



The Pianoplayer: A lesbian love story

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Description: How will the cooperation between Adolé and Michelle develop?

Adolé Varell is Germany's greatest pop and pop idol. For many years she has been filling the biggest halls and TV shows. She leads the charts with ease and releases hit after hit. Everybody knows her songs, but nobody knows what secret desires she has, which is no wonder, because officially she is happily involved with her long-term love and colleague Julius Gruber.

When things don't really work out in the studio during the recordings for her new record, her manager Roswitha decides to collaborate with a classical pianist. The studio recordings, scheduled for a few weeks, turn out to be a nightmare for the cheerful and open-minded Adolé, as French piano virtuoso Michelle Mimieux, for no apparent reason, shows herself uncooperative and from her scratchy side. Will this uncomfortable collaboration between the two different women burst or will they finally pull themselves together?

Or maybe even more...? And what role does the island of Sylt play in this scenario?

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Prologue

It was cold, so cold. Bare tiles were shining at her. Hygienic. Sterile. And bright. The brightness hurt her eyes. Everything was white, so white. Uncomfortable and hard.

Fear pervaded them. She tried to move, but she couldn't. The effort was too great, the pain too much.

Her head was buzzing. What had happened? Everything hurt. Every movement was too much. Had it happened again? Her memory was blurred, weak, too pale. She could not think clearly, the fog was impenetrable.

No matter how hard she tried, she could not move, could not get up. This pain. She moaned. She felt a twinge in her left arm, but she could not reach the source of this pain, could not prevent it.

Her mind could not remember, could not grasp the origin of all this, could not explain it, could not improve it.

Everything was blurred, muffled, quiet. So indirect.

As she tried breathlessly to move to escape, she noticed the shadow on the wall moving slowly towards her.

Panic broke out inside her, her pulse rate increased.

She tried to scream, but her neck just snapped. She couldn't get a sound out. Her eyes

were wide open, cold sweat was pouring off her forehead.

Her movements became weaker and weaker, more and more powerless.

Eventually she surrendered. She sank back. Her eyes closed. It got dark. Quiet. She fell into a restless, cold sleep.

1.

"That's not how it works! It just doesn't sound right!"

Roswitha Bergener had her palm slammed loudly on the table parallel to her loud outburst of emotion, all the more so to help her extremely strong disapproval to become even more expressive.

Adolé paused instantly. Her singing froze, while the playback music circulated through the room for a short moment until the startled studio technician interrupted her as well. Discontented, Adolé dropped onto the bar stool, which made the mostly long recording days in the recording studio a little more comfortable for her.

"Exactly what is it this time?" snatched her away with a slight touch of resentment. She could no longer hide the fact that she was annoyed - and didn't want to. After all, they already spent five hours in the studio today, which would have been fine for a normal day of recording, if they had at least been productive during that time.

Instead, they tried their hand at different compositions, worked out different variations, approached different pieces from different directions, but after the hours in this stuffy little studio, they were still not one step further.

Roswitha Bergener had no understanding for this. She had been Adolé's manager for many years and was always concerned about what was best for Adolé. And usually

she knew this very well and always found appropriate ways to make this clear to Adolé and to lead her in the right direction on her career path. Today, however, by her standards, she was increasingly rustic. Adolé didn't really offer her a reasonable reason for this, because they all did what they always did in the studio: namely their job. But obviously that was exactly the problem.

"It all sounds so unlovely... unimaginative... It's not the quality you usually deliver. You just drone on like that. It's no fun to listen to.

You've been in business so long. In fact, you need something different, a blood boost, something new and exciting. You've heard this a thousand times. It's just arbitrary and boring," Roswitha puffed angrily into the microphone on the other side of the glass.

"I see," thought Adolé. So that's the subject again and rolled his eyes in secret. She knew how much she owed Roswitha, because she had discovered her in her early twenties at a small singing competition in a disco and had made her the biggest pop and pop star in Germany that she is today.

At the beginning of her career it hadn't been usual to commit herself 100 percent to hits. Roswitha, however, did not allow herself to be put off, and with her decision to dust off the Schlager, to reinvent it, to make it more modern and to free it from the old stink of "Zum Blauen Bock" and "Musikantenstadl", she had not only won over herself, but also other advocates.

And she should be right. At first they tinkered through furniture store openings and village discos, were the unloved supporting programme for the set stars of the industry. But with "Seelenklang", a swinging number in the pop universe, came the long-awaited breakthrough. The success of almost twenty years now simply proved her right. Roswitha and above all Adolé had not only the German, but also the European stages firmly under control during this time with pleasing, easily sung

along and above all danceable Schlager disco anthems.

They were a good team in this as well. As Roswitha made her contacts and expanded her rich network of useful connections, making even the largest stages accessible to Adolé, Adolé in turn did everything she was told to do. She subordinated almost everything to the common success, was punctual, reliable, paid attention to her diet and sufficient sleep and to what she revealed about herself in public.

Together they created the public figure that Adolé Varell was now for everyone and that the German music scene could no longer be imagined without. She was the omnipresent Schlager queen, who was the first to dare to mix Schlager with danceable pop music in order to expand her spectrum of pure folk sounds. She deliberately went for rhythmic catchy popular music, which soon was to be found in every disco, at weddings and many other occasions. Her greatest commercial success "Herzschlager" has been a fixed component of every bachelor party, wedding, club evening, but also of every dance lesson for years and is celebrated in the stadium before and after every football match just as it is still played remarkably often on the radio.

In short: financial and personal success were no longer their greatest challenge. More important to her now was to express herself through her music, to be creative and to find new ways to reach her many fans who gratefully absorbed everything she had to say to them.

Roswitha Bergener played a major role in this, as her intuition for the situation, her connections and her experience in the music industry had always ensured that she had her finger on the pulse with her music releases. Today, Adolé's production and the release of a new CD were happenings throughout Germany that people were eagerly awaiting. Musical failure was a foreign word for Adolé.

And so she was now torn between what she herself intended to do with the new CD and what Roswitha apparently imagined. So far, she had only imagined "something completely different" - what exactly that should be, she had not yet expressed any concrete opinion about.

But Adolé had learned over the years to trust Roswitha. So they broke off the recordings they had made anyway and, together with the other members of the recording team, went to a nearby restaurant they had often visited and whose discretion they could rely on.

"What exactly do you have in mind now?!" Adolé asked Roswitha, who was so concerned about her. "Unfortunately, I'm not sure of that myself right now. But I do know that what I just heard in the studio is useless. It's nothing new, nothing surprising, nothing fresh, it's all so, so worn out. We can't seriously reissue something like that. Your penultimate CD was already better than that," she replied truthfully.

For this Adolé Roswitha appreciated. Sometimes she simply relied on her intuition, despite the fact that the studio and its staff had been booked months in advance and were expensive. If she felt that the recordings did not do justice to the joint project and her high quality and entertainment standards, she went against all other opinions and against everyone, uncompromisingly preventing a bad production that would have done more harm than good to Adolé. Without ifs and buts!

"Do you at least know roughly in which direction it should go?", Adolé begged and made a final attempt to at least tickle something out of her that would come next. She at least wanted to be able to prepare herself for it. But Roswitha was silent and waved away. She preferred to devote herself to the menu.

"Fine," thought Adolé. "At least it gives me one of those rare breaks in show business."

2.

A few weeks had passed. Adolé still did not really know what Roswitha wanted for her new CD. But she had - after enjoying the days off resulting from the studio's nonrecording and rebooking - come to terms with the fact that she would probably inform her when the time came.

Maybe she just didn't have a real idea yet and just still had this feeling of where to go. After all, you couldn't keep reinventing the hit song. So she had to come up with something completely new so that new CD stood out from everything else and Adolé was aware that something like that sometimes needed time.

But since she herself of course had enough press appointments and other appearances, she was by no means bored. So there was little opportunity for her to think about how to proceed with the recordings for the next release. She knew what she wanted and what not. And many a suggestion that Roswitha had made to her was at first considered crazy and then she did it - and usually with great success. So she did not push. She had learned to just keep still and wait.

She had just retired to her dressing room and was about to put on make-up when her mobile phone vibrated softly in front of her. "Hello, darling", it sounded to her. "What?! ", she returned a little gruffly.

"I just wanted to come by and wish you good luck right away..." Julius really meant well, but Adolé sometimes wished for more freedom. "Thanks - I'll be fine," she replied monosyllabically, pushing him away.

"That he really still has to remember before every performance," she thought angrily and shook her head. She actually liked Julius. They got along well. He had been one of Roswitha's strokes of genius when it became clear that Adolé would not be the complete heterosexual image of an exemplary pop queen. Too often just enthusiastic

blondes twisted her pretty head, too often one could have twisted it into a rope.

But thanks to Julius' dedication and good looks, they were able to nip all rumours in the bud and for years have been the perfect showpiece couple in the Schlager cosmos, performing together at public events and TV shows just as confidently as the popular self-productions on the red carpet. For the sake of the press, they even lived together, but then they actually had their own closed-off areas within their detached house, which Adolé had vehemently insisted on.

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After Julius had initially made arrangements to take an interest in them beyond his official "engagement", a serious conversation had taken place, and the separate residential units had played a decisive role in his resignation to simply being a "staffage" and limiting his caresses and declarations of love to the public part of their common existence.

While she continued to get ready for the upcoming show, she shook her head from time to time out of incomprehension for her fake boyfriend. "What is he thinking!?"

The performance itself ran smoothly as always. Playback events were against her and so she insisted since the beginning of her career on singing live whenever possible. Since she was a professional, the craziest locations were no problem for her. Live performances in front of many or few people, in front of other celebrities or "normal people", on sailboats, in stadiums and in small groups on breakfast television at bedtime did not even raise her blood pressure. Appearances at radio stations were just as routine for her today as long awaited premiere appearances for a new album or cosy, intimate performances on talk shows.

What was unusual, however, was the fact that Roswitha called her late at night after her performance. Contrary to her other habits, where she sometimes didn't answer her cell phone because she was too tired and then called back the next day, Adolé answered the call while already in bed.

"Yes?" she tried to appear reasonably pleased.

"Got it!" Roswitha didn't usually spend long on introductions and got straight to the point. "What exactly?" replied Adolé, thunderstruck.

"The idea for your new album!" Roswitha rejoiced at the other end. Adolé could literally hear her smile.

"Well, let's have it!"

"Do you know Michelle Mimieux?"

"Of course. Who doesn't know her. She is THE classical pianist of our time. She is world-famous and always fully booked, but probably as difficult as she is successful. Why?"

Roswitha didn't miss the opportunity to savour this moment to its fullest and took a promising break.

"Because you have the great luck to record your new album together with her. This is what was missing all the time. That certain something. The twist to something new, unusual and unexpected!"

Adolé thought he couldn't hear. "What?! Where did you get that idea?!". She was terrified. She sat up straight and squeezed the words out of her mouth. Her amazement and her unwillingness to believe that Roswitha could actually mean it, could not be overheard. For a short moment she even thought about hanging up. But she knew that this wouldn't stop Roswitha from her plan, as she thought her new idea with this bitchy piano player was so great.

yer was so great.

"It's simple - I've been thinking all along about how we can do something like this famous "unplugged" from MTV for you without it looking cribbed. Unfortunately that doesn't exist anymore. But that was just honest music, simply produced, little junk and stuff. But I didn't want to just copy it and put you in the studio with two

guitar guys and a double bass.

But when a distant acquaintance called me today, who also happens to be Michelle's manager, and complained to me of her grief because a long-agreed television format for her protégé failed, it immediately "clicked".

I discussed this with her immediately - she thinks the idea is as great as I do. You both have everything to gain. You are THE superstars in your respective music genres. Together you will be unbeatable," Roswitha rejoiced into the phone.

Adolé still believed the whole thing was a dream. She took a deep, resigned breath.

Half-heartedly she tried to convince Roswitha that this was not possible. "But our music is so different. We don't fit together at all. She has specialized in classical piano pieces, is constantly on the road in world history, plays in the Elbphilharmonie as well as in the Royal Albert Hall in front of the Queen and the whole royal family. How is that supposed to go together with my completely different kind of hit disco music?"

"That's just it," Roswitha casually countered this desperate advance with a smile. "It is precisely because it is so unexpected that it is so brilliant. I mean, who expects you to find each other at all? It is precisely because you are so different that it is so original! But still, this has happened very often in the history of music. Unexpected is good. Almost ingenious! Just think of Metallica playing together with a symphony orchestra. Great!!!! Or Nick Cave with the then still little Australian pop star Kylie Minogue! Who'd expect that? Or Jennifer Hudson and Iggy Azalea with "Trouble"! World class! Or Aerosmith and Run DMC? Or Run DMC with Sarah McLachlan? Or or or or!"

Adolé realized that further resistance was futile. Roswitha had prepared herself well and dispelled each of her objections with a lightness that surprised her even after all

these years. She sighed.

Unfortunately she couldn't counter with a better idea. She was just dreading having to spend so much time in the studio with this unknown woman. Her bad reputation preceded her.

...this could be fun.

3.

They all met for the first time together in a public hotel lobby. The hotel was not the kind of hotel Adolé was used to and as she had expected for a first meeting with the icon of classical piano music. All in all, the house made a somewhat rocked impression or as they say nowadays: vintage! - clearly it had its best years already behind it. Nevertheless it radiated a certain charm and the glamour of days gone by.

Quiet, unobtrusive jazz music sounded from discreetly placed loudspeakers as they penetrated further and further into the large and only moderately frequented room. Subdued light illuminated selected corners, green plants provided some cozy flair. Their steps were muted by thick hotel carpets. While Adolé still let her gaze wander in search of something, Roswitha walked purposefully towards a somewhat screened-off seating area at the back of the room.

Michelle Mimieux had tamed her long brown curly hair by tucking it under a rather masculine hat, her gaze being obscured by unusually large and dark sunglasses. She had wrapped herself in a leather jacket, unexpectedly rocky for a classical pianist, and had made herself comfortable in one of the comfortable large leather armchairs of this secluded sitting area. Her hands held her latte macchiato tightly wrapped around it for warmth. Her gaze was focused on her hands. It was still early in the day. Outside, the cool February wind was blowing and whirling as hard as it could. She didn't like the cold season and seemed sleepy accordingly. So the morning already

seemed to be not her time.

While Adolé, also public because of her baseball cap and also sunburnt, was hard to recognize, still anxious to appear reasonably friendly, Michelle did not even look up when she arrived.

"Oh, I'm so happy that this actually worked out," Roswitha Michelle's manager said to Roswitha Michelle as they hugged each other warmly. "Well, at least they're having fun," thought Adolé, while she waited for her turn to greet them. Shortly afterwards, Michelle's manager reached out her hand in a friendly manner. "Ella. Pleased to meet you."

Adolé grabbed the ball boldly and squeezed Ella's hand properly. There was nothing she hated more than when you meet someone for the first time and that first impression was dominated by such a lukewarm, meaningless, baggy handshake. She preferred it to be hearty and clear. And so was her first impression of Ella, who she liked quite a bit, but whom she had actually imagined to be quite different. This woman knew what she wanted and could get her hands dirty. "That's nice!" thought Adolé.

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While Roswitha was about twenty years older than herself and thus about in her early sixties, there was obviously no age difference between Michelle and Ella. Both could only be in their late thirties at most. But ultimately, for Adolé, age was just a number. The personality of the individual interested her more. So she liked Roswitha's motherly care as much as she sometimes hated it when she made every decision for her in advance, as if she was just pre-school age. All in all, they were a good team, who pursued a common goal and have been very successful so far. They owe this not only to Roswitha's excellent network but also to her inexhaustible commitment and wealth of experience and sometimes even to her stubbornness. But the latter was a different matter again.

"Me too!" Adolé replied truthfully and smiled reservedly. Although she still found the collaboration with a classical pianist somehow unexpected and strange, at least she had nothing against the meeting. In fact, Roswitha had by now worked on her in such a way and almost convinced her that collaborating with such a great world star of a completely different musical genre no longer seemed so far-fetched.

She just didn't quite see the necessity. For her, the musical creative process in a studio had something very intimate about it, which she didn't want to share with a complete stranger. The creation of a new song was in a way like the birth of a child, which is young and innocent at first, then grows up, takes shape, is sometimes bulky and rebellious, and for whom you feel love after all - and which you finally release into the world to make your own experiences.

Adolé liked this view. She had an intimate relationship to all her songs, which often continued to develop after the release, led her own life and, especially during various live performances, could take on completely different developments than originally

planned in the studio. This process had grown dear to her heart and was her very own. She didn't know yet if she was ready to let someone else take part in it. Especially someone she didn't like at first sight at all.

After Ella greeted her, she turned around with a sweeping arm movement and pointed at Michelle. "May I present: Michelle Mimieux," she whispered in a subdued voice so as not to draw unnecessary attention to the small cluster of people in the corner and nodded in Michelle's direction. Adolé had expected that at least they would rise from their soft upholstery and give her a hand, as was the custom among civilized people.

But far from it. Michelle only managed a short look up and a short "hello" before she turned back to her coffee without any emotion. Adolé, surprised by so much rudeness, froze for a moment and then pulled back her friendly but unnoticed hand embarrassed.

Annoyed and helpless, she looked at Roswitha, who together with Ella was trying to save what could be saved. "Michelle is happy too," Ella assured her in vain. "She is just a little tired from the concert series that ended last week. Her German is a little rusty too. It is surely best if the three of us discuss everything necessary and I pass it on to Michelle afterwards."

Roswitha nodded while Adolé was still struggling for her frame. She didn't know when she was last ever treated so uncharmingly, no, even rudely! and how she should deal with it. Never before had another person so duped and offended her. She was no longer so sure whether it was right to let Roswitha talk her way into this risky project, no matter how secret it was now and how great it would be for her career if it succeeded.

The rest of the evening she followed the negotiations between Roswitha and Ella just as silently as Michelle. From time to time she glanced back and forth between the one

and the other, her hot drink and the impudent pianist. Secretly she shook her head again and again without understanding how such a meeting could have come about in the first place.

After one of the longest hours of their lives so far, the managers had negotiated the conditions under which the project would take place. It was usually the case that both actors contributed very little to this decision-making process. In the end, they were only present at the meeting because they were supposed to get to know each other and sniff each other out, but this went thoroughly wrong.

The fact that the start of the project was already scheduled for the next month left Adolé desperate.

4.

The weeks leading up to the start of the project flew by. In the meantime, spring was tenderly visible. Adolé tried everything to convince Roswitha to leave this unloved project after all, but after the contracts had been signed at some point, all efforts had become pointless. She dreaded having to meet Michelle in the studio, although they would not even be alone there. Luckily, there was little reason to be prepared for embarrassing silence or small talk. And what they had to talk about would be limited to the professional topics they both knew quite well. Melodies, harmonies, notes, texts, rhythms.

Anyway, Adolé had decided to limit her necessary conversations to the bare essentials. They were forced by contract to participate in at least twelve different pieces of music, which they both had to come up with in collaboration with the studio band, and if things went well, they would gladly do so up to fifteen. But she really didn't expect that. Nobody could tell her to be happy or even enthusiastic about it. So Adolé had set herself the goal of

fulfilling her part of the deal, to be imaginative and creative, but not to provide more than the twelve titles she had asked for. At least she was a professional. Let the others see how they get along!

Although Adolé tried hard to let the time pass as slowly as possible until the project started in the studio, in which she perceived everything very consciously, often looked at the clock and hardly exposed herself to stress, there was no escape at some point - she had to go to the rented studio in Hamburg.

So she had no choice but to get moving in time and fly to Hamburg. As usual, the driver picked her up at the hotel at the agreed time and took her to the recording studio just outside the city.

She already knew the studio from previous recordings. It had been Roswitha and her suggestion to book it again for this project, because it allowed for creative work as well as the approach to difficult passages in the form of musical group work or going through different sections of the same piece separately. In total, it offered enough space for at least three independent creative working groups, but on the other hand it was so small and cosy that even intimate pieces of music, which required very little frills and had to be performed very quietly, sounded excellent and could be worked out in a very personal way. In other words: the perfect environment to balance the otherwise tense situation between the two main actors at least a little bit.

When Adolé entered the building she knew well through the back entrance, the owner of the studio and now a close friend immediately rushed at her. "Oh child, it's so good to have you back with us. We are all looking forward to working with you. The others are already upstairs." He pressed her warmly to himself and gave her a fleeting kiss on the cheek. "I'm happy too", Adolé sighed, which was true. She liked Manfred, his fatherly attitude and his unusual recording studio. Some special creations had already been made here. And he had a not inconsiderable share in that.

Many a time, when they found themselves in a musical impasse, he performed the trick of bringing them back on the right path of tonality and creativity with light-footed and unusual ideas. He was able to do this in his very own way. Sometimes he had a personal one-to-one conversation with her, sometimes he celebrated the night with the band, not without trying out the craziest things. On the following day they could usually conjure up something useful from these spontaneously created recordings. These jam sessions were wonderful. Actually, it didn't really matter how they got their original sound sequences. In any case, she and a lot of people liked them and they were tremendously successful. And that was the main thing.

"I'll take you up." With these words he gently pushed Adolé towards the stairs to the upper floor where the reception rooms were located. Adolé's tension grew as she knew that there was now finally no escape. It was a mystery to her how, in such a turbulent atmosphere, even the slightest creative work could be possible.

Without offering any noticeable resistance, she followed Manfred into the upper rooms she knew well. The whole studio radiated a warm comfort. Built as a factory at the turn of the century, the building was bought and renovated ten years ago by some brave rebels and now radiated a mixture of old and new.

The industrial charm had been preserved, although there was no lack of modern achievements. Twenty-four hours a day, a gastronomic kitchen was available for both catering and self-service, as well as a sauna, both of which were part of this innovative concept. In addition - and this was particularly important for Adolé, who was a self-declared Frahling lover - an original Italian espresso machine, with which she was able to make her beloved *caffè latte* especially well and which she liked especially well.

But the absolute highlight was the spectacular open-air pool on the roof. There they had already spent one or two summer nights with parties, which was only one of the advantages of this great studio.

Of course, all this had its price, but the excellent results justified this extraordinary use of resources every time.

Manfred led her up the stable iron stairs and opened the door to the studio rooms for her. Adolé closed her eyes, took a deep breath, gathered briefly and sighed inwardly once more. What had she done to deserve this? Then she entered "her" studio with her head held high and confident, not willing to give it up without a fight to some runaway French piano-playing girl.

To her surprise, nobody who came across as unpleasant was present, especially Michelle Mimieux. Her tension dissolved a little. The studio musicians, whose faces she knew, whom she liked and with whom she worked professionally and without complications, approached her joyfully and greeted her in a very friendly manner. They knew and appreciated each other.

After an overflowing greeting, in which many experiences were briefly touched upon, the first serious music rehearsal followed after everyone had been provided with sufficient coffee. Adolé got rid of her coat, slipped out of her high heels into comfortable sneakers and joined the musicians to discuss the first arrangements. Although it would have taken a meeting of the two main protagonists to determine the direction the album should take, they started to write some compositions due to the absence of Michelle. In the main they wanted to get familiar with the location again and get into the right mood.

They had already worked out some quite appealing tone sequences, when the door flew open and finally a sun-brightened Michelle Mimieux made herself comfortable in the studio. But instead of a polite request for apologies for her delay, as Adolé had expected her to be, she built herself up in the middle of the room and looked around reproachfully. "What's going on here? Why didn't you wait for me?!"

"I see," thought Adolé. "At least her German isn't as bad as we thought..." Then she

stood up, walked towards Michelle and again kindly reached out her hand.

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"Hello Mrs. Mimieux, Adolé Varell. We had the pleasure of meeting you the other day. Michelle again ignored the hand offered to her and instead stared unmoved at Adolé. The studio musicians, who did not know Michelle yet, had fallen silent and now looked at each other furtively. Their looks spoke volumes.

"I expect an explanation!" Michelle, with her slightly French accent, announced without further delay. She didn't even think of getting rid of her coat or making a friendlier face to defuse the situation a bit. Instead, she looked on without batting an eyelid at Adolé, who on the one hand tried not to be intimidated any further and on the other hand tried to calm Michelle down.

"Well", Adolé put on. "After they didn't appear here in the studio this morning at 11 o'clock as agreed, we thought about how we could still use the time sensibly. So we decided to start with some uncomplicated arrangements in order not to waste any time. After all, studio time is expensive. But you know that yourself." The whole thing sounded much more bitchy than Adolé had actually intended. After all, she originally wanted to mediate.

Surprisingly, Michelle did not know how to counter the argument "time is money". It therefore had more effect than expected. Moreover, she surely knew exactly when she had an appointment in the studio and how rude and inconsiderate it was to ignore it.

Michelle Mimieux looked at Adolé scornfully from top to bottom, then raised her right eyebrow snappishly and turned around muttering. Then she dropped her cape over one of the couches and threw her scarf behind her. She kept her sunglasses on. Without giving any further explanation for her considerable delay, she turned to one of the studio musicians in a low voice and asked him a question. He nodded at her

and led her to an adjacent studio where a grand piano was located. Shortly afterwards the musician returned alone.

Adolé shook his head. "What a performance!" she thought stunned and was happy to be able to devote herself to her own studio work again. "She prefers to get into the mood alone in the side studio...", the musician, who had accompanied the pianist to the other studio, started carefully. No one was interested in his explanation.

After spending some time talking to one of the studio musicians about technique, Adolé could no longer contain her impatience and put off her questions about collaborating with Michelle Mimieux. In fa

ct, she had expected them to join them and agree with her at the outset on the direction in which their work together should develop in order to sound out likes and dislikes regarding different musical styles and develop their own ideas and possibilities. For her this was the most normal process in the world. "Especially when you don't know each other, communication is an important thing," Adolé thought.

But when nothing of the sort happened, she realized that she could no longer avoid a first personal conversation with the world-famous but unappealing pianist.

She briefly sorted herself and then went over to the other studio with determination. Since the door was locked, she knocked softly. In no way did she want to complicate the mood further and sabotage any music rehearsals by hammering too loudly on the door. When nothing happened, she carefully pushed the door handle down and peered into the room. She found Michelle there, lost in thought, sitting at the piano without playing. In contrast to her last two performances, she made a decidedly unself-confident and unhappy impression as she sank into herself there and looked at the silent piano with her head hanging.

Adolé immediately felt an unexpected wave of compassion and sympathy for this

woman, who obviously could not behave and who, without exception, behaved inappropriately rude to her. She had not expected this. "What's going on there now?" it shot through her head involuntarily. Somehow she felt sorry for her.

She would have liked to withdraw immediately, because considerate as she was, she didn't want to bother Michelle with the details of her CD in this obviously unfavourable situation. But the business doesn't understand mood swings. After all, they had a big project in front of them that had already attracted worldwide attention. They finally had to discuss the details, at least in which style of music they wanted to approach it melodically.

So there was no way around talking to Michelle, whether it suited her now or not.

Still holding the door handle in one hand, the other leaning against the door frame from the outside, she carefully pushed herself into the open door.

"Mrs Mimieux..." She waited a moment, but nothing happened.

"Mrs. Mimieux????!", she repeated now a little louder and in addition knocked carefully on the door. Scared Michelle looked up. She had obviously not heard her enter and was now scared to death. Immediately the energy changed, the brittle and inaccessible Michelle was back after this short moment of weakness.

"What do they want?" she yelled at Adolé.

"Ahem. Excuse me. I knocked. We need to talk about our project, she and I. We should decide what we want to do, what music we want to make together. Otherwise the band won't know which direction we want to go in anyway. And that's not good," she stuttered, for which she was immediately annoyed with herself.

"Can't it wait?" replied Michelle, simultaneously angry and monosyllabic.

"I fear not," Adolé returned truthfully. "The musicians don't even know to begin with what we have in mind, what we want to do. We haven't even talked about which fellow musicians we like or which music styles and songs we like. Somehow we should find a common denominator that stands for our work. A certain framework. So that even in our absence the musicians know roughly how our CD should sound...".

Undecidedly, Adolé remained standing in the doorway. She expected a reasonable reaction, but as so often, Michelle gave her the exact opposite.

"What makes you think I would discuss this with you? It was your idea, this collaboration. Then you'd better find a way to handle it yourself!" Then she got up, went to the door and slammed it in Adolé's face without another word.

5.

After this repeated failure Adolé was finally fed up. She was tired of running after that stuck-up piano player and chumming up. After all, she was an accomplished musician herself. What she had expected was a cooperation on equal terms, and in her world, this also included that the other component of this work would behave according to her level, her ability and her age. Who did this Michelle actually think she was?!

Furious she had returned to the studio musicians and had to calm down again. Furious, she told them that "Mme Mimieux", as she was called from now on, had not rested to tell her. Therefore she could do what they wanted, including Adolé, because of her, they wouldn't take Michelle into consideration any more - the main thing was that sometime an album was made. The only important thing was that it was presentable and that it could possibly be used for a collaboration with "Mrs. Mimieux", although this was demonstrably not the case. But as long as the studio musician, who was responsible for piano, piano and all other keyboard instruments

and had an excellent command of them, could play the corresponding passages, everything was in order for Adolé from now on.

And now that the fronts had been settled and Adolé did not have to make any further efforts to please Michelle or to work peacefully with her, life was much more relaxed. Adolé at least felt freed from the pressure to establish a reasonable collaboration with the pianist - she had done everything. Ultimately, this was something that Mrs. Mimieux should also strive for and was also her responsibility. But if she blocked herself in this way, she would accept it from now on.

In the meantime it didn't matter to her how she had to look back on this session at the end of the studio time. At least a rather mannerly result was guaranteed and that had to be enough. In her eyes all this was not her problem anymore. After all, she had tried hard to create a common working basis and to provide polite manners - but thanks to "Mrs. Mimieux" unfortunately without success.

The next days were reasonably productive and quiet together with the team. While Adolé, as usual, came into the studio quite early and successfully composed and rehearsed one or the other song with a small group of musicians, Michelle always appeared - if at all - in the late afternoon and then stayed until late into the night. She had won over two of the studio musicians and was now working independently with them on other pieces. After all, they hardly overlapped in their presence in the studio.

Adolé, who was used to seeing the positive in everything, had finally made a conscious decision for this project and for an approach with jazz music and thus for a style of music that was still missing in her repertoire and that she liked very much. It was precisely this slightly swinging bar music that particularly appealed to her. With these rhythms one automatically imagined a smoky, sparsely lit New York cellar bar. She literally saw a lonely piano player playing evergreens by Frank Sinatra and Cole Porter, the Pepita hat on his head, an almost burned butt in the corner of his mouth and a whiskey glass on the piano. This was something completely new for her, a new

experience she liked despite all initial doubts and in which she is now completely absorbed.

Now and then she even almost regretted that they basically had the world's best pianist in their immediate vicinity and at their disposal and could have worked intensively with her on these atmospherically dense and imaginative compositions. She loved studio recordings and had her most creative moments when she felt most comfortable, usually after hours in the recording studio, when the ashtrays were overflowing with the cigarettes smoked by the band and they had really grooved. Unfortunately, the stiff and unapproachable Michelle Mimieux didn't fit into the picture at all, who obviously did everything to sabotage a real team result and who seemed to be able to work alone, isolated and independent from the others in the studio.

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Adolé had resigned herself to it, but she still could not understand it. She hadn't been thrilled either when Roswitha came around the corner with this unusual idea, but by now she understood the meaning behind this action and even had something like fun with it. Besides, she knew - because she had tried it over and over again without success over the years - that there was absolutely no point in resisting Roswitha once she had got something into her head. She was too experienced and too determined for that, Adolé knew that.

So at some point she simply started to see these experiences, which were not the order of the day for her either, as an enrichment and change in her everyday touring life. At first, she was reluctant to accept them, but then at some point this certain desire for the unusual and experimental outweighed, in which every outsider saw no sense at first, but which was nevertheless there at the end, and that quite obviously. It was astonishing how positive something could be, if you just gave it a chance. Suddenly she even enjoyed it a lot, because nobody expected something like this album from her. So it was just good. That was the special attraction.

Therefore, there were no rules that could be followed or broken. Adolé could not understand that a grown woman like Michelle Mimieux, at her age and with her experience, would not see it the same way, but would prefer to behave like a pubescent teenager in front of the whole team.

Adolé sighed softly once more and, lost in thought, made his way to the kitchen. It was already later than usual when she thoughtfully pushed open the door to the kitchen with her foot to help herself to the coffee machine as usual.

In one hand she held her empty coffee cup, in the other her mobile phone, which she

looked at incessantly as she made her way, as if by remote control, towards the refrigerator, next to which the coffee machine was placed. The other musicians had already finished their work and Adolé wanted to take the opportunity to give some of the scores a little more fine-tuning, especially since there had been nothing to be seen of Mrs. Mimieux all day long.

She liked being in the studio all by herself sometimes. Finally a piece of freedom, although there was no question that she also enjoyed teamwork and only in this way the most extraordinary pieces were created. It would be so beautiful and so practical if "Mrs. Mimieux" would at least leave her mark on her music, at least on paper. Her unique and special playing would do the record and the individual songs so much good.

"And so do you," thought Adolé amusedly - this nef

arious bar atmosphere of the twenties, just like in the days of the RatPack - and in the middle of it all, the stiff Michelle Mimieux, who just sat there apathetically and obviously swallowed a stick. Adolé couldn't let go of this image, because it didn't fit together at all - on the one hand this music of pure joy of life, on the other hand this controlled, fun-loving musician, who obviously denied herself any joy in life. Adolé grinned and wondered why "the Mimieux" made life so difficult when everything could be so simple. She should loosen up!

Lost in thought, she went further into the kitchen and around some of the kitchen furniture, further and further towards the coffee machine. Inexpediently, it was placed on the side of the kitchen room and therefore not near the entrance. Suddenly she noticed that, contrary to her expectations, she was not alone in the studio. She blinked in the sparse light of the extractor hood through the jumble of kitchen utensils hung there at the bottom end and suddenly stopped moving. In the semi-darkness, she recognized the shadowy outlines of Michelle Mimieux, who had pressed her cell phone to her ear, pushed completely into the shadows of the farthest corner. She

apparently also thought she was all alone in the studio at the time. While leaning against one of the stainless steel cupboards, she was fortunately looking in a different direction, engrossed in a half-French, half-German discussion.

Adolé was deeply frightened and stopped as if rooted to the ground. This situation was unpleasant for her, she did not want to have to go through such a delicate encounter with the pianist again, but at first she did not know how to free herself from this situation, which was unpleasant for both of them.

While she was still standing there, feverishly pondering how to leave the kitchen room quietly and unnoticed, she heard fragments of sentences that were clearly confidential and under no circumstances intended for a stranger, let alone for her. Apparently Mrs Mimieux was involved in an argument, because Adolé snapped up angry half sentences like "...I don't know how... "...do what I can...", "Mon Dieu... "...hard to implement... ", "'I don't like it at all! "...on.

To avoid intruding further into the privacy of a person who had already clearly shown her what she thought of her, Adolé carefully began to move backwards, turning around and tiptoeing out of the room. While she continued to hold her empty coffee cup tightly with one hand, she tried to shimmy along the stainless steel polished kitchen cupboards towards the exit with the other hand. As quickly and as quietly as possible, she crept over the floor tiles, still wet from cleaning, further and further back in the direction from which she had come, when she suddenly got stuck on one of the pots placed underneath the shelf and rattled it loudly to the floor.

At first she stood still as if frozen, but then she turned around. Her heart was pounding in her throat, hot and cold became like her.

Like a cat, Michelle Mimieux only needed a few elegantly quick steps until she was with her, the mobile phone still in her hand, but pressed firmly to her chest.

"How dare you?! Why are you listening to other people's conversations!!?" Michelle Mimieux also indignantly addressed her. She was not even out of breath after her short sprint, which had covered the not inconsiderable distance from her hiding place in the semi-darkness of the farthest corner to the unhappy Adolé, and now she built herself up in front of her. "What impudence!" she added without waiting for an answer.

While Adolé was still busy maintaining her composure and coming up with a plausible explanation, she looked down, which did not further irritate her opponent. Michelle Mimieux continued to express her indignation vehemently.

"I've never experienced anything like this before," Michelle Mimieux pointed out with her delightful French accent.

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean to," Adolé began stammering. "I thought I was alone and I was just going to the coffee machine when I..." And that was as far as she got. Again the Frenchwoman cut her off abruptly.

"They can tell that to whoever they want! Mind your own business and don't snoop around after me," she yapped at Adolé. "But I wasn't..." , she continued to try to explain herself and calm down, but Mimieux was not reassured.

It took Adolé a while to get her act together and then she realized that "Mrs. Mimieux" had approached her in a completely inappropriate manner, since she had not done anything reprehensible. So slowly it was enough for her. She began to collect herself, straightened up and looked Michelle Mimieux straight in the eyes. She took a deep breath, hoping fervently that her voice wouldn't break away when she answered her firmly:

"So Mrs Mimieux, I've had enough too! Who do you think you are? This is a music studio, in case you haven't noticed. We work here and record here - unfortunately

without you - already for days "our" common record. Or should I say: my record?! Because every attempt to integrate it has failed miserably so far. Why actually?! What is their problem? Why is there nothing to be seen of them here most of the time!

And if I take the liberty of entering the communal kitchen in the middle of the night during my work, which should actually be our joint work, to get a coffee here after exhausting recordings, please don't blame me. I've done that a dozen times before, without meeting you here by chance and noticing too late how you are hiding in the last corner in the semi-darkness like an immature teenager, as if you had something to hide. Plus, I had no way of knowing they were even here. After all, they haven't shown themselves all day today!"

She was astonished that the otherwise rebellious and quick-witted pianist had not yet interrupted her. So she continued speaking unmoved. "...and now, if you'll excuse me, unlike you, I have business here. And my management does not wait! “

With this she circled the amazed French woman and left her standing in the kitchen, simply baffled.

6.

Several days had passed since the incident in the communal kitchen. Adolé was feeling well. It was liberating to be able to get the frustration off her chest so directly. Michelle had shown up in the studio even less than she had anyway and in the end she had disappeared from the face of the earth. "Well, actually," Adolé thought almost amusedly, "the situation is unchanged. She's not here after our "conversation" as she was before..."

She was right, apart from the fact that her recording counterpart had at least buzzed secretly through the studio, nothing had changed - now you couldn't even see her

anymore. Basically, she and the team were happy about it, because now at least they were among themselves. Somehow everything always had its good sides.

Roswitha was also at the end of her Latin and that should mean something. She, as one of the leading responsible persons, could look back on the recordings so far, because fortunately, thanks to the creative studio team, they went quite well, independent of the French troublemaker. But of course she was not happy with the situation.

This was not what they had imagined when she and Ella cooked up this amazing scheme. After all, the plan was to collaborate with two world stars, whose experience and musical talent and emotions would be equally shared in this work. Instead, Adolé had taken sole responsibility for the work with the studio team, while Michelle kept completely out of it. Worse still, Michelle's occasional and unpredictable presence in the studio also caused great anxiety. Her main absence and non-participation in this major musical project had long since become the norm. However, her sporadic presence generated additional work, because the press had to be made to believe that they were working together as an equal team.

But Adolé also did not know a solution how to bring the French winger to her senses if she simply did not keep to her contractual obligations - except, of course, that afterwards the financial returns had to be divided up accordingly. After all, Mrs Mimieux had contributed almost nothing to the project.

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She had already talked to Michelle's manager because of her unexpected stubbornness, but her intervention hadn't helped either. So they had generally prepared themselves to carry out the project on their own. Given the situation, Adolé was not at all dissatisfied. After all, at least it still meant that she could do what she wanted

and did not have to deal with the pianist and her probably controversial opinion. At least that!

And so the originally jointly planned project went ahead, albeit moderately, but somehow satisfactorily under these adverse circumstances.

Roswitha only had one last idea to ease the generally difficult relationship between the two musicians, including the studio team. So on a Saturday evening, she invited everyone to a joint dinner in a hip Hamburg restaurant.

She hoped that everyone involved in the project would meet under neutral circumstances and perhaps get to know each other in a new and more relaxed way. This would possibly give new impulses, not only for the development of the music in the project. Especially for the poisoned relationship between the two main protagonists, this was to be a final attempt at debate. Convincing Adolé to participate was, as always, not difficult, as she was never averse to a good meal. Ella, however, had had to use all her powers of persuasion and appeasement to convince Mrs Mimieux to go to the restaurant that evening and behave in a reasonably respectable manner.

And so Adolé suddenly and unexpectedly found himself in an industrially influenced

loft restaurant with Jewish cuisine near the port of Hamburg. The restaurant was innovative and new, its interior characterized by the cool industrial accessories. Despite the many raw-metal furnishings, it was at the same time cosy and soft in appearance. This was ensured by the sweeping carpets and the many cosy and tasteful cushions and couches. The graceful lighting did the rest. This very relaxed atmosphere was supported by soft jazz music.

Adolé had no hopes of a reasonable contact or even a nice evening with the pianist and therefore limited herself to high expectations of what she knew to be excellent food. She loved Israeli cuisine and was happy even on bad days with a little good humus and fresh flat bread.

A rich selection of starters already filled the large and somewhat remote table in the restaurant when Michelle Mimieux finally joined the group of musicians and the two managers. As usual, she hardly said a word of welcome, nodded briefly to the group and then sat down on the only free chair not far from Adolé. Even now she wore her opaque sunglasses and only with a skillful movement she smoothly got rid of her coat.

When the waiter asked her what she wanted to drink, she answered as usual monosyllabically: "Chardonnay!" No "please", no complete sentence, just a clear instruction. Adolé was once again stunned by so much unkindness.

She immediately turned to the bright side. "Well, she has a good taste in wine. After all. " thought Adolé, who hadn't expected to see the Frenchwoman so close and detailed for so long. Even now her facial expressions were impenetrable, her gaze lowered, but Adolé at least thought it was to her advantage that she took part in this reconciliation dinner.

Adolé enjoyed the variety of the starters, the ingenuity of the arrangement and the excellent Argentinean Chardonnay, which she had also ordered. She liked the

multidimensional taste of sun-ripened Chardonnays, preferably when it was not from France. Countries with more hours of sunshine, such as Australia, Chile or even South Africa, produced in her eyes meanwhile great, competitive wines, to which she was never averse.

While she ate a bite here and there and listened to the atmospheric music, she let her gaze wander from time to time furtively in the direction of the bulky French woman. Under no circumstances did she want to look conspicuously over to her or even speak to her, since the fronts between them had apparently been settled to a certain extent satisfactorily for both sides. Moreover, she was of the opinion that the next step had to come from her - in her eyes Adolé had done everything for a peaceful and creative coexistence. Her patience and patience were not infinite. Should the arrogant pianist now enjoy this truce and the peace that went with it, and should she now perhaps even be able to imagine an approach, she would have to jump over her own shadow and venture a step forward on her part.

More often than she was willing to admit, Adolé secretly risked a look out of the corner of her eye at the piano player sitting diagonally opposite her, while here and there she had an emphatically casual and informal conversation. To her own astonishment, she suddenly and unexpectedly noticed that the unsympathetic Frenchwoman exerted a certain attraction on her, even a strange attraction. Adolé was shocked by this realization that this unsympathetic, egocentric and immature woman had such an effect on her.

She turned her gaze away in indignation and concentrated again fully on the conversation that she had started with the studio drummer some time ago - the focus was on the advantages and disadvantages of today's computer-aided composition possibilities. Basically, composing had become extremely easy thanks to a wide variety of programs and was therefore open to everyone. In the end, there was much more competition today, since it was not even necessary to master a "real" instrument.

Adolé liked the musician and the relaxed course of the conversation with him. Usually men were suspicious to her from time to time, but at least she usually felt uncomfortable in their company. This drummer, however, whom she had known for several years, was a notable exception.

She was about to answer a question he had asked her when she noticed a vibration in her trouser pocket. With a quick apology, she fiddled around in her pocket and immediately fished out her cell phone, which showed a Whats App message from an unknown number.

She read the message, paused and held her breath: "Can we talk for a moment? I'm out on the terrace. Michelle".

"How in the world did she get my secret mobile number????!!", Adolé secretly rebelled. At the same moment, however, it was already clear to her that only Roswitha and Ella could have any real interest in her two protégés finally finding a reasonable basis for their joint work. After all, this project should be a step forward for each of them. Her astonishment at this unusual approach outweighed the fact that she hadn't noticed that the pianist had moved away from their shared table at all.

Adolé slowly started to move. That she could not tolerate the disclosure of her confidential cell phone number even under these circumstances would be discussed with Roswitha personally at the appropriate time. She apologized to her interlocutor and asked to be able to continue the conversation in a few minutes. With a smile for the drummer, she left the table, turned around and walked along the corridor towards the terrace.

On the way there, she feverishly thought about what the Frenchwoman could already have back now. After all, this is how she quoted her out of the dinner party and back to herself in this remote place. "Actually I am not her errand boy. Let her come to me if she wants something!" it flashed through her mind.

Arriving on the terrace, she stopped for a moment, wondering whether she wanted to do so at all. She hesitated further because she was not sure whether she even wanted to have another crude conversation with her unconventional music colleague in this situation, which was originally intended to relax the entire team. What the hell was it that drove her to so abruptly divert this beautiful evening from its intended purpose? And what could she possibly want that she couldn't discuss with her the next day in the studio?

But curiosity prevailed. Despite all doubt, Adolé took a deep breath of the dark night air and looked around searching, found a sign saying "Relaxation Area" and an arrow to that effect, and slowly continued in that direction.

The roof terrace was deserted and only indirectly illuminated. A few scattered palms radiated a Mediterranean flair that she liked very much. They moved quietly in the light spring wind. After a few steps she saw Michelle Mimieux in the far back corner, who had turned her back and looked at the view. The nightly Hamburg lay at her feet.

"That's typical again," thought Adolé resignedly, "instead of greeting me properly," but despite all the negative expectations, he went resolutely and prepared for everything in the direction of the pianist. When she reached Michelle, she also leaned wordlessly against the balustrade and silently looked out at the dark port city. The weak spring wind played around her, hardly noticeable but nevertheless pleasant. Sounds of the street came up to them, a soft honking in the distance, a hearty laugh, a few cars moving away, but all this was dominated by the soft rustling of the palm trees on the terrace.

"Thank you for coming," Michelle opened the conversation quietly, without turning her eyes away from the view. "Not at all," replied Adolé, also in a subdued voice. "What can I do for you?"

Michelle turned around, turned to her directly and looked deep into her eyes for a

moment. Adolé became inexplicably hot and cold. She reached for the balustrade in order not to lose her balance. She felt her heart beating up to her neck. Adolé himself was astonished. She had not expected this violent reaction to the unsympathetic pianist - it could not be understood either.

As if she had noticed Adolé's inner confusion, the Frenchwoman turned away and looked down at the ground with concern. In her inimitable manner, she then began to search for words. With her unmistakably typical French accent she began to stutter helplessly around. "I would like to apologize. Our start was not a good one, I never wanted this project. It doesn't make sense to m

e either."

Again Adolé looked directly into Michelle's blue eyes, this time shorter and therefore less captious. Nevertheless, the attraction hit her so hard that she had to gasp for breath. What was that?! And what was that all about?! She got hot. After a few moments of reflection she answered in a calm voice, also looking down to the ground: "Yes, I feel the same. But my management does not tolerate any contradiction. And I trust Roswitha. She knows what she is doing. It was her idea. Maybe she is right and our strange interaction is a real chance - at least there has never been anything like it before..."

Michelle remained silent, but was obviously impressed by such a reflected and reasonable answer. Adolé's rational way of dealing with things was not at all in keeping with her own approach, but made sense in every respect. After a short period of reflection, she turned around and left the terrace without a further remark.

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"Hello?! That's just typical!!!", thought Adolé, who was still flashing from those blue eyes and surprised at her own violent reaction to it. She tried to stop Michelle, but when she started to call after her, not a word came out. So she preferred to continue holding on to the terrace balustrade, struggling to keep her composure. The whole spectacle lasted only a few moments, then Michelle Mimieux had left the sun deck of the restaurant with a few hasty, roomy steps and was as inexistent and surreal as ever.

What remained was Adolé, who, despite the questionable attraction to her opponent, was annoyed by the request to meet her, to have followed her at all.

7.

Adolé rolled in her bed from side to side. This strange appearance of the French stubborn man was still buzzing in her memory. She couldn't help but think of her constantly. She still appreciated her apology, to which she had had little opportunity to respond before she disappeared again like a mirage.

Yet she did not understand them. "What was that all about?!". Adolé didn't understand the artificial, calculating behaviour.

Their own behaviour was rather tangible - people said what did not suit them. And if you liked something very much, you said so. All in all, everyone had to behave honestly and authentically, or they did not need to be around them at all. This was a waste of time and a waste of precious life energy for them. She had no energy and no understanding for it.

She simply had no love for people who pretended to be more than they were. Equally

superfluous to her were people who lied and cheated, who could not be relied upon and trusted. She didn't want to accuse Michelle of all this, but her whole behaviour since they started this studio project together didn't seem to be on the level.

At least their habitus was mysterious and opaque and Adolé just couldn't make sense of it. Michelle made it much harder than necessary for her and everyone else. Even under these unusual circumstances, working together could be good, creative and enriching. A lot of fresh blood met here. But none of this was the case here.

Nevertheless, she caught herself looking at her mobile phone far too often that morning and somehow put it aside in disappointment when there was no message on the display.

She had enjoyed last night. The location was great, as well as the food, the atmosphere and her studio band, which she appreciated beyond measure. Basically the confusing performance of Michelle Mimieux was easy to get over.

With this thought she rose and went to the shower. A few moments later she was already sitting in the taxi to the studio again. A short stop at her favourite American coffee shop later she entered the rooms she knew so well and took two steps at once on her way up.

"Good morning everyone", she greeted the already fully present troop cheerfully. "Shall we get started?".

To her great surprise even the uncomfortable Frenchwoman was there, but in her own area across the hall and with her personal sound man.

Adolé took note of it with resignation, threw herself into her own work, picked up a score indiscriminately and got going. By midday they had already had some pretty good discolic rhythmic excerpts on tape, with which they spent the afternoon working

on the score.

The day went by faster than expected. The next time she looked at her mobile phone to check the time, it was already half past eight in the evening. In addition, she surprisingly looked at a new text message from the same formerly unknown number from the previous evening - she had saved it under the keyword "MM" to be on the safe side.

Adolé looked around in amazement and at the same time wiped furtively across the display to read the message. What was going on now?

As casually as possible, she glanced at the two sentences of the WhatsApp message, which left her astonished: "Feel like taking a short break? I'm on the roof terrace - again. " The end of the message was a wink.

"With all this love, who can cope with these contradictory signals," thought Adolé in amazement, and briefly considered whether she should again follow this call without complaint. When her curiosity finally prevailed, she grabbed her coffee mug without further ado, went purposefully into the kitchen, made herself and her secret date a fresh latte and turned back up the stairs in the studio stairwell.

Nobody met her until she came to the glass sliding door, which, with two coffee cups full to the brim, she could only push open with her elbow.

Again she looked around searching and discovered Michelle sitting on one of the couches not far from the pool. She walked moderately towards her and sat down beside her on one of the other free couches. Without further greeting, she held the freshly brewed coffee in front of her; Michelle accepted this gesture without further nagging and took a sip of the hot beverage. She even seemed to be happy about it.

Acknowledgingly she nodded and said softly: "Thank you - just the way I like him.

Not too hot, not too cold, lots of milk and no sugar."

I'm trying. That's exactly how I like him, by the way. So..."

For a while they looked, without saying another word, at the quietly moving water of the pool, which the moonlight threw against the house wall with a soft splashing, often billowing and silvery shimmering.

Adolé could not tell how long they sat next to each other in silence and darkness. She only noticed that she felt surprisingly comfortable around the pianist, which was astonishing, because actually they didn't get along very well. Even worse, they didn't really know each other at all. And after all, this French scratching brush did everything possible to make you dislike her. But why was Adolé so mysterious. Yet she noticed this pleasant feeling that spread through her in Michelle's company.

Finally Adolé broke the silence. "They were here early this morning..." was the only thing she could think of that was still quite innocuous. Making small talk, she added, "Not that they owe me any answers. " after the fact.

"Yeah, right. I just thought I'd give it a try, start this concept early. "

Further embarrassed silence followed. Here and there they both sipped their coffee with milk. This time it was Adolé who ended their secret meeting by slowly getting up. "I must get back to the others - before they start wondering and report a missing person," she said almost whispering.

"Yeah, sure. Me too." Again, she did not look at Adolé, but kept her gaze directed without any recognizable facial expression to the lightly sloshing water in the pool. Adolé noticed out of the corner of her eye that Michelle had a long scratch on her leg that was sticking out of her trouser leg. She immediately forgot the thought, however, when she noticed a short, restrained goodbye from Michelle.

"Yes, then." Michelle said goodbye almost inaudibly and shortly afterwards she shoved a quiet "Thank you. That was nice." after that. But since Adolé didn't know if Michelle really said that or if this almost friendly goodbye was just a figment of her imagination, she disappeared without a reply. Without turning around again, she walked in the direction of the exit, slipped through the sliding door, which was still open a crack wide, back to her musicians. No one had missed her, no one noticed how she continued to follow this encounter for a long time and feverishly pondered what this again strange meeting had already

meant.

8.

A few days had passed. Adolé's phone was silent. That didn't make things better. She still found herself pondering over and over again as soon as her tight recording schedule offered her even the slightest chance to do so.

On several occasions she thought about how to interpret this contradictory behaviour of the French colleague, but no matter how hard she tried, she could not reasonably explain it. What plausible solution could there be to this? In her eyes, this behaviour was childish and characterised by total uncertainty.

Certainly this behaviour was not worthy of a world-famous, widely travelled world star who had already experienced a lot. Normally, she would bring whole halls to rapture on stage with self-confidence and would not let anything upset her. Even high celebrities in the auditorium were no cause for excessive excitement for her. So why were performances in front of thousands of people no problem, but simple sound recordings with her so difficult?

Why didn't she just come up to them and say what was on her mind? After all, she was old enough to address and resolve conflicts. She wasn't 17 anymore! She was a grown woman in the middle of life! Adolé continued to ponder over this impenetrable being whenever the opportunity arose. The scratch on her leg in particular was a mystery to her. But surely there was an obvious explanation.

Whatever the case, Adolé tried to continue to deal professionally with the selected pieces of music. At the same time, her aim was still to make the joint album as imaginative as necessary and at the same time as entertaining and relaxed as possible.

She would have loved to know what Michelle's opinion was about her selection and approach and which pieces of music she worked on herself in her own music studio. I wonder if they would fit in with the pieces she had already worked out and the whole album?

Adolé decided that - since they were both adults - they would soon have to do a studio session together, as their managers had planned from the beginning, but Michelle persistently avoided it. In the end, it should be possible to do this between two music professionals. Especially since in her opinion a real single was still missing on the album, a piece of music that had the potential to become a hit. It had to be able to exist outside of their Schlager and classical circles, something like "New York, New York" or "Fly me to the moon". And something like that should be composed and recorded with a certain concentration and constructive teamwork.

So the next morning she went straight to the small remote recording studio where Michelle used to work with her studio musician all to herself. In memory of the experience she had at that door last time, she knocked a little louder and more insistently this time. She entered when she heard a brief "Oui?" from inside. Michelle sat alone at the piano with her cell phone as a recording device and was surprised to get visitors so early. As usual, she said nothing, but nodded briefly to welcome them.

Adolé then took matters into his own hands and, after a short squeeze, got to the point fairly quickly.

"Michelle, shouldn't we lump together our own work and compare what we have so far? I understand that you don't want to work with me, but while you're composing your pieces here in the studio, we're working on other pieces out there in the other recording studio. We're also making some progress, but ultimately that's not what the inventor intended. Shouldn't we just have a studio session together for simplicity's sake, so that we can both contribute something to the project at the same time?"

Adolé silently expected protest, but nothing like this happened. Only a short thought and another nod signalled to her that Michelle had understood what she was about. Apparently, for the sake of the outcome, she was prepared to put her personal concerns in the background and tackle the matter. She had an objection, however, which did not take long to be formulated.

"But just the two of us, nobody else. We should do it alone," she said briefly and succinctly as usual.

Adolé briefly weighed up how and when this could be possible and then decided to agree. It occurred to her that the studio musicians had been working with her non-stop for weeks, so they were certainly happy to have a day or two off. So she agreed without further lamentation. They briefly discussed when they were both ready to compare their progress and set Wednesday and Thursday of the next week for this purpose. Adolé thanked Michelle briefly, smiled at her and left the small recording studio as quietly and deftly as she had entered it.

As expected, the musicians were all happy with this development and the fact that they also had a few days off. So that the joy was worth it and because Adolé was so happy about this step in the right direction with the French keyboard player, she gave the band and the technicians the days until the weekend afterwards completely free. A little bit of relaxation did them all good and so they arranged to meet again for work in the studio on the Monday of the week after the tuning.

Adolé knew Roswitha would not be pleased. From time to time she had to take such solitary actions on her own and decide independently what was important to her. She also liked to take responsibility for herself at times. She could rely on her intuition and her feeling, after all the whole production stood and fell with her. And her feeling told her clearly that they would need this time and that in the end they might even be further than what they had achieved with the whole team in the weeks of separate work.

9.

The time until Wednesday passed like chewing gum for Adolé. Finally the "normal" work on the album was over and the intensive time of the two star musicians alone was just around the corner. Adolé was as always punctual in the studio. There she was completely professional. They had agreed in a short WhatsApp message sequence without further incidents to start at noon.

As Adolé had irritatingly observed in the course of the last few days, she was looking forward to this day with this troublemaker, who did everything to be disregarded and belittled by God and the world. Nevertheless, she was curious to see what they would be able to accomplish together and had brought one of her beloved lattes from her favourite American roasting house to celebrate the day.

It didn't take long until Michelle also arrived at the studio. The morning had been beautiful so far, the sun was shining high from the sky and Adolé immediately noticed how light and summery Michelle was dressed. For the first time she noticed what a slim, sporty, almost perfect figure her companion had. She also noticed her shapely breasts, which instantly raised her pulse rate. A sight she found very attractive. She had to pull herself together to look into her eyes when they greeted each other formally and succinctly as always. They shook hands and then both turned to their scores.

In order not to let an embarrassing silence arise in the first place, Adolé took the floor.

"Would you like to hear some of our songs? We have recorded a few tracks here that I would like to play for you. I'm curious if you like them.". After an obligatory short "I'd love to." Adolé went to the mixing desk and expertly pushed a few buttons. Shortly afterwards, some brief impressions of her work so far were heard. Some of the songs she had already sung, some were still without lyrics, but the melody still

gave them a first impression of the mood of the piece.

Michelle was visibly surprised that the sound recordings outside her cocoon had already progressed so far and also that her actual core competence on the grand piano had been almost perfectly taken over by a studio musician. It was obvious that she had not expected to be replaced so easily.

Adolé, who noticed this immediately, tried to reassure her and made her understand that the sequences had already been recorded by the studio pianist, merely to clarify the possibilities, and that Michelle could - if she wanted to - record these tone sequences afterwards. This would of course contribute to the authenticity of the whole record.

They spent the afternoon interpreting the pieces that appealed to Michelle in various new ways and here and there Adolé even sang the pieces in a completely new way, only accompanied by Michelle's wonderful piano playing. The result was a fabulous atmosphere that was indeed reminiscent of the old unplugged concerts.

The new recordings dragged on disproportionately long, as Adolé had carelessly given the sound technician some time off and therefore had to jump back and forth between the microphone and the mixing console himself.

Overall, however, Adolé was surprised how smooth, productive and pleasant the work with the pianist could be. She still could not understand why this had not been the case from the beginning.

At a late hour, as they were almost approaching the end of the day, Michelle suddenly took the floor. "Would you like to hear what I have so far?" Adolé was astonished by this sudden advance. "Of course!" it shot through Adolé's mind. How could she have forgotten to ask Michelle about her results?!

"Oh, yes. Of course. Gladly," she hurried to reply and noticed the heat creeping up her neck again. She hated it when she was so unobservant. After all, today was supposed to be a review of what they had achieved so far and where they should start again. How could she assume that only she would perform her compositions?

In addition, of course, she immediately noticed how skilfully the pianist had seized the opportunity and simply switched to the confidential "Du" without comment - an approach which, as Adolé noticed, she enjoyed more than she had expected. So she was looking forward to this joint session. Maybe at some point an opportunity

arose to talk to her in a normal way and just to talk about a few things.

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So Adolé took a seat on a bar stool behind the piano where Michelle was sitting, a position from which she could see both the keyboard and Michelle clearly. Michelle smiled at her and then turned to the piano with concentration. After a brief moment of focus, she put her fingertips on the keys and began a slow, jazzy piece. The intro immediately transported Adolé back to the smoky and wicked bars of her beloved New York of the 1930s, which had also served as inspiration for her own pieces. She closed her eyes, slowly swayed back and forth in time and got completely involved with this beautiful melody.

After an intense musical introduction, Michelle suddenly began to sing a French text to this song. Surprised, Adolé opened her eyes, but immediately got a grip on herself again. She had expected a pure piece of music without lyrics, certainly not with French singing, but somehow she liked this combination. She noticed the beautiful voice of Michelle, which she had never heard before, closed her eyes again and enjoyed this rare and beautiful performance.

Adolé was totally flabbergasted. What a beautiful sound, what an extraordinary melody. She was captivated by this beautiful performance and the rich, skilful tone of Michelle's voice. This was the first time Adolé was completely sure that Roswitha's unusual idea, which she had thought was a bad joke at first, would be a success.

When Michelle had finished her lecture, Adolé opened her eyes. Only now did she realize the tears of emotion she had shed. Her face was wet with tears, and so she secretly searched for a handkerchief. While Michelle looked at each other expectantly to ask her opinion, Adolé fished a tissue from her pocket and blown his nose away from her.

Having regained her breath and composure, she merely produced an inarticulate "Oh... that was so beautiful. To hide her puffy eyes from Michelle, she jumped up and shouted "I'll be in the kitchen for a moment..." as she ran out.

10.

Adolé still leaned against the refrigerator in the semi-darkness of the kitchen. How could she not have known that? That Michelle had such a beautiful voice and was obviously also a great talent when it came to composing?

She was still very emotional and deeply moved by this unexpected talk. If all her pieces were so soulful and beautiful, there was no doubt about the joint success of the CD.

Adolé was pleasantly surprised. Even outside of work, she felt that something had changed. She noticed that she felt crazy sympathy for this scratchy French woman and shook her head uncomprehendingly at the thought. She knew it would be difficult if she decided to follow this feeling of sympathy and affection, especially since she could not judge how Michelle felt about it. Furthermore, her eternal motto was reasonably - as it was for many others - and also voluntarily: "No love at work! She was willing to stick to it despite all temptations, because she was convinced that this motto made life much easier - not before a liaison, of course, but certainly after. It didn't take much imagination to imagine what would happen if you went to bed with colleagues and that didn't lead to the desired happy ending. When did you ever get anything tangible out of these sentimentalities? She was only too happy to spare herself this scenario, not to mention what would happen to her if the press got even the slightest whiff of something like this.

No, one thing was for sure, she would not take that risk, especially not when her career was going so well. Moreover, it had now turned out that the initial mad idea Roswitha had come up with at the kitchen table was indeed innovative, different and

above all extremely promising. She would not put all that at risk.

And so she resolutely grabbed the two coffee cups she had freshly filled and made her way back to the recording studio. She didn't let on and listened to the other pieces Michelle had composed with her studio musician. They were all exceptionally beautiful and above all special, not typical or predictable, some with English lyrics, some without. Nevertheless, they all fitted perfectly to the songs Adolé had worked out with her studio colleagues.

One thing was certain: they were a good team, although they had previously worked exclusively separately. And about something else there was now certainty: with today's comparison session, with which they had compared their individually composed songs for the first time and put them in the balance, their joint album had finally come a decisive step closer.

*

After the evening had progressed considerably, they decided to end their working day and arranged to meet the next morning. After all, they still had a whole studio for themselves for days on end - there had to be something useful to do with it.

They formally said goodbye, shook hands and wished each other a good night. Adolé smiled and offered Michelle to give her a ride in the taxi, but she declined, saying that she wanted to enjoy the summer evening a little longer and so took the opportunity to walk a little more. Adolé therefore wished her a good time and said goodbye formally, while at the same time she noticed that she did not even know in which hotel Michelle was staying here in Hamburg.

Disturbingly, she even noticed how she regretted not being able to spend a little more time with this impulsive pianist. Sighing, she turned around, entered the main road, which was not very busy at that time, and took the first car at the taxi stand. While

she looked at Hamburg at night from the back seat, her thoughts kept wandering back to Michelle. How much she had surprised her with her beautiful voice and this fancy song. Why had she never sung herself in her career before? She knew Michelle Mimieux, like the rest of the world, exclusively as a highly talented, diligent and successful showpiece pianist. However, she had never sung any songs herself, although her numerous concert tours would certainly have provided her with the opportunity to do so.

Adolé smiled inwardly. Maybe now what she had wished for Michelle all along had come true - she had recognized the potential of this extraordinary opportunity and finally did what she had always wanted to do: the best of it for herself and her career. And she finally sang! What an unexpectedly beautiful turn of events.

She secretly congratulated Michelle on this courageous and long overdue decision. Without a doubt, she had a very soft, powerful and unique voice. The public would be surprised and fascinated - should they ever hear this voice - that Michelle Mimieux actually had what it takes to be a singer. But probably they would be even more surprised that it had taken so long for this exceptional pianist to take her heart in both hands and to win the world of singing for herself.

"Wonderful!". It was with this thought that Adolé fell asleep that night.

11.

The next day had no comparable surprises in store, but still started promisingly. She had already spent many days in the studio, many of them for nothing. Other days, however, revealed amazing talents, rhythms and remarkable surprises that have accompanied her until today.

They met in the studio at noon, as agreed, and began, as the day before, to select, perform, evaluate and discuss pieces for the CD. It turned out that they were actually

pretty good in time. At least eight of the presented songs were so good that they could easily make it onto the record. Considering the fact that they only needed twelve usable songs, the situation relaxed a lot.

But what was still missing in Adolé's opinion was a real hit, one that made it into the charts and was suitable to be played in discos all over the country. This was a bit challenging, given their generally more jazz-oriented orientation, which Michelle, although they had never talked about it, apparently found very accommodating, but it was a thoroughly manageable task. Adolé loved such challenges and wanted to prove that especially these unexpected productions could be successful and had their charm. She enjoyed surprising her audience and offering them something fresh.

So they spent the second real day of their collaboration first defining the framework - text or not and if text, in what language and who would sing it? - in order to then move on to action in terms of content. They were able to quickly agree on a song with lyrics, but not on the language of the lyrics, let alone which of the two

of them would sing it, because of the pleasure of listening and because the piece should fit all sorts of occasions.

Because of the desired playability in clubs, however, they put this question on hold and initially took care of the basic issue, namely the external rhythmic appearance. Cool grooves and rich beats made dancing at parties a lot easier and so they started to experiment with all kinds of instruments, which nowadays are mostly only generated by computers.

It was astonishing what could be created without really having to go into the depths of these computer programs, let alone actually mastering instruments. They soon found the right sequence of crisp drum and bass sounds and then concentrated on combining this shell with Michelle's unique piano playing.

In between, Adolé noticed how Michelle secretly, quietly and silently took a piece of paper and wrote something down on it every now and then. Without comment she folded the piece of paper again and again and put it into one of the back pockets. Then she went back to business as usual and compared it with Adolé, who pretended not to notice the scene, the tone sequences and tried out different hard time signatures.

This day also passed far too quickly for Adolé, despite all initial reservations. They were so astonishingly productive and not only produced a fast danceable flagship piece, but directly a second one. These two songs would define their joint work. Roswitha and Ella would be satisfied with them if they only knew that they were working harmoniously in the studio and finally concentrated on the essential.

Adolé insisted on secretly watching Michelle from time to time. She was indeed a natural piano player. Her elegant movements on the keyboard of the grand piano, her sense of rhythm, her accuracy and precision in playing were a pleasure, her sometimes delicate, sometimes rich touch the pure joy. And she looked good, too. Whenever Adolé came closer to her than usual, she noticed her extraordinarily pleasant flowery light perfume that suited her so well. She finally enjoyed working together as Roswitha had surely imagined and was still amazed at the unexpected abilities of her comrade-in-arms.

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She still could not explain what was going on with her in the first weeks of her collaboration. Even now, she was still no paragon of cheerfulness, self-confidence or spontaneity, but at least one could talk to her reasonably and, most importantly, work productively. For the time being, she was content with that, although she briefly thought about approaching her about her strange behaviour at the beginning of the project. Surely, Adolé was confident by now, there was a simple explanation for this, too. In the end, however, she felt the risk was too great that this beautiful, now found silent agreement would collapse again. The risk was simply too great for her that they would fall back into the status quo that had characterized her project at the beginning. Little by little she admitted to herself that she would have liked to have wished for more than the present harmonic state, but she kept calling herself to order. Just don't exaggerate!

After the second important main track had been recorded reasonably well and it was already late, she spontaneously suggested to Michelle to go out for a meal together to end the day properly. To her surprise, Michelle immediately agreed, apparently even delighted.

So shortly afterwards, they set off together and decided on a small Italian restaurant, which was very close to the studio. They found a small table, a little bit out of the way, and ordered an Italian antipasto plate together, just to get a start.

While Adolé was still busy stripping off her light jacket, Michelle had already ordered the matching white wine for their meal together - a Peruvian Chardonnay. A rare and interesting choice, which Adolé immediately accepted, despite the fact that she didn't know and couldn't judge this wine. She simply relied on Michelle knowing what she was doing. The important thing was that her beloved Chardonnay had had

enough hours of sunshine in Peru as well, so that it had matured into a real treat for the palate.

She also liked the fact that Michelle simply took over the selection of the wine without discussing it and thus determined for both of them which wine would define the evening's taste. She, who was used to make such decisions herself, sat back and enjoyed not being responsible for these questions for once.

It did not take long and the Italian starter plate was served. It looked simply delicious in the candlelight and so they did not hesitate long and helped themselves. They had hardly eaten anything in the studio during the day. Because there were so few of them in the studio, the catering kitchen was not occupied. So they had secretly helped themselves in the afternoon and gathered a few leftovers, but their saturation didn't last long.

Against the snack of the afternoon, the Italian feast was now an incomparable increase. They took a hearty bite and ate more of the delicious bread than usual, without paying attention to too many carbohydrates in the evening. They then ordered the delicious main course.

While they mourned the excellent appetizer creation, they tasted the excellent wine. "Your wine is an exceptional choice. But a good one. I like it. How do you even know there is Peruvian Chardonnay?" Adolé asked Michelle. "That's surprising. “.

"Because I met him on location in Lima. I was there on a concert tour through South America. And my management, of course, knows how much I love Chardonnay. So they made sure that I could taste this fantastic wine every now and then. It is very different from the one we know here in Europe or from North America. But it is good. It is interesting. I like it, I just like it. And I thought you would like it, too. Because I've already noticed that we're kind of on the same tick...".

Adolé smiled. Yes, she was right. They were ticking away. And perhaps surprisingly, in some other things as well.

"Yeah, right. Apparently, we both love chardonnay. To me at least, it is the dearest of all white wines - not too sweet and especially without this excessive acidity. And whenever I can get it, I order it.

Michelle smiled at Adolé. Her blue eyes sparkled even more in the candlelight, and Adolé realized again how much she was tempted. She became hot, all her blood pooling in the lower torso area. She didn't even have the slightest clue whether Michelle was generally receptive to female charms at all. After all, Michelle had to assume that Adolé was straight, since she had a known long-term boyfriend who was known to the whole world.

She would certainly be surprised if Adolé took the initiative and made an attempt at an approach. But the external conditions in this Italian restaurant were perfect for this - soft Italian music, soft candlelight, a secluded table for two, which provided ample opportunity for confidential encounters, and a waiter who knew what discretion meant. Hamburg was simply a cosmopolitan city where international stars were no rarity. Adolé enjoyed being here again and again.

But she admonished herself to reason. She was sitting here with a world-class pianist with whom collaboration had been extraordinarily complicated up to that point. They had only just come a little closer and had established trust, which she didn't want to put at risk again lightly. Who knew how she would react when Adolé made an outright attempt at flirting?

But a liaison with a woman would also be difficult enough for her, especially in Germany, where she was an undisputed star and was constantly recognized in public. If a journalist happened to be in the pub or an obtrusive, unscrupulous fan with a mobile phone camera, the headlines would be pre-programmed and both their careers

ruined. Adolé was very clear that this was too risky for her and worse for everyone who depended on her - band, dancers, choreographers, management, family, friends. The responsibility for all these people lay on her and she was always aware of that. This was one of the reasons why she had made the hypocritical deal with Julius as her long-term friend. Thus, at least officially, she was heterosexual for the press and the public and thus, at least in this matter, no longer a worthwhile goal.

Fortunately, the fact that she still had short affairs with women every now and then remained undiscovered and thus without consequences. Admittedly, this had a great deal to do with Roswitha's discreet "unwinding" of the events - here a targeted threat, since the generous transfer of a not inconsiderable amount of money in return for the written signing of a watertight pledge of secrecy and the world was back in order again.

Adolé was, however, aware of the effort that her actions entailed and had therefore decided years ago that she would only pursue her preference for women if it was really worthwhile. Otherwise she liked her job and loved the opportunities it offered her. She enjoyed the kindness and love of her audience, liked the creative freedom she had and the opportunity to be creative on stage, to be creative and therefore to do what she really loved. Therefore, after the last unpleasant experiences, she had committed herself to cherish and cherish all this and only risk it if true love should really ever be involved. But this had not happened yet.

And when was that...? When was it ever safe? Up to now, it had always become apparent after a very short time that the women with whom she ended up in bed wanted to bask in her glory and hoped to make the big breakthrough or gain other advantages through her company. Therefore, such a relationship had never lasted longer than three months.

The last time this

had been the case was three years ago. Since then she had remained steadfast and had not started any more love affairs. Here and there she had noticed a pretty woman, but it wouldn't have turned out to be anything more than a varied bedtime story anyway. Besides, between her record recordings, tours, TV appearances, magazine interviews and photo sessions she lacked the time and energy to maintain such uninspired "friendships" in everyday life anyway.

Most of the time it was not worth the effort. When she summed up how many women regarded her simply as a trophy and were not really interested in her, in Adolé Varell, in her as a person, her life, her worries and needs, but only in making capital out of her, showing herself in public with her and making the headlines herself, she felt sick. She was too bad for that. Anyway, it was difficult for her to distinguish between those who meant well with her and those who just wanted to adorn themselves with her. So she simply took her distance and concentrated on her career. That was easy, because she knew that she was on the safe side in any case.

But Michelle's blue eyes tempted her for the first time in years and brought her serious distress, despite all her inner intentions, risks and warnings. She would have loved to stretch out her hand under the small bistro table and put it on Michelle's thigh, feeling it and looking further into her blue eyes; she would have loved to touch it, inhale its fragrance and kiss it.

Adolé had to admit to herself that Michelle exerted such a massive attraction on her as she had not felt for years; if she felt it very deeply within herself, she actually had to say that she had never felt this feeling of connection and attraction with a woman before.

Astonished at this realization, Adolé leaned back. Actually, she didn't even know Michelle and if she did, it was from a rather unappealing side. And yet this querulant person had become so intensely magical that she was surprised herself.

Adolé broke away from this thought and tried to reconnect with the conversation with Michelle. Not that she didn't feel well entertained that evening with her at this excellent Italian restaurant, but her thoughts kept wandering thanks to her vivid imagination.

What the hell was going on?!!

12.

It was not long before Adolé had found the thread of the conversation again, despite the immense distraction. Probably Michelle had concentrated more on her food anyway than she had told her from her life. At least she hoped so, because if the Frenchwoman, who said so little, had ever spoken without a point and comma, then Adolé wanted to hear it in its entirety. Secretly, she scolded herself because she had made up her own mind and thus missed a large part of the conversation.

The evening went on without any incidents worth mentioning and so they arrived at some point in the choice of dessert.

"What do you think? Tiramisu or panna cotta? Adolé was excited. Actually, there was only one correct answer to this question for her, although she ultimately liked both desserts. In restaurants, however, she never had the idea of ordering Panna Cotta in all seriousness - she loved tiramisu soaked in coffee too much.

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"Is this a test?!" Michelle blinked at her. "I'd prefer crème brûlée, but since this is an Italian restaurant, I'll have..... tiramisu!"

Inside, Adolé took a leap of faith. How could someone who was so complicated in his nature always have the right answers to her questions and thus ultimately fit in so well with her?! ... at least in such trivial matters?

"Good choice," she returned apparently unagitated and continued to rejoice in this decision. They ordered quickly, and it didn't take long before a tiramisu with two spoons landed on her table.

Adolé could not help but consider the consumption of this first dessert together as an erotic act. Again and again her spoons, her hands touched, again and again Michelle led her piece of tiramisu, which she had conquered on their shared plate, pleasurably to her mouth and then licked her spoon provocatively and thoroughly.

Adolé's pulse quickened, her thoughts wandered away for the second time. To finally come to her senses, she quickly ordered the bill and invited Michelle to dinner.

She thanked me nicely. When they finally left the restaurant, they walked silently next to each other for some time. It wasn't long before Michelle reached out to Adolé.

Adolé's heart took an even bigger leap than before. She enjoyed the constant closeness and for safety she grabbed Michelle's hand on her arm. She returned her grip noticeably. So they walked through the balmy Hamburg night for a while, leaning against each other more than necessary. This closeness was both exciting and reassuring.

Finally, the moment of farewell came inexorably, which was particularly difficult as they had agreed to take the weekend off and not spend it in the studio. It was a good moment to take a break and find some distance to the last over-present project. They were well on time, so there was no reason to work Friday through Sunday. They were also lucky to be in one of the most beautiful cities in Europe, so what could be more obvious than to explore this metropolis privately and take enough time for that?

So Adolé knew that if they said goodbye now, they would probably not see each other again for four days. This thought stung her. Four days was clearly too long.

As they headed for a taxi stand, Adolé's heart rate increased again. She thought feverishly about how she could inconspicuously delay her farewell without revealing what she really wanted. She continued to hold Michelle's hand, occasionally stroking the top of her hand with her thumb and was unwilling to let go.

The taxi rally point was just a few meters ahead of them when Adolé noticed Michelle grabbing her tighter and pulling her with light pressure to the side and into the shadow of a row of houses. She offered no resistance and was grateful that the farewell was apparently delayed a little bit.

In this poorly lit area of this little frequented place just before the taxi queue, Michelle suddenly started to press on Adolé more than necessary. She was pleasantly surprised and let what Michelle had planned happen. Their faces pressed close together, Adolé noticed that Michelle was breathing heavily. This was very unusual for this otherwise so controlled pianist.

Adolé's heart was beating up to her neck when she spontaneously decided to give this opportunity a chance. Although she was aware of the risks, having just realized everything that spoke against it, she opened the clasp in which they were still in, took Michelle's hands and pushed them under her light jacket and around her own slender body. It was beautiful to feel her touch so close. At the same time she put her arms

around Michelle's upper body and her cheek against Michelle's. She felt Michelle's embrace return. This intimate embrace felt so good, Michelle's closeness felt so good. And she smelled so good!

Michelle did not resist - on the contrary. Adolé had the impression that Michelle had only waited for Adolé to return her initiative, for she snuggled up tightly to her and seemed to enjoy every touch she made.

Adolé, who was slightly taller than Michelle, held her tightly, her nose and mouth almost touching her ear.

Adolé was aware that this situation could still be considered more or less harmless in cases of doubt, simply a hug among friends, colleagues. Perhaps it was due to the delicious wine, perhaps to the long days in the studio when they both felt alone and far away from home. Maybe they had simply worked too much and were exhausted and tired. But maybe two people had found each other here who could mean more to each other than they had previously suspected.

While Adolé was still struggling to decide whether the temptation was worth the risk of possibly producing one of the most spectacular headlines in Germany's biggest tabloid the next day, she felt Michelle gently loosening the embrace and moving her hand from Adolé's back up to her face. For a while they stood forehead to forehead, with Michelle's hand on Adolé's neck and cheek.

Adolé sucked in a lot of air. She was so close to Michelle, it was so easy to take the opportunity to kiss her. But reason prevailed.

She tried to turn away, but Michelle would not let her escape. "Don't," she whispered in the partial shade

of the houses they were still in front of. Adolé felt Michelle's firm grip and gave up.

For a brief moment, they faced each other again, then Michelle took the initiative and began to kiss Adolé.

Their lips met, caressed each other, again and again briefly, then longer. It wasn't long before her lips opened. Shortly after, their tongues touched. Adolé escaped a soft groan, her whole body was electrocuted like she had never experienced it before. All her blood collected in her lower body, her heartbeat racing. Oh God, she kissed so well!

Adolé seized the opportunity, did not want to let the opportunity pass by unused and signalled that she too wanted this kiss. Her hands embraced Michelle's slender body and pulled it tighter. Her hands found their way under the fabric. She touched Michelle's skin, explored her body. Adolé realised that Michelle wanted every touch she made as much as she did. This time it was Michelle who moaned softly.

Adolé couldn't help himself and pushed Michelle further back into the house entrance and against the wall, where it was even darker and thus more protected. This made them safer from other people's eyes. A muffled sound confirmed the contact when Michelle's back touched the wall. It was obvious how much they both wanted this development. They both pushed her in the same direction.

It took quite a while before they could separate. gasping for breath, Michelle whispered unusually directly, "Come home with me." Actually, it wasn't even a question, more like a breathless command, which, thanks to her lovely French accent, seemed more like a kind suggestion.

After a few moments of reflection, Adolé agreed, knowing how this evening would end and that she was knowingly putting herself at an incalculable risk.

They boarded the first car of the taxi series, which had previously waited in a well-behaved queue for its next passenger. As they both took their seats in the back seat, it was not difficult for them to maintain physical contact despite the unknown driver and the discretion offered. Outside the driver's field of vision they held hands, massaged their hands, touched each other's thighs and played with their fingers.

Adolé could hardly wait for Michelle to arrive. After what felt like an eternity, the taxi stopped at the address she had ordered and they got out. Even Adolé, who did not know Hamburg in such detail, noticed in no time at all that they were in Winterhude, a district just outside the city centre and one of the most expensive parts of Hamburg. Adolé was curious to know in what noble hotel Michelle was staying, which was so out of town and at the same time in such an illustrious district.

She was surprised when Michelle walked purposefully towards a high iron gate. The entrance gate was surrounded by an almost three meter high brick wall, which was partly covered with ivy. Michelle entered a code on the panel at the entrance, reaching into her jacket pocket and pulling out a key. With this she unlocked the gate and made an inviting gesture in Adolé's direction. She hesitated for a moment and then walked towards Michelle, who stood expectantly on an accurately raked pebble path framed by meticulously trimmed boxwoods. Hand in hand they walked along the path, which was indirectly lit by small spotlights and after the first bend the trees opened up the view of a beautiful old villa. It too was beautifully set in scene by well-placed spotlights and warm light. An impressive picture. Adolé was speechless.

"Is this where you live?" Adolé was surprised to discover. Michelle smiled and, as usual, answered eloquently with a short "yes".

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After a while, she pushed after explaining: "I often and gladly come to Hamburg. I simply love this wonderful city and have been coming here regularly for years. After spending weeks in different hotels here every year, I just didn't feel comfortable anymore. Because I like Hamburg so much and because it's easy to get everywhere from here, I decided to settle down here - next to Paris, of course. And voilà! There it is." With a sweeping movement of her arms she once pointed to the villa and the surrounding garden.

Adolé was genuinely impressed. She was still more familiar with Hamburg's city centre, but she knew from her numerous stays here, of course, that Winterhude was one of the best, most popular and therefore also one of the most expensive pavements in the Hanseatic city, if not one of the most expensive in the entire republic. Even she, whose career and business were going extremely well, would have difficulties in getting hold of such a large and beautiful villa at one of these hotspots right next to the city park and near the Alster. The supply of vacant buildings was simply not great either. But she had never really tried it, she was rooted in the southern German region, but she was still deeply impressed.

She liked the villa. It was not too big and not too small and had a very pleasant aura. Just now in spring the garden was also stunning. When they entered Michelle's home, they again looked at red brick walls, which Adolé loved so much. They took off their clothes and went into the kitchen. The house had a uniquely cosy and familiar atmosphere. Exquisite furniture, indirect lighting and selected green plants created a cosy ambience in which she immediately felt at home.

From an oversized refrigerator ("I love big refrigerators!!" - Michelle) the hostess fished a chilled bottle of the best Chardonnay and gave it to Adolé together with a

bottle opener.

"That you have kept this from me all this time... I am outraged!", Adolé joked carefree, while at the same time tampering with the bottle. "What a view of the countryside. What peace and quiet! I'm delighted."

Michelle, who was aware of the exclusivity of her property, only smiled, "I had had my eye on this house for a long time and a few years ago it finally became available. I couldn't help but strike directly. I just love this house." Adolé sensed Michelle's attachment to this place. She liked it when something like this happened, because it was far too rare these days - real dedication and passion for something and the passion to create a real home from it. It was not difficult for her to understand this closeness and she settled down with two chilled glasses of wine on one of the light leather couches in the living room.

The evening was already advanced, but despite the proximity to the sea, it was wonderfully warm on this beautiful summer day. She enjoyed that Michelle opened the doors to the outside area wide and let some air into the heated rooms.

Shortly afterwards, the relaxed swing sounds of Michael Bublé pervaded the candle-lit living room. A light, carefree mood spread and Adolé knew again how she had got into this house and what she wanted there. She placed the glasses on the coffee table and fixed Michelle.

After she put the CD cover aside, Michelle turned around and walked straight towards Adolé. Adolé knew what was about to happen and she knew she wanted it, just like Michelle wanted it.

There was no way back.

She leaned back into the soft leather of the upholstered furniture and Michelle sat

down without hesitation, tantalizingly astride her lap. They looked at each other briefly, then there was no stopping them. They kissed each other intimately, demanding, their arms clasped around each other. The discreet background music made their encounter perfect. While Adolé tried hard to find her way under Michelle's top with her hands, Michelle held Adolé's head with both hands during the passionate kiss and repeatedly stroked her curly hair. At the same time she gently pushed her lower body back and forth on Adolé's lap.

Adolé didn't know where to reach for first, where to kiss first, too many emotions poured down on her at once. But she felt good. Michelle felt good, kissing her felt good. She tasted so good. It all felt so right, like nothing she'd ever felt before in her life.

As they gradually surrendered to their desires on the bright designer leather couch, it became more and more obvious that this sofa was too uncomfortable for two women their age. Why not go to a more comfortable camp?

Adolé therefore dared to ask after a short time whether it would be possible to change the location and whether there would be a bedroom.

Smiling, Michelle kissed her a few more times and then said breathlessly and in her usual charming French accent: "C'est possible - possibly.

With this she separated from Adolé, stood up, took her by the hand and went up the stairs to the first floor and into the bedroom with a very large and comfortable waterbed. Adolé's heart took another leap - she loved waterbeds.

To express her joy, she took Michelle's face in both hands, kissed it and gently pushed her backwards onto the soft waterbed. They both came to lie on the bed at the same time, Michelle backwards below, Adolé half on top of her.

While they were kissing intimately, Adolé was already beginning to get Michelle out of her top. She kissed her neck, her décolleté and her upper breast. A slight moaning from Michelle told her that she was not entirely wrong about what she was doing.

She unbuttoned the blouse further and kissed further down to her navel, pushed the blouse off Michelle's body and then turned to her bra. Kissing, she worked her way up, then down again and finally began to pull the straps of the bra off her shoulders. Michelle joined in and her kisses became the most intense Adolé had ever experienced.

Michelle was extremely cooperative, straightening up and making it easier for her to open the bra. When she pulled it off and Adolé looked at Michelle's naked and perfect breasts, she realized how close they had become that night.

Adolé looked at Michelle,

shook her head at this incredible experience and kissed her tenderly and passionately, holding her close and holding her tightly in her arms. They swayed back and forth. It was obvious how much both enjoyed this closeness, this warmth.

After the kiss had faded away, Adolé looked for Michelle's gaze, as if to allow her to continue. In an unspoken agreement, she then began to look after Michelle's trousers. As she continued to kiss Michelle's neck while lying down, first unbuttoned the top button of her waistband and then all the others. Michelle was happy to let it happen and enjoyed the way Adolé devoted herself to her neck, her ear and many other areas of her upper body.

It didn't take long before Michelle wiped the long pants off. "You feel so good," whispered Adolé in Michelle's ear, feeling the closeness, and then kissed that very same ear again, nibbling the earlobe and kissing along the neck to Michelle's breasts and aroused nipples. A gentle moaning confirmed what she was doing. She herself

was already inflamed and felt how she too became more and more aroused and how the moisture was collecting in her middle. The blood pulsed in her veins and Adolé knew that anything could happen that night.

She paused, straightened up and contemplated the beauty of Michelle that had captivated her from the beginning. For simplicity's sake, she immediately took off her blouse and bra and then lay back on Michelle. Her upper bodies met, her naked breasts touched each other intensely.

They embraced and loved each other, sometimes one was on top, sometimes the other, sometimes one took the initiative, sometimes the other. Both enjoyed this night, the closeness, the heat of their bodies and the pleasure one gave the other.

Adolé knew that this night was something very special, something she had never experienced before in such intensity. Their sweaty bodies rubbed against each other again and again as Adolé, driven by lust, removed even the last piece of fabric from Michelle's slender body. She pulled her panties towards her knees, beyond them and finally pushed them over her feet. With one skillful movement, she threw them across the bedroom.

They looked at each other and had to laugh. An intense gaze followed, a gentle touch of Adolé, who gently stroked Michelle's pretty face and bent over stunned with happiness, to kiss Michelle once again, obviously in love, first tenderly, then more and more determined and wildly. Her lips met, then her tongues. A wild dance flared up in their mouths.

"Would you tell me if I was doing something wrong?" she whispered softly in Michelle's ear. "You can't do that," she replied with a noticeably agitated breath and pressed Adolé firmly to herself. It could not be denied, she too was over the moon about Adolé, whose desire, affection and lust was now obvious to her.

"Do whatever you want. I want you to." This "permission" sparked undreamt-of desire in Adolé, who was already very excited. She needed no further prompting. Another look and a quiet "Tell me anyway if you don't want it..." later she slowly began to kiss Michelle's athletic body further towards her centre. That this incredible woman was now lying naked in her arms became clear to her in the meantime and inspired her more and more.

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She kissed over her slender flanks, her firm belly and on over her thighs, which had been hardened by regular exercise, up to Michelle's knees, before she worked her way back up over the insides of her thighs to her centre. Michelle did not refuse her, worked along with her and only too willingly spread her thighs in lustful anticipation. She enjoyed this sensitive treatment. It wasn't long before Adolé had kissed herself all the way to her well-shaven center and then surrendered to her epicenter of lust completely uninhibited.

Michelle shrugged several times with relish and cramped her hands into the bedding. Then she began to moan loudly under the soothing massage of Adolé's tongue. An excited "Oh God! Oh yeah, that's good, don't stop... don't stop... oh fuck yeaheah" later Adolé knew how to bring Michelle to a gigantic climax.

She didn't give in, continued to lick her centre point persistently, explored it sometimes further up, sometimes further down, sometimes more to the side and knew that it didn't need much effort anymore until Michelle had reached her peak. She caressed her pearl of love and meanwhile held her sweaty hips firmly in her hands, pushed her pelvis sometimes more to the right, sometimes more to the left and also felt that Michelle pushed her lower body forward and gave way again and again in time with the beat of the tongue.

A few moments later, Adolé felt a brief pause, a vibration of the pelvis, then Michelle reared up trembling and moaning, writhing spasmodically under her touch for a few moments, began to twitch and collapsed exhausted shortly thereafter under a loud groan. She gasped for breath.

Adolé knew that she had come and enjoyed this intense moment of closeness, letting

go of her and kissing over her naked lower body, upper body and neck towards her face, and then came to lie beside her, gasping for air herself.

Both bodies were wrapped in sweat before Michelle had caught herself and took the scepter in her hand.

"You are so wonderful. ", she whispered into Adolé's ear with her sexy unmistakable French accent and slowly began to undress Adolé's body and explore it with kisses.

Adolé felt the excitement increase in her and how much she now wanted to feel Michelle's closeness as well. Very cooperative, she responded to every touch, loved all her kisses and gently directed them wherever she wanted Michelle's attention. As a result, Michelle gave her several lustful tremors, triggered by her sensual creativity and ingenuity, which did not stop at the edge of the bed.

A storm of sensations swept over Adolé, several exciting finales left both of them barely able to catch their breath, sometimes it was Michelle who was active, sometimes Adolé, whose crazy ideas drove both of them to undreamt-of heights.

In the end, they lay in each other's arms, exhausted, sweaty and breathing heavily, in a night that neither of them had expected at the beginning of the day.

The sun was already rising when Adolé Michelle looked lovingly into her eyes and without another word gave her a last intense kiss, during which she held her delicate body securely in her arms. She felt good, safe and arrived, she knew that she could let herself fall and that that night she had found the answer to the big question in life.

14.

When Adolé opened his eyes, it was already early in the morning. She had seldom slept as well as that resounding night. She looked over to the other side of the bed and

noticed that she was alone in the big waterbed.

Smiling, she lollied in the cool sheets and thought happily about the exciting scenes of the previous night. What a magical night! What an experience! Mind blowing!

She looked around. She heard no noise in the bedroom or the adjoining bathroom, so she assumed Michelle was on the ground floor. For the first time she had the opportunity to see the interior of this dream villa in daylight. The bedroom, like Michelle's entire house, was very tastefully decorated. Restrained colours dominated the living area, first of all beige, white and grey - colours that Adolé particularly liked. The furniture was exquisite, superbly composed, not mainstream, rather a balanced mix of both antiques and Ikea furniture, which she liked very much. It had style. In addition, there were selected art objects, pictures and sculptures; she liked that Michelle obviously had a soft spot for art, just like herself.

And it seemed to invest in young artists - a strategy that was becoming increasingly popular on Germany's flourishing art market. This allowed her to invest her money wisely on the one hand and support artists on the other. She herself had already taken care of young artistic talents and promoted their emerging talents accordingly - at least one way of using her immense success to give something back to society that had always been important to her. And she appreciated very much that Michelle apparently had the same opinion about this.

She sighed. She sat up carefully and looked around. There was nothing to be seen or heard from Michelle. She seemed to be all alone upstairs and finally stood up hesitantly to go to the bathroom. Afterwards she lay down again, Michelle would resurface sooner or later.

W

hen after another quarter of an hour nothing of the sort happened, Adolé ventured

another advance, stood up again and searched for her jeans, which she had dropped off somewhere the previous evening in the sway of emotions, in the pocket of which she suspected her mobile phone. When she finally found it, there was no trace of Michelle there either.

Finally Adolé got up, gathered her things, took a shower and hoped to find a good-humored Michelle in the kitchen, already trying to get a delicious breakfast.

To her greatest disappointment, this was by no means the case when she freshly showered and curiously explored the remaining rooms of the villa. Apparently she was alone in the whole building. Adolé dropped herself, confused and perplexed, on one of the design classics in the well-equipped kitchen and looked around questioningly as her eyes fell on a short note next to the coffee machine.

She sat up, picked up the piece of paper and read:

"Adolé, a short notice forces me to leave very early. You'll find your breakfast in the fridge. M."

Adolé's heart was racing. Stunned, he gazed again and again at these two meaningless, short sentences, at this naked piece of paper, which put the last magical night in a completely different light. Not a word of regret about this abrupt end to the day they had spent together, not a syllable about when they would see each other again. Was she imagining the whole thing? Had she been fooled? Was Michelle just another one of those women she considered a trophy?

Or was she just painting the devil on the wall? Adolé forced himself to remain calm. She thought about it feverishly, searching for a plausible explanation. She reached for her mobile phone and tried to reach Michelle. Even if she had to leave unexpectedly, she was certainly available for a short conversation and comprehensible questions. But it only went to voicemail.

Where was Michelle? What was that about? Why did she leave the house in such a hurry? Why had she apparently fled the house in such a hurry and thus had eluded a common awakening and harmonious morning after this wonderful night? Adolé racked her brain, tigressing up and down like a caged predator in this strange kitchen, without even considering touching the breakfast the refrigerator had prepared for her.

Again and again she propped herself up stunned with both arms on the kitchen sideboard, looked out at the perfectly trimmed boxwoods, then looked down in her mind at the kitchen worktop and shook her head.

She had hoped that the time of riddles would be over, that Michelle would trust her bit by bit and that at least now they would have the chance to get to know each other a bit better.

But it seemed as if last night had been nothing more than a beautiful dream, a short intermezzo and nothing of this familiar common ground could be saved into reality.

Adolé's doubts gave way to a frightening certainty. Finally she gathered the rest of her clothes and left the house, restless and torn apart, where she had spent those wonderful hours with this fantastic woman, where they had become so close and had slept so intimately together. Apparently none of this meant anything. Michelle had found her unpredictable and unsympathetic side again.

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Adolé couldn't make sense of it and desperately dropped into the first best taxi she found and drove back to her hotel. Arriving there, she sat motionless on her hotel bed in street clothes for a long time and recalled the last brilliant night over and over again, comparing it with the meaningless news of the morning after and came to no comprehensible conclusion. Again and again she looked expectantly at her mobile phone, but the display showed no new messages.

At some point, Adolé lay on her bed with her knees tucked up, only apathetically lying on her side, trying to calm herself with speculative explanations. Surely her management had called her for a short-term appointment, she would still get in touch with her - but why hadn't she done exactly that before? Was she still so unimportant? What could be so urgent that she couldn't even do one or two sentences via WhatsApp?

Suddenly Adolé was struck by a hot flash of lightning. What if it was all a ruse, an ambush to prove her sexual orientation beyond all doubt? Could Michelle have been collecting evidence or secretly taking pictures? Recorded audio recordings? Adolé was dizzy. The press would get a kick out of such hard evidence.

Adolé jumped up. Her eyes wandered aimlessly through the room. She became hot and cold. She paced restlessly up and down in her hotel room and tried again and again to reach Michelle by phone. But all she could hear was the private voicemail that she kept receiving: "Hi, it's me, Michelle. I can't come to the phone right now, please leave a message."

Her provocative and charming French accent almost drove Adolé out of her mind!

She compulsively continued to spend the rest of Friday racking her brain for what might have happened, especially because she had assumed that Michelle had also sensed this special connection between them. She didn't leave the room, nor did she order anything to eat, just kept to the few peanuts from the minibar. She pondered and brooded.

When she still hadn't received any news from Michelle towards evening, she ran out of explanations. She curled up on her hotel bed and gave up. She cried desperately. Once again she had fallen for an attractive charlatan, and surely the leading tabloid newspaper would present a corresponding headline next weekend.

She did a great job of that again. Bravo!

Roswitha would be delighted.

15.

Eventually exhaustion set in. After staring motionlessly at the ceiling of her room for hours, she fell exhausted into a restless sleep. There was no thought of rest. She rolled dreamlessly from side to side. Her cell phone was silent persistently. This was not a good sign.

In the early hours of Sunday morning, Adolé awoke without feeling even a little rested. At first she remained sitting on the edge of the bed, but after a while she rose. After a long shower, she at least felt like a human being again.

She had put it off long enough, but now she had to inform Roswitha, who was on a concert tour in Berlin with one of her other protégés. Undecided, she grabbed her cell phone and dialed Roswitha's number, which answered after the second ringing.

"Good morning honey - up so early? What's wrong? "Adolé felt miserable and didn't

bother to hide it from Roswitha for even a second. She came straight to the point for her circumstances and briefly outlined the events of the decisive night and at the same time formulated her suspicions for the press landscape of the coming weekend in a relatively neutral manner.

Roswitha, who had already experienced everything, was surprised, but quite composed. She called on Adolé to calm down and warned her not to act rashly. It would be better to wait for the weekend and prepare for next Monday, when she would meet the French pianist regularly in the studio. Then she could address the incident unobtrusively and react accordingly.

And under no circumstances should she fuel any speculation or answer tricky questions to the press. Keeping calm and showing coolness was the method of choice, even if it was extremely difficult to keep it up. A storm was raging in Adolé!

When she hung up, she was at least a little more reassured than before. It proved once again that Roswitha was very experienced in dealing with stars as well as the press and that she always had good advice at hand.

She was right. She had to stay calm and wait. She had no choice. Sooner or later she would see Michelle again anyway, even if it would happen differently than she had imagined a few hours earlier. But maybe there was a conclusive explanation for all this and all the excitement was for nothing.

Adolé tried to pull himself together. She looked at her mobile phone from time to time without anything decisive happening there. She spent the rest of the weekend with lonely walks along the Alster, completely absorbed, and a glass or two of wine in front of the flickering television without really looking. In her mind she was always in the night that had begun so unexpectedly and ended so familiarly. It took far too long until this extended free weekend was finally over. Adolé spent the last night almost sleepless and with innumerable thoughts of this unforgettable night, the

days before in the studio, this enigmatic woman and the questions what had probably happened in the meantime.

16.

Monday morning Adolé entered the recording studio very early as usual and as usual with a coffee cup in his hand. She felt bad, was restless and unrested. Her thoughts still circled around the events of the past days and were still looking for a comprehensible explanation. She simply could not switch off these thoughts that were constantly taking on a life of their own. Her heart was pounding, for today she certainly met Michelle again, whom she longed for so much, but whom she had dumped so brusquely after her fairytale night.

In the meantime, she no longer deluded herself into thinking that business matters had prevented her from spending Friday morning with her. Even so, no obligation could be so pressing as to leave any opportunity for a loving WhatsApp message. But she should have thought about it and wanted to. But since she hadn't received a single piece of information so far, she knew that this was intentional and that M

ichelle had only taken advantage of the situation. She had had a nice evening with her - as if there were not millions of other women for such adventures. One option was to buy ladies, the other was simply the classic groupie just waiting to finally be acknowledged by a star and taken to a hotel room.

So why was she after her, a woman who attracted far more attention and for whom the stakes were as high when her affair was discovered as they were for herself? That could have been much easier for her and has certainly happened more than once in this form. Certainly Ella, like Roswitha, had already had to resolve a crisis or two here, now that Adolé knew that Michelle was receptive to female charms and that she certainly lived them out here and there, although they were not conducive to her career.

Or was that just the appeal, her drive? Poor Ella - but at least that explained why she and Roswitha got along so well and why they short-circuited from time to time, no matter where in the world they were. Apparently their protégés were more alike than first thought and therefore their problems and job descriptions were more or less the same. Surely the bond between them was similarly short and Ella already knew from Roswitha what had happened between them.

Adolé sighed, and she realized that both managers had accepted a thankless task, even though they never had to worry about their bank balance again. But the press and public were adamant. They were constantly exposed to new situations, had to constantly reject curious advances or protect the private interests of their artists.

And when it came to such an explosive issue as this, they had no choice. They had to deny it, no matter what. Better safe than sorry. It would be much easier for everyone if there was nothing to deny or if both would just say with full conviction "Yes, my musician is lesbian - so what?! It's 2019! It's 2019! Get over it!"

But this was hardly possible even in the present day. The Schlager cosmos was too conservative for that and the target group of Schlager friends was too narrow-minded and uptight. Homosexuality did not occur at all in their world. Who wants to sit next to two gay Bavarian thoroughbred yodelers in the hit parade of hit music? Or to jovially overlook the fact that the main attraction and the German overstar is not interested in the strapping Upper Bavarian boys and is more interested in busty girls?

Can you imagine how the local pop universe would flinch if it ever came out that Adolé Varell's glamorous showpiece relationship with his dashing pop colleague Julius Gruber was nothing more than a carefully planned hoax and clever diversionary tactic to keep Adolé out of dubious headlines once and for all, so effectively covering up who she really was?

In Roswitha's opinion, one could not assume that Adolé's audience was able to

differentiate between what was a private person and what was a public pop star. An outing was altogether too delicate for her, they were all too dependent on the sales figures of their recordings and concert tickets, regardless of the fact that they had all actually already taken care of after all these years.

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And because Roswitha Adolé had always been well managed, lovingly cared for her, and success spoke for her, Adolé had so far always managed more or less without resistance. Of course, sometimes the whole spectacle had gotten on her nerves, especially when Julius had apparently promised more than had been agreed at the beginning of their arrangement. But in the end this arrangement was for the best of everyone. Her audience, as much as she liked it, did not need to know every detail of her private life. Somewhere there were limits.

Adolé would have loved to have been inspired by a role model, by a great German star, be it from film, sport, journalism, music, news or theatre, whatever! It would have been much easier to follow a woman who was in the public eye and who publicly admitted that her attention and love was directed towards other women, no matter what reprisals she was threatened with.

But this has not yet been seen in the entire German media landscape, although it was difficult but possible in other countries, for example the USA. Women such as Ellen DeGeneres, Martina Navratilova, Jodie Foster, Ellen Page or Wanda Sykes went ahead there, and even though a stiff headwind blew in their faces from time to time, they were generally happy with their decision and on the whole, even professionally, had no significant disadvantages due to their honesty. Even better - through their common interests and their common proud approach they had created a bond that richly rewarded them for living a different life concept. Their community went far beyond a simple network. They had a real community, were popular and role models for all those who had a similar situation.

Such a thing was unthinkable in Germany!

...a circumstance of which Adolé became painfully aware again and again and which she regularly cursed, for it weighed on her soul like a burden of a hundredweight.

Scattered thoughts. Adolé pushed them aside. She forced herself to concentrate on the current studio session. Although she couldn't deny her nervousness, because Michelle wasn't in the studio yet, but would surely arrive there sooner or later, she took a new track together with the musicians and started to record it with all attention. This also made a good impression, no matter who was watching her and sooner or later joined the recordings.

And as expected, it didn't take long before she noticed Michelle behind the darkened studio glass that separated the mixing console area from the room with the microphones.

As if in defiance, she set out to achieve musical excellence and decided not to expose herself, ignoring the Frenchwoman at first and pretending that nothing had happened - what she could do, Adolé could do three times!

The song demanded all their attention and skill anyway. It took her a little over an hour before she could deal with doing something else than singing for the first time. There was a short pause, which Adolé wanted to use for a short visit to the toilet.

While she was still concentrating on singing this song, in the hallway in front of the studio she walked indirectly directly into Michelle, who had lowered her head and was wearing dark sunglasses.

"Oh sorry! "Adolé came out automatically, when she - still busy with her song - unintentionally ran into Michelle. "Don't worry," it came back succinctly from the pianist. While she tried to escape the situation, Adolé seized the brief opportunity, grabbed Michelle by the sleeve and pulled her into a corner of the aisle.

Uncertain as to what she should say, she struggled for words and finally said, without apparent excitement, "What are you doing here? Where have you been? Why didn't you contact me?!"

As Michelle tried to free herself from the persistent grip, she wriggled back and forth and finally fought her way free. She glanced angrily at her wrinkled sleeve and finally squeezed out a short "I had work to do!" before turning and grudgingly walking down the corridor towards her own recording room. What remained was a confused, wounded and stunned Adolé.

17.

Adolé awoke again from a viscous sleep. She ran out of possible reasons for a valid reason for Michelle's impossible behaviour.

In the meantime she doubted herself. Had she only imagined this night full of love, familiarity, tenderness and wordless harmony?

A lot had already happened to her, at least until she decided to actively withdraw from the world of women. But this phenomenon of an unexpected, but dreamlike night of love, which was followed by complete ignorance, she just couldn't figure out.

How could all this have happened? How could she let herself be taken by surprise like that? After all, she didn't even know Michelle. Why hadn't she just been careful and stood firm? And what had gone wrong in the end that Michelle actually believed that she could simply wipe away this night of multiple highlights as if it had never happened...

All this was still a mystery to Adolé. Secretly, she knew very well that even before Michelle's love affair had begun, she had wanted more than just a decent working relationship. Of course - this was also desirable, since it was mainly up to her to drive

the "joint" project. But beyond that, and Adolé knew this very well, she had had her eye on the pianist since the first meeting - she didn't know

why herself. Apparently, she was attracted by the difficult and extraordinary. Sometimes she was a mystery to herself, also the fact that she obviously did not think with her head but with her heart.

But there was something about Michelle from the beginning that fascinated Adolé.

Thank God she was not twenty anymore and had experienced similar situations before, even if the intensity and closeness with which she had spent this one night with Michelle was not so familiar. At least she was able to distract herself with her varied work and thus ensure that this nonsensical reaction of Michelle did not affect her so much and at least was not very effective.

Nevertheless, sooner or later a solution was needed. For their CD project alone, which was actually the focus of attention. After all they were not in kindergarten here. And she hadn't imagined this passion and devotion on this decisive night.

She was at a loss.

There was no escape. Alone she found no way out of the situation, no matter how hard she tried and weighed the facts against each other again and again. So Adolé decided to confront Michelle at the appropriate time. But first she had to get hold of hers. Up to now she escaped the situation again and again, in which she stayed away from the studio and therefore from her work, contrary to every agreement and also signed contracts. How unprofessional!

But Adolé was sure that at some point she could see them and then address everything. And she was very curious about these answers!

Tough days went by, days when time seemed to stand still and when the work in the studio suffered noticeably. Adolé spent hours alone in the studio during the day. Since Ella also found no means to convince Michelle to devote herself to her duties in the recording studio, Adolé had given up resignedly. She wasn't even sure anymore if Ella, who should know everything about her protégé and have him under control, even knew where exactly she was and why she refused her work so consistently.

Roswitha, on the other hand, still took her job very seriously and had acted decisively. After all talks with Ella had failed and they would otherwise have been stuck with the not inconsiderable production costs, she unceremoniously relieved most of the musicians of their duties and released them for other projects. As a result, Adolé was able to work with an admittedly very talented musician, who was able to record the songs one after the other with different instruments and a technician alone in the studio. But this was not what she had expected at the beginning of the project - nor what it could have become in the meantime. She spent the nights more and more regularly in the hotel bar before she retired to her room, depressed and red wine blistered.

Again and again she lay curled up in her bed, doubting and brooding. Again and again she was overwhelmed by the stabbing pain of despair and powerlessness and the bitter realization that there was simply no reasonable explanation for this behavior. And that's that! Michelle had simply taken advantage of her and the situation, and even though the expected headline in the corresponding celebrity news had not yet come, her prestigious scalp together with her dignity was already hanging in the overcrowded trophy cabinet of the French piano player, who probably still couldn't believe in her ecstatic stupor of victory how naive Adolé had been, how easy it had been to lure her into her arms and what a triumphant coup she had achieved that night.

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She felt numb. Tears were streaming down her cheeks. Everything in her ached as if her body, her soul and her heart were one big wound for whose healing there was never any medicine, ointment or balm. Time did not matter. Improvement was far away. It just hurt, so much pain. She had no idea how to deal with this deep, painful injury or how and when to recover from it, if there was ever any improvement. At the moment she doubted, too present were the events of that magical night and the vile deception that followed.

She wasn't just a woman for one night. Couldn't Michelle have found someone else to satisfy her needs, someone who was easier to have and had less to lose? She was in a rut. She kept falling back on these meaningless thoughts. There really were a lot of decent women out there, and I'm sure Ella could have found her a suitable test person, a playmate who could have met Michelle's requirements, even though Adolé had to realize that it was certainly more attractive for a woman like Michelle to fish for a difficult target like her.

Yeah, so it made sense, of course. The hunting instinct. She was an attractive prey, after all. Adolé shook his head, got up and sat on the edge of the bed. She shook her head in disbelief, as she had been shaking her head a lot lately. Of course, some willing woman did not have the special booty potential that she, Adolé Varell, pop icon, pop queen and crowd-puller, Michelle offered. Yes, I'm sure there was no denying that. Adolé sighed.

Her thoughts went round and round, over and over again and around this one thing, this one seductive, weak, sensual night and around this breathtaking woman. A solution had receded into the distance. Probably there was no explanation at all.

Adolé got up. It was still early in the morning, but there was no point in staying down any longer. She preferred to take a shower and then go to the studio as usual. She wanted to finally end this unspeakable undertaking and leave it behind and return to her normal life. That was the only way back to normality and away from this madness.

19.

After Michelle apparently continued to refuse to participate in the studio recordings, Roswitha's collar burst at some point. Three months had now passed. She had really tried everything to save the recordings, had talked to Ella with angel tongues and tried to bring her to her senses. However, it soon became clear that Ella was not the source of the problem - on the contrary. She was extremely cooperative, but had lost control of her pupil.

While Roswitha vehemently insisted on continuing the studio work and at the same time finally finishing it in the foreseeable future, Ella wriggled back and forth with flimsy excuses and finally agreed to the only reasonable proposal and interrupted the recordings. Roswitha had actually tried by all means to prevent exactly this last consequence, but in the end she had no other choice. Studio musicians and technicians had other engagements as well. And Adolé herself also had public appearances and other obligations, which she now had to fulfil more and more often. After all, at some point it was also necessary to promote the upcoming CD release in a sensible way.

In fact, the most sensible thing to do was to put the whole undertaking on ice and wait until the stubborn pianist had finally come to her senses and the recordings could be resumed under the original conditions.

Adolé had moved out of her usual hotel and got into her tour bus. It was always a comfortable home for her during the touring time of the year and equipped with all

imaginable luxury, just as she was entitled to as a superstar.

She resumed her usual doctoral appointments, tinkered all over Germany and the bordering countries and behaved as professionally as she had always been. Those who didn't know what had happened - and that was everyone except Roswitha - couldn't tell the difference to her usual impeccable behaviour.

But secretly, questions remained unanswered, and Adolé continued to be upset, no matter how much she concentrated on her appearances, and the distraction this offered her was welcome. Again and again her thoughts wandered to this extraordinary night, which simply had to mean something! She couldn't push aside the same painful questions for good and found herself again and again desperate in thoughts in the mask or other quiet moments, in which she sat unobserved, left to herself, absent in a corner and stared at herself.

Roswitha rolled her eyes each time and kept saying sentences like: "Child, don't torture yourself like this. Stop that. Understand that you were just one of many. It had no meaning. Don't make it so difficult for yourself..."

Adolé had no more tears. She felt weak and powerless and had given up resignedly to trying to convince Roswitha of something else. She was probably right. Adolé knew she just wanted to make things easier for her. That's why - so what - she pushed thoughts of Michelle aside more and more often. A quarter year was now really enough sadness. After all, they hadn't been a couple. So why all the fuss?

More and more often Adolé called herself to order, if only to get her daily life under control. She had no opportunity to give herself over to her grief and despair. Even Julius, after all, was not allowed to notice any difference to the "normal" Adolé. She realized that it was better to keep her composure and simply concentrate fully on her career again, as Roswitha prayed to her over and over again. She finally had enough to do.

So she gave Roswitha's concept a chance and did several other performances and interviews.

When she was a guest at a well-known German talk show in Cologne on a Friday evening in September, she enjoyed the creative atmosphere of this relaxed live event. She felt comfortable, had checked into one of Cologne's better hotels in the early afternoon and was driven to the studio early.

The hostess greeted her personally and then discussed with her some of the topics she wanted to address in the show. Other interesting guests were invited, some of whom Adolé knew but of whom she had never heard of before. But exactly that was the attraction of this entertaining evening show.

She liked the concept of this entertaining show and did well. She talked entertainingly about her unusual everyday life and gave the viewers and conversation partners in the s

studio an insight into her interesting life. Time flew by and before she knew it, she was already back in her hotel room in the south of Cologne.

When she came out of the shower and turned on the TV in her room, her cell phone beeped. She threw the obligatory glance at the display and was actually expecting a message from Roswitha when her gaze and movement froze to ice.

"Can I see you?"

These four words jumped at her after all the weeks and months of waiting that had passed since then. Four words from the sender "MM".

Adolé couldn't believe her eyes. Who did that woman think she was?!! Her pulse was racing, she got up and walked restlessly around the room. Again and again she sat

down on the comfortable hotel bed, only to jump up again shortly afterwards.

How was she supposed to react to that now?!?!

After all, this woman had not only exploited her feelings, she had also disregarded contracts, harmed the crew and finally brought the recordings on her CD to a standstill. She obviously didn't care about her responsibility towards the musicians and everyone involved in her project. Social behaviour seemed to be a foreign word to her.

Adolé decided not to react to this news. Who would expect her to do anything else?!!!

She pushed the message away and deleted the corresponding chat history. With a snide movement she moved her phone to the empty side of the bed next to her and lay down. The TV was babbling to herself. She looked up at the ceiling again, as she had done so often lately. Her gaze looked for support up there, her thoughts racing.

Who could possibly understand that stubborn, opaque woman? Why did she make life so difficult? While she was thinking about it, her gaze slipped back to her phone from time to time, but it lay silently where she had peppered it.

Should she answer? Should she really make it that easy for her? Or would Michelle possibly write her again? And indeed. It did not take ten minutes before the display of her phone lit up again. It showed only one word:

"Please. "

She closed her eyes and breathed heavily. What was that about? She thought, hesitated briefly, doubted. She couldn't have been involved in a meeting like that, could she? And what good would it do? I mean, Michelle had had enough chances, and she'd let them all go by. Worse, she had also ignored professional arrangements, contracts and had turned the whole project upside down. She had gambled away all credit.

"No. No!" Adolé shook his head. The sting of the injury was too deep. How did this French keyboard player imagine this? "At first she treats me as if I were a supplicant, but my career is at least equal to hers! Then she endangers our CD and our whole project. This is so irresponsible!

And then she wraps me around her virtuoso fingers, only to disappear from the picture at the end... And I fall for her, too!" Adolé again closed his eyes stunned. She still couldn't believe this had really happened to her. But that wasn't all. "And then she also expects that she only has to snap her fingers and I stand at attention when she changes her mind?!

No! Not with me!"

Adolé took a deep breath. She sat up, grabbed her cell phone and blocked Michelle's WhatsApp contact without comment.

That's it for now. Once and for all!

Since Adolé had fended off Michelle's last attempt to contact her, she had not heard from her again. On the one hand, she found this a relief, especially since she had not succumbed to her charms. On the other hand, she still thought of her, although several weeks had passed in the meantime. Her heart still jumped as soon as her thoughts strayed to her, but often she didn't allow herself these runaways.

Besides, she had enough on her mind. Now that the recording sessions for the record were officially interrupted, the studio musicians were released from their duties and the studio was no longer kept free, her daily appointments became more and more important - here a TV interview, there a charity event and repeated appearances in well-known TV shows, which further maximized her fame and popularity. Soon there could be no one in Germany who did not know Adolé Varell.

Michelle Mimieux had disappeared from her life as quickly as she had appeared. Adolé compensated for this loss with work and a sense of duty.

She was on her way with her driver to one of those talk shows that are very popular in Germany on Friday evenings when she received a call from Roswitha.

"Yes, please," she whispered happily into the receiver, knowing that Roswitha had set up one of her usual "I wish you all the fun in your life small calls". "Are you on your way yet?" she heard Roswitha ask. "Yes, of course, it's just about to start. You know, I still have to get into make-up, and we always get these short instructions at the beginning, what is allowed, what not, how we should sit and talk and what questions they want to ask, whether we agree with them. Bla bla bla. ", replied Adolé bored.

"Yes, I know." Roswitha replied. "But that's not why I'm calling. ". She took a creative break, a fact that made Adolé nervously sit up and take notice. Roswitha always resorted to these pauses in art when she didn't quite know how to tell Adolé

bad news.

So Adolé impatiently reiterated: "Oh no... Then why are you calling so shortly before a recording?! Tell me!"

Roswitha pushed around a bit more and then took an audible run-up. She took a deep breath and then said: "Adolé, we still need a real hit on your project CD with your Frenchwoman. I know you don't want the contact anymore, and of course I understand that. Nevertheless, we still need a real lead, a song that will lift the CD for you from an insider tip and interesting excursion to a new level and also make your work a financial success that justifies all the effort. That's what we are missing so far and you know that...". She paused to wait for Adolé's reaction. She almost thought she couldn't believe her ears, but said only "You're not serious!"

"But little one. Look. You've had so much work on the album. It really turned out pretty good under such difficult circumstances, which wasn't to be expected, because the pianist didn't really participate and on the contrary was more of a brake than a help. Nevertheless, together with the excellent studio musicians and the technology, you really did a great job. You hardly let yourselves be distracted and conjured up a great album from the little you had. Let's now make sure that it is worth it for everyone...".

"So what do you want from me now?!" Adolé returned annoyed. She knew that it would be nothing that would get off her hands easily if Roswitha was already buttering her beard so massively.

She heard Roswitha taking a deep breath at the other end. "You need a hit. And I have two composers on hand who wrote one. I really think their piece is extraordinary - and it fits you perfectly. All you have to do now is work with them and make your song out of them. That's all," Roswitha tried to play down the fact that Adolé should go into the studio again together with Michelle.

"What?! You want me to take her back to the studio? We've been through this long enough! You know how this goes. "What the hell are you doing?!" she was outraged accordingly.

"Yes, I know, sweetheart. "Roswitha gave in. "I've already spoken to Ella about it, and she assured me that things would be different this time. Michelle will be there and will also be actively involved in the preparation of the pilot play. In the end at least the EUER will be a joint hit. And Michelle will be good. Ella has assured me."

"And you believe her again? That's what she said about the other pieces. Weren't we promised a completely different approach for the whole project? Better still - even contractually promised? You know yourself what became of it and how she behaved. All the work got stuck to the boys and me, not to mention everything else. I really don't need that again - I can do my records on my own, I'm better off and I know what I've got.

Roswitha could not help but agree with her. "Yes, I know, little one. And you're right, of course. But if we don't have this one shot, all the other drudgery was for nothing. Don't do this to yourself. Take one more bite of the apple and finish it properly. Then you'll have something to be proud of for the rest of your life - you and the st

udio musicians at least. At least think of them. You know that they are involved on a percentage basis and can make good use of that extra money.

When Adolé still didn't bite, she pushed afterwards: "I only ask you to try again. If it's another disaster like this, we'll call it off."

Because of the studio musicians, who had now really done everything humanly possible to save this crazy idea of cooperation, and because Roswitha assured her that she could stop the work if she tried and it didn't work out again, she finally reluctantly agreed. The press hadn't yet got wind of what had happened here for an

extraordinary collaboration - at least externally. Adolé knew this could have been good publicity. Especially free publicity. Without it, they themselves would have had to drum up publicity for their project when the time came. So a real hit at the beginning of the release was actually a real plus.

She was torn. Over the last few weeks she had gained some distance from the events with Michelle and their unpleasant course - now she was again forced to expose herself to the pianist for a long time. She had to produce a piece with her that was good for something, that the public liked and that guaranteed that not only the single sales went up but also the album CD sales - and the downloads were an important aspect as well. A lot depended on this one track, so a good cooperation was the basis for the success of this track.

Adolé knew that Roswitha was right, as always: a successful first release would draw attention to the entire ensemble and their extraordinary idea, arouse the audience's curiosity and boost sales in all sectors. But for obvious reasons she had reservations and respect for the new start of the collaboration. And not least before meeting Michelle again, because deep inside she knew that no time in the world could give her enough distance to this extraordinary woman, too much had touched and hurt her core.

"Very well," she reluctantly added, "but we'll stop immediately if I think it's right. Without discussion!!"

Adolé sighed resignedly and let herself fall even deeper into the back seat of her car. As she looked out the side of the back window of the limousine through her dark sunglasses, she knew that not only the success of the entire project depended to a large extent on this one shot - perhaps the rest of her life as well.

21.

Two weeks had passed when Adolé headed with her bicycle unerringly towards a small unknown studio on Sylt. It was early in the morning. The autumn sun was still low and so Adolé was blinded by the morning sun.

Adolé loved this island and had made it a condition to Roswitha, as a condition of her final agreement to this final phase of work with Michelle, that she book this cosy studio to work in peace on the one track that was so important to the whole project.

Roswitha had tried to change her mind, pointed out how remote this studio was and how unlikely it was that it would be available at such short notice. In the end, however, she agreed to give it a try and promptly booked the recording studio a short time later. Roswitha immediately got down to business and booked it for two weeks. That should probably be enough.

Adolé was happier about that than she was willing to admit. She needed a certain relaxed atmosphere to be able to work creatively and Sylt was for her the epitome of relaxation and recreation. Sylt was her soul place and especially now in autumn it was beautiful. As often as she could, she tried to go to her house a little outside between Kampen and List to find distance to her crazy everyday life in show business.

She loved this unique energy on the island.

When she found the house and immediately fell in love with it, it was a bargain by Sylt standards. She didn't know at the time that Kampen had a reputation as a trendy

resort that attracted all would-be residents and anyone who thought they were wealthy or important enough, like moths to a flame. Seeing and being seen was really not Adolé's cup of tea. She was therefore glad from the very beginning that this small Friesian house, hidden in the gentle dunes of the northern Sylt, had a sufficiently large plot of land including a fence.

She had fallen in love with this refuge right on her first visit. Especially the secluded garden with an unobstructable view of the North Sea was a special plus. Because it was only her holiday home for a few short days a year, she appreciated the view, the private ambience and the possibility to withdraw there undisturbed.

That paid off now, she could at least sleep in her own bed and stay in her own four walls during the stressful time in the studio. This was far more than she could claim most other times of the year. Although she loved touring and was now used to spending her time in the better homes of Germany and the world, the more precious were the moments she could spend in rooms she had chosen and designed herself. There was just nothing like a real home.

She was glad that she could at least include this compromise in her arrangement with Roswitha and that the recordings were now at least at a place of her choice. Roswitha had not been prepared to make any further concessions either, because she too wanted to bring this tiresome affair to a speedy and final conclusion without any further ado.

Although she found her original idea of bringing together two world stars of completely different musical genres and seeing what spectacular things develop out of it, still creative and surprising, outstanding and overly promising, even she had to admit that the choice of the French piano player had at least been unfortunate, if not a fatal mistake - even if one could not have foreseen this in advance. In retrospect, at any rate, everything that could have gone wrong had gone wrong.

Adolé had come to terms with the fact that she would see Michelle again and decided

to make the best of it. She couldn't help it anyway. She would behave professionally and make these last few days as short and effective as possible so that she could finally find the conclusion she wanted - for herself and her project. Afterwards she would look ahead and devote herself to other topics. Life went on. After all, this undertaking had now lasted much longer than planned and, above all, had robbed her of much more energy than had been expected. It now simply had to be brought to an end and then each of her ways went anyway. She knew that Roswitha, too, would make three crosses when the topic was finally finished and she could concentrate on other core tasks as manager of Germany's superstar number one.

She rode her bicycle further up a long driveway lined with lime trees and a little later turned into a farm surrounded by fields. It was precisely this spaciousness, which was seldom found in certain areas on Sylt, that gave this estate its flair. Adolé took a deep breath and with one hand pushed her coat up to under her chin. It had become cool, especially here by the sea. She braked, dismounted and leaned the bicycle against the wall of the house.

The two composers and some of the musicians she knew were already standing in the courtyard. They greeted each other warmly and were honestly looking forward to seeing each other again. In one of the former barns was the studio, which, although a little smaller than usual, was one of the best in Germany. After short conversations the group started moving towards the recording rooms.

Adolé was one of the last to enter the room. At the same moment she saw Michelle, who as usual was sitting sunburnt on one of the bar stools in the back, studying a score. She looked up briefly. Her gaze remained frightened for a few moments at Adolé when she recognized her in the crowd of people coming in. Without greeting, she immediately turned back to her notes.

"Well, this can get better. "it flashed through Adolé's mind. But she was determined to behave professionally and to perform this one piece of music with dignity and

decency, even if the sight of this stubborn keyboard player made her feel like a completely different emotional outburst.

She approached them with a quick decision and greeted them coolly but politely. "Hello, Michelle. I'm glad you're here. I'm glad that we can record this last piece together," and was aware that this reception contained one or two points - that she was here and that they would record something together. Yes. At last!

Without waiting for a reaction, she turned away and left her coat at the cloakroom. Meanwhile she felt Michelle's gaze in her back, but she was not impressed. She went over to the rest of the musicians and secretly wished that Michelle would behave like a normal person once, just once, and just come over to them and exchange casually with them like everyone else did. After all, they knew each other. Inwardly she shook her head once again, resignedly. What was waiting for her there?

Of course Michelle didn't do her that favour. As always, she did not feel part of the ensemble and preferred to sit in her corner next to the piano, obviously busy studying the composition to be recorded. At least she lifted her head when Adolé came over with the musicians at some point and they slowly started to try out first sequences of notes and discussed how they wanted to put on the song. She even sat down at her grand piano without comment and contributed several key sequences to the general rehearsal. Slowly a c

ommon work developed, which worked better than Adolé had imagined.

So the morning passed, the noon with a little refreshment and the afternoon, when coffee with little treats was served with Adolé's greatest pleasure. Towards the evening, they were already a big step in the right direction.

The next few days were similarly remarkably calm and without incident. Michelle's and Adolé's eyes met here and there rather unintentionally, but Adolé refrained from

further deepening the exchange.

When they were almost finished with their title piece after about a week, Adolé invited everyone to a nearby restaurant in the evening. Surprisingly, Michelle also accepted the invitation and arrived punctually at the described place. She sat across from Adolé and her eyes met again and again during the evening. Adolé could feel her pulse quickening and becoming warmer than usual for simple dinners. She hated herself for it and cursed that Michelle still had this effect on her.

Michelle occasionally even took part in general table talk. Adolé was surprised how well the Frenchwoman could behave all of a sudden.

When the cosy meal was over and the general mood was for departure, it was Michelle who helped Adolé into her coat. Surprised, but politely distanced, Adolé thanked Michelle, who smiled softly and took note of the thanks with a nod. Adolé felt something stirring in her. Shouldn't her feelings for Michelle still have become less? Adolé did not want to allow this thought to enter her mind, and he already wanted to put it aside. It had really happened enough now. Just the thought of it was ridiculous.

Outside in front of the restaurant they said goodbye loudly and emotionally. Probably this day would be one of the last they needed for their common work on the CD. Especially the two composers had finished their work and said goodbye until the next time.

Maybe there were still little things to arrange in the studio and at the end a big farewell evening with the musicians, but all in all their work and cooperation was now as good as done. It spoke for Adolé that each of the musicians took her personally in their arms and thanked her with a handshake and said goodbye to her. Adolé gave each musician a heartfelt hug. She knew that the band's skill and flexible willingness to step in had saved this unfortunate undertaking and was the only reason

why they were still in the band at all. The public would believe that the main work and the greatest influence on this work was Michelle and Adolé - but there they were wrong, and Adolé knew this as well as anyone else.

So Adolé thanked each of the musicians and assured them that they would of course be booked again for their next CD. In the end the last musician had jumped into one of the taxis and so she suddenly stood alone with Michelle in front of the restaurant where they had spent this beautiful evening. She shivered when she realized that she probably had to talk to Michelle now.

She turned around and there was Michelle standing there, wrapped in a thick coat and looking at her through her tinted glasses without any recognizable facial expression. It took a while before she broke the silence and formulated a first sentence with her French accent: "The musicians obviously like you. ". Thick wafts of mist accompanied what was being said. It had become even colder.

Adolé could not leave this template unused: "Yes, even if this is not comprehensible to you: if you are nice to people, they are nice to you in return. That's a very crazy concept. You should try it sometime."

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Michelle, for her part, could not help smiling. "Yes, you're right. " she replied, almost conciliatory by her standards. Since Adolé didn't feel like talking, she left the remark for now and stepped from one foot to the other, freezing. The musicians had all taken the taxis that had been waiting outside the restaurant. Now they had to wait until the next one came that Michelle could take. She herself would cycle the short distance to her house as she had come, even though it had already become late and quite cold. After that they went each their own ways again, except that they probably saw each other again in the studio for a short time in the next days.

So, on closer inspection, this was probably the last encounter they would have, if you disregard the usual promotion tour, which was certainly not on the schedule for a few months or a year. First of all, the CD had to be produced, the cover had to be designed and the whole marketing machinery had to be started.

Suddenly Adolé was overcome by a certain restlessness. Somehow it didn't feel right to see Michelle for the last time without having told her the right words. Maybe she should confront her here and now. I don't know if we'd ever had a better opportunity. But at first, she wasn't even sure if this was what she wanted. She had only just come to rest. Now her insides were boiling again. If only she knew exactly what to do.

"Shall we share this taxi?" Michelle Adolé's train of thought broke through. Adolé had not noticed that an apparently free taxi was approaching the restaurant. "Thank you. No. I came by bike. I don't have far to go. "she fought back with determination. Michelle seemed a little disappointed and decided to try again.

"But it's already so dark. And yet so cold too. ", she said to consider. Adolé was confused. "First she sleeps with me, then she dumps me, and now she's worried about

how I get home? You bet I'm cold!?!?!"

Fury was building up inside her. She was still thinking about what to do, but in the face of Michelle's contradictory behavior she decided not to hold back any further. Why should she?! They were in the middle of the night in the dark in front of a restaurant that no longer had too many customers. There was hardly anyone around them, so there was no danger of anyone hearing their conversation. As always, she had to be careful with the press and overly curious people with a cell phone camera and a strong desire for recognition, for whom an argument between two celebrities was an opportunity to stand out.

But she threw every caution overboard, took a step towards Michelle and took a deep breath.

"You care about me? You?!?! For real?! Excuse me, but I don't think that's your place. You could have been worried about me when I woke up alone in your house in the morning a few weeks ago after we had a wonderful night together. But you didn't worry too much about me then. "Without any consideration, she beat the words right out of Michelle.

She went on regardless. "I was under the misapprehension that this night meant something, that we were close, that something special connected us. But after I woke up the next morning alone, without a single word from you, without an explanation, something changed. All that time without a word - until now. Who does that? You sleep with me and then disappear? “

Adolé could hardly contain her outrage any longer. Disgusted, she looked at Michelle from top to bottom. "Couldn't be more obvious, could it?! Worse still, you would have had every opportunity to come forward afterwards and explain everything to me. But you decided not to do that. For weeks. Until now. And the only reason we're seeing each other now is because of our embarrassing collaboration, which you're too

bad for yourself.

Michelle had obviously not expected such an outbreak. She shrank back and looked embarrassingly at Adolé, then again on the floor. Her timid attempts to say something were ignored by Adolé in her rage.

"So please spare me your supposed concern. If you really cared about me, you would have done everything possible to save the situation and clarify what happened after we were in your house. We're not teenagers anymore. Better yet, if the press gets wind of our affair, we're both screwed. And yet I took that risk. Because it was worth it. Because I thought it was worth it and I thought you were worth it. But I guess I was wrong. And what do I get out of it now? Is that what got me anywhere? No! You ran off on the quiet when you got cold feet. Great! Really very grown up! "

Adolé could not resist a scornful gesture and took a short break, but Michelle, who was close to tears and had her hands clenched in front of her face, could not take advantage of this opportunity and did not make a sound.

While Adolé reached for her bicycle, pulled it and was already halfway up, she set about the final act of her revenge.

"So? Did you get what you were lookin

g for? Did you hang my scalp in your trophy case with your other victims? That's great. I congratulate you!

The only thing that really amazes me is that you didn't take the chance and leaked something to the press, something that exposes me while you are not mentioned at all. In our circles the mere suspicion is enough... But you will know what advantages you had from the night with me.

Now if you'll excuse me. I have to go home. At least there I'll have some peace and quiet and won't have to deal with hypocrites like you! “

Without further ado, Adolé got on her bike and pedaled bravely. She accelerated and left the manor at a brisk pace. What remained was Michelle, who was in tears.

22.

Michelle could no longer hold back the tears. She knew she had hurt Adolé. More than that. She couldn't blame Adolé for being so harsh with her. If only she could explain to her...

It took a few minutes until she had gathered enough to make it to the taxi, which was still standing at some distance, waiting for its next passenger. She dropped herself in the back seat and hummed the name of the hotel where she was staying. Then she turned to the side during the short drive and looked silently out of the window. Tears were rolling down her cheeks. The strangest thoughts circulated in her head. There must be some way to put it all right.

Michelle was deep in thought when she reached her destination. As if by remote control, she handed over the requested amount to the driver and went straight to her room where she dropped her coat lost in thought. Desperately sobbing, she lay down on her bed. How could all this have developed this momentum of its own? Tears rolled down her cheeks, which seconds later dripped onto the fresh white of the bedding. Dark thoughts billowed over her. She lay there for minutes before she could calm down a bit.

She turned on her back, took a deep breath and reached for a handkerchief. Still she could not think clearly, but she urged herself to be sensible. She blew her nose and tried to calm down. More and more an uneasy feeling took possession of her, an inner restlessness that could not be shaken off. It was as if she had finally received bad

news, which she saw coming towards her in slow motion and which she had not been able to prevent from coming, despite all her efforts.

Because she could not free herself from this dark feeling, she decided to go outside again. She could not stand this room any longer - she needed air. So she grabbed her coat, which she had carelessly thrown on the parquet floor, threw it loosely over her shoulders and ran out onto the hotel forecourt.

There she first walked restlessly up and down before giving in to an unexpected impulse. She abruptly turned around and rushed back into the hotel and to the reception desk. "Do you have bicycles? Can you lend me a bike?" she surprised the stunned receptionist.

"Yes, we did. But at this hour?! It's the middle of the night."

"Yeah. Whatever. I need it bad. What do I have to do to get one?" The French woman was determined not to let up.

The young man continued to look astonished, but had apparently decided not to resist Michelle's wish any longer.

With a "Follow me, please, I'll do it" he led them past the reception area and the offices behind it to a wooden house similar to a garden shed where the rental bikes were stored. There he handed Michelle - after he had gained access - the bike she had chosen without looking at the alternatives. After asking her for her room number, he warned her once again to be careful and then wished her a good ride. Michelle thanked him well, knowing that her wish would normally not be processed at this time. Then she pedaled resolutely and quickly left the hotel building behind her.

23.

She felt the wind at her throat and ears. Her hair flew in the wind, the coat fluttered noisily behind her. She didn't know exactly where she was going, but somehow her worried feeling got her on the way, which she had taken a taxi from the restaurant in the other direction just an hour ago.

It wasn't long before she arrived back at the forecourt of the restaurant where she had just had a conversation with Adolé and had had a terrible rebuff. The restaurant building was now in the dark of the night. Apparently the last guests and servants had left the restaurant. It was closed.

Michelle looked around searching. Except for the few cars that were just parked in the parking lot and which were now on their way home with their owners after a nice evening, everything looked exactly the same as an hour ago. What was she doing here now? In the middle of the night? Except for the sound of the wind, which kept getting caught, sometimes stronger, sometimes weaker, in the grass of the field surrounding the inn and some vehicles in the distance, she heard no sounds at all.

She pushed the bike a few meters further in the direction of the inn and kept looking around as if she was looking for something. But she did not know what it was herself. The gravel under her shoes crunched. For a while Michelle stood helpless in the night and didn't know what to do.

Finally, she resignedly turned her bike, pushed it back to the driveway and slowly drove back onto the path that had led her here a moment ago. Again and again she looked around, looking right and left into the darkness of the bushes lying beside the

road, but nothing suspicious caught her eye. At a leisurely pace she passed through the darkness of the night - a night that seemed like any other before and after.

She drove for a while as if by remote control over the path that ran alongside the road. The movement did her good, so the dark thoughts could be kept in check better. She knew that Adolé had no reason to be favourable to her. She must be angry with her, the rejection she had received from Michelle was too obvious. If only she had another chance to explain it all. Her heart sank one floor below again.

She kept driving through the dark without knowing where she was going. She let herself drift. The strange feeling that had crept up on her a while ago and that was still unexplainable to her still flowed through her and would not let her rest. She couldn't bear the thought of lying idle in her hotel room.

Again and again she stopped short and looked around without knowing what she was actually looking for and what she hoped to find.

Meanwhile she was on the cycle path next to the busy main road that cut the island from north to south, driving her further and further away from her hotel. Nevertheless, she kept on going in the same direction as a driven woman and never thought of returning to her hotel. She pedaled to get rid of this tension, but her insides remained agitated. So she accelerated for minutes and covered an immense distance. When she ran out of breath, she let the bike run out and headed for a bench that belonged to a bus stop on the side of the road, which was on a bend.

Slowly she got down, leaned the bike against the bus stop house and let herself fall onto the bench, breathing heavily. In the windy chill of the night she realized how sweaty she was. No wonder, as she had certainly made a great effort and spent the last two kilometres. Her heart was pumping. To make up for the oxygen debt, she gasped for breath, and it was good to notice how her breathing and pulse slowly regulated again.

She bent forward while resting her arms on her thighs. Her body recovered gradually. With a loud panting she lowered herself backwards against the backrest of the bench and looked around. Nobody was to be seen except her. It was too late when the bus was still running, taking tourists from A to B. So it was no wonder that no one was waiting for a ride.

So Michelle sat motionless on the bench for a while, looked up at the few stars the cloudy night sky revealed and heard only the wind and her increasingly calm breath. Just as she was about to get up, only to give in to her fate and drive back to the hotel, she heard something rustling in the bushes. Or had she just imagined the sound? She paused and listened for a moment in the direction of the supposed sound.

At first - nothing. Only absolute silence, even the wind was silent for a moment. But suddenly! There! There it was again. Something was moving in the darkness beside the road and beyond the cycle path, not far from it. What could it be? An animal? A mouse, surely, which thought itself safe under the cover of darkness, or a bird.

Unsure of herself, Michelle took a few hesitant steps towards the spot in question, just to make sure she was not imagining all this. Her nerves were bare today - but hopefully not so bare. As she approached the position, she suddenly heard a soft moaning sound. She stopped like rooted to the spot! Was that really a moan? She thought her imagination was playing a trick on her. This could no longer be an animal.

She pondered back and forth, finally pulled the mobile phone out of her trouser pocket and switched on the flashlight. In addition, she fished with her other hand for a broken branch that happened to be on the side of the road. After all, she was completely alone. Armed with so much brightness in one hand and the piece of branch in the other, Michelle felt reasonably safe and now she went step by step towards the source of the sounds.

While she carefully groped her way forward, she shone her cell phone light in all directions and held the branch up high for safety's sake. There! There it was again! A moaning, now to be heard very clearly. Michelle immediately held the light higher in the hope of finding something. Carefully she illuminated every corner next to the cycle path when suddenly something moved.

She flinched in panic. I thought she had too much confidence in herself. What if this was all a trap and that was supposed to rob innocen

t tourists of their belongings? But nobody rushed at her. So after a while she summoned all her courage and slowly worked her way forward.

While Michelle felt her heart beating up to her neck, she suddenly froze when she heard the lute for the third time. She shone the spot with her floodlight and was startled as her eyes began to see more and more of what lay before her in the bushes. In the undergrowth of the ditch she recognized more and more a coat that looked familiar to her, then a scarf that she had just seen. Suddenly she understood the full extent of the situation: the source of the sound was Adolé, who was covered in blood there, more powerless than alive, lying before her in the ditch, struggling to be found.

Michelle rushed at Adolé. Through the dense, thorny weave of bushes at the side of the road she could hardly make her way to the injured woman. Again and again she held an arm in front of her face to protect it from the thorns of the branches, got stuck here, stumbled over roots and stones there, which she could hardly see in the darkness.

When she finally reached Adolé, she began to shake her and talk to her. "Adolé, it's me. It's Michelle. Stay with me!". Michelle kept trying to speak to Adolé, but in vain. She seemed to be unconscious, which was no wonder if she had in fact - as it seemed - gone off the cycle path at full speed and then fallen into the depths of this ditch. The undergrowth had also left its mark on her face and clothing - Adolé's face was

covered with scratches, her coat torn several times.

"Don't worry. Now I've found you. It's gonna be okay. I'll call an ambulance. "Take it easy... With trembling fingers, Michelle dialed 911 while she continued to try to calm Adolé, who was lying half unconscious next to her, and talk to her. She had placed a protective hand on her shoulder.

"Oh my God, oh my God," Michelle kept repeating. She shook her head in bewilderment. "How could this have happened? If only I had spoken to you sooner." Michelle could hardly hold back the tears, did not let go of Adolé. Again and again she stroked her head and arm carefully, hoping that Adolé would feel it and that she would not cause her any more pain than her injuries already caused.

"Please forgive me. Please forgive me." Michelle's voice kept breaking off. "This is all my fault, oh my God. Why didn't I talk to you before? "I wanted to explain everything. "Oh, no. Oh, my God. I miss you so much. "she squeezed out with the greatest of difficulty, sobbing as she stroked Adolé's shoulder and head again and again.

It took endlessly long minutes before Michelle could see the blue light of an ambulance in the distance.

24.

Adolé felt a stabbing pain in her chest. She tried to open her eyes, but the eyelids were too heavy - as if magnetically attracted, they kept falling shut. She struggled against it, wanted to move, but simply didn't have the strength. She was sick - and so cold.

A restless sleep took possession of her.

A little later she woke up again halfway. She had lost all sense of time. When she finally managed to open her eyes for a short time, she at least realized that she was in a hospital. All around her were devices that monitored her vital signs and kept beeping softly to herself. At her side was a tube that ran in her arm. By her bed sat Roswitha, who had closed her eyes and was dozing. She held her hand. Something bad must have happened.

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But what exactly, she couldn't remember. Where was she last? And when? Yesterday? Last week? When she tried to move again, that stabbing pain ran through her again. She moaned and resigned herself to falling back into the pillows. At least Roswitha noticed that she was awake.

"Dear! Heaven! There you are again. Thank God you're back." She looked at Adolé with loving eyes, stroking and pressing her hand, which she held firmly in hers, as if to confirm. "What happened?" Adolé tried to ask, but only a cawing sound came from her dry throat. She was thirsty...

"Sure you want to know what happened? ", Roswitha interpreted her sounds correctly. "Darling, you had an accident on your bike the other night. Remember when you had dinner with the musicians at the restaurant three days ago? Adolé didn't remember, feverishly thinking. Roswitha went on for a while. "You wanted to ride your bike home at night in the dark. It was windy and cold, and you must have gone off the cycle path at that blind bend. You ended up in a ditch, and it was only by chance that you were found there in time. Anything else could have happened!!"

Adolé remembered again that Roswitha sometimes had a penchant for drama. At least that was something she could remember again, but not the situation Roswitha had just described to her and which had apparently led her here. Restaurant, bicycle, way home. All Bohemian villages for her. When she took a breath to ask what was wrong with her, Roswitha, with her index finger in front of her pursed lips, told her to save her strength and began to talk about herself.

"You wonder what your injuries are. Yes, of course. I would, too. So... you've had good luck in your misfortune, that first of all. Who knows what could have happened!

Adolé, at least, was doing so well again, even though she could hardly move and had not yet found her voice again, that she was able to react to Roswitha's drastically embellished report by rolling her eyes.

"Yeah, all right. " commented Roswitha knowingly her look. "So. You had quite a severe fall, it seems, upside down over the handlebars. That's why you have a concussion. Your left arm is broken, probably because you tried to cushion the fall. Your left ankle is sprained, and of course you have abrasions from the thorny bushes by the side of the road and bruises all over. So all in all, nothing that won't heal. But first you gave me quite a scare! "Roswitha was obviously seriously worried.

"You got a headache now. It's gonna take some time. A concussion like this is not to be trifled with. You should take all the time you need and get well soon. You're tied to the bed here anyway. Therefore I have already cancelled all appointments for the next three weeks and issued a press release. It was only a few dates on talk shows anyway. Nothing you can't catch up on at some point.

So don't worry, little one, you just get your strength back and get well. The next few days will cost you a lot of energy and nerves, but hopefully and especially thanks to the doctors and nurses here at the Insel Hospital things will start to improve again.

Adolé closed his eyes and took a deep breath. That was great news! If only she could remember any of it...

25.

Slowly but surely the fog of forgetfulness that had spread through Adolé's skull began to lift. The memory came back ever more clearly. After the last three days, which she had consciously experienced in the hospital, although she still needed a lot of sleep, she at least knew again how the evening in the restaurant had gone. And she remembered again that in the end she had told Michelle what she thought and then

she got on her bike in a rage and ran off.

Because she was so angry and disappointed, she had driven faster than usual. But she had dared to, because she knew the track well, it was dry and not very busy. How it had finally happened that she had underestimated the cycle path and ended up in a ditch remained a mystery to her.

Adolé had let herself be put a little more upright in bed, so she could at least look out of the window a little and distract herself. The weather was beautiful in autumn. That was a ray of hope in this gloomy time. She was still in pain, but at least she was able to drink some liquid on her own again. Unfortunately it was still too early for coffee, but she missed it. She was already looking forward to getting more exercise again and getting her first delicious café latte in the cafeteria downstairs. In the meantime, she was content to rack her brains over what had happened that night. She was still not one step further in how the accident could have happened.

It also remained unclear under what circumstances she had been admitted to hospital. How fortunate that someone, of all people, had to take the same route as her at this very night time and then looked so attentively and noticed her injured at the side of the road. She would probably still be lying there now, if her rescuer had not been so attentive. Unfortunately, Roswitha couldn't tell her anything about this hero, but she had to find out as

soon as she could who this someone was who had gone to all this trouble - if only to say thank you.

In between, she sometimes felt as if fragmentary moments, which somehow seemed familiar to her, were wafting far back in the swamp of memories of that evening, and then flickered briefly like spots of light, but then went out again too quickly for her to grab or hold them. As much as she tried hard, the exact course of this evening, after she got on her bike and set off home, remained impenetrable for her.

Still, the first thing she consciously remembered after the accident was waking up here in the hospital room, Roswitha holding her hand and explaining how it happened that she was lying here in the hospital. Everything in between was too blurred for her to draw any precise conclusions.

At least she got visitors from time to time so that she could talk a little. That felt good. But Roswitha took great care not to overexert herself. So she could use the time, switch off a little from everyday life and relax. From Roswitha she had learned to always see something positive in everything.

Meanwhile, her recovery progressed well, so it did not take long before she was allowed to leave the clinic with her left arm still wrapped in a protective plaster cast and a plaster plaster on her head. Although her foot was still a little sore, she was happy to be able to leave the hospital. At home she felt much better immediately, in her own house with the wonderful view of the lake and in her familiar surroundings.

Roswitha had been kind enough to drive them. After taking Adolé's small clinic suitcase up to the bedroom, she offered to help, but Adolé declined with thanks. She was looking forward to finally being alone again and finding the opportunity to think about everything in peace. The bonus was this unique view, which she had exclusively for herself from her terrace.

"You can't even move properly with one arm in a cast. Shouldn't I stay and help you?"

"You've done enough for me already. This whole stay here on the island wasn't planned. 'I've already messed up your appointments. Just give me a few days of peace and quiet before my life gets back to normal. Go, take care of your other protégés. I'll be fine.'" Adolé knew, as always, she had to be convincing, otherwise Roswitha would not let up.

But she just didn't feel like company, as a grown woman she needed her

independence and was looking forward to the next few days when she could finally be on her own again - without nurses, without doctors and without a manager. She would manage that.

So Roswitha finally gave up after another request and was content with her role as a worried agent from afar. In the afternoon she finally said goodbye and drove back to Hamburg, where she continued her business. Adolé was glad when the car disappeared behind the hill and the door behind her fell into the lock. Finally silence!

26.

She enjoyed the time all to herself. That was very special. Usually she was always surrounded by someone - mostly musicians, her band, her dancers, lyricists, composers, sometimes even bodyguards, audience, fans or anyone else who wanted something from her. When she wasn't in the studio, she was on a promotion tour for a new album, a new tour or any other project that needed to be made known. There were always directors, cameramen, journalists or just people around her, always she had to bow to their wishes and expectations.

The smallest form of freedom was Roswitha. She was already satisfied if it was only Roswitha who swarmed around her, she had known her for years and trusted her. She knew that she had only her best in mind, and yet she was happy when she too left her alone and she could simply be for herself. This was a happiness she hardly knew and which was hardly compatible with her normal everyday life, because there was always something up, something to be discussed, decided or planned.

This time of convalescence was all the more beautiful, even if her arm, which had been decontaminated in the meantime, showed signs of decontamination every now and then, which seemed to heal well, but occasionally capriciously allowed itself to produce pain.

But she was okay with it. If only that was all.

She had gotten up early that morning and was just about to make herself a coffee when she heard her mobile phone beeping again from a distance.

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When looking at the display of her mobile phone she suddenly stopped. Michelle! This time by text. What the hell was that all about? It was a surprise, since she had left her alone for the last few days. Disgruntled, Adolé dropped herself on the armchair and called up the message announced by the beeping.

"How are you? I need to talk to you. Can I see you?"

"Wow!" it went through Adolé's head sarcastically. "That's almost talkative for her." She raised an annoyed eyebrow and smiled bitterly into herself. She had a lot of nerve to come back to her after all this!

Without thinking about it any further, she typed a few words into her mobile phone and sent the message. "There's nothing to talk about." The rejection felt good. Finally clear conditions! She didn't let any pianist pressure her or play her out. If she had dedicated herself to the joint project from the beginning in the way one would expect an adult to do, many of the problems they now had would not have arisen at all.

In general, Adolé still did not feel quite well and thus not up to the consequences of this failed project. She didn't want to deal with it now either. It was just too early for problems and too late for Michelle. She had had her chance, but preferred to behave infantile and immature. Even though they had become closer, it didn't seem to have had any positive effect on her. Worse, she had only used Adolé and her feelings. A horrible feeling of emptiness and pain was spreading through Adolé.

She switched off the phone and resignedly placed it on her living room table. With her coffee and a book in one hand and two cuddly blankets in the other, she then sat down on her terrace, sighing and trying to distract herself.

It had all been a bit much lately. Too much. When she couldn't concentrate on the book as usual, she put it aside and finally let her tears fall after a long time. The tears should wash all sadness and disappointment out of her system. They should also take away every memory of Michelle and the beautiful, warm, familiar feeling that this woman had caused in addition to all the trouble in Adolé. As beautiful as this one night together had been, as much Michelle had hurt her when she had simply disappeared without a word afterwards.

And now that she wouldn't leave them alone...

What was she thinking?

27.

More days passed in a flash. The autumn wind played with the rustling grass around Adolé's house, and the cloud formations painted ever new patterns in the sky. After the setback on the terrace, after Michelle had called again, Adolé had himself under control again. Although her thoughts kept slipping to Michelle from time to time, Adolé blamed it on the fact that she still couldn't get her mind off it because she didn't have a plausible explanation for everything. She simply did not understand.

It was always easier for her to accept a decision - any decision - if she had a reasonable explanation for it, something she could understand. That wasn't the case here at all, which is why she caught herself thinking here and there and wanted to solve the mystery.

In the end, however, and she knew this, she would have to accept the facts and live with the fact that her affection for Michelle had not met with the response she wanted. Period! So there was no point in continuing to struggle with it. Adolé therefore decided to devote herself to more constructive things, such as her career, which promised both a healthy amount of distraction and a revival of her business,

which she now had to stay away from unintentionally for a long time.

So she would leave soon and concentrate again on the essentials as a musician and show star. Just when she had made this decision, there was a timid and barely audible knocking at her door. This was unusual, because guests first had to pass through the iron gate that blocked the entrance to her house long before it was even visible, to get to her. But the doorbell had not rung, she had not opened it for anyone. So it could only be someone she knew and who knew his way around the property, even if she was not expecting him. Maybe it was Roswitha who wanted to surprise her.

Quite surprised but relaxed she went to the front door to open it and fell out of the clouds when suddenly Michelle stood in front of her. Stunned, Adolé took a breath of air to let her surprise and anger run free, but Michelle tried to beat her to the punch.

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to attack you like this...", she started to explain and raised her hand in a calming manner, but Adolé did not accept these attempts at calming down. They bounced off her without effect.

She held firm. She didn't feel like visiting, much less talking. "What's the point? How dare you?! How dare you come onto my property like that. I didn't invite you here. And how did you get past my front gate down the street? The words of the prosecution were gushing out of her. Adolé, in all her manageable size, courageously stood up in front of Michelle, still holding the door with one hand, thus blocking Michelle's access to her house. Her face was serious, her eyes narrowed into slits, her body tense. She was determined t

o do everything, especially to defend her own private realm and protect it from uninvited intruders like Michelle. This was not to sully her with memories, so Adolé continued to stand broad-legged in the door frame of the front door, making herself invincible.

What a nerve! Finally, she could get rid of all her pent-up emotions in a targeted manner. "Please let me explain. ", Michelle rather sheepishly started to explain and made no attempt to leave the entrance area despite all the resistance she encountered. "No, Michelle! Are you hard of hearing?! What's the point of this? Just go," Adolé reigned over her, ignoring the pleading look Michelle gave her.

"That's the limit! What is she doing here anyway?!! “. Adolé's mind was filled with thoughts and her indignation formed a wave of anger that then swept over Michelle and her unannounced presence.

When Michelle wanted to put a hand on her arm, still stretched out towards the door frame, to appease her, Adolé felt too much pressure for a brief moment and overreacted reflexively. A short scuffle ensued. Adolé tried to fend off Michelle's touch with a somewhat too violent blow and then to escape the situation with a quick turn. Michelle, on the other hand, skilfully avoided the blow and checkmated Adolé by holding her arm, which she somehow managed to grab - fortunately the right one, which was not exactly broken - and turning it on its back. Michelle held the other arm comparatively loosely on her wrist, so that Adolé was completely incapacitated.

So for a few seconds both stood firmly embraced opposite each other in the entrance to Adolé's house. Their breasts touched, Michelle's arms were tightly wrapped around Adolé. But Adolé could hardly calm her down, despite or perhaps because of the restriction in her freedom of movement, and began to try to escape this embarrassing spectacle by screaming and squirming. This hurt, especially in her left, bruised arm, but the adrenaline that her rage had meanwhile produced made her hardly notice the pain. Amazingly, Michelle was able to withstand Adolé's angry twists and attempts to free her again and again.

That made Adolé even more upset. She let her angry emotions run wild. "Michelle! This has gone too far. Let go of me!"

"Not until you let me talk to you!" the Frenchwoman returned rigorously.

"There's nothing to talk about. It's all said. You had your chance. I told you everything that mattered the other night, that's all I have to add to it!"

"But I have something else to tell you which you didn't give me the opportunity to say that night."

"Excuse me, please," Adolé replied sarcastically, still in the forced grip of the Frenchwoman, "but I was not in the mood. I'm not interested anymore. Besides: I was busy!"

Again, Adolé struggled wildly to free himself from this predicament, but the somewhat smaller Michelle gave her all to hold Adolé as tightly as possible.

So they were constantly touching each other and confronting each other again and again, a situation that Adolé had longed for just a few weeks ago. Now she found this closeness irritating, especially since she noticed that something was happening inside her despite all her foaming anger.

It was a mystery to her where Michelle took this almost unexpected power from. She didn't consider herself so powerless, but she had no chance to get out of this situation.

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Michelle obviously wanted to use these moments of reason. "Amazing how well you're doing again, considering you were just lying on the side of the road half dead...", Michelle muttered and Adolé thought she couldn't believe her ears. "What are you saying?", she drove at Michelle in surprise, but she didn't engage in any discussion and didn't repeat what she said.

"What did you mean by that?!" Adolé followed up anyway. "Oh, nothing." Michelle replied briefly and concentrated on holding her opponent. Now she wasn't even taken seriously anymore. Adolé was furious!

"Damn it!!! Don't ignore me again! I asked you what you just said??!" she repeated her question and this time Michelle actually answered. She screamed back angrily: "I just said that I am amazed how well you are doing again and that I am surprised that you have the strength to practice wrestling with me here. After all, it was you who just a few weeks ago was covered in blood and lying half dead in a ditch! Now it was Michelle, who screamed her emotions and disappointment from her soul.

She closed her eyes and apparently let the moment of desperation pass before her mind's eye once again. Although Adolé was astonished at what she had just experienced, she found this moment of weakness, in which her opponent was apparently concentrating on something else than a good opportunity to escape her predicament, and began to resist anew. But Michelle came to her senses in time and once again held Adolé mercilessly.

"Just stop it already! Just listen to me for a second! I just want to talk!" Michelle's brief disorientation was over, her words were once again focused and appropriately directed at Adolé and her cause.

Adolé's resistance began to crumble. Michelle continued to hold her in her tight embrace, unimpressed. Even though both of them were still deeply angry, they were still facing each other and unintentionally touching each other on more body parts than they wanted to. Somehow each held on to the other.

So for seconds they stood close together, eye to eye, chest to chest, cheek to cheek, both dishevelled, excited and wheezing from the physical exertion. This closeness beguiled Adolé even more than she had just wished for. Although she had not yet completely abandoned her thoughts of escape, she took advantage of this opportunity of calm and intimacy and unnoticed Michelle's irresistible scent. She closed her eyes. Memories rose in her.

Her muscles relaxed slowly. She gave up. She laid her head on Michelle's shoulder and gave the final sign that she would not fight back anymore.

"Please forgive me, I didn't mean for any of this to happen. I didn't mean to hurt you." Michelle whispered the words, still pressed tightly against Adolé. Carefully Michelle released Adolé more and more from her clasp, which did not move a bit, her romantic feelings gained more and more of an upper hand through this unexpected intimacy. She liked this closeness more than she had hoped for.

For a while they stood like this, pressed close together, both undecided what to do. Michelle kept her head leaning against Adolé and still held her arms loosely together on her back. Adolé felt the opportunity to finally escape this situation and to throw Michelle off the property for good. But she could not go on. Her resistance had vanished into thin air. On the contrary, when Adolé noticed Michelle carefully pulling her arms back, she held her hands without a word and pushed her head closer to Michelle. Michelle's hair smelled so seductive. Her cheeks touched intensely and Adolé took the opportunity to cover Michelle's ear with a tender kiss.

Adolé heard the slight sigh, closed his eyes, released Michelle's hands and, without

explanation, went into an intimate embrace that Michelle immediately responded. They held each other tightly in their arms. Adolé felt their hearts beating violently.

After a short while she opened her eyes and slowly pulled her head back until both could look deeply into each other's eyes. Adolé whispered softly. "What are you doing? Who's going to understand all this?" Michelle wanted to say something, but Adolé, with a brief shake of her head and a loving look, told her that it was not necessary.

The intimate look was followed by an intimate kiss, at first cautiously approaching, then more and more demanding. Their lips touched, then their tongues met. Their hands slid over each other's bodies. Adolé felt Michelle's breasts even closer to hers in this close embrace and enjoyed this familiarity. Adolé escaped a breathless sigh of exhilaration, though she could not easily forget Michelle's strange behavior.

Her thoughts took the powerless approach of looking for an explanation for all this, but Adolé put aside any impulse for conscious thought and devoted himself entirely to the moment. Who could possibly understand this unpredictable woman? Completely unexpectedly she suddenly had the woman of her life in her arms after all. Although two seconds ago she was completely beside herself with indignation and rage, now all her resistance had evaporated, like a balloon

filled with helium hitting a cactus. She knew she wanted this, she wanted Michelle and at some point she wanted an explanation. But first of all she wanted Michelle, now, her body, her closeness and her passion.

She threw all her concerns overboard without further internal discussion. Without further explanation, she pushed Michelle into her hallway, kissing her, and with one foot behind her back she slammed the front door with a swinging motion, and with a breathless word she informed Michelle of her spontaneously decided plan: "Bedroom! "

28.

They lay intertwined on the bed. Little by little, one garment after another fell victim to their passion. They kissed intimately, rubbed each other, let their tongues and lips explore every part of the body. Adolé enjoyed the coolness of the goose bumps as well as the heat that the tender love bites Michelle gave her triggered in her. Adolé savored every touch, every caress, let herself fall and took everything Michelle was willing to give her.

The lovemaking continued, free from all constraints, breathlessly pampering each other with what they had never given to another person before - boundless trust, unreserved intimacy and unbridled devotion.

Adolé thought she was in paradise, with this woman whom she had wished into purgatory a few hours ago. Now the world suddenly looked so different, so simple, so straightforward and so friendly. Everything was bright and light. She felt intensely that Michelle would explain everything to her, even the new questions that came up during the night, because she noticed some bruises - bruises in places where you don't usually bump into each other.

And if she didn't have any answers ready, she was still ready to give Michelle everything she could in that second, that moment and that moment. Passion took over.

The most important thing was that Michelle would still be there the next morning. So Adolé restlessly fell asleep that night, despite the pleasant exhaustion and boundless confidence. She was unbelievably relieved when she found Michelle the next morning, snorkeling sweetly and fast asleep next to her in bed.

The sun was shining high in the sky. Another beautiful summer day promised to ennoble this first morning together.

She rose quietly, took a hot shower and went into the kitchen. Here she began to prepare a delicious breakfast together, a pleasure she had to do without on her last night together. She smiled to herself as she turned on the espresso machine while taking a fresh shower - yes, the last night had taken its toll. But it had been all the more fulfilling as everything she had experienced so far had been inspiring, stirring, exciting. And so it was now more important to serve an elaborate breakfast for both of them to regain their strength.

It didn't take long until Michelle, who was visibly satisfied, also came into the living room, showered and ready to go, and kissed Adolé, who was still busy preparing breakfast at the kitchen counter, tenderly on the shoulder from behind. "What a night, mon Amour. " she whispered, and Adolé, who skilfully turned around within the embrace and lovingly returned the kiss, returned with a smile: "Yes, what a night, Madame. "

They kissed with affection and trust. That night had changed everything. Although Adolé had no doubt that this unexpectedly found happiness was finally a permanent part of her life, she knew that there were open questions - questions she had been asking herself for a long time and which she wanted to have answered now that she could think clearly again.

She therefore gave in to her inner curiosity and formulated a first, cautious advance. "Michelle? May I ask you something?"

"Bien sur, chérie. "replied Michelle openly and looked at Adolé expectantly.

"Dear, I'm so happy about how things turned out between us now. I didn't see that coming. It couldn't be better right now. You make me really happy. "She paused and searched for words that wouldn't hurt Michelle. "But you are acting strangely, disappearing again and again, not talking. You can imagine that I have some questions burning on my mind after the start of our collaboration has been... let's

say... a little bumpy..."

Michelle's face darkened. She got serious and leaned back in her basket chair where she had dropped for breakfast. "I know. " she reported guiltily.

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Adolé, who assumed that Michelle would now speak and explain to her what moved her in the first weeks and months of her collaboration, waited attentively, but at first nothing happened. It was only when she was asked again that she began to tell slowly.

"You certainly don't understand my initial behavior. And it's no wonder. You can't understand something like that from an outsider. "

She lowered her head, and Adolé noticed how she struggled with the tears, but did not intervene because she wanted to give her room to unfold the explanation.

It took another tenacious minutes before Michelle took her hands out of her pockets and looked Adolé straight in the eyes. She finally began to explain in bumpy German. "Unfortunately, I married the wrong man when I was young. At first he was nice, charming, a good-looking guy. We hardly knew each other, but we were very much in love, but were sure to belong together forever." Her voice stopped.

"Matthieu was very attentive at first, funny, a positive person. We had a great time, traveled a lot, had friends with whom we did things." She swallowed and searched for words. "We were so happy. He was so happy when I got pregnant.

"But at some point he changed more and more. Nothing was right anymore. He was always in a bad mood. It was always the others' fault."

Michelle gasped for breath and then continued to talk in tears. "He beats the children and me again and again. "Behind me are countless stays in hospitals. "Again and again I wake up in these cold, tiled rooms. I am freezing. It's horrible." She shook her

head in disbelief as if she could not believe it all herself. "Ella keeps having to clean up after me to keep this from coming out." She swallowed. "You may have noticed some bruising here and there last night. It's a drama. He is now unpredictable. He used to be so different, but alcohol has changed him so much. He doesn't care about anything anymore, not about me, not about my hands, without which I'd have to end my career, and certainly not about the children." More and more tears ran down Michelle's cheeks.

Adolé slipped over to Michelle and knelt down in front of her, put one hand on her hands and pressed them comfortingly. She just wanted to calm her down, be there for her. Adolé felt Michelle's handshake return firmly with both hands.

Then Michelle went on, started telling everything, first slowly, then faster and faster and clearer - about her husband, whom she had met in the South of France at a young age, whom she had fallen head over heels in love with, this handsome, charming, sporty child, whom she had then hastily married. Soon after the wedding, he gradually showed his true face, started drinking and at some point began to cross all boundaries. At some point, violence took over, during sex and in daily being together. He began to treat her more brutally at every opportunity than the time before. And despite the unbelievable incidents, as unbelievable as it seemed, they always had good times, got closer again and had the two children together, Theo and Thula, who were 14 and 15 years old by now.

But the spiral of violence turned faster and faster, Matthieu's outbursts became worse and worse. With time, she left more and more obvious traces in her soul, but above all on her body. Again and again she even had to cancel appointments and performances because she simply couldn't play or because her face or arms showed clear injuries. But out of fear that he could press the children even more, she ultimately also accepted the physical humiliations again and again.

But at some point the break could not be repaired and Michelle tried with all means to

escape it. In exchange for a large sum of money, he finally agreed to a divorce.

When she had her first affair with a woman, it seemed for a short time as if a way out would open up. She regained her confidence and began tentatively to oppose him. But her happiness did not last long.

Matthieu found out about their liaison. That was the beginning of the end. He ruthlessly put Michelle under pressure and threatened the other woman who couldn't stand up to it. Fearing he could hurt her, she separated from Michelle and broke off contact. They met again only once after that, whereupon Matthieu had another fit of raving madness when she told him about it in a better phase, contrary to her feelings. Further threats against the other woman were the consequence, so Michelle broke off the contact to her and to a large extent to everyone else - except Ella - consequently to not endanger her.

She was trapped. Matthieu threatened to out her and to tell the public that she loves women. Michelle considered this to be unfavorable for her career. She wasn't sure how her audience would react. And he had love letters and photos to prove it.

Because of the press and their career, he always had the longer lever. He also used the two children unscrupulously as leverage and kept them from Michelle when she didn't follow his lead and did what he wanted - Michelle knew no way out, and in her distress not to endanger the children any further, she submitted until her will to resist was at some point completely broken.

As she had been constantly on the road professionally for years, he had continued to work on the impression after the divorce in France that she could

not be a good mother to the children, as she was never at home, but on the road in what he considered to be dubious surroundings and therefore not able to offer them a good home. She would not be able to give them what he, and probably public opinion

as well, believed them to need as minors under the protection of the law, for their optimal development. Again and again, when he saw fit, he threatened to spread rumours about their private lives and was successful in doing so over the years.

Michelle was far too afraid of an easily created exposure and slander campaign by her ex-husband, who threatened to destroy her career and deprive her of her children forever, so that she finally gave up powerlessly and did not fight back any further. Especially the destruction of her privacy, which she tried to defend again and again against all opposition, and her unprecedented career, which he could destroy with a short statement about her lesbian tendencies, made her subordinate everything else. Thus he had been able to obtain sole custody easily and in a coup de main in court.

Michelle was breathing heavily. Tears were streaming down her face. More and more often her already fragile voice failed, trembling ran through her body. Now and then she would desperately slap one or both hands in front of her mouth, shake her head and sob heartbreakingly.

Michelle visibly tried to keep her composure at least halfway through until she had told Adolé everything. Meanwhile, more and more pieces of the puzzle came together to form a unified picture in Adolé. She had received the conclusive explanation she had asked for.

She moved even closer to Michelle and tried to give her support and comfort. Again and again Michelle tried to justify in forceful words her fear of the revelations in the press and the loss of her children and probably her career as well, more in front of herself than in front of Adolé. In a desperate pause, when Michelle could no longer speak, even Adolé could not stop herself. She turned Michelle towards her, took her battered, weepy face in both hands and looked at her firmly.

"Michelle, I'm so sorry about all this. If I had known sooner... we would have found a way. We would have found a way. But anyway, I'm here for you now. "It took time

for her to find the right words for her own situation. "Yes, I was deeply hurt," Adolé began and Michelle tried to sob away from her and turn her face to the side. "No, listen!"

Adolé did not allow Michelle to avoid the situation. "I had no idea. I just didn't understand what you were doing. Why, what was going on inside you. It was so inexplicable, so crazy for me all the time. I didn't do anything to you. None of us did. But you were acting so inexplicably." She took Michelle in her arms again. "I'm so sorry that I didn't see all this or at least suspected that I didn't realize why you were acting so strangely and what trouble you were in. This is so horrible. Outsiders can't even imagine what you are going through. "She paused once more and then made a final push. "Why didn't you talk to me?! I would have been there for you. Why didn't you send me a message earlier? I would have helped you!

Adolé desperately sought words that could describe what she felt and what she wanted to say to Michelle. She knew that no vows and no promises would make the situation better, that nothing she would say could take Michelle's fear of her husband and of what would happen to the children, what would happen to them and, worse, what her husband would tell them, alienating her and the children more and more.

Michelle was, however, visibly grateful for Adolé's words and at the same time waved goodbye. "I didn't want to endanger you too. Matthieu is so unpredictable, so ruthless. I still don't know if he even suspects anything about you, but I couldn't risk him feeling that there is something there that means something to me and that he can use for his own purposes, as leverage against me. When he realizes that someone is important to me, he acts ruthlessly and fights that person with all means. I do not think he suspects that I have fallen in love with a woman, let alone with you, someone who is known throughout Europe, if not the world. Oh God, he'd love that! If he knew that..."

Michelle let herself fall back into the cushions with resignation. "This is your best

protection, that hopefully he is completely clueless. Otherwise the risk is too great. That's why I didn't get in touch, didn't talk to you, didn't write, because I didn't know if he was checking my mobile phone, reading my messages or my emails, but sometimes I just had to see you. I could not stand it without you. “

Again and again she held her hands in front of her face in disbelief. "I didn't want him to be able to make a connection between us. I didn't want to risk anything. Not even because of the press. That's his greatest leverage. My career will probably end when the public finds out I love women. Oh, God! And the children. "Michelle closed her eyes and shook her head. Apparently, the very idea that everyone would know what her life was really like "The press will tear us apart if they even suspect what is happening between us. "Adolé looked stunned at Michelle's wounded face. Tears shot into her eyes.

"This is so incredible. What a constellation. How could he do this to you? He loved you once and he only wanted what was best for you. What a pig! She shook her head stunned and then rather casually followed up with another little sentence asking: "And you fell in love with me? Did she? ", she said quietly while she watched Michelle's reaction closely.

"Yes. Of course." whispered Michelle and leaned her head against Adolé's. "What did you think? It almost tore my heart apart when I had to leave without a word and leave you in the dark for weeks afterwards. "I didn't want to put you in that kind of danger. My life is complicated enough, and unpredictable and dangerous. For you, the children, for everyone who belongs to me.

But for Adolé, there was no turning back now. She embraced Michelle with one arm and kissed her tenderly and unrestrainedly at the same time. She could feel Michelle returning her embrace and kiss. Her tongues met gently at first, then longer and longer and more intense. Breathless seconds later her lips loosened.

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Michelle continued to enlighten. "When we spent this wonderful night in Hamburg, I found a message on my mobile phone the next morning saying that he would bring the children to the USA if I wasn't in Paris by noon. I had no choice but to immediately pack up a few things and get on the next plane to France.

I just didn't know how to explain it to you. Our night was so magical, so gigantically beautiful. I've never experienced anything like it. I didn't really

want to ruin

it.

Of course I know that I have questioned everything with my disappearance and the subsequent silence. I would have understood if you never wanted to see me again, but I wanted to protect you at all costs. I was afraid, first and foremost for Theo and Thula, of course, they can do nothing for all this. But I was also afraid for you. He stops at nothing. I'm so glad you're here and we can finally talk.

Matthieu is a great danger for the children. I'd do anything to free them from his clutches. But he has the upper hand. “

Adolé shook his head repeatedly in bewilderment. If only she had known all this, she would have been a help to Michelle.

"I am so glad that nothing more serious happened to you in that accident on Sylt. When I found you in a ditch in the middle of the night - I really thought you were dead for a few seconds..."

"What?! ", it took Adolé incredulous, "You found me?!?!". Adolé looked up and looked at Michelle as if she hadn't heard right. "Yes. Of course." replied Michelle. "Didn't you know that?"

"No," Adolé returned in disgust. "Of course not. Otherwise I'd have said something about it long ago! And I thanked you and everything. “

Unbelievable! Why didn't Roswitha tell her before? Although she continued to follow the conversation with Michelle that she had been waiting for so long, it was working feverishly in Adolé's head. "What a coincidence! " it flashed through her mind. "On the other hand, can it really just be a coincidence? Isn't it already destiny?"

Surprised, Adolé collected the facts. "So you're riding a bicycle in the middle of the night across an island you hardly know and you're looking for a woman who just now screamed at yo

u in no uncertain terms and accused you of only being after her because she was a suitable victim for your trophy collection. And although you don't know anything about Sylt, you unerringly find your way to me and manage to save me after I inexplicably fell so badly - which nobody could have expected. Right? After all I know my way around the island very well - at least I thought so. And I can ride a bike, too. “

Michelle, who had listened attentively, slowly found her composure again and nodded mischievously. Yes, these facts were probably true. "Yes, I suppose they were. It was really terrible to see you lying there so hurt and not being able to help you. It was terrible when I did not know what was wrong and had to wait so long for the ambulance. And afterwards I wasn't allowed to come to you - we are not related. But I am glad that I could give you something back from what you gave me. At least I could make up for some of the trouble I caused you during the days in the studio and afterwards. “

They had talked for a while. Michelle had explained everything to Adolé. Adolé's head was spinning, she was both infinitely happy and incredibly shocked. Now she finally had the desired explanation for everything, for Michelle's strange behavior, an explanation she had not expected at all. What's more, now she even officially knew that Michelle, against all expectations, returned her feelings, that she had not just imagined their attraction to each other. This magical night they had spent together in Hamburg had also meant something. And even more - she had even found her way to her in an absolute crisis situation, against all odds and then not hesitating to help her for a moment.

But the situation was also difficult at the same time. On the one hand, they were determined to give their love a chance. They were sure they wanted to stay together and would therefore have to think about how they could do that in the future. After all, they were both coveted items in the Yellow Press - a scandal of such kindness would suit them just fine and would increase the circulation immeasurably.

On the other hand, if they didn't want to stay in touch using only mobile phones and skypecalls, sooner or later they would have to find a way to synchronize their respective appointments, performances and other commitments. At the very least, if they didn't have engagements in the same city, they shouldn't be too far away from each other, so that they could visit each other at least briefly in between. Her managers would have to let her in on it.

At first it also seemed most important to them that no one else, and certainly not Matthieu, could somehow find out about their connection in order to blackmail them with the threat of passing everything on to the press and thus the public. Adolé, however, was quite sure that no French court would award him the children if they could show how violent he was. Also, the fact that Michelle was homosexual and with a woman would not be a reason to deprive her of custody from a judicial point

of view. In fact, there was no reason to make such a secret of their relationship.

And the more they thought about it, the more a crazy thought settled in their heads - an innovative, courageous solution, so that in the end they would not be at the mercy of Matthieu and his whims forever.

Although Adolé was actually also interested in keeping her private life private and thus keeping her career as undisturbed and promising as before, she finally agreed to this plan. Despite her principle of not letting unknown factors influence her career, they agreed in the end to present their daring plan to their female managers.

As crazy as their plan was, if it worked, it would be a rescue. And it felt good - and right.

In the end, it was Michelle who suggested that they should both go out for a meal with their managers as soon as possible in order to have this decisive conversation, and so it wasn't long before Roswitha and Ella also arrived on Sylt - for a "completely normal" meal with their respective protégées alone. At least that is what they thought. They had no idea how wrong they were.

30.

It had worked out surprisingly easily to agree on a common date with Roswitha and Ella. In the middle of Westerland, both had reserved a table in a quiet restaurant, whose speciality was fish dishes. "How obvious. ", thought Adolé about the offer when she and Michelle fleetingly studied the menu after they had sat down. To be on the safe side, they had arrived at the restaurant very early - they didn't want to risk arriving after the two managers.

A short moment later Ella entered the restaurant and looked around inquiringly. Shortly afterwards, the waiter courteously brought her to the table, skilfully removed

her coat and then retreated as discreetly as he had come. Ella looked at Adolé in amazement, but first greeted Michelle warmly. They had not seen each other for a long time.

A few more minutes passed until Roswitha also joined the round. She took off her coat, laid it on one of the chairs that were standing at the next table and greeted Adolé first. She immediately noticed from the embrace how many question marks were buzzing around Roswitha's head. At first Adolé did not react to her murmuring "What is going on here?!!".

Michelle first ordered an aperitif for everyone and then made sure everyone had a card to delve into. Adolé was relieved to see that, as far as could be seen, everyone was busy choosing their table drinks and food.

She felt Michelle's closeness and insecurity at the same time, sitting right next to her, thigh to thigh. Under the table and out of sight of the managers they had placed their feet so that each could feel the other. This gave them the necessary security for what lay ahead.

When the waiter had taken her order, the conversation slowly picked up speed.

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Roswitha lost no time at all with a scrutinizing look at the lap. She began the interrogation without hesitation to get to the bottom of the purpose of this unusual meeting. "I see that you were able to pull yourselves together after all, and to bring our joint project to a reasonably decent conclusion. " Roswitha said provocatively. Adolé knew immediately what this meant. She knew her long-time manager too well and knew that she wasn't the type of person to beat about the bush. She was very direct and came straight to the point.

So Adolé took a deep breath and also began to tell without beating about the bush why they had to meet so mysteriously and in this unusual circle.

"Yes, you're right, of course. Michelle and I had a difficult beginning. But - and I hate to admit it. " she added with a wink, "You were right. This weird and surprising collaboration between two artists, who have each achieved almost everything in their respective fields, was really a good idea, I must say now - an idea that took us both further and challenged us in a very unusual way. But of course we only realized this after we had overcome our personal differences and realized how well we actually harmonize and how well we actually understand each other. " With a side glance at Michelle she added: "Yes, this is really working amazingly well. “.

She left the last remark in the room for now. Roswitha seemed to be extremely happy - that she was right, that the project had gone well in the end and also that the two different ladies had finally found each other artistically. Of course she also liked the fact that she now received recognition from all sides.

So she let herself fall relaxed into her armchair and replied contentedly: "Well, I'm glad to hear that. I thought we had to stop everything. The horror stories from the

studio that reached me in the meantime were really not what I had expected. Good - of course I didn't think that you would see each other and that everything would go like clockwork. Initial difficulties are a normal thing. You just have to get used to the other one and his way of working. ". She exhaled heavily to give her last sentence the meaning she thought it deserved. "But what I have been told and what I have experienced - my goodness! That was pretty tough stuff!"

Adolé nodded understandingly. "Yes, you're right, of course. We've taken far too long to come to a common denominator. But in the end it really worked out great. And the results speak for themselves." While Roswitha agreed to her nodding, she grabbed Michelle's hand under the table, pressed it lightly and stroked her palm with her thumb. She knew that Michelle, who, if possible, kept her sunglasses lowered and tried to stay completely out of this unpleasant conversation, was dying a thousand deaths inside. But they both also knew that this conversation and the solution they had in mind was their only way out of the uncertainty and dependence on Michelle's husband. So they had to go through... There was no alternative.

Now, after the start had been made and the waiter was serving the starters, Adolé decided to take it easy for a while. "It's no help to anyone if we can't enjoy our meal," she tried to calm herself, knowing that Michelle, for her part, would certainly not be able to get down a bite before the delicate subject was brought to its climax and her daring plan was approved by the managers. Nevertheless, they managed to get the meal through in a reasonable way, in the context of their nervousness. There was even a casual table talk - it was good that Roswitha and Ella had known each other for so long and rarely had the opportunity to exchange ideas. At last things were different here and so this part of the meeting went almost by itself.

Adolé was happy about this break, which she hadn't expected, and concentrated on her food, even if she couldn't enjoy it as usual. Again and again Michelle and Adolé exchanged anxious looks. So much Adolé would have liked Michelle to tell her not to worry - she knew Roswitha, and so she was quite sure that she would follow her

rational reasoning, even if it meant taking a certain risk. And even if Ella were to disagree, Roswitha would already tell her to join them and form a cohesive unit on the outside.

Thus Adolé later confidently embraced her beloved cappuccino, which warmed her ice-cold ha

nds, when she finally reached the essential point decisively after the meal.

"Roswitha, Ella. I would like to tell you once again how much we thank you for agreeing to this meeting at such short notice and coming here to Sylt. I know how full your diaries are, and the island is a bit far off the beaten track. The coordination was certainly not easy for you. And that you have taken the trouble to come here to us. That's really generous of you and easier than if we had to meet you somewhere else. So, for that we both thank you very much again."

The two managers nodded appreciatively. "You're welcome." But even Ella wanted to know what it was all about.

"What's so important that you feel all this effort is justified?"

"Fine," Adolé thought and swallowed dryly. "I guess there's no turning back now." One last look at Michelle, who nervously bit around her lip and then came straight to the point.

"I know you both meant well that you pushed us into this totally insane collaboration. "Adolé chose her words carefully. "Roswitha, as you know, at first I was anything but enthusiastic about the idea. But as I just said, in the long run, you were right. Right that we are capable of extraordinary things with the help of our musicians and that both of our music has been lifted to a completely different level than what we have known up to now. So far we are both not inexperienced and not unsuccessful, but I

think this new CD will top that by far. A lot! It was a hard piece of work, but it was worth it! “

Adolé saw how both managers listened to her spellbound and were happy about this beautiful praise. This was not the order of the day for her either. Fortunately, the restaurant was filled to just the right level - so full that the general noise level swallowed Adolé's speech and they were altogether just one table among many, but empty enough that despite the general noise, a reasonable conversation was possible and she did not have to raise her voice to speak up and reach everyone.

After the introductory words, Adolé knew that she had to get to the point. For her own safety and to reassure Michelle, who had hardly said a word until now, Adolé finally put her hand on her thigh and continued.

"As you know, working with Michelle did not inspire me much at first and really took me to my limits. For inexplicable reasons, Michelle deliberately avoided working with me and also with the whole team. I didn't understand all that - on the contrary, it made me furious and was poison for our project.

Adolé took a short break, looked at her cappuccino and took a sip.

"But then something unusual happened, something that I still can't quite explain. "One last pause, then it was time. "Michelle and I accidentally ran into each other in the studio from time to time. ... at odd times, but still. Sometimes late at night when the crew was off, sometimes at night. At first, we both tried to avoid each other for safety's sake. After we had a couple of real arguments, it seemed to be more advisable. Nevertheless there were always occasions when we had a short talk. And that was nice." Adolé felt the astonished look of the female managers resting on her. Obviously they both did not yet know exactly where the conversation would lead them.

She lowered her eyes and continued to talk calmly. "Incredibly, right from the beginning and despite all the trouble, I felt a certain connection with Michelle. This confused me to the maximum, and you, Roswitha, know how much I try as far as possible to stand up to these beginnings and to avoid these situations in order not to give the press or anyone else a target. "

Adolé saw how Ella still didn't know what she was getting at, but Roswitha was already taking a breath to drive her into the parade.

Adolé raised a defensive hand and as a precautionary measure cut her off. "No, Roswitha, please. I'm not finished yet. I know what you're thinking, but this time things are different. Please let me finish."

Roswitha paused, frowned and turned to Ella, who looked at her questioningly. Ella took out an inquiring "But, I don't understand...", and Roswitha rolled her eyes while she again resignedly dropped back into her chair and shook her head.

Although her heart was beating up to her neck, Adolé did not let herself be disturbed. She turned directly to Michelle's manager.

"Ella, I can understand that you don't understand anything But that's about to change - let me enlighten you: I am a lesbian. Always have been, at least as long as I can remember. Occasionally I have had affairs with other women, but as you can imagine, it has always been quite difficult. Most of the time the affairs were very short and only led to a lot of work for Roswitha and moreover only to trouble and high compensation for me. It became clear to me quite quickly that we had to give the public something that distracts from the facts - a nice story that my audience would like and so we came up with another solution. "

Ella, who hadn't expected it at all, made big eyes and looked at Adolé and then Roswitha again and again.

"Julius Gruber is just my fake boyfriend. He sometimes thinks that we are actually together, but in reality I like women - 100%! Julius just helps me to make sure that no rumours come up and that the press has something to photograph and write about every now and then, something that is relatively harmless. For this purpose he regularly accompanies me to shows and award ceremonies and whatever else is going on. Then everybody is satisfied - for the public I correspond to the general ideal, and I have my peace. And Julius gets a certain amount of money for his services, which of course only apply to the time when we are in public. At home we have clear rules, but for practical purposes he is mostly travelling himself anyway."

Ella, still stunned, clasped both hands in front of her mouth, more out of surprise than out of a desire to evaluate this alibi relationship.

"Normally I get along quite well with this arrangement - it allows me to live a life without too many questions being asked and without receiving more attention than I already have. And it was good while I was single. There were no complications and it has served me well. But now it's different - and now it's time to make a change."

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That was the moment when Roswitha turned as white as a sheet. She straightened up again, clasped her chair backs with both hands and pressed a "Single WARST???! What?!!! What have you done? And what in God's name are you doing??!!!". "You're not going to change your relationship with Julius, are you?"

Adolé was really going for it. "Yes, Roswitha, that's what I want. I have to. Because everything has changed. I have no relationship to Julius! You know that better than anyone!!" With one look at Michelle, she dropped the bomb. "Michelle and I have fallen in love. We are together and very happy. But Michelle is beaten and blackmailed by her violent husband. He uses the press against her and keeps the children from her. This all only ends when there is nothing left to blackmail and Michelle gets custody of the two children. That's why we want to go public. We want to come out and stand by our love. That's our plan. Only then will you and I be free of the possibility that some copycat is trying to take advantage of us and blackmail us.

That's it. It was finally out! The passionate speech had cost Adolé strength. She felt the tears in the corners of her eyes and how a whole rock fell from her soul at the same time. At last she could breathe a sigh of relief again. Lovingly she looked at Michelle and once more gently squeezed her hand on her thigh to relieve her of the burden that now weighed on her. After all, Ella was completely unaware until just now that her protégé was about to take an uncomfortable path and make her secret weakness for women public. Although she knew about the quarrels with Matthieu, she had been divorced and mother of two children. Now, no doubt, a conversation in private was due. But was the most important thing said.

Slowly Ella regained her composure and addressed Michelle in French. "No, Ella, let's do it in German," Michelle finally spoke up.

"Good," Ella replied. "What's the matter with you. Is what Adolé just said true?" Adolé felt the excitement in Michelle. But she could not help her in this point - she had to go through it alone.

"Yes. Everything Adolé said is true. I didn't want to offer Matthieu any kind of target and no reason

to use the children against me again or to make him angry. "Michelle was shaking all over. "You know how it usually ends. I tried everything to sabotage the cooperation with Adolé and to escape the situation, because I actually knew quite early on that I was about to fall in love with Adolé. But I didn't want to give Matthieu any reason to beat him up or make myself susceptible to blackmail. You know him. But at some point I couldn't do it anymore. I just couldn't resist. And then it all came to another."

For Michelle, who was experiencing such a coming-out situation for the first time, the confusion and excitement was too much - she put her face into her hands and burst into tears. Worried, Adolé laid her arm around her and tried to comfort her. Michelle sobbed softly inside herself, and Adolé began to worry if her plan was premature. On the other hand, the alternative was Matthew's unscrupulousness, with which he would surely sooner or later, if he got wind of them, proceed and then knew no mercy in dealing with custody and visiting rights for the children. Basically their plan had no alternative.

Roswitha took the chance and interfered in the conversation. "It's absolutely out of the question for you to come out in public! Are you crazy?!" Roswitha was seriously upset. "You can see that the pressure is already too much for Michelle. And we're only here in a small circle. What's it going to be like when everyone knows about it and picks on her?!?" she argued angrily and only then started to really get into it.

"You know that not everyone will accept the fact that you suddenly want to live your life in a completely different way than you did before and that it is generally

considered right?!!!!? The hater in the social media will not take your feelings into consideration. And sooner or later this will have an impact on sales figures. After all you want to present your CD very soon.

She looked at Adolé piercingly. "I don't have to tell you how all this will affect your career. There is no one in German show business who has even remotely your calibre, who has come out of the closet so far. Not to mention that he or she would be successful afterwards. " Roswitha was actually angry and reacted more violently than Adolé had ever expected. "You're risking everything we've built up over the years. And as long as I'm responsible for you and your business, you won't jeopardize it!" Roswitha underlined the seriousness of her statement by repeatedly tapping the table with her index finger.

Adolé was surprised by the sharpness of the statement. She swallowed, but didn't let herself be bullied. "Yes, I know not everyone will like that. "But I don't care, I can handle it. I can do without those trolls, let them deal with it. They will not prevail and sooner or later lose interest. "To stand up to Roswitha took a lot of strength. "But only when everyone finally knows the truth, I will finally stop pretending and live someone else's life. It's worth it. That means freedom for me and honesty, not to speak of Michelle and her worries. “

Lovingly she looked at Michelle, who had slowly calmed down again. Facing Roswitha, she continued. "I don't necessarily like other people's concepts of life either. But I don't have to. I just have to deal with my lifestyle and be fully behind it. And I think I like my future lifestyle. It is true and honest and right and I can't change it. And I don't want to! " She made an elaborate pause and expected Roswitha to contradict her again. But nothing happened.

Into the general silence, Adolé was already determined after: "I have finally met the right woman with whom I want to share my life. And as sorry as I am and as grateful as I am to you for everything you have done for me so far: "You will not stop me

from showing everyone who I really am and what makes me who I really am."

"Yes, Adolé, I will. You are contractually obligated to clarify and discuss such important strategic decisions with me and to obtain my consent in advance. But I can't give you that. And so it remains. And that's that.

With these words Roswitha stood up, grabbed her coat and left the restaurant without a word.

31.

She woke up alone in her hotel room in Hamburg and felt deeply miserable. While she tossed and turned restlessly back and forth half the night, she had to fight her way through a restless sleep the other half. Once again. The rest that sleep had given her in earlier days had become less and less to her in recent weeks. The unpleasant taste of last night's red wine spread on her tongue - a taste that had become all too familiar to her recently.

She turned to get up, but broke off again exhausted and let herself fall powerlessly back into the white fabric of the hotel bed-set. A narrow gap of bright sunlight broke through the drawn curtains, so that she had to squint her eyes. She breathed out with resignation and stayed crouched for a few minutes before finally dragging herself into the shower, completely exhausted.

Because of the lukewarm water that was splashing on her stressed body, she felt at least some spirits awakening again and that was good. She would need her strength. Today would be a long and exhausting day, like the awarding of the German music prize "Echo" every year. But this year's event would be very different for her from all the others - for one thing, she would go to this event alone for the first time. This time there would be no Julius at whose side she could present herself confidently to the fans and the press on the red carpet.

Although Roswitha, for strategic and contractual reasons, had rigorously refused to make Adolé's relationship with Michelle public and Adolé had finally reluctantly submitted to this, she had at least cleared the air and confided in Julius, with whom she was on friendly terms. At the same time, she had cancelled the agreement between them and asked him not to comment on her and their relationship until they had informed the press of their friendly decision to go their separate ways in the future, and Julius had thankfully kept to this decision.

On the other hand, Adolé would meet Roswitha today for the first time since their argument on Sylt. After the conversation in the restaurant in Westerland had ended so abruptly, they had only had purely business contact. Although Adolé often wanted to call Roswitha and talk to her, she had decided against it. She knew from experience - once again - that it was no use. Roswitha knew her contractual obligations and rights. And once she had made her decision, it was naive to assume that she could change anything by arguing on the phone. After all this time, she knew Roswitha all too well for that, and Roswitha was too much of a businesswoman for that, to throw overboard all the efforts she had made to build Adolé into a superstar.

Although she was also humanly disappointed in Roswitha because of this fact, she was angry with herself in addition to everything else in her heart, as she had ever assumed and expected that Roswitha could put her - Adolé's - personal needs above her business interests.

But what brought the barrel of her personal defeats to a head was a telephone conversation that took place a few days after the argument with Roswitha. She had called Michelle and explained to her that they had to put their relationship on hold for the time being - quasi for their own protection - again because of Matthieu and the fear that he might take the children away from Michelle. Of course Michelle had not understood this strategy. She had contradicted the whole plan and talked Adolé into believing that there must be another way. But Adolé had not been impressed and preferred to play it safe. Now that her plan to make everything public and Matthieu's

secret knowledge worthless had failed, she did not want to be a risk for Michelle. She had already endured enough. So she had continued her plan to keep Michelle away out of love and since then she had ignored her calls, SMS and all messages by any other means, even though it almost broke her heart. But it had to be done. Otherwise she would blame herself one day, and Adolé was determined to prevent this.

And as if all this wasn't enough to make her lose her mind in desperation, this damned Echo event unfortunately took place in Hamburg, the city where she had spent so much time with Michelle during her recordings and where she had first met her. This awakened many common memories - beautiful memories, which now more than hurt her.

Again and again this senselessness almost made her despair - why had she finally found her soul mate after all this time, only to lose her again directly after such a short time? Fate obviously took pleasure in such twisted turns, leaving her at a loss. No matter how hard Adolé tried, she could think of no other way. It was simply too risky to continue her relationship with Michelle as if nothing had happened. Even if their meetings were secret, she would only expose them to the risk of incurring the wrath of her ex-husband. It just wouldn't work.

But even if they had only agreed to "put their relationship on hold" until then - it was only a matter of time for Adolé before they had to end it completely. What other way out would there be? It was just pointless...

But all this had taken a lot out of her, more than she wanted to admit to herself. The many sleepless nights since then had left their mark, not to mention the countless red-wine pregnant evenings with which she had had to comfort herself to sleep. But in the end she had to realize that there was no consolation - it was all very difficult to digest. It cost her infinite strength not to react to Michelle's many attempts

to make contact. But all the nagging didn't help, she had to get through it.

At least the new CD was released successfully and stayed in the Top 10 album charts for about three weeks without any promotion. This was already a tremendous success for the collaboration between a pop hit singer and a classical pianist.

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Today promised at least some variety and distraction, because - unlike her last days - it would pass quickly due to the many activities. At noon she had a hairdresser's appointment, in the afternoon she had to try on her festive dress appropriate for the occasion and around 6 pm she had to start moving towards the event arena.

But as much as she was looking forward to the reunion with numerous esteemed colleagues and enthusiastic fans, the reunion with Roswitha was also in her stomach. She knew from the promoter that Roswitha would sit next to her during the show, relatively far in front and in the middle, as she always did, because normally she was one of the main nominees and therefore one of the main characters of the show. This time, unlike in previous years, there would be no performance by her, but thanks to the CD release, she would still be the center of attention.

That was a lot of time she would have to spend and bridge next to Roswitha during a show of about two and a half hours. The thought of it made her shudder. It wasn't Roswitha for whom she had respect, but for the unfamiliar situation - because she didn't know how Roswitha would even approach her and how they would get along, if she would talk to her at all. And all this always under the watchful eyes of the press and the television, which broadcast the show live.

32.

Adolé had left the red carpet behind him in his usual professional and friendly manner. The fans had met her as always friendly. Here and there a short greeting, now and then an autograph, a few selfies and then some press photos and she was already inside the event hall. On the way to her seat she first visited the toilet to check her appearance one last time and then went to the bar just to be prepared for the next

hours. The toilet visit had been a bit difficult in her overflowing evening gown, but in the end it could be managed in a fairly mannerly way.

At the bar she had a drink of water and then headed for her seat in the second row of the hall, which holds around 16,000 people. When she reached her seat, she sat down and looked around shyly. The hall was already well filled, which was no wonder, as the show started in just over three quarters of an hour.

Until the beginning of the event, she talked to some colleagues sitting in the rows in front and behind her and then enjoyed the opening of the festivities, which were moderated by various musicians. Contrary to her expectations, she certainly felt well entertained at times.

Only after about half an hour Roswitha finally made her way through the filled second row, greeted her with a nod and took a seat next to her. Without saying another word, they then watched the next award ceremonies and acts together.

When the first opportunity arose, Roswitha turned to Adolé to ask how she was doing. In reply, Adolé merely formulated a brief "according to circumstances, just fine" and was herself astonished at her serene coolness. It was not difficult to notice, but the last few weeks had left a rift between them, a distance they had never known before. Although Adolé was uncomfortable with the realization, she suddenly noticed how strange Roswitha had suddenly become to her.

To distract himself, Adolé continued to concentrate on the show and tried not to think any further about the break that had obviously developed between her manager and her and what consequences it would have to entail sooner or later.

Fortunately the show picked up speed. The appearance of the next artist was already announced. Hastily a grand piano was pushed onto the stage, which was immediately illuminated by a single spot. The whole rest of the stage was dark, the whole hall was

silent in anxious expectation of what was going to be performed next.

Adolé's heart almost burst when the presenter formulated his presentation from offstage.

"Ladies and gentlemen, we are proud and happy to be able to welcome one of the world's most famous solo artists at the piano today. She is a star of classical music and has now finally turned her attention to light music. Together with Adolé Varell, she has created an unexpected but very artistic and entertaining album, which has reached number 3 in the album charts this week. Please join me in welcoming the French world star on the piano - Michelle Mimieux!!".

The audience gave benevolent applause, but was more reserved than usual. Adolé's heart was almost bursting with excitement. She hadn't counted on this at all. Until now, the Echo Awards had merely been a pleasant distraction from her recently dismal everyday life. That the event now took this surprising turn almost took her breath away. Aware of her public impact, Adolé applauded somewhat more enthusiastically than before - no one who didn't know the details would ever notice that she was torn by her emotions and didn't know about this performance in the slightest.

When the applause had died down, Michelle set to one of the classic piano pieces that were on their joint album. She presented it in a new, pepped up and very rhythmic new style. Adolé again saw, just like in the studio, what a gifted musician Michelle was. It was easy for her to find the right keys and take the whole hall on a musical journey. It was beautiful. Adolé secretly had to congratulate Roswitha once again on her unusual idea - even though she still didn't like to admit it, she had been right in her decision to take a risk and to go completely new ways with this collaboration. It was an offer of peace when Adolé put her hand on Roswitha's arm and said loudly in her ear: "You were right - she is really great!

Roswitha took note of the late confirmation benignly and thanked with a nod. In reply, she leaned in Adolé's direction and replied, "Thank you. I'm glad how everything worked out in the end."

Adolé was pleased to see that the pressure between the three of them had eased noticeably and that a certain basis for communication was emerging. While she was still thinking about it with relief, the play ended and the audience gave an enthusiastic applause. Adolé also applauded politely.

Thinking that the show would now safely continue with the next eulogy, Michelle unexpectedly took the microphone in her hand, rose elegantly from her seat behind the piano in her gorgeous evening gown and addressed the audience directly with her smoky voice and delightful French accent.

"Mes amis. Thanks for welcoming the new album so warmly. It has been released only three weeks ago, and although it follows an unusual concept, you have given it a real chance. From what I have seen and read so far, I can see how much you like it. I am very pleased. And my musical partner, who is right here in front of the audience, likes it too. Thank you very much for that." With the last sentence and a glance at Adolé, she made sure that all the spectators in the hall and all the cameras turned to Adolé at the same time.

Adolé's heart was beating like crazy. What was that? What was she doing? This performance and this speech left her speechless. She never expected any of this. But she was glad to be recognized. Also how the album was received by the public, that it was so well received and spontaneously made it into the Top 5, was a great success. This was not to be expected after all the difficulties and quarrels they had to deal with during the recordings. Secretly, she enjoyed show business as much as she rarely did at that second and was happy about the creativity and the opportunity to create something extraordinary. It was a terrific feeling to meet the taste of the audience before they knew themselves what they liked.

Again a huge applause filled the whole hall. Apparently the audience had taken the French pianist, whom they had only known in another context before, into their hearts. Michelle was still standing with her microphone at the very front of the stage.

She continued with what she had to say. "To be honest, the time spent here in Germany during the recording sessions was not the easiest. It took a long time for us to find each other, to know what we wanted and I realized how important these recordings are for me, for my whole life. Today, as difficult as it was, I wouldn't want to

miss this time any more. It all showed me what is really important in life and also what is worth fighting for."

With these words she went back to her piano, straightened her long evening gown, sat down and put the microphone back into the microphone holder with a muffled sound. Adolé, whose thoughts suddenly no longer revolved around the shared music recordings, but between what she felt for this woman and what was happening here, could not quite follow the whole thing. Questioning, with her mouth open and her eyes wide open, she sat next to Roswitha, stiff as a poker. Out of the corner of her eye she saw that she too had to fight with what was happening on stage.

Although both were well aware of the attention still being paid to them by both the cameras and the local audience, Roswitha slowly bent over to Adolé. Trying to maintain her posture and not be conspicuous to outsiders, she hissed at Adolé, smiling, "Damn! What's she up to?!!" in her ear and looked at her urgently. Adolé, for whom all this was just as surprising, raised both shoulders only briefly and almost imperceptibly and then concentrated again on the events on stage.

Michelle certainly looked into the audience, directly at Adolé, who meanwhile was also illuminated directly with a spotlight for better recognition by the audience. Then she said the following words into the microphone, which shook Adolé to the core:

"Adolé, mon Amour, this is just for you!

Adolé received a blow. Her hands clawed into the back of her seat. What was Michelle thinking now at this performance?!! Was she going to embarrass herself beyond recognition?!!!!? And not only herself - both of them???!!!! Roswitha would tear them both apart in midair.

Michelle started playing. She elicited tender sounds from the piano, very calmly. Her fingers barely seemed to touch the keys.

Stiff with shock, Adolé heard the first sounds of the piano without having the slightest idea what was happening and what song it was. Her thoughts circled back and forth. What was Michelle up to? She had thought it out beautifully, she was completely at the mercy of this show here in the audience and had to put on a good face.

Adolé's head was working feverishly. She was looking for a way out - for nothing. She was aware of the fact that there was no hope whatsoever that this performance would be cut out afterwards and thus only be seen by the local auditorium - they were in the middle of a live show - without any time delay. The whole of Germany listened to Michelle, what she had to say, without net and double bottom. Had she really called them "Mon Amour" a few moments ago, to indicate how they felt about each other????!!!

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Time stood still! Adolé admonished himself to rest, forcing himself to be in the moment and to give the text the attention it deserved. Certainly she just overreacted, probably there was a very simple explanation for all this. Just stay calm!

The long jazzy piano intro slowly picked up speed. Rhythmic sounds took the hall with them, enthusiastically supporting the ever faster and louder chords with loud applause.

Es dauerte nicht lange und Michelle sang die ersten Worte zunächst schüchtern, aber laut und klar ins Mikro. „And I am telling you... I’m not going... You’re the best girl I’ve ever known, there’s no way I can ever go... No no there’s no way, no no no no, I’m not living without you... I don’t wanna be free... I’m staying... I’m staying... And you... and you! You’re gonna love me! You’re gonna love me!!”

Adolé sat in her seat in row two, thunderstruck, and was aware that not only the entire hall was looking at her, but also the audience at home in front of the live television. But this could not be true. This song, which they had discussed during their time in the studio, but in the end didn't make it onto the album, just blew up in her face. Adolé secretly congratulated Michelle for her courage to finally sing in public. But she also knew that these lyrics left no room for interpretation.

"Oh, God, oh, God!" Adolé closed his eyes. Her breath stopped. Her eyes turned black, while fragments of text kept penetrating her consciousness.

„I’m staying!“ „You gonna love me!!“ “We’re part of the same place...” “We both share the same blood!” “Darling, there’s no way I’m leaving without you!!”

"Heaven! What is she doing?!!" Adolé was getting hotter and hotter. Her heart was pounding in her throat. What would the audience think? And Roswitha?!

As she thought about it, Michelle sang her way up to higher and higher spheres. Her singing voice had indeed underestimated Adolé! In the meantime she had finally recognized the song, although she still hoped that she was wrong - but without a doubt it was "And I am telling you, I'm not going anywhere", originally by Jennifer Holliday, known in modern times through Jennifer Hudson, who had given the song a new lease of life with her performance in "Dreamgirls" and for this she rightly won the Oscar in 2007.

All of a sudden Adolé found himself here, in the midst of the echo award ceremony, confronted with this - actually - fabulous song, with which Michelle apparently wanted to express her love for her and at the same time burst a bomb for the entire German public. Her head was buzzing.

Roswitha slipped back and forth next to her on her seat. Adolé looked at her as she was seething with indignation.

"Darling, there's no way I'm living without you!" The words burned deep into Adolé's consciousness. "Darling?!" God, what would her friends say, her mother, her coworkers?

Slowly there was no longer any doubt that Michelle was fighting for her love with this performance and at the same time informing the public that she was not only lesbian but also had a love affair. And not with just anyone, but with Germany's celebrated superstar, who topped the charts everywhere. She had thought that up brilliantly. A real drumbeat!!

Adolé's brain was working feverishly. She had only a short time left until the audience rightly expected a reaction from her. She could hardly think clearly until she

suddenly realized that Michelle's going it alone offered her a way out of her dilemma. The longer she thought about it, the clearer the ingenuity of Michelle's move became - they had achieved exactly what they had decided to do together just a few weeks ago anyway, namely to end the game of hide-and-seek and to come out, to make it public that they were lesbians and, moreover, to have a love relationship. This might have been surprising for the audience, but in the end it was simply the truth.

At the same time, she - Adolé - had not broken any of her contracts with Roswitha, for she neither knew of Michelle's plans nor did she actively contribute to their planning or implementation.

But most important of all: due to Michelle's courageous appearance all advantages for Matthieu disappeared and simply dissolved into pleasure. If the whole world knew what they were receiving for each other, he had no more knowledge with which to pressure and blackmail them.

What a brilliant move!

Adolé's tension eased a little with these reassuring insights. Although the publication of her most private matters had not gone as she might have wished, Michelle had ultimately only done what they had both already decided to do. Had it not been for Roswitha and Ella's objection, who knows, perhaps the Echo Stage would have been the appropriate setting for this revelation of this news.

But now it was time to look at current events again.

The most important thing now was how she, the addressed person, reacted to this public performance. She knew that a response would be expected from her, something that would show how she felt about the whole thing.

For Adolé, her position on this became ever clearer. The longer she thought about it,

the more determined she was to respond to Michelle's declaration of love in an upright and unambiguous manner. She knew what she had to do! Michelle truly deserved this! She had risked everything, fighting for her love in public, making her the most beautiful declaration of love that woman could ever imagine. That had to be rewarded!

At the same time, outsiders, especially Roswitha, should no longer have any doubts about how they both were. It was clear to her that this would expose her to critics. But there were critics always and everywhere. The fact is, you can never please everybody. And nothing could be as bad as losing Michelle again and what Matthieu did to Michelle. Therefore any criticism of them would bounce off them both, she was sure of that.

Adolé began to sit up more and more in her comfortable audience seat, found her composure more and more and began to really enjoy the last sounds of this exceptionally beautiful song. When had anyone ever taken such a risk for her?!?! Michelle had bet everything on one card to win her back and Adolé knew that she had won it all.

Slowly but inexorably a feeling of relief rose in Adolé. It was not only now that she realized that she loved Michelle more than anything else, but she had agreed far too easily to put this love aside and to push Michelle away. Her whole happiness depended on it.

She felt Michelle's penetrating and at the same time uncertain, questioning, almost pleading gaze on herself, especially when she sang decisive passages of lyrics: "You're the best girl, I've ever known!", "I don't wanna live without you!", "You're gonna love me!!

She virtually shouted the words out, and at the same time she was shouting at Adolé.

L

ove me! Don't you dare do anything else!

And yes, she was damn right. She'd love her, and if Michelle let her, for the rest of her life!! With this thought there was no stopping Adolé from getting up from her seat and walking upright and without paying attention to the people to the right and left and in front and behind her, first through her row in the auditorium, then past the edge towards Michelle. Arriving at the edge of the stage she picked up her evening dress for simplicity's sake and then, with a few light-footed steps, climbed the few steps that still separated her from the stage.

She did not feel the spectators cheering her enthusiastically, nor the photographers trying to take the decisive picture of her. She had only one goal, namely to reach Michelle, who had sung this beautiful declaration of love that only someone could sing. She wanted to finally take away the burden that lay upon her that the song, the risk and her effort might have been in vain. She wanted to finally take her in her arms, kiss her and tell her that everything was fine.

Without letting her out of her sight, she steered unerringly towards the woman at the piano. When their eyes crossed again, Adolé felt her heart skip a beat. No moment could have been more beautiful. There was no place in the whole world where she would have preferred to be than here, on the public stage of the Echo Awards and with the woman she loved. This was where she belonged, this was where she had arrived.

In order not to disturb the highly emotional final chord, she held on to the back end of the piano during the last sounds, smiled at Michelle, teetered along and enjoyed this fantastic singing, in which Michelle now once again put all her energy:

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Tear down the mountains

Yell, scream and shout like you can say what you want

I'm not walking out

Stop all the rivers

Push, strike and kill

I'm not gonna leave you

There's no way I will

Adolé's heart almost stopped as Michelle took a deep breath and then, with a powerful voice, made her way to the final finale. At the same time she let her hands fly over the piano keyboard.

And... I am..... telling you I'm not going

You're the best girl I'll ever know

There's no way I could ever, ever go

No, no, no, no way

No, no, no, no way I'm living without you

I'm not living without you, not living without you

I don't wanna be free

I'm staying, I'm staying

And you, and you, and you

You're gonna love me

You're gonna love me

I'm gonna love you

For the rest of my life

Love you, love you, love you

I love you!!!

Adolé did not escape the changes that Michelle made in the text on her own authority to adapt the meaning of the original version to her own needs. I love you! It was just terrific!!!!

33.

What a furious ending!

Michelle had given everything. With her last ounce of strength, she had virtually shouted out her love for Adolé and thus enraptured the audience to storms of enthusiasm. It was obvious that all those people who had thought they were going to

a boring award ceremony were absolutely thrilled and delighted to see how true love spectacularly and in front of everyone paved the way between two women who probably never should have met. But now that they knew each other and were truly passionate about each other, the audience gave its passionate approval. As always, the audience had a sense that this performance was sincerely meant and authentic and was indeed driven by the fear of losing the other forever.

The auditorium applauded enthusiastically, screamed and cheered, making it as easy as possible for both protagonists. Adolé was the first to find her composure after the end of the song and in the thunderous applause despite tears, so that she could walk with a firm step towards Michelle, who was standing next to her piano, exhausted and breathing heavily with tousled hair, supported herself with one hand and laid the other hand waiting on her chest. When Adolé came towards her, she opened her arms and received her. At first they touched each other's foreheads and thus remained in deep intimacy for a few moments. Adolé grabbed Michelle lovingly at her hips, neck and cheek and pulled her tightly to himself with a skillful grip. After a head-shaking "You're crazy!" her lips met for a passionate and cheered kiss in the middle of the stage and under the eyes of millions of people who now knew what really moved their Adolé.

That this was obviously something different than before, they noted with so much goodwill and warmth that Adolé became more and more comfortable around her heart and she regained her self-confidence more and more. Full of happiness, the lady of her heart had just confessed her love in the most dramatic way, in public and under as many witnesses as possible. Nobody was allowed to experience something like that very often and as if that was not enough, her audience was also happy for her and cheered her beyond all measure. The moment was simply perfect!

Epilogue

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The sun burned on her naked skin. Her drinks were within easy reach, soft music played around the steady rhythm of the surf. They lounged on their comfortable chaise longue and giggled like teenagers, while they tried to catch short kisses again and again.

Crete was beautiful! Even Theo and Thula, who preferred to stay on the shady terrace near the house and the pool, enjoyed their new freedoms.

After the waves had calmed down and the revelation of their love affair had turned out to be much more undramatic than anyone had expected, Roswitha too had gradually calmed down. She still held it against Adolé that she had not kept her agreement and kept her relationship status secret. After many energy-sapping conversations, Adolé had finally been able to convince her that the performance in Hamburg was not a cunning plan on her part, but a desperate solo effort by Michelle, for which she was really grateful in the end.

Even Roswitha had to admit in the end that the emotional performance also had positive aspects and did not only attract critics.

Michelle's love life was also publicised in France and was generally well received. Matthieu's half-hearted attempt to keep Michelle away from her children was mercilessly blocked by Roswitha's lawyers. Finally, under the threat of various lawsuits for mistreatment and bodily injury, Matthieu even agreed in writing to waive custody of the children and transferred it to Michelle, grumbling.

The game of hide-and-seek came to an end, the synchronization of their appointment calendars was no longer a problem, but was generally taken for granted. So

unexpectedly this slot of 8 days came up, where Adolé together with Michelle and the children could spend a relaxed holiday for the first time in her career.

It was fantastic. Although their fans and those of Michelle knew roughly where to look for their holiday home, they enjoyed a relative peace and quiet. This was a completely new experience for Adolé, who was usually hunted by paparazzi without any consideration and whose personal fate, especially on vacation, apparently played no role whatsoever for the newspaper and TV audience.

All in all, a completely new life opened up for them, which they enjoyed to the full from now on. They had fought for it and never wanted to let it go again.

Could there have been a greater happiness?

END