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**Vote
for
Love**

Planet Girl

Dark Things

Weird opening question: do you believe in ghosts? I used to, *sort of*. I had my own private scary demons – I called them the “Dark Things”. Yes, that’s right, the Dark Things. I hated them.

The Dark Things were *sort of* ghosts, though they weren’t white like your standard Caspar-type **ghoul**, of course – they were black. And they didn’t rattle chains or drink blood. No, what they did was *much* worse: they jumped out at you if you went to the toilet at night, **grabbing** for your **ankles**. Needing the toilet after dark was, as you might imagine, a major trauma for me when I was a kid.

I grew up, of course, and found other Dark Things to worry about: boys! Ha! To be **honest**, I hadn’t thought about the original Dark Things in years. Until now that is, as I lie here at 3 am, needing the toilet, in The Grange, my grandmother’s house. I can’t stop thinking about them now, unfortunately.

The reason is clear: my grandmother, Beatrice Milling-

+++ weird – eigenartig +++ sort of – irgendwie +++ ghoul – Ungeheuer +++ to grab for s.th. – nach etw. greifen +++ ankle – Knöchel +++ honest – ehrlich +++

ton, known to her loving but sometimes sarcastic family as the Queen Mother, died in her sleep last Tuesday – at almost exactly this time! – aged 83.

It was a peaceful death, they say. There's absolutely no reason why my grandmother should come back to **haunt** her loving but sarcastic family. She lived a good life and it's clear that she'll have taken the royal express train to heaven. She'll be drinking sherry and playing **bridge** with the Queen Mum and Queen Victoria there as we speak.

Even with that beautiful image firmly in my mind, I still can't *quite* convince myself to go to the toilet. It's right at the end of the hall and to get there, I'd have to walk past the room where my grandmother died. It's too **creepy**, way too creepy. The Dark Things will definitely **have it staked out**.

I'm crazy, *natürlich*. If something dark *did* grab me and I screamed, then a whole army of Bright Things would come running to help me: my mum and dad, my little brother Max and my Auntie Nora are all sleeping in various parts of the house. Even my Onkel Dieter from Eisenhüttenstadt is here, though he's certainly not bright.

And there's Sam, of course. Sam would definitely come running. In fact ... that's not a bad idea. Well, it *is* an emergency. I need a big strong escort to the toilet now, it's clear. He's just the man for the job.

It's **insane**, of course, but I am totally, **utterly** desperate. I will wet the bed in a moment, otherwise, and that's

+++ to haunt s.b. – jmdn. heimsuchen +++ bridge – Kartenspiel +++
creepy – gruselig +++ way – *hier*: viel +++ to have s.th. staked out –
etw. überwachen lassen +++ insane – verrückt +++ utterly – völlig +++

not a really cool look when you're 15, now is it? So I grab my phone, call Sam's mobile number, praying that he's left it switched on. He has! Hurrah! It rings and rings before finally a *very* sleepy-sounding voice says, "Emily?? What on earth ...?"

"Can you come down?" I **hiss**. "It's really, really urgent!" Sam groans. "What ... oh, **never mind**. You **nutter**. Yes, I'll come down." And my hero hangs up.

Sam, you might remember, is my boyfriend, my long-distance lover from Scotland. Right now, luckily, he's my very short-distance lover. Sam arrived here in Surrey yesterday and he's now about two metres away, **as the crow flies**, in the guest bedroom directly above me. My mother put him on a separate floor, partly to **preserve** my honour no doubt, but also because the only free bedroom on this floor would have been my grandmother's. And no one much liked the idea of Sam sleeping there, least of all Sam.

I can hear footsteps in the hall, soft, Sammy ones: it's the sound of **salvation!** Sam taps at the door ... I'm saved! I **leap** out of bed and there he is. My hero! My hero who hasn't even **bothered** to put his glasses on: he's **squinting** at me. His hair is a mess, he looks totally exhausted. "This had better be good ..." he mumbles, rubbing his eyes.

I'm embarrassed, of course, but sometimes a girl's got to do what a girl's got to do. "I need to *go*," I **mutter**,

+++ to hiss – zischen +++ never mind – schon gut +++ nutter – Spinner/in +++ as the crow flies – Luftlinie +++ to preserve – erhalten +++ salvation – Erlösung +++ to leap – springen +++ to bother – sich die Mühe machen +++ to squint – blinzeln +++ to mutter – murmeln



pulling him by the arm. “And I was too scared to go by myself ...”

Sam looks at me in horror. “You got me out of bed at *three in the morning* to walk you to the bathroom???????”

It sounds so **selfish** when you put it like that! “Well, I needed to talk to you, too,” I mumble, a bit weakly. Sam’s mumbling something, too: bad, bad words. The Queen Mother would die if she heard that ... oh, never mind.

Sam thinks about punching me in the face, decides it would take too much energy and finally bursts out laughing. “Oh, **for goodness sake**, move it!”

When Sam and me get back to my room, we have a little bit of a kiss. Partly to celebrate surviving The Spooky Toi-

+++ selfish – egoistisch +++ for goodness sake – um Himmels willen

let Trip and partly because Sam's earned one. It actually feels quite **naughty**, kissing Sam in my bedroom at this time in the morning. My mum would **freak**, probably, but I have to tell you – knowing that somehow makes the kissing feel even nicer.

Then it's time to talk. There's a lot to discuss. I've **barely** had a minute alone with Sam since my family and me found him standing on the doorstep of my grandmother's house when we arrived back from the **funeral**. Amazing. Sam had **trekked** about 600 kilometres and has run the risk of losing his part-time job – “they probably won't fire me!” he laughs – to be here with me now. Be honest, how many of all your 6.5 million Facebook “friends” or Twitter contacts would do that? Go on, count them. It's no more than two or three, I bet you. *Maximum.*

So, personally, I was **delighted** to see Sam. I have the strange feeling, however, that the rest of my family don't share in my joy. My parents, **for instance**, gave Sam more or less the same look that they used to give the half-dead birds our cat “Mr T” loved to **drag** into our flat in Berlin. I don't really understand why: my parents have never even met Sam before! They know I went to visit him in Scotland but I didn't talk about that trip much to them. So they can't be giving him the cold shoulder because they know how complicated our whole relationship has been, for instance.

+++ naughty – unartig +++ to freak – ausflippen +++ barely – kaum
+++ funeral – Beerdigung +++ to trek – *hier*: reisen +++ delighted –
erfreut +++ for instance – zum Beispiel +++ to drag – schleppen +++

Oh, come on, it has been! I'm not being dramatic, honestly. Sam and me seem to have been through a lot, even though we've only been going out for eleven months or so. Even the way we got together was stressful. Ah, sweet memories ...

I thought all my Christmases had come at once when I met a charming boy named Ed Stanton, right after I arrived at Chalk Farm School for Girls in London last year. But Ed was no Santa: he grew bored with me after about eight minutes, it seemed, and was kind enough to **dump** me and then blog about it. The only good thing about the whole Ed Affair was that I made two great friends, Maudie and Kim, and ... I met Sam – he played drums with Ed in their band, the Kitty Gagarins. Sam ended up helping me to get revenge on Ed and we started dating just after that. We had to be really careful at first, hiding our love away so that Ed wouldn't find out and **smash** Sam's head through his **tom toms**. And, frankly, if *that's* not a complicated start to a relationship, I don't know what is.

I thought Christmas for our relationship had actually come at, well, *Christmas*. But instead of kissing and drinking *Glühwein* from a shared cup, as we should have been, Sam and me faced our next crisis, a present from my **boggle-eyed** roommate Amanda Dobson. She flirted like crazy with Sam at the Christmas party. Sam, luckily, wasn't interested in her. Things between us should have settled down then, right? Am I right?

+++ to dump s.b. – mit jmdm. Schluss machen +++ to smash – zertrümmern +++ tom tom – Trommel +++ boggle-eyed – mit Glotzaugen +++

No such luck. Our next love challenge was waiting to jump out at us, like a Dark Thing: Sam's dad lost his job and got ill which meant Sam couldn't afford to stay in London any more. But Sam and me decided, being young and naïve, that we could make our relationship work, even with us both at opposite ends of the country. I would stay on in London and we would travel to see each other. True love, after all, has no **boundaries**.

Anyway, **to cut a long story short**, it seemed that true love wasn't stupid. True love did know *exactly* where its boundaries were. It was almost impossible to find the time to meet up. Once he got back to Scotland, Sam just seemed so busy with his family, the new band he'd found and his part-time job. I suppose I felt that he didn't need me any more ...

... which might explain why I allowed myself to be interested in someone else – *Sportsfreund* Sebastian Junger, a boy from my old school in Berlin. I was wrong as it turned out – again, it's a long story – but the damage was done, somehow. Sam wasn't, like, *totally* enthusiastic about me having had Sebastian to visit me in London.

It's hard to believe that even after all that, Sam would still make the effort to come here to see me, isn't it? I **gaze at him**; he's **yawning** now. Then he falls back onto my bed and lies there for a moment, **blinking** like an owl. "Come over here," he says, sleepily. "Tell me what's on your mind, toilet girl."

+++ boundary – Grenze +++ to cut a long story short – um es kurz zu machen +++ to gaze at s.b./s.th. – jmdn./etw. anschauen +++ to yawn – gähnen +++ to blink – blinzeln +++ owl – Eule +++