

SAIA STUENG

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The autumn sun shines through the light curtains, warming my frozen feet a little, as they rest on his kitchen table. I lean back in the chair and drink my soda. From the bathroom, water can be heard cascading into a rusty bath-tub. Cold and fed up, I hurry into the bedroom and slide into our warm bed. Grabbing his phone, I quickly look to see if he's been messaging with anybody again, no, not this time. He always messages with a lot of people, especially with other women, older, better looking, slimmer and most probably cleverer women than me.

The cascade of water slows to a drip and there's the creak of a door opening. I panic, and put the phone back on the other side of the bed. A wet man puts his arms around me, thawing out my toes with his big warm feet.

“What’s the time?” he asks, not seeming to care that

I'm cold. I grab his phone from the other side of the bed before he gets to it first and finds that it's warm because of me.

"Ten to four," I answer.

Ten to four, mum'll be back soon and find out that I'm not home yet. If only I had a phone so that I could send a message to say that there's no need to go looking for me.

"Don't you want to go home now," he asks stroking my cheek.

Every day I go home at exactly this time, what'll happen if I stay a bit longer? Is somebody coming, is he going to warm someone else's frozen toes? Or is it just me who's running away from the fun that goes on after five, just so that mum won't start to worry?

"Today I was thinking of staying a couple of hours longer than usual, that's if you're not expecting any other female guests," I say, challenging him.

"Well actually I'm in a bit of a hurry because I want to get down to Hunting Supplies and Equipment

before they shut,” the man replies apologetically.

“I’ll stay here then while you pop down to the store.”

He agrees to this, kisses me on the lips at the front door and drives off. Now on my own in the big living-room, I catch sight of a CD-player and put on some 90s techno, very loud. I get the urge to dance, but it doesn’t feel right as I’m completely naked, so I quickly pull on one of his large sweaters. This old music has a tremendously happy feel, It’s a fun tune and the female singer has a very squeaky high-pitched voice. I jump around on the sofa, sit down on the window-sill and girate across the wide living-room floor. Kissing me at the front door must mean that we’re finally a couple. He’s never done that before in three years, next it’ll be watching a film, having a meal together and walking hand in hand. I knew he’d had enough of just being friends and wanted to take our relationship further. We’ll still have to keep it from mum though for a few months yet, as I don’t want to take him home with me until I’m eighteen, and by that time we might even

be engaged. I hope he asks me to be his wife when he takes me to Paris to see the Eiffel Tower and visit Disneyland. I remember the first time I saw him, the fair-haired man on the bus in Oslo. I was attending a Saami youth event, was running late and didn't know the way to the hotel where the meeting was to take place. He was the only Saami there and was more than willing to help a fellow Saami who was lost. Luckily, he was from the same place as me. Soon everybody will be able to see us, hand in hand and kissing each other. "I'm a Barbie girl, and he's my Ken." In front of the mirror I seem much prettier than I did just a few minutes ago, and didn't realise that a mouth with dental braces could be quite this attractive. "I'm a Saami girl, in a Saami world. Life in *gákti*<sup>1</sup>, it's *álki*<sup>2</sup>. Come on Barbie, let's go party. Uhh, uhh, je je." I wonder what Ina and Sire from my class will say about me having a boyfriend, and an older man at that, who takes me to parties. They're the most popular girls at the school, but they haven't got a boyfriend, like I

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<sup>1</sup> Saami folk costume

<sup>2</sup> *álki* = easy

have. If I had a boyfriend, then I'd walk round all the classrooms, with a horde of friends and adoring fans following at my heels. All the teachers would see who it is who gives the orders here around town, and guests would come to my birthday.

I pick up his phone, take pictures and film myself dancing. I haven't yet understood why I seem so much prettier in the pictures than in the mirror. My skin appears so clear and tanned with this camera. I film myself singing Barbie girl, oh I love Máhtte. The pictures I'm going to take on the kitchen table will be great, but first, I just have to take one of me holding up two fingers in a peace sign and pouting my lips. I pucker my lips the way I would every time we'd greet one another like real couples do on TV. I think kissing one another when you meet or say goodbye to each other is what shows and declares true love, and that two people are a couple. With my right hand, I hold the phone high in the air, while attempting, with my thumb, to press the photo button. But then, a sudden crash that startles me, and I've dropped it

on the floor. I hope it isn't broken. A mobile phone probably isn't that expensive, as even five-year olds have got one. But if this children's toy is important to him and he gets angry with me for breaking it, what then? I can't afford to buy him a new one, and besides, it would be good for him to be without one.

I should really break his computer as well, then he'd know how I feel. I don't have a phone or a computer, because mum's taken them from me. About six months ago, I came home late after going to see Máhtte. When I got in, my computer was gone and she took my phone from me and kept it. It's no fun being without a phone at my age, when everything happens on the Internet. Even though your real life is dull, sad and terribly boring, your on-line life can be as much fun as you want it to be, and not just one on-line life, but many. For every web-page or app you make up a user name for, your life becomes a bit better.

There is one positive thing though about me not having acces to the internet, and that is that I haven't had to

look at those party-pics that are posted on-line, because I haven't been at those parties, or rather haven't been invited to them, and I've never smiled on any party-pics. In fact, I haven't appeared on a single party-pic, and probably never will in the future either. Every weekend, the others from my class go out to party, take pictures and post them all on-line. To let everybody know that they're going to be addicted to drink when they become adults, which they announce as early as this, and if that wasn't enough, they announce it publicly on social media. I don't go to parties, and at the weekends I stay in. In the early evening, I go round to Máhtte for a couple of hours, until he gets a text on his phone to say that his friends are coming over for a drink before they all go out on the town. He gives me a lift back and I'm home just before ten o'clock in the evening. And all because he got that text message on his phone about some stupid party from some friends. Friends are something I don't need either, just as unnecessary as a mobile phone. Boyfriend and girlfriend, that's much better, and lasts longer as well, and if he can't bring himself to accept that, then what can I do.