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Translated by Anthea Bell

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BROTHER KEMAL

A KAYANKAYA MYSTERY

JAKOB ARJOUNI

TRANSLATED BY ANTHEA BELL

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For Lucy, Emil and Miranda

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Chapter 1

Marieke was sixteen and, in her mother's words, 'very talented, well-read, politically committed, with an inquiring mind and a good sense of humour – simply a wonderful, intelligent young woman, do you understand? Not the sort to hang around idly, not addicted to computers or into nothing but shopping and complaining that life's so boring. On the contrary: class representative, a member of Greenpeace, paints wonderfully well, interested in modern art, plays tennis and piano – or did play tennis and piano anyway...'

Her mother looked briefly at the floor and tucked a strand of blonde hair back from her forehead with her red-polished fingernails.

'Well, that's the way things go, don't they? Right? Two years ago she suddenly developed new interests. I suppose you would say Marieke was what you'd call an early developer. She had her first boyfriend when she was fourteen. Jack or Jeff or something like that, an American, son of a diplomat, in the class above hers. Then at some point it was another boy, and so on. Marieke became something of a live wire, if you know what I mean.'

I knew what she meant. However, not from the photos of

Marieke that I had in my hand. They showed a slightly dark-skinned girl with blonde Rasta braids looking sternly through black-framed designer glasses, with a forced and slightly condescending smile. Pretty, possibly charming, maybe cute if she took off those glasses and looked friendly, but certainly not what you'd call a live wire. More of a short circuit. Leader of a school strike, or singer in a protest band singing songs about animal rights.

What her mother meant applied to herself. *She* was what you'd call a live wire. At second glance. At first glance she was simply one of those athletic solarium blondes with a body that seemed cast out of hard, light brown rubbery plastic: a small pointed nose, full lips slightly too full to be natural, and eyebrows plucked to semicircles as thin as a thread to make her eyes look larger. The eyes were rather narrow, but even the plucked eyebrows didn't help that, and anyway it wasn't the size of her eyes that mattered. What made Valerie de Chavannes such a live wire was the blue steel in her eyes, promising all kinds of delights, which she turned on you as outrageously as if she were whispering in your ear: *I only ever think of one thing*. Of course – or at least most very probably – she didn't have that one thing on her mind that morning; after all, what she wanted was to hire me to find her missing daughter. But at some stage in her life this way of looking at men must have become a habit for her.

When she had opened the door of the villa to me half an hour earlier without introducing herself, I had been more or less sure that she was a visitor: a younger sister who had gone to the dogs, or a pushy tennis-club acquaintance who had just burst in unannounced to deliver the latest changing-room gossip. Along with her I-only-ever-think-of-one-thing look, Valerie de Chavannes wore long, wide-legged, white and very translucent silk trousers that revealed slender legs and a pair of white panties, silver sandals with cork wedges about twenty centimetres high and a yellow T-shirt that was remarkably

short and close-fitting for a high society Frankfurt lady and did nothing to conceal her small, firm, breasts, leaving so much skin on view right down to the waistband of her trousers that I could see the middle part of a snake tattoo. This was not what I would have expected of a woman called Valerie de Chavannes, daughter of a French banker, married to the internationally successful Dutch painter Edgar Hasselbaink, living in a five-hundred-square-metre villa with a garden and an underground garage in the middle of the diplomatic quarter of Frankfurt.

We were now sitting opposite each other in the sunny living room that occupied nearly all of the ground floor, with white carpeting, modern art on the walls and valuable furniture, with chairs made of leather, chrome and fake fur, sipping green tea from porcelain cups brought to us by a housekeeper of about fifty with a Polish accent. The question urgently occupying my mind was: Did the snake wind its way from her groin up to her navel, or vice versa? And what did it mean, one way or the other?

Instead I asked, 'When exactly did Marieke go missing?'

'At midday on Monday. She was at school in the morning, for a maths lesson, and after that she told her best friend she was going into town to buy a pair of trousers and she'd be back in time for the sports lesson.'

Valerie de Chavannes crossed her legs, and a slender knee pressed through the silk. The platform shoe drew small circles in the air.

'Do you want to tell me the best friend's name?'

'I'd rather ... I did say ...'

'I know, no fuss, no police, keep it discreet, but I do need some indication who your daughter's hanging out with. Or I'll have to start knocking on the doors of every apartment in Frankfurt, working my way slowly up to Bad Homburg, then through Kassel, Hannover, Berlin, after that maybe Warsaw or Prague – all of them cities for young people eager for new

experiences. Okay, not Kassel, obviously.'

She looked at me without a trace of humour in her eyes. The platform shoe had stopped in midair for a moment, and now the circles it drew were larger and faster.

As if speaking to a servant who was slow on the uptake, she explained, 'If everything is all right, and Marieke simply wants to gad about for a couple of days, she'd never forgive me for sending a detective after her. She'd say I was trying to spy on her and interfere with her life. Our relationship isn't entirely easy at the moment. I think that's normal between a mother and a daughter of her age.'

For a Frenchwoman, Valerie de Chavannes spoke German with hardly a trace of an accent. Only now and then did she emphasize the vowels at the end of a word a little too much: *mothaire, daughtaire*.

'Right, then how do you think I ought to begin searching? In the trouser shop?'

Once again the shoe stopped briefly in midair, and Valerie de Chavannes looked at me with barely concealed dislike. All the same, there was still a little of that I-only-ever-think-of-one-thing look left. As if she were turned on by an unshaven, slightly overweight private detective with a Turkish name and an office address in the notorious Gutleutstrasse area who cracked tired old jokes.

Of course it was the other way around: she turned me on, and what I called her I-only-ever-think-of-one-thing look was presumably more an I-can't-believe-I'm-letting-such-a-Turkish-arsehole-sit-here-in-my-elegant-armchair-from-the-Art-Cologne-fair expression. For some reason she seemed to think she was dependant on me.

'Well ... I told you on the phone that Marieke has recently been in touch with an older man – that's to say, older than Marieke, around thirty. He's a photographer, or so he claimed anyway. He said he wanted to take fashion photos of her – the usual chat-up line. His studio or office, or maybe just his

apartment, is somewhere in Sachsenhausen. She mentioned Brückenstrasse and Schifferstrasse a couple of times. There's a little tree-lined square. At supper, Marieke talked about a corner café there ...'

She cast me an inquiring glance. Did I know the café? The square? Sachsenhausen? Or was Gutleutstrasse all I knew of Frankfurt? Was I exactly what she'd been afraid of finding when she turned to the internet in search of a private detective: a drunken, crude man from a sketchy neighbourhood who had failed at all the professions he'd tried before? Trouble with your ex-wife? Ex-husband? An overdue bill for drugs. Poorly treated by the pizza delivery guy? Kemal Kayankaya, private investigator and personal protection, your man in the outer city centre of Frankfurt!

I sipped the green tea, which tasted like liquid fish skin – or the way that I imagined liquid fish skin would taste – and asked, 'Why did she mention it to you?'

'Mention what?'

'The café.'

For the first time she seemed annoyed. 'What do you mean, why?'

'Well, you say the relationship between you isn't entirely easy at the moment. So why does she tell you about a café where she goes to meet a man who, her mother thinks, is bad company for her? Do you know him yourself?' I gave Valerie de Chavannes a friendly smile.

'I, er, no...' She leaned forward and put her teacup down on the low, cloud-shaped table between us. 'Well, I saw him once by chance when he was bringing Marieke home in his car. We shook hands briefly.'

'What kind of car does he drive?'

'What kind of car...?'

Once again she hesitated. Maybe it was a matter of form, maybe she simply wasn't used to being asked questions by someone she was paying. Or maybe she didn't need a

detective at all – at least, not one who found anything out.

‘No idea, I don’t know much about cars. Something flashy, showy, a jeep or an SUV or whatever they’re called, black, tinted windows – maybe it was a BMW. Yes, I think it was a BMW.’

‘You did well for someone who doesn’t know much about cars. Perhaps you don’t know much about number plates either?’

She stopped short, slightly parting her full glossed lips into a moist, narrow slit smile, looking as if I had asked whether I could invite her sometime to a delicious frozen meal and women’s all-in-wrestling on TV. I decided to make her stop short like that as often as I could.

Smiling, I raised a hand. ‘A little joke, Frau de Chavannes, just a little joke. Tell me what the man looks like, please: size, hair colour and so on.’

This time her hatred of him brought me a prompt answer. ‘Medium height, what do I know, neither really short nor particularly tall. Lean build, fit, long curly black hair, in that greasy combed-back style, dark eyes, three-day stubble – good-looking if you like that type.’

‘And that type is...?’

‘Well, someone looking to pick up girls in a disco, that sort of character.’

‘You mean the slimy sort with the carnal stare, heels a little too high and an immigrant background?’

I smiled at her encouragingly.

‘If ... if that’s how you’d describe it ...’ For a moment she didn’t know where to look or what to do with her hands. Then she glanced up and looked at me, sceptical and curious at the same time. ‘Just so there’s no misunderstanding: no, I don’t think so.’

‘Of course not. It was only to get things clear: now I know what type you mean. And furthermore, that’s why you called me, isn’t it?’

‘That’s why I called you...?’

‘That’s why you called Kayankaya, not Müller or Meier. Because you thought a Kayankaya ought to know how to deal with an immigrant background. What’s the man’s name?’

She briefly wondered whether to refute what I’d said, and then replied, ‘I don’t know exactly. Erdem, Evren – Marieke mentioned it only once or twice.’

‘You have a certain amount of trouble with the names of your daughter’s boyfriends, don’t you?’

‘Excuse me?’

‘Jack or Jeff, Erdem or Evren...’

‘What do you mean?’ She looked puzzled, then sat up straight in her chair and snapped at me, ‘What are you getting at, anyway? Why are you talking to me like that!’ All at once she got to her feet and walked quickly to a bookshelf at the other end of the living room. It was roughly fifteen metres away. I noticed her swaying her hips attractively in spite of her rage. From the back, she could easily have passed for a woman in her mid-twenties. With a rounded, taut behind like that, either she spent a lot of time in the gym or Edgar Hasselbaink had struck lucky with her genes.

‘I called you to get me my daughter back! I’m just about dead with worry, and you sit here grinning and asking me nonsensical questions!’

She reached into the bookshelf and brought out a packet of cigarettes.

‘Well, questions about the name of the man with whom your daughter is presumably involved, what kind of car he drives and where he lives aren’t as nonsensical as all that.’

‘You know exactly what I mean!’ She snapped her lighter, held the flame to her cigarette, inhaled the smoke and angrily blew it out again. ‘Have I heard of number plates! Insinuating that I don’t remember the names of my daughter’s boyfriends! Your manner as a whole ...’

She took another drag. ‘All that silly sarcasm! And you’re

probably just looking at my tits the whole time!’ She walked halfway across the room towards me, stopped abruptly and jabbed the fingers holding her cigarette in my direction. ‘Either you’ll work for me and do as I ask, or I’ll look for someone else!’

I let her tantrum blow itself out, watching her breasts, as if she had shown me an interesting detail in the living room furnishings. I thought it was rather funny. She took it sportingly well, shaking her head and laughing dryly as much to express ‘I don’t believe it!’ as ‘You’ve got some nerve!’

‘To be honest, I was just taking a look at your snake now and then. At least, I assume it’s a snake, but unfortunately the head is out of sight – oh, sorry, I mean the head is out of sight.’

She switched to looking at me as if I were an amiable madman: a friendly sympathetic and slightly repelled look. She drew on her cigarette. ‘You don’t say so,’ and in her thoughts she was probably running through the list of private detectives in Frankfurt to decide which of them to call next.

‘Right.’ I put my cup of fish-skin broth down on the glass table and leaned back in my chair. ‘So you want me to do as you ask. I’d be happy to do that, Frau de Chavannes, although I’m not sure that you know exactly what you want me to do.’

‘Excuse me?’

‘Look, this is how I see it, roughly: you met this man – Erdem or Evren – somewhere or other, in the gym, or at a private viewing, something of that nature. He made up to you, and you felt a little curious, maybe along these lines: immigrant background, gold chain, oily hair – you don’t meet that kind of person every day, you thought you’d like to hear what he had to say. And when it wasn’t just the stupid showing off that you expected – let’s suppose he was witty, charming, a little bold, and anyway he could tell stories that you don’t often hear at the upper end of Zeppelinallee – anyway, you thought something like: let’s invite him to a party, won’t Frau von What’s-It and Consul Thingummy be

surprised! See who Frau de Chavannes has come up with this time! And so all went well, Erdem or Evren was the original party sensation you hoped he’d be, he flirted with Frau von What’s-It, he let Consul Thingummy tell him about something of no interest to anyone else, and told crazy stories about his friends, women, cars, the wide world, a touch of the suggestive, a touch of the Oriental, until...

I stopped for a moment. Nothing of Valerie de Chavannes was moving except the ash falling from her cigarette to the floor, but her eyes rested on me like the eyes of the fish whose skin I had just been drinking.

‘...your daughter came home. At her age, parties given by your parents are a good reason to go to bed early for once and conserve your strength for your own parties over the next few days. But then your daughter saw Erdem or Evren, and that was a refreshing change from one of those usually boring occasions with the What’s-Its and the Thingummies and Papa’s tipsy painter friends – and so on. I may not have the details right, but the general drift of where your problems are coming from must be something of that nature? Of course that’s the harmless version. There’s another possibility, no party, no husband...’

‘Shut up!’

Her cigarette had burnt down to the filter and gone out. All the same, she still held the butt as if she were smoking it.

‘I assume that’s the reason you don’t want me to talk to Marieke’s friends? I’d find out that Marieke was going around with one of her mother’s acquaintances. Marieke is sixteen, she has a right to do that, and if she’s enjoying the situation... she wouldn’t be the first daughter in the throes of puberty who wanted to show her mother a thing or two.’

She was looking absentmindedly at the floor. The cigarette end dropped from her hand, but she didn’t seem to notice. Suddenly she raised her head and asked, impatiently, ‘So now what?’