



Dita Zipfel

It's Bright and the World's Turning Outside

Novel

(Original German title: Es ist hell und draußen dreht sich die Welt. Roman)

219 pages, Clothbound

Publication date: 18 February 2026

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Sample translation by Katy Derbyshire

pp. 7 – 29

Friday

Something's wrong with this picture. Outside the bungalow, Linn is overpowered by tiredness so deep it almost pulls her legs out from under her. She wants to lie down and sleep all the way through the holiday. Maybe it's the progesterone. It's probably the sight of the house, though. It's floating mid-landscape like a glass-and-concrete UFO; from here, the staircase up to the entrance looks like it's made of light. As they get closer it turns out to be plexiglass, which is almost equally absurd. Then inside: floor-length windows. Views instead of walls, barely any doors, apparently.

'The bedrooms are there and there.' Eva points left and right.

'Which one do you guys want?' Matze asks.

'What do you think, Felix? Bubu?' Eva calls out.

'Not bothered!'

'We'll take that one then?' Eva points at the one on the right, further away from the kitchen and closer to the terrace.

'Great!' says Matze and rattles his suitcase towards the left bedroom.

The rollers on Eva's case glide soundlessly across the stone floor. Linn stays put, watching her go. And suddenly she knows what's wrong with this picture, what's out of place. She is.

The living room is the dining room is the kitchen. It's enormous. Each one of them could take a holiday in their own corner of the room. That might even be for the best. Each of them in their own corner. Everything is white and polished, the floor shining bright. An expensive wooden sideboard against a wall of exposed concrete, its horizontal surface decorated with subtle pointers to the Mediterranean outside the front door. A conch beside a pinecone in a delicate porcelain bowl. A thin ballpoint pen balanced on a shell. Between the kitchen and the living area, a dining table fit for a start-up. All so clean it's bordering on virtual. The last time Linn rented a holiday apartment she was yelled at by constant signs and wall tattoos. 'Recycle!' 'Keep doors closed after 10 pm!' 'Every Drop Counts!' 'Smile, life is beautiful!' It seems it's a privilege of the rich to be left in peace by interior design. There's a kitchen island and a white L-shaped sofa that truly deserves the epithet *landscape*. Linn touches it, incredulous. Genuine leather. This sofa has the surface area of at least four full-grown Galloways. In the corner of the living room, a birdcage containing a stuffed canary is hanging from the ceiling.

'What's this?' Felix is leaning over the sink.

Otto is four years old, used to be three and will be five very soon. He explained this to Linn on the flight over, very earnestly and at length. He's installed on the sofa playing pinging games on the iPad. His T-shirt says *Plays well with others*; he's still at an age when his parents can dress him in ironic clothing, like putting a raincape on a dog. The way Otto's sitting, his shirt folded over, even this four-year-old appears seeming to admonish Linn: Play well with others.

'Come and look, what is this?' Felix asks again, and Linn goes over to the kitchen units. She sees nothing when she looks into the stainless-steel sink.

'What do you mean?'

'This.' Felix points a finger at the nothing.

'Ah.' Little grey particles, like tiny moons. Ten or more of them.

'Silverfish?' she suggests.

'Then they'd be moving.'

'Maybe they're dead,' she says, reaching for one of the long shapes.

'Don't touch!'

'Nope. Fingernails.' Linn deposits the nail on the palm of her hand and holds it up to Felix. 'Or toenails!'

'Get rid of it!' Felix pulls a face. She propels the nail back into the sink and turns on the tap. Rinses it all away.

‘How can something like that happen? What are we paying for here?’

A card on the start-up-style dining table reads: *Wir wünschen Ihnen einen wunderbaren Aufenthalt. Das Haus wurde für sie vorbereitet von / Nous vous souhaitons un excellent séjour. La maison a été préparée pour vous par / We wish you a very pleasant stay. The house was prepared for you by.* The thin line beneath bears a handwritten: *Latifa*. Linn holds up the card and says: ‘You can leave a bad review about it.’ She doesn’t notice her mistake until Felix takes the card from her and pockets it.

‘I was kidding! You’re not really going to –’

‘Momo!’ he calls out, and Linn imagines Matze’s ears pricking up, like a labrador called by its master. ‘Let’s do a tour.’

The view from the bungalow’s roof terrace is fantastic. Being higher up than everyone else makes you either humble or arrogant, thinks Matze. Beauty floods them from all sides. The sky so blue, dotted with friendly clouds for decoration. The horizon distant and the Mediterranean before it a never-ending sheen of turquoise. The beach white, the pines knotty and fragrant, the air so healthy.

‘The best shit always comes for free,’ says Felix, flinging out his arms.

Matze nods and thinks: You need money for a view like this. Sometimes he thinks Linn’s thoughts, not his own.

‘Give us that a minute,’ says Felix, and he grabs at Matze’s phone. His friend looks good. Fresh. White teeth, slight belly. Once again, Matze is surprised that Felix has got so grown-up. He can still see him as a fifteen-year-old.

Felix takes a photo of a lounge not piled up with the others, still set up on the roof terrace. The phone rests in his hand as if it belongs to him. And maybe it does. If Felix wanted, Matze would give it back to him at the drop of a hat. Felix is constantly buying new devices; the next model is always better. And then Matze gets the old ones. Hand-me-downs, still perfectly good. The last-but-one generation iPhone, the electric razor that needs charging more often than it used to, the racing bike because Felix rides a gravel bike now. In return, Matze never says no. He knows he’s doing Felix a favour by taking stuff off his hands. That’s why they now have a 55-inch TV at home, which Linn hates because it’s so huge, but she still watches wildlife documentaries on it.

‘Jeez, Momo, you need to close a few apps, you’ll leech the battery.’

‘Ah, shit, yeah.’

Felix closes the apps. Felix is paying for the holiday. Felix has his life firmly in hand. Linn once called him a spoilt asshole, and every now and then, Matze thinks she's right. He can't tell Linn about these moments; she couldn't help launching herself on them and questioning everything. Felix is Matze's oldest friend. He's a generous guy, he doesn't add it all up, he enjoys life to the full, and why shouldn't he? He's got money, so what? From up here, from the flat roof of the house Felix has rented, it feels a bit like it all belongs to him. The view. The moment. The holiday.

'Jeez.' Felix looks up from the screen. 'Is the pool empty?'

LittleMi86

12. 05. 2019

Spotting after retrieval

Hi, I'm RT+1, getting spotting since this morning. Bleeding was pink to start with, now it's brownish and only when I wipe. My ObGyn warned me it might happen, but now I'm not sure. Do any of you have experience with spotting? Shall I just keep taking the Utrogest 200?

xxfg101 12. 05. 2019

Hi @LittleMi86,

Definitely keep taking it! I'm RT+13 TF+8 and had pink on RT+1 and +2, but a bit of bleeding is normal because they puncture the tissue. If it gets too much, go to your ObGyn.

maja0203 12. 05. 2019

Hi ladies :) had retrieval of one :(follicle this morning. Fingers crossed! I'm injecting progesterone, supposed to work better that way. If your spotting doesn't stop, I'd go back to the doc too.

Linn stops scrolling; the comments start repeating themselves from there on. If there's nothing useful in the first two answers, nothing comes afterwards either. Then you have to pick different search terms or post your own question. And Linn would never do that. Only desperate people post on forums.

Her phone's on the floor in front of her as her half-naked squatting body reflects in the floor tiles, they're so smooth. The sun's slamming its millions of watts against the window and the walls bounce the light off each other, the bathroom gleaming like a chandelier made of disco balls. The rusty stripe in her underpants looks out of place. If she bent any further forward she'd be able to look inside herself.

Eva calls out 'Shit!' in the living room and Linn swallows to fight off her disgust as she inserts the suppository into her vagina. She doesn't want to take the medicine. She doesn't want the suppository to dissolve inside her into bitter foam, the progesterone to be absorbed by her membranes, her body to get confused. And yet she wants so badly for it to work.

Blood sticks to her finger and she holds it up to the light to inspect the colour. At this point, anything can be a symptom of anything. The blood is old, probably nothing to worry about.

Doctor Lang said it was safe to fly. Exactly the right time for a holiday. France's health system excellent. If need be. She's to go to hospital if her body swells up and she puts on more than two kilos in twenty-four hours. Even if she feels like a soaked sponge, if she swells up she has to drink plenty of liquids to avoid dehydrating. It's possible that her ovaries might get bloated and press against her diaphragm from below. Unlikely, though. She didn't tell Matze any of that; he'd want to weigh her every day.

She hears Eva calling Felix. 'What's up?' Linn calls back.

'I can't believe this. Shit,' says Eva.

'Shiiiiit! Otto yells from the living room.

Everything's slightly smaller than in the photos. Big enough, still. But even though she always allows for the wide-angle effect when she book a place, this time she's surprised all over again by how the holiday home really looks. Not that it's all that important to her. She's been coming to Sainte-Elise-sur-Mer since her childhood, and she and Felix have always liked trying out different holiday rentals. Above a certain price, most of them are styled the same anyway. Pared back, modern. Open-plan kitchens, living rooms with big sofas and good views. Bedrooms and bathrooms branching off on either side, for privacy. She and Felix didn't deliberately pick the bedroom with the better view, of the pines. She'd have taken the other one; they both looked identical in the listing. She'd probably even have taken the one on the left, with the view of the bungalow next door, if she'd known it wasn't as good. She definitely doesn't want Linn and Matze to feel like they're at a disadvantage because they're not chipping in. The photos didn't show the fact that the house only has sliding doors.

'Otto! No toilet words,' she says in passing; she'd stroke his head if she had a hand free. But she's holding Baby on her left arm and the spring cradle on the other.

'You said shit!' says Otto, as if he's won.

'Bubu?' Eva calls out. 'Ouch!' Baby has grabbed a strand her hair and is pulling. Where is everyone? Eva crosses the house for the third time; she can't believe it. Baby will only go to sleep in the spring cradle, the spring cradle grants her freedom. The first time Baby slept without her mouth clamped around her nipple, without any physical contact at all, tears came to her eyes. She sat crying beside her sleeping child, the rhythmic squeak of the metal

spring gentle and calming. If there aren't any door frames here, they're going to have to leave.

'What's up?' Linn calls from the other end of the house.

'Have you got a door frame?' Eva calls back.

'What?'

'Is there a door frame in your room?'

'Let me have a look.'

Eva's grateful she doesn't ask any more questions. Sometimes when she's in this state, her breathing too shallow, swearing, Felix gives her that look of his. Pitying. As if she might have lost her mind. And then he usually has a solution to the problem, so quickly that she starts to doubt herself.

Linn comes out of her room, adjusting her trousers. 'We haven't got one.'

'Take her a moment,' says Eva, holding out Baby. Linn takes her as if she were a big fat mog and she had a cat-hair allergy. With her now free hand, Eva carefully ungrips the baby fist and releases her hair.

'Where's Felix?' Linn asks.

'I'll get it sorted.'

Otto shouldn't be on the iPad so long and he needs something to drink. The suitcases haven't been unpacked. But she can't take care of any of that until the cradle's hanging. She takes a stride across the opened case. The cradle has a kind of clamp at the top, a simple hanging mechanism; they take it everywhere. Eva has spent whole evenings around a table with friends as Baby was rocked back and forth by the cradle, sleeping blissfully. She'll be forever grateful to the woman who makes a living recommending the cradle on Instagram. Except – if there isn't a door frame, if there's nowhere to attach the bloody clamp, there's no point to the thing.

'Eva?' Linn calls from the living room. She can hear Baby fussing.

'Just a minute.'

Everything's smooth. Nothing jutting. She's given up on door frames and is looking for other ways to fasten the clamp. What would Felix's solution be? If he came back now and built a hanging system with a flick of his wrist, she'd feel like a stupid child. Baby's getting louder. Hungry.

'Eva?' Linn's starting to sound desperate.

'I can't believe it, Bubu. The pool's empty.' Felix pokes his head into their room.

‘I think it wants something,’ Linn says, coming in. She’s still holding Baby away from herself. Seeing Eva, Baby reaches out for her.

‘What did it say in the listing?’ Felix asks.

‘What?’ The spring cradle is weighing down Eva’s arm.

‘Did it say pool?’

‘Yeah?’

‘If it just says pool, you just assume you can use it, right? I’d assume that, anyway.’

The baby’s getting louder, kicking.

‘Doesn’t matter.’ Eva’s voice is faint, barely audible above Baby.

‘Can someone take the baby?’ Linn asks.

‘What do you mean it doesn’t matter? If it says pool, I want to be able to swim in it.’

Eva says nothing; she takes Baby.

‘What’s the matter?’ asks Felix. ‘You seem so –’

‘What? Hysterical?’

‘You said that, not me,’ says Felix, raising his arms as if admitting defeat.

‘I can’t stay here,’ Linn whispers.

Matze pauses, holding up a pile of her shirts he was about to put in the built-in wardrobe.

‘What?’ he whispers back.

‘We have to leave, I can’t stay here.’

‘Look, just sit down a minute.’

‘I don’t want to sit down. Put them back in the case.’ She takes the T-shirts from him and throws them in the case lying open on the floor.

‘Linn. Hold on.’

‘I’m gonna lose my shit here. The baby never stops screaming and what’s all the crap about the cradle and just look at the décor!’

‘Really? I think the baby’s pretty laid-back.’

‘Do you know what this place costs?’

‘That doesn’t matter.’

‘It does matter. A house like this, right on the beach? We’ll never pay it back.’

Linn sits down; Matze puts a hand on her leg.

‘That’s not what this is about,’ he says.

‘What is it about then? His poor best friend and his fucked-up girlfriend getting to have a nice view for once?’

‘It’s five days, Linn.’

‘The beach comes with the house! No one else is allowed on it, did you see that?’

‘Five days. We could do with this break.’

And then she stops talking. Because he says we, but he means her. Her and her moods, swinging without warning for months now. Because he means they’re having less and less sex and he keeps asking her: Is anything the matter? And then she says no, although there’s always something the matter. And without saying it out loud, he’s reminding her of the plan: five days on the Côte d’Azur and then: back home a better person. Ready to accommodate one of the clumps of cells currently growing far, far away under artificial light, to incorporate it into her body. It’s a bit like in *Jurassic Park*, Linn thinks. Buildings all over the world full of eggs and sperms, in which creatures come about that ought not to exist.

During these five days, according to the plan, all the rules will be followed, all the tablets will be taken at the right time, not one single suppository will be flushed down the toilet. No stress, no doubts: Linn’s as good as pregnant.

‘Maybe we just have to be a bit more like them. I don’t know anyone else as happy as those two,’ says Matze.

Or as rich, Linn doesn’t say.

Linn blows the steam out of the window of the rented VW bus she’s just parked in the supermarket car park. The bus smells new; it’s electric. It’s like it’s laminated from inside, so the scent of weed will roll off it. Taking her vape on holiday is the one little rule she has allowed herself to break. She wants to like being here, and Brigitte helps. A vape called Brigitte. It’s ridiculous. Because it’s the name of a women’s magazine, but also because it’s an object.

Names are for giving to children. Linn doesn’t have any.

If Matze found Brigitte, Linn could look apologetic and say: ‘For the pain.’ It almost wouldn’t be a lie. Her uterus is cramping. Her elastic waistband is cutting into her belly and sitting upright is a physical challenge. This morning, long needles were stuck into her ovaries to remove six matured eggs. She feels like an exhausted breeding mare shortly before the knacker’s yard. Maybe it’s self-pity.

Spotting herself in the mirror of the supermarket windows, she’s shocked to see her belly. Like she always has been, all her life. It never looks the way it’s supposed to. She

sucks it in enough to stop her T-shirt feeling tight. Of course she's stood in front of the mirror, looked at herself from the side with her protruding belly and wished she didn't have to work so hard for it. Wished she could carry a well-shaped bump with the confidence she's seen in other women. But what shocks her isn't a bump, it's a soft bulge. A useless flaw.

The automatic doors slide open with the sound that sand makes when it's somewhere it shouldn't be. It grinds and hums and she's standing in the typical glaring light and fishy scent of a supermarket in the South of France. The overly cooled air makes her shiver.

The shopping list is a crumpled piece of paper. She takes it out of her trouser pocket and smooths it out. Shopping for everyone. She's slap-bang in the middle of the 'holidaying with friends' game. Starting with the group selfie they took at the airport before departure.

Their heads squeezed into the frame, happy faces of people looking as if they really liked each other. Apart from Eva, they're all old enough to mourn their lost youth, and young enough to wish back their current age in a few years' time. Felix's hairline is receding like the tide going out. His forehead takes up a lot of space in the picture, his cheeks are soft and shiny; he never could grow a convincing beard. He's the happiest of them all, holding the camera despite having the shortest arms. He's short and stocky, everything about him looks slightly squashed. Him having such a young, beautiful wife is a cliché. Ten years younger than the others in the picture – Eva, the only one whose smile isn't marred by unflattering wrinkles. A mouth like a bed with too many pillows, everyone wants to launch themselves onto it. Eyes like someone dabbed on extra colour. Her hair has this almost ridiculously gorgeous wave to it, with a golden shimmer. Every time Linn sees Eva, she looks for dark roots or some other sign that her hair is dyed. She's never spotted anything. Where are the children in the picture? The baby, which doesn't seem to have a name, and four-year-old Otto, who looks like his father, just with more hair. Matze has one arm around Linn, the other around Eva and Felix. He looks hopeful. Linn's own face is only half in the picture. And maybe that's just about right. Half there.

Now, though, she's here in the supermarket, buying food, collecting Brownie points. She knows she's going to need them.

It's too colourful. It's too everything. Noisy, cold, much. Her brain is making the familiar mistake of not seeing the mass of things as a unit, perceiving every single item separately, every pack, box, tin. The thought that all this is to be eaten, consumed and emptied settles heavy on her chest. She stops, massages the soft place between her thumb and forefinger. The spot she's supposed to press when she feels that firm, merciless grip on her

windpipe. ‘Pardon,’ says a heavily made-up retiree in an accusatory tone, scraping her enormous trolley past Linn’s as if the aisle wasn’t ten metres wide. She breathes back a flight response and feels anger burgeoning because she has to do so. Because she can only deal with life with the aid of breathing exercises.

Can you see this?

No?

Here.

Doctor Lang made a swift motion, circling something invisible on the screen with the end of her pen. Linn pushed herself up, half naked, legs splayed. The device inserted into her pressed into her side from within.

That’s your ovary.

Ah.

Linn wasn’t sure. Maybe something good? She saw no indication of that in the doctor. *You can usually see the follicles here, getting ready for ovulation. It can get pretty crowded.* Doctor Lang laughed. Then she stopped. *I can’t see any follicles in your case.*

The people around Linn are blithely shovelling ultra-processed food into their trolleys. The smell of dead fish comes from a wide metal counter covered in mounds of artificial-looking ice. Right next to it is the generous cheese counter, as if there were some hope of the smells cancelling each other out. Linn tries to decide between seven kinds of capers in the next aisle along, breathing through her mouth.

A sun-tanned arm reaches into her view. Hairy. Too close. She backs off slightly and looks at the man who just held his arm in front of her face as if he wanted her to lick it. A golfer, well off, sweatshirt over his shoulders. Slip-on shoes, shorts, guaranteed a convertible-driver. Maybe a doctor. A dentist? Or a gynaecologist. He has the kind of full hair that makes men over fifty unpleasantly confident. He smiles, straight white teeth. Linn takes capers she didn’t want and pushes the trolley out of the aisle.

She loses her bearings, can’t find the kitchen roll, gets bumped into as she’s reading the shopping list for the fifth time. The golfer’s smile is a grimace, shoving its way into her brain from the left over and over. He watches her failing at the simplest of tasks, his expression amused. The loudspeakers play an advert for white bread, excitable voices over French pop. Buy two, get one free. A palette of peach yoghurt costs less than three pots of strawberry.

Everything's cheaper when you take more of it. She can't stop calculating how much crème fraiche they might use over the next five days.

Crémant by the crate. She loads the boxes onto the trolley's bottom level. As she's bending for the third one, something touches her backside, briefly but clearly. The golfing doctor is standing close behind her, leaning slightly forwards as if to take something from the shelf above her, or to take her from behind. He says 'Pardon,' without meaning it. And he grins.

'Piss off.' And then it's her that walks away.

She pushes the trolley along aisles she never wanted to go down, feeling her heart thudding and goosebumps on her scalp; why do they sell clothes in a supermarket?

Mugs, deep-fat fryers, irons, this must be the kitchenware department. Of course she won't tell the security guy there's an asshole in the store, who cares? There it is: kitchen roll.

It doesn't take her long to find him again. He's by the meat. She keeps her distance, studying the way his sweatshirt is draped both loosely and accurately over his shoulders, his self-assured gait with his feet turned slightly outwards, his firm calves and the sun-bleached hairs on them. The asshole's planning a barbecue. Everything he's buying is marinated. Her palms are stuck to the trolley, the rental-car key boring into her right hand. Why didn't she put it in her pocket ages ago? It bothers her every time she takes something from a shelf, but still she keeps hold of it. She follows the asshole into the cereals aisle. It's long and empty but for two boys, about six years old, apparently twins. As the asshole pushes his trolley towards them, something inside her tenses up, ready to defend the children if the stranger attacks them. But then they launch themselves at him, chattering in French, showing him the kind of breakfast cereal they want. He's a generous father, lets them put the box in the trolley. He laughs, looks up, sees Linn. He raises his hand, the hand that was just on his son's shoulder and before that on her backside, and waves. Waves at her. A short, abrupt motion.

She looks at him; he winks at her. Two seconds, three, then she turns and walks away. Behind her, she hears one of the twins asking who the madame is.

His wife must be here somewhere, she's sure of it. And while she's unpacking the shopping back home, he'll be wanking in the guest bathroom. Not because he's ashamed of doing it in the big family bathroom; he's just in too much of a hurry.

As Linn approaches him again, he's studying the label on a bottle of rosé, reading glasses moved from the top of his head onto his nose. The boys are nowhere in sight.

'Hey, you.'

Matze took a taxi to pick her up. Now they're sitting in the purring VW bus; it looks like a pumped-up bumper car without the upright pole and Linn has nothing but disdain for it.

'The thing with the key wasn't on purpose. I should have put it in my pocket but I was scared to lose it and then –'

Matze looks like he's got a headache. His hands are gripping the steering wheel too tightly. She's not sure he ought to drive in this state of mind.

'If I hadn't had the key in my hand...'

She must have made a pretty picture when Matze got out of the taxi. In the midst of the clamouring wife, the smoking security giant and the bleeding golfer, pressing a tea towel and a packet of frozen peas to his face. The twins had lost interest a while ago, were kicking an empty yogurt pot across the car park.

It looks dramatic, of course, when fabric soaks up blood. But the bleeding was long since staunched by the time Matze finally got there. Linn didn't have to convince the golfer not to call the police. Unlike his wife. She screamed and gesticulated so wildly that Linn felt a flash of something like sympathy for the man, standing there absolutely unshaken and occasionally addressing a pacifying word to his wife. Nobody wanted any more fuss; even the security man just wanted to go home. Only the wife seemed to be enjoying her outrage.

Linn sighs.

'The guy was an asshole, Matze. He groped me.'

She knows this state of mind he's in. When he stops answering, can't even look at her. The story has to be really convincing then, and Linn usually talks more than necessary.

'And I let myself be chased away like a farmyard hen. I made space for him, what an idiot I am. I bet he does it all the time, groping and grinning and pressing his dick against strangers' asses. He's used to getting away with anything.'

Matze is staring at the road, turned to stone; she feels her rage tipping into fear.

'He had two kids with him! You think that stopped him? No, it's so disgusting. Two little boys. Twins. Even when he dies he'll still be around. Two of him.'

She tries to calm herself down by looking at his badly shaved beard. The worse she feels, the more she has to concentrate on his flaws.

Matze is attractive in a way that rewards you when you go to the effort of looking twice. Few people do. That gives Linn the pleasant feeling of having discovered hidden treasure. And no other woman will ever be a threat to her, because nobody has the half-a-heartbeat's time it takes to spot his sparkle. Attention has to be earned, and Matze is bad at

that. He has the body of a man who ought to have done more sport when he was younger. Not fat, but a little too soft. His hair is thick, dark, handsome. But because he has no awareness of other people's gaze, he doesn't arrange it. Doesn't keep it in check. His hair is always that bit too long to be a style, and sometimes Linn plucks a single thick stray one from the tip of his nose or his shoulder blade when they're on the sofa together.

Matze has pulled over wordlessly by the side of the road. Linn feels the tremors of the cars passing the VW bus. They stare out of the windscreen, the bus feeling too small despite being so spacious. The air smells artificial. Matze is sitting there wearily; you can tell how much energy this life demands of him. This life with Linn.

'He had a cut, Linn. On his face! He could have pressed charges.'

'A scratch, not a cut. It's just that the face bleeds so much.'

She's making it worse, but it really wasn't a cut.

'A tiny laceration. Not a real cut!'

He's not going to agree with her, not in this state of mind.

'You've got to do something. You can't get people like that get away with it.'

Maybe she's exaggerating slightly, but you have to when you want to convince someone.

'It's not just about me. Who knows, maybe I've prevented countless women from getting groped by him. By doing what I did.'

'You're talking it up too much.'

'Can't you just be on my side?'

'We're here with our friends.'

'Your friends.'

'You have to stop doing this.'

'Am I supposed to put up with it? Just do nothing?'

'You have to stop.' He says it calmly and quietly. That makes it worse. That calmness of his, which she loves, unless he turns it on her.

'It wouldn't have happened if you'd been with me.'

That's his sore spot, and she knows it. When he hasn't done enough. And right now, it's the only thing she can think of to make her not the only one at fault. Matze turns his head and looks at her. And that's enough for her to manage to say, albeit quietly: 'I'm sorry.'