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**Maxi and Mo - Love & Co.**

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## Bubblegum and Broken Dreams

That's done it! I've just got to tell Mo about this straightaway, otherwise I'll simply burst. I race through the pedestrian precinct without looking where I'm going, rush past Mum's flower shop and turn left into the shopping arcade. People move out of my way of their own accord when they see me coming. Today I don't look like

someone to be messed with.

Damn it! This really shouldn't have happened, not again. Not to me, Maximiliane Düwel!!! But I'll make him pay for this, that jerk who thinks he's Casanova, that underwear model, with his massive conk and that smouldering gaze. Jesus! Those eyes... I scream out loud. People turn round to look at me, a dachshund joins in, howling in unison. Let him! I dig my hands deep into my pockets and crush the piece of paper into a tiny ball.

The stupid note he sent me:

Hi Maxi;

I'm incredibly sorry about the other day.

Shall we give it another go?

Today at 3 p.m. by the old oak-tree?

I'll be waiting for you

Patrick

He's incredibly sorry. Don't make me laugh. But he will be sorry. Incredibly sorry!!! I'll make sure of that. Mo and me.

Oh help! Seriously, no one but Mo must ever find out that today I was hanging around under that oak for the third time in a row and the bugger simply didn't turn up. When it happened the first time, he came up with some story about his grandmother suddenly having to be rushed into hospital. I believed that one. The second time, he tried the same story again, except that unfortunately for him I happened to see the "grandmother" with my own eyes. She is blonde, 15 years old, called Isa, and evidently has a preference for cropped tops and strawberry ice-cream. I watched as she practically ate the ice-cream out of his hands, but even that didn't stop me going to the meeting place again today.

"How stupid can you get?" I ask, when I'm finally sitting on the couch in Mo's room.

"You're not stupid!" says Mo, chucking a banana-coloured cushion at my head. "You're just infatuated!"

"Isn't that the same thing?" I ask in a muffled voice.

"Well yes!" says Mo, grinning from ear to ear. "But stupidity is a permanent condition, whereas 'being infatuated' is an extreme but transitory state. You'll get over it."

"The sooner, the better!" I snarl, pummelling the cushion in my hands as if I wanted to strangle it.

I do some serious soul-searching. Perhaps I'm deluding myself, but it feels as if I may be over the worst already. A minor improvement, anyway. At least it's not quite as bad as it was in the beginning.

The first time I saw Patrick was in Mum's shop. I sometimes pop in on my way back from my piano lesson and stop her working for a while. She was just in the middle of making one of her famous, totally awesome wedding bouquets, when Patrick walked into the shop.

„Gnmphrr!“, she said with a load of twigs and greenery in her mouth. Which was meant to come out as,

“Maxi, can you take care of this, I can't right now.“ Or something like that. So I went over to the counter.

There he was, and that was it as far as I was concerned.

I have no idea if it was because he is so drop-dead gorgeous. (Dark hair, lovely eyes, beautiful mouth, cool



gear – just the whole outfit). Or the fact that he has such an amazing smile. Maybe it's that incredible way he has of looking at you, the steady gaze he fixes right onto you, or the rich warm voice.

In any case, he said "Hello!" in husky tones. "I hadn't expected to run into such beauty here," he said, whilst looking deep into my eyes and winking.

Damn it! I only need to think about it and my stomach lurches, though the line sounds like it comes straight out of one of those ancient, corny Hollywood films that Mum sometimes watches.

"Traitor!" I say. Mo eyes me quizzically. "Just talking to my stomach," I explain and hurl the cushion against the wall.

"If I start crying as well, it'll cost him extra!" I squeeze out the sentence between clenched teeth, because I can already feel the tears welling up in my eyes. Delighted, Mo leans back luxuriously, folding her arms behind her head. "So, what are we going to do to this guy?" she asks. Her eyes are sparkling mischievously, ready for adventure.