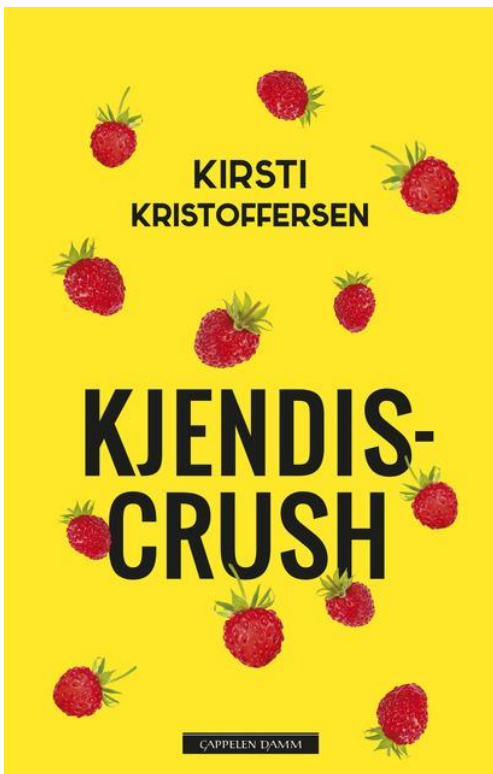


# Cappelen Damm Agency *Spring 2022*



## Celebrity Crush

What if the person you love suddenly became the most famous person in the country?

*Celebrity Crush* is the first book in a trilogy by Kirsti Kristoffersen, who probably knows more about fan culture than almost anyone else in Norway.

In the first book, Karoline meets Mathias at a remote campsite during the summer holidays. Everything is perfect, but there's something a bit odd about Mathias. What is he hiding? The scene is set for love, drama and a shock. First love, first kiss, and a campsite.

"*Celebrity crush* is a feelgood holiday read for teenagers. [...] The novel evokes the feeling that 'anything' can happen on summer holiday, regardless of where you are."

"Kristoffersen puts into words what many experience at that age, to not know whether the friendship will survive growth and development."

"The book engages me and makes me almost – almost – nostalgic about that first all-consuming love."

**Maren Dahl Keller, Periskop.no**

'Hurray for teenage love'

"Co-reviewer Molly Nagel [12 years old] is in the target audience and sped through the book in record time. And was delighted. 'I can't wait to read the next two books. I give it a five out of six stars!'"

**Jan Øyvind Helgesen and Molly Nagel, Nettavisen.no**

"It is a summer flirt-daydream that many will recognize, that serves as the basis for Kristoffersen's debut. Kristoffersen really captures the summer holiday feeling, so that the reader practically can taste the field strawberries and smell the sunscreen through the pages."

"[Kristoffersen] describes well the feeling of being so in love that it makes you dizzy, and how inexplicably awkward it is sometimes to be a teenager."

**Nora Steenberg, Bok365**

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## Kirsti Kristoffersen

Kirsti Kristoffersen is one of Norway's leading fan culture experts. She has worked in management for various names including child stars Markus and Martinus. She has also written two books about the artists. She now works as a publicist at Gyldendal.



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**Celebrity Crush**  
Kirsti Kristoffersen

## Synopsis

### *Celebrity Crush*

Spending her summer holidays at a secluded campground with Grandma was the last thing Karoline wanted, but here she is, and she's sour as vinegar. She can see on Instagram that everyone else is on way better vacations than her. Why couldn't she have a life like her celebrity crush, Chrissy? Completely carefree and able to do whatever she wants?

Things get a bit better when she gets to know a girl named Norah, who's spent all her summers at the campground. Norah is fun, energetic, and knows the campground and all its guests inside out – except for one new camper that shows up overnight. A camper that probably the cutest boy in the entire world comes out of. They both saw him, but then it's like he disappears into thin air, that is until Grandma's camper gets a new neighbor. It's him and his family, and the boy introduces himself as Mathias. He eats breakfast with Karoline and her grandmother as though it was the most natural thing in the world before he asks if Karoline can show him around. They hit it off right away.

Karoline, Mathias, and Norah become good friends and it seems like they can talk about almost anything, but there's something strange about Mathias. He has some kind of summer job in Oslo that he has to go to occasionally, but every time someone asks him what he's doing, he becomes evasive and won't answer. Karoline and Norah both have strong feelings for Mathias, but who does he like? Karoline's never kissed anyone before and never even had a boyfriend, and this is without a doubt her first big crush.

One morning, she surprises Mathias at the camp reception, where he's being followed by a camera crew... and... is that Chrissy? The artist, the host, the celebrity Chrissy – Karoline's celebrity crush! What's he doing with Mathias at this tragic, isolated campground? Karoline is completely starstruck, but meeting Chrissy leaves her with a bad taste in her mouth. He isn't as charming in real life as she'd imagined. Still confused, she gives Mathias the chance to explain himself properly that night when he gets back. He tells her that right now, his job is to go on auditions, and Karoline draws her own conclusions based on what he says: Mathias is a great singer, and Chrissy must be holding auditions for someone to make a song with him. They're filming all of it to post on Chrissy's Instagram. That must be how everything is connected... or is it? Mathias is relieved to have told Karoline at least some of his secret but insists that she doesn't say anything to Norah.

Mathias and Karoline sneak out in the evenings after the grown-ups have all gone to bed. Karoline is practically bursting with love and can't stop dreaming about the perfect first kiss. One night, they're caught red-handed after

lights out by Karoline's grandmother and the camp owner, Nes. Karoline is grounded the next day and has to watch Norah and Mathias head off on their own. Later that evening, Norah tells Karoline that she's convinced that Mathias has a crush on Karoline; he's been talking about her all day and Norah has had to admit to herself that the battle has been lost. Karoline's grandmother realizes something is going on and gives her permission to visit Mathias. He's set up a tent in the main square and Karoline finds him there, strumming on a guitar. Karoline finally gets to hear Mathias' singing voice when he sings for her and the German tourists in the tent nearby. Then, they finally, finally, have their first kiss. It's Karoline + Mathias = <3 for the rest of the summer. But vacation is short and the future is uncertain. Every time Karoline wants to talk about whether they should stay together, Mathias just answers that it's "complicated". And it is true after all since they live on opposite sides of the country – but it doesn't have to be that complicated, does it? After a tearful and heartbreaking farewell, they finally agree not to have any contact once summer is over. It will just be too painful.

Back at home and at school, Karoline is brokenhearted, and nothing seems to matter except for Mathias and the time they spent together that summer. No wonder she thinks she's seeing him everywhere: on the bus, in a passing car, in store windows. At Emma's house after school one day, she even sees him on TV – but this time it isn't something she's imagining. Mathias actually IS on TV, in a commercial for a new show that there doesn't seem to be any more information about right now. Karoline is in shock. Was this what Mathias was talking about this summer? Then, the news breaks on every social media channel at the same time: Mathias is one of the participants on this fall's big talent show, which Chrissy is hosting. Mathias didn't mention anything about this over the summer, did he? Or did she just misunderstand? Karoline is stunned, confused, and in shock, and it doesn't get any better when she sees what's hanging outside the local store: An enormous poster of Mathias with the text "Norway's dream guy" and "Coming soon". WHAT is going on?

## Sample translation

*Celebrity Crush (Kjendiscrush)*  
*by Kirsti Kristoffersen*

*Publisher: Cappelen Damm*  
*foreignrights@cappelendamm.no*

*Translation © Wendy Gabrielsen*  
*Translation Grant Support received from NORLA*

If anyone had told me beforehand what this summer was going to be like, I wouldn't have believed it. Wouldn't have believed that I was going to meet someone on this very ordinary, boring holiday, someone who would turn my whole world upside down and make my heart explode. And that I was going to be drawn into a world full of secrets and superstars, a world I could never have imagined being a part of.

*Yeah right, I'd have said. Get real.*

But then this turned out to be the summer when *everything* happened.

## Chapter 1

"HEAVENLY HERSJØEN," it said in big, black letters on the yellow sign that came into view as we drove into the campsite. We'd passed the nearest town many kilometres back, then the airport, and the last few minutes there hadn't been anything to see but forest and the odd little housing development along the road. And then Heavenly Hersjøen Camping. The dust swirled up and formed a kind of cloud around Grandma's small red car, and I glanced at the old-style storehouse that acted as the reception. The wide yellow sign stood on the roof of a dark brown log building that looked more like a cabin. There were some old prefab huts dotted around the large turnaround space and a few benches on the grass.

"Do they actually have horses here now?" I asked, pointing at the sign. It had symbols on it of both a horse and a fish, plus a fork and a spoon, and a figure diving into a rough patch of sea.

"Hmm, horses?" answered Grandma, busy driving though the open barrier and up to the camping area itself.

"Forget it."

There were big expanses of grass stretching out to the right and the left, upwards and downwards. Small slopes separated the clusters of caravans and cabins from each other, with long hedges dividing them into different floors, sort of. The hill led up to a large, low building that I remembered was the shower block and washrooms, then it flattened out on the top, where there were even more cabins, and the caravans stood huddled together.

“I’ve moved to Beverly Hills since you were here last,” said Grandma, grinning as she took a right turn.

I had no idea what she was talking about but sure enough, there was a little sign saying “BEVERLY HILLS” next to the driveway. We drove a bit further and then she parked outside the caravan.

“I recognise this, at least,” I said and Grandma smiled.

It occurred to me as I undid my seatbelt that the caravan would probably feel a lot smaller now than the last time I was here. Everything had seemed so huge back then; the caravan and Grandma’s awning was like one big playground, and the rest of the campsite felt enormous. That was many years ago. But once I was out of the car, on my way into the awning with a holdall that was supposedly big enough for everything I would need the next few weeks, it all felt surprisingly spacious still.

“Wait out there till I’ve aired it a bit. It’s really stuffy in here,” called Grandma from inside. I didn’t answer, I just dropped my heavy bag on the grass and crossed my arms while I surveyed Hersjøen Camping. Maybe it made sense to call it Beverly Hills after all. There was a view of the whole place from here, and the sun was high in the sky shining right at us.

When I was little, there was no end of things I could find to do here. There were always kids to play with, or I could kick a ball down on the grass, pick strawberries, jump in puddles or keep an eye out for toads when the sun went down. But now, what on earth was I going to do here now?

This wasn’t at all how the summer was supposed to be. Me and Emma should have been at her cabin by Lake Eikeren now, all by ourselves, just doing whatever we wanted, getting really tanned and probably meeting new people, maybe even some boys. It should have been the kind of summer you read about in books or see in movies, a summer you never want to end. But my parents had soon put an end to all *those* plans.

“You didn’t think you’d be allowed to stay out there with Emma and her family the whole summer, did you?” Mum said last week, giving me her “you’re not as grown-up as you think” look, the one she gives me every time she would rather I was a little kid so that *they* could decide everything.

“Why not? They can afford it!” I almost shouted back, without mentioning that the rest of Emma’s family weren’t going to be at Lake Eikeren at all, but at their other cabin in the Blefjell mountains. Mum rolled her eyes and said that wasn’t the point.

“What *is* the point, then?”

“The point is, as long as you live in our house you follow our rules and do what we say,” she said. The classic mum argument that wins every time.

Mum and Dad had finally decided to do up our house. I’d nagged about getting a new room for as long as I could remember, and they’d talked about it for ages. When I’d almost given up hope of them ever doing it, they suddenly made up their minds, saying it was best I was somewhere else the whole summer.

“So then it works out perfectly that I just stay at Emma’s!” I argued.

“No, you’re going to be with Grandma. It’s all arranged. And Grandma’s so excited! You really like being with Grandma, don’t you? Think how nice it’ll be for her to have company the whole summer when she’s normally all on her own,” said Mum, cocking her head slightly.

It was so fricking unfair. All that talk about young people speaking up and saying what they think so they can be a part of the decision-making process, but it only seems to apply to letters about the environment to the editor of the local paper. And it was so damn mean of her to play the “poor Grandma” card, just to make me feel bad. Because it wasn’t about her. Grandma’s pretty cool. But it would have been a hundred times better if I could have decided myself when I wanted to visit her, and for how long. Now I was stuck here. Against my will. The whole summer. And not in that good movie kind of way – unless it was a horror film.

I took a picture of the view and sent it to Emma. “Arrived safely, now stuck here at prison camp,” I wrote. She answered nearly straight away, with a picture of the view of the lake from their cabin, and it looked so cool. “Know what you mean. Stuck here too!!” she wrote, but she obviously didn’t get it. *She* wasn’t trapped. She was exactly where we both wanted to be. I sighed and put my phone in my pocket.

An elderly couple came walking past, each with a towel over their arm, and they gave me a short friendly nod. I nodded back, trying not to stare at their wrinkly old bodies, dressed just in swimming gear and crocs. Saggy dark brown skin. I gulped. Grandma came back out and held out her phone to me.

“Your mum’s calling,” she said.

I shook my head furiously.

“No?”

“Tell her I don’t want to talk to her,” I said, so loud that I hoped she could hear it at the other end.

“She seems to be rather busy looking at the view,” said Grandma into the phone, giving me a meaningful look over the top of her glasses.

I shrugged. Mum could ring *me* if it was so important. Then I could just *not* answer.

“Okay, yes I will. Bye then,” I heard Grandma say from inside the awning before she came back again and lifted more luggage out of the car.

“You mum sends her love.”

I didn’t reply. Mum didn’t deserve an answer. Just thinking about my parents gave me a nasty feeling in my stomach. I was still angry with them, and that cast a shadow over everything else. Even if it wasn’t actually Grandma’s fault.

“You were so lucky to get this spot in Beverly Hills,” I said in the end, after she’d gone back and forth to the car twice while I stood there with my arms crossed.

“Luckier than Ingvaldsen, at least, the last bloke that had it!” said Grandma cheerfully, as she carried in the last of the things from the boot and disappeared into the awning.

“Oh? What do you mean?” I picked up my bag and followed her in.

“He only went and snuffed it!” called Grandma from inside the caravan, and I felt myself blush. I quickly checked to see if anyone else had heard her. But there wasn’t anyone else around. Probably best to get used to it straight away – Grandma always blurted things out like that. And probably best to get used to old-aged pensioners parading about in their swimming things with skin flapping everywhere. Not to mention the campsite’s merciless hierarchy: for someone to make their way to the top and get the choice spot, someone else has to die. (RIP.)

## Chapter 6

Sometime after my failed phone calls, Norah came round, and we went for a long walk all over the whole campsite. Each time we strolled past The Prairie, I glanced discreetly at the large caravan Mathias had appeared from, but it was obviously empty. The car had gone, and everything looked closed up and locked.

“Can you just leave your caravan here and not come back and get it for ages? Like weeks and weeks?” I asked Norah, trying to make it sound like a completely random question.



“Nah, don’t think so, at least not in the summer when there’s so many people here all the time,” she said. “Why?”

“Just wondered,” I said.

She didn’t seem to think it was a weird question. Almost quite the opposite, because Norah made it her summer mission to initiate me into absolutely all the campsite’s secrets. Everything from where the biggest wild strawberries grew to when you really shouldn’t go into the washrooms, depending on which campers had been there first.

“Yuk,” I said.

“You bet!”

She pointed out the campers that had been regulars the longest, and that had nearly “grown roots and probably think they live here”, as she put it. She said that Nes, the man that ran the whole campsite, was usually super strict but sometimes he was in such a good mood he gave away free fries.

“It’s best to bump into him right after he’s had a delivery of new stock for the kiosk, and preferably not on the weekends,” Norah said in a serious voice. “Because most of the time he’s as grumpy as a bear that just woke up.”

We stood outside the old storehouse up by the barrier and watched while Nes talked to some tourists in there. He towered over the narrow counter, and from where we were standing it looked like he filled the whole doorway and more besides. Or maybe it was just the storehouse that was rather small with a low ceiling.

“He doesn’t look grumpy now,” I said.

Norah shrugged.

“Come on!”

The gentle slope down to Beverly Hills was covered in raspberry bushes, but according to Norah there wouldn’t be any berries till much later in the summer.

“You see that caravan over there?” she said, pointing towards the washrooms. “The woman is married to the man she shares the caravan with, but before that she was married to his *brother*. Can you imagine? She’s got kids with both of them, so they’re like siblings and cousins at the same time,” Norah said confidently, and went on in detail about everything she knew while we walked round again, past semi-regulars, regulars, tourists, day trippers and all the other names Norah used about the people there.

It wasn't easy to know if I should believe everything she said. Sometimes her imagination clearly took over, for instance when she claimed that the very fat man with the gigantic dog lying outside his caravan had killed his wife.

"They used to come here together but now he's alone here and his wife's dead," Norah said quietly as we approached. "He probably gave what was left of her to the dog," she whispered, just as we went past it. The dog lifted its head slightly to look at us and wagged its tail half-heartedly.

"Sure," I said. "Except then he'd be in prison. And the dog doesn't exactly look like it'd eat human remains," I added, while it followed us with its big doggy eyes.

Norah just looked at me.

"Whatever," I said. I refused to believe that a guy with a pink plastic parasol outside his caravan could have killed anyone. But I hurried past all the same.

The second day after we'd first seen the boy with the fair hair that might be called Mathias, his caravan had gone from The Prairie. Had it been there when I went into the shower block? I'd probably been too tired to remember to look. I should have realised. After all, Norah had said several times that The Prairie was mainly for tourists just passing through. There was really no reason to be disappointed – we hadn't even spoken. But now there was no chance it could ever happen. A wave was all I got. I trudged back up to Beverly Hills in my flip-flops, feeling the chilly drops of water trickling down my back after the quick shower I'd just had. It was still early, and most of the campsite hadn't woken up yet. The only ones up were a few tourists that were about to leave, manoeuvring their cars and caravans and motor homes from where they'd spent the night, before heading off to continue their holiday. The usual buzz from children, radios, barbecues, conversations and chats over hedges and along paths hadn't yet started. How long had I been here now? Impossible to say. Not very long, though it still felt like an eternity of days all merged together. The campsite had already become kind of one big unit, like a beehive, and I was sucked in as part of the community, existing at my own pace like everyone else.

A huge yawn brought tears to my eyes. My bed in Grandma's caravan was perfectly okay, but now that the summer sun had finally arrived and roasted the caravan from early morning onwards, it was like waking up in a sauna – I was so hot and sticky I almost suffocated. That's why I'd started showering as soon as I got up. Sometimes I didn't even put five kroner in the slot to get hot water. I just stood under the ice cold shower for as many seconds as I could bear, feeling my body coming back to life and reaching its normal temperature.

Just before I got back to Grandma's caravan, I suddenly spotted Nes a few metres away. We didn't often see him down here among the caravans, except in the van he usually drove round in. He was now stumbling backwards down the hill, flapping his arms around like mad. *He's going to fall flat on his face*, I thought to myself. Then I saw why he was waving his arms so madly. A massive caravan was being reversed into the vacant spot next to Grandma's, and Nes was presumably guiding it in. With limited success.

"Watch out for the hedge!" he shouted, still lurching backwards in his clogs. It was fascinating to watch. And after a few minutes of intense activity, he wiped off the sweat from his forehead with a rag he had in his pocket, and was obviously pleased with the result.

"I thought he was going to fall flat on his face," said a voice in my ear suddenly, and I jumped. I'd been so engrossed by the scene in front of me that I hadn't noticed the person that now stood right next to me. I quickly turned round. It was him, now standing very much nearer than last time I saw him. Mathias. His hair seemed even fairer close up, and he was grinning. I gulped. And it felt like my stomach was suddenly running riot, like something was turning somersaults in there. I gulped again, afraid I was about to throw up on the shoes of the best-looking guy I'd ever seen. That would have been something.

"I thought he was going land on his arse," I answered in the end, with a quiver in my voice.

"No way you can walk backwards down a hill," said Mathias.

"Not in clogs, at least," I said.

Mathias laughed.

It went quiet, and I suddenly became aware of what I looked like. Flip-flops, wet hair and a childish, pink flowery bathrobe that was far too small for me over shorts and a singlet. I was holding Grandma's hopelessly old-fashioned toiletry bag as well. I must have looked like a cross between a ten-year-old and an eighty-year-old. I could feel myself blushing – so damn annoying.

"Have you had a shower?" he said, like he'd only just noticed me properly.

I simply nodded. Best to change the subject.

"Is that your caravan?" I asked.

"Yep! We've taken over the spot from Dad's aunt or someone, no one I've ever met," he said. "We already had the caravan, and my brother's going to a bandy summer camp or something not far from here, and I've got some stuff going on too. So my parents decided we might as well just stay here all summer."

"Oh right, I thought you'd left already," I said.

*Jeeesus! Why did I say that?* Now I'd just revealed that I'd been keeping an eye on them, an eye on him. But he didn't say anything, he just looked at me and smiled.

"Are we going to be neighbours then or what? Is that yours?" he said, pointing at Grandma's caravan.

“Not mine exactly, it’s Grandma’s. I’m going to be here all summer too, with Grandma, because my parents are doing up our house back home, and it’s about time because I’ve got the ugliest room in the world, and first I didn’t want to be here, but now I think’s okay,” I said.

*Why did I tell him all that?* It was like I couldn’t keep my mouth shut when he asked me something, couldn’t plan what I was going to say before I’d said it. It just poured out of me. And normally I don’t really talk to people I don’t know.

“Right,” he said.

A couple that must have been his parents were busy pushing the caravan into place, with Nes as an eager spectator not really helping physically, but standing there in his clogs with his arms crossed shouting instructions like “Bit more to the left, that’s it!” and “Watch out for the hedge!” again.

“Maybe I should help,” he said.

“Maybe,” I said.

“My name’s Mathias by the way,” he said, and suddenly he’d turned round to face me and was looking me straight in the eye. He held out his hand too, and I was blown away by those green eyes of his that were locked onto mine.

“I know,” I said.

“Do you?” he said.

*Oh for God’s sake, really? Just shut up!*

I shook his hand. It was warm and dry and it held my hand firmly.

“Well?” he asked, raising his eyebrows.

Of course, now I had to give like a quick, cool answer and say my name, but my head was all over the place and I practically had to extract myself from his gaze.

“Karoline, with a K,” I said, and could have bit my tongue off as soon as I said it.

“With a K – I’ll remember that,” he grinned, then he let go of my hand and went over to his parents.

I stumbled off towards Grandma’s caravan. The smell of coffee meant she was up. “Karoline with a K.” How could I be such an idiot? Like it was roll call at school or something, not the answer to a question from the best-looking guy I’d seen for an eternity. I collapsed into one of the chairs in front of the awning and held my head in my hands. So typical. Wasn’t he just incredibly cute? I thought about all the times Emma had nagged about what kind of boys I liked so she could compare them with the kind she liked, and I’d never had a good answer because I hadn’t dared to say Chrissy and admit I liked older guys that looked like actual Ken dolls, at least from a distance.

But now I had a better answer. Quite tall, with blonde hair. Intensely green eyes. A voice that made my stomach tremble. Not like a Ken doll at all, but with eye teeth that stuck out a bit each side at the front.

“Fancy finding you here!” said Grandma, coming out of the awning with a cup of coffee.

“Yep, here I am,” I said.

“I think I might buy you a new bathrobe. That one must have been here since your last visit years ago,” said Grandma. She chuckled, leaning back in the other chair to drink her coffee.

Great. Thanks for reminding me that the most gorgeous guy in the world had just seen me in the ugliest garment ever. But there was nothing I could do about it. It was my own fault I’d worn that hideous robe.

“That’d be nice,” I said, trying to sound cheerful. “I think I’ll go in and change.”

## Chapter 11

After a while I started to wonder if maybe Norah really liked Mathias too. Liked him properly, just like I did. I liked him more and more, and to begin with I thought maybe I liked him in a good mate sort of way. But it wasn’t like that. Whenever I looked at him I wondered how it would feel to run my fingers through his hair, or how it would be to kiss those lips. Whenever we walked together down to the beach or up to the reception, I thought how easy it would be to just take his hand in mine. We could have held each other’s hands as we walked through the campsite like it was the most natural thing in the world. And each time he happened to touch me, or we sat next to each other and our thighs or knees met, I thought to myself that it meant something. Even though it probably didn’t. And each night before I went to sleep, I would go through the signs that maybe he liked me a bit too.

Sign number 1: He always showed up here of his own accord, morning and evening, wanting to hang out with me. And Nora, I suppose. But he always came here first. Sign number 2: He often said things like “I saw this and it made me think of you”, or laughed at things I said, even if they weren’t very funny. Sign number 3: He often touched me when he talked to me, either my shoulder

or knee and once my thigh too. It made fireworks go off inside me every time, and that had to mean something, didn't it?

But maybe he did exactly the same with Nora as well.

We sat on the steps behind the washrooms, the perfect place to observe everyone's comings and goings without anyone from Beverly Hills being able to see us. Not that Grandma ever kept an eye on me in the evenings, but still.

Norah sat on the top step, Mathias and I were on the second from bottom. He seemed distracted, and was drawing things in the dirt with a stick. I followed his movements with my eyes, my view only obscured by the occasional tourist going past us with their washing up, or walking along the gravel road. Norah was scrolling on her phone like she often did. "I follow far too many things," she would say if I asked what she kept checking all the time. But what exactly she followed, she didn't say. She just made the odd cry now and then, about so and so doing this and that, usually people I'd never heard of. Except Jordan, who I'd recently come to know intimately.

Mathias's phone rang, and when he saw the number he frowned.

"Hello?" he answered hesitantly, but then his face broke out into an enormous smile and he got up from the steps and walked away from us, chatting to whoever it was that had called.

"What if it's his girlfriend?" said Norah, looking at him as he walked off.

"You reckon he's got a girlfriend? He'd have told us, wouldn't he?"

Norah shrugged.

"Not necessarily," she said. "After all, he's got a load of secrets."

"Has he?"

I could feel my pulse pounding in my throat. What did Norah know that I didn't?

"Yeah, all that stuff about his job for example. He says he's got a job in Oslo but it doesn't make any sense because he's hardly ever there. Maybe he's got a girl that he visits," said Norah.

I didn't answer.

"Has he told you about that job too? What did he say?" I asked after a while.

"Nah, just that the job's very important and means a lot to him, and that he's a bit scared he'll mess it up and stuff. I get the feeling he's not really sure he deserves it, know what I mean? That's what it seemed like when he talked about it, at least."

I gulped. Norah had managed to get more information out of him than I had.

"When ... when did he say that ... to you?"

"Dunno, one of the days we were wandering around here," said Norah, fixing her gaze on Mathias again. "He's really cool, you know," she added.

"Hmm," I said, looking over at him as well. My heartrate hadn't exactly slowed down after what Norah had said. It wasn't only that she was obviously interested in Mathias, but they'd also been hanging out together without me. I was stunned just thinking about it, though it probably should have occurred to me earlier. Who knows what they got up to while I sat watching TV with Grandma, thinking we'd all gone in.

"What are you two talking about?" said Mathias as he sauntered up to us, having put his phone in his pocket.

"Nothing. Who were you talking to?" asked Norah.

"No one," said Mathias.

Norah rolled her eyes.

"Oh, come on. We could see whoever it was made you really happy," she said.

Mathias was still standing there, and it looked like he didn't know if he should sit down or leave. He crossed his arms and looked down at us.

"Tell us, then. Who was it that called?" Norah insisted.

“It was nobody,” said Mathias biting his lip uneasily. I really didn’t want him to leave us just because Norah had decided to grill him. Even if I also wanted to know who he’d been talking to.

“Who gives a shit anyway? Just sit down,” I said.

“Whatever,” said Norah getting up.

“Are you going?”

“Just to the loo,” she said and disappeared round the corner.

Mathias sat back down on the step beside me. He didn’t say anything, he just put his arms over his knees and rested his chin on them. I didn’t say anything either for a while, until I couldn’t restrain myself any longer.

“Have you got a girlfriend in Oslo or something?”

He sat up straight.

“No! Christ, no!” He shook his head furiously.

“You can just tell me if you have,” I said.

“Karoline,” he said, putting his hand on my shoulder, “I haven’t. I promise.”

“Okay,” I said, staring at the tiny little cabins in front of us, the ones Nes called the matchboxes.

“It’s work, I swear. I’m not kidding. But I can’t ... I mean, I’m not allowed ...”

He spent too long searching for the right words and didn’t manage to say anything else before the crunching of gravel meant Norah was back.

“I will tell you, I promise,” Mathias whispered, removing his hand.

It felt warm there for a long time afterwards.



## Chapter 28

(...)

Had it rained at all this summer? Yes, of course it had. But it wasn't possible to remember those days, even if I tried. The only thing I saw when I closed my eyes was long days filled with sun and beach and strawberries and Norah and Mathias. And now it was over. The rain couldn't have been more timely, like it was pre-ordered to mark the end of the holidays. Norah and her family were leaving today already. We'd said goodbye the night before, and it was really sad.

"Promise you'll call?" said Norah.

"Promise," I said. "Promise we'll see each other here next year?"

"Cross my heart," said Norah. "And you and me don't even live that far away from each other. Maybe we can meet up at half-term?"

"Hope so," I said, giving her a long hug. I thought miserably about the way she said "*you and me* don't even live that far away from each other". As opposed to me and *Mathias*, is what she meant, reading between the lines.

"I'm going to miss you so much. I'm not even mad that you two kept sneaking around every night without me," she said.

The surprise must have shown on my face because she laughed at me.

"Did you really think you could keep something secret here at Heavenly Hersjøen? No way."

Her dad honked as they drove past the caravan, and I waved from the opening of the awning, with long streams of rainwater running down the plastic windows.

Grandma went back to Oslo without me and I was alone – completely alone – for the first time in as long as I could remember. Grandma had folded up the last of the clothes she'd washed for me and left them neatly on the edge of my bed. Just that nearly made me cry. Couldn't we have had only one more week, for God's sake? There was nothing at home to look forward to. I wasn't even remotely excited about how our house looked now, not even after the enthusiastic phone calls from Mum and Dad, who told me about one thing after the other that would be ready before I got home again. I hadn't heard from Emma for ages. Great, she'd probably dropped me, on top of everything else. So it wasn't enough that I was leaving the best thing that had ever happened to me; I was going to be sitting at home on my own in that new, sterile room of mine. I started to pack. At the bottom of my holdall were still the emergency supplies I thought would be lifesavers: novels and games and exercise books ready for long, boring days that never materialised. Even that was sad right now. And instead of packing my things properly, I shovelled the pile of clean clothes straight into my bag and then threw all my other stuff on top. It was a mess. But what did it matter now?

My phone pinged.

"It's raining ... any bright ideas?"

"I'm home alone today. Want to come over?" I wrote, and about three minutes later I heard the sound of the zip on the awning being pulled up and Mathias's voice saying "Hello?"

"In here," I said, and with just one big step he was inside the caravan.

"You're so good at packing," he said ironically and sat down on my bed.

"Hmmp," I said and went out to the awning to dump all my things.

Back in the caravan Mathias lay stretched out on my bed looking at the books by my pillow. The sight of him made my side twinge. He was frowning as he read the blurb on the back of one of the books, and it was simply the sweetest thing I'd ever seen. My colourful bead bracelets, which I always left on top of my books at night, were now on his wrist.

"What?" he said when he realised I was looking at him.

"Nothing. You look so sweet," I said.

“Come here,” he said, putting the book down and opening his arms out wide. I lay down next to him, and felt his arms around me and the rain hammering on the roof.

“Funny to think I’ve never been in here before,” he said.

I grinned.

“So this is where you were while I had to stand outside, scratching at your window,” he said.

“I couldn’t exactly have asked you in,” I said.

“No, you have to be careful who you open your windows for. Beware of the camping crooks,” he said, turning round to kiss me.

“Beware,” I said, lacing my fingers into his.

We lay still listening to the rain for a while. Mathias hummed quietly while I plucked up the courage to start to say what had to be said.

“When ... when are you leaving?”

“Tomorrow,” said Mathias.

“Oh.”

“Yep. When are you leaving?”

“Tomorrow.”

“Hmm.”

“How long does it take you to drive home?”

“More than twelve hours, I think, if we don’t stop at all. What about you?”

“Only two,” I said.

If Mathias lived twelve hours away in one direction and I lived two hours away in the completely opposite direction, that meant we altogether lived more than fourteen hours away from each other. God, it was so unfair that we had to live in one of the longest countries in the world.

“What are you thinking about?” Mathias asked softly.

“That we should’ve lived in Denmark. It’s not possible to live so far from each other over there, whether you like it or not,” I said, and Mathias’s arm behind my neck shook when he laughed.

“True. We should’ve lived in Denmark. But we don’t.”

“Nope.”

Neither of us wanted to say what had to be said. We just lay there side by side on my little sofa bed listening to the rain.

“I just ...” started Mathias.

I held my breath.

“I just wanted to say that this autumn, I mean, whatever happens this autumn and winter, I’ll never forget this summer. I’ll never forget you,” he said.

That was one way of putting it.

“What do you mean, ‘whatever happens’?”

He sighed.

“It’s complicated. I don’t know what to say,” he said.

‘Complicated’ again. That’s what he said last time.

“Okay, so it’s complicated. Or else it’s actually fucking simple,” I said. “You live up there and I live down here, and it’s hopeless.” My voice cracked as I said those last words and the tears stung behind my eyelids.

“You think we’d have had a chance otherwise?” he said, and his voice sounded thick too.

“Yeah. But I just can’t bear the thought that I’m going to be one place, you’re going to be another, and we’re never going to see each other again.”

The tears started trickling down my cheeks and I did nothing to stop them.

“Hey,” said Mathias, pulling me closer. I cried into his T-shirt. It smelled so familiar to me now, and it was impossible to imagine not smelling that smell every day anymore. He caressed my back and kissed my hair.

“I know this is shit, but I don’t see how we could manage to be together,” he said in a low fuzzy voice.

I just cried as an answer.

“But we can still call each other, FaceTime and stuff, and text and ...”

I shook my head.

“No?”

“Oh Mathias, that would just make it worse. Seeing you hanging out with loads of people I don’t know, with girls all around you and stuff, I really couldn’t bear it.”

“So you don’t want to stay in touch at all?” He sounded hurt.

“No! No, *that’s* not what I mean. I don’t know what I mean,” I sobbed, burying my face into his chest again.

Mathias held me, stroking my back until my breathing returned to normal and I rolled over and dried my tears.

“Damn! ‘They were found lying dead on their backs. Cause of death: broken hearts and dehydration after crying so many tears. Little did they know that the solution to their problems was just to stay at Heavenly Hersjøen forever’,” said Mathias.

“Is that your first ever ‘if I died today’ joke?”

“I guess it must be! Don’t tell Norah,” said Mathias, starting to laugh. I laughed too, and my gasps of laughter mixed with gasps of sobbing until it wasn’t possible to tell what was what.

“Jesus. Just think, this is the last time you’re going to see me and *this* is what you’re going to remember,” I said, covering my face with my hands.

“Yep. When my mates ask if I met anyone this summer I’ll say yeah, she was nice, but it was a bit of a pain that she cried so much the whole time. Just kidding,” he added quickly. My hands were still covering my face but underneath them I was smiling.

“Hey, you,” said Mathias, moving away my hands. I looked straight up at him, his face next to mine. “I hope you know you’re the loveliest girl I’ve ever met.”

“And you’re the best-looking guy I’ve ever seen, I’ve thought that right from the first time I saw you,” I said.

“Karoline with a K,” he said softly.

“You’re magic.”

He kissed me, and maybe because I never wanted to let him go I pulled him even closer towards me, feeling his weight on top of me. Our kisses became more intense than they’d been before, and his hand started moving underneath my T-shirt. Then he stopped and looked at me hesitantly, and I nodded, allowing his hand to continue. I felt shudders all down the side of my body. He kissed my throat and I buried my hands in his hair before moving them inside his T-shirt. His back was warm. I’d seen Mathias without a top on hundreds of times but it was like it wasn’t the same body. Like it had a totally different effect on me now that he was so close. A thousand thoughts raced through my head but I couldn’t focus on any of them. It was just us and the rain.

“I so don’t want you to leave me tomorrow,” I said in the end, my lips dry and my head dizzy from all the kissing. Mathias was lying next to me again, with one arm behind my neck and the hand wearing my bead bracelets playing with my hair.

“And I so don’t want to leave,” he said. “But you know what we’re going to do now?”

“No?”

“We’re just going to lie here, you and me, and listen to the rain, and not think about the future at all. Roger, Karoline with a K?”

“Roger.”

## Chapter 30

(...)

Fresh August air enveloped me on the way down the avenue from Emma’s house. I sat down on the bench by the bus stop and got out my phone again. Staring at the screen shots I’d taken from the YouTube video, I tried to sort out the thoughts in my head. I knew this at least:

1. Mathias said this summer that he went for an audition to make a song with Chrissy. And they filmed some stuff for Chrissy’s Instagram.
2. Now he was in a promo for a new TV show. That was something else completely.
3. Someone on Twitter said something about Pop Idol for the whole of Scandinavia. So a much bigger deal than what Mathias had made it out to be.
4. Mathias had lied me. I didn’t know yet what exactly he’d lied about, but he certainly hadn’t told me the whole truth. All the times he said things were so complicated, was it really this he meant, and not us?

And that was it. I had far more questions than answers, unfortunately. All the things I *didn’t* know gave me a headache. What kind of show it was, when it was going to be on, and what kind of consequences it would have for everything else. Was Mathias going to sing? Who were all the others in the promo? Did Chrissy have anything to do with this? Was it a Scandinavian competition, which was already recorded? Was everyone going to know who Mathias is?

And so on. And the worst question of all, which I just kept shoving to the back of my mind, even though it was the only one churning round and round in my head as I sat there feeling my world was falling apart: Why didn't he say anything to me about it?

And like a magic signal the phone I held in my hand suddenly rang, snapping me out of my train of thought.

## Chapter 31

It was nearly 4 o'clock when I got off the bus in the centre of town. It was Mum that had called, and now she'd sent me a message with the things she wanted me to buy on the way home. Mince and onions and spaghetti, I read, and from the corner of my eye I saw Mathias smiling at me. I'd almost got used to seeing him everywhere now, in TV promos too, so I didn't jump in the same way as I had on the bus to Emma's. Now I knew what was real and I could just ignore the rest. But who was I trying to fool, really? I didn't know shit, but at least I'd learned not to trust all the impulses my brain was sending me. So that's why I didn't turn round to double-check that it wasn't actually Mathias I saw from the corner of my eye when I read the shopping list from Mum. Of course it wasn't.

I held my phone in my hand as I walked towards Kiwi. Mum kept sending messages adding groceries to the shopping list, then asked if I had enough money on my card. While I was answering her, it was like my phone got the hiccups. It flashed and beeped in a barrage of messages and notifications that came flooding in at almost the same time. I pressed the side of the phone to make the screen go black. Then I pressed it again, and all the notifications appeared one after the other. Mathias Lund has posted a photo. Chrissy has posted a photo. TV9 has posted something on Twitter. TV9 has posted a video. Mathias Lund has posted a video. Chrissy has posted a photo. Chrissy has added something to his story. Mathias Lund has posted a photo. Chrissy has posted a photo.



My phone must have frozen. I checked Mathias's notifications first. But it wasn't a bug, he *had* actually posted three pictures one after the other. They were all of him and all glossy, like they were taken straight from a magazine and could have been posters. He was in the same outfit in all three photos, the stripey sweater I recognised from the promo, and with my bracelets around his wrist. His pose was different in each of the pictures, but otherwise they were identical. The captions just showed a date. "September 6<sup>th</sup>." "September 6<sup>th</sup>." "September 6<sup>th</sup>."

My throat tightened. September 6<sup>th</sup> was next Friday, a week and a half away. What was going to happen then? What was he up to? And not only had he posted three pictures, he'd also deleted nearly all the other pictures he'd had there before. Not that he'd had so many, but now there were only three old photos there in addition to the three new ones. Perfect symmetry. I didn't know if I should feel happy or sad that the most recent picture was of Beverly Hills. He'd kept it. The yellow heart from me still shone in the comments. But otherwise it was all cleared out to make room for this new Mathias with long, fair hair and an Instagram smile just like Chrissy's. I'd seen it before during the filming at Hersjøen, which was now even more confusing to think about than ever. Where was *that* promo?

Chrissy's profile was pretty much the same. Three pictures of him in a row wearing three different-coloured suit jackets, with perfect hair and his famous grin flashing dazzling white teeth. "COMING SOON," it said under the first photo. "THE BIGGEST TALENT SHOW YOU'VE EVER SEEN", it said under the second. "HOSTED BY YOURS TRULY. SEPTEMBER 6TH", under the third.

*What the hell?*

More Twitter notifications appeared while I stood there trying to understand what was going on. TV9 had obviously opened the floodgates too, and while I stood there staring at the screen, the tweets came pouring in one after the other: "The biggest talent show in Scandinavia!", "The biggest stars you've never seen", "Which Scandinavian country will win the whole thing?", "You've never seen anything like it", "Tomorrow's superstars are ready to show you their talent".

And so on. The few accounts I'd chosen to follow literally exploded. Chrissy posted the whole TV promo on his story before reposting loads of reactions from his fans, who had presumably got the same notifications as me. I didn't know what to think. It was hard to collect my thoughts and make sense of anything at all.

*Spaghetti and onions*, I thought to myself. Spaghetti and onions, I could manage that. I clasped my phone as I walked towards Kiwi's main entrance. Then I decided to check it before I came out with the groceries. From the corner of my eye I casually noticed Mathias yet again. *Jeeesus*. But I still looked up at him, up at the massive wall right opposite the shop. It was just the one huge poster up there, rather than the usual two smaller ones, and just the teeth of the guy in the picture were maybe two metres wide and impossible to miss.

MATHIAS IS THE WHOLE OF NORWAY'S NEW DREAM GUY

*Sponsored by RVS. Coming soon to TV9.*

I gulped. He looked really good. It wasn't one of the pictures he'd posted himself but it was the same kind: glossy and shiny and colourful. I could see that his smile wasn't quite real, though. It was like it didn't reach all the way up to his eyes, like he was a bit nervous. Probably no one else would notice it, but to me it seemed a tiny bit fake. My hands shook as I woke up my phone again and found Mathias's number. Whether it was over or not, I had to know if I'd gone mad. Completely out of my mind. There was one short, strange ringing sound before a robot woman's voice said: "This number is no longer in use."

My legs went all shaky and unsteady, and I suddenly felt cold all over my body. My heart had started racing some time ago, working flat out, and my brain was desperately trying to keep up with the latest developments.

*Oh my God, Mathias, what's going on? What are you doing here? What's going on?*

That's the last thing I remember thinking before it all went black.