Heidi Marie Vestrheim: Jenny Fender

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**SYNOPSIS**

Translated by Megan Turney

Represented by Gyldendal Agency

[Anne.cathrine.eng@gydendal.no](mailto:Anne.cathrine.eng@gydendal.no) and [nina.pedersen@gyldendal.no](mailto:nina.pedersen@gyldendal.no)

Jenny and Signe are best friends and next-door-neighbours. They’ve wanted to be rockstars for as long as they could remember. The girls get home from a school camping trip, and the summer holidays begin. The only thing they’re interested in doing this summer, is starting their band. And the plan is as follows:

* Come up with a cool band name (needs to be *really* cool)
* Book a gig (the problem being that there’s nowhere good to play in this godforsaken town)
* Make some wicked t-shirts (all rockstars have their own merch)
* ~~Learn to smoke~~ (smoking = puking)

The dream is to play to thousands of fans one day. Travel around the world on their tour bus and visit all the coolest places and drink coca cola in all the cool cafes. And they will NOT be wasting their time on crushes and relationships, which they’ve noticed some of their classmates start to do. They have an agreement: No silly relationships. No silly kissing. Just the two of them. Forever.

Things start off well, and they manage to come up with a name for the band: Neighbourhood Announcement. Not only that, but the same day they land on a name, Jenny’s dad – who’s in charge of organising the local cider festival – asks if Neighbourhood Announcement want to be the support act at the concert for the Cider Boys. Of course they do! Jenny runs down to her best friend’s house to tell her the good news, only to find the family in a very sombre mood. Signe, crying her eyes out, informs her that they’re moving. This summer. To Stavanger!

My life is over, Jenny thinks. How will she cope without her best friend, and how were they meant to prepare for the concert when Signe wasn’t even here? They spend the whole of the next week on the phone together, and things only go from bad to worse when Signe tells her that she has to leave even earlier than expected as she and the rest of her family are going away to their holiday house in Spain. Which means it’ll be utterly impossible to find time to rehearse – that leaves them with just two days to practice right before the festival. What a disaster! They decide that if they’re going to impress anyone at this concert, they’re going to have to play their very own music, and they agree to use their time apart to write a song, and work on it over the phone.

Soon though, the new neighbour moves into Signe’s old house. Jenny sneaks outside to spy on them as they unpack. Peering round the redcurrant bush she’d chosen to crouch behind, she was just about able to catch a glimpse of someone she thinks might be a tall, thin teenage boy, with cool hair and a ripped t-shirt. This surprises Jenny – no one in this town wears anything ripped? But it isn’t until the new neighbour comes into the farm shop (where Jenny is working over the summer) that she realises that the boy is, in fact, a girl. She introduces herself as Sara, and looks very, very cool.

When Signe asks Jenny whether she’s seen the new neighbours yet, Jenny chooses not to tell Signe about Sara. Instead, she says that she hasn’t seen them but that she bets that they’re just an old couple from the city who wanted to move to the countryside for some peace and quiet. But that couldn’t be further from the truth, as Sara had not only already moved in with her dad but had started destroying the trampoline Jenny had inherited from Signe. It was, admittedly, still in the new neighbours’ garden, but still! It even turns out that Sara and her dad are both musicians – Sara plays the drums and her father plays bass, so they need space in the garden to build a little studio.

Jenny can’t bring herself to tell Signe this – how would she feel if it was Signe who had a cool, new neighbour with a crooked smile and who played the drums?

Besides, Jenny can’t get hold of Signe for several days anyway, and presumes she’s either off on a boat somewhere or swimming in the pool or flirting with some idiotic Spanish boy instead of picking up the phone and concentrating on coming up with the melody and lyrics for their song. What is she up to down there? Jenny feels like Signe doesn’t have time for her anymore, and that she’s probably too wrapped up in whatever’s going on between her and *that pretty boy Fabian*.

Back home, Jenny and Sara grow closer and closer. Jenny mentions that there’s a cider festival coming up, but neglects to tell Sara that she’ll be performing at it as one half of Neighbourhood Announcement. Sara attended the Øya festival in Oslo several years in a row, and is a huge fan of several Norwegian rock bands that Jenny’s never even heard of. Jenny feels stupid, and is scared that Sara will think she’s childish for singing English cover songs and trying to write an original song with Signe about *being best friends*.

Signe finally picks up the phone, but the conversation quickly gets heated when Jenny accuses her of caring more about Fabian than the band.

Jenny is utterly miserable about the whole situation, and the rain chucks it down outside. After a very wet day and night, Jenny heads down to Uncle’s to help clear out his shed and everything that got damaged from the flood. Sara comes down too and gives them a hand. On the drive over to the rubbish tip, Uncle lets slip to Sara that Jenny plays the guitar AND is going to perform at the cider festival! What if Sara comes to the festival? And now Jenny feels guilty for not telling Signe about her new neighbour sooner! But Jenny still can’t bring herself to say anything – she’s worried that Signe will think that she’s replaced her with Sara. That she’s found herself a new best friend she can start a new band with… but this is different.

The day before Signe was due to visit, so they could practice and perform at the festival, Sara asks Jenny if she would join her on one of the boat tours into the local caves. What Jenny doesn’t know when she says yes to going on the trip, however, is that the tour is planned for the day before the festival. When Signe and Jenny were going to spend all day practicing for the concert.

When Signe finally arrives, the tension between the two girls is palpable, as they hadn’t spoken since their argument over the phone. Jenny also has a big problem. She can’t pluck up the courage to send Sara a message and tell her that she can’t go on the boat trip. She knows she needs to tell her of course, she just hasn’t gotten round to it yet. The evening before the trip, Jenny decides she’s just going to have to send Sara the message to cancel, when she suddenly receives a text from Sara herself – a red love heart – and she feels butterflies that she’s never felt before.

Early the next morning, Jenny tries to sneak out of her room without waking Signe up, but gets caught. Signe asks Jenny where she’s going, and she tells her that she’ll explain everything later, but at that moment she had a boat to catch.

The boat tour turns out to be kind of magical. Or, a little tragic at first, as they get lost inside one of the caves, but Jenny comes to Sara’s rescue and finds the way out, as she also discovers that Sara gets quite claustrophobic. But that’s when the magic happens. Deep inside one of the caves, before they meet up with the other tourists, who are all standing and staring up at the rock carvings on the cave ceiling, the two girls kiss.

When the trip is over and they come back to land, Jenny decides that she has to come clean. But how is she going to explain everything to Signe? And where is Signe anyway? She’s not at Jenny’s house. Jenny’s mum informs her that Signe went down to Uncle’s, where Jenny finds her, sitting under an umbrella in the rain. Jenny tries to explain, all about how the new neighbours weren’t actually an old couple, but a girl who’s about to start eighth grade, who’s very cool, and that this with Sara feels more like love than just friendship, and that it doesn’t mean that Jenny has found herself a new best friend. But Signe tells her that the band is done, that she can’t be play music with someone who lies to her for the sake of a *romance*.

Come the day of the festival and Jenny is gutted, as she won’t get to play the concert with her best friend, and Signe won’t pick up the phone or reply to her messages either. She had just given up trying to get a response from Signe when Sara walks into the shop. She can tell that something’s wrong, and without knowing why, Jenny tells Sara everything. Sara responds by telling her to call Uncle, and that she mustn’t give up! Uncle doesn’t pick up, but sends Jenny a message saying that he’ll get Signe to go to the festival with him, and Jenny will have her chance to fix all of this.

Jenny gets to the festival, but can’t find Signe anywhere. To get a better view, she climbs up onto the stage. It’s there that she notices that all of the equipment for the Cider Boys is set up and ready for the concert. She grabs one of the guitars and starts singing the song she and Signe had been working on, which she finished writing last night by herself, after everything that had happened on the boat with Sara and at Uncle’s with Signe.

Jenny hopes that Signe will hear their song, and that she’ll understand and forgive her.

Just as Jenny feels like she has no voice or courage left, and wants to give up, she hears Signe singing behind her. Signe gets on stage too and duets the chorus with her! The crowd goes wild, Signe and Jenny head-bang and nod along and raise the sign of the horns to the crowd before collapsing onto the sofa backstage, where they agree that they both went a little nuts this summer. Signe reveals that she and Fabian kissed. Three times. There’s a knock on the door and in comes Uncle with Sara in tow, who Signe is finally introduced to. Sara gets them to autograph her t-shirt before she heads back out onto the dancefloor, where she waits for Jenny.

Jenny joins her outside, where Girl in Red’s ‘I Wanne Be Your Girlfriend’ is playing, and they dance until they’re dizzy.