

Ann Helen Kolås Ingebrigtsen: ANGRY (Sinne)

Sample translation

Part 1

“Have you gone stark raving mad?”¹

It’s crazy how fast a day can turn from so boring and normal, to becoming a total disaster that flips your whole world upside down.

I’m not talking about the type of disaster like “Oh no, my hair looks greasy and I don’t have time to wash it before school.” More like the type of disaster when your parents ambush you at home and tell you: “Surprise! We’re getting divorced!”

I’m being serious. This is the story of my life. It happened one completely bog-standard day, a few weeks after my confirmation. I thought the biggest challenge that day was going to be how to make sure we had tacos for the third time that week. Sometimes I get that thing when you get hooked on something and can’t eat anything apart that thing for days. This time it was soft tacos. I would happily have eaten them every day at dinner for weeks.

Well, I *got* my tortillas. Served together with that ugly word had now come between us. Divorce. Well, bon appetit, I guess.

Unexpected disasters like these make up pretty much my whole waking life, and everything seems to suggest that I should have been prepared for those words. But sadly, it’s not that simple. Because all of that *A new day, a new opportunity* nonsense doesn’t really sit well with me. A new day usually means more chances to cause more drama - something I’m an expert at. Why? Because I have ADHD.

Mum always says that I was even born making a racket. When I first began my journey out into the world, she was with Dad at the shopping centre buying some last

¹ Ronny Wiltersen, *Harry Potter og de vises sten*

essentials. It was still another three weeks before I was actually supposed to be born, but I was too impatient.

Mum's waters broke, streaming down her legs and out under the racks of clothing. At first she just carried on picking out baby clothes, as a massive puddle was forming around her shoes. Then Dad freaked out and tried to get her to lie down on the ground. She flat out refused and he was forced to get help from one of the people who worked there.

When this stranger first came over to her, Mum reacted really badly. She always defends herself by saying that Dad loses his common sense when he gets hysterical. It wasn't long before the ambulance came to take them away. But by this time it was too late. I was already on my way out. And so, the first light of day I saw was from under a clothes rack covered in discount tags.

I've got better at waiting my turn, but I'm still pretty impatient. Anyone who knows me would probably agree.

An irritatingly loud noise jerks me out of my daydreams. My hand, heavy with sleep, slams into my bedside table so hard it catapults my phone out onto the floor. With half-open eyes, I slowly crawl out of bed. Feel the weight of my body as I put one foot in front of the other. I pick up my phone. Run my fingers over its keys. Hogwarts lights up through the morning gloom, its high-reaching turrets looming across the screen. The phone still works, despite my rude awakening. Thank goodness, because it's a brand new iPhone. One that cost me plenty of months' worth of incessant begging until I could call myself its lucky owner. After all, the divorce kind of disasters can often cause parents to feel guilty, which can lead to great rewards. Especially if you know which strings to pull. I turned my phone off silent mode. It might still turn out to be a good day.

A moment later, the phone starts buzzing in my hand. It's Johan. He's been sending me snapchats every day this Autumn half term. First I just thought it was to keep his streak up, but then more and more started coming, until we'd spent the whole week sending memes to each other and chatting way past bedtime.

It feels weird to be about to see him again. Before the break he was this mysterious, handsome boy who moved here after the summer holidays. He's still mysterious and

handsome, but now he's also Johan. Johan, the boy who I now know simply has to eat O'boy and jam sandwiches every day. Who I now know has to watch at least two episodes of Friends before going to bed. He's asked loads of times whether we should go out and do something together, but I couldn't be asked. What if he's just kidding around with me?

I gaze around the room, wondering what I should wear today. I think the worn out hoodie at the bottom of my bed looks like the most likely option, but then again, I've been wearing that all week. I notice a pile of folded clothes on the chair next to my desk.

Vibeke palmed them off on me the last time I was visiting. "Everyone's wearing these," she had claimed.

The thought of Dad's new girlfriend sends a chill down my spine, but I shake it off and pick up the clothes. I would never have chosen these for myself, but decide to try on a pair of jeans and a knitted jumper.

I try as hard as I can to ignore how much the jeans are pinching my waist, and how the jumper itches more than a fresh mosquito bite. I tell myself that this is the type of clothes that I should be wearing. All the girls at school are, so I should too.

I count to ten, clench my fists and bite my lip. Deep breaths.

My forehead begins to prickle. Little red prickling dots that simmer and bubble through my body, filling me with restlessness. It's the ADHD taking over. I shut my eyes and breathe even deeper, letting the air fill me right down to my stomach.

Breathe in, breathe out. Tortillas. Tortillas. T-o-r-t-i-l-l-a-s.

Buffalo-Berit, the school counselor, is the one who taught me this breathing technique. She asked me to choose a word. The first thing I thought of was tortillas. So now when I can feel my anger building up, I say the word tortillas over and over again while I focus on controlling my breathing. It's like my very own tortilla mantra.

The red mist fades to pink and the prickling in my fingertips slowly disappears. I open my eyes and slowly exhale. I picture Johan's hazel eyes and feel more calm immediately. But these trousers have to come off before my intestines burst. The threads of the jumper are

itchy too. I give my back a stretch and try to ignore them, but it's like they're agitating every nerve in my skin and cutting me like knives.

Now the red mist is extending all around me and I can't keep it in check. It's simmering and boiling away under my skin. The bubbles begin to burst. I rip and tear at the sleeves until I finally manage to get the jumper off. Then I stomp into the bathroom.

In the end, I put on my hoodie and make my way down to the kitchen. The coffee pot sits on the counter, on a slow boil. The rich smell of roasting beans wafts through the air. Ulrik is already at the kitchen table slurping up his cereal, head buried behind his paper.

Ulrik's still-damp, blond hair glistens above the paper. He definitely woke up at some ungodly hour in the morning again to exercise before school. He's in his last year at high school and has known what he wants to do when he's older ever since he was five years old. The complete opposite of me, just bumbling around without rhyme or reason. In Mum's words, of course. But then she's right of course. I have no idea what I want to be, and there's no way in hell I'm gonna get up before sunrise to exercise either.

I grab a bowl from the kitchen cupboard and sit down opposite Ulrik. Take the box of cereal and pour milk into the bowl on top of it.

I start humming and tapping the tabletop with my fingers. I know Ulrik likes to be calm when he eats, but my arms and my feet never stop moving, and I can never seem to manage to stay still.

He's not saying anything, but I can feel him getting annoyed behind his paper. He smacks his lips. Smacks his lips and starts slurping his bowl, louder and louder. It's like a competition between us. Who can be the most annoying. The one who keeps it up the longest, wins. We've been doing this sort of thing for years.

I refuse to give up. Ulrike doesn't look like he's throwing in the towel either. Although his clenched fists do give away how irritated he is.

I increase my efforts. Turn up the volume a notch by starting singing. Still not a word from Ulrik. I decide to go all in and belt out the chorus until the ceiling light starts to shake.

And there it is.

“Can you please just shut up!”

His words booms through the newspaper. When it gets right down to it, he’s not so tolerant after all. I feel satisfied with my victory and quieten down. At least, I try to.

Mum comes in just as he’s shouting and looks at us, exasperated.

“Can’t I have a single morning without your racket?”

This hits home for Ulrik, who sits up with a shameful look.

“Sorry, Mum.”

He knows how rough she has it. Yet I can’t quite stop myself from gloating. I love teasing him. Mummy’s golden boy. Always so calm. The complete opposite of the black sheep - of me.

Poor Mum, with those tired eyes and her dressing gown in such a state. She looks so worn out that I feel a little bad, too. I realise that we’re heading into one of those countless misunderstandings that might have been avoided if he-who-must-not-be-named was still here.

Dad’s non-stop good mood was kind of like the glue that held this family together. Especially in the mornings. These days, we just lurch around shouting at each other, without any idea of who is going to take up the role of family optimist. Times like these are the absolute worst. Times like these, we forget that Dad isn’t just about to stroll in whistling a little tune and ask whether we’ve read the news so he can update us in slightly too much detail. Most of the time, it was so boring that I didn’t listen to him. But now I would be more than happy to offer him five minutes to get an insight into the USA’s foreign policy, or to hear about what idea some or other Norwegian politician has just come up with.

But it’s too late now. His empty chair stares at us from the other end of the table.

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When the bell rings, everyone in the class immediately runs to the door. It’s all about being the first one to the toastie maker in the canteen. We use it so often that an oil stain is beginning to climb up the wall. Torunn and I manage to get hold of one and start heating up

our sandwiches until the cheese sizzles over. Torunn picks them up and gestures over to the brick wall in the corner to signal she's going to save me a place.

I buy some chocolate milk from the canteen, open it up and let the cool liquid run down my throat. Need to cool myself down after that embarrassing Norwegian class. But before I reach Torunn's spot, Kine, Jørgen and their whole back row gang have already sat down with her. There isn't a single seat free. Are you *serious*?

"Can I sit here?"

I feel so lame having to ask.

"Yeah, sorry, but all the seats are taken," says Kine, looking incredibly pleased.

"Well shuffle up, then."

Torunn waves her hands at them.

"We can probably manage to squeeze you in."

Kine shuffles over and sits in the lap of Jørgen, who sneers so smugly it's enough to make you sick. He whispers '*Cat Fight*', then licks his hand and pretends to be cleaning his fur. Kine makes a sly grin and miaows.

"There's a free spot now, *Angry*."

Kine twists the sound of the word slightly so that it almost sounds like my name to the others. But I know what she said.

The word conjures up a thick lump in my throat. Kine whispers something to Jørgen, then they both look at me and laugh.

I swallow. The lump slides down my throat, and tears gather into a loaded cannon. Before I hear a word about it, I've already squirted chocolate milk in Kine's face. Coated in brown gunk, she stands there looking right at me, dripping wet and still as a stone.

Her eyes flash with black. Her glare is killing me, and I realise I've lost control for the second time today. But it's fine. I'm a cat with nine lives, and I have seven left. I stand up and walk off.

Three. Two. One.

Just a few moments pass before I feel my hair snag and I go flying backwards.

Kine.

Who else?

But attacks from behind are nothing to a cat like me. I make use of my best weapon and dig my claws into her face, boring my nails into her skin. Jørgen shouts something from behind me, beaming. Kine is screaming and slaps me right in the forehead.

I just about manage to tear her away before being lifted up and thrown to the floor. It's Buffalo Berit. Wheezing and gasping like the raging bull she's named after. She's only missing a ring through her nose.

"What in heaven's name are you doing, girls?!" she booms, surrounded by a smoke cloud and stomping with her hooves.

"Into my office. Now!"

Kine trots after her. I follow behind, with a tail between my legs. I cast a glance at Torunn, who's sitting with Johann. She nods towards my still-warm toastie, and shakes her head.

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I can't go home after school. Can't be asked with all of Mum's nonsense. I wonder whether I should ask Torunn if she wants to hang out, but I'm scared Kine is going to tag along again. She stuck to Torunn like a horsefly in school today, and now I've had it with her. I walk down the path, casting a few glances around me as I try to think up a plan. The leaves in the trees have changed colour from green to brown. A few of them have lost their grip and now lie in the ditch like blotches of paint.

When I reach the crossroads where Johan and I parted yesterday, I realise something. He has asked me so many times to go do something together, but I never take him seriously. Like, what does he want with me? But it's different now. He actually seems interested. I get out my phone and send a snapchat with a picture of the lamppost. I press send before I can change my mind. Put the phone back in my pocket and wait for a reply.

I can see his shadow long before I feel his hand on my back. I spin around.

"Hey, there!"

He looks almost like a criminal with his hood hanging low over his forehead, and black clothes that matches his hair. His piercing eyes flash out from his silhouette.

"Hi!"

I go all shy again, and try to make up for it by giving him a playful punch in his side. Wow. How old am I? Eight?

"Just had to get out of my house. Mum never stops nagging me."

"Yep, I feel that."

He runs ahead of me, turns around and starts walking backwards. Which means he's giving me his full attention. My stomach tingles.

His yellowish eyes lock with my own until I have to look away.

We walk down the road with slow footsteps. Don't know where we're going. I shove my hands in my pockets and carry on in the same direction as him.

He stops and we stand there a while, looking at each other. So close that I'm afraid he might hear the hammering of my heartbeat.

T-o-r-t-i-l-l-a-s.

A wet droplet hits my nose. Then another. I look up. In the sky, dark clouds have gathered into an ominous clump.

"Best head for cover."

Johan nods at the preschool up the way. It looks like a shining red anthill in the twilight.

"Shall we head up there?"

He grabs hold of my hand and pulls me along the path. He's so fast, I have to run to keep up. He opens the gate and rushes me under the lean-to by the school. We barely manage to get under the roof before the skies open. The bench is right up against the inner wall, so we stay dry. Raindrops are drumming hard on the ceiling above us, streaming down the walls and branching out into small rivers that run down the path. The air here is still, but cold. I zip my coat right up to my neck. My shoulders shiver and Johan sees it. He takes hold of my arms and rubs my hands up and down quickly to warm me up. My blood begins to feel faint, and I have to focus on breathing evenly.

"Now, I want to hear a little bit about you," he says.

Little drops of water run down his shoulders.

I don't know where to begin, I'm focusing too much on hiding my wildly beating heart.

“What do you want to know?”

I cross my arms and shuffle up against the cold wall. I’m so nervous.

“Everything,” he replies, looking right at me.

His eyebrows are dark and straight, close to his eyes. He has two moles on one cheek. One right at the tip of his chin.

“I’ve lived here my whole life. Nothing exciting.”

“More,” he says, and licks his lips.

I wonder whether they’re as soft as they look.

In the past we’ve only ever really spoken about what we like, so I tell him what I don’t like instead.

“Hrm... well, I hate spiders, limericks and maths.”

I glance up at him.

“Limericks, really? Me too. But spiders? Do you even know how fascinating they are? I’ll make you change your mind about them.”

“You can certainly try.”

He laughs and blows a rogue hair out from in front of his face. It falls back straight away.

“What about maths?”

So typical of me to like someone who is a fan of everything I hate. But I prefer maths to spiders. I nod.

“That one’s a lost case.”

He just laughs.

“More,” he demands. “Tell me more.”

My stomach tightens as I hear the words come out of my mouth:

“Dad’s moving away this summer. He has a new woman. Vibeke.”

I say her name in an extra high-pitched voice and roll my eyes.

“She has a kid.”

I look down when I say that last bit.

I’m still not used to talking about it out loud.

“Shit.” And that’s all he says.

He moves closer.

“You know,” He says. “Mathematics is everywhere. You just have to pay attention.”

“It’s in you, too. Your face is a perfect shape. Your eyes are the exact same distance from your nose on both sides. When you smile, they light up in the same way.”

Well that takes my breath away.

He smiles and goes on: “Did you know that your freckles form a triangle from your cheeks and over your nose?”

Oh no! Why did he have to say that? I hate my freckles and the way they show up in the sunlight.

“Triangles are actually the strongest of all the shapes, because you can’t move their angles.”

I don’t know if that was nice or just weird.

“And your mouth. The one front tooth that sits just in front of the others. It could mean that...”

He goes quiet, seemingly embarrassed. I go red and run my tongue over my teeth. There is a little gap under one tooth. I try to slowly sneak my tongue inside and wiggle, trying hopelessly to push it back into place. Then I realise what I’m doing and quickly bring a hand up in front of my mouth. He gets a little closer, and lifts his hand up towards me.

“No, don’t hide it. I like it.”

His soft, slightly calloused fingers run across my face as he pulls my hand away. He gives me an intense look and raises his eyebrows as if asking a question.

My heart turns somersaults. He leans towards me, and I let him.

Published by Samlaget, 2020

Sample translation by Bruce Thomsen

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