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Adda Djørup – Denmark

Den mindste modstand (2009)

The Least Resistance

Publishing House **Samleren**

Biography

Adda Djørup (b.1972) made her authorial debut in 2005 with a collection of poetry called *Mon-sieurs monologer*. Her work revolves around existential themes, with a twist of humour that suits her personal prose style and a distinct philosophical bite. All three of her publications have been praised by Danish critics. True to her versatility as an author, she is currently working on a libretto for a new opera. Djørup, who has lived in Madrid and Florence, is now back in Copenhagen. She holds a BA in Literature and, in 2007, she received an award from the Danish Arts Council. She is the mother of one child.

Synopsis

The novel *Den midste modstand* provides an insightful look at a remarkable year of a young woman's life. *Den midste modstand* is about Emma, a woman who surrenders to the forces pushing her life into new directions, and decides to drift along with the stream. When her grandmother dies and leaves her a wonderful summerhouse, Emma decides to visit with her grandmother's urn. On the way, she meets a very wealthy couple who, like her, are drifting through life. The three of them are at the summerhouse when Emma finds out she is pregnant. What she doesn't know is whether the father is the rich man she has met or her husband, who is currently away in Australia. The key characteristic of the novel is its language: everything, no matter whether speaking about the lighter or heavier aspects of life, is described with the same unsentimental, natural and reflective tone. The irony and intellectual reflection contained within the novel avoids glossiness and bears a faint resemblance to the great European authors of the early 20th century. However, this style is interspersed with a young writer's playfulness.

Den mindste modstand

Adda Djørup

Landet lå badet i sol. Bølgende marker, køer på græs og grønne løvtræer, der skummede livskraftigt mod himlen, bød sig til langs deres rute. De stoppede ved et ærte- og bærudsalg ved en rasteplads i skovkanten, en af den slags små ubemandede boder, hvor man bare lægger sine mønter i kassen og oven i handlen kan nyde følelsen af sin egen utvungne ærlighed. Emma var udemærket klar over at Dagny Dombernovsky ikke ville have brudt sig om et ligfølge, der kom anstigende med tre bakker jordbær og en pose ærter, men nuvel. Inga og John sad på bagsædet og kommenterede hvad de så og droppede en efter en de tømte ærtebælge ud af vinduet. Hvad var der virkelig at hidse sig op over?

Bedemand Jesper Espersens dør var låst, skønt forretningen ifølge skiltet med åbningstider burde være åben. De bad taxaen om at vente og gik bagom huset for at lede efter personale. De fandt en gårdsplads hvor en knaldblank rustvogn holdt sådan lidt nonchalant parkeret. Langs muren stod et par bænke og en række velplejede stedsegrønne planter i potter. Efter at have banket på døre og vinduer og råbt hallo, slog de sig ned på bænkene og fik selskab af en kælen kat, der kastede sin kærlighed på John og på den mest katteagtig måde smøg sig omkring hans ben og til sidst lagde sig for hans fødder, mand dog. Inga fik øje på en vandslange der hang på muren. Hun tog en bakke jordbær og skyllede omhyggeligt bærrerne. Tilbage ved bordet rakte hun skiftevis Emma og John et, og tog hver tredje gang selv. Sådan sad de jordbærspisende i hver

deres bekvemme stilhed. Emma begyndte at føle sig helt godt tilpas. En lang stund – hun fulgte med øjnene en svale, der for frem og tilbage mellem tagspærret og den blå himmel, der pustede sig mere og mere op – glemte hun endda hvad de sad der for.

Ved ellevetiden ankom Jesper Espersen på cykel med en bagerpose på bagagebæreren. Han havde jakken slængt over skulderen og det rædderlige slips stikkende op af baglommen. Med et adræt bensving steg han af cyklen og sagde dav. Han nævnte ikke med et ord at det hverken var den aftalte dag eller det aftalte tidspunkt, men takkede ja til et jordbær og bød dem indenfor. De afslog høfligt, og han smuttede selv ind efter urnen samt et par papirer der skulle underskrives. Mens Emma skrev under fik John overdraget urnen (med skruelåg, så simpelt), og Jesper Espersen mindede dem uden større ståhej om formalia, såfremt de ville strø asken over havet, før han gav dem alle sammen hånden og sagde at rundstykkerne stadig havde været lune da han hentede dem. Selvfølgelig, de var forstående, de havde jo også en taxa ventende.

Chaufføren løftede et øjenbryn, men følte sig åbenbart tryk ved at de alle tre satte sig ind på bagsædet. Emma sad i midten med urnen på skødet. Hun aede den med nogle små forsikrende strøg og fornemmede hvordan Dagny Dombernovsky (i askeform) faldt til ro og faktisk også befandt sig helt godt. De kørte turen hjem i stilhed, John blundede og Inga faldt i staver. Da Emma steg ud af bilen derhjemme, var det med følelsen af at have hjembragt en nyfødt. En skrøbelig og skattet favnfuld.

Emma forsøgte sig med forskellige placeringer. Ingen tvivl om at Dagny Dombernovsky skulle have en plads blandt de levende. Fjernsyn, borde og vindueskarme var udelukket på forhånd. Hun prøvede oven på reolen, men det virkede både risikabelt og tragisk hengemt. Inde i reolen virkede til gengæld al for tilfældigt, nærmest ligegyldigt. Under spejlet var for dekorativt. Til sidst besluttede hun sig for en plads på skrivepulten, og mindede sig selv om at være forsigtig når hun skulle i skuffen med frimærker. Hun fjernede en lampe og erstattede den med en overdådig buket Inga tjenstivrigt havde plukket i haven. John fandt efter Emmas anvisninger en flaske tør sherry i køkkenet og de løftede deres glas i stilhed. Emma stod og blev helt glad for sit valg af urne. Prunkløs og pæn, den passede fint til stuen, den var faktisk lige Dagny Dombernovskys stil. Hun havde, skulle Emma sige det, al mulig grund til at være tilfreds.

Med Dagny Dombernovskys ankomst bredte sig en vidunderlig ro. Blæsten var stilnet af, den lovede hedeølge indfandt sig til tiden. Det var vitterlig som om alting faldt i hak og julidagene forvandlede sig til intrikate maskiner af velsmurte tandhjul der greb ind i hinanden, nænsomt og sikkert, nydende deres egen formålsløse gang mod august. Emma kunne godt at have fundet sit liv den følgende tid perfekt, hvis ikke det var for endnu uafleverede arbejdsopgaver og kontorchef Birthe Bentzons gentagne opringninger. Der var ingen vej udenom, Emma måtte hver eftermiddag tilbringe nogle timer ved køkkenbordet med sin computer, mens John og Inga slog tiden ihjel med badminton og solbadning, og jævnlige forstyrrede hende med spørgsmål. Var der et par ekstra badesandaler? Hvor kunne de købe nye fjerbolde? Og plagede hende for at leje cykler, spille pool på cafeen eller spise frokost med Søs Guldborg, der inviterede. Vidste du, sagde Inga, at hendes

bedste veninde er gift med sundhedsministeren? Forkert, sagde Emma. Sundhedsministeren er hendes bedste veninde, og hendes mand danser som en drøm. Really, sagde Inga. Det skal jeg prøve at huske.

Efter et par dage flyttede Emma sin arbejdsplads ned i gæstehuset, der stod tomt eftersom John og Inga havde valgt i stedet at installere sig i soveværelset i stueetagen, hvor der var en mere bekvem dobbeltseng. Selv foretrak Emma det lille gæsteværelse på første sal, der havde balkon og morgensol. Deroppe tilbragte hun sine morgner med avislæsning og kaffe. Med udsigt til fyrretræets krone og havet, og avisens olympiske blik på verden, følte hun sig som en anden Zeus. Eller Hera, den kvieøjede.

Op ad formiddagen mødtes de alle sammen på stranden og spadserede langs vandet over på Helenekilde Hotel og Badepension, hvis eksistens Inga til sin begejstring var kommet i tanke om. Den kridhvide kasse på toppen af klinten og turen derop ad en stejl trætrappe havde åbenbart de pittoreske kvaliteter, der stemte overens med hendes fordrømte forhold til sit gamle fædreland. Hun kaldte med stædig sværmeriskhed slet og ret stedet for badepensionen og var kommet til en forståelse med tjeneren om et fast bord med udsigt. Her brugte de en magelig times tid på at indtage en portionsanrettet brunch. I starten byttede de høfligt bidder (hvad du siger du til at jeg lige snupper) men indså hurtigt at ritualet var overflødigt, og langede så blot ud efter deres personligt foretrukne lækkerier på de andres tallerkner. Inga var en hund efter røræg, John holdt af anything fruity and cheesy, mens Emmas favorit var de små sprødstegte pikante pølser, der gav efter for hendes bid med en kæk lille lyd. Efter måltidet skiltes

de. Inga dryssede rundt på Hovedgaden eller ledte efter kantareller oppe i Hegnet. Med den glæde det beredte hende at stikke i et par moderigtige gummistøvler og tage en kurv over armen, nænnede Emma ikke at minde hende om at kantarelsæsonen end ikke var nær, endsige at det ikke regnede. John og Emma gik hjem for at spille tomandswhist.

Emma foretrak at sidde i skygge, John i sol. De fandt et smukt kompromis under birken, der lod tilstrækkeligt meget sol slippe igennem til at bade Emma og John og spillebord i et flimrende mønster af lys og skygge. Emma hentede kort og John forfriskninger.

Der var en slående lighed i deres spillestil. Ingen af dem var ivrige efter at vinde, de var ikke emsige med at tælle kort og lave sandsynlighedsberegning, de arrangerede ikke deres stik i ordentlige bunker. Tværtimod. De spillede i fælles kontemplering over spillets omskiftelighed. De betragtede, i tavshed eller sludrende om livets almindelige eller spillets partikulære gang, hvordan deres mentale bølger i overensstemmelse med regelsættet for tomandswhist manifesterede sig på spillebordet, mens spillet med usvigelig sikkerhed nærmede sig den afslutning, der allerede var indeholdt i begyndelsen, hvordan mulighederne, der var udtænkt for det samme, en efter en satte hinanden ud af spillet, og hvordan de, de spillende, i takt med at mulighederne begrænsedes, antog karakter af, eller måske endda trådte i karakter som, brikker. Ja, netop. Hvordan spillet så at sige spillede dem. Nu vinder du, sagde en af dem. Eller: Måske skulle du hellere have gjort sådan. Nå ja, skal jeg gøre det om? Det ved jeg ikke. Prøv da.

I løbet af disse spil lærte Emma et par ting om John. Den ene, at han havde en livsfilosofi, og at den stod med Coca-Cola skrift på en t-shirt han ejede i to forskellige farver, petroleumsblå og meleret lyserød: *Surf the wave*. Og hvis Emma en dag prøvede at surf the wave, sagde han under et spil med klør som trumf og pegede på sig selv iført den lyserøde udgave, ville hun sandsynligvis give ham ret i at surfing var det perfekte billede på den mest attråværdige tilstand man kunne befinde sig i, fysisk såvel som mentalt. Den, nemlig, hvor man med få og rimeligt enkle manøvrer holder sig flydende og lader sig bære frem på overfladen af vældige kræfter man ikke selv er herre over. Således ville man med et minimum af anstrengelse komme gennem livet, der ellers godt kunne vise sig at være noget af en strabadserende affære, det vidste han alt om. But don't get me started.

Og den anden, at i Johns personlige liv forlod han sig stort set på tre bølger, som han regnede med ville aflevere ham pænt og nydeligt ved livets afslutning, såfremt han ikke klokkede i det. For det første den søde Inga, som han ærlig talt elskede, både for hendes vidunderligt lange ben og sære charme, og på trods af hendes despotiske væsen, hvis værste udsving heldigvis kunne undgås takket være den lille vidunderpille prozac. For det andet Ingas fars reb og ananas-formue, en pragtfuld og i denne verden ret usædvanlig bølge, på hvilken han og Inga sammen red hvor som helst og på hvilken som helst måde det faldt dem ind. Og Bombay Sapphire. Love, money and self medication, opsummerede ham. I'm not gonna ask for more.

Emma var imponeret. Hun lagde sit ruder es, som John snupede med en sølle klør tre, hvilket afgjorde spillet til hans fordel, 14-12. Du tabte, konstaterede han, og gættede på at hun havde troet at han var renonce i trumf eller at hun havde ladet sig distrahere af samtalen. Nemlig, grinede Emma, og sagde at den t-shirt for øvrigt klædte ham. Det gjorde den virkelig (og den blå version endnu mere endda).

I løbet af det følgende spil bekendte Emma til gengæld sin egen uskyldige last, og gav den oven i købet et navn. Tænkningens minimalhedonisme, sagde hun og så helt oprigtig ud. Hun sammenlignede den uvilkårlige tankestrøm (man kan ikke lade være med at tænke, det er umuligt, sagde hun belærende) med havets overflade og tænkerens opmærksomme men afslappede selvbevidsthed med surferens ditto krop. I mødet mellem disse to størrelser, sagde hun, fandt hun personligt den mindste modstands punkt, hvor oplevelsen af at være blot var en konstant, behagelig kildren, der aldrig blev for meget eller for lidt, aldrig for ophidsende eller for kedelig. Men, for nu at blive i metaforen, i modsætning til Johns surfing, der syntes at bero på fremdrift og afveksling, søgte hun tværtimod mest mulig stilstand og monotoni og fandt en soleklar fordel ved denne mental sport: Man er ikke afhængig af andre bølger end dem man alligevel altid har med sig, sagde hun og bankede sig illustrativt på panden. Enhver kan gøre det, når som helst og hvor som helst, om end det som med alt andet gælder, at kun øvelse gør mester. Og du ser tilfældigvis på en lige nu, sluttede hun uden falsk beskedenhed af.

Emma havde talt med blød, dæmpet stemme og nu og da ladet sin frie hånd vugge blidt på et punkt i luften, alt imens hun stille og roligt tog stik hjem. 17-9, sagde hun, du taber. John

så søvnig ud, men hans smil var sært opvakt, da han sagde at selvom han ikke helt havde fattet hvad hun sagde, var det åbenlyst at de i bund og grund forstod hinanden. Og hvis, tilføjede han, hun en dag skulle få lyst, ville han med fornøjelse give hende en lektion i wavesurfing, the real stuff. Eventuelt kunne de give hinanden lektioner. Her lo de begge to. Et smigret smil blev hængende på Emmas ansigt da latteren ebbede ud og John nærmede sig, og. Nå ja.

Der var end ikke anløb til fumleri. Galant hjalp John Emma ud af kjole og trusser før han selv i et snuptag afklædte sig t-shirt og shorts og bar hende ind i huset og op i gæsteværelset, hvor der var varmt og støvet svævede dovent rundt i striber af sollys. I løbet af den følgende times tid skiftedes de til at udvise saglig grundighed og drømmende eftergivenhed. Da deres bevægelser stilnede af, var solen forsvundet fra værelset og siddende i hver deres ende af sengen betragtede de smilende hinanden.

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Adda Djørup

Translated from the Danish by Walton Glyn Jones

The country lay bathed in sunshine. Undulating meadows, grazing cows and green deciduous trees frothing vigorously to the sky displayed their charm along their route. They stopped at a stall selling peas and berries by a picnic area on the edge of the forest, one of those small unattended stalls where you simply put your money in the kitty and in addition to the deal can delight in the sense of your own unforced honesty. Emma was perfectly well aware that Dagny Dombernovsky would not have been keen on a funeral cortege that turned up bearing three punnets of strawberries and a bag of peas, but never mind. Inga and John sat in the back commenting on what they saw and dropping the emptied peapods out of the window one by one. What was there really to get upset about?

Jesper Espersen the undertaker's office door was locked, although according to the notice showing the opening hours it should have been open. They asked the taxi to wait and went round the back to look for some member of the staff. They found a courtyard in which a shiny hearse was parked rather casually. Alongside the wall there was a row of well-tended ever-green potted plants. After knocking on doors and windows and shouting hello, they settled down on the benches and attracted the attentions of an affectionate cat that took a fancy to John and in the most cat-like manner rubbed against his legs and finally settled down at his feet, good heavens. Inga caught sight of a garden hose hanging on the wall. She took a punnet of

strawberries and carefully washed the fruit. Back at the table she offered one to Emma and John in turn, taking every third one herself. Thus sat the strawberry eaters, each in convenient silence. Emma started to feel quite at ease. For a long time – watching a swallow darting back and forth between the rafters and the blue sky that puffed itself up more and more – she even forgot why she was sitting there.

Jesper Espersen turned up about eleven o'clock on his bicycle with a bag of goodies from the baker on his carrier. He had his jacket slung over his shoulders and the dreadful tie sticking up out of his back pocket. Swinging his legs nimbly over the bicycle, he dismounted and said hello. Not with a single word did he refer to the fact that this was neither the day nor the time they had agreed, but he accepted a strawberry and invited them inside. They politely refused and he dodged inside himself to fetch the urn and a couple of papers that had to be signed. While Emma was signing, John was handed the urn (with a screw top, how simple), and without any great to do Jesper Espersen reminded them of the formalities if they wanted to scatter the ashes over the sea, after which he shook hands with them all and said that the buns had still been warm when he went for them. Of course, they were understanding; they had a taxi waiting as well of course.

The driver raised an eyebrow, but he obviously felt safe with them all three on the back seat. Emma sat in the middle with the urn on her lap. She caressed it gently and reassuringly and sensed that Dagny Dombernovsky (in the form of ash) was settling down and in fact also feeling quite good. They drove all the way home in silence, John dozing and Inga lost in thought. When Emma got out of the car on arriving, it was with a sense of having brought a new-born baby home. A frail and precious bundle.

Emma tried various places for it. There was no doubt that Dagny Dombernovsky should have a place among the living. Television, tables and window ledges were out from the start. She tried the top of the bookcase, but that seemed to be rather risky and tragically out of the way. On the other hand a place inside the bookcase seemed far too casual, almost a sign of indifference. Putting it beneath the mirror would be too decorative. Finally, she decided on a place on the writing desk and reminded herself to be careful when going to the drawer containing stamps. She removed a lamp and replaced it with a sumptuous bunch of flowers that Inga had eagerly picked in the garden. Following Emma's instructions, John found a bottle of dry sherry in the kitchen, and they raised their glasses in silence. As she stood there, Emma was quite pleased with her choice of urn. Unostentatious and pleasing, it was entirely in keeping with the sitting room; in fact, it was just to Dagny Dombernovsky's taste. Emma had to admit that she had every reason to be satisfied.

The arrival of Dagny Dombernovsky brought with it a splendid sense of peace. The wind had settled, and the promised heat wave arrived on time. It really was as though everything was falling into place, and the July days were transformed into intricate machines of well-oiled cog wheels that engaged in each other, gently and securely, enjoying their pointless progress towards August. Emma could well have found her life perfect during the following time were it not for tasks waiting to be handed in and repeated telephone calls from Birthe Bentzon, the office manager. There was no way round it: Emma had to spend some hours each afternoon at the kitchen table with her computer while John and Inga spent their time playing badminton and sunbathing and regularly

interrupting her with questions. Was there an extra pair of beach sandals anywhere? Where could they buy some new shuttlecocks? And they pestered her about hiring bicycles, playing pool in the café or having lunch with Søs Guldberg at her invitation. Did you know, said Inga, that her best friend is married to the Minister of Health? Wrong, said Emma: The Minister of Health is her best friend and her husband dances like a dream. Really, said Inga. I'll try to remember that.

A couple of days later, Emma moved her work down into the guest house, which was empty as John and Inga had chosen instead to install themselves on the ground floor, where there was a more comfortable double bed. Emma herself preferred the little guest room on the first floor, which had a balcony and caught the morning sun. She spent the early morning up there, reading the newspaper and drinking coffee. With a view of the top of the spruce tree and the sea and with the newspaper's Olympian view of the world, she felt like another Zeus. Or the ox-eyed Hera.

Later in the morning they all met down on the beach and walked along the water across to the Helene Spring Hotel and Seaside Hostel, the existence of which, to her delight, Inga had remembered. The chalky white building on the top of the cliff and the walk up there by way of steep flight of wooden steps obviously had the picturesque qualities that harmonised with her romantic relationship with her old native land. With a dogged and exaggerated imagination she called the place purely and simply the Hostel and had come to an arrangement with the waiter that she should have a regular table with a view. Here, they spent a relaxed hour or so eating brunch served in individual portions. To begin with they politely

exchanged nibbles (I'm sure you don't mind if I just pinch this), but quickly realised that the ritual was superfluous, and so they simply reached out for the titbits they personally liked best on each others' plates. Inga was mad keen on scrambled egg, John was fond of anything fruity and cheesy, while Emma's favourites were the tasty, crackly little sausages that produced a cheerful little sound as they surrendered to her bite. They dispersed after the meal. Inga drifted around in the High Street or looked for chanterelles up in the Plantation. In view of the pleasure it gave her to put on a pair of fashionable rubber boots and take a basket over her arm, Emma hadn't the heart to point out to her that it was nowhere near the chanterelle season let alone that it was not raining. John and Emma went home to have a game of two-handed whist.

Emma preferred to sit in the shade, John in the sun. They reached a fair compromise that allowed sufficient sunshine to slip through to bathe Emma and John and the games table in a flickering pattern of light and shade. Emma went in for the cards and John for the refreshments.

There was a striking similarity in their style of playing. Neither of them was eager to win; they weren't over zealous at counting the cards and making probability calculations; they didn't arrange their tricks in orderly piles. On the contrary. They played in mutual contemplation of the variable nature of the game. Silently or chatting about the progress of life in general or the game in particular, they considered, how, in accordance with the rules for two-handed whist, their mental currents revealed themselves at the card table, while with unerring certainty the game came closer to the end that was already implicit in the beginning. They reflected on how the possibilities that

had been devised for that end put each other out of the game one by one, and how, as the possibilities became more limited, they the players came to resemble, or perhaps even took on the nature of, pieces in a game. Yes, exactly. How the game so to speak played them. Now you are winning, said one of them. Or: Perhaps it would have been better if you had done it this way. Ah, yes, shall I retrieve it? I don't know. Then try.

During these games, Emma learned a couple of things about John. The first was that he had a philosophy of life and that it was emblazoned in Coca-Cola lettering on a t-shirt he possessed in two different colours, petroleum blue and mottled pink: *Surf the wave*. And if Emma tried to surf the wave one day, he said during a game with clubs as trumps, pointing to himself dressed in the pink version, she would probably agree with him that surfing was the perfect image for the most attractive state to be in, physical as well as mental. That was to say the state in which by means of a small number and reasonably simple manoeuvres you keep yourself afloat and allow yourself to be propelled on the surface of huge forces of which you yourself are not in control. In this way, with a minimum of exertion you could get through life, which might otherwise turn out to be a rather bothersome affair – he knew all about that. But don't get me started.

And the second was that in his personal life John relied generally speaking on three waves that he reckoned would bring him to the end of his life in good shape and in an orderly manner if he didn't make a mess of things. First, there was sweet Inga whom he honestly loved both for her wonderfully long legs and her singular charm and in spite of her despotic nature, the worst

manifestations of which could fortunately be avoided thanks to that wonderful little pill called prozac. In second place there was the fortune Inga's father had made from rope and pine-apples, in this world a rather unusual wave on which he and Inga rode together anywhere and in any way they fancied. And Bombay Sapphire. Love, money and self-medication was how he summed it up. I'm not gonna ask for more.

Emma was impressed. She played an ace of spades, which John took with a miserable three of clubs, a move that decided the game in his favour, 14-12. You lost, he pointed out, guessing that she had thought he had no trumps or that she had been distracted by the conversation. Of course, Emma grinned and said that by the way the t-shirt suited him. And so it did (and the blue version even more so).

During the following game, Emma acknowledged her own innocent vice and even gave it a name. The mini-hedonism of thought, she said, looking quite honest. She compared the involuntary stream of consciousness (you can't avoid thinking; it's impossible, she said didactically) with the surface of the ocean and the thinker's attentive but relaxed self-assuredness with the ditto body of the surfer. It was in the meeting between these two concepts, she said, that she personally found the point of least resistance, where the experience of being was only a constant, pleasant thrill that never became too much or too little, never too exciting or too dull. But, to keep the metaphor, in contrast to John's surfing, which seemed to be based on drive and variety, she on the other hand sought the greatest possible immutability and monotony and saw a very obvious advantage in this mental sport: You are not dependent on other waves than those you nevertheless always have

within you, she said, tapping her forehead to make her point. Everyone can do it, at any time and in any place, although as with everything else it is true that only practice makes perfect. And you happen to be looking at a practitioner now, she concluded without any trace of false modesty.

Emma had spoken in a soft, subdued voice, now and then allowing her free hand to float gently at some point in the air, and meanwhile quietly and calmly taking one trick after another. 17-9, she said; you lose. John looked sleepy, but his smile was curiously bright when he said that although he hadn't quite understood what she was saying, it was clear that they fundamentally understood each other. And, he added, if she should fancy it one day, he would be delighted give her a lesson in wave surfing, the real stuff. Perhaps they could give each other lessons. Here, they both laughed. A flattered smile remained on Emma's face as the laughter ebbed out and John came closer, and... Oh well.

There wasn't even the slightest hint of fumbling. John gallantly helped Emma out of her dress and knickers before deftly divesting himself of t-shirt and shorts and carrying her into the house and up into the guest room, where it was warm and where the dust floated lazily in strips of sunlight. For the following hour or so they took it in turns to demonstrate comprehensive proficiency and dreamy indulgence. When their movements subsided, the sun had gone from the room, and sitting each at their own end of the bed they looked at each other with a smile.



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