

hard ...!» she complained, but she was still smiling. Tobias smiled back at her.

«Jetzt oder nie», dachte er.

«Ääh ...» he began, «there is something I wanted to say.»

Britney gave him a surprised look.

Tobias was really embarrassed now, and it was hard to find the right words. «I wanted to say that ... two weeks ago ... I'm sorry that I said that girls shouldn't play soccer.»

Britney wanted to say something, but Tobias continued: «It was a joke. I'm sorry I made you angry.»

Then it was Britney's turn to look a little embarrassed. «I'm sorry I got so angry. How do you say this in German? Es tut ... Es tut mir Leid!»

«Mir tut es auch Leid», Tobias said.

«But we're friends now, right?» Britney said and playfully punched him in the side.

Tobias nodded and smiled. He felt so much better than before.

«Why don't we go and get something to eat? I would love some bratwurst – how about you?» Britney asked.

«I'm really hungry, too!» Tobias agreed.

Britney took his arm in hers. «Let's go eat!» she said.

Kapitel Zwanzig –

Finally Spring Break



Nach den aufregenden Ereignissen der Woche verbrachten Tobias und Britney zwei ruhige Tage im Hause Summerfield. Sie schliefen morgens lange, guckten DVDs, spielten Videospiele und ließen sich von Mr und Mrs Summerfield bekochen. Am Sonntagabend saßen Tobias und Britney mit Brittneys Eltern in der Küche und berieten, wie die letzte Woche von Tobias' Aufenthalt verbracht werden könnte. Roosevelt High School und der Kindergarten von Brittneys Schwester Brianne waren für die Frühlingferien geschlossen, die Eltern hatten sich freigenommen – einem Kurzurlaub stand nichts im Weg.

«So where would you like to go?», fragte Mr Summerfield Tobias.

«Mmmh, I don't know.» Tobias musste über diese Frage erstmal nachdenken. Dann hatte er eine Idee: «To the beach in California!»

Mr Summerfield lachte. «That's maybe a *little* too far away.

It's a good five-day drive from here to California!»

«Oh», sagte Tobias. Er hatte ganz vergessen, wie riesig die USA waren.

«If you would like to see some water, we could drive up North to Brown Bear Lake!», bot Mrs Summerfield an.

«My parents have a little cottage there», erklärte Britney.

«It's right by the water, and there's a little beach, too. It's really nice.»

«That sounds great!», sagte Tobias. Ob sie nun ans Meer

oder an einen See fahren, solange es Wasser gab, war Tobias zufrieden.



On Monday morning, the Summerfield family and Tobias were on their way to Northern Wisconsin. This time, they rode in the Ford Excursion. Tobias still couldn't believe how big the car was. It easily seated five people, and there were also bags, backpacks, and boxes of food for the whole week. Mr and Mrs Summerfield were sitting in the front, Tobias and Briney were sitting in the middle, and Brianne was sitting in the back.

The little girl was wearing headphones and staring at a monitor in front of her, happily singing along with the music. Tobias saw that she was watching Sesame Street. Elmo was singing a song with some big furry monster.

«We always bring a DVD for Brianne,» Mr Summerfield explained.

«That makes the drive a lot more enjoyable for everybody,» Mrs Summerfield smiled.

Tobias war beeindruckt. «Das ist ja wie im Flugzeug!», dachte er.

Nach vier Stunden Fahrt durch eine Landschaft, die hauptsächlich aus Feldern, Weiden und Wäldern bestand, waren sie am Ziel. Mrs Summerfield parkte den Ford neben einem rustikalen Holzhaus, und alle sprangen aus dem Wagen.

«Come on, Tobias, I'll show you the lake!», rief Briney. Die beiden liefen um das Haus herum und durch ein kleines Wald-

stück. Und da lag er vor ihnen: Brown Bear Lake, ein riesiger See, dessen Ufer gesäumt war von dunklen Tannen und einigen versprengten Blockhäusern.

«Isn't it pretty?» Briney asked.

Tobias nodded. It was very pretty. Unfortunately, it was also very cold, much colder than in Appleton. Tobias wished he had packed a warmer jacket. Briney was only wearing a sweater and she looked cold, too. «Come inside, you two!» they heard Mrs Summerfield's voice through the woods. «Dad is making hot chocolate for everybody!»

«Yummie,» Briney said. «I love hot chocolate.»

«What is yummie?» Tobias asked.

«That's something you say when you really like the way something tastes,» Briney explained.

«Oh!» Tobias said. «Lecker!»

«An easy German word!» Briney said jokingly, «I can't believe it!»

Tobias laughed.

«Brit! Tobias!» they heard Mrs Summerfield call again.

«We're coming, Mom!» Briney shouted. Then the two turned around and sprinted back to the cottage.



When they arrived in the kitchen, there were two steaming cups of hot chocolate waiting for them.

«Would you like some marshmallows in your hot chocolate?» Briney asked.

Tobias wasn't so sure.

Britney noticed his doubtful look.

«You should try it! It tastes great!» she told him.

Tobias decided to give it a try. Like Britney, he put some marshmallows in his hot chocolate and stirred. Then he took a sip: it was *very* sweet, and *very* good.

«Do you like it?» Britney asked.

«Yes,» Tobias said.

«I think it's the *best*!» Britney said.

Mr Summerfield entered the kitchen. «How's the hot chocolate, you two?»

«Lecker!» yelled Britney.

«Yummie!» Tobias shouted. Mr Summerfield smiled. «Seems like drinking hot chocolate isn't only a great way to stay warm. It's also a great way to learn a new language!» he thought to himself.

Chapter Twenty-one –

Deutsche Wurzeln ✈

Nachdem sie sich etwas aufgewärmt hatten, schlossen sich Britney und Tobias dem Rest der Familie zu einem Spaziergang am Brown Bear Lake an. Sie gingen auf einem breiten Streifen aus Sand und Steinen am Ufer, der hin und wieder durch eine Baumgruppe unterbrochen wurde. Brienne patschte in ihren Gummistiefeln durch das seichte Wasser.

«So, what do you think about Brown Bear Lake, Tobias? It's a lot different than Appleton, huh?», fragte Mr Summerfield.

Tobias nickte. «It is very nice here», antwortete er.

«There are six more lakes in the area, and huge forests. And, of course, there is a lot of flat land», erklärte Mrs Summerfield.

Die Landschaft hatte Tobias sich schon auf der Autofahrt angeguckt. Sie erinnerte ihn an Fotos, die seine Eltern von einem Skandinavienurlaub mitgebracht hatten. Deshalb sagte er: «It looks a little bit like Scandinavia.»

Mr und Mrs Summerfield schienen das nicht zu überraschen. «As a matter of fact, many families in Wisconsin are originally from Scandinavia», erzählte Mr Summerfield. «Their great-grandparents came to America, and they stayed in Wisconsin because it reminded them of their home.»

Tobias nickte interessiert. Das hatte er gar nicht gewusst. Ob die Vorfahren der Summerfields wohl auch aus Skandinavien stammten?

«Is your family from Scandinavia, too?», fragte er.

Mrs Summerfield nickte. «I'm Norwegian and Swedish», erklärte sie. «Before I married Britney's father, my last name was Svenson.»

Der Name klang auch in Tobias' Ohren sehr skandinavisch. Aber woher kam wohl der Name Summerfield? Tobias tippte auf England.

«Where is your family from, Mr Summerfield?», fragte er Britneys Vater.

Mr Summerfield grinste ihn an. «I'm all German!», sagte er. Tobias war überrascht. «Summerfield» konnte doch nie im Leben ein deutscher Name sein! Britney sah die Überraschung auf Tobias' Gesicht.

«When my great-great-grandfather came to America, his name was Sommerfeld. They changed it to Summerfield because it sounds more like English», klärte sie ihn auf.

«Ach so!», dachte Tobias. Das machte natürlich Sinn.

«There are a lot more names like that», fügte Mr Summerfield hinzu. «Do you know Chrysler? They make cars here in America. When they first came from Germany generations ago, their name was Kreisler. Or the famous Rockefeller family? They used to be farmers in Germany, and their name was Roggenfelder.»

«Wow!», sagte Tobias. Er war wirklich beeindruckt von diesen neuen Informationen.

Gerade wollte er noch eine Frage stellen, da wechselte Mrs Summerfield schon das Thema.

«Do you know what you would like to do tomorrow?», fragte sie ihre Tochter und Tobias.

«I thought that we could get the boat out tomorrow. Or we could go on a hike and have picnic somewhere», schlug Britney vor. Dann wandte sie sich an Tobias. «How about you? Do you like canoes, or would you like to go hiking?»

Da Tobias sich besonders auf den Urlaub am Wasser gefreut hatte, fiel ihm die Antwort leicht. «Let's get the canoe out!», sagte er.

Kapitel Zweihundzwanzig – *That's Some Bad Weather out There!*



The next morning, Britney was woken up by a loud drumming sound. She opened her eyes and looked to the window. Normally, she could see the lake from here. But today things were different. Instead of the calm blue lake and some tall green trees Britney saw only one thing: rain. It was raining so hard that all there seemed to be outside was water. Britney sighed and pulled the blanket over her head. There was no chance of a canoe tour in this weather.

Everybody got up late that day. After a long breakfast, it was still raining. Although it was hardly possible, it seemed like the rain was getting even harder.

Mr Summerfield had switched on the weather forecast on TV. «I don't think we'll be able to leave the house any time soon», he said. «It looks like heavy rain all day.»

«Oh man ...» Britney complained. «What are we going to do?»

«I'm sure you two will find something to do around the house», Mrs Summerfield tried to cheer Britney up. Then she gave her daughter a big smile: «And you can always play with Brienne, you know! Your father and I wouldn't mind at all if you did ...»

Britney didn't like this suggestion at all. But since she had no better ideas, Tobias and Britney spent the day with Brienne, doing Brienne's favorite activities: they played with building

blocks, read children's books and drew pictures. They were in the middle of a game of Memory when Mrs Summerfield told them it was time for dinner.

«You've been great babysitters!» she said to them. «As a reward, Dad and I made a nice big dinner. And for dessert, I tried a new cake recipe. How does that sound, Tobias?»

«Mmmmh, great!», sagte Tobias begeistert. Brianne war ja ganz niedlich, aber langsam hatte er genug. Das stundenlange Spielen hatte ihn richtig hungrig gemacht.

«How about you, darling, are you hungry?», fragte Mrs Summerfield ihre ältere Tochter.

«Definitely!», sagte Britney.

«No, they're not hungry!» Brianne's voice piped up. «They want to play, mom!»

Mrs Summerfield laughed. «Come here, sweetie,» she said and picked her little daughter up. «We'll have some dinner, and then the three of you can finish the game.»

Brianne protested all the way to the dining room. She didn't forget about their Memory game until she spotted the big cake that Mr Summerfield had put in the middle of the dinner table.

«Chocolate cake! Yummy!» Brianne screamed.

«Yummy» is «lecker» in German, did you know?» Britney jokingly told her sister and gave Tobias a big smile.

«Lecker! Lecker, lecker, lecker!» squeaked Brianne and everybody laughed.



Nach dem Abendessen – Tobias hatte drei Stück Torte verdreht – übernahmen Britney und Tobias freiwillig den Abwasch. Mr und Mrs Summerfield spielten dafür das Memory-Spiel mit Brianne zu Ende, bevor sie sie ins Bett brachten.

After that, Tobias, Britney and her parents sat down in front of the TV and watched two movies: a comedy and an old Western. Everybody had a great time.

Als Mr and Mrs Summerfield um kurz vor Mitternacht beide auf dem Sofa eingeschlafen waren, beschlossen auch Tobias und Britney, ins Bett zu gehen. Um die Erwachsenen nicht zu wecken, schlichen sie auf Zehenspitzen aus dem Wohnzimmer. Vor Tobias' Schlafzimmertür blieben sie stehen.

«Goodnight, Tobias», sagte Britney und umarmte ihn.

«Gute Nacht», murmelte er und umarmte Britney zaghaft zurück. Dann schlüpfte sie aus seinen Armen, lief die Treppe zu ihrem Schlafzimmer hinauf, winkte ihm noch einmal lächelnd zu und verschwand hinter ihrer Tür. Tobias stand noch einen Moment da und schaute Britney hinterher. Dann ging er auch in sein Zimmer. Dass es draußen immer noch in Strömen regnete, hatten beide ganz vergessen.

Als Tobias am nächsten Morgen aufwachte, erwartete ihn ein gänzlich anderes Bild als am vorangegangenen Tag: Vor dem Fenster lag der See glasklar und still, der Himmel war wolkenlos, von Regen keine Spur. Begeistert sprang er aus dem Bett. Endlich konnten sie wieder nach draußen! Dem Bootsausflug, der gestern im wahrsten Sinne des Wortes ins Wasser gefallen war, stand nichts mehr im Wege.

So, after a quick breakfast consisting of cornflakes and O.J., Tobias and Briney were on their way to the lake. Between them, they were carrying a wooden canoe. Once they got to the shore, they dropped it down into the water.

«That boat is heavy!» Tobias said and rubbed his aching hands together.

Briney seemed a little exhausted, too, but she was too excited to pause.

«Come on, let's get going!», sagte sie und kletterte geschickt an Bord.

Tobias versuchte, es ihr nachzumachen, doch es war nicht so leicht, wie es aussah. Trotz der Windstille wackelte das Boot hin und her, und Tobias, der noch mit einem Bein auf festem Boden stand, hatte Mühe, sein Gleichgewicht zu halten. Briney kam ihm zur Hilfe. Sie streckte ihm beide Hände zum Festhalten entgegen, er griff zu, und mit einem großen Schritt war auch Tobias trockenen Fußes an Bord.

Like the night before, they stood really close to each other.

For a short moment, they didn't move at all. Then Tobias realized that he was still holding Briney's hands. He took a step back and looked at her face. Briney's face had turned a little pink, but she stood completely still. Tobias realized that he had a funny feeling in his stomach. They stayed just like that for another moment, then Briney suddenly let go of his hands.

«Maybe we should start paddling.» she said. Her voice sounded a little funny.

«O.k.», stimmte Tobias schnell zu. Er griff sich ein Ruder und reichte Briney das andere. Wortlos setzten sie sich auf die gegenüberliegenden Bänke des Kanus und begannen zu paddeln. Erst ging es nur im Kreis, doch bald hatten sie die Technik heraus und kamen gut voran. Sie paddelten schweigend vor sich hin, und nach ungefähr fünfzehn Minuten hatten sie die Mitte des Sees erreicht. Tobias schaute sich um. Das Wasser um sie herum lag glatt wie ein Spiegel, und auch die Bäume in der Ferne standen still vor dem klaren blauen Himmel, an dem die Sonne freundlich strahlte. Es herrschte absolute Ruhe: Kein Wind rauschte durch die Baumwipfel, keine Vögel zwischerten, keine menschlichen Stimmen waren zu hören.

Keine menschlichen Stimmen? Tobias und Briney fuhren auf. Dort hinten, vor dem Haus der Sommerfelds, stand eine Person, die wild mit den Armen gestikuliert und etwas in ihre Richtung zu brüllen schien.

«That's my Dad!» Briney said, sounding surprised. «What is he saying?»

Tobias tried to listen hard, but he could not understand a

word. They were simply too far away. Mr Summerfield was still waving like crazy.

«I think he wants us to come back to the house,» Britney said.

«But why?» Tobias asked. The weather was so nice, why should they get off the boat?

«I have no idea,» Britney replied and looked at her father. He was still waving and shouting. «It seems to be important,» she added.

Tobias could tell that she was right. They both took up their paddles, and they rowed back to the shore as fast as they could. When they got there about ten minutes later, Mr Summerfield was already waiting for them.

«Come on, kids, we have to get back inside the house!» he shouted when they jumped off the boat. Tobias could tell that Mr Summerfield was very serious about this.

«What's going on, Dad?» Britney asked, but Mr Summerfield wasn't listening. He had already picked up the canoe, and he was carrying it back to the house, all on his own.

«Come on!» he yelled over his shoulder. All that Britney and Tobias could do was grab the paddles and follow him.



When they arrived at the cottage, Mr and Mrs Summerfield and Brienne were waiting for them in the living room.

«I'm so glad Dad found you!» Mrs Summerfield said when the two arrived.

«Could someone tell us what's going on?» Britney asked impatiently.

«We watched the weather forecast on TV,» Mr Summerfield began. «And there's a severe thunderstorm warning for Brown Bear County. There's a huge front headed right for us.»

«Oh no,» Britney sighed and plunged down on the sofa.

Tobias was very surprised. The weather was great, how could there be a storm? So he said to Mr Summerfield: «But the weather is really nice!»

«That's right,» Mr Summerfield said. «But did you notice how quiet it was? There was no sound outside at all. That is always a sign for a tornado.»

Tobias war plötzlich ganz flau zumute. Ein Tornado? Er wusste nicht viel über Stürme, aber er erinnerte sich noch gut an den Film *Twister*, den er mal auf Video gesehen hatte: Darin war es um einen Tornado gegangen, und Tobias sah ganz deutlich eine Szene vor sich, in der Menschen, Häuser, ja sogar eine Kuh durch die Luft gewirbelt wurden.

«We will be o.k., Tobias,» Mrs Summerfield told him. «We've been through a few of these, and we're always o.k.»

«We all just have to stay inside until it's over,» Mr Summerfield added. «Just to be on the safe side.»

«And we can follow the weather forecast on TV,» Mrs Summerfield said.

«And we can all play together!» Brienne shouted excitedly.

«Great!» Britney said sarcastically. «Another day inside the house, another day playing baby games.»

«Mom!» Brienne whined. «Britney is mean to me!»

Mrs Summerfield ignored her daughters' quarrel.

«Why don't Dad and I play another game of Memory with you, Brienne?» she said to her little daughter. «And you two,» she looked at Britney and Tobias, «you should go to Britney's room. Dad and I got something out of the basement for the two of you. Why don't you go and take a look?»

Was auch immer diese Überraschung war, Tobias war für jede Ablenkung zu haben. Er folgte Britney also gespannt in ihr Zimmer. Dort angekommen, sahen sie sofort, wovon Mrs Summerfield gesprochen hatte: In der Mitte des Raumes stand ein Kickertisch. Schon etwas abgenutzt, aber offensichtlich voll funktionsfähig.

«Cool! A foosball table!» Britney shouted.

Tobias was excited, too. «Let's play!» he said. Then, instead of walking over to the table, he paused and gave Britney a surprised look. «What is this game called in English?»

«Foosball!» Britney repeated. «Sounds like the German word <Fußball, huh?»

Tobias prägte sich das neue Wort gleich ein. «Soccer», «Foosball», «Football» – vor dem Austausch hätte er nicht sagen können, was diese Vokabeln genau bedeuten, jetzt schienen sie ihm sonnenklar.

«O.k., let's play!» Britney said. «You take the green team, and I'm yellow.»

So verging der Rest des Vormittags. Britney und Tobias kämpften fast so ehrgeizig wie auf dem richtigen Fußballplatz, und

immer abwechselnd gewann mal das grüne und mal das gelbe Team. Sie spielten, bis Mr Summerfield sie zum Mittagessen rief.

There was only a small lunch that day: sandwiches and potato chips. Everybody ate in the living room, because that's where the only TV was. The weather forecast continued as the storm moved in.

«It looks like the storm is almost here,» Mrs Summerfield said and took a bite from her sandwich.

Her husband nodded. «Maybe another five or ten minutes before it gets here.»

Tobias schaute aus dem Fenster. Eigentlich sah es draußen noch genauso freundlich aus wie am Morgen. Nur der Himmel schien jetzt etwas verhangener, das Sonnenlicht etwas trüber.

«I guess we will have to go to the basement pretty soon,» Mr Summerfield said.

Tobias fühlte wieder dieses flaue Gefühl in der Magengrube. Einerseits sagten alle, es würde nicht so schlimm werden, und dann mussten sie trotzdem in den Keller? In seinen Ohren klang das *ziemlich* gefährlich.

Britney and Brienne didn't like the idea either.

«It's so boring in the basement, Dad!» Britney complained.

«I always get scared down there!» Brienne whined.

«Don't worry, you two,» Mrs Summerfield said. «We'll take the radio and some games, and we also have some of the chocolate cake left! You won't even notice that we're in the basement.»

This was enough to convince Brienne, but Britney still looked unhappy. Then Tobias had an idea.

«Can we bring the foosball table to the basement?» he asked.

«That's a great idea!» Britney's face brightened up immediately. «Can we, Mom?»

«Sure! That is a good idea, Tobias,» Mrs Summerfield agreed.

Mr Summerfield, who had just finished his sandwich, got up. «Why don't I bring the foosball table downstairs,» he said and looked at his wife, «and you bring the radio and some food.»

Mrs Summerfield nodded.

«And I'll bring some games!» Brianne shouted.

«Alright,» Mr Summerfield agreed. «Finish your lunch, and then I'll see everybody downstairs in a minute.»

Kapitel Vierundzwanzig –

Tornado!



Der Keller des Blockhauses war gemütlicher, als Tobias gedacht hatte. There was only one small window, but, other than that, the basement looked like an ordinary living room. There was a couch, some comfortable chairs and a little table on which Mrs Summerfield had put the cake, drinks and some snacks. Brianne had scattered her toys and games all over the floor. Mr Summerfield was sitting on the couch with a small radio on his lap. He was listening to the weather forecast again. Mrs

Summerfield and Brianne were sitting in one of the chairs and looking at a photo album. The foosball table was in the middle of the room now, and Britney and Tobias started playing again.

«... green midfield passes the ball to forward, forward aims, shoots ... green team scores!» Britney shouted. «One to nothing for me!»

Tobias laughed. «You're not only a good player, you're also a good commentator!» he said to her.

And then, all of a sudden, Tobias forgot all about the foosball table, or Britney, or anything else that had just been on his mind.

«BOOM!!»

Ein Donnerschlag erschütterte das Blockhaus – so stark, dass die Wände wie bei einem Erdstoß vibrierten. Tobias zuckte zusammen. Britney ließ vor Schreck den kleinen Kickerball fallen. Brianne schrie erschreckt auf und vergrub ihr Gesicht in den Armen ihrer Mutter.

No one spoke. The thunder had gone, but it was still loud outside. Heavy rain was hitting hard against the small window now, and the wind was noisily blowing through the forest. Tobias could see lightning, and then there was another roar of thunder.

«BOOM!!»

Tobias war sich sicher, dass er noch niemals zuvor ein solches Unwetter erlebt hatte. Das laute Krachen des Donners hatte ihn einen Schrecken eingejagt, doch der herunterprassende Regen beunruhigte ihn noch mehr. Würde der See den

Regen aufnehmen können, oder stand eine große Überflutung bevor? Womöglich war der Weg zurück nach Appleton durch das Unwetter abgeschnitten, und sie saßen im Ferienhaus fest! Und was, wenn es durch den Blitzschlag zu einem Feuer kommen würde? Und was würde erst passieren, wenn der Tornado diese Gegend erreichte?

«Mom! I'm scared!» Brianne broke the silence.

Mrs Summerfield held her daughter in her arms and stroked her hair. «We'll be alright, kids. Don't worry,» Mrs Summerfield said. She had to speak much louder than usual because of the drumming rain. «This storm is nothing to be scared about.»

Then, another crash of thunder.

«BOOM!!»

It made the house shake again, as if nature was making fun of Mrs Summerfield's words.

«Really, this thunderstorm is a good thing,» Mrs Summerfield said. «Once this thunderstorm passes through, we know the tornado will have missed us,» she explained.

«That's true.» Mr Summerfield nodded. «This storm seems a little scary, but we're safe in here.»

Tobias wusste nicht, ob er das glauben sollte. Er hörte das tobende Unwetter, durch das schmale Kellerfenster sah er immer wieder grelle Blitze aufleuchten. Er fühlte sich überhaupt nicht sicher! Andererseits hatten die Summerfields sicher schon mehrere Stürme erlebt, sie wussten bestimmt, wovon sie sprachen. Oder wollten sie ihre Kinder nur in Sicherheit wiegen?

Britney had been quiet for a while. She had sat down on the couch and tried to listen to the radio.

«Turn up the radio, dad. Let's hear what they're saying,» she suggested.

Mr Summerfield turned up the volume. Now everybody could hear the newscasters' voice: «... heavy thunderstorms and strong winds in Northern Wisconsin, especially in the Brown Bear Lake Area. Several roads are blocked due to fallen trees. The tornado itself has moved into Chippewa county ...»

«Thank God!» Britney sighed. «Mom was right: the tornado is gone!»

Auch Tobias fühlte sich durch diese Nachricht etwas beruhigter. Die im Radio wussten sicherlich am besten, wie die Wetterlage war.

«Do you want to play some more foosball?», fragte er Britney. «Sure,» she said and walked over to the table. «What was the score? Oh yeah, one to nothing for me.»

Sie hatten gerade fünf Minuten gespielt, und Tobias lag – sehr zu Britneys Ärger – mit zwei zu eins in Führung, als ein weiterer Donnerschlag das Blockhaus erschütterte. Er schien noch lauter und bedrohlicher als zuvor. Und dann geschah es: Das Licht im Keller flackerte kurz und erstarb. Brianne kreischte. Mr Summerfield fluchte. Britney und Tobias brachten vor Schreck kein Wort heraus. Es war stockdunkel. Nur durch die Blitze wurde der Raum hin und wieder etwas erhellt.

Brianne was crying silently in her mother's arms. Britney

and Tobias slowly walked over to the couch and sat down with everybody else. There was no way they could play football now. At least they could still listen to the radio, it was running on batteries.

Langsam gewöhnten sich Tobias' Augen ein bisschen an die Dunkelheit. Er sah, wie Mr Summerfeld, der kurz den Keller verlassen hatte, um nach dem Grund für den Stromausfall zu suchen, wieder durch die Tür trat.

«Everything is fine upstairs. But I have no idea what caused the electricity to go out,» he said to everyone.

«What are we going to do now, Dad?» Britney asked.

«I guess all we can do is wait,» Mr Summerfeld answered.

«Noooooo, I don't want to wait!» Brianne whined.

Durch die Dunkelheit erschien der Sturm, der draußen tobte, noch gefährlicher. Tobias gruselte sich selbst ein bisschen, und Brianne tat ihm richtig Leid. «Kein Wunder, dass die Kleine solche Angst hat!», dachte er bei sich.

«Why don't we all play a game?» Mrs Summerfeld suggested to her younger daughter. «Some games are extra-fun when they are played in the dark!»

«Nooooooo!» Brianne whined.

«Maybe we can listen to some nice music on the radio!» Mr Summerfeld suggested. But that idea didn't cheer Brianne up either.

«Noooooo!» she cried.

Now Britney tried to make her sister feel better.

«I can tell you a story if you want!» she said to Brianne.
«Nooooooo!» Brianne screamed.

Tobias erinnerte Briannes Verhalten an ihr Geknurre vom vergangenen Abend, als sie nicht einsehen wollte, dass es Zeit zum Abendessen war. Dieser Gedanke brachte ihn plötzlich auf eine Idee.

«Hey Briannel!» Tobias said to the little girl. «How about a CHOCOLATE CAKE PICNIC?»

To everybody's surprise – especially Tobias' – Brianne stopped crying. Although it was dark, Tobias could tell that she was staring at him. «What is a chocolate cake picnic?» she said in a voice that still sounded a little whiny.

So Tobias needed to use his imagination. «We all take a pillow» he said, «and we sit down on it on the floor.»

Brianne was still looking at him expectantly.

«And then we all take something to drink,» Tobias continued, «and a BIG piece of chocolate cake.»

Brianne was nodding excitedly.

«And that's called a chocolate cake picnic,» Tobias finished.

Brianne smiled and jumped up. «Mom! Dad! Britney! Let's have a chocolate cake picnic!» she shouted excitedly.

Alle machten mit, und ein paar Minuten später saßen die Summerfelds und Tobias im Kreis auf dem Fußboden und aßen Schokoladentorte. Brianne strahlte. Gewitter und Dunkelheit schien sie ganz vergessen zu haben.

«Great job, Tobias!» Mr Summerfield said. «I thought we'd never calm her down.»

«That was a wonderful ideal!» Britney whispered into his ear and secretly squeezed his hand in the dark.

Jetzt strahlte auch Tobias.

Gerade als Brianne sich den letzten Krümel Torte in den Mund geschoben hatte, flackerte plötzlich das Licht an der Decke des Kellers. Erst nur ganz schwach, doch dann strahlte die Lampe, als wäre sie nie ausgefallen.

«Yippeel!» Brianne screamed and started dancing around the room.

Britney and Tobias had jumped up, too.

«Finally!» Britney shouted.

«Listen everybody!» Mr Summerfield said. «The storm is moving away, too!»

Tobias listened. Mr Summerfield was right. It was still raining hard, but the loud thunder had gone away.

«I think it's safe to go upstairs now,» Mrs Summerfield said.

Britney and Tobias looked at each other. Then they ran out of the room and up the stairs. The storm was finally over! And it felt *so good* to be out of the basement again!

Chapter Twenty-five –

Endspurt

Nach dem aufregenden Tag mit Tornado-Alarm verlief der Rest der Woche am Brown Bear Lake sehr geruhlos. Tobias und Britney machten Wanderungen, paddelten noch ein paar Mal auf dem See und machten es sich am Abend mit Mr Summerfields heißer Schokolade gemütlich. Obwohl nichts Außergewöhnliches vorfiel, vergingen die Tage wie im Flug. Als der Samstag gekommen war und die Summerfields das Auto für die Rückfahrt nach Hause packten, wurde Tobias zum ersten Mal bewusst, dass die drei Wochen des Austausches schon fast vorüber waren: Schon in weniger als 24 Stunden ging es wieder nach Deutschland.

Aus diesem Grund schaute Tobias auch etwas wehmütig auf den Brown Bear Lake und das Blockhaus zurück, als der Ford Excursion sich in Richtung Appleton in Bewegung setzte. Auch Britney war stiller als sonst, als sie neben ihm im Auto saß und die Landschaft an ihnen vorüberzog.

Back in Appleton, there was not much time for anything. Tobias had to pack the rest of his belongings, and the Summerfield family was busy unloading bags and backpacks and doing a lot of laundry. It was only after dinner that Tobias and Britney got to spend some time together on their own. They were sitting outside on the door steps of the Summerfield house, both looking pretty unhappy.

«I can't believe you're going home tomorrow!» Britney said.

Tobias nodded. «I don't want to go home,» he said. They were silent for a while.

Then Britney asked: «Do you want to know something?»

«What?» Tobias asked.

«Do you remember when you first found out that you were going to stay with me?» she asked.

«Of course,» Tobias answered. «Why?»

«Because I just remembered that I was really angry when I found out that you were coming,» Britney told him and smiled.

«I really wanted a girl, not a boy.»

Tobias laughed. «I was angry, too. I shouted at Mrs Berger when I found out that I had to stay with you,» Tobias confessed.

Now Britney laughed. Then she asked: «Are you still angry about that?»

Tobias could feel his cheeks turn pink. «No,» he said. «I'm glad that I stayed with you.»

«Me, too,» Britney said.

They didn't say anything for a while.

«You know what's a good thing?» Britney asked.

«What?» Tobias asked back.

«That I'll be coming to Germany in the summer,» Britney said.

Daran hatte Tobias auch schon gedacht. Im Sommer kamen die amerikanischen Schüler zum Gegenbesuch nach Deutschland. Das hieß, dass er Britney schon in ein paar Monaten wiedersehen würde.

«That is a good thing», stimmte Tobias ihr zu.

Sie saßen eine Weile schweigend da. Dann beschloss Tobias, etwas zu tun, das er schon lange hatte tun wollen. Er rückte noch ein Stück näher an Britney heran und legte seinen Arm um ihre Schultern. Zu seiner Erleichterung rückte auch sie ihm ein Stück näher. Dann nahm sie seine andere Hand und hielt sie fest. So saßen sie eine lange Zeit, bis es dunkel wurde und sie Mrs Summerfeld rufen hörten, dass es Zeit war, ins Bett zu gehen.

Kapitel Sechszwanzig –

Goodbye, America



Auf der Fahrt zum Flughafen am nächsten Morgen saß Tobias wieder hinten im Buick und Britney neben ihrem Vater. Mr Summerfeld, der sich an die erste Fahrt vom Flughafen nach Appleton erinnerte, fühlte, versuchte, die beiden in ein Gespräch zu verwickeln, doch weder seiner Tochter noch Tobias waren viele Worte zu entlocken.

Am Flughafen angekommen, trafen sie wieder auf die anderen Austauschteilnehmer. Anna, Björn und Madison winkten schon von der Ferne. Auch sie wirkten etwas bedrückt.

After everybody had checked in their suitcases, it was time to say goodbye. Tobias shook Mr Summerfeld's hand. Then Mrs Mayers told him to take care of himself. After that, Madison wished him a safe flight home. Finally, only Britney was left. They looked at each other, both very sad. Then Tobias gave

her one last hug. Britney looked around quickly and then, before Tobias realized what was happening, she gave him a little kiss on his lips.

«See you in the summer!» she whispered before she turned around and started walking to where the other Americans were standing.

Bevor Tobias etwas erwidern konnte, hörte er Björns Stimme hinter sich.

«Los, Tobi, wir müssen ans Gate! Frau Berger ist schon ganz ungeduldig!»

Tobias blieb nichts anderes übrig, als den anderen Deutschen zu folgen. Bevor er durch die Passkontrolle ging, drehte er sich noch einmal um. Dort hinten, gleich neben Madison und Mrs. Mayers, stand Britney und winkte ihm zu.

Epilogue –

Nachwort



To: Britney Summerfield

From: Tobias Stein

Subject: Wieder in Deutschland

Hello Britney,

I'm back home! The flight was very boring, but Anna and Björn were sitting next to me so I always had someone to talk to. (Anna talked a lot more than Björn and I, of course.)

I hope that everything is o.k. in Appleton. Maybe you can e-mail me and tell what is going on.

I don't like that I can't see you now. Maybe we can talk on the phone soon. And I'm glad that you will come here in some months.

Wir sehen uns dann im Sommer.

Tobias