

## Lost in Translation

It was an accident I tell you, a mix up in translation I swear! What's she on about I hear you ask? Well that's the crux really, I'm a he not a she, well I was anyway.

Okay I'll start at the beginning, or thereabouts.

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"Bier bitte"

I was in Munich supposedly on business but somehow I managed to get some me time on the itinerary and tonight I decided to do a bit of bar hopping. It wasn't festival season, well it was August actually so although the place was busy enough it wasn't full of drunks.

Now don't get me wrong, I'm not shy or anything but I don't usually stray from the main streets and 'safe' bars on these trips, you can usually get something to eat and a drink, maybe some entertainment, accordion player, you know the sort of thing. Well anyway I'd started around the Residenz area and I was now headed back towards the Hauptbahnhof where I was staying at the 'Intercity' right next to the station.

Well I must have got turned about somewhere because I found myself in a slightly seedy back street, but there were people about so I felt safe enough. The strains of some up-tempo Euro Rock drifted down the street, obviously from the bar on the corner, the neon sign proclaimed 'Bar Rock', very original!

In for a penny, it wasn't that late, maybe 8.30pm so I decided to go in have a brew and ask directions.

Surprisingly the place wasn't too smoky but the music was quite loud and I stood in the doorway a moment decided whether to give it a miss or go in. The place was dark, the music live, the patrons dressed in that strange kick back to the 80's that the Germans seem to have adopted as 'rock look'. My decision was made for me when I was gently shoved forward by some more new arrivals, ah well I'm inside now.

I made my way to the bar and uttered the only line you ever need when in Germany, "eine grosser bier bitte"! The bar maid was surprisingly wearing the full Bavarian kit, you know, the skirt, blouse and waistcoat affair, it didn't quite fit with the idea of a rock bar.

My drink was swiftly served, Paulaner I noted to myself, and I sat on the bar stool to take in the place. The band was a four piece, three girls and a guy on the drums and they were doing a mixture of covers and stuff I presume was original, well I'd certainly not heard it before. There was a small dance floor currently occupied largely by ladies clad largely, or is that smally, in leather and lycra along with a few big leather clad, I would say bikers, but I hadn't seen any outside. They were all bopping away happily and although my own taste goes more to prog rock I was getting into it too.

Before long my original purpose in coming in was forgotten and more Munich brau was ordered and consumed. Eventually the set ended and on checking the time I discovered it was getting on for 10.30, I'd been in the 'Bar Rock' nearly two hours. Damn, I'd got a meeting to prepare for in the morning.

I got the barmaids attention and got my directions, after all that I was only about 200m from my

hotel, just on a parallel street.

The following day's meeting went pretty well, my company, well not mine but the people I work for make these mini conductor things for the electronics trade and I was over on the twice yearly 'meet the customers' trip. I finished for the day about two but my flight wasn't until just after nine in the morning, it was cheaper that way as I was due in Frankfurt at 12.30 & the hotels up there cost more than here in Munich. See?

Well where was I? Oh yeah finished at two. So I decided to take a train out to Augsburg for the afternoon, it was dry and bright and it was only 45 minutes away. I did the tourist thing, gawked in a few shop windows, checked out some of the sites, with a lot of the shops open well into the evening, there seemed no need to rush back to Munich. As thoughts turned to food I remembered thinking the food looked okay in the 'Bar Rock', so I hopped the next IC back to Munich and got myself changed into something a bit more casual.

"Güten abend. Bier?" it was the same barmaid and like barmaids the world over, she remembered my poison.

"Essen?"

I wasn't sure if she' heard me but a menu arrived with the tall glass of beer. The prices were good and I decided to go for the 'würst platter', hopefully it wouldn't be! I took my drink over to a corner table and made myself comfortable. It wasn't as crowded tonight but I noted from a poster that 'Hellcats' that was last nights band were due to play a late set, I reckon I might just hang around for that.

I was just about done with my food and on a second beer when the band started up, tonight's set was more my thing and you could see the band were well into their covers of Bolan, Yes and Oldfield. The crowd was smaller than last night but maybe, I sensed, a little more 'cultured', less exposed flesh and piercings, but still lots of leather!

I still had beer in my glass at the end of tonight's set so I sat in a slightly fuzzy state watching the world go by.

"Can I sit?" I hadn't seen the new arrival.

"Er sure, you speak English?"

"Ja, Martha said you were English or American" she motioned to the angel of the beer pump.

"English" I replied. Well would you want someone thinking you were American?

"I thought so, you dress too well" I'm not sure if that was a compliment or not. Then it clicked who I was talking to, the girl singer from the Hellcats.

"You want a drink?"

"Nein, Martha brings me one" and as if on cue two beers appeared on the table

"On me, I'm Elkie by the way"

"Thanks Elkie, I'm Martin, Martin Dawes"

"Well Martin Dawes, cheers" we chinked glasses and each took a draft.

"So Martin Dawes, you like the Hellcats?"

"Tonight more than last night, erm if you don't mind me saying, Hellcats doesn't sound very German."

"It's much the same but the fans they prefer things in English and we get more bookings!"

"Can't argue with that," I agreed

"Argue? I not this word know"

"Sorry, er not agree?"

"Ah yes, not agree. I will remember that"

"Well I wish my German was half as good as your English"

We spent the next goodness know how long discussing music and stuff, we move on to fashions, the difference between last nights crowd and tonight's. I was probably too sozzled by this stage to realize but Elkie was clearly on the pickup! I'm living proof that it's not just male musicians who get their girl!

To cut the story short, well shorter, Elkie was doing a real number on me and somewhere in there I think my drink was doped. I could be wrong, I did have a few. Anyway, I found myself stumbling into a taxi at some point along with Elkie and then waking up at some point in what was clearly not the Hotel Intercity!

"Hello Marti"

God that voice was too cheerful. Oh shit! Where am I? I've got a plane to catch in, in? I searched for my watch. Oh bugger, 10 minutes.

"I have to go Elkie, I've got to get to Frankfurt for 12."

"Neh, neh, neh"

"Yes, yes, yes. Seriously, I've got a meeting, I can just make the next flight and get there I think"

"Marti you worry too much"

"It's my job"

"Marti you like being girl?"

"Of course I do, but I must get to Frankfurt"

"If you like Elkie you will stay"

"Of course I like you"

"Then you stay, be Elkie's girl"

I ran the timetable through my head, get back to the hotel, change, get a taxi to the airport, check in. Sod it. There is no way I can do it, I don't even know where here is! I can ring and rearrange I suppose, if I can fly later today I can schedule it in before I go on to Warsaw tomorrow. Yeah, I can do that.

"Okay, okay. I'll be Elkie's girl for a while longer but I must leave this afternoon."

"You be Elkie's girl you never leave"

Whatever.

"Let me just cancel the meeting eh?"

"Okay, then we really make you Elkie's"

I made the call, all apologetic, unexpected hitch here in Munich la-di-da and arranged for a breakfast meeting in the morning.

"I have coffee for you Marti"

Boy did I need that after last night.

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I really should have kept my eye on the ball, thought about what I was saying. No it wasn't a translation thing, oh no, Elkie meant what she said; she wanted me to be Elkie's Girl full stop. Why me? That's a question I've asked many times over the last few months and how come I haven't been missed?

That coffee, well that really was drugged, I don't actually remember much of what went on over the next weeks. I vaguely recall a conversation about rock chicks and stuff like that but it's still all a blur. And you'll be wanting to know why I'm still here too I guess. Well one thing at a time.

Why I'm still here. Well Elkie won't really tell me the whole story but from what I've managed to put together I've been sort of brainwashed, well maybe that's not the right word, but if I get more than say a couple of hundred metres from Elkie I get cramps and stuff, you don't want to go there. It's selective because if Elkie asks me to do something I'm fine, it's if I try to do something. Phones I hear you ask, the Internet? Well I've got access to both but anything that I try to instigate either gets me talking in drivel or I can't remember what to do. Again if Elkie asks me to answer the phone, no problem. Like I said brainwashed. Yet I do still remember who I am, was.

So that's why I'm still here, living as Elkie's lover, Elkie's girl.

What you must remember is that this next bit has been cobbled together from bits of information I've wangled out of Elkie or one of the others. The Others? Well that's Bruno the drummer, Annie & Soda [a nickname I guess, that's all I've ever heard her called].

Sorry I forgot what I was telling you. Oh yeah, I remember now. So okay I never was exactly George Clooney or Richard Gere but these days I look more Stevie Nicks!

I presume they must be implants, I mean you don't just grow a pair of 38c's in a few weeks do you? But they feel like they are all me. Then there's my waist, well lack thereof really. I was never fat but now I'm positively anorexic! They must have had me on some super crash diet, I measure up, I've done the conversion for you, as 38-26-38 - so it's gone to my hips okay.

This stuff must have cost Elkie a bob, I've discovered that Hellcats are really pretty big on the German / Austrian circuit, arena venues and stuff! So I guess I'm small change.

Sorry I'll get back to what I know shall I? Well I've had a face job, well that's more accurate than anything else. When I said I look like Stevie Nicks I wasn't kidding, the only thing left that's me is my eyes. I remember being in quite a lot of pain but I was mostly unconscious, Soda says it was weeks and I still looked like shit! They even altered my voice somehow, it wasn't deep but now it's sort of, I don't know, a bit like Joanna Lumley, you know the blonde in that ridiculous comedy thing back in England. Damn I can't even remember what it's called.

I suppose it's my own fault but my wardrobe is almost entirely 80's rock chick! Yep, all those flouncy skirts, tight bodices, pointy boots. I'd fit right into Fleetwood Mac! Occasionally if Elkie thinks I've over stepped the mark somehow I end up in a nightmare outfit of leather, talk about tart, I feel like one in that stuff, I must look like one.

I've missed something? Not on purpose honest. My ol' todger is still attached but not the veggies. Elkie still likes to use it from time to time but I can't, as the Stones once said, get no satisfaction. Mind you most of the time it's locked away anyway. I get to wear this damned chastity belt thing most of the time, the former Jolly Roger is fully concealed and I look just like a girl wearing said lump of steel. I guess one day I might lose that last vestige of Martin Dawes but I hope not soon.

I did try to ask Elkie why she did this to me. All she answers is that " 'I'll be Elkie's girl', that's what you said". And she wouldn't be lying. So I've only myself to blame. I still don't know how come I've not been missed; I mean surely when I didn't turn up in Frankfurt someone must have wondered?

So anyway, the next time you see Hellcats in concert, remember that the girl with the water bottles, yeah the one with the nose ring and all the hair, that's me, Marti or as my Id. card says Martina Dawes, spinster of this parish!

Maddy Bell, Augsburg, 29.08.04