

Appoliana

"OH GOD!" I jumped to the side and barely the large horse-drawn carriage. "Watch out-". He paused when he saw me. We stared at each other until he finally disappeared around the next corner. I stood rooted to the spot and was only able to collect myself when the clattering of hooves became quieter until it finally disappeared completely. "Appoliana! The apples don't sell themselves," I heard my mother call out to me. I turned around and noticed the long queue behind our apple stall. "I'm coming," I replied and hurriedly pushed my way behind the sales table.

11 months later

I sat up in bed and looked out of the window at the church clock. Luckily there was a full moon today, otherwise I probably wouldn't have been able to make out the curved numbers on the man-sized clock face. It was time. I threw the covers aside and quickly threw on a jacket before tiptoeing past my sleeping parents to the stairs. I paused at each step to make sure no one heard me. The floorboards creaked as I tried to sneak out of the front door unnoticed, which I carefully fall into the lock. I for a moment, but nothing in the house. Everything remained silent. I closed my eyes and took another deep breath before quietly stealing away to turn into the next alley. Anselm was already waiting impatiently for me there. As soon as



When I saw him, all my worries were blown away and I couldn't hold back my smile despite the seriousness of the situation.

Anselm

I had been standing out here for a while now and the cold was gradually creeping up under my robe. The moon was high up in the night sky and lit up the narrow alleyway, so I pressed myself even closer to the wall of the house to avoid being seen. She should be here any minute. Hopefully she wouldn't be spotted! What if the night watchman stopped her? What if we were discovered? But then a dark figure came around the corner. I hesitated. My heart was pounding. When I recognized her, a stone fell from my heart. "Appoliana," I whispered barely audibly. She began to smile and I couldn't help but smile back. I took her in my arms and pulled her close to me in the shadows. My heart was still pounding. It would be our downfall if we were seen together.

"As agreed tomorrow night?" I asked quietly. She nodded. "Sure, I've already started packing the essentials." "Good, then..." I stopped suddenly. Appoliana looked at me questioning. "What's-" she began. I pressed my hand against her mouth and pulled her down. "Shh," I put my finger to my lips. There it was again: a soft rustling at the end of the alley. Had someone overheard us? "Rumble!" Appoliana and I jerked our heads to the side. I squinted my eyes to make out something in the darkness. Something moved and suddenly jumped out of the shadows. "Aaargh," Appoliana said, digging her fingers into my upper arm. Then we saw what had startled us so much. "A cat?" Appoliana whispered. She started to giggle and I could only shake my head. "What did you want to say?" she asked as we stumbled along for a while, trying to regain our bearings. "I'll meet you tomorrow in front of the city wall at the east gate. I'll wait there with two horses, all right?" "And what if we get caught?" "We won't, this is our only chance and we'll take it." "But..." "We



can do it! Trust me." She swallowed and looked at me. I could tell by the look in her eyes that she was calmer now and relied on me completely.

Appoliana

With my father's old duffel bag on my back, stuffed to the top with everything I thought was important and helpful, I stood in front of the front door, wrapped in my warmest clothes. This door had seen so much, so many beautiful and terrible things, and it was still hanging on its hinges. The paint was peeling. I touched it and thought back to all the moments I had spent in this house, to all the tears I had shed from laughter but also from sadness. I thought back to how I had sat playing on the doorstep as a child and had to smile. Then my face darkened as I thought about how my father and mother had shouted at me for playing and not working. I would never have thought that this moment, this farewell, would be so difficult for me. Somehow I seemed to have loved them, my parents. A tear rolled down my cheek. I quietly walked into my parents' room, the door was open. They were both lying there, fast asleep. There was a piece of old leaflet on the floor. I took it and wrote a little message with a piece of old charcoal from the stove. Then I crept straight to the door and pulled it shut behind me. I looked back once more. I would leave this behind me now, I would start a new life in freedom. With this in mind, I made my way to Anselm.



Anselm

There she came. She had made it. I saw that she felt fear and hope at the same time. Just like me. I forced myself to smile to reassure her. After saying hello, we stowed everything in the saddlebags and I helped Appoliana to mount. Then we trotted off. At first at a leisurely pace, then we got faster and faster. I hadn't felt so free in a long time and I finally saw Appoliana laughing from the bottom of her heart again. Finally, the game of hide and seek was over, well, almost.

After a few hours, when I noticed that Appoliana was almost off her horse from tiredness and my eyes were closing again and again, we decided to set up camp in order to get at least a few more hours of sleep before sunrise.

Meanwhile, at Anselm's home...

"Señor Martín, may I come in? Breakfast is ready. Señor Martín, are you there?" The maid was astonished. She had never seen this before. knocked once more before carefully pushing the door handle down and sticking her head through the crack in the door. But the bed was empty. Frantically, she looked around and discovered the open window. She looked out and saw the dew stretching from the window into the courtyard. "Oh God, I hope nothing has happened to him!" She immediately ran to his father, who was already waiting impatiently at the table. "Where's the boy? Anselm's got nothing but nonsense on his mind!" he grumbled angrily. "He, he..." stammered the maid. "Dear, what's wrong?" Anselm's mother intervened condescendingly. "He's disappeared, out of the window," the maid replied. "What? Anselm has disappeared?" The father jumped up angrily. "The boy is good for nothing, and he comes from such a respectable Spanish merchant family, like the rest of us. He really is a disgrace," moaned his mother. Señor Martín ran through the dining room in a rage.

"What have we taken on? The long, arduous journey from our beautiful Madrid to this cold hole called Antwerp. We have been given the unique opportunity to help trade flourish on behalf of our beloved Spanish king. Which, with my diplomatic skills and with your son and his flair for good business, I could have done in no time at all." He ruffled his hair. "A plan for him should be made throughout Antwerp immediately. And quickly!" he roared, banging his fist on the table so that the fine china rattled. His best men immediately rode off in search of Anselm. They went round house after house asking if anyone had heard or seen anything. But Anselm remained as if swallowed up by the ground. "This is the last house and we haven't got a trace yet," shouted one of the men. He dismounted and stood in front of the door, which had been in need of a coat of paint for a long time and the paint was already peeling.

Meanwhile at the "Van der Merg" house...

"Come and eat," Appoliana's father said grimly to his wife. "I'm coming all right. But where's Appoliana?" she mumbled. "I don't know, she'll have to come herself. We always have to fetch her, why doesn't she manage to sleep through the night, then she wouldn't be so tired in the morning!" There was a knock at the door. "Who's that so early?" grumbled Appoliana's mother and went to the door. "How do you do? Oh!" said Appoliana's mother. "Good afternoon, Señor Martín, the Spanish merchant, sent us. His son has disappeared and now we're going from house to house to ask the residents if they've noticed anything." "All right, come in. We were just about to eat," she replied. "Who's there?" Appoliana's father called out and came to the entrance. "We're looking for Anselm Martín," the man explained the unexpected visitor. "We haven't seen young Mr. Martín," said the father thoughtfully, scratching his chin. "Appoliana, come and eat at last!" the mother called out. "Oh, you have another daughter?" asked one of the searching men. "Yes," replied the mother. "I'll go and see where she is." She trudged up the stairs and banged on the door with her fists. "Appoliana, where are you?" She opened the door and was startled. "She's gone, she's gone," her mother shrieked, stomping down the stairs. "What? That can't be!" her father shouted and stormed into her room. But the bed really was empty. "Where on earth has she gone? This can't be true. And my duffel bag is gone too, along with all her things. What are we supposed to do now?" "Calm down," said the man reassuringly, "I'll pass this on to Señor Martín straight away. Perhaps there is some connection between the two missing persons." "Thank you, but what connection could there be? We are poor and from Antwerp and he is

a rich Spaniard," muttered the mother and closed the door. "But at least now we have one less mouth to feed!" said the father snidely.
The men rode back to Señor Martín.

Appoliana

I stretched and yawned. Anselm was lying next to me. He was still asleep. "Anselm, Anselm," I tried to wake him up. "What's wrong? I'm tired." "Come on, we have to get going, we can't stay here forever." Once the horses were saddled, we rode off, invigorated. The landscape around us had hardly changed. We rode past many forests, streams and villages. However, we never crossed the villages as we didn't want to risk anyone seeing us. Sometimes I looked at Anselm and thought about how different we were. But we still had a strong love for each other. I smiled. Gradually, I began to look forward to our new home, even if I didn't know exactly where it was. "The horses can drink up ahead," Anselm snapped me out of my thoughts. He pointed to a stream. It was so clear that we decided to fill up our water supply before the horses drank from it. Then we mounted up again and rode on and on until my limbs ached and we set up camp again for the night, looked after the horses and ate something. "I'll just get some firewood before we go to sleep," said Anselm. "But be careful and hurry. It's already so dark." "Of course, I'll be right back," he replied and set off. Shortly afterwards, there was a rustling near the sleeping area. Although I was sure it was just Anselm, I held my breath and began to get scared. "Anselm," I whispered, clutching my necklace. The metal was cold. I traced the cross that hung from it as a pendant with my thumbs. Suddenly there was a clatter and I . My whole body trembled. "The hell! Ow my foot. Damn it!" "Anselm," I said in surprise, but also relieved when I recognized his voice. "What's happened?" "I didn't see the bags in the dark and tripped over them. Now almost half of our provisions are gone." "Oh Anselm, I would have expected a bit more skill from someone in such high society as you, you clumsy fool," I joked. "Ha ha ha, that's not funny! What are we going to do now? We won't have enough supplies until we reach our destination!" "We'll just save some by going to inn in a village tomorrow. You've got quite a few silver coins with you and nobody will recognize us. Maybe there's even a stable for the horses and we can stay there. My back hurts so much anyway, a proper bed would do me good." "Maybe you're right. I think I should think a little more hopefully in future," he said as he added firewood and joined me at the table.



sat down by the fire. "That's why you have me" I replied and we sat in silence for a while, looking into the fire, until our eyes finally closed.

Meanwhile in Antwerp

"How? Anselm has disappeared without a trace?" Anselm's father shouted. "That can't be. You're just as useless as he is!" The men ducked their heads. "But, but we've looked everywhere," one man stammered, intimidated. "And how can it be that you haven't found anything at all, you good-for-nothings?" Anselm's father shouted angrily. "Well, somewhat..." mumbled another man with his head down. "What are you saying?" the father asked with his eyebrows furrowed. "We have something... Oh, I don't think you're in that at the moment." "Say it now, or you can never show your face here again." Anselm's father angrily took a step forward, whereupon his men took a step back. "A poor girl, the daughter of two farmers, has disappeared - on the same night as Anselm," the man said.

"Why didn't you just say so? It can't be a coincidence! But who would kidnap a girl like that and Anselm also left of his own accord, considering the dew on his window. It can only be that they both fled. But why? And not together. No, that can't be! What would Anselm do with a poor farmer's daughter? And a local one at that." The father pondered. At that moment, a farmhand came running into the hall. "Señor Martín, Señor Martín!" he shouted, completely out of breath. "How dare you disturb me? Can't you see that I'm busy?" "Excuse me, but it's very important." "Very well, then speak." "Two of the best horses from the stables are missing, including Anselm's black horse, simply disappeared with saddles and bridles. And some hay is missing too. But the gate was closed when I came into the stables," the farmhand continued. "So Anselm did ride off with that peasant girl. I can't explain it any other way. That brat, he's in for a treat when I find him! Men, you ride to the printer immediately. Tell him to prepare a leaflet. Let everyone know that Anselm is wanted, then we'll find him. And then you will form a search party to look for him. Oh, and this girl, or rather this bumpkin, is also to be searched for. I'm sure she got Anselm involved in this! What was her name again?" "Appoliana, Appoliana is her name." "What would he want with someone like that?" the father added dismissively.

The men immediately made their way to the printer and Anselm's father remained behind, outraged and yet puzzled. He couldn't quite explain the whole thing.

Gesucht



*Anselm Martin
Appoliana Van der Merg*



Seit Sonntag, dem achten August, sind der spanische Kaufmannssohn Anselm Martin und die Bauerstochter Appoliana Van der Merg aus Antwerpen verschwunden. Sie flohen in der Nacht von Samstag auf Sonntag mit zwei Pferden der Kaufmannsfamilie. Darunter der Andalusier Anselms und eine fuchsfarbene Araberstute. Bei jeglichen Hinweisen bittet Alberto Martin umgehend dem Kaufmannshaus Meldung zu machen.

Anselm

"Anselm, come on, we have to get going. If I had known what a late riser you are, I would have reconsidered the whole thing," a voice chuckled reproachfully. A hand stroked my face. I opened my eyes and looked into Appoliana's sky-blue eyes. "Come on, get up. I've already saddled the horses, you just have to eat something and then..." she began. But I interrupted her by pulling her towards me and hugging her. I was about to close my eyes when Appoliana said: "Oh, you just want to go back to sleep. That's what you're all about." She freed herself from my embrace. "Come on, we don't have time for this now." She held out her hand to me. "All right," I mumbled sleepily and pulled myself up by her hand. After we had eaten, we trotted on. As dusk slowly fell, we rode into a small village called Neuendorf. Luckily, this village had an inn with stables. We first left our horses outside and then went inside. "Hello, we would like to dine and spend the night with you," I said. "Good evening and welcome to Neuendorf," the innkeeper replied in a friendly manner. "Yes, one room is still available. My wife Marie will take you up in a moment." Once we had thanked Marie and checked into our room, we went downstairs to have dinner. While I was used to being served food and accepted it gratefully, Appoliana was unfamiliar with the whole situation, or so it seemed. As far as I knew, she had never really been cooked for, except occasionally by her mother. She was actually the person at home who was responsible for the food. "Cheers," came from the next table. Four men were sitting there, who were probably merchants, if I understood their conversation correctly. They were laughing uproariously, clinking glasses of beer and one of them bellowed: "To a successful trade!" The others joined. I looked at Appoliana. She looked unsettled. I could see from her face that she was afraid we would be found out, even if she didn't want to admit it. "Everything will go smoothly," I whispered to her and looked at her.



into her eyes. She forced herself to smile, but I could see that she doubted it. If only I had known at the time how justified that doubt had been.

Appoliana

It was a nice feeling when I got into my freshly washed clothes. Anselm, who was shaving his face, asked: "How are you?" "Oh, I don't know. It's a strange feeling not to have a real home," I replied, looking dreamily out of the window. "I'm sure we'll find a place where we'll be accepted for who we are," said Anselm. He hugged me from behind and his head on my shoulder. "And then we'll finally have a better life," he said softly in my ear. "Two of us," he added. After he said that, my stomach began to tingle. A feeling of anticipation and hope for a better life came over me. I was not alone. I could rely on Anselm and he could rely on me.

As we stood there for a while, thinking about the past and the future ahead, we realized that it was time to leave. We were already packing up, but decided to have breakfast at the inn before leaving to continue our journey.



The search party

Mist lay over the meadows and fields and the morning dew had covered every blade of grass and every bush like a cloak. "Rusch!" A carriage raced along a country lane. Two black horses were harnessed to it. Mud foamed from their mouths. The mud splashed up the horses' legs. "I can't take any more! We drove all night so as not to lose any time. And now every fiber of my body hurts," the man moaned to the other. "Yes, yes, you're right," agreed the other,

"I just didn't want to be too slow to find them. Because if we come back empty-handed, Señor Martín will make us a head shorter. We'll stop at the next village." "Yay," shouted the entire search party. The carriage shook. "Heh, you can't just let go of the reins with all the cheering! We'll end up in the ditch," the eldest reprimanded them. Contrite, a man grabbed the reins and steered the carriage back onto its original route. Nobody said anything for a while. Everyone was silent in eager anticipation of a warm meal.

"There, there, just look. Back there in the fog. A church tower. Neuendorf can't be far away!" shouted one of the men. From then on, they couldn't stand it any longer.

"Hüa," shouted the coach driver and cracked his whip vigorously in the air. The horses neighed shrilly and galloped off. The countryside passed them by and finally they drove into the village.

Appoliana

"Give me the bag, I'll carry it," said Anselm and took the saddlebag from me, which was so bulging that it looked as if it would burst at any moment. "Thank you," I replied and walked light-footedly down the stairs.

My stomach was already growling. I was indeed very hungry. All this traveling really wasn't easy. Anselm put the bags next to our table and adjusted my chair so that I could sit down and then pushed it back towards me.

"What do we want for breakfast?" I asked Anselm. "How about bread and fried eggs?" "Why not," I replied. While we waited for our food, I noticed the hawkers settling down at a corner table again. This time, however, they were obviously hungover. "Look, I've got a leaflet from home," said one of them. "Let me see it," said the second. I tried to peer over at them unnoticed. Anselm had taught me how to read and write some time ago, but the three of them were bent over the , blocking my view. I glanced Anselm. But he was staring at the three men. I gave him an unobtrusive sign to stop, because I didn't want to get into trouble or attract attention.

But luckily our food arrived, which we devoured straight away.

"Do you know them?" one of the men asked the others. Anselm and I stopped chewing and pricked up our ears. "A Spanish merchant's son and a young woman are wanted here. Both are said to have disappeared on the same night." I felt hot and cold down my spine. Anselm looked at me with wide eyes. "What are their names?" one of the men asked. "It says Anselm and Appoliana," the other man replied. I felt sick and saw the color drain from Anselm's face.

Would we be found out? Would our journey end here? "Never heard of it," said the other man. "Anselm, Anselm, I've heard of her, but Apolliliana..." The other man interrupted him: "It's called Appoliana!" "Whatever. I certainly don't know her." Anselm and I stared at each other. I knew exactly what his look meant. To be as inconspicuous as possible and disappear. I chewed as fast as I could and just as I tried to swallow the half-chewed bite, I choked. I noticed the red color rising to my face as I tried to suppress my cough. Anselm noticed immediately that something was wrong and poured me some water, which I immediately poured into myself. My eyes burned and started to water. Anselm pretended that he had dropped something and patted me unobtrusively on the back. I slowly calmed down again and my breathing . I was relieved that I hadn't drawn all the attention to myself. While Anselm looking for Marie to pay, I heard the men say:

"Look, here's a drawing of the two of them." "Hm, looks familiar, but I've still got too much alcohol in me to think about where." "Yes, you're right, those two look familiar to me too!" When I heard that, I couldn't help but get up to find Anselm as quickly as possible. My heart was beating like crazy and I immediately broke out in a cold sweat. Where was Anselm? I was so scared that my whole body was trembling. We had to get out of here as quickly as possible!

"Appoliana come quickly!" Anselm stood in front of me with his bags in his hands.

"Let's get out of here, quick!" He walked straight to the exit and I tried follow him. I looked at the ground for fear I would be recognized. "Ow!" Anselm had stopped and I had run into him. "Why are you stopping? We have to get out of here!" Anselm put his finger over my mouth. "Look there," he whispered, pointing ahead of him. I tried to look past Anselm, who was standing there transfixed. There was a large carriage in front of him. It was made of wood with iron fittings and in the middle

was emblazoned with a red sign. I had to squint my eyes to make out what it said through the fog. I recognized a curved A and behind it, slightly offset, an M. These initials looked familiar. I tried to remember them. Then the scales fell from my eyes. This was one of Anselm's father's carriages. I knew we had to get out of here, but where to? The carriage was in the way. We wouldn't be able to get away unnoticed. Our only option was to go back to the inn. I turned around, grabbed Anselm's hand and pulled him behind me. He was totally perplexed and didn't know what was happening to him as he stood in the inn again.

"What are we going to do?" I asked Anselm on the verge of tears. "I, I don't know. How else are we supposed to get out of here? There's no other way," he replied desperately. My hands began to sweat. We were trapped! Suddenly, as if struck by lightning, I remembered. "The back door!" I looked at Anselm. "What back door?" Anselm looked at me, confused. "Come with me! I saw it when I was going downstairs earlier. It's next to the stairs. I hope it's not locked!" I grabbed Anselm by the arm and dragged him to the back door. "It's open," I whispered with relief.

I held it open so that Anselm could walk through with his heavy bags. The moment I stepped through the door, I saw a couple of men coming through the front door. They had to be Señor Martín's men. As quickly as I could, I pulled the door shut behind me. I closed my eyes and took a quick breath before running after Anselm, who had already rushed to the horses and started to saddle them. I quickly helped him, even though it took me at least five attempts to fasten the girth because my hands were shaking so much. Finally we were ready and swung ourselves onto the horses. Anselm rode ahead and peeked around the corner where the carriage was parked, but no one was there. He beckoned me to him and we tried to gain land as quietly as possible. When we finally reached the edge of the village, we galloped off, wanting to get away as quickly as we could. By now it was not only foggy, but it was also starting to rain. The sky darkened and it finally poured down like buckets.

We were soaked to the bone and didn't say a word. Then Anselm broke the silence and we started trotting so that we could understand him better. He looked at me. His black hair hung in his eyes. "We, we made it. We got through." His eyes shone and I thought I recognized a tear that he wiped from his eye. But maybe it was just the rain. And I, I couldn't help but grin. "I never thought we'd make it. I always tried to keep hope, but it was... terrible. I was so scared. But why did they have to stop at this inn of all places?" "Yes, they really gave us quite a scare."

We rode on and gradually regained some confidence. Now I was no longer shivering with fear but with cold. The wet clothes stuck to my body, but there was no point in changing as it was still raining so hard that I could only see Anselm riding alongside me in a blur. A curtain of water blocked my view. Despite this bad situation, I felt a great sense of relief.

"Thank you, God, thank you for protecting us. Thank you for looking after us like a shepherd looking after his sheep. I wish with all my heart that you will accompany us on our journey and give us your mercy," I whispered softly and closed my eyes briefly. I put one hand to my neck. I opened my eyes. "Where was she?" I thought. I felt hot and cold at the same time. I simply let the reins slip out of my hands and began to feel my neck with both hands. It couldn't be. I stopped and jumped off the horse. I tore off my many layers of clothing. Maybe the necklace was in one of them. But it wasn't there either. I slipped my clothes back on and began to rummage through the saddlebags. Anselm didn't notice any of this. He had ridden a few meters ahead of me

and only noticed something when I said out to him: "Anselm, wait!" He turned around and looked at me in amazement. Our belongings lay mud-smeared on the floor and my legs and hands were also covered in clay and dirt. This was also on my face by now, as I had tried to brush my dripping wet hair out of my face. "Appoliana, what are you doing? Have you gone mad? What are you doing with our belongings and what do you look like anyway?" He slapped his hands over his head. "My, my...", I began in a quivering voice, "k-k-chain is gone."

"What necklace?" Anselm said. "My cross necklace, the silver one," I replied.

"And that's why you're making such a fuss here now? When we arrive, I'll commission a new one. It's just a necklace. So, come on!" He was already turning to leave when I shouted: "You don't understand at all. My late grandmother gave this necklace as a christening present. It's the only thing I have to remember her by. But more importantly, it's the only thing I have left of my faith, of my religion, which was forbidden to me. When I touched it, I felt deeply connected to God and remembered and felt deep in my heart that I was actually

I am Lutheran-Reformed and not Catholic. It should have been clear to me that you didn't understand that. Your religion wasn't forced on you. You're one of the people who did that to us. It was you who made sure that our town became Catholic - against our will." I came into tears. Then swung onto my horse and turned back. "I'll go and get them!" I shouted and galloped off.

Anselm

"Appoliana," I shouted, even though I knew she wouldn't hear me. "Damn it!" I knew how important the necklace with the cross was to her. How many times had she talked about her grandmother and her faith? I was so blind. I should have realized sooner how much the necklace and her religion meant to her. I didn't want to make her so angry and sad! She must have been disappointed in me. What if she never forgave me for all this? I never wanted to hurt her. I loved her after all! I buried my face in my hands. What was I doing? Why was I so unsympathetic? Appoliana had it even harder than me and I was so blind. I had to find her and fix everything "Giddy up!" I shouted and galloped off. The ground was so soft from the rain that I had to be careful that my horse didn't slip.

What if Appoliana got hurt? Oh God, please protect her! I rode on. At one point my black horse almost slipped and I almost flew over his neck. I had been riding since I was little and Appoliana had hardly any riding experience. If I had such difficulties, how would she fare? I was so scared for her and trotted to her as fast as I could. Suddenly I saw the tail of Appoliana's horse. Relieved, I rode around the copse that was blocking my view. But then I saw something that took away all my relief. Appoliana was lying on the ground next to her horse. I jumped out of the saddle and ran to her. "Appoliana, are you hurt?" "Anselm, you followed me. No, everything is fine. I, there was a branch, and... I'm fine." I held out my hand and helped her up.

"Are you sure you can keep riding?" I reassured myself. "Yes, I'm fine." I helped her mount and we rode on. Appoliana suddenly stopped.

"What's there?" I asked and rode past her. Then I saw a wooden vehicle covered in mud coming towards us. "The carriage!" I shouted in shock. I looked around. The forest, we could hide there. I galloped there, expecting Appoliana to follow me.

Fortunately, she did so immediately. We dismounted and ducked behind some bushes.

"There, here they come," Appoliana whispered. The carriage drove past.

"I've had enough," said one of the men on the coachman's seat. "Now I've got you

Not like that, we'll just finish this route and turn back tomorrow." "Did you that? Then we're safe," I whispered to Appoliana. She smiled at me. We waited a little longer until we were sure that the carriage had gone.

"Appoliana, I just wanted to tell you that I'm so sorry. I should have known that this necklace meant so much to you. I didn't want to hurt you." "Oh Anselm, you couldn't have known. I'm sorry I overreacted like that earlier." She threw her arms around my neck.

We mounted up again and rode back to the inn. There we immediately met Marie. "Did you find a cross necklace?" Appoliana asked her. "Yes, it was lying next to the washbasin in the room. I'll get it quickly," Marie replied. "I must have taken it off when I was washing," said Appoliana, while Marie fetched the necklace.

Appoliana gave it to me and I put it on her. From then on, everything was better again.

Appoliana

The rest of the day and the next flew by. We rode on and on, always following our noses. "What's the name of this town we're going to?" I asked Anselm, "Stade. If what I've heard is true, different religions are accepted there and the people are said to be very hospitable."

"if we had our own house and could live there together," I dreamed. "That's one of my greatest wishes," said Anselm.

As we continued to philosophize about our future, we got closer and closer to Stade and suddenly we were standing in front of a city wall. We got off our horses and walked to a gate. We looked around, a little uncertain. "Moin, can I help you?" a young man asked us. "Good sir, is this Stade?" asked Anselm. "Yes, this is Stade. You're not from around here, are you?" "No, we've had a long journey and now want to settle down here to start a new life," I replied. "Oh, then welcome to Stade. You've come to the right place. My wife Adelheid and I, my name is Johannes by the way, have done exactly the same thing.

We came here two years ago." "Oh, that's a coincidence. My name is Anselm, by the way, and this is Appoliana," Anselm introduced us. "Would you like me to show you around Stade? We can also stable the horses first," Johannes suggested. "Oh, that would be really nice," I replied. After we had stabled the horses with a farmer friend of Johannes, we went through the gate. "That's the boatmen's gate," Johannes explained. After turning a few times, we stood in a large square. "This is the horse market," Johannes told us. We stopped and admired the many brick houses. "And that's the hospital." Johannes pointed to a building on the edge of the square. We walked on and came to a beautiful large building. "That building there is the town hall. And the church tower behind it belongs to St. Cosmae's Church. And over there, that's where I live with Adelheid." "Can we have a look?" I asked curiously. "Of course!"

We continued along the street and came to a small, cozy house. "This is where we live," said Johannes proudly. "Oh, and if you're looking for a place to stay: The house opposite," he pointed to a pretty house with a red tiled roof, "that's where the widow Cordes lives, I'm sure she wouldn't mind a little company." Anselm first looked at me with a grin and then at Johannes. "I can introduce you later, but for now, have something to eat. And I'll introduce you to Adelheid." Johannes walked into the house ahead of us. "We have friends and maybe a place to stay," I whispered excitedly. Now nothing stood in the way of a wonderful future together.

Epilogue

Anselm and Appoliana stood in a large, candle-lit room. Next to them was an altar. They looked to the side, where John and Adelheid smiled at them.

Appoliana's dress, which Adelheid only finished sewing the evening before, fitted perfectly. The wedding ceremony began. The pastor said: "Anselm Martín, if you wish to take Appoliana van der Merg, who is present here, as your wife, answer 'Yes, with God's help'". "Yes, with God's help," Anselm replied with a smile. "Appoliana van der Merg, if you wish to take Anselm Martín, who is present here, as your husband, answer 'Yes, with God's help'," said the pastor, turning to Appoliana. "Yes, with God's help," replied Appoliana, also smiling. Addressing Anselm, the pastor continued: "Then you may now kiss the bride."

