

Let's hedgehog

On a dark night, a man, silver haired and clad like a gangster from an American movie, stands in front of the German emperor's palace. His left arm is protectively resting on a woman's shoulders. Wearing a black cashmere coat makes her look like a duchess. At least, that's what the gangster is convinced of.

The gangster and the duchess remain completely motionless. Not even for a second do they take their eyes off the wild animal lying in wait in front of them. Ten minutes of absolute tension pass. Then the hedgehog is fed up with that silly situation and uncurls himself. Secretly, the duchess cheers, "Thank god, finally, this beast is moving." The gangster, getting totally excited and fidgety, shouts, "Oh look, he's moving. Let's follow him." I, for the duchess is me, am thinking, "I see. The male hunter's instinct has come through."

So we are tiptoeing after the hedgehog. From time to time, he takes a suspicious glance at us over his shoulder. During the wild hunt for him, I am trying to answer Jack's questions about hedgehogs. He wants to know why the hedgehog is so slow. I am mumbling something about bad aerodynamics, short legs, heavy quills and missing Nike sneakers. I do hope that the hedgehog doesn't know English or else I would be so embarrassed. Fortunately, Jack's language device has been temporarily paralyzed by the hedgehog's appearance – he doesn't even comment on the Nikes.

Still stalking the hedgehog, Jack's arm remains wrapped around me. He doesn't really believe me that this spiny animal is completely harmless. He seems to expect every second that little guy will suddenly turn around, sniffle, "Attack!!!" and kill us cruelly.

The hedgehog's muzzle is twitching suspiciously. I know what's to come now. He is going to flash a mocking smile and, oh my god, if Jack sees that! Who wants to be sneered at by a hedgehog? In my thoughts, I am begging the hedgehog, "He is not stupid. It's just that he has never seen someone like you before. In San Francisco, there are raccoons and cable cars and lots of elderly hippies. But not even one hedgehog. So please, be nice to him because he's so happy about you." The hedgehog is winking his black button eyes at me and then his face turns to stone, looking so perfectly bored and indifferent as though he has practiced this in linguistics lectures for all of his life. If he knew how to whistle, he would certainly do so. "Well, well, don't wanna be a spoil-sport." His little hedgehog heart is filled with pride because he is such a miracle.

Finally, my beloved American has seen enough of the hedgehog and turns his head towards the palace. "Wow, what a beautiful place. Wish I had my camera here to take a picture of this hedgehog and his palace." I can see the hedgehog rub his tiny paws and triumphantly stick his tongue at the statues in front, "Ha ha! Did you hear that? My palace, not yours!" And suddenly, it hits me: "Damn! That beast understands English. He knows about the Nikes!"

Jack takes a last glance at the hedgehog, who is now grinning like a madhog, and decides that he is a harmless creature. Turning towards me, he overlooks my red face and simply kisses me. There's something rustling. The hedgehog is leaving. Two-leggers kissing each other – that is something he has seen too often already. After all, he is an educated campus hedgehog with foreign language proficiency. Let's hope that San Francisco's raccoons will be just as discreet as Potsdam's hedgehogs are.

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