

# “One repeatedly and deliberately dislocated my arm.”

Are boys bad? Or to put the question differently: are boys more wicked than girls? It's hard to reach agreement on this tricky and eternally topical theme. Everyone's got something important and something new to say on it: developmental psychologists, brain and hormone researchers, neurologists and biologists, Darwin, Kant, Sloterdijk.

*But the question is: What do Milena (11), Marie (11), Ines (27) and Inge (60) think about it?*



*Text HEIKO SCHULZ Illustration ESTHER GEBAUER*

## To Warm up: What is “absolute evil” for you?

Milena: Absolute evil is living things that do harm to other living things without it being of any use to them, the ones doing it.

Inge: Exactly. The physical or mental ill-treatment of defenceless living things.

Marie: Mean tricks. Oppression.

Ines: For me there is only relative badness, each sort identified by character depth e.g. bad-wicked, bad-underhand, bad-thoughtless, hate-filled-bad, cruel-bad, annoyed-bad, furious-bad and so on. Absolute evil as a completely monopolising trait is beyond my imagination.

## What other nice vocabulary have you got for “bad”?

Inge: Underhanded, devious, malicious, hurtful, bullying, slanderous, libellous, brutal, sneaking, instilling fear, wounding, cunning.

Ines: Not synonymous, but partly overlapping with bad in their use perhaps: mean, egocentric, angry, grumpy, destructive, hypercritical, treacherous, immoral.

Milena: Wicked, naughty, harmful.

Marie: Nasty.

## Who once did something really bad to you? What exactly?

Inge: I can think of something from my childhood. Having done something naughty (then you were considered naughty much quicker than today!) I was locked in the cellar of the house where we were living; and it was my father who did it, who at that time was a somewhat older bad boy; while the rest of the family went on the traditional Sunday walk. Two ill-mannered lads from the

house thought it was fun to visit me in the dark, dark cellar. They put gas masks that they still had from the war on their faces and terrified me. Today I have to say, that was really wicked.

Marie: This too: a boy of about 14 tried to kiss me in the park. That was very alarming. I was incredibly frightened. He followed me too.

Milena: But he didn't mean it nastily.

Ines: My former Latin teacher occurs to me. He tested me on the homework vocabulary, although I'd told him before the lesson that I hadn't had a chance to learn it. Someone who enjoys despair and helplessness is a spiteful pig, don't you think?

Everyone: Yes.

## Is that the worst thing that a boy or a man has ever done to you?

Ines: No, there was some other stuff. One despite being asked not to kept expressing his affection for me. One went too far and turned excitement into fear. The same one got him and me embroiled in a vicious circle of lies and really damaged me with everyone else. These boys were already bigger though. But little boys can be evil too: in the sandpit one put a bucket filled with sludge over my head like a hat and nearly suffocated me. One held me too long in a headlock. One took my bike key away from me and threw it in a thorn hedge. One repeatedly and intentionally dislocated my arm. Two locked me in the linen cupboard and let fly a stretched French skipping elastic at me. I've still got a little scar from that.

## And in counterpoint: What is the nastiest thing that you have ever done to a boy or a man?

Ines: I once ignored a maypole (Note: traditional symbol of love). Because the

boy was a bit shorter than me. I was more often passively nasty, have allowed bad boys to do bad things, like peeing in the tank of a friend's Vespa to ruin it. I destroyed an illusion once, without batting an eyelid. But I never was really evil. (She chuckles.)

Inge: Even if I really think about it, nothing occurs to me, I must be (have been) quite a good girl.

Marie und Milena: We are more good than bad too. (They laugh.)

## You are all nice girls then? Why?

Inge: I think, I'm more a “nice girl” because I have more good thoughts than bad thoughts.

Milena: Then I don't know whether I am a nice girl.

Ines: Yes, you are. Me too.

Marie: I'd rate myself more as “normal”.

## To get to the heart of things; it is often claimed that boys are more wicked than girls. What do you think?

Inge: Er, I don't believe that. I think that there are bad people of both sexes. Girls are bad in a different way. Somehow softer, more underhanded. For this reason girls can be more hurtful and unforgiving. They like whispering and showing up people of their own sex. (She thinks deeply.) So perhaps girls are even more wicked than boys?

Ines: I think we're talking about examples of being wicked and maliciousness. It's true, boys are different. Lots of them, I would even say most, are coarser, less sensitive, more brutal, much more physically wicked. Boys kick people or hurt them deliberately with deliberate words. Girls punish people verbally with much more subtlety, e.g. being invited to a birthday party, and finding out quite by accident that you are only there so that an even number of children is obtained for the games.

Marie: Girls are nastier and cleverer with words. Boys are more brutal, but not evil, at least not in my class.

Milena: There are also quiet, horrible, underhand boys and loud, strong girls who like fighting. But in any case one thing is certain: girls are more cunning than boys. They don't let it show when they have done something wrong.

## More examples for typical boy's wickedness, please.

Inge: Pulling hair, kicking shins, talking about all kinds of physical weaknesses in front of other people. “Look, Pia's got a brace. Horrible!” Somewhat crude sometimes.

Ines: Getting in the way, laughing loudly, shooting catapults, tyrannising people, restricting freedoms, locking people out.

Milena: Locking people in the boys' loo.

## And examples for typical girls' wickedness?

Ines: Intriguing, sending people to Coventry, treating people with contempt, bombarding with accusations, labelling people. Kai is an anorak. Frank is sick. That sort of thing.

Marie and Milena: Making nasty comments.

## Do you often fight with boys? Which weapons do you use?

Ines: These days I don't often fight with boys any more. In earlier times it was mostly about self-assertion or simply about setting an example, like the saying: I am a living thing, respect me! Sometimes it was about fighting away an injustice, sometimes simply a question of strength, superiority, about winning. And weapons? Well, brain and voice, I would say. Having a sharp tongue and being quick witted. Speed. You have to think more sharply and speak more quickly. Sometimes shriller too. Then you win.¥

Inge: I don't fight at all any more, I don't see why at all, mostly with my weight.

Milena: In my old class (primary school) us girls have fought with them a lot. Now (grammar school) not so much. Just recently there was a really horrible fight. A boy found an old, mouldy, wet, slimy fruit bar – we fought about that.

## Do boys really always want to wage war?

Inge: No, not really, bad boys are badly brought up boys. So have poor or bad mothers.

## An interesting thing though. That would mean that...

Inge: ...that women above all are responsible for badness? I'll have to think about that. That sounds really bad.

Ines: I think: lots want to lead, but wage war: no.

## What is the good thing about being wicked?

Inge: I really don't know!

Ines: But I think: that a short outbreak of devilish energy is enough to feel good again about yourself afterwards.

Marie: Being wicked is only fun when there are several of you.

Milena: I have written an Elfchen on this topic (Note: a short poem consisting of eleven words, which are distributed in a simple pattern over five lines). Do you want to hear it?

Everyone: Yes.

Milena:  
Being  
wicked is  
great fun but  
not for the others.  
Shame!

Everyone: Lovely.

## So when were you really wicked for the first time in your life?

Ines: When I realised that you have to share. (Everyone laughs.)

## At what times could you be really bad today?



Inge: I get really bad if someone treats children badly or even hits them. Then I get all hot inside and turn into an Amazon.

Ines: When I feel too little motivation in myself. Or dissatisfaction.

Marie: When others are bad.

Milena: Stupidity can make me bad.

#### What are good feelings or thoughts or ideas for you and what bad?

Inge: A good feeling is when you have helped a person. For example, I once paid someone's electricity bill for them. Really. My husband calls me the Angel of Immenstaad because of it (Note: where Inge lives).

Ines: Good feelings? That you have achieved something or have helped someone or simply a momentary feeling of well-being, for example through sweets. Evil feelings are the desire for revenge or those of disdain. Self-hatred is the worst of all feelings. A good thought is: I would like to do something voluntary. And see that through it someone feels better. Like Inge with the electricity bill. An evil thought: doing something to unsympathetic or irritating people, just something little, perhaps laddering their tights or scalding their hand with a little bit of hot coffee. My best evil idea was rubbing the brake blocks on my brother's bike with grease.

Inge: Once not only did I have an evil idea, but I even carried it out. It was against the "hussy" of Lipbach (Note: neighbouring village to Immenstaad), because she treated her husband and child shabbily and with a lack of respect. Because of that I poured Domestos on her rose tree.

Marie and Milena: Unfortunately we can't give ours away. Perhaps enemies are reading this. (They giggle.)

#### Have you got further education tips on the theme? Books or films, in which villains have made an impression on you?

Inge: There is a book by Veronique Olmi called "Number Six". The main character is a really horrible father, who never calls his 6th child by name, only ever "Number 6". The child has to fight all through his life for his recognition. That is so profoundly evil in a masculine way. Bah.

Marie: The Orks in "Lord of the Rings" are awful villains, who ravage villages and kill people. It made an impression on me that there are so many.

Ines: I think Gert Fröbe in the film of the "Schimmelreiter" is nice and evil. The embodiment of the demonic. Or Klaus Kinski in "Cobra Verde". A deeply cryptic figure, who combines all bad characteristics that you can only imagine in one.

Milena: The preacher in "The Night of the Hunter" is incredibly evil. Because he seems so good. But the most evil of all is Voldemort in "Harry Potter". He is more of a being, the evil principle. And he keeps getting more evil.

Marie: Yes! Voldemort! I'm interested in the fact that evil apparently can be defeated again and again.

Inge: Now I've remembered: my favourite villain is the talented Mr. Ripley. He has no scruples in his nastiness, but is so full of ideas and talent in putting it into action, that you are always on his side. Talent is just good. Even talent for being wicked.

**You know Peanuts, Charlie Brown and consorts. That is purely a children's universe. Only boys and girls, no grown-ups. It is clearly Lucy, Linus' sister and as such a girl, who is bad, isn't it?**

Milena: For me there is a typical Lucy story. Lucy and Charlie are standing in a meadow and Lucy is keeping on and on at Charlie Brown: "You are weak, wishy-washy, stupid and boring. I don't know what else I can say. As I see it, your weaknesses simply exceed your strengths. I wish I could prove it to you somehow." Then she thinks about it hard and then she has a brainwave. "I've got it. I think I can give you a graphic presentation of your character. It will help you to see yourself as you really are." Then she lays a plank on a piece of a fallen tree trunk and balances it. "This plank represents a balanced personality. Now, on this side I place this pebble." Lucy places a tiny pebble right at the end of one side of the plank. Of course it remains in balance. "This pebble represents all your strengths." Then Lucy fetches a lump of rock and stands on the other side of the plank. "Here I'm placing this lump of rock which represents your innumerable weaknesses. Now, look what happens." She lets the lump of rock fall and "wump boing" – the lump of rock catapults the pebble from the plank in a high arc. Lucy says: "Don't you think that you can be happy that you have someone like me near you, who can make such things so graphically clear for you?" Only a girl could be wicked in such a cheerful way.

Inge: And how she always takes the football away from Charlie Brown at exactly the moment he wants to kick it.

Marie: She's not nice to Charlie Brown, but isn't to others.

Ines: That's what I meant about being quick-witted and having a sharp tongue and speed. The boys just cannot escape her special malicious remarks. That's the way it goes.

#### Another story, that of Adam and Eve. Isn't Eve actually evil?

Inge: No, I don't think so. Because temptation only ever works with two. And it's about temptation, isn't it?

Marie: I see it like this: they were living in God's kingdom and Eve took the forbidden fruit. A snake urged her to do it, she shared the apple with Adam. Adam did not stop her from doing it, but Eve abused God's trust. Adam wanted to try the fruit. Adam and Eve are equally responsible.

Milena: The snake is evil. Adam and Eva are human.

#### Perhaps to end a few more nasty rude words for bad boys?

Inge: "Primmi", "Egomanfred".

Ines: "Asi".

Marie: "Du Genetiv Singular Neutrum" (also works in other declensions and forms), "du Toilettentiefstaucher mit Arschbeleuchtung".

Milena: "Amöbe".

#### Tank you Milena, Marie, Ines, Inge.

*Milena, 11, is in class 5a, together with 20 boys and 11 girls. Marie, also 11, is in class 6a and has a little brother who has been really uncouth so far. Ines, 27, studies sociology and German and has an elder brother who has been really uncouth till now. Inge is 60, a wife, mother (one daughter and one son) and grandma.*

