

The man on the stairs

‘Here it is,’ Annie Grant said. ‘My home.’

Patrick Devlin stared. He and Annie were standing in front of an old grey building in a street full of shops. A sign over the door said ‘Bank of Scotland’.

‘Mum and I live above the bank,’ Annie explained.

Pat lived on a farm near a small Irish town called Ballycare. It was his first trip to Scotland. His friend, Annie Grant, had invited him to come and stay in Glasgow while his father went abroad to Australia. The sixteen-year-old was going to stay with Annie and her mother for two weeks. Annie was two years younger than Pat.

It was very busy near the bank. People were walking in and out of the doors. There was a cash machine on the wall and more people stood in line waiting to use it.

‘I’ll use that cash machine later,’ said Pat. ‘I need to get some Scottish money.’

‘This way,’ Annie said. She walked up a narrow lane beside the bank. She took a key from her pocket and unlocked a door. She looked behind her before she went inside. There was a thin man in a grey suit standing at the far end of the lane. He was holding a cigarette in one hand and talking into his mobile phone.

‘We have to be careful because we have keys to the building,’ Annie said to Pat. She nodded towards the man in the lane. ‘He’s okay. He’s Mr Duncan. He works in the bank.’

Pat followed Annie inside. He was glad to be there. The bag on his back felt heavy.

Annie closed the door and said, 'This way.'

They began to climb wide stone stairs.

'It's quiet in here,' said Pat. 'I can't hear any noise from the street. How many people live in this building?'

'Just three,' she replied. 'Mum and I are in Flat One and an old man – Angus Brodie – lives in Flat Two.'

'Is he a good neighbour?' Pat asked.

'Well,' said Annie, 'Angus is usually very quiet but this week he's become very noisy. Poor Mum. She can't sleep.'

Annie's mother had been very ill earlier in the year. She had sent Annie to Ireland to stay with her Aunt Jean in Ballycare. Annie had met Pat there and they had become good friends.

A door closed very loudly above them. They heard noisy footsteps and looked up. A man stood at the top of the stairs. He was a large man with a red face and small blue eyes. He was wearing a black coat over a black T-shirt and black trousers.

'Hello,' said Annie.

The man stared at the young people then pushed past them. His footsteps were very loud on the stone stairs.

'That's not Angus Brodie,' said Pat.

'No, that man was much younger than Angus,' said Annie. 'Angus is about eighty years old.' She and Pat kept walking up the stairs. 'Maybe it's his son, Jimmy. I've never met him.'

'Why not?'

Annie said, 'Jimmy Brodie works out in the North Sea on an oil rig. He doesn't come home very often. When he does he usually takes Angus to the country for a holiday.'

'Well, he wasn't very friendly,' said Pat.



'No, he wasn't,' said Annie. 'And Angus is a very nice man. Maybe people who work on oil rigs out at sea forget how to talk to other people!'

This is the German version of **The Man Next Door**

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