

When Franzi died, my sisters and I had to figure out what to do with her things. Somehow, my sisters managed to weasel their way out of it, saying that they had no time, and that I, having moved into the new house, would have enough space to store it all. It's not like I live in a castle, I said, I have Anni and Marta. It's not like my cellar is any bigger than theirs in Munich. Why don't we just throw it all away? There are even companies that specialize in that sort of thing. Yes, but first we should sort through it, and take out the things we want to keep, they said. I said I didn't want to keep anything. My sister rolled her eyes. In the end, it all got put into my cellar, where I left it for a long time—several years—during which time neither of my sisters came once to sort through it. Eventually Anni was getting on my case because there was no place to lock the bikes in winter, and the stuff was just gathering dust, and why didn't I call the *entruempelung* and be done with it? Which I thought was more than reasonable, except that they wanted 500 Euros to take it all away. I told the man on the phone that Franzi's things were already in the cellar, all in one place. At which point he said that the job would still need two men, and of course a van, and if necessary a small trailer. That's insane, I said. Then the man said, why didn't I just find a few valuables among the belongings and put them on Ebay. Not only could I offset the cost with whatever money they sold for, but also there would be less stuff to take, and that would reduce the cost even more. Not a bad idea. So I hung up and went down to the cellar where Franzi's things lay all covered in dust. She had everything our mother had given her, and besides that a bunch of stuff that was half broken and obviously not going to sell. The kitchen utensils were worthless. She ordered her clothes from a catalog. After some thought, I decided that the furniture would be the best bet. I could take pictures of it without dragging it upstairs, and I wouldn't have to rummage through her things. Her bad taste brought back memories. I photographed a table that I thought would be good worktable, and some wooden chairs that were not too badly beat up. Then I found some jewelry, and I photographed that as well. The table sold for about 70, the chairs didn't sell—not even for one euro—and the jewelry sold for a miserable ten Euros. I would have to go downstairs again for a second round. I found some smaller things this time, and finally there was the corner cupboard. This time, I got a friend to bid from his Ebay account, because if the thing was going to sell for ten Euros, it wasn't worth the time to meet the buyer and conduct the whole transaction. It was pick up in person, so I wouldn't have to pack it up, or go to the post office, but still. So with my friend's and my other account, we managed to bid the cupboard up to 68 Euros. We didn't go further, in case we won it ourselves. I think it was only fair to the buyer to stop there. He paid online, so all that there was left to do was meet him at my house. I let him know that it was big, and that he should bring another person to help him move it (I didn't really need to say this, as it was actually light, and once you took the glass door off it would be bulky, but manageable enough for one person to move). Then a couple of days later, he came in a rented van covered in green stickers advertising the car. It wouldn't have been difficult to guess it was him. Out here, you know the handful of cars that turn up

the street—it's still barely a street yet—but somehow I knew it was him anyway. I watched him park from the kitchen window. He was a young guy, Chinese, or actually, Vietnamese. Or maybe Thai. He was very skinny, and I guessed I would have to help him load the truck. When I opened the door, he explained who he was in terrible German. I led him down to the cellar, and showed him Franzi's cupboard. So there it is, I said. He opened the door to the cupboard and looked it over. I was afraid he might not take it after all, and I pointed out that the scratches would cover up with a little furniture wax. He said that it didn't matter. Then he said something else, but his German really was incomprehensible.

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