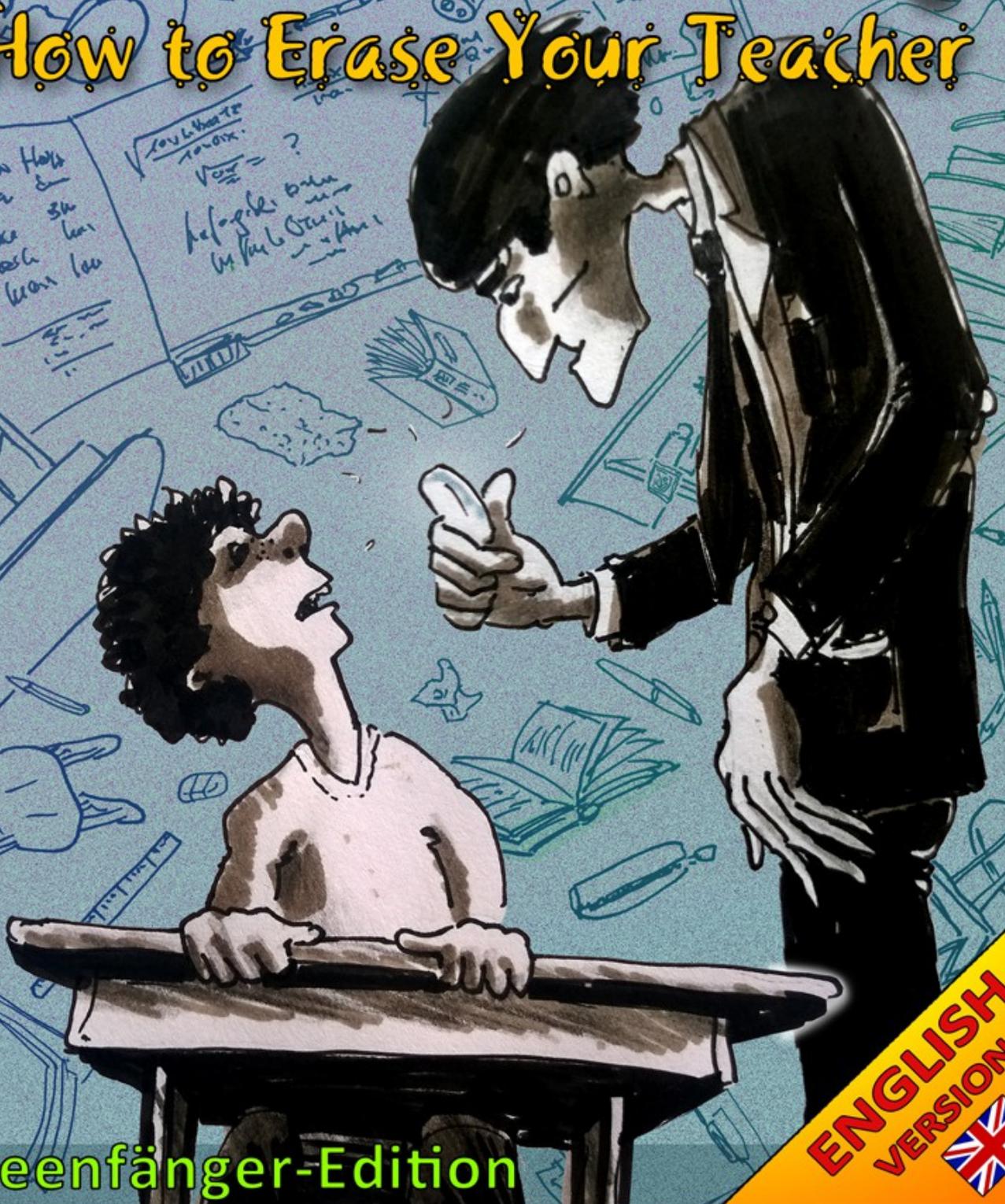


Andy Clapp / Christoph Buchfink

RUBBER-BOY

How to Erase Your Teacher



Ideenfänger-Edition

ENGLISH
VERSION



Rubber-Boy

or how to erase your teacher!

A short story written by
Andy Clapp and Christoph Buchfink
planned for the book

„Just Like a Fairy Tale“

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For all teachers, pupils
and friends of
unusual punishments

It was a Friday, last lesson. Maths with Mr Beasting. Nicknamed The Beast, because of his permanently evil expression & his delight in dreaming up new types of punishment.

TODAY'S PUNISHMENT

I spent the whole lesson looking for my rubber and couldn't find it. The Beast had a reputation for punishing even small misdeeds. Luckily this time it was only detention.

The rest of the class had gone home and I sat alone at my desk. What would The Beast think up for me this time? If he decided to inspect my desk and saw the chaos, there would be trouble, big

trouble. In a good mood he usually pulled your ear, gave you a bad mark or made you stand for three hours out in the rain on one leg with your left shoe on your head!

"But where am I going to put all this stuff?" I was thinking.

Too late, there he was right in front of me. "Desk inspection, Jonathan."

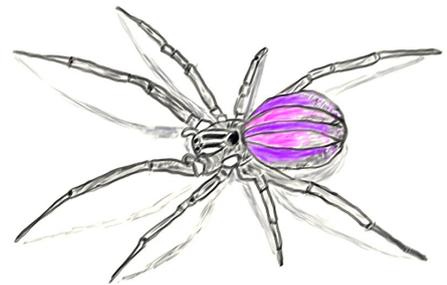
Just my luck. Caught like a rabbit in the headlights. I had to distract his attention. I needed an idea.

"Oh. Mr Beasting, over there, the spider. Isn't that a... agro... um... Aranea? From... um...Ecuador?"

Luckily he turned to look. At least I remembered the Latin name for the spider. Phillip had brought it to school to frighten the life out of Anabelle, and the thing had escaped.

"Indeed, Jonathan. An orb weaver. Hmm. You know they liquify their prey before they eat them!"

He started watching the spider and I had gained maybe a minute to put all my junk in Phillip's desk.



Then he turned his attention back to me. "So, dear boy. Desk inspection. Let's take a look at today's mess, shall we!"

I knew the tone in his voice only too well. If just a single thing was not tip top I was in deep trouble.

"Oh. Very tidy!" I could hear the suppressed disappointment in his voice. "Very good... but what exactly is this?"

He held my eraser directly in front of my nose. Blast. I must have missed it. I hoped he wouldn't make a drama out of it.

"Eat it!"

"What?"

"Immediately!"

I was all too familiar with his expression. He was deadly serious.

I had never tried it before but a rubber tastes really awful. I chewed very carefully on it.

"Swallow it!"

A moment later it was in my stomach and I felt really sick. The corner of Mr Beasting's mouth curved into a gloating smile.

My anger, more than usual, threatened to explode out of me. My whole body went as tense as a coiled spring. I wanted to hit him on the nose. But instead I managed to bang my hand on the desk. And unbelievably, the edge of my desk vanished. I stared down at the empty space.

“What are you doing there, obnoxious boy?” I heard Mr Beasting roaring. I wiped my hand over the remainder of the desk ... gone. As if I had erased it. I could rub out an entire desk with a wipe of my hand.

That put him in a terrible rage. “How dare you? Put that right or you will...”

He couldn't say anything else: a quick wipe with my right hand over his mouth, and it was gone! I was a living eraser! I could rub out his ears. And his reproachful look; away with it. The greasy hair, gone. I rubbed out the whole face, the arms, the hands, the legs, and the body: gone, gone, gone. Haah! I had rubbed out the whole teacher.



And the stupid maths books, and the blackboard ... everything gone! Now nothing could annoy me. If it did, I could just rub it out!

That realisation brought me to my senses. What if someone noticed that I had destroyed my desk and the blackboard? There would be trouble... a lot of trouble.

I had to put my desk back. But how? I looked around and saw a pencil in the corner. The first thought that came to me was crazy. Very crazy... I had to eat that pencil.

Have you ever tried to eat a rubber? I can only say this: a pencil is far worse. All I can tell you is you have to chew it really well!

Luckily it was an old and often sharpened pencil and therefore quite short. It crunched horribly between my teeth, but somehow I managed it.

I had a seething feeling inside me, and then my left finger started to twitch. I drew the rubbed out corner of my desk again and it was there. Almost like it was before, just a bit crooked. It worked! I could create things.

I drew my chair and the blackboard new, then two bottles of coke, chips, an apple, a pineapple, sweets... Wow. What a day!

Relieved, I sat on my chair and with a bump landed on the floor. It was fragile and crooked like the leaning tower of Pisa. And my desk wobbled dreadfully. So I had a good look at what I had made. The pineapple was soggy, the apple wrinkled and the chips tasted like rubber.

Obviously I had to draw the things better, or rather more accurately. So I rubbed everything out and started all over again. Finally the desk didn't wobble any more and the chips smelt delicious.

There was a knock on the door and before I could react Anabelle stood in the doorway.

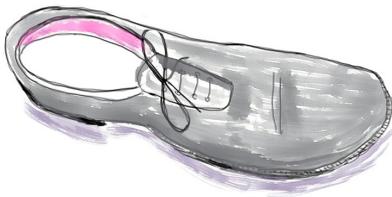
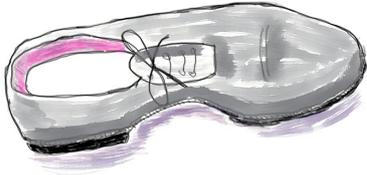
“Have you seen Mr Beasting? He's needed urgently for the teacher's conference in...” She hesitated and stared at me, “Where did you get those chips?”

I panicked. “From... um...Mr ... Beasting.” I answered, saying the first thing that came into my head.

“From Mr Beasting?” She was incredulous.

“Um. Yes. We get on very well,” I lied.

Annabelle looked doubtfully at me. “Anyway if you see him, he has to come to the Staff Room straight away.” She shook her head and disappeared.



Mr Beasting! Needed in the Staff room! I looked at the floor. There were his shoes. There was nothing else left of him. On the one hand brilliant, he was gone. Never again would he bully me, never again would I have to sing School Rule Number 3 to the melody of the national anthem with a wellington boot on my head.

On the other hand, what if he never turned up again? He'd be missed. The police would search for him. I had rubbed him out but hey... I'm not a murderer! Again I stared at the empty shoes on the floor in front of me. I felt quite queasy. My heart started to thump rapidly and my left finger started to twitch.

“OK. I'll bring him back. Let's get going,” I said to myself. But how did he look? First of all I drew his greasy hair in the air. And under that his bulging eyes with crooked glasses. His horrible ears. His protruding teeth and stinking mouth! Then his grabbing fingers that were always interfering and his stupid, ill-fitting suit. Hey. Finished. A real monster. “Ha-ha. I've done it!”

For a while nothing happened. Then he blinked twice, opened his mouth and croaked, “Kill... kill! Kiiiiiii!” I really had created a monster!

With a menacing snort he came at me with his claw-like hands and tried to grab me. I had to get out of there. I jumped sideways and pushed two school benches between us, but he was too quick. He stomped over the chairs, lifted his great paw and brushed the tables aside like shoe boxes.

I did a feint to the left and then jumped the other way. He was right behind me. With his wild gesticulating arms he knocked the bottles off the shelves, which smashed loudly on the floor. I threw the wastepaper basket at him but he just ripped it apart. He stamped the teacher's chair flat like cardboard and crushed the globe and the bookshelf. In the end I was standing with my back to the blackboard, pelting him with bits of chalk. But they bounced off him like raindrops. Now he'd cornered me. He reached out that bony claw to grab me. As a reflex my right hand shot up to protect me... and I rubbed out his claw. That was it! I could protect myself. With a wipe of my hand both his claws were gone. I looked up and had his face directly in front of me with those bulging eyes and protruding teeth. He snapped at me and his bad breath nearly knocked me out. At the last moment I managed to rub out his teeth. Then the Beast started to suck on my nose. Eeeeh! How disgusting!

I rubbed out his whole head, and the headless monster thrashed about wildly and ran blindly through the classroom, knocking over the last of the benches, ripping the posters down and finally smacking against the wall like a wet bath sponge and sliding slowly, repulsively to the floor. And now I could rub out the rest!

Exhausted I leant against the teacher's desk to catch my breath. At that moment I became aware of the utterly destroyed classroom.

"Mr Beasting. Mr Beasting urgently wanted in the conference room!" The Headmaster's voice boomed over the tannoy. Then I heard the caretaker's footsteps in the hallway getting nearer.

If he saw this mess there would be more than trouble. I had to stop him getting in. I sprang to the door, positioned two boards to block it and held my breath. The door handle moved once, twice but the boards held.

"Mr Beasting!" called the caretaker, "Oh. He's locked up. Must have gone already." He tried the door again. Then I heard his footsteps echoing down the hallway into the distance.

I breathed out, turned and my eye swept over the chaos. It looked like a bee-stung bull had been rampaging through it.

"Oh well," I thought. "Better get going... how long will it take to draw all this stuff properly?"

By the time I was finished it was dark outside. All the tables, chairs, glasses and posters were more or less done and my finger hurt from all that drawing, rubbing out, drawing, rubbing out... but I'd got it done. The only thing missing was Mr Beasting.

This time I had to draw him properly. I needed something to copy... a photo.

In the teacher's desk was the class book. Photos of all the pupils but not a single one of the Beast. I would have to go to his home...

Cautiously I crept out of the classroom. All was quiet. It was common knowledge that the Beast lived close to the school because it was the one street everyone avoided. Soon I was standing in front of his dark front door for the first time in my life.

As I stood there about to ring the bell, it struck me that there was no way I could explain everything to his wife. Better to creep in secretly. So I rubbed out a small spy hole so I could check if she was at home. It was dark and I couldn't hear anyone. Maybe there was no one in. That would be perfect. So I enlarged the hole, slipped through and drew the bit of door back again. I'd had enough practice.



The hallway was cold; right and left I could make out doors leading off it and at the end a staircase leading upstairs. I tried the first door to the right. What luck! The Beast's study. Just as I imagined it: all in grey and dirty brown, everything in its place, with the smell of musty books. There was a photo of his wife on his desk but nothing showing Beasting himself. I sat in his revolving chair to collect my thoughts. I swung round and knocked the standard lamp which hit the floor with a loud crash.

I held my breath and listened. For a few seconds nothing happened, then I heard footsteps upstairs and the voice of his wife, "Gottfried. Are you home at long last?"

I rushed out into the hallway but before I could reach the front door she was coming down the stairs. What should I do? In my desperation I did the first thing that came into my head and drew a large cardboard box around me.

Of all the possible hiding places, that was perhaps the most stupid.

"Darling," I heard her excited voice. "You've brought me a surprise. How sweet of you!"

I crouched down in my box, rolled into a ball and shut my eyes. It was about the most embarrassing situation I could imagine. I could hear the rustle as she opened the parcel.

"A pupil?" She had discovered me. "Gottfried. Is this one of your new punishments?" She called in the direction of his study. "Gottfried! Where on earth are you?"

She stared at me for a moment and then said in a far gentler voice. "Um. What's your name, young man?"

At that moment it just poured out of me.

"I'm Jonathan and I've rubbed him out and I wanted to draw him again but the monster destroyed the classroom which I never wanted to happen and Annabelle came and the caretaker but I managed to shut him out just in time and then I drew everything again until my fingers hurt and then ... then ..."

"It's OK," she said, "Everything's going to be fine."

"Nothing's fine! I need a photo!"

She looked at me quizzically. "A what?"

"A photo of Mr Beasting. I've got to draw him."

She stood motionless in front of me and seemed to have understood nothing. "What are you talking about, young man?"

"I can draw things that suddenly come to life. Like a mouse for example."

I drew a little white mouse with crooked ears and shaggy fur that started to nibble on the cardboard box. Mrs Beasting stared at it in a most perplexed way. I hoped she wasn't frightened of mice.

"How did you do that?"

"Well I swallowed a rubber. Actually I had to ... and I discovered I could rub things out." I rubbed the mouse away by way of explanation. "But then I had to repair everything ... and it would only work with a pencil and my throat still hurts from swallowing it."

With my left finger I re-drew the mouse which looked up at me and started nibbling the box again.

"OK, and as a punishment you had to sit in a cardboard box. Do your parents know about this?"

"No. I desperately need a photo of your husband." I sobbed.

"Of my husband?" She looked at me quizzically again. "Yes. Where on earth is he?"

“He’s gone ... I’ve ... um. Oh. It’s all so complicated.” I had no idea how I could explain it to her. “I’ll tell you what. Let’s go in the lounge and I’ll make tea and hot chocolate and you can tell me all about it until my husband gets home.” I sighed ... “She’s never going to believe me,” I thought.

In the lounge it was cosy and warm, with wonderful pictures on the walls, flowers, sculptures and no musty smell. Quite the opposite; it smelt of delicious hot chocolate. At that moment I remembered that I hadn’t eaten anything since detention.

“Would you like some biscuits?” She asked. She seemed to notice that I was hungry.

“Definitely!” I answered and drew a large plate full of chocolate nut biscuits and shoved a few straight into my mouth.

She looked at me with wide open eyes and said, “Now I’m really curious.”

It took me well over an hour to explain everything to her and another half hour until she believed me.

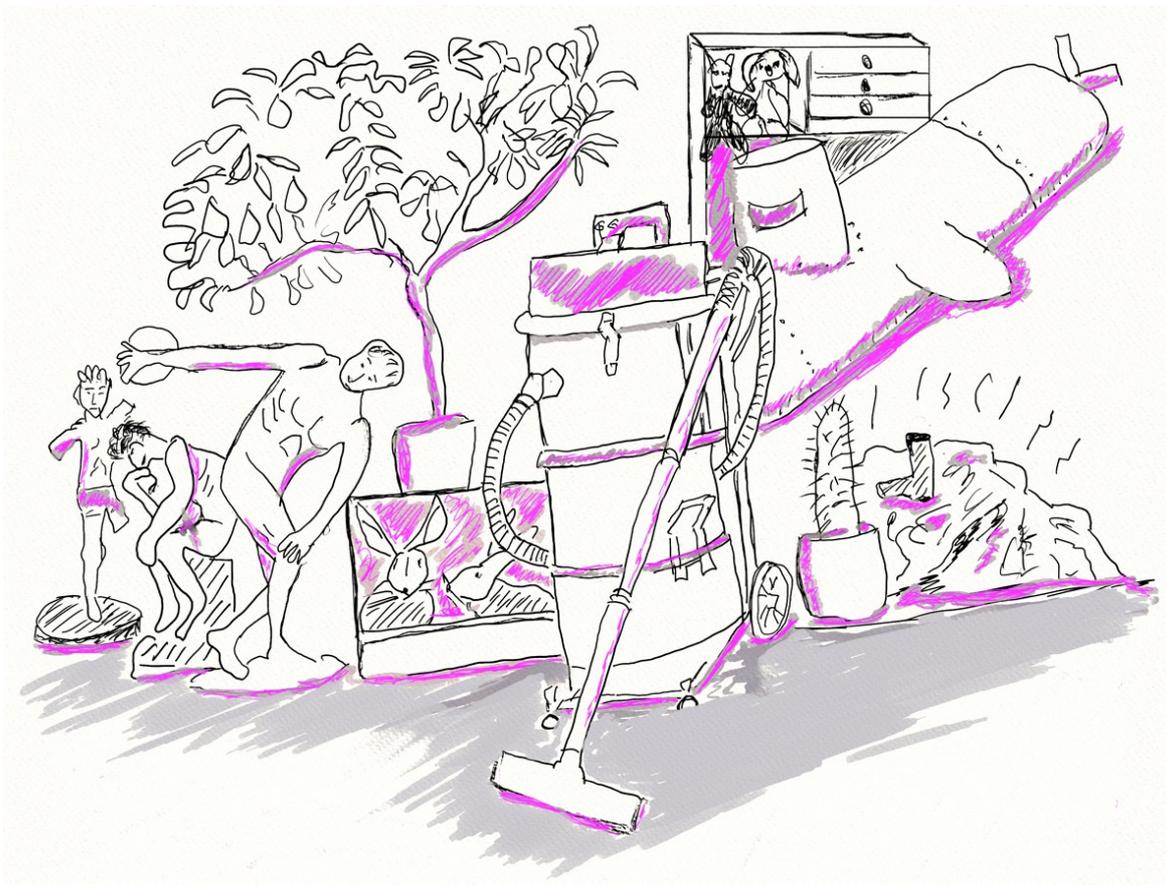
“And that’s why I need a really good photo of your husband otherwise I’ll draw him wrong and I don’t want that to happen again.” She looked at me and smiled, knowingly.

I had to practise to draw as accurately as possible. Luckily Beasting’s wife was an art teacher. She had done all the pictures in the lounge herself.

She put down a big pile of photos for me to draw.

“Practice makes perfect,” she reminded me, “I’ll go and phone your parents to tell them you’re OK and have to stay here for extra homework.”

We worked nearly the whole night and just before sunrise the lounge was full with: a small fridge, 6 different single shoes, 25 odd socks, a rabbit hutch with five baby rabbits, an Ikea wardrobe full



of cuddly animals, ten Greek statues, a compost heap with a wellington boot, all sorts of children's toys, fruit, a cactus, a lemon tree, an industrial vacuum cleaner and, my favourite, a one-man submarine with a solar drive system.

"Perfect," she exclaimed as she leant back laughing into the sofa. "Now you're ready!"

Two hours later I had Mr Beasting nearly ready. A couple more lines and he would be complete.

"Just a moment," interrupted Mrs Beasting. "As much as I love him, there's one thing that has always really annoyed me. I wish... I wish he wouldn't lose his temper so quickly." She gave me a shy sideways look. "Do you think we could do something about it?"

I already had an idea.

And indeed, from then on the Beast was mostly in a good mood. He was often to be seen standing at the window with a happy grin on his face. Especially when he was watching me in the playground in the rain, with a wellington boot full of compost on my head.

And there are rumours that he now breeds rabbits and has taken up deep sea exploration in the school holidays.



THE END

The Idea catchers

Whenever we start our theatre show “Die Ideenfänger”, the Idea catchers, we ask the children for ideas, objects, places or themes that they’d like to see in the story. Then we improvise using acting, storytelling and puppetry to develop a one hour adventure; it’s emotional, funny, exciting and sometimes just plain strange! Rubber Boy turned up in rehearsals and we felt it was a pity for him to have been forgotten there. So we’ve begun to put our best stories into book form. Some have now been published in German by Ideenfänger-Edition. We hope you have as much fun reading them as we did developing them. Best Wishes, Andy and Christoph

PS.: If you can read German and want to find out more about our theatre work, take a look at www.clapp-buchfink.de or www.wie-im-maerchen.de

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