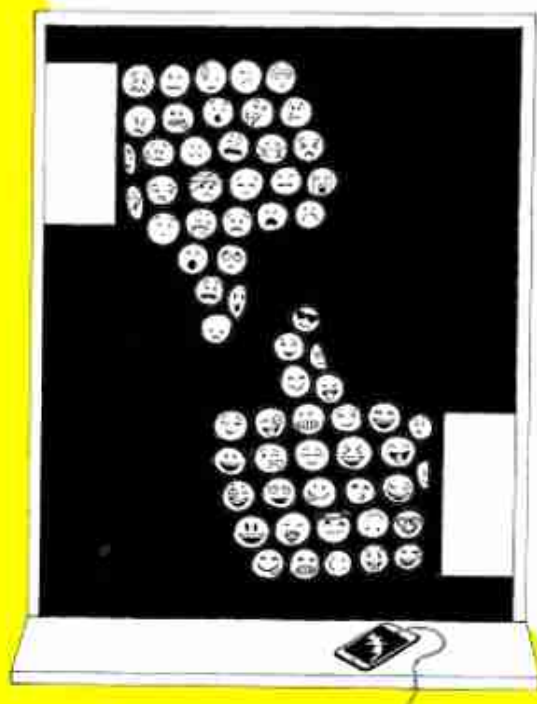


Sabira Stahlberg

Philip and the net



Lecti book studio

**When Philip opens his computer,
he does not believe his eyes.**

**Someone sends a picture
and writes evil things
about a girl in his class.**

**Is it a joke or she tries
to make herself popular?**

**Soon Philip gets involved
and he must make
a difficult choice
whom to believe.**



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Chapter 2

Philip does not delete the message.
Why? He does not really know.
The picture is of bad quality.
That is why he did not
recognise Annie at once.
But he has a feeling that he should keep it.

When he gets that special feeling,
he must follow it.
Therefore he saves the picture and the message.
He makes a folder in the computer
and calls it Annie.
Philip does not care for Annie.
He hardly speaks to her.
She is too strange.

Annie believes too much of herself.
She says she will be a singer.
She wants to live in America.
She always talks of London,
where she used to live.
Many in the class are tired of her.
They think she is only bragging.

Next morning Philip goes to school.

He knows at once that something has happened.
In the classroom the girls are whispering together.
They do not look up when he comes.
Not even Mimi greets him, despite the fact
that she usually greets everyone.

Some of the boys are sneering
and ask immediately if Philip has seen the picture.
'No,' Philip lies. 'What picture?'
'Philip, you are a fossil!
You dig only into your amoebas.
Dig yourself out and read your messages,'
Fred cries. 'Try to be modern for once.
Don't you have a phone? Or is it too old,
so you can't read messages?'

The boys laugh at Philip,
but stop suddenly.

Annie walks into the classroom.
The class falls completely silent and stares at her.
'Why do you have so many clothes on
today?' Fred asks.
'Shall we get new pictures soon?' John laughs.

Right after Annie arrives the teacher,
but nobody notices him.
'Annie is...' Fred starts, but the teacher interrupts:
'Silence! Sit down. We have English now.'

Open your books, please.'
Annie sits down at her desk.
She takes off her jacket.
'Take off your blouse too,' Fred whispers.
Annie blushes.
'Fred, do you have something to say?
Say it aloud so everyone can hear.
Or be quiet,' the teacher says.
'Annie, can you explain this sentence?'

The teacher points at the blackboard
and talks about various verb forms.
The lesson continues forever.
Finally comes the break.
Philip takes out his biology book.
He wants to check a detail before the test.

The mood in the class is tense.
The girls avoid talking to Annie.
Yesterday they spoke happily with her.

Annie has the nicest clothes
and listens to the newest music.
Today the girls won't even say hello.
They walk out of the classroom
without one look at Annie.

The boys gather around Annie.
'You have big breasts,' says Thomas.

'Will you show them to us?' Fred asks.
'Like you did yesterday on the photo.
Nice picture, I say. Did you take it yourself?'
Philip hears how Annie draws her breath.
He expects her to say something.
But Annie is silent.

Philip stands up. He thinks of what Mum said,
when she saw the picture.
It is no joke, Mum said.
Philip thinks the boys have gone too far.
'Listen,' interrupts Philip.
'Do you think you are funny? Let Annie be.
She has done nothing to you, has she?'

'Philip loves Annie,' John shouts.
'We are allowed to say what we want.
This is a free country.'
Annie is silently listening.
She blushes and then turns pale in her face.

Then she puts her hands before her face
and runs out of the room
with tears on her cheeks.
'Philip loves Annie,' Fred hums.
'Philip will...'

Philip runs after Annie, but she has disappeared.
In the corridor he meets Greg.

Greg is Philip's best friend.
He missed the lesson,
because he went to the dentist.
'Hi Philip,' Greg says. 'Why such a hurry?
What has happened to Annie?
Why is she crying?'

'Did you see the photo yesterday?' Philip asks.
'No,' says Greg. 'Yesterday I studied for the test.'
'Don't you read your messages?' Philip wonders.
'A waste of time,' Greg says.
'Tell me now what has happened.'

Philip explains to Greg about the picture.
Greg whistles a piece of a song he likes.
'Phew,' he says finally. 'How disgusting!
Poor Annie. I am sure she is innocent.'

'Why?' Philip asks.
'She probably took the picture herself.
She is quite arrogant and wishes to be popular.'
Greg does not reply, but he blushes.