



## Tiger Milk

*Stefanie de Velasco , Tim Mohr (Translator)*

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## Tiger Milk Details

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## Jasmin says

After reading all the fairly negative reviews of this book, I feel like I need to explain why I really like it - because I really, really like it.

First of all, I want to say two things: a) I wish the girls (and their friends) were a little, just a little older, maybe sixteen, because throughout the book all I could think was: can someone please protect these children, my goodness. (They also seem more mature, but that might be a consequence of growing up in the big city, furthermore in a not-so-easy environment.)

b) I am very sure I wouldn't have been friends with either of them, maybe Jameelah in a different setting, but that doesn't make me like the book less, even though a lot of other people seemed to use it as their starting point of disliking it.

What I really liked was the style of the book. I read it in German, and I don't know whether translations took some of it away, but the tone is very authentic, and I like how things that happen and that are said constantly mix with Nini's thoughts and perceptions. The "missing quotation marks" thingy irritated me a little at first, but you get used to it very easily. Besides, it also spares you of cryptical sentences no one would ever say that way irl, because Nini is more or less summarizing what the other person said in her thoughts, and it feels very natural.

The second thing I really liked is the relationships between the characters. First, there's of course Jameelah's and Nini's friendship, there's family ties and values and the lack thereof, hidden interest and fascination, complete indifference, there's friendships growing into love just as natural as growing up, rivalry turning into support in the face of fear turning back to rivalry, stupid and not-so-stupid crushes, and it all feels very, very real.

The plot is a bit over-the-top, I admit so much, but it is none the less interesting, sometimes shocking, and giving depth to the characters, and challenging their relationships and the understanding of one another.

The only thing that book really leaves me wishing for is a sequel.

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## Jazmin says

To begin with the story was slightly slow however, the further I got into the story the better it got! I loved the writing style and the way that Stefanie De Velasco makes the setting seem so realistic and so gritty- I could picture perfectly the settings described by her as if the story was a movie in my head. In hindsight I understand why the book starts slowly as this is needed to set up the feel of both the book's setting and characters before getting into the nitty gritty of the story.

Also, I loved the character development! The relationship between the two girls was so dark but so beautiful at the same time. However, I couldn't believe that the girls were only supposed to be 14. The things there were getting up to were more realistically the sorts of things 18 year olds would normally be doing both in book and in reality. All I could think was where are their parents..?

My one bug bare was the lack of punctuation in the book. I am aware that I read an ark copy but is it typical for arcs to have no speech marks/ lack important punctuation? I only say this because it was sometimes difficult to distinguish between what the characters were saying and what they were thinking.

All in all this book is beautifully written, the storyline is realistic and relatable and the characters are well developed. My only suggestion is the addition of punctuation for increased differentiation between speech and thought. As a final conclusion, I feel that this book dealt with a number of situations in a very appropriate way, she manipulated the immaturity/ maturity of the main characters in a way that makes you want to keep reading in order to see what will happen and how the characters will deal with it.

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## Marwa Eletriby says

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## Alexandra Tobor says

\* Meinung geändert. Das Buch ist super.

Ich habe dieses Buch nicht genossen. Es ist nicht "schön", es hat Figuren, die mein Pubertäts-Ich nicht mag. Was man ihm lassen muss, ist der authentische Ton. Die Autorin spricht wirklich mit der Stimme jugendlicher Helden - es sind keine "hochbegabten" Jugendlichen, wie Autoren sie gerne einsetzen, um die Schwierigkeit des Perspektivenwechsels zu umgehen, die einen Verzicht auf die volle Breite des schriftstellerischen Könnens bedeutet. Das bewundere ich.

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## Ape says

I won this on a goodreads giveaway.

So... it was all right but nothing amazing and only all right for me in the fact that I had to skim bits. I've seen other reviewers say they've struggled with it because of the lack of speech marks (don't know if this is a german writing/translation thing - or just trying to be too clever with the use of language, like the teenagers are so disengaged with everything, they don't need to use punctuation). I can't say this bothered me, perhaps because with other books I've read different ways of denoting speech have been used... or perhaps due to the fact that my irritations were just focused on the teenagers.

Oh I don't like books about teenagers most of the time; and these girls weren't likeable. And the book is so slow. Nothing happens for the first half, so it's just them hanging out and having conversations and being

teenagers - someone save me! But they're like this abandoned youth in Berlin in the summer. They run wild, do everything, but modern culture has numbed them so they're unshockable, completely to the extreme and... oh, get over yourselves. So they travel about town drinking tiger milk which is some cocktail mix they make up in milk bottles and drink because they're cool. They smoke, they hang out by the pool, they swear, they chase boys... and then they go to the red light district and pick up guys. No emotion, nothing. Not even enjoyment or a need to experiment. They both lose their virginity together with a couple of guys they pick up, and even though this is the thing they've been talking about doing for ages, it passes in the blink of an eye and it's all like, yeah, whatever. And I'm sorry for the coming SPOILER SPOILER SPOILER... but even when they've just witnessed a girl being murdered, the first thing they do is go and steal her jewellery. They're just so numb and apathetic to everything. There are odd flashes of moments when you think, oh, they might be human after all, such as when Nini (the narrator) looks after her little sister when she gets her period, or how Nini and Jameelah help one of the girls go to a clinic when she realises she is pregnant. The story did pick up a bit in the second half, but it's not really a book I can say I particularly enjoyed to any extent, and I wouldn't bother reading it again.

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## Vanessa says

*Tiger Milk* is the debut novel from Stephanie de Velasco, and was published on the 11th of September this year. I received this copy for review from a Waterstones giveaway, and wish to extend thanks to them for this.

This novel was quite unusual for me, for a number of reasons. Firstly, I had never read a novel translated from German before. The writing style was also quite unusual, with an almost complete lack of punctuation. Add to that the fact that the protagonists were both 14 year old girls further increased the alienation I felt when reading this.

I didn't particularly warm to *Tiger Milk*. I found the protagonists Nini and Jameelah to be unsympathetic and unrealistic - the things that they get up to in this book, the drinking, smoking, sex, and other things in between, I just felt like the world that the author created was something that would never be real. How often do 14 year olds get sold liquor in shops? How often do their parents let them run around at all hours of the night and do whatever they want? I just wasn't convinced. The two girls seemed overly crass, immature, and the way they spoke to each other and the things they did together did not strike me as something friends would do.

I would normally give a plot summary, but honestly I couldn't really tell you what the specific plot was. It felt more like an exercise in character development, and to de Valesco's credit, there was that. The friendship of the two girls altered significantly over the course of a summer, for reasons I won't disclose to avoid spoilers. And I do enjoy character development in a novel, which is why I thought this book was just 'okay', and not bad. But the idea and writing style overall really didn't work for me. The lack of punctuation, although it seems to be a stylistic choice, I felt really didn't work, and from glancing at other reviews, it seems a lot of people felt the same way.

If you are intrigued by the story, or by translated works, I'd say go ahead and check this out. I wouldn't go as far as to *recommend* it though.

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## **Fiona says**

I received a copy of the uncorrected manuscript through a goodreads giveaway, so I will write this review with a pinch of salt.

Something which has come up a lot in other reviews is the lack of punctuation, especially the complete lack of speech marks. I'm not sure if this is just because it is the manuscript, or whether it was a literary choice. If it was the latter, I would encourage the publisher/ author to rethink it, as it did make the book relatively difficult to follow and get in to.

The story is told from the perspective of Nini, a 14 year old girl running riot in Berlin with her best friend Jameelah and their group of friends, not doing a lot except getting drunk and getting up to mischief. Things change when Nini and Jameelah witness something awful.

I found the main characters to be emotionally detached. Nothing was reacted to with any feeling - including (view spoiler)

I didn't enjoy this book. The writing style didn't work for me, the characters were awful and often shallow, and don't even get me started on the unresolved ending. Nothing is explained to a satisfying level. If I hadn't won this book and felt obliged to provide a full review, I definitely would not have made it the whole way through.

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## **Sally Whitehead says**

I was lucky enough to win this in a Goodreads giveaway, and I had an inkling it would be my kind of book since I'm a sucker for a good coming-of-age novel, especially with a flawed female character at the centre.

We join Nini, our narrator, in Berlin for a month or so in which the usual adolescent ennui of Summer is disrupted and disturbed by sexual adventure and awakening, turbulent friendships and, most significantly, harsh realisations about life, loss and longing.

In many ways "Tiger Milk" is THE perfect contemporary European bildungsroman - set against a backdrop of rippling cultural tensions.

I would urge readers not to be put off by some of the other reviewers who have bemoaned the "lack of speech marks" - stylistically the novel is perfect. De Velasco presents us with a first person present tense narrative which eliminates the need for speech punctuation as Nini delivers the dialogue of her friends in a style closer to reported speech. It flows perfectly, and at no point was it unclear which character was speaking. One of the novel's greatest strengths in my opinion was the mastery of the characterisation and the differing voices. I was in love with Nini's intelligent, confident Iraqi best friend, Jameelah, within pages. Similarly, her innocent, quiet Bosnian neighbour and childhood friend, Amir, broke my heart.

The present tense narration also allows for a sense of urgency which befits the essence of the story and echoes the (gorgeous) imagery of time slipping away from those who find themselves gliding, not always so seamlessly, from the carefree boundless luxury of childhood into the gritty, painful reality of the adult world which awaits them.

Stunning debut. Devoured it in days and loved it.

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### **Marina Sofia says**

Well, Christiane F. for the new generation this ain't. (That was my impression after reading the blurb, and the reason I searched for the book and ordered it from Germany).

This is a YA book - the protagonists have that self-absorbed voice of teenagers everywhere - which makes it very heavily dependent on just the right nuance of voice, but it does not quite fully convince me. There is perhaps not quite enough self-awareness or introspection or growing up going on there, despite all the rather horrific events happening. There are interesting elements, some memorable scenes (the younger sister and brother jumping around on the sofa watching porn films, with carrots and courgettes stuck down their pants, for instance), but overall it doesn't quite gel for me.

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### **Sean Barrs the Bookdragon says**

Good reads winner.

Ok so this is an advanced reading copy but where the hell are the speech marks! I'm not sure if this is because they have not yet been included but that wouldn't make any sense. That surely is one of the fundamentals when writing a book. The result of this is the text is hard to read. I start to read something and it is not until mid-sentence that I realise it is someone speaking and then sometimes I'm not even too sure who, which leaves the conversations confusing and hard to follow and me very annoyed.

Normally with ARCs the book just needs a good proof read to remove any mistakes in grammar and this is evident here but that is normal, no speech marks is just a nuisance. The thoughts of the narrator are in the same manner as when she speaks and without the use of speech marks it just becomes difficult. If this is only the case with the advance reading copy, then don't provide an advance copy with no speech marks! I can't give this a serious review or delve into the actual plot of the book because I am just so put off. If any other reader of this book is reading my review please comment to tell me if you experienced the same or if it is just me being strange.

It says in the front that this is an uncorrected manuscript and that I will receive a final copy when it is released. If I do receive this copy then I shall update this review because maybe that copy will be readable. I have gone back after thinking about this and decided to re-read the book, if I receive another copy then I'll update the review but for now I'll have to give it 1\* because I just couldn't get through it.

There is also the possibility that this is some ambitious project by the author but for me, if it is, it doesn't work.

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### **B. says**

Two 14-years old girls from a lower-class multi-ethnic Berlin neighborhood learn about the hard truths of



life during a summer when they experience sex and love, witness a crime, and are simply confronted with the realities of life.

I liked this book. It touches all the themes that one would expect 14 years old from broken families and a tough neighborhood care about. From very superficial to very deep ones. And snippets of knowledge are spread all over the erratic thoughts of the protagonist and narrator Nini. And while the jumping of Nini's thoughts from a detail to another this book is more an open window into a summer of new experiences than the narration of a single overarching story. And drama doesn't have time to build up much. Here is where the reason for 3 rather than 4 or 5 stars lies: the book lacks suspense. It fails often to bring the feelings from the characters to the reader. Longer descriptions of the other characters, settings, situations would have been nice. On the other hand when you are young your mind wonders around and feelings change quickly. One moment you cry but soon something can make you smile again.

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### **Viktoría says**

Ninii erzählt von einem Sommer mit ihren Freunden, hauptsächlich mit ihrer besten Freundin Jameehla. Sie machen lauter verrückte Dinge, verlieben sich, beobachten einen Mord...

Es ist für mich gar nicht so einfach dieses Buch zu bewerten. Ich habe mich beim Lesen die meiste Zeit als Voyeurin gefühlt. Ich habe in eine Welt hineingeblickt, die so weit entfernt von mir ist, dass ich vieles nicht nachvollziehen kann, Beweggründe nicht verstehen kann. Im Grunde wird hier eine unheimlich traurige Generation (sicher in einem bestimmten Milieu) gezeigt. So was zieht mich immer extrem runter. Hoffnung auf eine bessere Zukunft wird auch nicht wirklich in Aussicht gestellt.

Stilistisch gibt es immer mal wieder sehr gute Momente, sehr stark in den Beschreibungen.

Die Lektüre lässt mich ein bisschen ratlos zurück.

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### **Pickle Farmer says**

3/12 stars. Really enjoyed the energy and momentum in this. I could have honestly done without the murder and have just followed these girls around Berlin, but I guess that added a traditional plot to this, which was fine. The translation was sort of nuts; I think with all the German youth slang this must have been pretty tough to do. For example, of saying "gross" the characters would say "cross" which made me wonder if this was an error on my kindle or if it was supposed to be slang. Also, apparently "losing your chandor" is the translation for an expression that means "losing your mind," which is pretty interesting. Anyway, this was a fun dark read that made me glad not to be a 14-year-old in Berlin--man, these kids would eat me alive. I thought it was weird that none of them used cellphones much, even though this was set in 2010. That's probably fairly accurate though, as none of them are well-off. Man, this sure did bring back memories of working in the Boys & Girls Club back in the States...

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