

Chapter 8 The mine shaft

Jake looked up. Jolene had turned round in her seat and stared at Pim. Her blue eyes weren't kind anymore; they were as cold as ice. "Bob," she said softly, "we've got a big problem."

5 Bob looked over his shoulder. "I should have never listened to you," he said to Jolene. "I should have run them over."

"If that black car hadn't come up behind us, it would have been an option," Jolene replied.

10 "There's the petrol station ahead," cried Pim.

Maritska jumped up in her seat as Bob made a U-turn.

"Why are we turning back?" she asked. "We're almost there."

15 "This would be all over if your nosy brother hadn't gone snooping back there," said Jolene.

"Pim, I told you not to touch anything!" said Jake. Maritska's heart sank. "We won't say anything. I promise we won't," she said to Jolene.

"Sorry, love," Jolene said and patted Maritska's hand. "We can't risk you telling the police."

20 "Pim!" Maritska looked at her brother angrily. "Why don't you ever do as you're told?"

"I'm sorry," said Pim. He realized they were heading back into the desert. He threw the fake beards down on the floor.

25 Jake's heart pounded in his ears. He wished he had trusted Kyeema's instinct. They shouldn't have got in this van.

30 Jake had no idea where the couple were taking them. All he knew was it would be somewhere bad.

Jolene forced Maritska into the back of the van with Jake and Pim. The three of them lost track of how long they had driven back along the road. The sun had nearly set and dark, purple clouds formed in the sky. A strong wind blew clouds of red sand from the roadside into the air. The van's headlights made two orange shafts of light in the dust in front of them.

Without any warning Bob suddenly spun the steering wheel. The van left the road. They all had to hold on tightly as it rattled over rough ground.

10 "Why are we going off the road?" asked Jake nervously. Maritska and Jake looked at each other fearfully. They were glad Pim was sleeping and couldn't see how scared they were.

15 The van's headlights suddenly fell on some rough buildings. A tall, old chimney and a lift shaft rose in the sky before them.

Bob stopped the van. "End of the line. Everybody out," he barked. Jolene grabbed a torch and jumped out at the passenger side.

20 Jake and Maritska heard Bob and Jolene muttering as they walked round the van. "Should we make a run for it?" asked Maritska.

25 Jake nodded. "Pim, wake up," he said softly and shook him.

Pim's eyes opened slowly and he blinked sleepily.

"Where are we? Why have we stopped?"

30 "I don't know, but we've got to get away." Jake could still hear Bob and Jolene arguing outside the back of the van. "This way."

shaft [ʃɑ:ft] Schacht; Lichtstrahl • 6 headlight ['hedlaɪt] Scheinwerfer •
8 steering wheel [ˈstiəriŋ ,wi:l] Lenkrad • 16 chimney ['tʃɪmni] Schornstein •
19 torch [tɔ:tʃ] Taschenlampe

12 U-turn ['ju:tɜ:n] 180°-Wende • 15 nosy ['nɔ:zi] neugierig • 16 to snoop [snu:p] herumschnüffeln • 20 to pat [pæt] tätscheln • 27 to pound [paʊnd] pochen

As quietly as they could, Jake, Maritska and Pim crawled into the front of the van. Without making a sound, Jake opened the door a little bit. "Stay low," he said.

The three of them slid out of the van. Jake pushed Pim and Maritska in front of him.

"Run," hissed Jake. "Let's hope they don't –"

Bang! A gunshot rang out.

"You didn't think you'd get away that easily, did ya?"

They turned to see Bob standing next to the van. He held a rifle. It was pointed in their direction.

"Come back," shouted Bob.

Nervously, the kids returned to the van.

"This way," Bob used the rifle to point the direction he wanted them to go.

15 Jolene had appeared at Bob's side.

"Just do as he says," Jolene whispered to them as they walked past her. The torch light fell on her face. They could see that Jolene was scared now, too.

The wind howled as Bob forced them towards the buildings at the base of the shaky, metal tower.

"What is this place?" shouted Jake. He had to raise his voice against the wind in order to be heard.

"An old tin mine!" Bob shouted back. "Hasn't been used in fifty years. Nobody comes near it," he laughed, "except for kids who get lost in the outback looking for shelter. Old mines are dangerous places. They've got deep shafts. Fall down one of them and you'd never be seen again."

Jolene looked worried. "Bob, you said we'd just lock them in?"

30 Bob kicked the front door of the shack at the base of the lift shaft. It swung open with a creak. "Go in there," he said.

"But Bob, you can't be serious," whispered Jolene.

6 to hiss [hɪs] zischen • 10 rifle ['raɪfl] Gewehr • 24 except for [ɪk'sept fɔ] außer • 25 shelter ['ʃeltə] Unterstand, Schutz • 28 to lock sb up ['lɒk] jmdn. einsperren • 30 shack [ʃæk] Bretterbude, Hütte • 31 creak [kri:k] Knarren

Bob waved the rifle in Jolene's direction. "This way there'll be no risk of them identifying us." As they walked inside, Jolene shone the torch around the shack.

Jake saw it was full of old machinery and rusty tools. At the far end was a half opened metal gate. Behind this was complete darkness. Jake realized it was the entrance to the lift shaft.

"Go to the shaft," Bob pushed Jake with the rifle. "All of you."

Jake's stomach tightened with fear. His mind raced as they walked towards the shaft.

"I'm scared," said Pim.

Jake placed his arm gently on his shoulder, "It'll be all right."

"We must do something," murmured Maritska.

Jake heard Bob and Jolene arguing quietly. Jolene waved her hands about as she talked. Light from her torch cast long shadows across the floor.

Jake spotted marks in the sand. They were wavy lines like the ones they had seen by the trees, the ones Maritska thought were made by someone drawing in the sand. He didn't just see a few tracks in the sand, he saw lots. The whole floor was covered with them.

"We need to play for time," Jake whispered. He stopped walking.

"Nobody told you to stop. Keep going towards the shaft," yelled Bob.

"Killing us would be a big mistake." Jake turned and faced Bob.

"Really? Give me one good reason why!"

30 "Our parents are very rich." Jake thought it was all right to tell a lie at a time like this. "They'd pay a lot of money to get us back."

Jake saw Bob's mind filter this information.

4 tool [tu:l] Werkzeug • 10 to tighten sth ['taɪn] etw. zusammenziehen • 15 to murrur ['mɜ:mɜ:] raunen • 27 to yell [jeɪ] schreien

“The kid has got a point,” Jolene muttered to Bob. The two of them discussed it quietly together, glancing at the kids every now and then.

Jake’s eyes raced around the inside of the shack. The light of Jolene’s torch was enough for him to see something move behind Bob’s shoulder. Their arrival in the abandoned shack had woken up its sleeping inhabitants. Two large snakes moved silently along the rafters. Jake looked around and saw more snakes. They were coming out of the shadows, crawling out from under old tarpaulins and buckets.

“Are you crazy, Jake?” said Maritska quietly. “Our parents aren’t rich. What’ll happen when they can’t pay that much?”

Jake didn’t answer. He watched the snake slide down from the rafter above Bob’s head. “Shhh,” said Jake. “No more questions.” Jake grabbed Pim’s hand and kicked Maritska, “Up there.” He flicked his eyes to the roof.



6 abandoned [ə'bændənd] verlassen, leer stehend • 7 inhabitant [ɪn'hæbɪtənt] Bewohner • 8 rafter ['rɑ:ftə] Dachsparren • 10 tarpaulin [tɑ:'pɔ:li:n] Abdeckplane • 11 bucket ['bʌktɪ] Eimer

Maritska held back a gasp as she saw the snake about to drop on Bob.

“When I say run, run,” whispered Jake.

Bob broke off his discussion with Jolene and turned his attention back to the kids. “You bought yourself some time. How much do you think your parents would pay to get you back? One million? Two million? What the – ?!” Bob’s demands stopped in their tracks as the snake dropped onto his shoulder and slithered round his neck. Bang!

Bob accidentally fired the rifle as the snake crawled along his arm. Luckily the bullet missed them all. Bob yelled hysterically as he tried to shake the snake off his arm.

“Run!” Jake screamed at Maritska. Jake took Pim by the hand. They raced around Bob.

“Oh my God, they’re everywhere. This whole place is alive with them!” Jolene screamed as snakes slithered around her feet.

“Get it off me!” Bob begged Jolene.

Although she was terrified, Jolene managed to pull the snake off Bob. She threw it to the other side of the shack.

“The stupid thing bit me!” cried Bob. His eyes bulged at the sight of two red spots on his hand.

Jake, Maritska and Pim ran out of the shack as fast as their legs would carry them. When they got outside, they were surrounded by the sandstorm.

“Which way now?” cried Maritska. She coughed and covered her mouth to stop sand blowing in it.

“That snake could be poisonous!” The kids heard Jolene cry as she and Bob stumbled out of the mine.

“I can’t let them get away,” Bob shouted. “I don’t want to go back to prison.”

8 demand [dɪ'mɑ:nd] Forderung • 9 to slither [ˈslɪðə] gleiten • 12 bullet ['bʊlɪt] Kugel • 23 to bulge [bʌldʒ] hervortreten • 30 poisonous [ˈpɔ:znəs] giftig

Chapter 9 The longest night

"If you don't get help for that bite, you could die!" Jolene's torch light shone through the dust.

"They can't have got far," Bob said. "Where have you gone?" he shouted into the night.

5 "Leave them," said Jolene. "We need to get you to a doctor."

Jake held his breath and prayed for help. "Kyeema, I wish you were here," he said to himself. "Give me a hint which way to go."

10 Then, and it was only for a moment, the wind dropped and the sky cleared. Although it was only a dot on the horizon, Jake recognized the large rock from Kyeema's song – the resting place of the lizard ancestor. Jake's mind snapped into gear. Going back along the road and turning off to the mine, he realized they weren't that far from where Kyeema had first found them. If he could get them to the rock, he thought they might be able to find their way.

"I see them," yelled Bob. Bang! A shot rang out and a bullet whistled past their ears.

20 "Follow me," Jake ordered. He ran in the direction of the rock. With no hesitation this time, Maritska and Pim raced after him. The wind suddenly picked up. Dust was in the air and hid them from Bob and Jolene.

25 "You stupid kids!" they heard Bob shout after them. "You're alone in the outback. You won't last the night!" Bob fired one final shot in their direction.

Jake worried that if the dust storm went on much longer, they truly would be lost. As they raced into the night, Jake hoped he had made the right decision and was leading his brother and sister to safety and not into more danger.

"Stop, stop!" Maritska gasped. She bent down and tried to catch her breath.

The wind had died down and several stars twinkled in the sky.

5 "Are they still after us?" asked Pim.

Jake listened. Apart from the distant cry of the dingoes the night was silent. "The snake bite scared Bob. I bet he's looking for a doctor right now."

Pim and Jake noticed that Maritska was having difficulty breathing.

10 "What's wrong?" asked Jake.

"I don't know." Her voice was faint, no more than a croak. "While we were running in the sandstorm, I must have breathed in some sand."

15 "Take a moment. You'll be fine," said Jake reassuringly.

Maritska rubbed her throat. Her hand fell on the turquoise necklace that Jolene had given her. She ripped it off and flung it as far as she could. "Would they have really pushed us down that mine shaft?"

20 "If money is the most important thing in your life, then you do crazy things." Jake's fear was that after Bob had received treatment for the snake bite he'd return and look for them. They had to get back to the road before Bob had time to get better. "Are you OK to go on?"

25 Maritska covered her mouth and she coughed. She tried hard to catch her breath. "I don't feel well. I can't walk anymore."

"Kyeema! Kyeema!" Pim shouted. "Please come. We need your help again!"

30 They all looked up in the hope they'd see her running towards them. But nobody came.

7 to pray [preɪ] beten • 14 to snap into gear [snaep ˌɪntə ˈɡɪə] in Gang kommen • 21 hesitation [ˌhezɪtəˈʃjən] Zögern • 28 truly [ˈtruːli] wahrhaftig

12 faint [faɪnt] matt • 15 to reassure [ˌriːəˈʃʊə] beruhigen • 16 throat [θrəʊt] Hals • 18 to fling sth [flɪŋ] etw. schleudern, werfen

"There are some bushes near the rock," Jake said and pointed to an area of scrub which was silhouetted by the moon. "You can rest there a while."

5 Pim and Jake helped Maritska. Every step made her gasp for breath. Before they laid her under a small tree, Jake checked for snake marks on the ground. There were none, so there was one danger less to face.

"I really think I'm sick" croaked Maritska.

10 "You'll be fine," Jake said, but he imagined that terrible things could happen. Maritska had been very ill a few years ago. A bad cold had turned into pneumonia and she had had to go to hospital. She was so sick that their parents had flown home from the US to be with her. Jake overheard them talking one night. They were worried her illness might be fatal. However, after a few days when her life hung in the balance, she recovered. But the doctors warned that it might have damaged her lungs. Jake guessed a combination of exhaustion and inhaling the dust had placed too much of a strain on her body.

20 "I see something!" Pim shouted.

Two small points of light flickered in the night.

"Is it her?" asked Maritska hopefully. "Has Kyeema come to help us?"

25 The lights came closer and they realized it was the moon reflecting off an animal's eyes.

"Oh no," Maritska trembled. "It's a wild dog. It's going to attack us!" Her body was shaken by a bad coughing fit.

The dingo broke into a run and jumped towards them. Jake stood still. For some reason he wasn't scared. He remembered Kyeema had told him that old people in her village believed the dingoes were part of their tribe.

30 The dog stopped at Jake's feet. Its amber eyes looked up into his for a moment. The dog threw its head back and howled. It paused and then howled again. This time the

2 scrub [skrʌb] Gestrüpp • 11 pneumonia [nju:ˈmɔ:niə] Lungenerkrankung • 15 fatal ['fɛtəl] tödlich • 16 to recover ['rɪˈkʌvə] gesund werden • 18 exhaustion [ɪgˈzɔ:stʃən] Erschöpfung • 19 strain [streɪn] Belastung

bark was a deeper tone. The sound resonated in Jake's mind.

"Pim, stay here and look after her." Jake knelt down and placed his hand on Maritska's. "I'll get help."

5 Pim watched Maritska's eyes flicker as she strained for breath. "But how, Jake? We don't know where we are!"

Jake forced himself not to panic. The dingo's bark echoed in his head. The desert dog trotted away. Jake didn't move. He was humming a tune. It was familiar.

10 The moonlight shone on the big rock of the lizard ancestor which loomed over them. Jake remembered Kyeema's song. He opened his mouth and began to sing. He wasn't the greatest singer, but the tune easily rang out in the night.

15 Pim looked up at Jake as if he was mad, "How can you sing at a time like this?"

"It's the songline! I have to sing it to show me the way." Jake didn't know the words to Kyeema's song, but he could remember the story. The tune would tell him whether the terrain was smooth or rocky and the story would show the landmarks he needed to know he was on the right path. "If I remember it right and run all the way I should find the road again by sunrise."

25 They stared at their sister trying hard to catch her breath.

"If I had listened to you and done as I was told none of this would have happened," said Pim sadly.

30 "We can't think about that now," Jake ruffled Pim's curly red hair. "Now is the time for us to stop making mistakes and do things right."

Jake looked up and saw the dingo. It stood in the distance and stared back at him. Jake took a deep breath. He cleared his mind and thought of the story Kyeema told

1 to resonate ['rezneɪt] (wider)hallen • 3 to kneel [ni:] knien • 9 to hum [hʌm] summen • 9 tune [tju:n] Melodie • 11 to loom [lu:m] sich drohend abzeichnen

him. "There's one thing you need to do for me," Jake said to Pim who looked very scared.

"What's that?" asked Pim.

"Stay safe until morning." Jake took one last look at Maritska and Pim and waved goodbye.

Jake ran to where the dingo waited for him. As soon he caught up with it, the dingo began to run too. Together they raced into the night.

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10 Jake was thankful that the night was cool. He ran like the wind. He could never have kept up this pace in the heat of the day. He didn't know where his energy came from, but somehow his feet kept moving. And he was not alone, the whole time the dingo kept up with him.

15 At one point Jake was so thirsty he thought he was going to faint. As if it could sense his need, the dingo ran off over a dune and disappeared. Jake went to see where it had gone. He found the animal drinking from a water hole. Jake followed and drank at its side.

20 When he got hungry and his energy was low, Jake found some quandong and he knew they were good to eat. He hoped he reached help before morning and didn't have to eat witchetty grubs and ants. But if he did have to, he knew where he was likely to find them. He was not afraid.

25 Although it was extremely important that he reached civilisation to get help for his sister, Jake was amazed by the moonlit beauty of the outback. The way his feet moved across the earth in time to the rhythm of the music in his head gave him a sense of connection to the land.

30 Each time he began to doubt and thought he might be going the wrong way, he'd spot a landmark which reminded him that he was on the right path. He saw the group of hills where the song said the lizard had laid its eggs. The deep grooves which were made when the babies

11 pace [peɪs] tempo • 16 to faint [faɪnt] ohnmächtig werden •
17 dune [djuːn] Düne

crawled away. The valley which was flooded by the lizard's tears when it cried about the loss of its children.

The sky was changing. Black was becoming blue. The rising sun threw shades of pink and orange on the clouds.

5 But then Jake came to a sudden halt. He was confused. Two hills of similar height lay in the distance. The one to the left was rocky and uneven, while the one to the right was smooth. He sang the song out loud. "That's it!" he said happily. The song's notes were short and high and low. The song was telling him to go to the rocky hill. He began to run as fast as he could to the hill on the left.

"Grrrr ..." the dingo let out a low growl, raced after Jake and jumped at him.

Jake felt the dingo's jaws clamp around his arm. "Let go!" he cried out in surprise.

15 Jake fell to the ground and tried to drag his arm out of the animal's mouth. But its bite was strong. "Get off! I must get help! If I take too long my sister could die." Jake thought he was crazy, talking to a wild dog. But he felt the animal had been helping him. He couldn't understand why it would attack him now. He also couldn't understand why he didn't feel its teeth in his arm.

Then, suddenly, the dingo opened its mouth and let go. Jake quickly crawled away and got back on his feet. He began to run to the hill on the left. He had only gone a few steps before the dingo jumped on him again. This time it didn't try and bite. Jake stopped.

The dingo gazed up at him. Their eyes met.

Jake didn't know if he was imagining it, but it was as if he heard it say, "Follow me ..."

30 Jake was sure he should go to the hill on the left. But he remembered the times when he should have listened to someone else. The time Pim said they were going the wrong way at the airport, and when Kyeema told him not

5 confused [kən'fjuːzɪd] verwirrt • 6 similar [sɪmɪlə] ähnlich • 6 height [haɪt] Höhe • 12 growl [graʊl] Knurren • 14 jaw [dʒɔː] Maul, Kiefer • 14 to clamp sth [klaɪmp] etw. festhalten

to get in Bob and Jolene's van. Perhaps it was a crazy thing to do, but this time Jake felt he should listen to what this creature was telling him.

5 "You want me to go this way? OK. I'll follow you. Will that make you happy?" Jake asked the dingo. It immediately raced off towards the smooth hill on the right. After only a moment's pause, Jake followed.

10 As he ran, Jake was afraid he had made a big mistake. But as he got closer he saw the hill to his right wasn't smooth. When he saw it from a different perspective he could tell it was rocky. Jake felt like his lungs were going to burst. The hill was close. He saw the jagged stones on its side. Jake's heart jumped. Large piles of rocks lay ahead. He could breathe as he climbed up the rocks. Was the road 15 on the other side? The dingo walked noisily on the rocks as it followed him.

Jake reached the top of the hill.

The whole landscape spread out before him. A breathtaking sunrise brought the Australian outback to



11 to burst [bɜːst] platzen • 12 jagged [dʒæɡɪd] zerklüftet

life. Kangaroos jumped gently across the undulating plain. Colourful budgerigars flew across the sky. But Jake was extremely happy to see something more beautiful than nature's wonders. There was the road! Even better, there were two lorries and a couple of cars heading his way.

5 "We made it!" Jake said to the dingo by his side.

The dingo stood on the top of the rock pile and watched Jake climb down to the road.

10 Jake stopped the first lorry. It slowed down as soon as the driver saw him. The driver had an ultra-modern communication rig. He immediately asked the emergency services to call an air ambulance for Maritska.

15 The other lorry and the cars pulled to a halt. After what seemed like an eternity of being alone in the outback, Jake found himself surrounded by people. Jake noticed that two days in the sun had turned his skin dark brown. Together with his thick, black hair this made the people on the road think he was an Aborigine when they first saw him. Jake told them his whole story. The drivers were surprised by his skill and bravery at surviving in the bush. They patted 20 him on the back and said things like, 'Bonza', 'Good on yer mate' and 'Well done, clobber.'

Jake didn't understand all their Aussie slang, but their voices were full of praise. However, Jake didn't allow himself any time for pride. He could think about being 25 proud of himself when he knew his brother and sister had been rescued and Maritska was all right.

There was so much going on, so many questions and so much to think about, Jake forgot to check if the dingo was still at the top of the hill.

30 If he had looked up, he would have seen that it was waiting. It stayed where it was and watched over him until he got in the lorry. It stayed and watched until the cars and

- 1 undulating [ˌʌndjələɪtɪŋ] sanft geschwungen • 1 plain [pleɪn] Ebene • 2 budgerigar [ˈbʊdʒɪrɪɡɑː] Wellensittich • 11 rig [rɪɡ] Vorrichtung, Anlage • 21 bonza (coll., Aust.) [ˈbɒnzɑː] cool, genial • 21 Good on yer! (coll., Aust.) [ɡʊd ɒn jɛə] Gut gemacht! • 22 clobber [ˈkɒləb] Kumpel • 24 praise [preɪz] Lob

lorries drove away and the road was empty once more. It waited until Jake's lorry was a tiny dot on the horizon. Only then did it pick its way down the rocks. Within moments, its sand coloured fur and amber eyes blended with the landscape and the dingo disappeared from view.

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Chapter 10 Australians

Jake's heart pounded heavily all the way to the petrol station. The lorry driver used his radio system to put him on to the emergency service operator. Jake described, as best he could, the location where he had left Maritska and Pim. Luckily the landmarks he described made sense to the operator.

By the time they pulled into the gas station, Jake heard the sound of helicopter blades overhead. Two choppers flew low and headed towards the outback.

There was a small snack bar in the petrol station. The waitress immediately brought Jake something to eat and drink.

"Have you got a phone?" he asked her.

It wasn't until somebody placed a mobile in his hand that he realized he had no idea of his parents' number. The information he needed to contact everybody was on his mobile phone. He didn't have anything at all written on a piece of paper. Normally, this was fine. But now his phone was lost, probably broken, in the middle of the outback. It made Jake realize how dependent the modern world had become on electronic equipment and computers to communicate and survive.

7 radio system [ˈreɪdiəʊ ˌsɪstəm] Funksystem • 8 emergency service operator [ˈɪmɜːdʒnsɪ sɜːvɪs ˌɒpəreɪtə] Notdienstmitarbeiter • 13 helicopter blade [ˈhelɪkɒptə ˌbleɪd] Hubschrauberrotor • 13 chopper [ˈtʃɒpə] Hubschrauber • 14 to head towards sth [hed təˈwɔːdʒ] auf etw. zusteuern

56

Jake heard the 'whoop, whoop' of a siren from the forecourt. A police car pulled up. Two officers jumped out and hurried in. People pointed them in Jake's direction. "OK, son," one of the officers said. "We've spoken to your parents. They're on their way."

5

Jake was relieved that his parents knew where they were and that he'd see them soon. The police told him that several search parties had been out looking for them. As it turned out, Ray had moved so far from his flight plan to avoid the sandstorm that they had been searching in the wrong area.

After Jake described the accident, the police told him that they had only survived because of Ray's skill as a pilot. Two other planes had been caught in the sudden sandstorm, too. Both of them had lost control and crashed. There were no survivors in either accident.

A message came through on one of the policeman's walkie-talkies. The officer smiled and shook Jake's hand. "No worries," he said. "They've found them."

"Are they all right?" Jake asked. "Is Maritska OK?"

20

After a short interchange the policeman nodded. "They're taking her to Darwin. She'll have to stay in hospital. They got to her just in time. If you had taken a couple of hours more, they don't think she'd have made it."

25

At last Jake could relax.

The policemen were about to turn away when Jake jumped up. "There's something else I need to tell you! It's about the people who robbed the cattle auction."

Everyone in the petrol station fell silent. They turned to Jake and stared at him.

"I know who they are."

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2 forecourt [ˈfɔːkɔːt] Vorhof • 10 to avoid [əˈvɔɪd] ausweichen, vermeiden • 16 no ... either [naʊ] ... [ˈaɪðə] keine/-r/-s (der/beiden) • 21 interchange [ˈɪntəʃeɪndʒ] Austausch

57