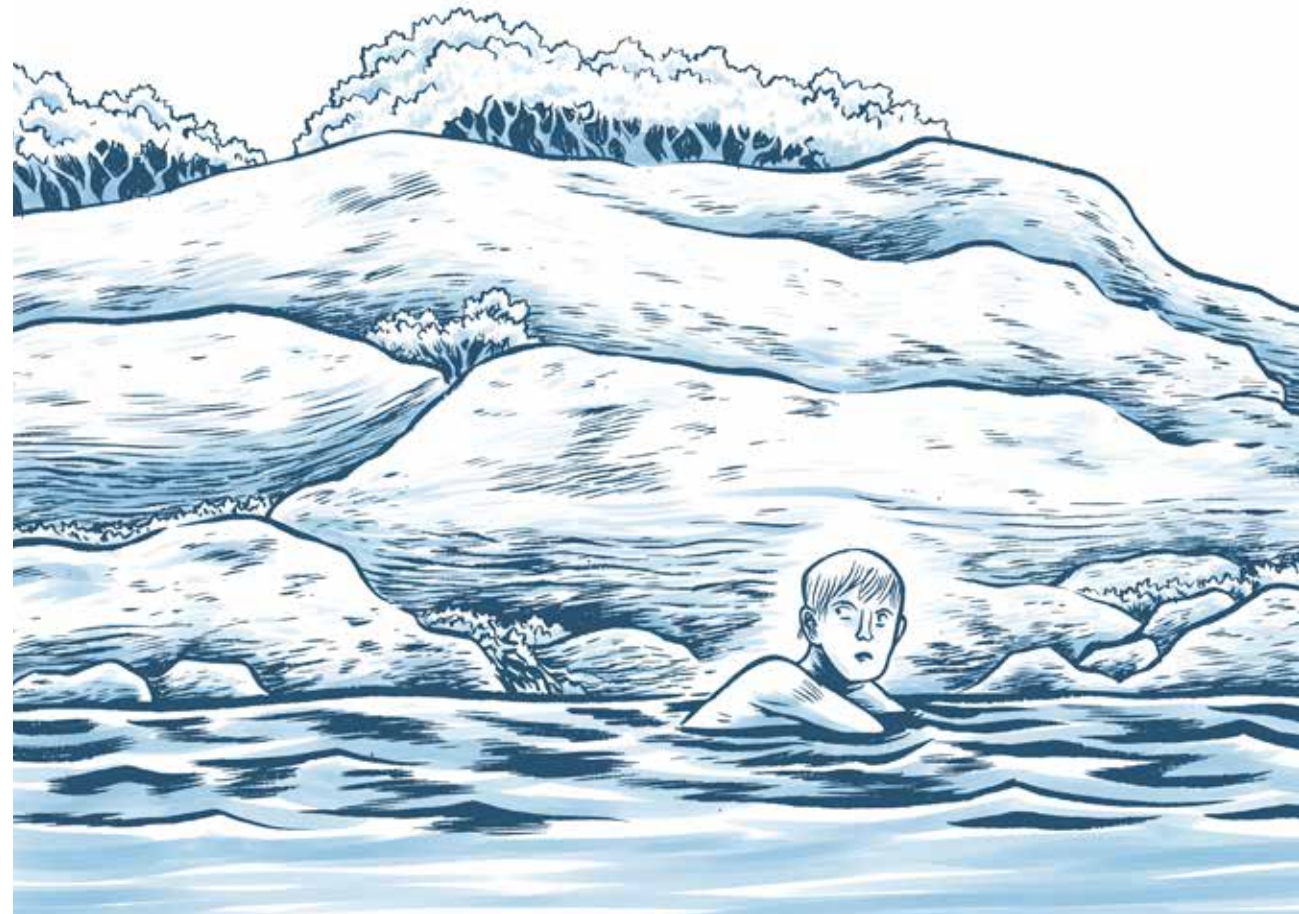


I swim away from Silja. I can't see her,
I just know she's there. She's down there,
in the deep.

That's where she enjoys herself most.



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www.samlaget.no

Design: Elisabeth Moseng, www.illustratorene.no
Førtrykk: xxx
Skrift: Minion Pro 11 / 17
Papir: xxx
Trykkeri: xxx
Printed in xxx

ISBN 978-82-521-9262-9

Boka er utgitt med støtte frå
Leser søker bok



Then she pops her head up!



She waves to me. Beckons me down into the depths. But I don't want to go down there.

It's cold. And I won't be able to breathe.

"Make up your mind, Tony T!" she shouts.

I clamber ashore. I'm so freezing, I start to shiver. But I don't say anything about that. Silja won't get to laugh at me.

"You're so boring, Tony T!" comes out of the waves.

Then she's gone again.



I'm Tony.

Or Tony T, like Silja calls me when she's annoyed. And she gets annoyed a lot. Most of all when we're at Grandad's. Like now. It's his quay I'm clambering onto.

Grandad is sitting right at the end of the quay, but he's not watching us. He's burying his head in his hands. He's just had an operation.

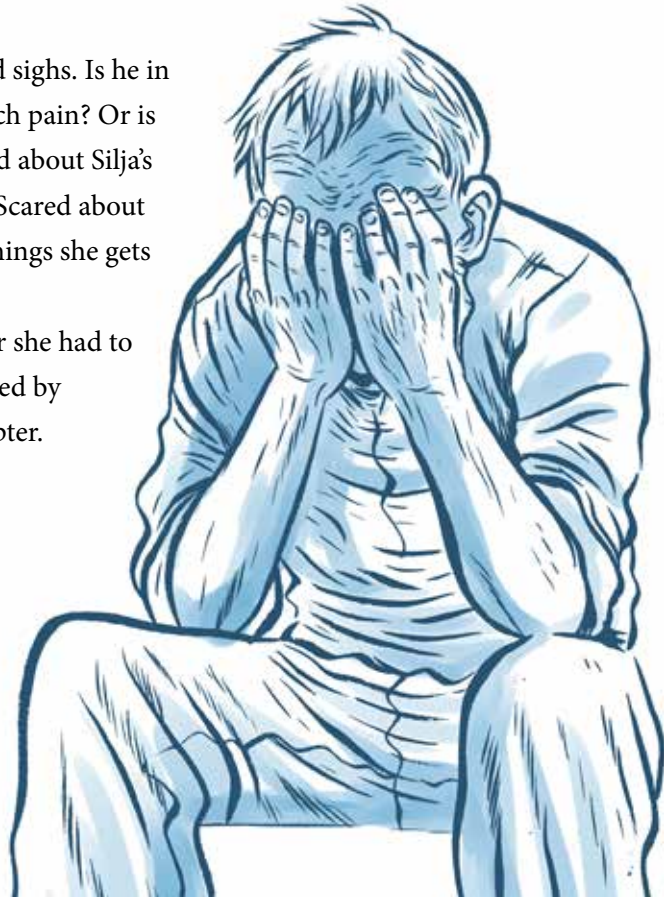
He gives me a towel.

"Nice of you to come, you and Silja. Nice to have some help while my eyes are getting better."

Silja's head bursts up out of the waves. She spits out seawater, hurls herself forwards and disappears.

Grandad sighs. Is he in that much pain? Or is he scared about Silja's diving? Scared about all the things she gets up to?

Last year she had to be rescued by a helicopter.



Grandad calls out to Silja. He wants her on land, but she won't budge. She wants to dive more.

"Time me!" she shrieks.

She has eyes like an otter, I think to myself. And otter teeth.

Silja disappears into the depths again.

Just like an otter.

I begin to count. I don't want to, but I still end up doing it. I'm doing what Silja wants. I'm so angry at myself!

I'm thinking about mum as I count. She won't like us diving this deep. It's not good for us. She'd say that our lungs aren't developed enough yet. But Silja never listens to other people. Silja just does what she wants.

I shouldn't have come, I think to myself. I shouldn't have come here when Silja's here. I hate her and all the dumb ideas she comes up with!

Grandad stands up. He wants to go up to the house.

"Take care of Silja," he says, and leaves.

Silja dives. I count.

I get scared just sitting like this, counting. What if Silja never came back up? Imagine if her lungs seized up?

“Don’t stay under for so long,” I yell, as soon as I see her dark hair reappear.

“I don’t need to breathe all the time. Only thickos think that!” Silja yells back.

“Come out of the water now,” I reply, a thicko.

But then she disappears again!

Next time she sticks up her otter head, she announces that she’s going to become a diver. She’s going to dive to all the depths in the world, and that’s why she has to practice every day.

Silja swims down again. She sinks like a stone. That’s just how she is: Heavy when she wants, light when she wants. She just makes her mind up. It’s freaky.

Finally she comes back up. Finally she comes back to shore, so I can go up to Grandad.

Grandad is sitting by the kitchen window.

“Is that a big fishing boat we can see?” he asks.

“Yes,” I reply, “it’s sitting really deep in the water.”

“And West of Otter Rock, what’s that?”

“A cormorant,” I tell him. “He’s flying out to the Reef, towards the rocks out there.”

We talk more about what we can and can’t see. But then Grandad puts his hands over his eyes.

“Does it hurt?”

Grandad denies it, but I can see that something is wrong. He’s not quite himself.

“I’ll fetch Silja.” I tell him.

