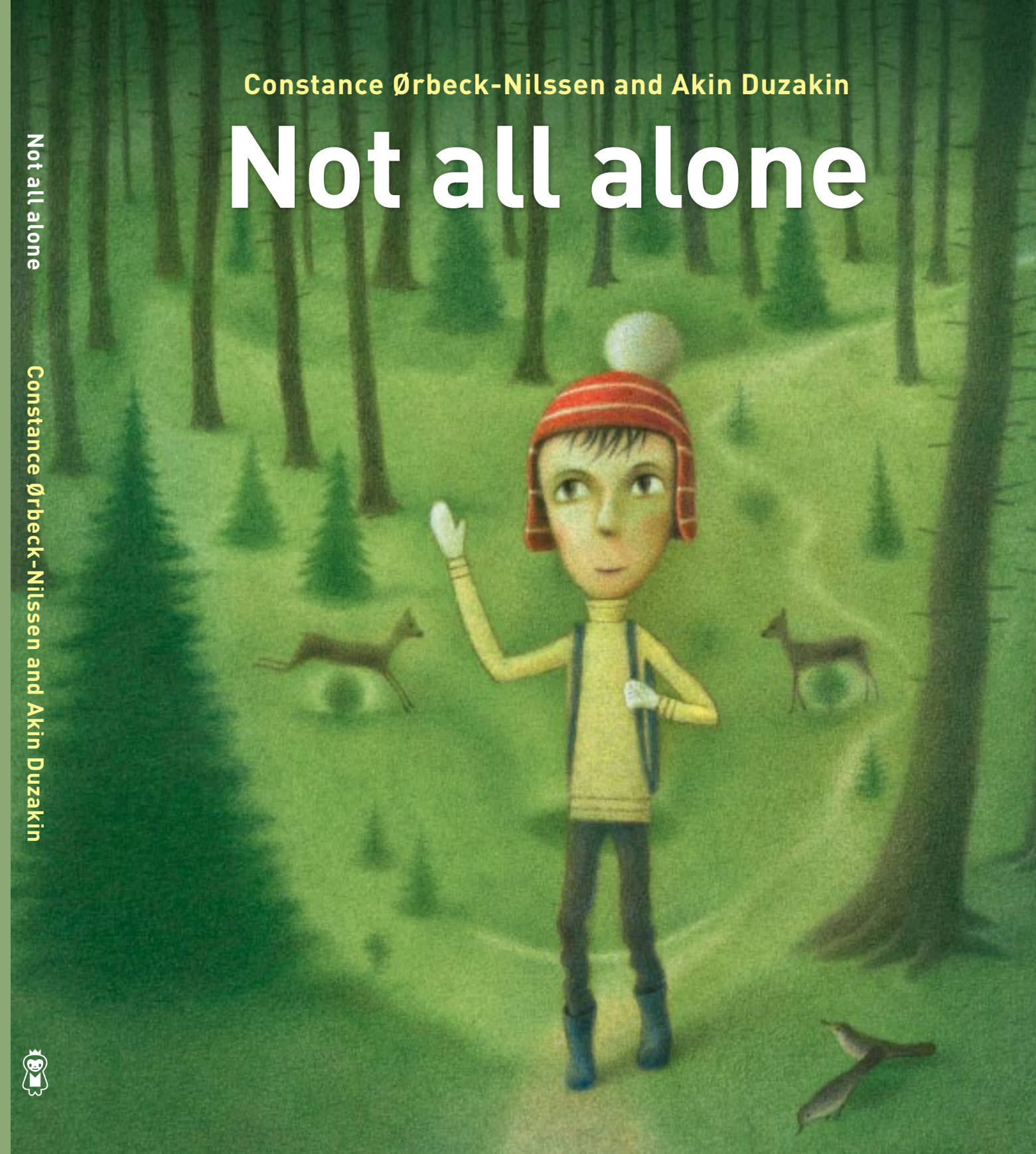




It is the first time Lars goes to school on his own. He decides to walk backwards, in order to keep his mother and the house in sight for as long as possible. The way to school goes through a dark and scary wood. Walking backwards is not easy. Lars is struggling to make it to school in time for class. Then he hears noises from behind the trees ... He is not alone!

Constance Ørbeck-Nilssen and Akin Duzakin

# Not all alone





# Not all alone

Constance Ørbeck-Nilssen and Akin Duzakin

MAGIKON



“Just walk straight ahead now, Lars,” says mom. “You know the way.”

I am walking backwards and wave to her. She stands in the window and calls out that I am to be careful. It’s difficult walking backwards, but that way I can still see her.

“Before you know it, you’ll be there,” she calls out and starts to close the window.

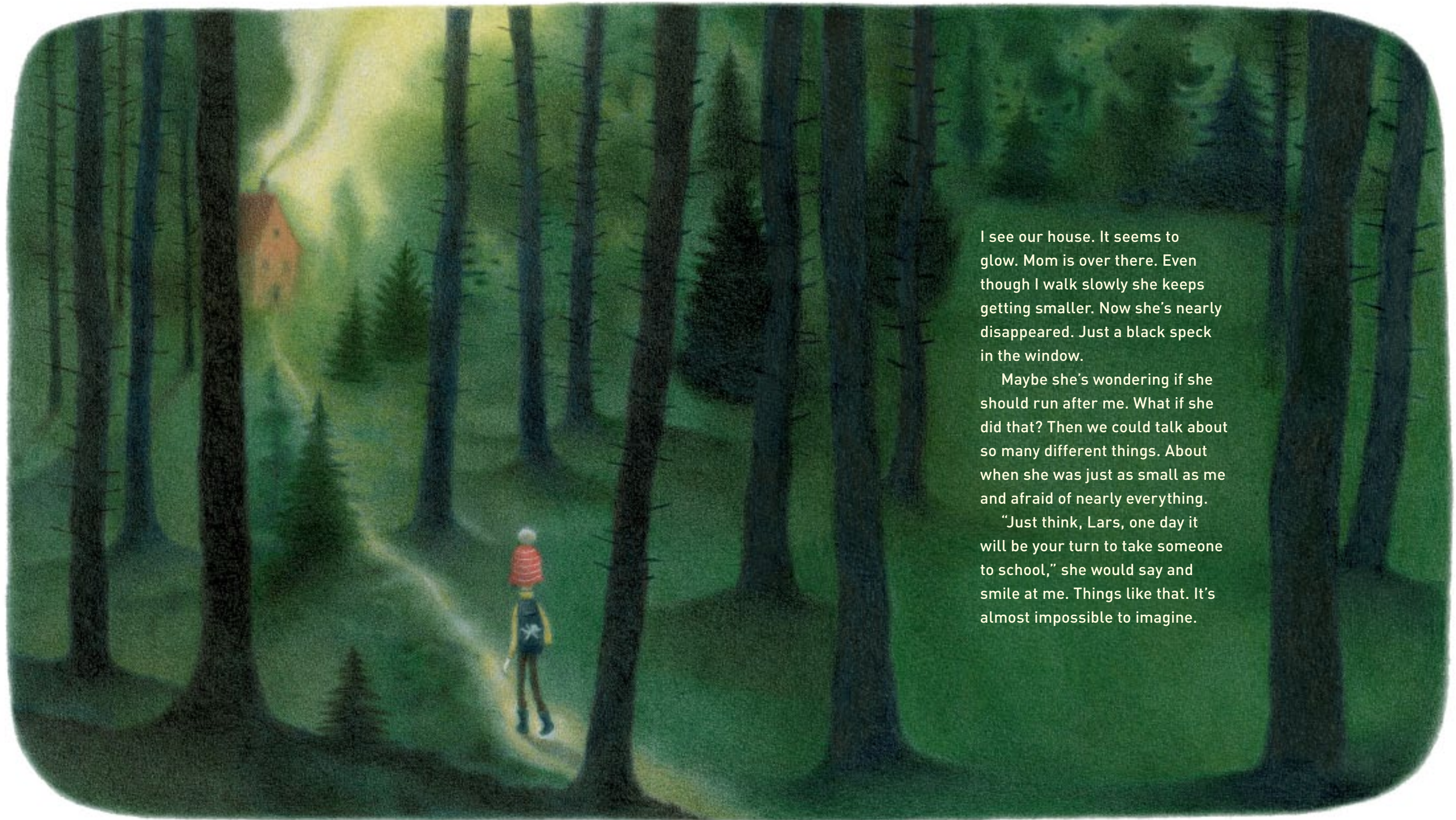
If she closes the window, I can’t hear her. I can’t see her either.

I stop and shout that she's not to close the window. That she's to stand there all the time.

"Just go on now, Lars," she calls out. "You can do it."

But I don't turn around. If I turn around, she might close the window. If I walk backwards, I can keep on seeing her for a long time. Smart thinking, Lars. That's the way to do it. That has to be. Just keep going now. Or else it's not going to work. Then she'd have to walk me to school every day. Maybe all my life.





I see our house. It seems to glow. Mom is over there. Even though I walk slowly she keeps getting smaller. Now she's nearly disappeared. Just a black speck in the window.

Maybe she's wondering if she should run after me. What if she did that? Then we could talk about so many different things. About when she was just as small as me and afraid of nearly everything.

"Just think, Lars, one day it will be your turn to take someone to school," she would say and smile at me. Things like that. It's almost impossible to imagine.

Behind me is the forest. But I don't turn around. Then I don't see the dog either. There's a big, black dog around here somewhere. It goes wherever it wants all by itself.

What if it comes now? Suddenly it's there, and then it's gone. A boy got bit in the arm once. Dogs have sharp teeth.

Maybe it's standing behind the trees waiting for me. It always comes so fast. Now Lars is alone, it thinks. Now, I can get him. Mom says that dogs can't think. Then why does it come when it sees me, huh? Dogs think!



What's that? Between the trees. It must surely be the dog. It's seen me. He's so cunning standing there. Maybe it's become enormously large. Even larger than yesterday. Can dogs grow that fast? When they eat a lot, they sure can.

Now I hear it coming. I shut my eyes tight and hold my breath.

Mom says that dogs only eat dog food. The neighbour's dog eats spaghetti and hot dogs and pizza. What if it gets so hungry that it wants to eat me too? Mom says that's not possible. But she doesn't know everything either.

I stand quite still waiting.

Then I open my eyes cautiously.



It's Chatty! She looks deep into my eyes.

"Lars," she whispers. "Did you see the dog?"

I shake my head. She smiles at me.

"By the way, it was clever of you to walk backwards. Otherwise you'd never have seen me.

How is it that Chatty can scare a dog, I wonder.

"If there's anything I know about, it's scaring dogs," she smiles shrewdly. "If it comes again, just walk on and pretend it's nothing. And zip! It's gone."





Suddenly, Chatty's gone too. I keep going. But I don't turn around.

What if a car comes along? While I'm all alone. Maybe it'll stop. Mom knows well that I'm afraid of cars. Not those that beep and drive by. Just those that stop; or follow me. The ones that say you can have a ride 'cause it's too far to walk. There are ones like that. And it doesn't help walking backwards either. But I don't turn around. It'll be OK, Lars. It has to be.

What was that? I stop and listen. Just so it's not a car, I think. What'll I do then?

Over there. In the road. Something' coming at me full speed. I try going faster. That's not easy when you're walking backwards. I try running. That doesn't work either.

