

SIMON STRANGER
HILDE HODNEFJELD

BONSAI

EN LITEN BOK OM
DØDEN





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Magikon forlag
Kirkens Bymisjon



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Everything dies.

Everything that grows.

Everything that breathes, swims and flies.

Everything that twitters, barks and meows will eventually fall silent. Sometimes it happens very suddenly.

A heart stops. A car crashes. A fish has its neck broken and ends up quivering in a bucket. Sometimes it happens very slowly. Like with Grandma.

I once found an injured bird in the grass. It had flown into a window and hit its head, and then it just lay on the ground, shaking. Dad didn't want me to touch it. He said it might make me ill, but surely death isn't catching? When I came back the next day the bird was gone. For a moment I forgot it couldn't have flown away.



The leaves on the trees come in green in the spring,
but in the autumn they fall to the ground and turn
to earth. Will I eventually turn to earth too? Become
black and soft and cold and crumbly?

Will I also be dug up, spread by spades, help trees and
flowers to grow? Everything goes in circles.

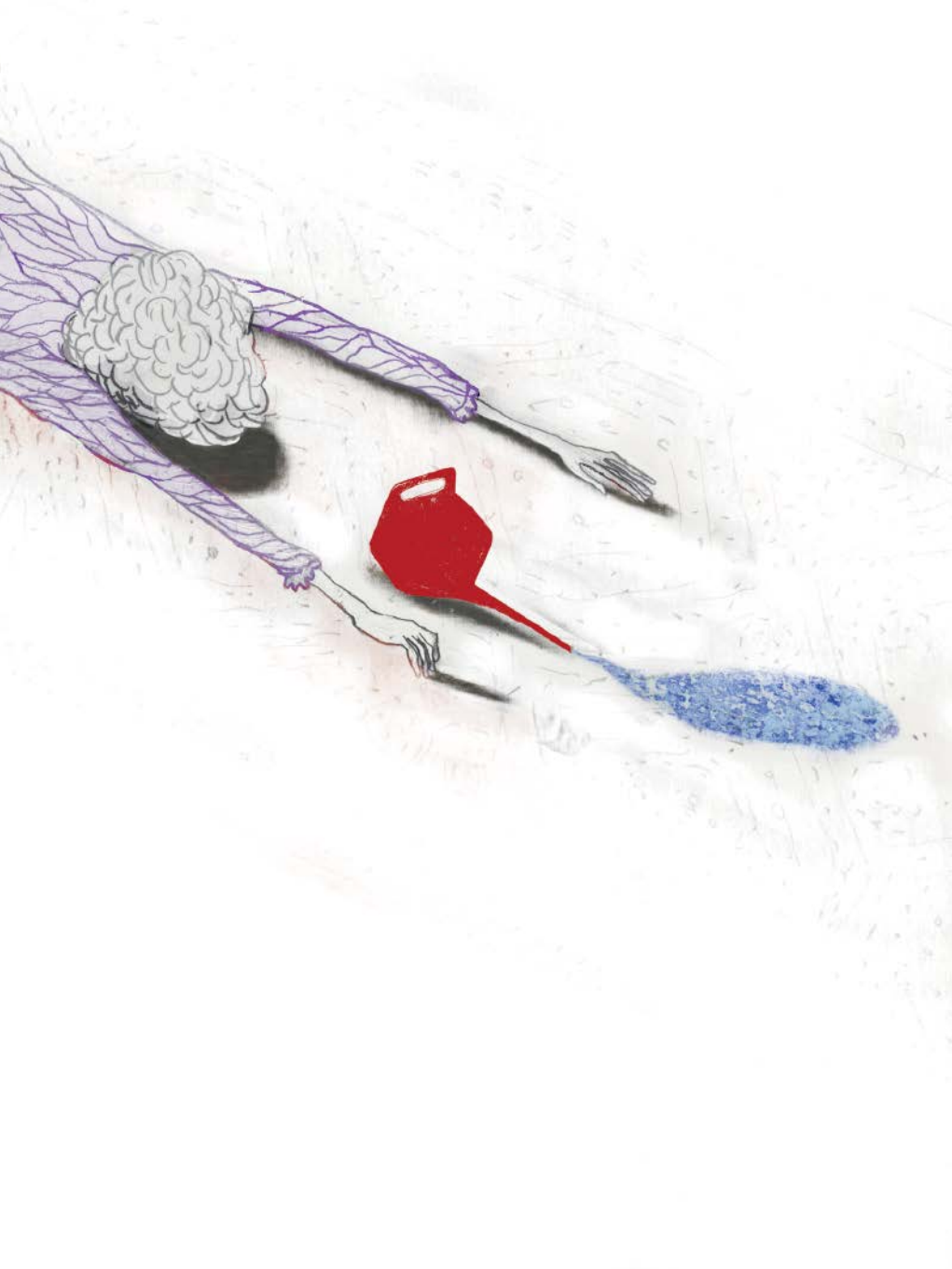
Where was I before I was born?



I have a tree in my room. A small, green tree in a pot next to my bed. It's Japanese – a bonsai tree. I got it when Grandma fell ill. It happened quite suddenly. Mum and Dad called Grandma several times and she didn't answer. There was fear in Mum's eyes, and we had to hurry out to the car. Had to drive as fast as we could, but not when the lights were red, and not faster than the speed limit.

'You should never be in such a hurry that you won't make it at all,' Dad always says. I didn't understand what he meant at first.





Grandma didn't answer when we rang the doorbell. Mum had to let us in with her key, and she was so stressed she dropped her phone. It was quiet in the flat. It smelled of perfume, carpeting and old furniture. 'Hello?' Dad called, taking my hand. No one replied. Mum walked ahead of us with quick steps. Click, clack, her boots went.

'Oh my goodness!' Mum said, stopping in the doorway. I pushed my head past her arm. There lay Grandma. On the floor.

The bonsai tree was on the window sill, dripping water down onto the floor, and there lay Grandma, flat on her back, with a watering can in her hand. Mum started to cry. Dad hurried over and put a sofa cushion under Grandma's head. Then Mum blinked a lot and looked around in confusion. 'Is it Saturday?' she asked. Dad called 113. I stood very, very still, but my heart was pounding like I was running as fast as I could. Then blue lights were flashing outside the window. A man and a woman got out of the ambulance. They lifted Grandma onto a white bed. A stretcher. They fastened a safety belt across her stomach so she wouldn't roll off. Then they carried Grandma out of the flat and into the ambulance. Mum went with them.



Dad mopped up the water on the floor using a towel. Then he found some pastries in the cupboard.

‘What will they do to Grandma?’ I asked.

‘They need to find out what happened,’ Dad said. ‘And then they’ll need to decide whether Grandma can come back home again or whether she’s become so old she needs to go to a nursing home.’

‘But what about everything in her flat?’ I asked. The bonsai tree I had given Grandma when she turned 81 sat in front of me. Dad and I found it in IKEA. We were looking for a new bed for me and found the tree at the same time.

‘Look at that little tree,’ I said to Dad, who was wheeling a load of flat packs along on a trolley.

‘Nice, isn’t it? It’s called a bonsai tree,’ Dad said.

‘Can I get it for Grandma for her birthday?’ I asked.



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