

TO HUNDRE OG SEKSTINI DAGAR

ROALD KALDESTAD – BJØRN R. LIE





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Two hundred and sixty-nine rainy days.
He watches the leaves as they float and fall
from the trees like the pages of the calendar.
Two hundred and sixty-nine days.
And whenever it rains, he misses his best friend.





Raindrops hang suspended from the glass window pane. He can see all the many different shades of green outside. Brown blades of grass. Yellow leaves in the hedge. Patches of red here and there. The central heating emits a steady hum, like an enormous purring cat. He wishes that he had a cat. A soft, warm, long-haired cat to curl up in his lap and tuck its little nose under its back leg, its closed eyes forming two lines.

The house across the road is empty. The windows are black mirrors. He feels as if there's an empty space inside him. His father is also at home, busying himself at the computer. His parents think he has the flu, but he knows better than that. Whenever it rains, he misses her.





Everything is in motion. Drops drip. Crows flutter from tree to tree. The clouds glide by. Little birds spring up in the air from the hedge, perching on the electrical wires.

– *Ding dong.*

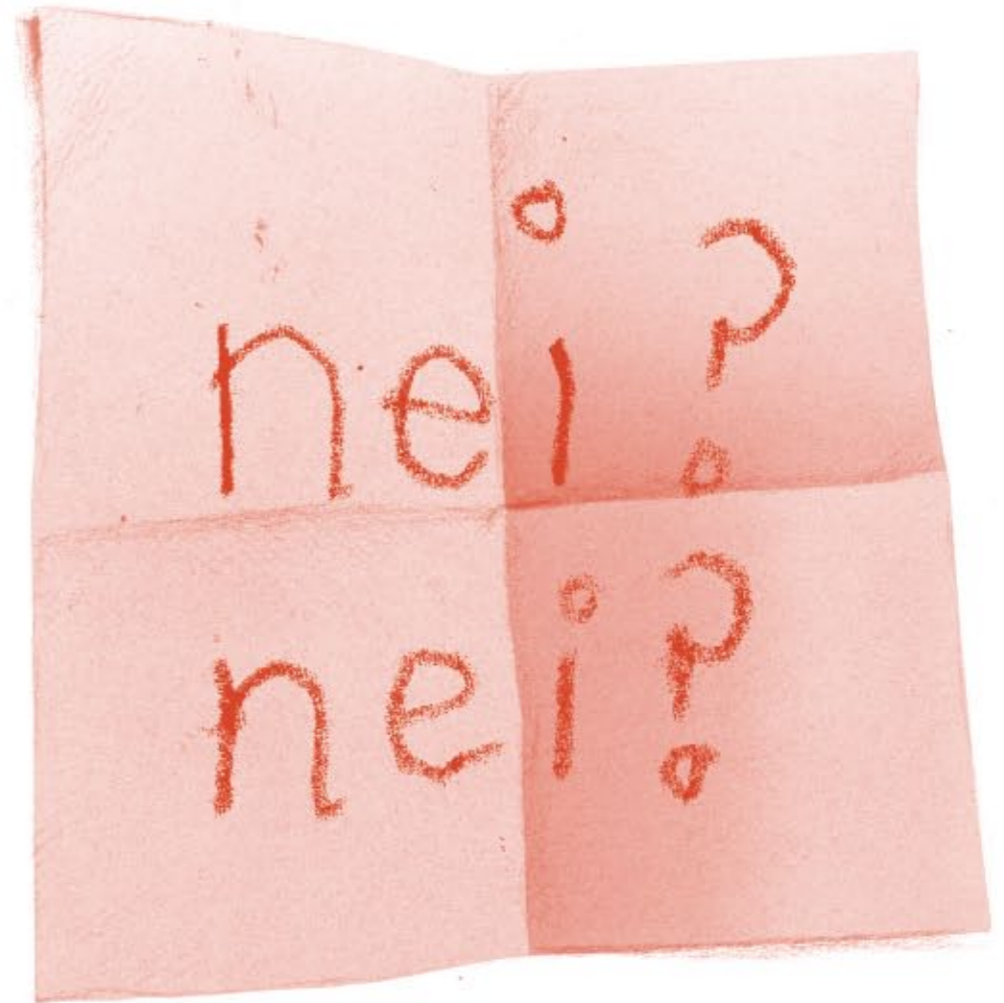
His heart thuds in his chest. She always rang the bell, even though she knew that she could walk straight in. Daddy opens the door.

It's a postman with a package. He imagines her sitting by the window in her new house. Her wild, black hair. Her wide, dark eyes. Her cheeky dimples. She was his very best friend.





The package is for him – and it's from her! Inside the big box is a small bar of milk chocolate. He can't help but smile. Then he spots something taped underneath it. A letter. He unfolds the sheet of paper and lays it on the table. Written in red crayon are just two words: *yeah? yeah?*





‘You and Lena up a tree, K-I-S-S-I-N-G.’

It didn’t bother them. They retreated to the forest behind the gym hall where they built a fortress of pine cones beneath the giant conifers. She accompanied him home every day. They jumped on the trampoline. They climbed trees and dangled from the branches like chimpanzees. They hopped and skipped and laughed. There wasn’t even time to eat, at least not until they had to devour an entire loaf of bread like two hungry wolves. Then they sat, huddled close on the sofa, playing games or watching films.

She slept over at his house. They giggled and whispered in the dark, music playing quietly in the background. The globe glowed brightly and whirled them each into their own cotton wool dreams.



Mum lies on the sofa watching television. Dad is away travelling again. He calls home every evening. Mum talks quietly on the phone and laughs a lot. He lies in bed and feels his tummy getting warm. But Daddy always comes home. And he always brings something with him, too. This time it's a funny hat.

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Author: Roald Kaldestad

Illustrator: Bjørn Rune Lie

Translator: Rosie Hedger

Publisher: Magikon

Agent: Magikon

Address:

Magikon forlag

Fjellveien 48A

1410 Kolbotn

Norway

Contact:

Svein Størksen

svein@magikon.no

0047 97 75 0060