

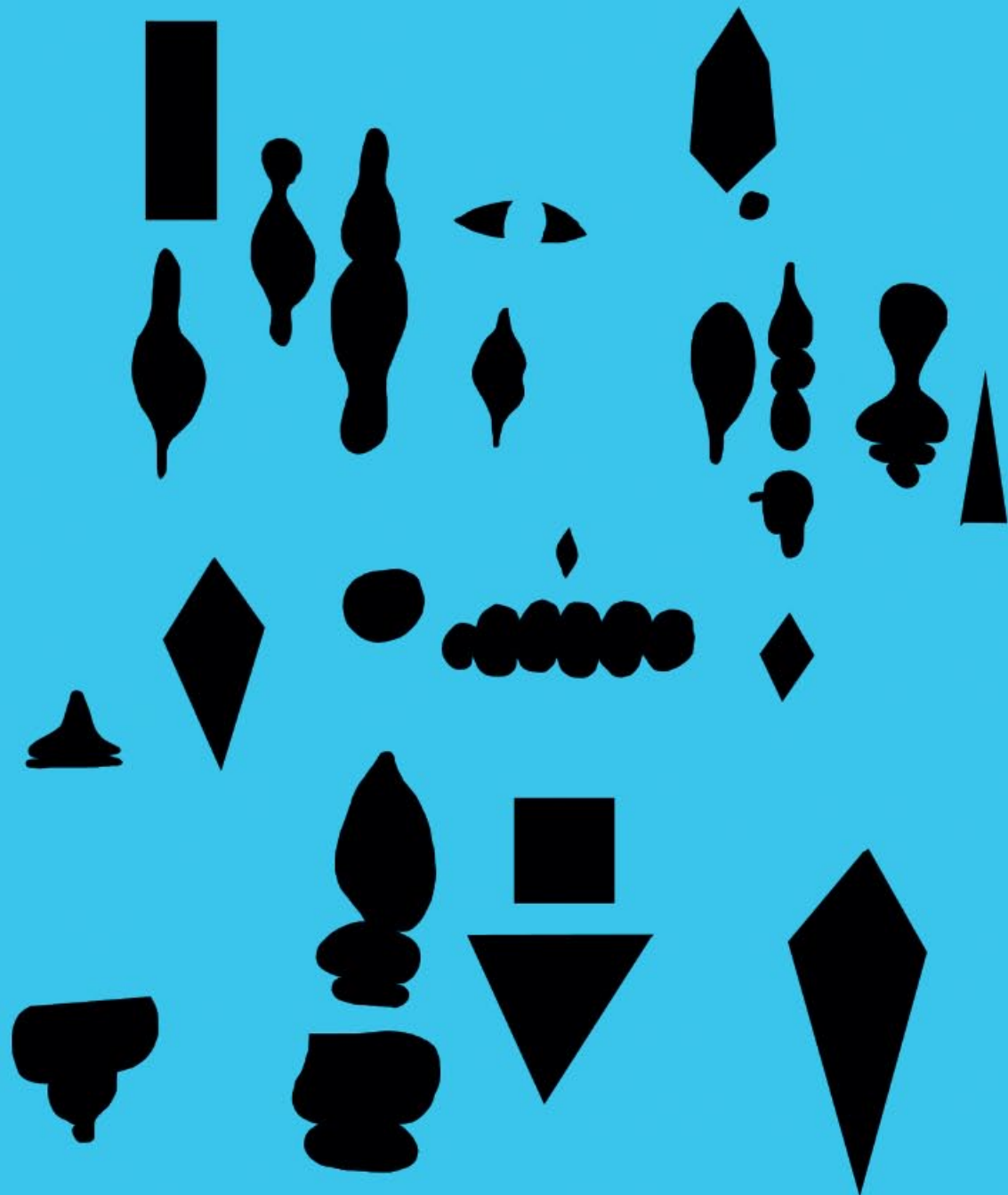
VIVALDI



HELGE TORVUND OG MARI KANSTAD JOHNSEN



HO ER IKKJE BARE TYRA LENGER




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A little clawing noise.
A little paw scratching against cardboard.
How can a noise make you so happy.
Tyra stays in bed a little longer. She can feel
the scratching blend into the new day's light.
The light comes in through long yellow curtains.
Inside her a little light-filled scratching joy is all there is.
Suddenly there's no way she can lie still. Not for a second.
She jumps out of bed, picks up the tiny cat, and climbs
back into bed with him. Which she's not allowed to do.
But where she is "allowed" and "not allowed" have disappeared.
She's inside of happiness itself.
Sharing the pussycat's lively, clawing, living life.
Playing with her soft, tender, wild and frisky puss.
At first he lounges quietly, enjoying the featherbed beneath him.
Then Tyra moves her hand and he springs into action.
Claws and bites and pretend fights.
He moves his head back and forth.
"Sweetie-pie cat!" says Tyra.
The cat turns to her voice and looks at
her with the bluest eyes that Tyra's ever seen.
All at once something's changed.
She's not just Tyra any more.
She's Tyra and the cat.



Mrs Berg had set things up so they could look over the hedge and see the little pussy frisking around his mother on the lawn.

“Yes, it’s too bad,” Mrs Berg had said.

“What is?” asked Tyra’s mother.

As usual, Tyra said nothing. She never said a thing outside the house.

“Too bad this one won’t get to live,” said Mrs Berg.

All three of them followed the little pussy with their eyes.

“He won’t?” said Tyra’s mother.

“No. There were three in the litter, and I’ve given two away. And Berg,” she said and nodded up at the house, “he says one cat’s enough. So one day or another he’s going to kill this one.”

Mrs Berg held the little kitten as she said that. He was ginger and white. She stroked him gently over his head and back before she slid him over the hedge into Tyra’s arms. Tyra looked into a pair of alert and living eyes. The kitten closed them as she stroked the back of his head.

Tyra said softly, so softly, “Pussycat, little pussycat!”

Tyra’s mother looked at the cat. Then she looked at Tyra. Tyra’s eyes were wide open. First Tyra’s mother saw how frightened they were. Then she saw that they were of pleading with her. Both of Tyra’s big eyes were pleading with her, pleading that the little pussycat would get to keep his life. And have a life with her.

“Maybe we can take him,” said Tyra’s mother.

“Can you?” Mrs Berg sounded extra happy.

Tyra’s mother knelt down by Tyra and said softly, “I’ll talk to Pappa.”

Tyra looked at the cat and had tears in her eyes.

“It’s all right with me,” said Tyra’s mother, “but I have to talk with Pappa first.”





When it was dark in the house that night and everyone should have been sleeping, Tyra's father heard her mother clear her throat. Then he knew she hadn't quite fallen asleep yet.

"Yes?" he said.

"What?" she said.

"You cleared your throat. Is there something you want to talk about?"

"No. Did I? Oh, yes. As a matter of fact, there is one thing. You remember before we had Tyra, we had Kjell the parakeet."

"Of course. What about it?"

"Well, just that when he died . . . there'd been no much mess and noise and dust with him that we agreed we'd never have another bird, or fish, or any other pet."

"Yes, thank God," said Tyra's father.

"Mmmhmm," said her mother, and it was quiet for a while.

"Weellll?" asked her father a bit impatiently. "What about it?"

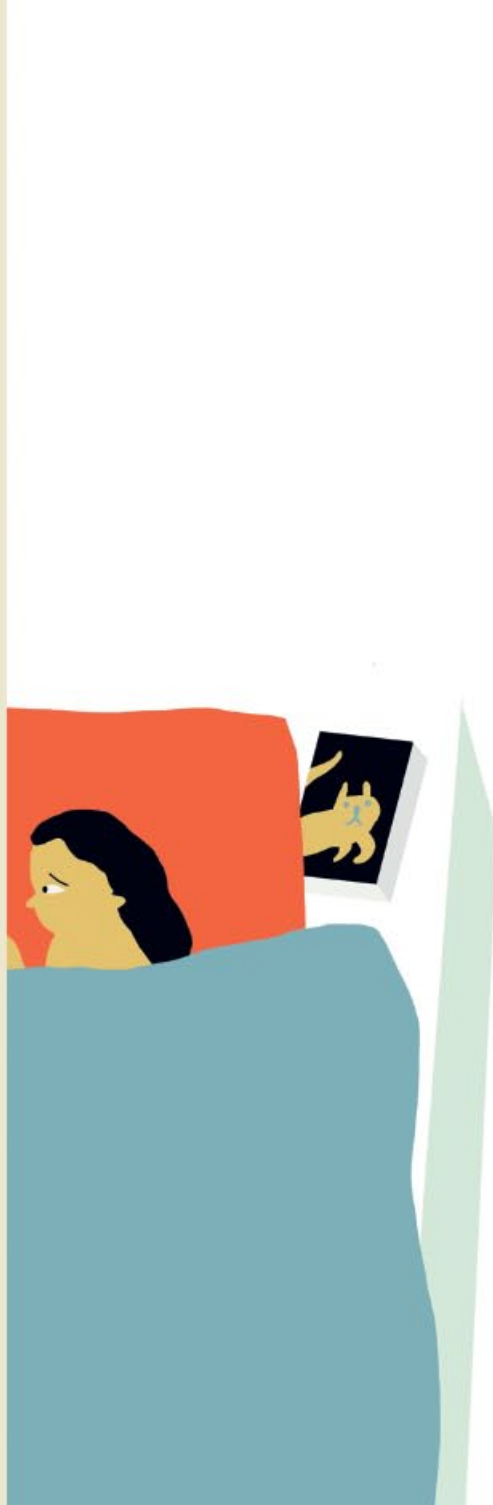
"Well, you see. Tyra saw this kitten."

Her father gave a deep sigh.

"It's Mrs Berg. There were three kittens in the last litter, and she's managed to give away two of them, but the third, well, nobody seems to want him, and she says Berg's going to kill him. And Tyra really really wants him."

Tyra's mother shook herself out of the mood she'd been in.

"It goes without saying we wouldn't take him if you're against it," said Tyra's mother, "but you know how hard it's been for her at school. Maybe this could do her good?"



Her father gave a heavy sigh. And didn't say a word.

"I told her it was okay with me," said her mother.

"Sneaky, sneaky!" said her father.

It was quiet for some time. Then her father leaned over to her mother and gave her a hug and said, "Of course Tyra will get her kitten!"

Tyra's mother was happy.

"But I don't want any complaints or whining about it smelling of cat pee around here," said Father.

"Of course not, of course not," her mother answered right away.

And then they went to sleep.

In her room Tyra lay awake looking at the long curtains moving gently in the night breeze.

She was thinking about the kitten with her whole body.

Oh, how she wished for it!

But what if Father said no.

He'd said no, it was absolutely certain he'd said no.

If only he were nice like Grandmother.

She would absolutely certainly have said yes.

It was a thousand times certain that Father had say no.

In her bed she could almost hear the sound of his voice: "No!" he was saying. "No! No! No!"

But then she went to sleep.

And now the pussycat was hers. For ever and always.
And it was summer. Summer vacation.
Tyra could be with the pussycat every single
day coming in through her curtains. All day every day.
She would tie a paper bow around a string and tease him with it.
The pussycat would spring like a mini tiger across
the grass to attack the paper bow.
He'd kick a ball across the floor.
The pussycat would lie in wait behind the leg of a chair
and leap out like a lion.
She would sit just looking at him while he licked
his paw and washed himself and was so sweet, so sweet,
only kittens washing themselves with their paws can be that sweet.
But he had to have a name.

“Well,” said her mother with a smile. “Have you found
a name for the pussycat yet?”

“No,” answered Tyra, “not yet.”

She wanted his name to be obvious.
As if he'd told her what it was himself.
Plus it was as if time stood still because he
didn't have a name. As if summer vacation would never end,
as if what she didn't want to think about would never begin again.





Tyra tried to hear his name.

She stood looking at the kitten when they were out in the garden. She lay down in the warm grass. And listened. As if she wanted to hear what the grass was calling him.

She went in among the currant bushes. Stood completely still. As if she could hear what the bushes were calling the cat. And she looked up at the chickadee in the plum tree. Listened to the sharp, clear song. As if she could hear what the chickadee was calling the cat.

“What are you doing?” said her mother, who had come out onto the porch.

“I’m naming the cat,” answered Tyra.

“I see,” said her mother.

Her mother shook her head on her way back to the house.

And one day Tyra was lying in the grass with the cat on her tummy. The cat lay on top of her and purred. And the vibrating sound was filling all of Tyra. She lay there and closed her eyes and felt that there was no room for a single thought inside her. A purring cat on your tummy, and all your thoughts disappear. When she opened her eyes, she looked straight up at a cloud.

“Vivaldi!” said the cloud.

And that was the cat’s name: Vivaldi. Summer was passing. Vivaldi grew big.



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