



figenschouforlag.no

TROLLHEIM - The Spider Queen

By ARNE LINDMO & IDA SKJELBAKKEN (ILL.)

Prologue

Silje dropped a mushroom into the bucket and wiped the sweat from her forehead.

How many buckets had she filled today? Enough to get extra food? It should, at least, be enough to avoid punishment—this time. She had learned that one does as one is told—in Helheim.

The job of gathering food was hard, and the large, shiny orb in the ceiling heated and illuminated enough to make it feel like she was outdoors under the real sun.

But it was a false sun, and she was not outdoors but deep, deep underground in a gigantic cave. Captured by what she first thought was the devil himself, and maybe he was just that, but everyone down here called him Loki... Ruler of the Underworld.

She no longer cried. She was used to it now. This was her new life, ever since the day he took her.

Her gaze swept through the fields, past the houses made of dried clay and stone, and stopped at Loki's tower, as it often did.

"Keep picking," whispered the old lady working beside her. "Or else they will come here, and then you will feel the whip!"

Figenschou Publishing
Anitra Figenschou
anitra@figenschouforlag.no
Phone: +47 92606318
Address: Tromsogata 21, 0565 Oslo,
NORWAY



figenschouforlag.no

That was Asta. She liked her. Kind and helpful. Kidnapped by trolls when she was just eight years old. Now she was at least sixty. Imagine, a whole life down here...

All the slaves told the same story: taken when they were young, around six to eight years old. Silje was an exception at twelve.

Why did they only take children? Were they easier to catch? Easier to control? Did they last longer before disease and death? She had asked a troll once but received only a slap and a "shut up" in response.

Asta had told her that she no longer remembered the surface, no longer remembered her own parents. It was sad... so unfair.

"Too late," Asta muttered and picked mushrooms even faster than before.

Silje looked up and caught sight of the large troll coming straight toward her. It had taken out the whip and smiled maliciously.

"Lazy girl! Girl whip!"

The troll raised its hand with the whip ready to strike.

Silje closed her eyes and clenched her teeth together. She waited for the pain.

But... nothing? She opened her eyes.

The troll stared, frightened, at something behind her.

Silje turned around and felt a chill run down her spine. Out of a tunnel in the cave wall came a flock of giant spiders!

"Arakhne!" the troll bellowed. "Guards! Arakhne attack!"

The spiders were as large as dogs, some bigger, like bears! And at the back of the pack stood a strange creature she had never seen before. Upper body of a lady, but with the lower body of a spider—eight hairy legs and all!



figenschouforlag.no

Small trolls and large trolls came running from all directions. Some shot arrows, while others tried to spear the beasts with spears. All of them were knocked down by long, hairy legs and glued to the ground with nasty, sticky spider webs.

The threads glistened in the light from the artificial sun.

Silje stood frozen, stiff with horror. She couldn't move a finger. It all unfolded around her like in a war movie.

Trolls and spiders rampaged everywhere. She had experienced attacks before, but usually, just a few trolls or slaves were assaulted and dragged into the tunnels. Small, quick raids, perhaps to gather food, but this time it seemed like something more. A large attack. An invasion! War!

And here she stood, right in the line of fire... The large troll flung out the whip and caught one of the spider lady's legs.

It dragged her closer and lifted the axe to strike! But one of the hairy spider legs rose in the air and speared the troll straight through the chest!

Silje shivered all over as she saw that each of the eight legs ended in a razor-sharp claw!

The spider lady lifted the troll's body and stamped it hard on the ground before pulling the claw out of the crater in the chest.

Silje could see purple liquid in the wound. Poison!

This monster must be Arakhne herself. Silje had heard stories, terrible, awful stories... about the queen of the spiders. And now she came crawling at furious speed!

Asta turned to Silje.

"Run," she yelled.

Those were her last words. One of the nasty spider legs hit her in the stomach! The claw went straight through and shot out of her back! The eyes became empty, lifeless...



figenschouforlag.no

But Silje could not run. She was too scared. And where was she supposed to run? The war raged around her on all sides!

Arakhne threw Asta's body aside and crawled towards Silje.

Their gazes met, and they stared at each other. It was as if Silje drowned in those cold, blue, hypnotic eyes. Was it her turn?

Was she the next victim?

A new hairy leg was lifted up... with a sharp claw and fresh poison!

Chapter 1

Bad News

Adam yawned and stirred the pot. The oatmeal was almost ready. Breakfast was going to be good.

His gaze drifted back to the milk carton on the counter.

There were two pictures on it, passport photos of Silje and Frank.

"Missing," it read. "A reward of one million kroner for tips that lead to their being found."

A million, that would be something... Mom would have fainted with joy, and Adam actually knew where the two kids were.

They had been in the same class until they were swallowed by a mirror portal two months ago. Silje and Frank had fallen into Helheim. The Underworld! Loki's realm...



figenschouforlag.no

But what could he really do about it? He, Tara, and Tobias had promised each other to keep the gate there a secret, and a rescue mission seemed impossible, or at least life-threatening... for what if Loki and his army somehow got out from there! He remembered what Tobias had said: Ragnarok, the end of the world...

Well, Frank could enjoy it, that bully! He had turned into a vampire after drinking blood from the ancients. And not a beautiful vampire like Zira, but something resembling a terrible monster. He was probably working for Loki now.

But Silje...

They couldn't just leave her down there. Could they? She had even made him a Valentine's card. It was still under his pillow. Sometimes he read it before he fell asleep and was tormented by terrible nightmares about what could have happened to her...

Adam shook his head, trying to shake the gloomy thoughts out of his mind.

"Mom!" he called out and turned off the stove. "Wake up! Breakfast is ready."

Adam divided the porridge into two bowls and brought them into the living room. He had already set the table and prepared a cup of coffee for her.

She slowly sat up on the sofa, still wearing the white, worn T-shirt and the gray sweatpants from yesterday. She liked to lie down there in the evening and fall asleep in front of the TV. Now she rubbed her eyes and yawned.

"Dziękuję, mój aniołku," she said, taking the steaming cup of coffee. She took a small sip and reached for the remote control.

"Morning News" on the TV lit up the screen.

Adam plopped down on the sofa next to her and poured himself a glass of milk.



figenschouforlag.no

"Good morning!" exclaimed the TV lady, flashing a broad smile.

"First, an update from Trollheim. The two children who disappeared without a trace two months ago have still not been found. The local police are now receiving assistance in investigating the case from..."

"Oh, no!" Adam's mother exclaimed, jumping up. "Is it really that late! I must clean at the high school today! The bus is leaving soon!"

She gulped down the rest of her coffee, cursed in Polish, stumbled out into the hallway, and slammed the bathroom door with a loud bang.

Adam watched the TV intently and ate his porridge. What help was the police going to get?

"I'm here with Detective Fredriksen in Trollheim. Is it true that you have new information for the public?"

The journalist thrust the microphone in the face of a small, gray-eyed man in an elegant, dark suit with a red tie. The man ran a finger along a thin stripe of mustache and looked important.

"That's correct!" he answered. "In hopes of getting help from the public, we're announcing that the missing girl wrote a diary..."

Noise from the hallway. Mom was apparently done in the bathroom already. Now it sounded like she was trying to tear down the wardrobe.

Adam turned up the volume on the TV. Had the man said "diary"?

Mom finally shouted "do zobaczenia" and slammed the front door.

"Goodbye," Adam automatically replied and mixed a spoonful of cocoa powder into his milk.



figenschouforlag.no

He drank eagerly.

"... in this diary, it is revealed that Silje believed one of the children at Trollheim elementary school was a vampire!"

Adam jumped, causing milk to spray out of his mouth and nose.

"What the heck! ... But if they know about Zira, why haven't they..."

"A vampire!" exclaimed the journalist with exaggerated drama. "Really?"

"Pure nonsense, of course," continued the investigator. "But an important clue! A child, possibly the same age, is walking around believing he or she is a vampire. From the entries in the diary, it seems like more than just acting or play. No, we are dealing with a deranged individual with a sick, criminal mind. A person so plagued by delusions that they walk around with fangs at school! Fake, of course. "I have an important message for everyone in Trollheim." The investigator stared straight into the camera and pointed with his finger. "Have you seen suspicious behavior? Do you have neighbors, friends, or family members who are interested in vampires? Check if your child is playing Dracula in their bedroom - because if so, we want to know about it!" Adam dropped his spoon into the half-full bowl and jumped up.

Chapter 2

More Bad News

Tobias was waiting for Adam at the bus sign, nervously pacing and biting his nails.

"Have you heard the latest news?" he asked.

Adam nodded solemnly. "Yes, the police are looking for a vampire."

Figenschou Publishing

Anitra Figenschou

anitra@figenschouforlag.no

Phone: +47 92606318

Address: Tromsogata 21, 0565 Oslo,
NORWAY



figenschouforlag.no

"I found out from my mom," said Tobias. "She barely let me go to school today."

They started walking down the road towards the school together.

"But why?" Tobias inquired.

"They've read Silje's diary."

Tobias gasped. "That's not allowed!"

Adam offered a slight smile. "They don't care about that, now that she's missing. But they don't know the vampire is Zira. Otherwise, she would have already been arrested."

"Do you think they might suspect?"

"No, they don't even believe it's a real vampire, just someone dressing up."

"Maybe Zira should take an early vacation?" suggested Tobias. "Until everything calms down?"

"Maybe... but I was also thinking that we could... you know... save Silje."

Tobias stared at Adam in horror. "Are you crazy? She's down in Helheim. Surrounded by evil trolls, draugrs, stone serpents, ice dragons, and polar bears... and... and LOKI!"

He shook his head sadly. "Besides, she might already be dead."

"We don't know that!" Adam exclaimed, throwing his arms up in frustration. "How long are we going to wait before we go looking for her?"

Tobias sighed. "I-I can't, Adam. It was a miracle we survived last time. Helheim is a terrible place."

"Yes, but think! If the police are looking for a vampire, they might actually find one: Zira! If Silje comes back, they'll stop looking. If you don't care about Silje, what about Zira? Do you want her to be imprisoned or killed? She's, our friend!"



figenschouforlag.no

Tears had formed in Tobias's eyes.

"I-I've thought about it," he barely managed to stammer. "And I-I can't. I-just can't!" Tobias wiped away the tears with his jacket sleeve and sniffled.

Adam felt ashamed.

"Tobias... I... I'm sorry. I didn't mean it like that. I know you care, and I didn't mean to pressure you. I just get so... Forget it. Let's just go to school."

"It's okay," said Tobias, pushing the roadside bushes aside. He entered the little forest path, the shortcut that passed by the old castle.

Adam was about to follow when he noticed a poster on a lamp post. Another missing poster. They were all over Trollheim. The beautiful green eyes of Silje stared back at him from the poster. It was as if she was accusing him. Why aren't you doing anything? Are you a coward?

Adam clenched his teeth and entered the woods.

Tara and Zira were waiting for them where the path passed by the old castle.

Zira was fully made up and looked like a regular girl – except for her sparkling silver hair, but that could have been dyed. And as long as she didn't smile, it was hard to see the fangs. When she spoke, most people would probably just think she had slightly crooked teeth, but no one would dare tease her about it, not after she broke the finger of the school's biggest bully.

"Bad news," said Tara.

"About the police?" Adam asked. "We know."

"No, worse."

"What then?"



figenschouforlag.no

"The teacher told Zira that if her parents don't make contact within the week, the school will have to call child services."

"Damn!" Adam kicked at a clump of heather and sighed.

"It's okay," said Zira sadly, looking down. "I knew my time as a normal girl wouldn't last."

Adam noticed a sadness in her voice that he hadn't heard before. Zira looked completely deflated... Defeated.

"This will be my last day," she said. "I'm going back to Omar, underground."

"But he's planning to move back to the surface again," said Adam.

"Well, then I'll have the cabin all to myself. Plenty of space."

Adam took her hand. It was ice-cold under the makeup hiding her unnaturally white vampire skin.

"Zira... You're one of us. We'll find a solution. I promise!"

Zira smiled. "Thank you," she said. "You're always so kind to me, but I don't think there's anything you can do this time."

They continued down the path towards the school.

As Adam emerged from the woods, he gasped.

There were three police cars parked in the parking lot!



figenschouforlag.no

Chapter 3

Surrounded by the Police

"Damn," Adam blurted out.

"Maybe they're after me," Zira said.

"No, they're probably just visiting," Adam said. "And you're full of makeup. You've fooled the teachers and the rest of the class for two months now, you can easily fool the police too—just for today."

"Yeah, it'll probably be okay," Tobias said. "They're probably just here to talk to the principal." But he didn't sound certain.

They entered the school building.

There were police at every entrance, and outside the classroom, there weren't just one, but two guards. A man and a woman, both in full uniform.

The police officers nodded and smiled as they passed by.

Adam sat down at his desk. Everyone looked nervous, even Zira, who was never nervous.

The teacher stood with the class book and checked them in. He didn't look happy at all.

"Everyone is here now," he said quietly to a small man beside him.

A chill ran down Adam's spine when he saw who it was. It was the same man who had been on TV. He was dressed in the same elegant, dark suit with the same red tie, stared at the class with the same cold, gray eyes, and ran his finger along the same silly stripe of mustache.



figenschouforlag.no

"Good morning!" the man said loudly to the class. "My name is Fredriksen!"

He snapped his fingers, and one of the guards at the door ran forward with chalk and wrote the name on the blackboard. He then took off his suit jacket and placed it on the teacher's desk. Underneath, he wore a gray vest and a white shirt.

"I've been allowed to come here today because we're looking for someone."

Everyone in the class stared at the two empty desks in the corner, Silje's and Frank's.

"Yes, indeed, it concerns the two children who disappeared," said Fredriksen. "Today we will be interviewing everyone here in the class, alphabetically by first name."

Tara raised her hand.

"Yes?"

"The police have already talked to us."

"Ha! Local police, local sloppiness," he said, shaking his head. "They spoke to all of you at once, not one by one... Besides, we have some new clues. And now you have me. Norway's best detective! I always find what I'm looking for."

The class went completely silent.

Fredriksen smiled slyly and stroked his moustache again.

Adam swallowed and cast a worried glance at Zira. She was staring at the window. Was she already thinking of escaping?

"Well... we're going to make Easter cards," the teacher said. "And while you're working on that, the police will be taking you one by one... for a little chat. Nothing to be afraid of."

"Exactly!" barked Fredriksen. "Let's start!" He ran a finger up to the top of the list he was holding. "We'll start with Adam and end with..." He let his finger slide all the way down. "Zira."



figenschouforlag.no

The investigator furrowed his brow and turned to the teacher. "Zira? That's an unusual name."

"She's new," the teacher said. "Started a couple of months ago."

"Before or after the children disappeared?"

The teacher stroked his chin, appearing to think.

"Hm... It was about the same time."

Fredriksen smiled.

"Interesting," he said. "Very interesting! But first... You!"

He stared at Adam with cold, grey eyes, like a shark might stare at a small fish right before snapping!

Adam began to sweat coldly on his hands, forehead, back; he felt trapped, damp, and cold like a fish in a net, and the shark was swimming closer...

"In there!" Fredriksen said, pointing to the door of the group room.

A police officer swung the door wide open.

Adam could see a table and a chair inside. On the table, there was a glass of water... and a pink book. Was it Silje's diary, the one they had talked about on TV? Was there something about him in it? Were they exposed?

(...)

This is the first 3 chapters of 36 chapters. On print, including one colour illustration per chapter there are 224 pages with slightly bigger font and good spacing between the lines.

Please contact publisher and editor Anita Figenschou on e-mail:

anitra@figenschouforlag.no if you want to read more of the story in English.

Figenschou Publishing
Anitra Figenschou
anitra@figenschouforlag.no
Phone: +47 92606318
Address: Tromsogata 21, 0565 Oslo,
NORWAY