

The background of the cover is a dark, atmospheric landscape. In the foreground, there is a body of water with dark, choppy waves. In the middle ground, there are several snow-covered mountains or hills. The sky is filled with dark, heavy clouds, with some light breaking through near the horizon. The overall color palette is muted, consisting of dark blues, greys, and whites.

SHADOW WATERS

a novel

Reto Koller

Where light and shadow unite, deep in the Northern heart of winter. Where amber glowing mountains are framed by dark fjords, where there is water, so still and mysterious, forever sheltering the souls of the lost.

All characters in this book are fictitious and a product of the author's imagination. Some may find it odd that complete strangers are addressing each other by their first names, but this has been actually common practice in Norway since approx. 1970. The king is the only one whose surname is used regularly.

Some parts of the story take place in WWII during which Tromsø played an important role for the German troops. This fact is not explained in the book. Additionally, the legal and social conditions in Norway and Norwegian orphanages have been freely interpreted by the author.

The places described in the story, however, are real and so incredibly breathtaking that an author's words could never be enough to do justice to their beauty.

Pronunciation:

Ø = [œ]

Å = [o:]

Sound: a seagate

Fjord: a long, narrow body of water reaching inland

I dedicate this book to my daughter Emily.

Your story has just begun...

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Prologue

Tromsø, Norway, January 1941

It was one of those January nights, where you could wander the streets for hours without encountering a single soul. A few drunken sailors, looking for the way back to their ships, were the only ones out in the city that night. The air was cuttngly cold, the ground was frozen. There was a complete and utter silence, no birds, no ship engines, not even the slightest hiss of wind. The witching hour had long passed and inside their homes people were sleeping the sleep of the innocent.

Any other night someone might have spotted the candlelight in the window of one of the houses. But not on that night. Inside, a woman was sitting at a desk. She was staring at a piece of paper in front of her. Her hands were tensely clutching the fountain pen that she was using to write on the piece of paper. Her eyes sparkled with the flickering light of the candle and her lips were trembling. The woman took a few deep breaths and with the flick of her wrist signed her name at the end of the document. After neatly placing the letter on top of an envelope she just sat there for a while and stared at it, tears welling in her eyes. Never before in her entire life had it been so difficult to find the right words for what needed to be said. She did not know how long she had been sitting there, but it had to be an eternity. At first it had felt like the words had refused to appear on the paper because an invisible hand was holding her fountain pen to keep it from moving. It had felt as if she

needed to be stopped from making the worst mistake of her life.

But now, as she was sitting in front of the broken pieces of her life, she understood that she had poured a little bit of her soul into every word. As if she had sold it to the devil himself, sentence by sentence.

The sadness that had taken over her entire body was now almost impossible to bear but there was also a glimpse of hope. Hope for a better life. Not for her, but for her daughter. She wanted to save her, wanted to know that she would be safe. She had spent many sleepless nights wandering around the house like a restless ghost. A ghost that was looking for an escape from this world. But in spite of all the pondering, she had not been able to find a solution to her dilemma. The inevitable was going to become reality all too soon and like a destructive storm that could not be stopped by anybody, it knew no mercy.

A sob tore from her throat as she folded up the light brown paper and inserted it into the envelope. Her gaze fell on her little daughter. She was lying next to her on the bed, all wrapped up in blankets, staring up at her mother with those steel-grey beady eyes. This little creature, so helpless and innocent, so perfect and pure, had no idea about the fate that awaited her. The woman could feel her heart shattering in her chest and she knew that she would never be able to recover from this night.

Disgusted with herself, she turned away from the child and threw on her coat before leaving the house with the bundled-up baby in her arms. Standing in the door, she looked around, just to make sure that she wasn't being watched. Then she stepped out into the street and started walking briskly. It was not long before her trail was lost in the dark alleys of the city. Nobody saw her creeping through the shadows of the houses, constantly making sure that she would not be discovered. The woman was holding the child close to her body, protecting her from the elements and

other dangers that were lurking in the dark. The little girl did not seem to sense the fear that was surrounding her. She was sleeping peacefully in her mother's arms, not knowing that her life was about to take a turn into a completely different direction.

The woman suddenly stopped in front of a tall building across from the port. She glanced up at the facade. There was a dim light in one of the rooms but other than that the house seemed deserted.

The girl whined faintly and her mother peeled away the many layers of warming blankets to uncover her precious little face. One last time she gently caressed her daughter's rosy cheeks and traced the contours of her tiny nose with her index finger. She touched the softness of her ears and ran her fingers through the little girl's hair. When she finally placed a kiss on her daughter's warm lips, the woman's eyes filled with tears. Feeling exhausted and defeated, her legs gave in and she fell to the ground. Silent tears soon turned into loud sobs until her body shook.

The bundled-up baby flinched and in an attempt not to scare her, her mother desperately tried to calm herself. But in all of her misery she knew that there was not an ounce of strength left in her body.

With a desperate last effort she got back onto her feet and checked to make sure her child was still asleep. Then the woman climbed up the few stairs to the door where she stood, hesitating. She was fighting with herself, with her emotions, with her body, so desperately screaming to rest. While a million things were racing through her head, she just stood there, paralysed. A thick wall of fog came over her, threatened to crush her, made it almost impossible to think clearly.

She looked down at her little daughter one last time. The girl had woken up from her slumber and was regarding her mother with those large, piercing eyes. Her gaze ripped out what was left of the woman's heart. She gently squeezed

her child, then placed her next to the door, before balling her hand into a fist and loudly banging on the wooden door. She then stormed off into the night, tears streaming down her face, more ghost than person.

Tromsø, January 1951

Magnus Olsson was sitting on a stack of newspapers, which had taken him all day to collect. Now, after nightfall, he had carried them onto the premises of a fish processing plant. With a blank look on his face he stared into the fire's crackling flames. Cold like never before, he held his hands to the fire in a desperate attempt to combat the numbness of his fingers. His feet also felt like ice blocks. He hoped that by wiggling his toes he would be able to warm them up some, but his shoes had seen too many winters and were no longer able to keep his feet warm. The winter hat, stolen from a clothesline, was a few sizes too small and barely covered his ears. Magnus routinely cursed the coldness of the night, especially on those nights when he was unable to find a warm place to sleep. Today he had planned to spend the night in the factory's old tool shed as usual. But some idiot had locked him out, so with no other choice than to light a fire outside, he hoped that the night would be over quickly. The only problem was the nights were too *damn* long right now.

Bored, he looked out into the *sound* and reminisced about his many years of living on the street; how he was fighting for survival each and every night, never sure what the next morning would bring. He could not even remember the last time he slept in a real bed. That had to be back when his wife was still alive. How long ago was that again? Thirty years? Maybe thirty-five? He didn't know. The rough life on the street had become too familiar, so familiar in fact, that he had forgotten all about the usual comforts of a normal life. And maybe it was better that way.

Suddenly high-pitched, bloodcurdling screams broke through the silence and Magnus's train of thought came to a crashing halt. He peered into the dimly lit factory yard.

The screams appeared to come from children.

But how was that even possible at this time of night!

Completely puzzled, his tired eyes tried looking around in search of the chilling sound's source. And then, out of nowhere, a girl appeared. She was running, dressed only in pyjamas, across the factory yard, looking back over her shoulder in the direction she had just come from. Even though Magnus was unable to see her face in the distance by the way she was moving, he could tell that she was running away from something.

When she reached the dock retaining wall, the girl finally stopped and looked out over the water. She was holding an oblong object in her hand but Magnus was unable to see what it was.

What was a little girl doing at the *sound* at 1 am, wearing nothing more than pyjamas, he wondered.

He was about to get up when a second girl, also in pyjamas, came into sight. She was running as well. He rubbed his eyes then looked down at the bottle of cheap liquor in his hand. When he looked up again he saw the second girl attacking the first one. They both fell to the ground, pounding each other with their fists and screaming like savages. Unable to move, Magnus watched the bizarre scene from afar. He had to do something, anything. But the stiff muscles in his body refused to obey his command. Finally he managed to get to his feet and walked as quickly as his old body would let him towards the two brawlers. Halfway there, he noticed that one of the girls had picked up the oblong object that had fallen to the ground. She raised it over her head and with all of her might whacked the other girl over the head with it. The girl collapsed and fell over the retaining wall into the *sound*.

Magnus could not believe his eyes. "Damn!", he shouted and started running.

The girl who had struck the other one looked up, startled. For a moment she just stood there, then quickly took off into the night.

"Hey dammit, wait, you can't just run off!"

Magnus didn't know whether he should chase after the fleeing girl or help the other one out of the water. He decided to do the latter. His legs were shaking as he kneeled down and looked over the wall into the darkness of the *sound*. But all he could see were waves, black as oil, that kept washing against the wall. Panic-stricken, he looked around over the water trying to find a trace of the girl in the darkness but deep inside he knew that the water had swallowed her up and would never release her again.

"Damn!" He kneeled by the wall for a while longer hoping that the girl would resurface. Five minutes went by, then he got back on his feet, crossed his arms in front of his freezing body and went back to his stack of newspapers. He was counting on the fire as well as the cheap hooch to warm him up.

Chapter 1

Tromsø, December 2014

Ørjan Aasen was relieved to close his notebook. He threw some papers into his backpack and left the university's crowded lecture hall. Once again, professor Stevensen's lecture in historical linguistics had been pure torture. His monotonous voice usually sent his students to sleep. In fact, it happened quite frequently that students would doze off while the rest of them fought a seemingly hopeless fight against the urge to close their eyes. Especially this time of year when the polar night brought nearly twenty hours of darkness, these types of lessons were the last thing anybody needed.

In a daze Ørjan, stepped out of the university building and took a deep breath, which filled his lungs with revitalizing, cool air. It had started snowing and a biting wind blew the dancing snowflakes through the urban street alleys. Pedestrians, brave enough to be out in this weather, had their jacket collars pulled up all the way to their noses. He brushed a strand of blond hair away from his eyes, put on his warm wool winter hat and tucked his medium length hair into it. He was just about to start walking when someone brushed past. It was a girl he knew from the lecture hall.

She turned to look over her shoulder and shot him a mischievous look. "Bye, Ørjan. See you tomorrow!", she said with a smile, before she disappeared around the corner of the building.

Ørjan was puzzled. Staring in the direction the girl had just vanished, he thought to himself that he had no idea what her name was. How she knew *his* was an absolute mystery to him. A pleasant feeling spread through his body but he suppressed it immediately.

As if he had just received a subliminal message, his thoughts turned to Svenja. He really needed to call her to cancel their plans for the night since he had just found out that he was unexpectedly scheduled to come in to work. Ørjan wished he had already got the call over with. He could already hear Svenja's angry voice demanding an explanation. But his excuses hardly ever found Svenja's approval anyway.

With a sigh he pulled up the collar of his jacket and headed towards the city centre. The cold air outside helped lift the haze he was in. Taking deep, refreshing breaths his stomach once again reminded him that it was already 4pm and he was starving. The last time he ate anything had been this morning around 8am and his stomach had been growling throughout the afternoon lectures.

Should he get a bite to eat in the city or rather go home and raid the fridge? Provided there was anything left to eat in there. Either way, he did not have all too much time left to eat. At 6pm he was supposed to start his shift as a waiter at the little Italian spot where he worked on the side.

He stopped in front of a small café down by the port and looked through the window. Inside the brightly lit room he saw a counter with a glass front. Behind the glass he noticed a display of several mouth-watering sandwiches. Technically he was supposed to watch his spending but the thought of going home and cooking an actual dinner was not very appealing. That made it easy for him to decide. Once inside of the café, he immediately had to unzip his jacket because the temperature difference made him break out in sweat. The café was rather crowded and therefore fairly noisy. In the corner he spotted a group of camera-

toting tourists who were listening to a woman going over the next few places on their itinerary.

Ørjan did not feel like having his dinner surrounded by all this noise. He much preferred a quiet corner, somewhere outside. A few minutes later he stepped back out into the street, sandwich in hand. He found a bench by the water. After taking his first bite he got distracted by two boats. They were moving slowly while their captains carefully maneuvered them out of two pretty tight spots. They drove off and left the port together, destination unknown. By now it had stopped snowing. Ørjan was watching the seagulls. Screeching loudly, they kept circling the docked boats in a circular flight pattern.

He was thinking about the night ahead. He would have much rather stayed home to watch a movie or curl up with a good book. But he would have quite possibly ended up just lying on the bed staring at the ceiling for hours on end anyway, just thinking about his life. He highly doubted that spending his evening this way would have been a great choice. At least the busy job at the restaurant was bound to distract him from his dark thoughts.

Someone took a seat next to him and he was hit by an awful stench. Ørjan looked up from his dinner and regarded his neighbour who appeared to be a homeless person. Two shopping bags were placed at his feet, probably filled with everything the man owned. He was huffing and puffing like a locomotive and snot was dripping from his nose. On his head he was wearing a hat with more holes than actual wool. His coat, on the other hand, looked warm, but filthy and worn out. He had an unkempt beard and his skin had the appearance of an old leather jacket.

The homeless guy must have felt Ørjan's gaze and turned to him without warning. Startled, Ørjan gave him a quick nod.

"Hey there, how's that sandwich?", the drifter asked in a gravelly voice.

“Pretty good”, Ørjan responded.

The man leaned in closer and with that, Ørjan’s sensitive nose was assaulted with another wave of highly unpleasant odour.

“What’s in the middle there, between those two slices of bread?”, the man wanted to know.

“Tuna, onions, tomatoes and lettuce.”

The man licked his lips while staring at the sandwich in Ørjan’s hand. Ørjan was fairly certain that the last time the man had some actual food must have been hours, if not days, ago. He was still hungry but he felt sorry for the old man. He could not imagine what it was like to live out on the street in this type of cold.

Ørjan looked over at the man who was still fixated with his dinner.

“Do you want to have the rest of this?”, Ørjan asked him.

The man shot him a surprised look but his eyes sparkled with delight. His mouth curved up into a smile as he reached for the food. Ørjan handed over the sandwich before also taking off his hat and giving it to the homeless man as well. The man's smile grew even wider when he accepted the godsent gifts.

“Thank you, son”, the homeless guy said. Then he threw his old hat in one of the bags and enjoyed the dinner he had just earned himself.

Ørjan was starting to feel chilled to the marrow despite how warm he was dressed. He got up and wished the man all the best then walked stiffly over to the bus stop.

It was not long before he entered the single-family home through the basement door. The house was located at the southern tip of the island. Finding this basement studio apartment had been pure luck on his part. Two years ago, when he had just moved from Trondheim to Tromsø to study literature and escape his past, he served his nowlandlord a pizza at the restaurant. That was how they had initially struck up a conversation. He mentioned to the man how

tired he was of living with loud and messy roommates but that as a student, he could not afford to live on his own. The restaurant guest must have had pity on him because to Ørjan's surprise he then proceeded to offer him to move into the studio apartment in the basement of his house for the same amount of money he paid for the room he was staying in at the time. The studio had been empty for years, he said, and he would love to see a new tenant move in. Touched by the stranger's generosity Ørjan accepted immediately despite the fact that he did not have the slightest idea what the apartment looked like. But anything was better than his roommate situation. And that was how he ended up in the swanky single-family home by the water.

He had been twenty-one back then and had just embarked on a new journey. It had been his intention at the time to start all over again, which was a sad thing to admit at his young age. Regardless, he had needed a fresh start because staying at home in Trondheim would have suffocated him. So he had left the only place he had ever known, wanting to forget and find a new purpose. Ever since the incident two and a half years ago nothing had ever been the same. Even if he was one day going to find the guts to try and get back to his old life, and that was a big if, he knew the door would be locked and the key way out of reach.

The images from that cold night in February held him hostage. He just could not get them out of his head.

Once again his thoughts went back to the past. In his mind Ørjan saw himself holding his newly obtained driver's licence and talking his brother into driving to the city with him so they could celebrate. A vision of Hendrik downing countless bottles of beer, getting more and more intoxicated by the minute, was burnt into his brain. Once Ørjan finally had had enough of his brother's foolish behavior, they got into the car to go back home, Hendrik sitting in the passenger seat continuing his shenanigans. Ørjan, on the

other hand, needed to focus all of his attention on the icy road ahead and could not afford any distractions.

He had warned his brother multiple times to let him concentrate on his driving but to no avail.

In a left-hand bend Ørjan lost control over the vehicle and the car crashed full speed into a streetlight. Hendrik was dead on impact. Both brothers had to be cut out of the wreckage by the fire department. Ørjan's injuries had only been minor so that he was able to leave the hospital after only one day.

One week later on a hazy Friday afternoon his brother Hendrick was laid to rest at the cemetery down by the fjord.

Since then Ørjan always felt that his life was stuck in a downward spiral. The relationship with his parents had always been complicated. That had started way *before* the accident. Hendrik had been in the same boat as him when it came to their parents. Since he could remember their life had been a sequence of social engagements, cocktail parties, weekends in the country and business meetings. Their father was chairman of a well-known textile company's board and their mother a surgeon at Trondheim Hospital. Their busy schedules did not leave much time for their own children. From an early age the boys had been on their own a lot which had caused Hendrik to act out, especially in school. Hendrik had suffered more under the difficult family dynamic than Ørjan had. Ørjan knew that Hendrik was craving his parents' love and attention, which he was trying to force his parents to show him by playing pranks and getting in trouble at school. But despite all the issues he had caused himself, the desired effect never happened. The absence of parental affection meant that Hendrik and Ørjan grew closer and formed an unbreakable bond with each other. A connection that many people were envious of. Even when they were little they had been inseparable. It didn't matter when or where, they always played with each other and they knew they would be ok as

long as they were together. Every waking minute they spent outdoors whether they were on a boat out on the fjord, cross-country skiing or fishing. When Hendrik was sick it was not his mother who sat by his bedside nursing him back to health. It was Ørjan. And the other way around. The brothers had no choice but to figure out what it meant to be on their own. And they had been fairly young when they learned it too. Ørjan vaguely remembered an incident when they were about nine or ten years old. It was winter and the two boys went to the river not too far from their house, to fish. It had been snowing a lot, so the icy ground next to the water had been turned into a slippery field of slush. Hendrik paid for the fact that he hadn't paid attention for a mere second, when he tripped and fell in. In the water his clothes immediately got so heavy that they were pulling him under. Ørjan did not hesitate, not even for a second. He ripped his clothes off and jumped into the icy water. With whatever strength he had left in his body, he just managed to pull his brother back onto dry land. Freezing and completely soaked, they hurried home but their parents were nowhere to be found. Huddled together they warmed up in front of the fireplace both well aware of the fact that Ørjan had just saved his brother's life.

After this incident the two made a pact to forever be there for one another, no matter what kind of curved balls life may throw at them.

And they had lived by that code until that fateful night when the flame of Hendrick's life had been extinguished way too soon. As a result Ørjan's entire world had come crashing down. The eternal bond between the two brothers had forever been broken and Ørjan felt that it was his fault and his alone. Losing one of their sons had been a devastating blow to his parents as well. It probably helped them realize the mistakes they had made along the way. But instead of being there for Ørjan and helping him get over his guilt, they accused him of driving too fast, even driving

recklessly. As it turned out, however, the police report later showed that that simply had not been the case. Ørjan also did not have the least bit of alcohol in his system. But that didn't help him deal with the loss or his own blame he had been harbouring ever since.

His parents, too, changed after the tragedy. There was constant arguing going on between them until finally his mother and father started taking turns not coming home at night. They announced their divorce after an incredibly toxic five months of marital hell. Ørjan moved in with his father but their relationship did not improve. Neither did the one he had with his mother. All three of them were doing their own thing and there was little interaction between them. After two years Ørjan made the decision to move out of his father's house to start a new life up north. That was how he had ended up in Tromsø. His father had not held back about warning him that being on his own would not be easy and that Ørjan should not make the mistake of counting on him for financial support but Ørjan didn't care. For his fresh start he did not want to depend on his parents anyway. Now he had his own place his grades were typically above average and he had been fortunate enough to land a lucrative job at a popular Italian restaurant. Although there was not much flexibility in his budget, the money he earned there barely kept him afloat.

In his new surroundings the memories of his brother flared up less frequently than had been the case in his hometown. Here every walk he took did not serve as a constant reminder of his childhood memories. Here he could fish in different rivers and take boat rides in different waters. The mountains had a different colour and the clouds on the horizon were different too. Brighter somehow. But still, forgetting Hendrik was, of course, impossible. There wasn't a day when he did not see his brother's face in front of him with that gaping cut on his forehead, the blood running down the side of his cheek and the empty stare of his dead,

cloudy eyes. There was not a city in the world he could move to that would ever be able to make these images go away.

For months after the accident he hadn't managed to set foot into another car, let alone get behind the wheel himself. It had felt like an impossible task. It took until the end of the year before he was able to sit in the driver's seat again, turn the key and drive off, and he still broke into a cold sweat while doing it. The whole procedure cost him such an incredible amount of strength that after only a few metres he was forced to pull over to the side. Blinded by his tears he was barely able to make out the road in front of him. His legs were shaking as if he had just faced an extremely challenging mountain hike. It was not easy but as time went by, he slowly got used to driving again and that meant he regained some of his confidence. However, even today, he still could not get behind the wheel without taking a deep breath and focusing all of his attention on the task at hand, the journey in the car. On a regular basis he conjured up the images of that night, even if he told himself over and over that this time, he would just start the car and go. Once he managed to snap out of his mental haze he often felt too exhausted and too weak still to go anywhere by car. He was lucky that Svenja was so understanding towards his mental block and therefore took over the part of being his chauffeur, whenever they were out together.

After Ørjan hopped into the shower, got changed and had a pretty uncomfortable phone conversation with Svenja, he noticed that he had just missed his bus. If he waited for the next one he knew he would be showing up late for work. Annoyed with himself, he left the studio apartment, got into his car and experienced the same ritual as so many times before. After three seemingly endless minutes he was finally able to put the car into gear and so he rolled out of the driveway. To distract himself his mind went back to the

phone call with Svenja. Once again she had demonstrated that she did not quite support Ørjan's job.

She had been looking forward to their dinner together and now she was getting stood up by him yet again.

As bad as that made him feel, what exactly was he supposed to do? He needed this job. Svenja was one to talk. Her father was well off and her parents gave her anything she wanted. He sighed loudly. How was it possible that their relationship had become so difficult lately? He realized that he was neglecting her but right now there was not much he could change about his current situation. Another issue between them was that Svenja did not stop bringing up the topic of having kids. Sure, they were both still pretty young, but soon after meeting her, Svenja had made it a point to tell him that she had always dreamed of becoming a mother before reaching the age of twenty-five. Even though Ørjan had known this since they first started going out, he had been so in love with the girl that his mind had refused to acknowledge this fact. He, for his part, never really had the urge to seriously consider kids. First of all, they were way too young. And secondly there was another important reason why it had not really been on his radar: his brother's passing and his parent's divorce had damaged his sense of family so tremendously, that he could not imagine having children at this point. Was he even capable of giving them the kind of love and affection they deserved? His parents had never taught him, so he did not have a clear picture of what it was supposed to look like, feel like. So how would he even know how to treat his kids, how to do right by them? He was too scared to repeat the same mistakes his parents had made when raising Hendrik and him. He remembered how much they had suffered as kids and he could not possibly subject his own son or daughter to that. At this point of his life he simply was not in the position to make a decision regarding his future when it came to having children. Svenja knew how he felt. Therefore, their dates

often ended in arguments. Ørjan was not as sure about his feelings towards her as he had been at the beginning of their relationship. It was a shame really, because things between them had started out so promising. He still remembered the first time he laid eyes on her. It was orientation day at the university when they were both just about to begin their college experience. Back then he was looking for the room the event was supposed to be held in and couldn't find it. So he decided to ask the first person he saw for directions. Since the girl was just as lost as him, they went on to try and find it together. That was how they started talking and even ended up sitting next to each other during the presentation. After the event was over, they went to grab a coffee and Ørjan became even more fascinated by the girl's conversation. He loved the way she talked, so intelligently and full of life. So full of plans for the future. He enjoyed hearing her talk about her family, that was so fundamentally different from anything he had ever known. And over the course of several weeks during which they met regularly, their young relationship blossomed into the love and affection he had missed his entire life. For the first time in two years his heavy heart was a little lighter and there was room for other thoughts and images in his head. Images that pushed his brother's bloodied face to the back of his mind. And he was unbelievably thankful for that because when it had all started between them he had not been entirely sure that he should embark on this journey with her. It was not long before Svenja noticed that he preferred listening to *her* speak rather than talking himself. When she confronted him about it he finally ended up telling her about Hendrik. Immediately Svenja had been extremely supportive while also giving him space when he needed it. But the conversations with her really helped him process what he had been through. Sometimes he even felt a glimmer of hope. Hope that his wounds may eventually

heal. But in the end his deeply rooted feelings of guilt never really went away.

Now, two years had gone by and they were not on the same page when it came to their future. Svenja was thinking about starting a family, Ørjan, on the other hand, couldn't manage to think ahead as far as next year. They were two people who had slowly drifted apart from each other like two sheets of floating ice in the Arctic Sea.

Chapter 2

It was early evening when Ørjan arrived at the restaurant. As soon as he walked through the door he was met by his boss who explained that the delivery driver had called in sick and that Ørjan would be required to fill in for him. Ørjan just stared at him in utter disbelief. A burning heat flooded his body while at the same time he felt cold sweat running down his back. His boss, who was running around in circles like a chicken with its head cut off, did not detect Ørjan's distress. He just handed him a sheet of paper with several addresses scribbled on it and pointed him to the kitchen where he was supposed to pick up the containers with the food he was meant to deliver. Ørjan stared down at the grease-stained paper in his hand, unable to move.

His boss came running back towards him. He looked at Ørjan with a big question mark on his face. "What are you waiting for? Does it not have the addresses on it?" He looked at the paper in Ørjan's hand. "This has everything you need. So, let's go, grab the food and get going." He picked up the delivery boxes, handed them to him, then pushed him in the direction of the door. Ørjan, in a trance, stumbled out of the door and stopped in front of his car, completely at a loss.

Was this really happening right now?

Did his boss really want him to drive around the city all night, going from address to address, making food deliveries?

He looked back over his shoulder to check if his boss was still standing by the door but he had already been drawn back into the hustle and bustle of the kitchen. Ørjan shook his head and opened the driver's side door. He put the boxes down on the passenger seat and got behind the wheel. After a couple of deep breaths that were meant to have a calming effect he started the car. Snow had started falling and Ørjan felt incredibly tense when he was driving to make the first delivery on his list. The first address was located in the general vicinity of Tromsø bridge. Once he dropped off the fish dish the customer had ordered, he drove back over the bridge with his windows down. On the other side he looked for an address in the neighbourhood of the Storsteinen cable car station. The houses in this area were larger and more luxurious than most houses anywhere else in the city. It was clear that this was the part of town where the financially more fortunate resided. The address on the paper read Fløyvegen 40. Ørjan ended up locating the street one block to the left of the cable car station. At a walking pace he drove past the majestic mansions so that he would not miss number 40. When he had almost reached the end of the street, where all he could see were the trees of the adjacent forest in front of him, his gaze fell on a huge house to his left. On its facade, the number he had been searching for. The car rolled to a halt and he snatched the food container from the passenger seat and walked up to the expensive-looking double front door. There he found a note, on which someone had scribbled the words: *Knock on the window with the light in it at the back of the house.* Very strange he thought to himself.

Puzzled, he followed the instructions and walked around the building. There he saw, just like the note had predicted, a single window with the lights on inside. He peered through the glass. Due to the arctic temperatures ice flowers had formed on the windowpanes, so it was difficult to see inside at first. With his face pressed against the glass to get a