Lars Mæhle and Cathrine Sandmæl (ill.)

**Alba and Finito: The Mystery of the Silent Parrot**

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Portraits p. 10-11

The characters: Alba and Finito. Dad Truls. Dad Emil.

Petrus Langdalen, Hotel Baron. Hampus Svensson, animal lover. Siren, receptionist. Robert, Spa manager. Rannveig, janitor. Belinda Mosletten, YouTuber.

Chapter 1

P. 11

- Hello?
No-one responded.
I slowly lifted my torch.
A narrow flight of stone stairs wound its way down the dark hillside, before disappearing in the pine woods by the fjord – probably fifty or so meters ahead of me.
I swallowed.
The thing was: A few moments ago, a shadow-like figure tip-toed down that flight of stairs carrying a huge, square-shaped thing. And disappeared into the woods.
Many things would suggest that this person was a dangerous thief. How could I know that, you may wonder?

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You’ll learn more about that soon.
- Hello-o? I called again. – Anyone there?
- Woof!
I felt a warm tickle.
- Yeah, I know that *you* are here, Finito.
I bent down and ruffled my dog’s black labrador fur.
His tail whipped against my shins.
I took the small, black scrap of fabric out of my pocket and held it up to Finito’s snout. Then I gave him the command he loved to hear more than anything else:
- Go bananas!

It was probably not a great idea. “Go bananas” means the same as “track”, you see. (It’s kind of a thing Finito and I have.)

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And indeed: Immediately, Finito shoved his snout into the stairs and pulled his leash so hard that I had to follow.
We zoomed downwards.
- Not so fast, Finito! I shouted.
- NOT SO FAST!
To no avail.
We half-ran, half-stumbled down the stairs in a headlong rush.

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At the same time, a thousand questions flew through my head.
One of them was: Why hadn’t I let dad Truls know I left the hotel?

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And especially this one: Why in the flipping flip hadn’t I called the police?
I know! Really stupid!

But then the thief would’ve escaped, right?
And also, I didn’t have a cellphone.
And also-also: By now it would’ve been too late anyway.
Finito and I dashed down the stone stairs in the dark. Faster and faster. Until we suddenly dove into the trees.
- Aaah!
Gradually, the forest grew less dense. And finally, we could hear the crunching sound of pebbles beneath our feet.

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We had reached the beach.
Ahead of us, the fjord lay quiet and dark. From across the bay, blinking lights reached us from a cabin or two among the trees.
Finitio pulled powerfully at his leash again.
We scampered along the beach at a frisk pace. I knew it all too well: Finito had was on the tail of the shadow we’d seen by the hotel.
Soon, the thief would be exposed.
- Woof!
Finito had stopped, wagging his tail vigorously.

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I gave him a treat and lifted my torch. We were standing right behind a large boatshed.
I clenched my jaw. And then I tip-toed along the wall.
Finito pulled his leash again.
- Careful! I whispered.
Finito calmed down a little.
We sneaked around the corner of the shed, slowly, slowly – and arched toward the fjord to get a better look.

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The door of the shed was pulled up, and on the wall beside it was one of those electrical door-opener buttons. We were standing about five meters away, with the open door fully in sight. Still, we could hardly see a thing in there, because it was almost entirely dark.
Carefully, I lifted my torch, the wavering strip of light illuminating the inside of the boatshed …
I jumped a mile!
Because there, all the way over by the back wall, was the figure with their back turned towards me. By a boat loaded with a painting I recognized all too well.
It was a person in an all-weather jacket with the hood up. Now, the shadow slowly turned to face me. And stared right at me.
The face was gradually revealed by the light from the torch. Finally, I recognized them.
As hiver ran down my spine.

p. 19

- What? Is it you?
At first, a low snicker was the only reply I received.
- Alba?
- Woof!
- And Finto?
The snicker grew in strength to an evil laugh.

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- And what do you two suppose you can do about this? The figure in the boatshed laughed. - Arrest me?
Their gaze hardened.
And yeah, I admit it: I was really scared!
But right then, I had a crazy idea. It was possibly the worst idea ever in the history of the universe.
But after all, better than nothing.
Maybe.
Slowly, I put my torch down, and snuck my fingers unnoticeably into the pocket of my hoodie …

But before I let you know what happened next, let me tell you how this day – which was supposed to be a chill Friday eating tacos at home with dad Truls – turned into everything but that.

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OK. Let’s actually start at the beginning.

Chapter 2

p. 22

Earlier that same afternoon:

Dad Emil’s car slowly came to a halt in the parking space. He turned the key.
The engine died down.
Finito uttered a soft “ruff” from his cage in the back of the car. I threw a sideways glance and caught a glimpse of dad Emil’s eyes.
He was nervous. Like, really nervous.
- Hm, do you know which house it is, Alba?
Good question. The only thing I knew at this point, was that dad Truls lived in one of them.

p. 23

If you absolutely must know, my parents have just split up. And to make a long and quite shitty story short: Because I didn’t want to choose between them (impossible, right?), we decided that I should live every other week with dad Emi in the old house and dad Truls in the new house.

p. 24

This was the first week with dad Truls in the new house.
We exited the car, and dad Emil opened the trunk lid.
Finito came bounding towards me. I gave him a bear hug.
- We’ll be happy here, ok?

p. 25

I felt a sting in my belly when I said it. How on earth was I supposed to be happy about living in two different places from week to week? With only one dad at a time?
Nevertheless, Finito gave a happy little howl. His tail wagged back and forth.
I got up to my feet and saw dad Truls approaching us with quick steps. I knew right along: He’d stood by his window, waiting for us to arrive.
For a long time.
But he was so … strange. Like he didn’t know where to put his arms. They were waving all over the place.
Dad Truls gave me a hug, before pushing me away a little bit, as if to look at me properly. Then he tried to smile.
He only barely managed it.

p. 26

- Welcome, Alba. I’m so glad you’re here. It’s been weird to … live in a new house …
He glanced at dad Emil.
- … without you two.
Dad Emil cleared his throat.
- Maybe we shouldn’t …
Dad Truls raised his hand.
- I’m sorry.

p. 27

Both of my dads stood and stared at the ground for a bit. It grew super quiet. Like, the incredibly painful kind of quiet. My head grew warm, too, and I could hardly breathe.
Finally, I kind of tipped forwards.
- I’ve learned Finito a new trick! Do you want to see it?
- Yes! Said dad Truls and dad Emil at the same time.

p. 28

- Woof! Said Finito.
I found a treat in my pocket and held it up in the air. Finito looked at it eagerly, but sat down. His tail wagged slightly.
Then, I slowly backed up, all the while keeping the treat visible in my hand.
After backing up about five meters, I stopped. Finito sat salivating, his back entirely straight, almost like a soldier.
While I aimed. And aimed. And aimed.
Then I threw the treat. It flew in a perfect arch, kind of staying afloat for a bit, before Finito leaped up, jaws wide.

Chapter 3

p. 30

Well, yeah.
The treat was supposed to land in his mouth, of course. The thing is that Finito is quite clumsy. The treat hit him on the snout and bounced over his head instead. When Finito landed, he stood confused and looked in all directions for a while until he finally spotted the treat nearby on the asphalt. He scurried over super quickly, snatched the treat and gave paw. I ran over and grabbed his paw, shook it a little, stepped back and said:
- Yes!
Only then did he gobble up the treat.

p. 31

- Woof!
My dads clapped their hands and whooped and whistled.
- Wow, cool trick, Alba! dad Truls cheered. I sighed and petted Finito a bit extra. Deep down, I’d hoped that he – for once – would be able to land the trick. We have practiced about a thousand times, but without nailing it yet.

p. 32-33

Oh well. At least dad Truls looked much happier than earlier. Now he bent down and ruffled Finito’s fur.
- Hello to you too, Finito! So pleased that you’ll live here with us!
- Yeah, thank you both for looking after Finito, said dad Emil and scratched Finito behind the ear as well.

As it happens, Finito is dad Emil’s dog, you see. Finito used to work as a police dog, and dad Emil is a police officer and a dog handler.
Finito has actually helped the police catch thieves and find drugs and stuff.
The thing is that he has a really good sense of smell.
Now, he’s retired as a police dog and is quite old. I have asked dad Emil if he was just as clumsy when he was a police dog, but then he laughs and tells me that Finito was the best police dog in the entire police station. Until he grew so afraid of drug searching on slippery floors (I know, really weird! But Finito is super scared of losing his grip on slippery floors!) that he had to retire.
Too me, the most important thing anyway is that he is cute. VERY cute.

p. 34

And now, Finito is my dog, kind of. And since everything turned out so sad, Finito gets to stay with me – all the time – no matter which dad’s house I’m living at.
Which is lucky! I couldn’t bear to be without Finito, too.
- All right, dad Emil said in a really weird voice. – I suppose I should get going. Have a nice stay, Alba!
Then he hugged me really tight.

p. 35

But at the same time, he was all soft and shaky, even if he is a though and super strong police officer.
Then he walked off, his shoulders drooping.
After he climbed into the car, I could see him waving through the window.
The engine started.
We stayed put waving and waving until the car disappeared behind a bend in the road.
Dad Truls’ slowly lowered his hand. He sighed and turned to me.
- Are you ready for tacos, Alba?
I nodded. But I felt weird. For the first time ever, I was going to live only with dad Truls, without dad Emil. It was incredibly sad, really, and … different.
Yeah. My whole body was crawling with feelings pulling in all directions.

p. 36

Dad Truls smiled a careful smile.
- Come here, I’ll show you your new home.
We went into the house.
Once inside, I stood looking about. It wasn’t really very home-y. Only … empty.
Dad Truls’ cardboard boxes stood stacked everywhere. There were no pictures on the walls yet.
But I only took a deep breath and went further into the house.

Chapter 4

As you’ve already discovered, this turned into everything but a quiet Friday night in, and it all started when we sat down for dinner.
I noticed immediately that dad Truls wasn’t his usual self. He did make tacos and stuff, almost like normal. But still, he was acting really weird. He tried telling jokes, but they weren’t funny. He put on his apron backwards, dropped the salad on the floor. He hardly listened as I spoke.
He too was probably afraid of everything that had changed, just like me.
Finally he plopped down at the dining table and drew his breath deeply.

p. 39

- Tortilla?
I nodded and grabbed the tortilla at the top of the heap, and started loading it with veggies and cheese and stuff from the surrounding plates and platters. Out of the corner of my eye, I noticed dad Truls’ fingers tapping.
- Oh shucks, should we put on some animal videos while we eat, Alba? Just like the olden days?
I smiled.

p. 40

- Yeah, let’s watch Belinda Mosletten’s dog videos! She and Doggy know so many fun tricks.
Dad Truls raised an eyebrow. – Doggy?
I nodded vigorously.
- Yep, that’s her dog. All the girls in my class LOVE it! Some of the boys too! And I’ve taught Finito plenty of tricks from those videos.
- Well, let’s do that, then! Dad Truls said and turned on the tv with the remote control, before searching for the YouTube app.
Soon, Belinda Mosletten and Doggy were performing their tricks. Doggy was a light-coloured Pomeranian, he was quite clumsy and cute, almost a little bit like Finito. Dad Truls laughed as well, in between chewing tacos, until he suddenly said:

p. 41

- I think she’s putting on a bit of an air, that Belinda Mosletten.
I glanced at him.
- Putting on an air? How?
It looked like dad regretted the comment a little. But there was no going back on it now.
- I mean … who would get dressed up in outfits like that when you are at home and training your dog, right?

p. 42

- Maybe she has to do that to be noticed and gain followers? I asked.
- Hm, dad Truls said. – It’s really sad if that is the case. Why can’t she just be … yeah, normal, and be herself?
I hadn’t thought of Belinda Mosletten that way. But maybe dad had a point.
- Maybe … I started, - … she is afraid that no one will like her for who she really is ..?
I knew what dad Truls would say, which was what he always said about things like that. And true enough. He scooted forwards on his chair and said loudly and clearly:
- If you don’t like a person for who they truly are, then what are you really worth?
I responded immediately:
- Not even as much as a fly fart!

p. 43

Dad put his hand on the top of my head.
- Yes! You’ve got it, Alba.
Maybe not a big brainer, because he had said the part with the fly fart about a million times before.
I laughed a little and lifted my taco wrap to take a bite when dad Truls’ phone rang.

Chapter 5

p. 44

- So typical! he sighed.
For a moment I could see that he considered not picking up.
The thing is, dad Truls is a veterinary. So quite often, he’s on duty, and then he has to be ready to help sick animals.
Around the clock.
In addition to being a veterinary, dad Truls is … well, yeah … a bit of a celebrity. He’s in a really popular TV show about veterinaries. People actually call him “Norway’s favourite veterinary”!
I know, a little bit cool, a little bit embarrassing – but mostly kind of tiresome.

p. 45

Because this leads to him receiving even more phone calls than a normal veterinary, from people who – entirely randomly – have seen him on TV.
Anyway, I knew he’d pick up that call eventually.
And true enough:
- Hello, it’s Truls?
It was quiet for a long while.
- Uh-huh? Dad Truls said all of a sudden. - Stopped talking, you say?
I understood squat, so I just took a bite of my taco wrap.

p. 46

Soon after, dad’s voice grew louder:
- You want me to come NOW? Tonight? But I’m alone with my daughter …
He was quiet for a moment before continuing:
- Ehrm … so Alba can come along? Stay for free at a hotel all weekend, all right. What about bringing a dog? Free access to a swimming pool and spa? Seriously? Yeah, I can ask her.

p. 47

Dad looked carefully at me.
- No! I said.
It was actually weird enough, just being in the new house. I didn’t want dad to work all night as well. Even if I got to stay at a fancy hotel.
The person on the other end of the line must’ve heard my answer. And said something. Dad Truls delivered the message:
- Belinda Mosletten will be there, too!

p. 48

I looked at him wide-eyed.
- You’re kidding me?
Was this something dad Truls only said because we were just watching her videos?
- It’s actually entirely true, dad Truls replied.

Then he put his phone to his ear.
- Yes, I proise to mention that as well, he said.

p. 49

- OK, bye-bye!
He slowly lowered the phone.
Dad glanced at me again.
- So who was it? I asked.
- Petrus Langdalen, the Hotel Baron.
- Do you know *him*? I said.
Even *I* knew who Petrus Langdalen was. He was on the TV almost as often as dad Truls. Always in a leather jacket and with a big grin. Always ready for a celebrity party or to open a new hotel.
- Langdalen’s parrot is ill, dad said. – It all sounds very mysterious. So what do you say, Alba? Would you like to meet Belinda Mosletten?
Fancy that, I actually really did.
Yup, I could already picture it, that I entered the classroom on Monday and – like, all casually – said to my friends:

p. 50

“By the way, I met Belinda Mosletten this weekend”.
They’d die from jealousy!
- But where’s the hotel? I asked.
- A small place along the Telemark coast, said dad. – It’s not a long drive.
He continued:
- Langdalen is there to open a new luxury spa hotel tonight. I was actually invited a while back, but declined because you were to stay here this weekend. But now the parrot is ill, and … yeah, maybe it could be fun to be there for the opening event? It’s supposed to be fireworks and everything.
- Finito *hates* fireworks, I said.
Dad opened his arms wide.
- But Langdalen is besides himself, Alba. His parrot has stopped talking. He’s afraid that it might be seriously ill.

p. 51

I sighed heavily.
And then I did something incredibly stupid.
I said:
- All right, then.

Chapter 6

p. 52

Our mini van skidded to a halt in the parking lot in front of Langdalen Hotel & Spa.
It was already dusk.
But the hotel itself was lit by huge spotlights.
Dad Truls fetched his veterinary’s bag, and then we walked up to the hotel.
The sounds of voices and happy partygoers hummed in the air. The smell of barbeque tickled our noses.
- Woof! Finito said.
- I know, I whispered, and gave him a treat to stop him from losing it.
Shortly after I crashed into dad’s back.

p. 52

He had suddenly stopped.
I looked up.
In front of us was a group of people blocking the hotel entrance. They were waving home-made posters and now started shouting:
- Spa hotel, no! Langdalen must go!

p. 53

Hesitatingly, dad Truls approached the group. A guy in a black woolen jumper with bushy red hair and a beard came towards him.
- Aren’t you that veterinary on TV? He asked in Swedish.
- Uhm … yes? Dad Truls said.
- Did you know that Langdalen treats animals very poorly?
- Ehrm … no?

p. 55

- Read up on it here! Said redbeard, handing dad Truls a sheet of paper. – Langdalen Hotel &Spa is built in an area where some of our rarest species of seabirds have their breeding grounds. All the tourists taking walks by the beach will disturb them as they nest!
Dad accepted a flyer and glanced quickly at it.
- Look, he said, - I’m here to examine a sick bird, a parrot. That must be in the interest of animal welfare, surely? So can you let us pass?
- Woof! Finito said.
The guy with the red beard smiled briefly.
- Nice dog!
In that moment, a sharp voice boomed out behind us.
- Now, Hampus Svensson, will you be so kind and move out of the way?

Chapter 7

p. 56-57

Petrus Langdalen stood behind us in his leather jacket. He was not at all as cheerful as he used to appear on TV.
He was furious.
- Shame on you! Ruining our big opening night is really rotten of you, Hampus!
The man whose name appeared to be Hampus Svensson got riled up as well.
- We don’t care about a party for rich people! We care about the welfare of animals!
Petrus Langdalen opened his arms wide.
- I’d love to talk to you more about this, Hampus. But now my parrot has taken really ill. “Norway’s favourite veterinary” needs to attend the opening party … and examine her. Quickly!
Hampus Svensson said, “Oh, ok!” and moved to the side.

p. 58

We hurried past the angry wool-sweatered Swede – and entered the hotel.

- Sorry about that, said Langdalen as we entered the hotel lobby. – Nothing but scolding, no matter how friendly one is to animals.
We were led behind the front desk at the reception.
- Are the celebrities all here, Siren? Petrus Langdalen said.
A tall woman in a black blazer with long, blonde hair in a ponytail, jumped and shut her laptop suspiciously quickly.
- Ehrm … only Belinda Mosletten, receptionist Siren smiled sadly. – Those fashion influencers attended a *Spiderman* premiere party instead.
Petrus Langdalen curled up his fist and mumbled:
- Shoot!

p. 59

In the next moment, he put his widest grin back on again, and drew his breath.
- But now, the important thing is to attend to Peggy! Please follow me!

Chapter 8

P. 60

Petrus Langdalen pulled us into a room behind the reception.
- this is to become my office, he explained. – But we’re not quite finished renovating yet.
It wasn’t exactly a small office. More like a ballroom. But the room was more or less empty. There was a cardboard box or two, and a faint smell of fresh paint. But one thing stood out like a sore thumb: Perched up by one of the walls was a large painting that looked pretty old.

p. 61

Over by the window- with a view of the fjord – a desk had been placed, with a computer and a desk chair.
And on the table there was a cage.
Petrus Langdalen hurried over to it.
- Here is Peggy, my dear, dear macaw.
Inside the cage a huge, colourful parrot sat perched on a stick.

p. 62

Finito seemed to find it exciting – and kind of scary – to see a parrot. He wagged his tail and approached carefully, bowing his head down.
When we came close to the cage, the parrot suddenly rustled her feathers.
- Hello, Peggy? Langdalen said carefully.
- Can you please talk with us a little?

p. 63

But the parrot only turned her back to him and stared into a corner of her cage.
- You see? Langdalen sighed. – Nothing!
Dad put down his vet’s bag and looked closely at the parrot.
- She seems a little stressed out. But why is that? Hm …
He turned to Petrus Langdalen.

p. 64

- When did you notice that something was wrong?
- This morning, Petrus Langdalen replied.
- Usually she chats as willingly as an old lady on a cruise! But this morning she was all of a sudden utterly taciturn!
Dad nodded gravely.
- I guess I’ll try to examine her.
While dad prepared, my eyes were drawn to the huge painting.
Finito and I walked a little closer to it.
- Careful! Petrus Langdalen shouted.
I wheeled around.
- I didn’t mean to sound so stern. But that painting is actually worth 50 million kroner, Petrus Langdalen said.
50 million?! That was an enormous sum of money! I understood perfectly well why he asked me to be careful. I turned to face the painting again.

p. 65

The painting depicted a huge mountain reflected in the glassy fjord surrounding it. A lonely fisherman in a boat pulled up a fishing net or something. At the very end of the fjord you could see the sun sinking – or rising? – above the mountains.
- Grand, isn’t it?
Petrus Langdalen was suddenly standing right behind me. Close enough for me to smell his black leather jacket.
- The painting is called “The Grandeur of Nature”, he continued. – It is a forgotten masterpiece from the 1800s.

p. 66

In the meanwhile, I could hear dad packing his vet’s bag.
He cleared his throat.
- Tell me, has Peggy been subjected to a change in environment lately?
- Change of environment? Ehm … nah, I don’t think so?
- Parrots can react to big changes in their lives, you see, dad explained. – Usually they make *more* of a ruckus when this happens, though. Not turn entirely quiet. So this is a bit odd.
- But changes? Langdalen said. – How much of a change does it take?
Dad scratched his head.
- Hm. Parrots are pack animals, after all. They prefer to be in the company of other birds, not alone in a cage. But if you’ve been good at training your parrot …

p. 67

- Very good! Langdalen interrupted.
- … yeah, well, then this, dad continued, - the fact that your parrot has stopped talking, is actually a bit of a mystery.
- Mystery, that’s the word! Petrus Langdalen said, before glancing at his wristwatch and exclaiming: - Oops! I need to practice my speech for the gala dinner … it’s in just an hour! And double oops! First i need to fetch janitor Rannveig and ask her to carry the painting into the grand hall. I am to reveal it during the opening ceremony!

p. 68

He ran off, yeah, he sprinted away from us, almost like a madman. But at the door, he stopped one last time.
- But you’ll just have time for one quick spa session before you attend the gala dinner. You’ll be there, right?
- Uhm … well … the most important thing is that I get to examine Peggy?

p. 69

Petrus Langdalen put on his broadest grin.
- Yeah, sure, but you HAVE to come! I’ve saved a seat at a first row table for “Norway’s favourite veterinary”! The same table as Belinda Mosletten! And, by the way, say hi to Robert who runs the spa and tell him that the first session is on me!
Then he swooped out.

Chapter 9

p. 70

- Ehm … I was to say hi from Petrus and say that … uh, tell you that … uhm, could we get the first hour for free?
Dad Truls’ was nervously shifting his feet by the entrance to the spa, cheeks bright red. In front of him was a tall, muscular guy with glasses, dark hair and a moustache – dressed in white pants and a t-shirt.
- Certainly! “Norway’s favourite veterinary”. It’ll be an honour!
The muscle guy sounded very pleased.
- Uhm … cool, said dad.
He was pretty embarrassed. And he wasn’t the only one!

p. 71

On a scale from one to a hundred: How embarrassed do you think I found it that dad should be getting free stuff just because he is a celebrity?
Reply: A hundred and twenty THOUSAND! At least.
But the muscle guy apparently thought it was wonderful.
- My absolute pleasure! My name’s Robert, by the way!

p. 72

He shook dad’s hand, before throwing a quick glance at Finito.
- But you’ll have to place the dog elsewhere while in the spa.
- No! Why is that? I asked.
- A spa needs to be kept clean, you see, so there’s no access for dogs.
He did not sound pleased at all anymore.

p. 73

I was about to say that Finito was in fact a *very* clean. But in that moment, someone cleared their throat behind us.
- I can look after that cute dog!
Dad and I turned around simultaneously.
Who do you think had snuck up behind our backs?
I almost froze where I stood, I was so star-struck. I couldn’t think of a single thing to say. Apart from the stupidly obvious:
- B-belinda Mosletten?
Yup. One of the coolest YouTubers I knew was standing there in her silken pyjamas, smiling from ear to ear.
- That’s me! She said and turned towards dad. – And you’re the vet guy from TV, right?

p. 74

Dad didn’t have time to answer, because Belinda Mosletten had bent down towards Finito.
- Oh, gosh golly! What an ADORABLE dog!
My cheeks glowed.
Not only was my greatest dog training idol standing right here – half a meter away! But she’d also said that Finito, MY dog, was cute.
I couldn’t utter a single word.
But she could.
- So, am I allowed to?
- Ehm … what? I asked.
Dad poked me in the side and whispered:
- Look after Finito.
- Oh, yeah! Sure! I replied. – It’s great that Finito can hang around with another dog.
Belinda Mosletten squealed.

p. 75

- Yeees! It will be soooo much fun for the both of them! Doggy’s really bored in his room. He’ll be super happy to get a visit from …
- Finito, I said.
- Finitoooo! Said Belinda Mosletten and ruffled Finito’s fur again. – Maybe you and me could make a video with Doggy, hm?
This was almost too much for Finito. He backed up a step and seemed, honestly, a little unsure.

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Especially when Belinda Mosletten grabbed his collar.
- You can come fetch him in room 42 later.
She did a little twirl in front of us and said:
- Look forwards to the spa! It was sooooo relaxing! I recommend getting the lava stone treatment.

Belinda Mosletten disappeared down the corridor, a slightly nervous Finito in tow. He turned and looked at me several times, as if to make entirely sure that it was ok, this with him being supposed to leave with a total stranger.
- Belinda Mosletten was actually really nice! Dad said.
I nodded and turned to face him.

p. 77

- What are lava stones?
- No idea, dad said.
The spa manager, Robert, cleared his throat besides us. (I’d almost forgotten he was there!)
- They are warm stones that we use for massages in the spa.
He could probably see the scepticism on my face, because he started to laugh.
- They’re not burning hot, I promise.

p. 78

- Just a little bit. Look, I’ll give you this one!
Spa manager Robert held out a small, black stone.
- Just keep it.
I hesitated, but then accepted the small, rounded stone.
It didn’t seem all that special. Not warm, either. Actually, it was a pretty normal stone.

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- Now, come enter the spa, spa manager Robert smiled. – Then you can choose whether you want spa treatment or to go swim in the pool.
Dad Truls looked at me.
- What do you want to do, Alba?
I popped the lava stone in the pocket of my hoodie and loudly proclaimed:
- Swimming pool!
And then we went to get changed.

Chapter 10

p. 81

Even if dad and I were the only ones in the pool, and even if the music was veeery slow and relaxing, I couldn’t seem to calm down. Nope, I swam around restlessly while dad tried to be funny, splashing a lot and telling bad jokes and the like.
I was stressed, and after a while I realized why: I didn’t like being away from Finito.
Even if it was Belinda Mosletten herself who looked after him.
How was he now? Did he like Doggy? I mean, a Pomeranian and a Labrador were pretty different, but at the same time, at least they were … well, about equally clumsy, at least. And Finito usually *loved* meeting other dogs … But what exactly was Belinda Mosletten doing with the dogs while filming her videos?
No, I suddenly felt done relaxing and splashing around in the pool. I *had* to make sure that Finito was ok.

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I climbed up the steps from the pool and said to dad:
- I’ll go fetch Finito!
- Already? Dad gurgled. – But we’ve still got time before dinner, and this was actually really nice …
- Just stay for a bit longer, if you want to, and I’ll go see Belinda Mosletten.
Dad winked.

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- Aha! I see! You’d like to talk to your idol?

A few minutes later I knocked on door number 42.
The door opened slowly – and out darted Finito! He seemed very, very happy and relieved, wagging his tail a lot.
Belinda Mosletten smiled through the half-open door behind him. She had already changed into a really nice, shockingly red party dress, and was apparently posing for outfit pics when I knocked.
- What a super sweet dog! She said. – Really well behaved. It was sooo fun looking after him.
I bent down, ruffled his fur, and said:
- Yeah, you’re such a good boy, Finito.
- Woof!
He seemed incredibly happy to see me again.

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- Where’s Doggy? I asked after having cuddled Finito for a small eternity.
- Oh, he’s just resting a bit in the bathroom.
- In the bathroom?
Belinda Mosletten laughed.
- He just loves laying on the heated bathroom tiles! Lovely and warm, right?
- Oh, yeah, I said. – Maybe I could meet him at the gala dinner, then?
- You bet! Belinda Mosletten smiled and shut her door.

I went down the hotel corridor with Finito with a spring in my step. Only now I fully realized it: I had met Belinda Mosletten! She had looked after Finito, MY dog!
Ha-haah! I could’nt wait to tell my friends on Monday!

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But first I had to attend a boring grown-up gala dinner …

Chapter 11

p. 86

Petrus Langdalen lightly tapped the microphone from the stage in the grand hall.
- Dear friends! I’d like to welcome you all to the opening of Langdalen Hotel & Spa! Let’s enjoy quite the gala dinner. Of course, it is only globally … I mean locally produced food! The salmon in the main course is from a fish farm only a few miles from here! As a starter, you’ll be served hand-picked seaweed and sea urchins from our own fjord … this will be delicious!
All the one hundred invited guests applauded politely.

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Well. I wish I had been A LITTLE prepared for this when we left. Have you ever been to a gala dinner with a hundred people dressed in suits and gowns, while you’re the only one there in a hoodie? Right beside Belinda Mosletten dressed in the most gorgeous dress ever?
And as the only person with a dog? (We had permission from Petrus Langdalen, don’t worry.)
I leaned carefully over to Belinda Mosletten and whispered:
- Where’s Doggy?

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- Back at the room, she whispered. – He refused to come, unfortunately.

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- Woof! Said Finito under the table.
Belinda Mosletten raised an eyebrow, before putting her smile back on.
Oh boy! I was pretty embarrassed. It seemed like everyone in the grand hall looked towards dad, Finito and me.
Petrus Langdalen, however, was in a great mood. He smiled and waved from the stage in his leather jacket. His shiny white teeth glittered in the light from the chandelier.
The applause died down.
- Thank you, thank you! The hotel baron continued. – We have grand plans for the place. No, ENORMOUS plans!

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We will be the biggest and the best in the market when it comes to luxury and spa! No less!
Langdalen took a sip of water.
- But how were we to mark this occasion in the grandest fashion? Well, as you know, I am a collector of art. And recently, I had the opportunity to buy the rarest of treasures.
He turned and pointed to a cloth covering a frame on the wall behind him.
- Oh yes! It IS the often talked about forgotten masterpiece in Norwegian art history, a wonderous art treasure from the 1800s. So, dear friends and celebrities, allow me to declare Langdalen Hotel & Spa open, with fanfare – and hereby unveil …
Langdalen pulled a rope, and the cloth fell to the ground.
- … “THE GRANDEUR OF NATURE!”

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The hall went deadly quiet. Even I stared.
As it happens: On the wall behind Langdalen hung a drawing in markers of a gigantic butt.