

Dear reader,

I'd like to tell you that I wanted to write a book that's like life itself: sprawling. I'd like to tell you that I wanted to write about loneliness and fear. But that wouldn't quite be true, because I don't know if it was something I chose. I was curled up on my sofa, alone, and wrote three sentences every day, which left me exhausted. All those sentences are still there. Maybe it's how it has to be.

I've thought a lot about fear. The narrator is a lot like me and I'm a lot like her. For a long time I didn't know if I'd show anyone what I'd written. Then I thought about how scared the narrator is, and how badly I wish I were a little bit less like her.

So I let a friend read it. Hands trembling, I sent him my document and held my breath until he wrote back. He said it made him think of Moomin. About Moomin and Moominpapa sheltering from the big storm, huddling inside until they finally stick their noses out, perhaps transformed. That image made me finish the novel.

There were a few things I knew I wanted to include. In this novel, just as in my first novel, I wanted to explore silence. People hold so much inside of them that we can't see. There's so much we can't know from the outside. There's a lot we don't understand when it's happening inside of ourselves. I'd like to try to understand.

Another thing that was on my mind while writing was loneliness. Pain is a lonely place. Being dumped is a lonely place. The fell above the tree line is a lonely place. The fact that the father and the daughter have each other shouldn't be lonely, but that relationship might be the loneliest place of them all.

There's also the loneliness of knowing who you are. This is a novel about being Sámi. Or, perhaps more accurately, a book about not feeling Sámi enough. But I hope it's a story that others can relate to as well: it's about wanting to get close to others but being too scared to try. About wanting and daring but not being let in. About letting yourself be lonely even though you might not need to. To feel like you don't belong, even though all you want is to belong. Maybe it's you staying on the outside? They might let you come in. But you won't know unless you dare to knock.

This story has many different threads. Reindeer herding and language and feeling like you don't belong. Silence and its origins. And the narrator's pain: that of her soul after she's been dumped, and the pain that racks her body. The reason for all these threads is probably because life doesn't run on parallel tracks. Instead they cross each other, shape each other, so that you can't know where one begins and the other ends. Not everything is logical. For instance, you might be terrified but publish a book anyway. Maybe that's how it has to be.

Best wishes,

Ella-Maria Nutti