

"Can't you just be happy that I'm happy now?" Dad shouts.

"You're not happy. You're manic! So take your damn pills!" Mom shouts back.

"I don't like the father I become with those pills," Dad says.

They don't know that you're awake, and you can hear them.

Solveig knows more than her sisters, but has spared them so as not to destroy their picture of Dad.

Dad

It was you who found him. In the chair. With half a bottle of red wine and an empty pill bottle. You've never forgiven him that. Nor have you told your two sisters: Katinka, who is 9 years old, and Cirkeline, 8. There's a lot you haven't told them.

Dad was ill. You know that. He couldn't control his mood. Mom has tried to explain it to you. When Dad was happy, he lit up like a lighthouse in a storm. When he was sad, he was the storm. And Mom was the boat who steered the family, so it didn't get smashed to pulp on the rocks.

That was why he was often away. "He's on holiday," Mom said to you girls. You knew he was away because he was the storm. The storm that raged. Yelled at mom. Cried himself to sleep. Who left everything. Abandoned you in the shopping mall, because he couldn't handle that many people at once. The Dad that forgot to pick up Cirkeline from kindergarten, so they had to call Mom at work because Dad didn't answer the phone. Silent Dad. In those periods you avoided him. Tried to help Mom as well as you could.



When he was Silent Dad, he was mostly with Katinka. You often saw them sitting in your treehouse and looking out to the horizon, while they mumbled low conversations that you never caught. Sometimes you can hear Katinka mumbling in the same way, when she lies in her bed at night and talks to her cat. You don't say anything.

As frustrating as Silent Dad was, he was equally fantastic when he was happy. Once he built a carpet-fort with pillows and comforters and rugs and clothespins and old Christmas lights, that filled the whole living room and most of the kitchen. You ate there in the cave for two days, until Mom had had it with sitting on the floor. Cirkeline was furious when mom cleared out the entire carpet fort. She refused to speak with her for an entire week. Cirkeline worshipped dad. Everything he did was amazing, and anything he said was truth. Now she feels the same way about Grandma.

Mom

You know mom doesn't have it easy. The last few years have been hell for her. She had to do everything to maintain the house and the home and a fulltime job, while dad just wrecked everything. Not that he meant to, but that's what happened. Even when he was at his best and happiest things often went overboard. And it turned out worse and wilder after every time he'd been on "vacation". And mom couldn't deal with it. She kept setting boundaries and rules, and he kept forgetting and breaking them. The last straw was a day he made a campfire inside. "But it's raining outside," was his excuse when you came home with mom. He sat by a burning fire in the middle of the living room floor boiling noodles in chocolate milk while the smoke alarm was beeping, without him reacting. It had been beeping for so long that the battery was almost drained. She packed your clothes, and then you'd all moved out.

You're pretty sure mom lost a fair amount of money on the house when it was sold. At least she keeps saying she owes the bank a billion, and that's why you have to live where you live. So you never complain to mom. It's not her fault.

But Katinka and Cirkeline don't know that.



Torben

And mom has found a new boyfriend. Torben. Torben is okay. He wants to do right by you, but he's not fun like dad. He is not a lighthouse in the storm. More like a bike light in a gloomy basement. He cooks well. But it's never pancakes on a grey Wednesday or cocoa soup with biscuits because the rain was a bit dreary. It's meat and potatoes, and not too much gravy. Dad once made pink gravy. It tasted awful. But it was pink, which made Katinka and Cirkeline eat three portions.

Mom likes Torben. That's enough for you, She needs someone who makes her happy. Cirkeline hates Torben. That's probably mostly because he's not dad. Everything he does is wrong according to her. Katinka doesn't really say anything.

Cirkeline and Katinka

You are the oldest of three sisters. And for that reason, you are also the wisest. That goes without saying.

Cirkeline is the youngest, and also the most annoying. She takes up a bunch of space and acts like a... kid. You could live with her childishness, if only Grandma wasn't filling her head with all kinds of stories about dad not being dead but being a sky pirate. All kinds of crap that Cirkeline just swallows hook, line and sinker. You don't like arguing with her, but you often do argue. She is so damn sure of herself. She drives you nuts. And she hates Torben, which she often lets people know. Let mom be happy, damn it! But no, the world revolves around Cirkeline. She's also sweet, though. When she's not yelling. Her enthusiasm is infectious. She knows everything about Cloud Land, and she taught herself to read to be able to read the letters from dad.

Katinka is 9. She'll be 10 tomorrow. She may have been the one of you who was closest to dad, when it all comes down to it. The one to know him the best. You worry that it might have made her a bit odd. Her best friend is her cat, Mr. Herman. She found Mr. Herman the same day you came home from the funeral. He is a black, shaggy cat. A bit chubby, like dad. Sometimes you can even hear her talking to it, as if it was dad. As if she can hear it answering back, which it isn't actually doing. Like that – odd. Katinka is also the diplomat who will throw herself in between Cirkeline and you when you are arguing.

But no matter how annoying Cirkeline is and how quiet Katinka is, you're still sisters, and you love them both more than life itself. When you are lying in a big pile every Friday watching Disney Afternoon, that might just be the best time in the week for you.

The Letters

When dad died, there was a letter for you. For the princesses. In the letter it said that Dad had gone on. He was now a sky pirate in the heavenly realm of Cloudland. And he was looking forward to when you'd all be together again. You have never understood what he meant by that. Dad is gone. He will never be back. Shortly after, Grandma started receiving letters from dad. Airmail from the clouds, she says. One each week. As if. Grandma writes them herself. That's what mom says as well. But Katinka and Cirkeline are happy, and look forward every week to a new letter from dad. So perhaps it's okay that it's not really from dad.

Cloudland

For about a year now, Grandma has told you about dad's experiences in Cloudland, or The Land in the Clouds as Katinka calls it. It's not really a country in the skies, but a different world, where dad is an air pirate aboard the airship The Cotton Ball.

He is the captain of a sorry crew of thieves and outcasts, sailing about and trying to steal all kinds of things from all kinds of people. Like when they wanted to steal the world-famous "Blood-Red Ruby" from a genuine desert sheikh, but ended up taken prisoner. That time they had to vacuum the desert palace all the time, because sand kept blowing in from the desert.

Other times there's a mutiny on the Cotton Ball because of a disastrous lack of pancakes. Or Dad's arch enemy, Black Trixie is devising nefarious plans again. Or that time the Cotton Ball was losing air and they had an emergency landing in the middle of the Cannibal Jungle.

Really crazy stories about crazy adults doing crazy things. Your sisters love it.

Summary - Solveig

- **Solveig** is the oldest of three sisters. She is serious and is on mom's side.
- It was Solveig who found dad after the suicide. She hasn't told her sisters this.
- It was dad's disease that ruined everything. Silent dad was stupid. Happy dad was wonderful, as long as it didn't get to be too much.
- **Katinka** is the middle child of the three, and she has a birthday tomorrow. She has a cat that she keeps chatting with.
- **Cirkeline** is the youngest. She thinks Dad is an air pirate, because Grandma says so.
- **Mom** is lovely. It's not her fault.
- Mom has a new boyfriend, who is called **Torben**. Torben is okay. As long as mom is happy, you're happy.
- **Grandma** tells you new stories of Cloudland every week.

