

ONE
in A
HUNDRED
THOUSAND

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LINNI
INGEMUNDSEN



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One In a Hundred Thousand is a work of fiction but it deals with real issues including child abuse and suicide.

Links to advice and support can be found at the back of the book.

I failed another test. It must have been the third one in four weeks. I didn't fail because of my condition. It didn't happen because I'm dumb.

Failing on purpose is actually not as easy as it sounds. You need to make sure you miss over fifty-five per cent of the test without making it obvious. So you can't put down any ridiculous answers or anything. If you can't think of something that sounds close, but definitely isn't right, it's better to just leave it blank or put down a question mark. Okay, it actually is pretty easy.

I'm not sure if the fact that I have been doing this on purpose makes it better or worse. There was a plan behind it. Not a very good one I suppose, but there was a plan.

Apart from my recent underachieving at school, I'm pretty much just like everyone else. At the same time I'm not. I like gaming, hanging out with my friends and

reading comics. And I like taking pictures, but I don't know if I'm good at it. I only have about a hundred and fifty followers on Instagram. But maybe that just means I'm not very popular.

I have two brothers. Jakob is seventeen, two years older than me. He drives a moped and has loads of friends. And girls love him. My younger brother, Adrian, is fourteen. He is stronger than me and faster than me. And, just like everyone else on the planet, he is also taller than me.

My dad died when I was six years old. He was a fisherman. He had broad shoulders and big arms. One day he went out to sea. And he didn't come back. My brothers both look a lot like him. I don't.

I have narrow shoulders and skinny arms and a tiny waist.

My right arm is longer than my left arm.

I am fifteen years old and 153 centimetres tall. The average height for an adult male in Norway is 179.7 centimetres. I'm not anywhere near average.

I figure the school will eventually contact my mum and tell her what's going on. I haven't been in trouble before. It's not like I am a star student or anything, but I always get by. For the past few days I have expected her to say something but so far nothing has happened. Every day she just comes home from work and everything is normal.

Earlier today, around 5 p.m., I had gone into the kitchen to get a glass of water just as Mum walked in carrying a grocery bag in each hand. I tried to read her facial expression, but I couldn't tell if she looked mad or not.

"Oh, hey," she said when she noticed me. There was nothing unusual about her voice either.

I sat down at the table and watched her put away the groceries. She placed two packets of chicken fillets on the counter, which I guessed meant we'd be having them for dinner. With a hundred per cent certainty I knew the chicken would be organic, because we can't eat chicken unless it is organic. That would just be insane.

I wasn't sure if the reason Mum didn't say anything was because she hadn't heard anything from the school yet, or if she was just torturing me. I couldn't take the suspense any longer, I had to know.

So I said, "How was your day?"

She looked up and paused for a minute. "It was fine." Then she gave me a sceptical look. "Why do you ask?"

I shrugged. "Do I need a reason?"

She lowered her shoulders and smiled. "No, of course not. It was very nice of you to ask. How was your day?"

"Fine."

"Did something happen?"

"Nope." I got up from my chair. "I've got homework."

“Okay,” she said. “Dinner will be ready in about an hour.”

I went upstairs to my room and started on my homework. I could hear music playing from the next room, which meant that Adrian was home. Not that this was a surprise to me or anything, because most of the time he wouldn't be out somewhere without me knowing where he was. I know this is going to sound really, really lame but my younger brother is actually my best friend.

There were no sounds coming from Jakob's room, which made sense as it was Tuesday and he would be at handball practice.

For Norwegian class, I had to read a poem by Rolf Jacobsen and answer questions about it. It was something about machines eating trees and how this was some sort of hell for wise pelicans. It didn't make much sense to me.

There were five questions connected to the poem and I didn't really have to do much faking when answering them poorly.

I finished my work, and then Mum called us down for dinner. I closed my workbook and ran downstairs two steps at a time. When I reached the bottom of the stairs, I heard Adrian opening the door to his room.

In my mind, we had a race and I won. If he had been aware of the race he would have beaten me, so it was better that he didn't know.

I walked into the kitchen and took a seat at the table, opposite Mum. Adrian came in and sat down next to me. No matter if we are all home or not, we always sit in the same places.

Then we ate our organic chicken with steamed vegetables and brown rice. No one was really talking, because everyone was busy on their phones.

Shortly after, we could hear someone opening and closing the front door, which was soon followed by a loud thud. It was Jakob, dumping his gym bag on the floor. Next we could hear the sound of his shoes hitting the wall as he kicked them off. My mum hates it when he does that, but she didn't say anything as he walked into the kitchen. She just said “Hi”, hardly looking up from her phone.

Jakob's cheeks were red and he smelled like the wind.

“Hey,” he said and sat down next to Mum, opposite Adrian. He helped himself to the food but skipped the rice. Carbs are apparently very bad for you if you want to make it as a handball player.

Me, I eat all the carbs I can get. My mum put away her phone and asked Jakob how his practice went. For a while we talked about how many goals he had scored, and then we talked about how Adrian finally managed to do this bike trick he has been working on. No one talked about me failing my maths test, because apparently my school is

really slow at picking up on these things. You would think they'd pay extra attention to someone like me.

This is what Google has to say about Silver-Russell syndrome:

Silver-Russell syndrome (SRS) is one of many growth disorders. It is characterized by a slow growth, starting even before the baby is born. Many children with SRS have low muscle tone and may start to sit up and walk later than average. Some may also have delayed speech development. Signs and symptoms may include; low birth weight, a head that appears large in relation to body size, poor appetite, characteristic facial features including a prominent forehead or a small, triangular-shaped face; and arms and legs of different lengths.

What Google doesn't tell you is what it *feels* like to be the shortest boy in your class. Or how it feels to know that this isn't going to change.

Approximately one in a hundred thousand people has Silver-Russell syndrome.

My name is Sander Dalen.

I am one in a hundred thousand.



A couple of days later I woke up before the alarm clock. I opened my desk drawer and took out a pencil. Then I stood next to the door frame. I made sure to stand up properly and look straight ahead and not go up on my tiptoes. Then I took the pencil and made a mark on the door frame above my head. I turned around to look at it. The mark was in the exact same spot as before. I sighed and got dressed, because what else can you do?

When I walked into the kitchen, Frank, the family dog, was standing by the door wagging his tail and looking at me with begging eyes. He is a Jackabee, which is a mix between a beagle and a Jack Russell terrier.

“Someone needs to take Frank for his walk,” Mum said, walking into the kitchen.

The sound of the word “walk” and his name made Frank let out a little bark.