



# TORRE RENNBERG

oktober



Photos from the movie picture **The Man Who Loved Yngve**  
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# TORE RENBERG

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Tore Renberg (b 1972) made his literary debut in 1995 with the collection of short prose *Sleeping Tangle* for which he won the prestigious Tarjei Vesaas' Debutant Prize. Since then he has written several novels and children's books, one collection of prose and made one book of collages. The novel *The Man Who Loved Yngve* got a warm reception in both Norway and Sweden, and the movie based on the book has been seen by 170.000 people in Norway. In 2008, Renberg won the prestigious Booksellers' Prize for his novel *Charlotte Isabel Hansen*.

During the 90s Renberg distinguished himself as a literary critic, working in the literary magazine *Vagant* and hosting the programme *Leseforeningen* on Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation. In 2004 he wrote his first film script. Renberg is also a musician.

# Charlotte Isabel Hansen

**WINNER OF THE 2008  
BOOKSELLERS' PRIZE**

**First published:** 2008, 355 pages

**Foreign rights sold:** Danish (Batzter), German (dtv),  
Lithuanian (Gimtasiz Zodis)

*A child?*

*A little child?*

*Did he, Jarle Klepp, have a child?*

*Was he, Jarle Klepp, a father?*

*To a child?*

Jarle Klepp, 25, is a student of literature. He lives in Bergen, and relishes his academic existence. Student life offers Jarle everything he has ever dreamt of: He is considered an illustrious young talent by the eccentric professor Robert Göteborg, and has an intense and exclusively physical affair with the stunning Herdis Snartemo. He has discovered his analytic skills, his effective charm; his future.

Then a letter arrives. From the police, summoning him for a DNA test.

It is time for Jarle to grow up. But is he able to?

Does he even want to?



“ A book full of humour, rhythm, elegant transitions, quick-witted characterizations and peculiar imagery ”

DAGBLADET

“funny, revealing, sharply observed, elegantly written, ironic in tone, sentimental at its core, yes; to cry over.... Stylishly executed!”

ADRESSEAVISEN

“Full steam ahead, in the way we almost take for granted with Renberg ... You might as well surrender!”

STAVANGER AFTENBLAD

”funny in a subtle, ironic yet warm way. But this author’s greatest strength is the portrayal of people, his insight into the dynamics of friendship and family, and his understanding of why people are the way they are... And we as readers only grow more fond of [Jarle Klepp] as we read on”

AFTENPOSTEN

# Sample translation from Charlotte Isabel Hansen

TRANSLATED FROM THE NORWEGIAN BY DON BARTLETT



When you receive a letter from the police it is natural to wonder why, and to Jarle, who always went around with a bad conscience and a fundamental feeling that he had done something wrong, or a terrible premonition that he was going to do something wrong, getting such a letter was downright terrifying. His nervous fingers were afire when he saw his name on a letter from the police department, and he ran upstairs to his apartment as though hotly pursued, locked himself in and sat at the kitchen table where he placed the letter.

He walked around the kitchen table three times.

He picked it up, held it in his hands on that August day on which a short time before he had said aloud, almost angrily: "significant and signifier have an exclusively semiological relationship. You have to get that into your heads. If you can't, don't even think about even trying to approach the tiniest article by Derrida or Genette or Paul de Man!" The letter from the police. For him. For Jarle Klepp. He ransacked his brain for something he might have done wrong. Was it illegal to have intercourse in the open air?

Had someone, an elderly lady perhaps, seen him standing in Nygård Park one late July evening, his trousers around his ankles, his hands on both of Herdis Snartemo's hips, who for her part had her outstretched hands around the tree trunk, her neck bent forward, her back straightened, her hair cascading down over her head as she said: "Come to me, Master of Delights, come! Be! My! Guest!" Had an elderly lady seen Jarle entering this battleship of a woman? Had an elderly lady walking her dog that evening seen him, proud and happy, boarding the vessel that was the abundant lower regions of Herdis Snartemo, and found the whole thing so disgusting and base that she had sent a letter to the police accusing him of disturbing the peace?

Or was the problem a domestic dispute?

Had the neighbour, the woman next door with the protruding tortoise eyes with whom he had never exchanged anything more than a few short pleasantries, reported him for domestic violence and disturbing the

peace after things had got out of hand at the party he had held at the beginning of August when no one had wanted to stop drinking before daylight? Had she seen him?

Jarle nervously breathed in and out.

He sat by the kitchen table and opened the letter.

Jarle read and gaped in amazement.

What?

Was it possible?

He dropped the letter, picked it up again straightaway and re-read it.

Was that really possible?

A child?

A little child?

Did he, Jarle Klepp, have a child?

Was he, Jarle Klepp, a father?

To a child?

Subsequent to information received by the police from one Anette Hansen, he was summoned to submit to a DNA test in order to ascertain whether he was the father.

*Anette Hansen?*

And this *child* would soon be seven years old, a seven-year-old girl, and he was supposed to be the father.

No. No. He was sweating, he blinked, his mouth went dry. No, that could not be right. Jarle rose from the kitchen table, walked around it three times with the letter in his hand, bent forward momentarily under the tap over the sink, turned it on and drank the water, then went to sit back down. OK. Easy now. Take it easy now. First of all, it's quite impossible. That has to be the starting point in this matter. Someone has made a mistake. It simply cannot be true. Take it easy now. Seven years ago? No. No. Could he have made someone pregnant seven years ago? In – when would that be – back in – yes – 1990?

*Anette Hansen?*

Who the hell is *Anette Hansen*?

Absolutely impossible. Not a chance.

He scrutinised the letter for the third time shaking his head, insulted but self-assured. No. Never. This child, and this, from what he could see, unhappy, psychotic mother had lived in Skien, according to the letter. Laughable.

Skien? He had never even been to *Skien!* What the hell would he have been doing in *Skien!* And now this mother had seen fit to *fabricate* a father for her child who – sorry about that! – was supposed to be *him*?

Somewhere you have to draw the line. And it's right here, he thought. Society has gone seriously awry if anyone can just foist a child on a perfect stranger and demand that they call you "daddy". Where's the sense of propriety? Jarle thought, shaking his head. Where's the stability? What sort of splintered society is this? This is where you draw the line, he thought for the second time in the space of a few minutes. This is where I draw the line for getting mixed up in things which have nothing to do with me. And how would he go about clearing his name against these accusations made by this Anette Hansen?

*Anette Hansen.*

What a name. It sounded almost made up, that was what he reckoned.

Christ almighty.

*Anette Hansen.*

Of all the common names people went around calling themselves: Anette Hansen?

Jarle stopped. The letter slipped from between his fingers and he watched his right hand begin to tremble.

ANETTE HANSEN!

His throat swelled, he felt the vomit rising and he threw up all over the sink.

ANETTE HANSEN!

Timid little Anette Hansen?

Jarle walked to and fro across the living room floor. 1990? Was that possible? He gulped, put his head in his hand and paced the floor. If this were really true – if so little was required – then – then – yes, then – Jarle opened the veranda door and took a deep breath. Jesus Christ! He couldn't remember a thing about it! She was only in the ninth grade! She was in mid-puberty! Or perhaps at the latter end?

It had been a monster of a party. Year before the last at senior high, must have been. Yes, penultimate year. Party at the house of some arrivistes in an opulent detached house on one of the islands in the Stavanger archipelago. The concert with his band had been disastrous and together with his pals he had gone to the party and knocked back as much alcohol and soft drugs as he could and large parts of the night were one black crater in his memory. Anette Hansen. My God. He couldn't remember

how he had met her. Or what he had wanted with her. Had she just been too pretty? Had she caught his eye late at night in the maelstrom of drunkenness and rock and noise? Had she been standing there like a candle in the mist with sparkling eyes and bashful lips? He couldn't remember. Anette. Hansen. All he knew was that he had woken up in a double bed the next day and there had been a girl from the ninth grade lying beside him, wearing socks on her feet and nothing else, panties round one leg, thighs apart.

What did she look like?

He couldn't remember.

Who was she?

He had no idea.

After all he had never spoken to her.

As far as he knew he had never exchanged a single word with her.

Who is this person who has a child with people they have never spoken to!

Me?

Is it me who has children with a girl I have never spoken to?

Jarle gave a short, distinct cough.

Well. They might have spoken in the throes of drunkenness on their way into the room in January 1990. Impossible to say. As far as he knew, nothing had happened between them apart from sexual intercourse.

Which had resulted in a child.

A little child.

Who was turning seven now.

Who, almost seven years after her birth, was now to have a father.

Christ.

What does the world want with one more child, he thought angrily, and threw the letter in the corner next to the LPs. What on earth does the world want with another blonde girl – he imagined this girl he was to be father to with shoulder-length blonde hair. What does the world want with one more girl tripping around in tiny red shoes playing with ... whatever it is small girls play with. What on earth does the world want with one more naive, jolly, little girl who will be curious about ... whatever it is small girls are curious about.

How far away is the moon?

Can flowers cry?

Or who takes the leaves off trees in autumn?

And what on earth is a girl of almost seven to do with Jarle Klepp as a father?

I haven't got time for this! He thought that August day in 1997 while peering at the summons to the doctor's surgery and the famous paternity test.

Anette Hansen's claims were well founded. Jarle Klepp was the child's biological father. The DNA test was duly performed by the authorities and he had to accept that he, a researcher of Proustian onomastics whose research was such that his Swedish tutor, Robert Göteborg, on repeated occasions had declared his enthusiasm ["Jarle, this work is both very well thought through and beautifully presented"] – he had to accept that he was a father.

That he had been a father for seven years.

Without knowing.

Every day gone by, every studious day and every alcoholic night during the whole of his academic 90s, he had been a father. Of ever such a small child. And every day this child had got up and done what children do – whatever that is, thought Jarle – and already almost seven years had passed, and he was the father.

It was quite incredible.

You go round having intercourse here and there with various degrees of protection, and various degrees of success, and then on the one occasion when you were not present, did not exist as anything other than a body, screwing, it results in a child. Which in turn makes you a father.

And then you – *the father – the very source* – are not even told about it?

You're a father, but you don't know?

How many children did he actually have out there?

Would he now be forced to regard every child passing by in the street, sitting on the bus, buying Pokémon cards at Hernán's as his own? Would every pair of small, innocent eyes point him out and ask: *Daddy?* Would every five-year-old playing in the sandpit with a spade in its hand and pebbles in its mouth turn to him, look him in the eyes and ask: *Jarle Klepp, are you my father?* Not that he had been to bed with that many women in his life, but nevertheless if this Skien child was chance, did it not open the door to worldwide male angst?

The angst of being father to all?

And what about future sexual activity? Would he be forced to think, whenever there was a favourable onshore

wind and he sailed up Herdis Snartemo's hot fjords to anchor, that what he was *actually* doing was preparing the ground for a child? Would he have to think twice whenever Herdis Snartemo lowered her bra for him to put his mouth around one of her small firm breasts because he knew this was the first step down the corridor to the maternity clinic? Would he, as it were, hear a child's cries whenever he looked at Herdis Snartemo's bottom? Which made his palms crackle with excitement at the very thought. Which started above his spine and did not stop until it was some way down his thighs.

Eh?

Christ.

And, putting his desires to one side, did he have time to be a father?

It was obvious that he did not. A tiny glimpse in Jarle Klepp's direction was enough for anyone to know. Good father or bad, modern or old-fashioned, he did not have time to be one. That much was obvious, he thought on his way home from the surgery where, blushing, he had undergone the DNA test and a plump doctor said "Mhm, mhm, right, yeees, right, is that riiight, yes, mhm, mhm. Jarle Klepp, isn't it? Klepp? Jarle? Congratulations! You're a father!" No. It was more than obvious. Being a father requires a presence, he mused as he walked along Lungegårdsvann lake, presence and dedication. He had both, but they were suited for Proustian onomastics, for the special field he had chosen for his thesis in literary science, for the fascinating subject he had discovered in Marcel Proust's twelve volume work, this French writer's almost manic obsession with proper names and the conspicuous avoidance of the narrator's own name. That was where his presence and dedication chiefly lay. And ought to lie.

So he didn't, he concluded, have time to be a father.

Not to mention suitability.

And that, after all, was more important, he told himself. If he was *able* to be a father, was he cut out for fatherhood?

Of course not.



# The Orheim Company

(Kompani Orheim)

First published: 2005, 461 pp

Foreign rights sold: Danish (Batzer)



Jarle is 24 when one night a phone call rouses him from his drunken sleep. It is his mother, telling him that his father is dead. Instead of sadness, Jarle is filled only with anger and a sense of relief.

Two decades earlier, everything looked good for the small nuclear family - the Orheim Company - who moved into a terrace house in Norway's oil capital Stavanger. As Jarle grows up, he possesses an enormous will to make the best of his world: He falls violently in love with girls, becomes an anti-racist and a feminist; and pop music is constantly playing in his head. But one day Jarle changes his last name. He no longer wants to be Jarle Orheim; from now on his name is Jarle Klepp. What happened to the Orheim Company? Why was it that those who wanted only the best for one another, ended up doing each other harm?

“touchingly empathic.... well-written, and more than a little intelligent”

DAGENS NÆRINGSBLIV

“Finally, Renberg!... a page-turner, well told and well constructed... exceeding all expectations... Renberg's best. We will be waiting impatiently for the third book about Jarle”

STAVANGER AFTENBLAD

“an entertaining and inviting novel, which also offers insights about what being human entails”

NRK

## Winner of the 2005 P2 Listeners' Novel Prize

Nominated to the 2005 Brage Prize for Best Norwegian Novel  
More than 75.000 copies sold in Norway so far

“believable, gripping and essential... Renberg has [...] found his force, which is the personal narrative... an important book”

KLASSEKAMPEN

“Renberg reaffirms his strength as a writer... He is an expert at building characters... And he is obviously an author who will attract many readers”

DAGBLADET

★★★★★ (5/6)

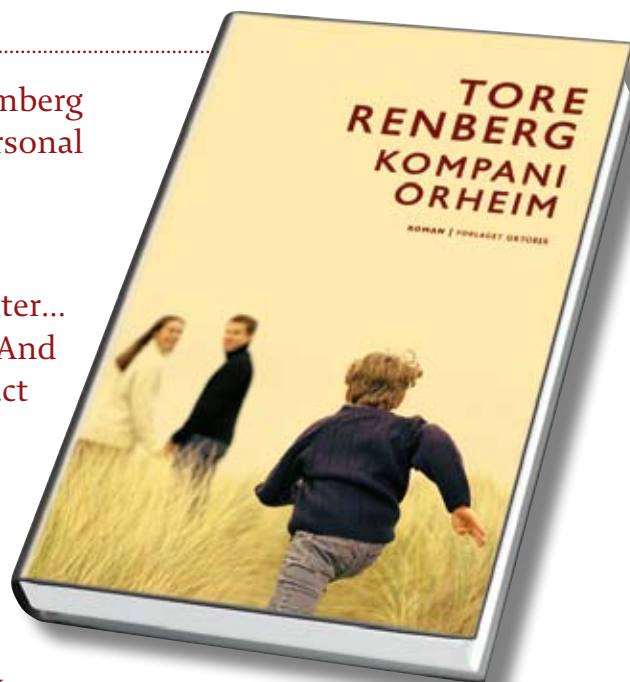
“An outstanding book about growing up... The description of the dramatic consequences of alcohol is disturbingly well done”

FREDRIKSSTAD BLAD

★★★★★ (5/6)

“*The Orheim Company* is marked by a magnificent soreness ... The descriptions are merciless, the characters accurate, and the story itself quite intelligent”

HAUGESUNDS AVIS



”With *The Orheim Company* Tore Renberg continues his exploration of the vulnerability and exposure attached to growing up in a world that does not always agree with one’s expectations. The novel distinguishes itself with a good insight into human relations. The main character Jarle Klepp is portrayed with tenderness and sensitivity, and has become a distinct and authentic figure in Norwegian contemporary literature”

THE JURY’S GROUNDS FOR THE BRAGE PRIZE NOMINATION

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Sample translation from

# The Orheim Company

TRANSLATED FROM THE NORWEGIAN BY DON BARTLETT

*I was drunk when it happened*

Hello.

Jarle?

Are you there?

The world is alive: wet foliage, drenched lawns, topsoil floating from flower beds and gardens, stripes on house fronts, sparks under the lamp posts, flooding drains. Bergen is under water, it is the middle of the night and autumn in Norway. It is pouring down over the university, washing in over Bryggen, and the waters are rising in Allégaten. But are you there?

No. You aren't.

You have sunk into a deep, dreamless state of hibernation, and you have vanished. There is nothing inside you to suggest that you exist. Everything is terminated. It is not dark in the country where you are, but it is not light, either. It isn't warm, and it isn't cold. The surface is gut-smooth and dead. Emotions have set, everything is barren. In these sparse depths only the simplest forms of life can survive. Only tranquil, undisturbed sleep.

But Jarle?

Someone wants to get hold of you.

Hello?

Jarle?

The telephone is ringing. Are you there?

Nothing is better than the state you are in now, simply sleeping, not feeling anything at all. How, Jarle Klepp, 24 years old, did you manage to get there? The warming spirits, the heavy beer, the alcohol that has pumped you full of paralysis and invincibility. You sat in a basement flat in

Danmarks plass drinking steadily, steadfastly, for eight hours: beer, gin, tonic, red wine, whisky, spirits. You felt the warmth spread, you felt your thoughts detaching themselves from their usual places, you felt your courage rising, and everything that normally seems impossible, or embarrassing, has become simple.

But Jarle!

The telephone is ringing.

It is the middle of the night and someone wants to get hold of you.

You have to wake up, Jarle.

Are you there?

It is a pitch black night in Nygårdshøyden, a waterlogged November and autumn. Outside the windows, the trees stand bare; along the pavements the faded leaves lie in the rain. A few hours ago you were staggering through the streets, humming songs from the 90s, happy and masterful. Here we are now, entertain us. A drunken student, midway through your Philosophy course at the University of Bergen. With your legs wide apart, you pissed into a flower bed outside the Sciences Building. You tottered in and out of the light from the street lamps, with the pouring rain above your head and the tarmac beneath your feet on your way home to Allégaten. You came closer to your flat, came closer to Lene who was in bed asleep, and gradually your Dutch courage began to dissipate, gradually you stopped flying. You began to sink. Feet soaking, muscles aching, joints worn, mood grim. What were you doing? Sitting there yelling, shouting to a fellow student that you wanted to hear a different song, leaning across the table and talking about the American elections in the light of deconstruction-

ism? Staring hard, and without any embarrassment, at the erect upper body of the girl sitting next to you. Then you had to go home. You were wet, you were cold and there was only one solution: collapse and sleep. Into the street, sharpen up, walk straight to the entrance door, blink, aim with the key for the keyhole. You missed, dropped the key on the floor and the noise resounded against the walls. You tried again and again until you managed to unlock the door to the flat you and Lene rent for four thousand kroner a month. You stumbled into a chair and paused for a second to hear if she was awake, to peep into the living room to see if she was sitting there, waiting for you, angry. No. Not a sound. You swallowed your breath, flipped off your black shoes, held out your rain-soddened coat, moved around in stocking feet as quietly as you could. Into the kitchen. Tore off a piece of paper from the kitchen roll and wiped your forehead and glasses. Stretched for a large glass, filled it with water and drank. Then you gingerly opened the bedroom door.

Yes.

She was asleep. Wasn't she?

Then you crashed out. Disappeared into a deep noisy drunken coma, a blessing for you and hugely irritating for her, who had to listen to the heavy breathing of the stinking body, who had been tossing and turning for hours, waiting for you, just to hear you stumble across the parquet floor. A few minutes later you were flat out on your back. Your mouth open, gurgling noises coming from your throat, snoring, spread out in the bed with your legs apart and your arms untidy, like a child in the sun or a Roman Emperor.

Some seconds after you fell asleep, something happened somewhere. A cool puff of air over your cheek, like a light hand, perhaps breath from a mouth, but you didn't notice it.

Hello?

"Jarle!"

The world is alive and something has happened.

"Jarle! The telephone's ringing!"

**HATE**  
is **NOT**  
a family  
value!



He wakes with a start from his amphibious night. The telephone had awoken Lene a long time ago. She has wriggled up onto her elbows, the borders of her eyes red. She shakes the body heavy with alcohol and immediately he is dragged up from the depths. Bewildered, he opens his eyes wide, feels his drunken body resist, hears Lene shouting and the telephone ringing. "Ugh?"

He knows who he is, he remembers where he was, but he is not proud of it. There is a hammering against the walls of his skull, and Jarle has a quick look at the alarm clock: 5:30.

"Jarle, the phone's ringing."

"Ugh?"

"Who the hell can be calling at this time?"

"My God, just answer it, will you," she says, turning her back on him.

He shuffles into the cold room and Lene mutters "You're still drunk". Jarle takes a few steps to stabilise himself and opens the living-room door. His heart increases its rhythm as his emotions, which a short time ago were prevented from working, are back on the job; his teeth ice up and his temples throb; the telephone is ringing, now, and it shouldn't.

Half past five?

He walks over to the telephone on the writing desk by the window, under the poster of Wings of Desire, beside the draft of a philosophy assignment and a pile of books about Hegel, Adorno and the Frankfurt school. He looks at the instrument, thinking that the ringing will stop at that moment. Someone must have dialled the wrong number. You can go and lie down again. But his pulse throbs in his ears and he thinks the thought that Jarle Klepp



cannot think: his mother. Something has happened to his mother.

“Yes, this is Jarle.”

He says it in a low voice, somewhat sternly.

“Jarle, it’s Mum here.”

He breathes out.

“It’s the middle of the night, Mum. Is something up?”

“Jarle.”

His mother says his Christian name for the second time in moments.

“Yes?”

He clears his throat.

“Erm, Jarle,” his mother says.

“Yes?”

“It’s your father,” she says.

“What?”

“Your father.”

“Dad?”

“Your father is dead,” she says.

“Dad?”

“Yes.”

“Dad?”

“Yes.”

“Dad?”

Jarle sinks down into the chair. He grabs his philosophy assignment as a reflex action; his eyes run over the title page: “The Light of Ambiguity – Hegel’s Linguistic Imprecision as an Epistemological Gain”. He turns the assignment over and puts it face down onto the table.

“Dad? Why?”

“I don’t know. They haven’t said much yet. His heart stopped.”

He hears Lene coming into the living room behind him and her voice saying: “Jarle? Is there anything the matter?” He stares in front of him, at the drawing by Bruno Ganz from Wings of Desire, tries to remember the poem from the film: als das Kind Kind war, ging es mit hängenden Armen, wollte, der Bach sei ein Fluss, der Fluss sei ein ...

Strom? Strom? Yes, Strom ... und diese Pfütze das Meer.

Mother’s voice: “It happened last night“

How did it go on? Als das Kind Kind war, wusste es nicht, dass es Kind war –

“Jarle? Are you going to come home?”

He turns round. Looks out towards the street. It is raining as if it is never going to stop.

“Yes,” he says finally. “I’m coming home.”

Lene comes closer.

Jarle is sober, Dad is dead and he feels her putting her arms around him. She whispers Jarle, Jarle, Jarle, just his name, but he wriggles out of her embrace.

“I’m sorry,” his mother says.

“Are you?”

“Yes. It’s terribly sad.”

Sad?

Should it be sad that he’s gone, should it be sad?

He sees Lene standing there with her arms down by her sides and only now does he realize that she is naked. She is so pale. She is too thin, he thinks. She is beginning to be skinny. There are no tits on her any more. She is so petrified of becoming fat that she only eats air, water and nothing else, and ends up becoming a frail bag of bones covered with transparent skin.

Lene comes towards him as he hears his mother repeat how sad it is. She stands in front of him, a scrawny wisp with prominent hips, stretching out her arms.

He pushes her away, looks out onto the street again.

“Yes, Mum,” he says. “Yes. Of course. We’re coming to Stavanger. Yes. Naturally. I’ll call the airport now.”

Lene puts out her white arms and begins to cry. She wants to hold him, but Jarle does not react. He gets up, says ‘Bye’ to his mother and puts the phone down.

“Your poor father,” Lene whispers.

He walks past her. Jarle does not take his eyes off the window panes. The rain running down the glass, the endless stream of water pouring down from the clouds.

Lene snuffles.

“Stop it,” he says brutally.

Jarle wipes the back of his hand across his eyes and feels his fingers getting wet.

His hands are shaking. There is a quiver at the corners of his mouth and his eyes become misty. He bursts into tears and hides in the space between the door and the book shelf, trying to cover his face with his arms.

The world is alive.

Radios are switched on in long-haul vehicles, small children open their eyes and babble themselves into consciousness, the power grid takes the strain, the temperature rises as the sun rounds the corner of Norway. The November morning becomes light, Bergen is on its feet, and the keenest students are up. Since Jarle remained on the floor with his face to the wall, Lene has packed for both of them.

She has called a taxi, put some food inside him, tried to give him a gentle hug, but he was unable to respond. They drove to Flesland with a talkative driver and Jarle talked more to him than to Lene. The taxi driver commented on both the weather and Bill Clinton – “well, he’s better than most” – and Jarle answered – with an academic smile – “most are better than most” – while staring at the windscreen wipers dispersing the rain. Lene was annoyed by Jarle’s questions about the weather and the news, his request to the driver to turn up the radio. She wished he had let her hold his hand, but he hadn’t. He thought it was fine to avoid the insistent closeness, her all too skinny body, he thought it was fine to chat about nothing with a taxi driver from Northern Hordaland, who could have no idea that this student, to his own surprise, had just been crying for two hours because his father had died.

“This is hard, Jarle. I can understand that.”

They arrive at the airport, early in the morning towards the end of November and stand in front of the counter. Jarle looks down at his shoes. They are black, shiny.

He doesn’t understand why it should be so hard. What was going to happen now? Dad six feet

under, Dad, like the leaves and the rain and the wind. What happens when people die? Autopsy? Perhaps not, he thinks. That is probably only when the cause of death is unclear. Funeral, at any rate. Perhaps you can get to see the dead body? Do I want to? he wonders, looking at Lene who is talking to a lady behind the counter. I think I do. But Dad has died. Funeral. My God. What if nobody comes. Shall we say anything? What shall we say at the funeral when there is nothing to be said. When the deceased isn’t someone you can say ‘he was a good man’ about, what do you say?

While Lene was getting the plane tickets and gently stroking the vein on the back of his hand with her forefinger, it strikes Jarle that perhaps he is the one who will have to say something at the funeral. Jarle can feel himself becoming nervous as they sit down and wait, the early-morning types around them, people with small black cases, wearing a silver-grey tie and dark suit. Is he going to have to stand in front of ten people in church and say something? And if so, what?

Lene wants to hold him again; she places her hand around his and this time he lets her do it.

He’ll have to lie.

It’s as simple as that. He nods quietly to himself as Lene says: “Jarle? We have to go. It says: Go to gate.” He understands that he has the choice between the impossible - saying it as it is - and the lie. Saying: my father lived a good life.

“How are you? Better?” Lene asks in a low voice while they are queuing for the flight.

“I don’t know what to say.”

She gives him a reassuring smile. “You don’t have to say anything.”

“I mean, at the funeral.”

“Do you have to say something then?”

“Probably have to.”

“You can say something nice, can’t you? One nice action, that’s all?”





He watched Lene giving the tickets to the man behind the counter. She doesn't know Dad. So far she has only met Terje Orheim, whom she considered to be easy-going.

She could give a better speech than me, he thinks. She could talk about Terje Orheim. The work colleagues could give better speeches than me, he thinks. The neighbours could give better speeches than me.

Terje Orheim?

Oh, Terje. He's dead, you say? How terrible. So young. He wasn't even 60, was he? Terje, yes. Never short of a snappy reply. I can remember that. A glint in his eye, you know. Personal.

Terje Orheim?

Is he dead? Head teacher at the Technical School? No. Well, I thought he would live to be a hundred. He was well liked, though. Strict when he had to be.

Terje Orheim?

Yes, I heard about that. He was always so considerate. Not simply Save the Child and the Salvation Army and surface things like that, he was the type to see inside people. Yes. He saw inside people.

Terje Orheim?

Do you know what I remember about him? Always gave you a thumbs-up. He was a thumbs-up type of man. Wasn't he. You noticed that too, didn't you?

"Can't you just say something nice about him?"

Lene asks again. "Something that gives an image of how he was?"

"My God, I was drunk when he died," he answers.

"Jarle, don't say such things."

"I don't know what to say."

They go on to the early-morning flight. Lene nods courteously to the stewardess who welcomes them on board. "It's not your responsibility," she says, "to talk about your father's life or anything like that. It just has to be a few words in commemoration. Don't think about it. You have to think of yourself now."

He looks at her, and suddenly he wonders who she is. This skinny skeleton working her way towards adult anorexia says that he should think of himself. She stands up, reaches up on her tiptoes in front of the small luggage lockers, and her hips almost disappear. She stretches her gaunt body, puts in her travel bag and jacket, and he thinks: Who is this? Shall I think about myself?

"Lene," he says roughly when she sits down, as if she had said something indecent. "This is something you know nothing about. I can't think about myself without thinking about Dad."

"No," she says meekly, lowering her eyes.

"And you've got to eat," Jarle says. "You're too thin."

The backs of the seats are put into an upright position. The aeroplane takes off. The stewardess goes through the safety procedures and Jarle follows closely as if they are going to crash during the ascent. It is only a short trip from Stavanger to Bergen. They have to break cloud cover and meet the morning sun up above. It is November and Dad is dead. All he can think is: I have no idea what to say because if I tell the truth it is too hard to hear.

He half turns his head towards Lene. Her heavy eyelids over her eyes - that was part of what he fell in love with. These heavy eyelids over her large eyes, enormous and round, set in a lean face. Where did it all go? I don't know her, he thinks, and she has no idea who I am. To him she seems beautiful as she sits there, more beautiful than earlier that chaotic morning - more beautiful because I know less about her, because she knows less about me?

Halfway during the flight he falls asleep. It is only now that he realises he had been drinking for several hours the night before, and he nods off. For a minute maybe, maybe five. It isn't a dreamless sleep, it is a light sleep during which the brain is in high activity, and he doesn't know if he is dreaming or thinking, but what Jarle remembers is how as a child in the 80s he used to wake up in the middle of the night, at home in their terraced house to a rumpus coming from the ground floor. He was

asleep in the basement, protected under posters of Depeche Mode, Duran Duran, and Frankie goes to Hollywood, and it was the weekend, and he always slept lightly at weekends. He squeezed his eyes together, felt the horror shoot through his body. He heard a plate crash on the kitchen floor, a chair being knocked over, the stereo suddenly being put on at maximum volume, and Louis Armstrong singing: Oh, what a wonderful world.

Jarle is woken up by the stewardess asking if he wants coffee. He does. Lene puts three fingers up to her light blonde hair and tucks her fringe behind her ear. She smiles at him, and he thinks that this morning while we are flying through the clouds and the morning sun hits the window, she looks at me with greater affection in her eyes than for a long, long while. But she doesn't know me.

"Have I told you about how I used to wake up during the nights when I was small?"

"No," she says. "You never want to say anything about the time you were a child. I only know that they are divorced, and that ... yes, but we don't need to talk about that now."

"Have I told you about 1988?"

"Nope, don't think so." Lene takes his hand. "Shh, Jarle," she says. "We don't need to talk about that now."

"I've never told you about the trip to Hardangavidda National Park?"

She shakes her head.

"No? Or the time I had to save Dad's life?"

"No," Lene repeats as the captain's voice on the intercom wishes the passengers a good morning, gives them the cruising altitude and says that it is a bright autumn day and the weather in Stavanger is good." "Save his life? What do you mean, save his life?"

She smiles hesitantly. "Was that in 1988, too?"

Jarle nods.

"Oh, then perhaps you can talk about that at the funeral?"

Jarle opens the plastic milk container, pours the milk into his coffee and stirs.

The early-morning flight is almost full. Lene holds his hand, the bright autumn light shines through the window and Jarle thinks: Dad is dead.

He watches the milk whirling round in the coffee cup, it follows the pull of the teaspoon, whirls from a chalky white to beige, and he thinks that it looks like pictures he has seen of the universe: the world is alive.

Then he leans back.

Closes his eyes for a few seconds.

Right.

So he has gone.

Finally.

A gentle breath brushes across his cheek, like a light touch from a cool hand or a puff of air. A nerve twitches in his neck and he gives a start. Opens his eyes.

"Lene?"

He looks at her. She is sitting with her hands in her lap.

Did she stroke my cheek? Did she blow on me? She looks at him. She repeats herself.

"That sounded good, the time you had to save his life. You can talk about that, can't you?"

"No," he says. "I can't."



# The Man Who Loved Yngve

(Mannen som elsket Yngve)

First published: 2003, 382 pp

Foreign rights sold: Danish (Batzer), French (Odin éditions), Hungarian (JAK), Swedish (Norstedts).



Don't  
tell me  
who I can  
love

The year is 1990. It is the year the world chooses to call a halt in order to start afresh. While Gorbachev is touring the world in triumph, Jarle is still at school in Stavanger. He plays in a band, has a beautiful girlfriend, wears a Palestinian scarf and holds strong opinions on most of the issues of the day. He is the kind of person who is determined to be different. Then a new boy starts in his school, a boy seemingly as straight as they come and undistinguished in every way. But there's something special about him nonetheless. Who is this odd newcomer, Yngve? Jarle's meeting with Yngve is destined to change everything - both for him and for those around him.

This novel is a wide-ranging tale of fascination and falling in love, of trying to become a human being, of entering the world, of loving one's mother and hoping to avoid speaking to one's father.

"... engaging and persuasive"

DAGBLADET, OSLO

"An exceptionally well-written novel"

NRK

"This year's most powerful novel about growing up"

KLASSEKAMPEN, OSLO

"The powerful energy of Tore Renberg's novel takes its reader by surprise (...) The novel describes the boundless courage and immense vulnerability of teenage boys, the troughs and peaks of their emotions, and the mad intensity of falling in love"

AFTENPOSTEN, OSLO

" a joyful story about falling in love at first sight. An overwhelming infatuation, and I have to say, an enchanting novel"

DAGENS NYHETER, SWEDEN

" the resigned tone makes me think at times of Haruki Murakami's bestseller Norwegian Wood, with the Beatles replaced by the The Jesus and Mary Chain and Japan swapped for - you guessed it - Norway"

EXPRESSEN, SWEDEN

"I am seriously tempted to skip bits just to find out what happens. Even though it's long into the wee hours, I just can't seem to put it down"

KRISTIANSTADSBLADET, SWEDEN



”One of the most important threads running through the novel is the description of unexplosive passion. Jarle quite simply becomes Werther, comparable with regard to pastamina, infatuation and blindness. It might all sound immature and silly, but in fact it is very touching (...) The reader lead down a twisting road of sparkling imagination, self-irony, and darkness through the un-predictable territory heart at its most vulnerable”

SVENSKA DAGBLADET, SWEDEN

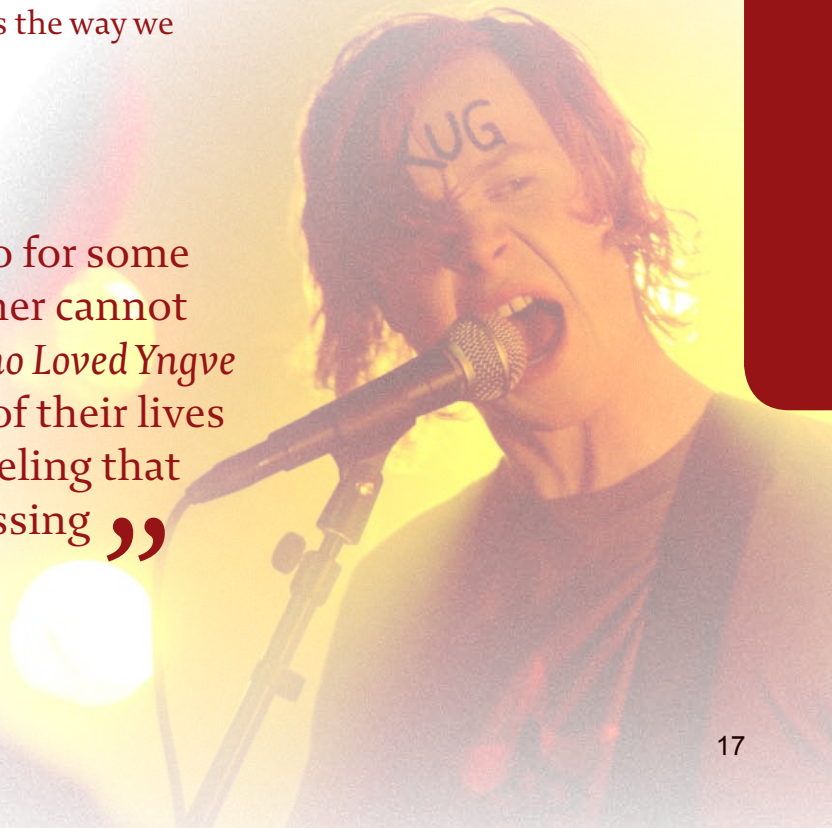


” an emotional cluster of a novel with Love as its main character, and indeed this is the way we fall in love – with love itself”

HALLANDS NYHETER, SWEDEN

“A masterpiece ... people who for some unfathomable reason or other cannot imagine reading *The Man Who Loved Yngve* are going to spend the rest of their lives wandering around with a feeling that something important is missing ”

GEFLE DAGBLAD, SWEDEN



# Grandma's Got Cable TV / Video Boy

(Farmor har kabel-TV / Videogutten)

First published: 2006, 219 pp

## Grandma's Got Cable TV

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- What's that, asks Grandma, sensing it again, that the present time is suddenly here, right in front of her.

- They're music videos, says Jonas, and Arve can't help feeling a bit embarrassed.

- Oh, says Grandma, so that's what it is.

*Grandma's Got Cable TV* takes place in Norway in the mid eighties, before commercial TV was widely available. For the two youngsters Arve and Jonas, the major problem is that they can't watch music videos, since they are only shown on cable TV. However, they suddenly realize that Arve's grandmother has cable TV in her apartment. Arve's parents haven't kept in touch with her, and Arve hasn't met his grandmother since he was a small child. The friendship that evolves between the older woman and the two boys is carefully and tenderly conveyed. A moving story with spontaneous presence, portraying two youngsters' fascination for the pop music of the eighties and an old woman who gets to know her grandchild and gains new knowledge of the times she is living in as the end of her life is drawing near.

## Video Boy

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*Do you dare to watch, Hasse?*

*Hasse nods.*

*You'll never be the same again, you realise that, right?*

*Hasse nods.*

*Video Boy* is the mesmerizing story of Pål and Hasse, aged thirteen and fourteen, who venture into a realm of darkness. They're tipped off about a boy called Video Boy, who seems to have every horror movie that was ever made. Video Boy is a frightening, weird, overweight and asthmatic teenager. Pål and Hasse can't quite figure out if Video Boy and his sister actually live by themselves, cooped up in their dark house. Pål and Hasse start coming over, bringing gifts in hope of being invited to watch the scary movies. Their acquaintance with Video Boy and the others who hang out at his house becomes an introduction to the strange and frightful. Video Boy's place also houses something far more uncontrollable than the gory movies. In Tore Renberg's clean, yet suggestive prose the boys' experiences come across like a meeting with pure evil.

*Grandma's Got Cable TV* and *Video Boy* tell the tale of boys in the eighties, and of friendship, music, TV and innocence lost.

★★★★★ (6/6)

“brilliant. The author writes matter-of-factly and unsentimentally – and still succeeds in evoking feelings, thoughts and experiences that capture the reader”

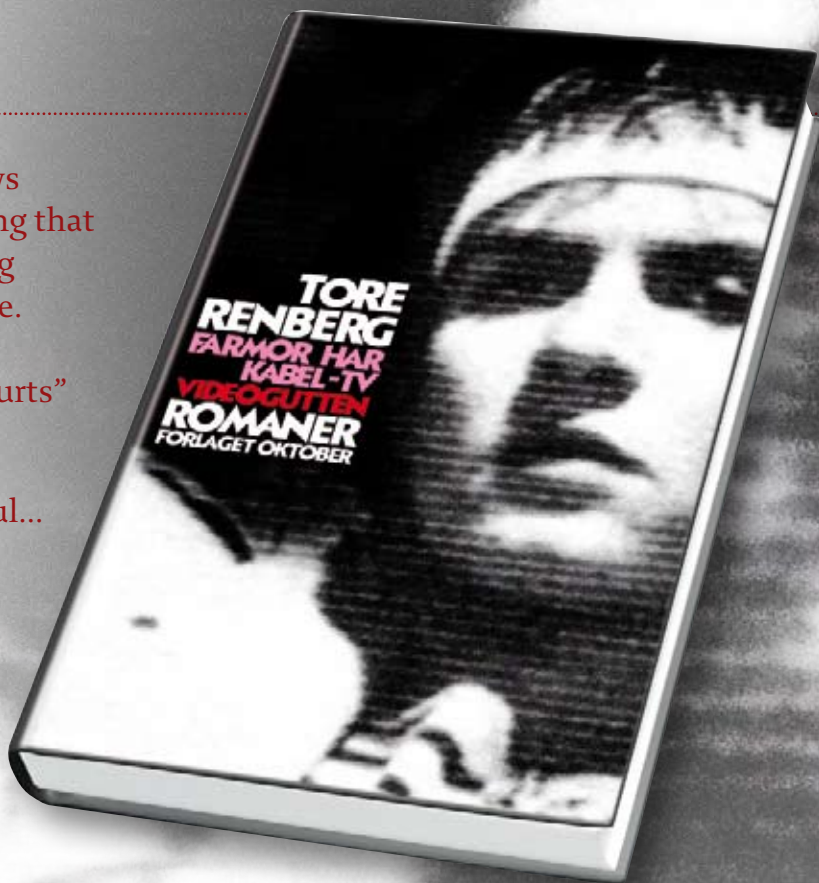
NORDLYS

“The youth years are always marked by a nagging feeling that there is something exciting happening somewhere else. Renberg writes about this dissatisfaction so well it hurts”

DAGENS NÆRINGS LIV

“Clearsighted and beautiful... a taste of Tore Renberg’s genuine writing talent”

TØNSBERGS BLAD



“one of the most interesting  
writers to emerge since 2000. He is a  
brilliant storyteller with a remarkable  
language and an original voice”

DAGENS NÆRINGS LIV

“the greatest storyteller of his generation”

AFTENPOSTEN

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