


FROSTINA

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By Kateřina and Zuzana Čupová





But we don't play much. Either my brother can't hear me, on account of the fridge noise in his headphones, or he can't see me because his hair is covering his eyes. And on top of that, I only come up to his belly button.

My brother would make a great vampire. He loves the cold and keeps the window open even when it's freezing outside. And in the summer, he moves his bed to the cellar, where it's cooler. He also often sleeps during the day.

There's another thing you need to know about my brother. He never does what anyone tells him to do. If someone says, "Go right," he'll go left, even if it never takes him where he wants to go.

One time, in winter, Mum told him, "Put something warm on, it's freezing outside." And I bet he went to his room for scissors, because when he came back, his jeans were even more ripped than they were before. That's my brother for you. I'm not making this up.

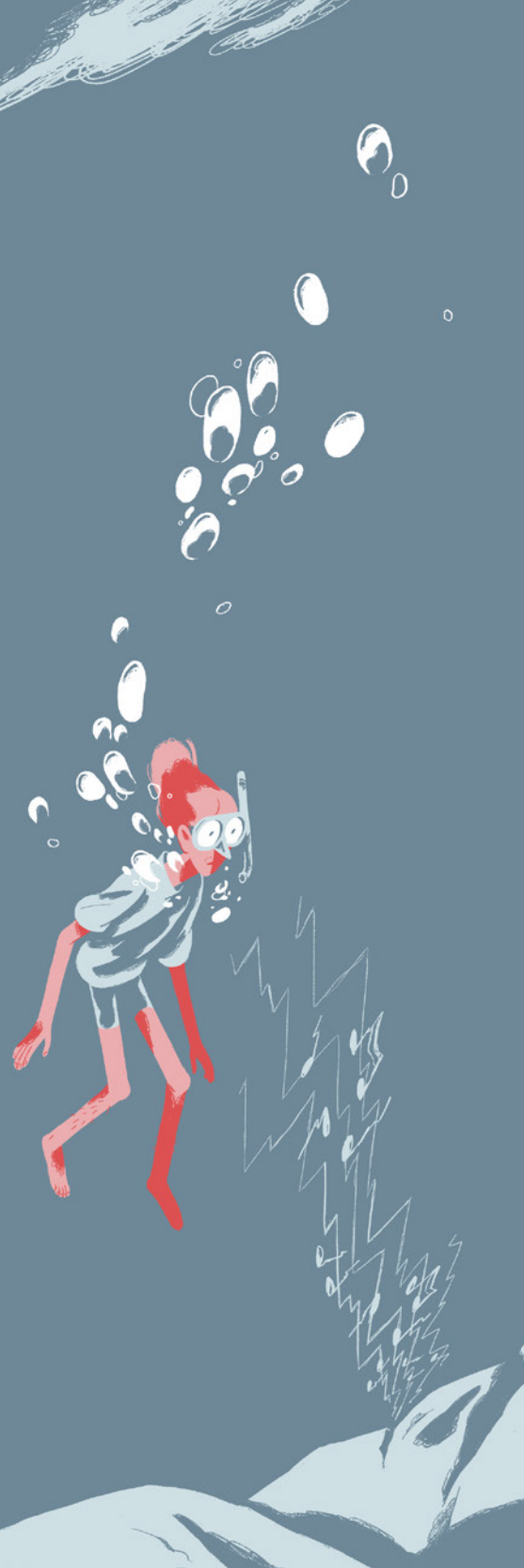
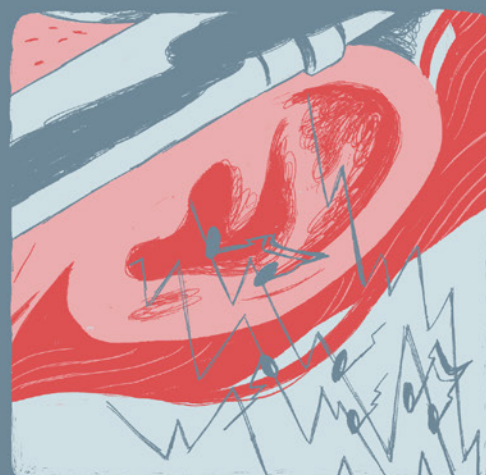
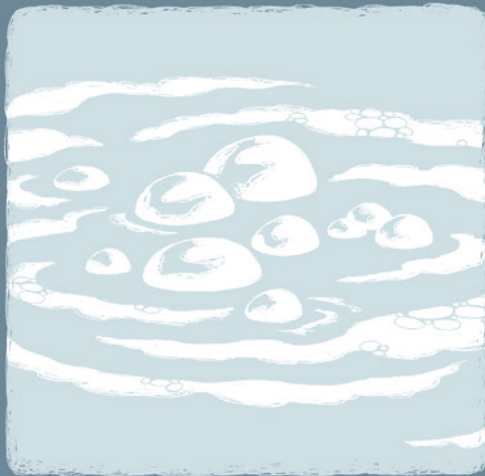
## Lake

That summer, we were planning to go on holiday. Our parents had been talking about the sea and looking at pictures of the sea on the internet. But somehow they didn't manage to book it in time. Or perhaps they just couldn't decide which sea to go to, because they all looked the same.

So, we went to the mountains, camping by a lake, like we do every year. It's a big lake, and there are fish in it, some of which are alive, others not. We went by car — me, Mum, Dad, and my brother.

Don't you think it's strange that my brother came camping with us? Last year, he didn't come, but this year our parents had worked him out. They told him, "Right, you're old enough now, you don't need to come. We know you've probably got your own plans." So, of course, he had to come.





## Brother goes north



My brother declared that he was going to look after a sled dog team.

This news was a great surprise to our parents and they reacted in the worst way imaginable.

"A sled dog team? The only animals you've ever looked after were fish!" said Dad.

"Yes, and I did a good job of it, too!"

"Erik... fish are not dogs," Mum chimed in.

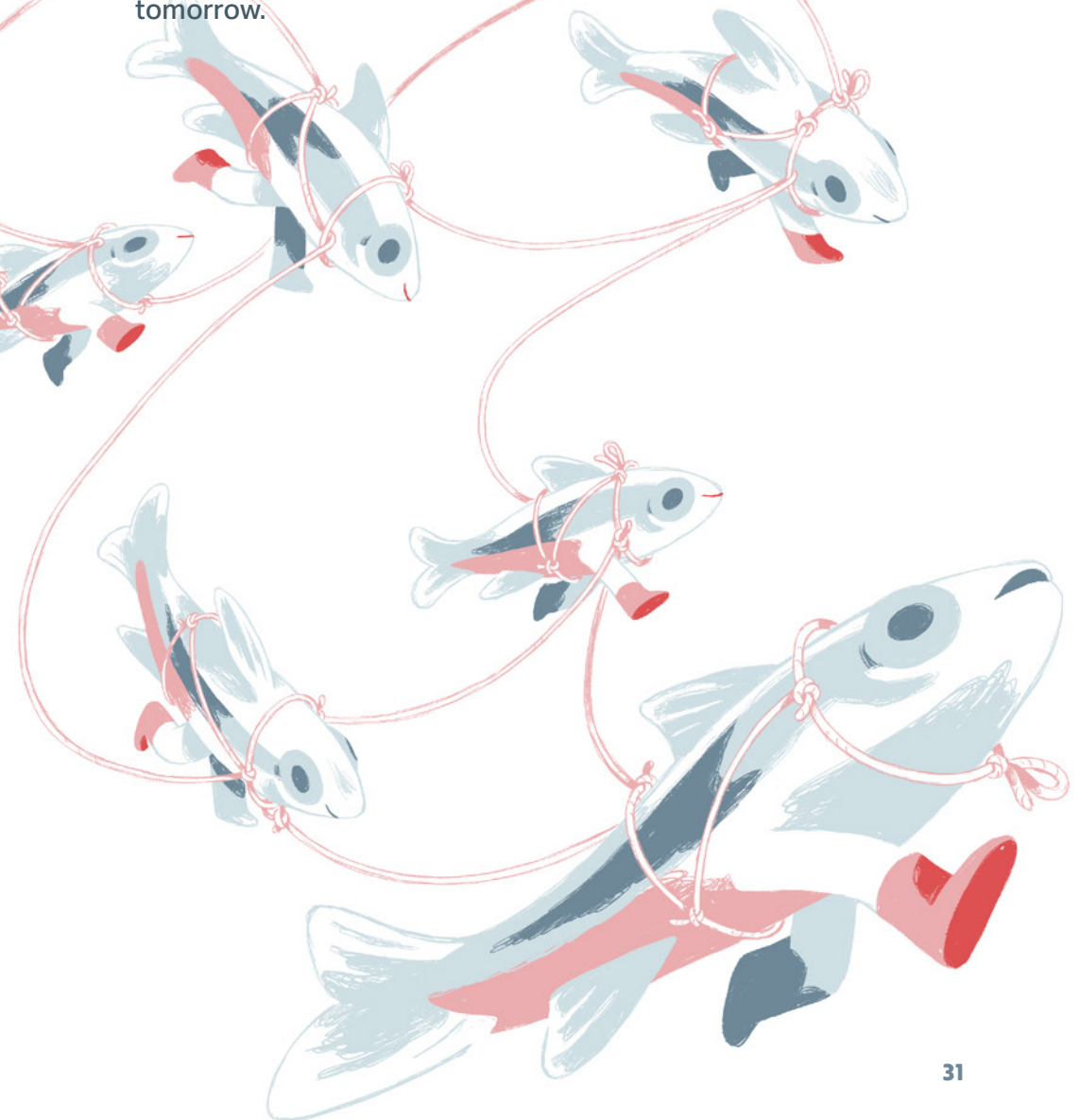
They told him that it was out of the question.

From that moment on, my brother was going to do it no matter what, although they argued about it for another two hours. I was in delight. It was going to be brilliant, having a brother with a sled dog team — we'd never even had a dog. But perhaps they would give him

another kind of team... of moose or walruses, or even fish. He really had taken good care of the fish... none of them had died on him.

Actually, it was the best idea my brother had ever had. However, whatever the team, he'd have to come to visit us with it, so the kids in my class could see. Otherwise, they wouldn't believe me.

In the end, my brother produced some tickets for a train to Denmark and a boat to somewhere even further north. Our parents realized the futility of their efforts. Erik was leaving the day after tomorrow.





The court of the Empress only goes to places where it has been minus five degrees centigrade for five days in a row. Neither the Empress nor the frost fairies bring the cold with them; they just hold onto it once it's there. On its travels, the court plays host to ice countesses and ice princes, who live in the eternal ice on the top of mountains and at the bottom of glacial valleys all over the world.

Frost fairies easily distinguish and appreciate different types of snow. The Ice Empress will happily spend the whole night sitting in a snow-covered glade, observing how the ice cracks beautifully on the trees (and how the trees crack under the ice). Sometimes, she moves through the frozen landscape faster than the north wind, while her ladies-in-waiting hunt snowflakes, trying to catch two that are most alike. Then they compete to see who can make the prettiest earrings from them.

Another favoured pastime is sitting in the mountains to watch how the ice so very, very sloooooowly carves into the rock of the valley. Apparently, it's very exciting. Frost fairies then try to predict what the valley will look like in ten thousand years, which is also said to be a lot of fun. You see, frost fairies view the world differently than we do. And they also live much longer. When Frostina's mum was a little girl, there was eternal ice where we live now.

Hairy mammoths once wandered in our back garden and it was bitterly, glacially cold. But that was a long time ago.

Frostina didn't travel with the court, as she liked dancing at home on the ice plains and diving in the dark sea beneath the ice. And with her singing she was able to join together ice floes, so she always had plenty of work with that. The frost fairies would often sing together to connect large sheets of ice. They built ice castles, palaces, and houses, depending on what was in demand among frost fairies at the time.

However, more recently, the ice floes were starting to break up, and the ice houses were becoming smaller and smaller. And no matter how hard the frost fairies sang, it had little effect.

Furthermore, increasing numbers of frost fairies from other corners of the world began moving north. It was said that the old aristocratic estates of eternal ice were slowly melting, and that it was no longer possible to live there all year round.

When Frostina heard this, she deeply regretted that she'd never visited those old cold lands in the south and that now she might never see them.



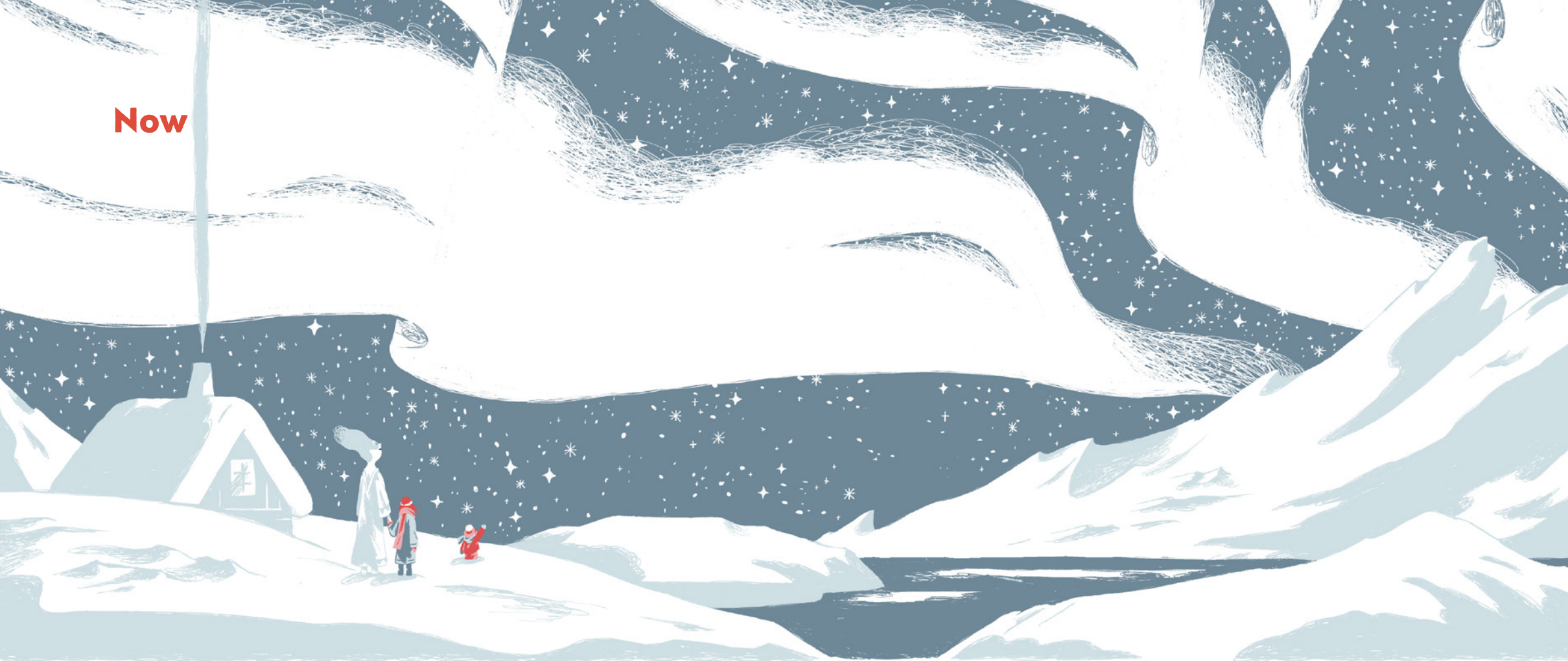
In the darkness at the bottom of the lake, it was comfortably cold, so she settled there, in a little crevice. And there she sat and sang a song, the kind for joining ice floes together, to make it colder down there.

And that's how the story and the ice cream ended. Then I went to the closet for my warm coat and woolly hat, and Frostina sang to me. It sounded like ice cubes in a glass, and my experienced ear instantly recognized that it was something my brother would like. In fact, with her song she had unintentionally lured him to the depths of the lake, and when he got close to her, she was so startled by him that she jumped into his ear.





Now



All this needs to be written down, I told myself. Otherwise, no one would believe it. So I wrote it all down and let Joe read it. Remember, the boring kid I mentioned at the beginning? But he didn't believe a word of it, not a teeny-weeny snowflake of it.

"Just you wait," I told him. "When winter comes and it's minus five degrees for five days in a row, you'll see! We'll go to the mountains and see the Ice Empress."

It's just that for two winters now, it hasn't been minus five for five days in a row.

Later, my brother invited us up north for his wedding. I wanted Joe to come with us, but he wouldn't. Up in the far north, computers don't work, and there's no mobile signal or Wi-Fi.

The wedding was wonderful, all glittery and echoing with the sounds of my brother's and Frostina's strange music. The wedding cake was a giant ice cream. Very pretty to look at, but I didn't have any. Since that night, I get queezy at even a whiff of ice cream.

We were all happy but frozen to the bone.

In the evening, there was lots of dancing. Our parents spent the whole time huddling inside a cabin my brother had built on the ice floe, as there was a tiny stove inside. But I stayed outside. Frostina had told me that if we waited, we were sure to see the court of the Ice Empress passing by. And that's what really happened.

It was amazing!



## Sweet ending

And so I went into the cabin to thaw out. Next to me was a piece of the ice cream cake, but I still didn't feel like eating it.

ut the frost fairies absolutely adored ice cream and polished off the whole cake. Frostina's mother even took the recipe with her into space. So I can actually say that I, Molly, was responsible for ice cream reaching distant planets. And that's all because one night I ate ice cream with a frost fairy until I felt ill. Can you believe it?





**Some people see a pile of snow and say “a pile of snow.” And Molly? Molly sees a snow hotel with a ski slope. Although she tends to exaggerate, this story really happened. Here’s how it goes:**

Once upon a time, there was a little frost fairy named Frostina, who was very curious and interested in everything. But then she got separated from her frosty companions and ended up alone and thawing with spring almost upon her. To avoid completely melting away, she had to jump into a ... Brrr, it’s chilly. The rest, you’ll just have to read for yourself.

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