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## Frode Grytten and Mari Kanstad Johnsen: *Bedtime*

**Night-time read: A smart meta-story from Frode Grytten and Mari Kanstad Johnsen.**

“Make up a book for me!”

Picture books for children who can't get to sleep are a genre unto themselves. They are usually designed so that grown-ups can carry out a series of tasks to make their little ones finally nod off. The twist in *Bedtime*, however, becomes clear when the child interrupts their evening ritual after the bedtime story is over. Instead of going to bed, she stays behind with her dad and starts pointing out all the books on the bookshelf, declaring that she wants a book that is all about her. The rest of the story is a rambling, associative dialogue between father and daughter about what this made-up book should be about, as well as what special, imagined abilities the daughter should have in her story.

*I want to travel around the entire world in my story.*

*Hrm. You know you get carsick easily, right?*

*Not in my story.*

With its roots in an everyday conversation, the book manages to pose questions about the border between literature and reality, between the fantastic and the day-to-day, between truth and fiction. Yet this border is flexible. The characters speak about how hard you need to practise to walk on tightropes in real life, and by the end of the book, the girl points out that nothing should happen in their imagined story except completely normal, everyday things.

These questions about fiction and reality are truly vast, even for grown-ups. For children in the target age group, however they are a dime a dozen.

They will have plenty of play and encounters with literature as their lives unfold. But that doesn't mean that they're ever quite done with the conversation. Take, for example, the way the girl's father gives way to his imagination when they run into her deceased grandfather.

*Go over to him, buddy.*

*I don't want to. I'll start crying.*

*Why?*

*Because grandpa doesn't exist outside this book.*

In good illustrated books like this one, there is plenty to talk about both in terms of the text and the images. The reading experience becomes a combination of reading along and conversations between parent and child about what they are reading, and what they can see. After reading “Bedtime” to your children, what will naturally follow is a conversation about what *their* story will be about. It is at this point the book will begin to snowball, continuing to affect you even after you are finished reading. It will pick up again a few days later when you turn the first pages once more, and your conversations will guide both you and your child down fresh, new paths to explore.

Frode Grytten, although best known as an eminent novelist for adults, has been writing children’s books for over 20 years. This time he has another ace up his sleeve, the illustrator Mari Kanstad Johnsen. Her drawings are uninhibited, almost sketch-like line drawings that are brimming with colour. The choice to make the father look so similar to his daughter works especially well, making it seem like you’re looking at him from her perspective, and look at her from his. Smart!”

Daily national paper, *Klassekampen*

“The pages are filled with details that invite multiple read-throughs and a wealth of rich, harmonious colours”

Daily national paper, *Bergens Tidende*

“Both verbally and visually, *Bedtime* is a heartwarming, fun-filled story about creating magic together, and about spending time in close company”

Daily national paper, *Dagbladet*, 5 on the die

“*Bedtime* is a pearl of a book - guaranteed to inspire readers young and old [...] Top stuff!”

Daily local paper, *Hardanger Folkeblad*