

Stilton Literary Agency



The Weight of Snow Crystals

Original title: Vekten av Snøkrystaller
Publisher: Oktober Forlag 2006
Fiction / Novel

The Weight of Snow Crystals is a strong and moving novel about a precocious boy who hides a terrible secret. It is also a painful portrayal of a father and son relationship, and how the ones who are closest to us can fail in offering love and support when we need it the most.

The protagonist is a fourteen year old boy living in Oslo in the sixties. Ski jumping is his great passion, and he has a genuine talent for it. His father, a soft-spoken optometrist, is ambitious on his son's behalf, while his beautiful, but slightly absent-minded mother wishes that he would give up what she considers a dangerous sport. They are a loving and close family.

But something is very wrong with the boy, and he is alone with his doctor when he receives news of his test results; he has a rare muscular disease that will ultimately render him a paralytic. The deterioration can happen quite fast or over time – it is impossible to predict. And since just one more ski jump could be dangerous, he is told he must give it up at once. The boy decides to keep his condition a secret, refusing to come to terms with it.

The next time he jumps, his coach and the other boys at ski jump practice watch him as he lands, buckling his legs and breaking his ankle. Now his father hears about the illness, but insists that they keep it a secret from his mother. Why is it so important to hide the truth from her?

The boy recovers from the fall, but finds it increasingly difficult to conceal his worsening condition – at school with his classmates, on a date with a girl, and at home with his parents.

Thorvald Steen

Thorvald Steen is one of Scandinavia's leading authors, translated into 26 languages. His international breakthrough came with the novel *Don Carlos* (about Charles Darwin). This and other novels have been critically acclaimed bestsellers. *Camel Clouds* had 22 print runs in Turkey. *Constantinople* and *The Weight of Snow Crystals* were bestsellers in Norway. The same applies to *The Little Horse*, about Snorri Sturluson, bestsellers in Iceland and Russia.

Thorvald Steen has received numerous prizes including the Swedish Academy's Doubloug Prize, the Saga Prize (Iceland), the Ján Hollý Prize and the Comenius Medal (Slovakia). Steen was chairman of NORLA and the Norwegian Authors' Union for many years, and a board member for PEN International.

Other titles

Sometimes you're absolutely correct (2015)
The Invisible Library (2015)
Balance (2012)
Lionheart (2010)
The Longest Leap (2008)
Kamelskyer (2004)
Den Lille Hesten (2002)
Konstantinopel (1999)
Don Carlos/Giovanni (1993)

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One night, the boy witnesses his mother suffering a violent breakdown and being forced into an ambulance by his father and a neighbour. His father is so preoccupied with his wife's mental condition, that he is unwilling to realise what is happening to his son, and subsequently the boy experiences this as an abandonment and a betrayal. As the boy gradually experiences the loss of control over his legs, the father grows ever more vague and distant. He goes to see his mother at the asylum, but she hardly seems to recognise him. Finally, the boy decides to jump one more time. Knowing that it might be fatal, he still goes for the biggest ski jump of them all – Holmenkollen ski jump. I've got nothing to lose, he tells himself as he stands at the top of the ski jump, looking down.

The Weight of Snow Crystals tells the story of a boy facing the gravest and most difficult challenge of his life, and having to go the whole distance on his own.

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