

ANGRYMAN

Gro Dahle • Svein Nyhus
Translated by Tara Chace



North
South

Boj is listening. There's something in the living room. It's Daddy.

Is Daddy quiet? Is Daddy happy? Is Daddy calm?

Yes. Daddy's calm now. Now Daddy's happy!

See how happy Daddy is! He's as cheerful as apples on the table and raisins in a yellow bowl. Cheerful as a bag of lemon drops and a three-layer birthday cake with candles on top. Cheerful! Cheerful as some presents tied up with ribbons and a glass of soda with a straw. Cheerful as apple pie.

Mama's laughing in her finest dress.

"My daddy," Boj says, looking at Daddy. Big, big, cheerful Daddy. Daddy's hands are so big. Daddy's hands have red knuckles.

My daddy, Boj thinks, looking at Daddy.

I might be as big as Daddy someday, Boj thinks.





Daddy is quiet.
Boj looks at Daddy. Why is Daddy quiet now? Is Daddy tired?
Is Daddy worn-out? Is Daddy angry? Everything is so delicate. The
whole living room is made of glass. Everything is swaying. Because
something's in the living room. It's Daddy.

And Daddy is quiet.

Something's creeping out from the corners. Something's waiting in
the wall. Shadows in the wallpaper. A cupboard that's open just a crack.
Vases getting ready to fall. "Shh, close the doors carefully. Shh, walk
quietly across the floor. Clear the glasses from the table."

Is Daddy in the living room now?

"Shh," Mama says, even though Boj isn't saying anything.

"Be quiet," Mama says.







There's something in the living room. It's Daddy. There's something in the house. It's Daddy. Boj feels something tighten. Boj's hands hurt. And Boj's heart starts to race. The race inside Boj is catching up with him.

Mama takes Boj into her arms. Mama says something with her mouth.

"*Shh*, Mama, *shh*. Don't let your mouth talk."

Mama sets Boj on her lap. Boj's leg is trembling. Because Daddy is sitting in his chair and pulling the curtains in his eyes. He closes off his face.

Why is Daddy like that? Boj thinks. Was it something I did? Was it something I said? Boj wonders, hunkering down inside of himself. Is Daddy calm now? Is Daddy happy? Is Daddy mad?

"I'm not mad," Daddy says. "Don't say I'm mad when I'm not mad," he says. The first thing is his voice, the small tone in his voice. It's that little flag. His voice tightens more and more. And his voice gets padlocks on it, and sharp edges. "I'm not mad," Daddy says. But behind Daddy's voice, there is a closed door. And behind the door, behind his voice, there is a dark cellar. And down in the cellar, someone is waiting. A bent back. A dark muscle. A neck.

Mama holds Boj tightly on her lap. She strokes and strokes Boj with her hands, and she keeps stroking. And Boj hears the clock chime a hundred chimes.



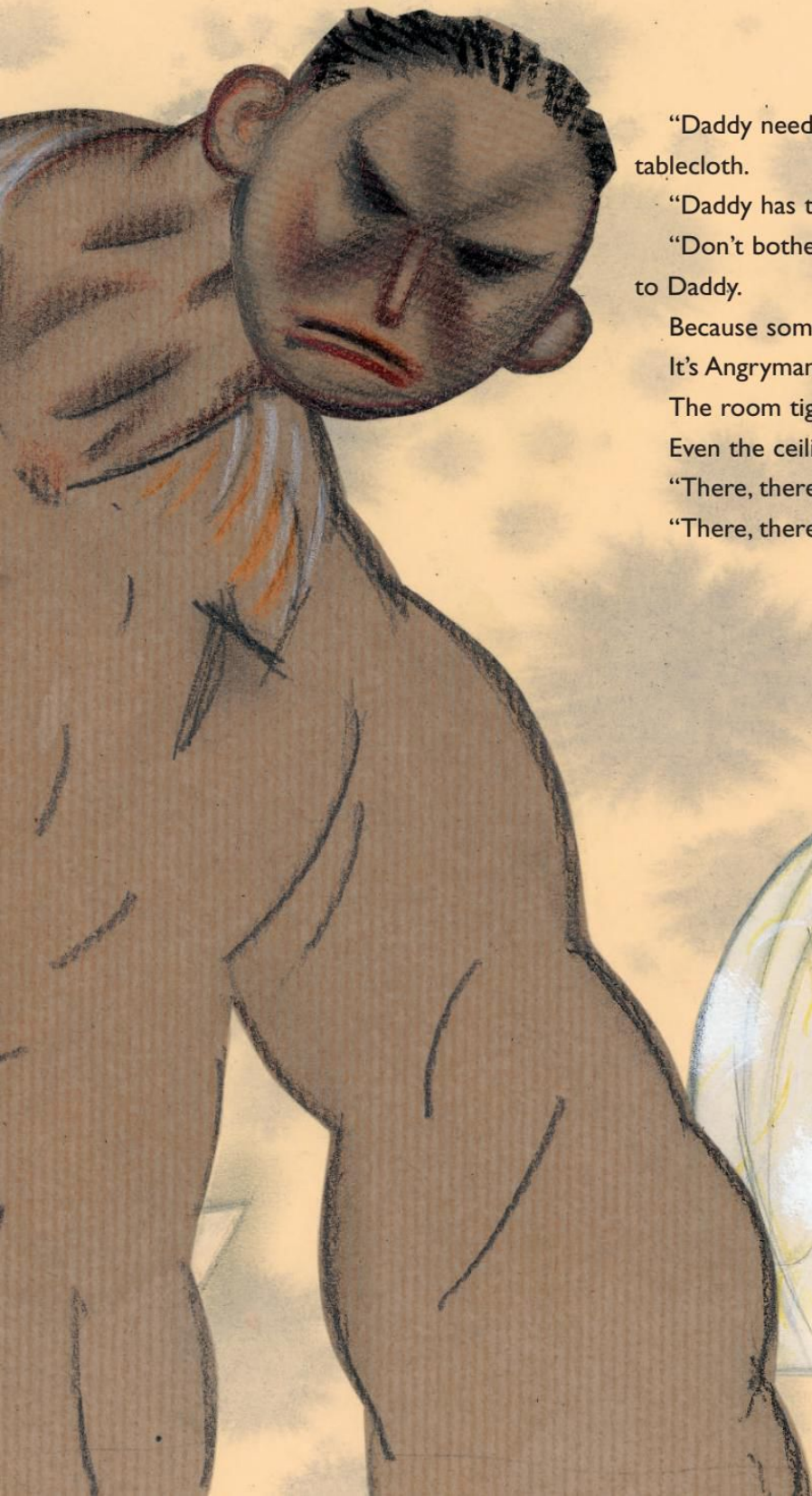
It's just Daddy. But in that cellar behind Daddy's voice, someone is coming up. And someone is coming up the stairs inside Daddy. Boj hears it in his breathing. Boj hears it in the steps and in the door that slams. It's Angryman who's coming up Daddy's back. Angryman curling around Daddy's neck. Angryman climbing up ladders of ribs. It's Angryman who wants out.

Oh dear Daddy, don't let Angryman out.

Don't let Angryman come. I'll be so good. I won't say a word. I won't breathe. But Boj hears Angryman coming. Everyone can hear Angryman coming. Angryman is in Daddy's breathing, in his face. In his throat. In his neck.

In his hands and legs. Angryman is everywhere on Daddy. Everyone sees it. Everyone notices it. Everyone. Except for Daddy.





"Daddy needs to rest a little," Mama says, smoothing the tablecloth.

"Daddy has to work hard," Mama says, smoothing the rug.

"Don't bother Daddy now," Mama says, closing the door to Daddy.

Because something's in the living room. It's not Daddy. It's Angryman.

The room tightens down to the very walls.

Even the ceiling is holding its breath.

"There, there, there, there, there," Mama says.

"There, there, there, there, there, there," Mama says.

