

‘Did Elly really come this way?’ I ask.  
‘Why don’t you tell me what has happened to her?’

‘You must not hold us up with all this chat,’ the man tells me. ‘We cannot stand here. Quick.’

‘I am not going in there till you tell me if Elly is here.’

‘Yes, yes. I keep telling you, but you keep standing about; holding us up. We need to hurry.’

He grabs my hand and tugs. I am being squeezed between the rocks. Then, pop - I am out of the narrow gap and standing on flat sand.

‘So how did Elly get here,’ I ask. ‘Did she come here by herself? Did you bring her? When will I see her?’

But the man is running on, across a stretch of yellow beach. His small flat feet

are slapping as they run on the wet sand. There is something funny about that slapping sound.

Then I see.

His prints on the sand show that his feet are webbed. Ducks have webbed feet.

‘Are you a duck man?’ I call.

I am trying to be funny, but the small man stops. Maybe he is mad with me.

When I catch up with him, he tells me, ‘No I am not a duck man. I am Marbig. I am a Sasten. And if you want to risk standing there, being silly, you can. But you should think about the fact that the sea is coming in, and if you don’t get off this beach, you will be swept away. That’s if you are lucky. If you are not lucky, the Zoths may get you.’