

This text was written by Kent Hultqvist and inspired by the poetry of **Alf Hambe**.

The Dog Cousins' outing to Steninge - Stora Skär (Big Skerry)

Semlan and Stella stood by the beach/shore? and looked out over the Molom Sea.

- Can you see Stora Skär out there? - said Stella with big eyes and pointed with her paw across the sea. - Doesn't it lie there nicely? As if it was just floating around.

- Today it lies completely still, but sometimes the wind can be very strong and make it bobble up and down in the water, said Semlan convincingly.

- Get real, Semlan! Stora Skär can't bobble! Said Stella determinedly.

- Look really closely and use your imagination, mumbled Semlan to herself.

- Do you want to/would you like to jump in and swim around Stora Skär? Asked Stella excitedly

Semlan looked up , wondering if Stella was joking.

- It will be a very exciting adventure, because a lot of things have happened on the other side of the skerry, said Stella surprised at not being afraid of her own words.

Semlan was not keen on swimming at all, not when there are boats.

- I can tell you that on the other side of Stora Skär, King Inge has lost his crown and throne. The crown is there on the bottom, shining, said Stella.

- Then all the fish that swim by must wear sunglasses said Semlan laughing.

- Semlan, are you making things up? Asked Stella.

- I never make things up. - But you can forget about swimming, said Semlan determinedly.

- You can't swim, Semlan, can you? Asked Stella.

- I can too swim, if the water is shallow, said Semlan proudly. - I think it's a better idea to ask the nice white swans down there in the water if they can drive us around Stora Skär.

- No, come back, Semlan! Too late again, said Stella shaking her head.

Semlan was already down by Steninge strand which is in Molomland.

- Hey swans! - How white and pretty you are, said Semlan with a nice voice.

- Thank you, said the two white noble swans at the same time.

- You see, I am not a big fan of swimming, so would you be able to take us around the Molom Sea for a little while?

The Swans looked at each other.

- Stella is too afraid of asking, but she would **LOVE** to ride on your nice wings, said Semlan.

Stella was shaking her head so much that it was about to fall off her neck.

- You can see that she is nodding, said Semlan convincingly.

The swans looked at each other and were wondering if they were looking at the same dog.

- That is a nice suggestion, said the swans at the same time. Let's swim to the beach/shore so that you can board without getting wet.

Semlan waved to Stella, who came (joined in?) with some hesitation (rather hesitantly?). Now the Dog Cousins were sitting on their own beautiful swan and were holding their thin white necks. You could hardly see Stella because she was almost (just about?) as white as the swan. They circled Stora Skär in a big wide bow and down there something was shimmering on the bottom. Slowly the swans continued swimming along the Molom Beach.

- Look, Stella! Can you see the boathouse up there? Shouted Semlan - Look at that nice door!

- We know where the door leads to, said the swans. - It's the door to a country on its own, or if you'd rather call it a kingdom - the Kingdom of the Sea.

- What is a Kingdom of the Sea? Asked Semlan.

- In there things always happen, which only happen in there. - Mysterious things, said one of the swans.

- Is it true? Said Semlan - Let us off! We want to go through that door! Shouted Semlan with joy. I want to go inside the Kingdom of the Sea.

- No, never! I don't want to! Never through that door! Shouted Stella with fear.

- Are you afraid, Stella? Asked Semlan kindly.

- Not afraid, but I have respect for strange things, said Stella looking down into the water and saw a flounder with sunglasses.

Just that moment came a strong gust of magic wind and knocked the door of the boathouse open.

- Look through the door! Shouted Semlan. There's a juniper bush moving. Here comes a dog - a poodle. Wow, she just turned into a juniper. Over there is a juniper bush which just turned into a dachshound. Wow, that is so cool!

Some transparent fairies were flying past and waving.

- Now I would like you swans to take us back to the beach where we boarded you, said Stella.

The swans swam calmly back and told them that there is no need to be afraid, because everyone here is kind and the Kingdom of the Sea is only exciting.

- Thank you for the ride, said Stella and Semlan in unison.

They jumped off and waved. The swans bowed calmly. Now Semlan and Stella were on their way to their next adventure.

Don't forget to look down into the water. Maybe you'll spot something that the king has dropped or a flounder with sunglasses.