

CHILDREN'S BOOKS
FROM ESTONIA

THE ESTONIAN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE CENTRE

The Estonian Children's Literature Centre is a specialised competency organisation that promotes the country's most outstanding children's works abroad. This includes representing Estonian children's authors at the world's largest book fairs, organising their appearances abroad, maintaining a database of Estonian children's literature, and producing publications on the topic. The Centre collaborates on a large scale with publishers, researchers, translators, teachers, and other specialists.

How can we help? We ...

- provide information on Estonian children's writers and illustrators.
- publish topical information in print and at www.elk.ee.
- help interested parties contact Estonian authors.
- assist in the selection of suitable translators for Estonian children's literature.
- inform publishers and translators about financial support opportunities.

The TRADUCTA grant programme

Traducta offers grants to translators and foreign publishers for translating Estonian literature and publishing it abroad.

The English Wallet programme supports the publication of Estonian prose and poetry into English.

Norsk Pengepung supports the translation of Estonian literary works into Norwegian, Icelandic, Swedish, and Danish.

Application deadlines are on 20 February, 20 May, 20 August, and 20 November each year.

Apply here:
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Contact us:

Estonian Children's Literature Centre
Pikk 73
10133 Tallinn
Estonia

Helena Koch
Foreign Rights Manager
E-mail: helena@elk.ee
Phone: +372 617 7238
www.elk.ee



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Texts: Helena Koch, Jaanika Palm, Anu Kehman, Ülle Väljataga
English translation: Adam Cullen, Susan Wilson
Graphic design: Katrin Kaev
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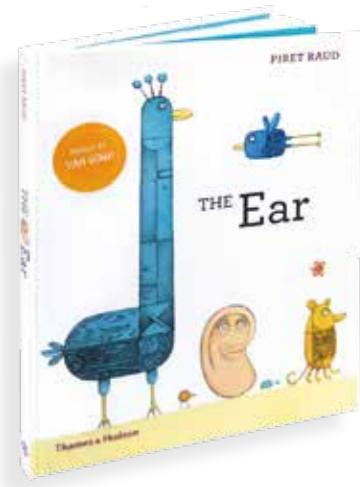
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The Ear

Written and illustrated by Piret Raud

Thames & Hudson 2019

241×196 mm, 32 pp

ISBN 9780500651636

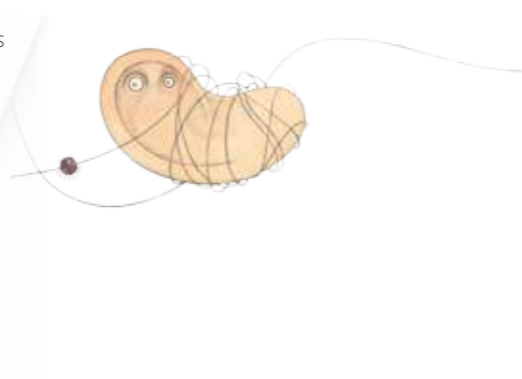
Rights sold: English

One morning, the Ear wakes up. Something is completely out of the ordinary: she's all alone. Where is the head on whom she's lived her entire life? How should she carry on? *The world is so big and I'm so alone*, she mourns, confused and utterly headless! *What good is an ear without a head?* she sobs. *Without a head, I'm no one!* But then, the Ear hears a croak. Is it someone who might need her?

Piret Raud's picture book *The Ear* is inspired by the life of Vincent van Gogh.



Piret Raud (1971) is the most successful contemporary Estonian children's writer and illustrator. She graduated from the Estonian Academy of Arts in graphic arts, and initially set off on the same path. After trying her hand at writing, Raud has since become the most renowned and widely-translated children's author in Estonia. She has written 18 titles (six of which were commissioned by Japanese, French, and British publishers), has been translated into 13 different languages, and has illustrated more than 50 titles. Her writing has received spectacular recognition both at home and abroad. She was included on the 2012 IBBY Honour List as writer and in 2018 as illustrator, in the 2010 and 2013 White Ravens catalogue, and was awarded the Estonian Order of the White Star, IV Class in 2016.



The Story of the Little House Who Wanted to Be a Home

Written and illustrated by Piret Raud

Rouergue 2017

232×175 mm, 32 pp

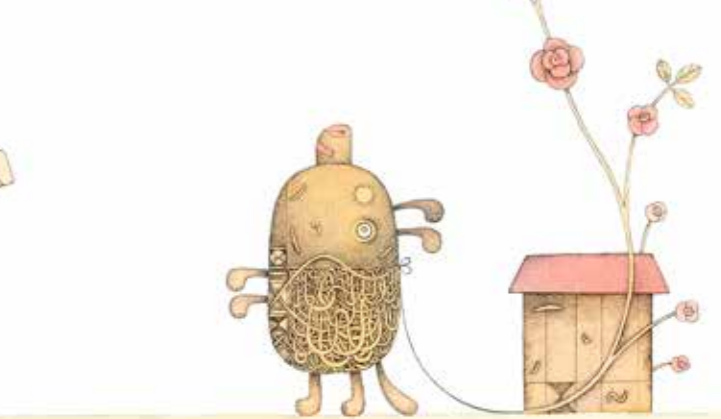
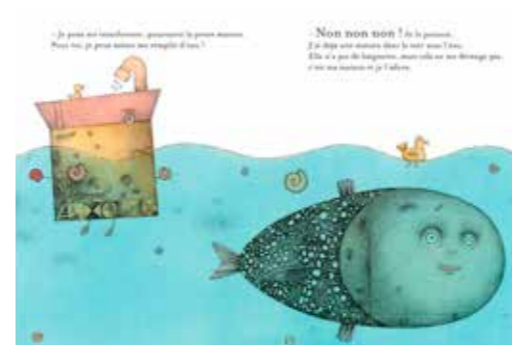
ISBN 9782812614422

Rights sold: French

Deep in the countryside lives an empty little house. She is lonely and sad, and would dearly like to be someone's home. One day, she decides to find someone who would like to live in her. Who could it be? A dog? Or a fish? Or a bird? Or maybe even the homeless man Jim? Or someone entirely different? On the last page of the book, we find an illuminated window: it turns out the little house's quest hasn't been in vain, after all!

Award:

2018 5 Best-Designed Estonian Children's Books, special prize of the Estonian Graphic Designers' Union





The Story of the Bunny Who Didn't Want to Fall Asleep

Written by Ellen Niit
Illustrated by Catherine Zarip

Tammerraamat 2018
217×238 mm, 26 pp
ISBN 9789949616442

It's night-time, and also the grey baby bunny's bedtime. However, he just can't seem to doze off, and keeps pushing the blanket away. The bunny's mom becomes irritated before long. She threatens that Fox will come if he doesn't fall asleep. Even so, the bunny stays naughty and refuses to duck under the covers. The more the mommy bunny scolds the boy, the more insolent he becomes. But then, he hears a mouse skittering in the corner ...



Ellen Niit (1928–2016) was a legendary children's author, poet, and translator. Over her lifetime, she penned more than 40 books of both prose and poetry for children. The author's works are a joy to read for all ages, and have been cherished by multiple generations of Estonian readers. Niit received many literary awards and recognitions, including the Cultural Endowment of Estonia's Award for Children's Literature on three occasions and the 1996 IBBY Honour List. Her works, which are written in an inventive style and with depth of meaning, have been translated into 18 languages.

Catherine Zarip (1966) is an illustrator and graphic designer.

She graduated from the Estonian Academy of Arts in ceramics, after which she worked at the publisher Avita as a book designer and art director. Zarip has illustrated dozens of textbooks and children's books and has designed about 200 works. She has been awarded twice at the Tallinn Illustrations Triennial and ten times in the 5 Best-Designed Estonian Children's Books competition. Her illustrations are fresh and elegant; simultaneously animated and restrained, detail-rich and simplified.



Thanks, I'm Full!

Written by Hilli Rand
Illustrated by Gerda Märten

Rahva Raamat 2018
212×267 mm, 42 pp
ISBN 9789949727339

Emptying his bowl of porridge seems like an impossible task to Timmo. At first, it's as big as a pond; then, it looks like a lake, and the longer he stares, the more it resembles an endless sea. Luckily, Timmo's big brother comes to the rescue, calling on wild animals to help. Big beasts like a bear and a wolf get big mouthfuls, while somewhat smaller ones like a hare and a hedgehog get littler bites. At long last, there's only enough porridge left for itsy-bitsy creatures. Fantasy animals get to lick up the final scraps: a hedgehawk, a frox, and a lizabbit.



Hilli Rand (1957) is a children's author, publisher, and teacher. She has worked in multiple fields in addition to running the publishing house Matle. Rand has written puppet plays, film scripts, and close to 30 books, primarily for young children. The children's stories she writes are always warm and heartfelt, no matter whether they offer young readers support in their new endeavours (such as starting school) or stimulate their fantasies. Rand's book *Snowy White and Pitch Black* has been translated into Latvian, Polish and Slovenian.

Gerda Märten (1987) is an illustrator and art teacher. She holds a master's degree in printmaking from the Estonian Academy of Arts; has studied illustration at the Academy of Arts in Macerata, Italy; and participated in the New York School of Visual Arts' Summer Illustration Residency Program. Märten has illustrated seven children's books and regularly collaborates with the Estonian children's magazine *Täheke*. She is a highly unique, talented illustrator whose visual style blends influences from the Estonian and Italian schools in the best way imaginable.





A Little Love Story
Written by Tia Navi
Illustrated by Kadi Kurema

Päike ja Pilv 2018
 206×206 mm, 32 pp
 ISBN 9789949728510

Triinu-Liis has two hands and two mittens: one for her right, the other for her left. One day, as the left-hand mitten is swinging in the girl's pocket, she sees the right-hand mitten falling out of his own pocket. The left-hand mitten knows all too well what happens to lone mittens. No matter what adventures might come meanwhile, in the end, they always find themselves in a landfill where seagulls and crows will peck at them. How can the left-hand mitten give the little girl a sign that her dear partner has been lost?

Awards:

2018 5 Best-Designed Estonian Children's Books
 2017 The Knee-High Book Competition, 3rd place



Tia Navi (Tiia Kõnnussaar, 1965) is a children's author, editor, and columnist. She studied media and communications at the University of Tartu, and works at the university's Centre of Ethics. Navi has written five children's books, a wealth of journalistic articles, a book of parental advice, and a young-adult play. She additionally runs creative-writing courses. The writer's books contain humour, wordplay, and project the world as sharp-eyed children observe it.

Kadi Kurema (1963) is an illustrator and printmaker who graduated in graphic arts from the Estonian Academy of Arts. She has illustrated 15 children's books and collaborates regularly with the Estonian children's literary magazine *Täheke*. Kurema has been awarded for her works in the 5 Best-Designed Estonian Children's Books competition. The artist's illustrations, which are entrancing and packed with provoking ideas, mix etching with other techniques while using very little colour.



The Carousel of Feelings
Written and illustrated by Margit Saluste

Koolibri 2018
 216×245 mm, 40 pp
 ISBN 9789985036716



What am I like when I'm happy? What about when I'm sad? What makes me jealous, angry, or proud? What do I do when I'm feeling curious, diligent, or scared? When do I feel brave, lonely, or loved? The carousel of feelings just goes around and around. What do you feel like today?

Margit Saluste's book *The Carousel of Feelings* helps children get to know themselves and better manage their emotions.



Margit Saluste (1964) is a children's author and illustrator. She graduated from the former Tallinn Light Garment Technology School in clothing design and modelling, has studied at the Estonian Academy of Arts' Open Academy, and has worked as a nursery art teacher. Saluste has written 11 books for toddlers, has illustrated works written by herself and others, and regularly contributes to the children's magazine *Mesimumm*. She expertly broadens children's worldviews by explaining things in easy-to-understand ways – be it acquainting various professions, describing climate phenomena, or detailing the wide range of human emotions.





The Raincloud's Greatest Wish

Written by Liis Sein

Illustrated by Anne Linnamägi

Päike ja Pilv 2018

207×250 mm, 30 pp

ISBN 9789949722440

Little Matilda likes sunny weather more than anything else. The girl simply adores playing tic-tac-toe, reading poems, and licking popsicles in the sunshine. But when a gigantic cloud settles down in the sky, the sun has no choice but to gather up its rays and wait for the rain to stop. Matilda also waits eagerly for the showers to cease, but they just keep falling endlessly. Days and weeks pass, and there is still no room for the sun in the sky. Matilda's patience finally wears thin and she decides to sit down with the cloud for a serious chat.

Award:

2018 5 Best-Designed Estonian Children's Books, special prize of the Jury



Liis Sein (1983) is a playwright and children's author.

She graduated from Tallinn University in adult education and has received additional training in playwriting and creative-writing courses. Sein currently works as an administrative assistant at the Estonian Children's Literature Centre. Many of her plays have been staged in Estonia and awarded in playwriting competitions. Sein is capable of viewing the world through a child's eyes such that it seems like a bigger, clearer, and brighter place for adults as well.

Anne Linnamägi (1966) is an illustrator and graphic designer. She

graduated from the Estonian Academy of Arts as a graphic artist and worked afterwards at the publisher Avita. Linnamägi has illustrated several textbooks and close to 15 children's books, and has designed a total of more than 200 works. She was on the 2016 IBBY Honour List and has been awarded at the Tallinn Illustrations Triennial as well as nine times in the 5 Best-Designed Estonian Children's Books competition. Linnamägi's illustrations charm readers with their soft colour palettes and gentle mood.



I Am an Artist

Written and illustrated by Kertu Sillaste

Koolibri 2018

217×245 mm, 32 pp

ISBN 9789985041383



Jaan is an artist. He imagines and draws and paints and pastes and sketches and moulds and photographs and films and thinks and builds and assembles. Jaan believes that having a good idea is the most important part of making art. There are all kinds of ideas, just like there are all kinds of art. Sometimes, art can be a game or a riddle or finding and recognizing. Art is telling stories with pictures. Art is surprise. What kind of art do you love? What kind of art do you like to do?

Award:

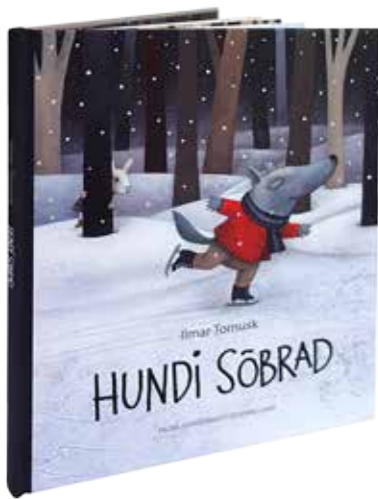
2018 5 Best-Designed Estonian Children's Books, special prize of the Estonian Children's Literature Centre



Kertu Sillaste (1973) is an illustrator, art teacher, and author of children's

books. She graduated from the Estonian Academy of Arts in textile design, studied tapestry at the École Supérieure des Arts Appliqués Duperré in Paris, and received a master's degree in art education at Tallinn University. Sillaste has worked as a graphic designer at the Tallinn Central Library, and currently teaches art at the Estonian Children's Literature Centre. She has written four books, illustrated 16 works, and is a long-time collaborator with the children's magazine *Täheke*. Sillaste was listed in the 2016 White Ravens catalogue and was a candidate for the 2017 Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award. Her signature style includes thick, vibrant India-ink brush strokes combined with acrylics or collage.





Wolf's Friends

Written by Ilmar Tomusk

Illustrated by Catherine Zarip

Tammerraamat 2018

256×215 mm, 26 pp

ISBN 9789949616558

It's Christmastime in the woods. The forest animals have already gotten their presents. Santa brought Wolf new ice skates: how fun it is to glide across the mirror-smooth ice! But suddenly, the poor animal slips and has such an unfortunate fall that he twists his ankle. Wolf calls out to his friends for help, but neither Bear nor Fox have the time to assist him. Then, Hare arrives at the shore of the lake and spots Wolf howling in pain. Hare reckons the predator is faking it and is all ready to hop on his way, but nagging doubt forces him to stay put all the same.

Award:

2018 5 Best-Designed Estonian Children's Books



Ilmar Tomusk (1964) is a civil servant and children's writer. He graduated from the Tallinn Pedagogical Institute as a teacher of Estonian language and literature, and currently works as Chief Director of the Estonian Language Inspectorate. Tomusk has written close to 30 children's books. His humorous stories, which alternate between elements of realism and fantasy, tell of clever, busy children's everyday activities and adventures. Testament to his high popularity among Estonian children is the fact that he has received three Nukits Awards in addition to several other readers'-choice awards.

Catherine Zarip (1966) is an illustrator and graphic designer.

She graduated from the Estonian Academy of Arts in ceramics, after which she worked at the publisher Avita as a book designer and art director. Zarip has illustrated dozens of textbooks and children's books and has designed about 200 works. She has been awarded twice at the Tallinn Illustrations Triennial and ten times in the 5 Best-Designed Estonian Children's Books competition. Her illustrations are fresh and elegant; simultaneously animated and restrained, detail-rich and simplified.



“Nice ice skates,” Hare remarked, cautiously striking up a conversation.

“They are nice, yes,” Wolf agreed. “But as you can see, I came here to skate, twisted my ankle, and now, I can't get home anymore. It hurts so much it makes me howl. No one will help me: Bear is hibernating and Fox only wants grilled chicken. And you, Hare, won't help me anyway, because we're not even friends.”

“Of course we're not friends: you're Wolf and I'm Hare,” Hare said. “But why do you think I won't help you?”

“Well,” Wolf said, “because hares aren't exactly fans of wolves.”

“If I'm to be completely honest, then no, we're not especially,” Hare replied. “Still, that doesn't mean I won't help you when you're in need. You just have to promise you won't eat me.”



Hare wrapped his arm around Wolf to support him while Hedgehog grabbed Wolf's ice skates so he'd have an easier time limping home. And with that, the three of them made their way towards the wolf den, where everyone had already gotten very worried.

“Thank you so much for helping me when I was in trouble,” Wolf said to his new friends. “By the way, we're having a scrumptious cabbage pastry for Christmas dinner tonight. Why don't you come in for a spell – there's enough to go around for everybody!”

Translated by Adam Cullen



A Serious Thought

Written and illustrated by Jonas Taul

Draakon & Kuu 2016

152×191 mm, 64 pp

ISBN 9789949574018

Rights sold: English (North America), French, Italian, Korean

One night, a little boy can't fall asleep. All kinds of thoughts start swirling around his head. They are wonderful and dangerous, dubious and tantalizing, frightful and funny. The thoughts come and go, but then, a particular one dawns upon him and just won't let him be – a very serious thought. The boy wonders why someone as small as him matters at all in the vast endlessness of the whole gigantic universe. He wakes up still feeling tiny and pointless. But then, the boy meets someone even smaller than himself.

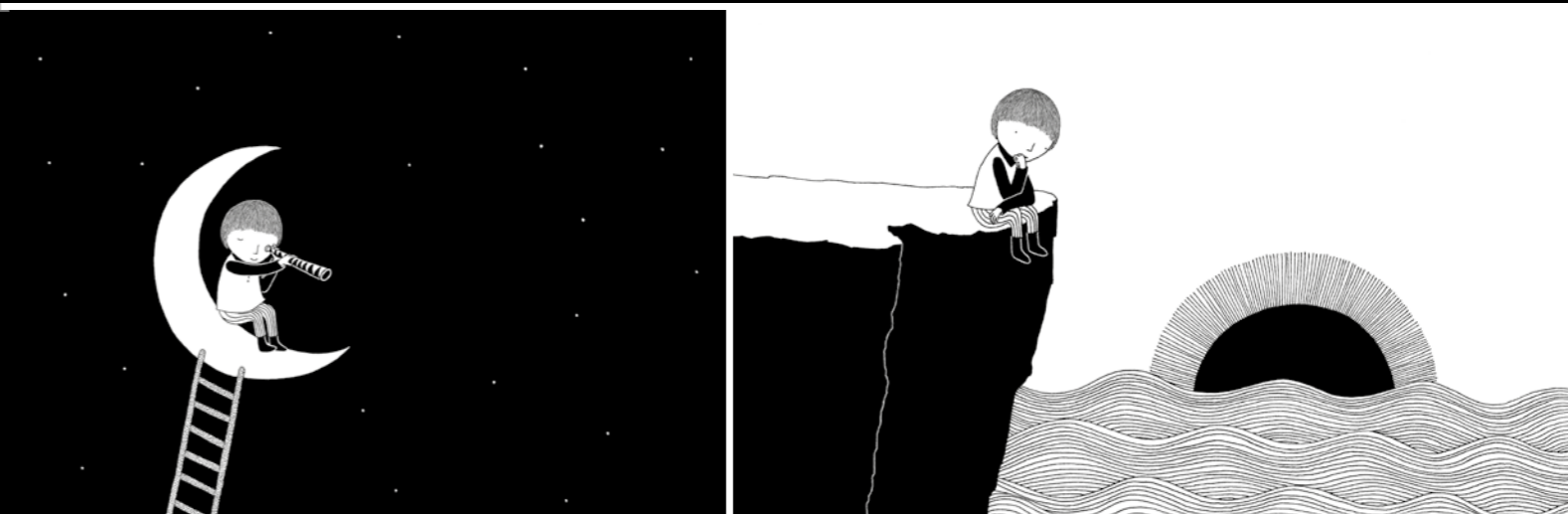
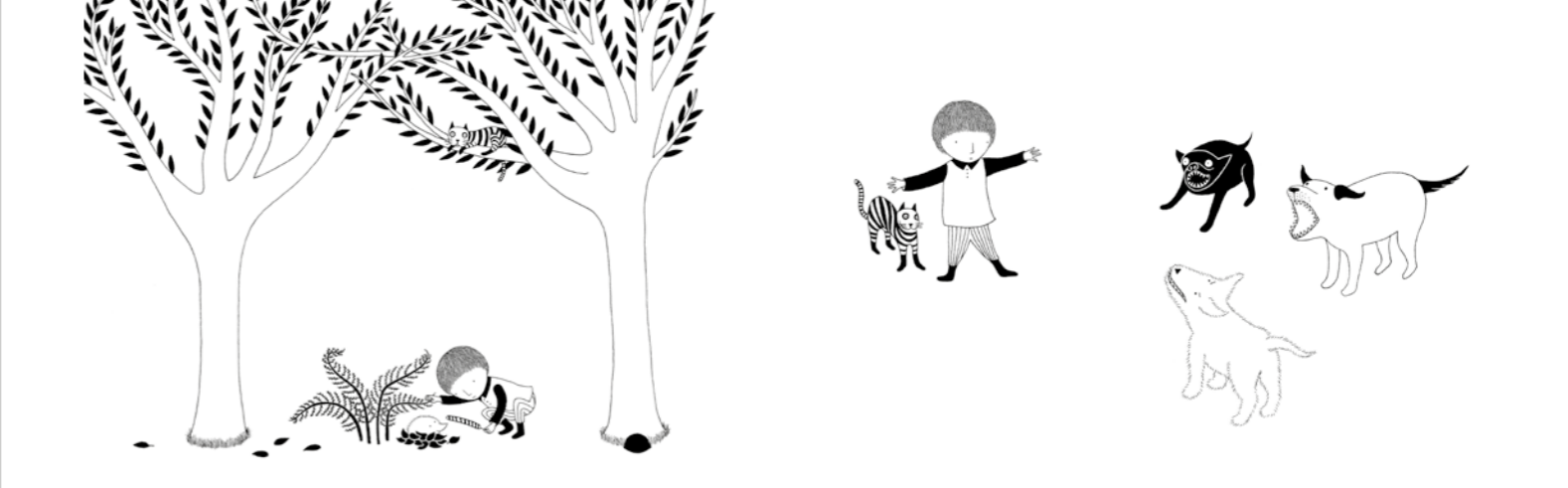
Awards:

2017 The White Ravens catalogue

2016 5 Best-Designed Estonian Children's Books



Jonas Taul (1986) is an illustrator and visual artist. He graduated from the Gerrit Rietveld Academie in Amsterdam in audio-visual art and currently studies animation at the Estonian Academy of Art. *A Serious Thought* is the author's debut, which received immediate international acclaim after being published in Estonia and has already been translated into several other languages. Taul is intrigued by existential topics and visual storytelling. Readers are enchanted by his sensitive, delicate, minimalist black-and-white illustrations that are arranged to the point of perfection.





The Boy Who Drew Maps

Written by **Kätlin Vainola**

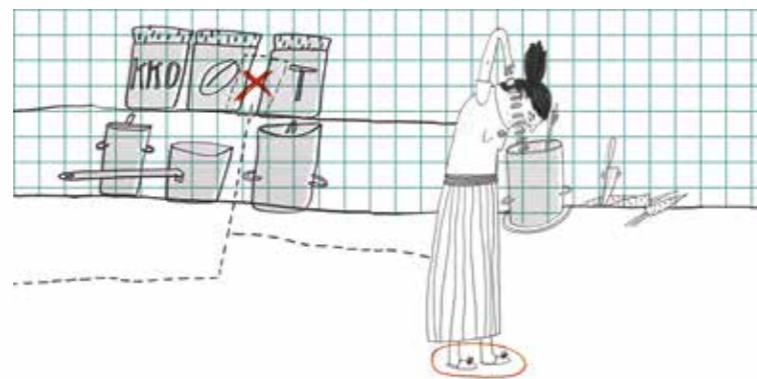
Illustrated by **Ulla Saar**

Pegasus 2017
206×204 mm, 48 pp
ISBN 9789949620548

Mark likes maps and diagrams more than anything in the world: they help him solve any problems that might crop up. For example, Mark has a map for when Grandpa is watching basketball on TV but the boy would rather watch cartoons, as well as maps for finding secret candy stashes or a hidden birthday present. There's only one missing map and the big problem it entails: one for the dark and menacing attic. How can the boy overcome his fears and conquer the unexplored land?

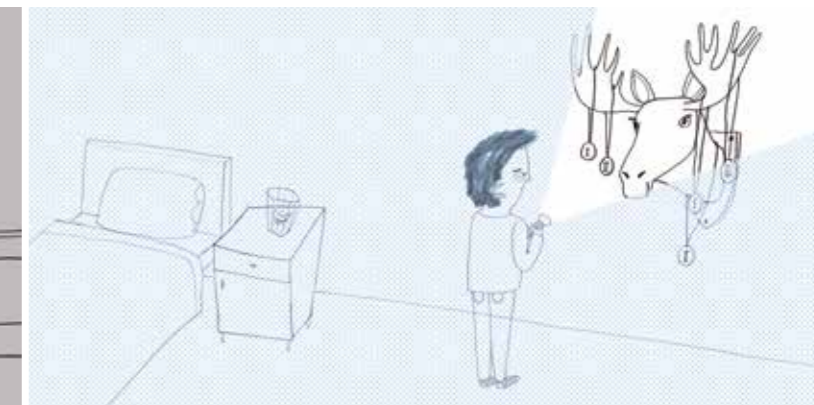
Award:

2017 25 Best-Designed Estonian Books



Kätlin Vainola (1978) is a children's writer and poet. She graduated from Tallinn University in Estonian philology and has worked as a teacher, project manager, and editor. Vainola is currently editor-in-chief of the children's magazine *Hea Laps*. She has written 18 children's books of various genres including realism, fantasy, and popular science. Her most widely-loved works are picture books for young children, many of which have been translated and received numerous awards.

Ulla Saar (1975) is an illustrator, product designer, graphic artist, and interior designer. She graduated from the Estonian Academy of Arts in product design and currently works in the same field. Her first illustrated book *Lift* immediately received widespread recognition, and was listed in the 2014 White Ravens catalogue. Since then, every one of her books has gained international attention. Saar practices a contemporary, design-like approach to book illustration: her spirited and playful art is often more a part of the book's overall design than free-standing pictures.



The very first map Mark drew was of the lounge. He needed it when he wanted to change the TV channel.

The problem was that Grandad spent most of the day in front of the TV watching the basketball. Mark didn't like basketball. This was a problem he needed to solve.

He needed to draw a map to work out how to move silently around the room, scramble to the top of the cupboard and drip water onto Grandad's head.

Then Grandad would always turn off the TV, climb up onto the roof and begin banging with a hammer. He thought there was a leak up there that needed mending.

In the meantime, Mark would put the TV back on in the lounge and flick over to the cartoon channel. He would sink happily into an easy chair. Grandad would usually be on the roof for ages.

He needed the second map to find the sweets.

The sweets were on the middle shelf of the kitchen cupboard behind the coffee jar. They were only allowed to come out when they'd eaten all their dinner. But Mark sometimes needed sweets before dinner or at night or well, whenever he happened to think about them.

Mark drew a map showing everything in the kitchen. The sweet jar was marked with a cross.

The map also showed Grandma making soup. There was a red circle around her. It meant danger. The journey could begin!

Translated by Susan Wilson





The Pärt Series

Written by Anti Saar
Illustrated by Anna Ring

Päike ja Pilv 2017–2018
217×170 mm, 25 pp

Pärt Can't Do a Backflip (2017)
ISBN 9789949986231

Pärt is a clever seven-year-old boy whose life is easy-going and filled with good times. But every now and then, a complicated situation crops up. Take for example when the neighbour-girl Kaisa starts making fun of him for not being able to do flips on the trampoline. Or when the boy is left cuing alone at the grocery store while his father fetches a forgotten package of yeast and is away for a long time. Or when juicy plums are just begging to be picked from a tree in a stranger's yard!

Award:

2018 "Järje Hoidja" Award of the Tallinn Central Library (*Pärt Can't Do a Backflip*)



Kõigepealt jõudsin ma kahetseks, et me polnud võtnud kätse, sest käed olid rasked, siis aga meenus mulle Joosepi juurde Lihavõetasaare pärtsmaalastest, kes raudsüd kivist hülgasuurid kujukid ja veeretastid neid saart mööda ringi puupalkide peal, aga küllap olid juba need paljajalgid päris suured ja rasked ja ega neid siin poes kuskilt võtta ka polnud. Ma niigis korvi kõigest viiest käte ja jalgadega ning nõkehaaval saingi selle päris kassalindi kõrvale.



Ma vaatasin saali poole, aga isa ei paistnud kuskilt. Minu selja taha aga oli kogunenud juba neli inimest. Ja kui ma näimoodi ringi vaatasin, vaatasid ringi ka kõik need neli, justkui oleks neid ka isa kadunud ja raha kodus see kujuga hoiustartis. Aga küllap otsisid ka nemad silmadega hoopis minu isa, kuigi nad ei võinud teada, milline ta ilmsel viija näeb. Samal ajal oli minu ette järjekorda jätkud veel kaks inimest, üks onu, kes ostis ainult ühe piraka praesani pudeli, ja üks tüdi, kelle kapp täitis ära kogu kassalind. Aga hetke pärast piakustas kassajõde ja ka kogu seda kassa ja lindile tekkis järjest rohkem vaba ruumi, kuhu pidi oma ostud ladama mina.



Anti Saar (1980) is a writer and translator who graduated from the University of Tartu in semiotics. Saar has written eight highly popular children's books to date. He enjoyed immediate acclaim with his first book *The Way Things Are with Us*, which was selected for the 2014 White Ravens Catalogue in addition to receiving several awards in Estonia. Saar immerses himself in the world of children and is capable of glimpsing what is special in ordinary everyday life. His stories, which tend to ricochet from reality, are fluid, witty, and sensitively worded.

Anna Ring (1992) is an illustrator and graphic designer. She graduated in media design from the Pallas University of Applied Sciences in Tartu, where she currently works as an instructor. Ring has illustrated more than 20 children's books and textbooks, and regularly contributes to the Estonian children's magazine *Mesimumm*. She has been awarded in the 5 Best-Designed Estonian Children's Books competition and was selected as an International Silent Book Contest finalist in 2015. Although the artist takes inspiration from the 1960s and 70s, her works are contemporary to the core.



Stand Here, Pärt!

“Stand here!” Dad said, set the shopping basket down by my feet, took me by the shoulders, and looked me straight in the eye. “I forgot to get yeast!”

Before I could say anything, Dad disappeared among the aisles. /---/

I felt pretty proud of myself standing there like a big boy, or even an adult, because there wasn't any kid-stuff like cookies or Kinder Surprise eggs there in the basket, but rather sausage and bread and milk and other groceries like that.

Well, alright — there was a little package of diapers for Leenu in there, too, but I nudged it behind a pineapple where nobody could see it. Not that anyone would have really believed I was buying diapers for myself. I'm already seven years old and will be going to school in the fall! /---/

However, Dad still wasn't back! I figured he probably couldn't find the yeast, because when I looked at the signs hanging over the aisles, I couldn't see the word “YEAST” written on any of them. To tell the truth, I myself didn't know under which sign one should look for yeast. What was yeast, anyway?! I really hoped Dad knew better than I did, but then why was he taking so long? It could be that there was

a big selection of different yeasts and he couldn't choose the very best one, just like sometimes when I'm allowed to pick out one candy and I stand in front of the shelf and just can't seem to decide which one of them might be the tastiest of all, and then I finally pick one that Dad says is either too expensive or has questionable ingredients, and he certainly won't buy that one, even though he himself said I could pick!

Dad says that the candy shelf makes me see double, but maybe the yeast shelf is what's made him see double now!

Translated by Adam Cullen





The Visit
 Written by Anti Saar
 Illustrated by Anna Ring

Päike ja Pilv 2017
 260x210 mm, 24 pp
 ISBN 9789949986279

In spring, when the apple trees begin to blossom, Robby's grandmother dies. When autumn arrives, the boy decides to visit his grandfather in the countryside, even though he reckons it will be a sad trip to take alone. Then, one evening, Robby takes a walk through the orchard. Spotting a nice-looking apple under his favourite tree, he picks it up. Yet right as the boy is about to sink his teeth into it, he notices a little worm who beckons him to follow it into a wormhole. Inside the fruit, a whole world that summons strong memories of his grandmother starts to unfold.

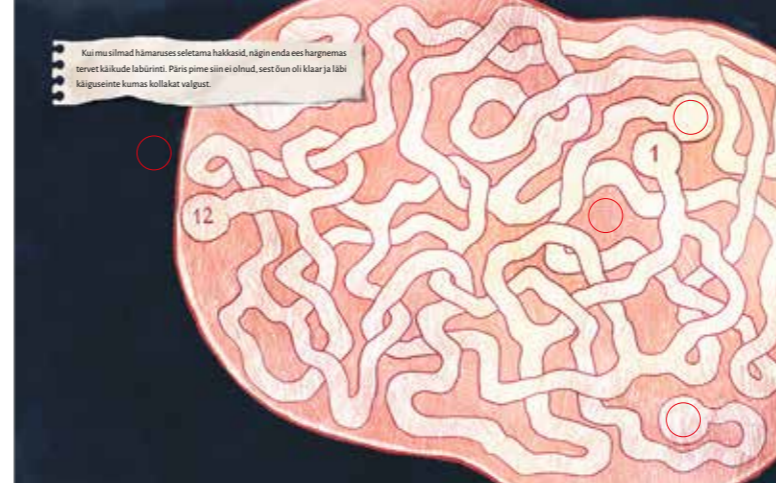
Award:

2017 5 Best-Designed Estonian Children's Books



Anti Saar (1980) is a writer and translator who graduated from the University of Tartu in semiotics. Saar has written eight highly popular children's books to date. He enjoyed immediate acclaim with his first book *The Way Things Are with Us*, which was selected for the 2014 White Ravens Catalogue in addition to receiving several awards in Estonia. Saar immerses himself in the world of children and is capable of glimpsing what is special in ordinary everyday life. His stories, which tend to ricochet from reality, are fluid, witty, and sensitively worded.

Anna Ring (1992) is an illustrator and graphic designer. She graduated in media design from the Pallas University of Applied Sciences in Tartu, where she currently works as an instructor. Ring has illustrated more than 20 children's books and textbooks, and regularly contributes to the Estonian children's magazine *Mesimumm*. She has been awarded in the 5 Best-Designed Estonian Children's Books competition and was selected as an International Silent Book Contest finalist in 2015. Although the artist takes inspiration from the 1960s and 70s, her works are contemporary to the core.



When I opened my eyes, I found myself standing on Grandma's porch. Autumn evening sunlight cascaded through the small window panes as a spider scuttled along the window sill.

There, sitting at the table covered in a faded tablecloth and stitching up my glove – the same blue knitted glove, with the hole that I had just adventured through – was my grandmother.

When she saw me, Grandma put down her sewing and cheerfully declared: "There you are, my little Robby!" – as if we had just been playing hide and seek the whole time!

I ran up to her, hugged her, and cried. She stroked the back of my head and comforted me. "Oh, my darling, what's wrong?"

"Here," Grandma said once I'd wiped away my tears, "I made bread pudding just this morning." She pushed a plate of the dessert in front of me and splashed milk on it from a pitcher.

Bread pudding with fresh milk is my favorite treat. Grandma always adds cinnamon and a big handful of raisins to the mix. I enjoyed my snack, and told Grandma how things were going at school and in sports and at drama club.

When I was finished, Grandma and I played Battleship and looked through the old children's magazines she keeps stacked on the porch.

Suddenly, I heard my grandfather calling me from very far away: "Come on, Robby! Sauna's ready!"

I looked at Grandma.

"Go on, go on," she encouraged me. "Don't keep your grandfather waiting, otherwise he'll get worried."

Translated by Adam Cullen





All My Relatives

Written and illustrated by Piret Raud

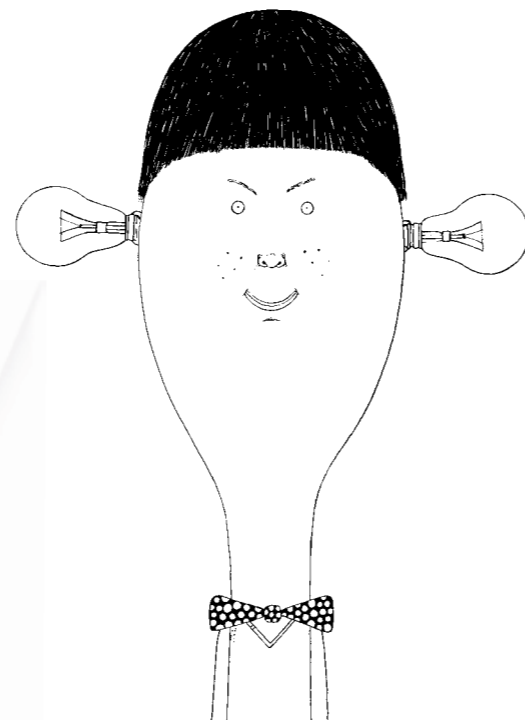
Tänapäev 2017

206×168 mm, 116 pp

ISBN 9789949852314

Rights sold: French

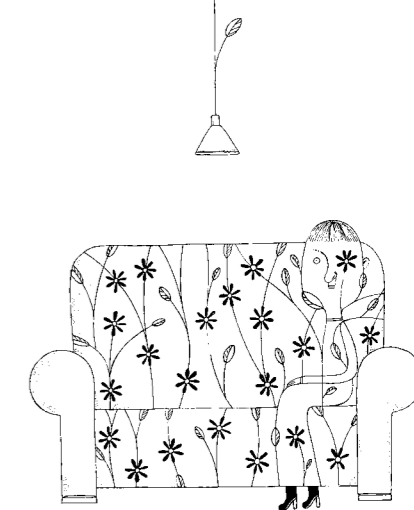
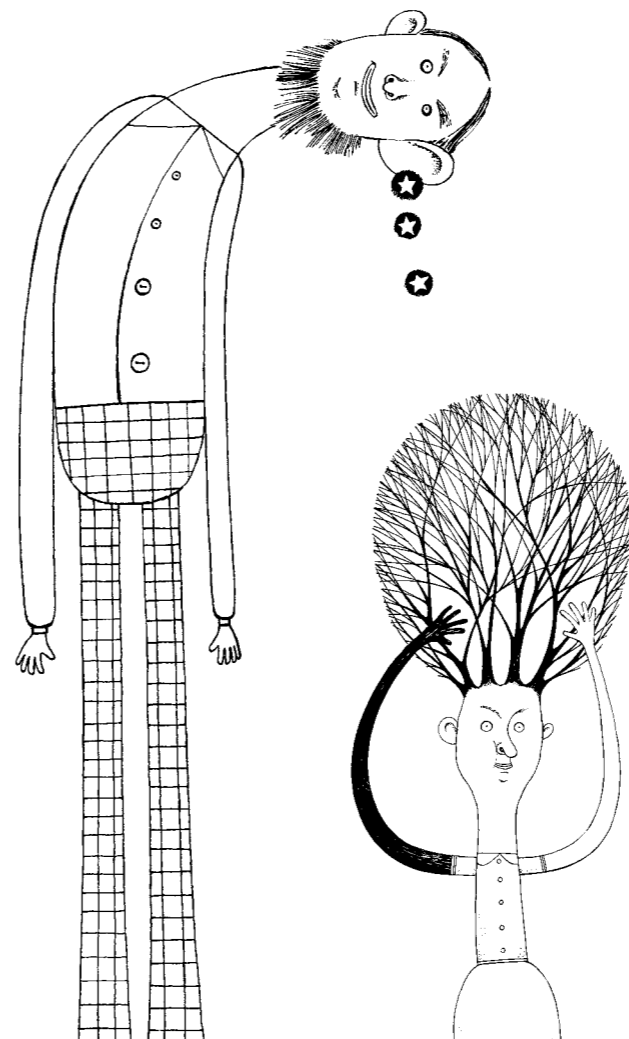
One day, Adam's teacher gives him an assignment to draw his family tree. The boy starts listing his relatives and discovers they certainly won't all fit on one – he'd have to make a hundred-legged octopus with one relative per leg! He can't fail to include his Aunt Mari who treasures curiosities, his Uncle Kaupo who just won't give up smoking, his foulmouthed Uncle Marko, his little brother Aapi who always gets into all his things, or his football-fanatic older brother Anton; not to mention his Aunt Ilme, who is so unnoticeable that she's almost invisible. As Adam's dad tells him: "You can't choose your relatives!"



Piret Raud (1971) is the most successful contemporary Estonian children's writer and illustrator. She graduated from the Estonian Academy of Arts in graphic arts, and initially set off on the same path. After trying her hand at writing, Raud has since become the most renowned and widely-translated children's author in Estonia. She has written 18 titles (six of which were commissioned by Japanese, French, and British publishers), has been translated into 13 different languages, and has illustrated more than 50 titles. Her writing has received spectacular recognition both at home and abroad. She was included on the 2012 IBBY Honour List as writer and in 2018 as illustrator, in the 2010 and 2013 White Ravens catalogue, and was awarded the Estonian Order of the White Star, IV Class in 2016.

Gail's eyes

The people of this world have eyes of all kinds of different colours. In our family, half of us have brown eyes and half of us have grey. /---/ But the most interesting eyes of all are those of my cousin Gail – she's already a young lady and goes to university. One of her eyes is blue and the other is green. Her blue eye is as blue as the sky and her green eye is as green as a lake and if you look at them very closely you can even see birds flying and clouds scudding across the blue eye, and fish swimming and plants growing in her green eye.



What definitely is true is that Gail's eyes are attractive. Or as my brother Tony put it – magnetic, which just means that you can't help but gaze into them for ages. Someone else who found her eyes magnetic was a particular fly that landed on Gail's nose one lovely summer morning.

"Ooh!" said the fly. "Would you look at those eyes? So deep that I could just sink into them, you beautiful thing you!"

Gail said nothing in reply. She merely smiled.

The fly admired her eyes and its own reflection in them and ventured to speak.

"Will you marry me?" it asked, bending down on one of its six knees. "It would make me the happiest fly in the world if you did."

"Well, er, no. Definitely not," Gail started to laugh.

"In that case you shall be my beloved," the fly would not give up, "and I shall be your knight!"

The fly stretched itself up and stood proud on the tip of Gail's nose. It sang to her and recited beautiful poetry, and sighed every so often. Later, when Gail went to bed and closed her eyes, her knight lost all interest and flew off somewhere else to attend to matters of its own. As soon as she opened her eyes again however, the fly immediately returned.

Translated by Susan Wilson



Catherine and the Peas

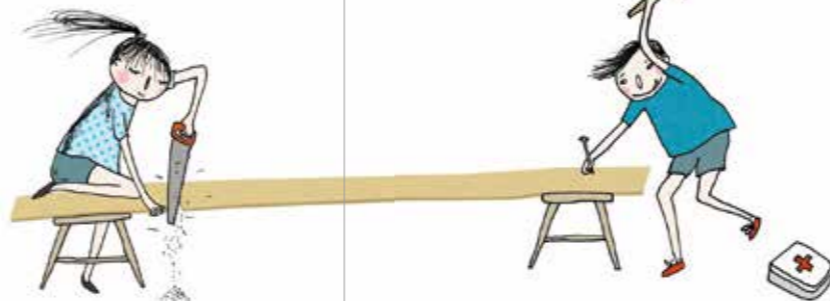
Written by Kadri Hinrikus
Illustrated by Anne Pikkov

Tammerraamat 2017
266×207 mm, 80 pp
ISBN 9789949565979

Lately, it's been rough going for Catherine. Her dad found a new partner and moved out, and her mom only has time and attention to spare for her job. Now that summer break has arrived, busy little Catherine feels truly alone. But then the girl meets Martin from her dad's new family and also befriends a fun old woman named Alice who moves into the neighbouring house. Together, they plant peas, care for the plants, and do all kinds of other entertaining things.

Awards:

2018 Tartu Prize for Children's Literature (Childhood Prize)
2017 25 Best-Designed Estonian Books



Operation "Ladder"

“Well, Kate – now, you got your wish. Sven here came to help us hang up the ladder.”

The bearded man plopped down into our armchair.

“I came to help like a whale with kelp,” he joked loudly.

With his big potbelly, balding head, and red suspenders, the man looked quite bizarre.

“First things first: should we have a cup of coffee? Work's no bunny who'll bound away,” the man joked again.

Mom hurried to the kitchen to make coffee.

“And what's a young lady like you going to be doing with a rope ladder, huh?” he turned to me and asked.

It was hard to think of a dumber question.

“Climbing it.”

“Boys climb. Young ladies dance, bake, and knit sweaters.”

“Where's that written down?”

“Huh?”



“Where's the rule that girls only dance, bake, and knit sweaters?”

“Ah, it's no rule,” the man said with a wave of his hand.

“That's just how life is. Then, everything's as right as rain.”

He grabbed the bowl of cookies from the table. Mom came back from the kitchen with coffee and sandwiches.

“Would you like a little snack?” she asked, offering the man the platter.

“Sure would, sure would,” he murmured before starting to devour the food and drink, not stopping until the whole tray, the bowl of cookies, and the coffee pot were empty. All he did was yammer away the entire time. Mom sank deeper and deeper into the corner of the couch, obviously tired of our guest. Nevertheless, the ladder still hadn't been hung yet.

Translated by Adam Cullen



Kadri Hinrikus (1970) is a children's writer and journalist. She graduated from Tallinn University as a theatre director and currently works as an editor of the children's magazine *Täheke*. Hinrikus has penned fairy tales and memoir-like works about her family. She is also a skilful teller of warm and humorous stories about children's everyday life. Her books have been featured in the White Ravens catalogue in 2013 and 2016.

Anne Pikkov (1974) is an illustrator, graphic designer, and book designer. She graduated from the Estonian Academy of Arts in graphic design, and is currently Vice Rector of Academic Affairs and a visiting professor at the Estonian Academy of Arts. Pikkov has illustrated 12 children's books and collaborated with the Estonian magazines *Täheke*, *Pere ja Kodu*, and *Jamie*. She has received many awards at annual Estonian book-design and illustration competitions. Pikkov's illustrations are ornamental, laconic, spiced with humour, and evocatively expressive.





Uncle Mati, Veterinarian

Written by Priit Põhjala
Illustrated by Anni Mäger

Tänapäev 2018
236×172 mm, 108 pp
ISBN 9789949853090

The fantastic Uncle Mati works as a zoo veterinarian. Unfortunately, his workday is too short to fully accommodate both his job and his love for animals, so he has no choice but to sometimes take work home with him. Uncle Mati thus shares his home with bats, capybaras, raccoons, and Indian cobras, not to mention elephants and a Przewalski's horse. Naturally, unusual companions such as these give rise to many a wonderful adventure, be it the presidential ball, marching in a military parade, or a trip to Berlin to present Uncle Mati's new animal book.



Priit Põhjala (1982) is a semiotician, editor, publisher, and children's author. He holds a bachelor's degree in semiotics and a doctoral degree in culturology from the University of Tartu. Currently, Põhjala works as an editor at the Tänapäev publishing house and writes linguistics-themed columns for the Estonian teachers' newspaper *Õpetajate Leht*. He has written two children's books that are characterised by warm humour and a fluid style. Positive reception by the author's young audience has secured him success in the Nukits Competition.

Anni Mäger (1977) is an illustrator and graphic designer. She graduated from the Estonian Academy of Arts in graphic design and currently works as an art director at the advertising agency *Taevas Ogilvy*. Mäger has illustrated 15 children's books and contributes to the Estonian children's magazine *Täheke*. Her bold style of caricature entralls young readers and has delivered repeated success at the Nukits Competition, including winning its main prize in 2006.

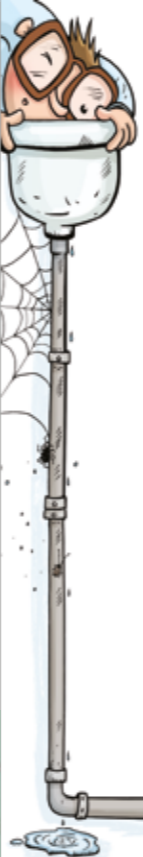


The Glasses and the Droppings

Whereas I can barely see past the tip of my nose without glasses, like a hedgehog, Uncle Mati's vision without glasses was like that of a mole, which is even worse. It was so bad that on the day Uncle Mati left them at home, he accidentally rode a steamroller to work (it was painted the same yellow as the trolley he usually took) and ran seven hours late.

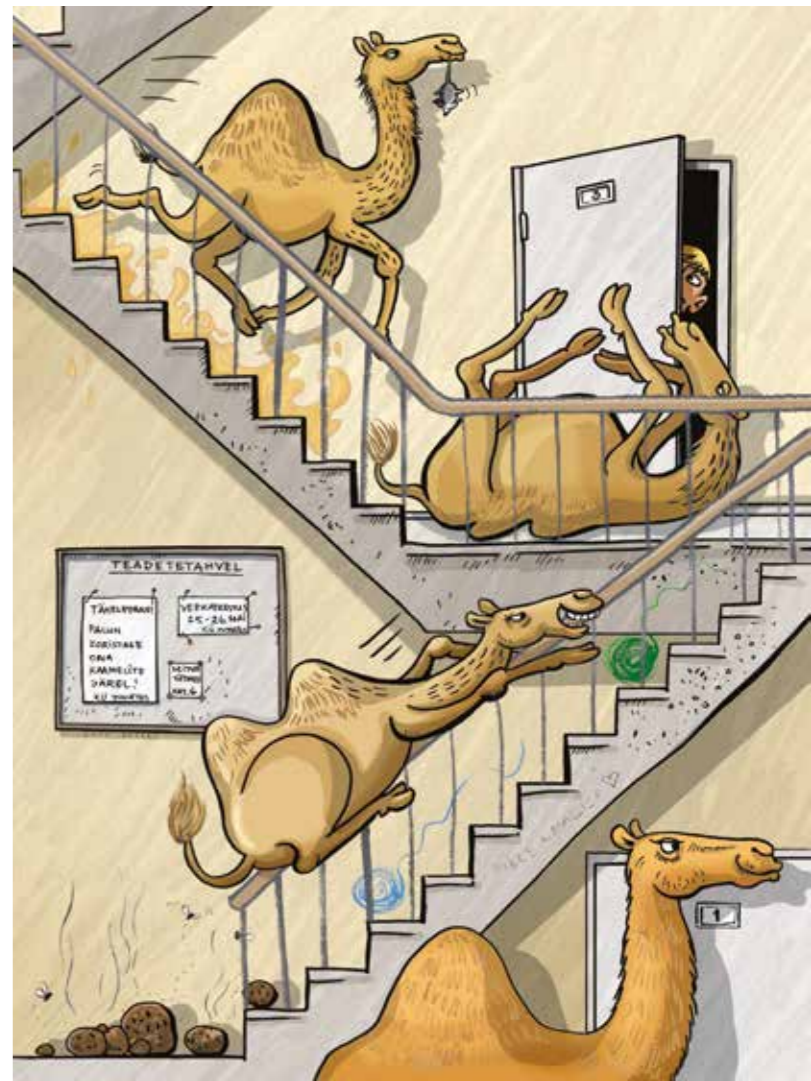
Once he finally arrived at the zoo, Uncle Mati decided to spend the one remaining work-hour on his daily relaxing walk. He intended to check on all the zoo residents, say hi to them, and then tell them goodbye.

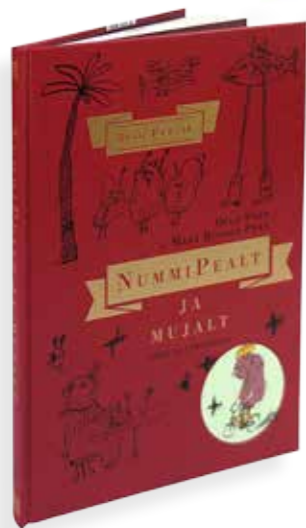
But first of all, Uncle Mati came across the zoo director, whom he thought was a bison because of his lack of glasses. Both were big and hairy! Uncle Mati scratched the zoo director under the chin and stuck a handful of fresh grass into his mouth – that was the bison's favorite food. This made the director very angry and he wanted to start yelling at Uncle Mati, but you try yelling with your mouth full of grass! It sounds just like the rumbling of a thankful bison.



On top of that, Uncle Mati had already strolled off and had come across the bison, who he thought was the zoo director. "Here you go – this is my study on the health of the zoo's bison," Uncle Mati said, handing the bison a giant stack of papers. He'd been working on the report for three whole months. But the bison, who was in very good health and therefore had a fantastic appetite, gobbled them up in just three seconds.

Translated by Adam Cullen



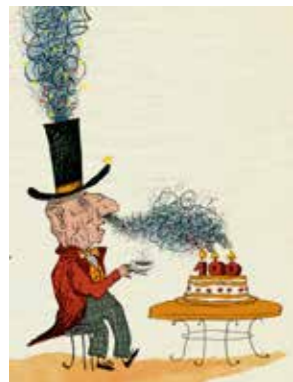


From BonnyHead and Beyond
Written by Aino Pervik
Illustrated by Olga Pärn and Märt Rudolf Pärn
 Tänapäev 2018
 237×171 mm, 76 pp
 ISBN 97899949854592



Somewhere, there lies a lovely little town called BonnyHead. All kinds of bizarre folk live there, big and small alike. Mister and Misses Industrious are always thrilled to undertake one project or another. Miss SharpTongue has something witty to say about everything she sees. Mister AbsentMind frequently forgets where he is and why. Mister LustForFame's greatest ambition is to become a huge celebrity. No matter how odd these individuals might be, there's room for each and every one of them in BonnyHead!

Award:
 2018 25 Best-Designed Estonian Books



Aino Pervik (1932) is one of the most influential authors of modern Estonian children's literature. She has written over 60 children's books, several of which have been translated into 12 other languages and have been adapted for theatre and film. Pervik has won many major prizes, including the IBBY Honour List in 2004 and Estonia's national award for children's literature on several occasions. Her writing sheds light on existential problems: the preservation of ecological balance, the clash of different cultures, the finding of one's identity, and other complex themes such as war, freedom, fatality, good, and evil.

Olga Pärn (1976) is an animator, film director, and illustrator. She graduated in graphic arts from the Belarusian State Academy of Arts and completed a course in film direction at the La Poudriere animation school in Valence, France. Currently, she works as a visiting professor at the Estonian Academy of Arts. Pärn's style is sometimes fun, other times somewhat sarcastic and edging towards dark humour, but always warm and witty. Her illustrations provide food for thought. The co-illustrator Märt Rudolf is Olga's young son.



Mrs. Wide-Eyed

Mrs. Wide-Eyed believed everything she was told.

Thus, it was no wonder that when some rakish roller-skater breezed past Mrs. Wide-Eyed one day and yelled out that she should drink gasoline if she wanted to move as swiftly, too, the woman headed straight to the gas station.

Mrs. Wide-Eyed took a one-liter milk jug with her.

When she arrived at the gas station, she asked the attendant to fill the container.

"What do you need gas for, missus?" the gas station attendant asked. "For taking out stains?"

"No," Mrs. Wide-Eyed said with a somewhat astonished smile. "I never have stains on my clothes!"



"Of course not," the friendly gas station attendant said. "I was just curious. Usually, it's just cars, motorcycles, and buses that tank up here."

Mrs. Wide-Eyed grinned slyly.

"They need gasoline to move quickly, don't they? It's the same with me. I'd like to go just as fast as they do."

"And how do you plan on doing that, missus?" the attendant asked a little incredulously.

"Someone advised me to drink gasoline," Mrs. Wide-Eyed said. "Once I do, I'll zoom around just as fast as a racecar!"

"Whatever you do, do not drink gasoline!" the gas station attendant exclaimed in shock. "Racecars have wheels, women do not."

"So you think I *shouldn't* drink gasoline?" Mrs. Wide-Eyed asked.

"No, ma'am," the attendant replied.

Mrs. Wide-Eyed believed him at once. The roller-skater had indeed been on a set of wheels. But to be honest, Mrs. Wide-Eyed was quite relieved she didn't have to drink gasoline. It smelled absolutely vile.

Translated by Adam Cullen





The Haunted House

Written by Helen Käit
Illustrated by Sirly Oder

Tänapäev 2018
206×149 mm, 203 pp
ISBN 9789949852895

Twin sisters Mia and Lia move to the countryside with their parents, where they've finally got their very own house and space galore. However, it's a fleeting thrill. When the sisters go to their new school and gush about their house to the other students, the children are horrified. Rumour around the village has it that their house is haunted. At first, the sisters just laugh and dismiss their classmates' superstitions, but then strange phenomena that are hard to logically explain start happening at home.

Awards:

2017 Children's Story Competition My First Book, 2nd place
2016 25 Best Designed Estonian Books



Helen Käit (1974) is a children's author and corporate adviser. She has a degree in management from the Tallinn University of Technology. Käit has written seven children's books and has been awarded in the My First Book children's story competition, as well as in other writing contests. Her works are filled with excitement and adventure, though they are primarily anchored in our own reality. A recently-staged children's play titled *The Curse of the Dragon* was based on her two-part fantasy series.

Sirly Oder (1983) is a set- and costume designer. She graduated in scenography from the Estonian Academy of Art and has been an artist for a wealth of Estonian theatre productions and short films. Currently, Oder manages and designs the Rahva Raamat bookstore chain's book displays. She has illustrated three children's books and has been awarded at the 25 Best-Designed Estonian Books competition. Her style of illustration features the personalisation of modern design coupled with a unique minimalist colour palette.



The Return of the Ghost

Mia shot into her sister's room like a bullet. As soon as she was in the doorway, she whispered: "It's there, right outside my window! It's hovering and banging against it and flashing its teeth!"

It took Lia a moment to realize what Mia was talking about. As soon as she did, she leapt to her feet.

"A ghost? There's a ghost outside your window?"

Mia nodded wordlessly. She was as pale as a sheet and trembling from head to toe. Although Lia herself had never seen a ghost, her sister's fear was infectious.

"What ... what did it look like?" she asked with a quiver in her voice.

"White. No, blue. Green. Red. Oh, I don't know – it kept changing colors and ... was somehow, like, transparent, too. It felt like I could see its guts."

"Its guts? Are you trying to say you saw a ghost's guts?" Lisa asked, revolted.

"Ugh ... not its guts. I meant its ... innards. Or, well, I dunno. I thought I saw what was inside of it. And its eyes were fire-red and glaring right at me. And when it opened its mouth, its teeth flashed like silver. Oh, you should have seen it ..."

Lia was quite sure she wouldn't have wanted to see it. Her sister's description was awful enough. Still, it did sound a little bit strange – that part about the guts and the silvery teeth and ...

Neither spoke for a while.

"What do you figure, is it gone now?" Lia finally asked softly.

"I don't know. I don't dare to go and check," Mia said in a whisper.



The twins peered in at the dark window for a maybe half a minute before they worked up the courage to step foot into the room. Without delay, Mia dashed to the window and flung the curtains shut.

"Oh my gosh ..." was all Mia could squeak out. The room felt a whole lot safer after the curtains had been closed: now, she could look in the direction of the window without holding her breath.

"And here we were hoping it'd moved away," Lia murmured. Mia just tossed herself flat on the bed.

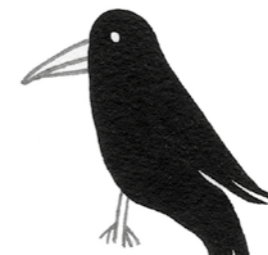
"Well, what're we going to do now? There's no point in telling Mom and Dad; they'll just say we're imagining things," Lia remarked. "I suppose we're going to have to ask Linda and everyone else at school."

"Should we tell them about today, too?" Mia asked.

Lia thought for a moment.

"Better not. We need to figure out how to drive the ghost away. Telling them won't help anything. I don't want them feeling sorry for us. They already do, anyways. Because, you know ... we've got to live in this house. We'll just ask how you can get rid of ghosts."

Mia agreed.



Translated by Adam Cullen



Tilda and the Dust Angel

Written by **Andrus Kivirähk**

Illustrated by **Takinada**

FD Distribution 2018

217×200 mm, 141 pp

ISBN 9789949724802



Tilda lives alone with her mother. Her father died when she was still quite small, and the girl can't remember a single thing about him. One day, after Tilda has forgotten to clean her room for a long while, the Dust Angel arrives: a nifty little creature who can only be seen by those who are born in the sunshine. All of a sudden, the girl starts recalling various things about her father: his green eyes and reddish beard, their trips to the zoo, and gleeful roughhousing. Thanks to the Dust Angel, the girl even starts to see her mother in a new light.

Award:

2018 Annual Children's Literature Award of the Cultural Endowment of Estonia



Andrus Kivirähk (1970) is an author of adult and children's prose, a playwright, topical satirist, and screenwriter.

He graduated from the University of Tartu as a journalist and is the most commanding and prolific figure on Estonia's literary scene today. Kivirähk has won many major awards, including being on the IBBY Honour List in 2008.

His children's stories are known for their rich sense of fantasy and unique humour. The author's writing style is simple, the stories fast-paced, and the gallery of characters colourful and full of surprises.

Takinada (Irina Shabarova, 1980) graduated from the Estonian Academy of Arts in textiles, fashion design, and printmaking. She has worked as a graphic designer and commercial illustrator, is currently employed as a costume designer, and also freelances at an Estonian theatre. Takinada has participated in local and international group exhibitions as a member of the Estonian Watercolourists Union, and has had two solo exhibitions in Estonia. *Tilda and the Dust Angel* is her first children's book.



Dozens of memories flashed through Tilda's mind. She was lying in a stroller and a man with green eyes was leaning over her, handing her a tiny camel that rattled. She was right under the ceiling, held up in the air by a man with a red beard, while a woman with dimples – was that really Mom? – shouted: "Are you crazy? Watch out for the lamp!" Then, she was on the floor, crawling across a checkered blanket, and that very same man was crawling next to her: the man she'd seen in her dream. And then, she was sitting in a little highchair and the man with the red beard was sticking a spoonful of porridge into her mouth, and when Tilda spat it out, the man licked her face clean. His bristly red beard poked Tilda and the woman with the dimples said:

"Ew, Samuel – you're not a dog!"

All of these memories swept over Tilda in the blink of an eye. She couldn't understand how it could be possible she hadn't remembered all those little flickering images before! How could she have thought she didn't remember her own dad?! She remembered him very well!

"Are you my dad?" she whispered.

"IAT," the gray being replied.



"IAT? What does that mean?" Tilda asked.

"I Am Dust," said the little creature. "Which means I'm also your dad. I am everything that has ever been, because nothing disappears without a trace. Everything remains. Everything turns to dust."

It spoke in Tilda's father's voice, and even though it looked more like a mouse than a person, Tilda had the feeling the being wasn't lying. It really was her father. Her father and a million things more, of course, but those weren't important right then. For Tilda, all that mattered was that she was talking to her father. It was completely unlikely, absolutely ridiculous – but even so, it was as true as could be.

Translated by Adam Cullen





How My Dad Got a New Wife

Written by Reeli Reinaus

Illustrated by Marja-Liisa Plats

Tänapäev 2016

221×147 mm, 196 pp

ISBN 9789949850273

Rights sold: Polish



Kaisa lives alone with her father, as her mother died when she was very young. One day, her dad decides to find a new wife. Kaisa is glad, and wants to help. Together, they draft a list of qualities a suitable candidate should possess, put it up on the Internet, and try out other ways to meet new women. Even when candidates meet all the conditions they came up with, the women still turn out to be sub-par when they meet in real life. It seems like each one has something either missing or extra.

Awards:

2018 IBBY Honour List

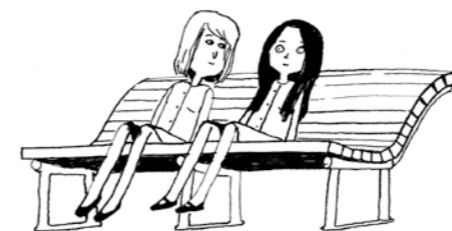
2017 Tartu Prize for Children's Literature (Childhood Prize)

2015 Children's Story Competition My First Book, 1st place



Reeli Reinaus (1977) is a folklorist and writer for children and youth. She graduated from the Tartu Academy of Theology, and received a master's degree in Estonian and comparative folklore from the University of Tartu. Reinaus has written more than 20 books for children and youth, and has won numerous awards in the My First Book children's story competition, as well as in the youth novel competition. The author has a flair for penning stories about children's everyday lives and problems, crime novels, and fantasy works.

Marja-Liisa Plats (1984) is an illustrator, graphic designer, photographer, and singer. She graduated from Tartu Art College as a photographer. Plats has illustrated more than 40 children's books and collaborates regularly with the children's magazine *Täheke*. She has received extensive recognition for her works, including multiple Nukits Competition awards. Her illustrations are perpetually searching, and experiment with a wide range of visual techniques.



Love Magic and the Friend Zone

“But if nothing else works, then there's always witchcraft, of course,” Merit said one day as we were snacking in the school cafeteria.

“What witchcraft?”

“Love magic,” Merit whispered, as if it was something secretive.

“What does that mean?” I knew, of course, what the words meant separately, but I had no idea how magic like that worked. “Is it like, some kind of hocus-pocus?”

Merit nodded. “More or less. But it works like a charm! At least that's what one of my mom's friends claimed a while ago.”

“So, what'd she do?”

“Well, she held a picture of the guy she liked and lit a candle and cast a spell. And an hour later, that guy called and asked her out.”

“Huh. My dad hasn't even met anybody yet. Where's he supposed to get the woman's picture?”

“He can cut one out of a newspaper or a magazine if he likes some celebrity or something.”

“Dad says he's just looking for an ordinary woman.”

“You can find ordinary women's pictures in newspapers and magazines, too,” Merit argued.

I shrugged. “I'm not totally sure Dad'll be into it.”

“Then I guess that spell won't do.” Merit took another bite of her meat pastry, and a smile spread across her face. “A pastry!”

Before I could ask Merit what she meant, she began explaining with her mouth full.

“I just remembered another one of my mom's friends said once that she took a couple strands of her hair and made pastries and baked them into a few. She invited the guy she liked to come over, made a mark on the ones with the hair, and gave them to him. That magic worked, too.”

I stared at Merit's pastry and suddenly felt sick to my stomach. I was totally sure I wouldn't give my dad that advice. I didn't know one word of any magic spell, either. On top of that, I wasn't convinced that he'd even start casting spells. I felt he preferred honest solutions to the problem.

“It doesn't have to be hair, either, you know,” Merit said when she saw my look of doubt. “I just remembered that fingernails work just fine, too.”

Translated by Adam Cullen





Marius, Magic, and Lisa the Werewolf

Written by Reeli Reinaus

Illustrated by Marja-Liisa Plats

Päike ja Pilv 2017

210×144 mm, 224 pp

ISBN 9789949986255



Marius and his older brother Martin recently moved to the countryside with their parents. Martin, who is very sociable, has already found a lot of friends, but Marius just can't seem to fit in. Yet when the boy meets the loner Lisa at school, adventures begin to unfold at once. Before long, the boy's former understandings of reality and the fantasy world acquire a new, fascinating dimension.

Awards:

2018 The White Ravens catalogue

2017 25 Best-Designed Estonian Books, special prize of the Estonian Children's Literature Centre



Reeli Reinaus (1977) is a folklorist and writer for children and youth. She graduated from the Tartu Academy of Theology, and received a master's degree in Estonian and comparative folklore from the University of Tartu. She has written more than 20 books for children and youth, and has won numerous awards in the My First Book children's story competition, as well as in the youth novel competition. The author has a flair for penning stories about children's everyday lives and problems, crime novels, and fantasy works.

Marja-Liisa Plats (1984) is an illustrator, graphic designer, photographer, and singer. She graduated from Tartu Art College as a photographer. Plats has illustrated more than 40 children's books and collaborates regularly with the children's magazine *Täheke*. She has received extensive recognition for her works, including multiple Nukits Competition awards. Her illustrations are perpetually searching, and experiment with a wide range of visual techniques.



In the Cemetery

“What would you like to do?” Lisa asked.

“Show me the most exciting place in the village,” replied Marius.

“OK,” she agreed, which made him glad. “Come on!”

After a spell walking they arrived at the place. The graveyard. At first Marius thought it was Lisa's idea of a joke, but in fact she was deadly serious.

“Is this what you think is the most exciting place in the village?” asked Marius in astonishment.

“Don't you think so?” she replied. “You said you were looking for bones. There's loads of them here.”

“I collect animal bones, not human ones,” replied Marius.

Lisa began to laugh. “I didn't think you'd start digging them up. That was just me kidding you. But I really do like this place. It's been the burial place of people from our village for centuries. I like reading the names on the headstones and crosses.”

“Do you come here a lot then?” asked the boy.

Lisa nodded.

“Why?”

“My Grandma's here.”

That must be who Esme had been talking about, thought Marius. But he then noticed the sadness on Lisa's face.

“I'm sorry, I didn't know,” he said, wanting to comfort her somehow.

“That's OK,” whispered Lisa. “You couldn't have known.”

Marius saw her eyes were brimming with tears.

“Would you like to show me her grave?” he asked.

She nodded.

They walked from one end of the graveyard to the other until they reached a sand-covered plot. Adele Marie Rimmelgas, read Marcus on the gravestone. Under the name were the years of her birth and death: 1945-2015.

“What happened to her?” he asked. “She really wasn't very old.”

Lisa shook her head. “No, she wasn't.”

“Was she ill?”



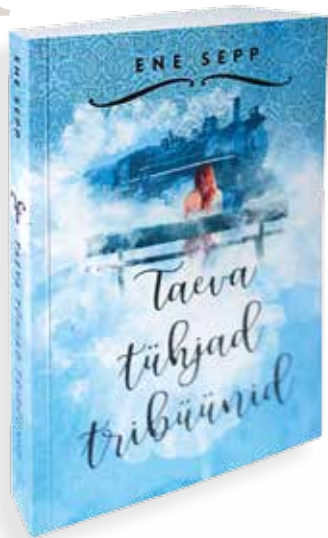
“No, it was an accident.”

“What happened?”

Lisa was silent. The tears were flowing down her cheeks and she wasn't even trying to wipe them away.

Suddenly it dawned on Marius. “It happened in the forest, didn't it?”

Translated by Susan Wilson



Heaven's Empty Bleachers

Written by Ene Sepp

Tänapäev 2018
215×142 mm, 251 pp
ISBN 9789949854165

Fourteen-year-old Merita finds herself in a strange place. Everything around her is white; only the long bleachers she's sitting on are a light blue hue. People, some of them injured or wearing tattered clothing, are constantly coming and going. Most of them board a sky-blue train. Only one man is in no hurry to go anywhere. The girl asks him whether he can tell her who she is and how she ended up there. It turns out she has died and must board the light-blue train just like all the rest. But when Merita refuses to go and accepts the old man's offer to take another look at her life, she finds out the proposal comes with a clause: the girl must right the wrongs she once made.

Award:

2018 Youth Novel Competition, 2nd place



“So that means I'm dead,” I remarked as blandly as I could and observed the other people around us, who were either still sitting on the bleachers with calm and unfocused expressions or standing up and heading towards the train. They were dead, too, it stood to reason. In a different way, of course, but as dead as dead could be.

My next logical deduction took the shape of a question for the Old Man: “Is this heaven?”

The Old Man answered with a question in turn: “I don't know. Is it?”

“Heaven should be...” I searched for the right word for a few moments before coming up with a suitable adjective, “more paradise-like. There should be nature and waterfalls and... I dunno,” I shrugged. “It should be a place you'd like to come to.”

“Then this consequently isn't heaven,” the Old Man said gently, making no effort to change my mind.

I looked over at the train again. “Where does it go?”

“I don't...”

“Does it take you to paradise?” I interrupted.

“I don't...”

“Does everyone have to get on board?” Getting on the train frightened me because it would have meant my death was final, and if I had no idea what was waiting at the end of the trip, then did I really want to see it? Not knowing was scary, but the Old Man surprised me by answering no.

My attention took a sharp turn from the train and the other people to this new topic. “What do you mean?” I asked curiously.

“You don't have to board the train. But I recommend it.”

I snorted. “But I don't *want* to. And if you say I must, then I want to know what my other options are.”

The Old Man thought for a moment, then said: “You can look back over your life and...”

I didn't even let him finish his sentence before interrupting: “Yes!”

“But...” the Old Man tried to add something, but I shook my head vigorously. No, no, no! I didn't want to hear another word! The Old Man couldn't mention the option and then take it away. “I want to look over my life,” I said confidently, reckoning one reason was that I now knew at least a little bit about who I am and had a sense of what my life was like. At the same time, whereas a train ride into a white void is terrifying and unfamiliar, I do know and recognize my own life. There wouldn't be anything unanticipated. And although I didn't actually remember everything, my mind was bursting like floodwaters waiting behind a dam and my head started to fill up with thoughts, memories, and wishes. Death is ultimate unknowing. By looking back over my life, I might gain a better understanding of who I was. Of who I am. The Old Man couldn't take that opportunity away from me! I demanded: “Show me my life!”

The Old Man accepted my wish, though I could see he was reluctant to do so. Still, I gave him no choice. I wanted to see! The Old Man approached, rested a hand on my shoulder, and pressed lightly for me to sit back down onto the bleacher. His touch unleashed a stream of images in my mind. Flickers of situations I thought I knew flashed through my head, but this time I didn't experience them directly. Rather, I was floating somewhere above the scene and observing the past I'd made for myself.

There were memories from the time before my brother had even been born, and then a memory from a party that had been a total fiasco a few months back. A fight with my parents and Grandma's funeral, during which I secretly chatted with my friends online. It all flashed through my mind so quickly that I didn't have a chance to record every individual moment, though each did leave some imprint, some impression on my memory. Two words started to run on repeat in my head: arrogant and egotistical. They sounded foreign and I tried to shake them, but couldn't. The images and memories kept coming and coming until I finally almost pulled away from the Old Man's hand. The memories yielded and no more new ones forced their way into my head; still, the ones I'd already seen had been enough.

I leapt to my feet as if stung.

Shaking and panting, even though I didn't have to breathe in that place, I glared at the Old Man. “That's not my life!”

His attitude was suddenly unpitiful. “Was it not what you thought you would see?”

“That's *not* my life!” I repeated. The memories had been so disturbing that I resolved riding the train off into the unknown would be better than watching the warped film that was supposedly my past. “I'm getting on the train,” I announced to the Old Man, but he shook his head.

“You can't.”

“What do you mean, I can't?” I demanded, raising my voice.

“You can't. You already agreed to look at your life. You can't go on anymore,” the Old Man said plainly.

Translated by Adam Cullen



Ene Sepp (1991) has lived in Estonia, Germany, and Austria. She started writing at an early age, contributing pieces to various media outlets already at 13. Her debut work *The Medalion*, which was published when she was a teenager, has been praised by critics and young readers alike. *Heaven's Empty Bleachers* is Sepp's sixth young adult book. Her works focus mainly on dramatic events or dilemmas in young people's lives.



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