

ZVAIGZNE ABC PUBLISHERS

Latvian Books for Children

CATALOGUE 2024



NOMINATIONS AND PRIZES



RIGHTS SOLD



LAURA VINOGRADOVA

Writes prose and poetry both for children and adults, often touching upon topics related to ethics and “uncomfortable” questions. Laura has won the prize in Kurzeme Prose Readings as well as the first place in the fairy tale competition by Kārlis Ķezbers. You can listen to Laura’s works in her own fascinating voice on her website as well as on her YouTube profile.



- Shortlisted for the Annual Latvian Literature Award, 2021 (novel The River)
- European Union Prize for Literature, 2021 (novel The River)
- Nominated for the Annual Latvian Literature Award, 2022 (Dad and the Dog)
- Jānis Baltvilks International Prize for Children’s Literature and Book Art, 2022 (Dad and the Dog)
- Second place in the Children and Youth Jury, 2022 (Dad and the Dog)
- Included in “The White Ravens” international children’s and youth book catalogue 2023



friendship, nature,
feeling happy, family



Laura Vinogradova

TĒTIS UN SUNS

DAD AND THE DOG

Illustrator Ieva Maurīte

Magda is a small girl with two ash-blond braids. She was eight on her last birthday, back in the springtime, and yesterday was her last day in the first grade. This morning, Magda wakes up in a good mood, looking forward to her summer holidays.


This is a heartfelt story for the whole family about the things that are the most important and valuable in everyone’s life. We all guess what it is, but we can’t always name it.

Laura Vinogradova is an unparalleled storyteller. Her language flows like music, and the books appear as if by themselves.



Illustrator IEVA MAURĪTE

Is the author of many illustrated books of exceptional quality. She has developed a very personal artistic expression which cannot be confused with any other. An artist obtained her Master of Arts degree in Fine Arts at the Art Academy of Latvia.

- Nominated for the book art competition “Golden Apple-tree”, 2022 (Dad and the Dog) 



Lithuania

987-9934-0-9219-0

Age 7+

22,5 x 15 cm

48 pages



Laura Vinogradova

CROWS (VĀRNAS)

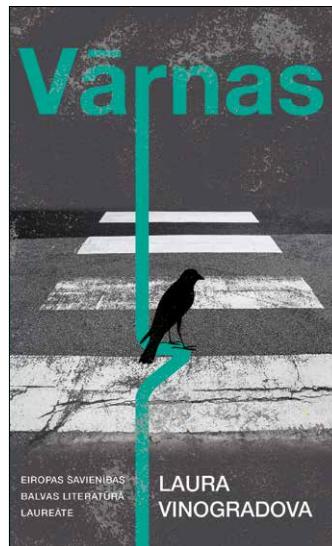
Sanna grows up in an orphanage. There she meets Andrey, a Roma boy. Unexpectedly, Andrey leaves the orphanage, and Sanna continues her journey alone. The feelings of loneliness and unimportance, stemming from her orphanage experience, make Sanna an unhappy and angry teenager who, after arriving to the capital city and living in the dormitory, drinks alcohol excessively, smokes, and is aggressive towards other young people.

After several years of not seeing each other, Andrey finds Sanna sleeping on a bench in the park. He takes the girl to his home, and they fall in love. Until now, Andrey has been supported by Aunt Rita, who now becomes a support for Sanna as well.

Sanna and Andrey seem happy; they have a daughter, Lia, but Sanna feels that her anger towards life has not subsided.

Lia is already attending school, and Sanna resumes her neglected studies. However, one evening Sanna fails to cross the pedestrian crossing – she is hit by a trolleybus.

Several years have passed. Lia returns home from Scotland because she heard a man on a show talking about his life after receiving a heart transplant. Lia and Aunt Rita are convinced that it is Sanna's heart. Unexpectedly, his family finds Andrey – Roma people whom he has not known until now. Romani culture enters their peaceful lives – loud, free, very family-oriented.



*#coming to age, destructive lifestyle,
family, orphanage, discrimination,
love, compassion*

Lia's stereotypes about Roma are shattered; she learns to be part of a family, to have a strong backbone, although at school she experiences severe bullying precisely because of her Romani heritage.

Lia decides to meet the man who received Sanna's heart. During the meeting, she encounters clear dislike, even disgust, as the man believes he is living with a gypsy's heart. Lia leaves without revealing that Sanna was not a gypsy.

Accepting her Roma family, Lia also accepts herself.

Sample translation
available: English

978-9934-32-189-4

Age 14+

21 × 13,5 cm

160 pages



ZANE ZUSTA

Has written books for both children and adults. She began her career in journalism and public relations before debuting in literature in 2015 with her first children’s book, “Ucipuci/ Ucklepuckle is Lost from Home”. Her other titles for children focus on socially engaging topics, such as OCDs in “I am the Boss”, the process of adoption in “Austra, Clouds and the Little Bird” and manifesting what you desire in “Toto Uncracks a Secret”. Zane Zusta has also written a poetry collection for children “Good/Swell Rhymes”.

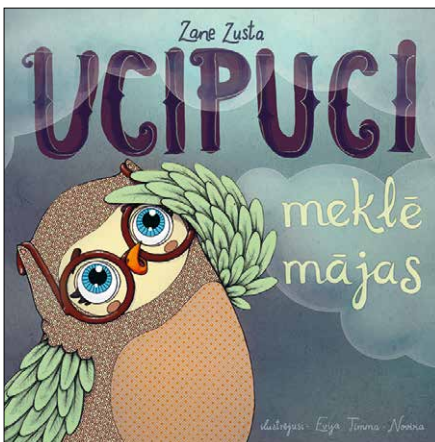
In terms of literature for adults, the writer’s main focus is on psychological aspects. Her bestselling short story collections “Cockroaches in My head” and “Cockroaches in Your Head” have been adapted into TV series.

Zane Zusta has received the No Limits Authors’ Rights Award (Autortiesību bezgalības balva), her Ucipuci titles have been adapted into TV series and developed into the “Ucipuci” magazine. Zane Zusta has written the screen adaptation for her “Cockroaches in My Head” and “Cockroaches in Your Head”.

- 👑 • Nominated for Latvian Literature Annual Award, 2018 (Ucipuci Thinks Outside the Box)
- Nominated for Jānis Baltvilks International Prize for Children’s Literature and Book Art, 2018 (Ucipuci Thinks Outside the Box)
- No Limits Authors’ Rights Award/ Autortiesību bezgalības balva (Ucipuci)

Zane Zusta
UCIPUCI MEKLĒ MĀJAS
UCKLEPUCKLE IS LOST FROM HOME
 Illustrator **Evija Timma-Novika**

A pleasing story about the small, brave toy owl, Ucklepuckle, who gets left behind at the end of a holiday in Italy. In order to get back home, the little owl must overcome all manner of trials as she crosses several rooms to the terrace where she hopes to meet the Big Gnat – the only creature who might know the whereabouts of Ucklepuckle’s owner, Krišs (Chris). On her journey, Ucklepuckle makes friends with Spider and Grasshopper, learns about an ants’ trap and witnesses floods in the bathroom before finally making it home, safe and sound. By the end of the book, children have learned, together with Ucklepuckle, what they should do in the event of getting lost; the best actions to take and the best way to remember their parents’ phone numbers. The book is sold with a delightful puppet theatre which will help ignite children’s imagination as they act out the little owl’s adventures on her journey home from Italy or come up with new adventures of their own.



friendship, courage,
 adventures,
 learning new skills



Lithuania; Estonia;
 China; Macedonia



978-9934-31-464-3
 Age 4+
 25 x 25 cm
 44 pages



Zane Zusta

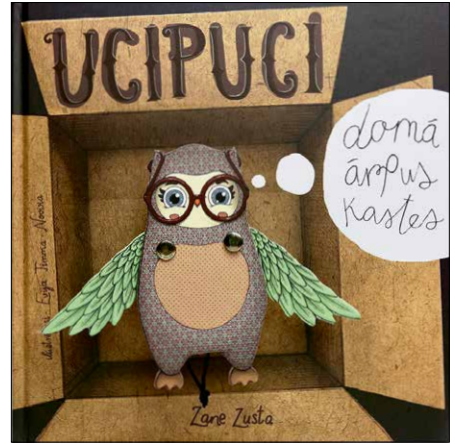
**UCIPUCI DOMĀ ĀRPUS KASTES
UCKLEPUCKLE THINKS OUTSIDE THE BOX**
Illustrator **Evija Timma-Novika**

This book tells the story of Ucklepuckle when she's at home on her own one day and accidentally falls into a gigantic cardboard box. At first, the only way out appears to be out of the top but, as time passes, she realises that there are other ways of getting out. This is how the little owl comes to understand what 'thinking outside the box' really means. By following Ucklepuckle's adventure, children learn about optical illusions and how images can change depending on how you look at them. The front of the book features a charming toy owl with wings that move from the cover of the book.

Illustrator **EVIJA TIMMA-NOVIKA**

I have been drawing for as long as I can remember, but my interest in book illustration comes from childhood. I loved to make up stories about animals and to illustrate them. I studied art and different art techniques first at Janis Rozentāls Riga Art School and later at the Art Academy of Latvia. My challenge in book illustration is to effectively visualize the words so that I can clearly communicate with the viewer (especially a young one). Sometimes it is hard to faithfully translate the idea in my head onto a piece of paper, but that is another challenge I love to solve.

👑 • Nominated for the book art competition "Golden Apple-tree", 2015; 2018 (Ucipuci)



courage, thinking outside the box,
optical illusions,
changing the point of view



Lithuania;
Macedonia



978-9934-31-465-0
Age 4+
25 x 25 cm
45 pages



AGNESE VANAGA

After getting a degree in business and management and philology, Agnese Vanaga had a career in journalism before moving into the world of children's literature as an author and scriptwriter as well as running children's storytelling workshops.



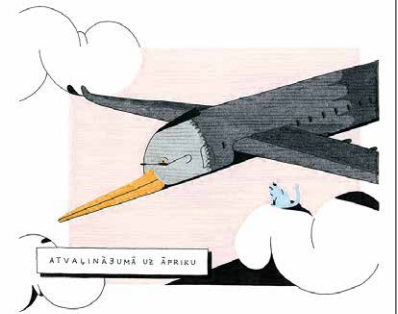
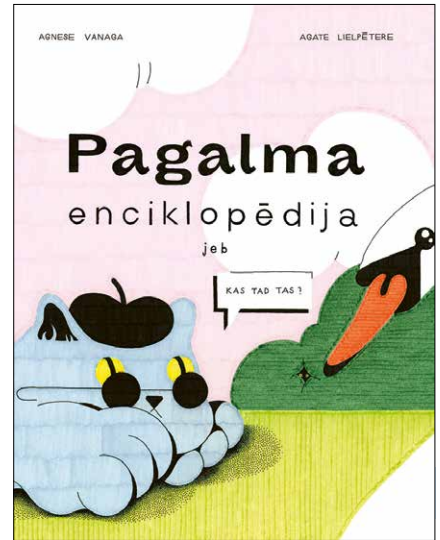
• Nominated for Jānis Baltvilks International Prize for Children's Literature and Book Art, 2022 (The Backyard Encyclopedia)

• First place in the Children and Youth Jury, 2022 (The Backyard Encyclopedia)

Agnese Vanaga, Agate Lielpētere
PAGALMA ENCIKLOPĒDIJA
THE BACKYARD ENCYCLOPEDIA
 Illustrator Agate Lielpētere

Children's books "The Backyard Encyclopedia or What's That?" and "Lots to Do in The Yard" have been featured in bestseller lists since publication and are widely loved by children. In June 2023, the stage version of the book "The Backyard Encyclopedia" was premiered. A sequel to the book – "The Backyard Detective" is coming soon.

nature, humor, animals, leaving the city



Kamēr peltēkais kājis prātoja, cik ilgi talkā vjōr varētu aizdāpot līdz Āfriakai, zivju gārnis ar ielektro kaku maziet pasmedzēs tuvāk ūdenim.

Pielūki – putns vīderis ar oranži dzelteno krāsīti cāiem un sāpīgu zivi.

pirms gara oļa, gārnis ar zvi knābi anas vietā.

īs noskatījās, kā gārnis, glāsi spārnus kā kajiem zivis garšotu."



"KOA?" Mārīte šausmās izlēta spārnus krūms sāka degt?"

"Kas deg?" Kājis satrūks un pavēris nekustīgi gūvēja auspūdus. Birtu peltēklais – mārīte. Kas izskatījās beģis.

"Esmu dzirdējis tādu skaitampantīnu... Tā mārīti atpaļal uz vēdera. Viss sakustināja sevi.

"Ak debestot! Kāji!" Mārīte grozīja meln trīsdabīgus oļos esmu sādījuši, jaunus mārītoj.

"Un jū pārņemjis briesmām tu nodērti be."

"Ne jau visi ir tik drosmīgi," mārīte atbildi parbēnēm. Piemēram, mana košā krāsa bridim.

"Jā, tikai mūšmēni gēdus noskaita pilos p.

"KOA? Kuram tad šakast? Man! Mārītebēsi šurpūnkaite mārīte! Un manas trīsdabīgas oļas nevis divpūnkū mārītes!"

"Ak tā, to es nezīnāju," kājis domīgi groz' arī nepārtikas, cik glābi, vai ne?"

Mārīte vīrīgi padūkojās auspūst uz kājis. Gāzīroklāns – tikpat tābi tu varētu te būt gūvēji. Kājis nožāvājās, nogūlās uz sāna un izs' būt tik lielam – daudz jād, daudz jāgūv'."



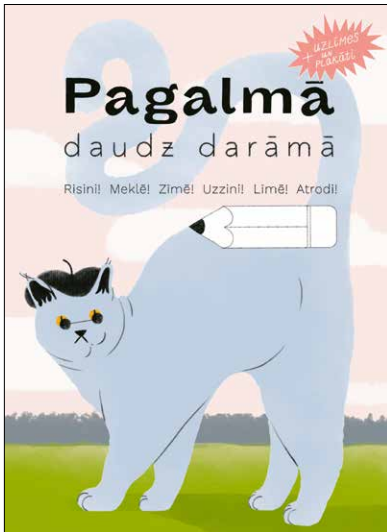
978-9934-0-8851-3
 Age 5+
 27 x 21 cm
 62 pages



Illustrator
AGATE LIELPĒTERE

Agate Lielpētere is a visual artist, illustrator, and designer. She holds a BA degree in graphic art from the Art Academy of Latvia and is currently undergoing MA studies in contemporary visual practices, in Ljubljana, Slovenia. Her work can be described as diverse and witty. Agate states that her “bad sense of humor” runs in the family – blame them!

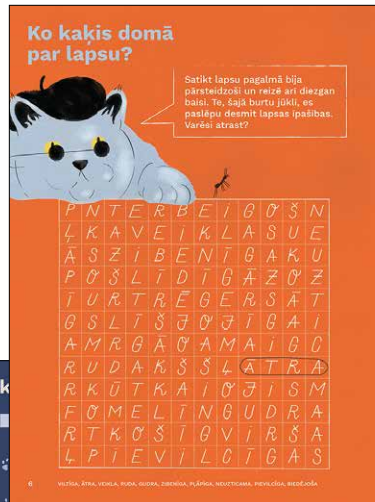
activities, learning, family time



Agnese Vanaga, Agate Lielpētere

**PAGALMĀ DAUDZ DARĀMĀ
LOTS TO DO IN THE YARD**

The book's protagonist is a fancy pedigree cat whose owners decide to move out of their city apartment to a house in the country, forcing him to exchange his cozy, carpeted home for a patch of grass in the garden shared with all manner of other animals. In the cat's company, readers encounter sixteen different creatures and learn all manner of surprising and interesting things about them. The creatures are the sort to be found in most gardens, such as an earthworm, a fly, a mole, a bat, a ladybird and others besides. The book encourages readers to observe the world around them and, most importantly, take pleasure in it.

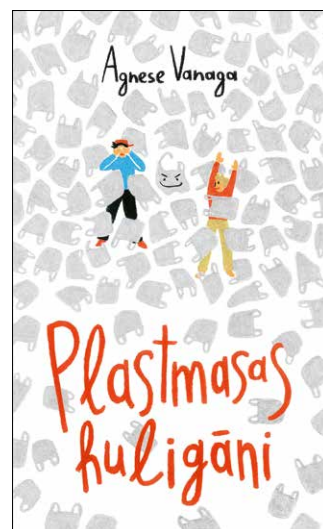


978-9934-0-9556-6
Age 5+
26 x 19,5 cm
32 pages



Agnese Vanaga
 PLASTMASAS HULIGĀNI
PLASTIC HOOLIGANS
 Illustrator Līva Ozola

environment,
 responsibility,
 humor, family



Illustrator LĪVA OZOLA

is an artist and illustrator. She has studied printmaking at the Art Academy of Latvia. Her main focus is on book illustrations, however she also participates in other art projects. Ozola's favorite technique is colored or black and white pastel pencils.

The book "Plastic Bag Hooligans" has repeatedly appeared in the top-selling book charts, has been reprinted three times.

Based on the book's motifs, a theatre production has been staged, nominated for the "Theatre Night" award, and an animated film "Grampus" has been produced.

• Nominated for Jānis Baltvilks International Prize for Children's Literature and Book Art, 2019 (Plastic Hooligans)

• Second place in the Children and Youth Jury, 2019 (Plastic Hooligans)

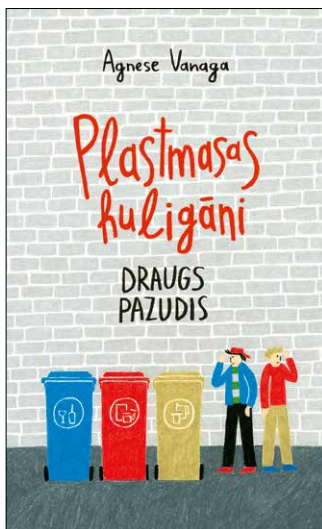
978-9934-31-840-5
 Age 7+
 21 x 13 cm
 96 pages

One day, on his way home from school, Clive gets a big fright because his mom accidentally drives over a hedgehog running across the street. When the boy examines the scene, he realizes it wasn't a hedgehog at all, but a plastic bag blown across the street by the wind. Clive gets angry that this ordinary plastic bag – useless trash – has fooled him and kicks it away in frustration. However, it turns out that it's not just an ordinary plastic bag. It's alive, talkative, and in a very grumpy mood – it wraps around Clive's leg and scares him. Surprised, Clive decides to catch it and find out what kind of plastic beast it is. After a struggle and chase, both brothers – Clive and Intars – capture the bag and trap it.

Cornered, the plastic bag reveals its sad life story: one of its handles had already broken off in the store, and it was thrown out as useless trash, failing to fulfil its sole purpose – to be useful, to carry something home from the store. It tells the brothers that many plastic bags feel the same way, drifting aimlessly through the streets, getting caught in tree branches, pretending to be fish in the sea and animals in the forest. Moved by the bag's sad story, the brothers decide to help it, name it "Grampus" and offer their friendship. Together, they come up with a plan to save the world from plastic bag hooligans, but their plan has a flaw: their parents know nothing about many plastic bags, which now take up the whole attic of the house.

After some time, the brothers find themselves in a trouble. They're afraid their parents might discover their imperfect plan and notice their peculiar, talkative friend – Grampus. Clive finds an answer and solution with their grandfather, to whom he explains the plan and what they've done. Together, they sort the bags, learn to fold them neatly into triangles for reuse, and decide to recycle the worn-out bags into new plastic items. It seems like everything is resolved, and the brothers, along with their mom and Grampus, plan to go shopping, but their mom notices something moving in Clive's pocket and screams, "A MOUSE!"





Kur viņš ir?

Bakš! Bakš! Divas smagas mugursomas nokrita priekšnamā uz grīdas. Klāvs ar Intaru bija pārņākuši no skolas. Abi uzreiz skriešus metās augšup uz mājas otro stāvu, tad uz bēniņiem un tikpat ātri atpakaļ. Viņi izjooja cauri visām istabām un atgriezās priekšnamā. Intars ieskreja virtuvē un atrāva valā maisiņu atvilktni. Brīdi tur parakājies, nopūtās un aizvēra to ciet. Brāļi saskatījās, metās ārā no mājas un aizbrāzās uz šķūnīti. Arī tur nebija tas, ko viņi meklēja.

– Nav...

– Joprojām nav.

– Kur viņš tik īgi ir nozudis? – Intars čuksteja, jo šķīta, ka, sakot to skaļi, aizlūzīs balsis.

– Nezinu, – Klāvs skumīgi noteica un apsedās uz prāva akmens blakus smaidīgam

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PLASTMASAS HULIGĀNI. DRAUGS PAZUDIS
PLASTIC HOOLIGANS: THE FRIEND IS MISSING

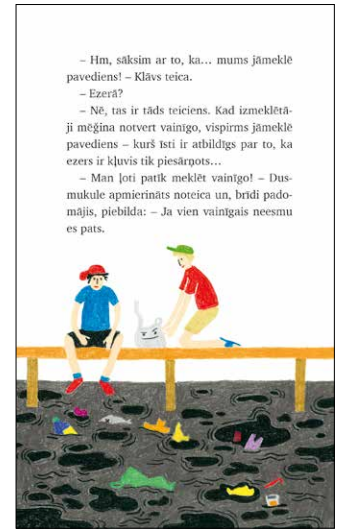
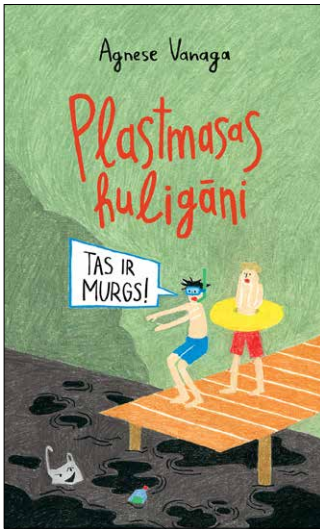
environment,
 responsibility, friendship
 humor, family

978-9934-31-842-9
 Age 7+
 21 x 13 cm
 104 pages

The two main characters, brothers Clive and Intars, are feeling very down. Their newly acquired friend, the clever plastic bag Grampus, has gone missing. Their efforts to find him are in vain, and the search for their friend is hindered by a gang of biking troublemakers – the Wheelers. They cause trouble in their neighbourhood – recklessly riding, leaping off curbs, crashing into trash bins, and behaving shamelessly towards pedestrians.

The brothers try almost everything to find their friend – they rescue a whole lot of plastic bags from dirt, hire one of them as their helper, and even challenge the leader of the biking gang, the “Wheeler,” to a race. After a series of adventures, it turns out their friend is stuck in a trash container, and despite their efforts to rescue him, he gets trapped in the garbage truck’s large bin and is taken to the landfill. At the last moment, they negotiate plan with a seagull, and Grampus is brought back home safe by the bird. Beating all odds, Grampus – looking quite battered and smelling foully – returns home and tells his tale of loss and adventures. The boys are horrified by Grampus’ experience at the landfill, and a new idea forms in their heads on how to solve it.

The boys tell their parents that as part of their science class, they have to conduct a social study – “How much waste does a family produce in a month?” This means that for a whole month, the family must diligently collect, wash, sort, and keep track of their waste. Mom and Dad are not thrilled, but they can’t object if it’s a school project. The neighbors are not happy either – there’s currently a city-wide competition for the cleanest neighborhood, and the Locins family yard doesn’t look good at all – heaps of used jars, dried-out plastic bags, and plastic cups, wrapping materials. When Mom goes to school to discuss the “utility” of such a project, it turns out the project task was completely different. The students were supposed to participate in the “Biodiversity” project and study one square meter of grass, identifying the species of plants growing there. The teacher goes to the Locins family and, surprised by the amount of accumulated waste, invites the brothers to discuss what’s more important – taking care to preserve various plant species or reducing the amount of waste produced. The meeting ends with an unexpected turn – the neighbourhood leader thanks the Locins family for contribution on winning the “Cleanest Neighborhood” award, and together, they decide to use the cash prize to set up a meadow and bee hives in the city center. While the everybody was chatting in the yard, the Wheelers were causing trouble on their street again. And this time, Grampus decided to teach them a lesson. He hid in the bushes and, in a scary voice, addressed the gang members, then latched onto one of their faces, and when they fled, he flew after them, promising to follow them for life if they didn’t stop littering the streets. Clive and Intars, their parents, the teacher, all watched thoughtfully as Grampus flew in the blue sky. “It looks almost alive!” declared the neighborhood leader. “He even has something like a mouth, it looks as if it is laughing!” Grampus indeed floated in the blue sky and chuckled contentedly, pleased to have helped the boys and frightened off the bike gang.



**PLASTMASAS HULIGĀNI. TAS IR MURGS!
PLASTIC HOOLIGANS: IT'S A NIGHTMARE!**

environment,
responsibility, friendship
humor, family

978-9934-31-786-6
Age 7+
21 x 13 cm
104 pages

Grampus hangs on a clothesline and reminisces about refreshing swims with friends in the nearby lake. Clive and Intars also want to swim, but they learn from their parents that water pollution has reached such levels that swimming in the sea, in the lake, is out of the question. Although they try to persuade their parents, Aiga and Sergejs are adamant – it’s forbidden, it’s dangerous to health. What kind of summer is it without swimming? Mom suggests filling in the bathtub and splashing in there, but the boys are not happy with that. They find long-unused swimming gear in the attic, hide it in their backpacks, and go to their grandparents’ to somehow convince them to go swimming. Along the way, they come up with the idea of fishing. Grandpa agrees but says regretfully that fishing is no longer what it used to be. If fish were caught before, now only trash can be caught. When they arrive at the lake and see the devastation – how it’s overgrown, full of debris, oil stains, and mud, the idea of swimming no longer appeals to the brothers. Together with their grandfather, they “fish for trash” and plan how to solve this big mess.

Meanwhile, their beloved Aunt Tata, who studies nature sciences, has come to visit. The boys have high hopes that she will help find the culprit polluting the lake, but Tata avoids it – she has her own research and work to do. The boys together with Grampus decide to take action anyway. Prepared for the expedition, they head to the lake, Grampus dives in and tries to find the cause of the polluted lake. The bag manages to find out that a large house right on the shore discharges sewage into the lake. Clive gets angry and decides to punish the homeowner. In the dark hour of the night, he takes paint and writes on the house’s wall, “VILE MAN!” The paint slightly washes away during the night...

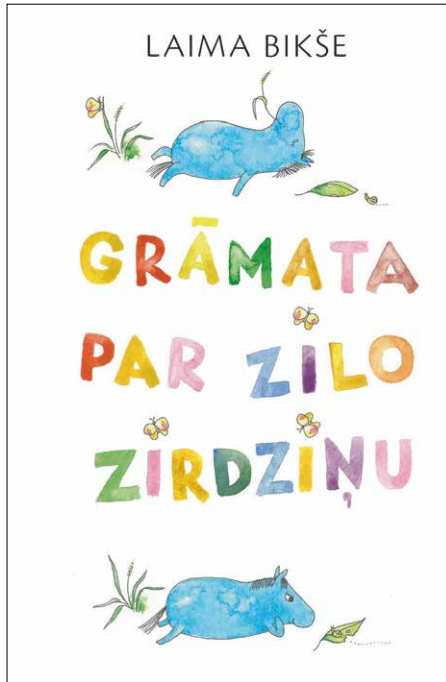
The next day, the police arrive and search for the culprit who painted “NICE MAN!” on the wall. Clive erupts in helpless anger at his failure and confesses to the misdeed. The homeowner is an old, kind old man whose birthday was yesterday, and this inscription was the only greeting he received, and it greatly pleased him, so he invites the boys over.

The boys, along with Aunt Tata, go to the old man to make him clean the lake. After the meeting and conversation with Tata, everyone understands that water pollution is not only the old man’s fault but the negligence of society as a whole. The old man promises to fix the sewage system, but the children and Tata repaint the wall and write some tips for eco-friendly living. When the wall is repainted and the painters need to wash up, they start splashing with water... and completely unexpectedly, Clive hears his mother’s voice waking him up from his sleep. Mom feels her son’s forehead and worries if he has sunstroke. Clive opens his eyes and sees that he is lying on a beautiful, clean beach, by the sea shore, and Intars is in the distance doing somersaults in the water. Clive murmurs for a moment and doesn’t understand what’s going on, but his mom reassures him saying, “It was just a dream, darling!” Hearing this, Clive responds: “No, mom, it was a nightmare!”



LAIMA BIKŠE

is a painter, an illustrator and an author. She has regularly participated in exhibitions since 1995 and has had personal exhibitions in Riga, Berlin and Leipzig. Laima draws and paints in a variety of techniques; her work characteristically involves contrast – gentle fragility interchanges with bright vitality. She has published two books for children and is currently working on the third one.



Laima Bikše

GRĀMATA PAR ZILO ZIRDZIŅU

STORY OF THE BLUE HORSE

Illustrator Laima Bikše

One day, the little blue horse feels a great sadness and decides to help himself – go and find something enjoyable. Finally, the little horse understands that his sadness has turned to joy as he has helped the mouse, the duck and the cow he has met along the way. The book invites the readers to discuss the ways we understand and recognize our emotions.

animals, fable, discussion, emotions, awareness, antistress



Zirdziņš noliecās un pastiepa kāju, pa kuru pele ar visām vārpām žgli uztrausās uz muguras.

– Tad tik turies pie krēpēm un nenokrīt! – iesaucās zirdziņš un uzņēma ātrumu.

– Ju-hūūt! – pele sajūsmā spiedza. – Tu nu gan esi varens rikšotājs!

Zirdziņš nopriecājās ko tādu dzirdēt un pielika vēl soli.

Ļoti ātri viņi bija kļāt pie peles mājas, kas atradās dziļā malā vecā vītola saknēs. Zirdziņš apsēdās, lai pele varētu nokāpt.

– Tas tik bija brauciens! – pele iesaucās un nošļūca pa zirdziņa muguru kā pa slidkalniņu.

– Āāā... – zirdziņš novilkta, un tajā pašā mirkli viņam prātā ienāca kāda ideja. – Vai zini, pele, es tevi varētu aizvest uz mājām! Man tāpat jāiet uz to pusi.

Pele saprata, ka šis tielām ir labs priekšlikums.

– Tas būtu jauki! – Viņa pasmaidīja.

Zirdziņš palīdzēja pelei aiznest vārpas līdz pašām durvīm, lekšā gan viņš negāja, jo tās bija ļoti mazas durtiņas, pa kurām varētu iespraucies tikai viena auss. Bet ko gan auss bez zirga darītu ciemos pie peles?

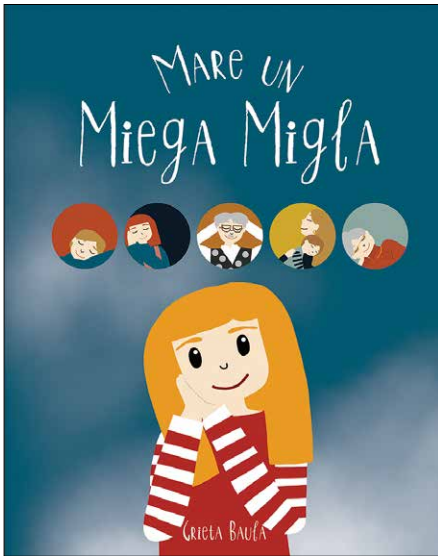


978-9934-0-7978-8

Age 4–8

30 x 25 cm

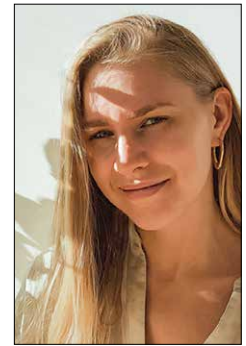
32 pages



fantasy, courage,
persistence, self-care

Grieta Baula
MARE UN MIEGA MIGLA
MARE'S SLEEP MIST
Illustrator **Grieta Baula**

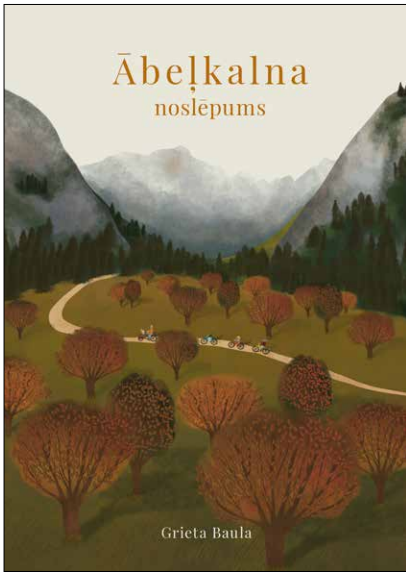
Mare receives exciting news one morning – the city is approaching a deep sleep mist! Her family is thrilled because the sleep mist brings wonderful sleep and incredible strength. However, for Mare, sleeping in the middle of the day feels like a waste of time, so she resolves to accomplish something remarkable. This sets off a series of events that unfold between stubbornness and courage, sleep and wakefulness. This book is inspired by a lack of sleep and was created during a time when I longed for a proper rest. “Mare And the Sleep Mist” is not a replacement for bedtime stories; it’s an empowering gift that allows everyone to slow down in this fast-paced world, where we often chase seemingly important goals. Just like the story’s heroes, I also cherish restful sleep, bold ideas, pleasant conversations, and the coziness of home.



Author and illustrator
GRIETA BAULA

I have graduated from the Latvian Academy of Culture. While I lack formal education in visual arts, I believe that my sense of composition has been influenced by my piano playing. My journey to illustration grew out of my work in graphic design. I have a deep appreciation for children’s books and a passion for studying illustrations, as they radiate love and a sense of a better world – a place where I can linger for a long time. It’s precisely this feeling that motivated me to start drawing and create my own stories. In any book, I value warm relationships the most, and that’s the foundation upon which I build my works. I am fascinated by nature, wonders, and mysteries, which is why I always want to infuse something that’s beyond this world into my stories.

978-9934-0-9419-4
Age 4+
27 × 21 cm
56 pages



Grieta Baula
ĀBELKALNA NOSLĒPUMS
THE MYSTERY OF APPLEHILL
 Illustrator **Grieta Baula**

As the train winds its way through the mountain bends, Lukas, Alle, and Francis arrive at Applehill – a charming mountain village where, as usual, they plan to enjoy a carefree summer with their beloved grandparents. However, upon their arrival, they are greeted by an unpleasant surprise – the village is facing hard times. The children’s fighting spirit and a sense of adventure awaken and leads them towards great experiences. How can they save the village? And is the legend of the glowing apple in the dark true? Embark on nocturnal adventures, experience a friendship with nature, and uncover the secret of Applehill alongside these brave characters! The Mystery of Applehill is a story of the wonders of nature, which, like the wonders of life, can only be seen by its friends.

*# fantasy, miracles, cooperation,
 nature protection*

grāmatnīcas virzienā. Lūkass satvēra masīvo rokturi un vilka vaļā smagās durvis, taču tās nevēdās.

"Lūkass, paskaties!" sauca māsa.

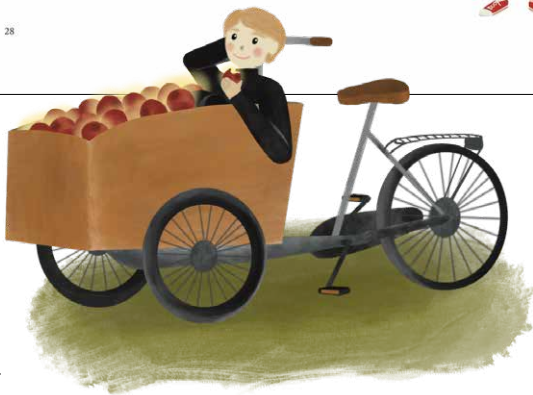
Lūkass nostājās viņai blakus un ieraudzīja nopučējušajos grāmatnīcas logos lielu izkārnīti, uz tās trokšņiem burtiem bija lasāms uzraksts SLĒGTS.

"Ai, Lūkass, man tik ļoti žēl... bet laikam jau tas bija gaidāms. Nebēd, varbūt aizņem repas pie Tillijas kundzes uzērē ābeļu kūciņas?" ierosināja Alle. Sekoja neveikla un ilga klusuma pauze. Viņa zināja, ka nekas nespēs brīli uzmundrināt, bet centās aizgānīt nepatīkamo mirkli, tāpēc jauklā kafējnīca bija pirmais, kas ielāvās prātā. Lūkass neko neatbildēja, bet devās kafējnīcas virzienā. Viņi nonāca ciema galvenajā laukumā, kur parasti valdīja liksma drūzma, taču šoreiz laukums bija pustukšs. Par laimi, bulciņu stends stāvēja, kur stāvējis. Bērni piegāja tam klāt un sarīcējās ar Tillijas kundzi, viņa bija priecīga atkal sastapt savus pastāvīgos pircējus.

"Cik labi, ka vismaz jūs vēl darbojaties!" atviegloti noteica Lūkass.

"Jā, bet es nezinu, cik ilgi vēl varēšu nonurēties šādos apstākļos, katru dienu strādāju kā pēdējo," atzina raižpilnā pārdevēja. Bērni smagi nopūtās un apspēdās turpat pie galdfiņa laukuma vidū.

"Tas nu ir par traku, mums kaut kas jādarā!" teica Lūkass.



978-9934-32-060-6
 Age 4+
 25 x 18 cm
 70' pages



GUNTA MEDNE

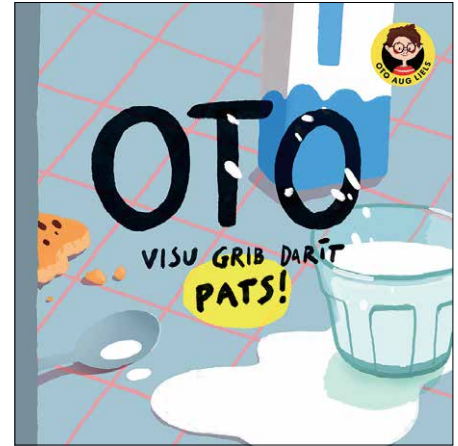
is a preschool and Montessori educator who works with children on a daily basis. With a deep understanding of child psychology, the author can turn the acquisition of new skills into play and weave captivating stories. In Gunta's family, her son Askolds is growing up, serving as the source of inspiration for the book and the prototype of Oto.

Gunta Medne

**OTO VISU GRIB DARĪT PATS!
OTO WANTS TO DO EVERYTHING
BY HIMSELF!**

Illustrator **Alise Landsberga**

The first book in the "Oto Grows Up" series. It reveals how to experience (rather than endure) a toddler's "I CAN DO IT MYSELF" phase more peacefully. It's an engaging story with playful illustrations, large letters, and colorable drawings, which also aid in developing early reading skills. The "Oto Grows Up" series is a helpful tool for preschool-aged children and their parents, navigating various challenges on the path of a child's growth.



#learnind, growing up,
Montesori pedagogy



Oto dodas meklēt kaut ko lielāku.
Kas ir vislielākais trauks mājās? Spainis!
"Oto, es tev palīdzēšu," piedāvā tētis.
"ES PATS!"



Uzvilkt pidžamu.
ES PATS KOPĀ



Forši ir arī ilgi šūpoties,
it sevišķi, ja šūpina tētis.
Viņš māc uzšūpināt līdz
pašām debesīm.



Oi, glāze ir par mazul!
Aste gan par to priecājas.



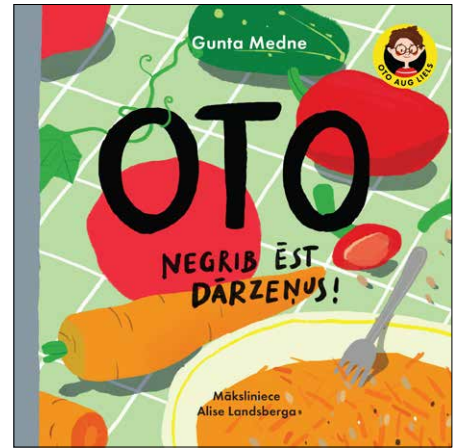
Izmazgāt matus.
ES PATS KOPĀ

978-9934-0-9558-0
Age 3+
23 x 22,5 cm
28 pages



Gunta Medne
OTO NEGRIB ĒST DĀRŽENUS
OTO WON'T EAT VEGETABLES
 Illustrator **Alise Landsberga**

The second book in the series, "Oto Won't Eat Vegetables", is a humorous story about a boy who refuses to eat vegetables because he doesn't like red food, because broccoli looks like a tree and bell peppers are too spicy. Until... The boy leaves to spend the holidays with his grandparents in the countryside... The book also includes valuable information about the nutritional value of various vegetables, presented in an understandable and exciting manner.



Illustrator
ALISE LANDSBERGA

I have graduated from the Art Academy of Latvia Department of Painting. Ever since I became a student, I have actively worked as an illustrator and designer, collaborating with written press of cultural content, and creating design for exhibitions and museum catalogues. I turned to book illustration after becoming a mother. An attentive look at the world from a child's point of view has become the main characteristic of my style.

👑 * Main prize in the book art competition Golden Apple-tree, 2014

healthy lifestyle,
 countryside living,
 grandparents

978-9934-0-9756-0
 Age 3+
 23 x 22,5 cm
 28 pages





ILIS
PUIKA, KAS SPĒLĒJĀS AR LELLĒM
THE BOY WHO PLAYED WITH DOLLS
 Illustrator Andra Otto-Hvoinska

*# expressing emotions, accepting
 different, overcoming stereotypes,
 family reading*



ILIS
 (real name
IĻJA MARIJA
BOĻŠAKOVS)

is a husband, son, father, dog owner, native of Riga, philosopher, and publicist. He studied philosophy and theology and currently teaches students while also writing stories, reflections, and research. This is his first book for children. The author of the book has a son and a daughter, and its message arose in response to all those countless individuals who have given advice on the proper upbringing of boys and girls. Such advice is not only offered by relatives, friends, and acquaintances but is encountered daily in books, movies, and all forms of media.

Is there a person for whom an adult would be willing to change their thinking, broaden their horizons, and improve themselves? Perhaps it's a child? A son or daughter? We say that children make us better. And this book "The Boy Who Played with Dolls" speaks directly to children. If they will understand, we – the grown-ups – will begin to understand as well. Often, children have already understood everything before we even start teaching them.

But this book doesn't teach. It simply invites you on a journey – to discover something along the way. The main characters of the book boldly venture beneath the surface of many topics. Clothing colours, hairstyles, jewellery, professions, responsibilities, hobbies, roles, emotions, and character traits are just a part of them. Scenes from Lauris and his little sister Laura's daily life, both at home and in school, are enriched by imaginative, dynamic fairy tale and sayings. Some of them may seem pleasantly familiar, but others surprise with unprecedented freshness and will certainly remain relevant beyond the pages of the book. Lauris' anecdotal counterpart – his little cousin Peter – leads us to laugh from the heart and find joy in a life that is neither right nor wrong.

Some people believe that dolls should be played with by girls because many girls will grow up to be mothers. But many boys, as they grow up, will become fathers, so it is fitting for them to play with dolls as well. Not everything that is conventional is right, and not everything that is right is conventional.

In the book, humour is intertwined with childlike clarity of logic and benign naivety. Through the author's talent and experience, truth speaks through the mouth of a child.



👑 • PEN Latvia – one of the best books of the year, 2023

978-9934-31-481-0
 Age 5–99
 17 × 22 cm
 184 pages



Illustrator
**ANDRA OTTO-
HVOINSKA**

has graduated from the Art Academy of Latvia Department of Painting and she has been taking part in exhibitions since 1994. The artist has had five personal exhibitions and her artworks can be found in private collections in Latvia, Germany, France and the USA.

"Sometimes I feel that we exist within multiple closed communities, the boundaries of which are also shaped by gender stereotypes. The manuscript of this book was crafted over a long period, piece by piece, but I see that a portion of society still dwells within these stereotypes and perhaps will perceive my work as a provocation." *Ilis*





KRISTĪNE NEIMANE

Kristine has graduated from the Faculty of Pedagogy and Psychology of the University of Latvia. Kristīne is optimistic and loves nature and children. They inspire her and teach her to notice things that the people usually forget when growing up.



Illustrator EVIJA TIMMA-NOVIKA

I have been drawing for as long as I can remember, but my interest in book illustration comes from childhood. I loved to make up stories about animals and to illustrate them. I studied art and different art techniques first at Janis Rozentāls Riga Art School and later at the Art Academy of Latvia. My challenge in book illustration is to effectively visualize the words so that I can clearly communicate with the viewer (especially a young one). Sometimes it is hard to faithfully translate the idea in my head onto a piece of paper, but that is another challenge I love to solve.

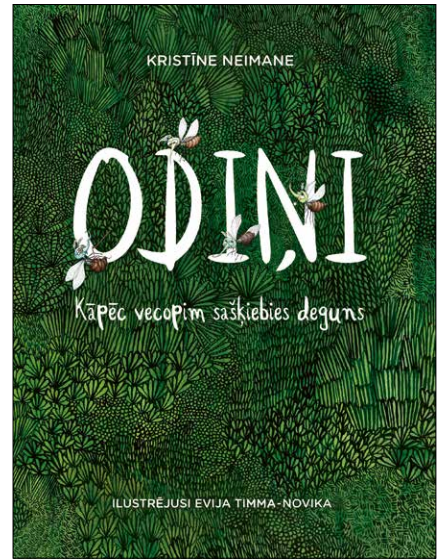
Kristīne Neimane

ODIŅI. Kāpēc vecopim sašķiebies deguns MOSQUITOES. Why is the grandfather's nose crooked

Illustrator **Evija Timma-Novika**

Once upon a time there lived and hovered in the forest a nice and very friendly family of Mosquitoes, which kept a secret. The day the little mosquito caught a cold, dad decided to reveal it to him...

kindness, courage, family, family stories



978-9934-31-809-2
Age 4+
27 x 21 cm
28 pages

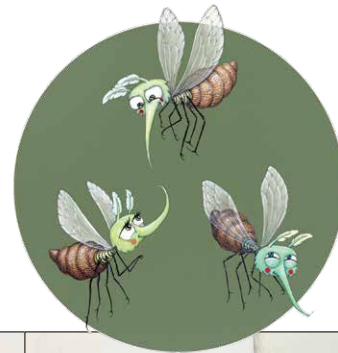
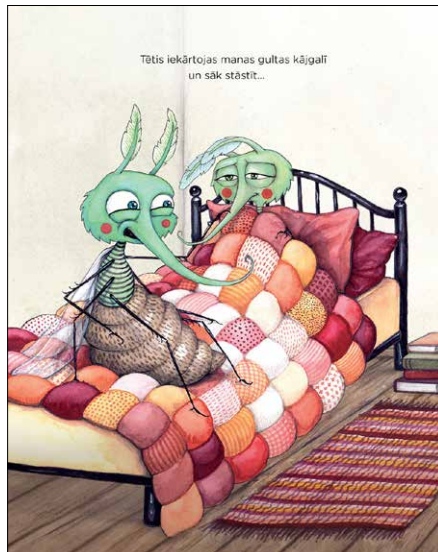




PHOTO: ZANE MAGONE

Dace Krēšlīņa
PASAKA PAR JŪRAS DZIESMU
TALE OF THE SONG OF THE SEA

Illustrator Dace Krēšlīņa

“Tale of the Song of the Sea” is a fairy tale that follows the courageous daughter of a fisherman, driven by desire to help her famine-stricken village. Fearlessly, she ventures into the stormy sea to catch fish when no one else dares. There she stumbles upon a magical underwater realm and uncovers the truth about the overfished sea.



nature, sea, environment, courage, girl power

DACE KRĒSLIŅA

has transformed her career from an attorney at law to an illustrator and children’s book author. She has written and illustrated two fairy tales featuring brave young girls who take action, embark on magical adventures, and impact their lives and the world around them. As a child, Dace loved reading fairy tales, yet noticed that male characters often took the leading role. Through her books, she aims to empower young girls to trust in their abilities and take charge of their own destiny, rather than relying on others to rescue them. Both books have vibrant full-spread illustrations teeming with intricate and rich details.



978-9934-32-225-9
Age 3+
23 x 22,5 cm
36 pages

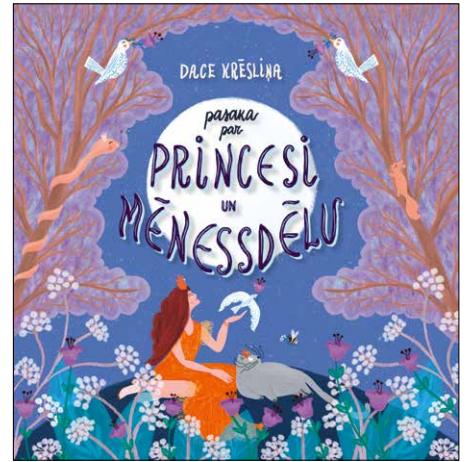


Dace Krēšlīņa

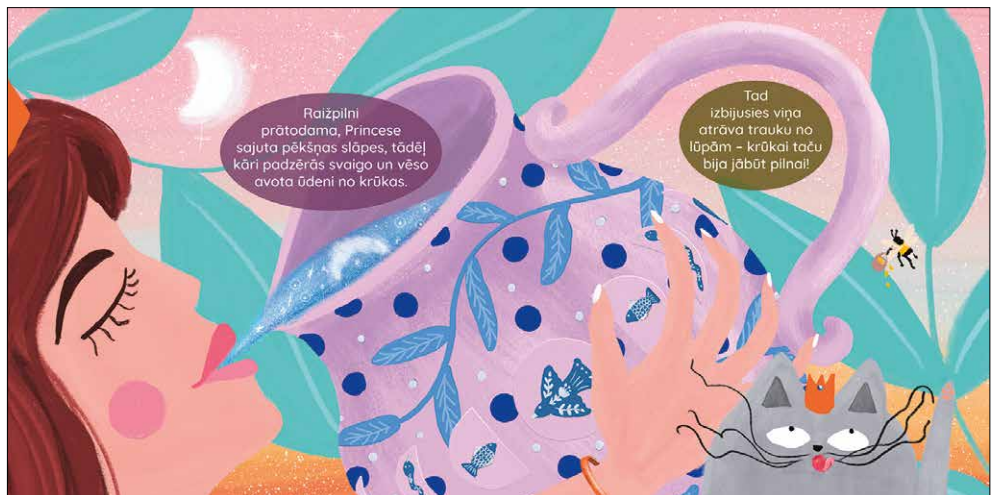
PASAKA PAR PRINCESI UN MĒNESSDĒLU THE TALE OF THE PRINCESS AND THE MOONSON

Illustrator Dace Krēšlīņa

“Tale of the Princess and the Moonson” is a fairy tale about a journey of a Princess who faces seemingly impossible tasks to take charge of her fate and unite with her true love, the Son of the Moon. Alongside her, a comical and slightly overweight cat accompanies her, contributing to the narrative solely through illustrations.



fantasy, achieving goals, following dreams, girl power



978-9934-31-416-2
Age 3+
23 x 22,5 cm
32 pages



AIJA LISOVSKA

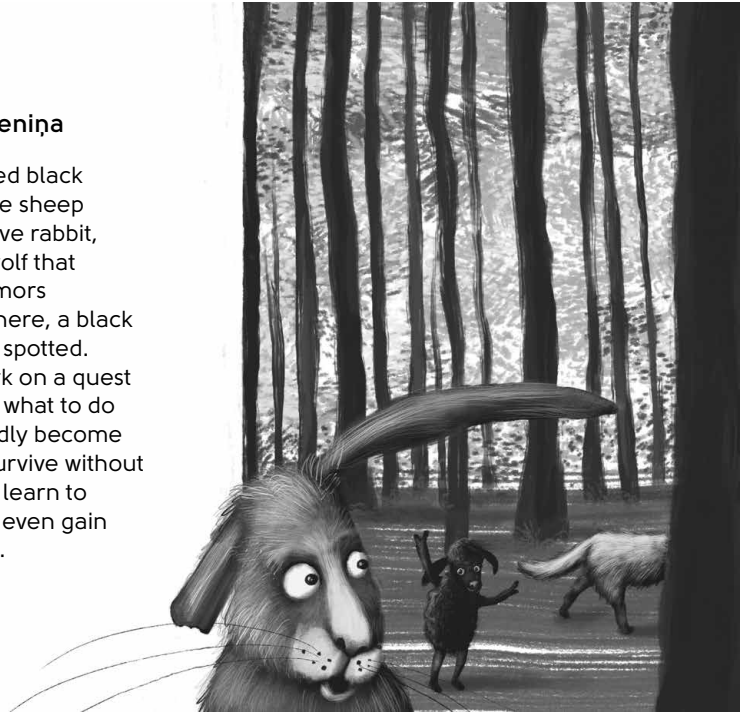
Aija Lisovska is an author with an exceptional command of language and a talent for uncovering the humor in the serious. In her daily life, Aija works as an IT specialist, and her stories are akin to games and animated films rolled into one.

- LSM (Latvian Public Media) Readers' Award, 2023 (Dullā diena Dundurzālē)
- Nominated for the annual Latvian Literature Award, 2023 (Black Sheep)

Aija Lisovska MELNĀ AITA BLACK SHEEP

Illustrator Marina Heniņa

In the forest, a rejected black sheep meets the white sheep herd, a recklessly brave rabbit, and a solitary white wolf that doesn't eat meat. Rumors circulate that somewhere, a black sheep flock has been spotted. Together, they embark on a quest to find it. A tale about what to do when you unexpectedly become an outsider. How to survive without losing one's essence, learn to laugh at failures, and even gain friends in the process.



*being different, self acceptance,
friendship, courage, cooperation*




978-9934-31-483-4
Age 7+
25 x 18 cm
128 pages



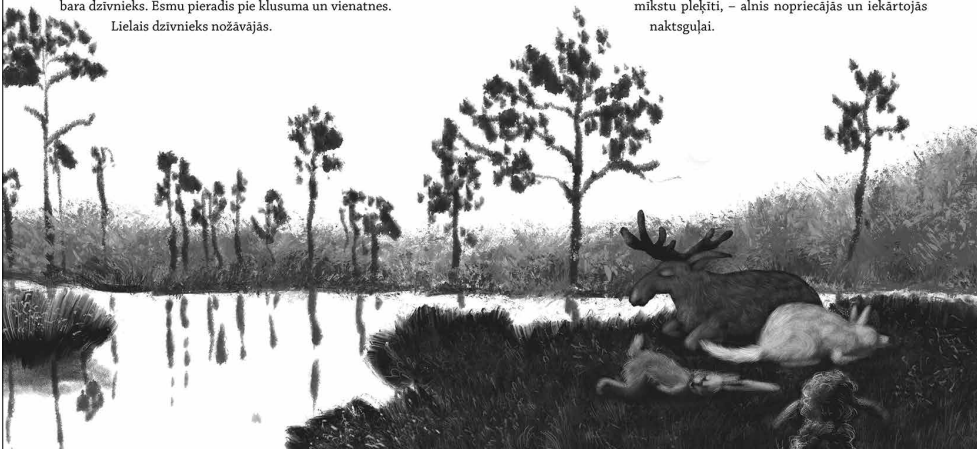
Illustrator
MARINA HENIŅA

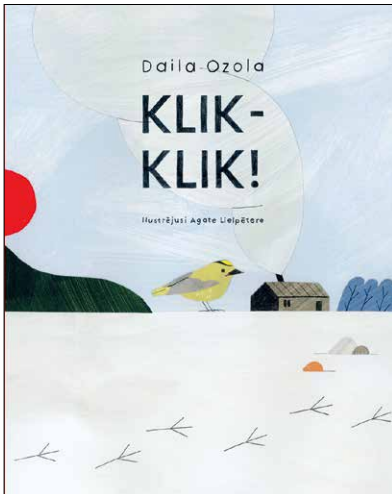
Marina Henina's illustrations radiate sincere and positive vibes. Looking at them makes you smile, and they catch your eye every time you are passing by. Marina isn't making a mere copy of a written story, she allows readers to see the characters of a story from a different angle, in a way – telling a story of their own. Marina draws both digitally and using traditional means, depending on the story. Her illustrations have been exhibited both in Latvia and abroad. She participated in the 28th Biennial of Illustration in Bratislava in 2021.

• Nominated for "Latvia's State Forest" prize for the best debut in children's literature, 2019 

– Bet krauklis mums teica, ka ir redzējis melno aitū baru! – Čiekurs iesaucās.
– Tā gluži viņš neteica, – vilks iebilda.
– Es gan kraukļiem pārāk neuzticos, bet var jau būt, ka šoreiz viņam taisnība, – alnis sacīja.
– Dzirdi, Mellene? – Čiekurs iesaucās. – Mums tikai jāturpina meklēt! Tu taču mums pievienosies? – Čiekurs vaicāja alnim.
– Par nožēlošanu, man jāatsakās no šī vilniņš piedāvājuma, – alnis atteica. – Man ir citi plāni. Tā ja. Un, kā jau teicu, es neesmu bara dzīvnieks. Esmu pieradis pie klusuma un vienatnes.
Lielais dzīvnieks nožāvājās.

– Jūs tiešām esat neparasts bars, bet man jālūdz jūsu piedošana, ka ilgāk nevaru palikt šeit un plāpāt. Man aiz muguras garš ceļš, un jūtos stipri saguris, tāpēc...
– Ai, tu vari pārņakšņot tepat pie mums! – zaķis iesaucās.
– Ja vien tavi biedri neiebilst...
– It nemaz, – Kašķis sacīja.
Mellene nespēja neko pateikt, tāpēc tikai piekritoši pamāja ar galvu.
– Redz, cik jauki! Nevajadzēs man pa tumsu meklēt kādu mikstu pleķīti, – alnis nopriecājās un iekārtojās naktsguļai.





animals, interaction with nature, birds, emotions

The book is suitable for children learning to read and was created in collaboration with Dmitrijs Boiko, an ornithologist from the Latvian Museum of Natural History, who believes that “CLICK-CLICK!” is an excellent educational resource for the first step in ornithology.



This book is published in Latvian and Ukrainian languages.

Daila Ozola
KLIK-KLIK!
CLICK-CLICK!
 Illustrator **Agate Lielpētere**

“CLICK-CLICK!” is a humorous story for preschool and early elementary school-age children, about human interaction with nature. Its main character is the European Goldcrest, the smallest bird in Europe, who ventures into a snowy forest in search of the source of unusual clicking sounds. There he encounters many other birds that have endured the winter in the forest, until he identifies the culprit behind the clicking sound. The story’s author, Daila Ozola, has made an effort to not only showcase language diversity but also maintain a sense of suspense with just a few sentences. The meticulously crafted, clever, vibrant, and endearing bird illustrations in the application were created by the artist Agate Lielpētere.



DAILA OZOLA is a translator and writer. She has studied biology, pedagogy and literary writing and worked as a teacher in a Waldorf preschool. She is also a keen gardener. Currently, Daila is translating fiction from the Estonian language. “Clik-Clik” is her first book.



Illustrator **AGATE LIELPĒTERE** is a visual artist, illustrator, and designer. She holds a BA degree in graphic art from the Art Academy of Latvia and is currently undergoing MA studies in contemporary visual practices, in Ljubljana, Slovenia. Her work can be described as diverse and witty. Agate states that her “bad sense of humor” runs in the family – blame them!

Estonia 

978-9934-0-9857-4
 Age 4+
 27 × 21 cm
 44 pages



RUTA SVAŽA

is a writer and translator. She is the author of a series of exciting picture books about a little girl Baiba. Incredible, thrilling adventures, which take place in the real and dream world, make young readers to think of friendship, devotion, bravery, and sense of responsibility, as well as they teach children to create their own fantasy world.

Ruta Svaža

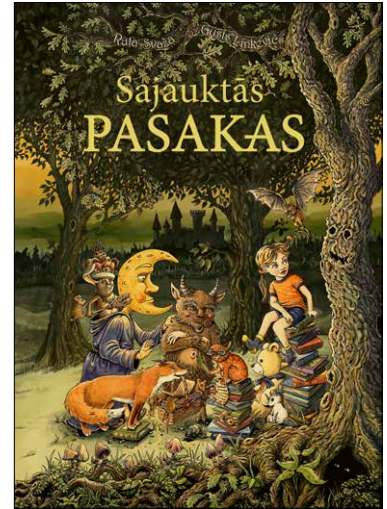
SAJAUKTĀS PASAKAS

MIXED UP FAIRY-TALES

Illustrator Gusts Linkevičs

The author brings us into a situation created by original fantasy, where the characters of several fairy tales are *mixed up*. This is an opportunity to encourage a child to read all the popular fairy-tales used in the story.

fantasy, courage, humour, adventure,
encourages reading



Putekljais vējš nobrauka meitenes vaigu, sakaltusi bērza lapa ieķeras matos. Priekšā pavēras naksnīga meža plava ar bagātīgi klātu gaidu plāšajā zālīnā, bet cienasts tāds jocīgs. Tur ir vecas sēnes un sažuvušas ogas, sakaltušas sēkļlīpas un

sarūgusi bērzu sula. Pa gaisu lidinās ķēmiģi sikspārņi. Kāds laksts izaudzis līdz patāim debesīm, bet ap gaidu sapulcējušies Baibas iemīļotie grāmatu varoņi. Meitene pazīst visas šīs sejas. Tomēr tās ir tik ļoti pārvērtušas! Mazā pagalam apjūk.



Estonia

978-9934-0-8374-7

Age 5+

35 x 25 cm

20 pages

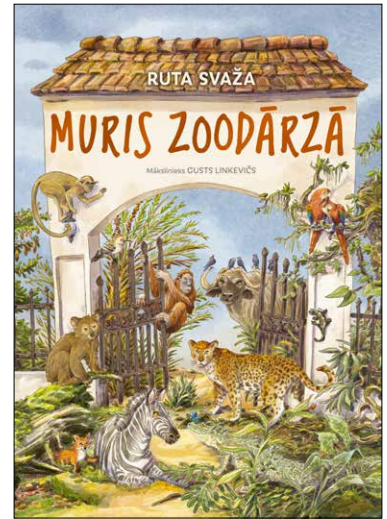
Ruta Svaža

MURIS ZOODĀRZĀ

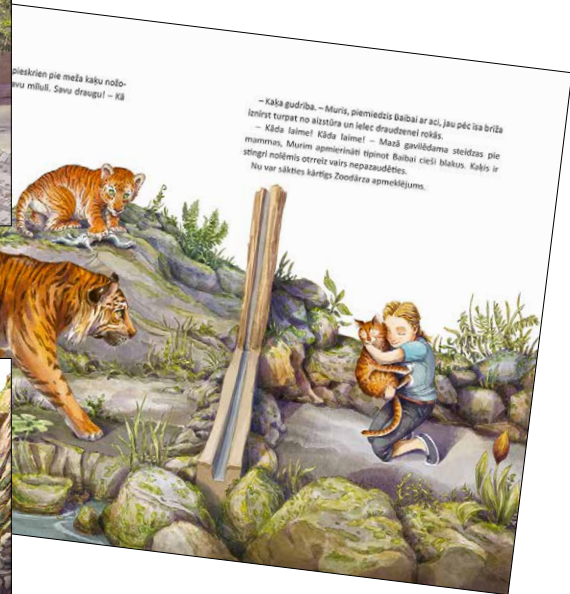
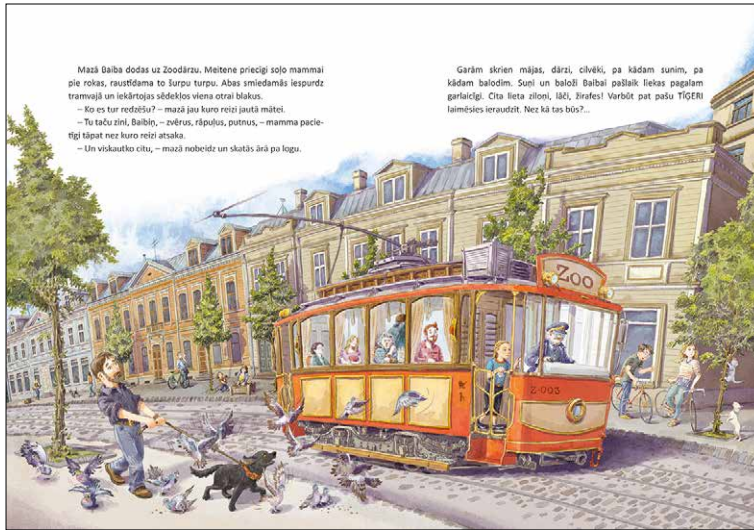
FELIX AT THE ZOO

Illustrator Gusts Linkevičs

This is an amusing story about small girl called Baiba who goes to the Zoo with her mom. Baiba meets different animals – a large and scary hippopotamus, flamingos dancing ballet and meerkats who unexpectedly talk to her! What an adventure starts! Surprises follow one after the other and at the end of the story something incredible happens – Baiba meets her beloved missing cat Felix, who has found his place among the animals of the Zoo!



humour, animals, friendship,
finding your way



978-9934-31-798-9

Age 5+

35 x 25 cm

20 pages



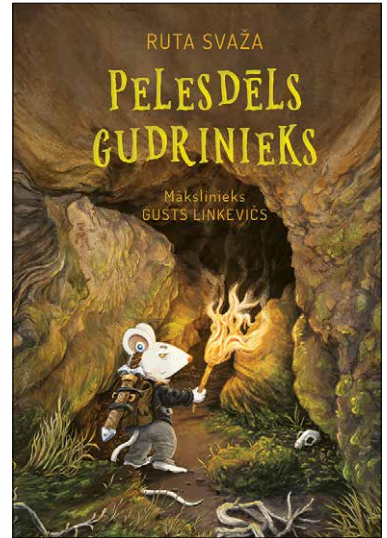
Illustrator
GUSTS LINKEVIČS

Gusts Linkevičs ir a programmer and talented, self-taught freelance illustrator. He mainly works with watercolor, ink and pencils. Books with his illustrations have been published in Latvia, Estonia and Australia. He participated in the ambitious project "100 Latvian Fairytales", being among 100 Latvian illustrators. The main goal of his illustrations is to encourage children to read.

Ruta Svaža
PELESDĒLS GUDRINIEKS
MOUSESON THE WISE
Illustrator **Gusts Linkevičs**

Incredible, but, yes, a little mouse tries to save its homeland, the Deep Forest, from death – eternal darkness. On the risky way, he meets funny and quite dangerous creatures, some of them are friends, others – enemies. Mouseson experiences a lot of dramatic adventures travelling through Deep Forest to Giant Monster's house hidden in faraway mountains. Nobody really believes in Mouseson's success...

fantasy, humour, adventure, courage, persistence, ingenuity



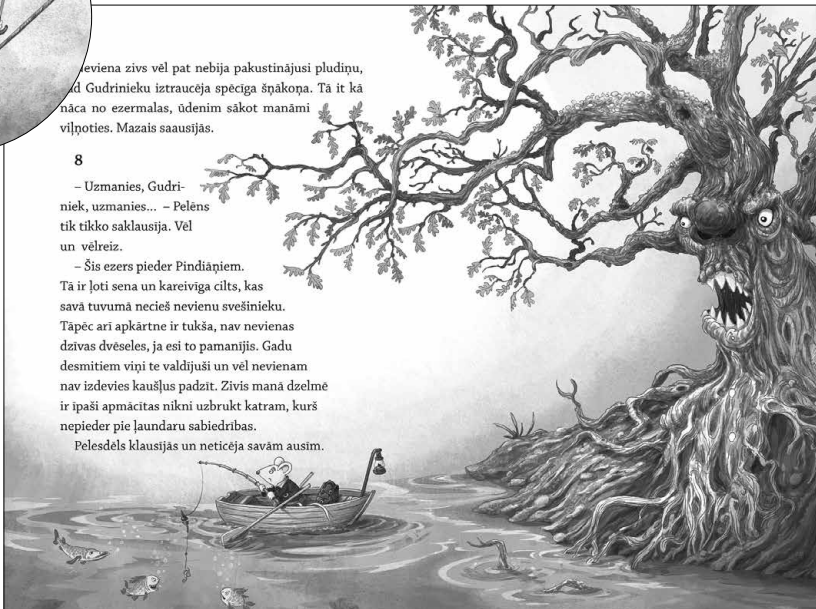
neviens zivs vēl pat nebija pakustinājusi pludīnu, kad Gudrinieku iztrauceja spēcīga šņākopa. Tā it kā nāca no ezermalas, ūdeņim sākot manāmi vilptoties. Mazais saausījās.

8

– Uzmanies, Gudriniek, uzmanies... – Pelēns tik tikko saklausīja. Vēl un vēlreiz.

– Šis ezers pieder Pindīņpiem. Tā ir ļoti sena un kareivīga cilts, kas savā tuvumā necieš nevienu svešinieku. Tāpēc arī apkārtnē ir tukša, nav nevienas dzīvas dvēseles, ja esi to pamanījis. Gadu desmitiem viņi te valdījuši un vēl nevienam nav izdevies kausļus padzīt. Zivis manā dzelmē ir īpaši apmācītas nikni uzbrukt katram, kurš nepieder pie ļaundaru sabiedrības.

Pelēsdēls klausījās un neticēja savām ausīm.



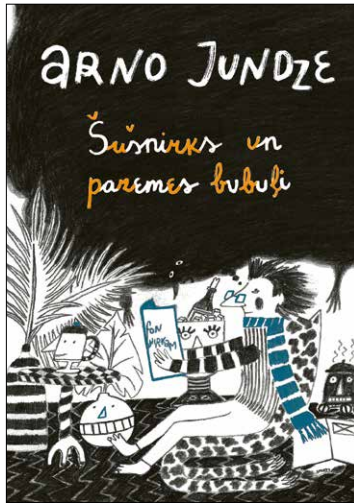
978-9934-31-377-6
Age 6+
22 x 15 cm
152 pages



ARNO JUNDZE

Arno Jundze is a Latvian prose writer, cultural journalist and literary critic. He has hosted several culture TV programs. Arno Jundze is an editor of the cultural news section for one of the biggest newspapers in Latvia, and helps in shaping country's most important art and literature forums. He writes for children as well as young adults and adults. Several of his books for children have been included in Children's Reading program. His books for adults have been nominated for all major literary awards in Latvia

- Nominated for Jānis Baltvilks International Prize for Children's Literature and Book Art, 2020 (Shushnirk and The Kid from Totland)



Arno Jundze

ŠUŠNIRKS UN PAZEMES BUBUĻI

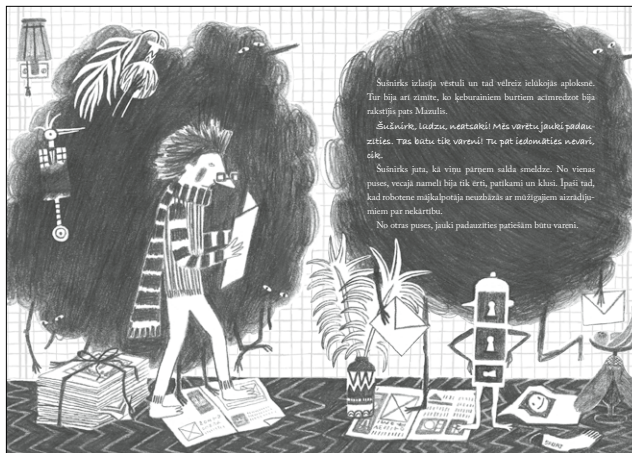
SHUSHNIRK AND THE KID FROM TOTLAND

Illustrator Kristīne Martinova

Shushnirk and the Kid from Totland is the third children's novel that depicts events in the imaginary Totland.

The story of a land of unusual creatures called Totland, where the aristocratic Shushnirk is unexpectedly left to care for a playful little kid whose parents have vanished unexpectedly in a tornado. Exhausted by the kid's antics, Shushnirk sets out with his ward on a journey full of adventure to find his parents. Author is currently working on the next book in the series.

adventure, children's storybook, friendship, humour



978-9934-0-7920-7
Age 7+
25 x 18 cm
144 pages

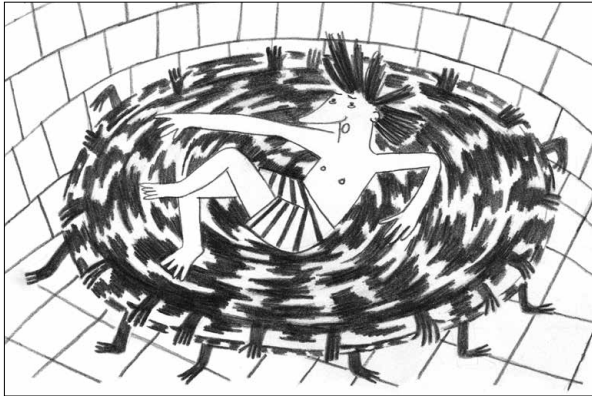


Illustrator
KRISTĪNE MARTINOVA

is an illustrator who pays great attention to creating the mood of the book. She studied at the Art Academy of Latvia. She made her debut as a children's book illustrator with Arno Jundze's story *Shushnirk and the Kid from Totland*. While studying for the Master's degree, Kristīne paid particular attention to the illustration of the books. In 2020, in the framework of the Bologna Book Fair, she participates in the exhibition *What happened until now?*.

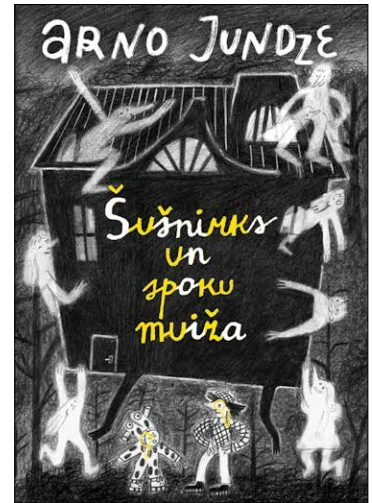
- 👑 Nominated for the Golden Apple-tree Award, 2019
- Nominated for the Latvia's State Forest Prize for best debut in children's literature, 2020

978-9934-31-729-3
Age 9+
25 x 18 cm
144 pages



Arno Jundze
ŠUŠNIRKS UN SPOKU MUIŽA
SHUSHNIRK AND THE HAUNTED MANOR
Illustrator **Kristīne Martinova**

With this, I solemnly affirm that the frightening events depicted in the book at the Somewhereorother Manor are represented in accordance with all the guidelines of Ghostland regarding ghost welfare, the Little One's private rights to mischief, and the recommendations of the men of science. The text is published with the personal permission of Mr. Shushnirk. Lord Perkins thanks everyone involved for saving the Somewhereorother Manor. He confirms that only the objectively fantasized truth is expressed in these imagined events. Considering the secrecy of the documents, the contract written in invisible ink and its annexes regarding the construction of the secret Sphere will not be published. Ghost Elmer's constructed sphere still exists, and one can visit it by taking a bed ride. Meanwhile, the Little One admits – flipping the school upside down was not a wise decision."



adventure, humour,
children's storybook, friendship





DZINTARS TILAKS

Dzintars Tilaks is a radio journalist, moderator, editor, producer and DJ. At the moment he is working as the producer of the Radio Theatre. He is the author of 20 books for children and adults and has also illustrated a few of his books. Dzintars Tilaks' works have been nominated several times for "Baltvilka blava", the most prestigious Latvian award in children's literature. Several of his works have won the main prize in the annual "Jury of children, youth and parents" organized by the National Library of Latvia and some of his books are even included as recommended reading for national schools.

His latest novel for young readers "Zlata's Journey" (10+) has been on the bestselling titles list from the moment it was published and has received the highest praise from the national press.

ZLATA'S JOURNEY (ZLATAS CEĻŠ)

In the statistics, the number of children killed in the Russia-Ukraine war are stated matter-of-factly. But how many other children have been the victims of this war; their health compromised for life and their loved ones lost? How many children have had to say farewell to their childhoods and be forced into adulthood in matter of months, in order simply to survive? These figures will not emerge for years to come, maybe never at all.

This book was inspired by the author's meeting with a Ukrainian family he hosted in his family home and who, during their stay, recounted to him their experiences and memories. Many details and figures in the book are based on real events whereas others are fictional.

Zlata and her father leave their home in Merefa in the Ukrainian region of Harkiv for the house of friends. Once there, Zlata meets her friend Olenka and the two girls talk about the events of the war and discuss the difficulties of the long distance learning they must now follow in order to complete their Grade 7 studies. The girls are angry with the adults for not telling them the truth about the course of the war and both are deeply worried about their respective fathers. Zlata's father is a National Security IT specialist, a job which counts as military service, while Olenka's father is employed by a utility service unit, charged with reconditioning decommissioned heating, electricity and water systems.

As the fighting draws closer, their friends, the Berezins, decide to journey to the home of relatives and the girls

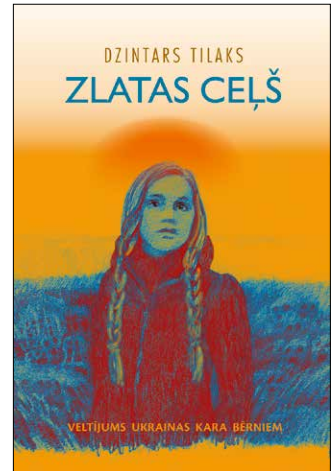
are separated. Zlata and her father, Dmytro, are soon also on the move again, this time to another village in the Harkiv region in search of Zlata's grandmother whom they have been unable to contact by phone. Zlata insists on going with her father, not wanting to be left behind on her own, but along the way he leaves her to wait for his and her grandmother's return and continues on his own.

However, her father fails to return that evening and not even the following day; neither does he answer her phone calls. At this point, Zlata resolves to search for her grandmother herself and sets off on a journey which, unbeknown to her at the outset, will take her over the frontier of Ukraine and into a small town in Latvia – Tukums.

From the very start of her journey, Zlata is aware of the military check points along the main routes and so follows secondary roads until she comes to a large nature reserve. There she meets an elderly hunter whose home has been destroyed and who now sleeps in a deserted camping hut, going out to hunt every evening and stealing from the enemy in revenge for the murder of his fellow villagers.

The hunter promises Zlata that he will go to her grandmother's home under the cover of night and try to find out what has become of her. He returns with the tragic news that the house has been reduced to rubble and that her grandmother has been killed and buried in her own garden.

The following day, Zlata resolves to go



• First place in the Children and Youth Jury, 2023 (Zlata's Journey)



978-9934-31-430-8
Age 11+
22 x 15 cm
144 pages

and see for herself. As she reaches the highway, she is met with the terrifying sight of burnt out cars bearing many bullet holes. Amongst these cars, she sees that of her father. Traces of blood on the car and freshly dug earth by the side of the road, clearly shallow graves, are testament to the fact that people have been killed and buried right there, by the side of the road. The dreadful truth that she has lost her father dawns on Zlata, along with the realisation that her carefree childhood is over and nothing will ever be the same again. From now on, she is all alone and must take care of herself.

Searching for somewhere to spend the night, Zlata finds a country dwelling on the outskirts of a village where she meets Nona, a Tatarian from Crimea. Nona tells her that enemy forces are stationed on the other side of the village where they are requisitioning and castigating the locals. The following day, Zlata tries to continue her journey but is apprehended by the Russian Army at a check point. Their intention is to send Zlata, along with the other woman and children from the village, towards Russia. Despite hearing that checks are made of the digital contents of all electronic devices, she decides not to delete the photos of her father in military uniform from her phone and, by an act of subterfuge, succeeds in hiding her phone and then fleeing. The plan is successful but Zlata is unable to return for her hidden phone. Nona then cuts Zlata's long hair and dresses her in her son's clothes in the hope it will make her safer on her journey.

With the sandwiches Nona has given her, Zlata sets off; she needs to try and reach Kramatorsk and from there board one of the trains taking refugees to Lviv and then across the Polish border and on into Latvia.

Zlata's mother had died some months previously. She had named her Zlata, or Zeltite, meaning gold in Latvian, her mother tongue. With both parents now dead, the only family left to Zlata are grandparents in Latvia. Without a phone, there is no way of calling them so the only option is to embark on the journey to Latvia.

She meets a host of characters along the way, spending the chilly spring nights wherever she finds a safe haven and a little warmth.

She spends one night in an abandoned church and another in a sauna house. Another night, sheltering in a shed, she finds herself in the midst of an air raid. She runs from the shed and takes refuge in the basement of a house where the owners are also sheltering. The son gives Zlata a bicycle to help her on her way and an elderly man gives her a map providing useful directions.

The following night, Zlata again takes refuge in a shed but she has developed a terrible cough and is unable to sleep. In the morning, she is found by an elderly Russian woman who takes her in and nurses her back

to health. She has cut all ties with her daughter in Moscow; convinced as she is that there is no war and the Russian troops in Ukraine are liberators. The elderly Russian is angry and indignant at this 'liberation', seeing as people in Ukraine are dying regardless of nationality.

Zlata continues her journey. Cycling, it is obviously easier to travel along the highways but Zlata is again intercepted at a Russian check point. Just as she is about to have her bicycle confiscated and get sent to a refugee camp in Izjum, a carload of refugees pulls up and Zlata manages to grab her bike and disappear.

That night is spent in an abandoned school where Zlata meets more people, each of whom has a different story, situation and attitude to the war. Zlata learns that Kramatorsk station has been damaged in an air raid but decides to continue in that direction, having no other options open to her.

She eventually reaches Kramatorsk where she gives her bike to a doctor and boards a train.

Crammed full of refugees, the train departs for western Ukraine. The carriages remain unlit so as not to be a visible target for enemy planes yet the passengers remain in good spirits, sharing food and life stories.

When the train terminates in Lviv, Zlata takes a bus to the Polish border. She lends a hand to a mother and her two children and, as they get chatting, she discovers they are also headed for Riga, Latvia.

When Zlata finally reaches Riga she is taken to the refugee reception centre where she learns that locating her grandparents will be no easy task. The last time she saw them was when she was just six years old and she doesn't know their address; she can't even remember the name of their village. Added to which, her grandparents' surname is one of the most common in Latvia. It is only with the help of a volunteer worker in the centre that Zlata's fragmented childhood memories are somehow pieced together and they are able to locate her grandparents' address in Tukums.

Zlata is given the warmest of welcomes by her grandparents and the sense of homecoming, love and peace are almost overwhelming. But in her mind, Zlata is still in Ukraine and she is haunted by the wish to return and give her loved ones a proper burial. One day, Grandma comes to Zlata almost beside herself with joy – she has received a phone call and Dmytro is alive! He had been picked up on the roadside after the attack by passers-by and taken to the local hospital where he received life-saving treatment. As soon as he was well enough, he had started looking for his daughter but all to no avail. Eventually, he gave up and decided to call his in-laws to tell them their granddaughter was missing, only to find that she was safe and sound there in Latvia with them! Dmytro and Zlata then delight in a joyful reunion.

CONTACTS:

ZVAIGZNE ABC PUBLISHERS
6 K. Valdemara Street,
Riga, LV-1010.
LATVIA

E-mail: santa.racina@zvaigzne.lv
www.zvaigzne.lv