

NEW  
HUNGARIAN  
CHILDLIT

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ALES

TWENTY TWENTY-ONE

*Everyday  
Miracles &  
Miraculous  
Everydays*

Petőfi  
Cultural  
Agency



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ALES

*Everyday  
Miracles &  
Miraculous  
Everydays*

NEW  
HUNGARIAN  
CHILDREN  
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ALES

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TWENTY TWENTY-ONE

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SORRY  
ABOUT

*The*  
**MESS**

*We Are*  
**ARTISTS!**

*The Gibberishburglars* is a literary bouquet rich with lyrical and absurd surprises and accompanied by witty and colorful, innovative illustrations.

In his book of twelve stories, poet and writer Bálint Harcos uses the life experiences of adults to help people become aware of and deal with the challenges and contradictions of raising children or running a household. The everyday situations of the tales are turned into astonishing, absurd twists, usually running along the blurred border between order and

# The Gibberishburglars

disorder. Images such as the fire brigade band practicing comfortably in a tree or the composer who is only able to work when alone among a bustling group of squirrels help children understand that life without conflict is not only impossible, but also would be utterly uninteresting. The stories offer examples of how to turn difficulties to our advantage or simply how to deal with elements of the world around us that we find either useful or superfluous. The details of the plot give us a glimpse behind the scenes of artistic existence in the everyday sense, but the stories primarily explore the metaphorical, philosophical meanings of art. The twists and turns in the tales on this theme also allow for a melancholic reading.

Barbo, the hairdresser for lions, can only do proper coifs for wild lions, while gentle lions leave him utterly stumped. In the short story “The Land of Clothes,” Kuszka’ clothes long to find this land, and they are followed by other items of clothing, leaving people naked as they day they were born. Nudity, of course, is one of the strongest taboos and social constraints. In the subversive final scene in this story, the clothes and the people go through the gate separately, and this moment of passage seems to evoke death for the adults, but Kuszka’s cries of joy also fill the symbolic scene with happiness.

Lilla Turi, the book’s illustrator, uses freehand solutions without digital post-processing. The boldly colored drawings show pencil and crayon lines, splashes of watercolor, and frequent metatextual references. In “Miss Lobélia and the Dreadful Witch,” for example, we see the smoke from Gandalf’s pipe among several different whisps of smoke.

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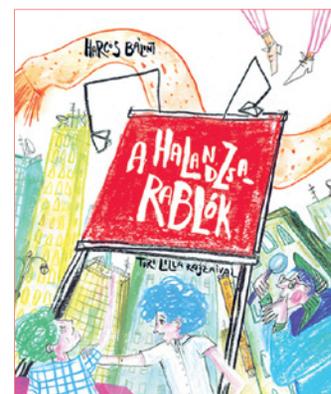
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**B**arbó was a hairdresser, but not just any hairdresser. Barbó specialized in lions' manes. And lions do not just let you comb and clip their hair. Barbó had to study hard to learn the art of clipping and coiffing lions' manes.

As he snapped his scissors and ran his comb this way and that, he jumped back and forth. He slipped the comb into the fur on the left, then on the right, and the lions snarled and snapped and tried to catch him in their teeth, but they never managed to snag him in their fangs, for Barbo always managed to hop away in time. And as he hopped left and right, he adjusted the mane a little bit here, a little bit there, and thus in the end he gave the lion quite a fetching hairdo.

One day, Barbó got a letter. "Dear Mr. Barbó, my name is Count Balthazar Cavalier, and I am the proud owner of 72 lions. I am writing to ask you to clip and comb their manes for the upcoming lion beauty contest in Scotland. I want my lions to be the prettiest in the pride! Do please come as quickly as you can! Sincerely, Count Balthazar Cavalier."

So Barbó grabbed his brush and his scissors, and he flew in his cotton-thistle air balloon to Scotland. The count was eagerly awaiting his arrival. He was chewing his own beard. Barbó immediately realized that his count was a haughty buffoon. The count was already grumbling words of protest, like "what's this? Just a brush and a pair of scissors? Well, get to it, and work quick!" He then showed Barbó his lions, who were relaxing on the lea, as calm as toads in the sun.

"They're the best-behaved lions in the world," the count said. "I want them to be the most beautiful too."

Barbó got down to work. But the lions were calm and gentle! Barbó hopped left and right, he clipped a bit from the mane here, a bit there, but the lions didn't so much as flinch. They let him do as he pleased. And the hairdos, the coiffures, they were simply dreadful! The lions' manes look like tangled birds' nests. The lions looked at one another with dispirited gazes.

"Please, please, try to snatch me in your jaws!" Barbó pleaded. "Be wild animals! Don't be so calm!"

The oldest among the lions spoke.

"But how? The count forbade us from snarling, growling, or gnashing our teeth."

"We even have to keep our claws pulled in," another lion said.

The other lions nodded glumly.

Barbó walked over to the count and told him as bluntly as he could that he could only clip and comb the manes of wild lions. The count almost burst with rage, but he had little choice but to give in. Barbó got down to work again. He hopped back and forth, clipping the manes here, then clipping them there, and the lions snapped at him and tried to grab him in their jaws.

And their manes were simply dazzling! They won the beauty competition, of course. But by then, they had become wild again, so when the count told them to hush and get moving back to his estates, they turned towards him and snarled, and then they simply stalked off. They hopped into the air balloon next to Barbó, and they didn't stop until they'd reached the savannahs of Africa. And they have been living wild ever since, at home again.



SOUL  
*of* EVERY-  
THING

In *Tales from the Empyrean Emporium*, the world of classic folk tales is intertwined with the everyday lives of four young children. The family stories of our four main characters, Samu, Sári, Emma, and Teeny Weeny, are told in a language that is both playfully distinctive, emphatically literary, and enchantingly reminiscent of childhood. The first two tales in the book, “Samu’s

# *Tales from the Empyrean Emporium*

Star” and “The Message,” are written in rhyming prose. The language has an alluring rhythm which is particularly captivating for young children. The rest of the tales are not composed in rhyming prose, but they are nonetheless rich with elements of sound and, of course, puns and language play. The tales offer perspectives on the world that will be familiar to children in nursery school and kindergarten, and the prose draws on a vocabulary that is authentic and understandable but also enthralling, in part simply because the tales are interwoven with fantasy and magic.

The stories include elements of the miraculous, fairytale creatures, and objects familiar from everyday life, but they also have hefty implications. The morals of the tales, which are never made explicit, and the solutions to the problems which arise are interwoven into the stories themselves, much as they are in folk tales. Samu learns to court a beautiful girl, to make sacrifices, and to show compassion, and thus he ends up finding his true love. Emma feels alienated from her friends in kindergarten, but she learns to change her perspective and forgive. As something of a black sheep, she is ostracized, and even her parents leave her on her own, yet she finds help and care, and manages to hold on to the hope that she can stand her ground despite the ostracism and fit into the community in her own way. “The Castle” is the story of birth told from the perspective of a fetus. In these stories, home and family relationships exist in a world full of magic, and the transitions, transformations, and miraculous solutions in each tale are sometimes subtle and sometimes dramatic. Eszter Sinkó-Barabási knows how to give just the right blend of magic, miracle, and everyday and how to keep the ordinary and extraordinary in balance. She also makes excellent use of the expressive potential of sound in language.

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Eszter Sinkó-Barabási  
Zenkő Karda

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Once upon a time, there was a little boy named little Samu. Time passed, and little Samu grew up. Soon, he was as tall as a young birch tree, and just as slender. His blond hair was soft, like feather grass, and everyone who laid eyes on him envied him for his elegant horseshoe moustache. And no one called him little Samu anymore. Everyone called him laddie Samu. And the girls often cast furtive glances at him.

One day, laddie Samu felt it was time for him to find a girl he could call his own. He set out for the neighboring village. He ambled through the bramble down a path which led to a thick forest. Suddenly, he found himself standing face to face with an old woman with long, gray hair.

“Good afternoon, old woman,” he said, bowing his head ever so politely.

“And good afternoon to you, laddie Samu,” the woman said. “And you should know, though I may look old to you, I am only 112. You may call my Ashenlocks.”

“Then good afternoon, Ashenlocks. Are you not frightened to be alone in this forest?”

“Frightened? Me? Why would I be frightened? The forest should perhaps be frightened of me... But listen, boy! If you have found a girl who is to your liking, promise her the moon and the stars, and don’t worry about the rest.”

With that, Ashenlocks vanished as suddenly as she has appeared.

Laddie Samu continued on his way, and soon, he reached the village. As he trundled down the dirt road which ran alongside the houses, he asked a man who was limping along which of the girls of the village was the cleverest and the most beautiful.

“Our Mary Scarlet’s a lovely sight! Why, you could search all day and night, and search again, all night day, and still find none with Mary’s grace.”

“Then I shall ask her to be my bride,” Samu decided, and a minute or two later, he was rapping on the window to her room.

“What do you want from me, you blond-haired boy?”

“I have come to ask your hand in marriage.”

“And what gifts have you brought for your bride-to-be?”

“The moon and the stars,” Samu said.

Mary’s eyes lit up. She let Samu in, gave him something to drink, made a bed for him and tucked him in, and while he slept, she rummaged around in his satchel, but she could find neither moon nor stars.

As evening fell, Samu woke up. He went out into the garden. He was troubled with doubt and sadness. How would he ever pluck the stars from the sky, or the moon? So burdened was he that he almost failed to notice the ladder that led from the garden to the sky. He started scrambling up, and what did he find? Be patient, and I will tell.

“Empyrean Emporium.” These two words stood above the door to a very large building. Much as you would have expected, Samu went straight inside.

“Good day,” he said. “Tell me, how much for one shiny star?”

“The stars are dear today, my dear!” the shopkeeper replied. “A horseshoe moustache end to end!”

The shopkeeper, who was garbed in a gray cloak, seemed familiar to Samu. Samu was loath to part with his moustache, but what choice did he have? He clipped it off and slipped the star in his pocket. He then scampered as fast as his legs would carry him to Mary Scarlet, took the star from his pocket, and hung it from the wall. Mary was beaming with joy, and she threw her arms around the flustered Samu.

“Dear Samu,” she said in a voice sweet but sad, “the poor star is lonely! It needs a friend, another star or two, or perhaps three or four.”

Samu returned to the Empyrean Emporium.

“Good day! And tell me, how much for a shiny star?”

“You can get a dozen for cheap today! Will cost you only the blush from your cheeks,” the shopkeeper said with an unusual chuckle.

Samu’s face was ghostly pale when he reached the ground, but his pocket was full of stars.

And what do you think? Had he finally brought his bride-to-be enough stars from the night sky? Mary Scarlet decided that she wanted every last star in the heavens to glitter and sparkle at her wedding feast. And she wanted the moon hung right above her head as a lantern. Who has ever heard of such a thing? Poor Samu sold everything he had to get every last star in the night sky. He sold his slender waist, his broad shoulders, and in exchange for the moonlight, he sold every last strand of hair on his head.

Mary Scarlet spent hours counting the stars, and when she grew bored of counting, she locked them in a little chest. Then she looked at Samu.

“Look at you! I deserve better than an ugly wastrel like you for a groom! Be gone from my house, and don’t bother looking back!”

Samu trudged off, not even knowing where his legs were taking him. He ambled and rambled until he reached the edge of the forest. And who did he see coming in the other direction? None other than Lady Ashenlocks!

“Oh dear, poor Samu! What has become of your hair and your moustache?” she asked, cackling with a wicked grin. “And where is your bride? How is it that all you have left is your sorrow?”



ORDINARY  
GIRL

**SAVES**

**WITHERING  
PRINCE**

*Princess Salvia and the Prince Thought an Old Man* on the one hand features all the major fairytale tropes while on the other it declares war on the dumb-ed-down tales so familiar from the Disney world. Hajnalka Szimonidesz offers captivating illustrations of the characters and the world of the story, which is complex, rich with humor, and easily poetic enough to survive as a treasured memory in the minds of its readers.

# *Princess Salvia and the Prince Thought an Old Man*

One evening, just before bedtime, a strange visitor arrives through the open window of the schoolgirl Salvia's house: a butterfly fairy named Tinea. Our heroine, alas, is terrified of moths, including Tinea, at least at first. Tinea tells her that she has come in the name of Aldo, Prince of the Kingdom of Aveus, who was born on the same day, at the same hour and same minute as Salvia. It turns out that only Salvia can save the kingdom, but to do so, she must travel to the distant realm. Aldo's father, however, does not want to hand over his kingdom to his son, and he has used some unknown magic to turn back time, replacing night with day, and while he himself does not age, his son looks older and older with every passing day, and the poor boy is even abused by his father.

Salvia, who is dubbed Princess Salvia by Tinea, takes up the challenge. In her room, hidden from her parents, she hatches a unicorn egg given to her by Tinea in lukewarm water and flies on its back to Aveus. Tinea teaches Salvia to fly at night, and together she and the prince set off on their birthday.

They have many frightening and dangerous adventures together, and Judit Kiss even evokes the Odyssey, but there are also references to folktales and mythology interwoven in the story without making it didactic for children. In the end, Princess Salvia and Aldo find the Time Dragon. They persuade him to help them restore the natural flow of time, and he gives them each a dragon's egg as a gift to take control of their own time, and the old king is turned into a crow as punishment.

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Hajnalka Szimonidesz

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The travelers set out towards the inner depths of the dryland. As they climbed out onto the steep shore, they saw a forest in the distance. They began scrambling forward ever faster.

Darkness and mist descended all around them as they wandered into the thick of the forest. They were marching quietly through the undergrowth when suddenly they heard a voice.

“Stop! This is my territory. Do not be so foolhardy as to take another step without my permission!”

The light of a flickering flame shimmered in the darkness, and in its glow, they saw a withered old woman who was little more than wrinkles. Her eyes had a scarlet gleam, and her long nose bent down over her lips. She was holding a knotted staff in one hand which had a blue flame dancing from its tip.

“We mean you no harm,” Aldo said, but the old woman interrupted him.

“I am Azuya, the witch of the forest crossroads. And who, pray tell, are you?”

“My name is Aldo.”

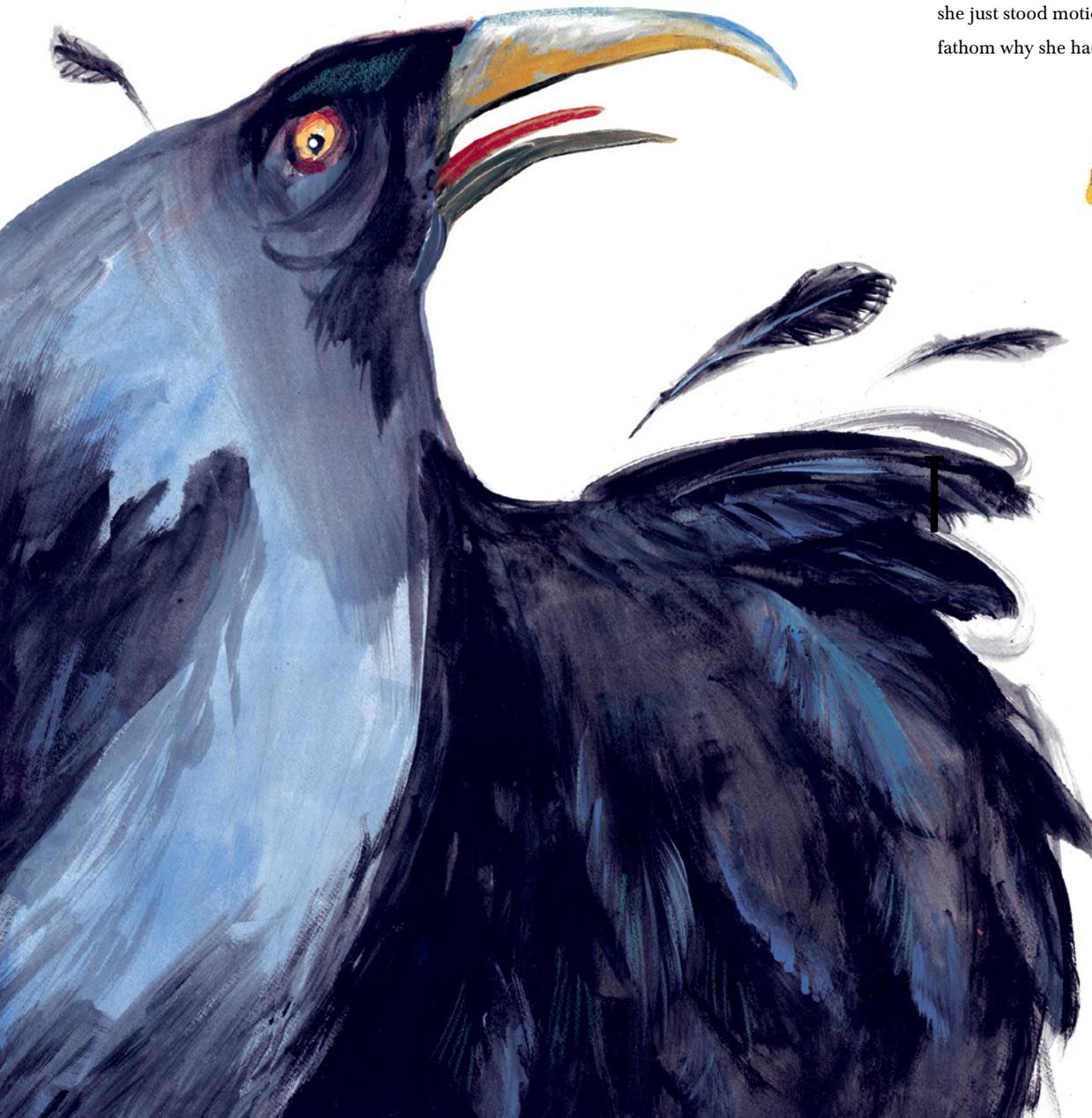
“Aldo? That is but a name,” the old woman said. “Tell me who you are!”

“I am prince Aevus.”

“Prince? That is but a rank,” the witch croaked. “Prince today, but tomorrow a commoner. Tell me, who are you?”

“I am a boy who has the body of an old man because of my father’s magic!” Aldo yelled. His voice was trembling with despair.

Salvia’s blood ran cold. At first, she could hardly grasp what she had just heard. Then, she just stood motionless, and she could not fathom why she had not realized this sooner.



For if King Erigon had used his magic to make time flow backwards so that he would be younger and younger, then perhaps the years were running the wrong way for the young prince too. She had been sad not to be able to meet the prince in person, and she had been trying to figure out who this Aldo was, and yet the explanation was right in front of her!

Her thoughts were interrupted by the witch's voice.

"And that is also not who you are. That is merely what has befallen you. Who are you?"

Aldo said nothing.

"You see? You have no idea!" the witch said, pursing her lips. "And where are you going?"

"I need to find the Time Dragon."

"And where is the Time Dragon?"

"I have no idea," Aldo whispered.

"Now you see!" the witch cackled triumphantly. "You don't even know who you are, you don't even know where you are going. And you?"

"Do you mean me?" Salvia asked, confused.

"Indeed I do. Who are you, and where are you going?"

"I don't know," Salvia replied with tears in her eyes.

"Of course you don't know" the witch said smugly. "But I can help you. Come closer! Take this."

She offered the flame flickering at the end of her staff to Aldo.

As Aldo took it, another flame started flickering at the end of the staff, and the witch offered it to Salvia.

"Take it, my girl," the witch said. "Now go, both of you. Walk through the forest and search for yourselves! You may find yourself in a stone, you may find yourself in a leaf. If you have found yourself, bring yourself here! If you have chosen well, you may go onward."

"And what about them?" Aldo asked, nodding towards the winged horse and the unicorn.

"Efirfira and Deinon will remain here with me," the witch said with an unexpected smile. "They have been carrying you for some time now. Let them rest. And Tinea knows exactly who he is and what he wants."

Salvia watched in amazement as the unicorn and the winged horse crouched at the old witch's feet like obedient dogs. Then she set off with the small blue-green flame in the palm of her hand. How would she find herself? How would she know if she were making the right choice? Why would she be a little twig or a blade of grass? At a complete loss as to what exactly to do next, she searched the ground and looked at the trees by the light of the little flame when suddenly something fell on her head. She reached out with one arm and found herself holding a tiny pinecone, and it seemed almost as if the pinecone were whispering something to her.

"I am you!" it was saying.

Salvia held it firmly in her grasp and scampered back to the witch. Aldo had already beaten her back. He was holding something with his thumb and his index finger, almost as if he were disgusted by it.

"What have you found, my boy?" the witch asked. "Do you know who you are yet?"

"A half-rotten plum!" Aldo spluttered angrily.

"You have chosen well," Azuya replied in a soothing tone, "You see that you have fallen from the tree, that you are half-rotten and are lying on the ground. All that is true. But you must also know that in this half-rotten plum there is a seed which will dig into the ground with its pointed end, and from it will sprout a whole plum tree!"

Aldo stared at the witch with his mouth agape, but she had already turned to Salvia.

"And what have you found?"

Salvia held out the little pinecone without saying a word. Azuya bent over and studied it, and then she reached out and, with her curly-fingered hand, she stroked the top of Salvia's head.

"You too have chosen well, Salvia. You are but a small thing for now, but when you ripen, the wind will carry your seeds thousands of miles."

"She knows my name," Salvia thought in amazement. "And yet I never told her!"

Azuya touched both the plum and the pinecone with the end of her staff, and then she continued.

"Take them with you, together with the flames! They will show you the way. I know you seek the Mountain of the Three Moons. I have healed Efirfira's wing, but you must cross the forest on foot. When you reach the far side of the wood, fly in the direction your compass points. If you must separate, do not be afraid, you shall find each other when you need each other. Do not rest until the light of the sun begins to blind you. Then land, and you shall find your next guide. Fear not! You are not far from your goal!"

Salvia felt the pinecone getting hot in her hand. The witch lifted her staff, and the blue flame showed them which way to go.

Efirfira got up and put her head on the witch's shoulder, and then she set off in the direction the flame had indicated. Deinon also leapt to his feet, walked over to the witch, heaved a sigh through his huge nostrils, and then followed Efirfira. Salvia watched them as they trundled off. Then, she turned back to thank Azuya, but the witch had vanished without a trace. Only her voice could be heard. She was singing.



WHEN  
*the* LIGHT  
*the* MIND *goes off*  
OPENS

Its title notwithstanding, there is a great deal to see in this book, which is universal in genre, function, and target audience. The black or rather dark background, which is unusual in a children's book, only allows the many colors and shapes which dance in the mind of a little boy getting ready to fall asleep to emerge more distinctly, and we see the fragments of

# *Nothing to See Here!*

thoughts, sometimes humorous, sometimes terrifying, which his imagination conjures. The binding of the book itself is unusual, as it contains a hole, and from this hole appears a thought-bubble with the message inviting us in: "Nothing to see here!"

The loosely connected texts are imbued with an absurd humor, and the images which capture the narrative in shapes and colors almost come together to form a film. About what? Nothing? About our fears? About the next world? We are given a glimpse into the mind of a child, into his innermost thoughts, and we discover that the darkness is not actually all that dark, for one can still see shadows and glimmers and figures imagined and real. We learn of the light snakes, which slither under the door and then suddenly vanish, or the bright shapes that dance when we squeeze our eyes shut tight. Other visions come alive in the darkness, and András Dániel draws on works by Miro and Andy Warhol, and mystical Wajang puppets even appear between the dancing pieces of furniture.

The funniest of these fictional creatures are the Franks and Cripps, who speak an incomprehensible language of their own. The poor boy fears for them, for he thinks there is a pair of birds living behind the radiator who love nothing more than a scrumptious meal of Franks and Cripps, but as the birds are also little more than his invention, he never actually lets them eat any Franks or Cripps. He finds other tasty delights for them.

Towards the end of the journey into dreams, the boy's musings become increasingly philosophical. As he thinks about both something and nothing, he finds himself more and more preoccupied with thoughts of annihilation: "Nothing is only nothing if it is not something. Maybe only the dead can imagine what nothing is, because they don't actually think about anything anymore."

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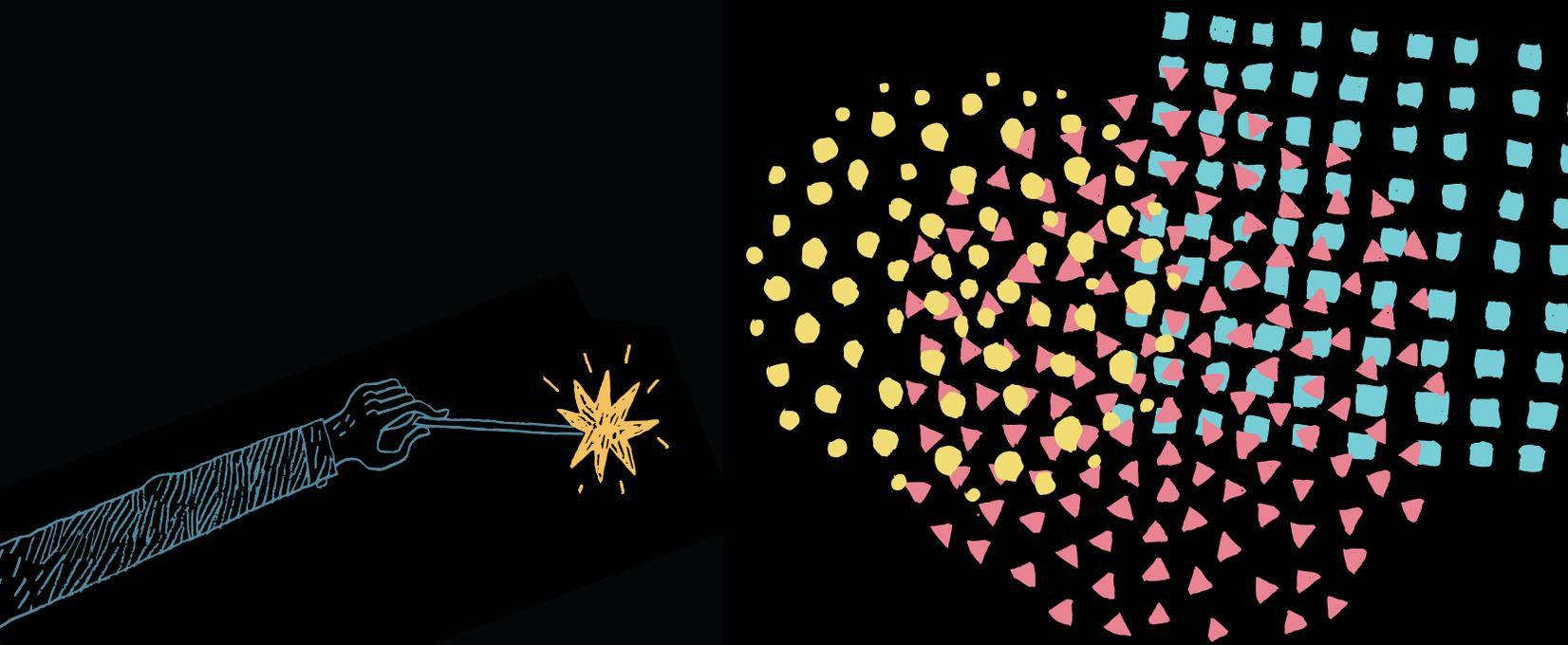
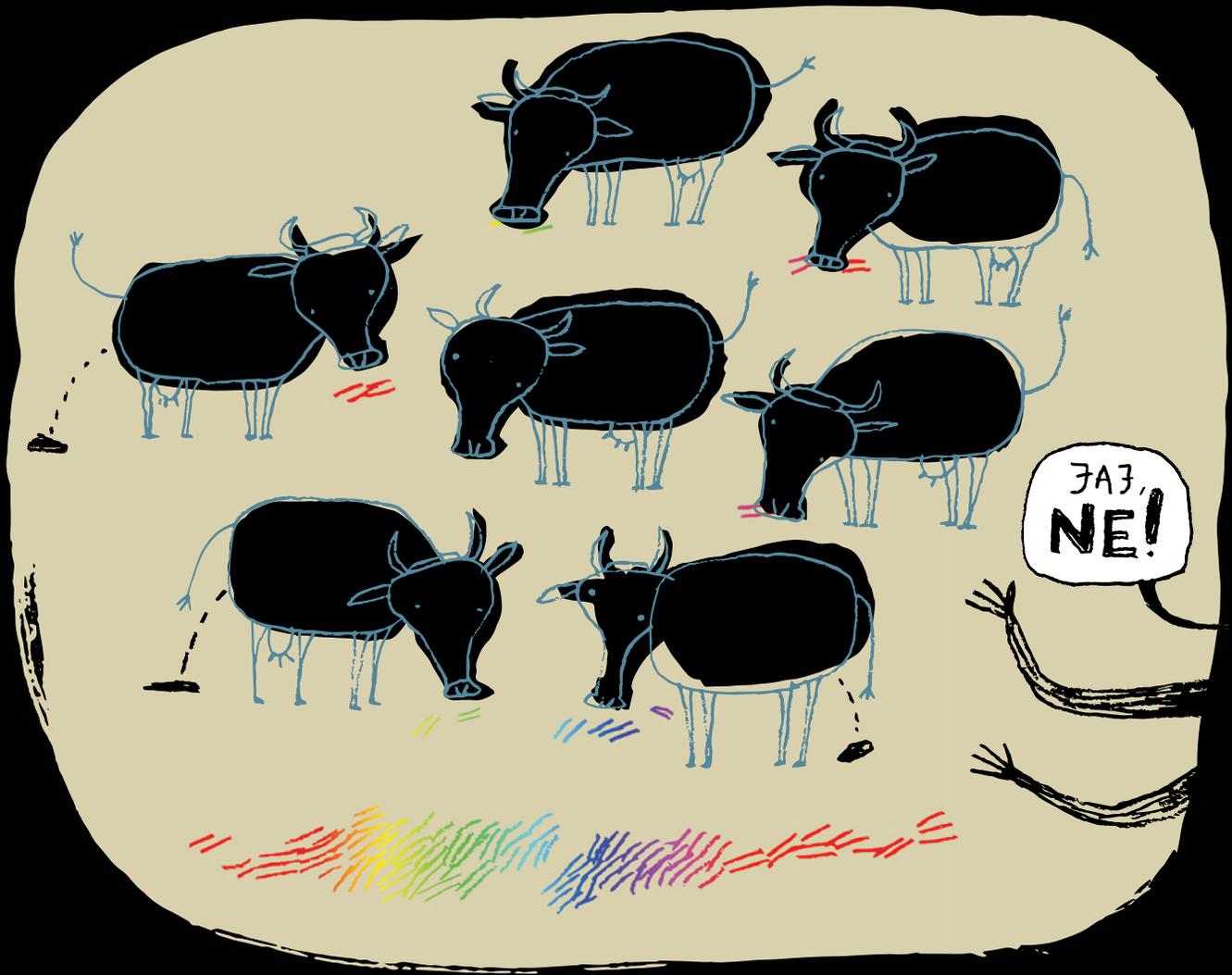
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That's the sound of the light switch on the other side of the door, in the living room. If the whole day were a long sentence, this little click from the next room would be the period at the end. We have already learned what the word sentence means.

In the dark, all cows are black.

That, for example, is a sentence. The first letter of the first word is capitalized, and the sentence has a period at the end. And between the front and the end there's darkness, as dark as it is now, behind my closed eyelids. So dark that you couldn't even see a cow. In the sentence, I mean. Because they are black too.

I know that when the click comes from the far side of the door, the light snake slithers off from under the door and vanishes. And now it really is dark!

But anybody who says that darkness is totally black is wrong. If I squeeze my eyelids shut tight, then all sorts of little bright things start dancing in front of me. Squares and circles, the kinds of shapes that are on the shower curtain in the bathroom. They dance around and around, and their shapes change, circles become triangles, squares become circles.

And then the dancing things break into little spots of light. They will be just like the stars! The stars in the black sky. And on earth, which is just as black as the sky, black cows are standing everywhere. They munch on black grass in the black meadow. You can also hear them chewing.

I imagine my room full of cows. There is no grass for them to much on here, so they would be forced to nibble at the carpet. It's funny, but mom wouldn't laugh if she saw bits of carpet all over the floor in the morning and cow pies everywhere. I wonder if black cows have black poop too.

When I think about all this, I see a picture. The image behind my closed eyelids is like the illuminated screen in the dark cinema when the movie starts. If I want it to, it even moves like a real movie! In this movie theater, I can watch anything I want. Not just a movie about cows. Anything!

And if I get bored, then click, I turn off the projector and it's dark in here too.

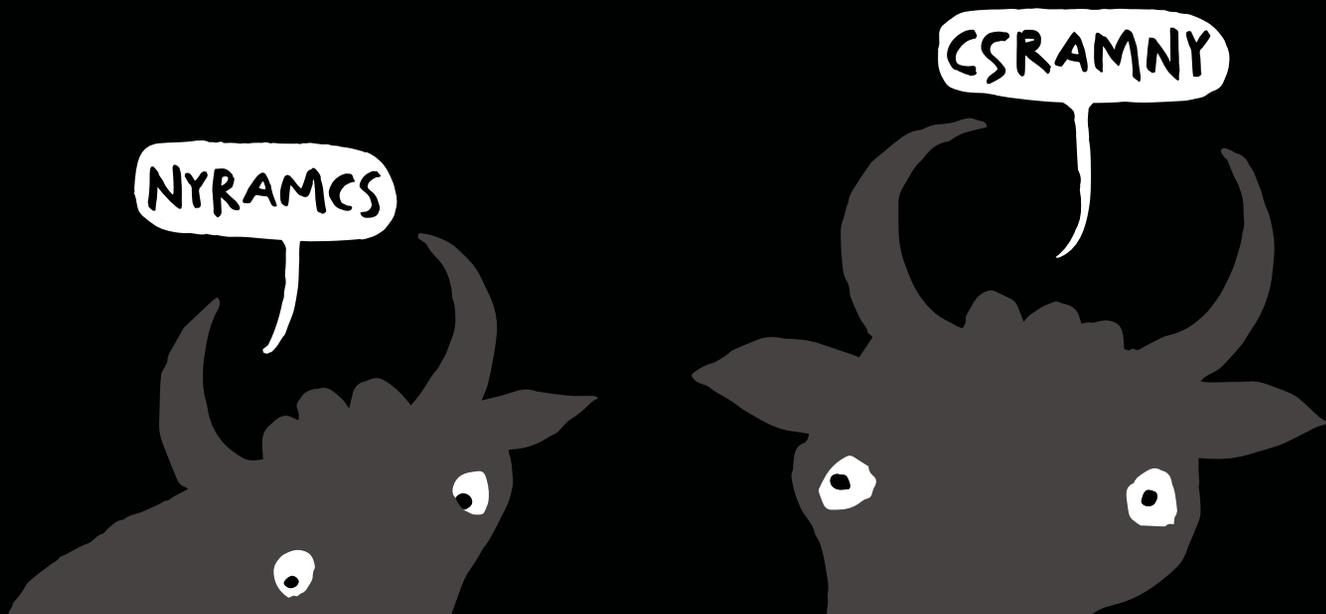
Sometimes, I fall asleep during the film. Sometimes, when I'm having trouble sleeping, I try to come up with a boring movie to see if maybe that will help. Like a movie in which there's nothing but a bunch of black cows. That would be just boring enough to help me sleep.

Lots of cows standing around, and that's it. Nothing else.

"What? What's the problem?" one of them asks in cow language.

"Nothing. Why?" one of them answers, and then a cow pie goes splat.

The others just keep chewing. They're nibbling on my carpet. That, for instance, would put me to sleep pretty quick. Or maybe not. The cows are too funny. All the black cows with their simple stares! Though I don't actually know if they're still black when it's not dark anymore. Maybe if we were to turn on the light, they would turn out to be all colorful.



*the*

WINDING PATH

*to* ONE-

SELF

The story of Tili and Tiló is a tale of love as both yearning and fulfillment. It has roots in the folk tale tradition, but it also draws on the great classics, like Hansel and Gretel and The Little Mermaid. Roland Acsai was also inspired by Michael Ende's *The NeverEnding Story* (for instance, the appearance of the luck dragon), but he nonetheless creates his own fantastic world. There are several smaller tales hidden in the mystically dreamlike story, but the adventures are gripping and easy to follow.

## *Tili and Tiló*

The narrative, which draws on an array of traditions and is interwoven with references to pop culture, is rich with poetry, and it even has elements of humor which are similarly poetic in their playfulness with language.

The stories of the main characters gradually unfold as they venture through distant, beautiful, and barren landscapes in their lyrical investigation. On the back of a huge bear named Ródlí, Tili, our heroine, travels across a snowy field until she comes across a mouse whom she frees, for he is trapped in the snow. She doesn't even know her own name, nor does she know where she came from or where she's going. She knows only that she wants to return the huge egg she found in the snow to its owner. When the mouse who is looking for his beloved calls her Tili, a voice deep inside her tells her that she has heard this name somewhere before.

During the long journey, the heroes must endure trials and tribulations familiar from the world of folk tales, but they always emerge victorious. A gas station attendant who pops up in the middle of nowhere, as so often happens in American road movies, tries to slow them down, and he even uses chocolate to poison Tili. But Tili and her allies still make it to the sea, where a merman boy name Arion comes to their aid when they are swept into the waves. But Ródlí the bear vanishes. The clues lead to the cruel circus manager, who has kidnapped Saharin, Simor's beloved, and who was also the malevolent soul who wiped Tili's memory clean. A paper airplane points our heroes in the right direction, a paper airplane with three words written on it: Tili and Tiló.

The illustrations by Mária Moldován create a playfully exotic, vibrantly colorful world for the very unusual adventures of Tili and Tiló.

*author / illustrator*  
Roland Acsai  
Mária Moldován

*title*  
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*publisher*  
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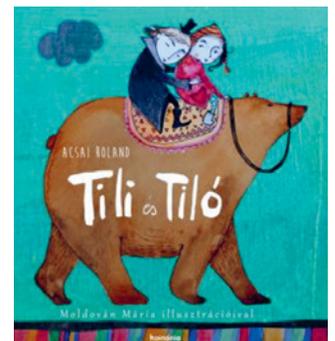
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They flew over the woods, and in the distance, it looked as if the lights of cities were shimmering in the gray of eventide. Sometimes, a curious bird fluttered by. The squirrels waved at them from the treetops.

Simor noticed a small, rapidly approaching dot in the distance. He gave Tili's shirtsleeve a tug. The dot slowly turned into a witch on her broom.

"She's going to catch up with us!" Tili shouted. "Alright sorcerer, cast your spells!"

"I'm not a sorcerer," Simor said. "That stuff with the balloons was just a trick."

"If you're not a sorcerer, then explain to me how those balloons, just a few balloons, were able to hold us up, not to mention a gigantic bear!"

Simor frowned.

"I never thought of that."

"See!" Lili said with a triumphant smirk.

“We’re not going to be able to shake her off,” Tiló said. “She’s flying much faster than we are.”

And hardly had he finished blurting out the warning than the old hag was already racing along beside them.

“I’ve got you now!” she cackled, and the warts on her grisly face trembled. She had a hunched back and long claws instead of fingernails. Someone had entrusted her with the task of catching the escapees. She was wearing a scarf with a skull-and-crossbones on it over her head, and her ragged, gray locks were flapping in the air behind her like tattered rags. She had a lantern dangling from her broomstick. Recently, some new rule had been passed requiring proper lights on broomsticks, and the witch was a law-abiding woman, so it should come as no surprise that her green card was also valid. The broom emitted essentially no greenhouse gases or toxic fumes, except when she belched from time to time.

“I’ve got you now!” she cackled again, as she had forgotten that she had already cackled those very words a moment earlier. She had been getting more and more forgetful over the past few years, though she was always going on and on about how 100 is the new 30.

Tili, Tiló, and Simor were trembling with fear, but Ródlí casually poked his thick leg through the bars, and the witch smashed into it as if hitting a toll bar that had been lowered.

She was dizzy, and suddenly the broom began to live a life of its own. It seemed as if the witch were doing the kinds of tricks a pilot would hardly dare try with a stunt plane. She was flying in huge loop-de-loops, and in the end, she went plunging into the treetops of the forest. The sound of the crash rumbled across the sky.

“Thank you, Ródlí,” Tili said, snuggled up to the warm, soft bear as if he were merely a big stuffed animal.

They saw a clearing in the distance. Tiló took a needle out of his pocket and started popping the balloons one by one. With every pop, they dropped a bit lower. Pop. A few feet down. Pop. Another few feet. Pop. Another few feet. Tili laughed out loud.

They landed in a meadow. Tiló leapt from the top of the cage to the ground and took a skeleton key from his pocket. He stuck it in the rusty lock and turned it. The door clicked open.

“Why didn’t you unlock it when we were back on the shore?” Tili asked, climbing out of the cage. “I’m not asking as a reproach, so don’t take it as one.”

“I just knew it would be easier to get you all away, safe and sound, if I left it locked.”

“And is your name really Tiló?” Tili asked, wrinkling her brow.

“Yes.”

“You don’t have some sorcerer’s name?”

“I told you, I’m not a sorcerer!” Tiló said, almost losing his temper.

Tili smiled.

“You don’t believe me?” Tiló asked.

Tili kept smiling.

“How do I prove that I am not a sorcerer?” Tiló muttered, scratching his chin. “Wait a sec! Sorcerers have long, black cloaks! All I have...”

Tiló looked down at his garb and suddenly realized he had picked a bad example.

Tili took a step or two towards him and gave his cloak a shake. A magic wand fell from its folds to the ground. She then put her hand in one of the pockets of the cloak and pulled out a white rabbit, and a white pigeon came fluttering out of the other pocket, gave an ostentatious coo, and then perched on the boy’s shoulder.

“So how do you explain this?”

“I’m a magician,” Tiló said proudly. “Or rather an apprentice magician,” he said, hastily correcting himself, but then he stared at his feet

and confessed the truth. “I was a clean-up guy in a ragtag traveling circus. I spent my free time staring in through the window of the magician’s car. I watched him do a few tricks, and I even invented a few of my own. The balloon trick, for instance.”

“And what about the paper airplane?” Simor asked. “Did you find a huge piece of paper, fold it up all nice, and then use it to fly to our cage?”

Tiló paused for a moment, as if he couldn’t quite remember exactly what he had done.

“Yes, pretty much. I climbed onto it, and then...”

“And then?” Simor asked. “What did you do then?”

“I just really wanted it to take me to Tili. And all of the sudden, the wind lifted it from the ground... The first paper airplane, the one you found on the shore with my name and Tili’s name on it, that was the prototype.”

“So let’s just suppose I believe you when you say you are not a sorcerer, just a clean-up guy who happened to spy on a magician and learn a few tricks,” Tili said, putting her hands on her hips.

“But how did you even know anything about me?”

“Elvira told me.”

“And who is this Elvira?”

“The fortune teller at the circus. One day, she dragged me into her caravan car and showed me an image of you in her crystal ball. She told me I had to find you at all costs.”

“And you did,” Tili said, pursing her lips and giving Tiló an admiring nod.

“I sneaked off from the circus, but first, I stole the magician’s cloak and wand,” Tiló said. Then he gave the flustered bird a guilty look. “I didn’t realize that the rabbit and the pigeon were still in it.”

“It’s getting late,” Tili said. “We’ll get back on the move tomorrow.”

She lay down in the grass and counted the stars in the firmament above her until she drifted off to sleep.



SISTERS  
TAKE ON

AGAINST

A SEA *of* TROUBLES

As a professional storyteller, Csenge Virág Zalka has brought some of the most beautiful stories from the Hungarian folk tale tradition to many countries around the world at international festivals, storytelling events, and performances. In *Red Currants at the End of the World* and *The Pirate Princess*, she brings old stories to life in new garb. Keeping the basic form of the traditional folk tale, she uses her own narrative style to make the stories modern and exciting for readers of all ages.

# *Red Currants at the End of the World*

*Red Currants at the End of the World* contains a total of 39 well-known and truly extraordinary Hungarian folk tales. The characters of the stories have complex and colorful personalities, and as the female characters have an array of distinct talents, the stories are not built around the classic gender roles. We find girls who slay dragons, princesses who save the kingdom and thus themselves become rulers, or girls who do not wait for some man to save them but solve problems themselves. Alongside the strong and resilient female characters, the men are presented as equals who are also brave, clever, and caring, and they often help each other achieve their goals or solve difficult situations. And marriage is a consensual act.

*The Pirate Princess* contains 38 folk tales, including several from the Far East and many countries all over the world. It offers exciting and adventurous stories which bring different cultures into focus. In addition to the rich symbolism of the tales, the stories are dynamic, humorous, and full of unexpected twists, and they address issues that are still relevant today, such as mutual respect and acceptance, overcoming fears, and the importance of equal opportunity. One of the main aims of the book is to show that the gender of the protagonist in a fairy tale does not determine who the story is meant for, and it also reminds us that real relationships between men and women are much more nuanced than the roles they play in fairy tales.

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László Herbszt

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The Pirate Princess

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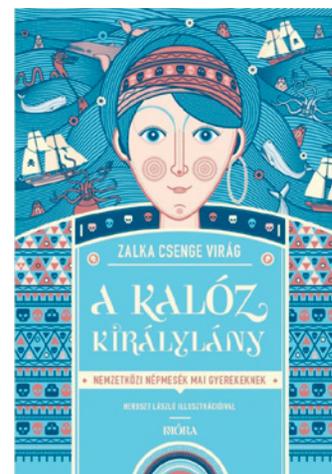
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Once upon a time, there was a young lass. She was clever and she was beautiful, and she was hard-working too, and yet for a long, long time, no one asked her hand in marriage. One day, a young soldier came home from the front, and he heard news of this clever, beautiful girl. He decided that he and his older brother would go and have a look and see if this girl really was as clever and beautiful as everyone said, and if she was, then he would ask her hand.

The two young men set out, and when they reached the girl's house, they opened the gate to the garden and went in. As they found no one in the garden, they opened the front door and went in. The lass was the only one home, and she was wearing nothing but her nightshirt. When the two

lads came sauntering in, she let out a cry and leapt into the bedroom.

"If only the house had ears!" she spluttered.

The brothers exchanged baffled looks. How could a house possibly have ears? The lass in the meantime had thrown on some clothes and returned to the front room.

"To what do I owe the pleasure of this visit, good sirs?"

"We have come to meet the maiden of the house," the younger brother replied, and he smiled at the girl. "What is your name, young lady?"

"The beginning of my name is the same as the end, and the middle is the same two times over," the girl replied, after thinking for a moment. The soldier was a trifle taken aback.

“And how old are you, if I may ask?”

“I am as many years as I am, and my mother is twice as many as I, and my father five more than she, and together, the three of us are one hundred years old!”

The brothers could make neither head nor tail of what the lass was saying. Why offer such bewildering replies to such simple questions? But as the girl had mentioned her parents, they took advantage of the chance to ask different questions.

“Is your father at home?”

“Alas, he is not. He went to the mill to pay for last year’s bread.”

“And when do you expect him back?”

“If he comes straight home, then quite late, but if he takes the long way, then he will be home soon.”

“And is your mother at home?”

“She is not. She went to the store to buy flavor for the food.”

“Do you have any siblings?”

“Indeed I do. I have a brother.”

“And where is your brother?”

“He is burying the living under the dead.”

The soldier lad had soon had enough of the girl’s enigmatic replies, and they turned and left without even bidding farewell.

“Who would want to take a lass so daft as his wife?” he muttered to his brother. “What nonsense she talks! She gave not a single sensible reply to a single simple question. If only the house had ears? Absurd! Last year’s bread? The flavor for the food? Now I understand why no one has asked her hand.”

The soldier’s brother, however, cast a glance over his shoulder as they stepped out into the garden, and he noticed that the maiden was smiling at them. He thought for a moment, and then he turned to his brother.

“Let’s go back,” he said. “Let’s ask this girl just what she meant with her puzzling answers. Perhaps there is some meaning to her riddles.”

“Nonsense! Meaning to her prattle? Surely you jest!”

“But it wouldn’t hurt to ask!”

“I will not waste my breath on that girl,” the soldier lad said to his brother. “If you want to hear more inane gabbling, then off you go, but I won’t join you.”

“His brother trundled back to the door of the house and knocked. The girl opened the door with a big smile on her face. She invited him into the kitchen.

“I thought you would never come back,” the girl said.

“But I did,” the lad said. “I confess, of the replies you gave to our questions, I understood not a single one! Do please explain what you meant when you said that the house has no ears.”

The girl burst out laughing.

“I meant that we do not have a dog! If we had a dog, he would have barked, and I would have known that I had a guest. A dog is both the eyes and ears of a house.”

The lad smiled and nodded.

“How right you are! But then tell me, what is this strange name of yours? The name that is the same at the beginning as it is at the end and in the middle the same two times over?”

“Now don’t be silly!” the girl said with a wink. “Surely you could have figured that out on your own? But as you ask, then I shall tell you. My name is Anna.”

Now the lad burst out laughing.

“And your father, who went to the mill to pay for last year’s bread?”

“He went to the mill to pay for the flour that we borrowed last year.”

“And how is that he shall arrive late if he comes straight home?”

“Because there is a thick forest full of undergrowth between the mill and our home. If he takes the long way, then he will go on the cobblestone road which winds around it, and he will make it home much faster than if he tries to plod through the brush.”

The lad was beginning to realize that this lass was quite clever indeed, and he was beginning to find her more and more charming.

“And your mother, who went to buy flavor for the food?”

“She is buying salt at the store. Food has little flavor without salt!”

“And your brother, who is burying the living under the dead?”

“He is digging a ditch at the edge of our lands. And as clumsy as he is, he will toss the dirt onto the new shafts of wheat. He will bury the living under the dead soil.”

The lad smiled at the clever lass, and the lass smiled at the lad.

“And now tell me one more thing. How old are you?”

“You could have figured that out easily enough too!” the girl said with a wave of her hand. “I am nineteen years old. My mother is twice my age, so she is thirty-eight. My father is five years older than she, so he is forty-three. Thus, the three of us are one-hundred years old.”

The lad found this sharp-witted lass irresistibly charming. He dropped in on her more and more often, and soon, they had fallen in love. And soon after that, they were married, and they lived happily ever after.



GARDEN  
*of* **MISTERIES**  
LAKE *of* **SECRETS**

Erzsi Kertész's novel *Garden of the Night* tells the tale of an unusual investigation. The plot is complicated by the fact that the decorative pond from the garden of the famously rich Signora Suplash has vanished, every lost drop, and ever last creature who lived in it. The desperate Lady Suplash immediately hires two of the city's best detectives, Theoria and Todor, who take on the strange assignment, as they have no other mysterious to

# *The Night Garden*

solve. The clues lead them to the mysterious Garden of the Night, a place which the good denizens of the city tend to avoid. The two detectives, who are always competing with each other, dive into the investigation, but they each use different methods. Todor borrows from the toolchest of classic law enforcement tools to unravel what he can, writing down notes in his notebook, listing suspects, and trying to gather evidence, while Theoria relies more on her observations and intuition. The two detectives are reluctant to go through the gate into the Garden of the Night until Nox Noctis, the gardener, invites them in. Nox Noctis shows Theoria and Todor around the garden and tells them about the creatures there, all of which have unusual properties and abilities. As they learn about these strange creatures, a unique system of symbols emerges. Everything is interconnected, and a small change or mistake can throw the garden out of balance, affecting the way in which the very world itself turns. Each creature has its own role to play. For example, the Bud Singers chase away the crows, who are the harbingers of winter and who keep spring at bay with their cawing, and the crows are soothed by the Crow Comforters, who try to cheer them up, and so on, each living thing playing an important part in the garden's ecosystem. The complex psychological portrait of the creatures of the garden reveals how these psychological processes reflect changes in nature. During their investigation, the two rival detectives unravel the mystery, and they realize almost at the same time who is behind the theft of the garden pond. The book is rich with humor, puns, and witticisms, and it makes an engaging read.

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Réka Zsoldos

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The Garden of the Night is just a few blocks down, in Deadened Street. It's not hard to find. You just have to follow your nose and then go whichever way the wind happens to blow for a bit, and you'll be there. But don't try using GPS. None of the satellite navigation systems have it mapped out as anything more than a little gray splotch.

Deadened Street is dark and grim, because a little night trickles out from the Garden of the Night. Or rather at low tide it trickles out. At high tide, it tumbles out in waves, and then you can't see as far as your nose. A single streetlight casts it faint glow day and night, but it's hardly

enough to tempt anyone to go for a stroll down the somber lane. Given the many legends and tales about the Garden of the Night, the good citizens of the city take care to keep their distance from it, as indeed do the tourists. Only very rarely does some courageous soul dare glance down the street to take a picture of the iron gate at the far end, and there are a few old, faded postcards in some of the gift shops which bear the inscription, "Greetings from the gate to the Garden of the Night."

However, our unflappable detectives were marching straight towards the gate with a look of determination in their eyes. The curls of hair on

Theoria's head were trembling in the cool darkness. Todor nervously cleared his throat. It was low tide, as it so happens.

"There's the gate!" Theoria said, and Todor wiped his brow with a handkerchief.

"Alright," he stammered, "after you! Ladies first, after all."

Theoria stood motionless and glanced towards the city.

"This whole investigation is stupid," she said. "Maybe we should just go home."

"I was just thinking the same thing myself," Todor said. "There are a lot more important things in this world than a stolen garden pond... These rich people can sure come up with some silly requests."

"But won't everybody gossip about how we didn't take the case?" Theoria asked in a whisper.

"Word will definitely get out," Todor said, nodding. "Maybe we should go in after all."

"Let's do it!"

"Alright."

They stood in front of the iron gate, from the bars of which ivy vines tumbled forth. They stood biting their nails, clearing their throats, and brooding over their next step.

Theoria gazed up at the sky.

"I'm just wondering if it's going to rain," she said. "I should run home and get my umbrella. You just go ahead without me, Todor. I'll be back soon."

"No, that's alright," Todor said. "I've got to run home and get my, ah, ah..."

He paused and wiped the sweat from his forehead.

"Your notebook?" Theoria asked.

"Uh, actually I have that. But I left my, uh, my..."

"Your pen?" Theoria suggested, and they might have kept going back and forth like this for some time had not something quite unexpected happened. Suddenly, there was a quiet rustling sound from the other side of the gate, followed by a similarly quiet, though pained squeak. The two detectives stood stone-still and watched as the heavy iron gate, covered with intertwining vines, slowly swung open and someone's head peeked out.

"Welcome, come inside," the head said, and the voice had all the enthusiasm of a circus ringmaster. "Come, come! Nothing to fear!"

"We haven't quite made up our minds yet," Theoria said, taking a few steps backwards, but the gate then swung open wide.

Theoria and Todor peeked past the tangled ivy on the gate, and the spectacle which unfolded before them was a nighttime fairytale won-

derworld. It was not frightening at all. Rather, it was very inviting. More mysterious than ominous. More alluring than alarming.

"Surely you're not afraid?" the voice asked with a quiet flutter of giggles.

Theoria and Todor paused to get a good look at the figure who was inviting them in. He was a tall, lanky guy. The battered straw hat on his head might just as well have belonged to some neglected scarecrow, but his cloak hung all the way to the ground, and when he moved, it flowed in graceful curves around his ankles. His clothing was worn and dark. His eyes had a mischievous glint, and he had a little goatee at the tip of his pointy chin. He looked like something of a mix between a scarecrow, a magician, and a tramp, and Theoria could not quite decide whether he seemed friendly or fiendish.

Todor, however, did not hesitate for a moment. As far as he was concerned, this strange character was not in the slightest bit friendly. He looked distrustfully at the dirty cloak and the tattered straw hat.

"So, are you the gardener?" he asked, and his voice had a disdainful tone.

The figure in the tattered straw hat chuckled. At first, his laugh sounded like tiny little pebbles bumping together, and then larger and larger stones, and then huge boulders crashing down a mountainside as his voice got deeper and deeper, and he cackled more and more thunderously.

"The gardener?" he says. "Me? A gardener? What a tremendously funny idea!"

He suddenly grew stern and stared Todor in the eye, and then he turned his gaze to Theoria and smiled.

"My name is Nox Noctis. I am the master of the garden. The master of the Garden of the Night!"

He spoke these words with such a theatrical flair that both Theoria and Todor stood mouths agape. Then he gazed at them quizzically from the folds of his long cape.

"And may I ask what you good people are doing at the gate to the Garden of the Night? Are you just curious souls? Are you tourists? Are you considering moving in?"

Theoria bit her lip. Confound it! They had completely forgotten to agree on a story! Did they dare even say why they had really come? Perhaps it would be better to come up with some innocent pretext.

"Oh, just curious," she said hastily, but a moment later Todor opened his mouth and blurted out the truth with a certainty that brooked no contradiction.

"We are investigators!"

"Very curious investigators," Theoria hastened to add, and she cast an angry glance at Todor. What a stubborn wretch he could be at times!



GRANDMAMMY  
*and the* **SWIRLING**  
**CITY**

In the first part of *Grandma Truly* (*Grandma Truly and the Gold Diggers*), the Golden Mountain, a natural wonder and treasure, was the other protagonist, alongside Grandma Truly. In the sequel, the story focuses on the world of the big city. It is this poetic vision, the fresh and lyrical depiction of the natural environment, and the naturalistic, carefully paced narrative that makes the text stand out among other works in the genre. Elements of

# Grandma Truly

contemporary reality (international pop hits and allusions to familiar films) are nicely interwoven with fairy-tale twists, just as Grandma Truly's "old lady" personality cleverly plays with and defies stereotypes.

Grandma Truly and her two friends, two hobgoblins, get into their beetle and drive to the city of Cluj. Grandma wants to prevent her grandson Ferkó, who is about to turn fourteen, from losing his ability to understand magic, for the magical creatures who have become his friends must leave the world of humans if they no longer have anyone in this world with whom to maintain ties. But Ferkó has vanished, and secret forces send destructive whirlwinds to foil Grandma's plan.

The city of Cluj serves both as a familiar backdrop (a major European cultural center) and a distinctive stage with unique splashes of color. In parallel with the Verespatak parable in the first part, here the reader is introduced to the senseless and soul-destroying bustle of an urban metropolis. The narrative juxtaposes the bustling, crowded city and the beautiful natural environment, which is being assessed as a world to be brought under subjugation.

Author Annabella Orosz, who knows Cluj well, captures the uniqueness of the city and its distinctive Eastern European charm with her illustrations, which focus both on the actual cityscape of the town and the irrational flow and jolts of the text. The colors evoke both the old and the new city.

Grandma Truly, whose name captures essence of her personality, knows both sides of the city. She is both tradition and innovation. The hobgoblins, Question Mark and Exclamation Point, skillfully bring out her inner dilemmas, her search for the truth, and her glances behind the scenes. Nothing is impossible for this wily grandmother, for she is always able to devise solutions. In the end, when major decisions are at hand, everyone would do well to heed Grandma Truly's advice.

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Annabella Orosz

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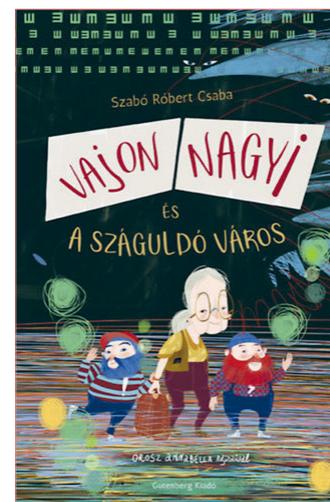
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Grandma truly stepped on the gas again, and the beetle started to accelerate, doing pretty well for its age. They were going 40. Just before the protestant theology school, she had to slow down to take the curve, and a bus coming from the right almost ploughed right into them. Fortunately, the brakes worked just like new, though the little ones grunted as they got thrown against the seat by their momentum. But Grandma Truly wasn't worried about them for the moment. She was looking in the rearview mirror. The sports car was two spots back.

Grandma accelerated, and suddenly they were off, racing towards Széchenyi Square. The road narrowed a little, but Grandma managed to slip into a free lane, and just before the light turned red, she slid through the intersection. The bridge was ahead of them, and Grandma saw the sports car stuck at the red light. They had enough of a lead now to take a quick breath. But before she could even cross the bridge over the river, taxis cut in front of her at a mad pace, and suddenly she had to brake again.

“It’s like a racetrack! Truly, what’s happened to this city since I’ve been gone?” she asked, as one of the hobgoblins coughed again from behind. Maybe it was Question Mark, maybe it was Exclamation Point. She couldn’t tell. She was too busy driving.

True, she would have to get out of the truly, truly habit, but this was not the time. Trulying helps you think clearly, she used to say. And that’s how they’d beaten the gold miners, she recalled. But a lot had happened since then. Not long after the successful Gold Mountain rescue operation, suspicious characters had started turning up in the town again. Grandma Truly thought it best to keep a low profile until her grandson Ferkó returned. The hobgoblins made her promise to stop using the word “truly.” They didn’t want her to get into trouble again. Were she to let the word slip from her lips, they might recognize her, and then something terrible might befall her.

And as far as that was concerned, it was very difficult to quit saying this word. She had done better, way back when, when she had tried to quit smoking! Or dieting, that was no problem either. But never to mutter the word truly? That’s a tough one. As long as she knew the hobgoblins couldn’t hear her, in the evening, after having held her tongue all day, she would say it for thirty seconds or so. Or maybe a little longer, until she fell asleep.

Truly. Truly!

But truly, did she not perhaps say truly in her sleep? Truly?

She didn’t know. How could she have known? She was asleep. But she knew that she talked in her sleep. Ferkó had told her.

So many questions!

“And truly, is that little street still there?” she asked, sitting on the back of the beetle, and then without waiting for a cautionary cough, she added in a voice that brooked no contradiction, “we’re finished if I don’t use it!”

The hobgoblins thought it best not to say anything, and Grandma turned the wheel to the right and drove into a yard. As far as she could recall, the yard opened onto the river. A narrow alley led to the bank. But she was wrong. Either she misremembered, or the place had been rebuilt, but either way, they had hit a dead end. She stopped the car. She looked towards the gate through which they had entered the yard. The sports car was braking, as if the driver wanted to take a good look around. As if he suspected where the beetle had scampered off. Other cars were racing past it, and what was most surprising was that little whirlwinds, cones of dust, were sprouting up behind it and then zigzagging around the cars as they passed. As if they were searching for something. As if they had eyes of their own. And all the while, the traffic was dodging the sports car, which stood, as if waiting calmly. No one honked at the driver, as if he

were in control. The cars raced past him faster and faster. And the cones of dust danced back and forth between the vehicles, as if performing a poorly conceived ballet. It was dizzying!

“Now truly, who could the driver be,” Grandma wondered to herself. But she knew she didn’t have much time to think. She suspected the worst. This was the new city of Cluj! She was gradually overwhelmed by the feeling that it had been a mistake to come!

“Get out,” she told the hobgoblins.

They blinked at her in disbelief from the back.

But Grandma was already handing out some clothes: the things Ferkó had forgotten in Golden City, which she had brought with her to Cluj to give back to him. The hobgoblins quickly put on Ferkó’s trousers, t-shirt, and hat. They were short, which meant you would easily have mistaken them for children had it not been for their beards. Grandma Truly gave them a stern look. The hobgoblins sighed, and then they held their breath. Before anyone could have counted to ten, the long hair had disappeared from their faces. They were able to take on the shape and approximate appearance of anyone by putting on their clothes.

They heated it, but that was another question.

They preferred to look like hobgoblins.

They got out of the car and, following Grandma’s gestures, they went out into the street and then headed for the bridge, in the direction of the train station. Grandma Truly was still watching the sports car out of one eye, and the sports car was still sitting in the middle of the rush of cars with the rush of little whirlwinds circling around it. As they continued onward, they saw that it went a bit backwards and then rolled into the yard, with the whirlwinds in its wake. Grandma picked up the pace, and the hobgoblins shuffled ever more rapidly along beside her. They turned their heads left and right and gawked at the bustling city. In fact, it was busier than usual. Or so it seemed to Grandma. It wasn’t anything like the town she remembered. The passers-by all looked as if they had gone half mad. They were almost running as they stumbled forward. Eyes straight ahead, dodging one another, rushing ever onwards. Grandma looked around anxiously, for at first, she thought they were running to catch the trolley. But no.

That was just how they walked.

They were all in a hurry to get somewhere.

She couldn’t figure out where.

Somewhere.

Grandma Truly and the hobgoblins were also in a hurry, but the rush of the passers-by was different. Faster and more determined, yet somehow more aimless. If they were in a hurry to be in a rush.



**LEARNING**

**CHESS**

*from the*

**VERY**

**BEST**

The rules and philosophy of chess can be applied to almost every situation in life, because even as children, we are constantly faced with choices and decisions. Judit Polgár, the best female chess player in the history of chess, uses real-life examples to illustrate the important moves, strategies, and tactics of chess in her informative book, *You Too Can Be a Champion!* The book is intended primarily for children who have already mastered the basic rules of chess, are familiar with the moves, and know the pieces well. From the mys-

# *You Too Can Be a Champion!*

teries of chess writing through developing memory skills to the moment of the checkmate, every step is covered in the seventeen chapters of the book. Each contains an introductory section followed by a presentation of illustrative examples. Important information is given in separate text bubbles, which can be easily checked before a match, for example. At the end of the chapters, the reader can test his or her knowledge with practice exercises, flash questions, and exciting puzzles. The friendly language of the book, which fosters a sense of supportive encouragement, helps beginners and advanced chess players improve step by step with a number of little tricks. As you learn, the main stages of Judit Polgár's personal life are also covered, giving a comprehensive picture from her beginnings to the global success she achieved at the very young age of twelve. The structure and message of the book emphasize the key role of practice and repetition in life and in sports and games. The book also stresses the importance of learning from mistakes, bad decisions, and even rash moves.

At the end of the book, there is a glossary of key terms, solutions to the exercises, and an evaluation page.

*author / illustrator*  
Judit Polgár  
Orsolya Varsányi

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Over the course of our lives, we make bigger and bigger decisions every day. Which dress should I wear? What kind of games should I take with me on the trip? Should I ask for vanilla ice cream or chocolate?

Sometimes, the decisions are easy. For instance, when someone asks you whether you want two scoops of ice cream or three. The choice is harder when the decision you are making is not a quantitative one. For instance, when you have to choose between eating an apple or a pear.

Choice is a very important part of chess thinking. In each game, **you have to make a decision every time you make a move**: which piece should you move, and which piece should you take? The decision is simple if you just base it on the value of the two or more pieces which are threatened. Quantitative decisions are relatively easy to make.

The hardest decisions come when **we have to choose from among two or more very different things**. For instance, what would you tell a castaway who has been languishing on an uninhabited island for years and has suddenly spotted a yacht, a speedboat, and a sailboat by the shore? Which one should he pick? Don't just blurt out an answer! First, learn as much as you can about the situation, the different possibilities, and the prospects. For instance, you should take into consideration whether the yacht and the motorboat actually have enough gas.

When you have to make a decision like this in a game, give the problem the thought it deserves. Consider your decision from several perspectives. Is the piece that is being attacked protected or defenseless? Do you want to get rid of the more valuable piece or the more dangerous one? Take all possibilities into consideration. You have to choose **the best possible solution**, and you have to do it lightening fast. For some people, this is easy. Others brood over a decision for a long time. The worst thing is when a player simply can't make decide and risks running out of time.

The consequences of your choices will teach you to make good decisions over time. The first idea is not always the best idea. **Decide carefully**, and be aware of the possibilities! And pay attention to how you make decisions in everyday life. How do different circumstances influence the choices you make? What are the consequences of your decisions? Try to see if, in retrospect, you could have made a better decision. **Practice as much as possible!**

## MY STORY

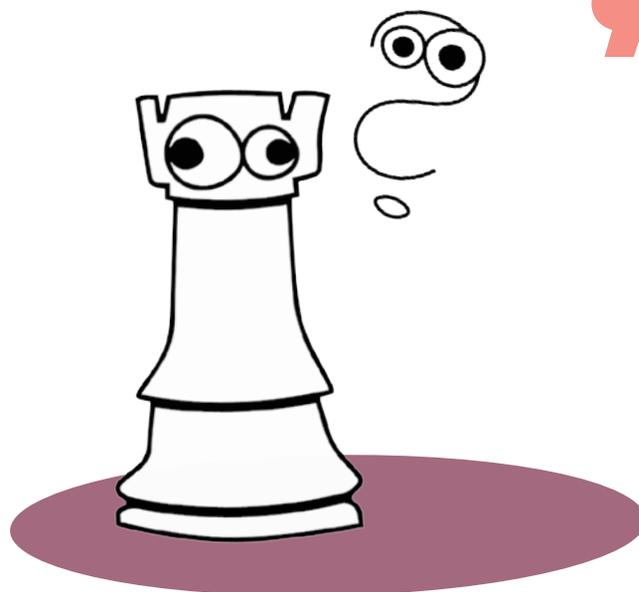
Shall we split it, Judit?

As a chess player, I have had this offer made to me twice by my opponent. We would play the game, or more precisely the match, but regardless of who won, we would share the prize for first place, or in other words, **we would split it, as if we were old friends**. The first time this happened was during a smaller competition, and first prize was a small model of car (I was sixteen years old, so I didn't even have a driver's license). The second time, the prize was an amount of money that would still be considered quite significant today. The winner would get 60% of the \$200,000 prize, and the loser would get 40%. I was presented with a choice.

If you had been in my shoes, **what would you have done?** Would you have accepted the offer? Would you have rejected it? I'll give you a moment to think about it.

So, what would you have done? But first, I'll tell you what I did.

Both times, the "idea" **came as a complete surprise to me**. I was in a bit of a daze, but it didn't last long. I turned down the offers, in part just because to me, they seemed irreconcilable with the competitive spirit. At the same time, I had the feeling that my opponents had given themselves away. They were not adequately prepared, they were afraid of me, of losing, and so they were trying to ensure that they would get half the cake. This feeling dramatically increased my self-confidence, and I beat both of them.



**FIELDTRIP** *to*

*a COURT of* **GOLDEN  
TIMES**

Ágnes Mészöly's young adult novel *The Queen's Viola* was published as the first volume of a series launched by Pagony Publishing under the title Absolute History. The aim of the series is to produce novels dealing with specific periods of Hungarian history in which the events of the past not only serve as a backdrop but are also brought to life for readers ten to fourteen years old in a manner that will be engaging and

# *The Queen's Viola*

memorable. The genre itself is familiar: with the help of a time machine, the characters travel to a bygone era where, taking care not to change anything, they find themselves in a variety of adventures and comic misadventures, due to the different cultures of the different periods of history. In the process, they discover two important things: first, a bygone era which they had only known from books and, second, the timeless nature of human behavior. In Mészöly's novel, three classmates, Bettina, Kende, and Martin, are plunged into the world of the city in which they live, but the city as it was five hundred years earlier. They find themselves in the very residence of king Mátyás Hunyadi, one of the most famous figures in Hungarian history, known as "Mátyás the just." They befriend the king's son, who is roughly their age, and they teach him the slang of their time much as he teaches them the slang of his. They also prevent an assassination attempt and solve several crimes. In the process, they discover that the seemingly insensitive boy is very sensitive, the seemingly shy one is very brave, and that the half-Italian, half-Hungarian girl is quick witted lass who finds her footing, no matter what moment of history she has stumbled into. As the two different eras collide, we see what a fifteenth-century man thinks of Vivaldi and Metallica, why breakfast was not important in the old days, and what interests a child who became a high-ranking clergyman at the age of seven. (Skateboarding, obviously!) But it will also be clear that loyalty, camaraderie, courage, and honesty are values that are independent of time and place. The author brings all this to the reader in a lively and exciting tale.

*author / illustrator*  
Ágnes Mészöly

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Frangepán set off in the direction of the palace. He walked at a slow pace, so the prisoners had no trouble keeping up with him. The boys didn't dare make a peep, and Betti was plodding along with her head hung low. The four soldiers were barely paying them any mind, but the mighty captain followed their every move out of the corner of his eye.

Kende did his best to see if he could recognize any of the streets, but without much success until they had reached the church. There, however, everything fell into place, even if there was not yet a single stone of the fisherman's bastion, and instead of the souvenir shops, old women were selling their wares. They were taking precisely the same path that the bus took to the royal palace, but the palace hardly resembled the fancy palace of the castle district of modern-day Buda. The whole thing was much more of confused jumble of towers, loggia, and balconies. And the uneven cobblestones. And the trash. Even with its discarded beer cans, modern Buda was a lot cleaner than the Buda of yesteryear.

They had arrived, in the meantime, roughly at what in modern Buda is Parade Square. The external fortress wall which protected the palace rose in front of them, with its enormous gate under the single bastion. Soldiers dressed in red and white and armed with halberds stood guard at the gate. When they saw the men approaching with their prisoners, they stood to one side. The larger man nodded as they passed, but Frangepán, who was at the head of the procession, did not cast them even a glance. He led the group across the enormous square, which was covered with smooth stone. There were a few little ramshackle stalls which looked like they were used for little more than storage. In front of one of them, a blacksmith was shoeing a horse.

But Kende didn't have much time to stare in amazement, for they had soon reached the far side of the courtyard, and after crossing a bridge that led over a dry ditch, they entered a gate over which a tall watchtower rose.

Frangepán again did not waste any time with greetings.

However, when they reached the next courtyard and a girl leaned out of one of the windows of the building on the left and shouted to them, he waved at her with the same warm smile on his face that one would expect to see on the face of a father in the twenty-first century when he was talking to his daughter.

"So, Bernát, my boy, I see the little lady has also knocked you a bit off your feet," the commander said.

"I confess, you are right, sir," Frangepán replied. "My little Beatrice has all the charms of her mother and her aunt, but none of the haughtiness or fussiness which is so common among the women of Ausonia. She has seen only six summers, yet she is a nimble and quick as any boy her age. Imagine this, the other day..."

As he recounted the misdeeds his daughter had pulled, the hard lines of his face softened. The prisoners could sense that the situation was not nearly as tense as it had been. Kende pulled the straps of his backpack a little tighter and walked over to the others.

"You were brilliant," Martin whispered to Bettina.

"Except for the weak-minded one," Kende added. "How come you weren't scared? I was so terrified I couldn't speak."

"I was terrified too," Betti sighed. "That's why I was able to come up with all that nonsense. If I'm so scared I'm about to crap in my pants, I can act as if I were totally calm. When they said all that stuff about foreign lands, I remembered that I'm half Italian, and of course,

we go to music class, and artists are always a little odd, you know..."

"And if we have to prove it, we've got the flute," Martin said, nodding. "Kenda can do some tricks with his skateboard, and we can sing from the stuff we learned last spring."

"But nothing by Bartók! That would totally shock them," Kenda added. "If only we knew which period of history we are in! Then we could pick some big hit from that era!"

"But we do know!" Betti said, putting her hand to her forehead with a gesture of sudden amazement and almost knocking the veil from her face. "That big guy said there were lots of thespians from Ausonia."

"Does anyone want to tell me what thespians are, and where this Ausonia place is?" Kende grumbled. He hated slipping into the role of the stupid kid again. "My mom didn't read to me much when I was little, you know, and..."

"We know, but every team needs a least one person with more muscles than brains," Betti said, nodding. "Thespians are just actors and performers, and Ausonia is the old name for Italy."

"Alright," Kende said, raising one eyebrow, "and when were the streets of Buda thronging with actors from Italy?"

"When the queen herself was Italian!"

"Queen Beatrice," Martin said, nodding.

"Then we're in the era of King Matthias!" Kende said, putting it all together. "So, then who was it who detained us? Pál Kinizsi, the toughest guy in all of Hungarian history! This is fantastic!"

He paused for a moment.

"And what do you think," he said, pulling a one-thousand-forint bill from his pocket. "Can I use this to get a sandwich anywhere around here?"



**LIFE** *in the*  
**GALEIDOSCOPE**  
*of a* **MOSAIC**  
**FAMILY**

*We Only Wanted What Was Best For You* is a dramatically concise text about an adolescent girl's search for identity with grippingly engaging scenes which are at times painfully poignant. Yet it is not a tale that will be of interest to girls alone. Rather, it is a drama of women's fates orchestrated for the period of adolescence. The dramatic effect is a tension between the narrator, who remains anonymous for

# *We Only Wanted What Was Best For You*

a long time and whose understanding of the world around her is shaped in part by her age, and the knowledge which accumulates in the reader. Lilla, the narrator, is in the process of discovering the enormity of the often dizzying gaps in a mosaic family, the dangers of verbal abuse, the passions and promptings that lie at the heart of the emotional games between parent and child, and the difference between femininity and "sluttiness." What is coercion and what is free choice? What happens when we don't choose our clothing, but rather are forced to wear the garb that please others?

We meet a schoolgirl growing up in humble circumstances, without a father and having to suffer critical remarks from her new foster father. As a child struggling to adjust to her new home, she tries on the mannerisms of her female classmates, her teachers, and her family members as if she were trying on spring coats. She realizes that she will suffer feelings of both pain and disgust if she is not true to herself. The novel's greatest feat is its subtle and tense exploration of taboo subjects, such as sexual attraction between a foster father and his foster daughter, what it is like to grow up with a cold, unreceptive mother and an imperfect body, and how adults manipulate one another and how sexual predators manipulate teens.

The text is courageous yet delicate and wise, and it maintains an authentic adolescent perspective. This brilliantly executed sense of proportion is captured in Juli Jásdi's slightly coy and restrained illustrations.

The text uses strong images to move towards a negative climax, a heartbreaking life event. Lilla confronts the fact that she is misunderstood at home, but she fails to realize that she is also being bullied at school. And yet the events suggest that it may well be her classmate, the aggressor, who is the biggest victim.

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Juli Jásdi

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The upholstery of my bed is made of a prickly material. When I sit on it in shorts, the fabric leaves marks on my thighs. Blue, gray, and red boucle. I like that word. The material not so much. I think it's woven from leftover yarn, and that's how it ended up with this chaotic pattern. If I put a pillow with some fancy embroidery over it, the whole thing

looks like a mess. It's got a big space under it for sheets, and it holds lots of stuff, not just sheets. As I lift it up, a spring takes over and pulls the mattress up. When I was younger, it was strong enough to lift me up too. My goodness, this furniture is a hundred years old! If not a hundred, then thirty at least. I hope whoever used it before didn't pee in his sleep!

Zsolti says the spring in it is so strong that we should never throw it out, cause they don't make furniture of this quality anymore. He's always using words like quality and stuff.

You need a dictionary to get that guy, but seriously. But whatever. I figured out that it must be some kind of spring myself, because he was pushing the mattress up and down so you could see how springy it was. I guess it must have been Trish's when she was a kid. I always just called her aunt Tush to myself, because she was always wearing skirts that were so short that at least half her tush was hanging out. When she walks down the street, everyone stares at her, which she takes as clear proof that she has kept her figure perfectly intact well into her forties. My mom said that, not me. I just curtsied like you're supposed to when we met for the first time. She protested as if she had never seen anyone do anything like that before.

"Little Marianne, I'm your aunt now! No need for these ceremonies," she said, and then she gave me a pat on the head.

Auntie. Aunt. My aunt. I never had an aunt before. We had a neighbor once who we called auntie, but only because we didn't know her first name. On her door it said Mrs. Paul Evans. We knew that Mr. Paul Evans had died a long time ago, and we didn't want to call her Mrs. Paul Evans, so one day someone called her auntie Evans, and it just stuck. We never did learn her first name.

As auntie Trish touched me, her long, shiny, fake fingernails slide gently over my skin. They don't scratch me. They just tickle a little. Every time she moves, a little cloud of powdery fragrances dances around her. Mom never uses that kind of stuff. She'd probably have a stroke if she knew that I actually kind of like auntie Trish's whole act. But no need to fear! I'm not going to grow up to be like her, but probably just because I lack the courage.

The other day, she forgot her lipstick in the bathroom, the lipstick that she used to touch up her make-up after Sunday lunch. It smelled so good! I started putting it on, and then I realized it would be a good idea to get a picture of myself, so I wiped it off, ran to the bedroom to get my phone, and then I ran back, put some more on, and took a few shots. I'm going to buy some lipstick too. Nothing quite so flashy, but something. I'll tell mom the girls gave it to me.

Zsolti is always going on and on about how thirteen-year-old girls shouldn't be so "slutty," and he always says the word slowly, with disgust.

And it is pretty disgusting the way he hisses as he starts to say the word and then clicks his tongue when he hits the "t."

And he totally freaked out about the bag with the glitter, though even fourth-grade girls have them. He freaks out about anything that costs anything. And mom just nods at everything he says. She could at least admit to me that he's talking nonsense, but she doesn't, not even when it's just the two of us. She just keeps pretending to agree with him. Though of course she always tries to show me that she loves me. She's always hugging me, and she smiles at me for no reason, like when you smile at people you don't even know because you want to seem nice. I caught myself doing that too. In sixth grade, when there were a bunch of new kids in our class, I smiled at them like that.

I heard one of the girls whose name I didn't even know at the time say something like, "What's she smiling about all the time? Does she think we're at the amusement park or something?" Actually, she said, "she think we at the amusement park?" I could never come up with a cool line like that. True, Kinga looks pretty much like a grownup. She's got big, round boobs, and she covers them up about as much as auntie Trish covers up her tush. I can't even get that right. I don't dare wear clothes that would let you see I've got anything to show. Sometimes I look at mine in the evening, though, but only if I know mom's not going to come in. I have a mirror with a handle. There was a drawer in my closet for knickknacks. I had to empty it out to make room for my underwear and stuff, and I found it in there. I use it to check myself out all over. I look at my teeth, but the mirror is too big for me to get a good view of the ones at the back. I check myself out naked on the bed. If I turn to the side, I look like a cello. I looked at myself from underneath too. I haven't been to the gynecologist yet, and I hope I never have to go. I don't even know if I could have children. Don't even know if I want any. Trish doesn't have any kids, and she seems fine. (To me.) And Zsolti doesn't either.

It's strange that neither of the two siblings has kids. True, I don't think it was all that right and proper the way mom ended up with a kid. Don't think she really wanted me, but she won't admit it. When we moved, she wanted to throw away the old phones, but I got them out of the trash just in case there were some old pictures on them. I've got them under the bed, among the sheets. You can't even turn them on anymore, but maybe someday some tech person could help me bring them back to life...



## THE GIBBERISHBURGLARS



**BÁLINT HARCOS** was born in 1976 in Budapest. He majored in Hungarian at ELTE University between 1994 and 2000. He has been publishing poems, prose, and essays since 1997. In addition to poetry stories and storybooks, he has also written screenplays and opera librettos.

**LILLA TURI** was born in Debrecen in 1990. She completed a degree as an architect and will finish her MA at the Cambridge School of Art in 2021, where she majored in Children's Book Illustration. In 2019, she was awarded the Emerging Illustrator of the Year Award (at the Budapest Illustration Festival), and in 2020, she will receive the Illustrator of the Year Award (Beautiful Hungarian Book). Her work has been selected for several Hungarian and foreign competitions (WIA, BIB, Cotonfioc). She is currently working on her first book as an author.



## TALES FROM THE EMPYREAN EMPORIUM



**ESZTER SINKÓ-BARABÁSI** was born in 1981 in Sălard, Romania. She graduated from Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj with a degree in pedagogy and English and then also completed a degree at the Faculty of Philosophy. She is currently a teacher at the Waldorf School in Sfântu Gheorghe, a pedagogue, and a story writer.

**KARDA ZENKŐ** was born in 1979 in Sfântu Gheorghe. She graduated with a degree in design from the University of Fine Arts and Design in Timișoara. She began illustrating children's literature books in 2017, and she uses an array of techniques.



## PRINCESS SALVIA AND THE PRINCE THOUGHT AN OLD MAN



**JUDIT ÁGNES KISS** was born in 1973 in Budapest. She majored in Hungarian at ELTE University and also studied oboe at the Faculty of Music of the University of Pécs and drama at the University of Theatre and Film Arts. She writes plays for adults and children and works as a drama teacher. She has won numerous awards for her writing.

**HAJNALKA SZIMONIDESZ** was born in Budapest in 1968. After completing a degree in social pedagogy, she also studied visual culture and drawing at the ELTE Savaria University Center. Alongside her work as a painter, she has been doing illustrations for children's literature since 2007.



## NOTHING TO SEE HERE!



**ANDRÁS DÁNIEL** was born in 1966. He lives in Budapest. He is a self-taught fine artist, graphic designer, and writer. He is a many-sided artist who has made illustrations for an array of contexts, including title pages of magazines and a variety of other uses, and many books are tied to his name. He won The Beautiful Hungarian Book Award in 2018, HUBBY - Book of the Year prize illustrator category in 2016, HUBBY - Book of the Year prize innovation category in 2015 and The Beautiful Hungarian Book Award 2013. He was also nominated for the 2022 Hans Christian Andersen prize.

## TILI AND TILÓ



**ROLAND ACSAI** was born in 1975 in Cegléd. He majored in Hungarian at ELTE University. He is a writer, playwright, poet, and translator. He writes for both adults and children, and he has won several literary prizes.

**MARIA MOLDOVAN** was born in Romania and moved to Canada in 2013. After four years of painting, she chose to study ceramic art at the University of Arts and Design in Cluj. As she has a passion for three-dimensional art but is also unwilling to abandon color, this seemed to be the perfect way to work with sculpture and painting at the same time. She has been pursuing both painting and ceramic art ever since.



## RIBIZLI AT THE END OF THE WORLD, THE PIRATE PRINCESS



**DR. CSENGE VIRÁG ZALKA**, international storyteller and writer, was born in 1986 in Győr, Hungary and currently lives in Budapest. She mainly tells folk tales and traditional stories in Hungarian, English, and Spanish. She completed a master's degree in storytelling and a PhD in cultural studies in the US. She won the Children's Book of the Year Award for her book *Ribizli at the End of the World*.

**LÁSZLÓ HERBSZT** was born in 1971. He completed his studies in graphic design at the Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design. He designs logos, labels, catalogues, and book covers, and he serves as theater director for several graphic design studios and has done illustrations for numerous books. He is an instructor at the KREA Design School and serves as the main organizer of the Budapest Illustration Festival. He won The Golden Thumbtack Award in 2004 and 2011 and the HUBBY - Illustrator of the Year prize in 2018.



## THE NIGHT GARDEN



**ERZSI KERTÉSZ** was born in 1975 in Mezőkövesd, Hungary. She completed a degree in psychology at ELTE University. After graduation, she worked as a school psychologist before pursuing a career in human resources consulting, training, leadership training, and organizational development. She has been working as a psychologist in several large companies. She has also been engaged in children's literature since 2012, and she won the HUBBY prize in 2016.

**RÉKA ZSOLDOS** was born in 2005. She is currently a student at the Secondary School and College of Fine and Applied Arts. *The Night Garden* is her first illustrated children's book.



## GRANDMA TRULY AND THE HURRIED CITY



**RÓBERT CSABA SZABÓ** was born in Boghis, Romania in 1981. He graduated from Babes-Bolyai University in 2003, where he studied Hungarian literature and ethnology. He served as a member of the editorial staff of several literary journals between 2004 and 2014. He was awarded the prestigious Miklós Mészöly award in 2017.

**ANNABELLA OROSZ** was born in Gheorgheni, Romania. She pursued studies in Cluj-Napoca, Romania and Katowice, Poland. After completing her master's degree, she worked for advertising companies in Bucharest, Moscow, and London. She has done illustrations for numerous books.



## YOU TOO CAN BE A CHAMPION!



**JUDIT POLGÁR** was born in 1976 in Budapest. From the age of twelve until the age of 26, she led the adult women's world rankings in chess, and by the age of fifteen she was already an international grandmaster. She is the organizer of the International World Chess Festival. She has developed a skills education program for pre-school and school-age children. She has been awarded the Cassica, European Chess Legend, and the Prima Primiissima prizes. Anya Taylor-Joy, the actress who plays the protagonist in the popular Netflix series *The Queen's Gambit*, has modeled the character on her.

**ORSOLYA VARSÁNYI** was born in 1996 in Budapest. In addition to her interest in landscape architecture, she also works in graphic design, illustration, and web design.



# AUTHORS, ILLUSTRATORS

## THE QUEEN'S VIOLA



**ÁGNES MÉSZÖLY** was born in Budapest in 1971. She has been working as a developmental teacher and as a teacher of physical education, and she has been writing for almost twenty years, mainly works for children and young adults. Her books have been published by the major contemporary Hungarian children's literature publishers, including Cerkabella, Móra, and Tilos az Á. In 2017, she was awarded a HUBBY Prize.

## WE ONLY WANTED WHAT WAS BEST FOR YOU



**ILDIKÓ LIPTÁK** was born in 1972 in Gödöllő. She is a theater education specialist, teacher, and drama teacher. Her two novels for young adults were published by Csimota Publishing House. She also publishes short stories for children and adults in literary periodicals.

**JULI JÁSDI** is a Budapest-based illustrator and graphic designer. She graduated from the Hungarian University of Fine Arts in 2019. Her focus is on digital illustration, though she also has a keen interest in drawing by hand. She enjoys experimenting with different ways of storytelling. In 2019, her diploma project, which was a picture book about alcoholism, won first prize at the Budapest Illustration Festival. She has since worked with several Hungarian children's book publishers.



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“

*More mysterious  
than ominous.  
More alluring  
than alarming.*

”

ERZSI KERTÉSZ