

INESE ZANDERE

LATVIA



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Illustration by Reinis Pētersons

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION ON THE CANDIDATE



Photo by Zane Bitere, LETA

INESE ZANDERE

Born in Dobeļe, Latvia, on 15 September 1958.
 Address: Baldones 4-4, Riga LV-1007 Latvia
 Phone: +371 29131706
 E-mail: zandere@lielsmazz.lv

EDUCATION

1976—1981 University of Latvia, Department of Philosophy. Mg. phil.

WORK EXPERIENCE

1981—1987 Editor at the Avots Publishing House
 1987—1990 Editor at the Pionieris (later — LaBA) Newspaper for children
 1990—1993 Editor at the Diena Newspaper
 1993—2011 Editor and Editor-in-Chief at the Rīgas Laiks Magazine
 From 2004 to date Editor-in-Chief of the Liels un Mazs publishing house
 From January 2024 to date Editor at the Lasis Magazine for children

Has worked as a compiler, editor and scriptwriter for the Dienas Grāmata, Nepuņš, Mansards publishing houses, AtomArt, SKUBA Films studios, etc. Taught the creative writing classes organized by the Rīgas Laiks Magazine (2012). Has compiled the 'Garā pupa' (*Jack and the Beanstalk*) annual children's poetry collection (2014-2021).

WRITER'S WORK

Has published 7 collections of poems for grownups, over 40 books of poems and prose for children, documentary prose, articles, interviews and essays in a number of collections. Has written the scripts for the 'The Shammies' animation series (director Edmunds Jansons, *AtomArt Studio*), librettos for several musical-dramatic works, created stage versions of literary works and lyrics for song cycles.

PUBLIC ORGANIZATION MEMBERSHIP

Inese Zandere is a member of a number of public organizations: the Latvian Writers' Union; the Latvian PEN; IBBY Latvia; AKKA/LAA (Latvian Authors' Society), Board member of the Latvian National Library Foundation etc. Formerly — a member of the Board of IBBY Latvia; Board of the Latvian Authors' Society; Board of the Latvian Writers' Union; Board and Scholarship Board of the Latvian Cultural Foundation; Artistic Board of the Latvian XXIV Song Festival and XIV Dance Festival; Consulting Board for Publishing at the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia; Extraordinary Advisor to the Minister of Culture for literature. From 2011 to 2012 was a member of the National Board for Culture.



Inese Zandere and colleagues at the exhibition of illustrations by children's book publisher *Liels un Mazs* at *Istaba* gallery, Riga (2022).
 Photo from the *Liels un Mazs* archive

STATEMENT ON THE CANDIDATE'S CONTRIBUTION TO LITERATURE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

SHAPING THE SOUL OF LATVIAN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Inese Zandere (b. 1958) is a Latvian poet, writer, and editor with extensive experience in various fields. One of her most significant achievements is her profound contribution to Latvian children's literature. Her work has been recognized with numerous accolades, including the Annual Latvian Literature Award for Best Children's Book of the Year (2002, 2013) and the International Jānis Baltvilks Prize (2007, 2024), the most prestigious honor in Latvian children's literature, and Award and Certificate of Recognition from the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia for outstanding contribution to Latvian literature, development of children's literature and illustration (2018, 2007). Additionally, she was included in the IBBY Honour List in 2008 for her book *Brother and Sister*.

Zandere is a co-founder and the chief editor of the publishing house *Liels un Mazs*, established in Riga 20 years ago. This publishing house has played a crucial role in shaping contemporary Latvian children's literature and has received multiple awards, including the Best Children's Book Publishing House in Europe Prize at the Bologna Children's Book Fair (2022), the Excellence Award from the Latvian Ministry of Culture (2022), and the Cabinet of Ministers Award of the Republic of Latvia (2024). It is also important to highlight that Inese Zandere had been an active board member of IBBY Latvia for several years, playing a key role in elevating the Jānis Baltvilks Prize to a new level of prestige. She is also a member of the Writers' Union of Latvia, PEN Latvia, and IBBY Latvia.

Beyond creating literature for children, Zandere is an accomplished poet, essayist, and editor. She was a long-time contributor to the Latvian intellectual and philosophical magazine *Rīgas Laiks* (*Riga Times*, 1993–2011). She is unafraid to tackle challenging and profound themes in children's literature. For example, her book series *The Boy and His Dog: The Story of an Untold Secret* (2017, 2021) explores the Holocaust through the eyes of the son of Žanis Lipke, the man who saved more than 50 Jews during World War II. Zandere firmly believes that children are intelligent, more so than often assumed, and that there is no need to simplify or diminish stories for them. She also actively brings new voices into children's literature. From 2014 to 2021, she curated the annual children's poetry collection *Garā pupa* (*Jack and the Beanstalk*), introducing many authors — who had previously not written for young readers — to the world of children's poetry.

Zandere is not an author who just remains behind her writing desk — she actively engages with children through discussions, performances, and even music. The band *BikiBand*, originating from the *BikiBooks* poetry book series published by *Liels un Mazs*, composes songs using lyrics by Latvian children's authors. Zandere frequently performs on stage with them, bringing her poetry to life through music. Her activities

reinforce the idea that authors are not distant figures but are accessible, vibrant, and engaged in their readers' lives. Furthermore, Zandere has written poems for song cycles, theater plays, librettos, and animation scripts, ensuring that her work reaches children through various mediums, not just books.

If Inese Zandere's contributions were removed from the landscape of Latvian children's literature, the field would be significantly diminished. With more than 40 works for children to her name, she has left an indelible mark, filling countless bookshelves and touching many hearts throughout the generations.

It has been several decades since her first children's book was published, and we eagerly anticipate what is yet to come. Latvia takes great pride in having Inese Zandere among its most brilliant literary minds. I firmly believe that the Hans Christian Andersen Award would be a well-deserved recognition of her remarkable contributions, bringing international attention to an author whose work is meaningful, insightful, and deeply heartfelt.

Sincerely,
Arno Jundze
President of the Writers' Union of Latvia



Opening of the *Cat on Vacation* with illustrator Aleksejs Naumovs and pianist Uģis Krišjānis.
Photo by Ingrida Punka

AWARDS AND DISTINCTIONS

STATE AWARDS

- 2018 Certificate of Recognition from the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia for outstanding contribution to Latvian literature, development of children’s literature and illustration in Latvia
- 2008 The Three Star Order (the highest state award of the Republic of Latvia)
- 2007 Award of the Ministry of Culture for contribution to the development of children’s literature.

AWARDS FOR WORKS OF LITERATURE

- 2024 Nominee for Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award
(Award announcement in April 2025)
- 2024 The International Jānis Baltvilks Prize in Children’s Literature
- 2021 The Annual Latvian Literature Award
- 2015 Imants Ziedonis Memorial Prize ‘Life In Literature’
- 2013 The Annual Latvian Literature Prize for children’s literature
- 2012 The Copyright Infinity Award
- 2011 Nominated for the Baltic Assembly Prize for literary works for children
- 2010 The Latvian Children’s Jury Award
- 2009 Nomination for the Diena Newspaper Annual Culture Award
The Latvian Children’s Jury Award
- 2008 IBBY Honour List
- 2008 The Latvian Children’s Jury Award
- 2007 The International Jānis Baltvilks Prize in Children’s Literature
The Latvian Children’s Jury Award
- 2003 Pastariņš Award for children’s literature
The Copyright Infinity Award
- 2002 A prize at the “Preses nama grāmata” original literature competition
The Annual Latvian Literature Prize for children’s literature
- 2000 The Copyright Infinity Award



Editor-in-Chief Inese Zandere and the publishing house *Liels un mazs* receive Cabinet of Ministers Award of the Republic of Latvia (2024). Photo by Zane Bitere, LETA



Inese Zandere after receiving the International Jānis Baltvilks Prize in Children’s Literature among colleagues and authors of publishing house *Liels un mazs* (2024). Photo by Evija Trifanova, LETA

COMPLETE LIST OF BOOKS AND OTHER WORKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

BOOKS

1. **Annas pasakas** (Anna's Fairy Tales) / text by Inese Zandere; drawings by Andra Štāla. Rīga : Karogs, 1994.
2. **Jaunajās mājās : veltīts kaķa Mr. Līzes piemiņai** (The New Home : In Memory of Mr. Lize the Cat) / Inese Zandere ; [illustrations by Boriss Mitins]. Rīga : Aka Print, 2000.
3. **Iekšīņa un ārīņa : dzejoļi** (Inside and Outside : Poems) / Inese Zandere; [illustrations by Ūna Laukmane]. Rīga : Preses nams, 2002.
4. **Lidojošie burti : dzejoļi** (Flying Letters: Poems) / Inese Zandere ; [illustrations by Ūna Laukmane]. Rīga : Zvaigzne ABC, 2003. Series 'Skolas bibliotēka. Sprīdi pa sprīdim'
5. **Iekšīņa un ārīņa : dzejoļi** (Inside and Outside : Poems) / Inese Zandere ; [illustrations by Ūna Laukmane]. New enlarged edition. Rīga : Liels un mazs, 2004, 2008.
6. **Limonāde** (Lemonade : Poems) / Inese Zandere ; [illustrations by Edmunds Jansons]. Rīga : Liels un mazs, 2005.
7. **Ceļojums ar lielo Šarloti** (Travels with Big Charlotte) / Inese Zandere ; [illustrations by Ūna Laukmane]. Rīga : Liels un mazs, 2006.
8. **Pingus Posta piedzīvojumi** (Adventures of Pingus Posts) / Inese Zandere; [illustrations by Kristians Šics]. Rīga : Liels un mazs, 2006.
9. **Māsa un brālis** (Sister and Brother) / Inese Zandere ; [illustrations by Juris Petraškevičs]. Rīga : Liels un mazs, 2006.
10. **Ja tu esi sivēns : 25 miklupanti** (If You Happen to Be a Little Pig : 25 Riddle Rhymes) / Inese Zandere; [illustrations by Edmunds Jansons]. Rīga : Liels un mazs, 2006
11. **Ko teica Gaiļa kungs?** (What Mr Rooster Said) / Inese Zandere ; [illustrations by Ilze Vītolīņa]. Rīga : Liels un mazs, 2007.
12. **Brīnumbēbiša gads : dzejoļi mūsu ģimenei** (Wonderbaby's Year : Poems for Our Family) / Inese Zandere ; [illustrations by Edmunds Jansons]. Rīga : Liels un mazs, 2008.
13. **Dzejoļi mātai un brālim** (Poems for Sister and Brother) / Inese Zandere ; [illustrations by Juris Petraškevičs]. Rīga : Liels un mazs, 2008. + 1 DVD.
14. **Vārdurati** (Word-Cart) / Inese Zandere ; [illustrations by Dina Ābele]. Rīga : Jumava, 2008.
15. **Karalis ezis** (King Hedgehog) / Inese Zandere ; [illustrations by Laima Eglīte]. Rīga : Liels un mazs, 2009.
16. **Latviešu zvēri** (Latvian Animals) / text by Inese Zandere, the visual concept by Mārtiņš Grauds; [photos by Kristaps Kalns]. Rīga : Liels un mazs, 2009.
17. **Princešu piedzīvojumi** (Adventures of Two Princesses) / Inese Zandere ; [illustrations by Irēna Lūse]. Rīga : Liels un mazs, 2010.
18. **Dieguburti** (Threadletters) / Inese Zandere ; [illustrations by Ūna Laukmane]. Rīga : Liels un mazs, 2011.
19. **Kā Lupatiņi mainījās** (How the Shammies Swapped) / Inese Zandere ; [illustrations by Reinis Pētersons]. Rīga : Liels un mazs : Atom Art, 2011.
20. **Līze Analīze un citi slimnīcas skaitāmpanti** (All Better!) / Inese Zandere ; [illustrations by Reinis Pētersons]. Rīga : Liels un mazs, 2012.
21. **Pūces svinības** (Owl's Celebration) / Inese Zandere ; [illustrations by Ieva Jurjāne]. Rīga : Liels un mazs, 2012.
22. **Lelles raduraksti** (The Doll's Family Tree) / Inese Zandere ; [illustrations by Līga Kichen] ; [Bicki-Buck Books : a series of selected 100 poems for children]. Rīga : Liels un mazs, 2012.
23. **Sapnis par Ziemassvētkiem : dzejoļi** (A Dream of Christmas : Poems) / Inese Zandere ; [illustrations by Irēna Lūse]. Rīga : Liels un mazs, 2012. + 1 CD.
24. **Zirgs** (Horse) / Inese Zandere ; [illustrations by Reinis Pētersons] ; [Bicki-Buck Books : a series of selected 100 poems for children]. Rīga : liels un mazs, 2013.
25. **Pūķa ceļojums** (The Dragon's Journey) / Inese Zandere ; [illustrations by Gundega Muzikante]. Rīga : Rīgas Doma pārvalde, 2013.
26. **Pasaciņa asaciņa par sēņošanu blēņošanu** (A Fairy Tale about Mushroom Hunting) / Inese Zandere ; [illustrations by Edmunds Jansons] ; [Bicki-Buck Books : a series of selected 100 poems for children]. Rīga : Liels un mazs, 2014.
27. **No zvaigznītes** (From a Little Star) / Inese Zandere ; [illustrations by Gita Ruģēna] ; [Bicki-Buck Books : a series of selected 100 poems for children]. Rīga : Liels un mazs, 2014.;
28. **Trīs draugi vienas upes krastā** (One House for All) / Inese Zandere ; [illustrations by Juris Petraškevičs]. Rīga : Liels un mazs, 2014.
29. **Daiļās krustmātes** (The Charming Aunties) / Inese Zandere ; illustrations by Andrejs Lavrinovičs ; [Bicki-Buck Books : a series of selected 100 poems for children]. Rīga: Liels un mazs, 2015.
30. **Kaķis brīvdienās : un citas pasakas** (Cat on Vacation : And Other Fairy Tales) / Inese Zandere ; [illustrations by Aleksejs Naumovs]. Rīga : Liels un mazs, 2015.
31. **Lupatiņu rīts** (The Shammies' Morning) / Inese Zandere ; [illustrations by Reinis Pētersons]. Rīga : Liels un mazs : Atom Art, 2015.
32. **Puika ar suni. Pirmā burtnīca. Bailes** (A Boy and His Dog. Part One. The Fear) / Inese Zandere ; [illustrations by Reinis Pētersons]. Rīga : Liels un mazs, 2017.
33. **Zirgā** (Riding High) / Inese Zandere ; [illustrations by Anna Vaivare]. Rīga : Liels un mazs, 2017.
34. **Bērns, kas neiekrita** (Staying Safe) / Inese Zandere ; illustrations by Reinis Pētersons]. Rīga : Liels un mazs, 2019
35. **Puika ar suni. Otrā burtnīca. Bunkurs** (A Boy and His Dog. Part Two. The Bunker) / Inese Zandere; [illustrations by Reinis Pētersons]. Rīga : Liels un mazs, 2021.
36. **Divas Almas** (Two Almas) / Inese Zandere ; [illustrations by Anete Bajāre-Babčuka]. Rīga : Liels un mazs, 2021.
37. **Kamoliņš un kastīte** (Ball in A Box) Inese Zandere ; [illustrations by Ernests Kļaviņš]. Rīga : Liels un mazs, 2022.
38. **Izdomā sev auto** (Imagine Your Vehicle) / Inese Zandere ; [illustrations by Aleksejs Naumovs]. Rīga : Liels un mazs, 2023.
39. **Neredzami plāksterīši** (Invisible Plasters) /Inese Zandere ; [illustrations by Krista Bitmete]. Rīga : Liels un mazs, 2023.
40. **Putni mūs redz** (Birds Watch Us Too) / Inese Zandere ; [illustrations by Aleksandra Runde]. Rīga : Liels un mazs, 2023.
41. **Ceļotājs čemodāns** (The Traveller Trunk)/ Inese Zandere ; [illustrations by Anete Melece]. Rīga : Liels un mazs, 2024.



AUDIOBOOKS FOR CHILDREN

1. **Sasauc smiekļus izklīdušus** (Summon Scattered Laughter) / Inese Zandere; music by Renārs Kaupers. Riga : Prāta Vētras Skaņu Ierakstu Kompānija, 2014. CD: digital, stereo + text booklet.
2. **Pingus Posta piedzīvojumi** (Adventures of Pingus Posts) [audio recording] : audio book for children / Inese Zandere. Riga : Liels un mazs, 2007. 1 CD: digital, stereo.
3. **Iekšīna un ārīna** (Inside and Outside) [recording] / Inese Zandere ; music by Juris Kulakovs, Līga Celma, Arnis Miltiņš, Ingus Baušķenieks. Riga : Upe tt, 2005. 1 CD, digital, stereo + text booklet.



MUSICAL-DRAMATIC WORKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

1. **Sūnu ciema zēni** (The Boys of Moss Village), a musical (based on the story by Andrejs Upītis); a LTV video Im (director Harijs Beķeris, 1995); a theatre production at Dailes Theatre (director Ģirts Nagainis, 1999);
2. **Kaķīša dzirnavas** (The Cat's Mill), a play (based on fairy tales by Kārlis Skalbe; songs by composer Valdis Zilveris to original lyrics by Inese Zandere; director Ivars Lūsis; premiere at the Liepāja Theatre in 2003);
3. **Rīgas rotaļas** (Riga Plays), song cycle (composer Jānis Lūsēns), 2004;
4. **Neatbildēts zvans** (Missed Call), song cycle for Latvian School Youth Song and Dance Festival (composer Jānis Lūsēns), 2005 ;
5. **Pieci bērnu dzejoļi** (Five Children's Poems), song cycle for vocal group Cosmos (composer Arturs Maskats), 2005 ;
6. **Princese ar trim galvām** (The Three-Headed Princess), a musical radio play (based on fairy tales by Karel Čapek; songs by composer Līga Celma-Kursiete to original lyrics by Inese Zandere; director Irēna Cērmāne; a Latvian Radio production, 2006);
7. **A translation in verse from English: libretto by Tim Rice for Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical 'Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat'** (the Latvian production 'Jāzeps un raibais brīnumspāņu mētelis' at Dailes Theatre, 2008).
8. **Princešu dziesmas** (Songs for Princesses), song cycle for Latvian School Youth Song and Dance Festival (composer Arturs Maskats), 2010 ;
9. **Dziesmiņas ar desiņām** (Songs with Sausages), (song cycle for children; composer Andris Sējāns), 2011.
10. **Sniega karaliene** (Snow Queen), a musical (based on the fairy tale by Hans Christian Andersen; composer Jānis Lūsēns; director Inese Mičule; the ARS NOVA musical theatre, 2011);
11. **Latvijas upju dziesmas** (Songs of Latvian Rivers), song cycle for Latvian School Youth Song and Dance Festival; composers Arturs Maskats, Līga Celma-Kursiete, Māris Lasmanis, Ēriks Ešenvālds, Valts Pūce, Ilze Arne, Uģis Prauliņš, Jānis Lūsēns.
12. **Sapnis par Ziemassvētkiem** (A Dream of Christmas), song cycle (composer Andrejs Laukmanis), 2012 ;

13. **Kartupeļu opera** (The Potato Opera), opera for children (composers Lolita Ritmane, Evija Skuķe, Rihards Dubra, Līga Celma-Kursiete, Mārtiņš Brauns, Andris Sējāns; director Margo Zālīte; featuring the Tiara Girls' Choir; premiere at the Latvian National Opera in 2014).



ANIMATION

1. **Nikno lapsēnu maršs** (The March of the Angry Fox Cubs) [video] (director Roze Stiebra, based on a poem by Inese Zandere, art director Dzintra Aulmane, composer Juris Kulakovs. Riga : Dauka Studio, 1995. (2 min) : sound, colour. DVD : Dauka Collections 2006;
2. **Miega vilcieniņš** (The Sleep Train) [video] (director Roze Stiebra, based on fairy tale by Inese Zandere, art director Juris Petraškevičs, composer Ingus Baušķenieks,. Riga : Dauka Studio, 1996. (2 min) : sound, colour. DVD : Dauka Collections 2006;
3. **Māsa un brālis** (Sister and Brother) (director Roze Stiebra, based on fairy tale by Inese Zandere, Juris Petraškevičs, composer Gunārs Kalniņš,) [video] Riga : Dauka Studio : Liels un mazs, 2008. 1 DVD (7 min) : sound, colour;
4. **Kā Lupatiņi mazgājās** (How the Shammies Bathed) [video] : animation / director Edmunds Jansons ; screenplay by Inese Zandere ; art director Reinis Pētersons ; composer Jēkabs Nīmanis. Riga : Atom Art, 2011. 1 DVD (7 min) : sound, colour.
5. **Lupatiņi** (The Shammies) [video] : animation series / director Edmunds Jansons ; screenplays by Inese Zandere ; concept by Inese Zandere, Ūna Laukmane, art director Reinis Pētersons. Riga : Atom Art ; liels un mazs, 2015. 1 DVD (40 min) : sound, colour + text booklet. Animation shorts: 'How the Shammies Bathed' (2010); 'How the Shammies Got Married' (2014); 'How the Shammies played Hide-and-Seek' (2015); 'How the Shammies Built a House' (2015); 'How the Shammies Got Well' (2015); 'How the Shammies Tidied Up' (2015). Web episodes: 'How the Shammies Teeter-Tottered' (2012); 'How the Shammies Guessed' (2013).



PRODUCTIONS BASED ON POEMS AND PROSE BY INESE ZANDERE

- 1. **Iekšīņa un ārīņa** (Inside and Outside) (directed by Ģirts Ēcis, the JRT Theatre, 2003).
- 2. **Ja tu esi sivēns** (If You Happen to Be a Little Pig) (directed by Varis Piņķis, the JRT Theatre, 2007).
- 3. **Ineses tantes miklāinie panti** (Auntie Inese's Puzzling Rhymes) (directed by Varis Brasla, Valmiera Drama Theatre, 2007).
- 4. **Pūķa ceļojums** (The Dragon's Journey) (directed by Aurēlija Anužīte and Valdis Lūriņš, the Riga Dome, 2011, 2012).
- 5. **Līze Analīze** (All Better!) – directed by Juris Ločmelis, premiere at Liepāja Youth Theatre Studio in 2014.
- 6. **Sasauc smiekļus izklīdušus** (Gather the Scattered Laughs) (directed by Inese Mičule, composer Renārs Kaupers, premiere at Valmiera Drama Theatre in 2019.
- 7. **Puika ar suni** (The Boy and His Dog) – directed by Jānis Znotiņš, premiere at Istabas Theatre in 2020.
- 8. **Pasaka par mūzikas instrumentiem** (A Tale of Musical Instruments) (composed by Andris Vecumnieks, directed by Una Rozenbauma), produced by the Latvian National Symphony Orchestra in 2021.
- 9. **Pasveicini bailes**. Minimūzikls ar Ineses Zanderes dzeju no krājuma “Bērns, kas neiekrita” (Say Hello to Fear: A Mini-Musical with Poetry by Inese Zandere from the Collection Staying Safe) (composed by Jānis Ķirsis, produced by Latvian Radio in 2022.
- 10. **Limonāde** (Lemonade) (directed by Varis Piņķis, composer Jēkabs Nimanis, premiere at Willa Theatre in 2023.
- 11. **Concert performance “Ziemassvētki manā ielā”** (Christmas in My Street) (composed by Raimonds Pauls, directed by Toms Harjo), produced by Latvian Radio in 2024.



PUBLICATIONS ABOUT CHILDREN’S LITERATURE

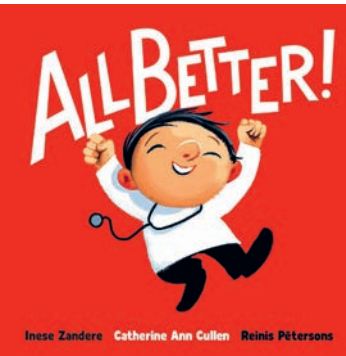
- 1. **Zirgs, kas naktī dzied : bērnu literatūra Latvijā** (A Horse that Sings at Night : Children's Literature in Latvia) / Silvija Tretjakova, Ilze Stikāne, Inese Zandere. Rīga : Latvijas bērnu un jaunatnes literatūras padome, 2006;
- 2. **A Horse that Sings at Night : Children's Literature in Latvia** / Silvija Tretjakova, Ilze Stikāne, Inese Zandere. Rīga : Latvian Literature Centre, 2006.

LIST OF TRANSLATED EDITIONS, AND THEIR LANGUAGES

ENGLISH

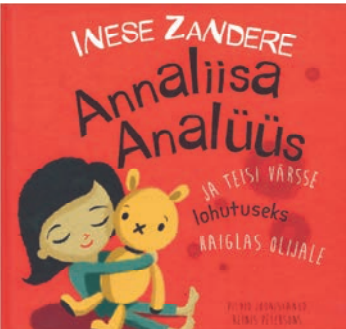


Zandere, Inese,
One House For All / Trīs draugi vienas upes krastā / Inese Zandere ; translated and adapted by Lawrence Schimel ; illustrated by Juris Petraškevičs ; [United Kingdom] : Book Island, 2017.

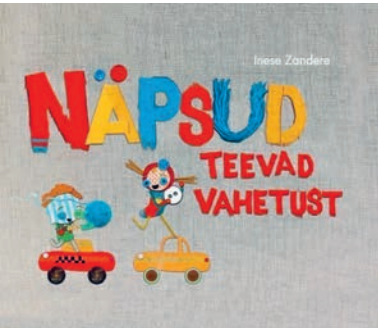


Zandere, Inese,
All Better! / Līze Analīze un citi slimnīcas skaitāmpanti / Inese Zandere ; Translated by: Catherine Ann Cullen, Lauris Veips, illustrated by Reinis Pētersons; [Ireland] : Little Island Book, 2019.

ESTONIAN



Zandere, Inese,
Annaliisa Analüüs ja teisi värssse lohutuseks haiglas olijale / Līze Analīze un citi slimnīcas skaitāmpanti / Inese Zandere ; translated by Leelo Tungal and Guntars Godiņš; [Tallinn] : Tammerraamat, 2016.



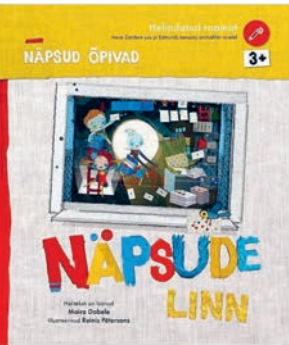
Zandere, Inese,
Nāpsud teevad vahetust / Kā Lupatiņi mainījās / Inese Zandere ; translated by Margus Konnula; [Tallinn] : Lumemana, 2016.



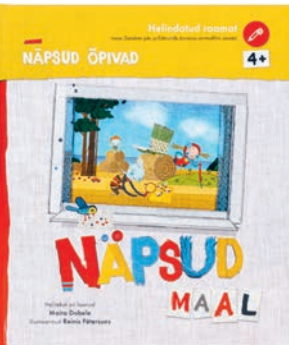
Zandere, Inese,
Tuhatnelja edasi! / Zīrgā /
Inese Zandere ;
illustrated by Anna Vaivare ;
[Tallinn] : Pāike ja Pilv, 2019.



Zandere, Inese,
Nāpsud sōōgilauas / Lupatiņi pie galda /
Inese Zandere ; translated by Contra ;
[Tallinn] : Lumemana OÜ, 2019.



Zandere, Inese,
Nāpsude linn / Lupatiņu pilsēta /
Inese Zandere ; translated by Contra ;
[Tallinn] : Lumemana OÜ, 2019.



Zandere, Inese,
Nāpsud maal / Lupatiņi laukos /
Inese Zandere ; translated by Contra ;
[Tallinn] : Lumemana OÜ, 2020.



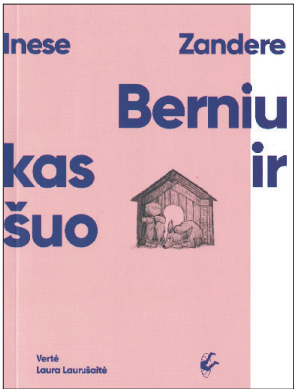
Zandere, Inese,
Nāpsude maja / Lupatiņu māja /
Inese Zandere ;
translated by Contra ;
[Tallinn] : Lumemana OÜ, 2020.

SPANISH



Zandere, Inese,
Anita está malita
/ Līze Analīze un citi slimnīcas skaitāmpanti /
Inese Zandere ; translated by Lawrence Schimel ;
illustrated by Reinis Pētersons ;
[Granada] : Esdrújula Ediciones, 2018.

LITHUANIAN



Zandere, Inese,
Berniukas ir šuo / Puika ar suni /
Inese Zandere ; translated by Laura Laurušaitė ;
illustrated by Reinis Pētersons ;
[Vilnius] : Aukso žuvis, 2020.

ARABIC



Zandere, Inese,
Shammies' Morning / Lupatiņu rīts /
Inese Zandere ; translated by Zeina Idriss ;
illustrated by Reinis Pētersons ;
[Beirut] : Arab Scientific Publishers, Inc., 2017.



Zandere, Inese,
الحصان العازف / Zīrgā /
Inese Zandere ; translated by Zeina Idriss ;
illustrated by Anna Vaivare ;
[United Arab Emirates] :
Thaqafa Publishing and Distribution, 2020.

TO BE PUBLISHED 2025-2027



**Divas Almas /
Two Almas** – in
Portuguese (except
Brazil), published by
Orfeu Negro



**Neredzami plāksteri /
Invisible Plasters** – in
Estonian, published by
Pāike ja Pilv

**Neredzami plāksteri /
Invisible Plasters** – in
Lithuanian, published by
Mr. Pinkmanas

LIST OF THE BOOKS SENT TO THE JURORS

1. **Līze Analīze un citi slimnīcas skaitāmpanti**
(All Better!) / Inese Zandere ;
illustrated by Reinis Pētersons ;
[Rīga] : Liels un mazs, 2012.
2. **Putni mūs redz**
(Birds Watch Us Too) / Inese Zandere ;
illustrated by Aleksandra Runde ;
[Rīga] : Liels un mazs, 2023.
3. **Divas Almas**
(Two Almas) / Inese Zandere ;
illustrated by Anete Bajāre-Babčuka ;
[Rīga] : Liels un mazs, 2021.
4. **Puika ar suni.**
Stāsts par nosargātu noslēpumu. Pirmā burtnīca.
Bailes. Otrā burtnīca. Bunkurs.
(The Boy and His Dog. The Story of an Untold Secret. Part One.
The Fear. Part Two. The Bunker.) / Inese Zandere ;
illustrated by Reinis Pētersons ;
[Rīga] : Liels un mazs, 2017, 2021.
5. **Zirgā**
(Riding High) / Inese Zandere ;
illustrated by Anna Vaivare ;
[Rīga] : Liels un mazs, 2017.



Photo by Ieva Andersone, Santa



LĪZE ANALĪZE
UN CITI
SLIMNĪCAS SKAITĀMPANTI

(ALL BETTER!)

Inese Zandere
Illustrated by REINIS PĒTERSONS
Liels un mazs, 2012



Negantā lauma

Parkā dzīvoja lauma,
vienmēr meklēja kašķi,
grūstījās slidkalniņā,
bērniem atņēma našķi,
acis sabēra smiltis,
sita ar lāpstu un spaini,
kurpes strūklakā meta
un mēdīja Jāni Raini.

Uzrāpās kokā augstu,
sēdās uz tieva zara,
kāja tai bija gara
un roka tai bija tik gara,
kurš vien ķerenes skrēja –
aizlika priekšā kāju,
kurš vien šūpolēs kāpa –
briesmīgi sašūpināja.

Man tagad pušu kāja,
man tagad pušu roka.
Neejiet spēlēties parkā,
lauma tur bērnus moka.
Ja kāds klupis un kritis,
vainīga tikai lauma,
tikai negantā lauma,
kurai vārdā ir Trauma.

13

Gudrais Dakteris

Es velku mammas halātu, lai arī balts tas nav.
Man pašam sava Māsiņa, kam pieci gadi jau.
Es šodien esmu Dakteris, kas pieri gudri rauc,
kas pazīst visas Slimības un zina, kā tās sauc:

– Pa plāvu lēkā Gripa un tai ir balta līpa.
Bet diķa malā Masalas pa ziemu ledū sasala.
Ar garu mikstu ķepu pēc desas sniedzās Klepus.
Pa ceļu Iesnas skraida, tās rej un bērnus baida.

Es esmu Gudrais Dakteris, kas pieri grumbās rauc,
kas pazīst visas Slimības un zina, kā tās sauc!
Bet netic Mazā Māsiņa un smeļ kā kutināta,
un visu pati izskaidro pēc sava Dumjā Prāta:

– Pa plāvu lēkā Zakis, pēc desas sniedzās Kakis,
bet diķi Varde gaida, un Suns pa ceļu skraida!



30



Paula Kauls

Man kāju rāda Pauls, kam salūzis viens Kauls.
Vai pedāļus var mit, ja Kaulam vajag dzīt?
Pauls nevar skriet un braukt, jo Kaulam vajag augt.
Pauls gultā sēž un dzied par to, kā viņam iet:

– Negribu ģipsi, man patīk čipsi,
bet nelīdz čipsi, man vajag ģipsi.
Negribu kruķi, man patīk skuķi,
bet nelīdz skuķi, man vajag kruķi.
Negribu gaidīt, man patīk skraidīt,
bet nevar skraidīt, man vajag gaidīt,

jo esmu Pauls, kam lūzis Kauls...



15



PUTNI MŪS REDZ
(BIRDS WATCH US TOO)

Inese Zandere
Illustrated by ALEKSANDRA RUNDE
Liels un mazs, 2023



Salās

Salās, kur dzīvo īri un īriņi,
ligzdo ķīri un ligzdo zīriņi.

Kurš ir tīrāks – ķīri vai zīriņi?
Lielie ir tīri, mazie ir tīriņi.

Lielie strīdi un mazie strīdiņi,
lielie naidi un mazie nīdiņi:

mēs esam ķīri, jūs tikai zīriņi,
mēs esam vīri, jūs tikai vīriņi!

Uz katras ēciņas klaigas un brēciņas,
klaigas un brēkas uz katras ēkas:

tu zīriņš, zīriņš, zīris,
tu ķīriņš, ķīriņš, ķīris!

Pakliegs un pāries, varam kaut derēt.
Ķīriem un zīriņiem jāsāk perēt.





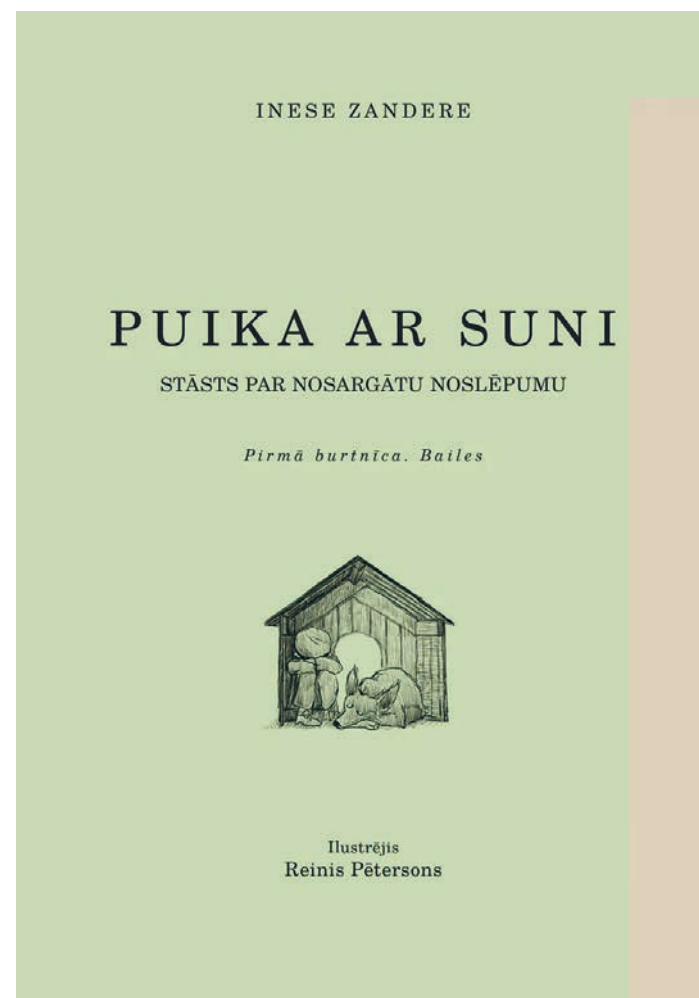
DIVAS ALMAS

(TWO ALMAS)

Inese Zandere
Illustrated yb ANETE BAJĀRE-BABČUKA
Liels un mazs, 2021







PUIKA AR SUNI.
STĀSTS PAR NOSARGĀTU NOSLĒPUMU.
PIRMĀ BURTNĪCA. BAILES.
OTRĀ BURTNĪCA. BUNKURS.

(THE BOY AND HIS DOG.
THE STORY OF AN UNTOLD SECRET.
PART ONE. THE FEAR.
PART TWO. THE BUNKER)

Inese Zandere
Illustrated by REINIS PĒTERSONS
Liels un mazs, 2017, 2021





ZIRGĀ
(RIDING HIGH)

Inese Zandere
Illustrated by ANNA VAIVARE
Liels un mazs, 2017



TAD MĒS METAMĪES UPĒ, UN UZ
VISĀM PUSĒM PAŠĶĪST ŠĻAKATAS!

„BLR-LR-LR-LR-LAM!
BLR-LR-LR-LR-LAM!”



PUBLISHED REVIEWS OF THE BOOKS SUBMITTED TO THE JURY

ALL BETTER! / LĪZE ANALĪZE UN CITI SLIMNĪCAS SKAITĀMPANTI

Ligita Levinska

A VITAMIN CONCENTRATE

05.12.2012. <http://www.ubisunt.lu.lv/zinas/t/16903/>

Tell me this riddle if you can! They do not live in genetics labs and are not hybrid brothers and sisters; they are also not in the grocery shelves or antique shops, or in the 'hope chests' of grandmothers; they are not representatives of the Great Barrier Reef flora and fauna. Where do you go to meet the naughty Jokey, Medicine Maddy, Sniffle-Piffle, Boo-Boo Bogey, the Fat Ghosts, Ulrich the Ultrasonographer, Ultrasound Spy and Nappy Nurse? No, you will not find them in a ghost story or a fantasy film. So tell me this riddle if you can!

Yes, finally I heard the words 'in children's books'. I will give you a further clue: in the latest collection of poems by Inese Zandere, a new piece in the long string of beads that is [Latvian] children's literature. The new book, 'Medicine Maddy and Other Hospital Nursery Rhymes' (English title All Better!), is Inese Zandere's contribution to original children's literature and has been published in association with the Children's Hospital Foundation and the 'Sunny Days for Our Children' charity campaign by the Diena Newspaper. [...]

Inese Zandere is an indisputably vivid and prolific author of current children's literature; children and their parents, theatre directors and composers interested in new joint projects – they are all waiting for her books like for the coming of Christmas. The relevance and popularity of Zandere's poems are proved by some interesting facts: for example, 2008 saw the third printing of the poet's most popular children's book 'Innies and Outies', originally published back in 2002. In a 2006 survey held by the Ministry of Culture, the above collection was included in the Top 100 of most popular books as the only representative of contemporary children's literature.

Using capital initial letters, the author in her collection makes [the reader] focus, absorb and enrich the vocabulary of all things hospital and illness related; this way various notions and concepts gradually find a permanent place in the child's consciousness, and the poems serve an informative purpose by expanding the range of their factual knowledge. It should be noted that the author does not burden the young reader by making the dose of information too condensed; the factual content is only briefly outlined. The author's poems also serve an edifying function, attempting to introduce some understanding of fundamental moral values through unobtrusive instructions.

The Lyric I is in the company of family, friends and animals (admittedly, imaginary ones), and these factors could be considered as the defining ones in the formation of the person of Inese Zandere's poems. Furthermore, one of the concluding poems in the collection acknowledges the importance of art; the Lyric I says: 'Bring me in your bag / the thing I expect, the thing I hope for every day, / not an enormous packet of treats, / not some tea for me to drink, / not the pristine handkerchiefs, / not the woolly bedroom slippers... / Better bring me a new Book, / the best medicine for boredom!' (P. 27) This example is didactics deliberately steered in a certain direction by the poet: children should accept books as some of their best and most trustworthy friends and include reading in their daily routine as an exciting process. The hallmark of quality is stamped on this book by the messianic message of the back-cover blurb (a book that helps children get well and not be afraid of doctors), the unaffected imagery and the diverse system of characters, filled with interesting and catchy proper nouns. Inese Zandere, of course, does not forget the role played by the object world, which she renders alive and moving: 'The Bed floats like a ship, / the Bed speeds like a train, / the Bed carries like a horse, / rocks like a swing!' (P. 3)

The [secret of the unique] captivating properties of the nursery/counting rhyme lies in the play of form, language and rhyme. In her collection of poems, Inese Zandere does not depart from these nuances; a special mention should be made of the light flow of her language: 'Runs with a sharp, sharp, sharp, / runs with a sharp needle / a quick, quick syringe runs / to me and gives a jab of medicine.' (P. 22) The counting rhymes are sometimes too long but justifiably so: after all, someone who is spending time at a medical institution, either alone in a little nest of boredom or in the company of some new-found friends, will have time enough to read them all and even learn by heart. The author has given a lot of thought to the rhyming system that children often keep in mind particularly well. Besides, Inese Zandere's nursery rhymes can definitely be used to improve speech skills.

At a time when the weather outside the window is growing windier and chillier by the day and when winter arrives with the danger of catching a cold because of the temperature fluctuations, these nursery rhymes by Inese Zandere are most definitely recommended as a means of building up the health of readers small and big alike – like hot linden tea with honey and garlic bread.

In her collection 'Medicine Maddy and Other Hospital Nursery Rhymes', the poet has chosen a single subject that does not stray from its coordinates for a single minute. The Lyric I of Inese Zandere (a child) is surrounded by illnesses both at home and at the hospital. Thematically, the author spans all the stages of being unwell, from the actual fact of falling ill to the oh-so popular children's game of playing at being a doctor, where the Lyric I is already well again and, pretending to be the Wise Doctor, treats her five-year-old sister, reliving and re-experiencing through the game the real scenes [of recent past], building communication with her playmate. For children, the hospital nursery rhymes become an attempt to use rhythmic and melodious language – which, in this context, is not unlike the specific character of Latvian traditional magic incantations – to overcome illness, as well as the psychological discomfort frequently experienced by children when being ill and visiting medical institutions and [interacting] with their staff. The chanting of the nursery rhymes 'put a spell' on the illness, and the child gets well; therefore, metaphorically they

substitute adhesive bandages, aspirin and ibuprofen, as well as provide psychological help, cheering up and reassuring that the oasis that is home to everything that is good is right here. One of the poet's trump cards is her determination not to idealize the world, showing a child living in the modern world – not one somewhere in a faraway land, on the other side of the seven seas. This is not a life without sharp splinters; sometimes unpleasant attacks take place – and in the context of this book, it is illness that takes on the role of the unfamiliar and dangerous enemy, disrupting the normal rhythm of everyday life: 'All noises will stop, footsteps fall silent, / a child who is ill cannot run and play...' (P.3)



All Better! book launch: Inese Zandere with illustrator Reinis Pētersons and designer Rūta Briede. Photo Delfi

BIRDS WATCH US TOO / PUTNI MŪS REDZ

Katja Wiebe in *The White Ravens 2024: A Selection Of International Children's And Youth Literature*

Munich : Stiftung Internationale Jugendbibliothek, 2024, p. 81.

How ever does she do it? With her new collection of poems Inese Zandere has once again achieved a great coup. One of the greatest children's poets in Latvia, Zandere has already delved into many topics in her poems, most recently dealing with the widest variety of automobiles. And now: birds. And people. In her inimitably light-footed manner, Zandere unites the world of birds with that of people, blurring the boundaries and creating for both enjoyable situations. At the same time, the poems are playful imitations of birdsong. Supple verses and rhythmical language allow the texts to fly. In this way, cave-like swallow nests on the bluffs quite logically turn into tunnels for a twittering express train. Aleksanda Runde's equally effortless and playful illustrations show seagulls, crows and other birds around rivers, seas or forests. And everywhere there is also a place for humans. The final poem unveils a special truth: not only do people observe birds – the birds too are watching us.

Ieva Melgalve, Jury Member of the Annual Latvian Literature Award, on Inese Zandere, nominated in the Children's Literature Category:

<https://lalgaba.lv/index.php/lv/bernem-24/putni-mus-redz>

Perhaps the future belongs to a way of thinking in which humans are not opposed to "nature" and are certainly neither higher nor lower than it—where a human is one respectful being among other respectful beings (whether living or non-living). This goes beyond a simple "love of nature" that one engages in on weekends or "teaches to children."

This is a perspective in which, just as we look at everything else, everything else looks back at us. And I, as a human, am important not because I dictate or control anything grand, but because I have been honored with a visit from a cuckoo. This kind of poetry—equal, vibrant, and linguistically buzzing—as a herald of times to come, is written by Inese Zandere.



Book launch of Birds Watch Us Too at the Ventspils City Museum (2023). Photo by Ieva Balode

TWO ALMAS / DIVAS ALMAS

Daina Sirmā, 16.04.2022,

LSM Culture News:

<https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/kultura/literatura/divas-almas-tetis-suns-un-laimes-berni-udenstorni-par-laligabai-nominetajam-bernu-gramatam.a452336/>

Inese Zandere's book *Divas Almas* follows the titular first-grader Alma as she spends her summer vacation in the countryside with her great-aunt, grappling with the theme of "to be or not to be." Much like Shakespeare's Hamlet, who in his soliloquy speaks of the fear of death, of "*that undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveler returns*," Alma asks her great-aunt directly: "*What happens to a person when they die?*" She asks this question after being mentally shattered by the destructive power of words, having overheard a phrase at a funeral beyond the cemetery fence: "*Our Alma is dead.*"

The child never truly receives an answer from her great-aunt—their conversation fails to materialize. And so, just as Hamlet is left alone with his thoughts, Alma confronts her own nonexistence alone, staring at her reflection in the mirror—only to see that her image has disappeared; she is no longer there. Even the house's name, *Velēnas* (meaning "turf" or "sod"), evokes the damp scent of graves, as the deceased in the cemetery lie buried beneath the very same *velēnas*, just as moss covers the roof of the *Velēnas* house.

At this point, I feel deep sorrow for the child. It's harsh. There is no father or mother by her side, no safe haven in her own room, no cradle, no toys, no friends. And Zandere offers no comfort in the fairy tale tradition, as authors like Astrid Lindgren in *The Brothers Lionheart* or J.M. Barrie in *Peter Pan* do, with their somewhat melancholic yet ultimately vivid depictions of the afterlife. In Zandere's world, there is no such consolation—pain is what brings Alma back to life. A cat scratches her, and suddenly, she becomes visible in the mirror again.

Is it only pain that makes us human? I have to ask. Positivists will faint upon hearing this.

Divas Almas is about transformations without boundaries. In her fantasies and emotions, Alma feels like a fish with an invisible tail, swimming through the green summer lake; at school, she is a sparrow; in autumn, she is a bird in flight, migrating to warmer lands alongside her classmates, with their teacher as the flock's leader.

By the end of the book, Alma has learned to merge with and become one with her deceased namesake, to reconcile with her own nonexistence. "*The living and the dead belong together*," wrote Rainis in his play *Spēlēju, dancoju*. The dead are alive, the living are dead—death does not exist.

To hold on more firmly to this side of the cemetery fence, Zandere has, in my view, embedded four solutions:

1. Eating. The plate must be emptied at all costs—peas and carrots must conquer the potato fortress. Life must be physically sustained. A warm

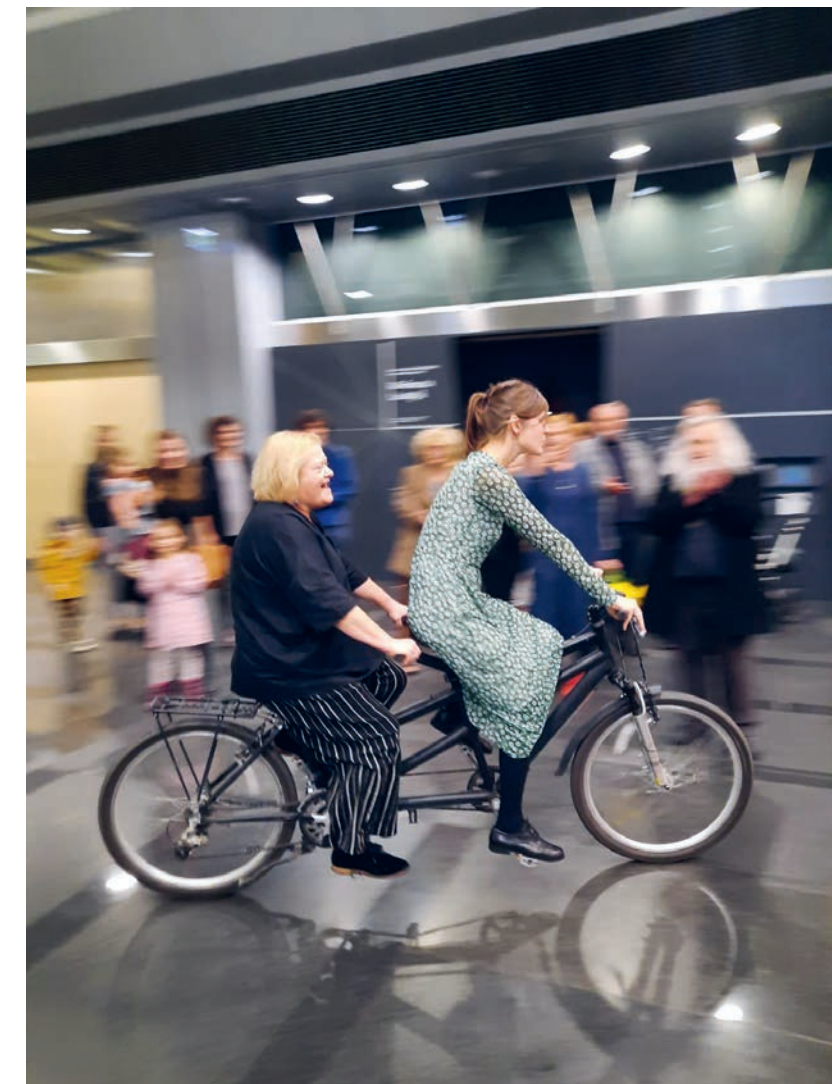
rhubarb pie baked by her great-aunt tastes just as good to the living as it does to the dead.

2. Joy. If a smile does not appear on its own, then it must at least be drawn onto the mirror with a marker, stretching from ear to ear.
3. Memory. The wisdom and bright remembrance of previous generations must be let into the room, floating like white clouds.
4. The beauty of life can be found in everyday existence—where a red geranium blooms in a pot on the windowsill.

I shudder as I read about the dead Alma in her great-aunt's memories, skewering herring eyes for smoking in the smokehouse—and how the small, living Alma follows her lead. At the beginning of the book, Alma herself had felt like a fish. Could this truly be an undercurrent of self-destruction? In such a dense and concise text, the fish motif is surely no coincidence.

After this final revelation, an uncontrollable flood of associations sweeps over me, dragging me away like a fish, together with all the Almas—from the lush green summer lake of the book into our own springtime lake of horror, towards Donetsk and Luhansk.

As I write these lines, it is April 4, 2022—the 40th day of war.



Opening of the *BikiMetr*s exhibition at the National Library of Latvia, together with Rūta Briede, art editor of the *Bikibuks* series. Photo by Juris Rozenbergs

THE BOY AND HIS DOG. PART ONE & TWO PUIKA AR SUNI. PIRMĀ UN OTRĀ BURTNĪCA

Aiga Dzalbe

Online culture magazine Satori, 04.08.2021:

<https://satori.lv/article/zigis-ar-dzeri-pret-pavliku-morozovu>

Who Knows Zigi? Who Knows Pavlik? At the very least, we all know Džeris—who is also Duksis, Šariks, Čita, Amis, Lassie, Rex, Peksis, Šēra, Lords, Sāba, Jack, Jim, Bim, Berimor, Baron, Bear, Argo, Stripe, Greta, Džera, Žiks, Vaktiņš... Everyone has their own Džeris. Humanity cannot live without dogs—many wise people have said so. And, after all, it was the dog (not the cow, pig, sheep, goat, or even the cat) that, according to archaeological evidence, was the first domesticated animal of the Baltic peoples. Interesting—why? Most likely because dogs have always been the most loyal friends and protectors, created to guard people, flocks, homes, yards, and even spiritual treasures—those that, for some reason, are not guarded by dragons or snakes. And what is the hardest thing to guard? Yes—the tongue! The tongue is flexible, reckless, which is why it has shutters—lips. If you know a secret, you can never be entirely sure that you will be able to resist the urge to share it with someone you deem equally trustworthy. Not keeping one's tongue behind one's teeth has always been a classic, universal cause of trouble. But a dog? A dog never betrays a secret—it only watches, growls, or barks.

Inese Zandere's children's novel, *The Boy and His Dog: A Story of a Guarded Secret*, explores multiple aspects of life that are worth passing down through generations. The story unfolds across different levels—ranging from a child's perception of everyday events in his backyard to an attempt to understand one of the most incomprehensible and terrifying chapters of world history—the Holocaust. The novel also spans questions of courage and loyalty, moving from specific, personal bravery to the broader moral choice of acting according to one's conscience rather than conforming to the ethical norms imposed by society.

From a genre perspective, *The Boy and His Dog* belongs to the same tradition of literature and cinema that filled the childhoods of Soviet-era children—works that, alongside thrilling plots and fervent protagonists, subtly programmed young citizens with a desired value system. I must admit, these wartime narratives, despite their usual ideological bias, have always seemed potentially powerful to me—not just for their dramatic tension or ideological influence, but because they allow for reflection on history written from the perspective of the victors. For some time after Latvia regained independence, this narrative niche was left empty. Then came works like Māris Rungulis' *The Riddles of Fox Hill*, followed by the TV series *Red Forest* and the film *Blizzard of Souls*, all aimed, at least in part, at school-age audiences. Guiding young people's gaze toward bloody battles fought for land, power, ideals, freedom, and human rights seems like an essential step in shaping their understanding of history and values. The question is: how should we do it today? On one hand, all

major and minor nations have their heroic epics; in recent decades, these have been joined by grand Hollywood fantasies about saving a robotic world.

Inese Zandere, however, seems to have brushed aside all this baggage with ease, choosing instead to focus on a historically authentic story about a boy and his family in Kīpsala during World War II. It is particularly significant that the main character is the complete opposite of the Soviet propaganda archetype—the “heroic child” Pavlik Morozov, glorified for allegedly reporting his father to the authorities and then being murdered in revenge by his own relatives. The prototype for the protagonist in *The Boy and His Dog* is Zigfrīds Lipke, whose memories, photographs, and drawings are preserved in the Žanis Lipke Memorial, dedicated to his father, the renowned rescuer of Jews, Žanis Lipke. In Zandere's vision, Zigi is a kind, ordinary boy—he enjoys watching the world, daydreaming, playing soccer with his friends, feeling at home in his Kīpsala courtyard, and being an integral part of his extraordinary family. He strongly resembles Karlsson-on-the-Roof's Little Brother, in stark contrast to the “Always Ready!” saluting conformists. A born pacifist, he literally couldn't hurt a fly—a theme symbolically illustrated in the chapter “The Mermaid and the Fly.” In this scene, Zigi and his mother, Johanna, cross the Daugava by boat to fetch everyday groceries from the Central Market. On their way back, a blue-glowing dung fly joins them. Johanna is about to swat it with an oar, but when Zigi whimpers, “*It's a living creature, Mommy, a living creature,*” she pauses and reconsiders: “*Why swat it? [...] Just because it's a fly? Just because we're stronger?*”

The storytelling itself is calm, quietly depicting the surrounding environment, events, and atmosphere—a stark contrast to the usual heroic adventure narratives of the genre, especially the socialist realism constructions familiar in our region. The novel is woven from two perspectives: that of eight-year-old Zigi and that of Silvija, the teenage girl living beyond the fence. Zigi's perspective, while seemingly neutral and observant, is rich with hidden emotions, existential fears, and deep contemplation—yet it is rooted in absolute trust in his family and a strong desire to stand with them as a team. [..]

Zandere's language conjures vivid, powerful imagery. The reader can clearly picture Žanis, Johanna, Alfreds, Aryeh, and the others hiding in the bunker beneath the doghouse, their faces intertwined with their fate. The scenes of Riga's Central Market, Kīpsala, and the boat rides across the Daugava come to life like frames from a film, with the scent of fried and fresh herring almost tangible. The sizzling herring on a pan evokes warmth and comfort, while the mention of baskets of fresh fish signals Zigi's unease and fear.

But these visions cannot be separated from the book's illustrations, which must be properly called booklets (burtnīcas). The design of *The Boy and His Dog* operates with stunning precision—perhaps even more effectively than the award-winning feature film *The Mover* (2018), which shares motifs with the first part of Zandere's novel.

This collaboration between writer, artist, and designers is a brilliant example of how to create a historically meaningful book for modern children. While fitting into the traditional genre of hero stories, it crafts an entirely original system of characters, taken from our own recent past, set in a tragic situation yet within a familiar, beloved environment. One cannot help but hope that this story will not fade into oblivion—and that the long and impatient wait for the next booklet will be worth it, just as the book itself immerses us in a time where patience and vigilance were the key to survival.



Reading of the book *A Boy and His Dog* and the premiere of the theatre performance at the Jewish rescuer Žanis Lipke Memorial in Riga.
Photo by Evija Trifanova, LETA

RIDING HIGH / ZIRGĀ

Agija Ābiķe-Kondrāte
A Horse for Everyone

Online magazine *Satori*, 01.02.2018:

<https://satori.lv/article/katram-ir-savs-zirdzins>

Inese Zandere's book unmistakably and directly evokes childhood memories, particularly the moment when the image of a horse in literature became something more than just a reading experience. It was a gateway to another, mysterious world where anything was possible. For a city child, the immense and insatiable longing for a horse was especially affirmed by two beloved classics—Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty* and Hannu Mäkelä's *The Horse Who Lost His Glasses*. These two works, created in different eras and artistic styles, left a lasting impression on me.

In Mäkelä's novel, the horse reads books about horses and even writes reviews for newspapers, earning just enough money to buy a liter of milk—until one day, it loses its glasses. Meanwhile, Sewell's novel, whose alternative title is *The Autobiography of a Horse*, does not shy away from harshness and life's injustices. Even now, I can deeply understand the fate of both protagonists and, in a peculiar way, identify with the sorrow, melancholy, and realization of life's mercilessness felt by these horses.

Sewell's book was gifted to me by my parents, and inside, my father inscribed a phrase that still follows me today: *"Everyone has their own horse—perhaps a real one, perhaps a dream one."* That made me realize the power and boundlessness of imagination—a truth that can also be found in the pages of Inese Zandere and Anna Vaivare's book.

The uninhibited joy and captivating energy of Vaivare's illustrations is one of their greatest strengths. They blend seamlessly with Artis Briedis' masterful book design, which enhances the visual depth of the work. Her ability to improvise and depict the bustle of city streets, the expressive atmosphere of surroundings, or the smallest everyday details of a little boy's room (a puzzle piece, pencils, toy animals, balls, cars, a paper snowflake—alongside a stray sock, a pair of pants under the bed, and even a forgotten hamburger) has a calming effect on us, the readers—parents, children, grandparents, diligent aunts, and serious uncles alike. We spend so much time chasing order, yet this book reminds us that disorder is just a word—that objects and things exist as they are, and the organization of our homes is rarely accidental. Rather, it is an extension of our personality, a part of our world—and even in apparent chaos, there is meaning and an art to life. It is no coincidence that the artist has given even the smallest crocodile or monkey unique, personalized features, or that she has meticulously drawn the tiniest book on the bookshelf. But the most brilliant element throughout the book is the series of dynamic portraits of the boy's piano-playing companion—the horse.

At times, one might think that the balance between text and the book's vibrant, expansive visuals could lean toward more written content. However, Inese Zandere—who has long upheld the principles of her publishing house, *Liels un mazs*—seems to know well the deliberate mystery that often makes literature for younger readers more powerful: less is more. Her ability to dream, her sense of rhythm, and her free movement within language—along with the unspoken democracy and respect for the reader—create a moment of realization within the book's concise sentence structure.

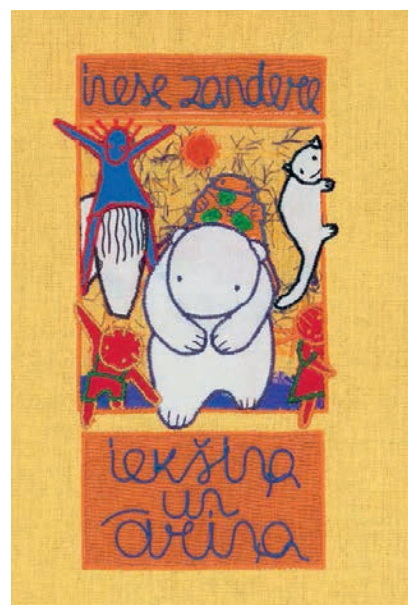
At some point, you recognize: We, the readers, are participants in this story, in this adventure. We are the ones who are (or, for some reason, are not) "on the horse." And, surely, this scenario will feel familiar to many of us: *"Every time I sit at the piano to practice, a horse appears from underneath the piano."* An invisible friend, a helper, or an inspiration is always needed in difficult and creative endeavors. Jumping choreographically over the black keys is no obstacle for the horse. *"To master this sudden passage, he needs both the white and the black keys."* Galloping, racing, wild and free—through rivers, splashes, up and down hills, soaring and leaping! *"When Mom opens the door, he's already gone."* As great artists often say, the secret to talent and success lies in patience, parental support in childhood, and relentless hard work. But maybe talent is simply having your own horse? Did Raimonds Pauls have his own horse?

Reading *Zirgā (Riding High)*, one comes away with a clear and liberating realization—that sometimes, in life, no matter our profession, goals, or choices, the key to true happiness is quite simple: A little reality and twice as many dreams.



TEN OTHER KEY TITLES BY THE CANDIDATE

1. **IEKŠIŅA UN ĀRIŅA.**
2002, Preses nams,
Revised edition 2004,
Liels un mazs
Illustrated by Ūna Laukmane
(Inside and Outside)



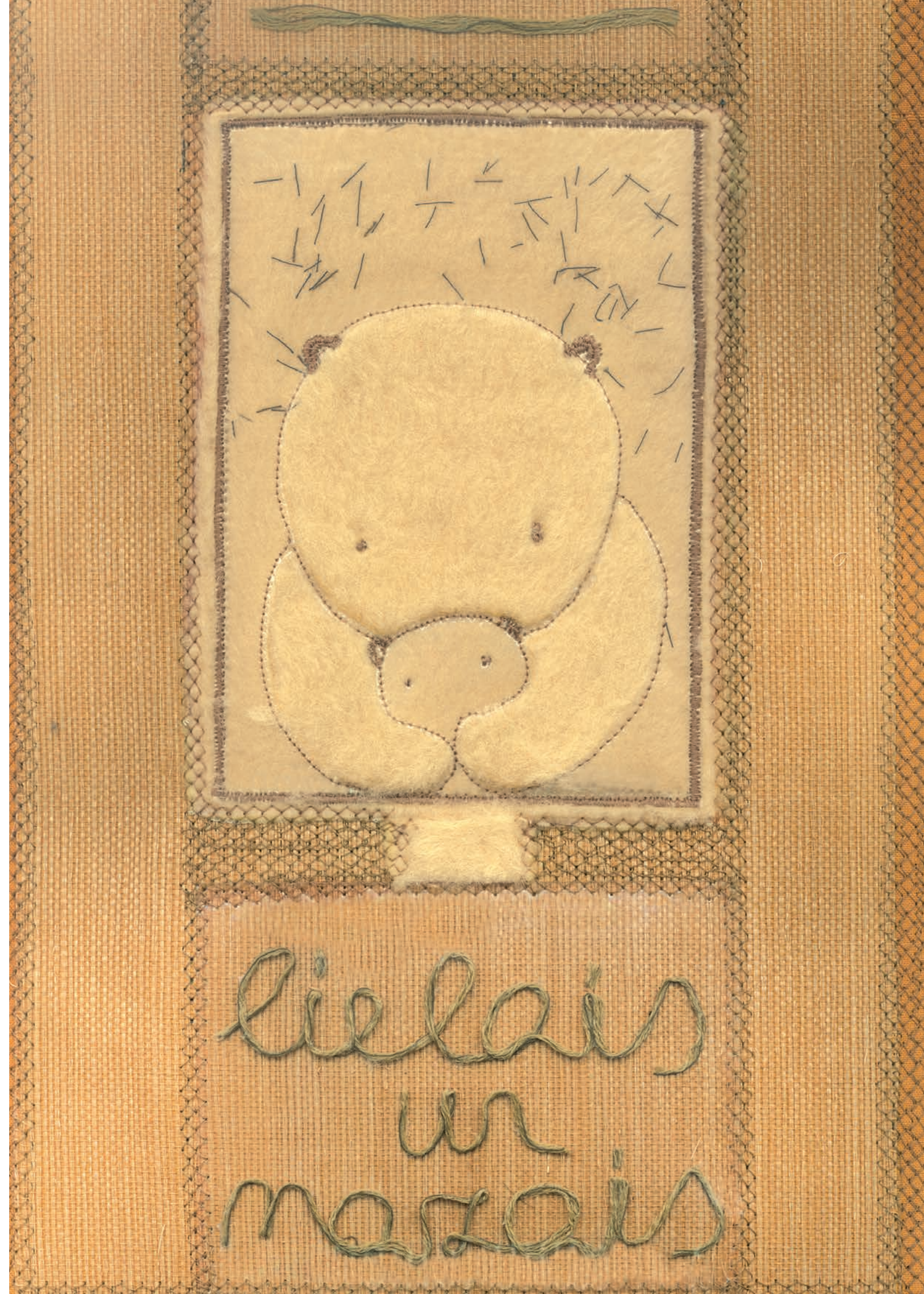
The poetry collection *Inside and Outside* has been a significant and enduring success in Latvian children's literature, with five editions published to date. It has received widespread acclaim from both readers and literary critics, earning four children's literature awards, including the National Literature Award in 2003.

In a 2006 survey conducted by the Latvian Ministry of Culture, which aimed to identify 100 books representing the "gold standard" of Latvian literature, *Inside and Outside* was the only children's book published in the 21st century to be included in the selection.

The title of the collection encapsulates a core idea that characterizes contemporary Latvian children's poetry: "Anything that has its inside also has its outside around it." This playful line from a children's poem is, at the same time, a classical philosophical principle.

In these poems, humor and deep seriousness coexist on the same page, encouraging young readers to reflect on complex matters with honesty, to closely observe the outward manifestations of things, phenomena, and living beings, and to examine their essence just as attentively. The collection invites children to delight in the world and to explore its many layers, from the surface to the innermost depths, with enthusiasm and joy—to feel, think, and understand.

In 2004, a poem from this collection, "Lielais un mazais" (*The Big and The Small*), inspired the name of the newly founded children's book publishing house, *Liels un mazs* (Big and Small). Additionally, an illustration by Ūna Laukmane from the book served as the basis for the publisher's logo design.



ĢIMENEI. 2008

Illustrated by Edmunds Jansons
Rīga: Liels un mazs
(Wonderbaby's Year:
Poems for Our Family)



The poems in this collection tell the story of a family welcoming a newborn baby, capturing the events of their first year of life and their integration into the family, the cultural and national fabric, nature, the cycle of seasons, the native language, and traditions.

The baby and their family, as illustrated by Edmunds Jansons, are highly original characters—fairy-tale creatures that cannot be easily categorized as humans, animals, insects, or plants. They are unusual yet incredibly believable, personal, and endearing.

In this world of fantastical beings, there exists a natural order and relationships upon which a child can rely. The poet and illustrator wanted to dedicate this book to the babies who were growing up at that time within their own families, as well as those of their friends, relatives, and close acquaintances.

Typically, such dedications take up just a few lines, but in this case, it turned into an entire page—featuring 94 little children. Some of them had already outgrown their baby clothes by the time the book was completed, but the story remains a tribute to how they grew and how dearly loved and important they are to us.

In 2009, artist Edmunds Jansons received the International Jānis Baltvilks Prize for Book Art for his illustrations in *Brīnumbēbiņa gads* (Wonderbaby's Year). The book was also included in the IBBY Honor List.

work

my daddy works as a tree
producing clean air
my mommy sews on leaves
and makes buds open here and there
I sit in the grass under the tree
moving my toes and doing neither
my spring job is to do lots of breathing

counting

a baby we have only ONE but he is so much fun
when daddy gives a kiss to mom there now are TWO
if we count your sis and brother, FIVE are altogether
grandmas grannies oumas nans are all so sweet
granddad's talking to grandpa uncle's walking with auntie
boy cousins are running around girl cousins are laughing out loud
at reunions count and wonder: people are close to a HUNDRED
on shadow-veiled paths a THOUSAND ancestors cut a swath
in the autumn dark a MILLION stars will spark –
I have to warn: we are counting babies still to be born

where to the apple rolls

summer frees peas from their shells
in the grass gray shadows swell

evenings shake stars from the trees
the baby is a brown apple seed

the apple falls and rolls away
perhaps by the lilac it will stay

people and lilacs hope for good luck
stars shoot down like being plucked

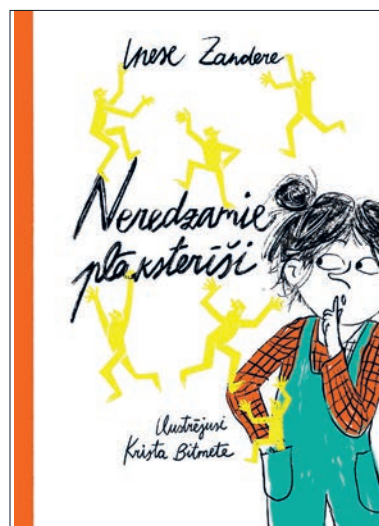
the baby is a brown apple seed
we know not where the apple will lead

Translated by **Ieva Lešinska**



NEREDZAMIE PLĀKSTERĪŠI. 2023

3. Illustrated by Krista Bitmete
Rīga: Liels un mazs
(Invisible Plasters)



Anete's mum stood in the middle of the room, looking at her phone with a very cross face. For a moment, she held it as if it were a hot potato or a saucepan lid that had burned her hand horribly before slamming it down angrily onto the table.

Mum seemed to be encircled by swirls of hissing steam. Anete could see straight away that Mum must have had a nasty quarrel with someone on the phone. An invisible burn!

But just as she was heading for the drawer, she remembered that all her mum's invisible plasters had been used up! Thinking quickly, Anete plunged her hand into her pocket. It was full of invisible plasters.

Inese Zandere writes short stories that are published in richly illustrated reading books. These books are almost like picture books, yet not in the traditional sense—in Latvian children's literature, the tradition of illustrated reading books remains strong. These books contain more text than picture books, yet the stories are not long and are quite easy to read. They are written lightly and playfully, but they address serious and important topics.

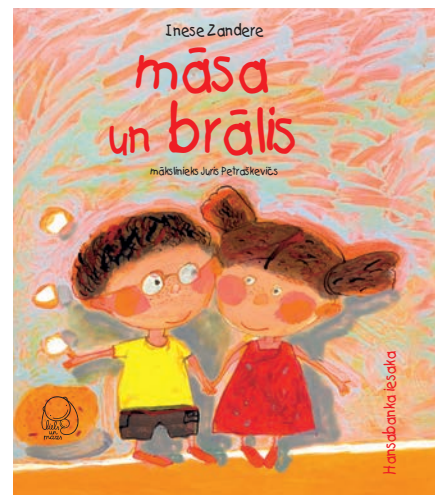
The main character, Anete, faces everyday situations where there is no physical wound, yet there is pain. These are what we call "heartaches"—failures, disappointments, insults, or arguments. The invisible wounds caused by such experiences cannot be covered with real plasters. Here, only the invisible ones can help—comfort, kindness, and friendship. Where can one find plasters for invisible but painful wounds? "Not in a pharmacy, but in a story!" suggests the author. Illustrator Krista Bitmete has brought these invisible plasters to life in her illustrations, imagining them as lively, colorful little figures, always ready to participate and help. They are all around us, in our homes and even in our pockets—we just need to learn how to find them and call for their help at the right moment. Anete's mum knows this well, but by the end of the book, Anete learns it too.

The book received the International Jānis Baltvilks Prize for Children's Literature in 2024.



4. **MĀSA UN BRĀLIS.** 2006

Illustrated by Juris Petraškevičs
Rīga: Liels un mazs
(Sister and Brother)



"Good morning," said the sister, sticking her nose out from underneath the blanket.
"I had a dream about you."

"And what was I doing?" asked the brother.

"You were swallowing little white balls, which you then started to take out of your schoolbag," said the sister, yawning.

"I was walking on a tightrope. Then we both rode around on a huge bear. Everyone applauded; we made a million; and then we wanted to go to America.

"Then we boarded a ship, which was decorated with little colored flags," sister said.

"The ship sailed for three days and three nights. We got to the middle of the sea, but the fog was so thick that the ship got lost, and we never got to America.

"Then you inflated two balloons; we both lifted up into the air and flew for three days and three nights. There was a huge forest down below; our balloons got caught in the branches of and popped. We fell to earth, in the middle of the forest, and never got to America."

A picture book for preschoolers and younger school-age children, featuring a "double-tale" where two children's imagined adventures unfold in opposite directions, driven by opposite intentions.

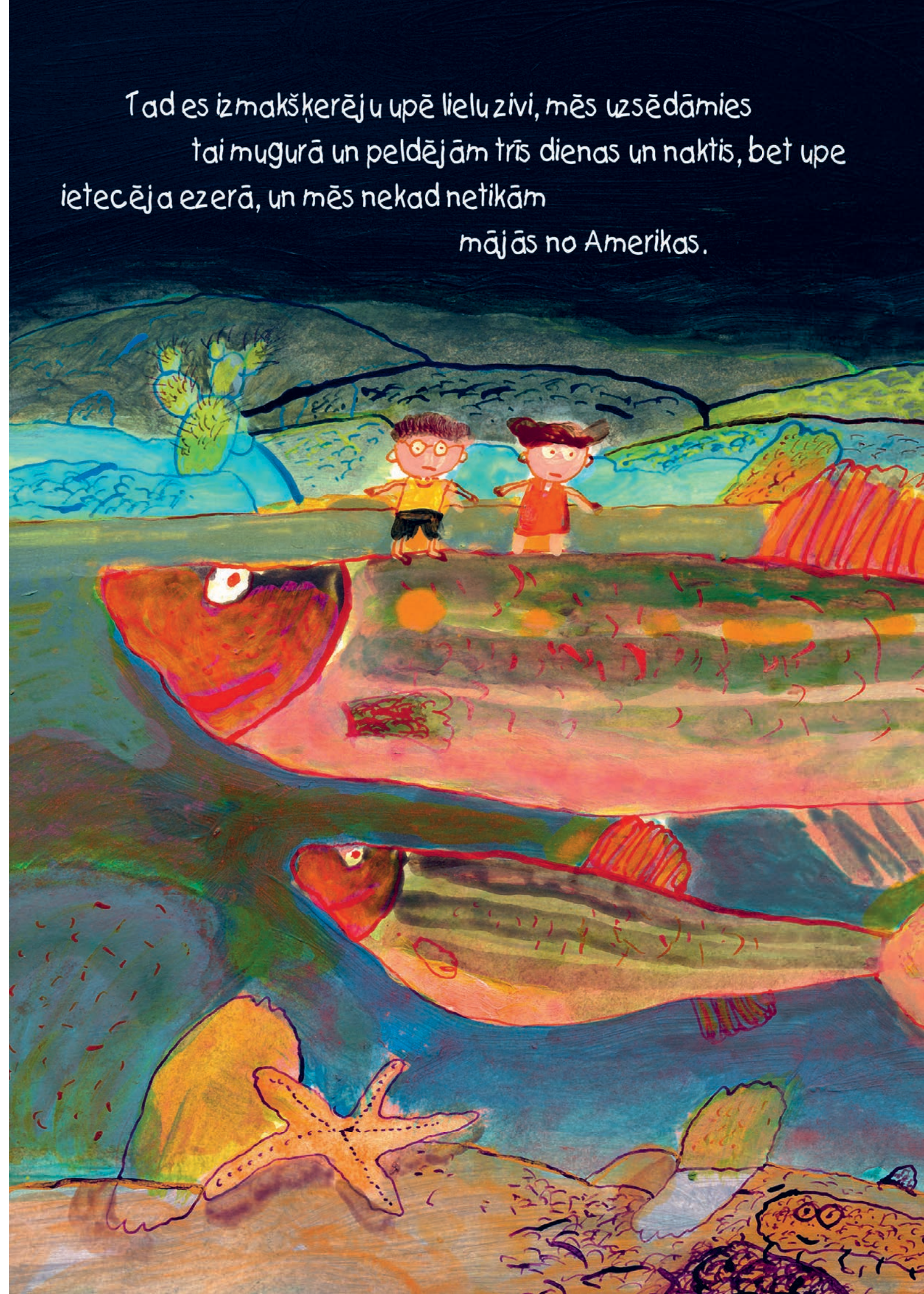
In the sister's dream, all her efforts are focused on reaching her dreamland—America. Meanwhile, the brother does everything he can to return home from this dream America.

Both siblings experience the same events, yet each assigns a completely different meaning to them.

The eternal longing to be "somewhere else"—somewhere we are not—fuels the imagination and shapes the book's Münchhausenesque storyline, where every failure transforms into a new opportunity, yet the ultimate goal always remains just out of reach.

Roze Stiebra's animated film adaptation: <https://www.filmas.lv/movie/2973/>

Tad es izmakšķerēju upē lielu zivi, mēs uzsēdāmies
tai mugurā un peldējām trīs dienas un nakts, bet upe
ietecēja ezerā, un mēs nekad netikām
mājās no Amerikas.



5. **BĒRNS, KAS NEIEKRITA.** 2019
Illustrated by Reinis Pētersons
Rīga: Liels un mazs
(Staying Safe)



The poems in this collection are dedicated to children's safety, injuries, and dangerous situations from which they must learn to protect themselves. From *Līze Analīze (All Better!)*, the evil fairy Trauma has made her way into this new book. However, this time, she faces a good fairy who believes that children can learn to avoid dangers. The poems create a journey of trials, a kind of odyssey filled with lurking monsters, cunning traps, and magical mischiefs. It is a perilous adventure with a happy ending. In these poems, real-life situations are transformed through the fairy-tale lens of exaggeration and fantasy. Wordplay and rhythmic verses form memorable formulas that embed themselves in a child's mind, helping them recognize dangerous situations. The book's dynamic and vivid illustrations by Reinis Pētersons bring these scenarios to life in an engaging way.

The book was created in collaboration with the Children's Hospital Foundation and BKUS (Children's Clinical University Hospital) doctors, whose experiences formed the basis for the "Top Injuries" section at the end of the book. However, the goal of these poems is not to lecture children and parents on safety—rather, it is to create vivid characters and memorable lines that influence a child's emotional and associative memory.

Sir Cheapo, the Knight

There once was a knight,
O, where to begin?
With a hole in his head
And a toothless grin.
One ear hanging off
And his nose askew,
Is this knight still alive?
I haven't a clue!

He barged and charged
He wasn't shy
With slashing sword
And pike held high

He headed right off
To the battle he flew
Is this knight still alive?
I haven't a clue!

But he never arrived
And I'll tell you why,
A safety helmet
He never did buy,
And halfway there
To the battle, instead
He fell off his mare,
And cracked his head!
To forgo a helmet,
He thought he was shrewd.
Is this knight still alive?
I haven't a clue!

Colliding in the Cosmos

Bouncing on a trampoline,
gravity you'll contravene,
flying up out of sight,
higher than a satellite.

Trampa, trampa trampoline,
higher than you've ever been,
bouncing up to outer space,
this cosmos is a crowded place!

Bouncers bouncing in a swarm,
ready for a cosmic storm.
Hope there's not a nasty crash,
that could happen in a flash.

Trampa, trampa trampoline,
higher than you've ever been,
bouncing up to outer space,
this cosmos is a crowded place!

But still we want to bounce and jump,
until a shoulder hits a rump,
until a forehead splits a lip,
until an ankle hooks a hip,
until a heel cracks a nose,
then off you limp on mangled toes
and give up on your race to space.

The cosmos is a painful place.

Translated by **Māra Rozīte**



6. **TRĪS DRAUGI VIENAS UPES KRASTĀ.** 2014

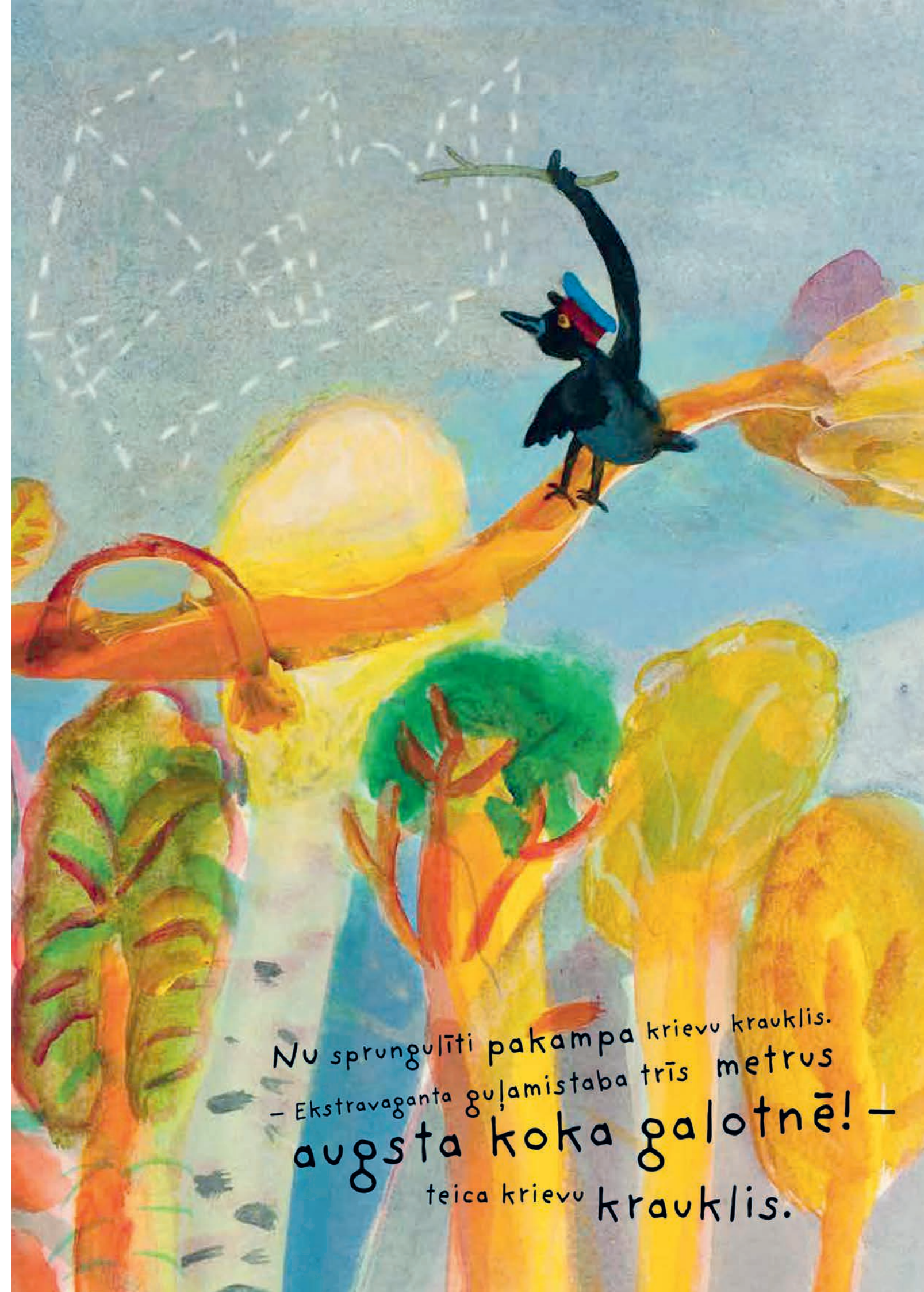
Illustrated by Juris Petraškevičs
Rīga: Liels un mazs
(One House for All)



Once upon a time, three good friends – Raven, Crayfish, and Horse – came together under a tall tree in a green meadow on the bank of a river. All three were now grown-up and wanted to get married, but they also wanted to remain close. So the three friends decided to build a big new house where they, their wives, and their children could all live together.

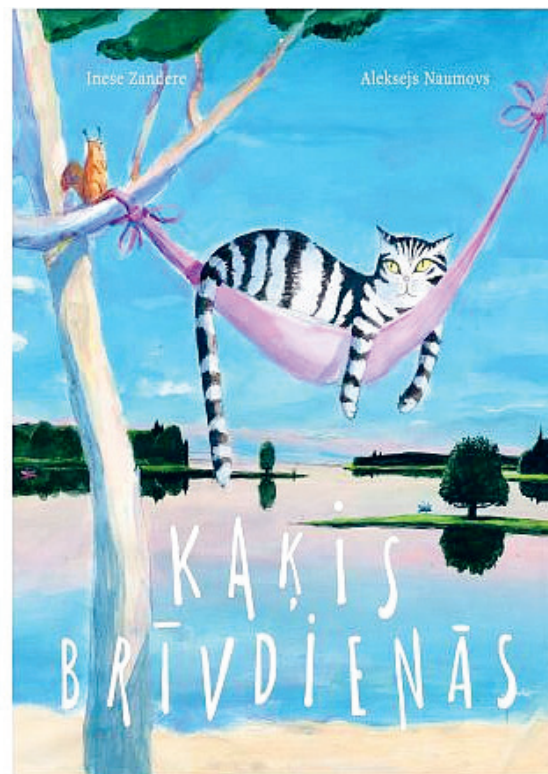
It becomes clear that planning their new accommodation will be a bigger challenge than it seems at first for three such different characters. By understanding their own personalities and needs and accepting their differences, the friends conclude that there is no solution for this problem without making compromises. I believe that this simple book written for children will also touch parents' hearts by reminding them that adult life starts with valuing relationships with other people over ones' selfish interests, and understanding that a compromise is often the best and most pleasant solution. On each page, short passages of texts are placed among the big colorful illustrations by Petraškevičs. His visual interpretation of the story brings the reader far from the eyes of others into a forest along a fantastic and calm river bank. I instead think of it as a fairytale about the natural order of life – about coming of age, moving on from disagreements, and transforming into a more empathetic, caring and wise person. And just like any other fairytale, it can speak not only to very young readers, but also those who have a rich reading experience.

Līga Horgana, review on latviaweekly.com, 22.05.2024



7. **KAKIS BRĪVDIENĀS:
UN CITAS PASAKAS.** 2015

Illustrated by Aleksejs Naumovs
Rīga: Liels un mazs
(Cat on Vacation:
And Other Fairy Tales)



Once, a little man lived in a big house in a city.
But it was neither an ordinary house nor an ordinary man. Actually, this man wasn't visible at all. At least, no grown-up had ever seen him before.
The big house in the city, on the other hand, was both easy to see and easy to hear. Each passer-by stopped beside it for a moment and listened to the sounds of singers' voices and those of various instruments coming through the open window. Sometimes you could hear each of them alone, but often they all made beautiful music together.

From the story *Believe-It-Or-Not* and *Stories about Musical Instruments*

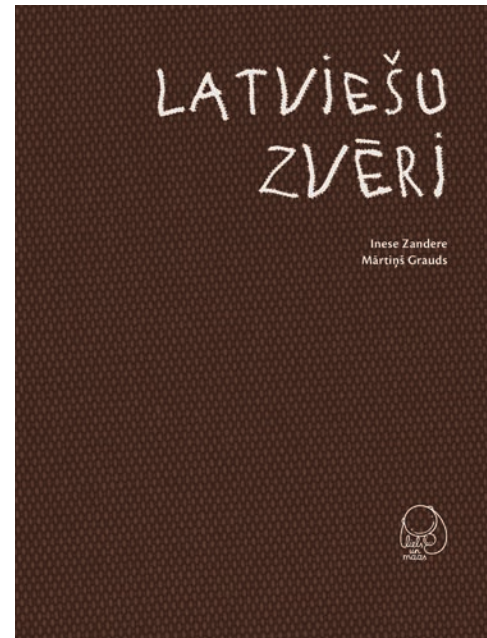
The book is filled with events and surprises, scents, flavors, sounds, and colors. In these stories, grass smells like cotton candy, snakes crochet white hats for their soon-to-be-born babies, cats eat apples and drink coffee, horseradish wants to bite mustard, and a Violin falls in love with a Flute... At the same time, urban landscapes seamlessly alternate with poetic natural settings—chickens ride the No. 5 tram, an owl lives in the opera house, a lonely father resides in a nine-story apartment building, while Prince Violin and Prince Viola race through snow-covered, moonlit forests in pursuit of love, as a cat's paws sink into the soft sand of the seaside.

Signija Silauniece on ubisunt.lu.lv, 17.10.2016



8. LATVIEŠU ZVĒRI. 2009

Visual concept by Mārtiņš Grauds,
Rūta Briede, Artis Briedis,
photos by Kristaps Kalns
Rīga: Liels un mazs
(Latvian Animals)



Thoughts of a hare

The hare was angry all day because he was bored. "What am I going to do?" he asked himself annoyed. "I have to think!"

The hare walked along the forest path over one hill, over another hill, but never came to a thought. "You can't think of anything walking like that," the hare grunted.

He stood on the bank of the stream and looked down at the winding river. The river was gurgling softly.

"It's no good, all my thoughts are running away," the hare was frustrated. He stood on the bridge and tried to fish some thoughts out of the river, but all he could find was water grass and a plastic bottle. The hare angrily threw it into a bush, but a wolf appeared behind the bush, shook his finger and put the bottle in a bag.

"What are you doing?" asked the hare. "Cleaning the forest," said the wolf, holding up something else blue and shiny.

"How did you think of that?" asked the hare enviously. "I don't know..." said the wolf calmly. "I woke up in a thicket, under the fir trees, and I made it up: I'm going to clean the forest."

"So you thought it up in the thicket?" asked the hare.

"Yes, it is so good to think in the thicket! Dusk, silence, only the tops of the fir trees rustling. I always think there."

"So in the thicket," repeated the hare. "Will you show me the good place?"

"Come quickly, I have a lot to do today," agreed the wolf and slipped into the forest. The hare followed him. The wolf walked along an anthill, then left, through a copse, and finally into an old fir grove.

They both sat down under a big fir tree and began to think. Dusk, silence, just the rustling of the spruce tops. The hare soon dozed off.

When he woke up, the wolf was no longer there. "He's gone to clean the forest," the hare said. "Lucky, he always knows what to do. But what should I do? His thicket is no good. Boring..."

Slipping out of the thicket, the hare crossed the den and found himself in a quiet corner of the forest where other animals rarely visit. Suddenly, a voice above his head said, "Hello, bunny!" The hare was so startled that he jumped into the fern bush in one leap.

A lynx was stretched out on a tree branch.

"What are you doing?" asked the hare.

"Taking photos," the lynx said, reluctantly. He put his left leg over his right and nodded to the camera hanging on the branch: "Look, soon I'll have a picture for the cover of a magazine."

"Interesting," said the rabbit. "How did you think of that?"

"Well, how do you usually think of something? You rest on a branch, turn on the music... You need to feel free," chuckled the lynx. The camera shutter clicked. The lynx re-set it and started posing again.

The hare looked around. On a branch? He leaned resolutely and jumped. The hare was only on the pine branch for a short moment. The very next moment, he was on the ground, in the same ferns.

"Well, have you figured out what to do?" the lynx asked lazily, stretched and arched his back.

"I can't think on a twig," snapped the hare. "Time is too short. I can't think of anything. My thoughts are definitely longer."

And he set off in a bored hare's pace towards the woods, where he could hear loud birds singing.

A fox stood in the woods with a twig and sheet music in his hand. Her bicycle was tied to a tree.

"What are you doing?" the hare did not understand.

"I'm teaching the birds a song. When the children are hatched, we will go to the Song Festival!" The fox quickly looked over his shoulder and raised his paws as if he was about to fly.

"Now, back to the beginning!" she said and waved her twig.

The chorus of birds immediately started singing:

"What are you doing, little children,

Sitting in a circle?

We are reading a book,

"We're reading a book lost by a bunny."

"What book?" the hare again didn't understand. "I haven't lost a book. I don't have any books."

"Then come to my green library. I'll give you one. After a choir rehearsal," said the fox.

"Where?" asked the hare.

“Right here, in the forest! This location is close to all the forest animals! And domestic ones don’t have far to go if they need to know something. Birds come for the notes. You see, today I thought of starting a choir for them. Come,” said the fox and turned back to the singers.

“I thought of a choir...” sighed the hare. “Everybody thinks of something. How do they know what to invent? If I knew what to invent, I would have invented it long ago!”

For a couple of hours, the hare stalked boredly along the forest edge, kicking the snipe and waiting for something to suddenly come to mind.

But only the fox came.

In fact, she rode. She arrived, got off her bike, climbed up on a stump, found a book on the library shelf, handed it to the bunny and got back on her bike. “We’ll have an orchestra rehearsal in a minute,” the fox exclaimed and disappeared into the bushes.

The hare turned the book over, shrugged his shoulders and put it in his pocket. After a few steps, he looked around. A ditch, overgrown with small willows, began nearby. “What a nice place,” thought the hare. “How did I not notice it before!”

And he shuffled into the ditch.

Suddenly a thought popped into his head. “I could sit here and read!” the hare thought. He took the book out of his pocket and settled down among the willow bushes. Comfortable, secret, nobody sees, nobody bothers... He opened the first page. The willows chattered softly, as if they were telling him something.

An hour later, a fly flew by. “Aren’t you bored here?” she asked, lowering herself to the hare’s ear.

“Don’t disturb!” The hare swatted the fly away with his paw. He stretched sweetly, listened to the willow twittering, turned the page in the book – and continued reading.

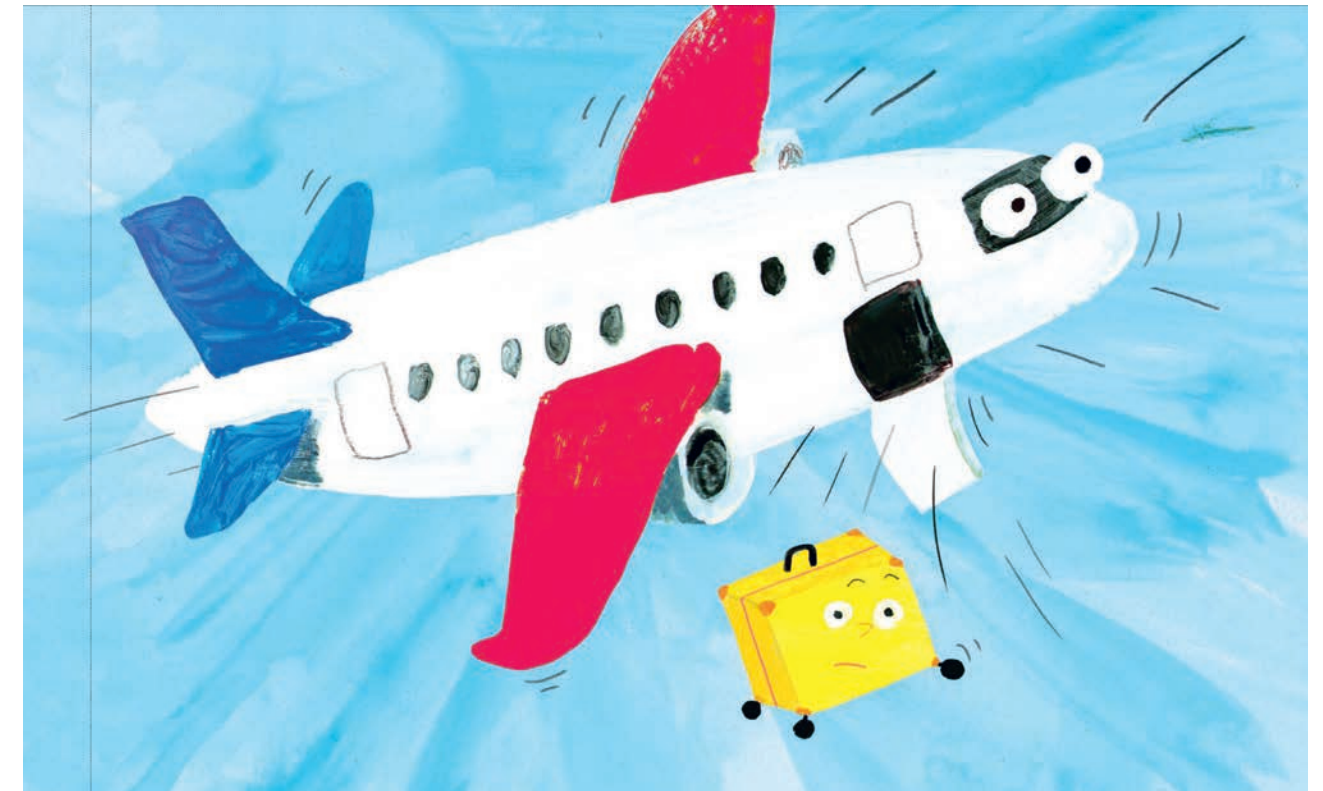
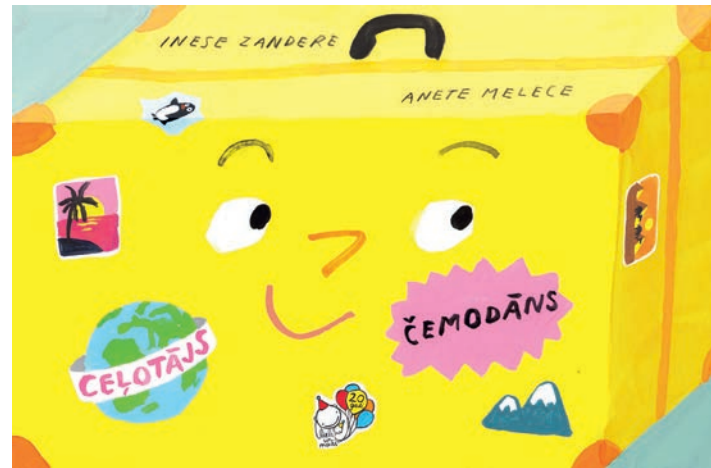
The book *Latvian Animals* was created as part of a unique project initiated by Inese Zandere, where fairy tales were visualized through photography, capturing actors in the roles of animals in the Latvian countryside—fields, forests, and rivers. The book harmoniously combines text—five fairy tales by Inese Zandere—with photographs featuring well-known actors portraying animals, photographed by Kristaps Kalns.

The book’s innovative visual concept was recognized in 2010 with the International Jānis Baltvilks Prize for Book Art, awarded by IBBY Latvia. The jury noted that:

“The original, contemporary use of multiple media and the inclusion of intriguing details introduce a new chapter in Latvian children’s book design trends. This illustrated book, which features a dynamic and spatially engaging photographic composition, has the potential to inspire future works in children’s literature, encouraging the field to evolve alongside the dimensions in which children live today.”



9. **CEĻOTĀJS ČEMODĀNS.** 2024
 Illustrated by Anete Melece
 Rīga: Liels un mazs
 (The Traveller Trunk)



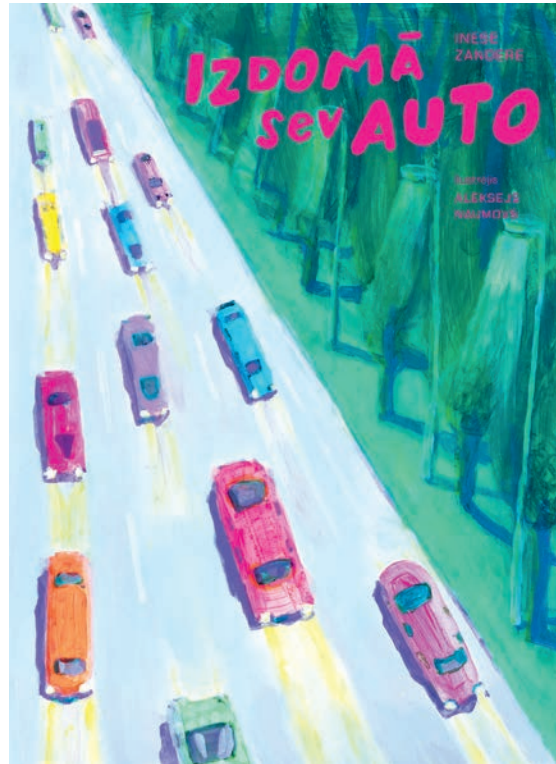
A suitcase with secret contents falls out of a flying aeroplane. It survives its tumble and escapes drowning in the ocean, falling into a volcano, getting lost in a jungle, and freezing in a glacier.

The author uses fantasy and the repetitive form of a poem to build suspense as the suitcase's mysterious contents are revealed at the end—it has brought migratory birds back home from the south.

ON THE PLANE IN THE AIR,
 THERE ONCE TRAVELLED A TRUNK.
 IT WAS LONG AND IT WAS TALL,
 IT WAS WIDE, NOT PAPER-THIN,
 IT WAS HEAVY, BULGING BIG –
 BUT A FEW COULD LIFT A TRUNK LIKE THAT.
 WE DON'T KNOW WHAT'S INSIDE.



10. Illustrated by Aleksejs Naumovs
Rīga: Liels un mazs
(Imagine Your Vehicle)



The heroes of these poems are various cars and machines—ranging from limousines, buses, and Formula 1 racers to milk trucks, combines, and garbage trucks.

Cars take on many roles—they are travelers, first-graders, Formula 1 racers, military vehicles protecting Latvia, and even a garbage truck. Their presence spans different areas of human life and all four seasons, each with its specific tasks, celebrations, and natural scenery.

The work of painter and experienced book illustrator Aleksejs Naumovs perfectly brings the book's concept to life: uniting the worlds of humans, technology, and nature into a single image, where nature is an all-encompassing force that includes everything created by humans, striving to maintain harmony and balance.

The artist gives objects personality, turning each vehicle into an active character alongside living beings.

Through poetry and visual art, the book encourages ecological thinking, which is most naturally and easily absorbed in childhood—a time when, in a child's perception, nature is neither something to be controlled nor exploited. Instead, a car is just like any other playmate—no different from a puppy or an acorn.



INTERVIEW

GRAB IT WHILE YOU CAN

Interview with Inese Zandere

Egils Zirnis, “SestDiena,” July 24, 2024

Both print and online: <https://www.diena.lv/raksts/sestdiena/sestdienas-salons/ker-kamer-vari-14321780>

The laureate of the International Jānis Baltvilks Award, poet Inese Zandere, on how to distinguish good from bad, the flourishing of Latvian children’s book illustrations, and why reading is essential:

“As a child, no one knows whether life will be long. Grab it while you can—later, there won’t be time to read.”

Her grandson Krišs was much less afraid of pricking his finger thanks to reading—an example of how poetry can influence a person, says Inese Zandere, referring to her children’s poetry book *All Better! (Līze Analīze)*. Recently, in the Botanical Garden of the University of Latvia, she received the *White Wolf’s Little Boat*—the Jānis Baltvilks Award for Children’s Literature for her three books published in 2023: *Birds Watch Us Too (Putni mūs redz)*, *Imagine Your Vehicle (Izdomā sev auto)* and *Invisible Plasters (Neredzamiē plāksterīši)*.

How do you distinguish a good children’s poem from a bad one? You can look at it from two perspectives—as an editor and as a creator.

Whether we talk about poetry, politics, or any other area of life, distinguishing good from bad is an aesthetic category.

Aesthetic, not ethical?

You reach the ethical through the aesthetic. It’s actually easier to explain how to distinguish good from bad in politics. Manipulations that are pointless or even harmful are mostly also tasteless. When listening to someone speak, you quickly grasp—based on how they speak—whether their words have meaning. Because meaning creates good form. The good, the meaningful, that which has direction and ethical justification, creates good form around itself.

It’s the same with poetry—the form is largely shaped by the content within it. A good poem, especially in children’s literature, must have a distinct form. As Jānis Baltvilks used to say: children’s literature is essentially music; it must have a sound quality. That is definitely one of my criteria.

A poem’s form might not conform to the majority of readers’ expectations—it might be highly specific and free—but fundamentally, you immediately sense whether there

is an essential link between how the poem is structured and what it conveys. Or whether everything is artificially forced—some rhymes are fabricated, a word could just as well be there or not. In short, a feeling of redundancy.

I control myself—not just for children’s poems—by reading the written text aloud. If I stumble or feel uncomfortable at some point, I know that something is wrong, not just with the form but also with the thought.

Can a text feel uncomfortable even if no one else is present?

I can imagine someone being present. But there is a difference. When composer Ēriks Ešenvalds asked me to record the libretto for his opera *The Walled-in (Iemūrētie)* to help him connect with it, I invited my neighbor, poet Ērika Bērziņa, and read it aloud to her. But she had a sick child, her husband kept knocking on the door, and she had to leave frequently—so she never got to hear the whole thing.

What’s the difference between texts for adults and children?

I’m not sure the difference is as big as people imagine. Children’s books are also suitable for adults, that’s clear. Likewise, children—if they are able to read the text—can read and interpret books that are not specifically addressed to them in their own way.

I’ve often told the story of how, at the age of four in Dobeles, my friend Ilze and I would write letters to each other and drop them in mailboxes—we had learned to read very early. I was fascinated by large-format books, such as the 1947 edition of the Latvian epic *Lāčplēsis* by Andrejs Pumpurs, with silk paper and Ģirts Vilks’ illustrations, or Rainis’ play *Fire and Night (Uguns un nakts)*. One might think: what kind of child reads *Lāčplēsis*?

But last year, I attended an event dedicated to children’s literature in Pilsrundāle with [painter and long-time Rundāle Palace Museum director] Imants Lancmanis. He spoke about the books of his childhood, and it turned out we had the same experiences—Lancmanis had learned to read because of *Lāčplēsis*!

At first, *Lāčplēsis* was read aloud to him, but then his mother told him that she didn’t have time to read such thick books aloud—he had to learn to read it himself. So he did.

For me, the most captivating parts of *Lāčplēsis* were the episodes that resembled fairy tales. The size of the book didn’t scare me—if you can read the words, you just keep reading, just as you walk or breathe without consciously thinking about each step or breath. In *Lāčplēsis*, I felt the form. The classical meter rocked me like large waves, and I could sense it while reading. Even the parts I didn’t understand stayed with me in some way.

Later, when I picked up *Fire and Night*, I was delighted—all the characters were already familiar [since the same storyline is interpreted differently—translator’s note]. The bright, positive character of Laimdota never appealed to me—I always preferred Spidola, the more contradictory figure. The realization that they were two halves of the same whole came much later.

Another shared childhood reading experience for Lancmanis and me turned out to be Anna Brigadere's fairy-tale plays. Plays are very structured. The works of Rainis and Brigadere sit on the border between poetry and prose—they contain a lot of poetry. I believe that from this early reading experience, there is a direct path to the ability to distinguish a good text from a weak one—whether content and form align or whether form is being pushed forward while the content remains vague. Or vice versa—if something is drawn out but lacks form.

By the way, speaking of thick books, *In Search of the Castaways* didn't interest me at first. Maybe there was too much geography and too many coordinates in the beginning? But after some time, I picked it up again and ended up reading it seven times.

Maybe it's the slow build-up in older texts that tails to spark interest at first, like in H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine* or Obruchev's *Plutonia*—when you, as a young reader, finally get past the long, boring opening chatter of the old men and reach the Morlocks or dinosaurs, it suddenly becomes incredibly exciting.

A children's book is better off pulling the reader in right away, whether through form or plot. This is especially true for modern children—they won't get through a slow and overly long introduction. In a TV segment about this year's Baltvilks Prize international laureate, British writer Kiran Millwood Hargrave and her novel *Julia and the Shark*, there was a perfect example of this. The segment's creator, failing to understand the nature of the book, handed it to a seven-year-old girl and asked her to read the first few sentences. It was clear the child was struggling through something completely uninteresting to her. Even though the book is fascinating, it's simply meant for older children.

But you yourself said that age categories are relative—some kids read books not meant for their age group.

While I understand the reasoning behind age classifications, I can't imagine someone forcing me to read only children's literature when I was 12 years old. I still read good children's books—I liked them! But what could have stopped me from reading books for adults as well? You need to know the child personally to understand what suits them and what doesn't.

Recently, a mother of two young daughters told me that when she visited a library, her children were directed to a table filled only with Barbie and Frozen board books. The librarian even added that the other shelves would be too boring for her daughters. The mother was shocked.

Maybe the librarian's experience led her to conclude which books interest certain age groups the most?

Either experience or prejudice—or a one-size-fits-all approach. But you can't measure all children with the same yardstick. I'm not saying my childhood reading experience should be imitated, only that children shouldn't be treated as if texts need to be adapted for them. They will adapt the text themselves—the only requirement is that they know how to read. Then the act of reading and understanding can take place.

Changes in tempo, rhythm, and variations within a book's text and illustrations are key to its readability. The text needs to be dynamic and varied, not monotonous and repetitive. A good book can't be like an empty table or a long road through the Arizona desert, nor can it be a book that screams hysterically at the child, where the text pelts them like hailstones.

When you were compiling your children's poetry collection *Inside and Outside (Iekšiņa un ārīņa)*, did you think about tempo and rhythm?

Intuitively. Now, I definitely think about it more. In *Inside and Outside* it meant cutting out unnecessary verses, as I had written far more than what was included. In any case, I see structuring a collection as just as important as writing the poems themselves. Over the years, I've gotten better at recognizing when something is coming together and when something is still missing—and working toward building a cohesive whole.

How does your children's poetry come to life? Is it mostly intentional, or does it write itself?

Both ways. Over the years, it has become very easy for me to write poetry, especially for children. If I decide that I'm going to write something now, I just do it.

So it's easy for you to write rhymed verses on a given topic as well?

Yes and no. For example, when I was asked by doctors to help by creating poems about hospitals, I didn't feel pressured by the topic. *All better! (Līze Analīze)* came very easily—I didn't feel constrained by the theme. It was more difficult with poems about injuries because the framework felt a bit too direct. In general, being given a set theme tends to constrict me; it doesn't help. Still, in *Stay Safe (Bērnus, kas neiekrita)*, there are poems that have found their rightful place in the world, like *Collision in Space*.

Right now, I'm working again with artist Anita Paegle, with whom I created *The Cat on the Piano*. This project is connected to an artist residency in French Catalonia, by the Mediterranean Sea, at Esparrou Castle (*Château l'Esparrou*), which has been uninhabited since the 1980s. It's a beautiful, mysterious building where everything seems to have fallen asleep for an unknown period of time. I really liked Anita's drawing—a castle, a little boy in front of it, and a cat playing the violin—so I wrote a long poem that could become a picture book. When I later visited the castle myself, new poems emerged.

I remember how my grandson Krišs had an imaginary dog for a long time, and that gave me an idea—what if this ghostly castle was an imaginary castle, where an imaginary cat plays the violin to bring all kinds of ghosts and pranks to life? A marble dog barks, skeletons play chess...

More than once, I've written a poem after seeing an illustration, rather than the other way around. For example, my book *Lemonade (Limonāde)* was a collaboration with Edmunds Jansons. We had promised to participate in a summer event—a children's festival called *Limonāde Ziemeļblāzmā*, a nod to the times when parents were kids and drank lemonade instead of cola. Edmunds, inspired by his childhood in Brocēni, gave me his drawings and asked me to write poems.

The night before the event, I had only managed to write one and a half poems. I went to sleep. That night, I woke up six times, got out of bed, sat at my computer, and wrote the entire book. A book written in my sleep. When you sleep, you release stress, but your brain keeps working.

You often perform at schools, kindergartens, and libraries. Do you receive feedback?

Yes, I do. However, I don't read poems just to see how children will react. I observe the children themselves, sense the atmosphere in the room, and instinctively know what to choose from everything I have—what they will respond to. If I have doubts about whether a particular audience will appreciate a certain poem, I won't read it just to test them. My experience lets me predict their reaction.

How important is it to read poetry aloud to children who cannot yet read?

Extremely important. A small child is in a state of confusion—they are born into a world where everything moves, spins, and happens unexpectedly. Rhymes, music—anything that is rhythmically structured and harmonized—helps them feel that the world isn't just chaos. A structured text helps a small child feel safer in the world. It's not something they understand logically, but if you recite nursery rhymes, sing songs, or look at illustrations where form and content align, you are building within them a sense that order is possible. That they have a place in the world. That life isn't just a series of unpredictable events where something might suddenly attack and devour them, where they might disappear. Instead, they start feeling like a small part of a larger pattern. Perhaps Latvian children are particularly receptive to poetry because Latvian mentality itself is ornamental, patterned, musical, and rhythmic.

But what about literature without fear?

Traditional fairy tales have always been terrifying—they are not bedtime stories meant to lull children to sleep. But the point is about fear of chaos, about a sense of insecurity—and structured, clearly and firmly built texts can help a child reduce that fear. A text that holds together gives a sense of stability.

So even today's child can turn to a book as a stable value?

It all comes down to one thing—a child cannot engage with something they do not know how to use. A book, in its physical form, cannot be seen all at once—it unfolds over time and space, from page to page, line to line, word to word. This slows down the perception process, and slow reading helps lead to understanding.

I don't want to say that people didn't struggle with reading in the past—just as today, there were always those who read well and those who didn't. But overall, the problem of comprehension has become serious—many people are technically unable to read and process a text.

How do you notice this problem?

A striking example: one reason why students perform so poorly on math exams is their inability to understand word problems. So this isn't just about math—it's about reading comprehension and proficiency in Latvian. If a student doesn't understand what a word problem is asking, what needs to be determined, then they cannot solve it.

A teacher friend of mine told me that high school students often come up to her and ask, “*Teacher, what is this problem asking?*”—even when the entire problem is just one short paragraph. An untrained mind and a lack of reading skills prevent them from comprehending what is written.

Now we live in a digital childhood. Of course, it's not radically different from the past, but the speed of information is different, and visual stimuli dominate—attention is drawn by movement. When something moves in front of your eyes, you focus on it, regardless of what it is or whether you understand it.

When screen time is too high, it's difficult to expect children to develop a meaningful reading habit. I believe that before engaging with screens, children should first learn to navigate the analog world and printed text. If they do, screens won't destroy their reading ability later.

But the fact that teenagers stop reading, except for a few particularly interested ones, is natural—at that age, they are very preoccupied with themselves, and they are only interested in what directly relates to them.

Does poetry for teenagers exist?

Jānis Baltvilks believed that it couldn't exist. He called it the “unpoetic age”—those who claimed to write poetry for teenagers, he said, were just writing bad poetry. He thought teenagers should read real poetry, not some specially tailored “teen poetry.”

But I must admit—I do have some somewhat “teenage” poems, like the *Girlfriends* (*Draudzenes*) cycle in my collection *Inheritances* (*Mantojumi*).

Are you happy about the Baltvilks Prize?

Very happy. First, because Baltvilks was my friend and intellectual companion in many ways. Second, because this year marks both the 80th anniversary of Baltvilks' birth and the 20th anniversary of the award named after him—and I was involved in its founding.

Back when I was deeply involved with *Rīgas Laiks*, Jānis' passing hit me hard, and I realized that in children's literature, where his place was left empty, I was needed more. *Rīgas Laiks* would always have plenty of young intellectuals to carry it forward without me.

So we came up with the International Jānis Baltvilks Prize in children's literature and book design. Around the same time, the children's book publishing house *Liels un Mazs* was also founded—and this year, it's celebrating its 20th anniversary too. These things are an integral part of my life.

How has Latvian children's literature changed over the past 20 years?

Illustrations have progressed tremendously. In places where they are valued—like the Bologna Children's Book Fair and the Bratislava Illustration Biennale—our artists receive recognition and praise. In Bratislava, two of our illustrators have won the Golden Apple award in recent years—painter Jānis Blanks, who slowly, meticulously, and brilliantly illustrated the 100th book in the *Bikibuks* series, *Zemesvēzis* (*Mole Cricket*), and now Anete Bajāre-Babčuka for her illustrations in my book *Two Almas* (*Divas Almas*).

In Bologna, where competition at the major exhibitions is incredibly fierce, our artists Anete Melece, Elīna Brasliņa, and Aleksandra Runde have been recognized. Two books published by Liels un Mazs last year were included in Bologna's Top 100 Most Beautiful Books of the Year—Reinis Pētersons' illustrations for Latvian children's counting rhymes and Sven Neilands' illustrations for the poetry picture book *Kas zoodārzā notiek naktī* (*What Happens at the Zoo at Night*).

Anete Melece's *Kiosks* (*The Kiosk*) has been published in 22 countries, won the Peter Pan Prize in Sweden for the best-translated picture book of the year, and has been awarded in Italy and other places.

In short, everything related to picture books and illustrations has progressed fantastically and is gaining international recognition.

As for children's literature in terms of text, poetry remains an area where we stand out positively compared to our neighbors. Our children encounter poetry in kindergartens, schools, and at home—this is a wonderful aspect of Latvian culture that is still alive.

Within the poetry world itself, a generational shift is taking place. Our classics—Vācietis, Baltvilks, Čaklais, Brūveris, Kronbergs—are no longer with us. From the older generation, Uldis Auseklis, Arnolds Auziņš, and Māra Cielēna remain active.

What happens next? I feel reassured that talented poets have realized they can also write for children. Kārlis Vērdiņš has established himself as a recognizable children's literature author, and others like Inga Gaile, Žebers, Andris Akmentiņš have joined in. New names continue to emerge, such as Linda Mence (Gabarajeva), Krišjānis Zelģis, Ivars Šteinbergs, and others.

For a while, I was worried about the future, but now things are starting to look promising. Of course, they are different—they have different artistic means of expression, and we shouldn't measure them by the standards of the older generation.

So the Soviet-era attitude that poetry for children is “too easy” has finally ended?

Dilettantism never truly ends, but ideology is a tricky thing. I worked at a children's newspaper in the final years of the Soviet era—back when children still sent in poems about Lenin, because that was cultivated in schools. But I also witnessed the moment when they suddenly started writing poems about auseklīši (the traditional Latvian ornament that became a symbol of Latvia's independence movement). Since then, whenever I have had the opportunity to evaluate children's writing competitions, I have always insisted on two things: First, children should not be called poets. Second, we must push aside all cliché-ridden work—all the “*dear mothers*” and “*oh, my Latvia*” poems, because those are just the same old clichés in a different wrapping. I only publish poems that contain a genuine impression of something the child has actually thought and felt. Poetry should emerge as an event, not as a moralizing stance on something.



International Jānis Baltvilks Children's Literature Readings (2022).
Photo by Ieva Leiniša, LETA

THE SMALL IS BIG IN A BOOK

CONTRIBUTION TO THE INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S BOOK DAY IBBY MESSAGE 2018.

Written by Inese Zandere, Illustrated by Reinis Pētersons

People are inclined toward rhythm and regularity, just as magnetic energy organizes metal shavings in a physics experiment, just as a snowflake creates crystals out of water. In a fairy tale or poem, children enjoy repetition, refrains, and universal motifs because they can be recognized anew each time – they bring regularity to a text. The world gains a beautiful order. I still remember how as a child I struggled with myself over justice and symmetry, over equal rights for the left and the right: if I tapped a beat on the table, I counted how many times each finger got to play, so that the other ones wouldn't be offended. I tended to applaud by patting my right hand with the left, but then I thought that it was unfair and learned to do it the other way – left on right. This instinctive aspiration for balance is funny, of course, but it shows the need to prevent the world from becoming lopsided. I had the feeling that I was the one who was responsible for the balance of it all.

Children's inclination toward poems and stories likewise stems from their need to bring regularity to the chaos of the world. From indeterminacy, everything tends toward order. Nursery rhymes, folk songs, games, fairy tales, poetry – all these rhythmically organized forms of existence help small people structure their presence in the greater chaos. They create an instinctual awareness that order is possible in the world and everyone has his or her unique place in it. Everything works toward this goal: the rhythmic organization of the text, the rows of letters and the design of the page, the impression of the book as a well-structured whole. The great is revealed in the small and we model this in children's books even if we are not thinking about God or fractals. A children's book is a miraculous force that promotes the small person's great desire and ability to be. It promotes his or her courage to live.

In a book, the small is always big, instantly, not just upon reaching adulthood. A book is a mystery in which something unsought can be found, or something beyond one's reach. That which readers of a certain age cannot grasp with their minds remains in their awareness as an imprint and continues to act even if not thoroughly understood. A picture book can function as a treasure chest of wisdom and culture even for adults, just as children can read a book intended for adults and find their own story, a hint about their budding lives. Cultural context shapes people, laying down the bed for impressions that will arrive in the future, as well as for the trying experiences they will have to survive while keeping themselves whole.

A children's book signifies respect for the greatness of the small. It signifies a world that is created anew each time, a playful and beautiful seriousness, without which everything, including children's literature, is just empty busywork.

In short:

A book makes the small person intuit that order is possible in the world, and everyone has a unique place in it. Everything works toward this goal: the rhythmic organization of the text, the rows of letters, the design of the page, the impression of the book as a well-structured whole. The great is revealed in the small and we model it in children's books. A book is a mystery in which something unsought can be found, or something beyond one's reach. A children's book signifies respect for the greatness of the small.

Translated by Ieva Lešinska

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Inese Zandere and her colleagues from the publishing house "Liels un Mazs",
pictured by illustrator Reinis Pētersons.

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Nominee for the Hans Christian Andersen Award 2026

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