

“What Do You Dream About?”

Text by [Kadri Hinrikus](#)

Illustrated by [Anu Kalm](#)

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Age: 7+

Kids' lives are nowhere as easy as grown-ups might think! For example, Eve's father works far away in the capital, so the girl misses him all the time. Andreas, on the other hand, is worried that his parents are in over their heads with taking care of his baby sister – all it's been since she was born is nothing but work and caring for her, with hardly any time left over for chatting and having fun. Helen, who is a city girl, finds herself afraid of everything when she attends her great-uncle's birthday celebration in the countryside: frogs, worms, bees – you name it. Jake is certainly there to support her, but then, a surprising sense of unease creeps into his heart, too. It sure is nice when there are adults around who know to take kids' worries seriously. And it sure is astounding when they're able to offer a pretty good solution!



Reading sample

[pp 5–6]

Carl

Summer vacation is quite the thing. How many wonderful things can happen! Think of all the surprises you can have over three months! Rich summer memories can help you ease into the first weeks of school a little less painfully once fall arrives.

Even on the way to his first day of school on September 1st, Carl hears from one classmate that he got a new dad over the summer. John, on the other hand—a boy who always tattled about every little thing—got his old dad back.

Maria got a pair of pink glasses; Stella, Roland, Mark, and Fred all got new phones. Herman was proudly limping around on crutches because his leg was put into a cast after he flew down the stairs on his scooter.

Tommy shows off pictures of his puppy and Carrie of her newborn brother. The class is divided on the last two: one group thinks the little brother is cuter, while the other prefers the puppy.

Gus uses every chance he has to wheel around on his new bike. Helen got a new home over the summer, and Rob got to fly in an airplane.

Carl somehow manages to stay strong, but the next week, when John starts boasting about how he got a tick while he was at his family's summer cabin, the boy runs out of the room in tears.

"Why so glum?" Dad asks when Carl gets home.

Wiping his snotty nose on his sleeve, Carl starts listing off all his classmates' summer achievements.

"I'm the only one who got nothing!" he whines, flopping down onto his belly on the couch. The tears just keep on coming.

Carl's dad sits down next to him.

"I think you're wrong about that," Dad says slowly.

"You got much smarter and stronger over the summer."

"What do you mean?" the boy asks.

"A year ago, you didn't know how to drill screws into the wall, but you learned when you helped me to build the sauna this summer."

Carl grunts.

"And Grandma taught you how to plant apple trees. You weren't able to do that before! The two of you planted four whole trees in the yard!"

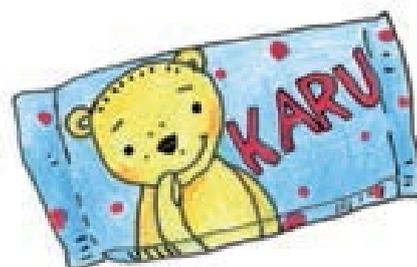
Dad ruffles Carl's hair.

"Did you really forget that for the first time ever, you worked up the courage to swim to the other side of the river? I thought you were going to explode with pride when you came out of the water!"

Carl sighs. There was no point in crowing about things like that to his classmates.

He tries to console himself with a mini chocolate bar his mom had put on a tray. Instead of getting a mouthful of sweet comfort when he pops it into his mouth, Carl grimaces from an unexpected burst of pain. He tenderly probes his gums with his tongue, and a grin spreads across his face.

The next morning, right in the coatroom, Carl cries out to his classmates: "I lost a tooth this summer! I lost my very first tooth!"



[pp 9–11]

Timmy

Timmy lives in a village. His sun-yellow house has flowerbeds and gooseberry bushes all around it and stands in a straight row on the edge of town next to others just like it. A couple houses further down the line, there are only fields, meadows, and forest.

Timmy has to get by being home alone in summer when the preschool is closed and his parents are at work. Naturally, Timmy gets by just fine! He goes to work just like his mom and dad.

Up in the attic, Timmy digs his grandma's old mailbag out of a pile of things that aren't useful anymore. His gram-gram once used it to deliver people's mail to them. Gram-gram died, but the bag can certainly still be used for something.

"I'm going to be a mailman when I grow up," Timmy confidently decides.

But why should he have to wait so long?

Timmy slings the mailbag over his shoulder. It is very big, can hold quite a lot, and almost brushes the ground as he walks. Timmy takes his mom's book of crossword puzzles and two newspapers from the living room table, and sticks them inside.

Inside his dad's desk drawer, he finds three postcards and some papers with the word INVOICE written on them. All this stuff fits snugly into the mailbag.

One more thing needs to be done before he sets off: a proper mailman must wear a nametag!

Timmy cuts out a nametag-sized piece of paper, uses crayons to draw the name CRISSTOFFER on it, and pins it to his sweater. He's very pleased with how he looks in the mirror. The mailbag is cool and the name sounds right for a grown up. Timmy is kind of a baby's name—you can't go to work with a name like that!

Chrisstoffer pulls on a baseball cap, closes the garden gate behind him, and sets off with a spring in his step. It's his very first day as a working man! The mailman stops by the neighbor's mailbox and slips his mom's book of crossword puzzles through the slot. At the next house, the neighbors receive his dad's INVOICE.

Living in a little red house across the road is Ms. Vicky, who has a pretty gray cat. Chrisstoffer leaves her a postcard with the picture of a cat on it.

One newspaper thumps against the bottom of a mailbox attached to a house where the owners recently had twins. Mr. Victor's mailbox gulps down the second newspaper. Two more postcards slide smoothly through mailbox slots, and Chrisstoffer's workday is finished.

"You don't know where my crossword puzzles have gone, do you?" Mom asks Dad that evening.

"Have you seen my newspapers?" Dad asks with a frown.

The boy who could answer their questions is already fast asleep in bed, because it's not easy being a working man!



Chrisstoffer sets off again on his postal round the very next day. He stuffs his mom's home decoration magazine into the mailbag along with a fresh newspaper nabbed from the kitchen counter. Dad's letters and a paper with the words WORK CONTRACT on it also find their way into the bag. Chrisstoffer takes along one of his drawings for the baby twins.

The mailman has a spring in his step again. It's his second day as a working man!

Chrisstoffer delivers the home decoration magazine to Ms. Vicky, the WORK CONTRACT to Mr. Victor, the drawing to the twins, and the fresh newspaper to the green house. One letter goes to the Fisher family, another to Ms. Ursula, and a third to the schoolteacher's house.

"Being a mailman is terrific," Chrisstoffer declares as he trots home. "Tomorrow, I'll do an even bigger round. People sure must like getting mail every day."

But instead of going on the next day's delivery round, Chrisstoffer has to set out again that same evening. His parents received a few telephone calls meanwhile. Ms. Vicky with the gray cat, Mr. Victor, the twins' father, and even the schoolteacher called.

So, Chrisstoffer is forced to sling the mailbag over his shoulder again. He holds his mom's hand tightly and the two head out. The little mailman doesn't have much of a spring in his step anymore.

Mom's crossword puzzles and her home decoration magazine, Dad's newspapers, postcards, letters, and contracts all go back into Chrisstoffer's bag. Mr. Victor also gives the mailman two apples and Ms. Vicky with the gray cat slips a bar of chocolate into his mailbag. Chrisstoffer lets the twins keep his drawing.

At home, the boy takes off his nametag and turns back into Timmy. He sits on his mom's lap to eat one of the apples.

"Your career can wait just a little bit longer, what do you think?" Dad reckons.

Just to be sure, Dad decides to keep his desk drawers locked from now on.

[pp 37–41]

Laura

Laura is so excited, she starts hiccupping. After a great deal of pleading, grunting, lugging, and tugging, she finally got her tent set up in the yard. The posts are nice and deep in the ground and the cords are pulled taut. Grandma lumbers inside, sinks into a creaking armchair, and lets her eyes flutter shut. All that effort was a little much for an old woman like her, so she says she'd like to take a little nap.

"Grammy, I'm going to take my bed linens out to the tent," Laura declares, running inside.

Grandma nods. Laura goes back out with her pillow and blanket.

"Should I take my mattress, too?"

Grandma nods. Hauling the mattress outside is a difficult task, indeed. It didn't want to listen at all, getting stuck in doorways and tending to make Laura do whatever it wanted, instead. Finally, she gets it into the tent.

"What else should I have for spending the night in a tent?" Laura asks, suddenly standing next to Grandma again. Grammy wakes up with a start.

"Maybe a water bottle for if you get thirsty at night?"

Laura dashes off to fill her water bottle while Grandma plods into the kitchen to peel potatoes. Before long, Laura is back again.

"What else should I bring?"

"Take everything you can think of and that you think will be nice. I shouldn't have to tell you over and over!"

Laura carries out her stuffed monkey, another pillow, a notebook and colored pencils, a book of fairy tales, an umbrella, slippers, a jar of jam, and a wallet containing two euros.

"I guess I've got everything I need now," she says

with a nod as she sets up a cozy nest.

Laura impatiently waits for evening to arrive so she can finally spend her very first night in a tent. She'd never have come up with the idea on her own—for that, she had her big brother, who told her about how he had slept in a tent when he was out camping with friends and how fun it was. Laura wants to do everything just like her big brother.

It starts getting dark out rather early that August evening.

“Goodnight, then!” Grandma says from the front stoop after they'd had dinner and she walked Laura to the tent. “It's going to be a nice warm night. Sleep well!”

“Goodnight!” Laura calls out, waving to Grammy, then ducks into the tent.

Grammy sits in front of the house for a little while longer—the phlox are in full bloom, a couple birds are chirping, and the stars are slowly appearing in the sky.

“We'll see where this night goes,” Grandma chuckles to herself as she finally goes inside.

Laura gets all settled in: she tucks her little nest snugly around her, draws the water bottle a little closer, pulls up her blanket, hugs her stuffed monkey tightly, and closes her eyes. Now, she just needs to fall asleep.

However, Laura opens her eyes again. Strange—it feels just like she's lying beneath the wide-open sky. Everything seems so quiet, but at the same time, there's rustling and creaking all around.

Laura takes a sip of water, lies down again, and squeezes her monkey more tightly under her arm.

“It's so fun sleeping in a tent,” she reassures herself.

“It's so fun ... so fun!” she tries humming.

Suddenly, a soft thump comes from somewhere very nearby. Laura sits up in a flash and listens hard, holding her breath. Even the smells are completely

new and different at night, somehow! “The yard sure doesn't smell this way in the daytime,” Laura thinks. She lies down again.

“It's fun!” Laura tries convincing herself, her eyes as big as dinner plates.

The dusk has turned to darkness. The more Laura stares into it, the more unfamiliar sounds she hears. And all those sounds are coming from right around her tent: something peeps, something pants, something whoops, something smacks, something yips, something cracks, something splashes, something buzzes, something squeals, something roars.

When Laura rushes inside the house, she's so out of breath that she's unable to gasp out a single word at first. Grandma sets down the book she was reading.

“How is it out in the tent?”

Laura composes herself a little.

“Not bad. I came to see if maybe you needed anything. Water, for instance?”

“It's great that you came. I wouldn't mind a glass of water, indeed. Would you bring me one from the kitchen?”



Laura trots into the kitchen, turning on the lights in all the rooms on her way.

“If you want, then I could sleep with you here tonight,” Laura offers when she returns with the water. “Maybe you’ll want some more to drink in a little while.”

“That’d be very nice of you. I’ve been dreadfully thirsty today. Take a pillow from the couch and come lay behind me.”

Grandma makes space in the bed while Laura snuggles in next to her. Being between four walls and by her Grammy, she starts feeling as right as rain again.

Setting her book on the nightstand, Grandma asks, “Would you like me to leave the light on?”

“Yes, please.”

Laura picks at the duvet cover.

“Grammy, have you ever slept alone in a tent outside at night?”

“I don’t believe I ever have.”

“Then why did you let me stay out there?”

“Because you wanted to so dearly. You were as insistent as a mosquito.”

Laura thinks quietly for a little while.

“I do want to. Another time, though.”

“Of course, darling. Tents aren’t mice that will skitter away now, are they?”

Laura suddenly comes up with a great idea. “Maybe I should practice sleeping in a tent in the daytime first,” she says.

“That sounds very reasonable. Let’s do it. I’m sure you’ll become the bravest tent-sleeper around before long. Now, close your eyes and fall asleep—I’ll be right here with you.”

Soon enough, both Grammy and Laura are sleeping soundly.

[pp 43–44]

Eve

Eve is very angry. Her birthday is just around the corner, but Dad still hasn’t come home yet.

“Daddy’s away all the time. I don’t like him being away so much,” Eve grumbles.

“You’re old enough now to know better than to criticize him like that,” Mom scolds her. “You know very well that Dad works hard in the capital to make money so that we can all live in such a nice big house like we do.”

“How can we all live together when Dad is away at work all the time?”

“He’s not at work all the time—he was home just last Sunday.”

“Last Sunday was a long time ago. I want Daddy to come home,” Eve demands.

She doesn’t like the bland bowl of porridge in front of her. The thick sweater Mom told her to put on is dumb, and she can’t find her favorite hair clip.

“Don’t pout. If you’re a good girl, then we’ll surprise Daddy by going up to see him on the morning of your birthday—how does that sound?”

Eve becomes a good girl in a split second, and even finds her hair clip under the bed.

Early on Eve’s birthday morning, she and her mom board a train to the city. Mom was up all night baking a cheesecake and cheese pastries, ironing her dress, straightening her hair, painting her nails, wearing a face mask, and curling her eyelashes. As a result, she looks a little worn out. Mom packed the baked goods to take along, so the whole train car smells like a birthday.

Eve is wearing a pom-pom hat she got as a present; Mom has on high-heeled boots.

“This train is so slow! Why won’t it go any faster?” Eve asks impatiently.

“The train is going just as fast as it should. Be patient and don’t fuss.”

Once they arrive, Eve and her mom board a tram, then hurry onto a bus, and finally walk the rest of the way. Eve’s hat keeps slipping down over her eyes and Mom is limping because the boots pinch her feet.

“Look, we’re here,” Mom says, trying to smile. She presses the buzzer victoriously. “Now, you finally get to see Daddy.”

Mom presses the buzzer several more times. Finally, she uses her key to open the door and Eve scampers inside.

“Where’s Daddy?” she demands after checking all the rooms in the apartment but only finding Dad’s glasses.

Mom sits down exhaustedly in the entryway, right in the middle of all the bags they brought, and tries to pull her boots off her aching feet.

“I guess he’s already gone to work,” she sighs with a sour grimace. “All he does is work, work, work! What kind of a life is that?! He can’t even find a single second for us.”

Mom looks so down in the dumps that Eve dials Dad’s number. As soon as he picks up, she blurts out in a single breath: “Hi, Daddy, Mommy’s criticizing you because you’re at work all the time. Stop it this very instant and come straight here! We’re moving out of that big, nasty house. She’s sitting on the floor and pouting.”

Daddy gets home by lunchtime. They all eat the pastries together and Mommy’s feet stop aching.

Translated by Adam Cullen

