



“Sander’s Microscope ”

Text by [Kristiina Kass](#)

Illustrated by [Marja-Liisa Plats](#)

Tänapäev 2014, 44 pp

ISBN 9789949274260

Storybook, fiction

Age: 7+

This humorous story is about a boy named Sander. Old Aunt Aili, who until this year has only given Sander knit socks or long johns for his birthday, gives him a microscope. Everyone is enthralled by the gift at first, but the more time that passes, the bigger are the problems that the microscope and the objects and creatures Sander observes with it bring along. Ordinarily, such a story would end with the boy’s mother throwing in the towel and running away from the bugs to a different city, but Kristiina Kass wouldn’t be herself if she did not give the story a real twist. And so, the author – who has implemented situational comedy in quite a few of her earlier works as well – has a jar holding a spider end up in the microscope box when Aunt Aili donates it to needy children during the church Christmas drive. The relatively shocking outcome is softened by an additional present for the child who receives that package.



Reading sample

[pp 15–19]

The guests and their presents dwindled more and more towards the end of the week, and no one came at all anymore on Sunday. But Sander did not mind. He had as much material to investigate as he could need now. Actually, his entire room was filled from floor to ceiling with crates, boxes, jars, and bags. Sander could sit at his desk for hours on end studying a fly wing or a mosquito larvae. It was fascinating! On top of that, neither Sander's father nor his mother would bother him when he was at work, because the boy had hung a sign on his door that read: Please do not disturb! His parents were quite content with the situation, because the boy – who had been so noisy before – was now sitting well-behaved in his room “developing himself”, as his mother called it. Before long, though, a cruel end came to all of this.

One night, when a little over a week had passed since Sander's birthday, he was woken up by an awful screech. “GET IT AWAY!” Sander's mother screamed. “SQUASH IT TO DEATH! AAHH!” Sander rushed into his parents' bedroom, because his mother's life was obviously in serious danger. His father had turned on the light, and Sander saw his mother looking crazed, dashing from one end of the bed to the other, making the mattress springs creak.

“Calm down, dear! It was just a bad dream!” Sander's father said to try to calm her down, but she just kept acting as if she were out of her mind.

“Can't you dummies see?!” Sander's mother squealed as loud as she could. “This whole darned room is seething with spiders! And they were climbing over my face!”

Only then did Sander notice the spiders. They were on the ceiling and on every wall, in the bed and on the nightstands, big ones and little ones. And not just spiders! An army of ants was marching across the floor, and a couple of corpulent beetles were hanging from the curtains. Sander's father bolted into the hallway and turned the light on there, too. There were not all that many bugs in the hallway, but the kitchen was chock full of ants.



/—/
[pp 26–32]

Sander and his dad worked on getting rid of the bugs for a whole week. Dad even took off from work, and Sander didn't have to go to school because of "pneumonia". There was a big job ahead of them. They had to shake out all the clothes in the cupboards and pack them away in airtight plastic bags. All the bags of flour and boxes of cereal needed to be checked, and all the bread and cookies had to be thrown away because they were infested with ants. In the end, Dad had to call an exterminator, because some of the creepy-crawlies managed to avoid the vacuum cleaner. After the procedure was done, the house reeked several times worse than a cartful of moldy bread heels.

When Mom finally returned from Pärnu, our home was truly cleaner than ever before. Still, for a long time after that dreadful night, Mom would constantly inspect all the walls, floors, and ceilings, and would always startle if she saw even a fly. Nevertheless, she did calm down again after a while.

"You will not bring a single bug into this house ever again, in any case!" she scolded Sander. "No dead ones, and no live ones, under any condition!"

Sander gave her his word that he wouldn't.

Mom eyed him sternly. "I've given a lot of thought to what we're going to do with that microscope of yours," she finally spoke. "At first, I wanted to just toss that gadget out in the trash, but then I reckoned it wouldn't be a very nice thing to do to Auntie Aili. So, I sent it back to her, instead."

"What do you mean, "back"?" Sander exclaimed incredulously.

"I know that returning presents isn't a polite thing to do," his mom explained apologetically, "but I wrote her a nice letter to go along with it."

Sander still couldn't understand a word she was saying.

"But I lent my microscope to Kalle yesterday!"

"Listen, that nettlesome box has been under your desk all this time!" Mom argued. "I didn't want to even look at the microscope, so I took the box straight to the post office and sent it to Antie Aili. I hope you cleaned it up nice and neat before you put it away!"

Sander was silent for a few moments. He was thinking. He was thinking extremely hard.

"Mom," he finally said very cautiously. "I lent Kalle my microscope without the box. I'd forgotten that box was underneath my desk. I actually thought I'd taken it out to the dumpster ages ago."

Now, it was his mother's turn to be silent. She felt her heart dreadfully skip a beat. "But that box of yours wasn't empty," she finally stammered, blinking fast and nervously. "There's no way I'd be so foolish as to send someone an empty box."

Sander wrung his hands and stared at his mother with guilt in his eyes.

"It wasn't empty. There was a jar in it."

Mom's face paled, and the left corner of her eye started to twitch a little. It looked as if she were winking at Sander, although the situation wasn't cheerful at all.

"So, what was in the jar?" she finally brought herself to ask.

Translated by Adam Cullen

