



### **The Hidden Silver Treasure Chest**

Text by Mika Keränen  
Illustrated by Marja-Liisa Plats  
Jutulind 2009, 118 pages  
ISBN 978-9985-9891-7-3  
Storybook, fiction  
Age: 9+

Rights sold: Finnish

The secret club founded by ten-year-old Mari and her four friends faces yet another mystery. Mari's grandfather finds an unopened letter in a book, which details some treasure hidden in the Tartu Botanical Garden during World War II. The children have to make use of only a few clues to determine where the treasure can be found. In the course of their investigations, they look for the old city wall, get to learn some Latin and the history of the Students' Society, and find out which games were played by the children in their very same neighborhood eighty years ago. When in a tight spot, their sharp wits and quick legs come to their rescue. The children's search is successful, and the treasure they find has great cultural and historical significance.

The author sets his popular children's crime series in Supilinn – an area of crowded little wooden houses known for its special milieu. Keränen's characters are based on his own children and their friends.

#### Awards:

2012 Nukits Competition, 2nd place  
(The Hidden Silver Treasure Chest, The Old Pink House, The Mysterious Flower Snatcher)

2009 Children's Literature Award of the Cultural Endowment of Estonia

## Reading sample

### Chapter 3

#### *The family secret*

Mari and Granddad leant against the plain metal pipe-work fencing bordering the Emajõgi River. Mari noticed that it was now dotted with university rowing boats. A white rowing boat turned almost under their noses and hastened to begin its return journey upstream. Mari, however, spent no more than a moment noticing this. She was itching to hear the family secret.

"...a couple of weeks ago, it must have been the 19th of August, if I remember rightly, I started on some tidying up at home. It'd been a long time since I'd dusted off the cobwebs from my bookcases and shelves. I got rid of all the dust and put the books back in their places," chuntered Granddad.

"And?" Mari prodded. She noted that the rowers were far away, beyond even the city end of the river. Blue, green boats and a single pink one. If Granddad had not been about to reveal the family secret to her, Mari would undoubtedly have spent quite a while watching them. But now she turned her back decisively on the river so that nothing would break her concentration.

Granddad went on. "I arranged the oldest books on the highest shelf. I was holding two volumes, a first edition of Marie Under's 'Sonnets', a real rarity, and Mathiesen's dendrology text book which my own grandfather, a famous biologist, had given to my mother as a gift, a precious keepsake. Both of them were published long before the war. Estonia was caught up in a major war when I was about the same age that you are now, dreadful thing. Tartu was ruled in turn by the communists and the fascists. I'm not sure whether you've heard those words before. Awful, dreadful people. Second World War. I'm not sure whether you know..."

"Of course I know about the war," interrupted Mari.

"It's good that you do," said Granddad. He continued, "But I was fumbling around and the

Mathiesen book just slipped out of my hand onto the floor. And the dustjacket around the book became untucked on one side. And under the dustjacket there was a slip of paper staring out at me. I took a closer look, it was the edge of an envelope. I pulled it out – and on it I saw my mother's name: Linda Haljandi. And the envelope was unopened. No-one had ever found it or opened it."

"Oh!" said Mari. The story was getting really exciting!

"So I opened the envelope straight away. It had a letter inside dated 1944 from my uncle, Kristjan. Kristjan Rimmelgas."

"What was in the letter?"

"It wished his sister, my mother, a happy birthday and said that he was planning to flee Estonia. And that the fortune was hidden in the botanical garden."

"The fortune?!" shrieked Mari.

"Shh! Don't shout like that," soothed Granddad, looking around excitedly. Fortunately there were no ears flapping nearby.

"Fortune?!" whispered Mari.

"Yes."

"But where? What fortune?"

"I have no idea what fortune. My uncle was no prince or sheikh with gold bullion to bury. Yet he must have had something to hide from the war and the communists."

"But where exactly did he hide it?"

"That too is unclear. All the letter says is that the fortune is in a chest and is buried in the botanical garden at the gate in the city wall."

"But where is the gate?"

"Aha! If I knew that, I would have unearthed it already long since. But I don't know which gate in the city wall he had in mind. Part of the old Tartu city wall does run through the botanical garden, the part where we had a rest, but that can't be it. There's no gate there. I've been looking into it a bit, but no-one knows anything about any gate in the part of the city wall that runs through the botanical garden. What a story! Now you know why I was resting on the wall. I was collecting my thoughts and unravelling the secret!"

"How exciting!" said Mari. "A real secret!"

"Isn't it just? The mystery of mysteries, no less! The assistant no doubt thinks I've lost my marbles completely or something, for me to be there all that time. Grandma was cross about it too."

"Is it that you can't stop thinking about the letter?"

“That’s precisely it. You’ve hit the nail on the head. I can’t stop thinking about it, I can’t, I just can’t!” Granddad made three movements with his fist, as if he were conducting an orchestra. “Do mysteries like this intrigue you too?”

Mari smiled. A thought had come to her.

“I’ll help you if you want,” she said. “Can I talk to my friends about it? The ones I looked for the gang of bicycle thieves with? Please, Granddad! We might come up with something! Can we all go to the botanical garden together tomorrow?”

Granddad chuckled. He considered what to do for a few moments and said, “Very well. Perhaps you will indeed come up with something, perhaps you will come up with something clever. Let’s do it tomorrow. But first I’d like to watch the repeat of ‘Special broadcast’. I missed it on Sunday and Contra is so talented.”

Mari was happy to agree. The matter was decided. Granddad added that rainy weather alone would deter him from the walk. Now he was older he had no desire whatever to go out in the rain. It struck Mari that on this point Granddad was just like Mati, who would never volunteer to go out in the wet.

They set off home.

On Emajõgi Street they bumped into a neighbour, Evelin, who was pushing a pram. Evelin noticed that Peeter Haljandi, who had raised his hat to say hello, and his granddaughter Mari had exactly the same cunning gleam in their eyes.

As soon as Mari had said her goodbyes to her Granddad, who lived on the other side of the courtyard, Mari got out her mobile and quickly punched in a text promising adventure. She sent it to three numbers. It was time to convene a meeting of Ramps secret society!

The first two messages went to Reilika and Sadu. The third was texted to Olav’s mobile and was also for Olav’s younger brother Anton. The content of the message was brief: “Hi, all come 2 Ramps 2morrow @ 12.”

Texting was so much easier than spelling everything out properly, although Mari could of course, if she’d wanted to, have done just that. She didn’t want to make calls: as yet as she had nothing clever to say. And when there was nothing clever to say it was always best to send a text.

When she got home she played with Mati and Magda, her younger sister, for a while until Mum sent all three of them outside to play. Mari’s mobile

rang in the yard, and Mari went out of her sister’s hearing to be able to talk properly.

It was Reilika on the line, grilling Mari in detail on the few but very promising bits of information Mari had. Reilika was delighted with what she heard. The two of them only hoped that it wouldn’t be raining the next day as that would mean they were unable to go anywhere with Mari’s Granddad. Sadu phoned after Reilika, and her enthusiasm for the Ramps Secret Society’s new case was even greater than that of Mari and Reilika.

Olav and Anton, however, neither phoned nor texted. Perhaps the boys wouldn’t come?