



Big Toell

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Varrak 2014, 51 pp
ISBN 9789985331040
Storybook, fiction
Age: 10+

Rights sold: Latvian

The giant Big Toell – an ancient Estonian hero – is a quiet and hard-working man. He goes around doing chores on his home island with his wife Piret and their horse, living an untroubled life. Blissful days go by as they farm the land and help their fellow Estonians. Every day when Big Toell goes home, he eats his fill of Piret's cooking and lies down to rest for the night. But one day, the devil Vanapagan, who constantly stirs trouble, shows up on the island. When enemies also invade the island, Suur Toell really has his work cut out for him.

Award:
2015 The White Ravens



Reading sample

This is the tale of Big Toell. Why was he called Toell? Who knows! Why is a lake a lake and a pine a pine? Why is dirt dirt and a rock a rock? So it has always been since long, long ago, and no one troubles themselves with wondering why.

Why was he called Big? Because he was big, that's all. Very big. There was no point inviting him to come and visit – he wouldn't have fit into a single house. He wouldn't have even fit in the yard. Not only the yard – he wouldn't have fit through the gate! He could easily step over the fence, of course, but then he would have trampled a shed or the sauna, no doubt. Not to mention the hens and roosters or a cat. And Toell did not want that; he was a good-hearted man.

What's more – why would you need to invite Toell over? You don't invite the sea to come visit now, do you? Nor a juniper tree into a pasture. They are where they are. You yourself can go and see them every now and then. People went to see Toell the same way; went to watch him ploughing and sowing his land. You would not go up very close to him, of course, otherwise you would get in his way and interrupt what he was doing. People would watch him from afar. Toell was so big anyway that you could see him from far away; even from across a forest. Just like the Sun or the Moon.

Toell had a horse, too; one even bigger than he was. It was quite the sight to see; no one knew where he got such a thing. But where does the sea get its waves and the sky its clouds? They are simply there.

And Toell had a wife as well, named Piret. She was just about the same size as Toell. Piret would do chores at home and in the garden. When she watered the cabbages at night, you could hear the thunderous splashing from the other end of the island.

I can't tell you what the horse's name was. Not that Toell ever called it by name, of course. Toell wasn't all that much of a talker. Wherever he was up to this or that, you could always hear a rustling and a rattling, as if waves were crashing on the sea or a strong wind was swooshing through the treetops. Sometimes the sound would be as gentle and sleepy as could be – almost like on a quiet summer evening; but sometimes, the thunder and roar would swell so loud. That would happen when something made Toell angry. Then, it would seem as if a gale was about to be unleashed; as if a storm was snapping age-old trees in half and lightning was striking shale.

But that would happen rarely. Toell had a friendly nature.

