

The Belly's Revolt

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Tammerraamat 2020, 37 pp

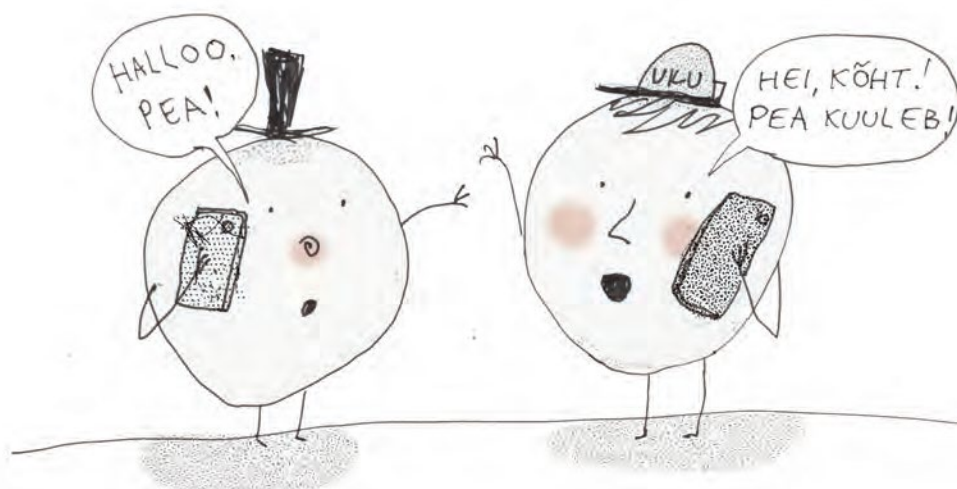
ISBN 9789949690459

Storybook, fiction

Age: 7+

Eight-year-old Uku is a kid just like any other. He likes spending time with friends, playing games on his phone, and listening to loud music. So as to have the energy to do all these things, Uku also likes gorging on all kinds of junk food and soft drinks. Yet although the boy is content with the way things are, his body certainly isn't – his belly has a hard time digesting that sort of food, his eyes itch, and his head aches. When Uku's belly decides to revolt one day, his other body parts quickly follow and demand their own right to a better life.

Helena Koch's *The Belly's Revolt* is a humorous children's book that teaches how to better listen to your body.



Reading sample

pp. 11–17

The Tummy's Tale

The thing with Uku's tummy was that it simply ran empty all the time. It usually happened so fast that even the tummy itself was taken by surprise. Hunger gnawing at its edges, the tummy would tap on Uku's spine and try to make the most awful noise it could manage to make the boy get up and find something to eat. "Garr-garr!" was its favorite cry!

To try and make his tummy be quiet (and a little because he loved the taste), Uku would munch on something every so often. Pizza and hamburgers were the boy's favorite foods. Uku's dad, however, constantly tried to make him eat some kind of weird-looking spinach smoothie or oatmeal porridge. Especially in the morning. Uku despised breakfast.

One day, Uku's eyes spotted an article on the computer. It was titled: "Why Is Junk Food So Bad for Your Kid's Tummy?" The eyes quickly passed the information on to the tummy, making it laugh—especially the silly idea of "junk food"! Since the tummy didn't understand what that meant, it decided to ask its smartest friend, the head.

"Hey, head! Belly here. Are you awake?" the tummy called out.

"Mmm . . . What do you want? I'm tired," the head grumbled.

"Tell me—what's 'junk food'?"

"Huh, funny that you don't know. You're the one who runs into it more than any other part of Uku's body! 'Junk food' is hamburgers, potato chips, French fries . . . pretty much everything that little boy of ours stuffs into his face. Why do you ask?"

"What?! Really??" the tummy gasped. "That's all very bad for him! We've got to do something about it!"

The tummy and the head talked for a while about how they could change Uku's eating habits, but the task seemed daunting.

"I know!" the head suddenly exclaimed.

"The key is cooperation!"

The next morning, Uku was up and at 'em unusually early. Still feeling drowsy, the boy couldn't quite understand how he showed up at the breakfast table or what trick made him eat the bowl of porridge his dad made him.

At school, Uku went to the cafeteria to buy

some salty snacks during his first break, but for some reason his hand grabbed a package of baby carrots instead! The boy tried to buy a candy bar, too. No matter how much he strained one arm or the other, both shot right past the sweets. So, Uku had no choice but to munch on carrots.

When lunch break rolled around, Uku wanted to go with his friends to hit up the little shop across the street. But instead, he somehow ended up standing in line for hot food at the cafeteria! Try as hard he may, but the boy's legs refused to move until he'd picked up a plate of healthy food from the counter.

The strange stubbornness Uku's limbs were showing continued even after school was over. By dinnertime, the boy was so tired that he didn't even try to turn down the bowl of stew his parents served him. And to be honest, contrary to every one of Uku's expectations, it tasted great.

A few days later, the head called up Uku's other body parts.

"Hey there, friends and countrymen! How's it going? I've got to say—I'm feeling fantastic! It's like I'm all light and airy, and I seem to have much more energy. What do you think—should we maybe let Uku handle himself from here on out?"

"What? Are you joking?! This has been the most amazing week of my life! I certainly don't want to give that up!" the tummy gasped.

"I know, neither do I. But the arms and legs are pretty worn out from controlling the boy's every movement. Let's just see what happens," the head proposed.

When Uku woke up the next morning, it never even crossed his mind to test his limbs' determination. He sat right down at the breakfast table and ate his bowl of porridge. For a late-morning snack, he gnawed on some baby carrots out of pure habit, and tucked into a warm meal for lunch.

The boy was astonished to find a piping hot pizza on the kitchen table when he got home for dinner.

"We haven't had pizza in so long," Uku's dad said with a grin, "and it's okay to treat yourself every once in a while!"

TERE, SUPERRÄMPSTOIT!

OI, TERE,
RÄMPSTOIT!



The Eyes Need a Break

After the tummy's condition improved, the notion of a brighter future started spreading around Uku's other body parts. The eyes, ears, and teeth all wanted to change something about their lives.

The eyes had been bothered by Uku's love for cartoons and computer games for a long time already. Ever since the boy got his very own phone for his birthday, things had become unbearable.

Uku played games on his new gadget while waiting at the bus stop to go to school, while riding the bus, and during recess. On top of that, he'd often plop down in front of the computer or watch cartoons on TV. Worst of all were the games that he played before falling asleep. It was incredibly hard for the eyes to close and dive into sweet dreams after that!

And so, the left eye complained to its neighbor: "What are we to do? I feel so uncomfortable all the time. Luckily the fingers come up to scratch me every now and then, but I just can't wait for the boy to finally take a break!"

"Same here," the right eye replied. "If only he were to pick up a book about our health in addition to all those games and cartoons! We'd at least have some idea of what to do. But woe is us . . . Only the tummy was so lucky. Why can't Uku study to be an eye doctor instead of taking all those classes at school!"

"A doctor? Ha! He's only eight years old! We don't have time to wait for that! Don't worry, I'm sure we'll fix things somehow. We've just got to come up with a plan!"

"Do you have any ideas?" the right eye asked.

"I've been thinking a bit lately, sure," the left replied. "I feel like we've both been giving our very best so that the boy can keep his vision for as long as possible. For my own part, I've been staying in control and blinking as little as I can, but you know how exhausting that is . . ."

"Of course I do—it's the exact same with me!" the right eye agreed. "Too bad the situation doesn't seem to be getting any better. It's the exact opposite—I feel like the boy is trying to strain us more and more."

"I know, right?!" the left eye exclaimed. "Well, what if we started squinting instead of staring wide-open all the time? Being honest and reacting

the way we really feel?"

"I don't know . . ." the right eye hesitated. "Maybe we should ask the head for advice. It is the smartest of us all!"

"Great idea! Let's ask right away," the left eye agreed.

The head was thankful for the question. "You know, I myself have been having some weird headaches lately . . . It's always best to be honest, so try to give the boy some kind of a sign, and if that doesn't work, then we'll think of something else together."

So that's just what they did. As soon as the eyes felt tired, both started to squint. And if that had no effect, then they simply pulled the eyelids down in exhaustion. They acted just the way they really felt. Yet Uku still didn't get the message. One evening, the boy's dad noticed him squinting and being grumpy. He asked if Uku could see alright, and although the boy replied that he could, Dad still stood there thinking.

"Uku, please put your phone away. Your eyes need a little break. Let's go bike around the block instead."

Uku slid his phone into his pocket and followed his dad. He liked to ride his bike, of course, but reckoned his dad could've gone without mentioning his eyes or how the phone was bad for them.

Yet worst of all was Dad's new rule: no phone in the morning before school or before going to bed at night.

Uku may not have liked the new situation, but his eyes were certainly delighted! It was so nice and peaceful to fall asleep without the bright blue light and to see colorful dreams instead. The head was happy, too—who would've guessed that too much time spent on the phone had been the reason for all its headaches!



Helena Koch. The Belly's Revolt. Translated by Adam Cullen

The Arms and Legs Get in a Fight

Unlike Uku's other body parts, the arms and legs had been rather content with life so far. He was an active boy and they never had to put up with boredom. Troubles only began when Uku's mom signed him up for ballroom dance lessons.

Although they'd been best friends so far, the arms and legs got into fights during every practice: who was supposed to move to the left, and when? Who was supposed to lift first? They bickered over and over and over.

The head had been watching the limbs argue for some time already. One day after yet another clash, it decided to have a serious conversation with the four.

"Hey, arms and legs—why are you fighting all the time?" the head asked. "First of all, that's not nice; and second of all, can't you see that you're only making Uku's life harder? Could you please get it together, focus on dancing, and work together instead of squabbling?"

"We're trying, but the legs keep messing up!" the arms snapped back.

"Why do you have such a hard time grabbing your partner? All you've got to do is just stand still most of the time, anyway!" the legs argued. "On top of that—we're the ones who are trying and you are messing up!"

"Okay, okay, let's calm down" the head said thoughtfully. "I understand that everybody is doing their very best. But what's wrong, then? Why is dancing so hard?"

"We don't like to go up and down gracefully. And as if that weren't enough, we're expected to pull around some girl we don't know, too!" the arms protested.

"And we don't like marching around to some stupid beat!" the legs grunted.

"We hate ballroom dancing! It's so dumb and annoying!" the arms and legs yelled in unison.

"Then let's think about what we could do together. It's obvious that activities are good for the boy. But if ballroom dancing isn't the right fit, then what would you like to do instead?" the head asked.

"We want to play football! That's our favorite!" the limbs all yelled at the same time.

Right after its chat with the arms and legs, the head had a long discussion with the mouth. To be honest, the mouth wasn't used to speaking

much. But after hearing about the arms' and legs' problem, it knew it wanted to help out.

"Okay, I'll do it," the mouth promised.

The first chance for the mouth to prove itself came the very next day after dance practice was over and the arms and legs were pouting.

When Uku got home, his mom asked how ballroom dancing went, just as she always did.

Uku hesitated before opening his mouth and, to his own surprise, replying: "Not well."

"What happened, darling?" Mom asked in surprise.

"I don't like dancing. I always get the steps messed up and the other kids laugh at me," the boy said softly.

"But you liked dance practice before, didn't you?" Mom asked, confused.

"Not really . . ." Uku said thoughtfully. "Mom, I'd like to play football instead."

"Well why didn't you say so earlier, honey? Of course that's alright!" she said, giving Uku a hug. "I just wanted you to know how to dance for if you ever need it in the future. Not like your dad!" Mom laughed.

The arms' and legs' days were soon filled with joy. Uku went to football practice twice a week and often kicked a ball around with his friends in their free time.

Now able to swing wildly on so many days, the arms couldn't believe their luck. And the legs got their chance to chase a ball around, dribble, and even kick it with all their might. But the greatest change of all happened to the mouth, which realized that if you don't like something, then you've just got to be bold enough to say something about it.

