



Peter – “Pete” to his Friends

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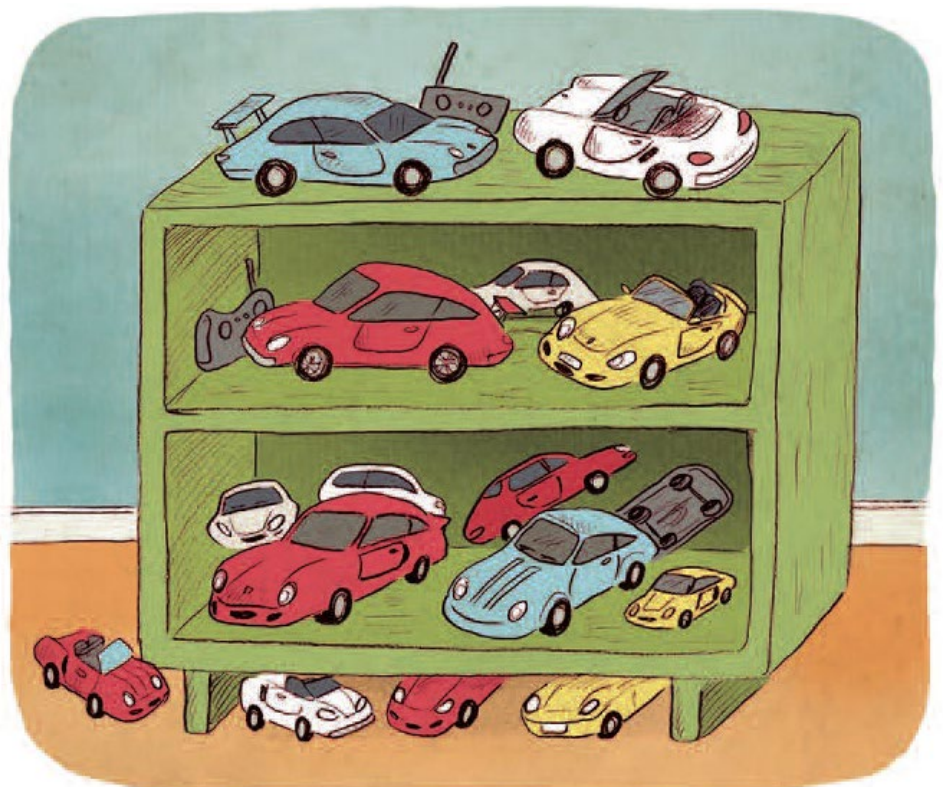
Storybook, fiction

Age: 6+

On one completely ordinary December morning, a new boy named Pete arrives in a completely ordinary preschool class. He has with him a mysterious telephone receiver and an awfully exciting secret. You don't tell secrets to strangers, of course, but Petey isn't a jealous person – he'll sure strike up a little deal! On top of that, Pete's new friends are dearly interested in the secret... and the closer Christmas comes, the more so. A little hint, too: he'll need all his wits about him!

Awards:

2015 Tartu Prize for Children's Literature
(Childhood Prize)



Reading sample

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“Tell us about the secret!” sighed Kristjan.

Peter nodded and beckoned the others closer. “But this stays among the four of us,” he whispered “It’s like this, guys – this is no ordinary tube.”

Kristjan frowned at Pete. “You’ve said that already,” he replied, reprovingly. “Tell us about it! What do you do with it?”

Pete gave Kristjan a piercing look. “Last week, using this tube, I contacted elves!” he told them.

A hush came over them; the children gave a sharp intake of breath. “Real, live elves?” asked Mia finally.

“Real, live elves!” Pete confirmed.

“I don’t believe you!” exclaimed Markus. “Not a single child has ever, ever talked to elves!”

Peter smiled knowingly. “You’re right, they never had – until last weekend!”

“What happened last weekend?” asked Kristjan, fishing for information.

“Last weekend was when the first contact happened,” Pete replied. “And we’ve been in contact every day since.”

Kristjan’s eyes bulged. “Real elves!” he whispered. “How?”

“The tube, of course,” Pete told him. “I speak into here and the elves reply.”

Markus looked at his friend suspiciously. “Easy as that, eh? So what did you talk about all day long?”



Pete rolled his eyes. “Mate, they’re elves. There’s tons of things to talk about. Like yesterday they taught me how to turn snow into banana ice cream. Gave me the recipe too. And this morning they were saying that Father Christmas’s reindeer have coughs and that they have to drink a bucketful of cough syrup every night before they go to sleep.” Pete took a deep breath and leant towards Markus: “Come to that, they told me that elf children who are always asking questions always have to wait till last. And they only get to ask theirs if there’s time.”

Markus gave Pete a startled glance and closed his mouth.

“I’ve already told them about you all,” Pete continued. “The elves said that they noticed that you all put donkeys in your windows on December 1st. Mia’s was the smallest and Kristjan’s and Markus’s were the biggest.”

The children fell silent and looked at each other. “Me and Kristjan did...” whispered Mia. Markus fiddled with his pyjama button. He too had left a donkey – an old green one – on the windowsill two weeks ago.

“Look, I’ll talk to them right now – the elves trust me!” Pete said. “Perhaps that’s why they made me the leader.”

“They made you the leader of the elves?” gasped Mia.

Markus lay down, head on the ground, and murmured, “There is no leader of the elves.”

Except perhaps for Father Christmas, but he doesn't count because he's Father Christmas."

"Ha!" Pete shouted. "You're just not up to date because I've only just started in the job." He spread his arms wide: "Allow me to introduce Brave Pete, the leader of talking to the elves! If there's anything you want to ask them you can do it through me."

Mia scratched her neck. "What do you mean, ask?" she didn't understand.

"Well, just like you'd ask anything else," Pete explained. "You give me your questions and I find out the answers from the elves. You're so lucky I ran into your group!" He patted the tube.

"I'd really like to talk to the elves..." whispered Mia.

"Me too..." Kristjan added. "I've got so many questions. Mum and Dad don't know anything about elves."

Pete rubbed his hands and grinned. "That's not a problem! One question costs just one normal sweet, two stick sweets, or three little chewy sweets."

"Just one normal sweet? I've got some in my coat pocket, I brought them from home just this morning," said Mia in delight.

"You're in luck!" Pete noted approvingly. "That means you can ask the elves something straight away."

Mia took a deep breath and whispered: "I'd like to know why..."

"Your sweet first," Pete was unshakable.

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A moment later Mia slipped back into the room. She ran towards the boys, took two sweets out of her pocket, and placed them on the bed in front of Pete. "Two questions, please," she said, proudly.

Pete nodded. "Ask away!"

Mia scrambled onto the bed and said: "Please ask the elves why they brought Laura, the girl next door, a yellow bike for big girls, the one with the carrier and the basket, but they only brought me a little green one? And the other thing I'd like to know is how do they walk on the windowsills without leaving footprints in the snow?"

Pete put the sweets into his backpack. "Let's find out right now!" He took hold of the tube, muttered in some weird language into the listening end, listened, nodded and then covered the lower end of the tube with the palm of his hand. "What's Laura's surname?" he asked.

"It's Mets, Laura Mets," said Mia.

Pete nodded and explained something in the unknown language into the tube.

Kristjan nudged Markus and whispered: "What's he saying?"

Markus listened and shook his head. "I don't know, I can't understand a word of it..."

Pete turned towards them, covering the tube with his hand. "Elf language!" he told them and turned back round.

"Elf language!" The children looked at each other wide-eyed.

Peter listened to the tube for a while longer and finally laid it on the bed. "Right, the thing is, Laura got the yellow bike because she tidied her room every day for the whole year. The elves were always checking up – they had a look every night!"

"Every single day...?" Mia's face went red.

Pete nodded. "The elves said that they don't bring big girls' bikes to lazybones. They get smaller ones. Green." Pete sighed and shrugged his shoulders. "The elves keep records of

everything. Two years ago Laura got a green one too, but things have moved on since then.”

Mia slumped but Pete did not step in. “And they don’t leave footprints because they climb down from a higher floor on strings!” he added.

“On strings!” exclaimed Kristjan, eyes bulging.

Markus eyed Pete suspiciously. “What about when there is no higher floor?”

“No, no, no,” Pete rolled his eyes. “Do you never stop asking questions? If there isn’t one then there isn’t one!” He eyed Markus carefully. “Do you live on a top floor?”

Markus looked at the floor and shook his head.

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