



“The Lovesick Basement Monster, the Vegan

Blood Sausage, and Other Stories ”

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Can you guess where a dust bunny lives? Or why a blood sausage was teased in the refrigerator? What does a pair of shoes do when no one is looking? What will become of a blossom that doesn't want to bloom? Why is the basement monster putting too much salt in her food and scribbling hearts on the walls? If you don't know the answers to these questions, then it's about time to pick up Piiper's book of humorous and fantastical children's stories that shed light on the mysterious lives of foods, objects, mythical characters, and kids alike.

Awards:

2019 25 Best-Designed Estonian Books, Certificate of Merit

2019 5 Best-Designed Estonian Children's Books, Certificate of Merit, Special Prize of the Estonian Graphic Designers' Association



Reading sample

The Vegan Black Pudding

One day, a black pudding decided to go vegan. He'd had enough of the constant taunting and scorn. Many other foods had gone that road a long time ago, and he was the only backwards character left hanging onto something so out of style. Often, the black pudding would sit alone in a corner of the fridge, leaning against a tiny patch of mold with tears in his eyes. Everyone made fun of him—absolutely everyone! The chickpea patties snickered and pointed, while the hummus simply laughed in his face! The almond milk sprayed herself all over him on purpose, and the tofu shoved him every time he passed.

"That's it! I'm going vegan, too," the black pudding whispered angrily to the soy sausage stretched out next to him, which was the only food in the fridge who hadn't picked on him yet.

"Really?" drawled the soy sausage doubtfully. "What'll you be made of then, if not blood and flour?"

The black pudding didn't know what to answer. She was right—what could his ingredients be? And what would become of his name? 'Black sausage' wouldn't do anymore. He felt tears spring to his eyes again. Who would he be if he wasn't black pudding anymore? Simply going by 'pudding' didn't have the proper ring to it. He was certain he'd still be teased just for his name.

"Christmas is coming soon, you know," the soy sausage whispered to him. "Write your wish to Santa."

It didn't sound like a bad idea at all, so that's just what the black pudding did.

Dear Santa,

I only have one wish.
I'd like to keep being
black pudding forever
and be happy
with who I am.

Merry Christmas!
Love,
Black Pudding

The third week of Advent came and went, and the black sausage was starting to lose hope. Santa still hadn't replied! The others were teasing him more and more every day. Then one snowy winter morning, someone completely new opened the door to the fridge and stuck his big bearded face inside.

"Well, well, well—what are you doing here in the wrong fridge?" Dad gasped, picking up the black pudding. "Let's go put you in the right one so that Mom doesn't accidentally mistake you for tofu."

The black pudding was baffled. He was in the wrong fridge? What did that mean? And how might he be mistaken for tofu? His head spun as Dad carried him to another refrigerator.



“What’s that?” asked Mom, who was tidying up in the kitchen.

“It’s my black pudding—it was in your fridge!”

“Well, what did I tell you!” Mom said with a smirk and shook her head. Dad opened the door to the second fridge and gently set the black pudding on the top shelf. Cautiously, the black pudding opened his eyes. Cheerful greetings rang out from every direction.

“Welcome!” cried the goat cheese.

“How nice it is to make your acquaintance,” said the pâté with a soft handshake.

“You sure do have a nice tan,” complimented the sour cream, her pasty white cheeks quivering.

The black pudding felt that he was finally surrounded by his own kind. No more teasing! No more laughing behind his back!

Soon, Christmas arrived and blood sausages appeared in the fridge, too. “My relatives came to visit for the holidays—how wonderful!” the black pudding thought as he made up beds for them.

The next time Dad opened the refrigerator door, the black pudding glimpsed the other fridge standing open across the room—his old home and former companions. It’s now or never! he thought.

“Merry Christmas, teaser-wheezers!” the black pudding yelled from his new fridge in a trembling but proud voice, and stuck his tongue out.

[...]

The Lovesick Basement Monster

The basement monster was in love. He hadn’t been able to eat or sleep properly in weeks. All he did was doodle hearts on the walls and overcook his meals. It was unlike anything he had ever felt before. All the basement monster wanted was for Lisa’s grandma to come downstairs more frequently. Luckily, she did quite often to bring new jars of jam and juice or fetch honey and pickled mushrooms. Sometimes,

it was the other way around. Whenever she had a little time on her hands, Lisa’s grandma would take a damp rag and wipe the dust off of each and every jar on the basement shelf. And on occasion, when she had even more time, she would organize the jars by month and year, keeping the sweet ones on one side and the savory ones on the other.

There was also a small furnace in the basement and when autumn came, Grandma would spend even more time down there to heat it. For as long as it took the logs to catch fire, Grandma would sit on a little bench in front of the opening and sing her favorite old songs. The basement monster secretly listened from underneath a stool with peeling paint that was wedged in the darkest corner of the furnace room, his mouth hanging wide open. He’d never heard anything so beautiful in his life.

Yet one time, a whole week went by where Grandma didn’t set foot in the basement. The monster’s heart ached with longing. He decided to do something absolutely reckless—something no other basement monster had ever done before. He would climb up the basement stairs to the ground floor. The monster had come up with a plan to invite Lisa’s grandma to move down into the basement with him. There was only one problem—he worried he wouldn’t look handsome enough in the light. In fact, he didn’t know what he looked like at all, because there wasn’t a single mirror in the basement. He couldn’t have cared less about how he looked before, but now that he was in love, the thought popped into his head and startled him. He picked up the most reflective jar of blueberry jam he could find and curiously inspected his somewhat warped reflection. Could be worse, thought the basement monster, trying to wink at himself. Yet he certainly couldn’t go up to court Grandma in the clothes he was wearing—that was as clear as day. Naturally, the basement monster did own a set of fancy clothes, but he’d never had to wear them before. Will they even fit anymore? he wondered as he sucked in his belly and ironed his pinstriped gray dress pants. He painstakingly shined his dress shoes to a twinkle and shook the dust from his suit coat. Now, the monster’s reflection in the huge three-liter jar of pickles was as sharp and slick as could be. Not too bad! he thought in satisfaction as he used spit to smooth his hair back.

The basement monster's heart was pounding as he climbed the dusty concrete steps. I should probably give her a bouquet of flowers, too, he thought nervously as he reached the top step. Low and behold, he was in luck! Resting there in a cardboard box were wonderful-smelling green plants! The monster bound some into a bouquet and rode an unexpected surge of confidence as he opened the door and stepped out into the kitchen. He strode across the colorful rag rug towards Grandma, who was frying liver on the stove. Stopping before her, the monster held out the bouquet and gave a wide, toothy grin.

"Good heavens, what on earth is this sooty creature?!" Grandma shrieked, flinging a white plastic bowl of whipped cream at him. "Who are you and what are you doing with my parsley?! Shoo!"

Grandma snatched the bouquet of parsley and started batting it at him so hard that green leaves fluttered through the air. The whipped cream dripped down the monster's suit and his handsome slicked-back hairdo was ruined by the sweet-tasting ooze. He was hurt to the core and no longer felt a shred of love for Grandma.

"I'll never make a mistake like that again!" the monster seethed as he stomped back down to the cellar, sticky from head to toe. Once he was home, he tossed the suit into the furnace and furiously made several jars of Grandma's very best seedless raspberry jam start to mold.
[...]

The Tooth Fairy

Lisa woke up early on Sunday morning. Her mouth felt somehow different. Something's not right, she fretted as she walked up to the bathroom mirror. Lisa opened her mouth and to her astonishment, one of her bottom teeth was crooked.

"Finally!" the girl rejoiced. She had nearly given up already! The other girls in her class already had big adult teeth—Pam's was even as long as Julie's and Trina's. Lisa was the only one still walking around with little old baby teeth in her gums. In the end, she'd gotten sick of waiting and had almost managed to forget she didn't have any adult teeth yet.

But now, they'd finally started to come in! Lisa dashed off to wake up her grandma.

"Grandma, wake up! I'm going to lose my first tooth at any second now! And tomorrow's Monday! I can take it to school to show everybody, and the day after that, I'll show them what the Tooth Fairy brings me, too!"

Lisa tugged at the sleeve of her grandma's night gown and her hair curlers.

"Stop tugging, you crazy kid! You'll stretch out the fabric," Grandma sleepily scolded as she sat up. She took her glasses from the nightstand and put them on. "Let me have a look!"

Lisa opened her mouth and smiled as widely as she could.

"You're right, this one is pretty crooked. If all goes well, then it could fall out in a couple of days."

Lisa's jaw dropped. A couple of days? If all went well? Was Grandma joking? She needed the tooth to come out now!

"But all the other girls get visited by the Tooth Fairy almost every other day! And now you're telling me I'll have to wait a few days more for my first time?!" Lisa groaned.

"Patience, child! You should be glad your teeth are coming in so late! They'll only be stronger for it and you'll hang on to them longer. One day all your friends will be toothless, but you'll still have them all lined up like a nice, neat row of peas!"

Lisa didn't care about having pea-shaped teeth that stayed in her mouth for ages. In fact, she didn't care about her teeth at all. The only thing she cared about was the Tooth Fairy. And here Grandma was, not giving her a single scrap of hope.

"You'll see, Lisa! You won't be losing any teeth today. I've seen enough lost teeth in my lifetime to know that."

Lisa marched angrily back to her room. Adults sure did think they were smart! How can she know when

my tooth will be ready to come out? I'll just have to help it along a bit, Lisa thought, wiggling the tooth back and forth and looking around the room. Still, she couldn't come up with a single good way to tap it out.

The girl sighed. There was probably nothing to do but wait, like her grandma had said.

Yet just before Lisa settled on the plan, she came up with another idea. Maybe she could talk to the tooth! What if she were to offer it something in exchange for falling out?

"Hello! Tooth? What would you like me to give you for coming out today?" Lisa asked.

The tooth thought for a moment, weighing all the possibilities.

"I think it'd be fair to get me a nice cake and some lollipops!"

So, Lisa decided to organize a feast for the tooth. Sugar, sugar, and more sugar! She asked Grandma to buy her a frosted cake with her allowance money and dug two lollipops out of her candy stash.

"Well, dig in!" Lisa announced, gesturing towards the big cake and lollipops on the table.

"Have you gone loony? I can't eat that all on my own—I don't even have hands! You're going to have to feed me! You fork the cake into your mouth and I'll eat it. Make sure there's none left over—I want the whole thing!"

Lisa saw no problem with that plan. She had quite the sweet tooth! But in the end, she ended up having too much sugar and feeling sick.

"Grandma, I think I'm going to throw up!" she groaned, running to the bathroom with her hand over her mouth. When Lisa finally straightened up and started washing her face, she noticed in the mirror that her front tooth was gone. It had kept its promise and fallen out that same day! Yet then Lisa shot a look of regret at the toilet, where pale blue clouds of foam were floating in the freshly flushed water.

So much for the tooth fairy, she thought glumly. Next time, I'll wait patiently for loose teeth to decide to fall out themselves.

Luckily, Lisa didn't have to wait long—to her surprise, her left front tooth started to wiggle the very next morning.

Translated by Adam Cullen

