

PIRET RAUD

Printsess Lulu ja härra Kere



“Princess Lulu and Mr Bones”

Text and illustrations by **Piret Raud**

Tänapäev 2008, 2014, 208 pp

ISBN 9789985627020

Storybook, fiction

Age: 9+

Rights sold: French, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian

Princess Lulu lives a safe and, perhaps, even somewhat boring life in a big castle with her mom and dad. Then, her toothpaste starts disappearing every night. The princess sets out to solve the mystery. Lying in wait, Lulu’s efforts are met with success. It turns out that Mr Bones has needed the toothpaste to keep his skeleton nice and strong! The princess feels bad for Mr Bones, who has been hiding out in her father’s tight squeeze of a closet, and decides to show him a little bit of the world. Alas, they run into trouble, and Mr Bones’s jealously-guarded briefcase filled with state secrets disappears. Now, the pair must get it back before the king’s great secret is revealed.

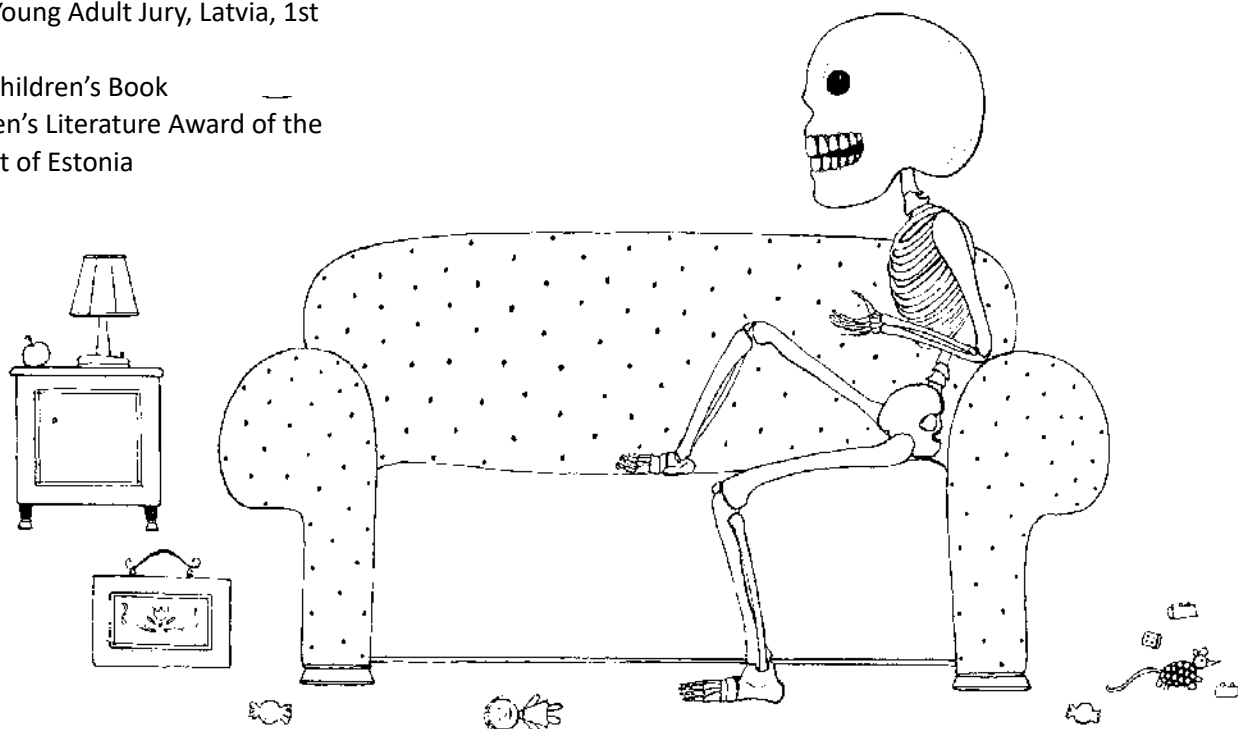
Awards:

2012 IBBY Honour List for writing

2011 Children and Young Adult Jury, Latvia, 1st place (Grades 3–4)

Spring 2009 Good Children’s Book

2008 Annual Children’s Literature Award of the Cultural Endowment of Estonia



Reading sample

Mr. Bones

“Ah, well,” the skeleton said in a somewhat husky voice, and turned on the light. “So I suppose I’ve been caught!”

Lulu stared at the skeleton standing in front of her, tongue-tied. It looked as genuine as a skeleton could ever be, complete with ribs, a spine and a ghastly skull. Lulu had, of course, seen a skeleton before – one time in the high school students’ biology room at school – but that one hadn’t spoken like a living human being.

“Are you a ghost?” Lulu asked when she regained her ability to speak.

“Nonsense!” the skeleton replied. “Ghosts don’t exist. I am a skeleton. A skeleton of flesh and bone. Well, actually just of bone. My friends just call me Mr. Bones.”

“What friends?” Lulu asked, frightened. “Are there other skeletons here?”

“No. My friends aren’t skeletons. Actually, I only have one friend – my tie, with whom I live together in your father’s closet.”

“Is your tie able to talk as well?” Lulu asked in amazement.

“Actually, it isn’t,” Mr. Bones admitted somewhat sheepishly, “but I talk to it. Otherwise I would get bored in the closet. But I think that if it were able to talk, then it would certainly call me Mr. Bones. You could call me that also, if you’d like. I know your name already. You’re Lulu.”

Lulu nodded. Everyone in the kingdom knew the princess’ name. As it turned out, she was the only one that didn’t know anything or anyone. A skeleton in her father’s closet – why hadn’t anyone told her about that?

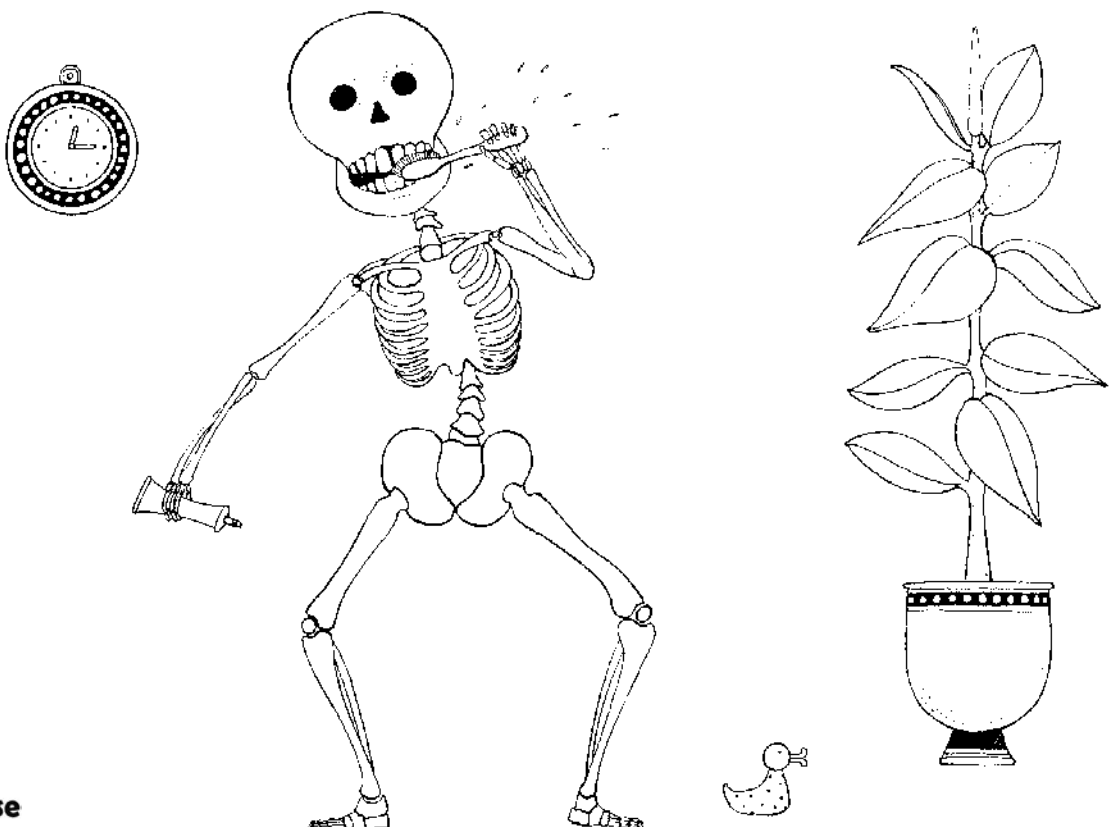
“Although, Mr. Bones, if you live in our castle, then why haven’t I seen you before?” Lulu probed.

“Your father, the King, doesn’t want anyone to know about me,” answered Bones.

“Why not?”

“It’s a secret,” the skeleton replied, and changed the topic.

“It wouldn’t bother you if I brush my teeth here a little, would it?”



Only now did the girl notice that the skeleton was holding a toothbrush in addition to the case. It was a nice little blue toothbrush – Lulu had one just like it, except hers was pink. The princess suddenly no longer had any problem with someone not part of the royal family using their bathroom.

“Not if you can stand brushing anything with that toothpaste,” she said in a friendly tone. “It has such a revolting taste.”

Mr. Bones uncapped the tube and squeezed a squirt of toothpaste onto his toothbrush.

“The taste doesn’t make much of a difference to me,” he said in an easygoing manner. “What’s most important is that the toothpaste contain all sorts of things that are good for you. I have an outrageous liking for things that are good for you!”

Lulu watched as her new acquaintance set to brushing his teeth so fervently that toothpaste sprayed in every direction. When he finished with his teeth, Mr. Bones began to clean his skull with the toothbrush. After his skull came his arm bones, his whole rib cage and hip bones and last but not least, both of his thigh bones. When the skeleton had completed brushing himself, there wasn’t a single drop of toothpaste left in the tube. Mr. Bones rinsed himself with cold water and asked the princess:

“May I use your towel?”

Lulu handed Bones her towel.

“I thought that you had your own towel with you and were keeping it in that case,” the girl admitted.

Mr. Bones looked tenderly at the small case that he had set on the floor next to the dressing table while he washed himself, and shook his skull.

“What do you mean?” he laughed. “I don’t keep a single towel in there. On top of that – it isn’t a case, but rather a chest.”

“What’s kept in that chest, then?” Lulu asked.

“A secret!” Bones announced solemnly. “A very important secret. And I’m the guardian of that secret!”

/—/

The chest

Lulu and Bones realized they wouldn’t have any chance more suitable than now to search for the secret chest, seeing as that the owner of the house had left. They let their eyes roam across the kitchen. It was stuffed chock full of all sorts of odds and ends. Two gas-burning stoves, two refrigerators, a round table covered with a purple tablecloth, a cabinet with no doors, a grimy stuffed armchair, a stroller filled with empty bottles, and a depressingly large heap of dirty dishes all fit into the tiny room. Set upon the kitchen table amid the stacks of dirty dishes was Bones’ lost chest.

The trick-or-treaters stepped up to the table. Seeing this, Muki – who until then had been sitting relatively peacefully near the kitchen door – began to growl.

Bones nudged up closer to the chest cautiously. The dog’s growl became more threatening.

Bones picked up the chest, and then exclaimed in astonishment:

“It’s been broken into!”

Muki started to bark.

“Show me!” Lulu requested. “If that strange man has seen the King’s secret, then the King’s daughter can see it as well. I have a greater right to do so, in any case!”

Bones didn’t start to argue with the princess, and handed her the chest. Lulu could feel her heart beating more loudly. What her father kept in the chest would all become clear in an instant. Did it, perhaps, contain a map showing the way to hidden treasure, or maybe it held some ancient valuable with magic powers? Lulu dearly hoped that her father’s secret was something fantastic and not bad. She curiously flipped the chest over onto the kitchen table and stood staring in shock at the contents that tumbled out. Lying on the table was a pile of tattered socks and someone’s old pajama pants!

“Is this really my father’s secret?” she strove to shout above the sound of the dog barking. “A pile of socks?!”

The skeleton shook his head. Something was wrong here. Someone, no doubt Väino, had removed the secret from the chest and replaced it with socks!

At that very same moment, the door opened and Väino stepped into the kitchen. He was angry. Seeing the trick-or-treaters inspecting the pile of socks next to the table, the man became enraged.

“Thieves!” he shouted furiously, and Muki started barking even more loudly. “Fakers! Socrates told me that today isn’t Halloween, you rotten rascals! You pretended all nicely as if you came to bring poor Väino good luck, but you actually want to steal his rags away from him!”

“This is all just a big misunderstanding,” Mr. Bones said, trying to calm the man down. “We don’t want your socks! Look – we already have our own! We don’t want to take away anything that belongs to you. We only want to get our chest back, together with what was in it before!”

Väino didn’t listen to him.

“Do you know how much time and effort it takes to gather up enough rags from trash cans so that you can weave a rug out of it?” he shouted angrily. “You can only get a couple of stripes worth of rug material out of this here pile, and that’s even my entire pickings for today!”

“Are you weaving a rug out of rags?” Lulu asked in amazement.

“And why shouldn’t I be?” Väino’s temper flared up even more. “You think, of course, that a man the likes of Väino is only fit for being a simple bottle collector! You think that Väino is some kind of hopeless drunkard, don’t you? But he isn’t! Väino is capable of doing things too! Väino has friends that have taught him how to weave rugs!”

Väino smiled triumphantly and continued speaking in an already much-better mood:

“You should see what beautiful rugs Socrates makes! Socrates has a loom, and he promised to let me use it when I’ve gathered up enough rags. It’s all colossally exciting. The rags you collect must be cut into strips, and then the strips are tied to one another and spun into large balls. I already have five rag-balls ready, but unfortunately it’s not enough. I want to make a huge rug!”

The man patted the pile of socks and suddenly became cross once again.

“And you two want to take away from me the little that I’ve managed to accumulate,” he said bitterly, and a threatening flame ignited in his eyes.

/—/

Translated by Adam Cullen

