



“The Verikambi Mill”

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Varrak 2016, 351 pp

ISBN 9789949850273

Storybook, fiction

Age: 10+

Four high-schoolers get lost in the woods during a hike, and are forced to spend the night in a mysterious windmill. The youngsters find their way home quickly the next morning, but the strange occurrence leaves its mark on each of them. Joonas, who takes an old photo album that he finds in the windmill, discovers it contains a picture of a girl who bears an astonishing resemblance to his sister. Kirke starts experiencing unconscious writing sessions, in which she channels a strange spirit. Gustav suddenly turns pensive and moody, and starts making demands he can't explain. Elin is struck by unexpected bursts of jealousy. Before long, strange things also start happening to the other students in town, and the four children realize that they have unleashed something sinister.

Award:

2016 “Järje Hoidja” Award of the Tallinn Central Library

Verikambi

Reading sample

What am I doing here, anyway? the girl wondered. Oh, right—I'm the token female element. Fine, I'll play along. There wasn't anything else to do but wait. Kuldar was mumbling something as he drew a ring around them and the fire with salt and dirt. Kirke's gaze fell on Gustav, who smiled at her encouragingly. It looked like he was a little bored, too.

But at that moment, Kuldar called them closer to the water-filled cauldron.

"Before we start for real, we've got to look into the past."

"Why?" Kirke asked.

"Because we can't change the future until we do. Drink this." Kuldar handed each of them a tin cup.

The liquid didn't have a foul smell, to Kirke's surprise. It was some kind of tea, apparently, and she didn't have the slightest objection to a warm beverage right now, even if it had a mild narcotic effect. She'd have no problem drinking something even worse-smelling just to fight the damp chill creeping into her bones.

"What is it?" Gustav asked.

"It'll help you see into the past," replied Kuldar.

"Alright, whatever," Gustav said, then dumped almost the entire contents down his throat at once.

Kirke drank in small sips, since the tea was a little too hot for her. It had a somewhat sweet aroma and a bitter taste, which was quite bearable all the same.

After their cups were empty, they leaned over the cauldron.

The water was just as it had been before. Kirke couldn't see anything in it, nor did she know what she was supposed to do next. Should she imagine something? Should she let her thoughts flow free and try to associate the water's shadows and reflections with something?

But then... This is impossible, Kirke thought, just before the vision in the water engulfed her.

She could see them—Lisa and Matt. They were right here in the flesh and bone. Living human beings. And although centuries of time separated them from the children, they looked as real as could be. Yet, it appeared that they couldn't see Kirke.

"Did you cast a spell on me?" Lisa asked, staring at Matt with suspicion.

"No. Why would you think that?"

"It's what people are saying."

"I would never do such a thing. It's wrong to force someone."

"Forgive me, I just... it's just what people in the village believe. They think you used witchcraft."

Matt smiled. "Sometimes, I have the feeling that you're the one using witchcraft."

The image faded away, but Lisa reappeared immediately. However, the girl was different. Bones were visible beneath her tight, bluish-white skin, and her eyes were sunken deep into her skull. Lisa's white wedding dress was now soiled and torn, and her hair was white, although it was still plaited on both sides. She looked tired and aged in this vision.

"I loved him. That's all I can remember about myself. Nothing else matters."

Kirke couldn't figure out for whom the words were meant. Were they for her? Was it supposed to mean something? Kirke recalled that Gustav told her he loved her not long ago. She had felt so ecstatic for a moment, but then noticed that the boy was still sad, down in the dumps. Something was troubling Gustav, but he wouldn't say what it was, exactly. Kirke wondered whether this could be some kind of premonition. She remembered her recent dream. What if it hadn't been a dream? What if she had seen the future? What if she'd seen how Gustav was going to die?

Translated by Adam Cullen