



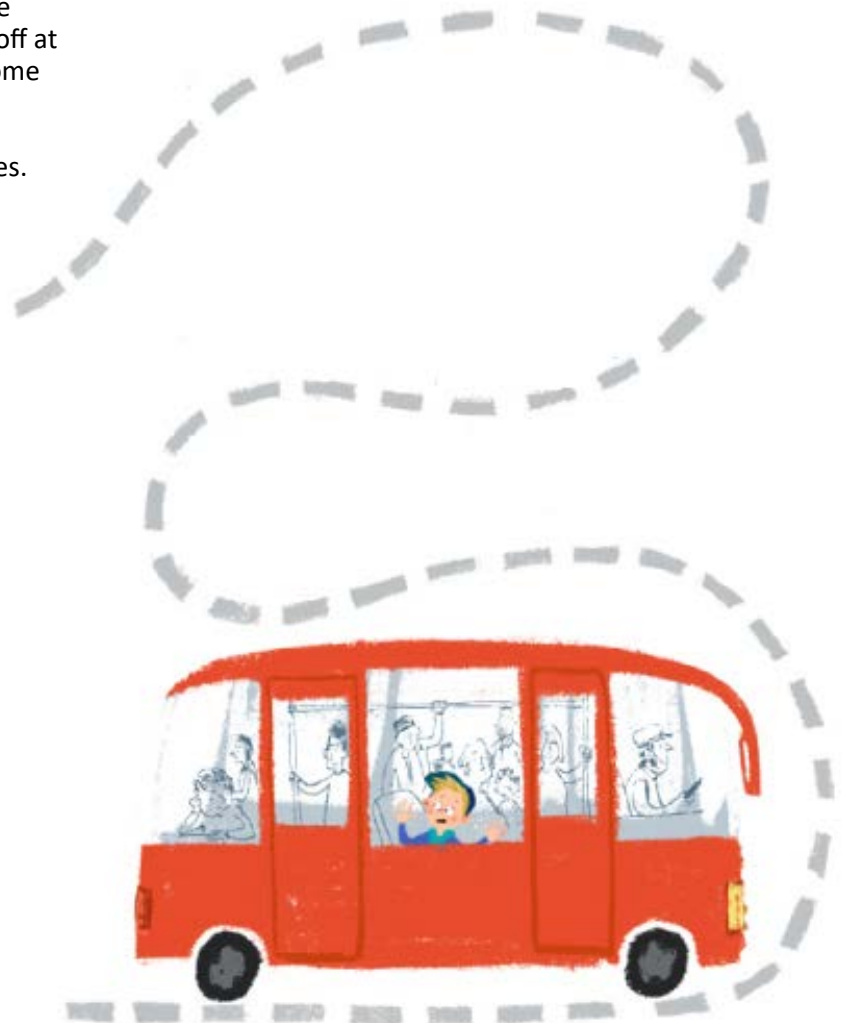
Pärt Goes Full Circle

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Age: 7+

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After a long day at school, Pärt rides the bus home. Exhaustion gets the better of him as his eyelids sink shut. When he wakes up with a start, the bus doors are already closing and the vehicle is pulling away from his home stop. Pärt doesn't know what to do – he certainly can't ask the driver to halt or turn around and drop him off at the right place! How on Earth will he get home now?

This is the fifth book in Anti Saar's Pärt Series.





Reading sample

I awoke with a start. The doors closed and the bus pulled away from my home stop.

I knew I'd miss my chance if I didn't run up to the bus driver that very instant and ask him to open the doors again, but even by the time I thought that, it was already too late—hopelessly late. My stop was already behind us, so I sat back down. There was no way I could ask the driver to turn around, because buses aren't cars that you can simply put into reverse. What's more, it would make all the other passengers who were on their way to other stops angry. Buses aren't like trams or trolleys which are tied to overhead cables, but that doesn't mean they can go wherever they please. I also knew the bus couldn't just make a random stop, even though I really wanted it to. After zooming by the hair salon and the bike shop on my street, the bus drove past my home as well. The neighbor-girl Kaisa was standing in the yard picking her nose, and I saw our third-floor apartment window was open, which meant someone—Mom or Leenu or Dad or Joosep, or all of them together—were already home and certainly expecting me.

The bus sped up and I lost sight of our house. I figured I should probably get off at the next stop. But then, I remembered it was on the other side of a busy intersection without any traffic lights or crossing marks. Mom says you're only allowed to cross that street when all the cars have gone past, but I'd never get a chance—there are so many cars in the world! How could Mom think it was so easy? I decided to ask as soon as I saw her, but then, I realized that moment might never come if I didn't get off the bus—I'd never see her or Dad or Joosep or Leenu ever again.

Even though the bus had barely gone one stop past our home, my family seemed so far away and precious that I promised myself if I ever made it back to them, I'd never pick at Mom's house plants again and would always let Joosep peek at my playing cards, and I'd wipe the toilet lid after every time I used it. Even though Kaisa picks on me constantly, I felt terribly sad and started to miss her when I remembered how sweet she looked standing in the yard picking her nose.

There had been a lady sitting next to me the whole time I'd been on the bus. She had a checkered purse and big earrings and smelled a little like my grandma does whenever I go with her to a café or to see a play. The lady had apparently noticed that I was in a pickle, because she asked if everything was okay. I said that everything was fine and even nodded, because that's what I always do whenever a stranger asks me how I am. Only afterward did I realize that everything was far from being fine. In fact, things were looking pretty grim, but I was too shy to correct myself. She seemed nice and might have smelled like my grandma, but in reality, she could be an evil stepmother who only rides the bus to find new stepchildren. She might take me away to her cottage in the woods, make me gather hay for her pigs, and force me to kneel on hard peas in the corner! That was the last thing I wanted! So, I stayed quiet and just focused on staring out the window.

By then, the bus had already made many more stops, most of the passengers had gotten off, and I no longer had any idea where I was. I was still in the bus, sure, but where was the bus itself? I could see tall apartment buildings outside and wondered if the bus driver lived in one of them. What if he were to stop and tell everyone to get off because he'd gotten home? He probably wouldn't me stay in the bus overnight. But then I thought: maybe bus drivers live in their buses, just like truck drivers who go on long trips and teachers who . . . no, I suppose teachers don't live at school.

I was still pondering this when the bus jerked to a sudden halt, the doors opened, and the driver turned off the engine. All the passengers left, disappearing between the tall buildings. The driver got off, too, though he didn't walk away—he stood next to the bus and started smoking a cigarette. He hadn't noticed me before, but now, he spotted me through the window. The driver boarded the bus, walked straight up to me, and asked: "Where do you think you're going, kid?"

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