



“Stand here, Pärt”

Text by **Anti Saar**

Illustrated by **Anna Ring**

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Pärt and his dad go to the grocery store. Once they've selected their purchases, they get in line to pay. But then, Dad remembers he forgot to get yeast. He asks Pärt to keep their place in line with the shopping basket and vanishes among the aisles in a flash. Pärt waits, feeling like a big boy. But the fewer customers there are left ahead of him, the more he starts to worry. What on Earth could have happened to Dad? What will happen to him if it comes his turn to pay and Dad still hasn't returned?

Award:

2019 Tartu Prize for Children's Literature (Childhood Prize) nominee



Reading sample

“Stand here!” Dad said, set the shopping basket down by my feet, took me by the shoulders, and looked me straight in the eye. “I forgot to get yeast!”

Before I could say anything, Dad disappeared among the aisles. I was in line. There were five more people in front of me, and a moment later, there was a woman behind me as well. I felt pretty proud of myself standing there like a big boy, or even an adult, because there wasn't any kid-stuff like cookies or Kinder Eggs there in the basket, but rather sausage and bread and milk and other groceries like that.

Well, alright—there was a little package of diapers for Leenu in there, too, but I nudged it behind a pineapple where nobody could see it. Not that anyone would have really believed I was buying diapers for myself. I'm already seven years old and will be going to school in the fall!

A short while later, there were only four people left in front of me and, although Dad had told me to stand there, I knew all too well that when the line moved forward, I'd also have to move and not just stand.

I grabbed the basket by the handle and tried to lift, but it was so awfully heavy and packed full of groceries that there was no way I could get it off the ground alone. I didn't want anybody to see that I was in trouble, so I quickly started brainstorming ways to somehow get the basket closer to the cashier.

First of all, I regretted that we hadn't taken a shopping cart, because those have wheels. But then, I remembered a story Joosep told me about the natives of Easter Island who carved gigantic stone statues and rolled them around the island on logs—still, I supposed those logs were really big and heavy, and it wasn't as if I'd find any nearby, either. I shoved the basket with all my might, using both my arms and legs. Inch by inch, I finally managed to get it pretty close to the conveyor belt.

However, Dad still wasn't back! I figured he probably couldn't find the yeast, because when I looked at the signs hanging over the aisles, I couldn't see the word “YEAST” written on any of them. To tell the truth, I myself didn't know under which sign one should look for yeast. What was yeast, anyway?! I really hoped Dad knew better than I did, but then why was he taking so long? It could be that there was a big selection of different yeasts and he couldn't choose the very best one, just like sometimes when I'm allowed to pick out one candy and I stand in front of the shelf and just can't seem to decide which one of them might be the tastiest of all, and then I finally pick one that Dad says is either too expensive or has questionable ingredients, and he certainly won't buy that one, even though he himself said I could pick!

Dad says that the candy shelf makes me see double, but maybe the yeast shelf is what's made him see double now!



Or maybe (and now, my stomach started to churn), just maybe, he's forgotten the way back or found out he hasn't got enough money to buy all the groceries, and is sulking between the shelves in shame right now and can't bring himself to come back to the register. It would be completely understandable, even though I don't especially believe Dad would do something like that. He always says that when you do something bad, the right thing to do is to go and tell an adult about it nice and calmly; not duck and hide somewhere (like I do every once in a while, to be honest), because the bad thing itself won't go away like that. But if that was the case right now, all the same, and Dad was hiding behind a shelf or crouched under a counter, then I'd have to pay for the whole basket of groceries all on my own!

I did have money, of course—quite a lot—but it was all in a piggybank at home that I never took to the store with me. I'm saving money for a tablet computer, but as you know, they're really expensive. As Mom and Dad say, a lot of people have done a lot of hard work to invent and manufacture them, so I'm afraid just one piggybank of coins might not be enough to buy one.

I looked back towards the aisles, but Dad was nowhere to be seen. There were already four people in line behind me. And when I started peering around like that, all four customers did the same, as if their dad had also disappeared and their money was at home in a piggybank. I suppose they were actually looking around for my dad, too—even though there was no way they could know what he looked like.

Now, there were just two people left in line in front of me: an old guy who was only buying a big brown bottle of something, and a woman whose groceries filled the whole conveyor belt. But a mere moment later, the cashier was already beeping all the woman's items through, and there was more and more space opening up on the belt where I was supposed to start loading my own purchases.

One by one, I lifted the groceries out of the basket: a long sausage, a carton of milk, eggs, flour, bread, carrots, and that funny-looking green plant that looks like it has a fish tail. I also heaved the big pineapple up onto the conveyor belt—it weighed a ton, but I was brave and didn't let it show. Last of all, I sent Leenu's diapers and two cans of beer off on their way; and then, I reckoned: if Dad doesn't show up this very minute, then I'll be in even worse trouble. No matter whether I had money with me or not, the cashier definitely wouldn't sell me beer, which is alcohol! I would have to look at least eighteen years old to buy it, but even if I tried sounding gruff or stood up on my tippy-toes, I wouldn't have pulled it off.

I looked up at the cashier, who was a big lady with hair on her upper lip, and was afraid that when she scanned everything all the way up to the beer, I'd almost certainly get a proper dressing-down for it. So, I decided at the very last minute to put all the groceries back into the basket before it was too late. But oh, woe was me! The diapers and the beer had pushed all the other items so far down the conveyor belt that there was no way I could have reached the milk, eggs, and everything else.



The cashier had already scanned through all the groceries the woman in front of me was buying. The lady gave her a twenty-euro note, got some coins and a receipt back, and stuck them in her wallet. All the while, my goods were rolling towards the cash register like they were heading straight into a monster's jaws. I wanted to run away, to leave everything right there, to scamper back to the aisles to look for Dad or maybe even outside to where our bikes were parked, but the cashier-woman with the hair on her upper lip had already grabbed my carton of eggs, scanned it through her beeping-machine, and said: "Hello, little man!"

I couldn't bring myself to reply. My mouth went crooked and my throat started to tingle.

All of a sudden, two ice creams and a little cube wrapped in pale white paper (so that was yeast!) plopped down with my groceries on the conveyor belt. I turned around and, to my delight, I saw my dad, who had finally returned. He said hello to the cashier for me and sent me through the security gates to wait for our purchases at the other end.

With our groceries in tow, we took our bikes to a park nearby, sat down on the corner of a fountain, and unwrapped our ice creams.

"It's great that you waited for me, Pärt," Dad said. "When I left you, I happened to meet an old lady who couldn't reach a granola package on the top shelf. And when I took it down for her, she couldn't read the ingredients on the package. They always write them in teensy-tiny letters. So, I read it all out loud for her. That's why it took me so long."

Would you look at that! I thought. A little old lady was in trouble and my dad rushed to the rescue without a second's thought. Dad really is a wonderful guy!

Translated by Adam Cullen