

### **“The Visit”**

Text by **Anti Saar**

Illustrated by **Anna Ring**

Päike ja Pilv 2017, 24 pp

ISBN 9789949986279

*Picturebook, fiction*

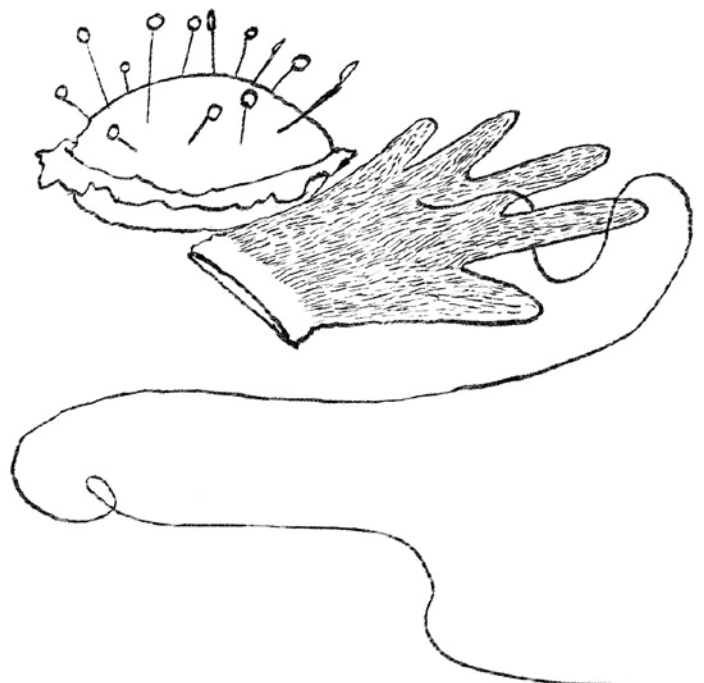
Age: 7+

In spring, when the apple trees begin to blossom, Robby's grandmother dies. When autumn arrives and the apples are ripe on the trees, the boy decides to visit his grandfather in the countryside, even though he reckons it will be a sad trip to take alone. He and his grandfather go fishing together, play checkers, and watch football on TV. Then, one evening, Robby takes a walk through the orchard. Spotting a nice-looking apple under his favourite tree, he picks it up. Yet right as the boy is about to sink his teeth into it, he notices a little worm who beckons him to follow it into a wormhole. Inside the fruit, a whole world that summons strong memories of his grandmother starts to unfold.

#### **Awards:**

2017 5 Best-Designed Estonian Children's Books

2017 Good Children's Book



*In Memory of my Mother and Grandmother*

**Reading sample**

/.../

...and soon, Grandma and Grampa's kitchen appeared before me.

How neat! I thought. There's a drawer inside the apple, a glove inside the drawer, and an entire kitchen inside the glove! What next?

The kitchen was just how it had been that morning when Grandpa and I made omelets, but even so, something was slightly different. The gentle scent of cinnamon was in the air, and hanging back on its usual place on the wall was a picture of me, Grandpa, and Grandma vacationing at the seaside last summer. Grandpa had taken the photo down after Grandma died. He said that looking at it made him miss her, and missing her made him very sad.

I stood staring at the picture for a long time. Grandma was smiling in it, and I smiled back at her from the kitchen. It felt like we were together again, like we'd just been playing hide and seek that whole time, and now, I'd tracked her down in the photograph. And now, it was my turn to hide!

I crept over to the big, wood-heated brick stove, and climbed onto the leso. The leso is what we call a big space in the stove's wall, where you can dry beans and onions, winter boots, and clothes damp from playing in the snow.

In the back of the leso, I discovered another, even smaller opening that I'd never noticed before. I smiled at the thought of having a sneaky new hiding place, and climbed in.

/.../

As soon as I was back in a little more spacious room, I stood up straight, and realized I'd reached my grandma and grandpa's front hallway. Everything was how it used to be: there were Grandpa's waders and fishing boots, but also Grandma's buckled shoes, and the wide-brimmed hat she used to wear while reading out in the yard in summer.

Grandma's lilac-colored silk scarf was also hanging there on a peg. I picked it up and held it against my face. The scarf still smelled like her.

I burrowed my nose deeper into the fabric and breathed in its scent, closing my eyes. Enormous contentment and enormous pain washed over me simultaneously. My knees buckled and I felt like I was falling somewhere deep, deep down—almost like into a dream.

When I opened my eyes, I found myself standing on Grandma's porch. Autumn evening sunlight cascaded through the small window panes as a spider scuttled along the window sill.

There, sitting at the table covered in a faded tablecloth and stitching up my glove—the same blue knitted glove, with the hole that I had just adventured through—was my grandmother.

When she saw me, Grandma put down her sewing and cheerfully declared: "There you are, my little Robby!"—as if we had just been playing hide and seek the whole time!

I ran up to her, hugged her, and cried. She stroked the back of my head and comforted me. "Oh, my darling, what's wrong?"

"Here," Grandma said once I'd wiped away my tears, "I made bread pudding just this morning." She pushed a plate of the dessert in front of me and splashed milk on it from a pitcher. Bread pudding with fresh milk is my favorite treat. Grandma always adds cinnamon and a big handful of raisins to the mix. I enjoyed my snack, and told Grandma how things were going at school and in sports and at drama club.

When I was finished, Grandma and I played Battleship and looked through the old children's magazines she keeps stacked on the porch.

Suddenly, I heard my grandfather calling me from very far away: "Come on, Robby! Sauna's ready!"

I looked at Grandma. "Go on, go on," she encouraged me. "Don't keep your grandfather waiting, otherwise he'll get worried."



Before long, I was right back in the yard. I skipped over to my grandfather, still holding the apple. The sun had already set, the grass was blanketed in dew, and wisps of fog curled between the trees.

"That's a whopper of an apple you've got there!" Grandpa said. "You can get a whole bellyful out of it if you just cut out that wormhole."

"No!" I shouted, horrified. "Let's just let it be." I carefully placed the apple under a tree, and we walked back to the house.

/.../

*Translated by Adam Cullen*

