

Children's Books by Bulgarian Writers and Artists



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ТОЗИ ПРОЕКТ Е РЕАЛИЗИРАН
С ФИНАНСОВАТА ПОДКРЕПА
НА МИНИСТЕРСТВОТО НА КУЛТУРАТА

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Yoo-hoo-inventicus Юху-буху-измислячус

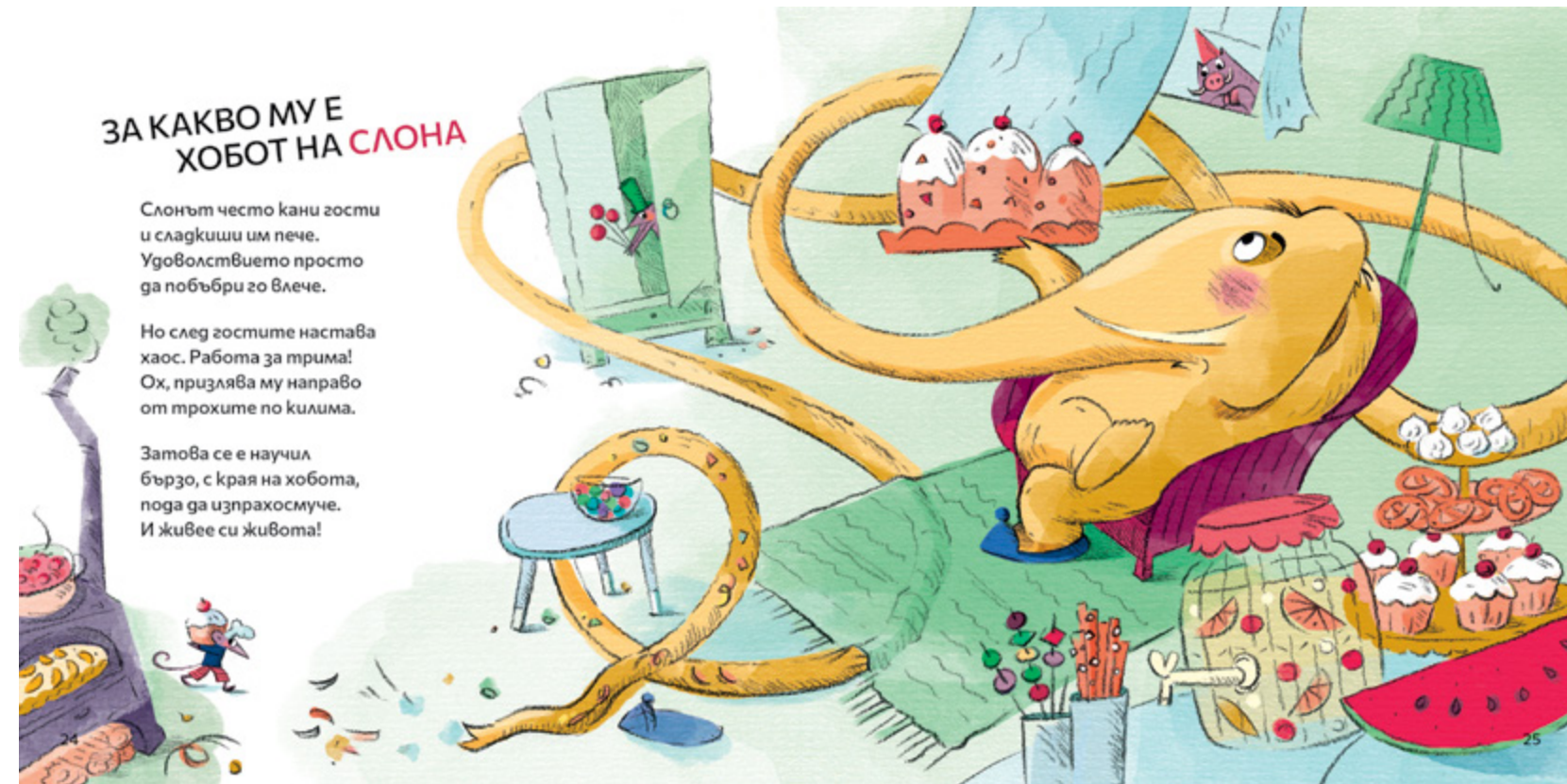
Author: Petya Kokudeva
Illustrator: Antonia Mechkueva

Picture book in verse, 40 pages
ISBN: 9786191867288
Janet-45 Publishing House, 2022

Do you know why the octopus has eight tentacles? Well, because it works in a nursery—it can cuddle and comfort many fish at once. And have you ever wondered why a dog chases its tail? Because it dreams of being a detective, and when it has no one to chase, it chases its tail for exercise.

Yoo-hoo-inventicus is a book of short poems that encourage children to think laterally, beyond the usual logic, and to discover new uses for familiar things. Each of the 17 animals in the book tells a story with an unexpected ending: the goat, for example, has a long beard because he is... so busy with work that he doesn't have time to shave.

Funny and playful, the yoo-hoo animals unlock children's natural poetic and inventive side. The little verse stories present an alternative, jokey logic and an unusual plot that provokes children to make up their own versions of each poem. The book trains children's minds to look for creative solutions that sound absurd at first but turn out to be ingenious.



PETYA KOKUDEVA (born 1982) is a children's writer and traveller. She graduated in journalism and has an MA in literature and creative writing. Her children's books have been translated into German and Hungarian, and individual works have been published in anthologies and literary magazines in Russian, Czech and Macedonian. She has won several national awards, including the 2012 Southern Spring Prize for best debut; the 2017 Konstantin Konstantinov Award for children's literature; and the 2018 Hristo G. Danov Award for Best Children's Book. She's among the top-10 most-read children's authors at the Sofia City Library for 2021. Some of her poems have been turned into songs, while others have been included in textbooks for first, second and third grade. She has also presented her books abroad at meetings with children in Luxembourg, Germany, Ukraine, Malta, and elsewhere. Petya lives in Sofia and works as a copywriter.

ANTONIA MECHKUEVA graduated from the National Academy of Fine Arts, Sofia, majoring in poster and graphic communication. She works in the field of graphic design, and in recent years most of her projects have been related to illustration, as well as the general artistic design of children's educational publications. She is the artist of the overall concept and illustrations of an educational series published by Prosveta, which was awarded the BELMA Gold Medal for Best Textbook in Europe in 2019. Illustration also led her to animated filmmaking; her current project is taking part in film festivals. This year, her illustration became the leading visual in a campaign to help women in toxic relationships. She is currently illustrating a new children's book full of adventure and fantastic characters. She believes that illustration brings joy, but it can also create meaning, and that makes it even more interesting and valuable for both the artist and the viewer.

E X C E R P T

Translated by Gergana Galabova

Why the Jellyfish Stings

The Ocean Jellyfish
has scarves and sweaters,
dresses all so stylish,
in her closet underwater.

She irons every outfit,
the oldest pairs jeans—
side, back and front.
She can't stand a crease.

She has a tiny iron—
and swims with a splash.
So careful, don't you touch it,
It'll sting you in a flash!

**Why the Octopus Has So Many Tentacles**

In the sapphire ocean of seaweed
you'll find underwater nurseries,
where little fine-cheeked fishies
munch on salads and purees.

Their teacher cares for them all.
He himself is very, very tall.
He's the octopus, who has
a tricky but beloved task:

If the fishies cry, he quickly must
hug them tightly in a bunch.
Thankfully his tentacles are eight,
so he can carry all the weight.





The Cricket's Shadow

Сянката на Щуреца

Author: Julia Spiridonova

Young adult novel, 240 pages
ISBN: 9789547714526
Krugozor Publishing, 2021

Mona is fifteen, with no friends, no talents and no looks to speak of. But what she does have is an eccentric mother, an eternally busy father, and intolerable half-sister, and a beauty-vlogger stepsister. To impress her new classmates, Mona declares herself the youngest detective in a made-up French association. But her first criminal case send her crashing (literally) into her first love.

JULIA SPIRIDONOVA was born in Sofia in a family of artists. She graduated from Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski and New Bulgarian University. She works as a scriptwriter and freelance writer. She is the initiator and organiser of the weekly volunteer initiative “Who Loves Fairytales?” as well as the “Flying Pig” initiative for teenagers at the Sofia City Library. She is the founder and organizer of the annual charity initiative “Where Children Live, There Must Be Children’s Books.” She is an ambassador of the “Fun Summer Reading” initiative. Her books have been translated into French, German, Hungarian, Romanian, Macedonian, Czech and Farsi.

She has won numerous prizes and awards, including the Konstantin Konstantinov Prize (2010); the P. P. Slaveykov Award(2010); the 2015 Peroto Award for Children’s Literature and the 2016 Magic Pearl Award for the book *Be My Friend*; the 2016 Most-Read Children’s Writer at Sofia City Library; and the 2016 Writer of the Year Award.

Her published books are: *Dreamland*, a middle-grade fantasy trilogy; a young adult series that includes *Tina and a Half* (2009), *Countess Bathory* (2010), *Max* (2012), and *Chronos* (2016); the standalone YA novel *The Cricket’s Shadow* (2022); the trilogy *Be My Friend* (2015), *What Magic Lies in the Snow* (2015), and *Where Are You, Sunshine?* (2017); and *Bobby and Santa’s Secret Agents* (2018)

EXCERPTS

Translated by Gergana Galabova

Family and Parents

“**T**his is my shamily,” grumbled Love, who was filming her latest video, hoping that it would gain one million likes. “This is my sister Mona. She has no hair, because...”

Dimana hurled herself at Love, but Mona’s dad was quicker. He confiscated the little beast’s phone. “That’s enough for today.”

Love threw a tantrum. Her dad got angry. “These gadgets have turned you into idiots.”

“They’re very useful!” Love snapped back.

“Useful?” said her dad, “Do you know what this is?”

He waved the phone under Love’s nose, who was trying in vain to catch it.

“That’s my phone,” she whimpered.

“No, that’s not a phone. It’s a door, letting in thieves.”

Everyone turned towards the Gray Mouse, standing by the door. It was the first time Mona had seen her angry.

"Thieves?" asked Dimana guiltily, thinking her mum somehow knew about the money theft. "And what are these thieves stealing?"

"They're stealing your childhood." The Gray Mouse sat down on the sofa next to Mona's dad.

Dimana sighed with relief.

"They're turning you into something... no, they're turning you into nothing!" said the Mouse, looking around at everybody. "You're not children, you're not adults. God knows what you are."

"It's not true!" Love cried out.

"I see what you're saying," said Mona.

Dimana and Love glared at her. Traitor!

"Exactly," began her dad. "Back in the day we had a childhood. I went out in the morning and came back in the evening. Spent all day with my friends. We played card games, spitball, football, we were running out and about. One summer we built a rocket ship, which took off. It hit the windows of the police station."

Her dad laughed. Nobody joined him.

"We do the same things now, we just do them virtually," explained Dimana.

"Virtually means not really."

"So, it's all fake."

"It is real," Love cried. "YouTubers aren't robots, are they? I want my phone back!"

"Those are the ones I'm most scared of," said the Mouse, "You are such a smart child. Don't you see what they're doing to you?"

"What are they doing to me?" asked Love.

"Whatever they want. They are training you kids like monkeys. They share dangerous challenges that can cost you your life. Do this, then that, buy the coolest..."

This seemed to hit Love right in the heart. "I'm not a monkey!"

The mouse tried to calm her down: "It's not your fault. The world today is a scary place for children, everything is so chaotic. Kids are lonely, scared. They are looking for soul mates. And what, what... they stumble upon these... tubers, in a fictional world full of fictional characters."

"And do you know why your favourites become YouTubers?" The dad leaned over Love.

"Because they're cool."

"For money," her dad said. "It's all for money. More likes, more cash, isn't that right? And contracts for some things. From time to time, you'll ask for something you don't need, because one of them filled your head with ideas. You're not children, you're not adults, just plain users."

There was an awkward silence. Finally Dimana jumped up: "OMG, you're so annoying. You don't understand anything." And walked out demonstratively.

"Boomers." Love followed her.

The traitor Mona waddled after them. Hopefully they would take her back.

First Day of School

Mona tried to move to another class, but no one was willing to help. Or even listen to her. Her mum outright laughed in her face. That's right: "Ha ha ha!" Then she said that in her life, a woman constantly encountered difficulties. Mona had to get used to that. What a cliché!

The two only argued for about half an hour because her mum was in a hurry. She had a meeting with some people who wanted a new interior for their ugly restaurant. Her mum considered herself an artist, but she also had to work as an interior designer. So, in the middle of the argument, her mother fled the field with the transparent explanation that she was running late.

Naturally, her work was always more important than Mona.

Mona texted her dad, but he couldn't talk either, he was late for surgery. Her dad was always late for surgery because he had countless patients. It seemed most people had nothing to do but operate around the clock.

As one might guess, the first day at the new school was a real disaster. The day got off to a lousy start. Her mum had made breakfast, something she (thankfully) did extremely rarely. She had toasted a few slices of bread and even boiled some eggs. Mona hated her mum's eggs—either they were overcooked or there was a whitish, snot-like substance bobbing around under the shell.

"You know I never have breakfast," Mona said angrily.

However, her mum insisted they sit at the table "like a normal family."

Because of the stupid breakfast, Mona was late and didn't get to dress the way she had planned. Of course, her mum didn't hold back and started criticising her outfit. When Mona took offence at this, she blatantly denied it. She hadn't intended to criticise at all, she had only asked: "Would you like me to give you a skirt?"

As if that were not criticism!

On top of everything else, she insisted on accompanying Mona. Great! What if her new classmates saw her? She could have at least dressed like a normal person. Someone needed to ban old women from wearing rocker boots. Especially paired with a frilly tulle skirt and short coat.

"Some people forget how old they are," Mona said.

The two of them argued all the way to the school. Good thing there was a newspaper stand on their way. CHILDREN KILLING CHILDREN IN THE NAME OF THE ISLAMIC STATE—screamed one headline.

Her mother had an inexplicable interest in disasters, tragedies, and crimes, as if her other shortcomings weren't enough. Mona took advantage of her mother's momentary distraction and, pretending the crazy red-haired woman had nothing to do with her, ceremoniously entered through the main entrance.

The crazy redhead remained at the fence, gripping the bars with hands blue from the cold. She had forgotten her gloves, but who would have guessed that October could be so cold?



Fake Dictionary of Funny Phrases

Фалшив речник на смешните фрази

Author: Ivan Radenkov
Illustrator: Lily Lamer

Short stories, 80 pages
ISBN: 9786191644223
Enthusiasm Publishing, 2021

Dear curious and overly-curious reader, you are now in possession of the first fake dictionary of all time, printed quite deliberately with the idea of giving false information about the origin of certain amusing phrases in our flowery language.

“Who needs that! And why?” some scholar will exclaim in despair.

And I will answer: “Because of imagination. In celebration of children’s creative spirit and limitless fantasy. For the sake of being glorious and fun, even if we do have ants in our pants. Because we often look through a crooked lens, because sometimes we’re a rabble-rouser and other times we turn a blind eye, but we’re always looking into everyone else’s plate, unless pigs fly. Oh, excuse these confused words: perhaps my board is bugging out.”



Ivan Radenkov became a children’s writer when he became a father (2012). He has experienced a second childhood with his two sons, causing mischief and creating stories together. Each adventure inspires a new illustrated story or musical work. Because Ivan is also a musician, we often read lyrics in his books and hear music with guitars and drums that children like in the enclosed CDs. (For reference, see the series *Books for Dads*, *Stories from the Big Yard*, *Frant the Cat and the Mysterious Island*, *The Taste of Adventure*, *Cyclists near Lake Papillon*, and *A Fake Dictionary of Funny Phrases*.) Ivan is the recipient of the 2021 Konstantin Konstantinov National Award. Ivan Radenkov’s unadulterated, sincere and funny stories are already being studied by children in the third grade.

Lili Lamer was born in Sofia and graduated in animation directing at the New Bulgarian University and in psychology and therapy in London. Thanks to her psychological education, the artist spends her free time illustrating books for children dealing with difficult subjects such as death, loneliness, sadness, loss, and violence. Lamer is a free spirit at heart and loves nature walks, dancing and singing, as well as getting lost in the world of a good book.

EXCERPT

Translated by Gergana Galabova

“Bang, Bang, Ah, Splash”

The news is that the Colorado potato beetle Dieter has got a bang-bang-ah-splash. The front lights on his bang-bang-ah-splash glow green, the back lights glow red, and overall the machine is extra mobile and agile.

Let me tell you the whole story.

One night, before Dieter went to bed, a dark red Ford with a broken headlight came down the dirt road to his home. Three boys and a girl got out of it and set to work pitching a tent very close to Dieter’s house. He was very worried about what was going on, but it soon became clear—the young people had come to be closer to nature and were setting camp in the field. Reassured, Dieter decided to go to bed, but the group would not let him sleep. They were terribly noisy. First, they went around left and right looking for branches for the fire, then they started breaking them... Finally, one boy pulled out a gadget and shouted: “Let’s fly the drone!”

After much fussing and animated chatter, the gadget flew like helicopters in the movies Dieter often watched on TV. It buzzed left and right, took off in a razor-sharp flight over the roof of his home, and finally crashed behind the stump in the backyard with a terrible crash. Dieter ran out in his pajamas and slippers to see what was going

on. The worst thing had happened—his favorite potato plant had been smashed—its entire stem cut down by the fins of the crashed machine. The pesky aerial vehicle was still flashing red and its motors humming, but after a sharp screech everything stopped. Dieter was more than furious. He had intended to survive all summer on this potato, and now... He started resolutely towards the mischief-makers' fire, but they were already singing and playing the guitar and did not hear him. They even nearly crushed him as he tried to get their attention. Well, what can you do... Tired and powerless, Dieter trudged home and fell asleep. In the morning, he was awakened by a car motor. Smoke from the exhaust poured in through his window and the bad mood quickly returned to his soul, along with the taste of burnt diesel.

Dieter devoted the next few days to nursing a small stalk of the potato, which had survived. He watered and fertilized his seedling. He moved the machine under the shed where he kept his small hand tractor and tools. Soon his curiosity and inventive spirit took over. What if I fix this drone and fly it? he said to himself out of the blue.

For two and a half weeks, he worked round the clock. Colorado beetles have dreams and love crafty gadgets just like us. True, they have wings, but they're not particularly skilled fliers. Very disappointing. And everyone wants to fly, right? Well, Dieter was a pretty smart beetle, and he learned this-and-that about motors and batteries, read a lot about aerodynamics and fin movements, winds and aviation. Then he got to work and rebuilt the drone as if it were his own. He fixed the broken fin, built a cockpit out of a beer bottlecap, put an armchair with a harness inside, switched the controls from remote to manual. He also installed four footswitches that operated the four fins independently and decided to give the drone a try.

The first attempt was tragic. Don't get me wrong: Dieter didn't get hurt. But he would have much rather suffered personally than cut down the potato stalk he had just reinforced! Well, the drone jerked its head twice against the cap: gab-gab. He came down after half an hour, stammered, and set about fixing the machine. He linked the fin controls into one common lever, and just increased or decreased the speed of each with the pedals. Now it really must be ready!

Oh, how it flew! Like a true swallow! It was unstoppable, faster than the wind, more powerful than any flying insect. He was an inventor, a thoughtster, a revolutionary of beetle technology! *I must show this invention to my friends!* he thought, and he set off for the great mud puddle where they gathered at noon.

They spotted him from afar and gasped. Dieter did some amazing loops and landed beautifully on a pier in the puddle. He sat inside and just chuckled at the curious bugs crowding around him.

"What is it? How does it fly? What's it called?" they shouted over each other.

"It's a drone," Dieter began as he tried to get out of his cockpit but hit his head twice again: bang-bang. He lost consciousness from the blows and clobbered into the puddle: splash.

"What did you say it was?" said the bugs at the edge of the crowd, who hadn't yet heard.



As they struggled to pull poor Dieter out of the puddle, those in the middle explained: "Bang-bang-ah-splash, didn't you hear?"

"Ah, right," the others nodded smartly and hurried to spread the word about what a wonderful bang-bang-ah-splash Dieter has.

From then on, the Colorado beetle couldn't convince anyone that it wasn't a bang-bang-ah-splash, but a drone. In order not to make him angry, those closest to him took to calling the machine drone-drone-ta-splash. You know, when a phrase starts, you can't stop it. As people say, it's set in stone. And his drone became known by the name bang-bang-ah-splash.

Bugging Out

The wood-eater Stumpy lived in the paneled room of an elderly couple—Grandmother Dina and Grandfather Denko. As soon as he got up early in the morning, Stumpy would start gnawing the boards on the wall. The wood was pine, well-dried, without many chips and unvarnished: the ideal environment for Stumpy. Like any little tree-eater, he was satisfied by little—he would both have a good meal and not be noticed by the grandparents. And that was good, because they would hardly be happy about someone piercing their paneling. So he lived happily and peacefully.

Once his Aunt Rose and Cousin Lena Tabak, who lived in the wooden walls of the wardrobe, came to visit. The two of them just powdered their noses, sneered, and made unambiguous remarks about his dwelling.

"And how do you live in this hellhole?! Our penthouse is ten times bigger and more beautiful. So, there's not even a closet! Oh, I hit my head on the ceiling—it's very low! Terrible, my hair's ruined!"

Stump was ashamed and embarrassed. As soon as the two had left, he set to work. He was going to turn his home into an exemplary spacious and modern dwelling. He couldn't entertain guests in such a manner!

The work progressed slowly, so he bought a chisel, a hammer, and a nice drill on the Internet. As soon as the tools arrived, the repairs went quickly. He built a huge living room with a dining area and kitchenette. He added three bedrooms and a long hallway with an entryway for his shoes. He even set about building a double garage, even though he had no car. Of course, to accomplish all this, he had to buzz and pound with tools all day. Grandma Dina was hard of hearing and didn't notice, but Grandpa Denko was always angry and complaining:

"This board is bugging out."

"You're bugging out! You're imagining things!" the grandmother argued.

"I'm telling you; the board is bugging out!" her husband insisted.

But what was an apartment without wide sunny balconies? They were the icing on the cake, and Stumpy took them on at the end of the renovation. He decided to place them overlooking the living room, just above the heads of Grandpa Denko and

Grandma Dina. As soon as he had finished them, it was obvious to the naked eye that there was a tree eater in the paneling. And Stumpy hadn't eaten the timber either, he just threw it over the balcony. Piles of sawdust had accumulated on the living room floor. Nasty business. Grandpa Denko insisted on calling a specialist. As soon as he came, the grandmother explained the problem to him: "Grampa's board is bugging out."

The specialist undertook an inspection. He took to crawling on the ground with a magnifying glass, found some of the chips, licked them, then examined them against the light. Finally, he stated: "It's normal for your board to be bugging out since a wood-eater has taken up residence in your paneling and is punching holes in your boards. If I may, I will varnish the wood to prevent it from punching any more holes."

So, they did. Stumpy was devastated—the balconies, the windows, the entrance hall and half the corridor were covered with sticky smelly varnish. His access to the bedrooms was cut off. He huddled like a prisoner in the kitchen, unable to get out or see daylight. It proved utterly impossible to walk around or invite guests, and his apartment became more cramped than before the renovation.

The worst thing was that Stumpy himself began to hear knocking and chirping in his own kitchen, which was, of course, made entirely of wood. The noise was coming from a board just above the oven and it didn't stop all day. Apparently, a wood-nibbler had taken up residence in his home—these are microscopic beetles that live in the paneling of wood-eaters and feed on them.

And so, Stumpy's board started bugging out, too.





The Dougles and the Magic Leaf

Дугулите и вълшебното листо

Authors: Nikola Raykov and Tony Tellalov
Illustrator: Maya Bocheva

Gamebook, 80 pages
ISBN: 9786197269055
Gametale Publishing, 2021



One early morning, in a very, very dense forest, the first rays of light caressed a huge Douglas fir tree and illuminated its leaves. Some of them were as yellow as small melons, others as red as large strawberries, and some as green as... well, as leaves. But the strangest of all were the blue ones!

Down under the tree, the douglies gathered to watch the miracle. Like little mossy eggs, their colorful bodies glistened along the paths like the bottom of a mountain stream. The day of the Great Touch had come!

This innovative book invites you into the depths of children's imaginations with its interactive story and 17 possible endings! The book won the Magic Pearl Award in the "Explorers" category by a landslide of 618 votes from children across Bulgaria.

NIKOLA RAYKOV became famous for his first-ever story-games *The Little Ghoul's Big Adventure* and *The Little Ghoul's Bigger Adventure*. In just a few years he has become one of the most popular and beloved children's writers in Bulgaria, and his books have sold many thousands of copies. He has numerous awards and nominations, including the national Konstantin Konstantinov Award. He is a three-time winner of the Magic Pearl Award for his story-games *The Dobrosats*, *A Tale of Two Worlds*, and *The Dougles and the Magic Leaf*. Electronic editions of his works have been translated by volunteers around the world, and his books are published abroad. The rights to his entire works have been purchased in China.

TONY TELLALOV is the author of eight collections of poetry. He has won numerous national literary awards, including the first prize for poetry in the National Student Literary Competition in Shumen (2002); the Grand Prize at M-tel's National Competition for SMS - Poetry; the National Palace of Culture and the Union of Bulgarian Writers Award (2007); first and second prize in the Competition for Short Prose organized by LiterNet and eRunsMagazine (2011; 2013); first prize at the Second National Competition for an Original Fairy Tale in Stara Zagora (2019); and the Ivan Peychev National Grand Prize for Lyrics (2021).

MAYA "WIKI" BOCHEVA is an artist, illustrator and animation director. She has worked on projects for the largest Bulgarian publishers, including Janet 45, Softpress, and Damian Yakov, as well as for global companies such as Microsoft, Disney, InTime and many others. She has had two major solo exhibitions, and has won the national Konstantin Konstantinov Award for illustration and four first prizes from the international Computer Space forum. She won first prize at the WSA World Contest, where he represented Bulgaria and competed among 178 countries from all over the world in the field of educational applications.





An Alphabet of Animal-Professionals

Азбука с животни професионалисти

Author: Maria Doneva
Illustrator: Elitsa Sarbinova

Picture book in verse, 64 pages
ISBN: 9786191867332
Janet-45 Publishing House, 2022

An *Alphabet of Animal-Professionals* is a book in verse. It introduces the youngest readers to letters in a modern and fun way, through images of animals with different professions or crafts. It is Elitsa Sarbinova's second picture book, done in collaboration with the poetess Maria Doneva and published by Janet 45. This picture book of 30 joyful animal-professionals—each illustrated and presented in a poem—is perfect for kids, their parents and grandparents.

The idea for the book was born in the dark times of the first lockdown, when Elitsa was feeling down and needed a funny gang of imaginary friends to brighten up her days. Initially envisioned as a memory-card game or a series of posters, the 30-strong illustrated gang transformed into a book when Maria Doneva gave each animal-professional a story in a joyous and amusing series of poems.

A romantic alligator-astronaut, a gentle caterpillar-gardener, a fluffy but very serious rabbit-dentist, as well as 27 more animals-professionals help kids get acquainted with the Bulgarian alphabet in a playful and exciting manner. *An Alphabet of Animal-Professionals* is a book to be loved and enjoyed over and over again.



MARIA DONEVA (1974) is the author of books of poems and short fiction. She translates children's books, and translations of fairy tales into verse are her trademark. She is a playwright at the Geo Milev Drama Theatre in Stara Zagora. She runs a literature page for one of Bulgaria's national newspapers and a podcast about books on Radio Stara Zagora.

Take a look at our brave pig
He gobbles flames both small and big
Because he is a FIREFIGHTER
he makes your calendar much brighter.
He feels no fear behind his hose,
a sturdy helmet above his nose.
His fire tuck is red and shiny,
its siren's howls are never whiny.
He keeps us safe with his trusty axe
and eats up fireworks as snacks.

ELITSA SARBINOVA is a grown-up who refuses to grow up for real. The colorful and whimsical world of kids is a constant source of excitement and inspiration for her work. She graduated from the National Academy of Art in Sofia with a degree in design of children's environments. For a long time, she worked as a graphic designer at a company for baby products. Many newborns and new moms grew up with her designs, characters and patterns. These days Elitsa is mainly focusing on illustration, as well as diving into animating amusing characters. She loves cats and long walks in the forest. You can see more of her work at www.mominoki.co



Вижте нашето прасе.
Огън с жупел то пасе.
То е смел **ПОЖАРНИКАР**.
Снимат го за календар.
Хич от нищо не се стряска.
Има си маркуч и каска.
На колата му червена
е монтирана сирена.
Взема превантивни мерки
и закусва фейерверки.



Five Stories about Nununkins Пет истории за нюнючета

Author: Anna Nort
Illustrator: Albena Kamenova

Children's book, 68 pages
ISBN: 3800083831235
Fyut Publishing House, 2022



Have you ever walked through an oak or beech forest? Have you ever seen those little round holes on the tree trunks? You must have thought they were made by a woodpecker or that some forest animal lived in the hollow. That's right! There are forest animals there, but they are not the only ones...

Writer Anna Nort tells us who else lives there in her new book *Five Stories about Nununkins*. Don't know what a Nununkin is? Oh! Well, a Nununkin is a tiny person, born to help out. Help out whom? Well, mostly children: people's children, fishes' children, all animals' children, be they squirrels, owlets, ladybugs, badgers—all kinds of creepy-crawlies, snippets and scribblers.

Mr. Clappers is a lovable bouncy Nununkin who loves the color purple and stripes, and has a huge purple amethyst ring. This ring is not just any ring, it is very, very special. With it, Mr. Clappers hunts for magical stories, like the bedtime stories parents tell their children in the evening, and then releases them into the dreams of those children who have no one to tell them stories. Mr. Clappers

also has a real hunting dog, a Beagle. You will find out in the book what the adorable Tromcho can do.

You'll also get to know the Nununkin Miss Sniffles, who protects children from diseases, and her faithful assistant, the squirrel Flyfly, who helps her prepare a miraculous elixir that keeps children healthy. The Nununkin Mr. Quivers helps little readers make friends with the Dark. That's right, it's capitalized because it's alive and very shy. That's why it's hiding...

And who are the other Nununkins? You'll find out from Anna Nort's hilarious stories, told with so much warmth and love. And they will come alive in the magical illustrations by artist Albena Kamenova. We suspect that both of them must have been to the Nununkin Kingdom, otherwise how could they know so much about the Nununkins? And the both of them, just like the Nununkins, love children very, very much.

ANNA NORT, or Anna Penkova, has several professions: chemist, economist and journalist, but her favorite job is creating stories. She has many articles and stories under her belt, as well as several children's books: one about the living forest (a book of seeds and poems), and one about the Zebra who carries children safely across the street. She was editor-in-chief of a teen magazine, as well as the children's magazine *Hlape Junior*, where she has published several original comics. Nort runs a blog together with a leading Bulgarian psychologist, as well as a YouTube channel. Currently, her aim is becoming even more true, because children as well as herself adore fairy tales, believe in the magic of goodness, in magical creatures and in books.

ALBENA KAMENOVA is a freelance artist, illustrator and dreamer. She graduated from the National Academy of Arts with a degree in book and print graphics. Kamenova created the illustrations for several teaching aids for kindergartens and for bilingual children, as well as the books: *Circles*, *Lines: Alphabet for All Kinds*, and *Tall stories with Letters from A to Z*. Her greatest joy is drawing for children, as this is her world, where she feels most at home.

EXCERPT
Translated by Desislava Toncheva

At seven o'clock sharp, together with Tromcho, they headed towards the bedroom of Iveto—a small, but very mischievous little girl who didn't like to sleep at all. Whenever bedtime came around, she'd begin making up stories so that she wouldn't have to sleep.

"Mommy, guess what? Today I saw how Barry (that was their dog) sneak a giant bone behind the couch..."

"Oh!" Her mother would jolt up. "Your father must have given it to him. Tomorrow the whole house will smell of rotten bone! Come now, show me exactly where he hid it!"

And so the search would begin for an imaginary bone, which poor Barry had never even gotten a whiff of. After they'd find no bone under the couch, mom and Iveto would crawl under her bed, under the master bed, poke between the sofa cushions, then finally, red-faced, nerves on edge, the mother would go to scream at the father for giving the dog this undetectable bone.

The father would blink behind his glasses in bewilderment, yet knowing there was no point in trying to cut off his wife, therefore only after she had finished would she learn that he knew nothing of any bones.

"Well, I may've been mistaken," Iveto would shrug her shoulders, happy with this game of hide-and-seek.

Another time, when once again she didn't want to go to bed, she said her grandma had called on the phone from the neighborhood park and said that she had left the

oven on, with everyone's favorite cake inside, asking them to watch the oven, as she would be late. Such commotion ensued! Everyone rushed over to the grandma's apartment to turn off the oven. And, to their surprise, there they found the grandma in her nightgown well on her third dream, and the oven was empty, with no cake in sight.

So now Iveto's mother was determined not to give in to Iveto's tall tales, but to tell her one of her own most interesting stories, in hopes this little trickster would fall asleep sooner. But Iveto would not fall asleep.

After the usual "I'm thirsty!" and "I've got to pee!" the little girl kept peeking out from under the covers wide-eyed, and her gaze saying decisively: "I'm not falling asleep!"

Finally, the mother gave up and started telling her new story. Iveto sighed with glee, as the same old tales would not fly with her.





What It Is To Be a Mother Какво е да си майка

Author: Maya Dalgacheva
Illustrator: Nevena Angelova

Children's picture book, 44 pages
ISBN: 9786191866298
Janet-45 Publishing House, 2021

What *It Is To Be a Mother* is a book for every age, which presents various aspects of motherhood through short texts. Ingenious illustrations “translate” the metaphors addressed to adults into the language of children—the depiction of animals and their young show the different sides of motherhood in the human world. This makes abstract concepts such as “love,” “protection,” “freedom,” “courage,” etc., easy and accessible to a child.

A wonderful gift for every mother and every child, an occasion to express or talk about the purest form of love there is.



MAYA DALGACHEVA (born 1967) is a Bulgarian author of children's books of fairy tales, riddles and rhymes. She has written several rhymed plays for puppet theatre—that's the reason she created many of her fairy tales in rhymed prose. She has been awarded the Golden Age Award by the Ministry of Culture (Bulgaria, 2006), Second Place in the International Fairytale Contest “Europe in a Fairy Tale” (2007), the Children's Literature Award (Union of Bulgarian Writers, 2009), the Konstantin Konstantinov National Award for Best Author (2009), and the Petya Karakoleva National Award for Children's Literature (2013). She is an Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award Nominee.

NEVENA ANGELOVA (born 1974) graduated from the National Academy of Arts, Sofia, specializing in book and print graphics. Over the last 10 years she has worked as a lecturer at the same academy. In addition to numerous exhibitions in Bulgaria, Angelova's works have been presented in the Netherlands, Switzerland, and other countries. She has illustrated and designed various editions for children and adults.

Standing still with feathers white
after the children's farewell flight—
there is no such gentler glow
other than a mother's quiet woe.



Why Miss Dora Learned To Bake Cookies

Защо госпожица Дора се научи да пече курабийки

Author and Illustrator: Sotir Gelev

Children's book, 80 pages
ISBN: 9786191644667
Enthusiast Publishing House, 2022

In one town, there is a beautiful old house with an extraordinary garden. The decorative bushes in that garden have been kept with great skill. Some of them are shaped like cones, cylinders, spheres and other geometric figures, combined in a common composition. Some of the bushes are shaped like animals—an elephant, penguin, pelican, rabbit and others.

Madame Athanasia and her niece Dora live in that house. The aunt, Madame Athanasia, is a stickler for decency and a regular way of life. All activities in the house must take place at a certain time, and she is sure that this will always be the case.

But one day, Miss Dora discovers a large magnifying glass in a secret drawer. This seemingly unimportant incident triggers a series of dramatic events involving the repairman Blagoy (nicknamed Johnny), the artist Krassen Boyadzhiev, the old man Aleko, the seamstress Ani, a sales department employee Araksi Garabedian, the journalist Margarita Tsvetkova, the elderly photographer Mr. Laskov, the elderly Madame Tsvetin, who was once an opera singer, Master Gencho Shekerov's granddaughter, young Boris, and last but not least, Mr. Klein.

These events will stir up changes that neither the aunt nor her niece are prepared for. At the root of everything, however improbable, is a blue-rimmed plate full of cookies.



SOTIR GELEV was born in 1960 in Asenovgrad and graduated from the School of Performing Arts in Plovdiv. In 1982 he made the animated film *The Chicken*, which participated in the 1984 Berlinale and won the Golden Dove in Leipzig that same year.

While studying at the National Academy of Art, Gelev drew comics for *DUGA* magazine. His series based on Tolkien's books *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* contributed to the popularization of fantasy literature in Bulgaria. In 1991, Sotir and his brother Penko Gelev founded the comics magazine *Rix*. Penko drew the comics *The Song of the Axolotls* and *Ephreitor Nek* for the magazine, based on his brother's scripts. Sotir, on the other hand, drew the comic strip *Zhmak and the Secret of the Pirigs*.

After 1991, Sotir worked in graphic design, television advertising, and did special effects for several films. In 1997, he published the poetry collection *Afternoon Meatball*. In 1995 Sotir and Penko founded their own graphic design company. In the next few years they created many posters, trademarks, book and magazine layouts. In 1997, they released the comic book *Mowgli* by Penko. Since 1998-1999, both brothers have been active in the film and television industry as writers, producers and directors. From 2001 to 2007, the brothers produced the children's television series *Fairy Tales about Physics and Astronomy*, of which they released two hundred and fifty episodes. In 2008 and 2009, the two produced the children's series *Good Morning, Mr. Jasmine*.

After 2009, Penko and Sotir began working on a series of animated films—*Doroga, Kerata, Orbis, Vector and Lecturer, Imago, Gas Mask and Labyrinth*. In 2011, Penko produced the TV movie *Yellow Dog* based on the script by Sotir Gelev and Maria Nikolova, and Sotir remade his original animated film *The Chicken* from 1982.

Sotir and Penko, together with their colleagues from *DUGA* magazine, organized the group The Rainbow Project, which aimed to promote and revive the art of comics in Bulgaria. After 2012 they released the collections *Over the Rainbow, Over the Rainbow 2* and *Arakel*. For these collections, Sotir created the comics *Ghost* and *Patent 64246*, and based on his scripts, Penko drew the comics *Dicho the Field-Keeper Must Die* and *Tamara*. Sotir and Penko authored the *Iliycho and August* series of comics and books, which includes *Iliycho and August, Iliycho, August and the Seven Dwarfs*, and *Iliycho, August and Gergin*. In 2016, the book *Ordinary Conversations* was published with illustrations by Penko Gelev, written by Sotir Gelev.

In 2018, Sotir Gelev's book *How Laura Learned To Count to Ten*, winner of the Peroto literary award in the Children's Literature category, was published. In 2021, Sotir Gelev won the Konstantin Konstantinov National Award for illustration for the book *Lullabies of Fairies and Monsters*. The book by Sotir Gelev and Penko Gelev *The Adventures of Mr. Blueberry on Water and Land* (2021) won the Hristo G. Danov National Prize. At the end of 2021, the book *Viola* by Sotir Gelev and Penko Gelev, based on the short film of the same name, was published.



The Magnifying Glass

Translated by Desislava Toncheva

Every morning before taking a shower, Dora exercised in her bedroom to stay in shape. She did her exercises, following the directions on the only program she listened to on the radio.

On Wednesdays and Sundays, after breakfast, Miss Dora painted for three hours in her studio. You may recall that the studio was in the turret on the roof. Although it was not large, it was a true artist's studio. There was an easel for drawing, a cabinet with large drawers for paper and small drawers for paint tubes, a shelf with jars filled with solvents, varnishes, and gum arabic crystals. A small, wheeled table was covered in vases and pots, filled with jugged bundles of brushes of various shapes and sizes. Between the linseed oil and turpentine containers lay the palette, covered with a thick layer of dried paints of various colors. Dora loved her palette and always squeezed the tubes in a certain order that she had come up with so that it would be convenient for her to mix the colors and get the right one.

Folders of drawings and stretched canvas frames were propped up along the walls.

To the right of the window, several objects were spread on a wooden stand—a plain white porcelain teapot, its handle facing the viewer, a large bunch of Colombard grapes, a large yellow-red apple, and a chunky greenish bottle half-full of olive oil. A handwritten label was glued to the bottle. In front lay two round prunes and a black-handled paring knife.

We should mention that the fruit was not real, rather made of wax, but made with such craftsmanship that they looked good enough to bite into. They were convenient for painting because there was no danger of them going bad and having to be thrown away.

Miss Dora went up to the studio, put on her work apron, removed the finished painting from the previous week from the easel and propped it up against the wall to dry, took a new canvas and attached it in its place. She pulled the table of paints and the palette within reach and picked up a piece of charcoal for drawing. She was ready to start a new still life.

She looked at the array of dishes and fruit and decided to go down and pick out something new from the *Kunstkamera*. That's what they called her father's study, filled with all kinds of curious objects that he had spent his lifetime collecting from all sorts of places. The name was German and meant a room for rare and valuable objects.

Miss Dora descended the steep wooden steps from the turret to the second-floor landing. From there, a double staircase led down into the large atrium. The girl



climbed sideways on the right handrail and slid down along it to the atrium. Right below the landing was the triple glass door that led into the drawing room, to the left was the dining room and kitchen, and her father's study was to the right.

Dora entered the *Kunstkamera*. It was spacious, but all the walls were occupied by cabinets with glass cases. They held so many various objects that at first glance one could get dizzy. Dora loved looking through them and each time discovered something new.

If I were to describe all the strange and extraordinary things in this book, there would be no room left to tell you the amazing story I promised you. To give you an idea, we will open one of the display cases, look at its contents and try to explain why these objects ended up in this collection.

And so, one of the shelves contained a huge tusk from an Asian elephant. Elephants have twenty-six teeth and replace their molars six times during their lifetime.

Next to the elephant tusk was an ammonite fossil, or rather its shell. Ammonites were marine mollusks that lived a long time ago and disappeared along with the dinosaurs. Their fossils are very often found on shores, but it's still fun to own something that's millions of years old.

The bottom of the display case housed a round and shiny object, the size of two watermelons. It was the largest seed in the plant world, which originated from a coconut palm from the Seychelles.

On the one side there was a plain old shoe that had been found walled up in the chimney of a country house. They called such shoes "hidden," and they served to protect the home and its inhabitants from evil spirits and witches.

On the top shelf there was a megalodon tooth about six inches long. A megalodon was an ancient shark that disappeared from the seas two and a half million years ago. It was huge, up to twenty meters long.

A cat's skeleton flashed white in the middle of the display case, and next to it lay a dried specimen of a spider crab, covered in menacing spikes. Below that was a Bellarmino jug. This type of beer mug is named after the bearded face of Cardinal Bellarmino depicted on the front, just below the neck. They were used in the past to ward off the curses of witches and confuse their spells.

Apart from all these artefacts, the display shelves were crammed with tropical clam and snail shells, a small oil portrait of Descartes, a flintlock dueling pistol, a copy of a Roman sardonyx cameo. Sardonyx is actually the most common reddish-brown onyx. Several red corals were strung on ribbons, next to a number of medals from flat-bottomed boat races.

We will stop the descriptions here, because there were two dozen more crowded display cases in the room, and it is more important to find out what Miss Dora was up to.

So, she went into her father's study, which everyone called the *Kunstkamera*.

The first thing she saw every time she crossed the threshold of this room was a portrait of her father hung above the mahogany desk. With his jaws clenched tightly, the man in the painting feigned a look of sternness in his narrowed eyes, which lit up with mischievous sparks. His stiff posture indicated that he was uncomfortable in

a formal suit with a starched collar, but he was determined to pose while the artist finished his work.

Dora's father had been dead for the past eight years.

Miss Dora mentally greeted the portrait and looked around.

Every time she wanted to start a new painting, Dora came to this room with the intention of discovering something new, of choosing interesting and beautiful objects for her still life.

And the same thing always happened. She wasted a lot of time browsing, hesitating, she couldn't choose suitable items and finally would give up. Then, she'd go back up to her studio and look at the still life lined up by the window. She would resolve to once again paint these familiar objects, which had been set up the same way on the stand for years, just as her drawing teacher, Mr. Krassen Boyadzhiev, had arranged them on the day her aunt had kicked him out.

Mr. Boyadzhiev was young and cheerful. He would come on Wednesdays and Sundays. Dora used to love the lessons and looked forward to them. They went on for two years. One day her aunt, Madame Athanasia, caught him taking a cigar from Dora's father's cigar box on the mantelpiece, and forbade him to teach her niece any longer. Dora didn't understand why. Her aunt hated the cigar box that had been sitting on the mantelpiece for as long as the girl could remember. While her father was alive, her aunt did not tolerate his habit of stinking up the house with his cigars and constantly hinted at how harmful and above all how expensive his hobby was. She was convinced that cigars were to blame for his death. After kicking out the art teacher, her aunt threw the remaining cigars into the fireplace in a fit of rage, but returned the box to its place on the shelf.

Sometimes, when she was alone, Madame Athanasia would secretly open the cigar box and inhale the smell of tobacco that had seeped into the wood.

All this had happened five years ago, and since then Dora had been drawing the same subjects over and over. The walls of the studio were decorated with sketches of this exact still life, but we must note that they were not quite the same.

They differed in that over the years Dora became more skilled at drawing, better at mixing colors and at conveying light. It seemed that she was also growing in height. It was clear that the older still lifes were viewed from below, and with her age the vantage point became higher.

Dora painted one sketch a week and rarely missed one. So, in five years, nearly two hundred and fifty almost identical paintings were piling up everywhere. There was not enough space on the walls, so Dora hung only those she thought were most well done.

She loved to paint, but she was tired of the teapot, the wax fruit, and the bottle of olive oil. She wanted to find new objects, but she could never find the right ones that went together in shape and color and made sense when placed next to each other. Now she was determined to change that, and if she had to, she'd choose random objects, but there was no way would she paint the teapot, the fruit, and the bottle again.

But that is exactly what happened, as it did every time.

She stood in the middle of the *Kunstkamera*, as if she had forgotten what she had come in for, and began looking around. She gazed into the glass cases and inhaled

deeply, the air infused with the scent of pine resin, old parchment, lavender and cardamom. The air was fresh, even though the windows of this room were never opened.

Then, she would go through the albums and books stacked up in piles in the corners, look at some of the reproductions, or read a random paragraph. She would pick up an item from her father's collection, raise it to eye level, examine it carefully, then place it back.

She had her favorite items. For example, a porcelain model of a human hand for palmistry with outlined lines, dotted with symbols and names in Latin. Or a tiny netsuke figurine that depicted a little girl in a kimono holding half an avocado. She liked to hold a large Brazilian agate found at the mouth of the Amazon, to lay her palm on a brass diving helmet from the deep-sea diving suit set up by the corner, and to look through its round windows as if expecting to catch a glimpse of someone. She was very fond of a sea-foam pipe, which ended in a grinning head of a fat man in a chef's hat, and an astrolabe, the purpose of which she knew, but had no idea how it worked.

That day, Dora saw a small drawer under the edge of the desk. She hadn't noticed it before and hastily opened it. Inside were a brown paper envelope and a large magnifying glass with a handle. She immediately took them out of the drawer. If she had turned the envelope over, she would have seen her name written on it, but she didn't.

If she had seen her name and opened the envelope, the story I'm telling you would be completely different, and maybe I wouldn't have to tell it to you because I wouldn't have heard it either.

But it so happened that Dora took the magnifying glass, rolled it around in her hands, and wondered what to look at with it. Her eyes found several butterflies preserved under a glass frame in a shallow wooden box. Through the magnifying glass, the small multi-colored scales that covered the wings of the insects were clearly visible. Then she opened a large folder full of stamps from all over the world. With the magnifying glass, she could examine the smallest details of the stamps, read the smallest inscriptions.

The front doorbell rang.

Mrs. Athanasia yelled from the parlor: "Young lady, go open the door! See who it is that that is ringing like they're on fire! Hurry up! If I could, I'd open it myself!"

Dora's aunt thought that any woman of her respectable age could not hear well, so she kept proving this to everyone by talking loudly and often shouting for no reason. Her hearing, in fact, was as good as a barn owl's.

Dora knew very well who was ringing the doorbell, one long ring followed by a shorter one. The photographer, Mr. Laskov, had come over to bring the framed portrait.

Dora slipped the magnifying glass into her apron pocket and ran out to meet him. The brown paper envelope remained on the desk.





Wild Animals of the City

Дивите животни на града

Author: Elena Pavlova
Illustrator: Milena Radeva

Children's book, 104 pages
ISBN: 9786199195604
Bulgarian Illustration Publishing House, 2021

Have you ever thought about how many animals live near us in cities and villages? Or more precisely, how many animals we live near? Pigeons nest in apartment building attics, swallows nest on window sills, bats poke around the joints of panel buildings, and hedgehogs scurry about in parks and gardens, where squirrels also jump from branch to branch. These are the *Wild Animals of the City*, and in this book we will introduce you to them and their stories. We will talk about saving and helping them, about freedom and about our life together without getting in each other's way, because things are always best when there is a happy ending.

What is most valuable in the story of each animal is not a lesson to wag a finger in children's faces, but a story of how to help. And this is where the book turns to the parent, as the person who guides their child. Readers will learn how to react when they see an injured animal, what to do if they are in the city or in the forest, and whom to

call for help. The stories are told in a light and intriguing way, despite their sometimes not-very-happy endings.

The illustrations are realistic and scientifically accurate and aim to show the reader the animals in their real life and habitat. Each species is depicted so as to give as much visual information as possible, even when part of a narrative. In addition to the fascinating stories about the various patients at the clinic, the book also presents encyclopedic information about each of the animals, as well as a short guide on how to help or not.

ELENA PAVLOVA writes children's books and scary books for adults. She has published over 30 choose-your-own-adventure books, has extensive experience as a translator, and has edited a number of Bulgarian books (*12 Hours Before Christmas* by D. Chuchulain, *Redrobe* by T. Vladimirova, *Bloody Songs 1 and 2* by D. Tsolov, *Permafrost* by Vasil Popov, etc.). Pavlova received the Konstantin Konstantinov National Award for Best Author in 2009, the European Science Fiction Society award for Best Work for Children in 2021, and the Diverse Worlds grant of the Speculative Literature Foundation in 2021. Her "grown-up" stories have also been published in various US publications.

MILENA RADEVA is an illustrator of children's books with rich and colorful experience both abroad and in Bulgaria; she graduated in book and print graphics and defended her doctoral thesis in the field of illustration. Radeva has participated in numerous exhibitions and selections and is behind the Bulgarian Illustration website (<https://www.bulgarian-illustration.com/>). She has been a part of various exhibitions and performances all over the world. Her books have been exhibited at the Leipzig Book Fair and various forums in Germany, Korea, and Israel. Regardless of advancing technologies, she continues to draw by hand on paper with watercolors, and the subject of animals is one of her favorites.

Both ladies love animals, and this book is an opportunity for them both to do something they love and to help as much as they can to save and rehabilitate the wild animals that coexist with us.



Wild Animals of the City: A Badger's Valentine's Day

Even when they have settled into living in the city, badgers are almost invisible to humans. We see them most often on roads, after they have been hit by cars. Sometimes the victims of accidents are still alive, fortunately, that's why it's important to stop and check, and to help victims get to veterinary care as quickly as possible.

Such was the case with the badger in our tale...

Piglet the badger lived with his badger clan in a nice, comfortable den with many entrances, exits and long, neat corridors. Every evening Piglet went out to walk around the clan's territory, to mark where necessary, so that the other, foreign badgers knew that they were not welcome there. We don't know what brought him to the road that fateful night, but he didn't manage to get away from the screeching tires fast enough ... and this tale would have come to a sad end very quickly, but one of the next cars to pass stopped to check on the limp body by the side of the road, and so it happened that the people in that car now had a more important task than getting to the guest house they were headed to.

At dawn, the badger was admitted to the Predator Care Department.

Patient: Piglet

Species: Badger

History of present illness: Hit by a car, fractured skull, seizures.

A skull, unlike a turtle's shell, cannot always be held together with staples and ties. Especially when the brain underneath is swollen and injured, as was the case with Piglet. He would not survive surgery, and the doctors could only hope that as the swelling subsided, their patient's seizures would go away.

For weeks, Piglet was on verge of death. He was hooked to an IV drip, on special, strong medications. Gradually his seizures subsided. He started to wake up now and then, to drink medicinal food from a syringe by himself, to resist the injections... At one point he'd even gotten up on his own and left his "bed" to go pee...



Unfortunately, it soon became clear that his upper jaw was irreparably damaged, and he would never be able to eat solid food, so his return to the badger clan was out of the question. Piglet would remain in the human world for the rest of his life.

Fortunately, a solution was found to this problem as well—there was a home for him at the Sofia Zoo. When he was fully recovered, the medical volunteers took him to meet the cute female badger that lived there. Thus, Piglet became the head of his own little clan, as on Valentine's Day, his female gave birth to his offspring.

A fun fact about badgers is that they always give birth around Valentine's Day, regardless of when the wedding between the male and the female took place—they are one of the few species in which the female is able to keep the fertilized eggs ready until the onset of the mating period.





Goodbye, Scary Slipper Сбогом, страшен чехъл

Author: Slavi Stoev
Illustrator: Yana Kazakova

Children's book, 48 pages
ISBN: 9786192460587
Robertino Publishing House, 2021

A story about courage and friendship with a... monster. About courage that is not exactly the absence of fear. About courage that you can cultivate to help you take care of the things that matter most to you. And a monster that isn't exactly monstrous, especially if you are no longer afraid of it. Or you are almost not afraid. Or at least you're scared so little that you are able to turn off the light.

Fear is on the agenda. Fear of the dark. Fear of monsters. Fear of the mysterious. Fear of what is lurking. And maybe fear of others finding out that we are cowards? With fear comes shame, powerlessness, anger, lack of self-confidence... Because we thought that being afraid was an expression of cowardice. Cowards are ridiculed. And everyone loves the brave and the heroic. But are fear and courage such opposites? Or do they meet somewhere in the middle? And what is the role of fear? Is it not sometimes our protector? When do monsters stop being monsters and become friends?



Откъм пода ѝ се чу прошемуляване и в светлината на нощната лампа изпъля най-големият ѝ кошмар. Или поне най-големият ѝ кошмар доскоро. Ужасът на нейното детство! Причината за безброй пролети съзми, безкрайни безсънни нощи и неизброими часове на кокорене в тъмното. Чудовището, заради което години наред Софи не искаше вечерта да идва – самият Страшен чехъл.

Той не беше никак едър, нямаше страшни роза, дълга опашка или лали с остри като ножове нокти. Приличаше си съвсем на... ами на чехъл. Затова пък отпред имаше много зъби и беше цялът на влажното промъкване и мушване под одеялото. Истински майстор на лепкавото и лизаво залепване за кожата и после... После следваше всичко, което може да направи едно чудовище с всичките тези зъби.



– Страшен чехъл, какво правиш тук?
Вече не ме е страх от теб, махай се! – скра му се Софи. Това, че вече не я е страх, си беше чистата истина. Така де, ако не чистата, то поне истината. Или поне в такава степен, че да може да го заяви категорично.
– Ееех, де да можех! – въздъхна тихо Страшен чехъл.



SLAVI STOEV is a human, a father and a psychologist with many years of experience in working with adults. His experience led him to the idea that if the knowledge and abilities to understand what goes on inside our heads was available to people in their childhood, there would be less work for him and his colleagues when these people grew up. Thus, in 2018, he turned to using children's literature as a tool to support children in better understanding themselves and the world around them. Stoev has published several books and is most happy when he receives feedback from a parent that his writings have helped their child deal with issues, fears or difficult emotions. Stoev is also the co-founder and host of the Natural Intelligence podcast, where he talks about the psyche in a useful and understandable way. He loves freedom, nature, beer and slightly weird people.



YANA KAZAKOVA is an illustrator. She graduated from the National Academy of Arts in book and print graphics, and then earned her master's degree in illustration and graphic technologies at the New Bulgarian University. When her favorite colored pencils are in her hands, the illustrator "steps into the children's shoes" and goes back in time. "I have the most freedom when my illustrations are intended for children. They don't have the limited thinking adults do, and I don't feel the need to explain why I drew something a certain way. Sometimes I too feel limited in my thinking simply because I am grown up. When that happens, I try to 'awaken' my inner child," Kazakova says.

Целата ѝ устременост и ентузиазъм се превързиха и на твоео място остана само тъга.

– И сега какво? – попита тя плахо.
– Ами, какво, сега ще си се случи неизбежното. Отиван при другите втвърдени чудовища, а с теб се разделяне. Добре се поплашихте, а? – каза Страшен чехъл и се опита да направи страшна физиономия, за да я развесели малко.

Софи се усмихна криво, но не намери сили да се включи в играта. Чувстваше, че е претърпяла страшно поражение и че никак си е предала чудовището си.



Goodbye, Scary Slipper 6

Translated by Desislava Toncheva

She heard a rustling down on the floor and in the light of the bedside lamp, her worst nightmare crawled out. Or at least her biggest nightmare until recently. The horror of her childhood! The cause of countless spilled tears, endless sleepless nights, and countless hours of cowering in the dark. The monster, which for years caused Sophie to not want the evening to come: the Scary Slipper itself.

It wasn't big at all, it didn't have scary horns, a long tail or paws with knife-sharp claws. It looked just like... well, like a slipper. On the other hand, it had a lot of teeth and was the king of slimy sneaking up and slipping in under the blanket. A true master of sticky slimy clinging to skin, and then... then followed everything that a monster with this many teeth could do.

"Scary Slipper, what are you doing here? I'm not afraid of you anymore, go away!" Sophie scolded him. The fact that she was no longer afraid was the plain truth. Well, if not the plain truth, then at least the truth. Or at least to such an extent that she could state it adamantly.

"Oh, I wish I could!" sighed the slipper.

"So why didn't you leave our world? I haven't been afraid of you for almost a year!" Sophie asked her monster sternly. She was preparing for the fight with the fairies and was practicing her scary voice.

"Well, what can I say..." Scary Slipper timidly snuggled into her so that she couldn't see its face.

"Hey, stop clinging to me, your teeth will tear up my new dress, just tell me!" snapped Sophie.

"I wanted to look at you a little longer!" shyly replied Scary Slipper. "I kept getting ready to leave, and I kept staying because I was enjoying what a wonderfully brave child you'd become. You are my child, you see, and I am very proud of you. And so it was, until today when I bumped into a chair, and it moved instead of going through me. That's when I realized it was too late, and that I'd become too solid. And I've just been sobbing ever since..."

Sophie stopped in her tracks and looked at Scary Slipper, who had solemnly placed its head on her arm. She felt herself soften at his confession, but then snapped out of it and strode forward even faster. She was headed for a fight with some impudent fairies who wouldn't take HER monster home.



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