



# BIOGRAPHY

**Slavko Pregl** (born in 1945) lives and works in Ljubljana where he graduated from the Faculty of Economics. He has been working with books most of his life – as a journalist, publisher and writer. He was President of the Slovene Writers' Association, President of the Reading Badge Association and President of the Slovenian Publishers' Association.

He writes primarily for children and young adults, and has received major national awards in this genre (Levstik Award, Večernica Award, Desetnica Award, Župančič Award). With his works for adults – mostly humorous prose and satire – he has won a Grand Prix at the International Festival of Humour and Satire in Svishtov (Bulgaria) and several other awards. Pregl was also presented with the Schwentner Award for lifetime achievements in publishing. He has written over 40 books that have been translated into more than 12 languages. Two TV serials and two series of cartoons have been based on his works. Pregl's book *Geniuses in Short Pants* has seen five publications in Slovenian and has been translated into four languages, while his works *The Silver of the Blue Grotto*, *School Report*, and *Geniuses without Pants* have had more than 25,000 copies printed. His book *The Czar without Treasure* has been adapted into a screenplay for a teen film.

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## Author's Quotes

“ The whole world is full of girls and boys, each of whom is a factory of adventures, intrigues, and complications... In my opinion, there is no better thing in the world than a boy who is in a good mood. Actually, there is one thing that is better: two boys in a good mood. ”

“ Humour doesn't save the world. It saves people. ”

“ To tell a story is wonderful. You avoid moments of terrible fear. You skip moments where your soft little heart might begin to cry. You reshape moments of ridiculous panic. All the other places you embellish: you sprinkle heroism around like sugar and mix it with large doses of victory. And thus the modest memoirs of an adventurous boy are born. ”

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# EXTRACTS FROM REVIEWS

“The collective protagonist in Pregl’s novel looks for treasure and finds it ... So we have all the elements of the holiday adventure novel genre. But still we get more than the genre.”

The jury at the presentation of the Večernica Award about The Silver of the Blue Grotto, Murska Sobota, 2004

“Slavko Pregl is a classic of contemporary young-adult fiction.”

Jože Hudeček at the presentation of the Desetnica award, Ljubljana, May 2005

“Pregl is simultaneously serious and entertaining; serious when befitting, and entertaining immediately and every time the opportunity arises, which turns out to be a well-balanced combination.”

Gaja Kos about The Czar without Treasure, the Literatura monthly, December 2009

“It seems that Pregl’s optimism and his faith in the young and is the main drivers of the stories he writes for children and young adults.”

Dragica Haramija, PhD, about the author’s oeuvre, Sedem pisav, Maribor 2009

“Among the writers for young adults the phenomenon of Slavko Pregl stands like a precious tree in the forest. He has been writing serious problem novels for years, making them attractive and priceless with a rare humour and talent.”

Tone Partljič at the presentation of the Župančič Award, Ljubljana, June 2010

“And what teenager would not love to read a work brimming with a positive outlook on all the experiences and activities of teenagers, and threaded with a distinct sense of humour?”

Katja Klopčič about Geniuses without Pants, the Sodobnost monthly, April 2010

“This satirical novelistic yarn ... is a shiny Christmas tree lined with the images of spiritually and ethically deplorable powers that be ...”

Franc Zadravec, PhD, on the book The Final Wish (Zadnja želja), Satira in groteska v slovenski literaturi, Murska Sobota, 2010

# AWARDS

## Levstik Award

Award of the Mladinska knjiga publishing house for the best work in children’s and young-adult fiction, Ljubljana, 1976 – Geniuses in Short Pants

## Grand Prix Aleko

Award won at an international competition of satire, 2004, Svishtov, Bulgaria, for the story Gordian Knot

## Večernica Award

National award for the best work in children’s and young-adult fiction, Murska Sobota, 2004 – The Silver of the Blue Grotto

## Desetnica Award

Award of the Slovene Writers’ Association for the best work in children’s and young-adult fiction, Ljubljana, 2005 – The Fateful Telephone

## Rastem s knjigo

(Growing with a Book)

Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia, first place in the competition for the best book for seventh graders, Ljubljana, 2005 – School Report

## Rastem s knjigo

(Growing with a Book)

World Book Capital, first place in the competition for the best book for high-school children, Ljubljana, 2010 – Geniuses without Pants

## Župančič Award

Award of the City of Ljubljana for literary works created for children and young adults in 2008 and 2009, Ljubljana, 2010

# On Pregl’s Writing for Young Adults

Professor Vanesa Matajč, PhD,  
University of Ljubljana



The writer Slavko Pregl is known as the embodiment of the Reading Badge among Slovenian readers, the face of the association devoted to turning Slovenian first-graders into avid readers of fiction – and making sure they carry their love of books beyond primary school. These mass metamorphoses into bookworms in Slovenia have been greatly aided by Pregl’s picture books, stories and young adult novels: his adventure novels (*The Expedition of the Green Dragon*, *The Silver of the Blue Grotto*), collections of stories (*A Wanderer’s Guidebook*, *Battle Records of a City Kid*), coming-of-age novels (*Geniuses in Short Pants*, *Geniuses in Long Pants*, *Geniuses without Pants*) and problem novels for young adults (*School Report*, *The Fateful Telephone*, *The Czar without Treasure*). However, the above genre labels are only a provisional map of the popular books written by Pregl. And what makes them so popular?

The situations in Pregl’s novels for young adults portray contemporary everyday life unfolding on city streets, in school corridors, on holiday islands and roads. The protagonists are contemporary teenagers of different ages who are testing how many of their exploits the environment can take. Yet sometimes it is the other way around, and it is the environment which puts Pregl’s protagonists to the test in dangerous situations of everyday real life.

In Pregl’s books, every event becomes an adventure: both the most trivial episodes and the most ambitious plans (concerning self-challenge, love, vanity, or motivated by real fear or threats) are joined in a series of dramatic tests: will the plan work? Is the protagonist going to solve the problem? The tension created by the situations is further intensified by the short dialogues between friends and foes which often turn into comic intrigues. In addition, the situations, dialogues and characters are accompanied by the narrator’s micro-commentaries: a voice from the background that knows very well what is going on from its own experience. And it often chuckles while it comments. But when the situations steer into the most serious aspects of modern life – drugs, blackmail and violence – the narrator’s micro-commentary withdraws, allowing the protagonists to express their decisions through their actions rather than words.

Even though Pregl’s novels and collections of stories use episodes to build adventures as exciting as the scripts of action films, they remain some of the most popular Slovenian books for young adults, winning numerous awards, because of the way they are narrated. What Dahl’s Matilda says is true for almost all of Pregl’s books: children’s (and young adult) books ought to have funny bits in them. Even when they speak about serious ethical responsibility.

Two of Pregl’s novels most characterised by adventure are *The Expedition of the Green Dragon* and *The Silver of the Blue Grotto*. In the first one, three teenage conspirators gather enough money to buy an ancient car (called Old Girl), acquire a driver by pulling a psychological trick and then travel along the Adriatic coast to Dubrovnik where the situation first starts evolving into a detective story, but soon turns into a crazy comedy. In part two of this adventure story, the more grown-up company around Old Girl finds itself in the Alps facing some very serious moral problems, but it can still find a way to resolve these difficulties through laughter. *The Silver of the Blue Grotto* also moves between seriousness and humour: the holiday routine on an Adriatic

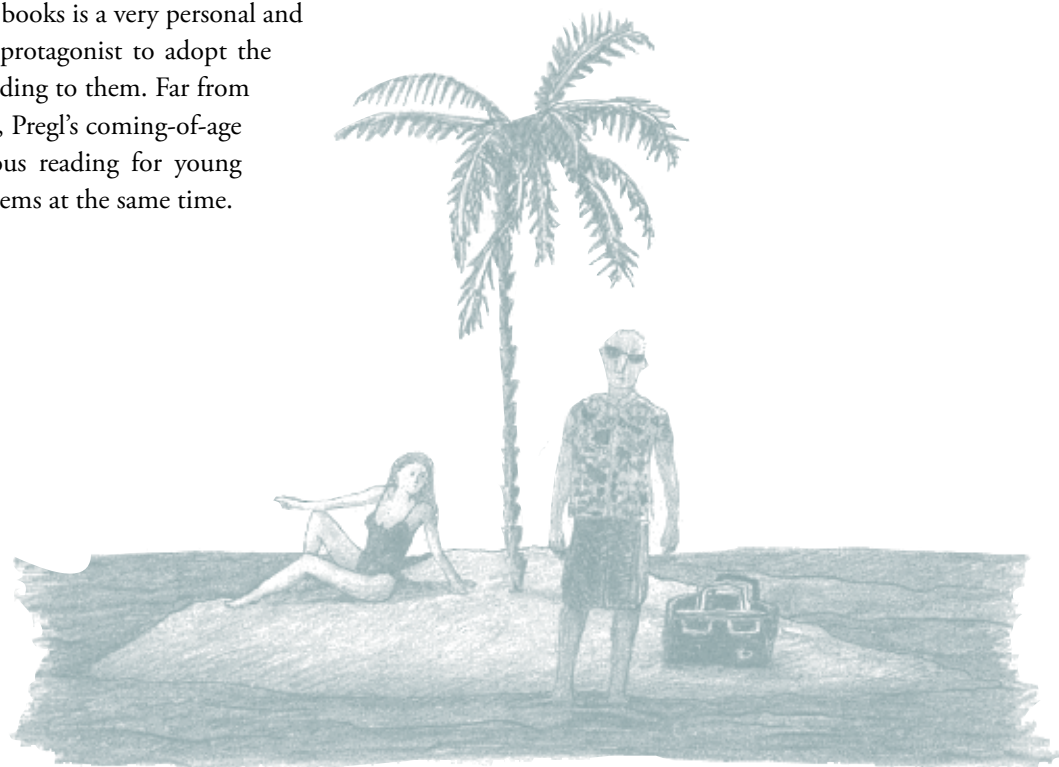


island is interrupted by a fall into a – quite believable – tunnel and the story slowly reveals ... something very interesting, and a certain very young and very cool girl, as well as the first experiences of being a responsible grownup.

The coming-of-age novel *Geniuses without Pants* presents a group of friends responsibly venturing into the big world in humorous and complex situations: they create an Internet newsletter, explore relationships between the sexes and resolve a problem linked with drugs and violence. The key word is teamwork: even when *geniuses* are temporarily caught with their “pants down” because of their overambitious plans, they soon pull their things together by talking to each other and re-thinking their values. Even though a more mature and prudent authority helps them solve big problems, the teenagers have to find the strength to overcome small and big crises themselves by searching for their own ethical values.

Three of Pregl’s problem novels deal with more serious issues: *School Report*, *The Fateful Telephone* and *The Czar without Treasure*. The first one is about school problems while the second concerns bullying, yet they both speak about fear, powerlessness and the need for an urgent solution to a problem. The third novel, *The Czar without Treasure*, deals with the most serious problem: the protagonist is involved in the criminal world of drugs and the presence of humour is minimal, making it an exception among Pregl’s works. Moreover, the problem is left partly unresolved: although the protagonist’s ethical decision is clear and has resulted from a painful experience, the solution to the problem does not extend to his entire social circle. The novel is not pessimistic, although the pieces of the late teen world from *The Czar without Treasure* are never reassembled into a harmonic coexistence.

In addition, Pregl’s stories are always somewhat subversive: they never fall into a trivial confirmation of social and moral conventions. These are only accepted after the protagonists have tested and adapted them in their own individual ways: boys and girls discover “holes” in the system and fill them with their own solutions. Especially in both adventure novels and in all three works about *geniuses*, every trick the teenagers play on grown-up authority figures can also be read as a comic subversion of social conventions and psychological patterns. But the tricks are not destructive. They simply play with convention. And when a problem is too serious to play with, the leading principle of Pregl’s books is a very personal and painful experience which leads the protagonist to adopt the accepted ethical values and act according to them. Far from being simple “affirmation literature”, Pregl’s coming-of-age stories make excellent and humorous reading for young adults, while tackling complex problems at the same time.



## On Pregl’s Writing for Children

Professor Dragica Haramija,  
PhD, University of Maribor



The children’s books written by Slavko Pregl mostly have a realistic motivation and an omniscient perspective. The third-person narrator remains unnoticed; the twists and turns of the story are presented through dialogue, while the adult narrator describes the unfolding events and comments on them from his perspective. The events mostly revolve around school and out-of-school activities, as well as school children’s free time in a modern urban environment. When the main characters are pre-school children, the stories are set in kindergarten or in the child’s home environment. The theme of an unproblematic childhood full of adventures and comic episodes is the most attractive feature of Pregl’s literature for children. The humorous parts “relieve” the everyday dreariness experienced by the growing literary characters. The child characters often do not understand grownups, their demands and procedures, which is the source of the comic plot. In Pregl’s works for young adults, humour is mainly present in his language and the situations he creates. There is considerable unity in his writing as regards the internal style, subject, theme and motifs; his works mostly belong to realistic literature; they have a child as the main character, a fragmentary plot, a limited (short) timeframe, and almost no changes of setting, which is outlined briefly.

Pregl’s works include four types of prose: realistic short stories about everyday adventures, humorous prose, fairy tales and fables.

Realistic short stories (e.g. *Battle Records of a City Kid*, *A Wanderer’s Guidebook*) introduce the reader to the world of child roaming where ten rules of wandering and some important rules of fighting have to be obeyed. The main characters are boys at the beginning of primary school whose adventures unfold in their free time. The stories usually end with a paradox. The children’s characteristics or needs (e.g. bragging, trying a cigarette, refusing to eat or going to the movies) are not understood by grownups so the children have to confront and trick them. Two of his works (*The Captured Fisherman* and *Two Great Little Fishermen*) present a collection of stories about fishing which reach a climax with bragging that is placed in the context of fishermen’s tales. The stories are fragments in the lives of city children, representing pieces of growing-up – not very tragic but at given moments showing considerable depth – that the narrator relates by adding comic elements. The author’s message to the reader is that even the most unpleasant moments can be overcome with humour.

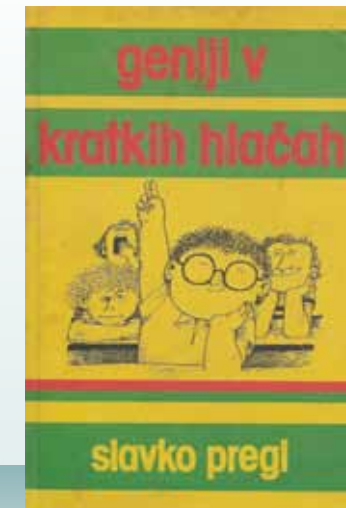
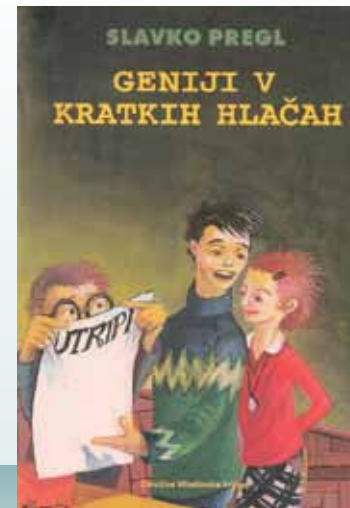
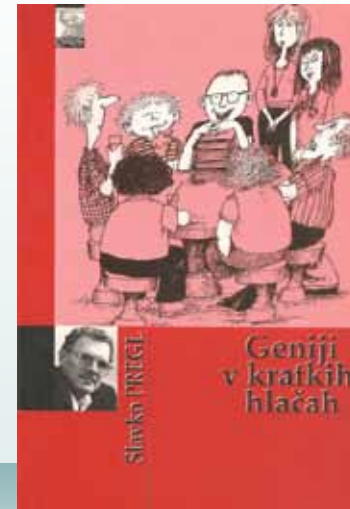
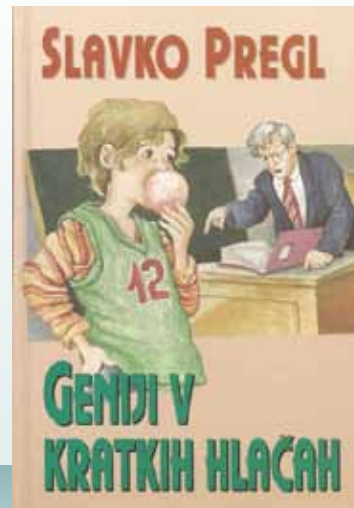
In his collections of stories (e.g. *The Star with the Cap*, *Little Cloudy Stories*) the author again turns to typical humorous prose that talks about, at first sight with childish naivety, a small city child’s problems, his playtime, school activities and his view of the future. The timeframe of individual stories is short, limited by a single event or a child’s idea. The main character links all the stories and is connected with all the minor characters.

The irrational (fantasy) prose (*Adventures at the Court of King John*) is interwoven with satire and social criticism (which is the main characteristic of Pregl’s works for adults), but is set in a (fairy-tale) environment of a court and features “fairy-tale” characters. Even though the characters and events are linked to the fairy-tale world, the characters’ motivations are realistic and there are no miracles, fantastic objects or characters (except for a dragon). The presence of irony is quite noticeable.

Pregl’s short prose is compiled in several books of fables (*Parrot Goes to School*, *If I Were and If I Weren’t*, *Parrot Goes to School Again*, *Rooster on a Dunghill*, *Sweet Purses and Other Fables*, *Strange Times*). The author mostly presents personified animals, but in some texts the characters are also people. In his recent stories, the writer has chosen quite unconventional fable characters, while still preserving the form of the literary genre. Thus the main personified characters are represented by concepts (e.g. lateness, lies, stupidity, ravages of time) and corporeality (e.g. matchsticks, a toilet bowl, a haircut, an umbrella). Pregl has succeeded in creating collections of fables that are based on humour, although some of them also speak about tragic or important subjects of life.

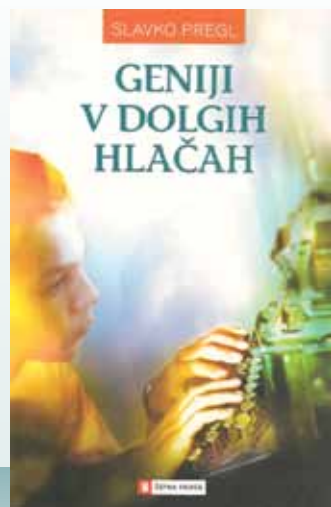


# Geniuses



## Geniuses in Short Pants

The editors of a school paper enter into a competition for the best school newsletter. The work leads to a quarrel between younger and older girls and boys, which produces an excellent result; things also get complicated with teachers and the school environment. The story cannot do without love embarrassments and rivalry. The geniuses realise that, despite their determination, they do not know everything and some questions leave them “in short pants”. The ending brings a happy and triumphant resolution.



## Geniuses in Long Pants

While one can talk about a collective protagonist in Geniuses in Short Pants, the characters in this book write their own stories by trying their hands at their individual interests: music, journalism and volunteer fire-fighting. Besides high aims, their desires also bring trials and tribulations that have to be overcome by making the right decisions. One has to enter the world of grownups properly equipped – “in long pants”.



## Geniuses without Pants

The story moves to high school, into the era of the Internet and modern technologies, but also a world of numerous dangerous challenges, including violence and drugs. A group of boys and girls that produces an online newsletter is no longer wrapped in the cotton wool of domestic safety: their youthful ease is confronted with real life. Since the Internet is a link to the global world, there is also an international development. The protagonists are caught with their “pants down”, in a clearing where they have to face the consequences of their naive ideas. And while their pants are down, there is also an opportunity for first love.



# Happy and Romantic Adventures



## The Expedition of the Green Dragon, A Great Adventure

City boys buy an old car with the money they have earned doing odd jobs, and find a boy who is already of age to embark on a tour across the country with them, betting on who would arrive at their destination first: the passengers in the car or the crew hitchhiking its way there. A girl who has run away from home joins the story. After many problems, the boys help her put everything right, thus happily crowning their friendship, which is – as the girl's parents put it – as rare as a “green dragon”. In part two of the story, the journey continues with amazing adventures that test love, courage and imagination, but the boys and the girl would not be made of the right stuff if they did not emerge victorious.



## Snotty and His Company

The story unfolds in the Middle Ages, but we are again presented with a group of girls and boys, this time separated by social differences (the prince from the castle and the rest of the company from the town below). However, this does not bother them in their adventures together. Their greatest achievement is stopping a battle between the armies of two neighbouring kings with a clever move.

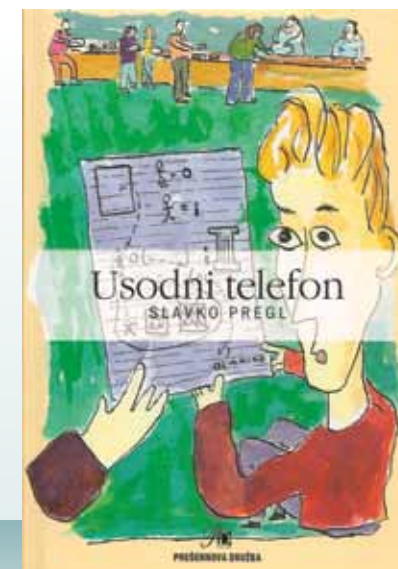


## The Silver of the Blue Grotto

Three boys, together with their parents and a dog, are spending their vacation on a small island. Their imagination is fired by a story about a witch who lived in a dilapidated house by a church at the top of the island. The plot thickens when a boat brings a girl to the island, together with her parents and a younger sister. Of course, she causes extra tensions between the boys. In a sudden storm, the youngest boy falls into the basement of the witch's house and a treasure hunt begins. Criminals from a nearby island hear about the treasure, but the boys and the girl thwart their plans with a clever action. As the summer draws to an end, a fisherman from the island takes the group of youngsters to the Blue Grotto and gives them advice that will guide them when they spend their lives far away from the sea and the quiet of the island.



# Girls and Boys in a Tight Spot



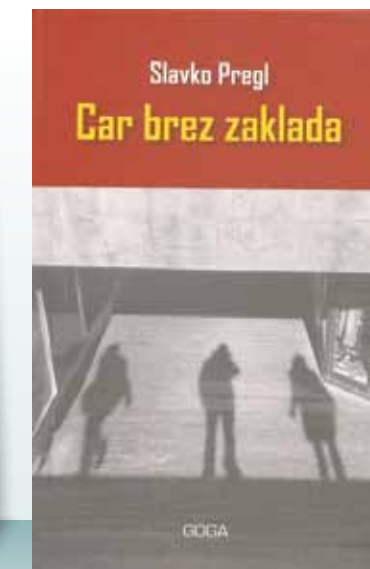
## The Fateful Telephone

In the middle of town and in broad daylight, two school boys have their mobile phones taken forcibly by their peers. Their families have to face court procedures and the school's considerable powerlessness in dealing with criminal incidents. Meanwhile, the young people painfully overcome problems amongst themselves and finally discover a way to successfully resist violence and alienation.



## School Report

The main character of the story, slightly out of his senses also due to an injustice at school, joins a gang of under-age thieves. The first escapade he takes part in ends badly, and he learns just how fickle friendships among thieves are. His eyes are also opened by a girl from his class who cares about him. Affection grows between them and finds an echo between the boys and girls around them. The school report the protagonist receives as he leaves school is proof of completed schooling but also a symbol of acquired life experience.



## The Czar without Treasure

A boy from a good family decides to take up a well-paid job as a garbage collector during the school holidays. He learns about “low” life and also meets a frail grandmother and her extremely sassy granddaughter. Parallel to the love story, a dangerous adventure of drug dealing unfolds. The boy suddenly becomes a “czar”, gaining a girl and a lot of money. A deal that the boy opposes, which the girl promises will be the last one, brings a painful ending and the czar loses his treasure. However, there is still room for hope.



# How to Grow



## Tamed Whims

This very complicated guide to correct behaviour is a relatively unconventional book of etiquette for school children. It is made up of everyday stories which are subjected to witty analysis.

## A Wanderer's Guidebook

Boys are walking factories that never cease to produce ideas on how to find treasure, how to get their spoiled friend on the right path or how to find an ingenious way to succeed at collecting whatever it is they decide to collect. In their exploits, they must move cleverly and cautiously through the dangers always lurking at adventure producers. The rules recorded in the book are tested in the stories and a wanderer would do well to stick to them.



## Battle Records of a City Kid

Two gangs of kids form in the city and claim their territories. They want to fight anyone who enters their quarter or tries to threaten their street dominance. This results in everyday bruises and even in occasional open battles. But when necessary, the kids show mutual solidarity in the face of an external enemy.



## Why Grandma Has Two Sticks

A city boy spends his vacations in the country, experiencing the interesting sides of farm life together with his cousins. He gradually starts to notice tensions in the family, which he does not understand. His uncle, whom he likes very much, is a bad farmer; he drinks and squanders the hard-earned estate of his parents. When it seems that the breeding of a race horse will bring a solution, it turns out that it is just the tragic climax of the story about the decline of a once mighty farm.

# A Bottom-up Perspective



## The Whining Soup

A young family (a mother, father, daughter and son) experience kindergarten, illness, fussiness and tidying as well as many other amusing adventures.

## The Star with the Cap

A family with two sons, as well as a grandfather and grandmother, deals with unusual wishes, solemn promises, magical potions and a plan on what to do when you turn into a star in the sky.

## Two Great Little Fishermen

Two little friends who love fishing include all the people around them in this sport and gradually start mastering the behaviour for which big fishermen are also famous.



## Little Cloudy Stories

Reality and fantasy come together in this book. The fairy tales introduce the reader to Father Cloud and his sons, then there is Bora the Wind with a toothache, the Mail Mouse, and of course Aunt Angela who bakes heavenly jam-filled butter cookies.



## The Captured Fisherman

Two friends start going to school and discover that everything will be different from that moment on. Their older sisters help them out. They also try their first cigarette and, after a painful experience, decide to forget about smoking. A strange accident brings them to hospital, but all ends well.



## Puppets from the Seventh Floor

The children from an apartment block are bored because of the constant rain so a man from the puppet theatre teaches them how to make puppets and put on a show. In the process they make the janitor angry, bring the puppet maker and the cook together and finally earn recognition for their play from the residents.



# Picture Books



The Laughurretor and  
the Whining Break

Chattering Varja

# Stories in a Single Breath

This group is made up of collections of short fables. Some of them are classic fables about animals, while others are more unusual, bringing objects and notions to life. They include many puns, plays on meanings and transformations of known proverbs or sayings.



Parrot Goes to School  
A Cure for Naughty Kids  
If I Were and If I Weren't  
Parrot Goes to School Again  
Rooster on a Dunghill  
Strange Times  
Sweet Purses and  
Other Fables



# GENIUSES IN SHORT PANTS

Extract from the book



## Chapter 1

Some statistical data from the first day of school

"Who, me?" Pip asked, trying to get the bubble he had just blown with his bubble gum back into his mouth.

"Yes, you! Come here."

Pip stepped uncertainly toward the frowning dark-clothed figure that had summoned him. The man wore a striped tie, had curly gray hair, and was tall and decisive.

"Listen kid," the man started, "maybe you come from the jungle, maybe you come from a skyscraper. I don't care where you came from. What's important is where you're going. And you're going to school. In school, first of all, we don't chew gum. Second, we don't shove our hands in our pockets right up to our elbows. And third – tell me, when were you last at the barber's?"

"Hmm," Pip mused, a little confused.

Pip pondered a while longer. From a distance, it might have looked as if he were pondering the formula for hexachlorocyclohexane or the answer to the eternal question: which comes first – the chicken or the egg? But, from up close, you would know he was fooling around. The headmaster's gray curly hair shot up.

"Don't bother to rummage through your head if there's nothing inside it! I don't care when you were last at the barber's! You'll go there this afternoon. Otherwise you'll be sorry."

The man stormed away and Pip looked around him in amazement. Some pale transparent stick of a girl – who might be useful as a ladder with which to climb the Eiffel Tower if there was a fire on the 27th floor – told him that the person he had just met was the new headmaster. Pip might have been worried if he had known that what had just occurred was by far the most pleasant meeting he would

ever have with the headmaster in all his years at school.

The schoolyard was one huge mass of people. There are only two ways to gather such a crowd. The first is to take 20 anthills, shake well, empty them on the ground, and order the ants to make new anthills. The second, which Pip was now witnessing, is to send notices to 500 high school students and 500 eighth graders and tell them to come at such and such a time to such and such a place and look for such and such a classroom taught by such and such a teacher. If some official monitoring had been going on, the actions of the high-school students and new eighth graders at Gymnasium XIII might have been systematically arranged in lines and columns and categorised as follows:

- 112 trampled little toes on left feet and 54 trampled little toes on right feet, 18 banged middle toes on left feet and 9 banged middle toes on right feet, 39 bruised big toes on right feet and 41 bruised big toes on left feet (all but one of which were the big toes of boys injured while kicking rocks, the other one having been injured by trying to kick someone in the butt and missing and hitting the stairs);
- 237 poked ribs (approximately two-thirds poked in a friendly manner and one-third out of spite) and 197 shoulders sagging from blows (of these, 3 girls' shoulders struck by mistake, which led directly to 3 stuck-out tongues);
- 389 pairs of shoes, 150 socks, 73 pairs of pants, and 42 skirts splattered with mud from puddles;
- 475,927 swear words uttered, of these 37,013 that would have earned a reprimand, 2,278 that would have required a parent's signature, 817 that would have called



for suspension from the classroom, and 7 that would have called for suspension from the whole teachers' council (although if the Slovenian teacher Slovka was not then on the council that number would have been reduced to 6); and

- 77 stuck out tongues, 13,956 expelled wads of spittle, 77 vulgar hand gestures, of which 2 would have certainly earned a conditional suspension.

These numbers are large and yet we note that during the same period only 63 reprimands were delivered (of which 8 were by the headmaster including his conversation with Pip, 42 by various teachers, 11 by the cleaning lady, 1 – and this abundantly – by the janitor and, lastly, 1 by the fellow who delivers the newspaper and otherwise never gets to reprimand anybody and had the good luck on the first day of school to run into a kid who didn't get out of the way of his bicycle fast enough).

Because a few of the teachers and many of the students were new, there was some difficulty getting everybody into the right classrooms. The following phrase was heard countless times:

"Excuse me, is this perhaps ...?"

Of course, the freshmen were the most befuddled, but the boys in the highest class also got mixed up a remarkable number of times. They were constantly asking the new biology teacher if she perhaps knew where classroom so and so was. If I were compelled to locate a reason for their confusion, it might lie in the fact that the new biology teacher was very young and pretty, besides which she blushed exceptionally well. I suppose it doesn't help to mention that Bob was among the boys who asked her the most times. When he approached her the eighth time, she finally had enough and roared at him:

"Now I've had it! We will certainly meet again!"

"You just tell me where and when," Bob grinned, showing his gums.

"Well now, aren't we amusing!" intervened the history teacher, who couldn't wait to come to the aid of his new colleague.

"Finally," said Bob. "You certainly haven't been up until now."

Then Bob quickly disappeared into the crowd so as to avoid any harsher punishment.

The boys and girls and the teachers swarmed about until they were all finally where they were supposed to be. That's just the way school starts.

# GENIUSES IN LONG PANTS

Extract from the book

## Chapter 1

In which Miha rises from his bed with a special fire, cleans up and gets dressed, and sets out on the beginning of a thorny path.

Maybe the seed of this story can be found on the day a storm thundered and crashed during biology. It looked as if the whole classroom was going to get failing marks in the grade book when a sudden ray of light shone through



the gloomy atmosphere. A small round man stepped up to the teacher's desk. He had been sent by the headmaster to ask for volunteers for the choir. Auditions would be held in the assembly room and would start immediately.

Miha volunteered without hesitation.

"Do you like singing?" the choirmaster asked.

"He likes to get out of class," someone muttered from the back row.

"I've sung since I was a little child," Miha lied, with a meek expression on his face. But it wasn't really a lie, since isn't it true that every little baby sings in their cot?

Miha escaped the classroom with a smug smile under his nose and, as it happened, also escaped a certain zero in biology. When the quality of his singing voice was tested beside the piano, it sunk like a rock trying to do breaststroke, but that is another story.

What matters here is that it was Miha's first encounter with the world of music. Well, maybe there had been a minor encounter before, the time Miha had passionately wanted to walk Alenka home from school.

"May I walk you home?" he asked her.

"You may not," Alenka answered. "I have to go to my piano lesson at the music school."

It struck Miha then that music school could not be complete nonsense if such pretty girls went there. Later at the school dance, he noticed that most of the girls under consideration were in love with one or another of the musicians in the band. The phrase "under consideration" must be understood as meaning those girls whom Miha, if they had fallen on their knees and asked nicely, would have accepted into his narrow circle. His narrow circle, for what it was worth, was made up of one girl and one boy.

It should also be mentioned in this regard that Miha's mother had needed to tell her son over 100 times to turn the radio down or he would blow the whole apartment building to kingdom come.

And that, laid out before our eyes, is the length and breadth of Miha's relationship with music and the world of music.

No doubt, all of this played a role when on a certain Friday, with the sun shining and offering a nice day to play football, Miha instead lay staring up at the ceiling in deep thought. All of a sudden, he shot out of bed with a special fire. He washed and got dressed and sombrely entered the kitchen.

"I am going to enrol in music school," he said simply.

All boys in the world have the same peculiar qualities. When, for example, a mother asks a seemingly straightforward question, like who broke the window in the hall-

way, the average boy will furrow his brow. He might also wring his hands and deliver some sort of lecture. In it, he might analyse the weather, good luck and bad, industrial glass around the world, coincidences, his feelings about the hallway, architectural flaws, the movement of the wind, the reading habits of Singaporean fleas. Only a master would succeed in extracting from all this stray information that the window in the hallway had broken all by itself. Well, yes, at the precise moment, coincidentally, when the boy had gone past.

When, on the other hand, there is one of those life-changing moments that really should be accompanied by some hemming and hawing, analysis and a flood of words, at those times, the boy simply blurts:

"I need money!"

Or:

"I want to drive the car!"

Just like now, when Miha simply said that he was going to enrol in music school. His mother had experienced much in her son's life that was shocking and unexpected. In fact, she was entirely justified in expecting from her son exactly that which was shocking and unexpected. And yet she could hardly recover from this particular announcement.

"To music school?" she echoed.

Then it occurred to her that it might be best to strike while the iron's hot. She quickly slipped her floral blouse on, splashed her face to chase her pale surprise away, and the two went out onto the street together.

While they walked, Miha fantasised about wild music.

He saw himself in a band submerged in different coloured lights. Around the stage wriggled wreaths of teenage girls in different stages of puberty, eyes closed, lips parted.

His mother thought about more poetic music.

She saw her son Miha taking bows on a concert stage, servants in livery bringing bouquet after bouquet of flowers, which her son Miha sent on to his proud mother, who after a while could no longer see him as her eyes had filled with tears.

The two were startled out of their fantasy-filled walk by a sound that any musically educated person would immediately associate with the loud blast of a tuba. Miha and his mother stood before a thin man with long white hair sitting at a table stacked high with piles of forms.

After the introductory clearing of his throat, he blasted:

"What instrument would you like to play?"

The question was very logical given the situation but it caught Miha completely by surprise. He hadn't thought of it. What instrument should he play?

"Well, hmmm, aaah, I was hoping you might advise me,"

Miha said, becoming calm again. He had answered superbly. Now the burden and embarrassment was no longer his but that of the white-haired musician.

"Well," said the man, "let's see."

First, he looked at Miha's fingers. Miha squeezed them closed because he hadn't cleaned and clipped his nails. He didn't know that was important for music lessons.

"You have long fingers," the white-haired musician said, mercifully overlooking what lay at the end of those fingers. "You could try piano or perhaps the violoncello."

Maybe he could play the piano. Although Miha had seen far too many cartoons where nervous bumbler dropped the piano lid on the long fingers of a promising pianist. If he had to choose, he'd much rather be the one to slam the lid down than the one holding his aching fingers afterwards.

"Maybe not the piano," he said.

"Wise," said the man. "There are already so many pianists and... and do you even have a piano?"

His mother shook her head no.

"We don't have a violoncello either," Miha hastened to add.

He had in his mind that the violoncello had something to do with the violin, and the violin was the only instrument he actively disliked. He might have liked it if it weren't for a girl in his class who was some serious concert-level violinist and insisted on making a huge racket with her etudes and sonnets at every celebration. It happened on Victory Day, the Day of the Dead, Woman's Day, New Year's Day, the first day of school, the last day of school (that at least was alright), the day for drivers and tank gunners, May 1, Independence Day, until finally there were no more days left.

"Of course," the man suddenly cheered. "What am I talking about? This boy would clearly like to blow or blast on something, isn't that right?"

He rifled through some folders and papers.

"Yes, there's still some space in clarinet."

Miha wondered what he meant when he said that was still some space in clarinet. In the case? In the instrument itself?

"You would like the clarinet, wouldn't you?" the white-haired man asked and confirmed at the same time. "It's a wonderful instrument. It's played in wind bands, in classical orchestras, jazz, everywhere. It's perfect for you!"

He filled out some forms because, without forms, you really can't do anything in this world. Then they walked down the hallway; the first door on the right, then the third on the left, up the stairs, through the vestibule, the second door on the left and then another sharp left right after that,

one more right and they were at the department for wind instruments.

"This boy is going to play clarinet," the white-haired man announced.

The man to whom he said these words, and who had now turned his eyes toward Miha, was older, heavy, and had his hair combed back. Emanating from his look – his neatly clipped moustache, his smart step – was a sense of determination and order.

"This boy, when he is a little bit older, will play the basset clarinet," the man said wisely and without any doubt whatsoever.

To Miha, he might have said a basset hound clarinet since he had no idea what it meant.

Only one thing was entirely clear and would never change: Miha had embarked all by himself on the thorny path of musical growth. And whoever grows encounters happiness. And, yes, also pain.



# GENIUSES WITHOUT PANTS

Extract from the book



## Chapter 1

"Who, me?" Lenart asked.

"Yes, you! Do you think I'm talking just for the sake of talking?" the young N.N. answered the question with a question of his own. Lenart had no idea who the other boy was, unlike, as it would turn out, the woman detective who worked at the nearby police station and had some experience of him. But that would become clear later on.

At the moment, no lucky star was shining on Lenart, who had entered the yard of the big city high school for the first time. More precisely, there were no stars out at all. It was daytime, the sun was shining and, after a long hot summer, it was the first day of school. For Lenart, it was, as his father had been telling him over the last few weeks, a step into a new life. Children's games were over. Now real school was beginning. When he was finished, he would have a career. A career, a job, his own money, lots of money if he wanted it. He would be his own master and could behave as he saw fit. And so the candidate to be his own master and to make up his own mind watched with amazement as this ostensibly magnificent story got off to a bad start.

"Come on!" said N.N. impatiently, giving the distinct impression that he had no intention of waiting all morning.

Lenart's gaze travelled uncertainly across the schoolyard. Most of the boys and girls appeared to be engrossed in weighty conversation. In any case, they only paid attention to what was in front of their own faces, as if there was nothing else of interest under the sun. N.N. and his four friends stepped closer to Lenart and looked at him expectantly.

All of a sudden, N.N. stepped on Lenart's toes and boxed his ears as hard as he could.

"So you can hear a little better," he said angrily, "and talk nicely. Now just give me some money while I'm still in a good mood."

Lenart staggered. Pain and fear rose up in his throat. Not even the smallest squeak passed his lips. Thoughts swirled

around his mind; he couldn't imagine that this was how the welcoming committee greeted newcomers to the school; he couldn't imagine that all of the kids in the schoolyard were so busy that they could not see what was happening to one of their fellows in the bright early morning light; he couldn't imagine that the monthly allowance he had successfully negotiated with his mother the day before would warm his pocket for only a few sweet hours.

"Want me to say it one more time?" N.N. asked, gently massaging his right hand.

Wordlessly, Lenart reached into his pocket, took his wallet out, and threw it at the boy's feet. The boy leaned over and picked it up.

"Have it your way," said N.N., "because you're a little green, and stupid. But if you're going to give something to somebody, you should put it in his hands with a kind word. If you think I'm the one who's going to teach you not to throw things on the ground, you're wrong about that. Now give me your telephone."

As Lenart reached into his other pocket, N.N. pulled out the 50 euro note from his wallet and whistled in appreciation.

"My goodness!" he exclaimed. "Mama's little boy is full of cash! I love you, little guy. You've made my day. Let me see your phone."

Lenart tossed it into the other boy's hands in a long arc. N.N. caught it and acted as if he wasn't seeing right.

"But this isn't possible! The kid is full of money, but his phone doesn't even work. You should be ashamed! I'm not going to soil my hands with this rusty old junk."

He turned his lips down in distaste, his disgust showing on his black ruin of a mouth. He threw the telephone into a hedge as if it were poison.

"Get a better one!" he said to Lenart. "The world depends on mobile phones these days. You have to move with



the times. Get a more modern machine, man. Otherwise, I'll take your shirt next time..."

N.N. stepped closer once more and pointed to the letters on the pocket of Lenart's shirt.

"Ar... ma... ni... Armani! Well, my dear Armani, I will have to visit you again. But, in the meantime, thanks for everything and, jeez, get yourself a better phone!"

Then the whole group disappeared as if it had been swallowed up by the earth. Lenart walked towards the hedge, found the telephone, and checked that it still worked. He didn't even ask himself if he was dreaming or if it had all really happened. The sun was shining. He could hear some birds singing from the plane trees. The boys and girls still milled about the schoolyard, talking quietly about the new school year amongst themselves. Everything was as it had been before, except that his monthly allowance was gone.

A friendly cry came from crowd.

"Hey, buddy!"

Right at that moment, Chubby emerged from the mass of kids and walked up to Lenart.

"Here you are, buddy," he gasped. "I've been looking all over for you."

Lenart gave him a melancholy look. "If you look, you find," he sighed. "It's just too bad you weren't looking a little while earlier," he concluded in a dejected voice.

"Aha," said Chubby, "were you surrounded by some cute babes and needed a good-looking guy to help out?"

"Not really," Lenart shook his head. "Five minutes ago, I got my ears boxed and in exchange I had to voluntarily donate 50 euros."

Chubby's eyes bulged. Then he stammered:

"You're kidding me, aren't you? I mean – what happened?"

Lenart told him what happened. Chubby pulled on his own ears, shook his head, then nodded, wrung his hands, and sighed out loud.

"It can't be true," he mumbled at last.

Lenart pulled his wallet out and opened it.

"Do you happen to see any money in here?" he asked, slightly angry and slightly sad.

"Not too much," Chubby admitted.

"Well, it is true!" Lenart retorted.

During this time, the crowd in the yard had dwindled somewhat, greedily gobbled up by the gaping school doors. The mass of young people that rolled into the main corridor and up into the three floors above was then swallowed up in smaller doses by the individual classrooms. Chubby and Lenart went to the last row of benches in class 1C, which was just beginning its indelible role in the process of polishing unformed youth into perfected products of the

education system.

The teacher promised what was necessary to promise. There was no more sentimentality about second mothers, or second homes, or second anythings. The words she used were concrete and real, much like the life all around them.

Lenart wanted to listen attentively to the teacher's words. But what could he do if a vision kept dancing before his eyes: that of the fellow with long, greased back hair, and the 50 euro note, of course, that the thief had slipped with a smile into the pocket of his similarly greasy jeans.

"Wow, Armani!" Chubby whispered with admiration, when he noticed the writing on Lenart's tee shirt.

A look of smug pride shot across Lenart's face, then he whispered bitterly:

"You know, that idiot thought my name was Armani?"

Chubby looked as if he wanted to do something nice for his disappointed friend. "Armani?" he said. "It's a nice name! Why don't use it as your nom de guerre?"

Lenart grinned and shrugged his shoulders. His gaze that had been resting on his teacher travelled dreamily over to a blond girl in the first row, before slowly turning to his friend Chubby. He whispered smoothly:

"Armani, okay, Armani! That's not bad!"



# SCHOOL REPORT

Extract from the book

## Chapter 2

Why a sentence has no calming effect ... how a devastated mother shatters all hope ... to whom the class teacher swiftly approaches ... what the problem with common sense is ... what the little rascal has no idea about ...

Mrs Marija Pirc was staggering up the stairs towards the door behind which her unsuspecting husband, Stane, was staring at his computer. The ladies from the front office have just hopped out for some coffee. "What a disaster!" Mrs Pirc exclaimed.

She decisively shut the door behind her with one hand. This was to make sure no sentence would leave the office of the city insurance company. She was wiping her sweaty brow with the other hand, trying to push away the auburn curl stuck to her face.

Mr Pirc, an auto insurance agent, redirected his gaze from the documents before him to his wife and bravely said:

"Come, come; sit down - everything will be ok, you'll see."

In normal circumstances, such a calming sentence would make some sense. But it very soon became clear that the circumstances were anything but normal. So, the sentence had no calming effect.

"What a disaster!" Mrs Pirc exclaimed again and sat down in front of the desk.

Mr Pirc would have only a few seconds to continue believing that his wife was succumbing to the unbearable summer heat that had dominated the town in recent days. In the evenings, everybody furiously turned off their televisions as the weather lady kept ensuring them with a frozen

smile that the hot days - too hot for the time of year, actually - would continue and that there was no sign of rain.

"Lenart," the boy's mother exclaimed again, shattering all hope, "Lenart has really done it! I've just been to school. During last week he got three Fs in a row!"

Mr Pirc was transformed into a surprised father with wide open eyes. "Lenart?" he asked, as if he couldn't believe what he was hearing.

"Lenart?"

The school year was coming to a close. Matej had just finished eighth grade and a huge amount of panic was hanging in the air as to whether he would be able to enrol at the high school of his choice. He had achieved exceptional results in tests, and was ranked among the top three percent of the super-smart kids in the country. But he was as slothful as all the sloths from prehistory to this day put together. He did not pay any attention to such trifles as school grades. But these trifles were the criteria on the basis of which the school authorities chose to decide whether they would give a boy a chance to continue his schooling and at which school. Mrs Pirc had stretched her nerves and her tongue, trying to explain this to her son. He simply ignored what she was saying and wanted to know why she was on his case.

While these full-scale wars were raging, the younger brother, Lenart, was trying to keep his distance. He would announce that all was well at school and that he was getting straight As. He had already commenced the diplomatic talks with his grandmother about the gifts one could expect to receive when one finished the fifth grade. The list was varied and extensive, embellished with the shining exam-



ples of grandmothers and grandsons from near and far.

And today, Mother Pirc went to school to certify some documents for Matej's enrolment. Completely unsuspecting, she was walking down the school hallway towards the school psychologist's office. She was racking her brain for sentences with which she would confirm that Matej was lazy yet also bright and playful, and it would be a shame to punish him so completely, so immediately. Let us give him a chance to direct his talents appropriately in a new environment. She had not yet finished polishing her sentences when she was stopped by a cry:

"Mrs Pirc, Mrs Pirc!"

Mrs Pirc stopped and turned round. The class teacher of her younger son, Matej's brother Lenart, was approaching swiftly.

"Mrs Pirc!" Lenart's class teacher greeted her. "So you've finally come?" Lenart's mother took a deep breath and anxiously asked:

"Where have I finally come?"

"For two weeks," the teacher began firmly, "I've been pleading with Lenart to tell you to come to school. I've tried to phone you at home a few times, but it was always Lenart who picked up the phone and he promised he would tell you to come. Are you so busy that you don't even have time to come when I particularly want to see you?"

A slight darkness clouded Lenart's mother's brow and eyes. She was supposed to have no time for the school and for her son?

"I don't know anything about this," she said in a voice that could barely pass as calm.

And then it came.

For the past month Lenart had been acting like a tourist who had mistakenly wandered into the classroom. All he was interested in was fun. He wasn't studying and his notebooks were in tatters. He got three Fs. He kept chattering during lessons and threatened to smash, thrash, or crush his schoolmates for the slightest trifle. Everyone was wondering what had been going on with him.

Everyone may well have been wondering. But the way Lenart's mother was wondering, no one had ever wondered before.

She was catching her breath while staggering down the hallway. She was sweating all over.

"Lenart ...," she sobbed. "Lenart ..."

The teacher did not ask her if she knew anything about it, by any chance. It was clear as glass that she did not.

"So," the class teacher added, "he hasn't told you I was looking for you?"

Lenart's mother shook her head in silence. When she had

calmed herself somewhat, she sat on a bench with the teacher, and together they hatched a plan to work on the little scoundrel, so he would manage to overcome the obstacles and bring home a school report without any Fs. When the class teacher left, the mother kept leaning against the wall of the school hallway for some time, trying to tie her nerve endings back together. In the process, she cast a chill over the school psychologist's morning office hours.

Lenart's story surprised her before she could finish Matej's story. She briskly made her way back to her husband. The more she thought about it, the clearer it became that Lenart's story could transform into a ballad, if not worse.

While she was hurrying down city streets, the heat came from three directions: the sun scorching from above, the road radiating from below, and there, right in the middle, there was just enough room for the internal combustion of a properly devastated mother. A little too much for one person.

But now the whole matter was being tackled by two people at Mr Pirc's office.

"Blast it!" father Pirc said. He got up and started pacing up and down the office. This did not calm things down much.

"And where's the young man now?" he asked a little later, stopping for a moment.

"He's at home!" explained Mrs Pirc. "I've forbidden him to go to training and told him which maths assignments he had to solve by the time I return!"

"Oh," murmured Mr Pirc. "Right."

Mr Pirc believed in trust and common sense. His approach to his sons was: let's trust them. And the second part of his trust involved believing that common sense would tell the boys not to get involved in anything foolish. But there was a slight snag in this approach. Common sense kept telling many things to the boys. The problem was that the boys mostly chose to ignore it.

"Oh!" said Mr Pirc again.

He remembered that he had met the mother of Lenart's schoolmate, Vlado, on his way to work in the morning. In a daze she told him she was trembling for Vlado who would be trying to improve his F in English. This was an addition to another one which had come the previous week. So, the miserable mother and the adequately miserable son burned the midnight oil going over irregular verbs and other English lessons back and forth.

Poor thing, Mr Pirc thought when they parted their ways.

Not in his wildest dreams had he imagined that he would so quickly give the opportunity to Vlado's mother to pity

him in return.

"Yes, well," Mr Pirc said in a loud voice, leaning down gently to Mrs Pirc, "we'll be firm with the little rascal and we'll pull him through. And next year we'll set him a timetable for home studying to follow. He'll study all right!"

Lenart had no idea what was in store for him. He was at home, lying on the carpet in the living room, playing with his gray cat. A little earlier, the cat had kept rubbing against his legs so long that he went to the fridge despite his mother's orders. He took out a big packet of cat food and put some in the cat's dish on the kitchen floor. Now the cat was satisfied. It lay down with Lenart and started licking his ear. Lenart was in seventh heaven and felt like the lord of the cats.

A key turned in the front door. Mrs Pirc's hands were full of bags. On her way home, she stopped to buy everything for dinner. The delay at the door took just long enough for Lenart to jump to his feet, hop to the desk, open the maths textbook and rest his head on his hand. He tried his best to give a very convincing impression of how he had been exploring the depths of maths all day long while the honest world was playing basketball in the sun, if not exactly jumping curbs with bicycles.

"Well," mother called out. "Have you worked hard, Lenart?" "Yes, mum!"

Luckily, mother did not have time to check up whether the greeting words were true. Lenart noticed this immediately and quickly asked:

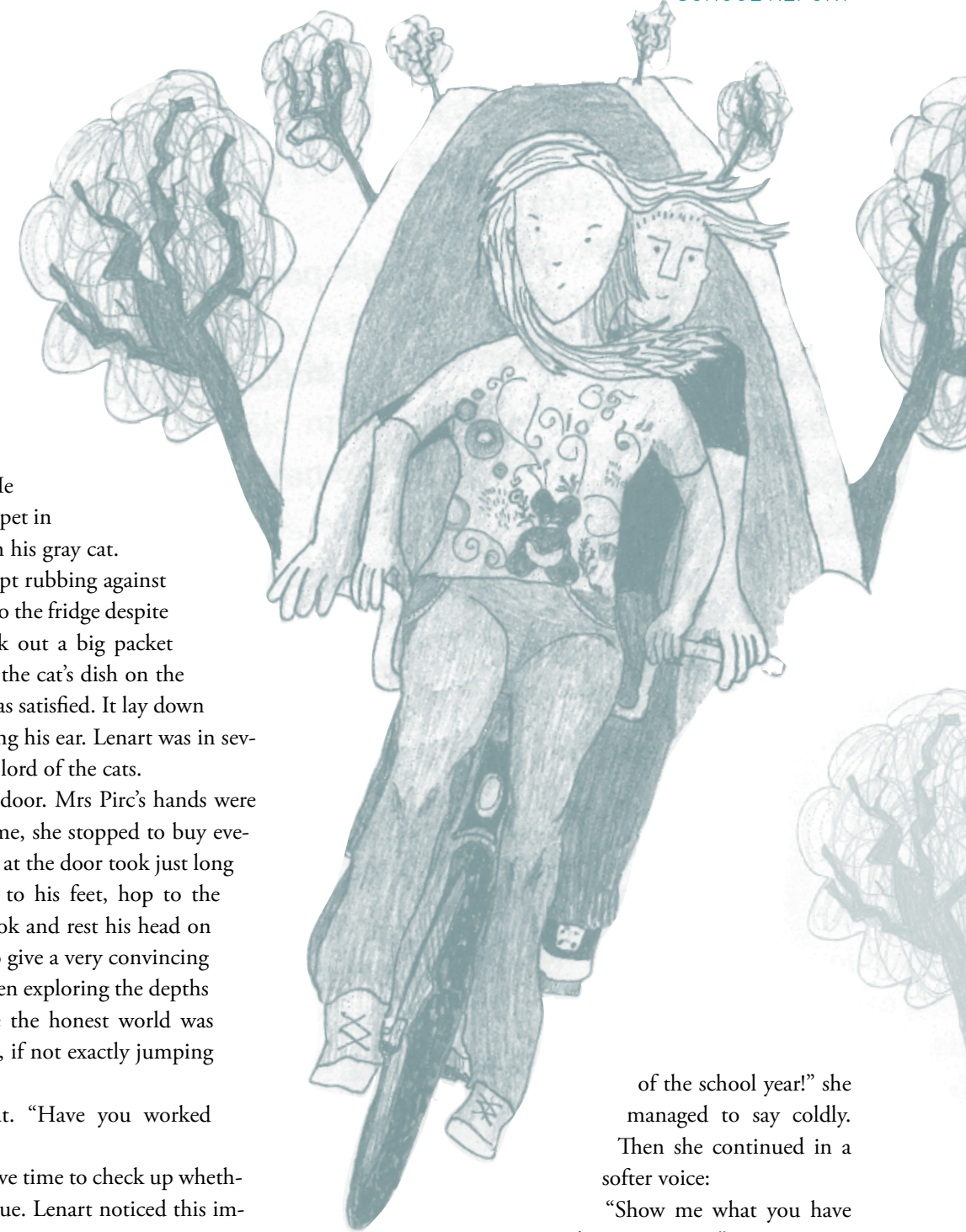
"Could I go out now and ride my bike for a bit? I'd do some more maths after supper."

Mother was not exactly showing any overwhelming gladness at this prospect. So, he adopted an offended tone and added, whimpering:

"All the others went to the park right after school. Now they're racing their bikes up and down the hill. I'm the only one who's not there. I'd be back by lunch."

Mother had a slight headache. If she continued this bickering with her son, the headache would surely not go away.

"All the others did not get a bunch of Fs in the last week



of the school year!" she managed to say coldly. Then she continued in a softer voice:

"Show me what you have done up to now."

"I've just closed the notebook and textbook and put them away neatly in my bag, as you always tell me to. And now I'm supposed to take everything out again?" the little rascal started whining shrewdly. "I'll really be back by lunch; you have my word!"

Mrs Pirc knew that a shower would do her much more good than any bickering with her younger son. In the overheated atmosphere, she gave a silent nod. Before she could finish arranging the shopping bags on the kitchen counter, Lenart shot out at the back door.



# THE EXPEDITION OF THE GREEN DRAGON

Extract from the book



## Chapter 1

The story begins to heat up when Miha and Pip count the money. But what happens next when a terrible squeaking sound is heard and Miha shoves his arms up to his elbows down his pants?

Miha and Pip sat in front of the door of the newspaper-recycling center and counted the money. The corners of their mouths crept up toward their ears and Miha said:

“So sweethearts: the money is all here.”

There were no sweethearts anywhere around but that’s how Miha talked. In other words: “Everything is taken care of,” Pip answered and he put the money into the pocket of his shorts.

The boys stood up and tried to walk with their legs in the shape of a perfect “O” as all men do when things are going well for them. School was over. But just before it ended, Miha and Pip had passed a note around the classroom:

“Give all notebooks, newspapers and such stuff to your Comrade Miha. Urgent. We must win. - The Board!”

If you’re wondering who Comrade Miha is: that was the Miha from the eighth grade, who wore blue jeans.

If you’re wondering who the Board is: that was the same Miha who now sat next to Pip, also from the eighth grade, who usually wore short pants and was a little bit smaller. He was small because he was like a trick that you’re not supposed to show ahead of time, and that means that he had to be smaller so he couldn’t be easily seen.

They had written the phrase “The Board” on the note so it would look very, very serious. They would only win if the boys collected a lot of paper, and with it a lot of money, and then they would be able to go on summer vacation.

Their schoolmates brought piles of paper because they also wanted to win, though they had no idea what they

were winning. Or for whom. But at the end of school, that wouldn’t matter anymore. All of them greatly respected the undersigned “Board”, even though it was nowhere written that their parents would have to report to the headmaster if too little paper was collected.

The accounting in front of the recycling center proved that the paper drive had succeeded.

After Miha and Pip let out a cheer and put their legs in the shape of an “O”, there came an enormous pop and a great rattle and hum from somewhere in the middle of the street and soon afterwards everything was covered by a veil of smoke. Then they heard a terrible squeaking and everything was quiet.

When the dust settled, what they saw was a four-headed tin can.

Maybe it wasn’t exactly a tin can, but the confusion on the sidewalk was so devastating that to call it box would be a compliment, rather like calling a stinging thistle a tulip or saying “Hello babe!” - to the mathematics teacher. That’s why you needed to look the thing straight into its eyes and say “tin can”. In any case, something tiny and gray crawled out of the tin can on wheels and said to the boys:

“I came here just in case you were interested in buying some old scrap metal.”

He was a pleasant enough little old man who had probably received the car from his grandpa on his birthday, the same car that his great-grandpa had given his grandpa on his birthday, the same car that his great-great-grandpa had given his great-grandpa on his birthday and so on and so forth.

Pip and Miha answered that he ought to go into the house and ask inside, that they were just passing by.

The old man said that the tin can, that is to say the car, ran beautifully. Only the brakes didn’t always work, and

the engine always overheated, and it guzzled a lot of gas and oil, and the doors sometimes fell off, and the tires lost control on corners, and the roof fell on the driver’s head while driving, and the steering wheel liked to come off, the headlights to blink, the trunk to squish all the luggage put in there, the motor to die in the middle of intersections, the driver’s seat to tip over. Other than that, he said, it drove like a dream. Strange that no one wanted to buy it. I’ll ask at the recycling center, he murmured, and headed inside.

“Miha, I was thinking, I would ...” began Pip.

“I was thinking, I would too ...” answered Miha as he spat and reached into his pocket. When you say that Miha reached into his pocket, what it means is that he shoved his arms all the way up to his elbows all the way down his pants.

## Chapter 2

Why the cops rubbed their hands together, why forty families jumped to their feet when the janitor scowled, and a little instruction on how to ride wild mustangs.

It was as clear as a clear blue day can be. Miha and Pip once again arranged their money in a pile and bought the tin can on four wheels from the gray-haired old grandpa.

All the cops in town rubbed their palms together. They would be able to stop the boys at every turn, because they were too young to be behind the wheel of a car. Ha! That might be true enough, but they were old enough to get an idea or two. Pip got an idea about Bob.

That was much better than Bob getting an idea or two about Pip. Because Bob weighed 180 pounds and was 18 years old. Old enough to have a driver’s license, which he had in addition to many other things.

Well, it wasn’t long before Bob was behind the wheel, Miha and Pip in the backseat and all three heading toward the driveway of the apartment building where they lived.

Frightened birds fluttered away on all sides. Little kids, who had been playing in the sand, rushed in all directions looking for their moms, so they could hide in between their legs. Eighteen fathers adjusted their radio sets because they thought there must be some kind of interference.

When he approached the driveway, Bob turned the steering wheel of the tin can but it continued straight ahead and crashed into the wall of the apartment building. The doors fell off, the roof slid down onto the passengers, the two rear tires spun around the driveway for another minute or two,

and finally came to rest near the garbage cans.

Forty families jumped to their feet, thinking that there had been an earthquake.

The tin can stood for a while popping and hissing and smoking in the driveway.

Every window in the apartment building was filled with a horrified face.

Bob, Miha and Pip climbed out of the rumbling mess and stood before a whole universe of staring eyes. Befuddled, the boys looked at each other. Before they could even say anything, a janitor with a broom came out of the building, coiled himself up and roared:

“Ha! Do you want to break down the whole house? Do you want to break some heads? Do you want to mess up the whole yard?”

It’s never a good idea to argue with a janitor, so Pip stuttered:

“In fact, Bob drove us over here so we could help you straighten out the yard.”

It was such a big fat lie that another door immediately fell off the car in protest. The janitor was standing just at the spot where it was about to hit the ground. Despite his advanced years, he nimbly jumped away and all the nosy parkers in the window exploded into a burst of applause. Before the janitor could say anything else, Miha made a rather hypocritical speech.

“But you, master of the house, you know everything, and we also thought that if we cleaned up the yard, you, master of the house, who knows everything, would take a tiny peek at our car, since you know everything ...”

The faces of most janitors fall into a scowl when young kids talk about automobiles. But, then again, the hearts of most janitors leap and bound when young kids say something nice.

And so the janitor stepped from one foot to another and back to the other on which he stood before, and finally said:

“Ha! So that’s the way it is, is it?”

“Yes, it is,” answered Pip sweetly and he batted his eyelashes the way usually only his younger sister did. “Yes, it is,” said Miha very sweetly, the way he did only when he was really in a tight spot.

“Yippee-ya-yeah!” said Bob the way all cowboys do when someone asks them if they know how to ride wild mustangs.

“Ha! So that’s the way it is,” the janitor said. “But let me tell you: I swear by three-hundred smashed garbage cans and thirteen broken keyholes that kids like you usually have something up your sleeves. And that’s a fact.”

And the fact was that Bob, Miha and Pip did have a couple of aces up their sleeves.

## Chapter 3

And then the mothers think twice and Bob says something about lifting anchor and a flock of sparrows do something that a wellraised flock of sparrows would almost never do.

The janitor was a truly amazing janitor and he spent the next million years scratching and banging away at the tin can. And that is how it eventually came to resemble the shape of a box. Sort of. Then Bob took gorgeous red paint and wrote two words on the door: OLD GIRL.

Pip and Miha cleaned up the front yard until it was so spick and span that all the mothers began to think, hmmm, what if on Sunday I just roll out the dough for apple pie right here on the ground in front of the apartment building. But mothers always think twice about things like that and all too often decide to just roll out the dough on the kitchen counter as usual.

And so it was that the OLD GIRL was fixed and the front yard was cleaned up. Bob said: hmmm, hmmm, hmmm. Miha said: hee-hee-hee. Pip just nodded, agreeing that they were both right.

“And so the story begins,” murmured Miha.

“The story began a long time ago; only now the plot thickens,” Pip said.

Bob needed to be smarter than three hundred and seventeen Pips and two hundred and ninety-three Mihas because, after all, he was the eldest. So he wrinkled up his forehead the way smart people do. And then he wisely said: “Tomorrow we lift anchor!”

No really smart person would say that it was necessary to lift anchor to drive around the streets in OLD GIRL which, despite everything, was still a car. But if Bob said that, he must know that tomorrow morning Bob and Miha would put Bob and Miha and a couple pieces of luggage into the OLD GIRL, step on the gas and burn rubber all the way to the seaside. It was, after all, summer vacation and, if a kid has gotten pretty good grades during the year, summer vacation was made expressly for wasting time.

But Pip was not going to stay at home crying until the end of his days. Running in his veins was the blood of the best campers. He would get his old backpack, and before it had even crossed the sun’s mind to get out of bed, Pip would be standing on the side of the road, sticking out his thumb. Where are you going, my friend, people would ask. To the sea, he would answer, to the sea.

Before, when the janitor had said that the boys must have something up their sleeves, the boys really did have some-

thing up their sleeves. They had, in fact, made a bet. Bob, the best driver that there ever was, that ever could or would or should be, had said that the tin can, that is to say the OLD GIRL, could make it all the way down the coast to Dubrovnik in a wink and a flash. Even if he were driving her at midnight, in only his underpants, with one hand on the wheel. Pip responded that he hadn’t heard a joke as good as that in the last million years or so. That he could get to Dubrovnik before the tin can if he rode on the back of a snail.

Then the boys spoke words one after another, one interrupting another, the kind of words that kids say without really meaning them, the kind of words that cause fathers to start spanking the seat of a pair of pants when the boy’s bottom is still inside the pants.

But they reached out their hands and shook and the bet was made.

Bob and Miha said that they would get to Dubrovnik first with the OLD GIRL. Pip said that he would hitchhike to Dubrovnik faster and that moreover he would probably have time to go to the barber one-thousand and thirteen times to shave the beard that would grow to the ground and then some before a heap like OLD GIRL would come coughing and wheezing into the city walls.

“Tomorrow we lift anchor!” responded Bob.

That evening three city mothers watched with heavy hearts three city boys looking long and hard at their traveling bags before going to sleep.

That evening a flock of sparrows mistook the OLD GIRL for a garbage bin and left inside of her much of what they had consumed the previous day.

## Chapter 4

There’s always trouble with women and suddenly with Miha’s eyes as well, and finally it becomes clear who is going to the bubble gum exhibit.

The birds had been singing at the top of their lungs for quite some time when our three old friends finally climbed out of bed. Bob, Miha and Pip had been unable to fall asleep for much of the night because the wings of competition had ruffled their imagination. And so only when the sun was very high in the sky did it throw them out of their beds.

They gathered in the courtyard from which their departure was planned in order to shake hands one more time. Actually what gathered in the courtyard were three piles of

suitcases and backpacks, each pile having been contributed by one of the boys.

“To battle!” they cried with one voice and pumped their fists into the air. At which point the courtyard filled with little kids who clapped and yelled simply because they sensed that something big was about to happen.

Pip hotfooted it out of the courtyard and headed in the direction of the main road that ran toward the sea. He muttered between his teeth:

“Ha-ha! We’ll meet again in Dubrovnik, though I’ll already be on my way home by then!”

Bob and Miha said nothing, but leapt into the OLD GIRL. But as is usually the case with women, there were troubles.

The OLD GIRL didn’t want to start up. Bob put all of his cunning to work, but it was no use. Everyone began to hoot and laugh. Miha went to find the janitor.

The janitor said that he hadn’t yet finished reading the newspaper. Miha said that he hadn’t either, but that all the same he was in a terrible hurry.

“Ha!” responded the concierge, “If you were in such a hurry, you would have left yesterday.”

Miha wanted to say something but all of a sudden it felt like a bone was stuck in his throat so instead he said nothing at all. His eyes turned red. His face transformed into a tearful grimace.

“Hm, this looks serious,” said the janitor and folded his newspaper.

Then he got up and looked at the OLD GIRL from the back, from the front, from the left and the right, from the top and from the bottom. Then he unscrewed about a hundred screws and screwed them back in again. Finally he yawned and said:

“My dear boys, did you eat something for breakfast this morning?”

Bob and Miha nodded nervously.

“Okay. Well, you might also think about putting a little gas into this tin can from time to time too.”

The janitor turned around and went back into the building. The boys wanted more than anything else to throw themselves into a miserable heap on the ground. But it was hard to get to Dubrovnik from the ground, so they decided not to. They asked the group of kids who were smirking like a bunch of tomcats to help push the OLD GIRL to the gas station.

“Are you thinking about donating this thing to a museum?” the gas station attendant asked them.

“No,” said Bob and he shoved his hands deep into his pockets so no one would notice that he was clenching his

fists. “We were thinking of taking it to a bubble gum exhibit.”

The man looked at him strangely, but said nothing. When the boys had paid, they jumped into the OLD GIRL. She started right up, gave a little pop, and off they went.

The kids, who had pushed them to the gas station, waved goodbye with their handkerchiefs. What did they know? Maybe they would never come back again.

All this time, Pip had been standing on the sunny side of the road with his thumb lifted high in the air. Slime from the road ran down his cheeks, his back, his hands, his legs and really down any part of his body that was even slightly exposed.

“Oh please: just one little lonely sweet golden darling ramshackle old heap,” he prayed.

But no one wanted to stop for him. Cars whizzed by one after another, shamelessly heading toward the seaside. Only one little puppy thought Pip was a telephone pole and left his mark on him.

“Actually,” Pip thought, “that OLD GIRL wasn’t such a good-for-nothing tin can after all. At least she was going somewhere.”

Right at that moment, he was staring straight ahead into the haze. He heard a dreadful noise that was coming toward him through the smoke. You might say that Pip had summoned the OLD GIRL with his thoughts alone.

“Where to, young man?” Bob called out from behind the wheel but by the time Pip could answer, the GIRL had already driven past.

“To a bubble gum exhibit,” Pip yelled back pathetically.

## Chapter 14

Where we discover the reason that Miha dashes and splashes. Where we discover the reason why suddenly something rattles and squeaks. How the three old friends meet again in a cloud of sand.

Miha looked and looked but he could not see the OLD GIRL. It seemed to him that where the OLD GIRL once stood, there now stood something different. His luggage. He shot to the spot like lightning and found this note on his bag:

“Before you were worried about what happened to Pip.

Now I think you should wait for him and arrive together in Dubrovnik. I’ll wait for you there and take care of the OLD GIRL. Bye - Bob!”

It took Miha a moment to catch his breath. Then he



walked up and down the beach. Slowly, his face began to brighten.

"Well," he said at last, "fine. He'll be sorry. And I don't care about anything in the world anymore anyway. I'm just going to swim and swim and swim."

He dashed into the water, splashed around until everyone was staring at him, and then lay down on the hot sand.

"Only where could Pip be?" the question flitted through his brain.

At this particular moment, the question of where Miha and Bob were was no longer flitting through Pip's brain. He had kissed that question goodbye, because he was convinced that he would never see them again. Why?

Well, just outside of the port of Rijeka, the police had let him go with a hearty squeeze of his hand, and a bus had taken him as far as the Kraljevica school camp. Then for the next hundred kilometers, Pip had crawled along in a French Deux Chevaux and, gesturing with his two hands, he had a conversation with two French students who spoke no Slovenian. When they let him out, he had to wait on the road in the most unbearable heat. It seemed that no one was kind-hearted enough to pick up the boy whose enormous backpack leaned against him on the burning road. Actually, it was a little less enormous if you consider that all the food that had once been in it was already eaten.

All of a sudden, something began to rattle and squeak. A sports car had stopped next to Pip, the kind of car that boys dream about but almost never actually see in real life.

Behind the wheel sat a bearded man with dark glasses. "Dubrovnik?" Pip asked.

The bearded man did not answer. He just nodded and gestured that Pip should get in.

Pip hadn't even sat down properly when the car shot forward. And then it took the corners and wiggled in and out of traffic in such a way that, oh, Pip almost fainted even though he considered himself a pretty cool operator for such a small boy.

The drive seemed to last forever, when at last Pip got up the courage to tell the driver that he hadn't eaten for three days and he would like to get out of the car.

The bearded man just nodded, stopped the car, let Pip out, and hurtled on, leaving only a faint echo of a rattle and a squeak behind.

More dead than alive, Pip dragged himself along the road.

Through the trees along the side of the road, he spied the sea and headed for it in hopes that the water might freshen him up.

He had hardly stepped on to the beach when a wild cry sliced through the air:

"Piiiiip! Is it really you?"

"Yes," Pip murmured, wondering who had recognized him.

A cloud of sand approached him from the left side. In a short time, the cloud transformed into Miha.

"How's it going, old pal!" Miha yelled and he was so happy to see his friend that he forgot that the two were actually competing against one other.

"It's going, it's going," Pip mumbled and then asked the question: "What about Bob? What about the OLD GIRL?"

Tears came to Miha's eyes.

"You won't believe it," he said, "You simply won't believe it."

Then he told the whole story from the beginning to the point when that irritating Sonya appeared and Bob disappeared with the OLD GIRL.

"But," Miha concluded, "Bob has no idea what it means to mess with Miha. Listen to what I have in mind for him!"



# A BEDTIME STORY

from The Star with the Cap



Gal was never exactly thrilled about going to bed in the evening. He would invent hundreds upon hundreds of excuses to avoid it. The easiest way to get him to accept his fate was if Father promised to tell him a bedtime story.

Gal's Father, on the other hand, really wanted to go to bed in the evening. He spent his days galloping around here and there. Early in the morning he vroomed off to work. After lunch he had meetings. Sometimes he had to take his children to music school or somewhere else. In the evening it was necessary to watch television, read and perhaps even write a little. That is why he preferred to lie down next to Gal and try to tell him a story. Sometimes he could even get a little nap in.

Gal went to bed. He propped himself up on his elbows and got ready to listen. Father stretched himself out beside his son, began to breathe deeply and turned the lights off.

"Well, come on, let's start!" the son demanded.

"Want to hear the one about the Mail Mouse? Or the one about Bunny and the Snowman? Maybe the one about Bora the Wind and his toothache?" Father asked, trying to find a comfortable position for his head.

"About the Mail Mouse!" Gal commanded.

"Well," Father began, "in a little town there stood a post office. An old postman worked there. Every night he sorted the mail ..."

Father sighed and fell silent. His breathing was becoming more and more peaceful and steady.

"And then?" Gal piped up. "What happened then?"

Father was startled as if he had been called from another world. He cleared his throat and went on:

"... and then winter came to the land. The New Year was getting closer. More and more letters and cards were arriving at the post office ..."

His voice was becoming velvety and soft. After a while it completely disappeared.

"Father, Father!" Gal exclaimed, starting to shake him by the shoulder. "And then?"

Father went on in a deep voice:

"And then Bunny ran out of food ..."

"No, Father, no," cried Gal, "not about Bunny! The postman was getting more and more letters, now the Mail Mouse has to come along!"

"Of course," murmured Father, "the Mail Mouse, of course, of course."

"Well, what?" asked Gal.

Father raised his head and racked his brains. Then his head dropped back down on the pillow.

"The old postman fell asleep ... and, from a little hole, the Mail Mouse appeared ... there were many many letters ..."

Father's voice trailed off.

"And then? What happened?"

Father moaned and went on:

"Bora the Wind was suffering from a toothache and he could no longer stand the pain. He had old and rotten teeth ..."

"No, Father, no," Gal cried, "not Bora the Wind – the Mouse! The Mouse, Father, the Mail Mouse! What happened then?"

"Well, the Mouse appeared from the little hole. She saw the old postman sleeping at his desk; sleeping ... he was very tired, so he fell asleep ..."

Father again fell silent.

At that moment the bedroom door opened carefully. A tiny beam of light from the hall lit Gal's eyes up. Mother popped her head in and whispered:

"Is he already asleep?"

Gal rose in his bed and called out:

"Yes! Father came in, told himself a very confusing story and fell asleep right away!"

# PARROT GOES TO SCHOOL

## FABLES

### THE EMBARRASSED SCHOOLBAG

A schoolbag full of books was leaning against a bench in the classroom. "I am the smartest in the world, look at me! I carry all knowledge inside of me!" it bragged. "Well," said the pencil who had just solved a mathematical problem, "tell me: how much is three times three?" "Hmmm," thought the schoolbag, and then sadly said, "I don't know." "You see," laughed the pencil, "you can't just swallow books, you have to also read them!"

### THE THIRSTY PUDDLE

The black umbrella was always very tense and puffed up when it was working. "It's really quite appalling," its handle (which was already bent with age) said the last time it rained. "That puddle knows no measure. It always gets so drunk it has to lie down right in the middle of the street!"

### GOOD ANSWER

The monkey sat high on a branch and ate a banana. A lion went by. "Come down," he called. "I'd like to whisper something in your ear." "You can roar, and I'll hear you just fine up hear," answered the monkey. "I can't. I have a sore throat," said the lion. "You come down from the tree." "I would very much like to come down," the monkey smiled at the lion. "But what can I do? My legs are sore, too!"

### THAT'S JUST THE WAY IT IS

The ants marched through the forest in a long line. All of a sudden, they heard a rumbling and the earth began to shake. "Get back," they screamed. A herd of elephants rumbled by. "Shame on you!" exclaimed one little black ant. "We had the right of way and we had to move." "Yes," his mother nodded. "Elephants have bigger legs."

### MISSED OPPORTUNITY

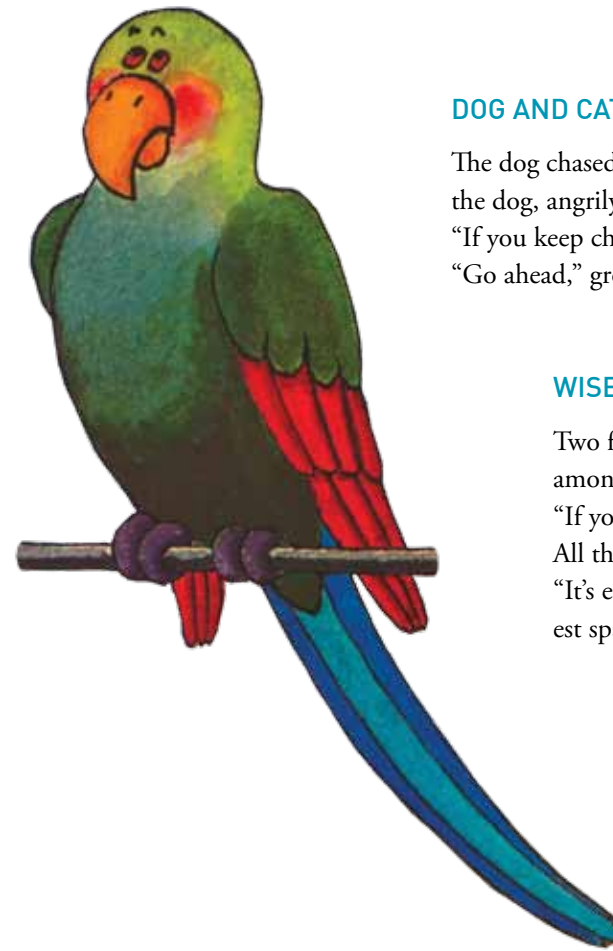
"I don't know why it is, but I simply never can get anywhere on time," sighed Delay. "Just get on the bus a little earlier," advised Just-In-Time. "I want to," Delay sighed again, "but I always miss it."

### DANGEROUS DESIRES

A crocodile lay on the bank of the river, big fat tears streaming from his eyes. A pig went by. "Can I help you in some way?" asked the pig who was moved deeply by the sight of tears. "Yes," nodded the crocodile. "Come a little bit closer."

### WHAT IS BETTER

"A radio is petty and stupid," explained the light bulb. "Whenever something happens, it tells everyone about it in a loud voice." Then the bulb added: "The washing machine is very wise and experienced. It always washes its dirty laundry with the doors shut."



### DOG AND CAT

The dog chased the cat. The cat barely escaped by climbing a tree. She sat on a branch and looked at the dog, angrily running up and down below. Then she said: "If you keep chasing me, I'll call my brother the tiger to help me." "Go ahead," growled the dog. "You won't be able to escape him by climbing a tree!"

### WISE CAUTION

Two flocks of sparrows were playing football in the dusty road. They argued incessantly among themselves. Out from the bushes jumped a cat. "If you'll allow me," the cat meowed, "I could act as your referee." All the sparrows fluttered upward, landing in the gutters of the nearest roof. "It's easier to take a swallow's iniquity than the justice of a cat," the oldest sparrow squawked from the highest rooftop.

### THOSE EXTRAORDINARY MATCHES

"Who are those tall slender ladies?" the candle asked the candleholder. "Those are matches," the candleholder answered. "They are unbelievably wise." "Oh," said the candle, "why is that?" "Because they always work with their heads," the candleholder explained.

### THE PARROT IN SCHOOL

The parrot had learned some human words and had a thought: "I am so smart. I could go to school!" And so the parrot went to school in order to take the entry examination and get a certificate. "Good day!" they greeted him at the school. "Good day!" said the parrot. "How can we help you?" they asked. "How can we help you?" answered the parrot. "What are you doing here?" they asked. "What are you doing here?" answered the parrot. "This is ridiculous," they said at the school, "he just repeats and repeats and doesn't think with his own mind!" And they sent the parrot home!

### QUICK ANSWER

The donkey watched the bear who was sadly watching the bees in the hive. He said: "Do you want me to tell you how to get to that honey?" "Please do," the bear said eagerly. "Fly like a bee," answered the donkey. "Do you want me to tell you how to avoid saying such nonsense in the future?" the bear asked the donkey. "Please do," the donkey said eagerly. "Shut up!" said the bear, and he shuffled off into the forest.

### HOW MUCH? THIS MUCH!

"Hey, you! How much time do you spend washing to make your fur so white?" the rabbit asked the polar bear. "The same amount of time you spend pulling your ears to make them so long," the polar bear answered the rabbit.

### WOULD BE, WOULDN'T BE

"If I were a cat, I would leave mice in peace," the mouse called out as he fled into his hole to escape the cat. "If I were a dog, I wouldn't chase cats," the cat gasped as she climbed a tree to escape the dog. "Stuff and nonsense!" growled the dog. "I wouldn't want to be either a cat or a mouse!"



# ROOSTER ON A DUNGHILL

## SHORT FABLES



### A Sense of Proper Measure

"Tell me," said one mosquito that had flown on a visit to his kinsman. "Is it true that fishermen only fish for little fish in your pond?"  
"Of course," the other mosquito answered, swinging on a reed. "Large fish are dangerous because they might pull the fishermen down to the bottom."

### Fortune in Misfortune

"We are two unfortunate creatures," the toilet gurgled.  
"Think of all the things we have to swallow in this life."  
"You really can't complain," squeaked the trash bin unhappily. "You can at least flush after every meal."

### Two Possibilities

"I help everyone to have beautiful dreams," the silk pillow boasted.  
"And I bring them all down to earth again," the banana peel retorted.



### Something Special

"Who are those tall slender ladies?" the candle asked the candlestick.  
"They are matches," the candlestick replied. "They are unbelievably smart."  
"Oh?" asked the candle. "And why is that?"  
"Because they only work with their heads."

### The Weight of Goodness

"Something must be done," the wolf said. "The sparrows are starting to warble too much. Would someone care to remind them how the swans do their swansong?"  
"Nonsense!" said the fox. "We only feed the sparrows the sweetest grain."  
"What!?" the bear blustered. "All that warbling and they get grain too?"  
"Of course," the fox giggled. "They can't warble if their mouths are full!"



### Good Excuses

The monkey sat high up on a branch eating bananas. A lion went by.  
"Come down," the lion called. "I'd like to whisper something in your ear."  
"You can roar and I'll hear you from up here," answered the monkey.  
"I have a sore throat and can't roar," said the lion. "It would be better if you come down from the tree."  
"I'd really like to come down," the monkey smirked, "but I have a sore foot!"

### Cruel Fate

"I would never want to be a Christmas ornament," said the lollypop. "Everyone admires them when they're in the shop window, but then they pick the nicest ones and publicly hang them."

### Sad Story

"My master always keeps me on a short leash," complained the boy's haircut.  
"Lucky you," wept the bald head. "My master takes me everywhere he goes and pretends I don't exist."

### Bad Company

"I feel awful whenever I get squeezed into this old shoe," the sock complained.  
"I might say something similar about you," the shoe retorted, "but every time you climb inside of me, my tongue is tied."

### Cold Explanation

"Have you no shame!" the fly cried.  
"You drink the blood of good people!"  
"Exactly," the mosquito nodded. "The bad ones drink each other's blood."

# LIST OF TRANSLATIONS

### Velika pustolovina

[A Great Adventure, The Expedition of the Green Dragon, Croatian], Mladost, Zagreb, 1978

### Priručnik za skitnju

[A Wanderer's Guidebook, Serbian], ZTT, Trieste, 1981

### Zamazana priča

[Dirty Story, Serbian], ZTT, Trieste, 1981

### Strašni bratanci

[Awesome Cousins, Serbian], ZTT, Trieste, 1981

### Priče sa dvora

[Adventures at the Court of King John, Serbian], ZTT, Trieste, 1981

### Genije i genijalci

[Geniuses in Short Pants, Serbian], NIŠRO Jež, Belgrade, 1981

### Genite

[Geniuses in Short Pants, Macedonian], Mlado pokolenje, Skopje, 1981

### Vyprava zeleného draka

[The Expedition of the Green Dragon, Czech], Albatros, Prague, 1982

### Genovia v kratkých nohaviciach

[Geniuses in Short Pants, Slovak], Mlade leta, Bratislava, 1982

### Skazki i rasskazi

[Tales and Fairy Tales, Russian], MK, Moscow, 1984

### Kungilsiz hodisa, Skvernaja istoriya

[Dirty Story, Uzbek, Russian], Gafura Guljama, Tashkent, 1985

### »Daidi«kar učun dastur, Eš gvardija

[Tales and Fairy Tales, Uzbek], Tashkent, 1986

### Geniusze w krotkich spodenkach

[Geniuses in Short Pants, Polish], Iskry, Warsaw, 1987

### Medicina per bimbi indocili

[A Cure for Naughty Kids, Italian], Most, Trieste, 1992

### Srebro iz modre špilje

[The Silver of the Blue Grotto, Croatian], Mozaik knjiga, Zagreb, 2005

### Vsičko teče...

[Everything Runs, a selection of humorous prose and fables, Bulgarian], Balkani, Sofia, 2005

### Srebro iz plave pećine

[The Silver of the Blue Grotto, Serbian], Mono i Manjana, Belgrade, 2010

Pregl's texts were published also in different anthologies, magazines and newspapers in Slovene, Croatian, Serbian, Macedonian, Bulgarian, Ukrainian, English, German, Greek and Swedish languages.

1976

**Odprava zelenega zmaja: Velika avantura and Odprava zelenega zmaja.**  
(The Expedition of the Green Dragon: A Great Adventure and The Expedition of the Green Dragon).

Illustrated by Marjan Manček.  
Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga.  
Reprints: Ljubljana: Karantanija, 2001; Tržič: Učila International, 2004.

1977

**Priročnik za klatenje.**  
(A Wanderer's Guidebook)

Ljubljana: Partizanska knjiga.  
Illustrated by Marjan Manček.  
Reprints: Trieste: Založništvo tržaškega tiska, 1981; Ljubljana: Delavska enotnost, 1988.

1978

**Geniji v kratkih hlačah.**  
(Geniuses in Short Pants)

Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga.  
Illustrated by Marjan Manček.  
Reprints: Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1985 (photographs from the TV serial used as illustrations); Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1996; Ljubljana: Gyros, 2000; Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 2000.

**Papiga v šoli.**  
(Parrot Goes to School)

Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga.  
Illustrated by Marija Lucija Stupica.

1979

**Denar. (Money)**

Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga.  
Illustrated by Božo Kos.

1981

**Juha Cviluha.**  
(The Whining Soup)

Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga.  
Illustrated by Kostja Gatnik.  
Reprint: Ljubljana: Karantanija, 2008.

**Strašna bratranca.**  
(Awesome Cousins)

Trieste: Založništvo tržaškega tiska.  
Illustrated by Bine Rogelj. Reprint: Ljubljana: Delavska enotnost, 1988.

**Umazana zgodba.**  
(Dirty Story)

Trieste: Založništvo tržaškega tiska. Illustrated by Kostja Gatnik.  
Reprint: Ljubljana: Delavska enotnost, 1988.

**Zgode na dvoru kralja Janeza.**  
(Adventures at the Court of King John)

Trieste: Založništvo tržaškega tiska.  
Illustrated by Bojan Jurc. Reprint: Ljubljana: Delavska enotnost, 1988.

1982

**Zdravilo za poredneže.**  
(A Cure for Naughty Kids)

Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga.  
Illustrated by Lucija Marija Stupica.

**Bojni zapiski mestnega mulca.**  
(Battle Records of a City Kid)

Ljubljana: Partizanska knjiga.  
Illustrated by Marjan Manček.  
Reprint: Mulci na pohodu (a new edition comprising Battle Records of a City Kid and Snotty and His Company). Tržič: Učila International, 2004.

1984

**Smejalnik in cvililna zavora.**  
(The Laughurretor and the Whining Break)

Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga.  
Illustrated by Kostja Gatnik.

1985

**Geniji v dolgih hlačah.**  
(Geniuses in Long Pants)

Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga.  
Illustrated by Bine Rogelj. Reprint: Tržič: Učila International, 2004.

1986

**Zgodba o knjigi.**  
(Story about the Book)

Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga.  
Illustrated by Janko Testen.

1987

**Smrka in njegovi.**  
(Snotty and His Company)

Ljubljana: Partizanska knjiga.  
Illustrated by Bojan Jurc. Reprint: Mulci na pohodu (a new edition comprising Battle Records of a City Kid and Snotty and His Company). Tržič: Učila International, 2004.

1990

**Olimpiada v živalskem vrtu.**  
(Olympics in a Zoo)

Ljubljana: Samozaložba, 1990.  
Illustrated by Bine Rogelj.

1993

**Če bi in če ne bi.**  
(If I Were and If I Weren't)

Ljubljana: DZS, 1993. Illustrated by Marjan Manček.

1993

**Počesane muhe ali zelo zapleten priročnik o lepem vedenju.**  
(Tamed Whims or a Very Complicated Guide to Correct Behaviour)

Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga.  
Illustrated by Marjan Manček.

2001

**Papiga že spet v šoli.** (Parrot Goes to School Again)

Ljubljana: Arkadija, 2001.  
Illustrated by Marjan Manček.

2003

**Zvezda s čepico.**  
(The Star with the Cap)

Ljubljana: Mladika, 2003.  
Illustrated by Arjan Pregl.

**Srebro iz modre špilje.**  
(The Silver of the Blue Grotto)

Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga.  
Reprint: Special Gift Publication.  
Ljubljana: Slovenian Reading Badge Association, 2005 (The Zlata bralka, zlati bralec collection).

2004

**Male oblačne zgodbe.**  
(Little Cloudy Stories)

Ljubljana: Mladika. Illustrated by Arjan Pregl.

**Usodni telefon.**  
(The Fateful Telephone)

Ljubljana: Prešernova družba.  
Illustrated by Arjan Pregl.

2005

**Spričevalo.**  
(School Report)

Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga.  
Illustrated by Arjan Pregl. Reprint: Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 2007.

2005

**Ujeti ribič.**  
(The Captured Fisherman)

Ljubljana: Založba Mladika (The Liščki collection). Illustrated by Damijan Stepančič.

2006

**Dva majhna velika ribiča.**  
(Two Great Little Fishermen)

Ljubljana: Založba Mladika (The Liščki collection). Illustrated by Arjan Pregl.

**Varja se pogovarja.**  
(Chattering Varja)

Revija Galeb. Čedad: Zadruga Novi Matajur. Illustrated by Arjan Pregl.

2008

**Zakaj ima babica dve palici.**  
(Why Grandma Has Two Sticks)

Ljubljana: Založba Mladika (The Liščki collection). Illustrated by Matjaž Schmidt.

**Petelin na gnoju.**  
(Rooster on a Dunghill)

Radovljica: Didakta. Illustrated by Bojan Jurc.

2008

**Med delom in denarjem.**  
(Between Work and Money)

Ljubljana: Karantanija. Text about Slovenian scientists by Sandi Sitar. Illustrated by: Tomaž Lavrič, Marjan Manček and others.

2009

**Geniji brez hlač.**  
(Geniuses without Pants)

Radovljica: Didakta. Reprint: Radovljica: Didakta, 2010.

**Car brez zaklada.**  
(The Czar without Treasure)

Novo mesto: Goga (The Lunapark collection).

**Sladke denarnice in druge basni.**  
(Sweet Purses and Other Fables)

Ljubljana: Mladika.

**Lutke iz sedmega nadstropja.**  
(Puppets from the Seventh Floor)

Ljubljana: Vodnikova založba (DSKG).

2011

**Čudni časi.**  
(Strange Times)

Radovljica: Didakta.







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