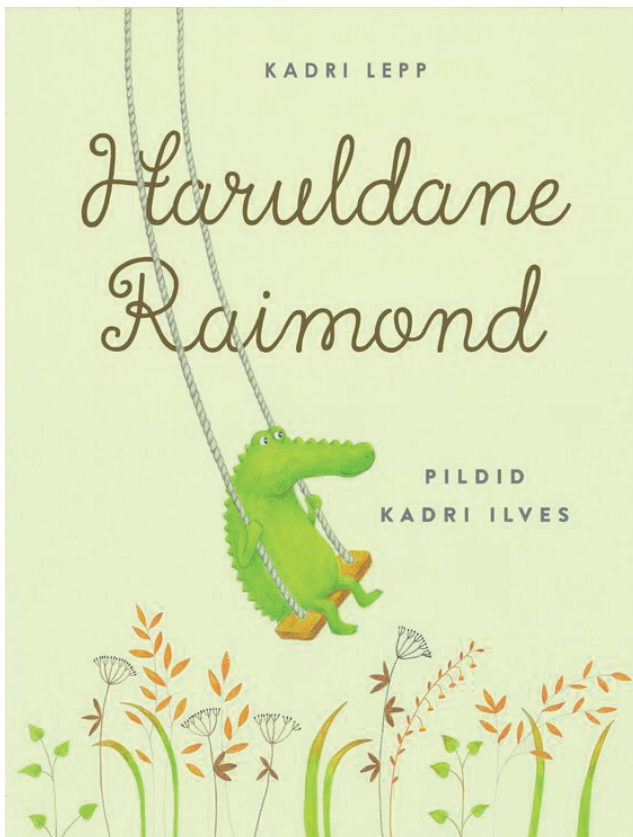


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Extraordinary Raimond

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Storybook, fiction

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Age: 4 +

Raimond is a crocodile. His father is a crocodile and his mother is a crocodile. Raimond's father has a mighty tail, Raimond's mother also has a mighty tail, although it's a bit smaller than the father's. Raimond's tail however, is completely different. He used to be a happy little crocodile and not even notice or think about his tail, until one night he heard his parents discuss it and not in a cheerful tone. Now Raimond feels that no one sees him as he is, that they only see his tail or what's more, the lack of it. Raimond decides that he won't go to the playground anymore, in fact that he won't ever leave his yard.

A story book about being different and coming to terms with that.



Reading sample

[pp. 5–9]

Raimond was a crocodile. His mom and dad were crocodiles, too, and Raimond was just like his parents—only a little bit smaller. But there was nothing strange about that, because he was a kid and kids are always smaller. Raimond’s dad had very big teeth, for instance. Raimond also had teeth, only not as big. Raimond’s dad had very strong legs. Raimond had legs, too, just smaller and with softer claws. Raimond’s mom also had teeth and legs and claws and a nice zigzag running down her back just like dad, except all those parts were even prettier.

Raimond was quite an ordinary crocodile. He enjoyed eating and taking baths, and he especially liked when birds cleaned his teeth. You see, every morning and evening, Raimond went outside with his mom and dad and they all cleaned their teeth. They didn’t need toothpaste or a toothbrush or floss like everyone else uses. “Birds clean crocodiles’ teeth, and that’s the birds’ job to do,” Raimond’s dad told him. For the birds to do their work, you had to open your mouth nice and wide, not squirm, and let them peck clean all the spaces between your teeth. And you definitely weren’t allowed to close your mouth or eat the birds. That’s what Raimond’s mom told him, and he always tried to do just as his mom said.

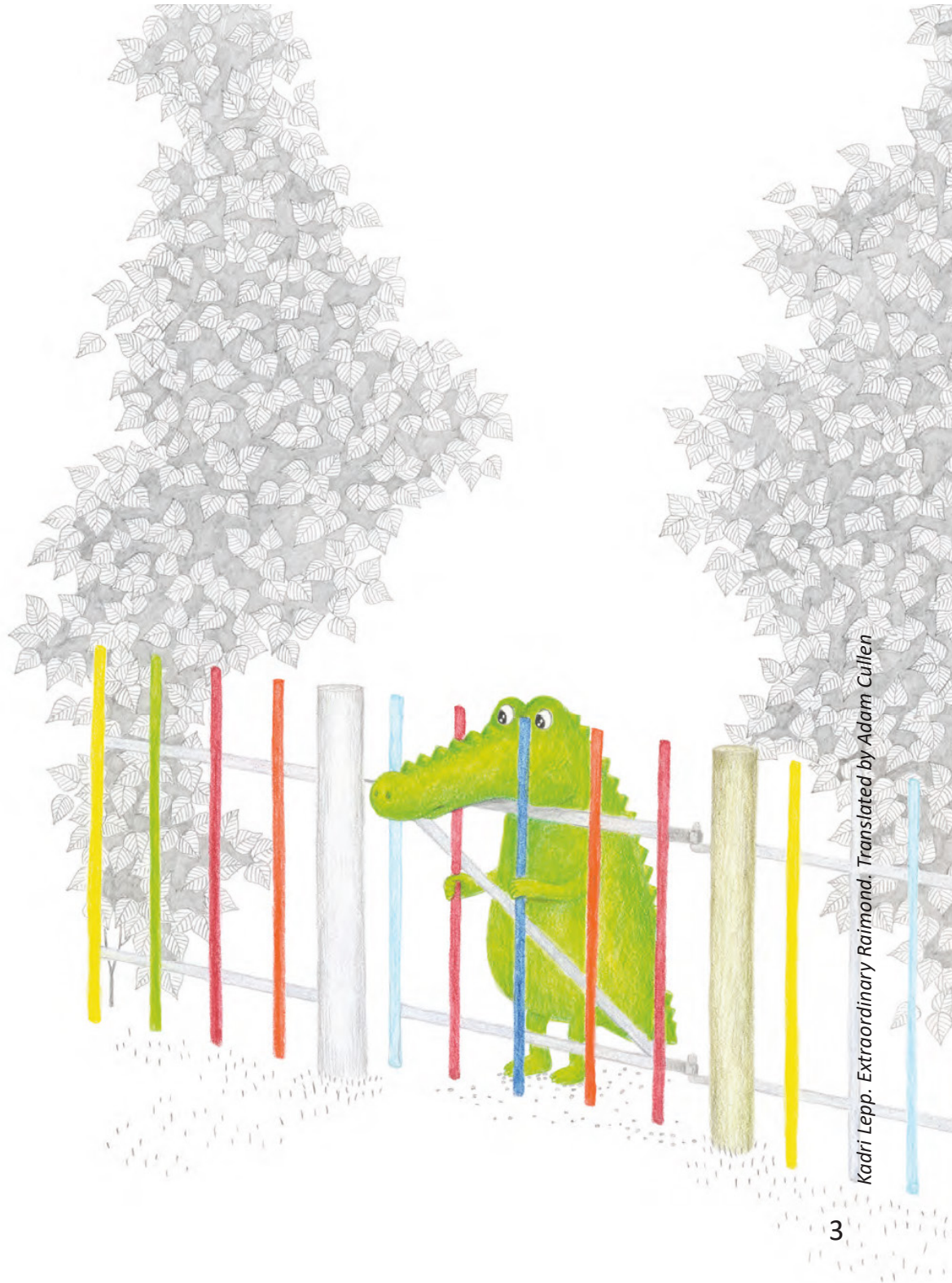
All in all, Raimond was a happy crocodile. There was just one thing that made him terribly sad and ruined almost everything. Raimond’s dad had a mighty tail, and his mom did as well. But Raimond’s tail was different. He did have a tail, of course, but it wasn’t as long and impressive as his parents’: it was a little triangular nub. The nub didn’t even reach the ground, much less drag proudly along like his parents’ tails. Raimond tried to press it all the way down one day, but the strain only made his tailbone ache—nothing more.

The whole tail situation hadn’t always made him sad, he remembered. Raimond hadn’t even known their family had any tail problem at all! That ended one night about two weeks earlier when he couldn’t sleep, so he got up to get a glass of water from the kitchen. Before he opened the door, he stopped and heard his parents whispering to each other inside. It wasn’t nice whispering, but a troubled kind of tone.

Raimond pressed his ear to the door and heard his mother say something like “what are we going to do about this tail thing”; then, there was silence... Finally, his dad said a word like “unusual”, which had an awful ring to it. Raimond quickly slunk back to his bedroom, turned on the light, and took a good, long look at his tail in the mirror for the first time in his life. It really was tiny and didn’t look like a crocodile tail at all: more like a tail belonging to a hedgehog or a frog or some other creature. The more Raimond stared at his tail in the mirror, the worse he felt. He tried to remember if it had always been that way. Or had it grown bigger, little by little, and then stopped for some reason?... Raimond suddenly had a hard time remembering. His head was packed with all kinds of thoughts and at the same time, he felt very scared and sad. So, the young crocodile jumped under the covers and decided to quickly fall asleep instead. Maybe it’d all just been a bad dream. And maybe his tail would grow a little longer by morning. Unfortunately, that didn’t happen—his tail was the same length it’d been when he went to bed. Raimond started checking his tail and measuring it every morning when he woke up. But it was no good: the tail remained exactly the way it was and didn’t grow another millimeter.

Now, all Raimond could think about was his dumb tail. He felt like everybody else in the world was only thinking about his tail, too. His mom and dad constantly looked worried and, suspiciously often, would ask if “everything is okay” and “everything is alright” and would have weird smiles that weren’t like real smiles at all. Raimond felt like everybody was staring at his tail whenever he played on the playground, too. It didn’t matter that he’d had the exact same tail every time he’d gone and played with the other kids there before. Now, he suspected that they all showed up at the playground just to look at his weird stubby tail. And every other tail suddenly looked especially impressive and even a little arrogant somehow. The more the other kids waved their tails up and down or back and forth or chased them around, the sadder Raimond became. So, he decided that it’d be better to stop going to the playground

at all. That it'd be better to stop going
anywhere at all. For a whole week, maybe
even longer, Raimond just sat by the garden
gate and tried to do so in a way that his
stubby tail was hidden under the lilac bush.
He only went inside when his mom called
him in to eat, and when he did, he tried to
scurry as quickly as possible, looking back
over his shoulder repeatedly.



Kadri Lepp. Extraordinary Raimond. Translated by Adam Cullen