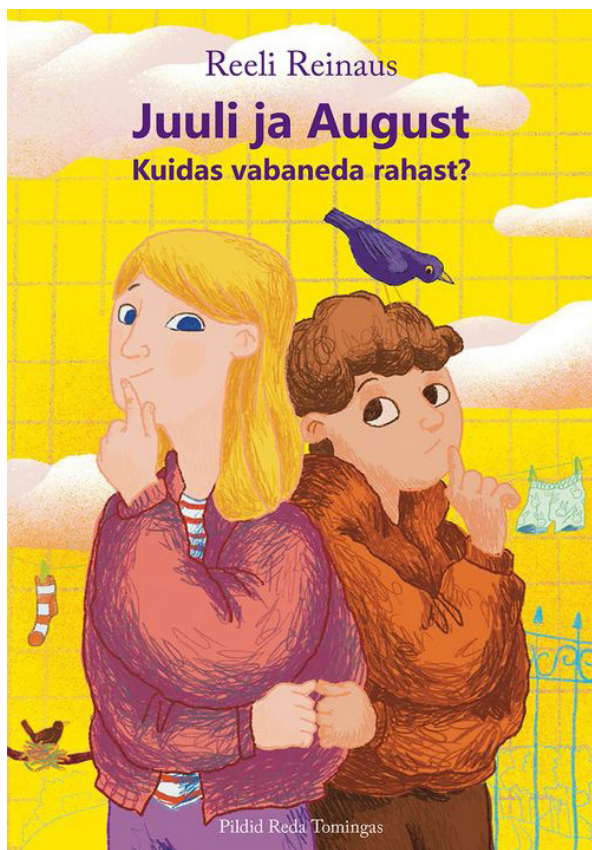


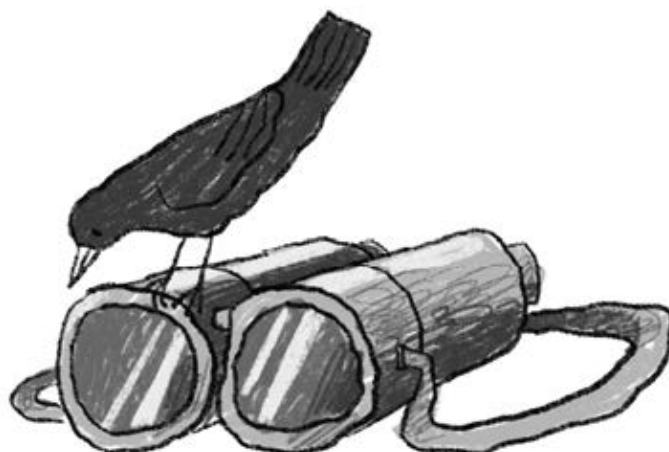
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June and August. How to get rid of money?

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One not-so-nice day, June and August get scared that they might one day become like their parents. But who'd ever want to be an archaeologist digging up old things or an ornithologist sitting around at home with a pair of binoculars all day long? So, the kids decide it's their last chance to make their own fortune and turn their parents into people they themselves would like to become someday. As their parents' jobs are their greatest shortcomings, the kids decide to start there. But to motivate their parents into looking for more ordinary jobs, the family's scant savings must be spent as quickly as possible. How hard could that be?



Reading sample

1. GENETICS AND ENVIRONMENT

“What do you think will become of us?” June asked August one evening.

She had just tried to make hot cocoa, but the milk had burned to the bottom of the pot, so the cocoa had a bit of a burned taste. Of course, that spoiled her mood. That was the reason all sorts of dark thoughts came into her head. The darkest of which was a thought about the future.

“Just, like, in general?” asked August, distracted, since he was trying to solve a Rubik’s cube at the same time.

June shook her head.

“Like, in the future. I mean, will we turn into mother and father?”

August shook his head. “That cannot happen!”

“I know. We have to do something,” agreed June. “I have heard that the environment affects children’s development just as much as their genetics. And think, we have both – genetics as well as environment!”

August put the cube down. He was convinced that June was doing this on purpose. First, his sister had ruined her cocoa and now she was determined to ruin August’s evening as well. Which was totally typical. For some reason, June couldn’t bear to be the only one who was sad or grumpy or angry. She always had to bring out those same emotions in August. And usually, his sister’s plan worked. August clearly recalled one time, for example, when June was sad, because she had just found out that foxes weren’t as big as wolves, but rather much smaller. And, as not to be sad alone, June had, with seemingly pure ill intent, revealed to August the truth about unicorns, mainly the fact that they did not exist. So, in the end, they were both saddened together: June because of foxes and August due to unicorns. August had only recently realized that June did these sorts of things on purpose.

Just as she was now.

Though, to be fair, their future outlook was quite bleak. June and August’s parents weren’t exactly the type of people whom they could feel pride for at a parent-teacher conference. Fortunately, they never made it there of course. Father was usually at work and mother would forget about the meeting. Or did not consider it particularly

important, because, to be honest, June and August did well in school and, besides, the teachers always put the rest of the information online.

“Why are you talking about it today all of a sudden?” the boy asked grumpily.

“Why not?” the girl wondered. “I am worried! We must do something!”

“Right now?”

“Yes, now! The sooner the better.”

“That’s too bad. I was hoping to enjoy a happy childhood for a few more years,” sighed August.

“Happy childhoods are for the weak,” asserted June. “We make our own fortune.”

“Maybe you’re right,” mumbled August. “Where do we start?”

June pondered. “We’ll start with the household.”

“Your room or mine?” asked August.

“I am actually quite satisfied with mine. It’s not quite as clean as yours, but it suits me.”

“No, in general. It’s an expression. If someone is well behaved or otherwise a good and polite person, then they say, that they came from a good household.”

“What does a good household look like?” asked August. “I’d like to see some pictures. Should we google it?”

“A good household means a good upbringing,” explained June. “We have to start with our parents.”

Our parents? June’s cocoa must be really disgusting, August thought, because now her mood was even worse than before...

“Let’s not start with mother,” August said, hoping that June would show some mercy. “That’s too hard.”

“Mother is exactly who we have to start with,” June said with certainty. “Father will go along with it on his own.”

“Which part of mother should we start with?” an unconfident August asked

“Everything. But first we have to find her a job,” said June.

“What job?”

“I don’t know. We have to figure out what she is best at.”

“Uhh... Maybe we should start with father instead?” suggested August shyly. He had tried to think what his mother was good at, but he was drawing a blank.



Reeli Reinas. June and August. How to get rid of money? Translated by Chris Reintal.

June had finished her cocoa and was now eating chocolate. The boy hoped that this would soften his sister's grumpiness a bit.

"Giving up is for the weak," asserted June. "If we cannot accomplish anything now as children, how do you imagine we accomplish anything as grownups? We start with mother. That is for certain!"

"Starting with mother is like... Like climbing Mount Everest, without even being to Egg Mountain," sighed August.

"Great or Small Egg Mountain?"

"Small," mumbled August.

"You are right. But if we start with mother, then think, afterwards it will be so much easier with father," assured June.

"Yes, but..." August shrugged his shoulders. "Maybe by then we'll already be grown up."

June nodded. "You may be right. But think, in a way it would be even easier then. We can tell father, that if he doesn't do as we say, we will put him in a retirement home or..."

"Or take away his pension?" suggested August.

"You're starting to get it," said June satisfied.

"Yes, but..." mumbled August. "How do we influence mom now? She controls us with our allowance, but we don't have anything..."

"Allowance, which actually comes from father," remarked June. "Don't worry, we'll definitely figure something out!"

"We will of course!" agreed August.

That was actually never in doubt. They always thought of something. June and August had always known they were an amazing team when it came to accomplishing something. But this time...

This time August did have his doubts.

2. BIRDS AND EGGS

The kitchen is full of blue smoke and the smoke alarm's wailing was deafening. A coughing June crawled across the floor. She imagined herself as a firefighter who was entering a burning building, sacrificing herself to save the residence. This image gave her strength and was even a bit funny. So, June was not sure if the coughing was from laughter or the laughter from the coughing.

At last, she reached the window, quickly jumped up, opened it, and gulped the fresh air into her lungs.

"Oh, it is suddenly so much brighter," said mother, who had been standing by the window looking out the whole time. Even now, she did not put her binoculars down.

"Mother, the eggs!" shouted June disapprovingly and she put the pan with the charred black eggs into the sink. The burnt eggs had created all this smoke.

"Yes, the eggs!" nodded mother cheerfully. "And there are so many!"

"Mother, you let the eggs get burnt!" shouted June over the wailing fire alarm, grabbed the mop from the corner, and banged on the smoke detector with the handle until it shut up.

It was then, that mother finally put her binoculars down.

"Oh, those," she waved her hand dismissively at the pan and eggs. "But look, the starlings are laying eggs!"

Mother offered June the binoculars, but June didn't accept them. She had never understood what was so special about those birds, that mother had to spend most days sitting by the window.

"No worry," consoled mother. "You can eat bread and water today. I'm sure your father will bring something from the store tonight. Though, to be honest, I knew the moment I cracked those eggs onto the pan something was going to happen. First, the refrigerator door wouldn't open, then I spent so long searching for the carton of eggs..."

"Mother, why don't you have a job?" asked June five minutes late as she was chewing on some bread.

Mother shrugged her shoulders. "I don't think having a job really suits me," she said.

"There could be some job that you liked?" asked August optimistically as he entered the room. "There are so many jobs in the world."

June looked at August but did not know if she should be angry at him or not. As usual, August had let her do all the dirty work which this time meant saving their home from the burning eggs and smoke. But on the other hand, he was now supporting her with the question directed at mother.

"Like astronaut for example," said mother. "Tell me, where in Estonia can I learn to be an astronaut?"

“You want to be an astronaut?” asked June, surprised.

Mother shook her head. “No, of course not. Do you really think I would want to spend years floating in some tiny capsule? I was just giving an example.”

“But there are so many other careers,” continued headstrong June. “For example, ticket seller, tram conductor, cashier, or gym administrator.”

“Or chef or chief,” added August.

“Or chauffeur,” said June

Mother shook her head.

“Listen, is it really that time again when your teacher wants to know who your parents work as? Why don’t you write whatever you want?”

“How could we lie?” wondered June. “They’ll find out. We have to write your employer too. And if the teacher calls there, she’ll find out that you don’t work there.”

Mother laughed. “Nowadays, when everyone has cell phones, no one is going to call to someone’s place of work.”

“Aren’t you bored at home?” August continued to inquire. He had decided to approach from a totally different angle. Mother was as hard of a nut to crack as he had anticipated.

Mother shook her head.

“Of course not! There are always so many exciting things happening here! Today, for example, I saw how the starling led a crow away from their nest. They were half its size! And just think, yesterday I saw a robin! Can you imagine, there was a robin in the fir tree right behind our house!”

“Did you also see a Batman?” smirked August.

“It’s a bird, you fool!” hissed June to his brother, though mother hadn’t even noticed the boy’s foolish question.

“There are so many interesting shows on TV every day,” continued mother getting excited. “All the shows on Netflix are like a gift from god in keeping boredom away. And there are exciting forums where you can read what other people are doing and what problems they have going on in their lives. I think having a job is totally overrated nowadays, when there are so many interesting things to do and discover.”

“But no money,” said June stubbornly.

“Money? Your father makes the money in our family,” said mother. “We

divide up our tasks well when it comes to that.”

“Father earns money, so what do you do?”

“I make food,” noted mother and started to peel off the burnt eggs from the pan. “And keep the house in order.”

June and August exchanged a worrying glance. Mother was right.

The house truly was in order.

Sometimes it even seemed that it was too clean, especially when it came to their things, which they had left in a specific spot on the floor the night before and could not find them the next day. Mother only forgot to clean when she saw an interesting bird in the yard.