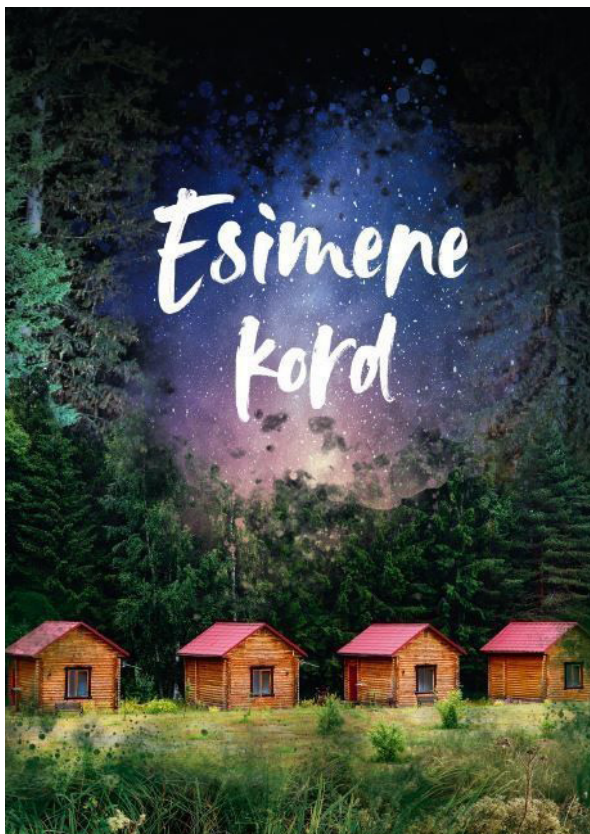


For more information or copyrights, please  
contact: ulla.saar@elk.ee



### **First Time**

By Kristi Piiper

Tänapäev 2023, 192pp, softcover

ISBN 9789916980576

*Chapter book, fiction*

Topics: mental health, relationships, school

Age: YA

Things aren't going too smoothly for 15-year-old Anna Elisabeth. Her dad is spending more and more time at work and is even distant when at home. Her mom is suffering from health problems that she avoids discussing with Anna. When the girl's best friend suddenly starts dating her class crush, their friendship is put to the test. What's more, all of Anna's classmates think it's cool to tease her about every little thing. The bullying continues on their class camping trip, during which someone snaps a graphic and embarrassing photo of her and tries to use it for blackmail. However, that's the last straw: Anna decides to fight back and finally stand up to her tormenters.

## Reading sample

[pp. 48–50]

### 6. .PE

“Faster, girls, faster!”

Despite the early hour, the girls’ PE teacher was screaming at the top of his lungs.

Damn it, Anna mentally cursed, wiping sweat off her forehead. The ongoing relay in the third-floor gym was boys against girls, just as always in their monthly coed class. Anna despised it with all her heart. PE with other girls was bad enough, and their coed classes were pure torture. She took the bench half the time because of a “headache” or her “period”, but that couldn’t be every time. Anna always counted down the minutes till the end of class. Her watch showed twelve more.

“Quit dozing off, lesbo! Your turn’s coming up! Don’t stare at your watch, focus!” Luisa hissed, jabbing her between the ribs. Anna had no time to react before Karita sprinted up to her, arm outstretched, and nearly flung the baton at her chest. Anna ran as fast as she could. Regardless of all her anger and indignation, she could still prove to Luisa that the girls wouldn’t lose because of her. Luisa’s turn followed hers, and as Luisa ran track and field, she could always make up a little time if necessary. But even with the girl’s speedy last lap, they still lost.

“The stupid lesbo was so fucking slow again!” Anna overheard Luisa jeer.

Karita smirked.

“Totally. And Fränki, too. She just stands there and wheezes in place even though she’s, like, super skinny. What a weakling!”

Anna jogged to the locker room even though class wasn’t officially over yet. She wanted to shower and get dressed before the others. Fränki walked in the moment she’d gotten her jeans on and the bell rang.

“Hey, the teacher was pretty pissed that you left before the end of class. Said it’ll take off points for behavior.”

Anna couldn’t care less at the moment.

“So what? He can do whatever he wants. Luisa’s just so nasty and gets me so worked up! You have no idea what she said this time!” Anna snapped.

Fränki shook her head.

“Doesn’t matter what she said. You only make things worse by running away. I told you—just ignore them!”

Anna grunted. Even Fränki was getting on her nerves with all this finger-wagging.

“Yeah, sure. Whatever. You always know best, don’t you.”

Anna slung her backpack over her shoulder and marched out of the locker room. There were still several classes left, but she didn’t want to be at school anymore. She just couldn’t. Without a second’s hesitation, she ran down to the coatroom, grabbed her jacket, and left the building, only stopping to catch her breath once she was off school grounds. She didn’t want to go home. Mom might be there and would immediately ask what happened, and she didn’t want to talk about it with anybody. Nobody understood her, anyway. They’d just tell her to get ahold of herself, ignore it, or say something back. Nobody understood that things weren’t so simple. Anna headed towards the bus stop to ride into the city. Hurtful thoughts were spinning around her head, but even though she felt offended, she didn’t want to lose Fränki. Fränki was the only one who helped her get through every school day.

[pp. 64–66]

### 9. The Bottle

Luisa lived in an old renovated house that had once, long ago, been the town’s most important post office.

“You knock,” Anna pleaded. Her own hands were shoved deep into her jacket pockets and lightly trembling. It was twenty minutes after eight and by the sound of it, the party had already started. The girls could hear music, the buzz of conversation, and table football. Fränki lifted her arm and knocked three times on the heavy wooden door. No one answered.

“Oh. There’s a doorbell, too. Didn’t see it,” Fränki said, pushing a yellowish button.

Not ten seconds went by before Joel opened the door.

“Oh, it’s you. Come in.”

Anna could immediately tell that Joel

wasn't particularly happy they'd arrived. Neither was he visibly unhappy, of course. Just indifferent, though still in his usual good mood. She and Fränki followed him down a long hallway. The music grew louder and louder. They went through a pair of double doors and entered big, dim living room. Their classmates were scattered among couches and armchairs. Alex was also there, chatting with Lisett by a window. Hmm, Lisett hadn't wasted any time, either. Anna would've wanted to act that boldly, too, but she still had a long way to go.

Having pinpointed Alex's location, the next thing Anna noticed was a total stranger sitting on a footstool by the fireplace. He was a little older and there was something weird about him. He was all on his own, silent, occasionally taking a big gulp from the glass in his slightly reddish hand.

The girls sat down on the edge of a big corner sofa. Sprawled about a meter away was Joel, focused on texting someone.

"You see the way that guy's staring at Karita? That's not normal. You see?" Anna softly whispered to Fränki, who nodded. The guy's gaze was locked on Karita like some kind of cyclops as she mixed herself a gross-looking pinkish iced cocktail on a little table nearby.

"Who is he, anyway?"

Fränki didn't know. She turned to Joel.

"Hey, Joel. Who's the dude by the fireplace?"

Joel didn't appear to like the guy's presence there, either.

"That's Karita's neighbor's older brother. He's the one who bought the booze. Karita said he demanded to come to the party in return for hooking us up. So, yeah. Just no other option."

"Hmm," Fränki grunted. "He looks so much older than us."

"He is. Twenty-three or something, if I'm not mistaken."

"So he's, like, some kind of freak who wants to party with teens our age? I mean, I could understand if he knew any of us," Fränki said, frowning.

Anna agreed.

"Yep. But who knows. Maybe he's OK."

She didn't want to judge anyone based purely on appearances because she knew all too well what that felt like. Even so, he still made her feel uneasy for some reason.

"Hey, I've got this spin-the-bottle game with cards!" Luisa called out from across the room, pulling a box on the coffee table towards her. "We've all played it before. Everybody knows the rules, right?"

Anna didn't dare to admit that she was probably the only person in the room who didn't know the rules by heart. She suspected that Fränki wasn't any wiser, either, though her friend remained quiet next to her. Everybody took a seat in a circle on the big colorful carpet, and Anna followed. Luisa's spin-the-bottle had to be like the game was usually played, right? Cards or no cards, how hard could it be?