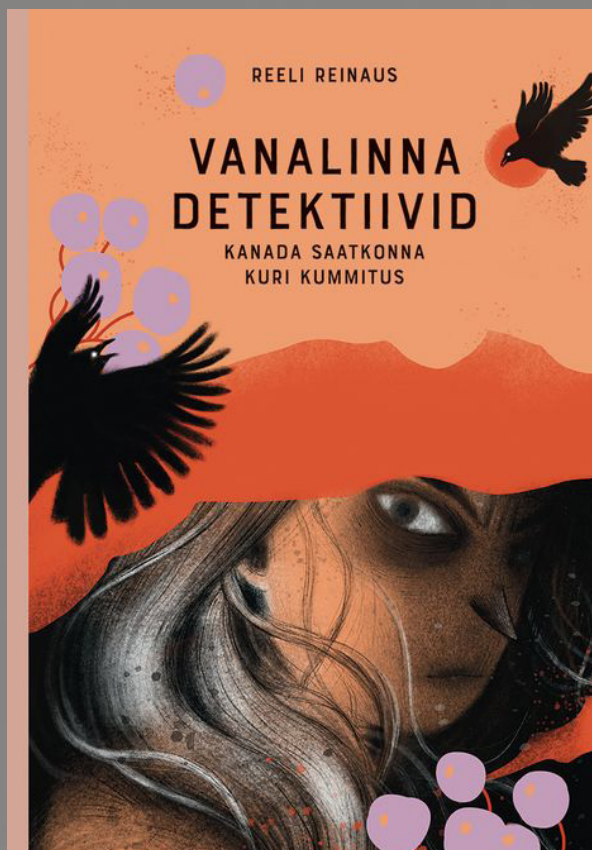


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Old Town Detectives: The Canadian Embassy's Gruesome Ghost

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Gregor, Rebeka, and Lota make up the "Seers' Guild" – a club that has already solved several strange mysteries in Tallinn's Old Town. Just as they decide to accept two new members – Markus and Kaspar, who helped them on their last case – the group receives a letter asking them to help rid the Canadian Embassy of a ghost. A quick Google search shows it'd be hard to find a more chilling ghost-woman than the one in that building on Toom-Kooli Street. Luckily, the detectives are lent a hand by Gregor's aunt Marju, who knows how people used to expel poltergeists and what to do when modern-day suspicions arise.

Reading sample

[pp. 22–28]

The Lady in Gray and the Lady in Black

The evening air was surprisingly chilly, even though the day had been nice and sunny. Laboratooriumi Street, which curved along the old city wall, was deserted as usual. Deserted, except for four kids: two girls and two boys who appeared to be waiting for something.

Gregor was the last to arrive, though no one paid him any attention at first. Rebeka was busy texting someone on her phone while Lota lectured the boys about executioners.

“My grandpa told me that most of Tallinn’s executioners were Germans who came from Germany’s famous executioner families. Just think: whole family trees filled with executioners!” Lota gushed.

Markus and Kaspar hung on her every word, nearly enchanted, occasionally murmuring a “wow” or a “cool”.

“Executioners were both scorned and feared, so you can understand why the job was passed down from father to son. There was simply no other option because nobody else wanted anything to do with them. Grandpa told me that for a while, there was even a law in Tallinn saying that an executioner’s kids weren’t allowed to go to school with other children. Their lessons had to be either before class or after the other students went home.”

Gregor coughed, but no one even glanced in his direction. He shrugged and pulled a key from his pocket, then unlocked the cupboard door. Rebeka didn’t even lift an eyebrow when the boy pulled out a brown padded envelope and tore it open. Only Lota stopped talking while Kaspar and Markus leaned in a little closer.

A single folded sheet of paper fell from the envelope.

“Read it!” Rebeka commanded, putting her telephone away.

Still, Gregor could sense a hint of anxiety in her voice. He unfolded the paper and stared at it in surprise for a moment. There were only two sentences: “Find out what the ghost in the Canadian Embassy at 13 Toom-Kooli Street wants. Call this number to get in.”

“That’s it?” Rebeka asked.

Gregor peered into the envelope and inserted his hand just to be sure, but it was empty.

“I guess this phone number is enough to get us in,” he reckoned. “Seems like a pretty simple task.”

“Though you don’t know what the ghost wants yet,” Lota reminded him.

“Is the embassy really haunted?” Markus asked.

“Seems so,” mumbled Gregor, who had taken out his phone to start seeing what he could find about the ghost of the Canadian Embassy online.

The internet offered countless articles about ghosts in Tallinn’s Old Town. Identical legends often repeated in story after story that didn’t offer much new or, as he now knew, reliable information. Even so, they helped to paint a picture for starters.

“It says here that it’s hard to find a more gruesome ghost woman than the one haunting the embassy.”

Gregor glanced up at Rebeka, but her face remained expressionless.

“Keep reading,” she said. “I’ve still got to go stop by Luisa’s place.”

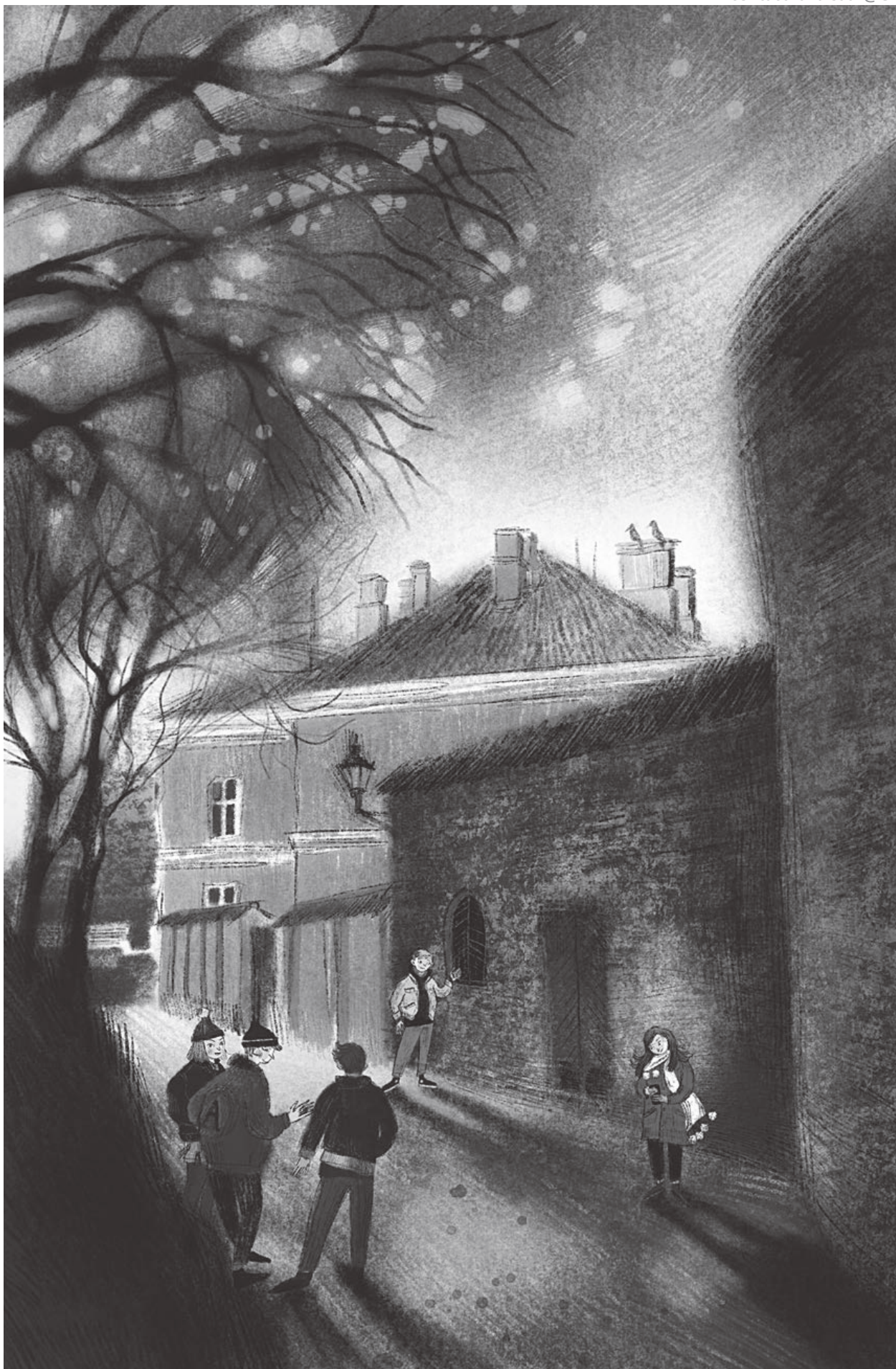
“Seems like it’s the ghost of a young upper-class woman who decided to marry a man from the lower class,” he continued. “But things didn’t go well: he was executed and she was walled in alive. Wait, no! She wasn’t! They actually walled in somebody else who had been gotten drunk and dressed up in fine clothing. The ghost that haunts there has long hair and nails and is said to be very angry.”

“No wonder,” Lota murmured.

“And we’re supposed to ask what she wants?” Rebeka asked, frowning. “As if the wishes of somebody who was unjustly bricked in behind a wall and left to die might be simple and straightforward?”

“Wait—there’s another story!”

Gregor exclaimed. “It says here that there are two women haunting the house: one is a lady in gray and the other is a lady in black. Once, a British naval officer who was staying there was hauled off to the insane asylum before long, because every night, a beautiful woman with a satanic laugh would appear in his room. And then it goes on about the woman with long fingernails,



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who's now a woman with long gray hair and allegedly wasn't switched out for somebody else, but killed. Everything in this story is flipped around: a young nobleman married a Estonian peasant girl and because his parents believed it brought shame upon the whole family, they killed the girl, put her in a tin coffin, and walled it in."

"Wait, so the pretty one and the gray-haired one are two different women?" Lota asked.

"Looks like it," Gregor said.

"I'm definitely confused," Markus admitted.

"What's so hard to understand?" Kaspar asked. "All the women are wearing different-colored clothes!"

"But how are we supposed to tell which one we're supposed to question?" Rebeka pointed out.

"Maybe there aren't actually that many there," Gregor suggested.

"You mean they just switch dresses every once in a while?" Markus joked.

"Yeah, ones they were walled up with," Kaspar added.

"My Grandpa says they've never found anybody walled in anywhere in Estonia. They're all just legends," Lota said.

Gregor was puzzled.

"So, why do people tell the legends?"

Lota shrugged.

"Maybe just for kicks."

"I found one more thing," Gregor said a few seconds later. "This lady in gray and lady in black are said to have tried to suffocate men with an ice-cold kiss."

"Huh?"

"Like, both of them?"

"Why?"

"Because they're ghosts," Lota said. "And I bet they're bored."

"And then there's also a lady in white whom people have seen," Gregor continued. "Doors open and shut all on their own in there and the whole house is said to creak."

Rebeka sighed.

"And those poor Canadians have to work in the middle of all this action?"

"Seems like they're fed up with it now," Markus said. "So, what're we going to do?"

"Well, if you feel like going to the store with me, then you could help me pick up cat litter for Pärtel," Lota said.

"I'm coming, too," Kaspar said. "I've got a couple more questions I'd like to ask about that executioner."

"And I've got to go to Luisa's place now," Rebeka said. "If it's alright with you guys, then maybe we could discuss what everybody's doing tomorrow or the day after?"

The kids set a time and moments later, all had split up on their ways.

Only Gregor remained lingering by the city wall, holding the brown padded envelope in his chilled fingers.