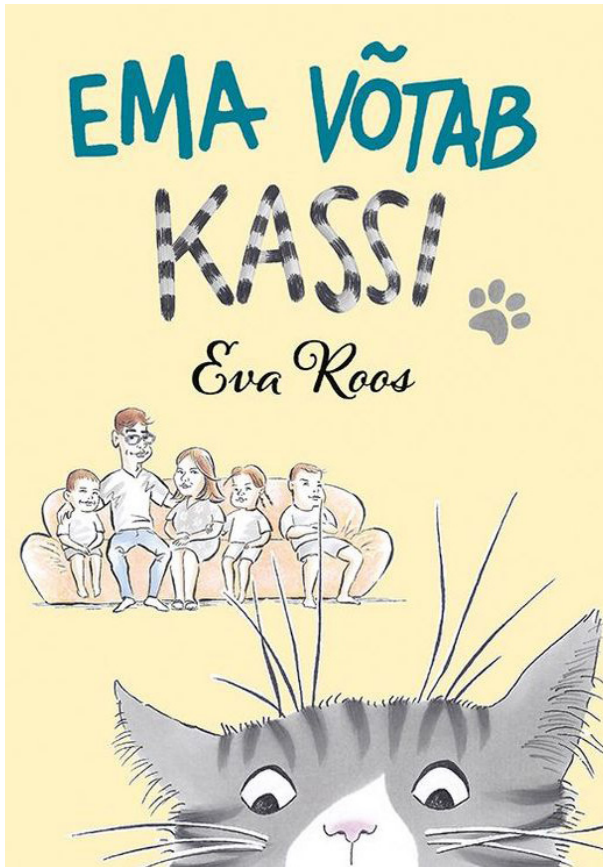


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### **Mum Gets a Cat**

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Storybook, fiction

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Age: 5+

Ekke, Lee, and Joosep have forever been asking for their parents to adopt a cat. Mum has always answered with “we’ll see” or “I’ll think about it” but the kids have started to suspect that those are just excuses to disguise a definite “NO!”. Yet, one morning mum surprises everyone by bringing home a tabby named Prooton. Life with a cat is not at all what the children expect. Since Prooton is their first pet, the absurdity of everyday life with a cat catches them off guard. Besides humour, there are also plenty of facts and figures about being a cat owner but they’re disguised so cunningly that it doesn’t feel like the author is trying to educate the reader. Even though she is, in a purrfect way.



## Reading sample

[pp. 40–43]

“Can we have that gray one?” Lee asked, pointing to a kitten that was climbing over its mother.

“That one’s still too little to take away from its mother,” the lady who ran the animal shelter said. “If you really want it, then you’ll have to come back in a couple of weeks.”

The kids wouldn’t agree to that. They knew all too well that what was happening was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. If they left without an animal now, then their parents could end up thinking about it for another hundred years and they might never get a pet.

“I understand you picked out a kitten online?” the lady asked.

“That’s right,” Mom said. She looked up from the black kittens and scanned the other cats.

“Which one’s ours?” Joosep asked.

“I think we’re going to take the striped female kitten named Reti,” Mom replied.

“Oh, yes. Reti. She’s right over here,” the lady said, pointing to a striped kitten with bright blue eyes.

The little creature was petrified to suddenly find five pairs of eyes staring at her. And the littlest of them was still squealing “Hey, kitty!” over and over.

The kitten retreated to the furthest corner of her cage—so far that she had to climb a little up the wall with her hind legs to get even farther away from them. In the process, the kitten knocked over her food dish. It flipped on top of her, frightening her even more.

“It doesn’t look like this cat is brave enough to come with us,” Mom reckoned. She was also a little surprised to see it so terrified.

“I don’t think the others will be any braver,” Ekke said.

“Maybe you’ll have to come back next week then, anyway,” the lady said. “We’ve been receiving new animals almost every day lately.”

Mom felt a little twinge. She had no problem with the kids learning a little lesson and maybe acting quieter and more politely in public next time. Right then, she was starting to feel as if their family had

been crossed off some list as being unfit for having pets. Crossed off by the cats themselves, which seemed insulting in a whole new way.

“And what kind of mischief are you getting into here, crazy?!” the lady suddenly exclaimed. She batted a white-tipped striped paw out of her hair. It had been stuck out of a cage on the top row, where a striped kitten was bouncing around. It was probably the only creature in the entire building that didn’t appear to be afraid of anything. All the others pressed themselves against the back walls of their cages or crouched low to the ground when the kids cried “kitty-kitty!”, and even the momma-cats in the bottom cages seemed anxious.

The kitten headbutted its little litter box until it flipped over.

“I’ve got my eye on you! Is that what you want, huh? Goofball! This is the third time he’s done that today,” the lady said to Mom, smiling apologetically. The kitten perched proudly on top of its accomplishment for a moment, then started scaling the walls of the cage and poking its paw through the mesh again.

“We’ll take that one,” Mom said abruptly.

“Are you sure?” the lady asked. “You wanted a female and this one’s male. And he might be rather... um... rather... interesting for a first cat.”

Mom nodded.

“He looks like the only cat here who isn’t afraid of us and wants to come with us.”

### Positive Particle

“What’s the kitten’s name?” Lee asked.

“Proo-oo-oo-ton,” Joosep sounded out. “Mom, Mom, what’s ‘Proton’ mean?”

“Look, dummy,” Ekke said, as it was hard to be as smart as he was and stay polite to boot. “Proton’s the cat in the next cage. This one is Quest. Mom, ‘quest’ is an English word, right?”

Mom sighed patiently, as patient is something you are when there are too many witnesses around.

“A proton is a positive particle,” she said to Joosep, then turned to Ekke. “‘Quest’ is an English word, yes. It’s something like a long search or a journey.”

Joosep elbowed Ekke for having to be so annoyingly smart. Ekke shoved Lee because Joosep had already gotten out of the smart aleck's way.

"Come on, guys!" Lee shouted after almost stumbling onto a big cage that held a family of kittens.

"Do you want us to be disqualified at the last minute? Huh?" Mom growled, then gave the lady an apologetic look. But the woman had a different expression on her face as she watched the kids. When the striped kitten stuck its paw out of the cage to toy with her hair again, the lady started to laugh.

"I think you're getting just the right cat for your family," she said.

The kids were satisfied to hear it. What fantastic news! It was much better to go home with the RIGHT cat than accidentally take the WRONG cat.

But Mom suddenly looked worried. For a few seconds, she had a dreadful suspicion that the whole idea to get a cat had been one terrible mistake. Maybe the lady read her mind, because she quickly said:

"Let's go get the cat's paperwork in order, shall we?"

[...]

[pp. 45–46]

"Now, to the pet store," Mom said as she got into the car.

"Which one?" Joosep asked.

"Probably all of them," she replied, not sounding very excited.

"Why? Can't we just get everything at the first store?" Ekke asked.

"I'm not made of money, unfortunately," Mom sighed. "Somewhere out there, all the things the kitten will need are on sale or clearance. We'll probably waste all the money we save on driving around looking for them, of course, but I'll feel better that way."

"How many things does a cat need?" Lee asked. Mom handed her a list she'd made by searching online in the morning and asking the animal-shelter ladies for advice. Lee's eyes widened.

"Wow!"

The kids knew that by bouncing around different stores and buying all kinds of things, their mom was also trying to show them that having a pet might not be as easy as they thought.

Mom could be pretty mean in her own way sometimes. For example, when Ekke whined that he didn't need to be reminded of things all the time, then she wouldn't remind him of anything for a couple of days until he had to whine again about why nobody ever reminded him of anything. When Joosep complained loudly and persistently during the evening news (which Mom and Dad definitely wanted to watch) and said it was simply a crime that nobody in their house had made pancakes in eight straight days, Mom immediately agreed with him. She wrote down the recipe in block letters and sent him to the kitchen to correct the terrible injustice. Only Lee was wise enough to not let herself get constantly fooled that way.