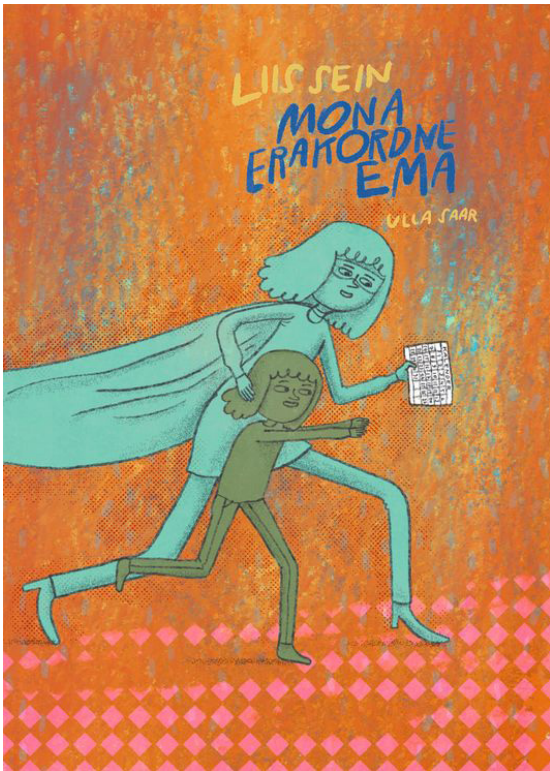


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### **Mona's Mum Celebrates**

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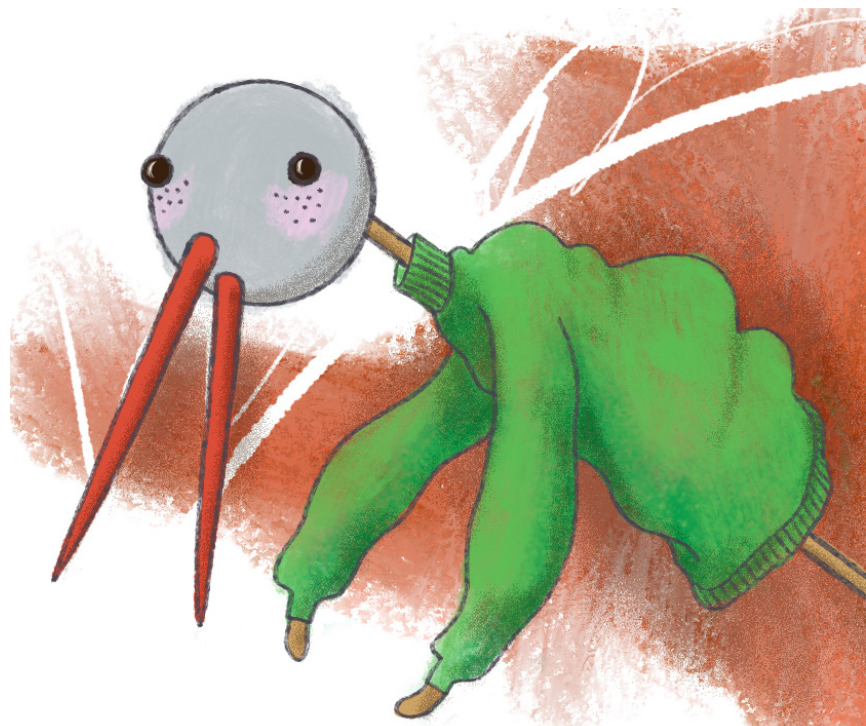
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Barely any time has passed since Mona had to keep up with her dad's bizarre hobbies, and now she feels like something's wrong with her mom. One totally ordinary Tuesday, Mom decides that every upcoming holiday should be celebrated properly from that point forward, no matter whether it's a birthday, summer solstice, first day of school, Valentine's Day, or Independence Day. Then, there's Do-Nothing Day, Bird-Drawing Day, Laughing Day, Ice-Cream Day, and Music Day. It turns out there's a reason to celebrate each and every day. Still, Mona's mom decides that Mother's Day should be marked first of all, and waits excitedly for the occasion. It seems, however, like all the planning will fall on Dad and Mona's shoulders.

*Mona's Mum Celebrates* is a sequel to the award winning *Mona's Dad Has Some Ideas* (2022)



## Excerpt

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### The Charm of Special Days

One totally ordinary Tuesday, Mona's mom decided to take a good look at the calendar of holidays and start celebrating each and every important day properly. She didn't want to even imagine missing a drowsy summer solstice, forgetting to practice folk traditions on Martinmas and St. Catherine's Day, or overlooking World Gratitude Day, the existence of which she'd only just discovered.

"I think it comes from when I was a little girl," she explained at breakfast. "A need to celebrate dolls' birthdays.

Whereas it nearly slipped Mom's mind to celebrate her own birthday, her dolls always had a very festive day on theirs. When she was a little girl, her birthday wasn't a very special occasion: not because her parents didn't want it to be, but because they simply hadn't the means to do much. She received a modest present on her birthday morning, and that was it. The only real birthday party she'd had was when she

turned 10: her parents put snacks on the table on the veranda and a couple of close friends were invited over.

"This year, the calendar will be our very best friend," Mom resolved, then looked up all the days of importance in the almanac.

"This year, we're not going to miss a single holiday," she stressed, planning to set some sort of record.

"This year, we're going to have such an exciting time that we won't even go abroad on holiday!" she exclaimed, cancelling the family's spring break trip to Paris.

Mona was devastated with disappointment, and it took a long time for the realization to sink in for Dad. They'd already done tons of planning for the trip by reading books, watching movies, and buying tickets to the museum where the Mona Lisa had ended up. Alas, once Mom got an idea into her head, the whole family had to go along with it without any arguing.

"Mom, does this mean we're going to be eating cake every day?" asked Mona, for whom celebrating always meant sweets. "We'd be gaining a lot of weight and too full to do anything."

"We're going to eat the best baked goods and drink the best soft drinks, but all in moderation," Mom reassured her as she picked out a new cake recipe from a cooking book.

"But honey, I'm definitely not going to have time to celebrate everything alongside my hobbies," Dad worriedly pointed out. To him, celebrating meant dealing with all kinds of tiny details.

"There'll be activities galore day and night, but all in moderation," Mom reassured him while drafting a list of the things he'd need to get done for the upcoming celebrations.

Mona and her dad tried to take it easy for the very last days they could: Mother's Day was on the horizon and all the other holidays would follow, one after another. Mona chewed on carrots and nothing else just in case, because she'd soon have to eat more cake than ever before.





Dad dove headfirst into his new hobbies and put off going through Mom's list for a while. Mona tried to get as much sleep as possible, because they'd no doubt be so busy that some activities would come at the expense of sleep. Dad stashed all kinds of tools and things in hiding places so he could be left out of future undertakings whenever possible.

But Mom paid no attention, hanging a calendar on the fridge that was just as important as a Bible is to some people. Then, she reviewed the family budget and tried to spread costs evenly over all the different holidays. The only tiny exception she made was for Christmas, as it's impossible to avoid spending more on that occasion.

Finally, Mom lined up the whole family and set the holiday marathon in motion. Their cat Rosie stood with them, too, and was the first to pad off towards the fridge.

"First of all, we've got Mother's Day," Mona read from the calendar, and was suddenly very worried.

"Then that means..." Dad added, trailing off in thought.

"That means it's going to be the best Mother's Day ever!" Mom squealed, and began waiting excitedly.

Mona and her dad were responsible for handling most of the preparations, and Dad took his responsibility very casually. Perhaps even too casually...

### **Punk Rock Mother's Day**

Mona's mom couldn't wait for the day to arrive. No other event since her daughter's birth could top what was to come. The closer it was to the Most Important Day Ever, the calmer Mom became. So calm that absolutely nothing happened at home anymore. For weeks before Mother's Day, Mom didn't make dinner, do the laundry, tidy up, or make any other plans. She was simply quiet and waiting.

Of course, Mom also expected there to be presents. She rummaged through every closet and drawer to see if she could find even a single clue. All for naught. Mona and Dad had hidden their gifts so well that Mom, who had a knack for finding things, couldn't locate any trace, no matter how hard she tried.

"Mona, why is your desk drawer

locked? Are you hiding something in there?" Mom asked while she lay on the couch and polished her nails.

"No... I'm not. It's been locked for a year. I lost the key," replied Mona, who was trying to manage making dinner on her own that evening.

It sounded so honest that Mom didn't suspect a thing.

"Honey, why can't I log into our computer anymore? Did you change the password?" she asked Dad while lounging in the armchair and flipping through her favorite magazines.

"No... no. Just a regular password change. It's the one from the time before the time before the time before last. You remember," Dad explained, trying to help Mona cook.

Mom certainly didn't remember their password from the time before the time before the time before last, and she reckoned that her Mother's Day present was probably hidden somewhere other than the computer.

Alas, the deadline for the game of Mother's Day hide-and-seek was approaching fast. Mom was usually able to figure out every secret present and plan, but this time, Mona and Dad had either been extremely clever or still didn't realize how important the day was and what it meant to Mom.

"Mona, dear, isn't there a school concert coming up? Or a play that parents are invited to come watch?" Mom asked in final desperation while changing yoga poses.

Mona just shook her head, zipped up her school backpack, and blew Mom a kiss.

"Honey, do we have any plans for Sunday yet? Are we going out or is anyone coming to visit?" she anxiously asked Dad, trying to squeeze out information while he made himself a quick coffee.

Dad just shook his head, grabbed his gym bag, and blew Mom a kiss.

Mona and Dad were very busy. Busier than usual, because they barely spent any time at home.

Mom no longer expected anything special to happen on Mother's Day. Her excitement turned to disappointment and sadness. She went to the bedroom and decided to take a long nap, sleeping the unfortunate day away.

Mom dreamt that she'd gone

overboard with Mother's Day celebrations and ended up forgetting every other important holiday in the process. Mother's Day lasted a whole year, which meant that Dad couldn't feel special on Father's Day, their grandparents on Grandparent's Day, Mona on her first day of school, or Rosie on long-awaited Cats' Day. It made everyone furious at her, and they refused to celebrate Mother's Day ever again.

"I'm sorry, from the bottom of my heart!" Mom cried out when she woke from her deep sleep. She was covered in sweat, and it took her a few minutes to make sure it had all just been a dream.

"Mona, dear, should we bake a cake for Sunday? Our favorite chocolate cake, maybe?" Mom asked to drop her daughter some specific hints.

"Darling, will I have to sleep longer on Sunday morning? Even if I'm not sleepy?" she asked Dad, attempting to convey how much she couldn't wait for that morning to come.

But still, neither Mona nor Dad would give her a clear answer or any hint. It even became even more confusing when Mona planned to spend all Sunday at the trampoline center and Dad agreed to join a chess tournament. So, Mom finally gave up and acted as if nothing important was coming up, either. Instead, she tried to keep her mind on the summer solstice party to make sure none of the preparations would be left to the last minute.

On the morning of Mother's Day, Mom was so tired that she slept almost till noon without even trying, and only awoke when the whole house suddenly started to vibrate.

"Bmmmmmmmmmm," went the first note on an electric guitar.

"Bmm-bmm-bmmmmmmmm," went a second and a third, followed by a whole song. Mona and Dad had put together a set list and began performing it right there in the bedroom as the famous band Punk Rock Yeah-Yeah-Yeah!

"I can't believe it!" Mom exclaimed, leaping out of the sheets like an old rock-and-roller. "Mona, honey, you're so cool!"

Mona was the spitting image of her mom when her own rock band swept the country 20 years earlier. Mona and Dad had been practicing nonstop for their performance. The gift even cost a few skipped school days and sick days from

work. Still, it was all worth it! Especially when Mom also grabbed a guitar and the whole family rocked out for Mother's Day so loudly that the entire neighborhood shook.

"Oh, what a day that was!" Mom whispered later that afternoon. The wild celebration had even made her lose her voice.

In addition to the musical surprise, Mona gave her mom a handmade necklace that had been biding its time in the locked desk drawer. Dad gave her tickets to the opera, which had been in a file on the desktop of their computer that was locked with a password from the time before the time before the time before last.

That Mother's Day had a lasting effect, because Mona soon enrolled in music school to study singing and electric guitar. Dad picked up a new hobby and began exploring what an artist manager in the music business does. He wanted to prepare himself for Mona's future band's first concert tour.

## The Longest Day of the Year

A huge summer-solstice bonfire in Viljandi County, an outstanding concert in Võru County, and an ordinary village festival on the island of Hiiumaa: those were just a few entries on Mona's mom's long list of celebrations for the summer solstice. Mom would've liked to take part in every single event, bonfire, dance, and outdoor sporting event there was. But even just the thought of doing all those activities gave Mom and the rest of the family a bad headache.

"Do we already know what we're doing for the solstice this year?" Mona asked her parents.

Dad only shrugged as he polished some porcelain he'd acquired as a new hobby, and looked over at Mom expectantly.

"Maybe we could go to Grandma and Grandpa's to grill this year," Mona proposed. "Grandpa's shish kebabs are my favorite!"

But Mom didn't show the least bit of interest in grilling or driving to Mona's grandparents' house. She sat and concentrated at the kitchen table, drinking cup after cup of strong coffee while endlessly calculating and planning. She studied maps of Estonia and distances between destinations, adding up the kilometers and turning them into travel

costs. She made lists of things that would need to be packed. She looked up every summer cultural event and how much the tickets cost. She drew up a budget and was prepared to spend all their savings.

"We might have time to do everything—what do you think?" Mom asked, giving Mona a questioning look and grinning. "The summer solstice is the longest day of the year. We could pull off a trip around the entire country!"

Whenever Mom got swept up in an idea, she stopped listening to anyone else. It was something she'd picked up from Dad when his hobbies started getting out of hand. So, Mona was forced to abandon her shish kebabs and Dad his growing porcelain collection, and the family started packing. The list of things to pack wasn't short...

"We'll need to have basically everything: rain clothes, warm clothes, light clothes, changes of clothes, nighttime clothes, hiking clothes, bonfire clothes, athletic clothes, swimming clothes, dancing clothes, comfortable driving clothes, and a whole lot of footwear," Mom listed off. "On top of that, we should pack bug spray, tick repellent, mosquito netting, sheets, blankets, pillows, plates, silverware, foldable lawn chairs, and food, of course."

Mom and Mona packed and packed while Dad carried load after load of things to the car. Before they knew it, the vehicle was packed tight and nothing more could fit.

"Hmm, I suppose our car is too small," Mom sighed. She peered through the window at their terrified cat Rosie, who'd been packed in a basket with the rain ponchos.

"Too small?!" Dad exclaimed, grabbing his head. "We've got the biggest SUV they offer! You can't find a bigger vehicle anywhere else."

Mom didn't settle for Dad's response, but tried to find a quick solution. Her eyes roved the street and suddenly, she spotted it: their neighbor Juhan's trailer had been parked in front of the building for months, unused. It was their last chance to strike a deal. Although Dad generally refused to speak to Juhan because he'd accidentally flooded their apartment one time, he was now forced to knock on the neighbor's door and negotiate.

"Juhan is unbelievably stingy!" Dad sighed when he returned, grumpy and grouchy and empty-handed.

"Stingy? We'll just see about that!" Mom announced, and marched out to do business herself.





After an intense discussion, cups of coffee, and bartering, Mom finally got her wish, and everything was repacked into the trailer. There was even room to spare.

“Mona, honey, what do you think about bringing a few of the costumes that’ve been sitting around in a box since Mother’s Day?”

Mona shook her head and quickly got into the car with Dad.

“Darling, what about the rubber raft? I’m sure there’ll be a chance to go fishing or just sail the sea.”

Dad shook his head and swiftly started the engine.

“Mona, do you think we’ll need some sound equipment for an impromptu karaoke night? You never know when you might get the urge to perform some pop songs.”

Mona shook her head and Dad let the car roll a few meters forward, just in case.

“Honey, how can we leave without a tent?! We must sleep outside on the summer solstice!!!”

Dad shook his head again and turned onto the next street to lengthen Mom’s journey to the car.

Alas, it was of no use. Mom ran to the car carrying a tent, rubber raft, sound equipment, and costumes. She shoved half into the trailer and the rest into the back seat before finally getting in herself.

Mona was wedged between things and couldn’t see out the window the entire trip. Even so, she’d never experienced such a painstakingly planned summer solstice in her life. They were already on their way to a parade in Pärnu County. After that, they went to an outstanding concert in Võru County. Then, they attended an ordinary village party in Tartu County. Afterward, it was straight to a lawn-games competition in Viljandi County, followed by the lighting of a bonfire in Ida-Viru County. Hours after midnight, they searched for fireflies in Lääne County, leapt over a bonfire on the island of Hiiumaa, and had a refreshing morning swim on the beautiful island of Saaremaa.

“Now can we finally go to sleep?”

Mona asked at the end of their exhausting road trip and dip in the chilly sea.

Mom finished her traditional morning sun salutation, checked her watch, and, in an especially happy and carefree tone, said, “Who sleeps the morning after the summer solstice?! We need to enjoy all the daylight we can today. Starting tomorrow, the nights are going to be getting longer again.”

But despite all his determined effort, Dad couldn’t stay awake any longer and made up for lost sleep under the open sky. Neither the pesky mosquitoes nor the dangerous ticks could disturb him. Nor the scorching sunlight or pouty Mom. And although Mona wanted to obey her mother’s wishes and fight tiredness at all costs, her eyelids slid shut as well.

“I’m not going to fall asleep! I’m not!!!” Mom declared at first. But as soon as Mona rested her head in Mom’s lap, an unbelievable wave of exhaustion washed over her as well. It only took a few seconds before the whole family was fast asleep. And they slept through that whole long day.

