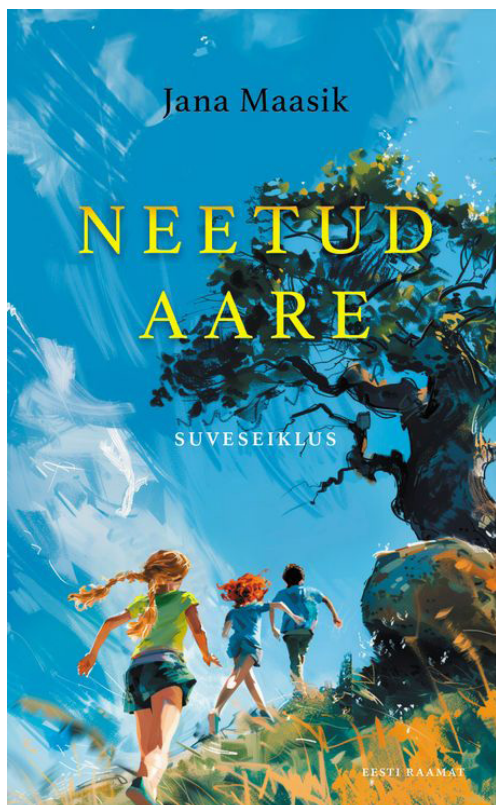


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The Cursed Treasure

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storybook, fiction

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Age: 10+

Twelve-year-old Robin can't fathom why he got stuck with the last name Pirate. It has nothing in common with his personality and has only led to endless fights at school. When the boy's single mother leaves for the whole summer to work as a chef on a Mediterranean ship, he's forced to go to the island of Saaremaa to help his sick grandpa. After Robin's grandpa reveals a story about a curse surrounding their surname, he decides to find out if there's any truth to the ancient legend. Luckily, he gets help from the spunky Säde, who is vacationing at the neighbouring farmstead, and the local tomboy Kirsika. The kids must work fast, however, because strange men driving a jeep and wielding a metal detector have started poking around the area.



[pp. 51–52]

The man, t-shirt flapping in the breeze, had laid out a checkered blanket at the edge of the seaweed mound, though he certainly hadn't come to sunbathe. He hammered a few pegs into the sand with a rock and then, carrying some kind of gadget, started pacing around between them. It looked like he didn't want to miss a single meter. After checking one square, he hammered new pegs into the sand and started all over again. Säde knew all too well that grown-ups do bizarre things sometimes, but she thought they at least enjoyed the unusual activities or hoped to get something out of them. This guy definitely wasn't having a good time. And what could he get out of plodding back and forth like that?

Säde then heard clear, insistent beeping. The man stopped, bent down to pick something up, and flung the little thing far out into the sea. A few steps later, the beeping started again. The man appeared to have found something worthwhile this time. He scraped at the sand with the toe of his sneaker and inspected the spot. Still nothing. He went over to the blanket, fetched another peg with a ribbon tied to it, tapped it into the sand where the gadget beeped, and carried on sweeping it back and forth.

"It's like he's on an Easter egg hunt," Säde said, frowning. "But who hid something there? And what?"

The girl watched the oddball work for a while. When she turned around to go tell Grams about everything she'd seen, she nearly bumped right into Robin.

"He's a treasure hunter," Robin said, not taking his eyes off the man.

Säde's mouth dropped open.

"Really? You mean there's hidden treasure here?"

"Shh. Not so loud. Yeah, maybe. Leigar said that there were some men who came here a few years ago, too. They're looking for the Pirate family treasure."

"The Pirate family? Why doesn't your grandpa go and dig it up himself, then? His last name is Pirate, isn't it?"

"Leigar says they won't find anything."

"That means he knows something that those men don't," Säde suggested.

"I guess so."

It was an interesting bit of information. Säde wrinkled her brow thoughtfully.

"I don't get it, though. Why am I just hearing about this now?" she asked Robin. "Anyway, we've got to investigate what this treasure is. Where is it, if not here on the beach? And what does Leigar know?"

