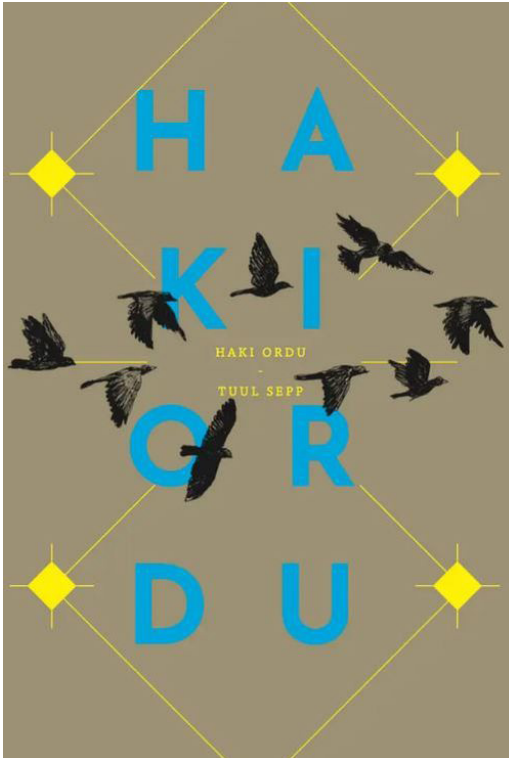


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The Order of Jackdaw

Written by: Tuul Sepp

Illustrator: Anu Kalm

Rahva Raamat 2024, 246 pp

ISBN: 9789916143902

170 x 240 mm

storybook, fiction

Topics: fantasy, ecology, urban nature, group dynamics

Age: 10+

Awards:

2024 25 Best-Designed Estonian Books,
Certificate of Merit

Reading is 12-year-old Taaniel's favourite activity, and he especially likes fantasy books. When Taaniel falls asleep while reading one night and wakes up with a mark on his cheek from the book, the events that took place meanwhile seem like a strange dream at first. What else could you call a prophecy of civilization's downfall given by human-sized jackdaws in a grey city of asphalt? But when the boy notices a glass sphere filled with curling green fog and a scrap of paper covered in ciphers next to the book, he realizes that the dream was real. Sharing the story with a friend leads to founding the Order of the Jackdaw, in which kids young and old alike have an important role to play. Their mission is to ensure that the city is a nice environment for everyone: humans, plants, and animals alike.

The design is exemplary, detailed, and multi-layered making it suitable to the target audience. The emphasis on illustrations is strikingly effective for a young adult book, simple, and fresh.

- jury of the 25 most beautiful books 2024

The Order of Jackdaw is an imaginative family book that teaches children and their parents to notice nature around them. Apparently, nature it's not only something that is "somewhere in the countryside" - it is right here, around us, in our cities and the surrounding neighborhoods. It nudges us into the direction of finding ways to consider and preserve nature even in urban spaces.

- "Postimees" bookblog

[pp. 9–10]

The bizarre dream that had just woken him must have come from the book he fell asleep reading. His mind had been filled with heroes' adventures in a dust storm on a barren, sandy landscape until sleep finally and irresistibly yanked him from the pages.

Out of all the wild fantasies that whipped through his head that night, he could remember one with startling clarity. In it, he was walking along city streets that seemed

overpopulated and totally desolate at the same time.

At first, he couldn't figure out what made the city feel so empty. Zooming down the wide, six-lane highways were cars that honked at any pedestrian trying to navigate the crosswalks and filled the air with the loud growling of engines. Their tires kicked up dust and exhaust fumes that hung suspended as thick smog for ages. Lining the streets were crowded, gray brick buildings that towered into the slate sky and continued to the foggy horizon. The few open spaces between them were paved over and painted with parking spaces.

The city was packed with people and vehicles. So, why did it still see so empty, even abandoned?

Taniel wandered the dream city searching for something, doing his best not to breathe in the dusty air that stunk of exhaust fumes. He didn't know what he was looking for, but he had a distinct feeling that something was missing. Something was gone from that city.

Suddenly, two gray birds swooped down from a window of one of the buildings. They flew from left to right across the street. Was that supposed to be bad luck? Or was it when they flew from right to left? He could never remember. Frowning, Taniel stopped and stared.

Then, he realized what was missing. The birds' unexpected appearance made it dawn upon him. There wasn't a single animal anywhere in the city! He looked around. Not even any plant stood out. Everything around

him, as far as the eye could see, was manmade.

The gray birds circled above him a couple times before landing on the right-hand side of the street, perching on a rusty metal grill covering a basement window. Their eyes, which should have been black, glowed bright green. Then, the birds started to swell. They spread their wings and grew bigger, bigger, until the dark figures in the haze were the same height as him.

"Weird dream," Taniel murmured.

The larger of the two cocked its head and drilled him with its piercing green gaze.

"This isn't a dream," it croaked. "It's a premonition!"



Tuul Sepp. The Order of Jackdaw. Translated by Adam Cullen