



LITTLE WEIRD  
CHILDREN'S

BOOKS

FROM FINLAND 2023



# Finland - not only Moomins

Young adult and children's literature is a very successful export venture in Finland. Between the years 2000–2022, over 2,500 titles have been sold to almost 70 countries.\* Science fiction and fantasy is a small but growing genre among the middle grade and young adult target groups. Especially scary stories for children are popular in Finland and also other countries.

Stories such as Tove Jansson's Moomins, Timo Parvela's Ella and Kepler62 books, and Mauri Kunnas' picture books continue to attract readers from all over the world, but Finland also has a wide range of contemporary young adult books to offer. These books treat subjects such as gender, identity and equality with a modern sensibility. The formats range from picture books and novels to novellas and verse novels.

Kumma Literary Agency represents 5 of these bold and talented writers. Look inside and see what we have to offer!

Greetings from the land of a thousand lakes and a thousand stories,

*Saara Henriksson*

Kumma Literary Agency  
Agent

\*Finnish Literary Exchange – FILI data base



# Anu Holopainen

Anu Holopainen's first novel *Kristallien valtakunta* ("Kingdom of Crystals") was published in 1996, and since then she has published over 20 novels and short stories. Her dystopian young adult novel *Molemmin jaloin* ("With Both Feet") was a candidate for the Finlandia Junior Prize in 2006, and her feminist fantasy series *Syysmaa* ("Autummland") received the Kuvastaja honorary award presented by the Finnish Tolkien Society Kontu in 2021.



## EEK! 1: Ghost Phone

Saku and Sussa are twins and also best friends. One day Saku finds a strange cell phone, but the class bully Ville takes it from him. Saku can't stop thinking about the phone, but when the twins notice that Ville is changing into something even more sinister than before, they realise the phone is not an ordinary appliance.

When Ville disappears and the twins' little sister Siiri finds a phone very similar to the one Ville had, Saku and Sussa must take action to save her. What horrible secrets does the phone hold?

The EEK! series is inspired by adults' horror classics adapted for children. The first book, "Ghost Phone", introduces the lore of Japanese technology ghosts.

*"Holopainen's straightforward story is exciting and compelling. The characters feel alive and real, and the moderate length makes it easier for also a less experienced reader to grab this book."*

- Merja Leppälahti/ Onnimanni, The Finnish Institute for Children's Literature



## Filigree Girl

"Filigree Girl" is a story about a child's OCD. Young Enni has a secret: she has the power to protect all her loved ones. But the power is also a curse, as Enni constantly hears the warnings of the Alerter, and if she doesn't turn her ring and repeat in her mind the magic words "Nothing-Bad-Happens", everyone will be in danger. One day she meets a boy who does things that seem familiar to Enni. Could someone else have an Alerter, too?

*"Holopainen's book is skilfully written. It has a strong and impactful topic that is treated in a way that is accessible for young readers."*

- Marja Welin/ Keskiuomalainen

*"Holopainen builds the novel using dense trails of thought and sense perceptions. The book is full of scents, colours, and details."*

- Marika Riikonen/ Hämeen Sanomat

# Kirsti Kuronen

Kirsti Kuronen (b. 1966) is a versatile Finnish author who has written about 30 novels and poetry books, mainly for young people. Most of her books are realistic with a little twist of oddness. Her main themes are the pains and joys of growing up. Kuronen admires her characters, and has the special skill of entering right into their emotions. Finnish nature plays a big role in all her books. The forest where she goes for a walk every day is the best source of inspiration for her. Kuronen's books have received many prizes and nominations.



## *Bad Patch*

"Bad Patch" is a verse novel that deals with the topics of suicide and grief. The story is told by Hilla, a teenaged girl whose younger brother jumped in front of a train. She tries to find a reason for her brother's incomprehensible act. Was his suicide her fault? Did her brother really want to die, or was it just a terrible mistake? The novel's short verses are full of pain, but also glimpses of hope and comfort. Hilla's brother will never die in his sister's memories.

"Bad Patch" was selected for the IBBY Honour List with stunning reviews, and received the Tampere City Literature Prize. "This book touches, moves, and leaves you speechless." (Aamulehti newspaper, Finland)

**Reading material:** A synopsis and a sample translation



## *Pirouette Friends*

The Topelius Prize winner "Pirouette Friends" is an honest and heartfelt novel about 14-year-old Elli's pressures to excel in ballet, school, among her friends, and at home. Elli's best friend Margot is the mystery of the story. She is perfect at everything – but is she real?

The Spanish translation of "Pirouette Friends" (Tal y como eres) has been published in Columbia by Panamericana Editorial.

**Reading material:** A synopsis and a complete English translation



## *Chick*

This touching verse novel tells the story of 18-year-old Luna's journey into adulthood. It deals with the pains and fears of growing up, including themes of sexuality and identity. Written with the intimacy of a diary, readers bear witness to Luna's anxieties and vulnerabilities but also learn of her love of photography and birds.

"Chick" was nominated for the Topelius Prize, and received a Punni Honorary Award.

**Reading material:** A sample translation





## Anne Leinonen

Anne Leinonen (b.1973) is a multiple-award winning prominent author, tutor, and editor of Finnish science fiction and fantasy. Her short stories have been published in magazines and anthologies and they have won several Atorox awards (voted for by the fandom). She moves fluently between science fiction and fantasy. Her texts deal with themes of otherness and unfamiliarity, as well as the problems between a community and the individual. Nature plays an important part in her work, as a vehicle for the story, the stage where the action takes place, and on a symbolic level. Leinonen writes tight prose with no superficial descriptions. Instead, she takes her readers right into the middle of the events and the lives of her characters. The way she uses language displays talent and uniqueness.



### *In August I die*

Alma, a girl going on her summer vacation, soon entering seventh grade, knows she is cursed. Dear grandmother Baba has died, and the strange pearls inherited from her predict how many days Alma has left to live. But before that, summer is here. Alma must say goodbye to all her loved ones. However, there are not many of them. The wait for death is interrupted when the mysterious Mia moves in next door, and takes Alma on adventures in the land of Roots. Alma also finds another friend, Kuura. Of course, things start to get interesting right when Alma is supposed to die. How typical. But something evil is afoot, and it's not going to stay underground. Alma must overcome her fear in order to save her friends, who are suddenly waiting in line.

The novel is aimed at young people aged 12–15. It combines horror and fantasy, especially Finnish folklore.



# Mervi Heikkilä

Mervi Heikkilä (b. 1974) is a multifaceted and award-winning fantasy writer. She writes mainly for children and young adults, but also short stories for adults.

In her stories, Heikkilä likes to combine Finnish folklore and realism. Her stories sometimes also take place in a weird, mythical world with witches, old Finnish gods and supernatural animals. Her characters often meet death, metamorphosis, difficult choices or unhappy love. A strong, ominous tone and distinctive ideas are characteristic of her stories, but humour and playfulness are also important.



## *The Girl from Boreal Brook: Tales from the Isle of Aijal, Book 1*

This enchanting fantasy adventure combines Northern myths with the heart-felt coming of age story of a temperamental girl who lives in the untamed forests of magical Aijali, where witches, leprechauns and other more dangerous creatures still roam.

Revonpuro has been published in Hungarian by Phoenix Books in 2022.

**Reading material:** Sample translation



## *Creatures from dusk*

Joona and Lari are twins. One day their mother goes on a business trip. Their neighbour is going to take care of the twins, but she is not at their home all the time. Joona has an interesting video game going on, so he doesn't notice when his twin sister simply disappears!

Bad omens are gathering, especially near the old museum in their neighbourhood. What are those odd, flying creatures blinking behind the windows? Despite everything, Joona is going to find his twin sister with the help of Topi, his best friend. The boys are also preparing for their first airsoft game. And what a game it will be!

"Creatures from the Dusk" is an exciting middle grade book. There are certainly some horror elements, but the book is not too scary. The talented young artist Broci has illustrated this 117-page book.

**Reading material:** A synopsis

*"This is a book, that those children, who don't read so much, will definitely read."*

- Kirjakaapin avain -blog, Finland



## J.S. Meresmaa

J.S. Meresmaa (b. 1983) is an award-winning Finnish author who mainly writes fantasy and other speculative fiction. Her steampunk novella *Naakkamestari* ("The Jackdaw Master") won a competition organized by the publisher Robustos and starts the trilogy "The Ursine Affairs". It has gotten glowing reviews from critics and readers alike.

Meresmaa's backlist includes the epic fantasy series "Mifonki", a fantasy novella trilogy, a short story collection, and young adult verse novels, to name a few. Many of her short stories have been translated into languages other than Finnish.

The main themes in Meresmaa's stories are love and friendships, power structures between individuals as well as between societies, and the empowerment of those who belong to minorities or lower rungs in the hierarchy. She has a talent for bringing fictional characters to life, and a keen sense of great plot twists and timeless themes. She is an incurable romantic, but never shies away from doing the groundwork to get her stories' facts right.

### *The Ursine Affairs trilogy*

A touching and vivid story of oppression, power, and an orphan child finding her own tribe.

The story is set in an alternate history Finland, in the year 1900 when the country was under Russian rule and a shamanistic tribe of Ursines face persecution. In this world, the last glacial period lasted so long that many of the big mammals, like mammoths, cave hyenas and woolly rhinoceroses have survived.

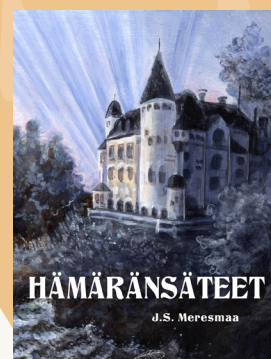
At the beginning of "The Jackdaw Master", 14-year-old Enni finds an injured, magical jackdaw and her life changes irreversibly. Through new friendships she learns how the past never leaves us even if we don't remember it. In "Twilight Rays" (Hämäränsäteet), Enni's Ursine friends resort to espionage to save their people from oppression, and in "Powerhouse" (Voimanpesä) they have to quickly find a safe haven for the precious Jackdaw Master when their hideout in Tampere is about to be discovered.

Hungarian rights for the The Jackdaw Master have been purchased by Phoenix Books.

**Reading material:** A synopsis and a complete English translation of the first part "The Jackdaw Master"; a synopsis and a sample translation for "The Twilight Rays"

*"An unbelievably abundant and imaginative story."*

– The blog Kirsin kirjanurkka







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