

Lauri Hirvonen: *Inka and the Sauna Flamingo*

Original title: Inka ja saunaflamingo

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Where does rain come from? What kinds of creatures live in the lake? How tall was my great-grandfather?

Inka is full of questions, though there are lots of things she already knows. But there's one question she can't seem to find the answer to: Where on earth is her plush polar bear?

In *Inka and the Sauna Flamingo*, readers spend an evening with Inka at her summer cottage, hear amazing stories about the past, and take a close-up look at nature. This story about a little girl and her grandmother shows how people are connected in the chain of generations and of life.

Plot:

Inka is a little girl spending the summer at her family's cottage. One morning, she discovers that her plush polar bear, Fluffy McSnowdrift, has gone missing. She looks and looks, but can't find Fluffy anywhere.

Inka's grandparents come to visit and Inka spends time with her grandmother. They marvel at a camera obscura in Inka's hideout, talk about the animals of the nearby lake and the wider world, and discuss what Inka is going to be when she grows up. Grandma also tells Inka stories about her own childhood.

When Inka takes a sauna with her mother and grandmother, Grandma tells them how she and her friends pretended to be birds when they were little. Inka suggests they play the same game now. Grandma, pink from the heat of the sauna, can be a flamingo!

At bedtime, Inka's plush polar bear is still missing. Inka wakes in the night to the sound of Grandma tiptoeing around the yard. Grandma can't sleep. Telling Inka about her childhood during the day has made Grandma feel melancholy. Inka feels sad, too, because Fluffy is still missing.

Inka and her grandmother spend a moment sitting together and talking on the steps of the cottage before going back to bed to try to sleep. When Grandma, a former police officer, comes to tuck Inka in, she demonstrates her knack for solving mysteries: Grandma finds Inka's beloved polar bear hiding under a blanket. Then Inka knows what she wants to be when she grows up: a grandma!

Book review quotes:

"A truly warm-hearted treasure of a book. ... Hirvonen's illustrations are a good match for the atmosphere of the text, which makes you both laugh and reflect at the same time. *Inka and the Sauna Flamingo* is a book about nature, the chain of generations, and shared work and shared feelings – the fruit of which is always being reaped by new children, who grow up to be new grandmothers. Even among all the rambunctiousness and fun, a sense of safety and unhurriedness is always present."

—Reetta Saine / IBBY Finland

Synopsis translated by Christina Saarinen.