



Literary  
fiction

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Pauliina Rauhala (b. 1977) works as a Finnish teacher and lives in the northern city of Oulu. *Heavensong* (2013) is Rauhala's debut novel. It became the most talked about book of the year.

Pauliina Rauhala

# Heavensong

*A story about moderate men, moderate women,  
love and religion.*

A young religious couple, Vilja and Alekski, dream of a brood of children – of a five-litre porridge pot and 70 small toes running around the house.

Nine years and four children later Vilja watches her 9-year-old son dance around with his blond curls flowing and tries to recall the moment when rhythm escaped her body.

Then finally, the day comes when Alekski and Vilja sit hand-in-hand at the maternity ward and everything changes for good.

*Heavensong* is a love story that with its tangible details allows the reader to see the life of the religious community from inside. Its poetic language, which elevates the story to a new level, is deepened by the big themes: what is the ethical ground of parenthood, what are the good and bad sides of a religious community and how can you live with all the myths and expectations surrounding motherhood?

The novel was awarded the Christian Book Prize and Gummerus' Kaarle Prize and it was chosen by literature bloggers as the best book of Finnish fiction in 2013. With over 40,000 sold copies so far, it holds the distinction of being the publisher's best-selling debut novel.

*"Rauhala's novel is polyphonic. [...] It is not just a griping story about a break-down of a mother tired out by the religious community's demands but also a description of her husband's confusion, the challenging of the rules and his radical personal choice in the end. [...] Vilja and Alekski are not narrowed to black and white stereotypes. Vilja's furious revolt is described in a heart-breaking manner, and Alekski is first and foremost a searcher. [...] Rauhala is especially skillful in creating atmosphere and feeling."*

Savon Sanomat newspaper



*Taivaslaulu*

Gummerus, 2013, 284 pp.

## READING MATERIAL

Finnish original, English sample,  
French sample, German sample

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