

Biography: Inga Gaile (1976) is a Latvian poet, prose writer, playwright, performance artist, and theater director. With her unique brand of humor, she explores inner states of being, her own experiences, the everyday lives of women and stigmatized groups of society, while promoting equal rights. Gaile uses the genre of the confessional poem as a means of self-identification, looking retrospectively at her own life and the trauma of repeated sexual violence, thus facing and coming to terms with this experience so that she could re-imagine herself as a person. She has won several awards, including the Annual Latvian Literature Award 2015 and 2020 for *Can the Back Row Hear Me* and *The Beautiful Ones*. Inga Gaile is an active participant in the feminist movement in Latvia and is a founder of stand-up comedy group Women's Stand-up.

Synopsis: The daily life of a family is like a point of intersection in which the daily events and relationships of children and adults meet up. This book is a similar point of intersection that can be read by adults as well as children of all ages. Alongside her witty illustrations, Anete Melece has created games, exercises and colouring pages.

Excerpt

A Family

A woman drives home from the maternity ward,

and sees no end to the line of cars,

beep beep beep beep, la la la la.

She's a mother and a chauffeur,

she's an organiser, breadwinner,

a jug of milk (slosh!) and first warm bath.

It's scary to drive now all alone:

Inga Gaile "Vai otrā grupa mani dzird?" [Can the Back Row Hear Me?]

Excerpt

Translated by Mārta Ziemelis and Ieva Lešinska

without a shoulder on which to lean,

but she putters through the city:

it'll be all right, be brave, now.

And blooming clover grows,

on the apartment-building steps

and into the room light falls, a curtain of soft hue:

morning, morning to your courage and you,

we'll embrace you, swaddled, tenderly,

the clouds, the wind and city buzz,

the dust that coats the curtains with fuzz,

we'll cherish you softly,

beep beep beep beep, la la la la.

Joy and vigor drift and rise,

falling dust-like from piles of books.

but real life turns out otherwise

beep beep beep beep, la la la la.

A family's being shown to us here:

a mother and her little girl.

Crossing the Street

A child leads his parents by the hand
through the sea of cars—and life,
Dad is buffeted by every puff of air,
Mom keeps yelling to hold in there.
He struggles through cartoons of broken bottles,
through magical wonders of cigarette smoke,
with every moment the child ages,
becomes an old man, just like that.
A child leads his parents by the hand
through that sea of blue-green glass,
Dad is buffeted by every puff of air,
Mom keeps yelling to hold in there.
Death shadows their heels, sowing fear,
They're scared, but the kid will get clear.

What to Do With and Adult in a Supermarket?

If you are going through a shop with your mum or dad,

and all of a sudden, well, maybe because you'd like a bit of chocolate,

some ten or fifteen kilos to get you through life,

if your companion suddenly starts screaming like a siren,

tugging your hand and rushing you to the cashiers,

or, what would be most unpleasant,

starting to shame you, to compare you

to some lacquered pink baby with bows,

if that suddenly happens, here's what you do:

imagine that your companion (usually your mum) is a ship

with a broken siren and, disturbing the fish and the birds,

you rush through the waves of the shop.

Or imagine your grandma with rabbit ears

which, at the moment she scolds you,

flop down rhythmically to the right and left.

If dad tells you: stop your whining, it's really too much,

imagine you have an oil can and tell him:

here, you grease me and then I'll grease you.

It's not easy to go with adults to the supermarket.

If mum is annoyed because no boots fit you and

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your trousers are found on the shelves for adults,

just say: perhaps we should go for a pastry or two, you look so tired.

If the adults refuse to buy you something saying: *not today*,

ask them to type the thing you want into their new iphone.

That alone will make you feel better.

It is not easy to be with an adult in a supermarket,

but with a bit of your irrepressible imagination

and your lively sense of humour

it just might become a great adventure

and you could emerge from the supermarket safe and sound—

or sometimes even bundled up in fur coat of love.