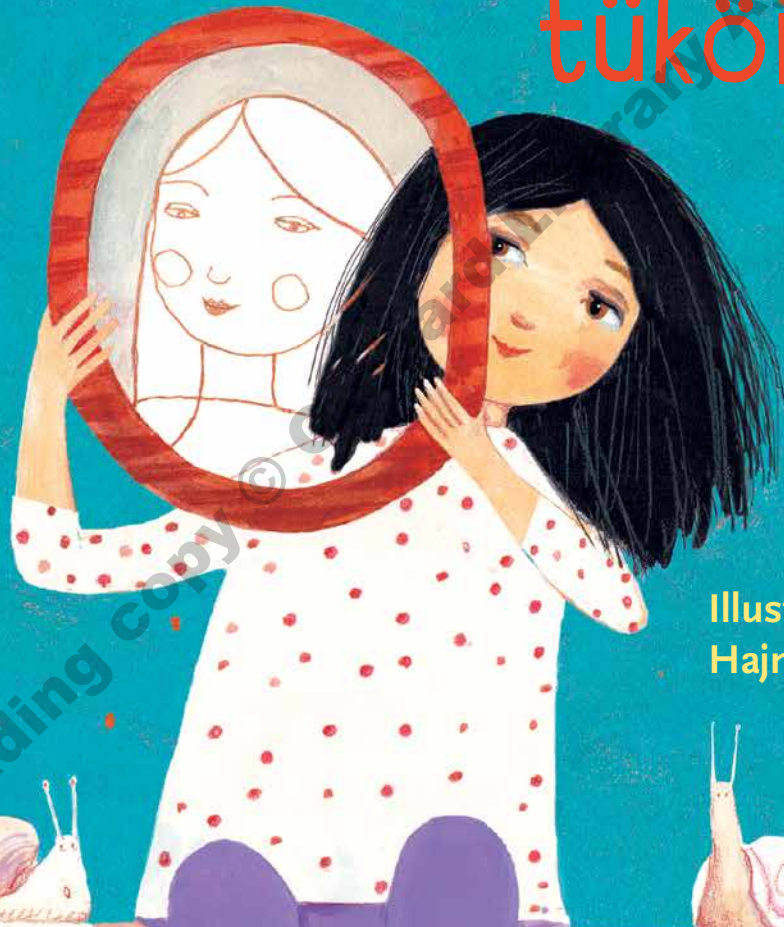


TASI KATALIN

# LÁNYKA,

Girl in the Mirror

# tükörben



Illustrated by  
Hajnalka Szimonidesz





*Csillagszedő Máriónak*

# GIRL in the mirror

by **TASI KATALIN**



Illustrated by Hajnalka Szimonidesz

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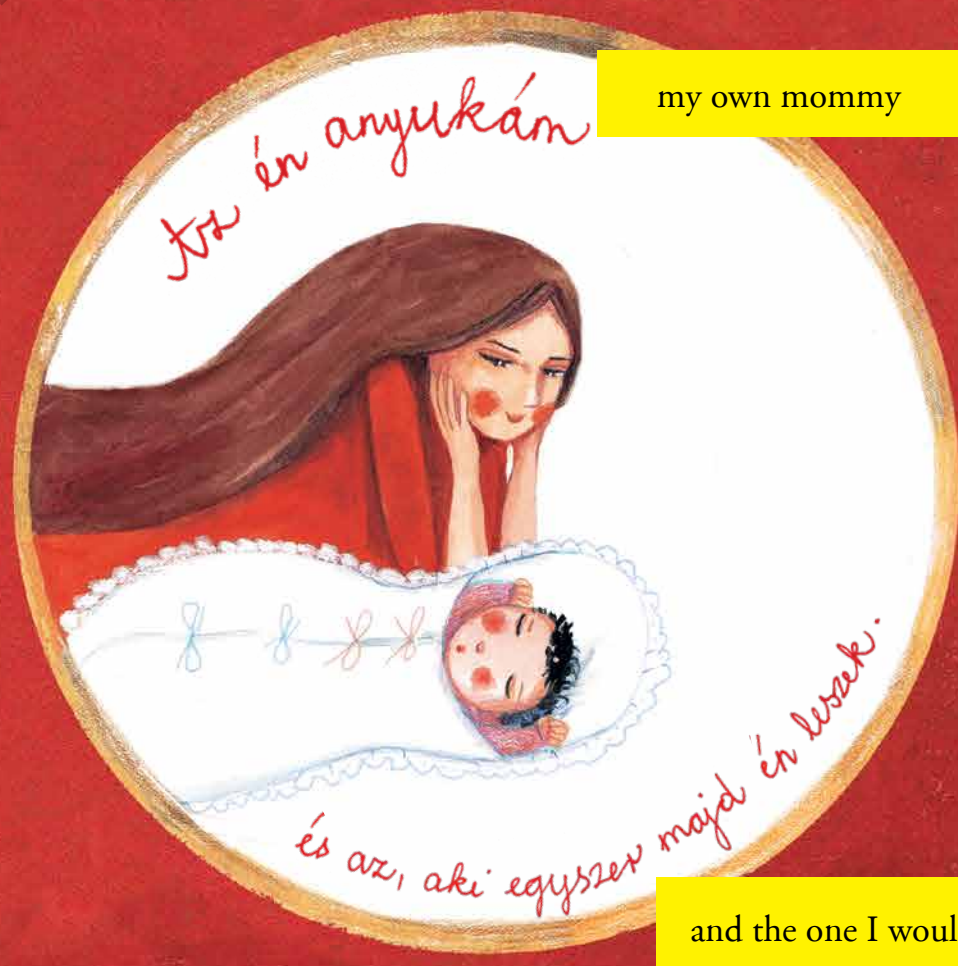
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# GIRL

When I became Mommy's little girl,  
two mommies were born:  
my own mommy  
and the one I would someday be.  
If I stared and stared into an endless mirror,  
I wonder how many girls I would see.



my own mommy

and the one I would someday be.

## STRONGEST

My daddy  
is so strong,  
he could pick up  
an entire kindergarten  
with just his pinky finger.

But when he  
picks me up,  
he always uses  
both hands.



## BEAUTIFULEST

Daddy always says  
Mommy is the most beautiful  
on the whole street,  
in the whole city.

But I don't know how  
he can be so sure,  
when he never even looks  
at the other ladies.



# PLACE

There are two places in the world  
where I love sitting the most:  
on Daddy's shoulders  
and in Mommy's lap.



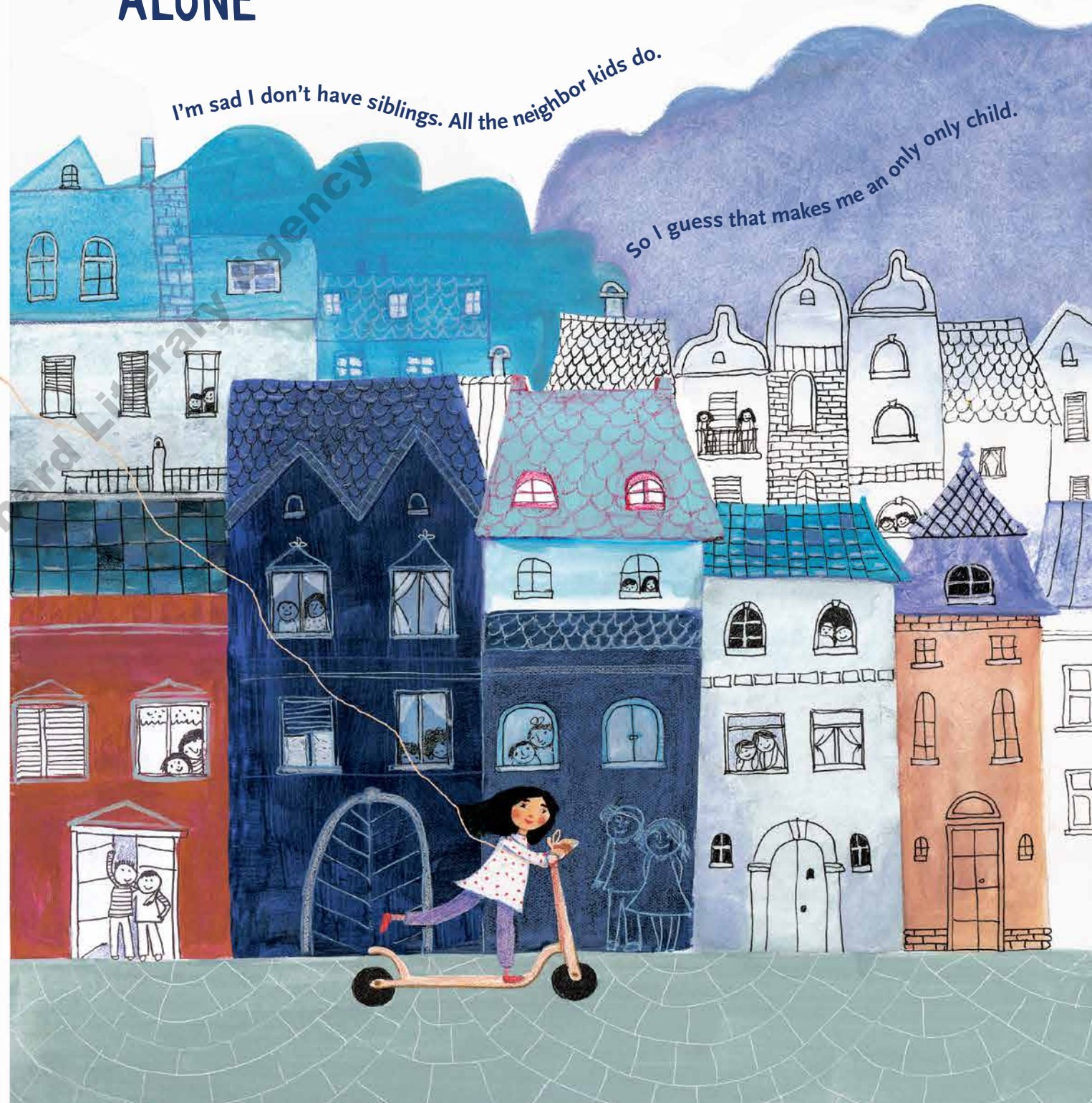
Way up there  
the whole world  
is mine,

and here down low  
I'm someone's  
whole world.

# ALONE

*I'm sad I don't have siblings. All the neighbor kids do.*

*So I guess that makes me an only only child.*



## DRIBBLING

My grandpa was once a famous footballer. The newspapers called him the Rinaldo of Kanizsa. I once decided I would be a famous footballer too, but by then we didn't live in Kanizsa.



One afternoon we were practicing in the yard, mostly dribbling. Pawpaw said the key is to know what your goal is and have different plans on how to get there, but to not let any of them show. After a while he said his leg was hurting and we should go inside. That night he needed an ice pack for his ankle.

And I decided if I wasn't going to be a famous footballer, then I'll be the most beautiful actress, or the bestest smartest kindergarten teacher.

And that's how I'll fake out Pawpaw! He'll be so surprised when I become an even famouser footballer than him!





## FEATHER

Sometimes Pawpaw and I go walking in the forest. Usually in the fall. We gather chestnuts and shiny gray pigeon feathers. I always imagined I would be a princess someday, and would marry a long-haired Native American. I bet when Pawpaw was young he thought he would want to marry a long-haired princess. But he ended up with Mawmaw Ella.

We would always play tag when we got back home, waking Mawmaw up with our laughter. But she never minded, she just smiled and asked for a pigeon feather to stick in the yellow-knit cap she wore because she'd lost all her hair.



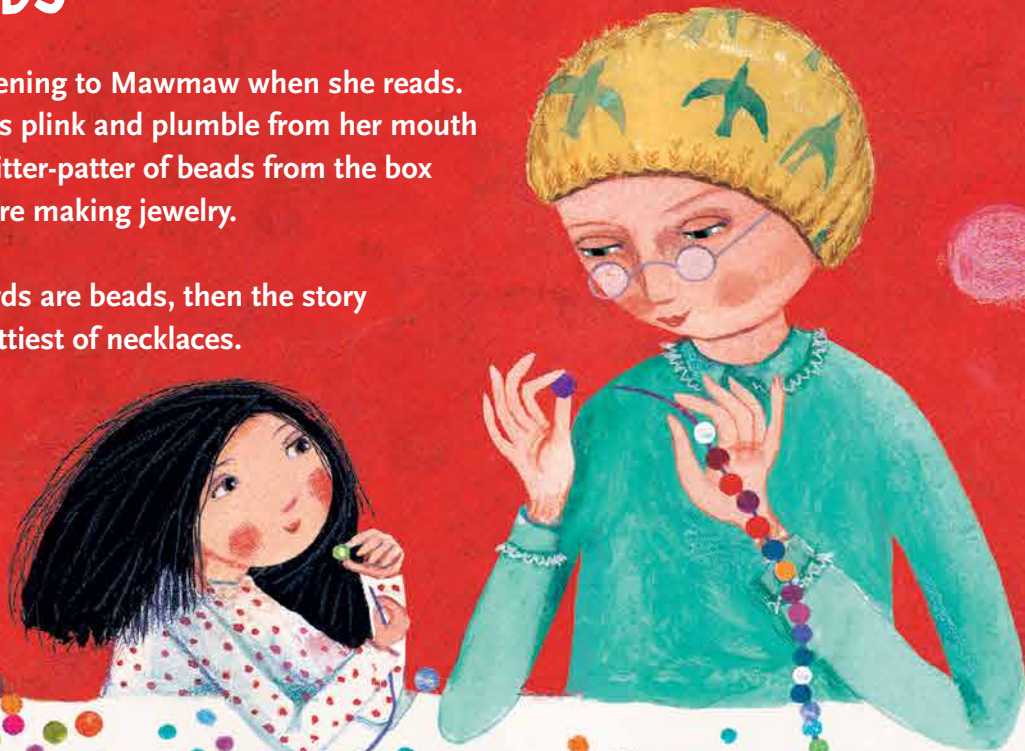
But Pawpaw had always known she was a real princess.



## BEADS

I love listening to Mawmaw when she reads.  
The words plink and plumble from her mouth  
like the pitter-patter of beads from the box  
when we're making jewelry.

If the words are beads, then the story  
is the prettiest of necklaces.



*Ha a szavak gyöngyök, akkor  
a mese egy szépen fűzött nyaklánc.*

If the words are beads, then the story  
is the prettiest of necklaces.

## BLACK

Mawmaw's old man doctor  
has a big black bag  
full of shots.



My sweet old lady doctor has  
her smile-scented white coat  
with sweets in every pocket.

I decided the best Christmas present ever  
would be if Mawmaw could borrow my sweet old lady doctor.

# CRAYONS

Coloring with crayons  
in Mawmaw's kitchen is my favorite,  
the yellow lamplight shining down  
while it rains outside and night begins to fall.  
I listen as the rain patters on the window sill,  
only to disappear by morning, the crayon softening  
beneath the lamplight, smooching and sticking  
to the paper as I drag the crayon back and forth.  
To be there forever, and never disappear.



Then when Mawmaw turns off the lamp  
because she needs to sleep,  
the darkness swallows  
everything, but it's all still here  
in my heart:  
the pattering become silence,  
the rain become dry,  
the day become night,  
the lamp become light,  
and the crayon become art.



# SWING

I have a swing up on the mountain,  
just over the hillside.  
If I swing long enough,

pump my legs hard enough,  
and look backwards upside-down,  
I feel like I'm flying!

# I'M FLYING



I've gathered a whole bunch of  
these moments of flying,  
and at night they're all I think of.

Once when I told this to Mawmaw,  
she said to never let go of those memories,  
even when I'm all grown-up.  
Then she closed her eyes while lying in bed, and smiled.  
I asked what she was smiling at, but she didn't answer.  
She'd become a little girl again and flown away.



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# WHITE

Pawpaw is now old,  
wintry time stretching over him  
and the hills alike.  
And his hair has become  
white as snow  
since Mawmaw died.

But whenever we play, he blooms,  
he sheds his years  
like the hills in spring shaking off  
their winter snows.  
And his eyes sparkle like April sunlight.



## PRESENT

All our friends soon found out  
I was getting a baby sister at the end of the year,  
and they all started asking me if  
she was going to be my Christmas present.

Luckily Mommy noticed  
I was getting more and more nervous,  
so she calmed me down and assured me  
I would get a proper present as well.

## SECRET

Before I was born,  
I just *know* I was out there somewhere.

If nowhere else, then I was hidden away  
in Mommy's laughter and in Daddy's heart,  
among their most secretest thoughts.

Then when Daddy heard Mommy laugh for the first time,  
he realized there was no reason to keep me secret anymore,  
and poof, there I was!

But then where is my little sister hiding?  
Where's Liza?



# PIE

My favorite pajamas are the ones  
with the rainbow stripes.

If put those on and curl up in bed,  
I feel like an apple pie:  
fresh-baked and fruity,  
wreathed in warmth.

Mommy smooths out my stripes,  
while I sigh and snore, a soft-baked apple pie:  
falling sinking, rising swelling,  
and waiting,  
for the sprinkle of sleep  
like powdered sugar.

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# LIZA

I'm still not exactly sure  
where Liza was hiding all this time.  
But I suspect it was somewhere near  
where Mawmaw went.

Mawmaw must have searched for her  
high and low, and given her a good talking-to  
for lollygagging for five long years,  
before finally sending her down  
to Mommy's tummy.

But Liza sure wasn't in any hurry,  
because she waited there  
for another nine months!

And now that she's been born,  
I can't say she's moving around too much.



# BLOND

Daddy has brown hair.  
Mommy does too.  
Mawmaw didn't have hair,  
and Pawpaw's was white.  
Only I have black hair.  
And Liza, of course, got all the blond!  
Shimmery and shiny as a princess.



Mommy says I'm beautiful the way I am,  
but ever since she went to the hairdresser  
and came back a shimmery blond,  
I don't believe her anymore.

The only thing that made me feel better  
was that yesterday I watched Mulan.



# FRIENDSHIP

Zsombi has been my best friend since kindergarten,  
and now we sit next to each other in real school.

He's the best to catch snails with after a storm  
or to be pretend gymnasts on bike racks.

And we always split our snacks to share.

At recess all the other kids tease me,  
saying I'm in love with Zsombi  
because we always play together.

But they just don't understand:  
you **can't be in love with your best friend!**







## LICKETY-SPLIT

Everyone knows snails are slow.  
You don't even have to chase after them.  
If Zsombi and I want to catch some,  
we just have to go out after it rains (treading carefully),  
lift up a soggy leaf or two,  
and quick as a wink, lickety-split, our bucket is full.

But if we're not careful,  
and we leave the bucket in the entryway (like last time),  
all it takes is a minute or two,  
and quick as a wink, lickety-split, they're zooming all over.

For such slow little critters,  
you'd think they wouldn't be so fidgety!

# HIDEOUT

Zsombi and I have a secret hideout in the garden behind the garage.

(Okay fine, Daddy knows about it because he gave us the boxes and tarp, but he crossed his heart and pinky-swore to never tell another soul about it.)

If one of us has a terrible horrible day, like I did today, for example, because everyone laughed at my dodgeball-throwing in gym, we sit in our hideout for a good cry.

Zsombi uses it for a good cry too, like last time when the big kids stole his hat and threw it into the river.

Zsombi doesn't mind if my tears are big and splashy, and I don't mind if his are sharp and salty. We make sure to keep some chocolate stashed away in the hideout. And that's always sweet.



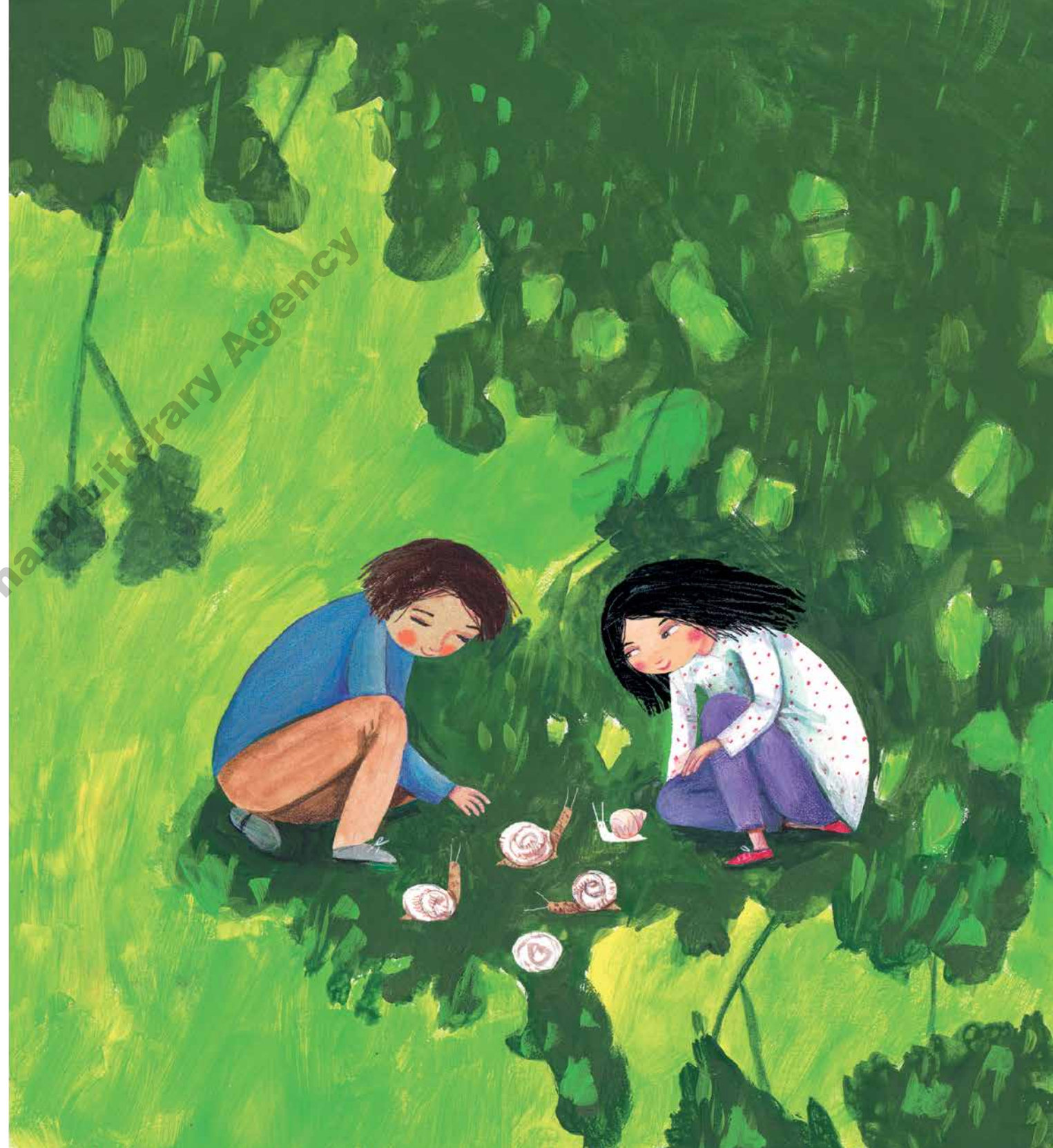
# SUNSHINE

What I love the most about Zsombi  
is that he'll come with me to our hideout just to eat chocolate,  
and that he isn't even a little bit afraid of the neighbor lady's gigantic rooster.

Or if he is afraid, he still goes into the yard in front of me.

And also that he puts the snails back beneath their leaves  
once the sun is baking down again after the rain,  
and sometimes he speaks softly to them,  
almost to himself,  
a smile on his face just like the one  
when he's telling me a story.

And that we can sit together quietly for minutes on end,  
admiring the beauty of the slow-slinking snails,  
and the sunlight  
filtering through  
the leaves.



# HEART

When I won  
the school  
poetry recital,  
and Mrs. Zsófi  
announced it to the class,  
everybody clapped  
and cheered  
so loud.  
Some even whistled!  
I felt like it all  
came from their hearts,  
and it made me so happy.

Then I remembered  
how earlier  
everybody had laughed  
and teased me



about not being able  
to throw a ball very far.  
I felt like that all  
came from their hearts too,  
and it made me so sad.

So is that why  
the human heart has  
a left side and a right side?  
The bad comes from  
one half,  
and from the other comes  
the good?

# CHILD

In the winter Daddy sometimes swerves on the icy roads on purpose. Mommy always scolds him, saying: "Cut it out already, you're like a child!"

But he isn't. If he really were a child, he'd be sitting in the back seat, white-knuckled and round-eyed, waiting desperately to get out of the car.



# BALL

I think Miki Palkovics is in love with me.

The reason I think this is because he's the best footballer at school, but whenever I'm outside at recess he always fumbles the ball and kicks it over so he can run toward me and look out the corner of his eye to see if I'm watching him.



# MIRROR

When I look into the mirror, I mostly see myself,  
and also Mommy, because I take after her the most.  
But I also see a little bit of Daddy,  
and if I look long enough, Mawmaw shows up too.

Even though it's been so long since I've seen her!

When I grow up and take a good long look in the mirror,  
I wonder: will I still see the little girl I am now?



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Én hiszek neki.

*Kiss Ottó*

