



Slovenian Fairy Tale Writer

Text and photo: Urška Krišelj Grubar

Thinning spiky hair, which reminds me of leafless autumn trees more than it does of punk, serves its purpose. It is like a selection criteria for all those people who judge superficially and to whom appearances matter more than content. 'Anything essential is invisible to the eyes', Franci Rogač, also known as Frakl, knows. He is a young fairy tale writer who, in the last four years, has outgrown his youthful rebelliousness, dedicated his time to studying social work, and has also written seven fairy tales.

He was born in Ljubljana, but has roots in Prekmurje, which is noticeable from his accent: to understand him, one has to listen very carefully. His thoughts run ahead of his words, and many are swallowed or uttered in uncompleted sentences. However, he is more adept at writing. He waits for his thoughts to ripen, and then searches for the way to articulate them clearly, as they are mainly written for children, although indirectly probably also to us, parents. Frakl's fairy tales carry a message. He offers children self-identification with protagonists in distress and gives appropriate solutions suited to the way children think. In every fairy tale he stresses that we are always left with something, and that is hope. Frakl believes that it is necessary to hope until the very last moment and hope is, next to the values of peace, love and friendship, one of the main messages in all of his fairy tales.

Frakl is convinced that, 'Today's children are much smarter than we used to be and that is why they deserve good fairy tales.' He is so sure of himself that he easily manages to convince sponsors, for his fairy tales are self-published. 'I am led by the energy that I trust. And sometimes I find myself in front of a door that I need to knock on. And only then, when I am already inside the room, do I realize where I have come to. But I always manage to be in the right place at the right

time if only I listen to my inner self.' Frakl has a turbulent past. He was the kind of son who did not make his parents very proud. He painted the town red on several occasions, got to know the life of homeless people, drug addicts, punks and many other sub-cultures with which he could identify himself in the years of searching. He let a lot of time slip by, but wishes to make up for it now through a lot of hard work. His greatest wish is, however, to save a young person here and there from moral ruin with the help of his fairy tales.

He has written about The Lost Elephant (Izgubljena slončica), about the Piglet and the Magic Star (Prašiček in čarobna zvezdica), about the Forest Dwarf (Gozdni škratek), The Duckling Named Repka (Račka Repka) about The Hedgehog Named Nosek (Ježek Nosek) and about a girl called Luna (Luna) whose ears are too big.

As a student at the Faculty of Social Work and a thirty-year old with plenty of experience of life, he is coming to realise that the young people of today are angry. The worst thing is for them to suppress their anger only for it to resurface in some strange form. Frakl's fairy tale heroes enable 3-9 year olds to transfer their anger as well as negative and positive feelings to his protagonists. Children can trust them with their problems, or the fairy tale heroes might help them realise that they are not alone and that everyone has trouble in their everyday lives.

Frakl's fairy tale creatures experience miracles brought about by joy for life, faith, hope, and love. The author himself believes in these, since his young life which was heading for destruction took a miraculous turn. He became one of the most successful and original Slovenian fairy tale writers, which is definitely an extraordinary achievement.