

SAMPLE
TRANSLATION

BARBARA SIMONITI
ANDREW SLEEPLESS

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TRANSLATED BY: BARBARA SIMONITI

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Barbara Simoniti: Andrew Sleepless

Illustrated by Peter Škerl

Somewhere in a big city, there was a little boy leaning against the window, watching the night come in.

“Aaan-dreew ...” Mother's voice was heard from a distance.

“No! I'm not going to bed yet!” the little boy protested loudly. He knew quite well what time it was. It was precisely the hour he disliked so much and tried to avoid every evening. His favourite escape was to hide in the dining room – the silent and secretive room that was seldom used.

“Well – we're just going to read a little, anyway,” Mother' voice suggested placatingly from a distance.

Yet Andrew did not hear it any more. He gazed firmly through the window into the evening sky. It was velvety blue and a thick slice of moon shone there.

Yet Mother's voice was coming ever closer – a few more steps along the corridor – Andrew whisked under the table – and the door opened. Mother looked into the dining room. She held Andrew's favourite blanket under her arm, the one printed with seagulls.

“Andreee-as ...” Mother called enticingly, entering the room. She switched on the light.

Everything was transformed in an instant. The draft furlled once more the sails of the three-masted ship surrounded by boats in the port – then the sails remained hanging and turned into curtains again. And the three-masted ship was no longer a ship at all, but a table amidst some chairs. Not even their legs were the pier piles any more, where Andrew had hid.

“Well, Andy, do come!” Mother said, bending down. The more difficult it was for her to get her son to bed, the more names he had – like a stubborn dragon with seven heads, all of them refusing to sleep.

“No, no, no!” Andrew stamped his feet, knowing well that Mother was serious about it, and tears rolled down his cheeks. “I'm not going to sleep yet!”

“Well, Andre, do come, do!” Mother reached out, yet the boy waved his arms and began to cry.

How could he leave behind all the ships sailing to far-off places – like Father – following the stars – while he should sleep through it all!

However, Mother embraced him firmly so that he almost stopped crying:

“You'll see what a great story we'll read tonight!” she promised. “The one about the whale.”

And there's your mug of milk waiting for you on your night table, as well as Thylo the seal!"

While Mother was saying this, she lifted Andrew into her lap, swinging the seagull-blanket over her shoulder. Thus loaded she set off along the corridor, straight through the waves of the parquet flooring – with Andrew always counting the herring-bones they crossed – and further towards the bedroom.

"But I really shan't sleep yet!" mumbled Andrew into Mother's shoulder, sobbing for the last time.

"No, we shan't sleep yet – we'll just read about the whale and drink milk," Mother assured him.

They reached the threshold sluice – heave-ho – and stepped safely over it into Andrew's room.

"Oh-heigh-ho!" Mother gasped with relief, unloading the freight of her son and the seagull-blanket onto the bed.

"But we really shan't sleep yet!" Andrew moped once again.

"No, not at all!" Mother agreed, tickling him. "First you'll go brush your teeth and wash your hands and face," she pushed him gently towards the bathroom, so that Andrew had to laugh, "and then – whoosh – into your pyjamas!"

Smiling, Andrew set off to the bathroom next door. Being very reluctant to wash, he always dealt with water as quickly as he could. – His thoughts were shut up while washing. – He was soon back by the bed.

"But I really shan't sleep yet!" he repeated for the last time, sneaking under the seagull-blanket. He pressed Thylo the seal to his side.

"Of course not," Mother kissed his forehead as well as Thylo's, setting the blanket right, so that the forgotten left leg did not stick out any more. Then she began reading the sea book with a story-telling voice.

Andrew listened attentively with a mug of milk in his hand. He saw the waves in front of him – nearly lapping against his bedside! – and a whirling funnel cut into the surface by the whale braking. Seagulls took off, circling around it and screeching loudly. But the whale only took a frothy breath – and chased them away! Its wheezy breath nearly splattered Andrew as well as Thylo! And the milk almost spilt into the story. – But soon the whale dived back into the depths with the waves covering it up, more loudly than Mother's reading, with everything falling silent somewhere in the distance – and Andrew gliding into bright, gossamer dreams ...

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Right at that time somebody knocked slightly on some wood somewhere!

“Tick-tick-tick-tap!” very tiny fingers could be heard.

Andrew went to the door and opened it carefully. Yet there was nobody there!

“Tick-tick-tick-tap!” something tapped on wood again.

Whoever could that be and where? thought Andrew looking around him. Not against the big wardrobe of all things? he almost stopped breathing.

An antique wardrobe stood near the door in Andrew's room. There was a mirror set in its door, staring around itself during the night. Mother stored there Andrew's old toys and pillows and blankets, with the wardrobe gulping it all down its enormous, creaking mouth. Andrew was slightly afraid of the wardrobe and avoided it in the dark, if possible.

But now he had to look what was going on! With long, soundless steps he approached the wardrobe. Yet its door was not closed at all! It gaped a full span wide – and from behind it the tumbling of blocks and toy-cars and other things could be heard!

Andrew bravely opened the door that gave a long creak. Everything fell silent in an instant. The toys on the shelves were disordered and overturned and smeared with paints of all kind. It took him a while to notice – that a small, hairy bat with black eyes kept peeking at him! It was hanging upside down from a net.

Andrew stared at the hairy umbrella-creature in front of him. He realized that the bat was very small after all, even smaller than himself. It was brown, but his fur was dishevelled and the skinny wings crumpled. There were crumbs of candy stuck around its muzzle and its feet had obviously plodded into Andrew's paints. The bat winked at him, waving his wings, while Andrew was still staring at it.

“Well, yes, this hollow is no good,” the bat grumbled, “it's roomy, to be sure, but it's also cluttered with junk!” it complained, shifting his feet glued in tempera with an effort.

“Who – ever – are you, after all?” Andrew addressed the stranger, with a chill of fear trickling down his spine.

“My name is Lull and I'm Bat Sleepyhead,” replied the bat waving his flappy paw.

“But what are you doing – in my wardrobe?” wondered Andrew.

“So yours is this hollow?!” Lull spread his feet with arms akimbo. “Well, it's like this,” he began explaining, “since you don't want to sleep, I can't fly and spin dream-time stories!” he said firmly.

“So you spin – my dreams?” Andrew gaped.

“To be sure! Whoever doesn't want to sleep, misses all the dream-time stories!” Lull said throwing his chest out. “Well, tell me,” he made a broad gesture with his arm, “have you ever dreamt of a maritime adventure, with ships and sailors and storms and all?”

“No, never!” Andrew shook his head.

“Well, you see! – But would you like to?” Lull looked at him with a mischievous air.

“Of course!” said Andrew with a sigh, “but I never seem to manage!”

“You certainly don't, by gad, since I rot here in this hollow instead of flying around freely!” Lull explained with triumph.

“I'm sorry, I really am!” admitted Andrew. “But what shall I do?”

“Well, you have to fall asleep as soon as possible – and let me out into the moonlight among the stars!” replied Lull.

“What are we waiting then?” Andrew got all worked up.

“But – shall I fly away looking like this?” Lull asked spreading out his wings, all blotched with chalk, revealing his untidy fur and greasy feet.

“No, of course not!” Andrew jumped up stretching out his arm. The bat landed nimbly on it and trod along his sleeve so that he could hang again, head down, from Andrew's finger.

Andrew took him to the bathroom. He washed the colourful sludge off Lull's feet so that a rainbow stream ran down the basin. Lull stretched his claws with relish before Andrew wiped them dry with a paper handkerchief. He cleaned Lull's chalk-smear wings with the corner of a towel, as well as his sticky muzzle, finally combing his fur with a soft brush of Mother's.

“Now I'm a proper bat once again!” Lull kept turning in front of the mirror.

He flapped playfully to Andrew's shoulder and they set off together back to the room. Andrew drew the curtains apart and stepping on his toes, he opened the window:

“Here you are, Lull, now you can fly into dream-time stories!” he said setting the bat on the window sill.

Lull's eyes shone with delight. He dashed to the edge of the window sill, getting hold of it with his claws. He flapped his wings several times, finally flying high into the blue sky:

“Good night, Andrew!” he cried out and disappeared in the moonlit night.

When Andrew woke up, he clambered out of his bed, tripping to the bathroom. After a cat-lick he scampered to the kitchen, with Thylo under his arm.

Mother stood by the stove making cocoa.

“Good morning, Andrew!” she smiled, kissing his forehead.

Andrew climbed into his chair and began telling her eagerly about Lull and the maritime

adventures. Mother toasted some bread, then spread the hot boats with butter and plum jam so that they crunched scrumptiously.

After that night it was no longer difficult to get Andrew into bed in the evening. As soon as Mother read him the first page or two of the book, the boy's eyes shut – and he fell asleep. Mother switched off the night lamp so as not to disturb the dream-time stories with intrusive light. Then she only had to tiptoe out of the room, shutting the door soundlessly behind her.

Barbara Simoniti

Andrew Sleepless

Illustrated by Peter Škerl

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Translation from the Slovene Barbara Simoniti

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