

# DURST HUNGER MÜDE

(THIRSTY HUNGRY TIRED)

Elke Naters and Sven Lager are writers.  
They live together with their two children in Berlin.  
Together they wrote the book *“Durst Hunger Müde - Unterwegs im Kinderland”*  
(*Thirsty Hungry Tired — Out and About in Kinderland*) which is packed  
with stories about parents and children. The book will be appearing in autumn.  
*kid’s wear* managed to get a sneak preview of one of the stories.

## Money

“We could buy a car with that!” says Jakob

“No we can’t,” I answer. “Do you have any idea how much a car costs?”

“No, how much?” Jakob and I look at the cars parked along the street.

“No idea.” I really have no idea how much new cars cost.

“Well, with two fifty,” I say, “we might be able to get an ice cream. Or a baguette. We do still need bread for tea.”

We go to the baker’s and buy a baguette and a doughnut with shiny raspberry icing which we devour between us on the spot.

“I mean with the money you earn.”

“Ok, maybe you could afford to buy a car with that. But why do we need a car?” I ask Jakob.

“We could drive anywhere we wanted to,” he says.

“Right.”

We think about paying the rent, buying food, some jeans for Lilly, new shoes for Jakob while fifteen years ago I would have been able to buy a car with that money.

“Jakob, you’re right again.”

“So let’s buy one.”

“Ok, which one?”

“That one!” He points to a new Beetle.

“Yuk, that’s an awful-looking car.” I point to a Chevy parked halfway onto the pavement.

“That looks like a cardboard box!” says Jakob appalled.

Jakob has obviously seen too few American films. We agree on a older Jeep with a military look about it which could also drive through the desert and across dirt tracks. And the seats are nice and high up. It’s just that it’s unfortunately not for sale.

“Hmm, there’s no price on it.”

“Pity.”

“Another time.”

“Ok.” So we go round the Gendarmenmarkt to catch the last rays of sun, still keeping a look out for cheap cars.

“I think everything in the world should cost one cent,” says Jakob.

“Eh? What? Everything at just one cent?”

“Yeah then it would be fair because everyone could buy everything they wanted,” he explains to me.

“But then everything would be sold out straight away,” I object.

Jakob says nothing. He chases a few pigeons and I take a moment to think. For the next few days I think about this and in fact he’s quite right. There are enough things to buy and if everything only cost one cent then nothing would be worth anything and people would just as well sell everything again for a cent or give it away. Then that would put a stop to all this insanity. The never-ending cycle would end and we would be free at last.

“You know what Jakob?” I say to him a week later. “You’re right. Everything should cost one cent.”

“Can I have my pocket money?” I give him one cent.

“There you go. Go and treat yourself. But not a car again. We’ve got three already.”

“Hang on, where are my 2 euros?” he protests.

“Not 2 euros anymore,” I say triumphantly.

“You still owe me 50 cents!” Lilly shouts from the kitchen.

“Tomorrow love.”

“Tomorrow, tomorrow. But I want my 50 cents back now!”

Since Lilly has had her purse she’s been scrupulous in the way she handles her finances. Frighteningly scrupulous in fact. And I have a guilty conscience because I secretly swiped a euro from it this morning to buy bread rolls. My latest trick is saving by not drawing any money out of the bank. Until the very last cent lying around the house, jangling in trouser and jacket pockets has been spent. This is because I’m basically not very

careful with money. Once I draw money out I spend it. Before I turn around the twenty euro note — let's be honest the fifty or hundred euro note — is gone. It was there a minute ago. Which is why Lilly's frugality surprises me all the more.

"Lilly, I'll give you your money at the shops."

"And you still owe me two euros pocket money and one euro from this morning which makes almost 5 euros!" That's how the Fuggers started.

I can still remember our holiday in Italy. We hadn't given the children pocket money for weeks and with this money Jakob got cheap diving goggles and Lilly got a T-shirt. For some reason or other we calculated it in front of them. Maybe so the children would learn how to handle money. Whatever the case, suddenly Jakob had money left over and Lilly didn't. So Lilly was indignant.

When we got home Lilly borrowed money from Jakob to buy herself a Wendy magazine double pack, a cherry juice and some chewing gum and Jakob still had money left. This almost drove Lilly mad. Her pocket money for the next week was already gone and Jakob still had 6 euros which suddenly kept increasing because he had some shady dealings going on at school.

**"I think everything in the world should cost one cent", says Jakob.  
"It would be fair because  
everyone could buy everything they wanted"**

He'd bought himself a pack of Yo-Gi-Oh cards and as it had a few good cards in it he sold it for four times what he paid for it. The next day he bought the same cards back again for 2 euros. By that time I felt sure Jakob would later be able to feed us. It was only when a first-year offered him 40 euros for his cards in the next break that I got suspicious.

"Jan-Niklas still owes me 40 euros!" complained Jakob

"How do you arrive at that?"

"I gave him the cards and he hasn't brought the money in yet!"

"Maybe he doesn't have that money." Heavens above, you don't hand over the goods before you've seen payment!

"But he said he had 40 euros at home. Cos his mum and dad are rich." Jakob is truly infuriated.

Jan-Niklas was a weedy first-year. For the first time I have the feeling I have to protect another child from my son.

"Listen, 40 euros is too much."

"A deal's a deal. Otherwise I'll beat him up."

What kind of a monster have I brought up? Nobody in my family was rich and I had been taught not to talk about money. Because it's not important and it's stupid. And now this! I hadn't fought for a better world saving the whale and sending medical aid to children in the Spanish-speaking Sahara for this.

"Money's just not important to you," says Marie reproachfully. "And that's why we don't have any."

"We don't have any more or any less than anyone else," I answer irascibly. I really hate talking about it.

"I haven't bought myself a winter coat for two years now."

"Then go out and buy one."

"With what?" I know she wants that shamefully expensive sheepskin she walks past every day.

"We have enough for the coat!" But Marie is too responsible. And too modest. And I've told her often enough I would prefer to eat dry bread and skip paying the rent if it means she can buy something like that.

"Axeeehl, am I going to get my moneeeey?"

"Of course!" I almost roar.

"We're poor aren't we?" says Jakob pulling an innocent face. He gives me the ten euros he made at school yesterday as basically he doesn't make a big thing out of money. He's always generous with his money. He's like me. It makes him nervous having money in the house.

"Here," I say and put out a five euro note for Lilly. "But now you owe me one euro fifty."

"Nooo, I get my pocket money tomorrow so you still owe me fifty cents." Since she's had her purse things have really been quite different. The way things look I will have to borrow money from her at breakfast again. Or I'll ask Jan-Niklas outside school when he's finally gonna come up with his 40 euros.

*Elke Naters and Sven Lager: "Durst Hunger Müde - Unterwegs im Kinderland," (Thirsty Hungry Tired — Out and About in Kinderland), 208 pages featuring numerous illustrations by Antje Dorn, will be appearing in late September 2004 from the KiWi Paperback publishing house.*

# “IT HAS TO BE FUNNY *else I won't read it!*”

Before Luzie and Anton used to think books were written in factories. Which is strange as their parents are the writers Elke Naters and Sven Lager.

What do they really do all day?

It's time for a serious talk once and for all.

Luzie: “Shouldn't you ask us before you write stories about us?”

Sven: “But we made all the stories up.”

Luzie: “HA HA.”

Elke: “Can we?”

Luzie: “But I'm 7 not 6!”

Sven: “But that's not you. That's Lilly. She's only 6 and she's not as clever as you.”

Luzie: “HA HA.”

Elke: “So can we?”

Luzie: “Spose so.”

Anton: “Only if we get some of the money.”

Luzie: “Yeah!”

Elke: “You already do.”

Sven: “Pocket money for instance.”

Anton: “Yeah, yeah, very funny.”

Luzie: “I want to be a writer too.”

Anton: “Oh no! I don't! You have to write all the time. I hate writing!”

Elke: “But you can write on the computer.”

Anton: “That's much better! I used to think your computers were like televisions and you were watching TV all day.”

Luzie: “And I thought books were made in factories.”

Anton: “So why did you become writers?”

Elke: “So we can work from home and be with you all the time.”

Luzie: “You mean so you can stay in bed all the time.”

Elke: “Ha ha.”

Luzie: “Well I think you should write a children's book.  
Just for children.”

Anton: “But it has to be funny else I won't read it.”

Sven: “You can help.”

Anton: “Can't you do your work on your own?”

Luzie: “I want one with magicians and princesses and evil  
step-parents and a dog.”

Sven: “Well, I find real life more interesting.  
Like in our children's book.”

Luzie: “You said you made it all up!”

Elke: “That's the way it is when you write. You experience some  
and turn it into a story. So the stories are still true.” thing and you make something up to go along with it

Luzie: “You mean like in the Mickey Mouse comics where the  
Anton: “Or when a house collapses on top of Donald and he still  
Sven: “Right. Making stuff up like that is fun. You always  
like making things up too.”

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Luzie: “Later we can write a book about you.”

Anton: “And we'd call it: SMOKE DRINK BLABBER!”

Luzie: “No, we'd call it: GABBY, MOANY, DRINKY!”

Elke: “Well as far as I'm concerned it could also be called:  
THIRSTY, HUNGRY, TIRED”

ducks can't talk but can still do everything we can do.”  
only needs a plaster afterwards!”