

## THE KNITTING NEEDLES

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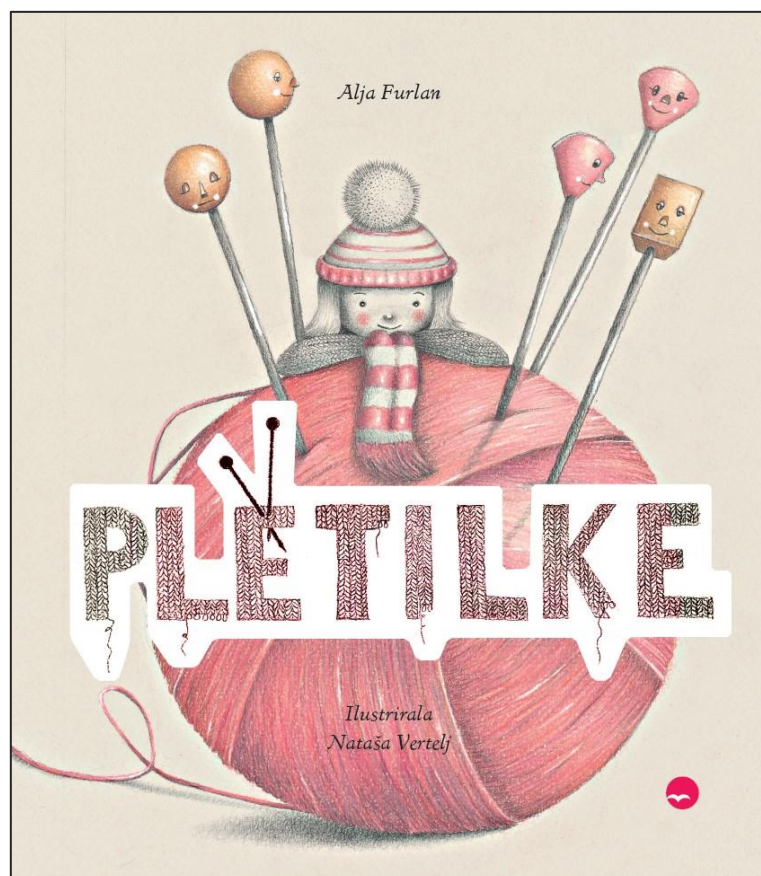
Illustrated by: **Nataša Vertelj**

Knitting is like a dance where you spin, twirl and weave the knitting needles to create clothing. Scarves, hats, pullovers, socks and much more. Paula's mother often makes her knitting needles dance. This is how she shows little Paula her love and care, as well as her wish that the little girl is dressed in nice things.

In her mother's hands, the wool becomes magical yarn. A ball of wool is transformed into wonderful pieces of clothing during this dance. And sometimes even the opposite happens. She transforms old pullovers into a tightly wound ball of wool to then be knitted into something entirely new. Into new old clothes, as Paula says, who isn't as impressed with the coarseness of the used yarn. She prefers soft wool that is as velvety as her mother's cheek. The rough thread cannot compare to the smoothness of her mother's skin. When Paula grows up, she will learn to love even the clothes that are knitted from old wool.

The picture book, interwoven with the tenderness of soft wool, talks about how strong love is and how quickly a child's heart forgives, if only it is loved.

Format: 21 × 24cm, colour print, hardcover, 28 pages



## Reading Sample

### THE KNITTING NEEDLES

#### *Page 6*

What could be hiding in the spaghetti tin? Plink, plank, long and short; click, clack, thick and thin—knitting needles. Grandmothers, mothers and aunts use them to knit pullovers, socks and hats out of fluffy wool.

#### *Page 9*

Paula's mum knits from dusk till dawn. She begins after breakfast and continues after lunch. Then she clicks away with her needles long into the night after the other family members have gone to bed. She can knit anything. Striped socks, hats, pullovers, scarfs and even vests. She can make thick or tiny braids. She easily calculates how to make challenging Norwegian patterns with snowflakes and reindeers. Creating holes, chessboards, she plays with colours, making tassels and playful fringes.

#### *Page 11*

But what Paula loves the most are new balls of soft wool. She plays shop with them. Piling them onto the table, she labels them with price tags and awaits her customers. "How may I help you? We have the best offer. Do you prefer green or yellow wool?" Her grandmother thinks for a moment, "Wait, I will touch it. Green is softer. It is like an English lawn". "How much wool do you need?" she asks her grandfather who wants new socks.

"For two big socks," her grandpa says and stretches out his leg. "Will three balls do? You chose the grey? Alright. It goes well with your slippers."

"Sir, for this cold winter you'll need a warm hat. This one is on sale today." Dad is happy, as he pays a half price for a full bag.

#### *Page 13*

The new wool is fluffy like a new chick. But when Paula's mum unravels an old vest, then the yarn is coarse and the colour faded. The old, reused yarn ripples like waves in the sea.

Mum often needs Paula's help. She needs to hold her fists and hold her arms out. Then, while she stands as still as a statue, her mum coils the curly yarn around her arms. She will make a new vest out of it, but it will never truly be new.

#### *Page 14*

Paula had played shop this morning, too. She got onto her chair and stretched up to reach the highest doors of a big cupboard. Opening them with a golden key, she pulled out the soft and hard, old and new balls of yarn, displaying them neatly on the table. She sold them to all: grandpa bought the hard ball of yellow yarn, dad a green boucle and grandma a grey mohair.

"Lunch time!" called mum from the kitchen, and the shop had to close. Paula was so hungry she didn't feel like putting the yarn back into the cupboard. She would have to step up onto the chair a hundred times, so she just pushed them in quickly and closed the door with some difficulty. She turned the golden key and ran off to have lunch.

*Page 17*

The next day, Paula's mum started to knit a new scarf. She needed the warmest yarn, so she walked over to the cupboard, turned the golden key and opened the door to the wool kingdom. Piles of colourful balls of yarn rolled out and fell on her head. They spilled into the room like marbles. One landed behind the furnace, the other under the armchair, the third under the table.

Mum turned to Paula and smacked her. Then, she started picking up the yarn. The balls that had rolled further away could only be retrieved by mum getting onto her knees, hunting for them and finally getting them out with a long knitting needle.

Paula stood in the corner, holding her burning cheek. Mum silently picked up all the yarn and put it back into the cupboard.

*Page 18*

She only kept a red ball—pretty as a rose—for the scarf she was going to knit.

When mum left, Paula was left alone with her sadness. She climbed into her hiding spot behind the book chest and the flowerpot. A cream ball of sheep's wool rolled up to her. Paula took it into her arms and said: "You would be so scratchy around children's necks."

The sheep shook its head, "No I wouldn't".

"If you were made into a scarf, you would hurt my cheeks. I know," the girl said. The sheep denied it again. "It's better they don't knit you into anything," she said, pressing it harder against her. She decided to save the sheep from becoming a scarf that nobody would like, or even an ordinary sock. She hugged it tight as she became increasingly tired.

*Page 21*

Little Paula became more and more sleepy. She stared at a knitted scarf that was hanging over a chair on the other side of the room. Blue tassels hung from its edges. Their round heads and cute skirts made of wool made them look like tiny people. They reminded her of festive bells and elves. They swung about, dancing and twirling as if there were a breeze in the room. Then they jumped off the scarf and danced towards the little girl in an orderly fashion.

The water sitting at the bottom of the flowerpot wet their skirts and then the first tassel approached Paula's red cheek and cooled it. Then came the second, the third, and the fourth, caressing the girl until her mother came and took her to bed.

*Page 22*

The next day, Paula was still very sad. She had to hold a piece of old pullover that her mum was unravelling while she coiled the yarn into a tight ball. The green yarn spun before their eyes, left and right, skipping out of loops, while Paula could barely see anything but a fog in her eyes. The piece of yarn in her hands was miraculously disappearing. She found comfort knowing it wouldn't last much longer. She had to hold it tighter and tighter. It pulled her forwards, towards her mum.

The ball in her mum's hands was growing bigger and bigger. Suddenly it escaped her hands and tumbled to the floor, unravelling on the carpet. Paula jumped to pick it up. They had to do it all over again. Paula stood awkwardly holding the end of the thread. She kept moving from one foot to the other as her mum coiled the yarn with a stern expression on her face. The little girl could think of nothing but: I don't want a top made from old yarn, I don't want it!

*Page 24*

When they finished, her mum said tenderly, "Would you like to knit a scarf for the bear with me?"

Paula clapped with excitement.

"We just need to find the right yarn," she said. She rummaged through the basket: "And of course the right needles."

"Edward needs a special yarn," Paula insisted and disappeared for a moment. She climbed into the dusty spot behind the book chest and the flowerpot and pulled out the creamy white sheep's wool, "This one!"

"That is an excellent yarn," her mum said and blew on it to get rid of the dust.

"Edward will look dashing!" Paula exclaimed.

"And definitely no colds for him this winter," mum said, smiling. It was the best way she knew to apologise to Paula for the smack. Because when she feels bad, she also loves to cuddle up with balls of wool.

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*Page 27*

Paula is now all grown up, and her mum is a grey-haired lady. She fell badly ill a couple of times and almost died. But she recovered and, gradually, she started knitting again. Click clack, click clack, plink plank, plink plank.

If she makes socks of old yarn today, Paula loves them more than anything. And let me tell you: Edward is still wearing his scarf.

The knitting needles have other uses, of course. The long ones can be used to scratch your back. Keep one in the kitchen, next to the oven and use it to check if your cake is ready. If it is, make yourself some tea and read a nice story.

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*Page 28*

The knitting needles have knitted a little thought for you:

Tiny braids and thick braids are among the more challenging patterns. Paula will learn them when she's older. She can't even start by herself yet. Her mum loops the yarn onto the needles. Then she knits a couple rows so Paula can easily continue.

And when the scarf is so long that it can wrap around her neck at least three times, then her mum takes it off the needles, because she has to finish the last row so it won't unravel.

*Page 31*

Today, Paula made a mistake when knitting. Mum took the knitting in her hands and started unravelling it. Oh no! All her hard work was ruined. Just like that! Paula started to tear up, so her mum knitted new rows, lots of new rows to make her feel better. Paula's knitting was now indeed longer than it was before the mistake.

And when her mum made a mistake, she had no trouble undoing it. She didn't get angry at all. Not even a sigh. She pulled out her needle, pulled the yarn and hop, hop, hop the loops went until the mistake was no longer there.

Then she carefully looped the needle through and knitted on: click clack, plink plank, click clack, plink plank...

Mum, I love you!