

# Éva Janikovszky

Born in the Hungarian town of Szeged in 1926, Éva Janikovszky read philosophy, ethnography, Hungarian and German literature at university between 1944 and 1948. She continued her studies in Budapest but this time with psychology and sociology before eventually qualifying as a teacher in 1950. Her first job was at the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Education before she first started to work for Móra Publishing as a proof-reader in 1953 where she was made chief editor in 1964. She continued to work for the company until her retirement in 1987 but remained closely linked with the publishing house and joined its board of directors. She was the president of IBBY from its formation in 1978 before stepping down in 1995 and was elected as president of the Children's Literature Division of the Hungarian Writers' Association in 1996. Her first book was published in 1957 and she wrote more than thirty books during her long career that have been translated into more than thirty languages. She also wrote for newspapers and journals, developed film scripts and made regular appearance on both television and radio. Many of her books have been made into animations as well as TV films. She died after a long battle with illness on June 14th 2003.



“My Dad always tells to watch out otherwise I’ll irritate him. But he always says this too late when I’ve already managed to do it.”

These few lines make every Hungarian reader over the age of ten think of Éva Janikovszky and her books. Her books are loved by all ages and generations of children have grown up reading them. Her favourite themes are the relationship between children and adults and everyday life with its everyday experiences and conflicts. Her voice and her descriptive manner create a unique literary world beyond compare in Hungarian literature and that was way before its time on the world scene in undermining adult authority. One of the most characteristic aspects of her individual technique is that she constantly moves from one view point to the other. It doesn’t matter what she is writing about, he coin definitely always has two sides and this is one of the sources of her indefatigable humour. She takes a child’s point of view and describes what makes him or her happy, she then speaks with the voice of the parent and why this makes them not quite so happy. This kind of split-screen and her short, succinct phrasing add up to make a very entertaining read with situations that we all know too well and handled with an ironic look at both perspectives.

The other source of her humour comes from the way in which the author speaks with the authentic voice of a child at kindergarten, at school or suffering the pangs of teenage. Adult readers are presented with the things that they say everyday but from the mouths of children like: “Speak Up When You’re Spoken to!” or “Come here, I want to talk to you!” Éva Janikovszky’s voice is just as credible as an adult whether it be the lady next door or grandma. She speaks in her own voice in many of her later works that are primarily directed towards an adult audience.

Her richest humour comes from taking “adult wisdom” and standing it on its head. She doesn’t only put the words into but also takes them from children’s mouth and this instantly turns established clichés into jokes that often appear almost absurd which is hardly surprising when you hear a grown up say things like: “...tell me, son, what do you use your head for?” And this produces the predictable reply of: “...I head footballs with it, grow my hair on it and keep an ear on either side of it that I can wiggle if you want.”

When you read Éva Janikovszky’s ironic but always loving “cliché technique”, you realise that the author is a master when it comes to describing model situations. The artist, László Réber, is the perfect partner in crime who takes her lines and effortlessly translates them into his.

The topics covered in Éva Janikovszky’s books, her humour and her voice are loved by readers from all over the world and it is no surprise that her books have been successfully translated into thirty-five languages.



### *Her main literary awards:*

- 1973 Deutscher Jugendbuchpreis – The Children’s Book of the Year for  
“If I Were A Grown Up”
- 1977 Attila József Prize
- 1979 Youth Prize
- 1986 “For The Children” Prize
- 1988 Knight of the Order of the Smile (Poland)
- 1990 Greve Prize
- 1993 “For Budapest” Prize
- 1994 Prize for Children’s Literature presented by the  
National Association of Hungarian Magyar Creative Artists
- 1996 Order of Merit of the Hungarian Republic, Officers’ Cross
- 2001 Móra Prize
- 2002 Saint Imre Prize
- 2003 Kossuth Prize



# Janikovszky Éva's books *for children*

## Flash in the Pan

The heroine of our story is the sixteen-year-old Vera Palócz, who is overloaded with emotion. The first thing she does is to fall head over heels in love with Iharos who is playing Peer Gynt and she carries on tumbling and falls for the conductor, János Kolozs. She sends letter after letter to János Kolozs who is far from being a conductor. The teenage girl's father watches the emotional tribulations of his daughter and does everything in his power to understand Vera who transforms from girl to woman before his very eyes.



## Golden Flowers

This classic girl's story is set in the Budapest of the 1960s. The main character, Ágnes Burián, suffers a great disappointment: she doesn't get accepted into university. She spends a while feeling sorry for herself before deciding to get on with life and to work as a nurse in a hospital. This is not simply a young girl's story but also a story of an era and a city. The book has been published in several foreign editions.

## Who Does That Kid Take After?

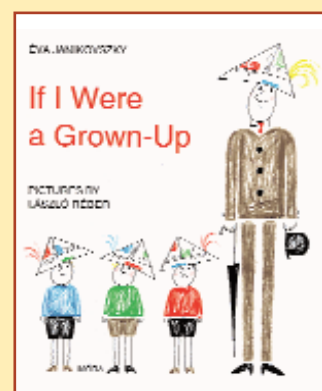
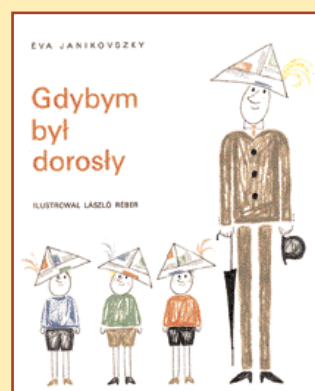
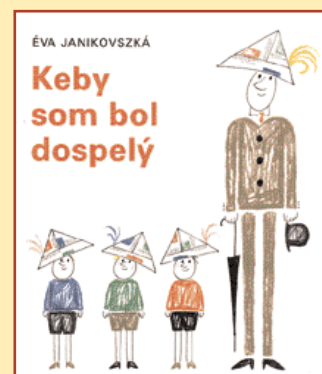
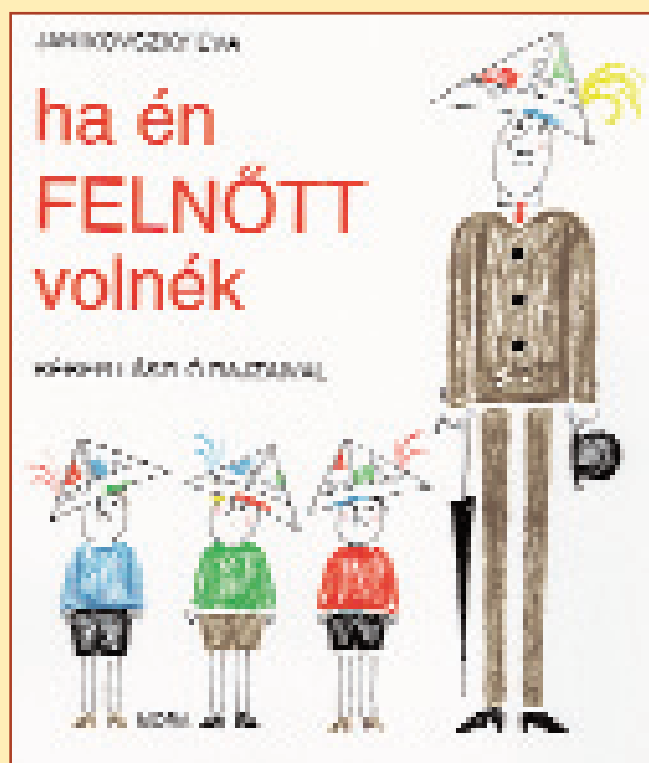
"While I was small and clever and kind and pretty, they always seemed to know who I took after. Since I've been bigger, clumsy and gangly, they just sit and say, 'Who does that kid take after?'" The complaint is a familiar one to us all and provides just as much amusement and support to a teenage reader as it can to a parent. Illustrated by László Réber.

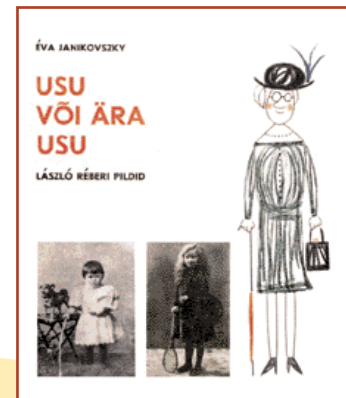
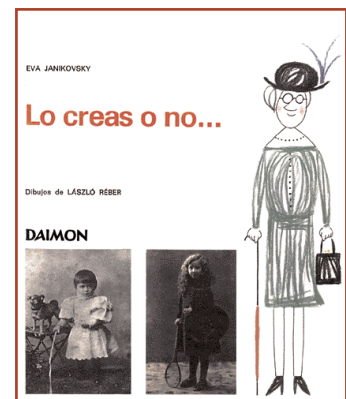
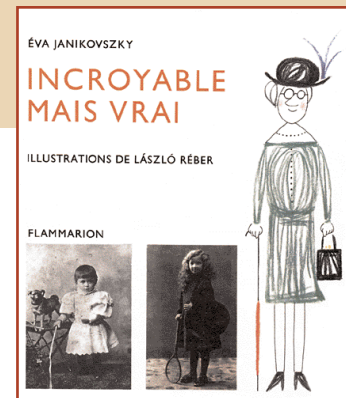
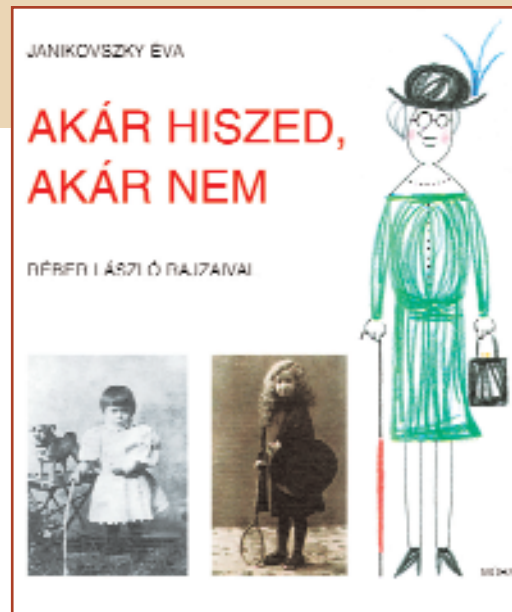




## If I Were A Grown Up

“You be happy while you’re still a child!” is what grown ups like to say. This is despite the fact that all children know that it’s much better being an adult! Grown ups can do exactly what they want and children have to do exactly what adults want them to do. The book is an extended child’s monologue that was an outstanding success when it was first published in Hungary and won the author and her partner, the graphic artist László Réber, deserved international recognition.





## Believe It Or Not

The child hero of the book tries to explain to his little sister that the world did actually exist before she was born. He also tells her that everyone was once a child, everyone has a mother and a father and if they are lucky, everyone has a child and so it is completely relative as to who is whose child. The book is illustrated with a charming combination of old photographs and drawings by László Réber.



“When my dad say, ‘Come here, I want to talk to you,’ then it is certain that something’s wrong. Because if there’s nothing wrong then he doesn’t say that he wants to talk to me, he just goes on and does it.” The author’s monologue talks about Danny, Bori and their parents and once again takes aim at the laughable habits of grown ups. The illustrations are provided by László Réber.

## Grass Reaching The Sky

The hero of the story, Misu, is afraid that the summer holiday that he is to spend with Uncle Dezső and Auntie Poldi is going to be unbelievably boring. But he has never been so wrong! Uncle Dezső and Auntie Poldi's old house holds many secrets and the whole place is full of fascinating figures. The book was successfully adapted for TV in 1979.



## It's Belting Down

Two people stand waiting at a bus stop: Bill Danilovics MacKonov, the astronaut and inventor, and Son of the White Stag, who, despite the name, is a girl and what's more, she's a pure-blooded Indian. Her hair is held together with an elastic band and she can do the tiniest bit of magic. As they stand around waiting for the bus it begins to rain and the two of them start to chat in the downpour that follows. They discuss an invention that is something like an umbrella but that has sides and a base and you can see out of it as well as walk into it. Isn't that an original idea? Illustrations are provided by László Réber.

## Cvikkedli - Monocle Man

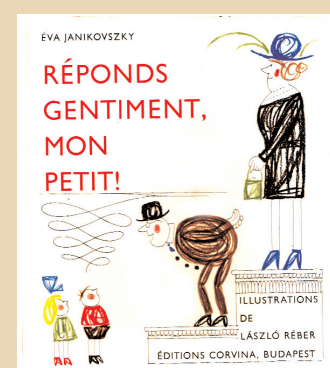
The author's last work for children is once again about Danny who comes across an unknown photo in the wooden box that houses the family photo collection and it shows an old man with a monocle, smoking a pipe and wearing a hat. Danny starts to investigate the identity of this stranger who he nicknames the Monocle Man. This book is especially recommended for children who have recently learned to read. Illustrated by László Réber.





## Speak Up When You're Spoken To!

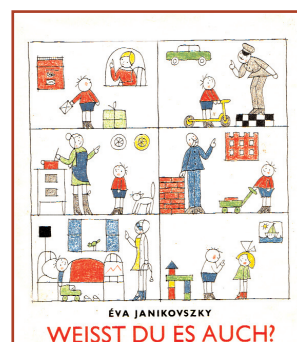
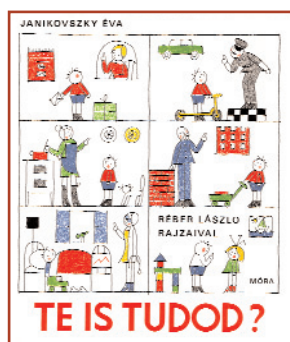
"It was easy to answer nicely when I was young... Since I've been big... I often don't know how to answer... And when I'm a grown up, I'm going to ask children questions in a way that means they will never need to be told to 'answer the question nicely'." Illustrated by László Réber.





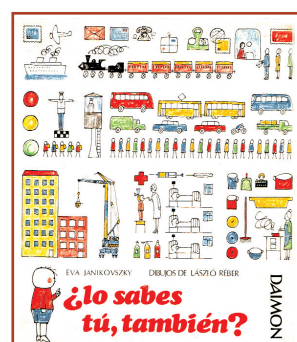
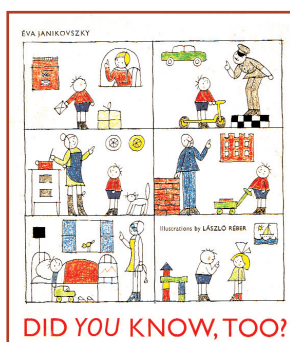
## Happiness!

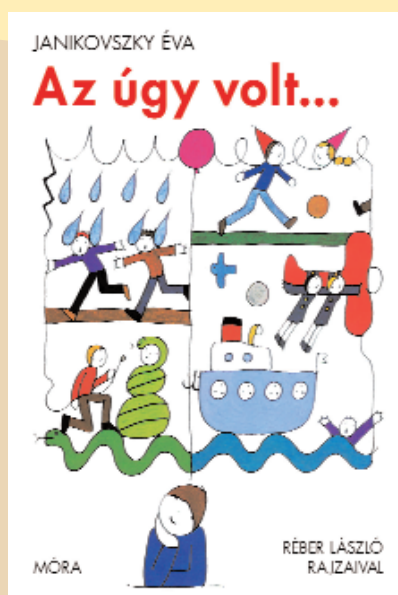
"I'd like it if everybody was happy: my mum, my dad, my grandma, my grandpa, Micike, my little sister and me. But unfortunately not everybody is happy all the time, not even me." The story is told in the author's favourite style using the playful monologue of a child and is completed by the illustrations of László Réber.



## You Know It, Don't You?

"Nobody's playing with me! Why?", complains the protagonist of the book but he is soon consoled when adults explain to him what they are doing all day. Step by step he gets to know that his mom works at the post office, his dad's a policeman and his grandad is a crane operator. „You know it, don't you?“, asks the author and by the end even nursery age „readers“ get to know what a postman, a policeman or a crane operator is doing.

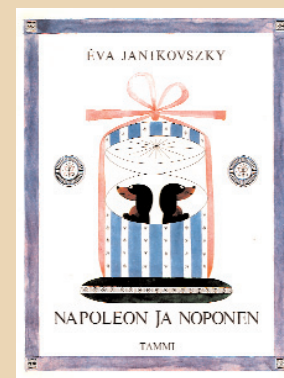
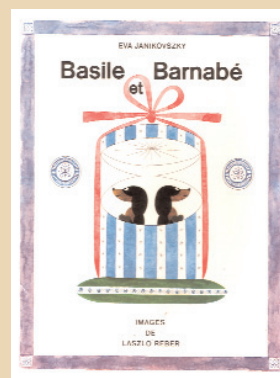
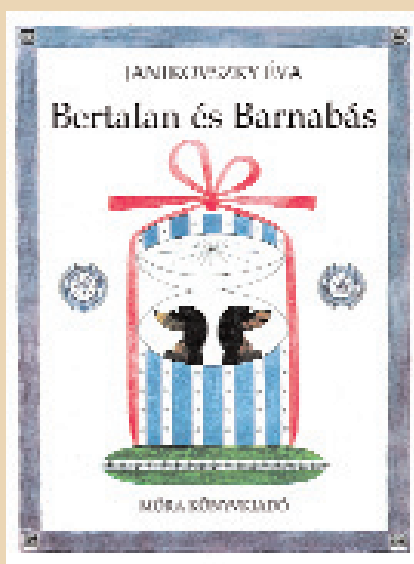




## What Happened Was...

"What happened was: I came back from summer camp and everyone at home ran up to me asking what's new, what was it like and to tell them everything.

I generally know what's new but I just don't like being asked all the time and so that's why I said that nothing was new." The author holds a mirror up to us all who, think about all manner of things, know about all sorts of things when it comes to what's new but we simply respond by saying: "nothing". László Réber's wonderfully humorous drawings bring us closer to understanding and loving the comedy and lyricism of being a teenager.



## Bertalan and Barnabás

The book's main characters are twin dachshunds who live happily with Aunt Borbála and Uncle Boldizsár in their lavender-scented garden. Their owners love them just as much as if they were their grandchildren. The problem is that the dachshund twins can be easily confused for one another and that is why their owners often get them mixed up. Thankfully, this confusing situation changes towards the end of the book. Illustrated by László Réber.

JANIKOVSKY ÉVA

# MÁR MEGINT

RÉBER LÁSZLÓ RAJZANAL



ÉVA JANIKOVSKY

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Éva Janikovszky

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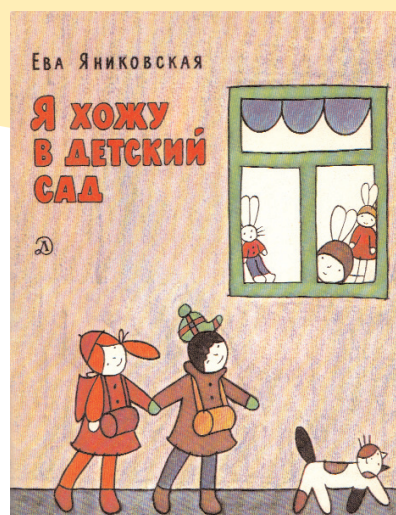
Kuvittanut László Réber



### Not Again

“When we do painting, my dad works around barefoot and my mother slides on the floor on all fours and if I happen to accidentally knock the water over, they don’t shout ‘not again’ but they tell Bori ‘that at least your little brother is trying to help’.” This is Danny’s hilarious monologue as he describes family life to us once again accompanied by the original and inspired drawings of László Réber.





## I'm At Kindergarten Now

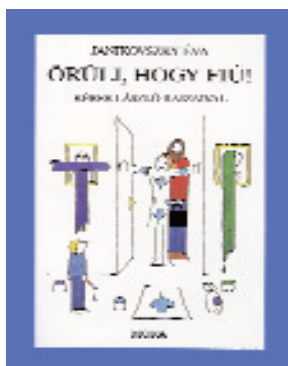
"The day that Danny first attended kindergarten, he was overjoyed that he could go but not quite so happy about the fact that he had to stay." His self-confidence soon builds and with it kindergarten life with its little happening, joys and anxieties. This book has been published in several foreign languages and is colourfully and vibrantly illustrated by the drawings of László Réber.



## I'm At School Now

A child's first school bag brings such happiness and pride! Danny also sets off with pride and joy to school where his enthusiasm does wane a little but his interest grows and grows. When asked by grown ups whether going to school is good, Danny can't answer because sometimes it's good and sometimes it's bad. This playfully written work is illustrated with the contagiously colourful drawings of László Réber. Recommended for both young school children and parents.

# I libri di Éva Janikovszky per *adulti*



## Be Glad It's A Boy! Be Glad It's A Girl!

Both her books speak with a mother's voice. The mother in *Be Glad It's A Boy!* is quite sure that she is going to give birth to a girl and dreams about how kind, sweet and patient a little girl can be. The other mother in *Be Glad It's A Girl!* already has her unborn child down as champion sportsman and unstoppable example of the male of the species – because the baby in her tummy is guaranteed to be a boy! The one expecting a girl has a boy and the other mother, expecting a boy, is surprised by the birth of a girl. And are they disappointed? Not in the least! Any parent can recognise themselves when they read Éva Janikovszky's humorous and generous books while children are amused and entertained by quite how odd grown ups can be. Both books are illustrated by the author's constant creative partner, László Réber.



## Written For Grown Ups

This work contains those pieces that the author wrote for various newspapers over the years. One piece comes from the 1970s, another from the 1980s and a third guides us into the 1990s. This collection with its subtle humour and oft times slightly melancholic mood exudes positivity throughout – so typical of her works for children – and is illustrated by László Réber.



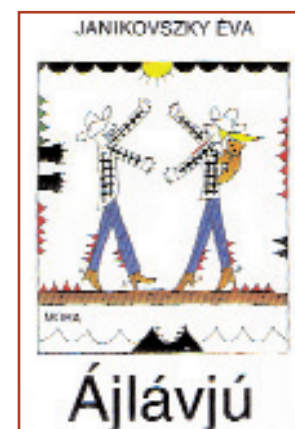
## Smile Please!

The title of this collection of short writings encourages us all to smile. "Not constantly, of course, and not from dawn to dusk, but we should have one ready – for whatever occasion – to shine at anytime," writes Éva Janikovszky. "Because a smile, and I am convinced of this, always brings a little light into our lives and into the lives of those around us. It might be only a little but it can all add up to mean a lot." The author's every word and phrase radiate the joy of a wise individual who accepts and loves her fellow man. The books carries the illustrations of László Réber.



## I Luv You!

This book contains a collection of short stories full of the wisdom and enthusiasm for which the author has become so well-known. It is divided into two parts. The first half takes a very close look at everyday situations; the sort of things that could happen to any one of us. The second half partly deals with the arrival of autumn and the preparations for Christmas as well as the mass hysteria that surrounded the year 2000. The illustrations are provided by the author's creative partner, László Réber.



## It's A Great Life

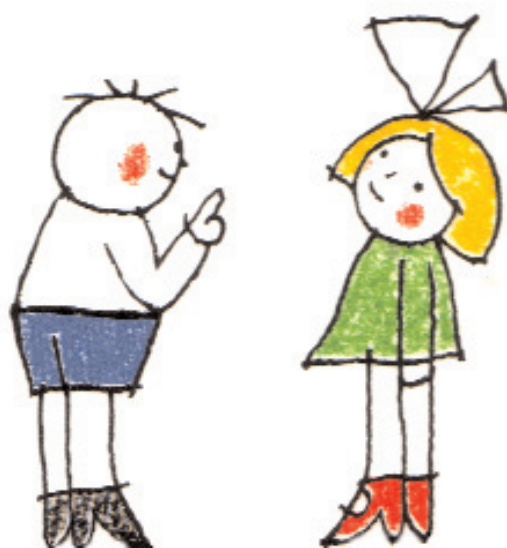


"I have borrowed the above statement from – with her kind permission - my five-year-old granddaughter, Verus, and with her voice it had an overtly enthusiastic and dynamic ring to it. However, we all know that, said with slightly different intonation by grown ups and grandparents, it can mean exactly the opposite – it sort of turns down at the corners. But who is right? I am of the opinion that both views have their place and life most definitely has its ups and its downs. And as we grow older, the latter sometimes receives a little too much emphasis." The short and largely melancholy essays in this book are illustrated by László Réber. This work was the graphic artist's last creative cooperation with the author as he sadly died the year that the book was published.

## Encore

This, the author's last book, is once again a selection from her works written for an adult audience. These short pieces, written with her customary enthusiasm and wisdom, awaken the reader to a great many things. One example of this speaks eloquently of how "everyday love" can often be far better than fancy celebrations and however clever we may think we are, "we still have something to learn". There are also lighter segments that look at strange and amusing topics such as "the ideal lady's handbag" and "hospital etiquette – from the patient's side". Éva Janikovszky is kind, calm and patient. She rarely loses her temper and even then she does her utmost to bring a lighter touch to her subject matter.





**MÓRA**  
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