



by Annemarie Andre
Müry Salzmann Verlag
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Fiction

Slugs

Nacktschnecken

review

This imaginative debut novel by Austrian writer and poet Annemarie Andre is told from the perspective of Charlotte, the youngest member of the Leitner family whose mother is struggling to make ends meet. Luckily, Charlotte is a resourceful, plucky girl who makes the most of situations, much like her heroine, Pippi Longstocking.

When Charlotte's mother sews her a princess dress for carnival but pretends to have ordered it, Charlotte spares her mother's feelings. Since her stroke, her mother mustn't get upset or her blood pressure will rise. At the party, the girls her age look like the pictures of princesses that Charlotte is constantly drawing, with perfect dresses and shiny tiaras. She watches them running around eating sugary doughnuts but doesn't join in their games in case they mock her, just like they did when she wore a pink leotard to gym class at school and they laughed at her chubby tummy. In her dreams, she is like Cinderella, waiting to be rescued by her father, a man who remains elusive. Penny-pinching is the only way her mother can afford to keep the family afloat; she blacks out the expiry date on tins in a clumsy attempt to hide how hard up they are, but fools no one.

Charlotte's brother Marcel prides himself on the family's ability to scrimp and save rather than throw money down the drain. They don't need Gameboys or TVs to be happy! He's an inventor with some strange habits – like collecting slugs, which he chops up with a homemade device. He's also invented a name for the family – he

calls them the 'Billigdorfer', or 'cheapskates', in an attempt to turn their disadvantage into a virtue. Every time Charlotte hears new words, images pop into her mind. Especially in distressing situations, Charlotte escapes into her head by drawing what she visualises – like the time she draws herself a sister during a heated discussion between her mother and Marcel. It doesn't help that Manfred, her mother's new partner, drinks too much and doesn't have a job.

Seen entirely from Charlotte's perspective as a child, *Slugs* is a touching, authentic and, at times, humorous exploration of how poverty can lead to social exclusion, especially among young children. Andre was awarded the Hans-Weigel literature grant from the State of Lower Austria to complete this compelling and topical family saga.

Find out more:

<https://www.muerysalzmann.com/belletristik/nacktschnecken>

press quotes

"Annemarie Andre's debut novel tells the story of a clever child who gains in insight and stands strong in the face of challenging circumstances."

Die Furche

"Annemarie Andre depicts the oppressive situation of a family in financial difficulty from the perspective of a child who has to go without many of the things her schoolmates take for granted."

Die Presse/Spectrum

about the author



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Annemarie Andre was born 1994 in Waidhofen/Ybbs, Austria, and lives and works in Vienna and Amsterdam. She studied Art History, Journalism and New Media in Vienna.

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Mona Müry – mmuery@muerysalzmann.at