

# Cappelen Damm Agency *Spring 2019*



Rikka – for Real and Forever is a book about being 10 years old, between being children and youth – and NOT being in love. Everything changes that autumn when Rikka's best friend suddenly falls in love. Because Rikka isn't in love. Absolutely not! She has more than enough on her plate with a dad who lives in another town, little siblings and stepparents – not to mention a new boy in the house next door. And when she falls out with Lise as well, nothing is the way it should be any more. Maiken Nylund makes her writing debut with a book that should hit everyone who is in between being children and youth.

## Rikka – For Real and Forever

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**Rikka - For Real and Forever**  
Maiken Nylund

## Maiken Nylund

*b. 1980*

Maiken Nylund studied to become a writer at the Norwegian Institute for Children's Books. She published poems in the international anthology, *Ice Floe*. *Rikka for real and forever* is her first book.



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**Sample translation from Rikka – For Real and Forever  
by Lucy Moffatt**

**Best friends, or ...?**

“I love summer!” Rikka says, staring up at the blue sky. She’s lying on her back in the grass, and the blades of grass tickle her palm as she strokes them.

“I love ice cream,” says Lise, who’s lying beside her, also staring up at the sky. Lise is Rikka’s very best friend.

“I love it when it’s so hot outside that your ice cream has nearly melted before it slides down your throat,” Rikka says, and Lise giggles.

“I love it when you can stay outside all day long and until really late at night without the grownups telling you its bedtime,” shouts Lise, loud enough so her mother can’t help hearing.

Then Lise turns over onto her side and looks straight at Rikka before saying, pretty quietly, “I love Tom in B Class.”

And then there’s silence. Lise blushes. Rikka looks up at the cloudless blue sky.

“I’m in love with Tom in B Class,” Lise repeats.

It hasn’t occurred to Rikka that Lise might be in love, or that she even could be in love. In fact Rikka hasn’t thought much about being in love at all. Maybe she should have, because now suddenly Lise is in love and she isn’t.

“You know Tom, don’t you?” Lise says. “Maybe you can set us up.”

“Set you up?” Rikka asks, as if she doesn’t understand a thing.

“You know Tom, don’t you?” Lise repeats.

“Well yes,” Rikka says, desperately trying to think back to the last time she saw Tom. She can’t remember. “Not that well any more, though,” she says.

“If you know somebody you know them and that’s that,” Lise says. “You don’t just suddenly stop knowing somebody you know, do you?”

“I know Tom because we’re neighbours. But he’s in B Class and I’m in A Class. He plays football with B Class and I’m with YOU.”

She leans on the YOU when she says it so Lise will understand that she just doesn't know Tom all that well any more. In fact, she sees so little of him that it feels as if Tom lives on a totally different planet from her now.

"You see? It's perfect," Lise says. "You know Tom from before, so you can meet up with him and then set us up."

She laughs. Rikka doesn't.

After that, Lise talks about nothing but Tom. All the time.

And then she says, "We need to find somebody for you too."

Rikka thinks about the boys in her class. She doesn't much want to be with anybody. Not from B Class either.

A nasty thought suddenly crosses Rikka's mind. What if she can't fall in love?

"Do you think maybe some people can't fall in love?" she asks cautiously but casually. So Lise won't realize she's talking about herself.

"Everybody falls in love," says Lise, as if she's suddenly a world expert on being in love.

Rikka stares at the ground. Imagine if she's the only person in the world who can't fall in love. What then? Or maybe she just doesn't know what it's supposed to feel like. What if she's been walking around in love for ages but just hasn't realized it?

"So how does it feel?" Rikka asks. "Being in love?"

"A bubbly feeling in your tummy," Lise says contentedly.

Rikka checks but there's no bubbling in her tummy.

"Shall we cycle down to the sea for a swim?" Rikka asks, standing up. "I can ask Mum if she wants to come with us."

"Imagine having eyes as blue as Tom's!" Lise sighs.

Rikka has never noticed that his eyes are especially blue.

"Shall we cycle down for a swim?" Rikka asks again, but Lise still isn't listening. So Rikka says she has to go home anyway. That it's dinnertime, even though they've already eaten today.

Rikka walks slowly up the hill to her house. If there's one thing she *doesn't* love, it's Lise being in love. She picks up a stick and runs it along the fence. Clunk, clunk, clunk, the stick goes, as it clunks between the planks. She'll be going to Dad's for the weekend so she can't spend it with Lise. It's stupid having to

be away from Lise every other weekend at the best of times. But now it's twice as stupid. What if Lise gets herself a boyfriend next weekend? Imagine if Rikka comes home next Sunday and doesn't have a best friend any more.

She drops the stick and wonders what to do next. Is she just going to spend the rest of the day all on her own? As she walks past Tom's house, a shiver runs down her spine. It's as if something has happened that has totally changed the whole of Pinehills.

"Rikka, come!" shouts her little sister Anna.

She and Nils come running up. They're twins and are only three.

"Could you play with Anna and Nils for a bit?" Mum asks, and Rikka sighs.

It feels like Mum's always lurking around just waiting to ask Rikka to look after Anna and Nils. That's why they mostly hang out at Lise's house because Lise's an only child.

### **Set-up fiasco**

Next day, Rikka stands around with Lise in break. She's ready to die of boredom.

"Did you see Tom in the corridor?" asks Lise.

"Yes," Rikka sighs.

"What's his favourite food?" she asks.

"I don't know," Rikka groans.

"Has he got a big room?" Lise persists.

"Not really," says Rikka. "It's just a regular room."

Yesterday, before Lise told her about being in love, everything was totally normal. Now it's almost impossible to get through to her.

"And he's got a dog too!" chirps Lise, starry-eyed. "I've always wanted a dog!"

Rikka feels a jabbing pain in her tummy. Pip is almost partly her dog. She's known Pip since he was a tiny pup who climbed onto her chest and crawled onto her lap. Sometimes Pip suddenly turns up in their house even though he doesn't live there. Is he going to end up being Lise and Tom's dog now?

When the bell rings for home time, Lise whispers, "Let's spy on Tom!"

He's just heading out of the school gates a bit ahead of them.

“No,” says Rikka. “Do we have to?”

“Maybe you can set us up today,” Lise says, staring at Tom, enchanted.

“Can’t we cycle down to the sea and have a swim instead? Come on – it’s so hot!” Rikka groans.

“I can’t be bothered,” Lise says.

“You didn’t want to go yesterday either!”

“I want to spy on Tom,” Lise says, walking after him with rapid steps.

Maybe, Rikka thinks, we might just as well follow him. And after he’s gone into his house we can cycle down for a swim.

They follow Tom. He lives in the next house down from Rikka’s. He takes the shortcut through the hedge into his garden and vanishes.

“That’s that,” Rikka says, with a sigh of relief.

“You have to go and ring on his door and ask him if he wants to be my boyfriend,” Lise says, clinging onto Rikka’s T-shirt. She gazes at her with pleading eyes.

“Right now?” asks Rikka.

She really isn’t keen. This is mega embarrassing.

“Yes!” Lise says.

“Can’t you ask him yourself?” Rikka says, tugging her T-shirt out of Lise’s fingers.

“Are you crazy? I wouldn’t have the nerve!”

“Me neither!”

“But he’s your neighbour,” Lise nags. “It’s no big deal for you!”

Rikka tries to picture herself ringing on the door and asking if Tom wants to be Lise’s boyfriend. It’s impossible. She can’t do it.

“Come on…” Lise begs. “Please!”

Rikka hesitates. If she says no, Lise will get cross. If she says yes, Lise will probably get herself a boyfriend. She doesn’t much like either of those options. Lise shoves Rikka ahead of her through the shortcut in the hedge. Suddenly, there she is standing in the garden. In front of her is Tom’s house; behind her stands Lise, blocking the way. It’s like she doesn’t have any choice. Rikka goes right up to the house and round the corner. She turns around; Lise can’t see her now. She walks slowly up the steps. Should she just go home? Hide under the duvet until Lise stops being in love. Rikka goes up to the door.

The door opens the second she pushes the bell. It happens so fast she nearly falls over backwards and down the steps. Tom and his mum Mona are both standing in the hall with rucksacks on their backs and shoes on their feet, ready to go out. Mona holds Pip firmly by the collar. Pip's feet patter against the floor like drumsticks, he wags his tail and is really pleased to see Rikka. Tom and Mona both laugh at how keen Pip is to get some Rikka cuddles.

"Hi Rikka," Mona says. "How nice to see you. We're just on our way out to go for a swim in the river pool. Do you want to come along?"

It goes quiet for a moment. Everything she's supposed to be asking about Lise and boyfriends and set-ups is quite impossible to say.

"Only if you want to, of course," Mona says.

Tom doesn't say anything. It feels weird to go swimming with Tom. She never hangs out with Tom any more. But at the same time, Lise can't be bothered to go swimming with her even though it's so hot. And suddenly Rikka realizes what it'll be like if Lise and Tom start going out. Then it'll be Lise who gets to go along for a swim. Then it'll be Lise Pip wants cuddles from and wags his tail at. Rikka will be left sitting at home alone bored out of her wits for the rest of her life.

"Well?" Mona asks with a smile. "Would you like to? I can ring your mum and ask if it's okay."

"Yes," is all she says.

And she doesn't run back down to Lise but up the steps in her own garden instead. Fetches her swimming costume and hurries back down again. So quickly that she doesn't have time to think about Lise. No, she doesn't want to think about Lise.

Rikka's tummy aches as Mona backs the car out. It's all going too slowly. What if Lise has started wondering what's taking all this time and has walked up the street and is standing by the driveway instead of down by the hedge? Maybe Mona and Tom will ask what Lise's doing there. What's Rikka supposed to say then? But Lise isn't standing by the driveway. She's nowhere to be seen. And suddenly everything stops going slowly and starts going really fast and Rikka doesn't have time to say anything either. Suddenly they're at the top of the hill and on their way to the mountain and the river pool.

## **The swimming trip**

"We walk up through the wood here and then it's not far from there to the pool," Mona says with a smile. Pip wags his tail and jumps and bounds – first beside Mona, then beside Rikka and Tom. It's as if he just can't decide who he wants to walk beside.

It doesn't feel right to be walking here with Tom and Mona when she's just ditched Lise. It's totally wrong and Rikka regrets it right away. She wishes they could turn around and hurry back again. But Mona, Tom and Pip rush along towards the pool.

"What's on your mind?" Mona asks.

“Nothing,” Rikka says quickly, glad that people can’t hear your thoughts.

They clamber up a steep slope. Mona goes first. Everywhere is buzzing with mosquitoes and bluebottles and butterflies. Rikka’s back sweats beneath her backpack. In a way, Rikka thinks, it’s Lise’s own fault that she’s been left behind. There really wasn’t any need to force her to ring on Tom’s door. Lise could have gone swimming with Rikka instead. Then Rikka wouldn’t have had to go swimming with other people.

“Is Lise away today?” Mona asks suddenly.

“What?” Rikka blurts out.

“It’s just that you’re always together,” Mona says and smiles. “I thought perhaps she was away.”

“Yes,” lies Rikka. “She is.”

There’s nothing else she can say. She certainly can’t tell them that Lise is standing on the other side of Mona’s hedge waiting to be set up. Tom walks ahead of them with Pip. He doesn’t look as if he’s in love with Lise or anybody else. Basically he looks totally normal.

When they finally make it over the top of the steep slope there’s just a long grassy incline leading down towards the bathing hole. Tom runs down the hill laughing, while Pip barks and runs alongside him. Rikka and Mona run down too.

“First one in wins!” Mona shouts, diving into the water.

Tom dives in after her, in exactly the same way as Mona. Rikka walks out into the water. It’s cold against her toes and shins. She can’t just hurl herself in headfirst.

“Put your head under!” Tom shouts. “You’ll feel a lot warmer afterwards.”

“I know,” Rikka shouts back. “But it’s so cold!”

She takes a deep breath. Tom and Mona swim and splash further out. She has to just do it, right now. Rikka ducks under the water and feels it surrounding her all the way over the top of her head. And now it *is* a lot warmer. Mona gets out of the water and dries herself off.

“Who wants pancakes for supper?” she shouts.

“Me!” shout Rikka and Tom in unison. Tom dives to the bottom and comes up again with a stone in his hand.

“Put your head under and listen to the noise it makes when I drop the stone,” he says, with laughing eyes.

Rikka dips her head under and Tom drops the stone. It hits the bottom with a loud, sharp clunk. They keep swimming right up until Mona has finished cooking the pancakes. Afterwards, when they’re sitting in the sun drying off and eating with their towels wrapped around them, Mona gives a happy sigh.



“It’s days like this that it feels good to be a human being!” she says.

Rikka knows what she means as she sits there snuggled up to Pip. Swimming and eating pancakes must be two of the best things in the world. As long as she doesn’t think about Lise, at least.

When Rikka gets home, Mum is standing by the window staring at the other house next door.

“Somebody’s moved in,” she says, craning her neck.

Rikka climbs up on the kitchen bench to take a look.

“It was about time,” Mum said. “That house has stood empty for nearly a year.”

There’s a whole gang of people in the driveway going to and fro with boxes in their arms. There’s a boy the same age as Rikka too. He isn’t carrying any boxes. He’s cycling. To and fro on the driveway. He does a wheelie then plonks his front wheel down again and carries on cycling back and forth.

“I can’t believe they let him ride a bike without a helmet,” Mum mutters.

Rikka rolls her eyes. That’s just like Mum.

“Can you play with Anna and Nils for a bit,” Mum asks. “While I make supper.”

“Okay,” Rikka groans.

“Shall we watch a cartoon?” Rikka asks, going into the TV room. The twins make such a fuss and she really can’t face playing with them right now. She can’t stop thinking about how she ditched Lise behind the hedge. She feels bad inside every time she thinks about it. Luckily, the twins are quiet as mice.

When she goes to bed, she sits right up close to the little round window on the far side of her bed and peers out at the neighbouring house. The lights are on in all the windows. She can see everything they’re up to because they haven’t hung any curtains yet. The boy must have the loft room, just like her. He’s in there now unpacking his things from the boxes. Suddenly he looks straight at her, from his window to hers. Rikka quickly ducks and lays herself flat on the bed. What if he saw her spying? Rikka’s head feels hot and she hides under her duvet.

## **Enemies**

The next day, Rikka cycles down the hill just like always. She cycles all the way down to Lise’s house. Sorry about yesterday, that’s what she can say, she thinks. Or she can ask if Lise had a nice day. Or she can pretend nothing happened. All these options sound equally stupid. The door opens but the only person who comes out is Lise’s mum.

“Lise has already cycled to school,” she says.

“Oh, okay,” Rikka replies, getting back on her bike again as if it’s quite normal for Lise to have cycled off without waiting for her. It’s never happened before. Now things are even worse and it’s total impossible to know what she should say. There can only be one reason why Lise has cycled to school without waiting.

It feels as if it takes an eternity to park her bike and walk up to the main entrance. It takes just as much of an eternity to walk along the corridor. She wished she knew how cross Lise was.

“Hi,” Rikka says to Lise as she plonks her bag down beside her chair.

Lise doesn’t answer, just sits there staring down at her desk. Rikka takes a deep breath and dives in.

“About yesterday...” she says.

*Then* Lise turns around. She looks at Rikka with narrowed eyes.

“You’re a jerk!” she hisses.

“But...” Rikka says.

Lise turns away and stares out of the window. The gap between Rikka and Lise’s desks looks wider than usual.

“I can explain everything!” Rikka whispers. “I didn’t do it on purpose! I couldn’t ask when...”

“I don’t want to talk to you!” Lise whisper-shouts, looking at Rikka with hard, angry eyes. “Don’t you get it?”

Just then, the teacher tells them to take out their maths books.

Rikka sticks the very tip of her tongue out at Lise, but Lise doesn’t see it anyway because she’s sitting with her back turned as far towards Rikka as it possibly can be.

But the teacher doesn’t have her back to Rikka.

“Rikka and Lise. Are you two okay?”

Rikka pulls a face at the teacher. It just happens. Without her meaning it to.

“Rikka!” the teacher says, quite taken aback. “Are you sitting there making faces at me?”

Rikka is pretty taken aback herself.

“No,” she says, because after all she didn’t mean to do it.

Some of the kids in the class snigger. Ole laughs right out loud.

“Rikka?” The teacher says again. “What was that about? You can’t go doing things like that.”

Rikka shakes her head and stares down at her desk. Wishes she could just vanish into thin air. Ole is still laughing. Maybe she should ask the head teacher if she can switch to B Class after this. She certainly can't face staying here, that's for sure. Especially since Lise is so cross. It feels as if there's no room for Rikka in this classroom. She watches as the teacher does sums on the whiteboard without managing to keep track until the bell rings for end of class.

"I didn't do it on purpose," Rikka says once again, looking at Lise imploringly.

"Where did you get to, then?" Lise hisses. "I waited and waited and in the end I walked through the garden and up to the door but there was nobody in. And when I rang on your door, you couldn't be bothered to open it!"

"But I wasn't home, was I?" Rikka shouts back.

"So where were you then?" Lise asks, eyes narrowed and hands on hips.

"Tom's mum was there – I couldn't ask."

Lise stares at her angrily. Kind of waits for more.

"I went with them to the river pool," Rikka whispers, and instantly realizes that she'll never be able to explain this to Lise. That Lise will never want to hear how it all fitted together. It's as if nothing she says actually reaches Lise's ears. Or not in the right way at least.

"You were there to ask for me, not to nab him for yourself!" shouts Lise, now in a rage.

"I didn't try to nab him!" Rikka shouts back. "It just happened – I didn't do it on purpose."

"You're a jerk!" Lise hisses. "I hate you!"

Rikka doesn't know what to do with herself. The only thing she can think is that she mustn't start crying, but it feels as if all the wetness in her throat and eyes and nose is on its way out of her face. She grabs her backpack and runs. Out of the classroom, out of the school, and then she cycles quickly up the hill home. She runs up the stairs and into her room and hurls herself onto her bed. She'll never ever be able to clear this up before she goes to Dad's on Friday! She can hear the phone ringing downstairs. It's probably her teacher or Mum. She doesn't pick up. She won't go back to school, not even if they drag her there. Never in her life. She sits by the window and looks over at the house next door. It looks absolutely quiet and empty. There's nobody there now. Only the boxes lying scattered about on the terrace outside show that somebody has moved in. When two o'clock comes around and school closes, Rikka sits by the window again. All of a sudden he comes cycling up. She cranes her neck to get a better look, but suddenly he turns and looks straight up at her window. She quickly flops down on her bed, her heart beating hard and fast. What if he saw her staring at him? Again. Why did she do it?

"Rikka," says Mum, who's suddenly appeared in the doorway. "You and I need to have a serious chat."

Serious chats are the worst and most boring things Rikka can think of.

## **Faking sick**

“Rikka, love,” Mum says, stroking her hair. “You have to go to school.

Rikka shakes her head. She won't. It's Wednesday morning and she refuses to get up. Everybody keeps getting her wrong all the time. Lise and her teacher and Mum and everybody else too. On purpose, it feels like. And on Friday she has to go to Dad's and it's all just impossible.

“I don't want to go away on Friday,” she says, blinking hard to make sure the tears stay in her eyes.

“Don't you, Rikka? Is something wrong? Why not?”

“I don't want to!”

“Did something happen last time you were there?” Mum guesses.

Rikka shakes her head. This has nothing to do with Dad.

“It's nothing like that. I want to be here, with Lise.”

She can't bring herself to admit that she has to fix things between herself and Lise. Because she can't bring herself to tell Mum what's happened.

“We've talked about this lots of times before,” Mum says. “Of course you have to go and spend time with Dad and Gunn and your little sister. It's just for a weekend. And everything will be the same when you get back.”

Mum doesn't understand a thing. She puts a hand on Rikka's forehead.

“Maybe you're coming down with something,” she mutters. “Maybe you're working up a fever. Do you feel sick?”

Rikka takes a deep breath.

“I do feel a bit sick,” she nods.

Mum peers anxiously from her watch to Rikka and back at her watch again.

“Peter's already left and I have to go to work. Can you stay home alone and ring me if you start feeling worse?”

Rikka lets her breath out, relieved. This was easier than she'd hoped.

“Ugh. I hope we won't all come down with some bug now!” Mum says as she dashes downstairs and out of the house to work.

Rikka is left lying alone in her bed. So it's that simple then. All you have to do is say you feel sick and you get to stay at home.

She spreads some bread with the chocolate spread she's only allowed on Sundays because she's home alone and faking sick. She takes the slices of bread upstairs with her and creeps back up to the round window on the far side of her bed. Now there are several men standing outside the house. They're talking and laughing and carrying guitar cases and other cases out of a big delivery van and down into the cellar. Afterwards they go out onto the terrace and light the barbecue. Are they planning to have a barbecue right now? In the morning? Rikka creeps right up close to the window to get a better view. There are five men. They've sat on the terrace. One of them is grilling something on the barbecue.

The phone rings and Rikka picks up. It's Mum.

"How are you doing?" she asks.

"Fine," says Rikka before remembering she's supposed to be ill.

"So you're feeling a bit better then?" Mum asks.

"A bit, maybe," Rikka answers.

"That's good," Mum says.

At quarter to two she goes out and sits on the fencepost by the road. She doesn't know why. She just does it. The delivery van is still on the new neighbours' driveway but the men aren't on the terrace any more. There's music coming out of the cellar. Maybe a band has moved into the house next door? And just then, along he comes. The new boy. What if he thinks she's spying on him again? Rikka's heart thumps so loudly she wonders if he can hear it.

"Hi," he says, braking.

"Hi. I always sit here, you know," Rikka says, and regrets it instantly. It sounds so lame.

"I've seen you before," he says, pointing up at her bedroom window. "Do you live there?"

Rikka swallows so loudly that he most definitely hears it and nods. At once she feels her cheeks grow hot.

"Then we're neighbours," he says and smiles.

She nods again. She doesn't know what to say and just kind of carries on sitting there on the fencepost.

"What's your name?" he asks.

"Rikka," says Rikka.

Why doesn't she ask what his name is? Rikka thinks. She could have, after all.

"I'm Jimmy," the boy says. "I'm named after a dead guitarist." He grins.

“Oh,” Rikka says, because that sounds really cool, but she isn’t named after anybody. And then suddenly, without thinking it through, she says: “I can put my whole hand in my mouth.”

Jimmy stands there for a second or two staring at her. Rikka wishes she could turn back time and keep her mouth shut instead. Why did she say that?

“Show us then,” he says.

“No,” she says. “I have to go in and do my homework.”

She jumps down off the fencepost and hurries inside.

Rikka lies down on the floor in the hall staring up at the ceiling and listening to her heart pounding in her chest. How could she be so stupid as to say something so lame? That she can put her whole hand in her mouth. She bangs her palm against the floor.

“Argh!” she shouts out loud. “Why am I so lame?”

“What on earth are you up to?” Mum says when she comes home from work a bit later. “Why are you lying here?”

“I just had to,” Rikka says, because that’s the truth of the matter.