

## The Colours of The Northern lights

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Inga-Wiktoria Påve (ill.)

The Saami Siida family consists of mother and father and children; Joret, Risten and their little brother Guovvsu. One evening, the children have to stay at home on their own, as their mother and father must go and see to the reindeer herd.

The children are strictly forbidden to go outside or to let in anybody they don't know. But then strangers appear in the form of snub-nosed children who start throwing snowballs at the Saami Siida children's goahti (type of Saami dwelling), teasing them and daring them to come out and play, until finally, the Siida children are persuaded to leave the goahti, even though their mother and father have strictly forbidden them to do so.

The smallest child, Guovssu, starts teasing the northern-lights. The northern-lights start to flicker and sweep the youngster into the air. The children's dog sees what is happening and races off in the direction of the reindeer herd to get help. Their mother notices that the northern lights have acquired colours and she realizes that she and her husband are about to lose their children to the lights. Father ropes the children with his lasso. The children must undo their coloured scarves from around their necks in order to escape. And that's how the northern lights got their colours.

“Karen Anne Buljo tells a traditional Sámi story of how the dangerous northern lights came to get their colours. The Sámi have always warned their children through storytelling not to challenge the forces of nature. Danger is everywhere and children are taught to think independently from an early age. We can see how the story of this book reflects exactly this, as a mother tells her children about why it's so dangerous to defy and tease light without colour. The northern lights

became colourless and are now on an eternal hunt for colours. In the tradition of Sámi storytelling, stories were used in the upbringing of children instead of prohibitions and orders. This was how children were guided. According to Sámi tradition, the northern lights should not be teased, as it can go wrong and they can take children. Everyone should respect the northern lights and other celestial bodies. The tradition is still alive today.”

**Nordic Council**



**Guovssu guovssahasat**  
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**Karen Anne Buljo** lives in Máze, in Kautokeino municipality, and has written books for children and young adults as well as radio drama for both children and adults. She has also published collections of poems as well as a book of travel writing. She has, in addition to all this, also produced teaching-material.