

Mudlum. Diary of a Rose Fanatic

“This is a story about an individual and a garden, soil and roses, the birds of the sky and the bugs beneath the ground. It’s fine reading for both those who dig through the dirt up to their elbows and those who’d rather lounge on a little bench beside a hedge and not lift a finger.”

#eco novel #gardening #roses #collecting #passion

A middle-aged woman moves from the city to her ancestral family farmstead on a small Estonian island, where she plants a gigantic rose garden. She begins collecting different species of roses and ends up obsessed with the hobby. Gardening swells into fanaticism: she must have as many flowers as possible, online retailers offer an endless selection, and her temperamental favourites require perpetual care, replanting, and appreciation.

What does a modern-day person ponder while gardening? A large and worrying world rages all around the rose garden: droughts and storms, insufficient water resources and crop failure, crises and wars. Although concerns have smaller dimensions in the rose garden, they still evoke intense reactions and the causes behind them are, directly or indirectly, tied to the outer world. Visitors to the garden occasionally drop into her literary work. The author also grows roots, having relocated to her hereditary home. All the while, the narrator increasingly thinks about and acquaints with the natural environment, and asks herself: how might I live in a way that gardening hurts no one?

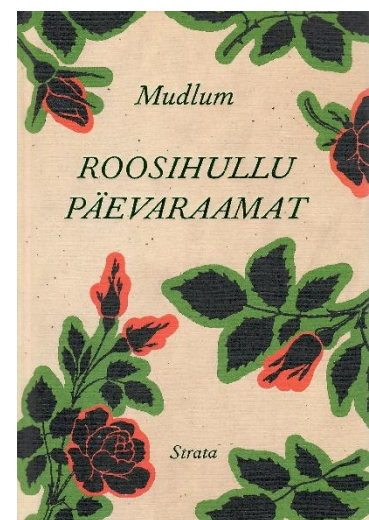
“A woman moves to the countryside to cultivate a life that blossoms and finds that ‘your arms and legs do what they do, but your head thinks whatever it pleases.’”

Heili Sepp, translator and literary critic

 Estonian Literature Centre



Mudlum (b. 1966) lives both in Tallinn and on the small island of Muhu. She has studied theatre studies, literature, and philosophy and graduated from the Estonian Academy of Arts. In 2020, Mudlum’s novel *Poola poisid* (Polish Boys, 2019) won Estonia’s most esteemed annual prose award and the EU Prize for Literature. She has been a member of the Estonian Writers’ Union since 2017.



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