

PAYSHAPES AND THE BEAR

PÉXEPS Y EL OSO

Stories in English and Spanish  
Cuentos en español e inglés

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Illustrations  
Ilustraciones

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Payshapes and the Bear/Péxeps y el Oso  
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This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are fictitious representations of historical figures and events.

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## Nota de la autora

Estos cuentos fueron creados como una respuesta al pedido de mi hijo de dos años para unos “Cuentos de Péxeps y el Oso, para dormir bien”. Al principio no conocíamos estos personajes, pero con el asesoramiento de Dani, toda su familia aprendió a contar cuentos de Péxeps.

Dani es un hombre ahora. No se acuerda de cómo pensó en el nombre de Péxeps, y mientras, los cuentos de Péxeps han logrado una vida y un público propio fuera de nuestro hogar.

Aunque Dani es el creador de estos personajes y su mundo, soy la autora de todos los cuentos de esta colección, que se presentan en el orden en el que fueron escritos.

Quiero agradecer a mi hijo Daniel Kuschinski; a Pat Perrin y Wim Coleman de Chiron Books, quienes están ayudando para que Péxeps alcance un público más amplio; a Fabián Nanni de Salta, Argentina, maravilloso ilustrador de Péxeps; a Iride Rossi de Fiori de Biblioteca de Textos Universitarios de Salta, quien fue la primera editora de Péxeps; y a mis colegas y amigos del Centro San Miguel del PEN Internacional, especialmente Nicholas Patricca, Elizabeth Starcevic, Anne McGravie y Pat Hirschl.

Espero que les guste leer estos cuentos tanto como nos ha gustado crearlos.

## Author's Note

These stories were created in response to my two year old son Dani's request for bedtime stories about “Payshapes and the Bear.” At first we didn't know who these characters were, but with Dani's guidance, his whole family learned to tell them.

Dani is a man now. He can't remember how he thought of the name Payshapes, and meanwhile the Payshapes stories have achieved a life and audience of their own outside of our home.

Though Dani is the creator of these characters and their world, I am the author of all the stories in this collection, which are presented in the order in which I wrote them.

I want to thank my son Daniel Kuschinski himself; Pat Perrin and Wim Coleman of Chiron Books, who are helping Payshapes reach a wider audience; Fabián Nanni of Salta, Argentina, Payshapes' wonderful illustrator; Iride Rossi de Fiori of Biblioteca de Textos Universitarios of Salta, who was Payshapes' first publisher; and my colleagues and friends from the San Miguel Center of International PEN, especially Nicholas Patricca, Elizabeth Starcevic, Anne McGravie and Pat Hirschl.

I hope you enjoy reading these stories as much as we enjoyed creating them.

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## 9. EL APOLO OSUNO

Péxeps estaba caminando en su bosque un día cuando se topó con su amigo el Oso, quien estaba desplomado contra un tronco hueco, llorando patéticamente.

“Oso”, dijo. “¿Qué te pasó?”

“Es mi autoestima,” contestó el Oso. “Ha recibido el golpe de gracia.”

“¿Cómo!” exclamó Péxeps, mirando inutilmente alrededor para saber si tal vez le perseguía algún enemigo reconocible.

“Son los finlandeses”, lamentó el Oso. “Siéntate, te enseño lo que me hicieron. ¡Ay de mí!”

*“This Finnish bear is 200 kilos of pure muscle. He doesn’t have a belly that hangs down and wiggles like mine. His posture is the last word in elegance, his fur is perfect, even his ears are perfectly rounded and stand up straight.”*

*“Este oso finlandés es 200 kilos de puro músculo. No tiene la panza medio caída como yo. Su postura es de suma elegancia, su pelo es perfecto, hasta sus orejas son redonditas y erectas.”*

## 9. BEAR APOLLO

Payshapes was walking through his forest one day when he ran into his friend the Bear, who was collapsed against a hollow tree, weeping pathetically.

“Bear,” cried Payshapes. “What’s happened?”

“It’s my self-esteem;” the Bear answered, “it’s been bonked just horribly.”

“What?” exclaimed Payshapes, looking around to see if maybe some recognizable enemy had been bothering the Bear.

“It’s the Finnish,” the Bear wailed. “Sit down. I’ll show you what they have done to me, oh woe.”

“¿Finlandeses?” musitó Péxeps. “No creía que el Oso supiera que existieran; debe haber alguna equivocación.”

Se sentó al lado del Oso, quien extrajo un libro de pasta blanda del tronco hueco. Se llamaba *Así es Finlandia*.

“¿Cómo encontraste eso?” preguntó Péxeps.

“Me cayó del cielo”, contestó el Oso. “No se lo pedí a nadie.”

Péxeps hojeó el libro. Era un libro de publicidad que tenía muchos datos sobre Finlandia. Le pareció interesante. “Dice aquí que la presidenta es la señora Tarja Halonen, que su poetisa mejor conocida fue Edith Sodergran, que a los finlandeses les gusta el pan de centeno horneado en roscas ... no veo nada peligroso para tu autoestima, Oso ... Que hay muchos bosques ... hmmm.”

Con la mención de los bosques sintió que se acercaba el problema.

“Es en la página nueve”, sollozó el Oso, impacientemente.

Péxeps encontró la página, que lucía la foto de un oso finlandés verdaderamente espléndido.

“¿Ves, Péxeps?” dijo el Oso. “¿Cómo puedo aguantar tal cosa? Este oso finlandés es 200 kilos de puro músculo. No tiene la panza medio caída como yo. Su postura es de suma elegancia, su pelo es perfecto, hasta sus orejas son redonditas y erectas.” Sacó un trozo de espejo del tronco hueco, miró su imagen y se quejó de nuevo. “Mira las mías. Una quiere doblarse, la otra también está chueca, y además las dos están manchadas de miel y hojas secas. ¡Guácala!” Bajó el espejo y siguió, “Si yo hiciera ejercicios a partir de este momento durante diez años no me vería como él. Ay de mí, ay de mí.” Y se puso a llorar a lágrima viva.

Péxeps no supo qué hacer. El tema sobre la imagen física de su amigo siempre había sido un poco delicado.

The Finnish? Payshapes wondered to himself. He didn't believe the Bear even knew they existed. There must be some mistake.

He sat down next to the Bear, who extracted a softcover book from the hollow log. It was called *This is Finland*.

“How did you find this?” Payshapes asked.

“It fell from the sky,” said the Bear. “I didn't ask anybody for it.”

Payshapes flipped through the pages. It was a promotional book with a lot of facts about Finland. It looked interesting to him. “It says here that the president is Ms. Tarja Halonen, that their best-known poetess was Edith Sodergran, and that the Finns like rye bread baked in rings ... I don't see anything here dangerous to your self-esteem, Bear ... that there are many forests ... hmm.”

With the mention of the forests he felt he was getting close to the problem.

“It's on page nine,” the Bear sobbed impatiently.

Payshapes found the page, which sported a photo of a really splendid Finnish bear.

“See, Payshapes?” the Bear said. “How can I stand it? This Finnish bear is 200 kilos of pure muscle. He doesn't have a belly that hangs down and wiggles like mine. His posture is the last word in elegance, his fur is perfect, even his ears are perfectly rounded and stand up straight.” He took out a piece of a mirror from the trunk of the tree, looked at himself and started complaining again. “Look at mine. One ear is bent almost double, and the other is crooked too, and furthermore both of them are matted with honey and dried leaves. Yuk!” He put down the mirror and went on, “If I did exercises starting right now for ten years, I would not look like him. Oh, poor me, poor me!” He started weeping many tears.

Payshapes did not know what to do. The subject of his friend's physique had always been a delicate one.