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The Story of the Blue Planet

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~~Editors Choice~~

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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Only children live on the blue planet until a grown-up arrives in a space ship on Brimir and Hulda's idyllic island. Until the arrival of Gleesome Goodday, an intergalactic vacuum cleaner salesman, the island children had been happy enough enjoying the natural world around them, particularly the mass annual flight of the butterflies and the glittering rainbow in the giant waterfalls. But Goodday promises to make their greatest wishes come true. And he does, stealing the dust from the butterflies' wings so that the children can fly; nailing the sun to the sky so that it's always daylight; and creating a dust and water repellent skin coating from the waterfall rainbow so that the children never need to wash again. There is a price, of course: for each 'improvement' in the children's lives, Goodday harvests and stores a little of the children's youth. That doesn't worry them unduly. It is only when Brimir and Hulda find themselves on the other side of their planet, where the children have been cast into eternal darkness, poverty and starvation by the nailing of the sun that questions form in their minds and they return determined to make changes to Gleesome Goodday's regime. This environmental fable is the work of one of Iceland's foremost writers and filmmakers. With attractive illustrations by Áslaug Jónsdóttir, which have gained her international recognition, **The Story of the Blue Planet** has already been made into a play and translated into sixteen languages from the original Icelandic, before finding a publisher here in Pushkin Press, a company newly established with the express purpose of 'sharing the very best stories from around the world.' This is an excellent choice to kick off their list. Ambitious and intriguing, it creates a fable whose contemporary relevance will be easily grasped by its intended readers. In its mix of social satire and religious overtones, it reminds me of Wilde's fairy tales. In this English language version, the humour feels a little forced at times, as if you are not quite in on the joke, which makes the story's didactic purpose rather more apparent. And I have a nagging feeling that there may be cultural references that I am missing. Is Brimir and Hulda's killing and eating of a seal at the opening of the book one of them? Nevertheless, there is nothing that I can think of in contemporary English language writing for children that has this kind of ambition.

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