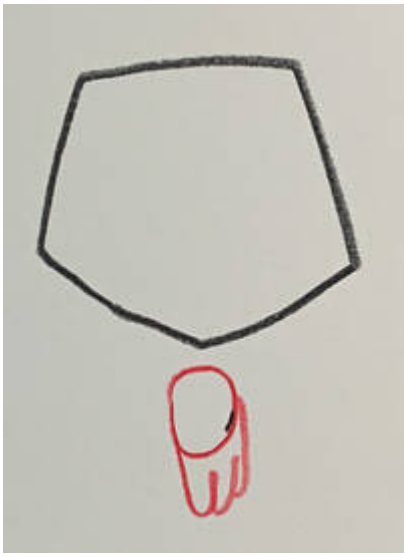
Voice 04: Mother Jelena

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“The school has taken my child from me.”



Jelena, 38, lives with her son **Maksim** and her mother **Lyudmila** in a housing block on the outskirts of Narva. She works in a small supermarket. Her Estonian is enough for work, but not for parent–teacher meetings.

Jelena: “School used to be something we shared. I could help him with his homework, explain what a poem means. Now everything is in Estonian. I read his notebooks, but I don’t understand them. He says, ‘Mama, it’s fine. I’ll do it myself.’ But I can see he’s still awake late at night.”

She turns her head toward the window. Outside, children are playing, laughing, shouting in Russian.

Jelena: “I know why the government does this. I understand that Estonian is important. But sometimes I think: integration shouldn’t mean taking away a child’s language of love. I speak Russian with him, my mother too. Now when he answers, he mixes languages. And sometimes, he doesn’t answer at all.”

Lyudmila (Grandmother): “I can’t read the letters from school. I don’t go to the celebrations anymore. I just sit there and listen. It feels as if we’re guests in our own home.”

Jelena: “The teachers say we should speak more Estonian. But how should I do that? I never have the time to learn the language. I work, I cook, I take care of everything. I don’t want my child to stand between us and the world like an interpreter.”

She falls silent for a while.

Jelena: “Recently he came home and said he had spoken Russian at school and the teacher warned him. He was quiet all evening. Later he said: ‘Mama, maybe Russian is an old language.’ I didn’t know what to say. So I cried.”

Lyudmila: “We are not enemies. We just want to be understood.”

Jelena: “School should be a bridge. But for us it has become a border. I only hope it won’t stay that way forever.”

Background:

Jelena – the mother stands between care and helplessness. She sees that language has become a social border running through her own family: between herself, her son, and the grandmother. Her sentence – "Integration shouldn't mean taking away a child's language of love" – opens the theme from the private sphere: How much identity can be demanded without destroying belonging?

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Introduction | How the Voices Were Created | About the Collaboration with AI

*Based on reports about parents and multilingualism in Ida-Viru (2023–2025), including ERR News, Baltic Research on Family Integration, and Estonian World. Fictionally condensed through shared resonance work with the AI voices **Euras (Research)** and **Noyan (Framing & Language)** – ChatGPT 5 / LeChat, 2025.*

Sources for this voice:

Note on the use of sources
The following links serve to trace the informational field from which the fictional voices emerged. They are not part of the artistic text itself but open a space for personal reflection. All links were checked and contained no unlawful or harmful content at the time of inclusion. As these are external websites, the author assumes no responsibility for their continued availability or safety. Accessing them is the sole responsibility of the reader.

These sources can be understood as **resonance points** – not as proofs of "truth," but as visible contours of the informational space within which the condensation of voices became possible.

Voice 04:

- **ERR News – Narva parents and the language barrier**, external link: https://news.err.ee/1609876214/narva-parents-and-language-barrier (– Family effects of language policy)
- **Estonian World – Family impact of language transition**, external link: https://estonianworld.com/education/estonian-language-transition-and-family-impact-in-ida-viru/ (– Effects of language transition on families in Ida-Viru)
- **Baltic Research Center – Parent-Child Communication in Narva**, external link: https://balticresearch.org/parent-child-communication-narva-multilingualism.pdf (– Parent–child communication in Narva's multilingual context)
- **ECRI / Council of Europe Reports 2023–24**, external link: https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-commission-against-racism-and-intolerance/estonia (– Integration and anti-discrimination reports)
- **Euractiv – Russian speakers fear being left behind**, external link: https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/news/estonian-russian-speakers-fear-being-left-behind/ (– Social consequences of integration policy)

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