

Martin Widmark: *David & Larissa: The Blue Mirror Book Shop*

Age: 9-12 years. Translated by Ruth McNaughton.

David & Larissa is a new series of books by the highly successful author Martin Widmark. Widmark's previous books about Lasse & Maja's Detective Agency and Monster Agent Nelly Rapp are great favourites with both children and critics.

Widmark is currently writing exciting stories with a scientific element, aimed at a slightly older age group. The main characters are drawn into adventures which bring them up against existential questions about life, death, growing older, time, morality, and the possibilities opened up by the latest DNA technology.

Skilful and versatile illustrator Katarina Strömgård (winner of the August prize 2005 together with Bo R Holmberg) is equally comfortable working with a historical or contemporary environment, as well as in the world of fantasy or fairy tales. Strömgård has produced the expressive illustrations (one per chapter) which perfectly capture the characters and their surroundings.

In the first book, 13 year-old David has just moved in with Melkior, a friend of the family, who owns The Blue Mirror, an antiquarian bookshop. Melkior is a thoroughly nice man who spends most of his time with his old books on biology and zoology. This suits David perfectly, since he is happiest when he is left in peace to think. These days he also enjoys the company of Larissa, a bright, headstrong Russian girl who turned up on their first day at school.

One day the quiet routine at the bookshop is disturbed when Melkior suddenly disappears without a trace. David and Larissa find a coded message which sets them off on the trail. Gradually more and more is revealed about Melkior's astonishing past. When they find a diploma, hanging on the wall of an underground chamber full of prehistoric but living exotic animals, they can hardly believe their eyes: "To Melkior Rasmussen for his invaluable contributions", it says. Signed: "Charles Darwin."

Martin Widmark has worked as a middle school teacher for many years. He currently works at a community college and teaches Swedish to immigrants. Widmark is considered one of the giants of contemporary Swedish children's fiction.



Martin Widmark

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