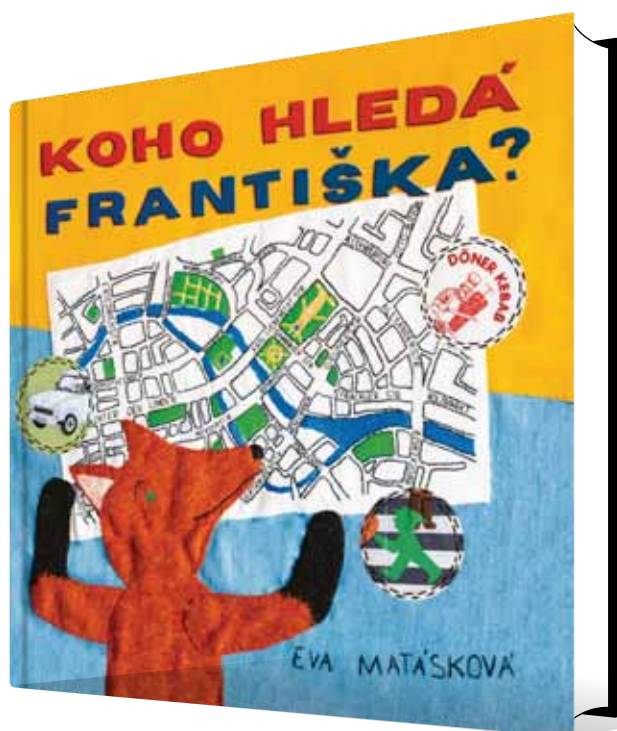


Who's Františka Looking For?

by **Eva Matásková**



A playful journey through Berlin filled with adventure, discovery, and enchanting illustrations

You probably know that Berlin is Germany's capital. But have you ever visited? Come explore the city with Františka the Fox, whose adventures are brought to life in original illustrations, each carefully sewn and intricately embroidered by hand.

At a Prague train station, Františka says goodbye to her friend Terezka and prepares to board a train for Berlin. Just before it departs, Terezka calls after her: "Find Sesam!" But who is Sesam, and how is Františka supposed to find him in such a vast city? Her search takes her past Berlin's famous landmarks and lesser-known curiosities, with plenty of unexpected adventures along the way.

Eva Matásková (b. 1987, Olomouc) worked for a time as a translator from German and English before moving into marketing and PR. She lived in Berlin for six years. She tends an orchard and several apiaries in the Central Bohemian Uplands, and her bees even inspired her to enroll in a distance-learning program at a beekeeping school. She and her husband, actor David Matásek, share a passion for traveling on their Vespas. Always at work on a new project, she sews, knits, and embroiders; she even made an entire traditional Haná folk costume by hand, complete with its extraordinarily elaborate embroidery. She lives in Prague's Žižkov district with her hilariously funny son Toník, an avid reader.



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Overview

Who is Františka Looking For? follows Františka the Fox on her first trip beyond Prague. Instructed by her friend Tereza to find someone named Yosef, she travels to Berlin, where she meets Fritz the Bear and embarks on an immersive tour through the city's landmarks. Along the way, the timid fox overcomes her fears, makes new friends and explores the richness of German culture. She returns home empty-handed - only to realize that what she had really been sent to find wasn't Yosef, but herself.

The book simultaneously doubles as a children's travel guide through Berlin. Each chapter spotlights a different facet of the city, from famous landmarks (among them the Brandenburg Gate, the Victory Column, and the East Side Gallery), to local foods (Döner kebab, currywurst, Berliner doughnut), important icons and other fun facts (such as Berlin's Buddy Bears and traffic-light men). At the close of each chapter, a related infographic expands on these subjects with facts and statistics, definitions, or relevant historical context. A few infographics introduce young readers to weightier concepts like protest and division, or the history of Berlin.

The book is woven through with German words and phrases, and references to the everyday texture of Berlin life. It is illustrated with original, hand-sewn and embroidered artwork.

Detailed narrative summary

Františka the Fox arrives in Germany's capital, Berlin, by train. It is her first time in the city. She takes the S-Bahn to the famous Alexanderplatz in the city's center. In a flashback, we learn she has come from Prague, in search of someone named Yosef. "Make sure to find Yosef, Františka, that is your main task," her friend Tereza prompts her amidst the hiss and clamour of the trains in Prague. With these words, and no sense of who or what it is that she is looking for, she embarks on her quest through Berlin.

In Alexanderplatz, Františka attempts to orient herself. She considers climbing the TV Tower - which, according to an infographic, stands 38 meters taller than the Eiffel Tower - when a large statue of a bear, covered in colourful scribbles, catches her eye. This is one of 400 Buddy Bears dispersed across Berlin, each of which is uniquely painted by an artist from around the world. Upon closer inspection, Františka realizes that the scribbles represent a map of Berlin's metro. As she ponders the lines, wondering how she will find the mysterious Yosef, she finds she is not alone: Fritz the Bear appears from behind his statuesque counterpart. Fritz quickly warms to Františka and offers to be her guide.

Together, they begin their tour through Berlin. They walk past the Brandenburg Gate, where they witness a peaceful political protest, then snack on German jelly doughnuts while Fritz tells Františka about President Kennedy's famous speech, "Ich bin ein Berliner." Still, Yosef is nowhere to be found.

The plot of Who is Františka Looking For? hinges on a wordplay specific to Czech: Tereza's opening instruction, "najdi sebe sama" ("find yourself") is misheard as "najdi Sesama" (here translated as "find Yosef"), an error that sends Františka on a wild goose chase through Berlin. In order to preserve this wordplay and its eventual reveal in English, the name "Sesam" has been rendered as "Yosef" throughout.

To ease their tired legs, the duo descends underground to Berlin's metro, the U-Bahn. An infographic dutifully informs us that the metro has 10 lines and over 170 stations. Concerned with their lack of progress, Františka becomes worried. With encouraging words - "Sometimes, you find what you're looking for only once you stop looking" - Fritz assures her that Berlin will show them the way.

Suddenly, Františka spots a strange figure on the other side of the train. When the figure exits at the next stop, she decides to follow him, but it becomes difficult to find him in the bustle of the platform. "We lost him," she tells Fritz in dismay. "You can't lose that which you don't yet have," comes the strange figure's reply from behind. The stranger responds cryptically to Františka's queries regarding the mysterious Yosef's whereabouts, before disappearing into the crowd.

After this strange encounter, the pair take the metro a few stops further to the River Spree. From a boat on the water, they admire Oberbaum Bridge, and dance to a rendition of "Hit the Road, Jack" by a group of street musicians. They fly past the East Side Gallery on Fritz's moped, while Fritz speaks about the division of Berlin. Accompanying infographics offer extra detail, tracing the city's history from its division after World War II to fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

Františka and Fritz reach the end of the wall and find Fritz's car, an old German Trabant. Overcoming her fear, Františka agrees to drive to the lake Wannsee. She listens carefully to Fritz's stories about the places they pass along the way. At Wannsee, they find a long sandy beach lined with comfortable wicker chairs. The two talk into the night, and fall asleep in the chairs.

In the morning, Františka continues her immersive tour of Berlin. Fritz takes her to a café for a traditional German breakfast. At a nearby flea market, they shop around for souvenirs; along the way, they ask several vendors about Yosef, but no one seems to have heard of him. At one stall, a sheep vendor offers Františka a beautiful hat, which she can't resist buying. As they continue through the streets, she notices the hats on Berlin's little traffic light men, the Ampelmännchen, and snacks on a variety of German food, from potato pancakes to Döner kebabs. At dusk, they go roller-skating in SO36, a club known for its punk concerts. Their eventful day comes to an end in the Tiergarten district, in the dome of the Reichstag, where they watch the stars and the sleeping city below.

Early the next morning, Františka and Fritz slip out of the dome. Františka's new hat is swept away by a sudden gust of wind, and lands atop the Victory Column, on the golden scepter of its statue Victoria. A little girl with a red balloon walks past, giving Fritz an idea, and a few moments later, he appears with a cluster of helium balloons. As planned, Františka rises into the air, retrieves her hat, and makes her way safely to the ground.

With the hat back in her possession, Františka and Fritz stop at the zoo to ask about Yosef, but the resident bears offer no useful information. As they walk through the zoo, Fritz tells Františka about the beloved polar bear, Knut, who lived there a few years before. Now hungry, the pair stops for a currywurst, a Berlin specialty of sliced sausage doused in ketchup and curry powder. An infographic traces its invention back to Herta Heuwer, who accidentally spilled curry spice into ketchup in 1949.

Before they part ways, Františka invites Fritz to visit her in Prague, tempting him with the Charles Bridge, the Astronomical Clock, and the city's Technical Museum. The two commemorate their last day together with a strip of photos from an old-fashioned photobooth.

Finally, Františka finds herself back on the train to Prague. She thinks again of Tereza's strange request to find Yosef. And that's when it dawns on her: there was never any Yosef. In the rush of her departure, Františka had misheard her friend's instructions, which had not been "to find Yosef," but "to find yourself." And Berlin, it turns out, had been the perfect place to do so. In just a few days, the city had drawn her out of her shell, filling her with new sights, tastes and encounters along the way. Whatever magic she came looking for, Františka leaves having found it in herself.





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