

## Daniel the Second

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Age: 8+

Daniel the Second is an ordinary schoolboy. He hates playing dodgeball, longs to have his very own pet, and is secretly in love with the tallest girl in the class. Since the boy's parents work in Sweden, he lives with his jolly grandpa Daniel the First, who is a nature-lover and an avid birdwatcher. Daniel the Second's life with his grandpa is thrilling and filled with adventure, but even so, he can't wait for his parents to come back home. Yet before his mother and father return, Daniel the Third shows up...

Award:

2016 The White Ravens



## Reading sample

### Best of all I love...

It had come round yet again: the PE teacher announced that today we'd be playing dodgeball.

In my opinion the person who came up with dodgeball should be in jail. I can climb down a domed ceiling on a rope with no fear. I'm best in the class at long-jump, even though I'm the third shortest. I can do press-ups and chin-ups, but I just don't get ball games at all. To me a ball is just some kind of round contraption for an ultra-stupid crowd to stampede after.

As ever, the teacher failed to ask my opinion. And naturally my team was losing. I was just really rubbish at catching.

"Daniel, you're gonna get a bit of a slap in the changing room," hissed Jürgen when yet again I messed up on some tactic or other.

I thought I might as well do what little I could: I ran and I caught and I threw sooo skilfully, like I was a machine. And then I was scampering about. Next minute, I was face down on the ground. Seeing stars.

"You'll be off flying again in a bit if you don't start moving any quicker!"

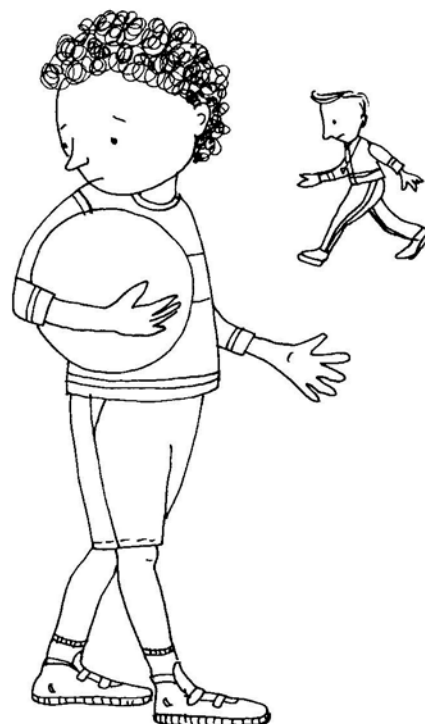
It was Jürgen, of course, who'd tripped me.

Ugh I'd hit my head and knees really hard; my eyes were smarting with tears.

"Boyth! Boyth! No fighting pleathe!"

Mr Raske pulled me up off the ground and without taking his whistle out of the corner of his mouth, lisped, "Remember now, Daniel, we talked about thith before – men don't cry. Chin up!"

I was limping until the end of the game. When the final whistle blew I was first into the changing room. By the time the others came in I already had my coat on. Just then I found the thorns in my pockets. I'd picked them that morning going through the park on the way to school. I'd thought they might come in handy. And now was just the time to make use of them. When Jürgen was in the toilet and Oskar in the shower, I hid the thorns in his underpants in his pile of clothes. Then I shoved off. I'd got as far as the window of the boys' changing room when I heard Jürgen give a sharp cry of pain.



The swearing was pretty desperate, it has to be said. I could hear the others laughing too. I didn't look back, just went home.

"How was school?" asked Grandad.

"Normal," I mumbled.

"Did you get any marks back?"

"No."

"Well, I can see that something's happened."

"What do you mean?"

"That humungous great egg on your head for one thing."

"Oh, that. That's from dodgeball."

Grandad made a cold compress and the pain gradually faded. My Grandad's name's Daniel too, by the way. He's really cool. He put four large hot rissoles on my plate.

"Oh, Grandad, you know that the thing I love best in all the world is rissoles!"

Before I'd managed to have a third mouthful I thought I should get something straight, "Rissoles and you, Grandad."

"Is that right," murmured Grandad, tucking into his own helping.

And we just sat there in silence for a while, eating. Then I remembered the PE lesson. I decided to discuss it with Grandad.

"Is it a huge no-no to put thorns in someone's pants?"

"Well now, let's see. It depends on what the other person did."

"Say he tripped someone up."

"In the middle of a game of dodgeball, say?"

"Yeah, perhaps."

"Then I'd put the lot of them in."

I was relieved.

For pudding there were jam doughnuts and peppermint tea.

"I almost forgot," exclaimed Grandad, spilling a sip of tea on his cup handle. "Your Mum phoned. She says hello and sends you her love. And she wants to know how you're getting on."

"Very nicely at this precise moment."

I squeezed another doughnut down and stretched my legs out onto Grandad's lap.

"How are Mum and Dad?"

"Fine, they've plenty of work but not much time, as ever. It would seem that there's even more work over there in Sweden than there is here."

The doughnuts were finished. I suggested we should read some more of "The Hobbit". We both loved that book and had already read it umpteen times. I brought it to Grandad.

"Just a sec, just a sec... what have I done with my specs?"

"You're wearing them."

"So I am! What would I do without you?! Now... last time we stopped at a real cliff-hanger."

Grandad adjusted his glasses and together we dived into Mr Bilbo Baggins' fabulous adventures.

## The class social

Miss Lovely, our class tutor, had said that she would allow a class social only if we didn't start any ruler-powered paper-flicking fights, stopped scowling at each other, got down to some proper studying and, above all, behaved ourselves. We tried. It wasn't easy, but even Jürgen made an effort. He only pulled Tiina's hair once as he went past her. I happened to be close by and smacked him with my sketch pad. Fortunately Miss Lovely didn't see.

That's how we earned our class social. It also doubled as our Christmas party and we were supposed to take presents with us.

You don't know your classmates properly unless you've met them at an evening party. All the desks had been pushed against the walls, a small spruce tree stood in the corner, all around were beautiful Christmas stars, and the curtains were drawn shut across the windows, decorated with paper snowflakes. Our class tutor stood amid all the festiveness, looking very lovely in her red dress.

The party got started. We piled the table high with all the goodies we'd brought from home. There was so much that we couldn't manage to get through giant pile of ginger snaps.

We played party games like wink murder. I got to wink twice. Both times I winked at Tiina. Jürgen kept quiet, fortunately.

Then we gave out the presents, which were all in a sack Miss Lovely called out the student's name and winked a parcel out of the bag. We called out names at random too. Marta got the present I gave.

"Look! it's lavender soap!" shrieked Marta. Anyone who expressed the slightest desire to do so was allowed a sniff.

The teacher received the soap from Roland. She thanked him for it profusely. Roland beamed at the teacher's words like a spoon gleaming in a rissole bowl. That's what Grandad would have said about it.

"Is it really from you?" asked the teacher when Roland asked her for the fourth time if she really liked it.

I got a bird mask.

"You can wear it next time you go bird-watching," laughed Roland. "Perhaps they'll think you're one of them and will ask you to come and live in their nest. I'll come and shower you with seed."

As Roland was my best mate I'd given him a box of coloured pencils. He was really good at art.

The party continued. We ate more cakes, pies and sweets, did quizzes and chased each other.



However, I became more and more nervous. I'd brought a present for Tiina. It was stowed in my trouser pocket so that I could choose the right moment to give it to her, when the others wouldn't be able to see. But unfortunately Tiina was always with someone. The first parents were already arriving to wish the teacher a Merry Christmas, collect their child and set off home. Tiina too was making ready to leave. I caught her in the corridor, halfway to the cloakroom.

"I've got a little present for you."

I must have blushed to my toes as I said it. I gave her the parcel; it had taken a bit of rough treatment in my pocket.

"Oh, thanks!" Tiina's cheeks dimpled with a smile. "It smells of lavender."

I nodded.

"That's really lovely of you, Daniel!"

"Well, bye then," I mumbled in reply.

"Bye!"

She was already off. My arms dangled uselessly as I watched her. I had to compose myself.

"Daniel!"

It was Roland calling; he was striding towards me awkwardly. I breathed a sigh of relief – rather him than Jürgen at the moment.

"What's all the noise for?"

Roland's eyes bored into me.

"I saw you. You gave Tiina a present!"

"So?"

"Do you fancy her or something?"

"Yeah, a bit maybe."

"It's crazy," wailed Roland. I could see he truly knew how I felt. He really was the best.

"Something might come of it, you know."

I shrugged.

"D'you fancy doing some sliding before we go home? My sledge is in the cloakroom."

"Great!"

We dashed off to go sledging.

### **Messaging Mum**

As my parents were living in Sweden I emailed Mum to arrange a Skype chat in the evening.

Because it was Mother's Day, at school I'd had to talk about what I most liked doing with Mum. I'd said that the best thing was when she came home for a long time and came to wish me goodnight when I was ready for bed. By that I don't mean just that I would go to sleep but that we'd have a long, pleasant chat about what had been going on, with me snug under the covers and Mum sat on the edge of the bed.

We would both have so much to say that in the end Dad would come and check what we were up to. And if Dad began talking it wouldn't be long before Grandad made an appearance because there were so many things that the pair of them would always argue over. Like, they'd argue over how to help starving children, or prevent the ice-caps from melting and the polar bears from drowning. All this talking would usually go on for so long that I'd doze off with Mum there before they'd got their argument over with. And in the morning I'd wake up and Mum'd be there. I like that very much.

When I told Miss Lovely all of this, she said I had a really wonderful family. I thought exactly the same.



“Have you said ‘Happy Mother’s Day’ to her?”  
the teacher asked.

“I will do tonight on Skype, if Mum’s got time,” I  
replied.

And now it was the evening and Mum was  
calling. I hurried to the computer.

“Mum, Mum, guess what, I wrote a poem with  
Grandad and it’s on the classroom wall!” This is  
what burst out of my mouth as my first piece of  
news.

“Oh, that’s great. Is the poem about Mums,  
perhaps?”

“No, not at all, it’s about a piglet who scratches  
himself on some spruce.”

“You don’t say! I hope he’s neat and tidy as  
piglets go.”

“Of course he is. And I played with a dog at the  
Easter play. Mum, if I get a really good report  
can we get a dog?”

“Daniel, sweetheart, don’t start that again.”

Mum hurried to change the subject.

“Are you and Grandad eating healthily –  
cabbage, carrots, beetroot, turnips? He’s not  
just giving you fried eggs, rissoles and jam  
doughnuts?”

As far as I was concerned there was nothing  
wrong with rissoles and doughnuts and  
fortunately Grandad and I ate them quite often.  
So I told Mum that Grandad made semolina  
porridge for breakfast.

“Oh, sweetheart, I’m so pleased with you both!”

I didn’t bother to point out that the morning  
we’d had porridge had been about five weeks  
earlier. Mum carried on with her questions.

“You’re not fighting at school any more, are  
you? You were in trouble in the autumn.”

“No, no. The class tutor has sat me and Jürgen  
so far away from each other that even if I really  
wanted to bash him one I just wouldn’t be able  
to reach. And there’s not always time at break.”

“So what do you do at break time?”

“Me, Roland and Martin play cops and robbers.  
One day we locked Martin in the toilets.”



“Why??”

“It was an accident ... but he made a fuss about it.”

Mum rubbed her forehead.

“Never mind, Daniel. The main thing is that you listen to what Grandad says, you don’t defy him and you help around the house. You’re quite grown up enough to be able to help around the house.”

“Of course I help him. I helped him yesterday.”

“Great. How?”

“I helped him look for his socks.”

“Look for his socks?”

“Yes, his favourite socks. You know, the ones with the checked pattern. He couldn’t find them anywhere.”

“So where were they?”

“He was wearing them. But we couldn’t see them because he was also wearing his slippers.”

“And how did you spot them in the end?”

“When we were going to bed, when Grandad took his slippers off. And the socks came out.”

Mum looked thoughtful.

“I don’t really understand how exactly you helped.”

“I looked through all the drawers, I even emptied the drawers in Dad’s desk.”

“Daniel!” Mum slapped her hand down on the table. “I’ve told you umpteen times that you must not touch the drawers in Dad’s desk.”

“You have to understand, it was an emergency. Grandad was so worried about his socks.”

“All right, Daniel. I think we’ll call it a day there otherwise I’ll be worrying myself silly about you and our home life.”

“You mustn’t do that. Everything’s fine with me and Grandad. What are you bringing me from Sweden?”

“We’ll see. Say hello to Grandad from me!”

“I will.”

“Love you.”

“Love you.”

We ended the call. Shortly afterwards Grandad came into the room. He wanted to know whether I’d managed to send Mum best wishes for Mother’s Day and if she was pleased that I’d remembered it.

“I think she was happy,” I said after a moment’s thought. “Though perhaps she was happiest about your checked socks.”