



A Ghost and Porridge

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Storybook, fiction

Age: 8+

Everything is possible in Markus Saksatamm's stories. An alien goes to day-care, the child of a sea monster finds a common language with a peer playing on the beach, a bear embodying a starling growls out the beginning of springtime, a naughty wolf gulps down a goat together with a grandfather clock, a red hand becomes a little girl's pet. A tooth receives a grand filling as an award for bravery, a freshly-received bump gets its owner to do foolish, life-endangering things. A pig becomes a cowboy, a robot a schoolteacher, and Linda Johanna a wizard. The child-characters are the only ones that keep their head straight in the topsy-turvy mess – taking the state of things just as it is right then.

Award:

2011 Nominee of the Annual Children's
Literature Award of the Cultural Endowment of
Estonia

Reading sample

The Late Breakfast

The morning was dark and dreary. The wind stirred the bare branches, and then on top of it all, a snowy sleet started to fall. A chickadee moved back-and-forth along the windowsill outside. From time to time it stopped, cocked its head to the side while squinting in through the window, chirped downheartedly, and continued on its way. Back and forth, again and again.

Then, a sparrow flew up and asked: "What? Is the buffet still not open?"

The chickadee shook its head in despair.

"There was quite a feast laid out here yesterday," the sparrow recalled. "There was both lard and sunflower seeds to be had."

"A divine ball of fat hung here, too." The chickadee gulped loudly. "The big and appetizing kind."

They fell silent for a while. Only the empty bird feeder swung in the gentle breeze. It was the most lonely and sorrowful sound in the world.

"Listen, knock on the window," the sparrow spoke up again. "I bet they don't even know we're here. Or their alarm clock is broken."

"I'm no woodpecker." The chickadee fluttered its wings angrily. "And anyway, if you, sparrow, can't behave politely and wait in line for food for a while, then you might as well turn migratory and fly south."

"I have an altogether better plan," the sparrow chirruped. "I'll paint my gray plumage an array of colors and go be a parrot in the circus."

"You can't even sing," the chickadee replied. But the sparrow decided to give it a try, anyway. He hopped closer, spread his wings wide so that it might sound louder, and belted out: "The time is now ideal, I'd like to have my meal..."

At that ceremonious moment, a bullfinch landed next to them.

The sparrow shouted: "Bullfinch, go and knock on the window. Guess, what – their alarm clock is broken."

He was apparently wrong about that, however, because a light suddenly switched on in the room. The birds flew to a distance, took their seats on branches, and waited for what would come next.

After a moment, the window opened, and a sleepy-looking little girl leaned out towards the bird feeder.

"Will she still put out a fat ball?" the chickadee asked impatiently. "Will she? Oh, I just can't wait... I'm going to faint!"

"A fat ball is on the menu," the sparrow reported. "And seeds and nuts to boot."

Then, they waited until the window was shut and the light in the room turned off.

"Bon appétit, gentlemen!" the bullfinch spoke, well-mannered. All three flew to the bird feeder and began their breakfast. Behind the curtain, however, the little girl didn't take her gaze off of them. It was fun to watch how the feathered creatures shared their breakfast table with each other. She tried to be very still and not move, so that the guests would still feel comfortable there. No one likes when someone watches him or her eat with their mouth agape, of course. Such a thing simply isn't polite.