

The Mouse Who Spoke Foreign Languages

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Age: 5+

Markus Saksatamm's collection of children's stories includes 26 fantastic tales about special animals: creatures big and small, sombre and mischievous, snotty and caring. We meet an athletic rabbit who plans to become a trolley, a cabbageworm who thinks the moon is a pumpkin, and a mouse whose love for foreign languages saves his family from disaster. We catch a glimpse of a parade organized by a moose who is president of the forest, and follow along with a snail who has a hard time finding friends. There are great times to be had in these fantasy woods!



Reading sample

THE HEDGEHOG AND THE CACTUS

A thorny cactus grew on a windowsill. He was big and arrogant and so thorny that no one dared to go near him. But one day, a little hedgehog scuttled up to the window and said:

“Hey, my dear relative!”

“What do you mean, “relative”?” the cactus asked grumpily.

“Well, we’re both wearing spikes, aren’t we?” the hedgehog replied. It made him so happy that he rolled up into a ball and did several somersaults. Yet, the hedgehog’s claim made the cactus angry. Just think—some ball of quills shows up and elbows its way into being your family!

“You’re no one’s relative,” the cactus said haughtily. “Are you even able to blossom, hedgehog?”

The little hedgehog shook his head in dismay.

“Well, I can. Every winter, a beautiful blossom bursts into bloom between my thorns!” the cactus snapped.

The little hedgehog scurried away. He snorted crossly and decided he wouldn’t leave things at that.

The next morning, the hedgehog strolled past the cactus with a dandelion blossom stuck to the end of every one of his quills.

The startled cactus nearly choked on his water.

The hedgehog showed up again around noon. This time, there were ten globeflowers and a water lily decorating his prickly coat.

The cactus couldn’t muster up a single word. All he did was grumble angrily.

That evening, the hedgehog was wearing a giant sunflower blossom on his head. The cactus was so jealous when he saw this that he almost wilted away.

“Hi, relative,” he squeaked respectfully.

But the hedgehog paid the cactus no heed. Imagine someone being so arrogant when they blossom only once a year! Hedgehogs won’t play with someone like that!

THE OCTOPUS WHO WANTED TO BECOME FAMOUS

Deep in the sea lived an octopus who wanted to become famous more than anything else. First, she thought about becoming a scientist and inventing seawater that tasted sweet instead of salty. Yet, the fish and other aquatic creatures opposed her plan at once. “We’d be like raisins bobbing in pudding!” they protested.

Next, the octopus tried her luck with singing, but alas, it turned out that’d go nowhere underwater: instead of beautiful lyrics, only bubbles blubbed from her mouth.

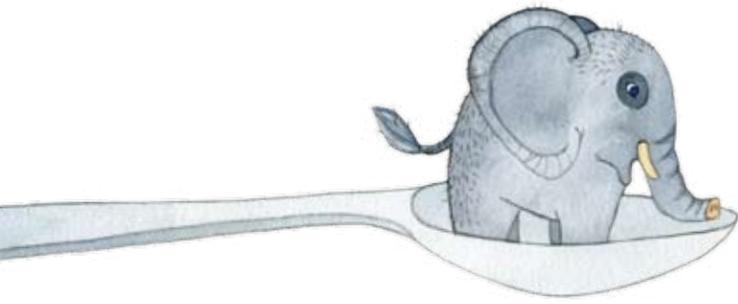
That night, when the octopus drifted off to sleep, she dreamed she was a famous sprinter. The starting pistol went bang! Since the other athletes only had two legs, they naturally fell far behind the eight-legged octopus. Next, she competed with horses on a racetrack, but not even the four-legged racehorses could keep up with the champion from the deep. The octopus started cheering, and her long-awaited fame was taking shape before her very eyes. Yet suddenly, all the land animals started calling out in chorus: “Call for the hundred-legged centipede! Call for the hundred-legged centipede!” The octopus was petrified. Just imagine: somebody with a hundred legs! She was afraid a wonder-creature like that would be able to run even faster than her. So, the octopus quickly pinched herself on the thigh, and woke up.

Nevertheless, the octopus didn’t just start moping around. So what that she wasn’t the greatest champion! Instead, she picked up a notebook and wrote down her dream. And that’s how the octopus became a famous writer, who even got a starfish pinned on her chest—the highest award in all the seas. Talent and perseverance should be recognized, too, and they can even bring fame—no matter whether you have two legs, or eight!

THE BIG MOSQUITO AND THE TINY ELEPHANT

Once upon a time, a big mosquito and a tiny elephant’s paths crossed. “You’re not going to hurt me, are you?” the elephant asked fearfully. She was so small that her voice sounded like a high-pitched whine. The mosquito, on the other hand, was gigantic, and he thundered: “I won’t. I like elephants very much.”

“Thanks, giant mosquito,” the elephant buzzed. She sat down bravely upon the big mosquito’s needle, and he swung her up and down.



“He-he-he!” the little elephant giggled—swinging was one of her favorite activities. The mosquito chuckled, too, because caring for the tiny elephant was fun.

Then, they both woke up. It turned out everything that had just happened was only a dream, which had turned the mosquito into an elephant, and vice-versa: the elephant into a mosquito.

“I had such a strange dream,” yawned the elephant, who was as big as a mountain again.

“I also had a strange dream,” the tiny mosquito admitted, and asked with worry in his voice: “You won’t squash me on accident, will you?”

“Don’t be afraid, my little friend,” the elephant said with a laugh. She lifted her trunk high into the air, the mosquito perched on top, and started swinging it gently.

This story ended up being rather short. But it’s not my fault that the elephant and the mosquito didn’t have a longer dream. That’s just the way things are, my friends!

A NASTY TALE ... BRRRR!

An icy wind howled outside. Riding it towards the house were two nasty little characters: Cold Ruffian and Cough King. They slipped through a crack in the window frame, and climbed down the curtain.

“Which child should we move into?” Cold Ruffian asked in a whiny voice. Cough King cleared his throat with a hacking cough and said: “Look, Laura is asleep over there. Let’s move inside of her.”

“Nope, can’t,” Cold Ruffian sighed. “Laura does sports. She doesn’t catch colds easily.”

“Let’s take Martin, then,” Cough King proposed.

“Martin takes cold showers sometimes,” Cold Ruffian grumbled. “And what’s more—he takes vitamins. No, we wouldn’t last long in a boy like that. But we’ve got Meelis over there, too. He’s so lazy

that he doesn’t even do his morning exercises. And yesterday, he forgot his scarf at home when he went outside. He’s the one we’ll move into!”

And so, they did.

“Where should I put the boogers?” Cold Ruffian bleated as he unpacked their suitcases.

“The boogers go up in his nose.”

Cough King started fixing up Meelis’ mouth. First, he painted the boy’s throat red. “Let’s pretend that this is the fireplace,” he said as he worked.

“I’ll start up the 21-sneeze salute,” Cold Ruffian announced, and started tickling the boy’s nose.

“Achoo!” Meelis sneezed. His mother immediately entered the room and felt Meelis’ forehead.

“You’ve caught a cold, son,” she said. “I’ll go heat up some milk and honey for you.”

“Did you hear that, pal?” Cold Ruffian hissed. “We won’t be partying here long!”

“Let’s skedaddle!” Cough King yelped in fear. The germs hightailed it out of Meelis’ body, but they were in such a rush that they left their precious boogers in his nose.

A PUZZLING TALE

The teddy bear woke up early. He was the biggest and most important toy in the kids’ play corner.

“Good morning, train engine!” he said to the toy train engine, who pulled three pink train cars behind her.

“I’m not a train engine anymore,” she announced. “I quit.”

“Why’d you go and do that?” the bear asked in astonishment.

“I got tired of it,” the train engine said. “All I did was clickety-clack around the tracks and blow my whistle.”

“So, who are you now?”

“I’m a big, mean wolf!” the train engine declared, and started chasing her train cars. “I’m going to catch you, my three little piggies!” she screeched, and the little train cars ran away from her, screeching pitifully.

This shocked the teddy bear, too. He hurried over

to the doll house and called out: “Barbie, are you home?”

“I’m not Barbie anymore,” the finely-dressed doll replied. “I don’t feel like playing little girls’ games. I’m going to be a cool truck now—vroom, vroom, vroom!”

She got down on all fours, lifted a couple of blocks onto her back, and scooted away. The bear watched her go, and he was absolutely stunned. But that wasn’t it, yet!

“Look, I’m a little Lego man!” the Pony of Dreams neighed, and since she could be taken apart and put back together again, she switched her head with her tail.

The bear spread his arms wide in confusion. It felt like the whole kids’ play corner had gone crazy. But then...

The train cars lined back up in order of size behind the train engine, and the pony put her head back in the right place, and Barbie stood up, letting the blocks fall wherever they landed. They all laughed gleefully and chanted: “April Fools’, bear! April, April, April Fools’!”

The bear himself laughed loudest of all. He remembered that today was April 1st—a day for playing pranks. How on Earth could he have forgotten!

