



Bedtime Tales Done Dad's Way

Text by Ilmar Tomusk
Illustrated by Priit Rea
Tammerraamat 2017, 103 pp
ISBN 9789949616053
Storybook, fiction
Age: 6+

What is one to do when Mom, who usually tells the bedtime stories at home, has a lot of work to do, but her little girl can't fall asleep without one? There's no other option than for Dad to take the reins and tell them himself. Story times start out a little clumsily, but gradually gain more and more momentum, and soon, Dad's stories become little Marta's favourites. Rumours of the girl's fantastic storyteller start circulating around school, and before her father knows it, a stellar book full of his bedtime tales is published.



[pp 43–48]

Before long, Dad walked in. He was carrying a plastic bag containing a big, round watermelon.

“A watermelon!” Marta squealed. “Should we eat it?”

“Of course,” Dad replied. “That’s what I bought it for! Every watermelon dreams of someone eating it.”

Of course, we had to eat a real meal first of all, which was stew today. Marta tried to eat just a teensy bit to leave more room for the watermelon.

When all the dishes were washed, Dad rinsed the watermelon, too, and cut it in half. The inside was juicy and dark pink and smelled very sweetly. Dad chopped it into thick slices and then cut the slices into pieces that’d be easier to eat.

It sure was tasty! A little sour, but very sweet at the same time. The brownish seeds crunched nicely between Marta’s teeth, and watermelon juice streamed down her chin and her throat, all the way to her belly.

In the end, Marta’s tummy was so full of watermelon, both inside and out-, that she had to use the potty several times and take a shower before going to bed.

“Will you tell me a bedtime story tonight, too?” Marta asked her dad.

“I’d love to, but I really don’t have any ideas for a bedtime story today. It’s all I thought about when I was coming home from work, but I couldn’t come up with a single idea.”

“That’s too bad,” Marta said. “Then I guess I can’t fall asleep.”

“Of course you can!” Dad said. “Just close your eyes and sleep.”

“But tell me a story, then,” Marta said. “Just open your mouth and speak!”

So, Dad opened his mouth. He opened it really wide. Marta could see his tongue and a whole lot of white teeth, but there wasn’t a single story inside.

“You see?” Dad said. “No story. There just isn’t. I’ve got nothing to tell you.”

“But then tell me about the watermelon you bought,” Marta said.

“The watermelon?” Dad said, frowning. “What do I have to say about that? The watermelon cost four euros and thirty-seven cents. And it weighed almost seven kilograms. That’s it.”

“Talk like the watermelon is like a person,” Marta proposed. “Say he lives somewhere and he has kids and all the other things people have.”

Dad couldn’t wrap his mind around how a watermelon could be a person and how it could have kids. A watermelon is just like a pumpkin, only green. And not one pumpkin has kids.

“One time, at daycare, we were read a fairy tale about a man who had three sons,” Marta said. “Two thought they were smart, but everybody thought the third one was an idiot. Tell me a story about a watermelon who had three sons. I’d like that.”

Dad furrowed his brow, wondering what to say.

“Wait just a minute, I’ve got to go to the bathroom again,” Marta said. “You come up with a story before I come back.”

Marta scurried to the bathroom, leaving Dad thinking on the side of the bed. When Marta was nestled back under the covers, he started telling a story.

“Once upon a time,” Dad began, “there was a man named Big Round Watermelon—he actually was a watermelon, too—who had three sons. One son’s name was Round, the second’s was Green, and the third was named Striped.”

“Were they triplets?” Marta asked.

“Almost, although the first was a little older than the others, and the last was just a bit younger than the first two. And in fact, all three were round, green, and striped,” Dad continued. “They couldn’t have looked any other way, because their dad was a watermelon and their mom was a watermelon, too. The watermelon-mom’s name was Helen.”

“Tell me what happened when the watermelon sons grew up,” Marta said.

Dad pretended to be a very serious watermelon-father.

“Now, you’re all grown up, and it’s time for you three to leave home,” Dad said in a gruff watermelon accent. “My greatest dream is for you all to be happy. But you’ll only become happy once you’ve made at least one other person happy.”

Then, Dad made his regular face again.

“The Brothers Watermelon were very obedient,” he said. “They packed up their backpacks and set off to make their father’s wish come true.”

“Where’d they go?” Marta asked.

“Be patient, I’ll get to that,” Dad replied.

He pretended to be the watermelon named Round.

“Make one person happy?” he said in Round’s voice. “But why only one? I’ll make one thousand people happy! If I become a football, then the most famous footballers will be able to play with me. Everyone will see how round I am and how fantastically I fly into the goal.”

Dad made his regular bedtime-story face again.

“So, Round rolled to the football stadium, where two of the most famous football teams around were going to face off that evening,” he said. “But what happened didn’t make anyone happy. Not even the poor footballer who started playing football with him.”

“That watermelon was a complete dum-dum,” Marta snorted.

“He was, indeed,” Dad agreed. “But let’s see what happened to the middle brother.”

Dad pretended to be the watermelon named Green.

“You should make at least one person happy,” Dad said in Green’s voice. “One is too few—I’ll make all people happy at once! If I fly to the Moon on a rocket ship, then everyone can marvel at me. I’m much rounder, much greener, and much more striped than the Moon, and everyone will certainly be very pleased by it.

“When it’d gotten dark out,” Dad continued in his ordinary voice, “the Moon appeared in the sky. At that very moment, Green’s rocket landed on it. Green was so proud of his spaceship that he burst with a bang from the pride.”

“That watermelon was a complete dum-dum, too, because watermelons are so small that you wouldn’t be able to spot them if they were on the surface of the Moon,” Marta giggled.

“You’re absolutely right,” Dad complemented. “But let’s see what happens next.”

Dad pretended to be the youngest watermelon, whose name was Striped.

“At least one person should be made happy,” Dad said in Striped’s high-pitched voice. “What on Earth should I do to bring joy to even just a single person? I’m round, green, and striped. I’m the most ordinary watermelon there could be. I certainly don’t know how to make someone happy.”

Dad spread his hands wide and made the face of the green, round, sad little watermelon named Striped.

“Striped crouched sadly on the edge of a field,” Dad continued. “All of a sudden, a little girl ran up to him and called out to her dad: ‘Daddy, may I take this watermelon? It’s so pretty!’

“‘You sure can, if it makes you happy,’ her dad replied.

“‘Thanks, Daddy! I’m the happiest person in the whole wide world right now!’ the girl said. Then, they went home and ate the watermelon. And everyone was happy.”

Dad finished his story, and he himself was surprised by where all those ideas could have come from.

“That was the nicest watermelon fairy-tale ever,” Marta told her dad. “Now, I can fall asleep with no problem at all.”

Marta pulled the blanket up almost over her head, rolled over to face the wall, and fell asleep instantly.