

All at Home!

It was an autumn morning. The waves of the becoming cold sea are running onto the shore, biting it and forcelessly rolling back. A blast of the wind is diluting an astringent scent of fading. In the air there is a cloud of falling leaves... I have got out from under the duvet and stretched. Looks like it is time to get up and go for a walk. It is cloudy today so Boriska will surely choose the short path through the wood. It is fine there, I know a lot of good places to stop, look around and run about. Here is my favourite pine-tree. It has such gentle bark with pink pattern, it seems to smile at me. The bottom of the straight and high trunk is getting dark and covered in wet green moss. It is great to breathe in the fresh air after the rain which has been rattling on the roof all night... The faded grass always rustles there and there is a lot of wet yellow leaves on the ground.

I enjoy walking along the narrow path along the shore in the morning. There are a lot of pine-trees there and there are hardly ever bilberries there. Their bushes are so nasty. If you walk near them, you get wet. I don't like that.

Boris is walking near me and phoning someone. He is busy. He is not in the mood. So I would better run to my favourite place. The bank there bends and forms a small pool with a lot of rich grass and reed mace. Quietly prowling through the trees to the water, I like to scare white swans, who often swim here to have a rest.

I run around along the shore trying to show everyone who the boss is here. Well, at least near my path... The swans are not fussing, they swim aside without waving their wings and are fluctuating in the water. They don't even turn their long necks. Not like ducks. Those would have flown up far away. These ones clang, flap their wings but don't fly away.

Having restored justice, I return home with a sense of performed duty. Boris has already prepared a meal and is carrying the plates to the table. After a long walk on an empty stomach I am always hungry.

I feel cheerful and rush to my meal, leaving Boriska behind. I have to look back all the time to make sure he is carrying my plate and has not eaten my food. So far, so good. The meal starts.

Usually I quickly eat my food and wait for Boriska recollect some doctor's words and leave half of his breakfast uneaten. I wait for that wonderful moment while sitting on the sofa and politely looking the other way. The air smells of boiled meat and buckwheat. Besides, his buckwheat is likely to be salted and poured over with olive oil, which makes it a real treat. The quantity of what Boris has eaten is growing and the buckwheat in the plate is decreasing, unfortunately.

I felt like reminding him of myself. Quietly banging on the table, I start humming something that I know annoys Boris. I know he can't stand it and tells me off for that. The effect is nil! It's tough. I will have to interfere directly. It is actually a sure option but I can only use it in extreme cases. Hooray! I won! I return to the sofa and lie down there comfortably with my head on a big red cushion. Having eaten enough, we watch TV in silence. As usual, there is nothing interesting there – just a noise and picture flickering. It is different when “Seventeen Moments of Spring” or football are on. Boriska groans or yells loudly and I feel something is wrong and get distressed for him. It is the

other way round today. It is full harmony, no emotions. We both gradually doze off.

A little bit later Boris makes a big mug of tea for himself. I get up straight away to check if he is making a cheese sandwich for himself. Or maybe, even a sausage sandwich! There is quite a lot of tea... Surely he is not going to drink it without anything else. No, I was wrong this time. Well, it is worse for him. With a sandwich it would have been much tastier.

He surprises me all the time. He knows that if his tea is with sugar, he needs a cheese sandwich. The tea was sweet, I saw it. Where is a sandwich? What would have happened if he had made a sandwich? Let me dream. Would he have given me half of it? No way! He would have stuffed all of it into his mouth and then be chewing it for a long time, washing down with tea. I know him! He doesn't like to share. He is either greedy or loves his food. I still have not made up my mind about him. I am studying him and comparing him to other people. I need to know it in order to apply effective sanctions to my elder relative.

In general, Boriska is nice and I love him. I love it when he takes me for a ride in his car. Usually I sit next to him and when he gets out I take his seat at the wheel. Passers-by look at me and are surprised that someone as small as me can drive. Sometimes I would wake up, throw the blanket off, open my eyes and through the huge window see the green lawn where I usually play, light leaves of a birch-tree on the background of always dark fir-trees... And Boriska would stroke me, put the blanket on my body and head and he would sleep again. I usually sigh deeply. There is so much sadness in my sigh that Boris would stroke me again. It is nice when all are at home! But this happiness will end up sooner or later...

When he goes somewhere I want him to come back soon. Then I would wait for him and don't want to miss

him coming back. I would lie on the grass and watch the gates for hours. Or I would go to a big bolder stone near the house. When my heart is heavy, I am always there. I would lie down and stay there in the warmth and calm. The bolder stone affects me this way. It has been there for a long time. Many-many years! Since before I was born. Sometimes I lie there for long. Then the bolder stone gives up and I can hear it whispering quietly, "Don't fla-a-a-ash before my eyes..." If it is late and time to go to bed I will go inside of course but I would still stay near the door for half an hour with my head down and wait. What if... It is a big difference to sleep on my own on the sofa in nan's room or on the big bed with Boriska.

Yesterday they brought my younger relative for my jubilee. He was small, white, with dark round eyes. Looked like a bunny. Ran like a bunny. I was shouting at him to show him who the boss was but he didn't run away, he was just running around me. He thought he was clever. He must have known I wouldn't be able to catch him. He was probably clever, but also very naughty. He has ripped all my toys that were lying around in the lawn. He had sharp and itchy teeth so he was grabbing everything he could, especially precious things. He has chewed Boriska's phone, TV remote and his favourite slippers. I remember I used to bring those slippers to Boriska but that little monkey!..

However, I taught him who the boss of the house was. When Boris brought something nice to eat in, that little relative of mine wouldn't even come up to him and pretend he didn't need anything. Of course – I was near him! I would have taken the food from him in the nick of the moment! It was a different story if I was far from him, on the sofa near Boris, for instance. Every day would be Sunday for him! He would drag the treat away, dig a hole in the garden, put it there (how could he do that?), after that he would put the soil back and return inside as if nothing

had happened. But his nose would be covered in soil. Not very clever! I can see everything, make conclusions, then keep a close watch on him and his activity and actions. Mind you, the words "activity" and "action", as a Muller said on TV, mean the same thing.

The newcomer has two peculiarities. I can't do anything about it. In winter he can always find under the snow all the toys that were left in the lawn. Must be by their smell. Boris would shout, "Where is our duck?" Fancy saying "our"! And he would find it straight away. He can even find the frog. The toy is so small but he can find it. He would get it from under the snow and run through the drift. And wouldn't even sink into the snow. I can't smell the toys like he does - I just remember what is where. But he is like a hunter for... strangers' belongings. He would run out with my duck onto the path in the snow, stand still and want others to admire him. "See how clever and bright I am!" Only a cap on the top of his head and trousers with suspenders are missing. He can't even bark properly. He just keeps quiet pretending to like to be thinking. Sometimes when Boriska clears the snow or leaves in autumn, he goes absolutely mad. He throws himself on the shovel or rake, squeaks, shrieks, mews like a cat, but he can't bark. He must like the way the rake moves back and forth or he lacks iron in his body so when he catches it he starts licking it like mad. Sometimes he would sit near the door for an hour without making a single sound. Even in winter! Some hero!

And now about the main thing. The bed I sleep on with Boriska is rather high but I am still able to climb it. I do struggle and can climb it only from the right side. So the cheeky monkey would jump on it first, sit in my place and wouldn't turn a hair. No, he wouldn't. He tried to demonstrate the natural process of the shift in power. I would come and go, squeak to Boriska to make him move the idler from my space. Nothing helps! One of them is

already asleep, the other is in the seventh heaven. Now I can't jump on the bed at all. If I could, he would be whining and begging me to forgive him.

Anyway, after having enjoyed his greatness, he would slowly and unwillingly, doing a big favour, climb over Boris to the left side of the bed and vacate my space. That means he does realize how to behave even though he is naughty! That cheers me up and makes me tolerate his tricks, get used to him. I would even say I start to kind of love him.

At last I climb on the bed and lie at Boriska's feet on the duvet. I sigh loudly of pleasure. The little one gets embarrassed, lowers his head and reaches me to lick. As if I need it! I would rather him not follow us when I go for a walk with Boris. He hangs about all the time. If it goes this way he will get as far as the swans soon. Even I have never barked at them yet.