

Rainbird Tales - Tall Tales about Animals and Nature from Santa Land

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17. Swan Love



Sylvester the swan had just returned to his home lake from far beyond the sea where he had spent the winter in warmer weather than the frosty winter of his homeland. His home lake's calm water and the familiar smell of the shoreline reeds felt good to his young yellow beak. The air was full of the merry twittering of migrating birds returning for the spring.

On his trip home Sylvester had met a heavenly girl swan. Her slender neck and elegant movements made Sylvester's feathers fluff out in excitement. Sylvester swam for days with his heart beating wildly whenever the girl swan was nearby. He gazed at her longingly and then arched out wings in order to catch the attention of Sylvia swan. In the evenings Sylvester would draw hearts in the shore sand with his beak as he said the girl's name to himself. In the mornings when he woke Sylvester's first thought was always about Sylvia swan.

No matter how hard Sylvester tried to charm Sylvia, she still ignored him. Sylvester still didn't dare to go to speak to her and felt like a proper coward. In the evenings he wailed in longing by the light of the setting sun.

One morning Sylvester woke and decided something had to be done. Today would be the day he would go and talk to Sylvia. He preened his feathers and swam elegantly over to Sylvia's home bay. Once he reached the bay he saw a terrible and paralyzing sight: Sylvia was flirting with another young boy swan from nearby. The boy was telling Sylvia stories about his trip and talking about all the brave things he had done. Sylvia was listening to him in delight, arching her slender neck this way and that. Sylvester almost turned green with

jealousy. Sylvia was clearly in love with the loud mouthed show-off. Sylvester's heart felt as though it could cry big elephant's tears.

Sylvester swam sadly along the lake's shorelines day after day, until one rainy day he found himself in the middle of a harsh thunder storm. The sky flashed white with every lightning bolt and the air was filled with the loud thunder claps. Out in the middle of the lake Sylvester could see two swans and one of them was splashing and hissing loudly trying to get away from the thunder storm. Sylvester swam closer and saw that the swan that had been left alone was Sylvia. Sylvester swam over to Sylvia and talking to her in a calming, gentle voice he helped her find her way back to her home shore. The swan that had run away in the storm was the show-off boy swan from nearby.

Sylvia thanked Sylvester for being so brave and her eyes shone in admiration for him. After the thunder storm the happy swans built a nest together into which Sylvia laid five large eggs. Sylvester and Sylvia had found each other and their own home nesting rock to which they returned each year from their migration trip to nest.

The moral of the tale: A friend in need is a friend indeed.

Translation from Finnish to English: Ann Albrecht

20. Sheep Philosophy



Sandra the sheep lolled blissfully happy in the spring sun in her own pen. With languid eyes, she observed the world around her. The bright yellow dandelions in the meadow poked perkily out of the ground, waiting for summer.

The other farm animals thought Sandra was a lazy and chubby comfort-seeking sheep happy to mind her own business. In reality she was a true farm thinker of the animal world, meditating and philosophizing about the big questions of Life.

From the sheep-pen Sandra had a direct view into the pen of Pamela the Pig. Languorously she watched Pamela's round behind, pondering upon the meaning of a pig's life. A great flock of little piglets had been born on the neighbouring farm a few weeks ago. Whatever was going through their mind, if anything?

Sandra had noticed that the pigs sprawled side by side all day long on their bed of straw, not doing much anything. Why does the same sow always give birth to so many piglets? They must provide each other company and no one needs to be alone, Sandra decided. And why do they have a wiggly tail wagging like a dog's? They must be happy with their life. And why do they root in the straw with their small snouts? They are looking for something – perhaps the key to happiness, or a treasure, she philosophized.

Sandra thought piglets were endearing pink sloe-eyed things. Why do they grow into ugly grunting swine? Why do the others think they are dirty and bad-mannered members of the

animal kingdom? She had heard the small boy living on the farm call his friend a swine after the other had angrily pushed the boy down onto a pile of cow dung. Another time the boy had called his friend a swine because he had greedily gobbled up the boy's dessert. Sandra had heard that the humans thought the swine was an ugly, greedy, dirty and selfish animal.

Sandra was happy for having been born a sheep. It did not bother her that the humans considered the sheep stupid, lazy and docile. That, at least, seemed sympathetic.

All young animals are sweet and innocent when small – even the human puppies. Not to speak of the lambs. During her life Sandra had noticed that people grew up to be sheep-like or swinish, ugly or beautiful. She thought that Pamela the Pig was the most docile swine in the world. Perhaps she was a sheep in a pig's clothing. Ultimately no one is what she seems to be, Sandra decided and continued her blissful lounging in the spring evening.

The moral of the tale: Do not judge the book by its cover.

Translation from Finnish to English: Mikko Lyytikäinen