

Title: Rinty

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The World Has Gone

'Up you get!' mum calls. 'It's quarter past eight already!'

'I can't see anything,' says Rinty. 'I can't see anything at all!'

'Then you should open your eyes properly, sleepyhead!' says mum.

'My eyes are open,' protests Rinty. 'But the world has gone. Have a look outside!'

'Oh, is that what you mean!' says mum. 'It's because of the fog, that's what happens in the autumn sometimes!'

'We won't be able to cycle to school,' says Rinty. 'We won't be able to find the way.'

'I'll find the way,' says mum. 'You'll still be able to see the things that are close by. If we cycle slowly we'll get there.'

A moment later Rinty jumps into the front bicycle basket.

'I can't even see our house anymore!' he shouts when mum pedals off.

'I can't look around now,' says mum. 'I have to mind where I'm going!'

'The trees don't have trunks,' says Rinty. 'It's as if they're floating.'

'When the sun warms up later the fog will lift,' says mum.

'Shame,' says Rinty. 'It's perfect for playing hide and seek.'

'But no one will find you,' says mum.

'Look!' says Rinty. 'Flying cows!'

‘Ha!’ says mum. ‘What a funny sight. It’s as if the cows are afloat. It’s because they’ve got their legs in the fog.’

‘Rinty!’ they hear all of a sudden. It’s Tobias.

‘Where are you?’ asks Rinty. ‘I can hear you but I can’t see you!’

‘I can’t see you either,’ says Tobias. ‘But I heard your voice, we’re very near you!’

Rinty looks in all directions but he doesn’t see anything. Then Tobias’s head pops up from the clouds of fog. He’s sitting up front in his mother’s bicycle basket.

‘Exciting, hey?’ he says. ‘There might all kinds of scary ghosts and we wouldn’t even know it.’

‘Don’t be so daft,’ says Rinty. ‘Ghosts don’t exist.’ But he has a good look around him to be on the safe side.

At the school playground Rinty and Tobias’s mums lift them out of their baskets.

‘Where are you Tobias?’ says Rinty. ‘I can’t see you anymore!’

‘Here, I’m right next to you,’ says Tobias and Rinty feels a kick against his leg.

‘Hehe, I get it,’ says Rinty. ‘Because the mist is so low and you’ve got such short legs you’ve become invisible.’

‘Woooooooh’, roars Tobias. ‘Here comes the invisible belly bumper. I’m going to haunt the playground!’

This makes Rinty howl with laughter. ‘Come on!’ he says. ‘We’re late. We need to get moving to get to our class. Miss Smarty Pants is about to start the lesson!’

Storm

Rinty is waking up. He hears strange noises. Something is tapping against the window. It seems as if the entire house is squeaking and creaking.

He shakes himself awake. He has a good stretch and jumps out of his basket.

Where are all those noises coming from?

A large branch lashes against the window.

Rinty sees hundreds of leaves fly through the air. And he has never seen the clouds move so fast. It’s dark for a minute, then the sun shines and the next moment it’s raining again.

Lots of twigs are flying through the air as well, and over there a very large branch. Even a whole piece of tree!

Mum should see this! Rinty goes over to her basket. He pulls her by the ear. Mum opens one eye.

‘I had just dozed off again’, she says. ‘The storm has kept me awake all night!’

‘Storm?’ asks Rinty.

‘That’s when the wind blows the hardest it can blow.’ says mum.

‘So that’s why everything is flying through the air!’ says Rinty. ‘The most beautiful sticks and twigs, I want to catch them all!’

‘They’re going far too fast,’ says mum, ‘you can’t run faster than the wind.’

‘I’m going to try it all the same,’ says Rinty, ‘together with Tobias!’

Mum jumps out of her basket. ‘Let’s have breakfast first,’ she says, ‘and then ring Tobias.’

Rinty gulps down his breakfast.

‘Ready!’ he calls. ‘And now let’s get to Tobias, quick!’

Mum grabs the telephone. She dials the number of the Dachshund family. ‘Tobias speaking,’ mum hears. ‘Is there such a big storm howling at your end as well?’

‘Yes,’ replies mum, ‘I’ve never seen it blow so hard, but can I speak to your mum for a moment?’

‘Mrs Dachshund here, good morning!’

‘Good morning, it’s Rinty’s mother,’ says mum. Rinty would like to go and catch sticks in the wind with Tobias!’

‘Absolutely no way!’ says Mrs Dachshund. ‘You know what happened to my neighbour?’

‘Your neighbour?’ says mum. ‘I have no idea!’

‘I had a lovely neighbour,’ replies Mrs Dachshund. ‘A miniature poodle with tiny black curls.’

‘You said “had”,’ says mum. ‘Has she moved or something?’

‘It’s much worse,’ explains Mrs Dachshund, ‘she blew away!’

‘Blew away, just like that?’ mum asks. ‘How can that be?’

‘Three years ago, I saw her go outside, in south-westerly storm,’ Mrs Dachshund tells mum. ‘A gust of wind lifted her up and since then she’s vanished!’

‘How awful!’ says mum. ‘I hope she’s landed in a lovely spot!’

‘We will never know, which is why I advise all dogs below ten kilos to stay indoors when there’s a storm blowing!’

‘My Rinty only weighs eight kilos,’ says mum. ‘So he can’t go out in this weather.’

‘And what about my little Tobias?’ asks Mrs Dachshund. ‘He weighs just five kilos!’

‘I think it’s a bit sad for them,’ says mum.

‘I’m staying inside until the storm has stopped raging!’ says Mrs Dachshund.

‘We can put Tobias and Rinty on the lead,’ says mum. ‘If we hold onto it tightly they can’t blow away!’

‘Are you sure?’ asks Mrs Dachshund. ‘I don’t know if I can!’

‘Of course you can!’ replies mum. ‘Really, nothing will happen, we’ll come and get you in a minute!’

‘We’re going out Rinty, but you’ll have to stay on the lead, otherwise you’ll blow away!’ says mum.

‘How exciting!’ cries Rinty. The wind carries his voice away.

‘I can’t hear!’ calls mum.

‘Exciting!’ shouts Rinty.

The wind is roaring and howling around their ears. When they get to the Dachshund family’s house, mum rings the bell.

Mrs Dachshund sticks her nose out. ‘Are you sure it’s okay?’ she asks. It’s still rather scary, I think!’

‘Nothing can happen,’ says mum, ‘as long as you hold on to the lead really tightly.’

Once Tobias and his mother are also outside, the four of them begin to catch sticks and twigs. But they fly past so fast that catching them is almost impossible.

‘Aren’t the clouds beautiful!’ shouts Rinty’s mother. But before Mrs Dachshund has a chance to look up she feels a gust of wind pull on her lead.

In one swoop, Tobias flies into the air! Rinty is also lifted up.

They look like two kites. Only when the wind dies down a little do they slowly come down to the earth.

‘Now I know what it’s like to be a bird!’ cries Rinty.

Taking The Plunge

‘What do you find scary?’ asks Henrietta.

‘What do you mean?’ asks Rinty.

‘Is there something you’re too afraid to do? Something you wouldn’t do, even if someone gave you a hundred thousand tasty chews?’

‘I don’t think anything scares me,’ says Rinty. ‘And you?’

‘I dare to do loads of things as well!’ says Henrietta. ‘Jumping off the diving board in the swimming pool!’

‘I’m not afraid to go out when there’s lighting,’ says Rinty. ‘And when there are fireworks!’

‘And I sometimes sneak a few bone biscuits from the tin when my mum’s not looking,’ says Henrietta.

There’s Tobias. ‘What are you talking about?’ he asks.

‘About the things we dare to do,’ says Henrietta. ‘I don’t think you dare to do all that much, Tobias!’

‘Oh yes I do,’ replies Tobias, ‘I’m brave enough to eat really scary things, such as beetles and worms.’

‘Oh’, says Henrietta, ‘that’s nothing. I do that all the time!’

‘I’m not afraid to phone someone I don’t know,’ says Tobias, ‘and when they answer I shout POO!’

‘What’s scary about that?’ Rinty asks. ‘They can’t see you!’

‘I’m brave enough to stick my tongue out to a really big dog,’ says Henrietta.

‘And if he turns angry?’ Tobias asks.

‘I run away really fast!’ replies Henrietta.

‘I can swim under water for a really long time,’ says Rinty. ‘With my eyes open!’

‘I know something you guys are definitely not brave enough to do!’ says Henrietta. ‘Do you see that tree there?’

‘Yes, but what’s frightening about that?’ Tobias asks.

‘I’d like to see you two climb all the way to the top,’ says Henrietta

‘That’s more of a cat thing,’ says Tobias. ‘Dogs don’t climb trees!’

‘Because no dog has the guts to do it!’ Henrietta shrieks.

‘I’ll be right up it, you know,’ says Rinty. ‘If a cat can do it, so can I!’

‘And you, Tobias?’ Henrietta asks.

‘Of course,’ replies Tobias. ‘Easy-peasy!’

‘Show me then,’ says Henrietta. ‘I don’t believe for one minute you guys have the guts.’

‘Come on, Tobias,’ says Rinty. ‘We’ll show Henrietta!’

Together they make their way over to the tree. Luckily a big knot is sticking out at the bottom of the trunk. This makes it easy for them to reach the first branch. Carefully they climb their way up, branch by branch.

‘Henrietta is getting smaller and smaller,’ says Rinty. ‘Look!’

‘I’d better not look down, otherwise I’ll get dizzy,’ says Tobias.

‘You’re nowhere near the top!’ shouts Henrietta.

‘I think we’ve climbed high enough now,’ Tobias pants. ‘Climbing trees is very tiring for a dachshund.’

‘If we stop now Henrietta will think we dare not go any further,’ says Rinty. ‘It’s just a few more branches to the top.’

‘You go,’ says Tobias. ‘I think I’ve gone far enough.’

‘Come on,’ says Rinty. ‘Do you want to be laughed at?’

Tobias musters all his courage.

‘Okay, I’ll come up, but then you have to tell the whole school!’

‘I’ll tell everyone that you’re the toughest dachshund in the whole world!’ says Rinty.

Together they climb up higher, to the top branches. ‘You can see really far, Tobias!’ calls Rinty. ‘Look at those flats in the distance.’

‘I’d rather look at the leaves in the tree,’ says Tobias, ‘that’s far enough for me.’

‘What are you shaking for?’ says Rinty. ‘It’s not cold now, is it?’

‘I don’t think I like it all that much so high up here,’ says Tobias. ‘Shall we go down again?’

‘Okay,’ says Rinty, ‘you go first.’

‘No, you go ahead,’ says Tobias. ‘Then you can tell me which branch I should jump onto.’

Rinty starts climbing down. ‘That fat branch,’ he calls. ‘And then the one with the big knot.’

‘Wait, it doesn’t work!’ Tobias cries. ‘I can’t move!’

Rinty looks up. ‘What do you mean?’

‘My legs aren’t working anymore,’ says Tobias. ‘You’ll have to carry me!’

‘Impossible,’ says Rinty. ‘If I do that I won’t be able to go down myself.’

‘What should I do then?’ asks Tobias. ‘I can’t stay here forever!’

‘I’ll think of something,’ says Rinty. ‘And don’t look down too much, it’ll make you dizzy.’

He quickly climbs down to where Henrietta is waiting for him.

‘You’re a hero,’ she cries, ‘but where is Tobias?’

‘He doesn’t dare come down. We have to do something to save him.’

‘I have an idea,’ says Henrietta. ‘We call the fire brigade; they always rescue cats who are too afraid to come down from trees.’

They go to Henrietta’s mother to call the fire brigade and then rush back to the park. A moment later a big fire engine arrives. It stops under the tree Tobias is in and a very long ladder is pulled out. All the way to the top of the tree. One of the firemen climbs up.

‘Right my boy,’ says the fireman when he’s got to the top. ‘Did you think you were a monkey?’ He lifts Tobias from his branch and carries him down.

Tobias runs over to Henrietta and Rinty.

‘You won’t tell anyone, will you?’ he asks.

‘It’s our secret,’ says Henrietta. ‘And I think you’re pretty tough!’

Birthday

Rinty is tossing and turning in his basket. He can’t sleep. Tomorrow is a very exciting day, in fact the most exciting day of the year. It’s his birthday.

Will mum be hanging bunting around the sitting room, like last year?

And will his present be waiting for him on the table? He has made a wish list. It was difficult to choose what he wanted to have more than anything else this year.

He likes squeaky toys, animals or balls that make funny noises when you bite them. He already has quite a collection. There are bone-shaped squeaky toys, but also mice, hedgehogs with yellow spines and even little gnomes with red pointy hats. Real bones are always welcome too, of course. Biscuit-bones. And pig-bladder bones, they last such a wonderful long time.

His list is quite long. He has stuck coloured dots next to the things he has written down. Yellow: would like to have. Blue: would like to have very much. Red: would like to have very, very much. And orange for: this is what I would like most. Next to the orange dot it says ‘skaytboard’. Rinty does not really know how to spell this, but his mother is bound to understand what he means.

When Rinty falls asleep he dreams about his skate board. It’s a beautiful one with purple wheels, and flames painted on the top side. That makes it seem as if it’s going really fast, even though it’s not moving.

All the dogs in the park come and check out his present. ‘What a beautiful skate board!’ they bark. ‘We’ve never seen such a beautiful one!’

‘Got it for my birthday,’ says Rinty proudly. ‘It’s been made specially for me, in America!’

‘Does it go fast?’ the dogs ask.

‘Have a look!’ Rinty cries out. He steps on the skateboard. He pushes off with his front right leg. Faster and faster. Now he pulls up his leg and is standing four-square on the board. He whizzes past, flies over a dip and ends up on the ground with a jump.

‘Brilliant!’ the other dogs cry. ‘Do you dare go into that metal arch?’

‘You mean the half-pipe?’ asks Rinty.

The half-pipe is big, metal arch that’s lying on its back. You can stand on the top of one side, skate down, and then zoom up on the other side. Then you have to turn around super-fast before you go down again. Only really tough dogs can do this.

‘I can do anything with this skateboard!’ Rinty calls. He places himself at the top of the halfpipe. But just as he wants to swoosh down he hears a voice: ‘Wake up, Rinty!’

It’s mum. He dreamt everything.

‘Happy birthday!’ mum gives him a big cuddle. ‘Quickly, come and have a look at your present!’

Rinty runs into the sitting room. There’s bunting everywhere. On the table is a big cake. And a big parcel with a red bow.

‘Open up!’ says mum.

Rinty can’t wait. Will it be what I was hoping for. He quickly tears off the paper from the box. When he opens the lid, he sees a plank. A plank with wheels.

‘And?’ mum asks. ‘Do you like your skateboard? I made it myself.’

‘Beautiful!’ says Rinty, disappointed.

This is not what he meant at all. It doesn’t look remotely like the skateboards he knows from the park.

‘You don’t look happy!’ says his mum. ‘You wanted a skateboard, didn’t you?’

‘I think it’s really beautiful!’ says Rinty. He tries to look as happy as possible. Mums don’t understand the first thing about skateboards. He gives mum a big cuddle.