

This was now the situation: the cat was perched on one branch of the tree... and the little bird on another...a little way from the cat. And below them the wolf was pacing around the tree, looking up at them with greedy eyes.

All this while Peter had been standing behind the locked gate and had seen all that had happened without being at all afraid. He ran into the house, seized a thick rope, and climbed up to the top of the garden wall. One of the branches of the tree, around which the wolf was still pacing, reached as far as this wall.

Peter sprang over into the tree. He said to the little bird, 'Fly down and circle around the wolf's muzzle, but be very careful that he doesn't snap you up!' The little bird brushed the wolf's muzzle with his wings, and the wolf sprang angrily at him, this way and that.

Oh how the little bird teased the wolf! And how the wolf longed to catch hold of him! But the little bird was cunning, and try as he might, the wolf simply couldn't catch him.

By now, Peter had made a noose with his rope, and very carefully he lowered it down. He slipped the noose over the wolf's tail, and pulled it tight. The wolf, realising that he had been caught, leapt about furiously, trying to tear himself free.

But Peter had tied the end of the rope to the tree. And each leap of the wolf only drew the noose tighter and tighter around his tail.

Just then, out of the woods came some huntsmen. They were following the trail of the wolf and firing their guns.

But Peter shouted down from the tree, 'You don't need to shoot. The little bird and I have already caught the wolf. Now help us take him to the zoo!'

And now, see the triumphant procession:

Out in front marched Peter. After him were the huntsmen, leading the wolf. Behind them came Peter's grandfather, with the cat. The grandfather was shaking his head unhappily. 'Well, well. But what if he didn't catch the wolf? What then, eh?'

Above them all flew the little bird, chirping merrily, 'See how clever we are, Peter and I. See what we have caught!'

And if you listened very, very carefully, you could hear the duck, still quacking inside the wolf. For the wolf had been in such a hurry that he had swallowed her alive.

Peter and the Wolf

By Sergei Prokofiev

Early one morning young Peter opened the garden gate, and went out into the big green meadow.

High up in a tree sat a little bird, one of Peter's friends. 'Everything is quiet and still,' chirps the little bird. 'Everything is quiet and still.'

Following behind Peter, and waddling from side to side, came a duck. She was very glad that Peter hadn't shut the garden gate, and decided to take a bath in the deep pond in the meadow.

When he saw the duck, the little bird flew down onto the grass, sat beside the duck, and began to shrug his shoulders.

'What sort of a bird are you,' he said, 'when you can't even fly!' To which the duck retorted, 'What sort of a bird are you if you can't even swim!' And with a big splash, she flopped into the pond.

They argued for a long time, while the duck swam around the pond, and the little bird hopped along the bank.

Then Peter had a sudden fright. Creeping stealthily towards them, through the grass, was a cat.

The cat was thinking: 'So the bird is busy with his quarrel, eh? I'll soon catch him!' And without a sound, she crept up to him on her velvet paws.

'Watch out!' shouted Peter, and in a flash the little bird flew up into the tree. Then the duck, from the middle of the pond, squawked angrily at the cat.

The cat walked round and round the tree, thinking: 'Would it be worth climbing that high? By the time I get there, the bird would surely have flown away.'

Then out came Peter's grandfather. He was very angry with Peter for going out of the garden gate into the meadow. 'It's dangerous out here,' he said. 'What would you do if a wolf came out of the woods? What then, eh?'

But Peter was not paying much attention. He explained that boys like him were not afraid of wolves.

But his grandfather took Peter by the hand, led him home, and firmly locked the gate behind them.

And sure enough, no sooner had they gone than out of the woods came a big grey wolf.

The cat shot up into the tree.

The duck squawked and flapped hurriedly out of the pond.

But, flap as she might, the wolf was faster.

He got closer...and closer...he caught up with her...seized her...and swallowed her up.