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Milla Gorilla

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Here Comes Milla

Milla lives here. At the very top of this house, just under the roof. With Mum, Dad and her banana plushie, Nani. Mum always says, “Don’t we have a beautiful home! We must be so very lucky to live under one roof with such a lovely bunch!”

And Milla thinks so too. Grandma and Grandpa’s flat is on the next floor down. Mr. Karuso, the building manager, lives on the ground floor. He always wears funny braces and is really good at whistling.

There’s only one empty flat and that’s the one next door to Mr. Karuso’s. The empty flat has a lovely big garden and Milla thinks it’s a big shame that nobody ever uses it.

Now you know a lot about Milla’s house, but absolutely nothing about Milla. We’ll have to put that right!



Milla is the kind of gorilla anyone would like to have as a friend. You'll always have a good laugh with her because her head is chock full of fun ideas. While we're on the subject, if you ever hear someone laughing so loud they're rocking the room, it might be Milla.





You'll know her by her red cowboy boots and her banana plushie, Nani, because she never goes anywhere without them.

Milla is as strong as apes come. So very strong she can even lift Mr. Karuso's toolbox clean off the ground all by herself. But Milla isn't just strong on the outside. She's strong on the inside too.

Once Milla has got something into her head, nothing and nobody can make her change her mind.

Dad always says, "There's only one thing bigger and stronger than Milla's will and that's her heart!"

I could tell you a whole lot more about her, but it would be better if you got to know her for yourself....





How Long Is a Minute?

Milla is still lying in her hammock when she hears an almighty racket on the street down below. “What’s going on down there?” she wonders. Half-asleep, she pads over to the skylight, holding Nani tight. There are tall trees outside Milla’s window, so her loft room feels a bit like a tree house.



She can see everything from up here: the little kiosk opposite, the park gate and even the playground with its zip wire. And she can see what's making all the din too! There's a huge removal van downstairs. A whole bunch of people, all in blue dungarees, are fetching boxes and furniture from the van and carrying them inside. Mr. Karuso, the building manager, is standing by with his big silver bunch of keys, whistling happily to himself.

The door opens behind Milla and Mum comes in. "Good morning, little monkey! I see you're awake." Milla starts chattering away. "Look what's going on down there, Mum!"



»“Oh yes, someone’s moving into the empty flat on the ground floor at last,” Mum says happily. A boy and his mother come out of the building and start chatting to Mr. Karuso.

“Awesome!” says Milla, thrilled. “That means I’ll have someone to play tag and hide-and-seek or do some climbing with. Can we go down and say hello?” she asks excitedly.

Mum laughs and strokes her head. “Have some breakfast first.” Milla is so keyed up that she hardly touches her banana bread. She keeps running out onto the balcony to see what their new neighbours are doing.

“Are you finally full up?” Milla asks when Mum and Dad have swallowed their last mouthful. “Can we go and say hello now?”

“You’re really excited, aren’t you?” Mum says.





"I can see why, little monkey. But first you need to pick your bricks up off the living room floor. You promised me you'd do it yesterday. I keep nearly tripping on them." Milla can't believe it. "What? Tidy up? Now? When a new playmate has moved in downstairs? I'll do it later," she says.

"No, do it this minute please!" Mum says.

Who could get their head around this minute business? When is this minute anyway? Now or later? Milla doesn't want to wait a minute longer for Mum and Dad when they obviously have no idea how long that is themselves.



She scampers into her room and paints a yellow bow on a sheet of paper. It's supposed to be Nani. Then she writes her name beside it: MILLA in block capitals. She can actually write her name all by herself. She folds up the sheet of paper and ties up her note with parcel string. Then she goes back out onto the balcony. The boy downstairs is eating pancakes on his terrace. Milla drops her letter over the balcony. She lets out more and more string until the note is dangling just above the boy's stack of pancakes.

He looks up at her in surprise. Milla can't help laughing out loud at his baffled face.

She waves down at him.

"Do you live here now?" she calls.

"Yes!" he calls back.



“Shall we be friends?” she asks.

“Yes,” he replies.

“Do you ever say anything other than ‘yes’?” asks Milla.

“Yes!” he calls again. “Erm, I mean, I do!”

“Great!” Milla replies. “Do you want to play with me?”

“Yes!” he calls.

“You just said it again!” Milla laughs.

“Oops!” says the boy.

“So what are you waiting for? Are you coming up?”

“Won’t be a minute!” calls the boy. Milla snorts. There it is again - the word ‘minute’ keeps popping up. Now she wishes he’d just said ‘yes’ yet again! But very soon afterwards, Milla’s doorbell rings.

Dad opens the door.





It's the boy and his mum. His mum hands something to Dad. "We got some mail from your daughter," she says with a friendly smile. "I'm Thea and this is my son, Benjamin."

Milla giggles. "Now I get it! You're Ben-YES-man!"

The boy goes a bit red in the face. "You can call me Benny."

"Come on, I'll show you my room," Milla says, tugging him along behind her. Benny can't believe his eyes when he sees Milla's room. That's because there's not another room like it! Grandpa has kitted it out especially for Milla. He's put up a rope swing like a jungle vine so Milla can swing through her room.





There's a climbing wall, a bar for dangling from and a net hanging just under the ceiling that Milla has made into a den for her soft toys with some cushions and blankets.

"Come on, Benny, let's play!" Milla says, hoisting herself up onto the swing rope. The pair of them climb and swing and romp about in Milla's room.



Then they notice that Nani doesn't look at all well.

Nani has to go straight to the doctor," Milla announces. "You be the doctor." She puts Nani in her doll's pram.

"Nee-naw! Nee-naw!" Milla blue-lights Nani to Doctor Benny. He's ready and waiting for his patient in the hammock hospital.

He listens to Nani's chest very carefully.

"Oh no, she has yellow fever!" Benny says, sounding terribly serious.

He gives Nani an injection.



“She’s already feeling a bit better, but she needs something to eat right away,” Doctor Benny says. “I’m horribly hungry too,” says Milla. “Me too,” says Benny. No wonder! Time has flown by. They scoot into the kitchen where Benny’s mum, Thea, is sitting at the table talking to Milla’s mum over a cup of coffee. Dad is standing at the kitchen bench chopping away.

“We’re hungry,” Milla tells him.

“When can we have something to eat?”



“It’ll be ready in a minute!” Dad replies.

“In a minute?” Milla narrows her eyes. “How long is a minute?”

Dad shrugs. “Well, a minute... That’s any time now! I’m just rustling up a few surprise sandwiches.”

Surprise sandwiches are Milla’s favourite supper.



It's Dad's signature dish: a plate of open sandwiches with different toppings. Today there's banana bread with sliced banana and banana mousse.

Then Dad pours two beakers of banana milk. But Benny can't stand bananas, so Dad makes him a cheese sandwich.

Benny only eats the cheese, but says it's even tastier on its own. After they've eaten, Milla and Benny take another look at Nani. "Still yellow," Doctor Benny murmurs pensively. He prescribes Nani some more special yellow fever juice, just to be on the safe side. Just then, Benny's mum pops her head around the door.

"Are you coming, Benny?"

Milla and Benny shout in unison, "In a minute!"

Benny's mum sighs. "Okay then, five more minutes. But that'll be it for today. We still have another few boxes waiting to be unpacked downstairs."

"Next time, you'll have to come to us," Benny says as he's leaving.

"Then we can play in the garden."

"Yay!"

When Milla goes to bed that evening, she's very tired, but very happy too. She gently zips Nani up and gives her a big kiss. Then it's her turn for a big kiss, from Mum of course. She snuggles up contentedly with Nani. And the next minute — immediately — her eyes close.



Poolside Chips

Milla loves her home just under the roof. For her, it feels lovely and cosy like a tree house. But in summer there are days when it isn't so great. Sometimes it feels baking hot like an oven up there. Today it's baking hot. By breakfast time, Milla, Mum and Dad are sweating like crazy.

"I'm melting," Mum groans.

"It's so hot in here we could cook banana pancakes on the kitchen table!" says Dad. Milla can't help laughing.

She likes the idea of it. Mum fans herself.

"I need to cool down! Who wants to go to the swimming pool?"

"Me!" Milla and Dad call out together. The next minute, they're all rushing around the flat.

While Dad is putting the swim things in a bag, Mum gets the sun cream. But when she comes back into the living room, Milla has vanished.



“What a shame Milla has disappeared!” Mum says, holding up something brightly coloured.

“I got this special paintbrush for the sun cream because I know Milla doesn’t like putting it on.”

Suddenly Milla’s head pops out from behind a cushion on the sofa.

“A magic paintbrush?” she asks, curious. And it really is! Putting on sun cream is really not so bad with Mum’s lovely soft paintbrush. Nani gets a bit of cream on her too.

Three people need loads of stuff for the swimming pool. Milla carries everything down the stairs all by herself.

“Just look how strong I am!” she says proudly.

They go to the swimming pool on their bikes and manage to find a nice, shady spot on the grass.

Milla puts Nani’s sun hat on.







Then she wants to go in the water. Mum is the first to the poolside. “Monkey flop!” she shouts. Hugging her legs, she cannonballs into the water. Milla can’t help giggling. “Now it’s your turn!” Mum says, but Milla would rather use the ladder.

The last thing she wants is to get water in her face. Mum and Milla both splash Dad until he’s all wet. Dad bobs up and down like a rubber ball and squeals like a guinea pig. Suddenly someone pops up out of the water beside Milla and Mum. “Hija!” Mr. Karuso the building manager warbles. Milla almost doesn’t recognise him in his swim goggles without his braces. “Superb weather we’re having!” He pushes off from the side with his feet and paddles away. Splash! That’s when Dad does a monkey flop into the water.



“I’m a sea monster and I gobble up little monkeys’ feet!” he shouts in a funny voice, raising his arms in the air. Milla clings to Mum. “Quick! Swim away!” she calls, laughing. That’s when Milla notices the water slide. She watches the other children whizzing down. It looks like fun. Milla wants a turn too.

“Are you sure, little monkey?” Mum asks.

“I’m brave,” Milla says indignantly. “I can do it!”

Dad stands in the queue with her. Mum swims to the bottom of the slide. “I’ll catch you at the bottom,” she promises.

Milla climbs the steps. A girl zooms down the slide in front of her. She disappears for a moment, then bobs back to the surface.





Uh-oh! Milla didn't notice that the kids go underwater when they shoot off the bottom. Their heads right under! She has a bad feeling about it.

A child behind her starts jostling her. "When are we finally going to get a turn?"

Everyone is looking at Milla: Mum, the other children, the lifeguard and Dad down on the poolside. Mr. Karuso comes paddling up to join them. He waves at Milla and gives her the thumbs-up.



“Dad has to go first,” Milla says.

“But Milla, the slide is only for children,” Dad says.

Milla shakes her head. “You have to show me how it’s done!”

So Dad climbs the steps too. He squeezes past Milla.

“This slide is really narrow,” he says. Now everyone is staring at Dad.

Dad sighs. He sits down and wriggles a bit to the left and then a bit to the right. “I don’t fit,” he says. Dad’s butt is just too big for the slide.

“Give me a push, Milla,” he says over his shoulder. And Milla pushes as hard as she can. But he doesn’t budge. Dad is stuck fast. The other kids help Milla and in the end even the lifeguard comes up the steps. In the meantime, a lot of parents have gathered around the slide. They’re all trying to figure out how to rescue Dad.

“Clench your buttocks,” Mum advises. But Dad has already been clenching his buttocks for quite a while.

The lifeguard has a think. “We could smear him with sun cream. His butt, I mean.”

“Or with the mayo for the chips,” Mr Karuso suggests.

“The mayo for the chips?” Dad squeaks in disbelief.

After a while, the lifeguard shakes his head. “We’ll have to call the fire brigade!”





Milla is excited. “Did you hear that, Dad?” she says, thrilled. “The fire brigade! They’ll come with their blue lights flashing!”

Funnily enough, Dad isn’t anywhere near as enthusiastic as Milla. He pulls a funny face. As if he’s just bitten into a lemon. “Grmmm,” he mutters and clenches his buttocks just a bit more. Then he leans to one side. There’s a pop, a whoosh and finally a splash!

Dad has whizzed all the way down the slide on only one butt cheek. Everyone claps.





When Dad resurfaces, he squirts a big fountain of water out of his mouth up into the air. “Now it’s your turn, Milla!” Mum calls.



“Maybe next time,” Milla says and goes back down the steps. She has to walk right past the lifeguard and all the children waiting to use the slide. It isn’t a very nice feeling.



Mum and Dad are already waiting for her at the bottom. They give her a big hug. “I think we’ve earned ourselves a big portion of chips from the poolside snack bar after all that excitement,” Mum says. Then after a sidelong glance at Dad, she adds, “With mayo”. “Grmmm!” Dad growls again, but he can’t help grinning.

Chips never taste better than they do at the pool, Milla thinks.

But she doesn’t say a word on the way to the snack bar. Or even when the assistant gives her a lollipop.

And Milla doesn’t touch her portion. Instead she clings to Nani.

Mum is worried. “Is everything okay, little monkey?” she asks.

“I so wanted to go down the slide,” Milla says. “But I didn’t dare. The other kids are much braver than me! And so is Dad.”

Dad shakes his head. “Not at all, Milla! It was the other way round: you were the brave one, not me.”

Milla frowns.

“You followed your gut instinct,” Dad says. “That was more than I could do. I had a gut feeling I was too big for the slide. But everyone expected me to go down, so I got on anyway.”

Mum nods and gives Milla a hug. “Being brave doesn’t mean you’re not scared. Being brave sometimes means being able to say no! Sometimes it’s much braver to trust your instincts than to dare to do something. You should be very proud of yourself, little monkey.”

Milla’s face lights up. Suddenly she finds her appetite and tucks into her poolside chips. With mayo!







Nani smells of sun cream when Milla takes her to bed that evening. Today she doesn't zip her up. It's just too hot!

"What a lovely day we had!" says Dad. He reads Milla a story. Milla's eyes close after a few lines. "Sleep tight, little monkey," Dad whispers and gives her a big kiss on the forehead. But Milla is out for the count. She has long since dropped off to sleep and is dreaming of summer days at the pool.





