

LITTLE MR

JAROMIR

BY

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The Man With the Green Hat

Little Mr Jaromir lives on the sixth floor. Each time he gets into the lift, he jumps as high as he can and presses a button. He usually reaches the fourth floor and walks up the last two flights.

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## ***The Man With the Green Hat***

One day little Mr Jaromir noticed a big billboard with the words: “SUPER! The Super Big Supermarket!” That was handy, because he had to go shopping anyway. He was sure to find everything he needed in this shop.

At the entrance Mr Jaromir took a shopping trolley. It was so big, that one had to be careful not to bump into anything while pushing it between the rows of shelves. Mr Jaromir had only reached the first corner when he shoved it into a woman’s heels.

“I’m sorry!” he said.

The woman looked at him angrily.

Gentle music came from the loudspeakers, from time to time interrupted by a friendly female voice.

“Here is a special announcement for all our customers. Why don’t you try ravioli today?” said the voice. “Seven tins for the price of six! A super offer!”

“That really is a super offer,” said Mr Jaromir. He didn’t have a job and so had to make do with a small amount of money. That’s why he paid attention to special offers.

And soon he had found a stack of tins of ravioli and

he put seven in his trolley. He went further along the aisles and picked up all the things he thought he needed. They included a big bag of rice, four packets of spaghetti, two jars of sausages. He found a lot of things he hadn't even thought of right away, for example, tooth picks, porridge oats and sesame paste. Mr Jaromir had never eaten sesame paste in his life. Now he was very curious to find out what it tasted like and he put it in his trolley just to try it. Three jars for the price of two, a super offer!

Other things took him a long time to find. Eggs, for example, were so well hidden behind the bread stand, that Mr Jaromir walked past them three times without noticing them. The fish fingers were so high up in the frozen food cabinets, that little Mr Jaromir didn't even see them at first, and then had to ask someone to fetch them down for him.

And butter! Where on earth could butter be? Mr Jaromir looked next to the yoghurt and next to the milk, but there was no trace of butter anywhere. He left his trolley standing close to the milk and went to look for someone, whom he could ask.

Near the vegetable section Mr Jaromir found a man in a green and white apron, obviously an assistant.

“Where do I find butter?” asked little Mr Jaromir.

“Beside the cheese,” said the man.

“Oh, I see. Thank you,” said Mr Jaromir.

Now he looked for the cheese, but he didn’t find that either.

When he saw an another assistant, Mr Jaromir asked: “Where do I find cheese?”

“Beside the butter,” said the assistant.

“I thought it might be,” said Mr Jaromir. The assistant was starting to walk away, but then Mr Jaromir called after him: “And butter? Where do I find butter?”

The assistant stopped again and pointed Mr Jaromir in the right direction.

You can imagine that Mr Jaromir’s shopping was taking a long time. But he was patient, because it was a pleasure to see his shopping trolley filling up.

Suddenly, however, Mr Jaromir saw something strange. He had just left his trolley beside the milk section and was looking for sugar cubes next to the packets of flour, when he noticed a man wearing a green hat with a feather in it. He had bushy eyebrows and a long black beard. The man certainly did look odd. But that wasn’t the oddest thing: In his shopping trolley he had exactly the same things, that Mr

Jaromir had bought!

What a coincidence, though Mr Jaromir in surprise.

Then he found the cube sugar and went back to the milk cabinet, to fetch his own trolley again. But it was gone.

“I don’t believe it!” exclaimed Mr Jaromir. “That man has taken my trolley!”

Mr Jaromir looked in every direction, he ran through the supermarket. The man with the green hat was already at the check-out and he was just putting Mr Jaromir’s shopping on the conveyor belt.

“Stop!” cried Mr Jaromir. “That’s my trolley!”

The man didn’t pay any attention.

“Stop the thief!” cried little Mr Jaromir to a sales assistant.

The sales assistant looked over to the check-out and laughed.

“We know him,” he said. “That’s the shopping trolley thief. He comes here almost every day. Because he can’t be bothered looking for the things himself, he simply takes a full trolley that someone has left unattended for a moment.”

“And why don’t you help me?” asked Mr Jaromir.

“Why don’t you stop him?”

“We can’t do anything about it,” said the assistant.

“The man pays for everything he buys. So he’s not a thief. I’m sorry, but that’s the way it is.”

The shopping trolley thief disappeared with Mr Jaromir’s purchases and there was nothing else for Mr Jaromir to do, but start his shopping from the beginning again. He went back to the entrance, took a new, empty trolley and filled it up.

You might think, that this time it was all a little faster, but not at all. The only things he now found immediately, were the ones he had taken a long time to find before. But the things he had found by chance - now he had to look for them for a long time.

Where were the porridge oats? The rice? The sausages in a jar? And where on earth had Mr Jaromir discovered the sesame paste? He was so curious to find out how it tasted, and now he couldn’t find it again.

Mr Jaromir asked an assistant, but he said: “Sesame paste? We don’t sell that.”

“He doesn’t know anything,” grumbled Mr Jaromir quietly to himself, because he knew very well, that this supermarket sold sesame paste.

At that moment, the music was interrupted again and the friendly woman's voice sounded from all the loudspeakers. "Today's special offer: Savoury sesame paste. Try it now! Three jars for the price of two. A super offer."

"Did you hear that!" Mr Jaromir called after the assistant. "You do have sesame paste! But where?"

The assistant didn't pay any attention and simply walked away.

After a while the music stopped completely.

"We would like to inform all our customers that this store closes in ten minutes," said the friendly female voice. "Please make your way to one of the check-outs."

Mr Jaromir broke off his search. Before he reached the check-out, however, he saw a well-filled shopping trolley and right on top of all the other items, there it was: a pack with three jars of sesame paste for the price of two!

Mr Jaromir glanced round. The shopper using the trolley was evidently far away, the trolley unattended. Quickly Mr Jaromir picked out the sesame paste and put it in his own trolley. I'm not a thief, thought Mr Jaromir on his way to the check-out. I'm going to pay for everything. But he did have a little bit of a bad

conscience, as he put his purchases on the conveyor belt. And when he had to pay, he got quite a shock. Individually all the things had been super cheap, everything together, however, was terribly expensive!

At home Mr Jaromir tried out three different ways of eating the sesame paste: He spread it on a slice of bread, he put a little in his yoghurt and he stirred a spoonful into his tea.

It smelled good, a wonderful nutty smell, thought Mr Jaromir.

But he didn't like the taste, not on his bread, not in his yoghurt and not at all in his tea.

“Tastes like sawdust,” he grumbled. “And now I've got three jars of the stuff.”

But then Mr Jaromir had a good idea. The windows in the bathroom didn't fit properly, there was a draught. So Mr Jaromir took the sesame paste and spread it in all the cracks and gaps.

