



Gustav Klimperbein

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He's not tall. He's not short.
He's not dumb, and he's certainly not stupid.
But fat—oh boy, he's fat!
Almost as fat as a bear.
His name is Gustav: Gustav Klimperbein!



Gustav lives in a house in a big city.
When Gustav leaves the house, everything
around him is tall.
Tall and slim.
The houses, the cars, the people, even the
dogs being walked—and they're all very busy.

Not Gustav.



Gustav thinks fat trees you can lean against are
beautiful, fat cars with lots of space, fat dogs
you can romp with, and fat savings books so
you're never poor.
He also loves fat aeroplanes, fat ships, fat
sandwiches, fat people, and fat duvets.
But most of all, he loves his fat mum, his fat
dad, his fat parrot, and his three fat goldfish.



All of that would be fine if it wasn't for one
problem: the skinny ones make fun of him!
"Gustav Wiggle-Belly!" they shout when he
steps out onto the school playground.
"Gustav Klimperswine!" too.
"Gustav Klimperbelly!" sometimes.
"Gustav Wobble-Legs!" now and then.
But their favourite is: "Gustav Wiggle-Belly!"
"Wiggle-Belly! Wobble-legs! Klimperswine
eats all the eggs!"



It's hard for him to endure the teasing.
But he doesn't want to tell anyone about it.
Not even his mum and dad.
He wants to find a solution, but all by himself.
He ponders and ponders.
"Ignore it!" a voice inside him says.
"Ig- what?"
"-nore it!" the voice repeats. "Ig - nore it!"
"Don't listen! Tune it out!"
"Let it slide off your back! Done!"
Maybe it's worth a try...

The whole afternoon, Gustav sits on the steps in front of the blue front door and thinks.



As evening falls over the city, he slips through the back door into the hallway, sneaks up the stairs, goes into his room, and locks the door from the inside.
"Gustav!", calls his mother.
No answer.
"Gustav, what are you up to up there? "
"Come, it's time for dinner."

Gustav's stomach growls like a hungry lion, but Gustav has decided to stay in his room and keep thinking until he knows what to do.
But then his father comes and convinces him to unlock the door.
"What's wrong?" he asks.
"Grrrrrrr!" says Gustav.
"Trouble?"
"Grrrrrrr!"
And because it feels good, he tells his parents the whole story.
"Oh boy, oh boy, oh boy!" says his father, scratching his head.
"Darn it!" says his mother.



Suddenly, a terrifying barking sounds outside the door.
"I'll go check it out!" says Gustav.
He's not the least bit afraid.
He simply goes to the blue front door and opens it.
And then he sees him!
The Skinny One!
The Spindly-Skinny One!
The Big One!
The Enormous One!
The Terrifying One!
The most terrifying dog of all time.



This dog just sits there.
Gustav stares at him.
The dog stares back.
Gustav says: "Good day."
"Woof!" says the dog and starts wagging his tail happily.
"No danger!" Gustav calls into the house. "It's just a dog."

"Come!" says Gustav.



The dog pushes past Gustav and marches into the kitchen.
"Th-there's the doggy!" says Gustav's mother, startled.

The doggy stands on its hind legs, puts its front paws on her shoulders, and licks her face from one side to the other.



The dog has eyes as big as Easter eggs.
And a mouth as big as that of a two-meter shark.
His ears are as big as dishcloths.
His fur is scruffy, and his tail is as thin as a rat's tail.



"Woof!" he says, sits down, and looks at everyone in a friendly manner.
Gustav's father cautiously extends a hand and strokes him on the head.
The dog starts trembling with joy.
Gustav's mother stares at him.
Gustav is on cloud nine.
He will never let this dog go!
"He's so skinny!" says Gustav's mother. "He must be hungry."

"Woof!" says the dog.



Gustav gives him his dinner.
A plate of spaghetti with minced meat.
The dog takes one big gulp, and the plate is empty.

The dog presses close to Gustav and beams at him with his enormous eyes.



Of course, the dog sleeps in Gustav's room.
 Of course, Gustav tells him everything about himself that evening.
 And of course, Gustav gives him a name.
 He calls him Skinny!
 The dog likes it.
 When Gustav calls "Skinny," he wags his tail.
 When Gustav says, "Skinny, sit!" he sits.
 When Gustav says, "Skinny, look pretty!" he looks pretty.



The next morning, as Gustav gets ready for school, Skinny insists on coming along.
 "That's not possible!" says Gustav.
 Skinny growls.
 "Really!" says Gustav.
 Skinny shows his dangerous teeth.
 "You have to stay here!" says Gustav. "I'll be back soon."
 Skinny's neck hairs rise.
 Gustav has no choice: he ties Skinny to his bedpost.
 Skinny wails as Gustav leaves.



At school, everything is as usual.
 "Wiggle-Belly!"
 "Wobble-legs!"
 Klimperswine eats all the eggs!" the children shout.
 Gustav tries out what he had planned: he doesn't listen at all.
 He acts as if it doesn't concern him at all.
 It's not easy.
 But during the break, tuning it out works a little better.



Just as Hans Lange shouts "Wiggle-Belly!", a shadow as grey as dawn rushes across the school playground and stops in front of Hans.
 The shadow growls.
 Hans Lange turns pale.
 His face is very long now.
 The shadow bares its dangerous teeth.
 Hans Lange freezes.
 Gustav recognizes the shadow.
 "Skinny, sit!" he calls.
 Hans Lange sits down.
 "No, not you!" shouts Gustav.



Hans Lange crouches on the school playground.
Skinny sits next to him.
Gustav approaches.
"Skinny!" he says. "Where did you come from?"
Skinny trembles with joy and rubs his cold dog nose against Gustav's nose.
Hans Lange stands up cautiously.
"Is that yours, Gustav?" he asks.
"Did I hear that right?" thinks Gustav. "Did he just call me Gustav?"



"Is that your dog?" Hans repeats.
"No!" says Gustav, "yees! I – I – uh – I don't know yet!"
"Well, which is it, Klimperswine?"
Hans hasn't even finished speaking when Skinny bares his teeth at him again.
And not just that.
Skinny grabs Hans' trouser leg and gives it a strong tug.
So strongly that Hans falls onto his bottom.



"Good dog!" says Hans pleadingly, "good dog!"
"Skinny, come on, let him go!" says Gustav.
The break is over.
Skinny crouches by the school gate and waits.
Gustav told him to.
In Gustav's class, everyone is talking about Skinny.
"Where did he come from?" they want to know.
"What's his name?"
"How old is he?"
"And if he eats people, and so on ..."
"Yes," says Gustav, "he can eat people."
"Klimperswine has a man-eater!"



At that very moment, a wild barking sounds from afar, freezing everyone in place.
"Well!" says Gustav, "Skinny doesn't like it when you call me Klimperswine!"
"But it's only a joke!" everyone says.
"Some joke," says Gustav. "I can't laugh about it at all!"



School is over.
Skinny greets Gustav.
The thin rat tail whips back and forth.
The big eyes shine with joy.
“Come on!” says Gustav. “Let’s go home.”
The children watch them leave.
They’d all like to have a dog like that.



The end