

Opening extract from

Lotta Says No!

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Lotta is such a baby

My brother is called Joe and my name is Mary-Lou, and our little sister is called Lotta. Lotta is only just four years old. Daddy says that before there were any children in the house everything was perfectly peaceful. But afterwards there was a constant hullabaloo. My brother was born before me. And Daddy says the house was full of banging and screaming almost straight away, from the moment Joe was big enough to hit his rattle against the side of his cot while Daddy was still trying to sleep on Sunday mornings. And from then on Joe just got

noisier and noisier. So Daddy calls him Big Shriek. And he calls me Little Shriek. Though I don't make as much noise as Joe does at all. Sometimes I'm quiet for ages. Then we got another baby, and that was Lotta. Daddy calls her Little Shriek, but I don't know why. Mummy calls us Joe and Mary and Lotta, our real names. Sometimes she calls me Mary-Lou, and so do Joe and Lotta.

We live in a yellow-painted house on a little street called Candlemaker Street.

'Maybe there were candlemakers living in this street once upon a time, but nowadays there are only troublemakers,' Daddy says. 'I think we'll rename it Troublemaker Street.'

Lotta is upset that she isn't as big as Joe and me. We're both allowed to go as far as the market all on our own, but Lotta isn't. Joe and I go to the market on Saturdays and buy sweets from the old ladies there. But we bring sweets home for Lotta too, just as we're told.

One Saturday it was raining so terribly hard that

we nearly couldn't go at all. But we took Daddy's big umbrella and went anyway, and we bought some red sweets. We walked home eating sweets under the umbrella and that was fun. But Lotta wasn't even allowed to go out in the garden because it was raining so terribly hard.



'What's it raining for?' said Lotta.

'So the wheat and potatoes will grow and we'll have something to eat,' said Mummy.

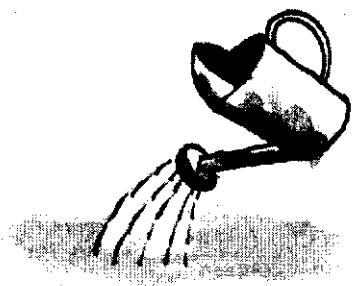
'Why does it rain on the market, then?' asked Joe.
'Is it to make the sweets grow?'

Mummy just laughed.

When we had gone to bed that night, Joe said to me, 'Mary-Lou, when we go to Grandma and Grandad's, let's not plant carrots in the garden—let's plant sweets instead, that'll be much better.'

'Yes, though carrots are better for our teeth,' I said. 'But let's use my green watering can to water them—the sweets, I mean.'

I felt really happy when I remembered my little green watering can that I had out in the country at Grandma and Grandad's. It was kept on a shelf in the cellar.



We always go out to Grandma and Grandad's in the summer.

Can you guess what Lotta once did out in the country at Grandma and Grandad's? There's a big dung-heap behind the cowshed, and Mr Johansson takes dung from it and spreads it on the fields to make things grow.

‘What’s dung for?’ asked Lotta. Daddy said that everything grew extra fast if you put dung on it.

‘And it has to have rain too,’ said Lotta, because she remembered what Mummy had said when it had rained so hard that Saturday.

‘Exactly,’ said Daddy.

That afternoon it started to rain.

‘Has anyone seen Lotta?’ Daddy asked.

But we hadn’t seen her for a long time, so we went looking for her. First we searched everywhere in the house and in all the wardrobes, but there was no sign of Lotta. Daddy started to get worried, because he had promised Mummy he would look after Lotta. In the end we went to search outside, Joe and Daddy and I, in the cowshed and in the hayloft and everywhere. Then we went behind the cowshed, and—what a surprise—there was Lotta standing in the middle of the dung-heap in all that rain, absolutely sopping wet.

‘My poor little Lotta, what are you standing out here for?’ said Daddy.

Lotta burst into tears and said, 'So I'll grow and be as big as Joe and Mary-Lou.'

Oh, Lotta is such a baby!



We play all day long

Joe and I play and play and play all day long every day. We let Lotta play with us too when we play the sort of games she can join in. But sometimes we play pirates, and then Lotta just gets in the way. She falls down off the table that we have as our ship. But she screams and wants to join in anyway. When we were playing pirates the other day and Lotta wouldn't leave us in peace, Joe said, 'Do you know what to do when you play pirates, Lotta?'

'Stand on the table and jump up and down and be a pirate,' said Lotta.

'Yes, but there's a much better way,' said Joe. 'You lie on the floor under the bed absolutely quiet and still . . . '

'What for?' said Lotta.

'Well, you lie there being a pirate, saying very quietly over and over again, "More food, more food, more food",' said Joe. 'That's what pirates do.'

Eventually Lotta came to believe that really was what pirates did, and she crawled under her bed and started saying, 'More food, more food, more food.'

And Joe and I climbed up on the playroom table and sailed away to sea, though it was just pretending, of course.

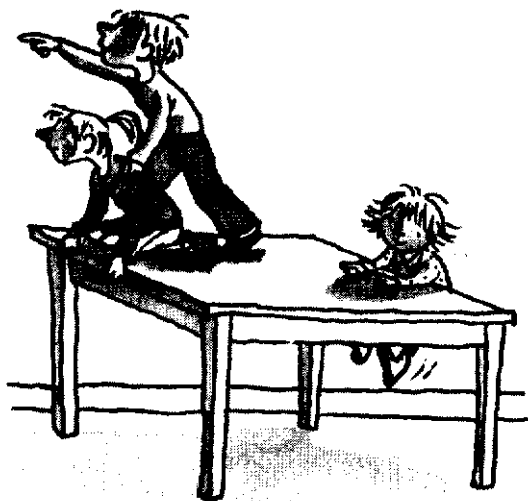
Lotta lay under her bed all the time saying, 'More food, more food, more food,' and we thought it was almost as much fun watching her as being pirates.

'How long do pirates lie under the bed saying "More food"?' Lotta asked at last.

'Till Christmas,' said Joe.

At that, Lotta crawled out from under the bed

and got up off the floor and said, 'I don't want to be a pirate. They're stupid.'



But sometimes it's good having Lotta with us when we play. Sometimes we play at being angels, Joe and I. We're guardian angels, so we have to have someone to guard, and so we guard Lotta. She has to lie in her bed and we stand beside it swinging our arms and pretending they're wings we're flapping as we fly backwards and forwards. But Lotta doesn't think it's much of a game, because all she has to do is lie still. And when it comes down to it, it's not

much different for her from playing pirates, except that then she lies *under* the bed saying 'More food'—otherwise it's the same.

We play doctors and nurses too. Then Joe is a doctor and I'm a nurse and Lotta is a sick child in hospital.

'I don't want to lie in bed,' said Lotta the last time we wanted her to be a sick child. 'I want to be a doctor and put a spoon down Mary-Lou's throat.'

'You can't be a doctor,' said Joe, 'because you can't write perscriptions.'

'What can't I write?' said Lotta.

'Perscriptions, like the doctor writes, to make sick children better,' said Joe.

Joe can write in capital letters, even though he hasn't started school yet. And he can read too.

At last we got Lotta to lie down on the bed and be ill in hospital, though she really didn't want to.

'So, how are we today then?' said Joe, sounding exactly like the doctor who came to see us when we had measles.

'More food, more food, more food,' said Lotta. 'I'm pretending to be a pirate.'

'Oh, you're silly,' shouted Joe. 'Let's stop, you can't play with us if you're going to be silly.'

And so Lotta let herself be ill in hospital, and we bandaged up her arm, and Joe held a big cotton reel to her chest and could hear through the hole in the middle that she was extremely ill in her chest. And he put a spoon down her throat and could see that she was ill there too.

'I'll have to give her an injection,' he said. Because once when he was ill he was given an injection in the arm by the doctor to make him well again, and that was why he wanted to give Lotta an injection. He went and got a darning needle that we pretended was the kind of needle that doctors have.

But Lotta didn't want an injection. She kicked her legs and screamed, 'You *won't* give me an injection!'

'You idiot, we're only *pretending*,' said Joe. 'Can't you see, I'm not really going to prick you?'

'I don't want an injection anyway,' Lotta yelled.

So we couldn't play doctors and nurses properly any more.

'I'll write out a perscription, anyway,' said Joe. And he sat down at the table and wrote on a piece of paper with a blue crayon. He wrote in capital letters, but I couldn't read it.

Joe and I like playing doctors and nurses. But Lotta doesn't.

SIK GURL MUST BE LOOKED AFTER. SIK GURL HAS
TO HAVE INJEXION.
DOCTOR JOE MALM