

My Privacy! – Don't look, don't poke about!

Not only do people sometimes behave like animals, but sometimes animals take on human characteristics – so why not use them, with a little exaggeration, to illustrate problems with privacy?

In a forest that has been cut off from human society for many years the animals live, on the whole contentedly, in a community headed by Mayor Bear. They haven't avoided, however, the problems that people face. They too have to deal with the problems that life and above all their fellow citizens in the forest present.

We have to start somewhere, so I'll begin with Pigeon. He's a bit noisy, but he's excellent as the forest's postman. All letters are delivered with no unnecessary delay. However, one seemingly normal day he had a little accident. An inattentive swallow crossed his path and a few letters fell out of his satchel onto the ground. Before he could fly down and pick them all up Polecat quickly grabbed two letters and vanished unnoticed. In his den he began examining them, opening the envelopes... Next day Marten and Owl asked where the letters they were expecting had gone. Pigeon found that strange, and he remembered the incident with the swallow. Before long Polecat had to confess that he'd read the letters. He lost everyone's trust. **Cut...**

It's probably happened to most of us: either a letter never arrives and is "lost in transit", or it arrives in our letterbox completely crumpled, looking as though someone's read it. And in that way they've encroached on our privacy. The confidentiality of letters is the right of all of us, and only the addressee can read a letter. The sad fact is that for the most part we never find out who's read our letters, and even if it happens to be one of our relatives we never like it...

In the forest there lived also a pair of peacocks. A year ago young Mr Peacock acted in a very successful film, and apart from learning how handsome and successful he was he also had problems with journalists and all kinds of "snoopers" who were forever milling around his luxurious home, made of expensive moss. Mrs Peacock was shy and retiring, and bore the burden of her husband's fame quietly but with difficulty. At every step cameras flashed around them and more than once journalists, tits, flew over the fence and took pictures through the windows of their house. To crown it all the star reporter on the local newspaper, cheeky Fox, got hold of a home-made transmitter and secretly put it into the Peacocks' bedroom. Mrs Peacock could stand it no longer, and she filed a complaint against the newspaper for the infringement of their privacy and personal freedom. **Cut...**

Every day in the tabloid press we see, and some of us read, articles and photographs of famous and less famous people in positions and situations that are clearly private. Journalists, however, like to violate the right to privacy, which is governed by the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Basic Freedoms, purely to make money and ensure that as many people as possible buy their newspapers. It isn't just publishers and reporters who encroach on privacy, but also readers who think they're not doing anything yet thirst each day for photographs of a celebrity caught out with someone or other. But how would a reader like it if a reporter photographed him in a swimming pool, or if he gave a female friend a kiss on the cheek and the next day reporters printed it on the front page with an often entirely invented story? And what if, as in our story, the reporter further violated your rights by trespassing on your property, entering your garden and taking photographs through your kitchen window? None

of us would like that. And maybe that's natural: we all anxiously protect our own privacy, but we like to look inside other people's private lives.

During the compiling of a list of land ownership, one day lists of names and the property the animals in the forest owned appeared on a notice board by an old lime tree. In addition through some mistake their dates of birth and birth certificate numbers were also pinned up next to their names. That caused a commotion in the forest – something that they hadn't known about each other before was now out in the open.... Soon everything had been explained and the next day there was a new list from which the confidential data had been deleted. **Cut...**

Personal data such as our names, dates of birth, addresses and birth numbers has to be protected so that people can't do what they want with it. So they can't use it for their own gain, against us, and I think that's only right. I wouldn't like it if all my personal information was posted on a town square, or if a ticket inspector, who should only check to see if I've paid my fare, could read my birth number, for instance.

We could spend a great deal of time talking about all the problems the animals experienced, just as many of us have had problems with privacy, but that would take too long. I would therefore merely add that just as the animals had to and have to resolve those problems; we too have to deal with them.

In conclusion I'd like to add that our privacy is something we should value. We should not only value our own privacy and safeguard it as we think best, but we should also value the privacy of others. And as in other matters, with privacy we should adhere to the maxim "do not do to others what you would not have them do to you."