The swan by Slavomir Bozek

**The swan is charming**, imposing, the way it "rolls" in the water... like a shapely mass of snow... The waters belong to the lake of a park.

The swan is a permanent resident of the lake and the park's biggest attraction.

One day the swan disappears. He was stolen by some tramps.

The Public Gardens Corporation bought a new swan. A special guardian position was created to protect the swan, to make sure it didn't suffer the fate of its predecessor.

This position was given to an old man who had lived alone and deserted for years. When he took on this job, it was getting chilly in the evenings.

The park was deserted. While patrolling the lake, the old man would glance at the swan, but sometimes he would let himself stare at the stars.

It was getting cold. It would be nice, he thought, to take a look at the little restaurant near the park. He started to walk towards it but remembered the swan. Maybe they would steal him while he was gone. He would lose his job. So he had to forget about it.

But the cold continued to pummel him, increasing his loneliness. In the end, he decided to go to the restaurant and take the swan with him.

Even if one came to the park while they were away, to breathe the fresh air in the beauty of nature, he would not immediately notice the absence of the swan.

The night was full of stars, of course, but there was no moon. And, most importantly, they would turn quickly.

So off they went.

They were greeted at the restaurant by a comforting wave of warm air filled with the tickling smells of cooking food.

The old man made the swan sit across from him at the table and he sat down too. That way he could watch the swan while he ate his food.

To warm himself up, he ordered a glass of vodka.

While he was eating a portion of lamb, and enjoying it very much, he noticed that the swan was looking at him with a miserable expression.

The old man took pity on the poor swan. Feeling his reproachful look, he lost all appetite for food. Then an idea came to him.

He called the waiter and ordered a roll and some warm beer with sugar.

He dipped the roll in the beer and gave it to the swan, who quickly regained his spirits. After the meal, satisfied and re-energized, they returned to their post.

The next night was colder. The stars seemed unusually bright, and the old keeper felt each star like an icy nail driven into his warm but lonely heart.

Yet he resisted the temptation to go back, once again to the restaurant.

In the centre of the lake the swan appeared; its white wings glistened under the starlight.

The thought of a living creature in the water on such a cold night made the old man shiver.

The poor swan deserved better fate. The old keeper was sure the swan would welcome a little warmth and some food.

So he took him in his arms and carried him with him to the restaurant.

Another night of freezing cold, and the old man tormented by grief. This time he had made up his mind not to go to the restaurant because, the night before, after they returned, the swan had been dancing and singing very strangely.

So he sat on the edge of the lake, in the empty frozen park, and looked up at the sky.

Suddenly, he felt his pants being pulled down. It was the swan asking him for something. So there they went.

A month later, both the guard and the swan were fired from their jobs. The swan: he was seen swimming strangely in the water, even in the daytime.

A mother who had brought her little children to the park to see the swan complained to the authorities, out of pure concern, of course, for the youth.

Even in the lowest position, the holder must have some moral principles.