

Sukhomlynsky News



From *I will tell you a story...*

The rainbow

Little Mykhailyk fell seriously ill. He was an old farmer's only son, and his mother and father loved him dearly. Their hearts were breaking at the thought that he might die. What would they do then? They could not have another son, because they were already old, and their two older sons were killed during the war. Little Mykhailyk was their only consolation.

The boy lay by the window, breathing heavily. The doctor whispered, 'He has a weak heart. My medicines cannot help him.'

Mykhailyk opened his eyes and looked out the window at the grey winter sky. Everything was still covered with a white blanket of snow.

'How I wish I could see a rainbow,' whispered Mykhailyk softly.

His mother and father leaned over him in despair. Suddenly, the father stood up and started putting on his coat.

'Where are you going?' asked the mother.

'To get a rainbow,' the father answered quietly. 'Mykhailyk, please keep looking out the window. You will soon see a rainbow.'

The father went to see the blacksmith. He told him all about his grief. The blacksmith took his forge and all his tools and brought them to the farmer's front yard. He set up his equipment right near the window, fired up his forge, and placed a plough share into the fire. When the iron was glowing red like the sun, the blacksmith took the plough share out of the fire, put it on his anvil and began to strike it with his heavy hammer. At the first stroke, the iron plough share sent up a shower of sparks, all the colours of the rainbow. The sparks flew everywhere, onto the ground and onto the snow-covered branches of the trees, as if it were raining fire.

Mesmerized, the boy could not take his eyes off the wonderful rainbow. He lifted his head from his pillow, and his pale cheeks turned red. His heart started beating more steadily and evenly.

'Mum, what is going to come out of this fire?' he asked, pointing at the rainbow.

'A plough share,' answered his mother.

'Oh, how I want to plough the earth!' he exclaimed, and he sat up in his bed.

'Now he will live,' said the doctor quietly.



An imaginative vision of the world

Dear reader,

I hope you are keeping well.

Sukhomlynsky wrote:

'Whenever I am asked how I compose fairytales with children, I am reminded of my Grandma Mariia. When I think of my childhood, I see her black eyes and feel the magic of her fairytales. At the time, it appeared to me that Grandma was witnessing the fairytale unfold: her gaze was directed into the faraway steppe or the dense leaves of the orchard, into the evening twilight or a white blizzard. I used to dream that one day I would finally catch a glimpse of that place where Grandma watched the tale unfold and would learn myself to see things that were miraculous, fairytale, extraordinary.'

Sukhomlynsky did indeed come to a point where he saw stories unfold and could share them with the children in his care. He has also shared his imaginative vision of the world with us.

I hope you enjoy this month's newsletter.

Best wishes,

Alan Cockerill



From *I will tell you a story ... (cont.)*

How a cat tried to catch a fish

A cat was sitting by a pond. 'I think I'll catch a fish,' he thought. He watched the fish, but they were all swimming far away from the water's edge and would not come closer.

'Why don't you swim closer to the water's edge?' the cat asked the fish.

'We'll come closer when you go home,' answered the fish.

A boy was passing by. He asked the cat, 'Are you fishing?'

'Not at all,' answered the cat. 'I'm just warming myself in the sun.'

The wonderful icicle

It was warm during the day but became frosty in the evening. Water dripping from the melting snow on the roofs froze and formed icicles. That is how one very long icicle was born. It hung above the window like a crystal wand.

When the sun rose, a rainbow shimmered in the icicle. The icicle had never seen the sun before, because it was born that night and had only seen the stars in the sky. But now the warm sun was shining brightly. Overwhelmed by emotion, the icicle burst into tears. But nobody realised the icicle was crying. Everybody thought that it was melting. But no, it was not melting, it was crying, and its hot tears were falling on the frozen ground.

The petal and the flower

A pretty dahlia was blooming in the garden. It was as white as marble and very fragrant. Bees and bumblebees were flying over to it to collect its nectar.

There were forty-two petals on this flower, and one of them started bragging, 'I am the most beautiful of all petals. Without me, the flower would not be a flower! I am the most important! Without me, the flower could not survive!'

So saying, the petal pulled itself from the flower and jumped to the ground. At first, she sat under a wild rose bush, watching to see what the flower would do without her. But the flower was oblivious to the loss. It was smiling at the sun and still attracting bees and bumblebees.

The petal set off by herself. She met an ant.

'Who are you?' asked the ant.

'I am the most beautiful petal, the most beautiful and the most important. Without me, the flower is not a flower.'

'A petal?' The ant was puzzled. 'I have seen petals on a flower, but I have never seen a petal with two little legs.'

The petal walked and walked, and by evening it had withered. But the flower was still blooming.

And that is the end of the story. A flower without one of its petals is still a flower, but a petal without a flower is nothing.

The one and only rainbow stone

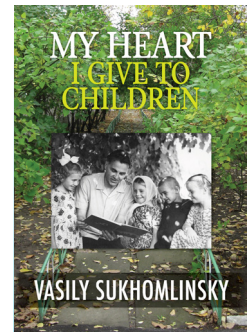
Vitia was playing in the sand on banks of a river. He was building a fairytale castle with a tall tower.

Suddenly, something sparkled in the sand, and Vitia spotted a little stone. It was small, the size of a sparrow's egg, but it was quite unique. It was full of different crystals, so it sparkled with all the colours of the rainbow.

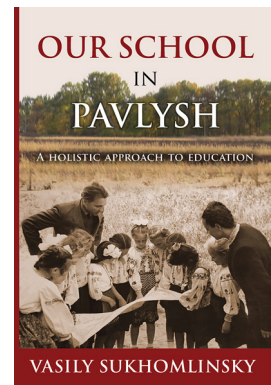
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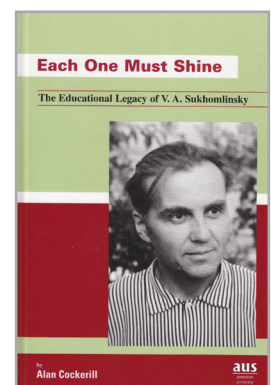
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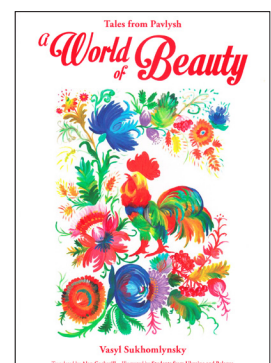
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Mesmerized by the stone, Vitia forgot about his fairytale sandcastle. He took the stone and went home.

He met some of his friends in a clearing in the forest. Vitia showed them his little stone. The boys were surprised to see its gleaming rainbow colours. They all started offering Vitia something in exchange for the stone. One boy offered his four-bladed pocketknife, another boy offered him a ball, a third boy offered a fishing rod, and a fourth boy his electrical flashlight.

But Vitia did not want to trade. 'Why don't you want to swap?' asked the boy with the flashlight. 'Because this little stone is the only one like it in the whole wide world,' answered Vitia. 'There is no other stone like this.'

How snow changes colour

When the sun rises, white snowdrifts turn pink. The sun paints them with its rays. As the sun rises higher and higher, the sky becomes strikingly blue, and the snow becomes dazzlingly white. You look out over the steppe, and against the white blanket of snow you can see a little bird, and a hare darting here and there.

Just before the sunset, the snow turns a deep blue, as if reflecting the sky like a mirror, and in the shade, the snow is even violet.

Then the sun sets. The sky in the west turns crimson red: tomorrow will be a windy day. The snowdrifts now reflect this crimson glow, as if the sun has splashed them with crimson paint. The evening glow fades, and so does the crimson reflection on the snowdrifts. The stars twinkle in the sky. The snow turns grey. The bird hides in her nest. The hare sits under a bush.

How our cat washes himself

Early in the morning, our grey cat wakes up. He crawls out of his bed near the woodstove, arches his back, and stretches. Then he sits down, half closes his eyes and starts washing himself. Washing is a ritual for him. It begins with poking out his tongue, raising his paw, and wetting it with saliva to brush his whiskers. Then, wetting his paw again, he cleans his face and eyebrows.

After he is done with his morning hygiene, he goes out into the yard. Some sparrows swiftly take off from the ground and settle in a tree's branches, chirping loudly and warning each other, 'Fly to safety! A fierce beast is on the prowl!'

The cat seems not to take any notice of the sparrows. He moves slowly around the yard, threading his way through the bushes, while the sparrows keep chirping away incessantly.

The hedgehog and the foxfire

A hedgehog was walking through the forest, carrying an apple on his spines, when he spotted a glowing tree stump, something we call 'foxfire'. It was dark at home in the hedgehog's hut, and he decided to take a piece of the stump home with him, to bring light to his little children, so they would not be afraid of the dark. The hedgehog took a piece of the glowing wood and brought it home. Their little house was now lit up. The hedgehog's children were thrilled. 'It's nice to have some light! Now, we can look at the pictures in our books.'

How the hedgehog built a stove

A hedgehog had a nest. One day, his wife asked him to build a woodstove so that their babies would not be cold during the winter.

The hedgehog made some little bricks and built a stove. His wife brought some wood and made a fire. Now it was warm in the hedgehog's nest. The baby hedgehogs started playing happily and jumping around. Then they crawled closer to the woodstove and told stories until they fell asleep, warm and cozy. Meanwhile, outside, a blizzard was howling, the frost was crackling, and trees were moaning in the wind. On the pond, a bird wept by a hole in the ice.

An apple tree for Grandma

I told my grandmother, 'I'm going to plant an apple tree, and it will be just for you. We'll call it "Grandma's apple tree". When the apples are ripe, I'll bring them to you!'

My grandmother smiled and said, 'Go ahead and plant it, but you must plant it over there, next to that old apple tree.'

And she pointed to a very old apple tree. We walked over to it. Grandma fell silent, and I noticed that tears were rolling down her cheeks.

'Why are you crying, Grandma?' I asked.

'I planted this apple tree when I was a little girl, just like you. I planted it for my mother.'

I felt so sorry for Grandma that I started crying as well. She is so old. Her hands shake. Every evening, she sits on a bench, watching the evening sunset. What does she think about? I love you so, so much, Grandma!



Don't forget the screw!

Yurko was sitting at home doing his grammar homework. First, he copied out several sentences. He was supposed to underline all the nouns, but Yurko was in a hurry and did not do that. He quickly closed his exercise book and ran outside to play ball with the other boys.

That evening Yurko's father checked his homework. He saw that Yurko had not finished the exercise. 'Why didn't you finish your work?' asked Yurko's father. Yurko hung his head and did not reply.

'I'll tell you a story,' said his father. 'At a factory they were building a large passenger aeroplane. Many workers laboured to make sure everything was done properly. They just had to screw in one small screw under the wing. They gave the task to one of the workers, telling him, "Take this screw and screw it in under the wing." But the worker forgot to do it. And they delivered the aeroplane to the aerodrome just as it was.

The aeroplane flew its first flight. Fifty passengers boarded the plane. But it was missing a screw ... The aeroplane broke up and crashed. The people on board died.

That is what can happen when someone forgets a small screw. Don't forget the screw, my boy!

Why did the pigeons fly to Oleh?

In a little village school, in the middle of the schoolyard, stood a beautiful little wooden house on a tall post. It had windows and doors, just like a real house. Pigeons lived in it.

Every day children brought food for the pigeons. Some brought wheat, some bread, some buckwheat. They took it in turns to feed the pigeons. The child whose turn it was to feed the pigeons called them, saying, 'Gul-gul, gul-gul.' The pigeons took the food, but they were too frightened to come close to the children. 'Why are they frightened of us? Why won't they settle on our arms?' wondered the children.

On the last day of school, the teacher asked the children to keep coming in turn during the holidays to feed the pigeons. The summer holidays flew by, and the first day of school arrived. Each student, as they got ready for school, thought, 'I wonder how the pigeons are?' Each one took a pocket full of feed.

When they were all in the schoolyard, the teacher suggested, 'Children, I would like you to spread out all over the schoolyard, standing by yourselves. I want to see who has been feeding

the pigeons over the summer.'

The children ran and spread out all over the schoolyard, standing by themselves. Each one began to say, 'Gul-gul, gul-gul' and to scatter feed on the ground. The pigeons took off from their little house and they all flew to Oleh. They pecked at the ground right next to him. One pigeon even landed on his shoulder, and another landed on his arm. But they did not seem to notice the other children.

A shack for Grandpa

Yurko's grandfather fell ill. He lay in bed and coughed. Yurko's mother and father said nothing about it.

One day, Yurko came home from the kindergarten and noticed that his father was putting up posts near their house.

'What are you doing, Dad?' asked Yurko.

'I am building an extension to our house, a shack for Grandpa to live in.'

Yurko took his little shovel, walked over to the vegetable garden, and started digging a hole in the middle of the potato patch.

'What are you doing, Yurko?' asked his father.

'I am making a dugout ...'

'What do you need a dugout for?'

'It's for you and Mum to live in when you get older.'

The voice that told me fairy tales

I remember as if it were today. It is getting dark. Evening descends quietly over the earth. I am listening to a fairytale about Baba Yaga and her bony leg. I feel as if I can see the dark forest with its mighty oaks, a mysterious ravine, and the hut on chicken legs. A grey wolf roams the forest ...

I can hear my grandmother's voice. She is the one telling me the story.

Everything is so familiar and dear to me in these memories, and at the same time so remote, extraordinary, and magical. When I was little, I sincerely believed that somewhere in the dark and mysterious forest there was a hut on chicken legs, and that somewhere, far, far away, Little Red Riding Hood had lost her way and was wandering through the forest, crying ...

I still believe it even now, and I can still hear my grandmother's soft voice.

