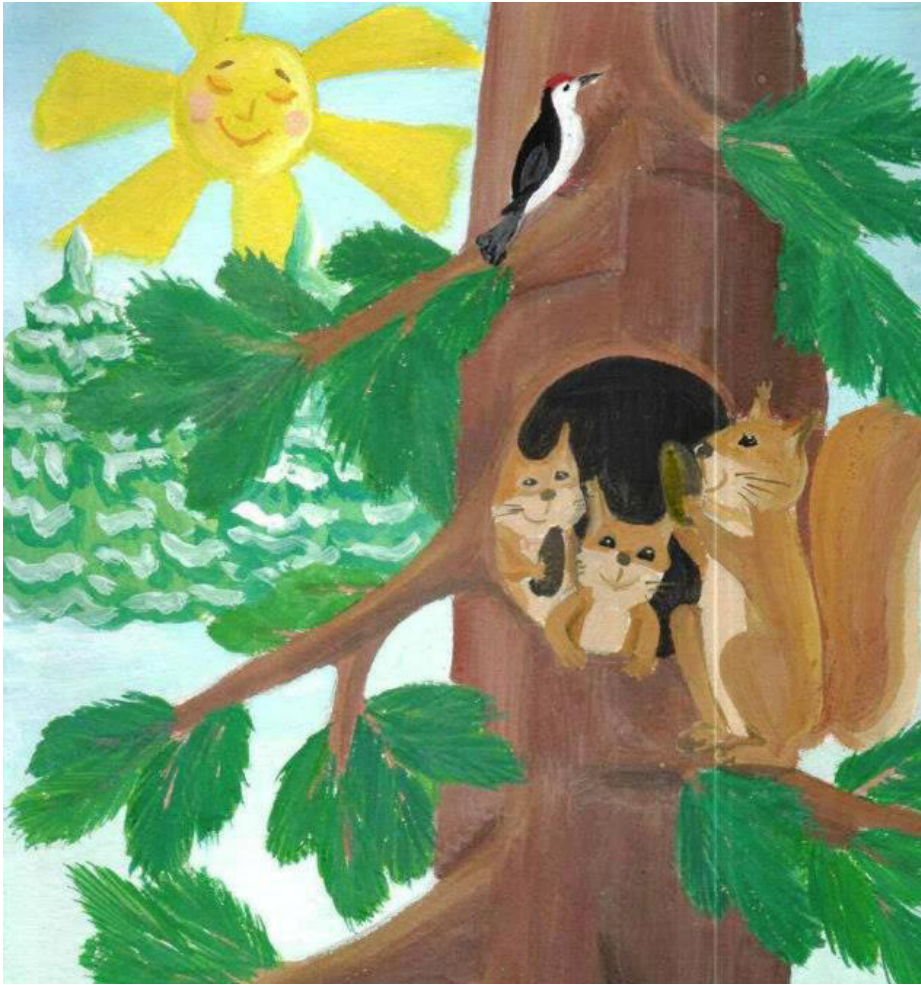


Sukhomlynsky News



'The fearless squirrel' and other stories

Dear reader,

I hope you are keeping well.

*This month's newsletter contains thirteen more stories from **I'll tell you a story ... Philosophy for Children**. Many of them are about the ways that mothers care for their children, often with animals as the heroes of the story. The theme of aging is also touched on.*

*In each newsletter I also include illustrations, sometimes using archival photographs, and sometimes using illustrations submitted by children as part of a competition held in 2013. About 2000 illustrations were submitted for that competition, and the newsletter is one avenue for sharing some of the illustrations that could not be included in the picture book **A World of Beauty**.*

I hope you enjoy this month's newsletter.

Best wishes,

Alan Cockerill

From I'll tell you a story...

The fearless squirrel

This happened deep in a dark forest. In a warm hollow at the top of a tall linden tree, lived a squirrel. She had two newborn babies. Tiny, fluffy, still blind, they clung to their mother and sucked her milk.

One day, the squirrel hopped far away through the trees, looking for nuts. She tried to find some nearby, but there were none to be found, so she roamed further and further away from her nest. While she was hopping from tree to tree, dark clouds gathered, thunder rumbled, and a bolt of lightning flashed and hit the linden tree, setting it ablaze. The flames soon reached the squirrel's nest where the baby squirrels were sheltering. The poor things started crying out, calling for their mother. The squirrel heard their cries and leapt from tree to tree to rescue them.

The whole linden tree was aflame when the squirrel reached it. Fearlessly, she leapt into the fire to save her babies ...

A nightingale flew to a neighbouring tree that was still green and began to sing. He sang of the wonder of life.



From *I'll tell you a story ... (cont.)*

Grandma is coming tonight

In the morning, Dmytryk went to visit his grandmother. She treated him to fried walnuts and told him the fairytale about the little straw bull with tar on its back.

Dmytryk came home at noon. The sun was shining, and the snow was sparkling like an endless white tablecloth.

The boy entered the house, but he did not close the doors: neither the door to the front porch, nor the main door into the house.

He took a fried walnut out of his pocket and gave it to his mother.

'Try this, Mum,' he said. 'Grandma treated me to walnuts like this.'

'Why did you leave the doors open?' his mother asked. 'It's cold outside!'

'But Grandma is coming tonight. What's the point of closing the doors?'

Farewelling a horse

Grandpa Mykola worked in the stables for many years, but the time came for him to retire. On his last day at work, Grandpa Mykola rose at dawn and went to the stables to say farewell to the horses. The young horses stood in a straight line along their trough. Grandpa Mykola stroked each one on the neck. And in the corner of the stable stood an old horse named Wind. He had once been as swift and hot-tempered as a summer wind in the steppe, but now his legs were as thick as tree stumps and his mane was thinning.

Wind immediately recognised the old stableman. He stretched his neck towards him and placed his head on the old man's shoulder. Grandpa Mykola stood for a long time by the old horse. Then he gave a deep sigh and walked home. A young stableman came to take charge of the stables.

The next day, Grandpa Mykola rose at dawn. He came out of his home and stopped in amazement. Standing there by his door was his faithful friend Wind.

Vania Senior and Vania Junior

This happened in Belarus during the darkest days of the war. The fascists burned down the village of Ivanivka, murdering many innocent old people, women and children, for no reason other than that they sympathised with the partisans.

Miraculously, two nine-year-old boys escaped death—two Vanias. Both were very small, and both were very much like each other. The only way to tell them apart was by their eyes—one Vania had blue eyes, the other had black eyes.

The boys sat near the smoking ruins for a long time, crying, and then decided, 'We will cross the frontline to our side and join our own soldiers. We will fight alongside them against the fascists to avenge the blood of our mothers.'

But the frontline was two hundred kilometres away. The boys began to think, 'Who will be senior on this difficult march?' One of them had to be in charge.

The black-eyed Vania said, 'I will be Senior.'

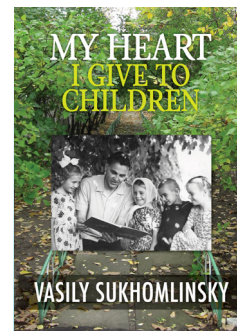
And the blue-eyed Vania replied, 'OK, I will be Junior.'

And they set off on their difficult journey. They walked hand-in-hand. The moment anything dangerous appeared on the horizon, Vania

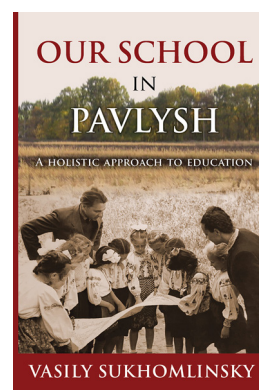
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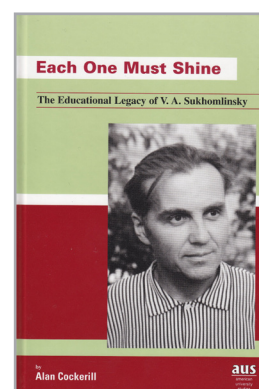
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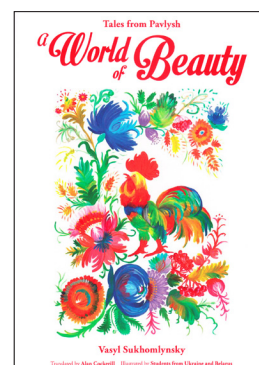
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Senior went in front and Vania Junior walked behind him. Their injured feet bled, their eyes burned from the wind, but the boys kept walking ahead and endured all the difficulties of their journey. At every step, death threatened them, but they did not pay attention to it, and consequently it could not trap them with its iron claws.

They became courageous and daring.

Vania Senior became courageous and daring because he felt that he was responsible for the life of the Vania Junior, while Vania Junior became courageous and daring because he felt that Vania Senior had taken on the responsibility of caring for him.

A person becomes invincible when they feel that they are responsible for someone else's life. A person also becomes invincible when they feel that someone else is responsible for their life. Do not be afraid of being Senior, and do not fear being Junior. The most important thing is to be human.

Silver hairs

For two weeks, little Olesia was very ill. It was feared she could die any minute. Her mother spent days and sleepless nights by her daughter's side, not leaving her even for a minute.

When the worst of the illness had passed, and Olesia began to get better, her mother lay down beside her and fell asleep. When she woke up, Olesia asked her, 'Mum, why do you have so many silver hairs?'

'My grief turned them silver,' answered her mother.

'Mummy,' Olesia went on, 'How much joy do I need to bring you for these silver hairs to disappear?'

The kitten and the baby hedgehog

A hunter found a little hedgehog in the forest. He wrapped him in his handkerchief, brought him home, and placed him gently on the floor.

In the corner sat a little kitten. 'What is that little grey ball?' he wondered. He hopped over to the hedgehog and stretched out his paw to touch him, pricking himself on the hedgehog's sharp quills. The kitten meowed in pain and the hedgehog took fright and hid his tiny head.

The hunter poured some milk into a saucer and placed it on the floor. The kitten started lapping up the milk, but the hedgehog was too afraid to approach. After some time, however, he plucked up the courage to come over to the plate and start lapping up the milk with the kitten.

They became friends. They slept together, and in the evening, they went for a walk in the forest together.

One day, the hedgehog went into the forest and

never came back.

The kitten waited for his friend for days, meowing pitifully ... When the hunter poured some milk for him, he would always leave some for his lost friend, still hoping that the hedgehog would return.

But the hedgehog was not coming back.

The ant's home

In the anthill there are many babies. Here is an ant, hurrying home. She is carrying a tiny piece of sweet watermelon. The mother ant enters her home, where her baby is lying in its cradle. The mother ant chews on the sweet watermelon, producing a sweet juice in her mouth, and feeds it to her baby. The baby ant savours his meal. The juice is delicious. When he is full, he falls asleep, but the mother ant dashes back to the forest again. She needs to gather as much food as possible for the winter.

How a squirrel fried some nuts

A squirrel gathered a big pile of nuts for the winter, enough to fill her hollow in a tree. Now she had enough for her babies to eat. Winter arrived. The squirrel gave nuts to her babies, and they happily ate them, but one spoilt little squirrel said, 'Mummy, I want fried nuts.'

'All right,' replied the squirrel, 'You shall have fried nuts.'

She put some nuts into a frying pan, took it into the forest, placed it on a glow-worm's nest, and fried the nuts.

'Yum! Now they're delicious!' said the spoilt little squirrel.

How a bee spent the night on a flower

A bee flew far, far way into a meadow looking for honey, when the sun was already setting. It took quite some time for her to find a patch of clover flowers, but they had lots of nectar. The bee flew from one clover flower to another, collecting nectar, and did not notice the time fly by. When she raised her head to fly home, night had fallen, and it was pitch dark.

The bee was frightened. What was she to do? She hid under the petals of a clover flower and fell asleep. In the morning, she woke up and hurried home, bringing lots of nectar for her babies.



How mother hedgehog comforted her babies

A mother hedgehog had two babies, as round as balls, with little spines. One day the baby hedgehogs rolled like balls to look for food. They rolled through the orchard, then rolled through the vegetable garden, where they met a hare. It was eating a sweet carrot. The baby hedgehogs also wanted to try some carrot, but as soon as they poked their little heads out, the hare shouted at them, 'Go away, you nasty, prickly things!'

The baby hedgehogs rolled home to their mother, crying.

'Why are you crying, my dears?' asked their mother.

'The hare said that we are nasty and prickly,' sobbed the baby hedgehogs.

The mother hedgehog hugged her little children and comforted them. 'My dear children, you're not prickly!' she said. 'Your hair is as soft as flax. You are round and fluffy, like little balls.'

How a magpie made some porridge

A magpie had seven chicks. When she came home, they all called out at once, 'We're hungry!'

'Just wait a minute, my dears,' she said, 'And I'll make you some porridge.'

And the magpie cooked some buckwheat porridge. The porridge smelt so good it made her babies mouths water.

The mother magpie dished up the porridge into seven little plates, gave her children spoons, and watched them gobble it up in silence. She sat by the table without dishing up any for herself. She gave all the porridge to her children.

'Let them eat it all, so they won't be hungry,' she thought to herself, 'And I'll fly around and find something else for myself to eat.'

The wheaten hedgehog

My mother made some *pyrizhky* and had some leftover dough.

'Mum, could you make me a wheaten hedgehog?' I asked her.

And she made a hedgehog: small and round, with quills. But where was his head?

'Mum, why is he hiding his head,' I asked.

'Just wait until we bake him in the oven,' replied my mother. 'Then his head will pop up.'

The hedgehog sat in the oven for quite some time. When fully baked, he turned golden brown. We took him out of the oven and put him on the table. The hedgehog had spread his quills and arched his back, and it seemed that any moment he would show his head.

The stepdaughter's present

A man had three daughters of his own and one who was adopted. One day, he went to the city and bought presents for all his daughters. The girls sat in front of him, breathlessly waiting for the presents to be unveiled.

'This is for you,' said the father, taking out a comb and giving it to his first daughter.

'And this is for you,' he went on, handing a bead necklace to his second daughter.

'These are for you,' he said, giving his third daughter three ribbons for braiding her hair.

'And this one is for you,' he said, presenting a bright silk dress to his stepdaughter.

The stepdaughter was delighted to receive the dress, and held it against her body, while her father kissed each of his own three daughters and asked after their health.

The stepdaughter saw him kissing her sisters and put down the dress, waiting for her father to come over to kiss her and ask after her health.

She waited and waited, but she waited in vain.

The happy leaf

Little Olesia and her grandmother were sitting on the riverbank. The autumn sun warmed them with its gentle rays. A willow that drooped over the river had already cast off its golden attire, and only a single leaf remained. Suddenly, that leaf fell into the water and was instantly sucked into a whirlpool. The leaf started swirling round very quickly. Olesia watched it spinning round and round and felt a thrill of joy. But her grandmother gave a quiet sigh.

'Grandma, why are you sighing like that? Are you sad?' asked Olesia. 'Look how happy that leaf is!'

Olesia's grandmother reached out with her trembling hand, stroked Olesia's head and gave her a gentle smile.

