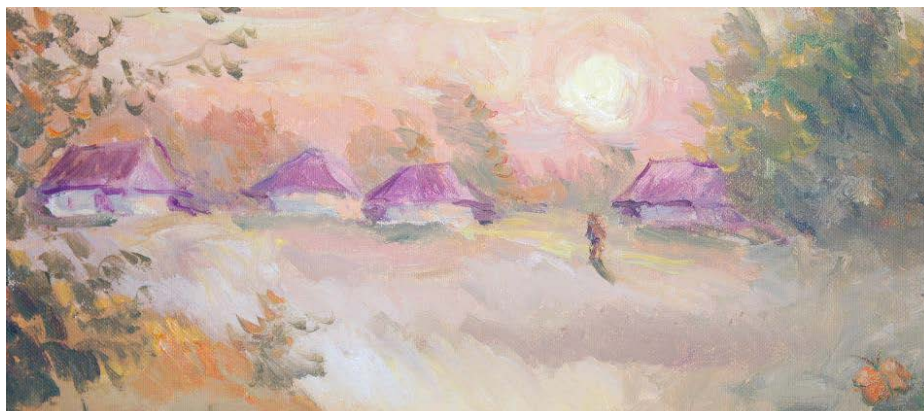


# Sukhomlynsky News



## From *I'll tell you a story...*

### Let him believe

There was a student in our class named Petro Rybalka. His faithful dog Som came to school with him every day for three years. Som did not just keep Petro company, he carried a drawstring bag with the sneakers that Petro needed for the physical education class in the gym.

As the winter break approached, Petro's parents made plans to move somewhere far away, and they did not want to take Som with them. No matter how much Petro begged his parents not to leave the dog behind, they would not listen. 'You know what?' Petro said to us before leaving, 'I'll leave my bag and my sneakers with you, and I want you, Mykola, to have Som and take care of him.'

So, I adopted Som and moved his doghouse to my front yard. Som became very sad, but he did not completely give up hope. Every morning, as I left for school, I would give Som the bag with Petro's sneakers in it, and he would cheer up right away, nuzzling up to me and wagging his tail. I would walk to school, and he would trot along beside me carrying the bag.

Near the school entrance, I would take the bag from him, and he would look at me as if to say, 'Where is Petro?' Then Som would wait by the school entrance until the end of classes. When I went home, I would give him the bag with the sneakers again, and again he would cock his head sideways and look at me with a puzzled expression. My friends and I walked home together, looking at Som from time to time, and we all felt bad.

'Why are we fooling him?' asked Stepan. 'Leave the bag at home, Mykola. Hide it, and forget about it! Som needs to know the truth!'

So, we decided to ask our teacher, Ivan Petrovych, whether we should hide the bag from Som.

'No, boys, I wouldn't do that,' said Ivan Petrovych. 'Let him believe. That way it will be easier for him to keep going.'

After a pause, the teacher added, 'People could learn a lot from a good dog.'



## New book out now

*Dear reader,*

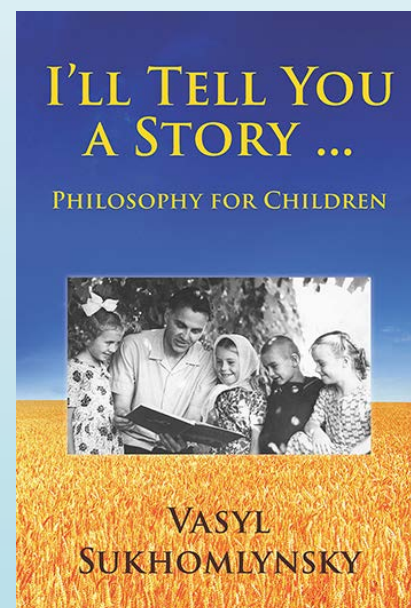
*I hope you are keeping well.*

*After several years work, and a lot of help and encouragement from Nataliya Bezsaloova and Berta Karaim, 'I'll Tell You a Story ... Philosophy for Children' is finally published and available for purchase. If you live in Australia and would like to purchase the book, please support The Really Good Bookshop and purchase the book from them. They have been very supportive of my work and will most probably give you the best price.*

*This month's newsletter contains some of my favourite stories from the book.*

*Best wishes,*

*Alan Cockerill*



**608 pages AU\$44.99**  
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## From *I'll tell you a story ... (cont.)*

### Straw hats

A young boy came from the big city to a quiet little town on the banks of the Dnipro River for his summer holidays. He was met by a sailor who worked on a steam ship that cruised up and down the Dnipro. It sailed all the way to the Black Sea. The sailor took the boy to the home of an old wartime friend of his father's.

The boy settled into a small room with a window that looked out on the Dnipro. Every day, the boy would go to the beach to play and to swim. The beach was crowded with other holiday makers who enjoyed spending their summer vacation at that hospitable town with its white houses.

On the very first day, the boy noticed an old man sitting by the riverside. He was sitting on a rock, and three large straw hats were spread out beside him on the sand, though he himself, for some reason, was not wearing a hat. His face was lined with deep wrinkles, and he sat gazing at the waves of the Dnipro. The boy observed throughout the day that nobody bought any hats from the old man. All three straw hats lay on the beach untouched until evening.

The boy felt sorry for the old man. Every day the boy was given fifty *kopiika* to buy himself an ice-cream. [A *kopiika* was roughly equivalent to a cent.] One day, the boy approached the old man and asked him how much a hat cost.

'Twenty-five *kopiika*,' replied the man quietly, but he did not raise his head or look at the boy.

'I'll take two hats, please,' said the boy.

The old man gave the boy two hats and put the coins into his pocket. The boy expected that the old man would be grateful and would thank him, but the old man did not even look at him. It seemed to the boy that the man was concentrating on something in the distance.

The next day, there were three new straw hats laid out by the rock. And again, nobody approached the old man to ask him about his hats. When it was time for the boy to have lunch, he took out his ice-cream money and bought two more hats from the old man. The old man did not raise his head this time either, but the boy could swear that he was listening attentively to his every word.

It continued like that every day: the boy would buy two hats from the old man and take them to his room looking out on the Dnipro. Now he observed that the man listened attentively not only to his words, but to the sound of his footsteps.

The last day of the summer holidays arrived. The boy's father was coming to collect him. The boy went to see the old man one last time and bought two more hats. He was about to leave, when the man lifted his hand and rested it on the boy's shoulder.

'Farewell, young man,' he said quietly. 'You are a good person.'

The boy felt his heart contract with compassion.

'How do you know that I am leaving?' was all he could whisper.

The old man raised his head, and the boy saw that he had no eyes.

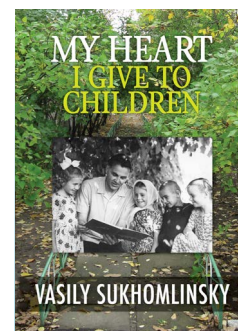
They sat in silence for a long time.

'Do you make these hats yourself?' asked the boy.

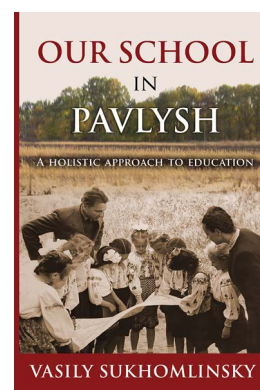
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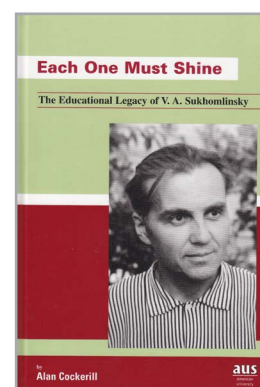
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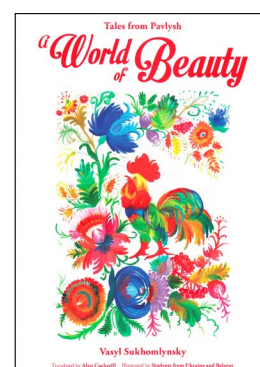
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'Yes, I make them myself ... At night ... If it wasn't for this work, I would have died by now,' said the old man.

The boy sighed heavily and said, 'I'll come again next summer. Please don't die! All right?'

'All right, young man,' promised the old man softly, and his hands trembled. 'Now I'll have to make sure I don't die.'

### **A smile**

It was a quiet, sunny morning. In a green meadow that stretched from the edge of the village, yellow dandelions were flowering, bees and bumblebees were buzzing, and a lark was sporting in the blue sky.

On this beautiful morning, a little three-year-old girl came out of her house. She had light blue eyes and fair hair the colour of ripening wheat. Her name was Marynka. She set off through the green meadow. She smiled when she saw a many-coloured butterfly. At that moment, she wanted the whole world to share her smile.

Still smiling, Marynka followed the butterfly. The butterfly flew slowly, as if it understood the little girl wanted to have a good look at it.

Suddenly Marynka saw an old man walking towards her. His gaze was stormy, his eyebrows frowning and his eyes full of malice. Marynka brought her smile with her as she walked towards the old man. She was hoping that the old man would smile back. How could anyone be gloomy and unfriendly on such a joyful day?

Already in the depth of the girl's soul a little wave of fear stirred, but she kept smiling, bringing her smile with her as she met the old man, and appealing to him: you smile too, grandpa.

But the old man did not smile. His gaze remained dark, his eyebrows lowered and his eyes malevolent.

Marynka's heart was gripped by fear. The smile faded from her eyes. At that moment it seemed to her that the whole world had become dark and gloomy.

The green meadow turned grey, the dandelions turned from yellow suns into purple spots, the blue sky turned pale, and the silver song of the lark began to waver, like a stream that is running dry.

Marynka burst into tears. A minute later, the old man was already far away. Now she could only see his back, but even his back seemed evil and unwelcoming.

The little girl kept walking through the meadow. Her heartbeat quickened when she saw that someone else was walking towards her. It was an old lady with a stick.

Marynka was now on her guard and looked searchingly into the old lady's eyes. The old lady smiled. And it was such a kind, sincere smile, that the whole world came to life again around the girl, vibrant, singing, sparkling with dozens of colours of the most subtle shades. The dandelions blazed like little suns, the sound of the bees and bumblebees resounded, the lark played melodies on its silver strings.

Marynka smiled, and again the many coloured wings of the butterfly fluttered before her. The old lady stopped on the path, looked back at the little girl and smiled again.

### **The new teacher**

The grade three students suffered a great misfortune. Their teacher, dear old Antonina Nychyporivna, died.

The children grieved for her for a long time. Only gradually, and with great difficulty, did they become accustomed to their young new teacher. It made it even harder that her name was also Antonina, though her patronymic was Petrivna.

Antonina Petrivna seemed to the children to be too happy and carefree. The children doubted if she would be able to love them as tenderly, as demandingly and as strictly as Antonina Nychyporivna.

One day, black-eyed Fedko was running outside when he fell and drove a large splinter into his hand. The boy ran to Antonina Petrivna. The young teacher, who was always so happy and carefree, gave a little scream and turned pale. She sat Fedko on her knee but did not know what to do next. Andriiko, an irrepressible mischief maker, walked up to her and said very quietly, 'You need to pull the splinter out with your teeth.'

Antonina Petrivna bent over the boy's hand and pressed her lips to the wound. When she raised her head, a large splinter was sticking out between her bloodied teeth. The children looked at their young teacher, their eyes now shining with delight.

That night, in thirty-seven households, the children told their mothers about their new teacher for the first time.



## **I asked grandma**

Pavlyk is a lively and mischievous grade four student. His grandfather died fighting on the frontline. At home, his grandmother keeps his grandfather's medals and awards in an old chest.

Not long ago, a portrait of Pavlyk's grandfather was painted and hung on the classroom wall next to Pavlyk's desk. Pavlyk's eyes shone with pride when he saw his grandfather, as if still alive, his chest covered in medals.

But his joy soon turned to bitterness, as people began to use the painting to reproach him. If he did not complete an assignment, his teacher would say, 'You should be ashamed of yourself. Your grandfather was a hero, and you are sitting next to his portrait.'

One day Pavlyk brought a piece of old mirror to school and began to reflect sunbeams onto his desk. Olenka, who sat next to him, whispered, 'How can you behave like that during a lesson? Do you think your grandfather would have played with sunbeams?'

Pavlyk felt bitter and depressed.

One Saturday, the teacher said, 'We are going for a walk in the forest today. Run home with your books and quickly bring some food to eat.'

Pavlyk went over to the open window, jumped out, and was about to run home when he saw his teacher walking towards him. How she had managed to get there so quickly he could not imagine.

She reproached him, saying, 'Is that how students are supposed to behave? Ask your grandmother if your grandfather ever jumped out the window.'

The next day, Pavlyk raised his hand and said, 'I asked Grandma.'

'What about?' asked the teacher, who had forgotten what she had said.

'I asked if Grandpa ever jumped out the window.'

'And what did your grandmother say?' asked the teacher.

'Once, when Grandpa had to stay back after school, he climbed out through the chimney.'

## **A grandson's request**

Three grandsons—Petryk, Ivas and little Tarasyk—came to visit Grandpa Taras at the melon plantation. They spent a long time with him. He treated his grandsons to watermelon, rockmelon, honey, apples and cherry juice.

As they were leaving, he gave each boy a large watermelon. He walked with them as far as the scrub on the edge of the plantation. The grandfather turned back, and had almost reached his hut, when he suddenly heard someone calling him. His seven-year-old grandson, Tarasyk, had run back from the edge of the plantation and was calling, 'Grandpa Taras!'

His grandfather asked, 'What's the matter, Tarasyk? Why have you come back?'

'Grandpa, can we please steal one watermelon?' asked Tarasyk.

The unexpectedness of the question caught the old man off guard. He opened his mouth to scold the boy, but looking at Tarasyk's pleading eyes, and the skin peeling off his sunburnt nose, he remembered something. Trying not to smile, he said sternly, 'Look at me! No more than one watermelon. And take it ... I mean steal it ... from that side over there.'

Grandpa Taras turned and walked back to his hut, smiling all the time, and remembering his childhood.

His grandson Tarasyk, jumping for joy, ran back to the scrub to give the other boys the joyful news: Grandpa said they could steal one watermelon.

## **Joy in a child's eyes**

It was a warm, sunny day, and everything seemed to be joyfully welcoming the spring. The orchards were flowering, and birds were twittering. A flock of cranes flew across the azure sky. Somewhere a spring brook was babbling happily.

However, underneath a tall poplar, a little boy was standing and crying. He did not see the orchards in flower. He did not hear the twittering of the birds. To him the sky seemed black, not blue. The flock of cranes seemed a thread of tears.

People walked past the little boy and did not notice him crying.

Only one old man saw the crying boy, walked up to him, and put his hand on his head. The old man spent a long time talking to the boy, asking him about something. Through his tears, the boy told the old man all about what was troubling him.

They talked like that for about an hour. Their conversation ended with the boy smiling. He noticed that the orchards were in flower. He heard the birds twittering. He saw a flock of cranes shimmering in the blue sky and thought, 'Spring has come!'

The most beautiful thing is when one person dries another's tears and awakens a smile.