

# Sukhomlynsky News



## New Year Wishes

Dear reader,

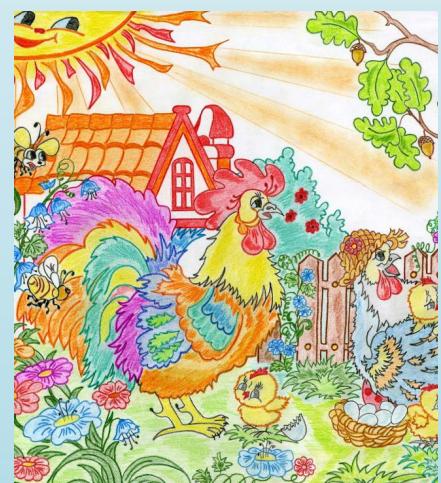
I hope you are well. May the New Year bring everything that you are hoping for, and may it bring peace to Ukraine.

This month's newsletter contains another 14 stories from *I'll Tell you a Story ... Philosophy for Children*.

The beautiful colour illustrations used in each month's newsletter were created by children from Ukraine during an art competition held in 2013. This competition was held in order to collect illustrations for the publication *A World of Beauty: Tales from Pavlysh*, which has been published in five languages. Over 2,000 illustrations were entered in the competition. A selection of these lovely illustrations can be viewed at: <https://theholisticeducator.net/sukhomlynsky/art/>.

Best wishes for 2026,

Alan Cockerill



## From *I'll Tell You a Story ... Philosophy for Children*

### A bumble bee awakes

In late autumn, a bumblebee was on his way home, when a cold wind began to blow, and it started snowing. The bumblebee was not able to reach his nest, so he took refuge in a deep crack in the trunk of a pine tree and fell asleep. His friends waited for him in vain. They thought he must have perished in the cold. But the bumblebee was sleeping safely inside the pine tree.

Spring arrived. The bumblebee was woken by the gentle rays of the sun. He flew out from his safe place and buzzed around the forest looking for flowers, so he could drink some sweet nectar. But there were not yet any flowers to be found. The snow had only just melted, and the grass had not yet turned green.

As he flew, the bumblebee could feel his wings becoming weak. Exhausted, he settled on the trunk of a silver birch tree and spread his wings, warming himself in the sun. And then he spotted a drop of transparent liquid sparkling on the white bark. 'I'll drink some dew,' thought the bumblebee. He tried it, and the dew was sweet.

Just then he heard the birch tree whisper, 'It is not dew. It is my blood. Yesterday, somebody broke one of my branches, and my white blood oozed out. Drink it, dear bumblebee, and regain your strength!'

The bumblebee drank his fill of the sweet birch sap, then flapped his wings happily and took off. He returned to his nest and told his friends how the birch tree had saved him from starvation.

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

## Why does the ice on the pond ring out?

On a moonlit winter's night, listen to the silence of the pond! You will hear a soft ringing, as if somebody is striking a crystal dome with a tiny hammer and making it ring. It seems as if the whole world around you is ringing as well: the sky, the stars, and the white frost on the willows.

What makes this sound? I'll tell you.

A boastful fish lives in this pond. One day, she decided to change her colour to silver, so she asked the moon, 'Please give me some silver to coat my scales.'

The moon replied, 'Take as much as you want.' Ever since, the fish has been trying to swim to the moon, but she keeps bumping into the ice and making it ring.

## The swan's feather

A flock of swans was flying high up in the sky. They were returning from warmer lands. Somewhere, far beyond the primordial forest, near a blue lake, a huge white feather fell from a swan's wing.

Just then, a grey sparrow was bathing in some dust on the ground. He was very surprised to see the feather fall near him, and asked, 'Where did you come from?'

'I am a swan's feather. I am a gift for you, dear sparrow.'

The sparrow was very happy. 'Well,' he thought to himself. 'Now, I will be able to soar high in the sky like a swan.'

He grasped the feather in his claws and took off, but he could fly no higher than an oak tree. He gazed at the flock of swans, disappearing into the deep blue sky, and his heart ached. He felt very sad.

The sparrow flew home to his nest under the eaves and put the swan's feather in a safe place. And whenever he felt sad, he would take it out and look at it, and it made him feel better.

## How a young rooster spend the night in an apple tree

A mother hen had a naughty little rooster son. The mother told him, 'Don't go far from me, stay close.'

But the little rooster wanted to wander around. One day, he wandered into a garden and just kept on going. He wandered so far into the undergrowth that he did not know how to find his way home.

A big dog ran over to him. The rooster took fright and flapped right up into an apple tree, but the dog just lay down under the tree and stayed there.

The sun set. Night fell. The rooster sat perched up in the apple tree, trembling with fear. A huge moth came flying by. It asked the rooster, 'Where is your nest?' But the rooster was too frightened to answer.

He barely managed to get through the night. When the sun rose, the rooster flapped down from the tree and ran all the way home. He ran up to his mother, as happy as could be, and started crowing with joy.

## The water strider and the ant

A water strider lived by a pond. He could run on the water because he had little floating boots on his feet, so he was not afraid of drowning.

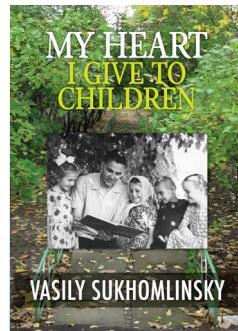
The water strider ran to the bank of his pond and met an ant. The ant was very curious and asked, 'How is it, water strider, that you can run on water?'

'Come with me, and I'll show you how,' said the water strider.

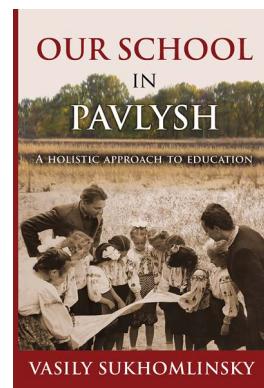


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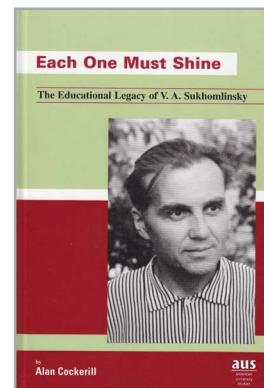
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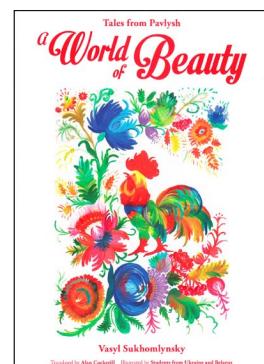
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The ant stepped onto the water and nearly drowned. She barely escaped with her life. 'You won't fool me again,' she told the water strider.

### **Why did the cherry tree bloom in autumn?**

There was an old cherry tree in our garden. It had rough, uneven branches and its bark was peeling off in long strips. In spring, the cherry tree came out in leaf, but it did not bloom. Then, when autumn arrived, the tree suddenly woke up and flowered.

'Why is it flowering in autumn?' I asked my grandmother, and in reply, she told me the following story.

'The old cherry tree became very ill. When spring arrived, it fell asleep in the sunshine, and did not hear the rumble of the first spring thunderstorms. And it is the first thunder in spring that signals to the cherry trees that it is time to flower. But it slept through all the spring thunderstorms ... Then in autumn, when it was nice and warm, it started flowering.'

I walked over to the old cherry tree and lay my ear against its knotty trunk. I heard the tree give a soft sigh.

### **The winged flower**

This happened during the summer. A strong wind lifted up a seed that had two fluffy wings. The seed landed in a meadow, and the grass asked it, 'Who are you?'

'I am a winged flower,' answered the seed. 'I'll grow here in the meadow.'

The grass was glad to have a new neighbour.

### **The snowman with a heart of ice**

Soft fluffy snow covered the ground. Some children made a snowman from it and left it by the bank of a pond. The snowman seemed alive: it had a beard, a moustache, and pebble eyes that gazed sternly from under its scowling eye-brows.

One of the boys said, 'A snowman is supposed to be kind. Let's give him a heart. A heartless person is mean, but a person with a heart is kind.'

But the children could not decide what they would make the snowman's heart from. Finally, they came up with an idea: since the snowman was made of snow, its heart should be made of ice.

They found a clear, transparent piece of ice, made a heart out of it, and inserted it into the snowman's chest.

One day, a boy's fingers were frozen. It hurt so much that the boy burst into tears. The boy skated over to the snowman and asked, 'Dear snowman, what should I do? My fingers are frozen.'

But the snowman was silent. It gazed at the boy with eyes that were neither kind nor angry. They were

indifferent, empty, made of stone.

Another boy came over to the one who was crying and said, 'That snowman has a heart of ice! Do you think someone with a heart of ice is going to help anyone?'

### **How a mushroom wanted to see the sun**

In a dark forest, under a mighty tree with spreading branches, hidden by the surrounding grass, grew a mushroom.

One day a magpie flew over to the tree, settled on a branch and said, 'I feel so sorry for you, dear mushroom. You live surrounded by grass and have never seen the sun.'

'What does the sun look like?' asked the mushroom.

'Oh, it is beautiful,' answered the magpie. 'It is bright and warm.'

'I want to see the sun!' cried the mushroom and poked its head out of the grass.

Just then some children were passing by. They spotted the mushroom, picked it, and put it into their basket. You will get to see the sun now, mushroom!

### **The tulip and the rose**

A young lad came to a garden where tulips and roses bloomed. He admired the flowers, gazing for a long time at the tulips' bell-shaped flowerheads and the roses' luxurious petals. With bated breath, the roses and tulips waited to see which flower the lad would choose, which he would like the most.

'Roses have thorns,' the tulips thought. 'He could prick his hands badly while picking a rose and make them bleed. We tulips have soft tender stems. It is easy to reach out and pick us.'

The lad stopped by the tulips, admiring the beauty of their bell-shaped flowerheads, and then moved on to the roses.

The pink tulips were so offended, they turned pale.

The lad stepped up to a rose bush. He tried several times to pick a flower, but pricked his finger on the rose's thorns, and it started bleeding.

'Well, now he will give up on the roses,' whispered a tulip.

But the lad did not leave the rose bush. He pricked himself several times, until the blood was dripping from his palms as well as his fingers. Finally, he managed to pick a rose, and his eyes shone with happiness.

The tulip bowed to the ground. It looked at its tender stem and thought, 'Perhaps it would be better if I had a thorny stem after all.'



## **The red apple at the top of the tree**

An apple tree bore a rich crop of apples. Summer passed, and the apples ripened. Children came and picked the ripe apples, but they could not reach one small red apple at the top of the tree. They left it on the tree, and thought, 'Let it enjoy the sunshine a little longer.'

Autumn came. The nights were cold. Leaves fell from the trees. The small apple looked around and felt sad. Then it rained ... But on clear sunny days, the apple was joyful: it had a little more time to warm itself in the sun.

One clear autumn night, from beyond some mountains, the frost arrived. It covered the remaining leaves with hoar frost. The red apple woke up and trembled with fear: there were no leaves left on the apple tree. A little boy came to the garden. The apple was so happy to see him that it tumbled to the ground. The boy picked up the red apple and took it home. The apple lay in the boy's pocket, snuggling up to the warmth of his leg. The apple was warm, but it trembled with fear. What would happen now? The sun and the orchard had disappeared.

### **Why do I feel this way?**

Ivanko and Tonia lived next door to each other, by a pond. For as long as Ivanko could remember, they had swum in that pond together, before they began to go to school, and during the summer holidays when they completed their first, second, and third years at school.

Today was a special day for the children: their parents came to school, and their teacher presented books to the best students. Ivanko and Tonia were awarded certificates of merit.

Ivanko came home, fed his pigeons, and ran to the pond to swim.

When he reached the bank of the pond, there was Tonia. She was already undressed and was about to step into the water. Ivanko looked at her beautiful, slender body, and he suddenly experienced a new feeling, previously unknown to him. He felt awkward looking at Tonia's naked body. Ivanko hid behind a guelder-rose bush and hoped that Tonia had not seen him.

Tonia entered the water and swam, but Ivanko was afraid to move. He sat as if bewitched. He wanted to keep watching Tonia, but at the same time he felt that there was something wrong in this desire.

'Why do I feel like this?' wondered Ivanko. 'Last year, we swam together, and I did not feel awkward.'

Quietly, Ivanko crept from behind the bush and headed home. He wanted to look back and watch Tonia from a distance, but he forced himself not to. His heart was pounding like never before.

## **The squill and the lark**

Under a soft blanket of leaves, in the warm soil, a sweet little bulb slept through the long winter. As it slept, it listened attentively for the song of the lark, because the song of a lark in the clear blue sky is a signal for a bulb to wake up.

And at last, through its carpet of leaves, the bulb heard the lark's song descending from the sky. The bulb cracked open and sent forth a small shoot. The green shoot sprouted from the earth, spread its leaves, and rose into the air. Its green stems rose higher and higher, and between them, clusters of squills bloomed. The squills were as blue as the sky above. The squills gazed at the sky with their blue eyes, listening to the song of the lark. The trees in the forest were still leafless. The forest was open and full of light. It was as if the blue of the sky poured down from above and spread through the forest in the squills below.

## **Sunrise**

The sun was rising. A starling flew out of his birdhouse in search of worms. A rooster perched on the fence and greeted the rising sun with his 'cock-a-doodle-doo!' A sunflower turned its yellow head to the sun and gazed at the red sky. A sparrow burst from his nest, shook his feathers, and started chirping joyfully. An aspen rustled its leaves.

Everyone welcomed the sun. An ear of wheat bent its head, its whiskers stirring. A fish swam up from the bottom of the river and trembled in the sunlight. A lark soared high in the sky, wanting to be the first to see the sun. A butterfly flitted from one flower to another, wondering, 'Did I sleep in and miss the sunrise?'

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