

Sukhomlinsky News



Ancient burial mound in a field on the outskirts of Pavlysh

Stories from *An Ethics Anthology*

This month's issue is devoted to translations of stories in Sukhomlinsky's *Krestomatiya po etike* [An Ethics Anthology].

No-one Can Kill the Gift of Song

In the Land of Green Meadows lived a happy nation of singers. They grew grain and sang songs. Each person had a little folk pipe. But one day the Land of Green Meadows was visited by Life-Eater, who hated joy. As soon as someone started singing or playing on their pipe, he crept up behind them, grabbed their song, and stuffed it into his mouth. That is why he was called Life-Eater. Wherever he went, songs died.

The Life-Eater swallowed all the songs. Only one pipe remained in the Land of Green Meadows. A little boy buried it in the ground and whispered, 'Keep quiet, and then we can defeat the Life-Eater together.' Everything was silent in the Land of Green Meadows. The Life-Eater, who hated joy, was pleased. Even the sun grew dim...

But then, where the boy had planted his pipe, green wheat grew, and developed ears of grain. The ears of grain began to sing like pipes. The earth was singing and the sky was singing throughout the Land of Green Meadows. The people were overjoyed. They all made new pipes and began to play songs on them.

The Life-Eater, who hated joy, lay in the full sun, his tummy aching from all the songs he had swallowed. When he heard everyone singing, he was so angry he burst like a balloon.



Aid for Ukraine

Dear reader,

I hope you are keeping well.

I imagine that, like me, you have been watching in horror as the events in Ukraine have unfolded.

The invasion of Ukraine has shown us the destructiveness and awfulness of war. It is appalling to think that human intelligence and effort has gone into creating weapons of destruction that in the space of a month can wreak destruction that will take decades to repair.

While individually we may feel helpless in the face of such a tragedy, collectively we can make a difference. Aid organisations are currently helping displaced people, and petitions are expressing the urgent concern of the international community.

The following are links to some aid appeals operating in Australia:

<https://emergencyaction.org.au/ukraineemergencyappeal/>

<https://www.unicef.org.au/landing-pages/ukraine-emergency-appeal>

The following is a link to a petition sponsored by the Dalai Lama and several Nobel Peace laureates, that calls for an end to the war in Ukraine and for renewed efforts to bring about nuclear disarmament:

https://secure.avaaz.org/campaign/en/no_nuclear_war_loc/

Best wishes,

Alan Cockerill

Stories from *An Ethics Anthology* (cont.)

Sunflowers During a Storm

Heavy black storm clouds cover the sun. It grows dark and gloomy in the field. The forest stands black and silent, as if wary and expecting something. The yellow field of wheat turns grey. An anxious lark drops from the sky into a meadow and falls silent.

Only the field of flowering sunflowers is aflame with colour. It seems to radiate light, and to reduce the gloom above the earth. A lustrous fire blazes in its flowers, reminding us of the sun above the clouds. Lightning tears the clouds apart, and the blue sky peeps through. Once again, the field laughs with joy.

The Lilac Grove in the Ravine

In the middle of the steppe is an old ravine. The slopes of the ravine are overgrown with grass. And what is that blue colour at the bottom of the ravine? We look from a distance and see a sky-blue stream winding through the bottom of the ravine. How clear the water seems, just like the sky! We want to reach it as quickly as we can.

We descend to the bottom of the ravine, and what do we see? It is not a stream after all, but lilac bushes. Someone has planted lilac bushes all along the bottom of the ravine. They have taken root and flourished. The lilac is in flower, and from a distance, it looks just like a stream.

The Shepherd Oak

On the edge of the forest stands a solitary oak, strong and thickset, like an old shepherd. Probably it has grown on the edge of the trees so it can keep watch over its brothers in the forest.

One summer day a thunderstorm rumbles over the forest. The oak is struck by a fiery flash of lightning. Its branches shake, and its crown bursts into flame. The rain pours down, but the oak keeps burning, and its crown is completely burnt out. The forest is sad. Who will now be its shepherd?

But the oak does not die. A year later its burnt branches are covered in green shoots. The old oak is covered in curly green leaves, but its crown remains dry and bare. Some storks arrive from warmer climes. They see the bare crown, settle there, and build a nest. The old oak is overjoyed. Now it will not be alone. When the sun sinks beyond the horizon, a stork stands on one leg in its nest, and gazes far into the distance, in the direction of the setting sun. He is keeping a lookout for any thunderstorm. The stork stands quietly, and the oak breathes easily. It rustles its green leaves and falls asleep.

How the Sparrows Waited for the Sun

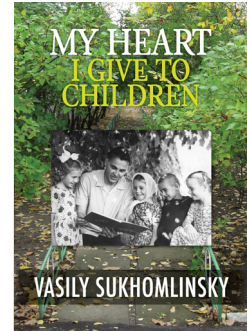
A mother sparrow was sitting in her nest with her chicks. The sun rose, appearing from below the horizon, big and red. The chicks asked, 'What is that, mum?'

'That is the sun,' answered their mother. 'When it rises the day begins, and insects come out of hiding.'

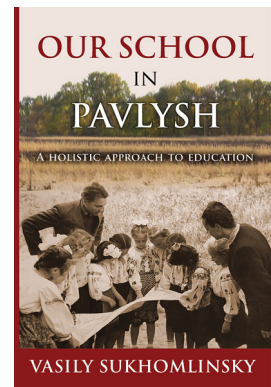
'How wonderful the sun is,' cheeped the chicks.

The mother sparrow flew from her nest and brought some worms. Her children ate them and then asked, 'Please fly and get some more worms. The sun is still shining.'

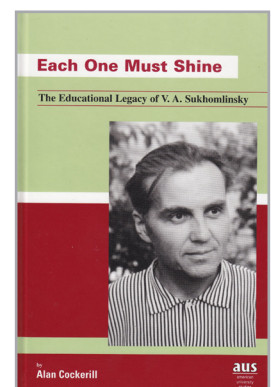
The mother sparrow flew off again to look for food. She brought some insects, which the chicks ate, and then they asked for more. All day long, while the sun shone, the mother sparrow flew here and there looking for food.



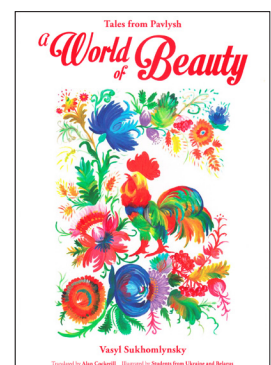
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Night fell, and the chicks went to sleep. They woke before dawn and asked their mother to go looking for food. But their mother answered, 'The sun has not risen yet.'

The chicks waited a long time for the sun to rise. At last, it appeared above the horizon, and their mother flew off to look for worms.

How the Nightingale Feeds Her Chicks

A mother nightingale has three chicks in her nest. All day long she brings them food: little bugs, flies and spiders. The baby nightingales eat their fill and fall asleep. But early the next morning, before the sun rises, they start calling out for a drink. The nightingale flies to a grove. On the leaves of the trees are drops of dew, clear and pure. The nightingale finds the clearest drop of dew, takes it in her beak, and flies to her nest, bringing her babies a drink. She carefully places the drop of dew on a leaf, and the baby nightingales drink the water. Just then, the sun rises, and the nightingale flies off again to look for bugs.

The Green Hair and the Red Pantry

A grandmother plants some carrot seeds in the ground. Warm, spring rains fall, and the seeds begin to grow. A red root burrows down into the earth, and a green shoot reaches for the sun. The root and the shoot grow and grow.

Rains fall, and the earth drinks the water. The green shoot turns into a curly head of hair, and the root gets fatter and fatter. Soon it is as fat as the stalk, and then like a little barrel, red and round. However much it rains, it is never enough for the red root. One day the curly green hair asks:

'What are you, down there underneath me, in the ground? No matter how much it rains, you can't get enough to drink.'

And from the earth it hears the reply:

'I am a red pantry. I am storing lots and lots of sugar.' 'Really?' says the green hair. 'So that is why children admire my green head of hair so much. If they pull on my hair, they will reach the sweet pantry.'

Frost and the Chamomile Flower

One moonlit night Autumn Frost paid a visit. He approached a rose bush and breathed onto it. Its pink petals fell to the ground and its green leaves withered.

Frost strode across the meadow, and wherever he breathed and whatever he touched—whether it was the grass or the green leaves of the maple tree—everything turned yellow and withered. He stopped to rest under the rowan-tree and its leaves turned crimson, like the sky at sunset before a windy day.

Frost roamed wide through gardens and fields, but he missed a little Chamomile Flower. She still stood by the road, stretching her white petals to the sun.

She looked at the poplar tree and was surprised. Why had its leaves turned yellow?

The sun rose, its warm rays gently caressing the chamomile flower, and the flower smiled joyfully back.

The Dawn

One by one the stars in the sky go out. The dark blue sky in the east turns a lighter blue, and then a pink band rises from the horizon and spreads over the whole sky. Next, everything turns pink: the water in the pond, and the drops of dew on the grass. Even the mist spreading through the valley is pink. A lark soars high into the sky and sings its heart out. Already the sun's rays are shining on its little wings, and its wings turn pink. At any moment the sun will rise from the horizon, and the lark is singing to tell us, 'I can already see the sun!'

Spring Breeze

A maple tree slept all through the winter. As it dozed it faintly heard the howling of the blizzards and the anxious cries of a black raven. The cold winds shook its trunk and bent its branches towards the earth.

But one sunny morning the maple felt the caress of something warm and tender. It was a spring breeze. 'You have slept long enough,' whispered the warm spring breeze. 'Wake up, spring is coming.'

'And where is it, this spring?' asked the maple.

'I have blown from the distant shores of a southern sea. Beautiful spring is making its way through the fields, covering the earth with flowers. And the swallows are bearing many-coloured ribbons on their wings.'

That is what the spring breeze told the maple tree. The maple sighed, stretched its shoulders, opened its green buds and waited for the beautiful spring to arrive.

It was only beautiful when it was alive

In the orchard a musician was playing on a flute. The birds, trees and flowers were all listening to his enchanting song. Even the wind settled under a bush and listened with wonder to the playing of the flute. The musician was telling of the sun in the blue sky, of a white cloud, of a little grey bird—a lark—and of happy children's eyes.

The music fell silent. The musician placed his flute on a bench and went into his house. The wind came out from under the bush, swept over to the flute and blew into it with all its strength.

The flute howled like bad weather in autumn. The wind blew even harder, but the flute refused to make music, and only howled and howled.

'Why is it so?' wondered the wind. 'I can easily rip an oak up by its roots or tear the roof from a house. Why will the flute not submit to me and make music?'



Stories

How the River Lost its Temper with the Rain

The river became conceited. 'Look how wide and full of water I am, and what green banks I have,' it boasted. 'Even the sun is reflected in me as in a mirror. So are the green trees and the blue sky.' Suddenly the sky was covered in grey clouds and rain began to fall. A day passed, and then a second and a third. The river and its banks also became grey. The whole world became grey. The river was angry. 'How long are you going to continue with your pitter-patter, you miserable rain?' it complained. 'I have become ugly because of you.'

The rain replied, 'If not for me and my greyness, you would not be so wide and full of water.'

We, too, should not forget the source from which we flow.

The Inquisitive Woodpecker

In a mother woodpecker's nest were four chicks. One of them could not keep still. He kept looking out of the nest and wanted to know about everything.

'What is there outside our nest?' he asked.

'When you grow up and learn to fly you will see what is outside the nest,' replied the mother.

But the restless baby woodpecker did not want to listen to his mother. He kept stretching out of his nest until he fell onto the ground. He sat in the grass and cried.

The mother flew to her chick. 'How am I going to rescue you, you disobedient son? Sit on my back, take my feathers in your beak, and hold on tight!' The baby woodpecker sat on his mother's back and gripped her feathers in his beak. His mother flew back to the nest, carrying her son,

and asked, 'Are you still going to keep stretching out of the nest?'

'No, mum,' said the baby woodpecker, crying, and lifted his little head up to look out of the nest.

By the Pond

A hot July day is drawing to a close. The sun is setting. We are sitting on the bank of a pond. The water is as still and motionless as a mirror, and the dome of the blue sky is reflected in it. Looking at the water, we can observe every movement of the sun. We see the moment when it touches the pond, and in an instant the water ignites and becomes a river of fire. The flaming disk of the sun descends lower and lower into the depths of the water. The pond is all ablaze. Finally, the sun sets, hiding below the horizon, and suddenly the river of fire is extinguished. The mirror-like surface turns a soft, pale blue.

In the twilight, the stars start twinkling in the sky. The water in the pond turns a deeper blue, and now the stars are twinkling in its depths.

An old willow leans over the pond. No leaf makes a sound, no branch stirs. The willow looks at its reflection in the water, sad that summer is coming to an end, that soon all her leaves will be gone, and dark clouds will cover the sky.

Do not be sad, dear willow! Soon the pond will freeze over, snow will cover you with its warm blanket, and you will look forward to the spring.

He Saved the Baby Frogs

It was a rainy spring. A large puddle appeared in the street outside. Petrik, a grade three student, noticed that little tadpoles were swimming in the puddle.

"Where did they come from?" he wondered.

After the rains, came a hot summer. There was not a single cloud in the sky. The puddle began to dry out quickly, and soon there was hardly any water left in it. One day Petrik noticed about twenty baby frogs in the small puddle that remained. They were as tiny as could be.

'The baby frogs must be hot,' thought Petrik. 'And what will happen when the puddle dries out completely? They will die.'

Petrik felt sorry for the frogs and decided to save them. He went home and got a bucket, collected the tiny baby frogs in his bucket, and took them to the pond. He let them go in the water, and they swam away.

'Now they will not die,' thought Petrik with joy.

