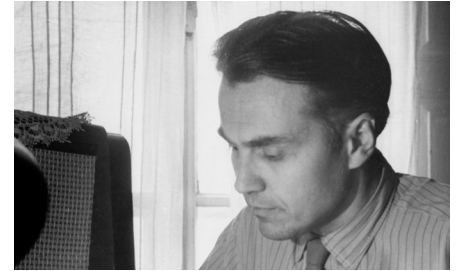


# Sukhomlynsky News



## ***New book due out in November***

*Dear reader,*

*I hope you are keeping well.*

*This month's newsletter contains twelve more stories from **I'll tell you a story ... Philosophy for Children**. Next month the book itself will be coming out, and I will send out a special notice to inform you as soon as it is available.*

*The book will be 608 pages in length, and will contain approximately 800 stories, accompanied by Sukhomlynsky's reflections on values education.*

*I hope you enjoy this month's newsletter.*

*Best wishes,*

*Alan Cockerill*

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

### **Grandma's borschch**

A grandmother had two granddaughters. The granddaughters lived in a big city and came to visit their grandmother during the summer holidays. The grandmother was delighted to see them. She treated them to sweet cherries, fresh honey, and varenyky. But the girls' mother had told them that their grandmother made the most delicious borschch, and that is what they wanted to try most of all.

The grandmother made them borschch, with fresh tomatoes, fresh cabbage, fresh beets and potatoes, and homemade sour cream. But unfortunately she was becoming forgetful, and she salted the borschch twice. She served two plates of borschch and invited the girls to try it. 'I'm getting old and forgetful,' she said. 'I can't remember whether I added salt or not. Here is some salt, anyway. Please add it to suit your own taste.'

The girls had a spoonful of borschch each, and it was so salty! They looked at each other and smiled quietly so that their grandmother would not notice. Spoon by spoon, they ate it all up and even asked for more, thanking their grandmother all the time. Their grandmother was delighted.

'So did I put salt into the borschch or not?' she asked.

'We didn't notice,' answered Nina. 'It was so delicious; we did not think about the salt.'

'Then I must have added salt,' said their grandma with relief. 'Tomorrow, I'll delegate that task to you, girls. I'm afraid I will forget the salt.'

'We would love that, Grandma!' replied the girls. And they quietly exchanged glances again. And quietly smiled.

## **I'LL TELL YOU A STORY ...**

**PHILOSOPHY FOR CHILDREN**



**VASYL SUKHOMLYNSKY**

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

### How the children celebrated, and the fir tree cried

The New Year was approaching. A family went to the forest and cut down the finest fir tree they could find. They placed it in the middle of a large, well-lit room and decorated it with sweets and pretty balls. The children ran around the New Year's tree, admiring it and joyfully singing songs. But the New Year's tree was frightened and sad. She missed her dear, dark forest, the grey hare, the blue sky, and the bright moon. Instead of being surrounded by a blanket of snow, she was surrounded by bits of coloured paper.

In despair, she started crying, but nobody noticed the bitter tears that ran down her branches and dripped onto the floor. Only one blue-eyed girl noticed. She sighed quietly, and whispered, 'The tree is crying.'

The celebrations came to an end. The children ate the sweets and put away the New Year decorations. The fir tree was thrown on a rubbish heap in the backyard. And only the girl with blue eyes stood by the tree to comfort it.

### Yurko's flower

'Each of you will be making a paper flower today,' said the teacher during the handicrafts lesson.

All the children set about their work. They cut narrow strips of coloured paper, then pasted them and wove them. Everyone wanted to make the most beautiful flower.

Yurko was the only one who did not want to work. He just pasted a few paper strips together any old how. The result was something weird, more like a potato than a flower.

The teacher said, 'Now put your flowers on the windowsill.'

Everyone placed their flowers in a row. So did Yurko. Then every student came out and described their flower.

'My flower has pink petals.'

'Mine has white ones.'

'My rose has tiny anthers.'

One by one, the children proudly presented their flowers. And only Yurko sat quietly at his desk, hanging his head.

### Taking a sword to face a wolf

Andriiko's father was a forest ranger. During the day, Andriiko played in the forest, and he was not afraid of its dense thickets or of the rain, because he could shelter from the rain under the trees.

The only thing that Andriiko was afraid of was a deep and dark ravine. He did not know what was in that ravine. He would have gone to explore it by now, to find out what was there, but his mother would not let him. As soon as the sun drew close to the horizon, his mother would call him inside.

Andriiko would reluctantly come home. His mother told him about a wolf that lived in the ravine, and that came out and roamed the forest as soon as it grew dark.

'Don't go into the forest at night,' warned his mother. 'A wolf is a fierce beast.'

'And how can you beat a wolf?' asked Andriiko.

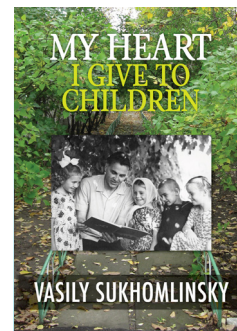
'Maybe, with a sword,' said his mother.

These words made a great impression on Andriiko. The next day, he went to the work shed and spent the whole day working on something.

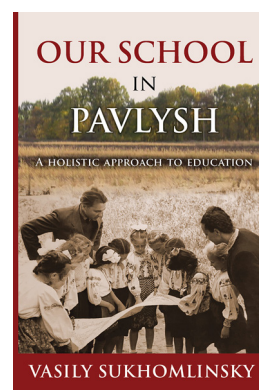
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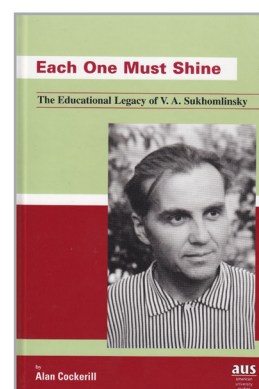
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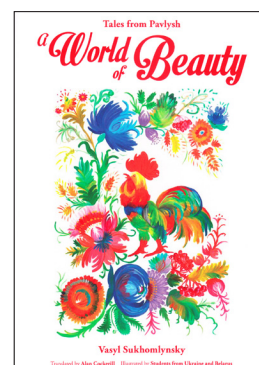
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Whatever it was he made, he hid it under his bed.

In the evening, his mother went to bed, and Andriiko was left to himself. His father was away in the city. Andriiko pretended to go to bed as well.

Then he got out of bed. He could see clearly in the moonlight. He put on his clothes, took something from under his bed, and tied it to his waist with a rope.

'Where do you think you're going?' asked his mother quietly, laying a hand on his shoulder.

Andriiko was neither frightened nor surprised. He was not going to lie about where he was going. If his mother had not woken up, he would have gone quietly to her bed, woken her up himself, and told her everything. But his mother had heard him getting ready, and now she was asking, 'Why?' So he answered, 'I am going to find the wolf ... Look, I made a sword.'

### **How the butterfly drank birch sap**

Snow still lay under trees in the shade, but a little butterfly, woken by the warm spring sun, flew out from his winter home. He felt dizzy, due to weakness and hunger. He had not eaten anything throughout his long winter sleep. 'I know,' thought the butterfly, 'I'll find a sweet-smelling flower and drink its sweet nectar. Then my head will stop spinning.'

But there were still no flowers, except for a single blue squill peeping out from the earth. The butterfly was overjoyed to see it, but when he settled on the flower it had no sweet nectar. It felt cold.

The butterfly flew on. His strength was failing him, and he was about to fold his wings and fall to the earth, when suddenly he heard a sweet, kind voice, calling, 'Fly over to me! Over here, to the silver birch tree. I'll give you a drop of sap to drink.'

The butterfly flew over to the birch tree and saw a drop of a sap seeping from a crack in the bark. The butterfly drank his fill and happily flapped his wings. 'Thank you!' said the butterfly. 'You saved my life. Without your help, I would have starved to death.'

### **The fiery stallion**

My mother told me this story ...

In our village, there was a stallion, a fiery stallion. He was completely untamed and would not obey anyone. Even the most experienced and strongest men were afraid of approaching him. When they tried to saddle him, he would strike the ground with his hooves, biting and snorting.

Finally, one brave boy, Yurko, managed to saddle the restive creature. However, the stallion reared up, whinnied, jumped onto the road, and threw Yurko off. Then he galloped through the village and stopped at its outskirts. Two small children were playing right in the middle of the road. I know from

my mother that it was me and my twin sister Olena. We were only eighteen months old. We ran to the stallion, sat down under him, and hugged his front legs. My mother's heart sank in fear. She thought that the stallion would kill us or maim us. But he stood quietly. Occasionally, he would slowly lift his leg and then stand quietly again, looking at us as if afraid. Meanwhile, we continued to play, oblivious to any danger.

Eventually, cautiously, the fiery stallion stepped away from us and trotted back to the village, where they barely managed to herd him into his stable.

My mother sometimes asks me whether I remember us playing under that horse, but I cannot recall it. All I remember is that, from my earliest years, my favourite toy was a stallion. I am eleven now, and I still play with my fiery stallion.

### **The mole and the lark**

A lark built her nest amidst a sea of wheat. She found a small hole in the ground, brought some soft grass and feathers, and soon her home was ready. She soared into the blue sky and sang joyfully, 'I have a home! I have a home!'

Just beside the lark's nest, a mole had dug a deep burrow. He would only come out of it very rarely, in the evening or just before sunrise. Once, the kind mole told the lark, 'I feel sorry for you, my friend! You do not have a real home. Let me make a burrow for you, so you can have a warm and cozy place to live.'

The lark just laughed at him. She rose into the sky and sang, 'I have little chicks at home! I have little chicks at home!'

Listening to the lark's song, the mole once more felt so painfully sorry for the lark, that all he could say was, 'Oh, that poor lark!'



## The owl and the maple leaf

The owl did not sleep during the night. She hunted mice, looking for food. When the sun rose, the owl flew to the forest, settled in a maple tree, and hid under a broad leaf. She slept all day, and then in the evening she took off to hunt. It continued like that for several weeks. The maple leaf grew accustomed to greeting the owl. When the sky turned red, just before sunrise, the leaf became expectant, anticipating the arrival of the owl. The owl, in turn, became accustomed to the maple leaf. She was very gentle as she settled under it, trying not harm it.

One morning, the owl did not come. The sun rose, the lark sang, but the owl did not arrive. Another night passed and morning came again, but there was still no sign of the owl.

The maple leaf grew sad and hung its head. Nothing was dear to it now, not even the sun and the life-giving rain. The leaf turned yellow, withered, and died.

## Indifference

In our village lived an old lady named Grandma Oryna. She was so old that nobody knew her age. The old lady had two neighbours, both tractor drivers. One had a daughter name Galia, in grade seven, and the other had a daughter named Nina, in grade three.

One day, Nina asked the old lady, 'Grandma, when is your birthday?'

'Tomorrow, dear,' answered the old lady.

Nina waited till the next morning, picked some flowers, and took them to the old lady. Galia asked her, 'Where are you taking those flowers?'

'To Grandma Oryna,' said Nina. 'It's her birthday today.'

Galia laughed and said, 'She isn't your grandma, is she? Why are you congratulating a stranger on her birthday?'

Nina was shocked by Galia's words. 'How can a grandma be a stranger?' she asked in surprise.'

## The seagulls and the crayfish

A crayfish was hiding under a submerged log in the murky water of a river and chewing on a green leaf that had fallen from a willow. He noticed two seagulls settle on the water above him and begin talking. One asked the other, 'What do you think is the best thing in the world?'

The other answered, 'Being high up in the sky is the best thing in the world. The sun shines down, and the blue sky is never-ending.'

The crayfish listened to their conversation

and decided to take a look and see for himself what this blue sky was like. He crawled out onto the riverbank, gazed up at the sky and became frightened: in all that blue sky, there was no silt, no submerged log, no murky water, and no swamp. 'No,' he thought, 'The best thing in the world is a quiet little burrow in the riverbed.'

## Unhappy Andrii

At school Andrii did not study hard. If he passed, that was good; if he failed sometimes, that did not really bother him. His parents were often summoned to the school and asked to make him study harder, but they could not do anything with their son. Andrii just did not want to study.

Andrii barely managed to complete his schooling. He began to work in a tractor brigade, but he did not want to work either. Andrii especially hated getting up early, and he had to get up very early and be in the field before sunrise.

Andrii would walk to the field in the morning and curse his life. 'Why am I alive? Why do I have to suffer so much?' he thought. And the whole world seemed gloomy and without joy.

Andrii is an unhappy man. He does not like work. But everything in the world that is beautiful and great is created by work. Work is the most beautiful thing.

## The crucian carp in the aquarium

Petryk has a small aquarium at home. Goldfish live in it. Petryk feeds them.

One day Petryk went to the pond and caught a little crucian carp in a bowl. He brought it home and put it in his aquarium. He thought the little fish would like it there.

Petryk gave the fish some food. The goldfish ate it, but the crucian carp did not. He squashed himself into a corner on the very bottom of the aquarium and stayed there.

'Why aren't you eating?' asked Petryk.

'Put me back in the pond,' said the fish. 'If you keep me here, I will die.'

Petryk put the crucian carp back in the pond.

