

Sukhomlynsky News



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

Who is telling the truth?

A farmer went to plough a field. His wife and baby daughter stayed home. The baby lay in a cradle hanging from the branch of an apple tree. The mother sat beside the cradle, singing a lullaby, and sewing a shirt for her daughter. Next door, her neighbour was doing her laundry.

Suddenly, a hurricane swept down on them. It flattened trees and left houses in ruins. The farmer's house was completely destroyed. The apple tree was uprooted, and the cradle and the baby were carried up into the clouds by the wind, landing far away beyond the mountains.

The distraught mother wailed as she stood by a hole where the apple tree used to be. Her eyes scanned the debris that used to be her lovely home. Only a tiny doll that the baby used to play with was left among the rubble.

The neighbour's house was untouched by the storm. The neighbour ran to the field, found the farmer, and told him what had just happened. The farmer looked into the neighbour's eyes and did not know whether to believe her or not. Her eyes were so indifferent. There was no grief in them, only amazement.

'Is that really true?' he asked his neighbour.

'The gospel truth,' she assured him. And once again she described how the hurricane descended on them, how it destroyed his house, uprooted the apple tree, lifted the cradle high in the sky, and took it far away.

Just then, the farmer spotted his wife crossing the field. She approached her husband without saying a word. She just sobbed bitterly and looked into his eyes. And her eyes were so full of pain and grief that he quietly whispered, 'So it is true.'



Illustrating values

Dear reader,

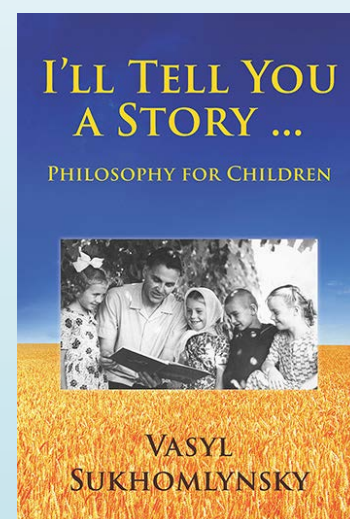
I hope you are well.

*This month's newsletter contains another eleven stories from our latest publication, **I'll Tell You a Story, Philosophy for Children**.*

All of these stories illustrate values such as kindness, generosity and sensitivity, tempered by common sense and wisdom. I hope you enjoy them.

Best wishes,

Alan Cockerill



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From I'll tell you a story ...

New Year's Greetings

An old teacher lived all by himself in a Ukrainian village. When he was too weak to continue working, he was transferred to a nursing home. He sadly parted with his grade three students and asked them not to forget him.

A year passed, then a second and a third, and every year, just before New Year, the children would send their teacher greetings: a bright handmade card with a picture of Grandpa Frost on it. The teacher arranged these cards on his bedside table.

Time passed, until eventually the teacher became very ill and died. Another man took over his bed at the nursing home, but the greeting cards remained on the bedside table.

'We need to write to those children and tell them that their teacher has died,' said one old man.

And they did intend to write, but somehow none of them ever got around to it.

More time passed. And the children sent their teacher another greeting card. The old men put it on the bedside table.

The children grew up, but they did not forget their teacher, and every year they would send a New Year's greeting card.

'Do we really need to write to those children and tell them that their teacher has died?' one of the old men asked one evening. 'Why not let him live on in their memories?'

The years crept by, and every New Year, deeply moved, the old men would read the greeting card sent to the teacher and place it on the bedside table. If one of those old men felt very sad (and old people often feel sad) they would go to the bedside table, look at a greeting card with its bright illustration, and their soul would find some peace.

How we saved the lark's chicks

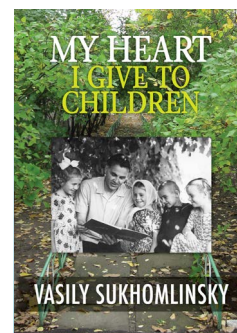
We were walking through a wheat field when we came across a lark's nest. In the nest were five chicks. They were not yet able to fly, and the following day the combine harvester was coming to harvest all the wheat. We looked at the little chicks, while the mother lark flew above us, calling anxiously. We took the nest with the chicks and placed it in the green millet. The millet would not be harvested for a long time.

As we walked home, we saw that the mother lark had flown to her nest. She sat there for a long time. Then she flew up into the deep blue sky and began to sing joyfully. She was saying, 'Thank you for saving my babies.'

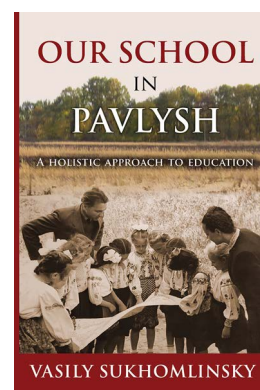
Hurt feelings and happiness

A dog named Brovko had a good master who never hurt his feelings and always took him for a walk.

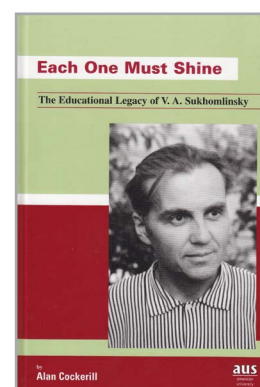
But then, one day, the master came home in a dark mood, and did not seem to care about anything. He did not respond to Brovko's gentle whining. He sat still for a long time, deep in thought. Then he stood up, locked the front door, and was gone. As usual, Brovko begged to be taken for a walk, but his master just pushed him away and did not allow Brovko to join him.



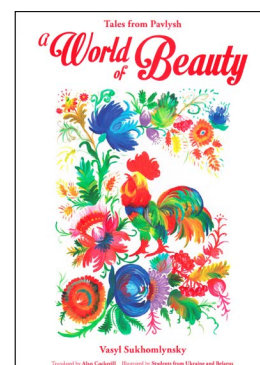
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Brovko lay down and started crying. When a dog cries, people say it is whining, and Brovko knew that. He also knew that people do not like it when a dog cries. But at that moment, Brovko forgot all that, because his heart was aching from the deep hurt that he felt.

Brovko's master did not come home that night, nor the next day. Brovko began to worry. He remembered his master's dark face and troubled eyes. Brovko did not feel hurt anymore. He felt anxious.

The master came home late that night. His face was pale and tortured; his eyes were full of suffering. Brovko rushed to his master, put his front paws onto his chest and looked into his master's eyes. Brovko's soul was full of kindness and compassion.

The master hugged his dog, and Brovko started crying, not because he felt hurt, but from happiness. He cried silently, because he knew that people do not like it when a dog cries.

Dmytryk's dad is in prison

One day, in grade one, the students were independently solving some maths problems. It was very quiet in the classroom. The teacher, Vira Pavlivna, was sitting at her desk, dreaming of the spring. Soon the flowers would be in bloom, and her fiancé would return from his military service in the navy ...

'Dmytryk's dad is in prison.' A child's voice broke the silence.

Vira Pavlivna raised her head. It was Petryk. He was sharing a desk with Dmytryk and could not help sharing such interesting news.

'He'll be in prison for three months,' Petryk continued, because Vira Pavlivna had been caught off guard and had not had time to gather her thoughts. She saw Dmytryk's face turn pale, and his pen drop from his hand. He raised his eyes and looked pleadingly at Vira Pavlivna.

'Well, there's nothing unusual about that,' said Vira Pavlivna, as all the children turned towards her and listened. 'Dmytryk's father is a glazier. Do you remember how he worked on our windows at school? There are a lot of broken windows at the prison. He has been sent there to fix them, and the work will take some time.'

Dmytryk's eyes shone with gratitude.

How the bumblebee fed the bee

The flowers of a foxglove look like long purple bells. Deep inside each bell is a little cup of sweet nectar.

A bee hovered by one of these flowers and tried reach the nectar with her long tongue, but in vain.

She settled on the flower and cried. A bumblebee was flying by, buzzing loudly 'zzzzz.' The bee told the bumble bee all about her problem.

'I can help you,' the bumblebee assured her.

With his even longer tongue, the bumblebee reached deep inside the flower and sucked up the nectar. The bee flew over to the bumblebee and extended her tongue, and the bumblebee gave her half the nectar. The bee thanked the bumblebee and happily buzzed away.

Since then, the bee and the bumblebee have been good friends.

The chamomile flower and the bee

A chamomile was in full bloom. The flower straightened its petals and set a little cup of nectar on each one. A bee was flying by, and the chamomile called out to her, 'Dear bee! Come over and visit me. I have delicious nectar. Help yourself! See how many cups of nectar I have! Every time you visit me, I'll give you a cup.'

The bee came and tasted the nectar. It was so delicious that she drank a whole cup. She flew back to her hive and told all the other bees what wonderful nectar the chamomile had. The other bees listened to her, and then they all flew off to visit the chamomile.

A kitten under her jumper

It was very quiet in the classroom. The grade three students were independently solving some maths problems. The teacher, Mariia Mykolaivna, walked over to Zina. She wondered why the girl kept on looking under her jumper and shifting something from one side to another. The teacher was deeply touched to see a tiny kitten poke its head out, look at the teacher, and quickly retreat to the safety of the girl's jumper.

Mariia Mykolaivna gently touched Zina's shoulder and gave her a conspiratorial wink. The girl understood that the teacher knew her secret. She blushed and awkwardly looked into her teacher's eyes. Mariia Mykolaivna lifted a finger to her lips to let the girl know that her secret was safe with her. The girl smiled happily ...

The next day, Mariia Mykolaivna took Zina to one side and asked her quietly, 'Why did you bring your kitten to school yesterday?'

'Oh, I'm sorry Miss,' she said. 'There was no-one at home ... And our kitten is afraid when she's at home by herself.'



Why the sparrow fled

A swallow built a nest under the eaves. She brought dry grass and feathers, and even some soft down to rest her head on at night. But then a sparrow took over her nest.

The swallow begged the sparrow, 'Fly back to your own nest, dear sparrow, kind fellow, and let me back into my home.' But the sparrow just pulled his head in and ignored her. The swallow begged him, over and over again, but the sparrow just sat there silently and would not respond to any of her pleas.

A starling overheard the swallow's pleading cries and flew over. 'My dear swallow,' he said, 'There is no point in reasoning with that fellow! He is such a bandit that no amount of pleading will help. Just pull a feather from his head with your beak, and he'll be gone in the blink of an eye.'

'How can I pull a feather from his head?' lamented the swallow. 'That would really hurt!'

'Then you are a fool! You may as well go and build yourself a new nest!' said the starling.

The swallow settled on a branch and thought to herself, 'What should I do? I feel sorry for the sparrow, because it will really hurt if I pull out one of his feathers. On the other hand, he did not just steal an insect from me. He kicked me out of my home!' Anger stirred in her heart. The swallow spread her wings and flew like an arrow at her nest. She opened her beak ready to pull a feather from the sparrow's head. The sparrow saw her coming and instantly fled.

The swallow was surprised that he had fled so quickly.

But the starling, who saw everything from his birdhouse, just smiled to himself.

I want to express my gratitude

I was three or four years old at the time. My mother took me to the hospital for an injection.

We approached a big white building. Everything in that building was white: the walls and even the doors. We were called into a small examination room. A doctor was sitting at his desk. He looked at me and angrily said to my mother, 'Why didn't you take off the patient's outer garments? Do you expect me to do it?' His face was red with anger, and I felt scared.

Just then, a woman entered the room. She was also a doctor and wearing a white robe. She gently laid her hand on my head and said, 'What a beautiful

jacket you have! It looks warm, too. Let's take it off!'

The woman's kind words made me feel warm and happy inside. I took off the jacket all by myself, and when they gave me the injection, it did not hurt.

I am twenty-five years old now and have two children. Both of those two doctors—the man and the woman—still work in our village. Whenever I see that angry doctor in the street (all my life I have called him that), I want to cross over to the other side of the road. But whenever I see that gentle woman walking towards me, my heart fills with joy. I want to walk up to her, greet her, and say something to express all the gratitude I feel.

Blind love

A young mother sits by her open window with a happy smile on her face. Her five-year-old son Vitia has just gone outside and is standing on the green grass. How handsome he is, and how clever!

Two other boys—Boria and Mykolka—approach Vitia. They are five-year-old boys, just like Vitia, but Vitia's mother thinks they are not nearly as developed as her son. Vitia is cleverer and more imaginative, and he has a bright, interesting personality. His peers seem grey by comparison.

The mother watches the children and smiles. Now they are arguing, waving their arms like young roosters. Suddenly Vitia clenches his fist and punches Mykolka. Mykolka steps back and looks at Vitia in astonishment.

The mother closes her eyes. 'It is nothing to worry about,' she thinks. 'It is not a real fight. They are just playing. And if Vitia hit Mykolka, he must have had a good reason. He never does anything wrong.'

The mother opens her eyes and sees Mykolka clench his fist and punch Vitia, who responds by howling loudly. Vitia's mother opens her eyes wide in horror. She runs outside shouting, 'How dare you torment a defenceless child? You should be ashamed of yourselves. You can see that he won't stick up for himself!'

She runs up to the children and picks up Vitia in her arms. He clings to her, sobbing, and the mother also has tears in her eyes.

An old man is sitting on a bench nearby. He quietly says, 'A blind love is as bad as hatred. And blind lies are worse than hatred.' But the mother does not hear these wise words.

