

The Magic Wand



Tales by Yuri Yarmish

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Два майстри
Казки

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*Would you like to watch a baby elephant
learning to dance? Or to stay among birds for
a while to listen to what they talk about?
Or perhaps you'd prefer to join a bear cub on
a space trip? Oh, but the more we offer,
the more difficult it is for you to choose.
You certainly wouldn't like to miss any of these
adventures. And you won't. We shall just collect
them in one book, add vivid illustrations,
and they'll be all yours to enjoy.
Good reading!*

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The Little Hare's Story-Book

Once upon a time a grey little hare was hopping along through the forest, flipity-flop, flipity-flop. Presently he saw — a story-book lying on the path. Little Hare turned the pages. The pictures in the book were really magnificent! There was a red carrot, a white rabbit and a merry little hedgehog. And the letters in the book were so large and easy to read. But unfortunately Little Hare had still not learnt to read. So he picked up the book and went on.

“If only I could find someone to read this story to me,” thought Little Hare as he flipity-flopped through the forest. “I’m sure it could be very interesting.”

No sooner did this thought cross his mind than he met Mrs Fox.

“Hello, Little Hare,” she said. “What’s that book you’re carrying?”

“Oh, it’s a story-book, Mrs Fox. And the pictures are simply magnificent! Will you be so kind as to read it to me?”

“All right, Little Hare,” Mrs Fox agreed. She sat down on a tree stump, opened the book and began to read, her paw travelling along the lines of words.



“Once upon a time there lived an old man and an old woman. They had a hen which layed very tasty eggs, but the hen itself was even tastier...”

“No, Mrs Fox,” Little Hare interrupted her. “It doesn’t say that at all. The pictures



show a carrot, a white rabbit and a merry hedgehog.”

“You good-for-nothing little brat!” cried the angry fox. “How dare you not believe me! You’d better get out of here while the going is good!” With this she threw the book on the ground.

Little Hare picked up the book and scuttled

off. He flipity-flopped along until he came across the old wolf, who was the master of the forest.

“Good day, Mr Wolf,” said Little Hare holding out his book.

“Hello, squint-eye,” replied the wolf in his usual mocking voice. “What’s the big idea of giving me this book?”

“I was wondering if you could read it to me, Sir,” said Little Hare. “It must be a wonderful story.”

“Wonderful, you say? Ha-ha! Let’s see if it is.”

The wolf opened the book and held it up in front of his face.

“Once upon a time there lived an old woman,” he began in a gruff voice after a pause. “She had a young goat, which, as you know, is a delicious thing to eat...”

Little Hare listened for a while. Then he looked at the book more closely and what he saw made him clasp his paws together in amazement.

“Excuse me, but I’m afraid you can’t read, Mr Wolf. You’ve got the book upside down, look, the pictures are the wrong way up!”



“Uhoohooo!” howled the enraged wolf hurling the book away into the bushes. “Get out of here, or I’ll eat you up. You’ve got a cheek to say that I can’t read! You’re an impudent fool! In case you didn’t know, all stories are about delicious young goats. Uhoohooo!”

The poor Little Hare picked up his book and scurried away, his eyes shut tight out of fear.

Suddenly he realized that he had run straight into the hands of a boy, who was gathering mushrooms in the forest.

“Calm down, Little Hare. Don’t be afraid, little friend,” the boy said soothingly stroking the frightened animal. “Who has been upsetting you?... Oh, what’s this? A story-book? And with nice pictures too! Let’s read it then.”

And the boy read to Little Hare the story of the white rabbit and the merry hedgehog.

“Now, Little Hare,” said the boy, returning the story-book to its owner, “it’s time you went back to your mummy. You should grow up as fast as possible so that you can go to the forest school and learn to read.”

“Oh! I certainly will,” said Little Hare happily, and with a wave of his fluffy tail he disappeared into the bushes.

And now you know the whole story.

How Baby Nightingale Lost His Voice

Once upon a time an unusually gifted baby was born to Mr and Mrs Nightingale. Stories about the new baby quickly spread throughout the forest.

“This Baby Nightingale can not only sing in his own voice,” said birds to one another. “But he can also imitate a thrush and a chiffchaff and even copy the song of a chaffinch, if he wishes to do so.”

Neighbours came from near and far to listen to talented Baby Nightingale.

“He should have been born a thrush,” said the thrush nodding approvingly.

“Marvellous!” cried the reed warbler in admiration. “This Baby Nightingale can sing as well as our most famous singers.”

“That’s what *you* say!” objected the pied flycatcher. “But I’m sure he’s much more talented than that. A chiffchaff can only sing in his own voice and an oriole can only sing in

his. But Baby Nightingale can sing in any voice he likes!”

The whole forest was talking about this unusual young talent.

“Which of our forest singing teachers will you trust to teach your son?” the birds asked Mr and Mrs Nightingale.

“It’s hard to say, very hard to say,” answered the proud parents. “But it certainly won’t be old Rich Voice the Nightingale. He can only sing like a nightingale.”

Soon the young thrushes began taking singing lessons from the best thrush singer, young chiffchaffs from famous chiffchaff singers, and the baby nightingales learned from Rich Voice the Nightingale.

Our little hero, however, had his own plans. Every morning he visited the neighbouring forests to show off his singing skills. It’s true, he did take lessons from famous singers sometimes: a few lessons from the oriole, a couple of lessons from the chaffinch, one lesson from the chiffchaff, and so on, but he never went for a lesson with Rich Voice the Nightingale.

The fame of the skilful imitator spread

throughout the neighbouring forests. He was invited to sing more and more often, and all the birds admired him wherever he went.

Nobody noticed how fast the summer had gone, but suddenly it was time for many of the birds to leave for the warm countries. And in honour of this occasion Baby Nightingale made up his mind to give a farewell recital in his native forest.

A great number of birds gathered to listen to him sing. Everybody cheered as soon as Baby Nightingale perched on a branch in preparation to begin. He was eager to catch the attention of his audience from the very beginning. So he trilled away, imitating a blackcap. Then he suddenly cheeped like a yellow bunting, and finally copied the clear and melancholy whistle of a chiffchaff.

Baby Nightingale was sure that he had imitated other birds better than ever before. Proud of himself, he made a ceremonious bow as he finished singing.

But all around him was silence. Then came the shrill whistle of the chaffinch.

“It’s all very amusing when a baby imitates other singers. But surely a grown-up nightin-

gale like this one should be singing in his own voice!”

Baby Nightingale suddenly felt weak. He had been so busy flying from forest to forest and showing off that he never noticed how he had grown up!

Then Baby Nightingale heard mocking whistle and jeering squeals coming from all sides and the noise grew louder and louder.

Finally the woodpecker tapped authoritatively on a tree trunk and the jeering stopped. He turned to Baby Nightingale.

“We’d rather you show us your art as a nightingale.”

Baby Nightingale tried once, twice, three times — but it was hopeless. Never before had he felt so ashamed of himself. Utterly dejected, he took off and flew away as quickly as his wings could carry him.

He sought comfort among the nightingales of his age, but he felt no happier when he joined them. It turned out that they could all sing much better now than he could.

Then he asked Rich Voice the Nightingale to help him out of his unhappy situation. The

famous teacher listened to his visitor's singing for a while and shook his head.

"I'm sorry, but I can't help you," he said. "It's too late to teach you to sing. I'm afraid you've lost your own voice."

Crocodile Tears

Who could splash about in the water, sending merry ripples around?

Who could roar like a fog horn on a large ship?

The answer, of course, is Dicky and Ricky, the baby elephants, when they were swimming in the coolest and clearest lake in Africa at the hottest time of the year.

One day Ricky and Dicky were splashing around, spraying each other with water from their short trunks. They were having such a good time that they didn't notice that someone was watching them.

It was a crocodile named Toothy. He had come from far away following the sound of their ringing laughter.

He watched the merry baby elephants for a while, and then he crawled up to the shore of the lake.

"Oh, what a beautiful lake. And it's all yours! I'm the best crocodile in the whole world, but



even I don't have such a wonderful lake," he said. Tears, as large as beans, ran from his eyes, and they dropped onto the sand.

"Please, don't cry, Mr Crocodile," said Dicky and Ricky. "You're welcome to swim here as much as you like. There's enough room for everybody."

And they raced each other to a small forest, where they helped themselves to some tasty young leaves. When the baby elephants were full up, they returned to the lake.

But — oh dear! — they saw two rows of sharp teeth sticking out of the water. Toothy flew into a rage as soon as he caught sight of Dicky and Ricky coming back.

"Get out of here! It's my lake now, but not yours!"

"How can the best crocodile in the whole world do such a thing to us? Aren't you ashamed of yourself, Mr Crocodile?" asked Dicky and Ricky, in tears.

"I'm certainly not, because I've the sharpest teeth in the world!"

The baby elephants glanced into Toothy's mouth and saw the terribly big sharp teeth gleaming inside!

As they backed away from the foreign monster, they heard him splashing around in the lake, snorting and roaring with laughter.

"Forget about your lake! It's mine now!"

Poor Dicky and Ricky trudged away, into the gloomy depths of the jungle, where tangled vines clinged to the trees and the sunlight could never get through the intertwined palm leaves.

The jungle became their home.

But after a time it got very hot again. Neither the people nor the animals could remember such heat in Africa.

When Dicky and Ricky could stand the heat no longer, they left the gloomy jungle for their wonderful cool and clear lake.

Toothy saw them coming in the distance and he exploded into that dreadful laughter of his, shaking all over and showing his sharp teeth.

"Forget about your lake, ha-ha! It's mine!"

With these words he dived down to the lake bed, the coolest place in all Africa. There he lay, smiling to himself.

But when Toothy came to the surface, what he saw made him so surprised he swallowed some water and nearly choked. The two ani-

mals standing by the lake were not the baby elephants he used to know, but two strong grown-up elephants. They had only seemed small to Toothy from the distance.

“Get out of that lake!” said Dicky.

“And be quick about it!” added Ricky.

“Oh, no, no,” Toothy growled stubbornly. “This lake is mine, not yours.”

“Wha-a-at!” trumpeted Dicky. “What do you mean ‘mine’? What about us?”

And leaping into the water the angry elephants chased the terrified Toothy all around the lake.

As he crawled out of the water, he cried bitterly and his tears, as large as potatoes, dropped onto the yellow sand.

This time, however, neither Dicky nor Ricky trusted his crocodile tears.

At last the elephants swam again in their lake, the coolest and clearest in Africa.

“Hhrrmph! Rrrmph!”

Dicky sucked in water into his trunk and sprayed his friend all over. Ricky waited for Dicky to turn away and then did the same to him. And so they went on happily spouting water at each other. And the sound of their

playful splashing could be heard far away from the lake.

Soon red monkeys came leaping up.

“We want to cool off in the lake too!” they shrieked.

Then striped zebras came galloping up.

“We’re ever so hot too!” they groaned.

Even the sun sighed from high above.

“I’m suffering from this heat myself.”

Finally the animals plunged into the lake and began splashing about, chasing and spraying one another.

Dicky and Ricky took trunkfuls of the clear water and shot it up towards the sun. The radiant drops of water spread out above Africa, and children, birds and animals danced as it sprinkled down on them.

The Wolf Who Had to Wear Glasses

Once a little hare named Grey Paw went picking berries in a neighbouring forest and lost his way. What was he to do? Who could show him the way home?

Suddenly Grey Paw caught sight of a wolf running through the forest. The wolf was old, one of his ears had been torn in a fight and his eyes were obviously weak, because he had a pair of old glasses perched on his nose.

“Good day, Mr Wolf,” said the little hare. “There must be a path around here which leads out of this forest. Did you happen to see it?”

“Of course I did,” answered the wolf. “I saw it very well. Can’t you see I’ve got very good glasses? But what’s your name?”

“My mother calls me Grey Paw.”

“Oh, Grey Paw,” repeated the wolf looking closely at the little hare. “I’ve never heard that name before. Where do you come from?”

“I come from the grove near the village of Noname.”

“Noname?” The wolf sat down, adjusted his glasses with his paw and repeated in a mocking voice, “So you’re from Noname?”

“From Noname Grove, Mr Wolf. Would you please show me the way there?”

The wolf sprang up angrily. “Why are you hanging around here anyway?” he thundered. “Don’t you know this is Ford Forest? Didn’t you have geography lessons at school?”

“I didn’t, Sir! I haven’t been to the Forest School yet.”

Mr Wolf poked at Grey Paw accusingly.

“You’ve crossed into my Ford Forest without permission! That’s what I call trespassing! You’ll have to pay for breaking the law by working for me until you grow up. Then I’ll think about what to do with you. Follow me!” he howled and padded away along the path.

Presently they came to the wolf’s cottage, which stood under an old oak. The wolf went in and returned with a drum.

“Play, Grey Paw!” he ordered. “I’m terribly fond of good music.”

The frightened hare beat a tattoo with his short front paws so fast that the wolf screwed up his eyes with pleasure.

“All right, let’s have breakfast,” he said when he had listened enough. “You may go and pull out some carrots for yourself in my garden, but what *I* eat is none of your business.”

The poor hare was so frightened he quite lost his appetite. He pulled one carrot out of the ground and scuttled back to the cottage.

The wolf gave him an angry look.

“Why did you choose such a .big carrot? I suppose you think you’re going to have an easy life here?”

“It’s really only a small carrot,” thought the little hare. “But I’ll choose even a smaller one for lunch so that Mr Wolf won’t scold me.”

After breakfast the hare cleared dry brush-wood from the glade in which the wolf’s cottage stood. He was very tired and hungry by lunch, but he picked out a carrot even smaller than the one he had had for breakfast.

The wolf’s eyes flashed with anger again.

“Isn’t that too much for such a small creature! You hares seem to be too fond of other people’s food.”

By evening the little hare was even more tired from work. But he came to the dinner table with a very tiny carrot indeed.

The wolf shook with rage when he saw the carrot.

“Help! Thief!” he yelled. “Who has ever heard of a hare with a bigger appetite than a wolf!”

When night came the wolf gave Grey Paw the drum again.

“You’ll watch my cottage at night. If anything suspicious happens, beat the drum to wake me up. But don’t try to escape! You’ll only get lost in the dark.”

Grey Paw shivered in the cold all night. In the morning the wolf came out of the cottage, yawned, perched his glasses on his nose and only then turned to Grey Paw.

“Still keeping watch, eh?”

“I am, Sir.”

“All right. Good for you. Now take this fishing-rod and catch me some fresh fish for breakfast. But don’t be too slow about it!”

Grey Paw hurried to the river and cast his fishing line. He sat for a while staring at the transparent water.

Then a pike nibbled at the bait. The hare pulled, and the hooked fish gleamed in the sunlight.

When it was time for breakfast, the pike was on the wolf's table. He gobbled it up and licked his lips.

"Why did you catch such a small fish?" he howled at the hare. "You had better bring a bigger one for my lunch!"

Grey Paw scuttled back to the river. But by lunch-time he had only hooked a golden carp. He cried bitterly as he carried the small fish to the wolf's cottage.

"Hey, hare!" a squirrel called from a tree. "Why are you so unhappy?"

"Mr Wolf told me to catch a big fish for his lunch, but I only managed to get this small one."

"Don't worry," chattered the squirrel and jumped down from the tree. "Mr Wolf can't see well, he has to wear glasses. The hares living in this forest presented him with a new pair on his birthday. Only they put in the wrong lenses."

Then the squirrel laughed and whispered something in Grey Paw's ear. The little hare jumped up happily and hopped back to the cottage. When he went in with the fish he had caught, the wolf scolded him even more than before.

"Just look at this ungrateful hare! He's been fishing for half a day, but he's only managed to catch one little carp!"

The wolf swallowed the golden carp and then howled furiously at Grey Paw, "If you don't bring me a big fish for dinner, I'll eat you up!"

With these words he went to have an afternoon nap.

As soon as Grey Paw heard the wolf snoring, he quickly looked around the cottage until he found the new pair of glasses that the hares of the forest had given to the wolf. Grey Paw leaned over the sleeping wolf, took the old glasses off his nose and put the new ones in their place.

Then Grey Paw hopperty-hopped to the river, dropped the old spectacles into the water and sat down to fish. By evening he had only caught a small gudgeon.

At supper time the hare scuttled into the cottage and put his catch on the table.

The wolf had just woken up. He adjusted his glasses, as was his habit, looked at the small fish and clapped his paws excitedly.

"Well done, Grey Paw! That's a good catfish you've caught. It's so big and fat!"



The wolf gobbled up the tiny gudgeon in a moment. He was thoughtful for a while, rather surprised that he had finished his meal so quickly. But then he shrugged his shoulders.

“It was a delicious catfish,” he said. “It just melted in my mouth. I didn’t notice how fast I was eating it!”

Then the little hare went and stood right in front of the old wolf. When the wolf saw Grey Paw through his new glasses, he started to tremble with fear.

“Oh, h-h-how ha-ha-hap-py I am to see a mighty lion in my hu-hu-mble cottage! You’re most welcome, Sir!” he stuttered.

At this moment Grey Paw showed his teeth.

“Oh Sir, why do you want to eat me up?” howled the wolf pitifully, dropping to the floor and closing his eyes.

Meanwhile the squirrel was sitting in the old oak by the wolf’s cottage laughing her head off.

“Grey Paw has put the glasses with magnifying lenses on the wolf’s nose,” she said to herself with satisfaction. “Now Mr Wolf will even be afraid of baby frogs!”

Suddenly the enraged wolf rushed out of his cottage, clutching the magnifying glasses.

“Where are you, you wretched hare!” he yelled.

But the squirrel had shown Grey Paw the way home.

So the little hare was racing along the path leading to his Noname Grove, laughing heartily about the joke he had played on the greedy wolf.

The Bear-Cub Becomes a Boxer

Have you ever heard of a brown bear-cub called Grumbler? The one that challenged any animal he met in the zoo to a boxing match? You haven't? Well then, listen carefully and I'll tell you the story.

One day Grumbler came to the animals playground and found his friend, Baby Hare, learning to roll a drum.

"How about boxing for a while?" suggested Grumbler.

Baby Hare agreed. They put on their boxing gloves and started to fight.

Baby Hare attacked at once: bif-bif-bif, his paws darted back and forth like drumsticks.

"He's got a brilliant jab!"

"Baby Hare is an excellent boxer!" cried the watching monkeys in admiration.

Grumbler didn't know how to beat a drum. So he fought his own way. He hit his opponent only once, and immediately Baby Hare sank to the ground.

"No more boxing for me," said Baby Hare. "I'm going to stick to playing the drums from now on."

Then Grumbler fought Aphrodite the Monkey. At first it was hard to say who of the two was more likely to win. But the first time Grumbler swung his powerful punch, Aphrodite was up in a maple tree in no time and she wouldn't come down.

Later Grumbler met his friend, another bear-cub named Growler.

"I'm not going to fight *you*," Grumbler said. "Even the monkeys here know that I can beat you."

"Suit yourself," Growler answered in an offended tone. "I'd rather go and practise a bit on my own anyway." With this he padded away towards a big pear-tree growing in the middle of the playground. He was very good at knocking down pears, and he used them as punch bags for practising his boxing.

Meanwhile, Grumbler hurried off to fight Sharp Tooth the Wolf.

However, Sharp Tooth's cage was empty, because he had gone for a filming session as an actor.

Grumbler, encouraged by his two victories, ran on to the giraffe.

“Let’s have a boxing match!”

“But how in the world are we going to do it!” exclaimed the giraffe very surprised and amused by the suggestion.

“Never mind, I’ll manage somehow,” said Grumbler stubbornly.

He swung his paw and punched the giraffe on the knee.

“Don’t you know that hitting below the belt is against the rules?” the giraffe said mockingly as he went away to munch some tender young leaves. As he passed the maple tree, he saw the frightened Aphrodite the Monkey still sitting at the top of the tree. The giraffe offered his long neck, and in a moment the monkey was on the ground.

The next day a new animal came to live in the zoo. It was Sally the Kangaroo from far-away Australia. All the animals welcomed her: they were glad to have a new neighbour.

Grumbler was very pleased to have a new opponent and he also went straight up to her and held out his paw.

“I’m Grumbler,” he said.

“Sally,” answered the kangaroo and shook his paw.

“I’m the star boxer around here,” Grumbler continued. “Let’s have an exhibition fight.”

“All right,” she said.

“Mind you, I’m bound to win,” Grumbler warned. “Your front paws are too short.”

“What a big-head he is,” Sally thought. “But he didn’t notice my long hind legs. I’ll show him!”

Soon all the residents of the zoo had gathered around the edge of the playground. Aphrodite the Monkey helped the boxers to put on their gloves.

“Time to start! Let’s begin!” shouted the impatient spectators. They were very eager to watch this unusual boxing match.

At last the opponents met in the middle of the ring. Grumbler swung his paw but — whoosh! — he only hit the air because Sally had jumped back on her springy hind legs. Grumbler swung his paw again — but with the same result. Sally kept her opponent just out of reach.

At the same time she jabbed the bear-cub with her short front paws as often as she could,

jumping back quickly after each jab. Grumbler was simply helpless.

Sally won the first round easily.

Grumbler sat on the grass to get his breath back. He scratched the back of his head thoughtfully. Then an idea struck him. Sally used her jumps very well. Perhaps he could do the same!

The second round began. As soon as Sally attacked, Grumbler leaped towards her.

“Now my punch will go home!” he yelled, carried away by the fight. But — what do you think happened! Instead of landing on the ground, the bear-cub fell straight into the pouch on Sally’s tummy.

“That’s against the rules!” roared Grumbler.

But when he heard the hearty laughter of Baby Hare, Aphrodite the Monkey and Mrs Fox, and saw the friendly smile of the European bison, he stopped complaining at once. He realized that it was all his own fault.

“Don’t you know that all kangaroos have a pouch on their tummies?” Sally said pulling him out. “You shouldn’t jump into it if you haven’t been invited. You’d better go to your friend Growler. I’m sure he is missing you.”

The bemused Grumbler trudged off to find Growler.

“Why did I lose? And why did she win?” Grumbler kept asking himself as he went along. “Oh! Of course, I know why,” he said. “I should have competed with a boxer of my own size!”

“Growler, dear,” said Grumbler as he went up to his friend. “I do hope you’ll forgive me for not having you as a sparring partner.”

Growler was the kind of bear who never held a grudge against others, so he said, “Yes. It’s all right. But don’t be such a big-head in the future, Grumbler.”

So the two friends began their sparring match. When they were tired, they found some paper and paint and wrote a notice in large letters:

**ATTENTION EVERYBODY!
TOMORROW THE BEAR-CUB’S
BOXING CHAMPIONSHIP
WILL BE HELD AT OUR ZOO.**

The Sea Captain's Pipe

A long time ago a fairy-tale ship with white fairy-tale sails travelled on a blue fairy-tale sea. The ship's captain was the famous Ivan the Wind-Maker. There could be no doubt that he came from a fairy-tale, because he wore a peaked cap with a shining badge on the front which, at night, was often mistaken for the moon. When sailors saw the badge, they would turn and sail towards it until they found themselves in the friendly embraces of the fairy-tale crew.

The captain had a clay pipe. It looked just like any other pipe. You would not have given it a second glance, but the fact is that it was a fairy-tale pipe. Whenever the wind got lazy and began to snore on the sleepy waves, Ivan the Wind-Maker would pull his peaked cap over his forehead resolutely and take his magic pipe out of the pocket of his bell-bottom trousers. If anyone else tried to smoke his pipe, he found that as soon as he had it between his teeth,

tobacco appeared in the bowl and started to burn. But apart from that it seemed much like any other clay pipe.

However, the captain could work miracles with his pipe. Whenever Ivan the Wind-Maker put it into his mouth, a magic wind-making cloud rose from its bowl. The cloud grew in size, and the wind it created blew into the white sails and the ship sailed ahead merrily.

But when Ivan the Wind-Maker took the pipe out of his mouth, the magic cloud shrank and disappeared back into the bowl. Then the captain would put the pipe into his pocket.

Once a strange thing happened to the captain's pipe.

Ivan the Wind-Maker was standing on the captain's bridge on a moonlit night. The sea was calm. The badge on the captain's cap was shining brightly, and the crew expected to see a visiting ship at any moment. The wind had just woken up and was about to billow the sails, and Ivan the Wind-Maker had taken the pipe out of his mouth to put it into his pocket.

Suddenly — Bang! Wham! Crash!

There was a terrible blow on the ship's bottom, then a shapeless black monster leaped out of

the water right in front of the bow and then disappeared among the waves.

The ship rocked dangerously and nearly capsized.

“All hands on deck!” yelled the captain at the top of his voice.

The helmsman was already turning the wheel madly to avoid the monster, while the rest of the crew rushed to carry out the captain’s terse orders.

“What was it?” The puzzled sailors showered the captain with questions.

“I don’t know myself,” answered Ivan the Wind-Maker and was about to pull his cap further down over his forehead to think it over.

“Hey, where’s my cap?” he cried. But his cap was neither on his head nor anywhere on the bridge. “How on earth are we going to attract night visitors now?”

“Hey!” exclaimed Ivan the Wind-Maker again. This time his voice sounded even more worried. “Where’s my pipe? What shall we do if that lazy wind falls asleep again?”

The sailors searched every nook and cranny on the deck, but found neither the captain’s cap nor his pipe. Everybody felt miserable.

But the wind whistled encouragingly up in the sails. “Don’t give up hope!” it said. “I’ll keep working hard until we find the captain’s lost things. No more sleeping from now on, I promise.”

The captain himself stood at the wheel.

“Never say die,” he said. “There’s a secret about this pipe. If a stranger uses it, there’s so much smoke you can choke on it. It rises sky-high but makes no wind. There’s nothing we can do but sail on until we see the smoke.”

Everybody agreed with the captain.

The dawn was just breaking when the sailors saw a ship in the distance.

“We must ask them about the pipe!” the whole crew shouted.

They came closer to the strange ship.

“Did you happen to see an extremely high column of smoke?” Ivan the Wind-Maker asked in his strong voice.

“Yes, we certainly did!” the strangers answered willingly.

“But where, where?” the captain demanded impatiently.

“Just keep going east until you see the shore. There will be a mountain there. You must call

to it using the word *Popocatepetl*. And then everything will work out just as you wish. Only mind that you pronounce the word correctly, because it's a magic word!"

The fairy-tale ship travelled east for one day, then another. Finally the sailors saw an enormous mountain on the shore.

"Popocatepetl, ahoy!" called out the captain.

The mountain rumbled and thundered terribly. Flames shot up from its top, stones showered down and a column of smoke belched out and rose high into the sky.

"But what about my pipe?" said the captain in great astonishment. "This smoking mountain obviously isn't my pipe. Perhaps I mispronounced that magic word, or maybe my *ahoy* spoiled the whole thing. Oh well. What is done can't be undone. At least we now know that there are smoking mountains in the world. We'll call them volcanoes in honour of my friend, a famous blacksmith. But this mountain we'll name after that difficult magic word, *Popocatepetl*."

So Ivan the Wind-Maker's ship turned south, because the shore line prevented it from going further east.

A day passed, then a second, a third and a whole week.

There was no smoke in sight, only the shore on the left and the sea on the right.

It was getting cold, though the ship was travelling south all the time.

Another week passed.

"Smoke! Awfully high column of smoke!" shouted a sailor from the lookout barrel fastened near the top of a mast.

As they came closer to the shore, they saw a group of red-skinned people jumping up and down doing a very lively dance around a fire. Every one of them was smoking a pipe.

The captain went ashore with some of his sailors to speak with the dancers. However, their pipes were nothing like the captain's. Not a single one reminded the sailors of the pipe they were looking for.

"Could you please tell us why you keep this fire going and smoke pipes all the time?" the sailors asked.

"This is a very cold place," the red-skinned people complained. "Our country is called The Land of Fire because we make the fires to keep ourselves warm."



“Did you happen to see a very high column of smoke?” asked the sailors.

The red-skinned people fell silent. The silence lasted for a long time. Meanwhile, the natives were thinking. Finally a grey-haired man rose to his feet and began to speak.

“I did see something of that kind. But you’ll have to sail that way, towards the pole.”

The sailors stared at him in surprise.

“What’s a pole?” they asked. (Our story took place in the fairy-tale times, when sailors had no idea about the poles on the earth.)

“A pole,” the old man explained in a mysterious voice, “is a magic place where a day lasts half a year and then a night lasts half a year, and where your teeth chatter by themselves because of the severe cold.”

“Oh, this is something I can easily understand,” said the famous captain, “because our teeth are already beginning to chatter.”

“We must push ahead,” insisted the sailors.

A day passed, a second and a third. The water in the sea grew colder and colder. Then icebergs appeared, glittering in the sun. The sailors had to dance about to keep themselves warm. The captain stood on the bridge with his eye glued

to his telescope. “Where on earth is that monster that managed to steal my pipe and cap in the middle of the night?” he thought.

And then it happened.

What Ivan the Wind-Maker saw nearly made him jump into his telescope.

“The column of smoke!” he thundered. “Wind, dear Wind, where are you? Blow, please blow for all you’re worth! You’re certainly the world’s worst sleepyhead, but I’ll forgive you if only you will billow my sails harder!”

And the ship raced ahead, towards the column of smoke rising in the middle of the sea. But — oh dear! — the column was moving!

The captain grabbed his telescope again and saw — whales! They were trying to escape from him, and, believe it or not, every one had a pipe sticking from his mouth. The whales were smoking like mad, sending sparks flying in all directions.

The biggest of them had the captain’s peaked cap on and was smoking the captain’s magic pipe!

The whales looked rather thin and their breathing was hard, but they were doing their best to swim away.

“Stop!” Ivan the Wind-Maker bawled, and the vibration of his voice sent waves splashing across the sea. “Put out your pipes and come to the ship right away!”

The whales heard him and — began to turn back! But still they went on smoking as before.

“Perhaps I’ll never hold my magic pipe in my hands again?” thought the captain, very unhappily.

“You certainly will!” the biggest whale said with an air of importance as he came close to the ship. “But let me tell you the whole story from the very beginning.”

“Why, go ahead,” answered Ivan the Wind-Maker. “We’re kind people. We don’t feel spite against those who have wronged us.”

“Well then, this is how it happened,” began the longest and the thinnest of the whales. “One night I became curious about how all those small clams and snails feel on the bottom of the sea. So I dived but found them all fast asleep. It was foolish to disturb them, and I decided that I’d rather go and see them in the morning. As I came up to the surface, I hit something with a terrible thud and to my horror I saw

that it was your famous ship. Then I saw your famous cap flying through the air, and it landed right on my head. Your famous pipe followed and fell straight into my mouth! Frankly speaking, I was rather glad it had happened. I was so eager to travel to distant seas and I knew your wind-making cloud would carry me over the waves, and the only thing I would have to do would be to steer with my tail. So I puffed on your pipe and — nearly fainted. It wasn’t the wind-making cloud that blew from it, but a huge cloud of poisonous smoke! But, funnily enough, I soon got used to it and even came to like it. So did the rest of the whales. They asked crabs to make pipes for them out of clay and to fill them with sea grass. Then they lit their pipes from mine. They went swimming about and belching out this terrible smoke. . . I could see very well that they were in low spirits. They’ve been losing weight and coughing badly. They should give up smoking, I thought. But they couldn’t, because they were already stuck in the habit, you know. So I thought of giving them an example to follow. But then you came with your order for everybody to put out his pipe. When I heard it I felt really happy.

Believe me, I've had enough of using things that don't belong to me."

The captain put on his peaked cap, took his pipe and became thoughtful. How could he help the whales who had become hooked on the bad habit of pipe smoking?

The captain was thinking, and the sailors were thinking, and the whales were thinking while sucking on their pipes. An hour passed, then another and still another.

Finally the captain struck his forehead.

"I have it! Now, my good smoking whales. You say you're used to puffing smoke sky-high. Why not shoot up water instead?"

The whales exchanged glances.

"Really, why not shoot up water instead?" they repeated.

And they hurled their clay pipes into the waves all at once! Then they dived, took in water and blew it out as they came up. Their spouts were so beautiful that all the other whales in all the other seas admired them immensely, and they never got out of the good habit of spouting water.

Captain Ivan the Wind-Maker brought his magic pipe to his mouth. The wind-making

cloud puffed up at once, filling the white sails, and the ship glided merrily over the blue sea.

"Hey!" the captain called to the man at the helm. "Turn her home. It's true that we travel in a fairy-tale, but there must be an end to everything."

That's how it happened in old times.

Can there be such a magic pipe now, you may ask?

Of course there can! Any captain who has crossed all the seas and visited every country, and who is not afraid of any storm, always has one between his teeth and he puffs away on it making magic wind clouds.

The Curious Sunray

A curious sunray, who had just travelled a long way from the sun, looked through a small window. It was dark and nothing stirred in the room.

Suddenly — mi-aow! There was a jumping sound as two green lights flashed in the darkness. Something fell — crash! — down and broke to pieces.

“Who’s in there?” asked Sunray in a thin voice, peering into the darkness.

“Mi-aow! It’s me, the cat.”

The two green lights glowed again in the darkness and Sunray realized that they were the cat’s eyes.

“And who are you?”

“I’m Sunray. What are you doing here, Mr Cat?”

“I’m guarding the pantry from a cunning little mouse, because there’s a string of tasty sausage in here.”

“Oh, how thoughtful of you!” said Sunray

respectfully. “But why is your muzzle white, while the rest of you is completely black?”

The cat licked his lips and squinted at Sunray with a very cunning expression on his face.



“I was tasting the sour cream that my mistress bought today. I just wanted to see if it was any good. But you surely want to know too much!” The cat suddenly became suspicious, and he stuck his tail straight up in the air. “Strangers are not allowed in here!”

“I’m sorry,” Sunray mumbled in an embarrassed voice and he shot out through the window.

He rushed across the yard and came to land in the branches of a tree. It was so good to play with green leaves and jump from branch to



branch. All the leaves were delighted to meet him. The whole tree felt happy about Sunray’s visit.

“How warm this Sunray is!” the tree said to itself. “I felt a spot of rain just a while ago, and now the sun has come out. There’s nothing like a bit of rain followed by a bit of sunshine. It helps me grow and makes me greener and that makes me happy.”

“I wonder what rain is,” mused Sunray. “It must have existed before I was born. Yes. That’s probably why I’ve no idea what it is.” And Sunray flitted from the tree onto a mound of earth and twigs.

The mound stirred the moment Sunray landed, and several tiny black ants with long feelers appeared on its surface.

They explored the wet trees, examined Sunray, talked for a while among themselves and then called out, “Come on! The rain has stopped. Sunray has come to tell us it’s time for work!”

“What a wonder!” Sunray thought. “I didn’t tell anyone anything, I was perfectly silent. What’s more, why do green leaves like rain, while these ants don’t?”

“Who are you?” asked Sunray.

“We’re ants,” answered one of the insects proudly.

“To work, get down to work everybody!” cried the ants, hurrying in different directions. In a short while everybody was busy. One was hauling a terribly long flower stem towards the anthill, another was dragging a beetle, and another was pushing a white ball out of the

anthep so that the baby ant inside could warm up in the sun.

All this hustle and bustle seemed to be so much fun that Sunray even thought of looking for a job himself.

He glanced under a wild rose bush and saw a large insect with lacelike transparent wings. “Excuse me, would you mind telling me your name please?” asked Sunray politely.

The insect opened her eyes, yawned a long stretching yawn and spread her beautiful wings.

“My name is Miss Dragonfly,” she said in reply.

“You can leave your shelter now, my dear Miss Dragonfly,” said Sunray. “The rain has stopped.”

Miss Dragonfly peeped from under the bush.

“Oh, how wonderful the world is! That’s because everything is glad to see me. I’m so beautiful.”

With these words she fluttered up into the air, above the tree and above the nearby house.

Indeed, Miss Dragonfly was so beautiful that Sunray followed her at once.

They could hear the children cheering from below.

“Isn’t that dragonfly beautiful!”

“But the sunray is even more beautiful!”

On hearing this Miss Dragonfly frowned. She didn’t like anyone except herself to be praised. But when she caught sight of some



beautiful flowers, she quite forgot her unhappiness.

“They’re almost as beautiful as me,” she thought. “They must be my relatives. I’d better go and see them.”

So Miss Dragonfly flew down and landed on the most beautiful flower.

Sunray would like to have continued playing with her, but he really didn’t like the way she

boasted about her beauty and he remembered that he was going to look for a job.

Sunray flew on until he saw a great many trees beneath him. It was an orchard. A small house with a tile roof stood among the fruit trees, on which there were a lot of ripe red apples, dark blue plums and yellow pears.

Sunray darted through the leaves of a large apple tree growing by the house. He looked through a window and saw a grey-haired man writing at a desk.

“Sunray!” said the grey-haired man happily. “What a pleasant surprise! I hadn’t noticed that the rain had stopped.”

“Can you please tell me what rain is?” asked Sunray.

“Oh, it’s a lot of clear cold drops of water which a cloud sends down to the earth as a present. The drops make the plants grow,” explained the grey-haired man. “And now tell me, Sunray, where have you been and what have you seen?”

“First I met a cat who was guarding a string of sausages,” Sunray began, “then I came across some ants. They said I had told them to work, though in fact I hadn’t said anything.

After that I played with a beautiful dragonfly. But to be honest I’m rather ashamed of myself. It seems that everyone has something useful to do except myself.”

“Oh, Sunray, you’re so conscientious, and so warm! Jump on my cheek, will you. Yes, you’re so gentle! That’s why everybody’s so glad when you arrive. And that’s your work — to make everybody happy.”

The grey-haired man closed his eyes for a moment. When he opened them, he saw that Sunray was playing again, dancing on the white sheets of paper lying on the desk. Then he saw how Sunray glided across the ceiling and along the walls, hopping from book to book, and finally landing on a cut-glass vase full of flowers.

“You can fly on now, my dear Sunray,” said the grey-haired man, “because I have written a story about you and you will live forever in this story and maybe it will make someone else feel as warm and happy as I feel now.”

Two Craftsmen

Anything can happen in this world. Just listen.

Once there was a city with no name. You want to know how people sent letters there? Well, they just wrote on the envelope: “To the nameless city.” The fame of the skilled craftsmen who worked there spread far beyond the city’s borders. People from all over the world came to see and admire the things that those craftsmen made.

That should give you some idea of how talented the craftsmen were.

There was, however, one bad point about them — each of the city’s masters worked by himself.

Only two of them — Cleverhead and Masterhand — worked together, though they had separate shops. Cleverhead, who was a very wise and good-humoured fellow, invented the most tricky mechanisms, so tricky that nobody could guess their secrets. Masterhand was also

famous. Nobody was better at turning Cleverhead’s ideas into fine objects.

Every autumn the citizens exhibited their works: wonderful clocks, secret locks, musical instruments and many other attractive things. The oldest masters judged the objects to see whose work was the best.

Once in early summer the city crier climbed onto a platform to make an announcement.

“Here is the decision of the esteemed Council of the Old Masters. The time has come to give our city a name. It will be named after the master who can make a wonder doll that can speak. All masters should prepare to exhibit their works in the square this coming autumn.”

Cleverhead and Masterhand heard the crier too.

Cleverhead became thoughtful. He was pondering how to make such a special doll. He was so deep in thought that he didn’t notice a gloating smile cross Masterhand’s face.

“My time has come at last!” Masterhand thought with wicked delight.

He had envied Cleverhead for a long time. He was eager to have all the fame to himself, but so far he had had to share it with Cleverhead.

This competition was a great chance to become famous on his own. The Council of the Old Masters could hardly give two names to the city.

Masterhand had no doubt that he would be the winner. His name, the name of the creator of a speaking doll, would live in the name of the city forever!

The next day he sent his apprentice to tell Cleverhead that they wouldn't work together anymore. The news worried Cleverhead greatly. He rushed to Masterhand to get an explanation for this strange decision. But Masterhand didn't even let the visitor into his home.

So the craftsmen began their work separately.

Masterhand worked under lock and key so that nobody could spy on him. He racked his brains for one day, two, three, five, ten, thirty, and even three times thirty. However, no good ideas came to him.

Helped by his apprentices, he finally managed to make a doll which could open her eyes and squeak, "Mama". But that was the only word she could utter.

Cleverhead was having a hard time too. Earlier, when he worked together with Master-

hand, their work moved along very quickly. But now...

Cleverhead had invented a very tricky mechanism for his doll, but it involved such fine work, that only Masterhand could have done it successfully.

Cleverhead tried his best to cut and shape the various parts so that they fitted together, but he could see the results were very poor.

The time for the exhibition was drawing near.

One day, when Cleverhead was feeling particularly upset, he heard young ringing voices coming from outside. The door flung open, and Cleverhead rushed to meet the unexpected visitors. They were his sons, whom he hadn't seen for three whole years. They had been learning their craft in another city.

The sons had a look at their father's work. "I'm sure we can help you, Father," the eldest of them said. "We've learned a lot. You can rely on us to do the most difficult work now."

Soon the work was in full swing. Cleverhead saw at once that his sons hadn't wasted their time while they were away from their home. Their hands worked quickly and carefully as

they constructed the doll according to their father's instructions.

Finally the doll was ready!

The masters were extremely tired and they decided to relax a bit before the exhibition in the morning. So they locked the door and went to see some travelling acrobats.

They came back late at night. Everything in their workshop was in its place, except the most important thing. . .

The wonder doll had disappeared!

The sons searched the rooms and the attic. Cleverhead examined the windows. But the thief hadn't left a single trace.

The family were in despair. They had spent so much time on their work, but now it seemed to have been a waste of effort. How could they remake within one night what had taken the whole summer to produce?

In the morning the down-hearted Cleverhead trudged to the square with his sons. A large crowd had gathered there, eager to know the name of the winner.

Every craftsman who wished to take part in the competition had written to the Council of the Old Masters. The city crier called the

craftsmen one by one onto the platform, from which they showed their dolls to the crowd in the presence of the judges, who examined each doll in minute detail.

The dolls looked very nice in their short colourful dresses, shoes and stockings. But none of them could say more than a couple of words. Some only uttered "Mama", others could say "Daddy" as well. One doll also said "Milk", but this could hardly be described as talking! The dolls acted rather like parrots, copying the words they had been taught.

"Esteemed citizens, look and listen!" the crier announced loudly, so that the whole square could hear him even better than before. "Now we shall see the doll made by master Cleverhead!"

A murmur of excitement ran through the crowd. People elbowed their way closer to the platform. They loved the famous craftsman and his wonderful creations.

However, Cleverhead climbed onto the platform very slowly, his head hanging low. There was nothing in his hands.

"My dear friends," he said sadly. "I invented an unusual doll. But I don't have it..."

He went off the platform without adding a word. Hushed and puzzled, the crowd parted to let him through.

“Look and listen everybody!” the strong voice of the crier resounded over the square. “Mr Masterhand is showing his doll!”

Masterhand ran lightly up the stairs leading to the platform. He was holding a most beautiful doll. She opened her blue eyes and began to speak.

“Good morning everybody! At last I can tell you the story of my birth.”

The crowd went wild with excitement. Hats flew up into the air.

“Long live the great master and his wonder doll!”

“From now on the name of our city will be Masterhand City!”

Yells and cheers drowned the doll’s quiet voice, but she remained on the platform, and, for some unknown reason, she was frowning. After a little while the people calmed down.

“At last I can tell you the story of my birth,” she repeated. Then she raised her voice so that everybody could hear what she would say next.

“I was invented by master Cleverhead and made by his sons!”

There was a dead silence. The people were struck dumb by what they heard. The crafty Masterhand tried to steal away from the platform, but he was stopped.

Meanwhile, the doll continued her story.

“Last night the masters who had made me went to the fair. I remained alone. Suddenly a board in the floor went up and a shaggy head appeared. It was Mr Masterhand! He grabbed me and dragged me through an underground passage to his house. He swore he would break me up if I told anybody that he had stolen me. Then he said that he had spent half a year digging a tunnel when he saw that he was not able to invent anything himself.”

The doll fell silent.

The people told Masterhand to leave their city forever. Then they congratulated Cleverhead on making his wonder doll.

“You’re the finest craftsman in the city,” they said. “It will bear your name from now on.”

“Quiet! Quiet!” other voices called out loudly. “Master Cleverhead wants to say something!”



My Friend Little Screw

“I’m glad to hear these kind words from you,” Cleverhead said. “But I must tell you that I couldn’t have made this wonderful doll on my own. My sons helped me. We shouldn’t be lone wolves anymore. We must all work together, like friends. And I don’t want you to give the city my name!”

In the evening there was a carnival in the city. Nobody could remember a happier festival. Clusters of green, red, and blue lights shot up into the dark sky. People danced and sang. There were cheers in honour of those who had made the wonderful speaking doll as well as in honour of the new name given to the city. Yes, the city did have a new name! It was carved in large letters over the gate in the city wall:

FRIENDLY CRAFTSMEN CITY

“I wish I could write a fairy-tale about a screw, a very ordinary small screw,” I thought. So I put a clean sheet of paper in front of me and sharpened a new pencil. I thought and I thought, but the fairy-tale wouldn’t come. The paper remained as clean as clean can be. So I went out for a walk.

It was spring.

Rivulets of muddy water trickled along the sides of the road and cheerful sounds of spring filled the air.

Suddenly I saw *him*. He was lying on the bottom of a rivulet, as if waiting for me to pick him up. The unexpected meeting made me start. I hesitated, but then immediately continued my walk.

“Where are you going? Wait a moment!” I heard a frightened whisper behind. “It’s me, Little Screw!”

I took several more steps, then turned round and ran back to the rivulet.

I picked up the screw. He was shining all over. Brand new.

“How d’you do,” he said in a clear voice. “Thank you for saving me. It was too wet in the rivulet. I was afraid I might rust lying there like that, doing nothing.”

“How did you get there?” I asked, wiping his smooth steep sides carefully.

“The thing is,” Little Screw began in a rather guilty voice, “I have a tendency to be awfully curious. There were many of us riding in a box to the factory. The lorry that carried us jolted on a bumpy road and we all jumped as high as we could to get a better view of the city with its interesting streets and people. Then I jumped higher than the others and fell out of the lorry. And that’s the whole story.”

“What d’you mean, the whole story!” I cried in great excitement. “Far from it! The fairy-tale has only just begun.”

The screw seemed shocked. He stirred on my palm, the sunlight playing on his sides in a rainbow of colours.

“Yes, oh yes,” he said softly. “You’re right. The fairy-tale is only beginning. Until now I could hardly imagine myself in a fairy-tale.”

The screw stood up on my palm and called out in a voice so strong and clear I would never have believed it was a screw’s voice.

“Brother screws! Can you hear me!”

“We’re here! We’re with you!” my wrist-watch sang in various voices. “Hello, brother!”

“Hello, Little Screw!” came from a newly-built house behind us. “We’re your brothers, wood screws! Greetings from the doors and windows!”

A big blue and yellow trolley-bus passed by.

“Best regards from my screws! They’re too busy to talk to you. So long!” rattled its wheels.

The trolley-bus rushed away.

“It’s only the beginning,” Little Screw warned me. “I can tell you even more, if you wish.”

“It must be very interesting,” I said. “But this place is too noisy. I’d rather we went to my home.”

As I walked along, the screw continued his story.

“We love our work. When we screw into something, we hold on tight, for good, you might say. That’s what my elder brothers have always done.”

He glanced up into the clear blue sky, where a silver plane was flying, and a note of pride appeared in his voice.

“The aircraft propeller screws into the air and makes the plane fly faster than the wind. And you know, the propellers on ships are also screws. They push the water and make the ships move. But turbines are the biggest screws in the world. They send electric current along wires and bring light to people. Even space rockets can’t do without us. We’ll fly to the stars yet. Because a real fairy-tale has only just begun.”

“It’s true,” I agreed. “But even the biggest screw was made by men.”

“Right,” my friend confirmed. “By the way, would you like me to tell you the story of the headless screw?”

“All right,” I nodded. “Go ahead.”

“Headless, like all of us, was born in a wire-drawing machine. He started off as a piece of white-hot wire. Then he cooled off and the workers put the wire on a lathe which cut it into a lot of equal bits. And one of them was our friend Headless Screw.

“Another lathe cut the grooves into him.

And he left the third lathe with a neat smooth head.

“All the screws were happy. Only Headless was grumbling.

‘What do I need a head for? I can do without it very well.’

“Still the workers supplied him with a head. It was badly fitted though, because Headless kept fidgeting. Unfortunately nobody noticed that it wasn’t on properly.

“So Headless was taken to another plant and put to work on a lathe.

“It was a new lathe. It worked quickly. And although our headless screw knew little about the work, he was very keen to work quickly. He was eager to help the lathe. But when the lathe was working at full speed, the screw’s head came off suddenly. The lathe stopped and its spoiled metal had to be thrown away. That’s how our headless brother got into trouble.”

Little Screw finished his story just as I was walking into my flat.

“You can have a rest here,” I said putting him on my desk.

But Little Screw was a restless fellow. He made friends at once with all the screws that

I had in my home: on my bicycle, television set, taps, desk and in many other places where I would never look for a screw.

That was how Little Screw lived in my home. He didn't seem to be at all bored. He was always chatting cheerfully with his numerous friends.

Once I came home from a business trip. Little Screw didn't seem happy at my appearance. He was just lying on my desk, sad and silent.

"Hello, my friend," I said in a cheerful voice. "What's up?"

Little Screw didn't answer. I felt uneasy and took him in my hand. Could he be ill?

"You see," he finally began in a melancholy voice. "I'd rather you didn't pick me up at all. Everybody's working around here, but I'm lazing about on this table. Nice little chats aren't enough to make you feel alive."

What could I tell him? He was right of course. I had completely forgotten that he was a working screw.

My thoughts were interrupted by a ring at the door. It was Mishko, a schoolboy who lived next door. He was a great dreamer and inventor.

We talked about my television set, which hadn't been behaving well recently.

"Where did you get this screw?" Mishko asked as he noticed my little friend. "It's just what I need — I've invented something new."

I didn't feel like parting with Little Screw at all. He was so clever and, as I came to understand, he was also honest.

But his look was really pleading! I closed my hand and brought him to my ear.

"Please let me go with Mishko!" Little Screw whispered quickly. "I can't sit doing nothing any longer!"

I held out the screw. The boy took it into his left hand while his right hand fished a brand-new nut out of his pocket.

"Look, they fit each other perfectly!" the boy said happily. "They'll work well together. But where did you get this screw?"

I smiled at Mishko and gave Little Screw a friendly wink.

"Let it be a secret for the time being," I said. "Until I write my fairy-tale. Goodbye, my dear Little Screw, and good luck."

The Autumn Tale

A young merry wind came from a distant land.

He had raced with the warm waves of the ocean, joked with tall slender palms and played hide-and-seek with little monkeys in a thick green jungle. By evening he had grown tired and fallen to sleep.

When he woke up in the morning, the wind didn't recognize where he was. He was in a forest glade. Yellow-green, copper-coloured and purple leaves were fluttering on grey and brown-yellow branches. A thin mist was caressing the tops of tall trees.

A very young girl was wandering among the trees, her footsteps so light that she seemed to be sailing through the air.

Now she melted away in the mist, now her slim silvery figure gleamed in the slanted rays of the autumn sun. The girl leaned over from time to time. She was gathering seeds, and as she worked she sang a simple and melancholy song.

The wind stole up behind the girl and stroked her long golden plait.

"Oh! Who is it?" the girl said, frightened.

"It's me! Just take a good look around and you'll certainly see me!"

"Yes . . . I think I can see you . . . and yet I can't see you."

The wind laughed.

"No wonder. I'm the wind. And who are you?"

The girl became severe, even stern.

"I'm the Mistress of the Autumn Forest. Why did you come? Do you want to pluck off all the leaves and blow them away?"

"Why, don't be afraid!" the wind was alarmed. And whenever he was alarmed, the trees swayed, the leaves fell off and the birds hid in their nests.

"Let's make friends!" the wind exclaimed and whirled the girl in a merry dance round the glade.

"Don't do that! Leave me alone!" the girl cried in an anxious voice. "Or I'll have to go away, for a long, long time!"

And she melted away slowly in the blue autumn air.



The wind grew darker than the darkest of the clouds. But he couldn't become darker than the bare trees around him.

The forest's garments, yellow-green, copper-coloured and purple, lay on the ground, cold and lonely.

The unhappy wind raced around the world, plucking off the last leaves, which were wet from the cold rains and mists. The majestic King Winter came walking softly behind the wind, with each step increasing his domain.

The wind searched the vast ocean, high mountains and dense evergreen forests for the young Mistress of the Autumn Forest.

However, she was nowhere to be found.

A year passed.

When the autumn came, the wind raced to the north again.

He met the girl with the golden plait in the same glade. Laughing, he lifted her up and went round in a happy whirl.

"At last! I've found you at last!" the wind was beside himself with joy.

"Leave me alone! Please!" the girl pleaded. "You don't understand anything at all. We can't be friends. You take away my power!"

The purple leaves are rustling in the wind, whispering the last of their autumn tales.

The wet withered grass is listening to them, quite still. The frightened birds are leaving for the warm countries.

But the wind is whirling and whirling among the trees, looking for the Mistress of the Autumn Forest, who has disappeared again like a beautiful dream.

Baby Dolphin and Yurko the Boy

Once upon a time a baby dolphin was born in the Black Sea. He was a very lively and curious dolphin and he showered his mother with questions from morning till night.

“Mummy, Mummy, why do they call our sea Black? It’s blue.”

“Mummy, Mummy, I can only swim, but those white seagulls can fly and swim if they want. Why is that so?”

“Mummy, Mummy, why can people both run on dry land and dive into the water like me?”

“You’re asking too many questions at once, my dear,” his mother answered, slightly perplexed. “Our sea becomes black when there’s a storm, that is, when it’s angry. You should be afraid of a storm, my dear, because a wave could throw you hard against a sharp rock.”

“What about seagulls and people? Please tell me about them!”

“Seagulls, my dear, live in the sky, but they come down to rest on dry land or water.

People live on dry land. They can’t stay underwater for long, the same as you can’t stay on the surface very long. Do you understand, dear?”

“I do,” Baby Dolphin squeaked. “But I want to see what it’s like on dry land all the same. Those small people who run about on the shore look so merry!”

“You’d do better to stay in the sea,” his mother insisted.

So Baby Dolphin dived and went down until he touched the bottom.

“Why are you so melancholy, Baby Dolphin?” the old turtle asked. “Isn’t it magnificent down here! The sun warms the water through to the very bottom. There are no storms down here. Just relax and be happy.”

“No, Mrs Turtle, I want to live on dry land, among people.”

“You, silly thing. I know that people use turtles to cook soup. They’ll set nets, catch you and cook you too!”

But Baby Dolphin wouldn’t listen to the advice of the old turtle. If he wasn’t allowed on dry land, then he’d explore the depths of the sea.

Baby Dolphin swam out into the open sea and dived where the water was extremely deep. Suddenly he felt weak.

“Air! Give me fresh air!” he squeaked piteously.

By a stroke of good luck Mr Squid happened to be nearby. He grasped Baby Dolphin with his tentacles and zoomed towards the sunlit surface like a rocket.

Baby Dolphin gulped in some fresh air and felt better at once.

Mr Squid was very angry indeed.

“Your son shouldn’t dive to such depths,” he said to Baby Dolphin’s mother.

“The deep sea is not for you,” she told her son sternly.

“All right,” Baby Dolphin agreed. “In that case, I’ll train to leap out of the water.”

Soon Baby Dolphin could jump out of the water very gracefully. He took a run, pushed off with his tail and shot out, flying, for several seconds, like a bird over the waves.

“I’m going to learn to fly in the air,” Baby Dolphin decided. However, no matter how hard he tried to fly, he always fell back down into the sea.

“Now I have it!” he said one day to himself. “If I can’t fly over the sea, I must try to do it over the land.”

So Baby Dolphin pushed off with all his strength and went up into the air.

Before he managed to squeak “How beautiful the land is!” he hit the rocky shore and lost consciousness.

When Baby Dolphin came to, he found himself in a vast swimming-pool filled with sea water. He saw a boy leaning over the water. The boy was fair-haired and snub-nosed and his blue eyes were looking tenderly at Baby Dolphin.

“I’m Yurko. I’m a boy,” he said poking his chest with his finger.

Baby Dolphin was a bright fellow. He grasped at once that the little man standing before him was a kind creature. But it was too difficult for him to pronounce the word *Yurko*, or any other human word for that matter. Dolphins speak quite a different language, and people are not able to hear or understand what they say.

Then Yurko brought some silver fish in a net. Baby Dolphin jumped out of the water as soon as he saw his favourite food.

“Oho, you can jump really high. That’s good!” said Yurko. He climbed the iron ladders over the pool and took a fish out of his net. Baby Dolphin leaped up at once and snatched the fish out of the boy’s hands.

From that day Baby Dolphin’s training began. Yurko’s father was studying the life and language of dolphins. Yurko himself dreamed of becoming a scientist like his father, and so he watched his work closely. Father was trying to understand how dolphins call to each other for help, how they warn each other about danger. It was not easy work.

“Well, son,” Yurko’s father once said. “Today we’ll try to find out whether our Baby Dolphin can see in the dark. We’ll fill the pool with muddy water and put in some of his favourite fish. Then we’ll wait and see what happens.”

Soon there was so much mud in the water that it was impossible to see anything.

When Baby Dolphin dived, Yurko’s father let several fishes into the water at the other end of the pool. Baby Dolphin rushed towards his favourite food immediately.

“See, son, our Baby Dolphin can see even in complete darkness,” said the scientist pulling

the empty net out of the water. “Now we’ll try something different.”

The scientist took his flippers and hurled them to one side of the pool. Then he picked up his face mask and tossed it in different direction.

In a moment Baby Dolphin stuck his head from the water, holding a flipper in his mouth. Then he brought up the other flipper, and finally found the mask.

There was a happy smile on Baby Dolphin’s face, and, if only he could have understood the dolphin language, Yurko’s father would have heard Baby Dolphin say: “See, people, I can help you, and it makes me happy!”

“Get Baby Dolphin ready for the big day, sonny,” Yurko’s father said one day. “A lot of people will be coming to watch him.”

At last the big day came. A large crowd gathered round the pool. Everybody was eager to watch Baby Dolphin’s performance, to see what tricks he could do.

Baby Dolphin willingly showed off his agility. Yurko climbed the high iron ladders and put his net of fish down on a little platform. Baby Dolphin recognized the net at once. As soon as

Yurko held a silver fish in his hand, Baby Dolphin came to the surface, pushed off with his strong tail and shot out of the water like a rocket.

“Bravo Baby Dolphin!” the crowd cheered.

Finally he leaped for the last time, and Yurko climbed down the ladders.

However, the performance was not over yet. Baby Dolphin came close to the edge of the pool, Yurko jumped boldly onto his broad gleaming back, and the two friends sped around the pool.

When the big day was over, the routine work began once more. Yurko’s father continued his experiments, while Yurko went to school.

Nobody noticed that something was wrong with Baby Dolphin. Sluggish and unhappy, he kept to one side of the pool, never showing any desire to swim.

If there had been someone there who knew the dolphin language, that person would have heard Baby Dolphin sobbing desperately: “I want to go back to the sea! I want to be back among the waves! There’s too little room here. I want to jump out of the sea, not out of a pool for the fish you offer me. I want to race ahead of

a ship. I want to go back to the sea! I want to be among the waves!”

“Open the underwater gate,” Yurko’s father said finally. “We must let him go back to his home, or else he’ll die from grief.”

The gate opened, and Baby Dolphin swam out into the sea. He was free!

How happy his mother was when she saw her beloved son again! There was no end to her questions. And the stories he told about the people he had met! The whole family came together and spent three days and nights just listening to them.

When they had heard everything there was to tell, they all agreed on one thing: people were dolphins’ friends.

It was good to be back in the sea. White gulls were gliding over the waves, and silver fish swam through the blue depths in graceful silence. There was so much space in the sea. You could swim for a whole day in one direction, and still not come to the end of it.

Baby Dolphin played with gulls. They came swooping down now and then to snatch fish out of the waves. This reminded Baby Dolphin of the tricks he performed for people. He dived,



then came up with a fish and tossed it towards the swooping gull.

“Take it, friend, don’t be afraid,” he said.

Once, when Baby Dolphin was feeding gulls, a cold wind rose. The sea became dark and rough. But Baby Dolphin wasn’t afraid. He kept leaping up to feed the gulls with fish. Suddenly he caught sight of a motor-boat struggling among the dark cold waves. He saw people rushing about in panic. Baby Dolphin grasped what was happening at once. The wind was driving the boat towards the jagged rocks, against which the sea was crashing violently. The people could do nothing against the raging wind.

Baby Dolphin shot out of the water in front of the boat. Then again and again. But the people just didn’t notice him. Baby Dolphin began making circles round and round the boat. At last he heard an excited voice.

“Father, I recognize him! It’s our Baby Dolphin!”

Baby Dolphin looked up happily.

He saw the scientist standing at the steering wheel and Yurko at his side. Baby Dolphin leaped high and swam ahead, glancing back at the man from time to time. Yurko’s father

understood what Baby Dolphin was going to do.

“He wants to lead us between the rocks!”

The scientist steered the boat behind Baby Dolphin, who, since he knew the coast well, swam boldly towards the place where there was a deep passage between two rocks.

The sharp black rocks dashed past the boat’s sides, the giant waves rose and fell, but the people on the boat had nothing to worry about. They left the dangerous rocks behind, while ahead of them was a bay where they would be safe from the terrible storm.

Baby Dolphin swerved aside to let the boat pass.

“You saved our lives, Baby Dolphin! Thank you! Come and see us when you have time!” father and son shouted through the howling wind.

For a moment Baby Dolphin looked after the boat thoughtfully. The bay reminded him of the waveless, boring swimming-pool. “No,” he thought. “Real fun was in the open sea!”

It was then that a raging wave lifted Baby Dolphin and threw him on the sharp rocks. But there was nobody to help him.

The Silver Boat

Baby Dolphin swallowed water and he was dragged down. But he was still alive!

He gathered all his strength and struggled up to the surface, gasping for air. Another, even stronger wave caught him and flung him against the rock again.

The boat was far away, and the people on it were looking ahead with hope. The sea was calm there, promising safety. They were talking excitedly, thanking their rescuer again and again.

However, Baby Dolphin couldn't hear them. He was sinking slowly towards the bottom through deep muddy water. Like people, he couldn't survive without air.

The sea dwellers were sheltering from the storm, and none of them would come to push Baby Dolphin up above the waves, where the salty wind swept over the vast sea. His sea friends were simply not as dedicated to him as his friends on the land were.

The moon was rocking on the waves like a silver boat. The little boy cupped his hands and scooped up the moon boat. The boat slipped softly through his fingers and disappeared into the waves.

“Where's the boat gone? Where did it disappear to?” the boy asked his mother in a puzzled voice.

“It's sailed into a fairy-tale. You won't find it again until you grow up and become strong and clever.”

The earth sailed in the starry ocean. The silver boat rocked on the night waves. The boy grew up.

When his mother's dark hair had gone grey, he came to the waves again. Now he was tall and strong.

He wasn't alone.

They were sitting silently on the night shore. They were quite still, not daring to touch each

other. When the youth found the courage to cautiously stroke the girl's hair, she clapped her hands and, laughing, ran down to the lake. There she scooped up some dark water with the silver boat in her cupped hands.

But the water, murmuring thoughtfully, slipped through the girl's fingers and the boat slipped away with it.

"I want that boat," she said.

And the youth set off on a long journey into the distant sky.

The girl spent many sleepless nights, staring up into the silent abyss.

She was waiting.

The day came at last.

The youth came back to earth with a tiny piece of the silver boat.

It was striking in its ageless beauty. The finest craftsmen on earth could make nothing to compare with it. And this heavenly wonder had at last been brought to the earth. It was lying in the warm hands of the girl.

The waves were lapping softly on the shore. The bright stars were twinkling in the distant silence.

Eternity was sailing over the earth.

"My dream has come true... So why do I still have this feeling of longing in my heart?" the girl said thoughtfully.

She looked at the waves.

The silver boat was dancing on the water's dark surface, laughing invitingly.

The Golden Cage

*To Olexander Kopilenko,
the magician of my childhood.*

This fantastic story happened in the most beautiful city on the old Dnieper River.

We shall begin in the busiest street, where everybody was in a hurry. A traffic policeman was standing on duty. He waved his black-and-white-striped stick so smartly that every child who saw him immediately wanted to become a policeman.

A wave with his stick in one direction — and blue and green cars moved off, each car rushing away on urgent business.

A wave in another direction — and people, young and old, crossed the street.

There was only one man in the city who dared to cross the street when the red light was glowing. Whenever the man appeared in the busiest street, the policeman stopped the traffic at once.

People wondered why this was so.

“He must be a famous sportsman. Look how he’s swinging his arms.”

“No, you’ve got it wrong. He’s a scientist. Look at his thoughtful face.”

“Excuse me, but you can’t be right either. He’s a poet or a singer. Look at the bird on his shoulder.”

So who was this man, so greatly respected by the traffic policeman?

His name was Theodore, and he was a carpenter.

Now that you know the name of the man, I should tell you that nobody called him by that name.

Children were especially fond of him, because he used to make merry-go-rounds. And he usually sang as he worked.

“Rum-ti-tum-tum! Rum-ti-tum-tum!”

“What will it be?” the curious children would ask him.

“Lah-te-doh-me? Doh-fah-te,” he would answer, which meant “Don’t you know, my dears, that everything I make is for you? This is going to be a humpbacked horse from a fairy-tale. It’ll be put on a merry-go-round.”

Every evening the craftsman sang as he finished his work:

“Rum-ti-tum-tum! Te-doh-ray!”

So children changed his name, Theodore, to a more musical one and called him Tedohray, or merry Tedohray.

Not to miss the fun, we shall hurry after merry Tedohray. There he is, in a large park. Here, among the exotic trees, which came from various distant countries, you'll see that merry Tedohray is a most unusual man. Can you hear that clear, high-pitched warbling? That's the birds greeting Tedohray.

On hearing the birds' greeting, Tedohray turned his head to the wise starling, who could speak the human language and was always perched on his shoulder, and told him something. The starling fluttered to the poplar tree from which the warbling had come. After a lively talk with nightingales, goldfinches, linnets and siskins, he returned to Tedohray.

"Everrrything is all rrrright. They'rrre all in good health and will begin singing in a moment."

No one in the world has ever heard such fantastic tunes as the ones those birds sang. Their warbling resounded throughout the park. Little children in white panama hats, old men and women and merry schoolpupils crowded around the poplar, listening to the birds' singing.

The traffic policeman, whom you have met already, stood under a sycamore and listened. After work he always hurried to the park in time for the birds' concert.

But what was so special about Tedohray? Why did the birds fulfil his wishes so willingly?

I'll tell you all about it. But first I want you to know about pot-bellied Boomboom and his golden cage.

This chubby fellow received his nickname because of his booming voice, which sounded as if it came from an empty barrel:

"Boom! Boom!"

There was an orchard by Boomboom's house, and on a window-sill, a beautiful golden cage.

On Sundays Boomboom used to take his golden cage and go to the bird market.

There was a great many singing birds there. Thrushes, siskins, goldfinches and starlings hopped restlessly in their wooden cages.

Boys scouted around trying not to miss anything unusual.

Old men would listen for hours to the fascinating songs of small singers. They knew a lot about bird keeping: how to feed every kind of bird and when to put it to bed.



But nobody was as fond of the birds' cheerful singing as merry Tedohray and pot-bellied Boomboom. However, there was no love lost between the two men.

Boomboom went to great lengths to buy the best singing birds ahead of Tedohray. But he only bought the birds in order to shut them up in his golden cage. The chubby fellow thought that the birds would feel better in his dear cage, and so they would sing better than they would in the wild. He bought them the most tasty insects and grain. But for some reason, unknown to Boomboom, the birds in his golden cage were always miserable. They didn't even try to sing. So Boomboom sold them at the market and bought himself even better warblers to lock up in his cage.

Tedohray was quite a different kind of man. He bought birds in order to set them free.

"A bird can't sing in a cage, even if it's a golden cage," he used to say.

One day, when the birds finished their concert in the park and the old men and women led the children away to their homes, Tedohray sat on a bench and became thoughtful. He looked unusually gloomy.

"What's up, Tedohray?" the wise starling asked.

This is what Tedohray told the birds.

"My dear birds, I've been worrying about something for a whole week. Pot-bellied Boomboom has bought a very beautiful linnet and shut her up. She used to sing in a magnificent flute-like voice. I've passed by Boomboom's window several times lately, but all I hear is some miserable twittering."

With these words Tedohray rose from the bench, heaved a deep sigh and went away. He was so upset that he didn't even know where he was going.

His wise starling stayed behind with the other birds. For a moment everybody was silent. Then they burst out chirping all at once.

"We must free Linnet from the cage!"

"Let's fly to Boomboom's house!"

The birds took off instantly.

Soon the whole company was at Boomboom's house.

"Look, the hinged window-pane is slightly open!"

"There's the golden cage standing on the window-sill!"

The birds slipped through the open pane into the room.

“Hello, sister!”

“How does your cage open?”

The birds began tugging at the cage door, trying to flick the golden hook off its place.

However, the linnet did not look at all happy about what was happening. She ruffled up her feathers and suddenly chirped angrily, “Stop it! What d’you think you’re doing? I feel quite happy in this cage!”

“Happy! In captivity?”

“Yes, yes!” the linnet snapped. “I didn’t like it at first. But Boomboom gives me the most delicious insects and seeds. It’s warm and cosy here. I’m very grateful to Boomboom, and I sing whatever he likes.”

The birds exchanged glances: Fancy saying such a thing!

“Will you please sing us, dear Linnet, something of what you sing for Boomboom,” the wise starling said.

“Please, please! Do sing something!” the rest of the birds joined in.

The linnet fluttered onto the golden perch.

“All right, listen.”

She trilled in a thin melancholy voice about unhappy flowers which the wind could beat down any moment because they grew in freedom, about the sun which was bright enough but not as warm as a stove in winter, and how good it was not to bother about anything and to sing without knowing what you sang.

The linnet fell silent. The other birds were silent too.

“So that’s it,” the wise starling said finally. “We expected you’d join our company. You’ve probably heard about kind, merry Tedohray. He taught us the songs which you don’t know. They’re really cheerful! Oh well, you can stay in your golden cage. You aren’t much of a singer now anyway.”

“What do you mean?” the linnet cried out horrified.

“He means what he says. We sing different songs when we’re free!” the birds retorted in chorus and darted off towards the window-sill.

Suddenly — bang! — a fat hand closed the window from outside.

It was pot-bellied Boomboom!

There was an outburst of frightened chirping, the birds flew madly around the room in panic.

The gleeful Boomboom closed the door tight behind him as he entered the room. He grabbed a large butterfly-net and began chasing the birds. He caught them one by one and threw them into a large wire cage.

“Come, my dears, come, my birdies,” Boomboom gasped happily as he ran about. “I’ve been listening to your singing for a long time, my beloved birds. But now you’ll sing for me alone!”

Boomboom threw a piece of black cloth over the cage, and the birds fell silent in the darkness.

The linnet also sat quiet in her golden cage.

But what was Tedohray doing while his friends were in such danger?

He had no suspicion of the terrible thing that had happened. He was on his way to Boomboom’s, thinking about the poor linnet suffering in the golden cage and about the difficult talk he was preparing to have with Boomboom.

Tedohray knocked at Boomboom’s door. He heard a loud “Boom!” meaning “Come in!” and entered.

“Good day, Boomboom,” said Tedohray, trying to make his voice as cheerful as possible.

“Good day, Tedohray,” answered Boomboom even more cheerfully, while thinking, “How could Tedohray have learned so soon that I had caught more birds?”

“You have a very beautiful linnet, Boomboom,” remarked Tedohray.

“I certainly do. I’m really fond of her,” Boomboom agreed and gave a quiet sigh of relief. “It seems, Tedohray doesn’t know about the birds in my wire cage,” he thought.

Tedohray finally plucked up his courage and blurted out, “Will you please give me your linnet, Boomboom.”

“What for? To set her free?”

“But I’ll teach her to sing merry songs first!”

“Her songs are good enough as it is,” said Boomboom in a satisfied voice. “Will you sing my favourite, dear Linnet,” he added proudly.

The linnet had hardly opened her beak when Tedohray heard a faint bird’s call. It came from the large cage covered with a piece of black cloth.

“Tedohray, Tedohray, save us!”

“How on earth did my wise starling get in there?” cried Tedohray in a shocked voice, yanking the black cover off the cage.



Oh, what an awful sight he saw! All his birds were imprisoned there!

“Boomboom! Whatever does this mean? Why are my birds here?” asked the astonished Tedohray leaning over the cage.

“What do you mean!” bawled Boomboom. “They’re *my* birds! They came here of their own free will. They want to be in the golden cage!”

“We can see if they do,” said Tedohray. “Open the door, will you, dear Boomboom. If the birds don’t fly out, it means they want to stay with you.”

Boomboom’s chubby fingers trembled as he opened the cage door.

Swish! Swish! Swish! One by one the birds shot out of the cage and then out of the room.

The beautiful linnet was looking after them from her golden cage, her eyes blinking.

Tedohray noticed the wistful look in the bird’s eyes.

“Boomboom, give her to me! She wants to be free!”

“Not for the world!” exploded Boomboom in rage. “This linnet is my most loyal bird. She doesn’t leave the cage even if I open the door. Look!”

And Boomboom flung the door wide open.

For a moment the bird was motionless. Then she made a cautious hop towards the door and — darted out of her golden cage!

“Wait, my dear!” Boomboom rushed after the linnet.

But she had already flown out of the room.

“I gave you everything you could want! The best insects, the best grain!” Boomboom cried out after her.

He ran out of his house, trying to see which way the bird had gone.

But the linnet was already far away. She was climbing higher and higher into the sky. Perhaps she could see the beauty of the high mountains and the blue seas, because she filled the air with her happy songs.

Deeply distressed, Boomboom trudged back to his house, groaning.

Meanwhile, merry Tedohray was striding along the busiest street towards his singing friends.

The Night Alarm

Once there was an old owl who lived in a forest. One evening, as the sun was setting, she woke up, opened her large tawny eyes and gave a long yawn.

“Oh, how beautiful the forest is at night,” she said. “At times like this I like to imagine that the sun has disappeared forever!”

“What!” cried out a magpie, who was going to bed when she heard the last few words that Old Owl had said. “What! The sun! Forever!”

The magpie flashed her black and white wings and flew away to her close friend, the talkative tomtit.

“Did you hear, did you hear?” chattered the magpie. “Old Owl — and you must admit she’s pretty clever! — said ‘The sun has disappeared forever!’ We aren’t going to see the light of day in our forest ever again!”

The tomtit hardly waited for the magpie to finish before she rushed to her friend, the cuckoo.

“News, amazing news!” twittered the tomtit. “Our dear Magpie has just recounted to me what Old Owl said — and you know how wise she is — she said, ‘The sun has disappeared forever!’”

That same moment woodpeckers, the forest telegraph operators, tapped out the alarming messages to the neighbouring forests.

“Listen everybody, listen everybody, listen everybody! The sun has disappeared forever!”

“Oh!” Old Owl said solemnly when she heard the message. “It means that my words were enough to make the sun disappear forever.” And she sat on her branch looking so important and wise that even the puffed-up Eagle Owl was moved to praise her.

“All glory to wise Old Owl!” he hooted.

The gloomy Little Owl, envious because he had not been the first to praise Old Owl, gave a signal to his wife and children.

“Glory to wise Old Owl! Glory to the ruler of all the birds!” they screeched in unison.

Their call echoed throughout the forest.

There was a sudden commotion all around as the night birds took to their wings. Little owls and eagle owls swished between the trees,

frightening the day birds with the glow of their bulging tawny eyes.

The swamp birds joined in the commotion, splashing and booming.

In the forest eagle owls added to the general noise:

Tu whit tu whoo!

Wait and see what we will do!

Even lazy nightjars joined in:

Wake up, rejoice,

because the sun has gone.

We'll rule in darkness

from now on!

The day birds became quiet and miserable. The merry orioles, the quick elm warblers, the rich-voiced chiffchaffs — none of them could go to sleep that night.

The unhappy peeps of the young birds came from their nests. The parents did their best to soothe the children, but they themselves were very sad and worried.

“What if Old Owl was telling the truth? What if the sun was never going to appear in the sky again?”

Soon little owls, eagle owls and great grey owls came to drive the day birds to the hollow where Old Owl lived.

“You must listen!” screeched several little owls when all the birds had come together. “Listen to the speech of our wise Old Owl.”

“Days in this forest will be dark from now on,” began Old Owl arrogantly. “We, the night birds, are going to be the masters here. All the rest of you must obey us.”

“Praise our ruler!” screeched and hooted the owls.

“Glory to Old Owl! Glory to the wisest of the birds! The sun will not appear anymore!”

The day birds huddled together in silence.

Suddenly a high-pitched, cheeky voice rose above the clamour.

“I, for one, don’t believe that the sun has disappeared forever!”

The night birds were shocked into silence, while the day birds raised their heads wide-eyed.

“Grab that impudent creature at once and bring him to the front!” ordered Old Owl.

“You don’t have to bring me, here I am!”

A young goldfinch landed on the branch next to Old Owl. Then he added in his cheeky voice, “The sun will certainly rise again. So there!”

There was a dead silence.

In a moment, however, the night birds recovered their voices.

“Put that shameless Goldfinch on trial! Put him on trial right now! The sun has disappeared forever! Glory to wise Old Owl!”

The fierce bodyguards around Old Owl grabbed the merry Goldfinch and dragged him before the judges — Eagle Owl, Little Owl and Nightjar.

“I think we should drive him out of the forest,” began Nightjar in her lazy voice.

“No. It would be better to throw the impudent creature into a bat’s cave,” interrupted Eagle Owl.

Old Owl’s bodyguards rushed to Goldfinch to carry out the sentence.

But at that very moment a streak of red appeared in the eastern skies above the forest.

“Look, look!” the day birds chirped joyously. “It’s the light!”

The streak grew wider and wider and looked more and more cheerful. Finally the pink light of dawn flooded the trees and dew covered fields.

The night birds blinded by the light dashed away to hide among the leaves and inside hollow trees. Old Owl’s hiding place was the farthest of them all.

Meanwhile the sun rose majestically in the blue sky, caressing the earth with its warm rays.

And there is no one in the world who can prevent it from rising every morning.

The Elephant and the Little Mouse

Once an elephant became terribly angry and in his fury he uprooted mighty trees as if they were stalks of grass.

The worried animals came together to decide whom they should send to calm the elephant down.

They decided to send a tiger.

But the elephant wouldn't listen to him. He grasped the tiger with his trunk and tossed him onto a tall tree.

So the animals sent a monkey.

But the elephant flung him onto a high mountain.

So they sent a crocodile.

But the elephant hurled him into a deep river.

The animals trembled in fear. Who would have to go next?

"Maybe you could try, Little Mouse?" they said.

The little mouse went and told the ele-

phant something in a soft voice. A very, very soft voice.

The elephant became calm and timid at once. Even today he trembles in fear whenever he sees a little mouse.

Do you know why?

The Lazy Hippo

A baby hippopotamus, called simply Hippo, was fond of wallowing in his favourite muddy pond.

“Hey, Hippo, let’s go and run in the meadow!” the fast striped baby zebras would call to him.

Hippo would open his small eyes, stare at the green meadow and think hard. He thought so hard that deep furrows appeared across his flat forehead.

“Nno. . . I’d rather stay in my pond. I like it here very much.”

And he remained wallowing in his mud all morning, all afternoon and all evening.

“Hey, Hippo, let’s go to the meadow and play hide-and-seek. You’re so good at closing your eyes!” the gracious baby antelopes would call to him.

Hippo would open his sleepy eyes again and think very very hard. He pictured himself clambering out of his muddy pond, making the exhausting trip to the meadow, and waiting with

closed eyes while the antelopes hid. He thought about how tiresome searching for them would be and about how, after all those great efforts, he would have to walk back to his pond! And



having thought, Hippo would heave a deep sigh.

“Nno. . . I’d rather stay where I am.”

“But why?” the baby antelopes would ask him in surprise. “It’s much more fun in the meadow.”



Hippo would keep silent for a long long time, trying to make up his mind which of the two places would be more pleasant.

“I don’t want to play because. . . because. . . because my tummy gives me awful pain. Ouch!”

This new idea was so much to Hippo’s liking that he decided to complain about his painful

tummy whenever he was invited somewhere or asked to do something.

Lazy as he was, Hippo even made an unexpected effort to compose these lines about himself:

*Your friend the happy hippo
can’t come out today
Because his hippo tummy
gives him awful pain.*

Hippo learnt this verse by heart and recited it in his favourite pond in the morning, in the afternoon and in the evening. Or even at night, if he happened to wake up.

Soon the little zebras and antelopes also knew Hippo’s verse by heart, and they didn’t invite him to join their company anymore. So each baby animal enjoyed his own favourite passtime. Some were playing, others jumping, and only one idled in the mud.

One morning in early autumn Hippo noticed that there were no animals in the meadow.

The little zebras and antelopes only appeared after lunch, but there was no more thoughtless jumping and running about. The young animals were reading and counting instead.

Once Hippo saw a baby zebra who was trying hard to remember black signs which stood out on a sheet of paper. One sign had a shape very much like the shape of Hippo's belly.

"What's that?" asked Hippo.

"This is the letter *B*," answered the zebra. "But please don't disturb me. I'm learning to read."

"I'm not interested," said the lazy Hippo, "because my tummy gives me awful pain."

But Hippo didn't really mean it. He was very very upset.

Earlier he had quite enjoyed seeing all his friends frisking about in the meadow nearby. But now they all went to school, because it was more interesting for them there.

"It takes all sorts to make a world," sighed Hippo.

One Sunday little zebras and antelopes called for Hippo again.

"Let's go to the cinema! There's an interesting film on, something specially for you."

"My tummy gives me awful pain," answered Hippo as usual.

So the little zebras and antelopes hurried on to the cinema. Hippo remained all alone. He



soaked and soaked there getting sadder and sadder every moment. Eventually he climbed out of his muddy pond! Limping uncomfortably on his stumpy legs, Hippo plodded after his friends.

Soon he came to the cinema. He stopped to look at the poster but — there were letters on it!

The Orange and the Sun

Hippo stood staring with his small eyes, trying to recognize the letters which he had already seen on his friend's sheet of paper. Finally he found a stout one that reminded him of his own belly.

"Beee!" Hippo cried out happily. "Beee!"

He looked at the poster from every possible angle, but no matter how hard he tried, he could only read one thing.

"Bee-bee-bee!"

"What's all this 'beeing' about?" Two heads stuck out from behind the entrance door. They belonged to the zebra and the antelope. "Please be quiet. We can't hear the film over your noise!"

"Boo-hoo!" said poor Hippo. "I'm trying to rea-a-a-d! But I can't understa-a-a-nd anything!"

And he burst out crying. Soon there was a puddle of tears beneath him.

Hippo was about to sink into it, as if it were his favourite muddy pond. But his friends held him up with laughing.

"Oh, no," they said. "You aren't going to wallow in your pond all the time. Come on in! This film is just for you. It's all about the lazy hippo!"

Once someone dropped an orange seed by the sea.

The seed liked it very much in the new place. It was warm and damp there.

A small tree grew out of the seed. Then an orange appeared in the tree.

Nothing grew around the orange except for a small patch of extremely polite grass, which bowed even to the slightest breeze, and a miserable clump of clumsy bushes. Beside his neighbours the orange looked really beautiful; he was so round and bright.

"I look like the sun," thought the orange. "Very much like the sun. It's quite obvious that we're brothers. That's why the sun is shining for me so brightly."

So the orange became awfully proud of himself. He even stopped greeting the grass and the bushes. And he boasted from morning till night that he was as beautiful as the sun, and even more beautiful.

Little Elephant Learns to Dance

“I don’t have to hide my beauty during the night, as the sun does,” the orange would say.

One autumn day a man came to the sea shore.

“Look, an orange!” he said in surprise and plucked the orange off the tree.

The man took the orange to his home and put him into a box. There were many other oranges there, and it was impossible to tell the new orange from the others.

Indeed, many of his neighbours were bigger and more beautiful than he was. And then, when the man ate him, he said that the orange was awfully sour.

There once was a little elephant who lived in a zoo. He had very stumpy legs and a stubby tail. And his trunk was quite comical to look at.

Little Elephant would often watch with envy as Mrs Ostrich danced with her children in the next yard. There was no doubt that Mrs Ostrich was the best dancer in the zoo.

There was a house near the zoo, from which lovely music could often be heard. Whenever she heard it, Mrs Ostrich would say to her children, “Now dance everybody! Move your legs quickly! That’s right, now higher!”

Oh, how envious Little Elephant was! He was even ready to give up taking sweets from zoo visitors to learn to move his legs in time to music, bend his knees gracefully and turn in perfect circles.

One night, when nobody could see him, he tried to dance a little.

But Mrs Gorilla, who was always extremely bad-tempered, didn’t like this at all.

“Why are you thumping about like that!” she said angrily. “I was having such a pleasant dream about my native jungle in Africa, and you woke me up. You elephants are so hopelessly clumsy!”

Poor Little Elephant sighed a heavy, sad sigh and stopped dancing.

Then one day, fighting back his shyness, he turned for help to Mrs Ostrich, the best ballerina in the zoo.

“Mrs Ostrich, I was wondering if you could possibly teach me to dance.”

Mrs Ostrich looked at the chubby Little Elephant doubtfully.

“Bend one leg and stand on the other,” she said.

“But what about my third leg? What should I do with that leg?”

“What do you mean your ‘third leg’?” Mrs Ostrich replied sharply.

“I mean this one,” said Little Elephant raising his third leg. “But I have one more,” he added timidly shifting from one foot to another.

“Oh,” Mrs Ostrich snapped impatiently. “Who needs four legs anyway? I suppose you can’t expect anything but clumsiness from an elephant. Just look how my children dance!”

Poor Little Elephant nearly burst into tears. But no elephant ever gives up once he has set his mind to something, and even though he was young, Little Elephant was as stubborn as any elephant could be. He started watching the keeper closely to see how he shut the cage door: Then, early one morning, Little Elephant lifted the hook on the door with his trunk and crept outside.

Little Elephant looked all around to make sure that nobody had seen him and then went towards the big house with large windows, from which he had so often heard the beautiful music. There was a sign above the door of the house, but Little Elephant couldn’t read, or he would have known that it said **BALLET SCHOOL**.

Little Elephant tried the doorknob with his trunk, but nothing happened. “It must be too early, I’ll have to wait in the garden,” he thought.

At last he heard the music and hurried towards the house, his heart pounding with excitement. But, much to his disappointment, he couldn’t even put his head through the doorway! Little Elephant turned his back to the door and tried again, but only his short tail could get through.

This was bad luck. What was he to do?



Little Elephant peeped through the large window and saw little girls holding onto a bar running along the wall. They were dancing, bobbing up and down and raising their slender legs in time to the music.

Little Elephant started to practise the same movements, bending his knees and lifting his legs in turn. It was even better to dance here: there was so much room in the street, and the music coming from the house was so beautiful! Little Elephant felt so pleased with himself. He looked around to see if there were any admirers watching him dance.

Indeed, several boys with school-bags were standing nearby, but they were not admiring him.

“Look at that little elephant!” they shouted mockingly.

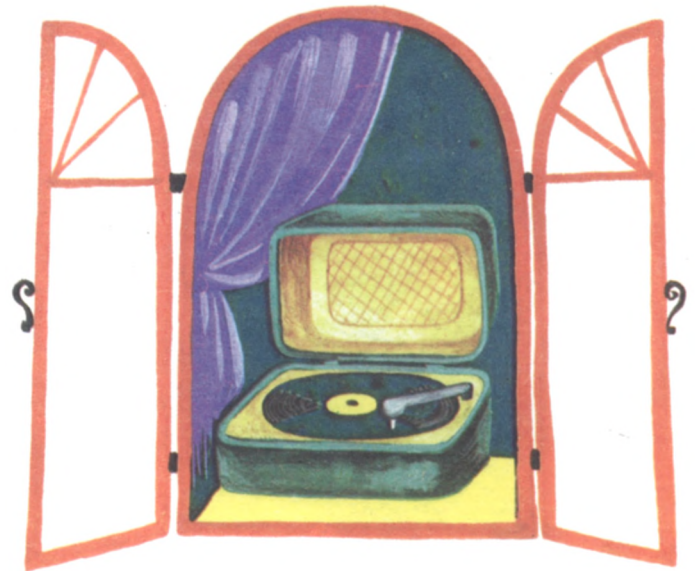
“He’s trying to dance! He does look funny!”

Embarrassed and ashamed, Little Elephant trudged back to his cage in the zoo. When night came and all the animals and birds were asleep, he cried bitterly. He continued to sigh and wipe his tears away with his trunk until dawn.

In the morning he saw a man approaching his cage. He was the most important man in the zoo and everybody obeyed him. He was accom-

panied by a short grey-haired man wearing a straw hat.

Suddenly, Little Elephant was afraid. Maybe the most important man in the zoo knew that he



had left the cage without permission? He was probably furious.

Before Little Elephant had time to decide what to think, the grey-haired man led him out of the cage. Soon they were in town, and everyone and everything let them pass first, even

the trolley-busses, which, to our little hero, looked just like tall, strong, grown-up elephants.

“What’s going on?” Little Elephant asked himself, very surprised. “Where is this man leading me?”

Little Elephant didn’t know that the grey-haired man had seen him dancing the day before from the window of a passing tram, and that he had spent a lot of time looking for him.

Soon they stopped in front of a huge round building. It was so tall that Little Elephant even couldn’t see its roof. And the gates were so large that he could walk in without any difficulty. Lions with long golden manes, stripy tigers and brown bears greeted Little Elephant from their cages with curious looks and friendly growls of welcome.

Seconds later Little Elephant found himself in a ring covered with sand just like in an African desert. The ring was enclosed with a low fence and tiers of seats rose on all four sides, reaching right up to the ceiling.

“You’re in the circus now and we shall start training at once,” said the grey-haired man giving a signal to the musicians. “Now, Little Elephant, listen to the music and do what I tell

you,” he went on. “First learn to bend your knees correctly.”

So Little Elephant lived with the grey-haired man and learned from him. The lessons were



very difficult for Little Elephant even though he was a great lover of dancing. Once the grey-haired man even lost his temper with him. This happened when, having learned to stand on his forelegs and waggle his hind legs high in the air, Little Elephant began to think

too much of himself and tried to do a headstand as well.

But he crashed to the ground immediately with such a heavy thump that the worried musicians stopped playing and rushed down to the ring. Oh, it hurt terribly, and Little Elephant was so ashamed of himself that he didn't even dare to look up at his trainer.

"What's the idea of trying to dance on your head?" the grey-haired man scolded him. "I'm not teaching you to be an acrobat, you know! Don't forget your first night is coming up very soon."

A first night was something Little Elephant had never heard of in his life. That evening he asked the stripy tiger to tell him what it meant.

"Oh!" the stripy tiger blinked his tawny eyes in amazement. "Oh, well! You're going to perform in public for the first time! That's what 'first night' means." He wanted to say something else, but it seemed he couldn't find the right words, because he stood shifting awkwardly from one paw to another. But what he had already said was enough to make Little Elephant's heart miss a beat. The idea terrified him.

When at last his first night came, Little Elephant peeped through the curtains. The circus was packed with people. A handsome man in a shiny black suit appeared in the ring and announced a performance by an unusual Little Elephant — "the Little Dancing Elephant!"

The dazzle of the spotlights hit Little Elephant's eyes. People stared at him from all sides. The hall resounded with music.

Little Elephant was completely at a loss. The music went on playing, but he just stood there and — did nothing!

Then he heard a familiar kind voice.

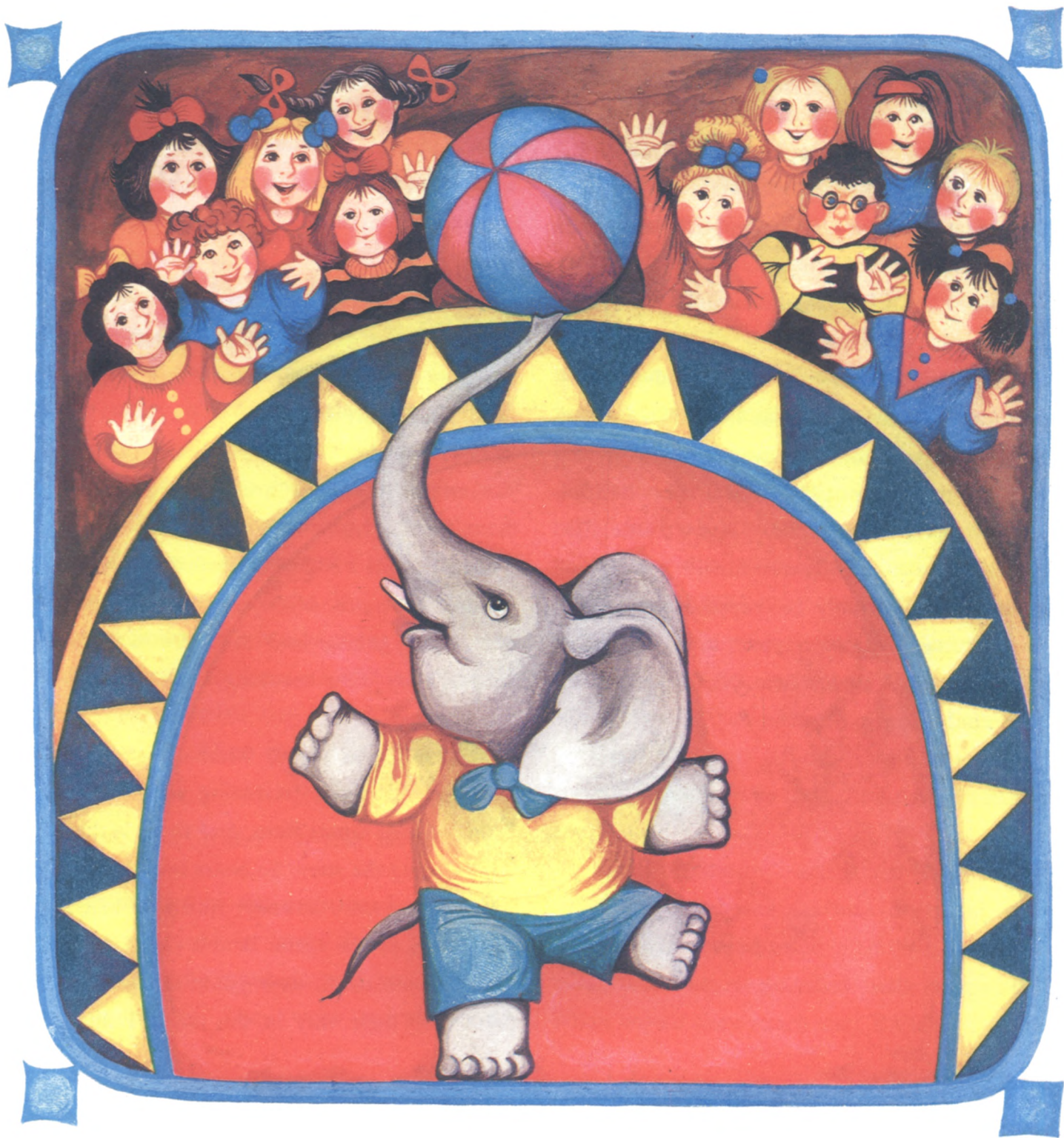
"Come along, Little Elephant."

Of course, it was the grey-haired man!

"Take it easy, Little Elephant," he said. "Throw your left foreleg out to the side and tap with your right hind foot."

Little Elephant threw his left foreleg out and quickly tapped with his right hind foot. The flow of his movements made him feel more relaxed. He looked round at the people: everybody was smiling, and the orchestra was so encouraging. He realized there was nothing to be afraid of.

Little Elephant began tapping with his feet in time with the music. At first he tapped with



all four feet, then he stood on his hind legs and clapped his front feet. Soon he was dancing away, bending his knees with all the grace his trainer had taught him.

Everybody in the circus clapped their hands in praise of Little Elephant.

“Doesn’t he dance magnificently!” murmured the delighted audience.

When Little Elephant had finished his performance, he bowed, and as he did so he saw among the spectators the same boys who had laughed at him outside the Ballet School.

“Bravo!” the boys yelled. “Bravo Little Elephant! You’re a real dancer now!”

“Oh, can this really be happening to me?” thought Little Elephant happily, as he continued to bow. “I wonder what Mrs Ostrich would say if she could see me now!”

The Bear-Cub and the North Star

Masha and Mishko

The tops of Siberian cedars were rustling in the taiga and far above the earth the stars were shining like tiny suns.

“Look, Mishko. Those stars are twinkling, you might say they are inviting us to visit them.”

That’s what a bear-cub called Masha said to another bear-cub, Mishko, as they sat under an old cedar, gazing into the inky sky. And of course, they were speaking in their own, bear language.

“I’ll tell you what, Masha,” said Mishko suddenly, his voice trembling with excitement. “There is the Great Bear, and there is the Little Bear among the stars. So bears must have visited some of the stars already! And that bright star on the tip of the Little Bear’s tail is the North Star. People use it as a guide at night so they don’t lose their way in the taiga. I met some

geologists here recently and saw how they did it. I wish I could visit that star!”

“What a dreamer you are, Mishko! Who would take a bear into space? It’s true, they’ve taken dogs and monkeys, but people must have forgotten about us bears. I wish I could have a star! I’d just hold it in my paws for a while.”

“All right, Masha,” said Mishko resolutely. “As long as we sit here, we can only see pine tops. I’d rather go to those people and ask them to take me into space.”

“But you can’t even speak their language,” Masha said in a worried voice.

“I’ll try to learn by listening,” Mishko reassured her. “Goodbye, Masha.”

“Wait a moment!” Masha bent down and picked up a brown cedar cone. “This is for you to help you remember our taiga.” She paused and added sadly, “And me.”

An Encounter on the Road

Mishko walked to the main road, the noise of the lorries could be heard from far away. Mishko sat by the roadside and watched the lorries racing by. They were carrying long

shining rails, concrete sleepers and bricks. Suddenly he saw an extremely large lorry rumbling towards him like a huge monster.

“Ohhh,” Mishko’s heart stopped. “It’s going to crush me!” He raised his paw in a hopeless attempt to defend himself.

But the huge lorry shuddered to a halt just when it was about to hit Mishko. A tall lean driver jumped out of the massive cab, followed by a shorter man. The shorter one turned to the driver, smiling.

“Vania, this cub seems to be a clever one: he raised his paw asking for a lift.” He went up to the bear-cub. “Does that mean you want a lift to the BAM?”

Mishko felt a tender note in the man’s voice.

“Grr! Grr!” he answered nodding his head, which meant “Yes please!”

“Good boy!” the tall driver said in a friendly voice. “Come with us then. And don’t be afraid. My name’s Vania.”

“And I’m Stepan,” added the shorter man.

Mishko clambered up into the cab.

The lorry roared on.

Mishko’s heart pounded with excitement. When would they reach that BAM?

Finally, as they rounded a bend, he saw some tents.

“All right, boy,” said Stepan. “You can get off here. This is our Star Town. You’ll live in a tent for the time being. Then we’ll move to the hostel and take you along.”

“Oh,” Mishko thought happily. “So I’m in Star Town. That’s what I call good luck. It sounds as if I might be in space soon!”

Stepan took the bear-cub in his arms and carried him past the tents towards a neat little green house. It appeared to be a canteen.

As he walked in, Stepan called out to the rosy-cheeked cook in a white coat, “Here’s a new customer for you. He has the appetite of a real taiga dweller!”

What People Do in Star Town

Mishko liked it in Star Town at once, especially as everybody here called him Mishko. Every morning young men and women with axes and power saws went into the taiga. They made a wide clearing there, then along which came excavators with big buckets and bulldozers

with steel blades in front. These machines were busy making a road. It was to be a special road for trains. The young people had a proud name for it — BAM, which stood for the Baikal-Amur Main Line.

Bam! Bam! went their axes loudly.

Bam! Bam! went their young hearts.

How to Make a Grand Circle

Every morning the railway builders did some fitness training. They pulled themselves up on a horizontal bar, and did various other exercises. The strongest and the most agile grasped the bar and swung right up and over it.

“Hey, Mishko,” they would tease the bear-cub. “Why don’t you make a grand circle like that! Cosmonauts enjoy this exercise too.”

Cosmonauts? Mishko’s heart missed a beat. In that case he’d definitely have to learn to make a grand circle!

He climbed one of the uprights, took hold of the bar and gripped on tight. But as soon as he started to swing he fell to the ground with a thud.

There was a roar of laughter from all sides.

“Looks like you’re going to follow the cosmonauts into space right now,” the young men said.

Mishko began to train. He learned to pull himself up and to swing. But still he couldn’t go right over the top in a grand circle.

The First Train Comes to Star Town

One day after breakfast Mishko went into the taiga with the builders. The young people cut pines, while Mishko gathered the branches together and piled them up.

The builders didn’t only cut trees.

By autumn they had also built a comfortable hostel. Everyone was so happy! The young workers moved in at once singing and joking. They didn’t forget about Mishko either. He was given a warm room near the entrance to the hostel. As soon as he heard the door open, the bear-cub would rush out of the room to examine the person coming in. If Mishko saw that his boots were muddy, he would get very angry indeed. Raising his paw threateningly, the bear

would chase the messy fellow out to wipe his feet.

Then freezing weather set in and the blizzards began to rage around the taiga. The wind piled up high snowdrifts around Star Town. But neither frost nor deep snow stopped the workers. They went on laying rails expertly, although it was difficult to work in such severe cold.

Finally the last section of the railway was finished, and the last spike was driven in to secure the rails. Everybody was eager to see the first train coming in.

The train announced its arrival from far away by giving a loud whistle. It slowed down and then stopped at the builders’ club In the Taiga. It was a great day. The best of the builders spoke about their plans for the future, about putting up stations, settlements and towns along the new railway. They said that thousands of people would come to work in the iron-ore mines and coal pits, to dig gold and extract precious stones. Big industrial plants would spring up in the taiga. Siberia was a fabulously rich land and now its riches would be put to good use.

In short, a good many interesting things were explained at the meeting in Star Town.

Mishko would remember the event for a long time, especially because the engine-driver took him for a ride together with the best railway builders. Mishko gave happy squeals as the rails slipped under the wheels and the train gathered speed and raced through the taiga like a rocket.

Mishko Meets a Stranger

The snow melted and the first spring flowers appeared in forest glades. On a day off Mishko went to the taiga with some builders. The young men picked a lot of flowers and presented them to the girls. The bear-cub also went up to the girls, holding snowdrops in his front paws.

Suddenly he heard strange sounds.

Click-click!

“Mishko, look here!” It was Stepan’s voice. “That’s it!”

The bear-cub turned and saw Stepan standing with a stranger, who had several cameras hanging round his neck. They were producing the clicking sounds.

“Mishko, where’s your smile? These pictures are for a children’s magazine. And we’ll write

under it ‘An unusual helper.’ You’ll be the talk of the country!”

Mishko wanted to yell “Hurrah!”, but he only managed to utter a little “Wa-a!”

Then he rushed from the cutting in the forest straight to the sports ground, where the horizontal bar stood.

The bear-cub grasped the bar, pulled himself up, swung once, then again and — flew up above the bar.

He made a circle! And one more! The earth and the sky swapped places.

Now, once again!

He went up but — his paws let go of the bar. Mishko curled up, spinning in the air like a top.

Crash! The bear-cub saw stars.

He closed his eyes and thought, “I must have gone into space!”

But when Mishko opened his eyes, he felt ashamed of himself. He was not in space at all, but on the ground, on a heap of dry leaves. He saw the photcorrespondent smiling at him encouragingly.

“Aren’t you a daredevil! Would you like to come with me? We’ll fly in a plane, high in the sky, eh?”



Mishko was very interested in the stranger's invitation, so he growled happily.

"Dear friends," the photoreporter asked the builders. "Will you give me this bear-cub as a present? The taiga is large, there are many more bear-cubs in it. He'll be happy enough in my city on the Dnieper River. All right? Mishko, my name is Anatoly."

A Journey by Plane

The plane was roaring like a giant beast, louder and louder. Then it took a run and gently lifted itself into the air.

Mishko looked out of the round window.

The taiga sailed past down below. He saw many colours: light-green, yellow, dark-green, almost black. Then there were mountains. Later on Mishko flew for a long time over shimmering rivers and vast lakes. And then followed the grey-brown and desolate land of the Ural Mountains.

Meanwhile Anatoly, the photoreporter, told the bear-cub about what they were seeing.

"From up here it seems that there's nobody living down there. But in reality there are many

people in the Urals. They mine very useful ores and extract precious stones."

Then they flew over meadows, yellow and green squares of forests and cultivated fields, and cities with high buildings and the smoking chimneys of factories.

Finally a blue river sparkled down below. Beautiful white buildings appeared. The earth approached rapidly.

Anatoly fastened the bear-cub's safety belt.

"Take it easy, my friend. We're going to touch down now. The engines are humming louder because they're glad to be near home."

A Visit to a Story-Teller

The photoreporter and the bear-cub raced in a taxi along a wide motorway.

"Driver, may I use your radio-telephone?" asked Anatoly.

"Certainly," nodded the driver.

Anatoly dialled several numbers. There was a click, then a low kind voice said, "Hello?"

"Hello there, old chap!" the photoreporter said cheerfully into the mouthpiece.

"Best regards from Siberia!"

“Is that you, Anatoly?” the voice on the other end of the line sounded very happy. “Have you really kept your promise?”

“Certainly! We’re coming over to your place right now.”

“Great!” Then the photocorrespondent heard the man to speak to someone who was with him, “Andriyko, get ready to meet an unusual guest!”

“Mishko,” said Anatoly, “I’m sorry, I should have told you before about this visit. My friend asked me to bring you around to his place. He’s a poet and story-teller.”

The car drew up at an entrance to a white multi-storey building. Mishko looked curiously through the windscreen.

“Hello, Mishko,” a man said as he opened a car door. “I’m the story-teller you probably heard about. And this is my son, Andriyko.”

The story-teller had a friendly expression on his face, and his voice was tender but firm. This kind of voice was very much to Mishko’s liking.

Dark-eyed Andriyko stroked the bear-cub’s thick brown coat, and Mishko replied by licking the boy’s nose with his long tongue.

“It’s good you aren’t afraid,” said Andriyko. “This is Smoky, he lives with us,” the boy added

and pointed to a grey shaggy dog staring at the bear-cub.

Mishko clambered out of the car, and he and the dog began smelling each other.

“Woof, woof!” said Smoky in a ringing voice.

“Grr! Grr!” answered Mishko.

“Well, now you’re friends, I suppose,” laughed the photocorrespondent. “Which means I’ve nothing to worry about and can get to my office.”

A Visit to a Fun-Fair and Other Adventures

“Smoky, you’ll take Mishko to the fun-fair on the island,” the story-teller said to his dog on the next morning. Smoky pricked up his ears and listened attentively. “You can have a ride on the roller coaster, the merry-go-round and the aeroplanes. I heard that Mishko’s fond of such amusements. Apparently he is especially fond of turning a grand circle on the horizontal bar. Only mind that you don’t get lost.”

“Right, this sounds like just what I need!” thought Mishko jumping for joy.

So Mishko and Smoky went off.

First they came onto the embankment.

Mishko screwed up his eyes, dazzled by the beauty of the place. Before him was the Dnieper River. Further off was the island with high white houses. On the opposite bank stood ancient buildings half-hidden in the greenery of the parks.

Smoky took the lead fastened to the bear-cub's collar between his teeth and they ran along the embankment. People stopped in their tracks and stared at the strange couple.

Finally the two friends reached the island. It was large and green. In the middle there were swinging boats, circling planes held up by iron arms and merry-go-rounds.

"Woof-woof!" Smoky suggested, which meant, "Let's try the merry-go-round first."

Smoky was obviously well known here. The ticket inspector said, "Hello, Smoky. This must be your new friend." Then he turned to the bear-cub. "Your name's Mishko, I suppose."

The cub nodded three times.

"Fine," the man continued. "We'll put you on the merry-go-round now. Who would you like to ride on? The wolf, I'm sure. He'll remind you of your taiga."

Mishko got on the wolf and, quite sure of himself, held onto his neck. The merry-go-round started moving. It got faster and faster.

At first Mishko could see some things as he rode. There was a building, a tree, the river and the forest. Then everything blurred into a multi-coloured screen. Mishko was suddenly afraid. He let go of the wolf's neck and put his front paws to his eyes.

Some mysterious force snatched him up and launched him into the sky like a rocket.

"Wow, maybe I'm going into orbit?" he thought.

The bear-cub swished over a fence and landed on a lorry carrying rolls of fabric.

The lorry raced along a high river bridge. It was a double-deck bridge. The lower deck was for motor vehicles, the upper one for the blue trains of the underground railway. Mishko wanted to cry. What should he do? Where was this lorry carrying him?

The driver had felt something hit his lorry with a thud. He swerved to the kerb as soon as he crossed the bridge and jammed on the brakes. As the lorry stopped he got out of the cab and glanced over the side of the loading platform.

“Owww! A bear!” exclaimed the driver and darted back into the cab. “How on earth did he get there?” he mumbled to himself. “Jumped from a tree, I suppose? And what shall I do with him now?”

After a while the driver got out cautiously and peeped over the platform side again. His eyes nearly popped out of his head: there was no bear! Could he have been imagining things!

Mishko had climbed over the side of the loading platform and raced towards the underground railway.

Soon he saw the swinging glass door. The bear-cub shot past the ticket inspector and rushed upstairs to the station platform.

“A bear! A bear!” the word ran along the platform like the wind.

“But where is his tamer?” the passengers gasped.

“What are you talking about? He came straight from the forest. And that’s no surprise. I’ve seen elks walking in the streets before now.”

“No, look! It’s a performing bear! He has a collar with a number.”

“Oh! Well, that’s a different matter. Let him get in the train.”

The bear-cub padded calmly into a carriage and climbed onto a vacant seat. He looked carefully through the large window while the train moved along.

There it was, the island!

Hardly had Mishko jumped onto the platform when Smoky ran up to him barking happily.

There seemed to be no limit to the friends’ joy. They were licking each other as if they hadn’t met for ages. Soon they were hurrying towards the merry-go-round.

Mishko wasn’t afraid anymore. He only repeated to himself, “I’m training for a space flight! I’m training for a spa-a-ce flight!” This time the bear-cub held tight. So tight that the ticket inspector could hardly take him off the wooden wolf when the merry-go-round stopped.

“I’ll come here with Smoky every day,” Mishko decided.

Mishko Meets a Cosmonaut

One morning the telephone rang in the storyteller’s flat.

“Good morning,” a familiar voice said. It was a man from the publishing house which pro-

duced children's books. "We have an interesting guest visiting us, one of our cosmonauts. You're welcome to come along."

"Thanks a lot for the invitation, but, if it's okay with you, I'll bring a bear-cub with me. His name's Mishko. He's preparing himself for a space trip."

The telephone was silent for a while. The man on the other end of the line was asking someone's advice.

"All right," said the voice finally. "You can bring your friend along. We'll have some delicious honey for him from the best market in the city."

Mishko's heart was thumping loudly as he entered the publishing house with the storyteller. In a moment he would meet a real cosmonaut, and maybe, at last, his dream would come true?

Meanwhile children's writers crowded around the bear-cub to shake his paw.

Suddenly excited voices came from the corridor.

"He's coming! The cosmonaut!"

The cosmonaut came in briskly, a broad smile on his face. Everybody in the room applauded,

because children's writers knew and loved the cosmonauts.

The cosmonaut greeted everyone heartily. Then he saw the bear-cub.

"Where did you come from?" he asked in surprise.

Mishko certainly understood the question, but he couldn't speak the human language. So he just held out his paw.

"Oh, you have good manners for a bear-cub!" the cosmonaut said. "Good boy."

"There's more to him than that," the storyteller cut in. "He's been training non-stop for a space trip! His name is Mishko."

"Really?" the cosmonaut's face screwed up in a smile. "That's something we're interested in. With your permission I'll take your Mishko to Star Town. We're working on a very important and unusual experiment there at the moment."

"You're welcome! Mishko's been dreaming about such an opportunity!"

The writers asked the cosmonaut many questions. They wanted to know about weightlessness, the docking of the Soviet spacecraft *Soyuz* with American *Apollo* and future space journeys to distant planets.

“Do you like animals?” The unexpected question came from a young moustached writer.

The cosmonaut smiled broadly.

“Very much! Between you and me, dear friends, I’m going to write a book about the nature on our planet.”

Mishko was so worried that he didn’t remember what came next. What if the cosmonaut changed his mind?

But he didn’t. When the meeting was over, the man took Mishko by the paw and led him to a car waiting at the entrance of the publishing house. Mishko was very proud to be walking with a world famous cosmonaut.

And this is what the cosmonaut whispered in the bear-cub’s ear:

“Mishko, if you are very serious about your training, you really will fly into space.”

The Blue Star

One day. . .

Masha was sitting under an old Siberian cedar, waiting for her friend Mishko.

She had been sitting like that for more than just one day and one night, and many other bears had approached her while she waited.

Young snub-nosed Shambler had invited her for a walk. Fat Brownie had called her over to gorge on raspberries. But Masha had given them all the same answer, “No, thank you. I’m waiting for Mishko. He said he’d become a cosmonaut and get me a blue star from the sky.”

“He was making fun of you,” Shambler would sneer. “Bears can’t fly in the sky.”

“Of course, flying in the sky is not a bear’s cup of tea,” fat Brownie would confirm with an important air.

“Why not!” Masha would snap back. And then she would give a soft sigh. She wished she had heard from Mishko. But anyway she would stubbornly explain the same thing to fat Brownie, “There are even constellations in the sky, called Great and Little Bear. Which means our relatives have been there.”

So Masha sat feeling a bit melancholy. Most probably nothing would happen today either, she thought.

Suddenly she caught sight of a shining star rushing across the sky. No plane could be so fast and silent. Then something quite unexpected happened. A tiny bright star came off the bigger

The Same Old Story

one and plummeted down to earth. But in a while a parachute flashed over it, and the star began falling slowly.

“Oh, please don’t get caught in a pine tree, my dear! I’m here!” called out Masha.

The tiny star came straight onto Masha’s cupped front paws. It was not a star at all, but a cedar cone, and a lamp was fastened to the parachute.

“Mishko has sent me his best regards from space!” Masha exclaimed joyfully. “So he did become a cosmonaut!”

She looked up at the dark sky. All of a sudden she was terribly worried.

“Hey, Mishko! Where d’you think you’re going? It’s not a bear’s business to go flying about space!”

But the spaceship swiftly carried Mishko, the new cosmonaut, away from the earth.

Masha couldn’t take her eyes off the ship. She saw that Mishko was making straight for the North Star clinging to the tip of the Little Bear’s tail. He had obviously remembered that Masha had asked him for a blue star from that distant constellation.

When spring came Mother Wild Duck hatched several grey eggs. It happened that she had to leave her nest for a while.

When Mother Wild Duck came back she saw that there was an extra egg in the nest and that it was bigger than all of her eggs.

Mother Wild Duck wasn’t a bit upset by this. In fact, she was glad it had happened, because she was a clever wild duck.

“I’m sure a white swan will come out of this egg,” she said to her husband, Wild Drake. “I’ve heard that such a thing happened once before. I read about it in an old book.”

And Mother Duck was right.

When the children of the Wild Ducks hatched out, they were all grey ducklings except for one long-necked creature that came out of the big egg.

The parents named their unusual son Baby Swan and fed him better than the rest of their children.



The ducklings were content to have duckweed and water bugs for dinner, but Baby Swan always expected his father and mother to give him something special.

The ducklings were swimming on the lake, racing each other from dawn till dusk, but Baby Swan never did any kind of exercise. He was afraid a race would kill him.

The ducklings used to fly between the lake and the nearby meadow, but Baby Swan waddled about and never paid any attention to them.

“You’d better not fly, my dear,” his anxious parents would say, “or you’ll lose your fine feathers.”

By the autumn the ducklings had grown up into a very happy family.

“It’s time we got moving,” they quacked. “It’s time we flew away to the warm countries. Come on, brother,” they said to Baby Swan.

But their brother wouldn’t move a muscle. His father and mother looked at him and suddenly they realized the horrible truth: they thought they had been bringing up a beautiful swan, but now they saw that the creature

standing before them was a fat and lazy goose.

He was too lazy to look for food, too lazy to go swimming, and too lazy to learn to fly. In short, he had absolutely no idea about how to survive in the big wide world.

The Magic Wand

Once there was a very lazy boy. As lazy boys go, he was quite typical. You've probably met someone like him yourself. His name was Mikola. One day, when young leaves were peeping out of the brown-yellow buds of trees and bushes, he found himself involved in a great adventure. The boys were playing soccer out in the yard, but Mikola was having no fun at all. His mother had locked him in his room so that he would do his homework properly. However, Mikola was just sitting there day-dreaming.

"If I had a magic wand," he thought, "it'd do my homework and a lot of other things that I'm told to do. I could even take a trip to the end of the world with no problem if I had a wand."

And then a miracle happened.

"Why go to the end of the world?" a kind voice said softly.

The boy looked round and saw a dwarf standing in the middle of the room. He was half

Mikola's height and wore baggy red trousers covered with white dots and a white pointed cap with red stars on it. His long grey beard hung over his shoulder and disappeared behind his back.

"Why go to the end of the world?" the dwarf repeated. "You can have what you wish right here."

"Excuse me," mumbled Mikola, perfectly at a loss. "Who are you?"

"I'm the Chief Guardian of the Magic Wand."

Mikola sat in silence, as if a spell had been put on him. Could this mean that the things he had read in fairy-tales were true? Did magicians actually exist?

"Are you really going to give me a magic wand?" the boy asked doubtfully.

"Of course, but you'll have to earn it," the dwarf answered with an important air. "I mean you'll have to fulfil three tasks. Is it a deal?"

Mikola nodded, what had he got to lose? And perhaps these tasks wouldn't be that difficult?

"Here's the first task," the dwarf's voice became even more serious. "You'll make your bed and help your mother for a whole week."

Mikola was about to refuse and say, “No-o, I don’t want to!” But then he heard a whispering voice, “Wait, don’t complain about the work, remember you’ll have a magic wand as a reward!”

“All right,” Mikola said in a quiet voice.

“Good boy.” The dwarf nodded with cheerful satisfaction, adjusted his cap and — disappeared into thin air.

Mikola pinched his arm — was he dreaming? No, the pinch hurt. Which meant that he wasn’t dreaming and he’d better get down to work, though he hated the idea of doing it.

For a whole week Mikola was busy cleaning the rooms and washing up. He even did the shopping twice. His mother was as glad as she was surprised: why this sudden change? If she had known why, she wouldn’t have been nearly so happy. Her son had become helpful and hard-working only to avoid doing any work in the future by using a magic wand.

As soon as the week passed, the Chief Guardian of the Magic Wand appeared before Mikola.

“How are you getting on with your task? Have you done everything I told you to?”

Mikola described how he had helped his mother.

“That’s a good beginning,” the old man said stroking his long thick beard. “Now for the second task. For ten days you won’t bully the small boys — I know you do that sometimes. What is more, you’ll defend them when big boys bully them. Is that all right?”

The old man adjusted his cap and vanished.

“A nice mess I’ve got myself into!” Mikola sighed a whistle with disappointment. “Sashko, the biggest, roughest bully in town, will certainly give me a nose bleed.”

However, there was nothing for it. He would have to become just and bold as the roughest bully, if he really wanted to have his own magic wand.

At school that week, during one of the long breaks, Sashko, the bully, pushed a first-year boy, who fell to the ground and cut his nose. Mikola jumped at Sashko at once.

“You better help him up and apologize, or else. . . Is that clear?”

Sashko was taken aback.

“All right, why such a hurry,” he mumbled in dismay.



During the ten days Mikola was the boldest and the most just pupil in his school. Boys from his class even wrote a long paragraph about him for their wall newspaper.

“You’re on the right track,” said the Chief Guardian of the Magic Wand when the second week had passed. “But your last task is the most important one.”

Mikola held his breath.

“I know,” the dwarf continued, “that you do badly at school. There are bad marks on your report cards and unsatisfactory marks in your school reports. The school year will be over soon. Show me your school report at the end of term. Is that understood?”

Mikola’s heart missed a beat. “Yes. You mean I must have good marks in my school report.”

This time Mikola was in real trouble. But it was too late for him to back out now.

Mikola’s mother was amazed.

“What’s got into you, my dear? You’re poring over those books for hours on end. Go and play soccer a bit.”

“I can’t,” replied Mikola, though he was itching to rush out and join his friends. “We’ve got exams soon. I must revise for them.”

With time the boy realized that he actually wanted to work, not only for the sake of the magic wand. He really enjoyed his studies.

Finally it was the last day of term. Mikola received his report and raced home to show it to his father. But the boy was even more anxious and impatient to show it to the Chief Guardian of the Magic Wand.

The dwarf in his star-studded cap appeared on time as usual. The boy saw him in the room as soon as his parents went away.

The old man looked through the report.

“Well done, Mikola!” he said joyfully. “My treasure is yours now.”

And the Chief Guardian held out his magic wand.

At last Mikola could see it! He would never have said it was magic from the look of it. Just a yellow stick, somewhat longer than his pen. Nobody would suspect that it was a real treasure.

“If you want the wand to fulfil your wish,” the Chief Guardian continued, “you must say this:

You can do any trick,

You can help very quick.

*So do what I want
Like a good magic wand.*

“Then you should say what your wish is. What will it be this time, for example?”

“Well. . .ice-cream!”

In a flash a beautiful cut-glass bowl stood in front of Mikola. It was full of strawberry ice-cream.

Mikola was amazed.

“What else can I tell it to do?” he asked.

“Anything. Except for things that go against your conscience.”

“Where do these wishes come from? Nowhere?”

The old man’s eyes became tender and kind as he looked at the boy.

“Certainly not, Mikola. Nothing comes from nowhere, even in a fairy-tale. When you make a wish, you just get for nothing what other people have made.”

Mikola twiddled the wand thoughtfully. So that was how it helped. It robbed one person to give something to another. But he’d do as his conscience told him to. And he made his wish in a ringing voice:

*You can do any trick,
You can help very quick.
So do what I want
Like a good magic wand.*

“I wish all the lazy-bones’ hands would start itching for work!”

Here Mikola handed the wand back to the Chief Guardian.

“It’s much more fun to do everything on your own. Here’s your wand, Mr Chief Guardian.”

“Farewell, Mikola!” the dwarf said in a cheerful voice. “You did the right thing.”

He touched his star-studded cap and vanished, as if he had never been in that room.

Never?

But what about Mikola’s report with good marks in it? There it was, lying on his desk.

His mother wasn’t angry anymore. And nobody called Mikola lazy-bones.

The boys were yelling again in the yard, playing soccer. Mikola rushed out to join them.

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