

Ole Lukoie

Hans Christian Andersen

There's no one on earth who knows so many stories as Ole Lukoie—he certainly can tell them!

When night comes on and children still sit in good order around the table, or on their little stools, Ole Lukoie arrives. He comes upstairs quietly, for he walks in his socks. Softly he opens the door, and *flick!* he sprinkles sweet milk in the children's eyes—just a tiny bit, but always enough to keep their eyes closed so they won't see him. He tiptoes behind them and breathes softly on their necks, and this makes their heads hang heavy. Oh yes! But it doesn't hurt them, for Ole Lukoie loves children and only wants them to be quiet, and that they are only when they have been put to bed. He wants them to be quiet so that he can tell them stories.

As soon as the children fall asleep, Ole Lukoie sits down on the bed beside them. He is well dressed. His coat is made of silk, but it would be impossible to say what color it is because it gleams red, or green, or blue, as he turns about. Under each arm he carries an umbrella. One has pictures on it, and that one he opens up over good children. Then they dream the most beautiful stories all night long. The other is just a plain umbrella with nothing on it at all, and that one he opens over naughty children. Then they sleep restlessly, and when they wake up in the morning they have had no dreams at all.

Now you shall hear how for a whole week Lukoie came every evening to a little boy named Hjalmar, and what he told him. There are seven of these stories, because there are seven days to a week.

Monday

"Now listen," Ole Lukoie said, as soon as he got Hjalmar to bed that evening. "First, let's put things to rights."

Then all the flowers in the flower pots grew to be big trees, arching their long branches under the ceiling and along the walls until the room became a beautiful bower. The limbs were loaded with flowers, each more lovely than any rose, and their fragrance was so sweet that if you wanted to eat it—it was sweeter than jam. The fruit gleamed like gold, and besides there were dumplings bursting with currants. It was all so splendid!

Suddenly a dreadful howl came from the table drawer where Hjalmar kept his schoolbooks.

"What can the matter be?" said Ole Lukoie, as he went to the table and opened the drawer. It was the slate, which was throwing a fit and was ready to fall to pieces, because there was a mistake in the sum that had been worked on it. The slate pencil tugged and jumped at the end of its string as if it were a little dog. It wanted to correct the sum, but it could not.

Another lamentation came from Hjalmar's copybook. Oh, it was dreadful to listen to. On each page the capital letters stood one under the other, each with its little letter beside it. This was the copy. Next to these were the letters which Hjalmar had written. Though they thought they looked just like the first ones, they tumbled all over the lines on which they were supposed to stand.

"See, this is how you should hold yourselves," said the copy. "Look, slanting like this, with a bold stroke."

"Oh, how glad we would be to do that!" Hjalmar's letters replied, "but we can't. We are so weak."

"Then you must take medicine," Ole Lukoie told them.

"Oh no!" they cried, and stood up so straight that it was a pleasure to see them.

"Now we can't tell any stories," said Ole Lukoie. "I must give them their exercises. One, two! One, two!" He put the letters through their paces until they stood straight, more graceful than any copy could stand. But when Ole Lukoie left, and Hjalmar looked at them in the morning, they were just as miserable as ever.

Tuesday

As soon as Hjalmar was in bed, Ole Lukoie touched all the furniture in the room with his little magic sprinkler, and immediately everything began to talk. Everything talked about itself except the spittoon, which kept silent. It was annoyed that they should be so conceited as to talk only about themselves, and think only about themselves, without paying the least attention to it, sitting so humbly in the corner and letting everyone spit at it.

Over the chest of drawers hung a large painting in a gilt frame. It was a landscape in which one could see tall old trees, flowers in the grass, and a large lake from which a river flowed away through the woods, past many castles, far out to the open sea. Ole Lukoie touched the painting with his magic sprinkler, and the birds in it began to sing, the branches stirred on the trees, and the clouds billowed along. You could see their shadows sweep across the landscape.

Then Ole Lukoie lifted little Hjalmar up to the frame and put the boy's feet into the picture, right in the tall grass, and there he stood. The sun shone down on him through the branches of the trees, as he ran to the water and got into a little boat which was there. It was painted red and white, and its sails shone like silver. Six swans, each with a golden crown around its neck and a bright blue star upon its forehead, drew the boat through the deep woods, where the trees whispered of robbers and witches, and the flowers spoke about the dainty little elves, and about all that the butterflies had told them.

Splendid fish with scales like gold and silver swam after the boat. Sometimes they gave a leap-so that it said "splash" in the water. Birds red and blue, large and small, flew after the boat in two long lines. The gnats danced and the cockchafers went *boom, boom!* They all wanted to go with Hjalmar, and every one of them had a story to tell.

What magnificent voyage that was! Sometimes the forest was deep and dark, and sometimes like the loveliest garden full of sun and flowers. There were palaces of marble and glass, and on the balconies stood Princesses. Hjalmar knew them well. They were all little girls with whom he had played. Each of them stretched out her hand, and each held out the prettiest sugar pig that ever a cake woman sold. Hjalmar grasped each sugar pig as he went by, and the Princess held fast, so that each got a piece of it. The Princess got the smaller piece, and Hjalmar got the larger one. Little Princes stood guard at each palace. They saluted with their swords, and caused raisins and tin soldiers to shower down. You could tell that they were Princes indeed.

Sometimes Hjalmar sailed through the forests, sometimes through great halls, or straight through a town. He also came through the town where his nurse lived, she who had carried him in her arms when he was a very small boy and had always been fond of him. She bowed and waved, and sang the pretty song which she had made up herself and sent to Hjalmar:

"I think of you as often,

Hjalmar, my little dear,
As I've kissed your lips so soft, and
Your cheeks and your eyes so clear.
I heard your first laughter and weeping,
And too soon I heard your good-bys.
May God have you in his keeping,
My angel from the skies."

All the birds sang too, and the flowers danced on their stalks, and the old trees nodded, just as if Ole Lukoie were telling stories to *them*.

Wednesday

How the rain came down outdoors! Hjalmar could hear it in his sleep, and when Ole Lukoie opened the window the water had risen up to the window sill. There was a real lake outside, and a fine ship lay close to the house.

"If you will sail with me, little Hjalmar," said Ole Lukoie, "you can voyage to distant lands tonight and be back again by morning."

Immediately Hjalmar stood in his Sunday clothes aboard this splendid ship. And immediately the weather turned glorious as they sailed through the streets and rounded the church. Now everything was a great wild sea. They sailed until land was far out of sight, and they saw a flock of storks who also came from home and wanted to travel to warmer climes. These storks flew in line, one behind the other, and they had already flown a long, long way. One of them was so weary that his wings could scarcely carry him on. He was the very last in the line, and soon he was left a long way behind the others. Finally he sank with outstretched wings, lower and lower. He made a few more feeble strokes with his wings, but it was no use. Now he touched the ship's rigging with his feet, slid down the sail, and landed, *bang!* upon the deck.

The cabin boy caught him and put him in the chicken coop with the hens, ducks, and turkeys. The poor stork stood among them most dejected.

"Funny-looking fellow!" said all the hens. The turkey gobbler puffed himself as big as ever he could, and asked the stork who he was. The ducks backed off and told each other, "He's a quack! He's a quack!"

Now the stork tried to tell them about the heat of Africa; about the pyramids; and about the ostrich, how it runs across the desert like a wild horse. But the ducks did not understand him. They said to each other, "Don't we all agree that he's a fool?"

"Yes, to be sure, he's a fool," the turkey gobbler gobbled, as the stork kept silent and thought of his Africa.

"What beautiful thin legs you've got," said the turkey gobbler. "What do they cost a yard?"

"Quack, quack, quack!" The ducks all laughed, but the stork pretended not to hear them.

"You can laugh too," the gobbler told him, "for that was a mighty witty remark, or was it too deep for you? No indeed, he isn't very bright, so let's keep on being clever ourselves."

The hens cackled, the ducks went "Quick, quack! quick, quack!" and it was dreadful to see how they made fun of him among themselves. But Hjalmar opened the back door of the chicken coop and called to the stork. He hopped out on the deck. He was rested now, and he seemed to nod to Hjalmar to thank him. Then he spread his wings and flew away to the warm countries. But the hens clucked, and the ducks quacked, and the turkey gobbler's face turned fiery red.

"Tomorrow we'll make soup out of you," said Hjalmar. With these words he woke up in his

own little bed. It was a marvelous journey that Ole Lukoie had taken him on during the night.

Thursday

"I tell you what," Ole Lukoie said. "Don't be afraid if I show you a little mouse." He held out a hand with the quaint little creature in it. "It has come to ask you to a wedding. There are two little mice here who are to enter into the state of marriage this very night. They live under the floor of your mother's pantry, which is supposed to be the most charming quarters."

"How can I get through that little mouse hole in the floor?" Hjalmar asked.

"Leave that to me," said Ole Lukoie. "I'll make you small enough." Then he touched Hjalmar with his magic sprinkler. He immediately became shorter and shorter, until at last he was only as tall as your finger. "Now you may borrow the tin soldier's uniform. I think it will just fit you, and uniforms always look well when one is at a party."

"Oh, don't they!" said Hjalmar. Instantly he was dressed like the finest tin soldier.

"If you will be so kind as to sit in your mother's thimble," the mouse said, "I shall consider it an honor to pull you along."

"Will you really go to all that trouble, young lady?" Hjalmar cried.

And in this fashion, off they drove to the mouse's wedding. First they went down a long passage under the floor boards. It was just high enough for them to drive through in the thimble, and the whole passage was lighted with touchwood.

"Doesn't it smell delightful here?" said the mouse. "This whole road has been greased with bacon rinds, and there's nothing better than that."

Now they came to the wedding hall. On the right stood all the little lady mice, whispering and giggling as if they were making fun of each other. On the left stood all the gentlemen mice, twirling their mustaches with their forepaws. The bridegroom and his bride stood in a hollow cheese rind in the center of the floor, and kissed like mad, in plain view of all the guests. But of course they were engaged, and were to be married immediately.

More and more guests kept crowding in. The mice were nearly trampling each other to death, and the bridal couple had posted themselves in the doorway, so that no one could come or leave. Like the passage, this whole hall had been greased with bacon rind, and that was the complete banquet. However, for the dessert, a pea was brought in, on which a little mouse of the family had bitten the name of the bridal couple, that is to say the first letter of the name. This was a most unusual touch.

All the mice said it was a charming wedding, and that the conversation was perfect. And then Hjalmar drove home again. He had been in very high society, for all that he had been obliged to make himself very small to fit in the tin soldier's uniform.

Friday

"It's astonishing how many older people are anxious to get hold of me," said Ole Lukoie. "Especially those whose consciences are bothering them. 'Good little Ole,' they say to me, 'we can't close our eyes. We lie awake all night, facing our wicked deeds which sit on the edge of our beds like ugly little fiends and soak us in hot perspiration. Won't you come and turn them out so that we can have a good night's sleep?' At that they sigh very deeply. 'We will be glad to pay you for it. Good night, Ole. The money lies on the window sill.' But I don't do things for pay," said Ole Lukoie.

"What are we going to have tonight?" little Hjalmar asked.

"I don't know whether you'd like to go to a wedding again tonight but it's quite different from the one last night. Your sister's big doll, who looks like a man and is named Herman, is to be married to the doll called Bertha. It's Bertha's birthday, too, so there'll be no end to the presents."

"Yes, I know," Hjalmar told him. "Whenever the dolls need new clothes, my sister either lets them have a birthday or hold a wedding. It must have happened a hundred times already."

"Yes, but tonight is the hundred and first wedding, and, with one hundred and one, things come to an end. That's why it's to be so splendid. Oh, look!"

Hjalmar looked over at the table. There he saw a little pasteboard house with the windows alight, and all the tin soldiers presenting arms in front of it. The bridal couple sat on the floor and leaned against the table leg. They looked thoughtful, and with good reason. Ole Lukoie, rigged out in grandmother's black petticoat, married them off. When the ceremony was over, all the furniture in the room sang the following fine song, which the pencil had written. It went to the tune of the soldier's tattoo:

Let us lift up our voices as high as the sun,
In honor of those who today are made one.
Although neither knows quite what they've done,
And neither one quite knows who's been won,
Oh, wood and leather go well together,
So let's lift up our voices as high as the sun.

Then they were given presents, but they had refused to take any food at all, because they planned to live on love.

"Shall we go to a summer resort, or take a voyage?" the bridegroom asked. They consulted the swallow, who was such a traveler, and the old setting hen who had raised five broods of chicks. The swallow told them about the lovely warm countries where grapes hang in great ripe bunches, where the air is soft, and where the mountains have wonderful colors that they don't have here.

"But they haven't got our green cabbage," the hen said. "I was in the country with all my chickens one summer and there was a sand pit in which we could scratch all day. We also had access to a garden where cabbages grew. Oh, how green they were! I can't imagine anything lovelier."

"But one cabbage looks just like another," said the swallow, "and then we so often have bad weather. It is cold here-it freezes."

"That's good for the cabbage," said the hen. "Besides, it's quite warm at times. Didn't we have a hot summer four years ago? For five whole weeks it was so hot that one could scarcely breathe. Then too, we don't have all those poisonous creatures that infest the warm countries, and we don't have robbers. Anyone who doesn't think ours is the most beautiful country is a rascal. Why, he doesn't deserve to live here!" The hen burst into tears. "I have done my share of traveling. I once made a twelve-mile trip in a coop, and there's no pleasure at all in traveling."

"Isn't the hen a sensible woman!" said Bertha, the doll. "I don't fancy traveling in the mountains because first you go up and then you go down. No, we will move out by the sand pit and take our walks in the cabbage patch."

That settled the matter.

Saturday

"Shall we have some stories?" little Hjalmar asked, as soon as Ole Lukoie had put him to bed.

"There's no time for any tonight," Ole told him, as he spread his best umbrella over the boy. "Just look at these Chinamen."

The whole umbrella looked like a large Chinese bowl, with blue trees and arched bridges on which little Chinamen stood nodding their heads.

"We must have all the world spruced up by tomorrow morning," said Ole. "It's a holiday because it is Sunday. I must go to church steeples to see that the little church goblins are polishing the bells so that they will sound their best. I must go out into the fields to see whether the wind is blowing the dust off of the leaves and grass, and my biggest job of all will be to take down all the stars and shine them. I put them in my apron, but first each star must be numbered and the hole from which it comes must be numbered the same, so that they go back in their proper places, or they wouldn't stick. Then we would have too many falling stars, for one after another would come tumbling down."

"Oh I say, Mr Lukoie," said an old portrait that hung on the wall of Hjalmar's bedroom. "I am Hjalmar's great-grandfather. I thank you for telling the boy your stories, but you mustn't put wrong ideas in his head. The stars can't be taken down and polished. The stars are worlds too, just like the earth, and that's the beauty of them."

"My thanks, you old great-grandfather," said Ole Lukoie. "I thank you, indeed! You are the head of the family, you are the oldest of the ancestors, but I am older than you are. I am an old heathen. The Greeks and the Romans called me their god of dreams. I have been to the nobles' homes, and still go there. I know how to behave with all people, great and small. Now you may tell stories yourself." Ole Lukoie tucked his umbrella under his arm and took himself off.

"Well! It seems one can't even express an opinion these days," the old portrait grumbled. And Hjalmar woke up.

Sunday

"Good evening," said Ole Lukoie.

Hjalmar nodded, and ran to turn his great-grandfather's portrait to the wall so that it wouldn't interrupt them, as it had the night before.

"Now," he said, "you must tell stories; about the five peas who lived in a pod, about the rooster's foot-track that courted the hen's foot-track, and about the darning needle who gave herself such airs because she thought she was a sewing needle."

"That would be too much of a good thing," said Ole Lukoie. "You know that I would rather show you things. I shall show you my own brother. He too is named Ole Lukoie, but he comes only once to anyone. When he comes he takes people for a ride on his horse, and tells them stories. He only knows two. One is more beautiful than anyone on earth can imagine, and the other is horrible beyond description." Then Ole Lukoie lifted little Hjalmar up to the window. "There," he said, "you can see my brother, the other Ole Lukoie. He is also called Death. You can see that he doesn't look nearly as bad as they make him out to be in the picture books, where he is only bones and knuckles. No, his coat is embroidered with silver. It is the magnificent uniform of a hussar, and a cloak of black velvet floats behind him and billows over his horse. See how he gallops along."

And Hjalmar saw how the other Ole Lukoie rode off on his horse with young folk as well as old people. He took some up before him, and some behind, but first he always asked

them:

"What conduct is marked on your report card?" They all said, "Good", but he said, "Indeed. Let me see for myself." Then they had to show him the card. All those who were marked "very good" or "excellent," he put on his horse in front of him, and told them a lovely story. But those who were marked "below average" or "bad" had to ride behind him, and he told them a frightful tale. They shivered and wept, and tried to jump down off the horse. But this they couldn't do. They had immediately grown fast to it.

"Why, Death is the most beautiful Ole Lukoie," Hjalmar exclaimed. "I'm not afraid of him."

"You needn't be," Ole Lukoie told him, "only be sure that you have a good report card."

"There now, that's instructive," great-grandfather's portrait muttered. "It certainly helps to speak one's mind." He was completely satisfied.

You see, that's the story of Ole Lukoie. Tonight he himself can tell you some more.