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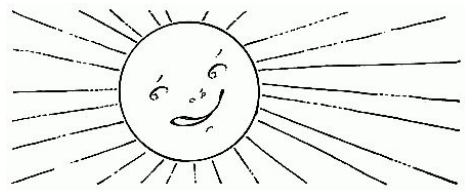
READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

Sunshine Stories

Hans Christian Andersen

"I'm going to tell a story," said the Wind. "Excuse me," said the Rain, "but now it's my turn. Haven't you been howling around the corner for so long, as hard as you could?"

"Is this the gratitude you show me?" said the Wind. "I, who turn everything inside out in your honor - yes, even blow apart all the umbrellas because people want nothing to do with you."



"Now I will speak," said Sunshine. "Silence!" Sunshine said it with such glory and power that the tired wind fell to the ground, and the rain, beating against him and shaking him, said:

"We can't take it! She always breaks through - that's typical Mrs. Sunshine. Let's not listen to her. What she has to say isn't worth hearing." But Sunshine continued to speak, and this is what she said:

"Once a beautiful swan flew over the rolling, turbulent waves of the ocean. Each of its feathers shone like gold, and one feather drifted to the large merchant ship that, with its sails ready, sailed away.

The feather fell on the lightly curling hair of a young man whose job it was to take care of the goods on the ship - he was called the supercargo. The lucky bird's feather touched his forehead and became a golden pen in his hand. It brought him so much luck that he soon became a rich merchant, rich enough to buy golden spurs for himself and rich enough to turn a golden plate into the shield of a nobleman, on which I shone with my sunbeams," said Sunshine.

"The swan flew on, away and away, over the sunny green meadow, where a little shepherd boy, only seven years old, lay in the shade of the old tree, the only tree to be seen.

During his flight, the swan kissed one of the leaves of the tree, and when it fell into the boy's hand, the leaf turned into three leaves - then into ten leaves and then into a whole book. In the book, he read about all the wonders of nature, about his mother tongue, about faith, and knowledge. At night, he put the book under his pillow so he wouldn't forget what he had read.



The beautiful book also led him to the classroom and from there everywhere, seeking knowledge. I read his name among the names of learned men," said Sunshine.

"The swan flew into the quiet, lonely forest and rested for a while on the deep, dark lake where lilies grow, where wild apples can be found on the shore, where the cuckoo and the wild dove have their homes.

In the forest, a poor woman was gathering firewood, fallen branches and dry twigs. She carried them in a bundle on her back, and in her arms, she held her little child. She, too, saw the golden swan, the lucky bird, rising from the reeds on the shore. What was it that glimmered there? It was a golden egg that was still quite warm. She placed it against her chest so it would stay warm. There was life in the egg! She heard the soft tapping inside the shell, but she thought it was her own heart beating.

At home in her poor little house, she brought out the egg. "Tap! Tap!" she heard as if it were a golden watch, but it was not. It was an egg, a real, living egg.

The egg cracked open, and a dear little baby swan, completely covered in feathers of the purest gold, pushed its little head out. Around its neck were four rings, and since this woman had four boys - three at home, and the little one who was with her in the lonely forest - she immediately understood that there was a ring for each boy. Just as she had picked them up, the golden bird flew away.

She kissed each ring herself, let each of the children kiss one of the rings, and placed the ring next to the heart of a child for a while before putting the ring on their finger. "I saw it all," said Sunshine, "and I saw what happened next."

The egg cracked open... One of the boys, while playing by a ditch, took a lump of

clay in his hand, turned around, and twisted the clay until it took the shape of Jason, who went in search of the Golden Fleece and found it.

The second boy ran out to the meadow where the flowers were - flowers of every color imaginable. He gathered a handful and squeezed them so tightly that the sap flew into his eyes, and some of the sap moistened the ring on his hand. The colors tickled everywhere and crept into his head and hands. After many days and many years, people in the big city spoke of the famous artist he had become.

The third child held the ring between his teeth, so tight that it made a sound. The echo of a song from the depths of his heart could be heard. Then thoughts and emotions rose in beautiful sounds, like singing swans, and they dove, also like swans, into the deep sea. He became a great composer, a true music master, of whom every country has the right to say, "He was ours, and he belonged to the world."

And the fourth little boy - yes, he was the "ugly duckling" of the family. They said he had to eat a lot of pepper and butter because he ate like a sick chicken. He received a warm, sunny kiss from me," said Sunshine. "He even got ten kisses instead of one. He became a poet and was kissed but also tormented and persecuted for his whole life.

But he held onto what no one could take away from him - the ring of fortune from the golden swan of Fortune. His thoughts flew on and on like singing butterflies and became symbols of an immortal life."

"That was a terribly long story," said the Wind.

"And such a stupid and tiring story," said the Rain. "Please blow on me, Wind, so I can liven up a bit."

And while the Wind blew, Sunshine said, "The swan of Fortune flew over the beautiful bay where the fishermen had set their nets. The poorest fisherman among them wanted to get married - and he did.

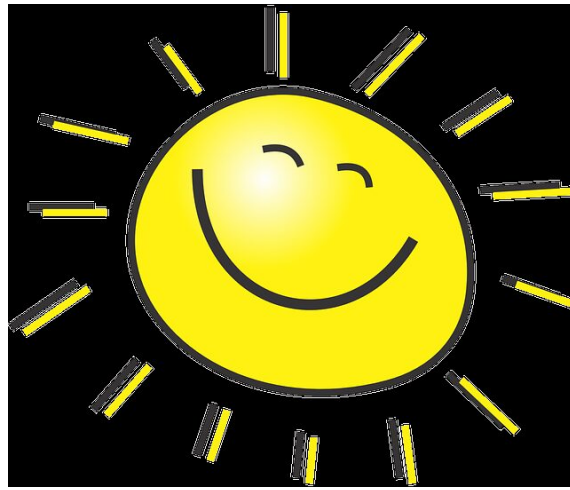
For him, the swan brought a piece of amber. Amber and barnacle attract things to themselves. This piece attracted hearts to the house where the fisherman lived with his bride. Amber is the best incense, and a gentle scent filled the house, like in a holy place. It smelled like the sweet breath of the beautiful nature that God made. And the fisherman and his wife were happy and grateful in their peaceful home, even content in their poverty. And so their life became a real Sunshine story."

"I think we really should stop now," said the Wind. "I'm terribly bored. That Sunshine has talked long enough."

"I think so too," said the Rain.

And what do we others say who have heard this story?

We just say, "Now the story is over."



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