

KONSTANTIN KONSTANTINOV

WHEN CHILDREN FALL ASLEEP

- "Cuckoo-cuckoo, cuckoo-cuckoo, cuckuckoo-coo," sang the wooden clock above the bed several times and fell silent.

Mummy leans over Kate's crib, caresses Kate's cheek and says:

- Sleep, my child, sleep!

One of Kate's hands is holding the new Fifi doll that was gifted to her yesterday morning, the other is under the blanket. Mom turns off the light and tiptoes out. Kate's hand relaxes and Fifi slips out of her grasp. The room is dim. Only in the corner does the lamp in front of the icon sparkle. The earth sleeps, the room sleeps, Kate sleeps, Vanyo sleeps, everyone and everything sleeps.

Everything? No, no. Here, look: a moonbeam quietly slips through the window - blue as a silk thread, moves here and there and stops by the cot. Someone sighs slightly: Fifi, the new doll from yesterday, stomps on the ground and whispers:

"Well, they finally fell asleep!"

Suddenly there is noise and laughter. The red clown claps his hands and giggles loudly. And from under the bed comes the shrill voice of the old rag doll with an ink face-Aunt Tota.

"Faster, faster, everybody-there's no time!" The guests will come now. The little lantern spins by itself and whistles softly: tin-tin-tin-tin. Foxy-the glass puppy unglues his step and shakes himself. The big felt Mummy Bear yawns and stretches. And from behind the box of cubes, the porcelain Cinderella doll appears - with one broken foot and wearing only a shirt.

Aunt Tota's shrill voice is heard again: she is very restless. They will be celebrating Fifi's wedding to Petra, Vanyo's sailor doll tonight. Guests will arrive. They have to prepare everything, and no one cares, no one is in a hurry...

"Miss Fifi, Miss Fifi!" cried Aunt Tota, waving her two soft hands desperately. "Come let me change your clothes." Where is Mr. Peter-why is he not there yet? Oh my God, we're going to be late again! It will be a morning soon - and we will not be ready.

The glass Foxy jumps around Mummy Bear and the red Clown claps his hands and sings:

"Hey, you Mummy Bear, your long fleece is unwashed!"

"Cinderella, go in a hurry and call Mr. Peter!" Aunt Tota shouts.

But Mr. Peter is already arriving - wide-eyed, red-cheeked, in a sailor's blouse and blue trousers.

"Give the bride the flowers," cried the rag-tag aunt, "and let me prepare your clothes!"

But what is this noise and clatter? What is this clang of guns and noise? One by one, the lead soldiers jump out of the box next to Vanyo's bed and form. The captain with golden epaulettes is outside, looking sternly at them. They are also preparing for the wedding. Here they formed in fours - and – stamping their feet - marched to the bride's house. Other guests are already arriving: a rubber elephant groans and wobbles. Phrrrrrr - a tin car with a driver nailed to it pulls up and stops.

- Oh oh! Aunt Tota wailed. "The guests have come, but we are not ready yet!" What about the house-where is the house?

Suddenly, colorful tiles, columns and towers come out of the box of stone cubes one after the other. In a little while the house will be ready.

They leave Cinderella to clean and tidy the house and the wedding goes off. At the head, the lantern sways on one leg and hums: tin-tin-tin-tin. Behind it go the bride and groom, adorned with white flowers, she in a Tyrolean dress, he in his sailor suit. Behind them comes Aunt Tota with her wooden crotch, and her painted face laughs contentedly: "Oh, they've got a wedding, it's a miracle!" The glass Foxy barks and jumps around, and the Clown runs forward, lines up next to the lantern and claps his hands solemnly. Behind Aunt Tota, Mummy Bear and the rubber Elephant slowly walk up and whisper amicably. After them comes the lead captain with his company. Finally, the empty car pulled up. And through the window peeps the smiling moon and wishes a good of health along its blue silk threads.

So the procession goes through the room, going from one corner to the other.

But they just get to the middle, and something stops them. A panting little mouse bows deeply and says in a shrill voice:

"Ladies and gentlemen, my father, the great Mouse, has sent me to invite you all to dinner." He has heard of the wedding and has prepared a rich feast in your honor. Welcome, ladies and gentlemen!

- Hooray! the red Clown shouted and clapped, and Foxy barked with joy. Mummy Bear got up on two legs, danced and mumbled: "We'll eat, we'll drink!"

- Right shoulder forward - quick march! commanded the lead captain. And they all went to visit old Mouse.

Old Mouse ate at night in the cupboard where they kept apples, sausages, sugar and walnuts. A sumptuous meal was indeed served there. Sam the Mouse with his wife and five little mice served the

guests. Everyone sat down, and since Mr. Peter the bridegroom's legs did not fold, he lay down completely on a few cut fibres of wool. Only the driver, who was pinned to his car, remained outside.

"Please, help yourself, dear guests!" - invited the old Mouse. "Try that bacon, that rind of cheese!" Here's pastrami and butter. The best meal was collected and brought here from the whole house and from the neighbors. Then we'll drink a toast to the health of the newlyweds.

When all had eaten, the little mice brought cups of hazelnut shells and poured wine. The smallest mouse served to the driver, who promised to give him a ride later. Soon all guests around the table cheered and old Mouse asked everyone to sing. Can you have a wedding without songs! The mice began to sing:

When cats sleep

*and dream of mouse for a breakfast - the mice wake up
and feast as royals until dawn. Lalala, lalala, lalala -
and feast like royals until dawn!*

- Well done! Well done! clapped the red Clown. "Now we will continue!" - And all the wedding guests sing:

When children fall asleep

*And dream of toys alive -toys wake up and watch
and they celebrate their own holidays. Lalala, lalala, lalala -
and they celebrate their own holidays.*

The whole company started to sing and danced:

Lalala, lalala, lalala -

and mice and dolls dance. Lalala, lalala, lalala -

and everyone have fun until dawn!

They drank a toast again - now to the long life of old Mouse and all his family. But just at that time the distant morning trumpet from the city barracks reached through the walls. Suddenly the lead captain jumped up and ordered, "Stand by!"

- and the whole company is being formed. But the soldiers struggled to stand upright. Now their legs were even heavier and their heads were spinning. The groomsmen got up, kissed the mouse family and headed home.

Everyone was cheerful and walking no longer in order. Only the driver was angry that he was left waiting alone all night. But here's the trouble: no one could remember the way. They droop their eyelids and returned to the same place three times. Mummy Bear had her arms around the red Clown and was singing in his ear:

We celebrated an engagement last night,

tonight – we have a wedding party!

Lalala, mouse feast,

lalala, bear song,

lalala, doll wedding!

Suddenly something lit up: the first sun bunny danced on the wall. At once the lead captain commanded: "Into the box - march at a gallop!" - and the whole company, together with the Elephant, trotted forward.

The driver got angry that he was late, coiled the spring hard and flew off - bang! - right into the newly built stone house of the newlyweds. The tiles fell, Fifi and Mr. Peter fainted, Aunt Tota hid under the bed, Foxy suddenly became petrified, the red Clown stuck his nose in the ground, and Mummy Bear lay on her back and pretended to be dead. Awoken by the noise and the sun, Kate peeked out of her cot and rubbed her eyes:

- Oh, dear! How they all rolled! Did I dream that I put them into the box last night, or did they come out on their own?...