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HOW DO YOU OVERCOME FEAR? (BASED ON “MIO, MY SON” BY ASTRID LINDGREN)

Astrid Lindgren lived in Sweden, which is located in Northern Europe, on the Scandinavian Peninsula. Sweden, together with other countries (Denmark and Norway), is part of this historic territory.

The ancestors of the Swedes are called *Vikings*. They were very brave and courageous, and they sailed a lot on their boats to other lands. Vikings sailed from Scandinavia to Byzantium and further to Arab countries. Thus, the Vikings reached the historical territories of Ukraine – Kyivan Rus. Some of the Kyivan princes even trace their lineage back to the Vikings. Some Vikings served in the Kyiv army and then settled in the Ukrainian lands (they called Ukrainian territories *Gårdarike*, which means “the land of cities”).

The house where Astrid Lindgren lived in her childhood is called *Näs*. Swedes often name their houses. *Näs* is situated on the outskirts of a little town called *Vimmerby*, where the writer was born. She wrote, “We have two things that define our childhood: security and freedom.”

A. Lindgren’s fairytale “Mio, My Son” is a story about overcoming your fear, about how a lonely and resentful boy overcame his fears and became a real hero. He and his friend were able to overcome evil and free children and adults from captivity.

The main hero of Astrid Lindgren’s book “Mio, My Son” is a nine-year-old boy living in Stockholm. His name is *Bo Vilhelm Olsson*, but nobody calls him that. They simply call him *Bosse*. He also has a friend named *Bengt* or simply *Ben*. They lived and often played on *Uppland Street* in Stockholm. But *Ben* was happier than *Bosse* because he had a family – a father with whom he built planes and went for walks, and a mother who allowed him to invite friends home.

Bosse felt unhappy because he had neither a father nor a mother. He was taken from an orphanage by aunt *Edla* and uncle *Sixten*. They treated him severely and did not allow the boy anything – to speak loudly, nor to laugh merrily, nor to invite friends... And he was often bullied by the boys from *Uppland Street*. And there was no one to protect him. So *Bosse* often felt very lonely and sad. He wanted so much for *Ben’s* dad to be his dad... But it was impossible in the real world.

By the way, any violence against children – physical or psychological – is prohibited in Sweden. Parents have no right to hit children or raise their voice. In Sweden, there is a principle called *Barnets bästa*. It means “*what is best for children.*”

But *Bosse* had neither parental respect nor love. However, even when there seems to be no way out, some new door to another world can open ...

FICTION THROUGH THE AGES

Bosse lived in Uppland Street. *Uppland* is the name of a historic province on the east coast of Sweden, north from Stockholm. What is it famous for? It turns out that Swedish kings liked to live here. Soon, we will find out that Bosse is a prince – son of a fairytale king. Uppland also has the largest number of Viking rune stones preserved since ancient times. *Runes* are inscriptions or writings that were left by Vikings in ancient times – about their travels, events of their lives, relatives, etc.

Bosse, who at first glance is weak, sad and hurt, is actually a descendant of Vikings and the son of a king! He, a small and lonely boy, has a great inner strength. Only at first he did not know what power was hidden in him... Astrid Lindgren believed that every child, every person has a great gift. First of all, the gift of fantasy, dreams. And if you strive for something very much, the dream will become a reality.

Bosse dreamed a lot about having a father like Ben's and a warm and cozy home like Ben's. And Bosse's dream came true! He went on the wings of his imagination to the Faraway Land, where the one who had been looking for him for a long time was waiting for him ...

From Uppland Street, where nobody loved him, the boy set out on a fairytale journey. Neither aunt Edla nor uncle Sixten saw him again in the ordinary world. But in the fantasy world Bosse will travel, discover new lands, perform feats and tell us about it on his own behalf in the story.

The park where Bosse's adventures begin was based off Tegner Park in Stockholm (*Tegnérlunden*). This is a real park where Astrid Lindgren liked to walk. It has existed since 1890, and today, there is a sculpture in honor of the writer installed in this park.

Mrs. Lundin, the fruit shop seller, gave him a beautiful apple and asked him to put a postcard in the box. And on the card, there were words: "To the King, Farawayland. The one you have long searched for is on his way. He travels by day and by night, and he carries in his hand the sign, a beautiful golden apple."

Busse looked at his apple, and it was golden! And then another miracle happened! From an ordinary empty bottle in the park, a spirit appeared (similar to a jinn from "A Thousand and One Nights"). He saw a secret sign in the boy's hand – a golden apple. And he said, "You're the one that I've come to bring back. You're the one that the King has been searching for so long!"

They flew to Faraway Land on a green island. There was a white castle on the island, and father the King was walking along the shore toward the boy.

"Mio, my son, how much you've grown again," he says when we measure. "Mio, my son," he says, and it sounds so warm and comforting. It turns out that my real name isn't Bosse at all.

"I searched nine long years for you," says my father the King. "I used to lie awake at night saying to myself, 'Mio, my son.' So I'd know your name well."

That shows you. Calling me Bosse was a mistake, like everything else when I lived on North Street. Now it's all been set right. I love my father the King, and he loves me."

The boy's dream came true, but the father's dream also came true. This could have been the end of the fairy tale, but the main and most interesting events are still ahead.

FICTION THROUGH THE AGES

Bosse got a rose garden with thousands of flowers and silver poplars. He also got a friend with an unusual name – *Yum-Yum*, Master Rose Gardener’s son. Yum-Yum looked like Ben, with the same eyes. He became a true and loyal friend to Mio.

Mio and Yum-Yum built a hut in the rose garden, listened to the birds singing and laughed merrily. And this laughter pleased father the King so much, because he knew that his son was happy.

His father the king knew what Mio loved most. He loved horses. And the king gave him the best horse in the world – a white horse with a golden mane. And they named him *Miramis*. Mio and Yum-Yum often sat on a horse and traveled to different parts of the Faraway Land. It was a great kingdom. Greenfields Island, where the King’s palace stood, was only a small part of the kingdom.

In the Faraway Land they sang and played one ancient melody. Mio and Yum-Yum heard it from the shepherd Nonno, who made them flutes and taught them to play this wonderful melody.

You can hear the melody played in Faraway Land in the movie “Mio in the Land of Faraway,” which was created in 1987 by a team from Sweden, Norway and other countries. The script for “Mio in the Land of Faraway” was written by William Aldridge. The movie starred Nicholas Pickard and Christian Bale, Christopher Lee, Susannah York and others. Music was created by Benny Andersson and Anders Eljas.

“We must be careful with our flutes,” I said to Yum-Yum, “and if we ever become separated, we’ll play this old melody.”

Yum-Yum held his arms tightly around me with his head leaning against my back, so he wouldn’t fall off the horse. “Yes, Mio,” he said, “we must be careful with our flutes, and if you hear my flute playing you’ll know that I’m calling you.”

“Yes,” I said, “and if you hear me playing, you’ll know that I’m calling you.”

Apart from shepherd Nonno’s melody, there is also a song called “Mio My Mio” in the film. Astrid Lindgren wrote its lyrics herself. This song was performed by Karin Glenmark, a member of the Swedish band “Gemini.” This band existed in 1984-1987. It consisted of a brother and a sister, Karin and Anders Glenmark.

Through the garden of roses
With the silver poplars
I walk with my father, holding his hand hard
And from the highest tree
I hear a lonely bird
Sing about the cruel country outside
And my heart trembles when my father’s voice is heard
Mio, my Mio
Over the garden of roses
Dusk is coming
And I see my bird
Throwing itself towards the sky

FICTION THROUGH THE AGES

With its broad wings
It flies straight towards the heavens
Flies towards the black country outside
And my heart trembles when my father's voice is heard
Mio, my Mio
Mio, my Mio

After a while, the friends found out that apart from Faraway Land, there is also THE CRUEL WORLD OUTSIDE. If you wanted to go from Faraway Land to the Land on the Other Side of the Water, you had to go over the Bridge of Morninglight. But at night, the King draws the bridge up, so that everyone can sleep calmly on Greenfields Island.

“Why?” I asked. “Who would come at night?”

“Sir Kato,” said Yum-Yum. The moment he said it I felt an icy wind, and Miramis began trembling.

It was the first time that I'd heard Sir Kato's name. “Sir Kato,” I said to myself, and the sound of it made me shiver.

“Yes, the cruel Sir Kato,” said Yum-Yum. Miramis neighed loudly, almost a scream, so we stopped talking about Sir Kato.

Who is Sir Kato, whose name makes nature go still? Beyond the Faraway Land, there was an Outer Land. Sir Kato ruled there. He had a heart of stone and an iron claw. He took children and turned them into Bewitched Birds. That's why many sad Bewitched Birds lived in Outer Land. With his iron claw, he took a living person's heart out and put a cold stone in its place. Everything Kato touched became black and dead... That's why there is a Dead forest, a Dead Lake, a black castle in his Outer Land... Eternal night and eternal darkness reigned in the Outer Land. And everyone was watched by Kato's servants – spies.

Mio and Yum-Yum learned about all this from the shepherd Nonno. His two brothers were taken away by Kato. And Totty told the boys about it, because his sister was also taken by Kato. And from the weaver who wove the magic cloth, Kato took away her daughter Milimani, who turned into a bird...

So, Sir Kato made many people and many children unhappy. His land – Outer Land – has turned into a land of evil and darkness.

Only the king's son Mio could free the world from Kato. He was destined to do so. At first he did not know it, and he could not even guess that he came to this world for this purpose. But his father the King knew about this. He knew that his son was destined to become a hero.

“As we rode out of the Garden of Roses I heard my father the King shout. “Mio, my son!” he cried, and it was the saddest voice I'd ever heard. But I couldn't turn back. I couldn't.”

Mio's father the King knows that someone has to take this responsibility for the world. He does not hide his son from the fight. He does not shield him. On the contrary, he knows

FICTION THROUGH THE AGES

that he must go – to protect, fight, save the people. Just as the Ukrainian military are doing now, defending our country.

“As we sat on Miramis’s back, far beyond the Forest of Moonbeams I saw a country where it was completely dark, and the darkness wasn’t peaceful. I couldn’t look at it without shuddering.

“What’s that terrible land over there?” I said to Yum-Yum.

“Outer Land starts there,” said Yum-Yum. “It’s the border country of Outer Land.”

“Sir Kato’s land?” I asked.

When he heard this Miramis trembled with fright, and a large boulder broke loose from the mountain and rumbled down into the valley below.

Yes, there was only one danger – Sir Kato. He was the one I was scared of. So scared, so scared. But I tried not to think about him any more.”

Still, Mio was able to overcome his fear. When did this happen? It happened when he met a Weaver weaving the cloth of dreams and heard the Sorrowbird sing.

“I stood there in the middle of the floor in the cottage and listened through the open window, as Sorrowbird sang outside. He had sung to me for many nights in the Garden of Roses, but I hadn’t understood what he was singing about. Now I knew. He sang about all the stolen ones, of the Weaver’s little daughter, of Nonno’s brothers and Totty’s sister and many, many others whom the cruel Sir Kato had captured and taken to his castle. This was why people mourned in the little cottages on Greenfields Island and in the Land on the Other Side of the Water and Beyond the Mountains. They mourned for their children, for all the children who were gone.

Sir Kato! I was so scared of him. So scared, so scared! But as I stood there in the cottage, listening to Sorrowbird, something strange occurred to me. Suddenly I knew why I had ridden through the Forest of Moonbeams tonight. Beyond the forest the border country to Outer Land began. It was there that I actually must go. I must go there to fight Sir Kato, though I was so scared, so scared. Yes, I wanted to cry when I realized what I must do.”

This is how courage began to be born in the heart of little Mio. When compassion for others and the desire to free them become greater than fear. Yum-Yum didn’t leave his friend, and they set out on a dangerous journey together.

“The path narrowed. The dark mountains rose higher. The darkness thickened. At last we came to something that looked like a door, a narrow opening between the rocks. Behind it was a darkness blacker than any other darkness in the world.

“Outer Land,” whispered Pompoo. “It’s the entrance to Outer Land.” <...>

I knew that I must go into the darkness. And yet I wasn’t scared any more. Now that I knew it had been foretold for thousands and thousands of years that I was to pass through this dark doorway, I felt braver. I knew that no matter what happened, I was going. Maybe I would never return, but I made up my mind not to be scared.”

FICTION THROUGH THE AGES

To fight, our heroes need weapons. The old man Eno, whom the boys fed with bread, showed them the way to the Swordsmith, who was to give Mio a magic sword that cuts through stone, because Kato has a heart of stone.

Eno said another important thing. Everywhere in the Outer Land, there are spies. Spies are Kato's servants who look for "enemies" for Kato to destroy. They spy and they search all day and all night... That's why you cannot trust anybody there.

But at the same time, like Eno said, "There are still a few people in this land who aren't traitors. And there are still some who forge weapons." Eno sent the boys to the Swordsmith to get a sword, but the way was not easy...

Mio's heart shuddered from the moaning of Bewitched Birds flying everywhere. "I longed to meet Sir Kato, even if it meant I would die. The promised battle must be now, even if there wouldn't be a Mio anymore when it was over."

But the spies got on the trail of the boys. And they stole the most precious thing Mio had – his horse Miramis. And FEAR returned to the boy again.

"I wanted to shout at them to leave my horse alone, but I didn't. Who would fight Sir Kato if I was captured by the spies? Oh, why must I be the one who would fight Sir Kato? I regretted it terribly, as I hid behind the rocks. Why hadn't I stayed at home with my father the King, where no one could take my horse from me! I heard the Bewitched Birds wailing out over the lake, but I didn't care about them. I didn't care about them at all. They could continue being bewitched, if only I got back my Miramis with the golden mane."

When he was lying behind a rock, he heard his father the King's voice.

"I wish that [father had] been there and could help me. I wish that I could've talked to him for a little while. Then I would have said to him, "I know you want me to fight Sir Kato, but won't you please let me off? Help me get Miramis back and let us leave! You know I've never had my own horse before and I love him. You also know I've never had a father either. And if Sir Kato captures me, I will never be with you again. Help me leave! I don't want to be here any more. I want to be with you. I want to go home again to Greenfields Island with Miramis."

As I was hiding behind the rocks, I thought I heard my father the King's voice. Of course I only imagined it, but I thought that I heard his voice.

"Mio, my son," he said.

Nothing more. But I understood that he wanted me to be brave and not lie there crying and screaming like a child, even though they took my Miramis away from me."

Mio's father-king wanted to provide moral support to his son so that he could be courageous and fulfill his duty. And Mio has changed!

"I was a knight. I was no longer the Mio that built huts in the Garden of Roses and wandered over the hills on Greenfields Island playing the flute. I was a knight, a good knight, not one like Sir Kato. And a knight must be brave and not cry."

FICTION THROUGH THE AGES

At first, the hero was a lonely boy who was insulted by everyone and could not resist the circumstances. Then he became a happy and cheerful prince, the son of his father the King. Now he is a good knight who does not turn from his path. But he still has to go to the end to defeat Sir Kato and become a hero who will free the whole world.

On this heroic path Mio will have many more dangers. The boys will be chased by spies, but the old tree will protect them. When the spies caught up with them again, the rock parted and they found themselves inside the mountain.

Here was a new test – Mio and Yum-Yum got lost in a dark cave. AND FEAR RETURNED TO MIO. But he heard his father the King's voice again.

“For the first time I almost thought that my father the King had been a little unfair wanting me to take such risks. But as I lay there crying it was like I really heard my father the King's voice. I know it was my imagination, but I really thought I heard him. “Mio, my son,” he said.

No more. But it sounded as if he meant there was nothing to be sad about.”

Mio didn't despair. The magic flute melody helped the boys find each other.

“We walked and walked, and we didn't feel so small and lost anymore. Because we were together and we played on our flutes. The old melody sounded clear and pretty in the Blackest Mountain, and it was as if it wanted to comfort us and help us to be brave.”

Nature itself (the forest, the lake, the mountains..) helps Mio and Yum-Yum on the way to victory, as well as the Bewitched Birds. One Bewitched Bird sacrificed herself and extinguished the torch with her wings so that the scouts would not see the boys. It was the daughter of a weaver – Milimani. Poor Milimani burned in the fire, saving the heroes at the cost of her life...

The Swordsmith gave Mio a magic sword which could cut stone. And it was with this sword that Mio was to kill Kato with. But the boys ended up in Kato's dark prison. Kato threw Mio's sword into the lake. The boys were dying of hunger. But again, help came unexpectedly. The spoon of Totty's sister turned out to be magical and fed them.

The Bewitched Birds took the sword from the lake and brought it to Mio.

And Mio's cloak was also magical – it made him invisible. Mio does what he has to. In an Invisible Cloak, he sneaks into Kato's castle. And he has changed again. He is not just a knight or a good knight. He is a knight preparing for battle.

“I was no longer scared. I have never been less frightened. I was not the Mio who built huts in the Garden of Roses and lived on Greenfields Island. I was a knight preparing for battle. And I ran on toward Sir Kato's room.”

Mio fought with Kato, and after that only a pile of stones and an iron claw remained. Courage and goodness defeated the universal evil. And the world began to change!

The Bewitched Birds turned into children again. Eno and the Swordsmith became free, as well as other people who, pale and exhausted, sailed their boats on the lake. And even in

FICTION THROUGH THE AGES

the Dead Forest, green leaves began to appear.

Even Milimani, according to the laws of fairy tales, resurrected and was able to return to her mother. Other children also returned to their parents. They flew on white horses in the moonlight, and Miramis flew ahead... And the Bridge of Morninglight shone with golden rays.

And Mio's father the King met his son in a rose garden with silver poplars, he hugged his son and whispered joyfully, "Mio, my son!" And the ancient melody of that land sounded everywhere ...

References:

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