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Opening extract from

Adventures of the Little Wooden Horse: Macmillan Classics Edition

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Published by

Macmillan Children's Books

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With a foreword
by Vivian French

ADVENTURES of the LITTLE WOODEN HORSE

Ursula
Moray Williams

Illustrated by Joyce Lankester Brisley

MACMILLAN CHILDREN'S BOOKS

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The Little Wooden Horse

One day Uncle Peder made a little wooden horse. This was not at all an extraordinary thing, for Uncle Peder made toys every day of his life, but oh, this was such a brave little horse, so gay and splendid on his four green wheels, so proud and dashing with his red saddle and blue stripes! Uncle Peder had never made so fine a little horse before.

"I shall ask five shillings for this little wooden horse!" he cried.

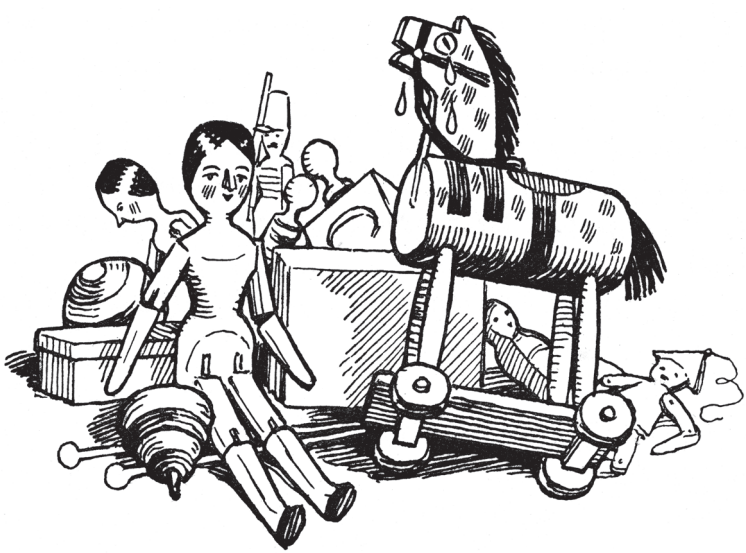
What was his surprise when he saw large tears trickling down the newly painted face of the little wooden horse.

"Don't do that!" said Uncle Peder. "Your paint will run. And what is there to cry about? Do you want more spots on your sides? Do you wish for bigger wheels? Do you creak? Are you stiff? Aren't your stripes broad enough? Upon my word I can

see nothing to cry about! I shall certainly sell you for five shillings!"

But the tears still ran down the newly painted cheeks of the little wooden horse, till at last Uncle Peder lost patience. He picked him up and threw him on the pile of wooden toys he meant to sell in the morning. The little wooden horse said nothing at all, but went on crying. When night came and the toys slept in the sack under Uncle Peder's chair the tears were still running down the cheeks of the little wooden horse.

In the morning Uncle Peder picked up the sack and set out to sell his toys.



At every village he came to the children ran out to meet him, crying, "Here's Uncle Peder! Here's Uncle Peder come to sell his wooden toys!"

Then out of the cottages came the mothers and the fathers, the grandpas and the grandmas, the uncles and the aunts, the elder cousins and the godparents, to see what Uncle Peder had to sell.

The children who had birthdays were very fortunate: they had the best toys given to them, and could choose what they would like to have. The children who had been good in school were lucky too. Their godparents bought them wooden pencil-boxes and rulers and paper-cutters, like grown-up people. The little ones had puppets, dolls, marionettes, and tops. Uncle Peder had made them all, painting the dolls in red and yellow, the tops in blue, scarlet, and green. When the children had finished choosing, their mothers, fathers, grandpas, grandmas, uncles, aunts, elder cousins, and godparents sent them home, saying, "Now let's hear no more of you for another year!" Then they stayed behind to gossip with old Peder, who

brought them news from the other villages he had passed by on his way.

Nobody bought the little wooden horse, for nobody had five shillings to spend. The fathers and the mothers, the grandpas and the grandmas, the uncles and the aunts, the elder cousins, and the godparents, all shook their heads, saying, "Five shillings! Well, that's too much! Won't you take any less, Uncle Peder?"

But Uncle Peder would not take a penny less.

"You see, I have never made such a fine little horse before," he said.

All the while the tears ran down the nose of the little wooden horse, who looked very sad indeed, so that when Uncle Peder was alone once more he asked him, "Tell me, my little wooden horse, what is there to cry about? Have I driven the nails crookedly into your legs? Don't you like your nice green wheels and your bright blue stripes? What is there to cry about, I'd like to know?"

At last the little wooden horse made a great

"Tell me, my little wooden horse, what is there to cry about?"

effort and sobbed out, "Oh, master, I don't want to leave you! I'm a quiet little horse, I don't want to be sold. I want to stay with you for ever and ever. I shouldn't cost much to keep, master. Just a little bit of paint now and then; perhaps a little oil in my wheels once a year. I'll serve you faithfully, master, if only you won't sell me for five shillings. I'm a quiet little horse, I am, and the thought of going out into the wide world breaks my heart. Let me stay with you here, master – oh, do!"

Uncle Peder scratched his head as he looked in surprise at his little wooden horse.

"Well," he said, "that's a funny thing to cry about! Most of my toys want to go out into the wide world. Still, as nobody wants to give five shillings for you, and you have such a melancholy expression, you can stop with me for the present, and maybe I won't get rid of you after all."

When Uncle Peder said this the little wooden horse stopped crying at once, and galloped three times round in a circle.

"Why, you're a gay fellow after all!" said Uncle

Peder, as the little wooden horse kicked his legs in the air, so that the four green wheels spun round and round.

"Who would have thought it?" said Uncle Peder.