

# KARLSON ON THE ROOF

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## ASTRID LINDGREN

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# Karlson on the Roof

*Translated from the Swedish  
by Patricia Crampton*

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METHUEN CHILDREN'S BOOKS  
LONDON

## Note to Reader:

*In an earlier translation the names of some of the characters appeared differently. This completely new and modern translation, while altering a few details, remains faithful to the original.*

First published in Great Britain 1958  
by Oxford University Press under the title

Eric and Karlsson-on-the-Roof

New edition first published 1975 by

Methuen Children's Books Ltd

11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE

Reprinted 1977

First published in Sweden as

Lillebror Och Karlsson På Taket

by Rabén & Sjögren, Stockholm

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by Methuen Children's Books Ltd

Printed in Great Britain by

Butler & Tanner Ltd, Frome and London

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# I

## Karlson on the roof

In a perfectly ordinary house in a perfectly ordinary street in Stockholm lives a perfectly ordinary family called Sanderson. They have a perfectly ordinary father and a perfectly ordinary mother and three perfectly ordinary children, Sebastian, Barbara and Midge.

'I'm not at all an ordinary Midge,' said Midge. But that was not true. He was quite ordinary. There are a great many boys of his own age with blue eyes and a snub nose and unwashed ears and trousers with holes in the knees, so Midge certainly is perfectly ordinary, no doubt about it.

His older brother Sebastian, called Bass, likes football and does badly in school, so he is perfectly ordinary, too, and Barbara has her hair tied back in a pony-tail just like all the other perfectly ordinary teenage girls.

There is only one person in the whole house who is extraordinary, and that is Karlson on the Roof. He *lives* up on the roof, does Karlson, and even that is quite extraordinary. It may be different in other parts of the world, but in Stockholm you hardly ever find anyone living in a special little house on top of the roof.

But that is what Karlson does. He is a very small and very stout and determined gentleman, and he can fly. Anyone can fly in an aeroplane or a helicopter but only Karlson can fly all by himself. Karlson has only to turn a knob which is just about in the middle of his stomach and – whoops! – a tiny engine which he has on his back starts up. Karlson stands still for a moment while the engine warms up. And then – when the propeller has got up enough speed – Karlson rises in the air and glides away, as dignified as a bank manager, if you can imagine a bank manager with a propeller on his back.

Karlson is very happy in his little house on the roof. In the evenings he sits on his front doorstep, smoking his pipe and looking at the stars. Of course you can see the stars much better from the roof than anywhere else in the house, so it really is rather strange that more people don't live on the rooftops. But the tenants of the house had no idea that it was possible to live on the roof. They did not even know that Karlson had his little house up there, because it was so well hidden behind the big chimney-stack. And in any case, most people don't notice tiny houses like Karlson's, even when they stumble on them. Once there was a chimney-sweep who caught sight of Karlson's house just as he was going to sweep the chimney, and he was quite startled.

'Odd,' he said to himself, 'there's a house here. You wouldn't believe it, but there's actually a house up here on the roof, though goodness knows how it got there.'

But then he began to sweep the chimney and forgot all about the house and never thought of it again.



It was a very good thing for Midge that he got to know Karlson, because when Karlson flew in everything became exciting. Perhaps Karlson also thought it was a good thing that he got to know Midge, because it can't be all that much fun living quite alone in a house which nobody dreams is there at all. It must be more fun to have someone calling 'Heysan hoppsan, Karlson!' when you come flying in.

This was how Karlson and Midge met one another.

It was one of those back-to-front days when it was no fun at all being Midge. Normally it was very nice to be Midge, because he was the darling and pet of the family, whom everyone spoiled as much as they could. But there were some days when things went wrong. Then he got a scolding from Mother because there was a fresh hole in his trousers and Barbie said 'Blow your nose, boy!' and Daddy shouted because he did not get home from school in good time.

'Why must you roam about the streets?' said Daddy.

Roam about the streets – his father didn't know that Midge had met a dog. A friendly, handsome dog which had sniffed at Midge and wagged its tail and looked as if it would have very much liked to be Midge's own dog.

If it had been up to Midge it could have *become* his dog, right away. But the fact was that his father and mother had no intention of having a dog in the house. And in any case a woman suddenly appeared, calling 'Ricky, come here!' and Midge knew that it could never be his own dog, after all.

'It doesn't look as if I'll ever have a dog of my own,' said Midge bitterly, that day when everything was



going so wrong. 'There's you, Mummy, you've got Daddy, and Bass and Barbie always stick together, but I haven't got anyone.'

'But darling Midge, you've got all of us,' said his mother.

'No, I haven't,' said Midge, still more bitterly, because he suddenly felt as if he really had nobody in the whole world.

At least there was one thing he had, he had a room of his own, and he went to it.

It was a fine, light spring evening and the window was open. The white curtains were blowing gently to and fro as if they were waving to the small, pale stars up there in the spring sky. Midge went over to the window and looked out. He thought about the nice dog he had seen and wondered what it was doing now, if it was lying in its basket in a kitchen somewhere and if a boy – another boy, not Midge – was sitting on the floor beside it, patting its rough head and saying: 'Ricky, you are a good dog'.

Midge sighed deeply. Then he heard a faint buzzing sound. The buzzing grew louder and suddenly a small, fat man came flying slowly past the window. It was Karlson on the Roof, but Midge did not know that yet.

Karlson just gave Midge a long look and glided on. He took a little turn over the rooftops opposite, rounded the chimney-stack and then steered back again towards Midge's window. He had got up speed now and he whistled past Midge, almost like a little helicopter. He rushed past several times and Midge stood there silently, waiting, feeling the tingle of excitement in his

stomach, because it isn't every day that you see small fat men flying outside your window. At last Karlson slowed down just beside the window.

'Heysan hoppsan!' he said. 'Could I come aboard here for a moment?'

'Oh yes, do,' said Midge. 'Isn't it difficult, flying like that?' he said.

'Not for me,' said Karlson importantly. 'It's not difficult at all for *me*. I am the world's best trick flyer. But I wouldn't advise any old clodhopper to try it.'

Midge felt that he himself might be 'any old clodhopper' and decided at once not to try to imitate Karlson's flying tricks.

'What's your name?' said Karlson.

'Midge,' said Midge. 'But actually my name is Sandy Sanderson.'

'How different things can be! My name is Karlson,' said Karlson. 'Just Karlson and nothing else. Heysan hoppsan, Midge!'

'Heysan hoppsan, Karlson!' said Midge.

'How old are you?' asked Karlson.

'I'm seven,' said Midge.

'Good. Keep it up,' said Karlson. He quickly put one of his short fat legs over Midge's window-sill and climbed into the room.

'How old are you?' asked Midge, because it seemed to him that Karlson was rather childish for a grown-up man.

'How old am *I*?' said Karlson. 'I am a man in his prime and that is all I can say.'

Midge didn't really know what that meant – a man in his prime. He wondered if he himself might be a



man in his prime without knowing it and he asked cautiously:

‘Which years are one’s prime?’

‘All of them,’ said Karlson happily. ‘At least, as far as I’m concerned. I am a handsome, intelligent and reasonably stout man in my prime,’ he said.

Then he took down Midge’s steam-engine which was standing on the book-shelf.

‘Shall we get this going?’ he suggested.

‘Daddy won’t let me do that,’ said Midge. ‘Either Daddy or Bass has to be there when I run it.’

‘Daddy or Bass or Karlson on the Roof,’ said Karlson. ‘I’m the world’s best steam-engine driver, you can tell your father that.’

He quickly took the bottle of wood spirit which stood beside the steam-engine, filled the spirit lamp and lighted it. He might have been the world’s best steam-engine driver, but he managed to spill a whole pool of wood spirit on the book-shelf and cheerful blue tongues danced round the steam-engine when the pool caught fire. Midge cried out and ran forward.

‘Easy, take it easy,’ said Karlson, warding him off with a chubby hand.

But Midge could not take it easy when he saw how the fuel burned. He snatched up a rag and beat at the cheerful little flames. Where they had danced there was now a big, ugly patch on the varnish of the book-shelf.

‘Look what’s happened to the book-shelf,’ said Midge anxiously. ‘What will my mother say?’

‘Oh, that’s a mere trifle,’ said Karlson on the Roof. ‘An insignificant patch or two on a book-shelf – that’s a mere trifle, tell your mother.’

He knelt beside the steam-engine and his eyes shone.

‘It will be puffing away properly in a moment,’ he said.

And it was. Soon the steam-engine began to run. Phut-phut-phut, it went. It was the most glorious steam-engine you can imagine and Karlson looked as proud and happy as if he had made it himself.

‘I must check the safety-valve,’ said Karlson, vigorously screwing a little gadget round and round. ‘Accidents always happen if you don’t check the safety-valve.’

Phut-phut-phut, said the steam-engine. It said it faster and faster, phut-phut-phut. At last it sounded as if it were galloping and Karlson’s eyes blazed. Midge stopped worrying about the spots on the book-shelf, he was feeling so happy with his steam-engine and with Karlson, who was the best steam-engine driver in the world, and who had checked the safety-valve so well.

‘Ha ha, Midge!’ said Karlson. ‘This really is a phut-phut-phut, this is! The world’s best steam-engine dri . . .’

He got no further, because just then there was a terrible bang and suddenly there was no steam-engine any more, only little bits of steam-engine scattered all over the room.

‘It’s exploded,’ said Karlson delightedly, just as if this was the best trick you could expect from a steam-engine. ‘It’s really and truly exploded! What a bang, eh?’

But Midge could not be as pleased as he was. Tears came into his eyes.

‘My steam-engine,’ he said. ‘It’s broken.’

‘That is a mere trifle,’ said Karlson, waving his chubby hand carelessly. ‘You can soon get a new steam-engine.’

‘Where from?’ asked Midge.

‘I’ve got several thousand up where I live.’

‘Where is up where you live?’ said Midge.

‘Up where I live in my house on the roof,’ said Karlson.

‘Have you really got a house on the roof?’ said Midge. ‘With several thousand steam-engines in it?’

‘Well, there must be a few hundred at least,’ said Karlson.

‘Oh, I should so much like to see your house,’ said Midge. It sounded so strange that there could be a little house up on the roof and that Karlson lived there.

‘Just think, a house full of steam-engines,’ said Midge. ‘Several hundred steam-engines!’

‘Well, I haven’t counted up exactly how many are left, but there must be several dozen,’ said Karlson. ‘One of them explodes from time to time, but there must be a few dozen left, at least.’

‘Then perhaps I could have one?’ said Midge.

‘Of course,’ said Karlson. ‘Of course!’

‘Right away?’ asked Midge.

‘Mm, I shall have to look around a bit first,’ said Karlson. ‘Check the safety-valves and all that. Easy, just take it easy! You’ll get it another time.’

Midge began to gather up the pieces of what had once been his steam-engine.

‘I do wonder what Daddy’s going to say,’ he muttered anxiously.



Karlson raised his eyebrows in surprise.

‘About the steam-engine?’ he said. ‘A mere trifle which he has no need to worry about, tell him from me. I would tell him myself if I had time to stop and meet him. But I must go home now and look after my house.’

‘It was fun having you,’ said Midge, ‘except for the steam-engine . . . Will you be coming back some time?’

‘Easy, take it easy,’ said Karlson, turning the knob which was more or less in the middle of his stomach. The engine began to cough and Karlson stood still, waiting until it was ready to start. Then he rose and flew round the room once or twice.

‘The engine is knocking,’ he said. ‘I’ll have to go into the garage and get it lubricated. Of course I could do it myself,’ he said, ‘because I am the world’s best engine mender, but I have no time . . . No, I think I’ll send myself to the garage.’

Midge thought that would be best, too.

Karlson steered out through the open window and his little round head stood out clearly against the star-strewn spring sky.

‘Heysan hoppсан, Midge,’ he said and waved his chubby hand.

Karlson had gone.

## Karlson builds a tower

'But I *told* you, his name is Karlson and he lives on the roof,' said Midge. 'What's so strange about that? People can live where they like, can't they?'

'Now Midge, don't be silly,' said his mother. 'You almost scared the life out of us. You could have been killed when the steam-engine exploded, don't you understand that?'

'Yes, but Karlson is the world's best steam-engine driver, you see,' said Midge, gazing solemnly at his mother. He had to make her understand that you could not say No when the world's best steam-engine driver offered to drive your steam-engine.

'You have to own up to what you do, Midge,' said his father. 'Not blame someone called Karlson on the Roof, who doesn't exist.'

'He does exist,' said Midge.

'And he can fly, too,' said Bass teasingly.

'Yes, it's true, he can,' said Midge. 'I hope he'll come back and then you will see for yourself.'

'Perhaps he'll come tomorrow,' said Barbie. 'I'll give you ten pence, Midge, if I can see Karlson on the Roof.'

‘He won’t be coming tomorrow,’ said Midge, ‘because he’s got to go into the garage and be lubricated.’

‘Oh, I think you need to be thoroughly lubricated, too,’ said his mother. ‘Look what’s happened to the book-shelf!’

‘That’s a mere trifle, Karlson says!’

Midge waved his hand carelessly just as Karlson had done, to make his mother understand that what had happened to the book-shelf was really nothing to make a fuss about. But she was not impressed.

‘Oh, so that’s what Karlson says, is it,’ she said. ‘Tell Karlson from me that if he sticks his nose in here again I’ll lubricate him so that he never forgets it.’

Midge did not answer. He thought it was awful that Mummy could talk like that about the world’s best steam-engine driver. But that was only what one would expect on a day like this, when everything had obviously made up its mind to be awful.

Suddenly Midge was missing Karlson dreadfully. Karlson, who was cheerful and happy and waved his hand and said accidents were a mere trifle which no one need bother about. Midge missed Karlson very badly indeed. At the same time he felt a little anxious. What if Karlson never did come back again!

‘Easy, take it easy,’ said Midge to himself, just as Karlson had done. After all, Karlson had promised.

And Karlson was a man you could rely on, that was obvious. It was not more than a day or two before he turned up. Midge was lying on his stomach on the floor in his room, reading, when he heard the buzzing sound again and there was Karlson, buzzing through

the window like a giant bee. He hummed a happy little tune as he circled round the walls. From time to time he stopped to look at the pictures. He put his head on one side and narrowed his eyes.

'Pretty pictures,' he said. 'Very pretty pictures! But perhaps not quite as pretty as mine.'

Midge had jumped up from the floor and was standing there, wild with excitement. He was so glad that Karlson had come back.

'Have you got a lot of pictures up in your house?' he asked.

'Several thousand,' said Karlson. 'Paint them myself in my leisure hours. Lots of little cocks and birds and lovely things like that. I'm the world's best cock painter!' said Karlson, landing beside Midge with an elegant swoop.

'Are you really?' said Midge. 'I say, couldn't I come up and have a look at your house and your steam-engines and your paintings?'

'Naturally,' said Karlson. 'Of course! You will be most welcome. Another day.'

'Soon,' begged Midge.

'Easy, take it easy,' said Karlson. 'I'd like to tidy up a bit first, but it shouldn't take long. The world's best instant cleaner, guess who that is?' said Karlson slyly.

'It might be you,' said Midge.

'Might!' cried Karlson. 'Might . . . there's no doubt about it! The world's best instant cleaner, that's Karlson on the Roof, everyone knows that.'

Midge was quite ready to believe that Karlson was the world's best everything. There certainly was no doubt that he was the world's best playmate. Chris and

Susanna were nice enough, but they were not as exciting as Karlson on the Roof. Midge decided to tell Chris and Susanna about Karlson the next time they came for tea after school. Chris always talked such a lot about his dog, which was called Jeffy. Midge had been jealous of Chris for a long time over that dog.

‘But if he goes on about his old Jeffy tomorrow, I’ll just tell him about Karlson,’ thought Midge. ‘“What’s Jeffy compared to Karlson on the Roof?” I shall say.’ Still, there was nothing in the world that Midge longed for as much as a dog of his own.

Karlson interrupted his thoughts.

‘I feel just ready for a little fun,’ he said, looking about him curiously. ‘Haven’t you got any more steam-engines?’

Midge shook his head. The steam-engine! Yes, now he had Karlson here, Mummy and Daddy should see that Karlson *did* exist. And Bass and Barbie too, if they were at home.

‘Would you like to come and meet my mother and father?’ asked Midge.

‘Delighted,’ said Karlson. ‘It will be nice for them to meet me, handsome and intelligent as I am!’

Karlson strutted to and fro across the floor, looking pleased.

‘And reasonably stout,’ he added. ‘A man in his prime. It will be nice for your mother to meet me.’

Just at that moment Midge smelled the first faint whiff of freshly fried meat balls from the kitchen and he knew it was almost time for supper. He decided to wait until after supper before taking Karlson to meet

his parents. It's never a good idea to disturb mothers when they are frying meat balls. In any case it was just possible that they might decide to talk to Karlson about the steam-engine and the marks on the book-shelf. And that must not be allowed to happen. That must not be allowed to happen at any cost! At supper Midge would work out a cunning way to make his parents understand how you behave towards the world's best steam-engine driver. He only needed a little time. After supper would be fine. Then he would take the whole family up to his room.

'May I introduce Karlson on the Roof?' he would say. Wouldn't they be amazed! It was really going to be fun to see how amazed they would be.

Karlson had stopped strutting. He stood still and quivered like a bird dog. 'Meat balls!' he said. 'I'm *very* fond of nice little meat balls.'

Midge felt a bit embarrassed. There was only one answer you could make to a remark like that.

'Would you like to stay for supper?' was what he really should have said. But he did not dare to take Karlson in to a meal just like that. It was quite a different matter when Chris or Susanna were with him. Then he could come in at the last minute, if necessary, when the rest of the family had already sat down, and say: 'Please Mummy, Chris and Susanna can have some supper with us, can't they?'

But a completely unknown, fat little man who had destroyed a steam-engine and made marks on the book-shelf – no, that really would not do.

But the fat little man had just said that he loved meat balls. So it was Midge's business to see that he got

them, or else Karlson might not want to see Midge any more. A great deal depended on those meat balls!

‘Wait a minute,’ said Midge, ‘I’ll go down to the kitchen and get some.’

Karlson nodded with pleasure.

‘Good,’ he said. ‘Good! But hurry up! Looking at pictures doesn’t fill your stomach – especially when there aren’t any cocks in them!’

Midge dashed down to the kitchen. There was his mother, standing by the stove with her checked apron on. She was shaking the big frying pan over the gas and the pan was absolutely full of little jumping, brown meat balls.

‘Hallo Midge,’ she said. ‘We’ll be eating in a minute.’

‘Could I take one or two meat balls to my room on a saucer?’ asked Midge in his most persuasive voice.

‘But darling, we’re going to be eating in a minute or two,’ said his mother.

‘Yes, but still,’ said Midge. ‘I’ll explain why after supper.’

‘Oh, all right,’ said Mummy. ‘You can have a few, then.’

She put six meat balls on a little dish. They smelled wonderful, and they were small and brown, just as they should be. Midge took the dish carefully in both hands and hurried back to his room.

‘Here, Karlson!’ he called as he opened the door.

But Karlson had vanished. There was Midge with the meat balls, and no Karlson. Midge was terribly disappointed; suddenly everything was miserable.

‘He’s gone away,’ he said aloud to himself. ‘But . . .’

‘Squeak!’ he suddenly heard someone say. ‘Squeak, squeak!’

Midge looked around. Right at one end of his bed – under the blankets – he saw a round hump which was moving. That was where the squeak came from. And the next second Karlson stuck a red face out from under the blankets.

‘Hee hee!’ said Karlson. ‘“He’s gone away,” you said. “He’s gone away” – hee hee, I haven’t at all! I was just pretending.’

Then he caught sight of the meat balls. He turned the knob on his stomach, the engine began to hum and Karlson glided off the bed, straight towards the dish. He grabbed one meat ball in passing, rose quickly to the ceiling and circled round the light, munching happily on the meat ball.

‘Delicious,’ he said. ‘Wonderfully good meat ball! You would almost think that the world’s best meat ball maker had made it, but obviously he *didn’t*,’ said Karlson. Then he swooped smoothly towards the dish and grabbed another.

Just then a call came from the kitchen:

‘Midge, we’re going to eat now, hurry up and wash your hands and come!’

‘I’ll have to go away for a bit,’ said Midge, putting down the plate, ‘but I’ll be back soon. Promise to wait for me!’

‘Yes, but what am I to do meanwhile?’ said Karlson, landing beside Midge with a little thud. ‘I must have something to amuse me while you’re away. Haven’t you really got any more steam-engines?’

‘No,’ said Midge, ‘but you can borrow my building box.’





‘Carry on!’ said Karlson.

Midge fetched his building box from the cupboard where he kept his toys. It was a really good building box, with lots of different pieces which could be fitted together and made into things.

‘Here you are,’ he said. ‘You can build cars and cranes and all sorts of things . . .’

‘Don’t you think the world’s best builder knows what you can build and what you can’t build?’ said Karlson. Then he quickly popped another meat ball in his mouth and leapt for the building box.

‘Now, let’s see, let’s see,’ he said, emptying all the building things on to the floor.

Midge had to go, although he would much rather have stayed to see what the world’s best builder would do when he really got going.

The last thing he saw when he turned round in the doorway was Karlson sitting on the floor, singing happily to himself:

‘Hurrah, how well I do this . . . Hurrah, how clever I am . . . and quite, quite reasonably stout . . . glumph!’

He sang the last word one second after swallowing the fourth meat ball.

Mummy and Daddy and Bass and Barbie were already sitting round the table. Midge slid into his chair and picked up his napkin.

‘Promise me one thing, Mummy, and you too, Daddy,’ he said.

‘What have we got to promise?’ asked his mother.

‘Promise first,’ said Midge.

His father did not really approve of promising things just like that.

‘What if you’re trying to get me to promise you a dog again?’ he said.

‘No, it’s not a dog,’ said Midge, ‘though you can promise me that any day if you like. No, it’s something else, and it’s not bad at all. Promise you’re going to promise!’

‘All right, we promise,’ said Mummy.

‘There, now you’ve promised not to say anything to Karlson on the Roof about the steam-engine,’ said Midge, relieved.

‘Ha,’ said Barbie, ‘how could they say anything to Karlson, when they’re never going to meet him?’

‘Yes, they *are* going to meet him,’ said Midge triumphantly. ‘After supper. He’s in my room now.’

‘I think I must have got a meat ball stuck in my throat,’ said Bass. ‘Karlson’s in your room, you say?’

‘Yes, he is!’

It was a moment of triumph for Midge. If only they would hurry up and eat, they would soon see . . .

Mummy smiled.

‘It will be fun for us to meet Karlson,’ she said.

‘Yes, that’s what Karlson said too,’ Midge assured them.

At last they had finished their fruit. At last Mummy got up from the table. Now the great moment had come.

‘Come on, all of you,’ said Midge.

‘You don’t need to ask us,’ said Barbie. ‘I can’t wait to see this Karlson.’

Midge went ahead.

‘Remember what you promised,’ he said, before opening the door to his room. ‘Not a word about the steam-engine!’

He turned the handle and opened the door.

Karlson had gone. He *had* gone. There was no solid little bump under the blanket in Midge’s bed.

In the middle of the floor a tower rose from the mess of building bricks. A very high, very narrow tower. Although of course Karlson could build cranes and things like that, this time he had been content to put one brick on top of another so that they made a very high, very thin tower. The top of the tower was decorated with something that was clearly meant to represent a dome. It was a small, round meat ball.

### 3

## Karlson plays at camping

Midge had a bad time after that. His mother didn't like people using her meat balls for decoration and of course she thought it was Midge who had decorated the tower so elegantly.

'Karlson on the Roof . . .' began Midge, but Daddy said sternly:

'We don't want to hear any more of this Karlson nonsense now, Midge!'

Bass and Barbie just laughed.

'That Karlson!' said Bass. 'A pity he had to go just as we were going to meet him!'

Midge ate the meat ball sorrowfully and put away his building blocks. It was no good talking about Karlson any more just now. But the room felt empty, terribly empty.

'Now let's have some coffee and forget about Karlson,' said Daddy, patting Midge comfortingly on the cheek.

They always had coffee in front of the fire in the living-room, and they did it this evening, although it was quite warm, a light, spring evening with the limes on the street outside already showing small green

leaves. Midge did not like coffee but he liked sitting with his parents and Bass and Barbie in front of the fire.

‘Shut your eyes a moment, Mummy,’ said Midge, when his mother had put the coffee tray on the table beside the open hearth.

‘Why must I shut my eyes?’

‘Well, because you said you didn’t like to see me eating sugar lumps and I was going to take one,’ said Midge.

He needed something to comfort him. Why had Karlson gone away? People really shouldn’t behave like that – just disappearing and leaving nothing but a meat ball behind them.

Midge sat in his favourite seat on the fireguard, as near the fire as he could get. Drinking coffee after supper like this was almost the best moment of the whole day. You could talk to Mummy and Daddy and they listened to you, which they hadn’t always time to do during the day. It was fun to listen to Bass and Barbie too, as they teased each other and talked incessantly about their school. Their school was obviously something quite different from the small school Midge went to, and much more splendid. Midge would have liked to talk about his school, too, but only Mummy and Daddy were interested in what happened there. Bass and Barbie just laughed, and Midge was wary of saying anything which made Bass and Barbie laugh at him. In any case, it was no good their trying to tease him, he was a master at teasing them back – you had to be, when you had a brother like Bass and a sister like Barbie.

‘Well, Midge, did you know your lessons today?’ his mother asked.

*That* was not the sort of talk Midge enjoyed. But since his mother had not said anything about the sugar lump just now, he would have to put up with her asking him things like that.

‘Yes, *of course* I knew my lessons,’ he said sternly.

He was thinking about Karlson all the time. How could anyone want him to remember about his lessons, when he did not know what had happened to Karlson!

‘What lessons did you have today?’ his father asked.

Midge was getting annoyed. Were they going to go on like this the whole time? This was not what sitting in front of the fire was for – talking about lessons!

‘We had nature study,’ said Midge quickly.

He took another lump of sugar and started thinking about Karlson again. They could chatter and buzz all round him as much as they liked, Midge would think about Karlson, wondering if he would ever see him again.

It was Barbie who awakened him from his dreams.

‘Midge, do you hear? Do you want to earn five pence?’

Slowly Midge took in what they were saying. He had nothing against earning five pence but of course it would depend on what Barbie wanted him to do.

‘Five pence is not enough,’ he said decidedly. ‘Everything is so expensive nowadays. How much do you think a tenpenny ice cream costs, for instance?’

‘What am I supposed to chip in with?’ asked Barbie, looking crafty. ‘It wouldn’t be ten pence by any chance?’

‘Yes, exactly,’ said Midge. ‘Five pence is not enough to buy anything.’

‘You don’t know what I’m talking about yet,’ said Barbie. ‘It’s not something you’ve got to do – it’s something you’ve not got to do.’

‘What have I not got to do?’

‘You’ve not to show yourself here in the sitting-room this evening.’

‘Pete is coming, you see,’ said Bass. ‘Barbie’s new boy friend!’

Midge nodded. Ah, so that was how they had worked it out. Mummy and Daddy were going to the cinema and Bass was going to a football match and Barbie wanted to sit in the living-room and Midge was to be packed off to his room – for a miserable fee of five pence. That was the sort of family he had!

‘What are his ears like?’ asked Midge. ‘Do they stick out as far as your last boy friend’s?’

This was the best way to annoy Barbie.

‘There you are, Mummy!’ she said. ‘Now do you see why I want Midge out of the way? He scares off every single person I invite home.’

‘Oh, of course he doesn’t,’ said Mummy lamely, because she didn’t like her children squabbling.

‘Yes, he does,’ insisted Barbie. ‘Didn’t he scare off Chas? He stood and stared at him for a long, long time and then he said: “Barbie doesn’t like that sort of ears.” So you can see why Chas never came back again.’

‘Easy now, easy,’ said Midge, in exactly the same tone of voice as Karlson. ‘Easy! I will go to my room and I will do it free. I don’t have to be paid for people not to see me.’



'Good,' said Barbie. 'Cross your heart then – cross your heart you won't show yourself all evening!'

'Cross my heart,' said Midge. 'I'm not all that crazy about your fellows anyway. I wouldn't mind paying five pence not to see them!'

A little later Midge was in his own room – completely for free. His parents had gone to the cinema, Bass had vanished and from the sitting-room, if Midge opened the door, he could hear a faint murmur. That was Barbie talking to her boy friend. Midge opened the door once or twice to try to hear what they were saying, but it was no good. Then he stood by the window looking out into the dusk. He looked down at the street to see if Chris and Susanna were out. But there were only two big boys fighting. That was interesting and he enjoyed himself as long as the fight lasted, but unfortunately the boys very soon stopped hitting each other and then everything was dull again.

Then he heard a cheering sound. He heard the humming of an engine and a second later Karlson came sailing in through the window.

'Heysan hoppsan, Midge!' he said casually.

'Heysan hoppsan, Karlson!' said Midge. 'Where did you get to?'

'What's that? What do you mean?' asked Karlson.

'Well, you disappeared, didn't you?' said Midge. 'Just when you were going to meet Mummy and Daddy. Why did you run away?'

Karlson put his hands on his hips and looked very indignant.

'Well, I never heard the like of it before!' he said.

'Isn't a man allowed to go and have a look at his own house these days? A house owner has to see to his house, or what would the world be coming to? Can I help it that your Mummy and Daddy want to come and meet me just when I'm seeing to my house?'

He looked about the room.

'Talking of houses,' he said, 'where is my tower? Who has destroyed my fine tower and where is my meat ball?'

Midge began to stammer.

'I didn't think you were coming back,' he said anxiously.

'No, that's obvious,' said Karlson. 'The world's best building erector builds a tower and what happens? Does anyone put a little fence round it and make sure that the tower remains standing for ever? No, far from it! Tear it down and destroy it, that's what they do, and eat other people's meat balls, too!'

Karlson went off and sat on a footstool and sulked.

'Oh, that's a mere trifle,' said Midge, waving his hand the way Karlson did. 'That's nothing to make a fuss about.'

'Is that what you think?' said Karlson, offended. 'It's easy to tear everything down and then just say it's a trifle, and that's the end of it. But it was me that built the tower, with these poor little hands!'

He stuck his chubby hands under Midge's nose. Then he sat down on the stool again and looked sulkier than ever.

'I'm not staying,' he said. 'I'm not staying, if this is the way it's going to be.'

Midge was desperate. He stood silently, wondering

what to do. There was a long silence. At last Karlson said:

'If I got a little present I might be happy again. It's not certain, but I *might* be happy, if I got a little present.'

Midge ran over to his toy cupboard and began to rummage furiously through the shelves where he had a lot of nice things. There were his stamps and his stone collection and his colouring chinks and his toy soldiers. And there was his favourite little pocket torch.

'Would you like this?' he said, holding out the pocket torch so that Karlson could see it.

Karlson snatched it like lightning.

'This is just the sort of thing which might make me happy again,' he said. 'It's not as grand as my tower, but if I had it I might try to be a *little* bit happy, at any rate.'

'You can have it,' said Midge.

'I suppose it does light,' said Karlson suspiciously and pressed the switch. Yes, the torch did light and Karlson's eyes began to brighten as well.

'Just think, when I'm walking about on the roof in the autumn evenings and it's dark, I can light my way with this and get back to my little house without losing myself among the chimney-stacks,' he said, patting the pocket torch.

Midge was very relieved to hear Karlson say this. He only wished that there was some way in which he could accompany Karlson on his roof walks and see him lighting his way with the torch in the dark.

'Heysan hoppsan, Midge, I'm happy again now,' said Karlson. 'Bring your Mummy and Daddy up and they can meet me.'



'They've gone to the cinema,' said Midge.

'Gone to the cinema! When they could have met *me*?' said Karlson, amazed.

'Yes, there's only Barbie at home . . . with her new boy friend. They are in the living-room and I'm not allowed to go in.'

'What's that you say?' shrieked Karlson. 'You're not allowed to go where you like? I don't think we should agree to that for a moment. Come on, now . . .'

'Yes, but I promised,' said Midge.

'And *I* promise that if something is unfair Karlson is down on it like a ton of bricks,' said Karlson.

He went over and patted Midge on the shoulder.

'What did you promise *exactly*?'

'I promised not to show myself in the living-room all evening.'

'Well, you won't be showing yourself,' said Karlson. 'But you'd like to see Barbie's new fellow, wouldn't you?'

'Yes, as a matter of fact, I would,' said Midge eagerly. 'She had one before with ears that stuck out like cup handles. I would like to see what sort of ears this new one has.'

'Yes, and so would I,' said Karlson. 'Wait a bit, I'll figure something out. The world's best figurer – that's Karlson on the Roof.'

He looked about the room.

'There we are,' he said, nodding. 'A blanket . . . that's just what we need. I knew I would be able to figure out something.'

'What have you figured out?' asked Midge.

'You promised not to show yourself in the living-

room all evening, isn't that right? But if you go in under a blanket you won't be showing yourself.'

'No, but . . .' Midge began.

'If you are underneath a blanket you won't be showing yourself, there's no "Nobut" about it,' said Karlson decisively. 'And if I am underneath a blanket I shan't be showing myself either, and that's Barbie's hard luck. If she's going to be so stupid, she won't be allowed to see me, poor thing, poor little Barbie!'

He pulled the blanket off Midge's bed and threw it over his head.

'Come in, come in!' he cried. 'Come into my tent!'

Midge crept under the blanket and Karlson stood inside, giggling delightedly.

'Barbie didn't say anything about not wanting to see a tent in the living-room, did she? Everyone is always glad to see a tent. Especially a tent with a light in it,' said Karlson, switching on the torch.

Midge was not certain that Barbie would be very pleased about the tent, but he himself thought it was exciting and mysterious to be under the blanket with Karlson and a lighted torch. Midge thought that they might just as well stay where they were to play tents, and not to bother Barbie, but Karlson did not agree.

'I can't stand unfairness,' he said. 'I'm going into the living-room, cost what it may!'

And the tent began to walk towards the door. Midge had only to follow. A chubby hand came out, grasped the door handle and turned it very quietly and cautiously. Out went the tent, on to the landing, which was only separated from the living-room by a heavy curtain.

'Easy, take it easy,' whispered Karlson. And without a sound the tent crossed the hall floor and stopped behind the curtain. The murmuring was clearer now, but still not so clear that any words could be distinguished. The living-room light was off. Barbie and her Pete were apparently content with the pale twilight from outside the window.

'That's good,' whispered Karlson. 'My torch will show up all the better.'

He had turned the torch off for the moment.

Softly, softly, the tent slipped out from behind the curtain. Barbie and Pete were sitting on the sofa by the opposite wall and softly, softly the tent made its way towards them.

'I like you, Barbie,' Midge heard a boy's gruff voice saying – he was soft, that Pete!

'Do you?' said Barbie and then there was silence again.

The tent moved across the floor in a dark, lumpy mass, making slowly and soundlessly for the sofa. Closer and closer it came, until it was only a few steps away, but the two who were sitting there saw and heard nothing.

'Do you like me, Barbie?' asked Barbie's Pete, shyly.

He never received an answer. At that very moment the light of a torch pierced the grey shadows of the room and caught him right in the face. He shot up, Barbie screamed and there was a good deal of giggling and stamping of feet running hastily into the hall.

You can't see anything when you have just been

dazzled by a torch, but you can hear. And Barbie and her Pete could hear laughter – wild, delighted laughter bubbling out from behind the curtain.

‘That’s my beastly little brother!’ said Barbie. ‘Now he’s going to catch it!’

Midge laughed as loudly as he possibly could.

‘Of course she likes you!’ he shouted. ‘Why shouldn’t she? Barbie likes *all* boys, so there!’

Then there was a lot of noise and still more giggling.

‘Easy, take it easy,’ whispered Karlson, when the tent collapsed during their wild flight towards Midge’s door.

Midge was taking it as easily as he could, although he was still giggling and although Karlson had fallen over him and he did not quite know which leg was his and which was Karlson’s, and although he realized that Barbie would be upon them at any moment.

They scrambled to their feet as quickly as they could and rushed to Midge’s room at top speed, with Barbie close behind.

‘Easy, take it easy,’ whispered Karlson and his stumpy legs pounded up and down like drumsticks under the blanket. ‘The world’s best sprinter, that’s Karlson on the Roof!’ he whispered, but he sounded quite out of breath.

Midge ran very hard as well. They slipped through the door to Midge’s room at the very last second. Karlson turned the key quickly and stood there, giddy with pleasure, while Barbie battered on the door.

‘You wait till I get hold of you, Midge,’ shouted Barbie furiously.

‘Well, at least I didn’t show myself,’ Midge shouted



back. And then there was more giggling from behind the door.

There were two people giggling – Barbie could have heard that if she had not been so cross.

## 4

# Karlson makes a bet

Midge stormed in from school one day in a bad temper, with a big lump on his forehead. His mother was in the kitchen and she was just as upset about the lump as Midge had hoped she would be.

'Darling Midge, whatever has happened?' she said, giving him a hug.

'Chris threw stones at me,' said Midge furiously.

'No, did he really?' said Mummy. 'What a naughty boy! Why didn't you come in and tell me?'

Midge shrugged his shoulders.

'What good would that do? You can't throw stones. You wouldn't even be able to hit a wall!'

'Oh, you silly billy!' said Mummy. 'You don't imagine I'm going to throw stones at Chris, do you?'

'What else could you throw?' asked Midge. 'There isn't anything else, at least not anything as good.'

His mother sighed. It was obviously not only Chris who lashed out on occasion. Her own darling was not a mite better. How could a little boy with such lovely blue eyes be such a ruffian?

'If only you could grow out of fighting,' said Mummy. 'Couldn't you *talk* about things, instead? You know,

Midge, there really isn't anything you can't clear up by talking it over properly.'

'Yes, there is,' said Midge. 'Take yesterday, for instance. I was having a fight with Chris then, too . . .'

'Quite unnecessary,' said his mother. 'You could just as well have worked out who was right by having a sensible argument.'

Midge sat down at the kitchen table and put his wounded head in his hands.

'Do you really think so?' he said, looking at his mother. 'This is what Chris said to me: "I can bash you," he said, and then I said: "You'd better not try."' How could we clear that up with a sensible argument, can you tell me that?'

His mother couldn't, and she soon stopped her peace campaign. Her warrior son was looking quite depressed and she bustled round preparing hot chocolate and fresh buns for him. That was something Midge liked. He had smelled the delicious fragrance of newly baked buns as soon as he got to the stairs, and Mummy's wonderful cinnamon buns made life easier, to say the least.

Midge bit thankfully into a bun and while he was eating, his mother put a plaster on his forehead. Then she kissed him lightly on top of the plaster and asked:

'What were you fighting about today, you and Chris?'

'Chris and Susanna said I made up Karlson on the Roof. They said he was make-believe,' said Midge.

'Isn't he, then?' asked his mother, rather cautiously.

Midge stared resentfully at her over the chocolate cup.

‘Couldn’t *you* at least believe what I say?’ he said. ‘I asked Karlson if he was made up . . .’

‘What did Karlson say?’ asked his mother.

‘He said that if he had been make-believe he would have been the world’s best make-believe. But actually he happens not to be,’ said Midge, taking another bun.

‘Karlson thinks that Chris and Susanna are make-believes. Very peculiar make-believes, he said, and I think so, too.’

His mother did not answer. She could see that it was pointless trying to get anywhere with Midge’s fantasies, so all she said after a moment was:

‘I think you should play with Chris and Susanna a little more and not think so much about Karlson.’

‘At least Karlson doesn’t throw stones at me,’ said Midge, feeling the lump on his forehead. Then he thought of something and smiled sunnily at his mother.

‘I’m going to see where Karlson lives today, anyway,’ he said. ‘I had almost forgotten.’

He regretted this as soon as he had said it. How could he have been so stupid as to talk to his mother about that?

But to her it sounded no more risky or alarming than anything else he had told her about Karlson, so she said thoughtlessly:

‘Oh yes, I see, that will be fun for you.’

She would not have been quite so calm if she had really taken in what Midge was saying and thought about where Karlson lived!

Midge got up from the table, full and happy, and suddenly very pleased with the world. The lump on his forehead no longer hurt him, he still had the

wonderful taste of cinnamon bun in his mouth, the sun was shining in through the kitchen window and Mummy looked so nice with her round arms and her checked apron. He gave her a hard, brief hug and said:

‘I like you, Mummy.’

‘I’m so glad,’ said Mummy.

‘I like you because you do such nice things.’

Then he went to his room and sat down to wait for Karlson. He was going up to the roof with him – what did it matter if Chris said that Karlson was only make-believe!

Midge had to wait a long time.

‘I shall come at about three o’clock, or four or five, but not a minute before six o’clock,’ Karlson had said.

Midge did not quite understand when Karlson meant to come and he asked again.

‘Not later than seven at any rate,’ said Karlson. ‘But just before eight. And look out at about nine o’clock, because that’s when it’s all going to happen!’

Midge had to wait for ages and ages and in the end he was beginning to think that Karlson really had been make-believe and nothing more. But then he suddenly heard the familiar humming, and in came Karlson, fresh and lively.

‘I *have* been waiting,’ said Midge, prepared to be cross. ‘When was it you said you were coming?’

‘*About*,’ said Karlson. ‘I said I would come *about*, and that’s what I did.’

He went over to Midge’s aquarium, put his whole face into the water and drank, in great gulps.

'Oh, look out for my fish!' said Midge anxiously. He was afraid Karlson might swallow some of his little guppies which were swimming briskly around in the aquarium.

'When you have a temperature you have to drink a lot all at once,' said Karlson. 'If a little fish or two goes down at the same time, that's a mere trifle.'

'Have you got a temperature?' asked Midge.

'Have I! Feel,' said Karlson, putting Midge's hand on his forehead.

Midge did not think that Karlson felt particularly hot.

'What is your temperature then?' he asked.

'Oh, ninety or one hundred degrees,' said Karlson. 'At least!'

Midge had recently had measles and knew what it meant to have a temperature. He shook his head.

'I don't think you're ill,' he said.

'Oh, you are mean,' said Karlson, stamping his foot. 'Can't I *ever* be allowed to be ill like other people?'

'Do you want to be ill?' said Midge in surprise.

'Everyone wants to,' said Karlson. 'I want to lie in bed and have a very very high temperature and you're supposed to ask how I am and I say that I'm the illest person in the world and you ask if there's anything I want and I say that I'm very, very ill so I don't want anything at all, except for a heap of tarts and a lot of biscuits and plenty of chocolate and a great pile of toffees.'

Karlson looked expectantly at Midge, who stood wondering where on earth he could get hold of all the things Karlson wanted.

‘I want you to be a mother to me,’ Karlson continued, ‘and you have to say that I *must* take some horrible medicine . . . but I must have one penny for taking it. And then you have to wrap a warm woolly scarf round my neck, but then I say it tickles . . . unless I get another penny.’

Midge would have liked to be a mother to Karlson. But that meant he would have to empty his money box. It was standing on the book-shelf, nice and heavy. Midge fetched a knife from the kitchen and reluctantly started working the coins out. Karlson helped with tremendous enthusiasm and rejoiced over every coin which fell out. There were a lot of pennies and some five penny pieces too, but Karlson liked the penny pieces best.

Then Midge ran down to the sweet shop and spent almost all of it on toffees and chocolate. When he handed over his capital he thought for a moment about all the time he had been saving this money to buy himself a dog. The thought made him sigh. But he realized that anyone who wanted to be a mother to Karlson would not be able to keep a dog as well.

Midge sneaked back through the living-room with all the sweets stuffed in his trouser pockets. They were all sitting there, Mummy and Daddy and Bass and Barbie, drinking coffee. But Midge had no time to join them today. For a moment he considered asking them to come and meet Karlson, but when he thought about it some more he decided not to bother. They would only stop him going up to the roof with Karlson. It would be best for them to meet him another day.

Midge took a couple of macaroons off the coffee

table – Karlson had said he wanted biscuits as well – and then hurried back to his room.

‘How long am I supposed to sit here waiting, sick and miserable,’ asked Karlson reproachfully. ‘My temperature’s going up several degrees a minute and you could fry an egg on me now.’

‘I hurried as fast as I could,’ said Midge. ‘And I bought a lot . . .’

‘Well, I’m sure you’ve kept some money back, so that I can have a penny when the scarf tickles?’ said Karlson anxiously.

Midge calmed him down. He had kept back one or two penny pieces.

Karlson’s eyes glistened and he hopped up and down with pleasure.

‘Oh, I’m the illest person in the world,’ he said. ‘We must hurry up and get me to bed.’

It was only then that Midge began to wonder how he was to get up on the roof, since he could not fly.

‘Easy, take it easy,’ said Karlson. ‘I’ll take you on my back and, heysan hoppsan, we’ll fly up to my house! Only mind you don’t catch your fingers in the propeller.’

‘But do you really think you can manage me?’ asked Midge.

‘That’s what we shall see,’ said Karlson. ‘It will be very interesting to see if I can get more than half way, sick and wretched as I am. But there’s always a way out. I can tip you off if I think it’s not going to work.’

Midge didn’t think being tipped off half way up to the roof was at all a good way out and he looked rather thoughtful.

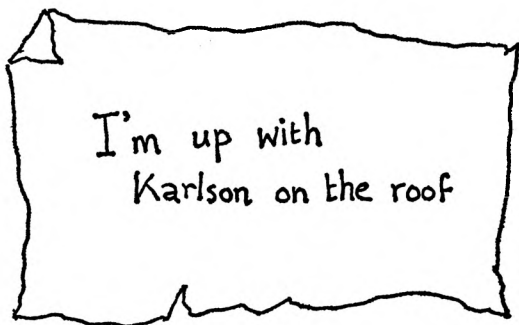


'But it's sure to be all right,' said Karlson. 'As long as my engine doesn't stop.'

'What if it does, then we'll fall down, won't we?' said Midge.

'Splodge, that's what we'll do,' said Karlson easily. 'But that's a mere trifle,' he said, waving his hand.

Midge decided to think of it as a mere trifle himself. He wrote a little note to his mother and father and left it on the table.



It would be best if he could get back before they saw the note. But if they happened to miss him, they had better know where he was. Otherwise it would be like the time they had been staying with Grandmother and Midge had decided to take the train on his own. Mummy had cried afterwards and said:

'But, Midge, if you wanted to take a train why didn't you tell me?'

'Because I *did* want to take a train,' said Midge.

It was the same now. He *did* want to go up on the roof with Karlson, so it was best not to ask anyone. If they discovered he had gone he could always defend himself by saying that at least he had written this note.

Karlson was ready for take-off now. He turned the knob on his tummy and the engine began to hum.

‘Jump,’ he cried, ‘we’re off!’

And they were off. Out of the window and up into the air. Karlson took a little extra turn over the nearest roof to see that the engine was running well. And it was puttering so steadily that Midge was not the least bit afraid, he just enjoyed himself.

At last Karlson landed on their own roof.

‘Now let’s see if you can find my house,’ said Karlson. ‘I’m not going to tell you that it’s behind the chimney-stack, you must find out for yourself.’

Midge had never been on a roof before, but he had sometimes seen men who came to clear the snow and walked about on the roof with ropes round their waists.

Midge had always thought they were lucky to be allowed to do it. But now he himself was just as lucky – although he had no rope round his waist, of course, and his stomach felt very odd when he was wobbling across to the chimney-stack. Sure enough, there was Karlson’s little house. How pretty it was, with its green window-frames and a nice step that you could sit on if you wanted to! But just now Midge wanted to get inside the house as quickly as possible and see all the steam-engines, paintings of cocks and all the other things that Karlson had.

There was a notice on the door so that you could tell who lived there:



the notice said.



Karlson threw the door wide open and cried:

'Welcome, dear Karlson . . . and you too, Midge!'

Then he rushed in ahead of Midge.

'I must get to bed, as I'm the illest person in the world,' he shouted and dived head first on to a red-painted couch which stood against one wall.

Midge followed him in. He was so curious he was ready to burst.

Karlson's house was very nice, Midge could see that at once. Apart from the couch, there was a bench, which Karlson obviously used as a table as well, and then there were a cupboard and a couple of stools and an open fireplace with a grating over it. That must be where Karlson did his cooking. But there were no steam-engines to be seen. Midge looked round for a long time without finding one and in the end he asked:

'Where do you keep your steam-engines?'

'Hrrhm,' said Karlson. 'My steam-engines . . . they have all exploded. Something wrong with the safety-valve, that's what it was! But that's a mere trifle and nothing for you to worry about.'

Midge looked about him again.

'But where are your paintings of cocks, have they exploded too?' he asked sarcastically.

'Of course they haven't,' said Karlson. 'What's that over there?' he said, pointing to a sheet of paper tacked on the wall by the cupboard. Right down in one corner of the paper there was a cock, a very, very small, red cock. The rest of the paper was bare.

'"A very lonely cock," that's what that picture is called,' said Karlson.

Midge looked at the little cock. Could Karlson's one

thousand cock paintings all boil down to this little cock?

‘“A very lonely cock,” painted by the world’s best cock painter,’ said Karlson, his voice shaking. ‘Oh, how beautiful and painstaking that picture is! But I mustn’t start to cry now, because it will make my temperature go up.’

He threw himself back on the pillows and pressed his hand to his forehead.

‘You were going to be a mother to me, get going,’ he said.

Midge did not know quite how to begin.

‘Have you got any medicine?’ he said doubtfully.

‘Yes, but nothing I want to take,’ said Karlson. ‘Have you got any pennies?’

Midge pulled a penny out of his trouser pocket.

‘Give it to me first,’ said Karlson. Midge gave him the coin. Karlson clutched it tightly in his hand and looked very crafty and pleased with himself.

‘I know what sort of medicine I can take,’ he said.

‘What is it?’ asked Midge.

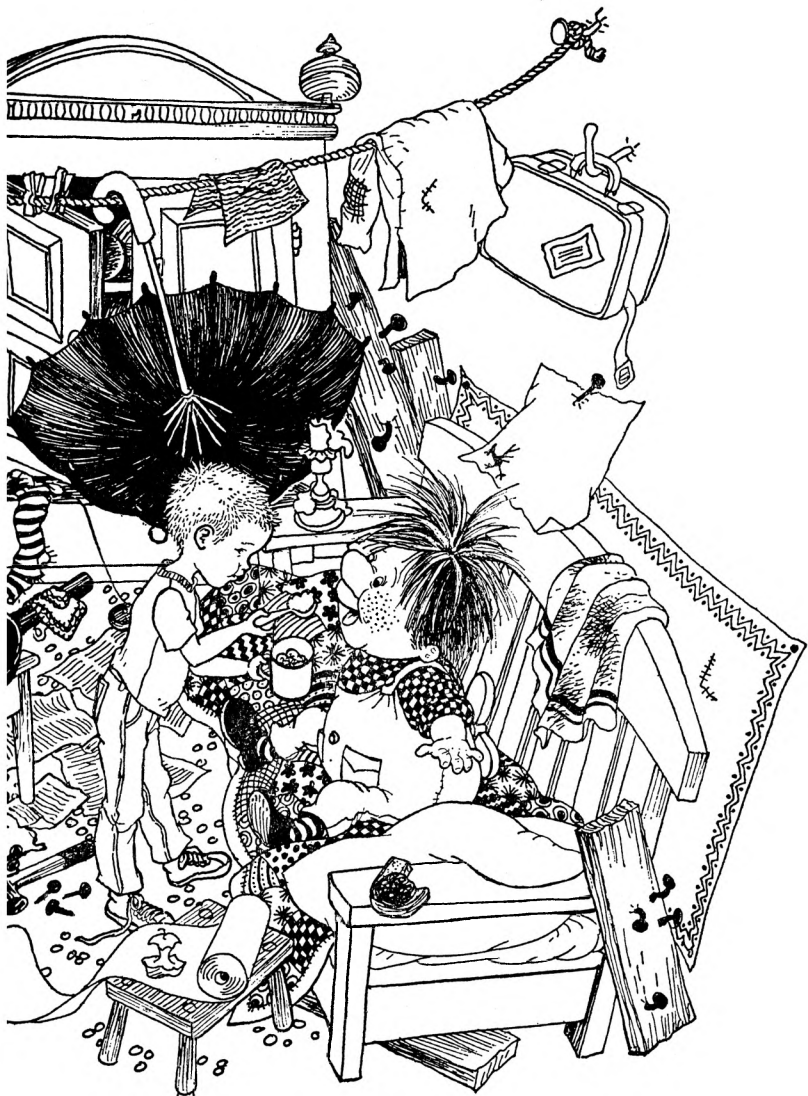
‘Karlson on the Roof’s gluggety-glug medicine. It has to be half sweets and half chocolate and you stir it all together with some bits of biscuit. If you do that I could take a dose right away,’ said Karlson. ‘It helps bring down your temperature.’

‘I don’t believe it,’ said Midge.

‘Shall we have a bet on it?’ said Karlson. ‘I’ll bet a chocolate biscuit that I’m right.’

Midge thought that perhaps this was what his mother meant when she said you could decide who was right by sensible arguments.





‘Shall we have a bet on it?’ asked Karlson again.

‘Carry on,’ said Midge.

He took out one of the two chocolate biscuits he had bought and put them on the bench so that they could see what the bet was worth. Then he mixed the medicine according to Karlson’s prescription. He took acid drops and raspberry jellies and toffees and mixed them in a cup with the same quantity of chocolate fragments. Then he broke the macarons in little pieces and sprinkled them on top. Midge had never seen a medicine like this before, but it looked good, and he almost wished he himself had a little temperature so that he could try it.

But Karlson sat on his bed with his mouth open like a fledgling bird and Midge made haste to give him a spoonful.

‘Pour me out a big dose,’ said Karlson. And Midge did.

Then they both sat quite still, waiting for Karlson’s temperature to go down.

After half a minute Karlson said:

‘You were right. It didn’t help my temperature. Give me the chocolate biscuit.’

‘Why should you have the chocolate biscuit?’ said Midge, surprised. ‘It was me that won.’

‘If you won, it’s surely not too much for me to get the chocolate biscuit?’ said Karlson. ‘There has to be a bit of justice in this world. In any case, you are a greedy little boy, sitting there thinking about chocolate when I have a temperature.’

Very unwillingly Midge handed Karlson the chocolate biscuit. Karlson sank his teeth into it at once, saying as he chewed:



'No long faces, if you please. Next time I'll win and you get the chocolate biscuit.'

He went on munching enthusiastically and when he had eaten every bit of the biscuit he lay down again on the pillows and sighed deeply.

'Poor invalid,' he said. 'Poor me! Of course, I could try a double dose of the gluggety-glug medicine, but I don't think for a minute that it will help.'

'Yes, I think a double dose might help,' said Midge quickly. 'Shall we bet on it?'

Midge could be crafty too. He did not believe that Karlson's temperature would be altered by three times the dose of gluggety-glug medicine, but he did want to lose a bet. He had only one chocolate biscuit left and he would get it if Karlson won the bet.

'We can certainly bet on it if you like,' said Karlson. 'Mix up another double dose! When you've got a temperature you should leave no stone unturned. All we can do is to try it and see.'

Midge stirred up a double dose of the medicine and gave it to Karlson, who gladly opened his mouth and swallowed it.

Then they sat and waited. After half a minute Karlson jumped out of bed, his face shining with happiness.

'It's a miracle,' he cried. 'My temperature has gone down. You have won again. Give me the chocolate biscuit!'

Midge sighed and regretfully handed over the last chocolate biscuit. Karlson looked at him disapprovingly.

'A sulky-boots like you shouldn't make bets,' he said. 'That's for people like me, who go round like little rays of sunshine whether we win or lose!'

There was silence for a time, apart from the smacking noise of Karlson eating his chocolate biscuit. Then he said:

‘But since you are such a greedy little boy, it will be best if we divide the rest up fairly – have you got any sweets left?’

Midge felt in his pockets.

‘Three,’ he said, bringing out two toffees and a raspberry jelly.

‘Three,’ said Karlson. ‘You can’t divide that in half, any child knows that.’

He took the jelly from Midge’s outstretched hand and swallowed it hastily.

‘Now you can,’ he said.

Then he looked at the two toffees with hungry eyes. One was slightly larger than the other.

‘Being kind and modest as I am, I’ll let you choose first,’ said Karlson. ‘But you know that the one who chooses first has to take the smallest,’ he went on, looking sternly at Midge.

Midge thought for a moment.

‘I want you to choose first,’ he said cleverly.

‘Oh well, since you’re so stubborn,’ said Karlson and grabbing the larger toffee he stuffed it in his mouth.

Midge looked at the little toffee which was left in his hand.

‘I thought you said the one who chose first was supposed to take the smallest . . .’

‘Listen, you little pig,’ said Karlson. ‘If you had chosen first, which would you have taken?’

‘I would have taken the smallest, I really would,’ said Midge earnestly.

‘What are you complaining about then?’ said Karlson. ‘That’s the one you’ve got!’

Midge doubted that this was what his mother had meant by a sensible argument.

But Midge was never out of temper for long. Whatever happened, it was fun now that Karlson no longer had a temperature. Karlson thought so too.

‘I’m going to write to all the doctors and tell them what’s good for a temperature. “Try Karlson on the Roof’s gluggety-glug medicine,” I shall write. The world’s best medicine against high fever!’

Midge had still not eaten his toffee. It looked so hard and good and tasty that he wanted to look at it for a little while first. Once he began to eat it, it would soon be gone.

Karlson was also looking at Midge’s toffee. He looked at Midge’s toffee for a long time and then put his head on one side and said:

‘Shall we have a bet that I can make your toffee vanish without your seeing it?’

‘You can’t do that,’ said Midge. ‘Not if I’m standing here holding it in my hand and watching it all the time.’

‘Shall we have a bet?’ said Karlson.

‘No,’ said Midge. ‘I know I’m going to win and it would just mean that you took the toffee.’

Midge felt there was something wrong with this way of betting, because that was never the way it worked when he was having a bet with Bass or Barbie.

‘But we could have a bet the usual, right way round, so that the winner gets the toffee,’ said Midge.

‘Just as you like, you greedy little boy,’ said Karl-

son. 'We'll have a bet that I can make the toffee disappear without your seeing it.'

'Carry on,' said Midge.

'Hocus pocus filiocus,' said Karlson and grabbed the toffee. 'Hocus pocus filiocus,' he said and popped it in his mouth.

'Stop!' cried Midge. 'I *did* see you making it disappear . . .'

'Did you?' said Karlson, swallowing hastily. 'Then



you have won *again*. I've never seen a boy like you for winning all the bets.'

'Yes . . . but . . . my toffee,' said Midge, all confused. 'The one who won was going to have the toffee.'

'Yes, that's true,' said Karlson. 'But I made the toffee disappear and I bet I can't make it appear again.'

Midge was silent. But he was thinking that as soon as he saw his mother he would tell her that sensible arguments were no use at all when you wanted to decide who was right.

He put his hand in his empty trouser pocket. And there – there was one more toffee which he had not noticed! A lovely, big, chewy toffee. Midge laughed.

‘I bet you I’ve got one toffee left,’ he said. ‘And I bet you that I’m going to eat it up at once,’ he said and quickly popped the toffee in his mouth.

Karlson sat on his bed looking sulky.

‘You were supposed to be a mother to me,’ he said. ‘And you do nothing but stuff yourself with all the toffees you want. I’ve never seen such a greedy little boy.’

He sat quietly for a time, looking even more depressed.

‘In any case, I didn’t get a penny because the scarf tickled,’ he said.

‘Well, but you didn’t have a scarf *on*,’ said Midge.

‘There isn’t a scarf in the house,’ said Karlson crossly. ‘But if there *had* been one, I would have had it on and it would have tickled and I would have had a penny.’

He looked pleadingly at Midge and his eyes were full of tears.

‘Should *I* have to suffer because there isn’t a scarf in the house, do you think?’

Midge didn’t think so and he gave Karlson on the Roof his last one penny piece.

## Karlson plays a trick or two

‘Now I feel ready for some fun,’ said Karlson a little later. ‘We’ll take a walk over the roofs round about here, you always come across something that way.’

Midge was very willing. He took Karlson’s hand and together they marched out of the door and on to the roof. It was beginning to be dusk now and everything looked beautiful. The sky was that particular blue that it is in springtime, and all the houses looked mysterious and exciting, as houses do in the dusk. The park where Midge often played glowed dark green far below them and even up here on the roof there was a lovely scent from the big balsam poplar in Midge’s garden.

It was a wonderful evening for roof walking. All the windows were open and you could hear all sorts of different sounds and voices. People talking and children laughing and children crying. There was the clatter of china from a kitchen nearby where someone was washing up, and a dog was whining and somewhere someone was playing a piano. From the street below you could hear the rattle of a motorbike and when that faded a horse came clopping by with a

wagon behind it and every clop could be heard up on the roof.

'If people knew what fun it is walking on the roof no one would stay down in the street,' said Midge. 'Oh, isn't it fun up here!'

'Yes, and it's exciting too,' said Karlson. 'Because it's very easy to fall. I'll show you a few places where you *almost* fall every time.'

The houses were built so close together that you could walk from one roof to the next. There were many strange little projections and attics and chimneys and nooks and crannies, so it was never dull. And it really was exciting, just as Karlson said, because here and there you *almost* fell. In one place there was quite a wide gap between two houses and it was in that kind of place that Midge almost fell. But Karlson grabbed hold of him at the last minute, when one of Midge's legs was already off the edge of the roof.

'Fun, isn't it?' said Karlson, pulling Midge back again. 'That was just what I meant. Do it again!'

But Midge didn't want to do it again. It had been a little too close to *almost* for him. There were several places where you had to hang on with both arms and legs in order not to slip and Karlson wanted Midge to have as much fun as possible, so he did not always take the easiest way.

'I think we ought to play some tricks,' said Karlson. 'I like to hop about on the roof in the evening and play little tricks on the people who live in these attic flats up here.'

'How do you do that?' asked Midge.

'I play different tricks on different people, of course.'

Never the same trick twice over. The world's best trickster, guess who that is!'

Just then a small child began to cry quite close to them. Midge had heard this child's cry earlier, but after that it had been quiet for a bit. The child had probably fallen asleep. But now it started up again and the cry came from the nearest dormer window. It sounded terribly sad and lost.

'Poor little thing,' said Midge. 'Perhaps it's got a pain in its tummy.'

'We'll soon see to that,' said Karlson. 'Come on!'

They crawled along the gutter until they were right under the window. Then Karlson stuck his head up cautiously and peeped in.

'A very lonely little child,' he said. 'Mummy and Daddy are out for a while, I see.'

The baby cried more miserably than before.

'Easy, take it easy,' said Karlson, heaving himself over the window-ledge. 'Here comes Karlson on the Roof, the world's best nanny.'

Midge did not want to be left alone outside. He wriggled over the window-ledge after Karlson, although he was wondering anxiously what would happen if the baby's mother and father came home at that moment.

But Karlson was not in the least bit anxious. He went over to the cot where the infant lay and put a chubby finger under its chin.

'Putti-putti-putt,' he said roguishly.

Then he turned to Midge.

'That's what you say to little children, they like it!'



The baby stopped crying in sheer surprise but as soon as it had drawn breath it began crying again.

'Putti-putti-putt. . . and then you do this,' said Karlson. He picked the child up out of its cot and swung it up to the ceiling several times. Perhaps the baby did think that was fun, because it suddenly smiled a toothless little smile.

Karlson looked proud.

'It's no trouble making babies happy,' he said. 'The world's best nan . . .'

He got no further, because the baby started to cry again.

'Putti-putti-putt,' cried Karlson angrily and swung the child more vigorously towards the ceiling. 'Putti-putti-putt I said, and I meant it, too!'

The baby shrieked to high heaven and Midge put out his arms for it.

'Here, let me have her,' he said. He loved very tiny babies and he had had long talks with his mother and father about whether he might not have a little sister, if they were determined not to give him a dog.

Now he took the little bundle from Karlson and held it firmly against his chest.

'Don't cry, there's a good baby,' he said. The child fell silent and looked at him with a pair of solemn, shining eyes, then it smiled its toothless smile again and crowed softly.

'It was my putti-putti-putt that did it,' said Karlson. 'It never fails, I've proved that a thousand times.'

'I wonder what the baby is called,' said Midge, stroking the fat little cheek with one finger.

‘Sweety-Pie,’ said Karlson. ‘That’s what most of them are called.’

Midge had never once heard of a child called Sweety-Pie, but he thought the world’s best nanny must know more than he did about what children were usually called.

‘Little Sweety-Pie,’ said Midge, ‘I think you’re hungry.’

For Sweety-Pie had clutched his finger and was trying to suck it.

‘Is Sweety-Pie hungry, well there’s sausage and mash here,’ said Karlson, peeping into the kitchen corner. ‘No baby goes hungry when Karlson can lay his hands on sausage and mash.’

Midge did not think Sweety-Pie could eat sausage and mash.

‘Babies like this need milk,’ he said.

‘Don’t you think the world’s best nanny knows what children should have and what they shouldn’t?’ said Karlson testily. ‘Of course – I can easily fly off and get a cow!’

He cast a cross look at the window.

‘Though it would be difficult to get the mangy cow through this mingy window.’

Sweety-Pie clutched desperately at Midge’s finger and made little mewling sounds. She really did sound hungry.

Midge searched the kitchen corner but he could find no milk. There were just three slices of cold sausage on a plate.

‘Easy, take it easy,’ said Karlson. ‘I’ve just remembered where there is some milk. I have a gulp or two

myself now and then. Heysan hoppsan, I'll be back in a moment!

Karlson turned the knob on his tummy and buzzed off through the window before Midge could blink an eye.

Midge was terribly frightened. What if Karlson stayed away for hours as he sometimes did! And what if the baby's mother and father came home and found Midge with their Sweetie-Pie in his arms!

But Midge did not have to worry for long. This time Karlson had hurried. Proud as a peacock he buzzed in through the window with a baby's drinking bottle in his hand.

'Wherever did you get hold of that?' said Midge in amazement.

'At my usual milk store,' said Karlson. 'A balcony over on East Terrace!'

'Did you pinch it?' asked Midge, very alarmed.

'I just borrowed it,' said Karlson.

'Borrowed . . . when do you think of lending it back to them, then?' asked Midge.

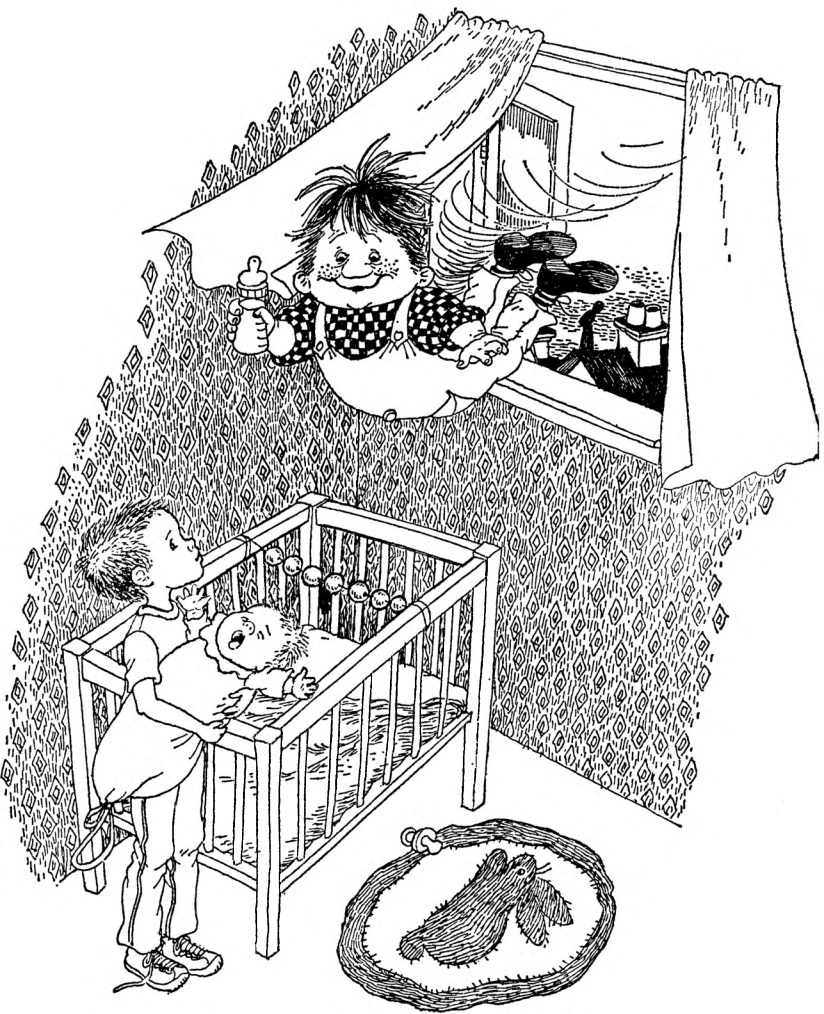
'Never,' said Karlson.

Midge looked sternly at him but Karlson flicked his fingers and said:

'A little bottle of milk – that's a mere trifle! The people I borrowed it from have triplets and they put out dozens and dozens of bottles in ice buckets on the balcony and they *like* me borrowing their milk for Sweetie-Pie.'

Sweetie-Pie stretched out her small hands for the bottle and mewed hungrily.

'I'll heat it up a bit,' said Midge quickly and handed



over Sweety-Pie to Karlson and Karlson cried 'putti-putti-putt' and threw Sweety-Pie up to the ceiling while Midge went to the kitchen and heated the bottle.

A little later Sweety-Pie was sleeping in her bed like an angel. She was full and satisfied and Midge had tucked her up and Karlson had poked her with his finger and squeaked 'putti-putti-putt', but Sweety-Pie went on sleeping, because she was so full and tired.

'Now we'll play some tricks before we go away,' said Karlson.

He went over to the kitchen corner and fetched the slices of cold sausage. Midge looked on, wide-eyed.

'Watch these tricks!' said Karlson, and he hung one slice of sausage on the kitchen door handle.

'Number one,' he said, nodding happily. Then he went quickly over to the desk. There was a pretty white china dove there and before Midge could see what he was up to, the white dove was holding a sausage slice in its beak.

'Number two,' said Karlson. 'And Sweety-Pie shall have number three.'

He threaded the sausage slice on to a pencil and stuck the pencil in the hand of the sleeping Sweety-Pie. It looked very funny. You would almost have thought that Sweety-Pie herself had fetched the sausage and gone to sleep holding it, but Midge could not help saying:

'No, stop that, please!'

'Easy, take it easy,' said Karlson. 'That will teach her mummy and daddy not to ignore her in the evenings.'

‘How will it?’ asked Midge.

‘A baby which can go and fetch itself a sausage shouldn’t be left alone. Think what she might fancy taking next time . . . her daddy’s Sunday bottle of beer, for instance!’

He rearranged the sausage stick in Sweety-Pie’s plump hand.

‘Easy, take it easy,’ he said. ‘I know what I’m doing, because I’m the world’s best nanny.’

Just then Midge heard steps on the stairs outside and gave a start of sheer terror.

‘Now they’re coming,’ he whispered.

‘Easy, take it easy,’ said Karlson and then they both rushed to the window. Midge heard a key being put in the lock and thought all hope was lost, but one way or another they managed to scramble over the window-ledge. A second later they heard the door open and a voice saying:

‘Mummy’s little Susanne – she just sleeps and sleeps.’

‘Yes, she just sleeps and sleeps,’ said another voice. Then suddenly they heard a scream and Midge knew that Sweety-Pie’s mother and father had seen the sausage.

He did not wait to hear what happened next but scrambled after the world’s best nanny, who was just hiding himself behind a chimney.

‘Would you like to see two villains?’ asked Karlson, when they had had a short rest. ‘I have two great villains in another attic over here.’

It sounded almost as if they were Karlson’s own

villains. They were not, of course, but Midge was keen to see them all the same.

They could hear the sound of voices and roars of laughter from the villains' attic.

'Gaiety and merriment,' said Karlson. 'Come on, let's see the fun.'

They crept along the gutter and Karlson stuck his head up and peeped in. There were curtains at the window but there was still a gap you could peep through.

'The villains have a visitor,' said Karlson.

Midge peeped as well. In the room were two men who might well have been villains and also a nice, modest little man who looked as if he had come in from the country, where Grandma lived.

'Do you know what I think,' whispered Karlson. 'I think these villains are planning to play all the tricks themselves. But we'll have to put a stop to that!'

He peeped in again.

'I bet they are busy making a monkey out of that poor fellow in the red tie,' he whispered to Midge.

The villains and the man with the red tie were sitting round a little table close to the window. They were eating and drinking and the villains were slapping the man in the red tie heartily on the back and saying:

'What a good thing we met you, dear Oscar!'

'It was a good thing for me, too,' said Oscar. 'When you come in to town like this, you need some good friends you can depend on. Otherwise you don't know what trouble you might land in. You might even bump into some cheats or swindlers.'

The villains nodded.

'Oh ho, yes, you might bump into swindlers, so you might,' said one of them. 'What luck that you met Filly and me!'

'Yes, if you hadn't met Rolly and me, things might have gone very badly,' said the other.

'But now you must eat and drink and enjoy yourself,' said the one called Filly and he slapped Oscar on the back again. But then he did something which surprised Midge very much. As if by chance, he slid his hand into the back pocket of Oscar's trousers and drew out a wallet which he slid carefully down into the back pocket of his own trousers. Oscar did not notice anything. Perhaps that was because Rolly was hanging round his neck at that moment, slapping his back. But when Rolly had finished slapping and took his hand away, Oscar's watch happened to come with it. Rolly pushed it into the back pocket of his trousers and Oscar noticed nothing.

But then Karlson on the Roof cautiously stretched a chubby hand through the curtains and plucked the wallet out of the back pocket of Filly's trousers and Filly noticed nothing. And then Karlson stretched in a chubby hand and took the watch out of the back pocket of Rolly's trousers and Rolly noticed nothing.

A little later, when Rolly and Filly and Oscar had eaten and drunk still more, Filly put his hand in his trouser pocket and felt that the wallet had gone. Then he turned savagely on Rolly and said:

'Here, Rolly, you come out to the other room with me, there's something I want to talk to you about.'

Just then Rolly felt in his back pocket and noticed



that the watch had gone and he turned savagely on Filly and said:

‘Suits me, because there’s something I want to talk to you about, too!’

So Filly and Rolly went into the next room and poor Oscar was left sitting all alone. He must have found it rather boring because after a moment he got up and went into the other room himself, to see what Filly and Rolly were up to. Then Karlson climbed quickly over the window-ledge and put Oscar’s wallet in the soup tureen. But Filly and Rolly and Oscar had eaten all the soup, so the wallet did not get wet. Karlson hung Oscar’s watch over the ceiling light, where it dangled merrily and it was the first thing that Oscar and Rolly and Filly saw when they came back from the other room. But they did not see Karlson, because he had crawled under the tablecloth which hung down almost to the floor. And Midge was also sitting under the table by then, because he wanted to be where Karlson was, even if it was dangerous.

‘Look, there’s my watch!’ said Oscar. ‘How in heaven’s name did it get there?’

And he took down the watch and put it in his waistcoat pocket.

‘And there’s my wallet!’ he said, looking in the soup bowl. ‘How very odd!’

Rolly and Filly gazed admiringly at Oscar and Filly said:

‘You’re not all that backward out there in the country, I can see.’

Then Rolly and Filly and Oscar sat down at the table again.

‘My dear Oscar, you must have a bit more to eat and drink,’ said Filly.

So Oscar and Rolly and Filly ate and drank and slapped each other on the back. And a little while later Filly’s hand crept under the tablecloth and carefully dropped Oscar’s wallet on the floor. He obviously thought it would be safer there than in his trouser pocket. But it was not, because Karlson immediately picked up the wallet and handed it up to Rolly and Rolly took the wallet and said:

‘Filly, I did you an injustice, you’re an honest man.’

A little later Rolly’s hand slipped under the tablecloth and gently dropped Oscar’s watch on the floor. And Karlson took the watch and tickled Filly gently on the leg and handed him Oscar’s watch and Filly said:

‘There’s no better mate than you, Rolly.’

But a little later Oscar said:

‘Where is my wallet? And where is my watch?’

Then both wallet and watch quickly vanished under the tablecloth, because Filly did not want to have the watch and Rolly did not want to have the wallet on him if Oscar was going to make trouble. And Oscar *did* begin to make trouble, shouting that he wanted his watch and his wallet, but Filly said:

‘How should we know where you’ve gone and dropped your old wallet?’

And Rolly said:

‘We haven’t seen your old watch, keep your hair on!’

But then Karlson picked up first the wallet and then the watch and handed them up to Oscar and Oscar put away both the objects and said:

‘Thanks, Filly, thanks, Rolly! But don’t play me up like that again.’

Then Karlson kicked Filly on the leg as hard as he could and Filly shrieked:

‘You’ll pay for that, Rolly!’

Then Karlson kicked Rolly on the leg as hard as he could and Rolly screamed:

‘What’s the matter with you, Filly, what are you kicking me for?’

Then Rolly and Filly jumped up and began to fight, so that all the dishes fell off the table and broke and Oscar was frightened and went off with his wallet and his watch and never came back again.

Midge was frightened too, but he could not go away. He had to sit quiet and still under the tablecloth.

Filly was stronger than Rolly and he chased Rolly into the other room and followed him to make mince-meat out of him. Then Karlson and Midge crawled out from under the tablecloth and saw all the dishes lying shattered on the floor and Karlson said:

‘Why leave a soup tureen when all the dishes are broken? It will feel so lonely, poor soup tureen!’ He picked up the tureen and dropped it on the floor with a crash and he and Midge rushed over to the window and climbed out as fast as they could. They heard Filly and Rolly coming back into the room and Filly said:

‘Why in the world did you give him back the watch and the wallet, you stupid baboon?’

‘You must be joking,’ said Rolly. ‘It was you that did it.’

Karlson laughed until his stomach shook and then he said:

‘I’m not going to play any more tricks today.’

Midge also felt that he had had enough tricks for the time being.

It was quite dark now and Midge and Karlson walked back along the rooftops hand in hand to Karlson’s house, which was on top of Midge’s house. When they got back they could hear a fire engine driving along the road, its siren blaring.

‘You’ll see, something’s burning somewhere,’ said Midge. ‘The fire engine is here!’

‘Suppose it’s in this house!’ said Karlson hopefully. ‘They have only to ask me and I’ll help them, because I’m the world’s best firefighter.’

They could see that the fire engine had stopped in the street just below them and a whole crowd of people were collecting outside. But they could not see any fire. On the other hand they suddenly saw a ladder come shooting up towards the roof – one of those long telescopic ladders which firemen use.

Then Midge began to think:

‘I wonder . . . I wonder if they’re coming for me?’ he said.

He had suddenly remembered the note he had left behind in his room. And it was very late by now.

‘Why on earth should they do that?’ said Karlson. ‘No one could mind you being up on the roof for a bit.’

‘Oh yes, my mother could,’ said Midge. ‘She has so many nerves, they’re all over the place.’

He felt very sorry for his mother when he thought about that and he began to miss her.

'Of course we could play a trick on the firemen,' suggested Karlson.

But Midge didn't want to play any more tricks. He stood still and waited for the fireman who came climbing up the ladder.

'Ah well,' said Karlson, 'perhaps it's time I went in and lay down for a bit. Of course we have taken it quietly and not played many tricks, but after all, my temperature was at least 90 or 100 degrees this morning, we must remember that!'

And he ran off across the roof.

'Heysan hoppsan, Midge!' he cried.

'Heysan hoppsan, Karlson!' said Midge.

But all the time he was watching the fireman, who was coming nearer and nearer.

'Hey, Midge,' called Karlson before he disappeared behind the chimney. 'Don't tell the fireman I'm here. I'm the world's best firefighter, after all, and they'd always be after me when anything caught fire from now on.'

The fireman was quite close now.

'Keep quite still, stay just where you are,' he shouted to Midge. 'Don't stir from that spot and I'll come and get you.'

It was nice of him, Midge thought, but quite unnecessary. After all, Midge had been wandering about on the roof all afternoon, so he could have taken another step or two now.

'Was it my mother who sent you?' he asked, when he was on his way down the telescopic ladder in the fireman's arms.

'Yes, of course it was,' said the fireman. 'But were

you . . . I did think for a moment there were two little boys up there on the roof?’

Midge remembered what Karlson had said and he answered honestly:

‘No, I was the only *boy*.’

Mummy’s nerves really were all over the place. She and Daddy and Bass and Barbie and masses of other people were down in the street waiting for Midge. And Mummy threw herself on him and hugged him and laughed and cried in turn. And Daddy carried him right up to the flat and held him tight all the time. And Bass said:

‘You really do scare the life out of us, Midge.’

And Barbie cried too and said:

‘You must never do that again, remember!’

And a little later, when Midge was in bed, they all gathered round him, just as if it had been his birthday. But his father said very solemnly:

‘Didn’t you realize that we would be worried? Didn’t you realize that Mummy would cry and be upset?’

Midge wriggled about in his bed.

‘Not as upset as all that,’ he muttered.

His mother hugged him very hard and said:

‘Suppose you had fallen off! Suppose we had lost you!’

‘Would you have been sorry then?’ asked Midge hopefully.

‘Yes, what do you think?’ said Mummy. ‘We don’t want to lose you for anything in the world, you know that.’

'Not even for a hundred thousand million pounds?' asked Midge.

'No, not even for a hundred thousand million pounds.'

'Am I worth all that much?' asked Midge, surprised.

'You are,' said his mother, hugging him again.

Midge thought. A hundred thousand million pounds, what a frightful lot of money! Was it possible that he could be worth that much? When you could get a puppy, a really nice puppy, for five pounds.

'Daddy,' said Midge when he had finished thinking. 'If I'm worth a hundred thousand million pounds, couldn't I take out five pounds in cash and buy myself a puppy?'

## 6

# Karlson plays ghosts

It was not until lunchtime the next day that they began to ask Midge how he had got on to the roof.

‘Did you go through a hatch in the attic?’ his mother asked.

‘No, I *flew* up with Karlson on the Roof,’ said Midge.

His mother and father looked at each other.

‘No, this simply won’t do,’ said Mummy. ‘This Karlson on the Roof is driving me crazy.’

‘Midge, there is no Karlson on the Roof,’ said Daddy.

‘Isn’t there?’ said Midge. ‘He was there yesterday, anyway.’

His mother shook her head.

‘It’s a good thing school will be over soon and you can go down to Grandma,’ she said. ‘I hope Karlson won’t think of following you out there.’

This was an idea which had not struck Midge. He would be going to Grandma for the summer and would not be seeing Karlson for two months. It wasn’t that he didn’t enjoy himself with Grandma, he always had a lovely time there, but how he would miss Karlson!



And what if Karlson was not still living on the roof when Midge came back again!

With his elbows on the table and his head in his hands he sat trying to think how life would be without Karlson.

'No elbows on the table, you know that,' said Barbie.

'Speak for yourself,' said Midge.

'No elbows on the table, Midge,' said his mother. 'Would you like a little more cauliflower?'

'No, I'd rather die,' said Midge.

'That's *not* the way to talk,' said his father. 'You should say "No thank you".'

So that was the way they bossed a hundred thousand million pound boy about, thought Midge, but he didn't say so. Instead he said:

'If I say I'd rather die, of course you know I mean no thank you.'

'But a gentleman doesn't talk like that,' his father objected. 'And you want to be a gentleman, don't you, Midge?'

'No, I'd rather be a man like you, Daddy,' said Midge.

Mummy and Bass and Barbie laughed. Midge wasn't sure why, but it seemed to him that they were laughing at his daddy and he didn't like that.

'I just want to be nice, Daddy, like you,' he said.

'Thank you, my boy,' said Daddy. 'What did you say, did you really not want any more cauliflower?'

'No, I'd rather die,' said Midge.

'But it's good for you,' said his mother.

'I can believe that,' said Midge. 'The worse you like something, the better it is for you. Why do they

have to stuff all the vitamins into something that tastes so bad, that's what I'd like to know?"

'Yes, isn't it funny,' said Bass. 'I suppose you think they ought to put them in fizzy drinks and chewing-gum instead?'

'That's the most sensible thing you've said for a long time,' said Midge.

After lunch he went to his room. He was hoping with all his heart that Karlson would come. Midge would be going away soon and he wanted to see Karlson as much as possible before then.

Perhaps Karlson felt this, because he came flying in as soon as Midge put his nose out of the window.

'Have you got a temperature today?' asked Midge.

'A temperature . . . me?' said Karlson. 'I never have a temperature. That was just imagination.'

'You mean you just imagined you had a temperature?' said Midge, surprised.

'No, but I made *you* imagine that I had one,' said Karlson, laughing delightedly. 'The world's best trickster, guess who that is!'

Karlson could not keep still for a moment. All the time he was talking he was moving round the room and rummaging energetically through all Midge's things, opening as many cupboards and drawers as possible and examining everything with extreme interest.

'No, I haven't got a temperature today,' he said. 'I'm tremendously hale and hearty today and ready for some fun.'

Midge was also ready for some fun. But the thing

he wanted most of all was for Mummy and Daddy and Bass and Barbie to see Karlson, so that he no longer had to go on listening to all that rubbish about Karlson not existing.

‘Just wait a moment,’ he said quickly. ‘I’ll be back right away.’

He rushed down to the living-room. Bass and Barbie had gone, which was annoying, but his mother and father were still sitting there and Midge said hurriedly:

‘Mummy and Daddy, will you come to my room with me now, at once?’

He didn’t dare to say anything about Karlson, it would be better for them to see him without warning.

‘Couldn’t you come and sit with us instead?’ said Mummy. But Midge tugged at her arm.

‘No, you’ve got to come with me and look at something.’

After a little persuasion he got them both to come with him and Midge was feeling very happy as he threw open the door to his room. Now, at last, they would see!

He could have cried, he was so disappointed. The room was empty – just as it had been the first time he was going to show them Karlson.

‘What was it we were supposed to see?’ asked Daddy.

‘Nothing special,’ mumbled Midge.

Luckily the telephone rang at that moment and so Midge did not have to explain. Daddy went off to answer and Mummy had a cake in the oven which she had to look at. Midge was alone. He sat down by the

window, feeling very cross with Karlson, and decided that he was going to hear a thing or two if he came flying in.

But no one came flying in. Instead the wardrobe door opened and Karlson stuck out his cheerful face.

Midge was very surprised.

'What on earth were you doing in my wardrobe?' he asked.

'Frying eggs – no! Thinking about my sins – no! Lying on the shelf having a rest – yes,' said Karlson.

Midge forgot to be angry. He was just glad that Karlson was still there.

'This is a lovely wardrobe to play hide-and-seek in.' said Karlson. 'Shall we do that? I'll lie on the shelf again and you can guess where I am.'

Before Midge could answer Karlson had disappeared inside the wardrobe and Midge could hear him climbing up on the shelf.

'You can play now,' cried Karlson.

Midge opened the wardrobe door wide and found Karlson on the shelf without much difficulty.

'Ugh, you are mean,' cried Karlson. 'You could have looked in the bed and the other side of the table and other places *first*. I'm not going to stay if you behave like that, ugh, you are mean!'

Just then the bell rang at the door of the flat and soon after Mummy was calling from the hall.

'Midge, here are Chris and Susanna for you.'

That was all that was needed to put Karlson in a good temper again.

'We'll play a joke on them,' he whispered to Midge. 'Shut the door on me!'

Midge shut the wardrobe door and no sooner had he done it than Susanna and Chris came in. They lived in the same street and were in the same class at school as Midge. Midge was very fond of Susanna and he liked Chris too, and had already forgiven him the lump on his forehead. He often had a fight with Chris, but afterwards they were just as good friends as before. In any case, Midge didn't only fight Chris, he had come through fierce battles with almost all the boys in the street. But he never attacked Susanna.

'Why is it that you never beat up Susanna?' his mother asked him once.

'Well, she's so extranice, I don't need to,' said Midge.

But of course Susanna could be annoying sometimes. Yesterday, when they were coming home from school, Midge had told her about Karlson on the Roof and Susanna had laughed and said that Karlson was make-believe. And Chris had backed her up so that Midge had been forced to hit him and it was then that Chris had thrown the stone at his head.

But now they were here and Chris had brought Jeffy with him. It was thanks to Jeffy that Midge actually forgot Karlson, who was lying on the shelf inside the wardrobe. Midge liked dogs better than anything else in the world. Jeffy jumped up and barked and Midge hugged him and patted him. Chris stood beside them, looking on calmly. He knew that Jeffy was *his* dog and no one else's and Midge was welcome to pat him as much as he liked.

While Midge was busy patting Jeffy, Susanna said with an irritating giggle: 'Where's your old Karlson on the Roof, then? We thought he might be here.'

That was when Midge remembered that Karlson was on the shelf in the wardrobe. But since he did not know what trick Karlson intended to play, he could not tell Chris and Susanna. So he just said:

'Huh, didn't you say Karlson on the Roof was imaginary? Yesterday you said he was only make-believe.'

'Yes, so he is,' said Susanna and laughed until the dimples showed in her cheeks.

'Suppose he isn't,' said Midge.

'But he is,' said Chris.

'No he's not,' said Midge.

He was just wondering if there was any point in going on with this *sensible argument* or if it would not be better to give Chris a clip over the ear at once. But before he could make up his mind, there came from the wardrobe a loud, resounding 'Cock-a-doodle-do!'

'What was *that*?' said Susanna and her mouth, which was as small and red as a strawberry, fell open with amazement.

'Cock-a-doodle-do!' someone crowed again, and it sounded just like a real cock.

'Is there a *cock* in your wardrobe?' said Chris, surprised. Jeffy growled. But Midge laughed. He couldn't get a word out, he was laughing so much.

'Cock-a-doodle-do!' came from the wardrobe.

'I'm going to open it and look,' said Susanna. She opened the door and looked in. And Chris ran forward and looked as well. First they could only see a row of clothes hanging up, but then they heard a sniggering sound above them and when they looked, there was a

fat little man lying on the shelf. He lay comfortably propped on his elbow, dangling one tubby little leg, and he had bright blue, shining eyes.

At first neither Chris nor Susanna said a word, only Jeffy growled. But when Susanna got her tongue back she said:

‘Who is that up there?’

‘Just a little make-believe,’ said the strange figure up on the shelf, wagging his leg a little more vigorously. ‘A little make-believe, taking a little rest. In short . . . an invention!’

‘Is it . . . is it . . .?’ stammered Chris.

‘A little invention, lying here crowing in all simplicity, no more,’ said the little man.

‘Are you Karlson on the Roof?’ whispered Susanna.

‘Yes, who else?’ said Karlson. ‘Do you think old Mrs Johnson from number 92 has crept in here for a bit of shut-eye?’

Midge could only laugh as Susanna and Chris stood there gaping and looking very silly.

‘I should think that would jolly well shut you up,’ said Midge at last.

Karlson jumped down from the shelf. He went over to Susanna and pinched her cheek roguishly.

‘What’s this childish little make-believe here, then?’ he said.

‘We . . .’ Chris began.

‘What are you called, besides August?’ asked Karlson.

‘I’m not called August,’ said Chris.

‘Good, keep it up!’ said Karlson.

‘Their names are Susanna and Chris,’ said Midge.

‘Well, it’s incredible what can happen to people,’ said Karlson. ‘But don’t you let it worry you – not everyone can be called Karlson, unfortunately.’

He looked eagerly about and went on without drawing breath:

‘I feel ready for a bit of fun. Couldn’t we throw the chairs out of the window or something?’

Midge did not think that was a very good idea and he was certain that his parents would not think so either.

‘Well, if they’re old-fashioned, they’re old-fashioned,’ said Karlson, ‘there’s nothing to be done. We shall have to think of something else, because fun I must have. Otherwise I’m not staying,’ he said, setting his mouth obstinately.

‘Oh, we can surely think of something else,’ said Midge, pleadingly. But Karlson had obviously made up his mind to be obstinate.

‘You’d better watch it, otherwise I shall fly away,’ he said.

Midge and Chris and Susanna all realized what a misfortune that would be and they begged Karlson to stay with them.

Karlson sat for a while, still looking very stubborn.

‘I’m not certain,’ he said, ‘but I *might* stay if someone pats me and says “Dear Karlson”,’ and he pointed at Susanna with his fat little forefinger. Susanna made haste to pat him.

‘Dear Karlson, please stay and we’ll think up some fun,’ she said.

‘All right, I will,’ said Karlson and the children gave a sigh of relief. But it was a little too soon.

Midge’s mother and father sometimes went for a



walk in the evening. Now Mummy was calling from the hall:

'Goodbye for a little while! Chris and Susanna can stay until seven o'clock and then get ready for bed straightaway, Midge. We'll be back soon to say goodnight.'

They heard the hall door close.

'She didn't say how long *I* could stay,' said Karlson, sticking out his under lip. 'I'm not going to stay if it's all going to be unfair.'

'You can stay as long as you like,' said Midge.

Karlson stuck his under lip out still further.

'Why can't *I* be chased away at seven o'clock like other people?' said Karlson. 'I shan't stay . . .'

'I shall ask Mummy to send you home at seven o'clock,' said Midge quickly. 'What sort of game are we going to think of?'

Suddenly Karlson's bad temper had gone like the wind.

'We could play ghosts and scare people out of their wits,' he said. 'You don't know what I can do with just a little sheet. If I had a penny for everyone I have scared to death I could buy myself a lot of sweets. I'm the world's best ghost,' said Karlson and his eyes shone merrily.

Midge and Chris and Susanna were quite ready to play ghosts, but Midge said:

'We don't need to scare people so *terribly* much!'

'Easy, take it easy,' said Karlson. 'You don't have to teach the world's best ghost anything about spooking. I shall just scare them to death *a little*, they'll hardly notice it.'

Karlson went over to Midge's bed and pulled off the coverlet.

'This would make a nice ghost costume,' he said.

In Midge's writing-desk he found some black chalk with which he drew a gruesome ghost face on the cover. Then he took Midge's scissors and cut two holes for eyes before Midge could stop him.

'Coverlets . . . a mere trifle,' said Karlson. 'And a ghost has to be able to see, otherwise it might flutter away and land in the East Indies or somewhere.'

Then he threw the coverlet over his head like a cloak so that only his chubby hands stuck out at the sides. Although the children knew it was only Karlson under the cover, they were still a little frightened and Jeffy began to bark quite furiously. It was no better when the ghost started his engine and began to fly round and round the ceiling light, with the coverlet wafting to and fro as he went. It looked really ghostly.

'I'm a little motorized ghost, wild but winsome,' said Karlson.

The children stood staring fearfully at him and Jeffy barked.

'I really like to have plenty of noise around when I come,' said Karlson. 'But if I'm going to play ghosts it will be best to put the silencer on. There we are!'

After that he hovered almost soundlessly, seeming even more ghostly than before.

Now they had only to find someone to haunt.

'I can go and haunt the stairs, someone's bound to come and get the shock of his life,' said Karlson.

The telephone rang but Midge had no wish to answer it. He let it ring.

Karlson began to try out some really good sighs and groans to himself. A ghost which could not sigh and groan was useless, Karlson said. It was the first thing a ghost had to learn at spook school.

All this had taken time. When at last they were standing in the hall, ready to begin haunting, they heard a peculiar scratching at the hall door. At first Midge thought it was his parents coming home early. But when he saw a long wire sticking in through the letter-box, he remembered something his father had recently read out from the newspaper to his mother. The newspaper said that there were a great many flat thieves about just at present. The thieves were cunning, they rang up first and waited to see if anyone was at home. If nobody answered, they hurried over to the flat they had been telephoning and all they had to do was work the door open, go in and take everything there was of value.

Midge was terribly frightened when he realized that thieves were trying to get in, and so were Chris and Susanna. Chris had shut Jeffy in Midge's room so that he would not bark during the haunting, but now he regretted it.

But there was one person who was not frightened and that was Karlson.

'Easy, take it easy,' he whispered. 'On occasions like this a ghost is the best thing you can have. Come on, we'll creep into the living-room, because that will be where your father keeps his gold and diamonds,' he said to Midge.

Karlson and Midge and Susanna and Chris stole into the living-room as quietly and cautiously and

quickly as they could. They crept behind the furniture and hid themselves. Karlson got into the beautiful old linen press which was used as a cupboard and closed the door as well as he could. He had scarcely shut it before the thieves came in on tiptoe. Midge, lying behind the sofa by the fireplace, peeped out warily. In the middle of the room stood the two thieves, looking villainous. And – what an extraordinary thing! – they were none other than Filly and Rolly.

‘Ha! Now to find out where they keep the Crown Jewels,’ said Filly in a low, hoarse voice.

‘In there, of course,’ said Rolly, pointing to the antique secretaire, which had a lot of small drawers in it. Midge knew that Mummy kept the household money in one of the drawers and in another she had some valuable rings and brooches which Grandma had given her. And Daddy had the gold medal he had won in a shooting contest. It would be awful if the thieves were to take them all, thought Midge, and he could hardly prevent himself from crying where he lay behind the sofa.

‘You look after that bit,’ said Filly. ‘I’m going out to the kitchen to see if they’ve got any silver spoons.’

Filly went and Rolly began to pull out the drawers. He whistled with pleasure. He must have found the household money, thought Midge, feeling more and more unhappy.

Rolly pulled out the next drawer and whistled again. Now he must have found the rings and brooches.

But then Rolly whistled no more. Out of the cupboard door rushed a ghost, giving a little warning groan as it came. And as Rolly turned and saw the

ghost, there was a rattle in his throat and he dropped the household money and the rings and brooches and everything. The ghost fluttered to and fro round him, groaning and sighing, and suddenly flew out to the kitchen. A second later Filly came running in, white-faced, screaming:

‘Golly, a roast!’

He meant ‘Rolly, a ghost’, but he was so frightened that he said ‘Golly, a roast’ instead. It was not surprising that he was frightened, because the ghost was flying right behind him, groaning and sighing terribly. Rolly and Filly rushed to the door, the ghost fluttering round their ears all the time, ran into the hall and through the outer door. But the ghost followed them, chasing them down the stairs, booming in a hollow, terrifying, ghostly voice:

‘Easy, take it easy! I’ll soon catch up with you, and then we’ll have some fun!’

But then the ghost got tired and returned to the living-room. Midge had picked up all the household money and rings and brooches and put them back in the secretaire and Susanna and Chris had collected the silver spoons which Filly had dropped when he ran from the kitchen to the sitting-room.

‘The world’s best ghost is Karlson on the Roof,’ said the ghost, taking off his ghost suit.

The children laughed, they were so happy, and Karlson said:

‘Nothing is as good as a ghost when there are thieves to be scared off! If only people knew how good they were, they would fix up an angry little ghost in every cash-box in town.’



The household money and rings and brooches and the gold medal and all the silver spoons were saved! Midge was so happy that he skipped as he said:

‘Imagine people being stupid enough to believe in ghosts! There isn’t anything supernatural, Daddy said so.’

He nodded importantly.

‘Silly thieves, they thought it was a ghost coming out of the cupboard, when it was nothing supernatural at all, only Karlson on the Roof!’

## Karlson puts a spell on Allen

The next morning a sleepy, tousled figure in blue and white-striped pyjamas came staggering barefoot into the kitchen where his mother was. Bass and Barbie had gone to school and Daddy to his office. But Midge did not have to leave until later, which was a good thing, because he loved being alone with his mother for a little while in the mornings like this. Although he was quite big, he still liked sitting on his mother's lap when there was no one to see him. It was so easy to talk then and if they had plenty of time, they would sing and tell each other stories.

His mother was sitting at the kitchen table reading her paper and drinking her morning coffee. Midge slid silently on to her lap and she held him there quietly until he had really woken up.

The walk the evening before had been a little longer than they intended and when his parents came home Midge was already asleep in bed. He had kicked off the covers and when Mummy was tucking him up she saw there were two holes in the coverlet and it was dirty too, someone had marked it with black chalk. No wonder Midge had gone to sleep so quickly,



thought Mummy. But now she had the culprit here on her knee and she certainly did not intend to let him go without an explanation.

'Listen, Midge,' she said, 'I should very much like to know who made that hole in the coverlet, only don't tell me it was Karlson on the Roof!'

Midge was silent, thinking hard. It *was* Karlson on the Roof who had made the hole, and yet he wasn't allowed to say so! It would be best to keep quiet about the thieves too, because his mother was not likely to believe in them either.

'Well?' said his mother, when no answer came.

'Couldn't you ask Susanna instead?' said Midge, cunningly. Susanna could tell Mummy what had happened and Mummy would have to believe her.

'Aha, so it was Susanna who had cut holes in the coverlet,' thought his mother. And she thought it was splendid of Midge not to tell tales but to let Susanna tell her what she had done herself. She gave Midge a little hug, and decided not to ask him any more about the coverlet just then. But she was going to have Susanna on the mat as soon as she got hold of her.

'You like Susanna a lot, don't you?' said Mummy.

'Yes, very much,' said Midge.

His mother was beginning to glance at the newspaper again and Midge sat silently on her lap, thinking. Whom did he really love? Mummy most of all . . . and then Daddy. Bass and Barbie he liked sometimes, yes, he liked them most of the time, especially Bass, but sometimes he got so furious with them he nearly burst! He liked Karlson on the Roof and he liked Susanna . . . very much. Perhaps he would marry her

when he was older, because it seemed you had to have a wife, whether you wanted one or not. Of course he would like to marry Mummy most of all, but perhaps that wasn't possible.

When he had got to this point he suddenly had a worrying thought.

'Listen, Mummy, if Bass dies when he's older, shall I have to marry his wife?'

His mother put down her coffee cup in surprise.

'What in the world makes you think that?' she said. It sounded as if she was going to laugh and Midge was afraid he had said something silly and did not want to say anything more. But she insisted:

'What made you think that?'

'Well, I've got Bass's old bike,' said Midge unwillingly. 'And his old skis and his skates that he had when he was as old as I am and his old pyjamas and gym shoes and everything.'

'But you won't have to have his old wife, I promise you that,' said his mother. And she wasn't laughing, luckily.

'Couldn't I marry you instead?' Midge suggested.

'I don't know if that would do,' said Mummy. 'I'm already married to Daddy, you see.'

Midge knew that was perfectly true.

'It's awfully bad luck that Daddy and I love the same person,' he said, annoyed.

But then his mother did laugh and said:

'Well, you know, I think it's a very good thing.'

'That's what *you* think,' said Midge. 'But I can have Susanna,' he added. 'Because you have to have someone.'

He started thinking again and he didn't think that it would be much fun living with Susanna. She could be quite awkward sometimes. In any case, he wanted to live with Mummy and Daddy and Bass and Barbie. A wife was not something he was looking forward to particularly.

'I would much rather have a dog than a wife,' he said. 'Mummy, *couldn't* I have a dog?'

She sighed. There now, Midge was beginning to talk about his blessed dog again! It was almost as tiresome as that business with Karlson on the Roof.

'You know, Midge, I think you had better go and get your clothes on,' said his mother. 'Otherwise you won't get to school in time.'

'Typical,' said Midge bitterly. 'As soon as I begin to talk about my dog you have to talk about school!'

All the same, it was quite fun going to school that day because he had so much to talk about with Chris and Susanna. They walked home together as usual and it was more fun than it had been for a long time, Midge thought, now that Susanna and Chris knew Karlson on the Roof as well.

'He's such fun, isn't he?' said Susanna. 'Do you think he will come today too?'

'I don't know,' said Midge. 'He just says he'll come *about*, and that could be any time.'

'I hope he'll come about today,' said Chris. 'Susanna and I will come home with you, can we?'

'O.K. with me,' said Midge.

But there was someone else who wanted to come too.

Just as the children were about to cross the road a little black poodle puppy came running up to Midge. He nuzzled the back of his knee and barked in a friendly way.

'Look, what a nice puppy,' said Midge, absolutely delighted. 'Look, he must be frightened of the traffic and wants to cross the road with me!'

Midge would have been happy to pilot the puppy over as many roads as he liked. Perhaps the puppy felt that, because it trotted over the crossing with him, close to Midge's legs.

'Isn't he sweet?' said Susanna. 'Come here, boy!'

'No, he wants to go with me,' said Midge, taking a firm hold of the puppy. 'He likes me.'

'He likes me too, so there,' said Susanna.

The puppy looked as if he liked everyone in the world as long as they liked him. And Midge liked him, oh, how he liked him! He leaned down and stroked the puppy and spoke to it and made a whole lot of friendly little noises, all of which meant only that this puppy was the nicest, nicest, nicest dog in the world. The puppy wagged its tail and looked as if it quite agreed. It barked and wriggled happily when the children turned into their own street.

Midge was gripped by a wild hope.

'Perhaps he has nowhere to live!' he said. 'Perhaps there isn't anyone to look after him!'

'Oh, there must be,' said Chris.

'You shut up,' said Midge angrily, 'you don't know!'

Chris had Jeffy, how could he know what it was like not to have a dog, to have no dog at all!

‘Come on, boy!’ called Midge, feeling more and more certain that the puppy had nowhere to live.

‘Watch out he doesn’t go home with you,’ said Chris.

‘Yes, but he can,’ said Midge. ‘I want him to come with me.’

And the puppy went with him. Right back to Midge’s door he went. And then Midge picked him up and carried him up the stairs.

‘I shall ask Mummy if I can have him,’ said Midge eagerly. But his mother was not in. There was a note on the kitchen table to say she was down in the basement doing the washing and Midge was to tell her when he came home.

But the puppy made straight for Midge’s room like a rocket and Midge and Susanna and Chris ran after it. Midge was quite wild with joy.

‘He wants to live with me,’ he said.

At the same moment Karlson on the Roof came put-putting through the window.

‘Heysan hoppсан!’ he shouted. ‘The dog seems to have shrunk. Have you been washing it?’

‘This isn’t Jeffy, you know,’ said Midge. ‘This is my dog.’

‘Oh, no, it isn’t,’ said Chris.

‘You haven’t got a dog,’ said Susanna.

‘Me, I’ve got a thousand dogs up in my place,’ said Karlson. ‘The world’s best dog-keeper . . .’

‘I didn’t see any dogs when I was up at your place,’ said Midge.

‘They were out flying,’ Karlson assured him. ‘I keep flying dogs.’

Midge wasn't listening to Karlson. A thousand flying dogs were nothing to this puppy.

'I don't think he's got anyone to care for him,' he said again.

Susanna stooped over the dog.

'Well, in any case, he's got Allen written on his collar,' she said.

'So you can see there is someone looking after him,' said Chris.

'Perhaps Allen is dead,' said Midge.

Whoever Allen was, he didn't like him. But then he thought of something good.

'Perhaps it's the dog who's called Allen,' he said, looking challengingly at Chris and Susanna. They laughed mockingly.

'I've got a whole lot of dogs called Allen,' said Karlson. 'Heysan hoppsan, Allen.'

The pup took a little leap towards Karlson and barked eagerly.

'There you are!' cried Midge. 'He knows he's called Allen. Come here, Allen!'

Susanna caught the puppy.

'There's a telephone number on his collar too,' she said heartlessly.

'Dogs have their own telephones,' said Karlson. 'Tell him to ring up his housekeeper and tell her that he has run away. That's what my dogs always do when they have run away.'

He patted the puppy with his chubby hand.

'One of my dogs called Allen ran away recently,' said Karlson. 'And then he rang home to tell me. But he had a little trouble with the dial so he got through

to an old major's wife over on King's Road instead and when she heard a dog on the telephone she said: "This is the wrong number". "Then why are you answering?" said Allen, because he is a very intelligent dog.'

Midge was not listening to Karlson. Just now he was not interested in anything but the puppy and he didn't even notice when Karlson said he felt ready for a bit of fun. But then Karlson stuck out his under lip and said:

'I'm not staying if you're going to play with the dog all the time. I want some fun too!'

Susanna and Chris backed him up.

'We could have a conjuring show,' said Karlson, when he had stopped sulking. 'The world's best conjurer, guess who that is!'

Midge and Susanna and Chris guessed at once that it must be Karlson.

'Then let's decide we're going to have a conjuring show,' said Karlson.

'Yes,' said the children.

'And then we'll decide that it costs a toffee each to get in,' said Karlson.

'Yes,' said the children.

'And then we'll decide that all the toffees shall go to charitable objects,' said Karlson.

'Hm,' said the children, more thoughtfully.

'And then we'll decide there's only *one* charitable object, and that's Karlson on the Roof,' said Karlson.

The children looked at each other.

'I'm not quite sure . . .' Chris began.

'That's what we're deciding,' shouted Karlson, 'otherwise I'm not staying.'

So it was decided that all the toffees should go to Karlson on the Roof.

Chris and Susanna went out into the street and told all the children that there was going to be a great conjuring show in Midge's house. And everyone who had a penny left over from their pocket money ran to the sweet-shop to buy their entrance sweets.

The sweets were handed over at the door of Midge's room, where Susanna took them and put them in a box marked: 'For Charitable Objects!'

Chris had put some chairs in a row and that was where the audience was to sit. In one corner of the room a blanket had been hung up and from behind it they could hear whispers and giggles and a dog barking.

'What are we going to see?' said a boy whose name was Cyril. 'Of course it's all make-believe, but I want my toffee back.'

Neither Midge nor Susanna nor Chris liked Cyril, because he was always so stuck up.

Midge, who had been behind the blanket, came out. He was holding the puppy in his arms.

'Now you're going to see the world's best conjuror and Allen the trick dog,' he said.

'As you said: the world's best conjuror,' came a voice from behind the blanket, and out came Karlson. On his head was Midge's father's top hat and over his shoulders was Midge's mother's checked apron, tied under Karlson's chin in a cheeky bow. The apron took the place of one of those black capes which conjurers wear.

Everyone clapped except Cyril. Karlson bowed and



looked very pleased with himself. Then he took off the top hat and showed that it was empty, just as conjurers always do.

‘Please take a good look, ladies and gentlemen,’ he said. ‘Nothing inside, absolutely nothing!’

Now he’s going to take a rabbit out of the hat, thought Midge, because he had once seen a conjurer do that. It would be fun to see Karlson conjuring a rabbit, he thought.

‘As I said, there’s nothing in it,’ said Karlson gloomily. ‘And there’s not going to be anything in it, either, unless *you* put something in it,’ he went on. ‘I can see a lot of greedy little children sitting here eating toffees. Now we’ll pass the hat round and everyone puts in a toffee. It’s for a very charitable object.’

Midge went round with the hat and soon there was a nice little pile of toffees in it. He gave Karlson the hat.

‘It rattles in a funny way,’ said Karlson, shaking the hat. ‘If it had been *full* of toffees it wouldn’t have rattled at all.’

He popped one of the toffees in his mouth and began to chew.

‘It tastes really charitable,’ he said, chewing happily.

Cyril had not put a toffee in the hat, although he had a whole bag of them.

‘Well, my dear friends . . . and Cyril,’ said Karlson. ‘Here you see Allen the trick dog, the dog who can do everything. Use the telephone, fly, bake cakes, talk, lift his leg . . . everything!’

Just then the poodle puppy did lift his leg, by Cyril’s chair, and there was a very small puddle on the floor.

'You see, I don't exaggerate,' said Karlson. 'The dog really can do anything.'

'Oof,' said Cyril, moving his chair away from the pool, 'any puppy can do that. You make it talk a bit, that will be more difficult, ha ha!'

Karlson turned to the puppy.

'Do you find it all that difficult to talk, Allen?'

'Of course not,' said Allen. 'Only when I'm smoking a cigar.'

Midge and Susanna and Chris jumped, because it sounded just as if the puppy were talking. But Midge thought it must be Karlson getting up to his tricks. And that was a good thing, because Midge wanted an ordinary dog, not one that could talk.

'Allen dear,' said Karlson, 'couldn't you tell some stories of a dog's life – for all your friends here . . . and Cyril.'

'Gladly,' said Allen.

And he began to talk.

'I was at the cinema recently,' he said, jumping playfully round Karlson.

'You were at the cinema, were you?' said Karlson.

'Yes, and there were two dog fleas sitting beside me on the same seat,' said Allen.

'Were there really?' said Karlson.

'Yes, and when we were out on the street afterwards I heard one flea say to the other: "Shall we walk home or shall we take a dog?"'

All the children laughed and enjoyed the show, even if there wasn't very much conjuring. Only Cyril sat looking down his nose.

'Tell him to bake a few cakes, too,' he said scornfully.

'Would you like to bake a few cakes, Allen?' asked Karlson.

Allen yawned and lay down on the floor.

'No, I can't do that,' he said.

'Ha ha, I can believe it,' said Cyril.

'No, I've got no flour left at home,' said Allen. All the children liked Allen very much, but Cyril went on being stuck up.

'Make him fly instead,' he said. 'You don't need any flour for that.'

'Do you want to fly, Allen?' asked Karlson.

You would almost have thought that Allen was asleep, except that he answered when Karlson spoke to him.

'Well, I can fly, of course,' he said. 'But you will have to fly too, because I promised my Mummy I would never go up in the air alone.'

'Come here, then, Allen,' said Karlson, picking the puppy up in his arms.

A second later Karlson and Allen were flying. First they rose up to the ceiling and took a turn or two round the light and then they were off, through the window. At that even Cyril turned pale with astonishment.

All the children rushed to the window and stood watching Karlson and Allen hovering over the rooftops. But Midge screamed desperately:

'Karlson, Karlson, bring my dog back!'

Karlson came back. He put Allen down on the floor and Allen shook himself and looked very surprised. You might almost have thought it was his first flight.



'Well, that's enough for today, we haven't much more to offer,' said Karlson. 'But *you* have,' he said, giving Cyril a sharp nudge.

Cyril did not know what he meant.

'Toffees,' said Karlson.

Cyril took his bag out of his pocket and gave the whole bag to Karlson, although he took out one for himself first.

'Such a greedy boy,' said Karlson. Then he looked round eagerly.

'Where is the box for charitable objects?' he asked.

Susanna went and fetched it. She thought that Karlson was going to offer the toffees round, now that he had so many. But Karlson wasn't. He took the tin and added all the toffees up hungrily.

'Fifteen,' he said. 'Enough for supper! Heysan hoppers, I must go home and have my supper!'

And Karlson flew out of the window.

All the children had to go home, Susanna and Chris too. Midge and Allen were left alone and Midge liked that very much. He took the puppy on his lap and whispered to it. The puppy licked his face and fell asleep. It made little snuffling sounds as it slept.

But then his mother came up from the laundry room and everything was suddenly miserable. His mother did not think it was at all likely that Allen had nowhere to live and she was annoyed with Midge for not telling her he was home. She rang up the telephone number on Allen's collar and told them that her little boy had taken charge of a black poodle puppy.

Midge stood beside the telephone with Allen in his arms, whispering all the time:

‘Dear, kind God, please don’t let it be their puppy!’  
But it *was* their puppy.

‘Darling,’ said Mummy, when she had put the receiver down. ‘Bobby belongs to a boy called Stephen Allen.’

‘Bobby?’ asked Midge.

‘Yes, that is the puppy’s name. Stephen has been crying all afternoon. And he’s coming to fetch Bobby at seven o’clock.’

Midge said nothing, but his face turned a little whiter and his eyes looked very bright. He hugged the puppy and whispered in his ear so that mummy could not hear him:

‘Allen, I wish you could be my dog.’

But at seven o’clock Stephen Allen came and fetched his puppy. Midge lay in bed and cried as if his heart would break.

## Karlson comes to the birthday party

Now it was Summer, school was over and Midge was to go to his grandma. But first there was an important event. Midge was going to be eight. He had been looking forward to his birthday for so long . . . almost ever since he was seven! It was extraordinary what a long time there was between birthdays, almost as long as between Christmases.

The evening before his birthday he had a chat with Karlson.

'I'm going to have a birthday party,' said Midge. 'Susanna and Chris are coming, and we're going to have the table set here in my room . . .'

Midge stopped and looked gloomy.

'I would love to invite you, too,' he said, 'but . . .'

Mummy was very cross about Karlson on the Roof. It was obviously going to be no use trying to ask him to the birthday party.

But Karlson stuck out his under lip more than ever before.

'I'm not going to stay if I'm not allowed to come!' he said. '*I* ought to have some fun, too!'

'Yes, yes, you *will be* allowed to come,' said Midge

hastily. He would talk to his mother – no matter what. He couldn't have a birthday party without Karlson.

'What shall we have to eat?' asked Karlson, when he had finished sulking.

'A cake, of course,' said Midge. 'I shall have a birthday cake with eight candles on it.'

'I see,' said Karlson. 'Listen, I've got an idea!'

'What is it?' asked Midge.

'Couldn't you ask your mother to let you have *eight* cakes and *one* candle instead?'

Midge did not think his mother would agree to that.

'Will you be getting any nice presents?' asked Karlson.

'I don't know,' said Midge.

He sighed. Of course he knew what he wanted – more than anything else on earth. But he would not be getting that.

'I shan't get a dog, not ever,' he said. 'But of course I shall be getting lots of other presents. So I'm going to be happy anyway and not think about dogs all day, I've made my mind up about that.'

'Well, and you've got me, after all,' said Karlson. 'And I should think that would be worth a bit more than a dog!'

He put his head on one side and looked at Midge.

'I wonder what presents you will be getting?' he said. 'I wonder if you'll be getting any toffees? If so, I think they should go straight to charitable objects.'

'Well, if I do get any toffees, you can have them,' said Midge.

He would do anything he could for Karlson and in any case, they were to be parted soon.



'Karlson, I'm going to my grandmother the day after tomorrow, to stay for the whole summer,' said Midge.

At first Karlson looked rather put out, but then he said solemnly:

'I shall be going to *my* granny, too. She's much grannier than yours.'

'Where does your grandmother live?' asked Midge.

'In a house,' said Karlson. 'Did you think she ran about all night?'

After that not much more was said about Karlson's grandmother or Midge's birthday presents or anything else, because it was late and Midge had to go to bed so that he would wake up in good time for his birthday.

Those minutes when you lay and waited for the door to open and everyone to come in with the birthday breakfast tray and presents and everything – they were almost too much to bear. Midge was so excited that his tummy really hurt.

But now they were coming, now they were singing 'Happy Birthday' outside, now the door was opening, and there they all were, Mummy and Daddy and Bass and Barbie!

Midge sat bolt upright in bed and his eyes sparkled.

'Happy Birthday, darling Midge,' said his mother.

They all wished him a happy birthday and there was the cake with the eight candles and the presents were on the tray.

Several presents. But perhaps not quite as many as he usually had for his birthday. There were only four

parcels, however often Midge counted them. But Daddy said:

‘There may be some more presents later on today. You don’t have to have them all in the morning.’

And Midge was very happy with his four parcels. There was a paintbox and a toy gun and a book and a new pair of jeans and he liked them all. How kind they were, Mummy and Daddy and Bass and Barbie! No one had as nice a mother and father and brother and sister as he had.

He fired his pistol once or twice and it made a good bang. And the whole family sat on the edges of his bed and listened.

‘Just think, a whole eight years have passed since this little fellow came into the world,’ said Daddy.

‘Yes,’ said Mummy, ‘how time passes! Do you remember how it rained that day?’

‘Mummy, was I born here in Stockholm?’ said Midge.

‘Yes, of course you were,’ said Mummy.

‘But Bass and Barbie were born in the country, weren’t they?’

‘Yes, they were.’

‘And you, Daddy, you were born in one town, and Mummy in another.’

‘That’s right,’ said his father.

Midge flung his arms round his mother’s neck.

‘Wasn’t it awfully lucky that we all met each other!’

They all thought it was. Then they sang ‘Happy Birthday’ for Midge once more and he fired his gun and it made a tremendous noise.

He had plenty of time to fire his gun during the day,

while he was waiting for the time of his party to arrive. And he had plenty of time to wonder about what his father had said . . . that there might be some more presents later on. For one brief, happy moment he wondered if a miracle would happen after all and he would get a dog, but then he realized that that was impossible. And he scolded himself for being so stupid – he had made up his mind not to think about dogs at all on his birthday and just be happy.

And Midge *was* happy. During the afternoon his mother began to lay the table most beautifully in his room. She put lots of flowers on it and the best, thin cups – three of them.

‘Mummy, there should be four cups,’ said Midge.

‘Why?’ she asked, surprised.

Midge swallowed. He would have to admit that he had invited Karlson on the Roof, although of course his mother would not like it.

‘Karlson on the Roof is coming too,’ said Midge, looking his mother straight in the eye.

‘Oof!’ said his mother. ‘OOOOOF! But I’ll let it pass, as it’s your birthday.’ She ruffled Midge’s fair mop of hair.

‘What a lot of childish things you think of, Midge. No one would think you were eight today . . . how old are you, really?’

‘I’m a man in my prime,’ said Midge solemnly. ‘And so is Karlson.’

The birthday crept along like a snail. Now it was a good deal later on, but he hadn’t seen any more presents yet.

At last he got one more, anyway. Bass and Barbie, who had not yet started their summer holidays, came home from school and shut themselves in Bass's room. He could hear them giggling in there and the sound of paper rustling. Midge was so curious he nearly burst.

After a long time they came out and Barbie laughed and handed him a parcel. Midge was very pleased and began to tear the paper off at once. But Bass said:

'You've got to read the poem on it first.'

They had written in capital letters so that Midge could read it easily for himself. He read:

**'EVERY HOUR OF EVERY DAY  
YOU'VE ASKED TO HAVE A DOG TO STAY.  
SO YOUR SISTER AND YOUR BROTHER  
HAD A CONFAB WITH EACH OTHER,  
BOUGHT A SPLENDID PET FOR YOU,  
WHAT A LOVELY THING TO DO!  
HERE'S A LITTLE VELVET HOUND  
A CUDDLY FELLOW, SOFT AND ROUND,  
WHO DOESN'T JUMP AND BARK AND PAW  
OR MAKE A MESS UPON THE FLOOR!'**

Midge stood quite still and quite silent.

'Open the parcel now!' said Bass. But Midge threw the parcel on the floor and the tears ran down his face.

'Oh, Midge, what is it?' cried Barbie.

'Are you upset?' asked Bass, very unhappy.

Barbie threw her arms round Midge.

'Forgive us, it was only a joke, you see.'

Midge wrenched himself away violently.

'You knew,' he sobbed, 'you knew I wanted a *live* dog and you needn't have teased me.'

He rushed away from them into his room and threw himself on his bed. Bass and Barbie followed and Mummy came running. But Midge took no notice of them. Now his whole birthday was ruined. He had made up his mind to be happy although he hadn't got a dog, but now that they had given him a *velvet* dog . . . The crying rose to a howl as he thought about it and he burrowed his face as hard as he could into the pillow. Mummy and Bass and Barbie stood round the bed, feeling very sad.

'I must ring up Daddy and ask him to leave the office a little earlier,' said Mummy.

Midge cried. What good would it do if Daddy came home early? Everything was awful now and the birthday was ruined, nothing could help.

He heard his mother telephoning, but he still cried. He heard that Daddy would be coming back soon . . . but he kept crying. He would never be happy again. It would have been better if he could have died, then Bass and Barbie could have his velvet dog and never, never forget how mean they had been to their brother when he was alive and it was his birthday.

Suddenly they were all standing beside his bed – Daddy and Mummy and Bass and Barbie. He dug his face still harder into the pillow.

'Midge, there's someone waiting for you out in the hall,' said Daddy.

Midge did not answer. His father shook him by the shoulder.

‘There’s a nice little friend of yours out in the hall, didn’t you hear?’

‘Is it Susanna or Chris?’ muttered Midge peevishly.

‘No, it’s someone called Bimbo,’ said his mother.

‘I don’t know anyone called Bimbo,’ muttered Midge, still more peevishly.

‘May be,’ said his mother, ‘but he is longing to meet you.’

Just then, from the hall, came a sharp, cheeky yap.

All Midge’s muscles tensed and he gripped the pillow hard . . . no, he really must stop imagining things!

But once again came that cheeky yap. Midge sat bolt upright in bed.

‘Is it a dog?’ he said. ‘Is it a *live* dog?’

‘Yes, it’s *your* dog,’ said Daddy.

Then Bass rushed out to the hall and the next second he was back, carrying in his arms – oh, it couldn’t be true! – carrying in his arms a shaggy little dachshund puppy.

‘Is he *my* live dog?’ whispered Midge.

There were still tears in his eyes as he stretched out his arms for Bimbo. He looked as if he thought the puppy might go up in smoke and vanish at any moment.

But Bimbo didn’t vanish. Bimbo was in his arms and Bimbo was licking his face and whining and barking and nipping his ear. Bimbo was quite tremendously alive.

‘Are you happy now, Midge?’ asked Daddy.

Midge sighed. How could Daddy possibly ask? He was so happy that it hurt somewhere right inside him, wherever it was that hurt when you were really happy.

'That velvet dog, you see, Midge, it was meant to be a toy for Bimbo,' said Barbie. 'We didn't mean to tease you . . . or not too much,' she added.

Midge forgave them everything. In any case he was barely listening to her. He was talking to Bimbo.

'Bimbo, here boy, you're *my* dog.'

Then he said to his mother:

'I think Bimbo is even nicer than Allen. Rough-haired dachshunds are the best of all, anyway.'

Then he remembered that Susanna and Chris would be arriving at any minute. He had not known that so many good things could happen on one day! Now they would see that he had a dog and a dog which was *really* his and which was the very, very, very best dog in the world.

But then he got worried.

'Can I take Bimbo with me, Mummy, when we go to Grandma's?'

'Yes of course, you'll take him on the train in this basket,' said Mummy, pointing to a dog basket which Bass had also brought in from the hall.

'Ooooh,' said Midge, 'oooh!'

Just then the doorbell rang. Susanna and Chris had arrived and Midge rushed to meet them, shouting:

'I've got a dog! It's my own dog!'

'Oh, but he's *sweet*,' said Susanna. But then she remembered and said:

'Happy Birthday! This is from Chris and me too.'

She handed over a bag of toffees. Then she fell on Bimbo, crying over and over again:

'Oh, isn't he sweet!'

Midge liked hearing her say that.

‘Almost as nice as Jeffy,’ said Chris.

‘Almost nicer,’ said Susanna. ‘Nicer than Allen, too.’

‘Yes, much nicer than Allen,’ said Chris.

Midge thought both Susanna and Chris were extremely nice and he invited them to come and sit at the birthday tea-table.

His mother had just covered it with plates of ham and cheese sandwiches and masses of biscuits. And in the middle of the table stood the birthday cake with eight candles.

Then his mother came in from the kitchen with a big jug of chocolate. She began to fill their cups up at once.

‘Shouldn’t we wait for Karlson?’ asked Midge cautiously.

Mummy shook her head.

‘No, I think we’ll forget about Karlson. Because, you know, I’m almost certain he won’t be coming. From now on we won’t bother about him any more at all. You’ve got Bimbo now.’

Yes, now he had Bimbo . . . but even so he wanted Karlson at his party.

Susanna and Chris took their seats and his mother handed round the sandwiches. Midge put Bimbo in the dog basket and sat down as well. Then his mother went out and left the children on their own.

Bass put his nose in and called:

‘You’ll leave some cake, won’t you, so that Barbie and I can have a bit?’

‘Yes, I must do that,’ said Midge. ‘Although it’s not fair really, because you were stuffing in cakes for seven or eight years before I was born.’



'Don't try it on, I want a big bit,' said Bass, shutting the door.

No sooner had he gone than the familiar buzzing sound was heard and in came Karlson.

'So you've started, have you?' he shouted. 'How much have you eaten?'

Midge comforted him by saying they had not eaten anything at all yet.

'Good,' said Karlson.

'Aren't you going to say "Happy Birthday" to Midge?' said Susanna.

'Aha, yes, all right, Happy Birthday,' said Karlson. 'Where am *I* supposed to sit?'

There was no cup for Karlson and when he realized that his under lip stuck out and he looked sulky.

'I'm not staying if it's all going to be unfair. Why haven't *I* got a cup?'

Midge quickly gave him his own and tiptoed warily out to the kitchen to get another for himself.

'Karlson, I've got a dog,' he said when he came back. 'There he is, he's called Bimbo.'

Midge pointed to Bimbo who had fallen asleep in his basket.

'Aha, that's nice,' said Karlson, 'pass over *that* sandwich . . . and *that* . . . and *that* . . . Oh, that's right!' he said then. 'I've got a birthday present for you, I'm the kindest person in the world.'

Out of his trouser pocket he pulled a whistle which he handed over to Midge.

'You can have this to whistle to your Bimbo. I whistle to my dogs too, although my dogs are called Allen and they can fly.'

'Are they all called Allen?' said Chris.

'Yes, all thousand of them,' said Karlson. 'When are we going to start on the cake?'

'Thank you, dear, dear Karlson, for the whistle,' said Midge. What fun it was going to be whistling to Bimbo with it.

'But perhaps I could borrow it from time to time,' said Karlson. 'Perhaps I could borrow it quite often,' he said, and went on anxiously:

'Have you had any toffees?'

'Yes, of course I have,' said Midge. 'From Susanna and Chris.'

'They should go straight to charitable objects,' said Karlson, snatching the bag. He stuffed it in his pocket and then fell on the sandwiches again.

Susanna and Chris and Midge had to hurry as much as they could to get some for themselves. But luckily his mother had prepared a great many.

Mummy and Daddy and Bass and Barbie were sitting in the living-room.

'Listen to them, they're having such fun in there,' said his mother. 'Oh, I'm so pleased that Midge got his dog. It's going to be a nuisance of course, but that can't be helped.'

'Yes, now he'll forget his silly make-believe Karlson on the Roof, I'm sure of it,' said his father.

They could hear laughter and chatter from Midge's room and his mother said:

'Why don't we go and have a look at them, the little ones are so sweet!'

'Yes, come on, we'll go and have a look,' said Barbie.



And off they all went, Mummy and Daddy and Bass and Barbie, to have a peep at Midge's birthday party.

It was his father who opened the door. But it was his mother who screamed first. Because she was the one who first caught sight of the fat little man sitting opposite Midge.

A fat little man with cream cake spreading right up to his ears.

'I'm going to faint,' said Mummy.

Daddy and Bass and Barbie just stood and stared.

'Karlson did come after all, you see, Mummy,' said Midge quickly. 'Oh, this has been a lovely birthday.'

The fat little man wiped away some of the cream cake round his mouth and then he waved a chubby hand to Daddy and Mummy and Bass and Barbie, while the whipped cream splashed about.

'Heysan hoppсан!' he yelled. 'You haven't had the pleasure before, have you? My name is Karlson on the Roof . . . here, here, Susanna, mind out how you help yourself, aren't *I* going to get any cake?'

He seized Susanna's hand which was holding the cake knife and made her drop it.

'I've never seen such a greedy little girl in all my life!' he said.

Then he took a large slice himself.

'The world's best cake-eater, that's Karlson on the Roof,' he said, smiling a sunny smile.

'Come on, let's go,' whispered Mummy.

'Yes, don't let me stop you,' said Karlson.

'Promise me one thing,' Daddy said to Mummy when they had closed the door behind them, 'promise me

one thing all of you, you too, Bass and Barbie! Don't tell *anyone* about this, not anyone at all!

'But why not?' said Bass.

'First of all no one will believe it,' said Daddy. 'And if they did believe it, we wouldn't have a moment's peace for the rest of our lives.'

Daddy and Mummy and Bass and Barbie promised faithfully that they would not tell anyone about the strange playmate Midge had found for himself.

And they kept their word. No one, anywhere, heard them say a single word about Karlson. And that was why Karlson was able to go on living in his little house which no one knew about, although it stood on an ordinary roof of an ordinary house in a perfectly ordinary street in Stockholm. Karlson could wander about and play tricks in peace and quiet and that is just what he did. He was, as you know, the world's best trickster.

When all the sandwiches were finished and all the biscuits and the whole cake and Susanna and Chris had gone home and Bimbo was asleep, Midge said goodbye to Karlson. Karlson sat on the window ledge, ready to leave. The curtains fluttered gently in the warm air. It was summertime.

'Dear, dear Karlson, you're quite sure you'll still be living on the roof when I come back from Granny's?' said Midge.

'Easy, take it easy,' said Karlson. 'That is, if my granny lets me. But I'm not sure about that. Because I'm the world's best grandson.'

'Are you really?' asked Midge.

‘Yes, who else could possibly be? Can *you* think of anyone?’ asked Karlson.

Then he twisted the knob which was just about in the middle of his stomach. The engine began to hum.

‘When I come back we’ll eat lots of cake,’ he shouted, ‘because we’ll never get fat *this* way. Heysan hoppsan, Midge!’

‘Heysan hoppsan, Karlson!’ shouted Midge.

Then Karlson had gone.

But in the dog basket beside Midge’s bed, Bimbo lay sleeping. Midge bent over him. He sniffed him. He stroked the puppy’s head with his hand.

‘We’re going to Granny’s tomorrow, Bimbo,’ he said. ‘Good night, Bimbo. Sleep well, Bimbo.’



