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Strange Happenings at Wild Lake

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To my grandchildren
Matias and Elias

Contents

A Night Visitor 7

A ride with Alli to Wild Lake 15

A Trip to Sky Mountain in the Feathercopter 45

This preview contains only chapters number 1, 2 and 7.
The finished book contains 11 chapters.

A Night Visitor

- Ritni! Wake up!

It was the early hours of the morning and Urbán jostled his big brother, trying to wake him. Urbán was in a bit of a state: For, in the tent, by the door, a visitor had appeared. The intruder had pulled over themselves the spare woollen blanket that their aunt had left by the entrance to the tent, so that all that could be seen of the guest were a few strands of black hair. Urbán wanted his brother to get up and have a look, but Ritni just rolled onto his side and pulled the covers over his head. Urbán and Ritni had finally been allowed to camp out in the tent on their own. The previous evening, their aunt had carried the tent to the river and helped them put it up at the end of the meadow. She had also left them a knapsack

full of food and expected them to manage until the following evening, when she would come and check on them to see how they had got on.

Urbán tried again:

- Ritni! There's a ...

I want to sleep! snarled Ritni, and was at once fast asleep again.

Urbán didn't have the courage to try and wake his brother again. He stared at the sleeping stranger, and would have liked to creep over and steal a look to see who it was, but didn't dare. So he just sat there, not knowing what to do. He was six years old and, in his own mind, already a big boy. But even so, he now seemed small compared to Ritni, who was all of eight years old. Too often, he just had to go along with whatever his brother said. Urbán would have liked to have been at least ten years old - then Ritni would have had to listen more to what he had to say. Then he would have gone over to that sleeping person ages ago and asked them to leave. It wasn't right, sneaking into someone else's tent at night without permission. Urbán lay down, looked up at the blue roof of the tent and heard how the birds were starting to twitter in the trees nearby.



He could see through the canvas walls of the tent that it was sunny outside. Urbán gazed at the roof and fell asleep, though he hadn't wanted to. He was awakened by noises in the tent. This time Ritni was also sitting up, and had turned his eyes towards the entrance. A young girl of about their age had rolled into view from under the thick blanket. She stretched, took a number of deep breaths and yawned. After yet more stretching, she looked at Ritni and Urbán.

- Good morning! she cried in a shrill voice.
- You've got a nice tent. Oh, what a difference a good night's sleep makes! So thank you very much for that.

The girl folded the blanket and placed it back where the boys' aunt had left it the previous evening. The girl had big brown eyes, black hair that hung down over her shoulders and a mouth that now smiled broadly at the two boys. She was wearing a dress made of tanned reindeer-skin and reindeer-skin brogues fastened with red, tasselled brogue-bands.

- You must be an elf girl from the underworld wearing clothes like that, suggested Ritni.

- Heh heh, elf girl ay! replied the young girl with a laugh. - And I'm certainly no underworld being, far from it. I'm from under the same sky as the two of you.

- We've never seen you before. Where did you appear from? Ritni continued.

- I didn't appear from anywhere, said the girl.
- I came here over those mountains yesterday evening. I left my ride, Alli, on the top of Windy Mountain, because he didn't want to be among people. I intended to go home again last night, but I was so tired that I wasn't able to climb that mountain over there. I thought I'd sleep in the bushes, but your blue tent seemed so inviting that I came here. You're not angry are you? - No, came Urbán's hurried reply. - But where have you come from, seeing you've come over so many mountains? asked Ritni ...

- Wild Lake. Do you know where that is?

- No we don't, said Urbán.

- It's on the other side of all those mountains as I've already said.

- We are Ritni and Urbán. Who are you? Ritni asked.

- I'm Laksi, and now I've got to go, they'll be expecting me back, replied the girl and moved towards the door. She was just about to unzip the tent flaps when Urbán spoke:

- Don't go just yet.

- But I must.

- Perhaps you could tell us what sort of place this Wild Lake is, suggested Ritni.

- Ooo! sighed the young girl. - It's a long story, too long to start telling now. But I've got a better idea! You could come and visit us!

- How would we get there? wondered Urbán.

The girl gave a joyful chuckle. - Just follow me and everything will be fine. Well, are you coming with me or shall I leave on my own? I can't stay any longer you see.

Laksi zipped open the tent flaps and started to crawl out, but just then Urbán called out to her:

- Wait, we're coming as well!

- I'll go out first, and then you two come after me! said Laksi as she disappeared out of the tent, zipping it shut again from the outside.

- Shall we go? Dare we go? wondered Urbán anxiously, but Ritni was already dressed and fastening his shoe-laces.

Hurry up if you want to come along, he said, grabbed his cap and then he too was gone.



A ride with Alli to Wild Lake

Laksi waited for the two boys at the edge of the field, and as soon as they got to within a few paces of where she stood, she strode off in the direction of the forest.

- Wait for us! Ritni called out.

- I've already waited for you for I don't know how long, I'm in a hurry to get home, and it'll soon be time for breakfast, Laksi replied, beckoning them on. She turned off onto a path that led up the steep slopes of Windy Mountain. Fortunately, the path was such that they didn't need to pick their way through any areas of large stones. Laksi was keeping up a fast pace out in front, with the two boys puffing and panting behind her. Halfway up the mountain, the two boys had to sit down for a rest. Laksi had disappeared out of sight behind the trees.

- We can't keep on running behind Laksi, Urbán panted, wiping sweat off his brow.

- Since you're so slow, argued Ritni.

- Well, so are you, retorted Urbán.

Laksi could be heard calling to them, but they couldn't manage another step. Laksi ran back down the path, stopping in front of them.

- You must be thirsty, seeing as you're so hot and sweaty. Look, there's a cold spring, you can quench your thirst there. If you can make it up to the top, I can get a ride for us from there. Well, do you think you can manage it?

- Yes, I think we can, Ritni informed her as he hurried over to drink water from the spring, with Urbán close behind him. Laksi stood and waited for the two boys, but as soon as they had finished drinking, she was on her way again.

At the top of Windy Mountain, the two boys looked around them. Land stretched out in every direction, seemingly without end.

Under a blue, cloudless sky, this wide expanse of land extended far, far into the distance, and then it rose upwards until it was impossible to say to where it continued on.



- On the other side of those mountains lies Wild Lake, said Laksi and sat down on a rock.
- I'll have to ask Alli to come now, if we're going to be able to carry on our journey.

- Who or what is this Alli? inquired Ritni.

- He's a huge eagle, who brought me here yesterday. He didn't want to go down to the valley to where people live, and when I didn't come back here he probably went off somewhere to sleep in the fork of a tree. Look! I've got this small whistle that I can blow into. The sound it makes is so high-pitched, that our ears can't hear it, but Alli can hear it.

- Laksi brought out from the front of her dress a small twig-like instrument, which she blew into before handing it to Ritni.

- Well give it a blow! And then you can give it to Urbán so that Alli knows that there are three of us who need a ride, instructed Laksi.

When Urbán had given his blow on the whistle, Laksi put it away again in the front of her dress.

- Alli is an extremely big eagle. In Wild Lake, he's the one who takes children on pleasure-trips. He lives on the top of Sky Mountain. Yesterday,

when I decided to come here, I called for Alli with the very same whistle we just used. Alli is very kind and always comes when we call. But as payment, he asks that we do a little dance for him. We must start to dance as soon as he comes into view. You can dance, can't you?

- Ouhf!, sighed Ritni doubtfully. - Can we?
- Surely you must be able to dance a bit. Oh, look! There comes Alli now. We'd better start dancing!

- With that, Laksi jumped to her feet, grabbed Ritni and Urbán by the hand, formed them into a ring and started twirling them around and around. Ritni and Urbán moved their arms from side to side, lifted their feet off the ground and bowed and turned exactly the way Laksi showed them. The great eagle known as Alli landed with a swoosh in front of them. Laksi stopped, drew her right hand over her forehead and cried:

- Hello Alli! We're ready to leave! So good that you came!

- Ritni and Urbán took in Alli with a frightened look: he had yellow, unmoving eyes, a sharp hooked beak and big sharp talons. Alli bowed several times and almost seemed as if he was

smiling, but the two boys still didn't feel at ease with him. They also doubted whether the eagle would be able to fly with the three of them sitting on its back. Alli cocked his head to one side and then, as if he was reading Ritni and Urbán's thoughts, said in a low, gruff voice:

- Oh, I'll manage alright! You two aren't that big, and neither is that slip of a girl Laksi. So I'll manage! And he flapped his great wings as if to show their power and strength.

This frightened Ritni and Urbán even more. A talking eagle!

- But if you two don't want to come along, it'll just be me and Alli, said Laksi as she climbed onto the eagle's back.

- Shall we go ...? Dare we go ...? whispered Urbán, grasping Ritni's hand.

- We'll go! replied Ritni firmly, leading Urbán towards Alli.

- Well come on then! insisted Laksi.

Urbán was doubtful. - And what if I don't manage to stay on, and fall back down to earth ...?

- You hold on to me and Ritni holds on to you, right!

For a moment, Urbán and Ritni didn't move, but then they both climbed onto Alli's back. If Laksi could stay on without falling off, then so could they.

- Is everybody on board? Alli asked.

- Yes, all on board and ready to go, came the reply.

With that, Alli flapped his wings and took off. They rose up above the trees. The wind was stronger up here, but Alli didn't waver, he just held steady and flew on. His dark wings lifted and fell: swish-swish-swish! The trees were left behind one after another. It seemed to the boys that they had, in some way, become smaller, though they didn't say this out loud. They were no longer afraid. It was fun to look down and see the many rivers and big lakes, and a small town with cars driving around. Then they saw reindeer and ravens, as well as a large animal running along. It was black and vigorous.

- That's Guovžaviellja, our Brother Bear, Laksi informed them. - He's going to the lake to catch fish. He doesn't eat anything other than fish. They could see Brother Bear sitting at the edge of the lake. And then reaching into the water with

his front paw. They didn't see any more than that however, as Alli glided quickly on. They flew over all the mountains that Laksi had pointed out to them just a short time before. They were soon looking down on a broad stretch of woodland, surrounded by round hills, hummocks and steep, gravelly ridges, beyond which rose a mountain. Down the side of the mountain flowed a glittering river, which splashed and bounced silvery droplets into the air on its way to a round lake, on whose shore stood a few small houses.

- That's our home, Wild Lake, said Laksi.

- Put us down by that grey thing over there if you would please Alli. Máðen's making a Feathercopter. Alli came to rest on the ground. They had landed next to a grey, round-shaped contraption. It was similar to an aeroplane, but had both wheels, skis and wings.

- Thank you Alli, said Laksi.

- Thank you from us too, added Ritni.

- Well, thank you for doing such a nice dance for me! Until we meet again! said Alli in that low, gruff voice of his. Then he nodded his head, lifted off into the air, and was soon over the mountain and out of sight.



A Trip to Sky Mountain in the Feathercopter

- Haven't they found Golláš yet? asked Máđen, when they came within earshot.

- The tracks end at Laughter Spring, replied Báhkki-áddjá.

- Where on earth can she be? wondered Máđen aloud.

- And if she's made stilts for herself and strode off somewhere, suggested Ritni, who had, that same summer, himself learnt to walk on stilts.

- Well yes, mused Báhkki-áddjá, pondering the idea.

- But would Golláš have enough strength to be able to walk on such heavy stilts as far as Laughter Spring ... hard to say. She might have been able to, if somebody helped her.

- Who? Urbán asked.

- Well, Balvavázzzi, for example, he'd be able to lift a little girl like that into the air, replied Báhkki-áddjá.

- And who's Balvavázzzi? asked Urbán.

- He's our helper, Cloudwalker, the one who helps us get the Feathercopter into the air, said Máden.

- Is he a person or a ghost? continued Urbán.

- He's neither person nor ghost, but rather a guardian spirit. An invisible guardian spirit whose presence can only be felt, explained Báhkki-áddjá.

- Be felt? Be felt how?

- In the same way as when you stroke your own cheek. Try it and see, said Báhkki-áddjá.

Urban stroked his own cheek, even keeping his eyes closed. It seemed strange to him, that such a thing as Balvavázzzi could even exist, let alone that it should hold great wooden poles upright for Golláš to walk on. He'd seen enough when Ritni was practicing walking on his short wooden stilts, oh, how many times he'd toppled over backwards onto his bottom. But he couldn't laugh, because Ritni would have got angry with him and chased him off.

- But where had Golláš disappeared to from the other side of Laughter Spring? Wondered Báhkki-áddjá, scratching his head.

- What if the Wishing Globe has swallowed her, suggested Máđen.

- No! The Wishing Globe would never swallow my friend! Laksi shrieked.

- Can this Wishing Globe eat children? asked Urbán startled.

- Does it swallow anyone, and at any time? added Ritni, searching for an explanation.

- Honestly, it doesn't, in itself, ever swallow or eat anybody, replied Báhkki-áddjá. - But right now we've got to leave for Black Mountain to look for Golláš. It may be that she has gone there with the Wishing Globe after all, you never know with Golláš.

- And what if Reaidnu and Riibma have taken her? wondered a frightened Laksi aloud.

Báhkki-áddjá glanced at Ritni and Urbán, and saw that they were even more puzzled, as well as a little afraid, and so he hastened to explain:

- Reaidnu and Riibma are sons of the Johcat. The Johcat are a lot bigger than us and they live over yonder on Black Mountain. The Johcat

themselves are very good-natured and kind, but their two boys, Reaidnu and Riibma, are a pair of wild and unruly lads. Now and again they go all the way to Wild Lake to play tricks and make a nuisance of themselves, and they're often here on Sky Mountain as well, trying to break The Sky Bow in half. They can't get it into their heads that this task is quite impossible. Then they play tricks on our people and on Stuorra Rávdu (Great Char). Once, they even tried to dam up The Laughter Spring, but that nearly led to Black Mountain becoming completely submerged under water. Well, the Johcat certainly had their work cut out to pull down that dam, and afterwards, they came to make peace with us and with Stuorra Rávdu. You never know what mischief those two boys are going to think of next, and they could do a lot of damage if they weren't so dim-witted. So if Golláš has fallen into their hands, she's smart enough to find a way to escape. So no need to worry, Ritni and Urbán.

– But Goaikkanas didn't escape herself, we helped her, Laksi reminded him.

That was Goaikkanas' own fault, asserted Báhkki-áddjá, why did she have to go and sleep

amongst the berry-tussocks. If you don't want to come with us, Ritni and Urbán, then ... – We want to, Ritni and Urbán assured him with a serious expression.

– If that's the case, then let's go! said Báhkki-áddjá. – Well, Máđen? Will we still be able to travel in that Feathercopter of yours?

– Of course! came the confirmation from Máđen. All we have to do is jump in and we're ready to go!

Máđen opened the door of the Feathercopter and waited until Báhkki-áddjá, Ritni, Urbán and Laksi had climbed in. He then jumped in himself, whispered something to the barrel – once, twice, three times. He then slapped the barrel, thanked it and drew a few quick lines on its top. The Feathercopter started to shake, yet it didn't break up, although Ritni and Urbán felt sure they would soon fall through onto the ground. Then it started to rattle and clang and, wonder of wonders! They remained safely inside the Feathercopter, which now started to move, its wheels finally turning.

– Hih hijj! Hih hijj! cried Máđen.

- Will it stay in the air? What if it falls? asked a sceptical Ritni.

- Or if a hole appears, added Urbán.

- It won't fall and no holes will appear! MáĎen assured them. - But if you're scared then ...

- No! We're not scared! replied the two boys in unison.

- We've never been in a plane like the Feathercopter before, added Ritni. - The kind that's made from feathers ...

- Well, no! MáĎen replied with a chuckle.

- Oh, I understand, you're two young boys who've only lived down in the valley. You haven't seen much of the world yet.

The two boys nodded, looking very serious and holding on tightly to each other's hand.

The Feathercopter continued to shake. MáĎen was now bent over the barrel, whispering things to it for what seemed an age. He then patted it, smiled and finally laughed. After a while, a humming sound began to come from the barrel.

It seemed to them as if the Feathercopter was breathing, a slow, regular breathing. Then they heard its wings start to swish with a sound a bit like the murmuring of the wind in the forest.

Its wheels began to turn and, little by little, the whole of the Feathercopter left the ground. Ritni and Urbán squeezed one another's hand. They were sweating and feeling afraid, but they didn't say a word, just kept glancing at each other.

The Feathercopter tipped forward and it seemed as if its nose would soon hit the ground, but suddenly, it began making a nice sound and levelled off above the trees, before lifting higher and higher into the air. The clouds now seemed to be below them. There was no rumbling or clanging, just a swish, a hum and a purr. The two boys gasped with excitement.

- What a strange vehicle, Ritni was heard to say.

- Máden stroked and patted the barrel, all the while talking to it in a low voice, and soon the Feathercopter was descending towards the ground. It glided smoothly, just above the tree-tops, before finally, its wheels touched the ground and they had landed.

When they got out of the Feathercopter, they were standing in a multi-coloured light, which shifted from black to white. Red, blue, yellow, green, violet, brown and all colours in between,

flew past their eyes. For a while, they were able to see nothing but colours. Everything was completely silent.

- Are we ...? Are we now inside the Wishing Globe? whispered Urbán.

- Almost, replied Báhkki-áddjá, as he gazed out into the distance in every direction.

- No sign of Golláš, he announced. - Let's have a look around for a while. Máđen, you go that way, I'll go over there and Laksi and the boys can go in the opposite direction. As soon as this light fades, we all meet back here. Is that clear?