

AUNO AND TAUNO

A STORY OF FINLAND

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BY MARGUERITE HENRY

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GLADYS ROURKE BLACKWOOD



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By

MARGUERITE HENRY

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GLADYS ROURKE BLACKWOOD

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CHICAGO ILLINOIS

1940

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TO
BEDA AND EFFENDI WALKEALA, WHOSE
RECENT MEMORIES OF FINLAND ARE
CAPTURED BETWEEN THE COVERS
OF THIS BOOK.





The little twins in two homemade beds stretch and yawn

AUNO AND TAUNO

IT is winter in Finland. For three long months, lights will be burning in all the little wooden houses from one end of the land to the other. Especially in the daytime, for the days are gray like kitten's fluff.

But at night the great white moon and the stars light up the snow. They throw a soft half-light, as if some good fairy had flown low and brushed the earth with her shining wings. And sometimes the Northern Lights send bright streamers across the sky. It is like the twilight hour in America when mothers go about lighting the lamps, making the house all cozy and warm.

Winter or summer, the Arola family stirs early. Papa Arola claps his hands, and the little twins in two little homemade beds stretch and yawn.

Mama Arola is bustling between oven and table. Little curls of steam are rising from the copper coffeepot. Auno and Tauno can watch all of Mama's movements as they dress, for the Arola house has one great room. It serves as kitchen, living room, and bedroom, only they call it *tupa* for short and pronounce it "too'pa".

Auno and Tauno always have two breakfasts: first, a quick breakfast of coffee and pumpernickel bread; then a real breakfast. After the quick breakfast, they hurry out to play in the gray half-light until *real* breakfast time.

No little Finn has to be called twice to come in for the *real* breakfast. What a feast it is! Steaming potatoes in their own jackets, salted herring, pink salmon and mounds of white mushrooms. And with Jack Frost and North Wind striding over the country night and day, appetites are sharp as icicles.

Breakfast over, Auno and Tauno shake hands with Mama and Papa and say, "Thank you for the food."

Then they strap on their skis and call, "Good-bye, Mama! Good-bye, Papa!"

They are all muffled up in scarfs and jackets and *two* pairs of wool stockings. Both children are sturdy as tree stumps. The only way Mama and Papa can tell Auno from Tauno is by her flaxen braids.

Inside the bags strapped over their shoulders they carry herrings and sandwiches; and books too, of course. And in Auno's bag, there's a starched white apron.

Outside the air is clear and still. The snow is so deep it hides all but the top rail of fences. Auno and Tauno skim over the rolling country, their skis making elfin music over the frozen snow! Up a little hill, and now whoosh! Down the hill they go. Up, down, up, down, like a never-ending roller coaster.

A reindeer, startled by their laughter, disappears into the forest. Foxes streak into holes hidden beneath snow-covered stones. Badgers scurry into rocky ridges. They are out of sight in such a hurry that Auno and Tauno wonder if they really saw them at all! And white rabbits whiff across the snow like gusts of wind.



And now whoosh! Down the hill they go

Now the twins are winding through a path between two lakes. There are so many lakes in Finland they can be counted by twos!

Ahead they see the white flag of Finland against a gray sky. It waves from the flagpole of their red schoolhouse.

Already several pairs of skis are lined up against the side of the building. Auno and Tauno add theirs to the neat row. Then they whisk the snow from their boots with a birch twig broom.

What a hubbub inside as good mornings are called! Frosty mittens are tucked into pockets and tingling fingers pressed to scarlet cheeks.

Auno puts on her starched white apron and takes her seat at one of the double desks. And Tauno, because he is full of mischief, has to sit with a very sober little girl. His teacher calls him Little Cuckoo because he jumps up and down exactly like the cuckoo bird.

With all the little girls wearing stiffly starched white aprons, the room looks as if white butterflies had settled there.

But pretty Miss Maki is not deceived by clean aprons. Very thoroughly she inspects hands, neck, and ears. Any boy or girl who is not scoured as clean as a copper kettle is promptly sent home to wash. Auno and Tauno always breathe a little easier after the inspection is over.

While Miss Maki's lessons are pleasant enough, Auno and Tauno can hardly wait for noontime. Then the boys play *Bilp* and the girls learn how to cook.



Tauno has to sit with a very sober little girl

But today poor Tauno is headed for trouble. And all on account of his favorite game.

Bilp is like baseball, except that a stick of wood is used for a ball. Whenever the batter hits the wood a square blow and sends it rocketing through the air, he must shout, "*Pois alta!*" That means: "Get out below!"

Today, in the excitement of the game, Tauno forgot to call "*Pois alta.*" And the flying stick whizzed through the air, clipping Urho's cap right off his head!

Of course Miss Maki happened to be looking out the window at that very moment. Rapping on the pane, she motioned for Tauno to come in. She was very angry. Her eyes blazed like Northern Lights.

"Tauno Arola!" she scolded. "You might have killed poor Urho. Boys who forget the rules," she added, "stand behind the blackboard for two hours, one hour during school and one hour after school."

When the small hand on the schoolroom clock pointed to three, Miss Maki reminded Tauno to take his place behind the blackboard. The blackboard rested on an easel, so the class could see nothing of Tauno but his two sturdy new boots.

The wall clock ticked on and on. Auno felt so sorry for Tauno that every now and then a great tear would roll down her cheek and splash on to her book. It would be no fun skiing home without Tauno.



The class could see nothing but his two sturdy new boots

Meanwhile, things were going on behind that blackboard, very strange things!

At first Tauno behaved very well. Then one foot went to sleep. He felt as if hundreds of red hot pinpoints were dancing up and down his leg. He shifted his weight. If only he could step out of his boots and jump around in his stocking feet.

Someone was going up to the map on the side wall to point out a nation called The United States. Everybody was facing the map.

Suddenly an idea struck Tauno. Why not step out of his boots? Yes, why not? Even the ticking of the clock seemed to repeat, “Why not?”

Ever so quietly Tauno lifted one foot out, then the other, and tiptoed into the cloakroom. No one had noticed. His boots still stood behind the blackboard as if he were in them!

When Auno reached home, her eyes stuck out like marbles, for there was Tauno sitting on the brick warming oven. He was whittling away, happy as could be. She looked at his dangling feet. His stockings were full of holes and two little red toes poked out like birds from a nest.

“Why Tauno,” she gasped, “how — why — I thought — your boots—”

Tauno laughed until the tears rolled down his cheeks. “Won’t Miss Maki get a surprise when she tells my boots they can go home? Ho, ho, ho!”

“But what did Mama say?”

“Mama isn’t home.”



He was whittling away, happy as could be

But almost before the words were out, he clapped his hands over his mouth. "Look! There she comes. Oh, Auno, what will I tell her about my new boots?"

Auno hurried to the window. Sure enough. It was Mama all right.

"Wear your old ones, silly."

"I can't. Mama gave them away."

Quickly, Auno began rummaging in the box by the stove and found a pair of her own. "Here, Tauno, they're old and stiff, but they will cover your bare toes." Both Auno and Tauno pulled and tugged, and somehow Tauno's feet were squeezed into the small boots just as Mama walked in the door.

"Hello, children. Why, Auno! You're still wearing your school apron. And Tauno! Your school blouse. Take them off at once and get into your play clothes."

Mama never even glanced at Tauno's feet. She was busy sucking the blouse and apron and hanging them up to dry in the outdoor drying oven. Then she built a roaring fire inside the oven, and the clothes were dry almost before the twins could say, "Helsinki is the capital of Finland."

After school it is Noisy Time in Finland. Such shouting and laughter! Sound travels very far in the clear air of the Arctic. Children's shouts echo through the forests and re-echo until they melt into one great shrilling.

Of course little Finns do more than just yell like steam whistles. They ski and they highjump and play *Bilp*.



Somehow Tauno's feet were squeezed into the small boots

Any child who does not join in the fun of Noisy Time is promptly taken to see the doctor.

“I asked the neighbor children to come over,” Mama announced. “Why don’t you go to meet them?”

“Oh, good!” cried Auno, bundling into her clothes.

“Guess I’ll study,” said Tauno.

Mama looked up in alarm. She felt Tauno’s forehead. “Go find Papa at once.”

Tauno tried hard not to limp as he went out after Papa. When they returned, Mama was bristling with plans. “Tauno is not well,” she explained. “He must take his steam bath today instead of Saturday. Then tomorrow we will see Doctor Sario. Will you please prepare the fire?”

“Mama,” pleaded Tauno, “I feel all right. I don’t want to see the doctor.”

But there was no use arguing. Mama loved plans and once they were made, no one could upset them. Not even Papa. So he built a roaring fire in the little log bathhouse, and when the stones were red hot, he called Tauno.

Tauno was really worried. “Suppose I can’t get my boots off,” he thought, “and they have to be *cut* off like Auno’s ring!”

The perspiration stood out on his forehead, even though it was cold in the little outer room of the bathhouse where he and Papa were undressing. Tug, tug, tug. Finally, off the boots came. Tauno sighed in relief as he wriggled his numbed toes.



She felt Tauno's forehead

Papa was pouring cold water on the hot stones now and it made funny sizzling noises as it turned into steam. There were benches around the sides of the walls, exactly like those at the circus. Papa climbed to the top bench because the hotter it was, the better he liked it. Tauno took the lowest bench.

“How good this feels,” he sighed, as little streams of perspiration ran down his back like rain on a windowpane.

Soon Papa came down and threw more water on the stones. More steam billowed upward. Next he switched Tauno with green twigs. This didn’t hurt at all. It just made Tauno’s blood tingle.

After more steaming, they both soaped until they were white with lather. Laughing and shouting at the top of their lungs, they threw dippers of water at each other. Then father and son raced out of the bathhouse to somersault over and over in the snow before they dressed!

Right after supper the twins took their places at the lamplit table. Papa was mending the fishing nets. Soon he would begin whittling. All over the *tupa* there were samples of his art—bushy-tailed squirrels, reindeer, sleighs.

Mama was at the spinning wheel. But only one eye was on her flying spindle. The other was on Auno and Tauno to see that there was no whispering when there should be studying. Up, down, goes Mama’s foot. But there is no up-down to her steady gray eyes!

Just before bedtime, Papa took out his *kantele* the harp of the North. Softly he strummed while he sang old, old songs of the lakes and the forests.



"How good this feels," he sighed

When morning came, Tauno had half a mind to tell Mama everything. But he had waited so long, it seemed harder than ever now. Oh, if only he had told her yesterday.

Biting his lip, he struggled into Auno's tight boots once more. He could hear the tinkle of bells as Papa harnessed Tapio, their white horse, for the long drive to town.

"Ready!" cried Papa, and out of the tupa trooped Mama and Auno and Tauno. They all climbed into the sleigh and buried their feet in mounds of hay. Then Papa tucked a great elkskin robe around the twins' shoulders. Auno's and Tauno's heads were almost hidden. In fact, they looked like turtles.

How cozy it was to be snug and warm while snowflakes fell like white stars on Tapio's back! Fir trees bowed stiffly to each other, like white-bearded old men. Harness bells jingled madly as the sleigh whipped across the frozen lake.

Men were cutting little holes in the ice, planting a line of grown spruce trees to guide travelers across the lake. Already, ice magic was at work. Many of the trees were frozen in place, as if they had been growing there for a very long time.

As soon as they reached town, Tapio was tied up and the Arola family walked along the cobbled streets to Doctor Sario's. Auno was kept busy curtsying to every grown-up they passed. Papa smiled and told her she looked like a cork bobbing up and down in a stream. But of course he wouldn't have her do otherwise.

Tauno, in spite of his poor little cramped feet, took off his hat and bowed politely. Both he and Auno were kept pretty busy.



The Arola family walked along the cobbled streets

They had scarcely any time to watch all the activity about them—the men sweeping the streets with juniper twigs, the market carts heaped high with exciting things to buy, the street cars with their women conductors.

And all too soon, the dreaded moment was at hand—that silly visit to Doctor Sario. Tauno reached for Auno's hand, not because he was exactly afraid, but no one understood quite like Auno. She gave a reassuring squeeze.

“Well, well,” greeted Doctor Sario. “If it isn't the Arola family! And how is Auno? And Tauno, the Little Cuckoo?”

“He is not a Little Cuckoo today, Doctor. He refused to join in the fun of Noisy Time yesterday. And Doctor, when he thinks I am not watching,” said Mama, “his face is pinched with pain.”

“Well, Tauno, let's have a look at that tongue.”

Tauno stuck out his little red tongue. Doctor Sario held it down with a piece of wood and looked into his throat with a flashlight. Next he held one of Tauno's eyes wide open and peered so close, Tauno could almost feel the bristles of his red mustache.

Still not satisfied, he took Tauno's temperature and held Tauno's wrist in his big hand, for hours it seemed. Finally, he told Tauno to run back and forth across the office five times. Tauno bit his lip and ran as best he could.

“Hmm,” said Doctor Sario in a grave voice.

“H-m-m,” he boomed again.

And then after an endless pause, “I think it's his feet.”



Doctor Sario held it down with a piece of wood

“His feet!” echoed Papa and Mama.

“Yes, his feet. The boots. Much too tight. Why, feel of his toes. They’re all curled up like the toes of his boots.”

Mama studied Tauno’s feet. “Tauno,” she said sternly, “are those *your* boots?”

Tauno’s head fell lower and lower. “No, Mama.”

“They’re mine,” Auno spoke up. And then both children began telling everything that had happened until the office grew so noisy Doctor Sario held up his hands for quiet—like the conductor at the band concert.

For punishment, poor Tauno had to remain in the sleigh while the family enjoyed the excitement of market day. But his feet were so pinched, he was glad to curl up in the hay and fall asleep. At noon, he fed Tapio handfuls of the warm hay at his feet. In the midst of Tapio’s dinner, the family returned, bringing sandwiches and hot coffee. And soon they were headed for home, Tapio’s harness bells playing merry music in the crystal air.

Auno nudged Tauno. Papa was taking the wrong turn at the fork. It would lead right past the schoolhouse. Tauno sighed. Would his troubles never end? Good old Tapio seemed to understand. He slowed to a walk, making it take as long as possible.

Surely Miss Maki would not be there this late on a Saturday. Why, they must have been on the road for hours! It would be nearly suppertime. But squares of light in the schoolhouse dark against the sky put an end to all wishing. “Oh, dear!” sighed Tauno.



He fed Tapio handfuls of the warm hay at his feet

Papa motioned everyone to follow him. Tauno limped openly now; there was no need to pretend any longer. "Perhaps," he thought, with new hope, "it will be the janitor and not Miss Maki at all."

But there she was, correcting papers. And there were Tauno's boots just as he had stepped out of them!

Miss Maki looked up in surprise.

"Good day," began Papa. "Tauno here has something to say to you."

Now it was Tauno's turn to look surprised. He looked helplessly at Auno, at Mama, at Papa. No one said a word. Suddenly his eyes found his boots. They looked so roomy and comfortable. "Oh, please, Miss Maki, may I put on my boots and finish my punishment?"

Miss Maki smiled. "Put your boots on, my Little Cuckoo," she said kindly, "but from the way you are limping, I think you have had punishment enough."

A short while later good-byes echoed in the frosty night as Tapio flew over the snow, faster and faster. It seemed as if the sleigh were headed right for the Northern Lights and would soon be tangled in the red streamers blazing across the sky.

Tauno was certain that nothing in the world could be more beautiful. He felt all comfortable inside, even though his feet were still numb. How glad he was to have Mama and Papa know everything, and how good they were not to scold! He gave a light tweak to Auno's braid, and they both laughed into the silver stillness like the tinkling notes from Tapio's harness bells.

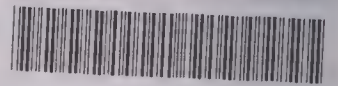


It seemed as if the sleigh were headed for the Northern Lights





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