

## **The Origin of this Book**

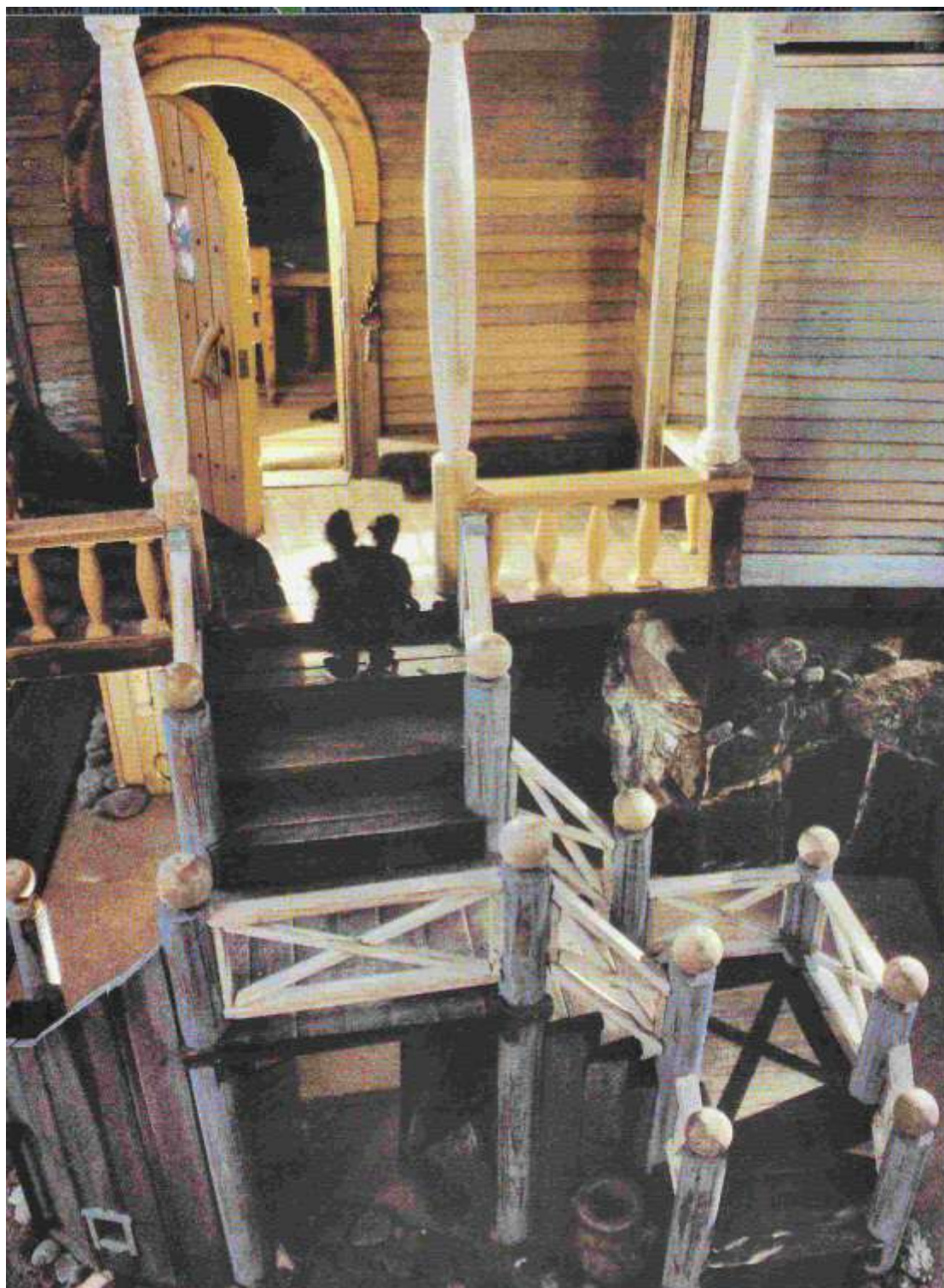
The house was made by Tuulikki Pietilä and Pentti Eistola, with a little help from myself.

It took a long time and was a lot of fun.

Tuulikki made the occupants, Hans Kling Hand tackled the Moomin family and I made the figure's faces.

During the construction of the house, friends and acquaintances began to search, finding many little gifts for us: old-fashioned dining-sets, little clay mugs and dishes and other household effects, including miniature home-baked bread and tiny crocheted oven-cloths and bedclothes, (with hand-embroidered monograms), and everything else that belongs in a real house.

Tove Jansson.



One night, at the beginning of autumn, there was a full-moon. It was still in the valley and there wasn't a breeze dappling the sea.

It was bedtime for everyone living in or staying overnight in the Moominhouse, but nobody had turned off their lights. They all sensed that this was no normal evening. Something mysterious was in the air.

At midnight, unnoticed, a small, black, shadow slunk up the steps to the porch and into the house. There was nothing extraordinary about comings and goings to and from the Moominhouse, day or night: the Moominhouse was always open. But this evening's visitor was no ordinary guest.



Little My had rolled herself up into a blanket in the workshop. She liked to sleep in a different place every night. It made her feel independent and this time she had chosen the carpenter's workshop. Despite the wonderful aroma of wood and turpentine, she couldn't fall asleep.

Then, suddenly, in the still of the night she heard an extraordinary nibbling sound.

'Mice', she mumbled. 'There are mice in the loft. I had already suspected that was the case. Now they're eating the way out of their nests and then they'll be everywhere! Only because Moominmamma insists on giving them milk!'





Little My peered into the secret passageway which led to the cellar under the house. Nothing! But she sensed a wonderfully strange odour rising up through her nose. And then she saw - and this was even more horrifying! - footprints in the sand! They were definitely not those of an acquaintance of the family, not even a very slight, distant, acquaintance.

“Very suspicious”, said Little My, and she became terribly excited.

She ventured further into the storage area where the driftnets are kept. Not the slightest trace there either! Not of the smallest mouse!

But something else was there.

‘This smells like a conspiracy,’ thought little My. ‘Very out of the ordinary.’

\*Author’s note: ‘Something HAD happened here. But we better not talk about it. I, for one, won’t say anything more. At least, not for now.’



Then Little My went into the cellar and exclaimed, ‘Oh my!’ for someone had tipped the potatoes all over the ground. She also noticed that half of the best jam, which had been kept aside for Midsummer, had been eaten. Also, it stank – to say the least – of sulphur and rotten eggs.

‘Aha’ My mumbled. ‘It seems that we are dealing with a scoundrel! It can’t be a ghost because, as far as I am aware, ghosts don’t eat jam.’

This was very interesting. But, nevertheless, My tried to be careful. Very softly, she climbed up and opened the trapdoor to the kitchen.



Moomintroll stood in the kitchen, his snout very pale.

‘Hello,’ he whispered, ‘It’s good that you came. I’ve been hearing such eerie noises! Look here, someone has chewed the armchair to pieces. Papa only made it yesterday! We must rouse the family.’

‘I’d rather not’, said Little My, “we can bring this trifle to order ourselves. Unless you don’t you have the guts?”

‘Me? Obviously I do.’ replied Moomintroll, hiding his tail so she couldn’t see it trembling with fear. ‘Do you think it’s the Groke again?’

‘Of course not, the Groke is *far* too fat. She would be stuck fast in the doorway. Anyway, she doesn’t smell. We are dealing with a relatively small villain, a *Diminutive*.’

‘Sounds ghastly,’ said Moomintroll.

‘Doesn’t it,’ replied Little My, whose speciality happened to be unusual words. ‘Let’s tip-toe into the dining room and see if the scoundrel has been messing around there as well.’



In the dining room old Grandpa Grumble was having an evening conference with his friend, an astronomer. Both were almost completely deaf, and neither had heard anything which differed from the usual unholy-din which frequently occurs in the Moominhouse. Their sense of smell had also deteriorated over the last few years.

‘No, no,’ said Grandpa Grumble ‘I’m telling you, we haven’t seen anything. But earlier something black crept under the sofa. Maybe that was it. One of your strange friends. Shut the door! Pull it shut!’

Then both gentlemen resumed their conversation about the stars.

‘My,’ whispered Moomintroll. ‘Look! The Ancestor has come out from behind the tiled stove!’

‘I see,’ answered little My, grimly. ‘Now it’s serious. The Ancestor has hardly been vexed for the last 100yrs.’

I’ll quickly make a trip upstairs and you guard the staircase. No-one is allowed up *or* down.”

‘But what if Pippi has to use the staircase?’ objected Moomintroll.

‘Ok then,’ said My, ‘but she must be quick!’



Little My went up and further through the house. She hadn’t had so much fun for a long time. The steps and walls creaked and groaned; hidden doors opening and closing. The house sighed a little, and then held its breath.



‘Forward, loyal soldiers,’ mumbled Little My, and stepped out onto the balcony. She stood there and pondered. On the roof sat the very smallest guest of the family, gazing at the full moon.

‘Hello,’ said My. ‘Why are you sitting on the roof?’

‘Hello, hello,’ replied Mini. ‘I’m sleeping outside tonight because of my *hyperosmia*.’ My immediately burnt with interest, as *hyperosmia* was a new and strange word that she didn’t know. ‘What does that mean?’

‘It means that I am very sensitive to smell,’ replied Mini.

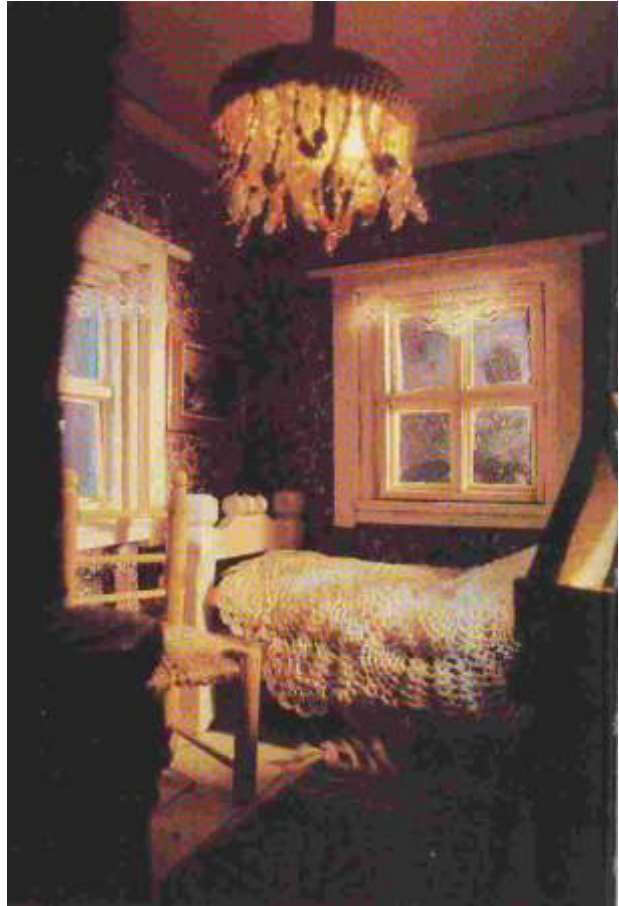


Suddenly Mock and Meggie rushed across the balcony, clearly not themselves.

‘We’re leaving,’ whispered Mock. ‘We’ve heard such disturbing noises! We haven’t once dared to go to sleep ... and over in the tower something screamed!’

‘Don’t panic,’ said Little My.  
‘I’ll bet it was only Misabel.  
She’s superstitious and  
believes in ghosts. I’ll take  
care of it.’

Unpack your luggage and go  
to sleep. Moominmamma has  
made a bed for you in the  
guest room. With their best  
sheets! So don’t be silly.’





Up above, everything was still.

It was a big drafty loft, and smelt wonderfully of autumn. Toft sat in his corner reading. That's what he did most of the time, and nobody disturbed him. Snufkin was telling Ti-ti-oo and the others bedtime stories, and some of the smallest were asleep.

Little My burst in and yelled 'Here you all are, sitting cosily together, and meanwhile, we have a scoundrel in the house! Have you not heard it?'

'Yes, yes,' answered Snufkin, 'We've heard it all. But we're right at the most exciting part of the story. Right now, we have no time for scoundrels.'

'Donkeys,' muttered Little My, and raced out again.

'Misabel,' called Little My. 'Where are you?'

And Misabel answered 'Here, up here. Oh Little My there is someone trying to tear apart the Master's and Mistress' house. He smells terrible, and I had just done a big spring clean!'



My climbed to the very top of the tower where, day and night, the fire burned, showing the sailors the direction of the coastline. There, in the farthest corner, Misabel had hidden herself.

‘Come out,’ said Little My, sternly.

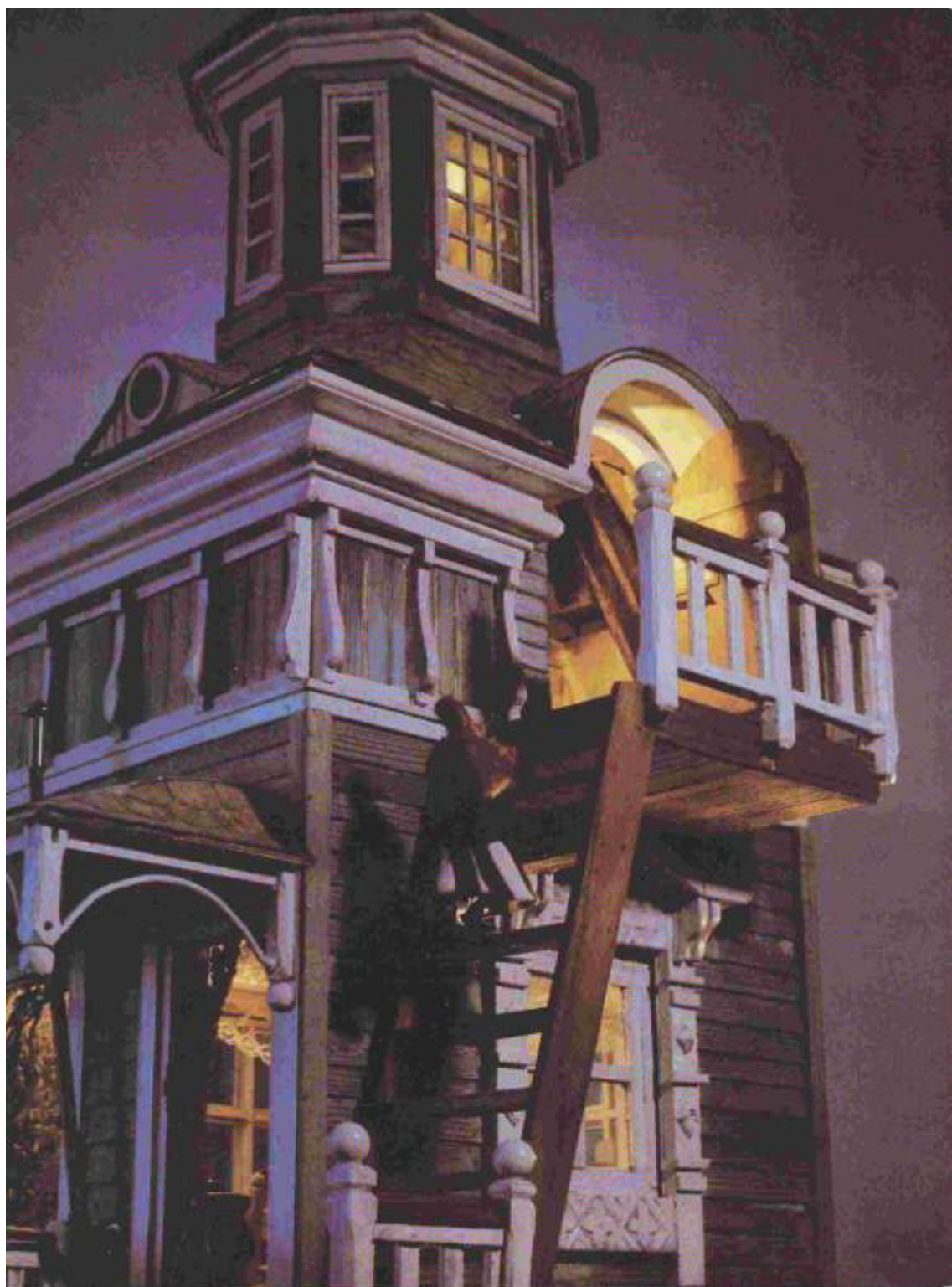
‘You know perfectly well that only Moominpappa is allowed in the lighthouse.’

Misabel whispered: ‘Could this be a ghost, or is it an evil-doer prowling around?’

‘Probably both!’ answered Little My, bursting into evil laughter. ‘Go to sleep!’

‘I’m not going to sleep!’ shrieked Misabel. ‘I daren’t sleep when there’s something so noisy and dangerous about.’

And right that second, there was a terrible noise.





Moominmamma was about to go to bed, when she heard the terrible noise.

‘Oh, not another natural disaster already,’ she sighed. ‘Oh, this is arduous.’

She grabbed her handbag, just in case, and looked out of the window. But the valley was unchanged. And grandmother’s portrait hung perfectly straight on the wall



Then Moominmamma went into the drawing room. Homse ran, saucer-eyed, from the other side of the room, while The Ancestor sat on top of the tiled stove, cursing.

The drawing room table was overturned, and there was mess all over the floor, as if there'd been a fight. Thank goodness the petroleum lamp had not been broken, and all the glass drops were still on the chandelier.

'This really makes me sad,' said Moominmamma. 'Homse, would you be a dear and go and ring the ship's-bell, and wake the entire house.'



Homse ran down onto the porch and rang the ship's-bell with all her might.

In a second the whole house was awake.

The family, all the friends and guests, rushed around: storming over stairs and terraces, through passages and balconies, and further into the house, crying 'What is wrong? Who broke the furniture and what's that dreadful stench?!'

Gradually, everyone had gathered in the drawing room. They righted the furniture while, the entire time, The Ancestor was mumbling, rudely, as he sat on his tiled stove.

‘Moomintroll,’ whispered the Snork Maiden, ‘you won’t forget to come and protect me?’

‘No, no,’ replied Moomintroll kindly, ‘You only need remind me.’

‘Where is your father?’ asked My. ‘Isn’t it about time he wakes up and helps me look around the house?’

‘He’ll come soon,’ said Moominmamma.

‘He has taken to sleeping in a sleeping bag. He takes his time to crawl out, as it’s far too narrow for him. In the meantime let’s go down into the kitchen. It’s cozy there.’





When Moominpappa awoke, he thought there was a storm and he got very excited. It was difficult to get out of the sleeping bag, but one does what one must to avoid making the bed.

Moominpappa put his hat on and went out to the balustrade, (which is what he liked to call the railing on the balcony.) He gazed out over to the western shoreline, but the sea lay still in the moonlight and no leaves rustled in the valley.



‘Something is definitely wrong,’ thought Moominpappa.

‘I’d better go and have a look.’



He left the light burning and went out.

Behind him, (guarded by the dolphin emblem that he had carved with his own paws), the cabin was peaceful.

But, after a few steps, Moominpappa suddenly stopped, smelling the air with his big snout. A horrible sense of familiarity seized him. Suddenly, he was very certain who had come to the house.

'By my tail,' murmured Moominpappa.

There was only one single being in the entire world who smelt that revolting, and that was his secret friend: the adventurer, the pirate, the incorrigible scoundrel, Stinky!



Moominpappa sighed and went down into the kitchen to make himself a sandwich. In the kitchen, the disgusting smell was even stronger and the room was full of people.



‘Misabel, dear,’ said Moominmamma, ‘is it possible you didn’t empty out the compost bucket?’ Misabel began to weep and cried, ‘Madam, you should know that I ALWAYS empty it!’



And, greatly offended, Misabel flung open the door under the sink and the bucket was there, clearly empty.

But behind the bucket, black, hairy and rebellious as ever, squatted the small pirate, Stinky.

There was total silence. Everyone was surprised that someone so small could cause so much trouble.

‘Stinky,’ said Moominpappa. ‘Come out. You have disgraced us both!’

‘Do you know him,’ asked Moominmamma, cautiously.

‘In a way,’ answered Moominpappa. ‘We are sort of, old, secret, acquaintances. You know, sometimes one may have *one* secret acquaintance, which mustn’t necessarily be introduced to the family.’

‘Hmm’, said Moominmamma.

‘Alright. Please open the door and let a little air in. Stinky, I am Moomintroll’s mother. Please take a seat.’

Stinky sat himself down on an un-gnawed armchair and was given a glass of raspberry juice.

Everyone waited, in-case Moominpappa was to clarify the situation.



Finally he said, 'Maybe you can understand that it isn't always easy to be a father, and behave exactly how everyone expects a father to behave. Sometimes one wants to do something adventurous or, as in this case, befriend an adventurer.'

'But does he have to stink and chew the master's furniture!' cried Misabel.

'Quiet!' said Moominpappa. 'Calm down. I can fix the furniture. The important thing is that Stinky has never chewed on my boat; he would never dare do that. And he is such a useful navigator – he navigates just as well at night as he does during the day.'

Snufkin asked, 'And where do you sail to?'

'Oh, a little bit here and there,' said Moominpappa. 'One simply sails off and fishes up all kinds of abandoned or unclaimed things. Things one can hide, for example, in a cave.'

'In MY cave!?!' cried Sniff. 'Imagine that! And what do you do next?'

And Moominpappa explained everything. About what it is like to play poker in a cave, in the light of a storm lantern secured in the sand.

How it feels to be surprised by an unexpected 20m/sec storm, caught 5 miles from the coast in a moonless night. To nearly capsize. For the first and only time, to see a sea monster, (which you at first had thought to be a water-spout), lift his little head, (on a long wobbly neck), out of the morning mist.

'Is that right?' said little My. 'The likes of us, flogging ourselves to death trying to save your house, and you are just out and about with scoundrels, having fun, secretly.'

Moominpappa became cross and said: 'You also have secrets! They are probably huge and absolutely dreadful. I'm sure everyone in this very house has secrets which you truly hope that other people never find out!'

'Ha!' cried Stinky, for the first time in this whole state of affairs, 'I know all kinds of things about this lot. Shall I tell you?'

'Don't you dare!' interrupted Moomintroll, and the others cried 'No, don't say anything!'

'I think the sun is rising,' Moominmamma interrupted, prudently. 'Tooticki, won't you fetch your accordion?'

It was an especially beautiful sunrise. A light morning breeze rolled across from the sea. While Tooticki played accordion, everyone stopped explaining and defending themselves, and trying to put things right. They eventually found that it all wasn't really worth discussing.

The sun climbed higher and it became warmer and warmer. It promised to be a beautiful day.



Naturally, Stinky moved into the Moominhouse. He was allowed to live in a small box under the veranda, and they built a ventilator for better air circulation. To keep him calm and quiet, he was given all sorts of things to chew to pieces and, in fact, many larger items which had been stored away in the attic, possibly on no account to be given away.

The autumn brought many clear days with fresh South-westerly's. But what happened in the evenings; that is entirely another story.

