

ESCAPED FROM THE LANGUAGE-LAB

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Editor's Note: The following story, the first chapter of De Logologische Ruimte (Meulenhoff, 1984), is a word-for-word translation of "The Adventures of Tom Thumb" from Dutch to English. George Levenbach has added in brackets the idiomatic version of some of the more ludicrous expressions.

There once was a poor woodchopper. This woodchopping, he said one day to his woman, there sits no dry bread in it [it does not pay]. I work myself an accident [extremely hard] the whole day, but you and our twelve children have not to eat.

"I see the future dark in," his woman agreed.

"We must see to fit a sleeve on it [look for a solution]," the woodchopper resumed; "I have a plan: tomorrow we shall go on step [go out] with the children, and then, in the middle of the wood, we'll leave them to their fate over."

His woman almost went off her little stick [fainted] when she heard this. "What is there with you on the hand [what is the matter with you]?" she cried, "aren't you good sob [are you crazy]?"

But the woodchopper wasn't brought off his piece [could not be moved] by her wailing, he gave no shrink [did not give in]. "It cannot differ to me what you think," he said. "There sits nothing else on [there is no other way out], tomorrow we leave them in the wood."

Little Thumbkin, the youngest son, had listened off his parents' conversation. The next morning before day and dew [very early] he went out and filled his pockets with pebbles. During the walk into the wood he knew unmarked-up [without being noticed] to drop them one by one. Then the parents told the children to gather some wood, and shined the plate [left surreptitiously].

When the parents didn't come for the day anymore [reappear], the children understood that they had been left in the stitch [left alone]. Soon the waterlanders [tears] appeared. But Thumbkin said "Don't sit down by your packages [do not give up hope], I will sorrow for it [see to it] that we all get home wholeskins [safely]." Thank be the pebbles, he was able to find his way back.

"By God," the parents said as they came to foreshine [appeared], "how have you ragged him that [how did you manage]?" - "No art on [no problem]," said Thumbkin and explained what he had done. "If you want to be rid of us you will have to stand up a bit earlier [be smarter]."

That is just what the parents did. This time there came no pebbles on to pass [available], all Thumbkin had was a piece of dry bread. He decided that his bread there then but must believe to it [had to be sacrificed]. He left a trail of breadcrumbs but he didn't have it in the holes [didn't notice] that they were being made soldier [being eaten] by the birds.

His parents departed with the Northern sun [left surreptitiously] as on the day before, but this time Thumbkin soon touched rid of [lost] the trail. What now? Good counsel was expensive [there was no good solution in sight]. The sun was already under, it was raining pipestems [cats and dogs] and the crying stood Little Thumbkin nearer than the laughing [he was close to tears]. At last he saw a tiny light through the trees; it turned out to be a house.

The lady who stood them to word [talked to them] was a giantess. She gave them what to eat but Little Thumbkin received the feeling that something wasn't fluff [right]. He had understood that the giantess' man, the giant, was a people-eater who would see no bone in [have no compunction] devouring them. If we do not pass up [are not careful], he thought, we shall be the cigar [be in trouble]; as soon as they saw their chance clean they took the legs and smeared him [started and got away fast].

When the giant came home, he sniffed the air and bellowed: "I smell people-flesh! Woman, why have you let them go there from through [escape]? Bring me my seven-league boots, I go them behind after."

He was about to haul the children in [overtake them], but, wonder above wonder, just then he decided to lie down in order to snap a little owl [take a nap].

"Shoot up [hurry], help me!" Thumbkin said to his brothers as soon as the giant lay there pipping [sleeping], we must see to make him his seven-league boots off-hand. They squeezed him like an old thief [they were scared to death] but they went ahead and knew him to draw his boots out. "Now we must make that we come away!" Little Thumbkin gasped. He put on the boots and quickly made himself out of the feet [got going], carrying his brothers along. Also, he had seen chance to roll [pick] the giant's pockets and pick in all his gold pieces.

"How have you boxed that before each other [how did you manage that]?" cried Thumbkin's parents in amazement when he showed up.

"It was a pod-skin [easy]," said Little Thumbkin modestly. "I may be small but I stand my little man [am as smart as the next one]. And look, I have also brought a lot of poon [quite a loot]. We used not to be able to allow ourselves billy-goat's leaps [do extravagant things], but now we have our sheep on the dry [we are well off]. We will never come to anything too short [be wanting] again! I shall be able to buy myself a nail-suit at last! And a woody-stringy [a frog-type button]!"

"And I a soup-dress [like a muumuu]," cried his mother, "they are you of it [the in thing] these days."

"Great," his father exulted. "I shall buy us a motor-car."

That afternoon he came riding to the fore [driving to the front of the house] in a sleigh of a wagon.

"I seem to be having trouble riding straight out," Thumbkin's father complained.

"That you thank the cuckoo [that is not surprising]," his woman said, "you have a piece in your collar [you are drunk]. You have him around again [you are drunk again]. I shall stop you in bed."

The next day all the children were stuck in the clothes as well. In her new soup-dress mother looked a cleanliness [a beauty]. After that, they moved to The Hague, where they bought a chest of a house [a very big house] on the New Explanation [a development near The Hague], and they lived still long and lucky.

ALLUSIONS

Another dictionary of allusions, this one the Facts on File Dictionary of Classical, Biblical & Literary Allusions by Lass, Kiremidjian and Goldstein, published in hardcover for \$18.95. It contains 1300 entries, about 15 per cent as many as the \$68 Gale Research Company book on the same subject, reviewed by Word Ways in November 1986, but restricts itself to a narrower range; nothing from modern pop culture (TV, movies, comic strips and the like) is included. However, it does give more discursive entries, up to a half-page in length, and includes longer phrases such as "add a cubit to his stature" or "Greeks bearing gifts" (in fact, it contains such entries as "Caesar's wife", "Forest of Arden" and "Adam's Curse" which the Gale book ignores). If one is really interested in allusions, one cannot afford to be without either book: the Facts on File work for an in-depth presentation of the more famous examples, and the Gale work for a briefer look at the more esoteric classical allusions as well as most modern-day ones.