



A two hundred and fifty-ninth time, there was a green door. Behind the door was love. And once you had entered through the door, you bumped into love no matter where you walked. It was everywhere: It was sitting in the trees, it was lying on the water, and when you looked each other in the eyes, love was there spelling itself from both the beginning and the end. But how does one open the door? It has, you know, neither keyhole nor handle! Not even hinges.

LOUIS JENSEN
DENMARK

LOUIS JENSEN

DENMARK

When I was a child ...

I quickly became a champion reader, although I am sure I never really learned to read when I started school – it was just too weird with all those letters. But I was very happy for my mother to read comics to me.

Reading became a very important part of my childhood – I borrowed many books from our local library, which only consisted of two rooms in an old house with a limited number of books. I began with the fairy tales, went on to the rest of the children's books and soon began to venture into the adults department in order to find more books. I also liked singing ... subconsciously I was probably caught up in the poetic space which language created for me – then as now it was entirely magic and profound, with enormous power of attraction and longing – we are forever inspired by longing and we continuously look for it in the stories we read, both as children and as adults.

*Louis Jensen in *Læsningens magi (The Magic of Reading)*. 2003.*

Louis Jensen fascinates readers with his capacity to combine and narrate the surrealistic with very realistic episodes. His timeless texts captivate and offer subtle messages without being pedagogically insistent or arrogant. He shows a great empathy for children, an understanding without being insistent. His messages – and there are many – fall between the lines. (...) Jensen's writing suggests an appearance of architectural flair; his works are all very well-built and show a careful construction. Not one word is superfluous. Unfortunately Louis Jensen is also very little known via translations. (...) Louis Jensen is a storyteller to discover!

*Helene Schär, *Bookbird*, 48:2, April 2010.*

"Louis Jensen takes his reader to a fantastic world where everything at first glance appears different, but on closer inspection seems terrifyingly akin to reality. Playing with conventions of ordinary language and an often absurd language contributes to make Jensen's stories amusing, but at the same time he has a magical language by which he casts a spell on his reader to believe that animals as well as gigantic letters and detached body parts can have feelings and human motives."

Michelle Molgaard Andersen, www.forfatterweb.dk



Louis Jensen

Louis Jensen was born in Nibe by Limfjorden in the northern part of Jutland in 1943, as a Sunday child and a Zodiac Cancer. When he was twelve years old, the family moved south and away from the sea. However, the great shiny fjord and the screams of the thousands of birds are always in his books.

His first book was a collection of poems, published in 1973. He keeps writing for adults, but not that often. His debut for children was in 1983, with a short story called "The Insect Man" for the anthology "Fantastic tales" (published in German as "Der Insektenmann" in an anthology with the same title (Berlin, 1990)). His debut in writing novels for children was *Krystalmanden* (The Crystal Man) in 1986.

Later, Louis Jensen became an architect specializing in city planning. Until a few years ago he held a position in the municipality of Aarhus, where he still lives. He is married to Elizabeth, with three children and several grandchildren. He has his own boat and sails in all weather, dances tango and travels. He is a skilled chess player, too. Today he lives entirely off his writing. Hardly any anthology for educational use is published without a story of his.

Louis Jensen has been influenced by thinkers such as Jung and Steiner. A favorite book is "Alice in Wonderland", and he reads Hans Christian Andersen all year round. Louis Jensen is also a man of practical action. His vegetable garden is widely known.



Louis Jensen has received all awards available in Denmark, and he receives a life-long contribution from the State in recognition of his work. He has several times been nominated to the Hans Christian Andersen Award, and was shortlisted in 2010, to the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award, and now also to the new Nordic Award for Children's Literature.

You could listen to Louis Jensen reading poetry at the latest festival of music in Roskilde, and in Germany and Austria you may listen to him reading from "33 Cent – um ein Leben zu retten", the German translation of *2 kroner og 25 øre*. He has been included in the Danish encyclopedia and the new history of Danish literature.

Louis Jensen is a rare mixture of nerd and freely-flying being. In one of his books, *Tusindfuglen* (The Thousand Bird), it was his ambition to mention all Danish birds. To his great annoyance, he forgot one of them so it had to be included in the next book! A greater piece of ornithological poetry does not exist. That's how you attack evil.

With his collections of "A Hundred Square Stories" – now completed with the 10th collection of hundred square stories, and the 11th volume with story number 1001 – Louis Jensen has found a whole new form of story-telling (see the following essay, p. 13).

In the very town of fairy tales, Louis Jensen has built a house the likes of which have never stood before. It has great eyes and birds on the roof.

Louis Jensen of Denmark



Before Louis Jensen there was nothing.

This is of course not entirely true! There was something. It was just lying around separately. Louis Jensen put it together. Magic and reality can be viewed differently now. Before Louis Jensen there was Hans Christian Andersen.

When you read Louis Jensen it is all so obvious.

Why didn't you see it this way yourself?

The art of Louis Jensen is purity. Childhood belief.

Really, he is telling Hans Christian Andersen's fairytale "The Ice Queen" over and over again. About love and compassion, which last till the end of the world. And about the essence of evil.

In the beginning, Louis Jensen would simply write down the images which came to him. They were pain-filled and grand. And always recognizable.

Amongst other things Louis Jensen saw a boy and an old man and a crow and a motorcycle with side car. They were going to travel through the country. Denmark unfolded itself before the feet of the small group of travellers. The journey became a life lived. And four books.

As the old boy grows closer to the still water of his childhood, he sees a new boy and an old man and a crow and a motor cycle with a side car getting ready for a journey across the country.

And the reader knows that life is circular and that everything is connected.

Louis Jensen devotes a lot of his time and effort to evil. Naturally he does this by means of good.

Evil can be so small that you can hardly see it. It can be a furious look, a sour thought or just a shrug of the shoulders. And evil can be so big, it is almost impossible to grasp.

In the books of Louis Jensen the proportion of magic to reality is almost constant. But the later stories revolve around how you relate to evil correctly and concretely. What is this? And which form of magic – and how little or how much - should be used?

It is never too late to become good.

Louis Jensen follows his own path. Paths which no man has walked before. There is an astonishingly high quality and consistency in his books.

In the most important of all genres – the fairytale – he has never given in to the temptation of moralizing or tampering with the story. So it would be easier to bear.

He also writes straightforwardly about a piece of rye bread falling in love with a smoked herring or about the unhappy dog with the many meaty bones. Louis Jensen has discovered a whole new form - the ultimate short story. He imagined there were 1001 of these stories inside his head. And there were.

As mentioned, Louis Jensen writes the tale of "The Snow Queen" over and over. It deals with journeying away and coming home, finding oneself and finding love. That's how it was, and that's how it still is with Jensen of Denmark. As time passes, and the number of books grow, one becomes aware that his real interest lies not in the very reason for the journey, nor even the outcome – because it will be good no matter the outcome – nay, Louis Jensen is interested in his travelling companions. He carefully composes a party consisting of an arrogant hare, twelve moles, a cat who likes dogs (or vice versa), or a cutter who goes all the way when he cuts himself into thin slices (and puts himself back together again). Louis Jensen is in his time and in his own way. And with the years, he has also become a political storyteller, as the book *2 kr og 25 øre (2 Crowns and 25 Øre)*, published in German as *33 cents – um ein Leben zu retten* (München, 2013), demonstrates. He is unstoppable in his visions and untamable in his energy.

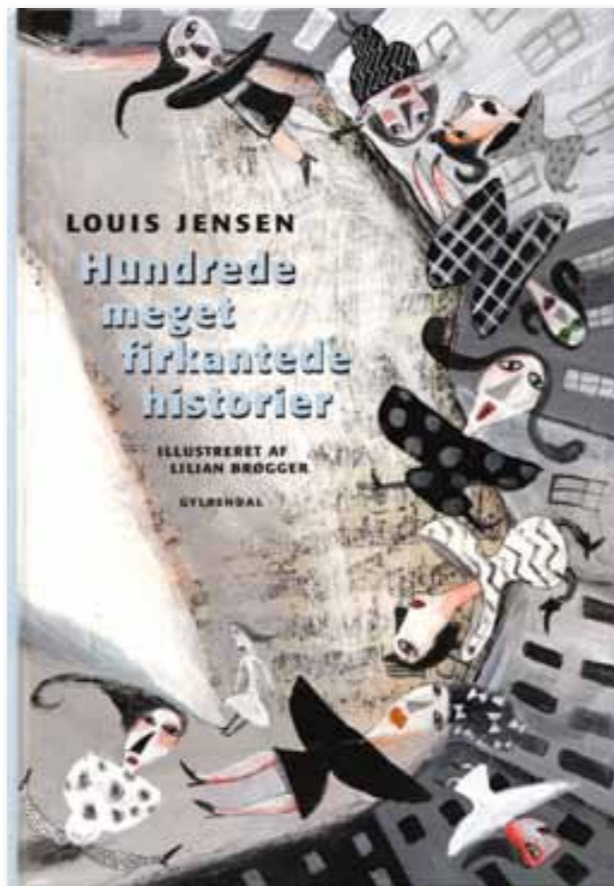
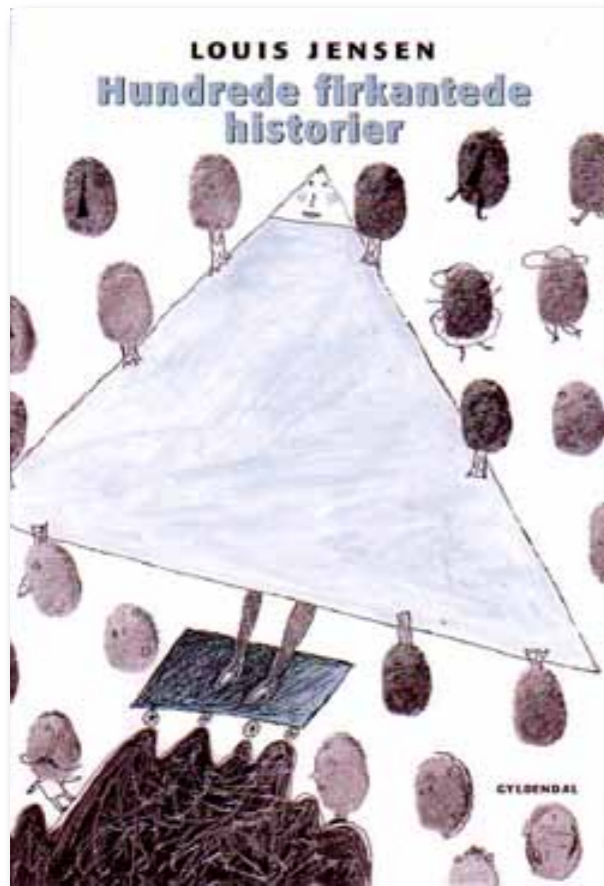
You cannot say that Louis Jensen has been ahead of his time, because before him there was nothing, but it took some time before the Danes saw that they had gained a new fairytale composer.

Louis Jensen is world-famous in Denmark now, and he will be in the rest of the world at some point. It was a bright shining swan that debuted 29 years ago.

Before Louis Jensen there was nothing. Now shining hearts roll around the streets.

The children of Denmark are much nicer to each other now. Adults smile more. The animals are also doing well in the birth country of Hans Christian Andersen...

See it for yourself!



A forty-sixth time there was a smart dog. He spoke three hundred languages, which is really a great many. He was also good at arithmetic and geography, so he always knew precisely how many bones he had and where he had buried them. Nevertheless, he was the world's unhappiest dog.



A hundred and eighty-second time, a left hand was traveling from Florence to Bologna. It traveled in a coach and was very skilled and spoke one language on every finger and German with the thumb. But the left hand did not like the Italian heat. Therefore it sat in a zinc tub with ice water. Only the thumb was sticking out, and when the coach drove by something interesting, the thumb proclaimed in German, what it was. For example, if it was a dog with black spots, it would clear its throat and say: Ein Hund mit schwarzen Pletten.

A two hundredth time there was a sun with a key hole in the middle, and a ladder, which lead up to the sun, and a boy with a key. Since the key fit into the key hole the boy went up the ladder, opened the sun and went inside.

A three hundred and eighty-sixth time a loaf of white bread and a loaf of rye bread fell in love with each other. As the one was as happy with the other as the other with the one, they sailed out onto the sea in a small boat to better see each other. At night the loaf of white bread sang to the loaf of rye bread with its white voice under the moon on the silent sea.

Louis Jensen – The Work

It all began with a series of four books: The books about The Crystal Man, which were published in the years 1986 to 1989 with one book a year. They comprise a fairy tale of travelling and growth told in an – until then – unknown tone of storytelling. And it has continued in that way.

The starting point is the journey taken by a small group of travellers on a motorcycle with side car.

In the first book, *Krystalmanden (The Crystal Man)*, the group travels through the country to solve the mystery of a jigsaw puzzle, help a girl, and fight The Crystal Man, who threatens to freeze the whole world solid. Along the way, on an island in the middle of Denmark, the following happens:

”On the highest point of the hills of Samsøe sat a man in a green wooden chair in the middle of the snow. They drove over to him. Birds were flying in and out of his mouth. In that way, he kept warm, he explained to them, and then he showed them the view.

They could see almost the entire world. In all directions, the magnificent field of ice unfolded itself from the island, and far away the land rose once again. From the west and to the north, they saw Jutland. To the south, they saw Funen and to the east, as a distant white light, they saw Zealand.

”That way”, said the boy to the man in the chair in the snow, ”That way is where we are going over the ice!”

The man swallowed a bird. Seconds later, it flew back out.

”Have a nice trip!” he said.

”And luck!” he yelled after them, as they were rolling down the tall hills of Samsøe on the other side and onto the ice...”

The second book in the series is called *Tusindfuglen (The Thousand Bird)*. Here the journey through the country continues, but the challenge this time is the Fire Man, who wants to make the world boiling hot. Everything is told in a language which never hesitates. The book ends with a final battle between the boy and his group of travellers and the originator of the fire. Along with him, the boy brings all the birds of Denmark, who will help him get over the wall of fire.

As the boy is soaring beneath the sky, he is intoxicated by a feeling of power and self-esteem. His arrogance becomes a disaster, and soon his world is in tatters. In the end, the boy becomes so small he is able to run inside the girl.

The third book, entitled *Hjerterejsen (The Journey of the Heart)*, takes place inside the girl’s body. It is a fantasy world, but at the same time, it is very tangible. Inside this land of fairy tale, Alice is a boy, and the great arteries are rivers and waterfalls. With its tones of purity and inevitability, ”The Journey of the Heart” is told with a sure hand.

Between the two dead zones is *Det grønne spor (The Green Trail)*, which is also the title of the fourth and last book in the series. It is the book of life. It is also the longest book of the series.

The journey home is the life of the boy and the girl. Along The Green Trail. The story is filled with peculiar, strong pictures. Years pass.

Now it is about the long haul. Getting back home. As the aging boy grows closer to the still water of his childhood, he sees a new boy and an old man and a crow and a motorcycle with a side car getting ready for a journey across the country. That's life!

Louis Jensen has written two books about the boy Karl Kluge and his friend Georg: *Karl Kluges dobbelte skattejagt (Karl Kluge's Double Treasure Hunt)* and *Karl Kluge og ondskaben (Karl Kluge and the Evil)*:

Two boys find a code in an old book during their summer holiday. They solve the code, fall in love with the same girl and Karl Kluge's double treasure hunt begins. It brings them to the bottom of a sunken ship and to the sky-high steeples of the town. An evil, faceless man is also hunting for the treasure. And for the boys' treasure map. It is also the story of the anguish and joy of falling in love. And about a rolling, red painted heart made out of wood, with windows and a built-in record player.

The second book about Karl Kluge is about freedom. Freedom for people and freedom for animals. The evil is represented by the man Skrut, who beats his horse and looks like a devil. The good finds its form in the two boys, as they decide to "set free" the horse and all other animals they meet along their way.

Then four books about life's most important issues:

Skelettet på hjul (The Skeleton on Wheels) is the most famous and maybe most important book Louis Jensen has written. Originally, it was a play which was performed in Copenhagen. The novel, published in 1992, is probably what finally set the seal on his reputation. From all sides, the book is acknowledged for its superi-

ority. And it is often used in schools. At the same time, it has given nourishment to the general debate of what is appropriate to tell children. (One may wonder what could have been said about Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales, had they been published today.)

Den fortryllede by (The Enchanted City) is cast from the same mould. It is his most personal fairy tale. It picks up the line from "The Thousand Bird". It is about boyish pride and audacity and tardy self-realization. It is probably the author's most personal book.

Den kløvede mand (The Split Man) came later. It is a wonderful fairy tale, which has gotten its tone of language from the outer edge of Louis Jensen's universe. The story is powerful and quite violent. A boy finds his favorite lake transformed. It has been split in two – the lake, that is – and on the shore lies two half men. The boy helps the one which turns out to be the evil. As in Louis Jensen's other books, there is a journey and a development. There is great sorrow and much excitement.

Den frygtelige hånd (The Terrible Hand) is one of the most puzzling (and beautiful) books in Louis Jensen's body of work. It tells – in brief – of the boy Arthur and his journey through Denmark and Europe to find his mother, who has been abducted by Evil-Hand. Good triumphs, but not without cost. The peculiar story is told with a pen that does not tremble. Every single sentence has significance. The language has been cleared of weeds. Only the relieving humor shows that the author is sometimes as surprised by the story as the reader is.

"The Terrible Hand" becomes even more terrifying thanks to the illustrator Cato Thau-Jensens' snake-like band of drawings, which run beneath the text. The illustrator feels right at home inside the author's head. There are hearts

and cars, skeletons and dogs, just like Louis Jensen would have drawn them himself.

Most of Louis Jensen's books are what you might call "fairy tales for everyone" – i.e. for children.

Nøgen (Naked) has several of the elements of a fairy tale. Possibly mostly from the fourth and last book in the series about The Crystal Man, where time passes and life is lived. Yet, it is absolutely realistic. Above a café sits a guy in his mid-twenties, who writes about events which took place ten years prior – in 1995. Peter is his name.

Louis Jensen has always written about faith, hope and love. Faith in that a dead dog can come back to life, like in "Skeleton on Wheels". Hope that there can be a life without evil, as Karl Kluge is looking for. And love as the way out of the "bubble", as in "The Enchanted City".

In "Naked", the author uses the Epistles to the Corinthians as an elixir of life: "Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face." And this "then" is what all Louis Jensen's books are about. Not least this one.

Children understand everything, but they cannot do anything about it. For adults it is reversed. In the point of intersection between child and adult you find this "then", which is a now, where you break through and see it all and meet love. Afterwards you feel like a bird after a bird bath.

But once upon a time... And that "One hundred and thirty-third time there was a proud fly. It walked around on the ceiling with its head downwards and lifted all of its six legs at the same time, so everything looked proud..."

With his eleven collections of "A Hundred



Square Stories" – although the 11th contains only one, number 1001, the very last square story – Louis Jensen has found a whole new form of story-telling. Besides being ultra-short stories, the hundreds of stories are placed aesthetically as a marked box in the middle of the page in the golden section. For every tenth story, Lilian Brøgger has drawn a spread, where the text is interpreted and lifted into heaven.

Here loafs of rye bread and smoked herring move easily alongside lonely dogs and neurotic sparrows, as the angels of light watch. The atmosphere is straightforward and without prevarication. And they alternate between the highest level of poetry and the most absurd event. No one has ever told stories like this before. Incidentally, at the same time, the books tell something about the changes in this project, spread out over 25 years, but a project that has also been able to hold on to the light and the love – and the dog leash.

These eleven books of small stories are as deep as wells. Danish children and their parents have come to love them. The project was finished in late Summer 2016 with the last volume that

contains only the 1001th story – and about 130 pages of Lilian Brøgger’s impressive images. Now, what story does it tell? It tells the same story as the one thousand previous stories: that the world is full of stories, and that the sun will rise again tomorrow.

In the category of ”various”, one finds the text for numerous picture books, a collection of short stories, story books for young children as well as a photo book for children about architecture: ***Et hus er et ansigt (A House is a Face)***. Furthermore, Louis Jensen has written a book for children about art, entitled ***Stygge streger: en kunstbog for børn (Ugly Sketches: an Art-book for Children)***, which challenges all the viewer’s habitual perceptions of art and culture.

In the Hans Christian Andersen ”celebration year” 2005 – the 200th anniversary of his birth – Louis Jensen published ***Tinhjerte og ællingefjer (Tin Heart and Duckling Feathers)***, a personal narrative of the writer’s outer and inner life. The book was distributed to all schools in the country.

En historie om seks søstre (A Tale of Six Sisters) is a son’s story of his mother. How do you relate the story of your mother and her times? Louis Jensen begins from below – with the stockings. The book is a declaration of love to a cautious girl. It is also a mature person’s acceptance of his roots. Most of Louis Jensen’s books are for everyone. ”Six Sisters” has been published as a children’s book, and the prose does flow easily. But the story is so full of poetical power that it can be read with pleasure by all and sundry. Grandparents. Soccer coaches. Milkmen.

Louis Jensen treads new ground with ***2 kroner og 25 øre / 33 Cents – um ein Leben zu retten (2 Crowns and 25 Øre)***. A ”grand old man” of Danish children’s literature, Thomas Winding, once said that children can understand everything. Also that which is evil. But they cannot understand that evil continues. This is where Louis Jensen and Robin Hood enter the picture. Because when evil continues, then you have to do something, right? At least that’s what the 14 years old protagonist in this fantastic book about development aid is thinking. The boy has read that you can keep one of these poor children with a swollen stomach whom you see on TV, alive with only 2 Crowns and 25 Øre. So he begins to work, he goes to school only every second day (that’s enough!), he steals in shops, he empties his father’s bank account, and finally he kidnaps a refrigerated van with food, and he drives it southwards, to the poor and hungry in the Third World, together with a Anne, a friend from school. Is this how to do it? Does it end well? No!

This is a true Louis Jensen book told in simple language and a tone of astonishment. Beneath the political radar, there is a layer of thoughts and emotions that come to life in this life-giving book about actually doing something, after all.

Rejsen til Gud (The Journey to God) is one of the most lovely books in Louis Jensen’s work – also visually. The story begins a morning when ”the grateful blade of grass” knocks on the boy’s door and suggests that they should ”make a journey to God”... One may regard the story as an extended edition of the tiny square stories.

The journey begins. On the way, they are joined by a surly duck and ”the jubilant chaf-finch”. A good example of how the author often is more interested in the disparate party of

travelers than in the journey itself. They advance slowly because the blade of grass insists on walking on its legs (of blades). And where does God live? ”The Journey to God” is told from a stratum of air where stories for younger children normally do not take place. Louis Jensen has a voice entirely his own. Without use of big words. The language amiably wraps itself around the small party that finds its way by help of the GPS of the heart.

King Button (Kong Knap) is a pleasant acquaintance. The story about ”the vanished teddy-bear eye” is a story for the youngest children – those with the very largest eyes of wonder. Oh, to be a child! Or the adult who reads aloud this fairy tale about (yet another) journey where the travelling party is almost more important than the journey itself. The tone lies somewhere between the sweet and the stolid, but is then formed by a conspiratorial wink of the story-teller’s eye. The author is never condescending, but addressing.

It happens one day when King Button is taking a walk in his palace and finds a glass-eye which obviously has been dislodged from a teddy-bear. So now the task is simply to find the teddy-bear. At first, the king is riding his royal bicycle, but soon the party needs to make use of the 25 accompanying moles who are on their way to the world championship in ”moling” in Bergen, Norway. Now it has to be mentioned that the most important characters, besides the king and the moles, are a wise girl with 20 rubber boots full of words, a singing trio of hares and their pathetic King Hare. The villains are 13 tiresome trolls. A humorous dragon provides some help. Louis Jensen is a pedant. You must be when it’s serious: ”What now? / 51 meter behind them are 12 furious trolls! 52 meter

ahead of them is a fire-breathing dragon!” There!

In recent years, Louis Jensen has been developing a series about the boy Tork and the horse Horse. Three books have been published as of this writing, brilliantly illustrated by Pia Halse. They are rather pedagogical stories because they are based on the two protagonists’ attempts to understand both the alphabet and mathematics. So far they master that 5 + 5 is 10. Well, that’s a beginning.

In the third book, they are ”on new adventures”. First they drive to The Netherlands in a moving van in order to visit their suitcase factory, but outside Hamburg they meet a German singer who teaches them words like Liebe (love) and Traum (dream), while she is singing about her disappeared Seemann (Sailor), who they discover is living in a luminous casino-palace out in the Atlantic when they have tied 29 suitcases together in alphabetic order and are sailing towards America. Tork and Horse continue to Jamaica and Brazil as well as Japan and the Bay of Biscay... where they are visited by a carrier pigeon without a letter, which has an important message for them. It is around the world in 60 pages.

Among Louis Jensen’s recent works are also ***Tre venner (Three Friends)***, a wonderful fairy tale in pictures about evil and love and forgiving, and ***L.I.V. – en historie om forelskelse (L.I.V. – A Story About Falling in Love)*** which is based on Robert Johnson’s blues ”Love In Vain”, and likewise is about love and much more.

There’s no end to this author and his startling ideas.

The wondrous beauty of life

... more space for the weird, the strange, the unpredictable, the extremely sad and the extremely humorous ...

Interview with author Louis Jensen

To be enthralled by the wondrous beauty of life to such a degree that it expands his consciousness and makes him 'high' trying to put these experiences into words – this is the fountain that sustains the works of Louis Jensen.



To allow the text a life of its own so that the story unfolds on its own accord – this is the most important technique for Louis Jensen when he writes. Consequently, he never knows in advance how his stories are going to end: – I start at a point which fascinates me – an inner vision, a word or a sentence that excites me in some way. For example a big heart lying on a beach. This sets an inner film in motion, and I then write down what I see. In this way the story and the plot are almost inevitable.

The text has its own life

Afterwards, Louis Jensen looks at his text critically – is something not quite clear or could something be expressed more beautifully or more rhythmically? But the plot itself, he makes no attempt to change: – It means that I don't always understand myself what I have written. Children at the schools ask me, "But, why did this happen?", but I cannot explain what happens or why – the text itself has decided what will happen. When Louis Jensen instructs children in how to write, he explains to them that they should not write according to a plan, but start at a point where their feelings are most intense: – "Don't think", as Rad Bradbury said – let the story get its own life rather than try to write something that is like something else. Therefore, I don't want primarily to create excitement or appeal to a zest for reading in other ways – I let myself be carried away by the flow. Naturally, pauses will occur when I am writing, where another part of my conscience begins to wonder how the story will unfold, about the plot itself and other technical dimensions. Subconsciously, my brain also begins to arrange the material – it takes a number of different overlapping structures to create a text. You are right in the middle of your story and looking at it from above at the same time, just as you write in a mixture of consciousness and subconsciousness.

To touch upon the indescribable

– My greatest joy in writing is to incorporate my experiences of the beauty of the world into my stories – a singular experience of the rain or the sun for example, a beautiful experience which I feel should be communicated so that it is not wasted. Unfortunately, I can't always describe my experience quite accurately. At other times I am transported by joy at having succeeded – you always keep trying.

The hymns by the great Danish writers – Brorson, Ingemann, Kingo and Grundtvig – are some of Louis Jensen's most important sources of inspiration.

– The Danish hymn book completely fascinated me as a child, and my linguistic aesthetics is rooted in their tradition of describing nature and the feelings it inspires, which extends our whole being and determines how we behave in this world. Also from a social point of view – one becomes a slightly better person when moving the attention away from oneself and directing it at other people. Man's great problem is that he is so self-absorbed, but the moment he stops focusing on himself, it suddenly becomes possible to understand and look at other people in an entirely different way ... they are mighty forces that work their way into our minds and make us the people we are. The ultimate experience for me is when the text suddenly opens up for all the dimensions in the world which have until now been obscured – when one succeeds in touching upon something almost indescribable. Some readers perceive this and take it to heart – in this way literature can make us more open and expansive in our understanding of ourselves and of the world.

Literature keeps us alive

– When I write for children I don't try to write in a particularly child-orientated way – I write in a way I think they will understand. And it makes me very happy when I meet children who say "that was exciting – do write some more!" To feel that they have gained something from one of my books, that it has touched them and what I want to say means something to them – that is a joy.

When I am out somewhere reading aloud to children, I often do a summing up of something I myself or others have written – for example the background for *The Arabian Nights* which my project on writing 1001 stories has been inspired by. The vizier who every day appoints a new woman and cuts off her head the next day, until he meets the ingenious Sheherazade who tells him a story so extremely exciting and keeps it going until the early morning so that he has to let her continue the next day. The vizier knows he is being outfoxed, but he is so wrapped up in the story that she is allowed to go on night after night. I am very fond of this story because it lets us realise that literature keeps us alive. The interesting point about reading stories aloud is also that it is possible to change pace according to the audience's reactions which provide input for the story-teller – if they are completely caught up in the tale, one can make the pauses longer. It is like a play.

It is also exciting for the children to meet those who write books for them. When they know you are coming, they begin to imagine who this story-teller is – he takes on a certain shape instead of being something rather abstract. And he becomes part of the text in a way that provides their experience with extra dimensions. And it might certainly inspire them to write something themselves.

'Presence' in the writing workshop

The direct meeting with the children can also take place in a writing workshop. For the writing workshop to function in the best possible way, it is absolutely essential that the author is able to generate confidence and a kind of 'presence', says Louis Jensen.

– If you want a good dialogue with children, you must make quite certain that you create a kind of mutual confidence. You have to be very open with them, so they feel you are taking them seriously and are really listening to what they say and write, instead of instructing them. However banal their reactions might seem to you, you have to answer in the best and most qualified way that you are able to – precisely as if you were having a dialogue with a fellow author. If the children feel this

kind of attention, they will open up and feel confident and safe enough to write something which they might not otherwise attempt. This space that you share with them must also be a reassuring free area where the children are allowed to express themselves in weird and strange ways, just as they feel like.

Therefore, Louis Jensen always underlines at the outset that bullying is expressly forbidden in his workshop.

– It is important that you yourself know the blocking mechanisms in the writing process, so that you can forestall them. When you succeed in creating this safe atmosphere, children are on the other hand much better to take advice than adults who have developed any number of defences. Children are much more likely to take heed when you tell them that for example “this word blocks your text, take it out” or “move the last word up front”.

The teachers’ special responsibility

Developing the ability to write does at the same time qualify the children as readers – so it is obvious that teachers and librarians must work more purposefully at stimulating children’s interest in reading by introducing writing activities.

– To tell stories and read aloud is also very important if you do it the right way – that is to say that you yourself really want to give the children something special. If that is the case, it is nearly always possible to catch their attention and encourage them in all sorts of directions. An uninspired teacher on the other hand can kill many children’s incipient zest for reading. So commitment is the most important key for teachers and librarians to stimulate children’s love of reading – tell them how very important it is to read. I myself had two wonderful teachers of Danish in lower and upper secondary school, who were able to make everything come alive and to give me the essential push forward – they were completely besotted with literature and their enthusiasm rubbed off on their pupils, as did their ability to feel wonder and renew oneself, to express oneself and be brave enough to do it in new ways. If one does not already possess these capabilities, it is important to learn them at college. We are all the time on the brink of spiritual death, but the school has the opportunity of giving children a constantly innovative opening to the world – a break-through to another world. It should be the obligation of every teacher to mediate this insight to children, because it is so all-important to our lives in a completely existential way, underlines Louis Jensen.

More room for the unusual

Asked whether Danish children’s literature has ideal conditions, Louis Jensen feels that on the one hand the Danish support system works really well – on the other hand he would welcome more room for the unusual children’s literature. – I feel that the state should support literature, making room for other than mainstream literature to be published. And if I were to express a wish, it would be for more space for the weird, the strange, the unpredictable, the extremely sad and the extremely humorous ... all that kind of literature where the text shows itself in another way than we are used to – the strange books that open up for something of what we all carry around inside our minds and which help to widen the world – it would be unbearable if all children’s books had the same predictable plot.

*Interviewer: Monica C. Madsen, journalist
Translated by Vibeke Cranfield*

A four hundredth time
there was a wonderful
tree. It stood on a
slope by the sea side,
and when you sat in the
grass on the slope under
the tree, a small piece
of light would fall from
the tree and right into
your heart. Imagine that!
Right through the flesh.

A six hundred and thirty-fourth time,
when the light and the rain fall, the
seed wakes up. It scratches its stomach
and yawns, and right then and there
it gets a move on: It grows and grows:
The root down into the earth. The stem
up into the light. I think it will become
a flower. A flower with red and white
leaves, and a yellow bee. I saw it all.

A six hundred and ninety-seventh time,
there was a man who happily got out
of his bed every morning. The reason
was that he had a pair of black trousers
with a belt. Furthermore, there was the
sky and the white clouds. Things go
well, he said, I have a lovely white shirt.

A Selection of Awards and Grants

1988: The Danish Ministry of Culture's Initiative Prize for "The Thousand Bird"

1989: The publisher Gyldendal's book grant for children's authors

The Danish Ministry of Culture's annual award to a children's book author

1995: The Arts Foundation: prize for "A Hundred New Stories"

1996: Nordic School Librarian Association's Children's Literature Award

1996-98: A member of the literary committee of the Arts Foundation, Ministry of Culture

1998: Danish Association of Writers' Hans Christian Andersen Grant

Denmark's School Librarians Association's children's book award

2000: Nominated to the Hans Christian Andersen Award

2002: The Danish Art Foundation: lifelong benefit

2006: The Children's Culture Award by the "Prince of Culture"

2009: The Odd Fellow Literary Award

The publisher Gyldendal's book grant for children's authors

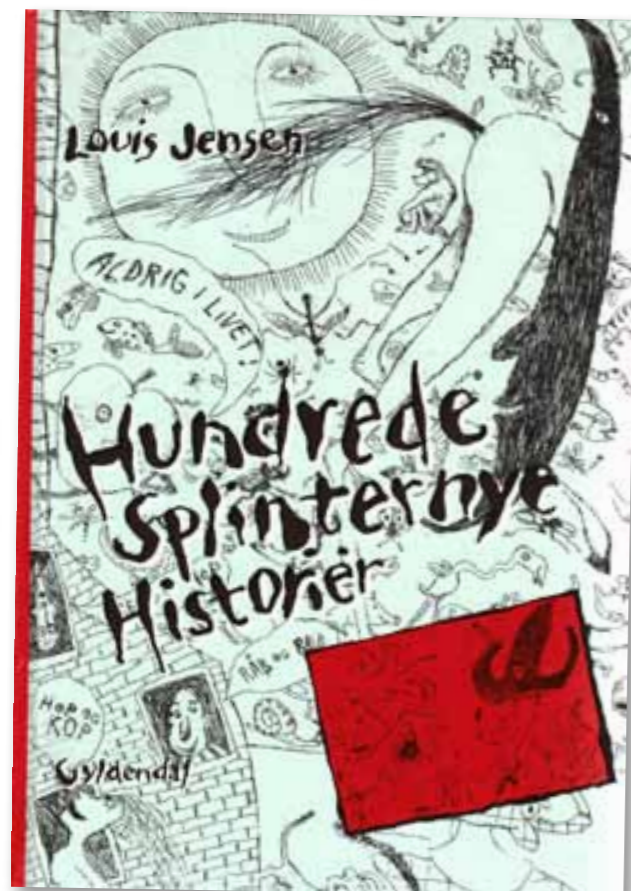
2010: Finalist, The Hans Christian Andersen Award

2014: Nominated to the Children's Literature Award of the Nordic Council

2016: Finalist, The Hans Christian Andersen Award

1990, 1992, 1994, 1996, 1998, 1999, 2001: The Ministry of Culture: working grants

2004 - 2010, 2014 - 2016: Nominated to the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award



Children's Books by Louis Jensen

Krystalmanden (*The Crystal Man*).

Copenhagen, Gyldendal 1986.



Tusindfuglen (*The Thousand Bird*).

Copenhagen, Gyldendal 1987.



Hjerterejsen (*The Journey of the Heart*).

Copenhagen, Gyldendal 1988.

Drageflyveren (*The Hang-gliders and Seven Other Stories*).

Copenhagen, Gyldendal 1988.



Det grønne spor (*The Green Trail*).

Copenhagen, Gyldendal 1989.



Karl Kluges dobbelte skattejagt (*Karl Kluge's Double Treasure Hunt*).

Copenhagen, Gyldendal 1990.

Plus-Four og Katten Skjatten (*Plus-Four and the Kitty-Honey*).

Copenhagen, Gyldendal 1991.



Skelettet på hjul (*The Skeleton on Wheels*).

Copenhagen, Gyldendal 1992.

Hundrede historier (*A Hundred Square Stories*).

Copenhagen, Gyldendal 1992.



Den fortryllede by (*The Enchanted City*).

Copenhagen, Gyldendal 1993.



Karl Kluge og onskaben (*Karl Kluge and the Evil*).

Copenhagen, Gyldendal 1994.

Hundrede nye historier (*A Hundred New Stories*).

Copenhagen, Gyldendal 1995.

Nøgen (*Naked*).

Copenhagen, Gyldendal 1995.



Zoofabetet (*The Zoophabet*).

Copenhagen, Alinea 1996.

Hjalmars nye hat (**Hjalmar's New Hat**).
Copenhagen, Gyldendal 1997.

Hendes Kongelige Højhed Museprinsessen (**Her Royal Highness the Mouse Princess**).
Copenhagen, Gyldendal 1998.

Et hus er et ansigt (**A House is a Face**).
Copenhagen, Gyldendal 1998.

Den kløvede mand (**The Split Man**).
Copenhagen, Gyldendal 1999.

Hundrede splinternye historier (**A Hundred Brand New Stories**).
Copenhagen, Gyldendal 1999.

Den strandede mand (**The Stranded Man**).
Copenhagen, Høst & Søn 2000.

10 hefter til selv læsning (**10 Booklets for Independent Reading in First Grade**).
Copenhagen, Dansk lærerforenings forlag 2001.

De bortblæste bogstaver (**The Blown Away Letters**).
Copenhagen, Gyldendal 2001.

Den frygtelige hånd (**The Terrible Hand**).
Copenhagen, Høst & Søn 2001.

Byen hvor husene bytter plads (**The Town Where the Houses Switch Places**).
Copenhagen, Høst & Søn 2001.

Den vrangvendte bamse (**The Inside-out Teddy Bear**).
Copenhagen, Høst & Søn 2002.

Bogstavskolen (**The Letter School**).
Copenhagen, Gyldendal 2002.

Hundrede firkantede historier (**A Hundred Square Stories**).
Copenhagen, Gyldendal 2002.

Luis og sølv mønten (**Luis and the Silver Coin**).
Copenhagen, Danida 2002.



Månebåden (**The Moon Boat**).
Copenhagen, Danida 2003.

Hør her stær (**Listen up Starling**).
Copenhagen, Høst & Søn 2004.

Tinhjerte og ællingefjer (**Tin Heart and Duckling Feathers**).
Copenhagen, Høst & Søn 2004.

Hundrede meget firkantede historier (**A Hundred Very Square Stories**).
Copenhagen, Gyldendal 2005.

Den meget tørstige mor (**The Very Thirsty Mother**).
Copenhagen, Høst & Søn 2005.

Hundrede helt og aldeles firkantede historier (**A Hundred Completely Square Stories**).
Copenhagen, Gyldendal 2007.

Bent og den kinesiske kasse (**Bent and the Chinese Box**).
Copenhagen, Gyldendal 2007.

Hallo! flere hundrede historier (**Hello, More Hundred Square Stories**).
Copenhagen, Gyldendal 2009.

En historie om seks søstre (**A Tale of Six Sisters**).
Copenhagen, Gyldendal 2009.

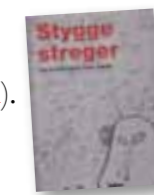
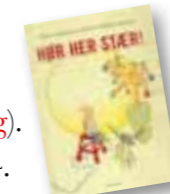
Stygge streger: en kunstbog for børn (**Ugly Sketches: an Artbook for Children**).
Aarhus, Klematis 2009.

2 kroner og 25 øre (**2 Crowns and 25 Øre**).
Copenhagen, Gyldendal 2010.

Rejsen til Gud (**The Journey to God**).
Copenhagen, Gyldendal 2011.

Kejserinden (**The Empress**).
Aarhus, Replikant 2011.

Tork og Hest (**Tork and Horse**).
Copenhagen, Alfa 2012.



Emma og bogstaverne (*Emma and the Letters of the Alphabet*).
Copenhagen, Gyldendal 2012

Rejsen til min far (*The Journey to My Father*).
Copenhagen, Gyldendal 2012.



Halli! hallo! så er der nye, firkantede historier
(*Hello! Hello! Come and Get Your New Square Stories!*).
Copenhagen, Gyldendal 2012.



L.I.V. – en historie om forelskelse (*L.I.V. - A Story About Falling in Love*).
Copenhagen, Gyldendal 2013.



Kong Knap og bamsens forsvundne øje (*King Button and the Vanished Teddy-Bear Eye*).
Copenhagen, Gyldendal 2013.



Tre venner (*Three Friends*).
Copenhagen, Gyldendal 2013.



Hurra & velkommen! Nye firkanter (*Hurrah & Welcome. New Squares*).
Copenhagen, Gyldendal 2014.



Tork og Hest – Den store blyant (*Tork and Horse – The Big Pencil*).
Copenhagen, Jensen & Dalgaard 2014.



Tork og Hest på nye eventyr (*Tork and Horse's New Adventures*).
Copenhagen, Jensen & Dalgaard 2015.



Tork og Hest – Den porcelæne danserinde (*The Porcelain Dancer*).
Copenhagen, Jensen & Dalgaard 2016.



Drengen der fik en hunds hjerte (*The Boy Who Got Himself a Dog's Heart*).
Copenhagen, Gyldendal 2016.



Så er butikken åben! Nye firkanter på alle hylder
(*Now the Shop's Open! New Square Stories on Every Shelf*).
Copenhagen, Gyldendal 2016.



Der er ingen ende – altid en ny historie (*There is No Ending – Always a New Story*).
Copenhagen, Gyldendal 2016.



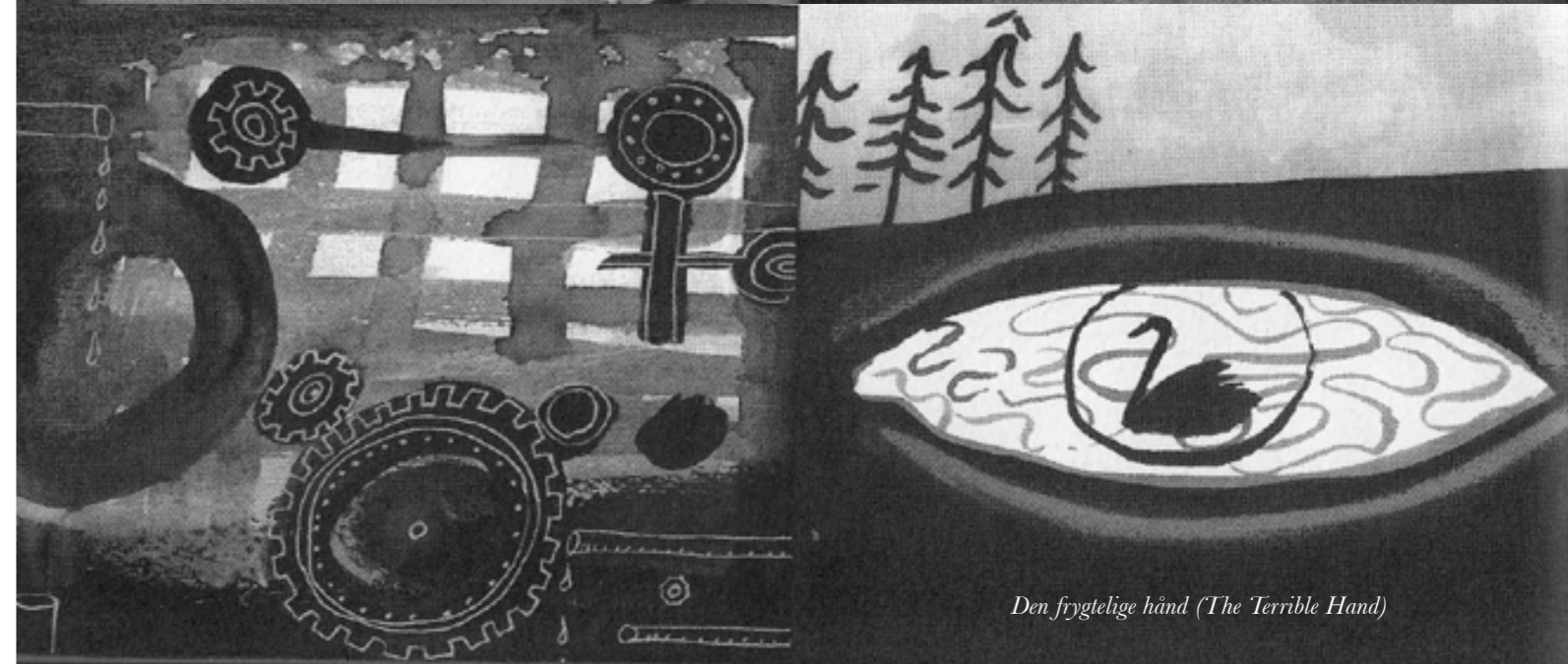
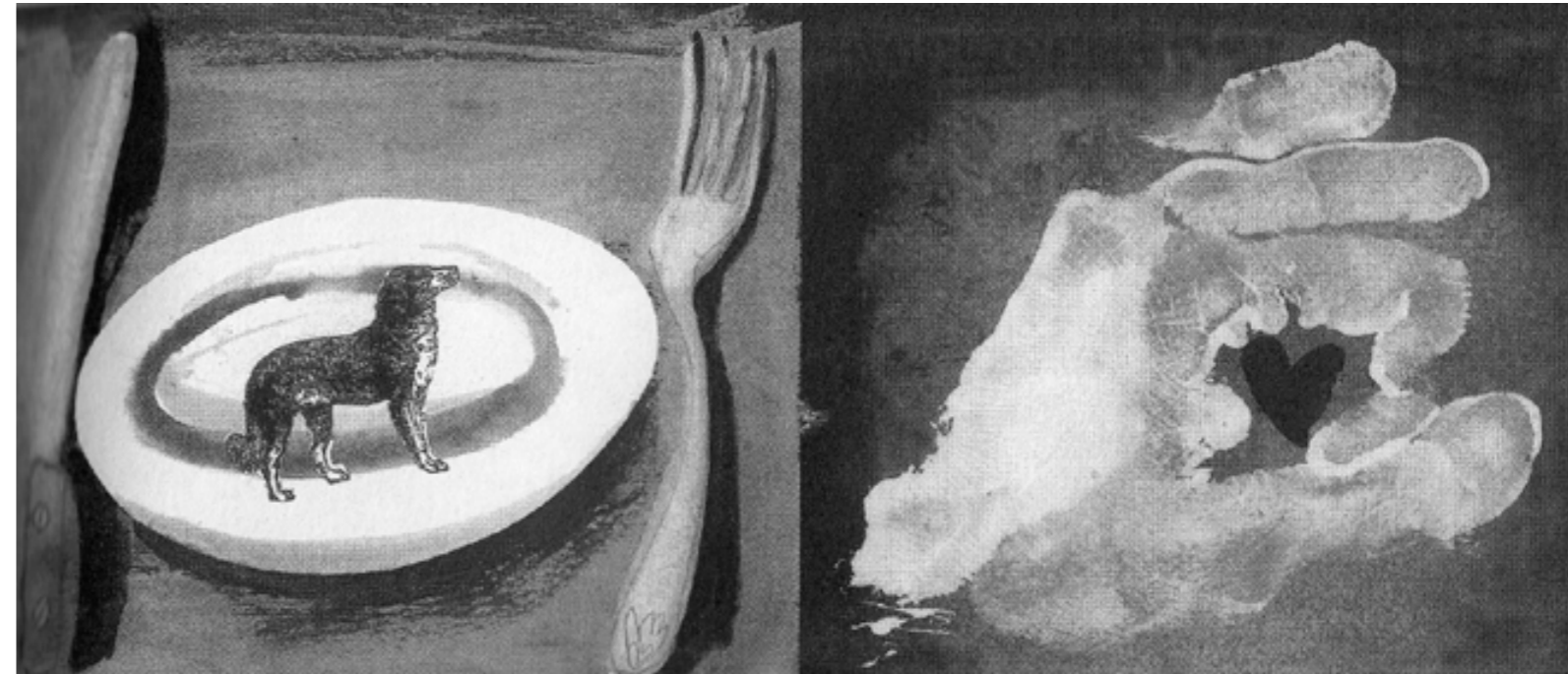
Furthermore a dozen short stories for various anthologies and occasions, plays as well as a few poems for collections for children. He has also written books for adults.

Books about Louis Jensen

Many articles, comments and reviews have been written about Louis Jensen's works.
Two books have been dedicated to the author and the authorship:

Gunnar Jakobsen: *Louis Jensen*,
Copenhagen, Gyldendal 1997

Trine May: *Louis Jensen – en fantastisk fortæller* (*Louis Jensen - a Fantastic Storyteller*),
Copenhagen, Gyldendal 2008



Den frygtelige hånd (*The Terrible Hand*)

Translations of Children's Books and Stories *(published)*

ENGLISH, AMERICAN

Five square stories. In: The Iowa Review, 42. University of Iowa.

Three square stories. In: Translation, 2007:2.

Mouth of Silence. In: Peace Story. Seoul, NAMIBooks 2010.

Some of these translations are forwarded to the jury, cf. p. 29.

FARSI (AFGHANISTAN)

Ræven. Short story in an anthology published by Danish PEN.

FLEMISH

De Vreselijke Hand (Den frygtelige hånd). Hasselt, Afijn/Clavis 2002.

GERMAN

Der Insektenmann (short story). In: Der Insektenmann
(an anthology of fantasy literature from Scandinavia). Berlin, Suhrkamp 1990.

A square story and **Die Drachenflieger** (short story).

In: Skandinavische Weihnachtsmärchen. München, Goldmann 2005.

Two square stories. In: Weinachten in hohen Norden (an anthology). Ditzingen, Reclam 2011

33 cent - um ein Leben zu retten (2 kroner og 25 øre). München, Hanser 2013

Three square stories. In: Folge deine Traum (an anthology). München, Hanser 2013

NORWEGIAN

Karl Kluges dobbelte skattejakt (Karl Kluges dobbelte skattejagt). Oslo, Damm 1993.

Karl Kluge og ondskaben (Karl Kluge og ondskaben). Oslo, Damm 1994

Den frygtelige hånden (Den frygtelige hånd). Oslo, Norsk Gyldendal 2003.

PORTUGUESE (BRAZIL)

Uma Jornada para Deus (Rejsen til Gud). Porto Alegre, Edelbra 2002

SPANISH

Eight square stories. In: Historias desde el Hielo
(an anthology of Scandinavian children's literature). Barcelona, RBA 2003.

SWEDISH

Karl Kluges dubbla skattjakt (Karl Kluges dobbelte skattejagt). Stockholm, Opal 2000.

A seven hundred and twelfth time,
during the night, when I was asleep,
God planted a flower in my garden.
Its name was Tiniest Finest.
It looked at me and said without
words that everything was good.

An eight hundred and third time, I went
out into the field. Then I met a cat. Then
I met a bird, then I went home again.

An eight hundred and sixtieth time, I
was employed by King Dog. I had to
write an X on a map each time he dug
a bone. 1000 crowns a day and a cap.
Then it was revealed that I was a cat,
and King Dog bit me in a huge rage,
but it was only the cap that was harmed.
I fled to China and further on to Japan
where I was employed by the Emperor
thanks to my beautiful handwriting.

5 Important Titles

Skelettet på hjul (*The Skeleton on Wheels*).

Copenhagen, Gyldendal (1992), 11th printing 2016

A story about love and death: Martin's parents have killed his dog Trofast (Faithful). The following night, the Angel of Light Angel tells him how he may bring it back to life. He must go to the big city and get its soul from the Jester. On the way, he meets not only good, helpful persons but also evil, deceitful persons; but he refuses to give up come what may.

Den frygtelige hånd (*The Terrible Hand*).

Illustrated by Cato Thau-Jensen. Copenhagen, Høst & Søn 2001

A story about good and evil: Arthur travels around the world to find Good-Hand, the only being who can help to rescue his mother who has been abducted by Evil-Hand. Like Martin in *The Skeleton on Wheels*, he encounters many unusual people, e.g. Barbie and Ken, a princess of glass and a master of pain, until the final confrontation with Evil-Hand.

2 kroner og 25 øre (*2 Crowns and 25 Øre*).

Illustrated by Maria Lundén. Copenhagen, Gyldendal 2010

A story about compassion and determination: Learning that nobody will help the starving children in Africa, an outraged boy decides to do a Robin Hood: steal from the rich, including his father who is a judge, and give to the poor. Eventually, he steals a truck loaded with food, and together with his girl-friend drives it to Africa. But arriving in Morocco, their endeavour comes to a tragic end.

Rejsen til Gud (*The Journey to God*).

Illustrated by Otto Dickmeiss. Copenhagen, Gyldendal 2011

One morning, a blade of grass knocks on a boy's door and suggests that they make a journey to God to thank Him. On the way, they are joined by a surly duck and a jubilant chaffinch.

The collections of A Hundred Square Stories. Volume 1 – 11.

Illustrated by Lilian Brøgger. Copenhagen, Gyldendal 1992 – 2016.

In total, 1001 ultra-short stories graphically formed as squares, alternating between the highest level of poetry and the most absurd event. Each volume from 1 to 10 has 100 stories; the 11th volume contains only one, but more than 130 pages of illustrations.



Der er ingen ende – altid en ny historie (There is No End – Always a New Story)

Books Sent to the Jury

as PDF

Skelettet på hjul

(*The Skeleton on Wheels*). Copenhagen, Gyldendal (1992), 11th printing 2016

Den frygtelige hånd

(*The Terrible Hand*). Illustrated by Cato Thau-Jensen. Copenhagen, Høst & Søn 2001

2 kroner og 25 øre

(*2 Crowns and 25 Øre*). Illustrated by Maria Lundén. Copenhagen, Gyldendal 2010

Rejsen til Gud

(*The Journey to God*). Illustrated by Otto Dickmeiss. Copenhagen 2011

Så er butikken åben! Nye firkanter på alle hylder

(*Now the Shop's Open! New Square Stories on Every Shelf*).

Illustrated by Lilian Brøgger. Copenhagen, Gyldendal 2016

Volume 10 of *A Hundred Square Stories*, story 901 – 1000. Copenhagen, Gyldendal 2016

Translations and Other Texts Sent to the Jury

A Hundred Square Stories (Hundrede historier)

The Skeleton on Wheels (*Skelettet på hjul*)

The Terrible Hand (*excerpt*) (*Den frygtelige hånd*)

The Journey to God (*Rejsen til Gud*)

About the Work

Louis Jensen. Wikipedia. Updated 11 January 2017.

Thinking Inside the Box: the Square Stories of Louis Jensen.

Essay by Lise Kildegaard, professor in English at Luther College, Decorah, Iowa. 2007.



The Mouth of Silence

Story: Louis Jensen
Illustrations: Lilian Brøgger

Because the people couldn't keep the peace, the animals decided to show them how it was done.

'No one is to eat anyone else any more!' shouted the giraffe. That was fine, because he was so tall that even the animals who were deaf could lip-read what he shouted.

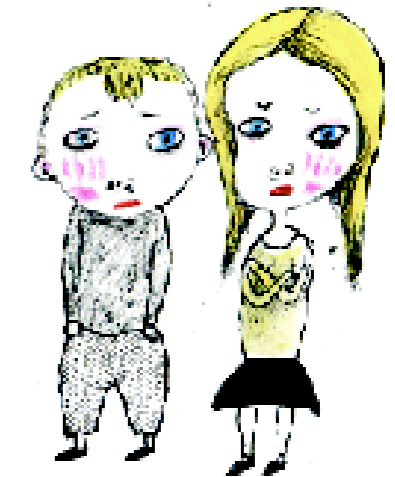
'Never again!' bleated the lamb.

'No way!' sang the songbirds.

'All year round!' squeaked the mice.

They went on shouting at each other like this for ages, until the great lion, who considered himself king of the animals, said that they could all go their separate ways quietly now, but even as he set off, the lion forgot everything, and he grabbed hold of the lamb to eat it.

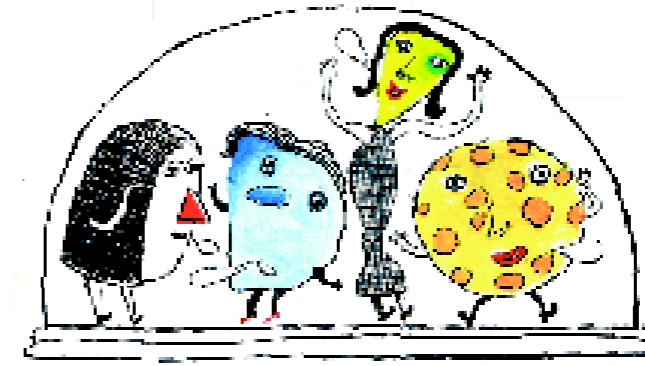
The boy and girl who fought from morning till night, and who had seen and heard everything, decided that they would keep the peace and never quarrel again. They would show the animals how it was done, but it wasn't even five minutes before they had come to blows. The girl pulled the boy's hair, and the boy kicked the girl.



The father and the mother saw and heard everything, and they decided that they would show the animals and the boy and girl how to keep the peace, but first the boy and girl got a punch each. Then the parents started to keep the peace, but it was hardly three and a half minutes before they began to yell at each other.



Now the musicians, who had seen and heard the animals and the boy and girl and the father and mother, decided that they would show everyone how to keep the peace. So they lined up with their instruments – trumpets, violins, drums, guitars, bagpipes, saws, flutes, etc. etc. But they'd only played for three minutes when they disagreed about the tune and began to quarrel. And imagine: the violin man slammed his violin right down on the trumpet man's head.



The cheesemongers had seen and heard everything. First the animals, then the boy and girl and the mother and father and the musicians, so they decided that they would show everyone how to keep the peace. All went well at first. They proffered their cheeses, they spoke kindly to each other, but then one of them got angry because his cheese was not getting enough praise, and he threw the cheese right at another person's head. Before long, cheeses were flying through the air. Everyone was furious. And was it fun to get a ripe camembert right on your nose? No, it was not, but the giraffe was amused. He could of course see everything.



At last, silence came walking on hushed feet. And wonderfully quiet were his eyes and his smile. And when he opened his mouth, everything got even quieter.

And now it all went quiet.

Even the wind lay silently down.

Even the great ocean, even the trees and their leaves stopped their rustling in mid-air.

Even the lion let go of the lamb, even the boy and the girl stopped quarrelling. And the mother didn't yell at the father nor the father at the mother, and all the trumpets, violins, drums, guitars, bagpipes, saws, flutes and music boxes played one more note each and then fell silent. And the cheesemongers? They just let their cheeses lie still.

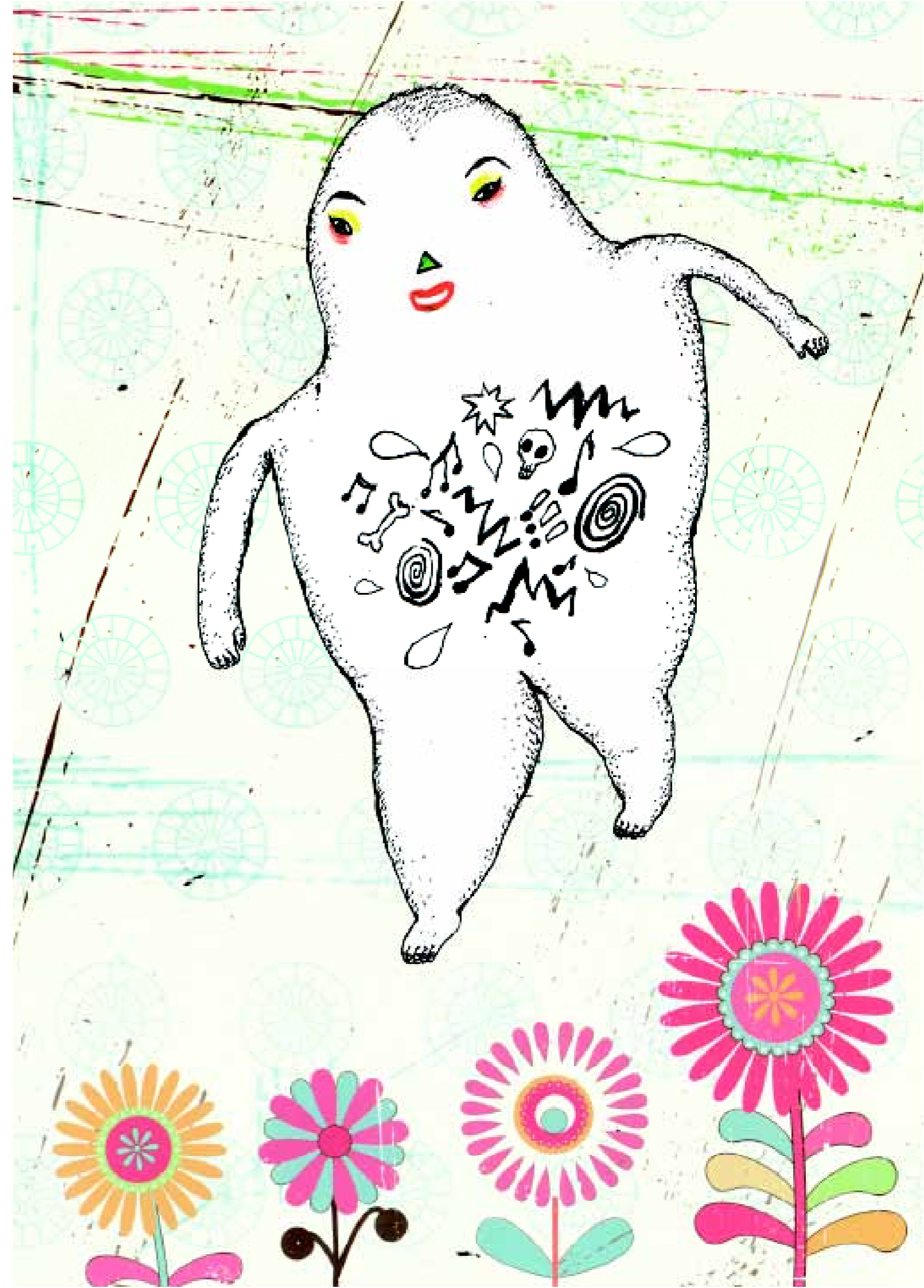
Then they all heard, deep down in the silence, the heart of the world.

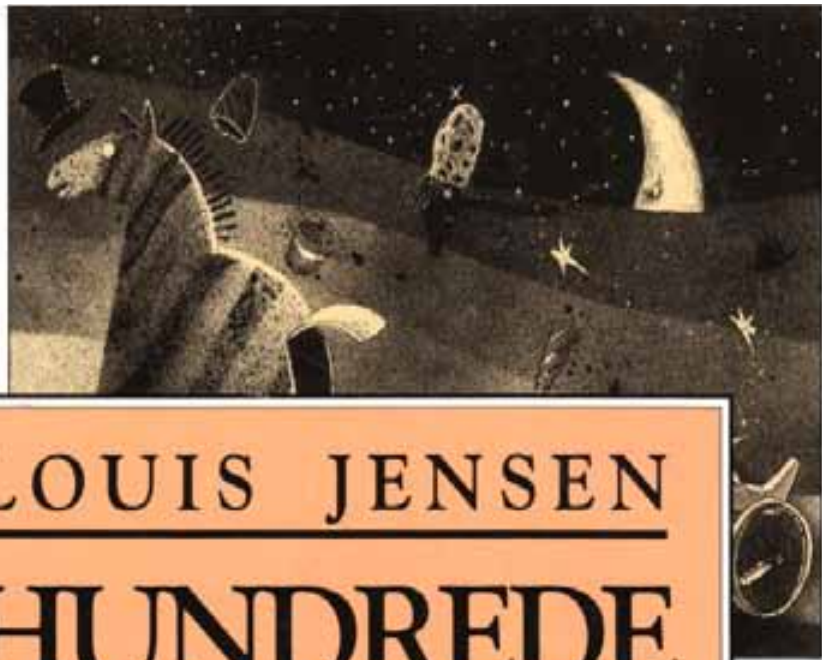
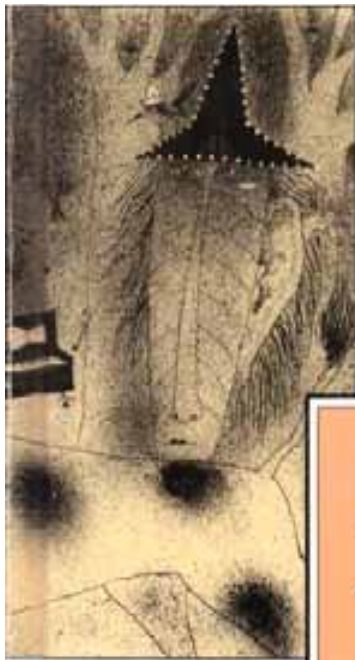
And the silence turned around and walked away.

But now they knew what silence was like.

And now, one by one, they could all go into the silence, take a little bit of it home with them, and make a gift of it to each other.

Translated from Danish by Vagn Plenge and Lakambini Sitoy





LOUIS JENSEN

HUNDREDE HISTORIER

GYLDENDAL

