

LOUIS JENSEN

FIVE SQUARE STORIES

Translated from the Danish by Lise Kildegaard

A one hundred and twenty-second time there was a man whose ten fingers were like ten playful and disobedient children. One night when the hands were sleeping and deep in a strange dream, all ten fingers set out and left home. "To see all the wonderful things in the world!" they whispered to each other. Each went its own way, and they never saw each other again. Nor did they see the fingerless hands again, but the left middle finger wrote a letter from Brazil home to the hands. It dipped its finger in its own blood, and then it wrote about the weather, the colorful people, and the white Brazilian clouds, and then it was done.

A one hundred and thirty-second time there was a young love story where no one found each other. Instead they all died on the last page after a lot of violent screaming and shouting. When everything was quiet again, the love story began to think. It had been hoping for something quite different. So that very day it set off on a journey. It rode the commuter train to Vejle, and there it lived its life, falling happily in love with a young girl with red cheeks and thick, shiny hair who worked in the post office selling stamps.

A two hundred and sixteenth time a completely new alphabet letter popped up. It immediately began to run into all the words, shoving all the other letters and shouting that it wanted a place, too. And because it was uncommonly brash and bold, after a lot of pushing and shoving, it finally got to stay. Then everything in the whole world came to be named something different. And, of course, everything had to change, too—for example, all the noses grew approximately one inch longer.

A three hundred and fourteenth time there was a snail. He grew tired of his slow snail pace and bought a little wagon with wheels and a cheerful little flag. Now he moved quickly through the grass: hooray! But the other snails shook their heads in their snailhouses: how stupid to ride on wheels! For the best thing in the whole world is to go at a snail's pace.

A three hundred and thirty-fourth time, the tongue has stars. Their uncles are the heart's stars. Their aunts are the ankle's stars. And the stars of the right side of the nose are in the family. And when the tongue speaks, the tongue's stars fly right out into the air, and when they first get into an ear, they stand up and shine, for ears are the best place in the whole world. And the ears love the tongue's stars.