

HOW UNCLE NIGHTINGALE GOES TO THE THEATRE

One evening while it was still light, Uncle Nightingale left for the theatre. It was now Saturday evening proper, and getting on for Saturday night. Uncle Nightingale was a free man. He had no night-shift to do.

At the cloakroom Uncle Nightingale handed over his hat and coat and in return received round disc number 666. He put it carefully in the right-hand pocket of his red velvet jacket. The jacket had gold buttons and was brand new! Uncle Nightingale adjusted his bowtie and combed his hair in the mirror. A theatre is such a small space, as you no doubt know.

Then Uncle Nightingale showed the usher his coloured ticket, climbed the stairs and bought a programme. Inside there were pictures and information. Then he joined the other people entering the auditorium where there were rows of seats and balconies and a large stage hidden behind a curtain. This was no children's or puppet theatre, it was for real opera and ballet. There were paintings on the ceiling and the chairs, and...

Uncle Nightingale looked for his place on the sixth row – his spot was number six. He took his seat – it was one that tipped up and down - but Uncle Nightingale sat, cross-legged, and at first didn't dare budge an inch.

Then he turned his head and gazed round the magnificent auditorium. He tilted the soft base of the tip-up chair, raising his knees to his chin, and studied the amazing painting on the ceiling. And suddenly, on the end of a row above him, he saw his dear old friend and pal Markus Stampfoot.

Uncle Nightingale jumped to his feet and waved his programme so that Markus would spot him. Or to be more exact, so that Markus would notice him and that he, Uncle Nightingale, would not go unnoticed. But Markus Stampfoot did not pay Uncle Nightingale the slightest attention.

Then Uncle Nightingale yelled, "Hey, Markus!" And waved some more. Lots of people assumed that the show had now begun and turned to look at Uncle Nightingale. But Uncle Nightingale was rushing from the lower auditorium and was already on his way up to the higher tier. Oh, how happy he was, how very happy!

He reached the right row and found Markus. Then the curtain went up and Uncle Nightingale and his friend Markus sat together at the opera. But enjoying sitting like that wasn't the only clever thing! They watched the opera together and even sang along a bit as well. And in the interval they went to the refreshment counter as thick as thieves. It's just wonderful, so wonderful to be at the theatre when your friend is there too!

At the refreshment counter they each ate six cakes and drank six glasses of fruit juice. And then the second half of the opera began. Once again Uncle Nightingale and his friend Markus sat together in the same row. And they completely forgot that they also had a seat in the lower tier.

At the very end they clapped and clapped with all the other members of the audience. And the performers stepped forward and bowed to them. And they clapped more and more and were so happy that their eyes filled with tears. What enjoyment would Uncle Nightingale have felt if he'd been all alone below in the sixth row?