

BECOME A PEOPLE

10

10 Lessons from
the Folk High School

Iben Benedikte Valentin Jensen

Become a people

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Become a people

Life grows only where contradictions are held in place, strung tight against each other.

By Iben Benedikte Valentin Jensen

Once upon a time, there was a goblin, who lived with a grocer. By day, he enjoyed itself in the shop, where there was plenty of food and lively talk. One day a poor student, who lived in the attic, came in to buy cheese. When the student saw that the cheese was being wrapped up in a poem, he ended up instead buying the rest of the poetry book, which the grocer was using as wrapping paper. Now the goblin grew curious. Who would rather have a few pieces of paper than a good piece of cheese? The goblin ran upstairs and peeked in through the student's keyhole, where the poetry book had been transformed into a wonderful tree, full of songs. The goblin was moved and wept with happiness, and he ran back to the shop, because that was the most sensible thing to do. However, from that day on, he longed to climb up to the attic again.

One night, a fire suddenly broke out in the neighbour's house, and everyone grabbed the most valuable thing they owned. The grocer took his money, the wife took her jewellery, while the goblin rushed up to the attic.

“The little goblin grasped the marvellous book from the table, stuffed it into his red pointed hat and held on to it with both hands. The best treasure in the house was saved! And then he ran off, right out onto the roof, right up onto the chimney, and there he sat, lit up by the burning house just opposite, holding on with both hands to his red hat where the treasure lay. Now he knew his heart's core, and to whom he really belonged. But once the fire had been put out, he had second thoughts – yes! “I will divide myself between them!” he said. “I can't completely abandon the grocer for the sake of the porridge!”

And that was only human! The rest of us also go to the grocer's – for our porridge.”¹

“The Goblin and the Grocer” was a story written by Hans Christian Andersen (1805-1875), and, when the folk high school teacher and principal Holger Begtrup (1859-1937)