

Luk Dot Vindow

While on one of our many concert tours through the west, I saw quite a funny little scene and heard some humorous conversation. We were seated in a day coach when we were attracted by the voice of a tall gentleman of striking appearance, carrying a large violin case. It seems that he had been checking the baggage and the minute he came inside the door he talked loudly in Danish, "Nu har jeg checket baggashen, aa alting er i orden." He was in the rear of the coach and the ladies he was speaking to were seated up in front; the three were, apparently, a concert company. He came talking as he walked, and naturally everyone in the coach turned to see what was up. The coach was crowded and no seats to be had, so he said to the ladies: "You always get good seats, and here I must stand and hold dose heavy violins."

A gentleman directly opposite the ladies got up and offered him his seat, and the violinist was very happy and thanked him graciously. The first thing to arrest his attention was a family of five or six occupying a double seat in front of him, eating a most appetizing lunch of fried chicken, hard-boiled eggs and delicious pie. They had the window open, throwing out the chicken bones and other leavings. The concert company evidently had no dinner, and looked on with envy. The violinist said, licking his chops: "Hør, piger, det smager skam godt," (girls, you bet that tastes good.)

But pretty soon he noticed there was an awful draft from the window and said to the ladies: "I can jo not stand dot træk (draft)." And to the dinner party he said: "Vil you pleas luk dot vindow?" Yes, they all looked, but saw nothing unusual and went right on eating. Then he turned to his companions and said: "Now you can see, in America people do not understand dere own langvitch — dot is vot I always told you." His friends tried to tell him that he was not making himself understood, but he said: "Now you keep tight, I vil learn dose people something — I piger holler med alle folk undtagen mei (you girls side with everybody but me) — Now I vil try it again."

So he leaned over and spoke to the mother of the lunchers again, saying: "Vil you kindly luk dot vindow."

They all looked at the window, but saw nothing startling, and went on eating. Turning to the ladies again he said: "Now you see, I have right — people here in Amerika do not unnerstan' der own langvitch. Nu skal I høre (now you shall hear): "I haf been all over Uropa, I haf been in Rusland, I haf been in France, I haf been in Germany and Belgium, but all over people unnerstands me because I speak de langvitch so immense perfect and plain — but here people unnerstand notting. But I vill ask her vun time more, but dot is also de last."

Then he leaned forward and said: "For de last time I ask you to luk dot vindow."

Of course they all looked again, eating great slices of bread as they did so. By this time, the violinist was so furious that he stood up and stretched across the woman's head, flattening her hat, and slammed the window down.

The conductor and passengers just roared with laughter, as they had been watching the little comedy. But his companions were disgusted with him, and one of the ladies said in Swedish: "Aa, fy hvor du er dum, jeg shems aa kjøra i hop med deg paa toget" (my, but you are stupid, I'm ashamed to be seen on the same train with you.) He sat and looked real hurt for a while, then he turned and said: "Men hør, piger, det var gælt. But dat was wrong vot I said, 'luk dot vindow;' I should hav said, 'close dot vindow' " — and he seemed to enjoy the joke as much as anyone.

— *Yust for Fun* by Eleonora and Ethel Olson,
Minneapolis: Lund Press, 1925

Notes

In 1905 Eleonora Olson was a member of the Skovgaard Concert Company. The group consisted of Danish violinist Axel Skovgaard, Norwegian mezzo soprano Eleonora Olson and Swedish pianist Christine Nilsson. Before coming to America Skovgaard had performed before European royalty and toured widely. The story "Luk Dot Vindow" appeared in the 1925 book *Yust for Fun* and featured a concert company not unlike the one Eleonora had joined twenty years earlier.