

Almost Fairy Children

By
Caleb
Lewis

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CHRISTMAS EVE IN THE IGLOO.

Well, said Uncle Tan the next evening, when the children flew out of that steepie that warm morning on the twenty-fourth of December, they never stopped to examine the little village. They sailed away to the North Pole.

In half an hour they had moved out of the warm atmosphere of the volcano, and were getting colder and colder. By ten o'clock they were too cold to stay up. They spied a village on the rocky coast of Greenland, and they dropped down and walked into town to get some warmer clothes.

This village was a trading-post. The Eskimos came there to sell skins and buy things. Most of the people in the town were Eskimos, but about seven or nine were Germans. The Eskimos were amazed to see the children come walking in.

The children had no trouble getting each of them a suit of Eskimo clothes that covered them from head to foot. The warm, soft skins kept the cold out amazingly well. They were a furry looking pair. I assure you. As for Aristotle, they got for him the skin of an Eskimo dog.

The children did not offer the Eskimo money for these clothes, because up there the Eskimos need something different. They offered them papers of needles and pairs of scissors, and strings of beads. It was Sister who thought to bring these things along, and Brother told her now that she was a good thinker. Brother admired Sister very much.

In their new clothes the children hurried back to their sled, and mounting the carpet, they started northward. It was only noon by the watch, but it was like evening. You see it was up in the region where the night lasts about half the year.

They ate their lunch as they moved along, and then discovered that they had devoured nearly all their provisions. There was plenty of tea and pilot bread, and there was a box of pepper, but that was all. Even the dog biscuit had munched the last one about five minutes before.

"Are you worried?" asked Sister. "Not a bit," said Brother. "Unless it turns out that there isn't any Santa Claus. If we find him, we can surely get something to eat."

"Have you told the carpet that we want to go to Santa Claus?"

"Crickle! I believe I forgot to." "Well, you'd better do it. Probably the carpet knows well enough whether there really is a Santa Claus, or whether grown folks just make him up. A carpet like that certainly ought to know, for it has been associated with magicians all its life."

Brother looked at Sister with admiration, both because she had such good sense and because she could say such big words.

This how is what Brother said to the carpet: "Carpet, carpet, we wish to visit Santa Claus, if there is any Santa Claus. If there is one, will you please go very fast for a few minutes, so that we can know?"

The words were hardly out of his mouth when the carpet gave a splendid flap, like a ship's sail in a high wind. Then it doubled up around the children and the dog and began to go so fast that their heads fairly spun around. You could see plainly that the carpet was tickled very much. It began to gallop up and down and whirl round, and once it turned a somersault and never spilled them.

Then it spread itself out and was as peaceful as a lamb. It was standing still in the air, quivering like a bird.

The children looked down and saw a wonderful sight. They were so high up that they could see the shape of the round earth. In the dusk the snowy edge of the curved white earth, rounding up there to the North Pole! It was beautiful beyond words.

They could see the North Pole. It was just a long, straight imaginary line, slender as a sunbeam, which stuck up through the round earth into the sky. If you watched it closely you could see the earth turn round it. "Lower away, you darling old carpet," said Brother, who always gave the commands.

Down they came, still watching the silvery imaginary North Pole. Just beside it on the earth they saw the roof of a loaf, low building, a sort of machine shop, with smoke coming up out of several little chimneys.

At seven minutes after two they stood on the snow in front of the Toy Factory of Santa Claus. They could see the North Pole shooting up above them. They went over and tried to take it in their hands. But it was thinner than the finest spider web, and they couldn't grasp it.

They gave it up and started for the toy factory. As they did so, the door opened and out came a big fat fairy. He was smoking the stump of an old pipe. He had a pointed red cap trimmed with the same white fur. The coat flapped in the wind as he tried to get it on.

Then a funny thing happened. The magic carpet rose from the ground all by itself and flew to Santa Claus and wrapped itself all around him and flapped and flapped against his white whiskers.

Santa Claus gently pulled it off and said, "Hello, da, du Old Useful Vurk. Vel, I was glad to see you again. Let me see. Must be 'bout humder yars, ain't it?"

So he brought the carpet back and laid it down, where it rested peacefully. Then he picked up Sister and Brother and kissed them and tossed them around, and they were not scared at all.

"Hello, you darlin' little Squimos. You tink Old Santa vil you a new harpoon and walrus-tusk doll tomorrow ev, hey? Tell me dis, you rascals. Vot useful vurk haf you dis day alretty done? Ain't it?"

The children lay down into the snow and rolled over with laughter to think that Santa Claus should really mistake them for Eskimo children. Aristotle ran to nip them and bark at them, and it was a merry jumble on the snow.

Then they got up and explained. And Brother went to the bundle and brought out the pipe and presented it to the Old Fairy.

Santa Claus was much taken aback. He said it was the first time any child had ever brought him a present. Of course when children gave their parents presents he was just as much pleased as if they gave them to him. He said a pipe was the only present he wanted; he didn't need anything else. And he asked them if they minded in case he smoked the beautiful pipe only at home. They said that of course they didn't mind. He said that he was afraid that people wouldn't know him without the short pipe. Besides the short one was much easier to carry when he went down chimneys.

"You mustn't let us keep you, Santa Claus," said Sister, "because this is Christmas Eve, and you have ever so much to do."

"Oh, mein Liebchen," said Santa Claus. "I haf not to go till Drei Uhr. I mean three of the clock. Dat is time enough. I vill show you everything. Dot sleigh is alretty, and dose reindeer dey is harnesses oop, only Blixen is out getting some moss to eat. You see him out dort alretty, eating moss also mit his muzzle. Also, vy not you go back mit in der sleigh? Ain't it?"

"Oh, thank you very much," said Brother, as his heart gave a big leap. He thought a moment. It would be a famous thing to be able to say that they had ridden with Santa Claus. Then he thought that, being children and a dog, and not fairies, they would make the sleigh go slower, and so some children would be late in getting their presents.

"Thank you very much, but we have the carpet, and we will go that." The Old Fairy put his hand on Brother's shoulder, and looked right into his head with those sweet old blue eyes of his, that have seen into so many children's heads and hearts all these hundreds of years. Then he said:

"Dot vas all right, leetle Broeder. I see vy you vas not vish to go mit. You vas wrong about dat weight of you and her and doggy, but you vas right about der vish in your heart. You vil go on de Old Useful Vurk. He ain't flied away in the night yet, hey? Dot vas two good children. Hey, Schwes-terchen, vot is it to eat in dot bundle? Let Old Santa look."

Sister brought the bundle and he looked in. He saw the tea and the pilot bread and the pepper. Then he laughed, and tossed all the pilot bread to Aristotle, who crunched it up and got snow in his mouth by doing so.

"Villst du a leetle more useful vurk dis day do? Und du? Villst du a toy make each one, vat Santa vill put in der sleigh for two leetle poor peeples?"

"Yes, indeed," shouted the children together.

"I can make a very good boat," said Brother, "with my knife."

"And I can make a whole doll if I can get some rags. I will take my apron. It's in the bundle there."

"All r-r-right!" said Santa Claus, rolling the r like a ratchet on a wheel. "Den vill I you some good pemmican give, and some pickled shrimps and some reindeer cheese and some pumpernickel! Coom mit!"

He went into the factory and they followed. As far as you could see there were benches on either side, and at these there were little men at work. The little workmen were gnomes. They were funny little fellows. Each one had a smile and two big round eyes. When they screwed their eyes up to see a toy closer, they looked very cross-eyed. But the children did not laugh. They knew very well that they probably looked as funny to the gnomes as the gnomes to them.

Santa Claus called one of the gnomes and asked him to go to Santa Claus' house and pack up the pemmican and things. Then he found some pine wood and some gay colored pieces of cloth and brought them.

"Ach, ve must you dose needles get."

"No, indeed," said Sister. "I have my own, thank you."

The Old Fairy found a piece of work for his own hands, and they all sat down by the stove in the corner and worked. Brother made a boat, Sister made a doll, and Santa Claus whittled out a whole cuckoo clock, and made it say "Cuckoo!"

"You've got fifteen minutes yet, Santa Claus," said Brother. "Won't you please tell us how you came to be Santa Claus? Were you born that way? Please tell us. We won't stop working."

Santa Claus picked up the cuckoo clock and deftly slipped the little bird off and held it in his hand. Then he lifted it up and held it against his cheek as if he loved it.

"You see dot leetle Vogel-bird? You know vy I likes to make dot leetle bird ven I sees vun leetle child? Vel, I vill tell you vy. Vunce Santa vas a leetle boy, shoost like Broeder here. I always vish I have a cuckoo bird. I have a cage maked, but I haf no bird. Dann I see vun leetle boy vat stay a bird. I went up to him and say, 'Gif me your bird. I gif you ten pfennig.' 'Nein,' say dot child. 'I haf my bird. I vill not sell him for ten pfennigs.' Dann I klick him and tumble him down and take his Vogel-bird and

thump and you pulled out a plum. That is, you stuck in your fork and you pulled out your pork—or at least what looked like pork. They ate some pemmican, because Santa Claus gave it to them. And they just doted on the reindeer cheese and the pumpernickel. They saved the pickled shrimps to show mamma. They melted some snow in the silver dish and had some tea.

The igloo soon became warm and the children went to sleep. When they awoke it was four o'clock. They had slept from six till four. That is ten hours.

After more cheese and tea and pumpernickel they got on Old Useful Vurk ready to fly. They had to drag Aristotle on by the collar, for he was determined to eat all that ball of pemmican up.

They made the trip home in three and one-half hours—the fastest trip that was ever taken by mortals on the earth.

They came 'dropping down gently into the farm yard at a quarter to nine. Their family nearly smothered them with kisses.

Among the family was Aunt Matilda. She had come to spend the day. She brought Bridget and Maggie and Johanson and Mrs. Johanson and Baby Johanson and Baby Johanson's older brother, a little boy six years old. He was named John.

John came to Brother and showed him a present that he had found in his stocking. Brother was very much surprised, but he knew he could not be mistaken. It was the identical boat he had made in the shop at the North Pole. And Baby Johanson got the doll that sister made. This showed not only that Santa Claus had kept them home but that he had remembered. They forgave him for taking them for Eskimos. In fact they never cared anyhow.



They All Sat Down by the Stove.

put in my cage. Dat child not got up, well his leg broke. Bad Claus! It vas Claus vat broke his little leg. "Vell, dot night I lies in mein bett und not sleep. I looks at mein bird in dat cage I made. By and by alretty I see a light dot cage above, and dann I see vun leetle child all burning bright. Dat vas Christ-Child. You understand?"

Both the children whispered, "Yes." "Vell, dat leetle Christ-Child he say to me, 'Claus! Claus!' Shoost like dat. I say nottings. Dann dat leetle bright babe he tell me about dat leetle child whom from I take away dat bird for mine. Dat vas vun poor leetle boy—so awful poor. And not vas only his leg broken, but his poor heart was broken, und dat night he died. And dat bright Christ-Child he ask me vat vil I do now. Dann he grow pale and pale and go away."

"What did you do, Santa Claus?" "Santa Claus silently held out the little wooden bird.

"Dis," he said. "All dis—and he swept his arm around toward the great shop with its twinkling lights. 'Ever since dat night I make toys. It is so long—hundreds and hundreds of years. It is forgiven. But I make toys always.'"

There was silence for a moment, and then Sister put up the rag doll to her eyes and patted away two big tears. She could not get at her handkerchief very well.

Santa Claus got up. It was three o'clock. He kissed the children good-by and went to his sleigh. In a few minutes they heard a sweet wild jingle of bells and ran out. So did all the little workmen. The reindeer were whirling the dear old saint away over the snow, and everybody waved good-by to him. As he sped away, there seemed to be more light in the landscape. There was a sort of red glow on the snow around the flying sleigh.

The gnome who had packed up the pemmican and things came back with them presently. He invited the children to stay all night, but they said that they must get an early start in the morning, and that they must be going.

"Were you sleep dis cold night?" asked the gnome. "I think I can make an igloo," said Brother. "I don't mean an igloo of stones, but a round one of snow."

"You got snow knife?" asked the gnome. "No," said Brother.

The gnome disappeared into the shop and presently returned with a broad flat knife more than a foot long.

"Dis my present," said the gnome with a grin. "Dis de gnome's Merry Christmas to dat Merkinsche boy."

Brother took the knife and thanked him. In a few minutes they were under way, and in an hour they were back in Greghland.

Then they came down, and Brother went to work. He cut blocks of snow and arranged them in a circle. Then he cut another set of blocks and built them on to the first circle, making the second circle smaller. In this way he went on, till he had made a round dome of snow blocks. He found that he had cut all the blocks at once except the first two rows, because he couldn't hop out again. Sister handed him the blocks. When just a small hole was left, he ducked down, and Sister slid the last block to him. He fitted it in over his head, and left no hole at all. He didn't intend to have a big fire, and he needed no chimney.

Then he knelt down and cut a hole in the side and crawled out. Then they all crawled in again and put the block of snow back. Then they lighted the lantern. Then they spread down the blankets. Then they opened Santa Claus' bundle of food.

The pemmican was not a bit like the canned pemmican which they had been eating on the way. It was a ball of seal tallow, with pieces of boiled seal meat inside it. You stuck in your

thump and you pulled out a plum. That is, you stuck in your fork and you pulled out your pork—or at least what looked like pork. They ate some pemmican, because Santa Claus gave it to them. And they just doted on the reindeer cheese and the pumpernickel. They saved the pickled shrimps to show mamma. They melted some snow in the silver dish and had some tea.

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NORTH CAROLINA, PERQUIMANS COUNTY.

Jamie Leigh vs. Mary Leigh.

NOTICE

The Defendant above named will take notice that action entitled as above has been commenced in Perquimans County for the purpose of dissolving the bonds of matrimony heretofore existing between the Plaintiff and the Defendant and that she is required to appear before the Clerk of the Superior Court of said County in his office on the 21st day of February 1921, in the Court House of said County in Hertford, N. C., and answer or demur to the complaint in said action or the Plaintiff will apply to the Court for the relief demanded in said complaint.

This January 1st, 1921.

CHAS. JOHNSON,
Clerk Superior Court Perquimans County
C-3-McM-37-21

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

Department of State

Certificate of Dissolution

To All to Whom These Presents

Way Come Greeting: Whereas, it appears to my satisfaction, by duly authenticated record of the proceedings for the voluntary dissolution thereof by the unanimous consent of all the stockholders, deposited in my office, that the Spence & Hollowell Company, a corporation of this State, in the town of Elizabeth City, County of Pasquotank, State of North Carolina, (L. S. Rides being the agent therein and in charge thereof, upon whom process may be served), has complied with the requirements of Chapter 21, Revisal of 1905, entitled "Corporations," preliminary to the issuing of this Certificate of Dissolution:

Now Therefore, I, J. Bryan Grimes, Secretary of State of the State of North Carolina, do hereby certify that the said corporation did, on the 27th day of November 1920, file in my office a duly executed and attested consent in writing to the dissolution of said corporation, executed by all the stockholders thereof, which said consent and the record of the proceedings aforesaid are now on file in my said office, as provided by law.

In Testimony Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my official seal at Raleigh, this 27th day of November, A. D. 1920.

J. BRYAN GRIMES,
Secretary of State.

(SEAL) C-37-41

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Aug. 8—13t