



Santa and the White Bunny

By Lucrece Hudgins

Chapter 1

It was just three weeks before Christmas and every little boy and girl in the town of Mogador was being very, very good indeed.

“For,” explained Duncan Briartree to his schoolmates, “Santa Claus knows everything and if we are bad he will leave nothing in our stockings on Christmas morning.”

“No. Nor will he leave a tree with red and golden balls and stars and tinsel!” cried Tommy Chambers, who was busy beating erasers for the teacher.

“I am going to clean out my father’s woodshed today,” said Ed Boles loudly, and everyone knew perfectly well it would be the first time in forty-nine weeks that Ed had even been in the woodshed.

“I’m going to wash and dry the dishes every night!” decided Carol Terry, the girl who never before had bothered even to take her own plate to the kitchen.

And so it went, with every child frantically helping at home and helping at school and helping each other until it was absolutely beyond reason that any parent should fail to know that, once again, Christmas was coming.

But in the little white house with the picket fence that stood at the foot of Elm street things were different. Here lived a fair-haired boy named David and a fat-cheeked girl named Mary.

“It’s all a lot of nonsense.” said David to his small sister. “For, if Santa knows everything then he certainly knows that Duncan Briartree hasn’t done his homework properly all year. And he knows Tommy Chambers usually beats his dog instead of erasers. And he knows that Ed and Carol and all the others sass their parents every day in the year except in December.”

Little Mary adored David and whatever he said was right. But still, she thought, they might better play safe. “It wouldn’t do any harm to go to bed without fussing for a few nights,” she suggested. “And we might eat all our vegetables instead of hiding them under the potato skins. Just for a while, I mean,” she added hastily as she saw David’s look of scorn.

“That’s a fine idea,” put in their mother, who had overheard the whole conversation. “And if you want a really bulging stocking on Christmas morning, you might try coming in from play the first time I call you and hanging up your coat and hat and taking your cod liver oil without fussing and -

David was really a pretty good boy, but he hated to be told every minute what to do. So now he said crossly, “I won’t do all those things. If I did I wouldn’t be me.”

His mother was very tired as she had done all the laundry that day and the cleaning woman hadn’t come and she hadn’t even started stringing the beans for supper so she said, “All right, son. If that’s the way you feel there’ll be no Christmas for you this year!”

David stared at his mother incredulously and Mary clasped her hands in fright. Right away their mother wanted to take back her words but before she could speak David stuck out his small chin and said:

“I don’t care a bit! I don’t think there is a Santa Claus anyway!”

His mother and sister gasped and for a long minute no one said anything at all. Then, David’s mother stood up and left the room. David felt a flood of misery wash over him. He knew he had said the worst thing anyone could possibly say, but he was too stubborn to admit he was sorry.

Instead, he turned to his sister and shouted, “I’m going to run away! And right away he ran out of the house, thru the little picket gate, and down Elm Street.

Little Mary stood for a minute too sunned to move. Then, with the sobs bursting in her throat cried, “Wait for me, David! Wait for me!”

And away she raced to be with her brother.



Chapter 2

THE CHILDREN MEET A GIGMY

When David got to the top of Elm Street he was entirely out of breath and was really on the point of calling the whole thing off when his little sister caught up with him.

Her legs were shorter than his so she was nearly twice as tired from the long run. She was crying and David's conscience hurt him to know he was the cause of all her misery.

"You go right back home," he said roughly. "What will mother say?" For, though he had just defied his mother and been very, very rude, he loved her dearly and didn't want her worried.

But Mary just stood there, just as stubborn in her way as David was in his. "If you are not going to have any Christmas then I don't want any either," she said firmly.

"Nonsense!" cried David, though secretly he was very flattered. "You go home and I am going out in the world to make my fortune!" He had read this in a book somewhere and thought it had a splendid sound.

"Please come home and say you're sorry." said Mary suddenly taking his hand.

Then David was angry all over again. "I'm not a bit sorry," he shouted. "I don't think there's a Santa Claus. I don't believe in magic anyway!"

The awfulness of this statement caused Mary to start crying again and, in fact, so overwhelmed David himself, that he pulled away from his sister and stomped off down the road.

Mary wiped her eyes on the hem of her pinafore and trailed after him. Now, truly, David had not the least idea where he was going but he turned down one road and then down another and cut through three fields and jumped two streams and followed a very narrow path through a forest as though he had

a very clear notion of what he was about. Mary trailed along all the way, never doubting for an instant that her brother knew what he was doing.

Then, suddenly, the sun was setting and David was cold and very hungry and ready to go home. But, of course, by this time he was completely and hopelessly lost.

He took Mary's hand in his and thrashed around in the woods for quite a while. "Don't be frightened." he said to Mary in an almost firm voice.

"I'm not frightened a bit." replied Mary. And she wasn't, not as long as David held her hand. But he was tired and she was hungry so it was a wonderful thing that just at this point she stumbled on something that lay hidden under the leaves.

"Look!" she cried kneeling down. "It's a basket just like the one we carry on picnics!"

"Open it!" cried David, kneeling beside her and helping her pull back the lid. Then both children gasped with delight for the basket was packed to the brim with sandwiches and cookies and apples and popcorn.

"Just imagine," exclaimed David, stuffing his mouth with peanut butter sandwiches, "Finding it when we most needed it!"

"Maybe there is a Santa Claus." whispered Mary as she too filled her empty tummy.

Before David could reply there was a sudden crashing of sticks and leaves in the forest and a hoarse voice rattled, "Who is eating my dinner?"

Then a fierce little creature bolted from behind a tree and pounced on the nearly empty lunch basket.

"Wh-who are you?" stammered David, nearly speechless with fright.

"I am a Gigmy. There are only fifty Gigmies in all the world. We are part goblin and cart pigmy and we cast magic spells over children who dare to eat our lunch!"

David was about to apologize but little Mary kept munching a cookie.

"My brother," he said serenely, "Doesn't believe in Santa Claus and he doesn't believe in magic. He probably doesn't even believe in you, so there!"

"Mary!" cried David, in horror.

But, it was too late. The ugly Gigmy pulled a long white stick out of his sleeve. "Then I'll teach him to believe in me." he squawked and he waved the stick over Mary golden head.

"Ismay Dosmay! Toesmay Nosmay!"

And right before David's eyes Mary disappeared and in her place there was a small white bunny!



Chapter 3

DAVID LOSES HIS BUNNY

For a minute there was not a sound in all that forest as David looked with disbelief at the small white bunny by his side. Then he leaped to his feet and threw himself on the ugly Gigmy.

“Bring her back!” he shouted. “Bring her back or I’ll choke you till you die!”

But the Gigmy wiggled out of his hands as easily as water would have slipped through his fingers and darted up a fir tree.

“So you don’t believe in Santa Claus and Gigmies and Magic,” he hooted. “Well, think it over. If the spell isn’t broken in three weeks your precious sister will turn into a white hippopotamus and a white hippopotamus she will be forevermore.”

And then the horned creature burst into laughter, shinnied down the tree and vanished into the forest. Crying with misery, the little boy picked up the white bunny and pressed his face against the soft warm fur

“What shall I do, little sister? What shall I do?” he went. But the bunny could only nuzzle deep inside David’s collar and look at him pleadingly with her soft eyes.

The sun had finally sunk beyond the distant mountains and a cold wind was blowing through the forest. The bunny began to shiver so David opened his jacket and carefully placed the bunny inside. “Don’t worry,” he whispered. “I’ll think of something.” And he hugged her close just as though she had been his sister.

In all the world I guess there was no more unhappy boy than fair-haired David. “Because it’s fill my fault,” he thought wretchedly. “Now there’s nothing for it but I must find Santa Claus and ask him to break the spell.”

For, of course, it had never been true that he had not believed in Santa Claus. He truly felt that Santa was the one good thing in the world that he could break any evil spell cast.

He stayed in the forest all the night, sometimes sleeping, sometimes getting up to stamp his freezing feet and settle the bunny more warmly in his jacket. When morning came he started out in a northerly direction.

When he had been walking for hours he finally came out of the gloomy forest and found a highway which led straight into a town. Now he was carrying the bunny under his arm and as he walked through the streets of the town people turned and stared.

“What a strange thing that a ragged boy like that should be carrying so beautiful a bunny!” they exclaimed. For David’s clothes were torn and dirty after the hours in the forest and his face was tired and streaked with tears.

“He must have stolen it!” the townspeople finally decided. “It is a very expensive looking rabbit.” So they rushed to the office of the Keeper of the Zoo and told him what they had seen. The Keeper ran after David and snatched the bunny from his arms before the surprised boy could stop him.



“THAT’S MY BUNNY! GIVE HER BACK!”

“Yes,” nodded the Keeper, looking very wise, “This is one of ours. Our very best, in fact. Well, it’s a good thing we caught you, my boy!”

“That’s my bunny!” shouted David, clutching the Keeper’s sleeve. “Give her back!”

“Well,” said the Keeper. “I won’t say you stole her but I’ll assume that she escaped and you found her. Now be off with you while I take this poor thing back to her cage.” And the Keeper marched off to his Zoo.

David started after him but the townsfolk stood in his way and taunted him. “Did you think you were going to have rabbit stew for dinner?” they jeered.

“She’s my sister,” screamed the frantic boy. “A Gigmy turned her into a bunny and I must take her to Santa Land at once!”

But it was no use. His sister was gone and the townspeople thought he was out of his head.

CHAPTER 4

David Goes to the Zoo

David soon realized that his pleas to the townspeople were useless so he slipped away and secretly made his way to the Zoo.

What a place it was! It stretched over acres of land and as the boy went through the gates he felt that it might be hours before he found the rabbitry. First there were the bears in great outdoor cages and a private swimming pool for each bear. Then the duck ponds and a treat pool for black seals.

There was an elephant house and a giraffe house and a monkey house.

How David would have liked to linger! He never before had been in a Zoo and had never seen most of these animals except in picture books. But, now he hurried along, giving scarcely a glance even at the rhinoceros.

At last he came to a big pool which seemed empty. Then, to the boy's astonishment, a huge mouth popped out of the water and the mouth was followed by the ugliest, biggest black body David had ever seen. He shuddered with fright and then he looked at the sign over the pool.

"Hippopotamus," read the sign.



"NO! NO!" CRIED THE BOY IN HORROR.

How well David remembered the words of the evil Gigmy: "Unless the spell is broken in three weeks your sister will be a white hippopotamus forevermore!"

"No! no!" cried the boy in horror. And he hurried away. He didn't stop at another cage but rushed around from house to house searching the rabbits.

Finally he came to a large brick building and over the door it said "Rabbitry." But just as David started up the steps a shrill whistle sounded all over the Zoo.

"That's closing time, son," said a guard as David stood uncertainly on the steps. "Better beat it."

But as soon as the guard turned away to clear the visitors out of the building, David darted through the doors and hid himself behind two big barrels of carrots. Very soon all the visitors had been shooed away and the cages and houses were shut up for the night. But, it wasn't really dark yet and David could see quite clearly where he was.

It was quite a large room and it contained a great number of hutches and each hutch was packed with rabbits. The little boy wandered from one end of the room to the other carefully searching as he went. He did this three times but it was no use.

Every bunny in the house was a white bunny and every bunny looked exactly like his little sister Mary!

He tried calling her name. He went to each cage and said, "Little sister, come to me and I will take you away." Every bunny looked at him with a kind of burning interest and every single one rushed forward.

Then he thought if he could hold the rabbits in his arms he would recognize Mary because he had held her all the night before. So he opened the door of each hutch and as the bunnies scooted out he gently lifted each one. But it wasn't any use because they all felt exactly alike.

Now what confusion there was! Imagine nearly a thousand white bunnies scurrying about in one room!

It all seemed very hopeless until David got his big idea.

"What would happen?" he wondered. "If I should open the large front door?"

He knew perfectly well that the bunnies would race away into the darkness and hide themselves in the woods.

"But, surely," he thought, "Surely the bunny that is Mary will stay behind with me!"

Quickly he threw open the great doors. Instantly, the bunnies bounced and scurried and tumbled over themselves as they made their escape. David watched as everyone vanished into the darkness. Then he looked down at his feet and there was one white bunny huddled by his shoe!

With a Cry of happiness he picked her up and put her in his jacket. Then he too disappeared in the darkness.

Chapter 5

A MAGIC LAND

By morning David had put many miles between himself and the terrible town where his sister had been locked in the Zoo. But his heart was very heavy because he knew that Christmas was not far off and if the Gigmy spell was not broken by Christmas day then his little sister would become a white hippopotamus forevermore.

“And suppose I do find Santa,” he thought, “How would he find the time to help me when he’s so busy getting ready for Christmas?” And a tiny little voice deep inside him whispered, “Especially when you said such horrid things about him!”

Well, there was nothing for it but to keep walking in a northerly direction. This he did for what seemed like months but was really only several days.

Finally, on the fifth day he realized that for a long time he had come to no village, passed no farm house, seen no traveler on the road.

He did not know it but he had passed beyond the boundaries of the kind of world he had always known. He had now come into a land where everything was Good.

A river travelled beside the road and there were boats on the river and boats along the bank. David thought it might be all right if he got in one and sailed part of the way for he was very tired.

As soon as he had stepped aboard one of the empty boats it started off and gaily skimmed the water. David was very excited and tried to hail the people in the other ships but he was suddenly so very tired that he dropped off to sleep.

When he woke the little boat had come to shore again and the bank was crowded with people. They ran down and helped the boy come ashore. But what strange people they were! David could not imagine who they might be.

They shouted, “Who are you?” And when he didn’t answer they began talking excitedly among themselves. “He has a bunny but that doesn’t explain anything,” cried a boy who was dressed in blue from top to toe.

“He must have something to do with Easter,” guessed another boy - and this lad was walking around carrying a whole pie in his hand!

“Now, let him catch his breath,” admonished a lady who was sitting on a goose. “One can see he is too astonished to speak.

Which was really true but still David managed to say, “I am David.”

There was silence. Then voices: “David? Never heard of him. Can’t think of a David in all the tales I know.”

Now David was about to cry with chagrin so he turned to the lady who was sitting on a goose and told her how Mary was turned into a bunny and how he was on his way to Santa to have the spell broken.

Again there was silence. Then the gayest laughter! Everyone crowded around him and the goose lady took his hand and said, “You have come to the right place, laddie. This is the

Land of Fairy Tale Folk. See, here is Jack Horner,” and she pointed to the boy who had the pie. “And here is little Boy Blue. And of course, I am Mother Goose. And - well, surely you recognize all the rest.”

And, of course, David did. There was Cinderella and Red Riding Hood and Simple Simon and the Gingerbread Boy and Goldenlocks and Miss Muffet and Tommy Tucker and just about everyone you could think of out of your Fairy Tale books.

Then there was loud laughter at the top of the bank and looking up David saw the Seven Dwarfs and standing in their midst was Santa Claus himself!



“DAVID ? NEVER HEARD OF HIM !”

Chapter 6

DAVID TALKS WITH SANTA

David was wild with excitement when he saw Santa Claus standing on the hill with the dwarfs.

“See!” cried Blue Boy “You are in luck. Santa has only just dropped in for a visit to find what we wanted in our stockings on Christmas day.”

“Come,” said Jack Homer, “I will help you up the hill.”

Together they climbed the bank. Behind them came Mother Goose and Ole King Cole and Jack the Giant Killer and Little Miss Muffet and all the other folk. And as they climbed they sang the gayest songs!

“If only Mary were all right,” thought David. “What a fine time she would have.”

At last they reached the top where Santa was joking with the dwarfs, Oh, he looked so happy and so sure of himself that David’s heart suddenly lifted for, he thought, surely there is nothing Santa cannot do.

“Who is the fair-haired boy?” asked Santa as David found himself standing before him.

The boy swallowed hard but for a moment he was speechless. Mother Goose got down from her goose and whispered in Santa’s ear.

Then Santa stopped smiling. He reached forward and took the boy’s hand. “Tell me about it, David,” he said kindly.

Then David told him how he had run away from home and with red cheeks repeated the terrible things he had said about Santa himself.

Then he told how he and Mary had eaten the Gigmy’s lunch and how the Gigmy had turned Mary into a white bunny.



“W-WHAT IS IT ?”

“And,” he finished. “Unless the spell is broken by Christmas day, she will be turned into a white hippopotamus and remain a hippopotamus forevermore.”

All the fairy folk shuddered and looked sorrowfully at the boy and his bunny.

“I hate hippopotamuses,” said Simple Simon bluntly. (You can easily see why he was called ‘simple.’)

“Oh, she is such a pretty thing,” cried Bo Peep, patting the bunny’s head.

King Cole turned to Santa and said. “Can. you break the spell?”

Santa just stood there thinking hard.

“Of course,” he said finally, softly, as if talking to himself. “It is only two weeks till Christmas and I should be back in Santa Land working, Mrs. Claus will be worried, too.” And he thought some more.

You could fairly hear his brain ticking and David was ready to weep and all the folk were sad and silent. Then Santa said, “We will see what we can do.”

Everyone cheered and David laughed with joy. He tucked the bunny under one arm and took Santa’s hand. They went into the woods and there, large as a house and tied down to four trees was a mass of what seemed to be both cotton and whipped cream.

“W-what is it?” stammered David as Santa led him into the midst of it.

“A cloud,” said Santa smiling. “Sit down now while I untie the ropes and we’ll sail away.”

“Where are we going?” asked David who would have been quite frightened had not Santa there.

“We are going to the Gigmy castle.” said Santa

Then he set free the cloud and it rose from the woods while all the folk below waved and cheered and sang.

Chapter 7

DAVID VISITS THE GIGMY CASTLE

Never was there so comfortable a bed as the cloud in which David and the white bunny sailed with Santa. Like lying in a great tub of cotton it was, only firmer and yet, softer, too, as if there were nothing there at all!

"I ride the clouds these days," explained Santa, "to save the reindeer. They must be rested for Christmas."

David wanted to tell Santa he was truly sorry for the things he had said but he realized that Santa already knew and had known all along. Besides, he was suddenly very sleepy so he shut his eyes and slept in the soft white cloud until Santa touched his shoulder.

"Wake up, David! Here we are."

David got to his knees just as the cloud plopped down on the side of a mountain. He hopped out on the ground and helped Santa pile rocks on the cloud to hold it down. Then the two of them climbed the mountain side to the very top.

And here was the Gigmy castle. What a large gloomy place it was! "Goodness," cried David, "if there are only fifty Gigmies in the whole world why do they need such a big place?"

"Gigmies are very show off," declared Santa. "I suppose they think this rock pile is the prettiest thing in the world."

Well, it was something to see - standing there surrounded by a wide courtyard and, far below, the great sea pounding against the rocks at the base of the mountain.'

"Now, don't be frightened," said Santa, who was pretty nervous himself as they strode boldly through the castle gates. "After all, the Gigmies are a reasonable people and they cast so many evil spells it shouldn't much matter to them if they broke one."

By this time they were standing in the castle hall and still had seen no one. They walked through room after room but all were empty. Finally they entered the dining hall and there at last was the king Gigmy and all the lesser Gigmies eating dinner.

For a moment Santa and David just stood there staring. Surely there was never a more horrid sight! The ugly, ill-tempered creatures were eating a roast wild pig, stuffing great hunks down their ugly throats. At the head of the table sat the king, fat and fierce, tossing lumps of meat to a mean-looking dog who crouched at his feet.

At last the king turned and saw Santa and David and the white bunny standing at the door.

"Quiet!" he screamed and the Gigmies were suddenly silent and looking with angry surprise at their uninvited visitors.

Santa cleared his throat and started to sneak but before he could get out a single word, the king Gigmy sprang from his chair and bolted to David's side.

"Well," he cried, trying to lift the bunny from the boy's frantic hands. "So this is the bunny that will be a hippopotamus on Christmas day!" Then he turned to Santa. "I've been expecting you. But, it's no use. I will do nothing for you."



"I'VE BEEN EXPECTING YOU. BUT IT'S NO USE!"

"Surely," said Santa, taking a deep breath. "It won't bother you to break one spell."

"It isn't small," replied the king angrily. "It's quite a difficult spell to cast and my men did very well. Besides, I need a white hippopotamus on the place. It will be the only one in all the world."

"Let us bargain," suggested Santa. "What will you take to break the spell?"

"Well," replied the king with an evil grin. "There are three things I'd like. Bring them to me and I will break the spell."

"Name them!" cried Santa while David held his breath. "Name them and you shall have them."

"A star," croaked the king. "A star and a Zany flower and a spool of thread 800,000 miles long!"

Chapter 8

OFF TO SANTA LAND

David felt sick with hopelessness as he and Santa left the castle.

“How could I get a star?” he whispered. “Or a spool of thread 800,000 miles long? And I don’t even know what a Zany flower is!”

“It’s a flower that grows at the bottom of the sea,” said Santa, leading the way to the cloud which they had left on the mountain side.

He didn’t say another word until they had taken the rocks off the cloud and were once again sailing through the sky. Then he said. “David if you are very brave perhaps we can find a way.”

“Oh, tell me.” cried the boy hugging the white bunny close. “I shall be very, very brave!”

“First of all,” said Santa. gently, “You’ve got to believe that you can do it and believing in a thing hard enough will make it so.”

David thought very hard for a moment “Even if I weren’t quite sure,” he asked at last “Would it be enough if someone else believed in me?” Santa nodded and David said, “Then it’s all right because Mary believes.” And he pressed his face against the bunny’s soft fur.

Santa had to blow his nose quite hard. But he said, “First we must go to Santa Land so that Mrs. Claus will know I’m all tight. And good gracious! What a lot of work must have piled up since I’ve been gone!”

So they went to Santa Land. David thought it an even more enchanting place than Fairy Folk Land. The snow lay seventeen feet deep and what hills there were for coasting! (if one, but had the time!) The long rows of workshops with smoke pouring from the chimneys and David could hear Santa’s helpers talking and singing as they made the wagons and skates and dolls and bicycles and spinning tops for all the children of the world.

They came to Santa’s cottage and Mrs. Claus was so cross! “You promised you’d be back right away,” she scolded Santa. “Everytime you go to visit the Fairy Tale Folk you forget all about time.”

“You are right, always tight,” said Santa mildly. “But listen now to this boy’s tale and you will see what I’ve been about.”

When she had heard David’s story she wept so she had to get an extra handkerchief. Then she cuddled the little bunny in her arms. After a while she fed the bunny and she fed Santa and David too. Then everyone felt better.

Suddenly there was a banging at the cottage door and Patrick Tweedleknees, the oldest dwarf in Santa Land stomped into the room.

“I won’t have it!” he cried to Santa without a word to David or Mrs. Claus and without even taking off his cap. “Enough is enough and I have had enough.”

Santa blew out his cheeks and winked at David. “This is Patrick Tweedleknees who has certain liberties.” he explained. “And takes more. What is it you’ve had enough of now, Patrick?”

“The spiders!” shouted Patrick. “The spiders you brought back last June. Sixty there were then and now there are hundreds of them spinning webs throughout the shops till no one can see what he’s about. It’s –“

“Wait!” cried Santa and he was on his feet. “Hear that, David! Sixty spiders I brought back here last June because everytime they spun a web in their city someone tore it down. Now there are hundreds of them.”

“That’s what I say -” began Patrick.

“Hundreds of spiders can spin thousands of webs,” went on Santa, ignoring Tweedleknees. “And thousands of webs make hundreds of thousands of feet of -”

“Thread!” shouted David, understanding at last. “Then we’ll have our spool of thread!”



“ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!”

Chapter 9

DAVID GOES AFTER A STAR



THE THREAD WENT ROUND AND ROUND

Santa and David explained to Patrick Tweedleknives about the fine thread they must have to break the Gigmy spell. Then off they all went to the toy shops gathering up spiders in big paper bags.

Mrs. Claus stayed in the cottage and David left the white bunny with her because he knew his little sister had always been afraid of spiders.

Patrick Tweedleknives grumbled loudly at the task but it was clear from the start that he would collect the most spiders - so anxious he was to help in the breaking of the evil spell. When they had seventeen bags of spiders they went down to the barn where the reindeer and sled were kept. The stable dwarfs turned out the deer and sent them kicking their heels through the snow - (how they loved it, too - like pampered children who had never before been allowed to get their feet wet!)

Then they emptied the bags of spiders on the floor of the barn and right away the little creatures scurried up the side walls and over the ceiling and in no seconds at all there were wisps of thread dangling in the air as the spiders frantically worked at their webs.

Meanwhile, other dwarfs had rolled in a great spool - almost as large as David himself - and as the wisps of thread were spun the dwarfs caught the ends and wound them around the spool.

David clapped his hands and laughed with joy as the thread went round and round. Then Santa nudged him and they stole out of the barn.

"We must get out before Tweedleknives realizes how many folk I've taken from their Christmas work," he said. Then he put his arm around David's shoulder.

"See," he whispered. "Already we've done one of the impossible!"

But in spite of himself David's hopes began to droop. "How shall we get a star?" he wondered. "Time is so short but even if I had a hundred years I do not see how I could get a star!"

"Look, then," laughed Santa suddenly. "And you'll see how it can be done in less than a day!"

David looked and saw that Santa was pointing in the sky. But, instead of stars in the sky there was a rainbow. And beautiful is a rainbow when seen from Santa Land!

With more colors than you have ever dreamed of and a magic mist about it, too, so it seems to be something you are seeing with your mind's eye and not your real eyes at all.

"You mean -" gasped David, "I should climb the rainbow and pick a star?"

"Can you do it," asked Santa and he looked close at the boy's upturned face, at the open lips and the eyes filled with hope and daring.

"Oh, I will do it," cried David "I will!"

First you must go to the rainbow's beginning," said Santa, "And quick you must be for a rainbow does not stay forever in the sky."

Then Santa ran down in the snow covered fields and caught his very best reindeer, the most fleet-footed of all. "Ride him," he said, leading him to David. "But bring him back safely, or I'll never make my rounds on Christmas Eve."

David leaped on the deer's back and turned the sensitive head towards the start of the rainbow. Away they sped, the deer's hoofs barely touching the ground.

But the further they rode the further away seemed the rainbow. Everytime they climbed a hill David thought, "Surely in the next valley there it will be!" But it never was and on and on they sped until it almost seemed they had covered half the earth.

But then, at last, when the boy was about to drop with fatigue, there it was on top of a hill - a spool of purple and gold and yellow and blue and orange and a dozen magic shades of magic colors.

And out of this wondrous pool arched the rainbow.

Chapter 10

DAVID CLIMBS THE RAINBOW

Before the deer had come to a stop David slid from his back and ran into the wondrous pool of color. Warm it was and beautiful and if David had but one wish in all the world it would have been that his sister Mary might have been there to see with him the start of the rainbow.

Now, quickly, he clasped his hands around the bow and pulled himself up. But what a task! For every twelve inches, he slid six inches back down. His hands ached with holding on and his arms ached with the pulling. After a long while he raised his head to see how far he had yet to go. And that was when he saw the funny little man who sat astride the bow.

The boy stayed perfectly still and stared. And while he stared the little man pushed his peaked hat to the back of his head and wiped his face with a purple-spotted handkerchief.

"It makes me perspire just to watch you," he said with a sigh. "For goodness sake wrap your knees around the bow and use your legs to push with."

David did as he was told and instantly the ache went out of his hands and arms. He grinned shame-facedly and said, "I never thought of that. I was in too much of a hurry, I guess."

"So," said the man, stretching out on the rainbow as easily as you might on a feather bed. "And where are you in such a hurry to get too?"

"Well, please," said David politely. "Tell me first - who are you?"

"Oh," replied the man nonchalantly. "I am the Keeper of the Rainbow."

"Well, then," explained David, who by this time had learned never to be astonished at anything. "I am going to get a star."

The Rainbow Keeper was silent for a moment. Then he sighed and said, "It isn't my business to know your reason for wanting a star but I should tell you that stars are not to be played with."

"Oh, I didn't want -" began David hastily.

But the little man interrupted him. "In fact, you must never, never look on a star except from the earth. If you look at one close up something terrible could happen!"

David gasped. "No one told me that!" he said.

"No one knows," replied the Keeper. "That is one of the reasons I am here."

"But - I must get one," cried David frantically. "I -"

"If you must," said the little man. "Then go ahead. But keep your eyes closed and when you reach a star - wrap it in this handkerchief and do not look at it - ever." He gave David his purple spotted handkerchief. "Hurry now for the stars are beginning to pop out and very soon the rainbow will fade away"

Then he moved aside and David thanked him and climbed past. He closed his eyes and pushed with his legs and pulled



HE SAT RIGHT ON A STAR

with his arms for what seemed hours until at last he could feel the arch flattening out and he knew that he had reached the top.

Never has anyone been so tempted as David now was tempted to open his eyes. He screwed them tight and he ached with the effort. Then he got carefully to his knees and felt above his head. Nothing. He felt to the right and to the left. But there was nothing.

He sat back to get his breath and then he cried out for he had sat right on a star! He felt of it carefully. It didn't have five points, it felt more like a rock - as large as his fist - but it must be a star, he knew.

He wrapped it quickly in the Purple spotted handkerchief and put it in his pocket.

Then with a shout, he stretched out his legs, pushed once with his heels, and went zooming down the rainbow towards the earth.

Chapter 11

THE MERMAID ISLE

David was just in time for as he slid down the rainbow the colors began to fade and dissolve until when he landed on the hill top there was nothing left except a mist.

Now he opened his eyes and looked about for the friendly little Keeper. But he had disappeared with his rainbow, much as a man might wind up his fishing line to go home at night.

For night it was now and David was glad to hear the stomping hoofs of the deer. He climbed on the animal's back and said "Home. now. Home to Santa Land."

Though the trip to the rainbow's beginning had seemed forever, the return was short and joyous. For now David had in his pocket a star and the spiders at Santa Land were spinning a thread and all that remained to break the evil spell was a Zany flower.

Santa was waiting for him by the cottage steps. He wanted to see the star at once but David told him that he was never to look at it or some terrible thing would happen. Santa confessed that was something new he had learned that day

David ran to the house and kissed Mrs. Claus on the cheek. But before he would eat the supper she had fixed him he insisted on seeing his bunny. There she was in a box behind the kitchen stove, huddled in warm wooly blankets and looking at David with such burning hope that he could feel the sobs bursting in his throat.

He whispered to her and petted and hugged her and wasn't ashamed a bit at the tears which rolled down his cheeks.

After he had eaten the mutton and buns and blueberry pie Mrs. Claus had fixed he was sleepy and would have liked to stretch out on the rug and take a nap. But, he said to Santa, "Tell me, please, about the Zany flower."

Santa told him all he knew. "It grows at the bottom of the sea. It is a small plant with very strong leaves and no blossom that I have ever heard of. There is something strange about it - something magic - but I do not know what it is."

"How shall I get to the bottom of the sea?" wondered David aloud.

"After climbing to the top of the sky - the bottom of the sea should be nothing," encouraged Santa, but there was gloom in his eyes for truly he did not know what was to be done.

He sent David to sleep in his own bed and in the early morning he went and woke him. There were shadows under Santa's eyes and it was clear he had spent the whole night through in front of the fire thinking of a way David could get the Zany flower.

"Now," he said, "You must go to the Isle of the Mermaids. They can help you if anyone can. Their isle is in the nearby North seas and easily reached."

David ran into the kitchen and told the bunny goodbye. Then he started out in company with Elmer Smidereen, the elf who was to lead him to the sea. Santa was right - the sea was

nearby - though you never would have suspected it in Santa Land where frozen waste seemed to stretch forever.

At the shore there was a dory and David jumped in and pulled steadily at the oars. "Keep going Nor-Noreast." shouted Elmer. "You can't miss it."

And he didn't miss it for the mermaids were lining the banks of their Isle singing and guiding the little dory ashore. The beautiful creatures surrounded David and he would have been speechless with shyness had he not remembered his purpose.

"Please," he begged. "Can you tell me how to get a Zany flower?"

They fell back in alarm and looked at him in grief.

The one said. "There is only one way, fair-haired one. You must ride a manfish to the bottom of the sea!"



Chapter 12

DAVID RIDES A MANFISH

David was stunned when the mermaids told him he must ride a manfish to the bottom of the sea.

“What is a manfish?” he asked. “And how could I ride him?”

“A manfish,” explained a lovely maid, “is the only creature that can descend to the very floor of the ocean.”

“Have you never seen one?” cried another mermaid. “They often swim here to sun themselves on our rocks. Wait and you will see.”

So David sat on the shore surrounded by the maids and scanned the seas for fish. But hours passed and none appeared. The maids grew tired and dove deep into the sea to refresh themselves.

Then, suddenly, from far off shore there was a cry and David saw one mermaid waving frantically. All gathered on shore and watched as the pretty creature swam to the isle. When she came to the rocks she was holding an enormous fish by one fin.

“Here,” she cried to David, “Here is your manfish!”

What a creature! His mouth was twice as large as his eyes were like those of a man. David waded into the water and crouched beside the fish.

“Please, will you take me to the bottom of the sea?” he begged.

“He can’t talk,” explained the mermaid. “But he understands.”

And truly the Manfish looked at David with such clear and understanding eyes that the boy was filled with hope. “I must have a Zany flower, he whispered. “Please help me.”

The manfish stayed quite still and blinked his eyes. Then the mermaid said, “Climb on his back, Fair-haired one, and let us see what happens.”

David’s legs were trembling so he was quite glad to climb on the broad back of the manfish. No sooner had he settled himself than the fish turned and began swimming away from the isle. The mermaids waved and cheered but David was too frightened to wave back. He hung on with all his strength and a good thing, too, because, in a few minutes, the manfish was cutting through the sea almost faster than the eye could follow.

The water was freezing and sometimes David was submerged to his shoulders but never once did his head go under. His hands were stiff with the cold and with hanging on and he was dizzy with speed but just as he thought he must surely fall off, the fish slowed and began swimming in a small circle.

“Now what?” wondered David. And then, with a shock, he knew. It must be here, in this very spot, hundreds of miles from any land, that the Zany flower grew. “And, if the manfish dives now,” thought David. “I will surely drown.”

Then he noticed that the fish was opening and closing his huge mouth and in an instant the lad knew what he had to do. He slid over the head of the fish and as the creature obligingly opened his mouth, David slipped in.

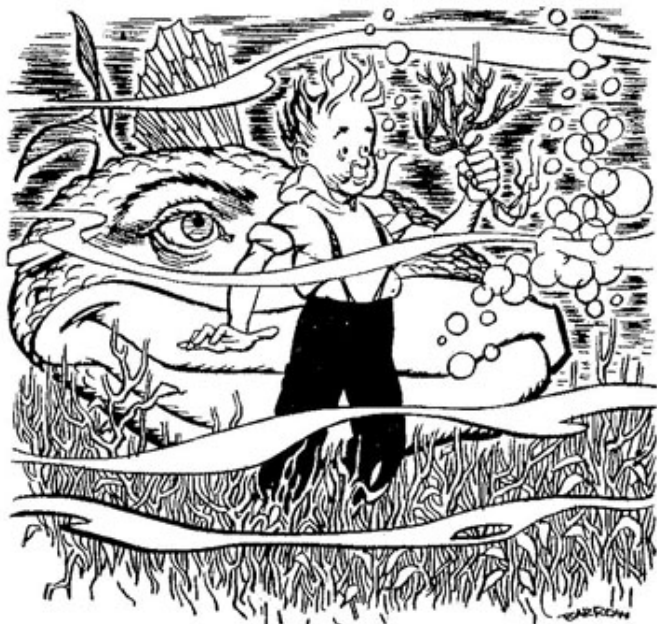
How dark and weird it was in the mouth of the fish, but warm. And there was air, too, for the fish could carry enough air in his mouth to last him in his dives to the floor of the ocean.

It was a long, long dive and even in the mouth of the fish, David could sense the water rushing by. Then there was a thump and at last all was still.

“We have reached the bottom” thought David and he took a big breath of air and held it. Sure enough, the fish opened his mouth and David stepped out.

For a moment he could see nothing. Then he felt his feet pressing against ocean moss. He looked down and saw strange weed growing all about him. Quickly he snatched up one by the roots.

“This is it!” he thought joyously. “This is the Zany flower that will break the spell!”



“THIS IS THE ZANY FLOWER!”

Chapter 13

DAVID RETURNS TO THE GIGMIES

Holding the Zany flower tight in his fist David slipped once again into the open mouth of the friendly manfish who had carried him to the bottom of the sea. Instantly the fish rose to the surface and David climbed out and took his place on the back of the fish.

The ride back to the mermaid isle was very swift. And how good it was to see the beautiful creatures sitting on the rocks waiting to greet him.

"I have it! I have the flower!" shouted David as he slipped from the fish's back and waded ashore.

"Let us see it!" cried the maids. But when they had examined the crumpled leaves in David's fist they screwed up their faces with disappointment. "It is only a weed!" they said. "What can you want with such a thing?"

"I will use it to break an evil spell that holds my sister," said David. "And I care not what it looks like."

"But, mind now," warned one of the mermaids. "It is an evil thing itself. You must never let pepper come near the Zany flower."

"Why not?" asked David.

"I know not what will happen," replied the maid. "But something terrible you may be sure for it is a wicked weed and that is the story they tell of it."

David promised not to let pepper come near the flower. Then he thanked the maids and the manfish for their help and set out again in his little dory for Santa Land.

It was far into the night when he returned to Santa's cottage but the lights were on and Santa and Mrs. Claus were waiting for him. Mrs. Claus had the little white bunny on her lap and David knelt beside her.

"Dear little Mary," he said, hugging the white pet. "Tomorrow the spell will be broken and we will soon be home again."

The bunny nuzzled her nose against David's hand and if Santa hadn't been there the boy might have burst into tears. For even though he had gotten the thread and the star and the flower which would save her, he couldn't help be miserable for all the sorrow he had brought upon his golden-haired sister.

The next morning Santa gave him the spool of thread which the spiders had woven.

"How heavy is it!" cried David, lifting it to his shoulder.

"Why not?" laughed Santa. "It is 800,000 miles long!"

Then he put David and the white bunny on his own private cloud and the boy set sail for the Gigmy castle. It was quite a job, when he got there, to carry the bunny and the thread and the other gifts all up the mountain to the castle. Finally, he put the bunny on the ground.

"Follow me," he whispered. "Don't be frightened of anything. I will take care of you."

Little did he know that very soon he would not be able to do anything for her at all!

As he entered the castle Gigmies swarmed around him. Among them David recognized evil creature who had cast the spell over Mary.

"Your spell will soon be broken," David told him, "For I have fulfilled the demands of your king and he will return my sister to me."

"We shall see," smirked the horrid Gigmy. "In fact, all the Gigmies of all the world gathered here to see whether bunny will be a little girl or a white hippopotamus."

At that moment the king himself appeared.

"Here," said David, his legs shaking with suspense. "Here are the things you required to break your spell." He held out the star (which was carefully wrapped in the purple-spotted handkerchief) and the flower and the spool of thread. "Now, please, may I have my sister again?"

The Gigmy burst into laughter. "Hold him!" he ordered. Instantly the Gigmies clutched at David and held him while the king called his huge ugly dog from the dining hall.

"Get her!" roared the king. The horrid animal sprang at the bunny, but the little creature darted away in a frenzy of terror. Then David looked on in horror as all the Gigmies roared, and the dog chased the wretched bunny around the castle.



"GET HER!" ROARED THE KING.

A LOOK AT THE ZANY FLOWER

“Run! Run!” screamed David as the bunny scurried up the stairs and down the corridors and through the long rooms of the castle. “Let me go!” He roared at the Gigmies.

But it was no use. They held him by the arms and legs and he could not move. But he could tell by the wild barking of the dog just what was happening. For, wherever the bunny ran, there was the dog close behind. At last the little creature could run no more and the flung herself against David’s helpless legs. The dog pounced on her and triumphantly carried her to the king.

“Wretched boy!” said the king to David. “Did you truly think a Gigmy spell could be so easily broken?”

“But, the star!” cried David, crying with rage. “And the flower and the thread! You said if I brought them you would break the spell!”

“And lose my white hippopotamus?” laughed the king. “How foolish that would be! Now I have your gifts and a hippopotamus, too - the only white hippopotamus in all the world.”

The Gigmies nodded eagerly and laughed at David’s misery. They dragged him into the courtyard. “See!” they shouted. “We have everything prepared for the day your sister will turn into a hippopotamus.”

Indeed they had! There was a tiny wire cage and next to it was a huge pool of water surrounded by a great iron fence.

“In four days,” said the king, “your sister will become a hippopotamus and we will keep her in this pool to amuse us forevermore.”

With that he put the little bunny into the small cage and locked the door. The poor bunny crouched against the ground quivering with terror.



BUT HE MUST TAKE A CHANCE.

“Wait!” cried David, biting and scratching at the hands that held him. “Just wait until Santa hears of this. He will destroy everyone of you!”

“That reminds me,” said the king, calmly. “I have sent an invitation to Santa Claus to be here on Christmas Eve when the great event occurs. He should find it amusing.”

Then the king turned away. “Let us go now to the dining hall and examine your gifts. I am very curious to see what you have brought me.”

There was nothing the boy could do. The Gigmies pushed and pulled and carried him to the hall where a great feast was waiting for them. There were roast turkeys and plump pigs and pies three feet around and gallon jugs of wine for each Gigmy. The center of the table was bare except for a small bowl of water.

“That,” said the king, pointing at the bowl, “is for the Zany flower.”

The Gigmies gave David a shove and he fell against the table. With the angry tears rolling down his cheeks, he placed the flower in the bowl of water. It was only a weed and it looked very ugly there on the great table. But the Gigmies thought it beautiful. They sniffed it and touched it and stared at it for long moments.

“What a thing!” cried one admiring, “I imagine it is the only Zany flower to be found above the sea.”

“But there is something magic about it, they say” whispered another Gigmy. “I see nothing magic here, What could it be?”

No one knew. That is, no one knew except David who now gripped his fists in his pockets for he was suddenly faint with excitement.

The Gigmies sat down and began to gulp their wine and swallow whole chunks of turkey and pig. David stood very quietly at the table where they had pushed him. And as he stared at the table his eyes found the pepper shaker and he was remembering the words of the mermaid:

“Never let pepper come near the Zany flower!”

What would happen he wondered? Would they all be destroyed - himself as well as the Gigmies? But, he must take a chance! For unless he did something - anything - he and his sister were lost forever.

In another instant, the boy’s hand shot out, grasped a pepper shaker and hurled it into the very heart of the Zany flower.

Chapter 15

THE MAGIC OF THE ZANY FLOWER

When David threw the pepper shaker into the bowl holding the Zany flower the lid came off and pepper showered every leaf. Then a remarkable thing happened. The Zany flower began to grow!

The stem grew tall and each leaf pushed out further and further, growing larger and larger until, in a moment, the amazing Zany flower was spreading over the banquet table, pushing aside the astounded Gigmies and pressing against the windows and walls and ceiling of the room.

“Stop it! Stop it!” roared the king, leaping frantically from one side of the room to the other to escape the flower that now had grown larger than an oak tree.

“Throw it out!” screamed the Gigmies.

But it was too late. No one could possibly have seized the now gigantic leaves and the huge, pushing stems. Just in time David and the Gigmies rushed from the hail. The walls of the dining room crashed behind them and the ceiling came down on the richly laden banknote table.

“Into the courtyard!” shrieked the king, dashing out of the castle. “The whole building is going to collapse!”

Indeed, he was right. The monstrous Zany flower pushed down wall after wall as it grew and grew until it was pushing against the highest ceiling of the highest room.

The Gigmies huddled in the courtyard and watched in disbelief of their beautiful castle crumpled and crashed before their eyes! Not till the last beam had fallen did the magic plant stop growing. Then it stood a huge and ugly tree waving in the midst of the wreckage.

David ran to the little cage which held the white bunny. He tried to open it but he could not break the lock. He tore at the bars which caged the terrified creature but before he could loosen them the king Gimgy snatched at his hands.

“You will pay a terrible price for this,” screamed the king, yanking David to his feet.

“You did not keep your word” shouted David, though his legs were trembling with terror. “Break the spell which holds my sister or even worse things will happen to you!”

He did not know where he got the courage to speak this way and he surely did not know what further harm he could cause these evil creature.

“But, surely,” he thought. “Santa still will come in time to save Mary.”

But the Gigmies, for the moment, had forgotten the bunny who was to turn into the hippopotamus in so short a time. Filled with rage they swarmed around David, urging their king to kill him, to tear him apart, to throw him from the top of the mountain into the sea that roared on the rocks far below.

“No, no! We shall have sport with him,” declared the king.

“Good,” exclaimed a Gimgy. “Shall we turn him into a worm and have him crawl the earth for the rest of his days?”



“YOU FORGOT YOUR STAR,” HE WHISPERED.

“Better to change him into a mongrel dog so the boys will stone him wherever he goes,” offered another.

“Or a rat who must live forever in a hole,” suggested another.

David bit his lips hard to keep back the tears. His knees shook with fright as he expected any minute to be turned into a worm or a dog or a rat or something even more hideous. But he put his hands in his pocket and glared at the Gigmies as fiercely as he could.

And just at that moment the hand in his right pocket fastened around a handkerchief and inside the handkerchief there was a hard lump.

“The star!” he thought. And he was filled with intense joy for he remembered the rainbow keeper had told him never to look upon the star or some terrible thing would happen.

He pulled the star wrapped in the purple-spotted handkerchief from his pocket and held it toward the king. “You forgot your star,” he whispered, too agitated to speak out loud. “Here it is. Open and see.”

The king snatched it. “We’ll have a look,” he said. “And afterwards have our sport with the boy.”

And with every Gimgy peering over his shoulder, the king slowly unknotted the purple-spotted handkerchief that held the star.

Chapter 16
NEVER LOOK AT A STAR



"HERE I AM! COME AND GET ME!"

David put both fists over his eyes and waited with thumping heart while the Gigmies unwrapped the star.

"What a way to tie up a star," grumbled the king as he fumbled with the knot. "One would have thought the boy would wear it on his cap instead of in his pocket."

"It is very small," said one. "Perhaps it isn't a star at all but just a trick to turn our minds from him."

"It feels like a rock," said the king. "If - there! I have it!"

The Gigmies cried out in awe and admiration. They gasped with delight and shouted, "Let me hold it! Let me!" Oh, how David yearned to open his eyes! For what a thing it was to have carried a star in his pocket all these days and never once to have laid eyes on it.

And where was the awful thing that the rainbow keeper had told him would happen if anyone looked on a star? The Gigmies were far from harmed. They were overcome with joy. If only he could take one little peek, just once, between his fingers, if only -

Then, it happened!

"It's too bright!" stammered the king. "Too bright and shining. When I look away I can see nothing!"

"It is as if dust from the star had blown into our eyes," muttered the others in bewilderment.

Then the king roared. "It is more than that! We are blinded!"

"Blinded by the star! Put it away - cover it quickly!" screamed the Gigmies. And they reached out and covered the star with their coats and hats and handkerchiefs and anything they could lay hands on.

Then David heard that they had covered the star he dared to open his eyes. What a sight there was! The evil creatures

stumbling around, knocking into one another, falling over their own feet, walking into trees. And the king, along with all the rest, scratching at his sightless eyes, tearing his hair in fury and screaming with rage.

"Find the boy!" was the sudden cry that went up and sent David living behind a tree to watch with incredulous eyes as the furious Gigmies stared about the courtyard, reaching with their clawing hands for the terrified boy.

Then David saw the third gift which he had brought to the Gigmy king. There it lay, forgotten, in the courtyard, a huge spool of thread 800,000 miles long. In a mad rush of courage, the boy left his hiding place and ran to the spool. He snatched at one end of the thread and began running round and round the courtyard. As he ran he screamed, "Here I am! Come and get me!"

The Gigmies stumbled after the voice and not one of them suspected what was happening. The truth was that as David ran he was winding the spider thread round and round and round until the blind Gigmies were caught in a hopeless tangle. The more they fought to free themselves the more completely they became enmeshed in the fine web, twining it again and again around themselves and around each other.

Now, although one fine strand of spider thread is not so very strong, hundreds and thousands of strands are very strong indeed.

But still the Gigmies struggled, some pulling one way and some another. Like a huge string ball that is thrown back and forth across a street, they bounced around the mountain top, screaming with rage. At last they crashed against the cage which held the little white bunny. As the cage overturned the creature darted out and scurried to David.

"Come little sister!" cried the boy gathering her in his arms.

"Now surely the king is ready to break his evil spell." But he shook with anxiety for he knew that already it was Christmas Eve and in a very few minutes more his sister would become a white hippopotamus forevermore.

"Now," he cried to the Gigmy king. "Will you break your evil spell?"

Just as he spoke a terrible thing happened. The Gigmies began slipping down the side of the mountain. Faster and faster, like a giant snowball, they stumbled, straight towards the sea which pounded on the rocks far below.

Chapter 17

A MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL

“Stop! Stop!” screamed David, standing at the top of the mountain and watching the Gigmies rolling towards the sea. “Oh, hang on!” And he jumped up and down in a frenzy of terror lest the Gigmies perish before the spell which held his sister could be broken.

What a screaming there was! Each Gigmy, slipping and tumbling down the mountain side bellowed and screeched until the hills and valleys all around were alive with the frightful noise.

Then, suddenly, above the screaming there was another noise - sleigh bells ringing! David caught his breath with joy to see Santa Claus come riding down from the sky, standing in his toy-packed sled and holding the reins of his eight reindeer.

“Oh, Santa! Oh, Santa!” cried David and that is all that he could say. But it wasn't necessary for him to say another word because Santa could see in one glance what was happening. Without a word he pulled David and the white bunny into the sled beside him and then he sped down the mountainside after the Gigmies.

Swifter than sound they went and just in time, too, for the great ball of Gigmies was on the very edge of the sea when Santa leaned suddenly from his sled and snatched at the tail end of the spiders' web which bound the creatures.

Then away into the sky he rode with David and the bunny beside him and dangling from the sled was the ball of thread with the fifty evil Gigmies bound up in it.

“Speak now!” shouted Santa and he didn't look jolly but solemn and severe. “Break your spell before another mile is passed!”

But the evil Gigmy king still refrained. “What will happen if I don't?” he cried.

“I will drop you into the sea.” warned Santa.

“And suppose I do break the spell, what then?” asked the creature.

“Then, you and all your mates may soar among the clouds form evermore,” promised Santa.

This sounded good to the king so with a sigh he cried. “Mayis, Maydo! Maytoe, Maynos!” And straightway the little white bunny turned into David's golden haired sister, Mary.

How they hugged one another, crying and laughing and talking and kissing all at one time. Santa watched from the corner of this eye and could hardly keep his mind on his driving job - it was so good to see brother and sister reunited.

Finally, he said, “It is Christmas Eve and I have far to go. How would you like to travel with me tonight through all the lands of the world?”

The children shouted their approval and then they clung to each other and to the sides of the sled as the swift journey began.

Truly, they visited every land and in every home where a child slept they paused to leave a load of Christmas gifts. It was many hours later when at last, as the sun began peeping over the mountains, they came to their own home in Elm street in the town of Mogdor.

As they climbed from the sled David said, “Why did you tell the Gigmies they could soar among the clouds forevermore?”

Santa laughed. “It is true,” he said. “As you soon will see. Here is my gift for you and Mary.”

He handed them a most enormous kite. The string was made of spider web, 800,000 miles long! And the tail was made of - Gigmies! Santa had cast a spell of his own and the wicked creatures had become a rag-tail of a kite - to soar forever among the clouds, just as he had promised.

“And now a Merry Christmas!” cried Santa, taking off once again in his wonderful sled.

“Oh, Merry Christmas,” cried David and Mary, waving. Then they ran into their own front door, shouting as they ran, “Merry Christmas! Oh, a Merry Christmas to all!”

The End.



THEY SHOUTED AS THEY RAN, "MERRY CHRISTMAS."

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