



Santa and the Good Boy

By Lucrece Hudgins

Chapter 1

MR. SLEEK'S EVIL PLOT

At the very top of world is the North Pole and at the North Pole, as everyone knows, lives Santa Claus.

At the bottom of the world is the South Pole and there, as very few people know, lives - or, used to live - Mr. Sleek. It is very odd that so few people have ever heard the name of Mr. Sleek for, in his time, he got around the world quite a bit and wherever he went Trouble went, too.

Everything that Santa Claus is, Mr. Sleek was the opposite. Where Santa is fat and jolly and kind, Mr. Sleek was lanky and sour and mean.

Yes. Mr. Sleek hated people and particularly he hated children. Why this should be so I do not know. It may be because Mr. Sleek himself was never a child and did not understand children's ways.

He himself said it was because children were bad. "They make too much noise." He snarled. "They take up too much room. They eat too much and cry too much and laugh too much and they never, never, never think of anyone except themselves."

Now, it used to be, a very long time ago, before the events of this story, that Mr. Sleek lived with thousands of evil fairies called sprouts and you will see what a wicked man he was when I tell you some of the things he did.

He sent his sprouts all over the world to tie knots in little girls' pigtail and tear holes in little boys' pants so their mothers would be angry and scold them. The sprouts also stole marbles and baseballs and broke up drums and pushed out the eyes of doll babies.

They sprinkled salt in the ice cream at birthday parties and dumped ants in the sandwiches at picnics.

And because the sprouts could travel about invisibly or take on any shape they wished they were never caught or even suspected.

Mr. Sleek was always busy at these evil things but he was his very busiest at Christmas time for then he had to work very hard indeed to spread misery in children's hearts. He sent his sprouts crawling into mailboxes to tear up letters children wrote to Santa. He put frogs in throats of choir boys so they couldn't sing Christmas carols. He stopped up chimneys with rags and pillows so that Santa couldn't climb down. He poured boiling water on winter lakes so the ice would melt and children couldn't use their new skates.

But, as I said, all of this was long, long ago and before Mr. Sleek's spirit was broken. But broken it finally was and this is the story of how it happened.

One day Mr. Sleek called in his ugliest and meanest sprout whose name was Jeffrey Jeremiah.

"Jeffrey," said Mr. Sleek, "I have an Idea that will forever wipe out gladness from the hearts of children."

"Tell me, tell me!" cried Jeffrey eagerly. "How can we do that?"

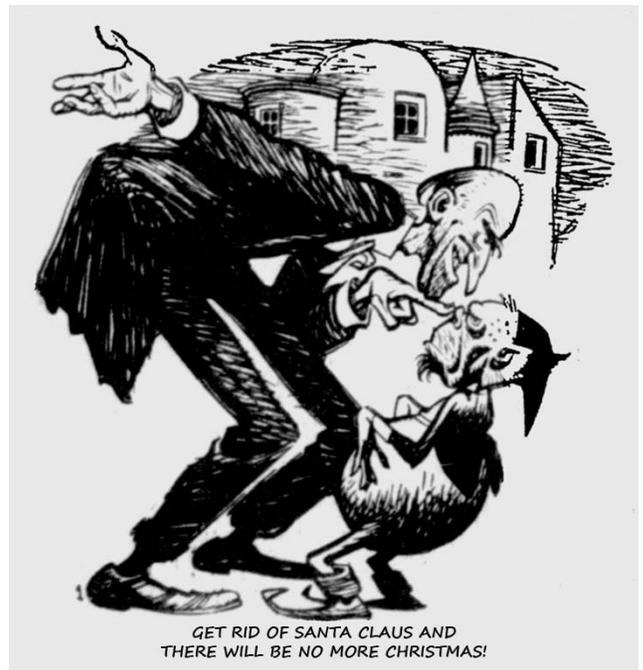
"It is very easily done," replied Mr. Sleek. "We have simply to get rid of Santa Claus and there will be no more Christmas for children."

"But Santa Claus!" protested Jeffrey. "He is very powerful!"

"He is a goody-goody and no more powerful than I," retorted Mr. Sleek. "I shall get rid of him and I shall take over Santa Land and forever afterwards I myself will drive Santa's sleigh on Christmas Eve."

"And what will be in the sleigh if not toys to make children laugh with joy?" wondered Jeffrey.

"Ashes." snapped Mr. Sleek. "Ashes and switches for every child in the world on Christmas morning!"



Chapter 2

MR. SLEEK BARGAINS WITH SANTA

Christmas was coming and in Santa Land there was not an idle creature!

How the elves and fairies and brownies sang and laughed and whistled at their work! For was not this the happiest time of the year for folk who loved toys and children more than anything in the world?

Old Santa himself was on a nearby hill trying out new sleds. He settled himself on each tiny sled, waved a red mittened hand and, as the elves roared with delight, went flying down the hillside.

“Perfect!” cried the elves. And each time Santa nodded and said “Perfect!”

When the sled testing was over Santa went to watch the kite makers who were trying out the kites Santa was to take to the boys and girls on Christmas morning.

There were thousands of them dancing and skipping in the sky.

“Beautiful” murmured Santa admiringly. So graceful and sturdy!”

But, just as he spoke a strange thing happened. The kites began dropping out of the sky! The elves ran and reeled in the string and played out the string but it did no good: the kites kept right on drifting to the earth.

Then the sky itself suddenly darkened and the wind died away and there was a terrible stillness everywhere.

“What can It be?” cried the startled elves



Santa’s cheeriness was gone. “It Is Evil.” he whispered. “When the sky turns dark at noon Evil has come to Santa Land.”

At that moment a swarm of buzzards dropped out of the sky and on each buzzard sat a bad fairy called a sprout. On the fiercest buzzard of all sat Mr. Sleek, who had come to drive Santa from his land.

“What is it you want?” asked Santa fearfully, for he knew Mr. Sleek was Bad and carried Badness with him wherever he went. “Say what you have to say and go away from here.”

“Ho!” cried Mr. Sleek. “Don’t be in such a hurry for I have come to stay. I am going to make ashes and switches to take to children on Christmas day.”

Then Mr. Sleek set his sprouts to work in Santa’s shops burning toys to make ashes and cutting up toys for paddles and switches.

The gleeful sprouts stacked the sleds Santa had been testing and set them afire. They stamped on beautiful half finished dolls. They smashed the kites.

When Santa’s outraged fairies tried to stop them the sprouts laughed and threw magic dust in their eyes to blind the little fairies with tears. Then they dropped a net on the good fairies’ heads and tied them in a heap on the ground.

“See,” said Mr. Sleek to Santa. “Your good times are over. You cannot stop me from having my way.”

“Why do you do this?” asked Santa. “Why do you wish to hurt children so?”

Because children are Bad,” replied Mr. Sleek. “They do not deserve the things you give them.”

“Children are good” protested Santa angrily.

“Ha!” scoffed Mr. Sleek. “Tell me the name of one good child and I will leave your land.”

Now Mr. Sleek hadn’t meant to say that at all - it had just slipped out in his excitement - but before he could take it back Santa cried:

“That is a bargain!”

Even a bad creature like Mr. Sleek must keep a bargain, even a bargain he hadn’t meant to make. Besides he was too proud to back down, so he nodded.

Then Santa said, “Stop your sprouts from their work and if I do not return in 24 hours with the name of a good child then you can have the whole of Santa Land.”

Mr. Sleek nodded glumly again. He was disappointed because he would like to have started work at once on his ashes and switches.

But he was not too glum because he was quite sure that Santa could never find a truly good child in the whole wide world.

Chapter 3

SANTA HUNTS FOR A GOOD CHILD

Santa Claus took off his red suit and shaved his whiskers and then, in disguise, went to the Land of Mizoo.

He went to the capital of the land, thinking "It is a good county and a good capital and surely there will be many good children there. I will have no trouble finding a boy or girl who will save Santa Land from Mr. Sleek.

First, he went to a playground but there he saw several boys pouring fresh yellow paint down the slides and tying knots in the swing ropes so no one could possibly use them.

Then he went in a school yard but there he found group of girls making fun of a little girl whose dress was torn and who had no coat nor lunch nor even enough courage to defend herself.

"Dear me," thought Santa, "I am not looking in the right places. Perhaps I had better go to the President and see if he can help me for I have very little time."

So he went to the President of Mizoo and said: "My name is Nick Olas and I am wondering if there is a good boy or a good girl in all your wonderful country."

"All our children are good," replied the President primly. "I will find the best children we have and you will see for yourself."

So the President called all the schools and the schools selected their best children and sped them to the President's office.

"Here they are," said the President proudly. "Talk to them and see how good they are."

Santa was very happy to have found so many good children so quickly. He went up to the first child - a girl with very wise eyes.

"Do you help your mother with her work?" asked Santa.

"Of course," said the girl. "I make my own bed and pick up my clothes and am careful with my toys."

"And do you get good marks at school?"

"Always A," said the girl. "I know the answer to everything."

"Tell me, then," asked Santa gently. "Is there a Santa Claus?"

The girl laughed knowingly. "Of course not! That's just a joke!"

Santa shook his head sadly and went to the next child - a boy with a sharp nose.

"Why were you chosen as a good boy?" asked Santa.

"Because," explained the boy proudly. "I work after school and on Saturdays and make lots and lots of money."

"What do you do with the money?" asked Santa.

"I buy my clothes. And toys and ice cream sodas and go to the movies"



"And do you ever give any of your money away? Or buy someone else a toy or a soda or a movie?"

"Certainly not," retorted the boy. "I make the money and it is all for me."

Santa went to the next child, a little girl with glittering eyes.

"I am here," she said, "because I have such beautiful manners. I never forgot to say thank you and excuse me and please. I always keep my voice low and I never grab things. I am very polite with my playmates."

"And do you love your playmates?" asked Santa.

"There are very few people worth loving," replied the girl. "My mother says it is enough if I am polite."

Santa's sorrow grew and grew as he went down the line, for every child was the same. Each one was smart and diligent and polite and obedient but each had a heart of stone.

When he had finished with the last one he turned to the President and said, "I am sorry but the one I am looking for is not here."

"How stupid you are!" cried President. "In all the world you could find no better children than these!"

But Santa did not hear because he had already gone away.

His heart was very heavy for he had begun to wonder if perhaps Mr. Slick was not right and there was no such thing as a good boy or girl in the world.

"And if I do not find one within the next few hours," he thought miserably, "there will never be another Christmas."

Chapter 4

SANTA FINDS TOM CLOVER

Santa searched the streets of Mizoo and wherever there were children he stopped to ask questions hoping each time that here at last he would find a child who was truly good.

“Beat it old man!” cried a group of boys skating on a pond. “We have no time to talk to you.”

“What a funny looking man you are!” shrieked some girls who were playing on the steps of a church. And they sang:

“Go away, Mr. Boo,

“We don’t like you!”

Then they threw back their heads and screamed with laughter.

Indeed Santa’s heart now was filled with sorrow but still he thought, “Surely, surely there is a good child somewhere. Why have I failed to find him?”

Suddenly he came upon two women arguing in the street.

One of the women was filled with anger and her voice was tense with fury. “He is a wicked, wicked boy!” she screamed so loudly that people could hear her half a block away.

“You are wrong,” retorted the other and she was angry, too, but quieter. “He is a good boy and what if he did take one of your pies? Do you miss it so much?”

“I can report him to the police you know,” screamed the first woman. “They would lock him up for good!”

“He is a good boy,” repeated the other calmly. “And will never go to jail!”

She turned away then and hastened up the street. Santa followed and took her by the arm. “Did you say you have a good boy?” he asked and he was desperate for he knew this was his last chance.

“Oh, sir,” cried the woman, almost in tears. “I do! My Tom is good - good - and I don’t care what the others say!”

“What about the pies?” asked Santa. “What about the lady’s pies?”

“The pies were sitting on her back porch - dozens of them - cooling. She was going to take them to the church. Tom took one.” The mother clasped her hands anxiously. “But not for himself! For a beggar man on the corner! How could I let her call him wicked for that? It was a mistake but surely not wicked!”

“Could I see your son?” asked Santa and he was suddenly filled with hope.

“Come with me,” said the woman. “I have left him at home, cooking the evening meal. He is good and helpful. You will see.”

She took Santa to the edge of town and into her one room house. It was cold within and the floors were bare and there was very little furniture. As soon as they entered the woman sniffed and ran to the stove.

“The soup is scorched!” she cried. “And the beets have boiled away!”



HE KNEW HE HAD FOUND THE CHILD WHO COULD SAVE CHRISTMAS

Then the poor mother was ashamed to look at Santa because she had told him her son was good and was cooking the evening meal. Just then the door burst open and a black haired boy with shining eyes banged into the kitchen.

“Oh, Tom! You told me you would watch while I was gone!” wailed the mother.

Tom Clover was filled with remorse. “I went to get some wood for the stove,” he explained unhappily.

“And what took you so long?”

“There were some musicians on the corner. Oh, Mother, they played beautiful music! I forgot the cooking.”

“And what of the wood?”

“I forgot the wood,” said Tom with downcast eyes.

There was a long, long silence in the kitchen. Then Santa said: “Do you study hard and get good grades in school?”

“No sir,” said Tom. “I mean - I try to study hard but my grades are not always good.”

“And what about your friends - do you fight with other boys?” The mother sighed and the boy sighed and then the boy cried, “Sure, I fight. A fellow has to fight sometimes, doesn’t he?” He turned to his mother. “How could I take care of you if I were not a fighter?” Suddenly he put his arms around her and whispered, “I’m sorry about dinner. I’ll go to the store and buy you a sandwich with my paper money and I am not hungry at all.”

The mother kissed him and said to Santa, “Please understand. He’s forgetful and careless and rough but - oh, sir, he is gentle and kind.”

“Yes,” said Santa softly. “He has a tender heart.”

And he was filled with joy for he knew he had found the child at last who could save Christmas for all the world.

Chapter 5

MR. SLEEK DECIDES TO TEST TOM

Santa was filled with joy. He put his hands on Tom's shoulders and said, "You are a good boy, son."

The black-haired boy looked worried. "I am rough and tough," he replied. "I am the toughest boy in Mizoo, I think, and I should hate to have any of the kids hear you say that I am good."

Tom's mother gasped but Santa smiled and nodded. "You have to be tough to get along in the world. I am glad you are tough"

Then he said: "I must go now for I have a long, long trip to make and only a handful of minutes left." But as he went out the door he turned again and said, "Tell me, Tom. Is there a Santa Claus?"

The boy stuck his hands in his pockets. "Sure," he said. "Sure, there's a Santa Claus, but -" His voice trailed off and he look at the floor unhappily.

"But what?" asked Santa gently.

"Well - he never comes to our house."

His mother put her arm around him and smiled at Santa. "We are poor," she explained. "We live on the edge of the town and I do not think Santa can find our house."

"I think he will find it this year," said Santa softly and he disappeared in the dark.

Out in the stormy darkness Santa took off his disguise and put on his old red suit and rubbed snow on his cheeks and chin so that, his whiskers grew back again.

Then he cupped his hands around his mouth and whistled. The sound travelled across the field, then up and up and up, through the falling snow almost to the very stars. When it finally died away there was another sound - tinkling bells! - low at first, then louder and louder until suddenly eight reindeer pulling a large red sleigh slid out of the sky.

Santa leaped into the sleigh and took the reins. "Fly!" he cried. "Fly away!"

Meanwhile, in Santa Land, Mr. Sleek stood outside Santa's cottage. "Three more minutes," he shouted, "and the toys will begin to burn!"

"How wicked you are!" cried Mrs. Claus, clasping her hands fearfully and swallowing her tears.

Mr. Sleek shrugged and called to his sprouts, the wicked fairies who were waiting with torches and hatchets to set fire to the workshops and chop up the toys. The Santa Land folk huddled together and strained to hear the sound of Santa's bells.

"Ashes and switches we'll make for the children," screamed Mr. Sleek in a frenzy. "Lay on the fire, sprouts, and the world will never have Christmas again!"

But as the sprouts leaped to their task the good Santa Land elves and fairies screamed "Stop! Stop!" and threw themselves on the sprouts.

And Mrs. Claus, suddenly hearing the sound of bells in the sky, screamed, too, "Stop! Remember your bargain!"

"The bargain is kept!" retorted Mr. Sleek, who had not heard the bells. "For the 24 hours Is up this minute and Santa Land is mine."

But even as he spoke Santa's sled dropped out of the sky and Santa himself stood before the evil creature. .

"Leave my land," cried Santa. "For you have promised and even an evil thing must keep his word."

"What!" screamed Mr. Sleek. "Do you imagine you have found a child in the world who is good?"

"I have," said Santa. "Tom Clover is his name and he lives in the one room house on the edge of Mizoo."

Then angry indeed was Mr. Sleek! He turned red with fury and his bald head glistened with sweat and noises sputtered in his throat.

"I don't believe it" he finally roared. "Is this Tom Clover - this Tom Clover of Mizoo - is he brave? Is he honest? Is he clever and gentle and kind?"

"He is all of that and more, said Santa.

"There is no such child!" said Mr. Sleek. "I shall test him and see. If he is not all of these things I shall destroy him and I shall return and have my way with you."

"Go," replied Santa calmly. "Test him and see."

But, though his voice was calm, he was filled with alarm and he thought, "What if I have choose wrong?"



THERE IS NO SUCH CHILD! I SHALL TEST HIM AND SEE!

Chapter 6

TOM CLOVER PLANS A CHRISTMAS TREE

Meantime, it was the Christmas Season in Mizoo and no one in all the town suspected there might not be any Christmas that year or any year again.

The storekeepers filled their windows with miles of ribbon candy and the florists sold thousands of holly wreathes and mistletoe branches.

Red ribbon streamers and tone of tinsel strung from lamp posts, crossed and crisscrossed above the streets.

Men spent hours cleaning their chimneys so Santa could safely slide through and repairing broken slate on their roof tops lest Santa's reindeer hurt their hooves.

Women met in committees to decide who would have coffee waiting at the hearthsides for Santa and who would have doughnuts and who would have fresh apple pie. And they knitted all day long red mittens and wide red scarves so that Santa would have them when his own became wet in the snow.

Children hovered with expectancy.

"I am going to stay awake all night and see him when he comes." boasted Ned Tulane to his friends in school.

"You can't do that." said Susie Pringle. "My mother says Santa Claus make himself invisible if he chooses so that none can see him at all."

"I don't care if I can't see him." shouted George Magee. "Just so he leaves me a two-wheel bicycle and a model airplane."

Then all the children I talked at once about what Santa was to bring. A curly haired doll for Peggy, a sled for Joe, skates for Howard, a nurse's costume for Ann, an umbrella and purse for Nancy.

What a mountain of toys they expected!

But one child was silent. Little Tom Clover, the black haired boy from the edge of towns kept his hands in his pockets and whistled a kind of tuneless tune.

Then Ned Tulane said. "What is Santa bringing you, Tom?"

George Magee shouted, "Probably nothing at all! He would never go in that dumb house of yours anyway!"

"A football." replied Tom. "And an automobile to get in. A bow and arrow, a bag of marbles, a cowboy suit, an air gun, and a dozen books!"

The children howled. "What a joke!" they cried. "What a dream!" Tom turned away and the tears were in his throat. "They'll never know anyway," he thought "They'll never find out it wasn't so."

Just then the teacher came into the room. "Children, children!" she exclaimed. "I have wonderful news! The President is giving a new fur coat and a green silk dress and a pair of patent leather shoes to the mother of the child who has the prettiest Christmas tree in Mizoo."

How the children squealed with pleasure! They could hardly wait for school to end when they rushed into the yard and began describing in shrill voices the trees they would have.

'I shall put hundreds of red and blue lights on mine!' said Ruth. "Nothing could be prettier."

"I am going to spray mine with artificial snow," declared Arthur. "It will be all white like a tree in a winter forest."

"What about you, Tom?" they asked at last, because the black haired boy had not said a word. "Perhaps you won't even have the money to buy a tree!"

Tom's chin came out. "Don't worry." he said. "I shall have a tree and I'll decorate it with - with," and he searched his mind for the most beautiful decoration he could think of.

"With what?" insisted the giggling children.

The black haired boy turned his face to the sky to hide his confusion and there he saw the lovely evening star just appearing. "I shall decorate it with a star." he blurted. "With a real honest to goodness star!"

'The children hooted. "A star! Just fancy! He thinks he can get a star!"

Tom turned and ran from the yard. "I will!" he cried furiously to himself, "I will! I'll get a star!"



Chapter 7

MR. SLEEK GIVES TOM A TEST

Tom Cover ran all the way to his one-room house on the edge of town. He burst in and cried, "Oh, mother, we have to have a Christmas tree this year! The President is giving a fur coat and a dress and shoes to the mother of the child with the prettiest tree!"

His mother smiled sadly. "How could we ever get the money, Tom?"

The boy stared gloomily out of the window. "Son," whispered his mother, "Christmas is for rich people, I guess. We must just pretend it's like any other time of year."

"No," said the boy roughly. "We will have a tree."

Then he picked up a shovel. "Don't wait up for me," he said and he went out of the house. He walked and he walked until he was far from the town. He kept on until he came to the forest and there he hunted for a tree.

By the light of the moon he found the fir - a proud little tree with a fine straight trunk and every bough perfect. He dug up the roots and tenderly lifted the tree and carried it the long way home.

Before the sun rose that day Tom had dug a deep hole and planted the proud little fir in his own front yard.

"But, Tom," asked his mother, acting with pity. "How can we ever decorate it to win a prize?"

"That's easy," he replied. "I'm going to get a star - a real honest-to-goodness star - to shine at the top of the fir."

Then before his mother would recover from her astonishment he tramped away.

He went to the great Hall of Science in the center of Mizoo where long bearded men with inch thick spectacles spent all their lives studying the skies and all that was in them.

"Tell me, please," said Tom politely to one of these men: "How much does it cost to buy a star?"

The man looked startled and coughed a little. Then he said, "Stars are free, boy. They are for everyone."

"And how can I get one?" persisted Tom.

"Well, son," faltered the scientist. "Stars are hundreds and hundreds of thousands of miles away."

"I thought maybe I could build a ladder," said Tom hopefully.

The man doubled up and Tom saw that he was choking with laughter. Then Tom turned and ran away from there and he was as angry as a small boy could ever be.

He went to the park and sat on a bench and sorrowfully kicked at the snow. By and by a man came and sat down beside him.

"Tell me what is the matter," he said. "You look sad."

He was a grey headed man with blood red eyes and a voice like syrup dripping off a spoon and if Tom Clover had known



who he was he would have gotten up and run away as fast as he could go.

For it was Mr. Sleek in disguise. Mr. Sleek came to show Santa that Tom Clover was a bad boy. But Tom thought he was a kindly man and said, "Oh, sir, I've got to get a star!"

"A star?" repeated Mr. Sleek and he nodded his head. "Now, isn't that strange! It just happens I know exactly where a star is to be found!"

Tom jumped up and his eyes glowed with pleasure. "Oh, tell me, sir," he cried. "Do you suppose that I could get it?"

"Indeed," nodded Mr. Sleek solemnly. "I believe you could."

"Where? Where?"

"It isn't so far away but first, my boy, you'd have to bring me a gift."

"Tell me what?"

"Bring me," said Mr. Sleek and his eyes narrowed and filled with glee. "Bring me the wool from a red sheep's back."

"A red sheep!" gasped Tom, for well he knew that sheep are either black or white.

"There is such a thing," said Mr. Sleek, "but It would take a very brave and smart boy to find one and I don't suppose you are either brave or smart" He rose to leave.

Tom Clover snatched at his sleeve. "I'll get it!" he swore. "I'll bring it to you here tomorrow!"

"And if you don't," asked Mr. Sleek craftily. "Will that mean you are neither brave nor smart nor good?"

"Why," replied Tom in surprise. "I suppose it would."

And little he knew that, if it were so. Santa Land would vanish and there never would be Christmas again.

Chapter 8

TOM GOES TO THE LAND OF TOMORROW

Mr. Sleek had told Tom there was such a thing as a red sheep and Tom had to believe him because if he didn't get the red sheep's wool he wouldn't get the star from Mr. Sleek and if he didn't get the star he wouldn't win the Christmas tree prize for his mother.

But the boy had no idea where to begin looking. He sat on a road side and tried to think.

Suddenly he heard a tiny sound like a sneeze - not a man sneeze but a mouse sneeze - and he saw a very small creature, about the size of half an ear of corn, standing at his elbow.

"W - who are you?" gasped Tom.

"I am Rudolph. I am a Santa Land fairy," said the little one.

Now Tom knew there were such things as elves and brownies and fairies in the world but it just happened he had never seen one before and he hardly dared to breathe.

Rudolph said, "Santa has sent me to tell you where you can find a red sheep."

"A red sheep!" cried Tom. "How did he know?"

"Why, boy, Santa knows pretty nearly everything. He knows for instance, there is a red sheep in the meadows of Nettyboo."

"Nettyboo! I've never heard of it!"

"No. It's not likely to be found in geography books because it's in the land of Tomorrow."



"Oh, my goodness!" wailed Tom. "Where is that?"

"Why," explained Rudolph matter-of-factly. "It's the Land that comes after today. It is Tomorrow and Tomorrow has things you never dreamed of - like chickens that lay eggs already fried and pigs with bacon growing out of their ears and

a sheep with red wool - for red woolen underwear, you know."

Tom's eyebrows climbed right up his forehead in astonishment. "Oh, my!" he gasped. "But, tell me, how does one ever get there?"

"Well, it is a very ticklish business. Ordinarily today is today and tomorrow is tomorrow and when you get to tomorrow you find it's really today and tomorrow is the next day after. Some people spend all their lives waiting for tomorrow and it never comes at all because it is always the next day after."

Rudolph caught his breath and Tom caught his too, for all this explanation had left him breathless.

Then Rudolph said. "However, I can show you a short cut." He pointed to the west. "You see over there at the edge of the world? If you go over the edge and round on the other side you will be in Tomorrow for when it's today here it is tomorrow over."

"I see," cried Tom. "I'll go!"

"Wait!" Rudolph pointed to the sun which was directly overhead. "You must get there before the sun, for when the sun gets there it won't be Tomorrow. It will be today."

"I'll run," cried Tom, and, with a wave to Rudolph, he started running across the fields. Oh, how he ran! He ran until his legs ached and his back creaked and his lungs felt like they had been pumped right out of his body,

But, though he ran through most of the afternoon he never got any closer to Tomorrow and meanwhile the sun had travelled far ahead and was almost there.

Finally he stopped running and paused to rest by an old dump heap. Suddenly a violent wind rushed out of the east and sent a wide open umbrella scuttling over the trash. It crashed against Tom and the curved handle stuck in his belt.

He tried to free himself but the wind got under the umbrella and swept it along, carrying Tom with it. Finally he freed himself but instead of letting go of the umbrella he sat in the curve of the handle and clung to the stick with both hands.

Then a wonderful thing happened. The wind became a hurricane and it swept Tom and the umbrella up into the sky. How he managed to hold on, he never knew, for he was carried faster than lightning, faster than sound, faster even than thought can go.

When the wind finally died away and he started drifting to the earth he saw he had gone faster than time itself. He had left the sun far behind in the east and the land below was the Land of Tomorrow.

Chapter 9

TOM GETS THE RED WOOL

Little Tom Clover drifted down into the Land of Tomorrow and landed ever so gently on the velvety grass in front of a fairy-like house made entirely of glass.

A curly haired boy ran out of the house "Hello!" he cried happily. "Have you come to play with me?"

Tom thought he was the happiest boy he had ever seen and he would have loved to stay and play. But, instead, he said "I must go to Nettyboo where the red sheep grazes."

Then he told the boy who he was and how he had to get the red wool for Mr. Sleek so he could get a star to decorate his Christmas tree.

The boy said, "Nettyboo is the village in the valley but the red sheep - oh, my goodness! The sheep is kept in a meadow guarded by bulls and the bulls are guarded by an evil witch. You could NEVER get the wool!"

"I must try anyway," said Tom and he started away.

"Wait!" cried the boy. "My name is Peter. Let me come with you Oh, please do - for I seldom go anywhere!"

Tom smiled. "Come then," he said. "For I do not even know the way."

So Peter took Tom down the mountain and into the valley and showed him where the meadow lay. It was a great field surrounded by a high fence and a herd of bulls. In the middle of the field a lonely sheep grazed and the sheep's wool blazed red in the noonday sun.

At the gate of the fence sat a horrendous creature with slits for eyes and two holes in her face for a nose. Her hair was like a wet mop and her teeth like broken stones. Peter and Tom gasped with horror as they stood before her.

Finally Tom cleared his throat and said, "Please, mam, May we have the key to the gate so I can get a handful of wool?"

"I will give you wool!" growled the witch and she leaped up and began tugging at his hair to pull it out by the roots.

Then it was that Tom remembered his mother once told him: "A woman loves nice words, Tom," she had said. "No matter who she is."

"Old witch!" he cried, his head aching with pain. "You are a remarkable being! Your cheeks glow like red coals in a grate. Your eyes are like coffee and cream. Your hair glistens like boiled spaghetti and your voice soars like a peanut vender's."

The horrible witch let Tom go and stared at him in astonishment. "Is it really so?" she begged. Her voice quavered with hope.

"Really, really," said Tom. "You are the most entrancing witch I have ever seen."

The old creature fumbled in her pocket and brought out a key. "Never has anyone said such things to me," she faltered and the rusty tears were running down her cheeks. "I've been here



TAKE THE KEY, CHILDREN

7000 years and never before heard those things a woman loves to hear. Take the key, children. And here are two feathers. Keep the feathers in your hats and the bulls will not trouble you."

Then she went off to find a mirror to admire herself.

Peter and Tom unlocked the gate and entered the meadow. Instantly the herd of bulls charged, snorting furiously, with horns lowered to kill.

The boys stood quaking. But when the bulls were almost upon them the angry animals saw the feathers and turned away.

"What magic!" cried Tom and he ran across the meadow with Peter at his side.

The red sheep gazed at them solemnly and moved not an inch while Tom snatched out his pocket knife and chopped off a fistful of crimson wool.

He stuck the wool in his pocket and turned and ran away. But, the curly haired Peter, at his heels, suddenly lost his footing and fell headlong in the grass.

Tom ran on. When he was nearly to the gate he stopped in amazement for every bull in the meadow was screaming with rage and charging past.

Then Tom turned and saw that Peter had lost his hat and, with it, the feather that would keep the bulls away!

Chapter 10

TOM RETURNS WITH THE WOOL

Poor Peter lay in the grass without his hat and without the magic feather that would keep the bulls away. He got to his feet and searched frantically for the hat but the bulls were already charging across the meadow.

Tom Clover, with his pocket full of red wool, thought. "I am safe for I have my feather in my hat and the bulls will not touch me!"

But he could not leave his friend. He turned and began running beside the bulls. He took off his hat with the magic feather sticking in it and waved it fiercely at the enraged animals.

"Stop!" he roared. "Go away!"

The bulls stopped and stared in confusion at the feather which calmed their rage. While they paused Tarn ran past them and threw his hat and feather on Peter's head.

"Now run!" he cried as he, too, raced away.

But the bulls saw at once that Tom no longer had the feather and they charged again, this time at him. They pushed him down and rolled him over and over in the grass.

He lay there stunned as the bulls turned to charge again. "This is the end," thought Tom and he was filled with grief for his mother who would never know what had become of him.

He pressed his face hard against the ground and suddenly he sobbed with joy for his face was scratched by Peter's magic feather which had fallen in the grass!

He snatched it up and the bulls, when they saw it, turned away for they could do him no more harm.

Then Tom and Peter limped away. "Oh, Tom," cried Peter. "I wish you would stay here forever for you are the bravest boy I have ever seen."

"I wish I could stay," replied Tom. "But I must hurry back to Mizoo."

"But how will you ever get there?" asked Peter.

"That I do not know. I have been thinking and thinking but I have not found a way."

"Listen, then. You can have my toy airplane!"

"But, a toy airplane will not fly!"

"Oh, yes," said Peter. "In the Land of Tomorrow our toy planes fly like any other. All you have to do is set the dials and it will carry you anywhere. When you get home you set the dials again and it will return to me."

Then Peter took Tom back to his home and showed him the plane. There were other toys, too - toys that can only be found in Tomorrow.

There was a bamboo slide that went up and down, up and down, around the yard so you never had to get off and climb back up for a second ride. There was a ball that could bounce as high as the sky and no matter how far you threw it, it would

always come back for you to catch. There was a toy teddy bear that walked around and growled and ate real sausage from your hand.

"How I'd like to stay!" cried Tom. "But I must say good-bye."

He got into the toy plane and set the dial the way Peter showed him. The motor purred ever so softly and the plane rose and sped away.

Sure enough the plane carried him straight to Mizoo. Then Tom set the dials and sent the plane back to Peter.

Meanwhile, the sun was sinking and the sky was darkening and Mr. Sleek sat in the park and felt very cheerful because he thought, "If the boy does not return soon he has failed and must admit he is neither clever nor brave nor good."

But just at that moment Tom came running between the trees. "Here is the wool!" he cried happily and he dumped a pile of blood red wool on the evil creature's lap. "Now show me the star!"

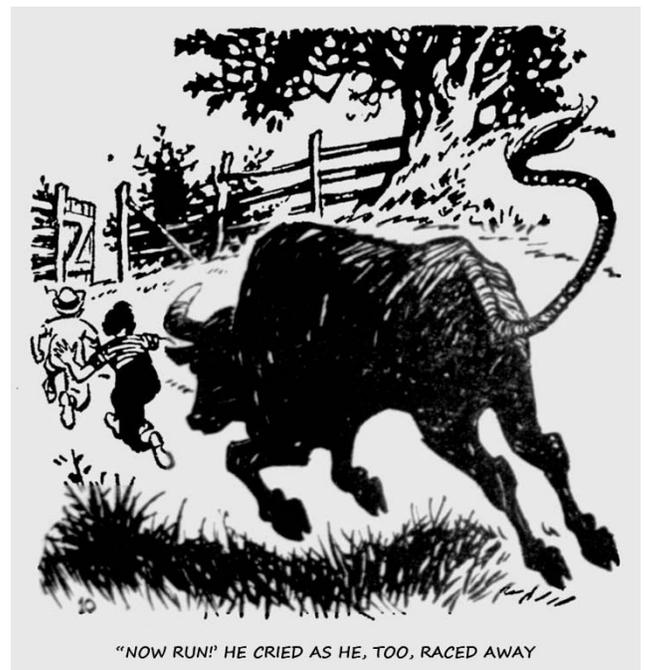
Mr. Sleek was so disappointed he leaped to his feet and threw the wool away. "You wretched boy!" he screamed angrily. "How did you get it? How did you ever find a red sheep's wool?"

Tom was too shocked to speak. He simply stared until Mr. Sleek managed to control his fury.

Then Tom quavered, "The star? What about the star?"

"Oh, yes!" snapped Mr. Sleek. "The star. Follow me."

And he stomped away.



"NOW RUN!" HE CRIED AS HE, TOO, RACED AWAY

Chapter 11

MR. SLEEK TRICKS TOM

Tom did not understand why Mr. Sleek was so furious to find that he really had gotten a red sheep's wool. And he did not understand why Mr. Sleek should have thrown the wool away.

"But," he told himself, "all of this means nothing to me if he shows me where I can find a star."

So he followed Mr. Sleek as the evil creature led him out of the park, out of the city, and down a country road,

When they finally stopped night had come and the sky was dark except for a lonely star or two. They stood in a deserted farmyard and Mr. Sleek pointed to a hole in the ground which was surrounded by a low wall of stones.

"There," he said sharply, "you will see your star."

Eagerly Tom leaned over the stone wall and peered into the hole. Sure enough, a silver star was shining there!

"Oh, thank you!" cried Tom joyously, and he reached deep, deep into the hole to grasp the precious thing. But his hands dipped into water and he drew back, speechless with horror.

For the silver star was not real at all. It was only a star far above in the sky reflected in the waters of a well.

Tom's eyes filled with tears and he turned to beg Mr. Sleek to explain it was only a joke and that the star was still to be had. But Mr. Sleek had disappeared.

Poor Tom! He wished for a moment he was a girl so that he might cry right out loud. He stumbled down the dark road home to Mizoo and he was as tired as any little boy would be who had been so far in so short a time.

He went into his house and his mother said, "Oh, Tom, where have you been?"

"I've been looking for a star to decorate our tree," he said, turning his face away.

She put her arms around him. Perhaps some year we will have a merry Christmas," she told him gently. "But this year Christmas is not for people as poor as we."

Then she gave him his supper and put him to bed. He lay there awake and watched his mother as she picked up the one room house.

"Her dress is so thin," he thought. "And she has no coat - only a shawl, and her only shoes are six years old." And then he really did weep a little as he thought of the green silk dress,

the fur coat, and pair of shoes which some other child would win for his mother.

The next day he returned to school. But there were no lessons to be read that day.

"Today," said the teacher, "you may work on the decorations for your trees."

"But," protested the children, "our daddies are buying decorations at the store."

"That is all right," said the teacher. "But to win the prize each tree must have something you have made or found or earned for yourself."

So the children set to work, but not very happily because they felt their most beautiful decorations would come from the store.

Sally Masters had a bowl full of cranberries and was stringing them on a long red thread. "Mine will be a cranberry tree," she explained. "With bright red berries as thick as snowflakes in a storm."

John O'Neil painted china lights, "My daddy will arrange the electric wires," said he, "but the lights will be all mine."

Edward cut out strips of tinsel to hang on his tree and Margaret made cones of colored paper for hers. George painted pine twigs and Mamie made a chain of paper rings.

And while the children worked Tom Clover sat at his desk and studied his books.

"Why, Tom," said the teacher. "What will you have on your tree?"

The children stopped their work and gathered round and hooted:

'He's the boy who is hunting stars

'He wants to hang Mars

'On his Christmas tree!"

The teacher laughed and laughed.

"That's silly," she said. "How could you ever get a real star, Tom? You must not dream so much!"

Then Tom was filled with anger again for had he not got a red sheep's wool? He glared at the children around him and said, "I will too get a star. Wait and see!"

"Go and find it then" howled the children, and the teacher nodded as she laughed at the joke.

"Yes, yes, go and find it, for you must learn to be more practical."

So Tom got up and went away and he thought, "I won't give up. I'll still find a way."



Chapter 12

MR. SLEEK TEMPTS TOM

In Santa Land, Santa Claus sat all day long in his cottage too worried even to eat the upside down pineapple cake Mrs. Claus made especially to cheer him up.

It was late at night and Santa was pacing his kitchen when suddenly the whole house creaked and groaned, the window panes rattled and the smoldering fire in the fireplace blazed anew.

The door burst open and Mr. Sleek stomped into the kitchen. His face was tight with anger, his eyes were little red slits and his voice, when he spoke, was sharp and biting like a January freeze.

"I will not give in!" he roared. "I'll set my sprouts to work this minute burning Santa Land. For I am determined there'll never be Christmas again."

"Tell me then." cried Santa. "Did Tom Clover pass your test?"

"He got the red sheep's wool," snapped Mr. Sleek

"Then does that not prove he is brave and clever and good?"

"In that particular case, yes, perhaps."

"Remember your bargain then," said Santa. "For you declared you would leave my land if there was one good child in the world."

Mr. Sleek did not want to remember the bargain. He cursed himself for ever having made such a bargain He would like to have screamed and stamped his foot and withdrawn from such a bargain.

But it was too late. For even an evil creature like Mr. Sleek must keep his word. Suddenly, he got a new Idea.

"Well," he said craftily, and the roar went out of his voice. "I shall test him again."

"Go ahead," agreed Santa cheerfully. "But Christmas soon will be here."

"I will be back in time," snapped Mr. Sleek and he went out and called to his sprouts. "Go into the forests. Make me a mountain of ashes and 10 tons of switches and have them ready for Christmas day."

Then Mr. Sleek hurried back to Mizoo. This time he dressed like an elegant lady. He covered his bald head with a wig of powdered white hair. He wore a black satin dress with a diamond brooch and a fur coat and soft kid gloves. Oh, he was very elegant looking!

He went to the edge of Mizoo and knocked at the one room house. Little Tom Clover opened the door.

"Good evening, young man," said Mr. Sleek in a high voice. "May I come in?"

"Pease do," said Tom and he led his strange guest into the small room. "My mother is out at work."

"Good," said Mr. Sleek "I wanted to talk to you alone."

Tom had never seen so beautifully dressed a lady and he could not imagine what she would have to talk to him about. He stood and waited and Mr. Sleek said, "You are a smart boy, I hear. Clever and tough, too."

Tom wondered where she could have heard such a thing but still he said nothing at all.

Then Mr. Sleek said, "Do you I know the story of the Bajoluka scarf?"

"Why," said Tom. "It is a scarf embroidered, it is said, of moon- beams arid dewdrops and rainbow strips and wisps of the evening sun. It was made, they say, by Bajoluka fairies a hundred thousand years ago."

Mr. Sleek nodded. "It lies," he said, "in the Jeweler's showcase." He paused and gazed at Tom and finally whispered. "I want you to get it for me."

Tom stared and stepped back from his guest. "You mean STEAL it?" he gasped. His visitor nodded.

"Certainly not!" cried Tom and he didn't know why he felt so ashamed.

"Get it for me," said Mr. Sleek "And I'll give you things you never dreamed of - a pony and cart, a motor bike and a tennis racket!"

"I don't want those things! Not if I have to steal!"

"Get it for me," went on Mr. Sleek "And I'll give you a life of ease."

"No, no! What would that mean to me?"

"Get it for me," persisted Mr. Sleek "And I'll give you a star."

"A STAR!" Tom caught his breath. He ran his tongue over his dry lips and his heart beat hard in his chest and he whispered, "Where is this jeweler's store?"



Chapter 13

THE SCRAF IS STOLEN

The Bajoluka scarf is a thing of such loveliness that just to look at it gladdens the heart. It is said that thousands of years ago the Bajoluka fairies embroidered it with threads they made of moonbeams and firelight, of children's laughter and lovers' tears, and all the most beautiful things they could find in the world.

Now it lay on display in a jeweler's showcase and if Tom Clover stole it, Mr. Sleek promised to give him a star.

After Mr. Sleek, disguised as an elegant lady, had gone, Tom sat by the cold stove and thought and thought.

Presently his mother came home from work. "Come," she said, seeing Tom sad. "The streets are filled with Christmas shoppers. Let us join them and look in the windows. That, at least, will cost no money."

They went into the crowded street and Tom said, "Let us go look in the jeweler's store." Even as he said it, his heart was filled with fear for he hardly knew what he planned to do.

Would he steal? Could he possibly do such a wicked thing? His mother laughed, "Why yes," she agreed. "We might as well look at precious stones as any other things."

They walked on and with every step Tom's feet seemed to get heavier and his breath shorter. "How pale you are!" exclaimed his mother.

"I'm all right," murmured Tom, but, in truth, he was nearly in a faint and he wanted to cry out, "Oh, mother! If I do this awful thing will you love me still?"

Finally they came to the jeweler's. "Do you think we should go in?" asked the mother.

"Yes, come," ordered Toni in an angry voice.



HE LAUGHED OUT LOUD IN HAPPY RELIEF

A glass case stood in the center of the shop and in the case was the Bajoluka scarf. Visitors clustered around it and cried out with delight just to gaze at the fabulous piece.

"Oh, Tom, just look!" whispered his mother. "Was there ever anything so beautiful in the world?"

Tom's mouth was dry and his knees were like jelly but he forced himself to look and instantly fear left his heart and the shaking left his knees and the hardness went out of his eyes for he knew he could never steal.

"What could I have been thinking of!" he cried to himself and he laughed out loud in happy relief.

A woman on the other side the showcase coughed and Tom thought, "Good heaven! It is the woman who came to see me this afternoon!"

In truth it was the evil Mr. Sleek but before Tom could speak aloud a terrible thing happened: the lights in the store went out!

Women screamed, glass crashed, men shouted.

The darkness lasted but a moment and then the lights were on again. People blinked and stared at one another: "What a scare!" they said and began to laugh a little.

But the jeweler who owned the store suddenly screamed, "The scarf! The Bajoluka scarf!"

Everyone turned to the case which had held the scarf. The glass was shattered and the precious piece was gone!

What confusion followed! The police came but though they hunted everywhere they could not find the scarf.

Tom Clover's mother said, "Only someone very wicked could have done such a thing." Tom shuddered to think it might have been himself. "They will find who stole it," he said, "before they let us leave."

"Yes," said his mother "They are bound to find out soon."

Just then Tom saw his elegant lady visitor again. She was talking to the police and pointing toward him. The police listened with interest. Presently they came over to Tom.

"There is the one who stole the scarf," said the elegant lady. "I'm sure I couldn't be wrong. I heard him planning to steal it not an hour ago."

Tom's mother turned white and Tom gasped aloud. "Why," he thought, "she must have stolen it herself and now is blaming me!"

But before he could think of a word to say the police took his arm and led him away.

Chapter 14

MR. SLEEK BURNS THE SCARF

Poor Tom Clover! He sat in the police station while the police searched his pockets and looked in his shoes and under his shirt and inside his hat but they could not find the Bajoluka scarf.

The distraught jeweler took Tom's hand. "Son," he begged. "Only tell me where the precious thing is and I will have them set you free."

"I don't know" cried Tom. "I have told you over and over: I do not know"

The police captain said, "Think it over, young man. We are going to lock you up and you will have plenty of time to remember what you did."

Then the police led Tom downstairs and locked him in a prison cell. He sat down on the tiny cot and put his head in his hands and after a while he began to cry – oh, not out loud, but just a little - quietly to himself.

Because, after all, it was nearly Christmas day and all he had wanted was to decorate a tree to win the President's prize for his mother. And now he was in prison and could never in the world find a star to hang on his tree.

"And I guess they'll never set me free," he thought bitterly. "For how could I possibly tell them where the scarf is!"

Well, just at that moment, there was a scuffling sound under the bed. Someone sneezed and wheezed and coughed and suddenly Rudolph appeared!

"Why!" cried Tom swallowing his tears. "You are the fairy Santa sent to tell me where the red sheep grazed!"

"Right." said Rudolph, who was only 4 inches tall. "And now he has sent me to help you again. But I declare my cold is so bad I really should be home in bed."

"Oh, yes." said Tom with sympathy. "I can see that. But, oh! if you only knew how much I need you."

"Indeed, I do know," sniffed Rudolph. "And I'm glad to say I can help you because -" he stopped to sneeze and wipe his nose. "Because - I know who has the scarf!"

"Why!" cried Tom joyfully. "If I can show them the scarf the police will let me go!"

"Your elegant lady friend has it," said Rudolph and he didn't explain that the "lady" was really Mr. Sleek in disguise. "I shall take you to her."

"But," protested Tom, "How can I get out of here?"

"Be patient and you will see." Then the little fairy reached in his pocket and drew out a box of talcum powder. He poured the powder in his palm, held his hand to his lips and went "pfft!" blowing the powder all over Tom.

And then Tom got smaller and smaller and smaller until in a moment he, too, was only four inches tall!

"Oh my!" he cried in alarm. "Will I ever be big again?"

"Certainly," replied Rudolph. "As soon as you wash off the powder. Now follow me!"

The two tiny creatures slipped through the bars of the window and climbed down to the prison yard. They darted under the gate and ran into the street. A taxi cab came cruising by. Rudolph and Tom climbed on the fender and rode along as nice as you please.

Presently they left the car and went into a hotel and if anyone saw them he thought they were mice and complained to the manager. They went to the third floor and climbed through a keyhole and dropped to the floor.



"There!" whispered Rudolph. "Is your elegant friend."

Tom looked and he saw Mr. Sleek still dressed in his elegant woman's clothes. Mr. Sleek was bent over the fireplace stirring up cinders. Then Tom gasped for he saw that the cinders were the ashes of Bajoluka scarf!

"I'll take a few ashes," muttered Mr. Sleek to himself. "And hide them in the mother's house. Then boy and mother will hang for the crime!"

The wicked creature laughed out loud. "Then Santa's 'good boy' will be gone forever and Santa Land will be mine."

TOM MAKES A JOURNEY

Tom and Rudolph left the hotel without a word to Mr. Sleek, for what could they do now that the Bajoluka scarf was burned to ashes?

“It was such a beautiful thing,” mourned Tom as he and Rudolph warmed themselves under a cracker box that had been tossed into the street. “I cannot bear to think it is gone.”

“That is not the worst of it,” Rudolph reminded him. “The burnt shreds will be put in your mother’s house and you both will get the blame. Think of that, laddie! You will hang!”

Tom’s heart beat faster in his tiny chest but he shrugged his shoulders anyway. “Even hanging me would not bring back the scarf.’ he declared unhappily.

Rudolph wanted to tell him that even hanging was not the worst of it for if Tom were hanged Mr. Sleek could claim there was no such thing in the land as a good boy. Then Santa Land would belong to Mr. Sleek and there would never be Christmas again for anyone in all the world.

But Santa had told Rudolph that Tom was not to know who Mr. Sleek really was. “If he is truly a good boy,” Santa had said, “he will find a way to prove it for Goodness is stronger than Evil.”

So now Rudolph said, “There is only one chance for you now, lad. You must go to the Bajoluka fairies and see if they can help you.”

“Why, the Bajoluka fairies have vanished from the earth!” protests Tom. “It says so in my school books!”

“There are some things even the school books do not know.” retorted Rudolph “There are still Bajoluka fairies and they live on an island in the middle of the sea. You can find them if you have the will.”



YOU CAN FIND THE FAIRIES IF YOU HAVE THE WILL

“Oh, I have the will.” declared Tom earnestly. “I’ll find a way. I must or my mother will hang.”

Then he said goodbye to Rudolph and slipped from under the cracker box. He ran all the way to the harbor and there he found a flock of seagulls playing on the wharf.

He ran towards them and the amazed gulls thought he was a rat and flew away. When they saw that he was really a tiny boy they came back and cooed over him in astonishment.

“I must go to the middle of the sea,” pleaded Tom. “Please, could one of you take me there?”

Because he had been sprinkled with Rudolph magic talcum powder the gulls could understand what he said. “It is far away,” they told him. “But Susy is very fast. She will take you there.”

Tom climbed on the back of beautiful gull named Susy, and bird and boy flew away.

Many hours later Susy fluttered wearily down from the sky and when Tom climbed off he saw that they had landed on a fairy island.

Exquisite winged creatures darted from buttercup and daisy petal houses. Their silver wings glistened in the sun and carried them ever so lightly on the breast of every breeze.

“Who are you?” they cried, gathering around Tom and staring him with wide eyes.

Tom told them, who he was and how he had been sprinkled with a magic powder to make him small. Then he told them how the Bajoluka scarf had been burned to ashes.

The fairies wept to hear the news. “Our great-great-great-great-great grandparents made the scarf,” said they. “It was the only one like it in all the world.”

“Yes,” said Tom. “And now I will hang and my mother will hang for they think we did the crime.”

The fairies wept again and cried, “What, oh, what can we do?”

Suddenly, Susy the Gull cleared her throat and said practically. “Why not make another scarf?”

They had never thought of such a thing but now they all chattered at once “Do you suppose we could? Can the pattern he found? How long would it take?”

But while they chattered the Queen Fairy stood quiet and hung her head for he alone knew that every time a scarf is made the Bajoluka fairies lose their wings for a hundred years.

Chapter 16

TOM IS FREED

The Bajoluka fairies turned to their queen, crying, "Oh, do you think we ever could make another scarf?"

The beautiful Queen raised her head and the fairies gasped to see that her eyes were filled with tears.

"Wait," whispered the Queen. "Wait and I will see if the pattern can be found."

Then she spread her lovely blue and golden wings and flew to the top of tree where old fairy treasures were kept in an ancient bird nest. She rummaged in tiny battered trunks and she could hardly see what she was about for the tears were running down her cheeks. At last she found a yellow parchment. Then she dried her tears and flew back to the wondering fairies.

"Here is the pattern," said the Queen and she began to read softly. "Two strands of rainbow gold, four strands of moon-beam on the water. Seven threads of laughter and seven threads of tears. One thread each of a mother's love, a child's kiss and a poet's dream."

The Queen paused and Tom Clover sighed for he thought it would take forever even to find such things.

But the fairy creatures were not at all abashed. "Why," they cried, "we already have most of these things locked in nut shells on our storage shelves!"

"Yes," said the Queen, "we have."

"Then," persisted the fairies, "do you think it would take us very long?"

The Queen shook her head. "With all our fingers and all our eyes it should take but a little while."

"Oh, come! Let us make it at once!" cried the fairies.

"There is one thing more," said the Queen sadly. "One thing that you must know." Then she talked to them in fairy language so that Tom Clover should not understand and he told them that if they made the scarf they would lose their wings for a hundred years.

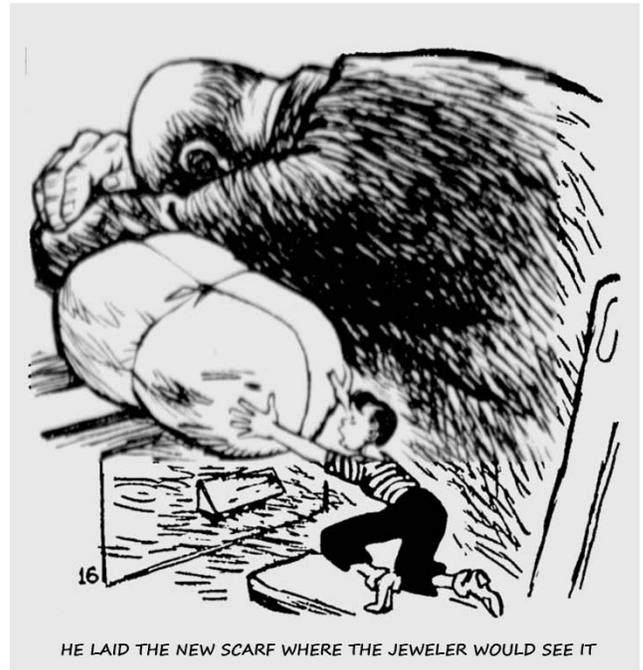
The fairies stared at her and stared at one another and stared out across the sea and their hearts were filled with pain,

"What shall it be then?" whispered the Queen, "A scarf or wings?"

Then the fairies answered, "Many fairies have wings but only we can make such a scarf. Let us make it, then, and give up our wings."

"Besides," added a very young fairy, "a hundred years is not to terribly long a time in our lives!"

With that the little creatures threw off their sorrow and set to work with needles and pins and fragile threads. They worked so hard and so swiftly that the sun had hardly set when they brought Tom a small package wrapped in silver fairy wings.



It was quite dark and Tom could hardly see the fairies as they stood huddled on the beach. He tried to thank them but he scarcely knew words enough. Slowly he mounted Susy's back and prepared to fly away.

The little creatures stood and waved and whispered soft farewells and never told him the price they had had to pay.

Then Tom returned to Mizoo on the back of Susy the Gull.

"Goodbye! And thanks a thousand times!" he cried and he left Susy on the wharf and raced to the jeweler's store.

It was Christmas Eve and what crowds there were! It seemed that everyone in town had come to the jeweler's to purchase diamonds and pearls and rubles for gifts.

But the jeweler himself sat in his office with his head in his hands and would see no one at all. "His heart is broken since the loss of the Bajoluka scarf," whispered his clerks and shook their heads in sorrow.

Tom slipped through a crack under the office door and tiptoed to the jeweler's knee. Gently he laid the new scarf on the desk so the jeweler would see it when he raised his head.

Then Toni slipped out and fled towards the prison gates. But as he ran a terrible thing happened. It began to rain! And the cold drops of water slowly washed away the magic powder Rudolph had sprinkled on Tom to make him small!

Chapter 17

MR. SLEEK'S SPIRIT BREAKS

The rain poured down and in 15 seconds Tom Clover doubled in size so that by the time he reached the prison walls he was 8 inches tall!

He raced around the walls and through the gates and across the yard.

"See the rat!" shouted the prison guards and they made a note to sprinkle rat poison that night.

The rain washed over Tom and his legs grew longer and his shoulders wider and he thought. "Oh, heavens! Will I ever get there in time!"

He climbed an ivy vine on the side of the prison and came at last to his own barred window. He squeezed and he wiggled and held his breath and he pushed and pulled and finally he got through the bars and landed kerplop! on the floor of his cell.

Just in time, too, for three minutes later he was a full sized boy!

He sat down on his cot to rest but he had hardly caught five breaths when the door burst open and the jailer came in.

"The jeweler just called," exclaimed the Jailer. "He has found his scarf and you are free!"

Then a dozen policemen came in and clapped Tom's shoulder and told him how sorry they were he had been locked up and what a shame it was and how they would go now and arrest the lady who had caused all the trouble.

The police took Tom and went to see Mr. Sleek who was sitting in his hotel room disguised as an elegant lady.

"You have done a wicked thing in falsely accusing this boy of stealing and burning the Bajoluka scarf." declared the police. "In his name we place you under arrest."

"What!" cried Mr. Sleek in astonishment, "I myself saw the ashes of the scarf in the boy's house."

"The scarf is now in the jewelers hands," retorted the police. "This boy has been freed."

Mr. Sleek put his head in his hands and sobbed out loud. He had done all he could to disgrace Tom Clover and all had been in vain. But the worst was yet to come.

For Tom, seeing the elegant lady in tears, was filled with sorrow. "I have suffered enough," he thought, "Why should she suffer, too?" He put his hand gently on Mr. Sleek's shoulder and said, "I forgive you. I will ask them to set you free. After all it is Christmas eve."

So the police reluctantly went away and Tom went, too, and Mr. Sleek sat in his room and thought and thought and finally he said to himself. "Santa was right after all for Tom Clover is surely a good boy."

Then he took off his elegant lady disguise and returned to Santa Land and he was sorrowful and hopeless like a broken man.

"Well," cried Santa triumphantly. "Will you say now that Christmas is all worth while? Will you admit there are good children who deserve good things?"

Mr. Sleek hung his head. "Yes. yes." he murmured sadly. "You have won. I shall go away."



He turned to call his evil sprouts to leave Santa Land but his voice choked in his throat and the tears began rolling down his cheeks.

"There," said Santa cheerily. "Do not take it so hard."

Mr. Sleek sniffed. "It's just - just that I did so want to make ashes and switches, I really do make them well."

"Why, then," said Santa suddenly. "Come with me."

He took Mr. Sleek to a tiny, tiny shop on the very edge of Santa Land. "There are in the world," said Santa regretfully, "a very few naughty children. Perhaps it would help them be good if once in a while we sent them no toys."

"You mean?" began Mr. Sleek eagerly.

"I mean you can still make your ashes and switches and I will take them in my sled of toys and leave them for children who just won't be good."

Then Mr. Sleek began crying again but this time with joy. "I shall stay here forever and work at my job." he sobbed.

Santa nodded and waved. "I must go now and load my sled for I have to fly all over the world this night."

Then he went away whispering softly to himself. "And there's also the matter of a star. Yes, there's the matter of a star to hang on Tom Clover's Christmas tree."

A MERRY CHRISTMAS FOR ALL

It was Christmas Eve and Tom Clover sat with his mother in their one room house and tried to hide his sorrow.

“What does it matter,” he told himself harshly, “that Santa forgets us every year. It is enough, after all, to be together.”

His mother, too, was sorrowful because of all the presents she could not afford to buy her son. She touched his shoulder shyly and whispered, “Son, do not be sad.”

“I am sad only for you,” replied Tom. “If you are happy all is well with me.”

“But, all the same,” he told himself, “It would have been a fine thing to have won the President’s prize for my mother.”

Then he went out in the yard and stared at the brave little fir he had planted and planned to decorate with a star. “It’s still a beautiful tree,” he thought proudly. “The prettiest I ever saw.”

Suddenly he remembered that this was the night the President was to choose the best decorated tree in Mizoo and almost against his will the boy started walking towards the school house. Long before he reached there he could hear the shouts and laughter of his schoolmates.

As he came to the gate the President himself was just coming out followed by hundreds of children. The President carried three large packages under his arm and he smiled happily as he said “Come, then, let us see your trees!”

The children swarmed around him and led him through the streets. “Here! Here is Ned Howell’s house!” they cried and they all went in to see Ned’s tree - a tinsel decked pine with lights of gold.

Then out they burst and moved on to another house. “This is Sarah Towne’s place!” shouted the children, leading the President in to view Sarah’s tree - a giant fir with one thousand silver balls.

“Now to Harold Ewing’s house - which is right next door!” chorused the children and galloped away.

So they moved through the homes and in every one there was a tree so beautifully decorated that it was almost impossible to choose between them.

Little Tom Clover dragged along on the edge of the crowd and he thought “These trees are beautiful - but, oh, none is so beautiful as mine might have been!”

At last the President had been taken to see every tree and the children cried, “Now, which is the best?”

“Well,” said the President and he began to stammer for he hardly knew how to choose. Then he cried, “Why, what is that?”

The children listened and heard the sound of bells in the sky and far away on the edge of town they saw blaze of light.

“Come, let us see!” they cried. And away they raced carrying the President with them.

Tom raced, too, and there was a pounding in his chest though he scarcely knew why.

At last the crowd came to a stop right in front of Tom Clover’s house. There was a breathless hush as all stared at the wonderful sight in the yard.

Tom’s little fir stood straight and proud and at its top was a very real star, its wonderous light filling the whole night with magic.

The President finally spoke. “There is no more beautiful tree than this! Where is the child who lives here?”

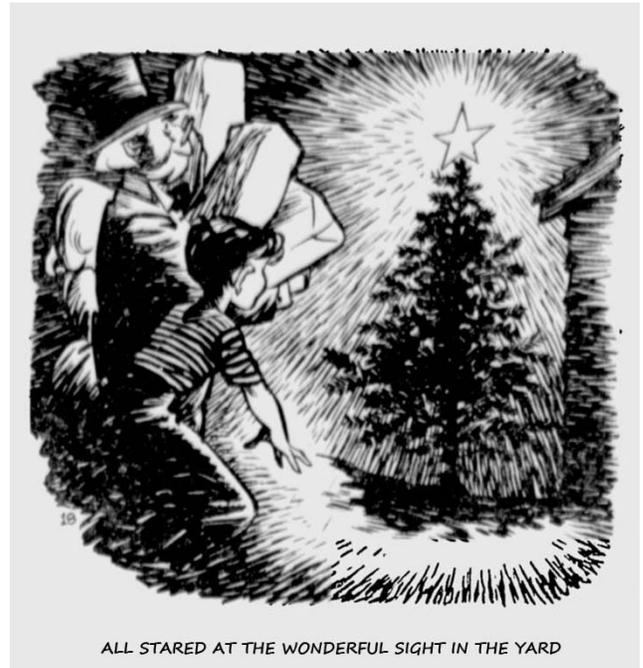
The children pushed the speechless Tom Clover forward and the President gave him the packages under his arm: A green silk dress, a fur coat, and a pair of patent leather shoes for his mother.

“Your mother must be very proud of you,” said the President.

Before Tom could find his voice his mother came running from the house crying, “Look, Tom, look under the tree!”

And Tom looked and he saw that the ground was carpeted with gifts! A football, a toy automobile, bow and arrows, a cowboy suit, an air gun, marbles and skates and a bicycle and fully a dozen books!

“Oh, my!” gasped Tom.



ALL STARED AT THE WONDERFUL SIGHT IN THE YARD

“What a good boy you must be!” cried his schoolmates and they were not envious only glad for his sake.

Then they heard again the sound of bells and they looked up just in time to see eight reindeer pulling Santa Claus in his sled through the star lit sky.

“Oh. Merry Christmas!” shouted Tom Clover, the happy tears rolling from his eyes. And all his friends shouted, too, Merry Christmas!”

From far away drifted Santa's reply, "A Merry Christmas to all!"

THE END

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