

SANTA and the SNOW MAN

BY LUCRECE HUDGINS

Santa and the Snow Man

By Lucrece Hudgins

Chapter 1

Once upon a time there lived a little boy named Danny. I guess he was the most lonesome boy in the whole world because - well, because of a lot of reasons.

For one thing, he had no home. And he had no father or mother or brothers or sisters.

But that wasn't the worst of it. No. The hardest thing of all was that he had a twisted leg.

His leg didn't hurt him, you understand but, because it was crooked he couldn't run like other boys and girls. He couldn't kick a football or skate or ride a bicycle or play tag.

The other children, not knowing how truly lonely he was, laughed at him and teased him and never even tried to be friends with him. So you can see he really didn't have a very happy time.

Well, one night in the wintertime - in December, to be exact - there was a big, big snow storm. The next morning there was such heap of snow on the ground that the schools didn't open. "Let the children play today," said the teachers. "After all, it isn't often we have so much snow."

So all the boys and girls got out their sleds and their skis and their snow shoes and spent a glorious day playing together in the snow.

All except Danny who couldn't sled or ski or walk on snow shoes because the other children laughed at him and chased him away.

Most of the day he stood behind a birch tree and peeped at the others having fun. But along about mid afternoon he got an idea.

"I can make a snow man!" he thought. "No one can stop me from doing that and I certainly don't need two good legs to do it."

He set to work right there. First he rolled a great round body. When it was good and solid and steady on the ground he made two fine feet and fitted them under the body.

He rolled two wonderfully round arms with perfect hands and joined them to the body. Then he made the head and set it carefully on top of the shoulders. He got some coals and some twigs and with these he made the nose and eyes and mouth.

Oh, it was a lovely face - fat and smiling with bulging cheeks and crinkly lines all around the month and eyes!

"Gee," whispered Danny as he stood off and looked at his snow man. "You look real - like an honest to goodness real man!"

He was so pleased he wanted the other kids to see his snow man. They wouldn't believe I could make such a thing, he thought. They might even ask me to show them how to do it.

He started off to call the boys who were sledding on a nearby hill. But when the boys saw him they started throwing snow balls at him - hard ones, mixed with ice.

Danny wasn't a coward but he had learned long ago it was pretty useless to fight a whole crowd of kids when one of your legs is crooked and no good to you at all.

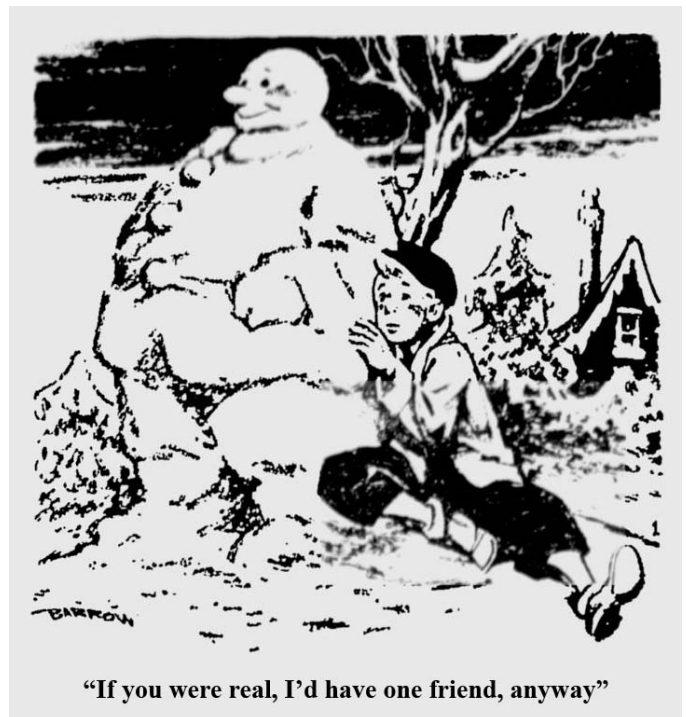
So he ran back to his snow man and sat down on the ground with one arm around the snow man.

"Oh, I wish you really were real!" he said. "If you were I'd have one friend, anyway."

Then he shut his eyes and he must have gone to sleep because he had a dream. Maybe it was his imagination or maybe it was real. I just don't know. But, anyway, while he sat there with his eyes closed, the sun came out and shone in a steady beam on his snow man.

Suddenly, a lovely fairy, carrying an enormous package, slid down that sun beam and landed at the snow man's feet.

And the fairy said, "Danny, I am going to make your snow man real!"



"If you were real, I'd have one friend, anyway"

Chapter 2

DANNY GETS A FRIEND

While Danny sat beside, his wonderful snow man the little fairy kissed him on the cheek.

"Watch now, Danny," she said "And you will see your snow man come to life."

Then she unwrapped her enormous brown paper package and took out a hat. It was a red peaked hat with the softest white fur all around the edges and a big plop of white fur at the very top of the peak.

Smiling, the fairy flew to the snow man's shoulder and carefully fitted the red hat over the snow man's head.

"This is a lovely snow man" she said admiringly. "And the hat will make him even lovelier."

She took a pin from under her wing where she had a pin cushion and fastened the hat tight so it wouldn't budge at all - not unless, you tugged at it very, very hard.

Then the fairy said, "This is a magic hat. So long as the snow man wears it he will be real." She leaned over close to the snow man's ear and said very loud so that he would be sure to understand, "if you ever take off this hat you will be just a snow man and the hat will never make you real again."

With that the fairy spread her wings and vanished.

The next thing you know a group of boys came trudging home from the sledding hill and when they saw Danny sitting by the snow man they shouted:

"Knock down the snow man!" And they began hurling snow balls.

Danny sprang in front of the snow man and all the snow balls hit him right in the face. Then an astonishing thing happened:

A great round snow ball flew through the air - not at Danny



but at the boys - landing right on top of the leader.

The boys dropped their hands and stared and then they turned and ran away as fast as their frightened legs would carry them.

Danny stared, too, and his mouth fell open and finally he said, "Did you throw that?"

The Snow Man brushed some twigs off his long white suit and said, "I did and it was a pretty good shot, too, wasn't it"

Oh, he had the most wonderful voice! Soft and deep and warm and friendly. That was the important thing.

"Oh, my!" gasped Danny. "Then you are my friend, aren't you?"

"Why certainly," said the Snow Man. "That's what I'm here for I expect. But there is one thing that bothers me and that fairy didn't explain it. What's to become of me when the sun comes out?"

"You mean - ?"

"I mean I'll melt. Bound to." He thought for a while. "You don't have an ice box, do you?"

Danny shook his head sadly.

"Just as well," grunted the Snow Man. "I'd hate to have to live in it."

"We - we could go north."

"Snow melts in the north, too, doesn't it? Does when summer comes."

"Why, then," cried Danny suddenly. "How about way, way north? At the North Pole?"

"Hm - m," said the Snow Man. "You mean at Santa Land? Why, boy, that's the place for us! Come on - what are we waiting for?"

And that old Snow Man started walking away holding Danny's hand tight in his.

"Do you suppose," ventured Danny, his heart bursting with excitement, "Do you suppose Santa Claus might be able to do something about my crooked leg?"

"Shouldn't be surprised," said the Snow man, kicking at the snow with his own snow feet, "I shouldn't be at all surprised."

Chapter 3

SANTA MAKES AN ENEMY

Santa Land, as you must know, is a very busy place. Only think how hard and long the Santa Land folk must work to make toys for all the girls and boys of the world! Of course, around Christmas time, the place gets busier than ever and sometimes the little folk don't have time even to eat their dinners (though they always manage to eat dessert even if they haven't time to eat carrots and broccoli!).

Now one day in December while Danny and the Snow Man were on their way North, Santa Claus sat at his desk reading letters from far away children.

"Here's a letter from Johnny Marshall," he exclaimed. "He wants an orange colored bicycle!" Santa turned to Mrs. Claus, "Now why would it have to be orange please tell me?"

Mrs. Claus was darning a hole in Santa's knit hat. "Perhaps because he has an orange sweater," he said soothingly. "And wants it to match."

"Poof!" cried Santa. "We have red bicycles, blue ones, black ones, even a few green ones. Why should I have to go out and do a special paint job just so this Johnny Marshall can match his sweater? I won't do it. That's all. I won't do it."

Mrs. Claus just sat there darning and smiling to herself. She knew perfectly well Santa would do it. He always did. He had to have - always - just exactly the right gift for each child who requested it.

Only that very morning he had put a tiny elevator in a tiny doll house because a certain child had written that her doll was an old lady who couldn't climb stairs. And the day before he had made pair of rubber wheeled skates for a boy who wrote that he wanted to skate indoors on rainy days.

So Mrs. Claus wasn't at all surprised when Santa went into the kitchen and dragged out his paints and began mixing. - trying to get a perfect orange. He had hardly started on this task when there was a pounding at the front door and Marlowe, the sled-making brownie, shouted:

"Come quick, Santa! Flournoy"

Santa dropped his paint brush and hurried to the door. But Mrs. Claus came up right behind him and said, "Don't you dare go out without your cap!"

She snapped the thread she had been using to darn with and pulled the cap over Santa's head. It was only a black stocking cap and it was worn and often mended. "One of these days," grumbled Mrs. Claus "You are going to get a new hat." But she had been saying the same thing for years so it didn't mean anything.

Besides, Santa was gone by that time and didn't even hear. A good thing it was that he hurried, too, because when he got to the work shop he found Flournoy had all but broken the Queen Fairy's wings.

Now Flournoy was a Santa Land elf but he was different from all the rest. For one thing he didn't like to work. And he didn't

like toys and he didn't like children and he didn't like anything but making trouble. He had a terrible temper and he was mean as any elf could be.

How he ever got to Santa Land no one ever knew but he stayed because Santa thought there was some good in everyone and he hoped if he was kind to Flournoy, Flournoy would grow to be kind, too.

But now Flournoy had tried to pull out the Queen Fairy's wings to make an Indian headdress for himself and Santa knew the elf would never be anything but evil.

So Santa took Flournoy's arm and said, "Leave Santa Land and never come here again!"

This was a terrible punishment because no elf or fairy or brownie in all the world had ever been banished from Santa Land.

Flournoy said "I won't go and you can't make me!"

Santa walked all the way around Santa Land drawing a line with a stick in the snow as he went. Then he pushed Flournoy across the line and said, "You can never cross this line." And Flournoy couldn't either because Santa had put up an invisible wall and though you couldn't see it, it might as well have been a brick wall a thousand feet high as far as Flournoy was concerned

Flournoy's face darkened with hate and anger. He said, "I swear by all the witches and goblins and evil spirits in the world that I will pay you back for this."

With that he stomped away and Santa, standing among all his faithful workers, felt a coldness around his heart.



Chapter 4

DANNY COMES TO SANTA LAND.

Flournoy, the evil elf, disappeared from Santa Land but he left behind a great shadow of fear.

"I'll pay you back for this," Flournoy swore when Santa banished him from the land.

"What could he mean?" wondered the Santa Land folk. What awful thing did he plan? How could he hurt Santa if he could not pass the invisible wall Santa had laid about his land?

Santa seemed as calm and jolly as ever. Though he felt fear, sudden and cold in his heart, he did not let his little workers know. He patched the poor Queen Fairy's wings with glue and tape and promised her she would soon be able to fly as well as ever.

Then he said, "Come now, everyone get to work for we must put the bounce in 2000 bouncing balls before sundown."

But before the fairies could return to work Danny and the Snow Man arrived!

"Fancy that - a snow man who walks and talks!" cried the fairies when the Snow Man introduced himself.

"My!" said Santa admiringly. "What a fine toy you would make!"

"Sir," said the Snow Man with dignity. "I could never be tucked away in a Christmas stocking - I am too large. And I could never be placed before the Christmas fire - I'd melt away. So please do not think of me as a toy."

Santa laughed. "What can I do for you then?"

"I should like to stay here in Santa Land for, to tell the truth, it is the only climate in the world that will agree with me."

"Stay," said Santa happily. "And be my friend. But tell me first where did you get your wonderful red hat?"

Then the Snow Man told Santa about the fairy putting the red hat on his head to bring him alive. "If I ever take it off I shall be just a plain snow man and the hat will never work for me again."

"My goodness," gasped Santa. "You must watch out for Mrs. Claus. She so dislikes my own cap she will surely try to trade it for your own"

So, laughing merrily, Santa led the Snow Man and Danny into his house and welcomed them to dinner.

And what do you suppose they had for dinner?

Fifteen different kinds of Ice cream! Vanilla, chocolate, strawberry, caramel, lemon, orange, macaroon, peppermint, pineapple, pistachio, peanut brittle, cherry, chocolate chip, butterscotch and banana.

Now all the time they were eating ice cream Santa kept watching Danny out of the corner of his eye. He was worried because Danny ate some vanilla and a little peppermint and didn't so much as touch another dish. This was a very strange



"You must do whatever the Tree Wizard requires"

way for a boy to act and Santa knew there must be something on Danny's mind.

Finally he said, "I can make most any kind of toy in my workshop. What would you like me to fix for you"

Danny looked at Santa, his eyes filled with hope. "Would you - would you fix my crooked leg?"

Then Santa's heart was heavy. He could bring Christmas joy all over the world but how could he fix a little boy's crooked leg?

"Would you?" cried Danny again, his face white with expectancy.

Santa slowly shook his head.

"Oh, don't say no," cried Danny desperately.

"Perhaps - some medicine - some herb - some tonic -" suggested the Snow Man hopefully. He couldn't bear to have his little friend disappointed.

He rose from the table and walked back and forth across the room four times thinking and thinking while Danny and the Snow Man watched and hardly dared to breathe.

Then Santa put his hand on the little boy's shoulder and said, "Danny, there is a pill which will cure your twisted leg. But to get it you must go to the Tree Wizard and do whatever he asks."

Chapter 5

A BARGAIN WITH THE WIZARD

"Tree Wizard!" gasped Danny. "Who is he?"

Santa drew his chair close to that of the little crippled boy. "The Tree Wizard lives in the Valley of Wasoon. He is a very smart man. Once he cured a woman of a broken heart and once he cured a man whose heart was made of stone. He can cure you if you do what he asks."

"Oh - I will!" cried Danny jumping from the table. "I'll do anything. I'll go now - this very minute." And he began at once to pull on his coat.

"Wait." cried the Snow Man. "Do you imagine you are going without me? You made me and I shall follow you wherever you go. Besides I might come in handy. Who knows?"

Then Santa told them where to find the Wasoon Valley and off they started hand in hand.

Now the Valley of Wasoon wasn't so far away but Danny and the Snow Man had hardly left Santa Land when Flournoy, the evil elf, popped from behind a hedge.

"Ha!" he cried. "So you, too, are leaving Santa Land. Perhaps you'd like to join in my plans?"

Of course he did not say what his plans were and Danny was delighted with such friendliness. "You must join us instead!" he said.

But the Snow Man, though he knew nothing of Flournoy's evil doings in Santa Land, didn't like the elf's face or the way he grinned at them. He said, "Thank you but we'd rather have nothing to do with you" And he pulled Danny along leaving Flournoy growling with fury.

"Why were you so rude?" Danny asked. "I think it would be



"Well, what are you staring at?"

fun to have an elf for a friend."

"That elf gave me the shivers," said the Snow Man. "And, being made of snow, I don't shiver easily. He has something mean on his mind and I don't want anything to do with him."

Danny laughed. "Well, neither do I, then. Come, let's hurry, hurry."

So hurry they did and it would have astonished you to see how fast they traveled: the Snow Man heaving along on his great snow legs and Danny limping along beside him like a giant grasshopper.

Before the day was over they arrived in the Wasoon Valley. Here was a place of magic such as you could never imagine.

Only think: there were at least a thousand trees growing there and every tree was different. One was a climbing tree - with twin trunks fashioned like a ladder and every limb a solid perch where a boy could sit and look over the world.

Another tree glowed with lights and tinsel - a Christmas tree that never died but stayed brilliantly aglow the whole year through.

Another tree was laden with fruit of every kind: Bananas, oranges, apples, pears, pineapples, grapefruit - all on the very same branch!

Soon they stood before a tall tree - so tall you could scarcely see the top. Suddenly one of the branches moved right down the tree and stood before them.

"Well," it said. "What are you staring at?"

Danny gasped and the Snow Man hiccupped they were so astonished. For it wasn't a limb but the Wizard himself!

Indeed, he looked like a tree! Tall and straight and narrow. Brown-skinned and hard.

The Snow Man said, "If you please, sir, if you are the Tree Wizard we have come to ask your help." Then he told the Wizard of Danny's leg and how they hoped he could cure it.

"Yes" said the Wizard. "I have a pill which will surely cure it and make you as fit as any boy you know."

"Oh, thank you!" cried Danny.

But the Snow Man was more practical. He said, "What will be the price, Mr. Wizard?"

The Wizard said, "Ah, yes, there has to be a price. You must bring me another tree for my Valley! A tree more remarkable than any you have seen here today."

Danny and the Snow Man looked over that vast valley of incredible trees and then looked at each other. Where in all the world would they find a tree even half so wonderful as any of these?

Chapter 6

THE STONE TREE

“I have 999 trees in my Valley” said the Tree Wizard. “Bring me one more and I will give you the pill to cure your twisted leg. But it must be a tree different and more remarkable still than any I now have.”

What impossible order was this? For where could one find a tree more astonishing than the Wizard’s Silver Tree whose branches blossomed with silver money instead of leaves? Or the Sleepy Time tree whose branches folded and curved to form a perfect bed covered with a down of leaves and shaded by orange blossoms? Or his Man Tree shaped so truly like a man that the birds never went near it and visitors talked to it thinking it alive?

“Oh, sir.” said Danny, “Where shall we find a tree stranger than these?”

“That is up to you,” replied the Wizard and he doffed his hat and went away.

The Snow Man grunted. “It’s a queer business. All these funny looking trees make me dizzy.”

“But - what are we to do?” cried Danny. “Where shall we even begin to look?”

The Snow Man put his round white arm around the boy’s shoulder “Come, we walk and surely we will somewhere find the tree we want.”

So they left the Valley and walked and walked. I do not know how far they traveled but it was a great distance. They studied trees all day and at night they slept on the ground with the Snow Man curled around Danny like an igloo.

Finally when they had about given up they came upon a tree which had turned to stone.

“Oh, this is it” sang Danny with pleasure.

The Snow Man nodded thoughtfully as he studied the petrified tree - grey and cold and gloomy. “Yes, this might do. Certainly the Wizard had nothing like it in his valley”

So Danny ran to a nearby farm - house and borrowed shovels and he and the Snow Man started digging up the tree.

Well, they dug for hours and hours and it seemed they would never uproot that tree. And, by and by, the Snow Man had to stop digging because he got so hot he was melting away!

So Danny dug on by himself. Every time he thought he couldn’t dig another inch he would think of getting the pill to cure his crooked leg and then he would go right on digging.

After a long while the tree was uprooted and Danny yelled with delight. But he yelled too soon because the hardest part had yet to be done. They had to carry that tree back to the Valley of Wasoon.

Danny was too excited to rest and catch his breath. “Let’s go!” he cried and using all his strength he lifted that stone tree to



They dug for hours and hours

his shoulder. The Snow Man took up the other end and off they started.

I have to have to tell you about the journey back. It was so awful they staggered along under that load for days. Every few yards they would have to drop it to rest and each time they took it up again it seemed heavier than the time before.

The Snow Man kept losing weight and every time they stopped Danny had to build him up with new snow.

But they kept on going and they got as far as the hill which sheltered Wasoon when the terrible thing happened.

They stood at the top of that hill and looked down at the valley and they were as happy as anybody anywhere. Suddenly Danny’s strength gave out and at the same time a piece of the Snow Man’s arm broke off. Instantly the stone tree fell off their shoulders and plunged down the hill behind them.

At the bottom of the hill was a vast lake and, while Danny and the Snow Man stood speechless, the tree ripped and roared down the hillside straight into the lake.

With an enormous splash it settled to the bottom never to be seen again.

Chapter 7

FINDING ANOTHER TREE

Danny and the Snow Man stood speechless as the great stone tree settled to the bottom of the lake far below them.

Here was the end of all their labors and here was the end of Danny's hopes of curing his twisted leg.

The little boy tightened his lips and tried not to cry. The Snow Man was not so brave: great tears ran down his snowcheeks. But the tears were for Danny and not for himself, though his own arm had broken off.

For a long time neither spoke. Then Danny said, "Come and I will fix your arm." He got down on his knees and rolled a fine round arm out of snow and tenderly fitted it to the Snow Man's shoulder.

"I wish I were a snow boy," he said, trying to laugh. "Then I could kick off this crooked leg and make a new one any time I wanted."

"Just the same," said the Snow Man, "It's no fun to be always melting away. You never know what's going to happen!"

Then they began to laugh and they sat down beside the road and laughed and laughed and after a while their heartache was gone.

"Maybe the Wizard already had a stone tree," said Danny.

"Maybe" said the Snow Man. "Or maybe he wouldn't have thought it remarkable enough."

They sat there for a while and stared absently at a little fir tree on the other side of the road. It was quite small - maybe 5 feet tall - but it stood so straight and proud and its branches were so even and its needles so thick and green - there could not have been a more perfect tree anywhere.

I don't know who thought of it first. Maybe the idea came to both of them at the very same time. Anyway, the two of them suddenly jumped up and Danny said, "What's the matter with that tree?" And the Snow Man said, "That Wizard has 999 cockeyed trees in his valley and not a single one is so remarkable as this plain little old fir."

Well, they set to work and dug that tree up and carried it on down the hill to the Valley of Wasoon. The little tree sat lightly on their shoulders and smelled so good and felt so soft it was a joy to carry it.

The Wizard met them at the Avenue of Colored Trees where each tree was a different color - orange or purple or maroon or raw turkey umber - not just the leaves but the bark and branches and all. You never saw such mad looking trees!

"What is that?" cried the Wizard when Danny and the Snow Man put the little tree on the ground.

"It's a Fir Tree," said the Snow Man.

"It's very remarkable," added Danny. "I guess it is the only tree in this whole valley that looks and smells and acts like a tree."

"Mercy me!" cried the Wizard. "What a feather in my cap such a tree will be! Wherever did you get it?"

The Snow Man winked at Danny and said, "That will be our secret. Remember the agreement was only that we should bring you a tree different and more remarkable than any you have."

"Oh, yes, yes," said the Wizard, falling on his knees and smelling and caressing the tree as though he truly had never seen another like it anywhere

"The - the pill?" faltered Danny. "Yes, yes, the pill," muttered the Wizard. He reached in his pocket and drew out a small box holding one tiny pill.

"Here," he said, giving it to Danny. "When you have left my Valley four hours behind swallow this pill and your crooked leg will be as fine and straight as that of any boy you know."

"But take care! If you lose it - there is not another one to be had"



"What's the matter with that tree?"

Chapter 8

THEY LOSE THE PILL

Danny held the tiny pill tight in his fist.

“Just imagine!” he cried to Snow Man. “Just imagine with two legs like any other

The Snow Man grinned. “And what will you do first when have your two good legs?”

“Why,” said Danny. “I shall learn to skate. And then I’ll play football. And I’ll run faster than any other boy and I’ll swim and - oh, but the best thing will be -”

“What?”

Danny sighed happily. “The thing will be that the other won’t laugh at me anymore.”

The Snow Man squeezed hand and for a long time they walked without a word between them. They went so fast in their excitement that, before they knew it, Santa Land lay just ahead.

“Now,” said Danny. “Surely we have left the Valley four hours behind. It is time to take my pill.”

But the Snow Man said, “Let us wait a little bit longer to be sure.”

Danny sat down on a fallen log. “Then we will wait right here because I want my leg to be well and whole when I see Santa again.”

At the word “Santa” the evil Flournoy sprang before them. Danny nearly fell off the log he was so astonished for surely the hideous elf had popped out of the very ground.

“Back again?” said Flournoy. “And what is it you are holding so tight in your hand?”

“Oh, it’s a wonderful pill,” cried Danny, eager to tell his happy story.

“I wish you would go away from here,” said the Snow Man for he hated Flournoy’s evil eyes. “Why is it you are always hanging around on the edge of Santa Land?”

“Because I’m going to play a joke on Santa,” grinned Flournoy. “He is an old busybody doing no one any good.”

“But, you’re wrong” cried Danny. “Only just look what he has done for me: he sent me to the Wizard of Wasoon to get this pill which will straighten my leg.”

“Ah!” said Flournoy. “Let me see your pill.” And before Danny could stop him the wicked elf snatched the box from his hands and leaped into a tree.

“Give that back!” roared the Snow Man.

“Oh, please be careful!” cried Danny. “Don’t lose it! Don’t crush it! Please give it back to me!”

The poor boy jumped up and down helplessly while the Snow Man ran round and round the tree beating at it with his fists. But Flournoy just sat there on a limb and grinned.



“Here, take your pill!”

“Santa would feel pretty bad if he knew you lost your pill, wouldn’t he?” teased the elf.

“But, he won’t lose it,” retorted the Snow Man and he picked up a rock and threw it into the tree. Flournoy leaped down and ran away.

Danny and the Snow Man followed but how could a cripple boy and a man of snow catch an elf who could run faster than a leaf on the wind?

Suddenly Flournoy vanished but before Danny could cry out his despair the elf reappeared at his very side.

“Here, take your pill,” he said, and threw the box at Danny’s feet. Then, laughing shrilly, he disappeared.

Poor Danny never even suspected the evil which had been done. He took the pill from the box and with trembling fingers popped it into his mouth and swallowed it whole.

“Now watch!” he cried joyfully and he held out his crippled leg for the Snow Man to see.

But what awful thing was this! The leg, instead of becoming whole and straight, twisted and turned and, right before their eyes, became more crooked than it was before.

“Merciful heavens!” gasped the Snow Man. “The elf has taken your pill and given you a poisonous one in its stead!”

Chapter 9

OFF TO THE WISHING POOL

Poor Danny! He couldn't say a word. He could only stare at his leg which was now so twisted and knotted it looked like a piece of crooked wood and not like a leg at all.

It hurt, too, like something was pulling at it and turning it all the time.

The Snow Man started to pick him up in his arms. "I'll carry you," he said gently. "For I know how it must hurt."

Danny shook his head. "I'd best learn to use it," he said and his voice was so steady you would never have guessed his heart was broken.

"Perhaps Santa will know what we can do:" said the Snow Man hopefully.

But alas! Santa was as helpless as they. When he saw Danny's leg and heard their story, Santa turned away to hide his sorrow.

"It's my fault," he said, "It is all my fault."

"Why how could that be?" protested Danny.

But before Santa could tell them about Flournoy's desire to hurt him Mrs. Claus bustled into the room.

"Only look!" she cried. "Here's the boy sitting indoors by the fire with his hat and coat and boots on. Certainly he will take cold when he goes out! Come now - not another word until you are warm and rested and fed too."

She swooped down on the boy and peeled off the heavy clothes. My, she smelled sweet! Suddenly Danny wanted to hug her tight. But he knew if he did he would cry and cry so, holding himself oh, so stiffly, he said, "Thank you, ma'am." Mrs. Claus looked at him queerly a moment. Then she kissed him quickly right on his lips.

Well, for a minute, Danny almost didn't mind about his leg, he felt so warm and so loved. And you must remember it was a very new feeling for him. Except for the Snow Man he had never been loved by anyone at all.

Mrs. Claus turned to the Snow Man and said, "You better take off your hat, too, though I can understand why you'd want to wear it - a prettier one I never saw!"

The Snow Man touched his red peaked hat with the white fur trimming. "Ma'am, if I took this off I'd have to say goodbye." And, it was true; too, as they all well knew for the hat was the magic spell which gave the Snow Man life. If he took it off he

would be just an ordinary snow man and never could be real again - not even if he put it on again.

Well, in no time, Mrs. Claus had the three of them cheered up and smiling and no one said a word more about Flournoy. They had a large dinner and this time Danny had a helping from each of the fifteen different bowls of ice cream. He even had seconds in cherry and peanut brittle.

They were still sitting at the table when there was a banging at the door and four little Santa Land brownies raced in followed, at a much more sedate pace, by a beautiful fairy.

"Santa! Santa!" cried the brownies. "Only look at Nadeen! See, would you recognize her?"

They pointed excitedly at the lovely fairy and Santa and Mrs. Claus gasped in astonishment. Nadeen smiled demurely. "I know I was the ugliest fairy in Santa Land," she said. "Then I heard of the Wishing Pool. I went there and bathed and wished I might be beautiful. My wrinkles vanished. My pointed ears

grew small and round. My hair grew fine and golden. And here I am and I know I am beautiful because I feel so beautiful inside."

"See!" cried the brownies. "So we are going to the Wishing Pool at once."

"To straighten my crossed-eyes!" cried Lance.

"To wash away my freckles!" cried Hugo.

"To curl my hair!" cried Hubert.

"To whiten my teeth!" finished Pudding, the last of the brownies.

"But where is this pool?" asked Santa.

"Down the way!" cried the brownies, screaming all together. "Over the hill. Across the clouds. Behind the moon. Under the daisy bed."

With shouts of joy they pushed each other out of the room and into the night.

"Walt! Wait!" cried Danny, who had been sitting all this time in absolutely speechless astonishment but who now found both feet and voice. "Oh, wait for me!"

"And me!" shouted the Snow Man, jumping up and following Danny.

For of course they had the same idea; for Danny to bathe in this wonderful pool and wish to have his leg well again.



"You better take off your hat, too"

Chapter 10

RIDING THE STARS

There isn't any use in your hunting for the Wishing Pool because it isn't there anymore as you soon will see.

But it was there once, in a land far away, so far you could never have found your way there no, not even with thirteen maps and a compass, too.

Listen, now, and you'll know why.

The four Santa Land brownies: Lance, Hugo, Hubert, and Pudding went hurtling through the night with Danny and the Snow Man stumping after as fast as they could. Pretty soon they were out of Santa Land and it's too bad it was so dark else they would have seen Flournoy, the evil elf, who crept up behind them as soon as they had crossed the line.

The wicked creature chuckled to himself when he heard Danny gasp as he ran.

"Ha!" thought Flournoy. "I guess the sight of that leg broke Santa's heart! But now what can they be up to? I'll just trail along and see."

What they were up to is something you almost wouldn't believe: The four brownies stopped and planted seeds!

"What about the Snow Man and the boy?" asked Lance tamping down the ground over his seed. "We have only four seeds."

"Shucks." said Pudding. "The boy can ride with me."

"And the Snow Man with me," said Hubert.

Then quickly Pudding took Danny's hand and Hubert grabbed the Snow Man's arm. Not a minute too soon, either, for suddenly the four seeds sent forth sprouts which burst into the

air at an amazing speed carrying the brownies and their friends, up, up, up - oh. I don't know how many miles into the midnight sky.

But don't imagine Flournoy had been left behind. Not he! For he very quickly understood what the brownies were planting and caught at the topmost stem of Lance's sprout so that he himself was carried before all the others into the midnight sky.

Danny clung to his sprout with one hand and with the other he gripped Puddings shirt. The air wooshed by him and the black night got in his mouth and into his eyes and he couldn't have cried out even if he'd wanted to.

But he did wish he knew where they were going and how much longer he was going to be shot into the air. For surely, he thought, we're going to bang against the top of the sky any minute.

Just about that time, the sprout stopped growing. There Pudding and Danny were, clinging to a vane in a sea of stars.

It was easier to see with all those stars turned on and Danny didn't have any trouble spying the Snow Man hanging to Hubert's sprout nearby and looking scared and breathless as a snow white polar bear that has been in the water too long.

But no one saw Flournoy on top of Lance's sprout. The creature was dark and tiny and would have been hard to find even had one been searching for him.

"Now," yelled Lance. "Grab yourselves a shooting star and we'll all meet in Platonian."

With that the tiny brownie flung himself from his sprout and landed on the back of a falling star. Hugo leaped for another star and Hubert and Pudding followed after.

"I'm afraid," said the Snow Man and you could hear his teeth chattering all over the sky.

"I am, too." said Danny. "But, we can't stay here, that's certain. Look, here comes a big one! Let's get it together"

Sure enough an enormous shooting star was coming their way. Catching his breath Danny leaped for it as it passed below. The Snow Man, who just couldn't be left behind, leaped too, and now they were carried out of the sky even faster than they had gone into it.

But where were they falling to? Truly, they were too terrified to care!



The Snow Man, who just couldn't be left behind, leaped too

THE SNOW MAN HAS TROUBLE.

In just about the time it takes for you to turn a page the falling star carrying Danny and the Snow Man landed on the earth with a solid plump.

What a relief! Danny and the Snow Man opened their eyes - of course, they had them squeezed tight all the way down - and looked around.

This was Platonía where falling stars fall. There were the four brownies: Lance, Hugo, Hubert and Pudding, sitting on their stars nearby - only instead of stars they were just big ugly rocks. The star of Danny and the Snow Man was just a rock, too. But, of course, you knew all the time that stars are only rocks!

"Come on," said Lance. "Follow me."

They slid down from their stars and followed Lance into a forest. Suddenly there was a dull thud behind them.

"Why, that sounded like another star!" whispered Pudding.

"Well, what if it was," said Lance, pushing ahead. "There was no one else but us riding them tonight."

Oh, but he was wrong! For Flournoy had ridden down and even then was creeping after them into the forest.

The little procession had hardly gotten started when the Snow Man cried for them to stop.

"What kind of a land is this?" he asked, wiping the perspiration from his face. "There is no snow and look! the trees have leaves - even in wintertime!"

They all looked where the Snow Man was pointing and it was easy to see, in the first light of day, that every tree was thick with summer foliage.

Then Lance and Hugo and Hubert and Pudding gasped in dismay. "Mercy us!" they cried. "We forgot! This is the far south where it's always warm and never a flake of snow"

"What shall we do?" burst out Danny. "The Snow will melt away!"

And sure enough, the snow was turning to water and running down the Snow Man's face and chest and great big body. It was all so bad that the brownies began to cry and the Snow Man himself cried such big tears they cut long valleys down his cheeks.

But Danny said, "Don't let's stand here and cry. We must get some ice or something to keep him cool!"

Lance said, "There's no place to find ice here."

"What about wrapping him in leaves?" asked Hubert.

"They would simply wash away," moaned the Snow Man. And it's true he was dripping water everywhere.

"We could wrap him in cellophane," suggested Hugo.

"If we had cellophane - which we don't," snapped Lance.



"Tell me a story like you've never told before"

Well, they stood there, not knowing what to do when suddenly Pudding got his great idea. "Why listen," he said, "I can make the Snow Man cool!"

"How?" cried Danny. "Yes, how?" echoed the brownies.

"Easy," said Pudding. "I am a storyteller. I can tell such gruesome, grisly, nerve-tearing stories, they would chill a man sitting in a furnace and send shivers down the back of a red hot poker."

"It's true!" cried the other brownies in relief. "Why once he told us such a frightening story we didn't dare leave the fire side for seven days!"

"Then tell me," begged the Snow Man. "Tell me a story like you've never told before."

"Here I go then," said Pudding and he commenced his story. Truly it was a story so filled with fright and suspense it would have raised the hair from your head to hear it. I won't tell it to you here for what would you do with the shivers?

But I'll tell you that it wasn't long before the Snow Man was hugging himself to keep warm. As for Danny and the brownies, they had to stuff their fingers in their ears so they wouldn't hear and have their blood turned to ice, too.

Now, wasn't that a funny sight: Danny, and the three brownies marching along with fingers in their ears; the Snow Man coming along behind them clenching his teeth to keep them from chattering; and Pudding happily talking away and bringing up the rear.

Chapter 12

WHAT HAPPENS AT THE POOL

The brownies with Danny and the Snow Man walked on and on through the forests of Platonía. And where do you suppose they finally stopped? Right beside a daisy bed!

‘Here we are!’ exclaimed Lance, the cross-eyed brownie as he nodded towards the daisies growing in a miniature wilderness at their feet.

‘But where is the pool?’ asked Danny.

‘Only wait and see, my boy,’ said Hugo, the freckle-faced brownie. ‘This will be the most amazing part of your trip.’

‘More amazing than riding a falling star?’ asked the Snow Man.

The brownies nodded and I think you’ll agree they were right. For suddenly those four brownies got down on their hands and knees and began rolling up that field of daisies! Like a carpet, they rolled it back until, beneath it, appeared a stairway made of moss!

Then Pudding took a big breath - because it hadn’t been easy work, you know - and said. ‘There you are: at the bottom of the stairs you’ll find the Magic Wishing Pool!’

Well, they crept down those soft warm steps and never looked behind to see Flournoy stealing along - so bold now he wasn’t more than two feet behind.

‘Oh, my!’ cried Danny when they reached the bottom of the stairs.

Never had he seen so lovely a sight as the little pool which lay before them, glowing in the reflection of some unknown light, splashing gently with some unknown current.

‘Danny boy, I’m glad we’ve come,’ said the Snow Man solemnly. ‘Anything they say of this pool must be true for I couldn’t Imagine a more enchanted spot.’

‘But, who’ll be first?’ cried Hubert impatiently. ‘Come let’s hurry. I can barely wait to curl my hair.’

‘Let’s have the boy go first,’ said Lance. ‘That’s the only thing to do.’

But Danny, his heart pounding with excitement, shook his head. Now that he was finally really and truly going to be rid of his twisted leg he was overcome with thankfulness. He couldn’t move at all. ‘I’ll just have to catch my breath first,’ he whispered and the brownies smiled for they understood.

Meantime, Flournoy wasted no time in admiring the view. He crept behind some rocks and slid over the twisting tangled tree roots and finally found what he was after: the moss covered gate which held the precious water in the pool.

‘Well, now, fancy that,’ thought Flournoy with a grin. ‘I wonder what would happen if I pulled the gate!’

Now while Flournoy studied the gate the little brownie, Lance, suddenly jumped into the pool.

‘I wish my crossed - eyes would come uncrossed!’ he wished aloud. No sooner had he said the words than his eyes straightened and were as good as yours.

Little Pudding could hardly wait. He followed Lance into the pool and squealed, ‘Oh, I wish my teeth wouldn’t be so dark and stained!’ The next instant he grinned and every tooth shone as white as the Snow Man’s face.

Then Hugo and Hubert had their wishes: Hugo’s freckles washed away and Hubert’s hair curled in ringlets.

Finally Danny stepped into the pool. The Snow Man and the four brownies quivered with excitement as the little cripple boy began his wish:

‘I wish - oh, I wish - ‘

But he never finished for suddenly, with an enormous swoosh, the magic water rushed out of the pool and melted away into the ground.

‘The gate - the gate has broken off!’ cried the brownies in horror.

‘What wicked business is this!’ roared the Snow Man and he and the brownies began talking all at once.

But Danny standing in the empty pool looked down at his crooked leg and said nothing at all.



Finally, Danny stepped into the pool

ONE MORE CHANCE

Every time Danny had a chance to cure his crooked leg Flournoy spoiled everything. And why? Because the wicked elf hated Santa Claus and wanted to hurt Santa by hurting Danny.

Now the little boy stood in the empty wishing pool and looked miserably at his still twisted leg. And finally he began to cry. Oh, very quietly so no one saw or heard him, but crying all the same.

"It really isn't any use," he thought wretchedly. "I guess I was just meant to be crippled forever and never, never have fun like other boys and girls."

Now all this time the Snow Man and the four brownies were working over the broken gate. Finally they set it back in place but it wasn't any use; the pool was empty and there was no more magic water to be had. To this day the lovely little pool has stood empty and that is why you could never bathe there and have a wish of yours come true.

"Never mind," said the Snow Man to Danny. "Worse than this has happened to us and we have come through it. Cheer up now, for we will surly think of something else."

But the Snow Man wasn't so cheerful as he sounded. Truth to he was finding it rather difficult to be a real live Snow Man. It wasn't a restful life, no, not a bit peaceful and relaxed like that of an ordinary snow man. He was always melting away at awkward moments and there were responsibilities, too, responsibilities which the ordinary man of snow never dreamed of.

"If it weren't that poor Danny needs me," he thought. "I'd almost wish I had never come alive. My, it would be pleasant to just stand all day in some snowy field and never have to think and never have to move at all."

So, on the trip back to Santa Land, the four brownies were the only ones who were happy - unless, of course, you could count Flournoy.

Yes, Flournoy was there disguised as a snowflake and travelling back to the north lands right on the tip of the Snow Man's nose. And of course he was quite as happy as he could be.

"Now," he said to himself when he jumped off at the gates of Santa Land (for remember Santa had put an invisible barrier around his land which Flournoy could never cross - - not even disguised as a snowflake!)

"Now, let's see what Santa thinks of this!"

But what Santa thought of it when he heard the story no one ever knew. His face grew stern and thoughtful. He left Danny and the Snow Man sitting in his cottage while he walked from one end of Santa Land to the other making sure his invisible barrier was strong and tight.

"This is terrible," he murmured over and over. "And so close to Christmas, too. My, I'll never be able to finish all my work! But something must be done, something must be done."

But what?

He hurried back to his cottage. On the way a dozen brownies stopped him.

"Santa, will you put the chimney on Ellie Steward's doll house?"

"Santa, you forgot to put balloon tires on Ed North's tricycle!"

And so it went: "Santa, where are the dancing shoes for Mary Bryan's doll? Have you finished the jungle gym for Tom Harris? We can't find the brushes for David Black's box of paints. What are you going to do about Helen Smith's triplet teddy bears?"

"Stop, stop!" begged Santa, holding his hands to his ears. "I can't be bothered with these things now."

"What?" cried the little folks in disbelief. "Not even with Christmas less than two days off?"

But Santa only shook his head and went on muttering to himself. Only one thing he was sure of and that was that straightening Danny's leg was now more important than anything else.

"There has to be an answer," pulling absently at his old black stocking cap. "There's always an answer to everything if only we can think of it."



"Stop, stop! I can't be bothered with these things now"

Well, before he went into his cottage he had the answer! It came to him in the queerest way: he was standing by his porch kicking at the step and the kicking made a thump - thump - and there was the answer as nice as you please.

He burst into the cottage and cried, "Danny! Danny! Mrs. Thump will cure your leg!"

THE MOUNTAIN OF WITCHES

"Mrs. Thump is a witch," explained Santa while Danny's face brightened with brand new hope. "A very nice witch. As a matter of fact, all witches are nice if you get to know them. Now, Mrs. Thump can massage your leg make it well.

"To get to her take my sleigh and reindeer. But hurry for you must be back in 24 hours so that I make my rounds on Christmas Eve."

No need to tell Danny to hurry! He was out of the house and headed for the stables like a deer himself - that is, a deer with a crippled leg - and this time he was sure that all would be well.

As for the Snow Man well, he hobbled right along beside Danny - more wearily, to be sure, but cheerfully just the same. "But I hope 'it's cold where the witch lives," he mumbled to himself.

He and Danny climbed into the sleigh and Santa, standing beside them cracked his long black whip above the heads of the eight reindeer. "Away you go!" he cried. And away they did go - over the fields of Santa Land and, through the forest, and across the frozen lake.

"Goodness," shouted the Snow Man in disappointment, "I thought these reindeer were supposed to fly!"

"Maybe they only fly on Christmas Eve" yelled Danny. "Or maybe Mrs. Thump doesn't live so far away."

Well, whatever the reason, it was a pity. Because, of course, Flournoy saw them when they crossed the boundaries of Santa Land.

"Ah!" he said to himself. "We're off again!" Quickly he



reached in an inside coat pocket and pulled out a pair of wings which he pinned to his shoulders.

Then away he flew so that in a moment's time he was winging his way above the sleigh as silently as doom.

Before very long the reindeer came to a standstill on the side of a mountain. But what a queer place! There were thousands of caves like black open mouths all over the mountainside.

"What a gloomy spot!" exclaimed the Snow Man wrinkling his nose in distaste. "What monstrous things must live here!"

"Don't forget what Santa said about witches," reminded Danny. "You don't want to hurt Mrs. Thump's feelings."

"Oh, I'll be very polite," said the Snow Man. "But what is this?"

His foot nudged a bundle of rags lying before a cave. To his amazement the bundle sat up and a beetle faced witch peered at him in annoyance.

"Do look where you are going!" she snapped.

"Are you - are you Mrs. Thump?" asked Danny.

"Mrs. Thump lives in the seventh cave on the seventeenth row," said the witch and prepared to collapse in the path again.

"But who lives in all these other caves" Danny persisted.

"Witches, to be sure," snapped the bundle of rags. "This is the Mountain of Witches and all the witches of the world live here."

"Even Halloween witches?"

"Certainly. I'm a Halloween itch myself. Now for goodness sake let me to my nap."

With that she did collapse and Danny and the Snow Man trudged up the mountainside to the seventh cave in the seventeenth row.

When they reached it Danny held back. "You go in," he begged the Snow Man. "You ask her. I - I'm afraid." He had had so many disappointments he felt he could not bear another one.

So the Snow Man went in and there was Mrs. Thump sitting on the floor soaking her hands in rose water. What a tiny creature she was! It was extraordinary that a face so small could hold so much that was hideous: marble eyes, slitted mouth, razor teeth and hairy chin.

"P - p - pardon me," said the Snow Man scared nearly silly. "But I've come from Santa Land."

Then he told her about Danny's crippled leg and how Santa had said Mrs. Thump could cure it.

The ugly little face glowed with friendliness. "I'd do anything for Santa Claus," she said sweetly. "Send the little boy in."

Chapter 15

THE TRICK

No sooner had the Snow Man left Mrs. Thump's cave than Flournoy himself popped in.



“Maba, Maba, Boligar, Zwiss!”

“My word,” said Mrs. Thump when she saw the elf's wrinkled face. “Surely you are not Santa's boy!”

“And why not?” asked Flournoy, his little black mouth twisted in a grin.

“Because your face is filled with wickedness and besides your leg is not crippled.”

“No,” said the elf. “I am not the boy. I am Flournoy and I am here to cast an evil spell over you unless you do as I say.”

“Why,” cried the witch indignantly. “I know more spells than you ever dreamed of. Be off with you or I'll turn you into a breath of air.”

“Very well,” snarled Flournoy. “We shall see.”

Before the poor witch could blink her marble eyes the elf leaped behind her and cried, “Maba, Maba, Boligan, Zwis” while his fingers danced in the air above the witch's head.

Instantly Mrs. Thump fell into a deep sleep. “Lucky for you I'm in a good humor,” muttered Flournoy. “I've only put you to sleep for an hour.”

Quickly he pulled off the witch's black robe and wrapped it around himself. He took her pointed black hat and set it carefully on top of his own head.

Then he picked the little witch from her chair and pushed her under the bed.

All these preparations had taken but the tiniest time so that the elf was not even breathless when Danny came into the cave. Flournoy squatted on his heels before a tiny fire and peered at the crippled boy from beneath the wide brim of the witch's hat.

“Please, ma'am,” said Danny politely. “Santa says you can straighten my leg.”

“Indeed -” began Flournoy but stopped at once for he had forgotten to disguise his voice. “Indeed,” he began again in what he hoped was more like Mrs. Thump's voice. “I can and will. Sit down, my boy, and let me see your leg.”

Danny sat down on a stool and held out his twisted leg. “You sound so kind!” he said happily. “I - I really hadn't expected a witch to be so kind. Do you really think you can fix my leg so I can run and play like other boys?”

“Why certainly,” said Flournoy in as pleasant a voice as a wicked creature could ever manage. Now just be patient while I fix up a salve.”

While Danny watched breathlessly the elf put a little black pot on the fire. He went to Mrs. Thump's cupboard and took down several bottles and dumped them one by one into the pot.

Then he threw in some powders and pills and a carefully measured assortment of all manner of witch's magic: A teaspoonful of hate, a sprinkling of dried lightning, a cup of children's tears, a drop of anger - all properly seasoned with worms and spiders and caterpillars.

Danny's rapture faded as he watched this nauseous concoction bubbling on the fire.

“Will it hurt terribly?” he faltered while his mouth went dry and his knees began to shake.

“Now, now,” muttered Flournoy gaily. “Don't be afraid.”

With that the elf sunk his own hands into the hot mixture and drawing them out he suddenly seized both of Danny's legs and frantically rubbed them up and down.

Danny's face grew white and his mouth stretched with pain. And see now what happened: Both legs wrenched and turned like crooked sticks!

And that wasn't all! While Danny stared, unable to speak, the elf threw off Mrs. Thump's robe and hat and showed himself a. he was: The miserable Flournoy, most wicked and evil of elves in all of Christendom.

A PACT WITH FLOURNOY

“Why - why have you done this to me?” whispered Danny when he was at last able to speak.

Flournoy laughed. “I just wanted to show you how powerful I am. I can do anything to you; twist your arm - both arms, perhaps! Move your ears and nose if I please - put the mouth where the eyes are and the eyes beneath your chin. There’s positively no limit to the things I can do to you!”

“But, why?” repeated Danny in distress.

Instead of answering, Flournoy reached in his pocket and pulled out a little bag filled with a white powder. “But,” he said, “I can also do good things for you. This powder, for instance, properly used, will straighten both your legs.”

Danny almost burst with relief. “Oh, it’s a joke! ‘You’ve only been fooling me!’”

Flournoy nodded.

“Then do give me the powder,” begged Danny. “It was a good joke, I guess, though I really didn’t enjoy it very much. But now, if you’ll be so kind - oh, I really can’t wait very much longer!”

Flournoy gave him the powder.

“Do I eat it?” quavered Danny, nearly sobbing with anxiety.

“No, no,” said the elf. “That isn’t it at all. You throw it.”

“Throw it?”

“At Santa Claus.”

Danny’s mouth fell open. Truly, to cure his leg by throwing a powder at Santa Claus seemed beyond all reason. He started to shake his head but Flournoy said, “It’s a part of the joke, you see. Just my silly way of doing things.”

“But - is it true? Will my I really be cured?”

“Yes, really,” said the elf. And if he said it then it was true for even a wicked elf’s word is reliable. “All you need to do is throw the powder over Santa’s head and instantly your legs will be as new.”

Now this was a very puzzling business but, after all, even queerer things had happened to Danny since his snow man came alive. So he said, “All right. I will do it.”

“One more thing,” said Flournoy. “Do not tell anyone until the deed is done.”

Danny nodded and left the cave, though he could scarcely walk at all with two crippled legs. The Snow Man cried in rage when he saw him.

“What awful thing did she do to you?”

“It’s all right,” said Danny. “We’ve only to return to Santa Land before the charm will work.”

“What nonsense!” roared the Snow Man.



Now, at last, the miracle happened!

How Danny would have liked to tell his dear friend the truth! But he dared not for fear the cure would not work. Hopping along on his ruined legs he got in Santa’s sleigh and back he and the Snow Man sped to Santa Land, the Snow Man grumbling furiously all the way.

It was growing dark and Santa frantically packed his bag for it was Christmas Eve and already time for him to be off.

His little workers scurried back and forth bringing him toys from the workshops: Skates, kites, toy stoves, cap pistols, doll carriages, crayons, books, sand boxes, swings - I don’t know how they all fit into one bag, but they did.

Suddenly the workers cheered for Santa’s eight reindeer glided out of the forest pulling the sleigh behind. In a twinkling Danny leaped from the sleigh and hobbled on twisted legs towards Santa while the Snow Man, sighing jogged along after him.

“What happened?” cried Santa in alarm.

But Danny, bursting with his secret, took a fistful of powder from Flournoy’s bag and hurled it over Santa’s head.

Now, at last, the miracle happened; the little boy’s legs trembled then suddenly grew straight and round and strong.

“Oh, look - do look!” he cried, transported with joy.

But instead of looking the Santa Land folk screamed in horror; for dear old Santa, covered with Flournoy’s white powder, lay dying in the snow.

A MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL

The Santa Land folk gathered around poor Santa and wept with terrible grief. Mrs. Claus came running from the cottage and knelt beside Santa.

“You’ve been working too hard!” she cried. “You are just faint for food!” But even as she said it she knew it wasn’t so; Santa was dying and the white powder dusted on his shoulders told them why.

Only Flournoy had such a powder which could cause a man to die. The wicked elf had sworn to revenge himself and now he had in spite of Santa’s invisible barrier.

But what of Danny? He stood on his fine strong legs and oh, he wished he weren’t crippled again! “It’s my fault,” he wept. “I didn’t know.”

Then he told them through his tears how Flournoy had given him powder to sprinkle on Santa and how he had not known that Flournoy hated Santa or that the powder was bad else he never, never, never, would have consented to have his legs cured.

No one blamed him, Santa least of all. Lying there Santa smiled with his eyes at the little boy - though he couldn’t say a word and couldn’t move a finger.

Well, all this time the Snow Man was standing there and his heart was just broken in two. For here were his two best and dearest - and only - friends; one dying and the other wretched forever.

And it wasn’t any use wondering what he could do - for what under the stars could a Snow Man do? But he didn’t have to wonder, anyway for suddenly right there under the stars, he knew without even thinking about it what he had to do.

He reached up and tugged and pulled at his red peaked hat with white fur trimming and fur tasseled top. Without a word he took off Santa’s old stocking cap and put his own in its place.

“No! no!” screamed Danny in horror for well he knew the secret of the Snow Man’s hat.

And Santa’s eyes, too, showed alarm and suddenly he raised his hands to remove the hat.

But the Snow Man shook his head. “It would never work for me again,” he said gently. Then he smiled at Danny and turned and walked away.

Well, the color came back to Santa’s face, his lips moved, his hands grew strong; he was alive - oh, very, very much alive again!

Mrs. Claus cried and Santa beamed but Danny, torn now between grief and rapture, rushed off to the Snow Man who stood quiet and alone a little way off.

“You shouldn’t have oh, you shouldn’t have!” moaned Danny. But the Snow Man said nothing at all.

Santa wearing the Snow Man’s splendid red hat, came up and put his arms around the little boy’s shoulder.

“He is just a snow man, now,” he said gently. “When he took off his hat he broke the charm which made him real. Now he has passed the charm to me.”

Tears rolled down Danny’s cheeks. “He was my only friend.”

Santa smiled. “You will have many, many friends now for remember your crippled leg is well. And you know, I think the Snow Man will be happier now. He’ll always be standing here in Santa Land and never melt away.”

Danny smiled, too. “Santa,” he said finally. “Don’t you ever take off the Snow Man’s hat.”

“Never,” promised Santa. And I think he never has.

Now the Santa Land folk squealed with impatience. “Come on! It’s time to go. You’ll never make it if you don’t hurry!”

They hustled Danny and Santa Claus into the sleigh and pushed the enormous bag of toys in after them.

“Merry Christmas!” the brownies and fairies called as the great red sleigh circled in the air above them.

“Merry Christmas!” cried Danny peering over the side and waving a last farewell at the plump snow man shining under the stars.

And Santa, pulling at the reins and laughing merrily joined in with “A Merry Christmas to all”

THE END



“He is just a snow man now” Santa said gently

Story and images are the property of the family of Lucrece Beale and reprinted with their permission.