

Santa AND THE MAGICIAN

BY LUCRECE HUDGINS

ILLUSTRATED BY E. H. GUNDER

Santa and the Magician

By Lucrece Hudgins

Chapter 1

SANTA AND THE MAGICIAN

Once upon a time there was a man named Mr. Dilly. He was a magician. All his life he had loved magic and had never wanted to be anything except a magician.

He started practicing magic at a very early age. When he was five years old, in fact, he used to hide his carrots and string beans under the potato skin on his dinner plate and say, "Look, mother, vegetables disappeared!"

When he was in school he had scarcely any time to spend on geography or history because he was always studying magic. He knew a hundred tricks. He made the teacher's book leap out of her hands; he caused her chair to screech when she sat down; he gave her a glass of water that turned to ink-

One day he said "Give me your old hat and I will change it into a new hat." The teacher gave him her hat and he shut it up in a hat box and shook it and mumbled over it. But he hadn't studied that trick very carefully because when he opened the box there was no new hat nor old hat either. He never did find either hat. The teacher was mad and would not let him come to school any more.

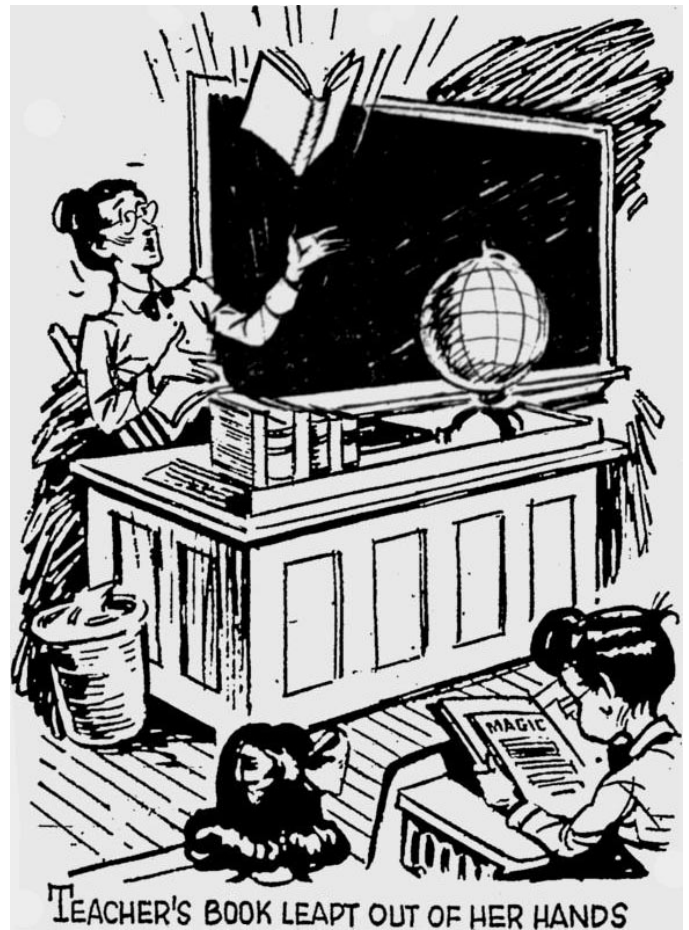
He didn't care. He just went on studying magic. When he grew up he called himself Mr. Dilly the Magician and travelled all over the country putting on magic shows.

Unfortunately, he was never a great success. This is why: he was never able to pull a rabbit out of his hat.

Everywhere he went to put on a show he was laughed at and sometimes even chased out of town when his audience found he could not produce a rabbit. Because what good is a magician if he can't do this trick that almost any magician can?

One December day he came to certain town and put on a special Christmas Magic show. Quite a lot of people came to his tent to see him. He did his very best tricks.

First he took a piece of rope that looked like any clothesline. He waved his wand and threw one end of the rope in the air.



TEACHER'S BOOK LEAPT OUT OF HER HANDS

Strangely, the rope stood stiff, like a stick, one end on the floor and the other end seeming to go right through the top of the tent.

Then Mr. Dilly did his smoke trick. He mixed some powders and liquids and made a big ball of smoke, bigger than himself. He bounced it around the platform,

Next he did his scarf trick. It looked like a regular scarf but when Mr. Dilly unwound it from his neck it got longer and longer and longer and turned from red to yellow to green to purple.

Finally he did his Christmas tree trick. He took a little fir tree and waved his wand and said magic words. Suddenly the little tree was covered with red and blue balls and silver stars and strips of tinsel and flakes of snow.

The audience thought those tricks fine. But presently they began calling, "Get us a rabbit out of your hat!"

So Mr. Dilly took off his hat and said some magic words. But no rabbit came out. He tried, it again. Still no rabbit.

The audience laughed at him and went away saying he was a fake magician who couldn't even get a rabbit out of his hat, Mr. Dilly sat down feeling very sad because that was the way his shows always ended.

Presently, a little boy crept up beside him. He had been sitting in the last row in the tent and stayed behind when all the others left.

"Did you stay behind to laugh at me?" asked Mr. Dilly wearily.

"Oh, no," said the boy. "I am Henry. I have a talking duck."

"Talking duck!" said Mr. Dilly. "How do you do that?"

"I don't do it," said Henry. "It's not a trick. She just talks and I thought - well, maybe you could teach her to come out of your hat Instead of a rabbit."

"Well!" said Mr. Dilly, greatly cheered. "That might solve all my troubles! Let us see your duck."

And he and Henry went Hand in hand out of the tent.

Chapter 2

HENRY AND MR. DILLY JOIN FORCES

Henry led Mr. Dilly to a very queer shed of a house at the edge of the town. It looked so rickety you would have thought even a spring breeze would send it tumbling to the ground. As they turned in at the gate a woman with fly-away hair opened the door and swept the porch vigorously.

“Is that your mother?” asked Mr. Dilly.

“Oh, no,” said Henry. “I don’t have a mother. That is Mrs. Snell. She takes care of me. I guess.”

Just then Mrs. Snell caught sight of Henry.

“You! Where have you been? There’s work to be done, you know. Get in here and scrub the kitchen and fill the wood box and peel the potatoes.” Her voice was dreadfully loud and cross.

Henry said “I went to a Christmas magic show and this is - ”

“Christmas!” cried Mrs. Snell “Just forget about Christmas. There won’t be any Christmas in this house I can tell you - not for boys like you.”

“Pardon me,” said Mr. Dilly politely. “I am Mr. Dilly the Magician. Henry is bringing me to see his talking duck.”

Mrs. Snell a mouth ‘dropped open and she stared at Mr. Dilly unbelievably for a long moment. Then her voice flowed back into her mouth and she cried, “Surely a man as old as you has not been taken in by this foolish story of a talking duck!”

Mr. Dilly looked at Henry as if to say “Have you been fooling me?”

“It’s not a story” blurted Henry. “It’s true. Serena is in the backyard and she talks to me all the time.”

Mrs. Snell burst into laughter. “Not only does the boy do no work, he is silly in the head besides. Why should I have so much trouble?”

“If I could see the duck, perhaps?” suggested Mr. Dilly.

“Yes, come,” said Henry quickly. “I keep her in a box out back.”

But as he started to lead Mr. Dilly around the house, Mrs. Snell whooped, “You won’t find your duck out back now, young man!”

Henry stopped and looked at Mrs. Snell, His face was suddenly quite pale, “Where is she then?” he asked.

“I’ve tied her up in the kitchen,” said Mrs. Snell. “I’m going cook her for dinner.”

Henry gasped. Tears of anger streamed down his cheeks. “I’ll never work for you again!” he said.

“Leave me, then!” shouted Mrs. Snell. “But you won’t get the duck!” And suddenly she took up her broom and began hitting poor Henry. She swept him off the porch and down the walk and gave him a final swat on his head as she shoved him through the gate.



OUT CAME A SKINNY, DUSTY, ANGRY LOOKING DUCK

For a while the boy was blind with dust and anger and tears. It was quite a few minutes before he realized that he was alone in the road, that Mr. Dilly had left him.

“Now what am I to do?” thought the wretched boy, robbed of his pet, left all alone by his new friend, and thrown out of the only home he had. It seemed to him that the world was a most cruel and friendless place.

It grew dark and as he stumbled along he did not see the man at the turn of the road until he had almost walked into his arms.

It was Mr. Dilly.

“What took you so long, boy?” said the Magician. “I began to think I’d have to come back for you.”

“Oh I’m so glad to see you!” said Henry ready to cry with relief.

Mr. Dilly put his arm around the boy’s shoulders. “Son,” he said. “How would you like to team up with me and be my helper?”

“You mean - travel with you and put on magic shows?” gasped Henry. “That would be great! Except - except - ” his voice faded away

“Except what?” prodded Mr. Dilly gently.

“Except for my duck,” whispered Henry. “I can’t bear to leave Serena for Mrs. Snell to eat.”

“If that is all that’s worrying you, you can forget it,” said Mr. Dilly. And he reached in his pocket and pulled out a skinny, dusty, angry-looking duck.

“Why - it’s Serena!” cried Henry.

Chapter 3

MR. DILLY GOES TO SCHOOL

Mr. Dilly gave the queer looking duck to Henry.

“How did you ever get her?” cried Henry. “Mrs. Snell said she had tied her in the kitchen.”

“You forget I am a magician.” laughed Mr. Dilly.

“You mean you used real magic?”

“Well, not exactly. While the old lady was sweeping you out I just went into the kitchen, grabbed Serena and hopped out the back window.”

“Yippitty, lippitty, what a life!” quacked Serena.

“Mercy me! She does talk!” cried Mr. Dilly in delight.

“Hackety, rackety, of course I talk,” snapped Serena. “But I’m most particular to whom I talk and I never ever cared for Mrs. Snell. Mell, pell.”

“There, there” soothed Henry patting the duck “Everything is going to be all right now. We are going to put on magic shows with Mr. Dilly and never see Mrs. Snell again.”

“I don’t know anything about magic,” protested Serena. “I am a poet. I love poems. I spend my life searching for perfect rhymes.”

“I think your rhymes are lovely,” said Mr. Dilly “but would you mind if I pulled you out of my hat?”

“Pockety, lockety!” exclaimed Serena. “Whatever for?”

Mr. Dilly then explained to the duck how he had never been able to pull a rabbit out of his hat and so all his magic shows were failures.

“Mickle, rickle and a rosy lickle,” exclaimed Serena. “I’ll be glad to help you out.”

“Oh,” said Henry joyfully. “Aren’t we going to have a wonderful life!”

And, truly, it seemed so, for what could be more wonderful for a little boy than to roam the world with friend and pet and give magic shows wherever he went.

But, alas, Serena was never able to come out of Mr. Dilly’s hat.

Mr. Dilly took a tall silk hat and pushed Serena into the bottom. Then he laid a false bottom on top Serena and put the whole thing on his head. When he stood before his audience he said, “Now I will take off my hat and show you it is empty then – presto! before your eyes I’ll pull a real live talking duck from the empty hat.”

He took off his hat and the audience burst out laughing. Serena had fallen out of the false bottom and was sitting on Mr. Dilly’s head!

“Leaper, deeper!” said Serena. “It was hot in there.”

But, even this didn’t please the audience; Not being special people like Henry and Mr. Dilly, they thought the duck said,

“Quack, quack.” They didn’t for a moment believe she was a wonderful talking duck and a rhyming duck at that.

After the audience went home feeling cheated, Mr. Dilly talked it over with Henry.

“Perhaps I had better give up magic,” he said sadly. “Now I have you and the duck to take care of maybe I’d better get a job selling tooth brushes or stomach medicines. I’ll never make money as a magician until I can get a rabbit out of hat.”

“I learned to be a poet by going to a school for poets,” said Serena. “Why don’t you go to a school and learn this rabbit trick?”

“Why, yes!” cried Henry. “Right in this town there is a college of science where they can teach you anything.”

So the very next morning Mr. Dilly and Henry and Serena walked into the marble halls of the College of Science. As they walked around they saw many men and women reading large, important-looking books.

At last they came to an office where a sign said, “President of the College.” They went in and found a wise-looking man sitting behind a desk.

“Good day,” said Mr. Dilly politely. “I would like to come to your school.”

“Why,” said the president, “that’s fine. What do you want to study?”

“I want to study magic,” said Mr. Dilly.



Chapter 4

PLANNING A TRIP TO SANTA LAND

“MAGIC!” cried the President of the College of Science. “We teach no magic here! Are you trying to make me look silly?”

“Why, no” said Mr. Dilly. “I thought - I only meant - .” But he could not think of the proper words to calm the great scientist.

Then he got an Idea. He crossed the room and pressed the electric light switch on the wall. At once the room was filled with electric light.

“There,” -beamed. Mr. Dilly. “That’s magic!”

He went into the corner where there was a wash basin. He turned the faucet. Immediately water rushed from the nozzle.

“That’s magic,” cried Mr. Dilly.

“Oh” said the president, smiling. “You mean you wish to study how to do these things!”

“No, no,” cried Mr. Dilly “I would simply like to learn how to get a rabbit out of my hat.”

“What!” screamed the president. He turned quite purple with anger.

“Saint’s, paints!” cried Serena in fright while Henry felt his own knees shake under the scientist’s rage.

“You have been wasting my time,” exploded the president. “If you believe in that kind of nonsense I guess you even believe in Santa Claus!”

“Oh, I do,” murmured Mr. Dilly hurriedly backing through the door.



THE DWARF RAN ROUND AND ROUND SHOOTING A PAIR OF GUNS INTO THE AIR.

“Then go ask him your silly questions,” roared the scientist and slammed the door.

Mr. Dilly and Henry and Serena went into the street. They were not a bit discouraged because now they had this wonderful advice.

“Santa Claus is the very one who can help us.” said Mr. Dilly. “He can do anything and he surely will not mind helping me.”

But Henry said. “How will we ever find Santa? I have never even seen him.” He wanted to say that Santa had never once been to his house in all his life but he didn’t like to complain.

Mr. Dilly said. “There must be a way. I’ll have to think it over.” He sat down right then and there on the side of the road to think.

Serena snorted. “Duck’s luck! Thinking’s no good. I know a Very Important Person in a Very Important Position. He runs a travel bureau and knows the best way to get to anywhere. Come, follow me.”

Straightway Serena waddled off and Mr. Dilly and Henry followed. Now this is easier said than done, for Serena took a strange road under fences, across streams, through hedges, and all kinds of places where it was easy for a duck to waddle but very hard for a man and boy to follow.

But they managed and before long they found themselves at a fish pond where there was a sign which read: George George Frothingham, Trouble-Shooter

“What is a Trouble Shooter, do you suppose?” asked Henry as Serena leaped into the pond and vigorously churned up the water.

Before Mr. Dilly could reply, a bewhiskered purple-haired dwarf sprang from the water and ran round and round the pond all the time shooting a pair of guns into the air, hurting no one but making a big noise.

“Murder, durder! Demons, Jemons! Timbuctoo and a Roundebooi!” screeched Serena, terrified into a truly heroic burst of rhyming.

At that the dwarf opened his eyes (he’d had them squeezed shut all the while), stared about him, then said, “Oh, it’s you, Serena. Why didn’t you say so? I’ve wasted all those shots.”

“Hoddy Toddy,” cried Serena “I never had a chance to say so. Rippitty, hippitty, I’ve brought my friends here and - “

“Stop that silly rhyming!” roared the dwarf!

At this point Mr. Dilly stepped forward and said, “Please don’t quarrel, Mr. Frothingham - if you are Mr. Frothingham - ”

“George George Frothingham,” said the dwarf stiffly. “I’m a trouble shooter and I shoot trouble wherever I find it.”

“Well, we don’t want to cause trouble,” said Mr. Dilly. “We want to get to Santa Land and Serena says you can tell us the way.”

“Perhaps,” said George George. He pulled out from under a bush a brief case. He opened the case and out came the strangest pile of time tables, schedules and maps man or boy or duck had ever seen.

Chapter 5

MAGIC ROUTE TO SANTA LAND

“Gladys Hadys!” exclaimed Serena when she saw what was in the dwarf’s brief case. “What important looking papers!”

Promptly George George Frothingham began repacking the papers. “I positively will go no further, Serena, unless you cut out that rhyming.”

“Slogum Po -” began Serena “I mean – certainly, if you can’t appreciate poetry – “

“Poetry!” snapped the dwarf. “If - “

Mr. Dilly quickly interrupted. “What are those strange papers in your brief case, Mr. Frothingham?”

“They are maps and time tables I have collected over many centuries,” said the dwarf, dumping the stuff out again. “By studying them carefully you can find your way to most anywhere. Here, for instance, is a route I mapped to the moon.”

He drew out a long narrow ribbon of paper covered with strange numbers and letters. He studied it proudly. “You go in your backyard at one minute past midnight on the first night of the new moon in the last month of summer,” he read. “Carry in your left pants pocket a pound of black eyed peas and in your right pocket a thimble.”

“What are they for?” gasped Henry.

“The peas are to pay your fare with and the thimble is to use on your finger when you ring the moon’s doorbell. It might be hot you know.”

Mr. Dilly cleared his throat. “This is very interesting” he said gently. “But we want to get to Santa Land.”

“Oh, yes” said George George. He put away the map to the moon. “But I have so many wonderful trips planned here. It’s a shame more people don’t come to me for advice on their vacations.” He rifled through his papers scattering them on the ground.

“Ships and trains to the Land of Cross Eyed Giants. Best Route including detours to the City Where Boys Never Wear Rubbers. Roads to Yesterday. A Vacation in the Milky Way.”

“My!” breathed Henry staring at the papers in delight. “I never knew people could go to those kind of places.”

“Well, I advertise in the papers,” said George George. “But no one seems to understand me. Or maybe people just prefer to go to the beach in the summer. Now here, I think, is the Santa Land route.”

He drew out a square sheet of paper and studied it closely while Mr. Dilly, Henry and Serena stared over his shoulder.

“Santa Land Express,” read the dwarf. “Take a pack of cards. Dear me, I have no cards!”

Mr. Dilly promptly pulled a pack of cards from his vest pocket. “A magician always carries cards.” he said.

“Good, good,” said George George. “Well, now, it says here to build a house out of the cards.”

Henry and Mr. Dilly immediately set about building a house out of the cards. They had a hard time of it because each time just as they were about to put on the roof the whole thing fell to the ground.

Finally Mr. Dilly pulled out his magic wand and said some magic words-and after that the house of cards stood up fine.

“Now, get in the house,” said George George.

“Swigger swagger, digger dagger!” exclaimed Serena, forgetting her promise not to rhyme.

“Don’t worry,” said George George. “You’ll fit.” He pulled a tiny red chimney from his brief case and put it on top of the card house.

Immediately a strange thing happened: the house began to get bigger and bigger until finally Mr. Dilly and Henry and Serena could walk right in the front door!

As soon as they were in George George shouted, “Now I am going to shuffle you!”



THEY SLID INTO EACH OTHER AND AROUND EACH OTHER UNTIL MAN AND BOY AND DUCK WERE DIZZY.

With that Mr. Dilly and Serena and Henry and all the cards in the house burst into the air with a terrible rippling sound. They slid into each other and around each other and on top of each other until man and boy and duck were so dizzy and so tired they fell asleep.

When they woke they found themselves lying in a snow drift and covered with fifty-two plain, ordinary-sized cards.

“Roll and toss, Middleman boss” squawked Serena. “Wait until I see George George Frothingham again!”

“But look what he has done for us,” cried Mr. Dilly. “Surely this must be Santa Land!”

They looked where Mr. Dilly pointed and saw a little white cottage in the snow. Beyond the cottage they saw row on row of workshops. And beyond workshops they saw reindeer flying above a windswept field.

“It is!” cried Henry. “It really is Santa Land!”

Whooping with excitement he ran as fast as he could towards the wonderful land.

Chapter 6

SANTA PLANS A PARTY

Henry and Mr. Dilly, with Serena in his arms, struggled through the deep snow to the little white cottage. Henry knocked at the door. There was no answer. He knocked again and again still there was no answer.

Henry was disappointed. "Maybe this isn't Santa Land after all," he said.

"Willy, nilly," reproved Serena. "Where else would you find flying reindeers?"

Just then Mr. Dilly spied a folded paper under a milk bottle on the cottage steps. He picked it up and read it aloud.

"Mr. Milkman, please leave 114 extra quarts of milk tomorrow as we are having company, Mrs. Claus."

"Goodness," said Mr. Dilly. "Do you suppose we are the company she expected?"

"If we are, do you think we will have to drink all that milk?" asked Henry in alarm.

Just at this moment a funny little dwarf, his pockets bulging with nails, hammer and Christmas lights, came rushing up on the porch dragging yards of ribbon and wires and tinsel behind him.

"Out of the way! Out of the way!" he shouted fiercely "How can I do anything with thousands of people standing in my way?"

"I beg your pardon," said Mr. Dilly. "There are only two of us and a duck. We will gladly step out of your way if you'll tell us where we can find Santa"

"You'll have to look for yourself," snapped the dwarf:

By this time the dwarf had dragged up a step ladder and was tacking Christmas lights from one end of the porch to the other.

"But, who are you?" asked Mr. Dilly.

"I am Patrick Tweedleknees," said the dwarf. "And if you have come to the party you are two days early and might just as well go home again."

"Joy, mulroy!" cried Serena. "I love a party!"

Tweedleknees looked at Serena with disgust. "I expect there'll be all kinds of queer characters at the party. But even I didn't expect a talking duck."

"She's a rhyming duck," boasted Henry.

"Well, get her away from here whatever she is -"

Suddenly a fine firm voice cried, "Tweedleknees! Behave yourself!"

And there, striding up the steps, was Santa Claus himself, all red and round and happy-faced..

Santa pulled Henry into his arms and gave him the finest hug he had ever had. He shook hands with Mr. Dilly and greeted Serena.



STRIDING UP THE STAIRS WAS SANTA CLAUS.

The party is not until day after tomorrow," said Santa. "But welcome anyway."

"We didn't know about the party," protested Henry.

"But we will be glad to come if we are invited," piped up Serena.

Then Mr. Dilly explained to Santa who they were and why they had come to Santa Land. "I thought you would know all magic and could show me how to get a rabbit out of a hat. I'll never be a successful magician until I can do that."

"Well now," said Santa. "I will try to help you but you must wait until after the party. We're so busy getting things ready -"

"Ha!" snorted Tweedleknees. "I'm the only busy one."

"Don't mind Tweedleknees," laughed Santa. "He doesn't mean any of his harsh words. Come in now and get warm, before the fire."

Seated before the fire he told them about the party he was having. "All my friends have been mad at me because they say they never have any Christmas. So I've invited them here for a Christmas party of their own."

"Who are your friends?" asked Henry.

Santa threw out his arms. "Goodness! You know them all the Halloween witches, the Easter bunny, Tom Thumb, Red Riding Hood, Simple Simon, the Seven Dwarfs."

Henry's eyes nearly popped from his head. "You mean those people are really coming here?"

“Those and many more. Everyone is invited except the Wiggle Waggles. They are some horrid elves who cannot behave themselves even at a party so I sent them no invitation. Now I must go to the shops for a while. Make yourselves at home.”

After Santa had gone Henry cried, “Won’t it be wonderful to go to such a party!”

But Mr. Dilly did not hear a word. He was staring at a little black box in a corner beyond the chimney. On the box were two words. They said “Santa’s Magic.”

“Oh, my,” whispered Mr. Dilly who loved magic more than anything in the world. “Do you suppose Santa would mind if I took one tiny peek into his box?”

Chapter 7

A TERRIBLE LOSS

“Mackerel in a sackerel!” exclaimed Serena impatiently. “Go ahead and peep in the box. Didn’t Santa say make yourself at home?”

Now Mr. Dilly always carried his magic in his pocket. He had a wand and a rope and cards and scarves and goodness knows what else stuffed into his pockets. There wasn’t any room left for even a handkerchief.

But Santa kept his magic in a little black box. Mr. Dilly thought he would be the happiest man in the world if he could just see what Santa’s magic looked like. He tiptoed into the corner and got down on his knees and carefully unhooked the box. Instantly the top sprang open.

What do you suppose was there? A wand. A simple black wand that looked exactly like the wand Mr. Dilly and every other magician carries.

“Doesn’t he have any tricks?” asked Henry in surprise.

“He doesn’t need tricks.” said Mr. Dilly admiringly. “I guess he does all his magic with this. What a wonderful wand it must be!”

He picked up the wand and waved it in the air. “If I knew the magic words,” he said wistfully. “I could get a rabbit out of my hat all by myself I guess.”

“What about your book?” reminded Henry.

“Of course!” cried Mr. Dilly. He pulled out of his coat pocket a little book which was marked For Magicians Only. It explained magic tricks and had 47 pages of magic words and rhymes which magicians use when they do their magic.

Mr. Dilly opened the book to these pages and tried a few while he waved Santa’s wand over his hat.

“Jumbo Mumbo and a heap big tumbo.”

“Hilly Billy, swing your silly.”

Nothing happened at all. But by now Mr. Dilly was determined to find the words which would make Santa’s wand work. He slipped the wand in his pocket and shut the black box.

“Most of these magic words have to be said outdoors,” he explained. “I’m going out in the woods and try it”

Mr. Dilly didn’t mean a bit of harm. He was sure Santa wouldn’t mind if he tried the wand and learned how to do the rabbit trick by himself. But he just couldn’t wait for Santa to come back.

He slipped out the door. Henry and Serena went with him. Tweedleknives had just finished hanging the last Christmas light and was feeling more cheerful

“Where are you off to?” he asked.

“Just into the woods for a bit.” said Mr. Dilly.

“Mind you don’t run into the Wiggle Waggles,” said Tweedleknives. “I hear they are all about the place.”

“Who are the Wiggle Waggles?”

“Very nasty elves. And they are very, very annoyed because Santa did not send them an invitation to the party.”

“Oh yes, I remember.” said Mr. Dilly. “Well, we’ll be careful.”

Oh, but he wasn’t careful at all. He just couldn’t think of anything except how wonderful it was to have Santa’s own wand in his hands and what a really splendid thing it would be if he could learn to work it all by himself.

He settled down in a little clump of trees with Serena and Henry beside him. He put his hat and his little book in front of him and held the wand lovingly in his hand.

For over an hour he worked, reading the magic formulas in the book and waving the wand. Still his hat remained empty.

Finally Henry said, “Please, could I hold the wand just one time?”

Mr. Dilly was quite worn out now. He gave the wand to Henry. Serena said, “I’ll try some of my rhymes.” So Henry waved the wand and Serena said, “A root, toot, toot, who gives a hoot?”

And suddenly there was a rabbit!

But it wasn’t a white rabbit and it wasn’t in Mr. Dilly’s hat. As a matter of fact, it was a plain old jack rabbit that had come hopping through the woods. But Henry thought surely it was a



magic rabbit at last. He whooped and snatched Mr. Dilly's hat and leaned at the little creature.

The frightened rabbit gamboled away with Henry chasing wildly and not even hearing Mr. Dilly calling him back.

In a few seconds it was over. The rabbit darted in a hole where seven brother rabbits were waiting for him. Henry took one good look and saw there was nothing magic about any of them.

Just then Mr. Dilly caught up with him. "Where's the wand?"

Horrified, Henry looked at his hands. They were empty. "I — I must have dropped it," he stammered.

"Quickly, start looking!" cried Mr. Dilly. "You, too, Serena. We must find it!"

But, alas! though they searched until dark they could not find the wand.

Chapter 8

HENRY MEETS A WIGGLE WAGGLE

Poor Henry. Poor Mr. Dilly. Never were two people so unhappy.

"It's all my fault," wept Henry. "I must go away. Santa will never want to see me again."

"No," said Mr. Dilly, almost in tears himself. "It is all my fault for taking the wand. I will tell Santa and give him all my own magic tricks. I'll never try to be a magician again."

Sadly they returned to Santa's cottage. There they found great excitement. Santa sat before his fire surrounded by Patrick Tweedleknesees and a host of other little folk. Everyone seemed to be talking at once. Everyone except Santa who was quietly reading a letter.

"Mercy, dergy!" said Serena cheerfully. "Has the party started?"

The little folk swarmed around the newcomers "Did you see any of them?" they cried.

"Any of who?" asked Mr. Dilly in surprise.

Santa looked up from his letter. "Ah," he said with a sigh. "The Wiggle Waggles have sent me a letter. They are angry that we did not invite them to the party. They say they will come anyway and beware for none of us will be left alive."

Every worker shuddered. "Oh my, oh my, what will become of us!"

At this moment Mrs. Claus burst into the room carrying a tray loaded with hot fresh doughnuts.

"Nothing is to become of us" said Mrs. Claus cheerily. "Have you forgotten Santa's magic wand? One wave of it and he can turn all those creatures into gum drops!"

Instantly the workers were cheered but Mr. Dilly said in a quivering voice, "Don't the Wiggle Waggles have magic, too?"

"Oh, yes," said Santa. "But their magic is for wickedness. My magic is for good. My magic is much stronger than theirs." He tossed the Wiggle Waggles' letter into the fire and yawned. "Come to bed now. We have a busy day tomorrow."

The workers departed carrying fistfuls of Mrs. Claus' most delicious doughnuts. The cottage was suddenly quiet. Now was the time for Henry and Mr. Dilly to confess the awful thing that had happened to Santa's wand.

But they could not bring theme selves to begin. Mrs. Claus bustled around them. "Sakes you look like sad ones! My

goodness, cheer up. We can't have the glooms in Santa Land. You would break Santa's spirit and what would Christmas be then?"

She hustled them off to the kitchen where she set out a turkey dinner with no vegetables and six kinds of dessert.

But poor Henry and Mr. Dilly could not swallow a bite.

"We cannot tell him tonight," whispered Mr. Dilly when Santa and Mrs. Claus went into the pantry. "We'll go out in the morning and find the wand. It's bound to be there somewhere. If we told Santa now - it's true what Mrs. Claus said - we might break Santa's spirit."

After dinner Mrs. Claus put Henry to bed on a couch near the fire, Mr. Dilly stretched out on the rug and Serena squatted under a chair. But Henry never slept that night.



At daybreak he got softly from the couch and crept out of the cottage. He went to the little wood where he and Mr. Dilly had practiced their magic the day before. But now all seemed more hopeless than ever for a fresh snow had fallen and covered all tracks.

He got down on his hands and knees and explored the ground turning up the snow with his bare hands. Time and again his fingers fastened on a stick but when he drew it out it was only a twig, never the wand.

Suddenly he heard a snorting and a honking and a clattering in the trees. He sprang to his feet and wondered whether he should not run away.

But it was too late, for coming through the woods was a queer creature no taller than Henry. His nose was blue and honked when he blew it. His ears were as large

as coffee saucers.

He walked straight up to Henry, honked his nose and said, "Are you looking for Santa's magic wand?"

Henry was so surprised and so joyful he could hardly speak, "Ha-have you found it?" he finally exclaimed.

"I have."

"Oh, please let me have it!"

"Follow me," said the creature. But just as Henry, filled with relief, was about to obey he stopped in horror.

For the ears on the blue nosed one were moving strangely: they were wiggling and wagging on the creature's head. He was, in fact, a Wiggle Waggle.

Chapter 9

THE WIGGLE WAGGLE CAVE

“Oh, my!” gasped Henry in terrible fear. “You must be one of the Wiggle Waggles.”

“Right you are,” said the elfin creature. He took a strawberry colored handkerchief and gave his nose three loud honks. All the while his saucer like ears wiggled and waggled like aspen leaves in a breeze. “Come, now. Follow me.”

He turned into the woods. Henry did not know what to do. If these elves were as wicked as he had heard, should he not return to Santa Land as fast as his quaking legs could carry him? On the other hand, the creature said he had Santa’s wand!

“I must go with him,” decided Henry. “No matter how dangerous.”

Immediately he started after the Wiggle Waggle. He cheered up when he thought how happy and surprised Mr. Dilly would be when he returned with the wand.

The Wiggle Waggle pushed on through the woods. Henry’s feet sank deep into the snow but the Wiggle Waggle seemed to walk on top of the snow and have no weight at all. In fact he went so fast that Henry would have lost him if the Wiggle Waggle had not stopped from time to time to honk his nose.

At last Henry caught up. “Where do you live” he asked breathlessly.

“Oh, the Wiggle Waggles are scattered all over the world,” said the creature. “You probably have heard us honking and never knew what it was. We’re usually invisible you know.”

Now Henry could remember many times lying in his bed at night and hearing strange noises in the black house of Mrs. Snell. Had it been one of the Wiggle Waggles blowing his nose? He wondered with a shiver.

“But now,” went on the elf. “We have all come north because of course you know Santa is having a big party tomorrow. Simply everyone is invited. Everyone except the Wiggle Waggles. We are quite angry about it and mean to pay Santa back.”

This sounded very rude to Henry. He started to say that he thought the Wiggle Waggles should just forget about it and maybe Santa would invite them the next time he had a party. But before he could say this, the Wiggle Waggle darted into a cave. When Henry followed him he very soon saw why Santa felt the Wiggle Waggles should not come to any party of his.

For the Wiggle Waggles appeared to be the most quarrelsome people in all of elfdom. What a honking and squalling and wagging of ears there was in that cave! Henry stood perfectly still and stared about in astonishment.

There were about a hundred blue-nosed, saucer-eared creatures pushing each other around. Some were slapping each other, some were kicking, some were pulling hair, and all of them were honking their noses and howling.

“Goodness!” cried Henry. “Why are they fighting?”

The creature who had led him there shrugged his shoulders. “We always squabble,” he said matter of factly. “Can’t help it.”

One Wiggle Waggle ran across the cave dragging behind him another Wiggle Waggle by the hair. The two of them crashed against Henry and then rolled over and over, screeching and digging at each other with their nails.

Henry was so frightened he started out of the cave. But at that very moment there was an extra loud honking and a deep voice cried, “Be quiet, the boy from Santa Land is here!”

Instantly the Wiggle Waggle quieted. The biggest and ugliest one then said to Henry. “I am Zezop. What do you want?”

“I – I won’t stay long,” stammered Henry. “I - I just came to get my wand – Santa’s wand, that is.”

“My brother, Humphrey found the wand in the woods.” said Zezop.

“Then - may have it? It’s really very important, you know.”

“We know very well how important it is.” snapped Zezop. “Are you going to Santa’s party tomorrow?”

“Why, I suppose so,” said Henry. Then he added, “If you did not squabble and quarrel so terribly I’m sure Santa would have invited you.”

“We’ll be there anyway,” cried Zezop fiercely.

What could he mean? Perhaps he is not going to give me the wand thought Henry in dismay. But at that very instant Zezop reached into his coat and pulled out a magic wand

Overjoyed Henry grasped it. “Oh, thank you! You are very kind!”

And bursting with happiness he left the cave and ran towards Santa Land.

If only he had known! The wicked Zezop had kept Santa’s wand and given Henry the Wiggle Waggles’ wand which could work only evil magic.



Chapter 10

A PRESENT FOR HENRY

Henry ran back to Santa Land as fast as he could. Mr. Dilly and Serena were waiting for him in Santa's cottage.

"I've got it! I've got it!" cried Henry handing the wand to Mr. Dilly.

"Thank goodness!" cried Mr. Dilly. "When we woke and found you gone I did not know what to think. I couldn't come after you because Mrs. Claus asked me to stay and watch her cakes."

"Hippy dippy," broke in Serena. "You never seen such cakes as they are making for tomorrow's party. Come boy, there are spoons to lick!"

"No, no," protested Mr. Dilly. "Tell us first how you found the wand."

So Henry told them about the strange Wiggle Waggles and how he feared them because of their fierce manners.

"Well, they can't be very bad since they gave you the wand," said Mr. Dilly.

Then he took the wand and put it in Santa's little black box. He felt wonderfully happy, "Now Santa never need know it was gone," he said thankfully as he shut the box and returned it to the corner. Neither he nor Henry dreamed that it wasn't Santa's wand but the Wiggle Waggles' wand which Zezop had wickedly traded.

"Now, come into the kitchen," said Mr. Dilly "Mrs. Claus has left us to watch her cakes while she is at the ice house tending the ice cream."

What cakes they were! As large as wash tubs and smelling so sweet a boy could hardly stand if he wanted piece so badly. On the tables were great bowls of frosting: caramel, coconut, chocolate, orange, mocha.

And sure enough there were spoons to lick and Henry licked them.

Presently Mrs. Claus came in and said, "Come with me, Henry. I need your help."

She took him to the Ice house - which really was a big house made of cakes of ice. There were fourteen ice cream freezers - each as big as a cement mixer.

"My," said Mrs. Claus. "I don't know how I'll get everything ready on time. I still have the favors to make. I do wish you would stay here and keep tasting the ice cream until it tastes right to you.. Then turn off the freezers."

What a job for a boy! With spoon and saucer in hand Henry moved from freezer to freezer, tasting as he went.

By then it was time to turn off the freezers, which was a lucky thing for Henry, I think. He came out of the ice house and went to the toy shop nearby.

What confusion!

The little Santa Land folk worked madly at their benches, putting heads on dolls, blowing up footballs, driving nails into



A FUNNY LITTLE BROWNIE LED HENRY INTO A JIG, wagons, painting tops and a hundred other jobs which had to be done before Christmas.

As they worked they sang and whistled and sometimes even dropped everything while they danced a jig on the work table. Of course this slowed things up a little but it made them happy and of course only truly happy people can make good toys.

Still, it made old Patrick Tweedleknees furious, he stomped around the shop pounding his fists on the tables.

"We might as well give up Christmas," he stormed. "No one does any work except me. Stop that dancing! Stop that noise!"

No one paid the slightest attention. Instead, a funny little brownie with enormous feet saw Henry and darting to his side, he snatched his hands and led him into a jig.

Tweedleknees threw up his hands. "The party has started already, it would seem," he said sourly.

"Of course it has," cried a lovely fairy and before Tweedleknees could help himself she had caught his arm and led him into the dance!

Then everyone joined in and what a sight it was to see as they all leaped and hopped from table to bench to floor, round and round the shop, with Patrick Tweedleknees the liveliest of them all.

Finally, gasping for breath, Henry said he must leave, for Mr. Dilly would be wondering where he was.

"Wait, wait," cried Patrick Tweedleknees hobbling up and taking Henry's arm. "That was the merriest dance I ever had, boy, and you were the cause it. Here, now, here's a little

Christmas gift for you.” He handed Henry a tiny box wrapped in tissue and tied with red ribbon.

Henry was so happy and so surprised he could hardly keep his fingers steady as he pulled eagerly at the ribbon.

But Tweedleknees shouted, “No, no!”

Henry looked up in dismay.

“Do not open until Christmas!” said Tweedleknees sternly but, giving Henry, all the same, his very nicest smile.

Chapter 11

THE PARTY

It was the night before Santa's party and all through Santa's house not a creature was sleeping though all were snug in their beds

Mrs. Claus could not sleep because she was counting cakes and cookies instead of sheep and wondering if she had made enough. Santa couldn't sleep because he had just thought of a new toy he wanted to make for Christmas, a bicycle with water wings which a boy could ride on the ground or pedal in water, whichever he wished.

Mr. Dilly lay wide awake worrying about the rabbit trick and wondering when Santa would find the time to show him how to do it.

As for Henry and Serena - they were too excited to rest. Henry had Tweedledee's present under his pillow where he could feel it from time to time. What could it be? What could it be? Would Christmas never come!

Along about half past midnight they all fell fast asleep but merciful day! No sooner had they begun to dream than there came a swishing and clattering and hallooing all about the roof of the tiny cottage.

They sprang from their beds and ran to the windows. It was black night and not a thing could they see.

Then came a thundering at the door. Quickly Mrs. Claus lighted the lamps and Santa threw open the door. In walked seven of the ugliest witches that ever flew brooms on a Halloween night.

Henry shook with fright and Serena hid in the wood box while Mr. Dilly snatched up two umbrellas to defend them all.

But Santa cried. "Come in! Come in!" and Mrs. Claus said, "Goodness, I'm so glad to see you!"

The seven witches clomped in dragging their brooms behind them.

"We had to come early, you know," screeched the ugliest witch. "We can ride our brooms only from midnight to one."

"Don't worry about us," chortled another. "We'll curl up under the stove and never be a bit of bother."

But Mrs. Claus knew that witches hate to sleep at night. Besides, when you have a party only once every hundred years or so you don't mind missing a night's sleep. So Mrs. Claus wrapped herself in her best red woolen bath robe and put a big pot of cocoa on the stove.

"We'll start our party this very minute," she declared. "Santa, do poke up the fire and put your slippers on, too. Mr. Dilly, find seats for everyone. Henry, bring me sugar and cinnamon for toast."

In a moment the little cottage was bursting with activity. What an odd sight it all was: Mrs. Claus with her hair still wrapped in paper curlers, Santa in his red pajamas and slippers, and the seven witches strewn about the room like long legged dolls suddenly come to life.



"THE UGLIEST CREATURES ARE VERY OFTEN THE KINDEST," SAID THE WITCH.

"Are you, really the witches who fly on Halloween night?" asked Henry when he had overcome his fear.

"Indeed we are," said a witch. "Are you one of the boys who throws stones at us and locks the door against us?"

Now Henry had thrown stones at Halloween witches but how could he ever have known they were nice like this?

"If only you weren't so ugly!" he blurted. "Then boys would not be so afraid of you."

"It is a good thing for you to learn," said a witch, "That the ugliest creatures are very often the kindest," And she drank her smoking cocoa down in one great swallow.

What a wonderful night it was!

At dawn other guests arrived for the party. By nine o'clock everyone had come. There were three men in a tub, Simple Simon carrying an extra load of pies, Little Boy Blue holding Miss Muffet's hand, Tom Thumb, Cinderella, Yankee Doodle, Father Time, the Gingerbread Man, Jack Frost and many many others.

The Santa Land workers raced from the shops and started games and dances and songs. Mrs. Claus set out bowl after bowl and platter after platter heaped with butterscotch rolls, ham with eggs, pancakes, waffles and sausage.

Santa and the Easter Rabbit talked about children they knew - which were good and which were bad and which were only middling. Mr. Dilly found a quiet corner and discussed magic with the Wizard of Oz. Henry went off for a snowball fight

with Pinocchio. Serena played checkers with Red Riding Hood's wolf.

But alas! all this pleasure could not last. Suddenly the terrible blue-nosed, saucer-eared Wiggle Waggles burst into Santa Land.

The Santa Land folk and their guests quivered with fear.

But Santa was undisturbed, "I'll get my magic wand." he said, "And we'll soon be rid of them."

Chapter 12

THE AWFUL CURSE

The Wiggle Waggles burst into Santa Land screeching and honking their blue noses and wiggling and wagging their tremendous saucer ears in the most terrifying way.

They surrounded Santa's yard where all the story book guests had been having such a lovely party with the Santa Land folk.

"Break up the party!" bellowed the Wiggle Waggles "Grab the food! Burst open the shops! Steal the Christmas toys! Tie Santa in knots!"

As they shouted they really set about doing all these terrible things. One ugly Wiggle Waggle grabbed little Bo Peep by the hair and kicked furiously at her poor sheep. Another chased the Gingerbread Man around and around the house. He finally did catch him and bite off a chunk of the boy's shoulder. Another snatched Boy Blue's horn and smashed it to pieces.

Henry saw Zezop, the leader of these wicked creatures. "Why have you come here like this?" cried Henry. "Don't you know Santa can destroy you with a wave of his magic wand?"

"Let's see him do it," retorted Zezop.

Now Santa had gone in the house to get his magic wand from the little black box. At this very moment he came out on the porch.

"Save us! Save us!" cried all the frightened guests. "Change the wicked ones into gum drops!" shouted his own little folk.

Santa nodded. Slowly he waved his wand from side to side. "Let all the Wiggle Waggles turn to gum drops!" he whispered.

Hardly were the words out of his mouth then the magic began to work. But heavens! instead of the curse falling on the wicked Wiggle Waggles, his own Santa Land workers and all their guests began turning into gum drops!

Santa cried out in surprise. He waved the wand again. It did no good. His people were gum drops. The Wiggle Waggles were free and more powerful than ever.

"Well," said Zezop to Henry, "What do you think of Santa's magic wand now?"

"I - I don't understand" mumbled Henry.

Zezop pulled a magic wand from his coat. "Perhaps Santa would prefer this wand?"

Henry looked and suddenly he knew what had happened. Zezop given his own wicked wand and kept Santa's for himself. With the Wiggle Wiggle's wand Santa could work no magic for good and could never destroy the Wiggle Waggles.

Now the Wiggle Waggles began running about the yard picking up gum drops and stuffing them in their pockets. Only Santa, Mr. Dilly and Henry remained. I expect they, too, would soon have turned into gum drops if Santa had not just then called, "Quickly follow me!"



"WE'LL GET AWAY ON THE REINDEER," CRIED SANTA.

He began running towards the barn where his reindeer were kept. "We'll get away on the reindeer," cried Santa as he led Henry and Mr. Dilly across the snow.

The Wiggle Waggles were too busy to follow. They picked up all the gum drops and lapped up the party food and crashed through all the Christmas toys.

They pulled the arms off teddy bears, punched out doll baby eyes, stuck holes in balloons, smashed blackboards.

Breaking up things was their idea of fun but soon they grew tired even of this and began squabbling among themselves. The Wiggle Waggles, you know, are the world's most quarrelsome folk. They are not happy unless they are squabbling. That is why no one else wanted to have them around.

"Let's go after Santa now" said Zezop.

"But," said Humphrey, "I heard them say they would escape on the reindeer."

Zezop snorted. "Don't worry. We will catch them."

Then the Wiggle Waggles began to quarrel. "What shall we do with Santa? Turn him into a worm? No, stupid, a turtle. No, no, a fly! Why, not turn him into a baseball bat?"

Zezop put an end to the fuss. "I can't turn him into anything with this wand," he said, looking at Santa's wand. "It works only for good. We'll just have to catch Santa and his two friends and destroy them without magic."

With a whoop of delight the Wiggle Waggles charged towards the barn, honking their blue noses and tripping over one another in their eagerness.

“Alter this,” screamed’ Zezop. “We will be the only magic folk left in the whole world. Think of how much fun we can have frightening little children! And think how awful they will feel when Santa never comes to their homes again!”

Chapter 13

MR. DILLY TRIES SOME TRICKS

Santa, with Mr. Dilly and Henry close behind him, ran into the barns where the flying reindeer were kept.

“We’ll fly away on the deer.” said Santa puffing and panting. “Then we can decide what to do next.”

“Where are the deer?” cried Mr. Dilly. “It’s so dark in here I can’t see them.”

“Henry, light the lamps.” ordered Santa.

Quickly the boy obeyed. Santa and Mr. Dilly and Henry each took a lantern to the stalls and peered in. There were no reindeer. Instead eight little gum drops, green and orange and yellow, lay in the straw.

“Oh, my!” gasped Santa. “I can’t think what has happened. I can’t understand why my magic wand caused this terrible thing.”

Henry dropped his head. He had to tell Santa what had happened. “It’s all my fault,” he whispered so low Santa could scarcely hear him.

“Why, boy?” exclaimed Santa in surprise.

“No, no!” cried Mr. Dilly in a loud voice. “It’s all my fault!”

“Why, man?” cried Santa, more surprised than ever.

Then Mr. Dilly and Henry told Santa how they had taken his wand in the woods to learn how to get a rabbit out of Mr. Dilly’s hat. They told how they had lost the wand and the Wiggle Waggles found it and gave Henry their evil wand in its place.

“And that’s the wand you have now,” finished Henry. “That’s the reason it cursed our friends instead of the Wiggle Waggles.”

For a long time Santa sat L thinking. Finally he said, “I do not dare use this wand again for who knows what evil it might cause. But, anyway, the Wiggle Waggles will never have it again!”

With that he broke the stick over and over across his knee until it was in a dozen pieces and of no use to anyone.

“Now,” he said “We must get back my wand and all will be well.”

“I’ll go after it!” cried Henry. “I’ll get it some way. They won’t fool me again.”

“No,” said Santa. “Next time they get you will be the end of you for they mean to destroy us all.”

At that very instant they heard the whooping and howling of the Wiggle Waggles as the wicked creatures raced to the barn.

For the first time Santa seemed truly worried. “Only magic can save us” he murmured.

Mr. Dilly flung up his hands. “Merciful day! I had forgotten I was a magician. I have a thousand magic tricks! Come let’s hurry outside.”



They ran out behind the barn. “What trick could you possibly know that would save us?” asked Santa.

“I must think,” said Mr. Dilly. His chin sank on his chest as he thought and thought. All the time the Wiggle Waggles came closer on the far side of the barn. You could almost hear them breathe as Mr. Dilly quietly thought over every trick he’d known in all his life as a magician.

Suddenly Zezop appeared around the corner of the barn.

“Too late,” whispered Santa sadly.

A hundred Wiggle Waggles joined Zezop and pushed around the corner. “Too late!” they echoed gleefully.

But Mr. Dilly raised his head. So quickly that no eye could follow his hand, he yanked a rope from his pocket and flung one end into the air.

“It’s the magic rope trick,” he shouted. “Follow me!”

Santa looked and Henry looked and even the Wiggle Waggles stopped to look. Mr. Dilly’s rope was standing straight up on the ground and Mr. Dilly was climbing the rope!

In an instant Santa and Henry followed and all three climbed steadily into the blue. In the next moment the Wiggle Waggles had recovered from their astonishment but when they raced to the rope it really was too late - this time too late for them. Santa had pulled the end of the rope up after him and the Wiggle Waggles could never reach it.

Meantime the other end of the rope rose as far as the eye could see. Mr. Dilly, Santa and Henry climbed for hours. When they were too tired to go on Mr. Dilly tied the rope into rings and they all three sat down in midair to rest.

“Mr. Dilly,” said Santa. “This is one of the finest tricks I’ve ever seen. You are a great magician.”

“Well,” Henry reminded them abruptly. “We got away that time but what do we do now?”

Chapter 14

THE THUNDERBIRDS

Santa, Mr. Dilly and Henry sat on the magic rope in the middle of the sky and wondered what to do next.

“There are only three more days until Christmas,” said Santa. “If we cannot win Santa Land back from the Wiggle Waggles very quickly there just won’t be any Christmas.”

“Nor any Easter,” said Henry. “Nor Halloween. Because the Easter Rabbit and the Halloween Witches are gum drops.”

Just then there was a crashing sound and three great big black birds swooped out of the clouds. They flew round and round thundering furious noises.

Henry ducked his head behind Santa and put his fingers in his ears. “Are those Wiggle Waggles?” he cried.

“No.” shouted Santa. He had to shout above the noise. “Those are Thunderbirds. They carry storms to the earth. They are friends of mine.”

“If they are friends,” suggested Mr. Dilly in a shout. “Do you suppose you could ask them to be a little quieter. I can’t think with all this noise.”

Before Santa could reply the Thunderbirds recognized Santa and stopped their noise without being asked. “What in the world are you doing up here in the sky?” they asked in surprise

Santa told them the sad story of how the Wiggle Waggles had come to the party and caused all their friends to be turned into gum drops - even Mrs. Claus and Serena. “There’s nothing I can do until I can get back my wand,” finished Santa.

“This is dreadful!” moaned the Thunderbirds. “Would it help if we made a big storm in Santa Land? Of course all we can do is thunder but we can thunder awfully loud.”

“Let us try it,” said Santa. “Perhaps we can scare them off. Could you carry us on your backs?”

Yes. Indeed. The Thunderbirds are strong as well as loud. It was no trouble to them to carry Santa, Mr. Dilly and Henry astride their backs. When all were aboard Mr. Dilly rolled up his magic rope and put it in his pocket. Then down swooped the three Thunderbirds and their passengers straight to Santa Land.

The Wiggle Waggles looked up in terror when they heard the rumbling. Crashing, reverberating thunder rolling down upon them. They ran in circles looking for cover from the storm.

After a while they discovered there is no real storm, only thunder. But thunder so awful that it seemed the whole sky must be breaking up and ready to fall on their heads.

“Do something!” screamed the frightened Wiggle Waggles to their leader.

“What can I do?” roared Zezop. “Do you think I can roll up the thunder and put it in my pocket?”

“You have a magic wand,” screamed Humphrey. “Put a curse on the sky.”

“Not with Santa’s wand,” retorted Zezop. “It works only for good.” Then he thought, if Santa’s wand can do good things it can certainly stop a storm. “I’ll try it anyway.”

So he pulled out the wand and said, “Let there be a rainbow!”

Scarcely had he finished speaking when a rainbow actually arched across the sky, The Thunderbirds zooming over the land suddenly lost their thunderous voices.

“We must fly away,” groaned the Thunderbirds. “When a rainbow comes we must leave.”

“Drop us off first,” said Santa.



The giant birds, quiet now, darted low behind Santa’s cottage and dropped off their passengers.

“Now,” said Santa. “We must figure out a way to get close to the Wiggle Waggles without their seeing us. That’s the only way we can get back the wand.”

“We need a smoke screen,” said Henry.

At once Mr. Dilly began digging boxes and bottles from his pockets. “A smoke screen is as easy as the rope trick for a magician,” he smiled. He opened his boxes and bottles and dumped their contents into his hat. He shook them and stirred them and blew on them and whispered strange words to them.

In a few moments a wisp of smoke sprang from the mixture. It grew stronger and thicker each second until there was a dense white cloud.

“Surely you are the world’s finest magician,” gasped Santa.

“If only I could get a rabbit from my hat,” Mr. Dilly reminded Santa for the twentieth time as the three of them wrapped themselves in the smoke screen and started off for the Wiggle Waggles.

Chapter 15

SANTA IS CAUGHT

The Wiggle Waggles stood about in front of the ice house gobbling up the fourteen different kinds of ice cream Mrs. Claus had made for her party. They were quite tired and cross from the long day. Soon they got bored with eating the ice cream. They began to throw it at one another instead

They were so busy doing this that they did not see the ball of smoke until it was quite close. Humphrey wiped a blob of strawberry cream from his eyes, blinked, and shouted:

“There’s a ball of fire rolling upon us!”

The ice cream fight ended. The Wiggle Waggles turned and gaped at the astonishing ball which seemed to have come from nowhere and was rapidly rolling towards them.

“This is a terrible land!” wailed one Wiggle Waggle. “You never know what strange thing is going to happen. I with we’d left it all to Santa in the first place!”

“Nonsense!” roared Zezop, the leader. “This is just some trick of Santa’s and - ”

Before he could say anything more the ball of smoke burst into the midst of the Wiggle Waggles, sending them screaming and wailing in frightened circles. Zezop turned and fled. The smoke followed, sometimes touching his heels, sometimes even wrapping itself for an instant around his head.

All the time he was running, Zezop was getting out Santa’s magic wand and thinking how he could use it. Still, he would never have had a chance to use it at all if he had not tripped into a ditch at the very instant the smoke finally surrounded him.

Lying at the bottom of the ditch, Zezop waved the wand and cried. “Let there be a fine fresh breeze!”

Immediately a fine fresh breeze swept across Santa Land. When it came upon the ball of smoke it blew it neatly away. And there were Santa and Mr. Dilly and Henry standing at the top of the ditch for all to see.

Now the chase went the other way.

Santa and his two friends, helpless now, turned and ran. The furious Wiggle Waggles followed, honking their noses and flapping their ears and screeching at the top at their ugly voices.

Zezop climbed out of his ditch and led the chase. Round and round the toy shops they ran until Henry felt he could run no more. Even Santa grew tired. And poor Mr. Dilly fell back further and further until he was only a hand’s reach from the Wiggle Waggles.

Just at this point Zezop did reach out his hand and grasped the end of the scarf which fluttered from Mr. Dilly’s neck.

“Got him!” roared Zezop. He gave a furious yank at the scarf.

But this was Mr. Dilly’s trick scarf. As Zezop clutched the end it grew longer and longer and longer. It turned red, then black, then orange, and a dozen other colors as it spread out in the breeze.



Finally Zezop realized what was happening and stopped pulling. But by that time Mr. Dilly was 20 yards away and had unfastened the scarf from his neck. The enormous thing fluttered from the Wiggle Waggle’s hand, blinding Zezop and tripping up all behind him.

But now Santa himself saw it was useless to keep on for Mr. Dilly would surely be caught soon. As for Henry - well, he was staggering already.

“This way!” cried Santa, suddenly. He led Henry and Mr. Dilly down a hidden lane between the shops and pushed them through the door of the bicycle house. Then he himself ran back out of the lane just as the Wiggle Waggles finally untangled themselves from the scarf.

“There he goes!” screamed Zezop. The Wiggle Waggles, angrier than ever, took off once again after the red coated figure.

Straight towards his own cottage ran Santa for there was nowhere else now to go. “Perhaps these creatures can’t climb,” he thought as he himself climbed with ease to the roof of his home.

But the Wiggle Waggles could climb. They shinned right up after him. Santa ran easily across the sloping roof to the chimney. The Wiggle Waggles slipped and slid but still came on.

“There’s nowhere else now but down,” thought Santa. “They won’t dare follow me here.”

With that he leaped into his chimney just as he had leaped into other folks chimneys a thousand thousand times.

He was right. The Wiggle Waggles did not dare to follow him. But they did not have to. For Zezop and Humphrey were waiting by the fireplace and when Santa slid out of the chimney he slid straight into their arms.

Chapter 16

HENRY'S PRESENT

Zezip and his Wiggle Waggles quickly tied up Santa.

"Welcome to your own party," sneered Zezip. "I told you that you would be sorry for not inviting us."

"Let's give him some party food," suggested Humphrey wickedly. "How about some gum drops?"

Immediately the Wiggle Waggles began dumping gum drops from their pockets - gum drop which were really the enchanted Santa Land workers and their story book friends who had come to the party.

Santa gazed sadly at the gum drops heaped on the table. The tip of his own magic wand stuck from Zezip's pocket "If I could only get that," thought Santa longingly. But he knew there was chance at all.

Meantime, Mr. Dilly and Henry hid in the bicycle shop, not knowing that Santa had led the Wiggle Waggles off their trail. All about the shop were bicycles and tricycles, shining bright with newness. How wonderful they would look around all the Christmas trees on Christmas morning thought Henry. He forgot for a moment that there very likely wouldn't be any Christmas morning any more.

He felt in his pocket for the little present Tweedleknies had given him. "Do not open until Christmas", Tweedleknies had said. What if there was no Christmas? Would he never know what his only present was?

While Henry thought about the Christmas he'd never have, Mr. Dilly was planning how to save Henry and Santa. He did not know that the Wiggle Waggles had already captured Santa.

This was his idea: why shouldn't he take Santa's place and let the Wiggle Waggles capture him while the real Santa escaped!

"Henry," said Mr. Dilly. "Lie down and get some rest."

The boy was only too willing to obey. He clutched his Christmas gift in his hand and stretched out on the floor. Instantly he fell asleep.

Mr. Dilly rummaged around the shop. The tables and benches had been overturned by the galloping Wiggle Waggles. Wrenches, screw drivers, and pliers were strewn about. Some of the bicycles had been smashed.

Hunting around, Mr. Dilly found what he wanted. It was an old work suit of Santa's. It was torn and dirty but it was red and fur trimmed.

What a sight Mr. Dilly looked when he had put it on! Long thin Mr. Dilly with Santa's suit hanging on him like a double sheet. He snatched up rags that lay about the shop and stuffed them in his coat, filling out the empty space.

Then he glued wads of cotton to his chin and cheeks. He had no hat so he glued cotton to his hair, too, to make it white and fluffy like Santa's.

When he was ready he was the funniest sight you ever saw. But anyone looking at him would have known right away that



"I TOLD YOU YOU WOULD BE SORRY," SNEERED ZEZIP.

if he wasn't Santa Claus he was someone who was supposed to be Santa Claus.

He ducked out of the bicycle shop and started off for Santa's cottage. He could hear the Wiggle Waggles whooping it up over there.

"Jingle bells, jingle bells," sang out Mr. Dilly, trying to sound very gay and jaunty. "Here comes Santa himself!"

With that he burst into the cottage. Instantly he saw Santa all tied up and he knew his whole plan was ruined. But it was too late to do anything. The astonished Wiggle Waggles looked first at him and then at the real Santa and then back again.

Finally Zezip said "Maybe it's all done with mirrors, maybe not. Anyway, now we have two Santas."

Well, I guess that would have been the end of everything if it hadn't happened that just about that time little Henry over in the bicycle shop woke up. When he found Mr. Dilly gone he thought the Wiggle Waggles had gotten him and would soon get him too.

"That being so, there's no reason I shouldn't open my Christmas present right now," he said to himself. "After all, it's the only present I ever had and I'm sure Patrick Tweedleknies wouldn't mind if he knew how it was."

So he tore the wrapping from the little box and peeped inside. What he saw was a tiny golden feather covered with tiny silver writing. For one whole minute he stared open mouthed reading the words on the feather.

Suddenly he cried out with joy. Then, his face lit with happiness and the feather tight in his hand, he whispered softly to himself.

A MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL

At the very instant Henry whispered to himself in the bicycle shop a most remarkable thing happened in Santa's cottage.

The Wiggle Waggles who held Santa and Mr. Dilly suddenly let them go. Four of the Wiggle Waggles who were pulling and kicking at each other in a corner stopped fighting and fell to hugging and kissing one another.

A kind and friendly smile suddenly spread across Zezop's ugly face. "Let me untie you," he said to Santa. Immediately he and a dozen willing helpers unwound the scarf that bound Santa's arms and legs.

"Is there anything else you would like?" asked the amazingly changed Zezop.

"Why -.yes. If you would just let me have my magic wand please," murmured Santa, hardly daring to hope the creature would obey.

But Zezop instantly obeyed. "I'm so sorry to have troubled you," he said politely and held out the wand.

Quickly Santa waved the wand above the gum drops which were scattered over floor and table.

"Come back," he whispered. "Come back to your proper shapes."

Slowly they came back: Mrs. Claus, Peter Pan, Jack Frost, Pinocchio, Father Time, Boy Blue, The Sand Man, and all the Santa Land folk and all the other guests at the party.

Soon all the gum drops had disappeared.. The cottage was overflowing with folk, little and big, friend and enemy.

But who was the enemy? Surely not these pleasant-faced, soft voiced, gentle-mannered Wiggle Waggles!

At that moment Henry raced into the cottage. When he saw what had happened he ran up to Patrick Tweedleknives.

"I opened my present and I made my wish!" cried Henry.

"H-hmph," said Patrick. "Isn't Christmas yet. You weren't supposed to open it until Christmas."

"But you'd still be a gum drop if I hadn't," laughed Henry.

"What's all this about?" asked Santa. "What present? What wish?"

"Patrick Tweedleknives gave me a present," explained Henry. "I just opened it. Here it is." He held out the tiny gold feather. Santa bent to read the silver writing.

"Whisper one wish and it will come true," he read. "Well - what did you wish?"

"Why," said Henry. "I wished the Wiggle Waggles would turn into the kindest creatures in the whole world and stay that way forever."

It was a wish that really came true. The Wiggle Waggles had become the world's kindest, most loving creatures. They were so gentle and so sorry for all the wickedness they had done



... "AND A MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL!" CALLED SANTA

that Santa told them they could stay forever in Santa Land and help him with his work.

"When all this kissing and hugging is over, somebody better get to work," growled Patrick Tweedleknives. "Or have you forgotten tomorrow is Christmas day?"

With songs and shouts the workers, the Wiggle Waggles and the story book folk headed for the shops to repair the broken toys and load Santa's big red sleigh. In a little while Zezop returned.

"I forgot this one," he said sorrowfully. He dug a crumpled orange gum drop from his pocket. "I bit a piece of it but it did not taste so good as I thought it would."

Santa waved his wand over the candy. Suddenly it vanished. In its place stood Serena, the talking duck.

"Holy moly, rahdedoo and ketchuptoo!" squawked the duck. "My tail feathers are gone!"

"Well, just be glad Zezop didn't like the taste of you or you wouldn't be here at all," laughed Santa.

They went out where the sleigh stood loaded and with all their friends waiting around it. When they climbed in Santa picked out a large white package and gave it to Mr. Dilly. "Merry Christmas," he said.

"Open it! Open it!" cried everyone.

Mr. Dilly opened the box. In it was a tall black hat. Quite an ordinary hat you would have thought. But it wasn't so at all.

With trembling fingers Mr. Dilly reached in. A wonderful smile lit his face as slowly he pulled out an enormous white rabbit.

The Santa Land folk cheered. Henry laughed with pleasure.

Mr. Dilly said: "Now I shall be the greatest magician in all the world!" And Henry said: "We can go on tour again."

Santa took up the reins of his sleigh. "Merry Christmas!" he cried again.

And all the creatures, man and boy, in all that land shouted after: 'A Merry Christmas to all!'

THE END

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