



# SANTA and the MAGIC MIRROR

by LUCRECE HUDGINS

AP Newfeatures



## Santa and the Magic Mirror

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### Chapter 1

Once upon a time there was a little girl named Belinda. She had no mother. But she did have a father and her father was Santa Claus.

Of course he wasn't the really truly Santa Claus who lives at the North Pole. No. Poppy (Belinda called her father "Poppy") was a make believe Santa. You see many make believe Santas around town these days: in the stores, on street corners, at school parties.

Now, Poppy was Santa Claus at a great department store in a great city. It was a job he had for six weeks every year and it was the only job he had. The rest of the time he stayed home and kept house for his little girl, Belinda.

Naturally, when a man works only six weeks a year his family doesn't have a whole lot of money to live on. But Belinda and Poppy managed fine and Belinda thought she was the luckiest girl in the whole world. I guess she was too. You'd have to travel pretty far to find something nicer than being the child of a Santa Claus!

Then one year, when Belinda was eight years old, something happened.

One morning, a little while before Christmas, Poppy and Belinda started out for the great store where Poppy worked. They had plenty of time and it was a bright cheerful morning so they walked instead of taking a bus as they usually did.

It was a lovely walk. There were Christmas wreaths on all the doors they passed. There were candles in the windows or tiny Christmas trees or bright colored balls. The streets were decorated with fir and holly. The people they passed had happy faces.

"Oh, Poppy!" said Belinda, "Christmas is the loveliest time! Everyone is happy and good and kind."

Poppy agreed that Christmas was certainly the grandest time in the year. They walked on, Belinda, holding Poppy's hand and Poppy carrying under his arm his red, fur-trimmed Santa suit wrapped in a brown paper bag.

Presently they came to an enormous stone house. It was five stories high and had marble steps leading to the front door. It was a rich and handsome house. But Belinda stopped right in front of it and cried, "What a sad house!"

"How so?" asked Poppy.

"Why, there's not a wreath anywhere! And the shutters are closed so even the sun can't get in!"

"Well," said Poppy, "this is the house of Jeremiah Lump. He is the richest man in the whole city so I don't expect they are too sad in there."

Well, they walked on and when they reached the store it was already open and gay Christmas shoppers and bright eyed children were crowding in the doors.



**"You Mean Santa Claus Never Comes to Your House?" Said Belinda in Astonishment.**

"I'll have a busy day," said Poppy, smiling at the children. He kissed Belinda. "Be a good girl and tonight Santa Claus will come to your house."

Belinda laughed. How she loved this joke between them! As she started back home she thought of the decorations she was making for their Christmas tree at home. She was skipping along dreaming of the tree when presently she found herself once again in front of the stone house.

This time there was a little boy sitting on the bottom step of the great marble stairs. He was dressed in a patched, poorly fitting coat and his eyes were large and sad.

Belinda said, "Are you Mr. Lump's little boy?"

The boy nodded. "I am Thomas Lump." His voice was small and lifeless.

Belinda looked up at the cold, shuttered house. "Why don't you have some decorations on your house?" she asked.

"What for?"

"Why - for Christmas, of course!"

Thomas Lump shrugged his thin shoulders. "We don't have Christmas at our house," he said quietly.

Belinda gazed at him in astonishment. "You mean Santa Claus never comes to your house?"

"Never." whispered Thomas Lump. Two large tears were forming in the corners of his eyes. Belinda rushed to him and threw her arms around his shoulders,

She thought wildly of some way to cheer this poor rich boy who had never had a Christmas. Finally she blurted, "Don't cry, Tommy! I'll take you to Santa!"

## Chapter 2

### THE MEAN MR. LUMP

Tommy Lump brushed the tears from his eyes and stared at Belinda.

“How could you take me to Santa?” he asked.

“Well,” said Belinda, “of course it isn’t really Santa. I mean it’s Poppy. Poppy’s my father and he’s Santa Claus. Do you see?”

No, Tommy didn’t see at all. So Belinda explained how Poppy had a job as a department store Santa and since Tommy had never seen a Santa Claus Belinda would take him to see Poppy. And moreover, she said, she was sure Poppy would be able to do something about Tommy Lump’s father who never let Christmas come into his house.

Tommy listened eagerly to all this but at the end he shook his head hopelessly. “My father would never permit it,” he said.

“I will ask your father,” said Belinda and she ran up the marble steps to the door.

“Oh, don’t!” cried Tommy, leaping to his feet. “You don’t know - ”

But Belinda was already standing in the vast hall of the cold, sad house and knocking at the door.

Now I want to tell you about Jeremiah Lump, Tommy’s father. He was a mean and miserable man. There wasn’t room in his life for anything except money.

He filled the banks with money and then he dug a big hole in the floor of his cellar and buried money there.

He didn’t live like a rich man because he couldn’t bring himself to spend the money for grand furnishings or servants

or automobiles or even clothes. So even though he made a great deal of money in business, the money never did anything but take up more space under the cellar floor.

His wife was dead and he lived alone with his son, Thomas. He never brought clothes for the boy until the old ones were in rags. He never brought the boy a toy or took him to a circus or a theater or on a vacation because those things cost money and Mr. Lump was too mean to spend money.

Belinda did not know all this about Mr. Lump. She only knew he was a rich man and it was a shame Tommy had never seen Santa Claus and she, Belinda, was going to do something about it.

When she got no answer to her knock at the door she touched it gently and it opened. She waved back at Tommy, said, “I’ll be right back” and walked in.

It was so dark in the house she could hardly see. But she didn’t have to worry about bumping into furniture because there was hardly any to bump.

She wandered around until he saw a light in a little room at the back of the house. She went in and there, and at a desk, sat Mr. Lump.

“I’m Belinda,” said Belinda gently. “I’ve come to see -”

Mr. Lump sprang up and a handful of papers scattered to the floor. He had been adding columns of figures and he was furious because he had added to 473,895 dollars and now he would have to start all over again.

He glared at Belinda from beneath great black eyebrows. He was the meanest looking man Belinda had ever seen or dreamed of.

He never said a word. Just glared. Belinda lost her voice entirely. Presently she felt her knees begin to shake. She smiled faintly at Mr. Lump the way you would if you found yourself in a cage with a lion and you wanted the lion to know you meant it no harm.

But a growl began curling up in Mr. Lump throat and Belinda stopped smiling and turned and ran out of the house.

“I told you! I told you!” cried Tommy, standing on the steps. “He won’t even talk to children!”

“Does he know you are out here?” she asked Tommy.

The boy nodded. “I guess so. I just sit here all day.”

Belinda took his hand. “Come with me, Tommy. We’ll go see Santa.”

The boy stood up and took Belinda’s hand. “I’ll go!” he said.

With a breathless laugh the two children ran down the sidewalk and disappeared around the corner. Not a moment too soon, either, for hardly had they gone than the door opened and Mr. Lump stormed out on the marble stairs of the house.



He Was the Meanest Looking Man Belinda Had Ever Seen or Dreamed of.

## Chapter 3

### TROUBLE FOR POPPY

Belinda and Tommy ran through the streets of the great city until they were out of breath. Then they slowed to a walk and went on hand in hand pushing their way through the crowds of Christmas shoppers.

Tommy Lump never said a word. One instant he was torn with fear of what his father might do when he found him gone. The next moment he was wildly eager for this enormous adventure that he had started upon.

Presently they came to the store where Poppy worked. In the lobby of the store was a giant tree dripping silvery icicles and glowing with colored lights. On the tip top was a golden angel. At the bottom was a pool of glittering packages.

Tommy Lump just stared and stared. Never, in his life before, had he seen a Christmas tree. He would have stayed there forever drinking in the sight and smell of it.

But the crowds swelled around the two children, swept them upstairs and downstairs and through room fatter room until suddenly they found themselves standing before the great red throne.

On the throne sat Santa Claus himself.

All the fear left Tommy Lump as he gazed at the cheery, red suited man on the throne. For the first time he believed there really would be a Christmas for him.

Poppy reached out and drew Belinda to his side. "Couldn't you wait for Santa to come home?" he asked with a smile.

"I could wait" said Belinda, "but Tommy couldn't. Oh, Poppy, you know the sad house we saw this morning?"

Poppy laughed. "You mean Mr. Lump's house? The house of the rich man?"

"Poppy, he isn't rich! He can't be. Because here is Tommy, Mr. Lump's little boy, and he's never had a Christmas in his whole life! Never seen Santa Claus - never hung up his stocking. And he's sad. I told you it was a sad house."

Poppy looked at Tommy Lump standing there thin and pale and wretched in his patched too-tight coat. "Are you really the son of Jeremiah Lump?" asked Poppy in astonishment.

The boy nodded dumbly.

Poppy reached out and drew the boy, too, into his arms. "Well," he said kindly, "this year you'll have a Christmas, I think."

"I told him you'd fix it!" cried Belinda.

"You mean I'll have a tree and toys and everything?" whispered Tommy hardly daring to believe.

"I'll go to see your father," promised Poppy. "I'm sure he won't say no to Santa Claus. Now you two children be my helpers until my lunch hour. Then we'll see Mr. Lump."

Speechless with happiness, Tommy Lump became a Santa helper. Belinda lined up all the children who came to see

Santa. Then Tommy handed each one a great lollypop. And he and Belinda had one, too, whenever they wanted.

All morning the children helped Santa. Finally it was lunch hour and Poppy got off his great red throne and took the children out of the store. He didn't bother to change his Santa suit or put on a coat or anything.

They walked towards Tommy's home and people turned to smile at the Santa Claus striding along between two skipping happy faced children.

But as they turned on to Tommy's street they found crowds of people packed on the sidewalk while police cars with screaming sirens roared in the street.

"What's going on," Poppy asked

"A kidnapping," said the man. "They say Jeremiah Lump's boy has been stolen."

At that very moment Mr. Lump, standing at the top of his marble steps, spied Tommy and Belinda and Poppy in the crowd. He flew down the steps and hurled himself on the astonished Poppy screaming, "Here he is! Here's the man who stole my boy! Arrest him!"

And before Belinda or Tommy or Poppy could even speak, a dozen police sprang from the crowd, put Poppy in a car, and



**Police Sprang from the Crowd, Put Poppy in a Car and Rushed Him off to Jail.**  
rushed him off to jail.

## Chapter 4

### BELINDA HAS VISITORS

Mr. Lump thought Poppy had kidnapped Tommy Lump. He told the police and it did look bad for Poppy because there he was with the boy's hand in his. The police arrested Poppy dressed as he was in red Santa suit with a red stocking cap dangling gaily over one ear.

It was a strange and awful sight to see a Santa Claus led off to prison.

Belinda and Tommy followed Mr. Lump into the house. "He didn't steal me," cried Tommy. "I ran away!"

"You were lured away!" stormed Mr. Lump. "This girl tricked you into meeting that man disguised as a Santa Claus."

"That's not true!" exclaimed Belinda. "My father wanted to make him happy. Anyway he was bringing him home!"

"He was coming to make me pay money for him!" roared Mr. Lump. "Now you leave this house. It's a pity the police won't arrest children."

"You're a mean wicked man!" cried Belinda. She clung to Mr. Lump's arm. "You just better have my Poppy freed from jail or I'll - I'll -"

"Get out of here!" Mr. Lump jerked his arms angrily and flung Belinda away. Tommy burst into tears as Belinda stumbled forward and fell against Mr. Lump's desk.

"Oh!" she cried, getting to her feet.

She took something from her mouth and then, without a word, she rushed out of the house and ran all the way home.

Not until she was safe in her own room did she open her fist and gaze at the tooth in the palm of her hand.



**There on the Floor Were Two Tiny Creatures Dressed All in Gold and Looking as Cross as Could Be.**

Tears brimmed in her eyes.

"Just a little while ago everything was so lovely," she thought. "Now Poppy's in jail and there's no Santa Claus at the store and Tommy won't ever have a Christmas and on top of everything else I've lost my very best tooth."

But Poppy had taught her that crying never fixed anything and so she washed her eyes, put on her coat and went to visit Poppy in jail.

"We've had all kinds of people in this jail," joked the guard. "But this is the first time we've had Santa Claus."

"Oh, Poppy," cried Belinda, seeing her father behind bars, "whatever shall we do?"

Poppy smiled. "Don't worry. The police will get things straightened out."

"But how long will it take, Poppy?"

"A while, I guess. It did look bad for me, you know."

"But Poppy! What about Christmas and the store and Tommy?"

"Things will have to work out," said Poppy looking sad and tired.

The guard told Belinda it was time to go. Before she left Poppy said. "I see you've lost a tooth. Don't forget to put it under your pillow. The tooth fairies will take care of you tonight."

Of course Belinda knew it was a joke. But, just the same, when she went to bed that night she did what Poppy told her. She wrapped the little tooth in tissue paper and hid it under her pillow.

Then she lay there in the dark. She was frightened and lonesome. "I just mustn't cry," she told herself. "I've got to think of something to do."

Presently she felt something move on her bed. She decided it was the blanket sliding off. "I just can't sleep," she said out loud and she turned with a great sigh to the other side of the bed.

"Oh, gracious:" screamed a tiny voice. "I'm falling off!"

Belinda sprang right out of bed tossing the covers in a heap on the floor. Her heart pounded and her hands shook as she turned on the light. There was nothing at all unusual to be seen. She began to think she had been dreaming when suddenly she saw two funny little bumps moving under the blanket she had thrown to the floor.

"How do you get out of here?" moaned a muffled voice.

"Help! Help!" screamed another voice. "The roof has fallen in!"

Belinda leaned over and picked up the blanket. There on the floor were two tiny creatures, boy and girl, dressed all in gold and looking as cross as could be.

"Well!" they snapped as they glared at Belinda. "You were supposed to be asleep!"

## Chapter 5

### A TRIP TO TOOTH CITY

Belinda stared in astonishment at her two fantastic visitors. "W - who are you?" she stammered.

"We're the Tooth Fairies, Frank and Fanny," said the boy fairy. "And I must say it wasn't very kind of you to stay awake to catch us,"

"Oh, but I didn't mean to spy on you," protested Belinda. "I never imagined you'd really come."

"And who is Poppy?" asked both fairies.

Belinda sat down on the floor and the two tiny creatures climbed up and sat on her bare toes. Then Belinda told them about Poppy and how he had been taken to jail and what a wonderful Santa he had been. Then she told them about poor Tommy Lump who had never had a Christmas and about Mr. Lump who was so mean.

"Mercy!" rasped Fanny. "No wonder you couldn't sleep. Whatever will you do?"

"I just don't know," sighed Belinda. "I don't know where to go for help."

All this time Frank had been swinging between two of Belinda's toes. "I know what I'd do," he said. "I'd go to Santa for help."

"But he's in jail," reminded Belinda.

"I mean real Santa Claus," said Frank, "You can just bet he wouldn't want one of his men treated like that. He'd know what to do about it."

"Oh!" exclaimed Belinda. "Do you think I ever could go to Santa for help?"

"I don't see why not," said Frank. "Come with us and we will take you to Tooth City and that is half way to Santa Land."

Belinda's eyes shone with excitement. "Could you take Tommy Lump, too?" she asked. "I can't bear for him to stay with that terrible Mr. Lump."

"Sure," said Frank. "We'll take him, too."

Then Frank leaped onto Belinda's bed, got her tooth from under the pillow and stuck it in his pocket. He scrambled under the bed and came out leading a little white mouse by the ear.

He and Fanny climbed on the mouse's back and Frank said, "Repeat after me these words: Outa, bouta, moopa, loopa."

"Outa, bouta. moopa, loopa," said Belinda obediently.

Instantly she was as tiny as the tooth fairies. "I must never forget those magic words," she cried. "Imagine how useful it will be to make myself tiny whenever I wish!"

"Unfortunately," said Frank, "those words will never work for you again. You may use them only once in a lifetime and even that once the magic lasts for 24 hours only."

"You mean I shall grow to be my old size in just one night and a day?" asked Belinda.



**"Outa, Bouta, Moopa, Loopa," Said Belinda. Instantly She Was as Tiny as the Tooth Fairies.**

"That's right. Hop on behind us now."

Presently they were in the bedroom of Tommy Lump. Belinda climbed on his pillow and woke him. He seemed not in the least surprised to see her. "I just knew you'd come again!" he whispered. "Oh, if you knew how angry my father is! Look, he has bolted my door and I suppose I shall not be able even to sit on the front steps anymore."

"Never mind," said Belinda. "I am going to Santa Land to see the really truly Santa and get his help. If you want, you can come with me."

"However can you get to Santa Land?" gasped Tommy.

Belinda pointed to Frank and Fanny who were waiting on the floor with the little white mouse,

"They are the tooth fairies," said Belinda. "They will carry me to Tooth City which is half way to Santa Land"

This seemed not at all strange to Tommy who had already had the strangest day in his young life. "I will go with you!" he agreed.

Then Frank told Tommy the magic words to make him tiny and when Tommy had repeated them he, too, was able to climb on the mouse's back.

Then away they raced for Tooth City.

Chapter 6  
THE BALLOON

The white mouse scampered through the land carrying his four passengers on his back.

He went so swiftly and followed so twisting a path that neither Tommy nor Belinda could ever have said where they went or how they got there. All they knew was that suddenly the mouse was running down a tiny street paved with enamel and lined with lovely shining houses made of teeth instead of brick.

Hundreds of fairies ran to greet them shouting, "How many teeth did you get? Hope they are good ones with no holes in them!"

Frank and Fanny jumped from the white mouse and helped the two children down. The fairies gazed at them. "What are they?" cried the creatures. "Are they fairies or are they children? Did you find them under a pillow?"

"Shush!" said Frank, "they are children on their way to see Santa Claus and it's up to us to see they get there."

Then Frank and Fanny told the fairies the story of the children's troubles.

"The question is how to get you there," said Frank.

"Couldn't we borrow your little white mouse?" asked Tommy, shyly.

"The way is hard because through the snow lands," explained Frank. "It would take white mouse two days to make the trip."

"And what of that?" asked Belinda.

"Just remember," said Frank. "This very night you will be big children again and little white mouse could not carry you at all."

"Oh!" said Tommy. "I forgot," said Belinda.

Just at this moment another white mouse dashed into the fairy city. He carried on his back two fairies whose pockets bulged with teeth they had collected through the night.

"Here's Buster and Barbara," said Fanny. "How excited they are!"

The two new fairies ran forward dragging a strange shapeless red thing about as long as your finger.

"Whatever is that?" cried the fairies. "Where did you get it?"

"We don't know what it is," said Buster. "A little boy wrapped his tooth in it and left it as a present for us."

"What a night!" exclaimed the fairies. "First we get children looking for Santa and now we get a strange what-is-it!"

"Perhaps it is a tent," suggested Fanny, poking at the thing with her foot. "Or a broken sling shot," said Frank.

All this while Belinda had been examining the queer thing. At first she wasn't sure what it was because it looked so large and different when she was so tiny.

Finally she laughed. "It's a toy balloon!" she exclaimed. "Watch!"

She picked up the open end and blew into it. She had to put her whole face in the hole and blow and blow and blow. Slowly, as the fairies looked on in astonishment, the shapeless thing grew round and fat and beautiful.

"Help me!" cried Belinda. "It is pulling away!"

The balloon, now full blown, was about to lift Belinda from the ground when, just in time, the fairies came to the rescue. They threw ropes of dental floss around the balloon mouth and anchored it to a stone.

"It nearly flew away with me!" said Belinda.

"Well, then," said Frank. "Why not fly with it to Santa Land?"

"Do you think we could get there in time?" asked Belinda. "I mean before we get big again?"

"Surely," said Frank. "It is not far as the birds fly. Come, let's get to work."

He ran into a nearby tooth house and returned with a fairy waste basket which was about as big as your mother's thimble. The other fairies made a tiny rudder out of a slender front tooth and fitted it to the basket. Then they tied the basket to the balloon and all was ready for the flight.

Tommy and Belinda climbed into the basket. Only their heads peeped over the top.

The fairies pushed away the stone and slowly the balloon rose from the ground.

Tommy and Belinda were on their way.



"It Nearly Flew Away With Me!" Said Belinda.

## Chapter 7

### THE TRIP TO SANTA LAND

The red balloon sailed through soft white clouds high above the ground. Belinda steered the airship steadily towards the northland.

How fast they went! The wind tore through their hair as they huddled in the basket.

Belinda smiled at Tommy. "You've changed." she said.

"I know. I'm smaller."

"I don't mean just that," said Belinda, "it's your face. It's so happy looking."

"Oh, I am so happy. I keep thinking if Santa can just figure out some way to get your father out of jail and how to make my father kind why you and I will always be friends and we can have adventures like this forever and ever!"

Suddenly Tommy stopped smiling. "Look!" he cried. "The sun has disappeared!"

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Belinda, "Now how can I tell which way is north?"

But that was not the worst of it. Not only had the sun disappeared but now the balloon was bobbing about in a great black cloud.

"We are in a storm cloud!" shouted Tommy.

Scarcely had he spoken when there was an enormous clap of thunder. Streaks of lightning zipped through the cloud. The wind grew stronger and rivers of rain poured down on the children huddled in tile basket.

The balloon zoomed about the sky like a rubber ball in ocean waves. It plunged towards the earth. It was sucked back into the sky. It spun over and over, jerked sideways, bounded up and down.

Tommy and Belinda clung to one another, too frightened to cry or even to speak.

Suddenly the storm was over. Once again the balloon sailed serenely through a pink blue sky. The children saw with relief that the sun was setting on the left.

"That shows we are still going towards the north," said Belinda. "But," protested Tommy, "we are not flying so high! Look, we are dropping closer to the ground all the time!"

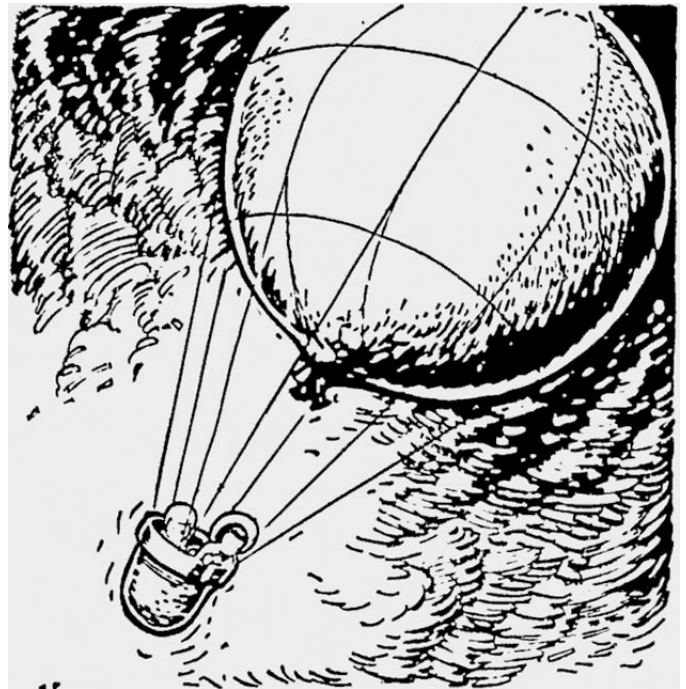
It was true. The sharp needles of rain had pierced three tiny holes in the balloon. As the air escaped from the holes the balloon sank slowly toward the ground.

"What shall we do?" cried Tommy. "If we go down here we'll be a million miles from nowhere!"

"I've got an idea," said Belinda.

"I'll bet I could stop up those holes with my fingers!"

She climbed to the edge of the basket and holding to the balloon strings with one hand she reached up and poked three of her tiny fingers right into the three tiny holes.



**Not Only Had the Sun Disappeared but Now the Balloon was Bobbing About in a Great Black Cloud.**

Instantly the balloon was air tight again and sailed smoothly on. Now it was night and instead of the sun to guide them there were all the stars in the sky.

While Belinda stopped up the holes Tommy began a steady watch over the land below. He was looking for some sign of Santa Land. But there was only blackness as far as he could see.

They had no idea how far or how long they had travelled but they were sure the journey must be nearly over.

Suddenly Tommy said, "We seem to be sailing through some cobwebs."

"I feel it." answered Belinda, "What on earth could it be?"

Silk like threads were brushing into their faces. They tried to shake the threads off but it was no use. The threads grew longer and thicker until in a little while the children were wrapped in them and the basket was nearly full.

"Belinda!" screamed Tommy in a strange voice. "Something is growing in my mouth!"

Suddenly they both knew the dreadful truth. Belinda's hair was growing long and Tommy's tongue was growing big. The magic twenty-four hours were over.

They were turning once again into their real selves!

(Next Santa Land)



Chapter 8  
SANTA LAND

The little red balloon began to slow down under the weight of Belinda's growing hair.

"When the rest of us starts growing well crash - balloon and all," cried Belinda. "We better try to get down now as gently as we can."

Tommy tried to reply but he could no longer speak - his growing tongue had filled his mouth!

Carefully Belinda drew out the three fingers which had sealed the three tiny holes in the balloon.

Immediately the air began escaping and slowly the balloon dropped towards the earth.

Belinda peered over the side of the basket. Suddenly she cried, "Oh, mercy! We are falling not down but up!"

It certainly appeared that way for they were falling towards hundreds of starry lights. Yet, when they looked overhead, they found the stars were still above them!

With a rush of joy Belinda realized what was happening. Below them were not stars but lights. And what other lights could they be than those of Santa Land?

"Just in time!" gasped Belinda. "At least I hope it's in time." For at that very moment Tommy's growing head bumped against the balloon and Belinda's toes pushed the bottom out of the basket.

Down, down, down, hurtled the balloon. The children shut their eyes and waited for the crash. But when it finally came it was not a crash but a plop. They had landed in a snow drift.

Belinda leaped to her feet. "I feel big as an elephant," she exclaimed.

"So do I," said Tommy. "And I have a big empty stomach, too. I am hungry!"

"Perhaps we can have dinner with Santa Claus!" laughed Belinda.

Then they brushed the snow from their coats and ran joyfully towards the right lights of Santa Land.

Now very often Santa Land folk work all night and all day, too. They have to do that in order to fill the late orders of children who wait until the very last minute to write their letters to Santa Claus.

Then there are the children who write letters in the summer time asking for sand boxes and skates and beach balls. When December comes these children have changed their minds entirely and write Santa that they no longer want those things but that they simply must have sleds and footballs and red woolen gloves.

All of this causes an enormous amount of confusion in Santa Land and that is why Santa and the little folk must work night and day before Christmas.

On this particular night Santa Claus was sitting at the desk in his living room checking lists. Patrick Tweedleknees, the

oldest dwarf in Santa Land, was on his hands and knees sorting cards.

There are many different card games for children. It was Tweedleknees' job, at the moment, to take the thousands of cards Santa had made and separate them into their proper decks.

So here he was, muttering to himself, scratching his head, fussing at Santa, and, all the while, stacking Animal Rummy cards by the front door, Author cards under the sofa, Old Maid cards on the kitchen linoleum, ABC Rummy on the easy chair, Animal Sounds on the hearth. And so on.

Finally every card was in its proper place. "Worse Job I ever had," growled Tweedleknees as he rose from the floor. "Seems like someone else could -"

At this moment there was a knock at the door.

"Come in!" cried Santa without looking up from his desk.

The door opened and a blast of winter wind swirled in, picked up every card from the floor and scattered them all from end to end of the house.

"Oh," said Belinda who had opened the door. "I'm sorry!"

"Sorry!" screamed Tweedleknees jumping up and down in a gigantic rage. "Sorry, sorry, sorry! Who cares if you're sorry? Get out of here! Never show your face here again!"

The astonished Belinda snatched Tommy's hand and fled.



"Sorry!" screamed Tweedleknees Jumping Up and Down in a Gigantic Rage... "Get Out of Here!"

## Chapter 9

### A GIFT FROM THE GIANTS

“For shame” cried Santa to Patrick Tweedleknees who had frightened Belinda away. “Go after her and bring her back.”

“Won’t do it!” shouted Tweedleknees. “Look at the damage she did.”

“Nonsense,” said Santa. “It was my fault. I told her to open the door. Go and get her now for she must be cold and frightened outside.”

Tweedleknees stomped to the door. “You’ll be sorry someday,” he muttered. “I’ll just resign. Then what will you do?” He threw open the door. It no longer mattered about the wind for it could do no more damage.

“All right, you careless, thoughtless, useless creature,” he screamed from the door. “You can come in now.”

Suddenly Santa himself was there. “Why - there are two of them!” he exclaimed. “Poor children! What a dreadful thing to happen to you on your first visit here.”

“You’ll get used to Tweedleknees,” said Santa as he helped the children off with their coats. “His fussing means no more than the buzzing of flies. Inside he has a heart as soft as a cream puff.”

“Hmpf” snapped Tweedleknees from under the bed where he was retrieving cards. “Someday you’ll find out how mad I can get when I really try!”

“My!” gasped Belinda, hardly knowing whether to be afraid or not, “he sounds as mean as Mr. Lump.”

“Who, may I ask, is Mr. Hunk?” snapped Tweedleknees.

“Mr. Lump,” corrected Tommy. “He is my father.”

“He is dreadfully mean,” said Belinda. “And he never gives Tommy any Christmas at all even though he is the richest man in town.”

Santa sat down by the fire and pulled the two children into his arms. “Tell me about Mr. Lump. I can see that he is why you are here.”

Oh, it was good to be there with Santa’s arms around them. Tommy felt as though his heart would burst with happiness and love. And Belinda felt as though she were home with Poppy safe and sound once more.

They told Santa everything that had happened. About Poppy being a wonderful Santa at a department store. And about Belinda meeting Tommy and feeling sorry for him because he’d never seen a Santa Claus or hung up his stocking on Christmas eve or even had a Christmas tree.

“So I took Tommy to see Poppy because he’s such a wonderful make believe Santa,” said Belinda.

“But my father thought I had been kidnapped and had Poppy put in jail,” said Tommy. “And now I really have run away and I’ll never never go back until my father says he is sorry to Poppy!”



**Santa Pulled the Two Children into His Arms.**

When they had finished the story Santa just sat there rocking and thinking and never saying a word. Presently the door opened and in came Mrs. Claus carrying an enormous box wrapped in red striped paper and tied with golden ribbons.

“Here’s a Christmas gift I found on the steps for Santa,” said Mrs. Claus. Then she noticed the two children. “Goodness me!” she exclaimed. “What dear children! Was it you who brought this gift?”

Santa told Mrs. Claus the children’s story and Mrs. Claus rushed right to the kitchen to prepare something good for them to eat.

Santa read the card on the Christmas gift. “To Santa with love from the Horrible Hobblins” Opening the box he found a red flannel night gown.

“Imagine!” exclaimed Tweedleknees, “Only six months ago the Horrible Hobblins hated you”

“Who are the Horrible Hobblins?” asked Belinda.

“They are giants,” said Tweedleknees. “They used to be very cruel but suddenly they changed and now are as sweet as new born babies.”

Santa said, “Now we must find out what caused them to change.”

“Why should we care?” protested Tweedleknees.

“Because,” said Santa, “if we find out the secret of the Horrible Hobblins perhaps we’d know how to soften the hard heart of Mr. Lump.”

## Chapter 10

### ANOTHER TRIP

The Horrible Hobblins are the giants of the North. They live in castle deep in the snow country. For many hundreds of years every creature in that green land lived in fear of the giants. They were mean tempered and mean acting and no one could tell what mean thing they next might do.

Besides that, the Horrible Hobblins were horrible to look at. They were so ugly that it is quilt possible they were even afraid of themselves!

All of this Santa told Belinda and Tommy.

“But now,” he said, “a strange thing has happened. The giants have changed completely. Instead of fighting and quarreling with their neighbors they send gifts and have become the most agreeable creatures alive.”

“Oh, I see,” cried Belinda joyfully. “Then if we find why they changed we can tell Mr. Lump the secret and then Mr. Lump will have Poppy freed from jail and be kind to Tommy!”

She could hardly keep still he was so eager to be off “Can we go this very minute?”

Mrs. Claus bustled in from the kitchen. “I don’t know where you are planning to go,” she said firmly. “But I do know you won’t go until you have had something to eat.”

With that Mrs. Claus set an enormous tray of food on the table. You can imagine how hungry the children were for goodness knows how long it had been since they had eaten. Neither child needed a bit of coaxing but started at once on the good things Mrs. Claus put before them.



Far Below Stood the Hideous Castle of the Horrible Hobblins.

There was milk, flavored with caramel. Muffins with apricots hidden inside. Potatoes molded into Christmas trees.

When they had finished, Santa said to Tweedleknecs “Hurry off and bring my sled.” Grumbling to himself, Tweedleknecs stomped away.

Santa bundled the children in their coats. Then he got into his own red coat trimmed with soft white fur.

“Come along,” he said cheerfully. “I think your troubles will soon be over.”

Belinda and Tommy were too excited to speak. Only think! - They were going to ride in Santa’s great sleigh pulled by Santa’s very own reindeer! But, alas, when they went outside there was Tweedleknecs with a perfectly ordinary sled and no reindeer at all.

“But who will pull us?” asked Belinda, hiding her disappointment.

“It needs no pulling,” laughed Santa, “you will see.”

He settled the children on the sled. But just as he prepared to climb on, Thomas the ball maker raced out of the night.

“Santa! Santa!” he cried. “We’re ready to paint the balls.”

Santa looked worried. “Can’t it wait until tomorrow?” he asked.

“No, no!” protested Thomas. “Tomorrow we must finish the wagons. Tonight is the only time we have for the balls.”

Santa looked sadly at Tommy and Belinda. “They cannot paint the balls until the bounce is put in them,” he explained. “And I am the only one who can put the bounce in a rubber ball.”

“Of course you must stay,” said Belinda. “Don’t worry,” said Tommy. “We shall be all right with the giants if they are as nice as you say.”

“Yes,” said Santa. “I am sure you will be all right. But first I will tell you my two most valuable secrets. The first secret is how to make a sled carry you wherever you wish. The second secret is how to rise in a chimney.”

Then Santa whispered to them. What he whispered I cannot tell you for they are secrets that belong to Santa alone and are his alone to give away.

The children used the first secret to speed away on Santa’s little sled. It needed no one to pull it but raced on under its own mysterious power up hill and down with Belinda and Tommy clinging to the sides.

Night had passed and day was half gone when the sled finally came to the top of the last hill. Far below stood the hideous castle of the Horrible Hobblins.

## Chapter 11

### THE STRANGE ROOM

Never had the children seen a building so dark and gloomy as the giants' castle at the foot of the hill.

"I can't help being afraid," whispered Tommy as he stared down at the place.

"I feel the same," said Belinda. "But it must be all right or Santa would not have let us come."

"Anyway it's too late to turn back now," sighed Tommy.

He was right for the sled was zooming down straight to the door of the castle. When they stopped they were instantly surrounded by seven giants. They were twice as large as ordinary men and what was even more fearful, ten times as ugly as the ugliest of creatures.

The children trembled and clung to one another not daring to speak. For a long moment there was not a sound. Then one of the giants opened his mouth and thundered:

"Cook my goose! What extraordinary visitors!"

"Hush your loud mouth, Walter!" ordered a second giant.

"You are frightening the little things."

"I was just so glad to see them," protested Walter. He turned his voice down as soft and low as he was able and said, "Oh, I just love visitors!"

"So do we all," said the other giants. "Do come in and visit with us."

The giants led the children into the great castle. It was as cold and gloomy inside the castle as outside but the giants themselves were cheerful and pleasant

All the giants were, in fact, so kind and so eager to please that Belinda and Tommy soon forgot their fears. In a little while they no longer noticed the giants' ugly faces. All that mattered was their kindness.

"Oh, you are good!" Belinda suddenly burst out.

"It's fun to be good," agreed the giants.

"But, Santa says you were not always like this," said Tommy shyly. "He says you used to be mean – and not so long ago either."

"Oh, my!" groaned Walter. "I can't hear to think of how mean we used to be!"

Belinda leaned forward. "Do please tell us," she begged. "What caused you to change your ways?"

"You see," put in Tommy, "if you tell us your secret we will tell it to my father and then perhaps he will become kind and have Belinda's father freed from jail."

But the giants said they did not know the secret. They had visited one morning at the Frozen Pond of Winnie the Witch and from the day they had found no pleasure in being mean.

"Sometimes, though," said Walter, "we feel the old meanness coming back. We go off alone for a few minutes and the mean feeling passes. We cannot say why for we do not know."



**They Peeped Out from Behind the Draperies and Saw One of the Giants Striding Towards Them.**

That is all the giants would say. And now they were tired from their heavy dinner. They lay down on the floor before the fire and began to doze. The children were left to entertain themselves.

"I am thirsty," said Tommy.

"Let us look for water," said Belinda.

They left the fireside and wandered off looking for the kitchen. But though they looked in room after room they could not find the kitchen.

Presently they came to a closed door. Belinda started to open it but at this moment they heard someone coming down the corridor.

"Maybe they won't like us wandering around by ourselves," whispered Tommy. "Let's hide!"

Quickly the children scrambled behind some wall draperies. They peeped out and saw one of the giants striding towards them.

He was scowling. He went into the closed room. In a few moments he came out and now the scowl was gone. He hummed softly to himself as he walked away.

"How strange!" said Tommy.

Belinda clasped his hand in sudden excitement. "I'll bet the secret we want is in that room!" she cried. "Come! Let's see."

They tiptoed from their hiding place and crept to the door. Belinda's heart pounded and Tommy's knees shook as they softly turned the knob and entered the room.

## Chapter 12

### THE MIRROR

Belinda was sure the closed room held the secret which would explain why the giants - once so mean were now so kind.

But when the children entered the room they found it was completely bare. There were no chairs, table, rugs, or shelves. There was not even a picture on the wall!

“Here is something,” said Tommy suddenly. “Is it a picture or a mirror or what?”

It was a strange milky glass hanging by the window. It was cracked and bumpy and it must have been a mirror because it couldn't possibly have been a picture.

Belinda tried to reach the glass with her fingers, but it hung far above her. She jumped at it with outstretched hands but it was no use. Finally she boosted Tommy to her shoulders. He was just able to lift the glass from the wall.

The two children gazed at the strange mirror in puzzled silence.

Finally Belinda said, “I must have been wrong. There's nothing mysterious or secret here.”

“Listen.” said Tommy. “Someone is coming!”

“Quick,” said Belinda. “Hang it back.”

She boosted Tommy up again but try as he would he could not reach the nail. The giant's steps were coming closer.

“Give it to me!” whispered Belinda. “I'll put it under my sweater until we can get something to stand on.”

No sooner had she tucked it under her sweater than the giant entered. He seemed troubled and cross. He looked vaguely about the room. Then he turned to the children.

“Nothing here to amuse you,” he said. “Come back to the fire.”

He led them out. He no longer seemed kind and tender. The children were frightened.

Back in the large room they noticed a strange thing. The giants were restless. Each one left the room. As each returned he was frowning and disturbed.

“If I did not know how good hearted you have become I would almost be afraid of you,” said Belinda.

The giants muttered among themselves and Walter said, “It gets tiresome being good. I've had enough of it.”

Before Belinda could move Walter leaned forward and yanked her hair. It wasn't a playful tug at all. It was meant to hurt and it did. Belinda cried out in astonishment. She tried to move to the front door but she faced a fearful sight.

The giants were now, in truth, Horrible Hoblins. They leaped around the children. They pushed and tripped them. They backed them against the staircase, There was nowhere to go except up.

Tommy and Belinda fled up the stairs. They ran down twisting corridors and through room after room in the great castle. The giants pounded after them but their great size slowed them.

The children ducked into a bedroom and crawled under a bed. They lay there trying to catch their breath as the giants hunted for them. Presently Belinda felt something pressing against her chest. It was the mirror she had hidden under her sweater. She pulled it out and gazed at it.

“Oh, heavens!” she moaned. “It must be that they are angry about this! They thought I stole it.”

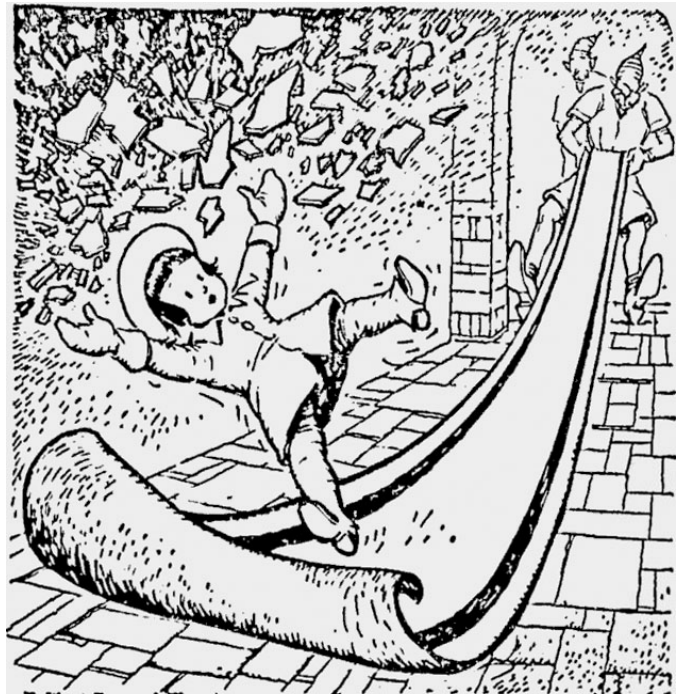
“But,” said Tommy, “why didn't they say so? Why didn't they ask for it? Who would have thought it so valuable?”

Belinda scrambled from under the bed. “I'll give it back at once!” She rushed into the long hall outside the bedroom. She saw the giants down the far end.

“Here's your mirror!” she cried. “I didn't mean.-.”

But the giants were not listening. They bellowed at her. They leaned over and picked up the end of the long rug that ran the length of the hall. They gave the rug a mighty yank.

Belinda, standing on the opposite end, was thrown to the floor. The mirror flew from her hands, crashed against the wall and splintered into a thousand pieces.



**The Mirror Flew From Her Hands Crashed Against the Wall and Splintered into a Thousand Pieces.**

Chapter 13  
THE CHASE

Belinda stared in dismay at the shattered glass surrounding her.

“Now see what you brave done!” she cried. She stamped her foot. “It was your very own fault. I was trying to return the old thing to you.”

But the giants seemed not to care about the mirror. With a holler they charged for Belinda. She dodged between their legs and flew back to the bedroom. Now all seemed hopeless for the giants were at the door.

But Tommy had crawled from under the bed and rushed across the room to a large fireplace.

“Quick!” he called: “Remember Santa’s second secret!”

With a gasp of relief Belinda ducked into the fireplace beside Tommy. Each child laid a finger beside his nose, whispered some words, and up the chimney they rose.

“That was a close call,” said Tommy when the two children reached the roof of the castle.

“But we’re still in a spot.” said Belinda. “For how shall we get down?”

Truly there seemed no way to get down. They could neither jump nor climb to the ground. They scurried around looking for an escape. Tommy found a trap door.

“We might as well try it,” he said.

Belinda agreed. They flung open the door and dropped through. They found themselves in the topmost hall of the castle - seven floors above the ground. A great staircase spiraled down through the very heart of the castle. Tommy and



Each Child Laid a Finger Beside His Nose, Whispered Words and Up the Chimney They Rose.

Belinda started down the stairs. But scarcely had they gone a dozen steps when they heard the seven giants storming up the very same stairs.

Tommy sat down right where he was. “I just can’t go any further,” he said. His face was white with exhaustion.

“We can’t stay here!” exclaimed Belinda.

“There’s nowhere else to go,” moaned Tommy.

“Oh, yes there is!” cried Belinda. “I have an idea. Have you ever slid down banisters?”

“Never,” said Tommy. “My father would never have permitted it in our house.”

“Well, you’re going to now.” said Belinda. “Quick! Follow me!”

She put one leg over the banister and gave a push. In an instant she was flying down through the heart of the castle. Tommy gave a whoop of joy and slid down behind her.

Down, down, down they zoomed past the seven startled giants, past the seven floors to the very door of the castle. Without a pause they ran outdoors, climbed on Santa’s little sled and sped away.

When they were back safe with Santa both children were sad and forlorn.

Santa laughed at them both. “Suppose you tell me everything that happened,” he said. So Belinda and Tommy told him about the strange mirror and how much it had seemed to mean to the giants.

Santa was very excited.

“That’s the secret of it all” he cried.

“But it was only a mirror,” protested Belinda. “Cracked and bumpy. What could be its use?”

“It was a piece of ice from the Frozen Pond of Winnie the Witch.” said Santa. “This is magic ice and will melt the hearts of all who see their reflection in it.”

“But why didn’t they tell us?” asked Tommy.

“They didn’t know themselves. They knew they liked to look in the mirror but they didn’t know that it softened their hearts whenever they did it.”

“And now,” said Belinda sadly, “The Mirror is gone forever.”

Santa laughed. “Far from it. If you are rested you must take one more trip. This time I will go with you.”

“Where are we going?”

“To the Frozen Pond of Winnie the Witch.”

## Chapter 14

### THE STRANGE WITCH

When the Santa Land workers heard that Santa was going on a trip they were quite upset.

“How can you leave?” they protested. “Only you can make dolls say ‘ma-ma’ and only you can put the whistle in a whistle. If you leave us now we cannot possibly have anything ready for Christmas.”

Santa knew very well what a mountain of toys remained for him to finish before Christmas day. “You are right,” he agreed reluctantly. “I better stay here. Tweedleknives can go in my place.”

“Great gooseberry!” shouted Tweedleknives. “Haven’t I work to do, too? How can I go off to see a woman witch?”

But grumbling and groaning he climbed on Santa’s little sled in front of Belinda and Tommy.

In this way they travelled to the Frozen Pond which lay in the heart of the Northland. A dreadful witch named Winnie sat for ever in the snow guarding the pond.

When Belinda and Tommy saw Winnie they felt very sorry for her. “What a cold and lonely life.” they thought. “How miserable she must be!”

But Tweedleknives had no time for pity. “Well, old witch,” he said gruffly, “we’ve come to get a piece of your pond. Be quick about it as I am a busy creature and have work to do.”

“No one will have a piece of my pond.” she said firmly.

Tweedleknives began to jump up and down in a rage but Belinda said quickly, “Please, ma’am. We do need it most dreadfully. It is magic ice, you know. It softens the heart of all who see their reflection in it.”

“I know that well enough.” snapped the witch. “Why else would I guard it so?”

“But - I don’t understand!” said Tommy.

“Well, when mean folks get mean enough they turn into witches. If mean folks all got soft why soon there’d be no more witches.”

“It must be very hard to guard your pond all the time. Don’t you ever get tired?” asked Tommy.

“I am always tired,” said Winnie. “But the last time I fell asleep seven great giants came here. They jumped on the ice and broke it and when I awoke and went for them they ran off carrying a piece of ice with them.”

“The Horrible Hoblins!” cried Belinda.

“That is who they were. I do not know whether they ever looked at themselves in the ice but I have never allowed myself to sleep since.”

“It’s probably worthless ice anyway,” said Tweedleknives scornfully. “Even if you gave us a piece it would melt before we could get it home.”

“The ice from my pond never melts,” said Winnie proudly.

“We shall see,” snapped Tweedleknives. Before Belinda could stop him he stepped onto the pond and tried to break off a piece of the ice with his heel.

The witch stood on the side of the pond. Smiling crookedly she muttered strange words to herself. Suddenly Tweedleknives disappeared through a hole in the frozen pond. Belinda screamed. The witch chuckled wickedly.

“Please save him!” begged Belinda. “He didn’t mean to be rude!”

The witch reached over and fished the dwarf from the pond. But alas! the water had frozen around him and he was imprisoned in a cake of ice.

The witch laughed and laughed. “He is a funny sight,” she chortled as she looked at Tweedleknives furious face frozen inside the ice. “But quite useless. What will you trade me for him?”

“Anything!” cried Tommy and Belinda together.

“Very well. You shall have back your useless dwarf if you bring to me the seven heads of the seven giants who stole a piece from my pond.”



The Witch Fished the Dwarf from the Pond, But Alas! He Was Imprisoned in a Cake of Ice.

## Chapter 15

### THE DRESS

Belinda and Tommy returned to Santa Land and told Santa the fearful fate of Patrick Tweedleknees.

“Can’t you do something?” Belinda asked Santa. “Maybe you can get her to trade Tweedleknees for me. I’m the one who has caused it all.”

Santa smiled gently. “I was wondering if we couldn’t get Winnie to look at her own reflection in the ice.”

“She’d never do it,” declared Tommy. “She even wears dark glasses to protect herself.”

“And she wears rags? And never combs her hair? No wonder she doesn’t care to see herself. But suppose she were to have a beautiful new dress. What then?”

Belinda clapped her hands happily. “Why, she’d just have to see herself in a mirror!”

“Oh joy!” cried the little workers. “That is what she would surely do!”

So, singing and laughing, the Santa Land folk set to work making a dress for Winnie the Witch.

When it was finished it was surely the most beautiful dress ever made. Belinda touched it lovingly. “I can hardly bear it,” she whispered. “Just to look at it puts valentines in my heart.”

“Now let’s wrap it up,” said Santa cheerfully.

“Here’s a box,” said Mrs. Claus. She pulled out the box that had held the red flannel night gown which the Horrible Hobblins had sent Santa for Christmas.

Then Tommy took the box and the children started for the sled. But, at this very moment, the earth rumbled and shook, and the seven Horrible Hobblins strode into Santa Land.

“We’ve come to get back our present!” shouted the giants. “From now on we are your enemies.”

Belinda and Tommy jumped on the sled and started away.

“Come in,” said Santa to the giants. “I’ll return your present.”

But the giants had seen the red striped box with golden ribbons in Tommy’s hands. They thought he had the red flannel night gown.

“It’s a trick!” shouted the giants. “The children have the box! We’ll take them along with the present!”

Before Santa could show them the flannel gown which he had rushed in the house to get, the giants took off after Belinda and Tommy. Santa’s sled went faster than the giants could travel though they had their own magic ways. The children could hear them rumbling far behind as they sped to the Frozen Pond.

“You were quick,” said Winnie the Witch taking the box from Tommy. “But this is certainly a small box to fold seven heads of seven giants.”

“This is a separate present,” said Tommy. “The seven heads are coming. You can hear them now. You see the seven heads are still attached to the seven bodies.”

“All the better,” said Winnie. “Now, what have we here?” She opened the box. The beautiful dress spilled out. The witch stared at it.

“Try it on!” urged Belinda desperately. She could hear the giants coming closer.

Slowly Winnie drew off her rags and stepped into the glorious gown.

“Hmmp!” she said.

“Oh, if you could see yourself!” cried Belinda.

“Hmmp!” said Winnie uncertainly.

“What a beauty you are!” cried Tommy.

Then the children caught their breath for the witch took off her glasses and moved slowly to the Frozen Pond. She leaned over the edge and stared for a long, long moment at her reflection in the ice.

When she rose her face was beaming.

At this moment the seven giants arrived. With a shout they surrounded Belinda and Tommy, but even as they lay their angry hands on the children, Winnie the Witch called to them.

“Come,” she said sweetly. “Look into my mirror.”





## Chapter 16

### SANTA IN PRISON

Winnie the Witch broke off a large piece of ice from the Frozen Pond. She held it up before the giants.

“Look!” she ordered. “Look into my magic mirror!”

The giants looked and instantly their hearts were softened. They kissed the witch. They hugged each other.

Then the giants went happily back to their gloomy castle. Winnie the Witch freed Tweedleknives from his cake of ice.

“Don’t you want to look at yourself in a piece of my ice?” the witch asked him.

“I should say not!” howled Tweedleknives. “Being hard hearted is my business.”

Tommy laughed. “Santa says that Tweedleknives heart is already soft as a cream puff,” he told the witch.

“But we would like a piece of ice,” Belinda reminded her, “for the stony heart of Mr. Lump.”

So Winnie gave the children a bit of the magic mirror and the children returned with Tweedleknives to Santa Land.

“Now, we must hurry home,” said Belinda to Santa, “for we have what we came for.”

“I shall take you home myself,” said Santa.

“How can you leave Santa Land?” asked Tommy.

“Because tonight is Christmas Eve,” said Santa, “and I shall travel over the whole wide world before another dawn.”

Then everyone set to work piling Santa’s sleigh high with bicycles and drums and wagons and books and dolls.

At last all was ready. Santa sat in the sleigh with Tommy and Belinda all snug beside him. “Hang on! We are going to travel faster than a dream!”

Then Santa called to his eight reindeer and away they flew across the snow and into the sky. In only a tiny speck of time they were flying over the great city where Tommy and Belinda lived. The streets were dark and empty. All the town was abed.

“But, look!” cried Belinda. “There is Tommy’s house and every light is on!”

Santa halted the sleigh in front of Tommy’s house. “You two go in and give Mr. Lump the magic mirror,” he said. “I’ll speed to the jail and see about Poppy.”

Now a strange thing had happened in the jail that very night. Poppy just couldn’t stand to think of Belinda all alone on Christmas Eve. Then, suddenly, a wonderful chance came his way. The guard who brought him his supper left the key in the door. Perhaps he forgot it or perhaps he did it on purpose not liking to have a Santa in jail on Christmas day.

Anyway, that night when the guards were having a Christmas party in the guard room. Poppy unlocked his cell and walked right out of jail. He went home but found no one there.

“Perhaps Belinda has gone to bring poor Tommy Lump some Christmas cheer,” he thought. “I will go there and see.” And he set off for Tommy’s house.

At this very moment Santa himself arrived at the jail. Finding the doors open, Santa walked in and went straight to Poppy’s empty cell.

As he looked about, the party in the guard room ended and the guard trooped down the hall. Seeing the door to Poppy’s cell open they slammed it shut.

Now, of course, all this time Poppy had been wearing his Santa Claus suit and the guards had no way of knowing that in the cell now was not Poppy but Santa himself.

“Someone left all the doors to the jail wide open” cried one of the guards! “This fellow could have escaped!”

“Let me out! Let me out!” cried Santa in alarm. “I am Santa Claus!”

But the guard only smiled at him sadly and turned away.



## Chapter 17

### A MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL

Santa called the guards back to his cell. "It's true!" he explained. "I am Santa Claus! Take me to the roof and I'll prove to you that I am really Santa Claus."

The guards laughed. "I suppose his reindeer are waiting for him on the roof."

Then the captain of guards said, "We'll make a bargain with you. If reindeer are on the roof we'll let you go. If no reindeer are there you will forget this nonsense and go to sleep."

"I'll agree," said Santa eagerly.

The guards unlocked the cell and the whole group with Santa in their midst trooped to the roof. There stood the eight reindeer and the red sleigh loaded with toys.

Before the guards could recover from their astonishment Santa leaped into the sleigh, cracked his long whip, and drove away.

"Alas, alas!" cried the guards. "To think it was Santa himself we've had behind bars all these days!"

Meantime, Belinda and Tommy stood outside Mr. Lump's house. "I'd better go in alone," said Tommy.

He was just about to start in when Poppy came running down the street. "Goodness," thought Belinda. "It took Santa hardly any time to get Poppy out of jail!"

"I thought I'd find you here," Poppy greeted her. "You better come home now and hang up your Christmas stocking."

"Oh Poppy!" cried Belinda. "Wait until you hear all we've seen and done! Or has Santa already told you?"

"No," said Poppy indulgently "But I suppose Santa soon will be here."

Tommy and Belinda laughed and laughed because they knew very well how near Santa was. Belinda gave Tommy the magic mirror. "Goodbye," he said. "And good luck."

Then Poppy and Belinda went off for home and Tommy crept slowly into his brightly lit house. He tiptoed to the door of the study and there was Mr. Lump leaning on the desk with his head in his arms.

Tommy held out the magic mirror. "Father," he said, "I have brought -"

Mr. Lump sprang from his seat and stared at the boy as if he couldn't believe his eyes. Then he snatched Tommy off the floor into his arms.

"You came back! Oh Tommy, I thought I'd lost you!"

Suddenly Mr. Lump was crying. "Nothing matters except having you, Tommy," he said. "Oh, I am a changed man, son. I've thought things out while you were gone and everything is going to be different now!"

Tommy's astonished heart was near to bursting with love. He threw his arms around his father and as he did so the forgotten magic mirror fell from his hands and shattered on the floor.

"What was that?" asked Mr. Lump.



Tommy looked in dismay the broken pieces. Then shrugged and grinned. "It just an old piece of ice," he said. "I thought I would need it but I don't at all!"

Mr. Lump said, "I have a surprise for you." He carried Tommy up to his bedroom. There was a great Christmas tree all shining with ribbon and tinsel and blue and red balls.

"It's the first tree I ever decorated," said Mr. Lump shyly. "Next year I'll do better."

"It's wonderful!" whispered Tommy.

It was the midnight hour and Mr. Lump was asleep and Poppy was asleep when suddenly Tommy, in his bed, and Belinda, several blocks away in her bed, heard the soft tinkling of bells in the winter sky.

Both children sprang from their beds and ran to their windows. Both saw Santa circling above the city in his great red sleigh.

Then both children leaned far from their windows and cried from their hearts "A Merry Christmas!"

Santa, far above them, smiled as he replied, "A Merry Christmas to you! And a Merry Christmas to all!"

The End

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