

SANTA and the SINGING TURTLE

Santa and the Singing Turtle

By Lucrece Beale

Chapter 1

Once upon a time in the faraway kingdom of Razenpie there ruled a wicked king named Kerchew. He was mean and greedy and terrible-tempered. He rushed around all day shouting orders:

“Do this? Do that! Bring me this! Take that away!”

He sputtered these orders so explosively they sounded like a steady stream of sneezes and that is why he was called King Kerchew.

To make matters worse, he wasn't even a real king. The true king was a little boy named Frederick Chadwick Anthony Matthew Christopher John, called Prince Chad, for short. Kerchew was Chad's uncle and was merely acting king until the boy was old enough to rule.

The laws of the kingdom said the prince would be old enough to take the throne on the next Christmas day and at that time Kerchew would have to step down.

Old Kerchew hated the thought of giving up his power and as Christmas got closer and closer, he became meaner and meaner. He kept the schools open from dawn to dusk so the children wouldn't run around the street and disturb him. He decreed that no one outside the palace should have dessert

except on the first Monday of every third month. He ordered everyone to be in bed by 8 o'clock to save on light and fuel. He threw people who disobeyed him into prison and he threatened every day to chop off the heads of any who spoke against him.

He ordered all the calendars in the land burned so no one would know Christmas was coming. He banned all Christmas shopping and all Christmas decorations.

Meanwhile Prince Chad quietly waited. He was a gentle boy who liked to dream and read of heroes and adventure. He did not know that Kerchew dreaded Christmas. He did not know any of Kerchew's wicked deeds, because the old ruler had kept his ways secret from the boy and encouraged the prince to spend all his time in his own room dreaming over his books.

But Chad knew the day was soon coming when he would take the throne and he had many plans. He intended to be a kind and noble king and bring happiness to the people of Razenpie and he could hardly wait to take his rightful place on the throne. But, to tell the truth, at the moment he was more excited about Christmas than about becoming king.

One day, when Christmas was only a week off, the prince was having lunch with Kerchew. He said, “Uncle, I want to give a big Christmas party for everyone in the kingdom.”

Kerchew dropped his fork and sputtered like a firecracker. The bread pudding he had been eating spattered in every direction.

“Never!” he finally managed to roar, “I won't have it!”

“But Uncle,” said Chad “I have already written Santa Claus asking him to bring special presents for everyone to the palace.”

“I saw the letter.” snapped Kerchew. “I ordered it burned. And I'll burn up any such letter you write!”

Chad stared at his uncle in astonishment. Then he put down his napkin and stood up. “In that case,” he said quietly, “I will go myself.”

“Go where?”

“To Santa Land.” said the prince leaving the room.

Kerchew's eyes bulged and his face grew purple. He pounded the table with his fists.

“Womp!” he roared. “Womp!”

Womp was Kerchew's slave. He was only two feet tall and he was as wicked as his master. Some said he was a man with and had magic powers.



And so our story begins

He popped into the room and Kerchew cried. "Stop that boy! He's not king yet!"

Womp grinned. "I heard all master," he said. "And if I were you I'd let him go."

"No!" roared Kerchew. "I am still king!"

"If he goes," persisted Womp, "perhaps it can be arranged that he never return and you will always be king"

Kerchew fell back in his chair. A big smile slowly split his face. "Ah, yes." he whispered. "Arrange it, Womp! Arrange it!"

Chapter 2

THE PRINCE MEET THE TURTLE

Prince Chad rushed to his room. He hurriedly pulled on his boots and his big winter coat and his gloves. He yanked open all the bureau drawer's and looked under the bed and even on the chandelier where he sometimes tossed things, but he could not find his red woolen hat.

He was in a terrible hurry. He could hear King Kerchew sputtering and pounding the table in the dining room and shouting for Womp, his servant. He knew Kerchew would order Womp to stop him from going to Santa Land. The Prince was afraid of the servant because he was one of those who knew that Womp was really a manwitch with magic powers.

"I'll look just one last place." thought Chad. He climbed on a chair and peered over the closet shelf. There, wrapped in tissue paper, was the gold and jeweled crown he would wear when he became king on Christmas Day.

He dragged the crown down and put it on his head. He looked at himself in the mirror. He thought he looked a little strange wearing a crown with his big winter coat but it was better than nothing. Anyway, he thought, it would show Santa that he really was a king, or would be soon.

He tiptoed out of his room and down the long stairs to the front door. He was out without a sound. But Womp heard nevertheless. He wrapped himself in a big, black cloak and followed the boy out the door.

The Prince had no idea how to get to Santa Land, but he was certain there was such a place for he had read about it often enough in his books. He knew Santa would understand his problem and help him to have a Christmas party for all the people of Razenpie on the day he became king.

He went up to an old woman who was staggering under a load of firewood she carried on her back. "Please," said Chad "Could you tell me the way to Santa Land? I am off to see Santa Claus."

The old woman stared at him. She was amazed at the crown he wore and even more amazed at his question.

"King Kerchew has forbidden all mention of that name in this kingdom," she quavered. "Are you a spy from the palace sent to trap me?"

"I am Frederick Chadwick Anthony Matthew Christopher John, soon to be King of Razenpie, and I am on my way to Santa Land. But I must hurry, for time is short and I do not know the way."

"Oh, Sire," quavered the old woman, not knowing what to believe and scared to death she would lose her head. "I can't help you. I dare not. You must not ask your question of anyone in Razenpie." She shut her eyes and bent again under her load.

The Prince sighed and started away. He had not gone three steps when he felt the woman's hand on his arm. "The North Road," she whispered. "I'd take the North Road if I were you."

"Thank you," cried Chad. But the old woman was gone. He waved after her and straightening his crown, set out on the North Road. Womp, the manwitch, like an unseen shadow, trailed behind.

The North Road was a long road and 10 hours later the end was not yet in sight though the Prince was sure he had passed far beyond the Kingdom of Razenpie.

He lay down by the side of the road to rest. He wished he had brought something to eat, but it didn't matter too much because he was so tired he was soon fast asleep. He slept until dawn and would have slept on and on, but he was awakened by a song.

He sat up and rubbed his eyes and looked around. No one was in sight but the song was everywhere and the voice that sang was the sweetest he had ever heard.

"Where are you? Who are you?" he cried jumping up.

The song stopped. The Prince peered up at the trees and into the bushes and down the road. "Whoever you are," he begged, "please don't stop."

"And whoever are you?" snapped a voice at his feet.

Looking down, the astonished Prince saw a turtle poking his head from behind a rock.

"I-I heard singing," stammered the Prince.

"You heard me," said the creature. "I am George, the Singing Turtle, and I was practicing my scales when you so rudely interrupted."



She was amazed at his crown and amazed at his question

Chapter 3

THE SNOWMAN

The Prince dropped to his knees beside the turtle

“Are you really a singing turtle?” he cried.

“You heard me,” replied George.

“Let me hear you again!”

The turtle stretched his neck out full length, tilted his head, closed his eyes and opened his mouth.

“Tra la la la! Tra la la la! De da!”

The notes came clear and true, ringing in the frosty air like silver bells on a sleigh.

“There,” said George. He opened his eyes and tucked his head down closed to his shell. “Now I must be off, for I am on my way to the Christmas Music Festival in Santa Land.”

“Santa Land! Why, that is where I am going and I do not know the way. May I come with you?”

“I do not think so,” replied George. “Ordinary boys and girls cannot go to Santa Land.”

“Well, I don’t suppose I am really ordinary. I am Frederick Chadwick Anthony Matthew Christopher John, called Prince Chad for short.”

“That’s not an ordinary name, certainly,” agreed George.

“On Christmas day I am going to become King of Razenpie!”

“So that’s why you are wearing that silly hat!”

“It’s not a hat. It’s a crown and it is very valuable, I expect.”

“Well, come along, come along,” grumbled George, starting down the road. “We’ll go together but you must not interrupt me when I practice my singing.”

“Oh. I promise” exclaimed the Prince as he fell into step beside the turtle. “Will you sing at the Festival?”

“Naturally. That is why I am practicing. The Christmas Music Festival is on Christmas Eve. It is held only once every hundred years and musicians from the whole world come to perform. Oh, it is something to hear! There are prizes, of course, but for me it is enough just to sing before Santa Claus. Imagine! What an honor!”

“Yes, yes!” agreed the Prince. “Still I do hope you win First Prize!”

“It’s been my heart’s desire for a hundred years.” Said George and he threw back bead and began to practice scales as they walked.

Meanwhile, hidden in the brush that bordered the road, Womp, the manwitch, crept along behind them, smiling to himself and biding his time.

They had been traveling for perhaps an hour when suddenly the Prince halted. “What is that?” he whispered.

“What is what?” said George crossly. “You promised not to interrupt me.”



“But - I heard something. Didn’t you hear - a kind of groaning?”

“I hope you aren’t referring to my singing!”

“No - a real groan! Listen!”

They stood still and sure enough they heard a moaning not loud or troubled, but sorrowful like the sad sound a wind sometimes makes around the window when you’re lying in your bed at night.

But there wasn’t any wind now and there wasn’t any person and there wasn’t any animal anywhere that they could see. George and the Prince looked at each other and didn’t know what to make of it.

“Let’s go.” said George at last. “Really, time is very short, for Christmas is only four days away and.-”

“Look!” interrupted the Prince. “It’s coming from there!” He pointed towards a nearby field where a broken-down Snowman stood, its shoulders drooping, one arm falling, and one coal black eye completely gone.

The Prince ran up to the Snowman. He looked behind it and on top of it and all around it, but he could not find anybody. Just then the groan came again and he saw it was the Snowman that was groaning!

“Are you real?” cried the Prince.

‘Of course I am real,’ said the Snowman, blinking his one eye. “But I won’t be long, for as you can see I’ve already lost an eye and an arm.”

“I can help you!” said the Prince. He straightened the Snowman’s drooping shoulders and put his arm back in place. But he could not find the missing eye.

“It’s no use anyway,” said Snowman gloomily. “For tomorrow or the next day or day after I shall melt away and be no more.”

Chapter 4

THREE TRAVELLERS

“Oh, dear,” cried the Prince to the one-eyed Snow man.
“There must be something we can do to save you!”

“Nothing at all,” said the Snowman sorrowfully. “It happens to my kind every year. Children make us when the snow comes, then forget us when the sun shines. In a little while we melt away and no one even remembers we once were here.”

“I know what we could do,” said the Prince. He turned to George who only now ambled his slow way up to them. “We could take him to Santa Land with us! There it is always cold and he would never melt away.”

George tossed his head and tapped an impatient foot. “He can’t walk!” he said shortly.

“But I can!” protested the one-eyed Snowman. “If I have some place to go to, I can walk. Usually snowmen have no place to go to and that is why -”

“No, no,” interrupted George. “You can’t go with us. It simply makes too much of a crowd and all the commotion has already caused me seriously to neglect my singing.”

“Was that you singing?” exclaimed the Snowman. “I heard you as you came down the road and I thought to myself I had never heard so noble a sound.”

“Eh?” said George. “And is that why you were groaning?”

“Indeed, yes. I moaned to think that I would never hear such sound again.”

“I see,” said George, puffing up as far as he could inside his shell. “It appears that you have a very good ear for music! Well, I suppose it will not matter too much if you come along with the Prince and me. Only, let’s hurry along for goodness’ sake and no more interruptions, please!”

The Prince gave the one-eyed Snowman a push to get him started. Then he held the fellow’s arm to steady him until he got used to moving his big, clumsy legs and was able to stagger along under his own power. Meanwhile, George plodded along in his slow turtle way. Taking everything into consideration, it appeared to the Prince that it was going to take a very long time to get to where they were going. It appeared that way, too, to Womp, the manwitch, who trailed the Prince and was getting very impatient to get his job over with.

But George was in excellent spirits. It was a fine, clear day - the very best kind of day for George’s voice - and as he sauntered along he freely exercised his remarkable vocal chords.

He sang through two complete operas, taking all parts, for his voice could cover all ranges from soprano to basso profundo. He was about to begin a third opera when the Prince began to be truly worried and dared to interrupt.

“How much farther to Santa Land?”

‘About 40,000 miles roughly, I should say.’ Replied George, opening his eyes for the first time since the walk began.



“Forty thousand miles! We can never walk that far in three days!”

“I don’t intend to walk, your Majesty,” reported George. “We will go by Hoppy Hope and Pray’s underground railway, the entrance to which is not far away. In fact, if I have counted my steps correctly It should be around the next bend in the road.”

Sure enough, when they rounded the next bend they came upon a hollowed-out oak tree. On it was a sign saying:

“Hoppy Hope and Pray’s Underground Railway.”

“What a strange name!” said the Prince.

“Not at all,” replied George. “You just hop on and hope and pray you get there!”

Chapter 5
A DIZZY RIDE

George led the Prince and the one-eyed Snowman into the hollowed-out oak tree. It was empty except for a rusty old washtub that hung from a dead limb by a rope.

“Is this Hoppy Hope and Pray’s railway?” asked the Prince in astonishment.

“This, as anyone can plainly see, is the elevator,” retorted George. “Get in and it will take you to the railway.”

Obediently, the Prince climbed into the tub. A moment later the ground seemed to give way and he swooshed through a thousand feet of darkness to land with a clank in a brightly lit railway station. There stood a little train, more like a trolley, huffing and puffing and clanging its bell.

The Prince, his crown bent and askew, tumbled out of the tub. Immediately the elevator rose again to the surface and came swooshing back to dump the Snowman in several pieces beside the Prince on the station floor.

“Oh, dear!” exclaimed the Snowman, staggering around. “I’ve lost my one good eye!”

The Prince crawled about on his hands and knees until he found the hunk of black coal that was the poor fellow’s remaining eye. He stuck it back in place and hastily repacked the arms that had been flung across the railway tracks. They were now quite uneven in length but serviceable just the same.

Hardly had the Snowman been put together than the elevator returned with George. It deposited him upside down on the railway platform, covered not only by his own shell but by the tub as well. The Snowman lifted the tub and the Prince righted the turtle.



The little red trolley-train began to puff heavily and clang its bell furiously, indicating clearly that it was ready to start. The three travelers flung themselves aboard just as the wheels began to turn.

They were so overcome by the whole experience they did not notice that the tub had landed again, this time bringing Womp, the manwitch, who raced after the trolley and just managed to fasten himself to the tail gate as the train shot off into a pitch black tunnel.

“Now is where you hope pray!” shouted George and shut his eyes and pulled his head all the way into his shell.

The Prince and the Snowman did the best they could. The Snowman could not close his one eye, but he raised his arms and wrapped them around his whole head. The Prince thought it would be unprincely for him to hide his head, but he did shut his eyes tight and pulled his bent crown far down over his face.

There followed the wildest, loudest, scariest ride that man or beast ever dreamed of. The fiery little train leaped through the darkness. It bucked. It rocketed. It gyrated. It quivered. It soared. It left a flaming trail of sparks scattered in its wake. It hissed. It crackled. It gurgled. It backfired. It roared,

Suddenly it was all over and the train was standing in a snow-walled station. The Snowman dropped his arms. The Prince opened his eyes. George’s head came out of his shell.

“Well” he said cheerfully. “It beats walking anyway” And he led the way off the train.

Meanwhile, Womp, the manwitch, pried loose his petrified fingers from the train’s tail gate. His face was black with soot. His hair was singed down to the scalp. His teeth were chattering. His legs were like taffy candy.

“I’ll get you, Prince Chad!” he swore furiously as he staggered dizzily away.



“Santa Land” read the big sign on the snow station.

“We’re really here!” exclaimed the Prince. “I can’t believe it.”

“I can,” said the one-eyed Snowman, taking in deep breaths of the icy air. “I feel better already. Why, in this climate, I will last ten thousand years!”

“But where are the musicians?” wondered George. “I was sure I would hear them practicing.”

“Let’s go see!” cried Prince Chad.

He darted away from his slow, plodding companions and raced across the snow-covered fields past row on row of workshops, barns and stables. He came to a little red-shuttered house with smoke curling from the chimney. He knew this was it - Santa Claus’ house.

He walked all around it and peeped through the curtained windows. He tapped softly at the door. There was no answer.

George and the Snowman finally arrived. George said impatiently, “Knock louder, for goodness sake!”

The Prince knocked and the Snowman pounded with his heavy fists and George tapped with his little tail. Suddenly the door flung open.

There stood Patrick Tweedleknées, a crooked-legged, bent-backed, near-sighted elf who clearly had just been awakened from a very fine sleep and did not at all like being disturbed.

“Stop that hullabaloo!” he shouted. “Can’t you see I’m working?”

The Prince was so astonished he stepped backwards, tripped over George and fell off the porch. The elf peered at him and

said fussily, “Who are you anyway and what’s that thing on your head?”

“I am Frederick Chadwick Anthony Matthew Christopher John,” stammered the Prince. “The thing on my head is a crown because I am soon to be King of Razenpie. Could we see Santa Claus, please?”

“Santa Claus! He’s gone to the Music Festival, as you should certainly know if you are about to be a king.”

“The Music Festival” cried George in alarm, “But we have come here to the Music Festival. I am to sing!”

“Sing if you wish but no one at the Festival will hear you.” snapped Tweedleknées. “The Festival is in Fairyland. It begins tomorrow and you can never get there in time.”

George was stunned with disappointment. He pulled his head inside his shell. Then he pulled his feet in and his tail, too.

“Now see what you have done,” said the Snowman towering over the elf. “You’ve broken his heart!”

“Me!” protested Tweedleknées angrily. “I’ll have you know tomorrow is Christmas Eve and I have my hands full getting everything ready, doing all the work, taking all the responsibility while Santa is away having all the fun. Then you come along and blame me because you came to the wrong place! Well, I say, pooh to you.” With that the elf went in the house and slammed the door.

The three visitors sat on the steps. The Prince said, “I never thought Santa Land would be like this.” And the Snowman said, “I don’t even want to stay here anymore.” George said nothing, but two big tears rolled out from under his shell.

Suddenly the door flung open and Patrick Tweedleknées was back. “I can’t stand this racket,” he grumbled. “I’ll send you to Fairyland. Make your racket there.”

George’s head darted from his shell. “You mean - you can get us there in time for me to sing?”

“I can see it’s the only way I am to have any peace,” snapped Tweedleknées. “Meet me at workshop number six in two hours and I will give you boots that will get you to Fairyland before tomorrow’s dawn.”

“Oh,” said George gratefully. “I will sing for you now!”

“Spare me!” retorted Tweedleknées. “It’s the least you can do.” And turning on his heels he stalked off to workshop number six.

Chapter 7

A DAY IN SANTA LAND

For two hours George and the Prince and the Snowman wandered through the workshops of Santa Land. They had never dreamed of such a wonderland and the little elves who were Santa's helpers had never dreamed of such visitors.

"Are you really real?" they asked the Snowman, pinching off a piece of his arm.

"Ouch! Of course I'm real. But I shan't be long if you keep that up."

"But, you're not finished!" exclaimed the elves and they put a tall silk hat on top of the Snowman's head. "And a broom! He needs a broom!" They stuck a brand new broom under his arm. "He's one-eyed. Give him another eye!" Out came the jewels and an emerald became the missing eye.

The Snowman looked at himself in the mirror. He was the handsomest, best-dressed Snowman ever made.

Meanwhile, George played games with a Jack-in-the-Box whose head popped in and out of its house even faster than George's did.

Prince Chad rushed about examining bicycles, pogo sticks, toy trains, fire engines, games and spinning tops. He planned to fill the Kingdom of Razenpie with just such things when he became King.

The two hours sped by and too soon it was time to meet Patrick Tweedleknees at workshop number six. The old fellow was cross as ever, but he handed them each a pair of shoes and it was plain to see he was pleased with the job he had done. There were two giant shoes for the Snowman, four tiny shoes for George and two regular-size for the Prince.

"They are the only ones of their kind in the world," said Tweedleknees. "They will take you to Fairyland but not bring you back. Put them on when you come to the forest that lies on the east of Santa Land. They will carry you faster than your thoughts and you will be in Fairyland in time for breakfast."

The three travelers tried to thank him but he waved them off grumpily and stomped back to Santa's house to finish his sleep.

"He is a good fellow," said George. "I wish I could have sung for him. But I do not think he is a music lover."

"He would be if he heard you," said the Snowman loyally.

"Perhaps he will," said the Prince. "If George should win the Music Festival."

"Ah, yes," said George longingly. "Let us hurry!"

They went off as fast as the Turtle's short legs would permit to the forest on the east side of Santa Land.

Behind them, where none could see, came Womp, the manwitch. All this time Womp had been fidgeting and biting his nails as he waited impatiently to catch the Prince alone.

Womp had promised King Kerchew of Razenpie that he would not return from his trip to Santa Land. If he did not

come back he could not be crowned King on Christmas Day and wicked Kerchew (who was only acting king) could go on being king forever.

But Womp had followed the Prince all the way to Santa Land and never had a chance to be alone with him. Now time was running short and Womp was very worried. Christmas Eve was tomorrow and after that came Christmas and it would be too late to stop the Prince.

But soon, very soon, Womp would get his chance.



Chapter 8

WOMP'S CHANGE

George and the Snowman and the Prince hurried to the forest on the east side of Santa Land. It was a long walk, but Patrick Tweedleknives had warned them not to put on the magic shoes until they reached the forest.

The Snowman carried his new broom over one shoulder and his fine shoes slung over the other. His tall silk hat was cocked over his new emerald eye.

"Suppose it is hot in Fairyland," he thought anxiously. "If it is I shall melt away!"

This thought made him sad because he felt healthy and whole for the first time in his life. He didn't tell his friends what was on his mind because he was afraid they would make him stay behind.

George probably would not have heard him anyway. It had been a whole day since the turtle had practiced his singing and he was trying to make up for it now

"Do re me fa so la te do." he sang as he plodded along. First in C, then F sharp, then B flat and so forth. It was very trying to listen to and the Prince was glad when they finally reached the forest and stopped to put on the shoes Tweedleknives had given them.

This was not an easy task. The Snowman was so large and ungainly he could hardly reach feet, much less put shoes on. The turtle's feet were so tiny he couldn't keep his shoes on.

The Prince put his shoes on a rock and bent over the Snowman's huge feet. He shoved and pushed and tugged and finally the Snowman's shoes were on.

"Hey! Look at me!" exclaimed the Snowman. "I'm walking on air!"

He took one step. then another, and suddenly his legs went zip, zip, zip like a pair of scissors and swish! the Snowman was gone.

"Oh, dear," wailed the turtle struggling with his shoes. "We should stay together!"

"Don't worry, we'll catch up." said the Prince. He slipped the four little shoes on George's feet and tied the laces tight.

"Good gracious!" cried George. "I feel weightless!" He waddled three steps and then all four feet began to churn and swish! the turtle was gone, crying "Hurry, Prince!" as he sped away.

The Prince hurried to put on his own shoes, but when he went to the rock where he had left them they were gone. He turned the rock over and kicked up the snow. There was no sign of the shoes.

Then the Prince saw foot prints leading into the forest. "Could the shoes have gone off by themselves?" he wondered. Frantically he followed the tracks. On and on they went, deep into the forest. The Prince began to run. His heart pounded. It was growing dark. Soon he would not be able to see the tracks.



"Good gracious!" cried George. "I feel weightless."

He stumbled over fallen logs and crashed into trees. A low limb swept the crown from his head. He left it where it fell and rushed on.

When he felt he could not run another step, the tracks came to an end. The Prince found himself in a small clearing in the woods. Standing waiting for him was Womp, the manwitch, grinning crookedly and holding the magic shoes in his hands.

Chapter 9

WOMP CASTS A SPELL

Prince Chad stared at Womp in astonishment.

“How did you get here?” he gasped.

The manwitch smiled, “I have followed you from the Kingdom of Razenpie and a long way it’s been, too.”

“By whose order?” demanded the Prince.

“By order of your uncle, my master, King Kerchew who wants it arranged that you should not return to the Kingdom.”

“But - why?”

“Silly boy! Because if you don’t come back you can’t be crowned king on Christmas Day and your uncle will be king forever.”

The Prince knew that King Kerchew was not a good king, but he had never imagined that he was truly evil. Now he knew and he was afraid. His knees shook and a cold shiver ran down his back. But he was a prince, born to be king, and so he said bravely. “You cannot keep me from returning to my kingdom to save my people from my wicked uncle.”

“Perhaps I can’t.” said Womp. He began to walk idly in a circle around the Prince. As he walked he carelessly drew a line in the snow with a stick he carried in his hand. When he had finished he threw away the stick and said. “And perhaps I can, for I do not think you can ever break out of the magic circle I have drawn in the snow.”

The Prince rushed toward him but when he came to the line of the circle he was stopped as surely as if he stood on the edge of a cliff. Frantically he raced around the circle. He could not cross the line. An invisible curtain surrounded him and kept him prisoner.

Tears of rage stung his “I’ll get out!” he swore. “My friends will get me out!”

“Your friends the turtle and the Snowman?” scoffed Womp. “I think it’s hardly likely they will ever see you again.”

The Prince clenched his fists and cried, “When Santa Claus comes to Razenpie, the people will know it is Christmas and they will make my uncle leave the throne whether I am there or not. That is the law of the land!”

For the first time the smile left Womp’s face “That is true. I had not thought of that.” he muttered. He scratched his head and walked to and fro swinging the magic shoes from his hands.

“But then,” he cried, suddenly smiling. “Suppose Christmas never comes to Razenpie!” He sat on the ground and began to pull the Prince’s magic shoes onto his own feet.

“What do you mean?” demanded the Prince, trying to keep the quaver from his voice.

“I shall go to the Music Festival in Fairyland,” said Womp.

“There I shall arrange things so that Santa Claus will be unable to bring Christmas to Razenpie or any other kingdom in the world”

“You wouldn’t dare to touch Santa Claus! He has magic more powerful than yours!”

“I didn’t say I would touch him,” replied Womp, lacing up the shoes. “I shall merely put him to sleep. A very long sleep lasting, perhaps, a hundred years.”

He laughed shortly and stood up. He took three short steps, waved his hand airily, and swish” he vanished into the forest, leaving the Prince imprisoned in the magic circle.



SANTA IN FAIRYLAND



At dawn the turtle and the Snowman arrived in Fairyland. While they waited for the Prince to arrive they removed their magic shoes, for Tweedleknives had told them the shoes were good only for a one-way trip to Fairyland. They threw the shoes away and gazed around them, speechless.

They were in a place of enchantment where the sun shone every day and flowers bloomed all year long.

“I shall melt!” thought the Snowman worriedly.

But he didn’t because Fairyland is a place where the weather is neither hot nor cold but always just right for every creature who comes there.

Fairies and elves and pixies romped among the flowers. Storybook characters sat under the trees and told tales, old and new. Strange insects gossiped together and animals who had always feared each other were friends today in Fairyland.

All around were the sights and sounds of the Christmas Music Festival that was about to begin. Instruments were being tuned and voices tried out. Some musicians rushed about nervously pulling their hair. Others stood muttering to themselves. Still others stamped their feet in time to tunes beating in their heads.

George began to shake with excitement. So many musicians! Could he possibly perform as well as they? He was sure he could. He longed to throw back his head this very minute and show how beautifully he could sing, how golden the tone of his voice.

But where was the Prince? George turned his head this way and that, searching. What could have happened to him. A sudden trickle of fear caused him to shiver.

“Look yonder” whispered the Snowman suddenly, “He’s coming!”

With a sigh of relief, George turned. But instead of the Prince here was Santa Claus coming down the path. He was short and fat and dressed all in red. He was jolly and smiling and as happy as if the Music Festival were something he had been looking forward to for a hundred years, as indeed he had.

He came straight up to George and the Snowman and said, “Welcome! Have you come to the Festival to perform?”

The Snowman said shyly, “I’ve come to listen. George has come to sing.”

“Ah,” said Santa nodding at the turtle. “I’ve heard of you! I love a good voice and I am looking forward to your performance. In fact, just to start things off right I shall put you down to sing first.” He took out a notebook and began to write down George’s name.

But George said. “Please, if you don’t mind, I’d like to wait for my friend, Prince Chad.”

Then he told Santa how the Prince had come all the way from Razenpie to see Santa and get his help for the people in his kingdom. He told how Patrick Tweedleknives had given them the magic shoes to get to Fairyland and how all the Prince had to do was put them on and he would be there.

“I’m so afraid something bad has happened,” he ended anxiously.

“Nonsense,” said Santa cheerfully. “We’ll put you down for number 15. By that time the Prince will be here and you can sing your best.”

He wrote George’s name down opposite number 15 and then he called all the musicians together and said, “Let’s begin!”

He led the way to the Fairy Queens garden where the Queen was waiting on her throne. Santa sat beside her in a red rocking chair. All the elves and pixies and animal and storybook folk settled on the grass around them.

As the festivities were about to begin there was a small commotion at the back of the garden. A latecomer had arrived.

George looked eagerly over his shoulder, sure the Prince had come at last. But it wasn’t the Prince. It was Womp, cloaked in black and carrying a flute in his hands.

Chapter 11
THE FESTIVAL

No one at the Music Festival paid any attention to Womp as he squeezed his way into the back of the audience. But George, the Singing Turtle, shivered suddenly under his shell and felt the way turtles feel when they know danger is near.

“There’s something about him I do not like,” he whispered to the Snowman. “Why do they let him in?”

“He is a musician,” said the Snowman. “See, he carried a flute in his hand.”

“He doesn’t look like a musician,” grumbled George. “He doesn’t even look as if he likes music!”

“Sssh!” hissed a cricket on the turtle’s left. “Santa is talking.”

Santa was on the stage welcoming everyone to the Festival. He wished everyone a Merry Christmas and said it was too bad the Festival had to be on Christmas Eve when they were all so busy, but he hoped it would make Christmas all the merrier.

He told how long and hard the musicians had practiced and how far many of them had traveled in order to perform. Then he listed the prizes and he said the first prize winner was to be named Grand Musician to the Queen of Fairies.

This was so high an honor the very thought of it caused the audience to gasp and George missed two heartbeats from pure excitement.

“Now let us enjoy ourselves,” said Santa. The Fairy Queen waved her wand and the Festival at last began.

The first performer was a tiny cicada dressed in pale blue gauze. She sang a song called “Lazy Days” about the wonderful times of summer.

The little cicada had a sweet haunting voice and George could have fallen in love with her because she sang so beautifully and summertime was his time, too. But all the while she was singing he was thinking about the missing Prince and he could not really enjoy himself at all.

A swarm of bumble bees called the Buzzing Baritones were next. They sang a love song with such feeling that half the audience wept. The Queen Fairy said it was beautiful and Santa Claus called for an encore.

“Don’t worry.” said the Snowman to George. “I am sure you can do better than that.”

“I am not worrying about that,” said George. “It’s the Prince I am worrying about.” He stretched his head out as far as it would go searching for the Prince over the heads of the crowd. All he could see was the black cloaked figure of Womp, the manwitch. George drew in his head and shuddered.

Now an ibex and a yak were on the stage playing a duet on bassoons. They showed great skill and musical knowledge but their music was far out and futuristic and it was clear they would never win the prize.

Next came a bullfrog who sang hymns in a rich basso profundo. Then the Pied Piper from Storybook Land danced

across the stage, playing gay tunes on his pipes, and all the littlest pixies left their seats and danced after him.

After that, a praying mantis played the cello; King Cole and his Fiddlers Three played several jigs, and Three Men in a Tub used their tub for a drum and beat out a fine, stirring march.

Next came three chipmunks who called themselves the Chipmunk Chatterboxes. They stamped their feet and beat on pots and pans and slashed sticks across an old washing board and sang at the top of their voices. They played such rollicking tunes and had so much fun doing it that Santa Claus himself leaped from his chair and did a jig in front of the Queen Fairy.

It was something to see and something to hear! The audience swayed and clapped and stamped their feet.

Only George was quiet, for he knew, suddenly and for sure, deep in his turtle heart, that the Prince wasn’t going to get to the Festival at all.



Chapter 12

GEORGE TRICKS WOMP

The Chipmunk Chatterboxes played on and on. The audience cheered and stamped their feet. Even the Snowman was carried away. He waved his new broom wildly in the air and shouted, "Rickety, Rackety, Cha Cha, Chat!"

Then he remembered himself and turning to George said loyally, "They are good but, of course, you will be much better. There's no doubt about that!"

But the turtle had disappeared. He was making his way through the crowd, stepping carefully through the tangled legs. Twice he narrowly escaped being smashed by stomping feet and once he was knocked head over tail and landed in a baby pixie's lap. The pixie plopped him down on the ground and went right on clapping her hands to the music.

Poor George! He longed to join in the stomping and the clapping, because it surely was the finest music he had ever heard. But he had to find the Prince and that was all that mattered now. He thought sadly of the hundred years he had waited for the Festival and the years he had spent practicing and training his voice. It wasn't so much the prize he wanted - it was the honor and pleasure of singing for Santa Claus.

But he had to find the Prince. "If only the magic shoes would take me back to Santa Land!" he thought. Without them, how else was he to get back and find the Prince?

He pushed through the crowd, until he came to the very back of the audience. There was only one pair of legs in front of him. He started to circle the legs and then he stopped and stared open-mouthed at the feet in front of him. On the feet were two pairs of shoes and the top pair was the pair that Patrick Tweedleknees had given to the Prince to carry him to Fairyland!

George caught his breath. Slowly he raised his head and he saw that Womp, the manwitch, was standing in the shoes.

"Where is the Prince?" cried George.

Womp looked down distastefully at the disturbance at his feet. "Ah," he drawled. "It's George, the Singing Turtle!"

"Who are you?" demanded George. "What have you done with the Prince?"

Womp cupped one hand over his ear. "Eh" he shouted, "I can't hear you!"

The chipmunks had struck up another round and the whole audience of fairies and pixies had joined in the singing. George caught the edge of Womp's cloak in his mouth and nudged the manwitch into the woods where it was quieter.

"Nov," he said heatedly. "Answer my questions or I - I -"

"You'll do nothing," said Womp, brushing off his cloak, "I am a manwitch and I can turn you into turtle stew anytime I wish."

"Wait until Santa hears about this," said George angrily.

"Ha!" laughed Womp. "I will deal with Santa as I have with your Prince whom I have left imprisoned in a magic circle in



George pulled the manwitch into the woods

the forest east of Santa Land. As for Santa - just look" He pulled his flute from his pocket and waved it in the air. "When I play my special tune on this flute Santa Claus and the whole of Fairyland will fall asleep and never wake up!"

George's heart thumped. "I don't believe it," he quavered weakly.

Womp put the flute to his lips. "I could do it now," he said. "But I was hoping to enjoy the Music Festival first."

"Pooh," retorted George desperately. "You do not have the proper nose to play a flute."

"What's the matter with my nose?"

"Let me see it closer," said George slyly.

Womp bent low to the ground.

"Closer," said George.

Womp brought his face closer and closer until snap! - the turtle lunged forward and clamped his jaws around the nose of the manwitch.

Chapter 13

GEORGE CAN'T SPEAK

Womp, the manwitch leaped into the air.

“Ouch! Ouch!” he hollered. “Let me go!”

But George clamped his turtle jaws as tight as he could around Womp’s nose and would not let go.

Womp put both his hands around the turtle’s shell and pulled and pulled. The harder he pulled, the tighter George locked his jaws, and Womp felt as if he were pulling off his own nose.

He began to dance crazily back into the circle of the audience. He stamped his feet and waved his hands and screamed at the top of his voice. George shut his eyes and held on.

Meanwhile the Chipmunk Chatterboxes played on and the audience shouted and stamped their feet. It appeared that Womp was merely carried away by the music and no one paid the least attention to his gyrating.



But suddenly the chipmunks were finished and everyone was quiet. Everyone, that is, except Womp who hollered louder than ever. The fairies and the animals and the Storybook folk looked at him in amazement, but the manwitch was hopping around so wildly they couldn’t tell what was going on.

Santa Claus got out of his rocking chair and said sternly, “This is very unseemly behavior. We must have quiet for the next performer who will be George, the Singing Turtle.”

Womp shrieked and spun like a top. Suddenly the snowman, who had been searching for the turtle saw what was hanging on the manwitch’s nose.

“Good gracious!” he exclaimed. “George has gone out of his mind” He ran up to Womp and put his big snowy arms around him to stop his spinning. “George!” he shouted. “It’s your turn to sing!”

“Get him off! Get him off” begged Womp, standing still and staring wildly at the snowman.

“For goodness sake, George, let go!” begged the Snowman, tapping George on the back. But the turtle shook his head furiously, pulling Womp’s nose harder than ever.

Santa Claus stepped forward and said quietly, “This is a Music Festival and not a circus. Let go at once, George, and explain yourself if you can.”

Instantly George let go and dropped to the ground. With a great sigh of relief he turned to explain everything to Santa and warn him about the wicked Womp. But alas! when he tried to speak he couldn’t move his mouth! He had clenched Womp’s nose so tightly he had dislocated his own jaw and the only sound he could make was “Ahhhhh” which sounded like a cross between a groan and the sound a child makes when the doctor is looking down his throat.

Womp saw at once what had happened. He stepped right up to Santa and said, “I never expected to be treated this way when I came to the Music Festival to perform.”

“Are you a performer?” asked Santa absently. He was looking down at George and shaking his head sadly. He was amazed and disappointed that the turtle would behave so badly.

“Indeed, yes,” said Womp. “I play the flute and I should like to play for you now.”

George said. “Ahhhh! Ahhhhhh!” and shook his head frantically.

“It’s George’s turn,” declared Snowman. “He wants to sing.”

“Ahhhhh!” went George furiously and it was clear he could neither sing nor speak.

“Shall I take his place?” asked Womp politely.

“I suppose so,” said Santa. “Although I am sorry not to have heard the turtle sing, for I have heard great things about his voice. Well, we will have a break for luncheon and then we will hear you play the flute.”

“A h h h h!” moaned George. “Ahhhhh”

But no one could tell what he was trying to say.

Chapter 14

GEORGE TALKS

Santa Claus led the fairies and the pixies and Storybook folk and all the visitors from the Animal Kingdom into the Fairy Queen's palace for lunch.

They were as hungry as any creatures would be who had sung and danced all morning. They gobbled up the clover salad, the corn and mushroom and pineapple sandwiches, the pecan pudding and peanut butter ice cream. Between courses they talked over the morning's performances and argued about who was best.

Only two were quiet at the feast. One was Womp, the manwitch, who sat alone at a corner table nursing his bruised nose while he planned the tune he would play on his flute in the afternoon.

The other quiet one was Santa Claus. He toyed with his food and could not make any conversation at all. He was troubled by all that happened. He felt in his bones that something was wrong. "What was it," he wondered, "that George wanted to say!"

Meanwhile, George himself was not at the feast. He was in the garden and the Snowman was working desperately to set his dislocated jaw.

"Just suppose that Womp won first prize. Imagine him as Grand Musician to the Queen! It wouldn't do at all. Oh, George, whatever made you get yourself into such a fix?"

"Ahhhhh!" groaned George. He shook his head violently, but he could not shake his jaws back into place.

"If you had hiccoughs I would know what to do." said the Snowman. "You could sniff pepper and you would sneeze and the hiccoughs would be gone."

"Ahhhhhh." said George.

"Say," said the Snowman. "We might try that anyway!"

Before George could groan again the Snowman dashed away to the dining room and snatched a pepper shaker right from under the nose of Womp, the manwitch. When he ran back out Womp got up and followed.

"I bet this works!" cried the Snowman, running back to the turtle with the pepper shaker in his hands.

George looked up and saw Womp behind the Snowman. He arched out his head and poked at the manwitch's feet crying "Ahhhhh!" The snowman looked at Womp and he looked at Womp's feet and he saw at last what George had been trying so long to tell him.

"The Prince's shoes!" he cried. "Why he has on the Prince's shoes!"

He was so surprised he dropped the pepper shaker. It crashed on George's back, spraying pepper over George's head.

"Kerchew!" went George. And so violent was the sneeze his jaw sprang back into place. "Warn Santa!" he gasped as soon as he could speak. "He bewitched the Prince and he plans to bewitch Santa, too!"



The manwitch sat alone at at corner table

"Good gracious!" gasped the Snowman, too astonished to move.

George rushed off towards the palace but though his feet were running he wasn't getting anywhere. Womp had leaned down and picked him up by the tail.

"I arrived just in time." said Womp. "It is fortunate I had finished my lunch. Now it is my turn to tweak noses."

He reached out and grabbed the dumbfounded Snowman Then he marched off into the woods carrying George upside down by the tail and leading the Snowman by his carrot nose.

Chapter 15

THE FIRE

Womp carried the turtle and the Snowman into the woods. George squeaked for help and the Snowman hollered through his nose, but no one could hear them. Santa was having lunch in the Fairy Queen's palace and all the little fairies and pixies and Storybook folk were so busy chattering they could not have heard a clap of thunder.

"W-what are you going to do with us?" asked the Snowman plaintively. It was difficult for him to talk because Womp had such a tight hold of his carrot nose.

"Leave you in the woods," said Womp, "so there will be no interruptions while I play my tune for the Music Festival."

"But, can't we hear you play?" quavered the Snowman, hoping to flatter the manwitch.

George swung his head around and blurted, "If we heard him we would perish! The tune he plays will put Santa and all of Fairyland to sleep for a hundred years! He told me so himself!"

"That is the reason you can't come to the performance," said Womp. "You know too much."

"You can't stop us!" said the Snowman heatedly.

"But I can," replied Womp. "And you will have a fate worse than Santa himself!"

With that he set George down upside down between two rocks and said, "You will stay there forever because you can't get on your feet again."

The turtle thrashed his feet and his head and his tail but he could not flip himself over again. To make matters worse, the more he struggled the deeper he wedged himself between the two rocks.



The manwitch threw his lighted match on the ground .

Then Womp pushed the Snowman into a nearby well that once held fairy water and now was empty.

"That will hold you," said Womp coldly.

It was true, because sides of the well were slippery and the Snowman's fingers were made of snow. Every time he tried to climb out of the well he slid back to the bottom with an awful crash.

The manwitch went off and left them but before he went he lit his pipe and threw the match on the ground. The match was still lighted and it flickered in the dry leaves among the rocks. Womp stared at the tiny flame thoughtfully. Finally he shrugged his shoulders and returned to the Festival.

The Snowman shouted from the bottom of the well. "Don't worry George! We'll get out of this! Something will happen. It always does."

The turtle was too busy to answer. He twisted and turned and beat on the rocks with his upside-down head. "Have to warn Santa," he muttered over and over. "Have to warn Santa!"

He could hear the fairy folk leaving the palace and taking their places in the Queen's garden for the afternoon Festival. Soon Womp would begin to play his flute.

"George," called the Snowman cheerfully. "Someone will be along to help us by and by. Don't worry."

George raised his head and looked wildly around as though by some miracle he might really see someone coming to help. What he saw instead caused his eyes to nearly pop from his head. He opened his mouth to warn the Snowman but only a thin high shriek came out.

"Ah. George, your voice is the very best," said the Snowman. "You surely would have won the festival if you'd only had the chance!"

"Fire!" shouted George, making his voice work at last. "The brush is on fire! It's all around me! In a minute I'll be in it!" He gasped and coughed in the smoke that swept across him. "Help!" he gasped. "Help!"

Chapter 16

WOMP STARTS TO PLAY

“A FIRE?” cried the Snowman. “Oh, good gracious!”

He clawed the slippery sides of the well with his icy fingers. “Hang on, George!” he shouted. “Hang on! I’m coming!”

But, try as he would, he could not pull himself out of the well. Each time he almost reached the top his fingers slipped and he slid again.

It was a leaf fire and not very large, but George was wedged between two rocks in the middle of the leaves. The flames crept closer and closer. In a few minutes he would be roasted. He was choked and blinded by the smoke. He groaned to himself. “This is the end. Nothing will ever save Santa now!”

The Snowman stood at the bottom of the well. He thought of how the Prince had built him up and the turtle had taken him to Santa Land to keep him from melting again. He thought, “I wouldn’t be me at all if it hadn’t been for them. Now I’ve got to do something for them.”

Without stopping to think further, he leaned down and dragged one leg right off from his big snow-ball body. He molded the leg into steps that went halfway up the side of the well. Using his broom for a crutch, he climbed the steps and pulled himself out of the well.

When he saw the turtle surrounded by flames he shook with horror. But he said cheerfully, “I’m here, George! Everything is going to be all right.”

He dragged off pieces of his left arm and spread the snow over the fire. It took his whole arm and part of his stomach, too, but in seconds the fire was smothered and George was saved.

The Snowman plucked the turtle out of the rocks, melting part of his one good hand as he did so.

“Poor George!” murmured the snowman as he set the half-cooked turtle down right side up.

“Poor you” sighed George. He gazed sorrowfully at the Snowman who was only half a snowman now. Even his head had melted somewhat and his tall silk hat fell over one eye in a way that was not at all jaunty.

It was very quiet in the woods. Not even the sound of the chattering creatures in the Fairy Queen’s garden could be heard. Suddenly George knew why.

“Womp!” he gasped. “He’s played his flute and put them all to sleep!”

He staggered out of the woods as fast as he could on his blistered feet. The Snowman lurched along on his broom and one good leg. When they reached the garden they found all the fairy folk sitting as they had in the morning. The Queen Fairy was on her throne and Santa Claus was in his rocking chair.

On the stage stood Womp. He was about to begin his performance. He bowed to the audience and wiped the mouthpiece of his flute on his cloak.

“Don’t listen!” shouted George.



Santa Claus rose to his feet as George and the Snowman hobbled through the crowd of astonished creatures.

Santa said to Womp, “Put away your flute. We will have the turtle tell his story.”

But Womp hastily raised the flute to his lips and took a deep breath.

“Wooo,” came his first deep note from the flute.

Santa fell back in his chair and the fairy folk gazed bewitched at the flutist.

“Woooo,” came the second note.

Suddenly the Snowman was on the stage. He took off his tall silk hat and wham! he slammed it over the manwith’s head covering Womp’s mouth and knocking the flute to the floor.

Chapter 17

MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL

Womp stood in disgrace with the Snowman's hat down over his face. He could not escape, for all the Fairyland folk surrounded him.

"Now," said Santa. "Perhaps you will tell us what is going on."

"I'll tell you!" cried George. And he told Santa how Womp had left the Prince in an enchanted circle in the forest east of Santa Land and how he had come to Fairyland to bewitch Santa and all the fairy folk with his flute playing.

"Why is this?" Santa asked Womp sternly. "What have I done to you?"

Womp tried to blame it all on his master. "I am the servant of Kerchew, acting king of the kingdom of Razenpie," he babbled in a muffled voice from inside the Snowman's hat. His nephew Prince Chad is to become the rightful king on Christmas Day. My master thought that if Christmas did not come to Razenpie, he would himself remain the king and I, of course, would remain his faithful servant."

Santa picked the manwitch's flute from the floor. "So," he said, "you planned to play a magic tune on this flute that would put us all to sleep? Well I, too, can play a magic tune and it will be just for you."

Santa put the flute to his mouth and played a tune never heard before. Strange, spine-prickling notes filled the air, and, indeed, they were magic, for when it was over Womp was a manwitch no longer. He had been turned into a rubber doll!

"He caused harm," said Santa. "Now I shall put him in a child's Christmas stocking and he will cause pleasure for a change. When he is worn out and the child has thrown him away, I shall turn him back into himself and I think he will have learned to change his ways." He turned to George and said, "Will you sing now for the Festival?"

"Oh, no!" protested George reluctantly. "I must get to the Prince, for tomorrow is Christmas Day and his kingdom must be saved."

Santa smiled. "Sing first. Then we will go to the Prince."

So the turtle had his turn at last. He threw back his head and shut his eyes and sang from his heart. But, alas! He had suffered too much since the Festival began and his voice was out of sorts.

Nevertheless, when it was over, all the fairy creatures clapped and shouted "Bravo! Bravo!" and Santa said, "I would like for you to come to live with me and be my Singing Turtle."

This was even better than winning First Prize at the Festival. George said, "Hurrah!" and the Snowman said, "Can I come, too?"

"Indeed you can," said Santa, "And there will be plenty of snow to make you whole again."

Santa took the turtle and the Snowman in his sleigh and flew to the forest east of Santa Land where they found the Prince imprisoned inside the circle Womp had drawn in the snow.

"Brush away the line," said Santa.

The Snowman hopped on his one foot and swept away the line with his broom.

The Prince flew out of the circle and into Santa's arms crying, "Come to Razenpie! Oh, you must come to Razenpie with me!"

"I intend to," said Santa. "We'll go this very night, for it is Christmas Eve. We'll put wicked Kerchew off the throne and Razenpie will have you for its proper king!"

The Prince rushed to pick up his crown which had fallen in the snow. He put it on his head and cried, joyfully, "From now on every day will be Christmas Day in Razenpie!"

Then he and the turtle and the Snowman marched with Santa to Santa Land singing "Merry Christmas! Merry Christmas to all."



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