



Santa and the Giant Fighter

By Lucrece Beale



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Chapter 1

Once upon a time there lived a little boy named William Henry Christopher Preserve.

What a remarkably long name for a small boy to have! What was even more remarkable was the amount of disturbance he caused.

Boys are sometimes naughty, everyone knows, and they are expected to be a problem now and then. But it seemed that because this boy had three names he got into as much trouble as three boys!

For one thing he did not like school. He daydreamed. He talked out loud. He made strange faces. And he simply would not study his lessons.

“Two plus two and six minus four!” he complained to his mother. “Who cares about all that? When I grow up I am going to be a giant killer. I don’t have to study for that.”

His mother told him there were no such things as giants but William Henry Christopher insisted there were. He said giants

were bigger than mountains and meaner than witches and a whole army of soldiers could not strike a strong giant down.

“You know perfectly well that’s all make-believe,” said his mother.

“It is not make-believe! I myself have seen lots of giants!”

That was another worrisome thing about the boy. He told stories. Because, of course, he hadn’t really seen lots of giants. Not even one. If he had why hadn’t anyone else seen one? But he pretended he had and if you pretend something hard enough it’s practically the same thing as true.

He made himself a sword out of two pieces of wood I from an old orange crate. This was to fight giants with, he said. He was always talking about the giant fights he expected to have. It was very tiresome.

Often while eating dinner or getting ready for his bath he would tell stories about giants he had seen. His parents were sick of these stories. They no longer listened. They hoped if they didn’t listen he would stop pretending.

Then one day in school the class was having a spelling lesson. The teacher wrote CAT in big letters on the blackboard. While her back was turned William Henry Christopher stood up and announced that on the way to school that morning he had seen a giant who had followed him all the way to the classroom.

“And he’s probably hiding in the cloak room this very minute!”

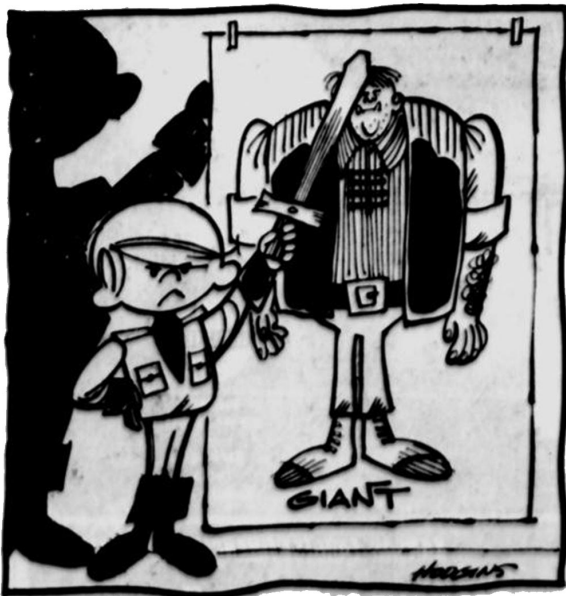
This was very upsetting to the class and naturally the teacher complained to the boy’s parents.

That night the boy’s father spoke very sternly. It was near Christmas and the father said:

“You stop this talk about giants or Santa Claus isn’t coming to you house this year.”

William Henry Christopher said, “Father, have you ever seen Santa Claus?”

“Of course not,” said the father, lighting his pipe. “But if you don’t behave yourself he’ll not leave anything in your stocking, you’ll see.”



William Henry Christopher Preserve believed in giants

“But,” said the boy, “If there’s a Santa Claus why can’t there be giants?”

“Because I say so!” retorted the father, crossly and he spilled his pipe all over the rug.

“But there are!” cried the boy. “I know because -”

His father got to his feet and shouted. “Go to bed! No supper for you tonight!”

William Henry Christopher went to his room and got into bed without taking off his clothes.

I’m going to run away, he thought. I’ll show them. They’ll be sorry.

But It was really too cold and too dark and he was too tired to run away just then. He pulled the covers over his head and thought he was asleep but he couldn’t have been because very clearly he heard a tap-tap-tap at the closet door and a high pitched voice from inside the closet cried out, ‘Hey, you! Open the door!’”

William Henry Christopher jumped out of bed. It’s a giant! He thought wildly. He snatched up his sword and threw open the closet door.

Chapter 2

OFF TO SANTA LAND

William Henry Christopher Preserve threw open the closet door. He waved his wooden sword and called fiercely:

“Come out, giant! I’m not afraid of you!”

Instead of a giant, out came a creature small as a baby’s fist. He was round and fat and he walked with a bounce like a rubber ball.

“I’m not a giant,” snapped creature bouncing up on boy’s foot. “I’m an elfite.”

“W - what is an elfite?” stammered William Henry Christopher.

“An elfite is a very small elf, silly. If you paid attention in school and studied your lessons you might learn such things.”

“I don’t like school,” said the boy. “I’m a giant fighter.”

“Well,” said the elfite, “I know the biggest, meanest giant in the whole world and unless someone kills that giant he is going to destroy us all.”

The boy’s eyes grew big and round. “W-who is he?” he quavered.

“He is called Goko. Five days ago, he captured the Fairy Queen. He means to marry her on Christmas Day. Then he will own her magic and be King of all Fairyland and she, poor creature, will be his prisoner forever. And that isn’t all. Already he has captured the moon!”

“The moon!” gasped the boy.

“You have noticed there has been no moon in the sky for the last three nights? Goko snatched it and hid it away. He means to take down the sun and stars, too. He doesn’t like things higher than he, you see. And when Santa and his reindeer fly on Christmas Eve, Goko has vowed to bring them down, too. And that, my boy, will be the end!”

“But, why doesn’t Santa do something?”

“He has tried. He turned himself into a mouse and visited the Fairy Queen. He hoped to gnaw away her ropes and then himself destroy the giant. But the Queen said it would take more than fairy magic to save them.”

“What then? What would it take?”

“The Queen said if there were live boy on earth who believed in giants and fairies and such then he might save them.”

“I - I believe in giants!” cried William Henry Christopher.

“I know,” said the elfite. “That is why I have come to you.”

“Do - do you think I could slay Goko?”

“What do you think?” asked the elfite.

The boy sighed. What if he tried and failed? What would happen to Santa and the Fairy Queen and the moon and everything then? Giant killing was an AWFUL responsibility.

But where else would the elfite find a boy who even believed in giants? He himself was the only one he knew of. So it was up to him.

“I can do it,” he said, trying to keep his voice steady.

He put on his wraps, stuck his sword in his belt and climbed half way out the window. The elfite bounced up beside him and said gravely, “From now on you will be known as Billy the Giant Fighter!”

“Billy the Giant Fighter,” the boy whispered to himself. It had a strong and sturdy sound. He began to feel braver.

He dropped out of the window and the elfite bounced down beside him.

“Where to?” asked Billy as they started away.

“To Santa Land,” said the elfite. “Santa will show you the way.”



“Goko has already captured the moon!”
cried the elfite

Chapter 3

THEY MET A TOAD

It's a very long way to Santa Land and very few people know the way.

William Henry Christopher Preeserve - now known as Billy the Giant Fighter - was glad he had the elfite to guide him because even with directions he was sure he would never find his way.

It was very dark. At first this was no problem because the elfite wore earmuffs and each muff had a little light attached to it. All Billy had to do was follow the twin lights bouncing ahead of him through the woods.

But after a while even the elfite appeared to be lost. "Of course it would be much easier if we had the moon," he complained. "But since Goko the giant has stolen it out of the sky everything is all mixed up and there's no telling where we might end up."

They went north, east, west and south. They seemed to be going in circles and the elfite hurried along muttering, "Oh, dear! There's really no time to lose." As he rushed along he bounced higher and higher as if to make up for their lack of progress. Billy stumbled after him bobbing his head up and down as he tried to follow the bouncing lights.

Suddenly the lights disappeared.

"Where are you?" cried Billy. "I've lost you!"

There was no answer. Billy ran back and forth calling frantically. He stumbled over a log and sprawled on the ground. Right beside his face were the two lights - very dim.

"Say something!" lie cried. "What happened?"



The airchoo bird rose gracefully into the air, carrying Billy

"Gallomp!" was the reply.

Billy reached out and picked up a huge soft toad. Two Lights blinked dimly inside the toad. Billy cried, "You ate the elfite! You horrible toad!"

"Not at all," said the toad giving a huge belch." I was here in my own bed having a rather restless night. I opened my mouth to yawn and something hideous bounced in. I assure you I find whatever It Is very indigestible and also a most extraordinary invasion of privacy.

All this time the two little lights inside the toad were going blink - blink - blink. Billy drew his wooden sword and held it over the toad.

"What on earth do you think you are going to do?" asked the toad in alarm.

"You'll see!" retorted Billy and he brought the flat of his sword down on the toad's fat rear end. The astonished toad gulped, and his enormous jaw dropped open. The elfite bounced out and streaked away through the woods with Billy at his heels.

Fortunately daylight had now come and the elfite was able to find his way to a shrunken oak that stood in a nearby forest. Here the elfite stopped and said, "This is as far as I go. The airchoo bird will take you the rest of the way."

He knocked three times on the trunk of the tree. The branches parted and a small white bird fluttered to the ground.

"This is an airchoo bird," explained the elfite. "He can fly fast as an airplane and steady as a choo choo. He'll take you straight to Santa Land."

"But how can I ride him?" exclaimed Billy. "He's almost as small as you."

"Try and see."

Billy straddled the bird and a curious thing happened. Either the airchoo bird grew big or Billy grew small. Whatever it was, the bird rose gracefully into the air with Billy riding ever so easily on his back.

They zoomed over cities, across oceans, past mountain peaks and landed finally in a snow blanketed valley.

It was Santa Land!

Billy climbed off the airchoo bird's back and ran as fast as he could towards Santa's little red house. As he ran he held his wooden sword ready in case Goko the giant was already there.

CHAPTER 4

PATRICK TWEEDLEKNEES

Billy the Giant Fighter burst through the door of Santa's house. He didn't even knock.

"Good gracious!" cried Santa. He had been pacing up and down in front of his fireplace. He stared at Billy in astonishment. "Who are you?"

"I'm ready to fight!" announced Billy loudly. He swung his sword back and forth a few times but he felt a little silly because there didn't seem to be any giants around.

"Throw him out!" shouted a furious voice from the corner. "Look what he's done to my papers!" A short bowlegged dwarf was jumping up and down and pointing angrily to a sea of papers which the breeze from the open door had flung all over the room.

"I - I'm sorry," stammered Billy putting his sword back in his belt. "I thought - I thought

"You didn't think at all!" bellowed the dwarf. "Let me tell you things are bad enough without - "

"Quiet, Tweedleknies!" Santa turned to the boy and said gently, "You must not mind Patrick Tweedleknies. He is old and grumpy and he has much on his mind. A wicked giant named Goko has captured the Fairy Queen. He has taken the moon from the sky and promises to take me, too, when I ride on Christmas Eve. Then he will marry the Queen, gain possession of all her magic, and he himself will rule the world.

"Tweedleknies has been playing with all the letters of the alphabet to discover the magic words that will free the moon. But it's all useless, I'm afraid, because the Queen has said that only a real live boy who believes in giants can save us all."

"I'm the boy!" cried Billy eagerly. "I'm Billy the Giant Fighter. An elfite sent me here."

"Giant fighter!" sneered Patrick Tweedleknies. "You look like a goldfish fighter. How many giants have you fought?"

"Not many. Not any, really, I guess. But I can! I know I can!"

Santa took the boy's hands in his. "Do you truly believe in giants?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Thank goodness!" cried Santa smiling. For a minute he looked cheery and pink the way Billy had always imagined he would look. Then he turned sad again and said, "Billy, you're the one chance we have to save the Fairy Queen and Santa Land. But Goko is strong and his power is great and you must be very, very brave."

Billy nodded. He was so scared he couldn't speak. He put his hand on the wooden sword in his belt. It gave him courage. He found his voice and said, "This is my sword. I made it myself. I expect it doesn't look like much to you but it is better than you might think."

Santa studied the sword and nodded solemnly. "The blade is straight and the point is good." He put his arm around Billy and drew him nearer to the fire because the boy was shivering so. Then he told Billy that more than a sword was needed to destroy the giant.

"You must have some magic as strong as Goko's or he will destroy you before you have a chance to strike him with your sword."

"But where will I get such magic?" asked Billy.

"From the Harp Witch. She is Goko's enemy. We will visit her and she will tell us what you must do."

Billy said he was ready to go but Santa said they could not go until Patrick Tweedleknies had found the magic words to free the moon.

"For, you see," said Santa. "The giant can be destroyed only while the moon is in the sky. That is why Goko took it out of the sky and that is why we must put it back."



"Billy, you are our one chance!" said Santa

Chapter 5

A SANTA LAND BREAKFAST

Patrick Tweedleknees sat on the floor in Santa's living room. He was surrounded by stacks of books and scraps of paper on which strange words were written.

Tweedleknees had been in Santa Land longer than anyone - except Santa, of course, who had been there forever. Because he had been there so long it was natural that he knew a great deal about hocus-pocus, abracadabra, mumbo-jumbo, and other magic words that could cast or break a spell.

He had been studying charms and voodoo and hoodoo and the incantations of all the sorcerers he had ever heard of for three days and three nights. Still he hadn't found the magic formula that would release the moon from the box in which Goko the giant had locked it

Santa was growing Impatient. Christmas would soon be here and the giant had vowed to snatch Santa, too, out of the sky when he drove his sleigh on Christmas Eve.

"Give me time," said Tweedleknees huffily. "This is a very difficult assignment. It can't be done in a minute, you know, but I am on the right track." He sniffed importantly and reached for still another book from the piles on the chairs and tables around him.

Santa went to his desk. He rummaged around in the bottom drawer until he found a little red skull cap with a long gold tassel. He set the cap on Tweedleknees head.

"Try my thinking cap," he said.

"Are you suggesting that I have not been thinking?" growled Tweedleknees.



Tweedleknees tried on Santa's thinking cap

"Not at all," replied Santa. "But the thinking cap may help you think. I often use it when I am trying to think of new toys for Christmas. It's been a very big help."

"Hmmp!" grunted Tweedleknees. He tossed the gold tassel out of his eyes but he kept the cap on.

Mrs. Claus came in from the kitchen and announced that breakfast was served.

"But, my dear," said Santa looking at her in amazement. "We just had breakfast."

"You mean YOU just had breakfast," retorted Mrs. Claus. "What about this boy? He looks like he hasn't had anything to eat for goodness knows how long!"

Billy was overjoyed. He had been standing there all this time watching Patrick Tweedleknees think. It had been a very hard thing to do because he was dizzy with hunger. His stomach kept growling for food but he himself was too polite to say anything.

He had been sent to bed without dinner the night before and he hadn't had lunch before that because the teacher at school had made him stand in the corner for telling giant stories. He took off his coat and dropped it on the floor beside Tweedleknees.

"I could eat a little, I guess," he said politely. He followed Mrs. Claus into the kitchen and sat down to breakfast.

There were buckwheat cakes stacked two feet tall and sausages long as baseball bats and ostrich eggs big as footballs. And that wasn't all. There were things no one else would dream of serving for breakfast. Deep-dish apple pie and coconut layer cake with orange filling and seven different kinds of ice cream.

Billy had a helping of everything and several helpings of some things. Mrs. Claus beamed. She said she wished she always had a boy around the house to feed because it made cooking so worthwhile.

She was frying another batch of ostrich eggs when Tweedleknees burst into the kitchen. His thinking cap was all askew and his spectacles hung on the tip of his nose. He handed Billy a thin green book and shouted, "I've found it! The magic words! They are in this Wizard's Handbook!"

Billy stared at the book in astonishment. It was his own school spelling book!

Chapter 6

THE HARP WITCH

Patrick Tweedleknives pointed proudly to the thin green book he had given to Billy.

"It is a secret book of wizardry. I was very lucky to find it. It contains the magic words you will need to set the moon back in the sky."

"B - but," said Billy, "It's my school spelling book! It must have dropped out of my pocket when I put my coat down."

"Nonsense!" snapped Tweedleknives. "It's a code book. You will find the right combination of words at the proper time. You can read, of course?"

Billy opened the book. He saw his name written there: William Henry Christopher Preserve. He had written it himself. He was ashamed to admit that these were practically the only words in the book he could read. He wished he had been a better student and studied his reading and spelling at school. What was he to do now?

Santa was pulling on his boots and fastening on his big red coat.

"That much is settled?" he cried happily. "Now off to the Harp Witch to find out how best to slay the giant!"

Billy sighed and stuck the spelling book in his pocket. He decided he would face the problem of the magic words when the time came. He followed Santa out of the house.

"If we could go to the witch's island in my sleigh we'd be there in no time," said Santa. "But the giant would surely snatch us out of the sky as he did the moon. Well, I know a turtle who can take us there quickly enough."

Billy's eyes popped when he saw Theodore Turtle waiting for them on the shore of the sea.

Theodore was so big four men could ride on his back. But, wondered Billy, how fast could even a big turtle swim?

Theodore didn't intend to swim. He climbed out of his shell and turned it upside down in the water. Santa and Billy and Theodore climbed in; the turtle raised a sail, and away they sailed.

Presently they reached the shores of Keepaway and the home of the Harp Witch.

The Harp Witch is an ugly old crone. Day and night she plucks the strings of a rusty harp and croons songs of hate. Once she had been beautiful and young and madly in love with Goko the giant. Goko wooed her and promised to wed her but on the day of the wedding he changed his mind and never saw her again.

The witch was so mad she flew to Keepaway island and lived forever after on her hate for Goko the giant. She did not want to talk to Santa and Billy. She told them to leave. But when Santa told her that they were seeking a way to destroy Goko, the witch laid aside her harp and eagerly listened to their story.



The Harp Witch plucks a rusty harp and sings hate songs

"The boy must have some magic," said Santa, "or the giant will finish him before he even draws his wooden sword."

The Harp Witch thought and thought. Finally she said, "Goko loves jewels."

"What kind of jewels?" asked Santa.

"Beautiful stones set in bracelets and rings and necklaces."

The witch paced back and forth muttering to herself. Suddenly she stopped in front of Billy and cried, "Bring me the Rosanna Ruby. I will place it in a neck band of my own making. When Goko puts the band around his throat it will squeeze so tight he will be helpless."

"Suppose he does not put it on?" said Santa.

"He will! He could not resist the Rosanna Ruby!"

Chapter 7

THREE ISLANDS

The Harp Witch told Santa there was an island where diamonds and amethysts and pearls and opals grew on trees.

“Among the trees,” said the witch, “there is a grove of rubies and here the Rosanna Ruby is to be found. It is the fairest stone of all. If you can pluck it you need have no fear of Goko. I shall put the stone in a magic necklace that will tighten around his throat and he will be helpless.”

Santo and Billy rushed off with Theodore the turtle in search of the jewel. The sea was rough. The turtle’s upside down shell rocked and bobbed in the waves. Water splashed over the sides. The wind beat the sail and the boom swung back and forth knocking them all to the bottom of the wobbly little boat.

At last Theodore called out, “There is an Island straight ahead!”

Thank goodness, thought Billy. He was feeling seasick. He had already had enough sea voyage to last him all his life. But when they came ashore they found this was not the Jewel Island after all.

A round cheeked brownie was sitting on the beach beating on a child’s drum. He told them this was the Island of Lost Toys. “Have you lost a toy?” he asked Billy.

“Oh, yes,” said Billy. “I’ve lost lots of toys! A whistle and a red and blue rubber ball and a baseball bat and a little tin soldier and - ”

“They are all here,” said the brownie. He pointed to a mountain of balls and toy trucks and dolls and pocket knives and kite and tops and even pogo sticks. They were all lost toys, he explained. “Every toy that is lost is brought to this island by the Play Brownies.”

“What happens to them then?” asked Santa.

“Once a year the brownies take the toys back to the world and hide them in strange places for children to come upon unexpectedly.”

“I once found my missing roller skate behind the kitchen stove!” exclaimed Billy.

“I expect the brownies put it there,” smiled the brownie. “Now why don’t you look for your other missing toys here?”

Billy was already shuffling through a pile of tin soldiers but Santa said they must hurry on their way.

They piled back in their rockety boat and rocked off. Twice more they came ashore and twice more they found they had not yet come to the Isle of Jewels.

The first place was called Candy Island. Long ago a candy machine on the island lost a screw. Caramels and marshmallows and chocolate creams had been pouring out of the machine ever since and no one had been able to turn it off.

“Can’t we stay here a while?” asked Billy eagerly.

Santa said no they must go on for they had lost so much time already and they must hurry and find the Rosanna Ruby.

The next land they came to was Kangaroo Land where kangaroos lived like you and I. They lived in houses and went to school and worked in offices. There were kangaroo policemen and kangaroo children who went to kangaroo birthday parties.

They found a kangaroo sailor standing on the shore. Santa asked him if he could tell them how to reach the Isle of Jewels.

“Certainly,” said the kangaroo sailor. He pointed over Santa’s shoulder. “Just hop over there!”

Santa turned and saw land that had not been there a moment before. It was an island glittering with the sparkle of precious stones.



The kangaroo sailor pointed to the Isle of Jewels

Chapter 8

THE ROSANNA RUBY



The Harp Witch has finished the magic necklace

The turtle boat landed on the shores of the island. Santa and Billy stepped out into a garden of jewels.

Emerald trees and diamond bushes and opal flowers bordered the walks of the garden. Sapphires and turquoise glittered in the grass. The precious stones sparkled in the sunlight and tinkled softly in the breeze.

A beautiful pixie came to meet them. She wore a pearl diadem on her head and a jade locket hung from her throat.

“Welcome,” said the pixie. “I hope you like our garden.”

“It is beautiful,” said Santa. “But we do not have time to enjoy it.”

He told her how Billy must slay Goko the giant because Goko had captured the Fairy Queen and the moon and vowed to capture Santa and rule all of Fairyland.

The pixie was very disturbed because this meant the giant would rule the Isle of Jewels, too. “What can I do?” she moaned.

Santa asked if she would give Billy the Rosanna Ruby. The pixie led them to the ruby grove and pointed to a brilliant stone. “This is the fairest jewel on the isle,” she said. “I would gladly give it to you but it cannot be picked from its branch unless Billy can solve a problem.”

“What problem?” asked Billy eagerly.

“An arithmetic problem,” said the pixie.

Billy sighed. Of all school subjects arithmetic had been the one he hated most. He had never done his lessons at all. He never believed a giant fighter would need arithmetic and spelling and boring things like that.

“What is the problem?” asked Santa.

The pixie said, “Billy has 24 apple pies. Billy eats thirteen. I eat one. You eat two. What is Billy left with?”

Billy got a stick and drew numbers in the dirt. He added and subtracted and crossed things out. He screwed up his face and chewed on his tongue and oh! How he wished he had paid attention at school.

Suddenly he had an answer. He cried, “If I had 24 apple pies and I ate thirteen and you ate one and Santa ate two I would be left with a stomach ache!”

The pixie held her sides and doubled up with laughter.

“That’s not the answer I had in mind but it will do!” she said and she plucked the ruby from its branch. She placed the stone in Billy’s hands and said, “May this jewel help you slay the wicked giant!”

Then Billy and Santa climbed back into the turtle’s upside down shell and sailed back across the sea to the land of the Harp Witch.

The witch had not been idle while they were gone. She had made a necklace out of the hairs from her own head woven with the webs of a hundred black widow spiders and the wool from the backs of a thousand caterpillars. She took the Rosanna Ruby and placed it carefully in the center of the band. It blazed with such flaming beauty it was certain the giant would not be able to resist it.

“But the band is too small” said Billy. “How will it fit around the giant’s neck?”

The witch said the necklace would expand or shrink to fit any size and Billy must be careful not to wear it himself or it would work its magic on him.

Billy put it away in his pocket and Santa said he was ready to go fight Goko the giant. But the witch said. “What about all the other giants? Goko’s brothers and his cousins and his nephews? They all live together in Goko’s castle.”

“W - what about them?” quavered Billy.

“You must destroy them ALL!” cried the witch.

Chapter 9

THE LAUGHING GHOST

Billy's teeth chattered so loud he was afraid that Santa and the Harp Witch might hear it. He was brave as any boy and he was ready to fight Goko the giant. But how could he fight Goko's brothers and his cousins and his nephews?

Santa was discouraged, too. "It can't be done," he groaned. "How can one boy slay so many?"

"He doesn't have to slay them!" rasped the witch. "There are other ways."

She told them about a powerful potion which mixed in the giants' food would turn them into pigs.

"Where are we to get this potion?" asked Santa.

"From the eyes of Ha-Ha the laughing ghost," wheezed the witch. "Make Ha-Ha cry and catch his tears. Three drops will be enough!"

"Why not use this marvelous potion on Goko himself?" exclaimed Santa.

The witch shook her head. "Goko is too powerful. He cannot be turned into any other creature."

The witch gave Billy a little bottle to hold Ha-Ha's tears and she gave Santa a pair of slippers that would take them to Ghostland in seven enormous steps.

Santa put on the slippers and Billy climbed on his back and off they went. With the first step they crossed the ocean. The second step took them over a mighty mountain range. Four more steps and they crossed four continents. The seventh step brought them to Ghostland where spirits and spooks and phantoms lived and no human ever goes.

Ghosts are happy creatures. They sing and play all the day. But Ha-Ha was the happiest ghost in the land. He was called Ha-Ha because he seemed never to stop laughing.

Santa and Billy Found Ha-Ha swinging in a rope swing hung from a weeping willow tree. He was dressed in a white sheet that billowed around him like a sail. He was singing a laughing children's song.

How in the world could they get tears from such a joyful creature?

Santa told him who they were and why they had come. Ha-Ha said it was Impossible to get tears from him. He had never cried in his life.

"Then," said Santa, "the moon will never rise again."

Ha-Ha laughed. "I don't like moonlight," he said.

"The giant will force the Fairy Queen to marry him," said Santa. "He will be King of all Fairyland."

"That's nothing to me," laughed Ha-Ha.

"The giant has vowed to capture me on Christmas Eve," said Santa.

"Ha ha!" laughed Ha-Ha.

"There will be no more Christmas," said Santa.

Ha-Ha stopped laughing. "No more toys? No more stockings? No more Christmas trees? Not even for ghosts?"

"Not for anyone in all the world," said Santa.

Tears came in Ha-Ha's eyes. They began to roll down his cheeks. "Never Christmas again!" he sobbed. "How sad!"

Billy held out his little bottle and caught Ha-Ha's tears as they dropped from his chin. In two minutes the bottle was full.

"It's all right now," smiled Billy. "Thank you for your help."

But Ha-Ha kept right on crying. "No more Christmas!" he sniffed. "How will we ever manage?"

"We will manage I think!" promised Santa and he strode out of Ghostland with Billy on his back.

They came to the cave where Goko the giant had hidden the moon. Santa took off the Harp Witch's slippers and gave them to the boy.

Then Santa said, "You have the magic words to unlock the moon and the ruby necklace and Ha-Ha's tears. This is all the help I can give you. I must return to Santa Land now for the Fairy Queen said the rest must be done by

you alone."

Billy nodded solemnly. He clutched his wooden sword and went alone into the cave.



Santa and Billy found Ha-Ha in Ghostland

Chapter 10

GOKO THE GIANT

Goko the giant was the bulkiest, hulkiest, heftiest giant in the world. He was larger than three elephants. His legs were huge as tree trunks and his arms as wide as storm water pipes. He was a prodigious, stupendous, monumental colossus of a giant.

Except for his head. It was the size of a very large cantaloupe. And the brains in his head were as mushy as the seeds in the melon.

Goko lived in a towering castle on a sky-touched mountain. His brothers and cousins and nephews lived with him. Compared to Goko they were pee wee giants. Goko was their master and they were his slaves.

Day and night he thundered through the castle whopping and whacking and thumping and lalloping the other giants. But it was not enough for him to be king of the giants. He wanted to be King of Fairyland and Santa Land and the ruler of all Little Folk everywhere.

He ordered his giants to capture the Fairy Queen. They caught her as she was traveling through the forest one evening on her way to a butterfly bell. They brought her to the castle and Goko asked her to be his bride.

Naturally the Fairy Queen refused. Goko locked her in a chamber. He swore he would marry her anyway on Christmas Day. Then he would be King of the Fairies whether she wished it or not.

The Queen used all her magic but could not free herself. She wept and begged to be set free Goko only laughed. He bellowed that she should get accustomed to her bonds because she would be his prisoner even after she became his bride.

The Queen cried, "My magic may have failed but a real live boy will free me and you shall die by the light of the moon!"

Goko threw back his head and roared with laughter. All the same he was worried.

He ordered his slaves to capture the moon. That night the giants went to the edge of the Western Sea. When the moon set they caught it in a net and put it in a box and carried it back to Goko.

The big giant sealed the box so no one could open it. Then he carried it to a mammoth cave three miles beneath the ground. But still he wasn't satisfied. He went to the swamps where dragons were known to have their nests.

He walked through the oozy, squelchy quagmire until he came upon a monstrous dragon rising out of the plashy marsh. The creature was almost as long as Goko was tall. His tail was sharp as a fish knife. His eyes glittered. Smoke drifted from his nostrils.

The giant told him he wanted dragons to guard the moon cave. The monster said, unfortunately, he was the only dragon around. All the others had gone off to live in zoos where the food was good and living conditions reliable.

"You look fierce enough," growled Goko. "You alone must guard the cave."

No one before had told the dragon he was fierce looking. The truth was he would like to have gone to live in a zoo, too, but no zoo wanted him because he had never learned to breathe fire. Furthermore, his tail moved up and down like a puppy dog's instead of back and forth as a proper dragon's should.

The dragon did not like the giant and he did not want to help him. But he was afraid to refuse. Besides, he was very tired of the squishy, squashy bog where he lived. He really would like to have a change.

Goko led the dragon to the cave and showed him the box he must guard. Then the giant returned to his castle and boasted to the Fairy Queen.

"Nothing can harm me now for the moon will never shine again."



"You look fierce enough" Goko told the dragon

BILLY MEETS THE DRAGON

The cave where the moon was hidden was three miles beneath the ground. To reach it one had to travel through miles and miles of tunnel that wound round and round and round like a circular staircase leading to the center of the earth.

Billy the Giant Fighter started down the tunnel. It was very dark. He felt his way along the sides of the tunnel. It was dank and oozy and cold. Something dripped on his head and, a cobweb drifted against his face.

He clutched his wooden sword and began to run. The tunnel grew smaller. Billy bent lower and lower until, first, he was on his hands and knees and finally, he was squirming along on his stomach.

He wanted to shout for help but he could hardly breathe. Who would have heard him anyway? Santa had gone back to Santa Land and ahead of the boy was he knew not what.

He shut his eyes and inched along pushing his wooden sword in front of him. When he opened his eyes he saw a dim blue light ahead. Moments later he came into a brightly lit cave. Fingers of ice dripped from the ceiling. Daggers of stones jutted up from the floor. A dozen tunnels led out of the cave. Billy did not know which one to take. He did not even know which one had led him there.

He sat down on a slimy rock pile and wondered what on earth to do. He had never felt so lost and alone.

But he was not really alone. Someone yanked at his sleeve and a whiskered old gnome said, "Are you the boy who fights giants?"



"Are you the boy who fights giants?"
asked the old gnome

"How did you know?" cried Billy.

"All the Little Folk know," grunted the gnome.

He told Billy there were many, many caves under the mountain and the gnomes had lived in them for a thousand years. But since Goko the giant had hidden the moon in the bottom-most cave all the gnomes had fled because they were very afraid of the giant.

"I am the last to leave," said the old gnome. He sniffed a little. It was all very sad, he said, and he couldn't help crying because he did not see how a mere boy could slay the wicked giant even if he managed to set free the moon.

"I can try," said Billy bravely. "Will you show me the tunnel that leads to the bottom-most cave?"

"Not the tunnel!" exclaimed the gnome. "You must take the Gnome-Go-Bucket. I have stayed here to show it to you."

He pulled a huge rock slab from the wall. There was a little closet and hanging in the closet was a silver bucket.

"Get in," said the gnome. "Push the button. It's like any other elevator."

Billy climbed in the bucket. There was a row of buttons on the handle. He pushed the bottom one.

The Go-Bucket went clinking, clackety-clackety, slam banging, smackety-rackety, whop, crump, bang, smash, down through the earth and it wasn't like any other elevator in the whole wide world.

It finally came to a stop, turned on its side and dumped Billy out in the dimly lighted cave where the dragon was guarding the captured moon.

Billy leaped to his feet. His knees shook and his heart pounded at the sight of the hideous beast.

The monster rose on his rear legs, thumped his huge tail and opened his massive jaws.

Billy tried to cry out, "Stay back!" Unfortunately he had lost his voice from fright and not a sound came out of his mouth.

He waved his sword frantically and backed against the wall.

Chapter 12

THE MAGIC WORDS

The cracking, rattling, crashing clangor of the Go-Bucket dropping through the earth frightened the dragon nearly out of his wits. He shivered and shook. His eyes rolled back in his head and he nearly swallowed his long forked tongue.

Then he remembered that he was a dragon (a fierce looking dragon, at that, the giant had told him so) and he said to himself, "If I think like a dragon I will act like a dragon."

He thought quickly of all the dragons he had known and how they made rumbling noises like thunder and lashed with their tails and shot fire and smoke from their nostrils.

At that moment the Go-Bucket slam-banged into the cave. Billy the Giant Fighter jumped out and stood there waving his sword.

The dragon reared up on his hind legs. He thumped his ponderous tail and roared. He shut his eyes and took a great breath and went "A-a-a-a-h!"

Billy expected a sheet of flame to burst from the dragon's jaws but there was not a single spark. The dragon cleared his throat and tried again. He huffed and gargled and rumbled deep in his innards and went "A-a-a-a-h!" A teeny, tiny wisp of smoke drifted from his nostrils. That was all.

"You're not a fire breathing dragon at all," exclaimed Billy. "I'm not afraid of you!"

"I may not breathe fire," snarled the dragon, "but my tail can smash you to pieces!" He lashed out furiously with his sharp, pointed tail,

Billy threw his hands up to guard his face. He need not have bothered. The dragon's tail was not lashing back and forth. It was pumping up and down like a friendly puppy's and was doing no harm at all.

"Why, I don't believe you're even a dragon," taunted Billy. He poked the monster on the snout with his wooden sword.

"I am, too, a dragon," whimpered the poor beast. "But I've never been a very good dragon. All my friends went off to live in zoos. I did so hope if I did a good job guarding the moon someone would give me a home, too. But I am a disgrace. Who would ever want me?"

"You can go to Santa Land," said Billy. "Santa would love to have you there."

"Santa wouldn't want me," sniffed the dragon, "I'm no good to anyone."

"Help me free the moon," said Billy. "Then I bet Santa would give you a home forever because you will have saved Santa Land."

"The moon is sealed in this box," said the dragon. "Tell me what to do and I will gladly help."

Billy got his spelling book from his pocket. "Patrick Tweedleknoses told me the magic words that would unseal the



Billy the Giant Fighter confronted the dragon

box are in this book," he sighed. "Unfortunately, I can't read the words."

"Didn't you ever go to school?" asked the dragon in astonishment.

Billy blushed. "I didn't study very much. I wanted to be a giant fighter and I didn't think I had to study for that."

The dragon looked at the spelling book. "It's a very pretty book. It's probably filled with enough magic to open anything."

They scanned the pages together. Billy could read "Cat" and "Dog" and "Boy" and "Baby" he said the words out loud but the sealed box did not open. The dragon turned to the front cover. "What are these words written here?" he asked.

"That's my name," explained Billy. "I can read that easy." He pointed to each word and said, "William Henry Christopher Preserve!"

As he spoke the words a strange hissing whistled through the cave. The box holding the moon rocked and swayed and bounced and bobbed.

Suddenly the seal burst and the lid flew open.

Chapter 13

GOKO IN RAGE

"It's the magic words!" shouted the dragon. "Your own name has opened the box!" I

Billy watched joyfully as the box opened wide and the big yellow moon bulged into the cave.

"How will we get it out!" he wailed. "We are three miles beneath the ground and it would never fit into the Go-Bucket"

"We'll go the way the giant brought me down here." wheezed the dragon.

He was wheezing because the moon almost filled the cave and there was very little room to breathe. He pointed to a wide staircase leading out of the cave. "Push it up there!" he gasped.

Billy clambered into a corner and pushed and shoved the moon through the opening to the stairs. It was like trying to get a balloon through the eye of a needle. No matter how he pinched and twisted and tilted, edges of the moon kept bulging and swelling back into the cave.

Then the dragon put all his weight behind Billy and wham! the moon plopped into the staircase. Billy and the dragon squeezed onto the steps behind the moon. The dragon stepped on a button and the staircase started moving. They shot up faster than the Go-Bucket had come down and before Billy could catch his breath they reached the surface.

The moon burst out of the hole and sailed off into the sky.

The dragon thumped his tail up and down. "Now do you think I can live in Santa Land?" he asked.

"I am sure of it," said Billy. "But you must make your way there alone for I am off to slay the wicked giant."

He put on the slippers the Harp Witch had given to Santa, waved goodbye to the happy dragon and strode away.

Meantime at the giant's castle all was pandemonium. Goko had awakened just in time to see the moon setting beyond the sea. He howled the castle awake. He tramped through the halls bellowing and squalling and smashing furniture.

When the other giants heard him coming they hid under their beds. They locked themselves in closets. They climbed up the chimneys. They covered under the piano,

It made no difference. Goko found them. He thrashed them with his club and bashed their heads together and threw them down the stairs.

They begged him to tell them what caused his displeasure.

"Idiots! Bunglers!" he roared "You have let the moon go free. Now my life is in danger for the Fairy Queen said I would be slain by the light of the moon."

"But, master," quavered a quivering mouse of a giant. "We can catch the moon when it sets again tomorrow!"



Goko was enraged. "Idiots! Bunglers!" he roared

"And what of tonight?" screamed Goko. "The moon will shine the whole night long!"

"But, sire," sputtered a second trembling giant. "The Fairy Queen said a boy will slay you and there is no boy here!"

"You are all boys!" shouted Goko. "You are pigeon-hearted, milk-livered pygmies, everyone!"

"Yes, your majesty," whimpered a twitching giant. "But the Queen said it would be a real live human boy and there's never been such a one in this land."

"True," snarled Goko, "and It will be your job to see there never is. Set guards at every door and window. You will get no food and no sleep until this day and night are over."

The giants nodded dumbly and stumbled away to guard the castle.

Chapter 14

GOKO'S BOOTS

In her prison in a turret of the castle the Fairy Queen saw the moon sailing overhead before it set beyond the sea.

When Goko the giant came in she said, "Your time is near for the moon will shine full tonight."

Goko laughed. He had gotten rid of his rage by beating up all the other giants. Now he felt safe and strong.

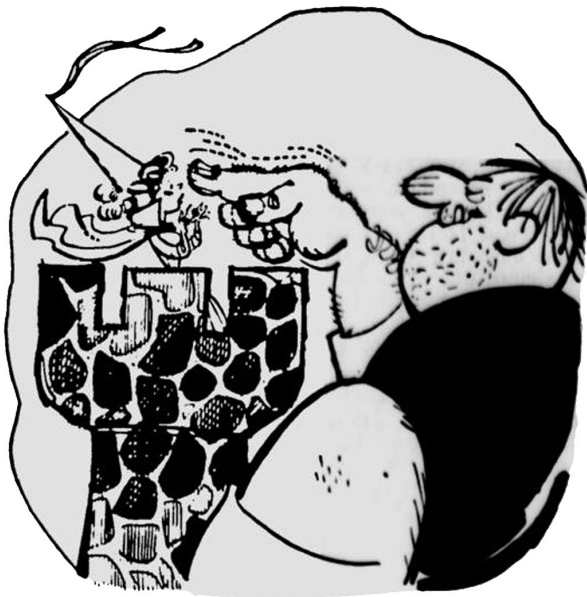
"Your time is near" he retorted. "Tomorrow is Christmas Eve and the next day you will be my bride."

"You are not so powerful as you think," said the Queen, trying to hide her trembling. "Even the moon has escaped you."

"Ha!" scoffed the giant. "I shall capture it again when it sets tomorrow. And I shall capture Santa Claus when he flies tomorrow night. Then I will be King of Fairyland and Santa Land and all the world will do my bidding."

"There is still tonight," said the Fairy Queen bravely.

The giant flew into a rage all over again. He picked up a chair



"You will soon be my bride," chuckled Goko

and tore it apart with his hands. A mirror fell from the wall and Goko jumped up and down on it smashing it to bits.

Then he stormed out shouting, "I'll show you! Wait until I am King!"

Meantime Billy had arrived at the castle and was searching for a way to enter. There were giants guarding the drawbridge and every door and window.

The boy hid in the bushes near the bridge that crossed the moat. Two giants were guarding the bridge. One of them had a bandaged head. The other was limping. Billy could hear them talking.

"I have never seen him in such a rage," groaned one. We are lucky to be alive."

"We must do something to calm him," whimpered the other. "Or he'll serve us no meals this day."

"We could clean his boots. That would please him!"

"I'll get them!" exclaimed the broken-headed giant.

He darted across the bridge and into the castle. He returned lugging Goko's enormous black boots.

"He was taking a nap," he gasped. "We'll have them back before he wakes."

They set to work washing the boots with water from the moat. When they finished they carried the boots up to the bridge. Then they went back to the moat to clean their hands. While they were gone Billy slid out of the bushes and climbed into one of the boots. It was so big he could curl up in the toe and never be seen.

The broken-headed giant came back and dragged the boots into the castle. He set them by Goko's bed and went back to guard the bridge.

Goko's snores sounded like dishes falling off the pantry shelf. Billy climbed out of the boot and stared at the sleeping mammoth.

"I can slay him now!" he cried to himself. But as he pulled his sword from his belt the giant hulk stirred and groaned and opened one eye.

Billy dropped to the floor and rolled under the bed.

Goko stood up and yawned. He felt calm and rested. He hung three gold necklaces around his neck and fourteen bracelets on his arm. He loved jewelry and was very vain.

He leaned over to put on his boots. When he saw them bright and shiny and newly polished he was very pleased. He wondered if he hadn't been too harsh with the other giants. He decided he would let them have some supper after all.

He went out and ordered the giant guarding the hall to serve soup to everyone.

When Billy heard them moving off to the kitchen he rolled from under the bed and stole out behind them.

Chapter 15

GREEN PEA SOUP

It was supper time and the giants guarding the castle were faint from lack of food.

“To bash in our heads is all right,” they muttered. “But to, starve us is quite another thing.”

The word came that Goko had relented and they were to have food after all. The giants were to remain at their posts and Goko would send them each a bowl of green pea soup. A bowl of soup - even green pea soup - is to a giant what a peanut is to an elephant. Still it was better than nothing and the giants dared not complain.

While the soup cooked, Goko sat in the kitchen and ate his usual meal. He had a barrel of oysters, a bushel of potatoes and half a roast hippopotamus. He topped it off with a small plum pudding - about the size of a railroad caboose.

All the time Goko was eating Billy was hiding behind the kitchen stove. It had been easy enough to slip into his hiding place. Goko's face was hidden behind the roast hippopotamus and the giant who was cooking the soup was so envious of Goko's succulent dinner he kept his eyes screwed shut so he couldn't see it.

Billy waited his chance. When the soup was nearly done he took out the bottle of Ha-Ha the Ghost's tears and dumped it in with the bubbling peas.

The pot of soup hissed and sizzled and sputtered and fizzed like a truckload of fireworks gone off at one time. The cook opened his eyes and staggered back in alarm. Goko leaped up from the plum pudding he had just finished and roared.

“Dunce! Can't you see? It's done!”

“Y-yes, yes,” stammered the giant. He ducked his head to avoid a green pea that shot out from the pot.”

“Then serve it to the clods!” barked Goko and he stalked away to his den.

The trembling cook hastily dished the gurgling, frothing soup into bowls - including one for himself - and dashed away to feed the giants. Every giant downed his bowl in one big gulp. They declared it the best soup ever served at the castle.

Five minutes later they had turned into pigs.

Billy came out from behind the stove and led the grunting animas into the kitchen. He dragged all the food out of the refrigerator and set it on the floor. Then he left them happy as well-fed pigs always are.

Billy tiptoed through the castle until he came to the den where Goko sat before the fire. Billy peeped through the half closed door

Every few minutes the giant heaved himself out of his chair and went to look out the window. He was watching for the moon to rise.

“No one could hurt me,” he muttered to himself. “What does it matter if the moon does shine? It's all nonsense.”

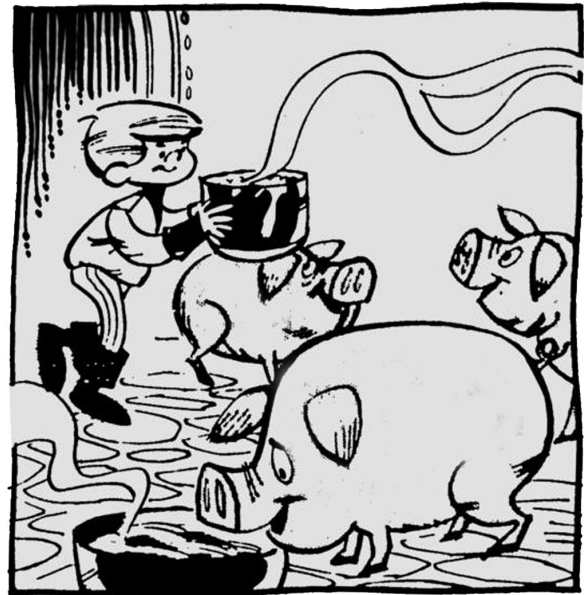
All the same he couldn't sit still. He had to keep checking on the moon. When he got up for the 18th time to look out the window Billy ran in and laid the Harp Witch's necklace on the giant's chair. Then Billy ducked behind the chair.

Goko came back from the window. He saw the Rosanna Ruby gleaming in his chair. He picked It up and held It to the light.

He could not imagine where It had come from but he grunted “Finders, keepers! it Is mine!”

He started to fasten the necklace around his neck. Billy, waited, holding his breath.

“It will tighten around his throat as the Harp Witch said,” he thought. “Goko will die and Santa and all of Fairyland will be saved!”



In five minutes, the giants had turned into pigs

Chapter 16

THE FIGHT

Goko looked at himself in the mirror over the fireplace. He reached up to fasten the ruby necklace around his throat. The fire of the ruby was reflected in the mirror. The giant was bedazzled.

He dropped his hands. "It is fit for a king," he grunted. "I shall not wear it until day after tomorrow when I marry the Fairy Queen. Then I will be a king and this stone will dazzle all who see me.

"In the meantime I shall wear the ruby as a ring for it fits my finger as well as my neck."

Billy's heart sank. He crouched behind the chair and wondered what would happen if the giant did not wear the necklace around his throat as he was supposed to do. Would its magic still work?

Goko slipped the ruby on his finger. Instantly he began to jump up and down and howl with pain. He threw his arms around trying to shake off the ring. He tore at it with his free hand and chewed at it with his teeth. The ring squeezed tighter.

The giant screamed and kicked savagely at the furniture. His boot struck the chair where Billy was hiding. The chair tumbled away and there was Billy crouched on his heels.

The giant stared in astonishment. He forgot the pain in his finger. "Who are you? Where did you come from?" he roared.

Billy got to his feet and pulled out his wooden sword. "I am Billy the Giant Fighter," he said. He hoped the giant wouldn't notice the tremor in his voice.

Goko blinked. He thought of his giants who had let the boy slip in. He shouted furiously, "Guards! Guards!"

"No use calling," said Billy. "Your guards have turned into pigs. No one can help you now!"

Then he lunged at the giant with his sword. He struck Goko on the breast but though the aim was true and the blow well struck the giant was unharmed. Against such a mammoth the wooden sword was as useless as the feather of a goose.

When the giant saw this he threw back his head and shouted, "You think you can destroy Goko the Great with a toy sword? We shall see!"

He snatched up his club and slammed it down on his finger.

The ruby stoned ring burst apart and his finger was free.

"Now where will your magic get you?" snarled the giant and he struck out at the boy. Billy ducked under the swinging club and fled from the room. He raced through the corridors and climbed the winding stairs. He could hear Goko stamping after him laughing and thumping his club.

He came to a door at the top of the topmost stair. Gasping with terror he burst into the room and there he found the Fairy Queen.

"You've come!" she cried. "Oh you've come at last!"

Billy threw himself in her arms. "It's no use," he sobbed. "My sword was just a toy and I'm not a giant fighter at all."

"Let me have your sword," said the Queen gently.

He gave it to her and she pressed it softly to her lips.

"There," she said, giving it back. "It's not a toy anymore."



"Do you think you can destroy Goko with a toy sword?"

Chapter 17

MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL

The door to the Fairy Queen's room crashed open. The giant stood there swinging his club.

"Did you really think a boy could slay Goko the Great?" he sneered. He stalked into the room and lumbered toward the boy.

"Stand back!" cried Billy. He jumped up on the bed and flourished his sword.

"Not that toy again!" scoffed the giant. He lifted his club and brought it down. Billy raised his sword and the club slid off and crashed on a table smashing the lamp to pieces.

All was dark. But only for an instant and then the room was filled with light. The Fairy Queen cried, 'The moon! The Moon is shining - bright and full!'

"All the better to see with!" roared the giant and threw himself at the boy. Billy clenched his teeth and shut his eyes and thrust with his wooden sword.

It was a wooden sword no more. The blade had turned to steel and the point was hard and sharp. It drove straight and true into the giant's heart and the wicked Goko fell dead.

Billy climbed down from the bed and stared at the fallen giant. He couldn't believe he had really slain the mighty Goko. He felt like he had been in a dream and it had all happened to someone else.

But the Fairy Queen was holding his hands and saying, "You have saved Fairyland and all Little People everywhere. From now on you will be one of us. You will live in Santa Land and all will know you as Billy the Giant Killer."

Billy shook his head. "If it's all the same to you," he murmured, "I'd like to go home now. I expect my family is worried about me and I really should go back to school and all of that."

"School?" said the Queen. "I thought you did not care for school!"

"I am tired of fighting giants," sighed Billy. "And anyway I suppose there are things I can learn in school that will help me if I change my mind."

The Fairy Queen smiled. "I understand," she said softly. "Now shut your eyes and think you are home in your very own bed."

Billy squeezed his eyes tight. He thought of home and how nice it would be not to have to be brave and fight giants all the time. Suddenly he was in his own bed and it was Christmas Eve.

The covers were pulled over his head and he wasn't sure at first but he thought he heard sleigh bells ringing. He threw back the covers and ran to the window.

There was Santa riding overhead in his sleigh pulled by eight reindeer. The round yellow moon sailed ahead lighting the way.

Billy reached for his sword. It was made of steel and the blade was sharp and true. Then it hadn't been a dream, after all!

But no one would believe him, he knew. Besides, it was over now. There were other things a boy must do. He hid the sword under his mattress. Then he ran back to the window.

"Merry Christmas!" he cried, waving both hands.

And Santa called back, so cherry and bright, "Merry Christmas, Billy! Merry Christmas to all!"



Merry Christmas to All!

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