

# SANTA and the SNOWMAN

BY LUCRECE HUDGINS

## Chapter 15 THE TRICK

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Very well," snarled Flournoy. "We shall see."

Before the poor witch could blink her marble eyes the elf leaped behind her and cried, "Ma-ha, Ma-ha, Boligan, Zwiss!" while his fingers danced in the air above the witch's head.

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

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

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

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

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

"Indeed," began Flournoy but

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Now, now," murmured Flournoy gaily. "Don't be afraid."

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

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

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

Chapter 16  
**A PACT WITH FLOURNOY**

"Why—why have you done this to me?" whispered Danny when he was at last able to speak.

Flournoy laughed. "I just wanted to show you how powerful I am. I can do anything to you; twist your arm—both arms, perhaps. Move your ears and nose about, if I please—put the mouth where the eyes are and the eyes

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

"But—is it true? Will my legs really be cured?"

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

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

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

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

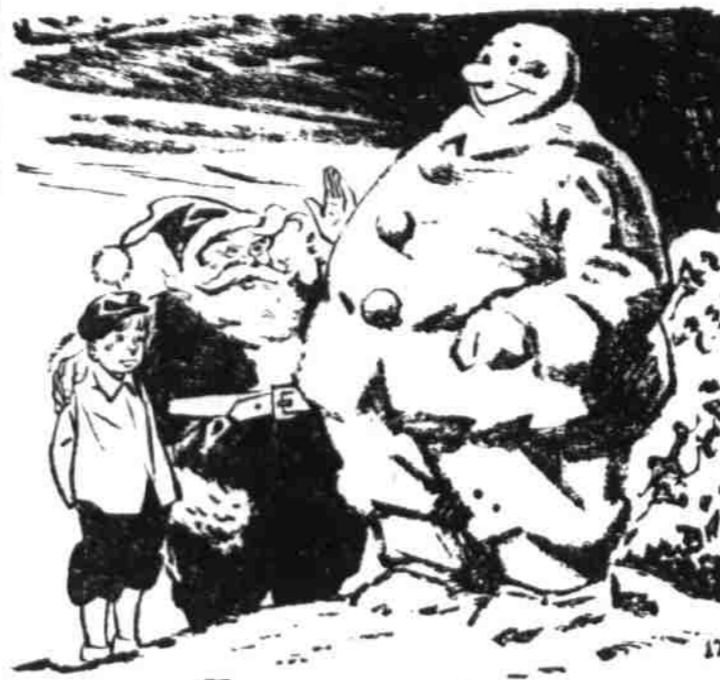
"What awful thing did she do to you?"

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

"What nonsense!" roared the Snow Man.

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

It was growing dark and Santa frantically packed his bag for it was Christmas eve and already



"HE IS JUST A SNOW MAN NOW," SANTA SAID GENTLY.

beneath your chin. There's positively no limit to the things I can do you!"

"But why?" repeated Danny in distress.

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

Danny almost burst with relief. "Oh, it's a joke. You've only been fooling me."

Flournoy nodded.

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

Flournoy gave him the powder, nearly sobbing with anxiety.

"No, no," said the elf. "That isn't it at all. You throw it."

"Throw it?"

"At Santa Claus."

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

"But—is it true? Will my legs really be cured?"

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time for him to be off.

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

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

"What happened?" cried Santa in alarm.

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

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

"Oh, look—do look!" he cried, transported with joy.

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

Chapter 17  
**A MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL**

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

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

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

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

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

No one blamed him. Santa leaped of all lying there Santa smiled with his eyes at the little boy—though he couldn't say a word and couldn't move a finger.

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

dying and the other wretched forever.

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

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

"No! no!" screamed Danny in horror for well he knew the secret of the Snow Man's hat.

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

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

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

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

"You shouldn't have—oh, you shouldn't have!" moaned Danny.

But the Snow Man said nothing at all.

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

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

Tears rolled down Danny's cheeks. "He was my only friend."

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

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

"Never," promised Santa. And I think he never has.

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

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

"Merry Christmas!" the brownies and fairies called as the great red sleigh circled in the air above

### Here's Couple Who Found Doomed Child G Vermont Winter Haven Five Years To L

BURLINGTON, Vt. (AP)—Miss Massachusetts residents who can afford it go south for the winter but not Fred Pousland.

Each year the 90-year-old tired baker and his 82-year-old wife move from their Carbon, Mass., home to their winter home in this northern metropolis.

"There seems to be less snow and the cold isn't so penetrating up here," Pousland commented.

"Merry Christmas!" cried Danny, peering over the side and waving a last farewell at the plump old snow man slipping under the stars.

And Santa, pulling at the reindeer and laughing merrily joined with "A Merry Christmas to all" with THE END



Now, at this Christmas time of year  
When you are surrounded by all you hold dear,  
May your season be merry, may your hearth be bright  
As the Star of Bethlehem brightens the night.  
May the voices of men to the heavens arise  
May their prayers resound through the Christmas skies  
And be heard o'er the world in a grand Amen  
With Peace on Earth, Good Will toward men.

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