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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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The Snowman

"It is so delightfully cold," said the Snowman, "that it makes my whole body crackle. This is just the kind of wind to blow life into one. How that great red thing up there is staring at me!" He meant the sun, that was just setting.

He had two stones on his face, instead of eyes and his mouth was made of an old broken rake. He had been brought into existence amidst the joyous shouts of boys and the jingling of sleigh-bells. The sun went down, and the full moon rose, large, round, and clear, shining in the deep blue.

"There it comes again, from the other side," said the Snow Man, who thought the sun was showing himself once more. Then he said: "If I only knew how to move, I would really like to move. If I could, I would slide on the ice, like I've seen the boys do; but I don't know how to move; I don't even know how to run."

"Away, away," barked the old yard-dog. He was quite hoarse, and could not pronounce "Bow wow" properly. He had once been an indoor dog, and lay by the fire, and he had been hoarse ever since. "The sun will make you run some day. I saw him, last winter, make your predecessor run, and his predecessor before him. Away, away, they all have to go."

"I don't understand you" said the Snow Man. "That thing in the sky will teach me to run? I saw it running

itself a little while ago, and now it has come creeping up from the other side.

"You know nothing at all," replied the yard-dog; "but then, you've only been made recently. What you see now is the moon, and the one before it was the sun. It will come again tomorrow, and most likely it will teach you to run then, I think the weather is going to change. I can feel such pricks and stabs in my left leg; I am sure there is going to be a change."

"I don't understand him," said the Snow Man to himself. "The one who was staring this morning, and whom he calls the sun, is not my friend; I can feel that too."

"Away, away," barked the yard-dog, and then he turned round and crept into his kennel to sleep.

There was really a change in the weather. Towards morning, a thick fog covered the whole country, and a wind arose, so that the cold seemed to freeze one's bones; but when the sun rose, the sight was splendid. Trees and



bushes were covered with frost, and looked like a forest of white coral; while on every twig glittered frozen dew-drops. And where the sun shone, how everything glittered and sparkled, as if diamond dust had been strewn about; while the snowy carpet of the earth appeared as if covered with diamonds, from which

countless lights gleamed, whiter than even the snow itself.

"This is really beautiful," said a young girl, who had come into the garden with a boy; and they both stood still near the Snow Man, and contemplated the glittering scene. "Summer cannot show a more beautiful sight," she exclaimed, while her eyes sparkled.

"And we can't have such a snow man in summer," replied the boy, pointing to the Snow Man; "he is amazing."

The girl laughed, and nodded at the Snow Man, and then walked away over the snow with her friend.

"Who are these two?" asked the Snow Man to the yard-dog. "You have been here longer than I have; do you know them?"

"Of course I know them," replied the yard-dog; "she has stroked my back many times, and he has given me a bone of meat. I never bite those two."

"But what are they?" asked the Snow Man.

"They are friends," he replied.

"Are they the same kind of beings as you and I?" asked the Snow Man.

"Well, they belong to the same house," said the yard-dog. "Certainly people who were only born yesterday know very little. I can see that in you. I have age and experience. I know every one at the house."

The dog continued: "I'll tell you; they loved me very much before. I used to lie in a velvet-covered chair in the house and they would pet me. They used to kiss my nose, and wipe my paws with a handkerchief, and I was called 'Ami, dear Ami, sweet Ami.' But after a while I

grew too big for them, and they sent me away to the housekeeper's room. You can look into the room from where you stand. It was certainly a smaller room than those up stairs; but I was more comfortable. I had my own cushion, and there was a stove—it is the finest thing in the world at this season of the year. I used to go under the stove, and lie down quite beneath it. Ah, I still dream of that stove. Away, away!"

"Does a stove look beautiful?" asked the Snow Man, "is it at all like me?"

"It is just the reverse of you," said the dog; "it's as black as a crow, and has a long neck and a brass knob; it eats firewood, so that fire spurts out of its mouth. You can see it through the window, from where you stand."

Then the Snow Man looked, and saw a bright polished thing with a brazen knob, and fire gleaming from the lower part of it. The Snow Man felt quite a strange sensation come over him; it was very odd, he didn't know what it meant. "So why did you leave? How could you give up such a comfortable place?"

"I was kicked out," replied the yard-dog. "They chained me up here. I had bitten the youngest son in the leg, because he kicked away the bone I was gnawing. 'Bone for bone,' I thought; but they were so angry, and from that time I have been fastened with a chain. Don't you hear how hoarse I am. Away, away! I can't talk any more like other dogs. Away, away, that is the end of it all."

But the Snow Man was no longer listening. He was looking into the housekeeper's room; where the stove

stood on its four iron legs, looking about the same size as the Snow Man himself. "What a strange crackling I feel within me," he said. "I want to go sit by the stove. I must go in there and lean against her, even if I have to break the window."

"You must never go in there," said the yard-dog, "for if you approach the stove, you'll melt away, away."

"I might as well go," said the Snow Man, "for I think I am breaking up as it is."

During the whole day the Snow Man stood looking in through the window, and in the twilight hour the room became even more inviting, for from the stove came a gentle glow, not like the sun or the moon; no, only the bright light which gleams from a stove when it has been well fed. When the door of the stove was opened, the flames darted out of its mouth. The light of the flames fell directly on the face of the Snow Man.

"Wow," said he; "so beautiful it looks!"

In the morning, the window-panes of the housekeeper's room were covered with ice. They were the most beautiful ice-flowers the Snow Man had ever seen, but they concealed the stove. The window-panes didn't thaw, and he couldn't see the stove, which he pictured to himself, as if it had been a lovely human being. The snow crackled and the wind whistled around him; it was just the kind of frosty weather a Snow Man might thoroughly enjoy. But he did not enjoy it; how, indeed, could he enjoy anything when he was "stove sick?"

"That is terrible disease for a Snow Man," said the yard-dog; "I have suffered from it myself, but I got over it. Away, away," he barked and then he added,

"the weather is going to change." And the weather did change; it began to thaw. As the warmth increased, the Snow Man decreased. He said nothing and didn't complain. One morning he broke, and sunk down altogether. And where he had been standing, a broomstick remained sticking up in the ground. It was the pole round which the boys had built him up. "Ah, now I understand why he had such a great longing for the stove," said the dog.

"The shovel that is used for cleaning out the stove is fastened to the pole." The Snow Man had a stove scraper in his body; that was what moved him so. "But it's all over now. Away, away." And soon the winter passed. "Away, away," barked the hoarse yard-dog. And nobody thought about the Snow Man anymore.