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The Golden Cobwebs

Unknown writer

I am going to tell you about something wonderful that happened to a Christmas tree just like this one, ever and ever so long ago, when it was once upon a time.

It was before Christmas, and the tree had been trimmed with bright spangled threads and many-coloured candles — and (*here name the trimmings on the tree beside you*) — and it stood safely out of sight in a locked room, so that the children could not see it before the proper time.

But many of the other little house-folk had already seen it. The big black cat saw it with her great green eyes. The little grey kitten saw it with her little blue eyes. The kind dog saw it with his steady brown eyes. The yellow canary saw it with his bright, wise eyes. Even the tiny mice, who were so frightened of the cat, had stolen one peep when no one was looking.

But there was someone who had not seen the Christmas tree. It was the little grey spider.

You see, the spiders lived in the corners — the warm corners of the sunny attic and the dark corners of the cellar. And they had been looking forward to seeing the Christmas tree as much as anyone. But just before Christmas, a great cleaning began. The mother of the house came sweeping and dusting and scrubbing and wiping, to make everything fresh and bright for the Christ-child's birthday. Her broom went poking into every corner — and of course the spiders had to run. Oh, how they had to run! Not one could stay in the house while the Christmas cleaning lasted. And so, you see, they couldn't see the tree at all.

Spiders like to know about everything and see everything there is to see, and these little spiders were very sad indeed. At last they went to the Christ-child and told him.

"All the others have seen the Christmas tree, dear Christ-child," they said. "But we, who are so fond of beautiful things and so much at home indoors — we are swept right out. We cannot see it at all."

The Christ-child felt sorry for the little spiders when he heard this, and he promised them they should see the Christmas tree.

So the day before Christmas, when no one was noticing, he let them all slip inside to look as long as they wished.

They came creepy, creepy down the attic stairs — creepy, creepy up from the cellar — creepy, creepy along the halls — and into the beautiful room. The fat mother spiders and the old grandfather spiders came, and all the tiny curly baby spiders too. And then they looked.

Round and round the tree they went, looking and looking and looking. Oh, what a wonderful time they had! They thought it was the most beautiful thing in the world. When they had seen everything they could see from the floor, they started up into the tree to see more. All over it they ran — creepy, crawly — up and down and in and out, over every branch and twig, peering at every single pretty thing up close.

They stayed until they had seen absolutely everything, and then at last they crept away, perfectly happy.

Then, in the still dark night before Christmas Day, the Christ-child came to bless the tree for the children. But when he looked at it — what do you suppose? It was covered in cobwebs. Everywhere the little spiders had run, they had left a web behind, and you remember they had been simply everywhere. So the tree was draped from trunk to tip with cobwebs, hanging from every branch and looped around every twig. It was a strange sight.



What could the Christ-child do? He knew that house-mothers do not love cobwebs. A Christmas tree covered in them would never do — no indeed.

So the Christ-child reached out and touched the spiders' webs, and turned them all to gold.

Wasn't that lovely? They shone and shimmered all over the beautiful tree. And that is how the Christmas tree came to have golden cobwebs on it — which we call tinsel to this day.

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