



Ririro

READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

Jack Frost's Cards

Abbie Phillips Walker

Rudolph lived on the side of a mountain in a country where they told wonderful stories of Fairies and Goblins, and often at night when everyone was asleep, Rudolph would watch and listen.

He had heard that sometimes at night when the Fairies were holding a revel in the mountains, a mortal was sometimes fortunate enough to be summoned to be present and enjoy the wild scene.

Some old people have said that "a watched pot never boils," and so it was with Rudolph; he watched and waited many nights, and no Goblins came.

But one night, he was awakened from a sound sleep by hearing someone call his name like this: "Rudolph! Rudolph!"

He jumped out of bed and ran to the top of the stairs, thinking it was his mother calling him, but he found no one there.

As he turned around, he saw a funny little head, wearing a pointed cap, bobbing backward and forward and beckoning to him with its slim pointed finger.

Rudolph ran to the window. "How did you get up here?" he asked, for he knew it was a Goblin.

"I crept up the side of the house," said the Goblin. "Be quick now," he told Rudolph. "Dress and come with me. I have been sent to summon you to one of our revels to be held on the mountain tonight. We are getting ready to send out Jack Frost's cards."

It did not take Rudolph long to get dressed, and in a few minutes, he was running over the mountains with the Goblin.

When they came to a forest, the Goblin stopped.
"Here is where the revel will be held," he said.

Rudolph looked around, but there was not a Goblin to be seen except his friend.

There were owls and rabbits and squirrels, and even bears sitting in the doorway of their cave.

"Where are your brothers?" asked Rudolph.

"They will be here at the stroke of midnight," answered the Goblin.

Rudolph wondered why all the animals were there, and he soon learned.

As the clock in the valley struck twelve, the Goblins popped up from behind rocks, out of rocks, and from behind trees.

Rudolph's friend told them he had brought the boy for which they had sent him, and one of the Goblins said, "We know you have been a good boy. You helped your mother, and we wish to reward you.

"After we finish our work tonight, tell us what we can do to help you. Now we must begin our night's work," he said to the other Goblins, "or Jack Frost will arrive before his cards are out. All of the trees and bushes must be turned brown tonight."

When he finished speaking, one of the owls flew down to a lower limb of the tree where he was sitting. "I protest," he said, "against such an early fall. You can wait a month later just as well."

"Yes," said a squirrel, "you will have a long winter even if you give us another month, and my present supply will not carry me through the cold weather. What do you say, Mr. Rabbit?" he asked.

"I think as you do," answered the rabbit, "and I should like very much to have another meal of green tops, but if they carry out their work tonight, I cannot have it."

The bears came from their cave, and Mr. Bear said, "I have let the others speak first, but really my reason for wishing to defer the fall is far more serious than the reasons given by the others. My wife and I will have to sleep much longer, and going to bed so early deprives us of much pleasure. Hold Jack's cards back for two weeks at least."

"Yes, do," pleaded the rabbit, "and besides, he stayed later than usual last winter."



The Goblins listened in silence to all these complaints. They sat on the ground, leaning their elbows on their knees and holding a thin pointed forefinger on each round cheek.

When the animals finished speaking, they rolled their eyes about, looking at one another, and one of them said, "What shall we do? Everything is ready for coloring the trees, and Jack expects it to be done tonight so that his cards will blow all over the land tomorrow, and the people will know he will soon be with them.

"If we do not send out the cards, he may come upon them suddenly and nip everything in sight with his cold breath."

"We have never asked a favor of you before," said Mr. Rabbit, "and I think you should grant this."

"I think so, too," said Mr. Bear, "and as you say, the spring was late this year, and I had to sleep later than usual."

"Well," said one of the Goblins, "I think we'd better help the animals this time; we will hold the cards back two weeks, but then they must go out. Put your paint pots and brushes where you can get them at a moment's notice."

The animals thanked the Goblins and ran home.

Rudolph's friend sat down beside him. "I am sorry to disappoint you," he said, "but if there is time, I will surely come for you when the revel takes place. I had no idea these animals would make such a fuss."

"I am not disappointed in the least," said Rudolph. "I have enjoyed being here, and now I know why the fall begins late some years, and besides that, I can look out for my plants and cover them every night, for I know that Jack Frost may come before his cards are out."

"What can we do for you?" asked the Goblin. "We want to help you in some way."

"If you would fix the cracks in the roof of my room, so Jack Frost and the rain will not get at me, I can look out for the vegetables and other things."

"We will do that some night soon," said the Goblin. "And now I must take you home; you can walk much faster if I am with you."

Rudolph laughed when he thought how big he was compared with the little Goblin. But it was true; he seemed to fly over the ground with the Goblin beside him.

One night, Rudolph was awakened by hearing a sound like the patter of rain on the roof. He waited, expecting to feel the drops on his face. Then he noticed that

the moon was shining, and he knew it was the Goblins repairing the roof.

Rudolph went to sleep again, feeling quite sure his vegetables were safe, for he had covered everything that could freeze. And in the morning when he awoke, there was a white frost over everything, and Rudolph wondered what Jack Frost said to the Goblins for neglecting to send out his cards in time.

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