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The Adventures of Kobold and Gnome on Saint Nicholas' Eve

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The forest was silent in the deep of winter, and Gnome stood in front of his burrow. His eyes sparkled with joy, like the snow on the pine branches. The sky was blue, and the sun seemed to be made of gold. Only under the trees that stood very close to each other, no sun shone, and there was no snow there. Everything remained dark.

"I'd rather walk in the sunshine," thought Gnome. "But I have to pass by Kobold's place. He lives under the dark trees."

He went into the forest and walked for an hour. He had short legs, and he wore a thick coat, so he couldn't walk fast. Kobold had just closed his burrow with moss, so Gnome couldn't just go inside.

"I really think he's hibernating, but that's a bit strange for a gnome. Or has he moved? That would be a shame. Anyway, I'll remove the moss and take a look," Gnome said to himself.

He quickly made a hole in the moss.

"Hey, who's breaking in?" a little voice inside the burrow called.

"Ha, are you still alive?" Gnome shouted back. "Man, you hid well. Come out, my friend. I have something to tell you."



Kobold grumbled a bit, but eventually came out. "Brrr, it's so cold," he said, shivering. "I don't understand what you're doing here!"

"Cold!" said Gnome. "Are you crazy? It's lovely weather!"

"Yeah, you're wearing a thick coat," grumbled Kobold, "and woolen mittens."

"No, I don't," said Gnome. "I ran hard, and that makes you warm. You should do it too."

"It looks like it's snowed," said Kobold. "A thick layer, I'm sure. Come back in April; I'm going back inside now."



"April?" Gnome exclaimed. "It's only the beginning of December. No way, just put on your thick coat and come with me. We'll go to my burrow, where the sun shines."

"The sun is shining? And what are we going to do in your burrow?" asked Kobold, now curious.

"I have something beautiful there for the Forest Ranger's child," Gnome said with a smiling face.

"What did you say?" Kobold exclaimed. "For the Forest Ranger's child? And you're telling me now? Let's go! Quick!... I'm coming with you!"



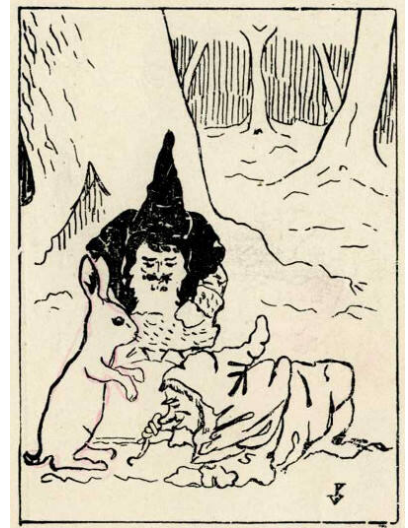
"Take it easy," laughed Gnome. "We have plenty of time, even if it's not until April. First, put on a winter coat, or you'll freeze."

Kobold didn't want to listen at first, but he eventually went to get his coat. On the way, he began to run faster and faster, so Gnome exclaimed, "I can't keep up, Kobold. You run as fast as a mouse. You have to let me catch my breath." But Kobold was very curious about what Gnome had made for the Forest Ranger's child. Gnome laughed and hurried to keep up. Soon they arrived at the burrow, and the sun shone even more beautifully than a few hours ago.

"It's so beautiful here," Gnome exclaimed.

"What's beautiful?" grumbled Kobold. "All that snow?"

"I'll show you first what I have for the Forester's child," Gnome said, laughing. "Otherwise, you won't be satisfied." He immediately went into his burrow and returned with something, which he placed in front of Kobold. Kobold looked at it, full of amazement, and then walked carefully around the thing, muttering all the while, "Exactly the same!... Really the same!... Just like the little rabbit!..."



"How do you like it?" Gnome asked. "Isn't it a nice gift for the Forester's child?"

"Nice?" exclaimed Kobold. "It's beautiful! And did you make that?"

"It's the same little rabbit that we so badly wanted to get better. I made it out of wood. And it looks just like a real little rabbit, doesn't it?"

"It looks like it could jump away at any moment, and what beautiful shiny eyes," said Kobold.

"Those are beads," said Gnome. "The board has four wheels and a string so we can pull it."



They took turns pulling the little rabbit through the snow and had a great time. Then Kobold said, "Forester's child will be so happy! When will she come to pick it up?"

"Forester's child doesn't know anything about it," said Gnome. "We're going to bring the little rabbit to her together. Today is December 5th, which is a holiday for children."

"Yes, people call it Saint Nicholas Eve," said Kobold. "Then the children put their shoes by the chimney, and the next day there is something sweet and something nice in them."

"Exactly," said Gnome. "That's why we're going to bring the little rabbit to Forester's child tonight, when it's dark."

"But the little rabbit isn't quite finished yet."

"What!" cried Kobold. "Not quite finished yet? Then finish it quickly, because it's getting dark."

"You'll have to do the rest of the work," said Gnome seriously.

"Me?" said Kobold. "I can't make little rabbits like you. I'm not that talented."



"You not talented?" exclaimed Gnome. "Who can carve such beautiful letters in the trees?"

"You don't want me to carve letters into the little rabbit, do you?" Kobold asked indignantly. "I won't do that, not for any price."

"But you can carve the board, can't you? Come on, start quickly," said Gnome. "You have to write on it: Gift from the gnomes to the Forester's child."

"I'd love to do that," said Kobold and immediately began carving diligently in the wood. He lay full length in the snow but did not feel the cold because he worked so hard. He asked every time if it was beautiful, and Gnome said, "It's beautiful." When the letters were finished, Gnome said, "You're really an artist, the board has become even more beautiful than the little rabbit."



Now they had to wait until it was dark. Waiting takes a long time, so in the meantime they had a snowball fight and then crawled into the burrow. There they made a plan on how to get the little rabbit into the house. That would work, they were after all smart gnomes. They set off in the moonlight. When they arrived at the house, they saw that a light was still on.

"Maybe they'll leave the light on all night," said Gnome. But Kobold whispered angrily, "You're talking too loud, they don't need to hear us inside."

They crawled with their gift under the bushes and waited until it got dark at the forest ranger's house. Then they sneaked up to the house and looked if a window was ajar, but everything was closed.

"It will be difficult to get in," Kobold thought.

"Come with me," said Gnome. "I have an idea."



There was a big hole in the chicken coop where a gnome could also fit through. So the gnomes carried the little wooden rabbit up and sat very still in the chicken coop, otherwise the chickens would wake up. They were very high up in the chicken coop and had to lower themselves down on a rope. A little later, they tiptoed on with the little rabbit and came to the door of the living room, but they were too small to reach the doorknob.

"Climb on my back," said Kobold.

Gnome climbed on Kobold's back and turned the doorknob very carefully, and the gnomes went in with the little rabbit. On one side of the fireplace was the shoe of the forest ranger's child, on the other side was the clog of the mean boy.

"We have nothing to do with him," said Kobold. "Just put the rabbit by the shoe, then the forest ranger's child will find it tomorrow. She will be so happy! I wish I could be here tomorrow morning!"

"Don't wish for impossible things," said Gnome. "Let's make sure we get away now."

That was easier said than done, but they got out of the house without being noticed. They came to the chicken coop, but they had to climb up the rope now, and that was difficult for the gnomes. They made so much noise that the chickens and the rooster woke up. The chickens became really restless. Something was wrong in the coop. The gnomes ran away as fast as they could, but the rooster jumped off its perch with a lot of flapping, and all the chickens clucked and flapped around. The gnomes ran out through the hole while the rooster and chickens chased after them. In the house, they heard the noise of people getting out of bed. They ran as fast as they could and arrived panting at their burrow.

"Phew, that was a hard run," said Gnome when they were inside. "That was quite an adventure."

"It was your fault," said Kobold. "You made too much noise."



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