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The Spring Snowstorm

Mary Graham Bonner

The great stone was very pleased.

It was a remarkable stone — large enough for a whole group of children to picnic on top, which required climbing a ladder to reach. And yet if you stood beside it and gave it the gentlest push with one hand, the whole enormous thing would rock, slowly and grandly, like an armchair.

Some children had driven out to see it in a wagon, through the private road that crossed a neighboring farmer's land. They stopped to pay the toll to the farmer's small son.

"Five cents each for children," the boy said. "And you can stay as long as you like."

"How much for the horses?" someone asked, expecting it to cost more.

The boy thought about it. "Nothing at all," he said. "I don't suppose they'll be looking at the stone."

Everyone laughed, and the wagon went on.

When they'd climbed to the top and unpacked their lunch — hot cocoa from a kettle they'd set over a bonfire, sandwiches and oranges and bananas and hard sweets — one of the children looked up and felt something cold on her cheek.

"Is that rain?"

It wasn't rain. It was snow.

Great soft flakes of it, settling on their sandwiches and their hair, even though it was spring.

"It can't be snowing," someone said. "Spring has come."

"It is, though. Look at them. Such big flakes."

And everyone laughed again — because what else could you do? Here they were, on top of a rocking stone in the woods, eating a picnic in a spring snowstorm. Everything was unusual, and everything was wonderful.



Old King Snow, drifting down in his final flourish before summer, chuckled to himself. He liked to give people a surprise in the spring, just when they thought he'd packed up for good. And from the laughter rising from the stone, he felt sure his surprise had landed well.

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