

A Christmas Secret



STORIES TO GROW BY

Derek and Michelle Brookes

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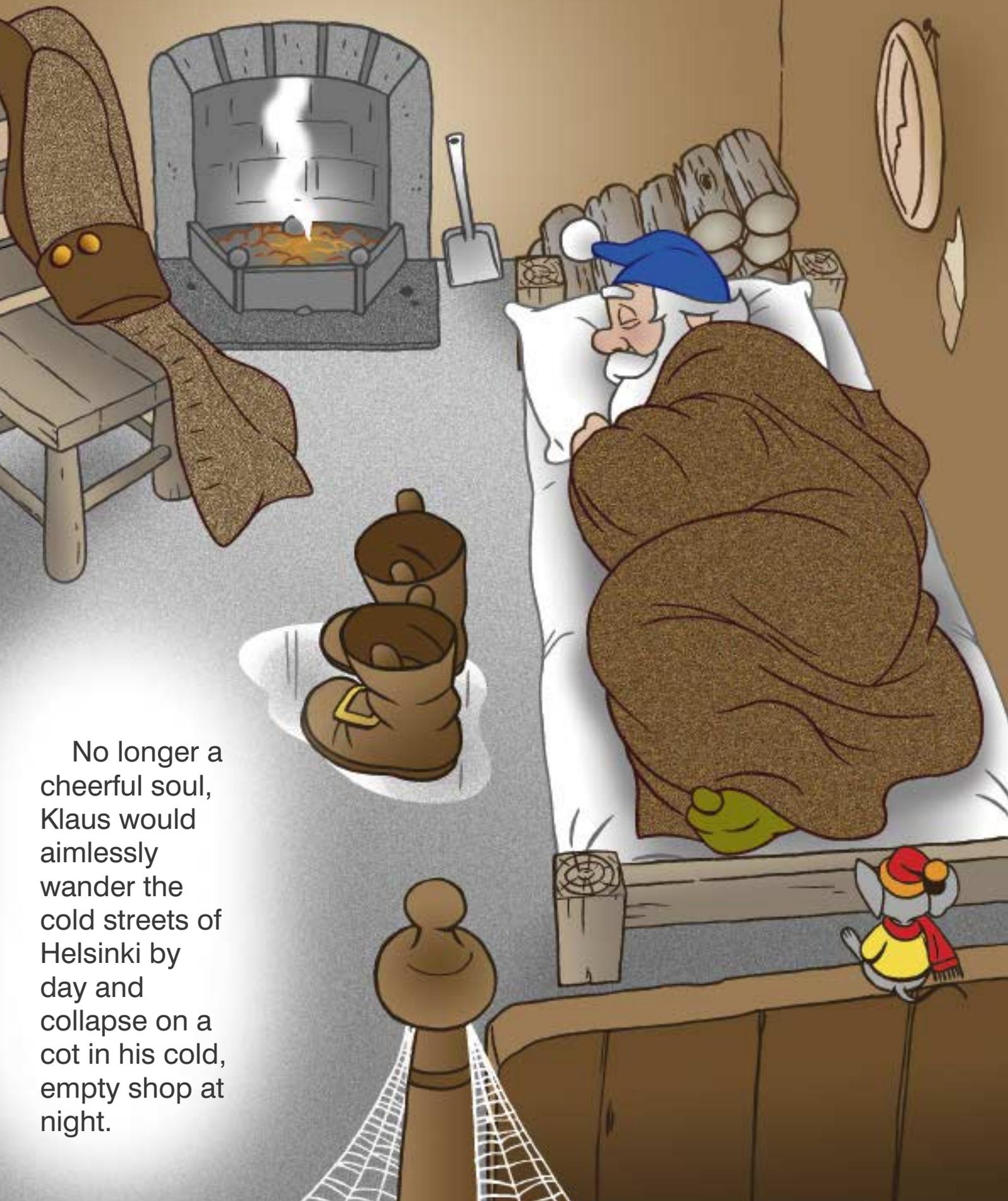
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Klaus was once a successful tailor. He and his wife, Gertrude, had moved to what is now Finland to escape the war and turmoil in their homeland.

Then a terrible flu epidemic took the lives of his wife and children and left him feeling he had little reason to go on living.



No longer a cheerful soul, Klaus would aimlessly wander the cold streets of Helsinki by day and collapse on a cot in his cold, empty shop at night.

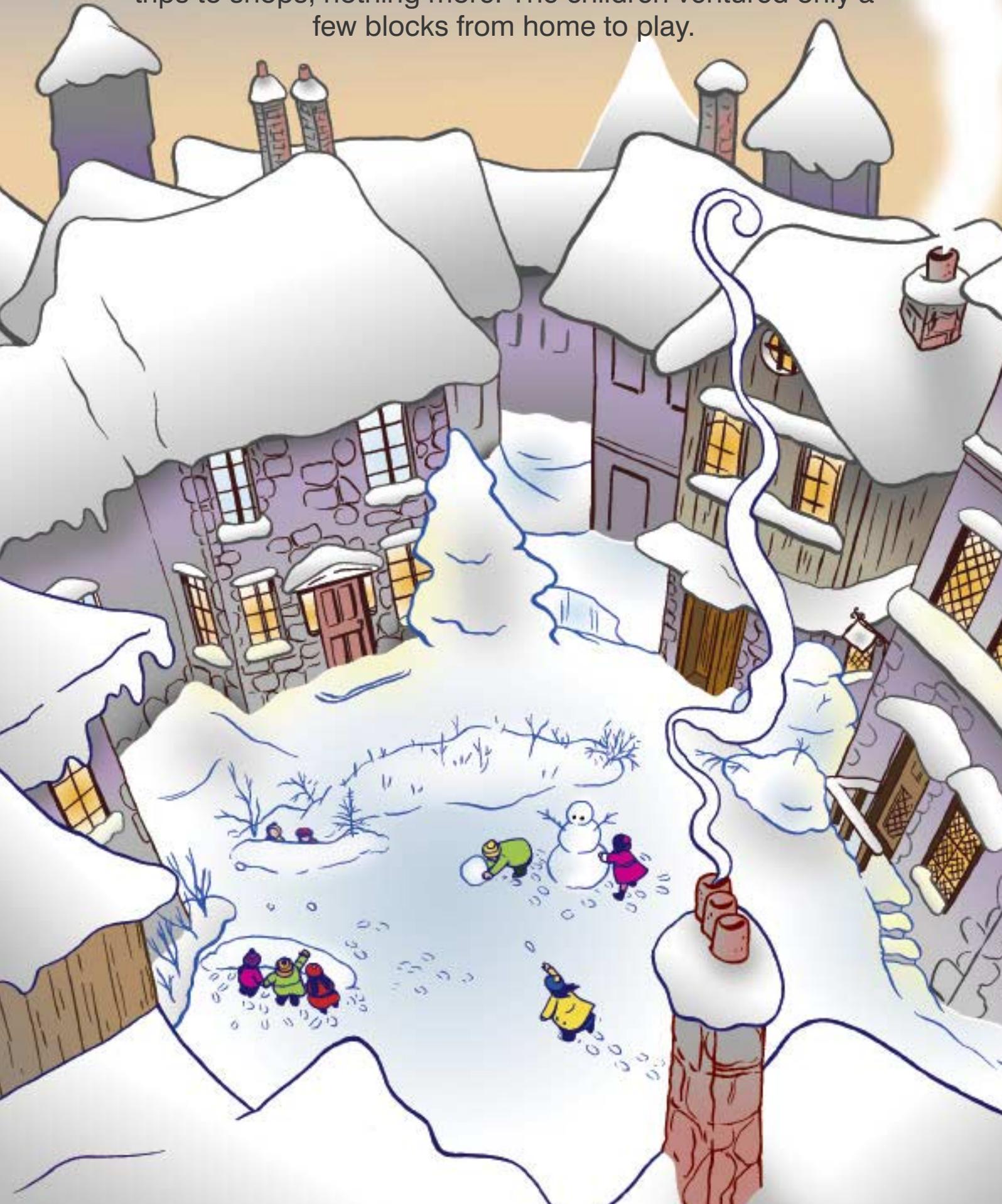
He no longer did tailor work. He couldn't even if he wanted to, for he had sold or traded everything of value for food and fuel. His clothes became tattered. His hair and beard, now white, grew wild and tangled. His head hung low, and his feet dragged. Those who had known him before could now hardly recognize him!



Whenever Gertrude looked down from Heaven, she was heartbroken. She would often plead for her husband before the throne of God. God always comforted her, telling her to wait, because He had a special plan for Klaus. At last He said, "The time has come! Your husband is about to turn his eyes from his own sorrow and see the needs of others. The moment he does, I will work a miracle."



It was winter, and as usual Helsinki was very cold, with only half a dozen hours of sunlight each day. Tradesmen worked at their crafts in cozy workshops by glowing fires. Women left the warmth of their kitchens only for hurried trips to shops, nothing more. The children ventured only a few blocks from home to play.



Wherever they lived, it never seemed too far to walk to “Children’s Lane,” where the town’s renowned toy makers worked their magic. Some folks said that gifted saints and angels gave the toy makers their ideas.



Along “Children’s Lane,” window after window was filled with toys which delighted the children’s eyes and set their minds awirl!

Klaus loved children, but whenever he would stop to watch them, they would remind him of his own children and each time his heart would break all over again, and tears would tumble down his cheeks.





One day Klaus noticed a small boy in clothes nearly as tattered as his own, gazing at the toys in a shop window.

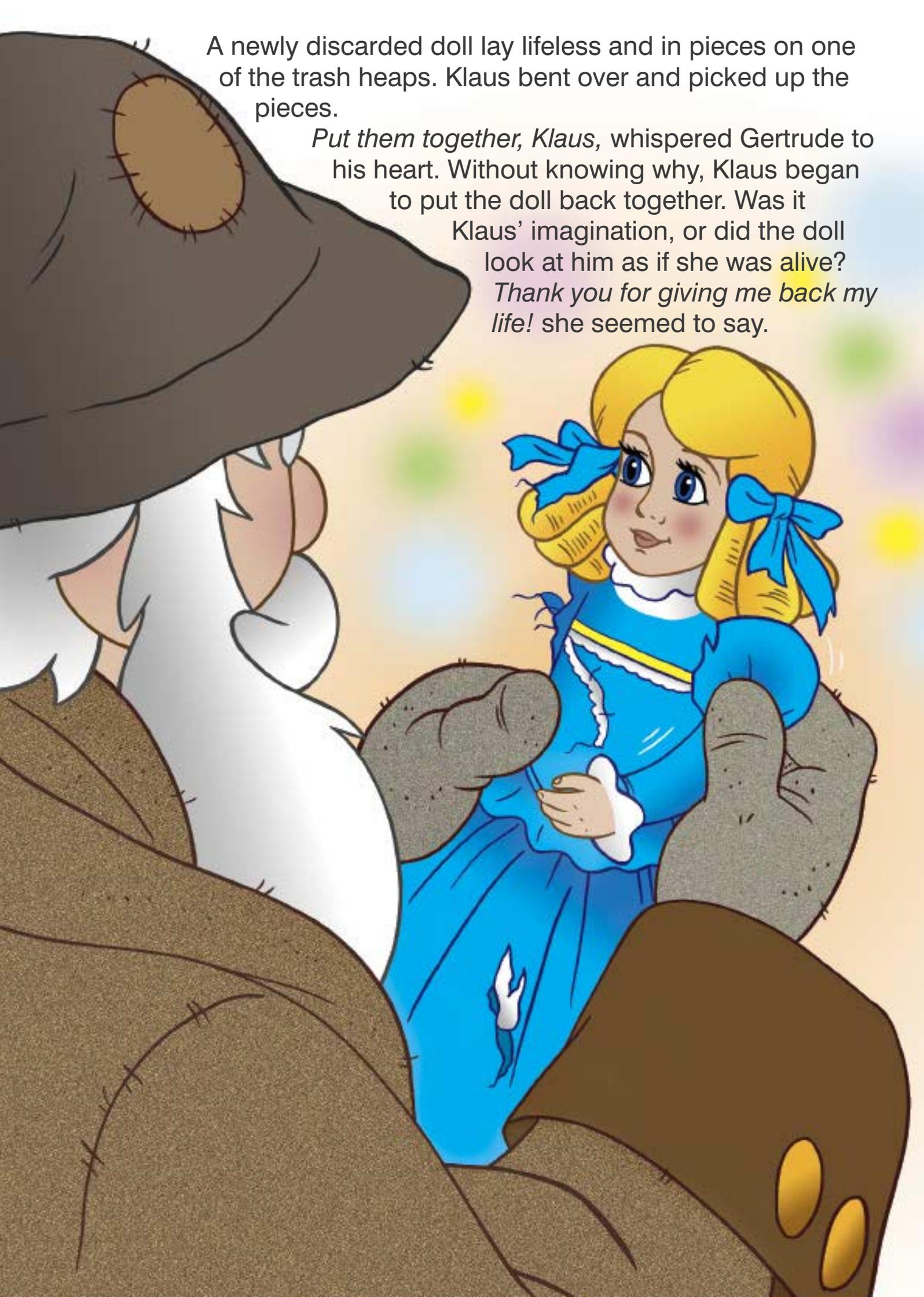
The look of hopelessness and disappointment on the boy's face told Klaus just what the boy was thinking: *I'll never know what it's like to have such fine toys as those!* Klaus began to cry, but for the first time in a very long time, his tears weren't for himself but for the little boy and other poor children like him.

The image of the small boy lingered in Klaus' mind as he went on his way. Scarcely thinking about where his feet were taking him, Klaus found himself at a small ravine on the edge of town, where people left their trash.



A newly discarded doll lay lifeless and in pieces on one of the trash heaps. Klaus bent over and picked up the pieces.

Put them together, Klaus, whispered Gertrude to his heart. Without knowing why, Klaus began to put the doll back together. Was it Klaus' imagination, or did the doll look at him as if she was alive? *Thank you for giving me back my life!* she seemed to say.



Klaus began to feel happy and hopeful.

Then he pulled an armless teddy bear from another pile of trash.



How nice it would be if these broken toys could be repaired and given to the children of poor families. How happy they all would be! Klaus thought. But what can I do about it? I am just a poor broken old man myself, and I have no tools, no needles or thread or material to mend them with!

A voice from Heaven seemed to speak to him: *With God, nothing is impossible! Where God guides, He provides. Look around!*





Still not understanding what was happening, Klaus started looking through the discarded things that were scattered around. Suddenly he spotted a battered wooden box. It looked worthless, but when Klaus lifted the lid, he was surprised!

It was full of tools—everything he needed for the job! The tools were old, but he knew he could clean them up and they would be as good as new. In one compartment of the box was a sewing kit with needles of all sizes, and thread in many different colors.

That's amazing! Klaus thought, as a new idea formed in his mind. *What if ... what if I collect all the broken toys I can find and I fix them and give them to poor children for Christmas?*



In Heaven Gertrude jumped for joy! God's promise was coming true!

Klaus didn't waste a minute. For the next few days he collected broken toys and quietly found out where each needy child in town lived. He wrote this information down in a small book. Klaus then spent many days repairing, mending, gluing, and stuffing toys. So absorbed was Klaus in the task at hand that he often forgot to eat.



Harder and harder he worked, late into each night, until his fingers ached, his eyes grew blurry, and he fell asleep in his chair. At dawn's first light, Klaus would awake and continue his labor of love.

On Christmas Eve his task was finally completed! Every child in his book would get a present. Seven big bags filled with beautiful toys sat on the floor of his workshop—all brought back to life by the worn old hands of the tailor.



But how shall I give them to the children? Klaus asked himself. They must not think that the toys are from me, for truly they are gifts of love from God's own heart!

Disguise yourself and give them away at night! whispered Gertrude.

And so he did.



Christmas Eve was cold and blustery. Just before midnight, Klaus loaded the bags of toys onto a big sled he had once pulled his own children around on; it was one of his few remaining possessions.



The load of toys was heavy and he struggled to pull it through the snow.



From street to street he went, leaving a package or two or three on the doorstep of each house where a poor family lived. In each package was a toy for some child in the house, and on each toy was a little note that said, "To you with love, from God Above."



On
Christmas
morning
the poor of
the town
awoke to
the
wonderful
surprise.



Some thanked God for what seemed to be a miracle; some didn't know what to think, but were glad to see their children happy. Some said they had seen an old man covered with snow distribute the packages. Others said they had seen a mysterious sleigh loaded with many big bags.

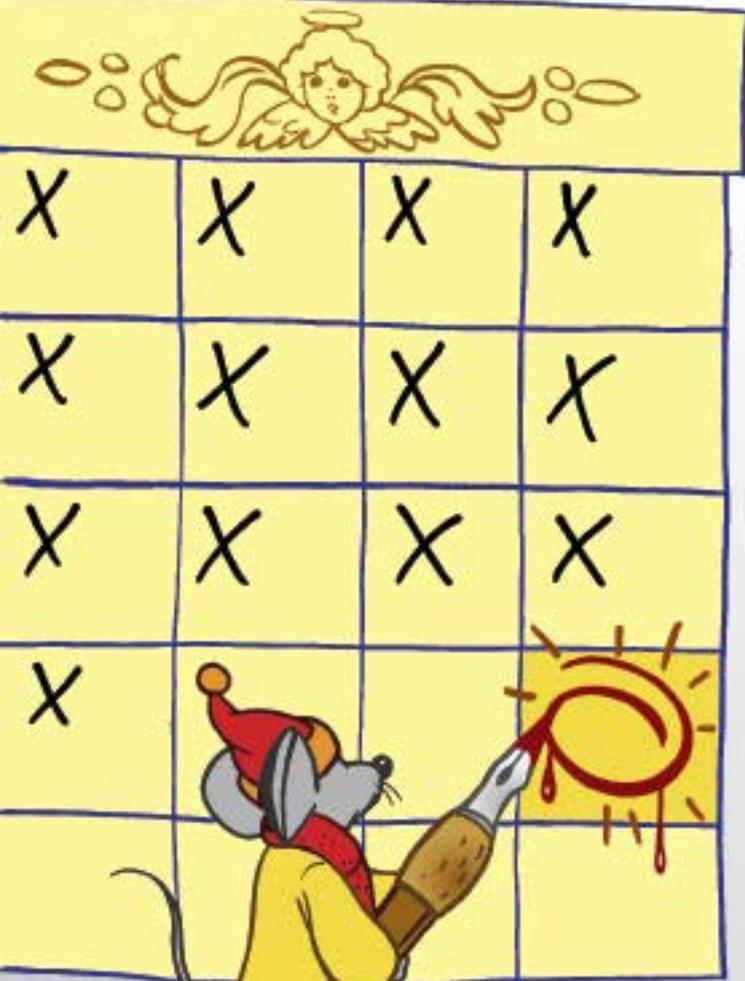


The story grew until finally it was said that the sleigh was pulled by reindeer, and had come down from Heaven!

Well, much of the story was true! There was an old man, covered with snow, and there was a sled filled with bags. And yes, in a sense, they did come from Heaven, for God was surely behind it all!



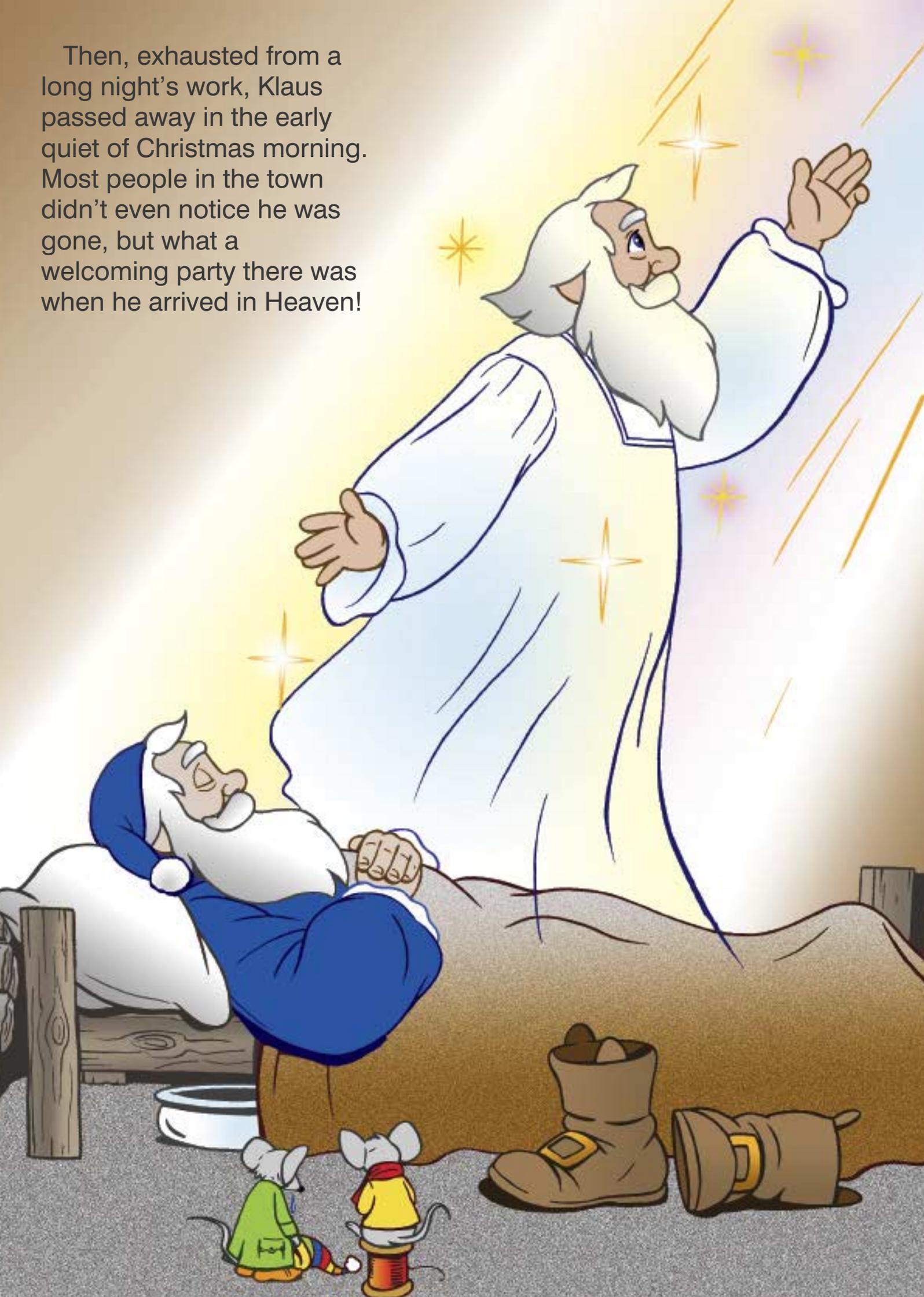
December



Klaus spent the next year quietly collecting and fixing broken toys. And when Christmas came again, Klaus once more made his secret rounds to deliver toys to all the poor children.

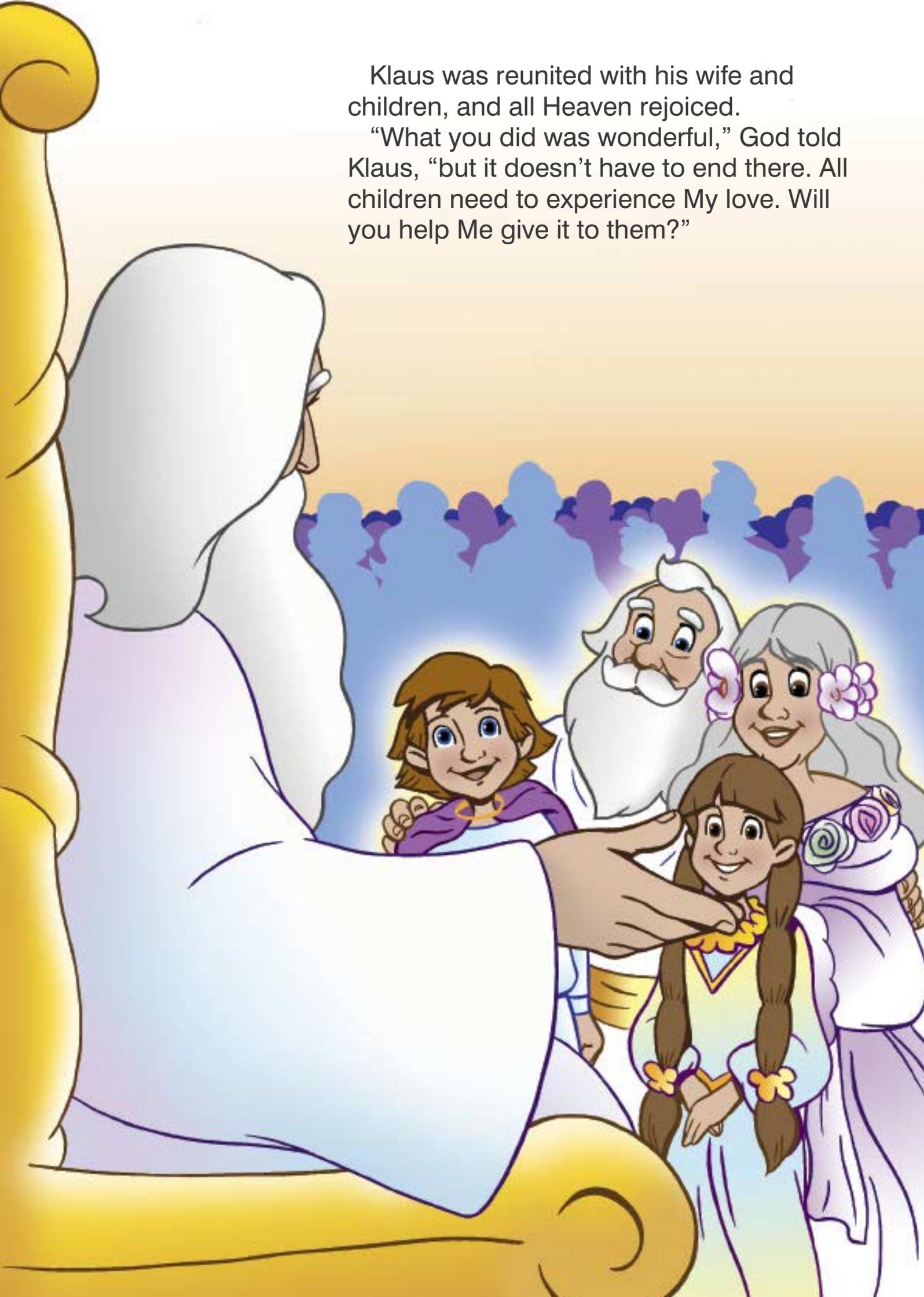


Then, exhausted from a long night's work, Klaus passed away in the early quiet of Christmas morning. Most people in the town didn't even notice he was gone, but what a welcoming party there was when he arrived in Heaven!



Klaus was reunited with his wife and children, and all Heaven rejoiced.

“What you did was wonderful,” God told Klaus, “but it doesn’t have to end there. All children need to experience My love. Will you help Me give it to them?”





In his life in Heaven, Klaus was happier than he ever thought possible. He began doing all he could to help children around the world, encouraging them by whispering in their hearts, as Gertrude had once done for him. What joy he felt as the children opened their hearts to God's love and He gave them happiness.

MORE

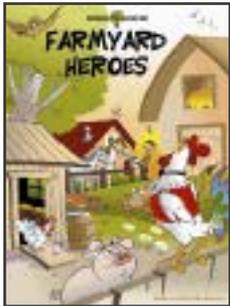
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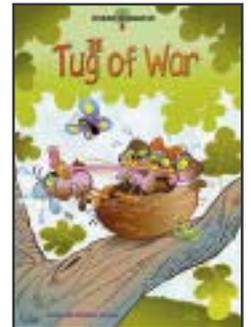
Farmyard Heroes

Jenny the baby chick wanted more action and adventure in her life, but she could not have guessed how suddenly her world was about to change!



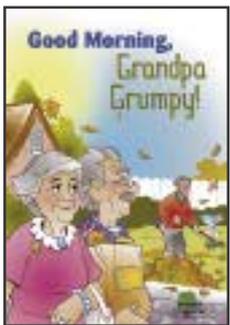
Tug of War

Billy, Reddy, Cherry and Chirpy are four little baby robins with a variety of personalities and preferences, huge appetites, and a few things to learn about manners! Find out what happens when Mama and Papa Robin fly away to find food, and Billy has his first brush with danger.



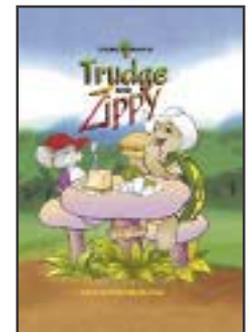
Grandpa Grumpy

Will there ever be cheer and laughter in Grandpa and Grandma Grumpy's house? "Good morning!" Grandpa Grumpy hears from the yard next door, as he grumpily takes out the trash. Little does he know that something special is about to happen!



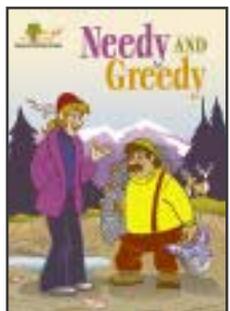
Trudge and Zippy

Two fun animal friends with very different characters share a day at the carnival and are brought closer to God and to each other through a serious turn of events.



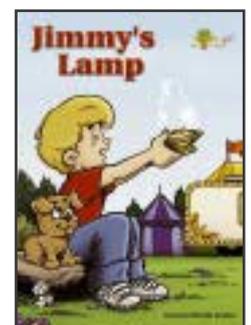
Needy and Greedy

Frederick and Hans have been fishing partners for years at Pirate's Cove, until one day they stumble upon a wooden chest. Needy and Greedy is a story about friends and the discovery that drove them apart. Can anything bring them back together again?



Jimmy's Lamp

Little Jimmy was the kindest and most cheerful clown anyone knew, brightening lives and putting smiles on the faces of audiences and fellow circus artists alike. Discover how kindness can touch anyone's heart, and forgiveness can even make friends out of enemies!





Klaus the tailor has lost everything. Grieving and hopeless, he wanders the streets of Helsinki. One day Klaus sees a boy in tattered clothing admiring the toys in a display window, and has an idea. Klaus's life is changed as he picks up the broken pieces in a way that brings the magic of Christmas into many homes, making children's wishes come true!

