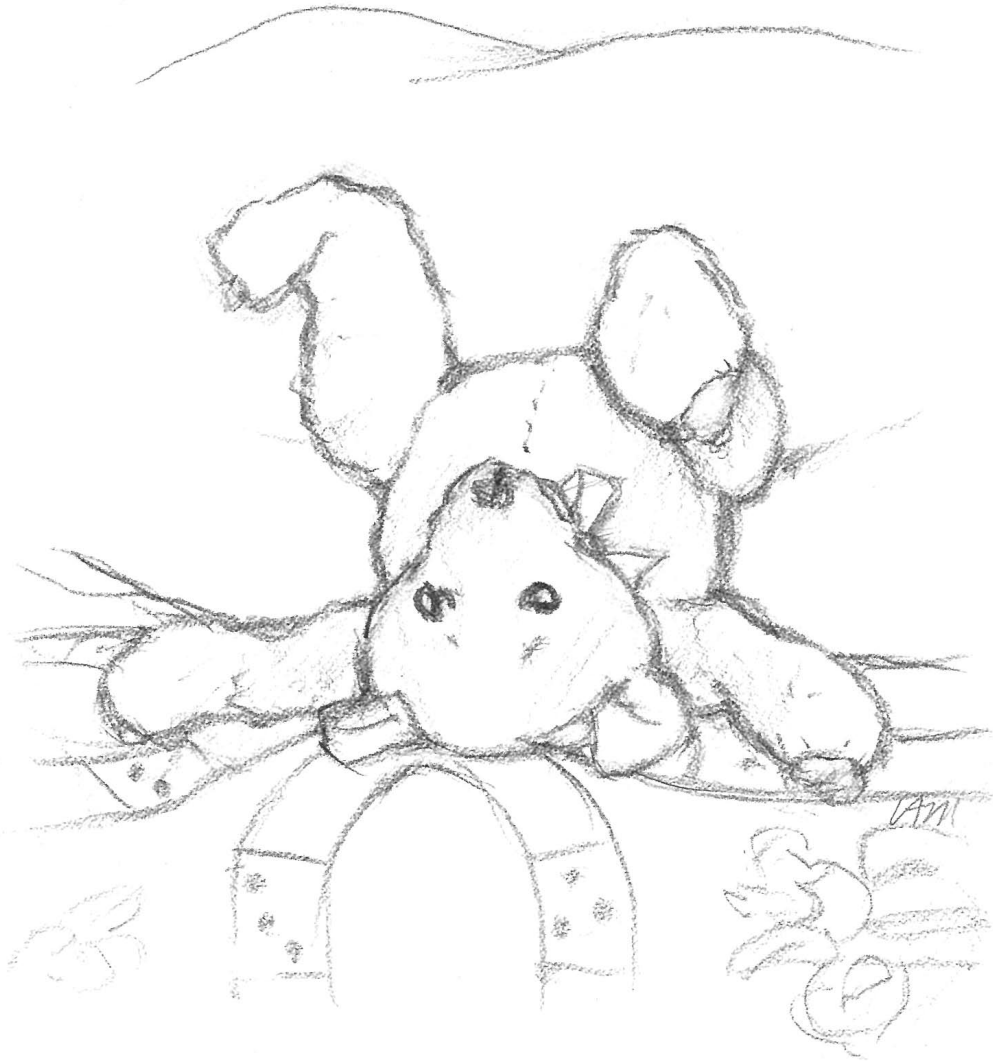


ILLUSTRATIONS

- Frontispiece “All of a sudden he knew why snowflakes were falling up.”
- p. 6 “Kirsten began her new Christmas tradition by writing to Santa Claus.”
- p. 14 “For hours Anna-Lisa delighted Kirsten with her dancing.”
- p. 20 “Tivoli gasped. Everything Anna-Lisa said was true.”
- p. 26 “Tivoli lost his balance and crashed noisily into the wastebasket.”
- p. 29 “The eyes moved closer and closer until they were right in Tivoli’s face.”
- p. 39 “Tivoli was surrounded.”
- p. 46 “The dog held Tivoli tight.”
- p. 52 “The old man picked Tivoli up and carried him inside.”
- p. 55 “Soon needle and thread closed the seams.”
- p. 66 “‘What a nice addition to my collection.’”
- p. 72 “‘Climb onto my back, hold on, and let’s go.’”
- p. 77 “With his legs spread wide, Whiskers landed on several startled rats.”
- p. 85 “Santa pulled out a thick quilt and wrapped Whiskers in it.”
- p. 90 “‘That’s where he is!’ she cried.”
- Endpiece “Kirsten’s letter to Santa.”

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All of a sudden he knew why snowflakes were falling up.

CHAPTER ONE

WISH

One Christmas Eve, a long time ago, a little toy bear named Tivoli lay crumpled on a bed, his back tight against the pillow. For an entire year five-year-old Kirsten had dragged Tivoli, last-year's Christmas gift, everywhere she had gone. And most of last year seemed to be clinging to his fur.

As if that was not bad enough, Tivoli's stitching was coming undone.

Little puffs of stuffing were poking out here and there through his seams.

Kirsten had flung poor Tivoli onto her bed when she was called downstairs for dinner. Since that time Tivoli had been staring out Kirsten's window, puzzling over all the snowflakes that were falling up.

With one paw stuck behind his back and one leg dangling out just past his tummy, Tivoli was uncomfortable. Yet, as his stuffing rushed to his head, he began to think more clearly. All of a sudden he knew why snowflakes were falling up. He was upside down. Soon Tivoli became very, very uncomfortable.

"Kirsten! Help!" he cried, but quickly covered his mouth.

Tivoli had broken the Two Rules. He had talked out loud, and he had moved. This did not go unnoticed by Anna-Lisa,

a doll dressed in a flowing golden gown, who frowned at Tivoli from the top of Kirsten's dresser. Anna-Lisa was much better at keeping the rules than was Tivoli, so she stayed quiet and stood still.

"Tivoli! Tivoli!" Kirsten shouted as she reached the top of the stairs and darted into her room. "I got the almond! I get my wish!"

Of course Tivoli did not answer. He remembered the rules now.

"Oh! I'm sorry," Kirsten said as she turned Tivoli right side up. Then, holding the white almond just inches from his eyes, she whispered, "I got the almond!"

Shortly after Christmas last year, Kirsten and her family had moved from Denmark to the United States.

This year, Kirsten's family was enjoying a traditional Danish Christmas Eve. The family had gathered around the dinner table promptly at six o'clock.

There are two reasons Danish children wiggle and squirm during dinner on Christmas Eve. In the parlor, hidden behind closed doors, is the Christmas tree, decorated with real candles and garlands that droop from branch to branch. Ornaments are splashed from top to bottom and gifts are tied to branches here and there with colorful bows.

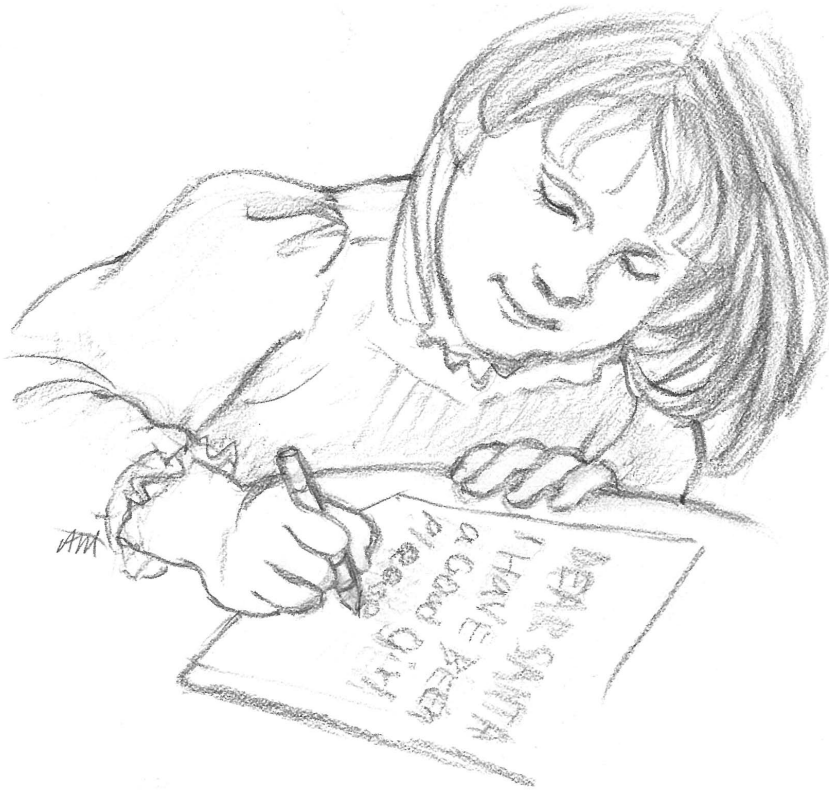
The other reason is that soon after dinner, dessert is served. Rice pudding and cherry sauce. What makes this so exciting is that hidden somewhere in the pudding is one, and only one, almond. All the brown stuff is scraped off, so the almond is white and hard to see. In Kirsten's family, whoever was lucky

enough to get the almond was given a Christmas wish.

Kirsten had reminded her family for days that when *she* got the almond, her wish was to celebrate the rest of Christmas just like her American friends.

So, she sat down at the small table next to her bed and picked up a crayon. Kirsten began her new Christmas tradition by writing to Santa Claus. When she was done, she folded the note in half, slipped it into an envelope, and hurried downstairs.

Kirsten lived in a very old house. One of two attic bedrooms was hers. The other was her older sister Sara's. In Kirsten's room the ceiling sloped almost to the floor. There was one large



Kirsten began her new Christmas tradition by writing to Santa Claus.

dormer window and beneath it a soft, padded window seat. Through a metal grill in the floor came warm air from the living and dining rooms below.

Tivoli learned long ago that if he lay near the edge of Kirsten's bed, what was said downstairs could be heard through the grill. If he leaned way over the side, he could even see some of what was going on.

Kirsten returned to the dining room and sat at the table where her family was finishing their pudding. "My note to Santa is done."

Mother rose from the table with a stack of bowls in her hands. "Let's all pitch in and clear the table. When the dishes are clean and put away and the kitchen and dining rooms are straight, we'll open the parlor doors."

Sara wrapped her hands around four glasses and turned toward the kitchen. Kirsten followed behind with the empty

pudding bowl.

When Kirsten and her sister reentered the dining room, Sara said, “Do you remember how beautiful the church bells sounded last Christmas Eve? Every bell in Copenhagen chimed for hours and hours. If I’d gotten the almond, I would have liked to hear those bells one more time, filling the night air with music.”

Kirsten recalled those lovely bells, too, as she opened and glanced at her letter to Santa.

Sara happened to see the last few words of Kirsten’s note as she passed by. She gasped, quickly covering her mouth.

Tivoli struggled to see more in the dining room below. He just knew something was wrong. It seemed like a million years before Kirsten’s parents returned from the kitchen.

Father crossed the living room and opened the parlor doors.

“Oooo!” Kirsten whispered.

“It’s gorgeous!” added Sara. “May I light the candles?”

Mother nodded. “I’ll help you.”

“Kirsten,” Father said, “I know it’s not how they celebrate Christmas in America, but would you like to sing songs with us as we circle the tree?”

Kirsten thought for a moment. Then she wrapped her arms around her father. “Oh, Daddy,” she said, “is it all right if I just go up to bed? I’ve asked Santa for something very special. If I’m not asleep when he comes, he won’t give it to me.”

“Of course, dear,” father said kindly. “I think we all understand.”

Kirsten put her note into the envelope upon which she had already

written, “To Santa.” She sealed it and placed it on a small table next to a plate of cookies and a glass of milk. Then she hugged everyone goodnight.

“Don’t forget your bath,” Mother said.

Father watched Kirsten leave. “What could she possibly want so much that she would skip singing her favorite Christmas songs?” he mused.

Sara peered into the hallway and glanced up the stairs. As Kirsten neared the top, Sara turned to her parents. “I know what she asked Santa to bring her!”

CHAPTER TWO

NEWS

Tivoli heard Kirsten’s footsteps on the stairs. Quickly he scooted back to where he had been while Kirsten wrote her note to Santa.

Kirsten glowed as she entered her room. She gathered clean underclothes and her pink nightie and left. A moment later Tivoli heard water plunging into the bathtub. He rolled back over to the edge of the bed and turned a ragged ear