

Christmas Stories

Collected and adapted for telling by Chuck Larkin

Part 2 of 2

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The First Christmas Tree, Candles in the Window and Mistletoe

Do you remember, when I told you about the small flock of birds that were roosting in the tree, outside of the barn, in the story of the “First Christmas Gift?”

The children’s children of those same birds are in this next story. It started about 400 years later, way north in the Burzee forest, in winter. The Burzee is the same enchanted forest where Santa Claus grew up and became “Father Christmas.”

The descendants of the same flock of birds were trying to fly south. The weather had been nice, and the flock had delayed leaving for the warm south. Now, they were caught in a nasty, cold, winter storm. The gusting wind buffeted the birds. When the flock of birds tried to land on branches of a tree the wind would sweep them off. The little birds were exhausted. The dense snow, swirling and falling, made flying even more difficult. The birds landed and were swept off several trees.

At dusk, the exhausted little birds, one last time, tried to land. Feebly, they fell into a large Spruce tree, deep in the forest, in front of a small log cabin. The Spruce tree quickly fluffed and curled up it’s outer branches and stopped the wind. The spruce tree protected the little flock of birds and they fell asleep. Later that night, after the storm passed, everything was quiet and the full moon highlighted the blanket of white snow that covered the forest.

The Spruce tree sat in a small clearing, large enough for a garden, in front of a small one room cabin. Only two small candles were still burning in the window of the cabin and a thin wisp of smoke floated almost invisibly from the chimney.

An elderly couple lived in the cabin and when the storm started, the grandmother had lit two candles and put them in the window, “to go with the yule log for a weary traveler out on this Yuletide night and to remind us of the warm sun light,” she said to her husband.

As I remember, it was close to midnight when, from the woods, in the bright moonlight a little boy, without a coat, walked across the fresh snow so lightly, he left no tracks. When he reached the cabin, he knocked on the door. The old people arose and opened the door. Quickly, they brought the little boy in from the bitter cold. The grandmother wrapped him in a blanket, warmed him some milk, stirred in a little honey, and served him Christmas cookies.

The grandfather stirred up the fire in the fireplace and put on another log. Then the grandfather fixed a pallet for the little boy to sleep on, next to the warm fire. Both the old people sat quiet until the little boy finished his refresh-

ments, then they tucked him into his pallet bed, said good night and went back to their own bed.

Around two o’clock in the morning, hovering in the air above the Spruce tree, was Michelle the Archangel. “Well, Spruce tree, that was a kind act you did for our feathered friends. I remember your ancestor, on the road to Egypt, who tried to hide the Christ child and formed such beautiful branches. The old people in that cabin, wasn’t that nice what they did for the little boy? They didn’t pester him with a lot of questions either. I think I will do something for both of you.”

I wish I’d been there to watch. I’m glad the storyteller remembered this part. The majestic Archangel Michelle, called the great spiders in from the forest and had them spin webs all over the tree. Then, she waved that great broad sword over the Spruce tree, and the spider webs turned into gold and silver strands.

Next, the Archangel reached into the heavens and grabbed fistfuls of twinkling stars, which she spread throughout the branches of the spruce tree. With a pass of her sword, she turned each into a beautiful, shimmering crystal holding the colors of the rainbow. It was an awesome sight to behold.

At last, the Archangel Michelle smiled, nodded her head, spread her wings and rose like a falling star, streaking across the heavens. Even today, whenever I see a falling star streaking across the heavens, I wonder, was that really a falling star or an angel, running an errand? How can you tell? I don’t know.

The next morning, the grandmother and grandfather woke up at the break of day. They looked around. The little boy was gone. The door and the shuttered window were bolted on the inside. They stepped out of the cabin, and saw the Spruce tree in all its radiance.

They stood in amazement. When they, at last, looked around in the fresh snow, there were no tracks. The only evidence of their visitor was the empty milk glass, a plate of Christmas cookie crumbs, the sleeping pallet and the incredible glorious Spruce tree.

After they finished breakfast, they dressed warmly and walked about three miles into Ballintober, the little village at the edge of the Burzee wood.

After hearing the story, everybody came out to their cabin home. The wonder of it all.

“What does it mean?” “What does it mean?”

The storyteller, Jim O’Lorcain, told of an old forgotten story how the Christ child, here and there, now and again,

“walked” on Christmas Eve. At times, he was age five, and at times age nine. It varied. That day, the people decided, that if you had a lit candle in your window, and a yule log in the fireplace on Yuletide, you were saying, “We are a Christian family, if you are in my neighborhood, you may guest at my table and sleep in my home”.

The Grandmother quickly added “And no silly, bothersome questions either.”

All agreed that a beautiful, decorated Spruce tree had to be there also “And if you don’t have one growing in your yard,” whispered the Spruce tree in their thoughts, “then cut one down and bring that tree into your home, so we will not be forgotten that we became the first Christmas tree.”

Everybody said what had just been in their thoughts, surprised themselves, and wondered who had spoke to them. It was a wonderful day. Everybody brought food and drink and the storyteller told all the old Christmas stories.

Jim even told the story of the towering, majestic, mistletoe trees, and how one had been cut down to build the cross, used by the Roman soldiers on Calvary. The story told how all mistletoe trees were so ashamed to be used in such a way.

Jim said that the mistletoe wood spoke to Jesus as he carried the cross up the hill. The mistletoe whispered in the right ear of Jesus, “Son of God, all the mistletoe trees in the

world are so mortified, over how we are being used. In order for man to never shame us again, we have sworn never to touch the ground, and all through the world, all mistletoe trees are shrinking to small shrubs and will only live in the tops of other trees.”

Jesus was so taken with their sacrifice, he told the mistletoe that when man began to celebrate Christmas, his birthday, mistletoe would stay green all year and would be his personal symbol of love.

Jesus also said that mistletoe would serve people in three loving ways at Christmas. During his birthday season, people will kiss when under the mistletoe, and when mistletoe was placed under their mattress on Old Christmas Eve, they will see the faces of true love in their dreams, and third, if you also hang mistletoe by the front door, you will pull love and good luck in doors.

That day, around the first Christmas tree, Jim O’Lorcain told the old Christmas stories, that storytellers have told over the centuries.

I received the stories and now I have passed the stories to you. However, as the Irish say, there be one more story, from my own clan about how we became storytellers.

Fergus O’Lorcain, The Irish Lad Who Had No Story

Once upon a time, a long time ago, when the rich earth of Ireland was preparing to snooze under the Fall’s first blanket of snow, Fergus O’Lorcain was returning home to celebrate the beginning of the long, cold winter with his family in the village of Dublin.

Fergus was a peddler. He carried a large wooden pack frame on his back. Attached snugly to the pack frame was an enormous, and spacious bag, almost empty, now that Fergus was returning home. When beginning a trip, Fergus would fill the vast knapsack to the brim with thick socks woven from wool, and a couple of thin blankets to use, when he had to camp out in the woods, which, to be truthful, was quite often.

On this trip, Fergus had ranged north along the coast of the Irish Sea visiting the camps of the Fianna warriors, who were preparing for winter. Now, while it was true that the Fianna were ready to buy Fergus’ socks, the Fianna otherwise shunned Fergus with much disdain. Fergus had a problem and this was the way of it.

In that ancient time, there were no motels or restaurants. A traveler would stay in someone’s home. Also in those days, there were no radios, television or newspapers. Any news outside of your village was brought by travelers, and the only entertainment available was provided by travelers.

When one visited in someone’s home, one paid for the room and board by entertaining the family. For example, to become a member of the Fianna warriors, man or woman, in addition to demonstrating extraordinary feats of athletic skills and fearlessness, you had to know twelve books of poetry by heart and be able to recite them. A Fianna warrior was not only brave and fierce in battle, but was also a poetic storyteller.

Fergus O’Lorcain did not know any poetry, did not know how to play a musical instrument, not even an Irish penny whistle! Can you believe that, not even a penny whistle! Fergus didn’t even know any news, except what his family was doing, when he left home last, and that never changed from trip to trip.

The real appalling and shocking truth, was the sad fact that Fergus O’Lorcain did not even know a story. In Ireland, everybody knew at least a story, even the wee children.

When Fergus O’Lorcain walked into a room, the people in the room got up and walked out, because in old Ireland no one would even stay in a room if no one was telling a story.

It did not take long for people all over Ireland to learn that there was a sock peddler, named Fergus O’Lorcain, who did not even know a story. When people saw Fergus

on the road, they would run home, lock their doors and hide, and pretend no one was home. If they needed socks, they would meet Fergus on the road away from their homes to buy from him.

Something different happened on this trip. Fergus was walking home, with his hat pulled low over his face, so no one would recognize him. He was so embarrassed when he would meet someone who knew him. When people recognized Fergus, they would turn and run away, or sometimes would fall down and pretend they were dead.

Fergus was cold and tired from walking toward home all day. He had, as usual, slept in the woods the night before and had eaten the last of his food. He couldn’t buy any food from a farm, because he knew everybody would run away, or hide and pretend they were away visiting. He would have to stay hungry until he reached a village. It looked like he would have to sleep in the woods that night and without supper.

This is what Fergus later told us. “It was almost dark with a full moon rising, I decided to find some long grass to pull together for a bed, when I realized I had left the foot path and was lost. I walked up hill to both pass the night and to get my bearings in the morning, when I realized, I, Fergus O’Lorcain, was myself, nowhere else but on Raven Hill.

Oh, the terror of that moment. My teeth started chattering. My limbs started shaking. I would have run, walked or crawled off Raven Hill but wouldn’t you know I was so scared, I was trembling and paralyzed with fear. There be no place in Ireland that has more bad tales about it than Raven Hill.

I fell to the ground, I did. I crawled into the underbrush I did and pulled myself under a thick bush. I pulled together a pile of leaves, put my two thin blankets on the leaves then covered it all with a high mound of more leaves and grass.

I crawled in between the blankets in the middle of the pile, out of sight, and said my prayers fervently; made fists with two fingers on both sides of my thumbs to ward off the bad dreams and fend off any other wicked thing that might be about on Raven hill.

I must have fallen asleep. When I next popped open my eyes, and peeped out between my blankets, it was pitch black night, the moon was not yet up. Something had startled me awake.”

“Fergus! Fergus O’Lorcain! We know you’re here! Where are you, you young rascalion?”

“Who’s calling me? Where are you?” Fergus pounced to his feet, in the middle of the bush. “What do you want with me? I don’t see no one, where are you?”

“We’re right here standing behind you.”

“I looked around me and saw nothing in the moonlight.”

“Down here, look down here you big lummo.”

“I did and there were scads of little tiny people dressed in green coats, yellow knickerbocker britches, with red derby hats on, and the ladies were in dresses, that looked like living flower gardens with wide-brimmed hats, covered with splashes of colors.

Now mind you, I didn’t see their clothes until the torches were lit and brought in close. It was the fellow with the fiddle under his arm that was speaking uncharitable to me and shaking his fiddle bow up under my nose.”

“Fergus we’ve been searching half the night for you and here you were hiding in the bushes. We need for you to run an errand for us.”

“What sort of an errand? I stammered.”

“We just got word that a few nights back that the son of God was born. We need you to go and ask him what’s going to happen to us on Judgment Day?

We believe we Leprechauns are too good to go down below, but we’re not so sure if we are good enough to go above on Judgment Day.

So we decided on Fergus O’Lorcain to go and ask the son of Heaven what happens to the Leprechauns on Judgment Day. Will it be good news or bad news?”

“Well, I thank you for the charge. I’ll be glad to ask - did you say the son of God?”

“Aye, he’s the one who would know.”

“Well I’ll go right now. How far a walk would it be, for, I am a bit tired and which direction do I go?”

“Oh, it’s that way over the Ocean”

“Over the Ocean! But I can’t swim”

“That’s not a nibble of a problem. We’ve got a horse for you”

Out into the clearing, under the full moon, came a stunning high-stepping white mare with fifty wee, tinkling, silver bells woven into her mane and a golden saddle and bridle.

“But I’ve never been on a horse!”

“We’ll help you on!”

All the little people crowded around and got a grip, and with a heave hoe, they tumbled Fergus up on the horse. Fergus grabbed the horse’s neck, bridle and saddle clutching for dear life.

“Fergus a word of warning! Hold on tight!”

“I will, I will.”

“And Fergus out over the water, the old one might try to stop you. Don’t look around. If’n you do, the old one will maybe turn you into a little green frog!”

“I don’t want to be turned into a little green frog!”

“Well then don’t look around!”

With that, the horse wheeled about and, like the wind whipping through barley corn, they moved quietly and quickly, like a white mist, darting through the moonlight. The horse’s hooves were lightly touching the tops of the bushes and trees.

Then, off in front, Fergus saw the great ocean and terror grabbed hold of him, but when they reached the ocean, the horse ran smoothly along the tops of the waves and Fergus marveled at the wonder of it all.

Suddenly, Fergus was looking at a giant dragon rising up into the air, out of the water, right in front of them. When the dragon opened his mouth, Fergus was frozen with horror. In that instant, Fergus counted 432 long, slimy-looking teeth.

The horse rose up in the air right over the dragon. But Fergus heard a thrashing behind him, and then heard the flap, flap, flapping of great wings behind him. A huge claw yanked his hat off, and plucked at the back of his shirt. There was the sound of a great crunch of teeth taking a bite.

The horse jiggled, and Fergus almost lost his balance. “Ouch, he bit off part of my tail.”

Now Fergus, he didn’t look back, he did not want to be turned into a little green frog, and he could still hear the wings flapping. But when he heard the horse speak, he almost let go.

“I’m sorry about your tail. I didn’t know you could talk”

“Why not? Did you think to ask anybody?”

“No, and remorseful I am. How do you do, my name is Fergus from the O’Lorcain clan. Do you have a name?”

“Bright it is from the Pooka clan and pleased I am to meet you and I see land up ahead. Look between my ears and you should see it too. I’m heading for that star. The son of Heaven they call the Christ child is below it.”

“How did you know that?”

“Oh, the word gets around. I think it was some birds flying through, that brought the tale to Ireland.”

“What about whatever is after us, can we get away?”

“No problem, he has no stamina for a long chase.”

As they rode over land, Fergus did not hear any wings flapping. In front of them, the star was bathing a beam of light down on a barn, built into the side of a hill.

“I’m going to drop you off over there on the right, by that patch of woods, near that small stream. I’ll wait for you there.”

“Thanks, I’ll be back as soon as I can.”

Fergus walked into Bethlehem and when he reached the barn, he joined the long line that was waiting to go in. Fergus quickly realized all the conversations going on around him, by the other people in line were not in his language, Gaelic.

“I wonder if the baby, the son of God, will be able to understand me? Everybody here is a foreigner.”

When Fergus entered the barn, he reached the manger’s makeshift crib, and leaned over and whispered in Gaelic. “Son of God, the Leprechauns of Ireland have sent me to you with a request. The Leprechauns wish to know what will happen to them on Judgment Day. Will it be good news or bad news? Can you give me a sign?”

Baby Jesus looked up at Fergus, started chuckling, got a big smile on his face that Fergus later said, “Went from ear to ear and he winked at me and gave me the thumbs up sign with his right hand and the OK sign with his left hand.”

Fergus left the barn and found Brigit rollicking in the stream. He climbed on Brigit’s back and in no time at all was back on Raven Hill. The Leprechauns swarmed around.

“What’s the news? Is it good news or bad news,” they shouted?

“It’s good news! It’s good news! It’s good news!” whooped Fergus as he dismounted.

The Leprechauns started jumping up and down and turning cartwheels singing out “Its good news!”

Then the fiddler struck up the music and the Leprechauns formed lines and started Contra dancing still whooping and shouting.

“Hurrah it’s good news!”

The women grabbed Fergus and danced him round and round. As he put it later, “My feet never touched the ground, and I was so worn out that I fell asleep dancing. When I woke up, I was in between my blankets in the middle of the pile, both on and under the leaves. It was dawn and I was on Raven Hill all by my lonesome.”

Fergus O’Lorcain, from that day on, was welcome into every house in Ireland. For the Irish love a good story, and wanted to hear it over and over.

It was hundreds of years later, when St. Patrick himself arrived on Ireland’s shore, to convert the people and found that he’d been expected. Everybody knew and told the adventure of Fergus over and over again. The O’Lorcains, over the centuries became Shanachie storytellers and the clan name evolved into Larkin, and now you know the rest of the story.

And as the little boy said after sitting on the block of ice, “My tale is told”.

Ms. Horse, Ms. Mule and Ms. Cow

“St. Francis of Assisi built the first manger as part of the Christmas celebration. He was a fine storyteller and was supposed to have told this story about the experiences Mary had with the animals in the barn.”

Mary sure did have some problems living in that barn. When baby Jesus was born, Joseph needed a crib, so he put some fresh hay in Ms. Horse’s feeding trough. Back in the old days a horse’s feeding trough or basket was called a manger. Nobody asked Ms. Horse if they could use her food basket, her manger for a crib. Then her manger was filled with fresh straw and nobody said Ms. Horse wasn’t supposed to eat that fresh straw in her manger. Fact was, just about every time Ms. Horse noticed no one was looking, she would pull some hay out from under baby Jesus for a snack.

Ms. Horse loved to eat hay, especially fresh hay. Well, before long, baby Jesus would be laying on the hard boards of the manger and wake up cranky and yowling, like any little baby. Mary would say, “Now Ms. Horse, stop eating that hay! You’re upsetting the baby.” Mary would then fetch some more hay for a mattress and baby Jesus would go back to sleep. As soon as everybody had their backs turned, Ms. Horse would sneak over and snack on some more hay and the whole problem would start again. Baby Jesus would wake up wailing. Mary would lecture Ms. Horse and Ms. Horse would lower her head and look real remorseful, you know, real sad. As soon as no one was looking, Ms. Horse crept over and nibbled on the hay until baby Jesus was laying on those hard boards. Well, it didn’t take long, Mary got a little bit nettled, you know, kind of mad like, just like the rest of us.

Mary said, “Ms. Horse, from now on, you and all your kith and kin and all your children’s children will never get enough to eat. You will have to eat all the time.”

Have you ever seen a horse out in the field? They are eating all the time. If you ever own a horse you will understand. When you own a horse you are feeding them all the time.

Ms. Mule also was naughty in the barn. First, Ms. Horse was eating up the hay mattress and waking up baby Jesus. Next, every time baby Jesus fell asleep, Ms. Mule would go “Hee haw! Hee haw”!

Let me tell you, you have never heard a baby cry, until you hear one cry after a mule goes “Hee haw, hee haw.” Oh my, how Mary would speak to Ms. Mule. I was told that almost every time the barn would get quiet, Ms. Mule would start in, “Hee haw, hee haw”! She’d wake up baby Jesus from his nap and he’d start in crying. Ms. Mule was so loud, even the grown ups would jump.

Mary got so aggravated, she said, “Ms. Mule you are not fit to be a parent! From now on, you and all your kith and kin will never become parents”! Do you know, to this day, a mule has never had a baby.

Now Ms. Cow, she was different. Ms. Cow was something else. Yep, she sure was. Ms. Cow was a big help to Mary in that barn.

For example, Ms. Cow would stand with her back next to the manger and wave her tail back and forth over baby Jesus, to keep the flies off him. There were lots of flies in that old barn. Ms. Cow gave fresh milk, to both Mary and Joseph, and to some of the other visitors to the barn.

She and Jack, the Donkey, would take turns baby sitting whenever Mary and Joseph had to run an errand. Ms. Cow also told Jack what a lot of the things were called he was seeing for the first time, since the miracle of the “First Christmas Gift” when Jack got his sight. They were the best of friends.

Later, when Mary was packing up to go down to Egypt, she said, “Ms. Cow you have been such a helpmate to me and baby Jesus, I want to thank you. From now on, you and all your kith and kin and your children’s children, whenever you finish eating your lunch on a warm summer day, you can go lay down in the shade of a tree and continue to enjoy your lunch with a chew of grass.”

The next time you see cows out in a pasture after lunch laying in the shade, you will see them chewing away like they had a big wad of chewing gum. The farmers say the cows are chewing their cud. Yep that’s why horses always eat, mules don’t ever get to be parents, and cows get to chew their cud after dinner.

Hanukkah

The following is quoted from Encyclopedia Britannica.

“...Following the death of Alexander the Great, his empire was divided between his Generals and a constant period of warfare ensued. Jerusalem was part of the Syrian Empire and the Syrian King in order to solidify his power attempted to establish a State religion in his Empire and began converting all temples including the Temple in Jerusalem into a Greek Temple to worship Zeus. Judas Maccabees {Hammer}, son of Mattathias and his four brothers led the armed rebellion as both a civil war and a war of religious independence after their Temple in Jerusalem was dedicated to Zeus.

Hanukkah is a Jewish observance commemorating the rededication (165 BC) of the Second Temple of Jerusalem after its desecration three years earlier by Antiochus IV Epiphanes; the Syrian king was thus frustrated in his attempt to extirpate the Jewish faith. Though modern Israel tends to emphasize the military victory of Judas Maccabees, the distinctive rite of lighting the menorah (q.v.) also recalls the Talmud story of how the small supply of non desecrated oil—enough for one day—miraculously burned in the Temple for eight full days until new oil could be obtained. Beginning on Kislev 25 (in December), Hanukkah is celebrated for eight days; during this time, in addition to the lighting of the ceremonial candles, gifts are exchanged and children play holiday games.

Maccabees

The Books of the Maccabees also spelled MACHABEES, four books, none of which is in the Hebrew Bible but all of which appear in some manuscripts of the Septuagint. The first two books only are part of canonical scripture in the Septuagint and the Vulgate (hence are canonical to Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy) and are included in the Protestant Apocrypha.

The First Book of the Maccabees

I Maccabees presents a historical account of political, military, and diplomatic events from the time of Judaea's relationship with Antiochus IV Epiphanes of Syria (reigned 175-164/163 BC) to the death (135/134 BCE) of Simon Maccabees, high priest in Jerusalem. It describes the refusal of Mattathias to perform pagan religious rites, the ensuing Jewish revolt against Syrian hegemony, the political machinations whereby Demetrius II of Syria granted Ju-

daea its independence, and the election of Simon as both high priest and secular ruler of the Judaeans Jews.

I Maccabees is the only contemporary source for the civil wars in Judaea, and the only surviving one for Judaeans-Syrian relations after the reign of Antiochus IV. The historical integrity of the book, which was compiled from official written sources, oral tradition, and eyewitness reporting, is attested to by the absence of almost all of the conventions of the Hellenistic rhetorical school of historiography and by its uncritical use by the later Jewish historian Josephus.

The author of I Maccabees, likely the Hasmonean court historian, wrote his history during the high priesthood (135/134-104 BC) of John Hyrcanus I, son and successor of Simon.

The Second Book of the Maccabees

II Maccabees focuses on the Jews' revolt against Antiochus and concludes with the defeat of the Syrian general Nicanor in 161 BC by Judas Maccabees, the hero of the work. In general, its chronology coheres with that of I Maccabees. An unknown editor, the “Epitomist,” used the factual notes of a historian, Jason of Cyrene, to write this historical polemic. Its vocabulary and style indicate a Greek original...”

General George Washington as a student of the first two books in the Protestant Apocrypha applied the successful guerilla battle techniques of the Maccabees in the American Revolution and Mick Collins applied the Maccabees battle techniques in the creation of Ireland and the Viet Cong applied the guerilla tactics against the USA.

Dreidel

Dreidel also dreidl n [Yiddish dreydl, fr. dreyen to turn, fr. MHG draejen, fr. OHG draen—more at throw] (1926).

1: a four-sided toy marked with Hebrew letters and spun like a top in a game of chance.

2: a children's “Put and Take” game of chance played especially at Hanukkah with a dreidel.

- Nun (A Great) = Zero (pass)
- Gimel (Miracle) = Take all
- Hay (Happened) = Take half
- Shin (There) = Put in one.

These are traditional Christmas stories collected and adapted for telling by Bluegrass Storyteller, Chuck Larkin. Permission to use, revise and tell these stories is granted to the storytelling public.

The Menorah And The Candles For Hanukkah

Hanukkah uses 44 candles 8 are servant {Shammus} candles and 36 are Hanukkah celebration candles.. One burns for the first night, two for the second night, three for the third night, until eight for the eighth night. Each candle burns until it goes out on it's own.

A Menorah holds the eight Hanukkah candles with the Shammus, the Servant candle, in the center above the Hanukkah candles. The Shammus represents the leader of the people like the head of government. A Mayor, A Governor or a President or a King or Queen. Even the chairperson of a committee. While they are above the people as a leader they are also servants to the people they lead.

Hershel Of Ostropol

by Erick Kimmel

The following is an outline of the story:

Hershel, a former soldier, on his way home arrives in a neighboring village thinking about eating potato pancakes called "Latkes"

At dusk on the first night of Hanukkah and the village is dark? Rabbi explains evil Goblins have moved into old abandon Synagogue up on hill top and they hate candles especially Hanukkah candles. In order to get rid of the Goblins some one must burn a Hanukkah candle each night even when the Goblins try to stop the candles from being lighted and on the Eighth night they have to trick the King of the Goblins into lighting all the candles in order to take away his power and drive all of the Goblins out of the old Synagogue and the Village.

Hershel volunteers to try. People give him hard boiled eggs and a big jar of Pickles for his food and he goes up

to the old Synagogue with 44 candles and a Menorah. He puts the menorah on the window sill, lights the Servant candle then the first night Hanukkah candle.

Soon a little goblin flies in through the empty window. Who is stronger? Hershhal takes out a hard boiled egg in the darkness says it is a rock and crushes it.

Second night bigger Goblin—Hershhal eating supper gives goblin a pickle Goblin likes it and wants more—sticks had in pickle jar—grabs pickles in fist and can't get loose of pickle jar.

Third night bigger Goblin waddles in. Play Dreidel but by Hershhal's rules and Hershhal takes all of goblin's gold.

Fourth, Fifth and Sixth nights different ugly goblins. Different tricks.

Seventh night—lights seven candles with the servant candle then Hershhal hears the mighty voice of the king of the Goblins "Enjoy your Seventh night of Hanukkah I'm too far away to arrive tonight but I'll be there tomorrow night."

Eighth night Hershhal places the Menorah filled with the eight Hanukkah candles and the Servant candle by the door and sits quietly in the dark.

King Goblin "I'm here!"

Hershhal, "Boys from the village trying to tease me again. Whip you good. You boys go on home and stop teasing me."

King Goblin angry.

"Well whoever you are I can't see you. Make us some light there's matches and candles there by the door."

King Goblin lights all the candles loses power and has to depart.

Old Christmas vs. Epiphany & The Birth of Santa Claus & Etc.

Old Christmas is independent of Epiphany. The church establishment in Rome designated Christ's birthday celebration on the 25th of December on or about 335 ACE. {Dec. 25th was a major Roman Empire holiday known as the Gods and Goddesses birthday. Primarily Mithra's birthday and Mithra was designated "Protector of the Empire" as late as 307 ACE}. The eastern part of the Empire did not accept December 25th until 375 ACE. The eastern part of the Empire wanted a date based on a myth of the Koreion date {Demeter - Artemis - Kali etc.}, January 6th was when the divine {holy} Virgin "a Goddess of the olden time" gave birth to the new Aeon in Alexandria every January 6th and in the east this Moma Goddess was everywhere including Israel's shrine the "Garden" {Mount Carmel}. (The Christian Church of Jerusalem did not adopt December 25th as Christmas until the 7th century). The great Koreion festival was held on January 6th, and later assimilated into Christianity as the feast of Epiphany and into the British tradition later as the Feast of Our Lady of Mercy.

The New Style "Gregorian" Calendar, solar dating system now in general use. It was proclaimed in 1582 by Pope Gregory XIII as a reform of the Julian calendar.

Old Christmas came about In Britain and the British dominions in 1752, the change was made when the difference between the New and Old Style calendars amounted to 11 days. The lag resulted by naming the day after September 2, 1752, as September 14, 1752. (This would support the Fifth of January as the first Old Christmas.)

This was a Catholic - Protestant disagreement and until this century, in the USA some Protestant communities celebrated on Old Christmas based on the Julian calendar.

The Alaskan territory retained the Old Style calendar until 1867, when it was transferred from Russia to the United States.

Place mistletoe under your mattress on Old Christmas Eve {January 5} and after midnight on January 6th {Old Christmas} you will see the face of true love in your dream state. Also whoever brings Holly first into the home during this season will rule for the next year!

Old Christmas vs. Epiphany

In 1752 Wednesday September 2 shifted to Thursday September 14 {in England} the "New Style {Catholic Pope Gregory's} Calendar" was adopted and there was a 12 day shift from "The Old Calendar." Thus into this century many Protestants continued to celebrate on the "Old Calendar" with "Old Christmas" falling on January 6th. Radio and

Television apparently ended this practice. The following quotation also demonstrates why "Epiphany, January 6th" routinely is confused with "Old Christmas." Also in the legend of the miracles in "First Christmas Gift" when the animals received the gift of speech the event occurred on January 6th "Old Christmas" in the variant passed down through the Scottish Highland family that told me the story and in the Epiphany tradition January 6th was also the day on which the visit of the "Three Kings or Magi" to the infant Jesus occurred. The Magi on "The Old Calendar" would have visited on January 18 {6+12}. I assume the calendar change confusion between "Old Christmas" and "Epiphany" is as old as 1752 in the story.

The following is quoted from *Encyclopedia Britannica*. " ...According to a Roman almanac, the Christian festival of Christmas was celebrated in Rome by AD 336. In the eastern part of the Roman Empire, however, a festival on January 6 commemorated the manifestation of God in both the birth and the baptism of Jesus, except in Jerusalem, where only the birth was celebrated. During the 4th century the celebration of Christ's birth on December 25 was gradually adopted by most Eastern churches. In Jerusalem, opposition to Christmas lasted longer, but it was subsequently accepted. In the Armenian Church, a Christmas on December 25 was never accepted; Christ's birth is celebrated on January 6. After Christmas was established in the East, the baptism of Jesus was celebrated on Epiphany, January 6. In the West, however, Epiphany was the day on which the visit of the Magi to the infant Jesus was celebrated.

The reason why Christmas came to be celebrated on December 25 remains uncertain, but most probably the reason is that early Christians wished the date to coincide with the pagan Roman festival marking the "birthday of the unconquered sun" (*natalis solis invicti*); this festival celebrated the winter solstice, when the days again begin to lengthen and the sun begins to climb higher in the sky. The traditional customs connected with Christmas have accordingly developed from several sources as a result of the coincidence of the celebration of the birth of Christ with the pagan agricultural and solar observances at midwinter.

In the Roman world the Saturnalia (December 17) was a time of merry making and exchange of gifts. December 25 was also regarded as the birth date of the Iranian mystery god Mithra, the Sun of Righteousness. On the Roman New Year (January 1), houses were decorated with greenery and lights, and gifts were given to children and the poor. To these observances were added the German and Celtic Yule rites when the Teutonic tribes penetrated into Gaul, Britain, and central Europe. Food and good fellowship, the

Yule log and Yule cakes, greenery and fir trees, and gifts and greetings all commemorated different aspects of this festive season. Fires and lights, symbols of warmth and lasting life, have always been associated with the winter festival, both pagan and Christian. Since the European Middle Ages, evergreens, as symbols of survival, have been associated with Christmas...”

The *Life and Adventures of Santa Claus* by L. Frank Baum. It is available (in print) and can be purchased through Amazon.com Books (<http://www.amazon.com>) in paperback at either \$6.95 (Dover Books) or \$3.95 (Signet Classics).

Claus was abandoned at the edge of the deep forest, Burzee, and saved by a nymph who adopted him. Santa’s foster-mother was the Nymph Nicile. (He was named “Claus” meaning “little child” and thus “NeClaus” meaning “Nicile’s little child.” He grew up with Nymphs who cared for trees, Ryls who cared for flowers, Knooks who cared for wild beasts, and Fairies who were guardians of humankind. They were all immortals, governed over by Ak, the Master Woodsman.

He had no contact with humankind until adolescence when Ak took him about to learn about himself. As a result he left the forest and lived in the Laughing Valley - from when his good disposition came about. It was there he made his first toy, a carved cat, which he gave to a lost child. Claus devoted his life to bringing joy to children before the cares of adult life set in. The rest of the story is there for you to read.

In the afterward, Max Apple writes: “The greatest achievement of Baum’s *Life of Santa* is a clear placement of Santa into the realm of folklore. Baum moves Santa not toward secularism, but squarely into paganism. He is the chosen one of the invisible forces of nature - the Ryls and Knooks and nymphs and fairies, those who care for plants and animals and put the smells and colors into nature. Claus is a true subject of the Fairy Queen, of nature herself. His one night of triumph is the difficult achievement of a single being who almost falters at every step of his impossible journey from orphan to demigod. “(Signet Classics Edition, page 145) He also notes interestingly that Santa has as much difficulty bringing joy to the hearts of rich children as he does the poor. An interesting perspective. Look this one up in the Library. Not only is it Baum’s colorful gentle and no-violent narrative, it is “food” for story.

The Birthday Party

Each Christmas time, a few, very lucky children, from all over the world, are invited to a special birthday party. I have found remnants of this tale in one ancient lore book. My sister, Barbara Anne, was one of the lucky toddlers, but she was so young, the family thought it was just a dream. Then, I heard my step daughter Rachel's dream story piece.

After listening to the fragments of their memories I began searching, and asking friends and as mentioned above I found a fragment of this story in a book of Magi Pellucid Parables.

Some times I have the feeling I was supposed to re-introduce this story because among my friends I found three, Bill Thompson, Earl Groves and Eleanor Long who have fragments of this dream. Ellie was five and seemed to remember parts that filled in the gaps in the other memories.

My biggest surprise was when my daughter told me of a fragment from my granddaughter Lauren Leigh and she was just about four years old. I think I know how to spot people who received the invitation nod because they grow into loving and wise adults.

After putting the parts together, the following story I taped from Earl Groves seems to be the most complete memory of the Christmas party.

"My name is Earl Groves and I was raised in New Jersey. I was somewhere between 3 to 5 years old, seeing and hearing, a few days before the dream, a great owl calling; 'who, who, he who is, is and invites you.' I told my parents, 'I'm going to a birthday party!'

They laughed and said; 'Who's birthday's party?'

"The child born on Christmas! But I don't need to bring a gift.'

"On the night of the party, it was after Christmas, and I believe, it's on old Christmas. While I was asleep, I remember tiny angels, in my dreams I think, the angels brought me some dress up party clothes, and carried me in a chair to visit paradise, we were playmates for the Christ child's birthday party. I remember a night of playing games, eating cake and ice cream, I didn't know then what I was eating, but it was good.

"One of the angles told me it was cake. Later when I was older and asked my parents for ice cream and cake they were surprised I knew the names.

"At the party some of the angels were dressed as clowns, some angels were doing funny tricks, and I listened to several animal and bird storytellers. Robin told a story about the night she visited the manger in Bethlehem to see the baby Jesus, the Christ child, the son of heaven, and found the fire almost out and it was cold in that barn.

"Robin told a story about Fox, Squirrel and Rabbit.

"... together the three carried in some logs for the fire and I, Robin, I fanned the fire with my wings to heat the barn until the flames got red hot and to this day I and all my clan have a red chest to show that our Rabbit clan was there and helped Joseph and Mary.

"Poor Rabbit, she climbed to the top of the wood pile and got her beautiful bushy tail caught in a fork of a branch and when she was trying to get free, she tripped, fell, snapped off most of her tail and left her clan with only a little powder puff of a tail.'

"Squirrel, joined the story and said, 'Rabbit landed on her front feet so hard, she pushed in and shortened her front legs, hit her face and split her upper lip and that's the cute way she still looks today.'

"Then Ms. Rabbit laughed and remarked how she always liked to hear Robin and Squirrel tell how her clan became so beautiful and handsome. Then Rabbit teased Fox and said if her clan had not lost that long cumbersome tail Fox's clan would sure be a lot fatter.

"I remember everybody were wearing beautiful clothes and I saw and met children from all over the world. I remember we were able to play games together because we all understood each other.

"At dawn, we heard a rooster crowed, 'It's time to go, it's, time to go,' and a Nightingale was singing a soft lullaby, I remembered getting drowsy and woke up in my own bed.

"I told my folks the next day but they said I sure had some great dreams. It wasn't until later when Chuck asked me about any childhood dreams about a Christmas party in paradise and told me about other fragments that I was able to remember that night."

Since I first talked to people who were invited, I admit, I've always wished, I had been invited too but, I guess I'm lucky, I was picked to tell this story.

A Circus Story at Christmas

I have told this Juggler Christmas story occasional over the years. I've never seen it in print. I was told the story by a migrant worker in the Belle Glade area of Florida, an elder woman from Mexico and translated by a friend in the early '60s before even thinking about being a storyteller. I don't have a copy in oral style just the outline below from my notes and you and any others are welcome to help pass it on.

The story is about a young husband and wife, circus performers and travelers, returning home to the capital of Mexico after the circus they had traveled with in southern Mexico had gone bust and closed. The couple, while passing through a village during the Christmas season, waited outside in the darkness and only entered the Village Cathedral after Midnight Mass, after all the people had gone home but there was a witness to the event, an elderly Priest, who told this story about the miracle he witnessed.

The couple were destitute with out any Christmas offerings for the alter as was the practice - the wife, a circus trick horse rider, places weeds she had collected along the roadside before entering the village as a gift to the Christ child and the husband, a juggler, picked up fruit, left at the alter by local farmers and his gift, to celebrate the Christ child's birth, his gift was to perform his Juggler's art - but as each piece of fruit entered the air he began to name one of the disciples and as the flying fruit increased so did the light from the alter candles. When the twelfth soured up in the air, into the huge circle flying high to the rafters, the candle light, in the Cathedral, increased and became as bright as the noonday sun and as he tossed the last into the air named for the Christ child, son of God, the weeds on the alter and all through the countryside cast out a red flower

The young man slowly reduced the flying circle and replaced the fruit and as he did so the candles began to return to their normal light. The old priest back in the shadows remained silent but overheard the Juggler say to his wife, "Never have I placed so many pieces into the air, somehow I knew I could cast one for the son of God and each of his disciples and look how your gift has become beautiful red flowers."

"Yes, she answered for did I not say that I felt, as we walked in to the village, I had selected the perfect gift after I picked the green weeds as my gift and now behold! We have been blessed."

The old priest later said they bowed and left and he stood quietly in tears for was not he also blessed to witness to one of God's miracles and did not he hear a voice say "From the most humble come the greatest gifts." Each holiday season after that event the red flower appeared which came to be known as the Christmas Flower. And the story continues to be told.

In 1832, our ambassador to Mexico from Charleston, South Carolina, brought the Christmas Flower home and it grew in our country. His name was Ambassador Poinsett and we still call the Christmas Flower by the derivative of his name, "Poinsettia."

And Blessed Be The Teller Of This Tale,

Chuck