

AYLCEE TARHA

*The Advent Farandole*  
*2025*

*A story a day*



## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

- Dualities, a romantic novel
- Clara, a Witch's Love, a fantasy tale
- Clara and the Stone Circle, a fantasy tale
- The Watchtower, a fantasy novel
- The Elemental Peoples, a collection of tales
- Lost Stories, a text collection
- Epidamus, a fantasy novel

## **DEDICATION**

This short story is taken from a collection of short stories: Lost Stories, to create free downloads for adults and youth. Each story is complete and original.

This text can be downloaded FREE of charge directly from my website by adults, parents, family members, friends, etc., who remain solely responsible for opening the minds of their children (specifically, those between the ages of fourteen and eighteen, in their teens).

I am an independent author and editor.

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## December 1 Surprise!

Once upon a time, there was a very cute little girl carrying a basket filled with beautiful mushrooms. They came in all colors, all shapes, and all smells. This little girl's name was Mirella. The little wood was populated by lots of small animals. A curious squirrel passed over her. Her cheeks flushed from the cold, a white scarf around her neck, she stopped in front of a fallen tree trunk, blocking its path. Suddenly... Mirella heard a growl just beneath the tree and loud curses. She was scared but called out in a small, frightened voice:

'Hello, who are you? Can I help you? Are you in pain?...'

She placed her basket on the ground and tried to move a branch. Nothing happened. Then she had a good idea: to locate the person under this green, slightly cracked pile. She suddenly saw something moving. She caught a tiny hand that popped out in front of her nose. She pulled gently, and the rest came out. It was a... Goblin! He was all dizzy, put a hand to his forehead, showing her a large bump. He sat down on the resinous stump and answered her:

'I am Mutinius and I thank you, young lady!'

She remembered her Grandma Flo's words:

'If one day you meet a little elf on your path, you will discover a whole new world!'

She applauded her new friend, who looked at her with a broad smile. He whistled through his fingers, and there... An entire family of elves and goblins appeared. This one was

joyful and dancing, laughing and bouncing. It was a wonderful celebration until the Head of the Family gave the signal. They all disappeared as quickly as they had come. Mirella picked up her basket again, returning to her warm home where she continued her dream...





## December 2 Invitations

At Mirella's house, three generations were gathered: grandparents, parents, and children. A big old dog, two feisty kitties, a large aquarium with seven multicolored fish, and a shelter with a wheel for a hamster core completed the decor. In the living room, watching Grandpa Guy put a log back in the fireplace, his brothers, Hans and Thiago, pushed and jostled each other. The latter tried to knock the former over:

'Stop, my lads, that's enough,' muttered the grandfather under his white beard.

Karen, the mother, was busy preparing soft and crispy cookies with pine nuts and raisins. Grandma Flo was stirring her pumpkin soup in the big pot, a creamy velouté that the clan adored. Papa Vince was sawing, chopping, and putting the wood away in the garage. Suddenly... There was a knocking on the windowpane. Mirella looked and recognized her friend the squirrel. She opened the door:

'Good evening, little girl!'

The animal spoke to her:

'Good evening, little girl, come with me to the forest tomorrow.'

He jumped and disappeared into the night. She closed the window enthusiastically.

In the morning, she arrived at the little wood. Her bushy-tailed friend urged her to follow him. A clearing opened up before her where a stream rippled, flowing into a gutter beneath the wild watercress.

'Oh, it's so magical!'

A ray of sunlight filtered through the undergrowth and she discovered... A burrow with a door! The squirrel knocked three distinctly.

'Yes, here I come!'

A small, sly face, Ginette the weasel, opened the door:

'Colin, you rascal, have you brought me a friend? Come and drink a cup of my wonderful violet tea. You're welcome here, my friend!'

Mirella had fun and chatted with her new acquaintances until late afternoon. She returned home, full of zest, where her brothers were waiting for her.







## December 3 Preparations

The two women of this household were shelling acorns boiled in three different waters to make a paste mixed with mashed potatoes, enjoying it with a pot of beef stew. The men were in the forest bringing back a fir tree that will soon sit in front of the fireplace. The three children were making garlands of leaves and colored paper in the form of crackers, cardboard and cotton cherubs, ribbon bows, 'positive thoughts' cards...

Imagination and creativity were flowing through all the stages of creative pleasure.

Thiago was the first to leave to return to his video game activities. Hans followed shortly after him in front of the console. Papa Vince appeared with Grandpa Guy in the main room where everyone was busy at their own task. They made a spectacular entrance with a slender but beautifully tall spruce tree. Mama Karen told them:

'It's huge, put it in the corner of the stairs leading to the mezzanine.'

Mamy Flo chimed in:

'Yes, we'll put the final star that way without any problem.'

Hans retorted shrewdly:

'It needs to be held up so cats climbing on it don't knock it over.'

Thiago shrugged fatalistically.

No sooner said than done:

Grandpa Guy held it firmly, and Papa Vince finished the job for the family's safety.

And what was bound to happen, happened:  
The two cats clung to the branches, but the tree held firm!  
Disappointed, they hid beneath its branches, and Black the  
dog dozed between the hearth and the tree.

Mirella served everyone their snack, not forgetting her three  
four-legged friends. Everyone in this house was learning to  
live together in harmony, singing, whistling, shouting, and  
joking.

Family joy, here and now!





## December 4 Winged Encounter

Every afternoon, Mirella trotted along the edge of her little wood. The trees inspired her, protected her, and reassured her. She had a favorite place: the clearing! It was magical, this corner forgotten by humans. She would meet Colin the mischievous squirrel and her friend Ginette the weasel. She would close her eyes, and when she opened them again... She was in this marvelous world. She was surrounded by a garland of elves, mermaids, salamanders, and dwarves. She was soothed by their caring contact. She dreamed of being like them.

She talked about her activities, listened to their problems, sang at the top of her lungs, and danced among these free creatures to children's songs. One day, she encountered a half-awake owl who dampened the festive atmosphere with a mournful voice:

'Stop this noise and look beyond your eyes, feel the misfortune coming here.' Mirella replied:

'What's going on, you who perceive this?'

He continued:

'You're in the way. I am the guardian of this forest. Go home.'

He spread and flapped his wings in anger.

A rustling sound was heard, followed by an attentive murmur among the friendly flock of these 'geniuses of nature.' A myriad of butterflies and dragonflies flew around the girl. She grew bolder:

'Why so much hatred in you?'

A rustling sound was heard, followed by an attentive murmur among the friendly throng of these 'geniuses of nature'. A

myriad of butterflies and dragonflies fluttered around the little girl. She grew bolder:

-Why so much hatred in you?

He shuddered:

-You're taking my place.

She murmured:

-No, certainly not. We all have a role to play in these parallel universes.

Curious, Voodoo the owl added:

-Do you really believe that?

She smiled:

-Of course! Joy easily replaces jealousy, even if they are neighbors, because positivity beats everything!

Mirella greeted him with a little wave, returning home, warm in heart and spirit.





## December 5 Bittersweet Memories

Grandma Flo escaped with Mirella to pick some aromatic herbs. She shared her knowledge of wild plants with her. They walked, closely observing nature as it glowed, turned green, and turned yellow. They wore long, loose-fitting blouses. Grandma Flo had a special knife for uprooting, cutting, and extracting even the most fragile roots without damaging them. They hummed tunes that had been sung many times. Grandma Flo suddenly remembered her eventful youth during the autumn-winter of her tenth birthday.

In the middle of that misty day, Grandma Flo told her little Mirella about a poignant episode that had happened to her. 'A beautiful, radiant morning, a road in the mountains, shouts, curses, the barking of hunting dogs, then rifle shots. A deep silence. The herd was climbing calmly. The dog barked at the edge of a fir grove. I whistled to stop its barking. It understood, fell silent, docile and faithful. I had spotted movement over there on the left. Suddenly, hunters surrounded me, whom I thought were threatening. They were angry at having missed their target.

Mirella held her breath. Grandma Flo continued her story: 'It was the day the children were taking their friend Fouettard for a walk through the streets of the village. He was playing the role of the bad man at the Advent festivities. I smiled at them shyly, speechless. One of them said to me: 'So, little girl, do you want an escort?' I shook my head. 'Aren't you going down to the village?' I shook my head again, and then there was a long silence between them all. They moved away from my path, shaking their fists in my direction, heading back down to the valley empty-handed. My heart was exploding as fear gripped me. That day, I unknowingly

saved wild animals in search of peace. I learned, much later, after this interlude, that it was a news item committed by poachers, wanting to circumvent border regulations regarding ecology and respect for certain protected species. I was with my herd where I needed to be, by chance, to create a diversion. It just goes to show that in life, there are small miracles that happen here and there.

Mirella kissed her grandmother, trotting over to their home. Memories shaped the present and inevitably affected the future!





## December 6

### Positive Attitude

The leaves swirled around Mirella. Birds flew away or retreated into the thickets. Despite the descending chill, she walked briskly. She heard the leaves crunch beneath her feet, with a deep love for this magical place in her heart. The magic of this spicy season, the evenings spent with chestnuts and mulled wine while Grandma Flo told stories of yesteryear, remained palpable. A sudden leap to the side and... pfft... A fawn was there, frightened by her presence.

'Hello Bambi, how handsome, sweet, and kind you are!'

Some elves were playing hide-and-seek in the tall grass when... A nasty 'snake-eater' arrived, trying to snatch them up! Bambi, with a single kick of his hoof, made him jump into the air and, in fear, hobbled away. Phew! More fright than harm! The little girl applauded his heroic gesture and thanked him cheerfully. It was then that she saw a red shadow slipping between the trees.

It was... It was... It was Saint Nicholas!

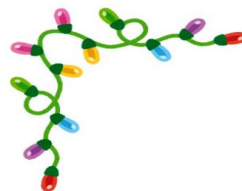
A bell could be heard quite close by, and Bambi's parents let the Christmas sleigh be gently and quietly stroked across the snow!

The clearing came alive, and Colin the squirrel, Ginette the weasel, Voodoo the owl, and many other woodland inhabitants gathered to celebrate, telling and singing about each other's exploits. A waterproof red, green, and black blanket was placed on the ground, and cups and spoons held beautiful hot herbal teas served by the fairies and fireflies. Brioches offered by Santa Claus were enjoyed by each guest

present. Mirella stood up reluctantly but with a festive spirit. She thanked them, kissing them all one after the other. With stars in her eyes and her heart leaping with joy, she had a return to her family that seemed cut short!







## December 7

### He who wants to take is taken!

Thiago quickly ate his breakfast, eager to follow from afar and spy on Mirella. Why was she going to the woods again today? Who was her sister talking to? What was she doing there in the winter cold? Quickly, he put on his jacket and combat boots, slipped out through the back door, and tracked her from a distance, intrigued. She stopped in front of a ruin where only a closed door still stood. She tapped a Morse code. The door opened slightly:

Knock, knock, knock...

'Hello Mirella,' a thin voice echoed. 'Come admire my new gallery.'

From where Thiago stood, he couldn't see whose melodious sound it was. Surprised, he moved closer, but, far too curious... He fell into a ditch covered with dead leaves! As he fell, Mirella entered and followed her friend to the back of a room. Dilapidated, exposed to the four winds, a hole serving as a passage to a corridor that descended via a staircase into the depths of the earth.

'Where am I? In a cellar? In your pantry?'

Thelma, the snooper, stopped walking, pointing out provisions for the entire winter, neatly arranged on huge shelves. She was very proud of her foresight!

Mirella couldn't believe her eyes! She congratulated her warmly. Suddenly, she heard calls for help... To her left, they became very distinct as she walked in that direction. And then, what did she see?

A muddy, furious Thiago, covered in vegetation stuck to his clothes! She laughed at this comical and improbable scene. He was relieved but very angry, cursing as he dusted himself off.

-When our parents see you, be careful they don't mistake you for game!

Mirella was maliciously poking at his bruised ego! 'How did you get here, dear brother?'

He said nothing, his face flushed with confusion.

-You spied on me? You should be ashamed!

She patted his cheek, and they left arm in arm, brotherly.





## **December 8th Walk to the Lake**

Grandpa Guy and Grandma Flo decided on this beautiful day to take a walk around the lake. A few couples were cycling, looking for hikes, adventures, unusual photos, and gentle exercise. There was a good-natured atmosphere despite the frozen scenery, with some shaded areas protecting against the frost. Grandma Flo admired herself in the water and... With confusion, glimpsed something indistinct but apparently moving at the very bottom. She called Grandpa Guy, who came immediately and showed it to her... under the surface of the water... one, then two, then three 'luminescent threadlike bodies' emerged! The 'phosphorescents' danced like an aquatic ballet on the surface of the water!

The couple, fascinated by this fantastic improvised spectacle, held each other close, staring straight ahead at the rippling water. They never lost sight of them. They measured their luck as humans overwhelmed by so much charm in the movements performed. And then everything stopped suddenly. Grandma Flo dared a gesture towards this sudden immobility and... A fibrous 'hand' caressed her and... Twisted around her wrist! Grandpa Guy courageously held her firmly while cutting these 'filaments': Phew! Grandma Flo was completely moved by her bravery.

So much emotion all at once!

Grandpa Guy excitedly resumed his drive back to the house. Grandma Flo was completely overwhelmed by her adventure! But had they really experienced this? What if it had only been luminous algae? She spoke to Grandpa Guy:

'Let's not say anything, shall we?'

He parked the car, got out, and smiled:

'Yes, if you want.'

She decided from then on to become a storyteller during the evening gatherings by the 'cantou'. Soup, mulled wine, chestnuts, amazed faces, and the magic of autumn or winter would spring up around them!

Grandma Flo, by choosing to keep this mysterious event secret, protected her loved ones.

Many unexplained things were better kept secret than revealed: the media frenzy could be overwhelming for some young people...





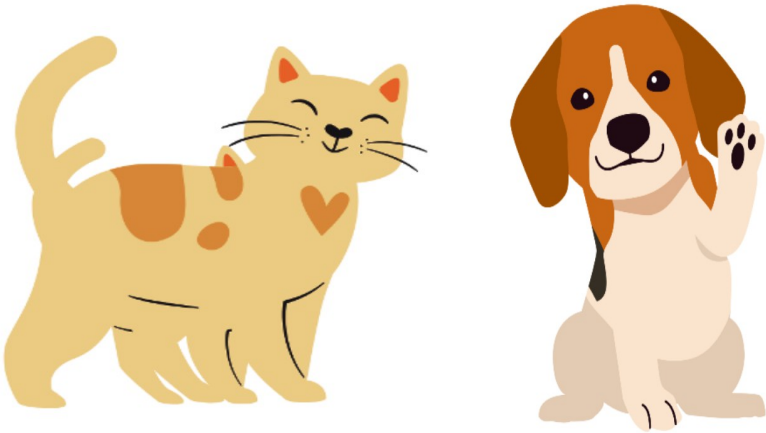
## December 9 Turbulence

Dad Vince and Mom Karen gathered their three children in the living room to help decorate the tree. Mirella came back from the attic with a wicker trunk filled with Christmas items. There were garlands and baubles of every color, a large shooting star to put on top, and stockings to hang in front of the fireplace. Grandma Flo brought treats and shortbread, followed by a hilarious Grandpa Guy with steaming drinks: herbal tea, tea, and coffee for the adults, and hot chocolate for the children.

A joyful atmosphere pervaded the warm room. Everyone was busy with their tasks. The boys were building chalets and village houses with wooden elements, complete with a bridge and figures representing everyday crafts. Mirella was adding candles to provide light under the now festive tree. Black, a brave and greedy dog, watched everyone's gestures, patiently waiting for something to eat, begging for a treat before his bowl.

Tonight, a handsome black Angora cat, lounged at full length under the tree, shaded from any bright light, soothed by the fire. Caramel, a nervous and gluttonous red-furred cat, was on the lookout for something silly to think about. The fish in the aquarium jumped, banging against the lid. The little hamster Carlos escaped from his cage, but the big, fat cat, with his bright eyes and agile paws, ran towards him. The other slipped behind the aquarium. In his haste, he ripped the wires. Grandma Flo grabbed one, cunning Carlos. Grandpa Guy the other, sthetic Caramel. Papa Vince reconnected the aquarium: everything was calm again. Phew! The storm petered out!

Hans and Thiago hadn't seen or heard anything, so captivated were they by the video game!  
Mirella didn't understand this impressive fixation! They were out in the daily life going on around them...





## December 10 Rescue

Hans was coloring greeting cards to send to his family and friends. He loved this precise work. He was listening to a song that made him dream of treasure islands, palm trees, adventures, sun, sea, seashells, and warm sand. He worked hard by sticking out his tongue or chewing the tips of his shimmering watercolor pencils. Carlos, his mischievous hamster, watched him, spinning his wheel. He made little cries to get the young boy's attention. The boy finally raised his head...

... A tiny baby bird had fallen onto the windowsill. It was trembling. Hans called Mirella and told her what was happening. She took matters into her own hands and quickly went to the garage. There was a birdhouse in the garden, and she filled the feeder and added water, then hung it on the apple tree opposite the living room window. This way, Hans could see his little protégé! She took some gloves and showed him his new home. The bird nestled in the cotton wool and twigs inside...

The next day, Hans saw him hesitating on the edge of his makeshift house. He went back to eat and drink, then came back to flutter along the edge: he made this journey several times during the day. One day, he came back to peck at the plate for crumbs with... a pretty bird. They had formed their habits and were happy about it. Hans asked Grandma Flo:

'We've adopted each other.'

Grandma Flo then replied:

'Yes, and that's good, but they're destined to leave again; it's their cycle.'

Hans smiled, a little sad...

Mirella whispered to him:

'With a bit of luck, next spring, they'll come back with a whole family! Stay positive, bro.'







## December 11 Mystery in the Forest

Grandpa Guy got up early that morning because he had to accompany his son-in-law into the woods to mark the pruning of certain trees. Some species were dying, being smothered by harmful plants, and others were threatening to fall. A forest required a lot of work. You had to know the categories, the seasons, the ages, the species... Their eye was sharp, their memory intact, and they possessed ancestral know-how (picking mushrooms, wild salads, herbs, etc.): the trees were their protectors!

Dressed like lumberjacks, their tools in two backpacks, they walked in step. Sometimes they stopped to take a closer look, make a decision, or hum a refrain. They spoke little, but there was a sense of complicity in the air between them. A race through the bushes and... two young piglets appeared before the two men. They scanned the surroundings, their senses on alert. They knew that if their mother was nearby, they couldn't be in the middle, cutting off her maternal path.

They spotted two large oak trees and hoisted themselves up onto their branches by the strength of their arms. It was a good thing they did, because as soon as they climbed up, their parents appeared. Behind them, a troop rushed out of the bushes. Papa Vince and Grandpa Guy sweated with fear afterward. They hoped they would leave so they could descend safely and rejoin their families. Imagine their astonishment when they saw Mirella speaking to them without the slightest fear. The wild boars listened to her without flinching. Then she left, and the animals too. They were alone perched...

... They had just witnessed Mirella's gift of speaking to wild animals.  
She was a shaman, of course!  
They kept that to themselves...





## December 12 Water Riddle

Near the clearing's stream, Mirella was enjoying her snack, saving the crumbs for the Gnomes, her little rascals, who dwell on the roots and tree trunks. She felt an unexpected coolness on one of her sneakers. She spotted...

A tiny Undine!

The little girl gently placed it in the palm of her left palm.

The little 'creature' began to sneeze very loudly several times.

'She's so pretty,' thought Mirella, smiling, moved by such grace.

They were spying on each other, curious about each other.

Aaattchoum!

A clap of its wings and there was Voodoo the owl!

He positioned himself just above them and said:

'My ladies, let's get to know each other!'

Several seconds passed, and he continued:

'This is Ondia, mute and deaf.'

Mirella offered her a tissue to dry herself.

'My God, I didn't know. Poor thing!' murmured Mirella.

As a doctoral student, Mr. Owl added:

-There are many things I know that you don't about this forest like no other.' Aaattchoum! Aattchoum!

The trio was joined by Colin the squirrel and his friend Ginette the weasel. They were all whispering because Ondia had fallen asleep under Mirella's handkerchief. With gentle gestures, she spotted a small cave near the trickling water and placed it there with its white paper sheet to keep it

warm. A few leaves to protect it from unpleasant encounters and to secure its rest with twigs arranged so that it wouldn't be disturbed. What an ingenious system!

Mirella had that kind soul of future therapists!  
Bringing happiness to others, whoever they may be!





## **December 13th**

### **Black, a festive doggie**

Inside the house, a traditional atmosphere reigned. The living room had a festive air with garlands welcoming everyone. We could smell different smells and flavors reminiscent of times gone by: cinnamon, orange, lemon, chocolate, dried and candied fruit. Grandma Flo was kneading, stretching, and baking, while Mama Karen was busy washing up and tidying up. Thiago was playing solo on his game console, and Hans was having fun with Black. Grandpa Guy was tinkering with a varnished wooden crate for the house cats, complete with a new cushion for their Christmas.

Dad Vince was making a rocking chair in the shape of an eggshell, wide and short, for their doggie. A foam mattress was nailed on so he could lie comfortably. A thick quilt sewn by Grandma Flo would be good for the animal's joints. Mirella wrote and signed Christmas and New Year's cards for family and friends. She sat on a high stool with a backrest, perched at a modern trestle desk. She thought about her forest... Dreamily...

On the kitchen table sat a plate of hot sausages, filling the air with aromas. Hans briefly went to the bathroom. Black didn't feel he was being watched and let himself be guided by his sense of smell. He went in and saw the succulent meal waiting for him.

Without hesitation, he got up on his hind legs and grabbed one of the sausages, then darted under the tree.

With both cats there, there were low growls alerting the adults.

Black swallowed rather than lose or give away.

He nestled behind the sofa where he swallowed sheepishly.

The adults laughingly decided not to scold him.  
After all, it was a holiday...





## December 14 Toll, toll or not?

Early in the afternoon, Mirella put on her gloves, scarf, and hat, along with her matching jacket and boots. She looked like a little snowball! When she reached the edge of the woods, she noticed a small path running under some thick undergrowth. She was curious and began her shrubby journey. After a few meters in this green paradise, a rather large hole opened up in front of her.

'Is this a burrow or a secret hiding place?' she murmured. She retraced her steps, rather perplexed.

The clearing was, when she arrived, bustling with activity. The little girl listened to them one after the other and calmed them, reassured them, and soothed them. It emerged that strange sounds surrounded them.

'Let's act by deduction and intelligence.' She started by finding the first clue: the starting point and the arrival point! They were identical!

'What sound? Are there silences between each one?' she asked them.

'Yes, it's continuous, then nothing.'

She wrote it down and told them, 'See you tomorrow, I need some tools!'

The next day, armed with a compass and a flashlight, she showed them the hole-burrow-hiding place. Ginette the weasel crawled inside and brought back... An alarm clock! All the animals were around, and Mirella showed them the mechanism that was disturbing them so much. The mystery was solved by the arrival of a... Garden Dormouse!

'What are you all up to here at my house?'

Mirella pointed it out with a smile, and Hugo apologized. He'd been living alone ever since his family had been killed by some treat-bait!

The ticking of the clock protected him from severe depression.

It just goes to show that even animals could experience the fear of loneliness!







## December 15 Between Childhood and Adulthood

Late one morning, Mama Karen heard the front door bell ring. She opened it, smiling, and found herself face to face with the postman.

'Good morning, ma'am! Here's a letter and a package for you. I need a signature. Thank you, ma'am.'

He got back on his scooter and left, happy to have finished his rounds. Mama Karen closed the door and took her package to the kitchen. She unsealed it and saw what it contained: candy canes, several gingerbreads, chocolates, macaroons, delicious cakes, fruit jellies!

She looked at it all in detail, remembering Christmases from a bygone era, but oh so fantastic to her childish eyes. She arranged everything with seasonal dried fruits: walnuts (pecans, Brazil nuts), hazelnuts, almonds, pine nuts, raisins and dried apricots, dried apple chips, figs and dates, banana slices and diced pineapple or mango. And of course, don't forget the mandarins, limes and lemons, and oranges. A real family treat that she made every year!

While grating the zest of a lemon, she suddenly saw a bright, star-like light that transformed into a... beautiful fairy. She waved her wand and said, 'Be proud of your brood, make three wishes for your family, and don't forget yourself!'

Karen sat down, her legs stiff with emotion:

'Hello little fairy, here it is: health for those here, animals and humans. The second, that we find inner peace and harmony. The third, help me with my chores like a vacuum cleaner.'

The fairy replied,

'You will have what you just asked for, be happy and positive!'





## December 16 Letters to Santa Claus

'We're on the sixteenth box of our Advent Calendar! Christmas is fast approaching! Soon the presents!'

Grandpa Guy was listening and said straight away:

'But I haven't received your official letters to Santa Claus!'

And Grandma Flo chimed in:

'Oh dear, we must quickly remedy this oversight and each write your wishes!'

Daddy Vince chimed in:

'Otherwise you won't get anything at all, that's for sure this year!'

Mother Karen was there with a tray full of snacks:

'Yes, and thank him because that Santa Claus is very touchy!'

Mirella began her letter by asking him about his health, that of his wife, and the dwarves who worked in his factory. She recounted her list and concluded kindly and signed her name. Hans told him to take good care of his reindeer and squirrels, giving him advice on how to go faster, and signed. Thiago, meanwhile, marked some articles with their references, wished him the best, and signed. Grandpa Guy put them in a white envelope, then wrote his postal address and stamped it. He mailed it right away!

'By the way, Mom and Dad, why don't you send your letter? And Grandpa and Grandma?' asked Hans, chewing on a pink and white marshmallow.

'Come here, my little guy,' replied Mama Karen, beaming. 'You're a real bundle of love.'

Hans blushed, but it made him happy.

-There's no Santa Claus for our animals, is there, Dad?  
Mamy Flo remained silent:

'It's a good sign in life to think of others besides yourself.'

A flop in the aquarium told them the lesson was in their hearts!





## December 17 Educational Discovery

Mother Karen and Father Vince left this morning by car for the neighboring town, about an hour away. Grandpa Guy and Grandma Flo were supposed to join them after the school bus had passed so as not to alarm the children. They had to do additional shopping for the festive meals on New Year's Eve and the following day, Christmas Day. They had decided to make this dinner a very special occasion this year. The stores were cluttered with boxes and friendly, polite customers.

The two couples entered a small, unassuming Italian restaurant whose aromas were enticing. When they opened the door, a plump woman greeted them warmly and guided them to a charming table slightly apart. They sat down and ordered a bottle of chilled, sparkling Asti. They were brought 'antipope' while they waited for their respective pasta orders. Songs whispered about love. A panettone finished the meal with a cappuccino!

Once their shopping was done, they hit the road again and returned home. They put food and other items away in the cupboards and freezers. They were active and got along well: Grandpa Guy at the fireplace, Papa Vince reloading wood between the garage and the house, Grandma Flo making the beds and cleaning, Mama Karen in the kitchen. A short break with tea and biscuits: everyone was in a good mood. The children arrived all excited from school and college:  
they would have pen pals to look after!





## December 18 Santa's Reply

-Children, come quickly, you have Santa's reply!

The three of them gathered in the living room where the fireplace radiated warmth. Grandma Flo held a stamped and sealed letter bearing their family's name. She sat down on her warm bench and gently opened it. The children were very attentive to her every move. She unfolded the sheet, folded in three widthwise, and read:

'My dear friends, you make a joyful and loving trio, which suits me very well. I especially thank you for inquiring about my health and that of Mother Christmas, as well as the worker gnomes and animals who assist me in this task. I have carefully considered your lists and included them in my schedule. They have been processed and are currently being sent, while you wait for this letter. Please stay as good as possible.' On behalf of everyone here, I wish you continued magic in these remaining days. The wait for your gifts is almost over. Happy Christmas Eve and holidays! Take good care of yourselves. Your devoted Santa Claus.'

The trio's eyes were wide with astonishment, their gaze filled with stars, shining with those dreams that only toddlers can still have. Some adults sometimes reclaim it, especially during the magic of these end-of-year celebrations. A naiveté and candor settle in hearts. Eternal songs return to heads and solidarity resurfaces. Let's not forget this fraternal side of our spiritual evolution, between faith, snow, and fire. One more plate to put on the table!







## **December 19**

### **A nod to the village**

On the way from the bus to their house, they often encountered squirrels, deer, hares, and moles. Many birds crossed their path. There was a small wooden bridge to cross where fish and tree frogs could be seen. It was a little paradise with neighbor Sébastien's cows and the kids of the neighbor above them, Helmut. His wife Bertha raised sheep for wool. Their dog Lulu guarded their flocks in the surrounding meadows. Their cheeses were marvelous!

In this corner of the mountains, crafts flourished. There was Gabriel, an artistic ironworker and stained glass artist, Philippe, a potter and ceramist, Quinto, a portraitist and watercolor painter, Mathilde, an interior decorator, Ian, a wood sculptor and cabinetmaker, Oswald, a photographer, Heidi, a milliner of yesteryear and today, Béat, a chimney sweep and heating engineer, Mikaël, a baker and pastry chef, Gretel, a charcuterie chef, Florian, a landscaper and florist, Martha, an organic fruit and vegetable seller: what a wonderful array of professional talents!

The villagers were busy during the holidays, brightening up their hilltop village. All around, the earthen 'planks' gave a less steep and gentler appearance. Around the small church, trees garlanded with multicolored lights, and in the center, a large fir tree decorated with positive cards, bows, and decorative objects. Everyone had written their name, their wish, their hopes, their needs, their desires. The miracle of Christmas was a warm atmosphere looking toward the future!





## December 20 Snowman

-Oh, Grandma, did you see the snow this morning?

Grandma Flo smiled:

-Yes, and it covered my little Hans completely!

Thiago rushed down the stairs:

-Now we have to make the snowman in the garden!

Grandpa Guy whistled and said:

-Hey, little guys, let's have our coffee, right?

Mirella sighed:

-Yes, first, breakfast, brush our teeth, dress warmly: jacket, gloves, scarf, hat, and boots.

The morning brought a muffled silence of peace.

It was also the solitude of Mother Nature.

The family created this 'ephemeral art sculpture'. Papa Vince and Grandpa Guy rolled a huge ball, which, rolling and kneading, became his body, while Thiago and Hans made a circle for the head. Mama Karen brought the clothes he needed: a hat, a scarf, a large faded purple cape. Grandma Flo made a nose with a carrot, eyes with two large corks, a mouth drawn with old buttons threaded into a necklace and stretched, adding an old toothless broom and a broken wooden pipe on one side.

Once finished, Grandpa Guy turned on an e-phone and lovely Christmas music began to play. The children and adults

formed a circle around the handsome snowman. Snowflakes then began to fall, fluttering around them. They were, with the surrounding air, happy and joyful, singing and dancing. Grandma Flo took a few photos to remember this wonderful moment. Hans took advantage of a moment of inattention and bombarded his parents, who fired back. It ended in a veritable snowball guerrilla war!





## December 21 New Tenant

The forest had received its beautiful white carpet. The little animals were unfamiliar with this. They were suddenly worried. The adults reassured them. Their parents explained to them how to live in this cold season. Most preferred to stay in their warm habitats, some huddled together, others going about their business. The squirrels, on the other hand, loved coming down from their trees to make snowballs, throwing them at each other, playful and mischievous.

Bambi joined them, frolicking in the powder snow and jumping to catch the snowflakes. That's when Mirella arrived and laughed, clapping her hands. The spectacle was nice, but Voodoo the owl didn't really appreciate it. He shook his wings a little grumpily and returned to his hollow tree. A marten came by:

-Hello, where could I find a place to spend the winter around here?

Mirella pointed to the fallen tree trunk where she was sitting.

-You'll be fine there, you can also make a way out.

-Thank you. I'm Clarisse, and you?

Mirella gave her name. The marten looked at the entrance and went inside to explore her possible new home. She immediately noticed another escape route. She took some care to add foliage and nestled there.

'Tomorrow, I'll progress slowly to feel even more secure. I'll add a corridor, storage areas, and some hardwood. I'm very

tired today, but fortunately I'm not lacking in ideas. I feel so good! Thank you.'

And she fell asleep right away!  
Mirella went home, smiling.





## December 22

### Dream or reality?

A sound of bells warned Mirella and Hans of the arrival of Santa's sleigh. They were amazed and delighted to finally meet them: real reindeer from the North Pole!

-Oh, Mimi, I'm a little scared.

She squeezed his hand to comfort him:

'They'll be very nice, don't worry, brother.'

They were in the enchanted snowy clearing. The animals stopped right in front of them and invited them to go for a walk. The two children sat down and set off again.

Hans had forgotten his anxiety and was lying quietly under the duvet. He was looking around when he realized they were high in the trees, in the air! His throat was tight, but Mirella felt in her element.

-Hans, it's magic powder, it's the same as Peter Pan and Wendy's.'

He finally relaxed, and at that very moment, the reindeer rushed... Into a... Tunnel! It was as black as a sooty chimney flue!

The reindeer stopped running in front of a wooden door lit by a lantern. Mother Christmas opened it for them, and they entered the toy factory! There were seven dwarves: Mirella recognized them all! They were posing, wrapping, wrapping ribbons, putting them on a conveyor belt, and then arranging them on huge shelves. Hans kissed Santa Claus, who said to them:

-See you soon!

The brother and sister woke up...  
They had dozed off on the big sofa in the living room.  
What a beautiful dream!







## **December 23**

### **Snowy Morning**

Thiago half-opened the front door to watch the snow fall in large white flakes outside. He particularly enjoyed this time before the traditional holidays. Everything became mysterious, secret, fluffy, silent, and magnificent. He was closing the door when he saw the two house cats sneaking into the garden and playing in the snow. He too decided to have fun and jump in. The old dog also wanted to join in the impromptu party. A joyful Hans joined them with Mirella!

The adults woke up to the sound of shouting, cursing, barking, and meowing. They looked at them with a mixture of tenderness and nostalgia. They gulped down their coffee, tea, and freshly squeezed orange juice in complete peace. The trio of children and animals shook their heads, their hair disheveled.

The hallway suddenly came alive: some were taking off their jackets and warm accessories, stored on the hooks, their boots on the special snow mat, others were letting Mirella dry their paws with a warm towel.

Mother Karen came armed with a tray of hot drinks. Grandpa Guy joked about their faces being flushed from the cold. Grandma Flo brought them clean jogging pants and dry socks. Papa Vince teased them because they were all in front of the fireplace he had just lit. The cats crawled under the tree where their quilted quilts awaited them, and Black in front of the hearth on his blanket. Each boy told his version of the story of snowballs. Mirella was thrilled; she hoped to find her beautiful gifts soon!

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## **December 24th**

### **Gifts? Yes? No?**

Early in the morning, Mirella left with her two brothers for the magical clearing, carrying two baskets full of treats for their little forest friends. One contained chocolates, cookies, shortbread, fruitcakes, and gingerbread for the dwarves, goblins, gnomes, fairies, and elves. The second contained millet branches for the birds, seeds for everyone, a bundle of cereal for Bambi, treats for Colin and Voodoo, and dried fruit. Hans brought grass and fodder in a wheelbarrow.

The trio returned happy with their good deed on this day before the festivities. They did several activities to help their parents and grandparents, because this year they were the ones inviting their neighbors to the barn. An aperitif of mulled wine, pretzels, sweet and savory cakes, orange and cinnamon gingerbread, honey, and dried fruit completed the picture. Food awaited the guests on trestles. Roasted chestnuts were enjoyed in cones. The evening was upon us!

When it was late at night, everyone went home. Flo, Karen, and the children cleaned up. Guy brought the dishes home. Vince closed the decorated barn. Dinner was ready. Grandpa Guy put on some music. We joked, we had fun, we waited for midnight to finally strike! But the children dozed off long before that, and the adults put them to bed. Touched, they gently closed their doors.

Knock, knock, knock...

Santa Claus placed the presents under the tree and left delighted!



