

The Christmas Vision

by Thornton W. Burgess

It was late when Kutok and his family reached the camp near the Valley of the Good Spirit. It had been a wonderful journey. The snow had been just right and the reindeer had traveled steadily and fast, for they were in splendid condition. Now they were fastened out, each tied by a long line to a hummock under the snow. There was plenty of food here and the deer at once began to paw down to get it. It is one of the advantages in traveling with reindeer that their food does not have to be carried for them. They will get their own food at the end of the day's trip.

Kutok and Navaluk had no thought for anything but rest after the evening meal. But not so the two children. They could not forget that they were in sight of the hills around the Valley of the Good Spirit and that it might be that over there in that Valley were the eight missing deer. So, when their father and mother were asleep, they slipped out from the hut for a look over toward the wonderful valley, for was it not from that valley that the marvelous Northern Lights flashed up through the sky?

There was no wind. The cold was intense. But Tuktu and Aklak were dressed for it and they minded it not at all. It seemed as if the stars were so close that they could be reached. It was not moonlight, for this was the period when the moon was not visible. But the starlight almost made up for it.

And then as they stood there, looking over toward the Valley of the Good Spirit, a long streamer of light suddenly flashed out, and up, up, up, until it was quite overhead. It quivered, almost died down, then shot up again! Then came another and another and another. The Northern Lights—the Merry Dancers of the Sky—dimmed the stars and made the night almost as light as day. At first, these Northern Lights were simply white; and then they were shot with yellow and red.

All their lives Tuktu and Aklak had been familiar with these fires of the sky, but never had they seen them as they now saw them. They caught their breath and held to each other with a little bit of fear. Those fires were no longer mere flashing white, shimmering, dancing streamers of light. They were yellow and red in many shades, and they appeared, as if in very truth they were fires leaping high up in the sky. And as they had so often heard it said, those dancing, leaping lights were coming out of the Valley of the Good Spirit. Certainly, they were flashing from directly behind the hills that shut away that valley, so of course they must be coming from the valley.

The lights died down. For a few moments there was no light save from the stars. Then from directly over the Valley of the Good Spirit a long streamer of white flickering light crept up and up, and as it crept, it broadened until it was like a broad path across the sky toward the south. There was the tinkle of silver bells. Tuktu touched Aklak. "See, Aklak! See the deer!" she whispered.

But Aklak had already seen them. On that broad shining path a pair of reindeer had appeared. He knew them instantly. They were two of the deer he had trained, and which had disappeared. Out of the shimmering light behind them moved two more. And these he recognized. There could be no doubt. He would have known them among ten thousand deer. They were harnessed two and two, and as they moved forward, another pair appeared, and then another.

Clinging together, breathless, round-eyed, Aklak and Tuktu stared. Eight deer they counted—

eight deer harnessed two and two. Would there be more? The curtain of light low above the hilltop seemed to burst in a glory of color such as made what they had seen before seem as nothing. And out of the midst of that glory, drawn by the eight deer, came a sled. On it Tuktu recognized instantly Santa Claus, the Good Spirit, whom she had seen in the Valley.

He was short and jolly and round and fat,
With a fur-trimmed coat and a fur-trimmed hat.
He laughed "Ha! Ha!" and he laughed "Ho! Ho!"
"Hello, Little Folk," he cried, "Hello!
The boys and girls of the world this year
Will see for themselves my splendid deer;
Will see and love them and surely know
That the reindeer come, though there be no snow.
For they're magic deer for my magic sleigh,
And we circle the world in a single day.
There is naught so faithful and naught so quick
To carry the message of Old St. Nick.
By training my steeds you have saved for me
Some weeks of labor; and so you see
It happens I'm able to start this year
In time for the children to see the deer.
And all who see them I tell you true
A Christmas greeting will send to you.

"As you will have given joy to all the little folk of the Great World this year, in like degree will your own Christmas be merry, and will happiness fill your hearts. And now, my dears, I must away." Santa waved a mittened hand to them, then turned to his deer and cried:

"Now, Dasher! Now, Dancer! Now Prancer and Vixen!
On, Comet! On, Cupid! On, Donner and Blitzen!"

Down a shining path of light, across the sky toward the south, the eight deer dashed, until in a breath they were mere specks. Up from the valley the orange and red lights streamed higher and higher, until all the sky was a blaze of beautiful light. When they died down, only the stars were to be seen, twinkling so close that it seemed as if they might be picked from the sky.

With shining eyes Tuktu and Aklak returned to the hut. "No one will believe us if we tell it," whispered Tuktu. "They'll say we dreamed it. We'll wait, Aklak, until the blessed deer are returned to us by the Good Spirit next summer, and we can show his ear-mark. Then all will know that we speak truly."

Thus it was that it was made possible for the boys and girls of the Great World to really see Santa Claus and his blessed reindeer. And thus it was that Tuktu and Aklak found happiness and great content, and the real joy of the blessed Christmas Spirit.

Source:

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