

## The selfish giant

Freddy looked through the window at the white world outside. The snow was like a white blanket covering rooftops, trees, streets, cars - everything. Even the garden where he played almost every afternoon had been turned into a winter wonderland. It had been snowing for a week now. Freddy was bored stiff and he was very angry because he wasn't allowed out on account of the weather.

"When is it going to stop snowing?" he groaned as he stared out the window. Every day after lunch he sat down to see what the TV weatherman had to say. But it was always the same dreary message, "Stay bundled up because there's no sign of the snow stopping," said the weatherman. "What a pain!" thought Freddy.

On Sunday, while his parents were in the kitchen washing up the dishes, Freddy was wandering about the house when he found a book on the small table by the fireplace. It was lying there next to his father's pipe and reading glasses. Out of curiosity, he opened up the book to any old page and to his surprise there was an illustration of a giant shivering with cold. "What's this?" he asked himself. "It looks like a frozen giant." And without further ado, Freddy picked up the book, which weighed a ton, settled into the armchair and began reading.

It was the story of The Selfish Giant.

Once upon a time, there was a village with a wonderful garden on a hilltop. The village children went there to play every afternoon until the sun went down. But one fine day, who should turn up but a very grumpy giant.

"What are you kids doing here?" shouted the giant. "This is my garden and I don't want to see you playing here ever again. And that's that. Now, get out of here!" he said heartlessly.

He was the giant who lived in the house on the hill. He had been traveling for the last ten years and had just returned home. Well, you can just imagine how frightened the children were when the giant roared at them in this way. They vanished from the garden in a trice, as if someone had waved a magic wand.

When they went to play the next day, they were surprised to see that the giant had built a high wall around the garden. It was so high no one could climb over it.

The days passed by and winter came. Everything was buried in snow for three months until one fine day the spring arrived. But while flowers bloomed and the birds sang in the whole village, the giant's walled garden stayed in winter's icy grip and was covered with snow. The giant's house was as cold as cold can be. It was like a big fridge.

After several years of unbroken winter, the giant was in a terrible state. His nose was frozen, his lips cracked and his ears frostbitten. His fingers were numb and his legs were like two blocks of ice. He was at the end of his ropes.

When he had almost turned into a giant ice cube, he thought he heard a bird singing. It sounded very faint, almost lost in the wintry wind.

Through his half-frozen eyes, he saw that a small section of the wall had crumbled and cracked. There was a small child wriggling through the narrow gap. The giant didn't know if he was dreaming or if it was really happening. But then, to his wonder, he saw how spring began to spread through the crack in the wall. The giant cried with joy as he heard the birds singing again and saw the flowers blooming amid the fast-thawing snow. The giant was so happy he went to work with a will and knocked down the whole wall so that he could share his garden with everyone. Since then, winter has never again froze the giant's garden.

"I was very selfish in wanting the garden all to myself," the giant said to the villagers, thoroughly ashamed of himself. "I promise that I will never ever build another wall. From now on, all the girls and boys in the world can play in my garden whenever they like."

And that is the tale of The Selfish Giant.

Freddy closed the book, his mind wrapped in thought. He thought about the giant, winter, and the child who brought spring back to the garden. Freddy sprung up from the armchair and ran over to the window. No change. The snowflakes continued to swirl down as steadily as ever. "Shall I do it or not?" he asked himself nervously. "I've got to, I've just got to give it a try!" he said with resolve.

Freddy put on his heaviest snow jacket and the woolen gloves and scarf his grandmother had knitted him. He crept silently out the door so his parents wouldn't notice and he started trudging down the street through the falling snow.

It was freezing outside! He was very cold! Before he had gone a hundred yards, his cheeks had turned beet red and his nose began dripping. Afraid that he might catch pneumonia, Freddy decided to run to the park where he always played, even though it was now closed because of the weather. He looked up at the sky and to his surprise, the snow had suddenly stopped falling. It had stopped snowing! And a few moments later, the sun started to peek out timidly from behind the clouds.

"Yayyyyy!!!" he cried at the top of his lungs. "I knew it! I just knew it!!"

And before too long, Freddy was surrounded by lots of girls and boys who joined him in playing every game imaginable.

*Script: J.M. Hernandez Ripoll*



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