



The Fairy's New Year Gift

Two little boys, Carl and Philip, were at play one day when a Fairy suddenly appeared before them and said: "I have been sent to give you New Year presents."

She handed to each child a package, and in an instant was gone.

The boys opened the packages and found in them two beautiful books, with pages as pure and white as the snow when it first falls.



Many months passed and the Fairy came again to the boys. "I have brought you each another book," said she, "and will take the first ones back to Father Time who sent them to you."

"May I not keep mine a little longer?" asked Philip. "I have hardly thought about it lately. I'd like to paint something on the last leaf that lies open."

"No," said the Fairy. "I must take it just as it is."

"I wish that I could look through mine just once," said Carl. "I have only seen one page at a time, for when the leaf turns over it sticks fast, and I can never open the book at more than one place each day."

“Here, you shall look at your book,” said the Fairy, “and Philip, at his.” And she lit for them two little silver lamps, by the light of which they saw the pages as she turned them.

The boys looked in wonder. Could it be that these were the same fair books she had given them a year ago? Where were the clean, white pages, as pure and beautiful as the snow when it first falls? Here was a page with ugly, black spots and scratches upon it, while the very next page showed a lovely little picture. Some pages were decorated with gold and silver and gorgeous colors, others with beautiful flowers, and still others with a rainbow of softest, most delicate brightness. Yet even on the most beautiful of the pages there were ugly blots and scratches.

Carl and Philip looked up at the Fairy at last.

“Who did this?” they asked. “Every page was white and fair as we opened to it; yet now there is not a single blank place in the whole book!”

“Shall I explain some of the pictures to you?” said the Fairy, smiling at the two little boys.

“See, Philip, the spray of roses blossomed on this page when you let the baby have your playthings; and this pretty bird, that looks as if it is singing with all its might, would never have been on this page if you had not tried to be kind and pleasant the other day, instead of quarreling.”

“But what makes this blot?” asked Philip.

“That,” said the Fairy sadly, “that appeared when you told a lie one day, and this when you did not heed your mother. All these blots and scratches that look so ugly, both in your book and in Carl’s, were made when you were naughty. Each pretty thing in your books came when you were good.”

“Oh, if we could only have the books again!” said Carl and Philip.

“That cannot be,” said the Fairy. “See! They are dated for this year, and they must now go back into Father Time’s bookcase, but I have brought you each a new one. Perhaps you can make these more beautiful than the others.”

So saying, she vanished, and the boys were left alone, but each held in his hand a new book open at the first page. And on the back of this book was written in letters of gold, “**For the New Year!**”

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(adapted)