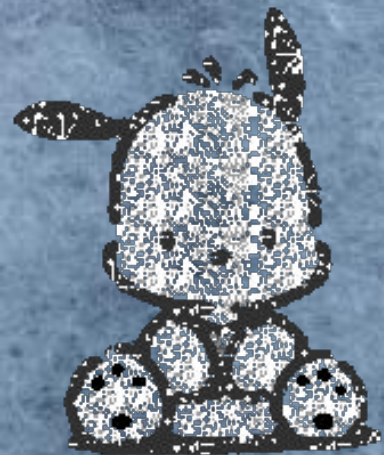




CHRISTMAS



Legends & Stories



Legend of Christmas Angels

There were two angel friends. One used to sunset pink robes while other used to adorn himself with sky blue robes. They were known for singing sweet duets about glory of God and playing on pure silver trumpets. They often used to lead the orchestra for angels because of their musical abilities. Once, their orchestra leader Temira gave them and other members of the angelic orchestra, an exciting news. God had decided to send his Son to live among His people. They had to prepare a musical jubilee in one of the most important events in the history of the world. It just had to be the best and all angels with good voice had to sing and all instruments were to be played for the event.

Temira asked his orchestra, whether they knew the importance of the assignment. Trumpeting angel in pink said that he understood that the Lord want them to appear to the shepherds in the hills of Bethlehem, who had never seen an angel in their lives and might get afraid. The trumpeting angel in blue completed the answer by adding that the angels could replace the fear of the shepherds with joy and love for the Christ Child and then, they could announce the arrival of the Savior. Temira smiled and nodded contentedly. All orchestra members felt honored for the opportunity and practiced for perfection in their roles.

On the day, Christ was born in the stable at Bethlehem and as planned, the Christmas angels first appeared to the shepherds and the trumpeting angel friends played the first few notes of the glorious concert in the dark night sky. Shepherds looked up to the sky and were shocked, surprise and awed, soon to be filled with amazement and wonder and their hearts brimmed with humility and thankfulness to God for His glory. The angels then gave the shepherds the good tidings of great joy and were joined by many other angels who sang and praise God, filling the skies with the angelic words - "Glory to god in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men".

LEGEND OF THE EVERGREEN TREES



One winter, when the birds were all leaving for south and warmer areas, one little bird broke its wing on the way and was left behind. Soon frost and snow covered the forest and she was cold and hungry. So she asked the trees to help her and let her stay in its branches. However, the trees are not always kind. The birch tree was proud of being beautiful and haughtily replied to the bird's pleas by saying that he could not possibly help him because he had to look after the birds of the forest first. The strong oak tree was reluctant because it was afraid that the bird would have to live there till spring time and would eat up some of its acorns. Even the willow tree that seemed to be gentle otherwise refused to help or even talk to the strangers.

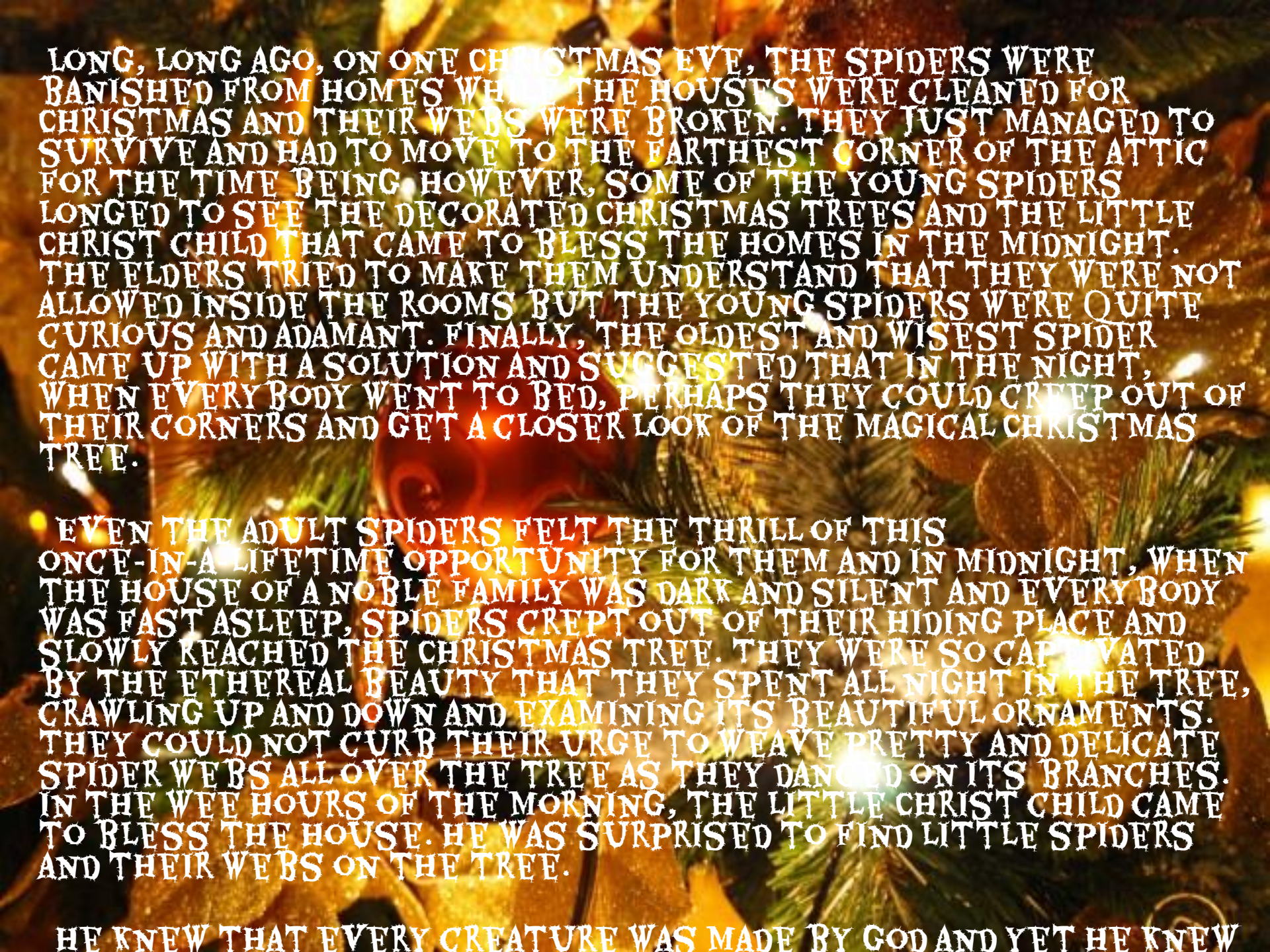
The poor bird was in much distress and tried to fly some more but her wing was still not fit for the purpose. Seeing her struggling like this, the spruce tree asked her, why she seems so downcast. When the bird revealed her miseries, it offered her the thickest, softest and warmest branch to stay. The bird was really glad to find some help. Inspired by the kindness of spruce tree, the big and strong pine tree also volunteered to protect the spruce tree and the bird from the North Wind all through the winters. The little juniper tree also piped in to offer its berries to the bird to quench her hunger. So, the bird lived comfortably there and flew away again at springtime, when its wing healed again.

The Frost King, who kept close note of the behavior of all trees, strictly instructed the North Wind not to touch even a



Legend of the Christmas Spider





LONG, LONG AGO, ON ONE CHRISTMAS EVE, THE SPIDERS WERE BANISHED FROM HOMES WHERE THE HOUSES WERE CLEANED FOR CHRISTMAS AND THEIR WEBS WERE BROKEN. THEY JUST MANAGED TO SURVIVE AND HAD TO MOVE TO THE FARTHEST CORNER OF THE ATTIC FOR THE TIME BEING. HOWEVER, SOME OF THE YOUNG SPIDERS LONGED TO SEE THE DECORATED CHRISTMAS TREES AND THE LITTLE CHRIST CHILD THAT CAME TO BLESS THE HOMES IN THE MIDNIGHT. THE ELDERS TRIED TO MAKE THEM UNDERSTAND THAT THEY WERE NOT ALLOWED INSIDE THE ROOMS BUT THE YOUNG SPIDERS WERE QUITE CURIOUS AND ADAMANT. FINALLY, THE OLDEST AND WISEST SPIDER CAME UP WITH A SOLUTION AND SUGGESTED THAT IN THE NIGHT, WHEN EVERYBODY WENT TO BED, PERHAPS THEY COULD CREEP OUT OF THEIR CORNERS AND GET A CLOSER LOOK OF THE MAGICAL CHRISTMAS TREE.

EVEN THE ADULT SPIDERS FELT THE THRILL OF THIS ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME OPPORTUNITY FOR THEM AND IN MIDNIGHT, WHEN THE HOUSE OF A NOBLE FAMILY WAS DARK AND SILENT AND EVERYBODY WAS FAST ASLEEP, SPIDERS CREEPT OUT OF THEIR HIDING PLACE AND SLOWLY REACHED THE CHRISTMAS TREE. THEY WERE SO CAPTIVATED BY THE ETHEREAL BEAUTY THAT THEY SPENT ALL NIGHT IN THE TREE, CRAWLING UP AND DOWN AND EXAMINING ITS BEAUTIFUL ORNAMENTS. THEY COULD NOT CURB THEIR URGE TO WEAVE PRETTY AND DELICATE SPIDER WEBS ALL OVER THE TREE AS THEY DANCED ON ITS BRANCHES. IN THE WEE HOURS OF THE MORNING, THE LITTLE CHRIST CHILD CAME TO BLESS THE HOUSE. HE WAS SURPRISED TO FIND LITTLE SPIDERS AND THEIR WEBS ON THE TREE.

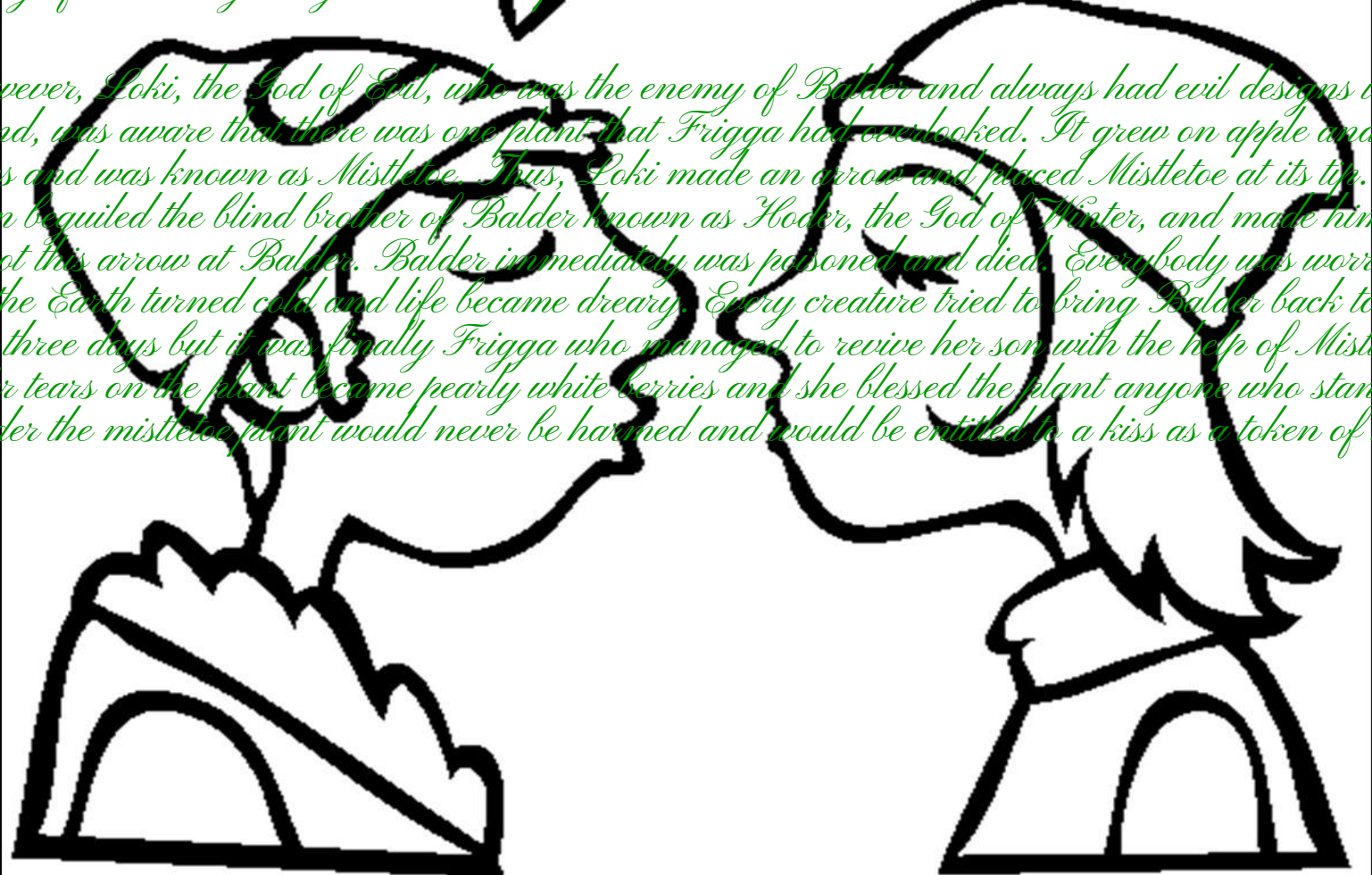
HE KNEW THAT EVERY CREATURE WAS MADE BY GOD AND YET HE KNEW

Legend of Mistletoe





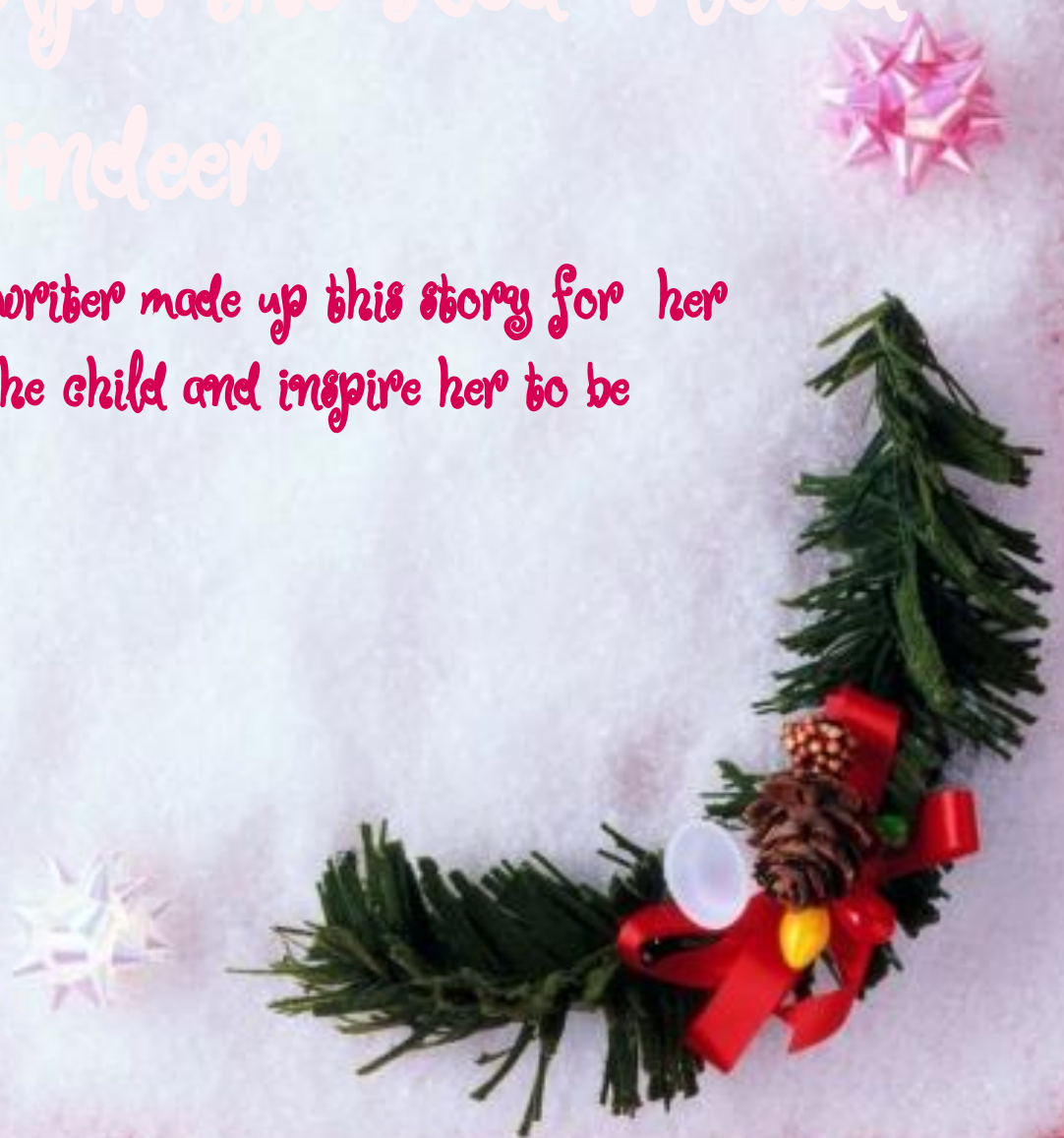
Mystical power of mistletoe and the tradition of kissing under the mistletoe owe itself to the legend of Goddess Frigga and her son Balder. Frigga was the Goddess of Love and her son, Balder, was the God of the Summer Sun. Once, Balder dreamt of his death. He was worried and told his mother about the strange dream. Frigga was worried not only for the life of her son but also for the life on Earth because she knew that without Balder, all life on Earth would come to an end. Thus, she did her utmost to avoid such a mishap and went everywhere and to every being in air, water, fire and earth to extract a promise that they would never harm her son. She was promised safety of her son by every animal and plant under and above the Earth.

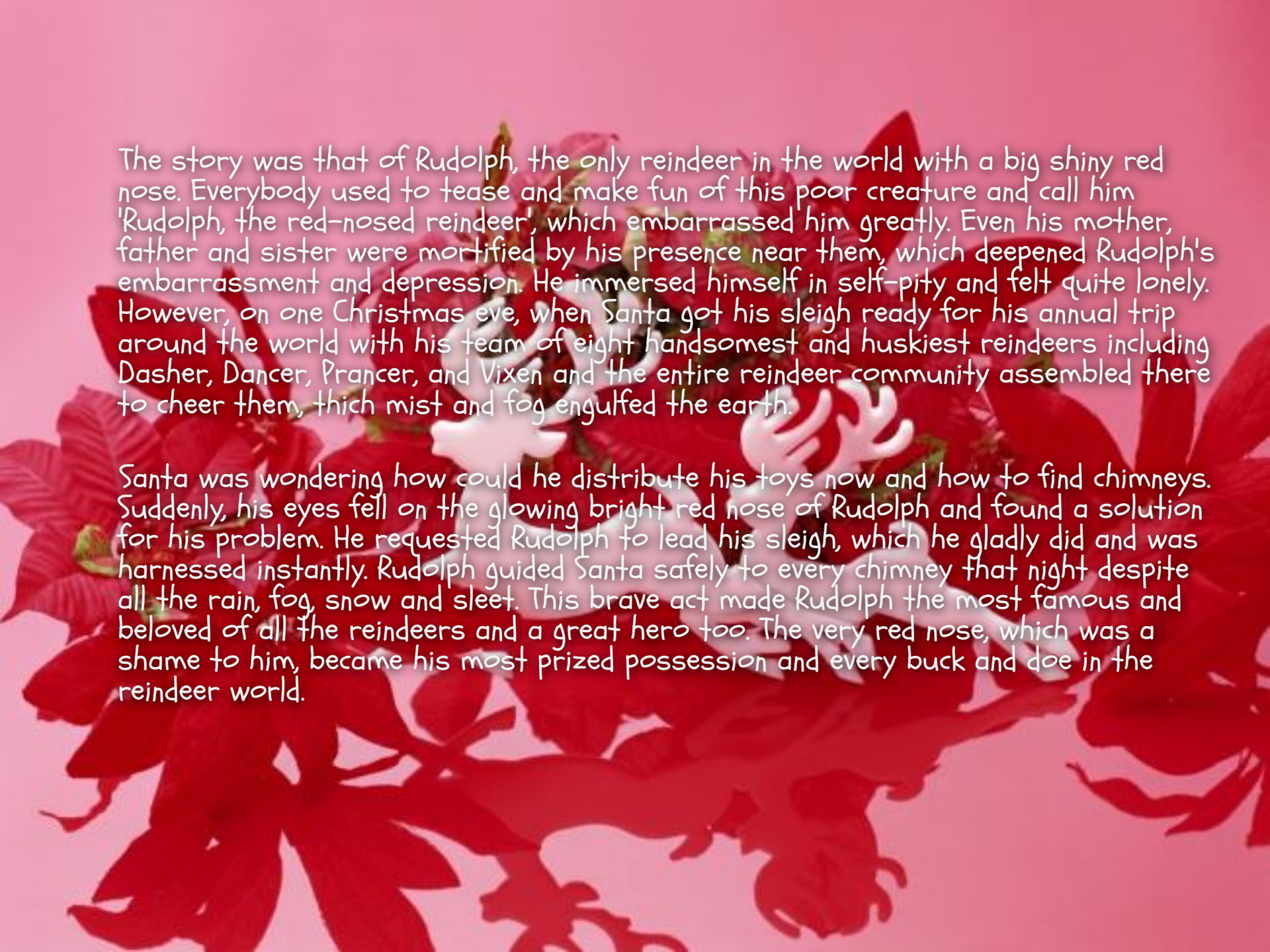


However, Loki, the God of Evil, who was the enemy of Balder and always had evil designs in his mind, was aware that there was one plant that Frigga had overlooked. It grew on apple and oak trees and was known as Mistletoe. Thus, Loki made an arrow and placed Mistletoe at its tip. He then beguiled the blind brother of Balder known as Hodder, the God of Winter, and made him shoot this arrow at Balder. Balder immediately was poisoned and died. Everybody was worried as the Earth turned cold and life became dreary. Every creature tried to bring Balder back to life for three days but it was finally Frigga who managed to revive her son with the help of Mistletoe. Her tears on the plant became pearly white berries and she blessed the plant anyone who stands under the mistletoe plant would never be harmed and would be entitled to a kiss as a token of love.

Legend of Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer

(Robert May a poor copywriter made up this story for her daughter Barbara to placate the child and inspire her to be optimistic.)






The story was that of Rudolph, the only reindeer in the world with a big shiny red nose. Everybody used to tease and make fun of this poor creature and call him 'Rudolph, the red-nosed reindeer', which embarrassed him greatly. Even his mother, father and sister were mortified by his presence near them, which deepened Rudolph's embarrassment and depression. He immersed himself in self-pity and felt quite lonely. However, on one Christmas eve, when Santa got his sleigh ready for his annual trip around the world with his team of eight handsomest and huskiest reindeers including Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, and Vixen and the entire reindeer community assembled there to cheer them, thick mist and fog engulfed the earth.

Santa was wondering how could he distribute his toys now and how to find chimneys. Suddenly, his eyes fell on the glowing bright red nose of Rudolph and found a solution for his problem. He requested Rudolph to lead his sleigh, which he gladly did and was harnessed instantly. Rudolph guided Santa safely to every chimney that night despite all the rain, fog, snow and sleet. This brave act made Rudolph the most famous and beloved of all the reindeers and a great hero too. The very red nose, which was a shame to him, became his most prized possession and every buck and doe in the reindeer world.

Legend of Baboushka

(The Russian version of St. Nicholas is Baboushka meaning 'grandmother' in Russian. The character had been much popular in old Russia before the revolution of 1917.)




It was reputed that Baboushka was old woman who had no family, rarely received guests and was so used to live alone in a big house that all she could think of was cleaning, doing the household chores and looking after her empty property. One cold evening, when she was scrubbing her floors, the three Wise Men passed her house on their way to see the Holy Child. They spotted her in the window and asked her to come with them to see the new King of the world. But she refused stating that her floors were not yet clean.

She invited them to her house to spend the night but they said that they were in a hurry and bid her farewell and went on their way. Later, that night Baboushka regretted her decision of not going with the three men and gathering a few trinkets from her meager possessions, set off to find them and the Holy Child. She kept on walking inquiring to several people about the three traveling men and the Holy Child destined to be the King of the world but could not find them. It is said that she is still searching and wanders from place to place in search of them. On the eve of Epiphany of 6th of January, she also leaves trinkets as gifts to the good children in the hope that they will help her find Baby Jesus.

A cluster of five red roses with green sepals and stems, set against a light blue, textured background. The roses are in various stages of bloom, with some showing more open petals than others. The text "Legend of the Christmas Rose" is overlaid in a large, bold, red font across the center of the image.

Legend of the Christmas Rose

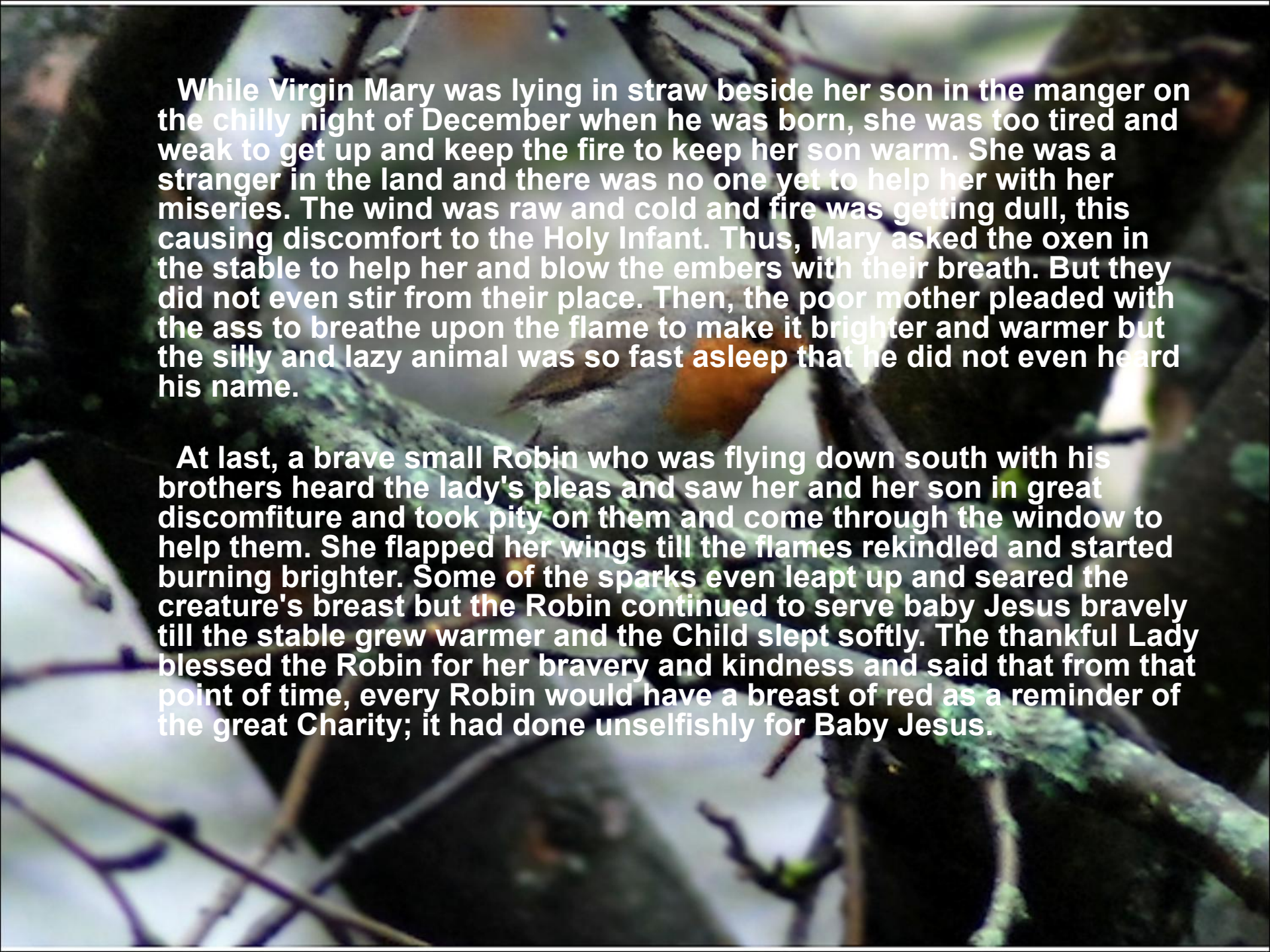


On the cold December night, everybody was coming to see their new Savior and brought Him all kinds of gifts and presents. The three Wise Men came in with their valuable gifts of myrrh, frankincense and gold and offered them to Baby Jesus. At that point of time, a shepherd maiden who had come to see and visit the Christ Child also reached the door of the stable. However, she was very poor and had nothing to offer the child. She felt helpless and was quietly weeping outside the door. She had searched for flowers all over the countryside but there was not even a single bloom to be found in the bitter winters.

An angel outside the door was watching over her and knew about her fruitless search. He took pity on her and when he saw her head drooped down in sorrow, gently brushed aside the snow at her feet, from where a beautiful cluster of waxen white winter roses sprang up with pink tipped petals. Then, he softly whispered in the shepherdess's ears that these Christmas roses are more valuable than any myrrh, frankincense or gold for they are pure and made of love. The maiden was pleasantly surprised when she heard those words and joyfully, gathered the flowers and offered them to the Holy Infant, who smiled at her with gratitude and satisfaction.

Legend of the Robin






While Virgin Mary was lying in straw beside her son in the manger on the chilly night of December when he was born, she was too tired and weak to get up and keep the fire to keep her son warm. She was a stranger in the land and there was no one yet to help her with her miseries. The wind was raw and cold and fire was getting dull, this causing discomfort to the Holy Infant. Thus, Mary asked the oxen in the stable to help her and blow the embers with their breath. But they did not even stir from their place. Then, the poor mother pleaded with the ass to breathe upon the flame to make it brighter and warmer but the silly and lazy animal was so fast asleep that he did not even heard his name.

At last, a brave small Robin who was flying down south with his brothers heard the lady's pleas and saw her and her son in great discomfiture and took pity on them and come through the window to help them. She flapped her wings till the flames rekindled and started burning brighter. Some of the sparks even leapt up and seared the creature's breast but the Robin continued to serve baby Jesus bravely till the stable grew warmer and the Child slept softly. The thankful Lady blessed the Robin for her bravery and kindness and said that from that point of time, every Robin would have a breast of red as a reminder of the great Charity; it had done unselfishly for Baby Jesus.

Legend of Christmas Stockings





In yet another version of the story of Saint Nicholas lies the origin of the tradition of washing the stockings on the night before Christmas and hanging them up on the window sill or near the hearth, in readiness to receive gifts from Santa. It is said to happen 17 centuries ago in Turkey. Here the Bishop of Myra, Nicholas was known all over for his benevolence and love for children. He used to distribute gifts secretly to children on Christmas Eve as a surprise for them. While he was passing a house he heard a father and his daughters lamenting their poverty and how they were unable to be married because they could not provide dowry that was prevalent in those days.

Overcome with pity and sympathy, Nicholas observed the woolen stockings of the girls that they had put on the windowsill to dry and secretly placed enough gold pieces in each to provide dowry for the girls. Another variations of the custom of hanging out stockings for Santa Claus (popular name for Saint Nicholas) are putting hay and carrots in their shoes by Dutch children for the horse of their dear Sinterklass who is their patron saint and brings them presents. Swedish children wait for a kindly gnome called the Tomte instead of Santa on Christmas. This gnome is believed to live under the floorboards. In some parts of France, Mexico and Spain, children wait for the Three Kings to fill their shoes with presents.

However, children of north French pray that Pere Fouettard or Father Spanker would not visit them as he is reputed to punish and spank children, if they are naughty and bad. La Befana is another version of Santa that visits the Italian children and gives them gifts albeit on Epiphany or 6th of January. Agios Vasilis, the Saint of Letters visit the Greek children living in plains but those living in the mountains are taken care of by the tiny elves who bring the desired gifts to the good little children. The tradition of giving gifts reminds us that Jesus himself was a gift to the world and the gifts that he received when he was born.



**Merry
Christmas!**