

## **The Eleventh Surprise - PRINCE FIDDLECUMDOO AND THE GIANT**

It happened, one morning, that the Monarch of Mo was not in his usual pleasant humor; and, of course, there was an excellent reason for this.

At the back of his garden grew one tree that generally bore an abundant crop of animal-crackers, and although the King and his court, being surfeited with all the dainties of the land, did not care much for these edibles, the younger inhabitants of Mo were especially fond of them, and yelled with delight whenever the King divided the crop of his tree among them.

A few days before the King had examined the tree and found the animal-crackers not quite ripe. Whereupon he had gone away and forgotten all about them. And, in his absence, they had ripened to a delicious light brown; and their forms had rounded out, so that they hung as thickly together as peas in a pod. As they swung from their stems, swaying backward and forward in the light breeze, they waited and waited for some one to come and pick them. But no one came near the tree, and the animals grew cross and restless in consequence.

"I wonder when we shall be gathered," remarked a hippopotamus-cracker, with a yawn.

"Oh, you wonder, do you?" mockingly replied a camel-cracker hanging near, "do you really expect any one to gather you, with your thick hide and clumsy legs? Why, the children would break their teeth on you at the first bite."

"What!" screamed the hippopotamus, in much anger, "do you dare insult me, you humpbacked beast of burden?"

"Now then--now then!" interrupted a wolf-cracker that hung from a stem just above them; "what's the use of fighting, when we are so soon to be eaten?"

But the camel-cracker would not be appeased.

"Thick-headed brute!" he yelled at the hippopotamus, angrily.

"Hump-backed idiot!" shrieked the other.

At this the camel swung himself fiercely on his branch, and bumped against the hippopotamus, knocking him off from the tree. The ground underneath was chocolate, and it was soft and sticky, not having dried since the last rain. So when the hippopotamus fell he sank half way into the ground, and his beautiful brown color was spattered with the muddy chocolate.

At this vengeful deed on the part of the camel all the other animals became furious. A full-grown goat-cracker swung himself against the camel and knocked it, in turn, from its stem; and in falling on the ground it broke its hump off. Then a lion-cracker knocked the goat down, and an elephant knocked a cat down, and soon the whole tree was in a violent commotion. The animals fought with each other so desperately that before long the entire treeful of animal-crackers had fallen to the ground, where many lay broken and disfigured, and the remainder were sunk deep in the chocolate mud.

So when the King, finally remembering his tree, came and looked on the sorry sight, it dampened his usual good spirits, and he heartily wished he had picked the quarrelsome crackers before they began to fight among themselves.

While he stood thinking dismally on this, up came Prince Fiddlecumdoo and asked permission to go on a journey.

"Where do you wish to go?" asked the King.

"I am tired of this beautiful Valley," answered Fiddlecumdoo, "and as the bicycle tree beside the Crystal Lake is now hanging full of ripe wheels, I thought I would gather one and ride over into the next valley in search of adventure." You see, this Prince was the King's youngest son, and had been rather spoiled by petting, as youngest sons often are.

"The next valley, my son, is inhabited by the giant Hartilaf," said the King, "and should you meet him he might do you an injury."

"Oh, I am not afraid of Hartilaf," replied Fiddlecumdoo, boldly. "If he should not be pleasant to me, I could run away from him on my wheel."

"I don't know about that," responded the King. "There may be bicycle trees in the next valley, as well as here; and it is always dangerous and foolish for any one to leave this Valley, where there is everything that heart could wish. Instead of running away in search of adventures, you

would do better to remain at home and help your mother pick collar buttons and neckties for the family."

"That is work," said Fiddlecumdoo, sulkily, "and I hate work."

"Yet somebody has to pick the collar buttons," returned the King, "or we should be unable to keep our collars on."

"Then let Jollikin help my mother. I am horribly tired of this stupid place, and shall not be happy until I have traveled around and seen something more of the world."

"Well, well! go if you wish," answered the King, impatiently. "But take care of yourself, for when you are away from this Valley there will be no one to protect you from danger."

"I can take care of myself," cried the Prince, "so do not worry about me," and he ran away quickly, before his father had time to change his mind and withdraw his consent.

He selected the best and ripest bicycle on the tree, and, having mounted it, was soon speeding away along the path to the mountains.

When he reached the far eastern part of Mo he came on a bush bearing a very good quality of violins, and this at once attracted Fiddlecumdoo, who was a most excellent violinist, being able to play correctly a great number of tunes. So he dismounted and selected from the bush a small violin that seemed to have a sweet tone. This he carried with him, under his arm, thinking if he became lonesome he could amuse himself with the music.

Shortly after resuming his journey he came to the Maple Plains, a level stretch of country composed entirely of maple sugar. These plains were quite smooth, and very pleasant to ride on; but so swiftly did his bicycle carry him that he soon crossed the plains and came on a river of pure maple syrup, so wide and deep that he could neither leap nor swim it.

Dismounting from his bicycle the Prince began looking for some means of crossing the river. No bridge was visible in either direction, and the bank was bare save for a few low bushes on which grew maple bonbons and maple caramels.

But Prince Fiddlecumdoo did not mean to be turned back by so small a matter as a river, so he scooped a hole in the maple sand, and having filled it with syrup from the river, lighted a match and began boiling it. After it had boiled for a time the maple syrup became stringy, and the Prince quickly threw a string of it across the river. It hardened almost immediately, and on this simple bridge the Prince rode over the stream.

Once on the other side he sped up the mountain and over the top into the next valley, where, he stopped and began to look about him.

He could see no roads in any direction, but away down at the foot of the valley was a monstrous house, so big you could easily put a small village inside it, including the church. This, Fiddlecumdoo thought, must be where the giant lived; and, although he saw no one about the house, he decided to make a call and introduce himself to Mr. Hartilaf. So he rode slowly down the valley, playing on his violin as he went, that the music might announce his coming.

The giant Hartilaf was lying on the sofa in his sitting-room, waiting for his wife to prepare the dinner; and he had nearly fallen asleep when the sound of Fiddlecumdoo's music fell on his ear. This was so unusual in his valley that the giant arose and went to the front door to see what caused it.

The Prince had by this time nearly reached the house, and when the giant appeared he was somewhat startled, as he had not expected to see any one quite so big. But he took care not to show any fear, and, taking off his hat, he bowed politely to the giant and said:

"This is Mr. Hartilaf, I suppose?"

"That is my name," replied the giant, grinning at the small size of his visitor. "May I ask who you are?"

"I am Prince Fiddlecumdoo, and I live in the next valley, which is called the Valley of Mo. Being determined to see something of the world, I am traveling for pleasure, and have just dropped in on you for a friendly call."

"You are very welcome, I am sure," returned the giant. "If you will graciously step into my humble home I shall be glad to entertain you at dinner."

Prince Fiddlecumdoo bowed low and accepted the invitation, but when he endeavored to enter the house he found the steps so big that even the first one was higher than his head, and he could not climb to the top of it.

Seeing his difficulty the giant carefully picked him up with one finger and his thumb, and put him down on the palm of his other hand.

"Do not leave my bicycle," said the Prince, "for should anything happen to it I could not get home again."

So the giant put the bicycle in his vest pocket, and then he entered the house and walked to the kitchen, where his wife was engaged preparing the dinner.

"Guess what I've found," said the giant to his wife, holding his hand doubled up so she could not see the Prince.

"I'm sure I don't know," answered the woman.

"But, guess!" pleaded the giant.

"Go away and don't bother me," she replied, bending over the stewpan, "or you won't have any dinner to-day."

The giant, however, was in a merry mood, and for a joke he suddenly opened his hand and dropped the Prince down his wife's neck.

"Oh, oh!" she screamed, trying to get at the place where the Prince had fallen, which was near the small of her back. "What is it? I'm sure it's some horrible crocodile, or dragon, or something that will bite me!" And the poor woman lay down on the carpet and began to kick her heels against the floor in terror.

The giant roared with laughter, but the Prince, now being able to crawl out, scrambled from the lady's neck, and, standing beside her head, he made a low bow and said:

"Do not be afraid, Madam; it is only I. But I must say it was a very ungallant trick for your husband to play on you, to say nothing of my feelings in the matter."

"So it was," she exclaimed, getting upon her feet again, and staring curiously at Fiddlecumdoo. "But tell me who you are and where you came from."

The giant, having enjoyed his laugh, now introduced the Prince to his wife, and as dinner was ready to serve they sat down at the table together.

Fiddlecumdoo got along very well at dinner, for the giant thoughtfully placed him on the top of the table, where he could walk around as he pleased. There being no knife nor fork small enough for him to use, the Prince took one of the giant's toothpicks, which was as big as a sword, and with this served himself from the various dishes that stood on the table.

When the meal was over the giant lighted his pipe, the bowl of which was as big as a barrel, and asked Fiddlecumdoo if he would kindly favor them with some music.

"Certainly," replied the Prince.

"Please come into the kitchen," said the giantess, "for then I can listen to the music while I am washing the dishes."

The prince did not like to refuse this request, although at home he was not allowed to enter his mother's kitchen; so the giant carried him in and placed him on a high shelf, where Fiddlecumdoo seated himself on a spool of thread and began to play his violin.

The big people enjoyed the music very much at first, for the Prince was a capital player. But soon came a disagreeable interruption.

About a month before the giant had caught several dancing-bears in the mountains, and, having brought them home, had made them into strings of sausages. These were hanging in graceful festoons from the beams of the kitchen ceiling, awaiting the time when they should be eaten.

Now when the dancing-bear sausages heard the music of Fiddlecumdoo's violin, they could not resist dancing; for it is well known that sausages made from real dancing-bears can not remain quiet where there is music. The Prince was playing such a lively tune, that presently the strings of sausage broke away from the ceiling and fell clattering to the floor, where they danced about furiously. Not being able to see where

they were going, they bumped against the giant and his wife, thumping them on their heads and backs, and pounding them so severely that the woman became frightened and hid under the table, while the giant started to run away.

Seeing their plight, Fiddlecumdoo stopped playing, and at once the sausages fell to the floor and lay still.

"That was strange," said the giant, as soon as he could catch his breath; "the bears evidently do not forget how to dance even after they are chopped up into sausage meat. I must beg you to abandon your concert for the present, but before you visit us again we shall have eaten the sausages, and then you may play to your heart's content."

"Had I known they were so lively," remarked the giantess, as she crawled from beneath the table, "we should have eaten them before this."

"That reminds me that I intended to have stewed polar bears for supper," continued the giant; "so I think I will walk over into Alaska and catch some."

"Perhaps the Prince would prefer elephant pie," suggested the lady, "and in that case you might make a run into South America for elephants."

"I have no choice in the matter," said the Prince, "never having eaten either. But is it not rather a long journey to Alaska or to South America?"

"Not at all!" protested the giant. "I shall enjoy the walk, and can easily be back by sundown. Won't you come with me?" he asked the boy. But Fiddlecumdoo did not like the idea of so long a journey, and begged to be excused.

The giantess brought her lord a great bag to put the polar bears in, and he prepared to start.

"I leave you to amuse my wife during my absence," he said to the Prince. "Pray make yourself entirely at home, and use my castle as you would your own house, and if I have good luck you shall eat a delicious polar-bear stew for your supper."

Then he slung the sack across his back and went away, whistling merrily. And so great were his strides that in less than a minute he was out of sight.

"This is my busy day," said the giantess to Fiddlecumdoo, "and I fear I shall not be able to entertain you in a proper manner, for I must hasten to the laundry to wash the clothes. However, if you care to accompany me, we may converse together while I am doing my work."

"I shall take great pleasure in visiting your laundry," he replied, "for never before have I been in such a place. And surely it will be more agreeable to watch you at your work than to spend the day alone in these great rooms."

"Come along, then," she said, and picking him up she placed him in the pocket of her apron, for she knew he would be unable to walk down the flight of stairs that led to the laundry. He was very comfortable in the pocket, which was just deep enough to allow his head and shoulders to project from the top. Therefore he was able to see all that was going on while the lady was at work. He watched her wash and rinse the clothes, and was greatly interested in the operation, as it was all new to him.

By and by the giantess brought an immense clothes-wringer from a shelf, and having fastened it to the side of the big wash tub began to wring out the clothes.

Prince Fiddlecumdoo had never seen a clothes-wringer before, and so pleased was he with the novelty of it that he leaned far out of the pocket to watch it work. But, unfortunately, he lost his balance, and before he knew what had happened to him had fallen from the pocket and lay sprawling on one of the giant's shirts, which was just then passing through the wringer.

The woman did not notice his fall, and the next instant he was drawn between the two great rollers, and came out on the other side as thin and flat as a sheet of paper.

Then the giant's wife saw what she had done, and realizing how serious was the Prince's condition, the good lady was much grieved over the accident. She picked Fiddlecumdoo up and tried to stand him on his feet, but he was so thin that at the least draft he fluttered like a flag, while a puff of wind would blow him completely over.

"Dear me!" exclaimed the woman, sorrowfully, "whatever can we do with you in that shape?"



"I really do not know what will become of me," replied the Prince. "I am certainly no good in this condition. I can not even walk across the room without toppling over. Can not you manage to push me together again?" The giantess tried to do this, but the Prince was so sharp that his edges hurt her hands, and all she could do was to fold him up and carry him into the drawing-room, where she laid him carefully on the center-table.

Just before sundown the giant returned from Alaska, bringing several fat polar-bears in his bag; and scarcely had he set foot within the house before he inquired after his guest, the Prince.

"You will find him on the drawing-room table," said the giantess. "I accidentally ran him through the clothes-wringer this afternoon, and the poor boy is as thin as a pie crust. So I folded him up and put him away until you returned."

The giant immediately went to the table and unfolded Fiddlecumdoo, asking him how he felt.

"Very miserable," answered the Prince, "for I can not move at all when I am folded up. Where is my bicycle?"

The giant searched all his pockets, but could not find it.

"I must have lost it on my journey to Alaska," he said.

"Then how am I ever to get home again?" asked the Prince.

"That is a puzzle," the giant responded, thoughtfully. "I do not see how you could ride on a bicycle even if you had one, and you certainly can not walk far in your present condition."

"Not if the wind blows," acknowledged the Prince.

"Couldn't you go edgewise?" asked the giant after a moment's reflection.

"I might try," answered Fiddlecumdoo, hopefully.

So the giant stood him up, and he tried to walk edgewise. But whenever a breath of wind struck him he fell over at once, and several times he got badly crumpled up, so that the giant had to smooth him out again with his hands.

"This certainly will not do at all," declared the giant; "for not only are you getting wrinkled, but you are liable to be blown away; altogether. I have

just thought of a plan to get you back into the Valley of Mo again, and when you are in your own country your friends may get you out of the scrape the best way they can."

Hartilaf then made the Prince into a neat roll and tied a string around the middle, to hold it in place. Then he tucked the roll under his arm and carried it to the top of the mountain that stood between the two valleys. Placing the Prince carefully on the ground he started him rolling, and in a short time he had rolled down the mountain side into the Valley of Mo.

At first the people were much frightened, not knowing what this strange thing could be that had come rolling into their midst. They stood around, curiously looking at the roll, but afraid to touch it, when suddenly Fiddlecumdoo began to cry out. And then, so fearful was the sound, they all ran away as fast as their legs could carry them.

Prince Thinkabit, however, being more courageous than the rest, at last ventured to approach and cut the string that fastened the roll. Instantly it opened, and to their amazement the people saw what it was.

"Upon my word, it is brother Fiddlecumdoo!" cried Prince Thinkabit. "The giant must have stepped on him."

"No, indeed," said poor Fiddlecumdoo, "I've been run through a clothes-wringer, which is much worse than being stepped on."

With many expressions of pity the kind people stood the Prince up and helped him to the palace, where the King was greatly shocked at his sad plight. Fiddlecumdoo was so broad that the only thing he could sit down on was the sofa, and he was so thin that when Princess Pattycake sneezed he was blown half way across the room.

At dinner he could eat nothing that was not sliced as thin as a shaving, and so sad was his predicament that the King determined to ask the Wise Donkey what could be done to relieve his unfortunate son.

After hearing all the particulars of the accident, the Donkey said: "Blow him up."

"I did blow him up, for being so careless," replied the King; "but it didn't make him any thicker."

"What I mean," explained the Donkey, "is to bore a hole in the top of his head, and blow air into him until he resumes his natural shape. Then, if he takes care of himself, he soon will be all right again."

So the King returned to the palace and bored a hole in Fiddlecumdoo's head, and then pumped him full of air with a bicycle pump. When he had filled out into his natural shape they put a plug in the hole, and stopped it up; and after that Fiddlecumdoo could walk around as well as before his accident.

His only danger now was that he might get punctured; and, indeed, his friends found him one day lying in the garden, all flattened out again, the Prince having pricked his finger on a rose-bush and thereby allowed his air to escape. But they inflated him once again, and afterward he was more careful of himself.

Fiddlecumdoo had such a horror of being flat that, if his father ever wished to make him behave, he threatened to stick a pin into him, and that always had the desired effect.

After several years, the Prince, being a hearty eater, filled up with solid flesh, and had no further use for the air-pump; but his experience had made him so nervous that he never again visited the giant Hartilaf, for fear of encountering another accident.