

## CHAPTER 2 - THE MAGIC UMBRELLA

When they reached the neat frame cottage which stood on a high bluff a little back from the sea and was covered with pretty green vines, a woman came to the door to meet them. She seemed motherly and good, and when she saw Button-Bright, she exclaimed, "Goodness me! Who's this you've got, Trot?"

"It's a boy I've just found," explained the girl. "He lives way off in Phillydelphy."

"Mercy sakes alive!" cried Mrs. Griffith, looking into his upturned face. "I don't believe he's had a bite to eat since he started. Ain't you hungry, child?"

"Yes," said Button-Bright.

"Run, Trot, an' get two slices o' bread-an'-butter," commanded Mrs. Griffith. "Cut 'em thick, dear, an' use plenty of butter."

"Sugar on 'em?" asked Trot, turning to obey.

"No," said Button-Bright. "Just bread-an'-butter's good enough when you're hungry, and it takes time to spread sugar on."

"We'll have supper in an hour," observed Trot's mother briskly, "but a hungry child can't wait a whole hour, I'm sure. What are you grinning at, Cap'n Bill? How dare you laugh when I'm talking? Stop it this minute, you old pirate, or I'll know the reason why!"

"I didn't, mum," said Cap'n Bill meekly. "I on'y--"

"Stop right there, sir! How dare you speak when I'm talking?" She turned to Button-Bright, and her tone changed to one of much gentleness as she said, "Come in the house, my poor boy, an' rest yourself. You seem tired out. Here, give me that clumsy umbrella."

"No, please," said Button-Bright, holding the umbrella tighter.

"Then put it in the rack behind the door," she urged.

The boy seemed a little frightened. "I--I'd rather keep it with me, if you please," he pleaded.

"Never mind," Cap'n Bill ventured to say, "it won't worry him so much to hold the umbrella, mum, as to let it go. Guess he's afraid he'll lose it, but it ain't

any great shakes, to my notion. Why, see here, Button-Bright, we've got half-a-dozen umbrellas in the closet that's better ner yours."

"Perhaps," said the boy. "Yours may look a heap better, sir, but--I'll keep this one, if you please."

"Where did you get it?" asked Trot, appearing just then with a plate of bread-and-butter.

"It--it belongs in our family," said Button-Bright, beginning to eat and speaking between bites. "This umbrella has been in our family years, an' years, an' years. But it was tucked away up in our attic an' no one ever used it 'cause it wasn't pretty."

"Don't blame 'em much," remarked Cap'n Bill, gazing at it curiously. "It's a pretty old-lookin' bumbershoot." They were all seated in the vine-shaded porch of the cottage--all but Mrs. Griffith, who had gone into the kitchen to look after the supper--and Trot was on one side of the boy, holding the plate for him, while Cap'n Bill sat on the other side.

"It is old," said Button-Bright. "One of my great-great-grandfathers was a Knight--an Arabian Knight--and it was he who first found this umbrella."

"An Arabian Night!" exclaimed Trot. "Why, that was a magic night, wasn't it?"

"There's diff'rent sorts o' nights, mate," said the sailor, "an' the knight Button-Bright means ain't the same night you mean. Soldiers used to be called knights, but that were in the dark ages, I guess, an' likely 'nough Butt'n-Bright's great-gran'ther were that sort of a knight."

"But he said an Arabian Knight," persisted Trot.

"Well, if he went to Araby, or was born there, he'd be an Arabian Knight, wouldn't he? The lad's gran'ther were prob'ly a furriner, an' yours an' mine were, too, Trot, if you go back far enough; for Ameriky wasn't diskivered in them days."

"There!" said Trot triumphantly. "Didn't I tell you, Button-Bright, that Cap'n Bill knows ever'thing?"

"He knows a lot, I expect," soberly answered the boy, finishing the last slice of bread-and-butter and then looking at the empty plate with a sigh. "But if he really knows ever'thing, he knows about the Magic Umbrella, so I won't have to tell you anything about it."

"Magic!" cried Trot with big, eager eyes. "Did you say MAGIC Umbrel, Button-Bright?"

"I said 'Magic.' But none of our family knew it was a Magic Umbrella till I found it out for myself. You're the first people I've told the secret to," he added, glancing into their faces rather uneasily.

"Glory me!" exclaimed the girl, clapping her hands in ecstasy. "It must be jus' ELEGANT to have a Magic Umbrel!"

Cap'n Bill coughed. He had a way of coughing when he was suspicious.

"Magic," he observed gravely, "was once lyin' 'round loose in the world. That was in the Dark Ages, I guess, when the magic Arabian Nights was. But the light o' Civilization has skeered it away long ago, an' magic's been a lost art since long afore you an' I was born, Trot."

"I know that fairies still live," said Trot reflectively. She didn't like to contradict Cap'n Bill, who knew "ever'thing."

"So do I," added Button-Bright. "And I know there's magic still in the world--or in my umbrella, anyhow."

"Tell us about it!" begged the girl excitedly.

"Well," said the boy, "I found it all out by accident. It rained in Philadelphia for three whole days, and all the umbrellas in our house were carried out by the family and lost or mislaid or something, so that when I wanted to go to Uncle Bob's house, which is at Germantown, there wasn't an umbrella to be found. My governess wouldn't let me go without one, and--"

"Oh," said Trot. "Do you have a governess?"

"Yes, but I don't like her. She's cross. She said I couldn't go to Uncle Bob's because I had no umbrella. Instead she told me to go up in the attic and play. I was sorry 'bout that, but I went up in the attic, and pretty soon I found in a corner this old umbrella. I didn't care how it looked. It was whole and strong and big, and would keep me from getting wet on the way to Uncle Bob's. So off I started for the car, but I found the streets awful muddy, and once I stepped in a mud-hole way up to my ankle. 'Gee!,' I said, 'I wish I could fly through the air to Uncle Bob's.'

"I was holding up the open umbrella when I said that, and as soon as I spoke, the umbrella began lifting me up into the air. I was awful scared at first, but I

held on tight to the handle, and it didn't pull very much, either. I was going pretty fast, for when I looked down all the big buildings were sliding past me so swift that it made me dizzy, and before I really knew what had happened the umbrella settled down and stood me on my feet at Uncle Bob's front gate.

"I didn't tell anybody about the wonderful thing that had happened, 'cause I thought no one would believe me. Uncle Bob looked sharp at the thing an' said, 'Button-Bright, how did your father happen to let you take that umbrella?' 'He didn't,' I said. 'Father was away at the office, so I found it in the attic an' I jus' took it.' Then Uncle Bob shook his head an' said I ought to leave it alone. He said it was a fam'ly relic that had been handed down from father to son for many generations. But I told him my father had never handed it to me, though I'm his son. Uncle Bob said our fam'ly always believed that it brought 'em good luck to own this umbrella. He couldn't say why, not knowing its early history, but he was afraid that if I lost the umbrella, bad luck would happen to us. So he made me go right home to put the umbrella back where I got it. I was sorry Uncle Bob was so cross, and I didn't want to go home yet, where the governess was crosser 'n he was. I wonder why folks get cross when it rains? But by that time it had stopped raining--for awhile, anyhow--and Uncle Bob told me to go straight home and put the umbrella in the attic an' never touch it again.

"When I was around the corner, I thought I'd see if I could fly as I had before. I'd heard of Buffalo, but I didn't know just where it was, so I said to the umbrella, 'Take me to Buffalo.' Up in the air I went, just as soon as I said it, and the umbrella sailed so fast that I felt as if I was in a gale of wind. It was a long, long trip, and I got awful tired holding onto the handle, but just as I thought I'd have to let go, I began to drop down slowly, and then I found myself in the streets of a big city. I put down the umbrella and asked a man what the name of the city was, and he said 'Buffalo'."

"How wonderful!" gasped Trot. Cap'n Bill kept on smoking and said nothing.

"It was magic, I'm sure," said Button-Bright. "It surely couldn't have been anything else."

"P'raps," suggested Trot, "the umbrella can do other magic things."

"No," said the boy. "I've tried it. When I landed in Buffalo I was hot and thirsty. I had ten cents car fare, but I was afraid to spend it. So I held up the umbrella and wished I had an ice-cream soda, but I didn't get it. Then I wished for a nickel to buy an ice-cream soda with, but I didn't get that, either. I got

frightened and was afraid the umbrella didn't have any magic left, so to try it I said 'Take me to Chicago.' I didn't want to go to Chicago, but that was the first place I thought of, and I soon saw this was going to be another long journey, so I called out to the umbrella, 'Never mind. Stop! I guess I won't go to Chicago. I've changed my mind, so take me home again.' But the umbrella wouldn't. It kept right on flying, and I shut my eyes and held on. At last I landed in Chicago, and then I was in a pretty fix. It was nearly dark, and I was too tired and hungry to make the trip home again. I knew I'd get an awful scolding, too, for running away and taking the family luck with me, so I thought that as long as I was in for it, I'd better see a good deal of the country while I had the chance. I wouldn't be allowed to come away again, you know."

"No, of course not," said Trot.

"I bought some buns and milk with my ten cents, and then I walked around the streets of Chicago for a time and afterward slept on a bench in one of the parks. In the morning I tried to get the umbrella to give me a magic breakfast, but it won't do anything but fly. I went to a house and asked a woman for something to eat, and she gave me all I wanted and advised me to go straight home before my mother worried about me. She didn't know I lived in Philadelphia. That was this morning."

"This mornin'!" exclaimed Cap'n Bill. "Why, lad, it takes three or four days for the railroad trains to get to this coast from Chicago."

"I know," replied Button-Bright. "But I didn't come on a railroad train. This umbrella goes faster than any train ever did. This morning I flew from Chicago to Denver, but no one there would give me any lunch. A policeman said he'd put me in jail if he caught me begging, so I got away and told the umbrella to take me to the Pacific Ocean. When I stopped I landed over there by the big rock. I shut up the umbrella and saw a girl sitting on the rock, so I went up and spoke to her. That's all."

"Goodness me!" said Trot. "If that isn't a fairy story, I never heard one."

"It IS a fairy story," agreed Button-Bright. "Anyhow, it's a magic story, and the funny part of it is, it's true. I hope you believe me, but I don't know as I'd believe it myself if it hadn't been me that it happened to."

"I believe ev'ry word of it!" declared Trot earnestly.

"As fer me," said Cap'n Bill slowly, "I'm goin' to believe it, too, by'm'by, when I've seen the umbrel fly once."

"You'll see me fly away with it," asserted the boy. "But at present it's pretty late in the day, and Philadelphia is a good way off. Do you s'pose, Trot, your mother would let me stay here all night?"

"Course she would!" answered Trot. "We've got an extra room with a nice bed in it, and we'd love to have you stay just as long as you want to, wouldn't we, Cap'n Bill?"

"Right you are, mate," replied the old man, nodding his bald head. "Whether the umbrel is magic or not, Butt'n-Bright is welcome."

Mrs. Griffith came out soon after and seconded the invitation, so the boy felt quite at home in the little cottage. It was not long before supper was on the table and in spite of all the bread-and-butter he had eaten Button-Bright had a fine appetite for the good things Trot's mother had cooked. Mrs. Griffith was very kind to the children, but not quite so agreeable toward poor Cap'n Bill. When the old sailorman at one time spilled some tea on the tablecloth, Trot's mother flew angry and gave the culprit such a tongue-lashing that Button-Bright was sorry for him. But Cap'n Bill was meek and made no reply. "He's used to it, you know," whispered Trot to her new friend, and indeed, Cap'n Bill took it all cheerfully and never minded a bit.

Then it came Trot's turn to get a scolding. When she opened the parcel she had bought at the village, it was found she had selected the wrong color of yarn, and Mrs. Griffith was so provoked that Trot's scolding was almost as severe as that of Cap'n Bill. Tears came to the little girl's eyes, and to comfort her the boy promised to take her to the village next morning with his magic umbrella, so she could exchange the yarn for the right color.

Trot quickly brightened at this promise, although Cap'n Bill looked grave and shook his head solemnly. When supper was over and Trot had helped with the dishes, she joined Button-Bright and the sailorman on the little porch again. Dusk had fallen, and the moon was just rising. They all sat in silence for a time and watched the silver trail that topped the crests of the waves far out to sea.

"Oh, Button-Bright!" cried the little girl presently. "I'm so glad you're going to let me fly with you way to town and back tomorrow. Won't it be fine, Cap'n Bill?"

"Dunno, Trot," said he. "I can't figger how both of you can hold on to the handle o' that umbrel."

Trot's face fell. "I'll hold on to the handle," said Button-Bright, "and she can hold on to me. It doesn't pull hard at all. You've no idea how easy it is to fly that way after you get used to it."

"But Trot ain't used to it," objected the sailor. "If she happened to lose her hold and let go, it's goodbye Trot. I don't like to risk it, for Trot's my chum, an' I can't afford to lose her."

"Can't you tie us together, then?" asked the boy.

"We'll see, we'll see," replied Cap'n Bill, and began to think very deeply. He forgot that he didn't believe the umbrella could fly, and after Button-Bright and Trot had both gone to bed, the old sailor went out into the shed and worked a while before he, too, turned into his "bunk." The sandman wasn't around, and Cap'n Bill lay awake for hours thinking of the strange tale of the Magic Umbrella before he finally sank into slumber. Then he dreamed about it, and waking or dreaming he found the tale hard to believe.