

Chapter V - The Home of the Puff-Pudgys

SO Twinkle and Chubbins, still holding hands, trotted along to the Puff-Pudgy mound, and it was strange how rough the ground now seemed to their tiny feet. They climbed up the slope of the mound rather clumsily, and when they came to the hole it seemed to them as big as a well. Then they saw that it wasn't a deep hole, but a sort of tunnel leading down hill into the mound, and Twinkle knew if they were careful they were not likely to slip or tumble down.

Mrs. Puff-Pudgy popped into the hole like a flash, for she was used to it, and waited just below the opening to guide them. So, Twinkle slipped down to the floor of the tunnel and Chubbins followed close after her, and then they began to go downward.

"It's a little dark right here," said Mrs. Puff-Pudgy; "but I've ordered the maid to light the candles for you, so you'll see well enough when you're in the rooms."

"Thank you," said Twinkle, walking along the hall and feeling her way by keeping her hand upon the smooth sides of the passage. "I hope you won't go to any trouble, or put on airs, just because we've come to visit you."

"If I do," replied Mrs. Puff-Pudgy, "it's because I know the right way to treat company. We've always belonged to the 'four hundred,' you know. Some folks never know what to do, or how to do it, but that isn't the way with the Puff-Pudgys. Hi! you, Teenty and Weenty--get out of here and behave yourselves! You'll soon have a good look at our visitors."

And now they came into a room so comfortable and even splendid that Twinkle's eyes opened wide with amazement.

It was big, and of a round shape, and on the walls were painted very handsome portraits of different prairie-dogs of the Puff-Pudgy family. The furniture was made of white clay, baked hard in the sun and decorated with paints made from blue clay and red clay and yellow clay. This gave it a gorgeous appearance. There was a round table in the middle of the room, and several comfortable chairs and sofas. Around the walls were little brackets with candles in them, lighting the place very pleasantly.

"Sit down, please," said Mrs. Puff-Pudgy. "You'll want to rest a minute before I show you around."

So Twinkle and Chubbins sat upon the pretty clay chairs, and Teenty and Weenty sat opposite them and stared with their mischievous round eyes as hard as they could.

"What nice furniture," exclaimed the girl.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Puff-Pudgy, looking up at the picture of a sad-faced prairie-dog; "Mr. Puff-Pudgy made it all himself. He was very handy at such things. It's a shame he turned out so obstinate."

"Did he build the house too?"

"Why, he dug it out, if that's what you mean. But I advised him how to do it, so I deserve some credit for it myself. Next to the Mayor's, it's the best house in town, which accounts for our high social standing. Weenty! take your paw out of your mouth. You're biting your claws again."

"I'm not!" said Weenty.

"And now," continued Mrs. Puff-Pudgy, "if you are rested, I'll show you through the rest of our house."

So, they got up and followed her, and she led the children through an archway into the dining-room. Here was a cupboard full of the cunningest little dishes Twinkle had ever seen. They were all made of clay, baked hard in the sun, and were of graceful shapes, and nearly as smooth and perfect as our own dishes.