

01 Paw Prints in the Snow

Holly and her family moved into their new house on the Saturday before Christmas. Holly didn't want to leave her classmates, but she tried to be brave. After all, she still had her best friend, Tippy, the little dog.

As the men carried furniture into the house, Tippy ran around happily and got under everyone's feet. "Let's put him outside for a while," Holly's father said after tripping over him again.

Holly took Tippy to the garden and played with him. She threw an old ball, and Tippy ran after it and brought it back. He loved the game, but soon Holly got bored. She went back inside and left Tippy outside.

Later, Holly went to bring him in. "Mum! Dad! Tippy is gone!" she cried. "He's run away!" she said, staring at a gap in the fence.

Her parents searched the streets full of Christmas shoppers. It was getting dark.

"He won't know his way home," Mum whispered, holding Dad's hand.

The next day was Christmas Eve. Holly decorated the tree, but her eyes were full of tears. "Tippy, I miss you so much," she said softly. "Where are you now?"

That night, Holly went to bed without dinner. At midnight, she woke up and looked out of the window. Snow covered the ground like a white blanket.

She opened the back door and stopped. "There are footprints," she whispered. "They're paw prints!" Holly followed them to a small shed. Inside, she saw Tippy sleeping on an old sack.

"Tippy! It's you!" she shouted. Tippy wagged his tail happily. "I miss you so much!" Holly cried. She hugged him tightly and ran home together.

With wet paws and happy hearts, Christmas had truly begun.

02 The Fisherman and the Devil

Once upon a time, there lived a kind and hardworking old fisherman by the sea. He went fishing every day to raise his family.

One afternoon, he went to sea as usual and threw his net into the water. "I hope today I can catch more fish," said the old man. When he pulled the net, it felt very heavy. "Oh! It must be a big catch!" he said excitedly. He used all his strength to pull the net onto the shore.

But there were no fish at all. Inside the net, he found only an old yellow copper bottle. "How strange," said the fisherman. "I could sell this bottle for ten gold coins!" He shook the bottle and felt something inside. "What could be in here?" he wondered. "Maybe I should open it before I sell it."

As soon as he opened the bottle, thick smoke came out and filled the air. The smoke grew bigger and darker. Suddenly, it became a fierce devil with sharp teeth.

"Hello, fisherman!" said the devil. "Thank you for saving my life. Now I'm going to eat you!"

The old fisherman was very frightened. "I saved you from the sea, and now you want to eat me?" he cried.

"Yes!" laughed the devil. "I waited for three hundred years, and no one came. Now I will eat whoever saves me!"

The fisherman thought quickly and said calmly, "Before you eat me, may I ask you a question?" "I don't believe you really came out of that small bottle."

"Watch carefully!" shouted the devil. He turned into smoke and went back into the bottle. The fisherman quickly closed the bottle tightly.

He smiled and threw it far into the deep blue sea.

03 Leopard and Jackal

One day, Leopard and Jackal went out hunting together. Leopard caught a goat, and Jackal brought home a cow. They tied the animals safely and went to bed.

That night, Leopard could not sleep. He was jealous of Jackal's cow. When he went outside, he found that the cow had given birth to a calf. Leopard was very annoyed. He secretly took the calf and put it with his goat.

In the morning, Jackal was shocked. "That calf is mine!" he said. "Only cows have calves." "Nonsense," said Leopard. "Let's go and ask Gazelle."

Gazelle was afraid of Leopard, so she said, "Calves used to come from cows. That's true. But maybe these days they can come from goats, too."

Jackal was unhappy and went to ask Hyena. But Hyena was also afraid of Leopard and did not tell the truth. Jackal felt desperate. "Let's go and ask Baboon," he said.

Baboon did not answer at once. He picked up a large stone and began to pluck it. The animals waited quietly.

At last, Leopard shouted, "What are you doing?" "I'm playing music from this stone," said Baboon. "Can't you hear it?" "You can't get music from an ordinary stone!" said Leopard.

Baboon smiled and said, "Music used to come from instruments. That's true. But these days, maybe it can come from stones, too."

The animals laughed. "Of course not!" they said. "You can't get music from a stone, and you can't get a calf from a goat!"

Leopard knew he was wrong. The calf was returned to Jackal.