

THE LITTLE MATCH GIRL – (adapted)

It was very cold; it was snowing fast, and was almost dark. In the cold and the darkness, there went along the street a poor little girl. She had no shoes. The little girl walked in bare feet which were red and blue with cold. In an old apron that she wore were bundles of matches, and she carried a bundle also in her hand. No one had bought any matches all day, and no one had given her even a penny.

Poor little girl! The snowflakes fell on her long blond hair. Lights shone in every window, and there came to her the savoury smell of roast goose, as it was New Year's Eve.

She sat down in a corner between two houses. She grew colder and colder; but she didn't dare to go home, for she had sold no matches, and could not bring a penny of money. Her father would certainly beat her; and, besides, it was cold enough at home, Because her house had holes in the roof.

Her hands were nearly frozen. She lit a match. A wonderful little light it was. It really seemed to the little girl as if she sat in front of a great fire. It burned and the little girl stretched out her feet to warm them also. How comfortable she was! But the flame went out, the fire vanished, and nothing remained but the little burned match in her hand.

She rubbed another match against the wall. It burned brightly, and where the light fell upon the wall it became transparent like a veil, so that she could see through it into the room. A white cloth was spread upon the table, on which was a beautiful china dinner service, while a roast goose, stuffed with apples and prunes, and sent forth a wonderful smell. And what was more delightful still, and wonderful, the goose jumped from the dish, with knife and fork still in its breast, and walked along the floor straight to the little girl.

But the match went out then, and nothing was left to her but the thick, damp wall.

She lit another match. And now she was under a most beautiful Christmas tree, larger and far more prettily trimmed than the one she had seen through the glass doors at the rich merchant's. There were lots of candles. The child stretched out her hands to them; then the match went out.

She saw them as stars in heaven, and one of them fell, forming a long trail of fire.

"Now some one is dying," murmured the child softly; for her grandmother, the only person who had loved her and who was now dead, had told her that whenever a star falls a soul goes up to the sky.

Just when the little girl was about to freeze for ever, a lady came out of the house and when she saw the child, she called to her husband.

The man picked up the freezing child and wrapped her in a blanket. The couple took her inside and laid her on the sofa in front of the roaring fire. The couple had no children and they decided they would look after the girl and make her their daughter for ever.