

The Secret of Snowflakes

A fairy tale by Vhrsti

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Once upon a time, in our block of flats, there lived a writer. He lived right at the very top, higher than anyone else had ever lived in any block of flats anywhere in the world. To get to his flat, he had to take the lift up, as high as it would go, then he had to get out and walk up several flights of stairs, because no lifts go as high as his flat.

When the blew wind outside, the top of the building swayed in the wind, just like an attraction at a funfair. On the other hand, when a heavy, cruel rain fell upon us down below, the writer, high up above the clouds, had the sun shining right onto his desk.

So there, in that unusual flat, high up in the clouds, the writer got used to his fairly solitary life, and it was no wonder that he rarely came down amongst us other tenants, when it was so far for him to travel. Mrs Kadeřábková from the fifth floor always said of him, with an important expression on her face, that he can see into God's own windows.

Well, maybe not into God's windows, but at the very least he can see into his assistant's windows.

At that time, amongst the clouds near the writer's window, there were two angels: the unusual, old Petronila, and her naughty nephew, Eliáš. Petronila worked as a maid – most of her time was spent scouring the clouds with a scrubbing-brush until they were sparkling white. And Elias, who was at that time working with Petronila on trial, was always at hand in case she needed him to run or fly somewhere, or if she needed something brought, or arranged. And these two angels, along with the writer, really did look into each other's windows.

But you really mustn't think of angels as enlightened, perfectly moral, and noble beings, without any character flaws which are typical for us people. Or at least not these two.

Eliáš and Petronila were, despite their natural warm-heartedness, industry, and sense of justice, a living embodiment of many remarkably bad habits, which you would never expect of angelic beings, such as fussiness, guilefulness, and sometimes even malice.

The teenage Eliáš loved to try the patience of his aging aunt, and by ever more inventive manners, and Petronila drove her nephew crazy with her compulsive sense for accuracy and order. So all the time they fought together, disputed, and quarrelled, and did all sorts of things to make each other even angrier. And from time to time, when they really couldn't take any more, then each of them would go to the writers window to complain about the other.

As if he didn't already know about it! He had to listen to their arguing and fighting, morning, noon, and night. His head had started aching long ago from their constant bickering, arguing, and fighting. It was only when Petronila sent Eliáš to take care of something down below on the Earth, or when she sent him up to Heaven, that things were peaceful for a while. But then, usually everything started anew, and with even greater intensity.

Like the time when Petronila starched Eliáš's bedding so much, that it was as hard as stone, and so it was no wonder that he got angry, because it was impossible to sleep in it. Then Eliáš borrowed from the writer a bottle of ink, and stealthily he poured it into Petronila's bucket of water when she was cleaning. Then, before his distracted aunt had noticed, she had

accidentally painted lots of clouds blue, and it took a lot of work to get them back to their proper colour and to get everything in order.

It was lucky for Eliáš that he hid at the writer's place, in a wardrobe, before his aunt found him. Otherwise she would have wiped her rag over his head in a wild rage!

And so it goes, always round and round in circles.

One day, an agonized Petronila came to the man of letters to complain about how her naughty nephew jumps from cloud to cloud, just like on a trampoline, so that hailstones as big as goose eggs fall from the clouds onto the ground below. The next day, an unhappy Eliáš knocked on the writer's window to ask if he had at least something small to eat, because Petronila had yet again cooked dill sauce for lunch, in spite of knowing how much he hates it.

Once their fighting reached such a stage that Petronila lost her temper and literally called Eliáš an imp! And as I am sure you know, for a boy angel this is very serious.

So the writer decided that he would write a fairy tale about Petronila and Eliáš. Partly to let people there down below know something about what is happening outside his windows on the top floor of the highest block of flats, and partly because the never-ending arguments of these angels was at times even quite amusing. And apart from that, with the non-stop arguments from the neighbouring clouds, he couldn't concentrate on anything else anyway.

Then an interesting thing happened: Petronila and Eliáš started to argue less, and almost forgot about thinking up new tricks to play on each other. You see, when they found out that the writer had decided to write a book about them, they put all of their efforts into finding out what he was actually writing, because like every proper novel-writer, he didn't want to give anyone anything to read through until it was finished. Every free moment they went to him and begged him to show them at least a sentence, at least a word.....but they couldn't persuade him.

Finally, when it was finished, he invited them both to his flat. He sat them down on his sofa, and he read them the whole work with great ceremony. And for the first time ever, Petronila and Eliáš finally totally agreed on something.

"It's outrageous!", they both said, after regaining their composure.

"I have never heard a worse fairy tale in all my life!", declared the uncompromising Eliáš.

And they immediately started on the writer:

"There's no truth in the comment that when nobody is looking I sleep leaning on my broom!" fussed Petronila.

"And I never go into Petronila's pantry to eat all of her sunflower seeds!" bellowed the raging Eliáš.

The writer, with his true account of their stormy household angered them so much, that they took his work, and they ripped it up in a rage into tiny pieces like confetti, and threw it out of the window. And because they were angelic beings, the tiny pieces of paper in their hands turned into snowflakes, and so it snowed on the Earth for the first time ever.

So even though no-one will ever read the writer's fairy tale, some good still came out of it. Petronila and Eliáš never quarrelled again, never played tricks on each other out of spite, and tried to come to a satisfying compromise with everything. And since that time, just to be on the safe side, the writer has only ever written fairy tales which he has thought up himself.

If it ever happens to you some Winter that a snowflake lands on your nose, then remember, maybe it isn't quite so ordinary after all. It might even be a tiny piece of the fairy tale about Petronila and Eliáš.