

Christmas Spider - Beginning Level Reader

This story takes place in Eastern Europe. Many years ago, there was a widow who lived in an earthen cabin in the woods with her eight, young children. They worked together and played together and were, generally, a happy family. On Christmas Eve they went out into the snowy woods and found a nice little evergreen tree to serve as their Christmas tree. They chopped it down and carried it home. That evening, the children cleaned the house while their mother cooked a nice warm soup and fresh, baked bread. After their bedtime story, the children hung their stockings on the fireplace mantel and got into their beds. They were very excited to wake up on Christmas Day the following morning, but after their long walk into the woods and helping their mother clean, they soon fell fast asleep. After cleaning up from dinner, the widow set the little tree up in the corner of the living room. The tree was nice, but she felt quite sad in her heart because she did not have enough money to decorate the tree. She had already spent what little money they had on very small gifts for her eight children and the ingredients for a pie that she would surprise them with after their modest Christmas dinner.

In her sadness, she found herself touching the branches of the small tree and said aloud that she was sorry that she had no decorations for their celebration, but that she was thankful for the little tree and that the tree was still beautiful. She blew out the candles and went to bed.

As one often finds in earthen cabins in the woods, there was a small spider who lived in a warm corner near the fireplace. The spider knew to hide in a crack when the family did their cleaning to avoid being swept away. The little spider had been watching and listening as the widow set up the Christmas tree and it felt sorry for the mother who simply wanted to have a nice holiday for her children. The spider was thankful for the home that it got to share with this lovely family and decided to create a special gift to surprise the family.

The little spider crawled down from its corner and went to the little tree and began to spin webs all throughout the tree. The spider worked for many hours to make its silky, web strands for each branch of the little tree. When the spider was finished, she was very tired and crawled back up to her little corner in the living room, near the fireplace, and went to sleep.

As it was Christmas Eve, Santa Claus was making his visits around the world and it was not long after the spider fell asleep that he arrived at the cabin in the woods where the widow lived with her eight children. As it should be when Santa Claus arrives, everyone was already asleep. He came down the chimney and looked around the clean, modest home. He saw that the children had hung their stockings on the mantle of the fireplace that he had just come through. He saw the little spider in the corner and then noticed the little tree that was covered in spider webs.

Now Santa knows a great deal about the naughty and the nice things that go on inside of homes. He knew that this web-covered tree was not because of a naughty spider that was trying to ruin a family's Christmas but that it was meant to be a kind gift to the family to bring them Joy on Christmas morning. Santa Claus also knows that most mothers would not be happy to wake up and find their Christmas tree covered in cobwebs. So, after Santa filled the children's stockings that hung on the fireplace mantel, he worked a little Christmas magic. He went to the tree and turned each strand of the little spider's web into pure silver. He also reached deep into his sack of gifts and found a special, tiny treat for the kind little spider who had worked so hard to try to bring joy to the widow and her children. After he took a last look

around the cabin, Santa Claus gave his magical nod that returns him to his sleigh, and he moved on to the next home.

When the sun came up on Christmas morning, it shone into the windows of the small cabin and awoke the children, who quickly woke their mother so that they could go into the living room and see what Santa may have left in their stockings. The bustle of the family entering the living room also awoke the little spider who was still resting from her hard work the night before. The sun that was shining into the living room windows hit the tree in such a way that every silvery strand was shimmering and glistening in the sunlight and it created such a magical sight that the children squealed and clapped their hands in delight. The widow was shocked and so full of gratitude that tears filled her eyes. The spider watched and was also filled with joy that her hard work was so appreciated. She would have been shocked to see her webs turned to silver, but when she saw the gift that Santa had left, she knew that he must have used his Christmas magic to turn her webs into silver for the family.

The family very much enjoyed their Christmas and because of the riches left on their tree, they never again had to struggle or worry about having decorations for their Christmas tree each year. As the story of the spider and the widow spread, families all over the world began to place silver strands on the branches of their Christmas trees to honor the little spider. That is how the tradition of using tinsel began. In many countries in Eastern Europe (especially in the Ukraine), it is also a custom to make a beautiful, beaded spider and place it on their Christmas tree, along with the other ornaments, to remind everyone of the kindness and giving that is shared during the season.

Christmas Spider - Intermediate Level Reader

This story takes place in Eastern Europe. Many years ago, there was a poor widow who lived in a modest, earthen cabin in the woods with her eight, young children. They worked together and played together and were, generally, a happy family.

On the morning of December 24, they put on their boots, coats, gloves and scarves and went out into the snowy woods to search for their Christmas tree. They found a nice little evergreen tree to serve as their Christmas tree that year. They carefully chopped it down and carried it home and set it up in a corner of the living room next to the fireplace.

That afternoon, the family worked hard to prepare for their Christmas celebration. The mother baked a fresh loaf of bread and prepared a nice warm soup. The children cleaned and organized the little cabin and wrapped a special gift that they had made for their mother from beautiful rocks and pinecones that they had gathered from the woods in which they lived. They wrapped the present in a flour sack that they had saved and cleaned for just this occasion, and carefully placed it under the empty little tree. You see, they were too poor to afford lights or ornaments for their tree, but they had a tree, nonetheless.

After their dinner and bedtime story, the children hung their stockings on the fireplace mantel and got into their beds. They were very excited to wake up on Christmas Day the following morning, but after their long walk into the woods and helping their mother clean, they soon fell fast asleep. After cleaning up from dinner, the widow sat near the fireplace to rest and took a long look at the little tree. The tree was nice, but she felt quite sad in her heart because she did

not have enough money to decorate the tree. She had already spent what little money they had on very small gifts for her eight children and the ingredients for a pie that she would surprise them with after their modest Christmas dinner the following evening.

In her sadness, she found herself reaching out to touch the branches of the small tree and caressed the fragrant limbs with her fingers. She said aloud, to no one in particular, how sorry she was that she had no decorations for their celebration, but that she was thankful for the little tree and that the tree was still beautiful. The widow then added a log to the fire, blew out the candles that the family used for light in their little cabin, and she went to bed.

As one often finds in earthen cabins in the woods, there was a small spider who lived in a warm corner near the fireplace. As was always the case when the family did their deep cleaning, the spider knew to hide in a crack in the walls to avoid being swept away or scooped up and set outside in the snowy woods with the other, less fortunate spiders. The little spider had been watching and listening as the widow set up the Christmas tree and it felt sorry for the mother who simply wanted to have a nice holiday for her children. The spider was thankful for the home that it got to share with this lovely family and decided to create a special Christmas gift to surprise the family and, hopefully, bring joy to the sad widow.

The little spider crawled down from its corner and went to the Christmas tree and began to spin webs all throughout the little evergreen. The spider worked for many hours to make its silky, web strands for each branch of the little tree. When the spider was finished, she was very tired and crawled back up to her cozy corner in the living room, near the fireplace, and went to sleep.

As it was Christmas Eve, Santa Claus was making his visits around the world and it was not long after the spider fell asleep that he arrived at the cabin in the woods where the widow lived with her eight children. As it should be when Santa Claus arrives, everyone was already asleep. He came down the chimney and looked around the clean, modest home. He saw that the children had hung their stockings on the mantle of the fireplace that he had just come through. He saw the tiny spider in the corner and then noticed the little tree that was covered in spider webs.

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When the sun came up on Christmas morning, it shone into the windows of the small cabin and awoke the children, who quickly woke their mother so that they could go into the living room and see what Santa may have left in their stockings. The bustle of the family entering the living room also awoke the little spider who was still resting from her hard work the night before. The sun that was shining into the living room windows hit the tree in such a way that every silvery strand was shimmering and glistening in the sunlight and it created such a magical sight that the

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