

SANTA`S ELF TRAPPED!



Sirpa Kostiander

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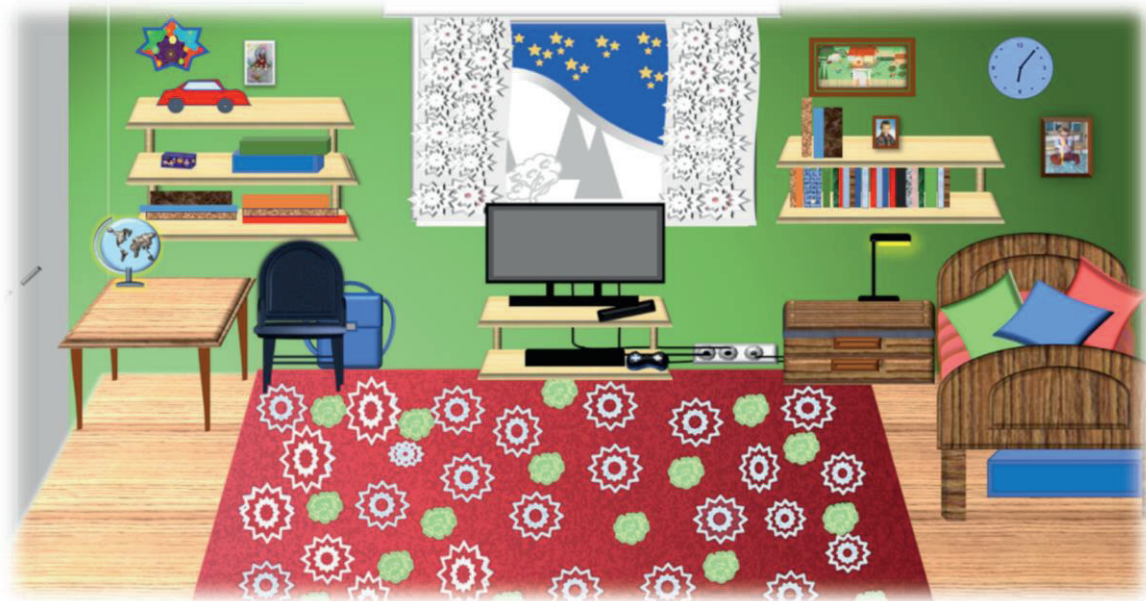
Hi, I'm Emil.

Chapter 1

It was a frosty day in November, and the last rays of sunshine were sparkling in the northern sky. The long Polar night was closing in.

Emil sat on the floor in his room. The sun made his fair, reddish hair gleam. Emil's eyes glared and he was disgruntled. Yesterday had been his eighth birthday and everything had gone wrong. He had wished for a castle with knights as a present but hadn't got one. He'd received a lot of other quite nice presents, too, but no castle.

What's more, his cousin, a little girl, had blown out his birthday cake candles. The grown-ups had just laughed. Mum had, of course, relit the candles, but it just wasn't the same thing. His little cousins had smothered his board game with chocolate, too, and some pieces were missing. Emil was particular about his board games, everything had to be in order and intact. The DVD discs had been covered in dirty fingerprints, and they all had to be washed and rearranged into their proper covers. Cleaning had been exhausting, though mum had helped.



Now Emil was angry. He looked at the carpet on the floor and ran his hand across it. It was soft and had a star-like pattern, which somehow reminded him of the adventures of Aladdin. Why had mum put a carpet like this in his room?

Ok, it was soft and looked nice, but it was useless for playing on. It was no good to bounce a ball on, and toy characters couldn't stand up on it.

On a sudden impulse, Emil started to roll the carpet up. "Out of my way, nuisance!" he exclaimed. The carpet was heavy, and it gave him little electric shocks, which irritated him even more. His cheeks were glowing, and his forehead was sweating as he worked away.

Then something strange appeared from underneath the carpet. What was that? With eyes bulging the boy stared at the hatch in the floor.

The hatch stood out from the lighter floorboards and was about the size of a school desk, with gold-coloured edges and was fitted with a buckle-like handle of the same colour. Emil tried to lift the hatch. It was heavy. The boy looked around and noticed

his dressing gown peeping out of the wardrobe. In a flash, he tied its belt around the handle and wrenched the hatch open.

He was astonished as he gazed at an open hole in the floor. “Wow, my room’s got a secret cellar.” Emil whispered quietly to himself.

On the right of the narrow steps there was a light switch, which he pressed as he stepped down. As he went past it the light dazzled his eyes, and it took a while before the layout of the cellar came into focus.

The room wasn’t very big, and a small window was covered with cardboard. Emil climbed onto a wooden box, tore the cardboard away and gave the room a bit more light. Now he could see more details. There were a lot of old things, like a blue dresser with white trimmings painted on its doors. There was an old lamp on a small brown table, next to a chair that had one broken armrest. There was a child’s bed in the middle of the floor. Sitting on the bed was a brown teddy bear that was missing an eye and an ear. Behind the teddy was a laced white pillow and a blue starry patterned blanket on the bed.



“Wow, what a place!” Emil sighed in wonder. He was just bending to open the blue dresser’s door, when he heard mum’s voice from upstairs. He needed to be quick. Clambering up the stairs, the boy thought that he probably shouldn’t be in the cellar without permission. He closed the hatch as quietly as he could, and just as Emil had rolled the carpet into place, mum opened the door and asked

“Didn’t you hear me call you for dinner? Quick now, before it gets cold.”

Emil’s mother wrote articles and stories and whenever she was writing, she was so engrossed in her work that she knew nothing of the outside world. She babbled on and giggled to herself, and got in a flap with the machine, when nothing she was doing was going well for her. Sometimes she grabbed her hair and pulled it up towards the heavens, screaming:

“Oh, no, you smoking cyber spaceship and your burnt gingerbread brains!”

She almost always threw a tantrum, growled and kicked over the wastepaper basket.

These were ideal moments to do what one wanted, especially to slip away down a cellar full of interesting things.

On his way to school, Emil thought about his cellar. Should he tell the secret to his friends?

The answer came immediately in the schoolyard. The velcro band on his backpack had picked up his mother's green striped woolen sock, which Emil hadn't noticed. His friends, though, had noticed it straight away, and were already teasing him about it.

"Look a walking washing line, haha!" they jeered.

Before Emil could do anything, Timmy had snapped the sock away and waved it mischievously in front of Emil saying: "A comfort cloth so you won't miss mummy, are you going to sniff it all day?"

Laughter and giggling. Emil flared up and threw a snowball at the nearest boy teasing him. This, of course, developed into a real snowball brawl. During the brawl, the sock had changed hands and had now settled on the edge of Willy's hoody.

As is common in most schools, news of the snowball fight spread like wildfire, and the boys' school day started with a trip to the headmaster. Luckily nothing more serious had happened, and the headmaster's call for apologies from both sides was honoured. The headmaster scolded them and spoke in length about how wrong it was to bully and fight. He said sternly that this behaviour would not be allowed at school. Then he announced that he wouldn't give them detention, but he would phone all their parents, and discuss with them about suitable punishments.

"No!" screamed, Emil quietly to himself. He was sure he'd get grounded, and he had already arranged to go bobsledding in the evening at the Pine Gravel Pit. All the village kids would be there. He'd been given a new bobsled for his birthday, and it would be great to test it there, and give his friends a good race.

Emil became even more upset as he thought about this.

"So, elves are on their way, well, i`m going to trap Santa`s elves, and not let them free till Santa pays me five euros for each one!"

Second grade Emil`s birthday plans go completely wrong. He doesn`t get the gift he wanted, a castle. His cousin blew out his candles and all the grown-ups just laughed. The young lad is peeved and his antics are frowned upon by Santa`s elf, Zak. Zak decides to teach Emil a lesson, but gets into a bit of a jam himself...

