Lovereading4kids.co.uk

Helping you choose books for children

0-5 5-7 7-9 9-12 12+

opening extract from

Hugo Pepper

written by

Paul Stewart and Chris Riddell

published by

Random House

All text is copyright of the author and illustrator

please print off and read at your leisure.



"They lived in a little cabin deep in the ice forests of the Frozen North . . ."

The Snow Giant's Gift

Once upon a time, there were two reindeer herders called Harvi and Sarvi Runter-Tun-Tun. Harvi was tall and bony, Sarvi was short and round. Both of them had beady eyes, snub noses and long hair, which they tied up and kept hidden beneath their three-pointed reindeer herder hats.



They loved each other dearly and, though they were not blessed with children, they were happy and healthy, and counted themselves the luckiest reindeer herders in the whole wide world.



They lived in a little cabin deep in the ice forests of the Frozen North, where the summers are short and the winters are very, very long. Every summer, Harvi and Sarvi milked their reindeer beneath the midnight sun. Then, as the days grew short and the nights grew long, they would return to their cabin in the ice forests.

There, all through the long winter, beneath the ice moon, they made reindeer cheese - the finest in the whole of the Frozen North. People came from far and wide just to taste their 'moose-milk mozzarella' and 'elk gorgonzola', while their famous 'red nose brie' was once served to no less a person than Queen Rita at a fabulous banquet aboard the *S.S. Euphonia*.



If they had wanted to, Harvi and Sarvi could have sold every truckle of reindeer cheese they produced,



but they didn't. And this is the reason why. Although they were famous cheesemakers, the Runter-Tun-Tuns were simple reindeer herders at heart and were always careful to observe the ways of the Frozen North.

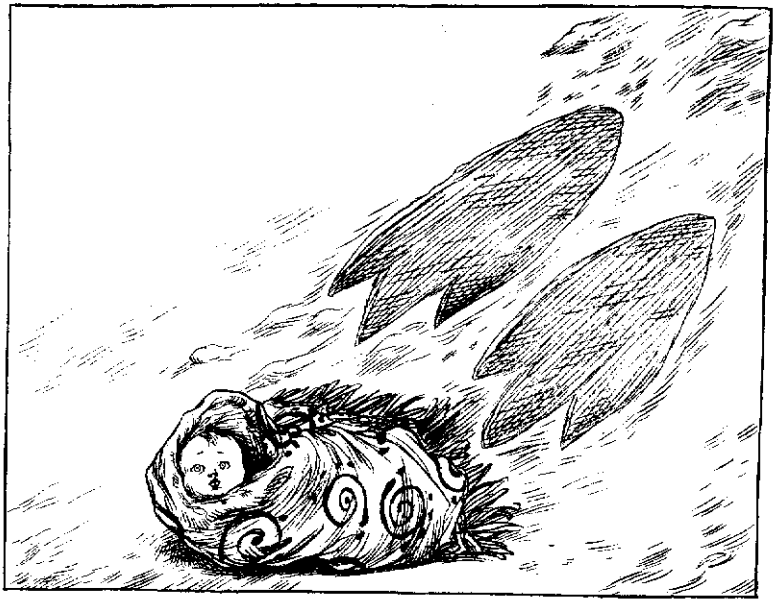
One of those ways was to save a single truckle from every batch of cheese and leave it outside the cabin door last thing before going to bed. This was to keep the snow giants who lived in the ice forests happy. Neither Harvi nor Sarvi had ever actually seen a snow giant, but they both knew that they existed because they'd seen their giant footprints in the snow. These footprints were huge – as wide as a milk pail and with three long toes splayed out at the front of each massive foot.



So, as every reindeer herder knew, it made sense to keep such fearsome creatures happy. Each night, the Runter-Tun-Tuns left the cheese outside and each morning there would be cheese crumbs on the cabin doorstep and huge footprints which led off into the forest of ice. Sometimes the snow giants would leave little presents of their own, like sprigs of icicle-trees or a frozen fir-cone or two. As the wolves howled at the moon and hungry polar bears prowled in the distance, Harvi and Sarvi felt protected by their snow giants.

Along with the sprigs and fir-cones, the Runter-Tun-Tuns believed that the snow giants also brought them luck. Then, one dark snowy night, the snow giants brought Harvi and Sarvi something else. When Sarvi opened the door to their cabin and looked down - expecting to see cheese crumbs and a frozen fir-cone or two - she found herself looking into two bright twinkling blue eyes. She gave a high-pitched squeak of surprise, because there on the doorstep in the early light of dawn was a little baby wrapped up tightly in a blanket.

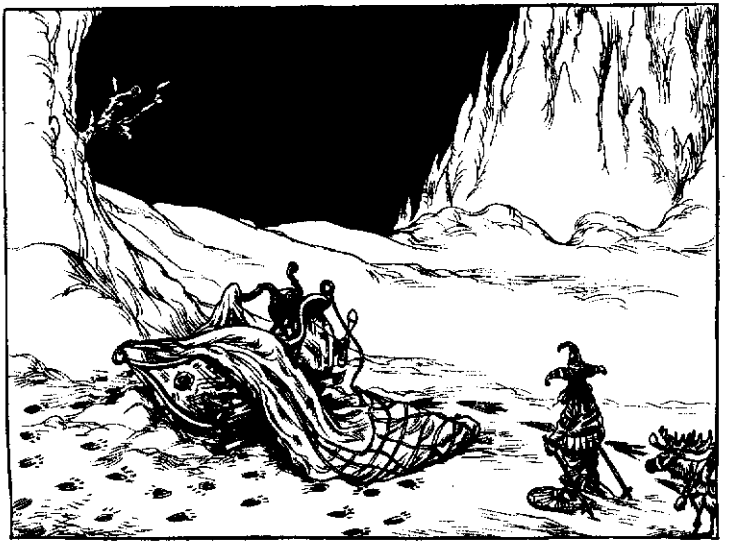
She knelt down, scooped the baby up in her arms and hugged it tightly. It gurgled contentedly.



Then she turned and rushed back inside, calling excitedly to her husband, 'Harvi! Harvi! Wake up! Look what the snow giants have brought us!'

Now the Runter-Tun-Tuns might have been simple reindeer herders at heart, but they knew that where there was a baby, there had to be parents somewhere close by. So Harvi put on his snow shoes, packed up a reindeer and set off to search the ice forests.

It was late afternoon with the low sun casting long shadows when he stumbled across it.



A strange sled, overturned, half-draped in a sheet of silk - and covered in polar bear claw marks. Next to it was all that was left of the baby's parents.

A gentleman's boot and a lady's glove.



There were polar bear tracks and snow-giant footprints in the snow, and the telltale signs of a mighty struggle. Harvi rolled up the silk sheet and turned the sled back over. Then - along with the gentleman's boot and the lady's glove - he stashed the sheet behind the seat, hitched the

sled to his reindeer and towed it back to the cabin. There he stored it carefully at the back of the milking shed and went inside to tell Sarvi the sad news.

And it *was* sad news. But deep down, both Harvi and Sarvi were also happy, because now they had a little boy to call their own. His real parents may have been eaten by polar bears, but the snow giants had saved the baby and brought him to the Runter-Tun-Tuns, and they felt proud and honoured to have been chosen for the special task of raising the infant.

They also felt a little bit guilty, because although they loved the little baby and looked after him as if he was their own, teaching him about reindeer herding and cheesemaking and the ways of the Frozen North – and even called him by the name stitched into the back of the cardigan they found him in, there was one thing they *didn't* do.

They didn't try to find out where he came from.

Harvi and Sarvi knew they should have, but they were just simple reindeer herders and they were frightened of losing their little boy. So when people arrived from far-flung places to buy their cheese,

the Runter-Tun-Tuns didn't ask or answer any questions. They simply smiled and nodded and wrapped up the truckles to keep them fresh - and always, always made sure that there was one left over for the snow giants.

And the years passed . . .

Then one day, ten and a half years later, the boy didn't come in from milking. When Harvi went to the milking shed, he found him at the very back, behind the woodpile, staring at the battered sled that had lain hidden there for all those years. He was holding a lady's glove in one hand and a gentleman's boot in the other.