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The Folk of the Faraway Tree (Enchanted Wood®)

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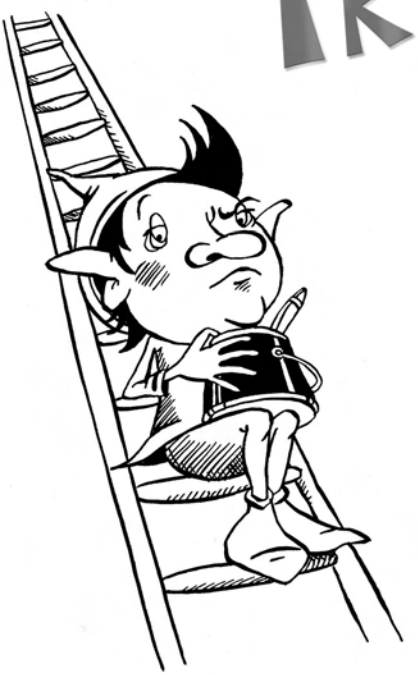
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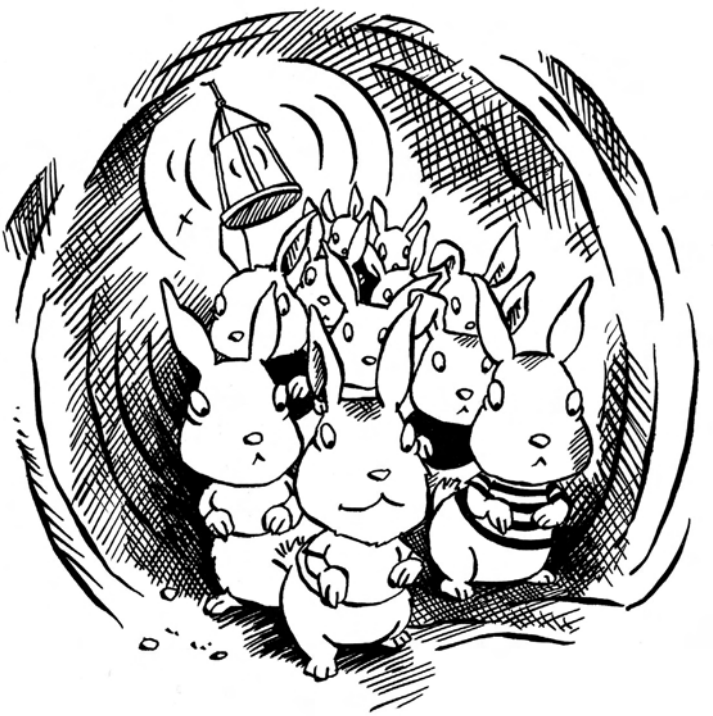
THE FOLK OF THE FARAWAY TREE



Illustrated by Jan McCafferty

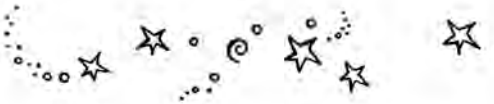
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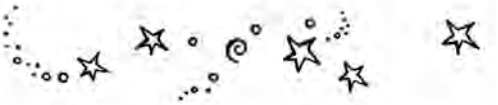
Contents



1.	Curious Connie comes to stay	467
2.	Up the Faraway Tree	475
3.	Connie meets a few people	483
4.	Dinner with Moon-Face	492
5.	Off to Jack-and-the-Bean-Stalk	499
6.	To the Land of Giants	507
7.	Up the ladder-that-has-no-top	515
8.	The Faraway Tree again	523
9.	Nursery Rhyme Land	530
10.	Miss Muffet's spider	538
11.	Back at Moon-Face's	546
12.	Saucepan is very cross	554
13.	In the Land of Dame Snap	562
14.	Dame Snap's school	570
15.	The Land of Tea Parties	578
16.	In the Land of Secrets	586
17.	Connie in trouble	595
18.	Off to find Connie's lost voice	603



Contents continued



19. The Land of Enchantments 612

20. What is wrong with the Faraway Tree? 620

21. Down to the jewel caves 628

22. The rabbits come to help 635

23. The Land of Know-Alls 643

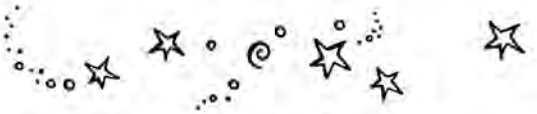
24. A surprise for the Trolls 652

25. The Land of Treats 661

26. Goodbye to the Faraway Tree 668



1. Curious Connie comes to stay



One day Mother came to the three children, as they worked out in the garden, and spoke to them.

'Joe! Beth! Frannie! Listen to me for a minute. I've just had a letter from an old friend of mine, and I'm wondering what to do. I'll read it to you.'

Mother read the letter:

'DEAR OLD FRIEND,

'Please will you do something for me? I have not been well for some time, and the doctor says I must go away on a long holiday. But, as you know, I have a little girl, Connie, and I cannot leave her by herself. So would you please let her stay with you until I come back? I will, of course, pay you well.

Your three children are good and well behaved, and I feel that their friendship will be very good for my little Connie, who is, I am afraid, rather spoilt. Do let me know soon.

'Your old friend,

'LIZZIE HAYNES.'

The three children listened in silence. Then Beth spoke.

'Oh, Mother! We've seen Connie once, and she was very selfish and spoilt – and so curious too, sticking her nose into everything! Have we *got* to have her?'

'No, of course not,' said Mother. 'But I could do with some extra money, you know – and I do think Connie would soon settle down and stop being spoilt if she lived with us. It would be good for her!'

'And I suppose we should help people if we can,' said Joe. 'All right, Mother – we'll have Connie, shall we, and just teach her not to be spoilt!'

'We'll be able to show her the Enchanted Wood and the Faraway Tree!' said Frannie.

'Yes – we used to have our cousin Rick, but now he's gone back home,' said Beth. 'We'll have Connie instead! If you put a little bed into the corner of Frannie's and my room, Mother, we can have her in there.'

Mother smiled at them and went indoors to write to her old friend, to say yes, she would have Connie. The children looked at one another.

'We'll soon tick Connie off if she starts any of her high-and-mighty ways here,' said Beth.

'And we'll stop her poking her nose into everything too!' said Frannie. 'Well – what about taking her up the Faraway Tree and letting her peep in at the Angry Pixie? He'll soon tick her off!'

The others giggled. They could see that they would

have a bit of fun with Connie. She was always so curious and inquisitive about everything and everyone. Well – she would get a few shocks in the Enchanted Wood!

'It will be fun showing somebody else the Faraway Tree, and all the people there,' said Joe. 'I wonder what Curious Connie will think of the Saucepan Man, and Silky and Moon-Face!'

'And I wonder what they will think of *her*!' said Beth. 'What a lovely name for her, Joe – Curious Connie! I'll always think of her like that now!'

Curious Connie was to come the next week. Beth helped Mother put a little bed into the corner of the girls' bedroom. Connie wasn't very big. She was the same age as Frannie, but she was a fussy eater, and hadn't grown as big as Frannie. She was a pretty, dainty little thing, who liked wearing nice clothes.

'Brush that untidy hair, Frannie, before you meet Connie,' said Mother. Frannie's hair had grown rather long, and needed a trim.

The children went to meet the bus. 'There it is!' cried Joe. 'Coming round the corner. And there's Curious Connie on it, look – all dressed up as if she was going to a party!'

Connie jumped off the bus, carrying a bag. Joe politely took it from her, and gave her a welcoming kiss. The girls welcomed her too. Connie looked them up and down.



'Huh, you do look like country kids!' she said.

'Well, that's what we are,' said Beth. 'You'll look like us soon, too. I hope you'll be very happy here, Connie.'

'I saw Rick the other day,' said Connie, as she walked daintily along the lane with the others. 'He told me the most ridiculous stories!'

'*Rick* did! But he's not a story-teller!' said Joe, in surprise. 'What sort of stories did he tell you?'

'Well, he told me about a silly Enchanted Wood and a ridiculous Faraway Tree, and some stupid people called Moon-Face and Dame Washalot and Mister

Watzisname, and a crazy fellow called the Saucepan Man who was deaf,' said Connie.

'Oh! Do you think all those were silly and stupid?' said Joe at last.

'I didn't believe in any of it,' said Connie. 'I don't believe in things like that – fairies or elves or magic or anything. It's old fashioned.'

'Well, we must be *very* old fashioned then,' said Beth. 'Because we not only believe in the Enchanted Wood and the Faraway Tree and love our funny friends there, but we go to see them too – and we visit the lands at the top of the tree as well! We did think of taking you too!'

'It wouldn't be much use,' said Connie. 'I won't believe in them at all.'

'What – not even if you saw them?' cried Frannie.

'I don't think so,' said Connie. 'I mean – it all sounds quite impossible to me. Really it does.'

'Well, we'll see,' said Joe. 'It looks as if we'll have some fun with you, up the Faraway Tree, Connie! I would like to see the Angry Pixie's face if you tell him you don't believe in him!'

'Let's take her tomorrow!' said Beth, with a giggle.

'All right!' said Joe. 'But we'd better not let her go into any land at the top of the tree. She'd never get down again!'

'What land? At the top of the *tree*? A land at the top of a tree!' said Connie, puzzled.

'Yes,' said Beth. 'You see, the Enchanted Wood is quite near here, Connie. And in the middle of it is the biggest, tallest tree in the world – very magic. It's called the Faraway Tree, because its top is so far away, and always sticks up into some strange magic land there – a different one every week.'

'I don't believe a word of it,' said Connie.

'All right. Don't, then,' said Frannie, beginning to feel angry. 'Look – here we are, home – and there's Mother looking out for us!'

Soon Connie and the girls were unpacking Connie's bag and putting her things away into two empty drawers in the bedside cabinet. Beth saw that there were no really sensible country clothes at all. However could Connie climb the Faraway Tree in a flimsy dress? She should have some old clothes! Well, she and Frannie had plenty so they could lend her some.

'I suppose you are longing to show Connie the Enchanted Wood!' said Mother, when they went down to dinner.

'Oh – do *you* believe in it too?' said Connie, surprised that a grown-up should do so.



'Well, I haven't seen the tree, but I have seen some of the people that come down it,' said Mother.

'Look – here's one of them now!' said Joe, jumping up as he saw someone coming in at the front gate. It was Moon-Face, his round face beaming happily. He carried a note in his hand.



'Hello!' said Joe, opening the door. 'Come in and have some dinner, Moon-Face. We've got a little friend here – the girl I was telling you about – Connie.'

'Ah – how do you do?' said Moon-Face, going all polite as he saw the dainty, pretty Connie. 'I've come to ask you to dinner with me and Silky tomorrow, Connie. I hope you can come. Any friend of the children's is welcome up the Faraway Tree!'

Connie shook hands with the strange, round-faced little man. She hardly knew what to say. If she said she would go to dinner with him she was as good as saying that she believed in all this nonsense about the Faraway Tree – and she certainly didn't!

'Moon-Face, you have put poor Connie into a fix,' said Joe, grinning. 'She doesn't believe in you, you see – so how can she come to dinner with a person she doesn't believe in, at a place she thinks isn't there?'

'Quite easily,' said Moon-Face. 'Let her think it is a dream. Let her think *I'm* a dream.'

'All right,' said Connie, who really was longing to go to dinner with him, after all she had said. 'All right. I'll come. I'll think you're just a dream. You probably are, anyway.'

'And I'll think *you* are a dream too,' said Moon-Face politely. 'Then it will be nice for both of us.'

'Well, I'm not a dream!' said Connie, rather indignantly. 'I should have thought you could see quite well I'm real, and not a dream.'

Moon-Face grinned. 'I hope you're a good dream, and not a bad one, if you *are* a dream,' he said. 'Well – see you all tomorrow. Four o'clock, in my house at the top of the tree. Will you walk up, or shall I send down cushions on a rope for you?'

'We'll walk up,' said Joe. 'We really want Connie to meet the people who live in the tree. She won't believe in any of them, but they'll believe in her all right – and it might be rather funny!'

'It certainly will!' said Moon-Face, and went off, grinning again, leaving Silky's polite invitation note in Connie's small hand.

'I'm not sure I like him very much,' said Connie, taking the last bun off the plate.

'What – not like *Moon-Face*!' cried Frannie, who really loved the strange little man. 'He's the dearest, kindest, funniest, nicest –'

'All right, all right,' said Connie. 'Don't go on for hours like that. I'll go tomorrow – but I still say it's all make-believe and pretence, and not really real!'

'You wait and see!' said Joe. 'Come on – we've time for a game before bed . . . and tomorrow, Connie, tomorrow, you will go up the Faraway Tree!'