

The weather had turned warmer, and the light snow had packed sufficiently to make the roads passable. Stella's grandfather had fetched around the white-faced pony, which was now standing near the door, saddled and ready to carry its precious burden. The jovial host was standing on the hearth, back to the fire, capped and mittened, while farewells were exchanged and invitations for future visits were extended.

The Blessed Mother accosted her child, and said: "Now, darling, what do you say to our good and holy friends?" There was not the slightest trace of emotion in the musical young voice, as He addressed the man before Him:

"Owing to the goodness of your heart, Saint Nicholas, your soul-stirring love for My Father's little children, your kindness and charity to the sick and poor, you shall be chosen above all people, to bring comfort and happiness to millions and millions of hearts. I will ask of My Father, and he will give you a team of snow-white reindeer, whose sparkling harness and jingling bells shall be seen and heard only by the Angels. On the twenty-fourth night of every December, till the end of time, you shall assume your natural form, you will be as you appear now, your merry blue eyes twinkling with joy and happiness, your warm heart overflowing with heavenly love, the spirit of which shall pervade the world, it will enter into the hearts of all the people. Their stores and factories shall be at your disposal on that night. The white robed angels fluttering between Heaven and Earth will fill