

THE LITTLE MATCH GIRLS

On a cold New Year's Eve, a poor, young girl tries to sell matches in the street. She is already shivering from cold and early hypothermia, and she is walking barefoot having lost her two large slippers. Still, she is too afraid to go home, because her father will beat her for not selling any matches, and also as the many cracks in their shack can't keep out the cold wind. The girl takes shelter in a nook or alley and sits down.

The girl lights the matches to warm herself. In their glow she sees several lovely visions, starting with a warm stove, then a luxurious holiday feast where the goose almost jumps out at her, and then a magnificent Christmas tree larger than the one at the rich merchant's house. The girl looks skyward and sees a shooting star; she then remembers her late grandmother saying that such a falling star means someone is dying and is going to Heaven. As she lights the next match, she sees a vision of her grandmother, the only person to have treated her with love and kindness all through her life. To keep the vision of her grandmother alive for as long as she

can, the girl lights the entire bundle of matches at once.

After running out of matches the child dies and her grandmother carries her soul to Heaven. The next morning, passers-by find the girl dead in the nook, frozen with a smile on her face, and guess the reason for the burnt-out matches beside her. They feel pity for her, although they had not shown kindness to her before her death. They have no way of knowing about the wonderful visions she saw before her death or how gloriously she is celebrating the New Year in Heaven with her grandmother.