

by Johanna Spyri

Eveli

and

The Children's Carol



**TWO
BOOKS
INSIDE!**



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Eveli

and
The Children's Carol

Eveli

Every day in the beautiful vacation time Eveli came down to the hospital with a new bunch of flowers, and every day the patients looked forward to her appearance, so that one could see she brought everyone something that did them good.

Even though life for Eveli is difficult, she finds immense joy as she discovers ways to serve and uplift others around her. Through her simple acts of pure kindness, Eveli learns how love can soften even the hardest of hearts.

The Children's Carol

High in the mountains of Switzerland, Basti, Fränzeli, and their widowed mother are constantly battling poverty. Work is scarce and food scarcer, especially during the long winter months. When Mother faints from hunger, the children know they must do something! Through their innocent gift of song, the children are blessed with a miracle that changes their lives forevermore.



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Eveli

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Chapter 1: At the Nettle-Farmer's

“In the Forest” was the name of the last house, standing somewhat higher than all the others, surrounded by meadows and fields lying scattered here and there on the mountains, the slope of which was covered with the woods called the forest. If the grass up here was not so rich as below in the valley abounding in fruit and corn, it was so sweet that when it lay cut on the meadows, the whole air all around was filled with its fragrance.

The house in the forest was not one of the large farmhouses, but one of the most beautiful meadows extended from it far down the mountainside, and the big potato field behind the house yielded from the dry ground a rich harvest of very excellent tubers.

Why the owner was called the nettle-farmer no one could exactly say; some thought there were a great many nettles on his land, but others said it was because his words usually hurt like stinging nettles. He himself was not displeased to be so called, for he knew only about the first explanation, and it seemed to him right that the people should believe his land bore nettles and not the fair grass and abundant potatoes which he harvested.

In his barn, built next to the house, stood two cows beside the indispensable goat, but there would be room for three. The farmer often thought of himself and reckoned that with one good summer more, an abundant crop of hay and the milk which he could furnish to the cowherd's hut, enough would be realized for him to purchase a third cow. His brother-in-law below on the mountain had three; why should he not get ahead as far as him? He had in mind still another plan which he was agitating. The nettle-farmer had many plans; he was always planning. He had two boys, twelve and fourteen years old, both of whom were already working industriously with him, and now the younger one was ready to leave school and could work with him all day.

If his livestock should be increased somewhat, he could make good use of the piece of land adjoining his sunny meadow, and even more valuable than this, he could acquire the land, he knew. The owner would sell it; he already had enough work, alone as he was, without wife or child. But then he could make good use of a third boy for the increased work, the nettle-farmer reckoned still further, for he would never employ strangers. But he did not know why he should not have three boys, he said to himself. His brother-in-law had three and two daughters besides, but daughters he did not long for. The work which fell to his wife she accomplished alone, promptly and quietly as well; such young ladies would waste their time in gossiping and be always wanting something; this he knew for certain. But a boy he could make use of. This was the clear result of his reckoning.

Sure enough, not long after this, when he came home from work, his wife called to him:

“Come in and see the pretty baby that has come.” And as he stepped in she said:

“But it is not a boy, it is a little daughter.”

This vexed the farmer very much, for he had not counted on it.

“Do what you like with it,” he said and went out again.

When Sunday drew near, and the child was to be taken to the village and baptized, the mother asked:

“What shall the child be called? We haven’t decided anything about it.”

Then the father replied:

“You can call her Eva, for she has above all brought one person misfortune.”

The wife seldom answered back, but this time she said:

“The little one really did not come specially to bring you misfortune, but she can be called Eva all the same; I like the name.”

So the little one was baptized Eva and afterwards called Eveli. Eveli grew and was a very docile and unusually tender-hearted child. She avoided every little creature in her way or quickly jumped over it in order not to step on it. If she came across one

The Children's
Christmas Carol

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Chapter First: Basti and Fränzeli Learn a Song

In Bürgeln, the little village above Altorf, the green meadows with their fragrant grass and gay flowers are wonderful to look at and to wander through in summertime. Shady nut-trees stand roundabout, and the foaming Schächen brook rushes past them down through the meadows, making wild leaps whenever a stone lies in its way.

At the end of the little village, where there is an old tower overgrown with ivy, a footpath follows the brook farther along. Here stands an extremely large, ancient nut-tree, and under its cool shade travelers enjoy lying down and looking from beneath the shady seat up to the high cliffs, which rise above into the blue sky. A few steps away from the old tree, a wooden foot-bridge crosses the roaring brook halfway up the mountain where the path climbs steeply. There stands a little hut with a small shed beside it, and higher up, another, and still another, and then, as if thrown down on the mountain, the smallest of all, with such a low door that no person could enter it without bowing his head. The goat shed behind it is also so small that only the leanest goat can go in and nothing else.

The little hut has only two rooms, a living room and a tiny bedroom next to it, and opposite the door of the living room is a space where the little fireplace stands. In summer, the

house-door remains open all day and makes the little room light. Otherwise it is very dark.

The haymaker Joseph used to live in the little hut, but he has been dead for four years, and now his wife and two children still live there: quiet, industrious Afra with Basti, a strong, healthy boy, and the younger Fränzeli, a delicate little girl with bright curls.

Joseph and Afra had lived very quietly and happily and only left their home when they went to church together. Usually Afra stayed in the house attending to her tasks, but Joseph went away in the morning to his work and came back at night.

When a little boy was sent to them, they looked at the calendar and, as they saw that it was Saint Sebastian's day, they gave the child his name. Then when the little girl was born on Saint Francis' day, they named her Francisca, which after the custom of the country became Fränzeli.

Since she lost her husband, the children were Afra's best possession, her great comfort and her only joy on earth. She kept her children so clean and neat that nobody would have believed that they came from the meanest little hut and belonged to one of the poorest women in the whole region.

Every morning she washed them with all care and combed Fränzeli's light blond curly hair so that she would not look unkempt, and every Sunday morning, one of the two little shirts, which each child owned, was washed, and over these was put Fränzeli's best frock, and Basti's trousers, made from his

father's. Usually both of them wore nothing else, for shoes and stockings never were on their feet all summer long. In winter, their mother had something warm in readiness for them, but really not much. It was not necessary, for the children then almost never went out of the house at all. For this and all the necessary work which had to be done, Afra had to be busy early and late, and could take little rest for herself. But nothing was too much for her. If she only had her children with her, and both looked up at her with their merry eyes, she at once forgot all the weariness from which she longed to be free, and she would not have exchanged her children for any luxury in the world.

Moreover, every one who saw the children was pleased with them. When they came down the mountain, hand in hand—for Basti always held Fränzeli firmly by the hand as if to protect her—the neighbors who saw them pass by often said to one another:

“I have often wondered how Afra manages with her children. Since mine came into the world they have never looked so attractive as these two.”

“I was just going to say the same,” the other usually replied; “I will ask my wife how it happens.”

The women, however, were not pleased to hear this, and said there was nothing to be done about it; some children were like that and others are different, and Afra must not think that beautiful children were of the greatest importance. But Afra did not think so by any means. She only desired, since the dear Lord had given her such lovely children, not to disfigure them