

## **Rays From The Rose Cross Magazine**

### **The Team**

**by Dagmar Frahme**

 

Livermore, who was quite tall for an Elf, kicked the pine cone and scowl-d as it sailed over the edge of the canyon. He was angry, and didn't care who knew it.

"That guy's got his nerve, blaming me when it's all his fault. Boy, I'm sure going to see that he gets what's coming to him!"

High overhead a crow cawed noisily. Livermore looked up. "Well? What's your problem?" he growled.

The crow cawed again and flew off. Livermore glared after it. His fists were clenched so hard the knuckles showed white.

"One minute he makes a promise," Livermore snarled to himself, "and the next minute he breaks it and says

it's my fault. Elves! They make me sick!"

Livermore kicked another pine cone, and even though he was still furious he couldn't help being proud of the perfect arc it made as it sailed up over the canyon and down into the abyss below.

"I should have gone out for football," he said.

He kicked still another cone, and was looking for a fourth when a voice behind him said, "Why are you taking it out on the poor cones? What did they ever do to you?"

Livermore wheeled around and saw someone very much like himself standing under a tree, his hands on his hips.

"What are you so mad about, anyhow?" the other Elf asked.

"Delbert!" exclaimed Livermore. "How come you're spying on me? Haven't you got work to do?"

"Of course I have work to do. And I'm doing it, which is more than can be said for you," retorted Delbert. "I'm reddening the berries on the shrubs at the edge of the canyon, and one of your cones almost hit me on the head. I don't suppose you noticed. Spying, indeed!

I didn't know you were here till you started letting things fly. You sure have a chip on your shoulder!"

"Oh — well — ah — I'm sorry," stammered Livermore, just a little bit embarrassed. "If I'd known you were there, I'd have kicked the cones someplace else. But I still would have kicked them!"

"That I believe," said Delbert. "But why were you kicking? Sailing cones over the canyon isn't your job for the day, is

"Oh, you know perfectly well it isn't," growled Livermore. "I kicked the cones because I was mad. And I'm still mad. And if I were stronger I'd kick over the whole tree. "

"Now that I'd like to see," laughed Delbert. "But what good would kicking over the tree do?"

"What good do you think?" snarled Livermore. "It would make me feel better, for one thing. I'd rather kick Montmorency, but I'd never get away with that."

"Ah-ha!" said Delbert. "Now we're getting somewhere. And what has poor old Montmorency done to you?"

"He got me into a pack of trouble, that's what. I believed him when he said he'd do something, but he's so old he forgets half the things he says, and when the time came to do it he didn't so it didn't get done, and now he's saying it's my fault."

"Oh," said Delbert, "I see — sort of. Now how about starting at the beginning and telling me what it is he said he would do and didn't."

Livermore took a deep breath. "Well, it's like this," he began. "One day two months ago Montmorency asked me if he could snap open the milkweed pods when the time came. That's really my job, you know."

Delbert nodded.

"Well," Livermore went on, "Montmorency said he didn't feel as strong as he used to and was having trouble doing his regular job. He said if I helped him with his job, he'd snap the milkweed pods for me later. I said sure, and I helped him with his job. I didn't mind helping him with his work because he is getting old and he does need help."

"A very fine gesture on your part," said Delbert, hoping to make Livermore feel better.

"I thought so too," agreed Livermore. "So, after several weeks it was time for the milkweed pods to be snapped. I suppose I should have reminded Montmorency that it was time to do them. But I didn't because he gets mad when he thinks he's being nagged. You know."

"Oh yes, I know," agreed Delbert, who had had some unpleasant experiences with Montmorency when he thought he was being nagged.

"So I didn't remind him," continued Livermore, "and I was too busy to get out to the milkweed meadow to see how things were going. Then the squad leader comes to me and says Montmorency told him I hadn't snapped the milkweed pods yet, and what was I doing with myself anyhow? Can you beat it?"

Delbert, who knew Livermore was expecting him to say something sympathetic, said "Oh - oh."

"You might well say 'oh-oh'," said Livermore. "The squad leader was furious, and wouldn't believe me when I told him that Montmorency had said he would do the milkweeds. He kept arguing with me about it. Then finally he said that since Montmorency is so old he can't be expected to get things straight any more, why

didn't I just pop over to the meadow and do the milkweeds myself, and quit fussing about it."

"Oh dear," said Delbert, who was running out of sympathetic things to say.

"Oh dear, is right," sniffed Livermore. "I wasn't making any fuss. Montmorency was, and so was the squad leader. I told him I had been doing more than half of Montmorency's work all along, and my own too, and how did he expect me to do the milkweeds besides? But all he said was I should put my shoulder to the wheel and get the work done before winter comes. As if I haven't had my shoulder to the wheel the whole time!"

"That doesn't seem quite fair, does it?" murmured Delbert.

"Not quite fair?" exclaimed Livermore, who thought Delbert should have been more sympathetic than that. "It's downright mean, that's what it is. He didn't say anything about how hard I've been working. All he said was quit fussing and get my shoulder to the wheel. I'll bet he won't say anything at all to Montmorency."

"What should he say to Montmorency?" Delbert asked quietly.

"Bawl him out, of course!" exclaimed Livermore, amazed that Delbert could ask such a question.

"And what good would that do?" Delbert asked.

"What good?" burst out Livermore, hardly able to contain himself. "It would show Montmorency that he forgot to do his job, for one thing. And it would show him that he blamed me for something that wasn't my fault, for another."

"So?" asked Delbert.

"So?" echoed Livermore, whose face was getting frightfully red. "What do you mean, so? Montmorency would know what a dumb thing he did. And he'd know that I had to do the milkweeds even though he promised he would."

"Would that make you feel better?" Delbert's voice was gentle.

"Of course," answered Livermore.

"And how do you think Montmorency would feel?"

"Ashamed of himself, I hope."

"You don't really mean that, do you?" asked Delbert.

"Yes, of course I mean it," answered Livermore, but he didn't sound quite so positive. "Why shouldn't I mean it?"

"Think about it a minute," said Delbert. "You can probably answer your own question."

"Ooooooooooooooh," muttered Livermore, who knew very well what Delbert was getting at although he didn't want to admit it.

"Well," he hedged, "do you really think it's right that I get blamed for something that's not my fault just because Montmorency is getting old?"

"Do you?" asked Delbert.

"Oh, I don't know," answered Livermore reluctantly, shuffling his feet.

"Yes, you do, Livermore," insisted Delbert. "Is it really Montmorency's fault that this happened?"

"Yes, in a way," Livermore said quickly.

"All right, in a way it is," agreed Delbert. "But in a bigger way, could he really help what he did?"

"I suppose not," Livermore said, sighing. "I suppose he can't help it that he doesn't remember things any

more.

"Of course he can't," said Delbert "Lots of Elves don't remember things too well when they get old. You know what a good worker Montmorency has been all his life. Remember all the things he's done for us. Remember the time your brother took off and didn't get back in time to do his work, and Montmorency stayed up all night doing it to cover for him? Your brother would have been in terrible trouble if he had been found out?"

Livermore sighed and shuffled his feet again. He remembered how grateful his brother had been, and how Montmorency had just smiled and said he had been glad to help out.

"I guess Montmorency's been a pretty good guy all these years," admitted Livermore.

"He sure has," agreed Delbert. "Now, do you still want him to get bawled out and feel bad?"

"No," Livermore said softly. "I'll just go to work on those milkweeds right now. I can probably get most of them opened this afternoon."

A few hours later Livermore was hard at work when a voice said, "Could I talk to you a minute, Livermore?"

Livermore looked up. "Oh, it's you, Montmorency. Hi."

"Hi," said Montmorency. "Look I — guess I owe you an apology. I forgot I had promised to do the milkweeds. I must really be getting old. My forgettury seems to be a lot better than my memory these days. I'm afraid I got you into a lot of trouble with the squad leader, too. I'm awfully sorry, Livermore."

"Awww—," said Livermore. He was very embarrassed. "That's all right. Don't worry about it. No harm done."

"But there was harm done," protested Montmorency, "and it's my fault. You were so good about doing my work, and then I went and got you into trouble. I wish I could make it up to you."

"There's nothing to make up," said Livermore, squirming. He remembered how angry he had been with Montmorency just a short while before, and his conscience really hurt him.

"You've already done a lot of the milkweeds," said Montmorency, "but at least let me do the rest."

Livermore thought that it would be just as easy for him to finish the milkweeds himself, and was going to

say so. Then he took a good look at Montmorency's face and changed his mind. Montmorency looked so unhappy. Livermore knew he felt very badly about what had happened, and wanted so much to do something to make things right.

"I know what," said Livermore. "Let's both do the milkweeds. Two people can work faster than one, and it helps to have company."

"Great!" said Montmorency. "I'd like that."

He smiled a broad smile, and in just a twinkling of an eye looked as though he felt much better.

A little while later, the two Elves were hard at work on a particularly stubborn milkweed pod that didn't seem to want to snap open. It was time for it to open, though, so there was nothing to do but force it.

"I'll hold and you squeeze," said Montmorency. He held the pod as tightly as he could while Livermore squeezed it harder and harder. Suddenly there was a "pop!", and a shower of delicate white milkweed seeds rained down on them both.

"Are you guys cooking up a blizzard?" inquired a voice that seemed to be trying not to laugh.

Delbert and the squad leader, both grinning from ear to ear, were watching.

"If you're going to make a blizzard, why not cool things off a little, too? We could use a little winter weather with all this hot Sun."

"Fffuft!" replied Livermore, trying to wipe the sticky milkweed juice off his face. "If you want winter, you'd better get in touch with the Sylphs and Undines. Winter's not in our department."

"All in good time," said the squad leader, still grinning. "Say, you two really work well together. How would you like to work as a team on other jobs. Montmorency's got experience and know-how, and Livermore's got plenty of strength and energy. That's a good combination."

Livermore looked at Montmorency, and Montmorency looked at Livermore. Then Livermore held out his hand.

"You know," he said, "I think we'd make a great team. How about it, partner?"

"I think we'd make a great team too, partner," he said, shaking Livermore's hand. "We can help each other, and get a lot of work done."

After that, Livermore and Montmorency worked together on many jobs. Montmorency sometimes did forget things, it is true, but Livermore learned how to remind him without nagging.

Montmorency knew many ways of making hard work a lot easier, and Livermore learned many things from him that he would not have known otherwise.

And that is how it came about that one of the best working teams the Elves ever had — the team of Montmorency and Livermore — was formed.

*—Rays from the Rose Cross Magazine, January, 1975, p. 43-46*

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