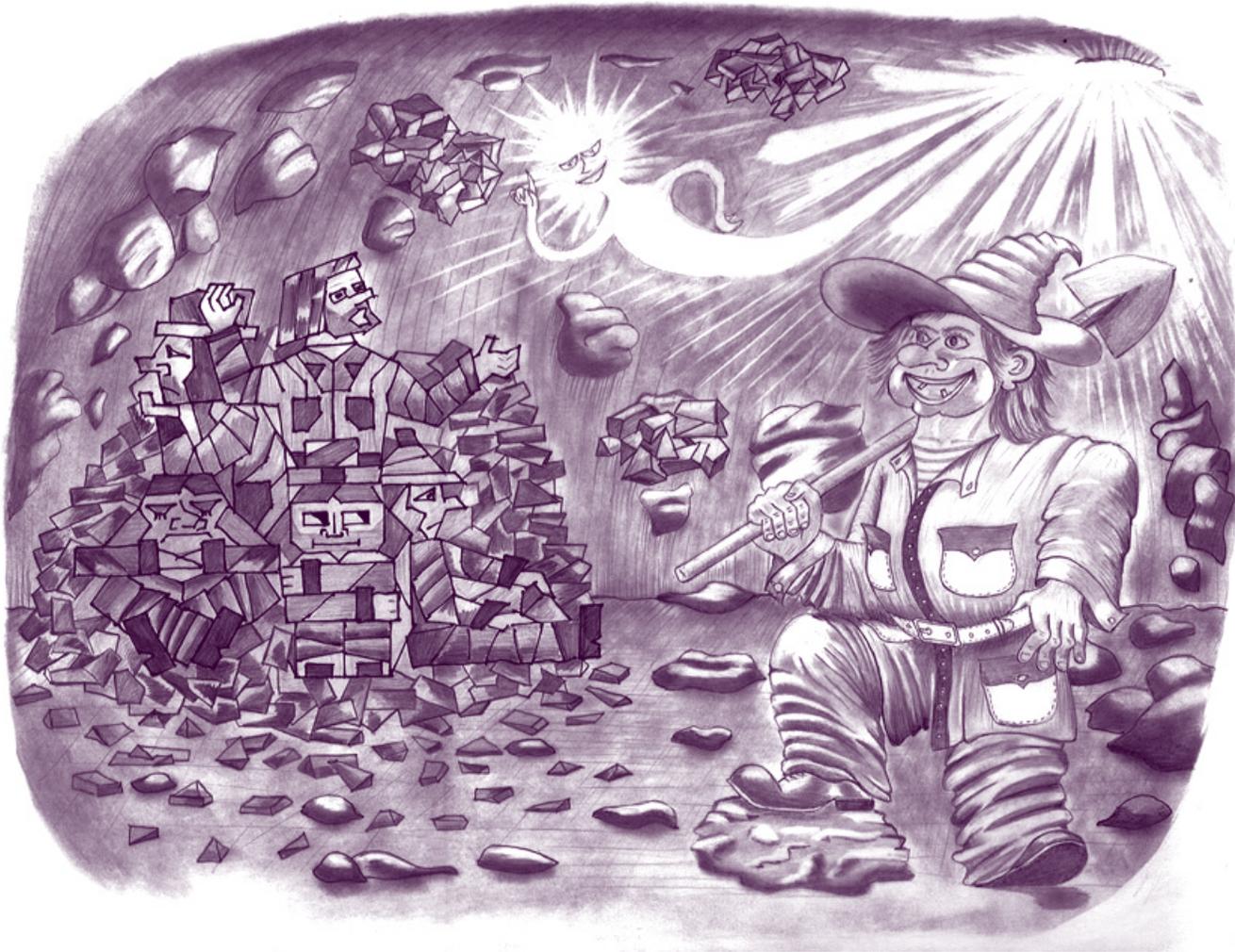


The Discontented Spark



Original artwork for the Rays by Alan Gregory

SUCH A STRANGE THING happened that I must tell you about it. Deep, very deep in the earth there are rich coal beds or mines. You knew that, didn't you? You didn't? Really? Well, now you do, and some day I will tell you all about these coal beds, but not today, for our story is about something quite different.

Some one who has very sharp ears one day overheard a conversation, and I am going to tell you

what it was. The gnomes, who work with the coal, were talking with the sunbeams. You see, they understand each other perfectly. This is what the Wisest Gnome said:

“Deep down in the earth is a discontented spark of light, always saying, “Do let me out! I'm tired of being imprisoned. I want to be let out. I'm so cramped in this black, black coal. Do let me out, please! please! I don't belong here, for I'm a spark of light. Why should I be shut up in the dark? Oh,

do let me out! How much longer do I have to stay here?"

The sunbeams danced and played about where the Wisest Gnome was sitting. "Do stop dancing for a few minutes, Merry Sunbeam," said the Wisest Gnome to one of the sprightliest of them. "The Spark must be some relation of yours. Let us see if we can think of some way to help this poor little shut-in. How do you suppose a spark of light ever got inside a coal bed anyway? But since it is there, maybe we can get it out."

Merry Sunbeam, always so bright, said: "Wisest Gnome, don't you know that we are all sparks of light from the great Sun Spirit, just appearing in different shapes and forms and ways? Some of the sparks, like the sunbeams, shine by day, while the moonbeams and starbeams shine by night. Some are hidden away out of sight altogether, in the hearts of mortals, and in the flowers; some even hide in stones and rocks, and yes, even in the black, black, coal. But they all belong to the great Sun Spirit. Always, without fail, when the right time comes, the sparks are all released from their hiding places.

"Now, Wisest Gnome, please, hurry down," said Merry Sunbeam, "and comfort the discontented Spark. Just tell it to be a little patient. It will be hidden away for only a little time—maybe a hundred years or so, but that's not very long. Some day the coal will be discovered by human beings and brought up to the light of day, right up out of the earth altogether. Then some crisp cold day the coal will find itself in a wonderful fire, all red and glowing, and out of it will come the Spark. It will fly straight up to the sun and be gathered back again with the sunbeams, and it will shine and shine and shine. Then it will dance with the sunbeams on the trees and flowers and be merry and bright."

Again Merry Sunbeam spoke, whispering very low: "So please, Wisest Gnome, do tell the Spark not to be discontented any more, but to be hopeful. Some day it will be released from the black, black, coal and be a beautiful spark of light. And do tell it never to forget that even though it is hidden deep down in the earth, it is still a spark of light from the great Sun Spirit, the giver of light and life." □

—Grace Swensen

Doctor Know-All

A poor farmer named Crabb was once taking a load of wood in a cart drawn by two oxen. He sold it to a doctor and, seeing how prosperous the man was, asked him if it was difficult to join his profession. "Not at all," said the doctor. "Just sell your oxen and buy a fine suit of clothes and have a sign made that says 'Dr. Know-All' and hang it outside your door. Also buy an ABC book with a picture of a rooster in it." Crabb followed his advice and his practice prospered.

One day there came to Crabb a duke whose money had been stolen. He asked the doctor to come to his castle and help him find the thieves. The doctor consented and went with his wife. When they arrived, they sat down to dinner. A servant came in with a dish, and Crabb said to his wife, "Here is the first," meaning the first course. The servant, however, thought that the doctor was pointing him out as the first thief, which he indeed was.

When a second servant approached bearing a covered platter, the doctor said, "Here is the second," and the servant thought *his* secret was known, for he was guilty as well. Then the duke asked the doctor if he could tell him what was in the covered platter. "O, wretched Crabb!" moaned the doctor, certain his ignorance would be discovered. The duke was amazed, for crabs were indeed the dish being served!

Then the doctor took out his ABC book. "And now I will tell you where your stolen money is hidden," he said as he began to thumb through the pages. But he was unable to find the picture of the rooster and, losing his temper, cried, "Come out, come out, I know you're in there!" Now it happened that a third servant was hiding in a closet and, thinking the game was up, came out with the money and confessed all, as did the other two servants.

The fame of Dr. Know-All soon spread throughout the country, and little Crabb, who had been so poor, lived in comfort for the rest of his life. □

—Brothers Grimm, adapted by James Spero