

The Star Tree

Written and illustrated by Gisela Cölle

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North
South

Gisela Cölle was born in Zweibrücken, Germany. She studied medicine, illustration, and comic drawing at the University of Applied Sciences for Art and Design in Hamburg. Before she started writing and illustrating picture books, she had primarily painted. She has received numerous awards for her picture books. Gisela Cölle has three children and many grandchildren and lives in Mainz, Germany.

For Feli, Nora, Lotti, Julian, Lennard, Ida, Jacob, and Frida

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In a little house, in a big city, there once lived a very old man. He had lived in this house for as long as he could remember. He watched the city grow bigger and bigger, seen it swallow up parks and gardens, seen skyscrapers rear up and supermarkets sprawl.

The people who lived in the skyscrapers knew nothing of the old man. Most of them didn't even know each other. Every morning they hurried off to work, and at night they came home exhausted. They let whole days go by without once looking up at the sky.



One winter night, a few days before Christmas, the old man sat in his little house, thinking sadly of Christmases long ago.

In those days, friends and family gathered around the stove to tell stories and sing carols. The children would make gold stars and hang them in the windows to welcome visitors.

The old man thought he still had a roll of gold paper somewhere in the house. He searched in cupboards and drawers until at last he found it. He picked up a pair of scissors and cut out a star, then another and another.

Then he stood up and went to the window.



The old man looked out at the gaudy Christmas decorations slung across the streets, and he sighed. Would anyone notice his paper stars, he wondered, among all the garish, glittering lights? He decided to take the stars out into the countryside, where it was darker and his stars would show up better, reflecting the gentle light of the moon.



Outside, the wind was rising. It whipped up the ends of the old man's scarf and scattered some of his stars.

In the city, the wind rattled and ripped the gaudy Christmas decorations. Then it tore down the power lines.





All the lights went out, and the loudspeakers stopped blaring their jangly Christmas songs.

The city lay silent and dark.

The old man walked through the silent streets, past the tall buildings, past the darkened windows and the locked doors.

Darkness and silence were new and strange to the people of the city. They huddled indoors, afraid to go out.

The old man walked on and on, out of the city, across the fields, and up the highest hill.



As he reached the top, the storm began to lose power. Then at last the wind drove the clouds away, and a huge December moon appeared in the sky.

“Look, there is a man in the moon!” cried the children.

“No, no,” said their parents. “The man in the moon doesn’t exist, except in nursery rhymes!”

Then they saw a figure outlined against the moon with a trail of gold at his feet.





They were so glad to see a light that they took their children by their hands and led them out of the city.

They walk over the silent, snow-covered fields and up the hill.

When they reached the top, they saw the old man hanging gold stars on a tree. The stars twinkled in the moonlight and cast a golden glow on the bare branches and the snow beneath.

Everyone stopped and stared in wonderment.





Then one of the children began to sing a Christmas carol, quietly at first, then louder as the others joined in.

The old man turned around when he heard the singing.

“This feels more like Christmas!” he said, and he began to sing too.

Then the old man took the rest of the stars from his basket and gave one to each of the children. He was happy to share once more the simple pleasures of Christmases long ago.

The children carried the stars back into the city and hung them in their windows. Other children saw the stars and made some of their own.

Soon the whole city shone with the glow of Christmas stars.







In a little house, in a big city, an old man remembers Christmases long ago—when friends and family gathered to tell stories and sing carols and children made gold paper stars to welcome visitors.

Now the city is filled with skyscrapers, bright lights, and signs. Who would even notice old-fashioned paper stars hanging in a window?

But memory—and the Christmas spirit—can be powerful and miraculous, as the old man with his basket full of stars proves in this joyous holiday story. A timeless classic back in print.

“A quiet appeal for simple pleasures and old-fashioned celebrations.”—*School Library Journal*