



# THE GOLDEN WOOD ESTATE STORIES

Tuxedo Park's  
Enchanting Tales For All Ages

FROM TUXEDO PARK MAGAZINE

netuxedo123@gmail.com  
www.tuxedoparkmagazine.com



There is a beautiful place called Tuxedo Park that was built many years ago. It was like stepping into a fairy tale, where balls and dances were given so beautifully, that the women looked like queens and the men, like kings.

There were magnificent castles that surrounded a pure blue, beautiful lake that was named, Tuxedo Lake.

A road meandered around Tuxedo Lake where the finest castle of all stood away from the rest and nestled within mountains, forests, and fields.

On this private estate were gardeners and landscapers that worked very hard all day to make the property of this estate look like a perfect picture.

However...there was a family of rabbits from long ago that lived on this very property before Tuxedo Park was even heard of or before this estate was built.

The vast woodland of the area around Tuxedo Lake, was once so rugged, that no one even thought of walking through it, although, this was the perfect setting for the "Golden Wood" rabbits, as they were referred to.

When Tuxedo Park was being built, these rabbits, not wanting to leave their precious home where they were all born, decided to settle on this one estate to make their new home.

The owners of the estate did not seem to mind the rabbits, as the owners were seldom on the estate, and when they were, it was “in season” and they were occupied with the many balls, dinners, and parties that were often held in Tuxedo Park.

Let me introduce myself, my name is Thackeray... Thack for short. I was named after my father, for I resemble his side of the rabbit family. Mother is a descendant of the hare family. The only difference being, that a hare is much larger than a rabbit, with longer ears and legs.

This is a story of long ago. Our family was very large, and we had lots of space to play and live, for the Golden Wood Estate had many buildings. One, was the grand mansion that overlooked Tuxedo Lake.

It was magnificent, the windows shone, the bricks were golden, and the trees were pine. A high stone wall nestled beneath the tall pines, and just past the pines, there was a large stone barn, this is where most of my family lived. There was also an ice-house, where they used to store huge blocks of ice in the summertime.



There was a root cellar, where lots and lots of food was stored, a wine cellar, and a library!

A ghost??!...There was a rumor that Golden Wood Estate was haunted! At times, food would be missing from the mansion, firewood would disappear from the woodshed, and bottles of wine would be mysteriously removed from the wine cellar.

Late at night when the woods were still, noises came from the root cellar, and the barn would be heard to creak and stammer beneath its haylofts.

The legend came to be known as the "Golden Wood Ghosts." My Grandfather, who is a pretty old rabbit by now, loves to tell stories about those haunted nights, because...he was one of those ghosts!

According to Grandfather, it happened one December evening. The ground was white in the moonlight, dark green ivy wrapped the stone walls like gifts, and holly swung from branches that bent beneath the weight of shimmering ice crystals.



Grandfather was just a youngster enjoying the Christmas spirit throughout the estate. All of the rabbits were to work on decorating their little dwellings one evening, a festive event that usually left everyone quite hungry.

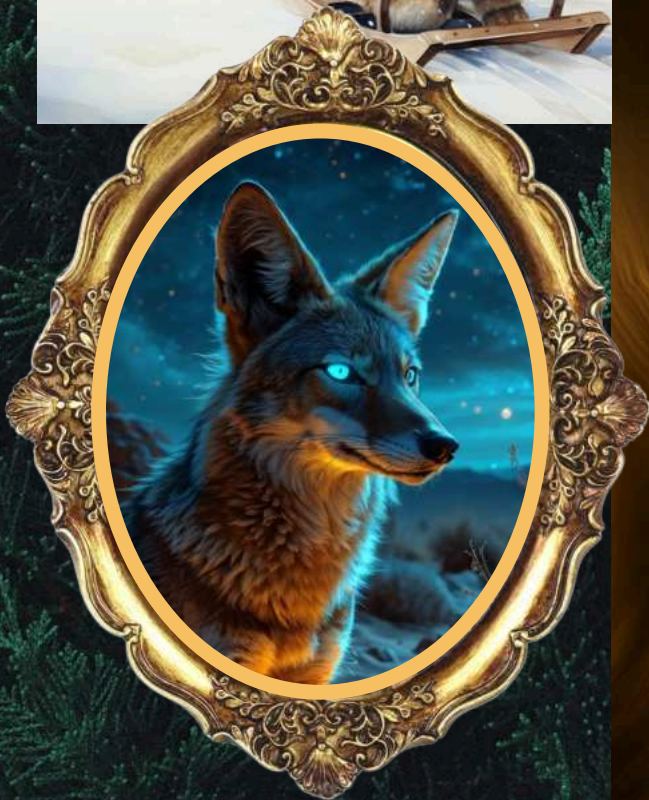
So, upon completion of the night's work, a traditional "food-fall" was to be held in the barn. In preparation for a successful food-fall, it was Grandfather's job to hide under the table in the mansion, where a huge holiday dinner was being held, and Grandfather would grab scraps of food when no one was looking, or food that fell to the floor, or desserts that leaned too far from the middle of the table and looked lonely.

He would grab anything he could catch, and take anything he could hold. Being a small rabbit, he could scurry through a tiny hole with the food, and bring it back to the barn. After several such trips, there would be enough food for the "food-fall" feast.

By the time he got back to the barn after several trips, Grandfather was exhausted!, but this would be his last trip to the mansion for the food. He wanted to make certain there was plenty of food for their feast, as they had invited some rabbits from the neighboring woods who had nothing to eat this Christmas season.

Up he went, one more time. Up the long narrow driveway, and around a very sharp curve, where the coyotes stood in a circle on the ice-blue crust of snow that covered the barren fields. Their glimmering eyes reflected their eagerness to catch this little rabbit who kept passing them, how dare he be so bold.

Grandfather knew all too well the danger he faced, but this would be his final trip. This was the very hour that the coyotes did their lurking errands around the woods and the estate, but even worse, the descent back down the hill with the food, would be upwind of the coyotes, and his scent would stir their hunting instincts long before he could hope to escape their notice.





Grandfather's route to the mansion began with the ash bin in the basement. Each of the fireplaces in the mansion had an opening in the back where the ashes were pushed down to the basement into a bin.

This bin had a trap door to remove the ashes, and this was Grandfather's secret passageway into and out of the mansion. On this particular night, the ash bin was unusually full.

Swimming to the top of the ash heap, he noticed that his arms had turned gray and his ears were pressed tightly to his head, for he was covered in ashes from head to toe. He clung to the small bag bulging with table scraps. Not for the world would he let it go. He knew everyone was counting on him for their Christmas delights.

Rubbing his eyes, he caught a glimpse of an old red sled wedged into the snow. It was curled up along the edges but would work perfectly for his escape, thought Grandfather.

Still clutching his precious bags of scraps, he pushed and pulled against the drifted snow until he freed the sled.

Placing the food bags on this makeshift sled, he pushed it onto the narrow driveway where the snow was packed down to a thin layer of ice.





Suddenly, a shrill, ear-piercing howl echoed up from those very fields that Grandfather would have to pass on his way down the road. The coyotes had obviously been stirred by his scent and were now at the peak of awareness.

Ever so slowly and quietly Grandfather climbed onto the sled, picked up his food bags and gently pushed off with his paws. Smoothly, the ice beneath met the bottom of the sled and it glided gracefully down the road past snow covered vines on the right, and huge gnarled apple trees on the left.

The moonlight cast eerie blue shadows in eerie shapes through the dark woods straight ahead. Grandfather shuttered equally with fright and with the icy chill of the night as he neared the blue ice field.

His thoughts were mingled with desperate hope, when he suddenly heard a sharp **“crack!”**...an icicle fell from a branch in front of him, causing him and the sled to topple head first into a snowdrift...right in front of the ice field and the howling coyotes!



Lying sideways in the snow, he was afraid to move. His long ears heard coyote footsteps edging closer and closer until he could feel their hot breath on his furry little neck.

Petrified to move, he sadly let the bag of food scraps slip ever so slowly from his grasp. Moments passed like hours in total silence. Grandfather heard nothing. He finally dared to open his eyes, and glancing around, he saw five coyotes trotting silently away with his precious food bag.

Grandfather was grateful he was unharmed. Then he realized he was even more grateful to be plastered with ashes from the ash bin and that they covered his natural scent. The coyote's keen sense of smell must have picked up only the odor of the table scraps, but not the scent of him! *Continued next page*





Shaken by his near miss, Grandfather scampered down the rest of the hill to the barn where he found the "food-fall feast" in full and glorious swing. It seems that his earlier trips up to the mansion had brought down more than enough food for everyone without the bags the coyotes had stolen.

As the rabbits and hares reveled throughout the night in the old stone barn, the folks in the mansion on the hill were mystified once again about the ghosts who took food and wine, for they never figured out how the food disappeared in plain sight, nor where it went to!

Golden Wood Estate was to have many more adventures, and many more events within the beautiful place known as... Tuxedo Park.

More Golden Wood Estate Stories:

- \*Part II...***The Christmas Ghost***
- \*Part III...***The year it snowed candy***
- \*Part IV...***The mystery of the Iron Mines***
- \*Part V...***The Grandfather Clock Mystery***





# THE GOLDEN WOOD ESTATE STORIES

## PART 2 THE CHRISTMAS GHOST





Such excitement stirred, as Tuxedo Park was being decorated for the holidays. The flying snow drifted onto the balconies and settled upon the terraces. Golden shadows lingered just beyond the gilded French doors of the mansions.

With a *swoosh*, and a *whoosh*, the pure white snow wove its way throughout the Golden Wood Estate in Tuxedo Park, like a bridal veil clinging to the forest.

The stone barns had wisps of snow clinging to their granite edges creating a white feather down appearance.



The old stone barn has always been the community gathering place for the rabbits and hares of Golden Wood Estate. My large family lived in the barn, but there were many of our friends who lived in "Wonder Wood", a beautiful place just off the estate property, but still within Tuxedo Park. The barn stood just about in the center of the area where all of the other woodland dwellings were.

Deep within the December colors, there is a path that pushes its way into the woodland as it meanders along an old stone wall, then curves slightly near a stream, that is where "Golden Wood" exists to this day.





Not long after Grandfather's narrow escape from the coyotes, everyone was busy decorating, for Christmas would soon be here. All were to meet at the barn that evening to hang ivy and wreaths from its windows and doors. The path that everyone traveled to get to the barn on Golden Wood Estate lay between two small buildings on the south side of the barn. At that time of year, no one ever used the north entrance which was blocked with ice and drifting snow.

From the wood stove in the barn, came a sweet aroma of apple-wood burning, and met everyone with a welcoming glow. Mittens and scarves were hung on nails as the group picked through evergreen branches and holly twigs to form their wreaths.



Grandfather was seated at a small window, which faced the north side of the barn. Glancing out, he saw something move quickly through the frozen snow. He knew that no one would dare venture so close to those tall drifts or ice caves on the north side of the barn, for there were rumors of all sorts of scary things where the ice formed strange shapes, and the wind howled louder than any place else on Golden Wood Estate or anywhere else in Tuxedo Park!

That is where an old abandoned root cellar was. It crouched beneath a tangle of briars and vines. It was hollowed out of the side of a small knoll and remained cool in the summer and above freezing through the long winter.



Suddenly, a shadow was moving in the root cellar's direction. In the glow from the wood stove that spread beyond the window, Grandfather saw a shape lingering in the dark woods near the entrance to this underground chamber. It paused for a moment beneath the arms of the briars, but before Grandfather could speak, the shadow faded into the night. **"A ghost!"** he shouted, startling the rest of the rabbits who rushed to the window. Of course, by now, everything outside was calm and quiet, but later, a chill touched everyone as they packed up to leave the barn. They agreed that the barn looked beautiful, but no one was excited to leave its warmth and face the *lonely*, walk home through the dark woods.



With hats and coats, and small sleds prepared, the rabbits who did not live in the barn, all set out for their homes. The night sky held bright stars, but the wind rubbed branches together with an eerie sound, and an owl followed close behind them, pulling the silence of the empty woods ever closer. Once they were safely home, they jumped into their snug beds and pulled the thick covers over their heads. The visions of a ghost outside made them shiver much more than the frosty winter night.

But these fears were soon erased the next morning as bright sunshine crept into every cozy corner of the Golden Wood Estate in Tuxedo Park. It was the day before Christmas eve and by tradition, all of the young rabbits were to meet at the skating pond for fun and refreshments. Any lingering thoughts of ghosts were quickly replaced with steaming mugs of cocoa and cider, served along with gingerbread muffins and cinnamon cakes with maple sugar.

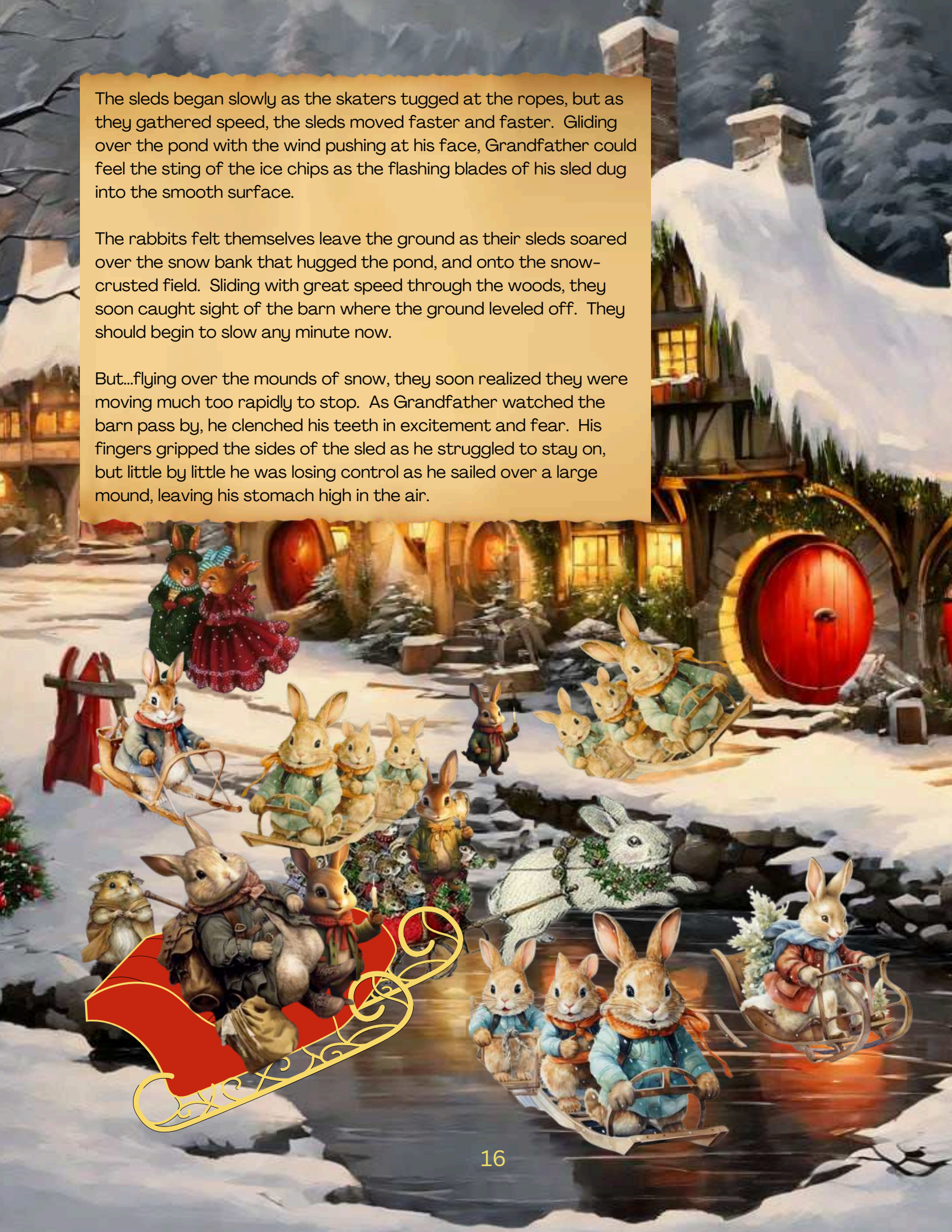
The ice was in fine condition for skating, and a slick crust had formed on the snow adjoining the pond. Those who were skating, pulled others behind them on sleds. The lucky riders on the sleds were whisked along on the ice then out onto the crusted snow, allowing them to glide rapidly across the fields and through the woods, ending at the barn. Several of the younger rabbits, including grandfather, were ready with their sleds for this exciting ride.



The sleds began slowly as the skaters tugged at the ropes, but as they gathered speed, the sleds moved faster and faster. Gliding over the pond with the wind pushing at his face, Grandfather could feel the sting of the ice chips as the flashing blades of his sled dug into the smooth surface.

The rabbits felt themselves leave the ground as their sleds soared over the snow bank that hugged the pond, and onto the snow-custed field. Sliding with great speed through the woods, they soon caught sight of the barn where the ground leveled off. They should begin to slow any minute now.

But...flying over the mounds of snow, they soon realized they were moving much too rapidly to stop. As Grandfather watched the barn pass by, he clenched his teeth in excitement and fear. His fingers gripped the sides of the sled as he struggled to stay on, but little by little he was losing control as he sailed over a large mound, leaving his stomach high in the air.





Now the sleds were heading down another hill, but this time they were aimed directly toward the snowdrifts and ice caves at the north side of the barn...exactly where Grandfather had seen the ghost the night before!

Completely losing his grip on the sled, Grandfather weaved about wildly. As briars and branches crisscrossed in front of his face. He covered his face, blocking his view of the steep, downward ramp leading to the root cellar. Before slowing, the sled tilted against the hill, then tipped over causing Grandfather to roll through the doorway of the root cellar. One by one, the other sleds tipped too, and one by one, each rabbit rolled into the root cellar, one on top of the other.





Looking around, the young rabbits saw that they were in a dark little room with tree roots which wandered along the walls, and wound their way across the dirt floor until they disappeared into a shadowy corner. Images of ghostly figures and spine tingling drafts immediately began to form in the rabbit's imaginations. For years, no one had dared go too near this root cellar. They all feared it. Strange noises often came from it on still nights, and the events of the previous evening had reinforced their notion that it was haunted! Slowly, their eyes followed walls that curved into darkness, and they trembled in fear as they thought of the ghost that Grandfather had seen.



Oddly enough, there was a lantern lit on the opposite wall, and its warm glow was seeping through the small dirt chamber. Bright orange pumpkins nestled beneath rhubarb stalks and cheerful red berries showed their bellies in the lantern's soft light. Sweet autumn cider swam in barrels beneath windows framed in frost. This comforting scene overcame Grandfather's feeling of fear as he moved around the room in a bold manner, examining the pleasant display of food enough for a banquet.



Now this particular root cellar had not been used in years. Another had been built closer to the mansion following the year that the January blizzards had blocked the road on the north side of the barn. "But where did the food come from?", and who lit the lamp?" Wondered Grandfather. Puzzled by this, the other rabbits wanted to leave right away, but as they turned toward the doorway to leave, a sudden noise caused them to turn back again. Then they saw it!, a strange little creature peeking out at them from a small door. The door was mostly shielded behind a tangle of thick roots and tiny green leaves, which blocked most of the opening.

The rabbits caught a glimpse into the room beyond. There was Christmas candy and small red fruit that sat on tiny branches. Candles twinkled merrily against the background and a strong scent of pine mixed with oranges, hung in the chill December air. There were butter cookies draped on a ribbon, each with a single bite out of them! A brilliant fire was dancing in the fireplace, and a warm smile lit the face of a rabbit in front of the hearth.


*Continued next page*

The door opened wider by a small, furry, happy looking creature with a small chubby hand waving everyone to enter into the room. Reluctant as the rabbits were, the aromas that drifted out to them were too wonderful to resist. Entering the small, cozy room, they came upon other little creatures that resembled one another. They introduced themselves as, "Mugworts". They were cheerful and kind creatures who always seemed to smile and laugh. They all had brilliant blue eyes that danced with friendship and excitement. Grandfather and the other rabbits were delighted to meet these pleasant new friends that lived so nearby, and to solve the mystery of the ghost in the root cellar. *There was no ghost, it was the Mugwort's home!*

They invited Grandfather and the rabbits to join them in the root cellar for a holiday party for the following evening. Because the root cellar was too small for the rabbits' huge family and friends who lived on the Golden Wood Estate and Tuxedo Park, they decided on the barn for the site of this festive event. The barn was large enough to fit everyone!

Grandfather and the other rabbits thanked the Mugworts, then ventured back to the skating pond to tell all of the others of their marvelous adventure, and discovery of new friends. Everyone agreed that the next day would truly be a Christmas Eve to be remembered. But little did they realize at the time, how very exciting and mysteriously enchanting it would really be...for that was the year it snowed candy on the Golden Wood Estate, in the beautiful place known as...Tuxedo Park.

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# THE GOLDEN WOOD ESTATE STORIES

## PART 3...THE YEAR IT SNOWED CANDY



Later in the same day when Grandfather first met the Mugworts, the evening began with a sharp wind whistling down the chimney. The wide chimney peeked up to the dark sky through the snow that almost buried the barn. Branches snapped in two with the strength of the wind and the weight of the snow.

But there was a cheerful fire glowing in the woodstove, and the winter jam was releasing its strong candy aroma throughout our cozy barn. Cinnamon bread was baking in the oven and cinnamon apples hissed in the large kettle. Everything smelled of cinnamon, even the snow, thought Grandfather, as he opened the door to get more firewood.

Out in the deep, drifting snow he pulled on the woodpile, filling his arms with logs. Suddenly, a pile of snow slid from the roof, covering him right up to his neck. "This is fun", thought Grandfather, letting the wood fall into the snow, he scooped up handfuls of snow and threw them wildly into the air. In the dim, fading light he noticed with a surprise that the snow was pink!

Grandfather put a little bit of it on his tongue, and the delicious taste of cinnamon filled his mouth, while its strong scent filled his nostrils. As he jumped around in excitement at this candy tasting snow, he yelled to everyone around. His voice echoed from beneath the great snow pillows that surrounded him.

One by one friends came from their warm homes near the barn, and ran out of the barn itself to see what this excitement was about. Tiny rabbits came out of a large, hollow mushroom that was decorated with dark green ivy. The Mugworts emerged from their cozy root cellar, and cousins came bounding down a narrow path, made more narrow by the pink drifting snow. Voices sang merrily, ice skates were flung over shoulders, and sleds were readied to take on the steepest hills of the Golden Wood Estate, or anywhere in Tuxedo Park.

The excitement chimed through caverns of pink snow and rosy icicles. Laughter tinkled through the woods. It was nearly Christmas, and what better fun than to have all the sweet cinnamon candy you can eat!



The pink snow continued to fall gently throughout the night. There was so much excitement that everyone rose especially early on Christmas eve morning. Grandfather jumped from his bed and rubbed the small window beside it to see if the previous evening had all been a dream. There was a strange glow over the tall pines, and the ivy did not look quite right. The early morning gray was just lifting from the ground, and a pink hue lingered over everything in sight. Grandfather rubbed his eyes again, then looked around a second time. The barn was draped in pink snow, the icehouse seemed carved in pink, the ivy, the woods, everything was covered in soft pink snow that smelled and tasted of cinnamon candy!



After breakfast, pink icicles sparkled brilliantly as the sun followed Grandfather down the forest path. His footsteps were wide and careful through the pink snow, cinnamon delight. The Christmas tree grove, where everyone got their tree on Christmas eve, was not far past the mansion. There were small evergreens with spindly arms, tall blue ones full and plush, and short ones with very long needles that smelled of tangerines when squeezed. Choosing one of these, he carefully placed it on the wagon and started back toward home.

The pink snow fell steadily and thickly in Grandfather's path. Higher and higher he stepped to gain distance as the wagon dipped ever deeper into the snow. He pulled harder on the wagon, but it resisted more with each minute the snow piled higher, covering everything recognizable to Grandfather. By now, walls of pink were all he could see. All at once he realized he had lost the rope to his wagon somewhere under the snow. A frightening feeling came over Grandfather. Once he found the wagon, he eventually came to an old stone well. Climbing up onto it, he hoped he could last out the storm without being buried under the snow.





A cold wind hurled branches through the pink downfall of snow, and icicles cracked overhead to the rhythm of the blizzard's roar. Grandfather shivered under his wet clothes, his eyes darted from side to side as he heard the growl of a coyote someplace VERY near. Scaling the well further, he scrambled up to the small roof that covered it. A wooden bucket hung over the dark hole that appeared bottomless.

As he sat there catching his breath, strange sounds began to reach his ears. It was not the wind, or the howl of the coyote that he heard, but voices, coming from the hole in the well...he was sure of it. There was an entire conversation going on, and it was about him!



Climbing back down from the roof and edging as close as he dared to the hole, Grandfather cringed when he heard a growl. Turning quickly, his gaze met fierce, yellow eyes glaring up at him. Another deep coyote snarl came on a gust of wind that pushed him hard enough to cause him to tumble off the edge of the well, and into the deep, dark hole of the well.

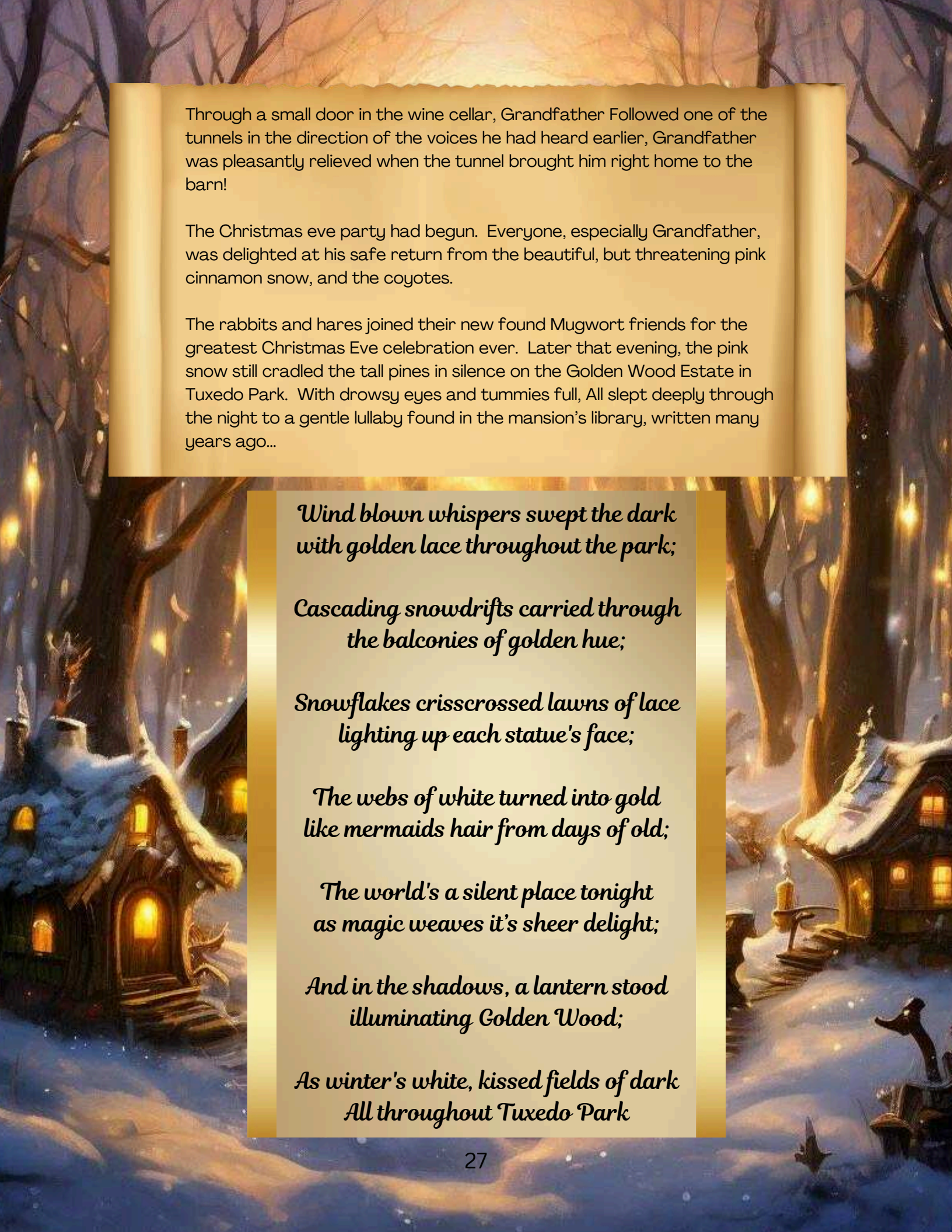
Over and over Grandfather fell through the weightless air expecting to hit the water with an icy splash. But the water never came. Instead, his landing was cushioned by a pile of soft hay nestled in the corner of a room. As he rubbed his eyes to see better, they adjusted to the dim light and the gray walls of an underground chamber. He had landed in the wine cellar of the mansion!



On large estates such as Golden Wood, there were often a series of underground passageways used to reach other buildings on the estate property.

The old well, which had gone dry long before Grandfather's time, actually served as an air vent for the wine cellar and adjoining passageways. Upon falling into the wine cellar, Grandfather was not alone. There were all different kinds of mice, and they looked as though they really enjoyed living there!



A whimsical winter scene with snow-covered houses, trees, and a lantern. The scene is set in a snowy landscape with several small, cozy houses with warm lights glowing from their windows. The trees are bare and covered in snow, with a soft, golden light filtering through the branches. A lantern is visible in the foreground, casting a warm glow. The overall atmosphere is magical and serene.

Through a small door in the wine cellar, Grandfather Followed one of the tunnels in the direction of the voices he had heard earlier, Grandfather was pleasantly relieved when the tunnel brought him right home to the barn!

The Christmas eve party had begun. Everyone, especially Grandfather, was delighted at his safe return from the beautiful, but threatening pink cinnamon snow, and the coyotes.

The rabbits and hares joined their new found Mugwort friends for the greatest Christmas Eve celebration ever. Later that evening, the pink snow still cradled the tall pines in silence on the Golden Wood Estate in Tuxedo Park. With drowsy eyes and tummies full, All slept deeply through the night to a gentle lullaby found in the mansion's library, written many years ago...

*Wind blown whispers swept the dark  
with golden lace throughout the park;*

*Cascading snowdrifts carried through  
the balconies of golden hue;*

*Snowflakes crisscrossed lawns of lace  
lighting up each statue's face;*

*The webs of white turned into gold  
like mermaids hair from days of old;*

*The world's a silent place tonight  
as magic weaves it's sheer delight;*

*And in the shadows, a lantern stood  
illuminating Golden Wood;*

*As winter's white, kissed fields of dark  
All throughout Tuxedo Park*

# Golden Wood Estate

