

The Elves of the Twelve Months

Traduzione in inglese de: I folletti dei dodici mesi

di Elide Fumagalli

casa editrice Vivo di Fiabe

Tutti i diritti riservati

January – Nevaldo and the Noise That Wasn't There

It was a winter night. In the great forest, everything was silent. Nevaldo the elf, guardian of January's silence, walked upon the snow, slowly and lightly; behind him he left gentle, quiet footprints.

Among the bare branches and heaps of snow, suddenly Nevaldo heard a sound: *thump... thump... thump*.

"Who is beating in my forest?" he whispered softly.

Not a bear. Not a woodpecker. Not even the wind. He knew it well.

He crept close to a hollow trunk: silence.

He peered into a burrow: only a small hare asleep.

After a brief pause of silence, the noise began again: *thump... thump... thump*.

Snowflakes started to fall quietly, glowing in the white moonlight.

And in that moment, in that silence, Nevaldo half-closed his eyes.

He breathed in the crisp air and placed a hand on his chest.

Now he understood the sound clearly: *thump... thump... thump*. That drum was his heart!

He breathed in and out slowly... his heartbeat grew calm.

In that moment he felt at one with the forest and all its creatures, as if his heart were the hidden rhythm of the Earth.

Beneath the falling snow and the shining stars, Nevaldo smiled.

And he stayed, listening.

February

Valentina and the Mask that Laughed

In the forest of February there was a colourful little house. Every day, from its window, a blond head popped out with a different hat: once with insect antennae, another time with rabbit ears...

It was Valentina, the elf! She loved to draw on her clothes, and each morning she added a new detail: a sun for when she was happy, raindrops for when she felt sad, a dark cloud for when she was really angry...

One morning she decided:
“Today I will wear the mask that makes everyone laugh!”

All the forest creatures, when they met her, greeted her and said:
“How funny you are, Valentina! Come on, tell us a story!”

And she did. She laughed and she told stories. She was glad to make others laugh and have fun; it made her feel “important.”

But after a while, inside her, something began to change. She didn’t feel like laughing anymore. Not always. Not all day long.

So she hid behind a bush and took off the mask.

“What’s wrong?” asked a little bird, landing on her shoulder. Valentina sighed.

“I don’t feel like laughing anymore... but with that mask... it felt like I had to!”

The bird looked at her gently and whispered:
“Take it off, be yourself!”

But the elf thought:
“What if the others don’t like me anymore? What if they stop looking for me?”

So many thoughts crowded her mind... but then she made her choice. She stepped out from behind the bush, without the mask.

She had understood that she was free to laugh, to cry, to sing, or to stay quiet. Without having to please everyone. Whatever she felt... was just right.

And on her dress, all of a sudden, appeared the colours of the rainbow.

March – Fiorillo and the Secret of Slow Time

In the forest of March, among primroses and violets, lived Fiorillo the elf. On his head he wore a hat of green leaves and, in his clothes, there was a pocket full of mysterious seeds. He walked slowly: he often stopped to listen to the sound of the first leaves in the wind, gazed in wonder at the morning dewdrops, and spoke with the animals waking after their long hibernation.

One morning Fiorillo found a special seed on the ground. He didn't know what plant it would become. The little seed was small and hard, closed like a secret. But Fiorillo was in no hurry.

"I'll wait for you," he said to the seed, as he gently placed it into the soft earth.

Every day he passed by, with a sprinkle of water and a whispered story. Sometimes he sat beside it and stayed in silence. He waited with trust.

The flowers already in bloom told him: "Fiorillo, look, nothing will grow there!"

But smiling, he answered: "It is getting ready, underground, to bloom."

Fiorillo knew: for something to be born, it takes patience, kindness, care... and a pinch of spring.

Then, one morning, something happened. A tiny *crick* that only elves can hear.

A tender green shoot pushed out of the soil. Fiorillo leaned close and whispered: "Welcome. I have waited so long and now you are here! I am happy to see you!"

For he loved things that change little by little, and he knew that every beginning needs patient waiting.

April – Frilly and the Dress that Changed Colour

In the forest of April the air smelled of rain; among the newborn flowers there was a little house made of petals and leaves. Inside lived Frilly, an elf as light as a little butterfly. She wore a dress made of thin veils that often changed colour.

When she was happy, the dress lit up in sunny yellow. When she was frightened, it turned a delicate pink. If she grew angry, it blazed fiery red, and when she was sad, blue coloured it all, like a sky full of rain.

One day Frilly left her house in a bright green dress: she was curious, ready to discover the world. She walked among the plants, listened to the birds singing, until she met a little rabbit who said:

“Oh dear, what an ugly dress you’re wearing today!”

Frilly stopped. She felt a wave of shame. Her dress wrinkled and the veils turned ashy grey.

“Why did you say that? Don’t you know it really hurt me?” asked the elf.

The rabbit lowered his ears.

“Sorry... it’s just that today I’m nervous. I can’t find my burrow and everything feels wrong. In fact, I really liked your little dress!”

Frilly sighed. At once the dress faded into pale blue. She felt happy, so she helped the rabbit search for the burrow.

“There it is, under that blackberry bush!” she cried, pointing.

The rabbit thanked her: now he was no longer nervous.

Frilly smiled, and her dress shone with the colours of the rainbow.

May – Lillibeth and the Mysterious Note

In the meadow of May, where dandelion clocks danced in the air and flowers whispered their scents to the wind, lived an elf named Lillibeth.

Every morning, when the sun's rays unfolded among the daisies, she stepped outside with light feet and curious eyes.

One day, by chance, she found a small note under a shiny stone. It said: "I wish someone would see me, even when I don't speak."

Curious, the elf searched, listened, and observed.

At last she found him: a little boy sitting alone, sad, with his eyes downcast.

Lillibeth came close without a word and sat beside him. Then she picked up some tiny pebbles from the ground and slowly used them to draw a heart among the grass and flowers.

The boy watched in silence. The elf was doing all this for him.

So he shyly offered her a daisy, and she gave him her dandelion clock.

"Blow, go on!" said Lillibeth.

He blew, and a thousand tiny umbrellas floated into the sky.

The two exchanged a knowing look: the boy was happy, and the elf could continue on her way to share more kindness.

June – Ubaldo and the Suitcase of Memories

It was almost summer. Ubaldo came out of his little house, a small burrow hidden beneath a giant daisy, carrying a mysterious suitcase in his hand.

That day, in the meadow, he met a group of children: some were smiling, others had watery eyes.

“Hey, why are you so quiet?” Ubaldo asked in a gentle voice.

“Because school is about to end. We’ll miss our friends and our teachers,” answered a little girl.

The elf sat down among them and asked each one to think of a happy memory: a hug, a laugh in the rain, a funny moment, a drawing made with a friend, a song sung together.

Then he opened the suitcase: inside were sheets as light as petals, crayons, thin twigs and colourful strings. On each little sheet he wrote down one of their memories. Then he folded the papers and turned them into small kites! Each child received one.

They flew their colourful kites, laughing and running. When the elf rang his little bell, the children let go of the kites, which drifted away into the sky.

Ubaldo and the children stood watching them in silence. The kites grew smaller and smaller, but the children’s smiles grew bigger and bigger.

Because every farewell can also be a beginning, and you can let go without losing anything.

July – Giralдино, the Elf of Summer Surprises

Giralдино was a lively, mischievous elf. He lived under a fig tree, in a little hut decorated with leaves, twigs, shells, and ribbons stolen from the wind. All around were meadows with singing cicadas, busy little ants, and lizards basking in the sun.

One day, in the nearby park, some children gathered in the shade of a big cherry tree, hot and a little bored.

“We don’t know what to do...” muttered one.

“It’s too hot...” yawned another.

Giralдино came closer and exclaimed: “It’s time for a surprise!”
The children looked at him curiously.

The elf pulled a feather from his pocket. He rubbed it on his head and, laughing, said: “I need it to tickle the ideas!”

Then he began his mission: to turn that boring afternoon into an adventure!

“Look!” he cried, pointing to a tiny flower that had grown between two stones.

“Listen!” he said, holding to his ear a shell he had in another pocket.

“Touch!” he whispered, showing a pine cone rolling between his hands.

“Taste!” he murmured, offering the children a juicy slice of watermelon.

Little by little, the children grew curious, stood up, and began to look more closely. They saw a tiny ant carrying a giant crumb, a little bird practising for the sunset concert, a blackberry bush no one had noticed.

At the end of the afternoon, Giralдино gave the children: a map to find strawberries and blackberries, flat pebbles to skip on the river, a flying seed that, once set free, who knows where it would take them!

“The best surprise is the one you don’t expect,” whispered the elf with a wink, “and every summer’s day hides at least one!”

Then, with his hat a little crooked and his pockets lighter, he waved goodbye to the children and vanished... but not completely, for if you listen carefully you can still hear a little giggle. Giralдино is still there, ready for the next wonder.

August – The Elf Agostino and... the Sweet Doing Nothing

Agostino walked barefoot, slowly, leaving light footprints behind. He lived in a little house beneath the big, fragrant rosemary bush. He loved the afternoons of August, those silent, hot afternoons, full of... the sweet doing nothing!

One day, in the park, the children were tired: they had run, jumped, shouted... and now they didn't know what to do anymore! It was summer and they wanted fun, not stillness!

Agostino watched them from afar, sitting on a branch. He took a long, long breath and, without making a sound, climbed down slowly. He picked up a feather from the grass and blew it into the air. The children turned and whispered to each other: "Who is that?" "What's he doing?"

Unbothered by them, the elf began to walk. At every step, though, he paused: he danced with a leaf moving in the wind, stroked with his finger the shadow of a branch, built a tower of stones... He did everything slowly, and he really seemed to enjoy it!

The children followed him in silence, one after another. There were no games to play and no words to say. There was only watching a caterpillar sleeping on a flower's stem, closing their eyes and dancing with the wind, placing a hand on their chest and listening to their heartbeat.

There was no hurry, because suddenly everything seemed different, calmer. Agostino led them beneath a big tree, opened his little cloth bag, and took out: a grey feather, a pebble that shone in the moonlight, and other tiny treasures. He gave a gift to each child. He said not a word. But everyone understood all the same.

"Silence helps you listen better," said one.

"Even the smallest things have a sound," said another.

When the sun began to set, the elf walked away, slowly disappearing into the tall grass.

But if you close your eyes and stay still for a moment, perhaps you will hear him, in that little silence. Agostino returns whenever a bit of slowness, of silence, a bit of peace is needed.

September – Matilde and the Little Bag of Magic

That morning, in front of the school gate, the air smelled of backpacks and new smiles. It was the first day of school: there were clean shoes, neat braids, hugs and hands that didn't want to let go, hearts beating fast.

The children looked around: some talked a lot, some not at all. Some smiled, others had watery eyes. Some couldn't wait to see their friends again, while others wished they could go back home to their mum!

Hidden behind a lavender bush, Matilde was watching everything. She was tiny, with a button nose and two big curious eyes. The "grown-ups" couldn't see her—only the children could. Every year, on the first day of school, she slipped between the backpacks, hopped among the hair, and slipped into their thoughts. She carried a little bag full of small spells: a drop of courage, a pinch of cheerfulness, a breath of patience.

That morning she noticed a girl with her hood pulled down over her eyes; not far away, a boy clutching the teddy bear hidden in his backpack; and another who was telling his dad: "I'm not getting out of the car!"

Matilde understood she was needed, so she set to work. She blew an idea into the girl's head: "What if something nice happened today in class?" She left a light giggle in the ear of the boy with the teddy. Then she winked at the third, whispering: "I'll be waiting inside, right by the window!"

When the gate opened, the elf followed the children into the classroom, skipping among drawing sheets, sharpened pencils, and colours. Whenever someone felt a little sad or lost, she left a trace: a caress, a funny thought that made them laugh, a drawing that seemed to appear by itself.

At the end of the day, as the children went home, they told each other:

"Something magical happened to me today..."

"I was so scared... but then it went away!"

"I made friends with a girl, even though we didn't know each other before!"

Matilde waved goodbye and then vanished among the leaves of the big tree, ready to guard every first time with a pinch of wonder.

October – Rodolfo and the Diary of Wonders

That day the sky was grey and the wind played tag among the trees. Leaves were falling lightly, one after another. The children entered school feeling cold. Some sighed, others yawned. It seemed like an ordinary day. But it wasn't.

On one desk lay a red leaf. It was there, as if it had been waiting for them. Everyone stared at it until, at last, a girl picked it up. She held it gently in her hands, turned it over, and saw a tiny writing: "*Find me! I am Rodolfo!*"

The children looked at one another. What a strange name—Rodolfo! Maybe it was a trick played by children from another class. Then one of them suggested they have a look in the playground when the teacher took them out for break.

So, instead of running here and there on their own, they carefully explored the garden. That's how they first found a grey pebble with a golden line. A little further on, a yellow feather, then a round strange seed, and finally a small acorn with a mysterious hole. At every step, a new discovery.

Until, at the far end of the garden, they saw a tiny elf gazing at the first fallen leaf as if it were a treasure.

He saw them and said nothing. He smiled. Then he handed each child a little card with a hole in it and told them: "With this, you can discover small things."

The children all nodded together, too surprised to speak.

Soon one noticed an ant dragging a huge crumb, another saw a drop of water sliding slowly down a leaf, and one little girl was mesmerised by a sunbeam making a spider's web sparkle.

That was when Rodolfo pulled a tiny notebook from his pocket: it was full of drawings and words. Then he whispered: "This is my diary—would you like one too?" The children all nodded. So the elf gave each of them a new diary to collect their own wonders.

Then he blew hard and... *poof!* He vanished into the wind.

From that day on, every child treasured their diary. Whenever something surprised them—a heart-shaped stone, a leaf with a hole, a funny sound of the rain—they drew it, described it, or glued it to a new page.

Because Rodolfo had left them a precious gift: the desire to marvel every single day.

November – The Elf Mirtilla and the Kindness Pockets

One foggy November morning, the children were playing hide-and-seek in the school garden.

Mirtilla watched them from behind a small bush; she was a little elf and knew well that adults would not see her, but the children... yes. She wore a dress with a thousand velvet pockets, each one hand-stitched with a different thread. Inside the pockets were tiny precious objects: a shining plaster to heal any wound, a pin to give courage, a sweet with a filling of kind words, and other little treasures.

The children noticed her through her gestures, through her gifts. One of them felt a warm breath on his grazed knee, a girl felt a leaf resting softly on her head, another felt a caress on his hand.

Andrea found his glove under the bench. Arlen discovered a heart-shaped stone in his pocket. Fatima saw that the plaster her mother had put on her finger to cover a cut had turned golden. What was happening? Something was changing... they were changing!

Luisa hugged Sara, who was sad that day; Giacomo shared half of his slice of cake with Marco, who had no snack; Kevin gave Leo a compliment for his new sweatshirt.

The garden was no longer just a garden: it had become a place full of care.

When the school bell rang, the children went back inside, but under the branches of the big tree a little figure was waving to them. It was Mirtilla, the elf of kind gestures.

The elf no one sees, but who arrives whenever you need a handful of kindness.

December – The Tree of Kind Thoughts

December arrived with the cold winter wind, misted windows, scarves and hats. At school, everyone was talking only about presents.

“I want a new video game!”

“I want a talking doll!”

“I’ll get so many presents it will take me ages to open them all!”

At the back of the classroom, though, some children said nothing: Viola looked at her classmates with a distant gaze, Samuele was sad and kept staring at the floor, and Marta sighed loudly from time to time. They were days full of lights... but some children seemed dimmed.

That same night, when everyone was asleep in their homes, the school door opened with a tiny click: it was Lulù, the elf of December. Lulù tiptoed between the desks. She sighed softly and left small gifts only on some of them.

In the morning, when the children entered the classroom, they immediately noticed that on Viola’s desk there was a folded note that said:

“Today someone will listen to you and tell you that you are truly special!”

Inside his notebook, Samuele found a cloud-shaped card:

“Even if you sometimes make mistakes, you are important!”

Marta found a little hand-drawn star with the words:

“I see you. I hear you. I care for you.”

The children looked around. Who had done this? The teacher? The headmaster? A child from another class? No one could answer. From behind the window, Lulù was smiling.

But that morning something even more important happened: without anyone saying it aloud, all the children began to pay more attention to one another. Those who were quiet and kept apart were invited to join in. Those who were sad received a drawing from an unnamed messenger.

The teacher then had an idea: she prepared little paper envelopes with each child’s name, plus one with her own, and pinned them to a big tree drawn on the wall. Then she said to the class:

“This will be our tree of kind thoughts. Whenever you feel like giving a sentence, a drawing, a thought to a classmate or to me, you can slip it into their envelope without anyone seeing you. At the end of the day, everyone will check if there is mail waiting for them.”

The children welcomed the idea with joy, and from that day on, the tree of kind envelopes became the most visited place in the classroom.