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American Child Health Association

The Magic Cat Field

by

Eleanor Glendower Griffith

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The magic oat
field.

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THE
Magic Oat Field
A Health Play for Children

By
ELEANOR GLENDOWER GRIFFITH

Illustrated by
JESSIE GILLESPIE



Child Health Organization of America

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FOUR IMPORTANT POINTS:

- 1 We emphasize health as a positive ideal, presenting health to children in terms of beauty, strength and joy. Too much so-called health education is merely a matter of information about disease.
- 2 Our efforts are concentrated on the *formation* of health habits rather than the acquisition of facts in physiology and hygiene. The essential laws of health have been incorporated into the "Rules of the Game." It is fundamentally important for a child to acquire a taste for and form the habit of eating the right kind of food, the habit of a thorough daily bowel movement, of an early bed hour. Unless the health teaching actually functions in these practical ways in the child's life, that teaching is in vain.
- 3 We believe that to interest the child in the significance of his weight, is one of the best ways of creating in him a health conscience and a willingness to obey the laws of health. It is as important for the growing child, as for the baby, to be weighed regularly. For this reason there should be scales in every school and the children should be weighed each month. We have devised the Class Room Weight Record as a means of simplifying and making attractive this routine. This should be used as the corner-stone in your health education program. Games and devices serve to continue the group interest so created.
- 4 In order to teach health effectively we must capture the interest and imagination of the child and help him to express his new enthusiasm originally and creatively. Our posters, health stories and plays are therefore offered merely as suggestive material.

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These Four Health Plays

The Magic Oat Field

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Dramatized From

“Cho Cho and the Health Fairy”

The Magic Oat Field

CHARACTERS

SCENE I

Fairy Health

Play Elf

Persian Cat

Witch

Cho Cho

School Child

Six Children

The Magic Oat Field

Stage Setting: The Fairy's Garden, rustic Bench or Rose Arbor, center stage at back—Garden gate at right—Lattice left, Fairy seated in Rose Arbor.

(Enter Cho Cho.)

Cho Cho: I seek Fairy Health; does she live here?

(Fairy rises and comes forward.)

Fairy: I am Health.

(Cho Cho draws card from pocket—hands it to Fairy—Fairy reads card.)

Cho Cho, the Friend of Children. Welcome, Cho Cho.

(Shakes hands.)

Cho Cho: I come to view the wonders of your garden and to learn from you the secrets of a child's heart.

(Fairy and Cho Cho walk to Rose Arbor—
seat themselves.)

Cho Cho: Tell me, Good Fairy, how to make the children healthy and happy. I have long loved little children, and it grieves me deeply to see in our schools pale faces and thin bodies. What is the reason that all children are not healthy and happy?

Fairy: The children will never be healthy and happy until they eat the right food. All the girls and boys who helped to build my house are eating a bowl of delicious oatmeal and milk at breakfast. I have a field of ripening oats, and as long as these oats grow and are beautiful, the oat fields in all this country will flourish and bear grain, but if by any chance a blight should come to my oats, all other oats would die. Then, little children far and near would cry for oatmeal and there would be none to give them.

Cho Cho: May I see your oat field?



Fairy: You may, indeed. (Rises and walks toward lattice, Cho Cho following.) I love to show my oats, for they are very beautiful.

(Exit Fairy and Cho Cho at left stage.)

(Enter a Persian Cat at right.)

Persian Cat: This must be the Fairy's garden, but it seems deserted. I will rest here beside the Rose Arbor until she returns, for I have something to tell her.

(Enter Fairy and Cho Cho from left. Fairy weeping, Cho Cho troubled.)

Fairy: My lovely oats are black and shriveled. (Sobs.) Some blight has fallen upon them.

(Cat comes forward—bows low before Fairy.)

Cat: Be not discouraged, lovely Fairy, your oats have been destroyed by a wicked Witch named Ignorance, but she shall be caught and punished. Do not weep, for when this Witch is fast bound, your oats will spring to life and flourish as never before.

Cho Cho: How did so evil a Witch pass unseen through the Fairy's garden?

(Cat points to gate at right.)

Cat: She came through yonder gateway. I was walking by your garden last night and saw her enter. In her hand she carried a large, strong box. The moon was brilliant and I could see each lovely bush and flower, as I crept after the Witch. I saw her open the box, the tiny insects spring forth and fly toward your oat field. The Witch laughed a harsh laugh, and said, "Go, little imps, work quickly for your time is short." I understand magic, Fairy, and can change at will into any shape that pleases me, so in the twinkling of an eye, I became a witch, too, and walking slowly forward, I said, "A fine night, Madame Witch; what do you here?" The old Witch jumped when she heard my voice, but seeing it was only a witch like herself, she grinned horribly and said, "I have persuaded hundreds of children to stop eating oatmeal, and every time a child refuses oatmeal one of these little imps is born. Before to-morrow night the Fairy's oat field will be withered and dead. One thing only can stop those imps of mine," she chuckled. "What is that, O powerful Witch?" I asked. "I must be bound fast with chains of steel. If such a thing could happen my imps would quickly die, the children eat oatmeal again, and the field regain its beauty; but, ha! ha! no one can bind me." She looked so evil and grinned so horribly that I turned from her in disgust and went to my home.

(Fairy, wringing her hands.)

Fairy: What shall I do? Tell me, wise Cat.

Persian Cat: I am your friend, Fairy; follow me and I will show you the Witch's home.

Cho Cho: I must go, too, for together we can overpower this Witch; but if you were alone her evil magic might prove a match for you, brave Cat.

Cat: I shall be glad to have your company, Cho Cho; one needs a comrade on a dangerous journey.

(All walk toward gate. Exit.)

(Enter left stage, the "Elf of Play," a sprite, dressed in green. Enters dancing or skipping.)

Play Elf: "What a lovely garden. (Flits around stage.) An ideal place to play but no children. I'll rest until the school children pass this way."

(Enter children, six or eight, at right stage.)

First School Child: Let's play something.

Second School Child: I'm tired of all the old things we play.

Third School Child: So am I, and tired of everything. (Throws books down. Play Elf comes forward among children.)

Play Elf: Suppose I teach you a new game.

(Children stare at Elf.)

Children: Who are you?

Play Elf: I am called the Elf of Play. I live in a beautiful country, where flowers bloom and the land is flooded with sunshine. In my country children play all day long and sing as they play. Shall I teach you a game?

Children: Yes! Yes!

(Play Elf takes chalk from dress—draws a line in center of stage.)

Play Elf: Now, children, the game begins like this. (Turns to First Child.) What do you drink for your breakfast?

First Child: I drink coffee.

Play Elf: Too bad, too bad; you stand on the right side of the chalk line. (Child moves to place.) Who drinks milk?

Second Child: I do.

Play Elf: Go to the left side of the line. (Child takes position, facing First Child.) Does any one eat oatmeal or other cereal for breakfast?

Third Child: Every morning I eat cereal.

Play Elf: Good, you go behind my little friend who drinks milk. Put your arms around her waist. (Child moves to place.) That's right. What do you eat? (To the Fourth Child.)

Fourth Child: Buns from the corner store.

Play Elf: Wrong, all wrong. (Shaking her head.) Your place is behind coffee.

(Child takes position, Play Elf directing her.)

Play Elf: Just two more children—what do you eat for lunch?

Fifth Child: My mother has fried meat.

Sixth Child: We have green vegetables.

Play Elf: Green vegetables belong with milk and cereal. (To Child) Take your place behind them. (To Fifth Child) You go to coffee and buns.

(Children now stand facing each other, three to three, arms around waists.)

Play Elf: Now, coffee and milk, clasp hands; when I count three, pull as hard as ever you can; the strongest will pull the other over the chalk line.

Play Elf: Are you ready?

Children (excitedly): Yes, Yes!

Play Elf: One, two, three, pull!

(Coffee and milk pull. Slowly coffee—First Child—is pulled over the line and children tumble together, all laughing.)

Play Elf: (Clapping hands) Milk, cereal and green vegetables are always stronger than coffee, buns and fried meat. Won't you children promise me to give up coffee, buns and fried meat?

Children: We will, indeed.

Play Elf: Then catch me in a game of "Tag."

(Play Elf dodges children, who try to catch her as she passes, and exit, left stage, followed by children, all laughing.)

CURTAIN

SCENE II

(Fairy's Garden)

(Enter Fairy, right, limping—seems exhausted.)

Fairy: Oh, dear! Oh, dear me! (Sinks down upon bench in Arbor.) I have walked until I am too weary to move.

(Enter School Child, carrying books, looks at Fairy.)

School Child: What is wrong, dear Fairy, you look so tired?

Fairy: Come rest beside me, little one, and I will tell you. (Child draws near—seated at Fairy's feet.) I had a lovely field of oats that grew and flourished within my garden. Last night a Witch destroyed every blade of grain. It lies beyond that lattice. (Points.) Cho Cho and the Persian Cat started in pursuit of her many hours ago, and I accom-

panied them. We traveled through a sweet-scented forest for weary miles until at last we reached her home, but she was not there. One of her imps who travel swiftly warned the Witch and she had gone to Devil's Mountain, where she thinks to hide. The Persian Cat and my friend, Cho Cho, have followed her and I hope soon to hear news from them.

Child: What shall we eat for breakfast, Fairy Health, if all the oats are dead?

Fairy: When the Witch is bound fast the oats will spring to life, more beautiful than ever.

Child: Oh! Fairy. Suppose they do not catch her? (Clasps her hands distressed.)

Fairy: But they will, my dear.

Child: Can I do anything to make your oat field gain its health? Let me help.

Fairy: Yes, you can help. Every child can help, even the smallest. The Witch comes to children at breakfast time and whispers in their ears: "Don't eat oatmeal and milk." Many little boys and girls listen to her voice and leave their bowl untouched. Every time this happens a tiny black insect is born, which helps the Witch to destroy my oats. You, Little One, can go to school and tell the children all about this wicked Witch. (Child jumps up excitedly.)

Child: I will go now. (Crosses to lattice, left, waves hand to Fairy.) Good-bye, I will soon be back. (Exit.)

(Noise—shrill cries from right of stage. Fairy rises.)

Fairy: What can that be?

(Enter Cho Cho and Cat, Witch between them, bound with chains, struggling.)

Cho Cho: Stand there, old hag, until I tell the Fairy how I caught you. The Cat and I found this Witch hiding within a deep dark cave and dragged her out. She vowed by everything in earth and heaven that she never saw your oat field, but we knew better than to believe her.

Fairy: How wicked she must be.

Cat: What shall we do to punish her, good Fairy? You shall decide.

Fairy: She can do no harm where she is, bound with steel chains, so you, Cho Cho, and you, dear Persian Cat, punish her no more, but send her forth to her home.

Cho Cho: No, Fairy, she deserves a good flogging. Don't you think so, Cat?

Cat: She well deserves it, but the Fairy shall decide.

Fairy: (Lays hand on Cho Cho.) For my sake, Cho Cho, let her go.

Cho Cho: Go then, you ugly Witch, out of my sight quickly, for I long to beat you black and blue.

(Witch hobbles off stage, muttering.)

(Enter Child, left, followed by other School Children, carrying books, hats and flowers.)

Child: I have told them, Fairy, about the Witch.

Children: And we will never listen to her again.

Fairy: Then let us dance and be happy. Come, dear Cat.

(Takes Cat's hand, leads dance, followed by Cho Cho and First Child. Other Children join in dance.)

CURTAIN

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