



The bell over the shop door jingled. The door swung open, and a woman and a little girl entered. Their eyes darted over the shelves and display cases of masks.

William lowered his feather duster and turned to the front of his store. He had been gently dusting the shelf of delicate princess masks. They were precious, and he dusted them every day.

All of his masks were precious to him. He cared for them as if they were his children.

As the woman and girl approached, Hansel lifted his big head and sniffed the air. The old

German shepherd didn't like to have his nap interrupted. But William was always happy to see customers. People he could share his beloved masks with.

"Welcome," he said. His voice was still young and crisp, despite his seventy years. His mustache was white, as was his wavy hair, parted in the middle. But his eyes were sharp, and he had the energy of a much younger man.

He brushed back the black cape he wore to give himself a look of mystery and set down the feather duster. "Welcome to William's Mask Emporium." He smiled at the little girl, who was dark haired and pretty. She wore a pink pleated skirt and a matching pink sweater. "Did you come to buy a mask?"

"Olivia is going to a costume party," her mother said. "We heard you have the best mask store in town."

William bowed his head. "I think it's the best. It's certainly the oldest. The store has been in my family for three generations."

Olivia was staring at a round pig mask in the first display case. The color matched her skirt and sweater. "Is that a real pig head?" Her voice trembled.

William chuckled. "Of course not. It's made of rubber. Do you like it, Olivia? I made it myself."