

NATALIA'S FIRST CHRISTMAS

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Natalia couldn't believe her luck. She had decided to go for a walk and sit under the Bridge by Butterfly Lake. The lake got its name because it was shaped like a butterfly.

Twin human children, Tory and Cori were there talking excitedly. Neither of them noticed the troll in the shadow of the mushroom at the water's edge.

"We only have five days before Christmas" the tall boy with dreads said. Which was Tory.

"I know. I can't wait! I wonder what Santa is going to bring me.... I mean us?" said the girl with braids that had beads on the end.

Natalia wondered what they were talking about. She had never heard of Christmas or someone named Santa. The twins seemed to be happy about both. She edged closer to the corner of the bridge to hear better.

"Did you hear that?" asked Tory.

"Hear what? Sleigh Bells ringing?" Cori laughed.

"No Silly, I thought I heard something over by the bridge." Tory started walking to where he saw a mushroom about six inches high and four inches wide. He thought he saw movement in the grass under it and stopped to study the spot.

"It's probably one of Santa's elves checking to see if we are being naughty or nice." Cori stated matter of fact. She too watched for movement.

Natalia stood frozen, not sure what to do. She hoped the children would lose interest soon. She had left Fir Valley without telling anyone where she was going. It wasn't far from the lake but still she should have told someone.

"Cori, Tory, come in the house. It's getting dark out." Called Brenda, the twins mom.

"Let's go Tor, mom is calling. It was probably just a mouse in the grass anyway." Cori said.

Cori took Tory's hand and led him away. HE followed but kept looking back at the purple and green mushroom.

"Whoa.... That was close." Natalia sighed and headed back to Fir Valley. She would ask her mom about Christmas, Santa and elves when she got home.

Fir Valley is a cluster of about 30 purple and green mushrooms that sit among Fir trees. Every year about the same time humans come to the valley and cut down some of the small trees. She figured it was for firewood to keep their houses warm in the cold weather. Now she wondered if it had something to do with this Christmas thing.

"Mom, what is Christmas?" Natalia asked her mom, Natasha.

"What dear?" Natasha asked with a puzzled look.

"Christmas? I heard two human children talking about it and someone named Santa, and something called elves."

"Well Sweetie, I don't know. We'll have to ask your father when he comes." Natasha didn't know and doubted that Franklin would either.

"Okay, will he be home soon?"

"He should be in any minute Nat."

Natalia rushed off to get ready to eat and wait for her dad. This Christmas thing sounded like it might be fun.

When Franklin came in Natasha told him about Natalia's question.

"It's a holiday that the humans celebrate in the winter months." He said. "Other than that I don't know much about it."

Natalia walked in the kitchen. "Is that why they cut down fir trees every winter?"

"Yes, they decorate the trees in their homes and on a certain night this Santa comes bearing presents for the household."

"For everyone Dad?! Why don't we do that this year so Santa can bring us presents too." Natalia asked excitedly.

"I don't know exactly how it works Nat. I'll have to look into it to see what has to be done."

"Will you, dad, please?! I want Santa to come here this winter." Natalia really wanted a present on a day other than her birthday.

"I'll do my best Sweetheart. Now eat your food and get ready for bed." Franklin said. He would ask Steven, the eldest troll about the human's Christmas celebration.

"Thanks Dad." Natalia said as she hugged her father and then went to bed.

"Franklin, do you think that was a good idea to do that." Natasha didn't want to get Natalia's hopes up.

"I'm sure we can make it happen for her. I'm going to ask Steven what needs to be done. Maybe the entire valley can celebrate Christmas for the first time."

"That would be nice, dear. But is there really a Santa out there?"

"It won't hurt to find out, will it?" Franklin said with a thought in his head.

"I guess not." Natasha kissed Franklin on the cheek and went to wash the dishes.

Franklin went to Elder Steven the next day after work to find out about Christmas.

"Well now, Franklin, on the winter month of December the humans celebrate a day called Christmas. Where presents are given to the children by a man named Santa Claus. But only if they have been good.

"Oh, I see... So how does this Santa know to bring these presents?"

"They decorate with lights and things to show they are celebrating Christmas. They cut down trees and decorate them with ornaments, lights and even popcorn, with a bright star at the top. They leave the lights on at night so Santa can see them."

"Does everyone who celebrates get a present? What does Santa get in return?"

"Yes everyone gets a present and Santa gets milk and cookies."

"Milk and cookies?" Franklin was puzzled.

"Yes, they leave out milk and cookies or some type of treat for Santa when he comes to bring the presents."

"Have you ever seen this Santa?"

"No, I can't say that I have, but I have heard bells ringing in the middle of Christmas eve and a man saying "Ho Ho Ho, Merry Christmas."

"How does he get the presents into each house?"

"It's said that he goes in through the chimney."

"How would he get the presents into our homes? We don't have chimneys"

"I suppose through a window."

"Okay, do you think we can have a village meeting tonight and get the trolls of Fir Valley to decorate for Christmas?"

"I don't see why not."

Later that night the elder trolls of Fir Valley decided they would decorate for Christmas, but would not tell the children. They would decorate the evening before Christmas.

"I hope we can pull this off in time." Natasha said to Franklin.

"It will be easy; Natalia is so preoccupied with watching the human children she'll never guess what's going on."

Natalia had waited two days and her dad still hadn't mentioned anything about celebrating Christmas. She decided to not bother him again. It was probably a waste of time. This Santa may not even be real.

Natalia went out to the lake again to watch Tory and Cori. She didn't know they had been watching and waiting the past two days for her to show up.

"Be Quite, here it comes." Cori said in a hushed voice.

"You're the one talking. Be still." Troy snapped back.

They watched as Natalia went to the purple and green mushroom and peeked around it.

"It's so cute, with its orange hair. Definitely not a mouse." Cori whispered.

"No, not a mouse. It could be one of Santa's elves." Tory whispered back.

"Elves have pointed ears, Tory."

"Well, what is it then?"

"I don't know. We could ask it." Cori said while eyeing the troll.

"What do you mean WE?" Tory asked as he looked at his sister.

"Come on, I know you aren't scared of that lil' old thing."

"I'm not scared, just cautious."

"Whatever, Come on." Cori grabbed Tory's hand and pulled him along.

As they approached, Natalia was looking towards the lake and didn't see them come up.

"Hey, excuse me." Cori said.

Natalia jumped at the voice. She stood there wide eyed thinking, *"Where did they come from?"*

"Excuse me. What are you?" Cori asked.

"Maybe it can't talk." Tory said.

"Be quiet, Tory.

Natalia was speechless.

"Can you talk? Do you understand me?" asked Cori.

She shook her head yes, but still didn't say anything.

"Do you have a name?" Tory asked.

Natalia nodded yes.

"It looks scared." Cori said.

"Don't be scared. We just want to know what you are."

"What is Christmas?" Natalia finally asked when she could speak.

"You don't know what Christmas is?" asked Tory. "You're not an elf then."

"I told you elves have pointed ears." Cori snapped.

"No, I heard you talking about it and Santa."

"If you tell us what you are and your name we will tell you all about it." Cori said.

"I'm a troll and my name is Natalia Fir. What is your name?"

"I'm Cori and this is my brother Tory."

"Now tell me about Christmas and Santa."

Tory and Cori told Natalia all about the presents, sleigh rides, snow angels, lights and decorations. She was in awe and wished she could celebrate in her village.

"We've never had anything like that in Fir Valley. I wish we could have Christmas there." Natalia said whimsy.

"Hey why don't you meet us here tomorrow and we'll take you to our house to celebrate with us?" Cori asked.

"I don't know. I have to be back to Fir Valley before full dark." Natalia wanted to go and see all the things they talked about.

"We can take you back on our bikes. So you can make it home in time." Tory suggested.

"Okay... I'll be here same time tomorrow." Natalia said, excitement causing her to feel jittery.

"See you tomorrow Natalia." Cori said.

"Bye Tory, Bye Cori." Natalia turned and left to go home. She couldn't wait until tomorrow.

Natalia rushed through her chores, ate in a hurry and went to bed early.

Franklin and the other trolls prepared to decorate the valley the next day. Steven, Joe, Torrance and Ruby got the things they needed to create Christmas in Fir Valley. They would put them up before full dark.

Natalia rushed to the lake to meet the twins. She was ready to see the lights and decorations. She wished she could see Santa and the elves and reindeers. Maybe one winter she would.

"Hey Natalia, we're glad you could come."

"Me too, I'm excited."

"We have a surprise for you." Tory said.

"Really, what is it?"

"If we tell you then it won't be a surprise." Cori stated.

Cori held out her hand for Natalia to climb on so she could put her in the basket on her bike.

They headed for the twin's house. Natalia was shocked at the sight she saw. The lights flashing and dancing around the windows. The decorated trees through the windows with the lights winking on and off. The snow men with carrots for noses and sticks for arms. Natalia had never seen anything like it. Everything was so pretty. How she wished the trolls at Fir Valley could see this sight.

"Everything is so bright and pretty." Natalia said.

"Wait until you see all the presents under the tree." Tory said.

"In Fir Valley we only get presents for our birthday."

"Really?" Cori asked surprised.

"Yeah, I wish we could celebrate Christmas in Fir Valley."

Once in the house Natalia could smell the cookies baking, cinnamon and pine. The smell was wonderful. She looked at the tall fir tree decorated with lights, ornaments and popcorn of all things. What caught her attention was the bright star and all the wrapped presents.

"WOW!" was all she could say.

Cori came back from the kitchen with a cookie and handed it to Natalia. "I hope you like chocolate chip."

Natalia took a bite and fell in love. She had never had a chocolate chip cookie before.

"It's delicious. Thank you. Is this my surprise?"

"Oh no. Tory bring Natalia's surprise." Cori yelled down the hall.

"Okay. Here I come." Tory came in the room with one of the wrapped presents.

"Here you go Natalia. Merry Christmas."

Natalia could say nothing. She took the present and hurriedly unwrapped it. The twins laughed with delight.

When the present was finally opened it was a small music box that played '*Sleigh Bells Ringing*'. Natalia loved it.

"Oh my, thank you. It's beautiful." Natalia said.

"Your Welcome. This way you will have a piece of Christmas if not all of it in your valley." Cori stated. She hated to think of Natalia not experiencing Christmas. It was the least they could do.

"I am going to enjoy it."

"It's about time to get you back home. Come on." Tory held out his hand for Natalia.

When they dropped Natalia off at the edge of her valley they noticed twinkly lights.

"What's that?" Cori asked pointing to where the lights were shining.

Natalia looked and to her surprise the valley was dancing with lights of every color and she noticed a tree in the center of the valley decorated with all kinds of trinkets and lights with a big star at the top.

Christmas had come to Fir Valley.

"Looks like my dad found out about Christmas." Natalia said to herself.

"Yeah, it's pretty." Cori said smiling. At least now Natalia will get to experience Christmas.

"Will Santa come bring presents now?" Natalia wanted to know.

"Yeah, he will be here. You have to leave him some milk and cookies by the tree to thank him."

"Okay, I will make sure I leave it for him." Natalia couldn't wait to see what Santa would bring.

"Good night Natalia. Enjoy your Christmas." Cori said.

"Good night, and thank you for the music box." Natalia walked towards her valley.

When she got there her dad was waiting for her. "Merry Christmas Sweetie."

"Oh, Dad! Thank you for bringing Christmas to Fir Valley. Natalia hugged her dad and kissed his cheek.

"Now we just have to wait for Santa to bring the presents." Franklin told Natalia.

"What time will he come?"

"I don't know, but we will be in bed sleep more than likely."

"And when we get up in the morning the presents will be under the tree." Natasha added.

Natalia wanted the night to go by quickly; so she ate, did her chores and got ready for bed. She opened the lid to the music box to let the song play as she fell asleep.

Sometime during the night Natalia heard a noise and went to her window to see what it was. When she looked out she didn't see anything at first. Natalia looked up and she saw a sleigh being pulled by what looked like reindeer with a man sitting on the seat. Her eyes got big as saucers.

"*Santa.*" She whispered.

As is he heard his name he looked her way, waved and said "Ho, Ho, Ho Merry Christmas."

Natalia rushed down stairs to where she left the milk and two sugar cookies. They were gone and under the tree were three presents wrapped in shiny paper with bows.

"Dad, Mom Santa came... Santa came!" she yelled as she went to wake them up.

"What is it Sweetie." Natasha asked.

"Santa Came! Come look!"

They got up and went to see what Natalia was so excited about. There were three presents under the tree.

"Well, what do you say. There is a Santa." Franklin was surprised. He had planned to get up in the middle of the night and place presents under the tree for Natalia himself. He would place them there anyway later.

"let's open them!" Natalia didn't want to until the morning.

"Here Dad, this one has your name on it."

Franklin opened the present. It was a brand new pair of boots. He needed them bad. He only had one pair and the soles were thin.

"Mom, this one is for you."

Natasha found a sewing kit. They couldn't afford sending their clothes to the seamstress, Ruby, to fix. It would come in handy.

When Natalia opened her present it was a necklace and earring set she had been wanting for her birthday for the past two years.

They all wondered how did Santa know what they needed and wanted. Just then they heard, "Merry Christmas to all and to all a Goodnight."