

THE MAGIC BRUSH &
THE DOORWAY THROUGH THE NORTHERN LIGHTS:

A CHRISTMAS TALE

Written by

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EXT. THE NORTH POLE - SNOWY LANDSCAPE - DAY

SANTA CLAUS stands on a snowy hillside peering toward the horizon. The sun shines on his face as his eyes sparkle with excitement. A white Arctic Hare stands beside him, whiskers flickering in the mild breeze. This is THEODORE, Santa's trusted friend and assistant.

SANTA

Well Theodore, I suppose it's time.
The elves will be waiting.

THEODORE

Yes! The celebration! They are all so eager to be Master Elf! Who will you choose this year, Santa? Will it be Belu? He holds the record for fastest toy painter. Or Nym? He makes the best chocolate cocoa with just the right number of marshmallows. Yum! Or perhaps Nushala? She is the best storyteller. All the elves love Nushala.

SANTA

Yes those are all good elves. But I can't make my choice based on how good an elf *seems* on the outside. If that were the case I'd have elves do-gooding all over the place, and what fun would that be?

THEODORE

A very good point. Yes.
(pondering)
So how DO you choose Santa?

Santa turns his attention to the other side of the hill where we now see many snow-covered houses in a snug little Christmas village, all lit up with Christmas lights. There is a large Toy Shop in the center of the village which is fully lit from inside, with warm puffs of smoke floating up from its chimney.

SANTA

The merit of an elf, or any living thing, lies within, Theodore. I take a peek inside and find out what's there. Simple as that.

THEODORE

Yes of course. Simple.

SANTA

Shall we head to the ceremony?

Santa starts off toward the village without waiting for a response and Theodore hops happily after him.

INT. JOHNSON HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A young girl, FREYA JOHNSON, 12, lies on her stomach in front of a sparkling Christmas tree in a nice suburban home that is decorated for the holiday. Her cat MINXY is curled up next to her. A warm FIRE CRACKLES nearby. Freya has a sketch pad and she is painting a picture of the Christmas tree. It's a good picture, not perfect, but showing potential. Her attention is diverted by her mother calling to her from upstairs.

ALAINA (O.S.)

Freya! Honey can you please come upstairs and help me with Teddy?

Freya rolls her eyes. Teddy again. It's always about Teddy these days. Well not this time. She'd just say no!

FREYA

(yelling back)
I'm BUSY!

She looks at her picture critically and scowls. She tears the page from the pad and crumples it up, throwing it angrily into the fire.

FREYA (CONT'D)

Stupid tree. I'm never going to get it right.

ALAINA (O.S.)

Freya Johnson you get up here right now or I'll call your father!

Freya flinches at that. Anything but that.

FREYA

Coming!

Freya storms up the stairs.

INT. JOHNSON HOME - TEDDY'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Freya enters and sees her mother, ALAINA, 44, on the floor with a bucket and a rag, kneeling before a pile of sick.

Freya's brother, TEDDY, 8, a thin and pale-faced boy with a mess of brown curls framing a sweet face, leans against the opposite doorway leading to the bathroom. He wears pajamas and a robe and looks up at Freya guiltily.

ALAINA

(frazzled)

It happened too fast and the bucket was by the bed. Can you help him into the bathroom while I clean this up?

Freya looks from the sick on the floor back to Teddy, skeptical. It's all so gross.

ALAINA (CONT'D)

PLEASE?

FREYA

Fine! I'm doing it!

Freya crosses to her little brother, her eyes growing a bit more tender as she sees he is not feeling well.

TEDDY

(dizzy but proud)

I can make it on my own. I'm not a baby.

Freya considers this. She crosses her arms and gestures toward the bathroom, 'go ahead.' Teddy takes a step - and nearly falls face first on the carpet. Freya catches him.

FREYA

OK big guy, I'm sure you can make it. But let me help you anyway.

(a whispered conspiracy)

So Mom doesn't worry.

Freya wraps her arm gently around Teddy, and he leans his weight into her, grateful for the help. They walk carefully into the bathroom where Alaina has drawn him a nice bubble bath.

INT. JOHNSON HOME - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Freya stands by the bath and turns her head as Teddy disrobes. She lays his robe over one arm while holding the other out for Teddy to hold onto as he climbs into the warm tub. Once he is in, Freya goes to the sink and fills a cup with water. She brings it to him.

FREYA
Rinse and spit.

Teddy does as he's told and Freya takes the glass back to the sink to rinse it out, making a face. So gross.

TEDDY
I'm sorry I'm so much trouble.

Freya SIGHS and sits on the edge of the tub. She'd rather be doing a million other things than taking care of her sick baby brother. But she knows it's not really his fault.

FREYA
You're no trouble. You're sick,
that's all. It's not your fault.

TEDDY
But I've been sick for so long. The
kids at the park make fun of me.

FREYA
Who makes fun of you?

TEDDY
You know. The neighbor kids.

FREYA
Shawn and Travis?

TEDDY
Yeah. They call me Captain Puke.

Teddy and Freya look at each for a beat, then BREAK INTO LAUGHTER.

TEDDY (CONT'D)
(still laughing)
It's not funny! It's mean!

FREYA
Yeah but true! So very, very true.

ALAINA (O.S.)
Keep it down in there kids! Teddy
doesn't need any more excitement.

Freya SHUSHES Teddy, eyes wide and playful.

TEDDY
(whispering)
Aren't I ever going to get better?

Freya hands her brother a washcloth, shrugging off his worry.

FREYA

Sure you are! Just a few more rounds of medicine at that stupid ol' hospital and you'll be home free, just in time for our Christmas celebration.

TEDDY

(brightening)

Have you written your letter to Santa yet?

FREYA

I'm 12 Teddy. Double digits. I don't write letters to Santa anymore.

TEDDY

Oh. I haven't yet either. I've been too sick. You don't think he'll forget me do you? Christmas is only two weeks away!

FREYA

Well, you'd better write him a letter like you do every year, just to be sure.

TEDDY

Will you help me Freya? Maybe paint a picture to get Santa's attention?

Freya scowls.

TEDDY (CONT'D)

PLEASE?

Freya HUSHES him, not wanting to get yelled at again.

FREYA

Fine. OK. I'll help. After your bath.

TEDDY

Thank you!

FREYA

But only for a bit, I have a life too you know!

TEDDY

I know.

Freya SIGHS again. She hands him the shampoo bottle.

FREYA

Now don't forget to wash this rat's nest. It's nasty!

Freya flicks water at him as she gets up to leave and Teddy GIGGLES, loving his big sister. Freya shakes her head.

FREYA (CONT'D)

I'm serious! Nasty!

INT. SANTA'S TOY SHOP - EVENING

Santa's toy shop is a child's dream. In every corner is a different station brimming over with a hundreds of units of the most sought-after toys. Trains, dolls, robots, space stations, remote control cars, paint sets, and more. Some are mid-way through production, all have been abandoned as the elves - a group of sixty or more - gather before a podium on a raised platform that serves as a stage. The elves themselves are uniformly dressed in matching clothes made of green or red, either shorts, pants, skirt or dress.

They CHATTER EXCITEDLY amongst each other as they await Santa. A female elf with green hair and wearing a red dress, TALINDRA, talks to her friend KAEDA, another female elf with a red pony tail, dressed in green pants.

TALINDRA

I be most excited, Kaeda! Who do you think Santa will pick this year?

KAEDA

How should I be knowing? It seems every year we work our most bestest, and we all be singing our songs most loveliest, but Santa chooses the elf we least expectest!

TALINDRA

This is true.

A handsome male elf, BELU, stands nearby with a group of male elves, MYRILL, KOLVAR and ORYM. Belu overhears the female elves talking and answers them loudly enough for all to hear.

BELU

He will choose the elf most worthiest to carry the magic brush to the other side! I am the fastest toy painter, so it only makes sense that I should be Master Elf this year!

KOLVAR

You be worthy, Belu, but Orym be
the strongliest. Must be strong to
go to the other side!

Suddenly Myrill emits a POOF OF GREEN CLOUD from his bottom.
He smiles sheepishly as the surrounding elves cover their
noses.

KOLVAR (CONT'D)

Myrill you be the fartliest. You
not be going.

KAEDA

Well I think it will be Nushala.
Nobody tells stories like Nushala,
and little boys and girls love
stories.

A lovely elf with a green dress and white hair, NUSHALA,
blushes at the compliment.

NUSHALA

I would be most honored, and I
would be bringing back the bestest
stories for all of you!

There is a CHEER from the elves who all love Nushala. All
except one. I skinny elf in green pants and suspenders, with
spiky hair a darker shade of red than the others, sulks at a
table nearby. This is ZALTARISH, a grumpy elf who feels he
never gets his due.

ZALTARISH

(to himself)

It should be mine. I have worked
for Santa the longliest. It be my
turn.

A pudgy and cheerful elf wearing green shorts, NYM, appears
from the kitchen, carrying a tray of steaming hot cocoa mugs
with marshmallows and colorful Christmas cookies. The boy
elves all crowd around him, eagerly reaching for the treats.

Zaltarish sees an opportunity to cause mischief. Nym is
passing right by and Zaltarish need only put his foot out to
trip him. Nym and topple the whole thing, and in the rukus no
one would know what happened.

Zaltarish PICTURES THE SPILL IN HIS MIND.

CUT SCENE

Nym trips on Zaltarish's foot, the cocoa goes flying, hot chocolate splatters all over Nushala's white hair, mugs and cookies break all over the floor.

END CUT SCENE

Zaltarish grins deviously and begins to make his move.

AEGO, a waifish young elf with red glasses, red pants, and a sprig of green hair, has been reading while awaiting Santa. He looks up just in time to see Zaltarish and his intentions. He calculates the likelihood of hot chocolate splattering on Nushala and, though against his character, steps forward to prevent disaster.

AEGO

Good day Zaltaresh. How do you be doing today?

Zaltarish pulls his foot back and glares at Aego.

ZALTARISH

Aego. Since when do you be caring about anything but books?

AEGO

I -

At that moment Santa enters the Toy Shop and all attention turns toward him. Theodore hops behind and, seeing the tray of hot cocoa that has made its way safely to the table, he hops happily over to partake in the warm drink.

SANTA

And how are my fine elves all doing this Celebration Day?

A CHEER goes up among the excited elves who begin CHATTERING again all at once about Celebration Day, and the selection of the Master Elf. Santa makes his way slowly up to the podium and waits until the attention is entirely on him.

SANTA (CONT'D)

As you all know, Celebration Day is about, well celebration! We - well I, I guess it's I who chooses - but we ALL celebrate! Right. So every December 14th I choose one of you to serve as Master Elf for the Christmas Holiday. This special elf will carry out the very important task of carrying the Magic Brush to the Chosen Child.

(MORE)

SANTA (CONT'D)

The child of course, will paint the doorway needed for my sleigh to make its way through in time for deliveries on Christmas Eve. Do I have that right?

Santa looks to Theodore who is thoroughly enjoying his cup of cocoa. He comes to attention and nods at Santa.

SANTA (CONT'D)

Yes. I thought so. After all, I invented it. OK, so let's begin. Music?

Santa looks to a small band of musical elves in the corner who are awaiting his cue. They begin to PLAY A HAPPY LITTLE MELODY.

SANTA (CONT'D)

May I have the Magic Brush please, from last year's Master Elf? Ruby?

An athletic and wise looking female elf with glittery red hair, RUBY, approaches the stage with a long brown box that appears to be made of sugar cookie dough. This is the magic Christmas Box. It is decorated like a beautiful Christmas cookie and covered in colorful gumdrops.

Ruby gives the box out to Santa, who takes it in his hands. When he lifts the lid, the MUSIC STOPS and all the elves lean in. There, resting among colorful gum drops which appear to be SLIGHTLY GLOWING, is a simple painter's brush. Santa lifts the brush from the box and holds it up for all to see.

The elves all OOOOOH AND AHHHH.

SANTA (CONT'D)

Thank you Ruby.

Ruby smiles at Santa and steps off stage.

SANTA (CONT'D)

Now, I'm sure that you all feel worthy of this honor. And you are. Worthy that is. What a funny word, "worthy" - what does it mean? And who decides? I'm not here to decide which one of you is worthy, only which one of you is right. For the task. For this year.

ZALTARISH

(to himself)

It should be being me. I have been here the longliest.

SANTA

Now Zaltarish is a good elf.

Zaltarish is shocked that Santa has said his name. His shoulders come up, his eyebrows lift, he is fully listening. Santa looks at Zaltarish and smiles. Zaltarish smiles back.

SANTA (CONT'D)

Yes a very good elf, and a hard worker. He has been with me a very long time.

Santa goes quiet and looks more deeply at Zaltarish. There is a HUSH among the crowd as Santa seems lost in another realm.

Santa looks closely at Zaltarish, so closely that he, but only see, begins to see inside him.

SANTA'S VISION

Santa sees yellows, blues, greens and reds swirling inside Zaltarish. They swirl all over his body, the yellow and the blue shining brightly for a moment then dimming as the red color becomes more dominant, swirling and swirling until it grows into an angry red ball surrounding Zaltarish's heart. The other colors sputter and fade, becoming minor players in the overall colors inside Zaltarish.

BACK TO THE TOY SHOP

Santa sighs with true sadness and looks away. Zaltarish exhales, unaware he was holding his breath.

SANTA (CONT'D)

But Zaltarish is not ready.

Zaltarish is crushed.

SANTA (CONT'D)

This year's Master Elf is...Aego!

A CHEER goes up among the elves who all turn to Aego, holding his book and cocking his head as if he did not hear Santa quite right.

AEGO

Me?

The elves lift Aego up on their shoulders and carry him up to the stage where they set him down in front of Santa.

SANTA

Yes, Aego. You. You are ready.
Congrats. I name you Master Elf.

Santa holds out the Christmas Box and the Magic Brush for Aego to take. Aego is stunned. He is a small elf who is not the best at anything.

AEGO

But, I - I am being the weakliest.
I am being the smalliest. Santa
must be mistaken.

There is a stunned silence. No one has ever refused the Magic Brush. Santa squats down so he is at eye level with Aego.

SANTA

I'm not mistaken, Aego. Your size
means nothing to this task. Your
colors are aligned. You are ready.
And Christmas needs you.

AEGO

Christmas needs ME?

Santa nods and holds out the box again.

SANTA

We can't get through without that
doorway, and without you, there is
no doorway.

Santa looks hopefully at Aego, the choice is his. Aego glances over at Nushala who smiles shyly and nods her encouragement. He musters all of his courage and straightens his glasses. Christmas needs him. He nods up at Santa.

SANTA (CONT'D)

Let's try this again.
(grand voice)
I name you, Aego, Master Elf!

Aego smiles and reaches for the box. As he takes it in his hands the gumdrops cease their glow. The MUSIC STARTS again and the CROWD CHEERS. Confetti pops and streamers drop from the ceiling, the celebration now in full swing. A large sign suspended by red ropes drops and reads "CELEBRATION DAY!" Santa smiles and stands. He allows the revelry for a moment before raising his hands.