



CHRISTMAS AROUND THE WORLD

A 'Novel' Christmas Eve

“Grandpa has a teleportation machine” Jack said casually as he spun one of the glittering ornaments hanging from a branch on the plastic Christmas tree.

“Don’t be ridiculous!” said Cassie, not bothering to look up from the yellowed pages of her book. They were staying at their Grandfather’s house on Christmas Eve and Cassie had been left in charge of her younger brother while their Grandpa went to a Christmas lunch. Cassie had picked up the only book on her Grandpa’s sparse bookshelf and unenthusiastically flopped into the nearest armchair.

“Does too!” exclaimed Jack.

“Jack don’t be silly, I’m trying to read.”

“He does though!” Jack cried as Cassie looked up at her brother. His eyes were serious, “Just let me show you.”

Reluctant and full of doubt, Cassie put down her book and followed Jack upstairs. He paused in front of the upstairs bathroom, “Get in the shower” he told his sister.

“But this shower doesn’t even work” Cassie said as she stepped into the bath, pulling aside the curtain covered in cartoon fish.

“Turn the cold tap to the left” Jack commanded as he hopped in after her.

Cassie paused, with her hand hovering over the cold tap, before giving it a quick turn to the left. She half expected to be hit in the face with a cold spray of water but everything suddenly turned the black-blue colour of the midnight sky. Cassie clutched her stomach. Her insides were spinning as though she was on a rollercoaster. All of a sudden, Cassie and Jack felt a cold breeze stir the shower curtain.

“Cassie! Open your eyes!” Jack exclaimed clutching his sister’s arm, “What were you thinking about when you turned the tap?”

“Umm, my book, I guess...”

“Cassie, was there snow in your book?” Jack interrupted.

“Yeah, why?” Cassie asked, watching in awe as Jack pulled away the shower curtain to reveal a field of bright, white snow.





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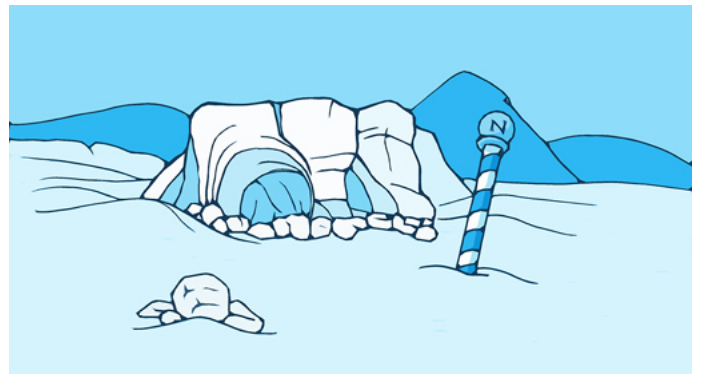
“No way!” Cassie cried as she jumped from the bath, the snow crunching beneath her shoes.

“Look at that!” Jack exclaimed pointing to a house beautifully decorated with flashing Christmas lights. Cassie and Jack glanced at each other before running towards the house, snow flying from their heels. They stopped by a tree covered with glittering icicles. From there, they could see through the frosty window. A fire filled the room with a flickering orange glow and a table was laid with silver cutlery and red Christmas crackers. A roasted turkey steamed in the centre of the table. Garlands of ivy hung on the walls and a tinsel-covered Christmas tree stood in the corner. Beneath the tree were presents wrapped neatly in red, silver and green paper. An old woman with silver hair tied in a bun and wearing an apron decorated with pictures of holly walked into the room and laid a bundle of wood by the fire.

“That couldn’t be...?” murmured Cassie under her breath. The woman reminded her vividly of a character in the book she was reading. But it couldn’t be, she thought, because that would mean...

“What is it?” Jack asked, his voice bursting his sister’s thoughts like a bubble.

“Follow me, I’ve got to check something” Cassie said as she quickly turned and ran towards the back of the house. Around the corner there was a large wooden building joined to the main house. Further on Cassie spied what she was looking for, exactly as it had been described in her book: stables containing not horses but....



“Reindeer!” Jack exclaimed, “We’re in the North Pole!” Jack jumped up and down.

“This cannot be happening!” Cassie said shaking her head in disbelief. But there it was, every detail just as it had been described in her book: the crisp white snow, the cozy dining room and the wooden stables filled with reindeer. They were certainly in the North Pole.

“That must be Santa’s workshop” Jack said pointing to the larger building. Cassie nodded, remembering the description of a large wooden workshop in her book. They hurried over and pulled the large door open just wide enough to see through the crack. There were hundreds of elves dressed in red and green uniforms, packing teddy bears, building sets, tricycles, dolls and books into huge sacks. Jack and Cassie watched the elves work until everything was packed. A group of elves began hoisting the giant sacks above their little heads like ants, before filing through a back door. Cassie nodded at Jack, and they quickly dashed around the side of the building to see where the elves were going.



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As they reached the other side of the building, Cassie and Jack saw, to their horror, that the elves were piling the sacks into their Grandpa's bathtub. One of the elves was even drawing little Santa hats above the heads of the fish on the shower curtain, as another draped tinsel and a string of bells around the rim of the bath.

"No! Stop! That's our bathtub!" Cassie cried, but it was too late; a man with a bushy white beard wearing a bright red suit and hat approached, leading two rows of reindeer behind him. The reindeer had golden bells hanging from their reins that jingled as they walked. When he reached the bathtub the man bent over to attach the reins to the bath.

"Quick! Run for it!" Cassie said to her brother, before running over to the bath and diving into a sack of teddy bears. Jack dove in after her, his feet just slipping over the rim of the bath and clattering onto a box of chocolates as the man stood up.

Cassie and Jack stayed carefully hidden between the sacks as the elves moved away and the big jolly man positioned himself at the front of the bath with the reins in his hands.

"First stop," he said "to drop off our two stowaways in the back here!" he laughed, turning around and nudging one of the sacks aside to reveal Jack and Cassie peering up at him in surprise.

As they took off and soared through the air, Santa told the children how he had a last minute problem with his sleigh and was relieved when he spied their bathtub in the field. Santa opened a box of Mrs Claus' gingerbread that the three of them munched on until they saw some lights shining through the darkness ahead of them. Santa maneuvered the tub down towards the ground, and the children saw that they were on their Grandpa's street. As they climbed out of the tub Jack thanked Santa.

"Good night!" Santa called from the front of the tub, "and as a Christmas gift to your Grandfather: a new working shower!" Santa said clicking his fingers.

"Cassie?" Jack whispered, watching the bathtub from their grandfather's second storey bathroom soar into the night sky.

"Yeah?" Cassie replied distantly, utterly dumbfounded by the vision before her.

"Do you think Grandpa's new shower will be a teleportation machine as well?"

