

I Want to Be an Elf

A story for Christmas from Chuck Tuite

For the children who become the adults who then shape the world we all live in.

“Each of you wanted to be one of my elves, but you already are. You do good things for others in your homes, in your town, and in the place where you live. You cause joy for many people just by you being who you are, so you don’t need some title at the North Pole in order to be important. You are important because you are good.

“Now my friends, as they say here in Italy, *io fame*.^{*} Does anyone know where a guy can find a good pizza here? Why don’t you all come with me and we’ll have a slice?”

The End

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A story for Christmas, 2012

^{*} To say this, just say ‘oh fahm-ay’ – it means ‘I am hungry’ in Italian.

“Daisy, your skills with candy are legendary even now, just from what the elves who came here with me saw earlier today. What if instead of trying to play on my sweet tooth to become someone important at the North Pole, you used your abilities to feed people living at the shelter? It would mean ten times more to them to get some fresh treats made just with them in mind than it would mean to me for you to provide taffy I could use for the gifts. To those who have very little, it is so very special to be thought of at all, and so much more so when they receive something specifically for them instead of being something that was handed down to them as extra.



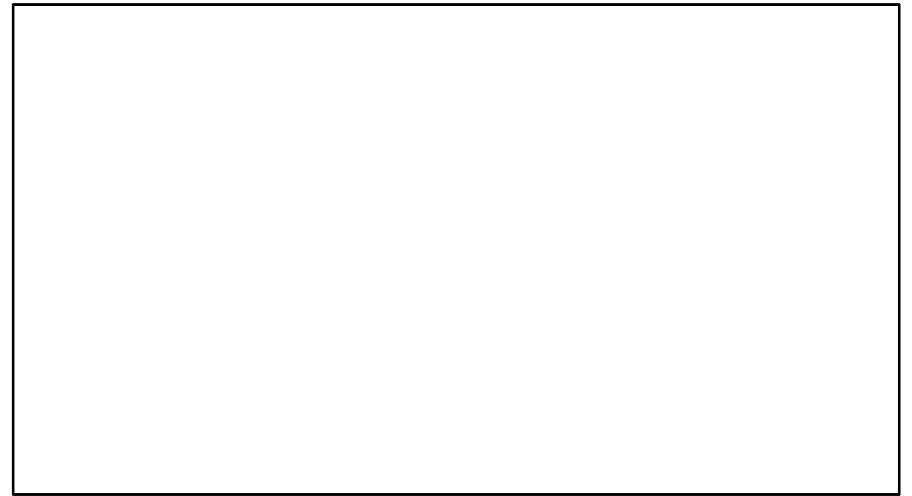
“Riah, you really are talented, and your wrapping skills are great. What if, instead of wrapping something really big to try to impress me, you went to the nursing home and helped wrap presents for the people living there? The joy that would come to them from opening such a magically-wrapped present is ten times the joy I would get from seeing the Colosseum wrapped up like a basket of fruit. To those who miss their families and the feeling of being with them at home opening gifts, extra efforts to make something nice for them will make a difference.



It was a beautiful day in a little group of houses right outside a city called Rome. The sky was a beautiful blue, the air was fresh, and a group of friends were playing games outside.

Riah was a lion cub, Soapy was a koala bear, and Daisy was an iguana. While it seemed at first they would be a strange group, they were actually really good friends.

They loved living outside Rome. It was a large city with many exciting things to see and do, but outside it in their little houses, it was peaceful and very quiet. As they were running down a hill, chasing each other, Daisy suddenly stopped right where she was.



Draw the three friends - Riah the lion cub, Soapy the koala bear and Daisy the iguana

“Wait, guys! Look what I found on the ground!” Daisy held up a skinny, silver piece of tinsel. The others gathered around her to examine her find. It was somewhat long, and when they moved it in the sun it gave off little sparkles – not just silver ones, but every color of the rainbow.



Draw a Christmas tree with tinsel on it.

Soapy was excited, “It has to be off of Santa’s sleigh,” she said, “and that must mean that one of the elves didn’t do their job the right way. Santa must be disappointed. Imagine, tinsel just falling off, all the way around the world, Santa looking for it when he stops, and all that.”

Riah wasn’t one to be denied her turn to speak. “I’ve always thought it would be fun to be an elf. It looks like there may be a chance for a couple of us to maybe get hired by Santa. I want to be an elf! Who’s with me?!”

“Soapy, my sleigh suits me well, and I appreciate your efforts to improve it for me. What if instead of trying to fix the best sleigh for me, you tried to help your little brother learn how to ride his bicycle? To him, that is his sleigh, and your attention would make him feel ten times better than a new sleigh would make me feel. And besides that, you wouldn’t have to explain to your father that you painted on someone’s Ferrari.



“You saw a piece of tinsel and thought that meant something was done the wrong way, but the tinsel didn’t mean that there was something wrong, it meant that there was something right. You see, that piece of tinsel is like each and every person. Each one has the ability to not only shine, but to also influence others, who see the bright light that comes from doing the right thing, and then want to themselves shine.

“If all the tinsel were kept in one place, that place would truly be beautiful, but the rest of the places there are would be kind of dark. There wouldn’t be anything good, anything nice, or anything kind. I put tinsel all over the place to remind everyone that there is goodness everywhere. You find it in the strangest places sometimes, but it is there.

“The lesson from your efforts today is that instead of trying to do large things to gather with the rest of the tinsel, you can do smaller things well so that you brighten up wherever you are.

Soapy and Daisy looked at her for a bit. Daisy asked, “How can we even do that? Hello! We live in Rome! It’s about as far away from the North Pole as it gets. What’s your plan?”

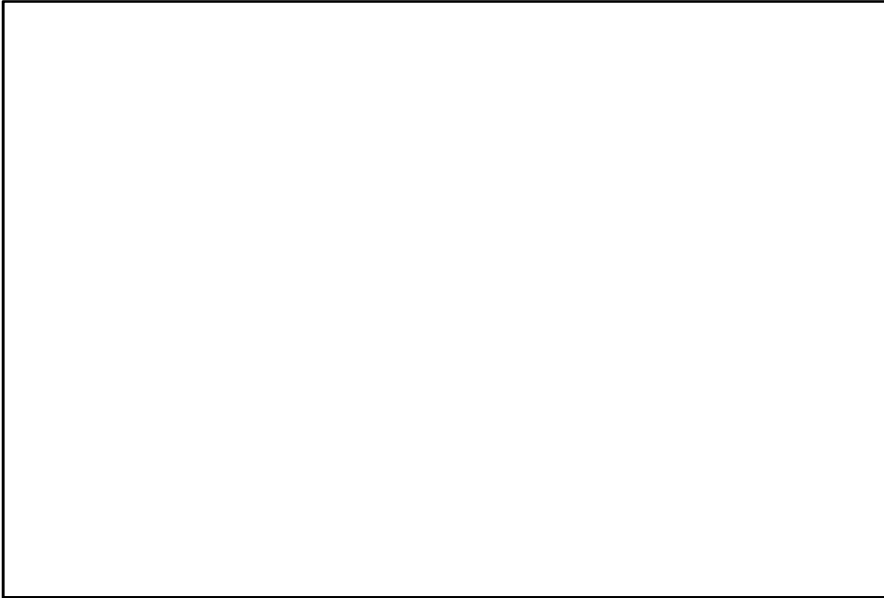
With a faraway look in her eyes, Riah pointed over toward the city. “We will impress Santa with our elf skills in a big way. He won’t have any choice but to bring us into the company. We will be swinging a tiny hammer in no time!” With smiles on their faces, they headed off toward Rome to try out for the elf brigade.



This is St. Peter's Basilica, seen from a hillside near where our three friends live

Soapy and Santa's New Sled

As they walked into Rome, the three friends decided that they would go in three different directions to perform their elfly duties. They would meet back up at 5:00 to compare what they had done. After a quick wave, Soapy disappeared around the corner, headed toward a place called a piazza.



Can you draw an elf?

When she turned the corner, she started trying to think through her situation. She knew that an elf must keep in mind all the things that Santa does, and all the ways that Santa does them, and it was quite a challenge. She knew she would have to do a lot of thinking.

Riah said, "Sounds like you had the same kind of trouble I did. I tried to do the largest gift wrapping that had ever been done so that Santa would see my skills and let me be an elf, but some mean people messed up my project."

Daisy sighed. "I make our luck none for three. I thought I would really be the head candymaker for Santa because I was making the best and biggest Christmas taffy, but I failed, and wound up having to run away without even so much as a piece of my own candy. I won't be an elf."

"It sounds like my three friends have had a rough day," said a deep, somehow familiar voice behind them. "It hardly seems fair that three friends who cared so much about doing the right thing would not be able to do the things they set out to do." It was Santa! He was standing there right behind them!

"I couldn't help but watch you all try to do things that would impress me, and I couldn't help but see what happened to end the plans you had. My friends, I have a lesson to give you about this.



This is one of the things inside the Pantheon you can see. An interesting thing is that it is still used for church services, even though it is so old, and is such a tourist attraction.

“Well, my plan didn’t work,” said Soapy. I wanted to get Santa a new sleigh, and I thought I found one, but there was a problem. So, I don’t think I will be allowed to be an elf.”

When she had walked a fair distance, she suddenly figured out what she was going to do. Santa had been using the same sleigh for the last few hundred years, and so Soapy thought the best thing to do was to get him a new sleigh, one that wouldn’t just let the tinsel float around all willy-nilly.

What Soapy saw in front of her was something called a Ferrari. A car! Why hadn’t she thought of it sooner? A car answered the needs for sure. It could hold all the tinsel inside, could give Santa shelter from the snow, and could play his music as he rode along. How much better could it get?



Here is a Ferrari without decorations. It is YOUR turn to decorate this one.

Quick as a wink she opened up her box of paints and began her work. She painted a picture of Santa Claus on the hood, and put pictures of the sleigh and reindeer on the door. It was BEAUTIFUL! It was impressive!



This is the Ferrari as Soapy decorated it

The Meeting

All three friends made their way to a place called the Pantheon. They didn't really know anything about it, but they figured it was as good a place as any to meet. They went inside and stood in front of a beautiful alcove.



This is the Pantheon in Rome. When you look at it it is interesting, but it is not really pretty. Its beauty is inside it. That is a great lesson to learn about where beauty is.



This is a clock that is in Vatican City

All of a sudden she heard some shouting behind her. A man was running toward her screaming about vandalism, and paint, and other things. Soapy was really worried, because if someone was going around with paint doing vandalism, they might mess up the car she had just prepared for Santa!

What she saw next she couldn't believe. She had never seen anyone try so hard to get on Santa's Naughty List, but the man who was screaming **STOLE** the car. He grabbed some keys, opened the door, jumped in and drove off! She was so frightened that she ran off into the crowd that had formed.

Riah's Radical Wrapping Run

As Riah walked along she saw that the street she was walking down was really pretty. On both sides of it there were walls, and on the walls were maps that were made out of different colors of marble. It was majestic!



This is one of the maps from the street where Riah was walking. Italy is the part that looks like a boot.

There were old buildings and parts of buildings all along the road, and the further she walked, the more of those she saw, until she saw one that was larger than any of the others. It seemed to be more important than any of the other buildings, and she was drawn to it. It looked like someplace where there would be a lot of things going on, like concerts.

Oh the bright colors she had! The red, green and white all twisted together, and so stretchy that she could walk almost to the end of the courtyard still dragging it.

She could see it now, Santa spying the taffy decorating the courtyard, marveling at how wonderful it was and demanding to meet the genius candymaker who made the Vatican so delicious-looking, then offering her the candy elf job, and she would be whisked away and live at the North Pole.

That is why she was so confused when she did get some attention, and some notice, but not from Santa. Four men dressed in strange orange and blue uniforms came running over shouting at her, screaming something about graffiti. They seemed so excited about something being dangerous, she got out of there as fast as she could. She ran right past the clock tower, and noticed it was almost 5:00. She needed to meet her friends.

This all caused a lot of attention, and quite a crowd gathered around her to see what she was doing. She enjoyed the attention, and began singing Jingle Bells as she then put the contents of the pot over the top of the obelisk and began to pull the taffy using it as the stretcher.



This is the obelisk that is in the middle of the courtyard in the Vatican. It originally came from Egypt.



This is the building Riah saw. It is called the Colosseum.

She was hit right there with an idea. One of the most important parts of Santa's job was delivering presents, brightly wrapped presents. Something so simple as the wrapping of a gift could mean the difference between a happy kid and a sad kid – that HAD to be something interesting to Santa Claus!

Wrapping... wrapping... wrapping... It all came clear to Riah. She should show Santa that she was the best wrapper who ever was, and that would make him want to have her be in charge of his wrapping department. She WOULD be an elf! All she had to do was wrap something grand.

The idea sprang at her. She would wrap the biggest, most extravagant thing she could find, so that Santa would be able to see it no matter where he was. She would wrap... THE BUILDING!

Riah saw a souvenir shop nearby, and she asked if they had any wrapping paper. They said they did, but then went back into the storeroom before she could finish her question. Asking herself which was more important, gifts for millions of children or asking permission first, she figured it was a better idea to do the wrapping first, so she took the cellophane behind the counter and headed back to the building.

The sun was beating down on her, and she was working hard, but she finally got the entire building wrapped in the cellophane. It glinted in the sun, sparkling like a thousand pieces of tinsel. It was BREATHTAKING!

She liked the mints, and the chocolates, but the most favorite thing she got in her stocking was taffy. It seemed that the most magical taffy was available at that time of year, some mint-flavored, some cinnamon-flavored, even some with a little tree in the middle and bright Christmas colors all around the edges.

All that chewy goodness was enough to make her mouth water just thinking about it, and she felt drawn to the idea that she should prove her elf worth by making enough taffy for the whole world so that Santa could give it out as he delivered the presents.

Daisy spotted something called an obelisk, and her plan took shape. She whirled around all afternoon, gathering sugar, wood to burn, flavorings and everything else she could find to give just the perfect taste to the treats. Quick as she could she built a fire, put on a pot of the sugar and other ingredients, and began to stir.



These are some of the columns you see when you are inside the Vatican.

All the beauty brought her thoughts to the things she enjoys the most when Santa visits. She thought of the gifts, the papers, the lights, the tree and about every other thing you could imagine, but there was one thing above all that she really liked – the candy!



This is what the Colosseum would look like if it were wrapped in purple plastic. Can you draw on a bow to finish the wrapping that Riah started?

As soon as the wrapping was on, Riah started to look around for the perfect bow. She was just figuring out how to get the banner she saw hanging across the road when from inside the building there came a large ripping sound. Soon there were more than a hundred people standing around. They had ripped her wrapping!

She felt so sad, those people who just felt they had to wreck her plans. They must be some really mean people to do all that. The only thing that made her feel a little better was being sure that they would be on the list of people getting coal and bundles of switches, rather than regular presents at Christmas.



What does a bundle of switches look like?

Daisy and the Delightful North Pole Delights

Daisy's journey took her on a long walk through the city, past sidewalk cafés, past stores, past streetcar stops and right to a series of metal gates. Metal gates! That must mean something special for sure!

She carefully walked around to try to find the entrance into the gated area, which seemed to be larger than any place she'd ever been. Just as she was thinking it would be impossible to get inside – being an iguana she was quite a bit smaller than everyone else, and it was quite a journey – she found an open gate, and walked in.

She was immediately breathless. What she saw was the largest courtyard she had ever seen. There were acres of nothing but open space right there in the middle, surrounded by columns, and buildings. It was amazing! Everywhere she looked there were statues, and pillars, and gold, and beautiful things. Oh, the colors of Christmas she thought of just from seeing what was there!