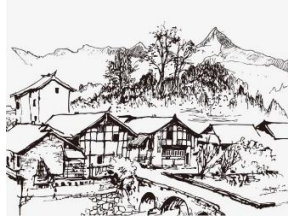


# A VILLAGE CALLED CHRISTMAS

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A long time ago there was a small town called Christmas Village located high in the mountains overlooking the sea. The reason it was called Christmas Village was because every year the children received gifts in their homes on Christmas morning. This had gone on for so many years that no one could remember when it began.

When the children woke up on Christmas day, they would find just the thing they wanted on the floor next to their beds, but no one knew where these gifts came from or how the person knew what the child wanted.

Year after year, the same thing happened. As one might think, the children were very curious as to where the gifts came from. Some people thought it might be the old man who lived in the forest, but they were not able to prove it.

People said the old man stayed in his home and never talked to anyone. He was a loner. The parents said it could not be the old man because there were many tales that he was so mean. They told their children not to go to the forest, just to leave him alone.

Many stories were told about what he would do to kids who came to his house. There was even one story that said he kept a child as a prisoner. Another story said he sold children to make money. No one knew for sure. There were so many stories it was hard to tell if they were true or not. Even the parents believed the stories and told them to their children. They wanted them to stay away from the house. This made the kids more afraid, but still very curious about who he was.

After many years of the gifts coming to the children of the town, two of them, Susie

and Billy, who were brother and sister, made a plan to discover who was behind the surprise gifts. Their plan was to stay up all night and watch to see who came into the house. They decided to have a party. The children of the village went to Susie and Billy's house on Christmas Eve.

They had food, they had music, they had games, they had so much fun, but when the clock on the wall said 11:00 o'clock, they stopped playing and hid in the kitchen, behind the furniture, under the stairs, and any place they could find. They stayed there and waited for the mystery to be answered. The children thought this was the best plan ever.

It got later and later and later. Soon all the children had fallen asleep.

In the morning, there were gifts everywhere. Each one had the name of a different child on it. There was a gift for everyone!

"How did this happen? How did these gifts get here without us knowing? We had the best plan!" yelled Susie.

Tommy spoke up, "I woke up and it was dark. I heard a noise, and I saw a shadow leave the house. It looked like an old man. He was moving very slowly. Maybe it was the old man in the forest."

The children looked at each other.

"No way! The old man is mean. You must have been dreaming!" yelled Billy.

"No, I wasn't. I know what I saw. He had a big bag he was dragging behind him," Tommy answered.

The children agreed that the old man in the forest could not be the one who gave them the gifts. Tommy must have just had a dream. The stories they had heard made it impossible for them to believe it was him.

"I guess we have to wait until next year before we can find out who is doing this for us," Billy said sadly.

"At least we had a fun party!" said Monica.

All the children agreed.

For the rest of the day, they played with their gifts. It was another party!

A year went by and they tried to catch the gift giver, but once again they failed.

“This is never going to work!” exclaimed Susie. “I’m just happy that I get a gift every year. Actually, I don’t really care who it is.”

Everyone agreed.

The next year, the children didn’t have a party. They stayed at home and waited for their gifts to come, but for some reason when they got up in the morning, there were no gifts.

“What happened? Where is my gift? I always get a gift on Christmas,” Susie said to her parents with tears in her eyes. “Did we make the person mad at us?”

“I don’t think so,” her mother stated. “Maybe he got sick or something.”

It was a sad day in Christmas Village. Not one child got a gift that day.

A few days later, a report came that the old man in the forest had died, and when they found him in his house, there were gifts piled high in every corner. Each one of them had the name of a child on it, so the men of the village who found the gifts, delivered the packages and the children were happy.

To everyone’s surprise, it turned out that the old man was really Mr. Kris Kringle, the owner of the toy store in town. His father had owned the store before him.

Before that, no one knew for sure where Mr. Kringle lived. It was thought that he lived above the store.

When they searched his cabin, there was a list with the names of every child on it and what they wanted for Christmas.

Mr. Kringle was the one who put the toys on the shelves in his store. He walked around the store to make sure everything looked perfect, and as he did, he would listen to what the children and their families were talking about. He always listened as the children told their parents what they wanted. Everyone liked him.

It was found out that his father had begun the giving the gifts and when his son took over the business, he continued the tradition.

His father didn’t want anyone to know that he was the one bringing the gifts. So, he

started the stories about how the old man in the forest was so mean. That way no one would come to his house and see all the toys. Mr. Kringle continued to tell stories about how mean the old man in the forest was and how he treated children so badly.

The parents realized how important Christmas gifts were to the children and decided they would give them a gift every year. This is how the tradition of giving gifts on Christmas began and many cultures around the world continue to do it to this day.

The stories about the old man in the forest and of how mean he was were not true. He was a kind man and wanted Christmas to be very special.

The families began to tell the stories of the old man who had lived in the forest, and of how kind he really was to their children and then to their grandchildren. They began to call him Father Christmas, but later the story changed to Santa Claus as we know today.

**The End**