



A Loopie Christmas

The smells of Christmas cookies wafted through the air. "I can't wait to get to Granny's tonight to celebrate Christmas Eve!" smiled Sherbet as she licked the cookie icing off her finger. "Me neither!" replied her brother wrapping another present. It was Loopie Christmas tradition to go to Granny's house on Christmas Eve, have a huge dinner, open presents and spend time visiting with all the Loopies of Acersville.

"Blast!" said Patch. "I canno' get this present wrapped Mateys!" Mango and Sherbet giggled. They had agreed to teach the Pirates about Christmas traditions in Acersville and this included sessions in "How to wrap presents" and "Baking Christmas cookies". "Here, let's try again." said Mango handing Patch a fresh piece of Gift Wrap and a new ribbon. "Aaaah!" screamed Patch about to pull his hair out with frustration! "No more lad, enough is enough, Pirates were made to plunder things, not to be giving gifts at Christmas time!" Wallace sniffed his fresh batch of cookies as he lifted them carefully out of the oven. "Come on Captain, it's not so bad, look I made Santa cookies just for you!" "Aye Captain, and they taste mighty fine too!" said Woody munching a leg off of his Santa cookie. Patch scowled. He was clearly not impressed. "Come on, let's get a bit of fresh air and try something new shall we?" offered Mango, he had an idea. So Patch and Mango left the cottage, leaving Wallace, Woody and Sherbet to bake and gift wrap to their hearts content!

Rounding the bend they got to Tubblie's house. Tubblie was home, you could tell by the naughty giggles that were coming from his garden! Mango smiled at Patch, motioning him to open Tubblie's gate. Patch was a little confused but welcomed the change in plans, he was adamant never to gift wrap another present ever again in his life and Santa cookies ... well lets just say he would eat them, but not bake them!

Tubblie's gate creaked, sending a bucket full of water tumbling down and emptying itself over Patch! "Arg!" mumbled Patch who was soaked right through. "Oops!" winced Mango, who wasn't deliberately trying to frustrate the all ready on-edge Pirate Captain. "I forgot about Tubblie's doorbell!" "Aaaah! Visitors!" exclaimed Tubblie as he came forward to greet them. He was the practical joker of Acersville so it made sense that his house would be rigged with all sorts of unexpected surprises! "What brings you here on this fine, fine Christmas Eve!" Tubblie just sounded naughty. He was definitely up to something, just as Mango had suspected. "Sherbet and I have offered to teach the Pirates about our Christmas traditions here in Acersville." replied Mango. "I was wondering if you would be able to offer any help?" Tubblie grinned. "Can you keep a secret?" he asked, his eyes dancing with anticipation to share something he'd obviously been keeping to himself all afternoon. "Aye lad, you can trust old Patch, I keep my word." Mango nodded in agreement. "Well alright then, follow me!" Tubblie led them around the corner towards the back of the garden. He pointed towards his Brandy Bottle treasure with great delight and grinned with glee.

"Aren't ye a little on the young side to be taking up drinking laddie?" asked Patch looking a little worried. Mango only grinned, waiting for Tubblie's explanation. "My dear Patch, Brandy isn't just for drinking at Christmas time here in Acersville." said Tubblie walking over and placing his arm around Patch's shoulder. "We use it to make trifle and Christmas pudding too!"

Mango's eye lit up. Everyone in Acersville knew that Granny would begin making her special trifle and plum pudding early in the morning for their annual Christmas Dinner that night. It was a Loopie tradition for Granny to light the Plum pudding after dinner and bring it into the dinning room in all its flaming glory! "And because this is your first Christmas in Acersville, I've taken it upon myself to enhance the Christmas Festivities this year. And that my friends; is how this specific Brandy bottle fits in!" Tubblie's eyes danced once more.

"But how?" asked Mango in amazement. "I stole it from Granny!" Tubblie confessed and then broke out into fits of laughter. "But now how is Granny supposed to light the Plum pudding without any Brandy?" asked Mango crossly. The Loopies would be very disappointed if Tubblie had gone and ruined the very high light of Christmas Eve in Acersville! No flaming pudding? What a disaster that would be! "You'll see! You'll soon see!" Tubblie just giggled all the more and ushered them out of the gate.

Soon it was time to go to Granny's house for the Christmas dinner. The Loopies got themselves washed and dressed and headed off armed with colourful presents and enough ice-cream to sink a small ship! "Come in, come in!" smiled Granny in her most welcoming voice. She seated the Loopies at the table and proceeded to serve the Christmas food. After the Loopies had finished eating they looked at Granny expectantly for the grand finale of the evening! "Should we eat the pudding before we open the presents?" asked Granny as she usually did each year, just to build a little more onto the already mounting anticipation. "Yes!" grinned the Loopies, hardly able to contain their excitement. It was then that Mango darted a glaring scowl in Tubblie's direction! "Well then I'll go and get it." "Let me help you Granny." said the naughty Tubblie grinning back at Mango. "Why thank you Tubblie, that is very kind of you." She said and the two of them headed into the kitchen. "Granny, I was thinking, wouldn't it be more spectacular this year, especially for the Pirates, if you would pour the Brandy over the pudding at the table and then light it?" "Well, I've never thought of doing it that way before." said Granny a little surprised. "But alright Tubblie, if you think it would make it more spectacular this year, okay then."

So Granny and Tubblie walked back out of the kitchen armed with a not so flaming pudding and a very suspicious looking Brandy bottle, well at least it looked that way to Patch, who recognized it as the same one he'd seen in Tubblie's garden that afternoon. Mango almost had a heart attack, but Tubblie motioned him to keep quiet and did something very un-Tubblie like. "This year I have taken it upon myself to make sure that the Christmas Festivities are extra special!" he explained. "Please would you all put on these special shades before Granny lights the pudding to see what I have planned." Tubblie began handing out sunglasses to each of the Loopies present and then handed Granny his Brandy Bottle, which didn't contain Brandy at all, but Lighter Fluid! He then turned down the lights.

Granny poured the contents of the bottle all over the pudding until it was soaked through. She then took a match and lit the pudding. The pudding glowed with all its might as strong as a flame from a blow torch, the Loopies sat back in awe and watched with shielded eyes as the pudding continued to burn and burn. First in brilliant white, then fading to orange and then flickering to yellow, until the lighter fluid had been burnt up and the flames stopped. Of course the pudding was burnt to a crisp and most of the Loopies had singed their eyebrows from the incredible heat, but they all agreed that sacrificing the pudding was a small price to pay for such an incredible fire show.

Later that evening once all the presents had been opened and all the ice-cream had been eaten, the Loopies sat back and thought about what Tubblie's flaming pudding had taught them. They realized that Christmas was not about their traditions or about basking in the light of a flaming Christmas pudding on Christmas Eve, but about celebrating and remembering the light of a star that once shone on top of a stable one cold night in Bethlehem, marking the birth place of a Mighty King.

The Loopies then folded their Christmas paper, collected their presents and kissed Granny goodnight. As they left Granny's house they starred up at the sky, determined to find the star that had lit the path to where Jesus lay so many years ago. Rumour has it that Mango was the first to spot it! But that's another story. One we'll have to save for next year!

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