

Have Yourself A Merry Little Sithmas Now

North Pole
Unknown Planet
35 ABY
1800 Hours

The blinding snowstorm burned the eyes of Commander Mauro Wynter, his vision distorted by the sheets of whipping snowflakes blasting his eyes. The frozen tundra offered no shelter or breakage from the winds that buffeted him and sent the drifts of snow up against his path. The midnight sun provided no warmth and only added to his bewilderment. He turned, if ever so slightly, to gaze upon his battered and broken craft, the *Harakoa*.

He walked for what seemed like ages, but by looking back at his footprints he knew it was only a kilometer at best. This far towards magnetic north, Wynter's compass was operating strangely and he could not get any signals from his comm-link. Before he crashed, a small beacon was transmitting. His salvation and only hope was to try to make it there to seek help. If he did not freeze to death first.

And so he walked, and walked, and walked. In such an empty and barren landscape a man's mind wanders. *It must be a mirage*, he thought. A small, jolly looking humanoid creature was visible slightly in the distance. Odd, he considered, since the apparition was not there a second ago.

Wynter could not wish the vision away, and he thought he heard the creature calling to him. The figment of his imagination slowly walked forward. Soon Wynter could make out some features. A green and white knit stocking cap. Long, curling shoes with bells on them. The creature appeared to be armed with a weird stick, colored red and white.

"Welcome to the North Pole! The big man is waiting for you!" the creature stated. He was indeed real. Mauro continued to slog through the snow until he was face to face with the diminutive human-like being. "The big man?" he asked.

The tiny one giggled to himself slightly. "Of course, Santa's village is down this hill. Aren't you here to see him?" asked the creature. "My name is Balthezar!"

Mauro put away his blaster and shook Balthezar's hand. "What kind of creature are you?" he asked.

Balthezar giggled loudly. "Why, haven't you heard of elves? I must admit we don't get guests here regularly. Well...we tend not to get guests at all."

They walked slowly down the hill, Mauro was freezing and was not in a friendly mood. Still, the jovial nature of the elf was infectious. In the distance, smoke could be seen bellowing out of a chimney. The closer they came more silhouettes of chimneys could be seen, and a cavalcade of lights and sounds were carried on the wind. Santa's village, indeed.

Upon entering the village's center, Mauro was awestruck. Hundreds of elves were busy scurrying about. Balthezar picked up on the Human's confusion. "Say, you aren't from here are you friend?" The giggling continued. "We are very busy this time of year, it is almost time!"

He was led to a very large and welcoming looking building. Brick and mortar, but painted in the same red and green of the village itself. They entered through a wide doorway. Odd odors were pungently filling Mauro's nostrils. "You haven't seen reindeer before? Where are you from?" asked Balthezar.

Seated in a large wooden sled was an old but friendly looking human. He was corpulent as a Hutt but a good deal more jolly. "Welcome friend. My name is Nicholas. My friends call me Santa, however. How can I help you?" he asked.

Mauro was given a wooden chair and he warmed himself by a nearby fireplace. Balthezar and another elf came forward with a large mug of brown liquids. He drank. The rich flavor and warm aroma was very pleasing. "Santa...my shuttle crashed here and I need to make a distress call to my friends. I saw a beacon coming from here and thought you might have a communications array?" he asked.

The old man launched into a loud belly laugh. "No, no, no that won't do. This place isn't on any map and we don't often have any outsiders here. It is a miracle you found us here. My elves are very gifted craftsmen. Your craft is being worked on right now. In a few hours you will be able to fly off. I wish my sleigh was as advanced as your...craft."

They passed the night drinking the warm sugary concoction. Mauro told Santa many tales of his adventures and the old man told the wildest stories. Apparently, he was a builder in his own right. Every year all of the boys and girls of this planet were visited by him unseen and given gifts. The peculiarity of it was not lost on Mauro.

It was nearly midnight when a team of elves entered, visibly shaken. "Santa it is time. You are going to be late!"

"Ho, ho, ho. There is always time to help someone who is on the good list. Say, Mauro, your name isn't on any of my lists have you been good or bad this year?"

Mauro dodged the question and turned to face Balthezar. "Say, Balthezar, can you check on my ship? I don't want to overstay my welcome and I do have places to get back to."

Balthezar giggled. "Mr. Wynter, we can work magic here. Your funny sleigh is fixed and ready to go whenever you are. Will we ever see you again?"

It was now Santa's time to speak as he lumbered to his feet and walked towards his own sleigh. A team of reindeer were being hustled into position and put in their hitches. He slowly rubbed the neck of the lead reindeer, who suffered from an odd affliction of his nose. "No Balthezar. I don't think Mr. Wynter will be visiting us again. It was an odd and unusual occurrence indeed but I do wish him well."

The elves pushed the sleigh out into the night air and parked it next to Mauro's craft. The two shook hands and parted ways with a laugh and a smile. Mauro punched in his coordinates and took off into the night sky and watched as Santa's sleigh disappeared in a flash of light.