**The Chosen Christmas**

“Wake up! Wake up! It’s Christmas! Get up Mommy! Get up Daddy! It’s Christmas!” Ness begrudgingly looked at his alarm clock which was set for 7:00 a.m., however, the clock stared back with 3:00 a.m. on its face. Ness chuckled and moaned, “Your mother and I will be down in a minute.”

The children screamed with anticipation and tore down the steps to the Christmas tree. Ness turned and stared into the face of his wife, Paula, who was out like a light, and thought “*How in the world can she stay asleep with this racket?”* He shook her until she stirred, and they both started down the stairs.

“Lucas! Ana! Time for breakfast!” Ness bellowed to the children who were shaking with eagerness.

“Awwww, but we want to open our presents now!” Lucas protested.

“Listen to your father. If we open the presents now, your pancakes will get cold.” Paula said from the kitchen.

After breakfast the family gathered around the tree. One by one the presents flew open, as if they were not saving the wrapping paper. Some of the presents included Eagleland baseball cap for Ness, a Deluxe Frying Pan for Paula, and an assortment of toys and trinkets for the four-year-olds. Paula and Ness looked at each other and smiled. This was one of the first Christmases that would be extremely memorable, for more than just them.

Jeff awoke in a cold sweat. He glanced at his clock; it was already 8:00. He got up, and put on his regular green suit to get to work. On his way down to his lab, he made an unusual stop at an end table down the hall from his bedroom. On it laid two pictures. Jeff picked up the first picture; it was of his father, whom had disappeared fifteen years ago. Jeff wanted to cry, but he couldn’t, all his tears had dried up years ago, when his father had left him, again, today, Christmas day, fifteen years ago. The second picture was of Tony, who had left for the army at the same time that Jeff’s father disappeared. Jeff sighed and went downstairs to work on another project. Jeff picked up the new tool kit that he had bought on Black Friday. It was the last one on the shelf too! Just as he started to work, the phone rang. Jeff walked over to it and glanced at the area code. It was an Onett area code, which was a strange sight to him, not many people called from there. Jeff Lifted the receiver to his ear and said, “Hello?”

“Jeff, buddy! It’s Ness! Mayor Pirkle II wants to hold a ceremony for the Apple of Enlightenment incident fifteen years ago! Bring the Sky Runner with you! Also you can have Christmas with us. Paula’s making Steak for the whole gang. See ya soon!”

*Click! Beep. Beep*. Jeff put the receiver down, and for the first time in fifteen years, a faint smile flickered on his face.

Poo stared into the morning sun, and then shifted his glance to the kingdom of Dalaam. A smile arose on his face. It was Christmas, the time of year where he could let the people rule themselves. The time when everybody got along and hadn’t a care in the world. It was that time of year. “*Ah, Christmas, the time of year where I can relax and be lazy,”* thought Poo with a smirk on his face. It was then that his master and Telephone Man burst into the room. “*Oh great, just what I need on my day of,”* thought Poo as the smirk was wiped off his face. “Urgent message for you my apprentice!”

Poo picked up the receiver off of the man’s head and held it to his ear. “Hello? This is Prince Poo.”

“Hey Poo! It’s been a while,” said a sweet-sounding voice from the other side of the receiver, “what, fifteen years was it? Oh, where are my manners! This is Paula. Ness and I want to get the gang back together; Mayor Pirkle wanted to have a ceremony celebrating our victory over Giygas all those years ago. I’ll be making steak for everybody. See ya soon!”

*Click! Beep. Beep.* Poo turned to the two men beside him. “I’m heading to Onett. Watch over the kingdom for me.”

With that said, Poo headed outside and teleported to see his old friends again.

Ness sat down to help wrap the presents that Paula bought for each of the Chosen Four. “I wish that jerk didn’t take the last tool kit on Black Friday. It would have made a lovely gift for Jeff… I tell ya, I should’ve just Smaaaasshhhhed his face in with my frying pan…” ranted Paula.

Just as Ness finished wrapping a sword fit for a king, he heard a loud hissing noise outside. Then, the doorbell rang. He opened the door to find a professional-looking Jeff Andonuts. “Hey Jeff! How’ve you been?” Ness’ face beamed.

“Oh, I’ve been better. How about you?” Jeff answered.

“Never better! I have a beautiful wife and two kids. Hey, are you ok? Is something the matter?” Ness said.

“Well, it’s just, umm, however, it’s…”

Jeff was promptly interrupted by a person that blew through a teleport portal. It just so happened that this person was Poo.

“It has been a while, all of you,” Poo said inquisitively.

“Same to you,” replied Ness and Jeff in time.

Just then, Paula appeared in the door. “Well don’t be rude, dear, invite them in!”

“Oh, I’m sorry, come on in you two. Paula made steak.” Ness said with newfound politeness.

The four friends trekked their way into the house. In the living room, Paula closed her eyes and shot a beam of heat into the fire place, creating fire. Poo sat down and started meditating, while Jeff looked around nervously. “Ok you guys, time to open your presents!” Paula called to them.

As the wrapping paper flew through the air, the smiles shone on everybody’s faces except for one: Jeff. “Here’s your last present, it was supposed to be the ‘Super Ultra Mambo Tango Foxtrot Tool Kit’ unfortunately, somebody got to it before me” said Paula nicely.

Jeff opened up the large present box. Inside was a picture of the Chosen Four in Saturn Valley with Dr. Andonuts and Mr. Saturn! Jeff takes it. Suddenly, a very familiar melody sounded, a man came twirling out of the sky and landed with ease. “Get ready for an instant memory! I’m a photographic genius if I do say so myself! Look at the camera, ready, say: ‘Fuzzy Pickles’!” exclaimed the man.

*Flash!* The camera saved the picture of the four opening their presents, then the man was sent twirling back to wherever came from.

Jeff started to cry. “What’s wrong?” the other three inquired in unison.

Jeff kept crying. The tears were not of sadness, which had dried up fifteen years ago, but of joy. Jeff, for the first time since his father had disappeared, was happy.

Critiquing