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## Let it Snow, Let it Snow, Let it Snow!

For days, the King of Syrrelle had been opening the little pictures on his advent calendar, and they were telling him that Christmas was very near. Each time he opened a new one, he went onto his balcony to look out over his Kingdom, hoping for something special to happen. "It would really set the scene," he said to his servant, Raymond, "But there's no sign of it. At Christmas my Kingdom should look spectacular as it always does – everything white and sparkling with snow. So, where is it?"

When the King was upset, his servant Raymond tended to stay quietly in the background because he usually got the blame for whatever had gone wrong. He tried a weak smile and said: "There are still a few days to go, Your Majesty. It might snow yet, if we're lucky."

"Lucky?" the King exploded, "I'm never lucky! Anyway, I'm the King and I don't need to rely on luck. That's what I keep a Wizard for. Bring him to me this instant, Raymond."

"Er...", Raymond suspected he was going to get yelled at, but he had to say it anyway: "Sire, Wizwoh never does anything instantly; and you are supposed to make an appointment before he will see you. He doesn't like being ordered, or commanded; and he did threaten to turn you into a newt if you demanded anything of him."

"So said that upstart-of-a-familiar of his. What was her name?"

"Lillfing, Sire," said Raymond.

"A silly name for a very short, blue elephant," snorted the King. "As for her Master, the new Wizard, he's hopeless at casting spells and has caused me nothing but trouble. I preferred him when he was just Digby the dog. Sometimes, I think I might be better off as a newt,"

"Do I tell Wizwoh that?" asked Raymond sheepishly.

"No you do not!" barked the King. "You will..." and he paused to sigh deeply. "You will tell him - very nicely - that his King would be oh-so pleased if he could spare some of his precious, wizardly time to make it snow for Christmas."

Raymond took the message down to the stone chamber in the depths of the castle; and once he had left, Wizwoh asked of his familiar: "What do you think, Lillfing - can we make it snow in time for Christmas?"

Lillfing went to one of the spell books and, being a miniature elephant without hands, she had to flick through the pages with her trunk. "I reckon we can. What we have to remember, though, is the little mistake we made bringing the rain."

"I'd hardly call that a *little* mistake," Wizwoh reminded his familiar, "It was a total disaster. The Kingdom was under water for weeks."

"But we did fix it," said Lillfing, "Eventually. Anyway, His Kingship only wants snow. That's simply white and kind-of floaty. Well," she added as an afterthought, "Until it settles, of course; but even then, it's not likely to drown anyone. Ah," said Lillfing, "Here's a spell for bringing snow."

Wizwoh came over to look at the spell book. "We have to make sure it works properly," he said. "Maybe if it snowed in just a small area. That should keep His Majesty happy, and it's less likely to do any damage if it goes wrong. Tell me what to do, Lillfing, and I'll give the King his snow."

Unaware of what was about to happen, the King was taking a bath. Raymond was approaching the royal bathroom when he heard shouting coming through the door. "Raymond! It's snowing in my bathroom! Get me out of here, I'm freezing!"

Raymond was sent down to the Wizard's chamber to report that the spell had gone wrong. "The King wasn't at all pleased about it," he added, "And would like it stopped."

Lillfing curled her trunk in a frown. "I wish he'd make his mind up. First he wants snow, then he doesn't."

"His Majesty would very much like snow," explained Raymond, trying to put it in a way that wouldn't upset the Wizard or his familiar, "But he would prefer it to be outside rather than in his bathroom."

Wizwoh looked at Lillfing in amazement. "We made it snow in the King's bathroom?" he said in disbelief, "How did we manage that?"

"Maybe we missed something in the spell," said the little blue elephant. "Tell you what, Raymond. Go back to His Kingship and say sorry from us. We'll put it right in a jiffy; then we'll make it snow outside. How will that be?"

Raymond was unsure. "Perhaps you should forget the snow thing altogether."

"We can't do that," said Wizwoh. "If the King wants snow for Christmas, he shall have snow. That's a promise."

A short time later, Raymond was standing beside the King on his balcony. "What are they doing, Raymond?" he asked his servant.

"They are outside the gate looking back at the castle, Sire," replied Raymond, "Now Wizwoh has his arms in the air. I think he's casting a spell..." The servant broke off as something white floated down and landed on his sleeve. "It's a snowflake!" he said in surprise, "And here's another, and another."

"Well I never," exclaimed the King, "I do believe our new Wizard has got it right at long last. It is actually snowing, and outside this time." He turned to go into his chamber.

“Don’t you want to stay and watch, Your Majesty?”

“I’m cold,” said the King, “You can tell me about it.”

Raymond came inside after ten minutes. “Well?” said the King, “I know that look on your face. Something’s gone wrong, hasn’t it?”

“Yes and no, Sire,” said Raymond. “Snow is certainly falling.”

“Is the countryside white and sparkling with it?” asked the King, “And is it settling on the trees? That always makes them look so pretty.”

“Not exactly, Sire,” replied Raymond nervously. “There’s no snow at all on the countryside. It’s only falling on the castle.”

“Oh, for pity’s sake,” the King moaned, “That useless Wizard...”

At that moment, the main door opened and Wizwoh strode into the King’s chamber, robes flowing and with Lillfing sitting on his shoulder. “What do you reckon, Your Kingship?” she asked in her squeaky voice, “Did we do good, or not?”

“Or NOT!” growled the King. “Certainly you made it snow, but only on the castle. What about the rest of my Kingdom? Not a single flake fell there.”

Wizwoh was puzzled. “We thought you wanted snow for Christmas, and we brought it, just for you: your own private snowfall.”

The King was about to explode, but he stopped himself. “The snow wasn’t for me. The snow was supposed to be for my subjects, my people. They work hard all year and they deserve something special at Christmas time. As for me, I don’t like snow – it’s too cold.”

“You surprise me,” said Lillfing. “You always struck me as a very selfish King who did things for other people only when you had to. Obviously, I was wrong. Inside, you actually have a kind heart.” She paused to tickle Wizwoh’s ear with her trunk. “Come on, Master, let’s help our Generous Majesty give his people their Christmas gift.” With that, Wizwoh spun and headed for the door.

Before the day was out, Wizwoh had cast another spell, and this one covered the entire Kingdom in a white blanket of snow. The King was so pleased, as were his people; and this was obvious by their smiling, happy faces when they arrived at the castle on that special day to wish their King a Merry Christmas. Wizwoh and Lillfing stood watching as he waved to the crowd from the entrance to his balcony. “Aren’t you going out to greet them in person?” asked Wizwoh.

“No,” replied the King quite sadly, “I really would love to, but it’s so cold out there. Even my fur cloak wouldn’t keep me warm enough.”

“No problem, Your Kingship,” said Lillfing. She nudged Wizwoh. “Give him his present, Master.”

Wizwoh put a hand inside his robes and brought out a paper package which he handed to the King. “This is too kind,” said the King as he started to unwrap the present. Then he was frowning. “Isn’t this my crown?” he queried, looking at the Wizard. “Why are you giving me my own crown as a gift? I don’t understand.”

“It *is* your crown, Your Majesty,” said Wizwoh, “But then again, it isn’t.”

“We’ve given it a makeover,” explained Lillfing, then she continued: “How are you feeling?”

“How do you mean?” said the King.

“Well, right at this moment, are you warm or cold?” enquired Wizwoh.

“A bit chilly,” replied the King. “Why do you ask?”

“Put the crown on, *then* see how you feel,” said Lillfing.

Still puzzled, the King placed the crown on his head. He was about to say that he felt no different, when something strange began to happen. “I do believe I’m getting warmer,” he said, and in another moment: “Yes, I definitely am. How is this possible?”

“You could say your old crown now has a spell of its own,” said Wizwoh with a smile. “It was Lillfing’s idea. While you wear it, you will always stay warm.”

“Wonderful!” exclaimed the King. “Come along, Raymond. Now I can wish my subjects a proper Merry Christmas in person.” He paused to look his servant up and down. “You’d better put a coat on – it’s cold outside.” Then he laughed and strode towards the door.

He was almost there when Lillfing said: “Before you go out, Your Kingship, you might like to press the green jewel on the front of your crown.”

Taking the crown off his head, the King looked for the green jewel and put out a finger to press it. Raymond said hastily: “Be careful, Sire. You never know what it will do.”

“Stop fussing,” he said to his servant. “What could possibly happen?” The instant he pressed the green jewel, all of the gems on the crown lit up and started flashing. But that wasn’t all. Music had begun playing from somewhere inside the crown. “It’s Jingle Bells!” exclaimed the King, and he was laughing again. “Now I can not only greet my people in person and stay warm doing it; but I can entertain them as well.”

Seeing what the King was going to do next, Wizwoh called out: “Don’t put it on, Your Majesty...” but he was too late.

With the crown now on his head, lights flashing and Jingle Bells tinkling away, the King said: “Why ever not?”

“Because,” said Lillfing, “We put something extra in the crown so that it wouldn’t fall off by accident. It can only be removed after the music stops.”

The King was nodding his understanding. “Good thinking. Now, how do I switch it off?”

“Ah,” admitted Wizwoh, “We didn’t quite get around to sorting that part yet.”

“But we’re onto it,” Lillfing assured him, “Just give us five or ten.”

On their way down to his chamber, Wizwoh said: “I’m not sure if we can fix it as quickly as you said, Lillfing. In fact, I’m wondering if we can fix it at all.”

Lillfing shrugged, “So? Nobody’s perfect.”

“But what about the King?” said Wizwoh, “He can’t go round playing Jingle Bells all his life.”

“You’re right,” said Lillfing. “People couldn’t stand it. Still, we could always shut him in a sound-proofed dungeon and bring him out at Christmas time. That would save on a tree.”