

Just Right: A Christmas Memory

By Whitney Stager, M.S.

We are crunching through the untouched snow, as if intruders on a perfectly white landscape. Soon, the snow becomes deeper and our feet begin to sink a little further down. This doesn't stop our little golden spaniel mix, Taffy Toes. She loves being out in the snow. Somehow she senses that something special is going to happen.

Earlier that day we get all geared up for the special trip. Long underwear, warm socks, boots, hats, mittens - the works. Then come the tools, map and compass. Finally we get the sled ready to go. But today, the sled isn't for the sledding hill.

The weather is not too cold, not too warm - it's just right. The sky is a little overcast, but it is not snowing. It is quiet and peaceful. Deep breaths brought the unique smell of the pines. It is so beautiful I almost don't want to do what we came to do. Nonetheless, I am full of anticipation - just like Taffy.

We don't need the map or compass yet - but we don't want to go too far into the woods, either. Right now we are on the lookout for the perfect Christmas tree. Not too tall, not too short. Not too scraggly, either. My dad and I are searching for a tree that's just right.

There! We find one about the right height. But it certainly seems to be too wide for the corner spot we have picked out. More searching. Another! This one looks perfect. Not the full, perfectly shaped ones that you can buy, but a tree grown in nature. We measure, but it is too tall. However, Dad and I decided that if we cut some off the bottom (and top) it would fit - just right.

We are hauling it out on the sled. Good thing we didn't go too far - it's very heavy! And after a while our little Taffy gets tired out from all the snow and I need to carry her. Dad has me check the compass to make sure we are going back in the direction of the truck. We get out to the side road and there's the truck, just a little further down from where we came out. It looks like a big, black shiny beetle in the middle of all that white snow.

Time to strap it to the truck. Dad always brings extra rope, no matter where or what we are doing. We don't want to crush the branches, so we are very careful. Now it's on - just right. It's already getting dark, we should get done soon. I help get the snow out of Taffy's paws and fur before we climb in the truck.

She's half-asleep in the back seat as we get closer to town, fully contented with our adventure. It is now dark. The lights start twinkling here and there - street lights first, then lights from homes and businesses, then the Christmas lights of the neighborhood. I'm tired, too! There will still be work to do when we get home, but decorating the tree will have to wait for another day. For now, everything is just right.

May you experience the fullness of God's presence this Christmas season. Every now and then in your busy schedule, take the time - even just a few seconds - to imagine yourself wrapped in His arms. You will experience a place where time stands still and everything feels...just right. God Bless you and yours.

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