

POPPYHOLLY AND THE CHRISTMAS TREE

Fairies love light and glitter. The idea started when Poppyholly, a child of the fairy folk, found a book that a human child had left in the park.

It was a book about Christmas. Poppyholly began to read it. She liked the sound of Christmas. It seemed to be all about decorating a tree with glittery ornaments and lights. Fairy lights!

She went to her favourite tree in the park; the holm oak who Poppyholly called Teresa Green. It was her jokey name but the holm oak did not mind.

Teresa was feeling lonely. The late autumn winds had taken her leaves and she missed the birds that had nested in her all through the summer, singing their joyful songs as they flitted between Teresa's branches.

There was the owl still in his nest, but he was a solitary bird, unfriendly. He did not sit and sing on her branches but glided silently into the night so no one ever saw him. His hoo-hoo wasn't musical like the tunes of the birds in summer. Nor were the caw-caw calls of the crows that barked across the landscape as it turned from summer into winter.

The Poppyholly tried to cheer Teresa up, telling her what she had learned about Christmas and how people had trees in their houses. "Trees in their houses," said Teresa. "What strange things these humans are," Poppyholly continued, "and they decorated them with light and glitter, baubles and trinkets."

Suddenly the fairy stopped talking because she had a brilliant idea to cheer Teresa up. "I'm going to decorate you for Christmas," she told Teresa. "Oooh", said the tree, "do you really think you can? That would be lovely!"

Poppyholly began to think about what she could use. People sometimes dropped bottles or cans in the park. She could use those. She could gather up cones that had dropped from trees. She could find delicate seed heads. Perhaps the roses would let her gather their hips and the quince may still have some fruits. She could look for small, round pebbles. She could use her magic to make them glitter. But it would all take her a long time.

She wished she knew where to find fairy lights, but when she said that Teresa surprised her. "If you find lots of decorations, I'll take care of the lights. We'll have fairy decorations and tree lights!"

Then Poppyholly had another thought, the most exciting yet. "I can be the fairy on top of the Christmas tree!" So the fairy began searching the park for anything she could turn into a decoration.

There was a cat who lived in the park. He would stroll around, sneak from bush to bush or just lie still in the sun and apparently asleep for hours. He noticed Poppyholly was bringing things to the tree and storing them in a hollow inside the roots.

He was very curious, as cats are, to know what was happening. He was prowling at night when he came across the owl. He asked the owl what he made of the fairy's behaviour but the owl was never out during the day so he had seen nothing. He asked a crow what he and the other crows made of Poppyholly's activities but the crow said he was busy, tidying up the countryside making sure everything in the natural world was safe for the winter.

The cat went back to the tree and investigated the hole. There he found everything the fairy had collected, some of them already glittering with her magic. He told the owl and the crow what he had found; the owl did not like the idea of the light glittering in the dark. The crow said that frosts and snows were the only things that should glitter through the winter.

They agreed to keep an eye on the tree, the cat during the day and the owl at night, and the crow would fly overhead making sure they were not disturbed in their task.

When Poppyholly thought she had made enough decorations for the tree she began to put them into the branches. She worked at dawn and at dusk so she wouldn't be seen. She could only put a few out at a time but children and their parents passing the tree noticed them and wondered who could have put them there. They had, of course, been decorating their own Christmas trees at home.

The owl hated the twinkling and glittering. Even at night the fairy's magic made them shine. The crow was upset that the traditions of the seasons were being changed by the unnatural light and glitter.





The cat went to his other friends, the elves. The naughty elves. They weren't really bad but they were thoughtless about others. The cat suggested it would be a good prank to take Poppyholly's decorations off the tree and hide them away. He told the elves that there were more decorations in the hollow of the tree. When the elves came and stole all the decorations, Teresa could do nothing. When Poppyholly returned at dawn she saw the glitterless branches, the sparkle had gone. She was so upset she sat among Teresa's roots and sobbed until the cold wind drove her back to her bed.

All the children who passed the tree on their way to school asked what had happened to all the pretty decorations but no one knew. (Except the cat, the owl, the crow and the elves - and they weren't telling). But the elves were watching and as they heard the questions and saw the disappointment on the faces of all those who passed by, some of them began to feel a little ashamed of what they had done.

The next day the elves were watching when a young man on his way to work stopped at the tree and took some glittery stars from his pocket and hung them in the branches as high as he could reach. While he was doing this, as an old lady came to the tree. She smiled when she saw what he was doing and she handed him a bag of decorations she had brought with her. "Perhaps you could hang these for me as you're taller than I am." The young man did so.

Then children came and they stopped at the tree and hung the decorations they had brought.

The elves watched all day as people came to the tree and put their own decorations on it.

The elves had a meeting and decided that what they had done was wrong. They found the cat, owl and the crow and told them that they should all move to another part of the park and to leave Poppyholly and Teresa to bring some seasonal cheer to the people in the park. So they gathered their belongings and slipped away, but not before the elves had brought back all her decorations and replaced them on the tree, putting them high up where the branches were still bare.

When Poppyholly arrived she couldn't believe her eyes. Teresa told her that the people had brought the decorations and that the naughty elves had brought back the ones that they had taken. They were both so happy to think what people had done.

The next day was Christmas Eve. When Poppyholly came at dawn she thought the tree was the most beautiful thing she had ever seen. "You are so beautiful dressed like this, Teresa Tree," she said, "but I still wish we could have had fairy lights." "How clever you are to remind me," Teresa Tree said. "I need you to fly into the hollow space in my trunk. There's an old bag in there, take it and fly to the very top tip of me and then open the bag and shake the contents out all over me."

Poppyholly went down to the hollow and pulled it out on to the grass. Who knows where Teresa Tree had found it but when she went to pick it up, it was too heavy for her to lift; she could not take it up above the holm oak and shake its contents onto the tree.

She tried as hard as she could, when all of a sudden, the owl and the crow swooped down and took the bag in their claws and lifted it high with all the strength they could find until they were high above the tree. They opened the bag and tipped it and shook it until out poured a sprinkle of the brightest, finest light.

Little points of golden light showered all over the tree and settled on the branches just like fairy lights. They shone all through Christmas Eve. They shone in the dark of the night and they were bright and golden all through Christmas Day and the twelve days of Christmas.

Everyone who passed said the tree was the most beautiful tree they had ever seen. Poppyholly heard every comment that was made, for she took up her place on the very top tip of the tree as the fairy on the Christmas tree.

Based on the ideas from the participants of the Stonydelph Community café.

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