

## **Christmas Story: Christmas Celebration in the Cold**

It was the last week before Christmas, and Mariënheem was covered in a thick, sparkling blanket of snow.

The streets were white and quiet, and children ran with red cheeks and hopping steps across the sidewalks.

Inside the houses, candles and Christmas trees glowed, while the smell of freshly baked cookies spread warmly through the rooms.

In the Jansen household, there was a busy hustle; the Christmas tree was already in the living room, but the decorations lay scattered across the floor.

Lotte, the twelve-year-old daughter, looked out the window and saw how the snowflakes floated down slowly and gracefully.

She felt a cold breeze on her face and pulled her scarf tighter around her.

Her brother, Tim, tried to hang a long garland on the tree, but it kept falling to the floor.

“This is going to be quite a task,” said their mother with a sigh, opening a box of sparkling ornaments.

“It must be perfect because Grandpa and Grandma are coming tonight,” added their father.

Lotte decided to help Tim so they could hang the garlands straight together.

Meanwhile, their cat, Minoes, watched curiously and occasionally tried to catch an ornament that had rolled to the floor.

The wind outside howled through the trees, and the snow seemed even thicker than the days before.

Grandpa and Grandma were still on their way, and everyone felt a little tension because it was so cold that getting into the car was difficult.

Suddenly, there was a loud rumble; the power went out across the entire neighborhood, and the room was plunged into dim candlelight.

“No electricity!” shouted Tim, but Lotte smiled and brought out a thermos of hot chocolate.

They filled all the mugs and placed them on the coffee table, while the candle flames softly lit the room.

“Maybe this is the coziest way to celebrate Christmas,” said their mother, warming her hands by the candles.

Outside, the snow swirled over the street, and the branches of the oak trees creaked under the weight of the ice.

Lotte thought of the neighbors across the street, Mr. and Mrs. De Vries, who were always alone during the holidays.

She decided that this year needed to be different; Christmas should bring warmth and togetherness, even for others.

She filled a basket with cookies, hot chocolate, and a few small presents and carefully walked across the icy street to the neighbors’ house.

Mr. De Vries slowly opened the door, his face surprised and slightly touched by Lotte's gesture.

"For you," she said softly, handing him the basket.

He smiled uncertainly but gratefully accepted the drinks and cookies, inviting her into his cold, quiet living room.

The room smelled of old wood and dust, and the only light came from a small candle on the coffee table.

Lotte and Mr. De Vries talked about the snowstorm, the weather, and Christmas preparations, slowly and carefully, as if they had to get used to each other's presence. After a while, he began to tell about Christmases long ago, when his wife was still alive and the house was filled with light, laughter, and music.

Lotte listened attentively, her heart full of compassion and warmth.

She realized that Christmas was more than gifts or decoration; it was about attention, togetherness, and sharing joy.

By evening, Grandpa and Grandma finally arrived, their faces red from the cold but smiling with happiness.

They all helped decorate the Christmas tree, together with Mr. De Vries, who carefully hung a few ornaments Lotte had brought.

The tree now shone, bright and festive, and the room was filled with laughter, stories, and music.

It seemed as if the cold outside no longer existed; the warmth of being together overcame everything.

Lotte looked around and felt a deep satisfaction; this was a Christmas she would never forget.

The snow continued to fall while the stars shone in the sky, and in every smile and handshake there was a touch of Christmas magic.

Everyone drank hot chocolate, told stories, and enjoyed small moments of happiness. Even Minoes seemed content, purring at the family's feet, while the soft light reflected off the sparkling balls on the tree.

They sang Christmas carols, sometimes off-key, sometimes beautifully, laughing at the small mistakes while decorating.

It grew late, but no one wanted to go to bed; the atmosphere was too warm, too cozy, too magical.

Outside the window, the snow fell like feathers, and the street looked like a painting of white silence and sparkle.

It was a Christmas celebration in the cold, but everyone's hearts were warm and filled with love.

They talked about memories, the new year ahead, and the importance of small gestures.

Mr. De Vries said how special it was that he was not alone this year and that he finally felt part of the community again.

The children helped with decorating, cleaning, and making hot chocolate, feeling proud

that they had done something good.

Everyone felt that this Christmas would remain a special memory, a story that would be told for years to come.

When the clock struck midnight, they all sat around the tree, holding each other's hands, and Lotte felt a wave of happiness and contentment.

She knew that the magic of Christmas did not lie in glitter or gifts but in being together, sharing, and showing compassion.

The snow continued to fall softly, but the warmth in the house shone stronger than ever. They made plans for the next day, for games, stories, and maybe a walk in the snowy garden.

The house smelled of cookies, chocolate, and wood fire; everything that makes a Christmas celebration so special.

Lotte looked outside, saw the sparkling snow, and felt that this truly was a Christmas that surpassed all others.

---

## 20 Multiple-Choice Questions

1. Why was the neighborhood so quiet during Christmas?
  - a) Everyone was on holiday.
  - b) There was a thick layer of snow.
  - c) People went to bed early.
  - d) There was a school party.
2. What did Lotte do when she saw the neighbors?
  - a) She ran past.
  - b) She decided to visit them with a basket of treats.
  - c) She built a snowman.
  - d) She only waved.
3. Why did the power go out?
  - a) Because of a storm.
  - b) Due to a broken cable.
  - c) Because of overload.
  - d) It's not explained.
4. What did Lotte bring to the neighbors?
  - a) A Christmas tree.
  - b) Cookies, hot chocolate, and small presents.
  - c) Only gifts.
  - d) Candles and a garland.
5. How did Mr. De Vries react to the visit?
  - a) Angry and irritated.
  - b) Surprised and slightly touched.
  - c) Indifferent.
  - d) Scared.
6. What does the Christmas tree symbolize in the story?
  - a) Wealth.
  - b) Cosiness and togetherness.
  - c) Only sparkle and decoration.
  - d) A decorative object.
7. Why did Lotte feel satisfied?
  - a) Because she drank chocolate.
  - b) Because she brought warmth and joy.
  - c) Because she finished her schoolwork.
  - d) Because she won a game.

8. Who helped decorate the tree?
  - a) Only the children.
  - b) The whole family, including Mr. De Vries.
  - c) The neighbor.
  - d) Only the children and the cat.
9. What did the cat, Minoes, do during decorating?
  - a) Slept.
  - b) Played and watched curiously.
  - c) Broke something.
  - d) Ran away.
10. How was the atmosphere after decorating the tree?
  - a) Chaotic and restless.
  - b) Warm, cozy, and joyful.
  - c) Cold and quiet.
  - d) Indifferent.
11. What did they do during the evening?
  - a) Watched TV.
  - b) Drank hot chocolate and told stories.
  - c) Played outside.
  - d) Listened to music only.
12. How did the neighborhood feel outside?
  - a) Windy and cold.
  - b) Warm and sunny.
  - c) Rainy.
  - d) Quiet but warm.
13. Why did Mr. De Vries feel special this year?
  - a) He got gifts.
  - b) He was no longer alone and felt part of the community.
  - c) He decorated the whole street.
  - d) He got a new coat.
14. What does this story emphasize about Christmas?
  - a) Gifts are the most important.
  - b) Togetherness, sharing, and compassion are more important than material things.
  - c) Decoration is essential.
  - d) Only magic can make Christmas special.

15. What happened when the clock struck midnight?
- a) They went to sleep.
  - b) They sat around the tree, holding hands.
  - c) They went outside to play.
  - d) They opened presents.
16. What did the family do when the power went out?
- a) Stopped decorating.
  - b) Used candles and hot chocolate.
  - c) Went to bed.
  - d) Called the neighbors.
17. Which emotion did Lotte feel most?
- a) Fear
  - b) Joy and satisfaction
  - c) Sadness
  - d) Anger
18. How did the conversation between Lotte and Mr. De Vries go?
- a) Short and awkward
  - b) Slow, careful, and heartfelt
  - c) Unfriendly
  - d) Only about school
19. What did the snow outside do?
- a) Melted immediately
  - b) Fell like feathers and enhanced Christmas magic
  - c) Stayed but was dark
  - d) Turned to rain
20. What made this Christmas special?
- a) The sparkling Christmas tree only
  - b) Being together, small acts of love, and warmth
  - c) The food
  - d) The presents
-

### **Answer Key with Explanation**

1. b) There was a thick layer of snow – quietness caused by snow.
2. b) She decided to visit them – bringing a basket of treats.
3. a) Because of a storm – storm caused the power outage.
4. b) Cookies, hot chocolate, and small presents – to share warmth and kindness.
5. b) Surprised and slightly touched – moved by Lotte’s gesture.
6. b) Cosiness and togetherness – the tree represents more than decoration.
7. b) She brought warmth and joy – fulfilled her heart by helping.
8. b) The whole family, including Mr. De Vries – everyone participated.
9. b) Played and watched curiously – added joy and curiosity.
10. b) Warm, cozy, and joyful – the perfect Christmas atmosphere.
11. b) Drank hot chocolate and told stories – tradition and warmth.
12. a) Windy and cold – contrasted with warm inside.
13. b) Not alone anymore – felt part of the community again.
14. b) Togetherness, sharing, and compassion – the true Christmas message.
15. b) Sat around the tree, holding hands – moment of connection.
16. b) Used candles and hot chocolate – improvised during power outage.
17. b) Joy and satisfaction – Lotte’s feelings.
18. b) Slow, careful, and heartfelt – a meaningful encounter.
19. b) Fell like feathers – enhanced the magic of Christmas.
20. b) Being together, small acts of love – what made the Christmas special.