

# It Happened One Christmas...



An Adventure for Faery's Tale By Scott Bennie

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# — It Happened One Christmas —

## Introduction

*It Happened One Christmas* is an adventure for *Faery's Tale*, the storytelling game of faery folklore. Just like the game, it's suitable for ages 6 and up. You'll need a copy of *Faery's Tale*, dice, and some Essence counters to play. The Narrator should read through the adventure before starting play, and may wish to gather a few props if possible. If you are going to play *It Happened One Christmas*, you should stop reading now or you'll spoil your fun.

## Christmas Elves

Players can play pixies, brownies, sprites, or pookas who have been enlisted by Santa Claus, or special Christmas elves created just for this adventure.

Christmas elves are a type of brownie. They help Santa construct his toys and help Santa in his Yuletide chores. They are polite, hard-working, and happy.

Long, long ago, a holy man named St. Nicholas decided he needed to share the joy he felt about Baby Jesus with the rest of the world, so he decided to build gifts for all the world's children. Many people laughed at his dream, and tried to do unkind things to him, so he ran as far away from them as possible. He went all the way to the North Pole and began to build a workshop. The local faeries laughed at him

and played pranks, but Santa still treated them with kindness, and they came to love him like a grandfather. Some of the best faeries volunteered to help Santa, and were transformed by the love of the season into Christmas elves.

Christmas elves look like brownies, except they're taller (up to one foot tall!), usually more slender, and their faces are bright and beautiful. While all brownies have nimble fingers, Christmas elves excel at craft, able to construct and package any gift with blazing speed. Although most faeries are musical, all Christmas elves are accomplished singers, for the spirit of Christmas lives every day in their hearts, and who wouldn't sing if they had that special gift?

Apart from their size, appearance, and voices, Christmas elves are very similar to brownies. They like to eat the same kid of food, and live in the same homey homes as brownies. They like saucy food and a tasty brew, and the comfort of a warm faery bed and a cozy fire. Their sleeping quarters can be found on the upper floors of Santa's North Pole workshop.

Christmas elf names are combinations of words associated with Christmas, such as: Warmhearth, Greenwreath, Hollybough, Chimneygift, Stockingwish, Carolsong, Yulefire, Winterflake, Angelchorus, Belljingle, Ribbonred, and Treestar

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## Creating Christmas Elves

You can create Christmas elves just for this adventure using the same basic process as outlined in *Faery's Tale*.

### Christmas Elf Pattern

Christmas elves are special faeries who work in Santa's workshops at the North Pole.

#### Attributes

Body

Mind

Spirit

2

2

2

Innate Gifts: Craft, Inspire, Musical, Duty

### Change Attributes

Spend 3 points to increase the Attributes given for your faery's pattern. Each point spent increases that Attribute by one. You may spend no more than 2 points in any single Attribute, however.

### Choose Gifts

Unlike brownies, Christmas elves cannot become invisible. However, all Christmas elves have these innate Gifts – because they have three innate Gifts, one more than normal for faeries, they also have a Duty.

#### Craft

Christmas elves love to work. For a Christmas elf, housework is as much fun as singing! They have wonderfully nimble fingers and are very good at carpentry and sewing and dusting. If anything's broken, it's easy for these faeries to fix it!

(Treat this as the Craft ability, *Faery's Tale Deluxe*, p. 29).

#### Inspire

Christmas elves work for Santa Claus, who's the most inspiring person in the whole wide world. Whenever they see someone who needs hope and encouragement, all they need to do is ask "what would Santa do?" and they'll probably figure out the right thing to say. That's why they have the Inspire gift (which is described in *Faery's Tale Deluxe*, p. 30).

#### Musical

A land of Christmas is a land filled with music. All Christmas elves are gifted singers and musicians. Often they will sing together, and when they do, they're capable of extraordinary things. Therefore, they have the Musical gift (see *Faery's Tale Deluxe*, p. 31).

Also, Santa is a holy man, and all of his elves share in that holiness. Sometimes things like prayers and church bells are used as protection against faery folk. Christmas elves, however, love the sound of prayers and church bells, because they remind them of the joy that lives in the heart of Father Christmas and the Christmas Child for whom the holy season is named.

#### Duty

Although most Christmas elves do not mind, they must obey the instructions of Santa Claus.

Above all else, while Christmas elves are allowed to be mischievous, they must never perform an act of real cruelty to an innocent person. If they do that, they will lose their voice and shrink to half their size (they will regain their abilities and form when they perform an act of kindness for a child and the child says "thank you").

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## Individual Gifts

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Christmas elves have 5 points to spend on Individual Gifts, as normal.

## Once Upon A Time...

Read the following italicized text aloud to the players (summarize for younger players with shorter attention spans):

*...long, long ago, there was a happy little village named Spielhaven. It was a town that overflowed with merriment and fancy, and its streets were filled with laughter. The only thing warmer than the fires that burned in the village hearths were the hearts of the people. Spielhaven had a reputation for friendliness that extended for miles and miles beyond its borders. So warm was the hospitality of the little village that the mayor boasted that no one could ever come to the village and leave without feeling they'd been made to feel completely welcome. It was a very good place to visit, and an even better place to live.*

*One Christmas Eve, however, Prince Punzleklupp, the most cold-hearted prince in the world, decided to test the legendary hospitality of the village. Like a bad winter storm, he paid a visit to Spielhaven and behaved abominably. When the baker or the shoemaker greeted him on the street, the prince spat on the cobblestones and replied with an insult: "peon" and "ne'er-do-well", "rat chaser", and "addle-brained cretin". Every single person in the town was insulted no less than ten times by the noisome prince, and each insult was worse than the last. He even scorned the babies of the village, calling them ugly, drooling dwarves, and the offspring of goblins.*

*Just how rude was this wretched prince?*

*With proud malice, he unbridled his horse and unchained his hunting dogs, letting them run amok through the village. These horrid beasts delighted in breaking into homes, destroying people's most cherished belongings, frightening children, and chasing all of the dear pussycats out of the village. Of course, the despicable prince laughed at the spectacle.*

*The impious prince even insulted the sweet sound of the village church bell; he spat on the ground in front of the church doors and refusing to enter the holy house for the Christmas Eve mass. He was the very model of the unwelcome guest, boorish, insolent, and unmoved by any display of kindness.*

*Even so, the good people of Spielhaven treated the prince with the utmost courtesy and respect, if not with delight. They offered him tea and beer, and numerous baked goods, and complained not at all when he threw the food to his dogs and hurled the beverages into his hosts' faces. At the stroke of midnight, the prince left the town with a great noise and thundering procession. As he crossed the village boundary, the mayor turned to him, and asked:*

*"Have you received complete hospitality, your highness?"*

*The evil prince's mouth twisted into a sick smile. "Why your worship, I'm afraid I did not," he proclaimed with a sneer. "For should not any guest who comes to visit you at Christmastime depart bearing a Christmas gift? Yet I leave empty-handed!"*

*The mayor gasped, for although the prince's heart was as black as sin, still he was right. No man should ever leave a house on Christmas without a gift. The fact that the village had not been true to its word granted a terrifying power to the evil prince: the power to pronounce a terrible curse and rob the village of all joy and prosperity. Every Christmas gift withered into dust. Every morsel of every Christmas feast became poison. Even the plumpest*

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*child lost their appetite for that year's Christmas pudding.*

*In all directions, the forests around the village were blighted, and the poor villagers, who relied on logging to earn their living, found themselves without any jobs. Terrible things encroached in the woods surrounding the town, scaring away travelers and merchants. The peal of the glad church bell became a dreary mourning toll. Christmas was transformed from a season of joy to a time of trudging burdens.*

## Santa's Excellent Plan

Read the following italicized text aloud to the players:

*At the uttermost North, under the shadow of the great Pole, lives a man with many names: Santa Claus, Kris Kringle, and Father Christmas. Santa beheld the injustice in Spielhaven and got very angry. Yes, the laws of magic do permit the prince to place a curse on anyone who breaks their promise, but surely the village was guilty (at best) of a mere technicality. The people did not deserve such a harsh punishment.*

*"I must do something about it!" Father Christmas declared. Fortunately, Santa Claus is a very clever man and he came up with a most excellent plan.*

The player characters, either the magic elves of Father Christmas or faeries of Brightwood enlisted by Santa for this special task, are being sent to Spielhaven to break the prince's curse, to right the terrible wrongs that have been done, and to restore the joy of the Christmas season.

To aid them in their task, Father Christmas is giving them three special charms:

- A silver candle, a foot-long candle whose wax never melts, which burns

so long as the Essence of the faeries endures.

- A wreath of Holy-Holly, two feet in diameter and overflowing with bright red berries, freshly plucked from the magical holly forests near the North Pole. And...
- A special Christmas song.

The faeries must all decide together to use any of the charms, for unless everyone agrees, the charms won't work. Above all else (Santa tells them) the last charm, the Christmas Song, must not be used until they have done everything else they can think of to break the curse.

To break the curse, the faeries must do three things:

- Find the cause of the trouble in the forest and put a stop to it.
- Find the unhappiest family in Spielhaven, and give them hope for a good Christmas.
- Fix the bell of the Old Church so it plays happy Christmas music.

## Getting to Spielhaven

Santa will send the faeries via reindeer sleigh to the crossroads outside Spielhaven, where they will be dropped off so they may conduct their investigation. Many things might happen in the adventure, and the referee is welcome to invent new events to challenge and delight her heroes. However we'll focus on the three main goals of the adventure.

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## Trouble In The Forest

When the faeries venture off the path near the village, they'll have to travel through some dark woods. The candle can help light the way or they can successfully complete a Mind challenge (this is a Tricky task) to navigate the maze-like woods. After some time passes, the faeries discover the ogres. Read the following italicized text aloud to the players:

*Congratulations! You've reached the heart of the forest, where even pixies fear to tread. But they should be afraid – and so should you – because you can hear three low, rumbling voices coming from a nearby clearing. Ogres! And faeries are their favorite meal!*

*Working up your courage, you peer through a maze of willow branches into the clearing. The first thing that you notice is the smell – such a terrible smell! It comes from a rotting pit that the ogres have dug in the center, a place where their meals and their stolen goods have been left to rot. Such untidy, wasteful brutes!*

*You're afraid that they'll spot you, but as you listen to their conversation, you can tell they're only concerned about themselves.*

*"I'm hungry!" the first ogre, a very large and slovenly brute complains.*

*"Shuddup Tuff!" the second ogre, who appeared to be the leader, snarls. "Youze is always hungry!"*

*"Gee, Gruff!" the third ogre, who is as big as the first, but who has a much more kindly face, says hesitantly. "Don't you feel guilty about what we're doing to all those poor, helpless villagers?"*

*"Get a grip, Ruff!" The second ogre looks like he wants to shake his brother. "When was the last time any of dem jokers ever did anything for us?"*

*"They did invite us to Christmas dinner last year!" Ruff reminds him.*

*"I'm starving!" Tuff, who really doesn't care about the conversation, complains.*

*"So's what!" Gruff snaps back, his manners as poor as his grammar. "Theys kicked us outta their village the first chance theys gets!"*

*"Maybe if Tuff hadn't tried to eat them..." Ruff speculates.*

*"But they looked so sweet and juicy!" Tuff laments.*

*"Shuts your mouth!" Gruff more than lives up to his name. "I don't cares if it's Christmas and no one loves us. Thanks to Prince P, we're gonna makes out like bandits!"*

*"Thanks to Prince P, we **are** bandits!" Ruff says sadly.*

*Tuff clutches his bulging stomach and wails. "If my tummy doesn't get some grub soon, I'm gonna waste away!"*

## The Ogre Brothers

Santa knows about these three ogres, so the faeries know about them too. Their names are Gruff, Ruff, and Tuff. They are ogre brothers who wandered out of the land of the ogres because they were hungry and there wasn't enough food for them to eat. These three ogres have an insatiable appetite and will eat anything (or, alas, anyone).

Gruff, the black-hearted, is the leader. He is not as strong as the others, but knows magic. Tuff, who is extremely fierce and vicious, is the hungriest. Ruff, who destroys things with a touch, is more kind-hearted than the others, but his clumsiness makes him the most dangerous of the three ogres.

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## Gruff

Body

Mind

Spirit

4

1

3

**Gifts:** Clever, Hardy, Sneaky, Black Magic

## Ruff

Body

Mind

Spirit

5

2

1

**Gifts:** Hardy, Strong, Whirlwind Strike

## Tuff

Body

Mind

Spirit

5

1

2

**Gifts:** Brave, Hardy, Strong, Sneaky

The faeries will want to force the ogres to leave the forest. If the faeries try to do it by attempting something as difficult as fighting them in physical combat, they risk losing (and being thrown into the brothers' big, smelly cooking pot). On the other hand, the ogres have obvious weaknesses like Tuff's hunger or Ruff's remorse that might be played upon by faery trickery (especially since Gruff is the only one of the ogres who is very bright). It would not be hard to force them into accepting a challenge in which the Christmas faeries emerge triumphant.

Also, the spirit of Christmas is that of giving. While Gruff and Tuff's besmirched hearts aren't particularly moved by kindness, Ruff might be touched by the Christmas spirit (particularly if he's given a gift). If the faeries are very kind, he might even decide to leave his evil brothers and help the Christmas elves save the village!

The Christmas charms may come in handy. Perhaps the holy holly has magical berries that will satisfy even Tuff's hunger. Perhaps they've been burning Christmas wreaths, but the holy holly will not burn, causing them to quit in frustration. Perhaps Ruff is scared of the dark, and the charm of the burning candle will calm him down at night. Use your imagination to handle the players' ideas.

After they've finished with the ogres, the faeries will notice something shiny in the middle of the ogre's cesspool. In the middle of this murky pit, unworn by dirt or mud or slime, sits a black scroll case. When they decide to open it, they'll find a message written in gold on jet black parchment. It reads:

*"I Prince Punzleklopp, hereby commission the three Ogre Brothers, Gruff, Ruff, and Tuff, to perform assorted acts of perfidy and villainy on behalf of my royal personage. Your most important goal is the destruction of Christmas, to destroy its symbols of joy and light, and to use the season as an excuse to turn parents against their children, and sister against brother. No act shall be too vile for you, for I am an Evil Prince. Do as I say, and I shall make sure you never go hungry again!  
"Christmas must be destroyed!"  
(Signed) P*

If the faeries have not been to Spielhaven, they should go there next.

## Entering The Village

When the faeries arrive at Spielhaven, read this description of the town to your players.

*"Until recently Spielhaven is a beautiful*

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*village composed of dozens of sturdy wood and brick buildings, each of which happily houses a family which clusters in front of a huge fireplace on the cold winter months, Now, however, a filthy black smoke now rises over the once-beautiful village. This rank-smelling, turbid smoke is billowing out of the chimney from a brand-new building, the Punzleklopp Soot Plant, which sits at the edge of town like a vulture. The smoke from this dreary factory has caked the walls, roofs and windows of every other building in a grimy film. “*

Because of the evil actions of the ogres, the villagers cannot earn a living working in the forest, so the poor people of Spielhaven are being forced to work long, grueling hours in Prince Punzleklopp’s newly-built Soot Plant, pounding the soot rocks to make soot-smoke. Why the prince wants anyone to do this is a mystery – it’s probably because he’s evil and even more unpleasant,

When the faeries enter the Soot Plant, read this aloud to your players:

*You’ve entered a huge factory. Normally, you’re very comfortable in these sorts of places, because they bring back happy memories of Santa’s Workshop. Unfortunately, this factory’s totally the opposite. Whereas the North Pole is a place of happy bustle where beautiful things are made, this is a dreary place full of dust and smoke. Everyone looks miserable.*

*A green hag whom you recognize as Nauzila, a horrible hag who’s responsible for the misfortune of a hundred faeries, runs the factory. She wears a once-beautiful black lace dress that is now covered in dingy grey soot. She holds a belt in her hand, and she lashes people with the strap as they work. She constantly shouts four phrases at the workforce.*

*“Christmas is coming! You have to work yourself until you’re too tired to have any fun!”*

*“If people don’t get you expensive presents, they don’t love you!”*

*“Christmas isn’t about peace on earth and goodwill to all men – it’s all about you!”*

*“Christmas is the time of year where families get together and argue until they hate each other!”*

*These are (of course) wicked lies meant to turn Christmas from a season of joy into a time of burden, greed, and quarrels. The workers are groaning in acknowledgement, and it’s clear that some of them are even beginning to believe her lies about Christmas. Something must be done now!*

Nauzila is a hag (see *Faery’s Tale Deluxe*, p. 61). The miserly Prince pays his workers only a few pennies a day for this arduous labor and a chance to listen to hateful propaganda. Everyone in the factory is tired, miserable, and hungry. They snarl at each other as they break the rocks.

The task of the faeries is to raise the spirits of everyone inside the Soot Plant and convince them to break free.

If the faeries haven’t defeated the ogres yet, the workers will tell them that they have to work here because there’s no other place to work. If they have defeated the ogres, they can spread the good news about the woods being free of the ogres’ evil influence and everyone in the factory will throw down their soot rocks and quit – except for one family: the Muttlehens

Dozens of people are drudging in the factory, but the most miserable is the poorest family in Spielhaven, the Muttlehens. These unfortunate wretches have been spending all of their waking hours working in the factory, grinding their fingers to the bone, trying not just to earn money to give each other expensive Christmas presents (in the hope that they will not hate each other), but to save their home. As part of his curse, Prince Punzleklopp bought the mortgage of

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every house in town and is threatening to foreclose

Even if the faeries tell people they can return to their old jobs, the Muttlehens are so tired and unhappy that even this good news makes no impact on them. In fact, the hag has placed a curse on them!

Seeing their misery, the hag will come next to them and begin shouting her slogans into their ears. The Muttlehens will continue to work without stopping, until you break the hag's spell. If the faeries act like they'll attack the hag, she'll laugh and say the following hateful speech:

*"So you want a fight, do you? Oh little faeries, even if you managed to defeat me – even if you destroyed the factory itself – you'll never break my curse. The only way to break it is to prove that the spirit of Christmas is stronger than the spirit of fear that my lies have put in their hearts.*

*"Fear of not having enough time to buy presents! Fear that they will slip in the snow! Fear of the cold! Fear that people will not like your presents! Such wonderful fears! You'll never defeat my beautiful lies and terrible fears!"*

*Then the hag shrieks like a banshee, a truly terrifying sound: "The Muttlehens are mine forever!" she proclaimed. And she continued to whisper each of her lies into the Muttlehens' ears. If only someone could convince them of the truth.*

It will be up to the faeries to disprove each of the hag's slogans and remind them about the true spirit of Christmas. When they do, the sound of sleigh bells will fill the factory, and the hag will scream and run out of the building, never to be seen again. Once our plucky heroes have defeated her and gotten all of the workers outside, the Prince's factory will shrivel up and crumble into tiny pieces. However, the soot will cover every building in the village until the curse is fully lifted.

Giving the holy holly as a gift to one of the Muttlehens will break the spell without having to refute the hag's arguments. Draping the wreath around the hag's neck will cause her to react in the same way as if she had been defeated in an argument contest.

## The Old Church

Sitting alone on a hill is the Old Church, an old wooden building with a beautiful, tall ceiling and a rusty bell. The doors are chained, but any use of faery ingenuity can unlock the chains.

When the faeries unlock the chains, read the following text:

*The doors open to reveal the empty sanctuary of an old country church. It is built from white oak, showing a skill that even impresses you. Orderly pews face toward a beautifully carved altar. Paintings of ornate angels line the walls, and a huge cross is nailed to the wall above the altar. Even with the rest of the town placed under a terrible curse, this church feels like a comfortable place (which is why the evil Prince chained the doors).*

*On one side of the church, a rickety staircase leads up to the bell tower in the church steeple."*

## The Bell Tower

The bell tower of the old church is the heart of the spirit of Christmas. Winged faeries shouldn't have any problems getting here, by flying here from the outside or using the staircase inside the church. When they reach the top of the steeple, read this to your players:

*A beautiful silver bell sits in a clapper at the top of this old bell tower. Glorious*

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*angels are etched on its sides. However, the angels look like they're very sad – the bell is also affected by the prince's evil curse. When you try to ring it, it plays only a very sad toll. It's obvious that the bell needs to be tuned so it can play a melody that will celebrate the joy of the Christmas season and break the curse. But it will require a special song, a Christmas song."*

Any Christmas song (except for those intended as jokes) will do. The Christmas elves will need to sing out loud (and so will your players).

If they try to sing their song before the other two tasks have been completed, one of the angels on the side of the bell will come to life briefly and speak: "Thank you, but you should try to rescue the rest of the village first. They're more important. Come back when you're done."

If the other two tasks have been completed, then when they sing the faery's song, something miraculous happens.

*As your song rises into the air, the bell begins to toll, and the holy voices of the angels on the side of the bell provide a wondrous harmony. The old church echoes with a very special song: one that's joyous, pious, and profound. The beautiful melody sweeps down every avenue of the village and throughout the surrounding countryside. Huge snowflakes begin to blanket the town, and wherever they touch, the soot that had covered the homes of Spielhaven vanishes like bad dream when you awaken in your mother's arms.*

*However, the greatest transformation takes place not in people's homes, but within their hearts. Your faery song is picked up and echoed by the townsfolk. Once again, from the tallest to the smallest, from the richest to the poorest, from the oldest to the youngest, the Spirit of True Christmas and everything it stands for abides inside every citizen in Spielhaven..*

*How could they not sing?*

*The transformation works wonders for every man, woman and child. The people decide that instead of needless bustle and the struggle to buy each other expensive presents, they will give each other a much greater present: The gifts of love, fellowship, and cheer. Those, like the Muttlehens, who are burdened will receive comfort, while those who provide comfort will receive gratitude. Best of all, everyone discovers that Christmas is not just a season, but an example of how things should always be, a celebration of love and joy that never ends. For love is the greatest of all gifts, and is no less special because it can (and should) be given on any day of the year.*

*And with the snow falling on the happy village of Spielhaven, and the Christmas song still lingering in the air, our story ends. Merry Christmas to men and faeries alike, and may the season's spirit of peace fall upon every corner of the earth.*

## Rewards

Santa will be very happy with the victory of the faeries. He'll give them a long Christmas vacation at his summer cabin, grant each of them a Boon, and present them with the Christmas Cross medal for distinguished service to Christmas. The other Christmas elves will give seven whoops of joy as Mother Christmas pins shiny new medals on their chests. Santa's reindeer will offer them a ride any time they want one (except on Christmas Eve, of course). They will also have the gratitude of everyone in Spielhaven, who promise Christmas cheer to them any time they decide to drop by.

## Extending the Story

The players may decide that the story is

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over. If that's what they decide, that's okay. However, if they want to continue their story, here are a few ideas:

- Prince Punzleklupp makes a deal with Old Man Winter to get his revenge on Spielhaven by freezing it with impenetrable chill. The faeries will need to melt Spielhaven and discover how to stop Old Man Winter from doing it again.
- Why is Prince Punzleklupp so mean? Can the heroes find a way to turn him into a kindly prince?
- The goblins of the North attack the House of Christmas! The only hope is Ho Ho Hotep, the Christmas Panda, but he's fast asleep in his magical hibernation. Wake him up.
- Santa is depressed that so many people seem to have lost the Christmas spirit. Find a way to cheer him up!
- Little Tommy Muttlehen is tired of doing his chores, so he runs away from home to become a Christmas elf. The faeries need to return him home, but he's prone to getting into big trouble.

## For Kids

This adventure is designed for older kids. Younger kids may get bored because it's a long adventure. You may want to skip the part with the Soot Plant. Older kids may understand when adults get very upset by the stress of the holiday season, but (hopefully) little kids are having too much fun to understand why their parents or guardians aren't as excited as they are.

If the players get bored or they can't figure out how to follow the adventure, then have one of the angels on the bell call out to them and ask for a song. Once they've sung, bring the adventure to a quick close.

Also, emphasize gift-giving and love. Make sure they understand how

lonely and unappreciated that Ruff is, and give them an opportunity to become his friend. Try to avoid violence in this encounter. Perhaps the ogres ignore any physical attack, and can only be tricked or persuaded into joining our heroes.

## For Adults

This adventure is meant for children, and is intended to be free of cynicism, irony, or black humor. As you've undoubtedly noticed, it is *very* earnest and sentimental. If such things provoke an urge for sarcasm and parody, go ahead and enjoy yourself, just don't spoil people's fun if they want to play through this adventure in the spirit for which it's intended. And Merry Christmas to you too.