

## The Green Nutcracker

December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2015

As we pulled in the driveway, I could feel the Christmas spirit lighting up my body. My legs were shaking. The car stopped and I dashed out of the car, hopping over the little step on my porch and sprinting to the front door of my house with my sisters trailing right behind me. My older sister jabbed the key into the lock and turned it, creaking the door open to reveal the stairs leading straight up to the second floor. I quickly dashed in and took off my snow gear and headed straight upstairs. I arrived at my room and without any hesitation I ripped off the clothing hanger containing my DeMarco Murry jersey and I threw it on. I headed straight downstairs, strolling past my parents who were fitting the tree through my door. I launched myself on our comfy brown couch to put on some football. The Eagles were playing; every Sunday felt like a party with the amount of action. I turned on the TV, and the game was 0-0. My dad had just gotten a job coaching modified swim, and he had to leave in a rush for a meet.

About four hours later, we were just waiting on my dad to get back from his swim practice. The Eagles were currently winning 21-14, and I was ready to jump out of my socks. My sisters were making delicious Christmas cookies, and I was really excited to paint the cookies with them. The door opened, and my dad walked in with pizza wobbling in his hand.

“DAD!” I sprinted over to tell him the news.

“Sup buddy...”

“Th—th—the Eagles are winning!”

“I heard; I was listening to some biased reporter...”

“Come on, let’s set up the tree!”

“Calm down buddy, just let me settle in.”

While my dad was “settling in,” I decided to shift my attention back to frosting the cookies. I would only choose the green or red frosting; the Christmas spirit felt like it was just starting to rush through my veins. My mom decided to bring up all the Christmas ornaments and decorations we put around our house. It’s a tradition to put up the decorations first, so we all scattered throughout the house putting up one decoration at time. I always decided to go with the giant nutcracker. I placed it right on the dusty piano that’s mainly in our house for aesthetics. One of my favorites though is a sign we have pointing north saying this is the way to the North Pole. It perfectly complemented the house.

My mom stomped upstairs with the giant bin containing the ornaments. She took a right into our living room and plopped the giant bin in the middle of the room. I dashed to take the top of the bin off, but a hand stopped me. I looked up and it’s my mom.

“We have to eat first, Miles.”

“But why?”

“Because people are hungry.”

“I want to set up the tree though.”

My mom eyed me down, giving me the look of “you better stop.”

I gave up and went to the dining room to eat. The pizza plopped on my plate. Cheese ran down the pizza with the grease following it. My attention quickly turned back to the Eagles game. I realized we were up 35-28 with 1 minute to go. I was rushed with a quick sensation of joy, realizing we were going to pull off this upset. The clock quickly ran out, and that was it; the

Eagles had won. My hands shot up, and I held them up there like a boxer after winning his long fight. I went back to the table and took one last big munch of my pizza and strutted to the living room to surround the box full of ornaments.

My mom opened the box, and my family rushed to see what ornaments were at the top. The famous Derek Jeter ornament capped off the top of the first box. That ornament was my dad's, and it was one that I enjoyed as well because I had seen the Yankees in front row seats just a few years earlier. We went farther into the box and it was filled with the brim of Santa ornaments and ornaments that contained my parents past. At the time I thought, "I wonder what it feel like to see my old ordainments when I grow up?"

We opened the next box; the ball shaped ornaments were at the top. These ornaments were basic Christmas attire, but what made them special was the green ball that was decorated with white decals. My bias towards green favored that ball over all the other ones, and from my eye when it rested on the tree it would stick out like a sore thumb. We slowly got to the bottom of the box, and on the bottom appeared my favorite ornament of them all. This was the green nutcracker; it held a marching stick in its hand; it had white hair and some navy-blue eyes. It was pretty small compared to the nutcracker that rested on the piano, but it was almost larger in the importance of it. I rested the Nutcracker on the top of the tree; it glimmered through the light, making it look like a god-blessed angel.

The last box contained past ornaments that me and my sisters made with family friends and through school activities. These ornaments were janky and weird; I largely preferred the other boxes over this one. My parents seemed to love this one for a reason I couldn't understand at the time.

We finished setting up the tree and immediately my family migrated over to the couch to sit down and take a rest. My mom threw on some old 80's *Full House*. I preferred Cartoon Network, but I loved seeing my family together at a time like this. My sisters and I got the ice cream out of the freezer and let it sit out for 5 minutes before getting the scooper and separating it into separate bowls. We went back to the couch and watched the rest of the *Full House* episode before going to bed.

December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2021

My family and I arrived at the front door with the Christmas tree with my girlfriend trailing right behind me. The keys bobbed in my mom's hand for a few seconds before she finally got ahold of the key and put it in the lock. The door opened, and the first thing I did was head to the living room to sit down and chill with my girlfriend. There was barely any snow on the ground today; it was a very plain day while the weather didn't feel very festive. My girlfriend and I kind of awkwardly sat on the couch and looked at our phones, maintaining brief conversation. My parents were more focused on getting the tree set up. I heard my dad scoff, which signaled my parents were having trouble setting up the tree. I chose to ignore it, focusing more of my attention on what my girlfriend was thinking. I was hoping that nothing would slip up today, but things were already starting to feel off.

It took about thirty minutes for my family to finally get the tree up; my parents decided to take a break and chill out for an hour. My girlfriend and I decided to take a chance and go into the front room to watch *Elf*. My stomach was roaring at me, telling me to eat, but my mind was telling me to just go along it and watch *Elf*, but it was irritating.

But ultimately, I thought, “It was better to suffer now, rather than risking additional stress.”

Earlier my parents told me the pizza was coming in an hour, so I just had to wait it out for thirty more minutes. Thirty minutes didn’t sound bad at the time, but my hungriness was telling me otherwise.

My parents came downstairs after that, asking us if we wanted to set up the tree, I told my girlfriend to wait a little bit, but she urged me to just do it, so my mom went downstairs and got the boxes bringing them back upstairs, stomping her feet. She brought the box to the middle of the room and sat it down. It seemed like everyone cowered away from the box almost expecting me to open it since my girlfriend was there. I insisted that my mom should open it; she uncapped the handle and opened the first box.

The Derek Jeter ornament arrived yet again but with an injury; his arm had fallen off the year earlier. The rest of the box contained nothing but the usual ornaments. Every once and a while I would eye my girlfriend, wondering if she was having a good time or not. The reactions she showed back were mixed. My hands started to sweat, and the room felt like it was getting hotter by the moment.

The next box was opened, and some of the special ball-shaped ornaments were cracked. A rush of disappointment swept the room. The Green ball was still intact, so I threw it up on a random spot and walked back to the box to see what was on deck. The nutcracker box appeared, and I swept the green nutcracker out of the box and threw it on the bottom of the tree and sat back on the couch. My mom glared at me, and then slowly shifted her eyes to my girlfriend.

“Miles get back up. We’re not done.”

“Okay, Okay.”

We had to go through the final box that I always dreaded. It was the old pictures of me and my sisters. The box opened, and my mom immediately went to go show my girlfriend the old photos of me. My girlfriend chuckled and my face turned red, and I put on a fake smile. I repeated to myself, “You just have to get through this.” There were ornaments in this box now from recent occasions like my hand-crafted snowball that was basically just a plastic ball with cotton in it.

My mom and I had to drop off my girlfriend after finishing the 3<sup>rd</sup> box, and the stress felt like it had been ripped off my shoulder once the car door slammed shut and she went in her house. We went back home, and me and my mom played some Mariah Carey on the way back. When we arrived in the house, we stepped inside, and I went upstairs to rest in my bed. I wondered if other kids my age felt this way.

I missed the simplicity of what used to be.