



*presents*

# Cat Tales: A Christmas Story



Written and Illustrated by:

Leta Nolan Childers

© 1999

ISBN: 1-58495-058-7

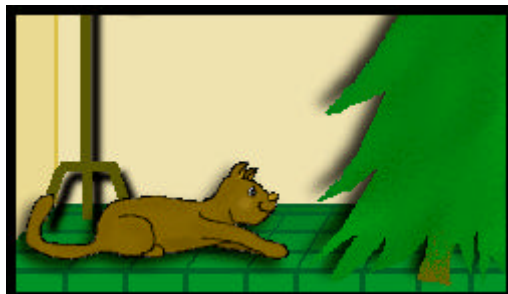
Parental Note: Please take the time to read this story with your children. Allow the music to play before advancing to the next page and allow yourselves to leave the world behind and become a part of this Christmas story.



**Why did they bring the tree from the Big World into the house, thought Bug, a small brown cat, as she looked up at the large green pine tree leaning in the entryway next to the door to the Big World.**



**Bug was a very young cat, new to many things in the Big People' house. She often looked to her friends Baby, a white and orange tomcat, and Buddy, a gray lady cat, who were older and knew more about the Big World and the House World. They would explain this strange happening.**



**Crouching down on her tummy, Bug crawled toward the tree carefully keeping it in her sight. When she was just inches from the tree, she slowly reached out with her tiny paw and touched the long green needles. Though the ends of the needles were sort of sharp, they were also very soft in a way.**



**Still alert, Bug crawled just a little bit closer and sniffed-her little brown nose wrinkling as she smelled the rich and strong odor of the evergreen. Hmmm, Bug thought, it smells just like the place in the Big World where Baby, Buddy and I like to explore when the Big World is warm and green and not covered with that cold, white, wet stuff.**



**Bug began to close her eyes and dreams of the fun times they had enjoyed when a small motion caught her attention. Bug crouched even closer to the tile on the floor with her ears pinned back, listening closely and watching carefully.**

**Suddenly, an orange and white flash flew through the air and landed on Bug who tried to jump aside at the last possible moment. Over and over and over Bug rolled on the cool, smooth tile.**



Finally, the flash freed itself from the tumbling little cat and stood up.

"Ha. Ha. Ha!" yowled Baby, smoothing down his ruffled fur. "Were you ever surprised when I jumped out of the Christmas tree at you.

"You jumped about a mile high. Ha. Ha. Ha."

"Christmas tree?" asked Bug, who looked up suddenly from smoothing her own fur. "I thought it was just a tree the Big People brought in from the Big World. What's a Christmas tree, Baby?"



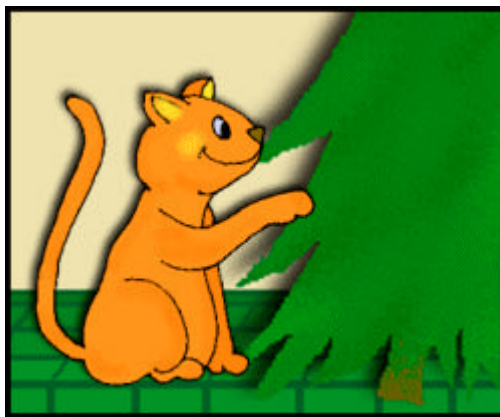
Baby laughed again at the young cat. "You don't know about Christmas trees?"

Then, Baby remembered that Bug was a very young cat. She hadn't lived here the last time the Big People made their Christmas. Baby became serious.

"I'm not quite sure exactly why the Big People make their Christmas. I only know it's named that because when the Big World gets cold and the white snow covers everything the Big People keep saying that word a lot," Baby said slowly. "Maybe they are celebrating the coming of winter..."



**Bug shook his head...why would anyone celebrate a time when a playful cat couldn't enjoy going out in the Big World and playing in the sunshine with the flowers and the birds and the buzzing little bees?**



**"But it's more than that, too," said Baby. "The Big People put the Christmas tree in the room with the warm fire place and they put pretty twinkling lights and round shiny balls and long silvery strings on it-oh, those are fun to play with.**

**"And they put all sorts of things under the tree-most tied up with long, beautiful ribbons which are ever so much fun to untie and tangle. Just wait, Bug, this Christmas thing is very fun."**



**And so Bug waited. She waited as that evening the Father took the tree and placed it right where Baby said it would go. And she waited while the Mother and the girl and the boy helped him put all the things Baby said on the tree.**

**After the Big People were done, they all sat on the floor by the tree and the only light in the room came from the warm fireplace and from the sparkling shiny tree. Baby and Buddy joined Bug visiting their Big People.**



**Baby played with a string the boy dangled for him.**

**Buddy curled up by the Mother and napped while the Mother slowly stroked her fur.**

**Bug sat in the girl's lap and licked the sweet hot chocolate the girl had poured in a saucer for her.**



**"This Christmas thing is nice," thought Bug, enjoying the closeness of both families-the cats and their Big People. Bug enjoyed the talk the Big People made-they talked about presents and friends and someone they called Santa Claus.**

**Bug learned that this Santa Claus was going to visit soon and would be bringing them all presents. Bug hoped that he would bring her a brand new squeaky mouse. Bug's old squeaky mouse was losing its fur and would only squeak once in a while. Bug played with her mouse every day.**

**Soon the Big People began stretching and yawning. It was time for bed.**



**The Christmas tree soon became the center of fun for the three cats. Each day they would visit the tree and play with the balls and the shiny silver strings and the ribbons which were so long and pretty. Often the Mother and the Father would scold the three cats for their mischief. But there was something about the Christmas tree that would make all the Big People forget the cats' mischief and make them laugh and play or pet the cats.**



**Each day the cats would lap up the water in the bowl which held the bottom of the tree and glance slyly at each other when the Father would ask out loud why he kept losing so much water from the bowl every day. That Father would tease the three cats and ask them if they had been drinking all the tree water.**

**The three cats would just look up at him as if they wouldn't dream of doing such a thing and he would laugh a deep, rich laugh that made everyone in the House World happy.**

**The Father was such a joker...to say such things when the cats all knew that he had placed the water there so they didn't have to go all the way to the eating place for a drink while they were playing with the Christmas tree.**





**Each evening the family of Big People would gather in the warm fire place room and talk about this thing called Christmas and the young Big People would wonder what this special visitor named Santa Claus would bring them.**

**Bug soon forgot how she missed the warm sun of summer in the Big World. She forgot all about playing in the long green, fresh-smelling grass and chasing the buzzing bees. Baby and Buddy would look at Bug and sigh and remember the wonders of their first Christmas.**



**One evening, the family of Big People gathered by the Christmas tree and were all very quiet.**

**"What's up now," asked Bug, who was laying close to Buddy and Baby. "Why are they so sad?"**

**"They aren't sad," answered Baby, gently nipping at Bug's ear. "They are just serious. There are serious parts of Christmas, too."**



**Bug, Baby and Buddy watched as the Mother gently moved the wrapped packages to this side and that of the Christmas tree-making a space on which she placed a soft piece of cotton.**

**"Oh boy!!!" Bug yowled excitedly. "More toys to play with."**

**Buddy and Baby both slapped at Bug with their paws.**



**"No, Bug," shrieked Buddy. "That is something we must not touch."**

**"No, Bug," said Baby. "Those are not toys for us."**

**"But...but...isn't everything of the Big People's ours to play with?" whimpered Bug.**

**"No, these are special things, important things we must not touch," said Baby. "I don't understand it all, but it has something to do with why our Big People celebrate Christmas and something to do with welcoming the Santa Claus each year."**



**Bug became very serious. She snuggled between Baby and Buddy and watched as the Father gently placed small sheep and a small shepherd figurine on the cloth. Next he set a little three-sided house that didn't look as if it had been made very well in back of the sheep and shepherd. The Mother and the Girl and Boy each set small cow figurines inside the little house. Then they stood up and looked down at the scene.**



**"Christmas is getting very close now," sighed Baby. "Look, they are getting ready for when the Baby comes..."**

**Bug wanted to ask Baby who that was. It was all so confusing to the little cat. First the tree from the Big World came into the house. Then all the beautiful and shiny toys and packages and all the laughter from the Big People. And, now everyone all serious about just some little toys like the Boy kept in his room.**

**"What to think? What to think?" Bug asked himself, as he settled comfortably once again between Baby and Buddy as the Big People began singing soft, slow songs about babies and silent nights and kings from the Orient-wherever that was.**

**It may not have been as lively as the other nights around the tree, thought Bug, but it was nice. It was very comforting and very nice.**



**The next morning after all the Big People had left the Big House and Baby and Buddy were in the eating place munching on their breakfasts, Bug crept silently into the warm fire**

place room. It was dark today. No cheery fire blazed up and sparked in the fire place. None of the pretty lights twinkled on the tree.

Full of mischief and curiosity, Bug crouched down and crept slowly and carefully toward the dark Christmas tree. Carefully he sniffed the little figures and the little house. They certainly didn't seem all that special to him. Oh, thought Bug, those little sheep might be fun to bat around the floor for a bit.



However, Baby and Buddy's words from the night before came back to him.

"There must be something very special about these toys, but I certainly don't understand what it is," thought Bug. Carefully and slowly, Bug backed from the room. "It's a mystery...a mystery that I must understand. But, I will have to be patient and pay a lot of attention before I know the answer."



That evening, the Big People were happy and laughing again. They weren't in the least bit serious. Once again they all gathered in the warm fire place room around the now brightly lit Christmas tree. The Boy and Girl laughed and poked at each other. They whispered to each other that this was the night that Santa Claus would visit.

"Oh goody," cried Baby, Buddy and Bug, who laughed and danced with the young people persons.



"I hope he brings me a new squeaky mouse," meowed Bug. "I love to play."

"And I hope he brings me some of those tasty little fish treats," said Baby. "I love to eat treats."

"Well," said Buddy, "I hope he brings me a new pillow on which I can nap. My pillow is all flat and not fluffy at all."



**The Mother brought a large wooden box into the room and set it near the tree and the little house. She then sat on the floor by the box and the boy and the girl. The Father took down their special black book and he joined the others on the floor. The three cats tucked themselves in with their Big People and watched as the Father opened the book and began to read.**

**The Father read a while the Mother opened the box and took out a man figurine dressed in long robes and a woman figurine and a little donkey. She placed them in the little house.**



**Then the Mother took another piece from the box and laid it in front of the little house. It was a small box and had a tiny baby in it.**

**Bug nudged a bit closer to the little box and sniffed at it as the Mother slowly stroked her back.**

**"Why is this Baby so special?" thought Bug.**



**Finally, the Mother brought out the final piece from the box. It was an angel-all dressed in beautiful white, glitterly flowing robes with wings that sparkled with golden stardust. It**

was the most beautiful thing that Bug had ever seen.

The Father closed the book and put it down. He took the angel and, by standing on a chair, placed the angel on the very top of the tree.



When he was finished, everyone stood back and looked up at the beautiful tree and the beautiful angel.

Bug still didn't know just quite what to think of all this. It was nice but where was the Santa Claus. Where was his new squeaky mouse?

Suddenly all the Big People were hugging and kissing one another and laughing and talking about having to go to bed so that Santa Claus would come. The boy ran from the room and was soon back with a glass of white milk and a plate with a cookie on it.

"Baby, aren't they going to wait and greet the Santa Claus when he gets here?" asked Bug.

"Oh no, Bug, everybody knows that the Santa Claus won't come if we are awake and waiting for him," said Baby as he nudged Bug toward the door. They were followed by Buddy who was already yawning and ready for a sound winter's sleep.

Bug stopped in the doorway and looked back in the room.

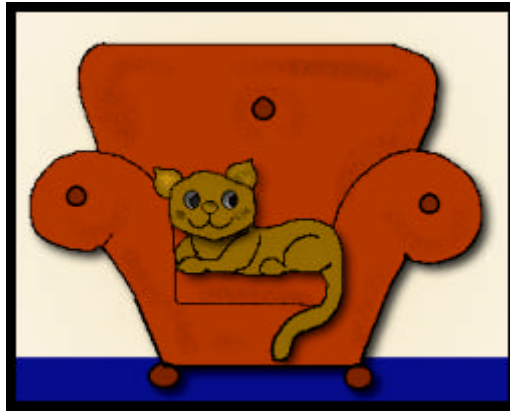
"Baby, can I sleep in here tonight?" asked the young cat hopefully.

"No, Bug, you come along. If you stay here, you won't sleep and the Santa Claus won't come," answered Baby. "You'll see soon enough if you get your squeaky mouse."

The three cats hurried down the long dark hallway and soon settled down in their sleeping place. All curled together, soon Baby and Buddy were softly snoring and sound asleep. Bug



**waited with her breath held to make sure the other two cats were very much asleep because Bug had a plan.**



**Carefully, Bug pulled herself from the warm pile of cat fur and pillow and tiptoed back down hall toward the warm fireplace room and the brightly-lit Christmas tree. She jumped up on a plush, comfy chair and curled into a ball. Pretending she was asleep, Bug peeked through a half-closed eye at the tree. That milk looked very good and Bug was quite thirsty. That cookie looked sweet and tasty and Bug was quite hungry.**

**"I had better not move even though I am hungry and thirsty," thought Bug. "I must remain very quiet until the Santa Claus comes."**



**Before too long, Bug heard the plop in the fireplace and saw a large figure all dressed in red and white step through the fire and into the room. Bug's eyes opened wide. "That must be the Santa Claus," thought Bug, amazed. "Why he walked right through the fire and**

**didn't singe his fur at all!"**

**Quickly the man stepped to the tree and looked up at the angel.**

**"Ho. Ho. Ho!" said the Santa Claus, as he smiled at the angel. "You did your work, Angel Fair. Got me here right on schedule and right on the spot."**



**"Ooooooooooooooh," gasped Bug.**

**The Santa Claus jumped and spun around. "Well, what do we have here?" asked the man. "Well, if it isn't little Bug celebrating her first Christmas. What are you still doing awake? You're supposed to be fast asleep when I come to call."**

**"Are you the Santa Claus?" meowed Bug.**

**"Well, yes I am, little one," answered Santa who was able to talk to all sorts of creatures. "Do you understand all about Christmas now?"**



**"No...not really," stammered Bug. "There are so many different things and they just don't fit together. I think it's a great mystery."**

**"Ho. Ho. It's no mystery, Bug," chuckled Santa. "Let me see if I can explain."**

**"Many, many years ago, there was a very important man named Joseph and an even more important woman named Mary. Even before Mary and Joseph were married, God had an important job for Mary to do. He wanted Mary as the mother to the Baby named Jesus."**

**"Mary and Joseph traveled a great distance with only the few things they owned and a little donkey that carried Mary. One night, both Mary and Joseph were very tired but there was no room for them to stay. So, a kindly man let them stay in his manger-the place where he kept all his donkeys and sheep and cattle."**

**"That night, Mary gave birth to a little baby who was Jesus. Jesus was the Son of God and it is Jesus who made sure that every man and even little kittens like you can live in heaven some day. And, heaven is a place where you can play everyday in sunshine."**

**Bug looked at the little scene beneath the tree and suddenly understood why it was so important. However, Bug was still a bit confused. The Santa Claus looked at her and saw her confusion.**

**"Now you're wondering how I fit into all this, aren't you, Bug?" asked the man.**

**"Yes, sir, and about the angel and the tree and ... well, lots," answered Bug.**

**"Bug, the birth of the little baby Jesus is the reason we celebrate Christmas...because of the gift that He gave to all of us. On the night that he was born, an angel...just like Angel Fair on the top of that tree...appeared in the sky and told people that Jesus-the Christ child-had been born. She told them that they needed to come and honor him."**

**"And they did-the shepherds left their flocks of sheep and came to the manger and great kings from different lands came...and rich and poor, powerful and shy, they all gave presents to the baby to welcome him to this earth and to thank him."**



**"And when the angel is placed on the top of the tree it sends out a signal to me that the people and the creatures of this house love Jesus and honor him. And, it's my job to leave a reminder that we must make a present to each other and to ourselves to continue that love of Him and each other. That's why I leave presents that bring happiness and joy because to love the Lord Jesus is the biggest present we all can share and something we must all remember each and every day that we live.**

**"Now, little kitten, do you understand?"**



**Bug thought a long while. Suddenly a bright glow began to shine in her heart as she thought of the innocent little baby and all that He meant to the world. The glow spread through the little kitten's body until every strand of her fur tingled and warmed.**

**"Yes, sir, I do believe and I do understand," answered Bug. "And, most important, I know now why Baby and Buddy said I mustn't play with the little things. I love them, too. And I**

**love the little Baby and His Mother and Father and God."**



**"That's wonderful," said Santa. "Now, quick as a minute, you must help me. For I've stayed longer than I should. You keep a close watch while I get to my work."**

**With that, the Santa Claus quickly began to pull even more brightly wrapped packages from his bundle and placed them quickly around the tree and he pulled out a big bag of fishy cat treats for Baby, a new pillow for Buddy AND a brand new, never chewed squeaky mouse for Bug.**

**The Santa Claus stood straight up, picked up his pack and walked to the warm fireplace. He picked up the cookie and took a big bite. Then he drank down the whole glass of milk.**

**"Ahhh...that was good," sighed Santa. "Now I'm off. You will be a good little kitten, won't you, Bug?"**

**Bug was glad that she hadn't played with the little figures. She was glad that she hadn't taken a drink of the milk or nibbled at the cookie. Bug looked up at the Santa Claus and nodded her head.**

**With a wink and a nod, Santa stepped into the fireplace and poof...in a glance was gone.**

**Bug shook her head in amazement. Now she understood it all. She walked over to the tree and sniffed at Baby's treats. She pawed at Buddy's pillow. She gently picked the squeaky mouse up and placed it near the little house.**



**Tired and happy, the little brown cat curled into a ball with her head resting near the figure of the tiny little baby. Her head was filled with new and wonderful thoughts. She couldn't wait to tell Baby and Buddy all the wonderful things she had learned.**

**"I love this Christmas thing," thought Bug. "I wonder how long it will be before we can do it all again?"**

**And with that, the tired little kitten closed her eyes and fell fast asleep.**

**Tired and happy, the little gray cat curled into a ball with her head resting near the figure of the tiny little baby. Her head was filled with new and wonderful thoughts. She couldn't wait to tell Baby and Buddy all the wonderful things she had learned.**

**"I love this Christmas thing," thought Bug. "I wonder how long it will be before we can do it all again?"**

**And with that, the tired little kitten closed her eyes and fell fast asleep.**

**The End**