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## Tallulah

by Sho Botham

It was five days before Christmas. Tallulah was in bed asleep when her parents tiptoed quietly into her bedroom and took a pair of trousers and a jumper out of her drawer. They gently pulled the blankets back and lifted Tallulah out of bed. Sleepily she opened her eyes and rubbed them with a tired hand. Mummy started getting Tallulah dressed pulling her trousers and jumper on over her pyjamas. Shoes and socks covered her small feet and then she was wrapped in a warm winter coat. Tallulah felt anticipation and excitement, despite her sleepiness. She stood in a wobbly and sleepy, sort of a way. Her long, fair hair falling over her face each time her head nodded forward.

There was a knock at the door and they went outside where a very tall man, in a smart uniform with a peaked cap, stood beside the biggest, blackest, shiniest car imaginable. He was holding the back door open. Tallulah hurried towards the car stumbling as she went and climbed up into the huge cavernous, luxury of the back seat. Even at her very young age, she loved the smell that surrounded her. It reminded her of mummy's leather handbag when it was brand new. Tallulah's feet could not reach the edge of the seat. The leather felt soft against her small hands as she made herself comfortable. Mummy got in and sat beside her.

Looking around in amazement Tallulah's sleepy eyes noticed the highly polished interior and the water decanter and glasses. She had never seen such luxury.

The very tall man walked round the outside of the enormous car before getting into the driver's seat. Daddy sat in the front with him.

The very tall man seemed happy and jolly to Tallulah. He turned his head to smile at her before starting to drive off. The huge car began to move forward but it was almost silent as it purred into action. Tallulah would have loved to see the silver lady mascot on the end of the very long bonnet as they drove along. But she was too small to be able to see over the high seats in front of her.

Tallulah half listened to her parents talking with the very tall man driving the huge car that smelled so wonderful. But gradually, the gentle, almost silent motion of the car made her eyes close. She dreamt about a secret visit to see a special person.

For the second time that evening, Tallulah was awakened by her parents from her slumber. This time they shook her gently when she was still in the back seat of the biggest, blackest, shiniest car imaginable. She opened her eyes and was immediately drawn to bright lights. Climbing down from the height of the back seat, Tallulah took mummy's hand and they walked towards the lights and the noise of lots of chattering voices.

Stepping into the brightness, Tallulah's eyes grew huge like saucers. A great big Christmas tree that seemed to disappear way up high, sat in the corner. It was covered in, what seemed like, millions of twinkling fairy lights and coloured baubles. Gold and silver decorations hung from the ceiling. And there was a stage where daddy was already behind the red velvet curtains putting up the Punch & Judy frame. Lots of chairs were laid out in rows for everyone to sit and watch the show. People were dressed in shimmering party dresses and glittery outfits. Tallulah didn't worry about being in her pyjamas with her clothes over the top.

Then her eyes saw him. A big, round man with a long beard, wearing a red and white outfit carrying a sack of presents over his shoulder. She stopped breathing for at least six seconds before she could speak and say, hello, to Santa.