







# Sleighbells with Satyrs (Greetings from Monster Town)

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**Category:** Fantasy

**Description:** Greetings from Monster Town!

Marisol

Losing my father has been like losing the sun. The holidays were always his favorite, full of laughter, community, and light—but this year, they feel like a cold, empty void.

On a whim, I travel to Avalon Vale, a monster-controlled haven where magic fills the air and Otherkin live alongside humans. I didn't expect much, maybe just a distraction from the silence that echoes in my life. Instead, I find myself swept into the warmth of the Winter Solstice Festival and the unexpected kindness of Thad, a satyr whose cheerful smile and steady presence make me feel like I can breathe again.

For the first time, I can speak about my father without falling apart. Thad's belief in living in the moment is contagious, and though I'm hesitant, I begin to wonder if maybe I could find joy again.

Thad

Moving to Avalon Vale gave me a second chance, a new community after the Rift Wars destroyed my homeland. But grief has a way of following you, no matter where you go. As a satyr and tavern owner, I've built a life here, tending to my patrons and weaving myself into the rhythms of the town. Still, something has always been missing.

Then Soli walks into my tavern, looking like she's carrying the weight of the world but with a strength and grace that captivates me. She's resilient, quietly vibrant, and a reminder that even in the darkest winters, there's still room for warmth. Helping her reconnect with life reminds me of what I've been missing in my own, and with every shared moment, I find myself hoping for more.

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Sleighbells With Satyrs is a heartwarming holiday romance filled with

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*Source Creation Date: August 5, 2025, 7:29 am*

## Chapter One

### Marisol

The train hums beneath me as it winds through snow-blanketed hills and frost-kissed forests. Outside the window, the world looks like a holiday card brought to life. Evergreen trees are draped in sparkling snow, and quaint cottages trail plumes of smoke from their chimneys. I clutch my father's scarf tightly, the familiar scent of cedarwood and spice lingering faintly on the soft wool. It's my last connection to him—a man who filled my life with warmth and stories, now gone.

The ticket in my pocket reads Avalon Vale, a place I've never visited but chose on a whim, drawn by its reputation for magic and wonder. I need a fresh start, or at least a temporary escape, from the echoing silence of my empty apartment and the weight of my loss.

As the train curves around a bend, my first glimpse of Avalon Vale steals my breath. Twinkling fairy lights weave through the trees, casting a soft glow on the snow-covered ground. Whimsical creatures—a faun balancing a stack of packages, a fox-like sprite darting between market stalls—bustle in a scene so picturesque it seems unreal.

When the train slows to a halt, I step onto the platform, my boots crunching in the snow. A cheerful attendant hands me a small map of the town, its borders marked with flourishes of enchanted ink that glimmer faintly in the twilight. I tuck it into my coat pocket, suddenly feeling both nervous and hopeful. Perhaps here, in this charming village tucked away from the rest of the world, I might find a way to heal.

I check into Lakeside Manor, a place that looks like it was plucked straight from the pages of a fantasy tale. The structure seems to grow organically from the mountain, a harmonious blend of stone and timber that gives it an ageless, earthy elegance. Massive beams arch over the entrance, their carved details weathered but intricate, as though the building itself has stories to tell. The proportions are vast, clearly designed with Otherkin in mind; the ceilings soar higher than any human construction, and the furniture is built to accommodate beings whose average height dwarfs my own by at least two feet. The scale is humbling, yet the craftsmanship and warmth of the design make it inviting rather than intimidating. It's a reminder of how Avalon Vale is a shared world—a place where humans like me are guests in a land designed for giants and creatures of legend.

Valiana, the B this moment feels like permission to let the grief flow freely. It's cathartic in a way, like a storm passing through, leaving the air clearer.

After a while, I swipe at my cheeks and take a steadying breath. Flipping to a blank page in my journal, I let the pen glide across the paper, the words spilling out as easily as the tears did. My thoughts take shape, untangling the knots in my heart with each line I write. When I'm done, I pull out a pastel pink sticky note from the stack by my side. It has a little cartoon bunny in the corner, its cheerful expression at odds with the heaviness I feel.

"Days Since I've Cried: 0," I scrawl in loopy script and stick it to the page with a firm press. A small, wobbly smile tugs at my lips despite the ache still lingering in my chest. It's a small note, a quiet acknowledgment of the day's emotions. As I close my journal, my eyes catch the colorful brochures Valiana handed me earlier, now sitting on the corner of the desk.

Curiosity nudges me, and I pick them up, flipping through the vibrant images of the Solstice Festival and its many highlights: the glowing Solstice Tree, the lantern ceremony, and a bustling holiday market filled with magical wares. They'd make

perfect additions to my journal, I think, already imagining how the colorful pages could brighten its somber tone.

One brochure catches my eye, showcasing the Hearth & Hoof Tavern, where Valiana mentioned the best spiced cider in Avalon Vale. My fingers itch to write something down, so I flip to a section in my journal I've labeled "Future Planning." With a practiced flourish, I jot: "Visit Hearth & Hoof Tavern."

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### Chapter Two

#### Thaddeus

The Hearth there's a quiet strength in the way she holds herself, even as uncertainty flickers across her face. She feels like an answer to a question I didn't dare voice, a wish I'd nearly given up on this past year. The warmth of the tavern seems to brighten in her presence, and for the first time in a long while, I feel a spark of something I thought I'd lost: hope.

And a still quieter voice that I never dared listen to before. Mate.

I step forward before she can decide to leave. "Welcome to the Hearth it's genuine. Humans intrigue me, especially those brave enough to visit Avalon Vale—a town that still holds a bit of mystery for most of them.

She glances up, her fingers tightening around the mug. "The festival," she says softly, her voice carrying a hint of something—nervousness, maybe, or hope. That barely-there smile of hers flickers to life again, and it strikes me like sunlight breaking through clouds.

The firelight reflects in her eyes, and something stirs in my chest—something I haven't felt in years. It's as if a weight I didn't realize I was carrying begins to lift, my own grief loosening its grip. There's a quiet strength about her, wrapped in exhaustion, and it tugs at me. "The festival's a good place to start," I say, keeping my tone light. "Though, fair warning, you might leave with more stories than you bargained for."

Her lips curve just a little more, and I catch myself leaning closer, wanting to see that spark of life again. "Stories are why I'm here," she says after a pause, her voice steadier this time.

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### Chapter Three

#### Marisol

I sit by the fire in the Hearth & Hoof Tavern, sipping on Thad's spiced cider, and find myself watching him as he moves through the room. A satyr—an Otherkin—I'm both intrigued and in awe. His kind eyes and merry demeanor seem to brighten every corner of the bustling tavern. For a brief moment, I forget the heavy ache of my grief. He has a way about him, a steady warmth that feels both grounding and uplifting, as if the world is somehow safer in his presence.

Maybe that's why, as I flip through the brochures Valiana gave me earlier, I find myself considering the Winter Solstice Festival. I glance at the vivid illustrations of glowing lights, joyful crowds, and whimsical creatures. These would make wonderful additions to my journal. A small smile tugs at my lips as I imagine my dad here. He would already have known everyone's name, laughing and swapping stories with the Otherkin like they were old friends. He always said they reminded him of Filipinos—the way they value community and family above all else.

The thought of my father sends a sharp pang of grief through me, like a sudden winter wind cutting deep. Tears prick my eyes, but I manage to breathe through the pain, letting the tears fall softly before wiping them away.

After walking a quick loop around the main square and follow the trail back to the Lakeside Manor. The heavy languor of sleep calls to me. The bed warm and inviting, pulling me into its gravity. I long for a nap, but I'd slept an entire day already, and I no longer wanted to waste another opportunity.

I can nap for as long as I want when I'm back to my own apartment, stale and empty as it is. My gaze falls onto the brochures once more, the colorful images already captured in perfectly clipped squares and rectangles to frame into my journal. The words Attend the Festival written in my script taunts me.

My father would have wanted to be here but can't.

Resolved, I march to the bathroom to get ready for the festival.

The festival is breathtaking. Strings of enchanted lanterns float above the cobblestone streets, casting warm, golden light over the stalls brimming with handmade ornaments and steaming cups of cider. The air hums with laughter and the faint tinkling of sleighbells. It feels like stepping into a snow globe.

I'm studying a delicate, hand-carved snowflake ornament when I hear a familiar voice. "Soli! Didn't think I'd see you out here." I turn to see Thad approaching, his satyr features illuminated by the soft glow of the festival lights. His curved horns gleam like polished mahogany, and his rugged yet approachable face carries an ever-present grin that somehow manages to ease the tension I didn't even realize I was holding. There's a warmth to him, a kind of effortless charm in the way he moves, his hooves making a steady rhythm against the cobblestones. For a brief moment, the merry twinkle in his golden-brown eyes makes me forget the heavy ache in my chest, as though his joy is something tangible that could be shared.

"Valiana convinced me," I say, shrugging.

"Smart woman, that Valiana," he says, and then nods toward a group of festival-goers gathered around a ring of glowing hoops. "Fancy a little friendly competition?"

I hesitate, but his enthusiasm is contagious. Before long, I'm laughing as we toss enchanted snowballs through the spinning hoops. I'm terrible at it, of course, but

Thad's teasing encouragement makes the sting of missed shots feel like part of the fun.

When the game ends, he gestures toward a sleigh waiting at the edge of the square. The reindeer—if you can call them that, with their crystalline antlers and glowing hooves—paw the ground impatiently. “How about a ride? The lights are best seen from the woods.”

I nod, and soon we're gliding through the snowy forest, the sleighbells jingling softly with every step. The woods are bathed in moonlight, the snow sparkling like diamonds. For the first time in months, I feel... lighter. Alive.

When the ride ends, Thad leaps from the sleigh and immediately pelts me with a snowball. I gasp, grabbing a handful of snow and flinging it back at him. What starts as a playful skirmish turns into a full-blown battle, and I'm laughing so hard my sides ache. The sound surprises me—a joy I hadn't realized I was missing until now.

“You've got a good arm,” Thad says, brushing snow from his curls.

“I've got a good teacher,” I reply, catching my breath. For a moment, we just smile at each other, the world around us quiet except for the distant jingle of sleighbells and the soft rustle of snow falling from the trees. The laughter lingers in the frosty air, and for the first time in what feels like forever, I catch myself believing that this season might hold something more than grief—something worth holding on to.

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*Source Creation Date: August 5, 2025, 7:29 am*

### Chapter Four

#### Thaddeus

The tavern is alive with the chaos of the holiday rush—orders flying in faster than I can pour a drink, laughter rising above the jingle of sleighbells outside. My hooves barely touch the floor before I’m pivoting to grab another tray of cider. Then, out of nowhere, Soli appears at my side, her scarf wrapped snugly around her neck, the thick fabric barely containing her dark hair that spills out in soft waves. Her bulky winter hat, crowned with an endearing pom-pom, contrasts sharply with her otherwise elegant poise. She moves with a kind of natural grace that belies the chaos surrounding us, her stature straight and composed, even in the midst of the holiday rush. It’s hard not to admire the way she carries herself—calm, capable, and quietly striking.

“Need a hand?” she asks, already tying an apron around her waist. Before I can protest, she’s weaving through the crowd with the kind of ease that leaves me staring.

It’s mesmerizing, really—how quickly she assesses the situation and jumps in without hesitation. Within minutes, the chaos feels manageable, her calm efficiency settling over the room like fresh snow. She even manages to charm Old Fergus, a towering minotaur with a perpetually furrowed brow and a coat as shaggy as the snowdrifts outside, grumbles from his usual corner of the tavern. His horns, chipped from years of wear and tear, curl in a way that gives him an air of eternal disapproval. Known for his gruff demeanor and a penchant for complaining about his cider never being refilled fast enough, Fergus is a fixture here—one of those characters you can’t help but secretly love despite his prickly exterior, who’s notoriously grumpy about

his cider refills.

As the afternoon rush finally peters out, the din of clinking mugs and laughter gives way to a welcome calm. I sink onto a stool, letting out a sigh of relief as I wipe my brow. Soli collapses into the seat across from me, her cheeks flushed from the warmth of the fire and the whirlwind of activity.

“Does it ever really die down here?” she asks, brushing a stray strand of hair from her face. There’s a hint of curiosity in her tone, and it pulls a grin from me.

“Honestly? I’ve never thought about it,” I admit, leaning back. “Avalon Vale has its rhythms. Busy one minute, quiet the next. Like life, I guess. You can’t really plan it all out. Sometimes, you just have to take a moment when it comes.”

“Like now?” she teases, a small smile tugging at her lips.

“Exactly,” I say, grabbing a pair of mugs and filling them with cider. I set one in front of her, the spicy aroma curling between us. “Speaking of moments, that’s how this cider came about.”

“Happy accident?” she guesses, wrapping her hands around the mug.

“Something like that,” I say, chuckling. “I was experimenting with local ingredients a few years back. Threw in some enchanted honey, a bit of cinnamon bark from the forest, and... well, let’s just say the first batch almost exploded. But once I got it right, it became a hit.”

Soli lifts her mug, her smile warming. “To happy accidents,” she says, her voice soft but steady.

“To taking moments when they come,” I reply, clinking my mug gently against hers.

As we sip in the quiet tavern, a sense of ease settles over me, like the world outside has paused just for us.

“You’re a lifesaver,” I tell her, meaning every word. “How’d you manage all that so effortlessly?”

She shrugs, a faint smile tugging at her lips. “Years of wrangling busy holiday gatherings with my dad. He loved this time of year—always made it a big production. You think this is chaotic?” She gestures lightly around the tavern. “At least no one here is challenging folks to karaoke.”

The corner of my mouth twitches, and I can’t help but chuckle. “Karaoke? Sounds like a serious competition.”

“You have no idea,” she says, her smile widening slightly. “My cousins would turn it into an all-night event. Someone would always bring the microphone, and before you knew it, half the family was belting out power ballads while the other half argued over who got to go next. It was loud, chaotic... but it was home.”

Her voice softens, and I catch the shadow that crosses her face. “It’s quieter now,” she adds after a moment, her gaze dropping to the steaming mug in her hands. “Too quiet.”

“Your dad sounds like someone worth celebrating,” I say gently.

She nods, her eyes glistening. “He was. This is the first holiday without him. I thought being here might help, but...” She trails off, the weight of her grief palpable.

I feel something tighten in my chest, an ache that mirrors hers. “Grief has a way of sneaking up on you,” I say. “But sometimes, it helps to share it. Makes the weight a little lighter.”

She meets my gaze, and for a moment, the air between us feels charged with an understanding that needs no words. “Maybe,” she says quietly, her smile small but real. The rest of the night passes in a blur of laughter and shared effort, but moments with Soli linger in sharp focus. Every gesture, every quiet smile, every flicker of emotion on her face is etched into my memory. Life, fleeting as it is, feels richer with her in it—like she makes the chaos worth slowing down to savor.

### Chapter Five

#### Marisol

The morning sun casts a golden glow over Avalon Vale as Thad invites me to explore the second day of the festival. Compared to last night's dreamy enchantment, the town now brims with vibrant energy. Families crowd the cobblestone streets, their laughter blending with the joyful shouts of children engaging in snowball fights and sled races. The air smells of cinnamon and roasted chestnuts, mingling with the faint hint of pine from the Solstice Tree.

As we walk, Thad points out the landmarks. "That's the town square up ahead," he says, gesturing toward an open space dominated by the Solstice Tree. The towering pine is like something out of a dream, its branches glittering with glowing ornaments that seem to hum softly in the crisp air. "Each ornament carries a wish," Thad explains, his voice low and reverent. The energy around the tree feels almost alive, making me wonder if the magic here is more than just legend.

The market stalls bustle with activity, offering everything from enchanted scarves that never let you feel cold to candied fruits that sparkle like gemstones. Children dart through the crowd, laughing as snow sprites flit around them, adding a touch of playful chaos to the scene. I catch a glimpse of a wulver shopkeeper carving intricate patterns into a wooden box, his claws surprisingly delicate against the fine grain of the wood.

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“Do you have a favorite spot here?” I ask, glancing at Thad as he leads me toward the edge of the square.

His grin widens. “I do, but it’s not in the town. Come on.”

During our second sleighbell ride, I can’t help but marvel at how the world transforms as we move deeper into the snowy woods. The sleigh glides effortlessly over the powdery snow, the soft jingle of the bells creating a melody that blends perfectly with the whisper of the wind through the trees. The woods are magical in their own right—tall pines dusted with snow, their branches arching gracefully as if bowing to the moonlight.

Thad pulls the sleigh to a stop in a hidden glade, where bioluminescent flowers bloom in delicate shades of blue and gold. The petals seem to pulse with light, as if breathing in harmony with the world around them. For the first time in what feels like forever, I’m overwhelmed by a sense of wonder.

“This place,” I whisper, not wanting to disturb the tranquility. “It’s... magical.”

Thad grins, his eyes sparkling in the soft glow. “You’ve got a good eye for it. Most folks just see the woods and snow.”

I’m not sure if it’s the setting or Thad’s presence, but I begin to open up. I tell him about my father—how much he loved finding beauty in the simplest things, how the holidays were always his favorite. My voice trembles as I admit how lonely it feels without him.

As I talk, images of my dad fill my mind. He would have loved this place—the glowing lights, the bustling markets, the sense of community that wraps around Avalon Vale like a cozy quilt. My father had a knack for making connections with anyone, human or Otherkin. He always said the Otherkin reminded him of Filipinos, with their deep sense of family and community ties. I smile softly, thinking about how he would already know everyone’s name and probably have a plate of cookies waiting for him at every corner.

But then, the sharp sting of grief slices through me again, catching me off guard. My chest tightens as I remember the past few months: the endless hospital visits, the whispered goodbyes, the weight of finality pressing down. I hadn’t even been able to speak about him without sobbing—not to the life insurance claims representative who had no idea what to do with me as I blubbered through my dad’s policy number, and certainly not to the pastor who gently guided me through the funeral arrangements. Yet, here I am now, sharing these memories with Thad, and for the first time, the words flow freely, unburdened by the storm of tears.

It’s a strange kind of peace I feel—a flicker of warmth in a cold season I thought would last forever. The tears still come, soft and quiet, but I breathe through them, letting the grief settle into something more manageable. Thad listens with a kindness that makes me feel lighter, and for the first time in weeks, I find a tiny, fragile comfort in simply remembering my dad as he was: joyful, present, and always ready to embrace the magic in the world around him.

“Loneliness has a way of tricking us into thinking it’s forever,” Thad says quietly. “But it’s not. Not if you let yourself see the magic around you.”

When we return to the Solstice Tree, he hands me an ornament. “Make a wish,” he says, his voice gentle. I hesitate, the weight of grief holding me back, but the earnestness in his expression makes me want to try. Hanging the ornament on a low branch, I close my eyes and let the hum of the tree carry my unspoken wish into the night.