The Ugly Treeling

an original adaptation by Eva Grayzel of a story written by Christie Pippen

His nickname was Scraggle because his branches were thin and his stature small. "Why don't I grow like the others?" he asked his Mom.

"Dearest, on this mountaintop, you are surrounded by many family members who love you," she replied. "Unfortunately, the sun cannot reach your face. Without the sun, you won't grow. But, you will be protected by us."

Scraggle didn't want to be protected anymore. He wanted his limbs to reach upward and his head to stand high. An overwhelming sadness enveloped him. Forever, he would be the ugly treeling.

One winter day, Scraggle heard the sound of people. As always, he longed to be admired. As usual, no one noticed him. Fast and furious chopping sounds filled the air. It wasn't the sound of villagers getting their Christmas trees as in years past. They were strangers taking what didn't belong to them. Family members were dropping to the ground and hauled away.

As his mother was losing her balance, she dropped a large branch over his head to hide him. By the end of the day, Scraggle was all alone. Now, he had room to stretch and feel the sun, but the freedom was bittersweet. He felt the pain of loss in his core. During the cold and windy days, he was comforted by the sounds from the little village below.

This December, the village looked different. There were no Christmas trees adorning front windows because there were none to be had on the mountaintop. It's no wonder Scraggle didn't hear the children caroling joyfully. A somber Christmas Eve arrived and with it a huge snowstorm. The wind tickled him under his limbs. Scraggle noticed when he moved just the right way in the wind, he created music. As the wind blew harder, his music got louder.

Villagers came outside to listen. As they looked up the mountain, a large star in the sky looked like it was resting atop Scraggle's head. The snow dust sparkled like stardust and attracted everyone's attention. Scraggle didn't need to be anything but himself to be noticed.

Young and old climbed the mountain to admire him. Songs were sung. Smiles exchanged. Joy multiplied. A tradition began. The villagers protected Scraggle from the woodcutters and celebrated each Christmas around him.