

# SANTA CLAUS GETS BUSY



“R-R-R-R-RING! R-r-r-r-ring! R-r-r-r-ring!”  
“Bother this telephone bell!” said Santa Claus crossly. “As soon as I try to take a nap it wakes me up! First it was the rocking-horse room phoning because they hadn’t got enough tails for the horses; then it was the golliwog room because they’d lost two of the biggest . . .”

He lifted up the receiver, put it to his ear and listened.

“WHAT? Gone off with my reindeer? I never heard such a thing. Get them back at once! AT ONCE! How can I go out next week with my sack of toys and my sleigh if I haven’t got my reindeer to pull me?”

He crashed the receiver down on the table. “What next? Someone’s gone off with my reindeer! How dare they! I really don’t know what people are coming to nowadays!” said Santa Claus angrily.

Outside in the stables where the reindeer were kept there was a great to-do. Jingle, the head stable-man, was staring at the empty stalls, going from one to the other, as if he couldn’t believe his eyes. Get-Up, his under-man, stamped up and down, talking loudly, whilst the stable-lads listened in awe.

“How did I know he meant to go off with the reindeer? He just came and said he could put a special polish on their hooves that would make them go twice as fast. And as Santa Claus always complains the reindeer are too slow I thought I’d try the polish.”

“Yes—and you let him try the reindeer, too, you silly, stupid fellow!” suddenly roared the head stable-man. “Told him to take the



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reindeer up into the sky, and you'd time them and see if they really did go any faster than usual."

"And up he went," said a stable-lad.

"With all the reindeer," said another.

"And he never came back!" said the third.

"You hold your tongues," roared Jingle. "I go off to get my dinner and leave Get-Up and three lads here to see to the reindeer—and when I come back they've gone! Right under your noses! What did you want to trust a fellow like that for, with his tale of a wonderful hoof-polish! Wait till I get my whip. I'll polish you all with that."

Certainly it was a strange and tiresome thing to happen just in Christmas week. The merry-eyed tramp who had come to the stable door had tricked everyone easily.

He had solemnly rubbed the reindeer's hooves with some kind of yellow polish which he said would make them gallop through the sky twice as fast—and then he had leapt on to the biggest one and taken the whole lot up into the sky, whilst Get-Up stood below, looking at his watch to time their speed.

And, to everyone's open-mouthed amazement, the reindeer had galloped into a deep purple cloud, their hooves thundering as they went—and had disappeared for good! The wicked fellow had stolen them away.

"We'll have to get them back," groaned Jingle. "But how? Where have they gone?"

"Better put out a notice all over Toyland asking if anyone has heard the sound of reindeer hooves," said Get-Up. "When the reports come in

we can look at a map and find the different places. The one that is farthest away will be the place to look for the reindeer.”

But it wasn't any good putting out a notice, because there had been thunderstorms all over the country that day and nobody knew whether it was thunder or reindeer hooves they had heard.

Then messengers were sent out everywhere to see if reindeer had suddenly arrived at somebody's stables. But that wasn't any good, either. Nobody had heard of any strange reindeer arriving anywhere.

Santa Claus grew more and more anxious as Christmas Eve drew near. What was he to do without his reindeer to draw his sleigh?

“We'll send to the zoo and see if they can lend us some,” said Jingle in despair. “I'll go myself and find out.”

So he went to the zoo and found the keepers of the Reindeer House. They thought Jingle was quite mad.

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head keeper. "Anyway, they all have very bad coughs and have to be kept indoors."

Jingle went off sadly. It wouldn't do to take reindeer with coughs and colds. They wouldn't be able to go fast at all.

He wondered if the big flamingo birds at the zoo could pull the sleigh. This time he didn't ask the keepers. He went to the enclosure himself when it was dark and got in with the long-legged flamingos.

"Oh yes—set us free!" begged the flamingos. "We can fly strongly."

"Could you pull a sleigh along?" asked Jingle.

"We don't know what it is, but of course we could pull it," said the birds.

"We'll pull it all the way back to our own country," said a small one.

Jingle frowned. "Oh no—you wouldn't have to take the sleigh to your own country," he said. "You'd have to take it to the roofs of houses."

"What a silly idea!" chorused the birds. "We should fly straight off to our own country."

Jingle sighed and said no more. He left the flamingos and went out of the zoo. It would never do to use birds that wouldn't take Santa Claus where he wanted to go. How angry he would be to land in some strange, far-off land he didn't know at all, with not a house in sight!



"My dear fellow, we don't believe in Santa Claus, and if we did we wouldn't allow our reindeer to try and scamper up in the sky," said the head keeper.



"Sir!" he said suddenly to Santa Claus. "Why don't you hire an aeroplane? That would easily take all the toys."

Jingle went to see Santa Claus. "It's no good, sir," he said. "I haven't been able to solve our problem at all. Can't get our own reindeer back because we don't know where they are; can't get the zoo reindeer—and nothing else seems possible."

A small brownie was in the room. He had come from the toy-aeroplane room to tell Santa Claus that some of the aeroplanes wanted a good talking to because they wouldn't fly properly. He listened to all that Jingle was saying.

"Sir!" he said suddenly to Santa Claus. "Why don't you hire an aeroplane? That would easily take all the toys. You could hire a pilot, too, to take you."

"Now why didn't we think of that before?" said Santa Claus. "Jingle, please see to it. And choose a pilot who has children of his own, because he won't mind stopping on every roof."

But the pilots Jingle went to said the same thing to him each time. "We can't land on a roof! You must be mad! Don't you know that

aeroplanes must have good landing grounds with long runways? Anyway, we'd probably break the roofs if we did try to land!"

And then Jingle at last heard of something he thought would do. It was the little brownie from the toy-aeroplane room that told him.

"Please, Mr. Jingle, sir, I've got an idea," he said. "You know we make model toy aeroplanes, don't you? We've got every kind there is. And we've got a toy model of a thing called a helicopter. It has propellers above it, sir, instead of at the front—and it can land like a bird, hovering first, and then going gently down to land on a small space. Sir, what about a helicopter?"

Jingle went to see the toy helicopter. It certainly looked very good. The brownie set it going and it went up into the air, its propellers whirring above it. Then it came slowly down towards a big doll's-house the brownie had set nearby. It hovered a second or two over the roof and then quietly settled on it.



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"There you are, Mr. Jingle, sir!" said the brownie, very pleased. "Get a helicopter for Santa Claus, and he can easily land on every roof and get down the chimney with his toys. It won't annoy him by stamping hooves on tiles either, like his reindeer did last year."

"It's certainly an idea," said Jingle. "I'll make inquiries about a helicopter."

But will you believe it, nobody would let him hire a helicopter for Santa Claus. They said helicopters weren't meant to land on roofs on Christmas Eve, and would Jingle please take his silly ideas somewhere else? He was very upset indeed.



He said the right words, touched the toy helicopter with his hands, and then threw a magic powder over the little machine.

He went to tell Santa Claus that he had come to the end of his ideas. It wasn't any good trying anything else. Santa Claus would just have to miss out Christmas for once.

Santa Claus stared at Jingle in amazement. "What are you talking about, my good fellow? Miss out *Christmas*? Disappoint the children? Waste all the toys we've been working on? You must be mad!"

Jingle was offended. "Well, sir, I've done everything I can think of. Perhaps *you* can think of something."

"Yes, I can," said Santa Claus at once. "I'll get one of the toy helicopters, use magic to make it big enough for me, and go off in that. I don't see why it shouldn't be as good as a real one."

Well, that certainly was an idea! Santa Claus didn't have to use a great deal of magic, really. He said the right words, touched the toy helicopter with his hands, and then threw a magic powder over the little machine. It swelled up at once. The brownies in the aeroplane room watched in astonishment. Why, it was as big as a real helicopter!

Actually, it wasn't nearly as big. Santa Claus made it just the right size to take him and his sack. He got into the machine and settled himself down comfortably.

Yes, it was just the right size. He could manage it nicely. The brownie told him in excitement just how to work it.

"I'll take a trial flight now," said Santa Claus boldly, and he pulled down a lever. The helicopter made a purring noise and its propellers swung round over his head. It rose from the floor. He flew round and round the enormous aeroplane room and then came to ground again. He stepped out.

"Very nice. Exactly what I want. It will be no trouble at all to fly, and it will land beautifully on the very smallest roof. I'll have to make it small again, carry it out into the open, and make it big there. I couldn't possibly get it through the door or window here."

"Yes, sir," said the brownie.

"Jingle," said Santa Claus, turning to him, "see that my sack is put ready in my helicopter on Christmas Eve, and look over the machine to make sure it's all right. If my reindeer are not found before then I'll use the helicopter on Christmas Eve."

"Whatever will the children say if you don't arrive pulled by your reindeer?" said Jingle.

"They won't know," said Santa Claus. "They will all be asleep. I shall arrive in my helicopter, land on the roof, and go down the chimney just as usual—and not a single child will know there's a helicopter on the roof! Aha!"

And he went off, leaving Jingle in charge.

Christmas Eve is already here. The reindeer haven't come back—so the helicopter will purr through the sky with Santa Claus and his sack of toys. You oughtn't to peep—but I thought you might like to *listen!*

R-r-r-r-r! R-r-r-r-r-r-r! Bumpity-bump. Yes, that's the helicopter on your roof. What an extraordinary thing!

