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Illustrated

Ву

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and

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This book is dedicated to my dear wife, Ann, and our nine wonderful children, Don, Mary, Dan, Jim, Matt, Lorrie, Kathy, John and Boomer. I also dedicate it to our twelve grandchildren, to all the children I have visited with since 1944, and to those who may visit me in the years to come.

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Introduction

In this book are a few of the stories and poems that I have told over the past forty years. Many of you have expressed the wish that I put them down on paper; now I have done so. They certainly do not exemplify great English literature, but the stories do the job they were designed to do. They were written to instill pleasant memories and to stimulate the imagination of the reader.

There are traditions in every culture and there have been since the beginning of man. Santa Claus is a pleasant tradition of the Western World, and I wish to keep it that way.

Memories are things we cannot avoid in our life, no matter what we do. It is my wish and prayer that all of us will do things in our lives to promote happy memories for our children and for our neighbors and thus for ourselves. In doing so, one has to start with a positive, happy and unselfish attitude towards others.

the Cla Santa Claus

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The First Letter From Santa Claus

So you want to go to the North Pole, do you? Well, let me tell you how to get there and what you will see when you arrive.

If you live in San Diego, California, take the freeway due north on up through Canada into the Yukon. It is a 4,000 mile trip.

If you live in London, go north, 2,500 miles. You will have to cross the Norwegian Sea and the Greenland Sea.

If you live in Washington, D.C. or surrounding area, take the beltway to 70 North, to Breezewood, Pennsylvania.

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Then go west on the Pennsylvania Turnpike to Erie, then go north to Buffalo. Then cross the Peace Bridge to Canada and travel north for 1,000 miles. All of a sudden you will see a sign 10 feet high and 10 feet wide right in the middle of the road. Do you know what it says? It says, "Stop! Stop! Stop! The road ends here!" It does, boys and girls, and you will have to park the car and go into the large Eskimo log cabin lodge and hire an Eskimo guide and a dog sled and team. Boys and girls, be sure to take warm clothing, snow shoes, plenty of food, peanut butter sandwiches, M&M's, a flashlight and a compass. You must have a guide, and Eskimos are the best guides of all. The temperature will, without a doubt, drop to 50° below zero. Dog sleds are a must. There are no roads, no signs, no gas stations, no stores, no McDonalds - just snow, snow, snow - as far as the eye can see. You will have to depend on the compass and the stars at night to guide you on your way.

After you cross hundreds of miles of snow and ice, you will approach the top of the world; there on the horizon you will see a breath-taking sight. Far off in the distance you will see an uncountable number of blue lights decorating thousands of Christmas trees that surround the North Pole. The trees are forty feet tall and so close together that their branches touch. As you approach the gates of the North Pole, you will see that they are made of silvery steel that glows in the dark. On each side of the gates I have two tall towers painted like giant candy canes. An arch connects the towers, and written on the arch in olde English scroll are these words: "Santa Claus Land - North Pole".

Now, in order for you to get in, you will have to announce your arrival by ringing the silver bell that hangs from the center of the arch. It will echo through the forest and be heard by my gatekeeper. There will be no one in the towers, for the gatekeeper lives in town. He controls the gates with a television computer. So now pull the golden rope that hangs outside the gate. As the gates open, you will hear the music of "Walking in a Winter Wonderland". After you pass through the gates you will travel a short way through the blue lighted Christmas trees and then come into a dark forest of tall pines. The road will wind through the forest for nine miles. If you look hard on your left and on your right, you might see reindeer sleeping on the forest floor.

Suddenly, through the quiet forest air, you will be able to hear soft, magnificent Christmas music. The forest will begin to brighten and shimmer with white lights. You are about to enter my magic Santa Land, Downtown North Pole.

That's all for now. I'll write again later and tell you about my village.

Love,

Santa Claus

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The Second Letter From Santa Claus

Hello again, boys and girls. This is your old friend, Santa Claus, writing to you from the North Pole. I am sitting in my kitchen near the window, enjoying a vanilla milkshake. I never drink chocolate milkshakes because they stain my beard.

My house is on a hill overlooking the village of the North Pole. As I look out my window, I can see right down the center of Candy Cane Lane. Let me describe to you what I see. There are giant candy canes about forty feet high crossing over the middle of the road to form a giant "X". These candy cane X's are quite close together, about every 25 feet or so,

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and hanging from their centers are many different decorations. My elves hang bells from some, ribbons from others, and some even have great clusters of ornaments on them. Christmas lights are wrapped around each cane. It is a very beautiful sight to see.

It must have snowed again last night for everything has a fresh frosting of snow. Everything except, of course, the sidewalks of the village. All the sidewalks are clean and dry because they are heated from underneath. Do you know why? Let me tell you why. My elves love to roller skate, and they love the new roller blades. They get around faster, and it certainly is fun. When they come to a corner and have to cross the street, they use the bridges that I had built for them. The streets, boys and girls, are just the opposite. They are always covered with snow and ice. That is good because my reindeer and my horses can pull sleighs full of toys to the warehouses all over town. And when my Eskimo friends come to town with supplies, they need to have snow on the roads for their dog sleds. It is a common thing to see elves on roller skates racing against elves on ice skates. We don't use electric lights in our house like you do. In our houses, we use Christmas lights and candles. Some houses use only red lights, others blue, some green, and some all colors.

> Yes, it is an exciting village, to be sure. I must sign off now and get back to my work. I

promise to write to you again very soon, and then I will tell you more about the North Pole.

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A typical intersection at the North Pole, with bridges over the ice covered streets.

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The Third Letter From Santa Claus

Hello again, boys and girls all over the world. This is your old friend, Santa Claus, writing to your from the North Pole.

Everyone is very busy up here. We are all having a lot of fun while we work. We sing, we dance, we laugh, we joke, and we talk, talk, talk.

Today I am going to tell you about my elves. First of all, I just hired 500 new elves to help with the Christmas rush, so now I have a grand total of 888 elves, all working very hard to make sure you all have a Happy Christmas! You should see some of my elves. They are a laugh! Ho, Ho, Ho, By Jingle, By Jolly, they could make the saddest person in the world happy again. I love them dearly, they are so good to me, I would be lost without them. Some are very thin, some are very tall, some are very fat, and some very small. I have brown elves, white elves, yellow elves, and red elves, boy elves and girl elves, young elves and old elves. My elves are all sizes, shapes and shades, and they come from all over the world to work and make people happy. I have elves from England, France, Africa, Germany, Chile, China, the U.S.A. and Canada.

I used to have trouble keeping track of all the elves, so I decided to form elf teams. Each team wears a different colored hat. The elves wearing the yellow hats make all of the musical toys and instruments. They are a gifted group. Many times they can be seen and heard playing their instruments on the corners throughout the village.

The elves that wear orange hats are probably the hardest working elves for they make computer games. Orange-hatted elves work very long hours, thinking of new games to help you have fun and learn at the same time.

Blue hats are worn by the elves who make all of the sport toys. They make footballs, baseballs, ice skates, and all of that.

Elves with white hats work on story books and coloring books. They are also in charge of pencils, crayons, paint sets and art supplies

The green hats are for the doll makers. This happy group also makes doll houses, doll furniture, and all kinds of doll clothes. They also make the soft cuddly animals that you all love so much.

All of the trucks, cars, tanks, bulldozers and the like are made by elves with purple hats. I must say that these elves are forever joking and playing tricks. You can never trust the elves with the purple hats - they always have a trick to play on you.

The elves that wear plaid hats make all of the games and puzzles. They love games so much that I have to remind them once in a while to get to work and leave the game playing until after supper.

I have elves that have polka dots on their hats. They



are hard working and certainly the noisiest group. They make all of the tricycles and bikes and Big Wheels. They also make sleds and wagons. If you can ride it, it was made by an elf wearing a polka dot hat.

My ornaments are made by a very special group of elves. They must be very gentle and have a delicate touch. All of the ornaments are made early in the year so that you can have them to decorate your trees. These elves wear striped

I have supervisor elves who make sure that the work is being done and done right. The supervisor elves wear red hats with ribbons hanging from the top of the hat. The color of the ribbon lets me know which group each supervises.

All the elves' hats are shaped just like my own special hat.

Well, that's enough about my elves for today. I must catch up on my mail and read some more of your letters. So, goodbye for now.

I'll write again soon.



Love,

Plans Santa Claus



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Hello again, boys and girls all over the world. This is your old friend, Santa Claus, talking to you from the North Pole.

Today I would like to tell you about my wonderful reindeer. I am walking down the path to the reindeer right now as I write to you. The path through the snow is not very wide, and it is so very cold today that I can see my breath as I walk along. I have to go down and open the doors of my reindeer barns.



My reindeer barns are all in a neat row. I have six of them, and they are all one hundred feet long. You may ask why I have six reindeer barns. Well, boys and girls, I have three hundred reindeer. That's right - three hundred. Most of you only know of my most famous reindeer. As you can imagine, I must have more than nine in order to get everything finished on time. Let me open my corral gate here, and now I'm going to sit down on this huge tree stump and tell you about Santa's reindeer.

Blitzen is the oldest reindeer; his hair is snow white, in fact, as white as my beard. Blitzen can't see very well any more, and he must eat lots of carrots and drink lots of carrot juice every day. Donner is his partner, and he also is very old, but only his head and chest are white. Donner is a very strong reindeer. Comet is a rather small reindeer, and so is Cupid, but both are very fast. And you know that I need fast reindeer for sure. Prancer is a handsome one, but he is forever prancing around, and I can't get him to stand still for very long. Vixen has the largest, most beautiful brown eyes that you will ever see in a reindeer. Dasher is quick, and so is Dancer, and both can leap higher than most reindeer ever thought of. That's why I put them up front when I hook up the reindeer to my sleigh. Rudolph, of course, is the newest of all and surely the strongest, and he is still very young.

Now, that's only nine, and what about the rest of my reindeer herd? Well, boys and girls, they have names just like some of yours. I have Billy, Mary, Nick, David, Sue, Christopher, Jennifer, Mary Ann, Michael, and so on and on. These reindeer help pull the Christmas trees down the mountain sides to the roads. Then the trees are loaded on big trucks and are shipped to cities all over the world.

A PLAN COLUMN

You know, boys and girls, there is a question that many of you ask when you write letters to me. That question is, "Santa, how do your reindeer fly?" Here is my answer. I am sure, dear children, that many of you have seen a falling star. Well, when the stars fall up here in the North Pole, they hit the snow and sizzle and give off a loud hissing sound and lots of steam. I have Eskimos who work for me, and they rush out on dog sleds to the spot where the steam is rising out of the snow. The Eskimos bring back the stars to my workshop. My elves grind it up and make stardust. They box it up, and it is saved to be used in December. Then, three days before Christmas, I dust the backs of my reindeer with stardust. I do that three times a day for three days, and that stardust is what makes my reindeer fly. It only lasts long enough to do the job, and no longer. I remember one time one of the Eskimos dusted the backs of his dogs, and we didn't see them for the better part of a week.

My reindeers' favorite treat is a reindeer salad, and I shall tell you how to make it. On Christmas Eve, go to the kitchen and take a bowl out of the cupboard. Put in that bowl nine small pieces of carrot, nine pieces of lettuce, and nine real cranberries or raisins. Take three pinches of sugar with your finger - do not use a spoon. Sprinkle it on the salad. Stir it with your fingers, and lick your fingers, and go off to bed. When I arrive, I'll put the salad in my pocket for the reindeer, and I'll put something in the bowl for you. The bigger the bowl, the bigger the present.

A DELETING

Well, that's all for now. I must feed my reindeer some hay. I'll write again soon.

Love, to Claus

Santa Claus





A long time ago, there lived a baby reindeer. He lived with his mother and father in the North Woods, high up on the mountain near the North Pole. This little reindeer was born with a hurt front leg, and he couldn't walk. He lay next to a pine tree feeling very sad. He couldn't walk, so he didn't know what to do. His mother had gone off to the east looking for food. His father had gone off to the west looking for food. This little reindeer lay there shivering with cold and crying. Icycles formed down his cheeks. Suddenly, a fairy

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godmother came down, stood next to the little reindeer and said, "Would you like to become the most famous reindeer of all?" He looked up and said, "But I . . . I can't walk." The godmother said, "Listen to me. I said, would you like to become the most famous reindeer of all?" He looked up again and said, "Yes. What must I do?" The fairy godmother replied, "When the snow stops falling in the night and the clouds disappear and the stars are shining bright, I want you to go over and kick that rock, the one with all the moss on it." "But I can't walk, you know, I can't walk", the little reindeer "Listen to me, little one, listen to me. You can do said. anything you want to as you grow up if you try. You must not give up. You must try, try, try." And with those words, the fairy godmother snapped her fingers and disappeared.

He lay there thinking of her words, and he fell fast asleep. The snow kept falling and getting deeper and deeper. The snow covered the baby reindeer, all but his nose, as he fell into a deep, deep sleep. Suddenly, he woke with a stark and shook the snow from his brow. He looked to the heavens and sure enough, the snow had stopped falling, and the clouds had disappeared, and the stars were shining bright in the night. He remembered what he was told to do. He must kick that rock, the one with all the moss on it. So he struggled and pushed and tried and tried, and finally he got to the rock, the one with all the moss on it, and he kicked that rock with all his might. Suddenly, something happened to him. No, he didn't break the other leg. He began to grow bigger and bigger, and his leg straightened out, long and beautiful and strong. And do you know what else? His nose began to glow.

I was working in my work shop that very night. I looked out my window, and I saw the red glow up on the mountain side. It came down the mountain in great leaps and bounds. I called for Mrs. Santa Claus and asked her to fetch my hat. Donning my hat, I went outside just in time to see this great, huge reindeer leap over the fence and into my corral with my own reindeer. He stood there rocking his head from side to side, smiling. Have you ever seen a reindeer smile?

I walked up to him and said, "My, what a beautiful reindeer you are. Where did you come from? Who are you? What is your name? Would you like to be one of Santa's special



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reindeer?" He nodded yes as his nose glowed in the night. "Well, I'll have to give you a name", I said. "You are so rude to come in here like this - rude, rude, rude. That's it! I will call you Rudolph."

Well, you know, boys and girls, he was just as unhappy with my reindeer as he was up on the mountain. Do you know why? Well, he was so different that they laughed at him, called him names and wouldn't let him play in any of their reindeer games. So Rudolph just lay behind the barn and felt very sad.

Christmas Eve came, and it as very foggy, and I could not find my reindeers. I called them by name: "Dasher, Dancer, Prancer and Vixen, Comet and Cupid, Donner and Blitzen! Come forth all of you!" Well, Rudolph knew just what I wanted, and he pranced around with his nose aglow and gathered all my reindeer in a row. I said, "Rudolph, with your nose so bright, won't you guide my sleigh tonight?" Ever since that night, Rudolph has gone out with me on Christmas Eve as the guide for my team.

The End



My Blue Cricket

Boys and girls, I lost my little blue cricket. That's right, my blue cricket. I wish I had him back for he is my special pet. Let me tell you about him. He is about an inch long or maybe longer. He is blue, just as blue as the blue lights on your Christmas tree. His eyes are green, a very pretty green, with long lashes. You would know him if you saw him for he has white feet which make him look rather neat. Oh, and he has red paint on his head. Yes, one of my elves put a stripe of red paint on the cricket's head and then sprinkled a bit of silver glitter on it. Why, I'll never know.

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My blue cricket used to sit on my tassel that dangles from my hat. He would swing back and forth, like it was a swing. And in the morning when I would have a bowl of cereal, he would wait patiently until I was through, and then he would scamper down my beard and jump into the bowl to eat the sugar off of the bottom of the bowl. I always put a little too much sugar on my cereal just for him. Sometimes he would clean up the spots of milk that splashed on my beard.

My cricket loved to go with me through the toy shops as I inspected the toys. Let me tell you what happened one day when I was walking through the ornament shop. Cricket jumped off of my hat and landed up on a long pipe that ran along the ceiling. Now, the ornament-making machines were going full blast, and shiny new ornaments were on conveyors going in every direction - some toward the machines that were putting caps on them so that they could be hung on trees. It was very noisy, and my blue cricket became very excited; he lost his balance, slipped off the pipe and fell into the ornaments. The capping machine kept on running and capping, and my cricket was trapped inside one of the hundreds of ornaments. We stopped all the machines and tried to find him, but to no avail.

Will you do me a favor, girls and boys? I think he will be on one of your trees this Christmas, somewhere in someone's house. When your tree is decorated, will you turn out all of the lights in the house except for the tree lights.

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Sit there in front of the shining Christmas tree, be very quiet, and listen to your tree. Listen very closely, and if you hear a chirping or clicking noise in your tree, I'm sure it will be my blue cricket. Tell Mom or Dad, and they will get in touch with me immediately. I will come to your house in the middle of the night and retrieve my special pet. I do miss him so very much.

To the one who finds him, I'll give a little look-alike blue cricket to have as your very own.



The Ugly Christmas Tree

The ugly Christmas tree turned out to be a very valuable and popular tree. Now I shall tell you how it all happened.

In a far away place, not far from Alberta, Canada, is a town called Red Deer. Outside of the town are large Christmas tree farms, stretching for miles and miles up and down the hills and in some places, even over the tops of mountains.

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Christmas tree merchants go there every year to tag the best trees - looking the trees over very carefully, noting that some are too skinny, some too fat, some too tall, and some too small. Most of the trees are just right. However, one tree located near the top of the mountain was ignored by everyone. This tree did not grow straight. It curved this way and that. It had long limbs on one side and short limbs on the other. Every year, the merchants would make fun of the ugly Christmas tree, pointing at it as they went by, saying, "This tree will never be a good tree." Each year, it grew bigger and bigger and even more crooked. The other trees around it were being tagged and cut to go to the big city for Christmas. After a few years, the tree was all alone at the top of the mountain. The winter wind blew it, and the hot summer sun blazed down on it. The tree kept growing until it was at least one hundred and forty feet tall and forty feet wide. The big sweeping branches that touched the ground made it look like a huge green tent.

Several miles down the mountain, in the town of Red Deer, there lived a little girl named Sarah, age eleven, and her brother, Jeff, age nine. They did not have a tree, and it was only a week before Christmas. Father was in bed with a back injury. Sarah begged her Mother to let her and Jeff cut a tree for their home. Mother gave her permission. They took their lantern, and promised to hurry back. Off they went with

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the lantern and a saw. When the children reached the farm, they paid the farmer for a tree and headed up the hill to find a perfect tree.

Sarah and Jeff wandered up and down the rows for over two miles, just looking and not realizing a snow storm was brewing. Suddenly, it began to snow very hard. The snow storms in Northern Canada are fierce and can dump a lot of snow in a short time. The two children began to worry; visibility was poor, and the tracks they left behind were soon covered. Sarah and Jeff were lost. Sarah did what she thought was the best thing - she took Jeff by the hand and headed to the big, ugly tree on the top of the mountain. She knew they would be safe there until the storm ended. It was snowing so hard, Sarah could hardly see the giant tree ahead of her, and when they reached the tree, they were knee-deep in snow and very, very cold.

They moved aside some of the huge branches and crawled inside. It was dark under there so Sarah held the lantern high and turned up the wick. The glow of the light gave them a very pleasant surprise. Under the tree were friends of the forest they too were taking shelter from the storm that raged outside. Jeff said, "Look! There are reindeer and rabbits and squirrels in here." Sarah hung the lantern in the branches above her head and said, "Look! Pheasants and quails are here, too!"

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The animals were not frightened, and it was cozy and dry and warm for the branches of this old ugly tree were thick above them. The pine straw on the ground was thick and made a soft mattress for the animals. Sarah and Jeff were cold and tired so they lay down on the pine straw and used the young deer for a pillow. The rabbits seemed to sense that the children were cold, for they came over and cuddled up to them to keep them warm. The children sang to the animals for a while but soon fell fast asleep. They must have been very tired for they slept far into the next day. The snow stopped falling, and the day was clear and bright.

The people in the village of Red Deer had organized a search party when the children had not come home the night before. The Boy Scouts were in charge of the search. They tracked through the snow on snow shoes and called out the names of the children as they trudged along. The Scouts were the first to reach the ugly old tree on the top of the mountain. As they lifted the branches and looked inside, they were overjoyed to see Sarah and Jeff still sound asleep with the animals. One of the Scouts shouted to the rest of the searchers to come ahead. This startled the animals. The pheasants and quail flew off into the air. The deer leaped out and dashed away. The rabbits took off in all directions, but the children were safe, thanks to the animals of the forest and the big, ugly Christmas tree.

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The villagers of Red Deer were so pleased that they decorated the tree with lights, and now they leave them on the tree all year long. Every night they can be seen for miles and miles to let the world know how beautiful and valuable the ugly tree really is.

THE END

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ENS ENS



Boys and girls, I have traveled around the world and have seen every land there is to see. But there is one very special place that I would like to tell you about. It is a place not on this planet. It is a far away planet well beyond Jupiter and Mars. No one has ever written about it, and spacemen have not found it. This place is called The Land of Gosh.

The Land of Gosh is the strangest land of all the lands that anyone will ever see. It is round like the earth, but not nearly as large, and it spins through space from place to place. It has a different sun and a different moon. The moon is round but flat like a plate and much bigger than our moon. One side is blue, and at night when the stars reflect off of the blue moon, everything has a beautiful blue look. In

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the morning, the moon turns and the other side is silver. The Land of Gosh is warmed by the silver side of the moon. I guess I would have to say that the sun and the moon are one in Gosh. The people of Gosh do not call it a sun or a moon; they call it a Gooch.

There are clouds in the sky about The Land of Gosh. They are all the colors of the rainbow. The sky is absolutely beautiful with pink, blue, yellow, green, red, purple and white clouds drifting in the sky.

On The Land of Gosh all the people are very small, maybe only three feet tall. They look a lot like you and me, but they sure do dress differently. Everything they wear is either on backwards or inside out. When they put on shoes, it seems like the left is right and the right is left. When they read a book, it is turned upside down. I believe up is down and down is up, back is front and front is back. You will never meet anyone as strange as the people from The Land of Gosh. Gosh people can walk upside down. I have watched them walk up a wall and across the ceiling as easily as a fly can. The gravity is different there, nothing ever falls. If you were to drop a book, it would not fall, you would have to push it to the floor. It is hard to tell what is ceiling and what is floor. Gosh people are everywhere. They even put things in the air, and they just stay there. Gosh people sometimes fall asleep on the ceiling.

Now, here is the strangest thing of all. At night, when the Gooch turns blue and it is dark, things begin to happen. The gravity changes and everything that is on the ceiling or floating in the air, begins to fall gently as a feather to the floor. When morning comes, and the silver side of Gooch is shining bright, you would see a very funny sight Nothing is floating in the air, and Gosh people are piled up on the floor everywhere.

In the fall, in October, when the trees begin to drop their leaves, they really do not fall at all -- they just float in mid-air. Except at night when the blue Gooch is shining, the leaves then flutter to the ground and never make a sound.

They have winter in The Land of Gosh. The snowflakes are all colors just like the clouds. Can you imagine pink snowflakes from pink clouds and blue snowflakes from blue clouds? The snow comes in all colors. When it snows during the day, the colored snowflakes just float in the air and stay there. Gosh people have to push them out of the way when they walk. Then, at night, when the Gooch is blue, the snowflakes fall gently to the ground to form pretty colored mounds.

Let me tell you more about the people of Gosh. Gosh people eat just like we do, but they eat dessert first and the main course last. They eat very slowly, never fast. Gosh people won't eat spinach, broccoli, liver or gizzards; they like burgers and fries and homemade pies. They talk backwards most of the time. For example, Gosh people will say "coming I am" or "outside I'm going". They even spell their names backwards.

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I brought four young Gosh people back to Earth to help me one Christmas Eve. Their names were Nad and Nod, Map and Tod. I asked them to help me decorate trees. Gosh, they did not understand this Earth land because, believe it or not, they turned my Christmas trees upside down and nailed them to the ceiling so they would not fall. Then they trimmed them with ornaments, lights and all. I laughed so hard when they did it, I had tears in my eyes. Not every tree was that way, but just how many I could not say. I wish I could have seen the look the on faces of the children that Christmas morning. I just know they said, "Gosh people do funny things!"

The End

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It was in 1857 that two eleven year old boys met in Paris, at a convention of trade merchants. One boy was German, and the other was French; and because of their extensive schooling, each could speak the other's language to some degree. Their fathers had taken them to the convention so that they could begin to understand marketing and the world of commerce. The boys met as they sat on the steps of the convention hall, watching the merchants as they brought in

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their wears. Some had new inventions, and others had new, unheard-of products.

Hans was the first to speak. "Hi, my name is Hans Wiemer. What does your father do?"

Jacque answered in his native French. "Hi, I'm Jacque Pairre, and my father is a boat builder. He builds gun boats and merchant ships. What is your father's trade?"

"Gun boats? Leaping frogs! I never met anyone who could build ships. My father is a famous glass ornament maker. He can blow glass over a fire and make beautiful Christmas ornaments. He is teaching me so that I can do it. I'm going to run the business some day."

"Well, I'm learning to build ships. Come, Hans, let's go inside. I'll show you some of my father's work."

Hans quickly replied, "And I will show you how to make ornaments with a pipe and a hot flame."

Off they went up the stairs and into the convention hall, each anxious to show off his father's work.

That was the beginning of a long friendship and the beginning of the story that leads to the "Santa Sleigh".

Santa wanted a sleigh for the children to step into when they visited with him. It had to be just the right sleigh, not only beautiful, but with a history. It had to be authentic, and with a romantic or intriguing background. Little did Santa know that these two boys would play a part in his quest for such a sleigh.

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The boys became good friends, and they kept in contact with each other as the years went by. Hans went back with his father to his village in the Thuringians mountains, sixty miles north of Nuremburg, Germany. The village called Lauscha was a story book town with its narrow cobblestone roads lined with slate roofed cottages, and each house quaint and original in its own way. In this little hamlet about two hundred families engaged in a craft they had learned from their parents and their parents before them. The ornament makers' houses were actually little factories called Werkstatts or workshops. The entire family would be involved in some part of the ornament making. Hans and his father would sit on high stools, bent over a bench with pipe in hand, blowing delicate glass bubbles of various sizes and shapes over a very hot fire. The mothers usually had the tedious job of silvering the inside of the ornaments. It had to be done perfectly, or the ornaments would not sell. They would fill the ornament one quarter full with hot liquid silver and then shake it vigorously until the inside was completely coated with silver. The next step would be to dip them into beautiful colored lacquers of red, green, blue, gold or silver. Then the artists of the family took over and performed their magic skill painting each ornament with a unique design. The work of the artist increased the value of the ornaments and brought prestige to the family. Each family in the village had a special style. Some made animals such as

dogs, cats, monkeys and bears. Others made fruits, pears, grape clusters and apples. There were families that specialized in angels, the Christ Child, churches, houses and Santa Clauses. Birds were also popular - parrots, cockatoos, and even peacocks with strands of spun glass for tails.



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Hans sent his friend Jacque ornaments every year for many years, all of them collectibles and eventually worth a small fortune.

Jacque in return spent several years crafting a beautiful sleigh in his father's shipyard. The Pairre family's shipyard was on the northern coast of France in the harbor city of LeHarve. Ships from around the world unloaded and loaded in this port.

Jacque soaked the wood patterns in water for months so they could be bent with clamps and shaped to form a sleigh. The sides had to be bowed like that of a boat. The front dash was curled like a rose petal, and the back of the sleigh was rounded and curved like a comfortable chair. He hammered out the metal runners and dipped them in a bronze plate finish. The metal rail trim that ran along the sides and across the front dash, was dipped in silver. The cushions were stuffed with horse hair and covered with the finest leather. This was no ordinary sleigh - it was called the "Aristocrat". It contained a removable coachman's seat and plenty of storage under the floor boards and under the seat. Jacque finished the sleigh with a small, one inch painting of a parrot, placed precisely inside of the dash board of the sleigh. This was the family trade mark. He delivered the sleigh to Hans in about the year 1870. Hans loved the sleigh and used it every winter for nearly forty years to transport thousands of Christmas



ornaments out of the mountains to Nuremburg, so they could be shipped to the United States.

When Hans became too old to carry on with his work, he sold the sleigh to a doctor in Salzburg, Austria. This wonderful old country doctor used the sleigh in the winter to make house calls through snow to places no one else dared to go. The old doctor, his horse and the "Aristocrat" saved many lives and carried many a baby and child to the hospital for recovery. When the old doctor retired, he sold the sleigh to a tour guide. The tour guide master used it for Christmas festivals, weddings and winter carnival parades.

Meanwhile, Hans' grandson, Karl, had been searching for the sleigh for years and had failed to find it. And one day in December while visiting Salzburg for the Christmas holiday festivities, there it was, the "Aristocrat" sitting in the center of the town square. It was Christmas Eve, and it was loaded with gifts. A Franciscan Monk was handing them out to the children of the village.

After weeks of negotiations, Karl convinced the tour guide master to sell him the sleigh. Karl paid a handsome price but he needed the sleigh to send to his son, John. John lived in the United States and started a glass ornament business in New England, and he wanted his great grandfather's sleigh. He used the sleigh occasionally but kept it on display most of the time.

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Times changed, and glass ornaments, being replaced with lower priced ornaments, began to flood the market. John's business failed as did his health. After his death the "Aristocrat" was lost for years in the old barns in New England, it was traded many times by antique dealers. It finally ended up in an antique storage barn in Olney, Maryland.

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And this is where Santa comes into the story. He had been searching old barns and shops for years. He found it in Olney in a barn buried under piles of old burlap and chicken wire. The floor boards had rotted away, the iron rails rusted and the leather crumbled - it seems the mice had taken over. Santa claimed it and had it lovingly restored to its original beauty.

Santa has been using the old "Aristocrat" for over ten years. He sits in the sleigh and invites the little children to talk with him. They whisper their dreams to him, and a magic moment of warmth and love surrounds everyone involved.

Each year, over 3,000 children cross over the threshold of this old historic sleigh, all with hopes and dreams and some entering a new age of understanding the true meaning of Christmas.

THE END





Boys and girls, Santa is hooked on computers. I will enter the twenty-first century with up-to-date technology. Believe it or not, my elves and I have a gift wrapping machine called a SACGWM (Santa Automatic Computerized Gift Wrapping Machine).

My elves have worked very hard, but each year they found it harder to keep up with all the gifts that need to be wrapped for Christmas. Something had to be done. So, by

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popular vote, we decided to streamline our toy wrapping operation. I contacted several computer companies such as IBM, Apple, Macintosh and Digital. They worked as a team with my elves to develop a gift wrapping machine. My clever elves designed and built a strange contrivance, and the ingenious minds of the computer people developed a program to make it all work. There has never been such a machine. Now we can handle tasks that would have been far out of reach years ago. It adds a new dimension to Santa's workshop.

It was not easy. There were months of trials and error. At first, the machine would wrap doll cutouts, trucks and Grandma's nightgown all in the same box. Another time it wrapped Aunt Lorrie's tea set with a bowling ball. Needless to say, you know what happened there. Sometimes when my elves were bored, they would put baby reindeer in the machine, and the baby reindeer would come out boxed, wrapped and rolling on the ground. I must admit it was funny, but I had to put a stop to that.

We solved all the problems, so let me explain this wonderful, crazy machine. Picture this! The machine is 48 feet long, 10 feet high, and 8 feet wide. New, empty boxes are stacked in a collapsed position against the walls in assigned racks. All boxes are numbered according to size. The gift wrapping papers are in rolls in large, revolving drums on the top of the machine. The paper is fed down through the roof through a slot. A conveyer carries the gift or toy - but no reindeer, please - into the machine. A large scanning light over the entrance informs the operator what size box to use.

Some of my elves are trained in computer technology, and only they operate the machine. An elf sits on a chair which is on a track to roll back and forth to keep things under control. The elf reads the screen which tells what size box to use. The elf presses the key and - woosh! -- the box pops out and is forced open with the aid of an air compressor. At the same time, a computer arm lifts the gift up and gently places it in the box. If the gift is delicate and needs packing, my elf presses a button, and -- poof! -- a shot of styrofoam peanuts drop into the box. Then, slap, smack! The box is closed. The operator can see all this on the computer screen. At just the right moment, the elf will press the key for the wrapping paper. Long, agile rubber fingers spring into action, and with a swish-swash motion, they wrap the box and tape it tight. Then, with a loud whirl and a twirl, the ribbon encircles the box and pop! A bow is placed on top. A bell rings when the gift is done, and out it comes on the rack. My busy elves carry them to the stack. On Christmas Eve, they are loaded into my sleigh.

I have over 700 sleighs to load - each to go to a certain part of the world. On Christmas Eve, I will streak through the midnight sky with a spirit of love and a gift or two for all.

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Let me end this story with a poem.



Santa Says Get Ready For Bed

The great feast of Christmas draws closer each day, So the 24th of December is right on its way.

My yearly job is nearly done, Delivering your gifts will be such fun.

While you are saying your prayers that night, I'll be loading up for my magic flight.

With the fastest reindeer of my herd, I'll take off like a great, giant bird.

You must be in bed and sound asleep -I'll check you out as through the heavens I streak.

If you are awake, I'll pass you by, As I swoop and swerve in the midnight sky.

But if you're in a deep and cozy dreamland, I'll leave you toys and surprises grand.

Be sure your shoes are next to your door, You might find there a special something more.

And then I will take a northwest flight As the darkness gives way to the morning light.

Happy Christmas to all, And to all a good night.

Santa's Coat

I wore many coats down through the ages, and I liked them all. When George Washington was president of this United States in 1789, I wore a long, brown coat to my ankles and it was trimmed with brown fur. The rope belt was tied in a big bow with bells hanging on a long, leather strap.

When traveling around Germany, I wore a different outfit. I had green knickers, brown boots, and a red coat and hat trimmed with fox fur.

I can remember very many years ago traveling through the Slavic countries and into Russia. I used to carry a wicker basket on my back.

Then along cam Dr. Clement Clarke Moore in 1822, and he wrote this classic poem about me entitled, "A Visit From St. Nicholas". I was dressed all in fur from my head to my foot. And every time I went down a chimney, it became covered with ashes and soot.

Now, as we know, there were no cameras to take pictures, but there were many good artists. I met one in an

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old pub somewhere in New York City many years ago. His name was Thomas Nast. Tom and I talked by candlelight far into the night. He insisted that I change my outfit, to get with it, to modernize it. I listened to him as I sat sipping my tea and taking long drags on my long stem pipe then letting the smoke encircle my head like a wreath.

Did you know I had a different pipe then? It was hand made by one of my oldest elves, Old Gray Beard. He could do wonders with wood. In fact, his favorite work was to build ships inside of bottles.

I can't remember what I did with that old pipe. I may have left it on someone's mantle or in someone's kitchen table while eating homemade cookies. I hope to find it again some day.

Now, getting back to Tom and his notion that I change costume. I argued with Tom and insisted that a bright red suit would be too much. It would glamorize me. I would have no part of it. He made a very good argument and insisted that no one would ever copy me. I would be one of a kind. Since there was no one like me, I should wear an outfit that no one else would wear. Now, we both sat there, me drinking my tea and smoking my pipe, and he sipping tea and sketching me as he saw fit. On the table a big candle was burning away into the night making a puddle on the board. As the evening wore on, I began to think it was worth a try, at least for a few years.



Then along came another artist, Mr. Louis Prang. Louis added to Tom's ideas of what I should wear. In 1875 he painted Christmas cards of me in a bright red suit trimmed with white fur and a big cloth sack on my back. It showed my big black boots and black belt. I still wear that style coat today. It is quite doubtful that I'll ever change the style of my costume for many years to come.

So let me leave you with this short poem.

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Call me what you want, Sketch me as you see, But the giving spirit of Christmas Will be what it will be.



Silent Steeple

A long time ago in a small city in Europe, there was a beautiful gray stone church. It had a steeple tall and narrow that seemed to reach for the clouds.

High up in the steeple hung bells that never rang. Bell tower men from around the world tried to fix it but to no avail. Every year on Christmas Eve, people of the church would bring gifts, thinking and hoping that their gifts might release the grip that held the bells so still. This went on for many years, but still the bells were silent.

Many miles away there lived a boy on a farm, who also knew about the silent bells of the old stone church. The young lad saved all the money he had earned on the farm, and with high hopes he set off to the church on Christmas Eve. He bundled up in a good warm coat, scarf and gloves. In boots that came up to his knees, he trudged off into the snow alone. It was snowing so hard that his tracks were soon covered. He had not gone too far, maybe two miles, when he came upon a man down on his luck. It seems he was heading to another village in his old car, with gifts for his family. He was low on money and low on gas. So the young lad reached into his cloth bag full of gold coins and gave some to the man to help him on his way.

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Then, trudging on and on until he entered the edge of the city, where he stopped to rest, he met two beggars. Again, the young man reached into his cloth bag, removed some coins, and pressed them into the hands of the beggars. After that, he took off his gloves and gave them to one beggar, and then he took off his scarf and gave it to the other.

The city was alive with excitement as people were singing and parties were everywhere. Everywhere except for one house at the very edge of town. The boy remembered that his parents had talked about the house where the refugee family lived. These people had come from the other side of the world and spoke only a foreign language. The people of the city paid little attention to them. They seemed quite alone on that Christmas Eve, far from their homeland and loved ones. The lad stopped in front of the darkened house, and then on an impulse he rushed to the store nearby just as it was closing. With the remainder of his money he bought gifts for the refugee family. Loaded down with presents, he knocked on the door. He was welcomed with open arms. He spent a good deal of time trying to tell the family stories of Christmas as he knew it, all the while laughing and singing and loving his new friends. Finally, he bid them goodbye and headed off toward the old stone church.

As the lad neared the church, his heart began to pound. The organ music seemed to vibrate through the cold

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winter air. The lights from within the church cast a warm glow through the stained glass windows. When he entered the crowded church, there was but standing room only. He stood alone and felt very small. The he reached into his cloth money bag and was struck with surprise as he realized that he had no money left. He watched in lonely silence as each person took a turn leaving a gift at the altar; each hoping that their gift would ring the silent bells. The organ music played louder and louder until it seemed to shake the walls. Tears came to the boy's eyes; he had nothing left to give.

The service was soon over, and the last of the congregation had gone home. The church was dark except for a few flickering candles set by the Nativity Crib. The boy waited a long time. The church was still and very cold, and the boy began to get a chill. He walked quietly past the altar and up to the Crib. The candles cast dancing shadows on the statues of the Christ Child, Mary and Joseph, and the sheperds. He knelt down and said these words, "I have no gift, so I'll just pray, and this, my dear Lord, is what I have to say . . . To you, my Lord, I'll give myself, and to the people of the earth, I'll give my wealth. Amen."

The bells began to chime that Christmas Eve of 1929.

THE END

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An Open Letter From Santa

Dear Boys and Girls,

I have received thousands of letters from all over the world. I would like to take this opportunity to answer each of them with this message.

There will be dolls for some of you, games for others. Racetracks, trains and sporting goods will be found under some Christmas trees. There will be art supplies and paint sets for the creative ones. Records and radios will be on order for many of the older children, and even bikes for a few.

Some will find a package wrapped in blue outside the bedroom door, on the floor. Some will find a gift with a ribbon of red at the foot of their bed. Little girls who like ribbons for their hair might look under their pillow and find them there.

The one special gift that I would like to give each and every one of you this Christmas is the gift of understanding the true meaning of Christmas. It is not the toys that are important, for toys break. It is not the games that are important, for they can become dull. It is not the clothes that are important, for clothes wear out.

What is important is people doing things for people. The truest gift you cannot wrap with paper of silver or gold. The truest gift of Christmas you cannot even hold. There is a meaning in Christmas far more important than Santa Claus, and if you can grasp the full meaning, you have a gift that will last your lifetime, a gift far greater than Santa could ever bring.



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Snowflakes

On this silent precious night snowflakes fall soft and light like frozen tears from heaven that cover the leaves of the summer past.

They grace the branches now asleep and blanket the earth to keep its heat. The breath of nature sweeps a circle to make them dance before they rest. Not a soul is moving, not a bird in flight, just snowflakes falling silently tonight.

A million years have come and gone, and the cycle still goes on and on. But tonight their life has just begun for tomorrow begins the winter fun.

Now be silent with the Lord and watch his miracle unfold, alleluia. The morning will bring laughing and shouting children from their beds with snowmen, skis, skates and sleds.

Tonight enjoy this sight so far untouched. This beauty no earthling could create. Not by beast, nor bird, nor man. This splendor coming only from God's hand.



Memories of Time

From the old Victrola and the Motorola to the high tech CD's and Diet Cola

From the horse and buggy and all the flies to the jumbo jets high in the skies

From the candles of wax that flickered in the night to the glow of multi-colored blinking lights

From the China doll with silk and satin to the Ninja Turtles in the sewers of Manhattan

From fire trucks and trains and balsam planes to VCR and Nintendo games

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From plum pudding and hot mince pie to foot long hoagies and curly fries

Memories of the time are they yours or mine?





To A Little Girl

This song is for a little girl, who this very moment is resting in bed trying very hard to get well before Christmas.

Oh, little one, close you eyes and Dream awhile, dream with a smile.

Dream of happy days, And lots of fun.

I promise you, my dear, That they will come.

You'll get better As each day goes by.

You'll laugh more, You'll need not cry.

There are great tomorrows All for you.

These days will be Just a memory.

There are great tomorrows All for you.

These days will be Just a memory.



Santa on the Roof

Santa, if you're up there, can you hear my call? Tilt your head and listen close, I'm by the chimney wall.

> Our family's going to Grandma's, as we do every Christmas Day. It's really neat, all the food and fun and so many games to play.

> > And Grandpa always has the biggest, prettiest tree. There among all the gifts is a special gift for me.

> > But Daddy said we can't travel if the weather is very bad. And that would make my Grandparents very, very sad.

So, Santa, as you hop from chimney to chimney, poking through the snow. Rushing around like a busy squirre] with a million miles to go.

> All I ask for Christmas is a little sunshine along the way. The rest will be up to us, to give each other a happy Christmas Day!





My Rocking Horse

I have a rocking horse that does anything I say.

I climb upon on his saddle And off we go to play.

Sometimes we go to the circus to dance in the center ring.

Sometimes we go to the village park to ride and swing and swing.

We love to go to big parades and march on down the streets.

And then we go to Grandma's house where he have special treats.

I have a rocking horse that does anything I say.

I climb up on his saddle and ride far, far away.

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Where, oh, where did my old friends go? They used to love and hug me so.

Now I sit all by myself, for fifty years on an old board shelf.

The days of laughter and children's noise, the games I've played with girls and boys.

Now I stare at a wooden floor of an empty barn that's used no more.

A lady came of obvious wealth, took me off the old board shelf.

Now I live in an antique show, where, oh, where, did my friends go?

Sometimes I think there's a friendly face - I'm held for a moment and put back in place.

Many strangers come and go, the friends I had - they wouldn't know.

I sit here only for display and dream and wish for yesterday.

Where, oh, where, did my old friends go? They used to love and hug me so.

Wait! But wait! I see a face - how did she ever find this place?

She looks old and gray like me, she's the girl in my memory.

By her side a grandchild walks, they're going to buy me, I hear their talk.

Now I'll be loved and treasured so, just as the grandma did, years ago.

Santa Claus

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Letter to Santa

Dear Santa, it's been a long time, Maybe, since the year I was nine.

I've grown up and have a husband now. Could we be put back in your book somehow?

Because there's a new baby on the way. Surely he will be here before Christmas Day.

We're so excited we don't know what to do. Santa, please stop by--we're counting on you.

It's going to be Christmas as it was years ago. It brings back memories we both treasure so.

We'll need trucks and books and building blocks, Cars and bears and musical tops.

Later years will bring sleds and skates and candy canes, Puzzles and bikes and electric trains.

We're so excited we don't know what to do. Santa, please stop by--we're counting on you.

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With love from a believer who has been real good. Thanks, dear Santa, I knew you would.

Blue Cricket

I had a blue cricket that lived in my hat.

He loved to tease my Christmas cat. He would climb in my beard, when my dinner appeared.

And went for the food that fit his mood. He would eat what he could, as I knew he would,

Then crawl back in my hat, for a cricket nap. And during the night, I would hear a noise

And find him playing with the Christmas toys. He would sing a song of clickety clack

And jump right back in to my hat. His eyes are green and lashes long,

And he flicks them while he sings his song. I wish I had my cricket back,

The one that lived inside my hat.



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Old Wooden Train

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I had a wooden train that never had a track. It took me everywhere and always brought me back. I traveled through the woods and in the deepest grass, Up sandy hills and through the mountain pass. I traveled with my friends, the cricket and the cat. The cricket in the front, and the cat in the back. In my little wooden train that never had a track



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Fantasy Fair

Fantasy Fair, fantasy fair Come with me, Ill take you there.

The dreamer's world is always safe, A romantic, warm and wonderful place.

With love and laughter and a smile, So put off reality for a little while.

> Let me take you by the hand, Come with me to Santaland.

Feast your eyes on a wonderful sight. Fantasy fair, it's a magic night.

Houses are made of gingerbread, Brown and white, green and red.

The trees are laden with jelly beans. The bushes are made of chocolate creams.

Leaves are made of curly fries, And the sky is full of butterflies.

Toy dolls can dance and even walk. And all can sing, all can talk.

> The puppets and the muppets And Kermit the Frog,

All the barnyard animals, the chickens and hogs,

March to the tune of Frosty the Snowman. All this can happen in Fantasy Land.

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There's Magic in the Air

It's Christmas Eve, there's magic in the air. Brightly wrapped gifts and decorations everywhere. Truly the most exciting night of the year. The children are washed and ready for bed. See them standing by the tree instead.

> Faces lifted in pleasure and awe. Squinting their eyes to see the sight.

Glowing from the colored lights. Truly the most exciting night of the year. Ornaments hung on the tree with love, As if put there by angels from above.

Each one a story unto its own. Let's go, little children, it's time for bed. It's time to sleep and rest your heads.

It's Christmas Eve, there's magic in the air.

Someday My Children

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Someday, my children, you will come back to me. Someday, my children, you will come back to me. You do not understand these words I say to you. Someday, my children, you'll find these words are true. Someday we will meet again, you wait and see. And my words will ring in your memory. Someday when the snow breaks through the fall, And you will no longer be very small. Someday you'll come to me out of the long ago As mothers and dads -- for that's what you will be. You'll bring your children for me to see.

> SANTA LEIGH MADE IN 1879

> > KIN



Tell us of the time you cut a hemlock in the woods, and then before your father stood. Tell us how he laughed, then winked, and patched it up the best he could.

Tell us of your Christmas gift for Mom hidden in the milk house, only to find it on Christmas Eve nibbled by a mouse.

Tell us of the stove and the heating of the rocks, carefully put in skates and covered with your socks.

Tell us how you skated on the pond for hours at a time. Did you really get silly on Uncle Herbert's homemade wine?

Tell us of the funny stories about the cider and the beer. Tell us of your childhood when Christmas time was near.

Did you know your Grampa, and was he just like you? Did he have stories you weren't sure were really true? Although they had to be, cause your Grampa said it's so. Tell us of your life you lived so many years ago.

Tell us for we really want to know. Give us color, give us words we never ever heard. Tell us all before you go so we can tell our children, "Grampa told us so."

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Special Gift

Dear Santa,

Please go back through the centuries of time. Look through your records and in your ledger book of gifts. Pick out a very special gift for a very special child.

> It must be a gift no one could buy. It must be something you can't see with the eye.

It must not break or tear. It must not make a noise or ever need repair.

It must not take up any space. It should be a gift that can be used every place.

It should be a gift that cannot be sold. It should never go out of style or become too old.

It should give pleasure to all people. When you've found it, wrap it tight. Lay it beneath the tree on the magic night.

Santa, how do you wrap --

Patiehce --- through adversity Wisdom --- and common sense Kindness --- and mercy Time --- well spent Respect --- for others' creeds Willingness --- to share Consideration --- for others' needs Commitment to God, who gave His life because He

cared.

A gift like that would bring forth love for all people, all ages, for all time. Put it in a box, under the tree for this child of mine.

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Thank you, Santa. Thank you.

Send Them to Bed With a Kiss

Oh, mothers, so weary, discouraged, worn out with the cares of the day. You often grow cross and impatient, complain of the noise and the play.

For the day brings so many vexations, so many things going amiss. But, mothers, whatever may vex you, send the children to bed with a kiss.

The dear little feet wander often, perhaps, from the pathway of right. The dear little hands find new mischief, to try you from morning 'till night.

But think of the desolate mothers who'd give all the world for your bliss, And as thanks for your infinite blessings, send the children to bed with a kiss.

For someday their noise will not vex you, the silence will hurt you far more. You will long for their sweet childish voices, for a sweet childish face at the door.

And to press a child's fact to your bosom, you'd give all the world just for this! For the comfort 'twill give you in sorrow, send the children to bed with a kiss!

One of Santa's favorite poems - author anonymous.

Reminisce With Santa

I have been constructing Christmas displays every year for over two decades. It would be nice, I thought, to reminisce, and maybe you may recall seeing a few of them. Here are a few of the best.

"Winter Wonderland"

As you walked on the flagstone path lined with red pointsettias, you could see on both sides perfectly shaped fir trees flocked with snow and glistening with multicolored lights. There before you nestled in evergreens stood a snow covered log cabin with a large picture window. It also was decorated with Christmas lights. Santa's sleigh was slightly visible through the frosted windows. Christmas music, the sound of the garden fountain, and childrens' chatter lent an air of excitement to the mood of everyone in line to see Santa. This was my winter wonderland.



"The Land of Gosh"

The theme portraying the upside down room was taken from one of my stories, called "The Land of Gosh". It's a story of the people on a planet out in space. This planet moves from place to place, far beyond Jupiter and Mars. The people on the planet defy gravity, and they can walk on the ceiling and the walls. They are only three feet tall.

You walked into a room, and there before your eyes, was a sight you had never seen. The table was set with a Christmas cloth, plates, silverware, glasses and a bucket of Kentucky fried chicken, all on the ceiling, upside down. When you looked around, you saw another crazy sight. The curtains, pictures and lamps were all upside down. Your mind was thinking, "How could this be?" And to top it off, remember the tree?

In the center of the ceiling stood a beautifully decorated Christmas tree with ornaments, lights and all. A train track and train encircled the tree with brightly wrapped gifts setting all around. And right before your eyes surrounded with a white wreath and colored lights, were two elves on a teeter-totter, enjoying a ride upside down. Do you remember the elf dolls running across the ceiling, draping tinsel and garland with a real peanut butter sandwich in one hand. The Land of Gosh was the most unique and cleverly contrived of all displays for Gosh people do funny things.

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"Santa's Igloo"

Santa's igloo was made of snow flocking. When you entered the room, you saw over 2,000 snow ball size colored lights. Each light glazed with white sugar like icing and it was impressive as they were falling from a black sky. A huge white igloo stood there with five foot high entrance and exit tunnels, intentionally built that way to make parents experience the world of little people. Large, ten foot candy canes leaned against the igloo in a helter skelter fashion. Once inside the igloo, you could appreciate how large it really There was room for my sleigh and five or six families was. with space to spare. The igloo was lighted with a spiral of seven hundred colored lights spinning out from the center of the snow white ceiling. Pretty glass ornaments and icycles hung from the ceiling. Little peak-a-boo windows allowed the little ones to see inside this wonder room. Sometimes I would surprise the people waiting in line outside the igloo. I would pop up through a snow tower. We would talk a while and sing a song or two, then I would disappear in front of them.

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If you do a snow dance every day in the winter time, you may get enough snow to build your own igloo. To do a snow dance, you must jump in the air three times and holler, "Snow! Snow! snow!" Then, clapping your hands and turning in a circle three times, you holler, "Ho! Ho! Ho!" Give it a try - you never know.



ENTERANC

"Poison Ivy Christmas"

There were so many interesting settings. My Ginger Bread House, the Ice Castle, Robin Hood's Forest, and one I shall never forget - my elves call it the "poison ivy Christmas". My helpers and I constructed a beautiful white birch cabin with a chimney and all. Little did we know that minute strands of poison ivy vines were entwined in the bark. When we were all finished, it looked great, with the birch trees in front all decorated with ornaments and birds. Then we all began to itch. I was one itchy Santa as I sat in my sleigh day after day. My elves were not happy campers for many days until Christmas Eve.

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"Old Williamsburg"

This was the year that if you came to see me, you had to step back in time to the world of Old Williamsburg. Early American street lamps showered the old shop windows with a soft warm glow, stars were shining down from the sky, and Santa's house was loaded down with toys all over the roof. Christmas lights decorated the windows to show off the wonderful Christmas ornaments. One shop had Frosty the Snowman in the window, another with the China Doll and one of my poems. The store windows that commanded the most attention was "Ye Olde Train Shop". There before your eyes were three trains running

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through tunnels and over bridges and winding through a miniature village. If you looked really close, you could see deer in the mountains and skiers coming down the slope. The trains seemed to come right at you and turn just in time so as not to hit the window. Sometimes the train would stop at Red Deer Station where miniature people watched on the platform.

Old Williamsburg was a nostalgic setting, and to add more atmosphere, my troubadour strolled through the streets with his guitar singing carols. One evening, a girl scout troop came in to sing Christmas carols. It was a fun season.



Remember the wonderful Dr. Suess, with all his fascinating stories? When he passed away, I dedicated my Christmas to him. When you entered my Headquarters, you saw the snow white walls all painted brightly with many Dr. Suess characters. On the right you saw "Green Eggs and Ham, on a train or in a plane". On your left was "Sam I am". There in front of you on Santa's Tower was a large painting of "the Grinch", all brown and eyes so big and scary. Just beyond him, the "Cat in the Hat", all black and hairy. And then on the wall by the lamp was "Horton the Elephant" sitting on eggs; and by Santa's door, creatures with a dozen legs.

As you left Santa's house, you saw a sign - it said, "Go, Go, would you please go now!"

The Dr. Suess setting was so well received I used it two years in a row.

"The Castle"

One of my favorites was the Castle. As you entered Santa Land, there before you stood a Snow White Castle with a turret tower so high it almost reached the sky. Several thousand miniatures blue star lights lit the black sky. You could pick out the big dipper if you looked long enough.

And there at the Castle entrance, a pole called the North Pole glowed in the dark like it was on fire from within. Waiting in line one could observe the little displays in the odd shaped castle windows. Suddenly, out of no where, you could hear a bellowing "Ho, Ho, Ho", and looking up to see where it came from, you saw Santa Claus. Yes, there I was up in the Castle tower waving and greeting my guests. I would hold a press conference and answer questions about the North Pole, Mrs. Claus, my elves or reindeer. Never was there a

-86-

question left unanswered. I usually told a story and sang a song. If there was time, I would recite the wonderful poem called "Send Them to Bed with a Kiss".

When you entered the inner room with my antique sleigh setting, there you knew you were in the world of enchantment.

These were just a few of the most popular Christmas Headquarters for me. However, there within all of the settings I had certain areas set up pretty much the same every year regardless of the theme for that season.

There is always a corner set aside with no decorations or pretty lights, only a very poor skinny looking Christmas tree. A few pine cones and a small sign hung on the tree with this message: "This tree symbolizes the fact that there are many poor people. The pine cones are symbols of hope that there is a tomorrow. Please leave a gift under the tree for those less fortunate than you." The toys that are left under the tree are greatly appreciated. During the short season, I manage to deliver several truck loads of toys to various areas where people are in need.

Another tradition which is always there is the sign-in table. My guest books show that people come from many areas to visit with me. I've had visitors from Virginia, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, West Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina, Texas, California, Canada, England, Germany, Japan and Australia. Some have visited with me for ten years in a row, others for 15 and 20 years as their

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families grew. I talked with children whose mothers and fathers came to see me when they were children.

Family photo sessions and camcorders have always been welcome in Santa's house.

The area which has always been the most important to me is the nativity scene, set up in a prominent place for all to see As the children grow up, I gently and carefully remind them that we have had a lot of good Christmases together. The best Christmases have not been with Santa Claus. The best Christmases they haven't had yet. They are in their future with friends they haven't met yet in high school and college, then family and Christ. To remember old Santa Claus when they grow up is a wonderful Christmas tradition, and when they have children, to carry on the same beautiful traditions their parents carried on for them, and their Christmases will be happy ones.



-88-

Dear Santa, For Christmas I would like : A jewel studder, some tapes, money, NES Game, A Sega game, game gear, clothing paints, sheet music, books, cool clothes, and what I would really really really like would be a puppy or a kitten. HO,HO,HO, Lauren Taylor p.s. I have been modretaly good this

year.

gotten what wanted. Merry Merry Christme Kirsten hustmas /

Dear Santa, Your the least

Love,

The woulds Best

-89

Sarah

I Love you SAnta!

12/19/80 Dear Santa,

Please make me nor alergic to anything. That is all but on wish I ask for demost every year



What Do They Say?

Some might think I would have a thousand stories to tell about what children say to Santa. In reality, most children are either in awe, in doubt, or entranced when they come to see me. They rarely start the conversation. I oblige them with a kind greeting to get them started. Some of the comments are one-liners, and others will need a little background description to appreciate them. Here are a few unsolicited comments.

"Santa, we have two fireplaces - don't use the chimney by the driveway. Daddy always has a fire in that one."

"Santa, I don't need anything, but my dog needs some toys."

A little boy about three years old approached me with a frown, shook his finger and said, "Santa, I'm not afraid of you."

During the Korean and Vietnam wars, I heard this rather often: "I want my daddy to come home."

During the recession and hard times, it is not unusual to hear another request: "My father's out of work - he needs a job."

Then there is always the barterer to deal with: "Santa, if you bring me a bike, I won't pick on my sister so much."

Older brothers have a way to reach Santa, using the younger ones: "Santa, can you bring me a real good fishing

pole with a Shakespeare reel?" This lad was only about five years old, so I asked who takes him fishing. His reply was, "I don't fish! My brother asked me to ask you for it."

Children apologize for being naughty, but one girl apologized for her Mom: "Santa, I sorry but we can't leave home-made cookies because my mother said she don't know how." I think every mother knows how to make cookies.

There are some children with desperate requests: "Santa, I need a game I can beat my brother in." And this one: "I need a skate board, nothing else.

There are always some who are afraid of Santa: "Santa, you're not going to scare me, are you?"

Some have a plan to catch Santa. One such plan failed, and this is how it happened. A little boy of about four came up to me and said, "Santa, do you know Uncle Charlie?" "Yes", I replied. Then he asked if I knew what a lariet was, and again I said "yes". Then he proceeded to tell

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me how his uncle and he looped the rope in a circle on the floor in front of the fireplace.

He had taken the other end of the rope up to his bed and waited. You guessed it, he said "I fell asleep Santa". I encouraged him to try again and to ask Charlie to help.

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Some children don't have a room to call their own. "Santa, I just want my own room. I have to sleep in the room with my sister and Mom."

Some children worry more than others. "Santa, Daddy always bolts the door, and we don't have a chimney, so I'll leave my window unlocked."

This is a precious one: "You gotta' come to my house Santa. I'm not smart in school but I'm a good person."

Here's one: "Santa, we moved to a new cul-de-sac pretty far away, it's really hard to find. Do you know where Cattle Cove is?"

Or, "We are going to Gramma's house, do you know where Philadelphia is?"

The next couple of comments I rarely heard thirty or forty years ago, even twenty years ago. Now it is becoming a common request. "Will you leave some toys at my Mother's house and some at my Father's house?" Or, "Can you leave the bike at my Dad's house and all the rest at my Mom's house?"

Children love more deeply than some may realize as one can tell from these remarks: "Santa, I love my Daddy and I wish he would not smoke any more."

Or, "I wish my brother would be healthy again, Santa he's always sick."

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Or, "I don't have a Mom, she died, but my Dad needs a Mom."

A boy asked about his dog: "Is Scotty in heaven, Santa?"

This little one's family is falling apart: "I love Daddy, but he don't want to live with us no more."

And here is believing - this lad waited in line for an hour and after his request, he disappeared fast: "Hi, Santa. I know I'm too old to be in here. I've come to see you for eleven years in a row. I don't need nothing for Christmas, but my Mom needs a warm coat for winter and my Father is unemployed. You never let me down in the past, Santa. See what you can do. So long."

One year a little girl gave me a note and told me not to open it now. That evening I opened the note: "Dear Santa, I just want my Mommy to be nice to me and not so mean to make me cry."

I listen to the children and I look into those beautiful faces and hear their thoughts, and it tugs at my heart sometimes, but most of the time they make me laugh and lift my spirits.

Some boys ask for B-B guns, rifles or guns of some kind or another, and some want sling shots. My answer is always the same - Santa does not give children guns, swords or sling shots. Guns were made to hurt or take the life of a

-94-

bird, animals or a person, and I will not give children the idea that taking a life is fun by supplying them with a gun. I know they are asking me for toy guns; however, they are not my kind of toys. There are plenty of other more creative and enjoyable gifts for Christmas.

There have been times when a child would come up to me and say, "We don't celebrate Christmas. We celebrate Hanukkah, but I like you, Santa. Can you bring me a football?"

One day a little girl said to me, "Santa, Daddy said he will leave fifty dollars on the plate with cookies and milk on Christmas Eve just for you."

Children and parents are so appreciative. I have received some wonderful gifts over the years. Such as the painting called the "Moonlight Skaters", the statute of the Holy Family, Duncan Royale Collector Santas, the hand crafted blue cricket, and many other mementos. I am thankful and treasure them, especially the letters from parents.

I really want to thank all the children that donated thousands of toys over the years, and the recipients of the toys also thank you.

I shall end this with a comment I heard a hundred times or more. "Santa, I saw you. I saw you flying in the sky, I really did!"



-95-

Dear Santa, an Did not l think you do a wonderful you do Christmas most like the belive in you at first chustman mot like the people who are in the shapping Hall. There is only one true Souta Claw and your it teople Day your dead and they saw your dead and they saw your dead and they hnow your deal and they know you don't work. But I know you don't work But I know you don't work. But I know you don't work are alive and well. I think but oce I saw you For My Self toget my X. marspi artha V OLILY DY I lelier in you. I think 15³⁵ 5. your the most wonderful you the most wonderful person arand lecause you make people happy and you care. The kids my are don't really. I ellerte in you they just relieve in your spirit. I'm i and in congrade and S're even good. fore. Unginia Thomas h Hi Sanna, event there When ho he here haying ; have ૡ 13 hape rade BLIG K te ting presenx ٢٥५ 1^γλe aspecily for like Carings istmas have Some iκ, misic Yoq.) Cance Faido Uno ilempy Dommon ilempy Dommon Splash happy X rind 沃 See You a..... any coill ng thing. ladders Staffed animals -96-

Dear Santa, Than Kvou_ for everything that vou've given_ hair ties! Matthew loved his fire engine! US I loved We're hoping that you will bring us Somethings 'this year 400 I want a horse (pony) more than anything in the world. I would also like a pad of paper and a red inkpen. Matthew would like a motor cycle that brrruums. We hope you have a very special Christma and we love you very much! Mrs. Clause too! -XXXXXXXXXXX000000000 Jenifera Matthew G. Dear Sinces at Grandmas Sanla treal isn't to ase 41. rame is Ben Hall. 0:00 stockings at her I would like: , now Hole Blackboard and chark have good flike, weathe Star wars Tauntaun Garage with elevator for Sincerly, Small cars and some new small cors 4 ster-war action figures Thanks a lot Sarra, mes

Christmastime 1993

Dear Parents,

In November of 1994 "The Real" Santa Claus will celebrate an anniversary. He will mark 50 years of bringing joy and happiness and peace to many thousands of families, from Hamburg New York in the Log Cabin Trailer to Northern Virginia and his present "home" here.

Santa has given me this bit of space to speak to you parents who have been so faithful to him and who have created so many traditions and happy memories for your own children.

Every time I have the opportunity to help Santa during the Christmas Season I am struck by the loving, careful way you listen and watch while Santa talks to your children. Year after year I have witnessed the deep, real feelings on the faces of the parents and seen through my own misty eyes the silent tears that appear as Santa speaks his very personal, special "message" to your ten and eleven year olds. I watch as mome and dads stand in line for sometimes as long as three hours for the few minutes that will live in their hearts for the whole year. Many times I have watched and wondered just who is getting the most out of this visit.

In 1991 a mom from Burke Virginia wrote: "This year we discovered that our times in your sleigh have come to an end. We will keep the memories alive as our sons grow up and begin to establish their own family traditions. But I want you to know there's a big hole in my Christmas this year, so I had to at least drop you a note to tell you thanks for all you have given me."

Erich and Patrick's parents wrote: "You have, with your special way, brought joy and happiness not only to our two children but to me and my wife as well."

The following is a letter from a young mother who visited Santa when she was a child. "You have truly been an inspiration for over twenty years. I first sat on your lap at Burke Nursery and then at Capper's Nursery, and now I bring my son and we travel from Germantown Maryland. You are the inspiration as my son and I try to carry on a spirit of giving and caring throughout the whole year. Yes, I drive down to Merrifield for my son - I want him to know the Santa who knows Jesus. But I come here for myself also. Thank you for all the little lessons you have taught me that have turned into quite big ideas - the values that have carried me this far in my life. I'll be back; I'm still learning from you!" In 1989 a family from Woodbridge, Virginia wrote: "Thanks for all the wonderful Christmases you have given us - year #11 for our family. You have really captured the spirit of Christmas and I'm sure yours must be wonderful and so merry because you give so much to others. You are a real Gift to all of us. Thanks from the bottom of our hearts."

Yes, Santa's Christmases are "so Merry". And that is so much because of all of you and the love that radiates from your hearts and on your faces as you spend those joyful, peace-filled moments in Santa's House. So many wonderful people have come through and into our lives over all of these years. I wish I could mention you all by name but only Santa can do that. I can send greetings and heartfelt love to those of you who read this book in Western New York; to Santa's "summer friends" who share his love of Chautauqua Lake; to those of you who knew him in Springfield, Virginia at the Pet Shop and the Bicycle Shop, and Fischer's Hardware. The years at Capper's Nursery were very special ones and remember Burke Garden Center and the first Igloo? Now, each year that Santa has spent at Merrifield Garden Center has seen an ever increasing number of "believers" who come weary and leave refreshed and renewed. During the 1992 season Santa visited with thirty-one hundred children.

A family from Alexandria, Virginia writes: "Each year we wait in line and wonder why we have done it again. Alas, when we emerge out the back door of your sleigh harbor we again know why we invested the time and effort. Your example of patience, love, giving, and responsibility is so wonderful to be a part of. Our nine year old daughter was not anxious to see you since her belief was weakening. She too, found her belief reinstated and strengthened. Of course, our six year old was in rapture (as were my wife and I) and listened intently - note taking was not even necessary."

In 1985 Lynn and Terry's Mom and Dad said: "We have been coming to see the "real Santa" for 17 years. From now on we will no longer be waiting for you but will give our place to the many young families around. The reason we kept searching for you whenever you would change your "headquarters" was because you always brought Christ into Christmas."

Please know dear parents that Santa treasures each and every letter you have written. We want to give a special "thank you" to the McCourt Family. And to our nine beautiful children who are all grown up and still believe -We Love You!

We wish you all the Peace of Christ as you celebrate His Birth, and bring your children to know Him. God Bless Us Everyone!



