



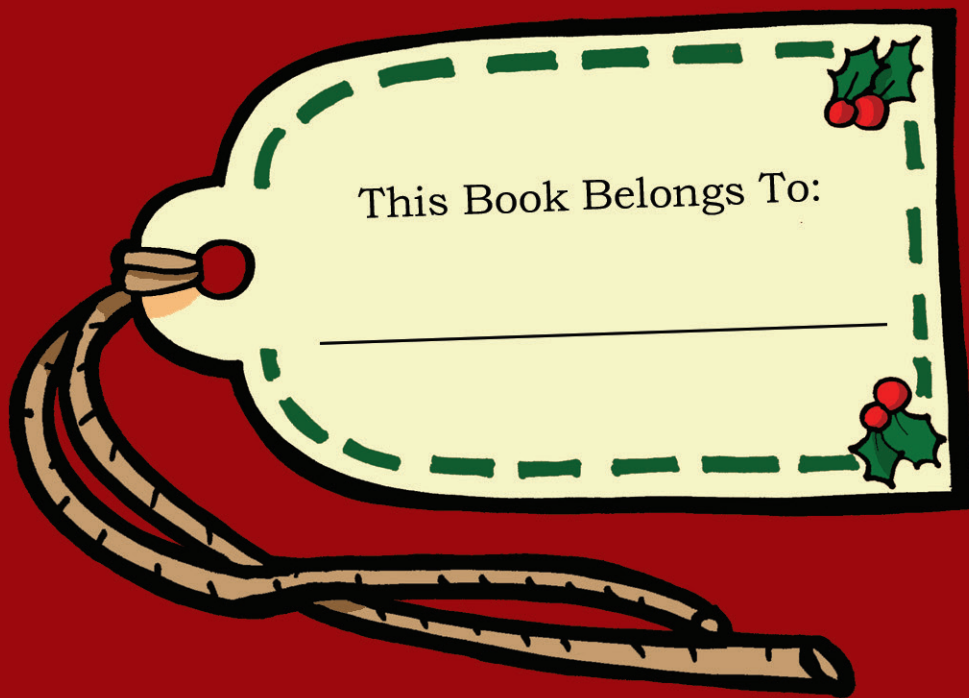
Twinkle, Twister, and Starlight

save

Christmas

by TUCK

illustrated by: Donna Yan & Stacy Gee





Two nights before Christmas, near the North Pole,
A storm roared totally, ... utterly out of control.
Wild winds wrestled and storm clouds boxed,
While a polar bear hid in a cave with a fox.

Ice and hail battered Santa's chalet,
All through that night and into the next day.

White icy snow fell all around,
Bundling Santa's sleigh with hardly a sound.







Early next morning, Santa got ready for work,
On went his pants, his boots and his shirt.
He drank cocoa for a golden teapot,
Rubbed his tummy and said, "*That hits the spot.*"






Santa pushed the door open and stepped into the storm,
Hoping his reindeers were happy, well fed and warm.
He found the nine all huddled together,
Stomping and snorting in the horrible weather.





Santa patted each nose and said, "*Nothing's wrong.*
It's just Old Man North Wind blowing his song."
He shoveled fresh hay and rubbed Vixen's back.
Then, BANG from the sky came a thunderbolt crack.

Prancer and Dancer reared round the pen,
Above them thunder pealed again and again.
Suddenly a branch ripped from a tree.
And torpedoed down most violently,



Santa shoved Donner from a horrible fate,
Then tried to save himself, but it was too late.
Comet and Cupid trembled with fear.
Prancer and Dancer fought back a tear.

While Blitzen nuzzled Vixen to keep her calm,
Rudolph's nose blinked frantically in silent alarm.
For this was terrible and not make believe,
And just one day before Christmas Eve.

BANG, the storm ended like a Wild West Show.
With the aurora borealis dancing do-si-do.
The sun rose THE next morning in unusual fashion,
Glowing red-orange and full of compassion.

High on a rock, a Polar Bear puffed at the air.
While deep in the earth a Fox woke in his lair.
Stretching from sleep – he twitched his sharp ears.
From directly above came giggles and cheers.



He scampered through his maze up to the ground,
And found three tiny elves playing merry-go-round.
They spun right and left. They danced in and out.
Then leaped in the air, like a green waterspout.

Twinkle, the tiniest, zigged up a hill,
Then zagged back down just for the thrill.
Twister dove behind – like a green jellybean.
Bouncing like a BALL – in a pinball machine.

Starlight waved shyly as she stood tippy-toe.
But deep in her heart, she was feeling quite low.
Hidden within was a dream pure and simple.
To see a real boy or meet a girl with a dimple.





Twinkle and Twister scrambled back up the slope,
“*Starlight, come join us. Don’t sit there and mope.*”
Now Twinkle was thin where Twister was stout,
And neither liked seeing Starlight pout.

To their bellies they fell trying a silly approach,
They pawed through the snow like an ugly cockroaches.
At last Starlight laughed, “*Okay, okay.*
I won’t be such a grouch. Now who wants to play?”



Twinkle shook the bells on her toes, cap and sleeves.

"I do. I do. – Hide and seek if you please?"

Twister spun round with an odd little flourish.

"Try and catch me. I'm a Whirling Dervish."





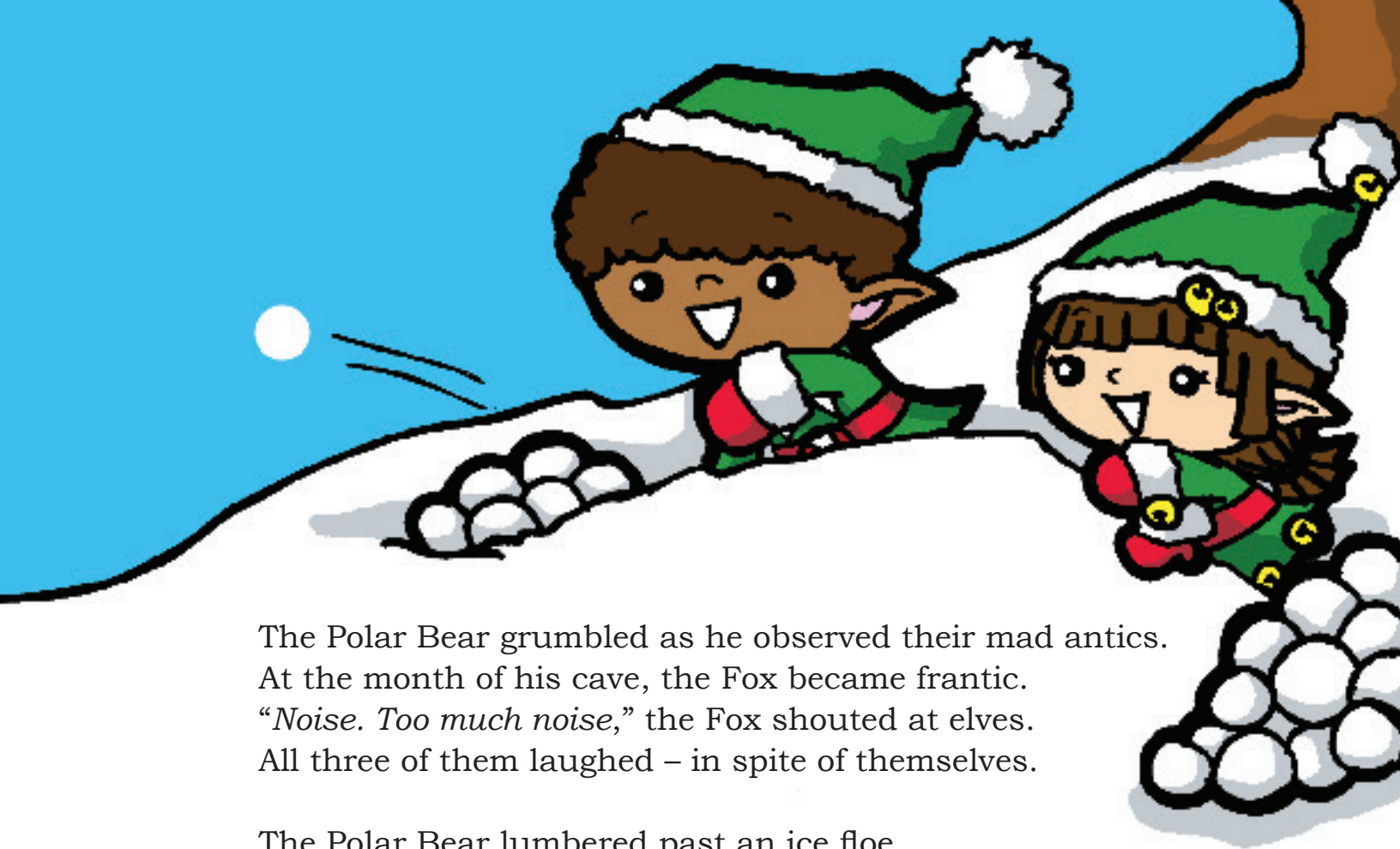
Both turned to Starlight with a bow and bend,
“*What should we play? We’re both at wits end.*”
Starlight thought deeply as she always did,
Brushing a snowflake from a tiny eyelid.

Starlight, ah Starlight, what an elf to behold.
Hair like sequins of rubies and gold.
Sapphire blue eyes – wild as the seas,
And a smile that dazzles the buzz from the bees.



Starlight chose a game, a game with no rules,
A game which certainly wasn't taught in our schools.
They giggled and wrestled over the fresh fallen snow.
Up, down again. Up, down again, - on top – then below.





The Polar Bear grumbled as he observed their mad antics.
At the mouth of his cave, the Fox became frantic.
“*Noise. Too much noise,*” the Fox shouted at elves.
All three of them laughed – in spite of themselves.

The Polar Bear lumbered past an ice floe,
Mumbled and grumbled, “Have you nowhere to go?”
“Come on,” Starlight said. “*Enough of this play.*
We have toys to finish and must pack the sleigh.”

Twinkle and Twister knew Starlight was right,
But still they tossed snowballs with all of their might.
The Polar Bear ducked and so did the Fox.
Then up went their paws ready to box.

In a wink, Twinkle and Twister sped out of sight.
“*Your friends,*” the fox tisked, “*are most impolite,*”
“*Sssorry,*” Starlight said. “*They are young and must grow.*
And, as for me – I really must go.”

Starlight raced up the hill and quickly disappeared.
“*Some elves,*” the Fox said, “*Are not properly reared.*”
“*Agreed,*” the Bear grumbled, “*but before you move on,*
I have a bad feeling. SOMETHING IS TERRIBLY WRONG.”





Santa's Toy Shop is bigger than six big cities,
And right before Christmas everyone's fidgety.
There's no time to vacuum or do the housekeeping.
Everyone's a bit busy, no one is sleeping.

Toy steam engines hiss and chug 'round a track,
Disappear in dark tunnels and quickly puff back.
Ten legged robots go phsssst, click-clack,
Offering gingerbread cookies, just for a snack.





Dear Santa,

Atop ancient stoves, popcorn pip-pops.
In time with elves hammers – that wippity – wop.
From ovens waft scents of hot caramel butter,
While peppermint canes dry on a shutter.

Above the noise in this wild atmosphere,
Elves sing songs, wondrous and clear.
But far in one corner – come let's eavesdrop,
Because at Starlight's table the singing had stopped.

*"I need a rest. I'm tired," Twinkle said,
As she lay down her needle and lay down her thread.
"Yes, yes, yes," Twister said. "No more for me."
Clinking his scissors one, two and three.*

*Starlight smiled a wide elfin grin,
Went up on her toes, she wouldn't give in.
"We are elves," She sang. "We make marvelous toys,
For all of the world's children – good girls and boys."*

*Twinkle snickered – her face a bit smug.
"Sometimes, Starlight, you make me say 'ugh.'
None of us know if boys and girls are for real.
And that my dear friend is your Achilles' heel."*



*“Sure, I’ll make toys for lad, lass or tot,
But if they’re not real – and I worry they’re not.”
“What a waste,” Starlight cried, “a terrible shame.
Why would Santa indulge us in such a useless game?”*

*Twister, twisted and then twisted again,
Nuzzling his body up close to his friend.
“Starlight, have you ever seen a girl or boy?”
“Have you ever, even touched the real McCoy?”*





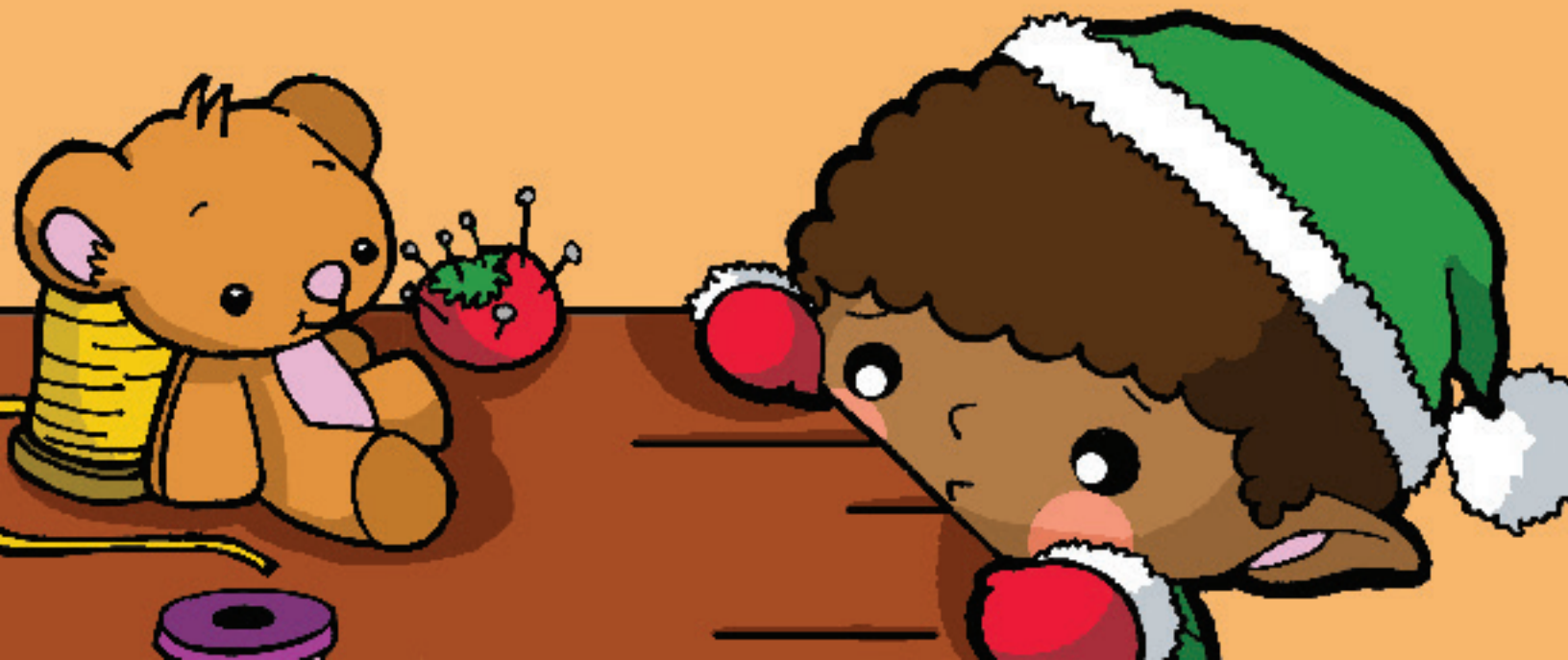
Starlight bit her tongue was this a trick?
Did Twister and Twinkle really doubt St. Nick?

“Listen to me,” Twinkle said to Starlight.
*“We have always been friends, so let’s not fight.
I will not be mean – or your dreams destroy,
But have you been anywhere? Even Chicago, Illinois?”*

Starlight’s lips vised tight, holding her word,
A little bit angry from the comments she’d heard.
She stared both friends right in their eyes.
“Are you mad?” She asked. “Would Santa lie?”

Ashamed, Twinkle and Twister flushed a bright red.
They apologized quietly and both bowed their head.
To avoid doing anything she might later regret,
Starlight kissed each and did a quick pirouette.

And before her mouth could open or another word be said,
Something quite astounding happened instead.



From outside the shop came an awful groan,
“It’s *Erasmus*,” an elf cried, “*and he’s running alone.*”
Erasmus flew through the door in a rush and a tizzy,
His green cap was off, his hair wet and frizzy.

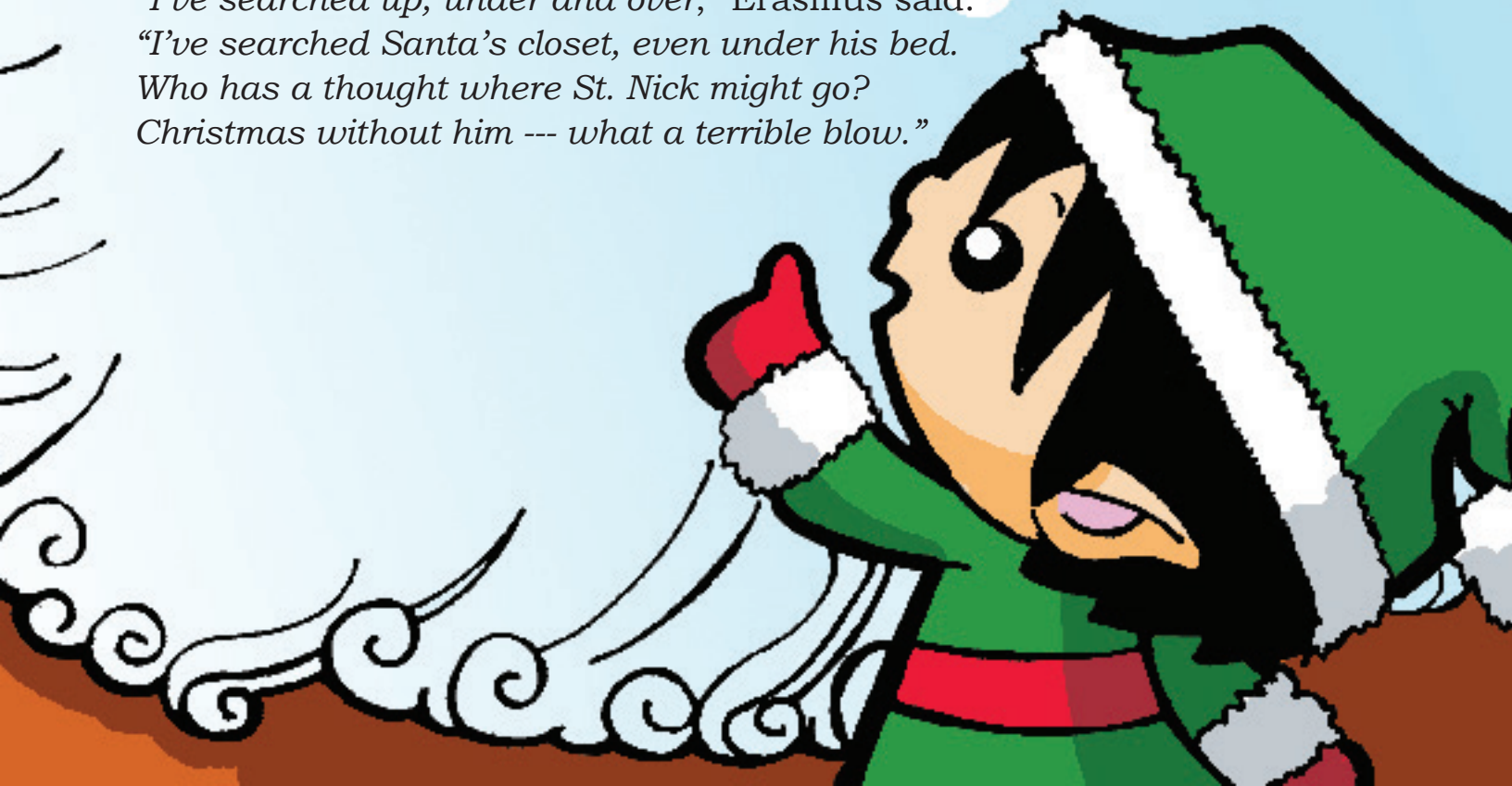
What’s wrong? Starlight said to her friends in a mime.
Erasmus took off his glasses and tissueed the grime.
He shouted to the assembly as loud as could be.
“*Santa is missing? Where is he? Where is he?*”


A bellowing hush crept through the Toy Shop,
Politely the popcorn ceased its pip-pop.
The legs of the robot froze crooked and straight,
And the toy steam engine disappeared through a grate.





*"I've searched up, under and over," Erasmus said.
"I've searched Santa's closet, even under his bed.
Who has a thought where St. Nick might go?
Christmas without him --- what a terrible blow."*





To Starlight came an incredible thought,
She tugged her friends out of earshot.
Her eyes grew bluer as she started to speak,
While a pink blush rushed from her lips to her cheek.

“My friends,” she said. *“I’ve a plan. I think.”*
“Oh, dear. Oh, no,” Twinkle and Twister blinked.
They laced their fingers across their midsections,
Listening politely, without interjections.

*“At first my thought may seem quite unique,
You know how we love hide-n-GO-seek.
We know the forests and the high mountain peaks,
We could find Santa – who better to seek?”*



*“But we could get in trouble,” Twister complained.
“Be asked to leave the Toy Shop,” Twinkle explained*

*Starlight warned, “If Santa’s gone, it won’t matter,
Come on let’s go. Stop all this chatter.
We must find Santa, please help me, please?”
There’s so little time, it’s almost Christmas Eve.”*

Twinkle, Twister and Starlight took each other’s hand,
Joining in agreement to this extraordinary plan.





They sped from the shop in a whoosh and a scurry.
Away on their quest in an incredible hurry.

“West?” Twister asked, “No that might be wrong.”

“I’ve an idea,” Starlight said. “Let’s try a song.”

Three elfin voices soared high as a choir.

Twinkle sang loud but Starlight sang higher.

(sung to the tune of Jingle Bells)

*“Santa Claus, Santa Claus, have you run away?
Don’t you know, we need you so – it’s almost
Christmas Day.*

*“Santa Claus, Santa Claus, can you hear our song?
Please don’t hide, we’re on your side or is there
Something wrong?”*



Within a tick tock of a clock they became a team,
Trekking through forest, over mountain and stream.
They fought through snow which covered their knees,
And climbed through the thorns of bricky-back trees.

They looked far and near, they looked up and down,
Almost getting bitten by a snarling wolfhound.
A difficult puzzle they were trying to solve.
Though they wanted to stop, they found new resolve.





Hours later in a forest of snow dusted spruce,
They came upon a Polar Bear talking to a Moose.
"Have you seen Santa?" The Elves all asked at once.
The Moose shook his antlers with one giant crunch.

"I'm sorry," the Bear muttered. *"I don't have a clue."*
He turned to the Moose, *"Good Sir, do you?"*
"Don't have a hint," said the Moose. *"Don't have a hunch.*
Have you anything to eat? I haven't had lunch."



Off they went, on they went across the icy tundra.
When they met a Red Fox he shook his head uh uh.
They asked a lone Elk and a wandering Ermine,
And an old Caribou who could hardly hear 'em.





Twelve hours that day they stayed on their quest,
Seeking and searching, the Elves did their best.
But when a cold frost blew blinding their eyes,
Twister stopped twisting to everyone's surprise.

Twinkle and Starlight halted fast in their tracks.
"Maybe," said Twinkle, "*it's time we went back.*"
"Yes, yes. *Let's return,*" Twister begged.
"*My nose is nearly frozen and so are my legs.*"

Twinkle nudged Starlight, "*I hate to complain.
But my hands and my feet are in very deep pain.*"

Twister nodded "*Starlight, I have to agree.
We tried our very best, all of us three.*"





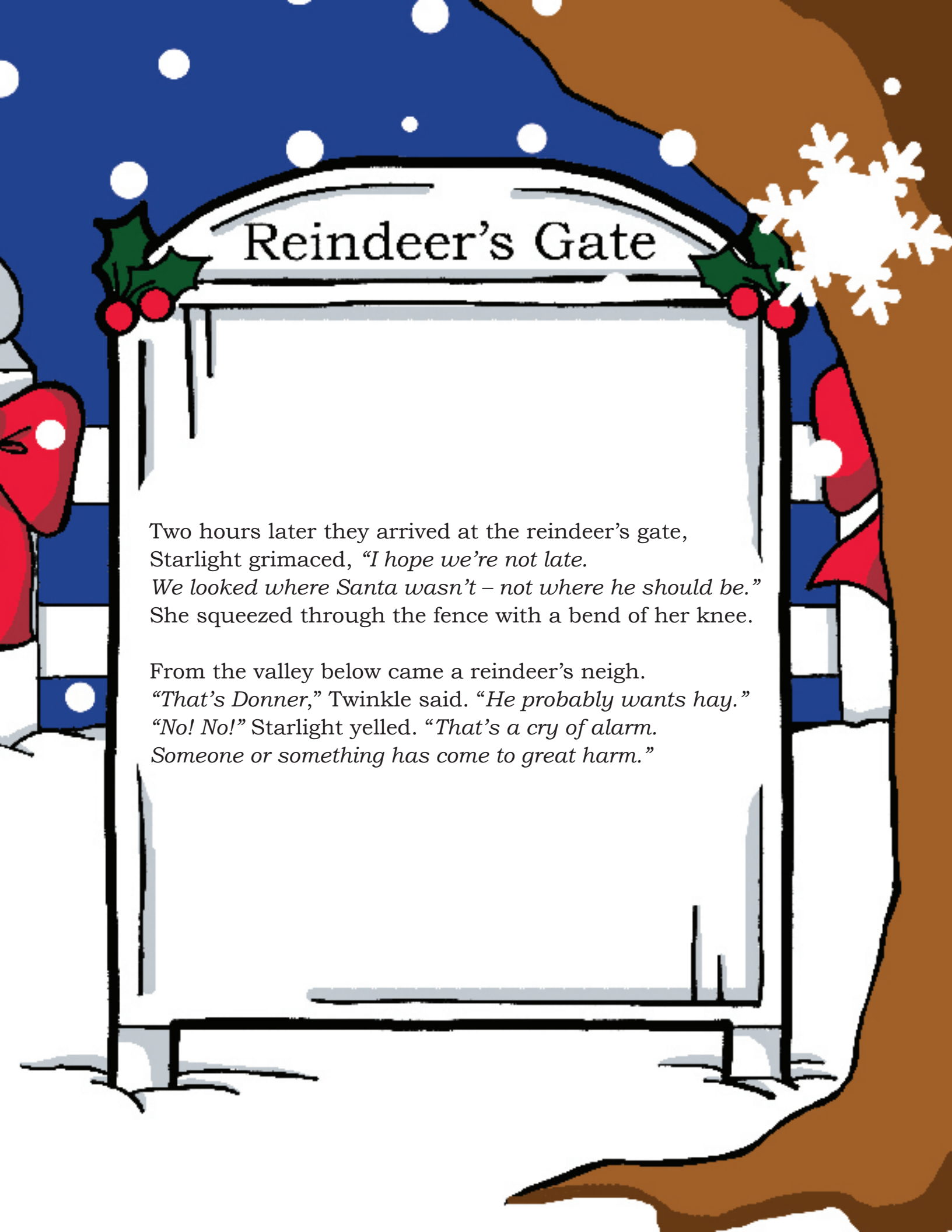
*"No," cried Starlight "No, my dear friends.
We can't quit now, this can't be the end.
It's almost Christmas, where can Santa be?
He must be somewhere, there must be a key."*

Terribly tired, they flopped on the ground,
And listened politely to each other expound.

*"He's not in the Toy Shop," Twister twisted his hair.
"And Mrs. Claus," Twinkle added, "is shaking with fear."
Starlight thought for a moment, then shouted, "Oh, no! Oh, no!
I've got it!" She was off as fast as she could go.*







Reindeer's Gate

Two hours later they arrived at the reindeer's gate,
Starlight grimaced, *"I hope we're not late.
We looked where Santa wasn't – not where he should be."*
She squeezed through the fence with a bend of her knee.

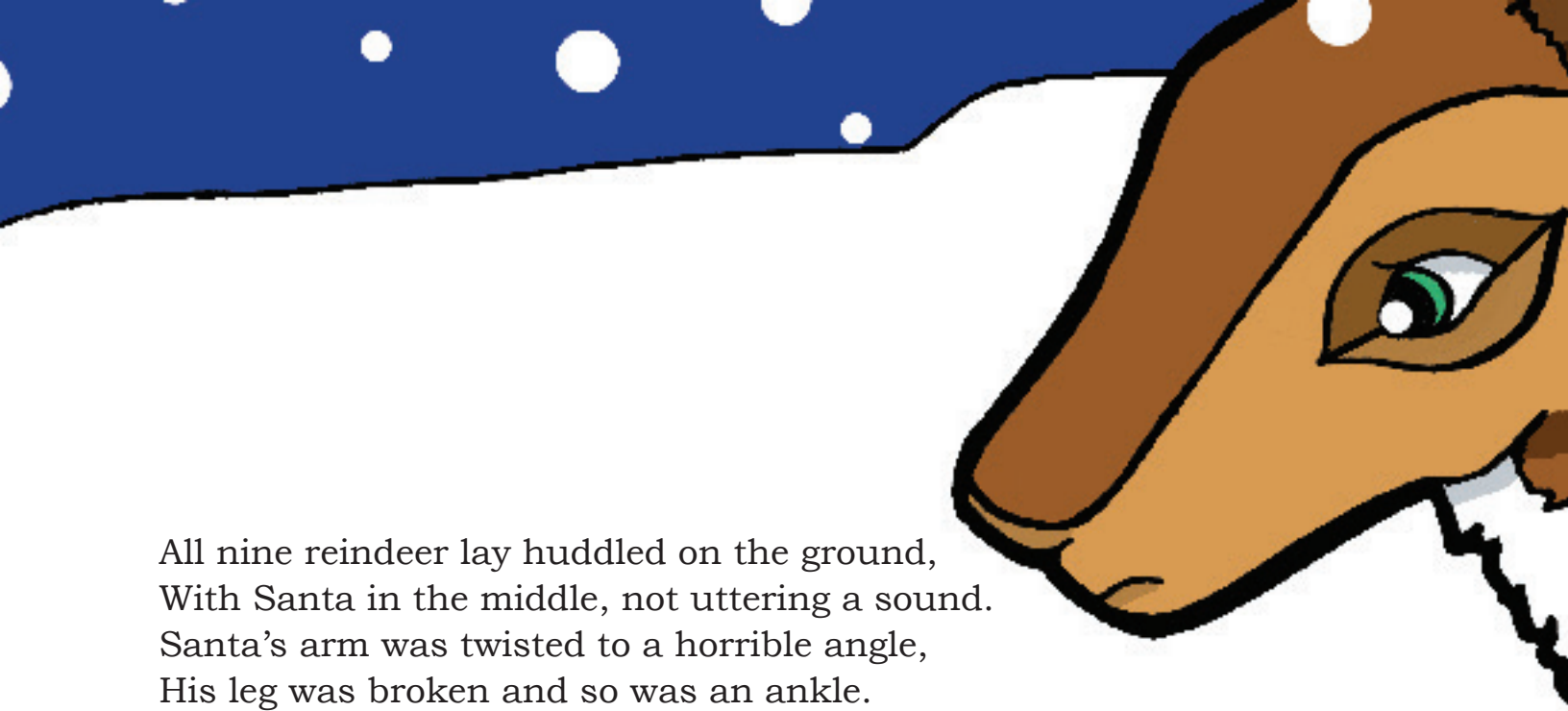
From the valley below came a reindeer's neigh.
"That's Donner," Twinkle said. *"He probably wants hay."*
"No! No!" Starlight yelled. *"That's a cry of alarm.
Someone or something has come to great harm."*



They dashed over a knoll, then down a steep slope,
And what they discovered made all of them choke.
Twinkle's bells did not jingle on her cap or her sleeve,
She stared in amazement. She couldn't believe.

Twister stiffened like a statue and let out a sigh,
His eyes glazed over as he tried not to cry.
There right before them was a gruesome sight.
They fought off their tears with all of their might.





All nine reindeer lay huddled on the ground,
With Santa in the middle, not uttering a sound.
Santa's arm was twisted to a horrible angle,
His leg was broken and so was an ankle.

Across Santa's body lay a large spruce tree branch.
"Oh, no," Starlight whispered. *"He didn't have a chance."*
The reindeers where huddled close to keep Santa warm,
Sheltering him from the wind and cold of the storm.

"What'll we do?" Twinkle and Twister said in rush.
Starlight held out her hand, *"Now both of you hush.*
First we'll need help to move Santa inside.
Then my dear friends I hope we can go for a ride."








In a blink and a wink, Santa was back home in bed,
With his red woolen cap pulled over his head.
While Mrs. Claus and several elves saw to his needs,
The Elf Council met and quickly agreed.

Erasmus' voice rippled like a gentle ocean tide,
*"Twinkle, Twister and Starlight, you fill me with pride.
And your wish will be granted, just as you've asked.
But please tell us why you've chosen this task."*

A smile spread over Starlight – Grand Canyon wide,
While her heart and her lungs pounded inside.
"The North Pole's our home," Starlight said with joy.
But all of us want to see a real girl and a boy."






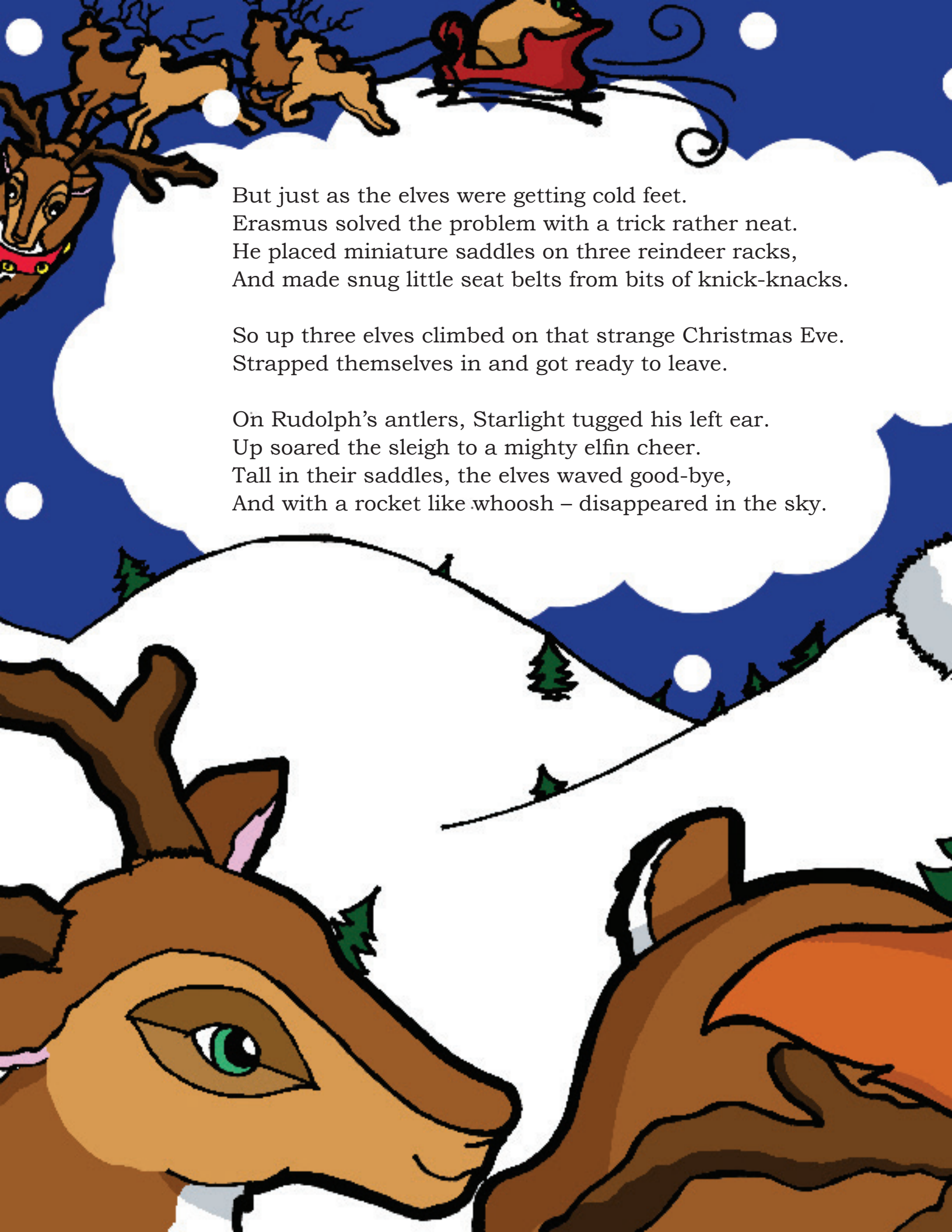


Outside all nine reindeer waited, ready and bold.
Santa's sleigh was packed with every toy it could hold.
And though there wasn't one minute to spare,
All stood together for a moment of prayer.

The Moose and the Polar Bear came to wish them good luck.
The Fox licked his whiskers, "*I admire your pluck.*"
"*We'll help you on to the sleigh,*" the Polar Bear mumbled,
But the thoughts of the elves were mixed up and jumbled.

They stared up at the sleigh to where Santa sat,
How could they steer, from as far back as that?
How would the reindeer hear their elfin commands?
Their voices were so tiny and so were their hands.





But just as the elves were getting cold feet.
Erasmus solved the problem with a trick rather neat.
He placed miniature saddles on three reindeer racks,
And made snug little seat belts from bits of knick-knacks.

So up three elves climbed on that strange Christmas Eve.
Strapped themselves in and got ready to leave.

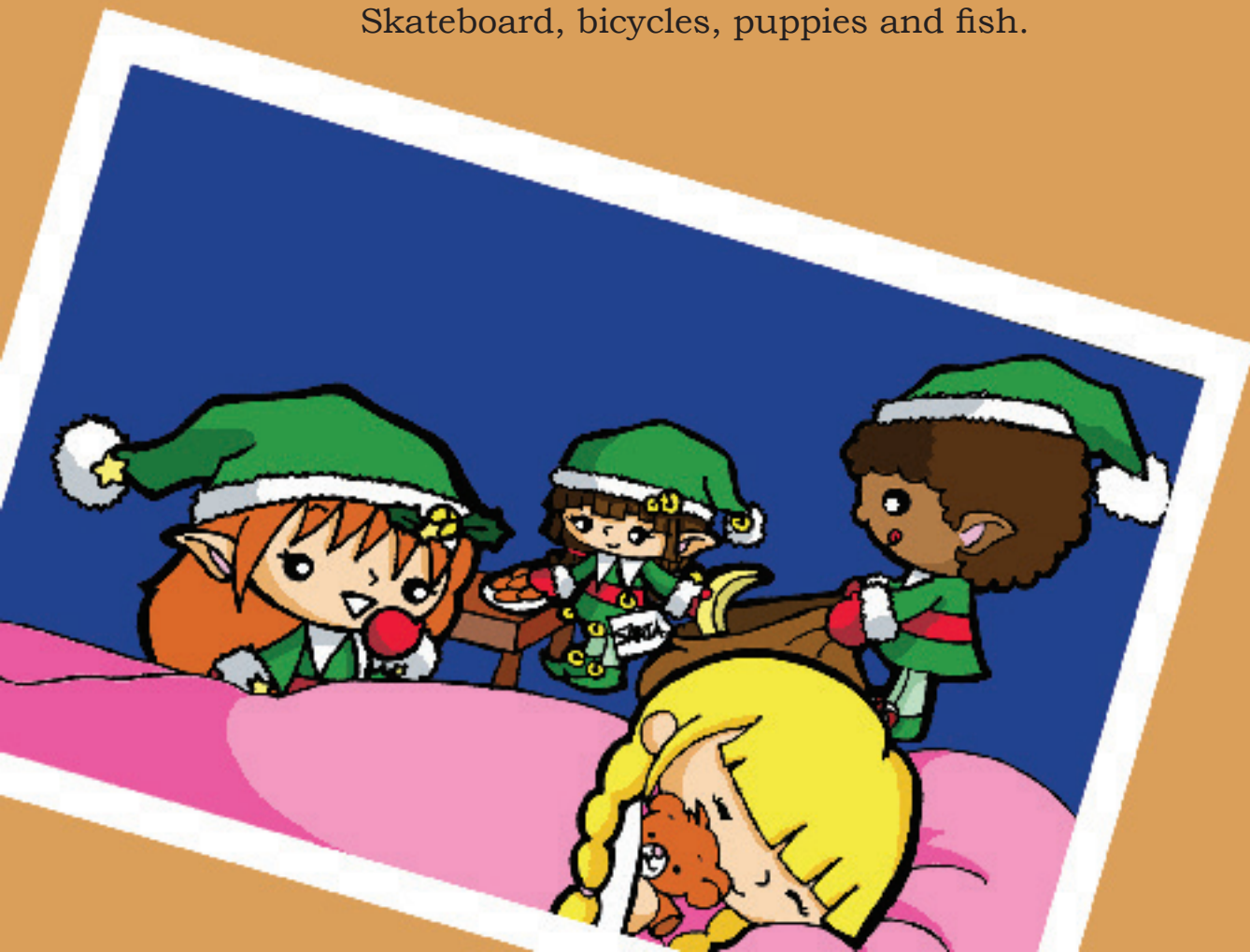
On Rudolph's antlers, Starlight tugged his left ear.
Up soared the sleigh to a mighty elfin cheer.
Tall in their saddles, the elves waved good-bye,
And with a rocket like whoosh – disappeared in the sky.





Through the long night the elves did persist.
Up and down chimneys quick as you wish.
If there wasn't a chimney, they used all of their wits.
Not at Tepee or trailer did they once call it quits.

Starlight crawled along gutters, and scaled ivy walls.
Twister cycloned into cellars, and down winding halls.
Twinkle made sure all was proper on each Christmas list.
Skateboard, bicycles, puppies and fish.



Inside, outside, then back to the sleigh,
On again, off again what wonderful play.
Sometimes they found snacks, cookies or a banana,
Which they saved in a sack to bring back to Santa.



With Starlight's wish came a wonderful surprise,
She saw the world's children every color and size.
She saw the babes of Asia and Africa too,
Europe, the Americas even the Incas of Peru.

That night they visited every country on Earth.
In Australia they witnessed a kangaroo's birth.
When their adventure was near over and up popped the sun,
They found themselves back where their journey'd begun.



Twinkle, Twister and Starlight, shuffled to Santa's bed.
And found his cheeks still white, not yet rosy red.
When he saw the concern in each of their faces,
He opened his arms and said, "*Come, take your places.*"

But they all stood still and turned purple as a beet.
With six elfin eyes staring at six elfin feet.

*"Did something go wrong? Did you get lost on track?
"No,"* Santa puzzled, *"Tis not as simple as that.
Tell me my friends, where is your joy?
Didn't you believe in real girls and boys?"*







Twinkle covered her eyes so embarrassed was she.
While Twister turned crimson like a cranberry tree.
Starlight puppeted forward – a sad marionette,
“I’m sorry,” she said, with a voice of regret.

*“I wasn’t’ positive, Santa. There was no guarantee.
Though now I feel stupid, as stupid can be.
Because I’ve seen what happiness our toys can bring,
And realize that doubting you was a horrible thing.”*

“It’s all right,” Santa roared. “Be proud of yourselves.





*"What?" Starlight cried in total disbelief.
"Not believe in us? Good grief, good grief."*

*"Ha, ha" Santa laughed. "You're surprised I can see.
But there are many children that don't believe in me!"*

*Starlight and the others turned white as sheets.
"Then why make them toys? Why give them treats?"*

*"Ho! Ho!" Santa laughed. "It's the giving I enjoy.
Besides I believe in each girl and boy."*





**THE
END**

