

The Night the Llama Saved Christmas  
By David J. Wing



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With thanks to  
Stephen Thompson- a valued friend and mentor.

Dedicated to Clarissa Troller Habekost,

*My Inspiration*

And in memory of my parents-

Daphne & Peter,

A real pair of dreamers.



## Chapter 1

### *Sniffles*

*'Knock Knock'*

A small Elf in a small Elf sized green coat, in small Elf sized green trousers and wearing small, Elf sized black boots, stood at Santa's door, looking frantically concerned.

'Sir, we have a problem!'

Storming from his office, Santa, clad head to toe in red, strode down the halls of Christmas HQ, flanked on either side by Elves, two on each side, each more nervous than the last.

As Santa approached the wooden Reindeer pen, the extent of the concern in his face rose.



Santa could hear sneezing over the sound of his boots crunching the fresh snow underfoot.

Popping his head around the entrance, Santa was greeted by a sea of red noses, busily sneezing over

their pen doors.

Elves were running this way and that in an effort to place handkerchiefs in front of each snout before they blew.

'My, oh my, this isn't very good', Santa said, unable to fully comprehend what was happening.

A stout and fair man, Santa walked slowly through the pen, stroking each 'deer in turn and enquiring after their health.

'How are you doing, boy?' Santa asked with concern.

'I've been better, boss, but I'll be good to fly tonight!' Donner replied with little confidence.

'That's my boy'.

Santa continued his jolly, inspiring chats until another Elf came careering down the pen, slipped on straw and slid to a stop at Santa's feet, bundled with tissue paper around his ankles.

'What is it, son?' Santa enquired.

'Santa, Santa, it's *Dasher*!' the Elf stated with real worry.

Santa's eyes widened, ever so slightly. He stood even straighter and marched down to the final door in the pen.

Glancing over the top, Santa could see the alarm. Dasher was flat on his side, exhausted and very, very sleepy.

'What's all this then, Dasher, my sprightly boy not feeling so sprightly?' Santa asked with a smile on his face, hiding his concern.

'I'm al, all, alriiiiiGHT!! Ah Choo!!' Dasher sneezed.

'Uh huh...I can see that. Forgive me for asking, son, but would you mind standing to attention?'

'Sir, I don't think he should move!' a concerned Elf protested.

'It's ok, I'm goo...choo!' sneezed Dasher.

Fumbling, Dasher managed to get to his feet, only for another sneeze to drop him back onto his comfy straw mattress.

'Ahhhh Chooooo!'.

'Nice try, son, its bed rest, fluids and lots of strokes for this poorly deer' Santa said, addressing the Elf to his side.

'We'll be ok without you just one year, kid, ok?'

Dasher smiled and then fell fast asleep with a roaring snore.

'Grrrrrummmmm, sssshhhh, grrrrrummmmm, sssshhhh'.

'He'll be fine, just a cold'.

Santa addresses the team.

'Elves, Reindeer, can I have your attention?'

They all turned from their duties and sneezing to look at Santa.

It seems you've all caught a cold'.

The Reindeer and Elves looked at each other disconsolately.

'It's a bit of an odd one, neither the elves nor myself can remember the last time there's been so much as a sniffle in the North Pole, but, heigh ho.

Them's the breaks.

Now, I need 'yays' and 'neighs' as to whether you're fit to fly this evening.

We're already replacing Dasher, he seems to have caught the worst of the cold and I need names.

Who's well enough to fly?'

The Elves looked at the Reindeer and within seconds 'yays' flooded the pen...with coughs and sneezes punctuating.

'Well, that is reassuring, I'm sure we'll be just fine'.

Santa smiled at the 'deer then turned and looked unconvinced at a worried Elf.

'Jim'. Santa said, addressing the Elf to his side.

'Who've we got that you think can replace the fastest 'deer in our team?'

'Gerald, Sir!' he answered without a second thought.

'Gerald?'

Appearing as if from nowhere, a Reindeer suddenly stood bolt upright at Santa's side.

'Gerald, I presume?'

'Yes Sir! Santa, Sir!'

A very eager 'deer, Gerald was brown, head to hoof, looking confident but with his juvenile antlers still baring velvet and his 5'9" of height gave away his early years.

'How long you been in the service, son?' Santa enquired.

'This is my Third year, Sir!' Gerald answered with conviction.

'And how many test flights have you been on?'

'56, sir!'

'Fifty Six?! What are you? Super-Deer?' Santa laughed heartily, with Gerald looking confused.

'Smile son, you're about to get your big break, you're gonna run the team with Blitzen'.

Gerald's smile, which rose skyward when he heard of his new job, swiftly dropped when he heard Blitzen's name.

Blitzen! Lord of the Hoof, hero to Deer and Doe alike.



Santa glanced over Gerald's shoulder and into the near distance.

Gerald could see his eyes move and turned to see Blitzen approaching, coming out of a blizzard that

seemed to encircle him and disappear at the same time.

Before he knew it, Blitzen was before him! Like magic.

'Ah, there you are, Blitzen'. Santa exclaimed.

'Sir! Yes, Sir!' Blitzen's voice bounced off the inside walls of the pens and momentarily woke a very poorly Dasher.

'A little quieter son, Deer and Doe sleeping in here', requested Santa.

'Sir, Yes, Sir', Blitzen's voice became only slightly less noise-some.

'This is, Gerald...you're Vice-Captain tonight'. Santa smiled, he knew exactly what was coming.

**'WHAT?!'**

The pens visibly wobbled, the Elves cowered, the 'deer's ears dropped and their heads turned away.

Santa smiled joyfully while the alarming sound echoed through the Pole.

'Finished?' he asked, still smiling.

Blitzen looked at Santa with understanding but annoyance.

Turning to the replacement he stared right through Gerald.

'Well, let's get this sleigh ride a movin'!' said a reluctant Blitzen.

He turned with a swivel and disappeared back into the blizzard from whence he came.

Gerald looked at Santa, pleadingly.

Smiling back, Santa said, 'You'll do fine lad, just follow old Grumpy's lead. Ha ha haaaaa'.

Santa's laugh disturbed the Reindeer too. He apologised with a hand up and a smile and then wandered off to get changed for the flight.

“Changed” for Santa, merely involved a bigger coat, as he only had three colours in his wardrobe- red, green and brown- although Mrs Santa had tried to get him to try a nice blue from time to time.



## Chapter 2

### *The Inuit Village*

The full Reindeer team stood harnessed to the sleigh, prepared, awaiting Santa and take off.

The toys sat, multi-coloured, piled expertly high but precariously on the back of the sleigh.

So many toys!

'My, oh my, what a lot of presents', said Santa, staring with his mouth open, 'must have been a lot of good children this year!'

Santa beamed a smile at the giant red sack.

The Reindeer looked back from their positions and smiled as best they could between sneezes and wobbled a little from side to side.

Addressing the head Elf, Santa said,

'These 'deer don't look too sprightly tonight lad'.

'No Sir, but they'll get the job done... somehow'.

'Good, good. Well, let's be away then!'

Santa climbed aboard the sleigh, sat down in his brown, mock leather chair and strapped his safety belt across his rather wide belly.

'Maybe time to let the belt out another notch', Santa thought to himself.

The Elves had known that for a while, but it's not nice to tell Santa to go on a diet.

'Everybody, stand back!' shouted the runway Elf.

The spectators all took a few steps backward and even though most of them had seen the team take-off hundreds or thousands of times before, they all stood with jaws gaping and eyes wide.

'OK, boys and girls, let's do this!' Santa shouted with confidence and the joy he always felt before the start of the yearly trip.

Santa cracked the reins, the Reindeer sprinted into action- a few slipping momentarily on the icy runway and the sleigh whipped away.

The Deer reached take-off speed and Santa gave the command,

'Up, Up, **UP!**'

Nothing.

The Reindeer tried, but with their colds they were understrength.

It took a few more strides but with another command, they were up, up and gone.

The Elves on the ground turned and looked at each other, somewhat concerned by the slower than average take off.

Santa looked down over the North Pole and his friends, equally concerned, but jolly, always jolly.

A few 'deer turned to look at Santa, only for him to beam back with trust in his smile and eyes.

Looking at his map- although he really didn't need to, Santa addressed the reindeer.

'OK team, first stop as ever, the Inuit village around the corner'.

'Boss?' Gerald was staring at Santa, 'the village is so near, why don't we just walk the presents around?'

'Come now, Gerald, where's the magic, where's the surprise if Santa and his incredible flying Reindeer walk around, instead of flying?'

'I get ya, Boss, much more magical'.

The team landed only a few minutes after taking off. Despite their rocky start, their landing was somewhat smoother.

The Reindeer's hooves tip toed down, with the sleigh working as a heavy anchor to slow them upon touch down.

They were situated firmly in the middle of the village. With the Reindeer at a stop, Santa stepped out and looked at the team.

All seemed well, other than the sniffles of course.

The people of the village wasted little time and came rushing out, old and young alike.

'Hey, Boss, they're coming towards us?' Gerald stated with surprise.

'It's ok, Gerald, the Inuit people have known about us for thousands of years. They get their gifts first and almost as importantly, you get a carrot straight away. Sound good?' Santa asked, smiling.

'Oh yeah, Boss!' Gerald beamed and the sniffly 'deer all cheered up somewhat.

The children ran up to the poorly 'deer and started petting them.

Santa began handing out the Christmas presents to the youngest children first. He sat on his sleigh and the children, one by one, jumped onto his lap.



The head of the village came to speak with Santa. In the Inuit tongue, he asked, 'How are they doing? I've seen many a poorly 'deer before, but yours never get sick' he asked with concern.

'True, it is a turn up for the books, but rest assured, they're a hardy bunch and tonight will be completed as ever' Santa answered with a confident smile.

'I believe in them, Santa. Might we offer the 'deer a few coats? I realise at the heights you travel it may not help much...'

'They'd be delighted. Many thanks', Santa replied.

The Inuit Chief turned and gave a signal and his children- the ones not playing with their toys, began sizing the Deer individually for a coat.

Each 'deer smiled in gratitude.

'Well team, time waits for no man...except me, Ho Ho Ho!'

The team had heard Santa's joke before, in fact, they'd heard them all before, though it didn't stop them smiling and Gerald, being new to the team, laughed out loud.

'Thanks boy, I knew that was a good one!'

Turning around for take-off, Santa nodded at the Chief, then smiled and waved to the children.

'UP, UP, UP!'

The Reindeer began to trot, to canter and then sprinted into the air.

A little more gracefully this time, they had an audience after all.

### Chapter 3

#### *Llama?*

A few hours later, Santa and the team were flying high over Central America, having completed deliveries to the good children of Canada, the USA, Mexico, Cuba and a few of the islands.

Turning a little, the team abruptly started to lose height.

The sleigh began to jolt and jerk up and down, like the birthday 'bumps'.

The toys that sat so precariously on the back seemed to be loosening.

Santa felt suddenly very grateful for his seat belt.

'Whoa, team! Whoa! Blitzen, what's happening up there?'

Blitzen was rather busy. A few of the 'deer in the middle were feeling worse and sneezing to the point they kept missing their rhythm.

The team slowed and began losing height as a result.

'They're not doing too well Boss. Might need a bit of a rest soon?' Blitzen yelled back over the sound of the wind beating against their faces.

'Understood, boy, Whoa, whoa, whoaaaa!!! Blitzen! UP!!!!'

The sleigh dropped so much they had to make a dramatic turn.

The team stepped up the pace as best they could, dodging and narrowly missing the right arm of Christ the Redeemer- the massive statue that stands overlooking Rio de Janeiro- Brazil.

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