

Santa's Shortcuts *(Mahesha Goleby)*



Christmas this year didn't quite turn out as planned as Santa was **cutting it fine**– he was running late. The **bell-ringing** over the weeks before had kept him up later than usual and he was tired this night of all nights. He'd finished with the **shoe polish**, had had his beard and **hair cut**, "**Take my hand**, Mrs Claus," he said to **the fox** he had married and had stood by him in his most unusual of ventures, "Time to go."

It was **bedtime** for the children of the world but not before they left out a **glass of milk** here, a juice there, sometimes a beer, or a muffin with **strawberry jam** and cream. Santa pondered the weight mentioned near his **mugshot** on the sleigh licence. "Hmmm, that'll go up another 40 kg in one night."

Despite the tales told, the reindeer only took him between major stops, then it was on foot for Santa lugging his sack, each **path** usually well-defined – across **meadowland** and farm planting, through **the orchard** or two, **over the fence** and **rail crossing**, and so on.

It was no **card trick**. He needed no GPS for his seeming **rambling** along this **tightrope** of precision supply **chain** management, it was automatic, an **echo** of memory, centuries past, **the price** of **stuck-in-the-mud** habits. Any agenda modifications were somehow psychically-updated for the itinerant and new families. Some families were on **fishing trips**, some were camping out and **shooting the rapids**. Last year, he was even **paddling** through the **water lilies** and **under water** to the research habitat where two families were spending a year to further scientific knowledge.

With the night over amidst the **dawn chorus** of puffing reindeer, Santa sat beside Mrs Claus in his recliner, "Wifey, open my **grandmother's cupboard**, I need a stiff drink!"