

## Santasy *(Helen Goleby)*



Santa lowered himself carefully on to the lounge chair in his living room, aware of his aching back and tired feet.

“I’m getting too old for this,” he grumbled, to no-one in particular. His elves were sitting wearily outside the workshop, glad that another year of Christmas preparations was over. Some were yet to join the tired group, making sure the presents were packed in properly, busy feeding and brushing the reindeer prior to hitching them up, while others gave a final polish to the silver bells to the sleigh.

Christmas presents, piled high in the sled, reminded him of the past years trekking across the world in a bid to please hopeful children. He shuddered as he saw himself again, this year, sliding hastily down dirty chimneys to land with a painful bang in the coals. His mouth twisted at the thought of yet another stale biscuit and glass of tepid, curdling milk awaiting him on a table. He was trying to lose weight and these so-called treats just didn’t help his self-control. No wonder his back and feet ached, having to carry around all his extra kilos!

Santa lay back in the lounge chair and allowed his thoughts to drift. The world had lost the plot as far as he was concerned. How had he evolved from Bishop Nicholas, spending years in prison during the Great Persecution against Christianity, then praised as a miracle worker when that religion was recognised, forgotten in the 1500’s during the Reformation, then revived in the early part of 19<sup>th</sup> century, to being marketed as a bringer of Christmas gifts with a jolly, chubby, grandfatherly face, a pipe, *(I don’t smoke!)* dressed in a red suit with white fur trim. *(Good advertising campaign, Coca Cola!).* And that heavy woollen suit with those huge black boots? *(Okay for winter in Europe, but what about Australia?)*

And what’s with this venturing out from the North Pole in a reindeer-driven sleigh *(cantankerous beasts!)* and being used to monitor children’s behaviour? *(What a cop out! Why can’t people do their own parenting!)*

Santa rose slowly and picked up the traditional pipe, grimacing as he poked the offending briar into his mouth. *“Oh well, better get cracking! Dirty chimneys and stale biscuits, here I come!”*

Climbing into the overladen sleigh he listened to the grunts and groans coming from the eight reindeer. *(You’ve got nothing to complain about! All you have to do is wait on a roof.)* He wedged himself in uncomfortably between the bulky presents. First stop New Zealand, he thought, planning his journey. *“I dread the thought of the extra workload in the years ahead. I can’t do it alone any more,”* he moaned. *“But I also dread the work recruiting Santas, training for shift work, organizing overtime, meal breaks, workplace health and safety regulations, extra elves, taming reindeer, and the other jobs I haven’t thought about!”*

The hours passed in a blur of biscuits and tepid milk as Santa belched his way through New Zealand, Australia, Asia, India, Africa, Europe and the United Kingdom, groaning with exhaustion as he climbed back into the sleigh. The reindeer smelt atrocious and Santa choked over their odour.

The respite from the cool breezes of the Atlantic Ocean was over too soon as Santa saw the twinkling lights of the east coast of America looming below. Last stops, a few islands, then back to the North Pole to recover. At least the Americans have wider chimneys. He looked ruefully at his soiled suit, the fur trim blackened with soot from the narrow apertures he'd had to climb through.

He'd almost finished the job in New York when he came down yet another chimney and began his stealthy trek to the Christmas tree. "Drop your weapon. On the ground. Now!" he heard and the lights blazed.

Uniformed policemen, eyes narrowed in readiness to shoot, stood silently aiming their guns at him. "Drop your weapon, I said. On the ground." barked one, who appeared to the officer-in-charge.

Santa dropped nervously to the ground, hitting the floor sharply. He grimaced in pain and reached down to rub his knee. "Don't move, or I'll shoot."

"I don't have a weapon. And you can't shoot me! I'm Santa Claus!"

"Yeah, and I'm the Easter bunny," scoffed the officer. "We've had lots of calls about some guy pretending to be Santa Claus, using chimneys to break in and rob innocent people. And at Christmas time! But now we've got you." He prodded Santa for weapons then jammed his gun into his back. "Come on, up you get. We've got a little sleigh ride downtown to the station."

As Santa stood for his mug shot he gathered that Christmas this year hadn't quite turned out as planned. It was definitely time to resign!