

Santa's Got Mail

a story to read to Beavers

by Laureen Duquette



"I have some bad news," Abigail Applebee said when Sarah, Amy, Freddie the computer wizard, Wilber the worrier and tiny Jason all arrived for their Beaver meeting. "I got an e-mail from Mrs. Claus and she said that Santa has a very bad cold."

The children were flabbergasted that their leader, Mrs. Applebee, had received an e-mail from Mrs. Claus.

"Maybe we can help him," Sarah suggested.

"Well what could we do? We can't make toys and we can't climb down chimneys and we can't fly a sleigh through the sky. What can we do?" Wilbert fretted.

"How about we ask Santa himself," Abigail suggested. "We'll send him an instant message."

"How can we do that?" Sarah asked.

"Oh, I have Santa's e-mail address. We correspond quite often," their Beaver leader confessed. "Wow," they all sighed. That was something about Abigail Applebee that none of them had known before. It did come to Sarah's attention that Abigail Applebee was rather roly-poly and did have very rosy cheeks and twinkling blue eyes like Santa. Someone could almost believe she was his sister.

Everyone gathered around the computer as Abigail logged onto her instant messaging.

"Look," she said. "Santa's logged on too. He is expecting to hear from us."

"Hi Santa," Freddie typed. Would Santa really answer?

"Ho, ho," came the reply. "Hi children."

"We're sorry you're sick, Santa."

"Ho, ho, ho. Thank you boys and girls. That's very kind of you. I'm sit-



ting in bed under a nice warm quilt with my laptop on my knee. Rudolph is at the foot of the bed."

"Rudolph is on your bed?" Freddy typed again.

"Oh yes, poor fellow. I'm afraid he came down with this nasty cold too. He's so miserable I couldn't just leave him in the barn. We're sneezing and sniffing and blowing our noses and, I must say, Rudolph has a pretty big nose."

The children exchanged glances. They just could not help but giggle when they imagined a big reindeer on the foot of Santa's bed.

"What can we do for you Santa? How can we help you while you're sick?" Wilbert typed.

"Well, boys and girls, would you be so kind as to pick me up a Christmas tree? Now I must sign off. It's time for my hot chicken soup and for Rudolph's special reindeer cold remedy that Mrs. Claus makes with the magic herbs from our kitchen window garden."

"Wow, we actually talked to Santa!" Amy exclaimed.

The next morning was bright and cold when Abigail Applebee and her Beaver colony arrived at Bob Banyan's Christmas tree farm to select a tree for Santa. They snowshoed down one trail and the next.

The Beavers looked from one tree to another and were just beginning to lose hope of ever finding the perfect tree when, to their astonishment, they heard a jingle. There, before them stood a deer – and not just any deer. He was a reindeer. The deer stood looking at them. He had big brown eyes, long eyelashes, a kindly looking face and a rather prominent nose. If a reindeer could do so, it almost seemed that he smiled at them.

He walked a few feet and nodded toward a small tree.

"Look," Sarah announced, "He wants us to take this one." The Beavers looked at the tree. It was not too fat and it was not too thin – in fact, it was perfect.

When they got back to the Beaver hall, the entire colony gathered around the computer while Freddie typed another message to Santa.

"Hi Santa," he said. "We saw one of your reindeer today and we picked up your Christmas tree for you."

"Ho, ho, ho," came the reply. "How nice of you. So you saw Blitzen, did

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you? Yes, I sent him to help you find just the right tree. He's a pretty good judge of Christmas trees you know."

"It's my turn to write a message," Amy said as she typed, "sure hope you're feeling better. How's Rudolph?"

"Oh I'm starting to feel much better. I hope to be back on my feet by the big night. Rudolph wants so much to go out on Christmas Eve but I told him that it would all depend upon whether he is over his cold. I think, though, he is feeling better. He is getting restless and he keeps yanking the covers away from me with his mouth. I have to say he's getting to be a bit of a pest. Would you children mind doing me one more favour?"

"Sure Santa," Sarah typed.

"Well, would you mind delivering the Christmas tree for me?"

"Deliver it where?" Wilbert asked perplexed.

"To the sad house."

"The sad house? Where's that?"

"Oh, you will know. Just pack up the Christmas tree on a sleigh, take a walk and you'll know which house it is. Now, I must go. It's time for Rudolph and I to take our medicine."

"Where can the sad house be," Sarah wondered as the Beavers pulled the little sleigh up the street. Tiny snowflakes fell and melted as they touched the children's warm cheeks and noses.

The neighborhood houses looked very festive. Some had many lights and others had a few, but they all twinkled against the night sky.

"Hey," Freddie suddenly announced, nudging Sarah. "There's the sad house."

"That?" Sarah was surprised. Freddie had indicated her best friend, Annie Thompson's house. Annie's family had always decorated for Christmas. They had always put lots of lights on the giant fir tree that stood in their front yard but Freddie was right. This

year there were no Christmas lights to brighten their home. This year the Thompson house was dark.

Sarah went up and knocked on her friend's door. When Annie answered, it was obvious that she had been crying. Her eyes were red and she blew her nose into a tissue. She tried to smile.



"Hi, Sarah. What's up?" she asked, seeing Mrs. Applebee and the rest of the Beavers gathered around her verandah steps.

"Guess what," Sarah said, "We have a Christmas tree to give away. Would you like it?"

"I'd love it," Annie beamed, "I didn't think we would have a tree this year. My Mom and Dad said we couldn't afford it this year. Dad's work is downsizing, whatever that means, and he said we have to be very frugal for awhile. He said that means we can't buy anything unless we really need it. Thank you for the tree. I love it."

Annie's mother came to the door and smiled as well. "Why don't you

bring your whole Beaver colony over for a decorating party tomorrow?"

The next night, Christmas Eve, the entire Beaver colony including Abigail Applebee went to the Thompson house. Mrs. Thompson put a string of tiny coloured lights on the little tree and set it on a table in front of the window. With their gift of love, the children made it a true Christmas tree.

Everyone sat around the kitchen table and worked on their own special craft while Mrs. Thompson popped some popcorn and Abigail Applebee poured hot chocolate.

"I'm making a Star of David because this is also the season when we celebrate the Jewish Festival of Lights," Freddie said, making the shape out of coloured straws.

"And I'm making the Star of Bethlehem for the Christ Child," Amy declared and she glued the shiny tinfoil to a cardboard backing.

"And I'm making a candy cane because I like them," Jason declared, twisting red, white and green chenilles together.

When they were finished, the children took a last look at the Thompson house. It was not sad any more. The little tree, adorned with the beautiful ornaments the children had made, twinkled gaily in the window.

Out on the lawn, Abigail's Beavers looked up and saw a red glow in the night sky. There, to their delight, flew a sleigh pulled by eight regular reindeer and one with a brightly shining nose. It was Santa — and Rudolph too! Their colds were gone. They were better! Santa's sleigh soared higher and higher and he called, just before he disappeared from sight,

"Thank you boys and girls. Merry, Christmas, Beavers! Ho, ho, ho ha-a-choo."

Well, at least Santa's cold was almost better. X
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