



# *T'was the Plight Before Christmas*

*by Sue Barry*

**T'was the day** before Christmas and all through the shop,  
the Elves were on countdown, with no time to stop.  
Their stockings were twisted. Their tempers were high.  
They hadn't had lunch and they wanted to cry.  
"We're working too hard!" fumed a frustrated Elf.  
"The pay is too small! I've no time for myself!"

**They loudly** complained as the hours flew past,  
till all of their projects were finished at last.  
All hands had been washed. They had changed to clean clothes.  
Then Rudolph stomped in with a cold in his nose.

**“What’s wrong?”** cried the Elves. “You are not looking well!”  
“I ab dot!” sniffled Rudolph. “My dose caddot sbell!  
But here’s the real reasod I’b cubbing to you:  
Our deers have all had it. They’ve quit aad they’re through!”

**One Elf gave** a whistle. Another one cheered.  
Another just nodded and fingered his beard.  
The rest of them mumbled and grumbled and frowned:  
“We all should just quit when next year rolls around!”

**“As if warming** temperatures aren’t bad enough,  
our products aren’t trendy, like all the new stuff.  
Our toys are old-fashioned. Our staff is old, too.  
We’ve failed to keep current. We’re toast! It’s so true!  
We wonder how Santa can keep keeping on?  
Just how do you think he would cope ... if *we’re* gone?”

**Well, that was** a question too sad to invite  
on an evening like this, with no reindeer in sight.  
They closed up the shop with its now-empty shelves.  
“We’re out of here, Santa! Good luck!” snapped the Elves.

**The hour was** late — it was more than half-past.  
Poor Santa was stranded. He had to think fast.  
“I’ll switch to my wagon?” he muttered. “My van?  
My old motorcycle?!” That seemed the best plan.

**He strapped on** his helmet and zipped up his jacket.  
“Merry Christmas to all!” he yelled over the racket.  
To his sleigh packed with toys, Santa hitched his bike tight,  
then stomped on the pedal and roared out of sight.

**T’was at four** Christmas morning when Santa returned.  
His sleigh again empty – a good rest was earned.  
The trip was exhausting for dear old St. Nick.  
His poor feet were aching, his poor heart was sick.  
“Oh, where is the happiness? Where are the joys?  
Has Christmas lost meaning for *these* girls and boys?”

**"It's different** for children," his wife counseled him.  
"They're glued to their screens. And each notion and whim  
gets met by their parents, indulged by their friends.  
Their hungers for 'things' have no limits, no ends."

**"You know,** Mrs. Claus," sighed that once jolly fellow,  
"I wish for the old days, when life was more...mellow.  
Before there were tablets and instant smartphones,  
wild video games, TikTok, Star Wars, and drones,  
before there was NOW! Instant gratification!"  
(Perhaps, thought his wife, Santa needs a vacation!)

**"When children** hung stockings and hoped I would stop  
to bring them *one* doll, or *one* ball, or *one* top.  
When *real* trees were trimmed with crisp popcorn on strings,  
with cranberries, candles and (yawn) carved wooden things...."

**The thoughts were** so painful. He nodded. Then slept,  
recalling those years when *his* Christmas was kept.

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**The Elves stayed** through winter, then planned their last day.  
Their minds were made up — they were quitting come May.  
Though Santa implored them, they wouldn't back down.  
"We're finished!" they glared. "We'll get good jobs *in town*!"  
Claus Factories closed at the North Pole right then.  
No toys could be fashioned without those small men.

**So months followed** months. There was nothing to pack:  
No toys for his journey, no gifts for his sack.  
He sat by his stove as he fought back the tears:  
"I'm losing my job! It's the worst of my fears!"

**Mrs. Claus couldn't** listen. She climbed to the door  
of the old family attic atop the fourth floor.  
"Up *here*!" she was shouting. "These toys — they're not new!  
They're broken and dusty. They'll just have to do!"

**And that was** how Christmas-time happened at last:  
with old-fashioned playthings and gifts from the past.  
Santa emptied the attic, repaired all those toys,  
to take them with love to a few girls and boys.

**This year, thought** poor Santa, my trip will be short.  
But suddenly hoofbeats! And then a loud “Snort!”  
In the wide-open door grinned his famous deer friend,  
the one with the nose that glowed red at its end.

**And behind him** were all of the other reindeer —  
they were smiling and stamping and bringing good cheer.  
“We’re all here to help!” shouted Rudolph with glee.  
“Then we’ll bargain with you, represented by *me*!”

**“Great news!” Santa** yelled, and he ran for his rope.  
“Ho! Ho! Ho! Welcome home! We had given up hope!”

**And as he was** hitching the deer to his sled,  
the Elves reappeared. “We’ve re-tooled!” they said.  
“We’ve learned to make gifts that a *cool* Santa brings,  
like Legos and robots and digital things.  
We’ve used what’s recycled and healthful and new —  
What’s good for the planet, for us and for you!”

**The Elves grabbed** their baskets of colorful toys.  
“Got room for these, Santa? For good girls and boys?”

**Now Rudolph’s nose** glowed like a halogen cherry,  
and Santa’s eyes twinkled, his thoughts growing merry.  
They loaded the sleigh and he drove out of sight.  
“We can bargain tomorrow! Now, to all: a good night!”

**And just as he’d** promised, when Santa was through,  
he drew up new contracts and signed them all, too.  
So that’s how the deer got new beds and fresh hay,  
and the Elves got new hours with raises in pay.

**Now each Christmas** is special, without any doubt,  
and sharing with others is what it’s about.  
For Christmas is best when your wishes are small,  
and your giving is GREAT! Merry Christmas to all!