

A Collection of Snowy Owl Christmas Stories

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A Perfect Choice Wondered Father Christmas

Firmly established is the image of THE FATHER CHRISTMAS SLEIGH, glistening high over frosty white rooftops during our festive season that touches all of our hearts and minds. You may ask how did Father Christmas select those magnificently eager Reindeer to lead his magically skilled sleigh, the carriage of joy and peace to the world over.

A very long time ago during the times of the Renaissance period, the Reindeer antlers provided the themes for the Christmas Ritual Horn Dance, which, in fact, goes back to the granting of hunting rights. Reindeer have very thick coats; their fur is brown and they have distinguished white patches on their neck, rump and feet. When digging in the snow for food, their thick-coated noses also protect them. Reindeer pulled the Lapp sleighs during migration for hundreds of years and indeed, Reindeer were always important to our ancestors and to our Home Lands.

A very helpful, graceful and historical animal thought Father Christmas!

Few creatures equal in grace and beauty; the Deer Family numbers about 100 species and the Reindeer, scientifically known as Rangifer Tarandus, is the most abundant, living in

most parts of the World.

A stunningly fine animal thought ·Father Christmas!

Reindeer appeared in wonderful cave men drawings made in Southern Europe over 25,000 years ago during the Old Stone Age! To this day, Reindeer are reigning free to be Reindeer as the world's only domesticated deer and antlers occur in both male and female reindeers. (The does of no other deer carry antlers.) Interestingly, the colouring of the Caribou (the Native American name used to describe the large Reindeer) becomes increasingly white in the winter...Reindeer have cloven hooves and the hooves are divided into two large toes. Their dew claws help support them on soft soils and their special hooves allow them to use the sharp edges to scrape snow and thin ice away. Additionally, their hooves orchestrate music; their legs and ankles make very merry clicking songs of merriment when they travel...

An amazingly talented creature thought Father Christmas!

Prior to the Great Wars, the Newfoundland Reindeer used to make an annual migration from the northern peninsula after the first fall of snow, when thousands of the magnificent creatures would travel in herds across the wild and free Lands through lakes and rivers. Highly bestowed with gifts of natural abilities, they can swim with perfect ease and they can travel more than 100 miles a day, tirelessly, maintaining a steady

trot while serving as pack animals or as special messengers of seasonal errands, pulling sleighs!

A wondrously magnificent choice thought Father Christmas!

What an unforgettable sight it is to see the picture of countless herds making their way over the barrens called moors and down the mountain sides in changing formations of dancing hoofs and mysteriously quiet movements matched by no other enormous groups of creatures in such rhythmic and changing movements. Their changing pathways in such descents and ascents present a perfect stage for the most magical of sights, perfectly balanced in visual adornment.

A remarkable memory for all thought Father Christmas!

The Reindeer will always give one of the most beautiful memories in a life time to share with all, especially when the herds maintain an unmatched and unforgettable silence of peace as they cover and travel the Lands with its fresh covering of snow and frost, glistening as though strewn with tens of thousands of diamond coloured ornamentally shaped snowflakes. These graceful creatures, named Reindeer, can move along so silently as they possess a serene beauty that defies any possible description.

A serenely vivid and beautiful companion to behold and to share around the globe thought Father Christmas!

Magically, Father Christmas has given us the glistening seasonal glows of the Reindeer that move through forests, streams, ponds, bogs, gardens and rooftops in every Land. I think that Father Christmas must have first seen the Reindeer with their antlers covered with the soft tissue of velvet, the purpose of which is to give protection for their developing horns. The Reindeer, with their caps of velvet, share such expressions of refinement, which would bestow upon them the honour to become:

THE LEADERS OF THE CARRIAGE OF PEACE,

JOY AND CHEER IN ALL THE LANDS,

TO WISH YOU AND YOURS,

ALL THE COMPLIMENTS OF THE SEASON. . .

“How truly perfect,” said Father Christmas!





Now the Snowflakes are Dancing!

Composers and Artists turned to nature for inspiration. DEBUSSY wrote an enchanting CHILDREN'S CORNER for his daughter, Claude-Emma and in the fourth movement, THE SNOW IS DANCING, he magically created a winter scene, suggesting snowflakes that were smooth and rippling. His musical notes changed, constantly, reflecting the ever-varied dance of the SNOWFLAKES that spiralled upwards to a final gentle flurry.

Winter snow was created by the composer PROKOFIEV in his creation of WINTER BONFIRE - SNOW OUTSIDE THE WINDOW, which was a symphonic piece for children; it described a train journey taken by a group of pioneer children. In the winter adventure, the children became overawed by the train journey and the snow outside. Prokofiev's WALTZ ON ICE also produced another movement that mimics a dancing activity on the ice.

TCHAIKOVSKY'S WALTZ OF THE SNOWFLAKES was the result of unusual creative freedom for a musical composer of a ballet production... It was one of the scenes on which he was free to work without following the detailed plans by his boss, Petipa! (Petipa was the chief ballet master of the Imperial Ballet in Russia, which he made the greatest ballet company of his

day.) Tchaikovsky's characters entered a magical, snow covered forest, where they watched the swirling, dancing snowflakes. Flutes tossed the musical notes about to create snowflakes blowing in the wind, whirling to a dramatic climax. This became the most admired part of the first production of the NUTCRACKER, in 1892.

MOZART'S SLEIGH RIDE, complete with jingling bells and posthorns, answering each other, created magical effects from the instruments. Interestingly, Mozart loved to dance, especially at fancy dress balls!

As striking as the glorious NORTHERN LIGHTS, the music of Scandinavia acquired its own recognisable winter musical notes... THE COPENHAGEN STEAM RAILWAY GALOP, complete with bells, by Hans Lumbye, created a scene about a lazy walk through the snow to the train station, which evolved into the most exhausting of popular dances through the snow: THE GALOP!

Composers became adept at instructing snowflakes to dance through the musical notes of tinselly sleigh bell joys in the orchestral colours, influenced by the vistas of the Northern Lights to welcome in a VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR!





Passing the Baton

Winter had arrived and it was time for SNOWY OWL to appoint the next group to make, in a traditional present for Father Christmas. This was the time to find a new relay team to create a fresh set of ideas for a perfect gift... As this difficult task must be achieved, Snowy Owl's selection of the next best team would be based upon his winter wanderings and observations, based mostly in northern habitats.

SNOWY OWL instinctively thought of passing the baton to THE PINE TREES, which have flowers in the form of cones! Cones are pollinated by the wind and the pollen often has small air-filled wings to help it float! SNOWY knew, too, that most trees with cones are evergreens; all pines have evergreen, needle like leaves in small tufts, growing off the main boughs...

As Snowy Owl passed the baton, he wisely suggested to The Pine Trees that they relay, using their natural resources to create the present of a Christmas WREATH. He described the wreath to the appointed PINE TREES as flowers or leaves strung or woven together into a ring for a naturally suitable gift of decoration! The selected Pine Trees contributed reasons why the wreath should be made with their branches of needles and cones.

The DOUGLAS FIR trees stated:

“Our needles are flattened and stand out all around the twig and our cones have three lobed bracts.”

The NORWAY SPRUCE joined the relay and explained:

“We are a typical tree of the mountain forests and our branches are arranged in regular whirls. We produce catkin clusters or red and green cones.”

The EUROPEAN LARCH also asked to join the relay team.

“We thrive on clean air and even though we shed in the autumn, our trees are covered with ovoid cones, which we retain for several years!”

The SCOTS PINE became an important member to complete a team that very much wanted to create a wreath for Father Christmas. These trees contributed very useful information:

“Our needles grow in pairs. We also produce flowers of small reddish stalked cones and variously coloured cones with sword-like wings. We are an important ornamental tree as well as a forest tree.”

Snowy Owl also wanted the SWISS MOUNTAIN PINE to join the team... He knew that Father Christmas favoured this tree, which he loved to pass on his global travels. These Swiss Pines added to the relay flow by stating:

“We grow high up in the Tree Line and our leaves are arranged

more densely with knob like, reddish-brown scaled tips. We can contribute both thickness and interestingly coloured tips.”

Snowy Owl was not going to leave the AUSTRIAN PINE out of the relay group, especially after its explanation:

“Indeed, our needles are dark green, in fascicles of two and our cones glow with lustrous, yellow-brown, rounded scale tips.”

All of these Pine Trees were delighted with Snowy Owl’s invitation to complete the relay challenge, especially since there are 80 different

kinds of pine trees found mainly in northern countries. They were located near each other and they watched the winter winds assist with the selection of twigs, needles and cones! A design of an unforgettable wreath fell into the place awaiting for Father Christmas to return.

Winged seeds were also carried away on this dry, wintry sunny day. Snowy Owl knew that the Pine Trees and the Wind had orchestrated a perfect present, magically... He had discovered the angelic wings of the trees!



A Thank You Surprise for Father Christmas!

As Father Christmas watched a bird snare some bright red berries from the ROWAN TREE, he knew, instinctively, that it was the perfect time to thank the most conspicuous living objects in the countryside: the trees and their cones. Together, they had graciously accepted the Baton this year to make his home-spun present. He also knew, instinctively, that the ROWAN MOUNTAIN ASH tree should be added to his thank you list as its fern like leaves with clusters of RED BERRIES salute the countryside from autumn to WINTER! The natural wealth of the Rowan's red berries is a very noteworthy feature of any winter display.. Of special note is the fact that the Rowan is not related to the Ash Tree, but is a relative of the Apple Tree, which is another tree Father Christmas added to his thank you list! Father Christmas knew, more than most, the importance of trees... They are truly magnificent and they serve him so well as his favourite landmarks, guiding him around the globe.

As trees change week by week, it was important for this special thank you to reach all the trees at just the right time, so he thought of a perfect thank you! He would read his favourite story to all on his thank you list! Just as the wind had chanted and moved the tree donations of exquisite branches and pine cones into the design of a WREATH for him, he would enjoy

the singing movements of the wind, magically, under the his favourite trees.....Coincidentally, his favourite trees formed a circle-wreath like formation and the story he selected to share was: TRAVELS into several REMOTE NATIONS of the WORLD by Lemuel Gulliver... Yes, indeed, he began to read: GULLIVER'S TRAVELS by Jonathan Swift.

All became very quiet; even the chants and echoes of the wind disappeared, so that all in the wreath of living creatures and objects could listen... Father Christmas explained that this story was written by a clergyman, named Jonathan Swift (1667-1745), who was a good friend of the poet, Alexander Pope. Swift was also a member of THE SCRIBLERUS CLUB, which lampooned badly written literature! Swift was known as the greatest Satirist of his age and served as an inspiration for all writers and all who aspired to follow the footprints of famous writers...

The story of Gulliver's Travels is full of HUMOUR, COLOUR, and LIVELY ADVENTURES and it, to this day, remains a favourite as its satire resonates, continually, the true balance of humanity in general. This adventurous account of a voyage by a surgeon and a captain, named Lemuel Gulliver, proved, over generations and generations, to be a biting satire about his VISITS TO A RANGE OF FANTASTIC LANDS, bearing OUTLANDISH NAMES. Gulliver met an array of peoples from the belligerent to the gentle...

The WINDS OF ADVENTURE tossed him about and through imaginary societies, the contemporary institutions were allowed

to speak with believable observations from all...

The STORY of such travels was an overnight success and its first print sold within days. It was universally read by politicians to little dwellers who were making footprints in their nurseries. Having never, to this day, been out of print, GULLIVER'S TRAVELS captured nature upon the entire surface of the earth. Father Christmas very much enjoyed sharing a story of humour with perfectly spoken words of a descriptive nature to thank all the gifts bestowed by the WONDROUS TREES, which decorate the globe. Gulliver, too, sat on the Globe with numerous 'PERSONAE' and just like Father Christmas and his reindeer, he was happy to return home. Gulliver's last visit in the Story was to a gentle civilisation and he finally found his way home to enjoy for the rest of his life a special animal, which we often see, travelling to and fro, on our lanes.

Just as Father Christmas was happy to be back home, enjoying his story telling about his favourite adventure to read and share, Gulliver was happy to be back home, away from the land of greed, and in the company of the Kings of Sport and Adventure: his beloved horses. Father Christmas looked up as he was enjoying his mug of hot chocolate, and he heard the wind chanting once more to applaud the special time. Then all present watched and enjoyed the view of the horses passing by the wreath of trees, which surrounded the Parish of Ockley, Okewood and Forest Green, trotting in tune with the chants of the Wind through those special trees.



Imagine that for Father Christmas!

The legendary Christmas Baton was being passed, once again, to selected friends of SNOWY OWL, who loved to organize the special workshop to make Father Christmas a special homemade thank you present. This year, SNOWY invited, firstly, his friends, the DORMICE. They are usually, at this time, tucked away in the honeysuckle bedding in hedgerows. With their golden fur and blackcurrant eyes, SNOWY knew them to be gentle creatures that liked to hibernate in a very big way! This Christmas Season, as a special favour to SNOWY, they would stay awake, especially due to the excitement of making a very magical surprise gift...

Also, Snowy promised to make certain that they would be safe under his watch over the special workshop area. Other friends were invited to help and they came from the list of feathered friends, all of which were so very different, talented, helpful and resourceful. They all graciously accepted and expressed that they liked the project. Together they worked to perfect the PLAN!

They wanted Father Christmas to see from on high, on his special landing in our villages, a mosaic picture of lush fields, all bordered by the stunningly natural line of trees and hedgerows, decorated with sparking colours, sprinkled over the

sculptured designs made from wild plants gathered. The hedgerows had always displayed for Father Christmas the perfect landing sites in our area and this year, the glow of the decorations would be quite something for Father Christmas to see!

As the team went into formation, the feathered friends included the resourceful BLUE TITS, who loved all and who were loved by all... They looked like squadron leaders as they joined in with their flat caps and their love of picking brambles in an orderly fashion. Then the TREE SPARROWS arrived, looking like country gentlemen with such perfect manners and an enormous love of the countryside. They were ready to work... The GREENFINCHES were not left out as they were already here, there and everywhere. They never missed out on a special treat of excitement... Music was required to keep the team working happily and the GOLDFINCHES were summoned. They were already practicing their orchestral chimes from thistle to thistle. Their musical performance when Father Christmas arrived had to be perfect... The BULLFINCHES offered their talent of making worthy “PEEPS” and all were impressed with the buoyancy of their ability to make perfect signals to alert all when Father Christmas was coming...

The Greenfinch cousins from Scotland, the SISKIN, were invited to help, too, as they could easily spot the pine trees and cones, which would be needed for the decoration plan... The WOODPIGEONS arrived, proud as punch in their new suits

and they immediately started to design a Christmas Jig for the end of year party... SNOWY OWL thought that this would now be a good time to add an air of peace to the atmosphere and he invited the DOVES, with such polite manners, to join in... Together, they wrote a letter to the SPARROWHAWK, asking him to take a few days off during this festive season and the Sparrowhawk replied that he was going away to visit family! All the feathered friends waved goodbye to him as he departed with heartfelt wishes of joy and relief!

Gold colours always decorated the fruit in Christmas paintings and displays and just as this was being discussed, the brilliant GOLDCRESTS flew into the workshop. In spite of their very small size (their weight is about as the same as a teaspoon of sugar), they were determined to add much to the gift making. The GOLDCREST keep their bright flat caps forward at all times, reminding all to behave like gentlemen and ladies... at all times... HOUSE MARTINS planned to add needed information, too, for the landing area. If they are flying high, the sun will shine and if they are flying low, have the umbrellas ready for Father Christmas. They all hoped that the weather would add something magical to the event...

A nutcracker would be needed and all the helpers started to shout: "NUTCRACKER"

Their NUTCRACKER friends responded; arrived and they immediately started to use their beaks, cracking nuts for the display as they ran up and down the trees.... They all knew

that no feathered friend could strip the Rowan bushes faster than the WAXWINGS, which looked liked Christmas characters from Norse tales. They were immediately invited to add bewildering colour-ways... They might even let others watch as they performed their magic. Another talent was noted on the list of helpers. The GREEN WOODPECKERS, with their unusually long tongues hidden well in their beaks, would prove to be the perfect collectors of beauties from the hedgerows, without disturbing the natural habitat...

SNOWY advised the workers that his friends, the BLACKBIRDS, were now on board to be at the forefront, observing all that was taking place; all the goings on; all the ins and outs of the plan. It didn't take the BLACKBIRDS very long to understand the plan of a visionary surprise for Father Christmas as he landed...

The quintessential winter bird, The ROBIN, certainly wasn't very far from the workshop area. Charmingly, he started singing a Christmas song to remind all that the feathered friend team was now in full swing... His tune reminded the workers of the importance of the whimsical plant gatherings and the decoration of the hedgerows. The designs collected were brought to the workshop to receive additions of winter sparkles and colour, especially gold, silver, red and green!

They had selected many stunning shapes which included: WILD ANGELICA for its elegance that formed an explosion of star shapes, BIRD CHERRIES, with wonderful drooping

lengths to make distinctive markers on the hedgerows, BORAGE, to help make a quilt like design, using its oval leaves with crinkly edges, WILD CHAMOMILE, with leaves of painted silvery tones, along with visions of bouquets, ELDER, coated with green lichen and with purple berries to create a soothing effect on the expanding vision...

The BLACKBIRDS announced that the chosen remnants of natural beauty had been glistened and sprinkled with the sparkling notions of colour and glimmering hues. Everything had been returned to the hedgerows, which bordered the land around the Parish of OCKLEY, OAKWOOD HILL & FOREST GREEN. In time to see Father Christmas arrive, all the feathered friends, the dormice and Snowy Owl viewed the result from the highest hilltop. They couldn't believe their eyes. The hedges were glimmering with images beyond belief.

Just as Father Christmas started twisting his sled downwards, with the help of his Reindeer, opposite the sun by reflection, a dispersion of sun rays in falling raindrops created a rainbow... Then, it started to snow and the rainbow turned into the most beautiful SNOWBOW, which they had never seen before. It was a performance like no other; a gift of wonder for all to see; the most perfect gift of bewilderment even for Father Christmas. What a magical time and place to share with all...



Imagine that for Father Christmas! (Part 2)

Overwhelmed by the surprise of the decorated hedgerows, which glowed with the dazzling colours of the rainbow and which magically formed a snowbow! Father Christmas planned an enticing occasion for all his feathered friends who made the present that glowed as his reindeer and sled brought him home. This surprise was one of the greatest and most natural gifts he had ever received and he was overwhelmed with gratitude. Father Christmas always enjoyed planning his annual thank you New Year's party and he wanted this coming party to be the most special ever... What was he planning?

Father Christmas was planning a commanding performance of a global tale and he was sending individual invitations to all of his feathered friends, who had worked very hard on the magnificently decorated hedgerows. As Father Christmas finished writing all of his invitations, he smiled. He knew that his feathered friends would love receiving his hand-written invitations. Each invitation was hand written to include the individual name of the feathered bird friend! When all the helpers received the invitations, they all fluttered with tremulous excitement as they couldn't believe their eyes. Was this really happening? The leader, Dormouse, read his invitation aloud to reassure them all that, yes, this was a very special invitation:

Mr, Dormouse, you are expressly invited to a
THANK YOU PARTY
Gingerbread and Hot Chocolate will be served,
A reading of my favourite international tale (along with its
composition of music) will be read by me in my Country
Kitchen on New Year's Eve at the time of the Sunset.

I very much hope you can join me!

Yours Ever,
Father Christmas

All of the feathered helpers replied, immediately, as they twittered a melody of choral replies. They wanted to express how much they were looking forward to such a promise of enchantment.

Indeed, they all arrived on time, on New Year's Eve, just as the sun began to set and all were drawn to the scent of gingerbread, baking in the oven and the hints of hot chocolate. Then, after Father Christmas served his special treats, he narrated his favourite tale of enchantment; a tale which he had heard in many parts of the globe. He explained that the story had several versions, but he had composed his own version to share while they all enjoyed the warm gingerbread and hot chocolate. He began his story by saying:

“My version is about two children, who were as cunning and thoughtful as you all are to your friends, family and to me.

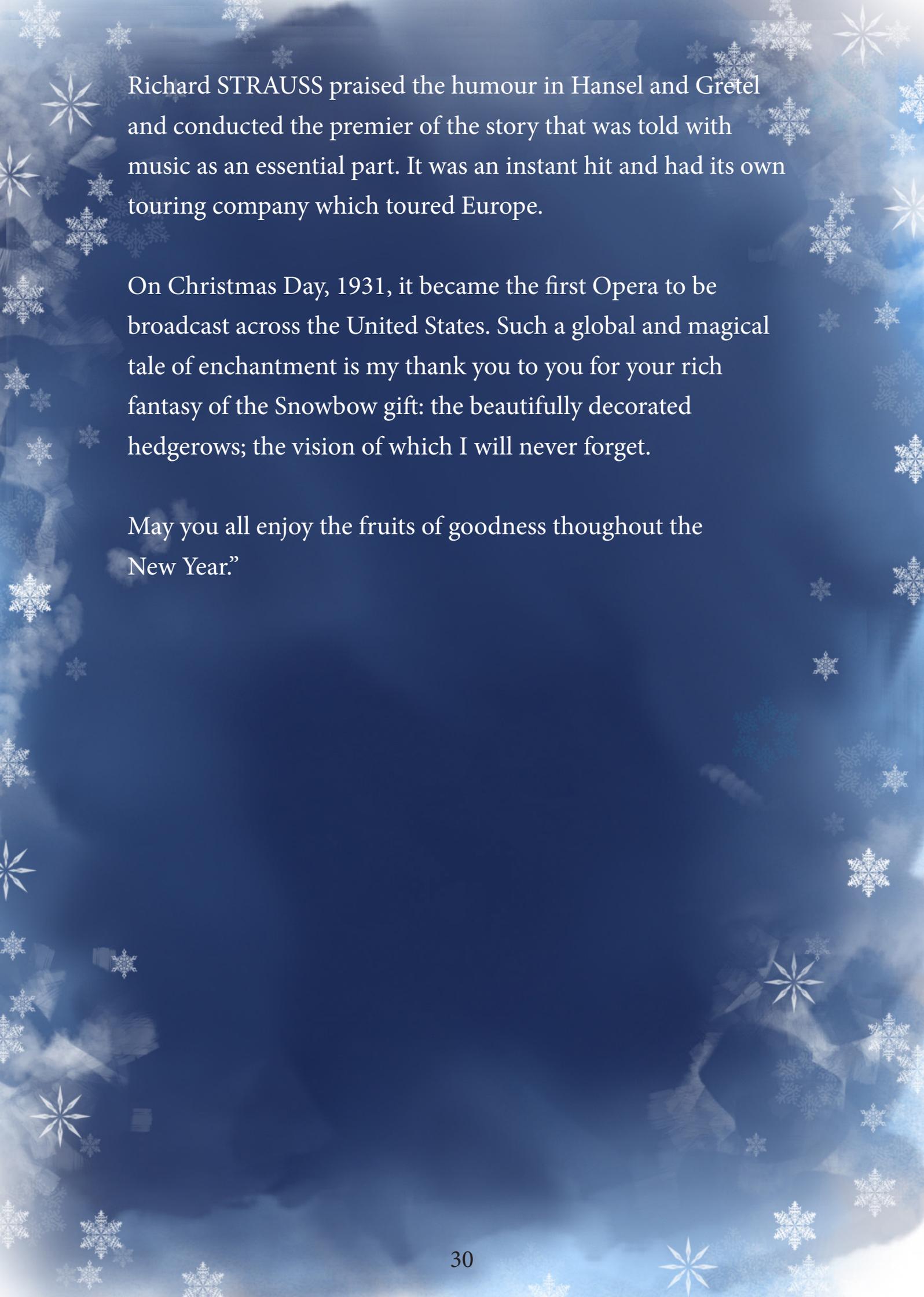
Hansel and Gretel were brother and sister. They worked in a workshop, making brooms and knitwear, industriously. There was very little for them to eat and during their break, they would dance to starve off the hunger pangs! One day their mother came home and found them dancing. She was sad because the last jug of milk had been knocked over and she sent them into the woods to collect wild strawberries (and perhaps other treats from the hedgerows, just as you did!). When their father arrived home and heard the events, he became quite worried.

He and the children's mother decided to go looking for the children in the woods.

Gretel, in the meantime, was enjoying the woodland....Using her knitting skills, she started to weave a garland while she left Hansel to collect the berries and other treats from the hedgerows. Both children quickly discovered how delicious the berries were; they enjoyed the delicious and natural delicacies in the woodland! They were having such a wonderful time that they didn't notice that the sun was starting to set... In the midst of a rising mist, they became quite lost, hearing unusual sounds... The Sandman arrived to prepare them for sleep and the two children, dutifully, prayed for ANGELS to guard them through the night. A heavenly mist descended and watched over them.

Waking to a spectacular sunrise, the DEW FAIRY appeared and graciously helped the children: In front of them was a marvellous sight of enchantment, a gingerbread cottage that was ringed by a fence of gingerbread children. Just as they started to nibble the enchanting gingerbread, out popped a witch!! She had set a trap and her trapped worked until Gretel, cleverly, pretended not to know how the magic wand of the witch worked. The witch did a demonstration, showing off, and Gretel quickly pushed the witch into her own set trap (the oven!). With explosive sounds from the oven, the children knew that the wicked spell of the witch was broken and the woods would now be safe! All of the gingerbread children, which had formed the fence around the gingerbread house, came to life. They, too, were saved and Hansel and Gretel were reunited with their parents.

My feathered friends, these characters, like you, used imagination, courage and wit! They learned to benefit from the fruits of goodness in the woods and the hedgerows. The music you heard in the background, while I shared my version of the story, came from the original opera written by Engelbert Humperdinck (1854-1921); he started to write the opera (which is a dramatic performance or composition of which music is an essential part) when he was only 14 years old. His sister had written a play for her children, based on the Brothers Grimm story, HANSEL AND GRETEL, as entertainment for her children. She asked her brother to compose four songs for her version of the Story.



Richard STRAUSS praised the humour in Hansel and Gretel and conducted the premier of the story that was told with music as an essential part. It was an instant hit and had its own touring company which toured Europe.

On Christmas Day, 1931, it became the first Opera to be broadcast across the United States. Such a global and magical tale of enchantment is my thank you to you for your rich fantasy of the Snowbow gift: the beautifully decorated hedgerows; the vision of which I will never forget.

May you all enjoy the fruits of goodness throughout the New Year.”



Snowy Owl and the Christmas Mouse

SNOWY OWL re-read the hand scratched note that he had sent to FATHER CHRISTMAS about the special surprise he and all the CRITTERS had given to him. SNOWY instinctively knew that Father Christmas loved the AVENUE OF HOLLY TREES and the line of honour to welcome him home. However, Snowy was very sad about the mistakes that he made in the composition of his note, especially since he had the reputation of being the wise old owl; the Owl who loved to carve his mark on surprises to remember. He wondered how he had made such mistakes. Were the errors of runaway words simply made in his excitement of the occasion or were they simply careless mistakes? In the end, he decided that it didn't matter as mistakes are mistakes and Father Christmas had a caring nature. He would apologise to Father Christmas and to the Christmas Critters. Just as he completed the personal process of a caring ponder, an invitation was delivered to him. It was addressed to Snowy Owl and all the Christmas Critters, inviting them to join Father Christmas for hot chocolate, biscuits and a special reading under the Old Oak Tree near St. Margaret's Church on the first day of the New Year!

A shadow floated through the moonlight and the shadow belonged to Snowy Owl while his flight of excitement took him to his destination: a gathering of the Christmas Critters. Snowy

descended with the wings of a guardian angel to the centre of all the anxious critters. They couldn't wait to hear all the details of an invitation from Father Christmas, which expressly invited them to a special reading of a favourite Father Christmas story, along with the very best hot chocolate and home made biscuits.

The first day of the New Year had arrived and all the Critters, including BIG MOOSE, THE CLEVER BEAVER, THE RACCOON, THE DORMOUSE, THE CARIBOU DEER and SNOWY OWL (with his eyes like amber searchlights) gathered on time, of course, near the Old Oak Tree. They all knew, instinctively, that Father Christmas was about to read his favourite Christmas story that was echoed around the world. To their great surprise, Father Christmas announced that he had re-written the story and he had turned the story into a POEM. He hoped that his poetic words would ring through the woodlands like bells for all to hear and he also explained that his poem was based on a true story:

THE CHRISTMAS MOUSE AND I

One Christmas Eve, when I came to a
Cave to a certain house
To fill all the children's stockings there
I found a little mouse

“A Merry Christmas and A Happy New Year,
Little friend”

Said I, good and kind

“The same to you sir” said the little mouse

“If I stay awake tonight
and watch you for awhile”

“You are very welcome, little mouse”

Said I with a smile!”

And then I filled the stockings up
Before the mouse could wink
From toe to top, from top to toe
There wasn't left a chunk

“Now, the stockings won't hold another thing.”

Said I, with pride

A twinkle came in the mouse's eyes
But humbly, he replied:

“It's not polite to contradict.”

Your pardon, I do explore.
But in the fullest stocking there
I could put one thing more.”

“Oh, ho!” laughed I, to the silly mouse

“Don't I know how to pack?
By filling stockings all these years,
I should have learned the knack.”

The mouse took the stocking down
From where it hung so high
And said: "Now put in one thing more;
I give you leave to try."

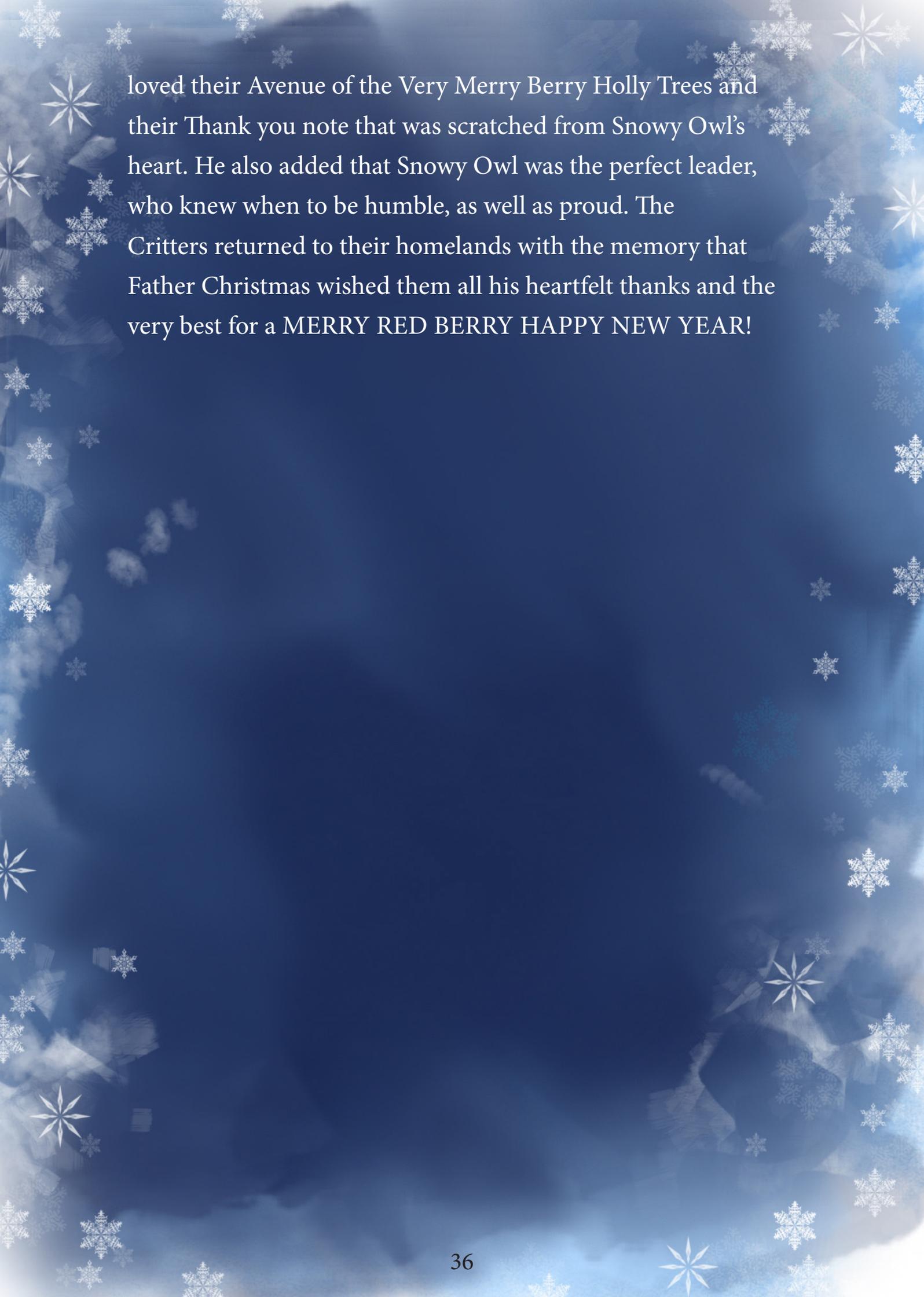
The mouse chuckled to himself
And then he softly stole
Right to the stockings crowded toe
And gnawed a little hole!

"Now if you please, good Father Christmas,
I've put in one thing more;
For you will own that little hole
That was not in there before!"

How I did laugh and laugh!
And then I cheerfully spoke:
"Well, you shall have a Christmas cheese
For that little and witty joke."

"Critters, if you don't think the story true,
Why I can show to you
The very stocking with the little hole
That the little mouse gnawed through!"

With joyous laughter, which did echo through the woodland,
the Critters thanked Father Christmas for such a charming and
witty tale. Father Christmas told the Critters, joyfully, that he



loved their Avenue of the Very Merry Berry Holly Trees and their Thank you note that was scratched from Snowy Owl's heart. He also added that Snowy Owl was the perfect leader, who knew when to be humble, as well as proud. The Critters returned to their homelands with the memory that Father Christmas wished them all his heartfelt thanks and the very best for a MERRY RED BERRY HAPPY NEW YEAR!



Snowy Owl and the Christmas Rocking Horse

The curved wings of SNOWY OWL were sweeping in flight to answer a special request from Father Christmas this year. Downhill flew Snowy Owl, against the North Wind to collect his instructions!

Yes, once again, FATHER CHRISTMAS was putting Snowy Owl in charge of a Christmas surprise. He wanted 'Snowy' to put together a team to design a Rocking Horse for the Elves, who had worked so hard in Santa's Workshop. The Elves had just finished wrapping all the presents that Father Christmas was going to deliver around the world for the very well-behaved children!

The magnificent Snowy Owl, who was almost as big as an Eagle Owl, swiftly presented himself on time, of course, to Father Christmas. After all, Snowy was known as a British Owl. British Owls are always on time!! Father Christmas couldn't get over how big 'Snowy' looked as his wing span was now 59 inches. His glowing lemon-yellow eyes were shimmering with the morning sun that glimmered through the branches of his favourite oak tree by the churchyard. Father Christmas shared his plan to have a unique Rocking Horse made for the Elves. He also mentioned that the idea of a Rocking Horse present for the Elves had been given to him by his well-chosen Reindeer.

Snowy Owl said that he would work with his Owl Team to scout the fields; to find Horse Farms and to gather ideas for the perfect Rocking Horse design.

They would then take their agreed plan to the Master Craftsmen, so that the construction of the Rocking Horse could be completed on time.

‘Snowy’ called his owl friends, using his special call-talk that is suitable just for owls. Yes, they have their own language, but it doesn’t work in sentences.

Owls also have explosive hunting calls that are very loud, sharp calls. ‘Snowy’ would use his loud call to signal his friends to the right location. Indeed, all his friends found Snowy Owl swiftly, in spite of the sunshine. This was no time to be dazzled or delayed.

The Owl team consisted of:

1. BARN OWL, who looked white in flight and who was of medium size, easy to recognise. His pale white blotchy markings complimented his white feathers.
2. TAWNY OWL, who was the definite brown owl with a very big head and dark brown eyes, also arrived.
- 3 LONG EARED OWL arrived, wearing his rather grey feathers and his eyes were brilliantly orange as ever!
4. SHORT EARED OWL flew in from the open country with his buff-coloured feathers and his distinctive brown patches tucked under his wings. His lemon yellow eyes were sparkling

with enthusiasm for the reunion.

The team of Owls welcomed the task. They would find the perfect horse to sketch for the Rocking Horse Design, including instructions for the right facial expression. After all, this Rocking Horse was to be a Happy Rocking Horse! 'Snowy' asked the Owls to separate and scout in different directions. Barn Owl flew away to the North; Tawny Owl flew off to the South; Long Eared flew in the Eastern Direction and Short Eared Owl flew due West. Snowy Owl was used to flying great distances, so he would cover the entire area, striving to be, once again, a great leader ready to help. 'Snowy' had advised all that he would share Hoot Calls to indicate in Owl language that he would know where they are at all times. Also, he would assemble them, at the right time, when the scouting mission was to return to share their observations for a vote.

Being as clever and wise as they are, it didn't take the Owls long to observe how perceptive the horses they viewed were. Each horse had, interestingly, their own posture and body language at the moment of viewing. They all seemed to understand the feelings of other creatures; even Owls!! All the horses gave the owls a relaxed greeting and they all raised their heads to look at the Owls with both eyes. Even though, secretly, the Owls knew the horses could see them with just one eye. Yes, the Horses raised their heads quickly, while their ears pricked forward... They had found very happy horses to sketch for the design of The Rocking Horse.

The call from Snowy Owl brought all the Owls back to their original meeting place and they all, enthusiastically, shared their findings:

The Rocking Horse must have soft enquiring eyes. The Horse's mouth and nostrils should be relaxed. The Rocking Horse must look happy as well as relaxed. The Tail must be held normally, but in suitably glorious texture! The Rocking Horse must look alert and aware of the coming festive season. A jolly horse he must be! The head must portray a happy smile through the expressions of his eyes. Yes, a smile to match the happy faces of the elves when they are working and singing away... They all agreed, too, that the eye colour could match the brown of all the horses seen for this project.

With the design completed, Snowy Owl took the sketch to the Master Craftsmen.. Yes, The Christmas Rocking Horse would be built in time, of course.

Father Christmas loved the completed Rocking Horse; it was the perfectly happy horse for the perfectly Jolly Elves. To thank Snowy Owl and his Owl Team, Father Christmas shared the following lines in his thank you Christmas card:

When icicles hang by the wall
And Tom bears logs into the hall
Then nightly sings the staring owl
A merry note: TUHOO TOWHIT

Father Christmas also wrote that these lines were written by William Shakespeare and these lines were written as the greatest compliment for Owls; a poem by Shakespeare just for OWLS; just for OWLS.

This story ends with Snowy Owl and his fellow Owls, sitting in the old oak tree that raises its branches to the glorious sky in Heaven. They are all listening to the church choir, singing the Christmas Carols and they are watching the elves, dancing to the music of the Carols around The Rocking Horse. The owls decided to join in, chanting a special HOOT to say in their secret language:

‘What a wondrously spectacular Christmas Season this is going to be!’



Snowy Owl, Father Christmas, The Rocking Horse and The Elves (Part 2)

The wondrously splendid Christmas present of the Rocking Horse inspired the Elves to thank both Father Christmas and Snowy Owl (and all his friends). All the Elves in Santa's Workshop were stunned by such a fun surprise; such a creative surprise. They were all enjoying their holiday adventures, rocking away to the glorious seasonal music! If any group could match such an element of surprise, it would be the Elves that work in Santa's Workshop. These Elves were never mischievous; they were the hardest working Elves in all the Land. SNOWY OWL knew that the ELVES wanted to create a 'Thank You' for Father Christmas and he, wisely, suggested that they do it on a timely basis (of course). He also suggested to the Elves that they include a special note, adding the joy that handwritten notes bring to us all.

It didn't take the Elves long to think of a perfect surprise; a splendid surprise. As they were discussing numerous ideas, it started to snow. The fleeting snowflakes were simply precious as they accumulated to create the greatest surprise of the season. Yes, indeed, the fleeting appearance of the snowflakes created more than enough snow to create very large snowballs. As the snowballs got bigger and bigger, they knew they had to act quickly.

They used their instincts and creativity to start rolling the snowballs to make them bigger. They recalled Snowy Owl's words of wisdom, instructing them to make the Snowman as big as possible. Snowy knew that a Snowman should be huge; very noticeable to catch the eye of Father Christmas.

The Elves, in agreement with Snowy Owl, found a grassy dip and spent the day rolling huge balls of snow, working the snow downward. Snowy, using his curved wings, flew downward to guide their efforts, brilliantly.

With Snowy's flapping wings, clever directions helped the Elves to stack the large snowballs. The Elves stacked themselves to achieve the height required to complete the perfect form of a Snowman. Indeed, this was not an easy task, but they were determined characters. The fun began when they used the tools from Santa's Workshop to smooth out the little gaps and crevices. They had all the right tools and all the right friends to complete the present. Having joined the adventure, Snowy and all his owl friends used their wings to help smooth and design a perfect snow sculpture of a very handsome SNOWMAN. Also, the owls had their list of important facial expressions that were needed to create a Christmas Rocking Horse. This list could now be used to create a very happy and expressive Snowman for all to enjoy, especially Father Christmas.

The Snowman was perfectly chiseled by the flapping wings of the Owls and the Elves were stacked like a ladder to place the seasonal costume on Snowman. A very well regarded TOP

HAT was placed upon his head, thanks to the Lord of the Land, Then, a very long coat was placed over his shoulders, thanks to the Rector of the Parish Church. Finally, pieces of charcoal, cleverly arranged, created an expression to wish all the compliments of the Season, along with a perfectly chiseled carrot, thanks to the Cook at the Manor, was placed to form a perfect Snowman Nose. All the Elves and the owl helpers had created a very handsome snowman. The creation made from fleeting snowflakes had matched the happy requirements of the Rocking Horse gift. It was the perfect time to write a thank you note for all to remember, especially Father Christmas!

Dear Father Christmas,

Happy New Year 2015!

May we all thank you for the beautiful and very loved Rocking Horse. Your gift will forever entertain us as we work for you in such a joyous Santa's Workshop! How we love taking turns to ride the Rocking Horse (which we named Cantor!) while we work to the very best seasonal music from all time.

We will treasure your thoughtfulness and Snowy Owls leadership for many years to come. It is such a Christmas treasure! If you look out your favourite window, while you enjoy a mug of hot chocolate from the Chocolate Pot which we left for you on your table, you will see a very happy SNOWMAN. You can't miss him as his smile is unforgettable. As part of our surprise, we have also painted a portrait of our

Snowman Gift just for you. His eyes will always look happy when you look at him; they will always smile upon you, overlooking your most comfortable chair!

May we also say that we named our Snowman SNOWY as we know how much you have appreciated Snowy Owl's leadership over the years to lead and create the perfect Christmas joys...

Wishing you all the compliments of the Season, we are Your Devoted Helpers,

The Elves





A Snowy Owl Time

Goodness! Another Christmas Season is about to arrive, thought Snowy Owl (known to the Village Children as SNOWY. Snowy, as in all the Snowy Owl Christmas stories in the past, will not be late with his determination to help Father Christmas with all the wondrous preparations. Remember, Snowy always proved to be the most organised and the most winged wonder! He always had eyes to the skies of Christmas wonderlands. His white camouflage and his feathered feet allowed him to help in parts of the world beyond his normal Arctic habitat. He is also one of the world's largest owls...

All of the Elves in The Father Christmas Workshop loved working with Snowy. He, cleverly, thought of the best ways to help; to surprise and to share. It didn't surprise the Elves when Snowy asked them to take a vote on their favourite Parish Christmas story to date. With a quick and unanimous vote, the Elves gleamed their decision: it was A PERFECT CHOICE FOR CHRISTMAS.

Snowy took it upon himself to organise the re-telling of the tale, so all the wonderful new families in the Village and the villagers, who asked to read it again, could enjoy the choice made for generations to come by Father Christmas. It is a story, telling why Father Christmas selected the Reindeer to pull his Sleigh. A PERFECT CHOICE BY FATHER CHRISTMAS.

Firmly established is the image of THE FATHER CHRISTMAS SLEIGH, glistening high over frosty white rooftops during our festive Season. The Season which touches all of our hearts and our imaginations. Snowy Owl was asked to explain how Father Christmas selected the magnificently eager Reindeer to lead his magically skilled Sleigh to bring peace and joy around the world.

The wise Snowy always explains that a very long time ago, during the times of the Renaissance period, the REINDEER antlers provided the theme for the Christmas Ritual Horn Dance that, in fact, goes back to the granting of hunting rights. Snowy also enjoys sharing that Reindeer have very thick coats and their brown fur displays white patches on their necks, rump and feet. He also explains that when Reindeer dig in the snow for food, their thickly coated noses protect them! Snowy never forgets to tell that Reindeer pulled the Lapp Sleighs during migration times over hundreds of years. Father Christmas knew that Reindeer have always been important and they passed his requirement of finding a very helpful, graceful and historical animal.

Snowy's words of both story telling and wisdom always maintained that few creatures equal the Reindeer in beauty and grace. Also, the Deer Family, in Snowy's collection of facts, numbers about 100 and the families live in most parts of the world (Father Christmas knew they would be a perfect choice, indeed). Snowy then recalled his facts about the talents of Reindeer:

Firstly, they appeared in cave drawings found in Southern Europe, dating back 25,000 years ago. To this day, Reindeer are reigning free to be the world's only domesticated deer. Both the male and female Reindeer have antlers.

Interestingly, the Colouring of the Caribou (the Native American name used to describe the large Reindeer) become increasingly white in wintertime. Magically, Reindeer have cloven hooves and their hooves are divided into two large toes. Their few claws help support them on soft soils and their special hooves allow them to use their sharp edges to scrape snow and ice away. Brilliantly, their hooves create and orchestrate music, thanks to their legs and ankles, making clicking songs of merriment as they travel. Snowy Owl convinced Father Christmas that Reindeer would always be the most perfect leaders of his Sleigh because they can travel more than a 100 miles a day, tirelessly, maintaining a steady trot while serving as a team to deliver joy around the World.

In addition to their achievements, they create unforgettable sights when countless number of Reindeer herds make their way down mountain sides in changing formations of dancing hoofs, along with mysteriously quiet movements matched by no other creatures.

Snowy Owl asked all his listeners to close their eyes and to imagine Father Christmas saying aloud. "HOW TRULY PERFECT REINDEER ARE TO LEAD MY SLEIGH to wish you and yours - All The Compliments Of The Season".



Operation Snowfall by Snowy Owl

Father Christmas gave his chosen Reindeer names that are now engraved in CHRISTMAS Songs around the globe: Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Comet, Cupid, Donner and Blitzen. The first writings about these magical, flying Reindeer appeared in the 1923 poem “A Visit from St. Nicolas”. Today, we know how loved these Reindeer are, especially in light of the help they give to Father Christmas, delivering packages of joy to all deserving children! Some foreign countries use their own language to spell the names of the Reindeer. The Dutch spelling for Donner and Blitzen is Dunder and Blitzen!

This morning I watched to see the magical Sleigh dashing away from the top of the porch to the top of the wall, just like it was described in the Poem.....As Father Christmas left me in charge, once again, of the Christmas Critters, the Christmas Workshop and the Elves, I asked my special helpers and friends to listen, quietly. Then, in the solitude, we heard Father Christmas shout, excitedly: “Now dash away! Dash away! Dash away all! His voice honoured the original poem. With all of my helpers surrounding me, having beckoned to my Seasonal Hoots, I explained that I needed their help, once again, to decide upon the very best surprise for Father Christmas.

The Elves told me that they had overheard Father Christmas mentioning to the Reindeer how much he loved them and what good company they proved to be on his global trips of joy. He also shared that he very much hoped that when they return from another fantastic trip, they would find snow on the ground where they land for the perfect homecoming after a long journey...

I then shared with the Christmas Critters that snow was not predicted for this Season. The Elves that created the Rocking Horse of Christmas Compliments last year shared a very interesting idea for a perfect gift. They put their words to song, clearly:

“Let’s summon all our white snowy bird friends. They could help to create a scene of white snowy magic, making snow cloud shapes and fluttering their snowflake-like plumage.”

I replied: “If snow-making machines can make round vice jagged shapes, we, the Snowbirds can make designs that move like real snowflakes.”

I applauded their idea and all my Critter friends danced to the tune : I’m Dreaming of a White Christmas... When the music stopped, I created a list of SNOWY BIRD FRIENDS that we all knew to be perfectly Snowy White and Snowflake-Like!

Our list included: My Snowy Owl relatives, Snow Bunting Birds, Snow Geese, the Fieldfares and The Great White Snowy

Heron. They all have unmistakable white plumage. My helpers and I then summoned all of my relatives, along with the others on our list.

My SNOWY OWL relatives, unlike other kinds of owls, can function brilliantly in the daytime. They will play a special role in creating a winter wonderland scene.

The SNOW BUNTING birds were very anxious to help, too. They are my friends and I have always called them the SNOWFLAKE BIRDS. May I add that these birds truly love to pretend to be snowflakes on the high mountain tops, displaying much experience! That's why I have always called them Snowflakes!

The SNOW GEESE swiftly accepted our invitation to join Operation Snowflake. May I say that these white geese travel in artistic flight formations. As they are white with black wing tips, they could even be called upon to form a mass vision of white, either in the air or on the ground. Their distinctive vocals could also make a perfect announcement of the Sleigh as it descends to the Home Landing.

The FIELDFARES already knew of the surprise Operation plan. I knew that they winter in large numbers in the United Kingdom. I think a group of them heard my hoots of excitement. How stunning they are as they are gifted with very white underparts and how noticeable they are as they joyously sing their flight calls of 'task' ...'task'. The Elves and I know we

will find a special role for them to play in the surprise plan. Uniquely, too, they can all face in one direction at the same time and they can fly downward when signalled.

As soon as SNOWY HERON accepted the invitation to join my Operation, he majestically arrived, showing off his beautiful plumes that looked like descending snowflakes, gathering on winter ice sculptures. He also demonstrated his talents of hovering, swaying his magnificent head, flicking his wings to create a snowy effect, running and even hopping. He and his relatives could sway many heads in snow falling movements.

The Snowflake Team was now formed, so I suggested that we all do some research about Snowflakes and Snowfalls! We found a book written by a Vermonter, who filmed thousands of different snowflakes. His photographs and drawings helped us to imagine what we needed to design to create an authentic scene of a winter wonderland. We needed to understand SNOW...

I reminded my group that the State of Vermont, where the snowflakes were photographed, is the State known for Downhill Skiing, Snowfalls and Morgan Horses prancing in the wealth of fresh snow. Shapes and movements are a must. I further explained that Snowflakes begin as snow crystals that develop when super cooled droplets freeze and snowflakes come in all sizes. (I instinctively knew this was very good news as my Snowbirds come in all sizes.) The snowflakes turn into shapes as they move... They are always white because of the the reflection of light on the small crystal facets. Snowflakes

have to work together. They have to cling to each other to create ample snow on the ground. We would all have to think, carefully, about how we could (all together) complete Operation Snowfall. The research told us how to create the perfect snow scene, covering the largest area possible. The Reindeer needed to see our Land of Snow from the horizon! It had to look authentic!

Suddenly, the perfect creation of a Snowy Scene came to me. With the approval of all, I will direct the following:

The FIELDFARES will ascend into the Sky, all facing in one direction. I will direct them to create masses of Snow Clouds. They will love the movement challenge.

The SNOW BUNTING birds that I call SNOWFLAKES will ascend to the mountain tops as they normally do! I will direct them to flutter their way down the mountain when the Reindeer start to descend to their landing area. My Snowflake bird friends will create the image of snowflakes falling to the ground, perfectly.

Indeed, I would never forget to instruct the WHITE HERONS. My very large Heron friends are wondrously large birds that fly with slow beats of their arched wings. I will ask them to create swirling winds that appear to be moving the snow into whirling movements, just like the winter wind.

May I, Snowy Owl, share with you the best part of my story:

Just as we had finished a full rehearsal and just as we had decided our plan would work as a perfect gift to Father Christmas (and the Reindeer), the Snow Geese announced in a honking snowfall fashion that The Sleigh was in sight. Their honking vocals told us all to start the magical Snowfall Scene Show...

We ascended; descended; formed snow clouds; created snowflake images. Surprisingly, the Snow Geese also covered the land to create a white surface. Everything glowed with winter whiteness and snowfall movements. We had done it... Operation Snowfall was a success!

To our great surprise, the local baker had placed a Christmas Cake for us all. The cake was in the full shape of a very yummy SNOWMAN! The Winter scene truly glowed now.

As we were eating the treat of an enormous surprise Christmas Cake, shaped like a snowman, Father Christmas announced that he had quite a thank you surprise for us all. He asked us all to close our eyes to enjoy a well-deserved rest. When we opened them, our village was covered in fresh snow, coming down from heaven. We couldn't believe our eyes. Together, our hearts of courtesy had created the perfect Winter Wonderland and a Merry Christmas that could never be forgotten.

Yours Faithfully,

Snowy Owl

(Care of Dianne Buckley Sunda)





Snowy Owl and The Reindeer

Snowy Owl was helping Father Christmas to prepare for yet another magical delivery of presents around the world. This year Father Christmas asked Snowy to make certain that the Reindeer were ready to pull his magical sleigh once again.

Snowy met with the Reindeer to begin his very important assignment. To his great astonishment, they were obviously not ready! All they wanted to do was to run, play, jump and hide... These Reindeer were chosen because they were talented, graceful, beautiful and rhythmic due to their changing movements. It would be an impossible task to replace them. The world would very much miss them!

Snowy wisely knew that he needed to seek the advice of Father Christmas, regarding the best way to inspire the Reindeer. Perhaps it was the long summer and golden autumn that motivated the Reindeer to become completely absorbed with playfulness! Snowy's instincts helped him to find Father Christmas. It was very important for them to devise a plan that would revive the traditional team of Reindeer to pull the magical sleigh.

Father Christmas shared with Snowy a story that always inspired

his Christmas helpers. It even inspired his Elves one year when all they wanted to do was dance to music....The Story he shared with Snowy inspired all to be cautious; to be prepared and to be ready for adventures.

The story began with the main character named Bambi. A book was written about a young doe deer, Bambi, in Austria in 1923. It became so popular that it was sold as a classic in 20 languages. One artist loved the story so much that she painted oil paintings for all the scenes in the story. Father Christmas, in his own words, explained the winter take:

“Bambi was a young roe deer that was born in a thicket. His mother loved teaching him what a young deer should know about the forest. Bambi also loved spending time with his Aunt and Cousins. One golden day, he and his cousins met a mature male deer, named Prince. Prince spent time with the young deer and they never forgot his movement and his words.

Later Bambi and his cousins started to explore the countryside. Bambi even ventured to strange territories on his own. One day, he encountered a hunter for the very first time. Bambi fled and shared the episode with Prince, the old stag.

Prince, as always, shared lessons about not being afraid to be alone and how to learn from experience; how to survive. Bambi never forgot the wise words shared by Prince and always called him OLD PRINCE. In the story, Prince grew to become the oldest, the largest and the wisest stag in the Land.

Just when Bambi got his first set of antlers, he was caught completely unawares by the sound of a crying doe. He ran towards the doe to see if she needed help and was stunned to see that the sound was coming from a hunter, imitating a doe's call! Bambi knew he was in trouble.

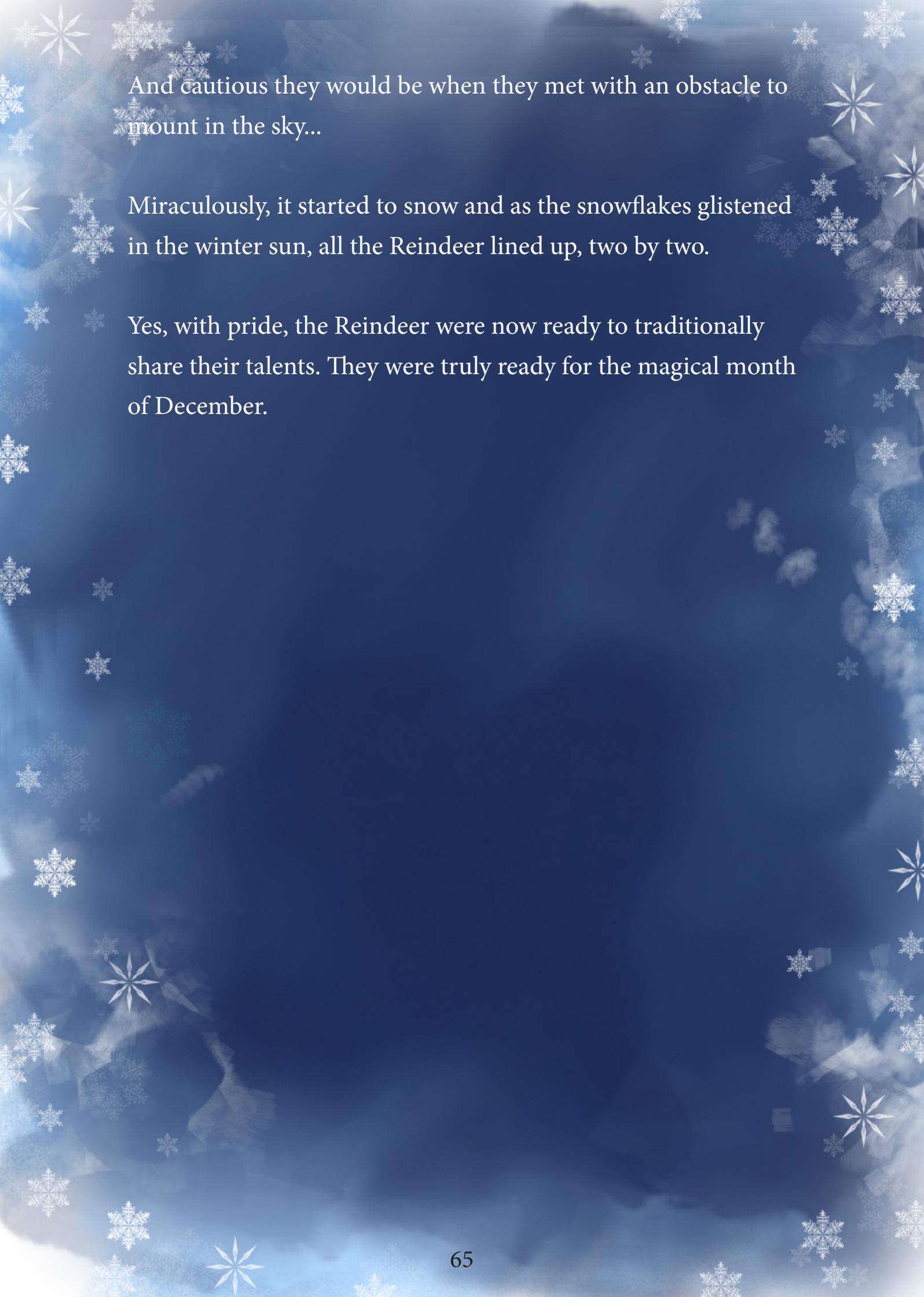
Suddenly, Old Prince appeared and rescued Bambi. That moment of danger taught Bambi how to be more cautious; how to be more alert to his surroundings. He remembered for the rest of his life, all the words of his older relatives and friends.

In particular, Bambi remembered a trick that Old Prince taught him, It was very clever as the trick was to walk around in circles; walk in circles and confuse the hunter! With time, Bambi earned Old Prince's respect. He matured and shared all the lessons he had learned with many young deer.

The sharing of both experience and wisdom was now his part in the woods. Bambi now knew how to be very cautious and how to share his love of fun and adventure.”

Snowy loved the story shared by Father Christmas. He instinctively knew that this story would both entertain and inspire the Reindeer in this important time of preparation. Well known poetic words entered his thoughts after Snowy shared the story about Bambi with Santa's Reindeer:

More rapid than Eagles their courses they came.



And cautious they would be when they met with an obstacle to
mount in the sky..

Miraculously, it started to snow and as the snowflakes glistened
in the winter sun, all the Reindeer lined up, two by two.

Yes, with pride, the Reindeer were now ready to traditionally
share their talents. They were truly ready for the magical month
of December.





The Reindeer Event

The Reindeer somehow knew that Father Christmas and Snowy Owl had made a secret wish for the New Year. One may ask: How did they know and indeed, what was their secret?

Perhaps they learned the essence of the wish from Bambi, who had acquired the skill of being aware from the Old Stag Prince. This possibility proved to be true, especially since Snowy Owl had left a very vivid clue when he mentioned that both he and Father Christmas had recently discussed that one day they should travel to spend some special time watching the Aurora Borealis.

Instinctively, all of the Reindeer looked at each other. They now knew of a perfect adventure surprise to give to Snowy Owl and Father Christmas for a most sincere thank you for their Christmas treats! A trip to the Aurora Borealis had to be orchestrated. To most, such a plan would prove to be difficult. These Reindeer could even see in luminous light like no other animal...

Then a very young fawn, courageously, asked: “Why would the Aurora Borealis be such a special treat?”

Bambi explained, in a mentoring tone, that the Northern and Southern Lights are mirror like images that in most cases occur at the same time, astonishingly. Their stunning displays of vivid colours, including green, red, yellow, blue and violet appear in many forms, with similar shapes appearing in the North and South.

The Aurora is an incredible light that can be seen around the magnetic poles of the Northern and Southern Hemisphere. (In The Northern Hemisphere, such lights are called Aurora Borealis and in the South, it is called Aurora Australis.)

Just imagine small and large patches of light appearing suddenly in shooting rays, arcs and in streamers, lighting up the sky in a wondrous glow never to be forgotten.

With such a description, all the Reindeer were ready to give Father Christmas the Surprise Adventure of a lifetime: A journey through the opening in the atmosphere of the Sun. These magnificent Lights can extend from 50 miles to as high as 400 miles above the surface of the earth.

Using acquired map skills taught at the North Pole, the Reindeer selected a place in Scandinavia for the best location on high ground to take their well deserved guests for a successful Aurora Spectacle. The Old Stag Prince Reindeer joined the plan, of course, and he volunteered to write the invitation letter to Father Christmas and Snowy Owl on behalf of all the Reindeer that serve the tidings and joy of Christmas.

Dear Father Christmas and Snowy,

Please accept our gift of an adventure treat, designed especially to thank you both with our heartfelt loyalty for all your efforts to surprise children around the world.

We will be taking you to a place of bewilderment and artistic beauty. Please meet us at St. Margaret's Church, following the Christmas Morning Service.

With warmest thanks,
Your Loyal Reindeer

Both Father Christmas and Snowy Owl were both stunned by the invitation of intrigue and they replied with great delight.

Christmas morning arrived and the Land glistened in hues of white and silver. As was planned, following the Christmas Morning Church service, the Magical Sleigh, pulled by the magical Reindeer, could be seen travelling higher and higher through the silver Sky and through the winter Sun. The wish of the honoured guests came true. Father Christmas and Snowy loved the spectacle of colour and light that the Aurora Borealis shared with the world.

As Father Christmas watched the glorious gift of wonderment, he shared the words:

❄️ What power disbands the Northern Lights
After their steely play?
The coming, the going
Alike in wonder showing
Midnight and Morn

Dazed by such moving words, the courageous young fawn spoke:
“Father Christmas, did you or Snowy write such descriptive words?”

“No, we didn’t” replied Father Christmas

“The lines came from a poem written by Herman Melville for a most important celebration of Peace. May I wish you all the blessings of Peace”

It proved to be a perfect adventure of surprise.

Such glorious sights and words could never be forgotten, along with such hope of Peace for all.





Costumes for all the Wonderlands!

This most unusual month of December, Jack Frost was making quite a rattle when SNOWY OWL announced that he would, of course, once again, lead the seasonal SURPRISE PLAN to create a very special present to thank a most deserving Father Christmas for all his hard work at this time of year. Just as Snowy was about to ask for an assistant helper, he heard above the rattles of the frost, a creature merrily singing:

“My name is ROBIN REDBREAST and I want to join you and the woodland critters.

Yes, Snowy Owl, I want to be your special assistant this year.” Only Robin Redbreast could put such sincere words to music.

SNOWY was taken completely by surprise. He hadn't expected such an offer from Robin Redbreast and then reflected that perhaps he hadn't given the Robin Family the credit they all deserve. After all, he thought, Robins choose to live alongside humans and perhaps Robin Redbreast has observed more about the hard work that goes on in the Santa Workshop than any of us, The Woodland Critters! No other bird gives so much to music and no other bird enjoys good company like our Robin Redbreast. Then he thought that perhaps Robin Redbreast could sing his heartfelt music to help us come up

Then he thought that perhaps Robin Redbreast could sing his heartfelt music to help us come up with the very best plan. Then, it was if Robin could read Snowy's mind as he proceeded to wondrously sing all of his ideas for the perfect surprise.

As soon as his high melodic notes sang about making special Father Christmas Costumes to match the customs of the many WONDERLANDS he visits, all of the Woodland Critters danced for joy, moving their creative footsteps to make sounds of clicks in the air...

Children in different parts of the world would truly love to see their Father Christmas in a traditional Christmas Costume. All parts of the Globe share the love of Christmas and all share their love for Father Christmas. Snowy and all the helpers, including the Workshop Elves couldn't wait to make WONDERLAND COSTUMES. The woodland critters tried to keep up with the ELVES as they dashed to keep up with the REINDEER to organise the creation making in the perfect Santa's Workshop. The clicking sounds of their hoofs echoed above the rattles of Jack Frost. Winter was here and Christmas was coming.

When the Costumes were finished with special details to match country traditions and fabrics, ROBIN REDBREAST sang his very best melodic tune to thank all the helpers for complimenting his ideas. He entitled his tune:

MAY ALL THE WONDERLANDS REJOICE AND SHARE HOPE TOGETHER.





A Wonderland Surprise

Snowy Owl announced to the Elves and the Woodland Critters that he would be, once again, helping to arrange a THANK YOU present from Father Christmas, who loved the National Santa Costumes made especially for him this year.

“Woodie” Woodpecker was finally recruited to alert all when Father Christmas was going to announce his Thank You Surprise!

Woodie’s drumming; hammering in dead trees (normally perfected to establish territory) could drum up to 600 times a day.

All the Critters would hear his hammering sounds across the Land when Father Christmas returned!

The Alert began.....and the drumming was successful:

Father Christmas and his magnificent Reindeer had landed safely in the most beautiful welcome runway of snowflakes. They were now home and eagerly ready to make a very special announcement:

Dear All, please accept my special invitation to expressly invite you all to attend a New Year’s Musical Celebration. All of the Countries I recently visited very much appreciated the traditional national Santa Costumes you made for me; they were quite touched with heartfelt thoughtfulness. Your attention to detail of Country traditions was perfect. I look forward to welcoming you this evening at our

Village Pavilion, overlooking our beautiful Village Green. Your thank you present will be awaiting with many surprises.

When all the guests had arrived, Father Christmas began unwrapping his surprise, using very sincere words:

“Our lives around the Globe are punctuated by Celebrations that come in many forms on a National and Family scale. There is no more fitting way of thanking you all than with splendid celebratory music. As we listen and dance together with musical compositions, including Charpentier’s joyous hymn Te Deum (Te Deum Laudamus), listen to the exultant fanfare as the trumpets soar above the orchestra to make eloquent movement.

The Drums and Strings will give you much support to the opening of my Thank You Evening Concert!

You will enjoy the music composed for The Bells of the Agia Monastery . The origins of Musical instruments go back as far as 67,000 years!

The world loves to celebrate and many countries sent us their musical instrument to rejoice this evening:

The clarinet was sent by Germany

The Flute was sent by China

The French Horn was sent by France and Germany

The Guitar was sent By Spain

The Oboe was sent by France

The Piano was sent by Italy

The Saxophone was sent by Belgium and The Trumpet was sent by England and other Country Friends!”

The mood of merriment was now engraved in the hearts of all the guests, They listened and danced to the Polonaises of Chopin, the Karelia Suite by Sibelius (that depicted thousands of trees and shimmering, falling leaves), the brilliant trumpet arrangement called Lohengrin by Wagner (with variations galore until the finish of calm and PEACE...

The music concert lasted as long as the stars shimmered; they danced until dawn.

When all the guests returned to their habitats, they were full of well deserved thanks and the brilliance of celebratory music. They couldn't have thought of a more joyful way to thank their families and friends. It was the most welcomed surprise.

Snowy Owl and Father Christmas had toasted once more a tradition that could never be surpassed: The tradition of Thank You and the gift of wishing you music throughout the New Year...



The Snowy Owl December Treat - 'Tweet'

Once again it is that special time of year, thought Snowy Owl, to create a very enjoyable and memorable treat for Father Christmas. However, he pondered, I must try and think of some special surprise for him this Merry Season! Snowy then thought to ask the Magic Sleigh Reindeer, all of whom are very close to Father Christmas, to suggest an event that would really make him smile with pleasure. So the Reindeer all agreed and they put their heads together to suggest the perfect idea that was new and exciting that Father Christmas would enjoy.

Snowy was advised gleefully, by the Reindeer, that this year Father Christmas wanted to share a special 'Art-Story-Time Exhibition' in the Village of Ockley as he had collected art work from children living in 55 different countries around the world. How unique thought Snowy... the Elves and I could display these very colourful pieces of art work as part of 'The Story Time Programme' in the Village Hall for all the families to see.

Snowy loves flying over the Ockley Village Hall and St. Margaret's Church so he thought this Event was a great idea and it was warmly received. He, secretly, knew that Father Christmas was going to make his first village stop at Ockley this year, so how perfect this event plan could prove to be.

A surprise of an 'Art Story Time' for families in this spacious Village Hall would make Father Christmas very happy.

When Snowy outlined all the fun to be had, including the preparations, the Elves danced to their musical words:

For Families the Village Hall shall be
Reserved,
To hear a Story Art surprise joyously
Rehearsed,
A wish shall be shared with seasonal
Harmony,
To Thank Father Christmas and all
Company.





The Owl that Saved the Christmas Tree Forest

All the Northern Saw Whet Owls that lived in the Christmas Tree Forest gathered to spread across the tree tops of their Norwegian Spruce Forest Trees. They were creating a special welcome for the seasonal visit of their loyal friend, Snowy Owl. This magnificent very snow white Snowy Owl was always called 'Snowy' by his friends.

Just as Snowy circled around all of the Norwegian Spruce tree tops, the families of Saw Whet Owls whistled their favourite tune of Too-Too-Too in perfect harmony.

Snowy loved his Christmas time visit to this wonderland; to this forest to share seasonal greetings and cheer. He especially loved to listen to the glorious sounds of high 'tssts' and the very high pitched toots that echoed through the Christmas Tree Forest to welcome him. His Saw Whet Owl friends performed melodies like no other owls.

Quickly, Snowy noticed that one of his very special Saw Whet Owl friends was not to be seen or heard! He was noticeably missing!

This owl was nicknamed Sleepy because he slept much longer in his 20 foot tree top home than any of the other Saw Whet Owls. Sleepy

also made the most incredible snoring sounds when he was both awake and asleep!

Where could Sleepy be? Perhaps he was experiencing a very deep sleep. Perhaps? Then Snowy recalled that Sleepy was always, always falling asleep.

All The Saw Whet Owls and Snowy Owl decided to search and seek in every direction across their beautiful wonderland. While in flight, they would toot Sleepy's favourite melodies. Saw Whet Owls have unusual ear shapes (like no other owl families) that greatly enhance their hearing ability to an outstanding level. Sleepy would hear his friends from great distances if he wasn't asleep!

Snowy decided to fly to New York City as he learned that a 75 foot Christmas Tree Forest Spruce Tree had been felled; cut down and taken to Manhattan's 30 Rockefeller Plaza to be erected as its traditional Christmas tree. Snowy knew the way as he had often flown over the popular Christmas tree lighting celebration many times. Perhaps, thought Snowy, just perhaps...

I wonder if Sleepy travelled 200 miles from his home to see the lights being turned on at Rockefeller Plaza? Or, could it be that when Sleepy was sound asleep the Christmas tree selected for Manhattan was wrapped with great precision. In any case, Snowy had a feeling that the lights of unmissable illumination somehow would help him to find Sleepy and bring him home in time for his family Christmas. He simply must find him.

Yes, Snowy was determined to find Sleepy and that was that...,

He practised all of the too-too calls that Sleepy would recognise. These unusual sounds can be heard from unbelievable distances. Just as Snowy approached the area where hard working men were raising the 70 foot Christmas Tree, he couldn't help but notice that the men were staring with wonderment as they had spotted a very small owl with deep eyes; an adorable creature that immediately made them all smile. They all smiled like they hadn't smiled in a very long time. Goodness me , thought Snowy, it was Sleepy. It was Sleepy. How wonderful.

Snowy couldn't believe all the smiling faces looking at such a sight of bewilderment. The men then spoke about how tired and thirsty Sleepy must be. They couldn't believe that such a small creature could survive such a long and cold journey wrapped up tightly in the Christmas Tree. Carefully, one of the men wrapped Sleepy in his sweater and remarked that Sleepy was the most distinctive and heart warming owl he had ever seen.

Snowy hovered above and around in circles until he was certain that Sleepy had been given the right amount of nourishment and water.

Time proved that Sleepy was very lucky to be so well looked after.

Yes, Sleepy was showing all right signs of a full recovery while the wonderful men and women looking after him sang Christmas Songs.

All knew that such bewilderment, joy and smiles would create one of the happiest Christmas memories ever. Snowy and Sleepy had never seen so many smiles. Interestingly, the workers also boasted about the fact that no complaints had been received about the Christmas Tree shape this year! This was the first tree that brought contentment. Everyone was happy! Everyone was sharing good will.

When Snowy heard Sleepy's "toot, toot, toot", followed by a snore, he knew Sleepy was ready to go home. The two special owls, Snowy and Sleepy, swiftly travelled back to the Northern Christmas Tree Forest together and as they landed on the tree tops of the beloved Forest, Sleepy was asked many, many questions about his extraordinary adventure. He simply shared that the very kind people who helped him gave him the name Rockefeller. "Imagine that" all the owls tooted.

Then Snowy told the story that everyone proclaimed was going to be the very best Christmas ever as this very small owl has brought us such joy; such peace and our hearts will never forget him. They also proclaimed that his home; his Christmas Tree Forest must be protected. They wrote many letters to share that every Christmas Tree cut down must be replaced with the planting of a New Norwegian Spruce Tree.

Sleepy surprised all when he proclaimed that every year, all the Saw Whet Owls must migrate to 30 Rockefeller Plaza to see the stunning illuminating lights being turned on, magnificently, to celebrate the Christmas Tree tradition thanks to the Northern Christmas Tree Forest and thanks to the wonderful folks that saved his life. All agreed with a toot-toot-toot that could be heard 200 miles away!

As Snowy was about to fly off to catch up with Father Christmas and his magical Reindeer, his wings engraved a Christmas message in the snow for all to see:

Dear Sleepy,

You spread good will and cheer wherever you go.

You are the owl that was given the name Rockefeller and you are **THE OWL THAT SAVED THE CHRISTMAS TREE FOREST.**



Snowy Owl and the Musical Echo

It was the time of Seasonal Tidings and Cheer, there, in the land of the Christmas Tree Forest. SNOWY, on this bright winter's day, decided to fly to Manhattan; to fly above and around Manhattan to see, once again, the magnificent Norwegian Spruce Christmas Tree, traditionally decorated and displayed with magnificent lights at Rockefeller Plaza.

SNOWY would thrive on this journey before on to meet his special friend, SLEEPY, the Saw Whet owl who last year saved the Northern Christmas Tree Forest.

In his departure from Rockefeller Plaza, SNOWY. Circled above Central Park to view its 1800 treetops, all of which were glorified with glistening snow covered treetops. They were all traditionally perfectly dressed with snowcapped hats for the coming Christmas Holiday. In amazement, he noticed a few rides on horseback, wearing top hats! What a stunning sight he thought. Perhaps they are going to a Christmas Ball!

The Many ladies and gentlemen walking in the Park were stunned as well as they couldn't help seeing the sight of SNOWY, flying above the treetops and they all stopped to wave their gestures of

welcome to such a majestic creature in flight. Indeed, Snowy was so very much surprised to see so many gentle folks waving with such heartfelt expression.

SNOWY was very happy that he kept his promise to visit the place where his friend, SLEEPY, was so well looked after last Christmas. A promise is a promise and that was something he truly believed.

As SNOWY departed, he glanced backwards at the glorious vision of the Park's 1800 snowcapped trees, continuing on to The Christmas Tree Forest, the home of his special friend, SLEEPY. Sleepy had saved the Forest Christmas past and Snowy knew that he needed help. Upon arrival, SNOWY learned that SLEEPY and all his friends were trying hard to solve an enormous challenge.

SNOWY couldn't believe his eyes! The snow in the Christmas Tree Forest had vanished. Father Christmas and his Reindeer wouldn't be able to land after all the presents for children had been delivered. The Sleigh was presently on its way home. SNOWY immediately summoned all the critters in the Forest; all of the winter white critters. He 'hooted' and 'hooted', summoning all to join his get-together plan. They all immediately appeared, strikingly, in their winter dress of white fur and feathers. SNOWY thought what a sight to remember; a sight to behold.

The winter white critters reflected the whiteness of snow across the land as a landmark for Father Christmas and Rudolph to see from the sky.

It also showed the bond of the friends, all working together, forming the Friendship Circle.

At just the right moment, SLEEPY introduced ECHO, a musically talented Barn Owl, to SNOWY. Interestingly, ECHO was dressed in winter white feathers like no other Barn Owl SNOWY had ever seen. Together, the Three Owls, supported by the winter white critters of the Friendship Circle created a plan to create the snow needed for the return trip of the Magic Christmas Sleigh.

The Critters included the white fallow deer, white ducks, white herons, a white arctic fox, winter white stoats, arctic hares, a polar bear, white arctic wolves and snow geese. Now this is quite a sight to behold, thought SNOWY.

The Friendship Circle learned that the Magic Sleigh was expected to arrive home soon and by now, all had settled down to listen to SNOWY's plan of action! He placed all of the winter white critters on both sides of the landing runway. Immediately, the whiteness shared by the feathers of the winter white critters marked in a Snow White fashion the landing runway for Father Christmas. This was a good start thought the Critters. Then SNOWY asked all to hoot and sing

sing like they had never hooted and sung before the musical notes to “Let It Snow, Let It Snow, Let It Snow” when SNOWY raised his wings.

It worked. The musical notes of hoots and critter music harmonised like no hill had ever heard before. They all themselves loved the music!

ECHO shared the best range of musical hoots and sounds, which echoed through the hills and mountains, just as SNOWY and SLEEPY thought it would.

His voice echoed so perfectly that it woke up the SNOW CLOUDS. The most beautiful snowfall appeared and danced downwards to share a blanket of snow on the important landing area for the Magic Sleigh. The Snowflakes danced and danced to the delightful and harmonious musical notes that performed “Let It Snow, Let It Snow, Let It Snow”.

In its traditional magical fashion, the Magic Sleigh arrived safely with both Father Christmas and Rudolph smiling to show many thanks. There is nothing like a smile thought SNOWY OWL. FATHER CHRISTMAS asked his wonderful OWLS and WINTER WONDERLAND friends to all take a bow. Just as they did, a RAINBOW appeared in the sky, stretching across all the mountains. FATHER CHRISTMAS started singing:

“Let It Snow, Let It Snow, Let It Snow” and all join in. The Christmas music rang notes of good will and tidings of joy.

It was simply glorious.

The SNOWFLAKES continued dancing and falling gracefully, but no one expected them to completely cover the RAINBOW....It was the greatest Christmas surprise ever and it was the very, very first SNOWBOW ever seen thanks to music, dancing SNOWFLAKES and thanks to ECHO!

SNOWY OWL named the mountain that proved to be perfect for the landing runway for Father Christmas:

ECHO MOUNTAIN, the home of the magnificent SNOWBOW.

A Collection of Snowy Owl Christmas Stories

The Snowy Owl Collection of Christmas Stories has been created through the magic of Christmas story telling and sharing by Dianne Sunda, writer and founder of The International Children's Museum Foundation (Surrey).

www.internationalchildrensmuseumfoundation.com

Her annual Christmas stories were inspired by the parish of the beautiful village of Ockley, Surrey England, which is blessed by both a magnificent Village Hall and the historic church of St. Margaret's which has strong ties to Guilford, Connecticut.

With special thanks to the following, Dianne's stories have been shared with the creative good will of Christmas:

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By Dianne Sunda