

"How Melvin Saved Christmas"

by  
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1 INT. SANTA'S HOME - AFTERNOON

1

We zoom in on an ornate house sitting amid the snow dunes of the North Pole. The view dissolves through a window and into the inside of the house, where SANTA is standing before a roaring fire and talking with the DOCTOR - a veterinarian - who has just arrived.

SANTA  
(anxiously)  
Well, Doc?

The Doctor removes his glasses, as people often do when they have to talk about something serious.

DOCTOR  
Santa, I'm afraid it's the  
reindeer flu.

SANTA  
Oh, no!

DOCTOR  
There hasn't been an outbreak here  
at the Pole in nearly a quarter of  
a century.

SANTA  
(worried)  
What am I going to do?

DOCTOR  
There's not much you *can* do. Like  
people flu, the reindeer flu has  
to run its course.

SANTA  
How'd the reindeer get it?

DOCTOR  
There's no way to tell. Maybe one  
of them didn't wash his or her  
hooves often enough. Hoof  
cleanliness is very important in  
the fight against reindeer  
influenza germs.

SANTA  
How many of them are ill?

DOCTOR  
*All* of them.

(CONTINUED)

SANTA

(aghast)  
You mean Dasher, Dancer, Prancer,  
Vixen, Comet, Cupid -

DOCTOR

Donder and Blitzen, yes. And  
Rudolph too.

SANTA

(hopefully)  
Can they. . . fly?

DOCTOR

No. They're not strong enough for  
that type of exertion. Give them a  
couple of weeks, and they'll be  
back to their old selves.

SANTA

A couple of *weeks*? Christmas is  
five days away!

DOCTOR

I'm sorry, but in their present  
condition, they won't be able to  
make their usual flight this year.

(beat)  
You have a back-up plan, of  
course?

SANTA

(longish beat;  
ashamed)  
No.

DOCTOR

I saw several reindeer playing in  
the snow dunes on my way here. How  
about them?

SANTA

They're not trained. I can't just  
strap a reindeer onto my sleigh  
and expect him to make the around-  
the-world run.

DOCTOR

How long would you need for  
training?

(CONTINUED)

SANTA

More than five days! It varies  
from reindeer to reindeer.

(sighs; worried)

What am I going to do?

Everything's set: The children are  
expecting me. The sleigh's loaded.  
Mrs. Claus has already pressed my  
best red suit.

DOCTOR

I'm sorry, sir. You'll have to  
look into some other mode of  
transportation.

SANTA

But my reindeer provide the only  
"mode" that works! Why do you  
think I chose them over, say,  
flamingos so many years ago?

DOCTOR

I never really gave it much  
thought.

(beat)

If you can't find some other way  
to make your deliveries, I suppose  
you'll have to. . . cancel  
Christmas.

FADE OUT.

The focus is on RUDOLPH, who is lying in a hospital bed  
with the covers pulled tightly up to his chin. His  
antlers are sagging a little. A humidifier is blasting  
vapor into the air beside him. His face is worn, and his  
eyes are red. He weakly tries a couple of beeps on his  
noise, which lights up a little but sounds worn out.

Santa opens the room door and approaches him.

RUDOLPH

(always sickly)

Hi, boss.

SANTA

(approaching)

How are you feeling?

Santa sits on the chair beside his friend.

(CONTINUED)

RUDOLPH

Pretty bad.

(sniffs)

My throat's *really* sore, and I  
can't get my nose to sound right.

He tries another toot, but it sounds horrible.

SANTA

It reminds me of a Model T horn.

RUDOLPH

And it's barely as bright as a  
nightlight.

(beat)

I'm afraid I'm not going to be  
much help to you this year, sir.  
I'd hardly be lighting your way at  
*all*.

SANTA

Don't you worry about it. You rest  
and get better.

RUDOLPH

(coughs briefly)

What about all the good little  
boys and girls? They're expecting  
you!

SANTA

(longish beat)

I'll. . . I'll figure *something*  
out.

FADE OUT.

Santa is seated at his desk, his computer in front of  
him. MRS. CLAUS stands beside the desk.

MRS. CLAUS

(concerned)

What are you going to do?

SANTA

I don't know! The reindeer have  
caught the flu in the past, but  
*never* this close to Christmas.  
There was always time for them to  
recover before the big night.

(CONTINUED)

MRS. CLAUS

Will you have to. . .  
(gulps)  
. . . cancel?

SANTA

I hope not! Kids already have their stockings up all over the world. Think of all the Christmas trees with their lights twinkling tonight in anticipation of the 25th.

MRS. CLAUS

Think of all the milk and cookies you *won't* get.

Santa rubs his ample tummy.

SANTA

(sadly)  
Yes, there's that too.  
(beat)  
There *must* be a way around this. I've delivered toys to good little boys and girls though storms, earthquakes, and even World Wars.

MRS. CLAUS

Maybe you could *delay* Christmas?

Santa leans forward in his chair.

SANTA

(anxiously)  
How so?

MRS. CLAUS

You could go on TV or issue a press release. Be *honest* with people. Tell them the reindeer are sick and you'll need to wait for them to get better before you can deliver the presents properly.

SANTA

Nice idea, but I don't think it would work.  
(beat)  
The vet says my team won't be back to their old selves for a couple of *weeks*. That's too late.

(CONTINUED)

MRS. CLAUS

How about other ways to travel -  
boats and planes?

SANTA

That would take *so* long. I'd  
probably get the toys delivered  
faster if I waited for the  
reindeer to recover.

(beat)

By the time I finished delivering  
the presents by airplane, people  
would be out of the Christmas  
spirit, the kids would be back in  
school, and the trees would be  
waiting on the sidewalk to be  
recycled. Everyone would have  
already celebrated the new year!

MRS. CLAUS

Is there anything *I* can do?

Santa reaches out to his wife and grasps her hand.

SANTA

Perhaps later, thank you. I'm  
going to sleep on it.

MRS. CLAUS

Should we send out an elf-mail?  
Maybe one of *them* will have an  
idea.

SANTA

It couldn't hurt.

FADE OUT.

In his red long-johns, Santa is lying in bed. His wife is  
asleep beside him. He is talking to himself, going over  
his problem.

SANTA

(yawns)

"Some other mode of  
transportation." What mode, Doc?  
How can I possibly. . .

(yawns as he drifts  
off)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

4

CONTINUED:

4

SANTA (CONT'D)  
. . . possibly. . .  
(starts snoring)

DISSOLVE TO:

5

INT. AIRPLANE - SANTA'S DREAM

5

On a crowded airplane, we hear the PILOT's voice over the intercom.

PILOT  
(over the speaker)  
Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. This is your pilot speaking. My crew and I welcome you aboard Flight 1225. If our attendants can do anything to make you more comfortable, please do not hesitate to ask.

Cut to Santa, who is desperately trying to shove his toy sack into the overhead compartment as many travelers look on.

SANTA  
(struggling)  
Get in there!

A flight ATTENDANT walks up to him. Holding the sack against the compartment, Santa stops pushing.

ATTENDANT  
Excuse me, sir?

SANTA  
(innocently)  
Yes?

ATTENDANT  
Your sack of toys is *not* going to fit into the overhead compartment. We have a few empty seats on this flight. I suggest you purchase one for your sack.

Santa clutches the sack and drops into his seat, defeated.

DISSOLVE TO:



6 EXT. CRUISE SHIP DECK - SANTA'S DREAM

6

On a large cruise ship, with the waves lapping against it and seagulls flying and cawing overhead, Santa approaches the uniformed PURSER.

SANTA

Excuse me, purser.

(beat)

Can you tell me how long it will be before we reach New York?

PURSER

Approximately four days, sir.

SANTA

(surprised)

Oh, that *won't* do.

PURSER

I beg your pardon?

SANTA

That's only *one* city. How will I deliver presents to the rest of the world on time? I *must* get there faster.

PURSER

I'm sorry, sir. We're a cruise ship, *not* a spaceship.

DISSOLVE TO:

7 INT. CAB - SANTA'S DREAM

7

With great effort, Santa manages to close the cab's door. We see that his toy sack is taking up most of the back seat and even spilling a bit into the front. The CABBIE behind the wheel looks a little annoyed.

CABBIE

Where to?

SANTA

I'm not sure.

(beat)

I suppose I may as well begin in Boston.

CABBIE

What's the address?

(CONTINUED)

SANTA

*All of them.*

CABBIE

Huh?

SANTA

I need to stop briefly at every house in Boston, and I need *you* to drive me.

CABBIE

(beat; confused)

If you say so, but that's *really* gonna make my meter spin - if it even goes that high! - and I *don't* take plastic.

In despair, Santa puts his face against the toy sack.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BUS STATION - SANTA'S DREAM

Santa is standing at the counter, asking questions of the female AGENT. The other service lines are packed with anxious travelers heading out for the holidays. Christmas carols play over a crackly speaker.

SANTA

I'd like to buy a ticket to see America.

AGENT

Would you be interested in our Scenic America package?

The agent slides a color brochure over the counter to Santa.

SANTA

Will that allow me to stop at every house in the country?

AGENT

(beat)

I'm sorry?

SANTA

I need to stop at every house in the world to deliver my presents.  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SANTA (CONT'D)

Will your Scenic America package  
allow me to do that?

AGENT

(beat)

No, but it does include a free cup  
of coffee, a bran muffin, and a  
complimentary copy of *USA Today*  
every morning.

DISSOLVE TO:

Santa is standing at the ticket counter. AGENT #2 is  
attempting to help him.

SANTA

Does your railroad make frequent  
stops?

AGENT #2

Yes, sir. We stop at most major  
cities along the travel corridor.

(beat)

Which city can I get you a ticket  
for?

SANTA

(proudly)

Every one of them!

AGENT #2

(beat)

I'm sorry?

SANTA

I need to get off at every city  
along the corridor, get back on  
the train, and get off at the next  
city, etc., etc.

(beat)

Can you arrange those tickets?

AGENT #2

I suppose I can, but it will be  
very expensive.

(CONTINUED)

SANTA  
(hopefully)  
Do you give out free *USA Todays*?

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CLAUS BEDROOM - *EARLY MORNING*

Santa wakes with a start to happily find himself in his own bed. It is still dark outside, There is a light sweat on his brow. His wife is gently snoring beside him.

SANTA  
(wakes with a start)  
What in the. . . Oh, it was a dream.  
(beat; sighs)  
I need a new plan. . . or  
Christmas won't happen.

FADE OUT.

INT. SANTA'S OFFICE - *LATER*

Santa - in his red long-johns - is sitting at his desk, typing on his computer. A dwindling fire burns in the fireplace. A bleary-eyed Mrs. Claus approaches him, pulling her robe tight about her.

MRS. CLAUS  
(yawns)  
Kris, are you alright?

Santa stops typing, surprised that he has a visitor.

SANTA  
I'm sorry, Edna. Did I wake you?

MRS. CLAUS  
I rolled over and you weren't there. I. . . I got worried.

SANTA  
I figured I'd check for any replies to the elf-mail you sent.

MRS. CLAUS  
Did you get any good ideas while you slept?

(CONTINUED)

SANTA

I'm afraid not. . . unless  
everyone wants a gift subscription  
to *USA Today*.

MRS. CLAUS

(befuddled)

What?

SANTA

Later, my dear.

MRS. CLAUS

Any promising e-mails?

He taps on a few more computer keys.

SANTA

(sighs)

I don't think so, though I *do* like  
the suggestion that we send all  
the presents via Federal Express.  
That would be pretty costly for a  
nonprofit group like us.

MRS. CLAUS

Maybe we could get a special rate?  
Sending all those packages should  
*certainly* qualify us as a  
preferred customer.

Santa types a little more.

SANTA

Here's the last elf-mail. It's  
from. . . Melvin.

(beat)

Do we know an elf named Melvin?

MRS. CLAUS

I don't, but you have so many  
elves working here.

(beat)

What does he have to say?

SANTA

(clears his throat;  
reading)

"Dear Santa, I know how to solve  
your problem.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED: (2)

11

SANTA (CONT'D)

It's much too complicated to write down here, but I would appreciate the chance to speak with you about the Melvin way to save the holiday. Yours in Christmas,  
Melvin - Elf Number 7654321."

MRS. CLAUS

*That sounds intriguing.*

SANTA

*It certainly* does. He seems pretty sure his plan will work!

FADE OUT.

12 INT. SANTA'S OFFICE - LATER THAT MORNING

12

There is a knock on the door. Santa, now in his usual red suit, goes to answer it.

SANTA

(calling)

I'm coming!

He opens the door. A wind is blowing, but he sees no one there. We hear MELVIN's voice before we see him.

MELVIN

Down here, boss.

(beat)

*Lower.*

Santa looks down toward the voice. Melvin is a smaller-than-usual elf dressed in brightly colored clothes and pointy, curled shoes. He wears very thick glasses. He holds a rolled-up paper in his right hand, and his shirt pocket - protected by a pocket protector - is stuffed with pens of all colors.

SANTA

(surprised)

Oh.

(beat)

I'm sorry, Melvin. I. . . I didn't see you there.

MELVIN

That's OK. I'm used to it.

SANTA

Please come in.

(CONTINUED)

MELVIN

Thanks.

Melvin walks in, and Santa shuts the door behind him.  
They walk to the roaring fire.

SANTA

Thanks for coming over so quickly.  
(beat; embarrassed)  
I'm. . . I'm sorry for the  
confusion just now.

MELVIN

Not a problem. I'm short! It's not  
*your* fault.

SANTA

You're not even the *average* size  
for an elf.

MELVIN

Don't I know it! Mom was short,  
and so was Dad. Of course, with  
Dad, that was usually a financial  
thing.

(beat)

Do you have any idea what it's  
like to look people straight in  
the *kneecaps*?

SANTA

I can't say I do.

Santa pridefully tugs at his overworked suspenders and  
throws out his chest.

SANTA

The Claus men have all been fairly  
tall - *round*, but tall.

MELVIN

You're lucky.

(beat)

I haven't outgrown any clothes in  
*ten* years!

SANTA

That sounds like a real money  
saver.

MELVIN

Yes, but it *does* make it tough to  
look fashion conscious.

(CONTINUED)

SANTA

Melvin, when I read your elf-mail,  
I didn't recognize your name.

(beat)

Have you been at the Pole for  
long?

MELVIN

A little over a decade.

SANTA

(surprised)

*That* long?

(beat; humbled)

I usually remember my employees.

MELVIN

It's not your fault. I'm not the  
most outgoing, charismatic elf.  
I'm just there Christmas season  
after Christmas season.

(beat)

You'd think people *would* remember  
me.

SANTA

Why is that?

MELVIN

*These*, for one.

He points at his glasses.

SANTA

That's *quite* a prescription.

MELVIN

No one can grind these lenses in  
an hour. And they're *awfully*  
heavy. I'm probably the only elf  
in the world who suffers from TFS.

SANTA

What's that?

MELVIN

*Tired Face Syndrome.*

He points at his pen-stuffed shirt pocket.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)



MELVIN (CONT'D)

The other elves are always making fun of me for this pocket protector, but I need it so I don't lose any of my pens. They wouldn't be cheap to replace. There aren't many stores around, and the shipping from Amazon.com is *really* expensive.

(beat)

Maybe I should become a Prime member?

Santa sits down in a chair, a table beside him.

SANTA

(direly)

Melvin, you know the situation.

MELVIN

Yes: All the reindeer are sick, and they can't make the Christmas Eve flight this year.

SANTA

Precisely.

He holds the paper he brought with him above his head.

MELVIN

I brought along some plans.

(beat)

Let me roll them out.

He starts unrolling the paper on the floor. Santa knocks on the table.

SANTA

How about up *here*?

MELVIN

Can't reach it.

Melvin stands and points at the unrolled paper.

MELVIN

(pridefully)

Take a gander at *that*.

Santa looks down at the paper, which is crowded with pictures - much like a comic book.

(CONTINUED)

SANTA

(beat; confused)  
What is it? I was expecting  
blueprints.

MELVIN

It's a storyboard, like in the  
movies - a series of pictures  
depicting the important points of  
this problem. You read it from  
left to right.

SANTA

Oh.

MELVIN

In the first panel, the doctor is  
telling you that the reindeer are  
sick.

SANTA

Nice artwork.

MELVIN

Thanks.

(beat)

And there you are visiting Rudolph  
in the hospital.

(beat)

I wanted to make his nose red, but  
my red pen ran out of ink.

Santa reaches out and puts a hand on Melvin's shoulder.

SANTA

Melvin, I appreciate the work  
you've put into this presentation.  
I *really* do. Can we please cut to  
the chase, though? Time is short.

MELVIN

I'm sorry. This is the way I  
practiced it.

SANTA

(surprised)

You *knew* my team would fall ill?

MELVIN

I knew it would happen sooner or  
later. I've gone back into the  
North Pole's history books.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MELVIN (CONT'D)

The reindeer flu seems to strike every 18 to 25 years. It was only a matter of time before the sickness matched up with the big day.

SANTA

What's your plan?

Melvin sits down on the floor and proudly flips the paper over to the other side.

MELVIN

I proudly present the Melvin way to save Christmas!

Santa peers down at an odd-looking drawing of his reindeer.

SANTA

(confused)

It's a sketch of my reindeer team.

MELVIN

It's the team alright, but the new and improved version - the latest in reindeer-making technology.

Melvin stands again.

SANTA

(beat)

*Mechanical* reindeer?

MELVIN

I call them "robot reindeer." I've always liked alliteration.

SANTA

And these. . . robot reindeer will take the place of my *real* reindeer and fly me around the world on Christmas Eve?

MELVIN

Exactly. The robot reindeer, *lovingly* created by yours truly, are the ultimate in modern transportation. Made of all-natural materials, they run entirely on solar energy and are one hundred percent green - which is very important nowadays.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MELVIN (CONT'D)

They require no food and, because  
of that, they make. . . uhm. . .  
no. . . uhm. . . poop.

SANTA

But can they make it around the  
world?

MELVIN

On a *single* battery charge! I've  
even created a smaller version  
modeled on Rudolph, whose nose  
will shine with the brilliance of  
a halogen headlight.

SANTA

(overcome)  
Do you *really* think this will  
work?

MELVIN

I wouldn't be here if I didn't.

SANTA

Wonderful! Get them charged and  
hooked up to my sleigh  
immediately.

MELVIN

I have to build them first.

SANTA

(taken aback)  
They're not. . . built?

MELVIN

Uh uh.

SANTA

But Christmas is -

MELVIN

I *know* how close it is.

SANTA

How long will it take you to  
construct these nine robots?

MELVIN

With some assistance, I can have  
them ready for your flight.

(CONTINUED)

12

CONTINUED: (7)

12

SANTA

Excellent!

MELVIN

I will need materials, of course,  
some helpers, and a workspace.

SANTA

Will the old commissary do?

MELVIN

That will be fine.

SANTA

Draw up a list of who and what you  
need.

Santa picks up the telephone and presses a few buttons.

SANTA

Hello, this is a priority message:  
Melvin, Elf Number 7654321, will  
be down shortly to see you. You  
are to give him *everything* he  
needs, and I am hereby releasing  
any of my staff to him to assist  
with his project.

(beat)

I said "Melvin."

(beat)

That's right: The elf who saved  
Christmas!

DISSOLVE TO:

13

INT. COMMISSARY - MONTAGE SCENE

13

Melvin and the many elves he has recruited are hard at  
work in the newly renovated lab. We see them sawing,  
hammering, welding, building the frames for the robot  
reindeer, inserting the circuitry, and applying the  
simulated reindeer hide. All the elves are dressed in  
protective gear and are sporting pocket protectors.

FADE OUT.

14

INT. SANTA'S OFFICE - CHRISTMAS EVE

14

Santa and his wife are standing before the roaring fire.  
Santa, in his expected traveling suit, is on the  
telephone.

(CONTINUED)

SANTA

Thank you, Doctor. I'm glad to  
hear they're getting better.  
Please give them all my best.

(beat)

Good night.

He hangs up the telephone.

MRS. CLAUS

(eagerly)

Well?

SANTA

The reindeer are improving, but  
they're *still* not up for the  
flight.

MRS. CLAUS

The doctor told you they wouldn't  
be.

Mrs. Claus starts fussing over her husband's appearance  
and outfit, straightening this and fluffing that.

SANTA

I know.

MRS. CLAUS

Then I guess you'll have to go  
with Melvin's plan.

SANTA

(sighs)

I suppose.

She stops fussing.

MRS. CLAUS

You seem disappointed.

SANTA

Not disappointed.

(beat)

*Worried.*

MRS. CLAUS

But his plan will save Christmas!

SANTA

*If it works.*

(CONTINUED)

MRS. CLAUS

You have your doubts?

SANTA

I *always* have doubts when we bring technology into this holiday.

Santa starts pacing before the fire.

SANTA

It's the *simplicity* of Christmas that makes it special: A child is born in a manger surrounded by adoring animals. *Simple*. No video games. The Three Wise Men didn't ride in on robotic camels. No one gave Jesus an Xbox for his birthday.

MRS. CLAUS

Times change. You can't expect kids to always play with blocks and Tinker Toys. You've been railing against electronics since the days of Pong!

SANTA

Don't get me wrong, Edna. I have every hope that Melvin's plan *will* work. But what if something goes wrong?

(beat)

With the *real* reindeer, I can talk to them or give them a sugar cube, whatever it takes to set things right. But with these robots. . . well, I. . . I simply don't know.

MRS. CLAUS

Melvin isn't going to send you on your way without showing you how everything works, honey. You'll know how to handle any situation that comes up.

SANTA

(sighs heavily)

I suppose so.

A mantle clock starts chiming the hour.

(CONTINUED)

14 CONTINUED: (3)

14

MRS. CLAUS  
It's getting late.  
(beat)  
You'd better go meet Melvin in the  
hangar deck.

She kisses him on the cheek.

FADE OUT.

15 INT. HANGAR DECK - MOMENTS LATER

15

The hangar deck is covered by a large white dome. Santa's sleigh has been hooked up to the robotic reindeer, who - though *absolutely* still - look exactly like the sick reindeer. Many elves are gathered around, drinking coffee and looking tired. Melvin proudly stands beside the robotic reindeer team as Santa approaches.

MELVIN  
(proudly)  
Here you are, boss. They're ready  
to fly!

Santa briefly walks around the robots, looking them over. He is impressed.

SANTA  
They look like the real thing!

MELVIN  
Of course they do! We can't have  
you pulled around the sky by  
creatures that look like clothes  
hangers stuck together with  
bailing wire! It would be  
undignified.

SANTA  
You and your team have done a  
*wonderful* job.  
(beat; calling)  
Thank you. Thank you *all*.

All the elves respond with "You're welcome," etc. Melvin shows Santa a box about the size of a remote control. There are many buttons on its face, and a small glowing antenna projects from its top.

MELVIN  
*This* is the control box. See the  
nine buttons across the top?  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)



MELVIN (CONT'D)

They're labeled with the names of the *real* reindeer. I've given the robot reindeer the same names and put them in the same positions as your real team.

(beat)

Let me start them up for you.

He presses a few buttons, which beep. We hear some clanking and a growing hum as the robots begin warming up.

MELVIN

They'll be ready for flight in ten minutes. Their solar batteries are fully charged and will last for 24 hours.

SANTA

(concerned)

How am I going to fly the sleigh *and* control the reindeer at the same time?

MELVIN

I've put a little Velcro holder for the control box right *there*.

Melvin points at the Velcro patch on the inside of the sleigh.

MELVIN

Your eyes won't be off your flight path for long if you need to push the buttons.

SANTA

That's *not* safe flying. The FAA wouldn't be happy.

MELVIN

It's like talking on your cell phone while driving. People do it all the time.

SANTA

Which *doesn't* make it safe.

(beat)

No, I need someone to fly with me and control the reindeer.

(CONTINUED)

MELVIN

(uneasily)

You. . . You do?

SANTA

Someone who knows all the intricacies of the control box and can work it while I make my deliveries.

MELVIN

(hurriedly)

Do you want me to send out a priority elf-mail?

SANTA

(beat)

No, Melvin. I need you to come with me.

All the color goes out of Melvin's face.

MELVIN

(beat; nervously)

M-M-Me?

SANTA

Who knows how to work the control box better?

MELVIN

But that's not in my job description.

SANTA

Don't you want to witness your creations flying through the heavens?

MELVIN

(quickly)

You can e-mail me a picture. . . or put it on Facebook.

(beat)

Are you on Instagram yet?

SANTA

You'll be missing a once-in-a-lifetime event.

Melvin looks down at his curly shoes, embarrassed.

(CONTINUED)

MELVIN

(stalling)

I. . . I *can't*.

SANTA

Why not?

MELVIN

(embarrassed)

I'm. . . afraid of heights.

SANTA

(surprised)

You are?

MELVIN

That's why I took the job here: No travel.

SANTA

How bad can this phobia be?

MELVIN

Bad! Being so short, I'm closer to the ground. Heights *really* scare me - even more than an average-sized elf.

SANTA

I *really* need your help to pull this off.

MELVIN

But. . .

SANTA

The children will be *so* disappointed if I mess this up.

Melvin shrugs his shoulders in resignation.

MELVIN

(sighs heavily)

You *had* to bring the kids into it?

(longish beat;

reluctantly)

OK, OK. I'll. . . I'll go.

SANTA

Wonderful!

(CONTINUED)

15

CONTINUED: (4)

15

MELVIN  
(calling)  
Murray!

MURRAY, one of the elves, looking annoyed, steps forward.

MURRAY  
(angrily)  
What?

MELVIN  
Bring me any leftover material. If  
I'm going flying, I need to be  
seat-belted into a pouch as snug  
as a baby kangaroo!

FADE OUT.

16

INT. HANGAR DECK - NOT MUCH LATER

16

Santa is seated at the reigns of his sleigh, the large toy sack behind him. All the elves are still gathered about. Beside Santa, a very nervous Melvin is strapped into a pouch made of simulated reindeer hide. Only his head and the glowing antenna of the control box can be seen. Santa looks over at him.

SANTA  
(amused)  
Can you *breathe* in there, Melvin?

MELVIN  
I'm fine, thank you.

SANTA  
Do you have a good grip on the  
control box?

MELVIN  
Don't you worry about it, sir.  
Taking care of this will give me  
something to focus on while  
we're. . .  
(gulps)  
. . . flying.

SANTA  
It's not so bad. I've done it  
*hundreds* of times. You may even  
enjoy it.

(CONTINUED)

MELVIN

*That will never happen.*

SANTA

(chuckles)

Are the reindeer ready?

Melvin presses a few beeping buttons on the control box.  
The box's antenna glows briefly.

MELVIN

All show ready. We have 23 hours  
and 52 minutes of solar battery  
life remaining.

SANTA

That's enough for *three* trips!

(calling)

Murray, open the dome!

The dome above them splits in two and, with much  
clanging, opens like a clamshell. The black night sky and  
the twinkling stars are now visible.

SANTA

(sniffs the air)

Ah, smell that air. What a night!

(beat)

Power up, Melvin!

The engines of the reindeer start revving.

SANTA

Ho, ho, ho!

MELVIN

(begins humming "New  
York, New York")

SANTA

*What* are you doing?

MELVIN

(stops humming)

Humming. It helps calm me.

SANTA

Why "New York, New York?"

MELVIN

It's one of the few songs I know.

(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

16

CONTINUED: (2)

16

MELVIN (CONT'D)

Would you prefer "You Light Up My  
Life?"

SANTA

Let's stick with Sinatra.

(calling)

On Dasher, on Dancer, on Prancer  
and Vixen, on Comet, on Cupid, on  
Donder, and Blitzen! And on  
Rudolph!

Robot Rudolph's nose beeps a few times and casts its  
bright light. The sleigh bells begin to jingle as the  
sleigh moves forward briefly and then lifts off.

SANTA

(calling; fading)

Merry Christmas to all!

All the elves on the hangar deck floor wave at the  
departing sleigh and yell wishes of good luck. Robot  
Rudolph beeps a few more times, his nose's light piercing  
the black night as the sleigh passes through the open  
dome.

MELVIN

(screams briefly,  
then goes back to  
nervously humming  
"New York, New  
York")

FADE OUT.

17

EXT. SKY IN SANTA'S SLEIGH - NOT MUCH LATER

17

The sleigh bells jingle as our heroes fly away. In his  
pouch, Melvin looks petrified. His eyes are closed tight,  
and he has stopped humming.

SANTA

I told you not to look down.

MELVIN

But that's where I *belong*. I'm not  
a bird!

SANTA

Maybe you should start humming  
again?

(CONTINUED)

MELVIN

It's not working anymore. Sinatra  
can only go so far.

SANTA

Report on the reindeer.

Melvin opens one eye just a bit. He presses a few control  
box buttons.

MELVIN

All nine are functioning as  
planned.

(beat)

Where are we heading?

SANTA

We'll follow the time zones around  
the world until we've delivered  
all the presents.

MELVIN

*Please* hurry.

SANTA

(calling)  
Ho, ho, ho!

FADE IN:

To indicate the passage of time, we see several scenes of  
Santa and Melvin flying, landing on rooftops, Santa going  
down chimneys, etc. The montage should be accompanied by  
excerpts from Christmas carols.

FADE OUT.

The sleigh and the reindeer touch down on a snow-covered  
roof. After they've landed, Melvin cautiously opens his  
eyes and takes a quick look around.

MELVIN

*Another* roof?

SANTA

I thought you'd like it up here.

(CONTINUED)

MELVIN

Why?

SANTA

We're closer to the ground.

MELVIN

But we're not *on* the ground.

SANTA

Why don't you get out of your pouch and check the reindeer? I've got a chimney to go down.

Santa leaves the sleigh and trudges away toward the chimney. As Melvin gets out of his pouch, Santa slides down the chimney.

FADE OUT.

Melvin has his tools out and is making some slight adjustments to the robot reindeer. He begins mumbling to himself.

MELVIN

(exasperated)

Why did I agree to this?

(beat)

I remember - *guilt*. The big guy brought up the kids being disappointed. Well, no more! One time on this route is *more* than enough.

Santa approaches him.

SANTA

(approaching)

That's it. The *last* house.

MELVIN

(happily)

It is? It really, *really* is?

SANTA

Have I ever lied to you?

MELVIN

No.

(CONTINUED)



SANTA

How are the reindeer?

MELVIN

Just swell.

SANTA

(longish beat)

Melvin, I. . . I have to admit that I had my doubts about these creatures of yours, but you've done a *great* thing. There wouldn't have been a Christmas this year without you. You should be proud.

MELVIN

(beat; surprised)

You know something? I *am*. Now that I'm not so scared, I realize that I really *am* proud.

SANTA

You deserve an honor for this - a medal or a citation or something.

MELVIN

(hopefully)

How about a raise?

SANTA

(chuckles)

Don't push it.

MELVIN

That's OK, Santa. The work is its own reward.

SANTA

Spoken like a true hero.

(beat)

Now get back in your pouch, "hero." We've got a return flight to make.

FADE OUT.

The sleigh bells jingle as they fly. Rudolph occasionally beeps his nose, his light shining brightly all the while.

(CONTINUED)

MELVIN

When will we reach the North Pole?

SANTA

In about 25 minutes.

(beat)

Are you anxious to get home?

MELVIN

I'm anxious to be back on the  
*ground*.

SANTA

So you won't join me *next* year?

MELVIN

If the Pole's influenza cycle  
continues as it has since the  
start of our recorded history,  
your *real* reindeer will be back  
next year. This team will be put  
into storage.

A loud alarm sounds from the control box.

SANTA

(worried)

What's that?

Melvin looks at the box.

MELVIN

(confused)

There's a power drain.

SANTA

Where?

MELVIN

In Rudolph!

(beat)

The main solar battery is right up  
front for better absorption of the  
sun's rays.

SANTA

How's that possible?

MELVIN

I don't know. It checked out fine  
when we left for home.

(CONTINUED)

The sleigh bucks violently, surprising Santa and sending Melvin's pouch swinging.

SANTA

Is it *serious*?

MELVIN

It could be.

The alarm fades out to nothing.

SANTA

Can we make it back to the Pole?

MELVIN

I don't know. Rudolph needs to be repaired before we run out of power *completely*.

SANTA

Let me find a place to land so you can fix him.

Melvin presses a few control box buttons. The spiral antenna glows in the night sky.

MELVIN

We'd better not! According to these readings, if we shut the team down, they *may* not start up again. We'd be stuck wherever we landed.

SANTA

Then we'll have to repair him in flight.

The sleigh bucks hard again.

MELVIN

How can we. . .  
(suddenly  
understanding;  
objecting)  
Oh no!

SANTA

It's the *only* way.

MELVIN

Don't you remember that I'm afraid of *heights*?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

21

CONTINUED: (3)

21

MELVIN (CONT'D)

I can't crawl over four sets of reindeer and try and repair Robot Rudolph while we're flying.

SANTA

Well, *I* can't do it. I'm much too big, and I have to control the sleigh.

MELVIN

But, Santa -

SANTA

Melvin, if you don't do it, we might not make it home.

Melvin tucks his head down into his pouch.

MELVIN

(sighs deeply)  
Not my day. Just *not* my day.

FADE OUT.

22

EXT. SKY IN SANTA'S SLEIGH - MOMENTS LATER

22

The sleigh bells are jingling. Robot Rudolph's nose beep sounds occasionally, though it is off key now because of the power drain. The light from his nose flickers off and on, casting an eerie glow over the sleigh and our heroes.

Melvin, looking very nervous, is cautiously climbing over the reindeer. He finally reaches Rudolph. The sleigh bucks. He holds on for dear life.

MELVIN

(calling)  
*Please* keep the sleigh steady.

SANTA

(calling)  
I'm trying, but it's not cooperating. The bucking must be the result of the power problem.

Melvin opens the repair port beside Rudolph's nose and looks inside.

(CONTINUED)

MELVIN

(mumbling)

Now let me see: The gizmo-trometer  
is connected to the whatchamacall-  
it-sizer.

(beat)

That looks OK.

The sleigh bucks hard. Melvin slips.

MELVIN

*Whoa!*

SANTA

(calling anxiously)

Are you OK?

We see Melvin holding onto Rudolph's neck, his eyes shut tight.

MELVIN

(calling back)

I'm *alive*.

(beat)

I've got Rudolph by the neck.

SANTA

Don't let go!

MELVIN

Don't worry about it!

The sleigh bucks violently again.

SANTA

(calling urgently)

Something's happening. I. . . I  
can't control this thing anymore!

MELVIN

The power's cut out. We're going  
down!

The sleigh erratically heads toward the ground, the  
sleigh bells ringing loudly.

Suddenly, all is quiet - except for the occasional off  
key Rudolph nose beep. We see that the sleigh has stopped  
*in mid-air*. Santa looks around, befuddled.

SANTA

Melvin!

(CONTINUED)

Melvin is still hanging on to Rudolph's neck.

MELVIN

What the *heck* is going on?

SANTA

I don't know. We seem to have. . .  
stopped.

MELVIN

In mid-air?

SANTA

Can you get back here?

MELVIN

I *think* so.

(grunts as he  
struggles his way  
back to the sleigh)

Melvin carefully makes his way back to Santa and the  
pouch.

SANTA

This *can't* be. There's nothing  
holding us up.

Melvin finally makes it back.

MELVIN

And I'm back!  
(sighs in relief)

He starts kissing his pouch as he climbs back in.

MELVIN

I missed you, my pouch.  
I *missed* you.

SANTA

Settle down.

MELVIN

Happily.

SANTA

What's the control box say?

MELVIN

I have no idea. I dropped it when  
the sleigh bucked.

(CONTINUED)

Santa looks out into the night sky.

SANTA  
(beat; amazed)  
Will you look at *that*?

MELVIN  
Where?

Santa points.

SANTA  
*There.*

Four stars, white and sparkling, zoom toward the sleigh.

MELVIN  
(alarmed)  
They're coming right at *us*!

The stars slow to a crawl and then, one at a time, attach themselves to the sleigh's runners.

After a moment, the sleigh starts moving again, the sleigh bells ringing.

MELVIN  
(very surprised)  
Hey, we're moving again! How could  
we. . .

SANTA  
I have no idea, but we can't do  
anything about it. We may as well  
sit back. . . and enjoy the ride.

FADE OUT.

There is a clang as the robot reindeer touch down on the snow followed by, seconds later, a thump as the sleigh lands. Santa's home is visible in the distance. Melvin gets out of his pouch and stands beside Santa on the floor of the sleigh.

MELVIN  
We're home! The stars brought us  
*home*!

The stars detach themselves from the sleigh's runners and zoom off into the night sky.

(CONTINUED)

SANTA

There they go!

MELVIN

How did they know where to take  
us?

SANTA

You've got me.

Santa looks up into the night sky. He sees one  
particularly bright star and points it out to Melvin.

SANTA

Look, there's the Christmas star.  
(beat)  
I've never seen it twinkle like  
*that* before.

A deep, echoing, male VOICE comes from nowhere and seems  
to be all around them at once.

VOICE

I could not permit any harm to  
come to either of you after all  
you have done to honor my Son's  
birthday.

MELVIN

(longish beat)  
Santa, did. . . did that voice  
come out of the star?

SANTA

I *think* it did.

MELVIN

But how could. . .

SANTA

You know what they say about  
Christmas, Melvin: It's a time for  
miracles.

MELVIN

And cookies.

SANTA

That's right.  
(beat)  
Let's go have some.

(CONTINUED)



Side by side, Santa's big hand in Melvin's little one,  
our heroes walk toward Santa's home.

FADE TO BLACK.