

Goody Santa Claus on a Sleigh-Ride  
By Katharine Lee Bates, Published in 1889

Santa, must I tease in vain, dear? Let me  
go and hold the reindeer,  
While you clamber down the chimneys.  
Don't give me that sour smirk!  
Why should you have all the glory of the  
joyous Christmas story,  
And poor little Goody Santa Claus have  
nothing but the work?

It would be so very cozy, you and I,  
all round and rosy,  
Looking like two loving snowballs in our  
fuzzy Artic furs,  
Tucked in warm and snug together,  
whisking through the winter weather  
Where the tinkle of the sleigh-bells is the  
only sound that stirs.

You just sit here and grow chubby off the  
goodies in my cubby  
From December to December, till your  
white beard sweeps your knees;  
For you must allow, my Goodman, that  
you're but a lazy woodman  
And rely on me to foster all our fruitful  
Christmas trees.

While your Saintship waxes holy, year by  
year, and roly-poly,  
Blessed by all the lads and lassies in the  
limits of the land.  
While your toes at home you're toasting,  
then poor Goody must go posting  
Out to plant and prune and garner, where  
our fir-tree forests stand.

Oh! But when the toil is sorest how I love  
our fir-tree forest.  
Heart of light and heart of beauty in the  
Northland cold and dim,  
All with gifts and candles laden to delight a  
boy or maiden,  
And its dark-green branches ever  
murmuring the Christmas hymn.

Yet ask young Jack Frost, our neighbor, who  
but Goody has the labor,  
Feeding roots with milk and honey that the  
bonbons may be sweet!  
Who but Goody knows the reason why the  
playthings bloom in season  
And the ripened toys and trinkets rattle  
gaily to her feet!

From the time the dollies budded, wiry-  
boned and saw-dust blooded,  
With their waxen eyelids winking when the  
wind the tree-tops plied,  
Have I rested for a minute, until now your  
pack has in it  
All the bright, abundant harvest of the  
merry Christmastide?

Santa, wouldn't it be pleasant to surprise me  
with a present?  
And this ride behind the reindeer is the  
boon your Goody begs;  
Think how hard my extra work is, tending  
the Thanksgiving turkeys  
And our flocks of rainbow chickens – those  
that lay the Easter eggs.

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Jump in quick then? That's my bonny. Hey  
down derry! Nonny nonny!  
While I tie your fur cap closer, I will kiss  
your ruddy chin.  
I'm so pleased I fall to singing, just as sleigh  
bells take to ringing!  
Are the cloud-spun lap robes ready? Tirra-  
lira! Tuck me in

Off across the starlight Norland, where no  
plant adorns the moorland  
Save the ruby-berried holly and the frolic  
mistletoe!  
Oh, but this is Christmas revel! Off across  
the frosted level  
Where the reindeers' hoofs strike sparkles  
from the crispy, crackling snow!

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Now we pass through dusky portals to the  
drowsy land of mortals;  
Snow-enfolded, silent cities stretch about  
us dim and far.  
Oh! How sound the world is sleeping,  
midnight watch no shepherd keeping,  
Though an angel-face shines gladly down  
from every golden star.

Here's a roof. I'll hold the reindeer. I  
suppose this weathervane, Dear,  
Some one set here just on purpose for our  
team to fasten to.  
There's its gilded cock, - the gaby! - wants  
to crow and tell the baby  
We are come. Be careful, Santa! Don't  
get smothered in the flue.

Back so soon? No chimney-swallow dives  
but where his mate can follow.  
Bend your cold ear, Sweetheart Santa,  
down to catch my whisper faint:  
Would it be so very shocking if your Goody  
filled a stocking  
Just for once? Oh, dear! Forgive me.  
Frowns do not become a Saint.

I will peep in at the skylights, where the  
moon sheds tender twilights  
Equally down silken chambers and down  
attics bare and bleak.  
Let me shower with hailstone candies these  
two dreaming boys - the dandies  
In their frilled and fluted nighties, rosy  
cheek to rosy cheek.

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So our sprightly reindeer clamber, with their  
fairy sleigh of amber,  
On from roof to roof, the woven shades of  
night about us drawn.  
On from roof to roof we twinkle, all the  
silver bells a-tinkle,  
Till blooms in yonder blessed East the rose  
of Christmas dawn.

Now the pack is fairly rifled, and poor  
Santa's well nigh stifled;  
Yet you would not let your Goody fill a  
single baby sock;  
Yes, I know the task takes brains, Dear.  
I can only hold the reindeer  
And to see me climb down chimney - it  
would give your nerves a shock.

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Santa, don't pass by that urchin! Shake the  
pack, and deeply search in  
All your pockets. There is always one toy  
more. I told you so.  
Up again? Why, what's the trouble? On  
your eyelash winks the bubble  
Mortals call a tear, I fancy. *Holes in  
stocking, heel and toe?*

Goodman, though your speech is crusty  
now and then, there's nothing rusty  
In your heart. A child's least sorrow makes  
your wet eyes glisten, too;  
But I'll mend that sock so neatly it shall  
hold your gifts completely.  
Take the reins and let me show you what a  
woman's wit can do.

Puff! I'm up again, my Deary, flushed a bit  
and somewhat weary,  
With my wedding snow-flake bonnet worse  
for many a sooty knock;  
But be glad you let me wheedle, since, an  
icicle for needle,  
Threaded with the last pale moonbeam, I  
have darned the laddie's sock.

Then I tucked a paint-box in it ('twas no  
easy task to win it  
From the artist of the Autumn leaves) and  
frost-fruits white and sweet,  
With toys your pocket misses - oh! And  
kisses upon kisses  
To cherish safe from evil paths the  
motherless small feet.

Chirrup! Chirrup! There's a patter of soft  
footsteps and a clatter  
Of child voices. Speed it, reindeer, up the  
sparkling Artic Hill!  
Merry Christmas, little people! Joy-bells  
ring in every steeple,  
And Goody's gladdest of the glad. I've  
had my own sweet will.

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