

Father Christmas

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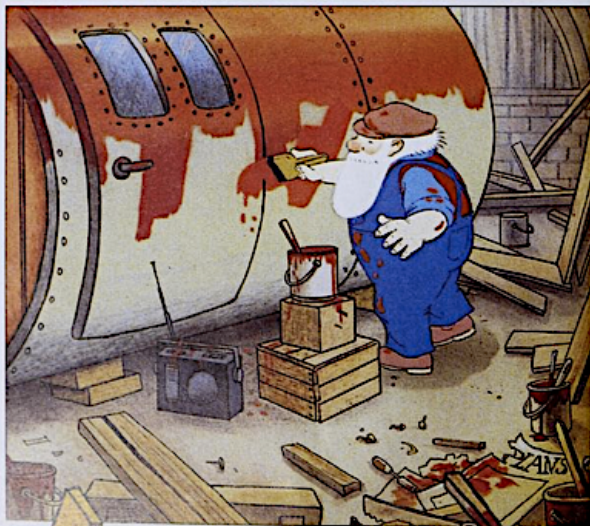
Raymond Briggs'

Father Christmas



Ladybird

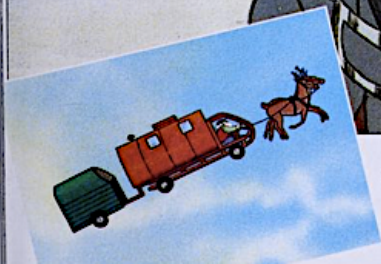
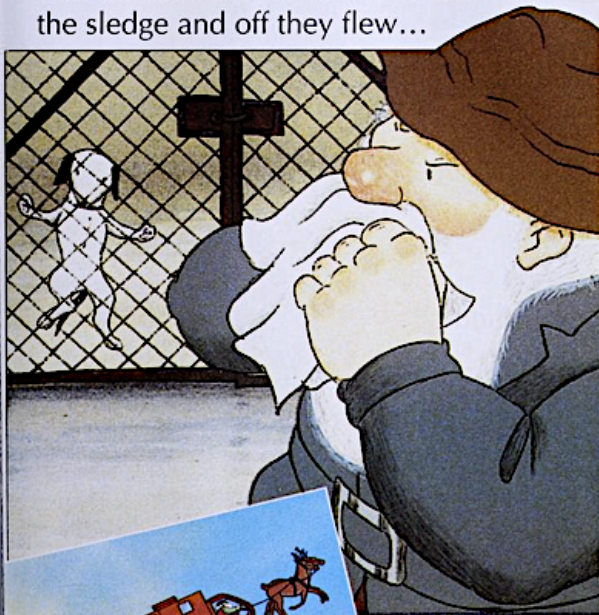
Last Christmas morning Father Christmas had come home feeling very tired, freezing cold – and more grumpy than ever. He was so fed up that he decided it was time to take a holiday.



First he turned his sledge into a caravan for the reindeer to pull, and then he packed his suitcases.



When it was time to leave, Father Christmas took Cat and Dog to the kennels and sadly said goodbye. He hitched the reindeer to the front of the sledge and off they flew...



...to la belle France!



So that no one would recognise him, Father Christmas bought a stripey jumper and a beret.

"Right then, dinner time!" he thought.

"Lovely, fish! What – no chips?"

After that came lobster, snails *and* pudding, followed by the bill. "Crumbs!" he cried. "Bloomin' expensive!"



Father Christmas had eaten so much that he began to feel very poorly!



A few days later some people at the campsite discovered the reindeer. "Hmmm! Time to move on," mumbled Father Christmas. "I know – I'll go to *Scotland!*"





He landed in a valley in the pouring rain. "B-b-bloomin' c-c-cold," shivered Father Christmas and he went to an inn to warm up. He loved the bagpipes and dancing.

Next morning the sun was shining, and he jumped into the loch for a swim. "Aaaargh! It's freezin'. Enough's enough! I need to go somewhere *hot*!"



Las Vegas! Nice room. Good food. Plenty to do. "This is the life!" chuckled Father Christmas.



And so the days and weeks went by.



One morning, by the pool, a small boy recognised who he was.

"Oh, dear!" moaned Father Christmas. "Time to be off again."

He asked for his bill. It was *enormous*! "Better go home," he said. So he packed his bags and set off.

"Back again, m'deers!" And the caravan bumped on the ground. "Better go and get the rascals."

Cat and Dog were so excited to see him again. "All right! All right! Mind me bloomin' beard!" laughed Father Christmas.

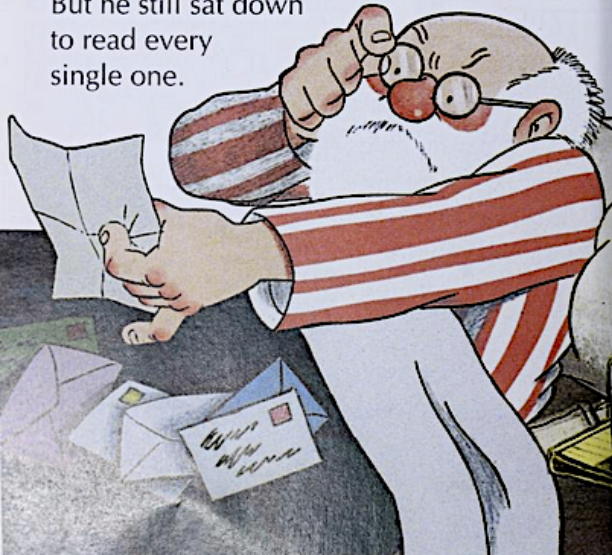




As he tried to
push his front
door open,
Father
Christmas
found a

mountain of letters behind it.

"Bloomin' Christmas post already!" he
grumbled. "Gets earlier every year."
But he still sat down
to read every
single one.



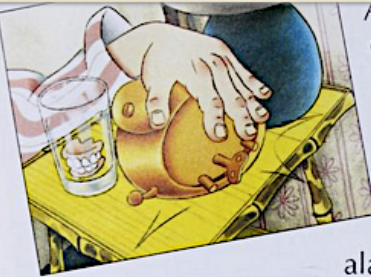
His list of
presents
grew longer,
and each
morning
more
letters
arrived.



Soon it was time to get his suit
from the dry cleaners. The lady in the
shop who served him thought he was
going to a fancy dress party.

"I should be so lucky," he growled at her.





At last it was Christmas Eve, and Father Christmas was woken early by his noisy alarm clock.

"Bloomin' Christmas here again," he moaned, crawling out of bed, and pulling back the curtains to look out. "Uggh! It's snowed during the night." And he carried on grumbling as he got dressed.



He fed Cat and Dog and listened to the weather forecast. "S'pose I'd better load up the sledge," he said. Then he fetched the reindeer and harnessed them up.

Snow began to fall again as he gently steered the sledge through his open gate.





"Tally-ho, m'deers!"
he cheered, and
the sledge took off
into the sky.

But Father
Christmas soon

started complaining again when
he flew straight through a thunderstorm.
So to cheer himself up a little, he began
to sing a song:

*Jump up on my sleigh,
And we're all on our way,
To another bloomin' Christmas!*



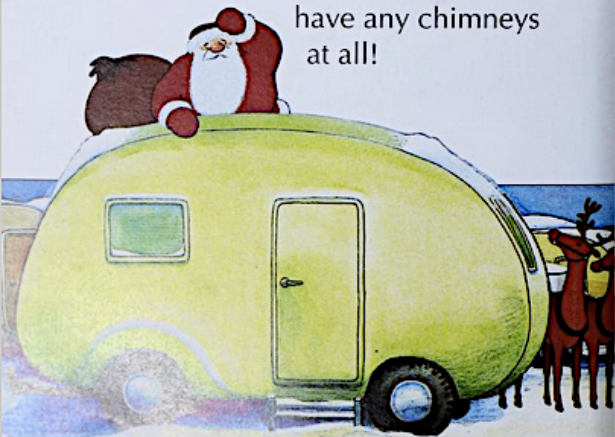
His sledge landed on the roof of the first
house, and Father Christmas squeezed
down the chimney. He crept softly into
the children's bedroom and carefully
tucked the presents into their stockings.



Throughout
the night
Father
Christmas
and the
reindeer
flew from
place to place.



His biggest problem was how to get into
some of the houses. Some chimneys were
a really tight squeeze. "Oooh!" moaned
Father Christmas. Other places didn't
have any chimneys
at all!



Father
Christmas
took a
break and
listened
to the
weather
forecast
again.
Then
it was
back to work.



"That's it, boys," he said to the reindeer
some time after. "We'd better get a move
on. We're a bit late for the party this year."



There was cheering and waving as the sledge landed in the middle of the Snowman Party.

"Hello, James!" said Father Christmas to a little boy with a snowman.

"Glad you could make it again this year."



The party was wonderful, with plenty of food and dancing. Then James and his snowman went to see the reindeer and to find *their* presents in the sledge. But, oh dear! They found two more hidden under the seat.



"That's torn it!" said Father Christmas. "I've left the wrong present before, but I've never *forgotten* any. Come on, m'deers, we're going for the bloomin' record! Bye, all. See you next year!"





"Come on! We're nearly there now," he shouted, as they flew over London and into the grounds of Buckingham Palace. "Oh, good! Flag's flying – they're in!" He quietly delivered the last two parcels and headed back to the sledge.

"Still at it, mate?" asked the milkman.

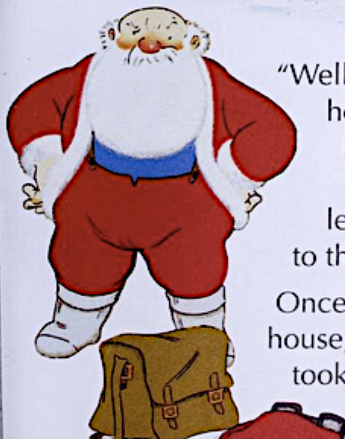
"Done now, thank bloomin' goodness," growled Father Christmas.

And he and the reindeer set off for home.



"Well done, m'deers," he said, as they landed safely. He yawned and led the reindeer to their stable.

Once inside his warm house, Father Christmas took off his hat and boots.



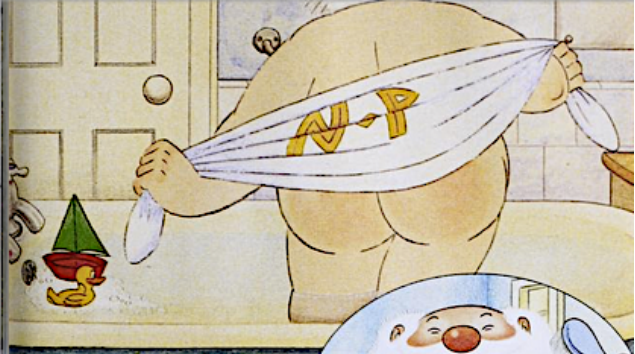


He hung up his jacket and then made himself a nice cup of tea.

He rolled up his sleeves and, with Cat sitting on his shoulders, he prepared the Christmas dinner.



When everything was cooked he sat down to enjoy it.



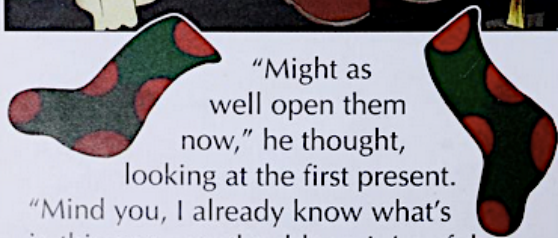
Later, after Father Christmas had had a steaming

hot bath, he got ready for bed.



He put a parcel each for Dog and Cat under the tree and picked up his own presents. Then Father Christmas headed upstairs.





"Might as well open them now," he thought, looking at the first present.

"Mind you, I already know what's in this one—another bloomin' awful tie from Auntie Edie.

"The usual *ghastly* socks from Cousin Violet," he grumbled, unwrapping the second.



"Phew! That's more like it," Father Christmas laughed, as he discovered a bottle. "Good old Uncle Bob!"

Father Christmas leaned over to change the date on the calendar. It was Christmas Day. "Well, that's that for another bloomin' year," he said thankfully.

"And a happy bloomin' Christmas to you and all!"



Poor old Father Christmas,
He never sees Christmas morn,
He works so hard on Christmas Eve,
He's asleep before the dawn.

Dear old Father Christmas,
We think you're very kind,
And if you get a little grumpy,
We don't really mind!

Thank you, Father Christmas,
From every boy and girl,
And all the children everywhere
In the whole wide bloomin' world.



Imagine how tired Father Christmas is after his long night's work. What he needs is a relaxing holiday – but he quickly finds not everything goes according to plan! Soon it's time to return to a mountain of letters and get ready for another “bloomin’ Christmas!”



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