



Ririro

READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

Goody Santa Claus on a Sleigh Ride

Katharine Lee Bates

Santa, must I tease in vain, Deer? Let me go and hold the reindeer,
While you clamber down the chimneys. Don't look savage as a Turk!
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 Arctic 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.

Home to womankind is suited? Nonsense, Goodman! Let our fruited
Orchards answer for the value of a woman out-of-doors.

Why then bid me chase the thunder, while the roof you're safely under,
All to fashion fire-crackers with the lighting in their cores?

See! I've fetched my snow-flake bonnet, with the sunrise ribbons on it;
I've not worn it since we fled from Fairyland our wedding day;
How we sped through iceberg porches with the Northern Lights for torches!
You were young and slender, Santa, and we had this very sleigh.

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-robies ready? Tirra-lirra!
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!

There's the Man i' the Moon before us, bound to lead the Christmas chorus
With the music of the sky-waves rippling round his silver shell —
Glimmering boat that leans and tarries with the weight of dreams she carries
To the cots of happy children. Gentle sailor, steer her well!

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 weather-vane, Dear,
Some one set here just on purpose for our teams 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 show with hailstone candies these two dreaming boys — the dandies
In their frilled and fluted nighties, rosy cheek to rosy cheek!

What! No gift for this poor garret? Take a sunset sash and wear it
O'er the rags, my pale-faced lassie, till thy father smiles again.
He's a poet, but — oh, cruel! he has neither light nor fuel.
Here's a fallen star to write by, and a music-box of rain.

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 brain, Dear. I can only hold the reindeer,
And so see me climb down chimney — it would give your nerves a shock.

Wait! There's yet a tiny fellow, smiling lips and curls so yellow
You would think a truant sunbeam played in them all night. He spins
Giant tops, and flies kites higher than the gold cathedral spire
In his dreams — the orphan bairnie, trustful little Tatterkins.

Santa, don't pass by the 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 nearly 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 the 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 Arctic 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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