

# This Is the Legend of Santa Claus

Perhaps the one closest to the truth. But since no story can ever be proven completely, everyone will choose to believe the one that touches their heart the most.



Once upon a time, in a far-off corner of the world...  
— though really, isn't it funny we say "corner" when we all know the Earth is round, and round things don't have any corners?

...there was a little town filled with kind children and wise parents. Everyone knew everyone else, no one ever left – they had everything they needed, each in their own home, with their own family. And no one ever moved into their town either; there simply wasn't room for new houses.

That's why everyone knew Claus. He had been there since the grandparents were born, and he hadn't changed much at all, just as they saw him during his short walks through the streets or the town square. It was as if Time itself was too shy to touch him. His beard was white and soft like a cloud, his eyes sparkled with kindness. He wore his calm like a coat and his goodness like a warm hat.

Claus. That's what everyone called him. No one knew his real name. He lived alone. Well... not exactly alone. In his yard, where others might keep a dog or a cat, perhaps chickens, goats or a bunny, he kept... reindeer. No joke! And each reindeer had a name. Oddly enough, the only one without a known name was Claus himself.

He took care of them with great attention, making sure they lacked nothing. They were the ones who pulled his sleigh to the marketplace at the edge of town.

Claus spent days and nights crafting toys and games, each more interesting and more clever than the last. And after a long period of work, he loaded everything into his sleigh, brought the reindeer, and set off to sell them at the market.

This happened only once a year. He didn't need much money, just enough to buy some string or a nail now and then, because he had plenty of wood from the forest that stretched behind his garden, and other materials he collected from people who threw away things they no longer needed. From a broken stove, he could make dozens of toys...

The townspeople had noticed many strange things about him: sometimes all the climbing rose bushes in their town bloomed in every color of the earth, while in the Claus's yard, visible from over the fence, the ground was covered in snow. Other times, the sun shone bright, yet above his house heavy clouds gathered, as if wanting to hide the mysteries happening there. But when strange things repeat often enough, they cease to be strange. They simply become... normal.

Days passed, and so did the years, quietly settling over the town.

Until one day, when Claus arrived at the market with an empty sleigh. Everyone froze - more than half the town was there, since the marketplace was where people met to chat or make important decisions.

– *What happened, Claus?* children and parents asked one by one. *Why didn't you bring toys?*

And he answered each of them:

– *They were all stolen.*

– *Stolen?! everyone shouted. How could they be stolen?!*

No one in that town had ever stolen anything. No one had ever been robbed.

The children forgot to blink, the adults shook their heads in disbelief.

– *That's impossible, Claus!* they all protested.

– *Well, it happened!* he replied, giving a stern look to the doubters.

– *We must catch the thief!* everyone insisted, even the children.

– *We should set guards!* suggested the most resourceful among them.

And so they did. Two guards every night, taking turns, all the able men of the town. Days and nights passed. And more days. And more nights. No one tried to steal again.

Meanwhile, Claus worked tirelessly as always, and soon his toys filled the entire yard and garden. No space was left, which was the sign that it was time to bring them to market.

He gathered everything neatly into the sleigh, ready for the next morning. He went to sleep early. The guards kept watch.

Just before dawn, when the cold is harshest and sleep the sweetest, tiny feet, many of them, left prints in the snow. *Tip-tap, tip-tap.* Small shadows jumped over the Claus's fence, grabbed a toy or a game each, and ran as fast as they could back into the street. When the sleigh was emptied, the footsteps faded away, the guards following them quietly. They had decided it was wiser to find out where the toys were going than to stop the thieves on the spot.

They crossed the whole little town, then passed beyond its borders, crossed the forest, and finally stopped in front of an old, tall building. It was

the largest orphanage in the region. Everyone had heard of it, but no one from the town had ever been there. It sheltered poor children who had lost their parents and had very little of anything.

But now, cheerful voices echoed outside. Laughter. Joy.

The small shadows, children with sad eyes on ordinary days, were discovering the new toys and games.

News of the thieves reached the town quickly. It reached Claus too.

Was he upset? No.

Only surprised. Because he realized something important:

*Those toys had arrived exactly where they were meant to be.*

He smiled.

He understood.

And he decided that from that night forward, every single year, on Christmas Eve, he would fill his sleigh with toys and games and give them to all the good children. Without showing himself, just as the little thieves had done on that magical night.

**Merry Christmas!**

