

Cedric's Christmas Adventure



Written by Lucia Wilson, Illustrated by Anne Bowes and Created by Katie Eggington

"Ho, Ho, Ho!" cried Santa Claus.

"Sorry, Santa?" said Juliet, one of his helpers.

"Oh, don't mind me, I'm just practising for Christmas Eve. Now, what's the latest on the children and their letters, Juliet?"

Juliet tapped her keyboard and the screen split into many different, smaller screens showing children all around the world writing their letters to Santa Claus. Santa smiled, with pleasure. "Excellent, excellent." Turning to another helper, he said,

"Kenzo, how is the postbag? Anything for me to read?"

"Yes, Santa san, here are the latest letters for you," replied Kenzo.

"Domo arigato, Kenzo" said Santa in Japanese; he can say *thank you* in over a hundred different languages. Then he sat down and picked up the first letter, scanned it with super-fast speed (he's the fastest reader in all of Lapland) and in a matter of minutes, the letters were read, scanned and passed on to Marcello, another helper, who worked in the gift department.

"Great work, everyone," said Santa with satisfaction. "Everything's running like clockwork. It looks like we're set to have a very smooth...."

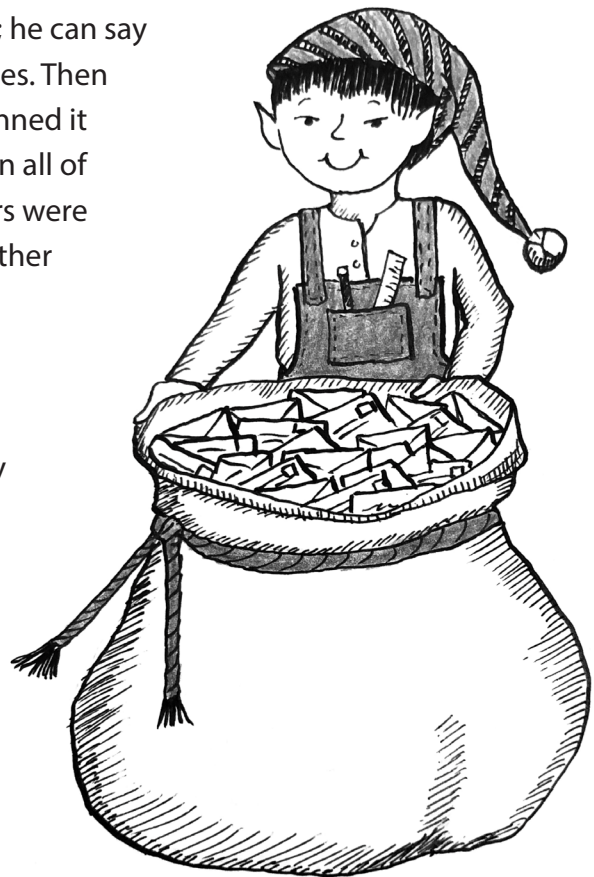
But just then, Charlie, the head keeper of the reindeer, burst in waving her mobile phone and shouted, "it's a disaster, Santa. OMG!" Santa moved towards her, but she put up her hand and said, "no, Santa, don't come any closer. Rudolph's handler, Lars, has just tested positive for covid," said Charlie, anxiously.

"Oh, dear, I must talk to Lars. Is he okay, Charlie?"

"Well, he just has a slight cough, to be honest," was the reply.

"Well, that's a relief," said Santa. "Try to keep calm, Charlie, it will be fine, I'm sure."

"Yes, but don't you see, Santa? Rudolph will have to self-isolate because of Lars."



"Hmm," said Santa, stroking his fluffy white beard, "that is a concern - for how long?"

"Until New Year! He can't do Christmas!"

"Oh, no. Then, he can't guide my sleigh" said Santa, frowning.



"And that's not all," said Charlie, "it means that all of the other reindeer will have to self-isolate until New Year as well; Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Cupid, Comet, Donner and Blixen!"

All of the helpers stared at Charlie and then at Santa whose frown was growing into a dark line across his forehead.

"Well, now that is a problem," said Santa. Then he noticed the worried expressions on all the young faces that looked back at him and said in a soothing voice "okay, now, don't look so serious. We can sort this out."

"But, but, Santa, don't you understand?" said Charlie who really couldn't speak anymore and plonked herself down onto a sack of letters. Juliet had understood what Charlie meant and said, "Santa, I think this means that you will have to self-isolate as well. We all will."

Charlie nodded her head repeatedly.

"Meeee?" said Santa, astonished. "Until New Year? Oh, my goodness. What on earth am I going to do about Christmas?" and he wandered off back to his office scratching his head.

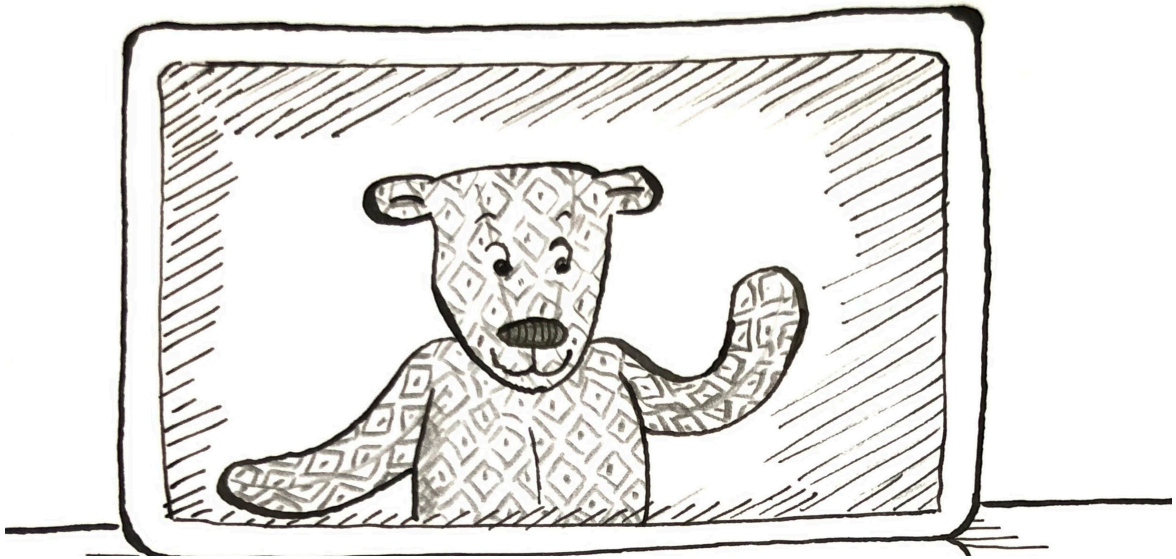


A little while later, Santa came back and clapped his hands to get everyone's attention.

"Okay, my dear helpers," said Santa with a big smile. "I've just made a Whoosh call to a very good friend of mine and he's agreed to help out. As Cedric would say, 'two heads are better than one!'"

"Who is Cedric?" said Juliet.

Suddenly, a face appeared on the wide-screen monitor.



"It's me!" cried Cedric, waving his paws at everyone. "I'm going to deliver all the presents this Christmas!"

"Thank you, Cedric, you are such a good friend and the best bear I know," said Santa warmly.

"You're welcome, Santa. I'm going to catch my train to Lapland right away."

"A train, Cedric? That will never do, far too slow. You need to fly!"

"Oh, no, but I hate flying. I get very nervous," said Cedric quietly.

"But you'll have to fly when you deliver the presents, Cedric," said Santa looking puzzled.

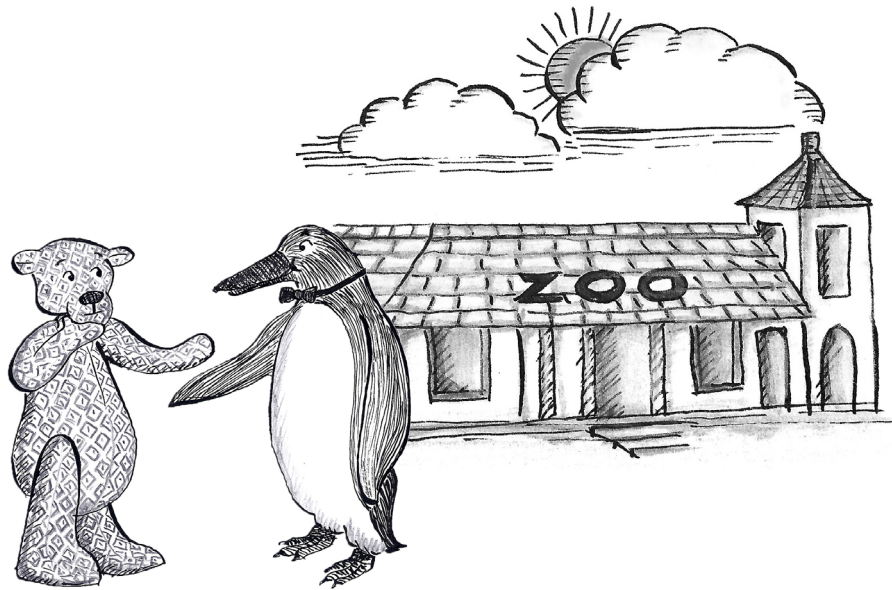
"Yes, I see," said Cedric, thinking hard. "Wait, I have just had an idea. I'll call you in an hour, two at the most. I've got to go to the Zoo," and Cedric's screen went blank before Santa or his helpers could ask any more questions.



As soon as Cedric reached London Zoo, he found exactly the penguin he was looking for.

"Polo, I need your help," said Cedric as he rushed up to him.

"Hello, Cedric, what's up?"



Cedric told Polo the whole story and finished by saying,

"I've got to help Santa! He can't disappoint all the little boys and girls. Didn't you tell me that one of your friends here can perform hypnotism? "

"Yes, Hector. But why do you want to know?"

"No time to explain, Polo, I'll tell you as we run! Where's Hector?"

"He's behind you!" said Polo, with a smile.

Cedric turned around and could only see four very slim tree trunks, or at least he thought they looked like tree trunks. Then he looked up; it was a beautiful giraffe.



"Cedric, meet Hector," said Polo.

"Aaah, I understand now. Giraffes certainly do have the most beguiling eyes," said Cedric, with a smile. He called up to Hector,

"Hello, Hector, please can you hypnotise me so that I'm not afraid of flying?"

"Certainly, but I can't do it while you're down there, you need to look into my eyes."

"What are we going to do, Cedric?" wondered Polo, moving his head from side to side.

"I know. I'll climb that tree!" and Cedric quickly clambered

up the tree until he was face to face with Hector.

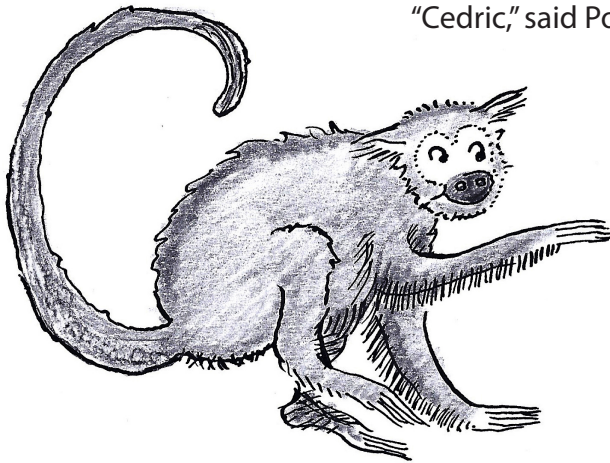
"Such initiative, you are a clever bear," said Hector with a smile.

"Now, relax, Cedric and look into my eyes." Cedric did as he was told.

"You're feeling sleepy, very sleepy... and when you wake up, your first thought will be 'I really want to fly.'"

And that's exactly what happened.

Cedric immediately rushed off to the Rocket Rental Centre, accompanied by Polo and all of his friends from the zoo, including the squirrel monkeys who were so excited to be going on an adventure that Polo had to keep telling them to stop chattering. The noise they were making made Polo think of something.



"Cedric," said Polo thoughtfully, "isn't a rocket going to wake everyone up on Christmas Eve? They are incredibly loud."

"Oh, gosh, yes, you're right, Polo" said Cedric with a worried expression. He turned to, Kitty, the Rocket Rental Manager.

"Silencer," said Kitty, briskly.

"Pardon?" said Cedric and Polo in unison.

"We can add a silencer to the rocket. I recommend the E.S.Q. model," said Kitty.

"E.S.Q.? What does that stand for?" asked Cedric.

"Ever So Quiet," said Kitty, with a whisper and a smile.

"Perfect! Thank you very much!" said Cedric, beaming.

"Happy to help, Cedric. Here are your keys. And if you could just put your paw print here," said Kitty, pointing to the rental form.



Soon after, Cedric, Polo and the squirrel monkeys made another Whoosh call to Santa and gave him the good news.

"We're on our way, Santa! You can leave everything to us."

"Thank goodness, Cedric. Well done. All the gifts will be ready in the main grotto, we'll be staying in the winter glasshouse nearby. I'll also leave out my electronic guiding system from my sleigh so you can attach it to your rocket.

"We call it, Santa-nav!" said Lars who popped up in a different screen, from his home.

"Ho! Ho! Ho!" chuckled Santa. And Cedric and his friends laughed and chuckled as well.

"Have a safe journey," said Santa, with a big smile. "And thank you all for saving Christmas!"

