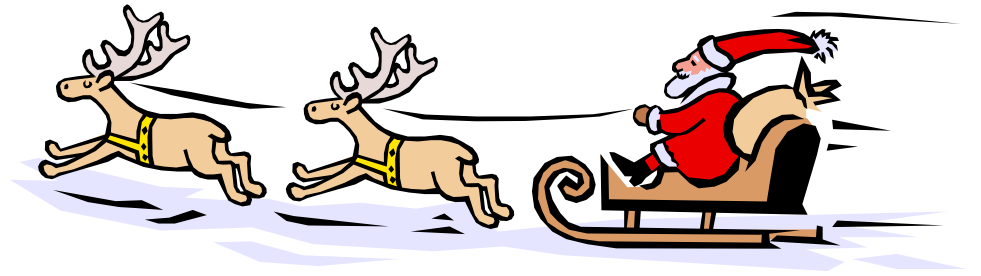


The Night Before Christmas

by Clement C. Moore



*'Twas the night before Christmas
when all through the house
Not a creature was stirring,
not even a mouse.*

*The stockings were hung
by the chimney with care,
In the hopes that Saint Nicholas
soon would be there.*

*The children were nestled
all snug in their beds,
While visions of sugarplums
danced in their heads.*

*And Mamma in her 'kerchief,
and I in my cap,
Had just settled our brains
for a long winter's nap.*

*When out on the lawn
there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from my bed
to see what was the matter.*

*Away to the window
I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters
and threw up the sash.*

*The moon on the breast
of the new-fallen snow,
Gave the lustre of midday
to objects below.*

*When, what to my wondering
eyes should appear,
But a miniature sleigh
and eight tiny reindeer,*

*With a little old driver,
so lively and quick,
I knew in a moment
it must be Saint Nick.*

*More rapid than eagles
his coursers they came,
And he whistled, and shouted,
and called them by name:*

*"Now, Dasher! Now, Dancer!
Now, Prancer and Vixen!
On, Comet! On, Cupid!
On, Donner and Blitzen!"*

*"To the top of the porch!
To the top of the wall!
Now dash away! Dash away!
Dash away all!"*

*As dry leaves that before
the wild hurricane fly,
When they meet with an obstacle,
mount to the sky.*

*So up to the housetop
the courses they flew,
With the sleigh full of toys,
and Saint Nicholas, too.*

*And then, in a twinkling,
I heard on the roof,
the prancing and pawing
of each little hoof!*

*As I drew in my head
and was turning around,
Down the chimney Saint Nicholas
came with a bound.*

*He was dressed all in fur,
from his head to his foot,
And his clothes were all tarnished
with ashes and soot.*

*A bundle of toys
he had flung on his back,
And he looked just like a pedlar
just opening his pack.*

*His eyes - how they twinkled!
His dimples, how merry!
His cheeks were like roses,
His nose like a cherry!*

*His droll little mouth
was drawn up like a bow,
And the beard on his chin
was as white as the snow.*

*The stump of a pipe
he held tight in his teeth
And the smoke it encircled
his head like a wreath.*

*He had a broad face
and a little round belly,
That shook when he laughed,
Like a bowlful of jelly.*

*He was chubby and plump,
a right jolly old elf,
And I laughed when I saw him,
in spite of myself.*

*A wink of his eye
and twist of his head,
Soon gave me to know
I had nothing to dread.*

*He spoke not a word,
but went straight to his work,
And filled all the stockings;
then turned with a jerk.*

*And laying his finger
aside of his nose,
And giving a nod,
up the chimney he rose.*

*He sprang to his sleigh,
to his team gave a whistle,
and away they all flew
like the down of a thistle.*

*But I heard him exclaim,
ere he drove out of sight,
"Happy Christmas to all.
And to all a good night."*