

An original story by John Doenges with illustrations by Alysia Scazafabo-Palmer

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WHAT!

NO

WAY!

HOW
CAN IT
BE?



IMPOSSIBLE!

THIS
COULD
NOT
HAPPEN!



But it IS true. It DID happen!

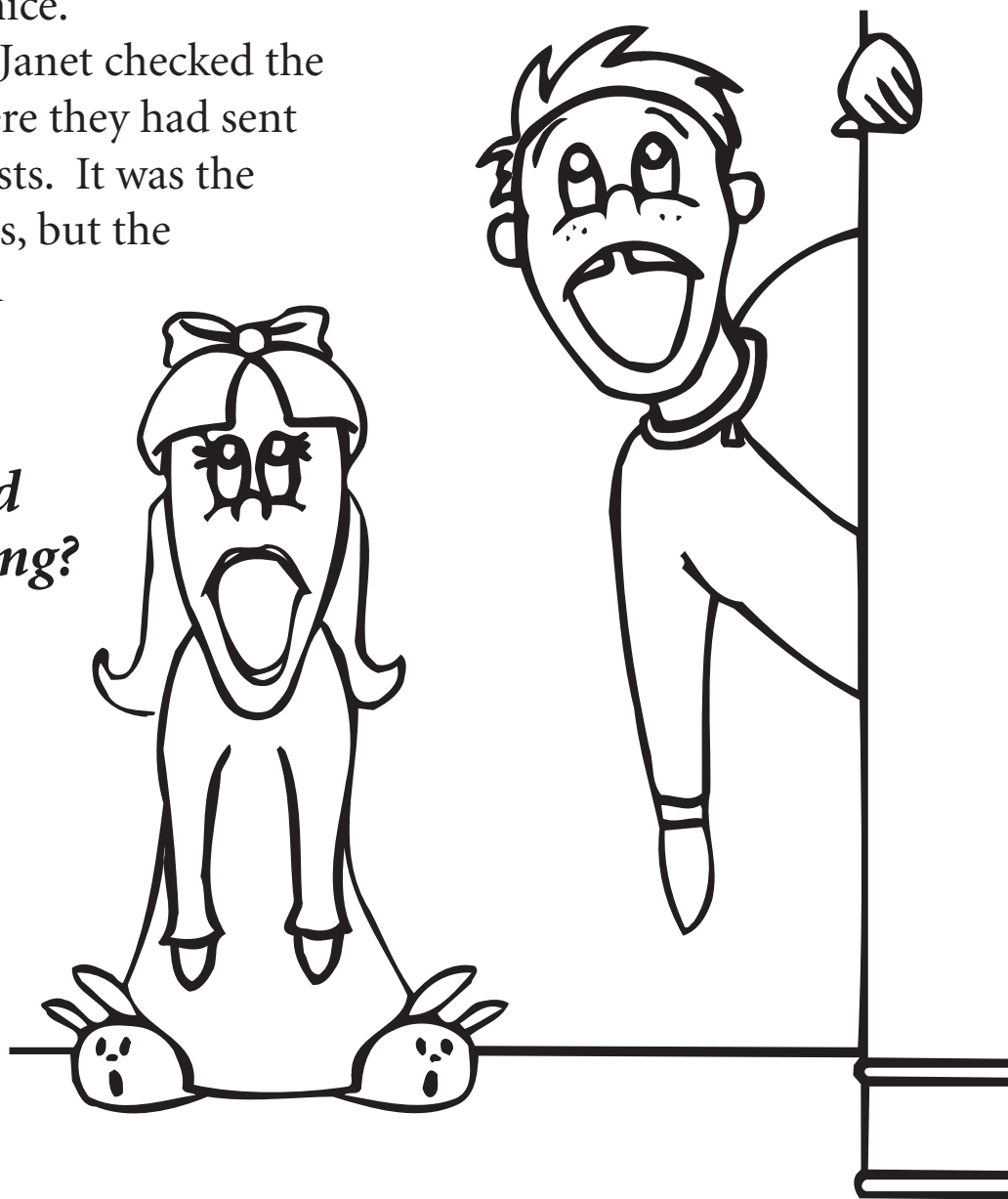
Jack and Janet could hardly wait for Christmas! After a night of tossing and turning and trying to sleep, they got up early Christmas morning and rushed downstairs to see what presents Santa had brought them.

They ran to the living room, skidded to a halt in front of the glittering Christmas tree and found . . . nothing!

Yes, there was **ABSOLUTELY NOTHING** under the tree — not one present. How could this be??? They certainly had not been naughty. In fact, their mother said she thought they had been quite nice.

Jack and Janet checked the address where they had sent their wish lists. It was the right address, but the tree was still empty.

What had gone wrong?





As it turns out, Jack and Janet's father, Gordo, was something of an inventor who **hated** the cold. So, in the fall of that year, down in the basement, Gordo set out to create an Anti-Snow Generator. Nothing very big mind you, just big enough to keep the snow and cold away from the house.

After a couple of months of work — a yellow wire here, tighten a screw there and a splash of paint — the Anti-Snow Generator (THE ASG 5000) was ready to try out. Much to Gordo's amazement it worked! Oh boy did it work! Not only was the cold around their house gone, but it was warm for miles around . . . so warm that they could have grown palm trees in the front yard.

“But Dad, how is Santa going to find us if it's summer outside?” said Jack and Janet.

“Oh, that’s simple,” Gordo assured them. “We just turn the Anti-Snow Generator off, and winter will return!”

“We’ll put up lights, a Christmas tree, a plate of cookies and glass of milk by the fireplace, and Santa will never know that we have taken a vacation from the cold, wintry weather!”

So, a week before Christmas, Gordo turned off the Anti-Snow Generator. A day passed, then two, three . . . a week, and it still looked like summer outside!

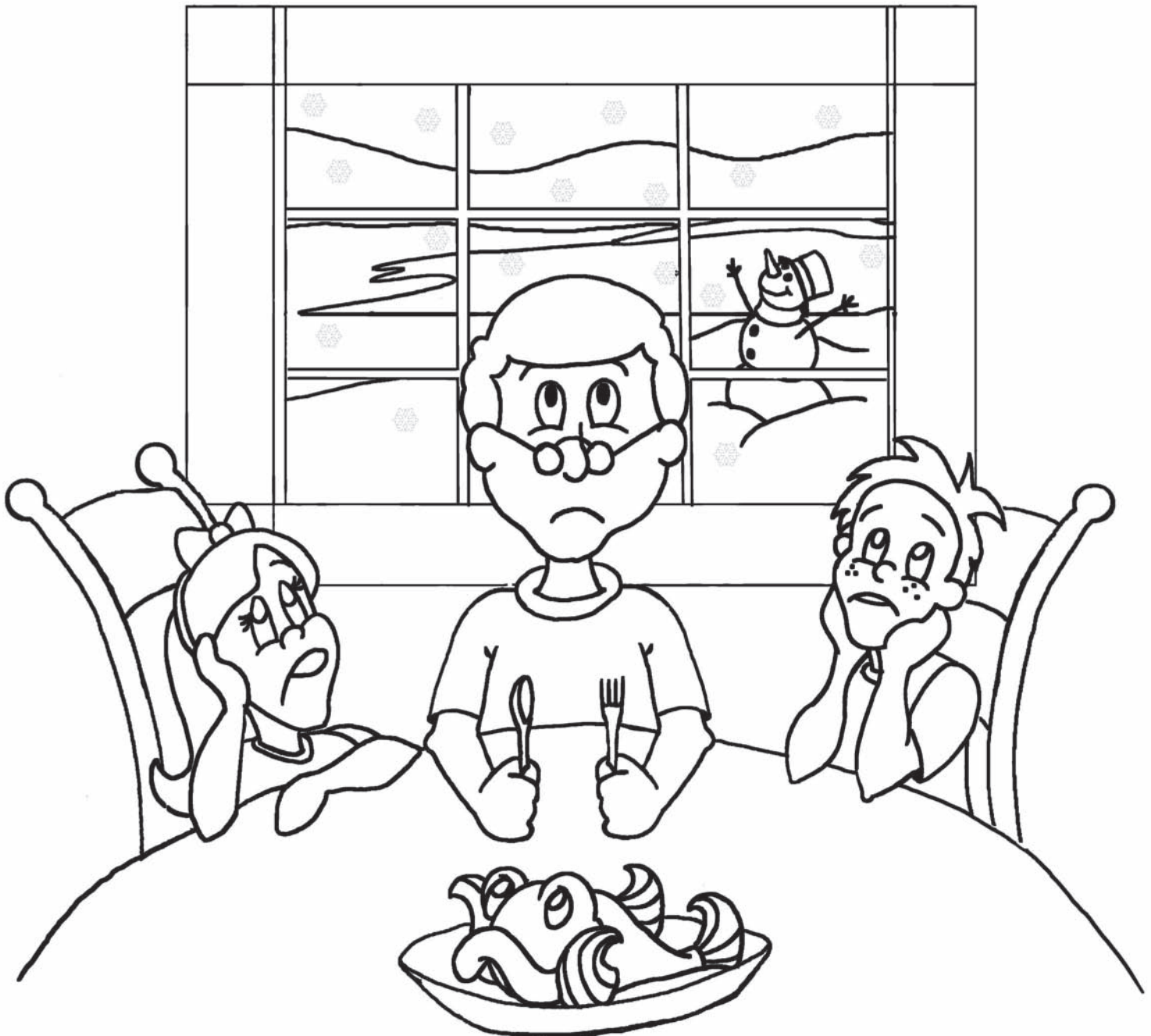
“DAD!” exclaimed Jack and Janet “We’re running out of time. Christmas is just three days away!”

Gordo scratched his head. He looked out the window at the lovely green grass. He scratched his head again. Finally, he spoke.

“Well, if winter won't come to us, then we’ll go to winter!” he proclaimed. “Load the car with everything we’ll need for Christmas, and we’ll celebrate at our fishing cabin in the Great White North.”



Gordo never saw Jack and Janet move so fast. In no time the car was loaded and on the road to the Great White North. Everyone was sure it had been a great plan, but somehow, even with all the snow at the fishing cabin, Santa still had not come! It was a *very unhappy* Christmas dinner that year.





Meanwhile at the North Pole, the twinkle was gone from Santa's eye. It was almost more than he could bear when he found out that not one, but TWO children had been missed on Christmas Eve!

"We must do something!" said Chris the Head Elf, stomping back and forth in the toy workshop.

"Santa has been in such a grump. We need to make decisions about the toys for next year, but he doesn't want to talk about it.

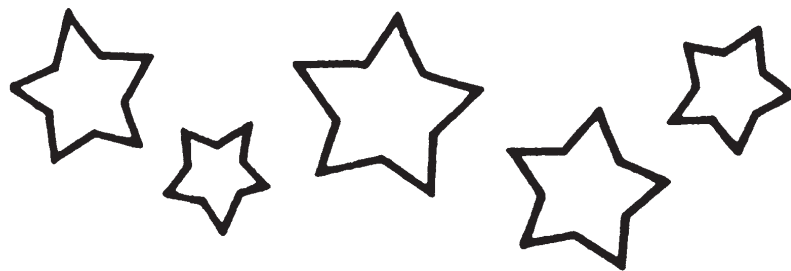
"He has hardly eaten. If this continues, we will have a skinny Santa and we can't have that!"

Chris the Head Elf thought and thought. Finally, he came up with a plan. He called all the elves together.

"We are going to hold some elf games, and the elf that performs the best will get a very special job next Christmas. That elf will search the world for misplaced children just like Jack and Janet and place a star on top their tree.

"This star will act as a beacon for Santa to follow to the children's house, and the unfortunate event of Jack and Janet not getting any presents will never happen again!"

All the elves cheered, and off they went to play their exciting elf games. In no time the games were completed, the finishing touches had been made to a special, new elf-sled, and the stars for the tops of the trees had been polished to a sheen that could be seen for miles (*elves are very hard workers who know how to get things done*).





Suddenly, Santa noticed that everything at the North Pole was *just too quiet*. He strolled through the workshops, double-checked the elf cafeteria, and even walked out to the reindeer stables, but there was not an elf to be found *anywhere!*



WHERE COULD THEY ALL BE?

Santa walked into the great meeting hall at the North Pole and found his answer. All the elves had gathered to find out who would get the honor of being “The Tree Topping Elf.”

“What’s going on here Chris?” he asked.



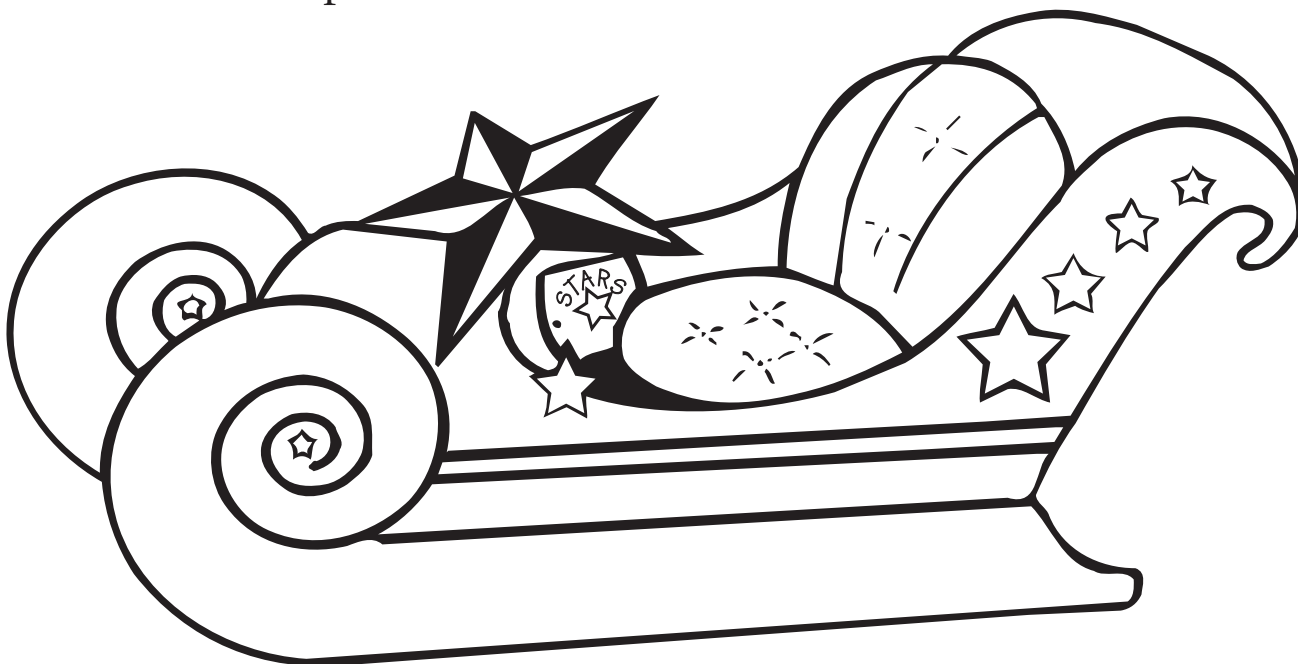
“Well Santa, we’ve been working on a plan to make sure no child will be missed on Christmas Eve ever again!” Chris explained. “And, you are just in time to see our results.”

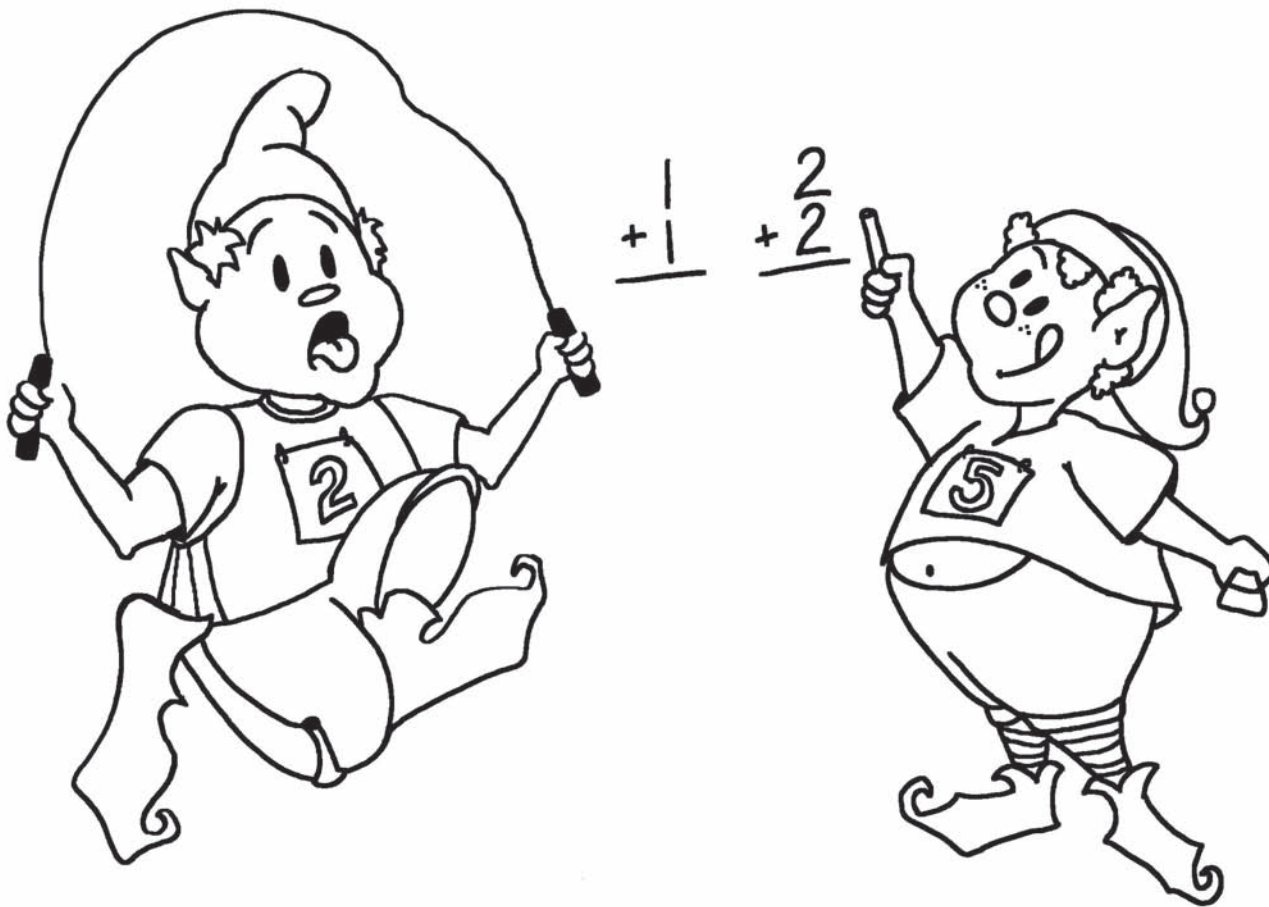
Chris pulled at the corner of a sheet to reveal a beautiful, shiny new sleigh, and he told Santa his exciting plan for solving the problem.

The new sleigh looked like a miniature version of the one Santa uses on Christmas Eve. It was bright red with a soft velvet seat. This sleigh needed no reindeer to pull it. It was powered by the lights of the borial north, and it was fast, *much faster* than Santa's sleigh. It didn't have to carry all those toys or a very large, chubby Santa.

All this sleigh needed to carry was one small elf and some stars. The stars were stored just inside a door next to where the driver sits, and they would absorb some of the shimmer from the borial engine. A benefit of the borial engine was that it would leave a shimmering trail that Santa could follow like an arrow pointing the way.

"Oh my!" exclaimed Santa with tears in his eyes. "This is all so wonderful, and I certainly appreciate all the hard work of you and the rest of the elves. But how in the world will you pick one elf to take on this special task?"





“Well Santa, all the elves competed in games, almost like Elf Olympics,” Chris explained. “A grueling series of tiddly-winks, croquet, running, jumping, climbing, bobbing, weaving and the most dreaded tests of all, the math and English tests.”

Santa shouted: “What?! No geography test?”

“Well Santa, since we make toys for children all over the world every elf scored a 100% on that part of the test,” replied Chris.

“All the tests have been scored, the game results tallied, and we are just about to announce who the winner is.”

With that, Chris handed all the scores to Santa. It seemed like **HOURS** to the elves as Santa examined the results. Then, he stood up and looked each and every elf in the eye. The elves wiggled and giggled with excitement.

Santa sat back down and after one last check of the scores, he turned to Chris and said “I’m very proud at how well everyone has done on all these tests, but if it’s OK with you, I would like to have Benny become the Tree Topping Elf.”



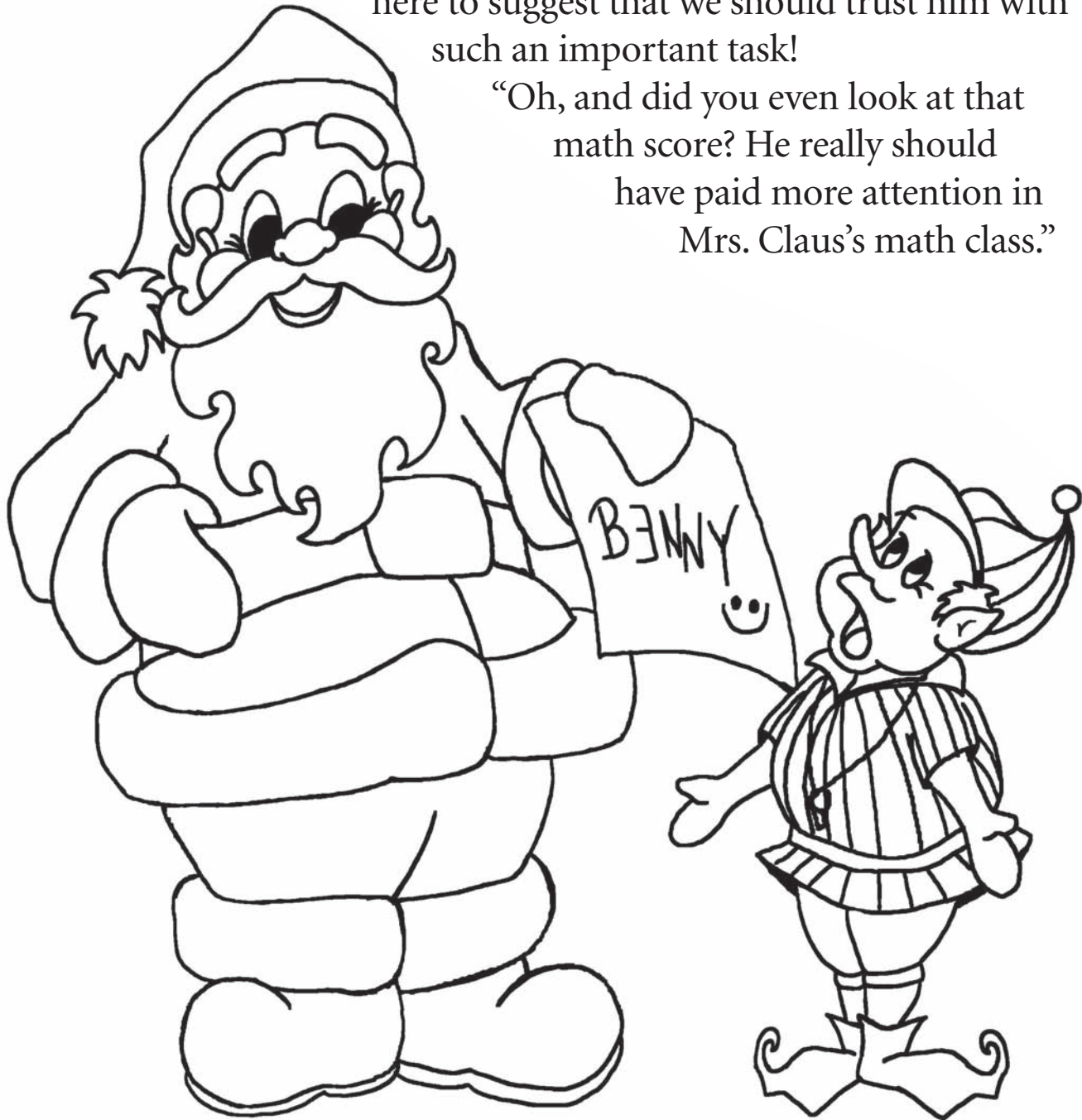
All the elves gasped.

“BENNY!” yelled Chris in surprise.

The echo of “Benny” seemed bounce through the silent hall. Chris hurriedly leafed through all the test results until he came to Benny’s.

“But Santa, all of his scores are average! Certainly nothing here to suggest that we should trust him with such an important task!

“Oh, and did you even look at that math score? He really should have paid more attention in Mrs. Claus’s math class.”



Santa chuckled (*His tummy really did shake like a bowlful of jelly*): “Well Chris, you might say Benny stands out in a crowd.”

Chris looked out at all the elves, and there in the middle was Benny, a good head taller than everyone else in the hall. While the rest of the elves were pleasingly plump, Benny was thin.

Santa went on: “Because Benny is tall he doesn’t have to climb as high into the trees, and he can stretch farther to place the stars on top. And weighing less, he won’t break the smaller limbs at the top of the tree.”

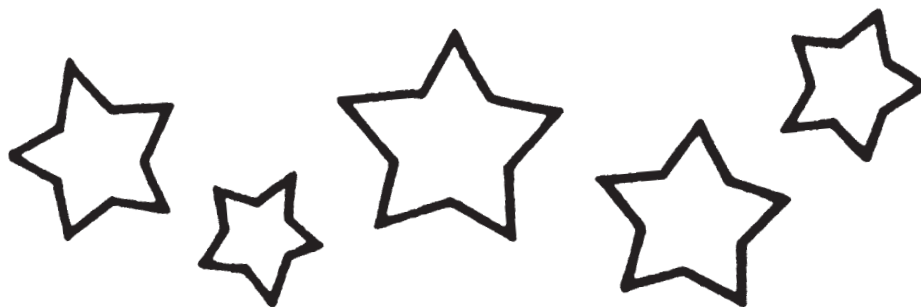
Chris had to admit Santa was right. He gave a nod, and the hall erupted in cheers as the elves picked Benny up on their shoulders and carried him to Santa.

“Benny,” Santa asked, “Would you be The Tree Topper, so no child will ever go without Christmas gifts again?”

“Yes Santa. It would be my honor to be your tree topper,” Benny replied with a shy smile.

Mrs. Claus came in with enough cookies and milk for everyone, and the celebration lasted long into the night.

All the time it took for the elf games and the tests and celebrating meant Santa’s workshops were now behind schedule. Even though they all had to work twice as hard in the coming months to get the toys done, there was joy in the elves’ hearts knowing that never again would a child wake up Christmas morning to find an empty Christmas tree.







h, and as for Jack and Janet and their very sad Christmas, Santa and the elves loaded all the toys they should have received in an old pick-up truck they usually use just for hauling reindeer feed and drove everything to Jack and Janet's house.

By the time the children and their parents got home from the fishing cabin, Christmas was waiting for them.

Gordo promised to put away the ASG 5000 and never to experiment with *anything* around Christmas time again.

He *has* been thinking about something that can take all the color off Easter Eggs — the EEB 9000 (Easter Egg Bleacher 9000)

*Don't tell Jack
or Janet.
It'll be a surprise!*

