

SANTABEAR



One bright young bear woke up from his slumber early and, with a little search, found a winter snack: A honeysuckle would be nice, he thought, and perhaps all the apples off an apple tree or two.

But the bear did not find any bees buzzing or apple trees blooming. The woods were quiet and the trees were bare of leaves. The only sound in the woods was the muffled snoring of the other bears who were still sleeping in the den.

Suddenly, there was the sound of bells. Could it be Jacques the lumberjack and his daughter, Marie, passing by in their sleigh? No, wait, thought the bear, the angle of bells was coming from the sky. Just as the bear looked up to see a sleigh pass overhead, KEROOW—something dropped right on his head!



It was a brightly wrapped box with a bow on top. And it had a tag that said, "To Marie, From Santa Claus." Of course the bear did not know this because he could not read, and he had never heard of Santa Claus.

"Perhaps," the bear thought, "there is something good to eat in this box." But before he could open it, a voice came from above.

"You can't keep that box," called a wise old owl. "That's a gift from Santa Claus. It must have fallen from his sleigh tonight."

"Who is Santa Claus?" asked the bear.

The owl explained the story of Santa Claus, and how he brought presents to children every Christmas Eve.

"Oh my," said the bear, "I must get this gift to Santa Claus before Christmas morning."

And so, with the owl flying overhead to keep a lookout for Santa, the bear ran through the woods with the Christmas present.

Suddenly, the owl shouted, "Santa's up ahead! His sleigh is on the roof of that log cabin!"

The bear bounded up a log pile that was stacked beside the cabin and onto the roof where Santa was beginning to unpack his sleigh.



"What's this?" Santa said. He was surprised to discover a bear on the roof, and especially one with a Christmas gift in his mouth. The bear explained the

whole story—about how the present had fallen from the sky, and how he and the owl had rushed to find Santa before Christmas morning.

"You are a very special helper," said Santa. "I think I'll call you 'Santabear.'"

Now every year at Christmas, Santabear helps Santa deliver presents to Jacques and Marie. In return for his help, Santa always brings a honeysuckle and a basket or two of apples for his very special friend, Santabear.



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