



## Reindeer In The Rainforest

It was Christmas Eve. Stars twinkled in the clear night sky. Ranger Tabatha, Snapper the crocodile, Blink the frog, Bronte the butterfly and Toco the toucan sat by a treehouse window, waiting and watching.

Milk and shortbread biscuits sat untouched on a table nearby, ready for a special visitor.

Ranger Tabatha read a poem aloud from a book:

*“Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the treehouse  
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse.  
The stockings were hung by the window with care,  
In hopes that Santa Claus soon would be there.”*

Snapper looked at the Christmas stockings hanging in row along their windowsill, and smiled. Bronte flitted through the air. Blink and Toco continued to silently stare through the window. Their eyes were fixed on the starry sky.

When would Santa Claus and his reindeer fly past the window? They were all determined to stay awake and see Santa Claus. But the night was warm, and everyone was tired from a busy day working in the rainforest. A ranger’s life was never dull!

Snapper drifted away to dreamland first. His snores filled the air. One by one, everyone else dropped off to sleep.

Ranger Tabatha was the last to close her eyes. ‘Must stay awake,’ she murmured. ‘Want to see Santa Claus...’ She fought to keep her eyelids open, but soon lost the battle. The book fell from her hands and clattered to the floor. Ranger Tabatha’s chest rose and fell with deep sleepy breaths.

Nobody was awake when bells began to jingle outside the window. Nor did they hear a voice boom, ‘**Ho! Ho! Ho!**’

Nor did they hear the same booming voice shout, ‘Oh, dear! Help!’, or the loud **WHIZZ** as a sleigh spiralled down, down, down through the air.

But everyone awoke and jumped from their chairs in fright when they heard: **CRACK! BANG! WHAM!** Something had crashed into the rainforest trees.

The rangers all looked at each other, and shouted in unison, ‘Let’s go and help!’

Ranger Tabatha, Snapper, Blink, Bronte and Toco and gathered their ranger



backpacks and raced down to the bottom of the treehouse.

'Flashlights on,' commanded Ranger Tabatha. Everyone reached into their backpacks, pulled out their torches and switched them on. Light beams illuminated surrounding trees.

'The crash site is this way,' said Ranger Tabatha, pointing southwards. Everyone sprinted through the rainforest.

'Oooh! Aaah! Oooh! Aaah!' A groaning voice could be heard nearby. Snapper suddenly stopped and stared, 'Look!' exclaimed Snapper.

Everyone gasped and said 'WOW!' Colourful packages covered the ground, rested in bushes and lay scattered through trees.

'Looks like it's been raining Christmas presents,' said Blink. 'Oooh! Aaah! Oooh! Aaah!' The groaning voice could be heard again.

They tiptoed around the packages until they came to a clearing. There was Santa Claus and nine reindeer! But Santa didn't look jolly. His lips pressed tightly together as he gently held one reindeer's hoof in his hands. The groans came from the reindeer.

'Dasher's injured his leg,' said Santa sadly. 'And I've lost my presents. I might have to cancel Christmas this year.'

'What happened?' asked Ranger Tabatha. 'Why did you crash into the rainforest?'

Santa nodded towards another Reindeer, who stood aside looking forlorn. 'Vixen, here, has a mighty bad cold. He sneezed so loudly it scared the daylights out of the others. Nobody knew what the dreadful sound was until too late. Everyone panicked, and I lost control of the sleigh.'

Vixen's head drooped lower and lower. Santa reached over and gave Vixen's head a friendly pat. 'You're not to blame, old friend,' he said. 'It's my own fault. I should've left you warm and cosy in your stable at the North Pole. A sick reindeer shouldn't be working on the busiest night of the year.'

'We'll help you,' said Ranger Tabatha. 'We'll pick up all of the gifts. And we can take good care of Dasher and Vixen while you finish your Christmas deliveries.'

Santa stroked his beard as he pondered the idea. He turned to the other seven reindeer and said, 'It's going to be tough with two of you down. Do you think you can manage?'

The seven healthy reindeer looked at each other with gleaming eyes. Each antlered head nodded with enthusiasm. 'Good, well that's settled,' said Santa. 'Let's pick up the Christmas goodies. We need to be on our way.'

Ranger Tabatha, Snapper, Blink, Bronte and Toco scurried about until they'd picked



up every single Christmas present. They tucked them into Santa's sack. With a jingly flick, Santa lifted the sleigh reigns. He whistled and shouted:

***'Now, Rudolph! now, Dancer! now, Prancer! Now, all!***

***On, Comet! on Cupid! on, Donner and Blitzen!***

***To the top of the forest! to the treetops tall!***

***Now dash away! dash away! dash away all!***

Dasher and Vixen watched sadly as their friends rose higher and higher into the sky. Ranger Tabatha stroked their heads. 'We'll just have to have a fun night here ourselves.' She bandaged Dasher's injured leg. Snapper made a comfortable bed amongst the ferns for both Reindeers.

Toco flew back to the treehouse, and soon returned with a bulging bag. 'Milk and shortbread for all.' They sat around nibbling cookies and sipping milk while Dasher and Vixen told some funny jokes:

*'What does Santa call a reindeer with no eyes?*

*No-eye-deer!*

*What does Santa call the reindeer with only one eye that's got no legs?*

*Still no-eye-deer!'*

Everyone laughed and laughed at the jokes. Dasher and Vixen no longer looked sad. They were happy to be with new friends until Santa came to pick them up.

One by one the new friends fell asleep under the stars.