



Santa and the COWBOY

AP Newsfeatures

By LUCRECE HUDGINS



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Chapter 1

Once upon a time there lived a little boy named George Harold Sanders. His mother called him Georgie and his father called him son. But he called himself Kid Buckaroo, the Terror of the West. If you were his friend he would let you call him Bucky.

He was a cowboy.

He lived in an apartment house in a big city 2,000 miles away from the wide open west. He rode the subway to and from school. He played in the city park. He had never touched a cow, never been on a ranch, never ridden a horse.

All the same he was a cowboy. To be truthful, you'd have to say he imagined he was a cowboy. But it's all the same thing.

He dressed in jeans and checkered shirt. He carried two six-shooters, one on each hip. A short and ragged lasso hung from his belt. His red hat dipped over his forehead. He usually carried a stick which he constantly patted. The stick, of course, was his trusty horse Fellow.

Every Saturday and Sunday Bucky rode Fellow over to the park where there were a lot of other cowboys - real like himself and a lot of Indians, too - though the Indians were wholly make-believe.

And that was the Great Sorrow of Kid Buckaroo's life that there were no more honest-to-goodness, war-painted, whooping, fighting Indians left in the world.

"All the Indians we have now are good ones," his father told him.

"Don't they ever fight cowboys anymore?" asked Bucky.

"No, they are our friends. And cowboys spend their time riding herd, and branding cattle, and getting beef to market."

Well, that's not the way Kid Buckaroo spent his time. He chased Indians. He tracked them down the main avenues of

the city, ambushed them in elevators, captured whole tribes with his two six-shooters.

"I don't know what to do with him," moaned his mother. "Goodness, I only hope his baby sister doesn't grow up to be a cowgirl!"

"Maybe we can get him something for Christmas to get his mind off cowboys," suggested his father.

Presently Bucky galloped in on Fellow. "Feel my muscle, Dad," he said. He held up his skinny, seven-year-old arm.

"That's great," said his father. "You're very healthy."

"I'm the strongest cowboy in the world," said Bucky,

"Son," said his father. "Christmas is coming pretty soon. What would you like Santa to bring you?"

Bucky sat down and thought for a while. Then he said. "I've got everything, I guess. Pistols, horse, lasso - there's really not much else."

"How about a baseball and bat?" said his father.

Bucky shook his head. "I'd never use it."

"Well, a football? Or a set of drums? Or some lead soldiers?"

Bucky took a bead on the living room light with his gun. "Honestly, Dad, - what would a cowboy be doing with that kind of stuff?"

"But there must be something," said his father. "Santa can bring you most anything you want, you know. You think of something and write it down. You'd be surprised at what Santa could do for you."

Bucky went in his room and put Fellow in his stable under the bed. He hung his guns on the closet door and pulled off his boots.



Bucky rode Fellow over to the park where there were a lot of Indians...make believe Indians.

He sat on the bed twirling his lasso. All the time he was thinking. A great big wonderful idea was growing in his mind until finally he was just about ready to burst with excitement.

His father said Santa could bring him most anything and that was certainly true because in other years Santa had brought him everything he could think to ask for, even including the time he'd asked for a baby sitter.

"Golly!" he thought as he rushed to his desk for paper and pencil. "Wait'll the kids see what I turn up with on Christmas morning!"

Then he sat down and carefully wrote his letter to Santa. This is what he said:

"Dear Santa, I'd be so happy forever if you'd please bring me some real live Indians to fight."

And he signed the letter "Kid Buckaroo, Terror of the West."

Chapter 2

BUCKY GETS AN ANSWER

Kid Buckaroo wrote a letter to Santa Claus asking for some real live fighting Indians for Christmas. He left the letter for his father to mail and went to bed.

Now, parents have to read letters to Santa before they mail them to be sure there are no misspelled words. So Bucky's father read his letter.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed. "All he wants for Christmas are some Indians to fight!"

"Mercy!" cried Bucky's mother. "Whatever shall we do?"

"I don't know. Maybe I better dress up like an Indian Chief. But one thing is certain - here's one letter that will never reach Santa Claus, thank goodness!"

He tossed the letter into the waste basket. But what strange things happened to that letter.

The next morning the waste basket was emptied by the trash man and taken away in a big truck. As the truck rumbled through the streets, the wind loosened the paper and blew it onto the sidewalk.

A man walking to work kicked the paper into an alley. There a small boy snatched it wadded it up and batted it across the street like a ping pong ball.

This time it landed right at the feet of Mortimer Moonface who was sitting on the curbstone resting. Few people could see Mortimer because he was a brownie. He was on his way home from the bakery where he worked putting holes in doughnuts.

I guess you know that fairies and elves and such are not just creatures to be found in forests and books. No, indeed. Every city is filled with them - tiny men and women, not six inches tall, making a living in the city just like everyone else.

Now Mortimer Moonface carried a wee loaf of bread under his arm. When he saw the crumpled paper at his feet he picked it up and wrapped it around the bread to keep it clean. When he reached home (behind the face of the big City Hall clock) Mrs. Moonface unwrapped the bread. As she did so she cried out, "Why - Santa's name is written here!"

"So it is," said Mortimer, peering over her shoulder. "Let's see. It says 'Dear Santa, I'd be so happy forever if you'd please bring me some real live Indians to fight. Kid Buckaroo, Terror of the West.'"

"Say," cried Mrs. Moonface. "Wasn't Herbert telling us something about Indians in Santa Land last week?"

(Herbert, a brownie who worked on a newspaper, knew about everything that went on in the whole world.)

"That was Jindians," Remembered Mortimer. "But Indians and Jindians are probably the same thing. Anyway, If Santa is having trouble I should think he needs some big strong fellow like this Kid Buckaroo to help him. I'm going to write Kid Buckaroo a letter. Look, his address is right on here."



...It landed at the feet of Mortimer Moonface.

When Kid Buckaroo (known as Bucky) went to the mail box he found a letter for himself that said: "Dear Mr. Buckaroo. Santa is having trouble with real live fighting Indians in Santa Land and he could sure use your help. Mortimer Moonface."

Bucky's heart thundered with excitement. So there were some fighting Indians left in the world. And in Santa Land of all places! Why Santa's very life was probably in danger!

A cowboy certainly knew what he had to do. He belted on his two six-shooters, yanked his faithful stick horse from under the bed and grabbed his lasso. "Don't worry, Santa," he whispered. "Kid Buckaroo is on the way!"

Chapter 3

BUCKY MEETS SNOW BIRD

Of course Bucky wasn't afraid of going to Santa Land. The only trouble was he had not the slightest idea how to get to it.

"It's North, I'm certain," he told himself. But where was north? He rode his stick horse, Fellow, down the sidewalks of his neighborhood until he found a sign saying: 'Take North Bound Buses Here.'

When a bus rolled to the curb Bucky hopped aboard. Away they went round and about city to places Bucky never had gone before. Presently the driver called Bucky up and said, "Where's your fare?"

Bucky's mouth fell open. "I don't have any money," he whispered.

The driver stopped the bus and put Bucky off. There he was - surrounded by skyscrapers, the traffic spinning past him. He felt a million miles from home and yet was certainly not very near Santa Land.

He asked a newsboy the way to Santa Land. The boy growled, "Scram!" He asked a lady if she knew the way. She said: "You dear boy, are you all ready for Christmas?" He asked a street cleaner who said, "Why go to Santa 'Land? You can see Santa in any department store."

Bucky was tired, hungry and almost ready to cry when he found himself in a quiet park. He sat down on a bench. Immediately a voice said, "You're sitting on me!"

Bucky sprang up and stared at a tiny little man no bigger than your finger. "I - oh, I'm sorry," he stammered. "But you're so little!"



...Bucky straddled the bird. Immediately a remarkable thing happened.

"That's what they call me," said the man. "Little Tiny. But who are you?"

"I'm Kid Buckaroo," said Bucky in a rather forlorn voice.

"Why," exclaimed Tiny "Can it be that you are the Terror of the West?"

"How did you know?" cried Bucky in astonishment.

"I heard my friend, Mortimer Moonface, talking about you last night. He said you were going to fight Jindians or Indians or something in Santa Land."

Bucky's eyes sparkled. "Oh, I am! That is - if I can ever find my way there."

Tiny considered for a moment. Then he said, "Mr. Buckaroo, I can get you to Santa Land. We little folk don't like for real people to know our secrets but I think Santa is in danger and I'd like to help you."

"Oh, if you could help me!" cried Bucky. "Look - just see - I have two guns. And a lasso. And my horse, Fellow. I'm a real Indian fighter."

"Well, we shall see," said Tiny. He led Bucky across the park to the City Zoo, and to a cage of birds. Tiny whistled softly. Instantly a snow white bird squeezed through the wire net of the cage and dropped to Tiny's side.

"This is Snow Bird," said Tiny. "He's a kind of taxi. He takes us little folk wherever we want to go. You can ride him to Santa Land!"

Bucky stared at the bird unbelieving. "He doesn't fit me!" he exclaimed.

"Try and see," said Tiny.

Obediently Bucky straddled the bird. Immediately a most remarkable thing happened! Bucky grew smaller and smaller until he was no larger than Tiny. Even his pistols and lasso and stick horse had shrunk to fit him.

"Away you go! Hang on!" shouted Tiny.

Without a sound Snow Bird rose in the air with the enchanted Bucky riding his back as easily as a man rides a horse.

Chapter 4

AN AIR FLIGHT

Bucky rode Snow Bird through the sky hardly daring to breathe. Never had a cowboy anywhere had such a ride! They zoomed through misty clouds, rode down drafts almost to the ground, then circled and quickly rose into the blue again.

They passed over many cities and mountain peaks and oceans and still Snow Bird flew on. Finally Bucky could hold his excitement no longer. He threw back his head and screamed. "Yippi ai ki-ay!"

Snow Bird was so surprised he plunged a thousand feet before recovering. Then he turned his head and peered with one eye at Bucky. "I beg your pardon?"

It was the first word he had spoken and Bucky himself might have fallen in surprise if he had not had such a tight grasp on Snow Bird's feathers.

"That's cowboy talk," he apologized. "It means - well it just means 'Watch out here I come,' I guess."

"I say, that's very interesting!" said Snow Bird. "I'll try some of it."

With that he let out a most ear shattering squawk! "That's yippi ai ki-ay," he explained. "How did it sound?"

"Wonderful!" cried Bucky excitedly. "Look, watch this!" He locked his legs around Snow Bird, pulled out both six-shooters and began shooting up the whole sky. Snow Bird squawked "Yippi ai ki-ay" in approval and the two of them, bird and boy, made such a thunder as had not been heard under those heavens for many a day.

They were having so much fun neither one saw the hawk who flew up from the forests below in a fury over the strange noises. When the hawk saw the tiny cowboy riding the white bird he was even more angry because he thought it was some fierce creature which meant harm to him.

With a shriek of his own, the hawk dived on Snow Bird. Just in time Bucky yelled a warning. Snow Bird swerved and the hawk passed beside them.

Now began a ferocious chase. Bucky clung with both hands to Snow Bird. The bird dipped and rose, swerved and zaggcd through the clouds.

Twice the hawk got close enough to jab with his terrible beak and drops of blood spilled through Snow Bird's white feathers.

Bucky could feel the bird's heart hammering under his legs. He knew the bird, wounded and exhausted, could not last much longer. Then he remembered who he was: Kid Buckaroo, Terror of the West!

With a yell he brought up his pistols and aimed them at the approaching hawk. Then he stopped banging and threw the six-shooters at the hawk's head.

The hawk swerved and came again. Bucky snatched at his dear stick horse, Fellow, and swung it at the attacker. Wham he landed a blow on the hawk's back. The hawk wheeled, shrieked and disappeared in a cloud.



Wham! Bucky landed a blow on the hawk's back

But a hawk does not give up easily. Again he roared out and descending with wings spread wide, brushed the stick horse from Bucky's hand and made another wound in Snow Bird's neck as he passed.

Now it was over. Snow Bird faltered. His wings fluttered uncertainty. He began to drift slowly towards the earth.

The furious hawk turned once again above them as if to attack.

Chapter 5
SANTA LAND AT LAST



When he came to the top of the hill he saw the most beautiful thing he had seen in all his life.

As the hawk came down again Bucky remembered the lasso at his waist. It was his last chance. He had practiced for hours roping the door knob at home. He could make it circle in a beautiful singing arc above his head, and throw it straight and true.

Now since he'd gotten on Snow Bird's back. It was tiny like himself - hardly more than a piece of twine. Still it was a lasso and it was his only chance. He swung the lariat above his head. The hawk came on, his eyes glittering. With one hand and both legs Bucky clung to Snow Bird. With his free hand he threw his loop.

In an instant Bucky was nearly yanked from Snow Bird's back as both he and the bird were dragged suddenly towards the ground.

Bucky had caught the hawk around the throat and the half chocked hawk was pulling them all earthward. Just in time Bucky recovered from his amazement and let go the rope. The hawk plunged down and disappeared in the great forests below.

But all was not well. Snow Bird had been sorely hurt and soon they began dropping slowly to earth. They landed in a snow covered field. Bucky was afraid he would sink over his head in the snow but he need not have worried. The moment he stepped off Snow Bird's back he took his real shape again and was as tall as any other seven- year-old boy.

Now he held Snow Bird in his hands and cleaned his wounds. One of his wings was torn.

"I'm afraid I won't be able to fly again for a long time," said the bird. "You must go on by yourself."

Bucky said nothing. So the bird said, "Speak. There is no need to be so sad."

Bucky said. "I'm not much of a cowboy anymore. I've lost my guns and horse and lariat. Guess I wouldn't be much help to Santa now."

Snow Bird considered for a while, "You can still say that 'Yippi al ki-ay,' can't you? Arid you're still the Terror of the West. What a terror you were fighting off that hawk!"

Bucky felt better. "I'll carry you," he offered.

But Snow Bird said no. "I will stay here. I am a snow bird and this is my country."

Bucky fixed a warm nest of evergreens or Snow Bird, bade him farewell and began to push northward.

But soon he discovered there were animals in the forests through which he was travelling! Not buffaloes, certainly. A cowboy could have managed those. But strange creatures darting among the trees! Bucky's heart pounded. A branch suddenly broke above him.

The boy started running. He tripped in the snow, rolled over and over, leaped to his feet, crashed into a tree. Scratched and bruised, he ran on wildly.

As it grew dark he had no idea what direction he was going. By now he hardly cared. He wanted only to escape the animal he knew was waiting for him in the dark.

He could feel the ground sloping upwards. He knew he was climbing a hill. When he came to the top he saw the most beautiful thing he had seen in all his life: lights at the bottom of the hill.

"It's Santa Land!" he sobbed. He wiped his eyes, shouted "yippi at ki-ay" and raced down the hill.

Chapter 6

BAD TIMES IN SANTA LAND

Meanwhile, strange and awful things had been happening in Santa Land.

On this particular night Mrs. Claus woke from a deep sleep. "Santa! Santa!" she cried, shaking Santa's bed. "There's something bothering the reindeer. Listen!"

Santa, instantly wide awake, sat up and listened. He heard a mad trampling in the stables. Santa pulled on his boots and coat and raced from the house. Lights went on all over Santa Land. All the little workers, wakened by the noise, poured from their houses - some still in their pajamas and nightgowns.

Marlowe, the sled maker, ran by Santa's side.

"What do you think it is?" he panted.

"Don't know," said Santa. "Tie your bathrobe around you. We can't all be getting colds just before Christmas."

At the stables they found the reindeer skittering around their stalls, rolling their eyes with fright, and pounding the floor with their hooves. While the brownies lit lanterns, Santa went to the deer, talking gently, soothing them.

"Don't see anything the matter," said Pudding. "Guess the wind frightened them"

Suddenly there was a cry from the far end of the barn. Dewey, the whistle-maker, burst from a stall and shouted: "Dasher has gone! Our very best deer has gone!"

The little folk rushed to the stall. It was empty. They hunted through the barn and the stable yard. Dasher was nowhere to be found. Santa stood silent and serious. The workers gathered around him crying, "Jindians again?"



"Santa! Santa!" cried Mrs. Claus. "There's something bothering the reindeer."

And the workers shook with fright. For weeks the Jindians had been annoying the Santa Land workers.

Now you are wondering what Jindians are. Everyone knows that all the Indians today are good and friendly people. Well, Jindians are the Indians who stayed warlike when the other Indians became our friends. They moved further and further north until they reached the North Pole and of course you must visit the far north lands to see them.

They changed their name to Jindians so people wouldn't get them mixed up with Indians and think they were friendly.

The Jindians were very angry with Santa Claus. The Jindians said they just naturally hated good people. But the true reason was because Santa never brought them anything for Christmas. "So," said Jindian Chief Hurricane, "we fix so nobody get Christmas."

They crept into Santa Land and stole food and toys. They threw snowballs at the workers. They had war dances and scared the little folk half to death with their whooping. But never before tonight had they done anything so serious as steal one of Santa's reindeer.

Santa left the stables and returned to his cottage. Suddenly his fairies and brownies shouted and screamed and ran after him. "Got one! I got one of the Jindians!" gasped Patrick Tweedleknees, the oldest dwarf in Santa Land. He was hauling along by the collar a trembling creature, dirty and red eyed.

"And what a shabby, shaking shameful looking Jindian he is!" jeered Tweedleknees.

"Stop, stop!" cried Santa. He went up to the captive and peered at him closely.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"Sir - s-sir," mumbled the wretched one. "I am Kid Buckaroo, Terror of the West."

Chapter 7

BUCKY TO THE RESCUE

“Kid Buckaroo, Terror of the West!” exclaimed Tweedleknees when Bucky gave his name. “What kind of a Jindian is that?”

“I’m not a Jindian,” protested Bucky. He was close to tears. “I’m a cowboy.”

“Cowboy!” The Santa’ Land workers shouted. “Whoever heard of a cowboy with no guns, no lasso - not even a horse?”

Bucky told them his story. How he’d heard they had Indians at Santa Land and he’d come to fight them. How he’d lost all his weapons on the way but come on anyway to help if he could.

“You do have Indians here don’t you?” he pleaded. “Real fighting Indians?”

“Not Indians, Jindians” snapped Tweedleknees. “They are silly creatures. I’m not afraid of them.”

Swoosh! Zing! a slender arrow shot from the dark, lifted Tweedleknees’ night cap from his head and pinned it to the ground ten yards away.

Tweedleknees’ legs shook. “I’m only scared half to death,” he growled. Another arrow whipped from the dark and landed at Santa’s feet. The fairy folk screamed with fear and ran to hide. Bucky cried, “Look, it has a message on it!”

Santa picked up the arrow. Yes there was a paper fastened to its tip. Santa unrolled it and read: “Us come to make powwow.”

Santa put his arm around Bucky. “Maybe you have brought us luck,” he smiled. “I think the Jindians want to make peace. Come get warm in the house. Tweedleknees will bring in the



“We come to steal all your deer. Burn your shops. Chase you away.”

Jindians when they come. I hope they have Dasher with them.”

Mrs. Claus met them at the door. “You poor boy!” she exclaimed when Santa had told her who Bucky was. Now a cowboy is a pretty tough character as everyone knows but Mrs. Claus didn’t care about cowboys. She just cared about the real boy underneath. She washed Bucky’s face and hands. She hugged him and warmed him and finally gave him a wallop dinner - bigger and better than Thanksgiving and Christmas dinner rolled into one.

And the wonderful old lady was just starting him to bed when Patrick Tweedleknees leaped into the room crying, “Here they come!”

A huge feather-dressed Jindian entered the cottage. He was followed by a young boy, solemn and handsome, with single feather in his head band.

Bucky’s eyes lopped with excitement. Real Jindians! Warlike Jindians; Oh, if he had his weapons now he would show them something!

The Jindian chief spoke. “Me Chief Hurricane. This Lonesome Boy, my son.”

Santa said, “I’m glad you have come. We will have peace.”

Chief Hurricane shook his head. “No peace,” he grunted. “We come to say we steal all your deer. Burn your shops. Chase you way. We fix things so nobody have Christmas again.”

Santa’s heart was filled with He knew the Jindians were fierce and powerful. What could he do to stop them?

Suddenly a voice cried, “Oh, no you won’t!”

Chief Hurricane turned in astonishment. Bucky stood with hands on his hips glaring at the great Jindian chief.

“I’m Kid Buckaroo. Terror of the West,” he snapped. “I can outride you and outshoot you. Now you just get out of here.”

Santa turned pale. Mrs. Claus clasped her hands Tweedleknees swallowed half his tongue. And Bucky, well, to tell the truth, Bucky’s legs were so weak with fright he was ready to topple over.

“Ha!” shouted Chief Hurricane. “Prove it!”

Santa turned Bucky’s face up. “Can you prove it?” he asked softly.

Bucky tried to speak. But his voice wouldn’t come. He tried to whisper but couldn’t even find a whisper. Finally he just nodded his head. But oh! how he wished he’d never spoken at all!

Chapter 8

BUCKY GETS READY FOR THE RACE

Chief Hurricane said. "My son, Lonesome Boy, swiftest, rider in world. Can this Buckaroo Kid ride better?"

"We will see." said Santa. "But first we must make an agreement. If Bucky outrides your boy you will leave our land and never bother us again. And you will return Dasher, our best reindeer."

"Ha!" cried the chief.

"Well," insisted Santa. "Is it agreed?"

"Agreed," grumbled the chief. Then his eyes gleamed. "Race tomorrow." he said. "Who rides first through Northern Lights, he win." Without another word Chief Hurricane and Lonesome Boy departed.

"Now you're in for it!" said Tweedleknees to Bucky. "For a little boy you talk awful big."

Bucky felt badly enough. It's true he talked too much, too fast, without thinking at all. Why, he didn't even have a horse to ride! He thought longingly of old Fellow, his stick horse. But he knew perfectly well that Fellow would have been of no use to him now.

He wondered why Santa believed in him at all. Now Santa sat in the living room, his chin on his hand, his eyes closed. What could he be thinking?

"Well, come on." said Tweedleknees. "At least we can rig you up into some decent cowboy clothes since that is what you are supposed to be."

Santa looked up. "Good," he said. "And then meet me in the tool house. I'll have a horse ready. Too bad Dasher is gone. On Dasher you could outride the wind."

When Tweedleknees had taken Bucky away. Mrs. Claus went to Santa's side. "What will happen," she asked, "when the boy goes among the Northern Lights?" Santa shook his head. "I am afraid," he admitted. "But he is our only chance. Our little workers are afraid of the great Jindians. We could never fight them. We must depend on the boy and the horse I give him to ride."

Meanwhile Tweedleknees marched Bucky to the Santa Land Cowboy shop, the busiest place in all Santa Land. It seems that all the little boys in the world asked for cowboy suits for Christmas. Not only boys - but girls, too, so that over a hundred fairy seamstresses were kept busy the year long stitching at Jodpurs and chaps and fringed skirts and all the fancy shirts that little cowboys and cowgirls love so much.

Mimi, the little fairy who used to be in charge of dolls but now was in charge of cowboy outfits, showed Bucky around the shop. "Pick any shirt you want," she told him.

Bucky chose a plain red shirt and dungarees. Then Benny the pistol maker took him into the weapon room.

What a place for a boy to be! Six-shooters, four-shooters, single shooters hung from the walls in holsters stamped with shining metal. With a cry of pleasure Bucky selected two six-

shooters exactly like those he'd lost in the fight with the hawk. Then with new boots and hat he stood finally before a mirror.

"Yippi ai ki-ay!" he shouted.

For an instant the fairies were dumbfounded. Never had they heard so strange a word. Then they tried it, rolling the word slowly around their tongues and then shouting together: "Yippi ai ki-ay!" it made quite a shout.

"Now for my horse," said Bucky as he and Tweedleknees left for the tool house. As they entered, they saw Santa bent over a work bench working with sand paper on twisted limb of cherry tree.

"I'm finished, son." said Santa. His voice was sad and weary.

"But - the - the horse?" stammered Bucky. "You said - didn't you say there'd be a horse?"

"Here he is," said Santa holding out the cherry stick. "His name is Fellow like your old one."

"Oh," said Bucky. He tried to smile but truly his heart was heavy when he thought of the race he must run with a cherry stick.



Chapter 9

THE GREAT CHERRY STICK

Bucky tried not to show his disappointment at the horse Santa had made him. It was a finely carved stick, strong yet slender, with the end curved forward like a head and a narrow strip of leather looped through the notched mouth.

"It's great," said Bucky politely.

"It is a very special horse," said Santa. "For the right cowboy it might do anything - even win a race through the Northern Lights."

"Santa," said Bucky. "I will do my best but I do not even know what the Northern Lights are."

Santa took Bucky by the hand and led him outdoors. The night was sharp and clear. Santa pointed over the horizon and Bucky saw what he'd been far too excited to notice before.

Great shafts of red and yellow lights almost encircled Santa Land. Whether they streamed from the heavens or from the earth, Bucky could not tell. They moved, some in arches like rainbows, some straight like big colored poles.

"It's the Aurora Borealis - the great Northern Lights," said Santa. "No one has ever ridden through them or even been close enough to touch them. In the race you must ride in one end and out the other and then back to Santa Land."

Bucky's fingers tightened on Santa's hand. He was afraid. Santa understood. "If you do not want to try it," he said, "you need not."

"What will happen if I do not win" whispered Bucky.

"I dare not think about it," said Santa. "The Jindians have Dasher - my best reindeer. They say they will burn the shops. The Jindians love no one and would not care at all if Christmas never came to the world again."

"Don't worry," said Bucky soberly. "I'm sure I can win. A cowboy always wins."

He was not nearly so sure as he sounded. Still when Mrs. Claus finally put him to bed for a few hours rest he dropped off to sleep at once for he knew that worry never did anybody any good and that tomorrow would take care of itself.

The next morning in the half light of the Northern day Chief Hurricane and all his tribe rode into Santa Land. From their midst rode Lonesome Boy. Bucky's hopes fell when he saw the strong black horse the Jindian had. Straight to Bucky came Lonesome Boy.

"Where's your horse" he asked in a low voice,

Bucky held the cherry stick. "This is my horse," he said in a loud voice, loud because he was afraid and because he didn't want anyone to think he was ashamed of the stick.

Lonesome Boy shook his head. "No good," he said. "Not fast. Northern Lights have evil spirits. You never get through."

"I'll get through," retorted Bucky. "You just better look out for yourself on that old black nag." He hugged his stick horse loyally.



Santa took Bucky by the hand and pointed over the horizon...great shafts of red and yellow lights almost encircled Santa Land.

Lonesome Boy and Bucky lined up side by side. The Jindian looked straight ahead. Bucky looked over at Santa. He smiled to cheer the fairy folk.

Chief Hurricane threw up his hands. "Go!" he shrieked.

Like an arrow from his father's bow Lonesome Boy hurtled across the plain. In an instant he was lost to sight in the half-day, half-night Bucky was left far behind, galloping along on his stick.

"I don't care," thought Bucky angrily. "It's a good horse all the same. Anything Santa makes is bound to be better than what that old Jindian has!"

So he ran till his breath was hard to get and his legs were stiff and sore and ready to crumple. The cold wind made tears run from his eyes. A pain in his chest grew sharper every second.

The Jindians hooted. The fairy folk moaned. Mrs. Claus chewed the end of her apron worriedly. Santa alone seemed hopeful. His eyes sparkled. If you had watched, you would have seen him whispering strange words to himself.

What words they were I do not know but surely they were very powerful. Suddenly the cherry stick between Bucky's galloping legs was not a stick at all but a stalwart chestnut horse, as fine and strong and swift a horse as you would ever want to see. The astonished cowboy leaned over the horse's neck. "Oh, wonderful beautiful Fellow!" he whispered.

Now Kid Buckaroo rode like a whirlwind toward the flickering Northern Lights.

Chapter 10

THE GIANT OF THE LIGHTS

Bucky galloped his wonderful horse towards the Northern Lights. But no matter how swiftly he rode he never seemed to get closer to the great shafts of sparkling color:

At first the lights seemed to be at the edge of Santa Land but Bucky passed far beyond Santa Land and still the lights lay far ahead. If you have ever set out to find the end of a rainbow you know how it was with Bucky. Though the rainbow seems to end on the other side of town you may travel all day long and never find the pot of gold that some people say is buried at the rainbow's end.

Fast as Bucky went, the Jindian boy had gone faster still, for he was nowhere to be seen. It was a wild and lonesome ride for the little cowboy.

Through the whole long day he rode the horse that never seemed to tire. But Bucky tired and finally fell asleep on the horse's back. When he awoke it was night and he was surrounded by tongues of flaming light that darted at him, crackling fiercely like lightning. He was in the midst of the Northern t Light!

The horse shied from right to left, reared on his hind legs, whinnied shrilly in fear and astonishment.

"On, Fellow!" shouted Bucky, snapping the reins. "Keep on!"

And the horse tore on through the forest of lights. It was like being on a merry go round in a scary house, during a thunder



The horse tore on through the fearsome lights. It was like being on a merry go round during a thunder storm.

storm. Curtains of bluish-green pink and yellow lights fluttered everywhere. spurts of light rose like whiffs of smoke.

Bucky thought only of urging Fellow on faster. But suddenly a giant of many colors stood in his path.

"Who goes there?" roared the giant. Bucky's blood ran cold to see the awful creature with purple face, green ears and orange hair. In his hands the giant held one hundred strands of color that sizzled and crackled and coiled across the sky.

"Please, sir," said Bucky in his most polite voice. "I am running a race to save Santa Land from the Jindians."

"Oh," cried the giant. "I have already met the boy you race. He could not cross my walls of fire and I have imprisoned him forever. If you can cross the walls you will win your race. But if you do not cross them you, too, shall be my prisoner."

"Show me the walls!" cried Bucky eagerly.

The giant pointed behind him. There stood three walls, one beyond the other, each one higher than the one before. The first wall was a flaming blue, the second a jagged edged yellow, and the third was a scorching red with tongues of flame licking at the sky.

Without a word Bucky charged at the wall of blue. Up and over went Fellow in a jump that carried them over the wall.

But the second wall was higher. Over the top went Fellow, but the heat of the flaming color burned Bucky's cheeks and the jump was made with no room to spare.

They came to the third wall. Up, up rose Fellow while Bucky clung to his back and made a mighty prayer. The horse leaped clear, though his skin was seared and his mane singed from his neck.

Still they had leaped the three walls and were safe. Bucky shouted happily and galloped on his way. But suddenly he wheeled in Fellow and came to a halt.

There beside him lay Lonesome Boy and his horse. The giant had tied them up with ropes of colored light and left them there to die.

"I have as good as won the race!" thought Bucky. "And Santa Land is saved!"

He started to ride away. But there was no joy in his heart. "It's no kind of a race like this," he told himself. So he leaped from his horse and ran back to Lonesome Boy.

"I'll untie you," he said. "And we'll finish the race fair and square."

Chapter 11

END OF THE RACE

Bucky untied the ropes of colored light that bound the Jindian boy and his black horse. When he was free Lonesome Boy rubbed his arms where the ropes had hurt him. Lonesome Boy watched carefully but said not a word to the little cowboy who had set him free.

The two boys got back on their horses.

"It can't be far now," said Bucky. "Soon we'll be out of the lights and then it will be a clear race back to Santa Land. Ready?"

Before Lonesome Boy could reply there was a terrible roar behind them. Turning he saw the giant of many colors running towards them. Furious that Bucky had dared to turn the Jindian loose, the giant roared through the great Aurora Borealis.

Bucky and Lonesome Boy dug their heels into their horses and sped away. It was hard to tell whether they ran so fast to escape the giant or to win the race for Santa Land.

The giant gathered ribbons of color in his huge fists and shook them after the fleeing boys. The ribbon ends snapped like riding whips and sent waves of color zigzagging around the frightened horse's legs.

The cowboy and Jindian bent over their horses and raced as man or boy has never raced before. At last they passed through a flaming sheet and were out of the Northern Lights and beyond the reach of the angry giant.

Now in a clear race Lonesome Boy and Bucky rode side by side across the snowy plains. On and on they raced and no one could have said who would win.

In Santa Land the Jindian tribe and Santa's workers waited

and watched across the plains.

"We should be working," grumbled Patrick Tweedleknees. "A whole day wasted and no toys made at all"

"But if the cowboy loses," said he brownies, "the Jindians will kill us all and there would be no use for the toys we made."

"Until he loses we should stay on the job," growled Tweedleknees.

But he himself peered across the plains more anxiously than the rest. Not even Santa could have driven him back to the shops.

At last there was a wild whoop from the Jindians. "He come! He come!"

Santa and all his workers stared and saw a boy on horseback racing alone across the plain. The Jindians beat their drums and sang a terrible Jindian chant. For, said they, Lonesome Boy is coming home and he has won the race.

Suddenly Santa broke into a cheer. "It's not the Jindian," he cried. "It's Kid Buckaroo!"

The rider was now close. Sure enough, it was Bucky. He rode proudly into Santa Land, the winner of the race. Far away one could see Lonesome Boy coming second in the race.

"Hurray for Bucky!" shouted the brownies. "He outride the Jindian and we'll never have Jindians here again!"

Oh, but they were wrong! For the Jindians were very angry. They grumbled among themselves. They pointed at the workshops. They looked at Santa and shook their fists.

Finally Chief Hurricane said, "We no go away. We burn Santa Land anyway."

"But you agreed!" cried Santa angrily. "You said if our boy could outride your boy you would go away."

Chief Hurricane said, "My people no like. Boy said he could outride and outshoot any Jindian. He outride my boy. He can't out shoot."

Santa argued, but it was no use. Chief Hurricane said unless Bucky could shoot better than Lonesome Boy he would destroy Santa Land and all the folk there.

So finally Santa turned to Bucky and said, "Can you shoot?"

Bucky fingered his two six-shooters. "I can shoot," he said softly. He nodded at Lonesome Boy. "I can shoot better than he can, I know."

"Ho!" cried Chief Hurricane. "Then let us see who can kill Herman the Wozzle!"



The great giant gathered ribbons of color in his huge fists and shook them after the fleeing boys.

Chapter 12

TRACKING THE WOZZLE

Santa gasped at the name of Herman the Wozzle. Even Lonesome Boy's face turned pale and he trembled at his father's words.

"Go;" ordered Chief Hurricane. "Bring tail of Herman the Wozzle."

"Who is it? What is it?" whispered Bucky, tugging at Santa's sleeve. "Why do you look so sad?"

"Ah," said Santa. "No one who ever hunted Herman the Wozzle came back alive. He is half bird and half animal with the tail of a snake. He runs faster than a rabbit. He roars louder than the ocean. He is stronger than a thousand strongest men."

"I am a good shot," said Bucky cheerfully. "At home, with my cork gun, I hit the target nearly every time."

Santa shook his head. "A cork gun would never hurt the Wozzle. You need a strong bow and arrow tipped with silver. I can make you such a bow and arrow. But your heart must be unafraid or no weapon can help you."

Bucky thought for a moment. "I am afraid," he said finally. "But maybe I will forget to be afraid when I see the creature. I will try anyway, for I am a cowboy and cowboys must be bravo."

Santa took Bucky to his cottage and sat before the fire with the boy at his feet. Santa whittled on a young sapling until he had finished a bow.

Then he cut an arrow and tipped it with the purest silver which he melted and shaped in the fire. When he had finished he woke Bucky who had fallen asleep against his knee.

"I've been dreaming," said Bucky sleepily. "I dreamed I was home with my mother and that I was tired of playing cowboy."

Santa smiled. "You know Bucky, I hope that dream will soon come true," he said. "Now here is your bow and here is your arrow."

"What!" cried Bucky. "Only one arrow?"

"Yes." said Santa sadly. "You'll never get a chance to shoot but once."

When they went out they found Lonesome Boy saying goodbye to his people. The Jindian carried a bow and a bag full of arrows slung from his shoulder. He looked at Bucky, and for the first time there was no meanness in his look.

"Let's go," said Bucky. The two boys got on their horses and rode away.

They had not left Santa Land very far behind when Lonesome Boy stopped and pointed at tracks in the snow - the strangest tracks Bucky had ever dreamed of. There were two prints like the webbed feet of a duck - but a duck with feet larger than an elephant. Behind these tracks was a long furrow that seemed to have been made by a snake twisting through the snow.



There in front of the cave was the missing track.

Twenty feet away was another such track. As the boys pushed on, they found another and another.

On they hunted until they came to the edge of a cliff which fell a hundred feet to the sea. Here the trail disappeared. The boys searched but found no tracks at all.

Lonesome Boy pointed down to the rocks piled on the beach far below. Bucky nodded. If the creature they hunted was anywhere he was somewhere among those rocks.

Without saying a word, the boys got off their horses and began climbing down to the sea. They crawled backwards, clutching at the side of the cliff with their hands and feet. They slipped and slid and tore their hands and scraped their faces.

When they were near the bottom they dropped to the rocks and rose bruised and shaken.

Lonesome Boy had spilled all his arrows but Bucky's one arrow was safe. When he helped the Jindian find his arrows among the rocks, Lonesome Boy did not speak but smiled as though to say "Thank You."

Suddenly they found themselves standing before a huge hole. In front of the hole was the missing track.

Bucky's heart pounded. His legs grew weak. Lonesome Boy calmly fit an arrow into his bow. "I'm a cowboy," Bucky told himself. "I can't let him see I'm afraid."

So he held his bow ready. The two boys walked together into the great black hole.

Chapter 13

LONESOME BOY SHOOTS

The black hole was the entrance to a mammoth cave filled with the roar of the sea.

Bucky and the Jindian crept slowly in and peered about. Strange bluish lights flickered from the walls. Jagged rocks jutting from the ceiling threw enormous eerie shadows on the sides of the cave. Was Herman the Wozzle hiding here?

For a long while the two hunters listened for a sound to tell them where the creature was. But the sea pounding on the rocks outside made such noise they could hear no other sound.

Cautiously they searched the cave - their bows and arrows ready in their hands. They found a tunnel that seemed to lead into another cave. The tunnel glowed with blue light. It was plain to see that nothing was hiding there. The two boys crept through it and entered the second cave. Here it was quiet. They could scarcely hear the far away sea.

It was a smaller cave than the first but it too was empty. They noticed three doors leading out of cave. They knew that the Wozzle was behind one of those doors.

Bucky finally found his voice. "Which one shall we try?" he whispered. Lonesome Boy shrugged his shoulders. He, too, seemed unable to move.

Bucky raised a finger. "Eenie, meenie, miney, moe," he whispered. When he finished, he tip-toed to the door that was pointed out. Softly he opened it and peered in.

It was a kitchen! But the strangest kitchen you ever saw! In the center was a stove made of rocks with a glowing fire of seaweed and drift wood. Across the top of the stove was a small whale. It was being cooked for someone's dinner!

Quickly Bucky shut the door. Lonesome Boy went to the second door. He opened it. Here was a bedroom with a circular bed that wound round and round the room.

"I guess he needs all that for his tail!" thought Bucky. He was glad the bed was empty.

Only one door remained. Together the boys pushed it open a tiny crack. They never made a sound. But it would not have mattered if they had for in the room itself there was a most extraordinary noise.

Someone was humming a song. But what a humming! Like pots and pans banging in a kitchen or children skating on an attic floor.

Suddenly they saw someone. It was Herman the Wozzle!

The hideous creature, standing on his bird legs and balancing himself with his snake tail, was looking in a mirror while he shaved his lion face and hummed his dreadful croaking tune.

Bucky, overcome with fright, backed away from the door.

"I can't help it," he thought miserably. "I'm going, to run away." He started off - the scariest little cowboy that ever was.



But Lonesome Boy drew back on his bow and took careful aim with his arrow through the crack in the bathroom door. Suddenly Herman the Wozzle moved away from the mirror.

Zing! the arrow left the bow and straightway shattered the mirror to pieces.

Herman the Wozzle roared. He snatched wide open the door, and fixed the terrified Jindian with an awful glare.

At the roar, Bucky turned back to see what was happening.

"Who comes to my cave must die!!" screamed the Wozzle and he reached for the Jindian.

Lonesome Boy let go with another arrow - aimed straight and true at the Wozzle's heart. But Herman reached out, caught the arrow as if it had been a rubber ball, and broke it in two. Again and again Lonesome Boy shot arrows. Herman laughed and caught them all and broke them to pieces.

Finally no arrows were left. Then Herman the Wozzle stopped laughing and prepared to pounce on the Jindian boy. Bucky the cowboy stood quaking in the tunnel door.

THE WOZZLE IS CAPTURED

Kid Buckaroo, seeing Lonesome Boy in such danger from Herman the Wozzle, suddenly forgot his own terror. His heart beat cool and steady and unafraid as he left his hiding place in the shadows of the tunnel.

He could not use his bow and arrow for fear he might strike the Jindian. His two six-shooters were of no use and neither was his lasso. What good would they be against such a monstrous creature? But he had to get the Wozzle off Lonesome Boy and he had to do it quick.

He did the only thing he could think of. He threw back his head and shouted at the top of his voice: "Yippi ai ki-ay!"

Herman the Wozzle turned. He was so surprised he dropped Lonesome Boy from his snake tail.

"Another one!" screamed the Wozzle. Before Bucky could move Herman leaped towards him. He tumbled the cowboy over in a heap and knocked the bow from his hands.

"What this thing?" blurted Herman, picking up the bow. "You strange creatures come my cave, expect conquer me with silly sticks? Takes more than branch of tree to get Herman the Wozzle."

"L-let me show you," stammered Bucky, getting to his feet.

"Bah!" exclaimed Herman. "You show me nothing." He hurled the bow across the cave. "I show you something!"

Again the Wozzle leaped. This time Bucky was faster. He threw himself over backwards and rolled like a hoop until he felt his bow beneath him. He snatched up the bow, fitted his

silver tipped arrow in the string and shot as the Wozzle pounced again.

Meanwhile, back in Santa Land, Santa Claus was having trouble. The Jindians built large piles of straw and brush around the workshops.

"When Lonesome Boy come back with the Wozzle's tail we light the piles," jeered the savages, "and burn all Santa Land and Santa folk, too."

The little workers were too frightened to work. There were only three days left until Christmas but great stacks of unstuffed animals stood on work tables: Dolls with no eyes. Wagons with no wheels. Footballs with no air. Toy telephones with no bells.

Worst of all, Santa found that he could not run his reindeer team without Dasher, his lead deer.

He asked Chief Hurricane to return the deer but the Jindian chief said he did not even know where the deer was. Santa knew the Jindian was not telling the truth but there was nothing he could do.

He took the seven deer that were left and hitched them to his sleigh. But though he commanded them in all the ways he could think of, the deer would not fly without Dasher to lead them.

At last, Santa went to his cottage and sat down before the fire. Mrs. Claus pulled her rocking chair up close beside him.

"It is hard to remember worse times," said Santa sorrowfully. "For to tell you the truth, I do not see how I can take Christmas to the world this year."

It made Mrs. Claus want to cry to see Santa so sad. She said, "It's the little cowboy you're really worried about, isn't it?"

Santa nodded. "Yes," he said. "It's Bucky. Kid Buckaroo, I never should have let him fight for us."

But Santa need never have worried. At this very moment Bucky came pounding across the Santa Land plains, yelling yippi ai ki-ay as he came and carrying across his saddle the great long tail of Herman the Wozzle.



The little workers were too frightened to work.

Chapter 15

THE TRAP

Oh, but the Jindian were angry when they saw Bucky come riding home with the tail of Herman the Wozzle.

"It's some trick," thundered Chief Hurricane. "My son, Lonesome Boy, shoot the Wozzle."

But Lonesome Boy shook his head. "Him shoot best," said the Jindian pointing at Bucky. "And he saved my life."

Then Santa spoke sternly. "Can a Jindian keep his word? You promised to leave us in peace if our cowboy was able to outride and outshoot you. He has done both. Now go!"

The Jindians gathered in a knot and grumbled and beat their fists on their chests. For an awful moment Santa thought they would not go. The Santa Land workers looked on worriedly - not daring to move or shout their joy at Bucky's triumph. Only Tweedleknees refused to be quiet.

He dashed into the nearest workshop, took up hammer and nails and began banging away at a doll house.

"Get in here, lazy ones!" he hollered. "With two days left until Christmas, there's a mountain of work here to be done. Get to it and let those Jindians sneak off where they belong."

Chief Hurricane's face turned dark with rage. Then he signaled to his tribe. They picked up their belongings, got on their horses, and slowly rode out of Santa Land.

"Hurrah! Hurrah!" shouted the dwarfs and fairies. They lifted the little cowboy on their shoulders and carried him round and round Santa's cottage.

"Come," cried Timothy Dwarf. "Sing us your cowboy song!"

Bucky grinned with pleasure. Never had he been so happy! "Yippi ai ki-ay! Oh, Yippi ai ki-ay!" he sang.

The little folk took it up. Dewey and Marlowe and Pudding played like they were prancing horses and galloped before the crowd. Suddenly there was an astonishing sound heard above all the other noise. The workers turned in amazement to see Patrick Tweedleknees leaning from his workshop window, waving his hammer, and singing "Yippi ai ki-ay!" to the skies.

Even Santa had to laugh at the sight. But Santa was not happy. Presently he took Bucky into his cottage and told Mrs. Claus to feed him. "What would you like?" asked Mrs. Claus with a twinkle in her eyes. "Soup, oatmeal, broccoli?"

Bucky looked at a great chocolate meringue pie Mrs. Claus had baked. His eyes grew large and his mouth watered. "Please ma'am" he said. "I'd like a piece of pie."

And she put the whole pie in front of the boy and he dug into it exactly as a cowboy should.

When he had finished Bucky went to Santa's knee. "Why are you still so sad? Isn't everything all right now?"

"It's Dasher," said Santa. "The Jindians took him off and the deer won't fly without him. I do not know how I shall make my trip around the world."



Then Santa spoke sternly... "You promised to leave us in peace"... "Now go!"

Bucky was quiet and thoughtful. He heard the busy sawing and hammering and bustling about in the workshops that meant the toys were at last being finished. The Jindians had gone and would never bother Santa Land again. But what was the good if Santa could not travel around the world on Christmas night?

"Don't be sad," said Bucky quietly. "I will try to find Dasher. He must be at the Jindian camp"

Santa shook his head. "Twice you have succeeded but a third time would be too many. I feel something awful would happen.. You must not go."

Bucky did not intend to disobey. He went down to the stables merely to hunt for tracks the way a cowboy does-when an animal has disappeared.

But the Jindians had not all gone away. Before they left Santa Land they intended to take with them this cowboy who has beaten them at riding and shooting. They could not let a boy live who had shamed them. So they had hid at Santa Land and waited to find Bucky alone.

When the little cowboy came whistling into the barn three great Jindians threw a blanket over his head and tied him up with ropes. Then they flung him over the back of the leader's horse and sped away.

And no one in all that land heard Bucky when he cried for help.

Chapter 16

JINDIAN WAR DANCE

“Help! Help!” yelled Bucky as he felt himself thrown across a horse “Santa! Come quick!”

But the Jindians had covered the little cowboy with a blanket that smothered his cries for help. Although he wiggled and fought and kicked, he couldn’t escape the ropes that bound him.’

The Jindians galloped for hours it wasn’t very pleasant for Bucky to be bouncing up and down on a horse’s back with a blanket over his head and not knowing what awful thing was going to happen to him.

“If only Santa knew about this,” he thought. “He would think of some way to help me.”

He knew he would never have won the two contests with Lonesome Boy if Santa had not made him the wonderful cherry stick horse and the silver tipped arrow. “But there’s nothing Santa can do for me now,” he told himself.

The Jindians took him to the Jindian camp which was in a forest miles and miles from Santa Land. They stood him on the ground and took the blanket off his head.

He found himself blinking into a great bonfire. On the other side of the fire stood the Jindians. There was Chief Hurricane and behind him was Lonesome Boy, solemn as ever but looking sad at what was happening to the boy who had saved his life.

“I don’t understand.” said Bucky in a shaky voice. “Why have you brought me here?”

“You shame us.” thundered Chief Hurricane. “You win riding contest. You win shooting contest.”

Before Bucky could speak Chief Hurricane threw up his hands as a signal. Immediately the Jindians started whooping and dancing around the fire, beating drums and stamping their feet.

Two Jindians seized Bucky and took him away to an empty tent and tied him up. The war dance grew wilder and Bucky wished that he had never left his home at all. But then he thought, “Why, if I hadn’t come, maybe there wouldn’t be any Santa Land left.”

Then right away he remembered about Dasher being lost and without Dasher to lead the reindeer Santa could not bring Christmas to the world. So nothing had been saved at all.

“But Dasher is probably right here in this camp!” thought Bucky out loud. “Oh, if only I had some help!”

Right at this moment a soft voice said, “Me help!” There was Lonesome Boy crawling into the tent!

The Jindian cut Bucky’s ropes. “Cowboy twice save me,” he whispered. “Now me save him.” When Bucky was free, Lonesome Boy said “Follow me!”

They ducked under the back of the tent and crawled on hands and knees past the tents and wigwams. All the time the whooping and drum beating were growing wilder and Bucky guessed the Jindians were just about ready to finish him off.

Lonesome Boy led him into the corral where the Jindians kept their horses. Bucky hoped if Lonesome Boy gave him a horse it would be a good one that would travel fast.

But Lonesome Boy didn’t take him to a horse at all. He led him to a shed where there was a great beast with spreading antlers and eyes that gleamed in the night.

“Dasher!” Bucky cried. “It’s Dasher!”

Lonesome Boy cut the tether that held the deer and Bucky climbed on the deer’s back. He looked down at Lonesome Boy.

“Come with me!” he whispered suddenly. “Be my friend!”

For a moment the Jindian never moved. Then he said, “Me friend. Me go.”

He climbed up behind Bucky and Dasher sprang straightway into the sky.



Lonesome Boy climbed up behind Bucky and Dasher sprang straightway into the sky.

Chapter 17

A MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL

Dasher, the reindeer, flew into the sky. The stars were so close and so bright Bucky felt he could reach out and grab a handful. He had just decided to try it when suddenly Dasher dropped from the sky and landed in Santa Land.

How the fairy folk sang and shouted to see Dasher back again! Santa and Mrs. Claus came running from their cottage. Mrs. Claus was crying she was so happy. Santa couldn't say anything at all. He just stood there looking jollier and jollier and as if he were going to burst with pride and pleasure.

When Bucky slid down from Dasher's back there was Lonesome Boy sitting there for everyone to see.

"Not Jindians again!" cried Tweedleknoses.

Bucky said, "Lonesome Boy is my friend. He is an Indian now."

Lonesome Boy smiled. It was the first time anyone had seen him smile and it was a wonderful thing to see.

"Me not Lonesome Boy anymore," he said. "Me Happy Boy. Me have friend."

Santa laughed - oh, such a gay and jolly laugh.

"Come, Happy Boy! Pick your Christmas present! Anything you want is yours. But hurry, for it is Christmas Eve and in a very few minutes I must be on my way."

Even at that moment the dwarfs were pulling out Santa's sleigh and hitching up the reindeer with Dasher himself leading the rest. The elves dumped sack after sack of toys into the bottom of the big red sleigh and still went back for more.

Lonesome Boy - who was Happy Boy now - took Santa's hand. "Please," he said. "I no want present. But if you bring presents to Jindian tribe they no hate you anymore."

Santa looked startled. Then he pounded his hands together. "So that's it!" he cried "They only wanted some Christmas for themselves all the time!"

Santa rushed away and didn't come back until Tweedleknoses roared it was time for him to go. Then Santa came. He carried on his back a special pack and over one shoulder he carried an enormous fir tree already decorated with gold and tinsel and red and blue balls.

Santa climbed in the sleigh. "Come Bucky," he said. "I'll take you home tonight. And Happy Boy, too." So the two boys climbed in the sleigh and away they flew.

I don't know exactly what those Jindians thought when they saw Santa come riding down into their midst. But I do know they were too astonished to move—not even when they saw Bucky and the Jindian boy in the sleigh.

"Merry Christmas!" cried Santa. He leaped from the sleigh and set up his great Christmas tree. Then he dumped out his very special bag that he carried over his back and every Jindian's eyes popped to see the presents there: tiddley winks and bob jacks and bead necklaces and marbles and bubble

gum and humming tops and crayons and shells and all the bright shiny trinkets that children and Jindians love.

For a long moment no one said a word. Then the Jindians mumbled excitedly together. Finally Chief Hurricane walked over to Santa. He had a pipe in his hand and he offered the pipe to Santa.

"Smoke peace pipe," he said. He grinned - a funny kind of grin because he wasn't used to smiling, you know.

Santa leaned over and took a big puff on the pipe and passed it back to Chief Hurricane. Anybody could see that Santa thought this was the most fun he'd had for many and many a Christmas Eve.

Happy Boy went to Chief Hurricane and said, "Me go home with little cowboy." Chief Hurricane just nodded yes. He was anxious to start playing around in that pile of toys from Santa's sack.

Bucky put his arm around Happy Boy. He thought, "Well, I really did get my wish! I'm going to have a real live Indian to play with for Christmas!"



Chief Hurricane walked over to Santa. "Smoke peace pipe," he said...He grinned a funny kind of a grin because he wasn't used to smiling.

He wondered what his mother and father would say to that. He guessed they'd be so glad to have him home they'd be glad to have Happy Boy there, too.

"Off we go, now!" cried Santa. He and Bucky and Happy Boy got into the sleigh and off they started.

"Christmas make merry to you!" shouted the Jindians - stumbling over the strange new words.

Santa leaned from his sleigh and called gaily back: "And a Merry Christmas to all!

THE END

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