

Rudolph to the Rescue

by Ruth Grayson

Illustrations by John Giles



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It was very late one December night. There were only a few days left before Christmas. The elves were all waiting anxiously in their workshop at the North Pole for Santa to come and tell them how many more presents they still needed to make.

'What can have happened?' said Gloomy. 'He's never usually this late.'

'No,' replied Sunny. 'He usually likes all of us to get as much rest as possible so close to Christmas. And he likes the reindeer to get lots of rest too, because of their long journey on Christmas Eve.'

Just then, they heard footsteps outside, followed by the sound of the door opening. Then there was Santa's voice. 'Hello, elves. Sorry I'm so late!'

Santa sank down into an armchair. The elves opened the oven door to share out some of the mince pies they had put in the ice since the previous Christmas. They all sat round the fire, watching the flames. Finally, Moody asked: 'Why were you so late tonight, Santa?'



'Rudolph wasn't quite himself,' said Santa. 'He seemed very sad about something, and all the others were worried about him.'

'Do you know why he was upset?' asked Jolly.

'It was something about our map,' replied Santa. 'You know, we always make a map for our journey on Christmas Eve. That way, we can work out how to load up the sleigh so that we drop off the right presents in the right places.'

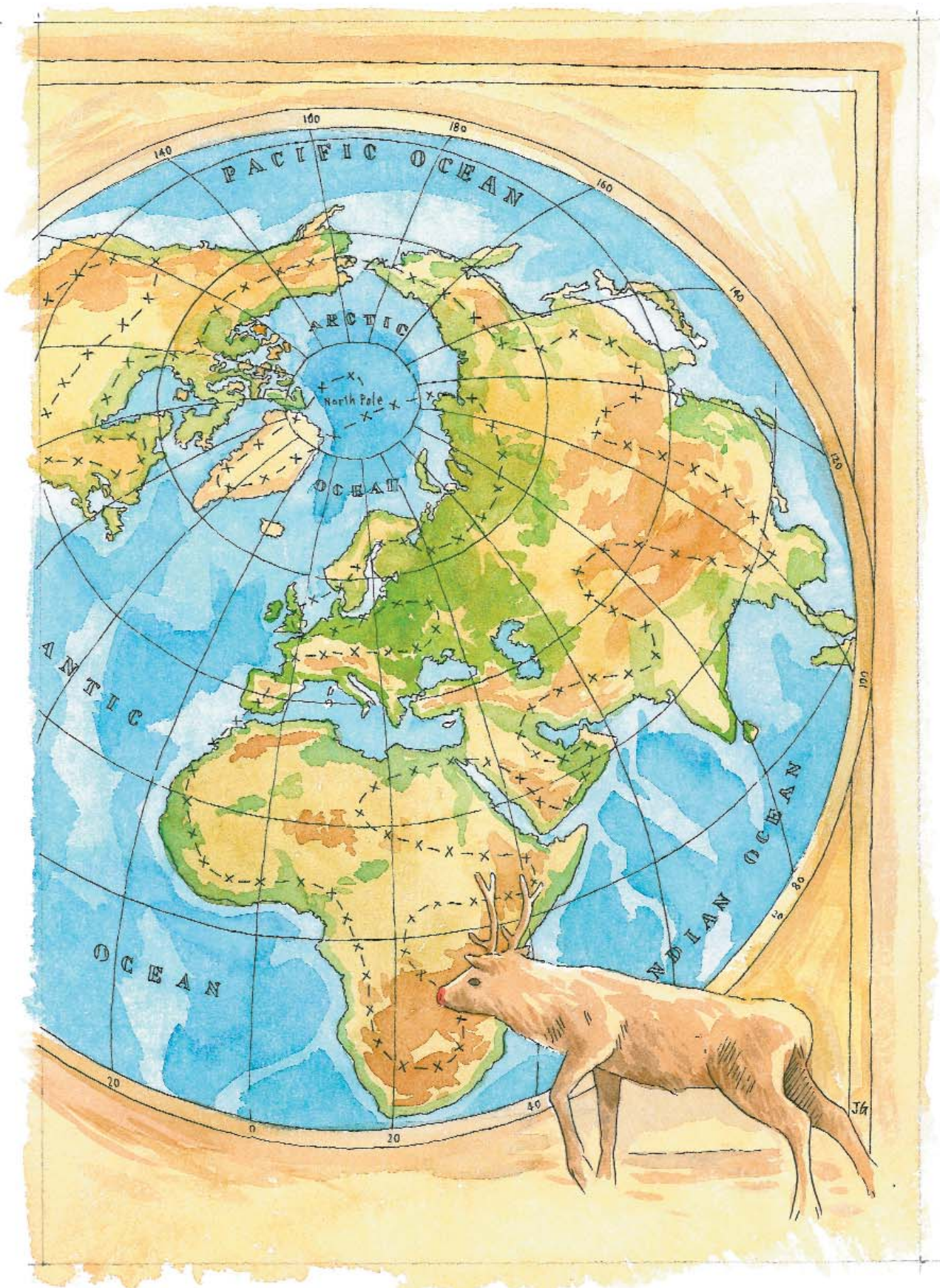
'Why should that bother Rudolph?' asked Lucky. 'We usually get it right, don't we?'

'No,' said Santa. 'Actually, we don't. And it's been worrying me, too.'

'Go on,' said Sunny.

'Well, said Santa, 'we leave gifts when children have homes, or at least a roof over their heads. We need roofs to land on, remember. So many children, in so many places, have no homes of their own. And it's getting worse.'

The elves all began to look worried. They had never thought about this.



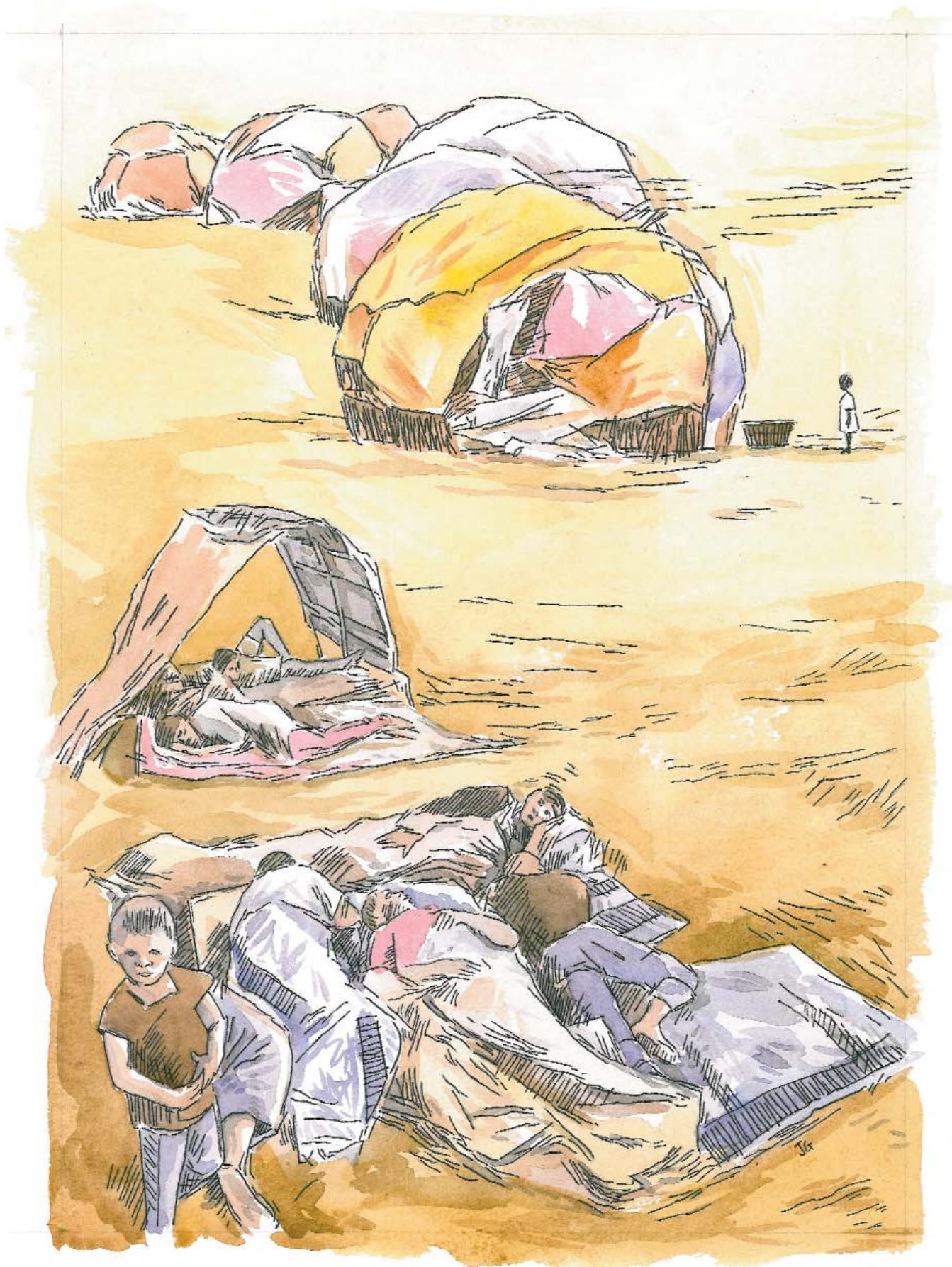
Santa went on, 'Children in many different countries have to leave their homes because of war, or illness, or because they don't have any food. Some live in big camps, maybe in tents, or even out in the open. They have to queue up every day for food and water. They just don't have anything.'

'Yes,' said Thinker. 'And some are always on the move, because there is nowhere for them even to camp, right? Nowhere is safe for them. Nowhere at all.'

'That's right,' replied Santa. 'Those are just some of the children we couldn't leave any gifts for. And that is what made Rudolph so sad. There are big gaps on the world map, where we can't go on Christmas Eve.' Santa looked sad too, as he finished speaking.

The elves were silent for a while. They were all thinking.

Finally, Gloomy asked: 'But what can we do? It's no good making more gifts, is it? We still won't be able to take them to those children.'



Suddenly they all heard a scratching noise on the door. They opened it to find Rudolph standing there, pawing the ground and snorting as if he was trying to say something.

'What is it, Rudolph?' asked Sleepy.

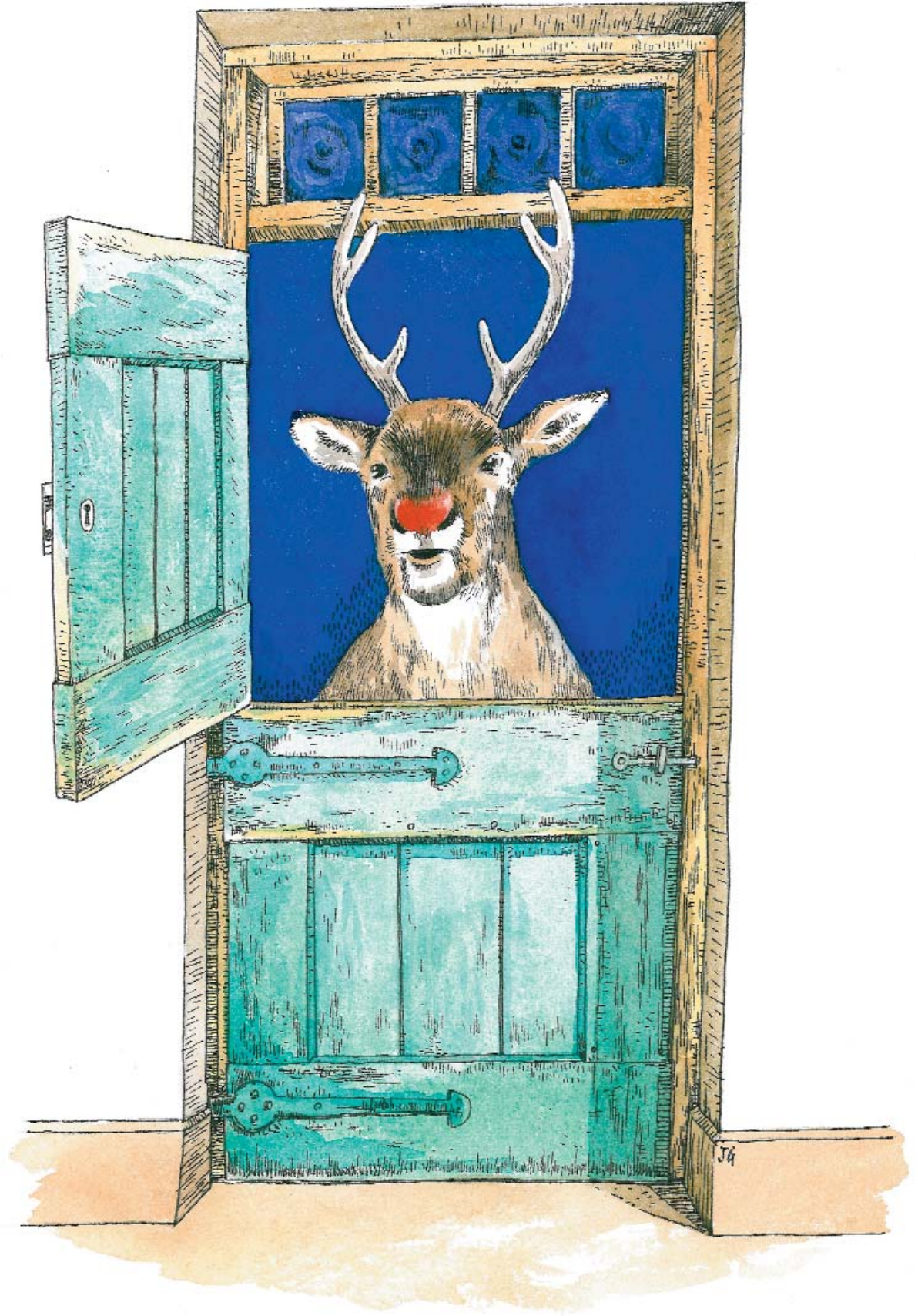
'I think I know,' said Santa. 'Rudolph wants to help all those children.'

'But how?' asked Sleepy. 'We can't do anything right now, can we?'

'I'm not so sure,' said Santa. 'Rudolph seems to think we can! Remember how that foggy night, he helped us take gifts to children who wouldn't have had anything without him?'

'Yes,' said Gloomy, 'but if there are no rooftops, how can he take them?'

'I have an idea,' said Santa. 'Why don't we take a message to all the children who will get presents this year, asking if they can think of ways to help?'



Rudolph began to look happier, as he rubbed himself against the side of the sleigh.

Santa continued, 'What we might be able to do is ask the lucky children who will get presents if they can think of ways to raise money for the others. Ways to help everyone have homes of their own. So many of them need houses, and food, more than they need toys and other gifts this Christmas.'

'You mean, make an extra trip now?' exclaimed Stuff. 'Carrying messages to the rooftops where you can land?'

'Why not?' said Santa. 'Rudolph really seems to want to go. And so do the others. Just look!'

Santa pointed to the sleigh. All of the other reindeer were already in their places, waiting to be harnessed up behind Rudolph, and pawing at the ground in their eagerness to be off.

'That settles it!' cried Santa. 'Let's start writing!'

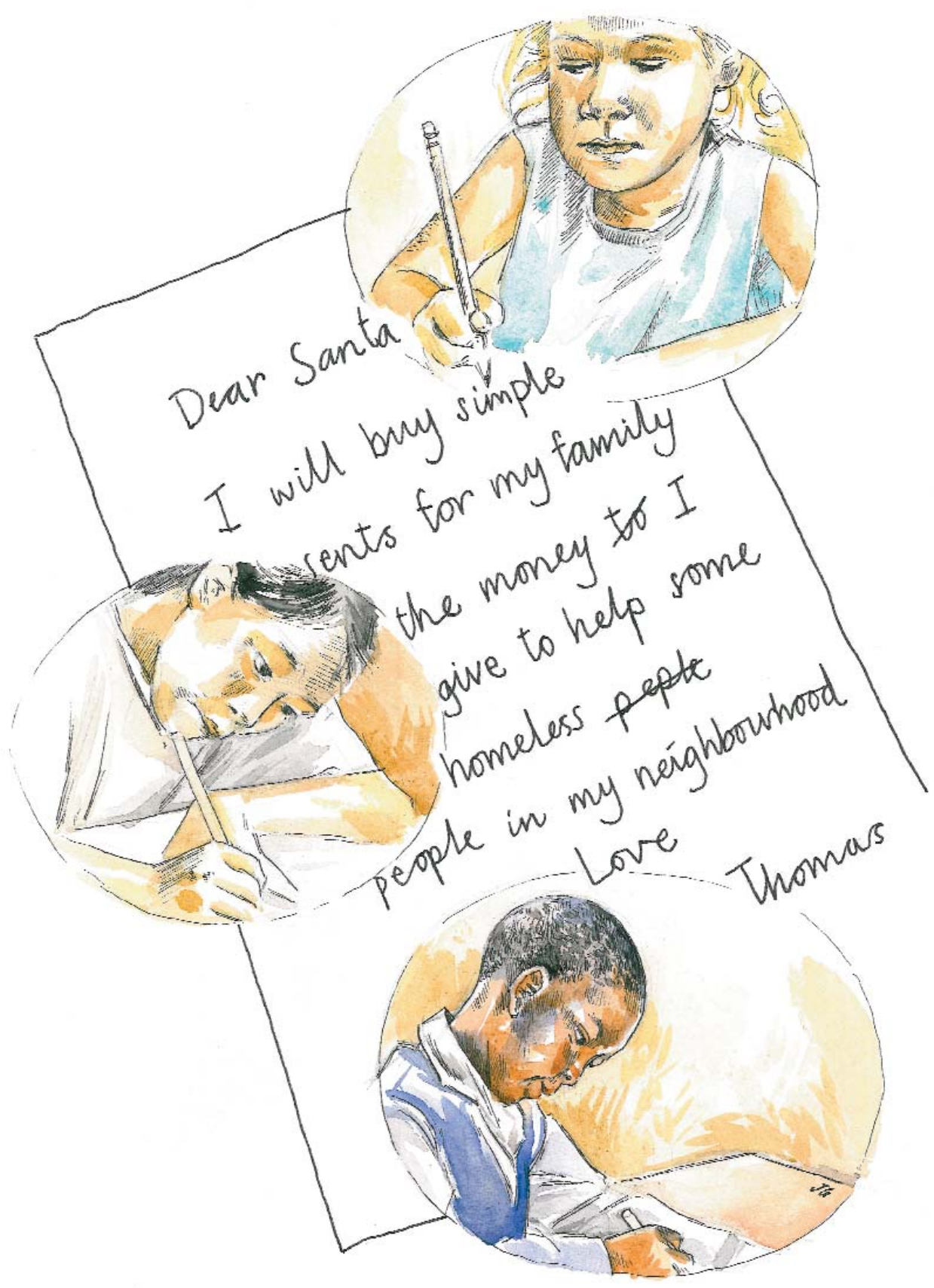


When the sleigh was full with letters, Santa and the reindeer disappeared into the dark with a jingle. And all over the world, children who had been dreaming about Christmas Day were surprised when a message floated down the chimney or through a window or letter box.

'Dear children,' it said, 'Can you think of ways to make Christmas a happy day for another child too? A homeless child who has nowhere to live, no food, maybe even no family? It may make your own Christmas even happier if you can help! Please send your message back up to me! With love from Santa'

'How can I help?' wondered Tommy, rubbing his eyes. 'Oh, I know. I haven't done my Christmas shopping yet. I'll set aside some of the money I would have spent, to give away. My family will be happy with smaller presents, I'm sure.'

'If I give money away, I won't really have enough to buy my family presents this year,' said Kim. 'But I could say I'll help with cooking the dinner and washing dishes instead. Mum will be very happy about that!'



'They were collecting for refugee children downtown,' thought Matthew, 'and I walked past, and didn't give anything. But I'm going to give my December allowance to them. And I can buy smaller gifts for my family and friends, and be as helpful as I can during the holidays.'

'I could make presents for my family this year,' thought Tanya, 'and give the money I save to help children who don't have their own homes this Christmas. And maybe my brother and sister would, too.'

'I know!' exclaimed Josh. 'Instead of all of us in our family giving presents to everyone else, why don't we draw names to give something to just one person, and give the money we save to help homeless children? I'll talk to the others and see what they say.'

Ellie thought to herself of all the times she had seen displays of a baby lying in a manger at Christmastime. Suddenly, she realised what it was all about. 'That could be my baby brother, if I lived somewhere else,' she said. 'I have to do something to help. My friends and I were going to go shopping, so I'll suggest that we put some money aside before we even start.'

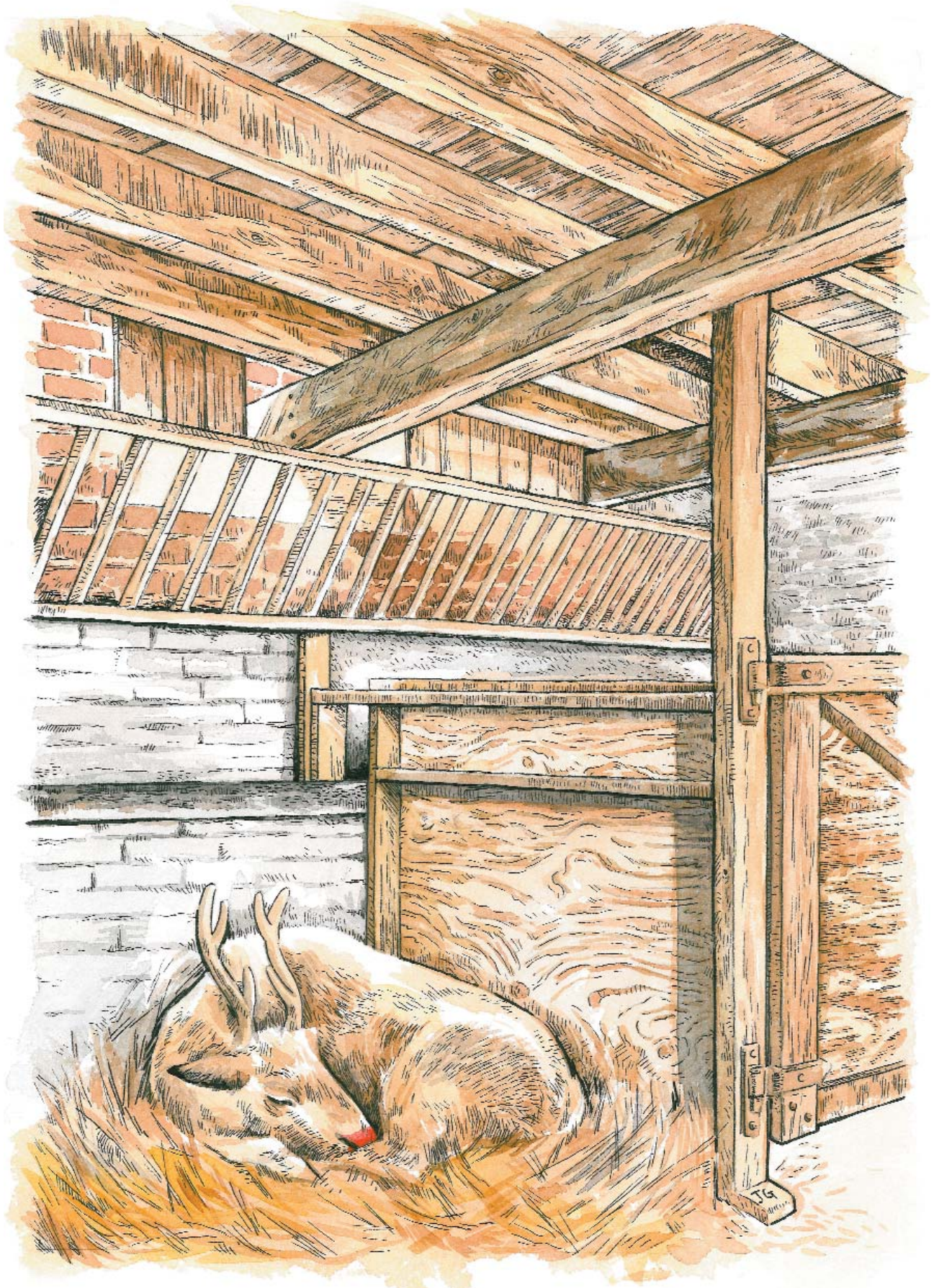


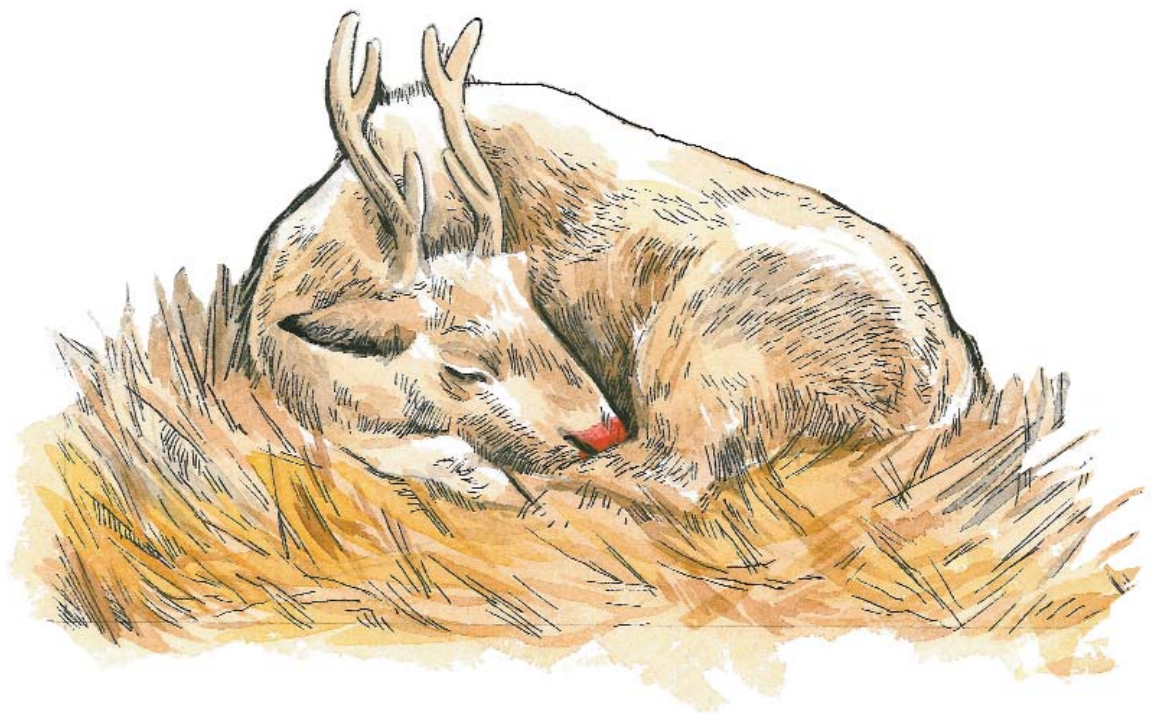
All over the world, children sent their messages back up to Santa. And Rudolph and the other reindeer went round the world again to collect them, and took them back to the North Pole.

'Look at all these!' shouted Happy. 'Children everywhere are fantastic! With all these promises of help, many more children can have a better Christmas this year. Maybe now they can have homes, and food and water, and be safer too!'

So they all went out to the stables. Rudolph had finished a good dinner, and was curled up in his stall, sound asleep. He knew he had done his best to help homeless refugee children all over the world.

'He looks happy now,' said Santa.





To find out more about Rudolph go to
www.christmasgiving.net





