

## **"TAGGART, THE WEE TOY REINDEER"**

'Twas the night a'fore Christmas a long time ago, and in a wee shop in a wee town in the southern most part of Scotland, there was Taggart, a wee toy reindeer. (Hah! - Bet ye thought there was goin' to be a rhyme there, didn't ye?),

It was late into the night, and Taggart had just been created by an old toymaker man by the name of Mr. McGinley. Mr. McGinley had just put the finishing touches on his wee toy reindeer's nametag.

"T-A-G-G-A-R-T" the old man spelled out the name. "Taggart'. Aye, that's a fine name." As the old man turned to put the wee toy reindeer on the top shelf of a tall display case next to a closed window, he accidentally dropped Taggart on his wee head. McGinley picked up the wee toy reindeer and checked to make sure it wasn't damaged.

"Well, ye look fine to me." said the old man. He put the wee toy reindeer in the front of the display case right in front of the other toy reindeers who were part of a Santa's sleigh-team toy replica. The old man placed Taggart so that it appeared Taggart would be leading the rest of Santa's team.

"Hmmm" said Mr. McGinley, looking at Taggart a wee more closely and noticing a chip on one side of the reindeer. McGinley spoke to his wee toy reindeer, as he did with all his creations.

"Looks like I'll need to touch that up a'fore I can put ye with the rest of the team in the display. But, I canna' do it now. I'm too tired. But, we'll have to do it first thing in the mornin'. Mr. and Mrs. Burns will be wantin' to pick ye up in the mornin' so they can give ye as a special present for their wee daughter, Bonnie. And I canna' disappoint them, now can I? Heh-heh."

With that, Mr. McGinley put Taggart back onto his workbench, stretched his tired arms, yawned a tired yawn, and then he went straight into his bedroom to fall into a well-deserved sleep. It was now well into the wee hours of Christmas morning.

As the shop appeared still in the darkness, a wee light shone through the window next to the WORKBENCH where Taggart stood next to a famous book, "*Twas the Night Before Christmas*".

Suddenly, the wee toy reindeer shook his head several times, to brush off the effects from the fall that he took.

"Where am I? Who am I?" cried the toy.

Taggart looked down at his nametag. "Taggart". He figured, "That must be m' name. But what am I?" Taggart leaned over and studied the book next to him. He noticed the pictures of Santa, and saw all the toys in Santa's sleigh being delivered to a wee boy and a wee girl.

"Wow", thought the wee toy reindeer, "What a nice thing for Santa to be doin', deliverin' them toys to those children."

Then, Taggart noticed the reindeer in the pictures, pulling Santa's sleigh so he could deliver the toys. Why, these reindeer looked just like him. "Why, I must be one of Santa's reindeer." thought Taggart. "But, if I am, then what am I doin' here? I should be with other reindeer, pullin' Santa's sleigh to help him deliver presents to lads and lasses like the ones in this book."

Taggart looked around the toymaker's shop. He saw all the toys except the sleigh replica, which was high up on top of the display case, which was too high for Taggart to see. However, Taggart could see the window next to the display. "Look at all the toys", thought the wee toy reindeer.

Suddenly, there was a thump on the roof. "Santa!" thought Taggart. "He must be leavin'. That's it! I must have wandered off from the rest of the team, and now Santa's leavin' without me. I've got to get to him fast. But how?" He looked around the workbench and noticed a chair next to it. He jumped down onto the chair, and then Taggart jumped down onto the floor, slightly injuring one of his legs.

He limped across the floor and finally reached the bottom of the tall tower that was the display case. From the floor where Taggart stood, it appeared to go infinitely up way into the sky.

Taggart thought, "How am I goin' to get up to that window to get Santa's attention? I have to stop him afore he leaves me here. I must help Santa deliver the toys for all the children for Christmas!"

All of a sudden, a big gust of wind blew open the window next to the display case. It also blew open the door to the display case, which now looked like a huge staircase in front of the wee toy reindeer. The window was way up at the top of the display case, four tall shelves up above.

"I canna' leap up to the window with this bad leg. But, I've got to get up there somehow." Taking one painful step at a time, the reindeer proceeded to make his way up.

Once on the first shelf, though, Taggart's wounded leg started to bother him more. He looked up and saw that it would be difficult to reach the next shelf. "Now what can I do?" he cried.

Well, on that first shelf, there was a huge toy hippo. He was big and round, and made of plaid fabric with a big kilt around his middle. "Hey!" said the fat hippo. "You over there! Who are ye? And what d'ye think ye'er doin'?"

Taggart turned to the toy hippo and said, "Oh, hello. My name is Taggart. What's yer name?"

The fat toy hippo said, "They call me Jocko. What's it to ye?"

"Well, Jocko, I'm one of Santa's reindeer and I'm trying to catch him afore he leaves. But, I canna' get to the next level. Can ye help me get up to the next shelf?"

The fat toy said, "Ye look more like a toy to me. A' course, everybody looks like a toy to Jocko. Why should I help ye?"

Taggart explained, "Why, because it's Christmas. And I need to help Santa deliver all the toys for all the good wee lads and lasses. Please! Can ye help me, Jocko?"

Jocko thought about it for a moment, then responded, "Well, then...sure. Sure'n, I'll help ye. But perhaps ye could return the favor, if'n I do help ye?"

Taggart answered, "Why sure, Jocko. What is it ye need?"

Jocko answered, "Well, ye see, there's a thread on the back of my kilt that's come undone. If left unfixed, it'll completely unravel, leavin' me one naked and hugely embarrassed hippo."

Taggart, "Oh dear. Jocko. Certainly I'll help ye. What would ye like me to do?"

Jocko answered, "Well, if'n ye climb up on me back, ye should be able to step easily up onto the next shelf. But, afore ye go, perhaps ye could just tie off the thread so it'll stop unravellin' on me?"

"Why, of course, Jocko." said a grateful Taggart, "I'll take care of it, and I appreciate yer help, as well."

Taggart leaped up onto the fat toy hippo's back, and proceeded to tie off the loose thread on Jocko's kilt. Then, Taggart stepped up onto the second shelf from Jocko's back.

Once there, Taggart waved goodbye with his hoof to the toy hippo down below, and then looked up at the next shelf, which seemed even higher than the first shelf.

"Oh no!" Cried Taggart, "Now what am I goin' to do?" Taggart kicked a box next to him with his hoof.

Just then, the box next to Taggart popped open its lid and a giant clown came out screaming "Happy Christmas Everyone! I'm Boggo the Clown!"

Taggart, startled, took a giant leap back away from the clown. "Hey!" said the clown, changing from happy to angry looking at the otherwise empty shelf, "Where is everybody?" Seeing Taggart, he said, "And WHO are YE?"

"Hello, Boggo." said Taggart, "I'm Taggart. What are ye?"

"Canna' ye tell? I'm a 'Jack-in-the-box'."

Confused, Taggart said, "But I thought ye said yer name was Boggo."

"Don't bother me with details!" said Boggo, "Ye canna' expect anyone to remember to bring home a 'Boggo-in-the-box' for Christmas, now can ye? Anyhoo. Who are ye?"

Taggart explained, "I'm one of Santa's reindeer and I'm trying to catch him afore he leaves. Can ye help me get up to the third shelf?"

Not realizing that Taggart was also a toy, Boggo said, "And why should I help ye, then?"

Taggart explained, "Why, because it's Christmas. And I need to help Santa deliver all the toys for all the good wee lads and..."

Boggo shook his head and said, "Not good enough. What's in it for me?"

Taggart thought for a moment, then asked, "What is it ye would like, Boggo?"

Boggo suggested, "Well, ye may have noticed that my lid is just a wee bit too sensitive. Just brushin' the sides of it open me up and I come flyin' out, which can cause me quite a pain in the box. Last time it happened, I shot so far forward I nearly fell right off the shelf. So, if'n ye could, there's a wee screw up on top of me box which, if tightened properly, will fix me lid."

"And then ye can help me?" asked Taggart.

"Well, I suppose what we could do is this:" Explained Boggo. "After ye help me fix the lid to me box, close the lid. Since ye'll be up there already, when ye'er ready, smack the top of me lid, and then I'll pop way up, and ye should wind up looking like a caber (log) being tossed by the greatest highlander, landing well onto the next shelf.

"Should?" Asked the wee toy reindeer.

"Well, if'n ye don't," said Boggo, "the nice soft floor below should break yer fall, at least."

So, although it was with a great deal of hesitation, Taggart did as instructed. He climbed up on top of the box, closed Boggo's lid, tightened the screw, tapped the lid, and then Whoosh! Up came Boggo, propelling the wee toy reindeer way up onto the third shelf. Taggart looked down and thanked Boggo for his help.

Now Taggart was on the next-to-the-last shelf. As he looked up, he realized the very last shelf was even higher than the previous two shelves combined.

"Oh no!" Cried Taggart, "Now what am I goin' to do?" Taggart felt something scaly winding around his legs.

"What's that?" He shouted. He looked down and saw that the something scaly was a long tail, and the tail was attached to a huge, monstrous looking creature which took up most of the third shelf; it's head scrunched just under the bottom of the next shelf above. The menacing looking creature stared down at Taggart's wee tiny frame and said in a loud, deep, and foreboding tone, "WHO DARES ENTER THE LAIR OF THE MONSTER TOY OF LOCH NESS?!!"

"The Monster Toy of Loch Ness?" Taggart asked, quite nervously.

"Well," said the Monster Toy, now changing to a much softer, milder, and more affectionate tone, "That's what the old toymaker called me, but I never really felt all that menacing. I mean, ye'er not really scared right now, are ye?"

Taggart, confused, said, "No, I suppose not."

"Oh, pooh!" Said the disappointed Monster Toy.

"But," Taggart began to ask, "Ye'er a toy, aren't ye?"

"Aye." answered the Monster Toy.

Taggart continued, "Then, why would anyone WANT a toy to be scary?"

"Ye know, that's a good question." said the Monster Toy, "I'll have to think about that one. Anyway, listen to me, just yammering on and on. Where are me manners? Who are ye, little one?"

"M'name is Taggart, and I'm trying to get up to the last shelf so I can stop Santa."

"STOP Santa?" said the confused Monster Toy, "Why on Earth would anyone want to STOP Santa from delivering toys?"

"No." answered Taggart, "I want to stop him a'fore he leaves me behind."

"Behind?" asked the Monster Toy, still confused.

"Aye." said Taggart, "I'm one of his reindeer. And I want to make sure he doesn't forget me when he leaves. Can ye help me up to the last shelf?"

The Monster Toy was now even more confused. "Now, let me get this straight. Ye'er telling me that ye'er a real reindeer?"

"Aye." answered Taggart, "Why do ye ask?"

"No reason. I just never thought a real reindeer would be so, so, oh, I don't know, so small. I mean, how big can Santa be if ye'er one of his reindeer?"

Taggart didn't know how to answer that.

"Well," said the Monster Toy, dismissing the question, "I guess anything's possible with Christmas, aye?"

Taggart nodded and said "Aye", but the Monster Toy's original question still lingered in his mind.

"Anyway" said the Monster Toy, "Since you were kind enough to listen to me chatter on, how can I help ye?"

"Well," said Taggart, "It's a long way up to the last shelf where the window is. Can ye help me up there?"

The Monster Toy shook his head with glee, and said "Why sure thing! I'll be happy to help ye. Just climb up onto m'head, and I'll lift ye up there no problem."

Taggart did as instructed. He stepped onto the Monster Toy's head and was lifted high above, up onto the final shelf. The Monster Toy's body stayed below as he rested his head onto the shelf above.

As Taggart stepped off the Monster Toy's head, the Monster Toy said, "I hope yer friends over there are able to help ye get to Santa."

"Friends?" asked Taggart.

"Aye," said the Monster Toy, as he was leaving. "Those other reindeer. Over there." With that, the Monster Toy was gone; leaving Taggart more confused than ever.

Taggart searched the shelf, looked all the way to the other side of the top shelf of the display case. Taggart then saw what the Monster Toy had noticed: the reindeer sleigh toy replica with all the other toy reindeer standing fast in their positions, like the toys that they were.

**All the reindeer looked just like him! Not one reindeer was different than another. And they all had nametags, just like Taggart's.**

**Taggart slowly looked down at his nametag and then back at the other reindeer. At that moment, he knew. He realized that he, too, Taggart, was indeed, a toy.**

**A ray of Christmas moonlight shone through the still-open window. The face of a man with a long white beard suddenly appeared through it. It was Santa. He reached in his hand and picked up Taggart, then Santa stepped through the window and lifted Taggart up to his nose, saying "Hello, Taggart."**

**Taggart was in awe. He could only muster up enough courage to say one thing: "Santa."**

**"Nice to meet you." Said Santa. "You know, I've been watching you tonight."**

**Taggart said, "I thought I was a real reindeer, Santa. I tried to stop ye a'fore ye left me here. Now I realize that I'm just a toy like all the other toys. I feel so foolish. I'm sorry."**

**Santa said, "No, Taggart. You're not 'just a toy'.**

**"I'm not?" asked Taggart.**

**"No." said Santa, "You unselfishly wanted to help Santa deliver toys to girls and boys. And as you met other toys, you convinced them to help you in your quest, showing them what it means to cooperate and help someone in need."**

**Taggart was astounded, "I did?"**

**"Yes, you did." Said Santa. "Your intentions and actions were consistent with the spirit of Christmas. And that, I think, deserves a little Christmas present from Santa.**

**"What do ye mean, sir?" Asked Taggart.**

**Santa chuckled and pointed to the sleigh toy, "There's a little girl who's been wanting a wonderful toy sleigh like this for a long time. And Mr. McGinley has been working on this one for weeks. So, we shouldn't disappoint either of them. Right?"**

**"Aye, Santa." Said Taggart.**

**Santa smiled and said "Then, Watch."**

**Santa waved his hand and magically, the chip from Taggart's side disappeared. Then, Santa made and placed an exact toy replica of Taggart at the head of the reindeer toy display and moved the whole display to Mr. McGinley's workbench, complete with ribbons and bows, and a wee Christmas card attached.**

**"It's beautiful, Santa." said Taggart, "But what about me?"**

**"And you, Taggart," said Santa, "Are coming to the North Pole with me. You're coming...home."**

**"Home?" asked Taggart.**

**"Home." said Santa.**

**Santa once again waved his hand and suddenly Taggart grew to the size of, and then became, a real reindeer.**

**"Wow!" said Taggart, noticing his new form. "I'm a real reindeer!" Taggart leaped for joy high into the sky. "I can fly! Santa! I can fly! I'm a real reindeer! Hooray!"**

**Then, when Taggart landed, he and Santa went to Santa's sleigh. Taggart took his place next to Rudolph, and then the team of now ten tiny reindeer took off into the night.**

**Christmas morning, Mr. McGinley awoke and saw that his reindeer display had been moved onto his workbench. He scratched his head, approached the display and noticed that the chip on the wee toy reindeer with the "Taggart" nametag had been fixed. He also noticed that the whole display was packaged up nicely, and was all ready to be given to the lass, Bonnie. Mr. McGinley noticed there was a wee card attached to the display. He picked it up and read the writing on the card:**

**"A present for you (Bonnie & Mr. McGinley) - HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO ALL, AND TO ALL A GOOD-NIGHT - Love, Santa."**

**THE END**