

## BALLEA WRITERS

## THE RUNAWAY REINDEER

A children's story by Brenda Keating

Santa Claus has a very special clock that stands in a tall tower in the middle of the North Pole. This special clock rings very loudly every hour. It reminds everyone how much time is left until Santa's Sleigh takes off on Christmas Eve.

Rudolf and Rollo the Reindeers were very excited about Christmas Eve. Now everyone has heard of Rudolf the Red Nose Reindeer but not so many people have heard of Rollo the Reindeer, Rudolf's little brother. Poor Rollo had a tough time in the North Pole. It is not easy having such an important big brother, you know. Especially when Rollo had a little black nose, not like Rudolf's shiny, red nose.

Every year, Rollo asked Santa if he could join the Reindeer Team and pull the sleigh. Every year, Santa said 'Not yet, Rollo. Maybe next year.' But this year Santa said that Rollo could join the Reindeer Team and help him to deliver toys to all the girls and boys.

'Santa told me that you will be pulling the sleigh with us this year,' Rudolf said to Rollo.

'Ring, Ring, Ring, Ring,' chimed Santa's special clock.

'We will be leaving in four hours. I will go and get us some carrots to eat while we wait,' Rudolf said.

But poor Rollo was afraid that he would make lots of mistakes because it was his first time pulling the sleigh. He was afraid that Santa would be disappointed in him. He was so worried that he decided to run away and hide until after Santa, Rudolf and the other reindeer had left the North Pole. When Rudolf came back with the carrots, he looked everywhere for Rollo but he could not find him.

'Where has Rollo gone?' Rudolf asked, and off he went to look for his little brother.



Rudolf went to the Reindeer stables where he met Dancer and Prancer.

'Hello Dancer. Hello Prancer. Have you seen Rollo? It is his first year on the Reindeer Team to pull Santa's sleigh and I cannot find him anywhere!' Said Rudolf.

'Ring, Ring, Ring,' chimed Santa's special clock.

'Sorry Rudolf. We have not seen Rollo but you better hurry. Santa's special clock says that the sleigh will be leaving in three

hours,' said Dancer and Prancer.

So Rudolf went outside to ask the Snowman.

'Hello Snowman. Have you seen Rollo? It is his first year on the Reindeer Team to pull Santa's sleigh and I cannot find him anywhere,' said Rudolf.

'Ring, Ring,' chimed Santa's special clock.

'Sorry Rudolf. I have not seen Rollo but you better hurry. Santa's special clock says that the sleigh will be leaving in two hours,' said

the Snowman.

So Rudolf went to Santa's workshop to ask the Toys.

'Hello Toys. Have you seen Rollo? It is his first year on the Reindeer Team to pull Santa's sleigh and I cannot find him anywhere,' said Rudolf.

'Ring,' chimed Santa's special clock 'Sorry Rudolf. We have not seen Rollo but you better hurry. Santa's clock says that the sleigh will be leaving in one hour,' said the Toys.

Rudolf was beginning to give up when suddenly he spotted Rollo hiding behind Santa's cabin.

'Rollo! Where have you been? I have been looking for you everywhere,' cried Rudolf.

'I'm sorry, Rudolf,' said Rollo. 'I don't think that I can join the Reindeer team. I am afraid that I will make lots of mistakes because it is my first time pulling the sleigh. I am afraid that Santa will be disappointed in me,' Rollo sobbed.

'Rollo, I was afraid that I would make mistakes the first time that I pulled the sleigh too. Santa picked you for his Reindeer Team because he thinks that you can do it and I will help you along the way. We won't be able to pull the sleigh without you and then the girls and boys all over the world won't get any toys,' Rudolf said.

'You were afraid too?' Asked Rollo 'Of course!' said Rudolf. 'Now let's go. The sleigh will be leaving soon.'

Rudolf and Rollo hurried to the Reindeer Runway where the Elves were putting the last of the toys on to the sleigh. Santa looked up and gave Rollo a big smile.

Rudolf and Rollo joined the other reindeers and got ready for take off. As they flew high into the sky, Rollo the Reindeer grinned with delight and he realised he wasn't afraid anymore.

## ELVA'S SPECIAL JOB

A children's story by Brenda Keating

It was the day before Christmas Eve and all of the elves were very excited. Christmas Eve is a very important day for Elves. And do you know why this day is so special to the Elves? Because on Christmas Eve, the elves put all the toys onto Santa's sleigh.

All the elves were bustling around, making sure that the toys would be ready for Christmas Eve, so Santa could deliver them to boys and girls all over the world. Well not quite all the elves. Elva, the littlest Elf, did not have a special job in Santa's workshop.

Elva thought that she might help the Builder Elves. The Builder Elves were very busy hammering all of the toys together.

'Hello, Elva,' said the Builder Elves.

'Can I help please?' Elva asked.

'Of course, Elva. You can hand us the nails!' The Builder Elves replied.

But Elva was so busy telling stories that she kept dropping the nails!

'Maybe you can help the Wrapping Elves?' The Builder Elves suggested.

So Elva went to see the Wrapping Elves. The Wrapping Elves were very busy tying brightly coloured ribbons onto all of the presents.

'Hello, Elva,' said the Wrapping Elves.

'Can I help please?' Elva asked.

'Of course, Elva. You can hand us the ribbon!' The Wrapping Elves replied.

But Elva was so busy singing songs that she kept getting tangled up in the ribbon!

'Maybe you can help the Paintpot Elves?' The Wrapping Elves suggested.

The Paintpot Elves were very busy pouring red paint, blue paint, yellow paint and green paint into little pots.

'Can I help please?' Elva asked.

'Of course, Elva! You can hand us the paints!' The Paintpot Elves replied.

But Elva was telling jokes and laughing so hard that she kept spilling the paint!

'Maybe you can help Mrs. Claus?' The Paintpot Elves suggested.

'Hello, Elva,' said Mrs. Claus.

But before Elva could say hello big tears started



to roll down her face.

'What's the matter, Elva?' asked Mrs. Claus and she sat down and put her arm around Elva.

'I have no special job to help Santa Claus. I tried to help the Builder Elves but I kept telling stories and I dropped the nails. Then I tried to help the Wrapping Elves but I kept singing songs and I got all tangled in the ribbon. Then I tried to help the Paintpot Elves but I kept telling jokes and I spilled all of the paint. I am a very bad Elf,' Elva said.

'You are not very bad! You are a very good Elf, Elva and I can think of a very special job just for you,' said Mrs. Claus.

'You can?' Asked Elva with a watery smile.

'Of course. Santa Claus has a very long night every Christmas Eve. Last year, he got so tired that he nearly fell asleep while he was flying the sleigh! If Santa Claus had a little Elf for company who could tell him jokes and stories and sing him songs while he is delivering toys all over the world, I am sure he would be very happy,' Mrs. Claus said.

'Wow!' said Elva. 'That is a very, very special job!' And so that Christmas Eve, Elva climbed aboard the sleigh with Santa and told him lots of jokes and stories and sang him lots of songs. Santa was very happy to have Little Elva for company and Elva, the littlest Elf in the Santa's workshop, had a very, very special job.

## A CHRISTMAS SUMMER

By Julianna O'Callaghan

'I'm fed up Catherine. This is my third Christmas Summer in a row.' 'Cheer-up Clare, will ya? We're on the beach in 35 degree heat, it's Christmas morning - what more could you want?'

'Frost, hot ports, turkey, a real fir tree! I've been ringing mum all morning, but she's not answering. Why does she have a mobile if she's not going to turn it on?'

'Forget about Ireland and enjoy yourself,' said Catherine.

Sand flicked onto Clare's knee as Catherine jumped up and ran into the sea. Clare smeared more sunscreen on her shoulders; they were starting to burn. She felt ridiculous in her red bikini with white fur trim and sweat-soaked Santa hat, traditional Christmas dress for Bondi Beach.

Later that morning Clare trudged back to the apartment, while Catherine bounced ahead. She watched Catherine's perfect blonde ponytail swipe from side to side as she moved along the footpath. Her own brunette mop was stuck to the nape of her neck, lank and lifeless, like road kill on a cream highway. How can we two sisters be so different, she thought.

As they rounded the Banksia-lined street and approached the apartment, Clare sniffed the air - the barbeques were firing up already. Spiced snapper, yabbie salad and pavlova were typical Aussie Christmas dinner. Clare pulled her international call card from her wallet, along with her new slim line mobile. She rang home to Ireland again and cursed the never-ending dial tone. She stubbed her toe on the curb, while she listened for her mum's voice to wish her a Merry Christmas. No reply. Tears started to drip from her sun-dried eyelids. Grow up, she thought as she wiped her eyes.

Catherine slid her keys into the front door of the apartment block. Clare walked up the stairs; phone clung to her ear, still hoping for a response from her Mum. From far away she could hear The Muppet Show theme tune. It grew louder as she neared her apartment. 'Somebody has the same ring tone as Mum,' she said.

Catherine turned to face her sister and grinned. 'It's probably a cross-connection on your phone.'

As Clare opened their door the smell of roast turkey enveloped her. Its Mum, she's here isn't she?

Their mum rushed from the kitchen and smothered her daughters in kisses.

They clinked glasses of Port and toasted to the best ever Christmas summer

