



The Night Before The Night Before Christmas

Chapter 2

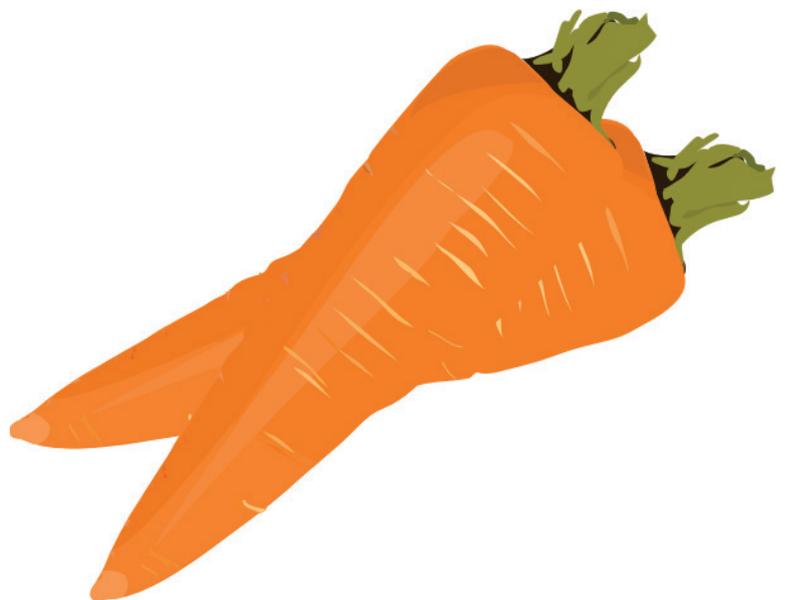
When Sam woke on Christmas Eve, he already had a smile on his face. His dreams had been filled with visions of him and Annabelle taking turns riding on the back of Rudolph. They'd soared over the town and raced between the tall buildings near to Parliament. In his dream, Queen Elizabeth had waved at him from her balcony. He'd been amazed to see she wore striped pyjamas to bed, just like him. He woke up that morning knowing all that stood between him and the wind whistling through his hair was his plan.

For the whole day, Sam fidgeted. His mother had calmed down considerably since the day before. Sam suspected this was because his father had raced straight out to the supermarket for a new turkey and fresh vegetables upon his return. During the traditional family ice-skating visit, Sam smiled and laughed. He even wore an ear-to-ear grin for their annual family photograph. This was so unusual that his mother burst into tears and order several dozen copies, much to the photographer's delight. Nothing was going to stop him from enjoying his day.

Eventually, after what felt like a thousand hours, evening came, and Sam was tucked into bed by his parents. He waited patiently until he was sure that they had gone to bed themselves before sneaking down the stairs and out into the garden. Once again, he threw a small pebble at the first-floor window next door.

"Boo!" Annabelle burst into muffled giggles behind him as he tried his hardest to calm his racing heart. "I've been waiting here for about half an hour!" she whispered. "What took you so long?"

Sam didn't bother to answer. He led them quickly down to the garden shed, and they both set about their tasks. Sam made sure that the rustic cage was as strong as it could be whilst Annabelle oiled and checked the hinges on the trapdoor that they had cut into the shed roof



the night before. Finally, they both stepped out into the cold and dragged the burlap sack up onto the shed roof via an old apple tree.

CRRRRRRK! The old roof was definitely worse for wear and it let out a warning moan. Desperate not to end up in a heap on the floor, Sam upended the sack and watched as hundreds of bright orange carrots tumbled out. They both swept them into a large pile just in front of the trapdoor.

With their trap set above their heads, the two children made themselves comfortable under an old blanket and closed their eyes. They were startled awake in the early hours of the morning when something enormous crashed through the roof. An eerie red glow filled the shed. Sam and Annabelle leapt to their feet and hugged. It had worked!

VOCABULARY FOCUS

1. Which word tells you that Sam couldn't keep still that morning?
2. Which word tells you how Sam went downstairs once his parents were asleep?
3. What does **muffled** tell you about Annabelle's laughter?
4. Why has the author chose to use the word **rustic** to describe the cage?
5. How do you know that Sam turned the sack upside down?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

- I** Who has been caught? How do you know?
- P** What do you think will happen now that they have a reindeer?
- E** Explain how you know that Sam and Annabelle feel their plan has worked.
- R** What job did Annabelle have to do?
- S** Summarise how Sam and Annabelle have come to have a reindeer trapped in their shed.

Answers:

1. Fidgeted
2. Sneaking
3. She tried to keep it quiet or covered her mouth with her gloves/hands
4. It tells you how handmade/amateur it looked
5. The use of the word **upended**

I: Rudolph - there is a red glow

P: Any suitable prediction based on the story so far

E: They leapt to their feet and hugged

R: Oiled and checked the hinges on the trapdoor

S: Look for key events in the story so far, especially linked to plotting, setting and activating the trap