

# Terrible

# Teddy bear



**T**errible Teddy Bear did not look like a terrible bear at all. He was the brown kind of teddy bear, just the size to take to bed. And he had a funny little squeak, and shiny black eyes and a bit of a smile. But he **WAS** a terrible teddy just the same.

Even Santa Claus, who had made this teddy and who had said, "He's the best bear I ever did make!" decided that at last.

"This terrible teddy bear!" he said the first Christmas morning at breakfast. "This terrible teddy bear climbed out of my pack last night. He hid under the seat of my sleigh. When I got back home, there he was—back home, too! And not wherever I meant to leave him for some good child!"

"Dear, dear!" said Mrs. Santa Claus.

And she was still saying "Dear, dear!" five Christmases later. Because every Christmas Eve, Terrible Teddy Bear climbed out of the toy pack. Every Christmas Eve he hid in a different place. And every Christmas morning he was back home at the North Pole.

On the fifth Christmas morning Santa Claus made up his mind to do something about Terrible Teddy.

He hurried into his workshop and looked at the letters in the basket marked NO! That basket was full of letters from people who didn't deserve presents. Santa Claus always felt very sad when he looked at those letters.

Just the same, he sat down and read them all.

He read straight through lunch and halfway through dinner. Then he jumped up, holding a crumpled letter in one red mitten.

"Here's a letter from someone more terrible than Terrible Teddy," he said. "Here's a letter from Terrible Tommy, who says 'I won't' all day long, and eats nothing but candy and bubble gum, and besides—he never will go to bed at night."

"Dear, dear!" said Mrs. Santa Claus. "You can't EVER take him a present!"

"Oh, yes, I can," Santa chuckled. "I'm going to his house right now—a special trip. And I'm going to give him Terrible Teddy!"

"Dear, dear!" Mrs. Santa Claus said. "Dear, dear, dear, dear, dear, dear, dear, dear!"

But by that time the reindeer were harnessed, the sleigh was out of the barn. And Santa was driving over the rooftops on Christmas night.

He was driving one-handed at that. In his other hand he held Terrible Teddy, tight as tight.

Terrible Teddy certainly didn't look terrible now. He was trying very hard to squeak, "Oh, please don't give me to Terrible Tommy!" But Santa held him too tightly.



Before long, the sleigh stopped with a jerk. It stopped on the roof of Tommy's house.

All the lights were out.

Everyone was asleep. Everyone, that is, except Terrible Tommy.

He sat by the hearth, rubbing his eyes and blowing his nose. He sobbed a bit, too.

"Santa Claus didn't come to me!" he cried. "He didn't bring me a thing. Not even some ashes and switches. Not even some old, worn, patched britches. Not even a horn that wouldn't blow. Not even anything. Oh, oh, oh! And I wanted a teddy bear, even an old one, a brown and plushy and nice-to-hold one—with shiny eyes in his fuzzy head, the kind that's the size for taking to bed."



Santa Claus, up on the roof, heard Terrible Tommy. He blew some ashes down to make Tommy close his eyes. And when Tommy did—

Whisk! Down the chimney came Santa.

Whisk! Up he went again, leaving Terrible Teddy behind.

Away went the sleigh with its bells all jingling. Terrible Tommy opened his eyes—and there, right in front of him, sat Terrible Teddy.

"Santa did come!" cried Tommy. "He made a special trip just for me—and he brought the nicest, softest, best kind of Teddy Bear in the whole world!"

He picked up Terrible Teddy and hugged him tightly. Teddy liked that so much that he hugged back. Tommy liked *that* so much that he felt good from head to toe.

And right then all the Terrible went straight out of Tommy.

It went out of Teddy, too.

Up the stairs they went, both together. Both together they went sound asleep. And they looked just like a good little boy sleeping, and a good teddy bear sleeping, too.



By that time, of course, Santa Claus was back at the North Pole. He chuckled as he hung up his hat. He laughed as he hung up his coat.

"I always did say he was the best bear I ever made," he told Mrs. Santa. "And it wouldn't be right for Santa Claus to be wrong, would it, now?"

Mrs. Santa Claus didn't say "Dear, dear!"

She said: "Of course not. That would Never Never NEVER Do!"