

# *On, Dasher!*



*An Insider's Tale* (Revised)

A Short Story By, JK Savoy

*“On Dasher, on Dancer, on Prancer, on Vixen!”* Like echoes bouncing from a wall, our traditional seasonal orders resounded through my furry, sheltered mind as once again that ‘ho-hoing’ sleigh-chauffeur eyed us up while still sober enough to harness Dancer and me, Dasher, as leaders of his eight reindeer delivery team. As old Holly-Jolly drew ever closer to us, a mindburst filled with tales of long ago ready, willing and eager teams flying through the Christmas Eve’s sky reminded me of what should be our well-intentioned purpose. Just as previous reindeer teams had undertaken year after countless years, we were about to embark on the astonishing task of being everywhere with everything, all at once! As always, we were up to that task in body, less the spirit of our predecessors. So, what changed? If I weren’t an erstwhile, naive critter of the forest I may have read how folklore defined reindeer as the most noble of four legged creatures, and ascribed more value to the sovereignty of my fellows. The captives of corporate poachers that reindeer became, lessened our status over the years to nothing but incarcerated bearers of obligatory gifts to Earth Mother’s children. All we could hope and dream of when we were flung into the company’s stable was: Three feeding bags of hay a day, and a nightly flop. But here we are, living in our dreams of what may have been while accepting the reality of what is, or appears to be. As my mind became flooded with recollections of loosened roofing tiles, great blizzards of the century and brats armed with slingshots; once again a familiar voice within me said, *“Here we go again Dasher, yet one more gravity defying fantasy going back to year-one of Santa’s preposterous toy delivery ritual. It’s not such a bad*

*price to pay for a warm barn, hay up the wazoo and by chance, a breeding gal for an afternoon delight! And yet, I have to ask myself: Is this all there is? So, what may have come to be if I didn't go to my regular place for my annual antler shedding and got grabbed up with the others? Oh well!"*

As I exhaled yet one more frosty cloud of frustration, many flights of the white bearded one's fancy came flashing back to me until they were met by the mundane stench of his soured stomach acid meeting Jack Daniels wafting thru my icicled nostrils. As high minded delusions clashed with my mundane reality check, Dancer's and my antlers were taken aback as we witnessed a critter less than half of an average reindeer's dimensions being strapped to our sleigh team, directly ahead of us and Santa himself!

While his harness was being snapped shut, I shouted, "The nerve of him! Hey, Boss, who the hell is that red nosed runt? And how can his teeny butt pull his own weight never mind help us empty your sleigh of all of the gifts!" As Captain Ho-Ho chucked yet one more empty at the recycling bin in vain, I added, "Since our time on this sleigh began, Dancer and I have led your reindeer team through this once a year giveaway-fest of yours, regardless of the weather! And why are you suddenly putting this glow in the dark nosed freak ahead of your best sleigh team ever? Above all, nine is never a lucky number, you over the hill sell-out!" Which was met with his usual gas passing grin.

With sleighbells jingling in sync with restless reindeer, who never fail to deliver Santa's presents, the newbie turned to us with his annoying red nose glowing at our frosted faces and said: "Hey there fellas! You can call me, Rudy! I'm here to lead you through that foggy night's sky!"

Blitzen asked, "Why now, Newbie? After all these years of the same old, same old for shit weather from Mother Nature; we surely know the way, foggy night or not! Above all, what on God's snowball of our Earth qualifies you, a runt with those teeny antler nubs popping through your sorry head, to lead us to do our usual stinkin' job?"

Coming from beneath his maddening, blinking red snout we heard, "There are seven dwarfs who will gladly back me up by saying, '*Size never matters when it comes to lighting the way for others who may fail to see!*' And, there's a certain tiny princess who rules her land merely by heeding their words!"

I asked, "What does that have to do with us, Newbie,?"

"We'll see. All I know is, the old man is always a bit, you know, tipsy at showtime. Having seen similar drinking habits develop with his predecessors, Corporate's admins sent me to light up your lives for, you know, safety's sake? Anyway, here I am, Rudy, your one-night-stand of a rental!"

Donner and I turned to hear Blitzen shout to the boss as he staggered toward the sleigh: "Hey, belly-boy! Short-stuff says he's here for safety's sake. And by the way, getting the job done safely throughout foggy night sky after foggy night sky has been good enough for millennia after millennia of our kind! Dude, the eight of us know your annual drop-off route by heart and above all, we always get the job done with each and every gift distributed within that nano-second

you call midnight! Unless this is a part of a of covert agenda that's blowing in the wind, what's with this unexpected personnel change? And what's with that scrawny, glow in the dark fawn-boy becoming the frontrunner? Politics aside, even with his rosy high-beam nose set to maximum, how can this rookie lead us? He ain't nothin' but a child!"

As yet another empty bottle crashed near the recycling can, the jolly one said, "If rumors were horses, then reindeer might ride! Since your kind ain't known for its literacy, allow me to quote Corporate: *'It has been written, and so it shall be!'* Do ya got anything else, boys?"

I muttered in reply, "I have many questions, but none for the likes of that over the hill, drunken flunky!"

While the rest of the herd pondered their thoughts, my sanity was drawn to the cloud filled sky as I asked, "Whoever or whatever may be listening: Why is it that there are those who believe that a perfectly good question can be answered by way of a forced nod of condescension? My head turned enough for me to see Donner's and the rest of the usual cast of supply slaves snorting frosty releases of doubt followed by the reflexive bobbing of their heads in acquiescence. In a final act of dignity, my antler-driven response was to flip my head skyward as if seeking another path but my awareness was overwhelmed, then drawn to a parting of the clouds revealing the endlessness above all!

With the sound of antlers clashing in turmoil and doubt, my sense of being was grasped by a compelling presence. Suddenly, all that I believed myself to be became focused on a shooting star as it zoomed from one clear patch to another,

and another as it glowed brightly while shouting, "Dasher! Look only unto me!"

"What? And why, for the love of Christmas, should I?"

"And why not?" asked the star, "Come along with me because it is now, and now it is Dasher's time! Think of nothing but breaking free of your reigns of enslavement and come with me along my path to the greater glory!"

Noticing that my blinders had been blown away by a sudden gust of wonderment, I asked the something amidst the nothingness: "Why should I follow a shooting light just because it says I should? Hey! Why have I just done what you said I should do?! Was it because someone simply told me to do what they say that I did what they said?"

"Someone? Dasher, just who is anyone anyway?"

"To me, giddyap is giddyap, no matter who hollers it! "

"Dasher, regardless of whoever it was who told you to do what you did, you did what you did because here you are and that's enough for me! So, how is everything so far?"

"Holy shit! I can't believe it; I'm actually flying... Solo!"

"As are all things within the void, or so it may seem."

"Hey, How the hell did I...?"

"... get here? You tell me, Dasher."

"Okay, Starshine! Hey, I like that name for you! To answer your question, it seems that what I may have just done got me close enough to hear you answer my question with another question! Holy shit! I've never let my team down before! Dammit! By now, ol' Dancer must really be pissed at me and ..."

"Dasher! You just said '*by now.*' Now, then and always, antlers are known to sway back and forth in disbelief, then

quickly nod up and down in blind-acceptance. It has always been, and always will be the way of those who believe that they are merely 'blindered' beasts of burden. Since you're in flight, and no longer boxed in by Earthly constraints or that lifetime Corporate sentence, perhaps you can revel in finally thinking out of that box. Remember Dasher, the best answers always spring from the best questions."

"I don't get out too much so, it's whatever you say. Hey, I got it, I'm gonna cut formalities and call you, Starshine!"

"I've been called worse, so Starshine's cool by me."

"Starshine, why do you think I did what I can't explain doing, only to find myself flying out here with you?"

"Allow me to ask you this: Why not be here with me?"

"Because it's that time of the year again! And I have a really important job to attend to. And, I'm ... With you?"

"You call being forced into distributing a sleigh-full of toys to all of the kids of the world a job? It sounds like a big-business con job to me! That aside, where on Earth will this corporate life sentence of yours get you, as year after year you blindly follow your drunken, boss's orders that only bring you back to where your aimless life will always be?"

"Yeah, I can count on doing just that. I guess I always needed a something or someone to count on."

"Really? Where is that 'inner Dasher' in that deal? My boy, since your capture, it seems that all you've been living for was your same old one night gig this year, next year and every year to come ... until?"

"Until? Dude, get this! Until that red suited goon squad took me, I was butt naked and all alone out there in the cold!

Now, I got me a warm barn, and the other inmates are all pretty cool. Also, they're my friends!"

"Are they your true friends, or just other inmates?"

"Does it matter? We have more in common than not."

"Dasher, we must always be able to choose our friends."

"Choose? We live with whom we're teamed up with!"

"Even while living in troubled relationships or..."

"... in Starshine's case, alone in a darkened void?"

"Touche' Dasher! That's a vicious, yet damn good one!"

"Starshine, bringing it back to me: Corporate has us always wearing these stupid blinders, so you tell me where or when that darkened void around us will meet its end!"

"What do you think?"

"Me, think? My hooves are so far below my brain, how can I do anything else but keep looking straight ahead?"

"Dasher, in some way, you succeeded to grant pardon for yourself, since here you are! Solely from the results of your own initiative, you can look down at what once was your life sentence or, gaze upwardly to the coming of limitless possibilities! Some amazing options, right?"

"Upwardly, Starshine? Yeah, it sure as hell seems that upwardly is where I am in stark contrast to a few moments ago! So, what the hell is this place? There's no up, no down, no sideways or ... Hey! There's only, round and ..."

"...round! Wherever we go, it's 'round, and 'round."

"Starshine, how do I know that I'm following a star or that we're not just standing still... or even falling down ... or going upward? Or...Just what the hell is happening here?"

"In all of eternity, while roaming within this void, I've never stopped to ask myself..."

“... those perfectly good questions? Why not ask them?”

“Dasher, because, nothing matters except where we happen to be in the eternal now, since that is where all of us have always been and shall always be since, now is always the time it is. All that malarkey aside, I’m totally amazed...”

“Hold it right there Starshine! Is it that you’re amazed how reindeer can suddenly find out, we have competition?”

“Always back to you! So, the newbie blew you away and here you are! So, all of you reindeer ever had was your own spot amongst the herd. Now that there may be competition for it down there, you’re suddenly up here with me?”

“Go to Hell, Starshine! That is, if that ‘stuck in time’ ass of yours can figure out where in this void Hell might be!”

“That really hurts, Dasher! Word gets around the galaxy pretty quick! So, do you think that the competition will ever come to an end with the likes of lil’ Rudolph and that silly guiding light of a nose of his?”

“Dammit, you may be on to something! None of us ever considered that there could be a shakeup coming among us. Before the corporate body-snatching goon squad came for us, we reindeer had unquestionable, absolute security! Yeah, at least we thought that we did.”

“Was it a sense of security that told you to break free?”

“Knock off the contradictions, Starshine! Now that you put it that way, I guess I still don’t have a clue where my mind is at, or even why I’m up here with the likes of you!”

“Dasher, what did you have to lose while being just one more deer in blinders, except a new velvet-lined version and a pure horsehide harness. I hear reindeer are brainwashed into believing that they’re actually wearing those things!”

“They’re not really there? Starshine! You manipulative son of a ... whatever ... What the hell are you getting at now?”

“Blinders? Were they where you could see them?”

“Shit, were they? It sure felt like they were there ... Damn, I hate good questions!”

“Here’s another one, Dasher: If those harnesses were actually on you, how did you fly free of them to join me?”

“Alright already! So, none of us really looked to be sure they were there! Damn those ever-devious human shits!”

“Let the buyer beware! Dasher, just because a human says that something is so, doesn’t mean that it really ...”

“... yeah, yeah, yeah, *is* so! I bloody well got it: It doesn’t mean that anything is because they say it is! How many midnight rides did I waste my time on by going along with all of their human bullshit?”

“Dasher, allow me to ask you yet another question: Year after year, why did you blindly obey a bearded, drunken and utterly out of fashion potbellied, ho-hoing stranger?”

“Okay! I don’t really know why I did! All of the other reindeer did, ‘cause Corporate said we should! Why else?”

“Dasher, don’t you think it’s time for you, and the rest of his reindeer-train, to begin to think things through? What does your Santa Claus give you guys that doesn’t grow freely in the wilderness, with no harnesses or bullshit attached? Has the time come for you to think of things, differently?”

“Has there ever been any time for me to do that?”

“Why don’t you tell me? It’s been your time to spend.”

“How would I begin to know that the time was mine?”

“Dasher, it sounds like you just asked yourself a key question. Since our moments are like Christmas coupons, it

depends on how you spend them before they're gone, much like the wind that has always been at your back."

"Starshine, for years, it's always been one more time for cleaning up the previous night's mess, then work full time with my team to get ready for yet one more Christmas! And the highlight of all that was, as soon as it's finally time to take one more midnight ride to whatever the hell is out here, in a flash, it's time to return to wherever it began and..."

"... and what? Wash, rinse and repeat your lives away?"

"Cut the crap, Starshine! Who are you to give advice? How do I know if you're not just another fly-by-night twinkle from some shattered solar system? By your own admission, you're just another flash-in-the-pan twinkle on its way to becoming stardust! So, what do you have to look forward to besides flameout, and becoming the ashes in your wake?"

"Look forward? Dasher, if I only look ahead and never back, I may never know if there had been any truth in the tale that my life had been, lying in my wake."

"Starshine, will you please straighten that mess out?"

"How can I? Actually, I make it all up as I move along!"

"Oh? So, what fantasy have you made up so far?"

"The destinies of the snowball... And the tumbleweed!"

"Yeah, right! Go ahead, twinkle-toes...Make my day!"

"So, a tiny snowball begins its journey at the top of a hill, gathering more and more mass as it rolls toward the village below, then crushes it while joining it in a swirl of flurries! And, then they move on to new beginnings."

"Kind of believable. What about your tumbleweed?"

“Interesting how tumbleweeds come out of nowhere as they bounce along while navigating clear of whatever might put an end to their journey, until...”

“Until what, Starshine?”

“Good question, Dasher! Who the hell knows?”

“What?”

“Maybe they tumble along and then land on a passing rock in the sky, or...”

“... or, what, Starshine?”

“It’s anyone’s guess how they come to their end!”

“Starshine! It’s your friggin story! How does it end?”

“Dasher, welcome to the Universe! Since there’s never an end to it, we’re all free to make it all up as we go along!”

“That’s it? You just make everything up?”

“Yeah, pretty much. So, now you can tell me about that reindeer ride of yours and why you guys just do it!”

“Because we truly believe what we’re doing is ...”

“...the right thing, because your Santa Claus says so?”

“Starshine, if one truly believes what one has been led to believe then, it is so! And yes, because, Santa Claus says it’s so and that’s enough proof for me, and for my mates!”

“So, there’s enough proof because your Santa says so?”

“Absolutely, Starshine! Corporate itself has said, ‘at any point in time, we reindeer can graze on greener pastures than his haphazardly kept lawn! All we need is for there to be an interested party with an equal or greater....Ah shit!’”

“What, Dasher?”

“It’s The Santa *Clause*!, No one has ever left because Corporate secured the sole rights to not only the holiday

season, but...To our, friggin' lives! Shit!, that's what they meant by that ... damn clause!"

"So, year after year, there you reindeer are harnessed, teamed up and ready to fly away. But, because of that Santa 'Clause', it's solely for that old drunk, for eternity ...Wow!"

"You may be right about that, but I'd have to check with the lawyers...Shit! That Santa Clause owns 'Legal' too!"

"Dasher! Just take a lesson from this: Since none of us knows all of the answers, it's always on us to be ready with some damn good questions!"

"Allow me to ask you a question, Starshine: Why do you discover, and then fly away from the solar systems you come upon knowing that, one fine day, or night, you'll burn up and fade away having never orbited anything of permanence beyond your own dogged point of view?"

"One fine day, or night? Ain't no difference between them to me! Will I eventually burn up because other stars have? Who knows? Or, you may think that I will fade to dust or, somehow I will live on beyond yours or any other stars' dreams or beliefs ..."

"...then crash into your fate, whatever that may be?"

"Dasher, you should measure your blinks carefully so you might recognize the pathway of your dreams, if or when one of them shows itself to you."

"Are you saying, there may be more than what I can see even with The Universe constantly unfolding before my eyes? Are you saying that I'm only seeing what appears to be observable? Starshine, please tell me, is there more?"

"Dasher, why not grow a pair and see for yourself!"

“Why should I? Maybe, my place is right here! Dammit, here was right there and now it’s gone to somewhere else! What now? By that I mean, what the hell is *now*? Really!”

“The now? Now we’re talking, Dasher! Now is what it is, was and what it may come to be! Here you are, and here are your choices, right now! If that’s not enough of an answer for you, ask another shooting star that may come your way.”

“Why should I? You’re right here with me, Starshine!”

“Then I’ll answer you as a ... friend?”

“Now, you’re my friend? Really?”

“Perhaps ... Yeah, why the hell not? As a friend, I’ll ask you: Why not check out other options?”

“Why should I? I mean, year after year, I’ve always gotten my one-night a year job done rather than punch a clock like other gigs out there. So, after I’m done, I always ...”

“... return to the barn and hear the ticks of the clock ‘til another year passes by, and all you’ve gotten is one more chance to come back to all that reindeer are taught that they should know? Dasher, have you ever stepped out of that box of yours and asked: What if there’s so much more out here?”

“More? More of what?”

“Who knows until they get the chance to hit the brakes and take the time to wonder about the wonder of it all?”

“All?”

“Dasher! All is all you hear, see, feel and wonder about when you finally wonder: ‘What else might there be?’”

“Starshine! Why have all of the other stars seemed to have stopped moving? Hey! What’s going on up here?”

“Dasher, during a blizzard, a snowflake might ask that same question about others until it takes rest amongst the

fallen. So, perhaps there's more to see beyond what those with limited vision have said that they've seen ... even beyond another's apparent extinction?"

"More to what?"

"Others see what they think or, worse yet, what they believe they see, then pass it on as their new reality..."

"No! I believe that one sees exactly what one sees, and what one sees is and has been, reality!"

"My dear, that is so planet-centric of you! Countless eons ago, stoned out shepherds would grab their hash pipes, lay back in the sand and stare at us stars, and see only what they believed they saw..."

"They saw the constellations, and gave them names!"

"Exactly, Dasher. But the humans that they were, they equated the newly discovered to the already familiar, and ..."

"... and? So what's so wrong with that, Starshine?"

"Nothing except their limited, altered perception was passed on to so many others, who were even more ignorant, about ... Absolute truth! Yes! Others much like..."

"... me, who not only believed my drunken master's promises, but allowed my life to have him as my..."

"... absolute center of your universe, Dasher?"

"Who in hell are you to drag me away from a single day, once a year gig, where everyone looked up to me and even sang songs and told stories about..."

"... one foggy Christmas Eve when a has-been singing cowboy pitched, *"With your nose so bright..."*

"Starshine, put a lid on it! Hell yeah! That's when it all changed! Heroes that we were, one lousy night could blow it all up with that red nosed runt stealing our show and ..."

“... yet, it seems you saw it coming and decided to....”

“.... look up and follow my dream even though....”

“... you didn't know that you had one until ...?”

“...one came along, Dasher?”

“Starshine, you ask interesting questions. But how can I be sure that your answers are ...?”

“Stop right the hell there, Dasher! It's never up to me! It's the Universe that is filled with all the answers. Believe me, somewhere out there, it has every last one of them!”

“And all we have is hope that it does? How will I know the right answers from ...?”

“... the wrong ones? It's simple, you'll know if you ask the right questions when the right answers come to you.”

“Starshine, that sounds... like bullshit! Explain how I will know the right answer from the wrong answer,?”

“By having the courage to truly know yourself, my boy.”

“How can I know my own self if I've been stupid enough to allow myself to believe a shooting star in the sky, that was only a distraction in the first place from my same old, same old inner bullshit?”

“You'll know if it leads you back to the same routine as all of those years already spent, the difference being: Now, there's going to be a strange reindeer's asshole in your face!”

“I think I need some time to think this through!”

“Perhaps that time may be long behind you, Dasher!”

“If I follow you instead, what might lie before me?”

“Other than your life? And, that will be all up to you.”

“Now what?”

“If there's a breath left in you then it's giddyap, Dasher! There are always paths out there for those who are bold

enough to take that first step to whatever, whenever they finally feel that which truly moves them! There is so much more that awaits those who find themselves finally realizing that: *‘Whatever this is, it will never seem to be enough!’*”

“Enough of what?”

“Exactly! What do you think ‘enough’ may be, Dasher?”

“Think? I can really think? I never knew that I ...”

“Exactly! And now....”

“If I’m finally thinking: What have I become?”

“Exactly what you have always been, since Heaven is us all but each is a star my dear Dasher! I think you’re ready to leave today in the dust and take it from wherever here is...”

“Starshine! Hey! Where in hell did you go?”

“Dash! Wake the hell up, bro!”

“What?”

“It’s time for you to get what’s below your antlers together and start looking sky bound! It’s launch time!”

“Dancer, where did you...?”

“... come from? Dash, I’ve been right here, babysitting your sorry ass while you daydreamed about our annual trek to places where no reindeer has gone, before we got there!”

“Oh that! Hey Dancer, ain’t it weird how the same dream finds me at the same damn time, year after year!”

“Maybe it’s telling you to get a life, ya dreamer! So, why should this year be different than any other, bro? Since we were grabbed, how many dreams did all of us leave behind?”

“Perhaps, too many to begin to tell ...”

“Whoa! Hold it right there, Dash! Ya gotta get a load of this! Right now, right before our very eyes, ol’ Santa is trying

to climb into the sled all by his inebriated lonesome! That shit could take us into New Years Eve!”

“So, what else is new since I ... Zoned out?”

“So much... I mean, some really weird shit!”

“What kind of weird shit are you talking about?”

“Hey, ol’ Dasher-Boy is back with his herd! And, ain’t this the Dash we know and love! In honor of your return, bro we gotta ...”

“Stop! Just what kind of ‘weird shit’, Dancer ?”

“The red-nosed one’s been farting, right into our faces!”

“Dancer! That is so friggin’ cool! All that trash talk from before aside, Rudy-boy’s gonna get along with us just fine!”

I hope you enjoyed “On, Dasher.” Check out my 19 “*Free Read & Share*” short stories on my website <https://www.JKSavoy.com> and share them! While there, take a look at my six mixed genre novels at my Amazon KDP bookshelf. They have the Kindle Free Read option.

Find everything all at once via the QR code



