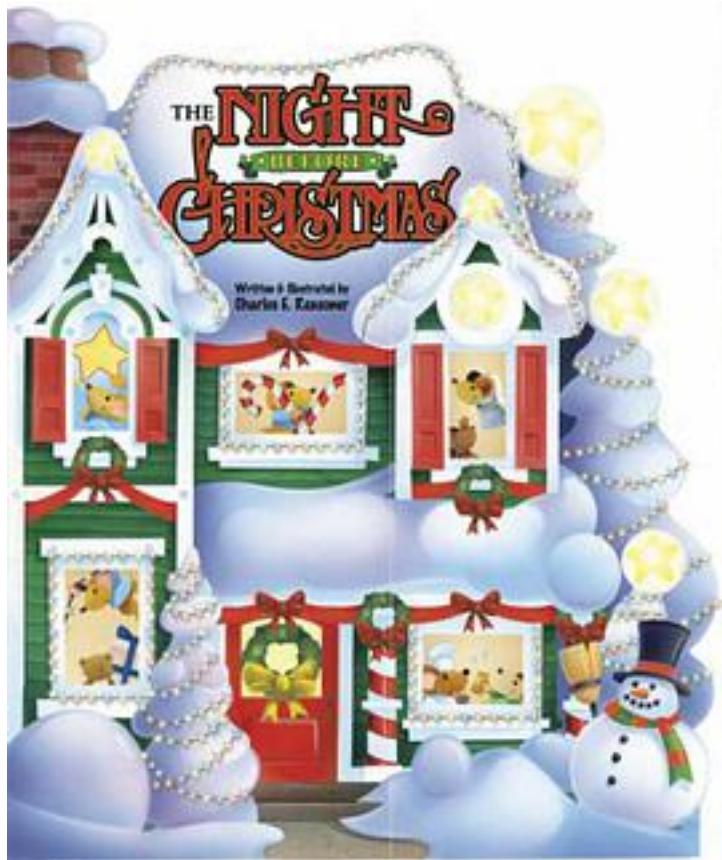


'Twas the Night Before Christmas



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"It may be hard to believe, but there was once a time when Santa Claus only needed three or four elves to run his workshop. His annual Christmas Eve journey was much shorter back then too, as most children outside of Holland and Germany didn't even know who Santa was. But then, in 1823, everything changed. In December of that year, The Troy Sentinel, a newspaper in upstate New York, printed an anonymous poem

entitled "An Account of a Visit from St. Nicholas." This was the first time many children in America had heard of Santa Claus. Naturally, they wondered what might happen if they hung their stockings by the chimney, just like the children in the poem. On Christmas Eve of that year, many tried it. Sure enough, when those children awoke on Christmas morning, they were greeted by the sweet smells of sugarplums and the thrill of new, handcarved toys. News of this incredible phenomenon spread quickly. Soon the poem was reprinted all over the world, and Santa Claus has been a very busy man ever since."

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