

It was a cold, quiet evening. Mr Richard sat at his desk, staring at a blank page. "I need a new Christmas story," Mr Richard sighed. "Something... mysterious." He tapped his pen on his chin, chewed it and dropped it.

Daisy tilted her head. She was busy looking for her lost ball. An idea popped into Mr Richard's head. "Daisy, that's it!" he cried. He scribbled across the page: *Santa Loses ...*

The words began to shimmer. The room spun like a snow globe, and Mr Richard and Daisy tumbled into their own story.



WHOOMPH! Mr Richard landed headfirst in a snowdrift. Daisy landed neatly on top of him. They were in a bright, busy village with candy-cane lamp-posts and gingerbread roofs. An elf raced up to them. “Are you the detectives?” Before they could speak, the elf cried, “The Master List is gone. It’s Christmas Eve - It’s a DISASTER!”

Mr Richard puffed out his chest. “Er, probably,” he said. “Who are you? What’s the Master List?” “Oh, I’m Tilda, Head Elf. The list has every child’s name. Santa can’t deliver the presents without it.” *This smells like a mystery,* Daisy thought.



Tilda led them to the largest house in the village. Inside, Santa was in a terrible fuss. “Oh dear, oh dear,” he muttered. “Ah! You must be the detectives.” Mr Richard swept into the room, knocking over a cup of cocoa. Daisy caught it with her nose. “Yes, that’s us,” he said proudly. “The detectives.”

Santa nodded. “This morning, the list was in the mail room. Tilda locked the door. Then, this afternoon, it vanished.” Daisy narrowed her eyes. “Let’s start at the mail room,” she whispered. “To the mail room!” shouted Mr Richard.



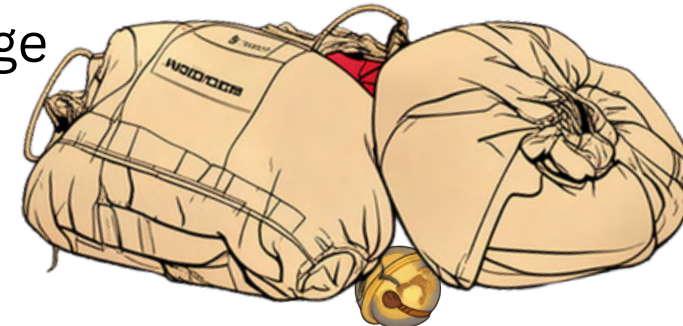
The mail room was a storm of paper. Children's letters were everywhere. Daisy put her nose to work. Sniff, sniff, sniff. Mr Richard knocked over a pile of envelopes, which fluttered to the ground. "Whoops," he said. As he knelt to gather them, he noticed some had been folded into paper airplanes. "Aha!" he exclaimed. Daisy rolled her eyes.



She padded to the far wall. "Look," she said. A high window was slightly open. On the latch hung a torn corner of parchment. Swirls of snow lay on the floor.



Daisy spotted a bell half-hidden by a large mailbag. "The thief wears bells!" Mr Richard cried. "Everyone wears bells in Santa's village," Daisy sighed. But he was already marching toward the Peppermint Lounge



In the Peppermint Lounge, two junior elves, Sprig and Jingle, sat eating sweets and cookies. “YOU!” shouted Tilda. “What did you do?” Jingle gulped. “We were only playing,” he said. “We folded old lists and envelopes into planes,” said Sprig. “But we didn’t touch the Master List. Honestly.”

Daisy studied the airplanes. The paper was thin and old, not like the torn parchment. She also noticed the tiny bells on Sprig and Jingle’s pointed hats. Sprig and Jingle were mischievous and naughty, but not thieves. “But we *did* see someone!” Sprig blurted. “Someone with a red coat just like that!”

