

When I was small, one of my friends said something really silly. He said that Father Christmas didn't exist.

'So where do all the Christmas presents come from?' I asked him. He didn't have an answer.

'I don't know,' he said. 'It's just something my older sister told me.'

'Who comes down the chimney and eats the mince pies and drinks the brandy?' I asked. 'Who rides the sleigh?'

My friend was silent for a while.

'You know what?' he said. 'You're right. I don't know why I brought it up. Do you want to play marbles?'

That night, I had trouble getting to sleep. I had won the argument, but my friend had planted a tiny seed of doubt in my mind. What if Father Christmas wasn't real?

As Christmas approached, I began to ask myself all sorts of worrying questions: who was Father Christmas? Why did he bring presents? How did he deliver them all in one night? How did it all start?

I made up my mind that there was only one way to find out the truth. I had to meet Father Christmas, face to face.

Of course, I didn't tell anyone about my plan. My parents would have tried to stop me, and my twin sisters would have wanted to tag along, even though they were much too young. This was a serious operation and I couldn't risk it going wrong.

Finally, Christmas Eve arrived, and my parents came up to kiss me goodnight.

'Do you know what day it is tomorrow?' asked my mother, her eyes twinkling.

'Is it Wednesday?' I asked, pretending not to care.

'Yes, darling,' she said, trying to maintain an air of surprise. 'But it's also Christmas Day.'

'Oh,' I said. 'I'm not really that interested in Christmas.'

'Really?' said my father. They both looked very disappointed.