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# The Santa Claus Trap

*by Andy Drummond*

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Now that the chimneys had been cleaned and widened, Santa Claus would be able to come down without a fuss. And with a much bigger sack than before.

But Laurence wanted just to be sure.  
So he made a plan.  
He looked in his daddy's tool cupboard.  
He looked in some big books.  
He made drawings on pieces of paper.  
He hurried away with pieces of string,  
he made off with cardboard and safety pins.  
He did experiments with his bears.

And then he was ready.  
In his rucsac he hid:

one tinkly bell from around his teddy's neck;  
two tough elastic bands;  
three crunchy bags of crisps;  
four carefully-fastening safety-pins;  
five full lengths of string;  
six sparkly stars from his tiny Xmas Tree;  
seven marvellous marbles;  
eight dusty figs;  
nine nibbly biscuits of the Christmas kind;  
*and*  
ten finger puppets  
    (the crocodile, the vole,  
    the leopard, the mouse,  
    the lizard, the cat,  
    the dog, the rat,  
    the toucan,  
    the bad alligator).

It was Christmas Eve. The Christmas Tree was shining in the corner.

Laurence went to his bed after his bath. His daddy read him a book about reindeer and sleighs and jingling bells. Laurence read a book about space monsters and man-eating plants.

Much later, Laurence closed his eyes and switched out his light. But he did not go to sleep.

The cuckoo clock said it was midnight - quietly. All was silent. Laurence's parents had gone to bed and were fast asleep. The boy climbed out of his bed.

He looked into his rucsac and checked that he had:

one tinkly bell from around .....;  
two tough elastic .....;  
three crunchy bags of .....;  
four carefully-fastening safety-.....;  
five full lengths of .....;  
six sparkly stars from his tiny Xmas .....;  
seven marvellous .....;  
eight dusty .....;  
nine nibbly biscuits of the Christmas .....;  
*and*  
ten finger .....  
(the crocodile, the vole,  
the leopard, the mouse,  
the lizard, the cat,  
the dog, the rat,  
the toucan,  
the bad alligator).

Then he put on his dressing-gown and tiptoed down the stairs, crept quietly down the stairs and into the living room, where the Christmas Tree was still lit up.

Underneath it, there were some parcels ready for opening.

Over by the fireplace, was the glass of whisky which his mummy had thoughtfully left out for Santa Claus.

Laurence set to work.

From out of his rucsac he pulled:

one tinkly .....
two tough .....
three crunchy .....
four carefully-fastening .....
five full lengths of .....
six sparkly .....
seven marvellous .....
eight dusty .....
nine nibbly .....
<i>and</i>
ten finger puppets
(the ....., the .....,
the ....., the .....,
the ....., the .....,
the ....., the .....,
the .....,
the ..... ).

and he put them down carefully on the floor.

This is what he did:

to one tinkly bell from around his teddy's neck  
he attached  
two tough elastic bands

and hung it from the mantelpiece  
over the entrance to the chimney;

three crunchy bags of crisps  
were placed at the front of the fireplace;

the four carefully-fastening safety-pins  
he carefully fastened to the sides and foot  
of the curtains and between the pins  
he tied  
five full lengths of string.  
And from the string he hung the  
six sparkly stars from his tiny Xmas Tree;

and then in front of the living-room door he put down  
seven marvellous marbles.

And now no one could  
come down the chimney  
without tinkling the bell  
or  
step out of the fireplace  
without crunching the crisps  
or  
come in through the window  
without sparkling the stars  
or  
come in through the door  
without rolling the marbles.

Laurence would see Santa Claus tonight.

He sat behind the sofa, and settled down to wait, with

eight dusty figs  
nine nibbly biscuits of the Christmas kind  
and

ten finger puppets to keep his little hands warm  
(the crocodile, the vole,  
the leopard, the mouse,  
the lizard, the cat,  
the dog, the rat,  
the toucan,  
the bad alligator).

The night was long.

The eight dusty figs were eaten, one by one by one by one by one by one by one by one, until they were all gone.

The nine nibbly biscuits of the Christmas kind were nibbled, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one, until they were no more.

The stars outside twinkled and the wind stirred in the chimney. Laurence's eyes grew heavy. One by one, the finger puppets curled up and snored (the crocodile, the vole, the leopard, the mouse, the lizard, the cat, the dog, the rat, the toucan, the bad alligator).

And when Laurence woke up, it was morning.

But.....

the one tinkly bell from around his teddy's neck  
had not tinkled;  
the three crunchy bags of crisps  
had not crunched;  
the six sparkly stars from his tiny Xmas Tree  
had not sparkled;  
the seven marvellous marbles  
had not been rolled.

Under the tree were all the presents Santa Claus had left behind; he had come and gone, and had drunk his glass of whisky, every last drop.

Laurence sighed.

Back into his rucsac he put:

one	.....;
two	.....;
three	.....;
four	.....;
five	.....;
six	.....;
seven	.....;
eight	- no, not eight;
nine	- nor nine;
<i>but</i>	
ten	..... (.....)

And then -

- and then he opened his presents.

# The End