

Bells were jingling. Fires were crackling. Maids were...milking?

The point is, it was busier than ever in the North Pole the days leading up to Christmas, with the trails connecting the snowbound town all bustling with traffic. Even Santa was struggling to hail a ride.

"You think I got this body by walking everywhere?" he said to no one in particular as he waved aimlessly at the passing shuttles. And just as he was about to do the unthinkable - engage in some actual exercise - a sleigh pulled over in the nick of time to save the day.

"About freakin' time," he muttered under gasped breaths, struggling to hoist himself inside the carved wooden sled. Only once he was sitting down did he notice the unique stature of the creature secured to the reins. "You from around here?" he asked playfully, already knowing the answer.

The hoofed mammal gave a polite smile. Living in the North Pole as a mule - half reindeer, half donkey - he was used to the funny looks. He'd been getting them ever since he was rescued by the reindeer first responders in the Bomb Cyclone storm of 2017.

"From Whitehorse originally, sir. Been working up here for the last few seasons."

"How ya liking our December weather? I don't recall you mules faring too well in these conditions," Santa teased. But he correctly sensed the mule wasn't in the mood, and quickly tried to walk back the jab. "Truth be told, even I'm freezing today. Conditions have been brutal!"

The mule jerked his neck around and retrieved a flask from his saddlebag. "Thirsty, sir? It's the only jacket I ever need."

Santa took a pull and immediately felt the hair on the back of his neck stand up. "I can see why," he shouted over the howling winds. "This ain't for the faint of heart! Hey, what's your name, young man?"

"The name's Uber, sir."

