WINTER WISHES

STRIPES PUBLISHING LIMITED
An imprint of the Little Tiger Group
1 Coda Studios, 189 Munster Road, London SW6 6AW

A paperback original
First published in Great Britain in 2020

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ISBN: 978-1-78895-247-7

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A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Printed and bound in the UK.



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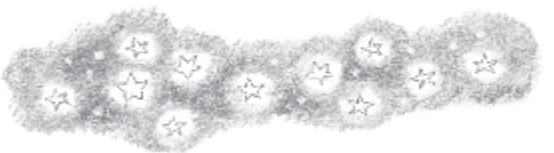
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THE PENGUIN PARADE

Caroline Juskus





Pip the little penguin hopped up and down, flapping his tiny, feathery flippers. He was bursting with excitement, for in two days' time, on Christmas morning, he and his big sister, Toots, were going to march in the Penguin Parade.

"The youngest penguins march at the front," explained Toots, "and if we march nicely, children bring us buckets of shiny, silvery, sparkly presents."

"Ooh!" said Pip. "What sort of shiny,

silvery, sparkly presents?"

"It's a surprise," said Mum.

"Humph," said Pip. "Do you know, Toots?"

Toots giggled. "Of course I do. I'm older than you."

"That's not fair," said Pip. "Please tell me."

Mum shook her head. "It's tradition," she said. "Every young penguin gets a shiny surprise for their first Penguin Parade."

But Pip didn't want a surprise. He wanted to know NOW!

"Go and practise your marching," said Mum, tickling Pip under his chin. "You'll need to keep up with the other penguins and lots of them are bigger than you."

Pip swung his flippers and jiggled his head.

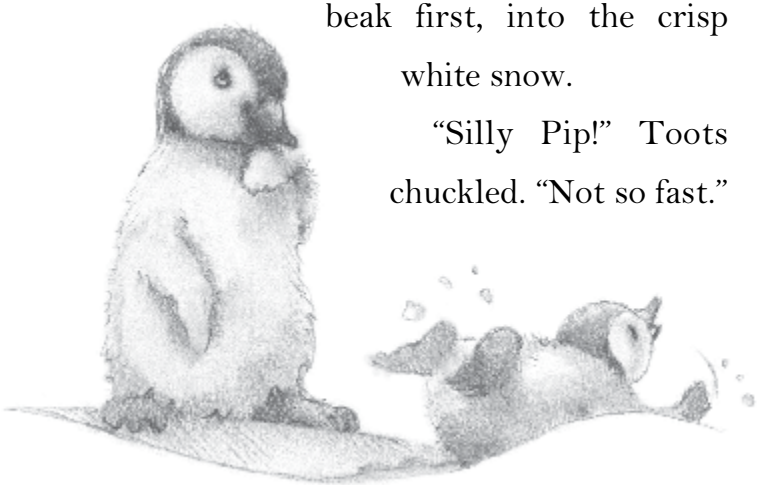
"Don't forget to move your legs as well!" Toots laughed.

"I know that!" said Pip, waddling off. But secretly he had quite forgotten. He was too busy thinking about his shiny surprise.

Toots followed him. "Try and move your feet like me," she said.

Pip hopped in the air and shuffled his feet, but they tangled together and he toppled, beak first, into the crisp white snow.

"Silly Pip!" Toots chuckled. "Not so fast."



Pip shook the snow off his fluffy feathers and carefully placed one foot in front of the other.

"Now you're too slow," Toots said. "You'll get left behind."

A fat white snowflake fell, plop, on Pip's head. It made him jump. "It tickles!" He giggled.

"Now you're dancing," sighed Toots. "Try not to be so bouncy, Pip."

Pip tumbled on to his belly and slid across the snow. "I'm going to practise on my own," he grumbled. "I can't do it when you're looking at me."

"But everyone will be watching on Christmas morning," his sister said. "Just copy me."

"No," said Pip, and when Toots wasn't

watching, he marched off in the other direction, skipping and hopping. And every time a snowflake landed on his head it made him wiggle and giggle.

By midday he'd marched all the way to an enormous wooden house, standing on its own in the middle of the snow. It was painted red and green, and Toots had once told him it was where Santa Claus lived. His elves made presents for all the children and on Christmas Eve Santa delivered them on his magical, flying sleigh. Santa was outside feeding one of his reindeer.

"Hello," Pip said. "I'm Pip and I'm practising my marching for the Penguin Parade."

"How jolly," said Santa. But he didn't look jolly.



"Is something wrong?" asked Pip.

"One of my elves isn't feeling very well. He's caught a horrible cold."

"Oh dear," said Pip. "Perhaps I can cheer him up! This always makes my sister laugh…" He began to march.

But Santa still looked sad. "I'm sure my elf would love that," he said. "But he's fast asleep. And now I don't have anyone to stuff the teddies for the girls and boys." He shook his head glumly. "I'm worried I won't have my presents ready to deliver on Christmas Eve."

"Oh no," said Pip. "Shall I stay and help you?" Then he tripped on his feet and fell, splat, in the snow.

"I think you'd better practise your marching, little Pip," said Santa kindly.

Pip waddled off and practised until the sky grew dark, but still he could not get it right.

