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Smallholder Sid...

...and Santa Sid

“What on earth is that?” screamed Alice and Fred in unison.

They were as usual sitting in the snug of the Fly and Cowpat, their glasses of Old Fart bubbling away in front of them. They were waiting to hear what Smallholder Sid had been up to since they last met earlier in the summer. Now it was cold and miserable. The fire in the grate spluttered and spat (the landlord always bought the cheapest coal he could get hold of). They snuggled up together for warmth – or was it more than that?

Rumours had been going round about Farmer Fred and Allotment Holder Alice ever since Fred’s pickup had been seen several times parked in a remote field entrance with the windows steamed up and faint murmurings coming from the exhaust pipe.

Sid was late, which was unusual. He was normally there before them, drumming his fingers on the table, impatient to tell them all about – Sid! But that gave Fred and Alice time to think about Christmas tippie. They were poring over the **Christmas glow recipe** and wondering whether it might taste a lot better than Old Fart. (See page 45 for more details). It was then that Sid burst in to the snug wearing a red hat with a bobble on it and what can only be described as discarded cotton wool on his face.

“Just a trial run,” he explained.

“For what? It is several weeks to Christmas” they replied.

So Sid explained at length. He had volunteered to be Father Christmas at the annual village children’s party and he wanted everyone to get into the spirit of it. Everyone knew how jovial he was and he wanted the kiddies to enjoy something spectacular. Alice and Fred looked at each other. “Jovial” was the last word they would use to describe Sid, but they said nothing.

“Now I wanted it to be really realistic. Just by luck this big deer from Bacton Woods wandered onto my land and I caught it. Come and have a look.”

He led them outside where they found he had a horsebox trailer attached to his car. There was a groaning noise coming from inside. They peered in to find a huge deer complete with impressive antlers staring forlornly out at them.

“What’s that on his nose?” asked Fred, pointing at a flashing red light.

“And you have decorated his antlers with fairy lights, poor thing,” spluttered Alice.

“Well I have named him Rudolph and I am making a sledge on wheels in case it doesn’t snow. I am going to ride through the village pulled by Rudolph and I will hand out sweets to the kiddies”.

“And I suppose you will be saying Ho, Ho, Ho as you go,” suggested Fred.

“That’s right. It is going to be great fun.”



“Not for Rudolph I don’t think. He must be missing his wives – all forty of them. You can’t just keep him locked up. He’ll pine away. Already he is very embarrassed. Look at his face. He’s gone pink.”

“That’s not embarrassment. I put some rouge on his face to make him look more human.”

“Well I don’t think this is a good idea at all Sid. You are asking for trouble. Leave the poor creature alone and let him go,” begged Alice.

Back in the snug the debate raged, with Sid adamant that he was going to be the best Santa Claus ever. He had been listening a lot to President Trump and adopted his language, telling them that his IQ was twice Fred’s and Alice’s put together and that they were a bunch of losers. The evening did not end well; Alice and Fred left early, saying that they had to go and water Alice’s geraniums (even though she still did not have any).

Much, much later Alice and Fred were again in Fred’s pickup. They were parked near Sid’s field. For once the windows were not steamed up. Checking that no one was looking they crept into the field, found Rudolph who was looking desolate in one corner, removed the head torch that had been making his nose glow red, unstrung the fairy lights, then led him out of the field and down the road towards Bacton Wood. As soon as he was free he raced back to his wives and no doubt now regales them with tales of how he was tortured by Sid.

“And what are we going to tell Sid?” murmured Alice as she snuggled up to Fred and the windows began to steam up.

“Mmmmmmmmm” replied Fred. ♦

Can there be a serious legal point to this?

Yes there can. If Sid had lived in the time of William the Conqueror he would have been beheaded for stealing a deer. Sid might not now be deprived of his head for what he did, but undoubtedly he committed other offences. Under the Animal Welfare Act 2006, for instance, it is a crime to cause an animal to suffer. Most people would consider that “Rudolph” suffered indignity if nothing else when he was captured by Sid.

Alice and Fred did Sid a favour by releasing Rudolph before the Reindeer Police arrived. ♦

By Richard Barr

For more of what he writes log onto www.richardbarrwriter.co.uk

Listen to him from time to time on BBC Radio Norfolk (the Chrissie Jackson mid-morning show)

And would you like to buy his book of articles called *The Savage Poodle* – to be published shortly by the Ark Group.

It does not contain Sid’s exploits but has other articles you might enjoy. Contact Richard on barrwriter@paston.co.uk if you would like to order a copy.