

Helping Rudolph!

Snow shimmered across the North Pole like scattered crystal dust, drifting in soft spirals before settling on the rooftops of Santa's enormous workshop. Inside, the halls usually rang with cheerful hammering and jingling bells — but tonight, something felt distinctly *awry*.

Elke and Annabel, both ten years old and proudly serving as junior holiday helpers, hurried toward the reindeer stables. They'd been sent on what was supposed to be a simple task: give Rudolph his evening berries. But the moment they stepped inside, a hush fell over them.

Rudolph stood in the corner, his famous glowing nose flickering weakly, like a lantern running out of oil. His ears drooped, and even the usually chatty reindeer watched him with none of their usual excitement — almost *indifferent* to the chaos the failing light could cause.

"Annabel... look at his nose," Elke whispered.

Annabel nodded, her expression tightening. "This isn't normal. Christmas Eve is tomorrow. If Rudolph can't lead the sleigh..."

The thought hung heavy in the cold air.

Just then, Brindle — the head elf — stomped in, muttering under his breath. “This won’t do. Not at all. Santa may need to take the backup lanterns. It would be *prudent* not to rely on a failing glow.”

Elke frowned. “But Rudolph isn’t failing. He just needs help!”

Brindle raised an eyebrow. “The northern winds will meander wildly tonight. One dim light and Santa could drift off course. We cannot risk it.”

Annabel stepped forward, placing a gentle hand on Rudolph’s neck. “We know him better than that. He’s brave, and he tries harder than anyone. You can’t give up on him.”

Rudolph nudged her hand as though he understood every word.

Elke thought for a long moment, her breath turning to fog. She cherished — *deeply* *cherished* — the times she and Annabel had helped care for the reindeer, especially Rudolph. She couldn’t bear the thought of Christmas being delayed because no one believed in him.

“Rudolph,” she whispered, leaning close, “you’ve flown through blizzards and storms.

You’ve never let Santa down. We believe in you. Don’t give up.”

At first, nothing happened.

Then — a spark.

A faint, ruby-red pulse flickered through his nose. Annabel gasped. Another spark followed, brighter this time, until Rudolph’s nose blazed with a brilliant, shimmering light that washed the stable in warm red radiance.

Brindle stumbled backward, eyes wide. “Well... I suppose I may have underestimated him.”

Elke grinned triumphantly. “You were being careful. But sometimes believing is just as important as being careful.”

Moments later, Santa strode into the stable, his laughter rolling like warm thunder.

When he saw Rudolph glowing proudly beside the girls, he beamed at them.

“Ho ho ho! Elke! Annabel! Looks like you two saved Christmas tonight!”

Rudolph gave a proud toss of his antlers, and the girls exchanged a look filled with joy — the kind that made them feel like magic lived not just in the sky above but inside their own courageous hearts.

Comprehension Questions

1. What does the word “awry” reveal about the atmosphere at Santa’s workshop?

- A) Everything was unusually noisy.
- B) Something felt subtly wrong or unusual.
- C) The elves were excited about the storm.
- D) The workshop was completely empty.

2. Why does Brindle suggest using backup lanterns instead of relying on Rudolph?

- A) He thinks Rudolph is too stubborn.
- B) He believes it is safer given the unpredictable winds.
- C) He wants Santa to try new equipment.
- D) He hopes the girls will learn about responsibility.

3. What does the description of the winds that “meander wildly” imply about the upcoming flight?

- A) The winds will twist and wander unpredictably.
- B) The winds will push Santa quickly in one direction.
- C) The winds will stop completely during the flight.
- D) The winds will be warm and gentle.

4. What can we infer about Elke and Annabel’s relationship with Rudolph?

- A) They are indifferent toward him.
- B) They feel nervous around him.
- C) They cherish him and believe in his abilities.
- D) They only help him because Brindle tells them to.

5. What is the deeper meaning behind Rudolph’s nose glowing again?

- A) It shows Brindle’s plan was correct.
- B) It symbolizes the strength of encouragement and belief.
- C) It represents the power of lanterns.
- D) It hints that the storm is fading.

6. Which word from the passage is closest in meaning to “indifferent”?

- A) Eager
- B) Uninterested
- C) Confused
- D) Joyful

7. Which theme best represents the story’s message?

- A) Strong belief and determination can reignite hope.
- B) Caution is more important than courage.
- C) Storms always cause problems on Christmas Eve.
- D) Working alone is better than teamwork.

Answers

1. **B**

2. **B**

3. **A**

4. **C**

5. **B**

6. **B**

7. **A**