Alva and the Bell in the Snow



Mom and Dad

This book belongs to

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Welcome to this sample book! It is made just like your own will be, using the photos and choices shown alongside, and it shows what a story from Saga to You can look like. Turn the pages, read, and imagine your child as the hero of their very own tale.

It was the night before Christmas Eve. Inside the house, it smelled of gingerbread cookies, saffron buns, and pine branches. Alva had just placed the last candy cane on the plate when something chimed at the window. Clink, clink, clink.

In the snow stood a tiny reindeer calf. It had wings, folded like two soft coats along its back, and a silver bell around its neck. It looked up at Alva, looked up at the sky, then tapped one teeny-tiny hoof. Between the clouds, a few dark specks drifted away across the moon. The reindeer calf tried to spread its wings, but folded them up again. Then Alva ran for the hallway.





Alva pulled on her hat, mittens, and boots so quickly that one mitten ended up backward. “It’ll have to do,” she said. Cold air smelling of snow slipped in through the open door.

The reindeer calf had already found a line of tiny hoofprints. They lay in the powdery snow, pointing toward the spruce forest. Alva crouched beside them. “We’ll follow the herd,” she said. “One step at a time.” She thought for a moment, then said, “One through the trees.” The reindeer calf took a careful step. The bell replied: clink. Alva took another, and together they followed the tracks toward the dark trees.

In the spruce forest, it was quiet in that snowy way. The branches hung white and round, and every now and then a clump of snow fell with a little plop. Alva spotted the hoofprints first—two tiny marks, then two more. She followed them carefully, the way she looked for animal tracks after fresh snowfall.

The reindeer calf hurried three steps, but a low branch caught one of its wings. It gave a little jerk and stood still. “Wait, I see it,” said Alva. She gently lifted the branch away. “One through the trees,” she reminded it. The calf went on. Between the trunks, a great white field opened up, and far out there came a deep boommm.





Beyond the last spruce tree lay the lake, frozen and smooth beneath the snow. Deep inside it, the ice sang: boommm, boommm, like a gigantic drum far underground. The reindeer calf's ears flew in opposite directions.

But the herd's tracks shimmered across the lake. They were no longer ordinary marks. They glowed silvery white and joined the shores like a narrow winter bridge. Alva placed her boot on the first sparkling track. "One through the trees," she said. Then she saw the next part of the way. "And one over the ice." The reindeer calf stood still for a moment. Then the bell went clink, and it placed its little hoof beside Alva's.

In the middle of the lake, the ice sang again, longer this time: boommm-boommm-boommm. The reindeer calf gave a jump. Its bell rattled so quickly that Alva almost lost count of the steps.

“The lake is good at bass,” she said. “But it needs help with the rest.” Alva hummed a little bit of a Christmas song, softly and slightly off-key. The reindeer calf listened. Then it set its hooves in the sparkling tracks, one after another. One through the trees, one over the ice. On the other side, little golden dots waited in the darkness. Alva squinted. “Snow lanterns!” she said, and hurried faster.





The snow lanterns stood in a crooked row, round as snow buns. Inside each lantern, a tiny flame flickered. It smelled faintly of warm candle wax, even though the night was cold and clear.

Between the lanterns, Alva found more hoofprints. One had stepped right beside her old sledding hill. “They were here,” she said. She looked up. Above the lanterns rose the tall hill, white against the sky. “One through the trees, one over the ice, one past the lanterns.” The reindeer calf stretched its neck toward the top, but the herd was nowhere to be seen. Only the wind moved up there. Alva started toward the hill.

The hill looked twice as high when Alva stood at its foot. This was where she used to sled until her cheeks turned red and her mittens grew heavy with snow. Going down was fast. Going up was mostly huffing and puffing.

“We’ll take little steps,” she said. The reindeer calf tried to climb, slipped backward, and suddenly sat right down in the snow. Its wings landed crookedly. Alva pressed her lips together so she wouldn’t giggle, but her shoulders shook anyway. The reindeer calf gave her a very grumpy look. “Sorry,” said Alva, holding out her hand. “One through the trees, one over the ice, one past the lanterns, one up the hill.” One more step. Then another.





Halfway up, the wind swept around the hill. It whisked snow across their path. First the reindeer calf's tracks became shallow. Then Alva's bootprints filled in again, until they were only soft dents that disappeared as she watched.

"Hurry a little," said Alva. She took two steps. The reindeer calf took one. She took two more, and it followed with the bell quiet against its chest. Behind them were the trees, the ice, and the lanterns, but the wind erased it all. Alva said the route out loud, as if the words could keep it there: "One through the trees, one over the ice, one past the lanterns, one up the hill." The top was close now. But would the herd still be there?

At the top there were no trees, only sky, wind, and snow racing sideways. Alva turned around. Their path should have been there. But there were no tracks at all—not a single one.

“Now you can fly,” she said, pointing upward. The reindeer calf opened its wings. It crouched, pushed off with its front hooves, and stopped. The bell dangled without a sound. “Fly!” said Alva again, louder this time. But the calf folded up its wings and curled into itself, as small as a lost mitten. Above them, the herd drifted on toward the edge of the clouds. Alva squeezed her mitten tightly. What did it have that the herd could hear?





The wind tugged at Alva’s hat. She held it on with one hand and looked at the other. Right beneath the reindeer calf’s chin was the bell, shiny despite the snow. Alva remembered the chime outside the window. She remembered how it had sounded among the trees.

“Maybe they can’t see us,” she said. “But maybe they can hear us.” She gently took hold of the bell and rang it: clink, clink, clink. Three clear sounds. At first, only the wind replied. Alva rang it again, more firmly. Clink, clink, clink. Then a dark speck stopped above the edge of the clouds. Next came an answer, thin but clear: clink-clink-clink.

The reindeer calf’s ears popped up. In the sky, the little specks turned back. More bells chimed from the clouds, as if the stars were shaking pockets full of silver.

Alva looked at the sledding hill. It sloped gently down from the top, smooth from many rides and wide enough for two. “You don’t have to start straight up,” she said. “When I sled here, I lean forward first, and then it happens all by itself.” She put her feet at the edge. “One through the trees, one over the ice, one past the lanterns, one up the hill…” The reindeer calf took one step forward. Alva smiled. “…and one down the hill.”





Alva ran. She ran the way she did when the sled had already begun to slide and she had to catch up before it disappeared. Snow puffed around her boots. The reindeer calf ran beside her, stiffly at first and then faster.

“One down the hill!” shouted Alva. The calf stretched out its wings. It made one leap. Then another. On the third leap, its hooves barely touched the snow. The bell sang so clearly that Alva laughed even as she huffed and puffed. The reindeer calf rose above the snowy edge and into the brightening sky. The herd came toward it, chiming and sparkling, and the little calf flew straight into their midst.

On Christmas Eve morning, the house was quiet again. It smelled of coffee, gingerbread cookies, and the little tree in the corner. On the table, the saffron buns rested beneath a striped towel. Alva walked over to the window.

In the fresh snow was a line of tiny hoofprints, all the way to the house and back again. At the top of the tree hung a little silver bell on a dark red ribbon. Alva stood on tiptoe and gave it a gentle nudge. “Clink, clink, clink,” it said. Far above the roof, a little herd could be seen in the pink winter sky. Alva rang it once more.



Alva and the Bell in the Snow

On the night before Christmas Eve, a tiny flying reindeer calf lands outside Alva's window, far from its herd. Alva follows tracks through snow, over singing ice, and up her own sledding hill, where a little bell must be heard all the way to the sky.

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