

## A Mousekin's Christmas

*By Dennis Knight*

Robert E. Mouse would never admit to being a scholarly mousekin, but he did read a lot of books, and he knew a lot of cool stuff. He could explain black holes in space, the meanderings of marsupials, and why his favorite movie should have been named not Jurassic Park but Cretaceous Park because its dinosaurs were from that era, not the Jurassic age.

But Robert couldn't quite believe in Santa Claus. He wanted to, but how could one man go to about a hundred thousand million houses in one single night? When he asked his mom to explain this and the one about sliding down a chimney into a burning fire, she said, "maybe you'd better ask your dad." All Pop could offer was, "there's more than one way to skin a cat." That wasn't even an answer, and it was gross. Even cats don't deserve that.

Most mice can sleep anywhere they want, anytime they want. But if curiosity can kill a cat, it keeps a mouse awake, and this Christmas Eve was curious indeed. While the rest of his family and the human pests in the house were sleeping, Robert E. Mouse skittered behind the sofa, up and over the big television, in and around piles of envelopes and packages. He was poking through the nut dish when he heard from the fireplace a sudden oomph, grunt, shoop, and a resounding TADAAA!

He peeked around a filbert, and there stood the jolly fellow, slapping at burning embers on his backside and dislodging clouds of soot. Merry eyes twinkled behind the fogged spectacles, and, even as this magical human gasped for breath, he gave off a mighty energy. From his bag he drew packages of all sizes and colors and found places for them in branches and under the tree. But a pretty package, except perhaps to gnaw on, is of no interest to your average mouse.

Then Santa flung the empty bag aside, and drew from his deep vest pocket a red pouch labeled "for the mice". He hopped all about, depositing behind the couch a handful of raisins, by the table various seeds, and sprinkled cookie crumbs all around the house; treats were everywhere, and it was a most wonderful mousian feast.

For last he saved Robert's favorite, a handful of candy-covered chocolate bits which he lined across the mantel to spell "mmmmmm". Then Santa tossed another handful of the tasty morsels into his own mouth, sucked in his great belly 'til he turned nearly blue, and, with a Ho Ho Ho, an oomph, a grunt, a shoop and TADAA!, up the chimney he vanished.

The skeptical little mousekin had seen Santa Claus for himself, and learned how he remembered all of God's creatures at Christmas. From the mantel, Robert E. Mouse selected one shiny red M, skittered to his bed behind the refrigerator, made a pillow of his candy, and slept soundly through the rest of that magical night.