

Nate-Nate the Christmas Snake



Second Edition

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Dedicated to my favorite little artists,
Georgia and Veronica.
And Merry Christmas to all!

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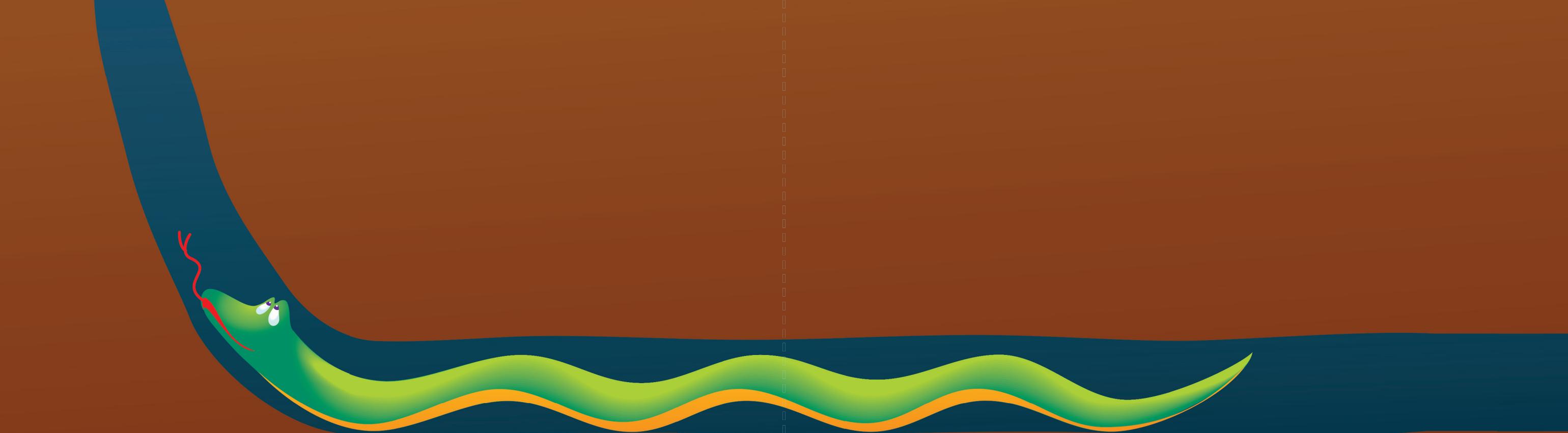
Chapter 1

Nate-Nate's Rude Awakening

It was cold when Nate-Nate woke up in the dark. He hated being cold. And he was hungry. Darned hungry.

He should still be asleep – hibernating really – but his jaw was vibrating. He was pretty sure there was something going on up above – something noisy. Not that he could hear it – he didn't have any ears after all.

It's not easy being a snake.



Even without ears, Nate-Nate knew vibrations and this was big. So, he stretched his neck so his head could reach into the narrow tunnel, stuck his tongue out to smell what was going on, then slithered up through the darkness. He could taste the cold air long before he reached the entrance. He hated the cold, but his curiosity pushed him forward.

Why was his jaw vibrating?

After traveling dozens of inches, he cautiously poked his head through the dead grass and leaves. What he saw was a shock. He thought he knew the neighborhood pretty well, day or night, but this was crazy.



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It was definitely night. He could tell because the sky was black and starry, but it was so, so bright that it wasn't really dark at all. But more surprising than that, all the light was full of colors. Every color imaginable, coming from thousands of sparkling colored lights, big and small, decorating every house in the neighborhood and every tree and every fence and every shrub. Wow.

If he hadn't come up to investigate on his first ever winter visit, Nate-Nate would never have learned that he lived in a neighborhood that was known far and wide as Candy Cane Lane.

Everyone always came from all over to view the millions and billions of blinking lights and strobing lights and winking lights and flashing sequences of moving lights.

And that's not all. There were strange new things on the lawns, like plastic reindeer, giant bells, gift-wrapped boxes, strands of tinsel, huge candy canes, and a festive silver sleigh. Even the trees had been decorated. It was insane. And – it looked like fun.

Snakes don't usually have a lot of fun. Snake life is mostly about either hunting or being hunted, so Nate-Nate was intrigued by all the happy things he was seeing.

And there were a lot more of the two-legged giants than usual. It's worth mentioning that when your eyeballs are only an inch above the ground, everything looks pretty big to you, and that's just one more reason – it's not easy being a snake.



Chapter 2

Nate-Nate's First Christmas Eve

There were giants on the sidewalks, giants passing in cars, and giants in the windows of the houses. Big giants, little giants, tiny children giants, and even a few cute baby giants. Nate-Nate wondered why everyone seemed so happy to be visiting all the festivities on Candy Cane Lane....

And then he saw the singing giants.

Half were the big ones and half were the little cute ones. He guessed that there were about twenty of them, but couldn't be sure. Nate-Nate had never quite learned how to count because he didn't have fingers or toes. It's not easy being a snake.



The group huddled around the big yellow house he lived under, where several of the giants' children were watching from the front door in their Christmas pajamas. The giants all had golden songbooks and the leader was waving his finger. Together, they all sang the songs that sent the sound waves that made Nate-Nate's jaw vibrate.

Nate-Nate didn't know a fa-la-la-la from a doo-wop-de-wop, but he could tell the giants were all swaying together and it sure looked like fun. Nate-Nate knew he couldn't sing – whatever singing is – but he could definitely sway. He could sway with the best of them.

So, he slithered to the sidewalk and the huge Christmas carolers. Their big mouths opened wide, thick unforked tongues wagging wildly. The snake raised himself as high as he could and joined in their swaying with what he thought was probably a smile.

He had to admit that it felt pretty good, and it was fun and exciting – but suddenly everything changed. Nate-Nate noticed that his jaw had stopped vibrating – because the "singing" had stopped.

Then the vibrations began again – but they were urgent and loud. They came from a small giant girl who was staring down at the snake, pointing and screaming – "Nate-Nate!"

Suddenly the once-happy giants were shouting vibrations in all directions as they ran away yelling his name. "Nate-Nate! Nate-Nate! Nate-Nate!"

It's not easy being a snake.

NATE-NATE IS NOT YOUR ORDINARY SNAKE

He may be average, but he's not ordinary. Not at all.

He's curious. And friendly. Those are good traits usually, but Nate-Nate knows all too well that no one wants to hang out with a friendly neighborhood snake.

It's a solitary life for young Nate-Nate, slithering hopefully among the giants who live above him on Candy Cane Lane, but he never complains.

Snakes don't get holidays (not even Christmas), but this year will be different. Nate-Nate eagerly joins in the happy celebration, but he meets his greatest challenge when the neighborhood is threatened.

Alone as usual, the outcast little Nate-Nate bravely stands up and saves Candy Cane Lane.

RECOMMENDED BY LEADING SNAKES EVERYWHERE

"Happily telling it like it is, snakewise..."

Brer Snake

"Finally, a snake I can appreciate."

Rikki-Tikki-Tavi

"A happy, happy tail -- and a good tale, too."

Santa C.

"Much better than I'd expected..."

Eve