

Nightmares before Christmas

The North Pole was not spared from the Covid-19 pandemic this year, which has upended businesses across the globe. As a result, preparing for Christmas this year has been a rather interesting experience for Santa.

BY GAYLE GOH, RAE WEE AND UMA DEVI

Santa's toy production had a late start this year. Borders started to close, so he couldn't visit any of his workshops around the world. Santa was beginning to regret offshoring his production lines as part of his efforts to globalise Christmas. If only all his workshops were still in the North Pole, like in the good old days, when the Arctic Ocean was winning all the time.



To showcase his toys and meet new children, Santa would normally head down to his favourite store, Northernsons. But this year, everyone was shopping online, so they turned to e-commerce platform Polee. "Free delivery with every 50 candy canes spent!" bellowed Santa on his livestream. A few months later, Santa found out that Northernsons had closed for good. Now he feels guilty.



One morning, Santa received a frantic call from his elves — they had to stay home for a month! Who was going to make all those toys? To make matters worse, all the children had to stay home too. They were being very naughty and driving their parents up the walls.



Santa's revenues were going up in smoke — his Nice list was only two pages long. To survive, Santa applied for the Elves Support Scheme to continue paying his elves, and took grants from the Wonderland Ministry to upkeep his reindeers.



Santa initially planned to retire this year; but decided to defer his plans. Nevertheless, he held an election in search for a second-in-command, as he realised that his ageing self could no longer keep up with the daily demands of his duties. Elves could either cast their votes in person or mail them in.

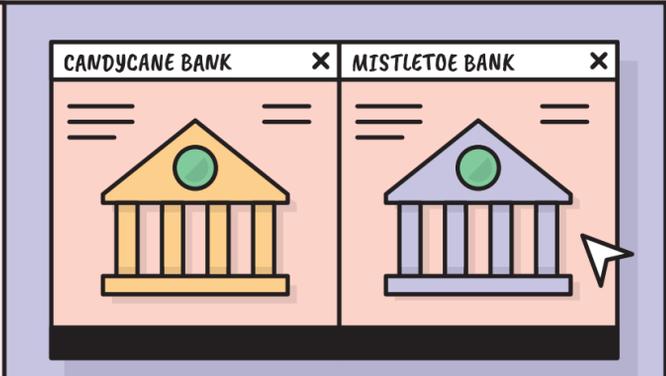


Long-serving elf Jovial narrowly won — to which his opponent, Grumpy, bitterly claimed: "Voter fraud!"

Seeing the success of Santa's workshops in spite of the pandemic, his nemesis, the Grinch, offered to buy out his workshop at a huge discount. The Grinch told Santa that he had the resources to build larger workshops, which would allow more presents to be made and delivered. But together with his shareholder elves, Santa shouted at the Grinch: "Never!" Now, Santa has to figure out how to fortify his workshops to prevent them from being attacked.



Due to the pandemic, Santa has become wary of touching surfaces in public. He decides it would be much safer — and more convenient — to set up a digital bank to manage his business funds, and ponders over the digital bank licenses awarded by the Monetary Authority of Wonderland. No hurry though, he has till 2022 to make his decision anyway...



Through hard work and determination, Santa and his elves have survived a brutal year to see through another Christmas. The pandemic has shown Santa how much the world still needs the joy and good cheer that he seeks to provide each year. The news of a Covid-19 vaccine also comes as a relief to Santa. He sure is looking forward to having his elves back at work, although safe distancing and mask wearing remain mandatory. In the meantime, he strongly looks forward to putting his feet up after Christmas Day, with a cup of hot cocoa and a trusty copy of The Business Times.

Merry Christmas, readers.



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