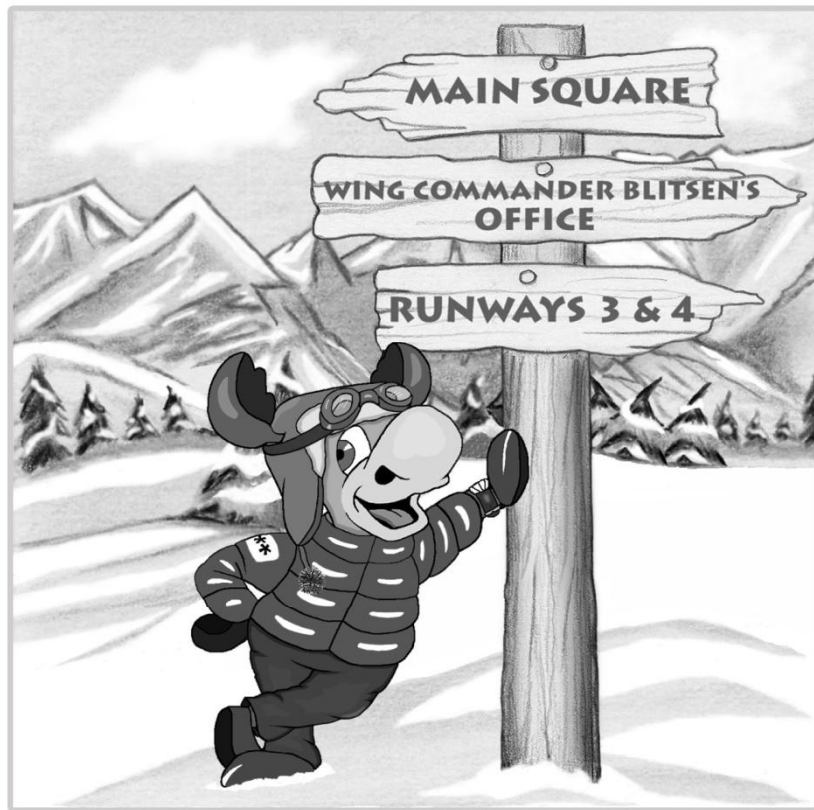


Ronaldo

The Reindeer Flying Academy



written & illustrated by
Maxine Sylvester

*For
Mum and Dad*



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**“Dream BIG, Ronaldo!
IMAGINE, see it, feel it, believe it.
You can do anything, if you truly believe in yourself.”**

Chapter One – ‘The Stare Off’

Woosh! The Weekly Flyer slid under the door. Ronaldo pounced out of bed, grabbed his favourite comic and jumped back under the covers.



The Weekly Flyer was full of up-to-date news on the top flying reindeer. Ronaldo loved it! He rifled through the pages searching for the article on his hero, Vixen Pederson. A glossy photo of Santa’s lead reindeer stared back at him: his deep-chestnut coat gleamed in the North Pole sunshine; his famous black hair styled in a quiff that fell over one eye. That’s going to me when I grow up, Ronaldo thought to himself. *I will lead Santa’s team!*

“Ronaldooooooooo!” Dad yelled from downstairs.

He shoved his hooves into his slippers and checked the time.

I can't be late today!

With his nose held high, Ronaldo followed the delectable scent coming from the kitchen. *Carrot pancakes! Yes!* The one thing Dad made successfully.

Cooking was Dad's passion in life. And disgusting food combinations was his speciality. Ronaldo couldn't decide which the worst was: custard covered lemmings, or chocolate-coated Brussel sprouts?

Crikey! Ronaldo hesitated outside the kitchen. An explosion of flour and carrot peel sprayed the walls. Butter, sugar and spilled milk littered the floor. "Yuck," he griped as he tip-toed through sludge towards the breakfast table.

"Morning, sweetheart!" Mum smiled as she looked up from the crossword in *The Reindeer Express*. "Ignore the mess," she said through tight lips.

"Thanks for my comic. It's got an awesome interview with Vixen," Ronaldo said.

"You're lucky, it was the last copy."

"Breakfast is ready!" Dad skidded across the slippery floor as if wearing ice-skates, crashed into the kitchen table with a thump, and dumped a mountain of pancakes in the centre.



Ronaldo stifled a giggle. His Dad had flour on his nose, egg shells nestled in his antlers, and pretty much everything down the front of his apron.

“Hmm, those pancakes smell good enough to eat,” Mum said. She put down her newspaper and leaned across and removed the eggshells from her husband’s antlers.

Ronaldo wasted no time! He smothered his pancake with warm apple syrup, caramel sauce and chocolate chips. He scoffed one pancake, then two, then three... and then he lost count! *Yummy!* He burped and rubbed his tummy. *Room for a few more? Yes!*

One pancake sat in the middle of the table. Ronaldo looked at Dad. He was eyeing it like a fawn staring into a toy shop window. Ronaldo nestled closer to the table and licked his lips. *It’s mine!*

Father and son stared at the pancake, then they stared at each other. They edged over the kitchen table, their noses almost touching. Words were unnecessary. The look said it all.

Now, Ronaldo's parents were always saying, "Eat up, Ronaldo", so in his opinion the pancake was his. But Dad wasn't giving up! He grunted in frustration. Mum gave him a hard stare that said: don't be rude, Ronaldo!

Ding! Dong! The clock in the hallway chimed.

Dad's caramel-coloured eyes continued to bore into Ronaldo's. He knew what he was thinking: that he was older and bigger... and that the pancake belonged to him! Ronaldo stared back. *I'm not giving up either.*



As the two reindeer engaged in a silent wrestle over who should have the pancake, Mum swooped in and took it. "You don't mind if I have the last one, do you?" she said, cutting into it with her fork. "I had a hectic night at work."

Ronaldo narrowed his eyes. *Sneaky!*

Dad's bottom lip quivered.

How could she do that to her only son? Ronaldo huffed. Then he remembered the comic she posted under his bedroom door. Mum was a worthy winner.

The clock on the wall read 8.15am.

Ronaldo jumped up. *I'm ten minutes behind schedule!* He had been so busy staring at Dad, he had lost track of time!

“Finish your carrot juice,” Mum said. “And make sure you wash that apple syrup from the corners of your mouth, you don't want your fur to be sticky.”

“It'll get infested with bugs,” Dad added.

The image of blood-thirsty insects eating away at his fur flashed into Ronaldo's mind. He shook his head to rid himself of the thought and finished his juice in one giant gulp.

“Get a move on,” Mum said. “You don't want to be late for school.”

“I don't go to school, Mum!” Ronaldo said with annoyance. He puffed out his chest. “I go to The Reindeer Flying Academy.”

The most prestigious flying school in the world!