

Santa's Tech Sled

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Santa pushed back from his desk, the endless cascade of Jira tickets finally subsiding. He stretched and yawned, then took off his rimless trifocals and rubbed his eyes vigorously. He was running four big monitors, but was getting a little old to be squinting at all that tiny type for hours on end.

The last 10 years had changed his operation. The elves had finally aged out and had largely elected to take their pensions, and the supply chain to the North Pole had become challenged by melting ice. Most of the business was run through a mix of on-demand AWS and Azure instances and six geographically distributed and redundant data centers — DASHR, DANCER, PRANCER, VXN, COMT, CUPD, DNER, and BLTZN. (RUDOLPH was his laptop. Santa never went anywhere without the laptop.)

Manufacturing was no longer possible up north, nor was it necessary. Slack and webcams made it easy to communicate with suppliers in China, not that they ever knew exactly who they were dealing with; AutoCAD and fancy 3D printers did prototyping that discreet local agents could use with manufacturers when it was necessary. Santa sure wasn't going to spend months in Shenzhen supervising production lines himself.

It had also gotten ridiculously hard to keep all his lists up to date. He had a couple of nasty, expensive, and ultimately disastrous Oracle and SAP installations that took years of consultant time before he yanked it all out and just went with Salesforce, which had problems of its own. (And let's not talk about the security breaches he managed to keep quiet, not to mention the ransomware attack that made him up his order of coal to eco-hostile levels.)

For the last couple of years, he'd been experimenting with blockchain to manage and sync the naughty/nice database across the seven data centers. It was working pretty well, all things considered. But to authenticate everything, he'd had to rely to miners who were paid in "nice" credits, and that wasn't entirely fair. It also meant strengthening his gift distribution network in Estonia, where a surprising number of the Nice Miners appeared to live.

Logistics were probably the thing that stayed the most constant over the last decade. Because manufacturing had been moved south, warehouse depots around the globe became easier to manage. Still, there was room for improvement; he'd have to ask Little Jeffy Bezos — he'd been *such* a cute kid not so long ago — about that when they saw each other at the Allen & Co. shindig in Sun Valley this year.

Actually, the whole North Pole thing was getting tired. Mrs. Claus was agitating for someplace warmer, someplace with maybe more people around, maybe with a bar and dancing, especially now that the elves had all left. Santa wondered if maybe he couldn't do all his work anywhere, as long as there was decent bandwidth and an airport nearby. He'd have to talk to the IT folks about getting his dashboard onto an iPad, so he could even work by a beach sometime...

But those consultants who are talking about putting AR and VR into his manufacturing line for next year? Coal. Every one of them. Coal.