

Somebody Catch That Christmas Tree!



“P OPCORN, NO!” MRS. SIDNEY shouted.

Too late. *Swipe* went her cat’s paw, and down went a glass reindeer. Mrs. Sidney shook her head. “That’s the third ornament you’ve broken today.” Popcorn yawned and strolled off.

Picking up the pieces, Mrs. Sidney called after him, “I didn’t decorate this tree with toys, you know.” That gave her an idea. Smiling, she took off the rest of the glass ornaments and put them away. Then she drove downtown and bought yarn and boxes of extra-bouncy rubber balls.

When she returned, Popcorn was napping on a sunny window sill. Mrs. Sidney got to work. *Snip, snip*, went her scissors. *Knot, knot*, went her fingers. Soon the tree was covered with colorful balls tied on tightly with yarn.

Just two minutes left
and it’s tied 2 to 2.

And the Fire Ants have the
pressure on the Leeches.



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“There! Now it’s safe for Popcorn to play with. I must take his picture when he sees it—oh, dear. I left my camera in the car.” She hurried outside to get it.

Popcorn woke up. Stretching sleepily, the cat looked at the Christmas tree. His eyes opened wide. Before, the tree had been interesting. Now, it was TOYLAND! At top speed, he launched himself.

The Christmas tree fell over. But it didn’t stay down. *Boing!* Its new ornaments sent the tree bouncing out of the living room.

Terrified, Popcorn clung to the tree. *Boing! Boing!* On the third bounce, he leaped off, landing in his water dish. “Yeeeowl!”



When Mrs. Sidney opened the front door, six feet of pine needles and wood were headed her way. Sensibly, she stepped aside.

Leaping outdoors, the tree bounced off the hard-packed snow and headed down the street.

“Somebody catch that Christmas tree!”

Mrs. Sidney shouted.

Her neighbors were busy clearing the sidewalk. *Whoomp! Whoomp! Whoomp!* The tree bounced off three snow shovels as Mrs. Sidney dashed to her car. Soon, she was in pursuit.

On the corner, carolers were singing, “O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree—EEK!” *Boing!*

The ants are at the goal and shoot!

The puck ricochets—bounces off Bill the Pillbug’s head and jolts him—moves him suddenly—into the net.





Everyone dove out of the way as the tree flew by.

Next, it jumped past the Christmas tree lot it came from. “I want a kangaroo tree, too!” a little boy shouted.

The tree slowed as Mrs. Sidney followed it to a brightly decorated park. Suddenly, it ricocheted off a penguin statue’s belly—*Wharoomp!*—to a snowman statue’s head—*Wharoomp!*—and onto a polar bear statue’s back—*Wharoomp!* Picking up speed, the tree headed out of town.

Through the nearby forest it jolted past jackrabbits and rebounded by raccoons. With its last hop, the tree landed on a ski lift. The seat rocked, and rocked, and rocked until finally . . . down dropped the tree onto the slope.

End over end it came. *Whoomp! Whoomp! Whoomp!* Left zoomed snowboarders. Right sped skiers. Onto the ski jump it went. *Whoosh!* It took off!

Soaring high over the trees, at last it fell, hitting a train engine

But the puck rebounds—
bounces back from the impact.

Spider gets it for
the Leeches!





pulling into town. *BONK!* Balls scattered. Just enough were left for one more bounce. *Swish.* It landed neatly in the basketball net on the mayor's garage.

Mrs. Sidney had been circling the town, searching high and low. At last she spotted the tree . . . and the mayor and her three kids staring at it. How embarrassing! Taking a deep breath, Mrs. Sidney marched up to the mayor. "I'm sorry. That's my tree. It got away from me. I couldn't catch it."

The mayor's daughter pointed at the tree. "You needed a net."

Everyone laughed. Mrs. Sidney sighed with relief. While she explained about Popcorn, the mayor and her oldest son got a ladder, took down the tree, and tied it to Mrs. Sidney's car. After thanking everyone, she drove off.



When Mrs. Sidney got home, Matt and Luke, the twins who lived next door, were outside with their sled. They were happy to help Mrs. Sidney get her tree back inside. They used their sled to pull it up to her house.

Opening the door, Mrs. Sidney called, "Popcorn?"

Popcorn let out a yowl. The tree was back! Hissing, he lunged at the tree, knocking

Spider takes it
back down the ice!

HE SHOOTS AND...



the sled off the porch. Mrs. Sidney grabbed Popcorn just before he went with it. Startled, the twins jumped away as the tree zoomed off downhill.

“There it goes!” yelled Luke with joy.

Matt raced after the sled. “Don’t worry, Mrs. Sidney, we’ll stop that Christmas tree!”

Mrs. Sidney laughed. “If you boys can catch it, you can keep it!”

Popcorn safe in her arms, Mrs. Sidney watched the tree speeding off on the sled. Sensibly, she went inside and made herself a cup of tea. 🐌

