

Sub-Zero and the Great Snowball Truce



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The morning after Christmas, snow covered the whole hill.
Sub-Zero slid down on his tummy. At the bottom he slid a bit farther, just because he could.
“Still going!” he called.



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Biscuit-Bouncer scooped up a soft snowball. He threw it at the stump.
Poff!
A little white cloud rose from the bark.
Two Baby Bulldogs bounced out of the snow. “Let’s play!”



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They made two teams. Sub-Zero and the brindle Bulldog wore blue mittens. Biscuit and the fawn Bulldog wore red.

Hop-Tart climbed onto a flat stone. His yellow hat was easy to spot.

“I’ll keep score.”



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Hop-Tart waved a white flag.

“Throw at coats, low and soft. When I lift the flag, everybody stops.”

Biscuit rolled his first snowball. Sub-Zero packed his just tight enough to pick up.



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“Ready?” called Hop.
Four mittens went down.
“Go!”
Four soft snowballs went up.
One landed on a stump. One went nowhere much at all.



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Biscuit’s snowball caught the blue Bulldog on the hem of his coat.
“One to red!” called Hop.
Then Sub-Zero slid past Biscuit. Biscuit spun to see where he’d gone.
Poff! Snow caught the back of Biscuit’s coat.



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“That was very quick,” said Biscuit. He shook out his coat.

“Can I have a spot where I can stop?”

“Of course,” said Hop. He pushed a yellow flag into the snow. “Rest beside this one.”



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The fawn Bulldog wanted a spot to roll snowballs. Hop put up a red flag.
Sub-Zero asked for a clear bit of slope to slide down. Hop put up two blue flags.
“Easy,” said Hop.



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Then the blue Bulldog asked where all the good snow was.
“By the little drift,” said Hop. He put a green flag there.
“What about the big drift?”
Hop had one green flag left.



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Biscuit rolled a snowball by the yellow flag.
“Red is for rolling!” called the fawn Bulldog.
Sub-Zero slid between the greens.
“Did green mean go?” he called.
Hop opened his mouth. Then he closed it.



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“Stop,” called Hop, and raised the white flag. He took off his yellow hat to shake out the snow.

He hooked the brim over a peg on the low fence post. The hat hung open side up.

The whole field stopped.



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“Would you like a bigger rest spot?” Hop asked Biscuit.

Biscuit looked at the flags. “I like throwing,” he said. “I don’t like turning round and finding snow on my back.”

Sub-Zero sat down beside him.



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“I mostly like sliding,” said Sub-Zero.
The blue Bulldog thought about that.
“I like rolling a great big snowball.”
“I like knocking things over,” said the fawn Bulldog.
Hop looked towards the fence.



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Three empty tubs stood under the fence rail.
“We could throw at those,” said Biscuit.
He tipped one over with a soft snowball.
Sub-Zero slid over and set it up again. “I could do that all day.”



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They set all three tubs on their rims in a row. They pulled up the little flags.
Hop kept just his white flag.
“Throw on my ‘Go’. When the snow lands, I lift the flag. Then the sliders can go.”



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“Do we still need teams?” asked the brindle Bulldog.
“We can wear our mittens,” said Biscuit.
“Let’s see how many turns we can finish together,” said Hop.
He held up one paw to count.



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“Ready? Go!”

Biscuit and the fawn Bulldog threw at the tubs.

Poff! Poff!

Two tubs tipped. The little one wobbled and stayed up.

Hop lifted the white flag. Everybody waited until the snow had landed.



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“Sliders ready?”
Down went Sub-Zero and the blue Bulldog.
Up went the tubs.
Sub-Zero slid past the last one, scooted back on his bottom and gave it a little pat.
“Still going,” he said.



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The Bulldogs swapped places. Hop played a turn, too. His first snowball rolled along the ground and stopped just short.

The fawn Bulldog set her paws on a tub anyway.

“I’m practising,” she said.



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“One last go,” said Hop.

Biscuit picked up a snowball as soft as a bun. Hop dropped the flag.

Biscuit threw. The little tub tipped. The snowball bounced off its rim and went up towards the fence.



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Plip.

The snowball dropped straight into Hop’s hat.

Everyone looked at the hat. It hung a little lower than it had before.

Hop looked down at his flag. “I didn’t make a rule for that.”



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Sub-Zero slid over to the fence and took down the hat.

“One point to yellow,” he said.

“I win?” asked Hop.

“The hat wins,” said Biscuit. He tipped the snowball into the empty little tub.



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They went to the bench for cocoa. Hop turned his hat right way up and put it on.
A single bit of snow slid down his ear.
“Can the hat have another go tomorrow?” Biscuit asked.



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Hop tucked the hat under his arm.
“The hat is resting.”
Below the bench, three tubs waited in a row. In the smallest one sat a snowball, shaped almost exactly like a yellow hat.