

# ***Elves at High Altitude***

*by Dee Malinsky*



My name is Herbert Eldemere Brown  
I run the workshop in this town.  
Every duty I oversee  
the elves are my responsibility.

In our shop we make the toys  
for all the little girls and boys.  
Lack of space makes storage tight,  
so toys are stored at a very high height.

The storage tower's 15,000 feet  
It's storage space no one can beat!  
My recent design is full of stealth  
but does it compromise my elves' health?

Increasing altitude is the key;  
barometric pressure decreases exponentially.  
On top of that, we're at North Pole  
so lowered  $P_B$  plays a role.

Even worse, the weather's cloudy  
so pressure drops more, and elves get rowdy.  
The big boss said it must be done;  
if the tower goes, the workshop can't run.

I must assure the elves ascend  
Are they not safe? I can pretend.  
I mean, what can hypoxia really do  
to hurt an elf like me and you?

Only recently have I had a doubt  
since little Joe elf told me about  
His euphoric state, and memory stop  
while taking toy trains to the tower's top.

I had the tower pressurized to  
9,000 feet, surely that would do.  
But still the elves exclaim their weakness  
they say they have "Acute Mountain Sickness."

What that means I do not know  
but I can see their fatigue grow.  
And what is this about GI upset?  
It's in their head. I'm sure. I bet.

I figure deep breaths and swelled brain should  
improve their health, and do them good.  
I think if they ascend enough  
their little bodies will adjust.

Poor Casey elf was unable  
to deliver toys while remaining stable.  
He said that every time he tried  
he'd hit the floor and think he'd died.

The toys are stored, but it's no good  
elves don't remember as they should.  
And several nights it has occurred  
their vision fails; it's more than blurred.

The elves say they can hardly wait  
for their body to excrete bicarbonate (?)  
Some talk of pulmonary edema  
others mention polycythemia.

They ask why *I* don't make the trek  
Because in work, I'm up to the neck.  
I'm most needed at the tower's base  
to...uh...wish them luck in keeping pace.

***In truth I do not trust the height  
For me, it just would not be right.  
My lungs are very weak at best  
I would not want to take the test.***

I tell my elves their job is great  
For Christmas gifts, the kids can't wait  
...but they'd have no gifts if we didn't store  
all the toys at 430 torr.

