



## From the Desk of Santa Claus North Pole

December 2015

Hello, Jericho boys and girls. This is your old pal Santa Claus. Kris Kringle. St. Nick. Father Christmas. The non-Hannukah Harry guy. Welcome to my very first Christmas letter. After more than two hundred years on the job, I figured it was time.

You know, Santa's mailbag is full of letters from children asking for a particular toy, or a new iPhone, or all four members of One Direction delivered to their doorstep trussed up like Xmas turkeys. Kids from Jericho are the WORST, incidentally; their lists of what they want go on for pages and pages, like George Zimmerman's arrest record.

But you know those torturous, narcissistic Christmas letters that some families send out every December, that either inflate their humble accomplishments or, worse, wrap their excruciating boasts in false humility as they regale you with how "blessed" they are? Believe me, I get those too. Tons, in fact.

*[Rummages through pile, plucks one envelope from the bunch.]*

Here's one ... from ... let's see ... Ah. the Cunninghams of Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania! Let me put on my Bifocals and tell you all a heartwarming Christmas story ...

Yep, yep ... Photogenic family posed around an ornate Christmas tree, smiling so fiercely it looks like their cheekbones are gonna detonate. Crackling fire. Obviously used a professional photographer. Buckle up, 'cos here we go:

"... Dan was recently promoted to chief synergist of synergy for the Synergy Unit at MegaMondoCorp. ("MegaMondoCorp: What we do is our business—and none of yours!") So proud of him! And the twins, Schuyler and Ronaldo, are both in their freshman year at prestigious Ivy League Schools! Schuyler texts us every month or so from Princeton to say that she spends her weekends curled up with Jim Beam. We've yet to meet this young man in her life, but we're sure that James comes from a fine, upstanding family! As for Ronaldo, that unfortunate business involving the New Haven Police Department during Yale Homecoming Weekend has been excised from his record, thanks to Dan's generous contribution to the department's Secret Santa Fund. As for me, I've changed the spelling of my first name from Caren to Charyn (exotic, don't you think?! ☺) in a desperate bid to draw some attention around here. We're so, so blessed ..."

*[Santa snorts, crumples up the letter, and tosses it over his shoulder, inadvertently knocking one of his industrious elves into the roaring fireplace. (Elves are short and light of weight, with barely any center of gravity; it doesn't take much to send them airborne.) Santa grabs a cap pistol from the toy pile and nonchalantly fires—KAPOW!—in the general direction, abruptly putting an end to the blood-curdling screams.]*

"Hey, you two! Get him out of here. Give 'im a full elf burial, with honors ...

"OF COURSE I know there's no such thing! You ever hear of SARCASM, Einstein?! Throw 'im in the wood chipper out back, like the other ones. *Vamoose! Vamoose!*"

Sorry, boys and girls. Everything about elves is little. Especially their teeny-tiny sense of humor.

Now: after two centuries-plus of this grind, it's MY turn to send YOU a Christmas letter telling you all about MY year. And it ain't been a pretty one, let me tell ya. Instead of Ho-Ho-Ho, I've been feeling more like Ho-Ho-Hum.

Oh, not what you EXPECTED from jolly ol' St. Nick? Well, DEAL with it, pal.

On the home front, once again, Mrs. Claus has been nagging me about not being home for the holidays. "Every year, it's the same thing," she complains, getting all weepy (after first getting all drinky-drinky—*glug-glug-glug*—if you catch my snowdrift). "You get to fly all over the world, while I'm stuck here at home in the North Pole with several thousand elves all hopped up on airplane glue. Why can't you be like other husbands?" Blah blah, woof woof.

Now, I'm thinking to myself, *Hmmm, after two centuries of marriage, what part of "BECAUSE I'M &&&% ^%)\* SANTA CLAUS!" don't you understand? I work ONE day out of the entire year, plus a few days afterward to recharge and get rid of that infernal reindeer STANK. Maybe you should've married stupid Dan, Dan, the stupid synergy man [Santa is spitting mad] from stupid, stupid Film Noir, Pennsyl-effing-vania, or wherever he's from. Stupid ... Dan.*

But do I say this out loud to Mrs. Claus? Oh, no, I most certainly DO NOT. I just sigh, toss one of my bulging bags of toys over my shoulder, and stomp outside to check the tranny fluid on the sleigh.

As for the elves, they've been nothing but aggravation all year. They got involved in that whole Fight-for-15 campaign and are threatening to go on strike unless I raise their pay from ten to fifteen gumdrops an hour. I offered them \$20 in cash, but they insist on gumdrops. And I just can't do it, because I pay their dental benefits, and Elves aren't exactly known for their dental hygiene—or any form of hygiene, for that matter—and the insurance premiums are just KILLIN' me.

And out in the world, it's no better. Did you SEE what Roosevelt Field did to its original Christmas display this year? They built this sterile, futuristic, neutered North Pole setting that had all the warmth of an operating room. Instead of "And what would YOU like for Christmas, little Sally?" it felt more like, "We're going to perform your colonoscopy now, Mrs. Beltzer. Just count backward from five. Five, four, three ..." I called the PC police there and told them that I wasn't going to send over ANY of my boys until they changed it back, and—



Oh. You don't really think that's ME at every godforsaken shopping mall across America, do you? Hell, no! I have a whole team of surrogate Santas for mall duty. My operation at the North Pole is like ...

Amway! It's essentially a pyramid scheme. But since "pyramid scheme" has such a negative connotation, think of it as more of a Christmas tree shape, with me the shiny star on top taking a 40 percent cut from the deputy Santas hung (and eventually hung out to dry!) from the branches below.

EVERYBODY, it seems, has been dumping on me this year. Even the presidential candidates. Bernie Sanders, the Socialist Democrat, has been railing that I should be delivering the exact same presents to every boy and girl around the world. "Christmas gift equality," he calls it. And no X-boxes or "Rehab Barbie" dolls, either. Comrade Bernie wants me to bring something educational: all eleven volumes of Will Durant's *The Story of Civilization*. Oh yeah, the little punks are gonna LOVE that.

As for Hillary Clinton, she's waiting for her campaign staff to run a few more focus groups before she commits to either supporting Santa or denouncing me as a national menace.

And then there's Donald Trump. [*Grumble.*] According to him, I'm—and I quote — "a big, fat, irrelevant slob loser." REALLY? Fat-shaming me? You're gonna GO THERE, Flock-of-Seagulls-Hair-Guy?! That's hitting below my 96-inch belt. First of all, I'm NOT fat. I'm just ... HUSKY, DAMN IT! Trump says if he becomes president he's gonna replace me with one of those bony little polycarbon-enhanced Eastern European models he's partial to. But don't worry about me. I'm gonna get even. Come Christmas morning, I'm SURE The Donald is going to appreciate the head lice I plan on leaving in his stocking, heh heh heh.

Head lice! I swear, sometimes I crack myself up. [*Slaps his own hand, giggling.*] "BAD Santa! SHAME on you! Oh, bad, BAD Santa!"

Anyhoo ... to borrow an old catchphrase, that's my story, and I'm sticking to it—like a half-eaten candy cane put back in its cellophane wrapper.

I'll see all of you next week. If you've been nice this year, leave me out a glass of milk and some cookies, and I'll slip a little something in your stocking. And if you've been NAUGHTY, put some Marvin Gaye on the ol' hi-fi, set out a chilled bottle of champagne and two glasses, and I'll wake you up as soon as I slide down your chimney. And as for the stockings, a pair of fishnets would be nice.

Very, very nice.

Enjoy your reunion next year.

## Santa Claus