

Short Story Extras:

*The Christmas Recruit*

By Om Mahto

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To all my loyal friends and family

## **FOREWORD:**

First off, Merry Christmas to everyone that has stuck with me through thick and thin! Hope you enjoyed your holidays and spreading the Christmas spirit! Version 2 expands on the joy of Christmas and the many surprises we cannot expect. Enjoy  
The Limited Edition Story: The Christmas Recruit!

*Om Mahto*

## Version 2 [Dec '24]:

Christmas Eve, a day shimmering with possibilities.

I was decorating my Christmas tree with umpteen ornaments. The vivid colours made my tree unique, capturing the Christmas spirit in my house – unlike the lacklustre LED lights. Additionally, the Bluetooth speakers blasted classic Christmas songs at full volume, while the whole town was abuzz with activity, alive with festivity.

It wasn't perfect, though. The bitter Winter zephyr ruffled my hair, chills running down my spine, a stark reminder that I had no one to celebrate Christmas with. My parents were dead—how, I didn't know. My aunt had bluntly delivered the news. I'd envisaged them returning, but reality crashed in. In hours, it would be my first Christmas without them. Depressing. I was still mourning, and the festive cheer did nothing to lift my spirits.

I glanced at my aunt's house pensively, wishing she didn't have to be away on her business trip. But I understood, she was the one making ends meet. What an errant Smith I had been—lazy, grieving, and alone. I wasn't the son my parents wanted, defective and useless. All I could do was offer a wan smile, hoping things might improve.

Just then, the door creaked open, loud footsteps echoing throughout. Someone walked into my house without even knocking the door; how rude! I was about to confront them, but I froze at the gaze of the solitary figure. It *was* Santa Claus! I couldn't believe it at first, so

shocked that my jaw practically hit the floor. I was utterly amazed that my eyes were popping out of their sockets at the mere sight of him.

His ginger khaki eyes, long white beard coalescing with his moustache, and velvety scarlet suit over white overalls were all donned with a black belt featuring a golden lozenge-shaped hook. His flowing, lustrous fair hair peeked from beneath a giant red hat, and his beaming smile hid his chin beneath the white of his beard. Everything was a wash of white, with an excess of red in his outfit.

‘What... do you... want?’ I stuttered, still appalled that he was a giant towering over me.

I thought, *Was I dreaming? Would someone pinch me please?*

Unfortunately, I inadvertently said that out loud, so Santa pinched me as hard as he could as a joke. I forgot to mention how he was all muscle and sinew. After all, he *was* a giant and also needed to deliver presents every year.

‘Ow!’ I shrieked. Even after a few minutes went by, the pain was still visibly there.

Santa waited for me patiently, and finally bellowed, ‘Sorry for the brief introduction. I am Santa Claus – obviously. Many think I am not real, but I just don’t reveal myself to the public...’

He stopped, a tear forming in his eye. I looked at him blankly, thinking: *Why would Santa be crying? How could the person spreading positivity be pessimistic?*

‘I am sorry I am gettin’ emotional. Usually, Misses Claus helps me with delivering all the presents, but sadly she passed away...’ Santa’s beaming smile changed to a frown.

I was hit with a pang of sadness and empathised with him. I then asked what he wanted from an ordinary boy like me. I almost blurted out a laugh when he replied with a ‘I was unique’.

*Me? Unique? How is that possible? Everyone tells me I am even lower than average, so how could I be unique?* A million questions ran through my head.

Santa explained that he needed a replacement to help him, and out of the eight billion people in the world, he chose me! I was sceptical, but decided to acquiesce his entreaty without any questions, and our escapade began.

We walked into the night and hopped onto Santa’s sleigh, where both of us just chatted at nineteen to the dozen about our personal lives, and realised we had a lot more in common, aside from deceased family members. It just felt like a portal brought me to this imaginary dimension. The feeling was surreal. *Finally something exciting, cheering me up!* I enjoyed the breathtaking scene – the serene, picturesque bird’s eye view of the city was something even a showman couldn’t replicate. It was before long that I started fantasising.

Santa broke the silence, lamenting, ‘No more daydreaming kiddo, come on, got some delivery to do righ’?’

I sighed and nodded silently. Had to do work... Santa shared everything he knew, and we reached a consensus. Our impromptu plan



was this: Santa would go into all the houses through the chimneys, and I would try to throw the presents gently into them. Santa will catch them (hopefully) and put it next to their Christmas tree. He needed to be as quiet as possible, like a moth in the shadows, so he must skedaddle without getting distracted by the cookies and milk left as tradition.

Then the cycle repeats until all the houses in the world are complete. My brain exploded when the epiphany was thrown at me. How was I supposed to have energy to throw all the presents into chimneys with pinpoint accuracy? Moreover, Vatican City has a population of about five-hundred people, meaning five-hundred presents were needed for just the smallest country on Earth. That's a lot. I would probably need to go into overdrive to deliver all the presents in time. *How many presents were needed in China?* Probably like a googol times more. I couldn't comprehend the sheer, colossal amounts of energy I would need.

It felt like Santa had a mental connection with me, because after that, he commented, 'Well, I know it's a lot, so let's get started!'

I was deep in thought the whole time we were travelling between countries. *How does Santa get 8 billion presents ready? I mean he does have a year but still...* It kept boggling me.

After what felt like an eternity, we were finally done. The process was repetitive and cliché. Santa happily devoured the chocolate chip cookies and milk (he wasn't supposed to) while I battled boredom. Despite using Santa's sleigh, it still seemed impossible that we finished in less than five hours. My job was arduous along the taxing journey. My arms ached,

cursed with endless fatigue. Everytime I threw another present, the ache aggravated, leaving me more numb than in pain.

Just then, Santa casted a spell, *Evig eht srewop ot leah*.

I thought it was gibberish, but it made everything easier. Rays of oppressive light enveloped me, and for a moment, I collapsed onto Santa's sleigh. As I sat up, all my fatigue vanished. I felt invincible, like a god who could do anything. Santa explained that the spell made me like him—powerful, yet still mortal.

'I am an erudite man, which is why I can cast these spells. It's time I explain everything to you... You are actually my grandson, Mark Claus. Your parents died after a mishap when making the presents for this Christmas, which I blame on myself,' he stopped and broke down. 'They wanted you to be strong and brave, because they knew that this job would eventually be passed down to you. Your aunt's business trip is just a cover as she is currently at the North Pole. It's time I entrust you with my job. Welcome to our family!'

I hugged my grandfather and tried to comfort him as we lost my father, mother and grandmother. It looked like we had to mourn these deaths together now. I cried joyful tears as I finally had a father figure in my life. We embraced and Santa dropped me at my doorstep. He gave me a nudge, and I realised I could cast the spell even when I did not learn it. I just said casually, '*Evig eht srewop*', learning it meant 'give the powers'.

'You have imbibed the power. Good job. Some Clauses took time to perfect it. Anyway, I'll pick you up for our next mission, kiddo, and please enjoy Christmas.'

This adventure felt like an unpredictable rollercoaster, but in the end, I discovered the truth about my family. I learnt I was part of a magical legacy — one that made me special, part of something much bigger than I ever imagined. Now, with these newfound powers, delivering presents would no longer be a daunting task. From now on, I look forward to joining my grandfather, Santa, every Christmas, helping him bring joy to the world. When his time comes, I'll carry on his legacy, passing down the magic to my children, so Christmas will always be a time of warmth, love, and togetherness — even in the darkest moments.

Life's hardest moments can lead us to unexpected gifts. Even after loss, new opportunities and paths can open, bringing light where we least expect it. And in those moments, we should also help others find the light, guiding them through their own darkness and showing them that even in the toughest times, *joy and hope can still shine through.*

## Version 1 [Dec '23]:

It was Christmas Eve.

Just then I heard someone say sternly, 'Hello boy...', behind my back.

I was initially scared, so I spontaneously looked up and found out that it was Santa. I was shocked that my jaw practically hit the floor. Was I seeing *the* Santa Claus? I couldn't believe my eyes... They were popping out of my sockets at the mere sight of him.

His ginger khaki eyes, with his long pure white beard on his chin down to his chest, and the velvety red suit with white overalls that he donned with his signature black belt that had a golden lozenge hook. His long-flowing straight white fair hair was covered by his ginormous red hat. His big beaming smile with his pure white teeth and his white moustache hiding all the face under him. Everything was just white. But at least there was a mix with an excessive amount of red.

'Wha-...What... do...you...want?' I said slowly as I was still appalled, but it sounded like a frightened debrief.

I thought inquisitively, *Was I dreaming? Would someone pinch me please?*

Unfortunately, I inadvertently said that out loud, so Santa pinched me as hard as he could instantaneously.

'Ow!' I shouted at the top of my lungs when I was in pain and agony, aggravating the whole situation.

Minutes later, I was still in pain.

Santa waited for me, and finally said, ‘Sorry for the brief introduction. I am Santa Claus – I think you know. Many think I am not real, but I am. I just don’t reveal myself to the public...’

He stopped, and a tear drop dropped out of his eye.

‘I am sorry I am gettin’ emotional. Usually, Misses Claus helps me with delivering all the presents, but sadly she passed away...’ Santa said when his face was full of frowns.

I was hit by a pang of sadness. I then asked what we wanted from an ordinary boy, which was me, and he said I was unique. I was dumbfounded and shocked. I had a million questions running through my mind.

*Me? Being unique? What? How the hell is that possible? Everyone told me I was even lower than average, how was I unique?* These were some questions I was thinking of.

Santa exclaimed that he needed a replacement to help him, and he came to me. Out of the 8 billion people in the world, he chose me! Anyway, instead of acquiescing, I agreed in a heartbeat and our adventure started.

I introduced myself when I was riding on his sleigh – which was brown with some green spots. We just chatted at nineteen to the dozen about our personal lives. It just felt like I was in the fantasy world and a portal brought me to this dimension. I just had a feeling that I was Harry Potter on Hagrid’s flying motorbike and Dumbledore was next to me. *My dreams are coming true! I love my life!*

Santa broke the silence, and said, ‘No more daydreaming kiddo, come on, got some delivery to do right?’

I sighed and nodded silently. Santa shared everything he knew, and we came up with a plan! Santa will go into all the houses through the

chimneys, and I would try to throw the presents gently into them. Santa will catch them – hopefully enough and put it next to their Christmas tree – if the people even have one. Then Santa will skedaddle, hopefully not getting distracted by the cookies and milk everyone would probably leave for him – a lot of people want to catch him in the act, and as quietly as possible.

Then the cycle repeats until all the houses in the world are complete. I just freaked out at that moment of realisation. How am I supposed to conserve my energy when I need to throw so many presents? And I mean a lot. Even the smallest country in the world (Vatican City) has 5,000 households. Don't get me started, that's a lot. And what if one house has a family of 10? That would be 50,000 presents that I would need to throw for the smallest country. *I wonder how many I would need to throw in China. Probably like a googol times more.* I was gobsmacked every time I thought about it.

It felt like Santa was reading my mind when he said, 'Well I know it's a lot, so let's get started!'

I was thinking the whole time when we were travelling between countries. *How does Santa get 8 billion presents ready? I mean he does have a year but still...* The thought of it.

What felt like an eternity later, we were done, finally. It was still hard to believe that we had done it in less than a day. Probably because of his sleigh. I think I drank about 10 bottles of water, which is a damn a lot. I probably needed to hydrate myself every five minutes or so – the job was arduous and the journey itself was taxing. I was fatigued in my arms. It felt like someone used a curse to destroy me overtime, and it jolly well was very painful. Just imagine you being stabbed by a knife, a sword, maybe even

shot by a bullet. That's how I felt. It was aggravating every time I threw another present.

Just then, Santa casted a spell.

He was saying, '*Evig eht srewop, leah.*'

I thought that was gibberish but that made my life so much easier. Rays of oppressive light just shined all over my body, then for a second, I fell on Santa's sleigh. This felt like a ritual. But as I was trying to sit up again, all my fatigue just disappeared. I was no longer exhausted. I even felt like a god. I could do anything. Santa just explained that the spell makes me like him – a very powerful one that still can be susceptible to passing away.

'Hopefully you can pass my spell down from generations to generations to come.' he said smiling.

I realised I could cast the spell even when I did not learn it. I just said casually, '*Evig eht srewop*' which is 'give the power' backwards if you noticed. Only skilful people can cast this spell which makes others like themselves – so it can be an infinite loop. You can figure out what Santa said earlier on, '*Evig eht srewop, leah*'.

This adventure was like a crazy rollercoaster ride. There were so many things happening at once, and I had so many emotions for my surroundings. I am sure I will give my powers to my family whenever I am about to pass on. It is now never hard to deliver presents anymore. From now on, I will always help Santa and will deliver presents every year on Christmas with him. When he passes, hopefully my family will help me as well, and my spell will pass down from generations to generations to come

– just like how Santa had described. *I will continue to do this as long as I can.*

**END OF BOOK**