

## Santa's Little Helper

The winds blew over the icy waters of Lake Michigan only furthering the chill of my heart. I should be happy; I should be merry for Christ sake. It's the holiday season but every Christmas tree, every set of blinking lights strung up on the boardwalk and all over town made me want to puke. I want to shout out at people's foolishness. The useless gifts they buy for undeserving children and friends.

"Ba-humbug." I snort. "Ba-humbug." I growl kicking a bit of sand.

"Hey!" A small squeaky voice said in the darkness before me. I look around. "Down here buddy."

A few feet in front of me standing not much taller than my knee was to my astonishment an elf. Pointy ears poked out from beneath a knit green cap.

"Why the long face buddy?" He asked.

"I hate the holidays." I grumbled almost ashamed to say it to the one creature whose sole existence was this holiday.

The little elf only smiled. It was a creepy smile that didn't reach his eyes which I just realized were two dark pits. I took a step back.

"I know someone who can help with that." The elf stepped closer his features becoming darker by the second.

"I don't need any help." I took another step back; the elf only smiled wider baring tiny sharp teeth.

"Oh yes you do." He said rubbing his hands together. "Santa doesn't like Scrooge's and you're the biggest one yet."

I turned to run but from out of nowhere ten more jumped out from the darkness tackling me to the ground; then blackness.

My screams are what awoke me. Where was I? A dull throb grows as I slowly take in the surroundings of my tiny apartment bedroom. I reach up and feel a knot that had formed on my temple. Was that a dream? How did I get home?

*Santa's at Macy's.*

A whispered thought runs through my mind. Maybe I should take my niece there today. Wait. I hate Macy's, especially during the holidays. The whisper returns.

*No you don't.*

No, I love the holidays. I get dressed in a festive sweater my mother had gotten me a few years ago. Hmmm, tags still on it? These strange feelings of being pulled in two directions come and go as I call my brother telling him I was on my way to pick up my niece. He sounded very

shocked. Why wouldn't I want to take her to the mall? Traffic, of course, was terrible, here's a reason to hate the holiday season. With this thought came a hard throb in my temple. How about I distract myself with some music, I say to myself. Every station seemed to be playing Christmas music. I hate Christmas music.

*You love Christmas music. Start singing.*

I'm blaring Santa Baby with the radio and my voice by the time I pull up in front of my brothers apartment building.

Macy's was packed with last minute shoppers. I let out a groan as I look around. Top five reason to hate the holidays. Another harder ache ran through my temple but began to fade as I take my niece's hand and wait in line to see Santa. It was completely gone by the time we got to the front and that's when I saw him, the elf from the beach. I stand transfixed as he brought my niece forward who then gleefully jumps onto Santa's joyful lap.

"Ho, ho, ho and what would you like for Christmas little girl?" Santa says to her.

"I want ...," she pauses.

*Whatever it is, BUY IT.*