

## Santa Claus: The True Story

I remember my first Christmas party with Grandma. I was just a kid. I remember tearing<sup>1)</sup> across town on my bike to visit her on the day my big sister dropped the bomb: "There is no Santa Claus," she jeered. "Even dummies<sup>2)</sup> know that."

My grandma was not the gushy<sup>3)</sup> kind, never had been. I fled to her that day because I knew she would be straight with me. I knew Grandma always told the truth, and I knew that the truth always went down a whole lot easier when swallowed with one of her world-famous cinnamon<sup>4)</sup> buns.

Grandma was home, and the buns were still warm. Between bites, I told her everything. She was ready for me. "No Santa Claus." She snorted. "Ridiculous<sup>5)</sup>. Don't believe it. That rumor<sup>6)</sup> has been going around for years, and it makes me mad, plain mad. Now, put on your coat, and let's go."

"Go? Go where, Grandma?" I asked. I hadn't even finished my second cinnamon bun.

"Where" turned out to be Kerby's General Store, the one store in town that had a little bit of just about everything. As we walked through its doors, Grandma handed me ten dollars. That was a bundle in those days. "Take this money and buy something for someone who needs it. I'll wait for you in the car" Then she turned and walked out of Kerby's.

I was only eight years old. I'd often gone shopping with my mother, but never had I shopped for anything all by myself. The store seemed big and crowded, full of people scrambling to finish their Christmas shopping. For a few moments I just stood there, confused, clutching that ten-dollar bill, wondering what to buy, and who on earth to buy it for.

I thought of everybody I knew: my family, my friends, my neighbors, the kids at school, and the people who went to my church. I was just about thought out, when I suddenly thought of Bobbie Decker. He was a kid with bad breath and messy hair, and he sat right behind me in Mrs. Pollack's second grade class.

Bobbie Decker didn't have a coat. I knew that because he never went out for recess during the winter. His mother always wrote a note, telling the teacher that he had a cough, but all we kids knew that Bobbie Decker didn't have a cough, and he didn't have a coat. I fingered the ten-dollar bill with growing excitement. I would buy Bobbie Decker a coat. I settled on<sup>7)</sup> a red corduroy<sup>8)</sup> one that had a hood to it. It looked real warm, and he would like that.

"Is this a Christmas present for someone?" the lady behind the counter asked me kindly, as I laid my ten dollars down.

"Yes," I replied shyly. "It's... for Bobbie."

The nice lady smiled at me. I didn't get any change, but she put the coat in a bag and wished me a Merry Christmas.

That evening, Grandma helped me wrap the coat in Christmas paper and ribbons, and write, "To Bobbie, From Santa Claus" on it. Grandma said that Santa always insisted on secrecy. Then she drove me over to Bobbie Decker's house, explaining as we went that

I was now forever officially one of Santa's helps.

Grandma parked down the street from Bobbie's house, and she and I crept noiselessly and hid in the bushes by his front walk. Then Grandma gave me a nudge<sup>9)</sup>. "All right, Santa Claus," she whispered, "get going."

I took a deep breath, dashed for his front door, threw the present down on his step, pounded his doorbell and flew back to the safety of the bushes and Grandma. Together we waited breathlessly in the darkness for the front door to open. Finally it did, and there stood Bobbie.

Forty years haven't dimmed the thrill of those moments spent shivering, beside my grandma, in Bobbie Decker's bushes. That night, I realized that those awful rumors about Santa Claus were just what Grandma said they were: ridiculous. Santa was alive and well, and we were on his team.

## 圣诞老人：一个真实的故事

我记得小时候和奶奶一起过的第一次圣诞晚会。我当时还只是个孩子。我记得姐姐嘲弄的话好似晴空霹雳：“根本没有圣诞老人，连傻子都知道。”我哪里受得了这个，马上骑自行车穿过镇上的街道直奔奶奶家。

奶奶不是个浮夸鼓噪的人，从不夸夸其谈。我找她因为我知道她肯定会告诉我真相。我知道奶奶讲的总是真的；而且，吃着奶奶那举世闻名的桂皮面包，她讲的话就更加中听了。

奶奶在家。她的桂皮面包才出炉不久。我一边嚼着面包，一边把姐姐的话告诉她。她对此早有准备，大声大气地说：“没有圣诞老人。简直胡说八道。你可别信那些。这个谣言散布了好些年了，真让我上火。来，把外套穿上，咱们走。”

“走？上哪儿呀，奶奶？”我问道。我还没吃完第二个桂皮面包呢。

那个“哪儿”原来是克比百货店，镇上惟一的百货店。进了门，奶奶递给我10块钱。那个时候10块钱可值钱呐。“买些东西给需要的人。我在车里等你。”她转身就出了店门。

我那时只有8岁。虽然常跟着妈妈逛商店，可从来没自个儿买过东西。那个又大又挤的商店塞满了为圣诞节购物的人。我捏着那张钞票，呆立了好一会儿，茫然不知该买什么，究竟买给谁。

我在脑子里搜寻着每一个认得的人：家人、朋友、邻居、同学、教友。所有的人都快想了个遍，忽地想起了博比·德克尔。他有口臭和一头乱发。我们都在波拉克夫人教的二年级班上。他坐我后面。

我知道博比·德克尔没有大衣，因为他在冬天课间休息时从来也没出过教室。他母亲总是写条子给老师说他咳嗽。但我们都知道他不是咳嗽，而是没大衣。摸弄着那10块钱，我越想越兴奋，我要为博比·德克尔买一件大衣。我看准一件红色灯芯绒带帽子的，看起来真暖和。博比会喜欢的。

“是送别人的圣诞礼物吗？”当我把10块钱放在柜台上的时候，女店员很亲切地问道。

“是的，”我难为情地答道。“是给博比的。”

她对着我笑了。我以为她会找钱给我，但她没有，而是把大衣装进袋子里并祝我圣诞快乐。

那天晚上，奶奶帮我用彩纸和缎带把大衣包装起来，并题上了字：“给博比，圣诞老人赠。”奶奶说圣诞老人总坚持送礼得秘密进行。然后在开车送我去博比家的路上，她告诉我今后我将永远正式成为圣诞老人的助手之一了。

## 学英语，练听力，上听力课堂！

奶奶把车停在离博比家不远处的街边。我们悄悄地挨近他家，躲在房前过道的矮树丛里。奶奶轻轻用肘推了我一下。“好了，圣诞老人，”她低声地说，“开始行动。”

我深深吸了口气，冲到前门口，把礼物扔在门阶上，使劲按门铃，再飞奔回树丛里，和奶奶一块儿躲着。我们在黑暗中屏息等待前门开启。门终于开了，博比出现在门口。

40年光阴未曾减弱我在博比·德克尔家前的矮树丛中挨着奶奶颤抖时所感受到的激动。就在那天晚上，我认识到，那些有关圣诞老人的恶劣谣传，正如奶奶所说，全是“胡说八道”。圣诞老人活得好好的，而我们都是他的好帮手。

### NOTE 注释：

1. tear [teə(r)] vi. [口] 狂奔，疾驰，匆忙行动
2. dummy ['dʌmi] n. [口] 笨人，蠢货
3. gushy ['gʌʃi] adj. 装腔作势的
4. cinnamon ['sɪnəməŋ] adj. 用桂皮调味的
5. ridiculous [ri'dɪkjʊləs] adj. 荒谬的，可笑的
6. rumor ['ru:mə] n. 流言，谣言，传闻
7. settle on 选定
8. corduroy ['kɔ:dəroɪ] adj. 用灯芯绒做的
9. nudge [nʌdʒ] n. 用肘轻推，轻推为引起注意