

Believe Again

The North Pole Chronicles

1st in the Santa Claus Trilogy



Joe Moore

Also by Joe Moore

Faith, Hope & Reindeer

2nd in The Santa Claus Trilogy

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Dedication

To My First Grandbaby, Jameson,

and to all the children, young and old,

who believe in Santa Claus.

You are the real reason Santa Claus exists.

*Childhood is the world of miracle and of magic:
it is as if creation rose luminously
out of the night,
all new and fresh and astonishing.*

Eugene Ionesco

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So many talented souls help me get my message across to make you, the reader, pick this up in the first place. Thank you all immensely for seeing this novel through my eyes, and putting my image forth so succinctly.

Preface

Alfie Newsworthy is the official historian of the North Pole, and much of what was learned came from this elf to the writer's ears. Alfie also ran the The North Pole Chronicles and much of the experiences discussed in this book came from those archives. Some of the 'details' were later filled in when discussing events with some of the characters involved at the time.

Now the construction of the dome and the elves village began early in the eighteenth century. Around 1728, the first elves began arriving each called by an inner voice and told to move as far north, away from the tallfolk as they possibly could.

What follows is a history of the North Pole including how they were able to tame this inhospitable climate, and make a paradise where hardly anyone else would dare tread. It also explains why the elves were there, what we did, and how the true story of Santa Claus began.

Many things are easily proven and some things, while not so easy to prove, are true nonetheless. All of the residents of the North Pole believe in 'sincere speech' and invoke it everyday. You'll understand what is meant by this soon enough.

So for those who seek the truth and history of Santa Claus, and all the elves of the North Pole, you may pull up a comfy chair and settle in. It is quite a story, or more exactly a Chronicle of the North Pole.



*All the best things in the world
can be found in the eyes of a child.*

- Forrest Hedemup

The Beginning

Long before Santa Claus moved to the North Pole and became world known, the North Pole began, and was run, by the elves. They had come to the top of the world after being treated poorly by bigger people. It was not so much that they were beaten or kicked, though occasionally that would happen, but because largely they were just ignored or dismissed. People didn't take them seriously, if they paid attention to them at all. Tallfolk thought that since they were small, they couldn't be very smart. Nothing could have been further from the truth.

So they had come from many lands, each hearing the promise of a better world. Elves came from every continent, and like the tallfolk they lived among, these elves were every shape, color, with pointed ears and round, some short and others taller. Unlike tallfolk, most of them were around four feet give or take a few inches. They spoke different languages, they had different stories and legends, and they brought various hopes and ambitions with each one. When things had become unbearable in the country where they lived, those elves would pack up their belongings, and hoping the stories they heard were all true, and the inner voices were not false, they would make the arduous trek to the

frozen north.

Sincere speech needs to be spoken here, these elves were, and remain far smarter than the people they had lived amongst. And once they banded together, they discovered that together they exceeded genius levels. As anyone knows, two people are smarter than one, and four are smarter than two, and so on. But with the elves, as they increased their numbers, their collective smarts geometrically progressed and became nothing shy of brilliance.

In addition to being much brighter than tallfolk, they have a very peaceable nature to themselves. Rarely do they ever have a disagreeable day. Each one finds great joy in working with each other. They have a strong sense of accomplishment in everything they do together. On the rare occasion elves disagree on something, they work it through with compromises, or when in doubt, they bring in a couple more opinions from other elves, until an agreement on a particular course is resolved.

Because the North Pole was inhospitable to others, they were not only left in peace, but were able to build quite a large settlement. Elves advanced their discoveries much faster than the outside world, and they began constructing marvelous inventions and ways to accomplish things to tame their new land. The developments they came up with would have given any other country pause. Soon they were centuries ahead of any other civilization.

Being friendly and forgiving by nature, the elves not only did not hold a grudge against bigger people, but found tallfolk children wonderful in their overall

innocence and curious nature. This was something that always had been particularly endearing to every elf. They enjoyed the fact that through play, many tallfolk children learned how to get along, and received good lessons from others. All of the elves wanted to encourage that playtime for children everywhere.

It was Carrow Chekitwice who first suggested that perhaps the elves might build some things for the children to play with and enjoy. Again, while the elves were genuinely not against tallfolk they still avoided them as much as possible. Of course even with their collective smarts, they had to deal with the tallfolk from time to time. They needed many goods and occasionally services from them, because even with all their advances, the North Pole could not provide all the raw materials that were sought after. But the elves had plenty to trade in order to get what was needed.

Not the least of these items were their wonderful toys that would often touch a heartstring of the tallfolk and cause them to remember, even if just for a moment, what it was like to be a child. And the tallfolk wanted to give these toys to their own children, which of course was what the elves wanted, too.

Because of their advances in tools, tallfolk often would be happy to trade for what the elves produced. Much of it had never been seen before, and often they were decades ahead of their own inventions and tools. Soon their products became in high demand. But problems developed as some of the inventions that were traded became used in ways that the elves had not intended.

Many products were constructed and used against other people and changed from their initial designs. Wars came about because of their advances to the tallfolk and their misuse. So the Council of Elves decided that they needed to carefully trade only the tools and advances that the tallfolk could handle during a particular time in their development. Many products and innovations would have to wait until the Council thought the tallfolk would not use them for destructive, rather than constructive purposes.

Meanwhile in the Arctic, their innovations kept being developed at a breakneck pace. They had not only learned how to tame their harsh landscape, but had developed a dome to help handle the often frigid blizzard conditions, and make the Pole not only livable, but enjoyable. They had become partial to cold weather, and liked the snow, although they preferred it in less amounts and more gently falling. Once under the dome, they were able to keep the inside around the freezing mark, and opted not to make it too much warmer. Elves would become sluggish and less inclined to get things done when it was too warm.

Of course they also developed a more seasonal climate including spring, summer and fall. Like the rest of the globe, they enjoy beautiful days and can control the sunlight artificially. Especially since the sun does not appear for six months in winter. But even more important than the climate, in developing the dome which is many miles across, they had constructed a barrier that became impervious to both outsiders and natural disasters, up to and including meteorites.

During their development they had also discovered an interesting side affect to living at the North Pole. They began living much longer than their tallfolk counterparts. And not just by a few years, but decades, and later, centuries. Each new generation lived longer and longer. It was believed that because of the strong magnetic properties of the North Pole, it resulted in elves eventually living hundreds of years instead as a normal lifetime elsewhere.

Since they were now so long-lived, they became master craftsman in nearly any activity they pursued, often spending several decades working and perfecting their craft before being considered journeymen or women. They eventually abandoned the traditional way of being named outside of the North Pole. Many forsook their old last name and took on new ones, often adopting something pointing to the craft they were particularly good at.

Before long, only first names were given to newborn elves, and they were allowed to pick their own surname when they felt the time was right. Few ever changed it once chosen, but some waited nearly a century or more before making their decision.

Occasionally some elves would want to make a change for a time and move back south for a while. Some wished for their old geography, and were allowed to work on behalf of the North Pole in other areas. These elves could return whenever they wished. The only requirement was that they could not disclose the elves culture, or location, to the tallfolk. They were especially not allowed to bring any of the tallfok to the North

Pole, and had to keep many of the advancements of the elves secret.

This continued for a great many years, and while elves kept abreast of what was happening in the other lands, they often just shook their heads and enjoyed their quiet peace in their secret habitat. Many of the elves that worked in other lands would load up a bag of toys after they visited and took them to the children of the area they returned to. Also, some elves would take a handful of toys and sweets to children of the tallfolk they traded with, and leave them quietly in various places where they would eventually be discovered.

As a matter of course, the elves would say nothing about the gifts and would just leave them secretly. Occasionally, a bag of toys would just appear in an area where children were known to gather and play.

Unknown to any elves at first, was one particular tallfolk doing the same thing. He had come from a lineage that began with a former bishop of early Christianity, originally from Turkey in Middle Asia. That bishop had been anointed to sainthood for his deeds and love of children. This good man, and then his ancestors, had already begun to have many tales told about them as they traveled throughout Asia and Europe.

The bishop of Turkey's sons spread into other European lands as did their influence. His ancestors had moved through Italy, France, Germany and the Netherlands. Each had begun many traditions in the lands they traveled, all culminating in events geared around the birth of the Christ child, just as their Bishop

forefather had done. They had begun to be known by many names from each land they traveled like Papa Noel, Pere Noel, La Befana, Babbo Natalie, Sinterklaas and others.

Many of the toys the elves had left for children had been credited to this tallfolk. This never bothered them as it had taken the attention off the elves, and left them to distribute their gifts in peace. A couple times the elves were actually pointed to as the gift-givers. They just said nothing and walked away. The elves did not want the attention of the tallfolk for the gifts left behind.

Toward the close of the eighteenth century, one of the elves came up with the idea to approach the tallfolk gift giver and ask if he would help distribute the elves' toys to the children, as he seemed to be doing it anyway. Denny Sweetooth, one of the members of the Council of Elves, asked about enlisting the stranger for help. Immediately a great debate ensued over whether or not to break elven law and allow the stranger to visit the North Pole, and to witness the wonders of the elves and their land.

After all, he was a member of the tallfolk. Many argued that it was wrong to say that none of the tallfolk could ever be trusted. Others argued that dire consequences would take place if this was allowed to happen. In the end, and by a single vote, it was agreed that the elves would send a delegation to meet with the man. During this meeting, if the delegation agreed, they would invite him to the North Pole.

They had placed on this delegation some of their best and brightest including Carrow Chekitwice - who was

known for his leadership and careful ingenuity; Denny Sweetooth – whose suggestion it was in the first place. Also, though Denny was a baker and chef by trade, he was known for his big heart and wise council; Forrest Hedemup – who was in charge of all the animals and training in the North Pole and a lover of all creatures; Whitey Slippenfall – who was not only one of the principle elves that made the North Pole habitable, but was in charge of the defenses of the Pole, including its protective dome, and finally, Ella Communacado – who was the chief information elf in charge of communicating with the elves outside of the North Pole.

Carrow was an ancient elf who had helped design and build the village in the beginning. He was slightly taller and thinner than many of the elves with a beard that ran all the way down to his knees. His face carried a lot of wrinkles and the elves weren't sure if it was due more to his age, or his stern nature. Carrow always seemed to be frowning and studying things, whether village plans or simple toys, with the same unending scrutiny.

At the opposite end of Carrow, Denny Sweetooth was always smiling and jovial. He was as round as he was tall, and looked like a dwarf even to other elves. Denny's passion was food. Cooking it or eating it didn't matter. He just loved being in a kitchen or near it. He also was known to have the biggest heart in the North Pole and was always offering counsel and help to others with their many concerns.

Forrest Hedemup was chosen for his stamina and strength. While no bigger than an average elf, he looked

like a ranch hand and was stronger than nearly any elf. He carried large bundles with no effort, and could handle himself with tallfolk if the need arose. He was chosen to help keep a protective eye on the delegation, and to assist with the animals they would need and their load. A good looking young man by elf standards, he was one of the few blond elves with deep blue eyes.

Whitey was aptly named, as he sported a full head of white hair that looked as white and big as a snow bank. He had piercing green eyes, and like Carrow, was taller than most of his village. Whitey was the protector of the North Pole. He handled the defenses and also the security within the Pole. Very rarely did anything untoward happen in the village, but if it did, Whitey was called to the scene. His keen senses were known throughout the village, and he had a great capacity for sensing what was right from wrong. It was for this reason, as much as any, that he was chosen for this important mission.

If Whitey was known for his intuition, Ella was known for being able to put thought into “sincere speech” as elves called complete truth. A pleasant looking woman with dark hair and dark mysterious hazel eyes to match, she was one of the more desirable ladies of the North Pole, and was often sought after by the single men of the village.

What made Ella important (and feared by less sincere men) was her ability to see through to the truth, or make sense of any garbled discussion, and put it into words that everyone could grasp. There are some that just have a difficult time talking with others. Ella could

understand what they meant and spoke their thoughts in a concise manner. Just in case this tallfolk began saying things insincerely, or without clear meaning, Ella would be there to interpret.

When these intrepid five left the North Pole on their quest, it was an unusual time in history. As they headed for the Netherlands, Ella explained to the others that this was a time of turmoil in England. As they all knew, the English had colonies throughout the world, on every known continental land mass, but one of these colonies was rebelling against their home country and England was embroiled in a war with their own people.

Apparently 'Americans', as they were calling themselves, had decided they no longer wished to be ruled by England and wanted to be free and independent. The other elves felt an instant kinship to these people, as they had traveled to the North Pole for similar reasons, though elves would rather leave for places unknown than to create war on others for something as unimportant as land.

The troupe had spent most of the fall, and part of the winter, searching for their quarry through the Netherlands. He was known to be in Amsterdam for a time, but they were not sure he was still around. It seemed the man was anxious to avoid recognition and attention, just as the elves had done. Many times they were told that yes, someone had been by and left some food stuffs and toys, but he was gone before they could even thank him. They had been given a vague description of the man, but other than sporting a full white beard and mustache, and being of large and

strong build, there was little else to distinguish him.

They finally caught up with the man they sought outside of Eindhoven in the south eastern part of the Netherlands around mid-December. They found him on the road heading out of town. He looked like a peddler and was carrying a large pack on his back. He had a long beard, hair and mustache.

But what the elves also saw was that his green eyes twinkled, and he had the reddest cheeks Ella had ever seen on a tallfolk. He called himself Kris Kringle, and he had a very pleasant demeanor about him. He was surprised when approached by the small band. While being of average height himself, he had not seen such a small group gathered together before. They said they would like to talk with him and invited him to dine with them at the local tavern.

Kris at first thanked the group, but told them he had to get his possessions to Tilburg, as he had children waiting for him. The elves pressed him further and said that what they had to say to him may help him reach a great many more children than just in Tilburg and Eindhoven. They also impressed upon that they had been seeking him for months and throughout the country. Kris finally agreed to have lunch with them and they all went to the tavern.

Once they sat down, it was an awkward beginning, as the elves didn't quite know where or how to start. They had spent so much time searching for the man, but never truly discussed how they would initiate the conversation once they found him. They were still apprehensive about sharing too much of their life in the North Pole, in case

they decided against asking this stranger to join them, so they attempted to speak in generalities. Likewise, Kris wasn't sure what business they wanted with him, and while he was polite, he was a little impatient to continue on his way.

They found common ground when Ella asked Kris why he traveled around giving gifts to children and then watched as Kris' eyes lit up immediately. He explained that his ancestor had instructed as far back as 300 A.D., on how God so loved the world that he gave the greatest gift of all to the world. A child, a simple gift that would forever change much of the world and its beliefs. As Kris was the tenth descendant of the great St. Nicholas, he wanted children to know that they were still loved. So like his forefathers before him, he brought gifts to as many as he could, and especially during December to remind them of God's gift. He explained that between making, securing and delivering the gifts, his efforts filled the entire year. But it was around Christmas when he tried to have the biggest impact.

He said that many children lose their innocent nature too soon, and he wanted to help them keep a little joy even if just during his one visit each year. The elves and Kris got into a very animated and spirited discussion about children, and what made them the most special of all God's creatures. Forrest talked about how the best of any creature could be found in the eyes of a child. Denny regaled his stories about the joy of a child's expression in every sweet cake he gave them. Even Carrow who is normally of a stern nature, talked about the wonderment of a child as they handled one of the

carefully constructed toys they were given.

The elves saw in Kris the virtues they had hoped; a strong and loving heart, a child's amazement of the earth and heavens, an innocence untarnished by the hardships of the world, and a vitality and enthusiasm that seemed boundless. With an indiscernible nod to each other, the elves began to talk in hushed tones about a wondrous land that was built almost entirely to serve children. They told Kris of their mission to find him and invite him to the North Pole.

Kris listened enraptured about the amazing things they were saying about their village and mission. Of course he had many misgivings about making such an arduous journey to such a faraway place and during such an inhospitable time. Also, if he went he would need to bring his wife, and there were still the children in Tilburg that needed their toys, and what of Christmas coming? This time the elves were ready and met each of Kris' concerns with a solution.

It was finally agreed that first, they would assist Kris in delivering his toys to the children in Tilburg, then they would meet his wife and discuss the North Pole in more detail with both of them. Finally, if they both agreed, the elves would send another delegation to the Kringle's after Christmas, and they would all make the journey then. The elves promised that the journey wouldn't be as difficult as Kris envisioned, and they would bring very special clothing that would keep them both safe and warm during the trip.

After spending quite some time on the journey to Tilburg with Kris and then meeting Mrs. Kringle, the

delegation was even more certain that they had made the right decision. Ann Marie Kringle was warm and enchanting with an easy smile and laugh, like her husband. Ann Marie was quite an attractive woman. She was only about 5 feet tall with dark brown hair and soft hazel eyes.

They both seemed so very...jolly! They were comfortable to be around and they had an easy spirit wrapped in a blanket of endless faith. All had agreed to the plan as laid out by the elves, and set the date to begin right after the Epiphany, on January 7th of the New Year.

This accord would change history around the world for billions of children everywhere.



*If people would only credit
our minds instead of our stature,
the world would find us very tall indeed.*

- Frederick Salsbury

The Journey

On January 7th, 1780, just as promised, five elves knocked on the temporary home of Kris and Ann Marie Kringle. Kris and Annie, as Kris called her, moved around so much through so many countries that they never had a permanent home. This was all about to change. The elves on the other side of the door were different than the first group that Kris and Annie met.

It was decided that since the trip would take some time, that elves skilled in other developments should accompany the Kringles during their trip up North. One of these was Carrow's wife, Ulzana Stitchnsew who was an accomplished seamstress and tailor. Ulzana looked weathered and wrinkled, but Kris sensed the strength in this woman and thought many people would misjudge both her age and ability. She walked slightly bent but her eyes were sharp and clear, and her movements succinct.

She presented travel clothes to the Kringles. They were beautiful and seemed quite warm. Ann Marie got a heavy full length dress of green velvet with fur lining around the front, bottom and pockets. It came with an extensive overcoat to match and a heavy fur hat.

Kris received a heavy bright red woolen pair of pants and matching coat. His too, was trimmed in fur in the

front and around the pockets. He joked that the bright color would certainly draw looks from everyone. He also received a matching overcoat and very heavy fur-lined boots that went all the way up to his knees. He thought they were a little tall for his comfort and rolled the tops down to around his calves. The inside fur of the boots matched the fur on the coat.

His hat was long and came to a point with a tassel. Ulzana said that her husband was vague on how big Kris' head was, so she thought she would leave plenty of extra to trim off. Kris thought the extra material was fine and said it would do nicely to cover his face. With that, Ulzana pulled a long strip of fur from her bag and with remarkable speed that belayed her age, sewed it around the bottom of the hat to match the ensemble. She said it should keep Santa's brow and head warm.

The other elves that accompanied them on their journey were Stacey Buttons, the elf's best doll maker; Jamie Hardrock, the chief miner who supplied the settlement with coal for their fires; Willie Movinmuch, the elf's principal transportation specialist; and Alfie Newsworthy, the elf's historian and record keeper.

Stacey was as spry and bouncy as Ulzana was old. She always talked in excited tones and the Kringles almost got the feeling that she was brought along for enthusiasm and comic relief. She had red hair that fell just past her shoulders and a clear, smooth face that showed a few freckles. Ann Marie thought she looked like a doll herself and wondered if she patterned her creations after the mirror image of herself.

Jamie looked somewhat like the Leprechauns Kris

has heard about in Ireland. He also had red hair with a round red beard to match. He had a brightness to his eyes that showed he enjoyed life and was pleased to be here. He spoke with a bit of an Irish brogue, but could make his meaning plain. His hands and nails were blackish from his line of work, but he was clean overall and there was no soot or dirt on his clothing. Like Forrest from the last group, Kris sensed that Jamie was here as much for the load bearing as for the leadership.

Alfie Newsworthy's face was a series of angles and points. He had a long nose, a distinctly pointed chin, pointed ears and even his head seemed to come to a point. On top of his pointed head he had great tufts of white hair that were undisciplined and seem to go every direction. He also wore half moon glasses that he needed for reading that were perched on his forehead.

Willie Movinmuch had short cropped brown hair and a thin mustache. He had an unmistakable intelligence that you could tell existed just by looking at him. His eyes were keen and missed nothing, and while he was somewhat unremarkable in his features, there was something that drew you to him just the same. He moved with deliberateness and was very sure of everything he did. He spoke with a Scottish brogue and was sometimes hard for the others to understand, as it was more pronounced than Jamie's accent. Kris found him fascinating, and had a hard time not staring at the elf.

Willie asked Kris if he and Ann Marie were accomplished riders, which they were. Kris said he often would take a boat to Spain and then ride his great steed

up into France, Germany and so on for his deliveries.

The delegation had arranged two horses for the Kringles, and Willie had constructed a cart and secured donkeys to carry the elves and the Kringle's belongings. They said that because of the great distance they would be traveling that they may be gone for quite some time. Once the cart was loaded and secured, they all set out across the landscape riding ever north.

During the trip the Kringles and elves discussed many things. The topics ranged from the making of toys, gathering of foods and sewing clothing for the children, to more complicated things. Such as the items the elves had at the North Pole, and what needed to be continually imported, to some of their modes of transportation, which were different from the Tallfolk's land. Willie used the word "outmoded" on more than one occasion.

Willie said that some amazing things had been constructed up north, but he would wait until they got there to explain, as it probably wouldn't make too much sense to them now.

Alfie relayed the story of the great migration of the elves to the North Pole, and how so many were pushed to go there at the very same time.

Kris offered that maybe God put the thought in their collective heads as he had with the Jews during the exile from Egypt. Alfie shrugged and said whether God or a collective consciousness, they all seemed to be motivated to make the change and head to the same destination.

"Good thing too," stated Stacey, "otherwise we might have frozen to death before we ever built the first

building.”

Annie asked how they survived during that first year and since, especially during the harsh winter?

Jamie said in his Irish lilt that they all brought everything they could carry or drag with them, including livestock, tools and possessions.

Alfie said, “Yes, we shared everything and it was quite a communal project from the start.” He explained they had learned many secrets of the North Pole, and with their collective ingenuity they were able to begin amassing many things to make their lives more bearable.

“Believe it or not,” said Stacey, “We have a few months that are reasonably temperate reaching 16 to 21 Celsius [60’s to 70’s Fahrenheit]. Of course we don’t announce that fact very often to outsiders.”

When they had reached a town called Zevenbergen, north of Breda, they arrived at a dock on one of the inland rivers, there was moored a small ship guarded by two other elves. Skippy Seaworthy, the captain, was making nautical preparations and his first mate, Hardy Wavebreaker, was attending to the lines and manning the single sail of the ship. Kris commented that a lone sail would probably take them forever to reach the polar ice cap. The elves looked at each other chuckling and grinning as if Kris had just told a joke.

Once everything was stored and everyone made comfortable, Hardy cast off the lines and pushed the boat away from the dock. After they were far enough away from the shore, and out of sight of land, Hardy lowered the sail.

Suddenly a loud noise ensued that caused both Kris

and Annie to leap to their feet in terror, and the ship began sailing under its own power and moving very quickly, too.

Willie came to the Kringles aid and told them to be calm, that the elves had discovered a form of combustible power that made almost every transportation mode much faster and easier to move products and food across huge expanses with minimal fuss and time.

Alfie came up to Willie and excitedly said, "Tell them about the livestock and the winged machines."

Willie said, "I think we sha 'old off on that until later, laddy."

Kris interjected, "It sounds like we have a great deal more to learn than what I first thought, and perhaps you should clue us in on anything you can. What are winged machines and what about your livestock?"

Willie shrugged. "We find when we give certain feed to some of our livestock they become weightless and begin floatin' through the air. We 'adn't figured out what value that 'ad afore, but it is kind of fun to watch, and it made it easy to move um from one place to d'other. We also 'ave discovered the power of flight and have large machines that can move products and people from one area to 'nother through the sky."

Kris said, "Surely you are mocking us now, trying to see just how gullible we are. We know if such machines were in use we would have heard about or seen them."

"There are a great many things we hide from the populations of other countries," commented Jamie, who had just walked over to the group. "An' there is a great

expanse we must cross to even see any other folks, which keeps many of our machines protected from prying eyes.”

Kris laughed and said, “Well that may be well and fine, but you will never get me to move through the sky. That is the bird’s domain and I’m happy to leave it to them.”

Willie shuffled his feet, cleared his throat and said, “Well then, I guess you are going to ‘ave a bit of a walk, because that is ‘ow we intend to get you to your final destination.”

Kris looked crestfallen as if this whole trip had been in vain. He looked over at Annie who was grinning like a Cheshire cat.

“Oh, imagine Kris, being able to fly like a bird and see things as God does!” She was clearly animated at the thought and in a rapid burst said, “I am certain that these clever folk would not risk our lives after taking us so far if it were not perfectly safe.”

Willie jumped on her words, “Absolutely not! We ‘ave been using these for many years with nary a mishap!”

Jamie and Alfie glared at Willie, and tried to settle the look of concern that came over Kris’ face at the word ‘nary’.

“What he means,” Alfie quickly said, “is that these are quite safe and we worked the problems out of our machines long ago.”

“Look at what they did to this craft,” said an excited Mrs. Kringle. “The advances these people have made are astounding. I can’t wait to get there to see the other things they have invented and created!”

“You won’t be disappointed there, lass,” Captain Seaworthy said. “I thought I had really come up with something when I put their engines into watercraft, but that was just small potatoes to some of the stuff the village has accomplished. Wait until you see the dome.”

“And the manufacturing area,” piped in Stacey from the other side of the boat.

“How about when they discover the time continuum?” yelled out Ulzana from the bow.

“Alright, enough,” Alfie yelled sternly. “We don’t want to overdo it before we even get them to the village.”

The Kringles were trying to follow along, but couldn’t begin to grasp a word of the things these elves were shouting about.

The rest of the voyage was relatively quiet, which was fine since it hardly took anytime at all to reach their next destination under the swift vessel they were on. The waves became choppy as they approached land, but Skippy and Hardy handled the ship expertly and minimized the effects the ocean was throwing at them. The craft landed on a deserted but windy beach. The Kringles bundled their coats tighter and pulled their hats lower. Of course, the elves seemed to take this in stride and were almost unfazed by the howling wind.

The Captain and mate bid them a fond farewell and said they hoped to see them soon on another cruise. As they left the ship, the wind blew snow all around them and the ship suddenly seemed to vanish. The wind was blowing so hard they couldn’t hear a whisper from the boat’s engine.

The Kringles followed closely behind the party of elves as they couldn't see two meters in front them due to the swirling snow. Something large loomed ahead of them, but they could not make out its features. It was much bigger than the ship they just left. As they got closer, Kris could see that it had wings like a massive bird. He was led to a series of steps and as he boarded the great craft he began to tremble, though not from the cold.

Kris was just plain scared. Did they honestly think this hulking monster could be lighter than air? As the rest of the elves took their seats, Annie came up and squeezed her husband's arm saying, "Isn't this exciting?"

Kris just mumbled something that couldn't quite be understood, but had something about how 'exciting wasn't the word that came to mind'. He turned to Willie as he approached the front of the craft with Jamie and asked, "Are you sure the weather isn't too bad to try this?"

Willie just chuckled and said, "Heck, this is a nice spring day in the North Pole. Wait until we get into a real blizzard!"

Just then, even with the wind howling, Kris heard a sound that made the engine on the ship seem like a guttural burp. Willie was flipping switches and turning dials. He watched as two huge windmill type turbines began to turn on either side of the big ship, and he gave an involuntary shiver.

Stacey said, "Uh, Kris you may want to take a seat and put that belt on until we arrive. It won't take too

long.”

Kris stumbled to a chair and sat down. Moments later the big ship began to lumber through the driving snow. Shortly thereafter he felt himself jolt into the air. He closed his eyes and gripped the chair with almost superhuman strength.

After a few minutes, which seemed an eternity to Kris, the craft broke through the clouds into a beautiful blue sky. Ann Marie was watching out the window and her breath caught in her throat. She gasped, but with excitement rather than fear. The clouds looked like giant cotton balls and floated below them effortlessly.

When Kris finally dared to open his eyes he could scarcely grasp what he was seeing. At first hesitant, he inched closer to the window, where his wife sat across from him glued to the scene outside. As they floated across the heavens they felt a shutter and shake run through the craft and Kris came immediately to his feet. “What was that,” he fairly screamed.

“Relax, Santa, that was just turbulence, when cold air hits a warm air mass it causes the craft to make an adjustment between them,” said Willie from the cockpit.

“What is that?” asked Kris.

“Well cold air moves higher in the atmosphere...” began Willie.

“No, you called me something else, what was it?” asked Kris.

“Oh...ahh, whether you know it or not you are called many names from all the lands you 'ave visited. I originally hailed from Scotland and there they call you

Santa or Sunty Claus or a loose translation in English would be St. Nicholas, and there are other names in other countries.”

“Well St. Nicholas was my legendary ancestor, but I am no saint myself,” explained Kris.

Willie shrugged and said, “Well whatever you believe, popular opinion has branded you as such, and as Shakespeare said, ‘A rose by any other name...’ You are called in many countries St. Nicholas or Sinterklaas or its local dialect, so you might as well get used to it if you plan to continue spreading joy to children as you do.”

Kris thought about Willie’s statement. He was slightly uncomfortable about being referred to as a saint and hoped God would not think it blasphemous, but he felt the rest was a term of endearment. Since he never really made a habit of introducing himself in places he visited, other than as an ancestor to his famous relative, he guessed the various names just grew naturally because they didn’t know what else to call him.

Kris noticed the nose of the machine beginning to point down and wondered if they had reached their final destination. He didn’t need to wait long to find out as the craft started bouncing around as it fought the winds in its descent back into the clouds.

Everyone else was undisturbed with the rocking and bumping going on. Even Annie seemed calm through it all. Kris finally decided that he would not be the only person showing distress during this crazy ride, and that it was really not much worse than riding on a particularly clumsy horse, so he pretended to relax and pull his hat lower over his eyes.

With a bang, the skis of the winged machine touched down on the frozen tundra of the North Pole. The ship taxied across the frozen field for a time and then made an about face and roared back toward what looked like a solid wall of snow.

Kris and Annie became more and more concerned as the machine continued its onslaught toward the wall without slowing.

It was Ulzana who came up to Ann Marie and assured her there was nothing to be concerned about. "We are approaching the dome and we will slip right through it in a moment. We are in no danger," she explained.

Kris couldn't help closing his eyes again as they sped towards the dome, sure that the whole adventure was going to end right there.

What he heard next was not a crash, but a gasp from his wife, followed by her saying, "Oh, my great heavens. I don't believe it!"

As the great machine revved down its engines, Kris rubbed his eyes as if they were playing tricks on him. The sight was beyond belief, even after all the things he had recently witnessed with this amazing group.

There were buildings of every size and shape, with brightly colored beautiful stained glass on many of the buildings and with architectural styles of every kind and culture imaginable. He found himself gasping at the sight. And everywhere he looked were people no bigger than his companions.

They had arrived at the elves village in the North Pole.

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