

An Elf Named Stanley, by Jerry M.

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Julia and Danny just loved Christmas. Every year it got better and better and now that they were 7 years old, the twins just knew the presents were going to be bigger and better than ever. Christmas eve, they sat together in their jammies and stared at all the colorful boxes under the tree. There were so many, they spilled out into the living room but they knew they had to wait for Santa to come for the really wonderful presents.

“I just know Santa will be here soon,” squealed Julia sitting cross legged in front of the fireplace waiting, “and he will bring the biggest and greatest present of them all, Danny.”

Her brother just could hardly stand it and he hopped around the room in excitement and joy. “But I want Santa to come RIGHT NOW, Julia. I can’t wait for the greatest present of them all.” Danny got Julia so stirred up that she too stood up and started hopping and hopping and Danny was hopping and hopping until they fell down together in the middle of the room huddled together giggling. Roscoe, their big happy Husky dog came over and licked their faces.

“What did you wish for Danny?” Julia asked in excited whispers as they got in position in front of the fireplace again.

“Oh I wanted so many things but I was afraid to ask for everything. I wanted a new bike and a new skateboard and I wrote down about a hundred video games I wanted but more than anything, I want that new game system. Daddy said he would play it with me once he got better.” And Danny and Julia got a little sad because daddy had been sick for a long time and the doctors said he wasn’t getting better fast enough. “But what did you want?” Danny asked so Julia wouldn’t cry.

“A dolly and a new dress and shoes and...” and it seemed she went on for about ten hours to Danny and finally she just giggled because it was all so fun and silly to think of Santa coming down that chimney any minute with ALL of those things!

“tick, tock, tick, tock.” Julia and Danny listened to the big grandfathers clock in the corner slowly tick away the night. Julia rocked back and forth holding her legs and Danny fidgeted with his toes.

“Oh, I wonder when Santa will get here?!?” Julia complained pounding her fists impatiently.

“Me too!” Danny said, jumping to his feet and stomping in a tantrum. But suddenly he stopped. “But wait Julia,” he said, with a new idea in his head. “I think we are being bad. Maybe we have already been too bad and Santa won’t come.”

“Oh, no, Danny!” Julia said with a sob in her voice. “Please I don’t want it to be like that. I don’t want to be bad. I don’t even know how to be good.” She began to weep. “Please Santa, we aren’t bad, we just want you to come see us so bad.”

“You are not bad children.” The voice came from the dark room. Both children jumped and it was Danny that spoke first.

“Santa? Is that you?” He asked.

“That didn’t sound like Santa,” Julia whispered.

“It’s not Santa. It’s me. Over here on the table. Next to the nativity scene.” Both children looked over and sure enough, there standing next to the tiny scene of Jesus being born was an elf. He was no more than six inches high, wearing all green and dancing from foot to foot.

“Hey, you aren’t Santa,” Julia noticed, always the observant one.

“No, I’m not. I am one of Santa’s elves. My name is Stanley. Santa will be here pretty soon but I couldn’t help overhearing. You are not bad children but you seem to be confused.” Stanley said sitting on mommy’s big ball of yellow knitting yarn.

“We just want Santa to come soon.” Julia said beginning to hop again which seemed to make Stanley dizzy.

“Why?” Stanley asked.

“Because he is bringing us everything we want and need and the best present of all time, today. It’s Christmas.”

“You seem awfully nervous and impatient for such happy children.” Stanley observed. “Why do you think that is?”

“Ummmmmm” Julia said scratching her head. “I guess we are scared he won’t come or won’t bring us the best present in the whole world.”

“What if I told you Santa is bringing you a box but inside is something that would be the best thing for the whole wide world, not just you but the whole wide world. What would you think of that?” asked Stanley. Both children got so excited. And starting squealing with the idea of seeing such a present. “Well, I can see you would like that. What do you suppose would be the best present for the whole world?”

“I know, I know, a cure for all the sickness in the world. That way daddy wouldn’t be sick anymore,” guessed Danny, “Oh, but that’s impossible in one box, isn’t it, Stanley?” he added.

”No, no, let me guess,” Julia giggled enjoying the game. “It’s an end to all wars in the whole wide world. Peace. That’s what the best present is for everyone in the world. That everyone would be at peace.”

“Even you Julia? Would you be at peace? So you could wait for Santa and not get sad? Would you have that kind of peace in your heart?” Stanley quizzed the little girl.

“I wish I did Stanley.” The little girl confessed. “But Santa just brings games and toys and dollies and candy. He never brings a big box full of peace for our hearts.”

“Well I have a wonderful surprise for you. This surprise will make Christmas a million times better for you forever.” The little elf said with great joy.

“A MILLION TIMES?” the Children asked with happiness and excitement in their voices.

“Yes. Because the toys and things Santa brings are just examples of the best present the world could ever get and that is what you are getting tonight. Do you know who started Christmas even before Santa came along?”

“It was Jesus!” both children knew because both were good Sunday school children.

“Yes that’s right and now here is the secret of Christmas that I am going to tell you and you treasure it in your heart forever, ok?”

“OK” both children whispered, bending down to the tiny elf to hear.

“Jesus is the greatest present of all time. He is able to give you perfect peace inside forever so you don’t ever have to be afraid or confused or impatient as long as you let Jesus keep his peace deep inside your heart.”

“REALLY?” the children gasped. “That isn’t a story like Frosty the Snowman, is it?” Danny asked cautiously.

“No Danny. You can have the peace of Jesus in your heart right now. All you have to do is pray for it. I can help you.”

So Julia and Danny joined hands to pray. They tried to join hands with Stanley but he was so tiny; he finally just stood on their joined hands and they prayed for Jesus to come in. And do you know what happened next? Julia and Danny got a big box of peace in their hearts and it never broke like a toy boat and it never got boring like a video game.

“This IS the best present in the whole world.” Danny said his heart full of the love of Jesus.

“Thank you Stanley. I want to hug you!” exclaimed Julia, full of the warmth of Christmas.

“Better not.” Stanley said cautiously. “You might squish me and anyway, I have lots of other children to tell about the greatest present in the world. You can tell your friends, too, and help them get the peace of Jesus in their hearts. I have to go now children.”

And Stanley vanished in a puff of green smoke. But Julia and Danny never forgot him and they did tell everyone they knew about the love of Jesus and the peace just kept spreading and spreading and spreading.