

Real Santa

William Hazelgrove

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This heartwarming and humorous Christmas story shows the determination of one man to bring magic to his daughter's childhood.

Themes of parenthood and the spirit of Christmas come together in this lively tale about a father's quest to keep the magic of Christmas alive for his nine-year-old daughter.

George is fired from his engineering job twelve days before Christmas. His young-adult children from a previous marriage despise him, and now his nine-year-old daughter, Megan, is questioning the existence of Santa Claus. Unwilling to repeat the same mistake he made of destroying his older children's belief in Santa, George is determined to show Megan that, despite what her teacher says, Santa is real. He concocts a plan involving screen projectors, smoke machines, and various colorful characters and animals. Though this scheme jeopardizes George's financial and marital stability, it might just save Christmas not only for Megan but also for George himself.

Real Santa jumps right into a debate between fourth graders and their somewhat crotchety teacher about the reality of Santa Claus, whose existence and practice of building toys with a team of elves and distributing said toys on a sled of reindeer is challenged by geographical and physical impossibilities, not to mention theories of global warming. William Hazelgrove offers a vivid picture of the classroom scene with humorous descriptions of the flummoxed teacher, who must contend with children who educate themselves using the Internet, and children like Josh, whom Hazelgrove describes as the "walking plague" because of his seriously runny nose.

The short chapters mostly conclude on a sentimental or humorous note, offering insight to the characters and conveying the depth of emotion and warmth among the family members. There are some distractions in the otherwise smooth flowing narrative, such as George's friend's overuse of the word "stupendous" or George's repeated assertion that Christmas makes him feel young again.

Hazelgrove offers just enough information about the scheme to allow the plot to move forward without getting too hung up on the actual logistics of the plan—though some suspension of disbelief is necessary in order to let the touching moments work their magic.

Real Santa is a humorous and heartwarming tale that reveals the magic of childhood and the power of family.

MAYA FLEISCHMANN (Winter 2015)

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