

Santa Was A Trucker



by Pepper Raines

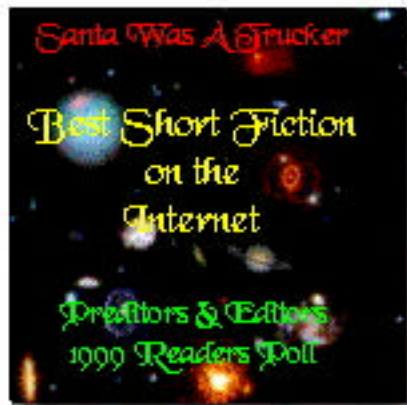
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SANTA WAS A TRUCKER

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Santa Was A Trucker

(A True Story)

“But Santa won't know where to find me in Seattle!”

Shawn's eyes were wide and brimming with tears that you could tell he was trying hard to hold back. After all, he was a big boy now. Big boys didn't cry.

“Sure he will,” I reassured without looking up from what I was doing. “Santa knows everything.”

I didn't see the look of doubt on my son's face and I didn't say anything else as I probably should have. To tell the truth, I was not too happy about this trip to Seattle either. It wasn't the trip that bothered me, I always made sure the company knew I was available at Christmas when everyone else wanted to stay home with their families. But, I always went to



California where Shawn could visit his grandparents--the only family we had. Not so, this year. It was Seattle plain and simple.

"Why can't we just stay home?"

"Because we can't, Shawn. You know that. It's my job and I have to go. Besides, I already picked up the load, I can't say no now." I moved down the hall to get Shawn's clothes from the dryer. Shawn was right on my heels.

"It's not fair, mama. Santa always leaves my presents at grandma's. He doesn't know anybody in Seattle." Shawn danced around me as I gathered up his clothes. I couldn't help but giggle as I started back down the hall with a bundle of warm clothes in my arms.

"Oh, Shawn, whatever am I gonna do with you? Of course Santa knows people in Seattle, he knows everybody. Don't you know there are lots of girls and boys who live in Washington? And Santa will stop at every house, too." I dumped the clothes on the bed, then began packing them into the suitcase. Shawn still shadowed my every move.

"But, he still won't know where I am." Shawn pouted, then plunked down on the floor and began picking at his shoe.

"It will be okay, Shawn. Now, be a big boy and go make sure we didn't forget anything. Check your room for me, okay?"

Shawn didn't budge from his spot on the floor. Instead, he

leaned his head against the wall in despair. "I didn't forget anything, mama."

I snapped shut the suitcase, picked it up, then carried it to the front door. A final glance around the tiny trailer we lived in assured me we had everything and were finally ready to leave.



My eyes rested for a moment on the Christmas tree in the corner of the living room. Suddenly it didn't appear as pretty as it had when we decorated it. The lights were unplugged and it was barren underneath. It almost seemed as if the limbs were drooping, but I knew that wasn't possible--it was an artificial tree. Still, it almost looked as dismal as my son.

"Shawn, let's go. We're already running behind schedule." I had intended to leave early that morning, but, somehow my alarm hadn't gone off. I had a pretty good idea HOW that had happened. "Shawn! Come on!"

Being a truck driver wasn't easy--but it was what I did--it put food on the table and paid the rent. Getting to travel the country and being paid for it was an added benefit. Shawn had already been in over half the states and had seen sights most

people could only dream about. He loved it when he got to go on the truck. I couldn't understand why he was causing so much of a ruckus on this trip.

Shawn shuffled slowly down the hall, dragging his feet with each step he took. I knew he was upset because we weren't going to California this year. I couldn't say I was overly happy about it either, but that was just the way it was. There was nothing I could do about it.

I didn't fit most people's preconceived notion of what a truck driver was--unkempt, unmannered, and stupid. Being a female driver didn't make it any better--especially since I didn't drive as a team. It seemed I always had to prove something because of it. It also generally meant if there was something nobody else wanted to do, it was dumped on me. This trip from Grand Rapids, Michigan, to Seattle, Washington, was one of those things.

“But, mama, we won't even have a Christmas tree!” Shawn had made it to the end of the hall, where he stopped in a last ditch effort to talk me into staying home. I was fast losing my patience.

“Santa doesn't care if we have a Christmas tree.” I opened the door and set the suitcases outside on the porch, picked up my purse, then fumbled for my keys. Shawn was still planted

firmly in the hall, silent tears streaming down his face.

"Oh, geez," I thought, suddenly realizing how insensitive I had been in my haste to get on the road. What was the matter with me? I fell instantly to my knees bringing myself eye level with my son, then threw open my arms wide. Shawn didn't hesitate to plant himself between them as he wrapped his own small arms around my neck and let loose his tears. I hugged him tight and let him cry.

"It'll be okay, baby, I promise it will." I spoke the words, although I wasn't so sure at this point if it would be. Just to make it to Seattle by Christmas Eve meant making the most of every minute. Even hesitating to comfort my son was costing us precious time. "Santa will find us in Seattle. Why, Santa is so smart, he could find us anywhere."

I couldn't tell Shawn, of course, but I had planned his Christmas well. His gifts were all wrapped and packed into a box inside the trailer. With luck, we would make it to Snoquamie Pass where there was a nice, truck accessible, park filled with the biggest Christmas trees Shawn had ever seen. I figured we would arrive sometime



around midnight on Christmas Eve. Shawn would be sleeping soundly, and I would have plenty of time to arrange the gifts under a snow capped tree for him.

I could almost visualize his rosy cheeks and sparkling eyes as he whipped me in a snowball fight. Then he could ride his new sled 'Santa' had brought him. We would build the best snowman ever and sing Christmas carols around a warm fire we could build in one of the summer bar-b-que pits. Perhaps there would even be others who stopped to enjoy the beauty overlooking Seattle and they might even join in the fun.

Shawn's tears had reduced to sniffles. He released his hold on me and slowly backed out of my clinging arms. I watched while he hung his head in defeat, then wipe his runny nose on his coat. I silently cringed as I saw the stain begin to spread on the green satin sleeve.

Shawn would have his Christmas if it killed me, I vowed. I could do this. It would mean driving long hours, but, it was not as if I hadn't done it before. Thirty-eight hours driving time was not so much split over two and half days. Of course, stopping to feed Shawn and the extra bathroom stops would certainly add up. I would just have to make up the time somehow.

"Hey, what if we leave Santa a note telling him where we have

gone?" I suggested, while grabbing a tissue and handing it to him. "Would that make you feel a little better?"

Shawn looked up reluctantly and accepted the tissue. Tears had matted his long lashes into tiny spikes. "Will Santa be mad at us, mama? I mean for making him come here for nothing."

"Of course not! In fact, he will probably be pleased that we saved him some time by not having to hunt us down. He's very busy on Christmas Eve, you know."

Shawn blew his nose yet made no effort to wipe off his coat. I rolled my eyes, then went to get a damp cloth to do it myself. It would still leave a stain, I knew, but at least it would be clean.

"Okay, all done. You ready now?" I tossed the cloth in the kitchen sink, picked up my purse and headed toward the door once again.

"Aren't we gonna leave a note, mama?"

The note. Damn. More wasted time.

"Oh, the note..sorry."

I couldn't help but glance at the clock over the desk as I

rummaged through the drawer in search of a pen and paper. "Damn, I've got to get on the road," I muttered under my breath. Already we were several hours behind. *That's okay, I told myself, catching a glimpse of my son's angelic face. I could cut back my sleep time in both Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and Missoula, Montana, then arrive in Snoquamie at 3 or 4 A.M. Yeah, that would work. It would mean thirteen to sixteen hour days, but it would work. It had to.*

"Ah, found it!" I opened the cap of the red felt marker and made ready to take Shawn's dictation. "What should we write?"

"Sorry we missed you Santa," was all Shawn said before he lowered his lids once more. A chill raced over me--a chill far colder than the frigid air pouring in through the front door.

"Shawn, look at me! You are not going to miss Santa. It will just not be here or in California." My voice had more of an edge than I had intended. I was fast running out of patience. At six, Shawn was nearly at the point of learning there was no Santa anyway--I nearly blurted it out. Instead, I whirled around and began writing the note.

"How about this? Dear Santa, we are sorry we couldn't be home on Christmas Eve, but, you can find us in Seattle this year. Mama is a trucker and has to work Christmas Eve just like you." I shoved the note over and handed Shawn the pen.

"Here, you can sign it."

Shawn began to painstakingly print out his name, then asked, "What about milk and cookies, mama? Shouldn't we still leave Santa something?"

Was there no end to this? Rather than have another round with my son about stale cookies and mice, I instead went to the kitchen, grabbed a plate and dumped some cookies on it. Then I slide the plate onto a shelf in the refrigerator.

"So they don't get stale," I said when Shawn gave me a questioning look.

"What about the reindeer?" Shawn stood with his arms crossed, a determined look on his face. Somehow he had suddenly realized just who was in control here, and it certainly wasn't me.

I bit my lower lip, trying my best not to lose my temper. This was important to Shawn. I had already let him down so much, I couldn't do it again.



"That's no way to raise a child, Diane!"

That was it! It had to be. My mother's words echoed around in

my head. She hadn't been pleased when I told her we wouldn't be coming to California this year. She had been less pleased to learn I was taking Shawn on the truck with me to Seattle.

My mother was always preaching to me about giving up my truck and getting a REAL job. "This IS a real job, Mom," I had told her over and over. "I have tried the 9 to 5 thing and I simply can't make enough money for us to live on."

"Well, if you didn't think you had to have the best of everything, you could make it just fine," my mother berated. "I managed to raise you, didn't I?"

"Yes, you did Mom." I had taken a quick survey of the thirty foot trailer we lived in and wondered what it was my mother thought we had that ranked "best of everything."

Still, it always came to that. How poor my mother had been--how she worked as a bar maid to raise me. She never mentioned how she stashed me at an aunt's house for years while she went off to the big city to make money. She didn't bring up the rich boyfriend who bought her a fancy house and paid her bills. Perhaps that was it though. Perhaps she realized not being a part of my life was what distanced us. Perhaps she simply didn't want me to make the same mistake with Shawn. But, I already had. We were apart more than we were together.

"Mama?" Shawn was tugging on my coat. "Where should we put the note?"

"The note? OH, the note, right..uhm..how about we tie it to the tree with a string or something?" I raced down the hall to my room and found a ribbon, then came back and threaded the thin strip of red velvet through a small hole Shawn had made at the top of the paper with the pen.

"There, all done. Now tie it to a branch and let's go." I started for the door once more.

"What about the reindeer, mama?" Shawn tossed over his shoulder as he began securing the note to the tree.

"Damn," I muttered under my breath, then more cheerfully, "I'll take care of it." I whirled around and stepped back into the kitchen. It only took a second to grab another plate and spill some carrots and crackers on it, but it seemed like an hour.

"Okay, cookies for Santa--carrots and crackers for the reindeer. Now, let's hit the road my boy! We have some serious truckin' to do if we want to be in Seattle by Christmas Eve." I headed for the door once more.

"Wait, mama. How will Santa know we left him cookies?"

"Santa will know, now let's go!" Shawn slowly lowered his eyes, then his head, then he began to move toward the door reluctantly.

"Okay, okay, okay! You wait right here by the door and I will take care of it." I flew to the tree and scribbled a PS on Santa's note telling him where to find his goodies. Then as an after thought I stepped back into the kitchen, found a clean glass, and put that in the refrigerator too.

"Now, can we please go?" Shawn nodded then finally stepped outside.

"Mama, what was the empty glass for?"

"So Santa knows it is okay to have some milk, and so he doesn't have to waste time looking for a glass." Shawn's face showed the first signs of cheer.

"Now why didn't I think of that?" he asked.

"Because you thought of everything else, Shawn. Now, get on up in the truck while I put these suitcases in the sidebox."

We had been on the road for less than six hours when I knew

we were headed for trouble. Shawn had long since grown weary of the Wisconsin and Minnesota landscape and had gone to bed. He hadn't stirred when I stopped to refill my coffee thermos and he didn't get to see the first snowflakes which slid gracefully across the huge windshield of my Ford CL-9000.

So far, it was a dry snow and visibility was still good, so I kept rolling into the night. I should have been tired, but I didn't feel sleepy. It was just after midnight and I felt I could still make it to Sioux Falls in time to catch a few hours sleep.



But, as the hours passed the flurries turned into a full fledged blizzard. I had slowed to a snail's pace along with a line of other trucks, all praying they would make it to the safety of the next truck stop.

"This simply can't be happening," I muttered in despair. A quick glance over my shoulder at my sleeping child made me try to will the snow away. But, when I turned back there was no denying the drifts were growing ever larger as the wind whipped it across the highway. I might make it to Sioux Falls, but the mountains after that would be out of the question.

I prayed they would be able to clear the highways come morning as I inched along with the convoy. I didn't have much of a gap left in my time schedule. It wasn't about the load--I had plenty of time to deliver, two days after Christmas as a matter of fact. But, I needed to make it to Snoquaumie for Shawn's sake. He would be heartbroken if I failed.

"Wow! It's snowing, mama! It's snowing!" Shawn came bounding out of the sleeper with a smile that stretched from ear to ear. I nearly jumped out of my skin, but, forced a matching grin on my own face. I hadn't even noticed when the dawn had broken on the horizon behind me. The sky was still black and ominous with the threat of even more snow. But Shawn didn't seem to notice or care.



"Are we there yet, mama? Is this Seattle?" Shawn was bouncing around the cab with excitement.

I was sure he was going to give himself whiplash, he was swinging his head around so much. He was thrilled to see so much white stuff. He had no idea how devastating to my plans this powder was.

How could I tell him we were barely going to make Sioux

Falls? Would he understand we may not be able to leave there until they cleared the roads? I couldn't tell him. I couldn't watch that smile--so rare of late--fade from his cherub face.

"No, Shawn, it's not Seattle yet. Remember, I told you we wouldn't be there until late on Christmas Eve and that is tomorrow."

Shawn didn't lose his excitement as I had expected. He was so thrilled to see all that snow even he couldn't pull off his pouting act. I couldn't help but crack a genuine smile myself just watching him. No, I couldn't tell him--couldn't in any way tell him that the thing he was finding such joy in was going to cost him Christmas in Seattle.

"Ahh, at last. There's the truck stop up ahead. See it?"

Shawn squinted his warm brown eyes against the glare of the white powder, although, it wasn't really necessary to do so. A blind man could have seen the bright orange ball of the Union 76 Truck Stop against the backdrop of all that snow.

I began to throttle down, then eased off the freeway onto the exit ramp. "You better get some clothes on, sweetie," I said, without taking my eyes from the slick blacktop. Shawn scrambled into the sleeper berth as I looked on the parking lot with dismay.

There were trucks everywhere. It was a sure sign they probably had closed the road up ahead. The lot was full--semi-trucks were double parked in the aisles and along side the road. Some had simply pulled off the side of the exit ramp without even trying to find a place inside.

Good God, I thought as I eased onto the lot anyway. There had to be someplace I could park. Yet, after squeezing sixty feet of truck and trailer between parked cars and other stranded trucks I knew I was doomed. There simply wasn't anywhere I could park without blocking someone. It was then I noticed the fuel islands. *What the hell*, I thought. It wasn't my normal place to fuel up my truck and it was far more expensive than what I liked to pay, but it was a place to park for the short time I intended to stay there.

Twenty minutes later the truck was fueled and we were heading inside the truck stop. It felt good to stretch my legs and I would have loved to grab a shower while we were there, but, I had no intention of wasting any more time.

There wasn't a line at the fuel window, I noticed, then grimaced when I was reminded of why. Nobody was moving out there--nobody was leaving.

"Uhm, is I-90 closed going west bound?" I queried as I shelled out \$300.00 for the fuel.

"No, not that I have heard officially, that is." The girl behind the counter looked at me like I was stark raving mad.

"But, you gotta be crazy to go back out there. That storm last night ain't nothing compared to the one coming." The girl nodded her head indicating the black sky outside the window.

"Thanks," I said, then turned away. The girl simply shook her head in disbelief.

I was tired, and I knew I should go get some sleep. I had been on the road nearly eighteen hours, the last four fraught with tension trying to make it through the worst of the storm. But, Shawn was awake now and full of energy. Besides, I couldn't just make him sit in the truck while I slept.

Shawn was right where I left him, staring into the tall glass cases that formed a wall around the gift shop. His big round eyes were focused on a tiny Christmas tree with battery operated lights.

"Come on, sweetie. We need to get some breakfast. They won't let us stay parked on the fuel island for much longer you know."

Shawn moved reluctantly from the glass case and took my hand. Then we made our way through the crowd of truckers

lining the walls toward the restaurant. I didn't miss the way his head kept turning back trying to catch another glimpse of the little tree. I didn't miss the look of gloom on the faces of the other drivers either.

I found us a table and ordered. Then I told Shawn to sit tight while I went to call in to dispatch. He glanced at the phone on the wall within our booth, but he said nothing as I rose and walked back down the driver lined hall.

"Hi, Ernie, it's Diane, truck 228."

"Where ya at, girl?"

"Sioux Falls."

"Just get up? Bet you were surprised to see all that snow!" Ernie laughed. "And, you might as well stay put. They can't keep the snow off the roads in the passes. No since in you sitting out there when you can stay there in civilization."

"No, Ernie, I did not just get up, I just *got* here."



"Just got there? I thought you were leaving yesterday morning. Not that it matters, you have plenty of time. Hell, this dang storm will be gone in a day or so--still time to make your delivery."

"Screw the delivery, Ernie. My kid expects Santa in Seattle and I'm going to give it to him if I have to push that damn truck over the pass!"

"Now calm down Diane. You don't want to be stranded out there or worse."

"I won't be stranded. Nothing is gonna stop me."

I glanced over my shoulder at all the drivers milling about. Several were playing the video games, a few were at the pool table, but most were just standing around with blank expressions. I wondered how many were supposed to unload the next day and how many people would do without whatever they were delivering. Would their Christmas be ruined also? How many of these drivers were just trying to make it home? How many disappointed children, wives, and sweethearts would awaken Christmas morning alone?

"Diane... Diane! You still there?"

"Yes, Ernie, I'm still here."

"Well, you just hang tight there until tomorrow. You got plenty of time to get to Seattle." Ernie chuckled. "And it's not like you got anyplace else to go." I could hear Ernie's hand cover the receiver and then muffled voices. Then Ernie was giggling again. I could tell the office Christmas party was in full swing.

"Ernie, I gotta go. My kid is waiting to eat."

I didn't wait for Ernie to say good-bye, I simply hung up the phone. When I reached the restaurant, I saw Shawn sitting as forlorn as the rest of the inhabitants. What had happened to all his cheer? He was playing with his food with the tip of his fork. I quickly pasted a smile on my face and slid in the booth across from him.

"Hey, kiddo! You didn't have to wait for me. Eat up." I picked up the steaming cup of coffee and took a sip. It was strong and a little bitter, but I didn't care. I was so tired I would have drunk crude oil if it pepped me up a little.

"Mama, the waitress said we'd never see Seattle by Christmas." His voice was barely a whisper.

"Well, how would she know?" I was infuriated. How dare that girl shatter the dreams of a little boy.

"She said ain't nobody going anywhere until tomorrow at best. Mama, tomorrow is Christmas Eve!" His little face searched mine looking for reassurance that the girl was wrong--that there would still be time to make Seattle.

"You see that snow out there, sweetie?"



"Yes, mama, you know I already saw the snow." Shawn's face brightened a little at the site of the snow again. "Do you think we can build a snowman?" He gazed at me hopefully.

"That would be fun," I admitted. "But, we really don't have time. That snow is costing us a lot of time." I watched for some sign that Shawn knew what I was hinting at. He showed none. He was simply waiting for me to go on. "Shawn, if we waste any more time we are not going to make it to Seattle before Christmas morning."

A look close to terror crossed my son's face. What had I done? Hell, it would probably take Santa's sleigh to pull this off anyway. How else was I going to get through this snow? Why didn't I just tell him it wasn't going to happen?

"Shawn, you are going to have Christmas no matter what. I

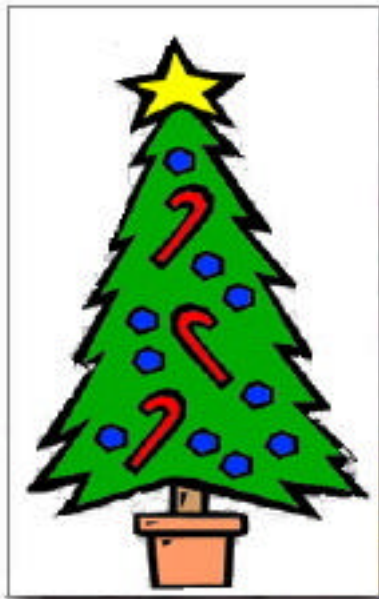
promise." The words were out of my mouth before I realized what I had said.

"Yes, mama."

I was stunned. He didn't believe me. Then why should he? He may have only been six years old, but he wasn't stupid. He could see all the drivers sitting around doing nothing. He had seen the parking lot. He had heard them all talking, not to mention the waitress' careless words. I began to realize we could have stayed at home, had Christmas, and then left right after opening presents and still have made it to Seattle on schedule. But no, I had to leave early and have him open presents out in the cold in the middle of a forest. What had I been thinking?

"Shawn, eat your breakfast. I will be right back."

I didn't give him time to ask where I was going, but, fled the booth heading straight for the gift shop. When I returned, I was carrying the 12" Christmas tree Shawn had gazed at so longingly. I set it on



the table and switched on the lights. I don't know which sparkled brighter, the tree or Shawn's eyes.

Later, back in the truck, I situated the tiny tree in a cup holder on the dash so it wouldn't topple over. Shawn fingered the tiny lights and giggled with glee.

"Now, no matter what, Santa will find us. Santa knows where every single Christmas tree is in the whole world."

Shawn cast me a suspicious glance and didn't respond. Instead, he cast his gaze out at the snow and sighed.

Geez, did the whole world know I was determined to do the impossible? Even my own child did not have any faith in me. "Fasten your seat belt."

I said a silent prayer as I headed back out onto the highway. The blacktop was slushy but passable. By night it would be solid ice. It was 350 miles over mountains with steep grades to Rapid City--the next safe haven for trucks. I was looking at eight to ten hours at best. I could do it--I HAD to do it.

"Mama, when are we going to be in Seattle? It's Christmas Eve."

It had been a long grueling couple of days. I was teetering on collapse from lack of sleep and I knew I had no business behind the wheel of an eighteen wheeler, especially in these hazardous conditions. I was at the point where short little cat naps were just not going to cut it anymore. It was also time to face reality.

"I'm sorry Shawn, but we are not going to make it to Seattle on time. There is just too much snow."

It broke my heart to say those words. But, what was worse was the lack of emotion from my son.

"It's okay, can I go to bed now?"

He didn't wait for my answer, but, climbed into the bunk without further comment. It was as if he had known all along that Christmas would never happen--as if he knew he couldn't count on me. And he was right. How many times had I disappointed him in the name of working or not having time?

The silence in the truck grew with each passing mile. The only sound was an occasional snuffle from the sleeper berth. It was just past midnight as I turned off the main highway onto Route 212 then found the little hole-in-the-wall truck stop just south of Custer's Last Stand. *How appropriate*, I thought as I pulled the air brakes and slumped over onto the dog house into an

exhaustive sleep.

"Mama! Mama! Wake up, Mama! Santa was here. He was really here!"

I thought I was dreaming, but the shrill, excited cries of my son jarred me instantly awake. What had he said about Santa?

"Look, mama. Santa was here!"

I followed the line from the tip of my son's finger with sleep swollen eyes. It was not an easy task as I was suddenly blinded by the glare from the sun reflecting off the snow. My hand instantly flew to my face to shield my eyes.



"What is it Shawn?" I fought to clear my head and grasp onto anything coherent.

The sky outside the truck was the most gorgeous blue and

white fluffy clouds swelled with pride as if it they had single-handedly run off the ominous black ones. There were a few other trucks parked around us, but I could see the blacktop on the highway and knew the roads were clear. But what did that matter now? It was already Christmas.

Christmas! What had Shawn said about Santa? Oh, God, I hadn't even taken the time to get his presents out of the trailer. What kind of mother was I?

"Look, mama, look!"

I scanned the truck. Nothing seemed out of place--then I saw it, the tiny Christmas tree, its miniature lights still burning brightly. But, it was the piece of red velvet ribbon that stunned me. I reached for it.

"No way," I muttered aloud as I pulled the attached note from the tree.

"What does it say, mama? What does it say?"

Shawn was hanging over my shoulder as I quickly read the note. "No way," I said again. I must be dreaming--that was it--I was still asleep and dreaming.

"Mama, read it!"

Shawn was shaking me. I cleared my throat and read the note aloud.



Dear Shawn:

Thanks for the cookies and treats for my reindeer. And thanks for waiting here for me, I wasn't sure if I could make it all the way back to Seattle with this storm going on. Love, Santa

I fell silent as Shawn snatched the note from Santa out of my hand. I was simply speechless. My mind raced out the fog that shrouded me trying to make sense of it.

How had that note gotten there?

"Come on mama. Let's go!"

"Where are we going?" I stammered, still not sure what was going on--still not sure I was even awake.

"Outside, to see what Santa left us!"

Shawn opened the door and was clambering down the side of

the truck before I could even think to grab my coat and help him. Not that he needed help, he was already on the ground and racing toward the trailer. I quickly followed.

Shawn was impatiently waiting when I reached the rear of the trailer with the keys to unlock the doors. *Well, this part of Christmas will work*, I thought, recalling the presents I had secretly packed inside the trailer before we left. I swung open the doors, then lifted Shawn up inside.

"Where are they mama? Where are the presents?"

Shawn was climbing over boxes but failed to find the box of presents I had placed inside. He should have though, I hadn't hidden them. I was just about to climb into the trailer myself when the sound of an air horn drew Shawn's attention.

"There they are!" Shawn leaped from the trailer and flew past me. I turned to follow him.

"Shawn, wait." I froze in my tracks. "NO WAY!"

There, under a decorated pine tree, were all Shawn's gifts. He was already tearing the paper from the boxes. He turned and smiled at me, the happiest smile I had ever seen.

"You were right, mama. Santa knows everything."

I sat down in the snow right where I stood and watched him as he inspected each of his new toys. Then several other drivers gathered around to enjoy the site as well. One handed me a cup of coffee. "Thanks babe," I said without looking away from my son. Then Shawn looked up at us--then beyond us--and his face filled with awesome wonder.

We all turned to see what Shawn found so amazing. And then, we saw him. Santa himself.



"No way," several drivers said in unison, including me.

He wasn't dressed in a red suit and he didn't have any reindeer. But somehow we all knew it was really him. Santa waved as he climbed into his bright red Peterbuilt, then laughed that jolly belly rolling laugh and gave me a wink. Then he drove off down the highway and out of site.

"Mama," Shawn shouted. "Santa is a trucker, too!"



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