

Santa Claus Is Coming

“JACK SPRATT, PLEASE COME TO THE IGLOO,” the intercom blared over the village, briefly silencing the insidious Christmas music that played throughout the day. Stephen left the grill, hung up his apron on a peg, and started downhill. The “Igloo” was code for the office where the accountants and the manager worked, and Jack Spratt was the fairy-tale character who was his double.

Everyone at Santa’s Village had a mythical identity. It was a fantasy village in the Adirondacks created by slick New Yorkers to lure tourists and their children to spend their vacation and hard-earned dollars. Employees were paid a minimum wage and worked nine hours, six days a week. Most of them were students, some already in college; in his case, this was his first summer job at the age of sixteen. Many of the female employees were Quebecoise girls brought in from various parts of that province. Their mother tongue was French, and most spoke a smattering of English while others, the “lifers,” were locals who worked the job from the late spring to early autumn and then collected the dole during the fall and winter after the resort had shut down.

Stephen walked down the hill past the frozen block of ice with the sign “North Pole” above it. It stood in the middle of the gaily painted buildings in the resort village, a giant phallus that

The Mark of Zorro and Other Stories

even on the hottest of summer days remained perpetually stiff and cold. Children would go up to it, touch it, and even lick it, much to the amusement of the staff. "Santa's frozen dick," they called it. "Santa's frozen popsicle."

He passed through the crowd that had gathered in the center of the village to watch the early afternoon performance by The Wizard with his array of magical acts. The Wizard's real name was Randy Popovitch, a former teacher from the Bronx who had made a second career as a children's magician, performing twice a day to overflowing crowds. He could do the usual tricks with disappearing coins, scarves, and card tricks, but his best act was with a group of doves who did everything from ferrying mice in their carts, to going on a merry-go-round constructed by The Wizard himself. And he was quite a talker, a regular comic ham, much to the delight of the audience. It was the same routine day-in, day-out, and Stephen cringed, anticipating the next line: "I asked this bird to buy a ticket," The Wizard intoned while setting a white dove onto the carousel, "and do you know what he said? 'Put it on my bill'." *Ha, ha*, Stephen thought, *ha ha*.... He wished he could mow down the birds with buckshot; he had always hated pigeons with their demented coo-ing.

Stephen walked past "Elmer's Wishing Well." This was a fake well into which parents and their children threw money to get Elmer the Elf (a small doll-like figure made of wood and cloth atop

The Mark of Zorro and Other Stories

the well) to talk to them. Stephen knew that the guy currently on duty and playing Elmer was Buddy Winch, a college student, who sat on top of the reindeer barn behind a meshed screen where he could not be seen, and he would talk to the children through a two-way microphone that was hooked up to Elmer's mouth. Inevitably, parents with their kids would look all around, trying to locate the source of the voice whom they could not see but who seemed to see, hear, and know everything they were doing. As Stephen passed the wishing well, and since there were no children or adults around, all having taken a seat to watch The Wizard's act, he suddenly heard Buddy, aka Elmer whisper in a gruff voice: "Psst... hey, Jack Spratt...you wanna suck my dick?" Stephen gave a perfunctory glance up at the screened window and raised his middle finger in his directions.

Passing the reindeer barn, he ran into one of Santa's helper's, Tom, coming out of the barn with a pitchfork in his hands. He was wearing green tights and had a Santa Claus hat on his head that said "Tommy." His ears were fake, pointed like that of an elf, although he stood a tall 6' 3". Tom smelled like reindeer manure, but Stephen liked him anyway. Tom had a thing for one of the girls, Judy, who worked for Santa's Candy Maker. He was always making excuses to hang around down there, bird-dogging Judy, although she seemed coy about going out with him for some reason. Maybe she had heard that Tom had dated one of

The Mark of Zorro and Other Stories

the “fast” French girls, Yvette, who was the best looking of the Quebecoise crowd. Tom was one of the locals from Ausable Forks, a small village around 15 miles away, but he was no lifer. He was an engineering student on a full scholarship to Notre Dame, drove a motorcycle, and actually read books. Judy, in her butt-twitcher outfit, complete with tights, mini-skirt, and an elf- tunic, came out from the shop and smiled at them both, although she stole glances at Tom while she pretended to engage Stephen in conversation.

Approaching the gate that led out of the village to the “Igloo,” Stephen came across Terri Carey, who played the fairy-tale character, Little Bo Peep. Terri had long, golden braids and wore a bonnet. She also sported a blue dress and held a large shepherd’s crook in her hand. Little Bo Peep was one of the most popular characters in Santa’s Village. Children were forever asking to take pictures with her, the young girls especially, and Stephen understood why. Her sole task was to speak to children, and she was highly photogenic. As Stephen passed her, she smiled at him and bent down to tie her shoe, revealing her well-tanned cleavage. He blushed and muttered something to her. He was in love with her, but he was only 16, while she was probably 19 or 20. She was also from the small town of Wilmington, a local, and he had heard one of the boys on the ground crew who worked there for the summer say: “That girl, man, she fucks like a

The Mark of Zorro and Other Stories

mink....” And the other one had replied with an impromptu lyric: “Terri Carey, whose cunt is hairy/How well does your garden grow?”

The first one took up this idea and replied: “Little Bo Peep, let’s fuck some sheep.../We’ll do this while your dad’s asleep...” but then ran out of further rhyming couplets.

Stephen finally arrived at the “Igloo,” and was ushered into the office of Mr. Mackie, the manager. Mackie suffered from a Napoleon complex. He was short, fairly ugly, with a huge, bulbous nose. He smoked Chesterfield plains constantly, and his tie was always undone, hanging loose on his wrinkled shirt. “Sit down, Jack...what the hell is your real name, anyway? Stephen, is it?”

Stephen sat uncomfortably. It was a hot summer day, and he smelled of grease from the French fryer and grill he labored over from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. His white cook’s uniform was soiled around the collar, his pants had dark blotches of catsup, and he stank of sweat and b.o. He briefly remembered the Mother Goose rhyme:

Jack Sprat could eat no fat.

His wife could eat no lean.

And so between them both, you see,

They licked the platter clean

Jack ate all the lean,

Joan ate all the fat.

The Mark of Zorro and Other Stories

The bone they picked it clean,

Then gave it to the cat.

Yet it was not true; Jack, aka Stephen, ate lots of fat: hamburgers he had grilled that were left over from the lunchtime rush and fries that floated in the hot grease. These were the only freebies the staff were allowed, and only when the lineup to the take-out windows had subsided. There were times when Tom would come over when business was slow at Mother Hubbard's Cupboard, the only restaurant in Santa's Village, and they would spend their time talking and catching flies that flew around the food. They would catch them in their cupped hands, shake them until they were too woozy to fly off, and then throw them into the hot fat and watch them sizzle. *French flies*, Tom called them. It passed the time.

Suddenly, Mr. Mackie was talking: "Look, kid, I know you've only been working here for a month, but you seem to know the ropes. Still, you're only sixteen."

Stephen said nothing, wondering what this was about, and only stared at the ground. Mr. Mackie buzzed his intercom and said: "Pootzie, come in here please, right away."

In came his office assistant. Pootzie was short with enormous breasts. She wore a tight dress and had long, fake nails painted a bright crimson. She was married to Jerry Jost, Stephen's boss, who managed Mother Hubbard's.

The Mark of Zorro and Other Stories

“Tell, him Pootzie,” Mr. Mackie said encouragingly.

Pootzie took a deep breath, puffed out her chest, and began: “Poor Jerry, he fell ill again. He’s off on disability and has to stay home from work, maybe for a long time.” Her breasts heaved in seeming dismay, as Mr. Mackie and Stephen both watched, mesmerized by their undulations.

Stephen wasn’t totally surprised to hear this. Jerry was a nut job. He was spastic, and would fly into fits of rage while telling his staff what to do. Jerry never did an ounce of work, pretending to go over the next-day’s inventory, letting Stephen man the grill with one girl helping him wrap the prepared hamburgers and hot dogs into buns and wax paper to be place under the ultra-violet lights. Jerry had an annoying habit of shouting out: “NOW YOU’RE COOKING WITH BUTANE,” whenever Stephen or some other staff member did a job super fast or efficiently. He often left the restaurant for hours on end, coming back only to tally the daily receipts.

“So,” Mr. Mackie said, “we’re counting on you, kid, to run the show. You are the official Assistant Manager now. This means a pay bump too, of course. Starting next week, you will be paid 50 cents an hour more. You’ll have to be here at 8 a.m. every day, including on your day off, and there is no extra for overtime. Got it?”

Stephen didn’t know what to say or do. Sure, it was great

The Mark of Zorro and Other Stories

that Jerry was in the loony hatch, that he would not be around, and maybe the title of Assistant Manager would make Yvette notice him. Maybe even a date...possibly? Plus, he needed the job, and there was still six weeks of summer before school started again.

"Ok, I guess, but how about the orders from the butcher and the bakery? I don't know how to do that," he finally mumbled.

"You'll learn, kid. Pootzie will help you fill out the order forms. She knows all about it, eh darlin'?"

Pootzie nodded and smiled at Stephen. Then, she walked over, gave him a wet one on his cheek, and hugged him, whispering: "Thanks for covering..." Her breasts bore a hole into his chest, and her perfume lingered on his cheeks for a long while after.

"Ok. I really have to get back. The Wizard has almost finished his show, and the crowd is going to be coming by for snacks and soda."

"Hold on a second there, Stevie boy," Mr. Mackie said. "Sit."

Stephen sat, and Mr. Mackie opened up a manilla folder on his desk. "Says here you put in a complaint against Danny Dregger, Santa # 2? That right?"

There were two guys who played Santa Claus, each working four-hour shifts daily except for alternate weekends when one was off and the other had to go the whole eight hours. They were

The Mark of Zorro and Other Stories

both older men, both with long, flowing beards and white hair, whose job it was to be in “Santa’s House” before which there was always an interminable line-up of children waiting to sit on Santa’s lap as he listened to their wishes. After, the kids would be offered a Santa hat to buy on which their names would be ironed by one of the “elves” who were his helpers. Santa # 1, as he was known, was a short, French-Canadian man called Marcel Lacombe. He was affable, and had been hired because he was fluently bilingual and able to serve the tourists from Quebec. Marcel’s only drawback was that he drank on the job. On his break, he would go to the locker room and come out glassy eyed and swaying, but he was still able to cope while depending on the licorice from the Candy-Maker’s shop to mask his breath.

Santa # 2, Danny Dregger, was a perv. How he got the job having kids sit on his lap all day was a mystery to Stephen. He was tall, nasty, and mean. He hated kids and hated his job. He was ornery and short-tempered, but he had the finer beard and the more imposing presence. What happened was that the Santas would alternate roles daily, sometimes switching to one of the Wise Men, usually dressed as one of the Magi during the twice a day Nativity Pageant that was enacted for the paying public. This took place on a hill near the center of the Village just before noon and then again at 4 p.m. While the loudspeakers planted in the trees boomed out Christmas tunes, the voice of a narrator would

The Mark of Zorro and Other Stories

chime in and recount the story of the Nativity, the birth of the Baby Jesus. Synchronized with the story was the procession of characters: Joseph, played by the head of the ground's crew, Caleb, himself sporting a huge, dark beard, dressed in Bedouin-type apparel. He would be leading a live donkey on which sat one of the working girls dressed as a very pregnant Virgin Mary (usually Little Bo Peep in a former incarnation). They went into a make-shift stable, and on cue Terri would emerge holding a doll in swaddling clothes, the Baby Jesus himself. Finally, the three Magi would come, led by one of the Santas dressed as a king with his staff or mitre. They would then appear at the stable door and offer their gifts to the Babe, kneel in supplication, while the story and music wound to the end, a fabulous tableau that the adults would photograph again and again while their children gaped in wonder. It was the highlight of the day, and each time hundreds came to witness the pageant.

A few days previously, Santa # 2 in his role as one of the Magi (or perhaps as St. Nicolas himself) was dressing up in the locker room where Stephen had come to change into another pair of pants, as he had spilled hot grease on the one he was wearing, staining it beyond repair. Once he had stripped down to his underwear, he bent over to change his socks. This was when Danny Dregger, Santa # 2, inserted the crook of his staff into Stephen's crotch from behind and drew it forcefully up into his

The Mark of Zorro and Other Stories

testicles. Stephen had screamed out, calling him a *son of a bitch* while Dregger tried to dig the staff ever deeper into the crack of his buttocks and anus, all the while laughing like some maniac.

“Watcha gonna do, you fucking little fairy?” Dregger asked, smirking, before walking off to take his place in the procession.

Shocked, Stephen just sat in place nursing the pain in his crotch. Finally, his anger got the better of him, and he went to the office to lodge a complaint. Mr. Mackie was too busy to see him, so he had to tell his story to Pootzie, who typed out a form and then asked him if he really wanted to sign it.

Stephen had, and now this was the form that Mr. Mackie held in his hand menacingly.

“This...this...want to tell me about this?” he hurled the words at Stephen.

Deflated, Stephen repeated the story as Mackie listened, saying nothing. Finally, he looked at Stephen and said: “You want that job as Assistant Manager? You want that raise, or not?”

Stephen nodded sheepishly but said nothing.

“So, that’s it then. Let’s forget about it. I’ll talk to Danny. It’s over. Get back to work. You’re a good kid; a winner. I knew it the first time I saw you. Now go, and Merry Christmas.”

*

END OF SAMPLE

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