

The Santa Claus Playbook

By Liam Shae

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“And, what is your job exactly?” the little Elf asked in her most sarcastic tone.

“Uh huh,” the taller Elf huffed as he scratched his fine trimmed beard.

“That wasn’t an answer. If you asked me, this monstrosity would be a better toy if Santa delivered it with instructions and the kid assembled it.”

“Nope,” the taller Elf replied. “Are you trying to get out of doing your work?”

“No. Well, yes. After all, I am the head of the toy workshop here at the North Pole, and I have better things to do with my time.”

“So, I’m the inspector general over all the facilities contained in Santa Land. That supersedes your authority.”

“There’s something to be said for letting the kids make an investment in the toys. If they do a little work, then they love it all the more.”

“Who told you that?” He glared at her. “Probably someone who was trying to get out of doing their job.”

“It came straight from *The Santa Claus Playbook*.”

“Where? You made that up. There is no such book.”

“Yes, there is. Since you’re the Inspector General, I’m surprised you haven’t read it.”

“I say there’s no such thing.”

“Wait, I’ll prove it.”

She ran through the wrapping department and grabbed a piece of brown paper, raced past the distribution station, and slid to a stop in her office. She snatched up the paperback book lying on her desk, ripped the cover off, and picked up the brown paper. A splash of glue along the naked spine, a little folding, some quick trimming, and it was done. The only thing it needed was a title. On her way back to the workshop, she snatched a marker from an Elf marking on a clipboard and yelled, *Thank you*, as she scribbled on the cover. Breathlessly, she skidded back into the workshop.

“See, here it is.” She pushed the reworked paperback in his face.

He slid his spectacles up on his nose and scowled at the book. “Hum. If you say so. What does it say about safety precautions for toy models?”

She opened the book and flipped forward a few pages, then ran her finger down the page. “Here it states: Model building, although not as safe as prefabricated toys, allows the child to develop a sense of self-worth.” She smiled. “Besides, it will increase production by twenty percent and relieve the time crunch for finished products to be ready by Christmas Eve.”

The inspector General sat back in his chair, and for the first time focused on her. Weighing her looks on a scale of Elven beauty, she was at least an eight, maybe a nine. Her belly shook when she laughed and her eyes sparkled with an abundance of Christmas magic. “Let’s go over to Santa’s Bistro for a cup of hot coco? I’m buying.”

“Sure.” She dropped the book. It opened to the title page: *How to get a date with your boss*.