

Dudley Claus

By Dan-Dwayne

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I could hardly hear Santa through the ferocious blowing snow. “Go down the chimney and get the room prepared for my big entrance.”

I know my job; it’s always the same. Leaping into the soot filled tunnel, I flip over at the last moment to land on my feet. It’s what I do. I’m Santa’s little brother—Dudley Claus.

No one at all recognizes me as a Claus. I mean here I stand, only five feet three, redheaded, and skinny as a rail. All the Claus family has forever been hefty and filled out with jolly happiness enough to shake when they laughed. Somehow all that holly jolly bypassed me. Then there is the nose controversy. Santa’s nose is like a button and mine could shelter the entire reindeer team. No, I am nothing like the rest of the Claus family—except in one way.

I have been blessed with an extra helping of Christmas magic. That’s why Nicholas has me leading the way at every house. I place my finger alongside my nose and I not only slip down the chimney but also charm everyone in the house. I announce his arrival to them all, parents and children alike. They turn, expecting to witness the grand miracle of Saint Nick appearing in their living room. They laugh and eat cookies; they drink milk, sometimes fortified with something stronger; and Santa takes presents out of the magic gift bag.

After he finishes and the Christmas spirit peaks. He turns to me and says, “Dudley, do your thing.” And I do.

With a finger by my nose, I weave the magic of Christmas throughout the house. I make them think they purchased the gifts, and to my credit I manage to convince them they will be

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receiving the bills. The children's memories of the evening are vague *sugar plum* thoughts about Santa bringing gifts while they slept in their beds. When I finish they will never recall the multiple cups of eggnog and cinnamon sugar cookies they consumed. My *crème de la résistance* will be when I turn the clock back and they have no recollection of partying with the jolly old elf.

Then it's up the chimney, and on to the next house where we repeat the entire scene again. It is my charm that magically restores Nick's hunger and dissolves the calories from the confections at every home. My magic makes Christmas what it is—what it has been for hundreds of years. Sadly, no one knows about Santa's little brother.

I trudge on every year doing what I do, not for Big Nick, but for the kids. It's their awe filled eyes that drive me on. However, it would be nice if once in a while someone thought enough to leave a cookie for Dudley Claus. But—no one knows I exist—until now. Is there hope yet? Perhaps this year someone who reads this brief note will leave a cookie for me, maybe you?