

## Cuppas with Mrs. Claus

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a companion story to 'I Was Santa's Ghostwriter'

"How is it, HQ, you always sense when I put the kettle on?" Mrs. Claus teased me as I joined her by the hearth. Though my intuition for teatime wasn't as keen as Saint Nick's is for Naughty / Nice lists, "I have my ways", I winked.

I liked to sip and chat with her after workdays as Santa's ghostwriter (my pen name was Holly Quill, HQ). With Dec. 25 near, though, my help in year-end correspondence would soon finish. As we shared one of our last, quiet, girl talks together, she gifted me this wisdom.



"Cuppa", I fondly called her (her warmth overflows), "you know the elf who's sweet on me – senior director of sleighbells?" She nodded, "musicians can be charmers". True. I went on. "You know all too well of sharing your heart with someone devoted to the whole world, beyond busy, long days (longer Eves), and century after century. However do you do it? What is love's secret?"

"Love is like winter twinkle," she softly said. "Just as night sky glistens on Christmas Eves as Santa sleighs by, that star shine glows faithfully every eve in between, too, enduring. So can romance, friendship, family, all love. And when life's clouds hide its fullness from view, or busyness distracts, keep love in your gaze. Light with love, my dear – to someone, it's star shine." ❖

## I Was Santa's Ghostwriter

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Jolly old soul sat on his spectacles one year and couldn't read – not his naughty list, not toy blueprints, not children's letters (nor his replies). I was dating an elf at the time who, bless his pointy little toque, boasted I had a skilled quill. Soon, Saint Nick was relying on my pen and peepers to pitch in for Christmas communiques.



Ah, that smell: spearmint ink on snowflake parchment. Who knew you can write with a candy cane? It was one sweet gig. At cookie breaks, I had to go easy on the nog or spelling suffered and 'cinnamon' would have 10 n's. Or, giddy on gingerbread, I'd sneak in to infiltrate the naughty list. A few got gifts that year only because I edited them over to the good group ... you know who you are.

My best memory, though, is not of the writing I did but of a letter read, sent to Santa too late for Christmas. It was days after his sleigh ride, eyeglasses fixed by workshop crews, toys long since crafted and delivered. When a penguin toddled in from the postbox, an envelope in his beak, we hoped the timing didn't mean a child had been disappointed. As Santa adjusted his specs to read, he wiped a tear. Voice trembling through his winter-white beard, he shared aloud the note's only words: "Thank You". ❖

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