

The Christmas Box

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Santa Claus was a little stressed, 'some children and parents these days ask for so much that even the elves can't keep up, I'm going to have to get some extra help' he said to his wife Mrs Claus.

For the first time ever Santa Claus was going to have to get some of the toys made elsewhere, rather than in the elves workshop, he didn't like it, but what could he do? Parents had promised so much and he had to deliver. 'I'm not sure how they find the time to play with all these toys anyway' he muttered as he wandered off to break the news to the Elves and the reindeer, before placing a very large order with the **Global Toy Factory Inc.**

Only six weeks before Christmas and the people in the factory were working flat out. The boss was so worried that they weren't going to have all of the toys finished and delivered to Lapland on time, she instructed the workers in the factory to work all night as well as all day.

A few weeks later over at the factory some very expensive toys were being carefully placed inside large cardboard boxes with just the right amount of packing material, to make sure they arrived in Lapland in pristine condition ready for Santa and his Reindeer to deliver them to children around the world.

The boxes came from another factory which made them out of recycled material, so a cardboard box that now had a picture of a very expensive toy on it, could have been made from a mixture of old cardboard, waste paper and even the middles of toilet rolls.

Even before one particular very expensive toy was placed in its recycled box and put on to the truck that would take it to the ship, that would then take it to Lapland. It started complaining, that it was too hot and not at all happy to be surrounded by a box made out of recycled material.

'You smell' said the very expensive toy to the cardboard box as it travelled in the back of the truck 'and you're stupid' it added.

As they sailed across the ocean to Lapland it continued to insult the cardboard box 'how stupid you must be, you've only been made to protect me and you're going to travel all the way to Lapland, then to a child who's adults will put you in a rubbish bin, or even leave you out in the rain until you turn to mush – yes you are truly stupid!'

The very expensive toy carried on insulting the cardboard box even when it and the other toys were picked up by the Elves and carried back to Santa's grotto. Despite one of the elves banging on the box and telling it to be quiet, the very expensive toy just waited until the Elf had gone, and then started again. It seemed to get more annoyed with the box, especially as the box didn't retaliate. 'Aren't you going to stick up for yourself?' the very expensive toy asked in a mocking voice.

The box finally replied in a calm and thoughtful way, 'I'm just doing my job, keeping you safe, I know that boxes aren't valuable or desired by people like toys are, but we do a valuable job, and I don't care if I get put in the recycling afterwards, that just means they'll make another box out of me like they did my granddad and my great granddad, as long as I'm useful I don't care.'

The very expensive toy had no answer to that.

Christmas Eve arrived in Lapland and the very expensive toy was loaded onto Santa's sleigh with all the other toys. Instead of just enjoying the honour of riding on the world's most famous sleigh, the very expensive toy just couldn't stop itself from having another go at the cardboard box. 'Not long now eh recycle head – just a few hours and I'll be the centre of attention, children will marvel at me, adults will want to play with me too, but the children will say no! Wanting to keep me all to themselves, other children will look at me and wish they had one just like me - oh I can't wait!'

The box said nothing, but thought it would be a great relief to be free of this tiresome, boastful, self-important, very expensive toy.

With the Christmas presents all safely delivered Santa was back home in Lapland with the Elves and the reindeer, celebrating yet another successful Christmas presents run.

'Phew!' he said to Mrs Claus as he sat down on his sofa, pulled off his boots and started drinking his well-earned cup of hot chocolate, 'this has been a busy one, so many extra toys, I'll have to send letters out to parents to try and get them to ease back a bit on the amount of toys children ask for, its wearing me out.'

The box meanwhile with the very expensive toy inside, was now sat on the floor along with a number of other smaller boxes, in the largest room of an ordinary home in an ordinary town. Children in pyjamas with sleep still in their eyes were looking at their presents. 'He's been!' shrieked a small red-headed girl 'look mum he's been.'

'Yes and he's left me that toy that I wanted' said a larger boy with short brown hair and freckles, staring at the box with delight.

Inside the box the very expensive toy could barely stand the anticipation of being taken out of the box and prized like the amazing thing it clearly was. 'Come on...come on... someone get me out of here! it said impatiently.

'See box in a few minutes you'll in the rubbish bin and I'll be played with, talked about, photographed and most likely filmed too. They'll probably just rip you up and dump you outside in the snow.. hah.. hah...hah, you'll soon be a pile of sogginess.'

The boy didn't rip the box open even though he was very excited, he opened it carefully so as not to damage the toy inside. Peering at the toy he shrieked.' WOW! 'Look at this!' as his mum, little sister, older brother and Granddad looked on.

'Look at this, it's awesome!' he said again, lifting the toy up and out of its packaging.

'Hear that box head' said the very expensive toy 'I'm awesome!'

The boy played with the very expensive toy all morning, whilst the box just sat in a corner waiting for granddad to put it in his shed where it would be filled with junk.

By the time Christmas dinner was served in the early afternoon the boy had played with the very expensive toy over and over again, he'd

discovered all of its features, he'd even let his older brother and little sister have a go, he'd phoned other relatives about it, he'd texted his friends about it, he'd had his picture taken with it and he'd filmed himself with it.

By the time Christmas dinner was eaten, the table cleared and the washing up done, the boy found he was bored with the very expensive toy; he knew everything about it, everything it did, there were no more surprises, and no more excitement.

He looked across at his little sister and saw that she'd got bored with her toys too, and was now taking an interest in the cardboard box. She climbed inside it, pulled the flaps down and then jumped up and out of it like a jack-in-the-box. The boy desperately wanted to do the same, so he did; he then put the box on his head pretending to be a box monster chasing everyone, making them squeal with laughter as he bumped into the furniture. They even persuaded Granddad to get into the box, he pretended to be a robot, the rest of the family played along giving him commands. Which he carried out perfectly before tripping over the cat and landing on the carpet with his legs sticking out of the box while shouting 'Robot down!..Robot down!' causing everyone to laugh even more.

Mum called a halt to the fun as it was getting very late, the boy and his little sister went happily to their bedrooms already planning what they were going to do with the box the following day.

That night the discarded toys looked at the big, plain, strong, slightly crumpled, but happy recycled box in a completely new light, and for once the very expensive toy had nothing to say for itself.

The End