

Georgie glanced at Dad in his favorite Christmas sweater stringing colorful lights across the front of the house. This used to be Georgie's favorite holiday, too, until all the kids laughed at her during lunch today.

"Santa's not real," Georgie said.

Dad arched an eyebrow. "Says who?"

"The kids at school said Santa's for babies."

"Well, I believe in Santa."

Georgie rolled her eyes. "You're thirty, Dad."

"Sure, but every year I get what I ask for."

"You ask for socks?"

"Nope, your happiness." Dad hugged George tight. "And each time you smile, it's a clue I got my wish."



Author's Note:

When I received the mystery genre again, my mind went to crafting a short story where a grownup believes in Santa. My original idea was that two people would discuss the authenticity of Santa, and at the end, you'd learn he was thirty. When I sat down to craft the story, I started in my typical *what if* fashion, which led to making Georgie a child, and having a father who believes in the magic of Christmas?

I wasn't sure if the story was a genuine mystery, but I wrote it anyway. I needed to include

the action of observing, thus Georgie watching Dad string up the lights, and I the word clue had to fit in there somewhere. Yep, I had that word previously, too.

Not much from start to finish with my original story. This story came together quickly, unlike the twenty-five revisions sometimes needed to get all words right.

*I was told this story was a delightful, heartwarming story with the mystery genre shining through with the subtle theme of belief. Your story captures the essence of the holiday spirit while touching on the struggle of growing up and retaining childlike wonder. It's a tender, well-crafted piece that tugs at the heartstrings. Well done!*

Dear reader, nothing makes a writer's heart swell more than hearing feedback from anyone who's read their story. Sure, it's not always fantastic feedback, but every little bit helps. I had some early beta readers tell me that some name choices were too similar. I countered by telling them that was the point. They pointed out it was confusing. Which resulted in me understanding their perspective and making the applicable changes.

When a writer gets kind feedback, it spurs us on to write more because at least someone out there is reading it and enjoying it. Thanks for taking the time to read these little pieces I put together each week. Wishing you all a Merry Christmas.

The Reluctant Author 