

The Spirit of the Season

By

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Tofer Carlson (2010)

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## Cast of Characters

Jolly Old Man:

Not so jolly old man, but  
still obviously Santa Claus

Administrative Elf:

Mid-level functionary, more  
power than he/she should  
have. Doesn't actually know  
anything useful. Likes long  
walks on the beach, paperwork  
and smothering the hopes and  
dreams of underlings.

*The scene is set at Santa's workshop, Christmas Muzak playing in the background, perhaps some overdone version of Jingle Bells, or The 12 Days of Christmas. The JOLLY OLD MAN, sits at his desk, perhaps looking a little less than jolly and a little more like he wants a stiff cocktail. He is shuffling papers, and looking miserable. When the ADMINISTRATIVE ELF enters, he/she formally waits to be acknowledged before speaking.*

JOLLY OLD MAN  
Yes?

ADMINISTRATIVE ELF  
Good morning, sir.

JOLLY OLD MAN  
Morning, is it? I hadn't noticed.

ADMINISTRATIVE ELF  
It is, sir. Morning. *(Returns to waiting solemnly)*

JOLLY OLD MAN  
*(Beat)* Can I help you with something?

ADMINISTRATIVE ELF  
Oh, no sir. I just came to introduce myself, as I have recently been hired by your wife. I was promoted from the Elves in Charge of Managing other Elves department. I'm now in charge of PISD (*prounounced pissed*).

JOLLY OLD MAN  
Pissed?

ADMINISTRATIVE ELF  
Productivity, and Integrated and Staff Development.

JOLLY OLD MAN  
Productivity? Staff Development?

ADMINISTRATIVE ELF  
Yes, sir. Productivity and an integrated staff development program are the new wave of business innovation. They are the single most important key to improving our gift design and proliferation. The PISD model has been taken directly from successful business models, and already been incorporated by all of our competitors, most notably Walmart, Target, and the cast and crew of that home remodeling TV show that makes you cry when you watch it.

JOLLY OLD MAN

*(Laughing)* I think you're a bit mistaken, my elvish friend. Up here, we aren't exactly a for-profit organization. Our goals are quite different from those scoundrels who make it impossible to leave home on the day following Thanksgiving.

ADMINISTRATIVE ELF

Sir?

JOLLY OLD MAN

In fact, our most successful deliveries aren't even quantifiable. A new bike, or a puppy, sure, but the warmth and good cheer of the Christmas season! That cannot be bought and sold!

ADMINISTRATIVE ELF

Sir, while I acknowledge that may have been true in the past, with modern market evaluation techniques, we can more efficiently track our clients' deepest desires. Thereby eliminating the need to produce such unquantifiable results as 'good cheer'.

JOLLY OLD MAN

We already do that.

ADMINISTRATIVE ELF

I'm talking about modern methods here, not letters addressed to the North Pole.

JOLLY OLD MAN

Those letters are addressed to the North Pole and sent with the hopes and dreams of the holiday season!

ADMINISTRATIVE ELF

Hopes and dreams or none, it's slow, unreliable, and tedious to sort through.

JOLLY OLD MAN

Look *(beat, while he visibly calms himself)*, email I accepted as a way to get wish lists sooner, and it made all of our lives miserable. Elves couldn't log into the servers, the reindeer went on strike. It's more efficient to stick to the old ways.

ADMINISTRATIVE ELF

The reindeer have already been taken care of. Their new contract states that they must undergo twenty-three hours of professional development each month. We used the last PD day to convince them that interests of the Reindeer Union were contrary to our mission.

JOLLY OLD MAN

The Reindeer Union be damned, there is still absolutely no reason to change our methods.

ADMINISTRATIVE ELF

I respectfully disagree, sir. We are in no way efficient enough. Case in point: (*pulls out clipboard*) JJ Newsome of Nunavut, Canada.

JOLLY OLD MAN

He's practically a neighbor.

ADMINISTRATIVE ELF

So has above average access to our Wishes and Dreams department.

JOLLY OLD MAN

So?

ADMINISTRATIVE ELF

So what does he want?

JOLLY OLD MAN

Easy. (*Flips open notebook*) He wants a toy pony, and something called a three-hundred-sixty.

ADMINISTRATIVE ELF

How do you know?

JOLLY OLD MAN

How do I know?

ADMINISTRATIVE ELF

How do you know what JJ wants?

JOLLY OLD MAN

He asked me.

ADMINISTRATIVE ELF

He asked you?

JOLLY OLD MAN

Yes, he asked me.

ADMINISTRATIVE ELF

But where is your data?

JOLLY OLD MAN

My data?

ADMINISTRATIVE ELF

Well, you can't trust the boy. How is he supposed to know what he wants?

JOLLY OLD MAN  
Are you kidding me?

ADMINISTRATIVE ELF  
To know what someone actually needs, you need to do research, collect and analyze data, thereby bypassing any need to ask them what they want.

JOLLY OLD MAN  
Is there a hidden camera somewhere? My wife put you up to this.

ADMINISTRATIVE ELF  
You need data to have any possible idea what someone wants.

JOLLY OLD MAN  
His letter explained what he wants this year for Christmas.

ADMINISTRATIVE ELF  
But without any data to back it up, you can't expect to understand his inner desires. Have you given him a Wish-List Assessment?

JOLLY OLD MAN  
Wish-List Assessment?

ADMINISTRATIVE ELF  
My first act as the head of Productivity and Staff Development was to enact a policy of sending all potential giftees a Wish-List assessment to guarantee their Wish-Lists were met with a satisfactory response.

JOLLY OLD MAN  
Wish-List Assessment?

ADMINISTRATIVE ELF  
A three-part questionnaire designed to eliminate any unnecessary or unrealistic wants from actual wishes.

JOLLY OLD MAN  
Unnecessary wants and actual wishes?

ADMINISTRATIVE ELF  
Takes some of the whimsy out of the process of gift designation and replaces it with organization and distribution efficiency.

JOLLY OLD MAN  
But the point is the whimsy--to hope and dream and receive an answer for once in your life.

ADMINISTRATIVE ELF

Like JJ's dream of a toy pony?

JOLLY OLD MAN

Yes!

ADMINISTRATIVE ELF

*(Really not getting it)* But you don't even know that he wants it.

JOLLY OLD MAN

Of course I know.

ADMINISTRATIVE ELF

You don't. And I don't mean to sound demeaning, but you don't seem particularly effective at your job. You don't have data or even any case studies to back up your suggestion that JJ wants this toy pony or his three-sixty.

JOLLY OLD MAN

JJ sent me a letter, asking specifically for a toy pony and a three-hundred-sixty. He included a statement of the four good deeds he has done in the last year as evidence of his deserving the items on his Christmas list.

ADMINISTRATIVE ELF

I see that you are not understanding my point.

JOLLY OLD MAN

Your point?

ADMINISTRATIVE ELF

If we want to know what a young boy or girl wants, it is necessary that we assess their wants using our Wish-List Assessment. It is good science and business practice.

JOLLY OLD MAN

Better than asking?

ADMINISTRATIVE ELF

As if that were even an option in today's world. A complicated world calls for complicated solutions to complex problems that are more convoluted than a simplistic approach like a wish list letter can even begin to address.

JOLLY OLD MAN

Words are clearly coming out of your mouth, but I have no idea what you just said.

ADMINISTRATIVE ELF

It can't possibly be as difficult as you make it out to be, I just explained it in plain language that any elf could understand.

JOLLY OLD MAN

I guess I'm an exception to the rule.

ADMINISTRATIVE ELF

Maybe it's just that you're a bit...*(stops before saying old/senile/daft)* Perhaps a study of our analysis of JJ will aid your understanding.

JOLLY OLD MAN

You analyzed JJ?

ADMINISTRATIVE ELF

While we were having this meeting *(pulls out an electronic device of some sort, the more complicated looking, the better)*.

JOLLY OLD MAN

Now, what is that?

ADMINISTRATIVE ELF

It's only the *(mumbles something technical sounding)*, the latest innovation in Christmas-wishyology.

JOLLY OLD MAN

And it does?

ADMINISTRATIVE ELF

It analyzes giftees desires. I thought you finally understood all that.

JOLLY OLD MAN

And it does that how?

ADMINISTRATIVE ELF

Isn't it obvious.

JOLLY OLD MAN

Not even remotely.

ADMINISTRATIVE ELF

*(Long pause while waiting for JOLLY OLD MAN to 'get it')* You press a button.

JOLLY OLD MAN

And it returns someone's desires?