

I HAVE A SECRET. SANTA!



BY KNOWELLE A KAROLE & AI

Dixon sat at the breakfast table, swirling his spoon through his cereal. He looked up at Daddy with serious eyes. "Is Santa real?" he asked. Daddy nearly choked on his coffee. "Why do you ask, buddy?" Dixon frowned. "Tommy at school said Santa isn't real. He said it's just parents." Daddy set down his mug carefully. His heart squeezed tight. "What do you think?" he asked softly. Dixon's eyes filled with worry. "I want to believe. But I need to know the truth." Daddy took a deep breath. "Dixon, I have something important to tell you. Can you keep a secret?" Dixon nodded eagerly, leaning forward.



"The truth about Santa is complicated," Daddy began. "But I promise to show you something amazing tonight. Something that will answer your question." Dixon's eyes went wide. "Really? What is it?" Daddy smiled mysteriously. "If I told you, it wouldn't be a surprise. But you must promise to go to bed on time and not peek." Dixon bounced in his chair. "I promise! I super promise!" The day crawled by slowly. Dixon could barely concentrate on anything. He kept looking at the clock, willing time to move faster. Finally, evening arrived. "Bedtime, Dixon," Daddy called. Dixon raced upstairs, his heart pounding with excitement.



Dixon tried to sleep but couldn't. His mind raced with possibilities. What would Daddy show him? Suddenly, a gentle hand shook his shoulder. "Wake up, buddy. It's time." Daddy whispered. Dixon sat up, rubbing his eyes. The clock showed midnight. Daddy handed him his warmest coat. "Put this on quickly and quietly." Dixon's hands trembled as he zipped up. They tiptoed downstairs and out the back door. The winter air bit at Dixon's cheeks. Stars sparkled overhead like diamonds. "Where are we going?" Dixon whispered. Daddy pointed to the garden shed. A strange golden light glowed from underneath the door. Dixon gasped.



Daddy opened the shed door. Inside, instead of garden tools, there was a shimmering golden doorway. It rippled like water, casting warm light across their faces. Dixon grabbed Daddy's hand tightly. "What is that?" he breathed. "It's a portal," Daddy explained. "It only appears on special nights, for people who truly need answers." Dixon stepped closer, mesmerized. "Where does it go?" Daddy smiled. "To the North Pole. To Santa's workshop." Dixon's jaw dropped. "We can really go there?" Daddy nodded. "I've been once before, when I was about your age. My father took me. Now it's your turn." Dixon felt tears of joy prick his eyes.



Hand in hand, they stepped through the golden doorway. Dixon felt a warm tingle rush over his skin. The world spun and sparkled around them. Then suddenly, they landed softly in deep snow. Dixon looked around in wonder. Enormous candy cane lampposts lined a cobblestone path. A massive workshop stretched before them, with towers reaching toward the aurora-filled sky. "It's real," Dixon whispered. "It's all real." Bells jingled in the distance. The smell of peppermint and fresh cookies filled the air. Daddy squeezed his hand. "Come on. Someone's expecting us." They walked toward the huge wooden doors of the main workshop building.



The doors swung open by themselves. Inside, the workshop buzzed with activity. Conveyor belts carried toys in every direction. But Dixon noticed something surprising. There were no elves working. Instead, machines hummed and whirred, building toys automatically. "Where are all the elves?" Dixon asked. Daddy chuckled. "That's a good question. Let's find out." They walked deeper into the workshop. The toys were amazing. Dixon saw robots, dolls, trains, and games he'd never imagined. Then he heard laughter echoing from a side room. Warm, jolly laughter that made his heart feel full. "That's him," Daddy said with a grin. "That's Santa."



They entered a cozy room with a crackling fireplace. There he sat. Santa Claus himself, rounder and jollier than any picture Dixon had seen. His white beard flowed down his red suit. His eyes twinkled like stars. "Ah, Dixon!" Santa boomed. "I've been expecting you! And hello again, James. You've grown a fine beard since I last saw you!" Dixon froze, starstruck. Daddy gently nudged him forward. "Go on, buddy." Dixon approached slowly. "You're real," he whispered. Santa's laugh filled the room. "As real as you are, my boy! Come, sit. Have a cookie. We have much to talk about."



Dixon munched on the most delicious chocolate chip cookie he'd ever tasted. "Santa," he began nervously, "why don't most people believe in you?" Santa's expression grew gentle. "Because magic works differently than people think, Dixon. I need children to believe, but not everyone is ready for the truth." Dixon frowned, confused. Santa continued, "The magic of Christmas lives in kindness, generosity, and wonder. When people stop believing, they can still have Christmas. They just experience it differently." Daddy nodded. "Santa appears to those who need him most." Santa winked. "Your father learned this lesson long ago. Now you understand too."



"But what about the elves?" Dixon asked, remembering the empty workshop. Santa chuckled. "Ah, you noticed! The elves retired years ago. They taught me their magic, then went to live their own lives. Now the workshop runs on the magic of belief itself." He gestured around the room. "Every kind act, every generous thought, every moment of wonder from children around the world powers this place." Dixon's eyes widened with understanding. "So when kids stop believing, you lose power?" Santa shook his head. "No, dear boy. They just express the magic differently. Through family, kindness, and love." Dixon smiled. Everything made sense now.



Santa leaned forward, his expression serious but kind. "Dixon, you now know the truth. But with this knowledge comes responsibility." Dixon sat up straighter. "What do you mean?" Santa explained, "You cannot tell other children about me or this place. Each person must find their own path to belief or understanding." Dixon thought about Tommy at school. "But what if they ask me?" Daddy spoke up. "Tell them what you believe in your heart. Let them decide for themselves." Santa nodded. "Exactly. The magic works best when it's discovered, not explained." Dixon understood. Some secrets were meant to protect wonder.



Santa stood and walked to a special shelf. He pulled down a small snow globe containing a tiny workshop. "This is for you, Dixon. A reminder of tonight." Dixon took it carefully. Inside, tiny lights twinkled. "It's beautiful," he breathed. Santa knelt down. "Whenever you doubt, whenever you forget the magic, shake this globe. Remember that wonder exists for those who keep their hearts open." Dixon hugged Santa tightly. "Thank you for being real." Santa's eyes glistened. "Thank you for believing. Now, you and your father should head home. Morning comes early." Dixon nodded, clutching his precious gift.



They stepped back through the golden portal into the garden shed. The magical doorway shimmered and disappeared behind them. Dixon looked at the snow globe in his hands, proof it had all been real. Back in his room, Daddy tucked him in. "So, did you get your answer?" he asked. Dixon smiled sleepily. "Yes. Santa is real. But it's complicated." Daddy kissed his forehead. "The best things usually are." The next day at school, Tommy asked again, "So, is Santa real or not?" Dixon thought carefully, remembering his promise. "I believe in the magic of Christmas," he said simply. And that was enough.



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