

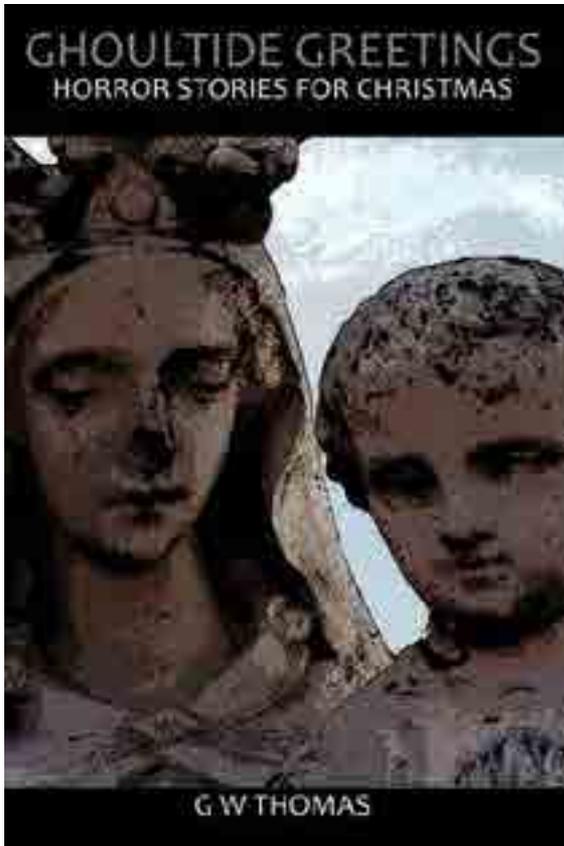
GHOUTLIDE GREETINGS
HORROR STORIES FOR CHRISTMAS

THE SIXTH TALE:

SANTA



G. W. THOMAS



Ghoultide Greetings: Horror Stories For Christmas is seventeen tales by G. W. Thomas to make your Christmas nights a little less sleepy. The book contains old fashioned ghost stories, a Cthulhu Mythos tale or two, several Strange Northerns, even the odd Science Fiction tale like the one presented here: "Santa". The entire Yuletide experience is wrapped in a frame story, giving you an eighteenth story for free.

<http://ragemachinebooks.gwthomas.org/horror/>

THE SIXTH TALE: **SANTA**



G . W . T H O M A S

THE SIXTH TALE: SANTA

JAMIE wiped the tears from his eyes and repeated the words for the hundredth time. “There *is* a Santa Claus! There *is* a Santa Claus!” Earlier that evening a careless remark by Uncle Nathan spurred Mom and Dad to take the matter in hand.

“Jamie is eight, more than old enough to know that there is no real Santa,” Dad said. “Most of the kids his age stopped believing two years ago. I only left it this long because it seemed harmless. But now—”

Mom quietly agreed. Uncle Nathan was her brother. How she glared at him when he had said, “Ha ha, Jamie, I bet that’s Santa Claus.” The adults had been listening to a news report. A meteorite had been seen landing near town.

The scientists rushed out to investigate. The religious nuts as well. The discussion of “hippie-weirdoes” and all that “occult bull” went over Jamie’s head. Then Uncle Nathan had blundered, “Course, it can’t be Santa since he don’t exist.”

But Jamie believed. No matter what any of them said, he knew: there was a Santa.

THE SPACESHIP lie all around the clearing. The creature’s dead body was covered in light powdery snow that fell in wet clumps. The prone form wriggled but not as a living thing moves. Something inside shifted. The blue-green skin cracked, allowing a gray-silver foam to spread out over the snow. The glutinous mass collected near the body, then took a course directly away from the crash site. The foamy slime sped with surprising speed, especially since the below zero temperatures froze everything to ice. As it crept away from its old form, the liquid touched hundreds of spherical globes. With the slightest contact the balls sank down into the snow and disappeared.

When the scientific team arrived at the site, not much remained except for a few metal scraps (all perfectly recognizable: iron, aluminum, nickel) and an odd black patch where the Zamorak had been. The crew took a few metal samples, a photograph of the dark spot then gave up the hunt, driving back in their vans to warm Christmas toddies.

THE GRAY sludge moved on without lessening its speed. It searched for the quantra, the ray of mind energy

that would mold it back into a Zamorak. The inchoate mass found no trace of the quantra but did detect light. It followed the beams to a flashing, gaudy mixture of green, red, yellow and orange. The illumination seemed to spiral around a long artificial structure.

The jelly climbed the vertical surface as easily as it had traveled the horizontal plane of the ground. Beyond, the light was a transparent shield and past that the warm energies of a quantra—or something very similar. A small being about half the size of the Zamorak was making auditory ejaculations. The sludge absorbed its mental thought waves, taking in the information on how to reform the Zamorak. Only the information was different. A large portly figure, and separate bovine pseudopodia ...

JAMIE stopped crying when he heard the sounds outside. He approached the window with a lump in his throat. It was probably just Uncle Nathan getting into his beat-up Ford, but he had to look.

What he saw filled him with great exhilaration. There he was! There was Santa and next to him, a sleigh lead by eight tiny reindeer. Jamie cheered, pounded on the window. “I see you, Santa! I know you exist!” he cried with joy.

Below, Santa noticed the sound, turned slowly, his face expressionless. He watched the young boy for a moment without waving back. Then with no apparent reason he got into his sleigh and cracked the whip. The vehicle ran along the ground, picking up speed. Just before reaching the back yard fence, the sledge rose into the air and flew off into the low-lying clouds hanging above the house.

Jamie failed to notice Santa's odd expression. He smiled enough for both of them. He ran to the living room where the adults all sat reading, not talking to each other.

"I saw him! I saw him!" yelled the excited boy.

"Now, Jamie—" started his father, but he never finished because the son had run for the back door through the kitchen. The parents followed crying their protests.

Jamie went directly to the tracks outside his window. "See Mom? See Dad? He was here. I saw him."

The adults, Uncle Nathan joining the pack, stood in the wet snow in their slippers and exchanged blank looks. Then Mom's expression changed as she attacked her brother, "Well done, little brother. Who did you put up to this? Haven't you done enough for one night?"

"Honest Sarah, I had nothing to do with it."

Dad came to Nathan's rescue. "Son, these aren't Santa's tracks. Probably just some people sleigh-riding. Trespassing, too." He looked grimly at the invasion of his territory.

"No! No!" protested Jamie loudly, "I saw him! I saw him!"

"You imagined it, son. You saw the sleigh and the people inside and you thought it was Santa. Santa doesn't exist."

"No, look by the fence. You can see where he took off into the sky."

Mom gave up. She went back in. The two men went to the fence and looked. They exchanged glances.

"See, Dad? He took off into the air, right here."

Dad shook his head. "Son, the tracks just got covered up by the wind. It only looks like they end here. I bet they

turned that way, went around the fence and kept going."

"No, Dad."

"C'mon, son. It's cold out here."

The three investigators returned to the house.

THE RE-FORMED Zamorak glided through the air. The new shape was much better than the last one. It traveled quickly, finding the crash site in a matter of minutes. Some strange new directive told it there was work to do, a delivery to make not unlike its original goal.

The sleigh came to rest on the fine, powdery snow. The Zamorak reached into the back of the vehicle composed of its own tissue. A large sack found its way to his hand, which it raised with a weird whistling call.

The silver globes broke the surface of the snow. They flew up into the air by some undetectable power, falling into the limitless confines of the sack. The Zamorak cast its new directive at the shiny balls, covering them in silver light. Soon the hundreds of shiny orbs were packed and ready.

MOM AND Dad had had enough. Jamie sat in the living room, staring at his feet. The two parents took turns lecturing the boy. Uncle Nathan had politically disappeared.

"Now, Jamie, for the last time—there is no Santa Claus," Dad said for the fifth time. "Your mother and I have been giving you toys since you were a baby and telling you it was Santa. It's—it's kind of a game."

Jamie said nothing aloud, but inside he repeated the

mantra, “There *is* a Santa Claus—there *is* a Santa Claus—there *is* ...”

It was Mom’s turn. “Darling, I know how disappointed you must feel, but this is a thing every child must—”

“He’s not listening,” growled the father. “I don’t know—I give up!”

Before Mom could reply, her face torn with annoyance with both her boys, a sound drew their attention. A loud drumming on the roof, then a thump made all conversation irrelevant.

“What the hell—? If that’s Nathan again, I’ll kill—”

A clot of snow fell down the chimney, spilling over the grate and stone border. A second later something large was crawling from the dark hole.

No one said anything. A large man dressed in red and white, holding a bag, looked at them with a matter-of-fact expression.

It was Jamie who broke the silence. He ran up to the large portly figure and hugged him. “Oh, Santa, I knew you’d come. I knew you were real.”

Santa didn’t say anything, only stared with blank eyes.

Jamie smiled up at him. “What did you bring me, Santa?”

Santa copied the boy’s smile. He had something to give him. The sack was pulled forward and opened. The red-clad man extracted a shiny, silver globe. Jamie took the ball, not sure what it was, but filled with wonder all the same.

“Thank you, Santa. Thank you.”

Without further conversation, Santa turned back to the opening in the fireplace and vanished, off to deliver other

presents to other children.

“Look, Mom. Look, Dad.” Jamie said, presenting the ball to his parents. There was no malice in his voice, just joy. “Look what Santa gave me.”

The orb cracked, then spilled out millions of miniature Santas.

The invasion had only just begun.

This, too, is a very worthwhile collection of Christmas horror-theme tales ...less Lovecraftian in content and leaning more towards the M.R. James ghost story school -- but worthwhile nevertheless... all the stories are interesting, and I await more work from Thomas with open tentacles!

James Ambuehl, *Nightscares*