

LETTER FROM SANTA CLAUS

“Palace of St. Nicholas
In the Moon
Christmas Morning.

“My dear Susie Clemens:

I have received and read all the letters which you and your little sister have written me by the hand of your mother and your nurses; I have also read those which you little people have written me with your own hands—for although you do not use any characters that are in grown peoples’ alphabet, you used the characters that all children in all lands on earth and in the twinkling stars use; and as all my subjects in the moon are children and use no character but that, you will easily understand that I can read your and your baby sister’s jagged and fantastic marks without any trouble at all. But I had trouble with those letters which you dictated through your mother and the nurses, for I am a foreigner and cannot read English writing well. You will find that I made no mistakes about the things which you and the baby ordered in your *own* letters—I went down the chimney at midnight when you were both asleep and delivered them all myself—and kissed both of you, too, because you are good children, well-trained, nice-mannered, and about the most obedient little people I ever saw. But in the letters which you dictated there were some words which I could not make out for certain, and one or two small orders which I could not fill because we ran out of stock. Our last lot of kitchen-furniture for dolls has just gone to a very poor little child in the North Star away up in the cold country above the Big Dipper. Your mama can show you that star and you will say: ‘Little Snow Flake’ (for that is the child’s name) I’m glad you got that furniture, for you need it more than I.’ That is, you must *write* that, with your own hand, and Snow Flake will write you an answer. If you only spoke it she wouldn’t hear you. Make your letter light and thin, for the distance is great and the postage very heavy.

“There was a word or two in your mama’s hand which I couldn’t be certain of. I took it to be ‘trunk full of doll’s clothes.’ Is that it? I will call at your kitchen door about nine o’clock this morning to inquire. But I must not see anybody and I must not speak to anybody but you. When the kitchen door bell rings George must be blindfolded and sent to open the door. Then he must go back to the dining-room or the china closet and take the cook with him. You must tell George he must walk on tiptoe and not speak—otherwise he will die some day. Then you must go up to the nursery and stand on a chair or the nurse’s bed and put your ear to the speaking-tube that leads down to the kitchen and when I whistle through it you must speak in the tube and say, “Welcome, Santa Claus!” Then I will ask whether it was a trunk you ordered or not. If you say it was, I shall ask you what *color* you want the trunk to be. Your mama will help you to name a nice color and then you must tell me every single thing in detail which you want the trunk to contain. Then when I say ‘Good bye and a Merry Christmas to my little Susie Clemens,’ you must say ‘Goodbye, good old Santa Claus, I thank you very much and please tell that little Snow Flake I will look at her star tonight and say, I know somebody up there and *like* her, too,’ Then you must go down into the library and make George close all the doors that open into the main hall, and everybody must keep still for a little while. I will go to the moon and get those things and in a few minutes I will come down the chimney that belongs to the fireplace that is in the hall—if it is a trunk you want—because I couldn’t get such a thing as a trunk down the nursery chimney, you know.

“People may talk if they want, until they hear my footsteps in the hall. Then you tell them to keep quiet a little while till I go back up the chimney. Maybe you will not hear my footsteps at all—so you may go now and then and peep through the dining-room doors, and by and by you will see that thing which you want, right under the piano in the drawing-room—for I shall put it there. If I should leave any snow in the hall, you must tell George to sweep it into the fireplace, for I haven’t time to do such things. George must not use a broom, but a rag—else he will die some day. You must watch George and not let him run into danger. If my boot should leave a stain on the marble, George must not holy-stone it away. Leave it there always in memory of my visit; and whenever you look at it or show it to anybody you must let it remind you to be a good little girl. Whenever you are naughty and somebody points to that mark which your good old Santa Claus’s boot made on the marble, what will you say, little Sweetheart?

“Goodbye for a few minutes, till I come down to the world and ring the kitchen door-bell.

“Your loving

SANTA CLAUS

“Whom people sometimes call ‘The Man in the Moon.’”