

CHAPTER 5

He Knows If You've Been Bad or Good!

If that wasn't bad enough, guess what happened next!

"Simon! We're here!"

Oh great. The girls showed up, just like they promised.

Simon ran over to them.

"Get in line," he said. "I'll make sure you get a great photo."

"How much is a photo?" asked one girl. I think her name was Carla.

“Twenty-five dollars without a toy. But only ten dollars if you make a donation,” Simon told them.

“What donation?” Carla asked.

“Duh. Can’t you read?” I pointed to the sign. “You have to donate a toy to a poor kid. Then you get a discount.”

Five girls looked in their purses. Then they put their heads together.

“We have enough money for a photo with the discount,” Carla said. “But we don’t have enough money for a toy.”

“Tough. Get lost,” I told her.

Carla rolled her eyes. “You’re a creep, Sam.” Then she looked at Simon. “Can’t you help us out, Simon? Get us some kind of discount? Please? You’re so adorable.”

I wanted to gag. “No, he can’t help you out. Rules are rules.”

“Pleeeeeeeeeze, Simon?”

I could see Simon felt bad. He knew the rules, but because he liked some dumb girl, he was ready



to cheat. What a loser!

Then I had another brainstorm.

I pointed to one girl's shopping bag. "What's in there?" I asked.

"Why?" she said.

"Are they Christmas presents for someone?" I asked her.

"No, nosy. They're for me."

"Why don't you donate them to Santa's gift

box? Make some kid real happy.”

“Because they’re for me, you jerk.”

“Too bad,” I said. “Move along. You’re holding up the line.”

She ran over to her stupid friends. At last, a couple of girls pulled out some make-up, and a hat and mittens set. Carla brought them over.

“Simon, is this all right?” she asked.

“That’s great,” he gushed. “I think you’re wonderful.”

“And I think *you’re* wonderful, Simon,” she said. I was about to vomit when Carla looked over at me. Then she stuck out her tongue.

So I left Simon to pose with his new fan club. Tara took their money and I took the donations over to the box. I saw what Simon had seen earlier. All the board games and the sports gear were gone.

I got really mad. I don’t even know why. Why should I care if stuff got stolen? It wasn’t *my* stuff.

But I did care. Maybe it was just because I was working so hard. But maybe I felt sorry for some

kid with no presents on Christmas morning. I mean, that would really stink.

So I marched over to Tara. “Why are some of the gifts missing?” I demanded.

“What are you talking about?” she asked.

“The games, the teddy bears. They’re not in the box. But all the cheap stuff is still there.”

Tara went over to the donation box. “Oh no! Not again.”

“You mean this has happened before?”

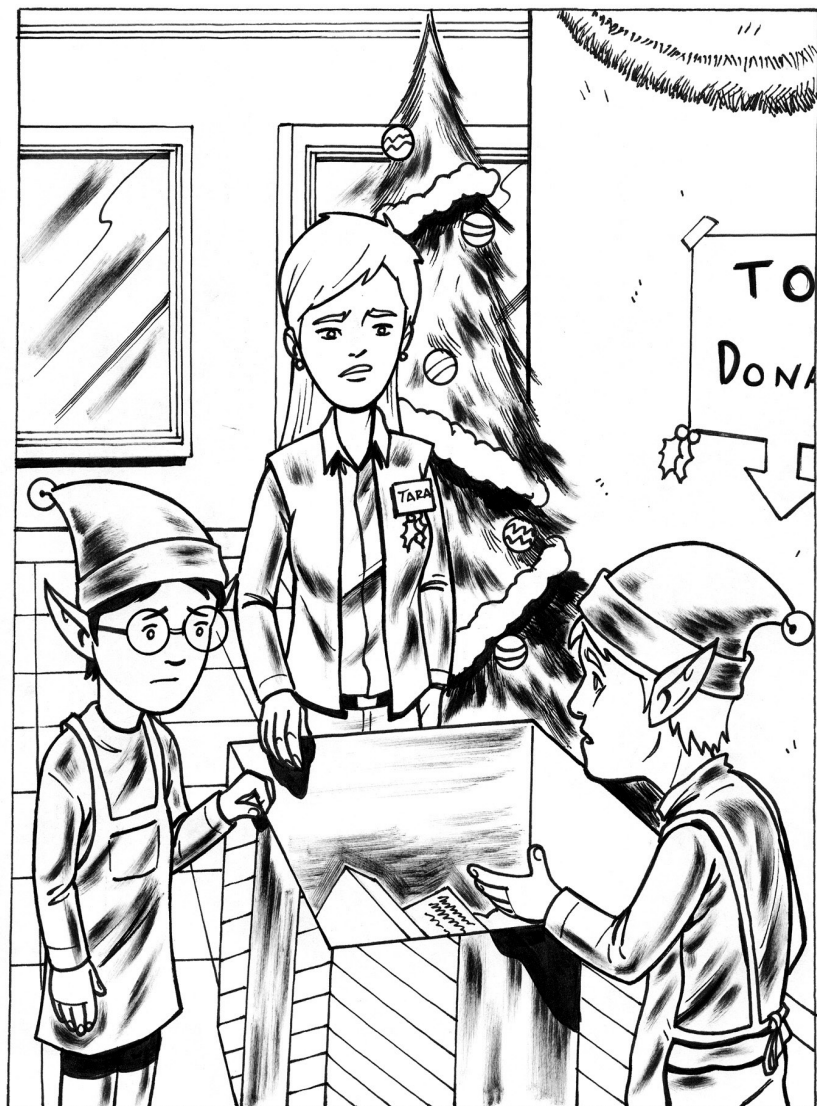
She nodded. “This happened just the other day. And we never found the gifts, either. They were stolen.”

“Did you call the cops?”

“Yup. They couldn’t do much,” Tara replied.

I left her and went back to Simon. The dumb girls had left so I could tell him what was going on. We worked a couple more hours and took turns watching the gift box. But nothing else went missing that afternoon.

But a couple did the next day. Some guy had given a bunch of music store gift cards. Gone.



So were a really neat backpack, a doll and a few dvds.

We never saw it happen. We saw the stuff go in the box, but we never saw it come out.

At last, the day was over. Santa stood up and waved at the kids still in line.

“Ho, ho, ho. Santa has to go,” he said.

Simon and I left, too. We went to the change room and dumped the elf stuff in our locker. We were just heading outside when I remembered my key. My folks were going to a party, so I needed a key to get in the house.

“I’ll catch up,” I told Simon and ran back into the mall.

I hurried into the change room and put the key in our locker. I pulled the door open.

At the bottom of our locker was a doll and a teddy bear. The *stolen* doll and teddy bear.