



*Twelfth Night:
The Best Santa Ever*

By Katie Allen

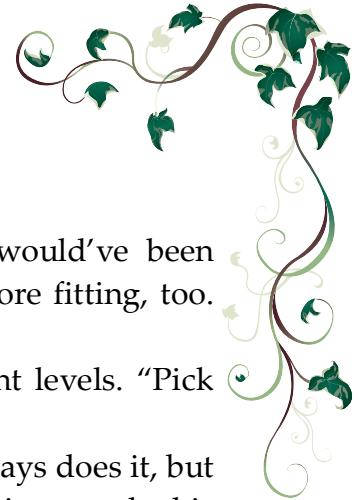


Twelfth Night: The Best Santa Ever

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"Santa? Fuck that."

Melanie sighed. She'd expected this reaction. It would've been easier to ask Alexander Brooks to dress up like Satan—more fitting, too. "But you're our last hope. Please, Xan?"

His scowl darkened to near pre-dentist-appointment levels. "Pick someone else."

"There isn't anyone else," she told him. "George always does it, but he's still in the hospital. Mike, Daphne's husband, was going to take his place, but he's stuck in St. Paul. All the flights are cancelled because of the snow."

"Then George is already there. Tell him to go down a couple floors, say a few ho's, and go back to bed."

Melanie stared at him. "George just had a heart attack."

"A mild one," he grumbled, although he dropped his gaze.

"George is out," she said firmly. "Come on, Xan. It'll be a half-hour out of your life, and then you're free to continue your beard- and belly-free existence. It's for kids. Sick kids." She waited a second and then added, "Really, really sick kids."

Crossing his arms over his chest, Xan leaned his shoulders against the wall. Melanie wished he wouldn't do that. It brought out the definition in his arms, making her even more aware of how disgustingly hot he really was.

"Can't you hire someone who does this professionally?" He grimaced. "Some guy who likes all this Christmas shit?"

Christmas shit? She almost laughed at that. "There's no time. The party's tomorrow night, and all the Santa possibilities are already booked. It's prime professional Santa time, and I wasn't kidding when I said you're our last hope."

"Why can't you do it?"

"Well, for one, the kids don't need to be confused by Santa in drag," she said. "Plus, I'm too short."

His eyes flicked down her body, and she felt a flush of heat rise beneath her skin. "Yeah," he agreed grudgingly. "You're more elf-sized."

Melanie drew herself up to her full five-feet-and-one-inch height. "A *tall* elf, maybe," she protested.

His scowl wavered, as if a smile was fighting to escape. "I don't look like fucking Santa."

Pressing back a triumphant grin, Melanie knew she had him. "You think?" she teased, giving his hard stomach a poke. "This is pretty close to a bowlful of jelly." He growled, and she laughed. "Don't worry. Daphne has the suit and beard and padding and everything. She'll get you all white-haired and chubby."

"Fuck," he groaned, but Melanie could hear the resignation in his voice.

"So you'll do it?" she asked.

He scowled at her for a few seconds before letting his arms fall to his sides in defeat. He gave her a grudging nod.

Unable to hold back a bounce of excitement, she threw her arms around him. "Thank you! You're the best!" She'd meant for it to be a quick hug, but his arms wrapped around her, tucking her against the muscled body she'd been lusting after since she started working for him six months before. A broad hand slid down her back, leaving a trail of heat behind it. Melanie pulled back before she did something embarrassing, like ripping off his paint-smudged clothes and having her way with him.

"Um...so." She wasn't able to meet his eyes and instead focused on a smear of burnt umber decorating his t-shirt. "I'd better call my sister and let her know the crisis has been averted." She turned toward the door that led to her office.

"Wait." His voice stopped her and Melanie looked over her shoulder at him. "If I have to be fucking Santa, then you have to be there, too."

"Of course." She grinned. "Do you think I'd miss seeing this?"

He was smiling a little and Melanie felt suddenly uneasy. "You have to dress up like an elf," he said.

Her smile dropped away. "You're kidding, right?"

Shaking his head and grinning in earnest, Xan said, "Nope."

"But..."

His mouth set in a stubborn line. "No elf, no Santa."

Melanie stared at him, still not quite believing he was serious.

"Do it for the kids," he told her, a smile twitching at the corners of his lips. "The really, really sick kids."

He meant it. Xan wanted her to dress up in an elf suit. Melanie groaned and headed for her office door.

"So you'll do it?" Xan called after her.

"Yes," she snapped as she began pulling the door closed behind her. Melanie stopped and popped her head back into his studio. "You know, I'd never thought Santa could be such an ass."

His laughter drifted through the door as she yanked it closed, hard enough to thump against the doorjamb.

"He's going to do it?"

Melanie winced and moved the phone away when Daphne's excited shriek pierced her eardrum. "Yes, but there's a catch," she said, returning the phone to her ear.

"A catch? What kind of catch? Is he allergic to fake beard hair?"

"No," Melanie said and then paused. "At least as far as I know. The catch is that he won't do it unless I'm there."

"Oh." Daphne sounded relieved. "Well, that's okay then. You were going to be there anyway."

With a sigh, Melanie added, "Dressed like an elf."

There was a brief silence, and then Daphne burst into laughter. "Oh Lord," she wheezed as she tried to get her mirth under control. "That's perfect. I didn't realize your temperamental artist had such a good sense of humor."

"He's not temperamental as much as...crabby," Melanie corrected. "And he's not mine. *And* it's not funny. Where am I supposed to get an elf suit by tomorrow night?"

Still giggling, Daphne told her, "Don't worry about that. I have something I wore a few years ago to surprise Mike on Christmas Eve, so I've got you covered. Not very *well* covered, but beggar elves can't be chooser elves."

"What does that mean?" Melanie asked suspiciously. "Are you going to turn me into a slutty elf?"

"You'll see," Daphne chuckled. "I'll bring it over to the studio tonight along with the Santa suit so both of you can try on your costumes. Wait 'til you see it. This elf outfit will definitely make your boss sit up and take notice."

A hot flush rose in Melanie's cheeks. She was grateful her sister wasn't there to see it and mock her mercilessly. "I don't want..." She trailed off, not able to even say it, since it was such a bald-faced lie.

"Don't even start," Daphne told her. "All you've been able to talk about for the past six months is this guy's gorgeous eyes and body and face and ass—"

"I never said anything about his ass!" she protested, glancing uneasily at the door to the studio. It was closed, but who knew what Xan could hear from the other room?

"You're totally in lust with him," Daphne continued, running right over her sister's interruption.

Fanning her face, which now felt like it was on fire, Melanie said, "I appreciate that he's aesthetically pleasing, that's all."

Daphne's snort held a world of disbelief.

"Okay," Melanie conceded. "He's hot. I admit that. He's not interested, though, so it's pointless."

"Is he gay?"

"No," Melanie sighed. "Just because a guy isn't interested in me doesn't mean he's gay."

With a skeptical grunt, Daphne said, "Any guy who doesn't want you is either gay or nuts."

"Thank you, darling sister."

"He'll reconsider after he sees you in this slutty-elf costume."

Melanie's fond smile fell away and she closed her eyes. "Kill me now, please."

Xan was an incredibly hot Santa.

Despite the padding, he was still the sexiest thing in a red suit. The white trim on his hat actually made his eyes appear even darker—almost black—and brought out his smoky sweep of lashes. Melanie swallowed and smoothed down her skirt.

There wasn't much to smooth down. The white faux-fur trim ended at mid-thigh, leaving an excessive amount of red-and-white-striped tights showing. The dress wasn't much better up top. No matter how much she tugged, there was still cleavage showing above the plush red fabric.

There's probably more fabric in my hat than in this dress, she thought glumly, shifting in her heels—red, patent-leather Mary Janes, also supplied by an annoyingly amused Daphne, who'd stopped by the studio as promised, costumes in hand.

"You two look great," Daphne announced, startling Melanie out of her thoughts. "Except you, Santa, need to smile. You'll scare the kids."

"Smiling was not part of the deal," grumbled Xan.

"You agreed to play Santa," Melanie corrected. "Santa smiles. A lot."

He bared his teeth at them.

Melanie sighed. "Now that's just scary."

Daphne snorted a laugh. "I'd better run. Becky'll be dropping the kids off at home soon. I'm working at the hospital tomorrow afternoon, so come to my office around five and I'll help you get all suited up. Everything fit?"

"No," Melanie told her, tugging at her dress again.

"Yes it does." Daphne didn't even look at her. "I was talking to Santa. You good?"

"I guess." His long-suffering expression made Melanie forget her elf-costume woes as she bit back a smile. "Aren't I supposed to have a beard?" Xan asked.

"Yep." Daphne nodded. "And a white wig and bushy white eyebrows. I didn't have you try those on tonight, since they're all pretty much one-size-fits-all. I'll bring everything with me tomorrow." She pulled open the door. "In the meantime, Santa—practice smiling." She put on a fake grin and pointed a finger at her mouth. "It's not hard—see?"

Xan just growled, and she laughed. "See you!"

The door closed behind her with a thump and Melanie shot a look at Xan's sulky face. "So how badly did you want to flip my sister off just now?"

"You can't even imagine," he grumbled, although the humor was back in his expression. He plopped down in the battered armchair tucked against the wall. Normally, he sat on a stool to paint but Xan insisted on having the armchair for when he needed a more comfortable place to sit. Every so often, Melanie would arrive at work to find him sleeping in that chair. Those days, he was extra crabby.

"I can't believe I let you talk me into this," he groaned.

"You? What about me?" she gestured at her scantily clad body. "I'm going to be walking around a hospital in this, looking like an elf with low self-esteem."

He laughed, tugging at his fur-lined collar. "This suit is not lounge-wear, that's for sure. This thing is choking me."

"Here." She bent over and pushed his hands away. "You're going to pop a button off, and then Daphne will yell at you. Let me get it." Melanie pushed the button through the hole, opening his collar. "There."

"Thank you."

Leaning over as she was, their faces were very close together. Melanie cleared her throat. "This is really nice of you to do this," she told him sincerely. "Thank you."

"Seeing you in this elf suit is thanks enough," he said, his lips curling up at the corners. His gaze was focused on something below her face. Glancing down, Melanie saw that her bent-over position was giving Xan a great view of her bra-less cleavage. She straightened and slapped a hand over her neckline.

"Um...thanks?" she said, feeling suddenly awkward. "I'll be glad to get it off—I mean, to change into my regular clothes."

"I like it," Xan told her, reaching out to catch a fold of her skirt beneath his fingers. "It puts me in the holiday spirit." His voice was rough and growly, and the sound warmed her lower belly, melting her insides.

Bad idea, Mel, her practical side told her turned-on side firmly. *He's your boss!* She cleared her throat. "I should...um, help you out of your suit."

His grin was wolfish. "Sounds fun. Can I ask you to do something first?"

"I don't know." Her heart was pounding, but Melanie wasn't sure if it was from apprehension or excitement. "Last time you asked me to do something, I ended up wearing an elf costume."

"This is just a tiny thing."

She didn't believe him for a second but her curiosity won out. "Fine. What?"

"Sit on my lap." He patted his knee. "Tell me what you want for Christmas."

Melanie swallowed. "Sit on your lap?" she parroted, flushing when her voice came out high-pitched and nervous.

Giving her a tug on her skirt, he held his smile, although his eyes were dark and intense and so, so hot. He didn't say anything else but just drew her in with his magnetic gaze and a gentle pull on her skirt. Before she even realized what she was doing, she'd stepped closer and settled gingerly on Xan's knee.

"There's not much room left with that belly," she teased nervously, giving the padding at his middle a poke.

"There's plenty of room. You're tiny." He lifted and turned her so she was sitting sideways across his lap, her feet hanging over the arm of the chair. "There."

"What's this about?" she asked suspiciously.

"What do you mean?" His eyes held a devilish gleam. "Isn't this what Santa does? Invite sexy elves onto his lap?"

Her stomach fluttered at the compliment but Melanie forced a frown. "Sexy? You've never even looked at me twice before."

"I've looked at you," he corrected, his hand settling on her thigh right above her knee. "All the time. I can't stop looking at you."

"Really?" Catching the flattered note in her tone, she tried to squash it and keep her voice sounding neutral. "I've never noticed."

"That's because I didn't want anything to happen between us."

Melanie blinked and tried to slide off his lap. When he caught her hip, holding her in place, she met his eyes. "What are you doing?" she demanded, annoyed how he'd so easily gotten her on his lap when he

obviously felt so little for her. "Why are you messing with me?"

His hand above her knee traced soothing circles. "I've been trying to keep my hands off you since your first day. Seeing you in this," his gaze followed the line of her body, "ruined all my good intentions."

"Good intentions?"

"You're the best assistant I've ever had," he admitted. "I didn't want to fuck that up."

A giggle escaped. "Literally."

He smiled back. "Exactly."

"So what's changed?"

His hand slid a tiny bit higher on her thigh. "You're hotter than hell in those suits you wear but tonight..." He shook his head, blowing out a hard breath. "I think you blew a circuit in my brain when I saw you in this dress. All my willpower's just...gone."

"Really?" This time, the word came out in a purr.

He nodded, his eyes narrow and hot. "Yeah. So tell me, what do you want for Christmas, little elf?"

She wiggled a little in excitement. Although Melanie still couldn't really believe this was actually happening, she didn't want to mess up this opportunity. She stretched up toward his ear, and he bent his head closer to her.

"What I would like for Christmas," she murmured in his ear, "is a kiss from Santa." Moving nearer until her lips brushed his earlobe, she added, "Too bad I'm not getting a present this year, since I'm on the naughty list." Melanie felt him shiver but wasn't sure whether it was caused by the touch of her lips or her words.

"Lucky for you," Xan told her, his voice gravelly, "I have a special bag of gifts for naughty little elves."

A hot rush of moisture dampened her thighs at his words. "So I get my present?"

In answer, his hand left her hip and cupped the back of her head, holding her still as his mouth descended. Just the light contact of his lips drew a moan from her. It was even better than she'd imagined—*he* was even better. All those daydreams about him hadn't even come close to the amazing reality of his mouth on hers.

Xan deepened the kiss, and her world exploded with heat. As his tongue invaded her mouth, she struggled to get closer, twisting around until she straddled his lap. His hands slid beneath her skirt to cup her ass, kneading the cheeks firmly enough to draw a shiver from her.

She gripped his head with both hands, her fingers burrowing through his hair, those closely trimmed locks she'd teased him were too short for any self-respecting artist. Now the strands felt perfect—long enough to grip and gently tug, long enough to hold onto as she pressed even harder into the kiss.

His teeth nipped at her bottom lip, and she gasped at the pleasurable sting. As wonderful as the pressure of his mouth was, it wasn't enough. Melanie tugged at his coat, needing the unyielding planes of his chest beneath her hands.

"Don't rip it," he warned her, his voice husky. "Your sister is scary."

Right. Daphne's wrath. Melanie pulled away from the kiss and slid off Xan's lap.

"Wait," he protested.

She smiled, a slow, sexy curve of her lips. "Just getting you out of your coat, Santa." Bending over to give him a good view down her low-cut neckline, Melanie unbuckled the black belt circling his enhanced waist and pulled it free, tossing it behind her without taking her eyes away from Xan. She flicked each button through its hole until the coat hung open and his eyes were hot enough to singe the faux fur rimming her dress.

"Fuck, you're beautiful," he groaned, yanking his arms from the sleeves and throwing the coat behind him. His suspenders were next, and she took her time, easing the elastic over his shoulders and down his arms, coasting her fingers over the hard lines beneath the fabric of his shirt. She reached for his top button but Xan caught her hands.

"Your turn." The words were a thick growl, and Melanie thrilled at the need in his voice. "Take something off."

She straightened, trying to think. There wasn't much for her to take off and she wasn't ready to be completely naked when he was still covered up from neck to toe. Turning her back to Xan, she hooked a finger in either side of the waistband of her tights and slowly pulled them down.

She bent at the waist as she slid the fabric over her knees and down her calves, knowing the position would make her skirt creep up the back of her thighs, exposing almost the full length of her legs to him.

Melanie heard the catch in his breathing as she unbuckled her shoes, pulling her feet free, one at a time, of both the tights and shoes. The tile floor was cool against her bare soles, but every other part of her body was almost unbearably hot. The plush fabric of her skirt brushed against her ass cheeks, exposed by her thong. The teasing touch of the skirt sensitized her skin, making her even more desperate for Xan's hands on her.

Turning back to Xan, she asked, "May I take your shirt off now?"

He slowly nodded. Sitting in the armchair, half-undressed as he was, he looked like some gorgeous, debauched king. Melanie returned to straddle his lap as she unbuttoned his shirt, revealing his sculpted chest, lightly furred and irresistible. She had to touch him. Her fingers slid over the flexed muscles beneath his skin, strumming the rise of each ridge of his abs before tracing invisible lines back to his chest.

Finding his nipples, she played and tugged until he groaned, the sound vibrating beneath her hands. She needed more. His body was addictive. She wanted to touch and taste every inch of him. Ducking her head, she teased one of the rigid peaks with her tongue.

"Fuck," Xan hissed, his hands finding the bare cheeks of her ass and squeezing—hard. She moaned in response, pushing into his grip as her lips closed around one of his nipples. His hand lifted, and his palm smacked down on her ass. Although it didn't really hurt, it startled her enough to bring her head up and meet his eyes.

"Out of that dress," he ordered, and her entire body flushed with need.

"Only if you get out of those pants," she shot back, and he grinned, but it was more of a wicked, feral showing of his teeth than any expression of amusement.

"It's a deal," he rasped. "Boots first." He held one out, and she grasped it, bending over and shimmying a little more than necessary to pull off his boot. For his other foot, Melanie turned her back to him, straddling his leg and grasping his boot. Arching her back, she pushed her

ass up and out as she tugged the boot free. His hungry growl behind her made her smile.

“Dress,” he demanded.

Reaching between her shoulder blades, Melanie grasped the zipper tab and pulled. Turning to face Xan, she hesitated for a moment, but the intensity and heat of his gaze gave her courage. Tugging the dress down, she shimmied and the dress crumpled around her feet. Naked except for her thong, she stepped out of the pool of fabric.

With a hungry sound, Xan surged out of the chair and caught her against him, his mouth coming down hard on hers. After a start of surprise, she melted into the kiss, tossing her arms around his neck. His mouth moved to her neck and she let her head drop back, allowing him access. Dropping to his knees, Xan flicked one stiff nipple with his tongue.

Melanie jerked against him as a line of fire ran straight from the tip of her breast to her pussy. He licked the straining nipple again and then closed his lips around it, sucking strongly and forcing a gasp from her. Her fingers worked against his skull as he teased the nub to a desperate point and then pinched it between his teeth.

“Xan!” she cried out, and his mouth gentled, soothing her breast with light licks and brushes of his lips. He switched to her other nipple, and she whimpered as her knees wavered beneath her. His mouth trailed down to her belly, his tongue diving into her bellybutton as his fingers caught the sides of her thong. He dragged her underwear down around her thighs, tugging until her last bit of clothing dropped around her ankles.

Being naked didn’t bother her, since Xan’s lips were teasing her thigh. She tried to widen her stance but the thong hobbled her. Impatiently, she kicked away the tiny piece of fabric and spread her legs. Gripping her thighs with strong fingers, he rewarded her with the flick of his tongue against her clit. Melanie shuddered as hot moisture slid from her pussy.

“Please,” she whimpered.

With a guttural sound, he surged to his feet, yanking his pants and boxer briefs down. She helped him eagerly, crouching to shove his clothes around his ankles. Xan stepped free as he pulled his arms from the shirt

and let it drop.

Melanie looked up at him, awed by how beautiful he was. His cock was thick and stiff and gorgeous, and her mouth watered just looking at it. Before she had a chance to taste him, Xan reached down and helped her stand. Cupping her face in his hands, he kissed her sweetly.

"You're amazing," he rasped as he pulled away, not giving her a chance to respond before his lips took hers again in a short, hard kiss. "Wait here."

He strode over to his box of supplies and dug through it, knocking several tubes of acrylic paint to the floor before pulling out a foil packet.

"You have condoms in with your paints?" she asked, bemused.

Xan ripped open the wrapper and shrugged. "I knew I couldn't resist you much longer," he admitted, rolling the condom over his erection.

"But with your *paints*?"

He laughed and grabbed her hand, pulling her against him. The feel of his naked body made her shiver despite the heat that pulsed like a fever beneath her skin. Palming her ass with both hands, Xan lifted her until their faces were level. The way he was looking at her made Melanie catch her breath. She didn't think anyone had ever stared at her with such intensity and focus before. It was as if she was the only person in the world who existed to Xan.

Then he kissed her, and everything else disappeared in flood of desperate need. Wrapping her legs around his hips, she clutched his head, kissing him back with everything inside her. He turned and pressed her against the wall. The cool touch of the painted wall against her back intensified the heat of his body.

Without breaking the kiss, Xan bent his knees and drove his cock into her. She cried out against his mouth, loving the amazing feeling of fullness after months of empty longing.

"Okay?" he asked, going still.

Her legs tightened around him. "Better than okay," she gasped and his eyes flared with desire. Xan pulled almost free and then slammed in again, even deeper than the first time. Over and over, he plunged his cock into her body as she gripped him with her arms and legs and pussy,

trying to hold him inside her at the same time she craved the addictive friction of his thrusts.

His fingers gripped her thigh and even that pressure added to the ecstasy of the moment. His cock pounded into her, harder and faster, driving her higher and higher until her climax crashed over her and she screamed, every muscle in her body taut, her hands scrabbling for purchase on Xan's slick skin. She pressed her face into his corded neck as the ripples of pleasure shivered through her body and multicolored lights exploded behind her squeezed-shut eyelids.

With a final thrust, Xan buried his cock deep inside her and shuddered with his own orgasm, his hands tightening in a way that should've hurt but instead set Melanie off again in a series of delicious aftershocks.

Locked together, they leaned against the wall, drifting in the final blissful strands of pleasure. Xan dropped a kiss on her shoulder, and she smiled.

"No wonder everyone loves Santa Claus," she murmured and felt his chest vibrate with laughter.

Daphne poked her head into her office and cocked her head. "Where's Santa? And why do you look like someone just killed your pet bunny?"

"He's on his way and because Santa's a dick."

Daphne quickly stifled her laugh. "Can't wait to hear all about it. Just let me finish up a couple things and I'll be back."

Melanie just gave her sister a half-hearted wave, unable to dredge up a smile. That morning, she'd almost skipped into work, so excited to see Xan again. Instead of a smile or a hug or even a "hello", he'd snapped at her to get out of his studio. She'd retreated to her office to mope and call herself an idiot for believing one night of sex would change everything. She'd even composed a resignation letter but ended up putting it through the shredder before she could throw it into the asshole's face. Despite her dickhead boss, Melanie really did love her job.

"Hey." Xan came in, closing Daphne's office door behind him. "Where's your sister?" He tossed the Santa suit over the back of the desk chair.

"Oh, you're talking to me now?" Melanie snipped, disappointed she didn't have any better cutting remark than that.

"Yeah, about that..." Xan raked his fingers through his hair, actually looking a little embarrassed. "I was doing something."

She gave him a withering look before turning away without saying anything.

"Making something, actually," he clarified.

Melanie shrugged. "Whatever."

"A Christmas present."

That caught her attention and she turned her head. He was indeed holding a gift, wrapped in red and green paper with a really lopsided bow stuck on the top.

"For my favorite elf."

She shoved down a surge of excitement. "You were really rude."

"Yeah." He frowned at the bow and tried to straighten it. "Sorry about that. I didn't have much time."

"I figured it was your subtle way of telling me last night was a mistake," she admitted. Unable to meet his eyes, she focused on the pathetic bow.

"Of course not!" He reached over, tilting her chin up so she had to look at him. "Last night was incredible. And when have I ever been subtle? If it'd been a mistake, I would've just said so."

Relief began to seep into Melanie, loosening the tight knot in her stomach. "Actually, I was being sarcastic about the 'subtle' part but never mind that. Give me my present."

He held it out, as awkward as she'd ever seen him. When she tried to take it from him, he didn't let go. "Remember I only had a day for this, so don't be too judge-y."

"I'm never judge-y," she retorted and then pretended not to hear his snort of disbelief. He released his grip on the gift and she tore the paper off, revealing the back of a stretched canvas. Turning it over in suddenly shaky hands, Melanie looked down at a painting of herself,

dressed like a sexy elf, looking over her shoulder and laughing.

She swallowed, feeling sudden tears prickle behind her eyes. "You made me look so...beautiful."

Xan took a step closer. "I didn't make you anything. You *are* beautiful."

"Thank you, Xan," she told him, tearing her eyes away from the painting. "I love it."

He grinned. "I'm not such a bad Santa after all, huh?"

"Well..." she teased, letting out a shriek of laughter as he snatched her off her feet and kissed her. When she could breathe again, she admitted, "You're the best Santa ever."

The End

Author Bio

Katie Allen writes erotic romances for Ellora's Cave (ellorascave.com), including *One-Two Punch*, *Private Dicks* and her latest release, *Chasing Her Tail*. She thinks she's pretty funny. Find out more about her and check out her books on her website, ktallen.com.