



Tuesday 21 October

Last night I dreamed I was a Christmas Elf.  
It was Christmas Day, and we were all at  
Father Christmas's lodge in the Arctic Hills,  
celebrating another successful year.

At one end of the room was a roaring fire, framed  
by garlands of holly, ivy and mistletoe; at the  
other sat Father Christmas, flanked by his Right-

Hand and Left-Hand Elves.

And in between sat the rest of us: row after row of red-faced Toymaking Elves, feasting, laughing and joking.

I was just tucking into my second turkey leg, when Father Christmas stood and tapped his glass with a spoon, to get our attention. We all fell silent.

‘Dearest elves,’ he said, sliding gracefully off his chair and on to his feet. Unfortunately he is quite short, so all we could see behind the table was his red velvet hat.

‘Ah,’ said Father Christmas thoughtfully.

Steinar, his Right-Hand Elf, and Ola, his Left-Hand Elf, helped him to stand on the seat of his chair. Father Christmas mopped his face with his handkerchief,



*Father Christmas stood and tapped his glass*



collected himself, and resumed his speech.

‘You have worked tirelessly all year, and I am quite overwhelmed with gratitude. On behalf of all the children of the world, thank you, thank you, thank you!’

We all clinked glasses and drank huge mouthfuls of the most delicious mead.

‘Now, I know what you’re all wondering,’ Father Christmas continued. ‘Who can it be? Who is my Christmas Elf of the Year?’

The room filled with excited chatter.

‘Well . . .’

An expectant hush descended.

‘Without further delay . . .’

Everyone looked around the room.



‘My Christmas Elf of the Year is . . .’

An elf on the far table let out a yelp of excitement.

‘The one and only . . .’

Steinar, the Right-Hand Elf, cleared his throat, impatiently.

‘. . . Tog!’

That was ME!! *I* was Christmas Elf of the Year!

The room burst into wild applause.

‘Up you get . . .’ said my mother.

But I couldn’t seem to get up from the table! It was as if my bottom was glued to my seat.

‘. . . Tog, get up! You’re late!’

I opened my eyes. I wasn’t in Father Christmas’s house at all. I was in my bunk, in the tiny room I shared with my four younger brothers and sisters:

Twig, Leaf, Plum and Pin. My mother was shaking me by the shoulder.

‘Your father and I are off to work! You need to get the little ones to school!’

Which was when I remembered who I really am: an unemployed one-hundred-and-sixty-year-old loser elf who is still living with his parents.

Oh, and just in case it’s a human reading this (it’s always possible): elves live ten times as long as humans. So one hundred and sixty to us is like sixteen to you.