

# **“I Believe in Santa Claus”**

## Chapter One

### Thanksgiving

Winter had arrived early in Chicago. A giant snowstorm had already dumped six inches of a thick wet snow with no signs of a let up. The huge snowflakes sparkled brilliantly off the light from the street post. In the living room window, a cozy amber glow emanated from the fireplace. The Edwards were in the dining room preparing for their Thanksgiving feast. They lived on the South side of Chicago, in a nice working class neighborhood, called Beverly. They lived in the middle of the block in a brownish red two-story brick house.

The dining room looked like a picture out of a Martha Stewart magazine. A crystal chandelier with twelve lit candles hung over the table. The table itself was right out of the Middle Ages, made of dark mahogany wood with dragons carved into the table's legs. The chairs were just as ornate. The plates were Mrs. Edwards's best china. The glasses were of course from Ireland, and grandma's silverware was being used for the first and only time of the year.

An elaborate spread covered the table. The staples were there: The golden brown turkey, mashed potatoes, gravy, stuffing, candied yams, and cranberries. It was the desserts that made Mrs. Edwards Thanksgiving special: A homemade apple pie, peppered with cinnamon, a pumpkin pie four inches thick, with gobs of whipped cream on top, a plate of assorted chocolates from Bavaria, and as the centerpiece of her creations was a multi-flavored jello mold in the shape of a turkey.

At the head of the table is Mr. Edwards. He is carving the turkey with great pride. Mr. Edwards is a tall muscular man, however he does have a middle-aged belly, which Mrs. Edwards reminds him of all the time. Today his belly is hidden behind a Chicago Bears sweatshirt and his favorite blue jeans. His hair is curly, light -brown and has begun to recede. He has dark brown eyes

and a smirk instead of a smile. He looks, at his wife, with a twinkle in his eye.

Mrs. Edwards is spooning mashed potatoes onto her daughter's plate. She is slender and above average in height. She has long black hair with slight curls at the end; her hair reaches half way down her back. Her eyes are a gorgeous blue. Her smile lights up a room. She is wearing a nice blouse and slacks. She looks at her daughter, Tina, sadly.

Tina is a very cute five year old. She has big blue eyes like her mother, and that funny smirk like her father. She is wearing a red bandanna over her head because her hair has fallen out. She is dressed casually in a red t-shirt and blue jeans. Her older brother Tommy is seated across the table from her.

Tommy looks like his father, except that he has thick brown hair with a funny cowlick on the back of his head. His eyes are blue like his mother's. He is athletic and spunky, but skinny. He is wearing a Bear's sweatshirt like his dad's, and a pair of blue jeans. He reaches under the table to feed his dog, Pashankus, some turkey. Pashankus is a highly intelligent Australian Blue Heeler. He is an average size dog sporting a thick dark gray coat with tinges of blue. He has a distinctive black circle around his right eye.

There is an uncomfortable silence in the air, especially for such a joyous occasion. Mrs. Edwards bows her head and puts her hands together. The family follows her lead. "I would like to give thanks before we start eating. I know we have a lot to be thankful for, and I've never asked for anything... But could you please help our little Tina." Mrs. Edwards reaches for Tina's hand and gives her a loving squeeze. Tina smiles, as she slips a piece of turkey to Pashankus with her other hand.

Tommy gets an idea and asks, "How about if I ask Santa Claus to help Tina?" Mr. Edwards grins and rolls his eyes. "How old are you?" Tommy looks at him curiously, "Ten years old, why?" Mrs. Edwards shoots Mr. Edwards the evil eye, and then looks at Tommy. "Sure honey. Why don't you ask Santa? Every little bit helps. And, I'm very proud of you for being so nice to your sister

lately." Tommy blushes and turns his head. The feast begins.

As the Edwards enjoy their dinner, Pashankus continues his rounds underneath the table. Pashankus makes his way to Mr. Edwards and nudges his leg. Mr. Edwards sneaks a piece of turkey to Pashankus. Mrs. Edwards notices his slight of hand. "Jeff! How many times have I told the kids not to feed the dog at the table? That's a fine example." Tommy and Tina look at each other and laugh. Mr. Edwards blushes, and yells at the dog. "Go lay down Pashankus."

As dinner ends, everyone helps with the clean up. Mr. Edwards pours himself a cup of coffee and heads for the den. He grabs the remote, relaxes in his easy chair, and flips on the Bears game. Tommy is already in the den, stoking the fire. Tommy walks over to the couch and sits next to his dad. "What's the score?" He answers in a mock Chicago accent. "Da Bears, fourteen ta tree." " Really", says Tommy surprised. "What quarter are they in?" "Da third."

"Do you think the Bears have a chance of making it to the Super Bowl this year?" They look at each other and laugh. "Not a chance in the world!" replies Mr. Edwards. "I think the Titans will win it all. Who do you think will win it?" Tommy ponders the question. "I think the Rams will win it again. I'll bet you a dollar the Rams win the Super Bowl." Mr. Edwards rises to the occasion. "Okay I'll take the Titans. But it's not official until we shake on it." Tommy runs over to his dad and eagerly shakes his hand.

Mrs. Edwards reaches into the refrigerator and grabs a bowl of premixed cookie dough. Spread out on the kitchen table is flour, cookie cut outs, candy sprinkles, gold and silver candied bb's, and tubes of colored frostings. "Tina, what kind of cookie do you want to make first?" "A Santa cookie!" cries out Tina enthusiastically. Tina grabs for the Santa cut out, while Mrs. Edwards rolls the dough.

Together they push the Santa cut out into the dough and begin to laugh.

The long day is finally over. Mr. and Mrs. Edwards have retired to their bedroom. "I can't believe you made Christmas cookies tonight," states Mr. Edwards, as he massages her shoulders. "I had to. It's my turn for my club meeting tomorrow." She turns around, looks into his eyes, and begins to cry. "I can't believe this is happening to her. I love her so much." Mr. Edwards gives her a hug. "Me to honey. Me too."