

Young Authors' Club

FLORITA GOOD, Editor

(Christmas Contest Entry)

SANTA'S RETURN

Original by Philip Dink

Santa Claus sat at his desk one cold December night making a list of all good boys and girls. Suddenly a strange noise in

"Santa," said the gnome, "are you going to leave the North Pole this year? I thought maybe he came out of the war . . ."

Santa sighed and began to clean his glasses. "No," he said. "I don't think so. In fact, I think that I will wait until after the war ends before I visit any one's house."

And that was that, and no one saw Santa away from his workshop at the North Pole until Christmas Eve just after the armistice. It had been many years before the fighting stopped, but Santa was patient and waited. As he flew over western Europe he thought that he had never seen such a desolate scene as was France after the war. He could see nothing but ruins of towns, burned fields, and one and then a ragged peasant hustling among the debris for something of value. After awhile Santa saw a small child carrying a bundle of firewood into a ruined building. He landed his sleigh and was about to call to the child when to his surprise the child began to run from him in fear.

"Frighten," he cried over his shoulder. "Do not shoot a machine gun at me!"

"But I am Saint Nicholas," Santa Claus" explained Santa. "I have never heard of you," said the boy.

Santa continued, "Every year I give toys to children who are good."

"Did you do so last year?" asked the boy.

"Well, no, but there was a war," protested the Saint. The boy was unconvinced. It was probable that he suspected Santa of being an enemy aviator. He began to cry, and a man came running up, attracted by the wails. The man was dressed in a uniform.

"Who are you?" he demanded of Santa. "Why do you frighten this boy with your red costume, do you play the devil?"

"No," said Santa. "I am not the devil. I am Saint Nicholas."

"Let me see your papers," "Papers? I have none."

"Then I must arrest you for a spy unless this boy knows you and can identify you. Do you know this man, little boy?"

"No," said the boy. "He said his name is St. Nicholas, but I have never heard that name before."

Behind him Santa's reindeer were moving restlessly as if they wished to move on. Santa turned and, stepping into the mist, uttered "Goodnight! Goodnight! Goodnight to the North Pole!"

"Wait!" cried the soldier. "Wait!" But Santa was gone, back to the North Pole, never to return to a world that had forgotten him.

CREDIT LINE
Five credits for Philip Dink,
January 4, 1944.