



# A Close Call for Christmas

Slush the Elf

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Jean-François  
“For Nora, the best gifts of all  
are the ones we wait the longest for.”

Martin  
“To my biggest fans:  
Raphaëlle, Frédérique and Maxim.”

Translation by Valerie Anderson  
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Everyone knows how hard elves work right up to **CHRISTMAS** Eve. They make sure that everything is just perfect for **SANTA CLAUS'** grand gift delivery. Did you know that one elf in particular is so fast that he always finishes his tasks two days before Christmas?





This extraordinary little elf is named **SLUSH**. He's the one who wraps up all of Santa's **TOYS**. You've probably guessed it already, but the worst thing to happen to an elf as playful and clumsy as Slush is to run out of work. When this happens, he never knows what to do with himself and blunders about all day long. This is exactly what happened last year when he transformed the oldest inhabitant at the **NORTH POLE**.





It was two days before Christmas, and Slush was extremely pleased with himself - he had already finished wrapping all of the presents. So, with extra time on his hands, he decided to help out his friends. He started off the day by first walking **POUT**, the book in which the names of all the naughty children can be found.

He then filled up some clouds with snow for his friend **THERMOS**, the elf in charge of creating a joyful holiday atmosphere.





After saying goodbye to Thermos, Slush wondered if there were other elves who needed help preparing for the big celebration. In a few seconds he had found his answer. “Of course”, he told himself, “The workshop elves in charge of designing next year’s toys! They could definitely use an **EXTRA MITTEN!**” Slush immediately headed off to the workshop to offer help.

When he arrived, and pushed open the door, he saw no one. The workshop was completely **DESERTED!** Not a soul to be found! “Everyone must have gone for lunch”, Slush thought. He wasn’t very hungry, and felt like having some fun, so he decided to use his extra time to look around the workshop. He let his little slippers decide where they wanted to take him.





Laid out before his eyes were rows and rows of games, future models for new toys, and the workshop's most important machine: the **TRANSFORMAGIFT**. This towering machine can transform the tiniest piece of **MAGICAL WOOD** into the season's most wanted toys. Being the only one of its kind, there is only one special person who can operate it: **SANTA CLAUS**.





Slush went over to take a look at this incredible **MACHINE**. Its dashboard was full of switches, buttons, and handles of every imaginable colour.

“Wow! With all these gadgets, I can pretend to be the captain of a galaxy star ship”, exclaimed Slush, with a twinkle in his eyes. In a very serious, deep voice, he called out, “Departing for planet Squeaker-Squeaker in 5-4-3-2-1-0.” Then, with all his might, Slush delightfully shouted, “**BLAST OFF!**”

At that very moment, he heard Santa Claus’ voice: “Don’t touch anything! I’m inside the machine fixing one of the parts.” But, it was too late! Slush’s finger had already pushed on the biggest **RED BUTTON** he could find, the one with the word “Transformation” written across it.





**“ZOINK, CLOINK, BOINK,”** – the noises of the firing pistons filled the workshop. Rays of light shone out of the machine and lit up the room in a kaleidoscope of colours that bounced off in all directions. Surprised by the noise, the workshop elves came running into the workshop. “Don’t worry!”, Slush assured them as he frantically pressed on all of the control buttons in front of him, “Santa’s in good mittens!”

“What did you transform him into?”, demanded **PENNY** who was staring at the flashing dashboard that was out of control. “I, I, I don’t, don’t know yet,” stuttered Slush. After a few long seconds, seconds that felt as long as a ski slope, the Transformagift groaned to a halt, **“PSHHHHOINK”**.





The elves looked over to the machine and through the billows of smoke escaping from its open doors, they saw someone slowly walking away from the Transformagift. The elves recognized the familiar silhouette and clothes of the person standing there, except there was one “small” **PROBLEM**: Santa Claus was no longer the same **SIZE** nor was he the same **AGE**.

Slush had transformed Santa Claus into...  
**BABY CLAUS!**

