

## Short Story: Eight Days Before Christmas



Level: A1-A2



The clock reads a quarter past seven.

My boss gave me a letter yesterday. He said

I should open it eight days before Christmas.

I don't know if it is a pay rise or simply a letter of dismissal. You never know with these people.

This is why I haven't read it yet. I know that my mood can be affected in two extreme ways. I will read it when I'm sure that I can handle its contents.

I am now going to work. The traffic is very busy. I feel tired but I do not let the general atmosphere affect me. It is easy to get upset in these conditions. The cars are moving like snails and you can see the other drivers getting impatient with each passing second.

I turn on the radio and look for music stations. There are mostly Christmas adverts: where to buy the best toys: where to get the finest food; where to spend Christmas Eve if you plan to go somewhere. I listen, my eyes set on the road in front of me.

Sometimes I cast an occasional glance at the sidewalks. They are teeming with different kinds of people. Most of them are like me: middle-aged, male, weary and heading towards unwelcoming workplaces.

I see a few students too. They have faces that are beaming with unexpected joy. Is it the festive season? Are they happy because they will be on holiday soon? Have they recently passed an exam?



Are they looking forward to get the latest i-Phone or i-Pad? They look happy, I must say. I envy their nonchalance. I envy their spirited gaits and youthful expectation.

Decorations have already been installed and I am sure that at night they must be a pretty sight. There are fairy lights of course and garlands made from real fir trees. The baubles are colourful and spectacular. There are all sorts of ornaments on shop windows. They look inviting and welcoming.



I remember that I have to buy my children Christmas presents. My son wants the latest PlayStation and my daughter wants a professional microphone to record her songs. I will buy perfume for my wife. I have no idea what I

will get for myself. Maybe I should wait until I read the letter. If it's good news, I might spend more money. If it's bad news, then budget adjustments need to be made. Little food will be bought; cheap wine will grace our dinner table; fruits will be our perfect dessert and nothing will be allowed to go to waste.

After one hour and forty-five minutes, I reach my office building. All my colleagues but one have arrived. We have an open space configuration and you can almost see what everybody is doing. I walk sheepishly to my desk and start working immediately. My boss sees me arriving of course. I hope this is not an excuse for him to fire me.

In the evening, I ostentatiously leave one hour later than everybody else to make up for the time I lost this morning. When I am leaving, I see a fake Father Christmas passing by with a bag full of things. He is thin and his beard is almost dropping from his droopy face.







I am happy that my son did not see him because he still believes that there is man who pays us a visit each Christmas Eve. He, and not me, is the one that gives him toys if he has been nice and well-behaved during the year.

I arrive home late. My wife has almost finished preparing dinner and the kids are watching TV. I go straight to the bedroom to drop my briefcase.

“Have you finally read the letter?” My wife asks me as soon as I join her in the kitchen. She gives me a small kiss on my forehead.

“No, not yet,” I reply. “ I will read it when the right time arrives.”

“I don’t know why someone would do something like that. Why can’t he just tell you to read the letter whenever you want? Everything will be settled then and we will stop being worried. Do you think it’s a nice surprise?”

“I don’t know really. It could be anything.”

My wife hugs me and tells me that we will all be fine.

Time passes slowly and when then the fateful day arrives, I shiver with dreadful expectation.

What is in the letter?

My wife asks if she can read it with me but I decline her thoughtful offer. I close the bedroom door and sit on the bed. Carefully opening the envelop with my fingers and then a ruler, I start reading the letter:

***Dear Mr. Christopher Bright,***

***I am pleased to announce that we have decided to organise a Christmas party for the children of our employees this year.***

***It is my pleasure to inform you that you will be our first Father Christmas.***

***We will provide you with more details regarding the organisation of this exceptional event.***

***Wishing you all the best.***

***Sincerely,***

***Jack Robinson***

Ha, ha, ha, the nerve of him!

I went out of the bedroom and announced the good news to my wife. She heaved a sigh of relief, of course, and vowed that she would take a lot of pictures of me. You don't get to see your husband dressed as Father Christmas every day of the week!



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