

Elf On The Shelf Ideas That Only Adults Will Understand



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He sees you when you're sleeping. He knows when you're awake. But be good to him, for goodness sake, or he just might cut your brakes. We're talking of course, about the Elf on the Shelf, the most thinly veiled wolf in sheep's clothing that money can buy.

Some people love the guy. For them, it is too late. For the lucky few who have been living under a rock — one of the few remaining safe havens for non-"Shelfies" — here's what you need to know. Elf on the Shelf is a social virus ... er ... viral social media star and pose-able doll who has garnered traction in the late 2000's as the holiday "it" toy after being spotted by paparazzi in the arms of Jennifer Garner. Now it's a beloved, photogenic star willing to pose in any position which will get it more Insta likes. It is living the American dream.

Kids love it because it's cute, and parents love it because it's marketed as a "disciplinary tool." According to Vox, the elf makes its intentions very plain in *The Elf on the Shelf* book: "I watch and report on all that you do!" the elf warns ... adding that "the word will get out if you broke a rule." But Elf on the Shelf breaks rules too, in ways only adults will understand. Here's proof.

An elf in favor of S.P.E.W.

Don't tell the kids that it's not milk and cookies this elf is hacking up. From the looks of things, this shelf denizen is going to be putting the "elf" in "twelfth step." Or maybe he's just seen one too many "naughty" things, but either way, Santa's not going to be very happy with his report. But any kid that does understand what's going on here has far bigger problems than a lump of coal.

The elves better keep a close eye on this guy to ensure he doesn't start stripteasing on the North Pole.

Great balls of fire

The scene here isn't very subtle at first glance. It appears to imply that this Christmas elf is filling mini booze bottles with liquid diarrhea. At least that's what a kid would think.

But like a Mandelbrot sequence, the more you stare, the more layers you find. Is it tongue-in-cheek commentary on the quality of Fireball Whiskey? Is it an imaginative fan fiction on the origins of everyone's favorite cinnamon liquor?

Deeper still, what if it's not going out at all — but going in? Is this elf shamefully butt-chugging Fireball? Is he doing a cleanse? If you can wrench his hands from his face and see through the shame in his gaze — you just might be able to find out.

Squeezing the lemon with glee

Here's a new spin on a classic "naughty" Christmas trope — yellow snow. Rather than pouring a little canola oil into a pile of baking soda, this enterprising owner of elf and shelf thought it would be best to take a more summery approach, implying that this elf's urine is a nice refreshing beverage sold by children.

While the elf gets credit for being a regular Warren Buffett, capitalizing on every opportunity to build wealth it can, it fails to realize that its profit margin is going to be very slim, and that it's going to have to fill a lot of glasses to make minimum wage.

Let it snow

Cocaine references are some of the lowest hanging fruit for any would be EOTS naughtiness connoisseur. Find a little baking soda, sand or baby powder and your naughty elf will have a night to remember. Bundle it with alcoholism, and interspecies coitus, and you've got a veritable Sid Meier's Bundle Pack of holiday fun. From the looks of things, it appears our elf friend may be having second thoughts about what went down last night. But at least his years of practice wrapping things up paid off.

Don't ask, don't tell



Come on man, there are some things best kept to your shelf!

Either you're picking up what this elf is putting down, or you are blissfully unaware. But even if you haven't checked Urban Dictionary, it's pretty obvious that mustache rides have nothing to do with transportation — unless you're heading to Pleasure Island. If you do happen to be seeking a trip Pleasure Island, consider this guy your "ticket to ride." Is it just us or can you see the pain in his eyes?

He sled, she shed

Somebody call State Farm quick! Cheryl will have no trouble winning a handsome settlement from elven coffers with this cut and dry admission of guilt. Clearly toy making didn't hold the same charms as arson for this elf, but chances are he won't be whistlin' Dixie in the old hoosegow. Book 'em boys!

The old ball and cane

The elf has wrapped up something extra special here, and while an especially naive child may be blessed enough to see this as nothing more than the surreptitious presentation of a jagged candy cane pointing skyward, we all know the truth. We know what the candy cane represents. Unless this lad hastens to roast those chestnuts over an open fire, it may be the only toy he gets to play with on Christmas morning.

The Elf on the Shelf



The Elf on the Shelf Adopt a new family tradition this holiday season! Author Carol Aebersold Chanda Bell Illustrator Coë Steinwart Country United States

Publication date

2005

The Elf on the Shelf: A Christmas Tradition is a 2005 American picture book for children, written by Carol Aebersold and her daughter Chanda Bell and illustrated by Coë Steinwart. The book tells a Christmas-themed story, written in rhyme, that explains how Santa Claus knows who is naughty and nice. It describes elves visiting children from Thanksgiving to Christmas Eve, after which they return to the North Pole until the next holiday season. The Elf on the Shelf comes in a keepsake box that features a hardbound picture book and a small scout elf. The story was inspired by a family tradition started by Carol Aebersold for her twin daughters, Chanda Bell and Christa Pitts, in Georgia.[1]

Plot[edit]

The book tells the story of a scout elf who hides in people's homes to watch over events. Once everyone goes to bed, the scout elf flies back to the North Pole to report to Santa the activities, good and bad, that have taken place throughout the day. Before the family wakes up each morning, the scout elf flies back from the North Pole and hides. By hiding in a new spot around the house each morning, the scout elf plays an ongoing game of hide and seek with the family. The Elf on the Shelf explains that scout elves get their magic by being named and loved by a child. In the back of each book, families have an opportunity to write their elf's name and the date that they adopted it. Once the elf is named, the scout elf receives its special Christmas magic, which allows it to fly to and from the North Pole.

The book tells how the magic might disappear if the scout elf is touched, so the rule in the book states, "There's only one rule that you have to follow, so I will come back and be here tomorrow: Please do not touch me. My magic might go, and Santa won't hear all I've seen or I know." Although families are told not to touch their scout elf, they can speak to it and tell it all their Christmas wishes, so that it can report back to Santa accurately.

The story ends on Christmas Day, with the elf leaving to stay with Santa for the rest of the year, until the following Christmas season.

History[edit]



An Elf on the Shelf doll, pictured in 2013

The Elf on the Shelf was written in 2004 by Carol Aebersold and her daughter Chanda Bell. Bell suggested they write a book about an old tradition of an elf sent from Santa who came to watch over children at Christmas time.^[citation needed] Aebersold's other daughter, Christa Pitts, was recruited by the family to share her expertise in sales and marketing. Together, the trio devoted the next three years to promoting their self-published book and attending book signings and trade shows.

The Elf on the Shelf won the Best Toy Award by Learning Express, a Book of the Year Award from Creative Child Awards, and a National Best Books Award sponsored by USA Book News in 2008.

On November 26, 2011, a thirty-minute animated special, titled *An Elf's Story: The Elf on the Shelf*, directed by Chad Eikhoff, aired on CBS.^[2]^[3] The Washington Post criticized the quality of the animation and dismissed it as "just a half-hour advertisement for a book and a toy", which it felt would not join "the canon of prime-time animated Christmas specials that actually move the spirit".^[3] Common Sense Media disagreed, calling the special "a great addition to families' holiday TV traditions".^[4] However, they also warned parents about the consumer-driven nature of the story, and made note of its lack of educational value.

In 2012, The Elf on the Shelf made its first appearance in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, alongside fellow parade newcomers Hello Kitty and Papa Smurf. In 2013, the book hit the No. 1 spot on the USA Today bestsellers list.^[5] In October 2013, *The Elf on the Shelf: A Birthday Tradition* was released. Written and illustrated by the same team that created the first book, it offers instructions for inviting a scout elf to visit for a child's birthday party and describes how the elf decorates a chair for the child.^[citation needed] In April 2014, two supplemental birthday products were released: *The Elf on the Shelf Birthday Countdown Game* and *The Elf on the Shelf Birthday Chair Decoration Kit*.^[citation needed]

Mensch on a Bench[edit]

A Jewish counterpart to Elf on the Shelf has also been designed: Mensch on a Bench, a stuffed toy that looks a bit like a rabbi or a Hasidic Jew.^[6]^[7]^[8] Jewish father Neal Hoffman, a former Hasbro Toys toy marketing executive, raised more than \$22,000 using the crowdfunding website Kickstarter to fund the creation of the toy in 2011.^[7]^[9]^[10] "Mensch", in Yiddish, means a person of integrity or honor.^[6]^[11]^[12]

Cody Decker, the starting left fielder for Team Israel at the 2017 World Baseball Classic, brought the team's mascot, a five-foot version of Mensch on a Bench, with him to Asia from the United States for the World Baseball Classic.^[6]^[13]^[14] Decker said he "tried getting him a first-class ticket. But that didn't fly, so he was put in a duffel bag and checked."^[15] The mascot proved to be a big hit.^[6]^[13] He gets his own locker, sits on Team Israel's bench in the dugout during every game, and sat alongside Decker at a press conference in South Korea.^[11]^[15]^[16] Decker said:

He's a mascot, he's a friend, he's a teammate, he's a borderline deity to our team ... He brings a lot to the table ... Every team needs their Jobu. He was ours. He had his own locker, and we even gave him offerings: Manischewitz, gelt, and gefilte fish... He is everywhere and nowhere all at once. His actual location is irrelevant because he exists in higher metaphysical planes. But he's always near.^[11]

Team Israel Manager Jerry Weinstein said: "He's on the team. Everybody brings something to the team, and certainly The Mensch is a unifying factor for the ball club."^[6] Pitcher Gabe Cramer said: "The Mensch on a Bench is...a symbol we can rally around as a team. We are proud to be Jewish, but we know how to make and take a joke, something Jews have a long history of doing. The Mensch is a great way to have fun in the dugout while reminding us of why we're here and who we're representing."^[17]

Criticism[edit]

The Atlantic columnist Kate Tuttle calls *The Elf on the Shelf* "a marketing juggernaut dressed up as a tradition", whose purpose is "to spy on kids". She argues that one shouldn't "bully [one's] child into thinking that good behavior equals gifts."^[18] Writing for *Psychology Today*, David Kyle Johnston calls it a "dangerous parental crutch", with much the same reasoning as what he terms the "Santa lie".^[19]

Many privacy organizations and researchers criticize the product for teaching children that involuntary, non-consensual surveillance is normal.^[20] Washington Post reviewer Hank Stuever characterized the concept as "just another nannycam in a nanny state obsessed with penal codes".^[3] Professor Laura Pinto suggests that it conditions kids to accept the surveillance state and that it communicates to children that "it's okay for other people to spy on you, and you're not entitled to privacy."^[21] She argues that, "if you grow up thinking it's cool for the elves to watch me and report back to Santa, well, then it's cool for the NSA to watch me and report back to the government... The rule of play is that kids get to interact with a doll or video game or what have you, but not so with the Elf on the Shelf: The rule is that you don't touch the elf. Think about the message that sends."^[22]^[23]

Using the elf in public school classrooms has been criticized for making children feel excluded if their families do not celebrate Christmas or Santa Claus.^[20]

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External links[edit]

- Official website

The Elf on the Shelf | A Christmas Tradition



Sign up to receive product notifications, special deals, elf ideas, family activities and even an email from Santa!

'Seasonal surveillance': ACLU expert says Elf on a Shelf not healthy for kids

The beloved Christmas tradition of Elf on a Shelf may belong on the naughty list.

An expert with the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has raised concerns that the custom in which parents hide the doll in the home in the days leading up to the holiday could be normalizing the idea of surveillance by authorities.

Children are told the toy, which is based on a 2004 book by Carol Aebersold and Chanda Bell, is watching to report their good and bad behavior back to Santa Claus.

"I know a lot of families just see this as a fun thing, but it's worth thinking about the messages it's giving to children about surveillance by authorities," Jay Stanley, senior policy analyst at the ACLU Speech, Privacy and Technology Project, told the New York Times.

"Personally, I consider success as a parent to be teaching my kids to do the right thing even when nobody is watching, whether they be from the North Pole or anywhere else."

Security experts agreed that the toy was sending the wrong message.

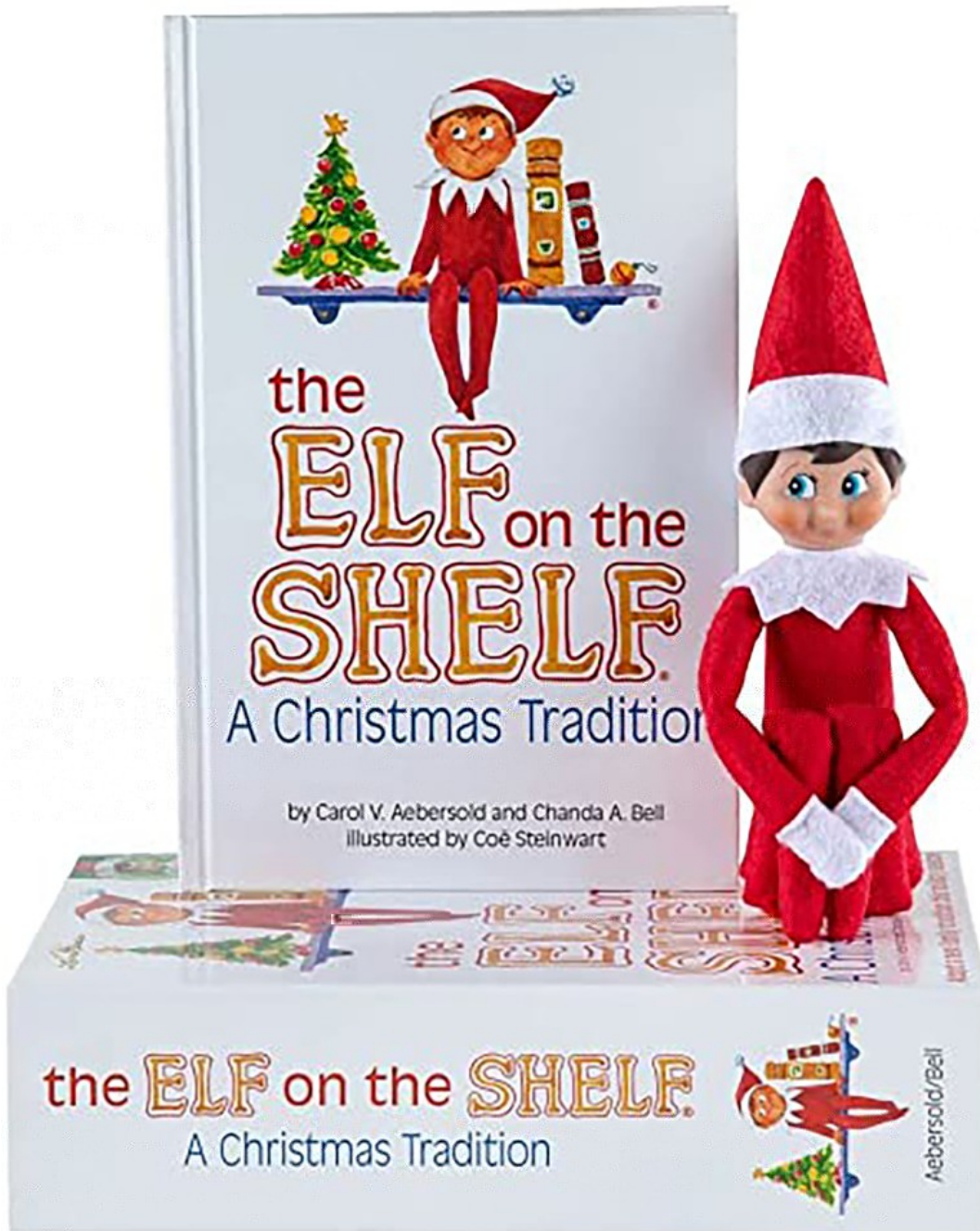


Critics were suck to blast concerns over the tradition as overdramatic. WNBC-TV

“I don’t want to sound like a Grinch, but we shouldn’t be celebrating seasonal surveillance,” Albert Fox Cahn, executive director of the Surveillance Technology Oversight Project, told the newspaper. “It’s really a terrible message for kids.”

Cahn agreed that kids may be internalizing the wrong idea, and they should learn that “no one should be looking at you in your bedroom without consent.”

“I don’t want to be the first one to take Santa Claus to court for invasion of privacy, but consent matters, and having privacy matters,” he told the paper.



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The toy is based on a 2004 book by

Carol Aebersold and Chanda Bell. Amazon

But critics were quick to hit back on social media, blasting the concerns as overdramatic.

“Oh, give me a break. Will we not stop this stuff until every single ounce of joy & wonder is completely extinguished?” one naysayer bemoaned.

“Omg. Let’s create a paranoid, neurotic generation scared of everything. Of the top million things to worry about I’d put this about negative nine hundred ninety nine thousand,” another commented.

Another Twitter critic quipped about the technology families already have in their homes which can listen to them, writing: “Alexa, does Elf on the shelf teach my children to passively accept being watched by an unseen authority figure.”

The Lumistella Company, which is behind the Elf on the Shelf brand, insisted that the toy is wholesome.



The Elf on the Shelf balloon floats down Central Park West in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade 2015. Gary Hershorn/Corbis via Getty Images

"Santa's Scout Elves don't just help to keep up with the Nice List; they also share with Santa how families are spreading the spirit of Christmas," the company said in a statement to the newspaper.



Christopher Sadowski

“Many children note that their favorite moments throughout each season include waking up to see where the family’s Scout Elf has landed and the humorous scenes they sometimes set up. Our hope is that the Elf on the Shelf will create cheerful holiday moments and precious family memories that will last a lifetime.”

WABD's Human Elf on the Shelf spreads holiday cheer (photos)

MOBILE, Alabama – An instantly recognizable holiday icon now has a new incarnation around town, courtesy of 97.5 WABD: the Human Elf on the Shelf, otherwise known as Gossip Greg from the “Qtip & Blondie in the Morning” show.

Several WABD employees came up with the idea of putting Greg Hill in a tight red suit and sending him out for early morning appearances, said radio host Glenn Johnson, a.k.a. Qtip. “We thought how funny it would be that as the sun comes up on your way to work, the Elf on the Shelf may be watching you,” he said.

Adult Elf on the Shelf suits weren’t readily available, so the WABD folks found a red morph bodysuit at Party City, customized a Santa Hat to make it stand straight up and cut up a white T-shirt to create his distinctive collar.

And Hill, a good sport, fully embodied his new role. “We didn’t realize that he looks exactly like the elf” until he was in the costume, Johnson said.

“I’m just going to go out there with anything I do and have a good time doing it,” said Hill, 23, who only just started at the station in April.

The Human Elf’s first roadside appearance was on the electric box next to the Season’s Greetings holiday sign in Daphne. Hill made frequent calls in to the morning show from 6 to 10 a.m. each day, telling readers where he was and encouraging them to weigh in on Facebook to suggest other good spots to perch.

His appearances included the corner of Airport and McGregor; Bienville Square; the Pensacola graffiti bridge; downtown Fairhope; the 32nd floor of the RSA Tower; the fireplace mantel at Cracker Barrel; and the Saraland welcome sign.

From the start, the gig took off in a big way, Johnson said, with people stopping to take photos and videos and the Elf drawing bigger and bigger crowds each morning.

“I called them my paparazzi,” Hill said.

It wasn’t long before the Human Elf was invited as an honored guest to business grand openings and to ride in the Bayou La Batre holiday parade. The Elf made numerous TV appearances. He even became an advocate for the importance of dental hygiene.

“I actually had a dentist appointment (at Tillman’s Corner Dental Health Center) and they were begging me to come with my elf suit on,” Hill said. After photos of the Elf getting his teeth cleaned were posted on Facebook, the radio station got messages from grateful moms, saying they showed the photo to their kids -- “see, even the Elf on the Shelf goes to the dentist,” Johnson said.

“There was a lot of more meaning to this than we even expected,” he added.

The Human Elf has spread holiday cheer at USA Children’s & Women’s Hospital in Mobile and at Sacred Heart Children’s Hospital in Pensacola. “It was so much fun, just bringing some joy to them on Christmas Eve,” Hill said.

The non-human Elf on the Shelf does not speak, but Hill has become an advocate for Santa. Some children have told him what they want for Christmas, and he assures them that he will let Santa know (after a quick glance at the parents).

“Every kid knows exactly who I am as soon as they see me,” Hill said.

But now that Christmas Eve has arrived, what’s next for the Human Elf?

“The Elf goes back to the North Pole, and I’ll just go back to my duties on the morning show,” Hill said. “I’ll go back to Gossip Greg. Until next year ... you never know.”

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