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A valentine's bedtime story

By Stewart Quentin Pid (Mark Soderstrom)

"Daddy, does Cupid really shoot arrows?" the little girl snuggled further down into the warmth of the blankets by her father's side.

He put his arm around her and hugged her tightly. "Well, there is a bit of a story to that. You see, one day, Stewart Quentin Pid, who was Santa's smallest elf, was working on the toy assembly line when the toy manager walked in. The manager looked down at a clipboard and said in a loud voice, 'Stewart Pid? I am looking for Stewart Pid.'

"Stewart knew what was coming and shot his hand up, but he was so short he was not seen. A large elf shouted out, 'Just call him Stew,' and giggled.

"The whole room erupted in laughter and Stewart's face burned. The manager ignored it. He just explained that Santa had gotten complaints on the toys Stewart had built. Many had broken.

"I try my hardest," said Stewart.

"Results are what matter," the manager said.

"The manager then showed one event on the Santa cam, which watches boys and girls. The little elf watched as a toy wagon broke and the little girl went running to her father. He pulled her up into his lap, hugged her and told her everything would be all right. He read her a story, and she fell asleep in his arms.

"Something stirred in little Stewart's heart. This was more wonderful than any of the times he had watched a child receive a toy. 'It is the results that matter,' was what the manager had said.

"Hmmmm...he thought, 'My results are better than any of the other elves. Little girls get hugs!'

"But the manager did not see it that way. So Stewart left the North Pole and decided he would break toys, but he knew he could not be seen breaking them. He would have to do it from a distance. It occurred to him that he could use a bow and arrow. He could tie a string to the arrow and pull it back.

"It worked several times, and he believed his system was perfect. Then, the most terrible thing happened. An arrow got stuck in the side of a wagon! He pulled and pulled, and to his horror, the little girl was coming back while he was still pulling on the string. He gave a mighty yank and...THE STRING BROKE!

"DADDY!" the little girl called.

"A very large, very strong man appeared on the steps.

"There is an arrow stuck in my wagon," she said.

"Stewart gritted his teeth.

"She looked closely, 'There's somebody's name on it.'

"Stewart slapped his forehead. How could he have been such an idiot? 'Well, at least I just used my initials.'

"What's his name?" the father asked with fists tightening.

"She squinted her eyes to make it out. 'S...QPID, it says.'

"Hmmm. So this Cupid guy is shooting arrows at my daughter's toys! If I meet him ... He is in trouble. Come on with me. We will play a game together in the house.'

"She smiled and took his hand. 'SQPid is a funny name,' she giggled.

The father continued his bedtime story. "The rest is history. Of course, Stewart knew he had to make his arrows invisible so he went to college and learned about thermodynamics, quantum physics, zero point energy and...

"He what?" the little girl asked, snuggling deeper into her blankets.

The father smoothed back her curls. "He made the arrows invisible. But every year, after Christmas, he goes about breaking toys so that fathers and mothers will hug their children and make things all better. He always gives them time to enjoy the toys, but by the middle of February, they need to be enjoying their parents."

"What does he do the rest of the year?"

"Oh...he writes bedtime stories for dads to read when they tuck in their children and kiss them good night."

And with a wink, he leaned down and tucked the blankets in tightly around her shoulders and kissed her goodnight.



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