

**I DID A
NO—NO
A FEW YEARS
AGO**

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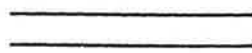
I Did A No-No A Few Years Ago.....38

Well, here it is, folks--my second Hardcastle & McCormick zine. This one contains "The Shoe and The Other Foot", a continuation of the episode, "When I Look Back On All Those Things"; a missing scene entitled "Strike One, You're Out" from "In The Eye of The Beholder"; a short scene concocted in the middle of the night called "Nightmares Ain't What They Used To Be"; "S. Claus & Associates", a continuation of the Christmas episode, "Hate The Picture, Love the Frame"; a poem, "A Visit from St. Nicholas--McCormick Style", which is another version of what happened on a certain night; and the main story, "I Did A No-No A Few Yars Ago", an original idea from my own befuddled brain.

I want to thank Ann Leonhart and Reg Marracino for editing the story, "No-No". They very daringly disagreed with me on character interpretation in certain scenes, which takes a lot of guts since I can be a royal pain in the butt when it comes to criticizing my stories. I went along with them on some of their suggestions, and on others, I had to stick with my own feelings, so if you don't agree, please feel free to let me know. I'm not promising I won't send Milt to your gatehouse with a shotgun, but I'll definitely listen.

I owe a very big thanks to Mysti Frank for typing this for me. I've published fourteen other zines and the worst thing about them is the typing. You would think I'd get better as time goes on, but I don't. So I really am grateful to Mysti for taking that God-awful rough draft and making some sense out of it. You'll probably notice that the type is different on some of the stories. That's because I ended up writing and typing some new stories while Mysti was doing the ones I had given her.

Well, I'll shut up now, throw in a few ads, then let you get on with the stories. I hope you like them.



WHO SAY TRUTH IS STRANGER THAN FICTION? SASE

Now, here we have an unusual story. Hardcastle and McCormick go to San Diego on a case, and guess who the judge meets in a bank— Cecilia Simon. After having lunch together, she invites him home for dinner (which invitation, needless to say, also includes Mark and her sons). What I had intended to be as nothing more than a short comedic situation taking place around Cecilia's dining room table, turned serious, and grew into disgusting proportions. These four guys didn't know when to shut up. I'm in the process of typing it now, so if nothing happens, it should be in print before Christmas

The following zines are available from: Ann Leonhart, Dragon III Graphics, P. O. Drawer "O", Russell, KY 41169

WHO RIDES FOR JUSTICE? I-SASE to see if there are any left.

WHO RIDES FOR JUSTICE? II Now accepting \$7.00 deposit with SASE (legal size please)

Includes works by Thrower(S&S); Bryson (H&Mc); Tucker (ML, H&Mc); Anders (S&S); Frank (S&S, MPI); Leonhart (H&Mc); Marracino (S&S, MV); Bohling (S&S); and Warner (H&Mc). Poetry by Barr (S&S) and Vaughn (S&S). Art by Vaughn. Still seeking portrait type art-- send good quality xerox copies only. Checks made out to Ann Leonhart.

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A VISIT FROM ST NICHOLAS

MCCORMICK STYLE

Twas the night before Christmas
And all through Gulls-Way
Not a creature was stirring
It had been quite a day.

The Coyote was nestled
All snug in the garage
Safe at the moment
From another barrage.

And the judge with his gavel
And I in my cap
Had just settled down
For a short Malibu nap.

When out by the fountain
There arose such a blast
I fell outta my bed
And right on my...ast.

Away to the window
I crawled like a flash
Threw open the shutter
And tore down the sash
(Oh damn!)

The moon on the water
In the fountain below
Made it look like midday
For the objects below.
(Yeah, I know they're the
same words, but they
rhyme, don't they?)

When what to my bleery eyes
Should show up
But a miniature sleigh
And a guy who looked tough.

Well, I jerked in my head
And fell down the stairs
Ran outta the house
After fallin' over some chairs.

I banged on the door
While yelling, "Oh Judge!
You'll never believe
What's in the sky up above!"

I finally aroused him
And to the den we both ran
Right when we heard
A crash and a bam!

There he stood in the middle
Of Hardcastle's room
And the judge yells out,
"Hey, kid, get a broom!"

'Cause he was dressed all in fur
From his head to his foot,
But his clothes were all tarnished
With ashes and soot.

With a wink of an eye
And a twist of his head
He soon gave me to know
He didn't want me dead.
(He's the first.)

He had a broad face
And a round little tummy
And a coupla cookies
That really looked yummy.
(Now I know how he got
the round little tummy.)

A stump of a pipe
He held tight in his mug
And the judge had a fit
When he dumped it on the rug.

He was chubby and plump
But a little bit nuts
And I laughed when I saw him
Which really took guts.

He spoke not a word
After glaring my way
And filled both our stockings
Then turned with a sway.

And reaching up in the fireplace
He opened the vent
And giving a nod
Up the chimney he went.

He sprang to his sleigh
But the reindeer had left
For which charges will be brought
Against me for their theft.
(Probably. I get blamed
for everything.)

And I heard him exclaim
As he fell in the sumac
"Merry Christmas to all
But forget Mark McCormick!"
(Gee, and I thought I'd
been such a good kid all
year, too.)

S. CLAUS & ASSOCIATES

"Ho, ho, ho."

That and the sound of scratching on the roof caused both men to look up quickly.

"What the hell?" Hardcastle muttered.

Grasping his arm, McCormick's eyes widened in surprise. "Judge, that sounds like--"

"Now, don't go lettin' that pea brain of yours wander," Hardcastle growled. "It's not what you think."

"Well, what is it then?" McCormick demanded.

"I don't know, but I sure as hell am gonna find out." Jumping to his feet, he started across the room, still looking upward. "Listen! Somebody's on the roof!" he hissed and grabbed a shotgun from the rack. "Sounds like he's headin' for the--"

There was a rustling sound, followed by a soft plop, and McCormick's eyes grew round with wonder. "J-Judge." He stared in awe at the man bending low to step out of the fireplace, and the line of an old poem ran through his head. The guy was chubby and plump, he did look right jolly and was definitely old, but there was no way anyone could accurately describe him as an elf. He stood at least two inches taller than Hardcastle, and his shoulders looked more like they belonged to Rambo. Probably from lifting all those bags of toys, McCormick thought.

The man flashed him a smile and a friendly, "Hi, Mark", then turned to the judge. "Evening, Milt."

"What the hell're you doin' breakin' into my house?" Hardcastle demanded and raising the shotgun, pointed it at the man in a warning gesture. "You better talk, pal, or I'm gonna blow you back up that chimney."

"Judge, put the gun down," McCormick ordered quietly.

"What! Are you crazy!"

"Put the gun down, Judge."

Hardcastle lowered it slowly, keeping a firm grip on the weapon that let anyone know he could jerk it up again at a moment's notice. "Who the hell are you?" he growled.

Glancing at McCormick, the older man smiled. "Mark knows."

A continuation of the Christmas episode, "Hate the Picture, Love The Frame"

Hardcastle glanced his way, too, and seeing the wide grin plastered across McCormick's face, he groaned. "Aw, kid, what'd you do? Send your brain out to be drycleaned? This guy is not who you think he is."

"Yes, he is, Judge."

"No, he's not."

"Yes, he is." Stepping in front of the man, McCormick tentatively offered his hand. "Would it be improper for me to ask to shake your hand...Santa?"

"It would be my honor," Claus returned with a smile and gripped McCormick's hand. In a swift move, he suddenly pulled the young man into a hug, patting his back.

"McCormick, what the hell're you doin'?" Hardcastle yelled. "Get away from him!"

Returning the hug briefly, McCormick stepped back, his face crimson, and his voice shaky. "What was that for?"

Claus shrugged. "What can I say? I'm an emotional kinda guy." He patted his stomach. "I've got a lot of good cheer here, and I like to spread it."

"I bet you got a lotta good cheer," Hardcastle growled. "You're probably drunker'n a skunk."

Turning a look of infinite patience on the judge, Claus sighed. "Oh really, Milt. You can certainly be narrow-minded sometimes." Leaning against the desk, he smiled benevolently. "Just for your information, Your Honor, the good cheer inside me cannot be gotten from a bottle. It comes from seeing the best in people over the last five hundred or so years."

"You expect me to believe you're five hundred years old?" Hardcastle demanded.

"Mark believes," Claus answered casually.

"That's because McCormick has some brain cells missing."

"He has the ones that are important."

"His problem is, he still thinks like a kid."

"That's not his problem; it's his greatest asset." Claus folded his arms across his chest and grinned. "Wanna got for three outta four, Milt? Or would you rather put twenty on the pulse rate? You just might win it since I only have about four hundred and thirty-five years on you."

"You're crazy, you know that?" Hardcastle shot back angrily.

"You're a damned lunatic!"

"I've thought that sometimes myself over the years," Claus admitted solemnly, "but I've persevered, and on the whole, there have been many more pleasant surprises than disappointments."

"Which have I been?" McCormick asked softly.

"Oh, my boy, you haven't been either," Claus smiled. "I knew you had it in you all along, son; you've just continuously proven me right."

McCormick's cheeks rivaled Claus' suit in color, and he smiled shyly. "Thanks, Santa."

"Don't thank me, son. You get all the credit. Well, almost all of it," he amended and turned to Hardcastle. "You deserve some of the credit, Milt. You did a wonderful thing for Mark. He wanted to be good, but no one ever gave him the opportunity, that is, not until you came along."

"What is this?" Hardcastle growled. "What do you want here, anyway? And how the hell did you get up on my roof? You got one of those new-fangled soft-runnin' choppers?"

Crossing the den, Claus gestured with his head towards a chair. "Mind if I sit down?"

"No."

"Yes!"

Settling his large bulk comfortably, Claus looked up, the piercing blue eyes twinkling merrily. "In answer to your questions, Milt--I don't want anything. On the contrary, I am here to give you something. And no, I don't have a chopper as you colloquially put it. My mode of travel actually goes under several names--Dasher, Dancer, Prancer..."

"And Rudolph?" McCormick asked hopefully.

"I'm sorry, son, but the truth of the matter is, Rudolph only exists in a legend," Claus informed him regretfully.

"A legend?!" Hardcastle roared, and standing in the middle of the room, he glared at the red-suited man. "Look, pal, if you think for one minute I'm gonna believe you're who you claim you are, then you got two screws loose! Santa Claus doesn't exist, either!"

"Believe what you will," Claus shrugged, "but I don't know why you're getting so uptight at the idea. It didn't bother me when you gave that motorcycle to Mark and signed the card, 'Love, Santa'; even though we both known impersonating someone is a Federal offense, and impersonating me could land you in the funny farm."

"That's it!" Hardcastle exploded. "I'm callin' the police!"

"Judge, wait a minute!" Jumping up, McCormick grabbed his arm. "Judge, what're you gonna tell 'em? That an old man in a red, furry suit and a white beard dropped down your chimney? Santa's right--you report that and I'll be bringing you magazines at the nuthouse."

Hardcastle hesitated. "Well, what're we gonna do with him then?" he growled.

"I don't know about you, but I wanna ask him some questions." Releasing the judge, McCormick pulled an ottoman close to Claus' chair and dropped on it eagerly.

Leaning back, Claus propped his feet on the edge of the ottoman and smiled. "So you wanna know a few things. Okay, son, shoot."

"Get your boots off my ottoman and quit callin' him son!" Hardcastle yelled.

"Oh, excuse me," Claus apologized, leaving his feet where they were. "Am I stepping on some toes here?"

"Ignore him," McCormick suggested and leaned closer to the chair. "Uh, I don't know exactly how to put this, Santa, but you're not quite like I thought you'd be. I mean, I pictured you as more of an old-fashion person, you know, distinguished, reverent, and all that."

Claus laughed, a hearty "ho-ho" that shook his entire body. "Change, my boy, that's what it's all about. You gotta relate to the times. Let's see, the last time I was distinguished and reverent was about the late seventeen, early eighteen hundreds. Toys change, so I have to change along with 'em."

McCormick grinned. "That makes sense. One other thing, though. I thought--I thought no one is supposed to know that you really do exist. So why did you come here? It's two days after Christmas, and you had to know this early in the evening, the judge and I would still be up."

"I knew," Claus nodded in agreement, "but there was no risk here. If you two try to tell anyone you met the real Santa Claus, nobody's gonna believe you. After all, you're both adults."

"One of us is," Hardcastle grumbled.

Ignoring him, Claus continued, "The reason I came is because I know what the two of you have been through the past few days." Leaning over, he patted McCormick's knee. "Buying those wreaths from that little boy, then giving them away, was a very nice thing to do, Mark. And having that wreath delivered to Milt while he was in jail... He won't admit it, but it really lifted his spirits."

"I thanked him for that," Hardcastle shot in gruffly, "and I also thanked him for hocking his car to get me out."

"I know and I'm proud of you, Milt," Claus replied quietly. "I'm also proud that you didn't lose your faith in the law, even though it seemed to have turned against you there for awhile.

You ran a gauntlet of fire and remained the same honest and good man that you've always been."

Reaching up, McCormick grasped his arm. "Now do you believe, Judge?" he asked softly. "There's no way anyone but God or Santa Claus could've known all that."

Hardcastle stared down at the young man, forced to clear his throat before he could speak. "I can't believe he's Santa Claus, kid. If I do, then I've gotta believe the whole bit about the elves at the North Pole and him delivering toys to all the kids all over the world in a single night."

Claus made a casual gesture with his hand. "It's a difficult job, but somebody's gotta do it. And speaking of gifts, it's time I got around to the other reason I came." Reaching down beside the chair, he picked up a large black canvas bag which McCormick had thought was empty a few minutes before, but now appeared to bulge with as-yet-unseen treasures.

"I remember the Christmas when you were seven, Mark. My sources told me you were wanting a certain toy that year, but your mother couldn't afford it." He paused and sighed. "It would be wonderful if I could give every child exactly what he or she wanted, no matter what the cost, but unfortunately, even Santa Claus has overhead." Shaking off the obvious regret, he broke into a smile. "This is a special situation, though. You earned this a long time ago, Mark." Using both hands, he pulled a large box from the bag and handed it to the young man.

McCormick's eyes grew wider with wonder. "Oh my God."

Hardcastle leaned over the chair, curious in spite of himself. "What is it?"

"A-a race car set," McCormick breathed in awe. "Just like the one I wanted when I was seven, only-only it's not the same, either." He held up the box so the judge could see the picture. "Look! One of the cars is the Coyote and the other is a customized Porsche, identical to the one I used to own." He stared over the box at Claus in amazement. "Where did--where did you find--"

"I didn't," Claus smiled. "That, son, is one of a kind. Drew up the design myself and put a couple of my best elves to work on it. You won't find that in the Sears wishbook."

Seeing the expression on McCormick's face, Hardcastle beamed. "That's nice, that's real nice."

Mark was once again that seven-year-old boy as he dropped his head and smiled shyly. "Thanks, Santa."

"My pleasure, son. And now for you, Milt." Claus reached deep into his bag, feeling around as he talked. "You were seven, too, the year that you wanted this. It wouldn't have cost much, but there was a drought that year, and things were really tight. That was the year, too, your daddy sold the tractor to help Albey's family. Well, you didn't get what you wanted, and it's still not that much now, but it's the thought that counts, right, Milt?" Standing, he held his fist above the judge's hand and dropped something into it.

"Aw, would ya look at that," Hardcastle spoke softly. "A utility knife. Just what I wanted when I was a kid."

McCormick peered at the device curiously. "What's it do?"

"What's it do?" Hardcastle echoed in surprise. "Kid, you're lookin' at the most useful gadget known to man." He began opening the blades and identifying them with relish. "You got your regular blade here and a saw-tooth, and this is a fish scaler, and a screwdriver, and here you got your bottle opener and a corkscrew, and then over here..." He hesitated and glanced at Claus. "Funny, I don't remember the knife I wanted having this many attachments."

"It didn't," Claus smiled.

McCormick broke into a grin. "Another customized job, huh?"

"You got it, son."

Looking up from the knife, Hardcastle studied the whiskered face before him and nodded as if arriving at a decision. "Okay, you're one of two things--either the best and most informed con man I've ever run across, or you really are who you say you are."

Claus puffed away on the pipe he held clenched in his teeth, the smoke forming a circle around his head. "And which one are you opting for, Milt?"

"The latter," Hardcastle grinned, "'cause I sure as hell am not gonna admit you're that good a con." He stuck out his hand. "It's a pleasure meetin' you, Santa."

"The pleasure's all mine," Claus smiled and gripped his hand in a firm grip.

McCormick stepped beside them, a grin stretched from ear to ear, and the race car set clutched lovingly to his chest.

"Well, I'd say that just about does it," Claus decided.

and rubbed his hands together. "Gotta get going before my rooftop travelers get restless."

"Aw, so soon?" McCormick sighed.

"Afraid so. Lots to do and less than a year to do it in." Claus reached out and engulfed McCormick in a red suit, patting the young man on the back. "Take care of yourself, son, and do what the judge tells you to. Believe it or not, he's usually right."

Stepping back, he grabbed Hardcastle in a bearhug before he had a chance to move. "Take it easy, Milt, and be good to the boy," he whispered in his ear.

"Hey, cut it out," Hardcastle protested half-heartedly. Pulling back, he sniffed loudly and rubbed his nose. "Listen, I was thinking about what you said a few minutes ago about wishing you could give every kid what they wanted. Would-uh-would it help any if I made sort of a-uh-a donation?"

It was Claus' turn to be surprised. "Well, yes, it would be a great help, Milt, but I don't think the IRS would let you deduct it."

"Aw, what the hell," Hardcastle shrugged, and going to his desk, he pulled out his checkbook, but his hand hovered over the rectangle of paper. "Uh, how do I make this out?"

"Myron Abdul O'Shaunessey," Claus answered, his bushy white eyebrows shooting up when he saw the looks of surprise turned his way. "Well, you don't really expect me to have a checking account in the name of S. Claus, do you?" he explained wryly.

Chuckling, Hardcastle finished writing the check and handed it over. "It's not much, but hopefully, it'll help."

Claus' eyes widened when they fell on the amount. "Believe me, Milt, you're being too modest. Why, this is wonderful!"

McCormick tried to see over the red, furry shoulder. "How much is it, Santa?"

"None of your damned business," Hardcastle growled. "Stuff that in your pocket, Santa, before the kid sees it and demands a raise."

Laughing so hard he shook all over, Claus folded the check in a small square and tucked it away in a deep pocket. "Well, this is it, boys. I gotta get back to the North Pole and cold weather. If I stay in this heat much longer, I'll lose twenty pounds. Can't have that." Hardcastle started towards the door, and he gave a shrill whistle. "This way, Milt. I don't use doors, remember?" Bending low to step into the fireplace, he

waved one last time, then laying his finger aside of his nose and giving a nod, he disappeared up the chimney.

Hardcastle and McCormick exchanged glances, then both made a dash for the front door. Flinging it open, they made it outside in time to see Claus' unique mode of travel. Leaning out of the sleigh, he yelled, his voice ringing out in the warm summer night, "Merry Christmas, Milt and Mark. Have a good night."

Returning to the house, Hardcastle stared at the food spread out on the table and sighed. "We should've asked him if he wanted something to eat."

"Nah, he was busy," McCormick replied. "Maybe next time."

"Yeah. Well, let's get to work here; the food's gettin' cold." Pulling out his utility knife, Hardcastle selected the saw-toothed blade and stuck it in the massive turkey. "Well, what do ya want, kid? Light or dark meat?"