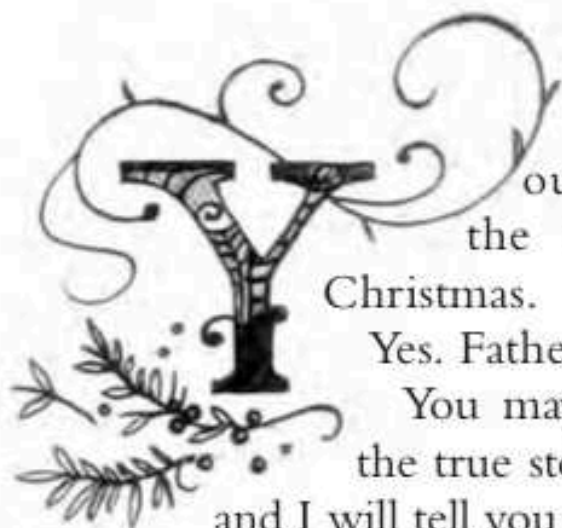


Impossible.

– An old elf swear word

An ordinary boy



You are about to read the true story of Father Christmas.

Yes. Father Christmas.

You may wonder how I know the true story of Father Christmas, and I will tell you that you shouldn't really question such things. Not right at the start of a book. It's rude, for one thing. All you need to understand is that I do know the story of Father Christmas, or else why would I be writing it?

Maybe you don't call him Father Christmas.

Maybe you call him something else.

Santa or Saint Nick or Santa Claus or Sinterklaas or Kris Kringle or Pelznickel or Papa Noel or Strange Man With A Big Belly Who Talks To Reindeer And Gives Me Presents. Or maybe you have a name you've come up with yourself, just for fun. If you were an elf, though, you would always call him Father Christmas. It was the pixies who

started calling him Santa Claus, and spread the word, just to confuse things, in their mischievous way.

But whatever you happen to call him, you know about him, and that's the main thing.

Can you believe there was a time when no one in the world knew about him? A time when he was just an ordinary boy called Nikolas, living in the middle of nowhere, or the middle of Finland, doing nothing with magic except believing in it? A boy who knew very little about the world except the taste of mushroom soup, the feel of a cold north



wind, and the stories he was told. And who only had a doll made out of a turnip to play with.

But life was going to change for Nikolas, in ways he could never have imagined. Things were going to happen to him.

Good things.

Bad things.

Impossible things.

But if you are one of those people who believe that some things are impossible, you should put this book down right away. It is most certainly not for you.

Because this book is full of *impossible things*.

Are you still reading the book?
Good. (Elves would be proud.)
Then let us begin . . .