

# I Married Krampus

Santa leaned back in his chair and adjusted his belt. "We should have done this ages ago," he said, thumping Krampus on the shoulder. "That meal was simply superb." He turned to Mrs. Krampus. "My compliments to the chef."

They really should have done it ages ago. Every year, Krampus invited them, but every year Santa and Mrs. Claus had found one excuse or another not to join him for Christmas dinner. But when Krampus announced he had taken a bride, their curiosity got the better of them.

And what a bride she was! Margie Krampus was not at all who they had expected. She was well-dressed, with a trim waist and perky figure, a simple string of pearls adorning her throat. Her neat bouffant framed long-lashed eyes and a sweet, bow-shaped mouth. The Krampus home was completely unexpected as well. It was immaculately kept, with plastic slipcovers shining over the furniture and every little decoration just so.

Santa could hardly imagine what an attractive young woman would see in Krampus, but there did seem to be genuine affection in the match. He could see it in the way she looked up at her horned and hulking husband, her eyes shining with devotion as she asked if she could pour him more coffee.



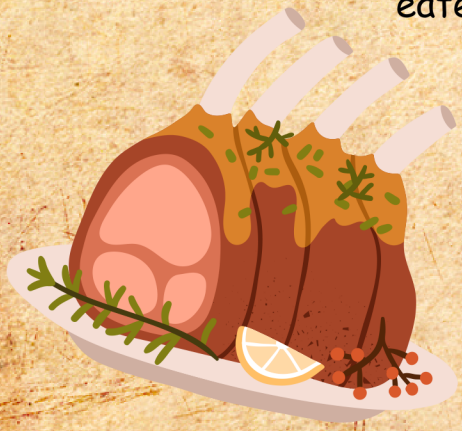
Krampus had told Santa that her cooking was only one reason he married his "little Margie," and having met her it was obvious she had plenty of other charms to recommend her.

But her cooking...it was sublime. The evening had begun with hors d'oeuvres. Dried beef pinwheels, deviled ham puffs, and all manner of delicacies on frilly toothpicks. Once they sat down to the table, things just got better. From the broiled grapefruit starter to the Baked Alaska (or Baked North Pole, as Mrs. Krampus playfully christened it) for dessert, everything was delicious.



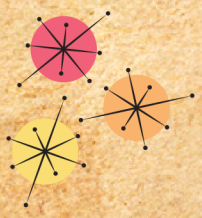


What that girl could do with gelatin (aspic canapes and an exquisitely molded pistachio and cranberry salad, complete with cottage cheese and grated carrots) was nothing short of witchcraft. The crowning glory of the meal, however, was the roast. Delicately spiced, tender and juicy, artfully displayed on a bed of greens and fruit, Santa couldn't remember when he'd eaten meat so succulent.





Mrs. Krampus seemed pleased but a little embarrassed by her guests' praise of her cooking and changed the subject. "Was Jeremy Preston good?"





Santa choked on his coffee and splattered it over the remains of the delectable roast. "Good?" Santa coughed. "Jeremy Preston? The less said on that subject, the better," he said, going a little red in the face. That little hooligan's name was hated and feared by little sisters, pets, and parents alike. "He was the worst."

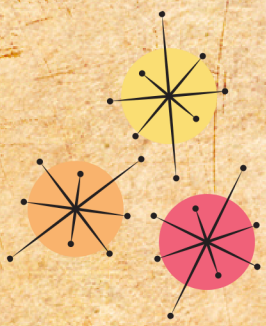


Santa remembered his blood pressure and dabbed at his beard with a napkin, trying to regain his composure. Mrs. Krampus was staring at him, her sweetheart lips forming a horrified O. "What?" he asked with a rising feeling of panic. "Did I get the name wrong?Maybe I'm thinking of Jerry Presley, or Joey Prescott." He pulled out his Nice List, running an anxious finger down it until he arrived at the Ps.

He sighed in relief. Jeremy Preston was on Krampus' list. "No," he said with his eyebrows raised conspiratorially at Krampus, "not good at all."

Krampus covered his wife's smooth white hand with his hairy, long-clawed one and chuckled, a low rumble starting deep in his chest. "No, Margie, love. Not good." He glanced admiringly at the platter at the center of the table. "Jeremy Preston was simply superb."





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