

In her house she is the indisputable Grinch. She is the one who tries to keep the household on a budget, the one who tries to prevent four female children (who consider shopping a major hobby) from becoming spoiled rotten. Tightwad, Queen of Thrift, Meanie Mommy, and The Wicked Step-Monster are some of her other alias.

As The Grinch, her most common phrases include no, NO, I don't think so (said with pronounced sarcasm), you have ten of those already, starving children in Africa would love to have just one of your ____, we are not made of money, that costs a lot of money, use your own money, use your imagination and pretend you have one, you don't use the one you already have, shopping is not a hobby, go to your room if you are going to pout, and other heartless lines. In response, the children weep, beg, offer bribes, and throw tantrums. But The Grinch, determined to win the battle against gross materialism and credit card debt, shows no mercy.

Although The Grinch is vigilant year round, she becomes truly green and mean during the holiday season. Secretly sentimental, The Grinch had always envisioned a Walton's Country Christmas, one in which a snow-covered Santa bursts through the door and presents each child with one special and totally unexpected gift. That evening and all through the next day, the children play with their one special gift while the adults sit by the fire, basking in the true meaning of the holiday spirit.

Unfortunately for The Grinch, the reality of Christmas is quite different. The day after Halloween, the very same day the stores put out their Christmas merchandise

and began playing that horrible music over and over again, The Grinch says to her mate, “Honey, now that the kids are older, do you think we could downscale a bit?”

Her mate, who considers himself Santa reincarnated replies, “Sure, but remember they are only kids once. When I was a kid all I ever got was plaid shirts and underwear.” Still, The Grinch feels a tiny ray of hope in her tiny little heart that maybe this year she will hit the budget.

Once the multi-paged wish lists are submitted, The Grinch and Santa II sit down to consider the requests. After a fair number of cross-outs, (cars, ponies, and Coach purses) the lists are reduced to something more reasonable for a middle-classed family with four daughters. The next few weeks, The Grinch spends agonizing hours on foot and online locating the exact color, brand, and size for each gift. By way of coupons, early bird sales, and e-bay auctions, she manages to buy only the items on the revised lists at prices that fit within her bottom line.

Not until the night before Christmas Eve, does she begin to relax. The presents are wrapped. Victory is only twenty-four hours away but then ... Santa II rolls in with a large bag on his back, a satisfied smile on his face.

“Just picked up a few more things. I forgot I ordered these in August. I just couldn’t resist this ...”

Despite The Grinch’s protests, Santa II and his overflowing sled plow right over the top of her. To make matters worse, because Santa II doesn’t know how to gift wrap, The Grinch must spend the remainder of the evening wrapping the unauthorized, budget-busting presents.

“It’s going to be a great Christmas this year, don’t you think?” Santa chortles

from his recliner by the fire. The Grinch scowls and stomps from the room.

On Christmas Eve, the children open ten gifts. On Christmas Day, they open ten more. They spend the entire day quarreling and whining. They complain about dinner because it consists of real food and not just dessert. They balk at picking up. They refuse to put away their new toys. Ultimately, each child is sent to her respective room for a prolonged time-out. An exhausted Grinch spends two hours cleaning the house, while a very crabby Santa II assembles toy after toy after toy.

That evening as they are getting into bed, Santa II says to The Grinch, "I think you went a little overboard this year. Why don't we try cutting back next year?"

Speechless with rage, Grinch grabs her pillow and attempts to smother him. Unfortunately, she is too exhausted to inflict much damage.

A week later, The Grinch pays the bills then calculates how much they--he went over. She writes down the five figure number and files it away in a folder marked, Evidence.

When she is packing away the last of the decorations, The Grinch comes across Santa's big red suit. With a howl she flings it across the floor. Raising both fists to the sky, she looks upwards and proclaims, "As God is my witness, Christmas will be different next year!"