

The Doll & A White Rose



I hurried into the local department store to grab some last minute Christmas gifts. I looked at all the people and grumbled to myself. I would be in here forever and I just had so much to do. Christmas was beginning to become such a drag. I kinda wished that I could just sleep through Christmas. But I hurried the best I could through all the people to the toy department. Once again I kind of mumbled to myself at the prices of all these toys. And I wondered if the grandkids would even play with them. I found myself in the doll aisle.

Out of the corner of my eye I saw a little boy, about 5, holding a lovely doll. He kept touching her hair and he held her so gently. I could not seem to help myself. I just kept looking over at the little boy and wondered who the doll was for. I watched him turn to a woman, and he called his aunt by name and said, "Are you sure I don't have enough money?" She replied a bit impatiently, "You know that you don't have enough money for it." The aunt told the little boy not to go anywhere, and that she had to go get some other things and would be back in a few minutes. And then she left the aisle.

The boy continued to hold the doll. After a bit I asked the boy who the doll was for. He said, "It is the doll my sister wanted so badly for Christmas. She just knew that Santa would bring it." I told him that maybe Santa was going to bring it. He said, "No, Santa can't go where my sister is...I have to give the doll to my Mamma to take to her. I asked him where his sister was. He looked at me with the saddest eyes and said, "She has gone to be with Jesus. My Daddy says that Mama is going to have to go be with her. "My heart nearly stopped beating. Then the boy looked at me again and said, "I told my Daddy to tell Mama not to go yet. I told him to tell her to wait till I got back from the store".

Then he asked me if I wanted to see his picture. I told him I would love to. He pulled out some pictures he had taken at the front of the store. He said "I want my Mamma to take this with her so she don't ever forget me." "I love my Mama so very much and I wished she did not have to leave me. But Daddy says she will need to be with my sister."

I saw that the little boy had lowered his head and had grown so very quiet. While he was not looking, I reached into my purse and pulled out a handful of bills. I asked the little boy, "Shall we count that money one more time?" He grew excited and said, "Yes, I just know it has to be enough". So I slipped my money in with his, and we began to count it. Of course it was plenty for the doll. He softly said, "Thank you, Jesus, for giving me enough money."

Then the boy said "I just asked Jesus to give me enough money to buy this doll, so Mama can take it with her, to give to my sister. And He heard my prayer." "I wanted to ask Him for enough to buy my Mama a white rose, but I didn't ask Him, but He gave me enough to buy the doll and a rose for my Mama. She loves white roses so very, very much".

In a few minutes the aunt came back, and I wheeled my cart away. I could not keep from thinking about the little boy as I finished my shopping in a totally different spirit than when I had started. And I kept remembering a story I had seen in the newspaper several days earlier, about a drunk driver hitting a car and killing a little girl and leaving the Mother in serious condition. The family was deciding on whether to remove the life support. Now surely this little boy did not belong with that story. Two days later, I read in the paper where the family had disconnected the life support and the young woman had died. I could not forget the little boy, and just kept wondering if the two were somehow connected.

Later that day, I could not help myself and I went out and bought some white roses and took them to the funeral home, where the young woman was. And there she was, holding a lovely white rose, the beautiful doll, and the picture of the little boy in the store. I left there in tears, my life changed forever. The love that little boy had for his little sister and his mother was overwhelming. And in a split second a drunk driver had ripped the life of that little boy to pieces. []

An Adventure With Grandma



I remember my first Christmas adventure with Grandma. I was just a kid. I remember tearing across town on my bike to visit her on the day my big sister dropped the bomb: "There is no Santa Claus," she jeered. "Even dummies know that!"

My Grandma was not the gushy kind, never had been. I fled to her that day because I knew she would be straight with me. I knew Grandma always told the truth, and I knew that the truth always went down a whole lot easier when swallowed with one of her world-famous cinnamon buns. I knew they were world-famous, because Grandma said so. It had to be true.

Grandma was home, and the buns were still warm. Between bites, I told her everything. She was ready for me. "No Santa Claus!" she snorted. "Ridiculous! Don't believe it. That rumor has been going around for years, and it makes me mad, plain mad. Now, put on your coat, and let's go."

"Go? Go where, Grandma?" I asked. I hadn't even finished my second world-famous, cinnamon bun. "Where" turned out to be the one store in town that had a little bit of just about everything. As we walked through its doors, Grandma handed me ten dollars. That was a bundle in those days. "Take this money," she said, "and buy something for someone who needs it. I'll wait for you in the car." Then she turned and walked out of the store.

I was only eight years old. I'd often gone shopping with my mother, but never had I shopped for anything all by myself. The store seemed big and crowded, full of people scrambling to finish their Christmas shopping. For a few moments I just stood there, confused, clutching that ten-dollar bill, wondering what to buy, and who on earth to buy it for.

I thought of everybody I knew: my family, my friends, my neighbors, the kids at school, and people who went to my church. I was just about thought out, when I suddenly thought of Bobby Decker. He was a kid with bad breath and messy hair, and he sat right behind me in Mrs. Pollock's grade-two class. Bobby Decker didn't have a coat. I knew that because he never went out or recess during the winter. His mother always wrote a note, telling the teacher that he had a cough, but all we kids knew that Bobby Decker didn't have a cough, and he didn't have a coat. I fingered the ten-dollar bill with growing excitement. I would buy Bobby Decker a coat!

I settled on a red corduroy one that had a hood to it. It looked real warm, and he would like that. "Is this a Christmas present for someone?" the lady behind the counter asked kindly, as I laid my ten dollars down. "Yes," I replied shyly. "It's for Bobby." The nice lady smiled at me. I didn't get any change, but she put the coat in a bag and wished me a Merry Christmas.

That evening, Grandma helped me wrap the coat in Christmas paper and ribbons (a little tag fell out of the coat, and Grandma tucked it in her Bible) and write, "To Bobby, From Santa Claus" on it -- Grandma said that Santa always insisted on secrecy. Then she drove me over to Bobby Decker's house, explaining as we went that I was now and forever officially one of Santa's helpers.

Grandma parked down the street from Bobby's house, and she and I crept noiselessly and hid in the bushes by his front walk. Then Grandma gave me a nudge. "All right, Santa Claus," she whispered, "get going."

I took a deep breath, dashed for his front door, threw the present down on his step, pounded his doorbell and flew back to the safety of the bushes and Grandma. Together we waited breathlessly in the darkness for the front door to open. Finally it did, and there stood Bobby. Fifty years haven't dimmed the thrill of those moments spent shivering, beside my Grandma, in Bobby Decker's bushes. That night, I realized that those awful rumors about Santa Claus were just what Grandma said they were: ridiculous. Santa was alive and well, and we were on his team. I still have the Bible, with the tag tucked inside: \$19.95.