

Gift of Friendship

A Christmas Tale

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By A. Nation

Published 2016

rev.i

ISBN: 978-1541112414

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to thank those that gave me support and tolerated my persistence in writing my story; they are by first names only as they know who they are:

Yuma Writer's on the Edge,
Shirley, Kam, John

Books by A. Nation

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Watch for ebooks on Amazon and Smashwords.

For more insights to how this story progressed, see
my blog at: bloggingwrites.weebly.com

—A Nation

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This is a short after tale to The Pottery Sale

The Gift

Since, Trisha, my neighbor, had invited me and some of my questionable friends to have Thanksgiving at her house, I felt it was only right that they spend Christmas eve with me in my home.

The neighborhood was beginning to sparkle with Christmas color. Many houses were dressed out in green and red while others had a solid blue string of lights along the eaves of their homes. The fences were decorated with white silver lights hanging from a long cord to give the appearance of dripping icicles.

On this cold December day my doorbell rang.

"Hi, neighbor, looks like it's snowing," Trisha exclaimed unwinding her thick black scarf from her neck and stomping the snow off her boots before crossing the threshold.

"I guess I'll have to locate my snow shovel," I replied helping her out of her winter coat.

"Don't worry about that, Larry just got himself a new snow shovel for the front of his truck. Let him have fun with that."

"Come in. Want some hot chocolate?"

"You bet," she said removing her boots to the foot mat in front of the door. I looped her coat over a wall hook above her wet boots.

My little black poodle left the comfort of his warm bed in the kitchen to see who had entered his domain. As soon as he saw Trisha, he returned to his cozy bedding near the heated floor vent.

Earlier, I had heated water in my teapot and pulled out two ceramic cups from my cupboard that I had made in pottery class. After depositing the cocoa mix in each cup, the steaming hot water was added.

Handing my friend a cup with a spoon to stir, we returned to sit in the living room.

"So, when are you going to put up your tree?" she asked tasting the hot liquid in her cup.

"I've been procrastinating. I don't know whether to put it in here or in my studio. Both rooms have good size windows."

"Is it downstairs?" she asked.

"Yes, Henry bought the artificial tree and since he wanted a big one, he bought a seven footer."

"Men always think bigger is better," she said setting her cup down in the coaster on the commode. "Let's do it now."

"Okay," I agreed and put my hot chocolate down on the nearby table.

The seven foot tree, which came in three sections, was compressed in the box. Each section, when

assembled, had lights already attached to its limbs. Since I was taller than Trisha, I reached up to grab one end of the box off the shelving in the storage room for Trisha to hold, while I grabbed the other end.

She led the way back up the stairs holding onto the box handle as I did the same at my end. The box wasn't as heavy as it looked, just awkward. We took a step at a time up the stairs, and at last, reached the kitchen to set the carton on the floor.

"Well? Where do you want it?" she asked.

Mickie looked as if he was directing and stared back up at me.

"Let's put it in the studio. There's more room in there," I said.

We hauled the container into my new studio and set it in front of the large picture window I just had installed in September.

We pieced together the three sections of the fake fir tree and connected the light cords. I plugged the tree in. Green, red, and yellow lights began flashing on and off.

"I'll finish trimming this later," I said unplugging the lights. "Let's drink our cocoa before its get too cold."

"I'm with you."

We returned to the living room and shared Christmas stories about our kids and husbands. Our warm drinks now finished, Trisha decided to take her leave.

"I'm glad you stopped by and don't forget to come Christmas Eve," I said helping her get another arm into her thick coat.

"I won't."

Her boots now on, she wrapped her scarf around her neck. After she left, I returned to my tree and started spreading the branches apart.

"What is that?" said a low voice near my studio door. I looked over and saw Hobnobby standing there.

"Hello, Hobs. I didn't hear you knock," I hinted.

He ignored my attempt to remind him not to just pop in any time he wants to. In order not to explain to me how he got into my house, he maneuvered himself toward my tree.

"That's beautiful. Why is the tree in here?"

"It's for Christmas. Do you know about Christmas?"

"Yes, I have heard about it from some of the residents of Vesda. But I don't know much. Tell me."

"Christmas is the season we worship our savior being born and give thanks to others. We also are more charitable to those who are less fortunate than ourselves. Do the people of Bailory have Christmas?"

"No, they come from the beliefs before Christianity became a mainstay for the populous. However, many of the Nissers and elves are now part of the new Christmas belief upon the advent of your Santa Claus."

"You know the church is having a Christmas play in two weeks. You are welcome to attend with me."

“Thank you. I’ll consider that. Well, I must go.”

“Bye, Hobs.”

I never heard the door shut but he does have a way when he leaves a building.

The next couple of days, I had baked some pies and some frosted cookies for Bosloe’s café. I wanted to find something I could give during Christmas Eve at my house. Back downstairs, I began looking around in the storage room. I rummaged through more of the old boxes I kept in the basement that I could gift away.

I found a knitted sweater my mother had made too large for me. I’ll give that to Cal. There was one of Henry’s black dress suits that might fit Fin. I had made a blue vase for my sister Eileen, so she’s taken care of. Deep in one carton, I found my mother’s afghan blanket she had knitted for Jan who was in junior high school at the time.

I had promised Bosloe a large ceramic bowl that I had made to be picked up later at The Glazed Pot. I carried my giveaways back upstairs to my studio and set them into one of the upholstered chairs. Clearing my desk off, I pulled out some wrapping paper and tape to begin my work.

“What am I going to give to Trisha,” I thought. She has been with me through my tragedy and believed in my unreal adventure tales. I can never repay her generosity and support. I’ll have to think about what I can give her.

"Oooo, how pretty," squeaked a small voice from behind me.

I turned and saw one of the Nissers admiring my decorated tree. Dressed like Hobs in a green outfit and a pointed red cap, this one was smaller and thinner.

"I'm glad you like it. I want you to know that I enjoy your company but you need to come in through my outside doors first. I have privacy issues."

"Sorry, but Hobs let me in. What are you doing?" the small elf chirped.

"Wrapping presents for Christmas."

"Why?"

"Because this is the time of year we exchange gifts to those we love and appreciate."

"That's a wonderful idea," his childlike voice replied.

"Now, why don't you return home so I can finish my task."

"Okay," the small elf replied and vanished before my eyes.

The day of the annual Christmas play all my friends attended to watch the children of our town participate. Some acted as Santa's elves in his workshop. Hobs, Fin, Cal, Bosloe and Colin also was present in the audience.

I didn't know we had so many children involved in the play until I spotted one with a beard. I glanced over at Hobs who just shrugged his shoulders in that innocent attitude of his.

Now Christmas Eve has arrived and the invited were Trisha's family, Jan, her new boyfriend, Eric, Fin, Cal, Bosloe, Colin and Hobs. Hobs had brought his friend Niki and the Nisser, Bilbo. We all sat around the Christmas tree while Larry began reading *Twas the Night Before Christmas*.

"Where's your sister?" Trisha said in a hushed tone.

"She said she had a prior commitment," I whispered back. My sister is always busy with other things.

"Her loss, family comes first."

I nodded and looked up to listen to Larry recite. I wasn't going to let my sister's absence distract me from this happy occasion.

After the reading, we all headed for the desk where I set the cider and cookies. It was then I heard the front doorbell ring.

"I'll get it," squeaked an unknown elf.

"But, oh, all right," I sighed.

The woman was standing on my front doorstep in her expensive fur coat when she saw a small child open the door.

"Hello," she said.

"Are you here for the party?"

"Yes, I'm Susan's sister."

"Come in," was the reply.

Eileen smiled and took off her boots when indicated by what she assumed was a costumed child. She hung

her coat up on one of the hooks and followed the little girl to my studio.

I was surprised when I saw Eileen enter the room, but happy that she came.

"It's just a little something for you, Susan," she said handing over a small Christmas wrapped box to me.

"I'm glad you came, please sit down." Glancing around, I had now noticed a couple more elves in the room.

Eric was over at the cider bowl getting his and Jan's drink when Larry saddled up to him.

"Hey, Eric, you know what I do?"

"I heard you're a bail bondsman. That must be interesting work."

"Yes, but I'm almost like a second father to Jan. Just remember, I hunt people," Larry remarked in his deep commanding voice while he stared at the younger man.

"Yes, sir. Uh, I have to bring Jan her drink."

"You do that, Eric," he said sipping his cider as the young man made his escape.

I got up after everyone came back from the desk table and had settled back down on the floor and the few chairs available. I gave a little prayer I had written of gratitude to my friends for their help and support since my husband had died. I started handing out my presents and gave Trisha a white envelope with her gift sealed inside.

"What's this?"

"Trisha, Larry, I can never repay you for all your unselfish support. So, I want you to have this."

Trisha opened the envelope and gasped.

"Oh, Susan, you didn't have to give us this," she exclaimed holding up two boarding passes for a cruise in Hawaii. Then she hugged me. I think I was going to cry.

"Yes, I do. Sorry I didn't include your children, but I wanted you two to enjoy the time."

"No problem as long as you know that friendship is the only gift friends need. Come Larry, I want to talk to you about this."

"Okay, but let the kids open their presents," he said walking out of the room with my friend.

I smiled as she pulled her husband toward the kitchen. They will have to make plans.

Jan approached me looking about in the dimly lit room.

"Mom?"

"Yes?" I asked wiping an eye.

"Uh, who are all these, uh, people?"

I looked around and realized there were many more elves and Nissers gathering in the back of the room near Hobs.

"Hobs?" I asked hoping he had a good answer.

"This is my family," was all he said.

After Trisha's children opened their gifts, the rest of my family and friends opened theirs.

Bosloe smiled when he unwrapped his new ceramic bowl, and Colin was happy with his new apron. Fin took off his tattered coat and tried on my husband's tuxedo while Cal pulled his new sweater on. I gave Hobs and his friends some candy, spools of thread, and new needles.

Eileen was wondering why I would give children needles and thread, until she opened her present and began to admire her new blue vase.

"Oh, Susan, this is beautiful. Did you make this?"

"Yes, I know blue is your favorite color."

I realized I still had her present in my pocket. I decided to unwrap the small gift. She watched as I peeled off the silver ribbon and opened the box. I gasped.

She stood up and gave me a big hug and a quick peck on my cheek. My floodgates were beginning to open up. My sister had given me our mother's diamond necklace and earrings. Before I could start bawling I turned to the array of food and offered everyone more cider.

Trisha and Larry returned and walked over to me.

"No, I'm not returning the tickets, Trish," I said.

"No, we will accept them on one condition."

"Yes?"

"Larry and I talked this over and we decided to treat you to come with us. Larry was just on the internet and booked you a room not far from ours."

Now the tears came rushing out as I grabbed Trisha to hug her. Larry caught the vessel of cider I was holding and removed it from my hand. Wiping the tears of joy from my face, I turned and held up my paper cup.

“Everyone lift your cup and let’s cheer to our friends, and family, and wish everyone a Merry Christmas.”

“Yes, and a wonderful New Year,” added Trisha raising her cup.

I saw Eric turn to Jan and kiss her. Many of the elves hugged each other and drank their cider. Mickie, was inhaling in all the cookie crumbs which had fallen on the floor.

I felt so blessed.

“Merry Christmas, Readers.”



Read The Pottery Sale to learn more of what happened before this tale at:

Amazon: <http://amzn.to/2hnogKm> or

Smashwords: <http://bit.ly/2gx2D8V>

Characters

- Susan Edwards - Lives in Firth, Idaho
- Trisha Paige - Susan's friend
- Larry Paige - Trisha's husband
- Bosloe & Colin - Susan's friends from Vesda
- Hobnobby - Susan's friend from Vesda
- Eileen - Susan's sister
- Jan - Susan's daughter
- Eric - Jan's boyfriend
- Nissers - smaller elves
- Fin and Cal - Susan's friends from Vesda
- Mickie - Susan's dog

About the Author

A. Nation travels the west with her husband. I decided to write in a futuristic fashion creating an interesting adventure stories that have a moral realization. Whether from prejudice, political crime, retribution, or enslavement, the sagas shall continue. The Pottery Sale was inspired by my sister who loves to make ceramic cups. She helped me with the details of making pottery.



For more insights to how this story progressed, see my blog at: bloggingwrites.weebly.com

To participate in National Writing month go to: nanowrimo.org

You can purchase my ebooks through Amazon, Barnes & Noble, iTunes, and others through:

<http://www.anationauthor.com>





The Pottery Sale

What Lies Beneath

Some people's lives are uneventful, and then there's mine. Just when I thought my life had returned to normal, my friend shows me a strange land that I never knew existed right in my small town.

Chapter 1

"Crash!"

The glass from the back kitchen door shattered into a spray all over the stone tile flooring. Shards of the window pane crinkled and danced in all directions. The two men were told the home would be dark and unoccupied.

"Are you sure no one is home? I don't want to hurt someone. Hank?" a second man whispered behind the first who had entered.

"Will you shut up! Just follow me and keep your yap shut."

Hank's leathery gloved hand reached in through the broken glass opening and twisted the deadbolt to unlock the door from the wall jam.

"Come on, this way," said the more experienced thief.

The two shadowed figures entered the small kitchen built in the nineteen sixties. They crept in silence toward a hallway which was located at the other end of the room on their right. Pete followed his partner as they proceeded down the hall toward the master bedroom.

"How do you know—"

"Quiet! Here's the bedroom. Look for a wooden box."

Both of them pulled out from their pockets small LED flashlights. The last thing they wanted was to attract attention from the outside by using a room light. The other man began searching the walk in closet while Hank began running his hands through each of the four drawers of a dresser. Rifling through the second drawer down, Hank found his hand on the prize he sought.

"Pull one of the pillowcases off and bring it here," he ordered.

Pete watched his cohort lift a small twelve-inch box out of the drawer and dump its contents onto the bed. His friend put the small flashlight handle into his mouth allowing him to use both hands while he examined the jewels strewn about the bed covers.

"What about the silver? Should we be look—"

Hank removed the flashlight from his mouth, "This is what the job pays. The boss said just the jewels. Probably 'cause it's insured." Hank gathered up the pieces he wanted and placed them into the pillowcase.

“Come on, the owners are only going to shop so long. Let’s go.”

In their retreat, some of the window glass on the floor couldn’t be avoided and were stepped on. Hank heard the crunch from Pete’s shoe.

“Careful where you walk, and brush the glass off when you get outside.”

They hurried down the street with their score where they had parked their car and drove off.

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