

## Sharing Christmas

by  
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I AM a happy little tree. I stand beside the front entrance of a white cottage on a quiet street. Each Christmas time I bloom out in beautiful colored lights, and all who pass share my beauty and catch something of the joy of Christmas.

But I was not always happy like this. Once I lived in a great forest, surrounded by trees so tall I could only catch a glimpse of the blue sky above me, and I felt very small and lonely. I, too, wanted to be tall; to look out on the big world like the others and feel the sun shining through my branches. I would stretch out my limbs as far as I could, and send my roots deeper into the earth, but my progress was so slow I grew discouraged.

One day I saw a man and a boy coming through the forest. The man carried something over his shoulder and they seemed to be looking for something. Then the boy saw me and cried: "Look, father, there is just the tree we want." He ran over to me and fairly hugged me in his eagerness. The man looked me over. "Fine," he said. But when he began digging with the thing he had carried on his shoulder I began to tremble. I felt my roots snap one by one and soon I lay a tumbled heap on the ground. Life seemed over for me.

Next I was tied to a funny looking thing on wheels that spluttered and growled when the man and boy climbed in and we started off down a twisty little road that wound through the forest, then out on a big shining highway until we came to a wide driveway that led through a sloping lawn to a white cottage.

Here I was untied and put into a large earthen jar filled with sand and carried into the house, and set in a corner of a big room beside a sunny window. Oh, the joy of having the sun on my branches. I began to feel less scared and to look about me.

In a big mirror opposite I could watch the man as he fastened me upright. Then he put a string of



Two Little Faces Pressed Against the Window Pane.

lights from my top to my toe, whistling softly as he worked. Then I heard a door open and a rush of feet—a little boy and a girl dashed into the room crying: "Mamma, come quick, and see our Christmas tree." They clapped their hands and danced about me. Soon the mother came with a box filled with shining lovely things and my plain green dress was covered with sparkling jewels. I hardly dared look in the mirror for I remembered I was only a humble tree after all, and what I saw could not be me at all; but the great silver star on my topmost branch made me feel very happy. I seemed to draw courage from just looking at it.

After a time I was left to myself. I was glad, as I needed to rest up a bit and get used to my strange surroundings. It grew dark outside and snow was falling; but inside my star shone and a quiet peace came over me.

Then once more the doors opened and a merry group of people came in. This time there were Father and Grandfather and Grandmother, too; and Mother leading the little boy and girl. Everyone was saying how lovely I was; but I did not want them to look at me. I wanted them to see two little faces outside pressed against the window pane. The boy saw them first. "Look, Daddy, Mamma!" he shouted and pointed to the window. "There are two children out there. Bring them in, Daddy; give them some of our Christmas." And the little girl clapped her hands and cried: "Oh, do, Daddy, it's cold out there!"

When they were brought in looking rather scared, but glad, I was so happy I almost shook my baubles off. Then Mother made music on a big box with shining keys and everyone sang Christmas carols. Then Father told the old story of the Shepherds and the Star that led to the Christ Child. Then a jolly man with a red coat and a pack on his back gave everyone presents, including the little strangers. There were candies and nuts, plenty for all, and such a babble of happy voices. I felt the thrill of it myself and the big star glowed in sympathy.

## Two Little Dolls In Blue



"AREN'T the dolls beautiful?" exclaimed Joan to her mother, as she gazed upon the finished product of the "Two Little Dolls in Blue" which Dorothy May had ordered from Santa Claus.

"They are quite the loveliest I have ever seen," spoke mother. "I do believe that you have put your very heart and soul into their fashioning."

Joan had spent many days and nights, too, stitching a loving holiday thought into each tiny garment. The dainty materials had been transformed into things of beauty. The dresses of pale blue silk with bonnets and slippers to match, had proclaimed them the "Two Little Dolls in Blue!"

"Oh, won't Dot love them!" beamed Joan, as she again eyed the dolls from head to foot with a happy smile of complete satisfaction.

"I dare say this will be her happiest Christmas, one that she will never forget," said mother.

Christmas eve, with its bright lights and cheer, was in full progress and the two little dolls in blue were being fondled by one of the happiest little girls in the world.

Rocking in her own tiny chair Dorothy May began singing a lullaby to the dollies, wholly oblivious of the attendant surroundings. It was such an adorable sight that the others had stopped their celebrations and were beaming upon her with transformed emotion.

The spell was broken when Dorothy May suddenly stopped singing and called out, "What shall I name the 'two little dolls in blue'?"

"Well," said Joan, smiling thoughtfully, "since they are dressed in blue and are two very important little ladies, why not call one Alice Blue and the other Elinor Blue?" And so the dollies were named.

On Christmas morning in another house around the corner, Bonny Jean awoke with the joy of the holiday and shouted, "Mother, did Santa come and did he bring me a big baby doll with curls and eyes that open and shut?"

"Yes, dearie, Santa came and brought you a very pretty doll."

Then spying it, seated beneath the tree dressed in scarlet finery, Bonny Jean clasped it to her breast. Upon close inspection she soon learned that it was the same sort of doll she had always received, only with new features.

Just as she was about to burst into protest at her bitter disappointment there came a rap upon the door and a kindly neighbor was saying, "Merry Christmas." Then with a happy smile—

"What is the matter, little girl? Hasn't Santa Claus come yet?"

"Oh, yes, he came, but he brought me the same old rag doll again. I thought sure it would be a real one this year, because I'm nine, you see."

"Oh, I am so sorry," said Dorothy May, with true feeling and thinking of the two beautiful dolls which Santa had left for her. Then with a happy Christmas thought, she whispered something very lovely to her mother.

They all went right over to the big house on the hill nestled under its burden of Christmas snow.

Bonny Jean forgot all about the rag doll when she glimpsed the great tree through the holly wreaths in the window. But when she saw the two little dolls in blue sitting beneath it her joy was unbounded. She clapped her hands and danced with glee. "Such darling dollies!" she gasped, breathlessly.

"Their names are Alice Blue and Elinor Blue," said their little mistress, proudly.

"I want to give you one of them, Bonny Jean; which do you like?"

With unbelievable surprise, her eyes fairly dancing with joy, she clasped the beautiful doll in her arms and asked, "Is it really mine—for keeps?"

"Really and truly for keeps," said Dot.

Dorothy May explained it all to her mother after the happy little class and asked, "Did you just did not miss Elinor Blue very much when she saw how happy she had made Bonny Jean?"

In her heart she felt that it was truly "more blessed to give than to receive," and hugging the one little doll closely, she whispered, "Merry Christmas, Alice Blue."

## Kay's Selfish Christmas



TOBY BARNES, just home from the office, stood regarding his wife with amusement. "You have the manner, Kay, of being about to leap up and wave a flag. What's happened?"

"I've just discovered something important about myself," Kay's short, light curls were becomingly haphazard. Her eyes were of an intense blue. She was slender and young and vivid. "I'm supremely selfish." She rose to her feet and gesticulated with both hands, "I want to be utterly, gloriously engaged in ME!"

They both laughed. Then Kay ran forward and dragged her husband



down into a wide, comfortable chair, squeezing in beside him.

"You're a perfectly grand guy," she smiled, "but this Christmas, my man, I'm going to be superbly selfish, as an experiment. Will you try it too, Toby?"

"All right," he agreed, "I'll take you on."

The next morning Kay tilted a pert gray hat on her curls, and walked imperiously to the shopping district. "I'm fed up with being poor, and scrimping and saving so I can be generous in mean, little ways. Today I . . . spend on myself!"

She felt guilty and ridiculous, and she turned her eyes away from a haberdasher's window where gentlemen's furnishings were invitingly displayed. Toby needed masses and masses of things. No, just this once she would spend with a bang all she had on something frivolous for herself. Toby had promised to do the same.

At noon she happened to notice a tall person standing by the next store window. He was absorbed in thought. Kay hardly breathed while the man suddenly plunged into the store door. She crept close to a sheltering pillar while she watched what happened inside.

She saw the man point to a woman's rich, quilted housecoat. She saw him pay for it, and leave, but without a package under his arm. Just the sort of housecoat for which she had yearned hopelessly.

She gasped in dismay. For one hot second she was possessed with anger. Toby wasn't playing fair. He had no right to make her feel ashamed and abject on Christmas morning!

When Toby's flapping overcoat was out of sight Kay slipped into the same shop, going straight to the counter her husband had left. "May I inquire," she asked crisply, "if that quilted housecoat just purchased, is to be delivered to Mrs. Toby Barnes?" She gave the house address. The clerk was startled into admitting the fact.

Kay threw up her chin. "I asked my husband, Mr. Barnes, to step in here today to buy that for me. I've changed my mind. May I exchange it for something I prefer?" The clerk weakly nodded.

Christmas eve found Kay a bit cryptic. Toby carelessly inquired if a package had been delivered that afternoon. Kay said yes; it was waiting in the closet. As it was, though not quite what Toby supposed.

Kay was excited as a child on Christmas morning. There were waffles for breakfast and especially good coffee. Afterwards Mrs. Toby Barnes shoved her tall husband into his big chair. "Sit there," she commanded him, and left the room.

"When is this fine exhibition of selfishness going to begin?" he shouted after her. "I want to see it in action!"

Kay returned with a large package elaborately wrapped. Toby looked pleased. "There you are," he said. "I'm sorry, Kay, to fall

down on our agreement, but I knew you wanted the darned thing."

"There you are!" cried Kay hurling the box at him. "I simply will not let you squander your money on expensive things for me, Toby."

Toby opened the box, drawing forth a manly, well-tailored dressing gown for a tall gentleman. "You did it at home," he muttered in a small voice. "You haven't a thing to sit around in at home."

"So this," he raved, "is the great exhibition of selfishness! And where is your housecoat, I'd like to know?"

Kay, in a thin, quivering voice, begged him to be kind while she explained.

## A Christmas Awakening



"WITH Christmas drawing near, why can't we get together and make plans—" Robert Dutton read no further. With calm deliberation, he put the heavily scrawled letter back into its envelope.

"Always the impractical Hal," he said slowly. "No wonder he never gets anywhere."

A list of appointments waited upon his desk. Visits from two of the most important men in town; a delegation about a right-of-way through a tract of land he had just purchased; a reminder of a luncheon. Important things, he thought, things Hal would never be called upon to do.

Hastily he went through his mail. A square envelope in a familiar hand caught his eye. He opened it a little curiously. What could Miss Denby be writing him about? His long fingers drew out an artistic Christmas card. A conservative wish and an old Christmas carol printed in English letters. That was all, except the signature, "Eleanor Denby."

A flash stained his face, an undefinable something sent the blood singing through his veins. "Eleanor," he said softly; "a beautiful name; how queer that I never heard it before."

Then, as if resenting his weakness and sentiment, he dug into his mail again. But try as he would, he could not concentrate on the things that had meant anything to him before. Something had happened to Robert Dutton; a Christmas greeting from a secretary whom he had scarcely noticed left him visibly unsettled.

Christmas memories surged through his heart. He was back in the old home again. Everybody was rushing around in circles. He saw the big tree in the corner of the parlor; the kitchen table piled high with good things to eat. And Mother and Dad, with happiness beaming upon their faces.

He picked up Hal's letter again. After all, maybe his kid brother wasn't so crazy? The thought was pushing through his mind that maybe it was he who lacked real sense. This time he read the letter in a

different mood. "Let's give Dad and Mother the surprise of their lives. Let's go down and make one grand Christmas for them. You can turn everything over to someone else for a week—anyone can handle things like that—there's nothing personal or precious about them."

"Nothing personal or precious about them?" He turned the words over in his mind. Hal was right. Someone else could handle the things that had seemed so terribly important. A few hours of confusion, perhaps; then things would go on as before. The world would forget him in a day.

His fingers reached for the pen upon his desk. "Dear Hal," he began, "I heartily agree with your proposal that we get together and make plans to give Dad and Mother the biggest surprise and the grandest Christmas ever—" He was smiling broadly, almost laughing aloud, as he finished the letter with a flourish.

Five minutes later Miss Denby entered his private office to find a new Robert Dutton. She almost dropped her book in surprise at the expression upon his face, and the new way in which he greeted her.

"I'm ready to begin, Mr. Dutton," she began nervously, when he made no motion to start the routine of the day.

"We're going to forget business for today, Miss Denby, and go Christmas shopping, that is, if you want to help me out." He fumbled with his tie as he spoke, noticing for the first time the soft curving of her white neck. "Your Christmas card," he went on, "wrought some miracle. I've found out that business and making money aren't everything in life. They're both fine in their way, but there are other things, too; precious things that I've been overlooking." He came closer to her side and looked hard into her eyes. "For instance, going shopping with a good-looking and adorable secretary."

"We're going to forget business for today," Miss Denby, and go Christmas shopping, that is, if you want to help me out."

"I thought it would be more fun to take them together."

"Stewart stopped and kissed her. 'I think so, too, honey—so let's go.' 'Wait until I get my hat and coat.'"

"And I'll bring the car up to the door."

When Stewart returned to the room Janice was placing packages under the tree.

"Janice, doesn't it seem to you there is something wrong with the tree?" Stewart asked suddenly.

"No," Janice walked all around the tree, looking at it critically. "No," she said the second time—then suddenly—"Yes, Stewart, there is something wrong—something missing—the loving sharing of decorating the tree. Our families would so have enjoyed it. We trimmed it just for ourselves. It does seem selfish."

Then after a moment's silence she cried: "I have it! Suppose we leave the presents here and invite our families here for a good old-fashioned Christmas eve celebration. What do you say?"

"I say—great! Here goes," and Stewart hurried toward the telephone.

## Christmas In The New Home



"THE first Christmas in our new home," Janice Wray announced joyously as she stepped across the threshold of Stewart's and her new home.

"Christmas in our new home," Stewart echoed, switching on the light.

"Oh, isn't it just grand!" exclaimed Janice.

"I'll say it is—but slow up—slow up, Janny! I've got about all my arms will hold, without taking you aboard," Stewart warned her as Janice attempted to throw her arms about him.

"Oh, keep quiet! You're just as excited as I am—so why pretend?" Janice answered with a toss of her head.

Stewart put his packages down and then with his arms around her he assured her, "You bet I am, Honey. I think it is wonderful! Stupendous! And just because they were so happy, they both laughed.

"Come on—let's get busy with the tree," Stewart suggested.

"Right!" agreed Janice, "just as soon as I change my dress."

The tree must be neither too large nor too small.

Some time had been consumed deciding just the proper size for a Christmas tree for two. They were to be alone this Christmas—the first Christmas in their new home; there was no doubt about that, for they had definitely decided that when they purchased the house, and now here they were ready to trim the much-discussed tree.

"Isn't that star lovely?" Janice said as Stewart placed it at the top of the tree.

"Yes. But I thought you had planned on something else," Stewart replied.

"I changed my mind," was all Janice said. She didn't tell him she couldn't think of a Christmas tree without a star at the top. They always had one on the tree "at home."

"Thought you weren't going to get any red balls," she reminded Stewart.

"I changed my mind." Both laughed at Stewart's echo of Janice's answer of a moment before.

"Mother would love this silver ball," Janice hung the ball where it caught the most light.

"Wouldn't Bess love this blue globe?" Stewart picked up the large blue globe.

"Our dads would enjoy that open fire—and Bill those spruce boughs over the mantel"—Bill, the older brother of Stewart, loved anything from the woods.

And so each thing reminded them of someone's fondness for it, or of some of the happy times of former holidays.

"Well, I guess that's all for now," Stewart said when the decoration of the tree was finished and he and Janice stood admiring it. Janice made no reply to her husband's remark at first.

"All but the presents," she said hesitatingly.

"Oh, we can put those out later," Stewart suggested.

"But I mean the ones for the family," she explained.

"Didn't you distribute those today?" Stewart asked in surprise.

"I thought it would be more fun to take them together."

"Stewart stopped and kissed her. 'I think so, too, honey—so let's go.' 'Wait until I get my hat and coat.'"

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## A Christmas Reconciliation



MARY and John had quarreled—just before Christmas, too. The Christmas candy had burned, and then, in the excitement, each had blamed the other, making cruel retorts, until Mary fled to her bedroom in tears and John stalked off in the snowy night.

The Christmas candle beamed a welcome from the window as John started around the block again. He was cold, and sorry, but he mustn't go in too soon.

The tree, the holly, their little girl asleep in her crib and dreaming of Santa Claus—all were a mockery. Mary went into the living room and snapped on the radio, looking for a jazz band and forgetfulness. Instead there came the strains of "Silent Night"—"peace on earth, good will to men."—"God bless us, every one"—"may nothing you dismay." Wasn't there anything on except Christmas programs? A click brought back the silence.

She opened the front door. Next time she would ask John to come in. Tell him she was sorry. Now that he was sorry, too. Why let a few excited words that neither of them meant spoil their Christmas?

But John did not come. It was too cold to stand at the door any longer, but she sat at the window, with the curtain drawn aside, watching for him. An hour went by.

When at last she saw him coming the relief almost choked her. He

was striding rapidly, carrying something in his arms. She opened the door for him and he handed his burden to her.

"Here, Mary, hold him. Careful, now. His leg's hurt. I'll get a box and we'll fix a bed."

Mary looked down at the warm bundle. It was a furry puppy. One leg was in splints. The puppy whimpered a little and licked her hand.

"But, John, where did you get him?"

"Accident. Over on Linden. Fell out of a passing car. I took him to a vet and had him fixed up. Thought he'd make a cute pet for Alice—"

He stopped his work and straightened up. "I'm awfully sorry, Mary. I was a fool."

"It was my fault, John." Their eyes met in perfect understanding. How silly to quarrel. The silence was a more impressive reconciliation than words. Mary broke it nervously, for fear she would cry again. "There are some clean rags in that drawer. And we ought to get him something to eat. He can have this old bowl for his dish." She worked with one hand, cuddling the puppy.

"Won't Alice be surprised? And what shall we name him?"

"Ought to have some connection with Christmas eve, don't you think. How about Scrooge, or Marlow?"

"Oh, no!"

"Good King Wenceslaus?"

"Such names for a poor innocent puppy! Maybe we had better see what Alice wants to call him in the morning." She put the puppy down with a saucer of warm milk. John came and put his arm around her, and they stood close together watching their pet lap greedily.

"We ought to call him Peacemaker, honey," said John. "If it hadn't been for him, I might have still been out there in the snow."

"Oh, John!" She held him close. "Weren't we silly? I was so worried when you didn't come. If anything

had happened to you I could never have forgiven myself."

"Felt pretty rotten myself. Not my idea of the best way to spend Christmas eve."

"Of course! I forgot! We have so much left to do! The tree, and her stocking filled. What time is it?"

He looked at his watch. "Almost midnight."

"Not really!"

He nodded, and put his watch on the table. "Here, pooch," he said, "it's bedtime for you." He lifted the puppy into its bed, and turned back to his wife. "And as for you, miliary," he said, "in about ten seconds I want a kiss for Christmas, and then we're going to pitch in together and clean up this mess, and trim the tree, and maybe even chance another batch of candy. OK? Then, it's time, darling, to say Merry, Merry Christmas."