

TWO CHRISTMAS STORIES

BY JESSICA BEEBE

It was Christmas Eve. Spencer McGraw turned off all the lights and locked up his bookstore for the evening. The snow was blowing madly and he held his coat tightly to block his face from the wind. As the people hurried by him with their last minute presents, he thought of a time when he too had a family to go home to.

It was two years ago when the accident occurred. Spencer and his wife, Kim, were getting their three children ready for the annual family Christmas party. As they were heading out the door, Spencer remembered that he had forgotten to cook one of the desserts.

"Take the van and go ahead with the kids," said Spencer. "We promised that we'd be there early to help set up so you go now and I will take the car and meet you there in a bit. It won't take me that long."

That was the last time that Spencer saw his family. As he turned off the stove and covered the dessert the phone rang. It was the hospital.

"Mr. McGraw, there's been a terrible accident. We tried to save them but it was too late. I'm so sorry."

"I'm so sorry." The words echoed in Spencer's head as he turned the corner on to his street. His house looked so dark and empty. Another Christmas alone. He climbed the stairs to his townhouse unaware of their iciness. Before he reached the top, he lost his footing and tumbled to the ground. He lay there motionless as the snow gathered around him.

As his eyes began to focus he gazed around the unfamiliar room. "Where am I?" he asked.

The doctor replied, "You had a terrible fall, Spencer. Luckily your neighbour found you and brought you here. I hope you're feeling better because you have a visitor waiting outside to see you. She's very concerned when she heard what had happened."

"Who would visit me?" asked Spencer.

The doctor looked at him puzzled and said, "Why, your wife of course."

For many people, Christmas is a time of cheerfully giving presents and hoping for ones just as expensive in return. As we walk by the donation boxes, we unselfishly toss in all our left over change and along with those coins go in a year's worth of guilt. But does our generosity during this joyous season make up for the neglect towards the unfortunate throughout the rest of the year?

To avoid any embarrassment, the following people have chosen to remain anonymous.

Person 1: "Yah, I am more likely to give to charities at Christmas time than at other times in the year. That's because everyone's in the 'giving' spirit now. Where that spirit goes the rest of the year, who knows!"

Person 2: "No, I don't do anything generous any time of the year! I do feel sympathy for the unfortunate at Christmas though because it's cold and they don't have a home and stuff. I just figure that my contribution wouldn't make that much of a difference."

Person 3: "I haven't given out of the goodness of my heart in years. I do remember years ago, in Boy Scouts we would go around to the needy people and show them that we cared. It wasn't just at Christmas time, though. It was all year 'round. That's how it should be."

Person 4: "I'll give some coins to charity here and there but it's usually only at this time of year. I think it's because it all the charities and organizations mostly enforce their causes at Christmas time. There isn't a channel that doesn't play one of those commercials with the starving children and the Christmas music playing in the background. It's sad but can we really make a difference?"

Person 5: "I feel that it is especially important to give at Christmas time because that is when families come together to give gifts and be merry! The people who don't have families or money need to share the season's joy as well. It doesn't need to be through money. Even wishing them a Merry Christmas shows that you care. It makes them feel good and makes us feel good too!"

Some people give, some people don't. That's your decision. The bottom line is that when the carols stop playing and the tree comes down, the needy remain needy.