

CHRISTMAS is LOVE

BY

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A TRUE STORY OF LONG AGO

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CHRISTMAS CAME EVERY YEAR AND MOSTLY IT WAS MERRY. COMMUNITY SHARING WITH A GREAT FIR TREE IN THE QUAKER CHURCH, TRIMMED AND WITH SMALL PRESENTS...PROGRAMS AND SONG. FOOD WAS NEVER A PROBLEM, BUT "CASH MONEY" WAS. GOODIES, FRIENDS, CAROLS (NEW SHOES, MAYBE), TREES, WE LIVED WITH TREES. WE MAY HAVE BEEN DEPRIVED...BUT WE DIDN'T KNOW IT. IN FACT WE WERE FOREVER THANKING OUR LUCKY STARS, AND HEAVEN IN PARTICULAR, FOR OUR GREAT GOOD FORTUNE--TO BE ALIVE AND WELL, HAPPY AND HEALTHFUL. WE SHED TEARS OVER THE PLIGHT OF "THE LITTLE MATCH GIRL," A WAIF OF THE LONDON STREETS WE READ ABOUT. WE WERE SO SORRY FOR CHILDREN IN GREAT CITIES WHO COULDN'T AFFORD A CHRISTMAS TREE. WE HAD ONLY TO CHOOSE THE ONE MOST BEAUTIFUL.

THEN THERE CAME THE TIME, THROUGH MISFORTUNES OF ALL KINDS, BAD WEATHER, POOR CROPS, LOSS OF LIVESTOCK, DEBTS AND ILLNESS, THAT WE COULD AFFORD NOTHING BUT A TREE...FOR OUR CHRISTMAS.

NOTHING TO SPARE FOR GIFTS, EVEN MATERIAL TO MAKE SOME. IT WAS GOING TO BE A SAD SEASON, EVEN WITH PLENTY TO EAT AND WOOD FIRES TO KEEP US WARM...AND EACH OTHER.

THEN MAMA HAD AN INSPIRATION. WE WOULD ALL DO SOMETHING FOR THE BABY. SHE COULDN'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT WHY THERE WERE NO GIFTS. WE WERE BIG AND COULD TAKE IT. HERE I WAS ALL OF NINE...I THINK. SO A FEW DAYS BEFORE THE GREAT DAY, MY LITTLE SISTER'S DOLL DISAPPEARED. SHE COULDN'T FIND IT ANY PLACE BECAUSE WE WERE WORKING ON A SECRET PROJECT AFTER SHE WAS ASLEEP IN BED.

DAD BROUGHT IN THE NICEST, GREEN FIR TREE EVER. IN THE WARMTH OF THE HOUSE IT SMELLED SO GOOD, IT WAS A PLEASURE TO TRIM. I STRUNG POPCORN, MADE PAPER CHAINS, CUTOUTS OF CLOWNS AND THAT JOLLY FELLOW, STILL KNOWN AS SANTA. THAT WAS MY JOB. AND I WENT ALL OUT, EVEN BAKING COOKIE-DOUGH LITTLE MEN WITH DRIED FRUIT BUTTONS AND STRING HANGERS.

MEANTIME, MAMA AND GRANDMA HANNA RECONDITIONED THE KID-LEATHER-BODIED BISCUIT-HEADED DOLL. WITH SCRAPS OF TURKEY-RED COTTON LEFT OVER FROM QUILTS, THEY FASHIONED A BRAND NEW OUTFIT. IT HAD A FULL SKIRT, LONG SLEEVED BLOUSE, WITH A FINISHING TOUCH OF LACE LEFT OVER FROM LAST YEAR'S NEW CURTAINS, AS AN OVERLAY. SHE WAS COMPLETE WITH NEW PANTIES MADE OUT OF FLOUR SACK MUSLIN. SHE WAS RESPLENDANT TIED TO THE TREE ITSELF, ABOUT HALF-WAY UP WHERE OPAL COULD BUT SEE IT, FIRST OFF, CHRISTMAS MORNING AS SHE CAME DOWN STAIRS.

WE ALL LINED UP TO WATCH. BEAUTIFUL...IT MADE HER DAY. IT WAS A JOY FOR ALL.

AND DOESN'T THE GOOD BOOK SAY: "IT IS MORE BLESSED TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE?"

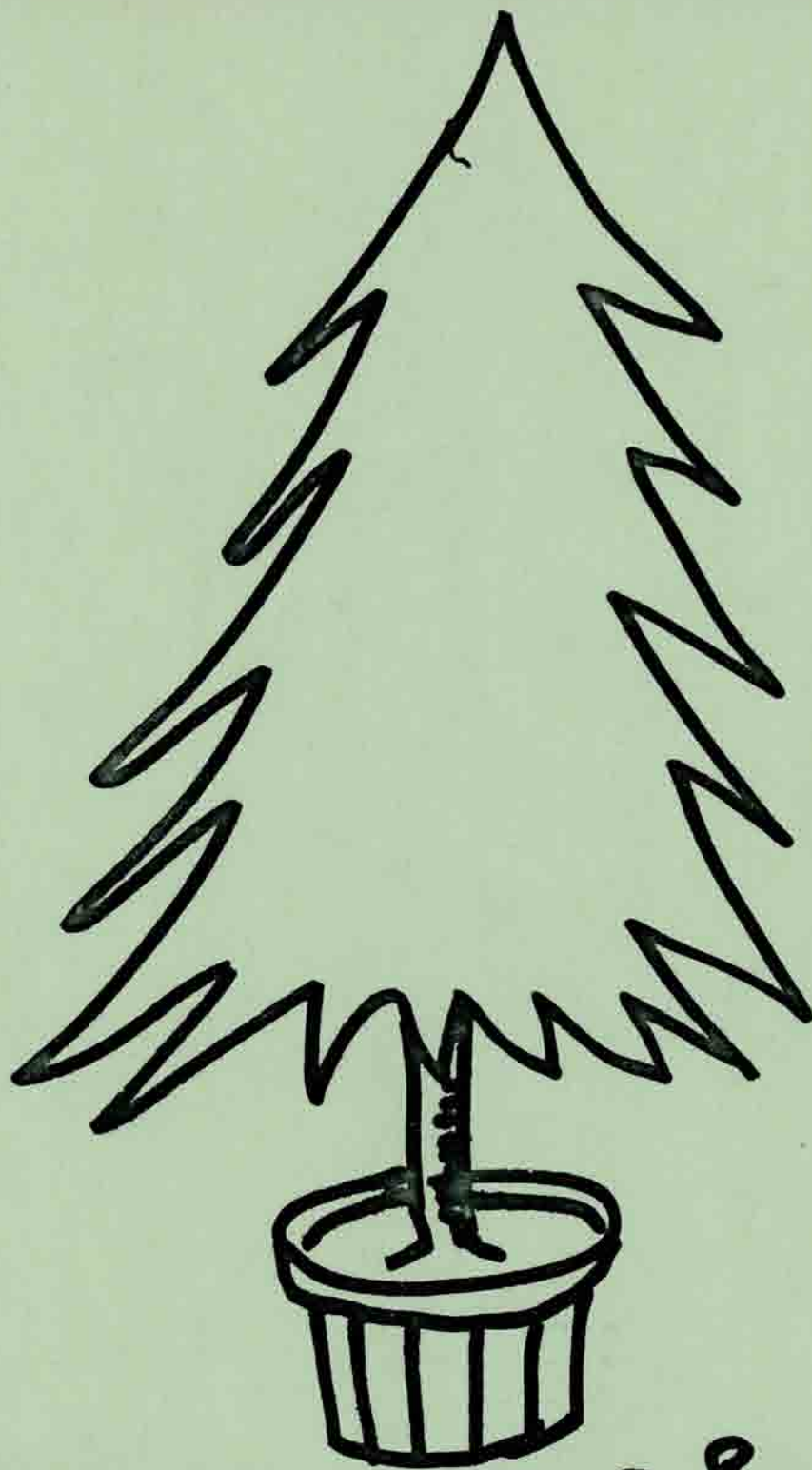
WARNING

AT YOUR OWN RISK

MAYBE YOU HAD BETTER NOT READ THIS. 'TIS VERY SAD, BUT IT IS THE TRUTH, SO I MUST WRITE IT DOWN.'

I HAD AN OLDER SISTER, TOO. IT WAS HER JOB TO TIDY UP. SO AFTER BREAKFAST WHEN EVERYONE WAS BUSY, OPAL ENJOYING HER "NEW" DOLL; PAPA SPLITTING WOOD TO KEEP THE OVEN GOING TO ROAST OUR DINNER; MAMA, GRANDMA AND I DOING SMALL CHORES IN THE KITCHEN, SHE APPROACHED THE LIVING ROOM BROOM IN HAND.

BEFORE I KNEW IT SHE HAD DISMANTLED MY PRECIOUS TREE, MY BEAUTIFUL TREE, MY LABOR OF LOVE, MY ONLY CHRISTMAS AND TOSSED IT OUT ONTO THE BURNING PILE. SHE SAID SHE THOUGHT IT HAD SERVED ITS PURPOSE . . . THERE WERE NO MORE PRESENTS ON IT. USELESS . . . SO THROW IT OUT. IT WAS USEFUL TO ME. IT MY MY "SHINING CITY ON A HILL." SO BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU THROW OUT, IT MIGHT BE SOMEBODY'S DREAM. MAKE SURE IT ISN'T YOUR OWN. WE ALL NEED DREAMS.



COLOR ME LIVING
GREEN!