

Letter from the Editor – Christmas stories

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Hollywood, MD - There is not a stocking large enough to stuff and hold all the great Christmas stories that have been documented, created and written. The first-ever Christmas story—the Nativity, of course, remains the greatest ever told. As magnificent and enormous as the story of Jesus' birth is, it has begat many other tales and anecdotes of the best, and yes, even the worst of humankind. The latter I refer to as "bah, humbug" stories. Those could be stories about bosses who fire employees for wishing clients a "Merry Christmas" instead of the generic (although extremely pleasant) "happy holidays," stories about thieves who steal gifts, fires that damage and destroy homes or even Christmas ghost stories. Of course, "bah, humbug" is Scrooge's signature line from Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol," which details how Christmas can be a time when humans display their best and worst behavior. It is also a ghost story. Happily, the true Christmas spirit wins out in the end. While "bah, humbug" is the most familiar line from Dickens' Christmas novella, thankfully, it is not the last line.

Hopefully, if you are experiencing what seems like the worst humankind has to offer during this season, you are able to create a pathway to a happy ending. In all likelihood, you will need the help of others. A few years ago Reader's Digest re-featured stories from "Chicken Soup for the Soul – It's Christmas." The true stories included an account by a Canadian college professor who decided to travel to Australia to surprise her sister who was preparing to receive her graduate's degree. To make her unexpected visit a bigger surprise and since it would be around Christmas time, she decided to go several steps further by gift-wrapping herself in a large box and having it delivered to her sister's doorstep. Another story is about a family whose beloved black Lab mix, had—ever since it was a puppy—a knack for neatly unwrapping Christmas gifts with its teeth, nose and paws. Sadly, when the dog reached its 14th birthday its health had begun failing and the ability to unwrap its beloved humans' presents was seriously challenged. Instead, the family members wrapped treats for their beloved Lab mix, which eagerly opened them. It was a fitting way for a faithful dog to spend its final Christmas and create an unforgettable family memory.

If you think your favorite personal Christmas story is just too plain and simple to be memorable, keep this in mind—in reality, so was the Nativity. While it is appropriately recalled with much flair and pageantry, it was the saga of a struggling couple sent to a faraway place with the simple elements of a barn put to use to bring a child into the world. No glitter, no ornaments, no paper wrapping—it was a desperate, depressing situation that found a pathway to a happy, glorious ending. And remembering it and all our other simple but significant moments and having the resolve to make new memories each Christmas is what gets us through the season.

Merry Christmas! God bless us all!

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