

# "Ain't Friends Wonderful?"

—Elizabeth Clodfelter



The man sat quietly in the reception room of the hospital, his expression mingled with tear and concern. Sitting across the room a young woman watched him anxiously. "I wonder if someone he loves very much is in here," she thought.

Feeling uneasy, the man looked up and catching the young woman watching him, he fidgeted self-consciously. He found a magazine and began to turn the pages nervously. "Oh, what's the use," he said. Throwing the magazine on the table, he got up and left the room hurriedly.

The girl glanced up as he left, and thinking that he might be ill himself, she quickly followed him. It was snowing and a strong wind forced the man to bend forward at the waist to keep his balance. The girl caught up with him and asked, "Are you ill, sir? I don't mean to be nosey, but you looked so pale I feared you might need help."

The man looked at her for a minute without saying a word. His anger at her inquisitiveness slowly left him, for he saw the girl really wanted to be kind.

"Thank you, no," he replied. "I'm quite all right. I mean . . . well—"

He turned from her searching eyes and started to leave. Then he changed his mind and said, "I'm very lonely. Would you mind walking a little while with me until I can get control of myself?"

"I'd be glad to," the girl said. "Would you like to talk or just walk quietly?"

The man did not answer, so she remained silent. When they had been walking for sometime, she broke the silence, saying, "My name is Kathy Donnels. I know you'd rather I would be still, but it seems strange to be walking with someone whose name I don't know."

"I'm sorry. I don't usually forget my manners, but a small boy in my neighborhood has me so upset I can't think straight. My name is Ted Williams."

He returned to his silence and Kathy did not try to interrupt his thoughts. They came to a small diner and Ted said, "Would you like something to eat? Mrs. Jackson makes the best chowder in the state."

Kathy nodded, so they went in. She found to her surprise that the inside of the diner was cheery and warm. The tables were covered with bright red checked cloths. There were small bowls of fruit in the center, which added to the festive air of the coming holidays. They found a table in the corner and sat down. A short, chunky man came toward them, beaming.

"Good evening, Ted. How are you and the little lady? You like some of Mama's chowder?"

He patted Ted on the shoulder and smiled at Kathy. When he left for the kitchen, Ted said, "Pop is a fine man. He always has something to say that cheers everyone who comes here to eat. If some cannot pay, he smiles and tells them to pay him when they have the money. He's always giving free meals to some of the kids whose parents aren't interested enough in them to see that they have something to eat. He is everyone's friend and the kids worship him."

"It is nice to find someone like that, isn't it? There are so few people who seem to care about their neighbors anymore," said Kathy.

Ted nodded understandingly. "Since I've been here I've found that true to some extent, but the majority of the people are wonderful and I enjoy working among them."

"Ted, maybe it isn't any of my business, but I have been wondering what was causing you to be so blue when Christmas is only a week away."

He tried to smile, but couldn't quite make it. "Why is it that some parents don't care if their children live or die, Kathy? They act as though

the kids are a burden to them and that they might have to do a little work to rear them."

"I don't know, Ted. We can't see a kid wandering around the streets and say he is there because his parents aren't looking out for him. Sometimes the child has slipped away from home of his own accord and his mother may not even know where he is."

"You're right. I'm not taking time to analyze things. I'm so worried about Jimmy I can't think straight."

"Jimmy?"  
"In my neighborhood there is a man whose wife is dead. He has a son that any man would be proud of, but he takes no interest in him whatsoever. Although he has a maid to look after the boy he never stops to think that she doesn't look out for him or that the boy needs a father's love."

"Has the boy gotten into some sort of trouble?"

"Oh, no! I'd better explain. When I first moved here, he came over and talked with me a great deal and I liked the little fellow. Finally he began coming over every day when it was time for me to get home from work. He helped Mom by running errands and she enjoyed his company. One day when he didn't come over we worried about him. When he still hadn't come the next day I went over to see what was wrong. He had a severe chest cold and I suggested to his father that he be taken to a doctor. Mr. Brett said Jimmy had had colds before and always had been okay. It made me angry and I left before I said anything I would regret later."

"Two more days passed and Jimmy had not appeared so I went over this morning. He was coughing terribly and was very feverish. I picked him up, wrapped him in a blanket, and took him to Dr. Bishop, who has offices in the next block. The doctor said Jimmy had pneumonia and we rushed him to the hospital. I cursed myself for not realizing what was wrong and doing something sooner."

"You did what you thought best at the time and that is the most important thing."

They hadn't realized how hungry they were until Pop had placed the hot bowls of chowder before them. When they had finished they told Pop good-bye and returned to the hospital, where they learned Jimmy was out of danger. Dr. Bishop assured them that if no complications developed Jimmy should be well enough to return home for Christmas day.

After bidding Ted good-night, Kathy managed to locate the apartment where Jimmy and his father lived. She went up to the third floor determined to see Mr. Brett before the night was over. It was quiet and she was afraid that he might not be at home. She knocked and the door was opened by a nice looking man. That is, he would have been nice looking if he had not been frowning so.

"I'm a friend of Jimmy's and I would like to talk to you," said Kathy.

"Do you know where Jimmy is?" asked the man. Kathy somehow felt that he was very worried about his son. He moved back from the door and motioned for her to enter. The apartment was nicely furnished and Kathy saw Mr. Brett at least gave Jimmy every material thing a boy could possibly want, for toys were scattered all over the apartment.

"Your son is very ill with pneumonia."

"Pneumonia? I hadn't realized it was that bad. What a fool I was to neglect his cold! Is he all right?"

"Do you mean you actually care whether he will recover or not?" Kathy asked sarcastically.

"Of course I care. You don't understand. I've tried to show Jimmy how much I love him, but when I

(Continued on Page Thirteen)

## MY GREATEST CHRISTMAS JOY

—Bonnie Leonard

He placed his tiny hand in mine,  
His brown eyes twinkling brightly;  
His chubby hands were red with cold,  
For around the snow fell lightly.

A chill ran up and down my back—  
How cold his little hand!  
My voice broke slightly as I spoke,  
"What for you, little man?"

"Well, uh, my name is Tommy Green  
And I live in Brookdell."  
His little hand stopped trembling here  
As a story he started to tell.

"Mommy's sick and poppa's dead,  
But I guess all this you know,  
Since you visit me most every year  
When to every house you go."

The old man's eyes were filled with  
tears.  
Oh, Santa, please don't cry!  
Why, I don't worry, not one bit,  
'Cause Daddy had to die.

"I'll sell papers, or sweep or wash,  
Or scrub somebody's floor.  
I'll make money for my mom  
By doing some small chores."

## ANOTHER CHRISTMAS

—Carole Biesecker

It was the night before Christmas,  
And Santa with his pack  
Came down through the chimney  
With a clickety-clack.

With a look to the left  
And a peep to the right,  
He scattered the presents  
'Neath the tree so bright.

When he had finished  
He suppressed a deep sigh  
That another happy Christmas  
Was about to pass by.

So up through the chimney  
And off through the snow  
He was off to the North Pole  
As fast as he could go.

On Christmas eve a happy Santa  
Knocked on a shabby door  
And placed a box of presents there  
Upon the shabby floor.

"And to think I thought 'twas Santa  
Claus  
Who brought joy to girls and boys,  
But a little boy has brought to me  
My greatest Christmas joy."

## MEMORABLE CHRISTMAS EVE

—Arlene Lashmit



Amid the peal of the church bells,  
Amid the laughter and cheers,  
Amid all the stories that the Christmas tells,  
Amid heartaches and tears,  
A little boy lay fast asleep  
When he heard a terrific crash  
And a painful moan of a voice quite deep.  
The little boy sprang from his bed like a flash,  
Only to see bright gifts and toys gleaming  
And a big red bundle in the middle of them all—  
He began to wonder if he were dreaming.  
He was afraid to move or even to call,  
So he stayed quiet to see what it would do.  
It arose from the floor and walked to the tree,  
Where presents were placed, all bright and new.  
The little boy moved closer to see what he could see,  
And when it had finished the Christmas tree,  
The red bundle turned quickly toward the door,  
But then the trouble began to be.  
A large pillow fell softly to the floor.  
And then a familiar figure appeared.  
The boy's eyes became large and filled with fear—  
But quickly the familiar figure disappeared;  
And nothing could the little boy hear,  
So he returned to his little bed,  
Remembering the exciting events of the night,  
Never forgetting the figure in red.  
He had recognized the figure on sight.  
He closed his eyes and sleep soon came.  
Christmas morn he was awakened by Dad,  
Who, when he looked at him, showed some shame.  
Was his little son blushing, or was he mad?

## ARE YOU GUILTY OF ?

