



Everybody Likes to Say...

# MERRY CHRISTMAS

SO DO WE! IT HAS A MEANING ALL ITS OWN AND WHEN WE EXPRESS THESE SENTIMENTS TO YOU, PLEASE REMEMBER WE ARE TRULY MINDFUL OF THE FINE FRIENDSHIPS WE HAVE ENJOYED IN THE PAST. MAY THIS CHRISTMAS BE YOUR HAPPIEST.

**CRAVEN FURNITURE COMPANY**  
J. R. CRAVEN                      CLIFFORD CRAVEN



By WILLIAM TREMON  
EVERY day for a week old Oliver had been passing their house in his wagon loaded with pine and cedar trees.

"Christmas trees cheap!" he shouted. "Christmas tr-e-es—two dollars. On-l-y two dollars. . . ."

He was passing now, and Marge, washing the few dishes she and Denny had soiled at their noonday meal, wished she couldn't hear the sound of his shouting voice.

Joe always bought old Oliver's trees. "Old Oliver needs the money," he'd say. "And our old car just wouldn't take the bumps of a hunt for a tree in the country around here."

Old Oliver hesitated in front of the little house, repeating his chant until Marge thought she must go to the door and tell him to stop. She



"Denny, dear," she said thickly, "we're not going to have a tree this Christmas. Daddy isn't here to help decorate it, and besides—Santa will come without a Christmas tree."

and Joe had explained to him the first time they'd bought a tree just the kind they liked. It had to be so tall and so big around. It had to be cedar with clusters of blue berries on it. Old Oliver always had the kind of tree they wanted.

Little Denny ran into the kitchen from the front room.

"Mommy, there's ol' Oliver," he said. "Mommy, he has our tree. . . ."

Marge dried her hands and knelt to gather little Denny in her arms. "I know he has, dear," she said, making herself look at him. Since last January when the horrible car accident had taken Joe away from her, she'd had difficulty in looking at Denny. Denny had Joe's rumpled dark hair, his dark eyes, the deep cleft in his chin. A sob caught in Marge's throat. "Denny, dear," she said thickly, "we're not going to have a tree this Christmas. Daddy isn't here to help decorate it, and besides—Santa will come without a Christmas tree."

"I'll help decorate it," Denny said. "I did last year."

Marge pressed Denny close. "I know, dear—" she said. Poignant memories of last Christmas crowded her so that she couldn't talk for a moment. She could see Joe teetering on the ladder to put the star in the top of the tree.

"I can help, Mommy. . . ." Denny insisted.

"You could, dear, but we don't want a tree with Daddy gone. Someday, dear—oh, I hope it never comes to you—you'll understand why Mommy didn't want a Christmas tree!" She rose to her feet hurriedly feeling a rush of tears. "I'll get your wraps, Denny, and you can play outside in the snow for awhile."

Shadows lengthened in the little house before it came to Marge with frightening realization that it had been all of three hours since Denny'd left the house.

"Denny—DENNY!" She ran out on the porch and down the steps, her slim unprotected feet and legs sinking into the deep snow that had banked there. "DENNY—!" The echo of her voice came back to her in mocking horror across the white stillness of the little yard.

A cold wind swept against her as she stood at the gate looking up and down the street and calling Denny's name. It was a horrible moment, one in which she knew she must have aged twenty years, and one in which she saw in heart wrenching clarity her unfairness to Denny in harboring a self-centered grief over her loss of Joe to the extent of his safety, his protection, his veritable happiness.

A familiar wagon made the turn at the end of the street, and Marge recognized old Oliver and his load of Christmas trees. His chant rang out again. "Buy your Christmas tree now! On-l-y two dollars. . . ."

Marge shrieked against the wind. "Oh, don't—please don't!" Then she saw Denny—little brown garbed Denny sitting up in the seat by old Oliver!

The wagon stopped by the gate, and old Oliver grinned as Denny climbed down into Marge's reaching arms. "He likka th' ride. He. . . ."

Marge didn't give him a chance to talk. "Do you have our tree, Oliver?" she asked.

Old Oliver chuckled and jumped down from the wagon. "All's week I've had your tree," he said.

"Just put it in the yard," Marge told him. "Why, Denny and I couldn't do without our tree!"



All the fragile beauty of a snowflake symbolizes this shimmering season of joy and happiness. May this Christmas be the exact joyous of them all.

**REINS-STURDIVANT FUNERAL HOME**

# The Ties of FRIENDSHIP

May they be strengthened more securely by the associations of the Christmas-time. May the Yuletide bring you good times, and all that is the best of life.

Our kindest thoughts are of you at this glad season of the year.



**BURGESS FURNITURE CO.**



It's an ideal time to wish for you all the good things in life.

We're delighted to extend this holiday greeting to all our friends.

**WATAUGA HARDWARE, Inc.**