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CHRISTMAS 1963

by: Janelle Cochran

The gaily lighted homes, the pungent smells that come from the kitchen, the busy shoppers loaded down with their bundles bustling through the crowded stores, the Santa Claus on the street corner with his jolly "Ho!Ho!Ho!", and the sound of Christmas carols riding high on the cold, crisp air---this is the Christmas spirit. People are greeting people with bright smiles; and here and there is heard the cheerful sound of "Merry Christmas". This year, as in years past, it is the same. Or is it?

This year those bright smiles and the familiar "Merry Christmas" mask broken hearts and unshed tears. Why? Because there lived a man who once laughed, who was the leader of a nation, and who knew the meaning of the word 'leadership'. There was a man who forgave and looked for the good in the forgiven.

There was a husband who loved with a quiet, deep, and eternal love.

There was a father who gazed wide-eyed with joy in his heart as he watched his young son gleefully discover life. Meanwhile, the people of the world looked on and smiled quietly to themselves; they were a part of something and they knew it. They were part of the majesty

of John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

But this leader, this father, this husband, this man was struck down by bigotry and hatred. And the shocked people of the world asked, "why?"

Hours later the man who was the weapon of this bigotry and hatred was himself laid in the grave. And the shocked people of the world asked, "why?". "Why did it happen?" "How could it happen in America only a short time before Thanksgiving and the beginning of the Christmas season?"

We have only to search our hearts for the answers. Every time we have permitted anger to rule us, every time we have criticized unjustly, we have been guilty of adding to the bigotry and hatred.

Christmas is the season of miracles. Perhaps from that one lone grave in Arlington National Cemetery will come a miracle for the Christmas of 1963.

Before that grave there flickers an eternal flame that can be seen for miles. Through that light, the spirit of the man sleeping in that grave seems to send forth that Christmas message of long ago, "Peace on earth, good will to men."

If the people of this earth will but hear anew this message, perhaps "the glow from that fire can truly light the world". But if this is to be so, we must never forget. We must never forget that man and the cause for which he gave his life.

"Ask ever person if he's heard the story,

And tell it strong and clear if he has not..."

"Don't let it be forgot, that once there was a spot,

For one brief shining moment that was known as Camelot."

