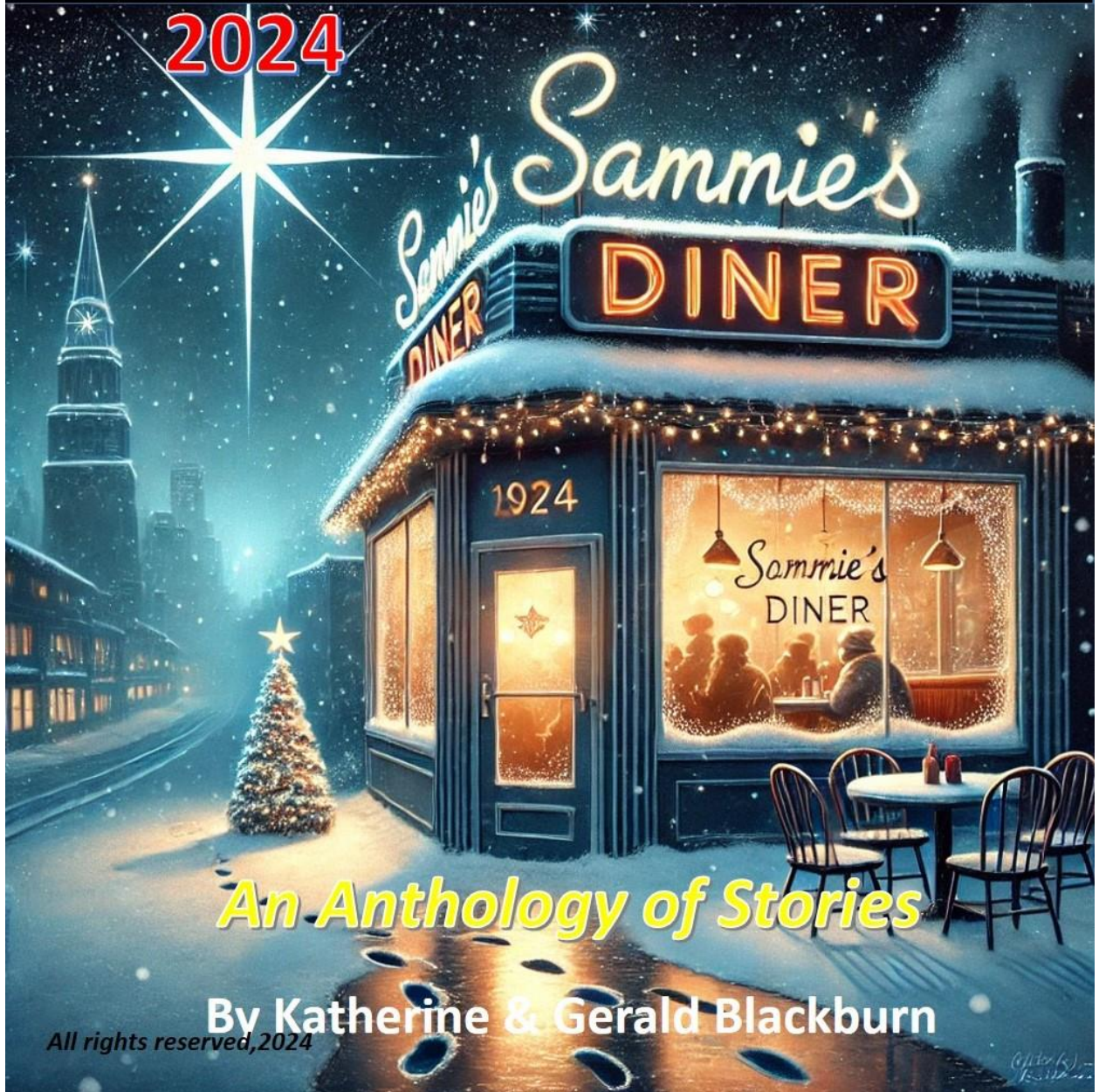


The Spirits of Christmas

2024



An Anthology of Stories

By Katherine & Gerald Blackburn

All rights reserved, 2024

The way you spend Christmas is far more important than how much.

Henry David Thoreau

The Spirits of Christmas 2024

By

G. A. Blackburn



Contents

Introduction: *The Meaning of December 25*

- A reflective essay exploring the universal themes of hope, renewal, and generosity associated with Christmas.
- Discussion of the historical and spiritual significance of December 25, including its connection to the winter solstice, Christian traditions, and cultural celebrations worldwide.
- A call to view Christmas as a time to embrace kindness, community, and introspection in the modern era.

Anthology of Short Stories

1. St. Nicholas by Samuel Clemens

- A witty and heartfelt fictional narrative reimagining St. Nicholas's origins and his role as the embodiment of generosity.
 - Written in Clemens's classic humorous yet profound voice, capturing the magic of belief and the joy of giving.
-

2. The Holiday Rose by G.A. Blackburn

- A poignant tale of a widower at a Bus Stop and eternal Love.
-

3. Angel in Waiting by G.A. Blackburn

- The story of Lucy an angel waiting to meet her new family .
 - Blends themes of faith, perseverance, and the unseen miracles that unfold when least expected.
-

4. 'Twas the Night Before Christmas at HOB by G.A. Blackburn

- A creative reimagining of the classic poem, blending modern-day humor with a nostalgic nod to tradition.
 - Incorporates the chaos of the HOB.
-

5. The Last Day Miracle

- A humorous essay chronicling the misadventures of a dad rushing to finish his Christmas shopping on Christmas Eve.
- Filled with relatable mishaps, from long lines to quirky gift choices, culminating in an unexpected act of kindness that makes it all worthwhile.

Conclusion: *A Modern-Day Nativity Story*

- A contemporary retelling of the Nativity story set in an urban backdrop.
- Highlights universal themes of hope, love, and new beginnings through the journey of a young, expectant couple navigating challenges in the city, aided by strangers embodying the spirit of the Magi, shepherds, and angels.
- Ends with a message of unity, compassion, and the enduring power of faith to transform lives.

Appendix: *Acknowledgments and Reflections*

- Brief notes on the inspiration behind each story.
- A Message for those who Grieve on this day.
- Acknowledgment of contributors and their unique voices.
- Final reflection encouraging readers to carry the spirit of Christmas beyond December 25.

Your children need your presence more than your presents.

Jesse Jackson

Introduction: The Meaning of December 25

December 25 is more than a date marked by tinsel and twinkling lights—it is a day rich with meaning, steeped in history, and aglow with the enduring spirit of humanity. While its origins lie in ancient traditions and Christian faith, the essence of Christmas transcends boundaries of religion, culture, and geography. It is a day where time seems to slow, and we are reminded of the things that matter most: love, hope, and the profound joy found in giving.

For centuries, December 25 has symbolized light in the darkest moments of the year. In ancient times, the winter solstice brought rituals celebrating the rebirth of the sun, the triumph of light over darkness. Christianity embraced this time of renewal to mark the birth of Jesus Christ, a moment of divine hope and a promise of salvation. For others, Christmas has evolved into a season to celebrate kindness and togetherness, a universal holiday of shared humanity.

Christmas is not just a singular event but a collection of deeply personal stories woven together into a shared experience. Each year, it invites us to reconnect with our truest selves, to open our hearts to family, neighbors, and even strangers. Whether you find meaning in the Nativity, the legend of St. Nicholas, or the simple warmth of a shared meal, Christmas is an opportunity to pause and reflect on the beauty and fragility of life.

At its heart, Christmas teaches us the art of generosity—not just through gifts but through our time, attention, and compassion. It challenges us to embrace the unexpected, to see the magic in the ordinary, and to carry its spirit forward into the year ahead.

This anthology, *The Spirits of Christmas 2024*, is a tribute to those timeless truths. Within these pages, you will find stories and essays that explore the many faces of Christmas: its humor, its mysteries, and its profound ability to heal and inspire. Each tale invites you to journey through the rich tapestry of traditions and emotions that make this season so cherished.

As you turn the pages, may you rediscover the joy of believing, the warmth of giving, and the light of hope that shines even in the darkest corners. Christmas is more than a holiday; it is a moment to believe in miracles, in each other, and in the enduring power of love. Let us honor that spirit, not just on December 25, but every day of the year.

Christmas will always be as long as we stand heart to heart and hand in hand.

Dr. Seuss

Twas the Night before Christmas Poem (Original)

Clement Clarke Moore 1779 – 1863

Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse;
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there;
The children were nestled all snug in their beds,
While visions of sugar-plums danced in their heads;
And mamma in her „kerchief, and I in my cap,
Had just settled down for a long winter“s nap,
When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from the bed to see what was the matter.
Away to the window, I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.
The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow
Gave the lustre of mid-day to objects below,
When what to my wondering eyes should appear,
But a miniature sleigh, and eight tiny reindeer,
With a little old driver, so lively and quick,
I knew in a moment it must be St. Nick.
More rapid than eagles his coursers they came,
And he whistled, and shouted, and called them by name;

“Now, Dasher! Now, Dancer! Now, Prancer And Vixen!
On, Comet! On Cupid! On, Donner And Blitzen!
To the top of the porch! to the top of the wall!
Now dash away! dash away! dash away all!”
As dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly,
When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky,
So up to the house-top the coursers they flew,
With the sleigh full of toys, and St. Nicholas too.
And then, in a twinkling, I heard on the roof
The prancing and pawing of each little hoof.
As I drew in my hand and was turning around,
Down the chimney St. Nicholas came with a bound.
He was dressed all in fur, from his head to his foot,
And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot;
A bundle of toys he had flung on his back,
And he looked like a peddler just opening his pack.
His eyes-how they twinkled! his dimples how merry!
His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry!
His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow,
And the beard of his chin was as white as the snow;
The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth,
And the smoke it encircled his head like a wreath;
He had a broad face and a little round belly,
That shook when he laughed like a bowlful of jelly.
He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf,

And I laughed when I saw him, in spite of myself;
A wink of his eye and a twist of his head,
Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread;
He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work,
And filled all the stockings; then turned with a jerk,
And laying his finger aside of his nose,
And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose;
He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle,
And away they all flew like the down of a thistle.
But I heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of sight,
Happy Christmas To All, And To All A Good-night!

**I will honor Christmas in my heart, and try
to keep it all the year.**

Charles Dickens



The Holiday Rose

A Christmas Story

By

G.A. Blackburn

At a quiet, snow-dusted bus stop on the outskirts of a small town, illuminated by a single streetlamp. It's Christmas Eve, and the faint sound of carolers and church bells can be heard in the distance.

A young man, *Ethan*, heartbroken after losing the love of his life, sits at the bus stop late on Christmas Eve, staring at the ground.

His face is etched with despair, and a small, wrapped gift sits beside him on the bench.

An old man, *Gerald*, approaches the stop with a gentle smile, wearing a worn overcoat and carrying a single red rose. He sits beside Ethan, shivering slightly, and strikes up a conversation despite Ethan's initial reluctance. Gerald shares that he is waiting for his wife, *Katherine*, to join him for their Christmas Eve tradition. Curious, Ethan asks why she isn't with him yet. Gerald explains cryptically that "she always meets me here in her own time."

Gerald begins to recount his love story with Katherine. They met in a parking lot at a holiday dance, where Katherine was a guest and Gerald was a young lonely man. He describes her as his soulmate and the light of his life and shares memories of their decades together—creating and raising a family, enduring hardships, and celebrating countless Christmases.

Gerald shared his wisdom about love, loss, and the importance of holding onto his faith and hope. He explains how, even during the darkest times, communication and love gave him strength. Slowly, Ethan starts to share his own story. He talks about his breakup, the bitterness of the holidays without his partner, and his belief that love is not worth the pain it brings. Gerald listens patiently, offering gentle but profound advice: "Sometimes, love hurts because it matters." The grief we feel is mostly the shadow of the love we have in our hearts.

As the bus pulls up, Gerald doesn't get on. He smiles and shakes his head, saying, "This one's not for me." Ethan is puzzled but doesn't press.

As midnight approaches, Gerald glances toward the horizon, and his face lights up. He tells Ethan, “She’s here.” Ethan sees no one, but Gerald speaks as if Katherine is standing beside him. He places the rose on the bench and thanks Ethan for listening. Gerald stands, tips his hat, and begins walking down the snowy road, seemingly alone. As he disappears, Ethan notices faint footprints in the snow beside Gerald’s own, as if someone is walking with him.

Ethan picks up the rose, reflecting on Gerald’s story. He realizes the gift of love, even when it’s lost, is worth cherishing. Another bus arrives, and this time, Ethan boards, carrying the rose and his small gift with a sense of renewed hope and faith in his own strength.

Next to the empty bench where Gerald and Ethan had been sitting. The faint outline of a snow angel is now visible in the snow, with two sets of footprints leading away into the night. Silent Night is heard in the still evening air along with the tolling of the Church bells.

And So This Is Christmas; And What Have We Done? Another Year Over; A New One Just Begun; And So Happy Christmas; I Hope You Have Fun; The Near And The Dear Ones; The Old And The Young.

John Lennon



**THE MAGIC OF CHRISTMAS IS A TIME
FOR REFLECTION,
HEALING, AND CONNECTION.**

*Dedicated to those who carry love in their hearts, even when it
feels far away.*



The Angel in Waiting

A Christmas Eve Tale

Christmas Eve had always been a magical time in the old Blackburn house, where six bright-eyed children gathered to share stories, laughter, and wonder. The house, nestled on a hill blanketed in snow, sparkled with lights and decorations lovingly prepared by the family. This year, something extraordinary was about to unfold.

Francesca and Macy, the eldest at 9, are the unofficial leaders. They are the organizers, ensuring the stockings were perfectly hung and the tree's ornaments glistened. Macy's younger sister Zoe, 8, is a dreamer, always sketching fantastical creatures by the fireside. McKensie, the adventurous 8-year-old, was already outside, crafting a snow fort while the others, followed her with giggles and determination. Little June, only 4, hummed Christmas carols as she carefully rearranged the nativity set on the mantle. The youngest, Maverick, at just 2, toddled around, clutching a shiny red ornament like it was the greatest treasure in the world.

As the evening wore on, the children gathered by the fire for their favorite tradition: storytelling. Macy opened the well-loved book of Christmas tales, her voice soft yet commanding, as the others snuggled close under a patchwork quilt. Suddenly, a faint, golden glow began to shimmer near the tree. Francesca gasped.

“Did anyone else see that?” she whispered.

“See what?” McKensie asked, squinting toward the tree.

Before anyone could answer, a soft, melodic voice filled the room. “Don’t be afraid, children. I’m here to share in your Christmas Eve magic.”



The children stared wide-eyed as a small, glowing figure emerged from the tree’s branches. It was a young angel, no taller than Francesca, with delicate, silvery wings and golden hair that seemed to shine like the star atop the tree.

“I’m Lucy,” she said with a gentle smile. “An angel in waiting.”

“Angel in waiting?” Macy asked, her curiosity overriding her surprise.

Lucy nodded. “I haven’t been born yet“ So while I’m waiting I’ve been sent to help bring a little extra Christmas magic to those who need it most. But I’m still learning, so tonight, I thought I’d visit you.”

Zoe’s eyes sparkled. “Do angels celebrate Christmas?”

“Oh, yes!” Lucy replied. “But more than anything, we love to see the joy it brings to others. And tonight, I thought maybe you could help me bring that joy to someone special.”

The children were intrigued. “Who needs our help?” McKensie asked eagerly.

Lucy motioned for them to follow her. She led them to the window and pointed toward the forest at the edge of the property. “There’s a small family in a cabin not far from here. They’ve been struggling this year, and their Christmas isn’t as bright as it could be.”

Macy’s face lit up with determination. “We can help! But what can we do?”

Lucy clapped her tiny hands together. “That’s the spirit! Let’s gather gifts, food, and whatever else we can to share the Christmas magic.”

In a flurry of excitement, the children sprang into action. Macy and Zoe carefully packed baked treats from the kitchen, while McKensie and Francesca gathered warm blankets and toys they were willing to part with. Even little June and Maverick contributed—June proudly carried a jar of homemade jam, and Maverick offered his beloved shiny ornament.

Once everything was ready, Lucy led them through the snowy forest. Her golden glow lit the way, making the trek feel like a magical journey. The children arrived at a humble cabin where a soft light glimmered through the window. Inside, they saw a mother and her two children sitting quietly by a small fire, their faces weary but hopeful.

Macy knocked on the door, and when it opened, the children cheerfully exclaimed, “Merry Christmas!” They brought in their bundles of gifts, filling the room with warmth and joy. The family was overwhelmed with gratitude, and tears of happiness shone in the mother’s eyes.

As the children shared stories and laughter with the family, Lucy hovered nearby, her smile brighter than ever. When it was time to leave, she whispered to the children, “You’ve done something truly wonderful tonight. You’ve shared the true spirit of Christmas.”

Back at the Blackburn house, as the children settled in for the night, Lucy spoke one last time. “Thank you for helping me, and for reminding me what it means to be an angel. Merry Christmas to you all.”

And with that, Lucy faded into the soft glow of the tree’s lights, leaving the children with hearts full of warmth and wonder.

That night, as the snow fell gently outside, six children dreamed of angels and the magic of giving. And somewhere, Lucy, no longer an angel in waiting, began her new role, her wings shining brighter than ever. And on a branch of the Christmas Tree down in the parlor there was another glow and tinkling sound as a small soft voice whispered, “Merry Christmas to all” from Bennie the newest angel.



'Twas the Night Before Christmas at
the House of Blackburn

by

G. A. Blackburn

'Twas the night before Christmas, and all through the house,
Not a sibling was stirring—not even to grouse.
The stockings were hung by the chimney with flair,
In hopes that St. Nick wouldn't trip on the chair.

The children were nestled, but let's be precise,
Jerry was reading his books—oh, how nice!
Terry was sewing with great concentration,
While Fred fixed a toaster with sheer determination.

Tony, of course, had his guitar in hand,
Strumming a tune for a one-man band.
Fran wrote a poem about mistletoe cheer,
And Mary danced to it—her moves were top-tier.

Regina, dear Mom, in her robe and her curlers,
Had just settled down with a cup of hot Earl Grey.
While Jack in his slippers, so cozy and plaid,
Watched reruns of Gunsmoke—like he always had.

When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,
Fred grabbed his wrench to see what was the matter.
Jerry peeked out with his flashlight in tow,
While Tony yelled, "Guys, it's probably snow!"

Mary cried, "Snow? In *our* neighborhood? Please."
But Fran sighed, "Let's check the news, on Dad's TV we tease."
Out to the porch they all made a mad dash,
And promptly tripped over Jack's old Christmas stash.

The moon on the brown grass of the old front yard palm,
Lit the chaos they'd caused—it was nearly dawn.
When what to their wondering eyes should appear,
But a miniature sleigh and eight confused reindeer.

With a jolly old driver who scratched his red head,
“Blackburns again?” Santa nervously said.
He looked at the crew, from Jerry to Mary,
And sighed, “This family’s a bit... legendary.”

“I’ve got gifts to deliver, but first a quick plea:
No more debates on the best kind of tree.
No more arguments over board game rules.
And Tony, stop asking if reindeer need tools.”

Regina stepped forward, her hands on her hips,
“Santa, you’re late, so we made our own snacks.”
She held out a platter, piled high with delight,
To smooth Santa’s temper and avoid a long night.

Santa grinned wide, took a bite with a wink,
“Regina, your snacks are the best, don’t you think?”
He opened his bag with a flourish and cheer,
“Here’s presents for everyone, for the rest of the year!”

To Jerry, more books; to Terry, soft yarn;
To Fred, a new toolbox for work in the yard.
Tony got strings for his vintage guitar,
Fran got a notebook to write her memoir.

For Mary, some shoes—gold tap shoes, at that,
And for Regina, a tiara (to replace her old hat).
To Jack went a new TV remote and mug for his beer,
He blinked back a tear—it was more than a guy could bear.

The Blackburn's stood there, their hearts full of joy,
Even Fred cracked a smile like he'd done as a boy.
Santa climbed to his sleigh and called out with a laugh,
“Merry Christmas, dear Blackburn's—you're one crazy clan!”

And off he flew, through the cold winter night,
While the House of Blackburn glowed merry and bright.



A little smile, a word of cheer, A bit of love from someone near. A little
gift from one held dear, Best wishes for the coming year. These make a
merry Christmas!

John Greenleaf Whittier



The Last Day

It was the morning of December 24th, and Fred was a man on a mission. Unfortunately, the mission was doomed from the start. For reasons he couldn't quite explain—even to himself—he had left his Christmas shopping to the last possible moment. He had spent the last three weeks telling his wife, Sandie, “Don’t worry, I’ve got it all under control,” while secretly procrastinating like a seasoned expert.

Now, armed with a cup of lukewarm coffee and an increasingly irrational sense of optimism, Fred braved the chaos of the local mall.

10:00 AM: The List That Didn’t Exist

Fred had no actual list, only a vague memory of what his family might want. His teenage daughter Amber had mentioned something about wireless headphones—or was it earrings? His son, Jeff, was obsessed with a game called “Space Fortress Something-Or-Other,” and Sandie... well, Sandi had said she didn’t want anything, which Fred knew was a dangerous lie.

“Keep calm,” Fred muttered to himself as he stepped into the first store. “I’ve got this.”

11:30 AM: The Toy Store Incident

Jeff’s gift was Fred’s top priority, so he found himself in a toy store teeming with desperate parents. Fred grabbed a sales clerk and described the game. “Space Fortress Something-Or-Other,” he said.

The clerk looked at him blankly. “Do you mean *Galactic Wars: The Expansion Chronicles*?”

“Sure. Let’s go with that.”

The clerk led him to a shelf that was completely empty. A hand-lettered sign read, *SOLD OUT*. Fred stared at it as if sheer determination could summon the game back into existence.

“Maybe check online?” the clerk suggested.

Fred tried. His phone told him the game wouldn’t ship until mid-January. Perfect.

1:00 PM: The Wrapping Paper Debacle

By now, Fred had managed to grab a pair of headphones, a random scented candle, and a coffee mug with *World’s Best Wife* emblazoned on the front. He was standing in the checkout line with about thirty other procrastinators when he remembered something important: wrapping paper.

Fred darted over to the aisle, where two women were arguing over the last roll of red-and-gold paper. He decided that snowman print would be fine. When he returned to the line, his spot was gone, and so was his patience.

3:30 PM: A Miracle at the Department Store

Fred stumbled into the department store, feeling defeated. It was his last hope for Sandi’s gift. As he wandered the aisles, he spotted a display of scarves. They were soft, elegant, and—best of all—on sale. Fred grabbed a beautiful one in emerald green, Sandi’s favorite color.

Just as he was about to pay, an elderly woman approached him. “That scarf... my granddaughter would love it. I’ve been looking everywhere.”

Fred hesitated. He looked at the scarf, then at the woman’s hopeful face. With a sigh, he handed it over. “Merry Christmas,” he said, trying to sound cheerful.

The woman beamed. “Bless you, young man.”

Fred smiled back, even though his internal monologue was less charitable.

5:00 PM: The Unexpected Gift

By the time Fred got home, the sun was setting, and he was carrying a bag of mismatched gifts and a heart full of regret. He placed the items under the tree and prepared for the inevitable disappointment.

But something magical happened. As his family unwrapped their gifts that evening, their reactions surprised him.

Amber squealed over her headphones. “I’ve been wanting these for months!”

Jeff tore open the mug’s box and laughed. “This is perfect! I can use it for my hot chocolate while I play Space Fortress!”

Sandi’s eyes lit up when she saw the candle. “It smells like the beach. You remembered our honeymoon!”

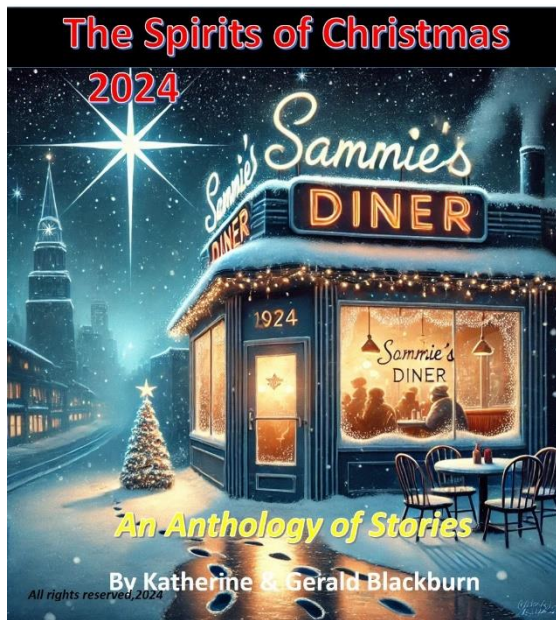
Fred stared at them, stunned. “You... like the gifts?”

Sandi hugged him. “Fred, it’s not the gifts that matter. It’s that you thought about us.”

Fred looked at his family and realized something he’d forgotten in the madness of the day. Christmas wasn’t about perfection. It was about love—and maybe a little bit of luck.

As they settled down for the evening, Fred made a silent vow: next year, he’d start shopping in November. Probably. Maybe.

For now, though, he was just grateful. It had been chaotic, but in its own way, it had been the perfect Christmas.



"A Miracle at Sammie's Diner"

By

G. A Blackburn

The city hummed with holiday energy, its streets glittering with strings of lights and store windows glowing with festive displays. Among the bustle, Maria and Joseph Santiago walked hand in hand, their footsteps heavy with both exhaustion and hope. Maria was nine months pregnant, and

Joseph carried a battered backpack filled with the few essentials they had managed to hold onto in the past weeks.

Their journey had not been easy. After losing their apartment to rising rents, they had been staying in shelters and spare rooms offered by kind strangers. But tonight, they were without a place to rest. The holiday season had stretched every shelter to capacity, and Maria's contractions had begun to make her steps falter.

"We'll find somewhere," Joseph said softly, his voice steady despite the worry in his eyes.

Maria nodded, drawing strength from his resolve. They approached a small diner, its neon sign flickering above the words *Open Late*. Inside, the smell of coffee and warm food wrapped around them like a comforting embrace. The waitress, a middle-aged woman with kind eyes, approached them.

"You two look like you could use a break," she said, guiding them to a corner booth without waiting for an answer.

A Gathering of Strangers

As Maria sipped on a hot cup of tea, Joseph explained their situation to the waitress, whose name tag read Sammie. Sammie listened intently and then surprised them by pulling out her phone.

“Let me make a few calls,” she said. “We’ll figure something out.”

As the minutes ticked by, other patrons in the diner took notice. A man in a construction jacket approached their booth and handed Joseph a thick wool blanket. “It’s not much, but it’ll help keep her warm,” he said.

A teenage girl with purple-streaked hair offered a thermos of soup she had been carrying for her own dinner. “I’m not hungry anymore,” she said with a shy smile.

Even the short-order cook came out from the kitchen, his hands still dusted with flour. “There’s an old cot in the storeroom,” he said. “It’s not fancy, but it’s clean.”



A Night of Miracles

With the help of the strangers, Maria and Joseph were soon settled in the storeroom. The cot was draped in the wool blanket, and Sammie had strung up a set of twinkling Christmas lights to brighten the small space. As Maria’s labor intensified, the cook’s wife, a retired nurse, arrived to assist.

In the early hours of Christmas morning, amidst the soft glow of the lights and the quiet murmurs of encouragement, Maria gave birth to

a healthy baby boy. The diner erupted in quiet cheers, and Sammie gently wrapped the baby in a clean dish towel embroidered with stars.

“What’s his name?” she asked.

“Emmanuel,” Maria whispered, her face radiant with joy. “It means ‘God is with us.’”

The True Spirit of Christmas

Word of the Christmas birth spread quickly, and by sunrise, the diner was filled with visitors. A local baker dropped off warm bread, while a musician brought his guitar and sang carols. The teenage girl returned with a hand-knit hat for the baby, and the construction worker came back with a small crib he had built overnight.

As Maria and Joseph looked around, they saw a community of strangers brought together by kindness and generosity. The challenges they had faced seemed lighter now, eclipsed by the love that surrounded them.

Outside, the city buzzed on, unaware of the tiny miracle that had occurred in the corner diner. But for those who had been part of it, the birth of Emmanuel was a reminder of the true spirit of Christmas: that in the darkest moments, light can still shine, and in the unlikeliest places, miracles can be born.

And so, the story of the Nativity was retold—not in a stable, but in a diner, where the spirit of compassion and hope had found a home once more.



My idea of Christmas, whether old-fashioned or modern, is very simple: loving others. Come to think of it, why do we have to wait for Christmas to do that?

Bob Hope

For those who still Grieve on this day.



Stolen Holidays

By G. A Blackburn

Happy Thanksgiving, Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

*Tis the season to celebrate, a tradition from long ago but for some of us,
now the seasons of loss and silent grief.*

*Memories of joys, happiness and blessings hang in the air and slip
through the shadows of our minds.*

Gone, with the loved ones we lost.

It was their time to go, does not satisfy the hole left in my heart. They are gone and took my Holiday spirit with them.

The boxed decorations have been stored for so long, reminders of what was taken from our life. No need to drag them out to remind me of my pain and loss.

I search now for how to fill these days and instead pack away the feelings of grief and dread.

Oh Katherine I miss you so much and it hurts to be sad during this time of year.

So I have decided to choose joy and fill this empty Holiday space with our memories of the past and make new ones with the family again.

Happy Thanks Giving 2024; *I am so grateful and thankful for you, our children and me and the half century we have shared.*

Merry Christmas Darling 2024, *I have hung the mistletoe over your picture here and given you all my love.*

Your stocking is hung with care and filled with love, kisses and hugs to last a year, I have added the memories of the children on Christmas morning that we shared together.

Happy New Year 2025; *When the clock strikes twelve this new year we will stand together under the moon and stars and begin to step closer to our loving return.*

I know you are still right here with me and thank you for choosing us to be one for eternity.

The good news there is nothing to put away, or get lost, I carry all of this love and hope – our memories and dreams here in my heart everyday – along with you!

Our love is here and now as we continue this journey through eternity together.

Happy Holidays Katherine

My Angel in Heaven

December 25, 2024

Appendix: Acknowledgments and Reflections

- Brief notes on the inspiration behind each story.
- Acknowledgment of contributors and their unique voices.
- Final reflection encouraging readers to carry the spirit of Christmas beyond December 25.

1. St. Nicholas (Twas the Night before Christmas) by Samuel Clemens Moore

This traditional story is told each year at Christmas. It was only intended for his children but now belongs to the world. This book is only intended for our Family but can also be shared with others.

2. The Holiday Rose by G.A. Blackburn

This is a personal story that reflects on myself and my grief. I recognize though others share their own sadness with the Holiday. Maybe it can offer some solace.

3. Angel in Waiting by G.A. Blackburn

This year will welcome two new angels to the family here is a fictional account of the blessings that can bring.

4. 'Twas the Night Before Christmas at HOB by G.A. Blackburn

Ok Sam Moore here is the HOB take on how it might have happened at our place long ago....

5. The Last Day Miracle

For many years mI always did my shopping for Christmas on Christmas Eve. This fictional story tries to explain or rationalize that behavior. Of course it was mostly just pure procrastination on my part.

Conclusion: A Modern-Day Nativity Story

The real story of Christmas is Universal and has not changed for hundreds of years. It can sometimes be difficult to understand its true meaning in the context of these ancient cultures. So here is a contemporary version or spin based on present day realities. This could happen and include Divine intervention.

For 2025

The **Spirit of Christmas** is more than a season; it's a way of living that extends beyond December's glow. It calls us to carry the light of **kindness, generosity, and connection** into the everyday moments of the year ahead. By sharing a warm **smile with a stranger**, offering **help to someone in need**, or simply taking time to **listen and show understanding**, we embody the heart of Christmas in our actions. Let us be mindful of small, consistent ways to spread joy—whether through volunteering, uplifting words, or acts of service—transforming fleeting holiday cheer into a year-round practice of **love and goodwill**.

Fin