

A Very Merry

COVID

Christmas



Bah, Humbug!



Merry Christmas

2020

If you Like.



Chapter 1



Doug tapped on the red circle with the white X embedded. The smiling face of his son disappeared with the ending of the phone call. FaceTime, Zoom, Portal, whatever you called it, technology had now become the primary moment of contact with loved ones and friends. He sighed and died just a little more at the antiseptic nature of it all. What he wouldn't give for a little dirt, a smell, the warm embrace or the heated exchange. He missed his family. Hell, he missed humanity.

He did have his wife with him. That was a blessing. At least one of his friends had suffered the devastation of losing their mate due to this damnable disease. Now she sat alone suffering the loss by herself. Afraid even to let her family come near in fear of getting or spreading the plague.

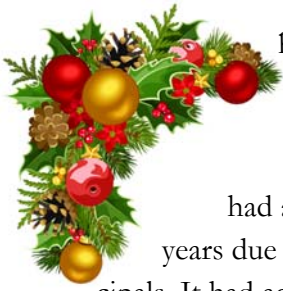


He chuckled as he ruminated. His own wife of many years, the love of his life, had herself become fit to be tied on more than one occasion during this outbreak. The self-imposed isolation had made them prisoners in their own home.

Now pet peeves and usual irritations earlier ignored were becoming major issues. He grinned because he wasn't too sure she wasn't thinking of various methods to dispose of his body. Being married and close was one thing. Being forced to confine to a small house twenty-four seven for months was something quite different.

He took a stretch and headed to the computer completing what was now his daily commute from the living room to an old bedroom turned office. He wasn't big into social media, but it had proven a distraction from too much interpersonal communication with the wife. The interruption in his daily routine often kept the

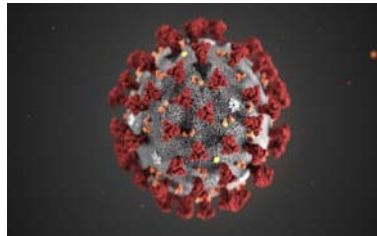




peace and his hide. He hummed along briefly reading the postings. Skimming more than reading. He didn't want to get too involved in the politics. The election was over, and he had already lost too many friends over the last four years due to different political beliefs and personal principals. It had accelerated in the last four months of the election. He needed to dial it back for his own personal sanity and to ensure he retained even a small cadre of friends.

He would like to say he was immune and neutral on the subject. But he wasn't. He had felt betrayed by many of his former friends and associates. It had hurt and he had occasionally struck back. His feelings might have been inflamed by the isolation, but maybe not. He did know the politics and election added to his stress. The constant lack of closure to the event, driven by the losing side, didn't help.

Now it seemed the loser and the disease were intent on shutting down his Christmas. Christmas. His time of year. His white beard and full belly along with the Santa hat had made many a happy encounter with



strangers and friends. He liked the twinkling lights, the Christmas trees all decorated with personal memories, the TV shows, and even the unrelenting songs constantly played since the first of November. Mostly he liked the Christmas spirit. The magic of the season that brought all of us together for the benefit of each other regardless of race, religion and even political persuasion.

How could you have Christmas without the feel of a child's hand, the squeeze of a loved one's heart, and the excited breath of the anticipated gift? The year had taken so much, and it seemed it



was not done until every cherished tradition would be squashed under its unrelenting heel.

He heard a ping and noticed that a friend had sent him a direct message or DM as the youngsters called it. It was a neat little device tucked in the medium that allowed him to talk privately with other friends. He clicked on the icon and saw that it was Linda an old friend and compatriot.



“Do you still have that Santa hat?” Linda queried in the DM.

He replied that he did.

“Could you put it on, and video call me? It’s for my grandson.”



This was a first. He never had played Santa online or via video, but he was game. Wasn’t like there was a long list of to do items waiting. He confirmed the request, donned his ever-present hat and initiated a video chat. What he got in return was a wide-eyed grandchild.

Linda was squeezed into the video frame with her six-year-old grandson. He had the biggest eyes and the most quizzical look. He slurped on a candy cane until his eyes focused on the figure on the video.

“Santa!” He reached out to the phone and tried to touch the jolly old man. Santa reached back desperate for that touch but knowing it wouldn’t be really there. Santa gave a loud chuckle and few Ho Ho’s. They chatted for at least 10 minutes. Santa got the whole list and wrote it down. He even got the grandson’s promise to be really, really, good this year. When they were done, Santa hit the X on the red icon and the video was done.





He smiled. He even laughed. God that was so much fun! The ping on the DM rang again.

He clicked on it. Linda was texting him again.

“Oh my god. That was so much fun! It almost felt like a real Christmas. The little guy is running and telling his mother and father that grandma has a direct line to Santa! I am the belle of the ball over here thanks to you.” Linda and he exchanged a few other quick comments and then signed off.

It was a blessing. It wasn't holding a child in your lap. But he made a child happy. The wonder of it all filled his heart. Doug grinned a grin that had been lost for some time. He shook himself from in front of the computer and took a detour to the front porch.



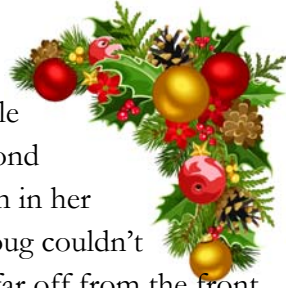
The front porch was the second stop in the daily commute. There he had set up a rocking chair that looked out upon the pedestrian traffic. Doug marveled at the thought he had placed a rocking chair on his front porch and now perched himself there daily observing the world walk by. It seemed so Norman Rockwell, so ordinary, so well, 'old'! Here he was rocking back and forth, beverage in hand, white hair, white beard and big belly and looking every bit

the old man of his youth's imagination. Still vital, still thinking, still wanting to move, give and participate. Full of laughter, happiness, glee and song but confined to rocking back and forth while he stared at the parade literally passing by.

Doug hated it and loved it. The rocking at least connected him to the real world. Even though it portrayed him as old and decrepit, an old curmudgeon yelling at the kids to 'get off his lawn'. But he had to be here. He just might see the little blond-haired girl walking with her mother. She was so cute and sweet.



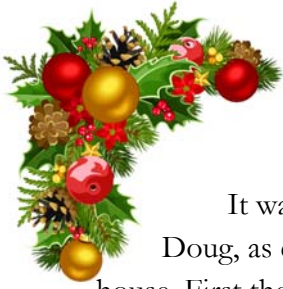
She usually wore a pink garment of some kind. Yesterday it was a pink sweatshirt with pink pants. The day before she wore a little fairy dress, all pink of course. She had curly blond hair. Long bouncy blond hair that fell too often in her face. She held tightly to her mother's hand. Doug couldn't see her eyes. They mother and child were too far off from the front porch as they walked by. But Doug was sure the little girls' eyes were of the deepest pools of blue with a bright glorious sparkle.



He looked down the lane toward the direction the from which they always approached his house. He saw them in the distance and began his smile. A touch of humanity in a dismal world. They started to pass his house when the little girl stopped dead in her tracks and looked directly at Doug. Her mother stopped short and looked down at her unmoving child. Then she looked in the direction of her child's gaze. It fixated on Doug himself.

Doug was taken aback a bit. They had never had this type of interaction before. Then he realized. He hadn't taken off his Santa hat. Doug grinned. Then he waved at the little girl. She waved back. Her eyes, whatever color, growing wide as her mother gently coaxed her along. The mother smiled sweetly, at if to say thank you. They finally continued their journey. Doug sat quietly at peace but remembered to remove the hat before further encounters.





Chapter 2

It was getting time for Christmas decorating.

Doug, as expected, did do that. It was a necessity at his house. First the Christmas tree. This year it was a daring adventure. Usually a fun outing complete with shopping and a stopping for a meal at the local dining spot. This year was going to be get and go. There wasn't a discussion as to whether there would be an artificial tree this year. Pandemic or not, the tree was going to be real. So, a bit of planning had to be in place.

First part, timing. Had to be middle of the afternoon when there were less shoppers and less employees. Had to be at an outdoor market. No going inside.

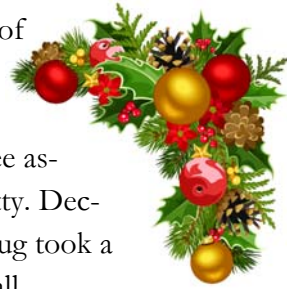
Masks in place and the pickup truck for transportation. Doug just wanted the tree to be able to be thrown in the back of the truck. No interaction between the employee and himself. Plus, there had to be room for the Mrs. and the dog. Check, check and check.

They had made their way to the local market, found a tree, and had the employee trim and load. No human contact, no handshake, little laughter, and all business. Well, until the little lady found out the poinsettias were on sale. A quick side trip to the garden department produced a bundle of flowers of various types, colors, and designs. It was her first shopping trip to a store in 8 months. He supposed it was to be expected.

The tree was mounted, crooked as usual. He had made plenty of efforts over the years to stand the tree in an upright and sym-



metrical stance. But later age, less energy, lack of help and a greater acceptance of what nature had given made crooked Christmas trees the norm. It had proven though that letting the tree assume its natural shape was in its own way, pretty. Decorating the tree was a three-day process so Doug took a break and commuted to his office down the hall.



After opening the social network, Doug found three more friends had DM'd him. This was curious as he usually only received one or two DM's over the course of a month. Roxanne, Sally and Carol had all sent him a text message. He opened each in turn and found that they had all talked with Linda about his meeting with her and her grandson. They wanted to know if he could do the same for them. Good friends all, of course he would. It would be a hoot. He sent them messages agreeing to time and date. They replied enthusiastically.

The next day about 2, Doug had his first online chat with Carol and her kids. It was quickly followed by one with Roxanne and her grandkids, then Sally and her kids. Each lasted about 10 minutes and Doug ensured it was timed out so no one would have to wait. He laughed and joked with Mom's, Grandma's and kids. Doug even sang a song or two for the little ones. He took screenshots of all with his face in the little box on the side. When he was done, he emailed the pictures to the ladies. They were ecstatic to say the least.

Doug's heart was full of cheer as he logged off with the last crew. He then commuted to the front porch again just for a moment of human interaction with the little blond-haired girl and her





mom. This time he purposely wore his hat and gloves. Her wide-eyed smile was the best. At least she wasn't a monitor or TV screen.

He so missed people.

As the child and her mother passed, Doug headed to the garage. There would be Christmas lights outside.

But technology had worked to his advantage for outdoor lights over the years. He had spent too many cold days hanging onto a rickety stepladder putting up strings of bright lights over the years. Often he found when he was done that one string, usually in the middle, had stopped working. Thus, ensuring another hour or two or removing and re-installing a second set of lights. He believed that in all those efforts of putting up lights he had not once been able to complete the display successfully. There had always been lights. But the way, type and sparkle were highly divergent from the original plan.



Laser lights, LED sheets, projectors, and even computers had changed all of that. A couple of LED sheets and a computer could have Santa and his reindeer dancing in the yard. Laser lights made it snow, sparkle or shine reindeer, Santa, candy canes and snowmen on the side of the house. Doug,

however, had been blessed by his sons with a video projector. An outside screen, a downloaded video, some outdoor speakers and viola, Christmas Carolers sung tunes to the neighborhood for four hours a night.

Doug had his Carolers up and running in less than an hour. No step ladders required. A laser light on the side rained sparkles on the walls. In a bid to old fashioned Christmases past, a string of red lights surrounded the front door giving a frame to a gently placed



wreath. When darkness fell, Christmas was alive. No muss, no fuss, no need for friends or help. Entirely and safely away from everyone. Didn't even need the hot cocoa to warm up the body for another round of effort.



The doorbell rang about 10 am the next day. A package. He was sure of it. Doug waited for the delivery person to leave the yard and went on the porch to retrieve it. Doug tried to time it to wave hello to the driver. But he was masked and away without looking back.

It was a curious package. It was addressed only to 'Santa' at his street number. Doug hadn't ordered anything, so he was quite interested as to the contents. He took it inside, wiped it down and opened it up. He had to unravel it a bit before he realized what it was. It was a computer background for video chats. A basic bit of cloth that could be hung behind the person on the computer that would show a scene or give the impression the chatter was somewhere special. In this case the background was the interior of Santa's workshop.

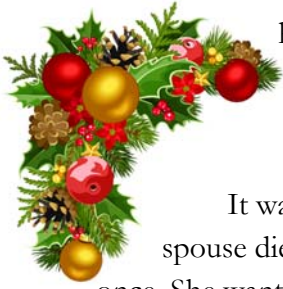


"HO. HO." Doug was thinking as he unwrapped his new toy. "This could be fun!"

Doug looked and looked for a return address or any sign of who sent him this fine gift. But none was to be found. The sender would be anonymous. He suspected one of the ladies from the DM meetings, but he knew it would be useless to ask. He smiled and accepted the gift with a "Thank you" to the universe. Gifts, he knew, were meant to be enjoyed.

Doug commuted to his office and went about setting up the background. It was something to do before getting to the duties of





his life, such as they were. It was after putting the background on just so and checking on the computer for the umpteenth time, Doug got another DM.

It was from his friend. The friend who had had her spouse die from this horrible disease. Doug answered at once. She wanted to know if he could set up an online meeting with her and her daughter's family. They wanted to talk but neither knew how to do it online. The daughter was waiting so Doug set up a video chat room right away. He sent them simple instructions on how to come to the chat room and guided each one through the process. In about five minutes the three of them, his friend's wife, her daughter and Doug were video chatting online.

Doug's heart broke. He hadn't seen her for some time. Neither had her daughter. With her daughter were two young grandkids. The squeals were real and immediate when the kids saw Doug in his Santa hat with the workshop background behind him.

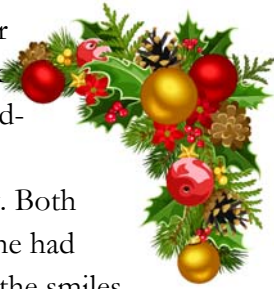


"Grandma knows Santa!" A little black-haired girl with the largest brown eyes yelled into the camera.

A family reunion online quickly devolved into a Christmas chat with Santa, Grandma, Mom and the kids. After a few moments Santa did have to go see about some elves and left the chat room. He also left his mike and speakers on mute so the two family members could speak in private. It was awkward and unexpected. But as always, the Christmas spirit made it work. A half hour later the conversation was over, and Doug closed the meeting room.



A ding on his computer showed another DM had arrived. It was from his friend. “Thank you.” It said in simple words. It was all that needed to be said.



Doug received two more DM’s that day. Both from friends that had heard from friends what he had been doing. Doug enjoyed the interactions and the smiles, so he agreed to continue with the show and set both up for later on that evening.

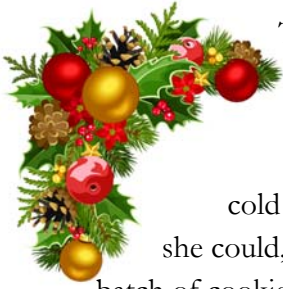
He did take time out to commute to the front porch. He had to wave to the little blond-haired girl. She gave him the biggest smile from a socially approved distance. Then she danced, as little girls do, holding on to her mother’s hand as they made their way down the road.

The background was a big hit in the meetings that night. Especially when he put on the Santa coat with the hat and the gloves. In the first meeting the kids giggled, Dad laughed, and Mom fussed. Grandma teared up. It took a bit of a moment for the Dad to take the screen shot Mom wanted. Mom’s can be so insistent. But they got it done and ended the call just in time for the next one.



The next call was a bit of a surprise for Santa and the family that called in. Doug’s wife, a former thespian and more than a bit devious in her own right, interrupted the call about halfway through. She came in with a Christmas cap on while carrying a glass of milk and a plate of cookies. With the kids all agog in wonder she set it all down, admonished Santa to finish his cookies and milk, then turned to the kids and said hello. Pandemonium befell the house that called in. There were three little kids, a grandma, grandpa, Dad and Mom on the other end.





The kids could not control themselves. They had to talk to Mrs. Claus. They wanted to know which reindeer Santa liked the best. Did he like chocolate chip cookies? Was it cold at the North Pole? Mrs. Claus answered all she could, but then excused herself to check on the next batch of cookies. Goodbyes, Merry Christmas and all other sense of kind thank you's followed her exit. Santa grinned. Took a few more gift lists and then closed the call.

Mrs. Claus was standing by as Doug signed off. "Now that was fun!" She laughed as she turned on her heel and commuted to the living room.



Chapter 3



The online video chats didn't end there. Doug continued to get one or two requests a day. Some even offered to pay him. He just requested that they send a donation to the local women's shelter, a favorite charity of his. Doug wasn't in it for the money. Doug was in it for the warm fun, happiness and Christmas spirit. Plus, a regular gig would be work. Doug always avoided work whenever possible.

Doug had commuted to the rocker out on the porch again. It was close to time to wave hello to the little blond-haired girl. He swore she was looking forward to the wave as much as he was. Her mother was also becoming a part of the conspiracy of happiness.

It was while he was rocking that Doug looked out upon the lawn. His nightly video Christmas Carolers had been a hit. They usually drew one or two walkers and an occasional neighborhood car to sit and listen. It wasn't a big crowd. It wasn't a big neighborhood. One or two audience members nightly was a sellout.

This got Doug to thinking about his family's Christmas movie nights. When the kids were home, they would all gather round the super huge 27" cathode ray tube TV and watch old Christmas movies like *"It's a Wonderful Life"* or *"Miracle on 34th Street"* or even *"A Charlie Brown Christmas"*. Oh, often the kids would get bored and wander around the house between video games and talking with friends.



But, surprisingly enough, they noticed if the movies didn't play or were missed. They'd ask if Mom



and Dad were going to watch the movie. Or did we know it was on tonight. We did and we would let them know we would be watching it. They would groan and roll their eyes. But they were there for the beginning of each movie and all the “best” parts, especially the end.

Doug missed that now the kids were grown and gone. He and Mrs. Claus still watched the classics, but more and more the Hallmark Christmas movies were making a play for screen time. He had passed this memory along on social media and phone calls with family and friends. It was amazing how many had the same memories.

Doug wondered if he could share this experience with the neighbors and friends. Then an idea came to him. The video projector and sound system could play more than just short videos of Car-olers. They could play movies. A crazy idea entered his head and he went to see Mrs. Claus about it. She gave him that ‘oh, go ahead’ smile and nod. The one women give when they know it’s useless to object. With her acceptance, he was off.



That night Doug had cleared his driveway of cars and cleaned his white garage door spotless. He had downloaded “*It’s a Wonderful Life*” onto a memory card and plugged it into his video projector. The sound system

was relocated to next to the garage doors and prepped to play. Then he set about placing a dozen chairs, two to a spot so couples could share, using the proper six-foot social distancing down the driveway. They zig zagged so every chair had a clear view of the ‘screen’. Doug had created his own outdoor/indoor movie theater in a proper pandemic set up.



He placed a tray of facemasks at the end of the driveway and a 'Welcome' sign next to the road. Everything was ready, he hoped. Promptly at 6:30 pm when it was nice and dark, he started playing the movie on the garage door. Being a black and white movie, the playback was perfect. He gathered the Mrs. and a large quilt and sat with her on the front two seats.



It wasn't too long before he heard another couple set down in the chairs behind him. More followed over the course of an hour until each seat was filled and a few more friends had brought lawn chairs. Quiet chatter could be heard throughout the movie. Nothing that interfered with the dialogue. But when the last bell in the movie rang, polite applause and a nice sense of Christmas formed a bubble of happiness in Doug's yard. It was another precious memory well earned and shared.

Doug and the Mrs. waved to each neighbor as they left. Doug even saw the little blond-haired girl leaving the movie with her mother and father. Doug carefully placed all the chairs and equipment back with a smile on his face. He commuted back to his bedroom and joined Mrs. Claus in a deep satisfying sleep.



It was a close as Doug was probably going to get to human contact and interaction on this Merry Christmas. He reveled in the thoughts. But it still wasn't the warm embrace of Christmas he truly craved. He had to admit it. There was a hole in his heart where human warmth filled it with the Christmas spirit. He had gotten used to the feel over the years and he missed it so much this year.





Doug commuted back to his office a bit late the next morning. He had slept a happy sound sleep and didn't have anything on the schedule until later that afternoon. He was actually going to attempt to do some of his oft put off research and contract work. He was supposed to be working but found the pandemic had changed his regular schedule dramatically.

He checked into his social media to say hello and was greeted with more than one posting about last night's movie. His neighbors had been pleasantly surprised. They suggested he might want to do one more before Christmas. He thought he might.

Then a DM ding hit his computer. It was from a friend on his list he only spoke with infrequently. Curiosity compelled him to read the message. It was a heartbreaking plea. A friend's friend had a child in the hospital. The child had the virus and it wasn't going too well. She wanted to know if Santa could 'visit' today. Now. The friend couldn't be there. She couldn't give the child any Christmas. She couldn't hold her. Doug donned the Santa cap and said yes. Santa called out to Mrs. Claus and began the video chat.

A nurse clicked on a link on a cell phone app. Doug looked into the mask of a tired, worried, and worn woman. Only her eyes could be seen through the plastic headgear that surrounded the mask.



"Can you hear me? Can you hear me? Oh, I see you!" Doug heard the nurse shout through the mask.



Doug gulped and gave the best “Ho, Ho, Ho. I hear you” acknowledgement he could muster. The nurse’s eyes smiled. Just her eyes. But they said so much. The phone was held before a small child. A child that seemed to be wasting away in such a large bed. There were tubes and digital displays everywhere. Doug wasn’t there, but he could smell the anti-septic. All he could see of the child were the big brown eyes. Then he saw the smile.



It was a child’s smile. The one’s that warm a heart and give hope. It is the pure smile of innocence. “Santa!” a small hoarse voice said. The child’s tiny arms tried to reach for the man in the video. Santa tried to reach back. Santa wanted to touch that child so much. He wanted to hug her. He could only smile and try to laugh. The child had had so much trouble. It didn’t need any more sadness. She needed hope.



They talked for a few minutes and even sang a quick song. Just as he was about to ask what she wanted for Christmas, Mrs. Clause entered the frame, cookies in hand. The child was thrilled. Mrs. Claus and the child talked and exchanged those thoughts only mothers and kids can. Santa entered the picture again and got the list. Then they began to end the call. The phone turned from the child and back to the worn, tired eyes of the nurse. The nurse that had held that phone in her tired hand for the child for a full ten minutes. “Thank you.” She said and hung up the phone.

Doug collapsed. The nurse thanked him. All he did was talk online while wearing a Santa suit. He had done nothing. He was amazed at the dedication of that nurse, of her courage and caring.





Mrs. Claus was in another room crying. It was a time for giving a moment and he took it.



Chapter 4



As Christmas got closer and closer Doug continued playing Santa online. He always commuted to the rocker on the front porch each day and waved at the little blond-haired girl. Her mom and her always waved back. He would so like to have her close, to have her sit on his lap and whisper in his ear all the wonderful things she wanted for Christmas. This damn plague was so devastating.

Doug had had more movie nights. “*Elf*”, “*The Grinch Who Stole Christmas*” and even one Hallmark movie that was surprisingly well attended were offered. Mostly women attended the Hallmark movie, but the men were there as well. Homemade quilts, masks, social distancing, and a few pillows were the required attire and conditions. A microwave was added, and popcorn bags provided by one of his neighbors. Each brought their own drinks to ensure pandemic compliance.

His Christmas was filling up nicely. There were still no hugs, warm embraces, close laughter or tender secrets told in a waiting ear. But Christmas was providing its own measure of goodwill. You couldn’t stop the Christmas spirit. No matter what. It always came through.

Doug was rocking his chair again. A quilt across his legs and a book on his lap. Yes, it was ‘*A Christmas Carol*’. It seemed appropriate. Doug’s mind started to wander again. He remembered reading “*The Night Before Christmas*” on more than one occasion on during Christmas. He wondered if anyone would want Santa to read it to them online. He thought





about it, then pushed it back out of his thoughts. But it wouldn't go away. He read a little more, then decided to commute to the office for information.

Sure enough the video chat company allowed a meeting of up to 500 people. He was positive he wouldn't need that many, maybe 10 or 11 people would want to join him. But it would be fun to read it to that many as well. Doug set up a video chat room with a link to join him on Christmas Eve about 3 pm. It was the only time he could get. Seemed everyone wanted to video chat on Christmas Eve.

Doug got the link and posted on his message board and on his social media page. He thought nothing else of it as he answered a few more Santa requests and spent some time online Christmas shopping for Mrs. Claus.

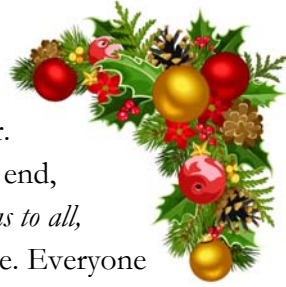


Doug made sure his background was ready, the camera set and the audio on when the time came short for his 3 pm performance on Christmas Eve. He was a bit more than excited as his own family was going to join him for his performance. His sisters, sons, Aunts and cousins had all reserved a slot. This was going to be fun. Christmas with the family!

Doug clicked on the link that opened the portal. Mrs. Claus was by his side. A glass of milk sat before him so he could wet his whistle while he read. The chat room opened, and Doug was stunned! There were 500 links active. He could barely see them. What he could see showed families gathered, children excited, little ones, adults, even a hospital bed or two. They all cheered as Santa came on.



Santa waved at the group, then set the scene. He picked up his book and began reading. He read slowly, distinctly, so all could hear. They listened raptly. Then, when he got to the end, they all joined him in saying; *“A Merry Christmas to all, and to all a good night.”* It was a complete surprise. Everyone cheered and closed their screens. All except the Aunts, sisters, sons, nieces and nephews. They stayed and chatted for more than a few moments more.

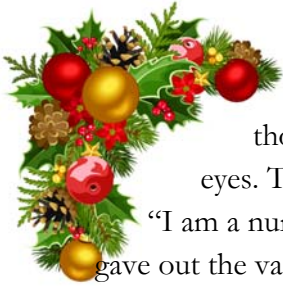


When time ended, Doug closed the room and took a happy moment and a drink of now too warm milk. He was happy. If he couldn't have his warm hugs. If he couldn't have sweet secrets told in his ear. If he was going to be deprived of human contact this Christmas, he would cherish what he could have.

Doug got up, Santa suit on and commuted to the rocker on the front porch. He rocked and he smiled. The little blond-haired girl might come by one more time before Christmas and he wanted to be there.

As he sat and rocked, he saw his little cherub walk excitedly down the street. She was in a brand-new Christmas dress. It was blue with white trim and flared out from her legs wrapped warmly in white leggings. Her curly hair bounced. Her eyes sparkled. She was Christmas joy herself. But she didn't walk by. Her mother and her turned up his driveway and made their way directly to his chair. He stiffened up. He was worried. He didn't want to give this precious child any disease. What was her mother thinking?





Her mother turned to him and he looked over her mask to her eyes. He recognized those eyes. He would never not recognize those eyes. They belonged to the nurse that held the phone. “I am a nurse. I am considered ‘essential’. When they gave out the vaccine, I was the first to get the shot. My family got their shots has well. We can’t get the virus anymore. We have both tested negative for the virus. We tested just recently. Just for this day. If you don’t mind, Cindy would like to sit on her Santa’s lap and tell him what she wants for Christmas.” The eyes smiled. He

trusted those eyes.



Doug put a mask on his face and held out his arms. A child sat in his lap. Cindy sat on his lap on Christmas Eve. She snuggled into his arms and threw her little arms around her neck.

Doug felt her warmth, knew her touch. When the time came, he leaned down, and she whispered in his ear her greatest Christmas wishes.

Doug’s Christmas wish had been granted. It always had been so, and this year was not going to be any different. Her soft breath on his cheek, reminded Doug that the pandemic would end. They would get through this. It was now only a matter of time and the work of good, dedicated people. People like the nurse behind the mask that helped a scared child in a hospital.

Cindy hopped down from his lap after giving Santa a kiss on his cheek. She grabbed her mom’s hand and walked back down the driveway. Doug called out at the last minute. “Did the little girl survive?”



The lady stopped and turned to look closely at Doug. She smiled a wonderful smile. “The video Santa. I thought I recognized you. Yes. She survived. It’s amazing what a bit of Christmas spirit will do. Thank you for making her believe.”



With a final wave they turned to finish their walk. Santa started to hum a Christmas tune. He got up and commuted back to the bathroom. He had to wash his hands and find a fresh mask. Doug was gonna be here for next Christmas. Guaranteed.





Ghost of Christmas Present





Merry Christmas
and a
Happy New 2021

(God help us!)





This Story is my Gift to you. May you know the love and joy of the Holiday Season year round. May you enjoy it in person with friends and family in 2021

Thank you for your friendship.

To read new, unpublished and earlier stories go online to:

www.courtneypress.com

For those of you that wish to support my literary efforts, I thank you.

Please become a patron.

Go to: <https://www.patreon.com/dougcourtney>

