

The Christmas Angels



It was December 23, 1993. For a single mom who was going to college and supporting my children completely alone, Christmas was looking bleak. I looked around my little home, realization dawning like a slow, twisting pain. We were poor. Our tiny house had two bedrooms, both off the living room. They were so small that my baby daughter's crib barely fit into one room, and my son's twin bed and dresser were squeezed into the other. There was no way they could share a room, so I made my bed every night on the living room floor. The three of us shared the only closet in the house. We were snug, always only a few feet from each other, day and night. With no doors on the children's rooms, I could see and hear them at all times. It made them feel secure, and it made me feel close to them -- a blessing I wouldn't have had in other circumstances.

It was early evening, about eight o'clock. The snow was falling softly, silently, and my children were both asleep. I was wrapped in a blanket, sitting at the window, watching the powdery flakes flutter in the dimming light, when my front door vibrated with a pounding fist. Alarmed, I wondered who would stop by unannounced on such a snowy winter night. I opened the door to find a group of strangers grinning from ear to ear, their arms laden with boxes and bags. Confused, but finding their joyous spirit contagious, I grinned right back at them. "Are you Susan?" The man stepped forward as he held out a box for me. Nodding stupidly, unable to find my voice, I was sure they thought I was mentally deficient.

"These are for you." The woman thrust another box at me with a huge, beaming smile. The porch light and the snow falling behind her cast a glow over her dark hair, lending her an angelic appearance. I looked down into her box. It was filled to the top with delicious treats, a fat turkey, and all the makings of a traditional Christmas dinner. My eyes filled with tears as the realization of why they were there washed over me. Finally coming to my senses, I found my voice and invited them in. Following the husband were two children, staggering with the weight of their packages. The family introduced themselves and told me their packages were all gifts for my little family. This wonderful, beautiful family, who were total strangers to me, somehow knew exactly what we needed. They brought wrapped gifts for each of us, a full buffet for me to make on Christmas Day, and many "extras" that I could never afford. Visions of a beautiful, "normal" Christmas literally danced in my head. Somehow my secret wish for Christmas was materializing right in front of me. The desperate prayers of a single mom had been heard, and I knew right then that God had sent His angels my way. My mysterious angels then handed me a white envelope, gave me another round of grins, and took turns hugging me. They wished me a Merry Christmas and disappeared into the night as suddenly as they had appeared.

Amazed and deeply touched, I looked around me at the boxes and gifts strewn at my feet and felt the ache of depression suddenly being transformed into a childlike joy. I began to cry. I cried hard, sobbing tears of the deepest gratitude. A great sense of peace filled me. The knowledge of God's love reaching into my tiny corner of the world enveloped me like a warm quilt. My heart was full. I fell to my knees amid all the boxes and offered a heartfelt prayer of thanks.

Getting to my feet, I wrapped myself in my blankets and sat once again to gaze out the window at the gently falling snow. Suddenly, I remembered the envelope. Like a child, I ripped it open and gasped at what I saw. A shower of bills flitted to the floor. Gathering them up, I began to count the five, ten, and twenty-dollar bills. As my vision blurred with tears, I counted the money, then recounted it to make sure I had it right. Sobbing again, I said it out loud: "One hundred dollars."

I looked at my children sleeping soundly, and through my tears I smiled my first happy, free-of-worry smile in a long, long time. My smile turned into a grin as I thought about tomorrow: Christmas Eve. One visit from complete strangers had magically turned a painful day into a special one that we would always remember...with happiness.

It is now several years since our Christmas angels visited. I have remarried, and our household is happy and richly blessed. Every year since that Christmas in 1993, we have chosen a family less blessed than we are. We bring them carefully selected gifts, food and treats, and as much money as we can spare. It's our way of passing on what was given to us. It's the "ripple effect" in motion. We hope that the cycle continues and that, someday, the families we share with will be able to pass it on, too. — Susan Fahnck