

*Grandmother cont'd from pg. 8*

The arrangements were made. It was good to have that done. She was feeling tired. Maybe it was the damp grey weather that was bothering her. Just in case, she should finish wrapping her few Christmas gifts. Anyway getting out the pretty paper and doing the wrapping, would take her mind off the weather. There was special gift to be given to her grand-daughter. Not special because of its price, but special because of what she hoped it would remind her of years from now. She put it into a little box, then decided to write a letter to go with it.

The letter took some time, even though it was short, for holding a pen and forming the letters, a task that not that many years ago had resulted in a clear, fluid script, now produced lines of writing that was barely legible. But it was important to include a note with this gift, so she persevered. Completed, she folded it into the box with the gift and wrapped the two. On the tag she wrote "To Rebecca, my namesake. To be opened on Christmas Eve." She wrapped it again in brown paper and addressed it, stuck what she hoped was enough postage on it. She'd get her daughter to mail it. She made another phone call. There that was taken care of. She sat back in her chair with a smile.

It was again one of those beautiful, soft days, with clean white snow falling, wrapping the world in awesome silence. Even the sound of cars going by on the street was distanced by the effect of the snow. Only sounds with great resonance, like the striking of the clock in the church tower and the merry sound of its carillon playing Christmas carols seemed to penetrate the snow. Or maybe, grandmother thought, it was just that these were the sounds her ears chose to hear. As she sat in the window, the snow stopped falling and the world took on that brilliant light that comes only at the end of a snow fall when the sun hasn't yet broken through, but will, and will turn the world into such radiance. In her mind she heard again the muffled beat of horses hooves on frozen ground, the jingle of horse brasses, the snort of horse as it blew in the cold. She saw again the diamond crystals of frost in the air. She felt again the sensation of flying one has in a sleigh and the warmth of the sleigh rugs the wrapped her from the cold.

Secretly, the grand-daughter thought it was selfish of her grandmother to die just before Christmas. She felt guilty about thinking this, but felt the resentment none the less. How could they enjoy the shopping trips, the parties, the Christmas events that were still to take place, while keeping up the appearance of mourning grandmother's death? Couldn't she have waited until after Christmas. At the same time, the young person had to admit that she was also angry that the only person who had been a constant in her life, had deserted her. And she knew above all that it was she, not grandmother, who was selfish. How could she wish her friends "Merry Christmas" when it was anything but?

Christmas Eve came. It was a subdued family that made plans to fill stockings, put gifts under the Christmas tree that had been put up and decorated just two days before grandmother died. They would go to church for the Christmas Eve service. There would be none of the

commotion of getting grandmother and her chair into the car, then into the church. The young person remembered how impatient she had been at having to wait for grandmother each year, and realized that it had been resentment that her active, outgoing, grandmother had succumbed to the disease that had confined the old woman to her wheelchair. The child recalled the woman who had had the time to take her shopping, who had driven her to parties at friends houses when her parents were too busy, who had mended her favorite blouse for her to wear to the school dance, and had to admit that for the last year or two, she had found it very hard to reconcile the frail, old lady in the wheelchair, with the robust older friend that she had been for so many years.

It was dark out now. The snow, that grandmother had loved to watch fall, was bathed in the light of the rising moon. There was a knock at the front door.

The child heard her mother's steps hurrying to the door.

"Does a young lady by the name of Rebecca live here?" a man's voice asked.

"Rebecca," her mother's voice called.

The young person went with sullen step to answer her mother's summons.

There in the hall stood an elderly gentleman, his face rosy from being out doors, at small parcel in his hands. "Your grandmother asked me to give you this on Christmas Eve and to take you for a sleigh ride," the gentleman explained, putting the parcel into the girl's hands.

Rebecca took the parcel, read the instructions in her grandmother's hand, to open on Christmas Eve. She took the folded piece of paper and unfolded it.

*"Dear Rebecca,*

*Merry Christmas my very dear girl. This little gift and the accompanying sleigh ride, are for the girl I was, the woman you will become and to pass on to the grandchild you may some day have. It is something you can keep for its memory. I give it to you with all my love. Under the tree is a gift for the girl you are now that I hope you will enjoy. But this gift, the one you now hold in your hand, is for all the people you will be in your lifetime.*

*Love*

*your grandmother*

*Rebecca"*

She opened the gaily wrapped little box, lifted the lid and saw nestled in white tissue paper, the little glass paper weight that had sat on grandmother's dresser for years. She gave it a shake and watched the snow swirl and dance around the little horse drawn cutter and the miniature couple that sat in it. How often she had played with this as a child.

"Now, young lady, your grandmother has asked me to take you for a sleigh ride this very evening. The horse and cutter are out on the lawn waiting for us." The man looked to her mother, "With your permission, of course."

"When did mother arrange this, Mr. Fold?" her mother asked in amazement.

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