

# Santa finds a willing young helper

By DAISY IP

Sunlight pierced through the cracks in the blind and made peculiar striped shadows on the white-washed walls of the room. A pair of large brown eyes peered cautiously over bedsheets that seemed to have been bleached several times. Then, making sure that she was not being observed, the small girl threw off her covers and jumped out of bed.

Her robe hung on her bloated yellow body like a neglected garment on its hanger. She seemed even more insignificant than usual this morning, as she slouched slightly from the pain that constantly cut through her grossly protruding abdomen. Despite this, her countenance showed no signs of fear, though she bit vehemently on her bottom lip, for her only thoughts were to get to the window.

Silently, she tiptoed over the

cold linoleum floor. Drawing herself up to the window sill, she gazed upon the world with her large brown eyes, the only noticeable features she possessed.

How beautiful everything looks, she thought, especially with the trees in the park decorated with the prettiest ornaments of nature. She wished adamantly that she could play in the snow like all the other children, laughing and singing joyously.

"Rise and shine, Samantha!" boomed out the voice of Nurse Tuttle as she entered the room quite unexpectedly.

Samantha turned around all too suddenly. She felt a sharp pain which emanated from her stomach, carving its way through her entire body. Instinctively clutching her abdomen, Samantha bent over and fell to her knees, landing clumsily on the cold floor.

The elderly nurse dropped the

tray which she was holding and ran over to the fallen girl, now lying immobile. Deftly, she reached over and pressed a button on the wall.

"You silly girl," she reprimanded Sam. "What in the world was going through your mind? You were given strict and precise instructions not to leave your bed!"

"I only..." gasped Sam. "I only wanted to see Christmas one last time."

"Of course you'll see Christmas, it's only a day away. You'll see this Christmas and the Christmas after that and all the ones after that one too," said the nurse gently. However, an uncomfortable lump grew in her throat, for she knew this was lie.

At that moment, the doctor entered, followed by more nurses. "I will be back," said Nurse Tuttle. "So be a good girl."

"Okay," promised Sam as she watched the elderly woman leave. "Merry Christmas, Mrs. Tuttle," she added. The nurse smiled.

As the doctor was performing a thorough examination of her Sam's parents arrived. Her mother, Claire Vivaro, was a sophisticated looking lady whose face was permanently etched with lines of worry. Mr. Vivaro, who towered a head above his wife, was a simple man with angular features that rarely showed any expression.

"Oh, Sam!" cried her mother with tears in her eyes. In a moment, she was by her daughter's side, holding her hands tightly as if Sam would leave if she let go.

"We brought you some presents, Sam," said her father after having spoken briefly with the doctor.

"But...it's not Christmas yet," stated Sam.

"We know, dear, but..." paused Mr. Vivaro, who looked desperately at his wife.

"Sam, honey, we thought that you'd like to play with some of your gifts now," Mrs. Vivaro told her daughter calmly.

With that, Sam's father brought in a hospital trolley overflowing with brightly wrapped presents. Soon, the room was lit up by colorful plush animals, dolls, playhouses, wind-up toys, electronic games, a brand new bicycle, and the charming laughter of a little girl who was experiencing the happiest moment of her life.

It was approaching midnight and Mr. and Mrs. Vivaro tucked their daughter in bed, each giving her a kiss that soothed her pain for a brief moment.

"We love you," said her mother tenderly.

"Merry Christmas, Sam," added her father.

Together they left with the satisfaction of having made this Christmas their daughter's best ever.

"I love you," whispered Sam.

As the footsteps in the hall began to fade away, Sam purposefully slid out of bed, clenching her teeth in pain. Bending down to several stuffed animals, she gathered them in her arms. Carrying all the toys she could, she made her way to the large door. Strenuously, she fought to open it and peeked outside to make sure no one was around.

Cautiously, she let herself out of her room and slipped discreetly into the room next to hers. There she found a sleeping little boy.

"Merry Christmas," whispered Sam, as she placed a Pound Puppy by his bedside. Then, she made her way down the corridor, after many trips back to her room for more presents, careful not to get caught by an overly protective nurse or orderly.

At last, she came upon a vacant room. Sam had almost emptied her room of all her toys and was about to return for the last of them when she was drawn to the window of this room.

Looking outside, she saw flakes of sparkling white snow falling to the ground in the soft light of the street lamps. The clear, black sky was lit up by a few twinkling stars and a mysterious moon which was calling to her. No, it was not the moon which summoned her but a man. In the light of the stars, Sam saw that he was approaching her in a sled pulled by several swift, antlered creatures.

He seemed so close that when he reached out his white-gloved hands, she could clearly make out his silvery beard and rosy cheeks. When he spoke, his words filled her with warmth.

"You are a very generous little girl, Samantha. Thank you," he said sincerely. "Would you like to come join me? You would be a great help to me."

"Why yes! Oh, thank you, Santa," replied Sam joyously stretching out her hands. They seemed to pass through the pane of glass as she reached to touch him. He took her hands gently, healing all her pain forever, and effortlessly pulled her into the silent night of falling snow, leaving all behind.

**Editor's Note:** Weekender staff selected three winners and eight runners up from Christmas stories submitted by Markham District High School. First prize (of \$100) was won by Daisy Ip (above). Second and third prizes (of \$50 and \$25) were won by Kevin Amery and Julie A. Brooks. Their stories will be published in upcoming issues. The Weekender is pleased to sponsor this contest which promotes the writing craft.

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