

Short story contest

Yuppie Yuletide thaws out hobo

By KEVIN AMERY
The hypocrisy of it astounded George. The complete hypocrisy. The spirit of Christmas was not healthy. Not here in suburbia. True, there were lights and plastic lawn models, tinsel and music, and evergreen trees brightly decorated. All the trap-

pings were there, shouting out their existence. But true Christmas spirit didn't quite make it this year. Not last year, either. Nor the year previous to that. George couldn't clearly remember one way or the other before that. Welcome to the Yuppie Yule-

cheery. The lawn models were polyurethane monstrosities, designed more as status symbols than good will ambassadors. Each house seemed to be in competition to out-light its neighbour, and looking at all the tinsel was blinding. The over-all effect was more tacky than cheery. George reached the place that Markhamites laughingly called downtown. Ahead, he saw something which summed up all of modern-day society's seasonal ills. A group of kids were taunting and abusing an old, shabbily dressed man. The man was clutching a heavy paper bag to his chest, cowering in front of the local Pizza Pizza while the punks pummeled him with snowballs. Various trendy adults walked by, giving the scene distasteful looks but no more. George just stopped and watched, horrified, wishing he had the courage to intervene or the callousness to walk away. Finally, the proprietor scared the punks off with threats of calling the police. He turned to the old man. "You need any help?" "No." "Then go somewhere else, alright?" George was just short of impressed. For a moment he had thought the proprietor had actually cared about this piece of human detritus. Now, he realised that profit had been the only motive. "Well, if nobody else'll help him, I will!" George walked over to the old man. The fact that a person like this was a statistical impossibility in affluent Markham didn't even enter his head as he squatted in the snow, inhaling the stink of the old man's sweat and rancid aftershave. "Hey, mister. Want me to take you somewhere?" "No, leave me alone!", the old man croaked. "You can't stay here! You'll freeze!" "Leave me alone! I don't need none of yuh! Yuh don't care about me anyway." George realised that he and the old man were not very different. They both saw through the fancy veneer of modern society to its unsavory underbelly. Both of them could not stand all of the hypocrisy any longer. The difference between them was that the old man was giving up. Not if George could help it, he

wasn't. "Look, I know they're all unfeeling no-minds! I know everything's fake and commercial. Nothing's real anymore. But you can't give up! You can't! Cause if you do, then they've won." The old man stared into space, as if assimilating this information. Then, "Church."

"What?" "I want to go to church." George thought for a moment. There was a church opposite the high school, he remembered. The Christmas service would be over, but the place should still be open. The trip was incredible. The old man had to be supported most of the way, and he mumbled incessantly. But George still managed to get him to the church a few minutes before the Reverend left. "I'm sorry. We're closing." George was outraged. "What kind of a church is this?! I thought you were supposed to help people!" The old man chimed in with, "Help people." The Reverend hesitated a moment. "Alright, come in." George and the Reverend cleaned the old man up, bundled him in a large blanket, and sat him down in front of a large heater. Then the Reverend took George aside. "What happened?" "I was walking down Main Street. Some punks were beating on him, and he wanted to come here." "You know I'm going to have to call the police." "Yeah. Mind if I call my folks first? They'll be pretty freaked out by now." As George made his phone call, the Reverend thought it was encouraging to see that some of today's young people had Christmas spirit. And so did the Spirit, thawing out by the heater.

Editor's Note: Weekender staff selected three winners from Christmas stories submitted by Markham District High School. Above is the story by second prize winner, Kevin Amery (\$50). First place story by Daisy Ip, winning \$100, was published last Weekender. The third place story by Julie A. Brooks will be published in an upcoming issue. The Weekender is pleased to sponsor this contest, promoting the writing craft as well as the Christmas spirit.

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