

The legend of Saint Nicholas comes to life in this enchanting tale of Christmas warmth. Snuggle by the fire as father and child travel back in time to meet Nicholas, a man with a wish as big as Christmas.

Whispers of Christmas

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“...Nicholas had a secret...”



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Whispers
Of
Christmas

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ISBN 978-1-60145-385-3

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2007

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Hawanya, Simbai Kaye, Gracie, Erin and Chloe.
Special Guest Appearance by DD

Whispers of Christmas

Alan Dittrick



Prologue



Even now, the memory stirs my heart.

I remember the drifts of snow that carpeted the world outside our window... and the rainbow glow of ornaments that blended with the quiet warmth of the fire... and a night that was alive with Christmas magic...

But what I recall the most was a feeling of peace, as I snuggled close to my dad ... and we whispered our gentle secrets.

My thoughts had lingered on the coming of Christmas. But my gaze had settled on the stockings hung by the fire. Stockings, I mused, seemed a strange place for a gift.

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"Christmas Stocking on Mantle" © Anne Kitzman
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The spell was hardly broken as my father quietly smiled, and spoke softly of another time, when Christmas was young. You see, he said, there was a time when children did not receive presents at Christmas... not even in stockings.

More than a thousand Christmas seasons have come and gone, and yet, you may not know the real story of Saint Nicholas; and how he brought a special magic to children so many years ago.

So grab your blanket, and gather 'round, and I will tell you the legend of St. Nicholas... exactly as my father told it to me.

Alan Dittrick

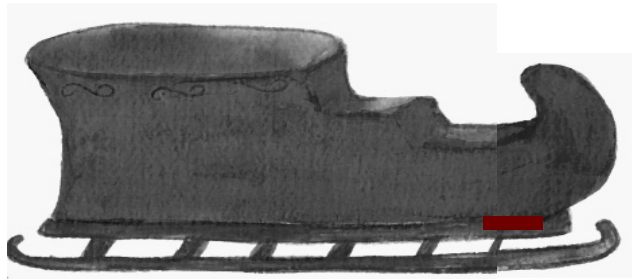


Whispers Of Christmas

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It seems a long time ago, in a land called Turkey, in a city named Patara, there lived a wonderful man by the name of Nicholas. He had a twinkle in his eyes and a laugh that would warm your heart. And when the children saw him, they would run to him. They could hardly wait to talk to him, and share their dreams. In fact, everyone loved to talk to Nicholas.

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Chapter One

And so our story begins one wintry evening, when Nicholas went to visit a friend. While he waited in the hall, a young servant took his coat. She was enchanted by his warmth, and they began to talk. Soon, they were sharing Christmas memories. For those brief moments, the joy of Christmas filled her heart. And though they had just met, they had become friends.



She found herself talking about her problems. It seems her father had no money. She worked as a servant to pay for the family's debts. It would be many years before she would be free to marry, and have Christmas with a family of her own.

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Whispers Of Christmas



When the tears welled up within her, she turned away to hide. But Nicholas reached out to comfort her, and she felt a sense of peace. Talking to him had helped. As she left the hall, she was feeling better.

Nicholas was not as fortunate. Walking home that night into the crisp winter air, he could not stop thinking about her. He wanted to help, but he did not know how he could. For her father was proud, and would not accept a gift.

Alan Dittrick



Chapter Two

And so, Nicholas developed a plan. On Christmas Eve, he went to visit the girl's father. As they talked, Nicholas warmed his hands by the fire. There on the hearth, the stockings of the young girl and her family were set out to dry. Ever so softly, he dropped some gold coins into her stocking. The next morning, with her debts paid, the young woman was free!

Nicholas loved doing such things for others. In fact, the only thing that made him happier was thinking about Christmas. And each year when Christmas came, he thought of that peaceful night so long ago. He thought of the Shepherds.. And a stable... And of Angels... And the gift of a Child. But when his thoughts turned to the wise men who brought gifts to honor the newborn King, he was sometimes sad. His eyes would lose some sparkle; his cheeks were not as rosy; and his laugh was less than merry.

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For Nicholas had a secret. Something that he told no one else. You see, Nicholas longed to do something special for that Child. Something he knew he could not do. For Nicholas wished to be there that night in tiny Bethlehem. He wanted to follow the path of the Star that emblazoned the heavens so many years ago; to gaze at a black night aflame with the Hope of Heaven written across a midnight sky.

But more than that, he wished to join the wise men on their silent quest. For he longed to bring a gift to the Child resting in the night. He had nothing worthy to offer, yet he wanted to give something. He dreamed that one Holy night, such a thing might happen. But, he feared that it would not.

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*"Holy Family" Nativity Scene © Anne Kitzman @
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And so, as Christmas approached each year, he struggled with these thoughts. And his joyful laugh fell silent, for he did not know what to do. Then one night, he had a wonderful thought. Perhaps he could ask another for help. But this was such a big problem, he would have to talk to someone very special. And so, he decided to ask Heavenly Father.

As he kneeled, he couldn't exactly put his hope into words. So, he talked of his overwhelming desire to bring the Christ Child a gift.

"Oh, ho!" Nicholas thought, "I guess I muddled that prayer." Yet, he felt better. In fact, he felt very peaceful about it. But as often happens with important things, the business of everyday living crowded in.

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"Christmas Candles" © Brian Kelly @
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And yet, Nicholas found time to read the scriptures. And one day he read in Matthew, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these.... ye have done it ..unto me." It seemed he saw these words for the first time. "Why," he thought with a chuckle, "That is the answer to my prayer." And he understood that he *could* fashion a gift for that Child in Bethlehem so long ago !

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"Gift" © Edyta Pawlowska @
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Chapter Three

It all seemed to fall in place quickly after that. He decided to give gifts to the children he knew on Christmas Eve.... so they would receive their gift on Christ's Birthday! Oh, what a joyful time he had!

And then, miraculous things began to happen. It seems that whenever he had forgotten a special someone, or an unexpected child visited, that somehow, just the right gift would appear. "Now, where had that come from?" he would wonder. "Well," he smiled, "No matter, it is just the perfect gift."

And when he needed a part for a toy he was making, he always seemed to find it in his basement or attic. "It's funny how just the right thing seems to turn up when you need it." Nicholas would wonder with a smile.

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Whispers Of Christmas

But as he gave more gifts, he found it hard to carry the packages. So his wife, clever seamstress that she was, made him a red bag lined in white fur. Now red is such a fine color for a bag. It was his favorite color! Nicholas just loved it! It was so handy; he began to use it all the time.

The next year, his wife decided to surprise him with a Special Coat for Christmas. But try as she might, the coat would not fit into his stocking. Though his stocking was quite large, truth to tell. And so, she placed the coat under their tree. For Nicholas kept the red sack with all his presents under their tree. So of course, it was the first place he looked before leaving on his Christmas rounds.

Alan Dittrick

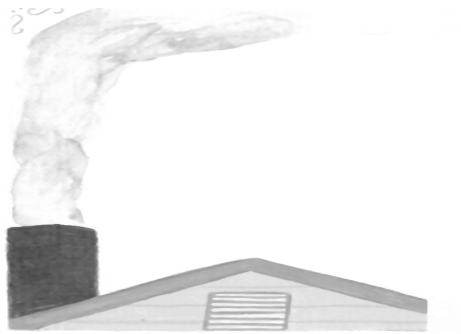


Chapter Four

What a gift that wonderful coat made ! It was bright red, just like the bag. And, of course, it was trimmed in white fur. Oh, it was a fine coat, with a big black belt. She padded it with layers of fur, to keep him cozy and warm. And when he put the coat on, he could feel the love that his wife had sewn into it. He often told her that wearing that coat made him feel just like being tucked into bed at night. Sometimes when he was alone, he couldn't resist putting it on, even though it wasn't Christmas.

Soon, other interesting things began to happen. As Nicholas delivered his gifts he found that many doors just seemed to *open* for him. And as he went from house to house, he would put a gift into each child's stocking, just as he had for the young girl.

Alan Dittrick



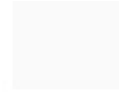
Whispers Of Christmas

Still, Nicholas found it difficult to deliver to some homes. Some locks were very persistent. But Nicholas realized that during this cold time of year, even the poorest of homes had a fire for warmth. And a fire meant that there were chimneys. So, if he waited till late at night, when the fire grew dim, and the ashes were barely warm, he could slip his gifts down the chimney while the household slept.

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Whispers Of Christmas

And if he lost his way on his midnight rounds, the play of starlight seemed to glow a little brighter on the path he needed. He did not know why the stars of Heaven might contrive to guide his solitary journey. Perhaps his old eyes were fooled by some trick of the light. It might be that, and nothing more. Yet when he was lost, he always looked up to the stars for guidance

Each year Nicholas tried to make a few more gifts. But somehow, the gifts kept getting bigger. And so, he followed his wife's example. If a gift was too large for a stocking, he would leave it under the tree.



Alan Dittrick

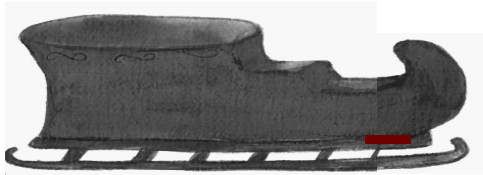


Santa at Work" © Linda Bucklin @
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Chapter Five

Of course, Nicholas kept his giving a secret. And strangely, the coat helped him keep the secret at first. It was padded so well; it made him appear bigger. But, though he saved his coat for use on that one special night, his sack was never far from him. Alas, it was the sack that he enjoyed so much, and the children that he loved, which were destined to give away his secret.

Alan Dittrick



Whispers Of Christmas

For after a gift was found, it was often recalled that his sleigh had been seen nearby. And some would remember a familiar, but unusually plump driver near their home. But the children unlocked the secret, when they noted that the sprightly driver had a red sack that was strangely familiar.

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"Christmas Candle With Cross" © Carlos Santa Maria
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Whispers Of Christmas

So, eventually it was obvious who was giving all the presents. Some people laughed at him. Others said he was foolish, or mad! They said that he would give away all his wealth, and have nothing. But Nicholas just smiled that secret smile of his. And the warmth of his smile would silence their doubts, and ignite a glow of understanding in their hearts.

Alan Dittrick



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