

# A Yard for Christmas

Two weeks before Christmas, a girl, 9, was walking with her friend down the street, sliding on the ice. The two of them were talking about what they hoped to get for Christmas.

They stopped to talk to an old man named Harry, who was on his knees pulling weeds from around a large oak tree. He wore a frayed, woolen jacket and a pair of worn garden gloves. His fingers were sticking out the ends, blue from the cold.

As Harry responded to the girls, he told them he was getting the yard in shape as a Christmas present to his mother, who had passed away several years before. His eyes brimmed with tears as he patted the old oak.

“My mother was all I had. She loved her yard and her trees, so I do this for her at Christmas,” he said.

His words touched the girls, and soon they were down on their hands and knees helping him to weed around the trees. It took the three of them the rest of the day to complete the task. When they finished, Harry pressed a quarter into each of their hands.

“I wish I could pay you more, but it’s all I’ve got right now,” he said.

The girls had often passed that way before, and as they walked on, they remembered that the house was shabby, with no wreath, no Christmas tree or other decorations to add cheeriness. Just the lonely figure of Harry sitting by his curtainless window.

The quarter seemed to burn a hole of guilt in the one little girl’s mind as they returned to their homes. The next day, she called her friend and they agreed to put their quarters in a jar marked *Harry’s Christmas Present*, and they began to seek out small jobs to earn more. Every nickel, dime and quarter they earned went into the jar.



Two days before Christmas, they had enough to buy new gloves and a Christmas card. Christmas Eve found them on Harry’s doorstep singing carols.

When he opened the door, they presented him with the gloves wrapped in pretty paper, the card, and a pumpkin pie still warm from the oven.

With trembling hands, he tore the paper from the gloves. Then, to their astonishment, he held them to his face and wept.

(more)

A couple of questions about this true story:

1. Who received the most joy from the gifts – the receiver or the givers?
2. What produced the tears? It was the love demonstrated by two little girls to an old, lonely man.

The lesson is not lost. Every day, in the centers of Life Care and Century Park, and in the work of Life Care at Home, we experience true joy from the love extended to old, lonely men and women.

Merry Christmas, everyone!

– Beecher Hunter