

THE CHRISTMAS WISH

By Cherokee Echols

I sat at the edge of the river leaning against my Harley watching the water roll by as the cigarette smoke curled in front of my eyes. I shake my head wondering what am I doing with this cigarette and toss it into the foaming churning water. The glistening of the sun shinning in my eyes reflected off the water and the soothing sound of the wind whipping through the trees takes me away to another time and another place. A time and place when I was happy and full of anticipation. I hadn't been with a woman in more than fifteen years. Oh, don't get me wrong I went out on dates and even gave into my body's occasional need for release, but I hadn't given my heart over to another in all that time.

Fifteen years before I had betrayed my love, not just any love but the love of my life or at least I thought she was at that time. I denied my love for her and the love she had for me and I broke it off. Why, you might be asking, because I was weak and immature. I left her because my family could not handle her ethnicity. Having her youngest daughter be a lesbian was enough for my mother's southern sensibilities. But for the same lesbian daughter to be dating a "colored" woman, as my Momma put it, was too much. Therefore, like a weak coward I left her, the love of my life and my heart that cold winter day.

Now many years later it is a different time a different place, hell it is even a different season, it's spring. I love spring with the cold harshness leaving the earth and everything coming to life. Ah, spring time for rebirth and love. You guessed it love found me when I was not looking this past spring. It came rushing at me as a locomotive loaded with hope, desire, love, and happiness. Yes happiness, it's funny how you can be unhappy and never know it until happiness slaps you in the face. Well it not only slapped me, it hit me upside the head with a two by four and laid me out flat on the floor.

We were introduced online by a mutual friend. It started out innocent enough we talked about writing and stories. Then as we came to know each other, we discovered the quirky similarities we had in common like a love for blues music, wine, and growing up in the country with horses. Neither of us had met anyone who had so many of the same similarities as we did and yet we had come from two very different places. She was a northern Yankee and me I'm a southerner. You may not think it is significant now but when you grow up in the country with the old ways, it is very significant.

After talking everyday and in some cases all day we decided it would be nice to meet face to face. So, I arranged to meet her on her home turf and we would see a bit of the countryside on a driving tour with our mutual friend. Yep our first meeting was a three way, actually a four way, counting her beautiful dog. She and her entourage met me at the airport and what a first meeting it was. To both my surprise and delight, she kissed me at baggage claim. I do mean kissed me. Not one of those Aunt Harriett on the cheek kind of kisses but a full blown tongue dueling ohmygawd did I see stars kind of kiss.

We spent a wonderful week enjoying each other's company and the many sights of nature. I knew I was in love not only with her but her dog. I know this sounds silly that I fell in love with her dog, but you would just have to meet this beautiful canine to understand. Now our week was over and I was going back home. As I was preparing to get on my flight, she again kissed me this time good bye. It was the same ohmygawd I am seeing stars kind of kiss. A kiss so powerful, so wonderful that made me feel she too felt as I did even though she did not say it.

At the airport, I left her and her beautiful dog along with our mutual friend to head homeward. I knew I had left part of myself behind, the best part. I could not believe that after all these years I found a woman who was everything I ever wanted plus a few things that I did not. That's right she had a few flaws, but what woman doesn't? It was all part of her charm and nothing that I didn't feel we could not get past.

We went back to our constant on slot of emails, IM, texting and phone calls. We had moments when pressure from the stress she was under (preparing to move to another state and look for new employment) caused us to have differences. Her and our friend was constantly reminding me of what SHE was going through but no one took the time to ask what I was going through. I held my temper knowing that better days (without stress) lay ahead and with God's good grace, everything would work out. I wanted this more than anything I had wanted in more than fifteen years.

Sometimes there in lays the problem. Want and desire can often cloud good judgment. Did I want her because I loved her, because she accepted me as I was? On the other hand, was it because she was available? Did I desire her because she was a good woman or because she was good looking? (Okay a damn handsome woman.) What was the true motif behind this love? As I struggled with these questions brought on by the stress I was under at work and her rapid mood swings induced by her own stressful situation, she hit me upside the head again with a two by four. This time it was not so pleasant.

She wanted nothing to do with me. No email, no texting, no calls, no nothing and no reason why. I was stunned to say the very least. Had I so poorly judged her character? Did I know so little about her that I would not see this coming? How can a woman call you her "dearest love" and then two days latter drop you in the trash like a baggie of hot dog shit? What happened in those two days to transfer the honorable, honest, witty woman I fell in love with? I don't know and probably never will.

Many weeks have past and my family and friends try many different ways to get me to move on from this faux pas of a relationship. Giving me wonderful advice like "You were from different worlds it was better to find out what kind of woman she is now than before you got in to deep." "What kind of woman she is"? "In too deep"? I know what kind of woman she is... a good woman despite her actions. In too deep? What is too deep? My heart hurts the same today as it would a year from now. I promised to love her today and all my tomorrows and in my heart, I think I will. Although I know, we will never be together nor do I think I would want to be with her.

I want her to be happy that's the bottom line. I don't think being with me would bring her that happiness so it is not what I want for her. I want her to find a woman who can keep up with all that energy she has and her quick wit. I want her to find a woman who can take away her fears and make her feel safe again. I want her to find a woman who loves her as much she loves them. I want all of this for her and much more. I want all of this and much, much more for her, because my love is a true love and for it to remain true I must want what is best for her.

Don't think I don't have wants for myself too I do, many. I want to stop worrying about her, wondering if she is okay, wanting to know how she is. I want to move on in my life and be happy for the time I did spend with her. Nevertheless, the one thing I want most of all is my friend back. I want to be able to talk to her again to share little things like the stories we are working on, how her beautiful dog is doing, what bullshit is going on at work. I miss her laugh and her different outlook on life I miss her friendship.

So here, I am leaning against my Harley at the river's edge watching the water rush by. I reach into my pocket and pull out a quarter one from the cheese state and I toss it into the water making a wish. I wish for Christmas to have my friend back nothing more nothing less just her friendship. I look up into the clouds and see what looks like the first storm for the winter. I take one last look into the water where I tossed the coin then climb on my bike for the ride home. Who knows maybe there will be an email waiting for me that reads, "Hey how are you doing my friend?" However, I know that is only a wish, a Christmas wish.

The End

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