



*The*  
Christmas  
Orange

Lester Yocum

Dedicated to traditions that improve lives.

And to Kathy, Morgan, Kelsey, Laura, Ben, and Jane,  
whose patience and support made it possible to tell  
this story. May your dreams come true.

And, of course, to my wonderful wife, whose  
great patience and support have made my dreams  
possible.

Once there was a boy  
who didn't like Christmas.



He didn't like all the cheap presents and old stories and lights and songs. He didn't know why, but somehow the season didn't feel right to him.

So whenever Christmas came around he would stay at home and play video games and watch TV.

In the same town lived a girl who didn't like Christmas, either.

They had never met, but just like the boy, the season didn't feel right to her.

So whenever Christmas came around she would stay at home and play video games and watch TV, too.



No one knew why they disliked Christmas so much.

Some said it was because they hadn't gotten enough presents when they were younger; others said it was because they had gotten too many.

But still others said that they really didn't dislike Christmas at all; they just disliked what it had become.

Every year it seemed to become more selfish, more about getting than giving. That made it feel empty to them, and that's why they stayed home.



And so, while other people were out buying presents and candy and wishing for more stuff, the girl and the boy stayed in their homes and watched their TVs.

Their moms and dads and cousins and friends would invite them to go outside and such.

And because the girl and the boy were not rude, sometimes they would go with them.

But most of the time they just stayed at home where they didn't have to see or hear the cheap presents and old stories and lights and songs.



But once, a few days before Christmas, when the air was cool and people were wrapped like presents in coats and scarves and hats and mittens, the girl and the boy decided to leave their TVs.

You see, there was to be a big parade downtown, where bands would play and people would march and horns would blow and lights would shine.

And there would be fire trucks and shiny cars and people in costumes and ladies on horseback and lots and lots of food.

And even if you were a person who didn't like the cheap presents and old stories and lights and songs, you could still enjoy the food.

Besides, the girl and the boy were getting tired of watching the same old shows on their TVs.

So when their dads invited them to go to the parade, to everyone's surprise they went.



And though they didn't know it, the boy and the girl were about to meet.

You see, they happened to be watching the parade from the same side of the same street, not very far apart, in a crowd.

And a big yellow float came by carrying people waving their hands and smiling big smiles.

Clowns dressed like elves walked beside it tossing big, juicy oranges into the crowd.



Now, the boy and the girl had always liked oranges, but on that day they liked them even more.

In the chilly air, those round balls of fruit looked so beautiful and smelled so delicious that everyone wanted one. So they all tried to get one for themselves.

In the jumble, many oranges bounced out of children's gloves and landed on the ground and rolled away.

Some of those oranges got squashed and some got picked up, but then the next float came by and the crowd forgot all about them.

The boy and the girl, however, didn't forget about them.

They picked them up and stuffed them into their pockets and hats and wherever they could jam them. And they got quite a few.



One orange rolled into an alley and stopped against a large cardboard box.

The boy and the girl saw the orange and then, for the very first time, they saw each other.



They looked at the orange, then at each other with their pockets and hats brimming with oranges.

Then they grinned great, "Me first!" grins and raced after it.

The girl reached the orange first.

She scooped it up and held it high, laughing in triumph.

The boy joined in and together they danced, reaching for the prize.



Then something made them stop.

Looking around, they shivered with the crawly kind of feeling that wriggles down your spine and makes you feel like you're being watched.

Spying a small hole on one side of the box, the boy bent to look inside.



He jumped back as a pair of wide, frightened eyes goggled back at him.

For the briefest of moments their gazes locked, and then the eyes blinked and disappeared into the box.

The girl and the boy looked at each other, their eyes wide, and then they slowly knelt down and peered inside.



Two ragged bundles lay inside the box. One was a very young girl dressed in a hodgepodge of too-small clothing. The other was a woman who seemed to be sleeping.

The child stared at them with eyes wide as an owl's. She made no sound but gripped the woman tightly.

Her eyes darted toward the older girl's hand then flicked away.





*"Once there was a boy who didn't like Christmas..."*

A chance meeting with a homeless child a few days before the holidays transforms the hearts of a young man and woman, giving them new insight into the real meaning of Christmas.



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on the author's web site,  
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