Judy buttoned her coat collar tightly around her neck, burying her face farther down in the collar’s warmth and protection from the swirling snow and the bitter cold. She felt bone-weary and her legs ached with the many errands she had run for those less fortunate than she. But it was a most rewarding day, the dark-haired girl soliloquized contentedly, smiling in spite of her fatigue and near-exhaustion. Always, she was happiest doing things for others. Christmas was such a very special time to demonstrate what Jesus meant when He said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Not that Christmas was the only time for doing good deeds and acts of mercy and kindnesses-never--but it was so fitting--a time to let the world know that the Christ of Christmas was very much alive and no longer a mere babe but a Saviour-Redeemer who dwelt within the hearts of men.

She hurried along the busy avenue, dodging the many shoppers who rushed past her, their arms laden heavily with packages of various shapes and sizes and their countenances sad and dissatisfied looking. Between two store buildings, Judy paused in front of a weather-beaten door. Then, opening the door on its creaking hinges, she climbed the two flights of stairs and knocked on the door at the top landing.
Below her, outside, the snow continued to swirl, churning up little drifts beside the buildings and around the street lamps, making visibility poor and hazy-white and giving a festive holiday air to the atmosphere.

She knocked again, and when the door opened and Mrs. Morton's wan face appeared Judy felt greatly relieved. "For a brief moment you had me scared," she confessed, stepping into the warmth of the modest but clean and neatly-kept apartment.

Mrs. Morton took Judy's hands affectionately in her own. "I'm so glad you came!" she exclaimed softly.

"Are you feeling better? And where's Joey and Joy? School?"

"Yes, to both questions, Judy. Your prayers certainly worked wonders for this body of mine."

"You must give God all the glory, my dear. He performs the wonderful miracle of healing--in soul and body, mind and spirit. Oh, He's such a great and wonderful God! But here, before the children get in from school, I brought Joey that Bible he so much wanted and Joy the doll she saw in Berk's Department store window. Then there are lesser, smaller items in this large bag which I'm sure they'll enjoy. This big package is for you--a love-gift from me."

"But, Judy, you can't do all this! Why, you . . . you only do baby-sitting jobs after school two nights a week!"

"Occasionally, I take on an extra one or two," Judy said, laughing pleasantly and forgetting her weariness for the moment. "Now where shall I put these things?"

Laughing like a small, excited child, Mrs. Morton carried the beautifully-wrapped gifts into the living room. "God sent you!" she declared emphatically. "I had nothing for the children, and no money with which to get them anything either. Oh, dear girl, you are God's angel to us."

"Then praise Him for it. And now, I'll have a word of prayer with you and then I'll be going. Oh, by the way, the gifts for the children say, 'To Joey--Love, Mother; to Joy--Love, Mother.' Only the smaller items have my name on them."

Mrs. Morton buried her face in her hands and wept softly. And when Judy took her departure and pressed a good-sized bill into the astonished widow woman's hand, she felt she was more than well repaid for her special effort and her gifts of sacrificial love. To see the light come on in another's eyes was reward enough.

Judy hurried out into the cold. By now, the street lamps had come on and the snow had intensified, as did the wind. Save for one more visit . . . a quickie drop-in to an
aged lady... she was anxious to get home. How good it would be to finish her errands of love and bask in the love of parents and sister and brothers!

Mrs. Kettering opened her small cottage door at the first hint of Judy's knock and welcomed her warmly inside.

"You're half-frozen!" she exclaimed, making Judy unbutton her snow-covered coat and hang it near the sizzling, sputtering hot water register.

Dropping wearily into the nearest chair and taking her boots off, the girl exclaimed, "Oh, Mrs. Kettering, how good it is to just sit for a spell! Every year, it's the same," she said hopelessly. "Each year, I tell myself that 'this year, I'll get my errands of love done early, so that I may come up to Christmas uncluttered in my mind and calm and serene in my spirit.' But it just never seems to work out the way I plan. So many, many things happen and arise--unexpected things and needs."

Mrs. Kettering nodded in agreement and affirmation. How easily she could associate with this lovely young woman, remembering when she was the "doer" instead of the recipient. But that was when she was able to go and do; age had a way all its own of slowing one's activities down.

"We did order our Christmas cards," she continued, looking like a collapsed rag doll in the chair. "I might have gotten them done early for Mother, but Ben Pillsbury called to say that his wife wasn't well at all and the babies needed some attention... they have two more children, you know, twins this time. So I hurried over there, intending only to stay that afternoon. As it turned out, I was there every day--and night, too--after school for six days. I decorated their house for Christmas, baked bread and cookies, did some shopping for Sue Pillsbury, stocked the refrigerator with goodies and washed and ironed every single day I was there. Babies use a lot of clothing-diapers, especially."

Mrs. Kettering poured Judy a cup of steaming-hot tea, smiling as the girl continued.

"When I got back home, Mother reminded me that I had promised to have cookies for the Bauers and the Shones. They're dreadfully poor, as you know, and our Sunday school class decided to take boxes of toys and clothing and good things to eat to them. So I stayed up half the night baking the cookies, then off to school the next day--and it's been rush, rush, rush ever since."

Mrs. Kettering laughed softly. "You've really had some exciting days, Judy," she remarked, turning on the Christmas lights and sitting down to enjoy the girl's company.

Judy closed her eyes and kicked off her shoes. "My, but it feels good to relax!" she exclaimed, sitting in peaceful silence for a few moments and enjoying the serenity and collected calmness and quiet of the lovely old woman.
In a little while, she was out of the chair and on her feet. "I must be going," she said quickly. "It's too tempting a thing for me to fall asleep in that comfortable old chair of yours. I always have felt it's the ultimate in comfort. And so close to this warm hot water register! Um-m! Too, too tempting for a bone-weary person."

Mrs. Kettering laughed again. "I said I'd will it to you upon my departure from this life," she said brightly. "My children hate it; say it's 'positively archaic and out-dated.' Furthermore, it would look totally and completely out of place in their fashionable homes."

"No hinting intended," the girl replied, slipping into her warm coat. "I merely dropped in to pray with you and leave this small gift of love," she said, handing a sealed envelope to the dear woman. "My way of saying I love and appreciate you greatly. You've been a guiding light to me. And I wasn't complaining; my errands of love do get done, and there is something about the breathlessness of it that goes with the whirling snowflakes, the stepped-up tempo and the excitement and wonder of it all. I imagine it was a lot like this in the little town of Bethlehem the night when Jesus was born..."

Mrs. Kettering sat for a long while after Judy was gone, thinking of the girl and her many, many errands of love. How wonderful of her to have helped the Pillsburys out the way she had. Little wonder they had come to Christ such a short time ago! They saw love in action, true Christian love. This was the most convincing of all things and displays. How wonderful, too, for the Bauers and the Shones to have opened their humble doors to discover the radiant faces of true Christian young people giving out of hearts of love and sincere concern for others.

Yes, the saintly woman thought, as she sat basking in the warmth and love and sincerity of the visit, the prayer and the monetary gift, this was all a part of the exquisite delight and the ineffable wonder of the Christ of Christmas in the heart.... the spirit of giving of doing and of being.

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THE END