

THE
FORGOTTEN
SPIRIT
(A CHRISTMAS TALE)

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DEDICATION

FOR MY LORD JESUS CHRIST!

*AND, In Honor of the birth of The HOLY MESSIAH CHRIST
JESUS*

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CHAPTER ONE

What It Could Have Been

IT COULD HAVE BEEN THE night before Christmas, instead it t'was a night not to be forgotten. A night not recorded through various fairy tales, such as *The Night Before Christmas*, a tale that burns brightly in most people's minds. It was a night of great importance nonetheless, with just much less fanfare.

It was a night in the spirit, a night directly linked to the Christ Child, and the spirit of truth, surrounding his birth. All in all it was a night that would touch the hearts of a people who truly needed it.

A people who needed to remember, *The Forgotten Spirit*.

As the celebrations in all their gaiety resounded throughout the world, and masses of people spilled into the streets, in various parts of the globe, beginning the celebrations of Christmas, the hushed silence in this particular realm was in startling contrast to the bright gaiety, that was going on, as one child, was sprinkled with the stardust of remembrance.

It was a remembrance that went beyond the gaily-wrapped packages, the decorated trees, and the stockings hung by the chimneys with care. And, of course beyond the steady hum, of the chi-ching, of cash registers, at retailers around the world.

And, it was not a myth. It was truth in all its power. It was wondrous magnificent and joyous, in its giving. It was in its essence, the greatest love of all!

And on this night one small child, parallel in circumstances, though not in holiness, to a night many eons ago would receive a charge. One that was much bigger than she was at nine-years-old.

Hartford, Connecticut was renowned throughout the country, as the Insurance Capital of the world. Little did it know that after this night, it would become known as so much more.

The City of Hartford had been imbued with a spiritual, magical realism along with some very special visits. And, the footprints of those visits had been recorded. It had been recorded in a place, where it would be most remembered.

Deep in the heart of the city, in a modest two family home a nine-year-old girl, named Jamie Lynne Brooks, knelt with her ear to the dining room door. Though she was dressed warmly in flannel pajamas with footings attached, she still shivered more from the sound of the voices, coming from the other side of the door, than from the cold.

A bright, precocious and curious child, sometimes Jamie tried to learn more than she should know. Just as she was doing now, which is why she found herself, suddenly fleeing down the hall, with a guilty expression on her face, while she turned the knob softly to close the door, after reaching the safety of her room.

The following morning Jamie's grandmother, Elizabeth Brooks prepared the same breakfast that she had been preparing the week before Christmas, for more years than she could remember.

There was bacon, as well as smoked ham shipped from Virginia. It was a special catalog order that arrived every year, along with gourmet sausage links.

Lizzie had prepared buttermilk pancakes. She had wheat as well as banana nut pancakes, right alongside these scrumptious varieties, was old-fashioned maple syrup. The syrup had been warmed to perfection.

There were platters of eggs as well as a vast assortment of honey, apple and original butters that Lizzie collected, from around the country.

Old-fashioned strawberry scones that she had baked sat in their baskets, wrapped in colorful warm cloths, along with a vast array of marmalades, jams, and various jellies.

In the center of the table there was a bowl of fresh fruit, direct from the Farmer's Market.

Though with all those pancakes and syrup, providing pleasing eye candy on the table, not one person would touch the fruit until much later in the day.

And this was only the beginning of the week.

Each morning leading up to the morning of Christmas Day, would bring a variety of breakfast dishes, sumptuous enough for a King, and certainly worthy, of the upcoming Prince of Prince's birthday.

The Christmas lights that hung from the gaily-decorated tree tinkled the familiar melody of *Joy To The World*, softly in the background, from its place in the adjacent dining room.

Elizabeth never deviated from this pattern year in and year out. She was a stickler for tradition and Christmas was the one time of the year, that she didn't feel nary a twinge of guilt for sticking to what others liked to call her regimen. Call it what they may, she always did exactly what she felt like, to make Christmas the most festive of occasions.

She looked over to see that the coffee had finished brewing. She poured a steaming cup from the gleaming red Kitchen-Aid coffee pot, for her husband George who began the morning conversation with exactly where he had left off the night before, which was what had sent his granddaughter Jamie scurrying down the hall to her room, in tears.

"I just don't know how I'm going to tell Jamie her mother won't be home for Christmas."

Elizabeth automatically poured some cream in George's cup. "Hmmm. Hmmm. It's going to break her heart alright."

George spooned in the sugar.

Elizabeth sighed. "Well now George let's not give up so soon. Maybe something will happen."

The scowl on George's face deepened.

Worry lines creased his forehead. "Oh sure it will. The Connecticut Parole Board will get a touch of the Christmas spirit, and release her."

Elizabeth ignored his sarcasm. She put a buttered scone on his plate.

"It's the week before Christmas for God sake."

He turned his attention back to the morning paper, exasperated. Unable to read as he felt Elizabeth's eyes assessing him he glanced up from his paper.

"You know I've been married to you for what feels like forever. And I can't believe you of all people would go and make a stupid remark like that Lizzie," he said using his nickname for her.

Elizabeth rolled her eyes but refused to change her position.

"Maybe nothing will happen like nothing is happening. You can't go filling a child's head with that kind of nonsense. Kids have to learn to live in reality."

"Ain't nothing wrong with having a little faith," Elizabeth said.

George finally snapped his paper shut.

"Ain't nothing wrong with living in reality either. Which is where we live most of the time. And the reality is that nothing good ever seems to happen around here."

Elizabeth refused to be deterred from her hope.

Sighing again she whispered, "What we need is a miracle."

CHAPTER TWO

Jamie Lynne Brooks

JAMIE SAT ON THE BUILT-IN wooden parlor bench in her room near the window staring down at an earlier photograph of her mother. Tears trickled slowly down her cheeks. “Please God let her come home.”

Her heart felt heavy in her chest as though it were too big for her. She could actually feel the weight of it. And it felt as though it weighed a ton.

She glanced out the window. There wasn’t even a snowflake floating in the air, to cheer her up. The streets were cold, dry, windy, and barren looking. There wasn’t a sign of snow in sight.

Jamie loved to sit on her window seat, and watch the huge soft flakes of snow, drift from the sky to the ground.

She ran her fingers over the photograph of Cynthia Brooks. The thought of no snow saddened her even further. She loved this time of year, the smells, the sounds, the feel of the snow in the air.

But this Christmas would be different.

Her mother’s absence was putting a damper on Christmas, for her.

Her mother would not be there to tuck her into bed, sing her a song, or to sneak her some cookies and milk, from Grandma Lizzie's kitchen.

In the past they'd always laughed together, because they had broken Grandma's rule of no food in the bedroom. But Christmas was a time for rules to be broken.

One would think she would have gotten used to it, by now, because the reality was that Cynthia, hadn't been there for the last three years.

But, nevertheless Jamie was harboring memories of their Christmas's past, and yearning for the touch of a mother, whose incarceration was far beyond her young reach.

She ran her fingers down the glass frame again. Cynthia shivered in her prison cell, as though she'd felt the touch of her precious daughter. But she hadn't.

Jamie looked out the window as the sounds of some boys on her street playing touch football, reached her ears. She sat on the bench hugging the picture of Cynthia while she watched, the boy's toss the football, tackling each other.

That's how she was feeling like someone had tackled her, and took the ball from her to make a touchdown, scoring, a touchdown for the other team.

She knew a bit about sports since her grandfather was a sports fanatic.

In the living room George was sitting in his favorite recliner. No one ever sat in the chair but him. It was forbidden to all others. The chair wrapped itself around his body like a glove; it hugged the very imprint of him.

George found it profoundly satisfying to have one thing in the house, that was all his own.

Lizzie had started a fire in the fireplace and its flames were crackling, as well as glowing warmly. The Christmas tree in the

dining room was sparkling from its lights as well. The Star of David was perched proudly on top.

George was feeling rather satisfied from the wonderful breakfast he had eaten. He was about to light his pipe, when Jamie climbed into her favorite spot on his lap, putting her arms around his neck. She laid her head against the warm spot beating in his throat.

He hadn't even heard her come into the room. Sometimes she reminded him of an angel appearing, and disappearing at will. It really wasn't so that she could do that, but she put him in that frame of mind sometimes, as she entered, as well as left a room, so quietly that you barely knew she was there.

George laid his pipe in the ashtray without lighting it. He cradled her in his arms. "I'm sorry baby. Granddaddy did everything he could think of to bring your mommy home for Christmas. But, well, it just can't be. I'm sorry baby. I'm truly sorry."

Recovering from her own episode of sadness, and still hopeful as well as unable to accept the truth of her Grandfather's words Jamie said, "Isn't there anything that anyone can do?"

She looked down on the floor as she felt a lump forming in her throat.

Then she turned big brown eyes with water sitting unshed in them directly on him, scrutinizing his every feature for the slightest twitch.

Her hair was braided with beautiful beads woven through, and the hair was pulled away from her face, so her granddaddy got a full frontal impact, of the pain emanating from his little girl.

Seeing the earnestness on her face he answered directly. "I'm afraid not Jamie."

He refused to give her false hope. He had spoken to the attorney as well as to various organizations, which in turn had spoken with the prison officials, and through it all he had received a very firm *no*, for an answer.

His daughter would not be home for Christmas.

“Are you sure Granddaddy that not anyone anywhere can do anything?” Jamie persisted.

George sighed.

He wanted to light his pipe badly but couldn't do so with Jamie sitting on his lap. He loved his grandchild dearly but sometimes she wore him out with her stream of questions and her never-ending ability to *not* accept no for an answer.

“I'm sure. I wish I wasn't but I am.”

Jamie looked at him before sliding off his lap. She gazed briefly into the fireplace, and then tilted her head at a proud angle. “Don't worry Granddaddy. I know you did your best. It's okay, really. Everything will be all right. I promise.”

She smiled brightly at him like the sun appearing on a cloudy day. She hugged him tightly absorbing his disappointment in her little body.

Putting her hand under his chin she forced his downcast eyes to look into hers. “Remember don't look down or wear a frown. Life is like a jeweled crown for those who see, and have found.”

Jamie loved reciting poetry that she'd made up, and she especially liked using it at certain times. Times like these were when the poetry cheered her up. She adored looking for the rhyming words to form sentences that gave off rhythm.

For his part her grandfather wondered where she got her wisdom for one so young. It sprouted from her at various odd times.

She put a finger to her lips and then touched the same finger to his lips, leaning over she kissed him on the nose. “Can I go outside Granddaddy?”

“Sure thing muffin.” He tickled her and she fell to the floor in a gale of giggles. It was one of their favorite pastimes with each other.

“But first we're going to have to take you to the hospital and get some of those funny bones taken out.”

Elizabeth smiled at them from the kitchen.

Wistfully she repeated her wish once again. “All we need is a miracle.”

CHAPTER THREE

Hattie Brooks

JAMIE WAS EXCITED TO BE on Christmas vacation. There was so much to do, things to see and places to go. The only shadow marring her thoughts was her mother or her absence thereof.

In any case she decided to visit her great grandmother, which she usually did on the weekends, but since she was out of school she would do it today.

Armed with a platter full of warm pancakes from Grandma Lizzie's breakfast table, Jamie pushed insistently on Hattie Brook's bell until the buzzer sounded to let her in. Her great grandmother lived on the same street as her grandparents, just a few houses up the street.

Jamie bolted through the door and up the stairs. She was about to begin banging on the front door when her great grandmother, leaning heavily on her cane opened it, staring out at her and wondering what in tarnation was after this child, for her to be laying on the buzzer like that.

"Well for land sakes child you gonna take the door off the hinges, the way you did that buzzer down there?"

Jamie grinned. With her empty arm she reached out hugging her great grandmother around her waist.

"I'm sorry Grandma I just wanted to see you so badly."

The old woman melted.

“Why of course you did child. Come on in here and take off those cold clothes.”

Jamie smiled.

She loved this old woman with all her heart. Her grandma was so special. She always called Hattie, Grandma even though Hattie was her great grandmother, and her grandmother was always called Grandma Lizzie. That was how she distinguished between the two of them.

However nobody who knew them would ever confuse them. Lizzie was charming, warm, gracious and full of fun and wit, which actually grated on Hattie’s nerves sometimes.

Hattie on the other hand was serious, all observant and tough, except when it came to Jamie. Hattie Brooks was Jamie’s grandfather’s mother. And she had been a pistol in her day, and still was most of the time. However Jamie had her wrapped around her finger.

It had been so since the day George had brought Jamie home, and she had looked down at that beautiful baby, wrapped in the scraggly pink blanket.

Cynthia of course had managed to get herself into something she couldn’t get out of so easily, and had wound up pregnant, scared, and abandoned, by Jamie’s daddy.

In stepped George when he got the frantic phone call from Cynthia who had a hungry baby, no money, and no man. Consequently Jamie had not left his home, since that fateful day.

She had been three months old when that happened.

Hattie had known from the day Cynthia was born that she would be trouble. She’d just had that air about her. However, George was her only son, and he loved that girl to death, so how could she tell him that.

Instead she had observed Cynthia’s spoiled selfishness, silently over the years. Her heart filled with sorrow every time Cynthia did something that proved her right.

As much as Elizabeth got on her nerves, sometimes she wished that child of hers had taken a bit more of her disposition.

Instead Cynthia had an edge to her. She loved what old folks used to call, “The Hustle.”

Consequently something always seemed to be brewing with her, most of the time none of it was good, with the exception of the birth of Jamie Lynne Brooks.

Jamie was a different package all together Hattie knew. She was not even remotely like her mother in any way. Hattie didn’t know how Cynthia had been blessed with a child of such a good spirit.

But, praise The Lord for his miracles.

Hattie headed for her favorite chair. It must have been in the genes in their family because her son did the same thing every day.

Mahalia Jackson’s distinctive notes sailed through the air as Hattie comfortably settled herself in for a chat with her favorite girl-child.

Nestled among her antiques, and memories of old, was exactly where Hattie knew that she belonged. This was her life, this and her church activities.

And thanks to George buying this house as well as the one he lived in, there was no danger of her ever having to leave her precious home.

She would die right here among her cherished belongings and memories, when they called her number, and it was time for her to go marching in.

Hattie was spry although she walked with a cane. She made it seem as though she were endowing that cane with personality except for when she began to tire a bit, and had to lean heavily on it.

Seated in her rocking chair by the window she indicated the big fluffy pillow at her feet, that was reserved for Jamie’s visits.

Jamie had been sitting on that pillow at her feet, since she was old enough to sit up. In fact when she hadn’t been old enough to sit up, Hattie used to just prop her up with extra pillows.

Laying her cane against the windowsill Hattie's eyes probed Jamie's face. "Now tell me child what is the trouble that I see in those beautiful brown eyes that has you in such a rush?"

It was true Jamie's eyes were a beautiful large cocoa brown. One could almost become lost in their almond shape. Jamie picked up a small-embroidered pillow holding it tightly to her chest. Against her will her lower lip trembled.

"Granddaddy told me Mommy won't be here for Christmas. They won't let her come. Grandma she was all I wanted for Christmas. I don't have to have toys or clothes. I don't want any of that. All I want is my mommy. She's been gone a long time."

Hattie watched Jamie closely.

Before a tear could drop from her eye she handed her a handkerchief. "Granddaddy said not anyone anywhere could do anything."

Hattie opened her arms beckoning to her. "Come child. Come on over here to Grandma. That pillow you're sitting on is too far away."

Jamie went to her. She laid her head in her grandmother's lap. Hattie stroked the child's hair comforting her. She glanced over the top of Jamie's head to the wooden cross hanging on the wall. "I know someone who can help you."

Jamie lifted her head from the wet spot she'd left on her Grandmother's apron. "Who?"

"Jesus."

"You mean God?"

"No I mean Jesus just like I said. You can't approach God unless you go through his son Jesus. In the name of the Almighty Jesus you can do all things. And through him you can talk to God."

Jamie looked puzzled.

"You know how to use the phone child. Don't you?"

"Yes."

“Well when you pick up the receiver you punch in a number and that becomes the line you use. It rings on the other end and someone answers and you start talking. Right?”

“Right.”

“Well Jesus is like that line you punched in. He’s the way, the truth, and the life child. He said there’s no other way but through me. And he meant what he said all right. Through him you can reach God. When you respect the name of Jesus, God picks up on the other end, and he answers.”

Jamie puckered her lips considering this information.

“Do you understand me child?”

“Yes. Yes, Grandma I do.”

Drifting for a moment Hattie said in a faraway voice, “Jesus is the light of the world. He’s powerful. He’s also a miracle worker.”

“I overheard Grandma Lizzie say what we need is a miracle. Just this morning she said it to Granddaddy. A miracle can bring my mommy home.”

Smiling fondly Hattie said, “Yes, baby it can. You see Jesus helped the lame to walk, the dumb to talk, and the blind to see. He came for you and me.”

Jamie looked across at her. “You just made a rhyme Grandma.”

“No I didn’t baby that’s just what the scripture says is all.”

After a few seconds of reflection Hattie continued, “There is nothing he can’t do. No job is too hard for him, Jamie. Do you know where he was born?”

“No.”

“He was born in what we know as a barn. Back then they called it a manger. But, it was a barn alright.”

Jamie shook her head incredulously. “A barn? I thought you said he was powerful Grandma.”

Outside on a tree branch one little child angel fell from the tree, where he had been eavesdropping, physically landing with a loud thump, on the ground.

His partner who was also an angel known as The Spirit of Discernment, and who had been waiting on the ground looked at him, shaking his head for naught.

“That’s what you get.” Discernment was annoyed because they could’ve just sat inside the room, listening without either the old woman or the child being aware of them, if they had chose to.

Instead Sam who was known as The Spirit of Innocence in his usual way, wanted to experience the physical. That was why he had fallen. He wasn’t quite used to how gravity worked in this realm.

Brushing himself off and getting back to the matter at hand, Sam said, “The old woman is getting every word of it right.”

The Spirit of Discernment sighed.

Sam as he was most often called instead of by his angelic name was renowned for answering questions, he hadn’t yet been asked.

Discernment knew that just as children in the flesh could be precocious so could little child angels. Sam was nine-years-old, the same age as Jamie.

Inside Hattie said, “He was, and still remains powerful, Jamie. Still waters run deep.”

She gazed out the window as though she could see the two angels, who were now perched together on a tree limb. Sam usually got his way with Discernment.

Discernment often deferred to the folly of Sam’s youth, as he knew he was still learning.

“The time of his birth is approaching,” Hattie said. “He is the Savior. And he will grant a miracle, or miracles on one condition.”

Jamie grasped the bottom of her Grandma’s apron, intent on what she was saying, gazing at her. “What’s that Grandma? What’s the condition?”

Her grandmother stared at her as though she were searching for something.

Finally speaking softly she said, “The condition is that you *must* believe. No matter what anyone tells you, or how hard it may get. No

matter how impossible, it may seem child. You've got to know that whatever you ask in Jesus' name will be, and it will. It's called faith Jamie. You must believe child. You've just got to believe."

Jamie leaped to her feet.

"I believe Grandma. I do," she said earnestly. A shiver passed through her body as she spoke the words.

"I gotta go. I'll be back," she told her grandmother. With those words she kissed her grandmother on the cheek dashing from the room.

She stopped when she was halfway out of the room, looking at the old woman, whose eyes were bright and shiny.

"Grandma how come granddaddy doesn't know about Jesus and him being a miracle worker?"

Her voice dropped to a whisper. "I know you're right. And I know Jesus can help. I know it cuz I feel it right here." She pointed to her heart.

Hattie shook her head sadly. "He knows Jamie. Many people know. It's just that they've forgotten."

A tear rolled down the old woman's cheek.

Outside on the tree limb the two angels wiped their eyes, as well knowing what was coming.

"Baby. Jesus Christ is *The Forgotten Spirit*. People have forgotten what Christmas is really about. Perhaps you can help them remember."

In a voice that belied her years Jamie answered. "Perhaps I can Grandma."

She pulled on her hat and coat heading for the door, closing it softly behind her.

Hattie rocked in her chair, humming along with the Christmas Spirituals.

Outside Hattie's window the tree limb was now empty.