

Mademoiselle magazine: a christmas memory

[Family](#)



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" A Christmas Memory", which was written by Truman Capote and originally published in Mademoiselle Magazine in December 1956, is a meaningful and emotional story about family. In which, the characters of a family are defined especially: " Family is not only a shelter but also a safe place to care, share memories, sacrifice, and love. " There are many definitions about family. One of them is " A family consists of two or more people (one of whom is the householder) related by birth, marriage, or adoption residing in the same housing unit "(US Census Bureau.) Its main functions are to produce and reproduce persons, biologically and/or socially; share material substances (such as food, shelter.) However, two family members (Buddy and his cousin) in " A Christmas Memory" are connected with each other not only by consanguinity but also by love and friendship. The story employs a first-person narrator who is called Buddy —a seven-year-old boy, but it is not his real name. It was given by his distant cousin who is " sixty-something" and is described as " still a child. " Though it is so sad that the more Buddy grows up, the older his friend is. His friend used to realize: "... I guess I hate to see you grow up. When you're grown up, will we still be friends? " But, their innocence keeps them be best friends despite age. Besides, both of them are poor and lonely. They are considered outsiders by their family. " Other people inhabit the house, relatives; and though they have power over us, and frequently make us cry, we are not, on the whole, too much aware of them. " (" A Christmas Memory", p. 2) Throughout the story, other family members did not appear too much except for two occasions: One is when the Buddy's friend let Buddy drink the leftover whiskey, the relatives yelled at her and brought up cousins and uncles who were involved in scandals and humiliated the family. This hurts Buddy's friend and makes she cried all

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night. Another is on the Christmas morning when they gave Buddy gifts which made him angry: hand-me-downs, a church shirt, and a subscription to a religious magazine. Both of these appearances only bring sadness, tears and disappointment instead of charm or love. Moreover, they do not know about Buddy's needs and desire: a bicycle. An interesting detail is: Buddy and his friend are very poor but why do they save every penny to make fruitcakes every year? Instead of selling fruitcakes to have some money or keeping them for themselves, Buddy and his cousin give these fruitcakes away to strangers: President Roosevelt, a knife grinder who comes through town twice a year, a driver of the six o'clock bus from Mobile who exchanges waves with them every day, a California couple whose car one afternoon broke down outside the house and chatted with them on the porch.

Especially, although Mr. Haha Johnes is described as a "giant with razor scars across his cheeks" and never smiles, when Buddy and his cousin purchase whiskey for their fruitcakes from him, he gives it for free with a smile that means there is good in all people. People cannot be judged on their appearance. Sadly, these warm gestures are given to Buddy and his cousin by outsiders instead of their family. They are lonely and need love; especially at Christmas - a season for giving and reunite. It is a wonderful time of greetings, gifts, joy, care and sharing that their relatives never give them. Family is also where members sacrifice for each other. The story is a bittersweet reminiscence beginning with "Imagine a morning in later November. A coming of winter morning more than twenty years ago. Consider the kitchen of a spreading old house in a country town." ("A Christmas Memory", p. 1) This places the story during the Great Depression - a time of great poverty which then results in many emotional details. The <https://assignbuster.com/mademoiselle-magazine-a-christmas-memory/>

way Buddy and his cousin hide their money is so impressive: " These money we keep hidden in an ancient bead purse under a loose board under the floor under a chamber pot under my friend's bed. " (" A Christmas Memory, " p. 6)

This purse seems very important and valuable with them and the women saves money and keep it carefully. She has never traveled more than five miles from homes and eaten in a restaurant. She still gives Buddy a dime to watch the movie show every Saturday. Even when Buddy is in military school, in every letter she also encloses a dime wadded in toilet paper. She wants to enhance Buddy's skills. Buddy likes her eyes to describe the world outside for her. She is strong with morals and purity- innocent and trusts in the Lord. Moreover, she is charming like a mother or grandmother. Family is where people share happiness and sadness which become the most beautiful memories in their lives. Buddy and his friends have many unforgettable Christmas holidays together. They save money by selling fruits and flowers, killing flies, holding their own shows with pictures and a three-legged biddy chicken. And when the " fruitcake weather" comes, they buy ingredients to make fruitcakes and present it to their neighbors, friends or also strangers. Next, they venture into the woods and cut down a majestic tree. When a " rich mill owner's lazy wife" offers to buy it, Buddy's friend insists on refusing. They respect the Christmas spirit. It is much more valuable than money. Then, they decorate the tree with homemade ornaments and odds and ends found in the attic. Finally, they create gifts for their relatives. Buddy wishes he could give his friend a knife, a radio, and the chocolate-covered cherries she craves. His cousin wants to give Buddy a new bicycle. However, they embarrass to confess that they only have kites for each other like the previous Christmas. Despite that, Buddy and his friend are happy with their

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kites rather than what their relatives gave them. They spend Christmas day happily watching their homemade kites soar in the breeze. Buddy soon forgets disappointed gifts from his relatives and is excited "...as if we'd already won the fifty-thousand-dollar Grand Prize in that coffee-naming contest" while his friend happy as if she could see the Lord. (" A Christmas Memory, p. 20"). It is their last perfect Christmas together. " Those who Know Best" — the adults who do not care much about Buddy's life as well as his dream- send Buddy to a military school where he is separated from his friend forever. Although Buddy has a new home, in his mind: " Home is where my friend is, and there I never go. " (" A Christmas Memory, " p. 21) Home is not defined as a shelter. It is where he can find love and safety. Another meaningful in this story is the kite which is a symbol of freedom, heart, friendship, and dream to fly up high to touch the sky. Kites are also memories of their beautiful days together. Memories are something passing by our life that we cannot touch them again except for remembering them sometimes. However, they are important parts in our heart eternally. Thus, even when Buddy is far from his house, his childhood's memories about his lovely friend, his dog- Queenie, Christmas holidays, and the kites always alive in his soul that make him strong and keep forward. That is why when his friend dies, Buddy feels as if he lost an irreplaceable part and while walking across the campus on December morning- Christmas time, Buddy still searches the sky with hope to see a pair of kites- his unforgettable memories about his lovely friend. " A Christmas Memory" is a vivid picture of family and lovely friendship of Buddy and his cousin that leaves a message for the reader: Family likes a house which has the base built by LOVE, four

walls connected by CARE, the roof made by SHARE and the furniture inside are SACRIFICE.