



# DollyAnna's Miracle

by

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For twenty years, I've been a part of the Wilsons' Christmas. I've been packed, unpacked, dropped, and scratched, but I'm still hung on the Christmas tree every year. I'm an 1886 Murano Glass Chalcedony Christmas tree ornament, candy apple red with faded gold letters. They say, "Love is the best gift of all." Every year Mrs. Wilson hangs me on a high branch so I won't get broken. She says, "My dear Oscar gave me this ornament on our first Christmas together. I call her DollyAnna."

Most of the year is boring, but during the Christmas season, I come alive after the family goes to bed. I listen to their dreams and search for a true miracle, a way to bless them. When I'm successful I'll be promoted to Spiritdom, a place where Christmas magic is celebrated year around. Unfortunately the Wilsons seem to have forgotten what causes the sparkle and glitter. Everything is what they'll receive and not what they can give.

This year is no different. It's already the 20th of December, and I can't find a hint of a miracle anywhere. I sprinkle a bit of Christmas cheer on Oscar, the kind-hearted Schnauzer, allowing him to carry me silently through the house, and we talk.

"What do the dreams tell you tonight?" Oscar says.

I sigh. "Rather hopeless. Dad wants golf clubs. Mom has her eye on a diamond bracelet. Lisa is demanding an Apple iWatch, and Caleb insists upon an Xbox One. Little Maddie cried herself to sleep."

"Why?" Oscar says. "She's so sweet."

"No one would tuck her into bed or kiss her. They were all too busy."

"But she's only eight years old." Oscar's concern warms my heart. "If I hadn't been banished to the kitchen, I'd have laid at her bedside until she fell asleep."

"Her mom says she's too old for bedtime drama. She's the only member of the Wilson family who longs for something other than a gift she can hold." I choke back a sob. "But I'm afraid she'll grow cold to what really matters. A hurting heart searches for ways to soothe the pain."

"How sad, DollyAnna. Can I help?"

"This has to be Maddie's decision, to wish for love more than a toy. All I can do is whisper in her ear that she's loved."

I spend the rest of the night listening to the Wilsons' dreams. Over the years, I've learned to monitor them, like we were taught in Ornament School. I pray too. Although many view God as unreal and obsolete. He is the only thing I can rely on.

The following morning while Mrs. Wilson brews coffee and Mr. Wilson pops bread into the toaster, Maddie sleeps through breakfast. At least that's what her mother claims since it's Christmas break from school. But I know differently from her sweet dreams. She's taken the money from her piggy bank and divided it into four piles of \$9.78 each. After placing the money into a play purse, she hurries downstairs.

"Did you sleep well?" her mom says.

Maddie beams. "I did. Could someone take me to the store today?"

Mr. Wilson glances up from reading the newspaper. "For what?"

"I want to go Christmas shopping." She bites into a piece of buttered toast.

Lisa snorts. "You can't afford anything I want."

Caleb laughs. "Just give me the cash."

"Enough." Mr. Wilson frowns. "Maddie, I'll take you after breakfast."

"I don't think so." Mrs. Wilson's voice rises. "You have clients this morning."

“I can reschedule. Maddie is more important, unless you want to take her.”

“I’m doing laundry today.”

“My point,” he says.

Maddie and Mr. Wilson leave together, although Mrs. Wilson protests. They return close to noon. Mrs. Wilson refuses to talk to him because he delayed his appointment, but Maddie smiles and hurries upstairs with her treasures.

All day I jingle with excitement. While the family sleeps, Oscar and I creep into Maddie’s room, but she’s already wrapped her gifts in snowman paper. She dreams of Christmas morning, and how she looks forward to a special time with her family.

None of the others dream anything promising that night or the next, or the two following. Lisa and Caleb spend Christmas Eve making fun of Maddie’s gifts under the tree, but neither of them contribute to the assortment.

Early Christmas morning, Maddie sits beside her dad in front of the Christmas tree hugging Oscar, quietly weeping. “Oscar, I’m so sorry. I forgot to buy you a gift.”

“What’s wrong, honey?” Dad says, touching her shoulder.

“I didn’t buy anything for Oscar.”

He kisses the top of her head. "I'm sure he forgives you. Merry Christmas."

She smiles through her tears. "Merry Christmas, Daddy."

"Let's wake up this sleepy family."

Soon everyone is seated ready to tear into their presents.

Maddie hands her dad his gift.

"A coffee mug." He reads aloud the note attached. "To take to work so you can remember how much I love you each time you take a sip." His eyes moisten. "Thank you, honey."

She gives her mom a gift.

"Two pairs of tennis socks." Mrs. Wilson reads her note. "These are for you to wear when you play tennis so whether you win or lose, you know how much I love you." Her mom kisses Maddie on the cheek. "I'll wear them always."

Maddie gives Lisa her gift.

"My favorite bubble bath." Lisa studies her note. "When you are soaking in the tub, I hope the sweet smell reminds you of my love." Lisa smiles through glossy eyes. "Not bad, sis."

Caleb tears into his gift, but stops with the note. "A sign that says 'Sisters Keep Out.' Don't forget I love you." He coughs, unable to speak.

“Thank you, Maddie.” Her dad hugs her close. “You’ve brought back the meaning of love to Christmas.”

Mrs. Wilson lifts me from the tree. “All but Maddie had forgotten. Love is the best gift of all.”

The End

*DiAnn*

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