

It's hard to explain what sets the night before Christmas apart. It's mysterious. Watchful, maybe, Blessed. Of course, there's the looking forward to Christmas day goodies, but what's going on the night before is more complex than anticipation.

Christmas Night

Christmas night was frosty and sharp, and the fires in the houses burnt bright and warm. Just the sort of night it was in which to be happy and merry; and at Uncle Bob's happiness, as he expressed it, was in great force. Mrs. Rogers was there with clean face and clean apron, doing something before the fire. The stove in the warehouse was also doing its very utmost to be all right. With radiant good humor it sent forth its flickering light on all around, but it especially favored a great white sheet, in front of which was a double-barreled thing like a new sort of cannon. But it also leaped into the rafters or vanished into the corners as if it were full of larks, in readiness for the twenty boys which it knew to be coming.

Read more fun facts about holidays and traditions from around the world at our [Christmas Idea Blog](#)

- [Adults](#)
- [Kids](#)
- [Holiday Shopping](#)
- [Christmas Cheer](#)
- [Corporate Giving](#)
- [Recipes](#)

For those boys great preparations were going on in the house. Uncle Bob and Lizzie and Mrs. Rogers were all busy. The cake had to be cut up and piled high in several plates. When done, it looked most tempting. And after the cake came the cheese, placed in the middle of the plates of cake; none of your scaly Dutch cheese, but real Cheshire, yellow as gold, and creamy and crumbly, and smelling as good as it looked.

'Won't their mouths water!' exclaimed Mrs. Rogers, as she herself gazed on it with admiration, and with certain sniffs of pleasurable anticipation.

The good woman was doing her utmost to set the kettle to boil, intending to make the coffee as good as possible, her face red hot, encased in a frilled mob-cap, her sleeves rolled up above her elbows, and her apron drawn tightly round her skirts. As she filled a large



It seems every European culture feels the magic of Christmas Eve and has stories and traditions to account for it. For example, ancient legend in a number of countries claims animals have the power of speech at midnight on that night. In France, it's believed that during Christmas Eve midnight Mass, as Christ's genealogy is recited, hidden treasures are revealed. Russian tradition has a similar legend, with buried treasures revealed on the evenings between Christmas and Epiphany.

[Christmas Gifts & Gift Baskets](#) is your online source for Christmas presents. We're open year round, and we've got a huge selection of Christmas gift baskets, gourmet food towers, and more. Whether you need gifts for your kids, spouse, or an important corporate business client, our huge selection of seasonal gifts is sure to give you plenty of great ideas. Order online or contact us toll free 24 hours a day for great prices and friendly customer service. We're here to help you make their Christmas wishes come true!

Christmas Gift Ideas

- [Christmas Gift Baskets](#)
- [Christmas Towers](#)
- [Christmas Cookie Gifts](#)
- [Wine Gifts](#)
- [Gourmet Cakes](#)
- [Popcorn & Nuts](#)
- [Chocolate Gifts](#)
- [Christmas Gifts for Women](#)
- [Christmas Gifts for Men](#)
- [Christmas Gifts for Kids](#)
- [Family Gifts](#)

sieve-bag with the coffee, and put it into a very large coffee-pot, and then poured the hot water over it, such an aroma filled the room and flowed out under the door into the yard as might well serve to attract all the boys of the neighborhood.

"Twill warm t' cockles o' their hearts," she said sententiously, coupled with an emotion somewhat mysterious. But no doubt she was thinking of her son, her sailor lad, who ought to have got home for Christmas, but of whom she had latterly heard nothing. Yes, she thought of him as mothers will to whom all sorts of things suggest absent sons and daughters which would do so to no one but mothers. That beautiful spread raised before her imagination visions of famine and danger in which Tom was perishing, and she wished he were there. It was this which brought the tears to her eyes.

It was hard to keep them down, hard to suppress the good cry which would have been such a relief to her poor feelings; but she did, for the sake of all the lads who were coming.

Shining Star Golden Gift Basket



This gift basket is truly a star. Available in two sizes, each on glitters with an impressive assortment of gourmet food. The small features a sweet selection - Haute Cuisine Cookies, Perugina Sorrento Candies, Chocolate Wafer Cookies, Almond Roca, Butter Toffees, and Belgian Chocolate Petites

Price: \$ 29.00 - \$ 39.00

[Buy Now!](#)

It would never do to spoil sport. Such a heroic effort in humble self-sacrifice deserved to be richly rewarded.

It was drawing near six, the appointed hour, and expectation grew intense in the breasts of the three workers. At length voices were heard in the yard, and this was what penetrated within:

'Ain't this the place where old four-legs hangs out?'

Fancy little Lizzie's flush of indignation! But when she looked up into Uncle Bob's face and saw a smile of amusement on it, she grew happier, and she felt also that one glance at all the wealth of good things provided would at once make the graceless ones ashamed of their thoughtless impudence. 'But boys are so strange!' she thought.

Out of the cold they came, breathing white breath, but with roses on their cheeks and some on their noses, and when they caught sight of all the cake and all the cheese, and all the oranges and nuts, and felt the full blast of the delicious coffee, they just looked as the Queen of Sheba must have looked when she saw all Solomon's glory.

For a full minute they subsided into awe and wonder, underneath which,

however, I am bound to say, rapidly generated huge anticipatory delight, which at length found vent in a subdued, but most expressive, 'Oh my!'

'Come in, come in, all you two-legs,' cried Uncle Bob. 'Come in; old four-legs is very glad to see you.'

It was amusing to watch the lads' faces as this greeting fell on their ears. They looked as if unexpectedly caught in a place where they ought not to be, and didn't know how to get out. However, the expression soon passed into a half-shamed hope that all was right when Uncle Bob smiled on them and made them welcome to all there was; but for all that, I think some of them were a little sorry about the rudeness of their joke.

One after another shoved themselves into the various corners and places provided, and made a sort of circle, starting from Uncle Bob's sofa. But Jem, our old friend, had not yet arrived, and everybody was on the look-out for him. He was always such good fun, was Jem, that all were wishing to see him. Indeed, he had come to seem like the spirit of laughter. Some people chill and dull you, and some make you bright. Very excellent are the 'chillers,' no doubt; but for a Christmas night give me those that warm the heart.

When Jem came in he was much better 'got up,' as he would say, than when we last saw him. He had a collar on, and his hair looked brushed, with even an attempt at a parting. The ridiculous fellow stood making grand bows towards Lizzie, and flourishing his hat, in quite an attitude, 'Your servant, your humble servant, ladies and gemmem!' he said. Then, cap in hand, with his left arm akimbo on his hip, he added, 'All the complements O' the season, guv'nor, and many O' them to the young lady. We all wish you' (and here, in a stage whisper to the lads, he said, 'Be quiet whiles I say some poetry,' and then went on) -

*'We wish you a merry Christmas
And a happy New Year,
With every blessing you desire
And nowt to make you fear;'*

...and having said, in another stage aside, I composed it all myself,' he gracefully moved his hat to make an elegant finish and await applause.

There was a broad grin on the mouths and an expectant look in the eyes of the lads, which plainly said, 'There! J em's in fine form. Can Uncle Bob come up to that?' I t seemed impossible, and they were quite excited as to what would follow. All eyes turned in Uncle Bob's direction. Would he be indeed equal to the occasion? He himself felt it was a kind of crisis in which he must conquer or lose ground, and he nerved himself to conquer.

You are a Christmas poet, Jem, are you?

Well, little Lizzie and I thank you for your kind wish, which please allow me to return in kind,-

*To all in this our merry meeting
I return you happy greeting,
And may this our Christmas night*

To everyone prove glad and bright I'

Of course it was doggerel, but nothing captivates boys so much as the power to reel off a few lines like these. It fairly took them by storm, for Uncle Bob had an attractive voice, which made it sound more wonderful; and when he actually went on with another whole verse, as if verse-making were the merest trifling effort to him, and when he pointed to the laden tables, saying-

*'There's rich coffee you may take,
And bread and butter, buns and cake
And if you want a lump of cheese,
Say, "Mrs. Rogers, if you please"'-*

...the situation was conquered, and he was quite triumphant. The boys burst out into a cheer, and little Lizzie's face gleamed with delight. Was not Uncle Bob the most wonderful man in the world? She had not the slightest doubt of it.

As for Mrs. Rogers, coffee-pot in hand, which she flourished around as she spoke, she cried out,-

Hear, hear! Stop! Stop, while I say that never in all my born days did I hear such blessed po'try as this night. Hip! Hip! Hurrah! Oh, if only my poor Tom were here!

She was so excited and carried away by her feelings that she tried to wipe away her inevitable tear for Tom with the hot coffee-pot. However, when it burnt her, she came to herself, and in her confusion was going to sit down on nothing, in quite a natural way, only she found it out just in time, as if she had thought better of it, and thereupon became quite absorbed in pouring out, and, truth to say, for the moment looked a trifle foolish.

But what did it matter? Soon all were fully engaged in eating and drinking, in helping and talking, in joking and laughing, and enjoyment of the happiest kind was taking full possession of every heart.

Now, as we all know, Christmas is the time of wonders, when strange things happen, and stories come to their climax. Well, believe it or not, just when the fun was at its height, and Jem was chaffing one and another, and Uncle Bob was, as the poet says,-

'Eyeing the general good with boundless love,'

and just when Mrs. Rogers was gazing anxiously into the coffee-pot to see how long it would meet the still pressing demands made on it; just whilst she was muttering, 'They must be as dry as the Desert O' Sarah, and she's a dry 'un, they say,' and laughter and clatter of mugs and plates were uniting in one pleasant social din, and no one had any trouble save Mrs. Rogers-just then, I tell you truly, steps were heard in the yard, and then voices in converse, and then a knock was knocked at the door, and there fell a wondering silence of expectation in every ear. Something Christmassy was about to happen, something wonderful, surely for Mrs. Rogers, coffee-pot and all, was already at the door, before it could fully open, and when a head was put in, on that head she seized with joyful and tender ejaculations and it was drawn half through the door into her bosom, and she unwittingly the while was rubbing it behind with the coffee-pot, until its owner spoke, and then poor Mrs.

Rogers fell back, and stood and gazed as if she couldn't and wouldn't believe her own eyes.

'Nay, pardner,' said the new-comer, 'you're wrong somehow, though with the best intentions, dootless but that coffee-pot wor rayther hot! '

And there stood Juggling Joe, rubbing the back of his head with one hand, and wiping his face with the other, amazed at his reception.

But evidently also there was somebody else who wanted to come in, and dared not. It was this dark figure which now fascinated Mrs. Rogers, so that she took no further heed of Joe, but dashed out of doors, and was heard chasing somebody about the court, whom at last she succeeded in capturing, and with whom she finished the frustrated scene of affection.

Everybody felt the pathos, and some also felt a little of the fun of it, when the poor old mother, with radiant face, pushed in a sailor lad, and cried out behind him, 'There, Uncle Bob, he's come-bless 'im!'

'Hip! Hip! Hurrah!' cried all the boys, relishing the sensation immensely between their eating and drinking.

As for Sailor Tom, never was a more stupid fellow, as well he might be, thus unexpectedly plunged into a dazzling publicity, which he had in vain endeavored to avoid. He stood blushing and ashamed, feeling that everyone there knew his mother had kissed him in the yard, and he kept looking over his shoulders in the intervals of hitching his trousers, evidently full of fear lest she should take him unawares, and be at it again before them all. He wanted a corner bad into which to subside and be out of harm's way.

Uncle Bob came to the rescue. 'Come in, my lad,' he cried, 'and make one of us. You are as welcome as flowers in May. And so is Joe there. Do you know, lads, that once when old four-legs wanted a young two legs to take him up three flights of stairs, Joe lent me them? He was a friend in need, I can tell you.

Happily it doesn't take much to make lads forget themselves, and soon all was harmony and good comradeship in the little company.

The only anxious one was Mrs. Rogers, who had to work wonders with the coffee-pot. Once and again she replenished it with most determined looks. But it was not until all had vowed themselves quite satisfied that she uttered her thoughts.

'Uncle Bob,' she said solemnly, 'it wor a miracle. How I did it is unbeknown-quite unbeknown. '

'Mrs. Rogers,' replied Uncle Bob, with equal solemnity, 'it was love as did it, and that last can of hot water.

