

Just as they were finishing breakfast the phone rings. Old Cowboy just sits there... doesn't go to answer it. "You gonna get that?" Sarah asks....naw....lot of sales people calling lately.....it's probably nothing. That bothered Sarah, She'd never seen him do that.....After a while the ringing stops.

Sarah washes up the dishes and notices Old Cowboy a little antsy. He keeps going over to the door and looking out. "What's wrong?" Sarah asks. Old Cowboy is bothered. "O coming home I saw a family stranded on the highway" he says in half confession tone. "And you didn't stop?" Sarah says in surprise. "That's not like you". "O stop it." old Cowboy barks back. "Where is it written that's always my job?" "No wonder Dogs acting like he is" she quirks... "Look Sarah, I'm just giving someone else an opportunity to step up to the plate".... Total silenceDog raises his head and looks at her, then him, then her. "Don't look at me" Sarah says, "I'm not the one that just left them there"....

Like Old Cowboy needs a reason to feel worse. "Come on" as he grabs his hat off the coat rack. Sarah and Dog right behind him. Dog bails into the back barking in excitement. Cat seemingly unmoved by it all. They get in, start up the old truck and away they go, creating a dust storm behind them. Crow escorts them to the gate along with Horse at full speed. Sarah laughing and shaking her head as always at the navigational technique required to keep the old truck between the bar ditches. Knowing better than to say "We could have taken my truck" That would only seemingly insult the old cowboy and get you a sermon about just how good this old truck really was and how they don't make em like this anymore.

She only wondered shouldn't it have all the gears and brakes you don't pump and she'd like to not sit on a pillow to avoid the spring sticking from the seat. Other than that it was just fine. No its not! She thinks Just to herself though as she just looks over at Old Cowboy and smiles that smile that drives him crazy cause he knows what she's thinking and says so "I know what you're thinking" as he grinds through the gears, finds 4th and here we go.... The telephone rings unanswered back at the ranch house.

"Slow down" She says, as the snow is getting heavy and the old trucks traction is in question. "Your right" Old Cowboy admits and pulls the truck over. Reaches over and grabs a shovel from the back and starts to shovel

dirt and snow from the roadside into the back of the old truck. Dog ducking and dodging the wild slinging dirt.

And yes, these days we have traction control, stability control, anti-skid. Well, not out here. Out here you fill the back with dirt and add weight for that. We don't need no stinking button!.. No no, just dirt. Sarah reaches back and grabs Dog and puts him up front. Old Cowboy jumps back in and here we go again. Sarah just shakes her head. "That ought to do it" she smirks, "O yes that's much better" "If we do wreck and are killed they will have dirt to cover us with" she laughs. Old cowboy trying to be all coy and stoic but her laughter is contagious. She could always do this to him and the more he tried in vain not to, at her encouragement, "come on you can do it she says", the smile comes on and like a kid in church trying not to laugh it happens....He breaks out and they are busting out laughing going down the old county road.

After a while the cab quiet again, Sarah breaks into a rendition of Jingle Bells...He knows full well she will bug him till he joins in. And it's not like he doesn't sing in the truck any way. If only the boys at the coffee shop could see this. Who cared if he was miles off key, they were kids again and Dog a pup. And for the short ride all the cares and bad of the day disappeared. These are the moments that get us by and take us out of the grind. The coffee on the back porch, the rainstorm, a sunset, and yes singing in an old truck.... Moments.

The singing died down as they came upon the highway and saw that no one had stopped to help the stranded family. Old Cowboy feeling terrible; the man still under the hood trying in vain to find what was wrong. The wife huddled with the kids because without the car running there was no heat.

Old Cowboy gets out and introduces himself and asks the problem. One look under the hood and he knows. "Water pump" says Old Cowboy. Old Cowboy through necessity was quite the mechanic also. "Where you headed" Old Cowboy asks. "Midland" he replies in despairing tone. Old Cowboy is rubbing his chin and thinking.

The man's name was John and he and his family was headed there to be with her family for Christmas. Like a lot of folk the hard times from being in and out of work showed. Cowboy knew the drill. How many times had he been down to his last dollar in his pocket. "Well John, there's no one that's going to get to this

Christmas Eve".

Sarah is introducing herself to Celine, his wife, and Brent, ten and Alisa seven. "Well, there's only one thing to do bunch" Old Cowboy announces. "I got a ranch about 10 miles north, you will stay with me there's plenty of room and it beats being out here"...John hesitant to say anything. "Sir? We can't impose on you like that." "We'll pull your car in and as soon as we can get one well put her on and you'll be on your way." "Not a problem" Old Cowboy reassured them.

"Sarah, Can you handle a real truck"? Old Cowboy smirks... "I'll let you pull me" knowing John from Dallas probably wasn't versed in the art of towing like He and Sarah. And that would put Sarah and the wife and kids in the heated cab. Old Cowboy puts a chain on the bumpers and Sarah and Celine and the kids cram into old truck...."Here, you'll need this" she laughs as she hands Celine the pillow... So here we go Old Cowboy mumbling to himself "Why me"???..."What's that Sir?" John asks ..."O nothing, can you hear that?"....you can hear them singing from here!"....Cowboy laughs... And so they did....they sung as many Christmas songs as they knew. Sarah making Celine and the kids feel like they were headed to the North Pole....

And so it began....Christmas saving grace, for little by little, the old cowboys lonely, meaningless Christmas was slowly being transformed....In a twist of fate that soft part of the old cowboy's heart overtook the hard. It was just

beginning.


The Caravan arrives at the ranch and while Old Cowboy and John from Dallas put the car in the shed the rest of them hustle into the house. The heater in the old truck was just so good. Snow is accumulating and it's getting colder. Some more wood on the fire and some stoking and in no time a fire. Every one huddled around it.

Celine and the kids looking around, taking in the new surroundings; not exactly what big city was used to but there was an old western charm about the place and soon the kids relaxed and started playing on the staircase that went up to the loft. "Let me take your coat Celine" Sarah says....Sarah had such a way with people. Celine needed that right now what with the task of making ends meet on a good day. Taking money they didn't have trying to go to family to show the kids some kind of a Christmas. But in short time it was like they were best buds....sisters of sort as they sat by the fire and talked girl talk.

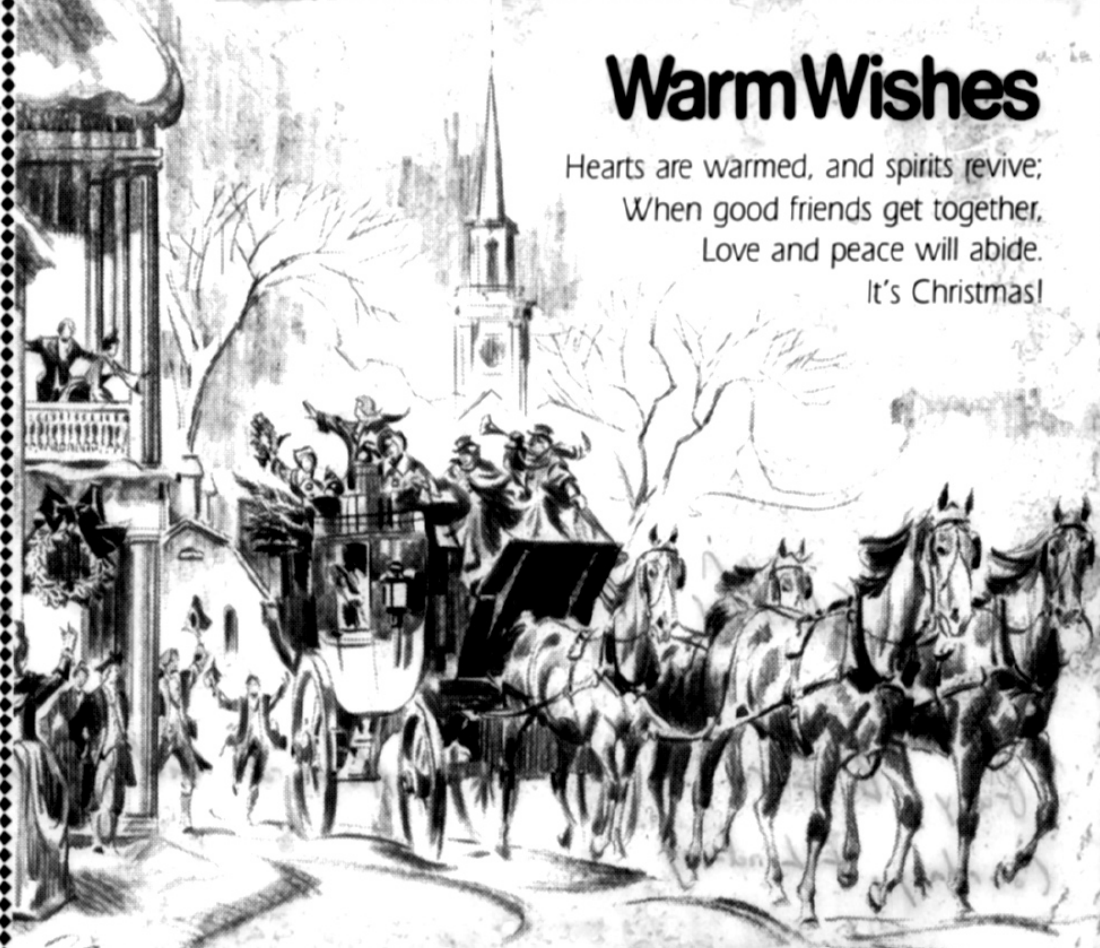
John of Dallas and Old Cowboy make their way up to the house. Knock the snow off and warm by the fire for a moment. Sarah pours them up a cup of coffee. Old Cowboy notices

that the youngest, the girl, is whispering to her mother. Old Cowboy is moved when he makes out that they are talking what about Santa? "How will he find us?" she asked... Old Cowboy looks at Sarah, each knowing what the other is thinking. Old Cowboy pulls his pocket watch from his jeans. Its 2:30. "ya'll make yourself at home". "What's mine is yours" and he shows them to their bedroom. "We're gonna let you get settled in while we tend to some things in town"

Old Cowboy and Sarah grab their coats and in sprinter speed rush out to the truck...her truck ...he says not a word. Taking a moment to sail a warning shot snowball across the bow of Old Cowboys hat. "Darn, Just missed" she laughs. Sarah is smiling that smirk possum smile. Cowboy says nothing. "Well hey" Sarah offers ..."you don't need a pillow to sit on"....she laughs. She fires up the diesel dually and heads out again escorted by Horse and Crow. Turning toward town she asks "you thinking what I'm thinking"? "Of course, This piece of junk metal go any faster"? Old Cowboy remarks... "I'd think you'd be feeling like you're in a jet airplane compared to what you been in" Sarah laughs..."This is fun". She says....Old Cowboy not



Silent Night
Holy Night
May the wonder of
His love inspire you
anew. Rejoice.
Joan Davis



Warm Wishes
Hearts are warmed, and spirits revive;
When good friends get together,
Love and peace will abide.
It's Christmas!

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