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Christmas Comes Home to Canaan

By Donald Davenport

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Lately, I've been thinking
of a lot of things...

To truly understand
the soul of canaan, Texas,
you'd first have to start
with the story
of two young boys...

Rodney?

Best be going.

Mwah!

That boy and his books.

Dj!

I'm comin'!

Boys, who were once
sworn enemies,
one white, the other black,
and bandit,
the puppy they found,
whose life they'd saved,
and, by that act,
became friends.

And there was Daniel Burton,
who, despite struggling
to raise his family
on his own...

It's beautiful, papa.

Rodney.

...took the black boy in
when there was
no one else to do it,
an act of courage
in a town divided...

...and, then,
the accident,
that left his youngest boy,
bobber, crippled...

And, finally,
it's the story of a promise
one boy...

Cheers.

...now a writer,
made to the other,
a promise to return to canaan,

and, with him,
he brought a gift,
offered by a stranger,
a gift with the power
to change so much,
in ways
few could have ever imagined.
You sure you packed
enough clothes?
I've packed most
everything I've got.
What about socks?
Here you go.
This enough for you?
Besides, it's a big city.
If I need anything,
I can just buy it new,
right, Rodney?
Anything you want.
And just what are you
proposing to use for money,
your good looks?
I'll pack some
of these for you.
Don't know for sure
how long we're going to be gone.
You might have to handle
the harvest yourself this year.
Well, Rodney'll pitch in.
Between the two of us,
we'll manage.
Anything else needs doing,
you're in charge,
and, don't forget,
there's a little bit of cash
hid in the corner of the shed,
just for emergencies.
We'll get along fine.
You just take care
of bobber.
Daddy!
Dj!
You need to hurry.
You'll miss your flight!

We wouldn't be the burtons
unless we was fixin'
to miss something.
All right, buddy,
kiss your sister goodbye.
Bye.
And be sure
and thank Rodney.
If it weren't for him,
we wouldn't be goin'.
Thanks, Rodney.
Just make sure you do
what those doctors say, okay?
I will.
Hey!
Just so's you all know,
I'm not driving you
all the way to San Jose.
All right, let's go.
You ready,
bobber?
California,
ready or not,
here they come,
y'all got any gum?
What do we need
gum for?
Keep your ears from poppin'
on the plane.
We can stop
at shoup's.
Let's do it.
We got time.
I'll be right back, boys.
All right, well,
hurry it up.
Hello?
Ah, Mr. Burton!
Can I help you find something?
I need some chewing gum.
Juicy fruit, if you've got it.
Juicy fruit.
Spearmint. Chiclets.
Complete assortment.

How's that brave,
young Mr. bobber?
Hope he's well.
Oh, fair to middling.
We're actually
on our way to California
to see about gettin' him
fixed up right now.
California!
Oh, if I had any sense,
I'd close up
and move to California myself,
the way things are goin'.
Really?
Business been slow?
Slower than slow.
It's dead.
You're my first customer
all day.
Well, I wouldn't worry
too much about it.
You know, money's
always tight around here
come the end of the month.
No, it's more than that.
The whole town's changing.
Old folks are moving away.
New folks
are shopping elsewheres.
Yeah.
You know what,
if the town's changing,
maybe you oughta change
right along with it.
And just what would you
suggest changing exactly?
Oh, I don't know,
maybe try something new.
I heard about some boys
putting in a big company farm
South of town.
That'll be needing
some farm supplies,
save 'em the trip to clarksboro.

Hmm.

Farm supplies...

And just exactly

what am I supposed to know
about farm supplies?

Hi.

Can I help you?

Yes, ma'am.

I'm Daniel Burton,
this is my son.

We have an appointment
to see Dr. hanson.

Just one moment.

Yes?

Dr. hanson,
the burtons are here.

Thank you.

Thank you, ma'am.

You're welcome.

Please, come in.

Have a seat.

I'm Daniel Burton.

This is my son, bobber.

Bob.

Bob.

I'm Marcus hanson.

Well, I'm glad
to finally meet you.

As you know,

I learned of your case
after reading

Rodney Freeman's book,
and approached him
with my offer to help.

As I told Mr. Freeman,
the medical school here
has a very advanced
neuro-orthopedics group,
and some good advances
have been made
in the whole field
of spinal injury
rehabilitation,
so when I heard about

your story,
well, I thought you'd make
a good candidate.
As for the procedure itself,
we'll use special pins
and screws
to realign and stabilize
the damaged vertebrae.
Then, there'll be
an intensive period
of physical therapy,
now, you'll be doing
most of your work
right in here...
Oh, good, there's Dr. adair.
She's head of
our of post-op rehab.
Dr. briony adair,
I want you to meet
Daniel Burton.
Pleasure to meet you,
Mr. Burton.
Thanks.
It's nice
to meet you, too.
This is my son,
bobber.
It's Bob.
I've been looking forward
to meeting you.
You've got a lot
of admirers around here.
I've been giving them
a tour of the facilities.
Do you have time
to show Bob
the therapy rooms?
Sure.
Come on.
The doctor,
what's her name?
Dr. adair. Briony adair.
Briny?
That's right.

Right. Hmm...
Level with me, doc.
I mean, you really think
this is gonna work?
Well, we've had
some success in the past
with similar cases,
so there's a good chance
he'll see some improvement.
So, what's
the best-case scenario?
Well, the best-case
scenario
is that once we relieve
the pressure on the nerves,
he'll regain
full use of his legs.
Well, what's the worst?
Hello?
Sissy?
Daddy?
Everything okay?
Yeah.
Um, I just got done
talking to the doctor, and, uh,
things may not be as rosy
as we had hoped for.
The doctor says the surgery
may not help all that much.
As a matter of fact,
it could even make things worse.
How's bobber takin' it?
Well, I haven't
told him yet.
To be honest,
I was kind of wondering
whether I should or not.
He oughta know.
Well, if he knows,
then he might not
go through with it.
Then that's his choice.
Yeah, but
this might be

the only chance he has,
and if bobber gets wind of this,
then he loses that chance,
and it's likely to be
the only one he has left.
Oh, here he is now.
You wanna say hi to sissy?
No.
Hey, listen, he says
he'll speak at you later.
Okay.
Well, take care.
All right.
Love you.
Just catching them up
on the latest.
So I heard.
Be real nice
if you told me, though, first.
I don't want the operation,
not if it could
make things worse.
But, Bob,
I also told your father
that there's a good chance
that we would
see improvement.
But you don't know for sure.
No, no, we don't,
not for sure.
Well, I wish you'd have
told me that
before everyone got
their minds made up,
and then I'd have told you
I wasn't interested.
I'm sorry, son.
It's just, I was just afraid...
Afraid you couldn't find a way
to fix what happened?
How many times
I gotta tell you,
the accident wasn't your fault,
so it's not your job

to keep on trying to fix it.
I have an idea.
What if Bob and I
were to take a little walk.
No point.
I'm not
changing my mind.
Just think of it
as a sadie Hawkins dance.
Ladies' choice.
Can't say no.
Against the rules.
Here.
So...
Cards on the table.
Why the change of heart?
Like I said,
nobody told me
it could make it worse.
That's a good reason.
No wonder you're upset.
Look, I get around
good enough.
I worked hard
to get around this good.
Why would I want to risk
what I've got?
I can understand that.
No, you can't.
No one can.
Not you, not my dad, nobody.
It's here, too.
What happened?
I was about your age.
There was an accident,
a fire.
The doctors
weren't even sure
they could save my arm.
So many skin grafts
and surgeries.
Sometimes, I wished
they'd just stop trying.
I about had,

but they never doubted
they could save my arm.
Turns out,
they were right.
So, here's the deal...
If you decide
to have the surgery,
I will work
with you myself-,
just you and me.
But there's one thing
I won't do.
I won't let you quit.
Not until we have tried
everything we can.
Bob, you've been
given a gift,
just like I was.
If I were you,
I'd think real hard
before I decided
I wasn't interested.
How you feeling, bud?
A little drowsy?
Yeah...
Pop?
Yeah, bud?
If something goes wrong...
That's not
going to happen.
We've come too far for that.
But, if
something does,
I want you to know something.
What's that?
You're the best dad a fella
could ever hope to have.
You never gave up on me,
on any of us,
but especially me.
You best get
some sleep now, bud.
We got a mighty
big day tomorrow.

Yup, big day.
Mighty big day...
Any word?
This is not gonna happen
overnight...
We've got to be realistic,
but we can try,
we can strive,
and next January,
we're gonna strive.
It's time for new leadership.
It's time
for our country to move,
it's time for
a fair tax policy,
it's time for
lower interest rates...
Hello? Dad?
Well, all I can say is,
the boy's got
more screws in him
than a John deere tractor...
Not to mention
all these rods and brackets,
and titanium stuff
I never even heard of.
He's okay?
Oh, he's fine.
Came through it
like a trooper.
When will we know
if it worked?
Well, nobody's
really saying for sure,
not till he starts rehab anyway.
They should have
a pretty good idea by then.
Dr. adair.
Briony, please.
Briny...
I'd wanted to
check on him earlier,
but I got behind.
How's he doing?

He's out like a light,
but I guess that's good, right?
And you?
How are you holding up?
About how you'd expect.
Listen,
I haven't eaten all day,
and I was going to grab
a quick bite.
You're welcome to join me.
Sure.
A fella's gotta eat, I reckon.
You always been
a city girl?
What make you think
I'm a city girl?
Just figured.
You ever heard of
crystal Springs, Mississippi?
Population 4,837.
Well, at least that's
what it was when I left.
Well, how in the heck
did you end up
all the way out here?
Let's just say
a straight line isn't always
the shortest distance
between two points.
There's
some truth to that,
especially if you've
seen me plow.
There's one.
Mind if I ask you
a question?
Be my guest.
How'd you get
that nickname?
What nickname?
"Briny."
I mean, I know it's got to be
short for something,
but darned

if I can figure out what.
The only briny I know
has to do with
making pickles,
and for the life of me,
I can't figure out
how somebody as pretty as you
could get herself nicknamed
after something like that.
It's briony.
Briony is a flower
that grows in Scotland.
It's where my father's from.
Hmm, it's nice.
I like it.
Bri-on-y.
I'm sorry.
I have to go.
I'll take care of that
for you.
Thank you.
It's my pleasure.
It's the least I can do.
'Night.
'Night.
I found 'em,
and the new popular science
just came in, too.
Well, there's still
plenty of room in here.
Anything else?
Oh, yeah, there's a bunch
of get-well cards
on the sideboard.
Can you
grab those for me?
Yeah.
Hey, sissy,
where's that address?
It's over there
on the hutch.
Hey, sissy...
What's this?
It's nothing.

No, it's an application
for the university
of Texas.

Does pop know
about this?

No.

Just came.

Well, when did you
plan on telling him?

It's just an application.

I'm not sure I'll even
send it in.

I just want to wait till things
settle down a little bit
before I mention it.

Well, I wouldn't

wait too long,

'cause if you are
thinkin' about leaving,
he deserves to know.

Good morning.

Morning.

How you feeling?

Like I've been in a fight
with a freight train.

Probably one of those big
Norfolk southern
used to roll by my house,
engines all painted up
with stripes,
like a big ol' catfish.

Okay,

I'm going to
start you out easy,
and you let me know
if I'm working you too hard,
and then, I'll work you harder.

- You ready?

- Yup.

Let's get cracking.

Show 'em

what you're made of, son.

Good.

Good.

Let me show you
how to do this.
Hold, just hold
under here.
And two more
of those.
I can't.
Yes, you can.
Just focus, concentrate.
Come on, bud,
you can do it.
One more.
Come on...
Good.
I think that's enough
for today.
Why don't you go have
a long soak in the whirlpool?
You deserve it.
You ready?
Good job, buddy.
I'm proud of you.
You know, I can't
thank you enough
for all
you've been doin'.
It's my pleasure.
I've been trying
to think of some way
to thank you for all your help.
No, that's not necessary,
really.
I was kind of thinking that
maybe I could at least
just take you out
to a nice dinner?
There's this little place
that the guy
at the hotel recommends,
called the fireglow?
That is nice.
You been there?
No.
Well, maybe

we could go together?
Are you asking me on a date?
I-I guess
you could call it that,
I mean, if it ain't
against the rules.
I mean, y'all got that
doctor-patient
privilege rigmarole thing
going on, so...
I don't wanna get you
in no trouble or nothing.
I'm sure we could find a way
to bend the rules.
After all,
you are the boy's father.
I am his daddy, yeah.
Hello?
Hey, sissy.
Dj there?
He's right here.
Dj!
Dad wants to talk to you.
No, actually,
I need the both of you.
Both of us?
Hey, daddy, what's up?
Well, it seems
I got myself a date.
Daddy,
that's wonderful!
Who is she?
She's bobber's rehab doctor.
See, her and bobber
hit it off so good,
I just wanted to show
my appreciation.
Okay, so
where you taking her?
I'm taking her out to dinner.
The folks at the hotel
recommended this place.
Sounds romantic.
Now, see, that's why

i need your help.
I ain't been out on a date
in 25 years, kids.
I don't know what to say.
What do I do?
I... you gotta help me.
Well, let's start
with conversation.
Always talk about her,
never yourself,
and even when
she asks about you,
make it seem like
you're still
talking about her.
Got it.
Always talk about her.
And, for heaven's sake,
whatever you do,
don't use "reckon"
every other word.
It makes you
sound like a hick.
Well, dang-flabbit, son!
Maybe I am just a hick.
Well, let her
catch on to that gradual.
You don't have to
spring it on her
the first thing.
Anything else?
Isn't that enough?
Daddy, just relax.
Relax and have
a good time.
You'll do fine.
Okay.
Goodnight.
Relax, have a good time...
So, you think
he's serious?
I don't know.
I'll tell you
one thing for sure...

Giving my dad advice
about women?
Something kind of
unsettlin' about that.
Hmm...

Hey, you want a soda?

Oh, sure,
if you're buying.

Why should today be
any different?

Morning, Mr. shoup.

How you doing, dj?

Good.

What's with
the seed catalogs?

You ain't thinking
about farming, are you?

No, but I am
thinking about farmers.

Fact is, it was your dad
that got me started on it.

I might be carrying
a whole new line here.

That might work.

You think so?

Well, farmers got
to buy their stuff somewhere,
no reason it shouldn't be
from you.

I like the way
you think, son.

Mm-hmm.

Welcome to the fireglow.

May I help you?

Yes, sir, uh, Burton,
party of two?

I called in earlier.

Ah.

Excuse me, sir,
but, uh, may I have
a word with you?

Sure.

I'm sorry, sir,
but we require our patrons

to wear a tie.
Oh, I got on a tie.
I mean a tie-tie,
the normal kind.
I'm afraid I don't own
the normal kind.
I see.
Well, I'm sure we can find
something that will work.
That should suffice.
You think
it's bright enough?
Well, let's just
call it colorful.
That'll be \$5, please.
Five bucks?
You're gonna need to
tie it for me.
I see...
There.
Voila.
Voila...
What's that for?
Well, I guess
I needed a tie.
You had a tie.
Ah, we're finally
dressed for dinner.
I thought I was dressed
when I got here, but...
Are we coming?
No, we're not coming.
We're going.
I know a place where people
still have manners.
There's a great little
restaurant on the wharf.
Uh, excuse me...
It's not fancy,
but it's got...
I'll need the tie.
Sure.
That should get
your fire glowin'.

Whee, howdy!
Thank you.
Wow!
Now, that
is what I call service.
I waited my share
of tables back home.
Cheers.
Oh, cheers.
So when'd you decide
to be a doctor?
It's what I've always
wanted to be,
for as far back
as I can remember.
But even knowing early on,
I mean, it still
must have been long.
You have to make
a lot of sacrifices,
but I'm sure you know
all about that,
considering you raised a family
all by yourself.
Not fair.
You know way more about me
than I know about you.
What do you want to know?
You a single lady?
Now.
Oh. Are you seeing anyone?
My job keeps me pretty busy.
That would be a no?
That would be a no.
Ah. Hmm.
Ever married?
Mm-hmm.
Children?
My folks sure enough
thought we were.
You know that's not
what I'm talking about.
You got kids?
No.

Did you want
some malt vinegar with that?
I don't know,
you tell me.
I'm pretty sure
that you do.
It's not my prettiest feature.
It doesn't matter.
You're still beautiful.
You want to tell me about it?
You mind me asking?
My mama and I
were canning preserves.
The boiler that she used
to sterilize the jars exploded.
It knocked
a whole box of paraffin
into the fire
and all over me.
By the time we put it out,
I had third-degree burns,
all the way up to my shoulder.
Eight surgeries later,
half a dozen skin grafts,
a lot of tears
and hard work,
and here I am.
So, that's what did it.
Did what?
Changed bobber's mind.
You told him about you,
didn't you?
I may have mentioned it.
I want people to know
that it's okay to be afraid.
Everybody's afraid of something.
Probably even you.
I'm not going to be able to
thank you enough
for all that you've done.
You'll never know
how grateful I am.
I just remember
reading your story,

thinking,
"who is this guy?
"This Daniel Burton?
"So strong.
"Never backs down
"from what he thinks
is right,
yet so kind."
Now you're
embarrassin' me.
I thought,
this guy can't be real.
He's gotta be just
some character in a book.
But here you are.
I hope I'm not
a disappointment.
No.
You're not a disappointment.
Would it be all right
if I kissed you?
I'd never forgive you
if you didn't.
Hope that wasn't
against the rules.
It wasn't.
Well, I wouldn't much care
if it was.
We've stabilized
the injury.
That's
the important part,
and, judging from
the test results,
there seems to be
some modest improvement
in motor function.
So what you're sayin' is
it didn't work.
I'm saying there's improvement,
and that's what we want.
But the boy still can't walk.
Pa, it's okay.
It is some better,

it really is.
It just seems to me
like he's been through
an awful lot
for only "some better,"
that's all I'm sayin'.
You can't let yourself
get discouraged.
With ongoing
physical therapy,
there's a chance
we could still see
continued improvement.
Just how am I
supposed to manage that?
We'll find someone
near canaan.
I can even work with them
to set up a program
specifically for Bob.
I'm happy to make
some phone calls.
Or you could just
follow us back
and find someone in person.
Whoa, now,
hold up here, son.
We can't just
ask Dr. adair
to drop everything
she's got going on here
and fly off to canaan.
I mean, especially
with the holidays
just around the corner.
Maybe she oughta
spend Christmas with us.
I'm sure she's got plans.
Do you?
Bobber...
Actually,
I don't.
Well, then it's settled.
She's spending Christmas

with us
and she can
meet Sarah
and dj.
Oh, and Rodney'll
be there, too.
I don't want to impose.
Impose? My dad
doesn't even know
the meaning
of the word "impose."
Do you, pop?
Of course, we'd love
for you to come join us,
but you just
need to know
what you're
getting yourself into.
It ain't nothing ritzy.
Just a good ol'
family Christmas.
It sounds wonderful.
Okay, well,
come on, pop,
we got to get to a phone
and tell the others.
You go ahead, son,
I'll catch up with you.
Looks to me like
you just got railroaded.
Are you sure about this?
Are you kiddin' me?
I've been wondering
how on earth
I was ever gonna manage
saying goodbye to you.
It's gonna be
a whole lot easier now,
knowin' there's a hello
just a few weeks away.
I can't imagine
anything better
than spending
Christmas in canaan,

with you.
Bandit, either push, pull,
or get outta the way,
preferably the latter.
Here, I'll put him out.
Come on, bandit.
Come on, boy.
Is that the nicest tree
you could find?
What's wrong with it?
It's green.
It's got branches
in all directions.
And there ain't
no squirrel nests.
Seems a little
thin on that side.
Rodney, what if we
turn it the other way?
Maybe it's got
a better side.
Did you clean all the junk
out of the guest room?
What, all those
seed catalogs?
I thought she was
a country girl.
Make her feel
right at home.
This country girl
might just be
your father's new beau,
and I'll be switched
if I'm going to
let her think
a bunch of hayseeds
live here.
Now, go on.
Huh?
I'd say this looks
pretty good.
It looks really good.
Good enough
for country folk.

Now we just need
the angel.
I'll get it.
You think she'd mind?
Me inviting a friend here
for Christmas?
I imagine she'd be happy.
She'd never have wanted you
to stay alone forever.
And what better time
than Christmas?
She always did love
Christmas.
And she always
loved this angel.
Then let's put her
up on her angel's perch,
so she can
watch over us,
just like always.
Come on.
The boys are waiting.
Okay, who wants the honors?
Dj?
No, my hands
got pitch on 'em.
You'll have to.
Bobber?
Can't reach that far.
Why don't you
do it this year?
I suppose I could,
I guess.
All right.
There.
Perfect.
Her plane lands
in a couple hours.
Best get movin'.
Hey, you sure
you don't want to borrow
some of my cologne?
It's musk.
I'll do just fine

without it,
thank you very much.
Ooh, somebody's
a little prickly.
I wonder what
that's about.
I wouldn't have
the faintest idea.
You kids are going to end up
embarrassin' me yet.
Well, we'll certainly
give it our best shot.
Drive safe.
Will do.
Poor girl.
I hope she knows
what she's in for.
They're here!
They just drove up.
And would you
quit fussing?
You look sufficiently
glamorous.
Why is it that
I feel like a mother
meeting my son's prom date
for the first time?
Well, I'm not quite sure,
but if you're thinking
about having
the "birds and the bees"
talk with him,
I think that duck's
pretty well flown.
What's taking them
so long?
Well, he's getting
her things.
Women come with
a lot of accessories.
They do.
Would you look at
the three of you?
You're all lined up

like it's a firing squad.
Here we are, guys and gal.
Please welcome Dr. adair.
Hello.
I'm glad you made it.
Me too.
This is my older son, dj.
Ma'am...
Uh, doctor?
It's briony.
Briony... ma'am.
And this is
Rodney Freeman,
canaan's
most famous author.
Canaan's only author,
best I can tell.
I loved your book.
It makes coming here
almost like coming home.
Thank you.
And this is Sarah...
Sissy, I call her,
which I'm sure
she hates.
Sarah.
I'm so glad to finally meet you.
I hope you brought
an appetite.
Dinner's about ready.
I bet you'd love
some help.
Just point me
towards the kitchen
and turn me loose...
No!
I mean...
You're a guest.
I can manage.
Well, let me help you
get settled in.
Come on,
grab your things here.
Just follow me.

Through here.

Okay.

I'll help you get
settled in here...

No, ma'am...

And what's

your new book about?

Short stories mostly,
about growin' up.

Things my grandmother
taught me.

Oh, you would have
loved her.

That woman was fearless.

Oh, she had to be.

You know, it wasn't
easy back then.

Back then?

So when did it get easy
all of a sudden?

I must have
missed that part.

Okay, now

it's Sarah's turn.

I want to hear
all about you.

What about me?

Anything.

Hopes, dreams.

Any special fellas

lurking out there

that we should know about?

Not much time

for that

when you're busy

riding herd

on this bunch.

Then, how about your plans?

Not much to tell.

Ever thought about college?

As bright as your dad

says you are.

Yeah, sissy,

what about college?

Sarah go to college?
What for?
For your information,
I recently applied
at the university of Texas
at Austin.
Daniel, why didn't
you tell me?
That's wonderful.
That's the first
I've heard of it myself.
I was wondering
when one of us
was finally going to
make a run for it,
especially now that
there's somebody here
to keep track of you.
Hey.
You got 'em all tucked in?
Mm-hmm.
Three in beds,
and Rodney on the couch.
Listen, daddy.
What I said,
about going to college?
I just filled out
the application, that's all.
I probably won't even
get accepted,
and, even if I do,
I don't have to go.
I've been meaning
to tell you.
It's just,
when she asked,
I blurted it out.
Well, she has
a gift for that,
making folks say
what they're feelin'.
It's obvious
the boys like her.
Yeah. And you?

I just met her.
I don't know her hardly at all.
She certainly feels at home.
But you like her, right?
I like that you like her.
Oh, I haven't had
one of these since last year!
Hey, look,
I got one, too.
Just the color I wanted.
Dj, care to hand me
that package
there under the tree?
Thank you.
Now, see, we've got a little
family tradition around here.
The kids know
all about this.
It started
one particular Christmas...
My daddy started it...
It had been
a pretty rough year.
We weren't expecting much,
but come Christmas morning,
here were all these gifts,
wrapped and under the tree,
just like always.
Well, my mama, when she seen it,
boy, she lit into my dad,
said, "where'd you get
the money for all that?"
And daddy just smiled
and looked at her, and said,
"don't you know nothin', woman?
"Even if you're flat broke,
you can still have
some Christmas."
See, to him,
"some Christmas" meant
giving all the gifts
you really wanted to give,
when only your heart
could afford it.

We did it that first year
Rodney came to live with us,
you remember that?
I sure do.
You gave me
my first typewriter.
That's right.
So, this year,
with you being
practically family and all,
I thought you deserved
some Christmas, too.
It's a little house.
It's a country house.
You're always
talking about
how you're
a country girl,
so I just thought,
maybe someday,
you might like a little
country place of your own.
Thank you.
I love it, I really do.
It's so sweet.
Of course, until then,
you're plenty welcome
to stay right here with us.
I brought along
a little Christmas of my own.
First, the guys.
A sweater.
Not just
any sweater.
That's cashmere.
Nothing wrong with
sheep's wool.
Thanks, briony.
And, Sarah,
this is for you.
They're Laurel burch.
I think she makes
the most beautiful things,
don't you?

Well, go ahead,
sissy.
Put 'em on.
I'll do it later.
Nah, do it now.
I wanna see
what you look like in 'em.
Look how pretty
you look.
You could be on the runway.
Yeah, along with
all the other
crop dusters.
Now, come on,
be nice, dj.
Sorry.
Thank you,
Dr. adair.
You shouldn't've.
All us girls
need some pretty things.
Now, Daniel,
your turn.
Aw...
Briony, you didn't
need to do all this.
You better see if you like it
before you start thanking me.
It's a "real" tie.
Whoo...
Italian silk no less.
I bet you didn't think
I'd notice.
I love it.
Thank you.
I guess
no more gettin' thrown out
of ritzy places.
Come in handy
around here, that's for sure.
And...
I brought something
for the house.
A kind of a thank-you

to all of you
for inviting me
to Christmas.
Here.
You didn't
have to do that.
One of you guys
want to open it?
Go on.
What is it?
A friend
brought it back
from Italy.
I wanted you all to have it.
Isn't it beautiful?
Uh... yes, ma'am.
Sure is.
I thought it would look
so pretty on your tree.
We already have an angel.
Oh, but not like this.
This is a botticelli.
Well, a copy, anyway.
All the way from Florence.
You know, it would
look real nice
on the mantle.
- I-I vote we put it there.
- Mm-hmm, mm-hmm...
It's a tree-topper.
You can't put a tree-topper
on the mantle.
Here, let me do it.
There.
A little touch
of renaissance.
Didn't you hear him?
He said
we already have an angel.
And where do you
get the nerve
to just waltz in here
and move things around
without askin'?

You had no right...
Sarah...
I'm so sorry.
Why don't you just leave?
It's been hard
on all of 'em.
I'm not blind
to that, but...
It's think it's been
toughest on her.
I never meant to do anything
that would upset her.
I know.
This just all happened
pretty quick, you know.
Christmas was
when we lost her mama.
I think this just
brought it all back.
For you, too.
Thing is,
maybe she knows
you're just not ready.
It's just her way
of showing it,
of getting your attention.
It's odd.
14 years I've lived with this,
the sorrow of losing Betsy,
and I thought that...
I know
what you thought.
Sometimes, we think
we've worked through a thing,
just by having lived with it
so long,
but oftentimes,
it's something
we set aside,
and never really faced
at all,
just got on with life.
Daniel, you've done
a remarkable thing

for your kids.
You've given them
a stable home,
and I know that wasn't easy.
You took on Rodney
when he needed a family,
and maybe you let that focus
distract you
from your own grief.
I don't know.
Maybe.
And now they're grown.
I think it's your turn.
Your turn to face that grief,
to work on you,
in your own time,
in your own way,
just you.
I'm sorry.
You sure you don't
want me to drive you?
My daddy always taught me
a fella should
leave the dance
with the same girl
he brought.
Dj offered.
It's fine.
You know,
all I'm asking for
is just a little more time.
We all have things
we can't change.
I only wish
you could have looked
a little deeper into your heart
before you thought
to invite me in,
that's all.
Goodbye, Daniel.
...we got the fertilizers,
and the pesticides
around the corner,
up against the wall...

What's 01' man shoup
up to now?
Come on,
let's go find out.
It's too much trouble.
You go.
You sure?
Yeah.
...fertilizer out back
and pesticides
around the corner,
right next to the ones
against the wall...
Hey, Mr. shoup!
Rodney!
Rodney Freeman.
You're just in time.
Just in time for what?
For a tour.
You're looking at the newest
authorized distributor
of the agro harvest line
of professional farm products.
It seems like an awful
lot of inventory.
Well, it is,
but you know what they say,
if you can't give it to 'em
when they need it,
they'll find it someplace else.
Now, for the first time,
the farmers can buy
all their supplies
right here in canaan.
Come on, let me show you.
All right.
We got stacks and stacks
of stuff out back,
you'll be surprised
when you see
how much stuff we got...
Hey, hey, bobber,
they're wreckin'
the house down, come on.

This don't concern you.
Bobber, no!
You get back here
right now!
I should've listened to pop
and stayed home that night.
You know,
back in California,
I told him "some better"
was good enough.
But I only told him that
because he felt so bad,
and everyone worked so hard.
But it's not, Rodney.
"Some better" is not
good enough by half.
Let's get out of here.
Not too far over...
All right, when you...
When you sit here,
put your foot in the straps.
See?
And when you push down,
it raises the sandbag.
And you want more weight,
you can just put
some sand in.
Well, you want to try it out?
Those doctors already tried
everything in the book.
I don't know
if a bunch of pulleys
and a bag of sand's
going to make a difference.
Now, last year,
this was all alfalfa,
but I've been speaking to
Ralph Clark down at the co-op,
and he says
we might oughta consider
putting in soybeans,
maybe up to half.
Now, I told him
I'd ask you.

We could do that.
But mind you,
down at Davis & Dunn,
they're puttin' in
100 acres or more of sorghum.
Davis & Dunn?
You know,
that new company farm
South of town?
Maybe they know
something we don't.
Well, we ain't never
planted no sorghum before.
Just cause we haven't,
doesn't mean we shouldn't.
Whatever you think.
Oh, no, daddy,
I ain't puttin'
my head in that noose
without some company.
Well, whatever we plant,
it's either gonna freeze, bake,
get eaten by bugs,
or be worth nothing
by the time we bring it in,
so I say plant whatever
you wanna plant.
It ain't gonna
matter much anyway.
Well, now, ain't you just
Mr. sunshine these days?
Hey, where you goin'?
Town's that-a-way.
Well why drive
all the way to clarksboro
when we can order from
old man shoup?
Well, Rodney was right.
Looks like openin' day
at the county fair.
All he's missin'
is the cotton candy.
And the people.
Yeah, that's what

I was afraid of.
What?
Well, farmers
not buying their stuff here.
We may have come a ways
in this town,
but we ain't come that far.
Wait here.
I'm not useless, you know!
Whatever you say, bobbles.
Here, bandit,
come on, boy!
There you go.
Hey, look at that.
Keep it up, bobber.
How long's
he been out there?
Almost an hour.
I think it's about time
we all had a little talk.
I never seen him
like this before.
Ever since Christmas.
When briony left,
it's like the joy just
flew right out of his life.
Why doesn't he just call her
and tell her he's sorry?
Because he's too proud
to let her
see him like this.
So, why'd he let her leave
if he loved her so much?
Maybe he decided
he just wasn't ready
for someone else in his life.
It's been 14 years.
How ready
does he got to be?
If only she hadn't
busted that angel.
It wasn't the angel.
It wasn't?
It wasn't the angel, or mama, or

any of that other stuff.
He did it because of me.
Hey, bobber!
Change the channel
to happy days, will ya?
You know that's only
for emergencies,
right?
What do you think
this is?
You need to go where?
California,
to talk to Dr. adair.
She's the only one who can help.
Does Mr. Burton
know about this?
He'd never let me.
Then how can you just
up and disappear?
I'll tell him I'm staying
over at a girlfriend's.
Jeri-Lynn Drake's baby's sick,
and I'm helpin' out.
I've got enough
for my ticket.
I've just never
flown anywhere before.
Don't even know where to start.
Can you help me?
Are you sure about this?
Well...
I guess I do know
a little something
about getting out of dodge...
Or whatever this place is.
...that's a really
good improvement.
I'd like to see another
20 degrees of rotation.
I think that's enough
for today.
You worked
really hard.
I'm really proud of you.

Sarah?

This is a surprise.

Sorry to barge in

on you like this,

but I need to ask you a favor.

You want me to do what?

We want you

to come back to canaan.

He only let you go

because he thought

having you in his life

would hurt me.

He didn't know what else to do.

Does he know you're here?

Then this was

your idea, not his?

The family's

worried about him.

It's like all the joy

has just gone out of him.

He never smiles,

never laughs.

If anyone can help him,

it's you.

He still cares

about you.

I know he does.

That doesn't

give me the right

to show up at his door

uninvited.

I'm inviting you.

We all are.

But Daniel isn't,

and he's the only one who can.

He's the only one

who can open his heart

the way he wants to.

The way he needs to.

If I show up in canaan

before he's ready,

it won't solve anything.

Chances are,

it'll likely

make things worse.

I'm sorry.

So you'll let me know
how he's doing?

I will.

Sarah, I know this
hasn't been easy,
especially for you.
You've held this family
together so long,
and then, suddenly,
your dad shows up
with another woman
in his life,
but I want you to know
one thing.

I know how much you mean
to this family,
and no matter
what happened,
I would never have done
anything to change that.
Thank you, Dr. Adair.

Briony.

Briony.

Thank you.

Thanks, Rodney.

All right, take care.

Where the heck
you been, sissy?

You know where.

I told you.

I talked to Jeri-Lynn.

I went to California,
to talk to Briony.

And what exactly
did you expect to get
out of doing that?

Give you two a second chance.

It was the happiest
you've been
since mama died.

I'd never seen you like that,
and then it was like

this cloud came over all of us.
I know why you did it.
You did it to protect me.
Well, we'll get by somehow,
we always do.
Sometimes, we get by
because we have to,
but sometimes, "gettin' by"
is just "settling."
For once in your life,
you deserve more
than just settling.
She probably don't even
care anymore?
She's probably
moved on.
You don't know that.
She say anything
about seeing anybody?
Didn't say, didn't ask.
Figured it was best
to leave that up to you.
Good night.
Dr. adair.
Briony?
It's Daniel.
Hi.
I've been thinking about you.
I understand
you had a visitor.
I did.
It was quite
a surprise.
She's worried about you.
Says you've been a little down?
That doesn't sound like you.
Ah, it's just a rough patch
I'm goin' through.
I'll be fine.
Daniel, there's one thing
i learned early on.
Sometimes, the best way
to lighten your own burden
is to take on someone else's.

Find someone
who's worse off than you,
someone who needs you.
Plant some other fields.
Water someone else's crops
for a while.
Sounds like good advice.
I'm gonna keep that in mind.
You're a good man, Daniel.
A lot of people care about you,
probably more than you realize.
Thank you.
That means a lot
coming from you.
It's true.
I know it first-hand.
Well...
Um...
I just wanted
to check in on you.
I'm glad you did.
It's nice to hear your voice.
Hey, if you're ever
in the neighborhood,
you be sure and stop in
and say hello, all right?
You too.
Okay.
Well, goodnight.
'Night.
Water time...
What you got for us
there, bobber?
Well, now,
looks like you boys
had yourself quite a year.
Well, you can thank
dj for that.
He was the one wanted
to plant the sorghum.
Well then, you're lucky
someone at your place
knows something about farming.
Whoa-ho-ho...

Whoo-hoo!
Okay, come on, pop,
let's celebrate.
Chili cheese fries,
and I'm buying.
Who's that?
That's delmer p. Davis,
owner of
Davis & Dunn farms.
The way he's goin',
before long,
he'll own
half the county.
Hey, dad,
you coming?
I don't know how much longer
shoup can hold on.
Agro harvest
wants their money.
He told me
he can barely afford
to keep his lights on.
And if he does
start selling,
his mark-up
is next to nothing.
I can't believe
people would rather drive
a half hour away
and pay a third again more.
It just doesn't make sense.
Well, it doesn't have to.
That's the economics
of prejudice.
You tellin' me
after all this town's
been through,
there are still
folks here
that'd rather see
a hardworking fellow like shoup
fail and fall flat
than see him succeed?
What rock you been

hiding under, pa?
You think just 'cause
it don't matter to us,
it shouldn't
matter to them?
Well, I got news for you,
not everyone's like you.
It'd be nice if they were,
but the simple fact
is that they're not,
not by a long shot.
To see a man fail
just 'cause he's black,
it's just not right.
Can I help you,
Mr. Burton?
Yes, sir.
I was wondering
if you was hiring.
Hiring for what?
Store clerk?
What's so funny?
Tell me,
you see anyone here
needin' a clerk?
Well, you will.
Sometimes, all you need to do
to bring folks in
is to show 'em a familiar face.
You mean
a familiar white face?
I just mean a familiar
farmer's face.
Christmas time's
coming up real soon.
You're bound to be
needing some more help.
Well, I can't pay you nothin',
not at first.
That's okay.
I'll just take it out in trade.
But why?
Why you want to work here?
I got my reasons.

Let's just leave it at that.
Okay, you can start tomorrow.
I could start tomorrow,
but I'm ready to start today.
Today?
Yeah. Today.
All right.
What do we do first?
What we do first
is we sweep the porch.
Yes, sir, boss.
Lord have mercy.
Let me help.
We got some more
back there, right?
Yeah...
I tried to find the reason
to what it might have meant
I was counting
every footstep
and how time was spent
as I sit here lost
and all alone
I realize that all roads
lead you home
home...
Home is where your heart is
the place inside
you never really leave
boy, you keep on searching
in hopes of what you'll find
every road
that you ever roam
leads you home
leads you home...
I'm goin' home...
I'm goin' home...
Can I help you, son?
One customer all day,
and that was the ding-dong.
Can't make a livin'
just sellin' ding-dongs.
Just got to be patient.
You know, I saw that fella

from Davis & Dunn
drive by yesterday.
He slowed down
and took a good look.
He's been doing that
for weeks.
He ain't stopped once.
Yeah?
Just got to give him time,
that's all.
Time's the one thing
in short supply.
Everything else I got.
Tomorrow will be a better day.
Listen, Daniel,
you've wasted enough
of your time here already.
Let's quit foolin' ourselves.
Just take our losses
and move on.
Whatever I owe you,
I'll find a way to pay it.
It might take me a while,
but I'm good for it.
I'm not worried about it.
You know something,
it just felt good
to do something
for somebody else.
Tomorrow's gonna be
a better day.
Mr. Davis?
That's right.
My name's
Daniel Burton.
I reckon we need to talk
about our town.
Now, don't get me wrong.
I've got nothing against
buying from
this particular gentleman.
It's just that we require
a certain quality
in what we buy.

Well, you consider
agro-harvest product
good quality, don't you?
I suppose.
Good as any.
Well then, you'd be getting
what you're used to.
Look, you see, we buy in bulk.
That's good,
'cause we sell in bulk.
As a matter of fact,
any price you can get
we can match,
probably beat,
and by the time
you figure in the cost
of haulin' it
all the way out to here,
it's bound to be cheaper
for you.
That's another thing.
See, the fella we buy from
down in clarksboro's
been at it 20 years or more.
He's got a track record.
This shoup fella?
Shoup's family's
owned the store
since the early '30s.
He's second generation.
All right, I'll level with you.
It just doesn't seem right
buying from him.
It's nothing personal.
It's just not my kind of place.
Well, I guess I misjudged you.
Sorry for wastin' your time.
Now, hold on a second here.
I got a right to buy
where I feel comfortable.
That's my choice.
There's no law
against that, is there?
There's no law against it,

not an official one anyway.
I'm gonna level
with you, Mr. Davis.
I'm just a strugglin' farmer.
I got an old truck,
an old tractor.
Some years,
we do okay,
others, not so good,
but I can tell you one thing,
I'd be a whole lot worse off
if it wasn't for my neighbors,
if it wasn't
for this town.
You see,
if we get a chance
to help a neighbor,
and we just choose to stand by
and watch him fail
when we could have done
something about it,
then this town dies a little.
I'm just asking you
to help a neighbor,
that's all,
just one neighbor.
Can I help you?
Who do I need to talk to
about placing a seed order?
I could help you with that.
Right on over here.
We'll get you all fixed up.
Emmanuel shoup.
Delmer Davis.
So there you are.
Whatcha doin'?
Just out here thinkin'.
About?
Shoup.
He asked me if I wanted
to go in with him,
be his partner.
Do you wanna?
I might.

Let dj run things
around here.
He's been doing it
mostly by himself anyway.
I think that's
a fine idea,
for you and for dj.
I've been
thinking, too.
About?
I've been accepted
by u.T.
Starting next year,
even offered me
a scholarship.
What with working,
and Rodney's offer
to loan me a little money
for tuition,
I think I can
pay my way,
if it's okay with you.
That's great.
I think you should go.
You know, your mama
always said
you were gonna go
to college.
She'd be so happy.
Though it's gonna be a little
different around here
without you.
Maybe you could invite
briony out for a visit.
Nah, I'm sure
she's gotten
on with her life by now.
I'd expect that.
You don't know that,
not for sure.
Hi, this briony...
Hey, briony, it's...
I'm sorry I can't come
to the phone right now,

but if you leave me
a message,
I'll be happy
to return your call.
Briony.
Hi, it's just...
Hey, briony.
It's Daniel.
Daniel Burton.
I just wanted to
give you a call and...
Let you know that you were right
about you told me.
The sooner you start
trying to help somebody else,
the more you realize
that your own problems
don't really add up
to all that much.
I don't know how I ever
lost sight of that.
Anyway, I also wanted to say
if you're ever
anywhere around canaan,
I'd love it if you'd stop by,
or if you just
want to call sometime
and say hello,
I'd like that, too.
I think about you,
I think about you a lot lately.
I hope you're doing good.
Well, anyhow,
hope to hear from you,
and by the way...
Merry Christmas.
You know, whoever invented
them dad-gum answering machines
oughta be shot.
Merry Christmas to you.
Merry Christmas, son.
Thank you, folks.
Merry Christmas.
Merry Christmas, now.

Merry Christmas, son.
Merry Christmas.
Merry Christmas
to you.
Hurry up and lock the door
before somebody else
comes in and buys something.
Listen, Daniel,
I owe you a lot.
No more than I owe you.
Well,
whoever deserves it more,
thank you.
You headed home?
Yeah, I got a whole
house full of in-laws.
You?
I'm headed out
to the Freeman place.
Rodney says it's his turn
to have Christmas
out there this year,
and I got a feelin'
him and Sarah have probably got
something special cooking.
Sounds real nice.
Yeah, I gotta enjoy
having everybody together,
you know, with Sarah
leaving for college next year.
Once they leave the roost,
it's hard to get 'em back.
Then you'd best
make the most of it.
You got that right.
Merry Christmas, partner.
Merry Christmas, my friend.
Merry Christmas.
He's here.
Hey, everybody,
sorry I'm late.
Have a seat.
I thought
you'd never get here.

Me too.
Old shoup was so full
of good tidings,
I didn't think
he was gonna lock up
and let me come home.
How can I help you?
Finish setting the table?
I'm on it.
Sissy,
I think you miscounted.
There's an extra plate here.
No, it's right.
There's
someone else
joining us.
Oh, really?
Somebody I know?
I'd say there's a good chance.
Briony?
What are you doing here?
You invited me,
don't you remember?
You said if I was ever
in the neighborhood,
I should stop and say hello.
So, here I am.
Hello.
Merry Christmas.
So, how long
you plan on stayin'?
I'm not sure.
There's a job opening
in clarksboro.
They're looking for
a good orthopedist.
I've been thinking
I might apply for it.
Are you sure
about this?
About what?
Moving to canaan.
It's a long way
from the big city.

I've always been
a country girl,
you know that.
Besides,
it'll give me a chance
to work a little bit more
with bobber.
Well, he'll sure
appreciate that.
It's not
a permanent position.
Only a year.
Then what?
I don't know.
We'll just have to
wait and see.
I reckon
a person can learn a lot
in a year, Daniel Burton,
don't you?
Yeah.
I reckon he can.
Hey, you two,
dinner's ready!
Well, let's go.
Oh, my, it's lovely.
Dj, bobber, we're ready.
Here, buddy, let me
get these for you.
No, it's okay.
I'm fine.
You sure?
What's the matter,
you never seen anyone
walk before?
Atta boy, bobber.
I'm proud
of you, buddy.
Let us bow our heads
and thank the lord,
like my grandmother,
miss eunice, would've.
We thank you, lord Jesus,
for us to share this meal

one to another,
and we ask you to bless
those folk who struggle,
even now,
as we enjoy this plenty,
and as we partake
of this food,
help us grow,
not only in strength,
but in love,
one to the other,
in a desire to be
more like thee.

Amen.

Amen.

Well said, Rodney.

Yeah.

As we gathered
around the table,
who could have imagined
how a gift for bobber
would become, for Daniel,
another gift entirely.

But, then,
in the words of briony,
"what could be better
than spending a Christmas...

"Any Christmas...

In a place called canaan?"