

# All I Want For Christmas: Scenes in the Life of a Single Girl

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published Christmas of 1997 in *Mom Guess What* newspaper

**"The world is a theatre of love."**

Kashmiri proverb



## OPENING NIGHT

On the night before Thanksgiving, I meet an angel. At Faces, of all places.

As clichéd as it sounds, it starts with our eyes meeting across the crowded dance floor, our bodies soon following suit. We begin to dance, moving in perfect rhythm, closer and closer, holding each other's eyes, small-talking a bit, for no more than a few minutes, but for long enough for me to become completely intoxicated. I am floating, spinning, dizzy, feeling a connection with this woman that is as inexplicable as it is sudden—and passionate. She feels it too, and tells me we have to stop dancing.

No mere mortal is she. Dark hair, incredibly warm eyes, perfect body, and a smile that completely lights up the room—a feast for the eyes. The scent of her perfume which still lingers today—a feast for the nose. A voice so familiar that it seems to resonate with the very beating of my heart—a feast for the ears.

The difference between a beautiful woman and an angel is in her presence, in her radiance and brilliance and luminosity. The aura of a halo around her head is also a dead give-away. This woman is clearly an angel.

In the midst of debating whom to thank for this wonderful gift that I've spent a lifetime longing for—Santa or God—she tells me that she has a partner. They've been together for 2 1/2 years.

I feel like one of those children in Whoville when the Grinch stole their Christmas.



## SCENE 1

That weekend, Sam patiently listens to every detail of the story of my angel at Faces. "I think you'll see her again," he finally offers reassuringly.

"Oh yeah, I've seen her plenty of times since then. I see her driving down the road in every white car I pass, and I see her when I close my eyes to sleep at night and I see her on the pages of the books I'm reading and I see her in the middle of teaching my classes. She's everywhere—she's become an apparitional angel almost haunting me."

"You saw her car? You should have gotten her license plate number and I could have looked her up for you." Sam works for an investigative agency.

"Samuel!" I reply indignantly. "You know I'm not the stalking type."

"Well honey, 'tis the season of stockings," he says, snickering, pleased with his sense of humor. "And I'm planning on stuffing a cute single one into mine for the holidays."

Puns aren't very funny to the broken-hearted. I tell him I'll save it for my first laugh of the new year.



## SCENE 2

I string up the outdoor lights, proud to be the first on my block to get lit.

I still don't understand what happened that night. People who don't believe in romance and magic might call it animal magnetism, pure physical lust. Others with a more mythological bent might say that we were hit with Cupid's poisonous arrow, making us fall uncontrollably in love with the next person we saw—equally random, though slightly more romantic than the animal theory.

Or, there's the theory I was reading, ironically enough, just hours before I saw her at the bar. Fred Alan Wolf is a physicist who explains deep attraction as two spinning quantum particles who find their true partner and feel "a dizziness, a loss of spatial sense, a psychic awareness, a sense of connection with the other physical thing."

My favorite poet, Rumi, knew that over 500 years ago when he wrote, "All the particles of the world are in love and looking for lovers." Perhaps I just fell in love with the wrong particle, a proton who already had her neutron.



### SCENE 3

I call Alexandria the day after Thanksgiving. "How are you?" I ask, after detecting a sadness in her voice. "You sound depressed."

"I guess so, yea. The holidays always make me think of Hitler."

This comment takes me by surprise. I know Alex has always been a drama queen, but it seems odd for even her to have to juxtapose Hitler and the holidays to get her fix of melancholia for the day—until I remember that Hitler is the name we gave to her ex-girlfriend, a particularly militant dictator type of lover.

"I mean, don't you get depressed around the holidays? Don't you miss having a lover?" she asks wistfully.

"Not really," I tell her. But then again, I'm the type of person for whom not only is the glass always half-full, but all I wanted was half a glass anyway. I'll make the best out of anything.



### SCENE 4

This will be my third holiday season in a row without a lover to share it with. If I stay away from the Kenny G Christmas cd and only play "Ella Wishes You a Swinging Christmas" (and skip over "What are You Doing New Year's Eve?") then I'm usually okay. After all, being single at Christmas has its advantages. No having to split up the time between two families. No having to go to her terribly boring Christmas office party. No having to buy her the perfectly expensive yet meaningful gift. There's no arguing over different styles of Christmas trees, or the bigger decision—to flock or not to flock.

Then again, there are disadvantages. No one to put her finger on just the right spot on the ribbon, to sneak a kiss on your nose as you tie the knot on your mother-in-law's present. No one to drive you home from your office party if you've had too much eggnog, to tell you if you made an idiot of yourself in front of your co-workers. No receiving the perfectly expensive yet meaningful gift. No slow dancing in the living room to romantic holiday songs by the light of the Christmas tree.

Sometimes the glass really is half-empty, but if I squint my eyes hard enough, I can make it seem half-full.



## SCENE 5

Sarah is a single friend of mine who shared with me a few days ago that she wrestles with why even bothering to put up a tree or string lights if she doesn't have a lover to share them with. Not me. I love the holiday season. Brilliant white lights, blood red poinsettias, pine green trees, bright Hanukkah blue and gold—a feast for the eyes. Holiday songs, the Salvation Army bells, the bustle of shoppers—a feast for the ears. Cinnamon, pine, potpourri, a roasting turkey—a feast for the nose.

I place the Christmas angel on top of the tree. Another disadvantage of being single is that no one can tell you if it's on straight—you have to keep climbing up and down the ladder, checking it yourself.

I still can't stop thinking of her. Angels, when they finally appear, are not supposed to have lover angels. Then again, I remind myself for cheap consolation, there were three of Charlie's Angels. A perpetual triangle, with me as Kate Jackson, the unchosen one with the boring hair. Why, I wonder, would I be shown the perfect vision of the perfect woman, the cookie cutter from which my type was made, yet have her snatched away from me after only five blissful minutes?

Ella bops in the background with her swinging version of "Santa Claus is Coming to Town." She warns me, "He's making a list, and checking it twice. Gonna find out who's naughty and nice." Stepping off the ladder, I think perhaps I've hit on the real reason for my torment. Maybe I've been naughty this year, and this was my lump of coal, a month early, as a warning to get my act together.

I check the balance on my karma sheet, but find it still heavy on the nice side. Nevertheless, I swear to "be good for goodness sake" from here to eternity.



## SCENE 6

At my friend Jack's house after dinner that night, we share a glass of brandy and fall to lamenting our singular state.

"We should start a club. A singles club. We could call it SOS. Season of Singles. Single Over the Season," he suggests sardonically.

"Or, for us, it will be more like Single over the Seasons," I reply, emphasis on the final "s."

"I don't know," he says as he shakes his head. "I'm just so good at pining away after some man I can't have or don't have. I think it may be my gift. I'm not sure I can give it up."

"I hear you, brother. I'm a piner too. A piner from way back. But hell, at least now we're seasonally correct." (Sometimes the broken-hearted do make their own puns, but they don't promise to laugh at them).

"You're right. 'Tis the season to be lonely," he says as he kisses me goodnight.

I drive away from his house, still smiling at the possibility of our SOS club, so lost in my thoughts that somehow I miss my turn. It is late and dark, and I can't find my way back to the freeway. I keep going down the same streets, finding the same dead-ends, finding myself more and more frustrated, until finally, I pull over and begin to cry. "Please, I don't want to be lost. Don't let me be lost anymore." I feel slightly ridiculous as tears stream down my face, and I know what this is actually about—not being lost, but being *not found*.

Sometimes the glass really is half-empty, but if I cry hard enough, I can make it half-full again.



## FINAL SCENE

Somewhere out there, my angel is lying in the arms of another. Somewhere out there I am lying under my tree with my dogs, counting my blessings, minus one. Somewhere out there, another woman I've never met is wishing for me. Somewhere out there Sam is stuffing his stocking, Alex is missing Hitler, Sarah is wondering whether to bother trimming a tree, and Jack is pining away while drinking the dregs of the bottle of brandy. Somewhere out there, animals are drawn together like magnets, Cupid is blindly shooting arrows, and particles are falling in love. Somewhere out there, you're reading this story, maybe finding a little piece of yourself in it.

If you're in a relationship, promise me this. Skip the curtain call and go home to your lover, holding him or her so close to you until you can feel wings. What you are holding is a miracle, but only if you recognize it.

If you're single, stay seated.



## CURTAIN CALL

One of my favorite holiday songs when I was little was "All I Want for Christmas is My Two Front Teeth," except I faulted the girl who sang it with being

incredibly idiotic. With my youthful logic, I reasoned that the opportunity to ask for anything you want only comes once a year; I couldn't understand why she'd squander that opportunity on something so stupid as two front teeth which would inevitably come in anyway if she were just patient enough.

And for you, for us, I offer this—maybe that's how it is with love too. Falling in love again is inevitable; if we're just patient enough, our angels are sure to come in time. The real opportunity is to ask for hearts open enough and wide enough to embrace them when they arrive.

When the curtain falls, that's all I want for Christmas.