

GOD
WINK
CHRISTMAS
STORIES



Discover the Most Wondrous Gifts of the Season

Squire Rushnell
and Louise DuArt

ILLUSTRATIONS BY GAIL FOERSTER

Includes previously published stories from
Godwink series books and *The 40 Day Prayer Challenge*

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INTRODUCTION

Imagine that you have just opened the door to this book. And you are awaiting wondrous gifts that will enrich your life!

With the joy you once felt as a child, arising with wide-eyed delight on Christmas morning, every Godwink story on the following pages is a beautifully wrapped gift, just for you.

Think of it. Out of seven billion people on the planet, a Godwink is a direct, person-to-person message of hope and encouragement.

We believe that as the following true-life stories unfold they will trigger memories of your own Godwinks, extraordinary things that have happened to you; things you perhaps wondered about and maybe even dismissed as too unbelievable to believe.

Now you can believe them. This book proves that Godwinks happen to everyone. They are universal—crossing

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every border, every religion—because, as the ancient scriptures tell us,¹ a tiny bit of faith the size of a mustard seed is all you need to begin developing your vision to see your Godwinks. And once you see them, the more you’ll see them, all around you, every day.

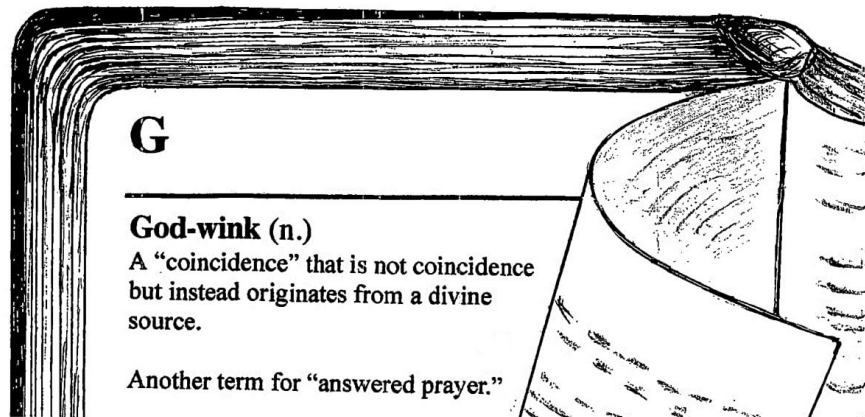
As you are drawn into the lives of the people who lived the thirty amazing stories in this book, you’ll imagine you’re alongside them as their Godwinks are revealed, as if you were in the middle of a minimovie with a surprise ending.

You’ll sense you’re with Sandy, a beleaguered pre-Christmas mother, rushing through a supermarket, as she realizes the joy of an incredible gift of kindness. You’ll be in a children’s hospital at Christmas with the actress Roma Downey as she opens her gift of purpose—her job for God. You’ll take a romantic journey with Brooke, who’s uncertain that she’ll ever find Prince Charming, and you’ll be next to her as she discovers the gift of reassurance that’s awaiting her, like a scene from *It’s a Wonderful Life*.

Looking on expectantly and lovingly is the Giver of every good gift; your Creator, who personally wrapped your presents and put them under the tree. He’s saying, “Go ahead . . . open them! They may change your life forever!”

—*Squire and Louise*

The new word, now appearing in dictionaries:



Note: Most of the stories in this book are brand-new. A few are "classics," previously published, now rewritten and updated. The latter are marked with this symbol:



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Sandy: Godwinks and Giftwinks

Like so many women on Christmas Eve, Sandy Locke had a lot to get done. She moves like a Road Runner cartoon, in a figurative cloud of dust, zooming from store to store—*beep beep*—checking and rechecking her lists—*beep beep*—watching the clock like a coach in the final seconds of a game.

Sandy and Rick Locke's daughter had invited them for Christmas Eve, with a request for Sandy to bring one of her special dishes: her delicious gluten-free Strawberry Jell-O Pretzel Salad. Two of the family members were gluten intolerant.

Rapidly, Sandy and Rick pushed their cart through the supermarket, grabbing things they needed—and too many more they didn't—trying to get to the checkout as fast as possible.

Darn. The store didn't carry the *one* item Sandy absolutely had to have for her special salad: gluten-free pretzels.

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She looked at Rick. “Why don’t I drop you at home? You put away the groceries, and I’ll run over to Albertson’s to see if they have ’em.”

Rick nodded.

“Tell you what,” she continued as an afterthought, “while I’m checking out, why don’t you bring the car up. I’ll meet you out front.”

Rick again nodded and disappeared.

Sandy lunged her cart forward, then immediately was slowed. Blocking the aisle was an older couple. Sandy looked to see if she could squeeze by. No. Not possible. They were moving very deliberately, both holding on to the cart to steady themselves.



Other customers began to display annoyance, rolling their eyes, heaving sighs. But as Sandy looked at them, something caught a piece of her heart, a tenderness that was evident between the two of them.

When the opportunity arose, she circled into another aisle, found an available checkout, and soon saw Rick waiting in their car out front.

A short while later, they pulled into their driveway. As Rick gathered up the groceries, Sandy slid into the driver's seat and said, "I'll try not to be too long."

At Albertson's, Sandy didn't bother with a cart or basket but headed directly to the gluten-free area. *Thank goodness, there they are!* she thought as she grabbed what she needed.

As she headed for the shortest checkout line, she saw a few other things and, on impulse, piled them onto her now overloaded arms.

The line wasn't moving; then she saw why.

Two places ahead in the line was the older couple she had seen from the other store. They were methodically counting out their money to pay the bill. Sandy watched as the lady took out what appeared to be a gift stamp book, looking at the cashier with anticipation.

The customer standing between Sandy and the older couple was now making smacking sounds and groans.

Sandy looked above the register. A sign described an Albertson's holiday promotion. For every ten-dollar purchase you would receive a single stamp toward gift items, silverware, etc.

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The cashier handed the older woman her stamps, and, as her husband watched, she began to paste them into her book.

The cashier, sensing the growing anxiety of the next customer, asked the older couple if they would mind stepping to the side to finish their task.

Sandy's eyes followed as the sweet couple shuffled off a short distance and stopped to glue their stamps into the book. She saw simultaneous disappointment descend upon their faces. Their already slumped shoulders seemed to sag further. They must have been saving up for something they needed and didn't have enough stamps.

The older man put his arm on his wife's shoulders, comforting her.

Sandy's arms were getting weary with all the items she was carrying. And now the impatient person ahead of her was challenging the price of something. A courtesy clerk was called to go check a price.

Everyone waited.

Just as the courtesy clerk returned, Sandy strained to see where the older couple was. She saw the dejected pair shuffling behind their cart, exiting the store.

There was an unmistakable sense of dearness between the man and woman. He helped her, and she helped him.

Feeling helpless, she whispered a prayer, just "Please Lord . . . bless them."

It dawned on her that in a single moment, with a sweet snapshot, she had been lifted from all of the anxiety—the

pressure to get everything done, the hassles in the check-out line—and that God had provided her with a peace that surpassed all understanding.

“Next.”

It was the cashier, pulling her attention back to the matters at hand.

Sandy was surprised that her total came to a little over forty dollars. It occurred to her that if she had purchased only what she had come in for, it would have been around five.

Now the cashier was handing her change and four stamps.

She looked at them. She knew what she had to do: find that older couple!

Now she had a new anxiety. Could she find those dear people in that big parking lot? Several minutes had already passed since they’d left the store.

Running was no longer an option for Sandy’s knees, but she rushed as quickly as she could. She scanned the handicapped parking areas.

There they were!

The wife was just getting into the driver’s seat. Her husband was already in the passenger seat.

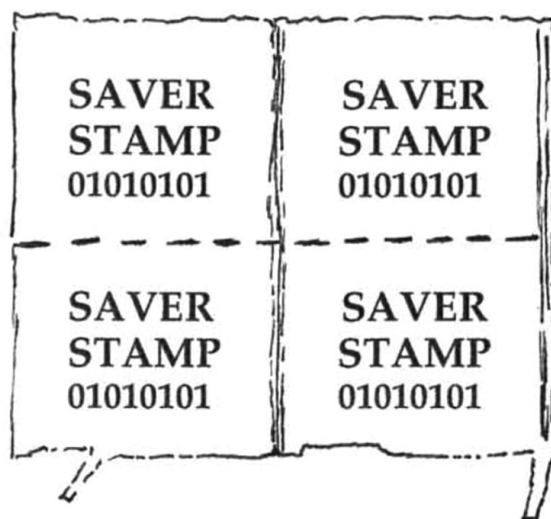
Not wanting to frighten her, Sandy walked briskly, speaking loudly, saying, “Excuse me. I noticed you’re collecting stamps. Would you like mine?”

She held out the four stamps.

The lady’s mouth opened slightly. Her eyes filled with tears. And she reached for her stamp collection book.

“Oh. Oh, my goodness. We’ve been saving stamps for a Christmas gift for our daughter. Silverware.” The lady held up the book to show Sandy the empty spaces for stamps. “You’re not going to believe this. We just needed four more stamps!” She smiled at Sandy with childlike wonder. “Thank you so very much,” she said with twinkling eyes.

Sandy returned the smile. “Merry Christmas,” she said with a lump in her throat.



The lane to exit Albertson’s parking lot routed traffic past the front of the store. Sandy had to bring her car to a stop. The older couple was now shuffling past the front of her car, returning to redeem their stamps and get their daughter’s gift.

Tears came to Sandy’s eyes. God’s fingerprints were all over every detail of that day, leaving her with one of her favorite God memories.

“Thank you, God,” said Sandy, realizing she’d just been given the stamp of approval . . . to be a Godwink Link—the unexpected deliverer of a Christmas Godwink to someone else!

REFLECTIONS

You, like Sandy, have probably found yourself barreling toward a destination when all of a sudden God prompts you to make a U-turn. You find yourself at a crossroads where you need to make a choice.

You ask yourself: Should I stop in my tracks, turn around, and tend to the needs of someone else? Or should I continue on with my intended mission?

Sandy was up against the clock, feeling there wasn’t enough time in the day to complete everything on her to-do list. The fact is, it doesn’t matter if you’re rich or poor, famous or unknown, God has given each of us 1,440 minutes in a day. The question is, what are you going to do with your gift of time?

In Sandy’s case, when opportunity knocked, she made the choice to slow down and allow God to work through her. To her it seemed like such a small gesture, but she soon found out that the smallest package often contains the most precious gift. Such as the gift of kindness.

*Each of you should use whatever gift you have received
to serve others, as faithful stewards
of God’s grace in its various forms.*

—1 PETER 4:10 (NIV)