

The
**Special
Gift**



an never enjoyed Christmas, and frankly he never enjoyed any holidays or joyful gatherings.

Christmas — or rather, winter — was especially hard for Han because the long winter nights and short hours of daylight made him deeply sad inside. He still went to work and spent time with family for the most part, though there were days when he would hide away in his office and refuse to engage with anyone. His family longed to see Han joyful but got used to seeing him go through highs and very deep lows with his emotions. As Han got older, he became more sad, internally lonely and very cynical about life. His wife would always try to remind him of the many good things in their life and the beautiful family he had but that truth never stuck in his mind for long.





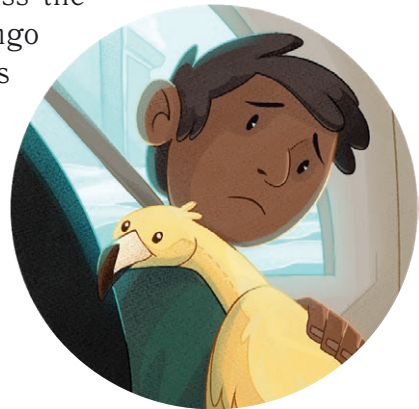
One particular Christmas, Han's daughter came with her son, Sam, to spend the Christmas holidays with them. Han was excited to see his daughter, and especially his grandson. On Christmas Eve, as they opened gifts, Sam received a bright yellow flamingo; that though a strange gift, it looked quite cute. Sam loved the flamingo so much that he slept with it every night and kept it by his side throughout the day.





As much as Han was happy to be with his family, he still felt very sad and lonely inside. Feeling especially frustrated that he couldn't be happy, Han would retreat to his office to wallow in the guilt of his sadness.

As the days went by Han noticed that he started enjoying watching Sam as he played with the odd, simple little yellow flamingo. What was even more interesting was that he particularly enjoyed looking at the flamingo, which he noticed brought him an indescribable peace and simple joy. When the time came for his daughter and Sam to leave as the holidays had ended, Han noticed that he would miss the odd little yellow flamingo more than them. His sadness grew heavy as he waved them goodbye and off he went to be alone in his office once more.



One month later, Han's daughter and Sam stopped by, early in the morning. Sam, with his yellow flamingo close by, was very excited and announced, "I'm here to see Grandpa."

"Grandpa is still in bed sweetheart, he isn't feeling too well or happy today," said his grandmother.

Without delay, Sam ran to his grandpa's room, climbed on his bed and placed the yellow flamingo right in front of him.



As Han opened his eyes, he couldn't believe the flamingo was right before his eyes. Sam exclaimed, "Here Grandpa, the flamingo is here again!"

Han replied, "My goodness, is this for me?"

"Yes Grandpa! You're always so sad and never satisfied but when you look at my flamingo everything seems so sweet in your eyes."



Han had tears in his eyes as he looked at his grandson and then looked at the flamingo.

Sam said, “I know you’re looking for peace, Grandpa, and to not be so sad all the time and since we can’t bring you that joy, I thought maybe this flamingo would...”



At this moment Han could no longer hold back his tears: “Are you sure you want to give me your favourite Christmas toy my dear?”

“Yes Grandpa, to see you happy, I’d give up much more...”

Like the yellow flamingo, the birth of Jesus is a gift. It’s the gift of joy, peace and hope that never ends and gives us everlasting security. Though Jesus was born in a simple and unassuming way, he was born to be the greatest thing we all long to have: joy, peace and hope.



He gives us:

Joy, when things around us seem hard and difficult.

Peace, when we struggle with internal pain and sadness.

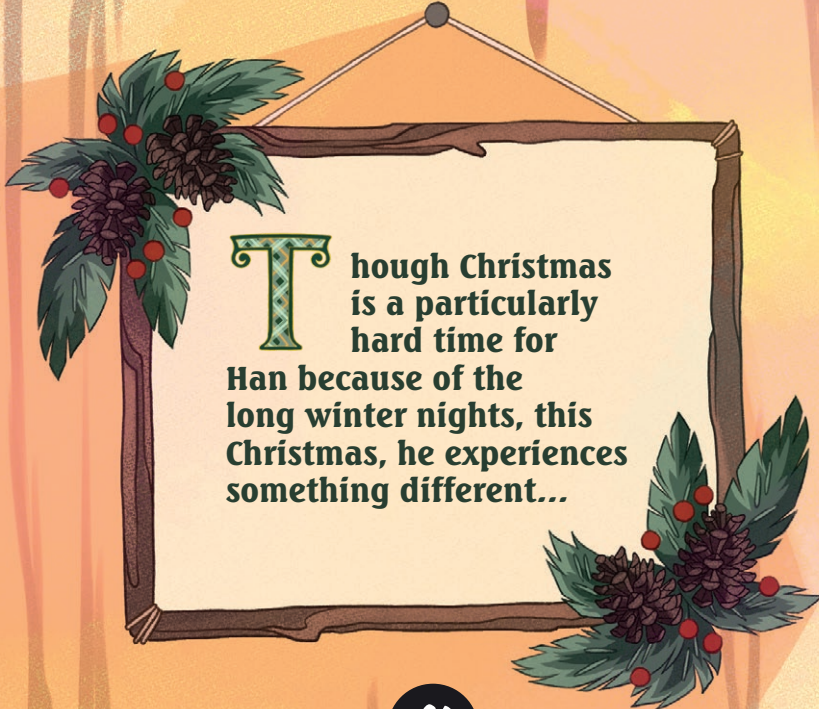
Hope, that one day he will make right all the injustices of the world.



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Though Christmas is a particularly hard time for Han because of the long winter nights, this Christmas, he experiences something different...

