

Wise Men Still Seek Him

A story about the real true meaning of Christmas

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Christmas was coming, and Billy Boxx couldn't have been happier. He loved Christmas, the Christmas season, and everything about it. Christmas trees, wreaths, lights, egg nogg, ornaments, presents, and even Santa Claus. He loved it all. In fact, everyone that knew Billy would tell you that Billy Boxx was Christmas' #1 fan.

And just about everyone knew William Conrad Boxx IV. Of course, how could anyone *not* know Billy? He was the owner of the largest appliance and electronics store in the 5 county area, including Silver Springs where he, his wife Beatrice, and three daughters lived. Billy Boxx Appliance & Electronics. That's 2 X's for extra, extra low prices. The store had been in his family for 4 generations now. They had sold different kinds of merchandise throughout the years—and had only added electronics seven or eight years ago—but they had always had the 2 X's for extra, extra low prices.

Billy had taken sole possession of the family business thirteen years ago after his father—Billy Boxx III—unexpectedly died of a heart attack at age 52. Billy was just a couple of years out of college and only 26 years old at the time. He didn't have any brothers or sisters, and his mother didn't have the desire or the know-how to run the business. So it was up to Billy to carry on the extra, extra low price tradition.

Which suited Billy Boxx just fine. Billy had a deep respect for his dad, and certainly was saddened by his sudden death, but deep down, he felt liberated. He had worked in the family store ever since he could remember—with the exception of his years away at college—and always thought that his dad was too....well, old-fashioned. He didn't have the tenacity necessary to really make the store earn the kind of money that Billy the younger dreamed it could make... and indeed it would make someday.

Now, thirteen years later, Billy Boxx Appliance & Electronics was the epitome of profit, marketshare, and capitalism. The store did over 10 times the annual sales volume that it did when his old man ran it. Billy was very proud of that. Every day he'd look at the pictures in his office of the three previous generations of Billy Boxx's on the wall and whisper to them, "Hope I'm making you guys extra, extra proud."

The secret to his success was simple: "Early to bed. Early to rise. Work like crazy and ADVERTISE!" While his dad had shied away from all but the most conservative of newspaper ads, Billy had become a star. In the last thirteen years, Billy had appeared in over 750 television, newspaper, and radio commercials. Just about anyone who could see, hear, or even just breathe knew Billy Boxx.

And just about everyone loved him, too.

But then again, he did have his detractors. Especially in the early days. See, Billy Boxx, the man with 2 X's in his name for extra, extra low prices.... The man who in a contest would win the title of "Christmas' #1 Fan" was actually not Christmas's #1 fan at all. He was *X-Mas'* #1 Fan.

Now I'm sure that you've heard the abbreviation for Christmas—X-Mas—many times before. And, if you're like most folks, you probably prefer not to substitute the letter 'X' for Christ's name. But something strange must happen to you if you've got 2 X's in your name. Especially if those X's stand for something extra, extra important like Billy's did. In short, Billy wasn't like most folks. He really liked the letter X; he really liked to put the X in X-Mas. And there was nothing on earth that could make him take that X out.

For it was X-Mas that made Billy Boxx famous—and rich, too. When his dad died, that very same year, Billy introduced his first X-Mas promotion. His father never would have gone for it. He was way too conservative and religious. His mother protested. But the young Billy Boxx persisted, and on November 1st that year, the advertisements debuted announcing "This Year, Do Your X-Mas Shopping at Billy Boxx Appliances & Electronics. Where the X's stand for X-Mas—and extra, extra low prices."

That first year it caused quite a stir. Billy knew it was a risky strategy. Silver Springs was a pretty religious community. There might be a few who objected. He realized this fact. But hey, at least he didn't call it Boxx-Mas, like he'd thought about. That, he knew, might get him in extra, extra trouble. But X-Mas, come on. Lots of people called it X-Mas. He'd seen it on cards, banners, lights, and even on a Coke commercial one time...or so he claimed at least.

Billy didn't call Christmas X-Mas because he was some kind of grinch or scrooge or something. He truly *loved* X-Mas. His store was decorated every year to the hilt with X-Mas decorations, including a 20-foot tall X-Mas

tree with a huge yellow star. He had strung legions of lights, gobs of garlands, and tons of tinsel. He had an extra huge wreath custom-made a few years back that nearly filled the entire back wall of the store. He threw bigger X-Mas parties at his store than any Christmas party anywhere else in town. He had a full-time Santa on duty from the day after Thanksgiving through X-Mas eve (who, of course, would say, “Ho, ho, ho, Merry X-Mas”). He had free X-Mas giveaways during the season, and always had even lower extra, extra low prices for X-Mas. Hey, he was X-Mas’ #1 fan. (And if the truth be known, he would have been Christmas’ #1 fan, too, except for the X thing with his name and all.) He really did love the season.

And the X-Mas thing wasn’t because Billy didn’t know or understand the real meaning of Christmas, either. He could practically rehearse from memory the whole story of how Mary and Joseph couldn’t find any room at the inn, and how the shepherds followed a star, and how the baby Jesus was born in a manger and wrapped in swaddling clothes, and how wise men gave gold and frankenstein and mryth...or whatever. He knew the story well, and respected it, too. He figured he probably even believed it, although he hadn’t been to church in over 15 years (except for X-Mas service).

As a matter of fact, a few years ago, when Billy hired a choir and a band to transform all of the traditional Christmas songs into X-Mas songs, he didn’t change any of the religiously significant songs like *Silent Night*, *O Little Town Of Bethlehem*, and others. Actually, he didn’t bother to record those at all. His record only contained songs like *We wish you a merry X-Mas*, *I’m dreaming of a white X-Mas*, *Oh X-Mas Tree*, and *I’ll be home for X-Mas*.

So Billy Boxx had become Mr. X-Mas. Now understand, normally in the appliance business, as much as one-fourth of all the sales come during the 2 months of November and December. I know that it probably doesn’t sound very exciting to get a refrigerator or washing machine for a Christmas present, but you’d be surprised how many people do. But now, with Billy’s X-Mas promotion in high gear, his store did over 40% of the annual sales in those same two months. Billy attributed the sales increas mostly to the success of his X-Mas promotions. Billy Boxx just loved X-Mas.

And strangely enough, just about everyone in Silver Springs loved X-Mas too. It was becoming a tradition—almost a habit even. Billy’s influence through his advertising was so great, that during December, if you were walking the streets of Silver Springs and tipped your hat to a stranger, chances are, you’d get a hearty “Merry X-Mas,” instead of the expected “Merry Christmas.” Many of the houses put up light displays proclaiming “Merry X-Mas” to all who passed by. You could buy them down at Billy’s store for 7 or 8 years now. X-Mas cards were becoming the norm in Silver Springs. The town even gathered every December 1st for the ceremonious lighting of the town X-Mas tree, which was lit jointly by Mayor Jenkins and—you guessed it—Billy Boxx, the sponsor of the tree and decorations. Funny what you can buy with money, isn’t it!

But, like I said earlier, Billy Boxx did have some detractors who weren't exactly raving fans of the whole X-Mas idea. He kept careful track of the complaint letters that came in every year to monitor the negative publicity that he might be receiving. The first year he promoted the X-Mas season, he had received 56 pieces of "anti-X-Mas" mail... 9 of which were downright nasty. The number of complaints shrank every year by 4 or 5 or 6 until three years ago, when only one solitary complaint was mailed in (incidentally, the number of X-Mas cards increased every year to over 600 last year!) Everybody just loved Billy Boxx.

For the last 3 years, the only complaint letter that came was from Old Lady Crabtree. Now Old Lady Crabtree didn't have any X's in her name, but Billy was convinced, nevertheless, that the crab was in her name because she was extra, extra crabby. She was one of the original 56 complainers thirteen years ago, and had diligently written her complaint every November 1, the day the first wave of advertisements hit the Silver Springs airwaves and newspapers. Her letter always arrived promptly on November 2nd (except for the case of Sundays,) and always read the same way every year:

Dear Mr. Box,

(She always only put one x, probably intentionally)

*The true meaning of Christmas can only be felt by those who put themselves aside
and succumb to the spirit of the season. I trust that someday you will see the light.*

Sincerely,

Lucille Crabtree

This letter, the same one year after year, really got to Billy. What kind of letter was this anyway? What did she mean, "Feel the true meaning of Christmas?"

"I know what the true meaning of Christmas is," Billy would mutter to himself under his breath as he read the letter, his face turning bright red like the red part of a candy cane. "Of course I know what the true meaning of Christmas is. Any red-blooded American Christian knows the real meaning of Christmas. Who does she think she is? I am the biggest promoter of the season in all of Silver Springs. Probably in the state. If anyone knows the true meaning of Christmas, it is I, Billy Boxx, with two X's for extra, extra understanding of X-Mas. What does that old coot know about Christmas? I'll bet she decorates a Crabtree for Christmas. At least my X-Mas tree looks like a

Christmas tree!" And then he would imagine what a Crabtree would look like, all decorated, if there even were such a thing as a crabtree.

But this year, alas, there would be no crabby letter from Old Lady Crabtree. She had died the previous summer, presumably of old age. Not that Billy was happy... but, it has been said that you can find *some* good in any circumstance. And for Billy, it was this: For the first time in the thirteen years since the inception of X-Mas, it seemed that he would have 100% of the town of Silver Springs converted into X-Mas fans—and hopefully, paying customers, too.

Thirteen years, hundreds of thousands of dollars spent on television, radio, and newspaper advertisements, and all those huge X-Mas parties and giveaways at the store, and Billy Boxx had finally captured the whole town. Perhaps this would be an ideal time to make the switch over to calling it “Boxx-Mas” like he had originally intended. No, that would have to wait. This year, he would enjoy his victory. Besides, Billy had some very important things to attend to during this X-Mas Season.

On November first, Billy’s busy X-Mas season was officially kicked off. Thanksgiving was a non-existent holiday at Billy Boxx Appliance & Electronics; it just distracted from the main event, X-Mas. As soon as the last trick-or-treaters were gone on Halloween, the X-Mas lights were switched on, The X-Mas Tree went up, and the X-Mas Carols were piped over the store’s stereo system. And this year was no exception.

Billy had to leave the store early, at about 3:00, to meet his wife Beatrice down at Dr. Tolliver’s office. Beatrice was pregnant with their fourth child, and Billy wanted to be there for the sonogram that would confirm (hopefully) the good news: Billy was finally going to have a baby boy, due to be born on X-Mas day. See, Billy Boxx already had three beautiful daughters—Bonnie, Beverly, & Belinda. And he loved them all very much. They were good kids, never got into any trouble, and made good grades too (Mostly B’s).

But Billy Boxx wanted more than anything in the world to have a son. Someone to carry the on the Billy Boxx tradition. He wasn’t even going to name his son the expected formal “William Conrad Boxx V.” No, instead, Billy was just going cut to the chase and just call his son Billy. “Why mess with William, when everyone knows us as Billy Boxx anyway,” Billy reasoned. “And besides,” he continued, “The important thing is that he will carry on the proud tradition as a Boxx.” Billy proclaimed this in his mind as if being known as a box—a moderately durable rectangular shaped container generally made from corrugated cardboard—was some kind of major accomplishment that was worthy of special recognition.

So today, November 1st, was the big day. The third sonogram. Two previous sonograms had predicted that Beatrice was indeed carrying a little boy Boxx in there; but to be certain, and to avoid undue disappointment, Billy insisted on the third sonogram.

“Oh what an X-Mas present this will be,” Billy almost sang out to his wife as they drove home from the appointment. Dr. Tolliver had confirmed what the last two sonograms had indicated. He gave the Boxx’s a 95%+ chance that they would indeed be getting a little boy for their X-Mas present this year.

He couldn't contain his imagination: “I can see it now. In fact, I’ll unveil a new sign on X-Mas Eve, at the X-Mas party down at the store. The whole town will be there to see. I’ll announce it over the airwaves and in the paper. Everyone will see and know the new name of the store.” Billy then looked up and away in the distance, and read aloud an imaginary sign that only he could see. “Billy Boxx & Son Appliance & Electronics.” He quickly added a new slogan: “Now There’s Two Boxx’s And Four X’s....for extra, extra, extra, extra low prices.” His prices really were quite reasonable. Four "extras" may have been pushing it, but two just didn’t seem like they did justice to how low his prices were. So he decided he would unveil the four "extras" sign and slogan on X-Mas Eve.

When they got home from the doctor's office, Billy was too excited to eat dinner. He hadn’t dared make the plans for having a son until the confirmation of the third sonogram, which he got today. He had learned the hard way with Beverly, his second daughter, that those sonograms aren’t always accurate. He was hoping that people wouldn’t remember the last time he announced the birth of his son, only to be greeted by a bouncing baby Beverly. He hadn’t added two more "extras" to the store name that time, so most folks probably wouldn’t remember. But this time it was a sure thing. It was real. Three sonograms confirmed that this would indeed be a boy. A son. Another Billy Boxx. And the boy was to be born on X-Mas, the day that HE had made famous in Silver Springs. It was almost too good to be true.

Ah, then there was the other thing that would make this X-Mas season extra special. Billy was due to unveil of his newest product line—computers. He already owned the appliance market in Silver Springs. The electronics market had been his ever since the last competitor filed for bankruptcy a good 4 or 5 years ago. And now he wanted to take over computers. Get your kid a computer for X-Mas at Billy Boxx Appliance, Electronics, & Computers.

With a little luck, and with a lot of advertising, Billy was hoping to push his holiday sales total to a whopping 50% of the entire year’s business. The goal was ambitious, especially considering that they were already having one of their best years ever. To basically double the year’s sales between now and December 31st would be an unprecedented feat in the history of appliance & electronics retailing. And with Billy’s extra, extra big ego on the line, doing something unprecedented was extra important.

That night, with dollar signs and a baby boy racing through his brain, Billy just couldn't get to sleep. He rolled over, flipped on the light, grabbed a piece of paper, and wrote a letter to his future son. He decided that he would read it aloud to his son and the rest of the family as soon as the baby was born, and then again every year on year on his birthday until he was 21 and could officially take over the reigns of the store. The letter read:

My dear son Billy,

I have waited for more years than you know for God to send me a miracle, a son. You have been named Billy Boxx in the great tradition of the Boxx Family. For generations, Billy Boxx has stood for quality, integrity, and extra, extra low prices. I trust and pray that you will uphold this tradition, and become greater still, in your own right.

Love, Your Father

The next morning Billy woke up late and couldn't even remember falling asleep. It seemed like he had been awake all night. He tucked the short letter he had written into his planner and rushed down to the store to help the employees put the finishing touches on the new displays before it opened at 10:00 a.m. The computers were in stock and ready to go. And with yesterday's big radio, TV, and newspaper advertising blitz, the X-Mas season was ready to get going full swing.

The first day of X-Mas meant that thousands of people would file through Billy's store for the annual "First Day of X-Mas" party and Sale-abration. That's S-A-L-E-abration. This was the day he threw the first big X-Mas party; the 2nd was on X-Mas eve. Billy paid very close attention to the Sale-abration sales figures because they were a good measuring stick for how good the season would be.

And at 10:00 a.m. when the doors were finally opened, there was a line with almost two hundred people waiting to get in, despite the cold weather and the fact that it was Sunday, and most folks were supposed to be in church. The shoppers and party-goers alike rushed in for FREE hot chocolate, apple cider and donuts.... And the kids headed straight for Santa.

Billy smiled and thought, "I'll bet I've got more people in here than old Pastor Brown has down at the church. He may have the 'true' meaning of Christmas, but I give people the X-Mas that they really want. I give them all the fun and excitement, plus extra, extra low prices on appliances, electronics and this year, computers."

At noon Billy retreated into his office for a few quick minutes out of the spotlight, and to grab a bite to eat. When he sat down at his desk, his jaw dropped and his face turned pale. In a fraction of a second's time, he saw,

recognized and processed all the implications of a letter sitting smack dab in the middle of his desk. It was Old Lady Crabtree's annual complaint letter. He didn't have to open it to know. Her handwriting was as old and crabby looking as Mrs. Crabtree herself. And then his heart leaped: the telltale "one X." Billy Box, spelled with just one X. It had to be from Old Lady Crabtree. She was dead now and still somehow managed to get her "one X" letter on his desk. And this time on a Sunday.

Billy's mind raced for answers, but only more questions kept coming: "How could it be? She didn't have any friends. Her husband Gilbert must have been dead for 25 or 30 years now. Maybe she mailed it when she first knew she was going to die. But the postmark reads Nov 1st. She must have had somebody mail it for her. But how did it get inside my locked office on a Sunday?"

Billy panicked. He thought he was going have one of those "Ghosts of Christmas Past" things happen to him. "But that's not possible. That happens to scrooges and grinchers and guys like that." Billy thought to himself. "I'm X-Mas' number one fan. If there was a contest, I'd win an award."

Then Billy hatched a brilliant idea: "I'll open the letter and see what it says. It's probably from somebody else. Maybe it's an X-Mas card from some other old coot."

It wasn't.

The card had a picture of the Christ Child in the manger on the front, and the inside was printed, "Jesus Is The Reason For The Season." And it was signed, sure enough, by Lucille Crabtree. But the usual letter with the annoying message was missing. This time it was just the card with the signature.

Billy couldn't believe it. "I hate that saying, '*Jesus is the reason for the season.*' Couldn't they come up with a better rhyme than that? I don't know what this dead old coot is thinking, but I wish she'd keep her crabby old dead opinion to herself. Who does she think she is? The nerve of her to be dead and to still be trying to keep me from having this town 100% converted over to X-Mas. Like really it matters. Good grief already! Just let me be!"

By this time he was yelling as if there were a person standing in his face taking his verbal lashing. But no one was there. Billy Boxx didn't believe anyone could hear him, anyway. See, he didn't really believe that dead people could send letters and hear people yelling at all. He figured that once you were dead, you were... well, gone. He passed this whole thing off as a practical joke pulled by one of his friends. Still, it got under his skin. He knew that old lady Crabtree was extra, extra dead; and even on the off chance that she was somehow "haunting" him, she should keep her nose in her own dead business. "Don't dead people have something better to do than pick on alive guys?" Billy muttered to himself as he closed his office door and headed down the stairs.

He returned to the sales floor and looked around, as if he were checking for some incarnation of a dead Old Lady Crabtree. Better safe than sorry, he figured. When all was checked out, he got on with his day, and the store ended up with stellar sales. It was his best “First Day of X-Mas” Sale-abration ever.

As he drove home that evening the strange card he had received was still on his mind, and by this point, he was defiant. “Take that Dead Lady Crabtree,” he thought. He figured it was more appropriate now to call her Dead Lady Crabtree than Old Lady Crabtree, for obvious reasons. He liked the ring of it better, too. “My best first day ever, and you can’t do a thing to stop it now!” And he began laughing. Inside his mind at first, then a little bit out loud. After a minute, he was laughing so loud and so hard that his side hurt and he had to pull to the side of the road for safety’s sake.

It must have been too much.

For Billy didn’t know it, but the invisible curtain between us who are alive, and those who are dead, is actually very thin. Lucille waited until the car had come to a complete stop (for safety’s sake), and in a moment of awkward intrusion, suddenly appeared in the passenger seat of Billy Boxx’s car.

Lucille started in, “Nothing I can do about it? Is that what you think? Just because I’m dead, I’m helpless? Is that how it works, Mr. Box?”

Billy Boxx had appeared in hundreds of ads that had been seen by probably millions of people. He was popular and well liked. And he always knew just what to say. But right now he was speechless. So he let her keep talking.

“You listen to me, Mr. Box. We’ve about had it up to here with your X-Mas shenanigans!” she shouted about as loud as a dead old lady could shout.

Now there was a word that caught Billy’s attention, and he quickly figured out what to say. “What do you mean, ‘~~We’ve~~ had it up to here?’ Are you telling me that there’s more of you old dead coots hanging around here?” he said almost as if he were playing along with a practical joke, even though he knew that this was the real thing.

“I mean,” she fired back, “We, The Heavenly Host. And no, we’re not old dead coots, young man. Is that any way to talk to the deceased? We prefer to be referred to as “mortally-challenged.”

Billy still was having a hard time believing that he was talking to a dead person, and an even harder time believing that they were politically correct in heaven, or wherever it was that these “mortally challenged” people lived.

Lucille continued, “Look, I only appeared to you as “Old Lady Crabtree” so that you’d recognize me as soon as you saw me. The shock of seeing a mortally challenged person is bad enough; but the shock of seeing one that you don’t even recognize could be disastrous. Actually, where I live now, everyone has the appearance of a 25-year old adult. When you see me next, I shall probably look much different than you’re used to seeing me.”

Billy quickly fired back, “I’m used to your being dead! I was getting really used to it, as a matter of fact. Don’t tell me that you’re here to bug me about the X-Mas thing. I mean, come on, get off it already. I like calling it X-Mas. The people like X-Mas. In fact, you’re the only one who *doesn’t* like calling it X-Mas. And seeing as you’re dead—eh, mortally challenged—I don’t think your vote really counts very much any more. Heck, it didn’t even count when you were alive.”

Billy got down off his soapbox and sheepishly asked, “The *entire* Heavenly Host has had it up to here with me? Who exactly is the Heavenly Host comprised of? Am I in trouble or anything like that?” The weight of the matter was beginning to settle on Billy. He realized that there must be something extra important happening if Old Lady Crabtree was revived from the dead to send him a crabby message from the entire Heavenly Host.

Lucille replied in a more compassionate tone, “Look Billy. Remember all those years that I sent you those letters that said “*The true meaning of Christmas can only be felt by those who put themselves aside and succumb to the spirit of the season. I trust that someday you will see the light.*” Do you remember? Did you even read the letters? You got them, didn’t you?” She was beginning to look exasperated as she realized that it was entirely possible that her pupil was beyond help.

Billy played coy: “Oh yes, your letters, I got them. Still got them. In a box in my office.” He was careful not to reveal that the box was tucked away in his closet and marked on top with a marker, “Letters From Idiots.” Billy answered as honestly as possible, “I read your letter every year, without fail.”

Lucille replied, “Well, then Mr. Boxx, I presume you remember the part about seeing the light someday? This is what you could call, seeing the light.”

“Oh great, this is seeing the light? Having some hundred-year-old dead lady come gripe at me about X-Mas is what you call seeing the light?” Billy was beginning to become annoyed with the whole situation.

Lucille sensed that this was getting out of hand; this guy really was beyond help. So she pulled rank on him and gave it to him straight. “Look Mr. Box, here’s the deal. There’s two ways to deal with hoodlums like you. One way is to let you see the light. If you would please just be quiet and listen, I’ll be able to show you the light in due time. You’re lucky—it’s very rare that we actually get to show somebody the light. So if I were you, I’d quit making light of the light. Got it?”

“And the other way to deal with hoodlums —er , guys like me?” Billy asked timidly, wondering exactly what she meant by “hoodlums like you.”

“Let’s just say that I could have not waited until your car came to a stop before I appeared,” she said. “I could have popped into this seat when you were going full speed down the freeway, given you a heart attack on the spot, and then who knows what would have happened to your car. That’s the other way we deal with hoodlums like you.”

Billy was incensed. “What?!?! You kill people? What kind of program is this that you and this Heavenly Host of yours are running anyway? Going around giving people heart attacks and killing them? Do you have some kind of registration card or ID that proves that you’re from, well, you know, up there?”

Lucille was growing more impatient by the moment. “Please, Mr. Box. Quit pretending like you have any idea how we run things up there. As if you would know. There’s a book called the Bible; maybe you’ve heard of it. They keep in the nightstand at hotels. There are dozens of stories about the wicked being destroyed in there. It only takes God until page 10 in the Book of Genesis before he’s so fed up with the entire human population that he wipes them all out with a flood, except for Noah, of course. Then there’s Sodom and Gomorrah. Two cities, gone in one fell swoop. Destroying the wicked has been used from time to time to take care of problems. I think we could handle you pretty easily if we felt it were necessary.”

“Destroy the wicked?” Billy nervously asked. “Come on, drama queen! I know you have a beef to pick with me over X-Mas and all. But now you come here, invade me in my car, and call me wicked? No, no. I don’t think so. You’re haunting the wrong guy. I think you must have mistaken me for a man named Ebenezer. So what if I call Christmas X-Mas? What’s the big deal? Everyone knows that I am the number one fan of the season.”

Lucille answered in a stern, serious tone, “If you only knew Billy Box. There are tens of thousands of people in the 5 county area of Silver Springs. Because of you, they have all taken the most important part of Christmas... out of Christmas. You’ve replaced Christ’s name with an X. Do you have any idea what kind of spiritual impact that has on a community?”

“Spiritual impact?” Billy asked. “Everyone knows what the true meaning of Christmas is. We all know about the Christ Child and the star and the manger and the swaddling clothes. I can’t speak for every individual, but Mrs. Crabtree, with all due respect, I think just about everyone is already pretty darn familiar with the true meaning of Christmas. And besides, I heard one time that the “X” really is Greek for Christ anyway.”

“Ah, such a simple mind,” she replied, in a thoughtful voice. “You eat a gyro at the mall and suddenly you’re an expert on Greek. The technical meaning of the “X” is not the point. Billy, you hear, but you do not understand, Billy Box. In thirteen years of sending you letters, I have never said anything about knowing the true meaning of Christmas. I know you *know* the true meaning of Christmas. I have always said that the true meaning of Christmas can only be **felt** by those who put themselves aside and succumb to the spirit of the season. ***The true meaning of Christmas isn’t something you know; it’s something you feel.*** Tomorrow I will show you the light, and maybe—just maybe—you will feel the true meaning of Christmas.”

And then, as suddenly as she had appeared, she was gone.

Billy rubbed his eyes and pinched himself to make sure he wasn’t dreaming. He couldn’t believe it! He had just had a conversation with a mortally challenged person. As he thought about what she had said, he still wondered what she meant by “showing him the light.”

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The next morning, after another nearly sleepless night, Billy arrived to the store early to help his staff get ready for the day. He had taken back roads, driven slowly, and kept a careful eye on the passenger seat of his car on the way over to work, but nothing happened. As he got his key out to let himself in the store, he heard an unfamiliar voice.

The voice of a young lady called out to him, “Billy. Billy! Hey, wait up! I need to tell you something before you go in there.”

He turned around and saw an attractive young lady who bore a striking resemblance to Dead Lady Crabtree.

By this time, Billy felt comfortable talking to mortally challenged people—and he wasn’t in the least bit phased by her striking new appearance. “Don’t tell me. This is you at age 25? Am I right?”

The new, younger-looking Lucille answered cheerfully, as though she was glad to have shed her old skin, “You sir, are correct. What do you think? Not bad for and old dead lady, huh?”

Before he could answer, she continued, “I told you yesterday that you were lucky, and that you were going to get a chance to see the light. I wasn’t kidding when I said that we seriously considered using option #2 on you. But, fortunately for you, there were a couple of factors that made us decide against it. First, since you’re the one that got this town into this mess, it’s likely that you’re the only one that the people will listen to if they’re to get out of it. Second, you’ve got a wife, three beautiful daughters, and one on the way. We just can’t call your number yet. You’ve got too much influence.”

Suddenly it dawned on Billy that Old Lady Crabtree might be privy to some inside information regarding the gender of his soon-to-be-born fourth child. “Wait a second,” he insisted. “Hold on there. Back this train up. Hello. You just said, three beautiful daughters, and one on the way. Did you mean one more beautiful daughter on the way? Or did you probably just mean one more *child* on the way—who, incidentally, angel lady, is just about 100% likely to be a boy baby, and not another beautiful daughter. So which is it?”

Lucille quickly countered, “Unfortunately, I’m prohibited from giving out any such information to mortals. And, Mr. Box, you’re certainly not on my good side after yesterday—not to mention the last thirteen years. So I’m not going to say if it’s a boy or a girl, and I don’t want you to pester me about it any more, okay? Now, let’s continue. I’ve got plenty of light to show you today, so we better get started.”

Unsatisfied that he was going to get the answer he wanted, he resorted to begging. “Look, if it’s a boy wink once, and if it’s a girl, wink twice. I won’t tell the Heavenly Host, I promise. I just have to know if I’ll be getting my dear son Billy the 5th.”

“And if you get another girl,” Lucille asked suspiciously, “would that upset you?”

“Well, I guess that’d be okay—I guess,” Billy answered unenthusiastically. He was now convinced that he’d be getting another girl. And he had already run out of “B” names, too. His plans for adding more “X’s” to the store’s slogan were already going down the drain.

The pity party was just beginning when Lucille clapped her hands together sharply, and jolted Billy back to the matter at hand.

“Billy,” Lucille asked gently, “do you know why Christmas is called *Christmas*? I’ll give you a hint. It’s in the word. It’s kind of like motorcycle. That would be a cycle with a motor, get it? Does that help you understand the meaning of the word Christmas?”

“Quit treating me like a child,” Billy shouted like a child. “Of course I know. Christ and mas. The mas of Christ. I told you yesterday I already know all about the real meaning of Christmas. I just don’t see how can the name possibly be that important? I mean, when I say X-Mas, everyone still knows that we’re talking about the holiday situated on December 25th, that commemorates the birth of Jesus, right?”

Lucille explained, “The name is all-important, Billy. I’ll have you know that the Heavenly Host debated the naming of Christmas for years. Some wanted to call it Christmas. Others wanted to call it Jesusmas. They thought that would be more impactful—more likely to remind people about Jesus. I mean, think about it. If someone asked you when you were going to put up your Jesusmas Tree, you’d have little choice but to be reminded of Jesus. It would tend to make folks remember better what the real “reason for the season” was. I still love the cards with that saying, “Jesus is the reason for the season.” I left you one yesterday, remember?”

Billy did remember, and he hoped she didn’t somehow read his mind and see what his reaction to her card had been. Lucille continued, “But in the end, Jesusmas lost out because it just didn’t roll off the tongue as smoothly as Christmas. What a shame. And now, you have taken “Christ” out of Christmas and replaced it with a loathsome X. X-Mas. X is the lowliest of all letters, you know. It could mean anything; and therefore, it means nothing. It’s actually worse than calling it Boxx-Mas like you had thought about. At least Boxx-Mas would be instantly recognized by everyone in town as a complete affront to the spirit of the season and discounted as nothing more than a sick, self-centered, egotistical attempt to sell—refrigerators? You would’ve never gotten away with that. But X-Mas. Wow. Now we have a problem.”

Suddenly, Billy was extra, extra scared. He had never so much as whispered his plans for “Boxx-Mas” to a single soul in his entire life. How did she know? This was beginning to get creepy.

She continued, “My objective here is to help you feel the spirit of the season. Hopefully you’ll then comply with the cease and desist order that we’ve filed against you for calling Christmas ‘X-Mas’. Then we want you to change the name back, and help the whole town get reacquainted with Christmas once again. Of course, you don’t *have* to comply with the order.” Billy could only guess that she was alluding to her second option for dealing with hoodlums like him.

“Billy, I know that you know what the true meaning of Christmas is,” she explained, “But it’s also evident that you haven’t a clue why Christmas is even important in the first place. When you find out, you’ll see that

Christmas has very little to do with the 25th day of December, and very much to do with every single day of your life. You see, it's a time of the year that God has set aside to remind us of everything that is good, and to remind us of His Son, and our need to rely on Him and His teachings if we are to return to live with him hereafter. This will all make more sense to you in just a little while. Let's go on in to the store and I'll show you what I mean."

Billy turned the key, and pushed the door open. As they entered the store, Billy was shocked and amazed—even horrified at what he saw. His store had been broken into during the night, and it looked—at a glance—like everything was gone. Billy gave the store a quick visual inspection to determine the extent of the damage. The refrigerator section, to his immediate left, still seemed to be in tact. Scanning from left to right, he realized that the ranges, vacuums, and washing machines were also safely in their appointed places. A panicked, quick glance toward the electronics sections showed, to his relief, that it hadn't been touched either. Billy's heart leaped—the computer section! He hurried to the back of the store and realized that all of the computers were still there too. Then it dawned on him what was missing, and why the store had at first appeared to be completely empty. Every single one of his X-Mas decorations was gone.

Without thinking, Billy shouted at the top of his voice, "Call the police! I've been ripped off! Somebody must have backed a U-haul in here and stolen all of my X-Mas, er, uh, Christmas stuff." He was suddenly cognizant of how awkward he felt saying X-Mas with Lucille around. But that didn't change the fact that everything was indeed gone. The tree was gone, the huge wreath was gone, the lights—*everything*—all gone. Even Santa's workshop and reindeer were on hiatus.

Billy looked like he was going to cry as he desperately called out, "Call the police, there's a thief out there."

To be perfectly honest, Lucille had been waiting for this exact moment in time for well over ten years now, and she had come prepared. She spoke in a matter-of-fact tone, "The thief, Mr. Box, is right here." As she made the statement, she produced a small, handheld mirror from behind her back and held it up to Billy's face. "You are the one who has stolen the real true meaning of Christmas from Silver Springs, and the surrounding 5 county area. Not to mention the great blessings you've kept from yourself and your precious family. You have completely disassociated Christ from Christmas. And you're looking at what is left. Approximately nothing."

Dazed and confused, Billy muttered, "What do you mean? I don't get it."

"Look, Billy Box," Lucille offered in a compassionate voice. "Apparently you don't know it, but every single symbol of Christmas is actually a symbol of Christ. When you take Christ out of Christmas, you must then,

logically, take away all of the symbols. You can't enjoy all the goodies if you're not willing to acknowledge the very thing that all the goodies represent."

Billy disagreed: "Look, Crabtree. I didn't have any nativity scenes in here in the first place. That's the only Christmas thing that I know of that's a symbol of Christ—*isn't it?* We tried to sell the big, plastic, lighted yard nativity scenes in here about 5 or 6 years ago, but I'll be honest with you. They just weren't big sellers. So we dumped them for 10 cents on the dollar in our after X-Mas sale. See, folks around here would rather have a big, lighted, plastic, 'Merry X-Mas' yard sign."

Lucille was dumbfounded. "Billy, were you paying any attention a minute ago? I *just said* that every single symbol of Christmas is a symbol of Christ. Every single one. Would you please pay attention."

"The first thing that we took out of your store was everything that was red and green. Obviously, you know that those are the colors of Christmas, but do you know *why* they're the Christmas colors? Trust me, it's not because M&M's make their candy red and green during December. The colors are symbols of Christ. It's very important to understand this if you want to feel the true meaning of Christmas."

"The first and greatest color of Christmas is red. It's first because it represents the blood of Christ, which he willingly shed for us. It reminds us of the ultimate sacrifice that God made—even His Only Begotten Son—so that we can all return to live with Him someday. It's a symbol of the gift of God. You see red everywhere at Christmas... on stockings, on ornaments, on giftwrap, even on the M&M's I just mentioned. But very few people understand why it's so significant." We celebrate Christmas as the birth of Christ, and rightly so. But ultimately, it was his death—or his blood—that gives us hope, and makes the difference in our lives every day."

Billy had to admit it. He didn't know that red was symbolic of anything.

Lucille continued, "Even Santa's suit is red. Again, trust me. His suit's not red because Coca-Cola promotes him and gets to choose the color. Don't you think it's appropriate, Billy, that the ultimate symbol of giving in our society—even Santa Claus—wears a red suit? A beautiful red suit that symbolizes God's ultimate gift to mankind. But sadly, nobody recognizes all of the symbolic weight that Santa bears. They just want presents, presents, presents. We'll talk about presents in a minute."

"What about presents?" Billy wanted to know immediately. He had to admit, there was something very fascinating about this new information he was receiving. "What about the presents?"

Lucille responded, "Okay, I'll go ahead and talk about presents for a minute before we move on. Everyone *thinks* they know about the presents. Of course, everyone knows that the three kings came to the Baby Jesus bearing gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. So then everyone goes hog-wild giving all kinds of gifts to everyone in sight saying that Christmas reminds us of the 'spirit of giving' and that it's 'better to give than receive.'"

"So you're telling me that's wrong? It's not better to give than to receive? What, we shouldn't give presents at Christmastime? I'd go broke!" Billy reasoned.

"Billy, God gave us two ears and only one mouth. Maybe you ought to consider using them more in those proportions." Lucille was only half-teasing. She continued, "Yes, giving is better than receiving. I won't dispute that. And no, it's not wrong to give presents to people at Christmas. Don't worry, this is not about trying to put you out of business, Billy. But while giving gifts to others is important, the symbol of the gift is actually two-fold. What's more important than giving to others is to follow the literal example of the three kings. They didn't give gold, frankincense and myrrh to each other, or to their loved ones. They brought their gifts and laid them at the feet of the Savior, as a token of their willingness to give to Him who gave so much to us. These gifts are a symbol of our need to sacrifice for Him as well. We too should place our gifts—our time, our talents, and our means—at the Savior's feet.

As Billy thought about what Lucille was saying, he began to realize the weight of the matter. He hadn't put much effort into anything but running his store for the last 15 years. Something in Billy's heart was telling him that it was time to change.

Lucille interrupted his thoughts. "Anyway, enough about the presents for now. Back to the colors. Now you know that red is the first color of Christmas because it symbolizes Christ's blood. The second color of Christmas is green. Everyone knows green as the color of Christmas trees and wreaths. While red symbolizes the death of Christ, green symbolizes His rebirth, or in other words, His resurrection. It symbolizes the hope that through Christ, we all might one day rise again and live eternally."

"If you take a closer look at a Christmas tree," she continued, "you'll notice that all of the needles on the tree point heavenward. This is to remind men to think of returning to heaven. Billy, do you think it's a coincidence that the Christmas tree is an evergreen? Listen to the words Billy. It's like the motorcycle thing again. Ever and green. Always living. It's because of Jesus Christ that we can break the bands of death and rise again and live eternally. Many people are scared or confused at the prospects of death. They don't know what happens in the hereafter. I'm telling you Billy, as sure as I'm standing in front of you right now, that Jesus has made it possible for us all to rise again after death, and for families to remain together forever. That's the hope that was given to mankind by Jesus Christ. The tree symbolizes it. Green symbolizes it. And most people don't even realize it. What's

worse, you've gone and stuck a measly old "X" in Christmas. No wonder the people in Silver Springs are spiritually famished. The 'X' is also a symbol, you know. It symbolizes peoples' unwillingness to accept Christ into their lives and unwillingness to sacrifice. Billy, you've got to put Christ back into Christmas. Please, Billy. Put it back."

Billy didn't know which feeling in his heart was greatest at this point: the feeling of embarrassment for having caused this whole "X-Mas" debacle, or the sweet, inner peace that somehow co-existed with his anxious feelings—the inner peace that told Billy that what Lucille was saying was true.

"We're not through yet, Mr. Box," Lucille informed the store owner, "There's still plenty of light to see. You'll notice that we took your huge, custom-made wreath out of here. You know, with no Christ in Christmas, there's no need for a wreath. Now you know why wreaths are green, but you probably don't know why they're round. We deliberately created wreaths to be green and round to symbolize the eternal nature of love; it never ceases, stops, or ends. It is one continuous round of affection. Without Christ in Christmas, it's just another circle. It might as well be a basketball hoop."

"Here's another symbol that just about everyone takes for granted: the bow. We tie bows on the wreaths and on the gifts that we give to each other. The bow is a symbol of the spirit of the brotherhood of man. It is tied, as men should be tied—all of us together—with the bonds of good will toward each other. This is what Christ taught us, and why we should always think of the message of the bow. Personally, I think the bow is one of the most underrated symbols of all. We already talked about presents; and their two-fold message. Presents are wrapped with bows to remind us to make our sacrifices to others—and particularly our sacrifices to the Lord—in the spirit of love, and in the spirit of the general betterment of mankind. Without Christ in Christmas, there's no point in putting bows on anything. That's why we've removed them from your store."

Billy had always hated bows. They kept his presents from stacking up nicely on Christmas morning. He preferred Scotch Tape. But his attitude was beginning to change.

Lucille pressed forward, "Billy, you may not know it, but even the timing of the season is a symbol of Christ and his atoning sacrifice. It's widely accepted that Jesus was not actually born on December 25th. But we chose, in the council of the Heavenly Host, to put the holiday, the time of remembrance, here. That's because December 25th is generally on or about on the Winter Solstice, which is the shortest day of the year. It's the day of the year with the least amount of light. Christ came into the world—and maybe you've heard the Bible verse—as a beacon of light. A light to show the people of the world the way to live their lives on a higher plain. He literally gave light and life to all of us. Christmas day is put in December to remind us that Christ is the one who brought us out of the darkness and into the light."

"When I said that every symbol of Christmas is a symbol of Christ, I wasn't exaggerating. Even the most seemingly insignificant Christmas things symbolize Christ... that is, if you don't put an X where His name ought to be. Take the candy cane. It's shaped like a shepherd's crook—a tool that was used to bring strayed sheep back into the flock. It represents our duty to love our neighbor and help out in time of need. Mortals don't know it, but when the Council of the Heavenly Host debated the naming of Christmas—or Jesusmas—the candy cane was a central issue. The pro-Jesusmas contingency thought that the candy cane could serve a dual role as a shepherd's crook, and an upside-down 'J,' for Jesus. It was perfect. Okay, so I admit I was the chair of the pro-Jesusmas committee. I tell you, the candy cane could have been big. Much bigger than it is now. Anyway, where was I?

"The candy cane," Billy reminded her.

"Oh yes, the Shepherd's crook. And that brings us to a discussion about bells. Do you know what they represent, Billy?"

Billy was too embarrassed to say that he thought that bells were a symbol that Santa's reindeer were headed your way.

"The bell, like the Shepherd's crook, was also used to help the lost sheep to return to the fold. Christmas bells are now a symbol to remind us that each and every one of us is precious in the sight of the Lord, and He desperately wants for each of us to return to His presence. But like the bell in days of old, we must listen carefully if we are to hear the call of the Good Shepherd who is always trying to bring us back into the fold. The problem nowadays, Billy, is that with all the glitz of the season—and particularly your 'X-Mas' season—the still small voice of the Shepherd cannot be heard. It has been drowned out by the hype. So don't listen for it with your ears; instead, use your heart. It's something you have to feel. And when you feel it, then you will understand what the real true meaning of Christmas is."

Billy didn't know how to react to all of this. So he just stood there and tried to feel what she was talking about. But he didn't really have to try. The feeling was there, and it was beginning to swell within him.

Lucille was beginning to wind down by now. "Billy, before I discuss with you the last, and possibly the most important symbol of Christmas, I want to put your mind at ease. You're not in any trouble. You've got a tremendous amount of influence in your community, and we just want you to influence for the good. That's why we've taken the time to show you the light. We want to give you a perspective of Christmas that you've never had before. The perspective of emphasizing Christ."

Lucille's eyes filled with excitement as she continued, "I'm so excited now to share the last symbol with you. It's my favorite; I think it encompasses all of the others. It's the symbol of the star. You already know from the story of Jesus' birth that three wise men traveled to Bethlehem to give gifts to the Christ Child. As they traveled, they were guided by an extraordinary star that shone brightly over Bethlehem—it was brighter than any other star in the firmament. It was a sure sign of Christ's arrival; they had but to follow it to find him. Now we use stars now to decorate at Christmastime, but it's doubtful that very many people understand the deep significance of this important symbol. We put the star high on the point of the tree to remind us to look heavenward and to follow Christ. Wise men in ancient times followed the star. We now, must follow Christ."

Lucille looked at Billy, and just as she was going to ask him if he understood, a single tear ran down his cheek and answered her question.

"Wise men still seek him, Billy," Lucille said with a quiet smile. "What you're feeling right now is the true meaning of Christmas. You've opened your heart to the Spirit of the Lord, and it has entered you and edified you. Now, it's up to you to do the rest."

"The rest?" Billy earnestly inquired.

"Yes, Billy, the rest." She replied. "Remember my letter all those years? *'The true meaning of Christmas can only be felt by those who put themselves aside and succumb to the spirit of the season.'* Now that you understand, you've got to put yourself aside and think first of other people. You've got to be less concerned with Billy Box, and more concerned with everyone else. That's the real meaning of Christmas. Jesus came as a sacrifice for our sins. How then, can we truly feel the spirit of the season, unless we too sacrifice our selves and focus our efforts on helping others? Remember the song, 'Peace on Earth, good will toward men.' That phrase was given to man to inspire him to do good. That's your challenge now."

"Well, Billy Box, that's it. I've shown you the light. Now I've got to get back to where I came from. I trust that you will do the right thing now. But first, I've got one more quick surprise up my sleeve, and then we're out of here."

"We're?" Billy asked.

"You don't think I hauled all of your X-Mas stuff out of here by myself, do you? I had to employ a little help," she said as she snapped her finger and summonsed someone toward the back of the store.

Four young men appeared carrying large amounts of Christmas items. Sure enough, they all appeared to be about 25 years old. They were all dressed the same, and they all looked extra, extra alike. It was obvious that they weren't four copies of the same person, but their resemblance was uncanny. As they got closer to the front of the store, Billy couldn't believe his eyes. They all looked just like just like Billy Boxx himself.

"Billy," Lucille said gently, "I would like for you to meet Billy Boxx, Billy Boxx II, Billy Boxx III, and this gentleman. This is how I managed to get rid of all your X-Mas stuff. These gentlemen hauled it out for me."

As Billy stood face-to-face with his progenitors, the whole idea of X-Mas instead of Christmas suddenly seemed extra, extra stupid. He had waited until his father died to start the X-Mas tradition because he knew that he would never approve. Billy was embarrassed and excited all at the same time. Just like the night before when Lucille had first appeared to him in his car, he didn't have a clue what to say.

His father spoke to him first. Billy thought it seemed strange that his dad looked so young, but to be getting a lecture from him nevertheless.

"Billy, I speak for all of us when I say that we were extra, extra disappointed in you when you started this 'X-Mas' nonsense. We left you a legacy of extra, extra low prices, and you turned it into extra, extra insanity. Every evening when you look at our pictures on the wall and say that you hope you've made us proud—well, there's going to have to be some major changes in the way you conduct yourself and the store if that's to be so. I am confident now that you've seen the light and the symbols of Christmas—and you have felt its true meaning—that you will make the necessary changes to 'put yourself aside' and become more Christ-like. That means giving—not just always worrying about getting. You do the right thing and that store of yours will be a great source of pride... and a means for doing good in this world. God be with you Billy. I love you."

The other two generations of Billy Boxx's expressed their same sentiments, and then they all bid him farewell. The fourth man, who hadn't been introduced, turned back around as they departed, and extended his hand to Billy. He had something in his hand, and he gave it to Billy as they shook. As he turned back around, he smiled and quietly said, "I shall probably see you again very soon."

"But who are you?" Billy pleaded to know.

The young man answered, "I don't know. I haven't officially been given a name yet."

Then, suddenly, they were all gone—including Lucille. Billy looked around, and in an instant, the store was restored to its original, pre-break-in condition. But there was one major difference. Everything that used to say X-Mas, now said Christmas. The music started up from the store's stereo system, and to Billy's amazement (and relief) 'We Wish You a Merry *Christmas*' was playing. All of the signs, banners, and logos that one day prior had proclaimed 'Merry X-Mas' were all changed to 'Merry Christmas.' It was as if X-Mas had automatically been X-ed out from his store—and Billy hoped, from his life.

He looked down at the object that the fourth man had placed in his hand and saw a small yellow star. Upon closer inspection he found that it had been inscribed. On the front, it said, "Wise men still seek him," and on the back was the tender message, "Merry Christmas. I love you dad."

Billy Boxx realized that he had indeed, just seen the light.

The next morning, Billy called his ad agency at 6:30 a.m. He had to make some major changes to his advertising message, and he had to make them quick. The new ads were cut and ready to go by noon. In the new ads, there was no mention of X-Mas. Just Billy, with a message for Silver Springs, and the surrounding 5 county area.

He said, "It's time for the holidays again, and you know what that means down at Billy Boxx appliance and electronics. But ladies and gentlemen, this year the 2 X's in Boxx don't stand for what they used to. You could say that I've seen the light, and my eyes have been opened. This year the two X's in Boxx stand for extra hope for an extra peaceful world. They stand for an extra helping of charity, and extra effort to help those in need. The X's should stand as a symbol to each of us of the excess that has been given to us by our Creator, and an extra obligation that we have to share with our brothers and sisters. And most of all, my friends, the X's should remind us of the extra, extra special sacrifice that God made for the world to send us a Savior, even his son, Jesus Christ. If you have need of appliances, electronics, or even computers this year, come on down and see me at Billy Boxx Appliance & Electronics. I'd like to meet you personally, and tell you more about what I've seen. Have a Merry Christmas, and an extra, extra happy new year.

This new ad was most unusual. It was just like thirteen years ago when he unveiled the X-Mas promotion—a risky strategy. But in reality, this wasn't a strategy at all. It was what he had to do to recapture all of the lost sheep that he had personally scattered. The store's sales were not as important as recapturing the lost souls. So he decided to run the ads and see what would happen.

And, to Billy's delight, his message was well-received. Everyone loved Billy just the same, and came down to the store to talk to the new Billy. Even Pastor Brown came in to hear about Billy's experience—and he even bought a TV.

And then, when Christmas morning rolled around, sure enough, Beatrice went into labor. When Dr. Tolliver delivered the beautiful baby boy at 10:23 that Christmas morning, Billy was not surprised. The precious child looked extra, extra familiar, and Billy could have sworn that the baby winked at him, although he couldn't tell for sure. He gathered his entire family around the bed in the hospital so he could read out loud the letter that he had written the night of the third sonogram on November 1st. But Billy had made a few changes:

He read aloud,

My dear son,

*There has been a tradition in our family for four generations now to name the firstborn son of Billy Boxx after his father. That would make you Billy Boxx the 5th, and you would continue the extra, extra low price tradition of our family. You have no idea how long I have waited for this moment. But as this day has drawn near, I have seen the light, and my heart has changed. So I hope you'll understand why I cannot name you after the tradition of your fathers. Since you were born on Christmas day, and because all of the symbols of Christmas, including you, point to Christ, I am naming you Christian Boxx. You will always remind us of the gift God sent us from heaven on December 25th this year, and you will remind us of the gift he sent us when he sent his son to this earth. I am giving you this extra special name because it was you who taught me **that wise men still seek him**. Thank you for this gift. We will call you Chris.*

Love, Dad