

Joy to the World by K. Dobson {Rated G}

Synopsis: Logan doesn't want anything to do with Christmas, but Someone One Else has other plans!

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It was Christmas again, and Logan was greeted by the familiar smell of evergreen in the mansion's recreation-TV room. Glittering green, blue, red and white lights hung in blinking strands along the mighty boughs, and delicate glass ornaments hung from nearly every branch. Sparkling tinsel reflected and shimmered in the candle light that the Professor always had present in the evenings during winter. For many in the school, the Christmas tree was a place of peace and comfort among family and, though Logan did have a family with the X-men, he was always saddened by the tree. He didn't know if it was the smell that reminded him of the North or, if somewhere in his lost memories, a sad one still hung just beyond his reach at this time of year. Either way, he usually stayed around the mansion just long enough during the Christmas season to give Rogue her gift, then he would be off to Canada until sometime after New Years. Rogue had come to expect this each year, everyone did, but they still missed him sorely. Logan knew this, but he just couldn't stay. No matter what they did or said, he would always be set apart from them by his past, and what humanity had done to him. They accepted him and loved him, but Logan couldn't seem to look past his horrific past to accept their acceptance. As usual, he packed his bags, gave Rogue her gift, said goodbye and left on his motorcycle for Canada.

He traveled during the day and night normally, but the snow got so bad during the second night, he was forced to pull over. Since he was stopped anyway, he decided he might as well get some sleep. He had ended up in a fairly remote area where there was nothing but woods and the road, as far as he could see, was thick with snow. He decided to park his bike deeper in the thicket and find a sheltered place to get some sleep.

As he wheeled his bike into a sheltered area, he noticed a soft glowing light, like candle light, and headed toward it. He came up on a small, stone church and the candles left from the Christmas Eve service made the glow he had seen. The church had no bell, but all of the windows were stained-glass, making the candles glow with faint color. He figured no one would mind him taking shelter in a church until the storm passed, especially since nobody would be there at that hour. He made his way around to the front of the church, going inside through the carved solid oak doors. They were stained a dark mahogany and the carvings were Celtic. Inside, it was very warm and comfortable. The entire building was one room with stained-glass windows along the sides. Each window depicted a scene from the life of Jesus: His birth, teaching, death, and resurrection. The pews were solid oak as well, stained and carved like the doors, with velvet padding covering the seats. The floor was made of giant flag stones, worn smooth where he could see them, since most of the floor was covered with woven Celtic rugs. Celtic tapestries were hung on the walls in different places and a cross hung at the front of the church with a crown of spruce hung around its top. A large beautifully carved altar that mimicked the doors and pews in style was at the front of the church just in front of the cross. It was draped with a red cloth that hung over the sides in neat folds. In the center of the altar was a small elegantly carved nativity scene surrounded by candles and sprigs of freshly cut spruce. There were glowing candles in every window and more that were set along the walls of the church.

Logan felt a sense of peace that he couldn't explain inside the church, especially when he looked at the nativity scene. He walked silently up one of the isles, his foot steps muffled by the woven fabric rugs. He sat down gingerly in the pew just behind the front middle one, thinking somehow his rough angry ways would be exposed and ruin the holy peace if he were to make his presence known by the slightest sound. He was close enough to the altar to see the nativity clearly now, the carved figures of Mary, Joseph and the shepherds surrounding the infant Jesus. Logan knew the bare basics of the Christmas story, but he had never really thought about it before, what it might really mean to him, as a person. He had a vague understanding that the child surrounded by worshipping shepherds was Jesus, supposedly God's son, but he had always thought of it as a nice, cozy story for a snowy Christmas night. Now he looked at the child in the manger with a new curiosity and wonder, one he couldn't explain. He knew very little of the story of Jesus and he had never really cared to find out, but now, finding his inner pain soothed by the mere carving of this child, he wished he could know more.

Logan silently lay over on the cushioned pew, his head resting on the corner where the arm rest and seat back joined. He lay there, slowly succumbing to the warmth of the place. Logan didn't know how long he had been there before he felt a soft, warm hand on his back. It startled him out of his sleepy state and he looked to see who had touched him. An elderly man, dressed in a priest's gown was seated next to him, his kindly blue eyes looking into Logan's amber ones. Logan looked at him, bewildered as to why he hadn't heard the man come in. The front doors were the only way into the church and Logan was sure he would have heard him come in.

"Are you lost, my son?" the man asked, in a soft voice.

"No, I just needed a rest. I can leave if you need me to," Logan said, hoping he wouldn't ask him why he was here in the first place.

"Are you sure? You looked pensive," the man asked with a gentle, understanding look on his face.

The man seemed to have an aura around him that made Logan feel like he could trust him and he relaxed. He felt the peace that had first come upon him settle over him again and he looked back at the nativity scene.

The man followed his gaze, looking upon the nativity, too, for a time before he said, "Now there were in the same country shepherds, living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them and the glory of the Lord shone around them and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.' Do you know of the Christmas story, my son?" the man asked Logan.

Logan, still looking at the nativity said, "I've heard the story, but never really got why it is so important. I understand that the baby is supposed to be God's son, sent to save all mankind; but even if it's true, why would God want to save a world this messed up?"

"Ahh, my son, the story is *very* true; but only God can understand the kind of love He has for this world, to send His only Son to save it. Sadly, not every one realizes that the salvation He died for is for *them*, along with the rest of the world," the man replied, his tone heavy with grief.

"I could understand, at least partially that Jesus died for the world, if we weren't a bunch of lying scum bags; but what would make Him want to get us out of our own mess?" Logan said, feeling anger rise in him as he thought of what humanity and mutants alike did, killing and mutilating one another.

"No one understands why He loved us so much. He just did and that is all you need to know. That's why it's called faith. You don't understand, you just trust. He died so you wouldn't have to be chained to sin and pain any longer. He came to earth on Christmas, so that the world might find life."

Logan looked at him, his eyes showing all the pain that was in his heart. How could God love him, a man who had killed countless people, who was more animal than man? He had been mutilated into a killing machine, how could God create a life, only to allow it to be destroyed by man's wickedness?

"He does love *you*, Logan," the man said as Logan realized the old man had been replaced by a young man in white robes, with white wings draping over the back of the pew. His face was streaked with tears. "He wept when they did this to you," he said, touching Logan's forearms. "He watched you wander alone in the snow, bloody and broken and He wept, He wept for you and for the world. He loves you more than you can ever understand and He sent me to show you that. He wants you, His child, to come home so that you may never have to feel the pain of your past again. He made you this way for a reason, Logan, and He has wonderful plans for you, if you could only see them. He wants His child to come home and rest and be healed. He has always loved you, He always will."

Logan looked into the angel's face, amazed, but now understanding. He felt a peace, even more than before, one that came from knowing the God of heaven had wept over him and wanted him to come home, that he could be one of God's children, that he didn't have to run anymore. He could give his pain to God and would never have to feel the pain of his past again. His life had a purpose and a peace.

The angel looked back at him and smiled. "Logan, my brethren in heaven are rejoicing right now. Go, and be at peace."

Logan blinked, but the angel was gone. Silently, he made his way back to his bike and took it back to the road.

The snow had ceased, leaving everything white. There was no moon, just a single bright star illuminating the blanket of snow. Logan glanced back in the direction the church, but it, too, was gone. He started the bike up and headed back down the road, hoping he would get back to Westchester before Christmas breakfast was over.