

THE CHRISTMAS CARD NAZI
(A Short Story)
by Thomas Smith

Harry Schmitt was a man of honor, a warrior of tradition, a stalwart defender of Yuletide etiquette. But above all else, he was as his family proclaimed "The Christmas Card Nazi."

Every Holiday Season, like clockwork, he would don his festive sweater, settle into his old recliner, and begin his annual crusade - handwriting, addressing, and mailing Christmas cards to his vast circle of family and friends.

His rules were simple yet unyielding:

1. If you've received a card, you must sent one back.
2. If you failed to reciprocate, well... "NO CARD FOR YOU! YOU'RE OFF THE LIST!"

For decades, Harry kept meticulous records, his "Nazi's Ledger" filled with names, addresses, and checkmarks. Green check? Loyal subject. Red X? Traitor.

His wife, Thelma, used to tell him, "Harry, Christmas isn't a game of revenge! It's about giving!" But Harry simply scoffed, tightening his grip on his favorite holiday tradition.

Over the years, as Harry's list grew shorter and shorter, he began issuing dramatic declarations.

"The Hendersons have fallen! Never again shall they darken my mailbox!"

"Cousin Ida? Exiled! A decade without a return card! Treasonous!"

Even his own grandson, Mikey, was cut off one fateful year. "You think I didn't notice, boy? I saw your mother's post about your dog's Christmas sweater, yet no card for your dear old Grandpa? Disgraceful!"

Thelma had passed some years ago, and Harry, now well into his eighties, found his list dwindling to nearly nothing. This past Christmas, only one card sat on his mantle - a pre-printed, mass-mailed greeting from his chiropractor.

Christmas became cold. Lonely. Depressing. And as the seasons passed, Harry's once-mighty resolve wavered.

By the time Thanksgiving arrived this year, Harry sat alone with a microwave turkey dinner and a bottle of whiskey, flipping through his old journals. That's when he found it - an old Christmas card list from decades ago.

His hand trembled as he traced over the names. There was Thelma's handwriting

next to his, little notes like "Remember to send Ida an extra note about her hip surgery!" or "Mikey's getting big - maybe slip a ten in his card this year?"

Tears welled in the old Nazi's eyes. These weren't just names on a list. These were people he had loved. People he had cut off over a stupid sense of fairness.

"This is the answer," he whispered. "I will send Christmas cards to everyone, without expecting anything in return. And maybe, just maybe, if I'm not so critical this time, perhaps I won't die alone."

And so, with renewed purpose, Harry set out on one final campaign. He bought stacks of cards, personalized each message, and sent them out without a single grudge in his heart.

The results were nothing short of a Christmas miracle. By mid-December, cards started pouring in. First a few, then a flood. Even Mikey sent one - "Merry Christmas, Grandpa! Hope to see you soon!"

On Christmas Eve, Harry's doorbell rang. He shuffled over, expecting a package, but was instead greeted by a crowd - Mikey, Ida, the Hendersons, and the rest of the people he'd exiled over the years. "You old fool," Mikey laughed. "Did you really think we wouldn't come see you?"

For the first time in years, Harry spent Christmas surrounded by friends and loved ones. And as he sat by the fire, sipping hot cocoa, he chuckled to himself. "Perhaps," he mused, "a Nazi's greatest victory... is knowing when to lay down his sword."

{THE END.}