

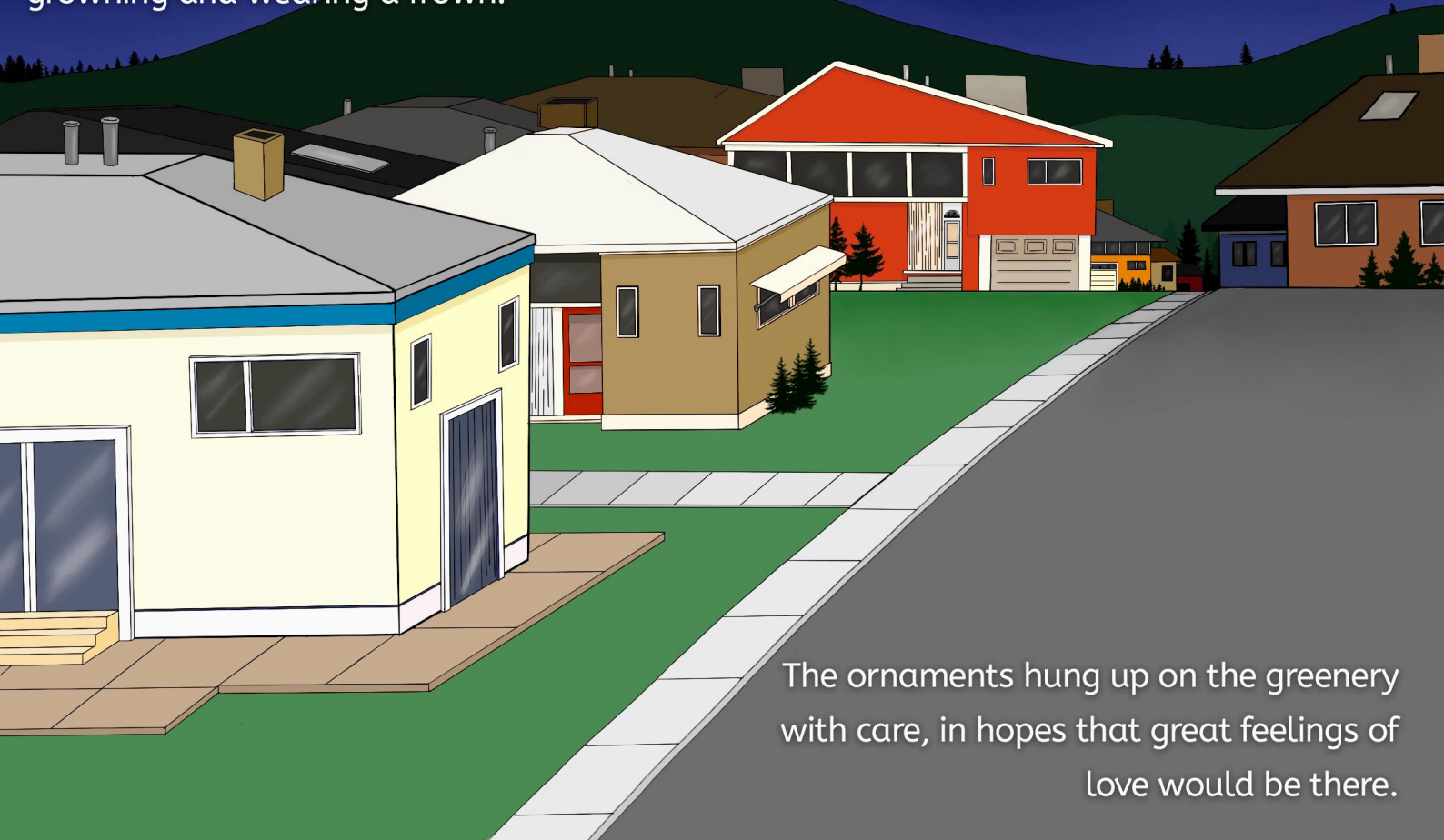
A Neighborhood Christmas

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Illustrated by Noelle Thompson

Based on a true story



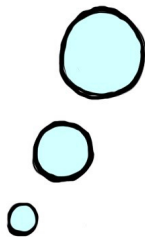
'Twas the night before Christmas and all
through the town. All of the people were
growning and wearing a frown.



The ornaments hung up on the greenery
with care, in hopes that great feelings of
love would be there.



But I felt just like the pits, I was tired and was blue
Just thinking of all that I had yet to do.
I'd maxed out my Visa, my debts were sky high
And still, I had dozens of presents to buy.



“What would it take?” thought I, on that night, “To make Christmas perfect and everything right?” I’d have to have endless supplies of green money For mountains of gifts for my kids and my honey.



All perfectly wrapped in gift paper and bows
Covering jewelry and expensive clothes.
The house would be spotless from ceiling to floors
With a music box playing and wreaths on the doors.



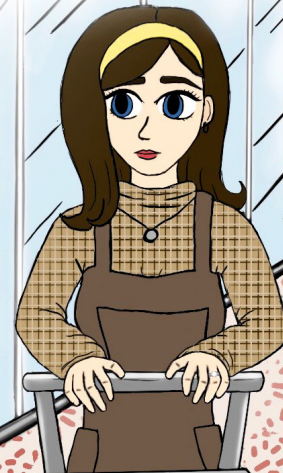
The feast would be scrumptious from turkey to pies
Served up on old China to guests wearing ties.
Then out from the dressing room I would appear
Exquisitely dressed from my toes to my ear.

Looking peaceful, serene, and with confidence soaring
For this perfect Christmas could never be boring.
The happy guests ooze “What a great family,”
As we hug and we sing around the tree.
All the marriages strong, all the children are bright
And we treat our old parents with reverent delight.



Just then I caught sight of my protruding belly,
Stuffed with French fries, chocolate, and biscuits and jelly.

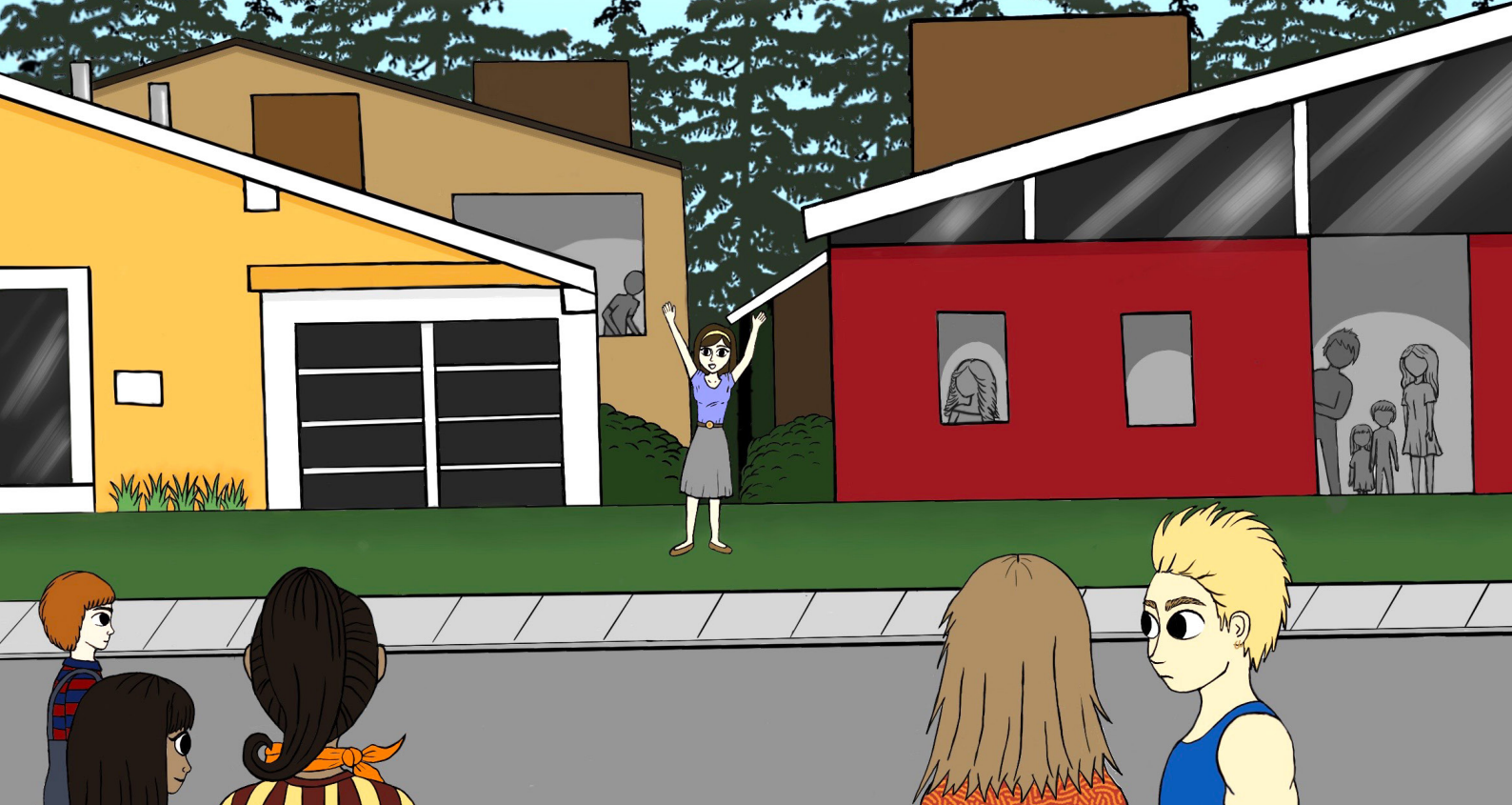
I screamed, "It's impossible, pure fantasy!"
There's none like the Walton's ideal family!"
Then i cried for the dream that I had to let go
And I started another that began to grow.





I put back the turkey and spoke not a word
Except to the clerk, "Give the Walton's the bird"
I scurried on home, a mischevious elf
And went right to bed (I took care of myself)

But early next morning I gathered my crew
“No matter what happens, I said ”I love you.
This Christmas is different, we’ll do something wild.
We’re inviting all neighbors, man woman and child.”



“Come Karen, come Tommy, come Donnie and Fritz
Come Mrs. Campbell and come Mr. Gritz



From the end of the street, from over the wall
They all started coming, the short and the tall

Peggy Jane came with her fatherless boys,
Then the widow next door with canned fruit and old toys

The couple whose daughter was killed in a car,
And the woman whose husband was shot in a bar.

One's family was Jewish, one goes to A.A.,
One's just out of rehab, and two are gay.

The old man who sometimes forgets where he is,
And his daughter who'd rather be Mrs. than Ms.

The couple who grieve over children not born
All came with their beans, their soup and their
corn.



We told of the funniest Christmas we had
And of times we were wicked and times we were bad.
Performed crazy tricks and played silly games
Then we sung and we danced and we guessed middle
names.



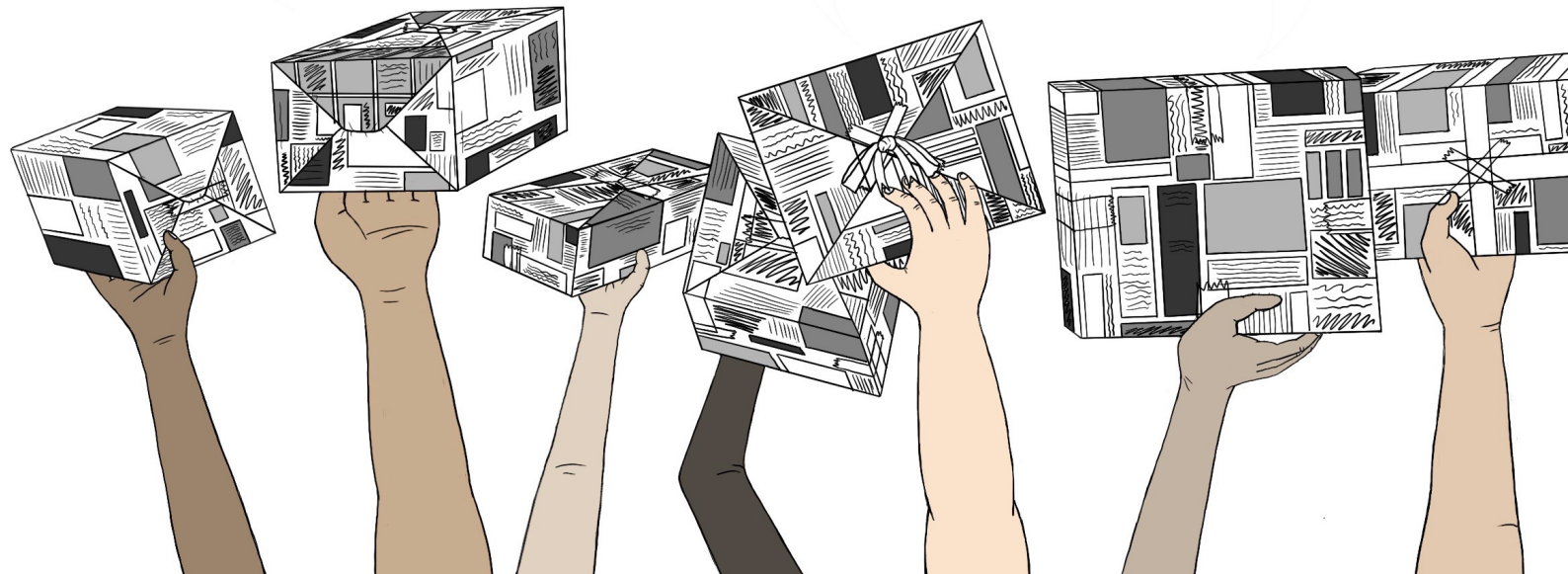
They came in all colors, all shapes and all sizes
And I knew in a flash we were in for surprises.
We started to talk, then we laughed as we joked
Reminiscenced and told stories bout' marvelous folk.

George played the guitar, Sue played the kazoo,
Shawn brought in a pot of real Irish stew.
We fashioned dolls from old kitchen rags,
Then we built a pinata from old grocery bags.



Pulled the plug from the tube as we sat on the floors
Built a fire to make popcorn and hot dogs and s'mores.
Ate spicy hot apples and drank lemon tea
Twas' a feast cooked by neighbors to serve royalty.

Then came the presents all wrapped in old news
Each gave of himself, there'd be no winter blues.
"I'll rake up your lawn, I'll watch your dog 'Sophie'
This tickets good for a pan-full of cookies.
I'll babysit one night a week, every Monday.
I'll paint your fence white, take you out for a sundae."



We thanked everyone and we hugged and we cried.
Then we said, "let's have races!" And all went outside.
On the grass we played horseshoes, on cement, we
jumped rope,
We dared all the children to roll down the slope.

We played all that day as we shared Christmas joy
And we shared Christmas love with each girl and
each boy.



Finally the party had come to an end
And we each said “Goodnight” to a newly found friend.
Then they heard me exclaim as they strolled out of sight
“We found the true spirit of Christmas tonight!”

