

# **The Christmas Fairy Tale**

**A Novella by  
R. A. Conti**

# **The Christmas Fairy Tale**

By R. A. Conti  
Copyright 2018 Richard Conti  
All Rights Reserved  
ISBN

More titles by R. A. Conti are available at [RichardConti.blog](http://RichardConti.blog)

## Contents

[Chapter 1 - Real Books](#)

[Chapter 2 - Thanksgiving](#)

[Chapter 3 - The Collection](#)

[Chapter 4 - Yearbook](#)

[Chapter 5 - Inventory 1](#)

[Chapter 6 - Inventory 2](#)

[Chapter 7 - Girlfriend](#)

[Chapter 8 - Truths](#)

[Chapter 9 - Memories](#)

[Chapter 10 - 'The Fairy Tale,' by J. C.](#)

[Chapter 11 - Complications and Resolutions](#)

## Chapter 1 - Real Books

Jenny overslept and arrived at her bookshop late. It was the Monday before Thanksgiving. The holiday shopping season was about to begin, but she did not feel enthusiastic about it. There were no customers waiting.

She puttered around the store, opening boxes, shelving books, and straightening up displays. Saturday had been a long day. Several customers stopped in. Jenny closed late, had no time to clean up, and went home tired. She did not open Sunday. It was her last day off until Christmas.

She had many books, both new and used, and a bright, welcoming, cozy bookshop. There were a few inviting high-backed comfortable chairs scattered throughout the store. Her parents laid out the shop years ago when they opened it as *Real Books*. The name was a play on words. Real is the Spanish word for 'royal,' so the actual name of the shop was *Royal Books*. It was their other child, and they loved it. Jenny was never jealous, however; her parents always told her they loved her more.

Her mother, Anne, died a few years after the shop opened. Her father, Jack, asked her to run it before he died, but told her would understand if she had something better to do. She burst into tears and told him of course she would keep it; what could she possibly do that was better than running his bookshop? He died in peace.

Her parents sold *real* books, the kind printed on paper. Jack died before digital books were available. She did not think he would have objected to electronic books, however. He was an avid reader and loved language, stories, and information, regardless of what form they came in.

She did not want customers to think it was an elitist or anachronistic bookshop. People thought it was named *Real Books* because it was anti-electronic books. She laughed at their assumption and explained the origin of the name. They were always impressed, and liked that an independent bookstore was called *Royal Books*. It made them feel special, which was how her parents hoped customers would feel whenever they came in.

Jenny struggled to remain in business, and felt apprehensive about the next five weeks. She worried she might not make enough money to pay her bills and debts. This holiday shopping season could end as 'sound and fury, signifying nothing.' Jenny felt a miracle was necessary to bail her out, but did not believe in miracles at Christmas, or any other time of the year.

The door chime sounded around one pm as her first customer of the day walked in. He paused inside the door and looked around. Jenny quietly waited behind the counter. She did not like to approach people before they had time to take in the inviting, and relaxing feel of the store. She wanted customers to feel at home. He did not move from the door, however, so she politely greeted him.

"Hello. Nice day. Thanks for dropping by. Looking for anything special?" He felt pleased she had addressed him. It made him feel less awkward.

"Um, yes. I'm not looking to buy anything. I have some books to sell, and I wanted to see if you might be interested." Jenny felt disappointed. She took in people's unwanted books, but never had enough space for all of them. She never had enough money to pay people what they expected, either.

"Yes, we buy books. Do you have them with you?" She expected he had a bag or box outside in his car.

"No. They're at the house," he said, as he walked toward the counter. He was a distinguished looking gentleman in expensive clothes, and had a kind face and businesslike

voice. She guessed he was around her age, and had the impression, from the way he walked and spoke, that he liked to direct people, and give orders.

“Are there a lot of them?” Jenny asked, apprehensively. She could not afford to buy an entire library.

“Yes. Is that a problem?”

“No,” she lied. She wanted to encourage him to tell her more before she declined his offer.

“Oh, good. You see, I don’t know what to do with them. I need someone who knows about books.” Books were *all* Jenny knew about.

“Oh, great. I can probably help you.” He reached the counter. She waited for more information. He stared at her. She felt uncomfortable.

“Are you Jenny Collins?” he asked, tentatively.

“I was. It’s Rodgers, now, like it says on the door. Do I know you?”

“I’m Charlie Stockton.” Jenny had never heard of him. Was he someone famous? She looked at him, waiting for an explanation. “We went to Springfield High together,” he explained, cheerfully, as if he felt happy to meet an old classmate.

“Oh, did we? I’m sorry I don’t remember you, Charlie. Were we in the same class?”

“Yes. Class of ’91.”

“Wow. That was a long time ago. Where have you been? How are you doing? ” *Judging from the way he’s dressed, she thought, Charlie’s doing pretty well.* Charlie ignored her questions.

“Jenny, here’s the thing. I came back to be with my mother before she died. Now that she’s gone, I need to dispose of her possessions, and sell her house. I’d like to get everything out by the end of the year.”

“Oh, I’m sorry she’s gone,” Jenny said, sympathetically.

“She lived a good life, and wasn’t in any pain. I’m grateful for that,” he replied, sadly.

“But, you miss her.”

“Well, yes and no. We didn’t see each other a lot after I left, but we kept in touch. We were close, but in a distant way.”

“Strange way to put it, but I understand.” She could tell he did not want to talk about it anymore.

“Here’s the thing. Many of the books have been in my family for generations.”

“Oh, if they’re old books, I can put you in touch with a few antiquarian dealers.”

“I *don’t* want to deal with dealers,” he interjected, cutting her off. “My mother asked me not to,” he explained.

“The people I know would give you a fair price, I can assure you.”

“Oh, it’s not about the money. My mom asked me to...how did she put it...find good homes for all her friends.”

“She must have loved the books very much,” Jenny replied, admiringly.

“She did. So I don’t want a dealer, I want someone who loves books. Does that make sense?”

“I think I understand. But what do you want me to do?”

“Well, just look at them and tell me what you think. I don’t know what’s there. I don’t know what to do with them.”

“I could help you with that.”

“I’ll pay you, of course.”

“Well, I’m about to start my busy holiday season. I won’t have any free time until after Christmas.”

“That won’t work for me. But maybe you could at least *look* at them, tell me what you think, and give me some advice, even if you can’t sell them for me. I’d be happy to pay you just to do that. Please?” The pleading in his voice made her unable to resist.

“Sure, I could do that. When?”

“Sometime this week.”

“That could work. I’m expecting my son home for Thanksgiving. He could run the store for me - he’s done it before - while I come to look at your books.”

“That would be great. Here’s my card. Could you call me when you know you’ll have some time?”

“Sure. I’ll talk to him and call you as soon as we have something worked out.”

Charlie smiled weakly and turned to leave. Jenny felt sorry for him. Thanksgiving was the holiday when everyone returned to their homes and families. Charlie had just lost his mother, and would soon say good-bye to his family’s home. He hesitated before he opened the door. She wondered if he had forgotten something.

“By the way...I was wondering...how does that fairy tale end?” he asked.

“*What* fairy tale?” she replied, puzzled.

“The one *you* wrote...back in high school.”

“I don’t recall writing anything. Are you sure it was me?”

“Absolutely certain, but I can understand if you don’t recall it. That was a long time ago.”

“I don’t remember it. Sorry.” Charlie shrugged and left. Jenny tried to remember the story he referred to. Perhaps it was a long-forgotten class project. How could he recall it if she did not? She would have to ask him about it the next time they met.