

My Christmas Ornaments
By Jenny Dee



Twenty years ago, I unwrapped a gift that I would hold close to my heart for years to come. It was the Bride's Tree Collection of Ornaments, given to me at my bridal shower by a very special person who had presented this to me on behalf of a beloved neighbor, who had passed away from emphysema a few years earlier. The sentiment touched me so deeply then, and every year, I tear up remembering that moment and the love behind that most thoughtful of gifts.

When I first received them, my husband and I would just put them on our Christmas tree without any thought whatsoever to their meaning. They were simply a pretty set of ornaments to brighten up our annual decorations.

Since then, they have come to mean so much more.

The first Christmas after my divorce, I had come upon these ornaments when I opened up my storage of decorations, and they tugged at my heart. I didn't expect to find anything that would remind me of my dissolved marriage ten months later. See, over that last year, I had done a lot of cleaning out of joint possessions, but had forgotten all about this gift and how it was meant to bless our union. Another reminder that forever had come to an end prematurely.

But they were from someone special, with a deeper meaning, and I could not bear to part with them.

Instead, I chose to look closer at the ornaments; at the beautifully, intricately designed see-through box that held them. It was then that I discovered what I had missed for so many years, when I quickly removed them from their padded squares and hung them in a hurry aside other generic ornaments. Along the side were the designated meanings of each one, and I became mesmerized by their symbolism.

As I took in their individual messages, it occurred to me that they encompassed everything a home should consist of in my eyes, from the tangible idea of shelter and protection, to the warmth of welcoming neighbors and the gift of God's blessings.

And for the first time since receiving this special present, I felt the depth of the meaning behind these ornaments of pure love and remembrance, and decided to consciously honor each one as it took its spot upon a branch.

As I placed each one on the tree with love in my heart, I read what it stood for, thought about what that meant for me, then closed my eyes and visualized how I saw each in my life, ending each thought with gratitude for the blessing to come.

Each of the twelve ornaments has developed into its own significance for me:

- A House – Shelter and protection. May I continue to be blessed with this beautiful, safe home I have made for my children and myself.
- A Rabbit – Hope and faith. May I continue to trust that everything happens for a reason, and that miracles are possible.
- A Teapot – Hospitality. May all who enter my home feel welcome and bring even more joy to our surroundings.
- A Bird – Happiness and joy. May we remember what's most important in life: the little things, the present moment, the people we love.
- A Rose – Beauty & Affection. May I always remember that beauty is within, and that I am worthy of affection.
- A Fruit Basket – Generosity. May my basket always be full of an abundance of health, wealth, love and joy, so that I may share my blessings with others.
- A Fish – Christ's blessing. May God continue to bless our home and our lives with His love and protect us from harm.
- A Pine Cone – Motherhood and fruitfulness. May I continue to strengthen my bond with my children and provide them with the love and foundation they need to flourish.
- A Santa – Unselfishness and goodwill. May I reach deeper within to become even more compassionate, remembering that there are those less fortunate than us.
- A Flower Basket – Good wishes. May we be blessed with loving surprises, opportunities, family and friends.
- An Angel – God's guidance in the home. May God, the angels and our departed loved ones continue to watch over us and guide us from up above.
- A Heart – True Love. May this be the year that my heart finds true love.

Well, that last one has been a long time in the making, so for now, I just have to wish to continue treating myself like my own true love until prince charming arrives.

It wasn't always easy to hang up that heart ornament, especially in the earlier years. And depending on my state of mind each year, others also presented an emotional challenge. Several years ago, the rose broke, not-so-coincidentally the same year I started to feel no beauty or affection in my life. I let it remain broken and missing from my set for quite a few years, feeling melancholy as I skipped over that particular ornament's blessings.

After a few years of healing, I decided that it was time for me to bring that ornament back to life, so together with my daughter, we created a homemade paper rose to complete my set once more.

A few years after that, my little flower basket broke, and again, my sweet, artistic little daughter crafted the perfect replacement. This time, we replaced it immediately to continue the blessings of good wishes upon our Christmas tree. The physical items may break over the years, but we will no longer be without a complete set; it means too much to me.

These Christmas ornament wishes have now become my personal tradition, as I take the time to place each one on the tree to honor its symbolism and say a little prayer. I shed a tear for the neighbor who passed, remember the warmth in my heart from the person who gave this to me and feel gratitude for the ability to still hang these tokens on a tree each year as I count my blessings.

Wishing all of my readers equal blessings this and every holiday season.