

Lucky Leonard

By Marilyn Reeves

Lucky Leonard Leibowitz's good luck had just run out. He could hardly believe the bad news his doctor had given him. "I'm sorry, Leonard, but the cancer's back, and the test results indicate that further surgery or chemo would be to no avail. Go home, enjoy your last Christmas, and – if you're lucky – ring in the New Year. My best guess is you've got another six to eight weeks, tops."

I wish I *had* a home, Leonard thought, as he headed out the door. Oh, he a place to *live* – a penthouse filled with fine furniture and expensive bric-a-brac – but no family to make it seem like home. No one to share his bad news with. No one who would really care.

Since he was already downtown, Leonard decided to walk past the shops one last time. A cacophony of Christmas carols competed with each other as he made his way down the block. He used to love looking in all the lavishly decorated windows filled with fancy clothes, knickknacks and toys that tantalized his childhood imagination.

As he was taking in all the sites, he also remembered how he had learned to make a living in his youth – as a pickpocket!

Leonard had been very careful about whom he picked as targets. They were always well-dressed, obviously well-to-do individuals who were distracted by something. So they didn't notice when Leonard brushed by them, saying "Excuse me," while he skillfully relieve them of their wallets. He made so much money picking pockets his friends started calling him 'Lucky Leonard.'

Eventually, he moved on to bigger and better things. He became a cat burglar and made a

small fortune off stolen goods. But one not-so-lucky day Leonard got busted and did some time in prison. While he was incarcerated he decided to go straight, and spent his time studying everything he could find about finance. So, after his release, he eventually made an even bigger fortune, adroitly playing the stock market.

But now here he was, a wealthy, dying old man with no family, no friends, no one to spend the Holidays with.

He passed by a mother and her two young children who were mesmerized by the toys inside one of the display windows. The little boy wanted a bike, the little girl was pleading for a curly-haired doll. The mother, obviously distraught, could only tell them, "We'll just have to wait and see what Santa brings." Judging by her frayed coat, Leonard surmised that Santa wouldn't be bringing them those expensive toys they were wishing for.

On sudden impulse, Leonard pulled out his money clip, and then – reverting to his skills as an expert pickpocket – excused himself as he brushed by the woman, slipping a couple of Ben Franklins into her pocket. He only wished he could be a fly on the wall when she discovered that unexpected bounty!

Over the next few weeks, Leonard had a new career as a 'reverse pickpocket,' slipping hundred-dollar bills into the pockets of individuals he deemed most deserving. He never had so much fun in his life! And Lucky Leonard's last Christmas turned out to be a very merry one after all!