

TRADITIONS ARE BORN

Creating holiday magic in a hurry.

BY DONALD FRASER

In 2014, our newborn daughter Clara spent the weeks and days before her first Christmas in and out of the hospital. Perched beside the bassinet for the whole time was Krista, unwilling to leave her daughter's side. When some well-placed caution on the part of the doctors pushed Clara's final release time to 5 pm on Christmas Eve, Krista realized that she would have no time to buy gifts or even decorate the house.

"But..." Krista's lip trembled on that Christmas Eve. "But ... I just wanted it to be special!" When the tears that had been welling up began to spill, I knew I had to take things into my own hands. And so, at 2 pm – a mere two hours before everything closed for the holidays – I set out to save Christmas and start some family traditions.

First up, a tree. Both Krista and I love real trees so I scoured the few lots that were still open. What I ended up with made Charlie Brown's sad-sack pine look healthy by comparison. It also only came up to my shoulder. While moving it, I sneezed – and one of its limbs fell off!

We wanted to have a special ornament

for Clara each year, and luckily had thought ahead. We got her a snowman with "First Christmas" written on it and room to write her name and the year.

Next, I set out to ensure we had some good quality family time – with carols and retro holiday specials. As soon as I got home from the hospital, I downloaded Rudolph, Frosty, and Peanuts. While I was at it, I bought a whole bunch of Christmas music online.

At the last minute, I went food shopping. With nary a turkey to be found, I bought the last frozen chicken from the only supermarket still open. Once defrosted, I figured out why it had been left behind. It was missing a wing and looked like it had fallen down a few flights of stairs. As I recall, we served it with sour cream and onion potato chips.

This year, we're going to do Christmas up right. We're going to cut our own tree, with Clara in tow in a brand new red wooden sleigh. It's going to be as Canadian a moment as you can imagine – complete with warm apple cider for all of us.

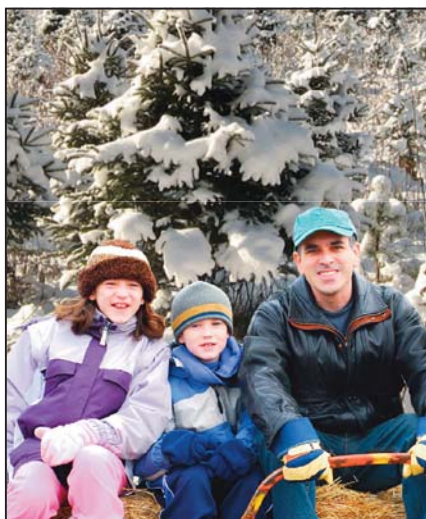
Christmas dinner will be at Clara's grandparents' house, so we're going to make



our Christmas Eve/Christmas morning plans absolutely delicious – and a ton of fun. I mean, how cool is it to eat in the living room? In pajamas! Hot appetizers for the evening and little quiche bites for the morning. Music and wrapping paper will fill the air and smartphone cameras will be clicking away. We'll take our Christmas selfie in front of the tree and our new annual e-card tradition will begin.

Clara's first Christmas didn't go the way that any of us wanted it to. That's just the way that life with a newborn goes. But while it was rushed and harried, it brought us together in ways that we never would have imagined. In the end, it all came together for a special few days that we'll never forget. So much so that we now have a Christmas story that will be told each and every year.

Donald Fraser writes for television, radio, print, and web. His heart grows three sizes each December 25th.



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