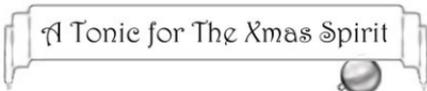




The
Other
Christmas
Carol
by
David Wake



A Tonic for The Xmas Spirit

WATLEDGE BOOKS

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“I am the Ghost of Christmas Present,” said the Spirit. “Look upon me!”

A Christmas Carol – Charles Dickens

’T WASN’T THE NIGHT BEFORE XMAS

“**I**t’s Christmas!”

I am a brown bear and I lived at the North Pole. I remember those happy, innocent times all those days ago. I can still hear the jolly music playing now, the fun and the laughter, and most of all the playing.

There was a house, full of furniture, all lovingly made from bits and pieces, odds and ends, and bric-a-brac: a bobbin for a chair, a wooden block for a table, a matchbox for a bed and, in pride of place, a sprig of pine stood in for a real Christmas tree.

Snow fell, or at least pieces of paper, fluttering down like giant snowflakes to catch on the cotton wool that had already been painstakingly added to the roof. Safe inside the house was a family: a father, a mother and a son.

“Naughty boy!”

A gigantic finger appeared and waggled at the model of a small boy.

“You’re not allowed to see Santa, so off to bed with you.”

The hand took the model and plonked it into a bed upstairs.

“Night night, don’t let the bed bugs bite.”

Of course, I knew that this was Carol speaking and not the real Santa Claus, but I was entranced by the tale as always such was Carol’s enthusiasm in the endless retelling of it all.

“Santa Claus lands on the roof pulled by Dunder, Blixem, Dancer, Comet, Prancer, Dasher, Vixen and Cupid.”

And Santa did land in his cardboard sleigh pulled by his reindeer of clay, all controlled by Carol’s cold fingers, which looked so huge next to her Doll’s House.

“Out he gets... Ho, ho, ho,” boomed Carol, her face lit up, pink and warm despite the Arctic winter. It loomed large over the corrugated cardboard roof, beaming like the sun.

“Now, Santa checks his list – you have been good – so he uses his Magic Belt and goes down the chimney. Hold tight.”

Under her control, the Santa model jiggled for a few wobbles. He couldn’t fit down the chimney, of course, so Carol flew him through the open front of the house with a whoosh and stood him by the painted fireplace.

“Now,” she said, “Let’s see what’s inside his Magic Sack? It’s a... present!”

She produced the present, all shiny and bright, wrapped up in a scrap of real Christmas wrapping paper.

“Into the stocking with it.”

The white and purple spotted ankle socks, one of Carol’s own, bulged as the present slipped inside.

“There we go,” she said, placing it under the tiny Christmas tree. “Under the Christmas tree ready for Christmas morning. Shush! It’s a toy. A brand new toy to play with on Christmas Day, because that’s what Christmas is all about: toys.”

And her smile was a joy to behold as the background music reached a crescendo.

“Oh! Wait!” she said. “There’s the mince pie and milk.”

She pulled out a plate with a mince pie, which she ate, leaving crumbs on the hay covered floor, and then she drank heartily from her milk, depositing a white moustache upon her top lip.

The music finally finished on the radio: “That was...” the DJ began saying.

“Ho, ho, ho,” said Carol in a deep voice before continuing: “Santa goes back up the chimney and takes off in his sleigh to deliver all the other presents to all the other good boys and girls.”

Carol sat back, happy with her tale, and looked to all her toys arranged in a semicircle around her. I was myself in the front row as always. We were all in her den tucked away under the disused sleigh that lay forgotten and upturned at the back of the reindeer stables. It was home to many stories and to us: the thrown out, but rescued; the broken, but repaired; the lost, but found. We were all much-loved toys, all of us: Jemima Duck, Toby Jug, Dark Wader, Achoo Man and myself, Theo Bear.

“...and now to remind us that Christmas is coming,” said the crackling voice and with that Jingle Bells began, full of hope and happiness. A huge grin exploded onto Carol’s face.

“Christmas is coming!” she yelled.

She jumped up, grabbed me from the collection, and bolted towards the stable door.

“Rudolph,” she shouted as she charged past. “Christmas is coming.”

Rudolph, old now, his famous nose more plum than scarlet, glanced up from his hay and shook his head in mock dismay: ‘kids today’.

Carol skipped out into the snow-covered yard where everything was lit by the twinkling lights dangling from the branches of the pine trees. There were Snowmen, big, friendly-looking creatures with coal for eyes and carrots for noses. Carol zig-zagged around them as they tried to lumber out of her way.

“Be careful, Carol,” a Snowman said in his wise, but sad voice. “It’s slippery.”

“Frosty! Christmas is coming.”

Another Snowman put out a steady hand out to stop Carol, but she dodged underneath and raced away towards the cottage. The Snowman shrugged to the other Snowmen as if to say: ‘what can you do?’

I was stuffed within her duffle coat pocket, my usual place, as she ran across the white field towards the cottage. Father Christmas’s grotto was three oft-extended buildings arranged around an airstrip on an ice floe near the North Pole. There were the reindeer stables, the factory with its workshops, and finally Father Christmas’s cottage. Carol kicked off the snow that inevitably stuck between the treads of her boots before rattling across the floor tiles into the kitchen.

Her mother, Mrs Christmas, was cooking: steaming fruit and nuts in suet with a rich porter.

“Mother, mother!” cried Carol.

“Yes, dear?”

“Mother! Mother!”

“Yes, dear?”

“Christmas is coming!”

“Why, so it is.”

“Christmas is coming!”

“Don’t I know it? So much to do.”

“Christmas is coming!” shouted Carol. “Aren’t you excited?”

“Yes, dear, but there’s still plenty of time.”

“But Mum...”

“It’s still only September, dear.”

“Only September, but... that’s simply ages.”

“It’ll pass in no time.”

“But the decorations are up already.”

“Yes dear. Christmas seems to come earlier every year.”

“And Father’s got loads of letters – simply loads – already.”

“Yes, dear, but there are still one hundred and five shopping days to go.”

“But that’s, like, forever!”

“Patience, Carol, patience.”

“But Mum... it’s not fair,” said Carol, her arms folded across herself crossly, a difficult task as she was still wearing her duffle. “Why can’t every day be Christmas Day?”

And so the days passed.

Slowly.

Reluctantly.

Interminably.

Even though more Christmas decorations went up sooner than ever before, it still wasn’t the real day – yet. Thanksgiving came and went, so did Halloween; Bonfire Night and Remembrance Sunday too, came and went. Father Christmas worked longer and longer hours, preparing his lists and organising the toy making in the workshops where the elves toiled to make the many, many presents. Carol played in her den, desperate for the days to pass as her playtime rehearsed and rehearsed the Big Day. Eventually, when the sun no longer appeared above the horizon, Mrs Christmas put up the Advent Calendar and Carol opened a window every morning:-

1. A Christmas Tree.
2. A Pudding.
3. Holly.
4. A Car.
5. A Clock.
6. Candles.
7. Ribbons.
8. Bells.
9. Stockings.
10. Sugar Canes.
11. A Snowman.
12. A Christmas Cracker.
13. A Toy Train.
14. A Toy Soldier.
15. Two Snowflakes.
16. A Family of Penguins.
17. A Cuddly Toy.
18. Balloons.
19. A Santa Hat.
20. A Reindeer.
21. Father Christmas.
22. A Book.
23. Sweets.

Carol sang too: Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer had a very shiny nose. Olive, the other reindeer, used to laugh and call him names. Over the fields we go, laughing all the way, oh what fun it is to fly on a one deer open sleigh, and it's a fairy tale, they say, he was made of snow, but the children know how he came to life one day. Frosty, the Snowman, you'll go down in history...

*...and the story continues in paperback or ebook:
[The Other Christmas Carol](#)*