

CHRISTMAS 2018

WRITINGS BY NNU3A CREATIVE WRITERS

READ AT THE CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION

EVENT 13 DECEMBER 2018

Pass the Christmas Parcel.

Written and Read by Janice Ley

It was a family Christmas tradition, beginning so long ago its origin forgotten. We wrapped our Christmas presents in a pass the parcel manner, sandwiching the gifts between layers of Christmas paper. There were five of us, so five parcels, containing a gift for each between the layers. We assembled them during December, the season of Advent. Each of us needed to consider what gifts would practically fit, with a few hints as to who wanted to begin the parcel as their offering was perhaps an awkward shape and others would plea for theirs to be the last to include. One year Jeremy wrapped a giant chocolate bar in red tissue paper, very seasonal, but hardly practical as the next layer held a white lace handkerchief and it caused a temporary fall out in the O'Hara family.

Most years the Advent season was fantastic. Each day someone would phone, or call at the door with a parcel, this one for Tom, another for Jeremy and visits between ourselves escalated as the big day drew near. "I need the parcel to Sara back!" Paul declared one December 23rd. "I've put the wrong gift inside and she will not be happy with Tom's flashing Santa tie!" That was a logistical nightmare as the outer layers needed to be opened by the right sibling so as not to spoil their surprise, but somehow, we managed.

When Christmas Day came around, we gathered together and the unwrapping begun. Dad put on rousing Christmas music and the parcels circulated. Only when the right person was holding their gift package as the music stopped, did a wrapper get undone. We each had to remember our paper and who it was for, which was fine early on, but less reliable after a glass or two. It was great fun and lasted for ages.

We had goes at it throughout the day and if one person fell behind, dad tried a bit of cheating with the music to see fair play. We all got to enjoy each other's gifts and there was much merriment in the process.

Sensible presents were soon discarded and silliness took over. Garters, sexy underwear, Dickens type nightcaps and rude aprons, all added to the fun and each year the gifts grew more outrageous.

Tom is the eldest and he was the first to bring a girlfriend to our Christmas tradition. I am sure he did his best to explain it, but the poor girl got it dreadfully wrong. We didn't have to guess which layer was hers. They were nice enough presents, I would even say generous, but the laughter fell silent as soap, then writing paper, socks and talc, all so sensible fell from the parcels. It put a dampener on our festive game and we squirmed as we said our thank yous. Slowly the tradition died. Tom got married and had three children, Sara moved away, so posted her presents and dad grew frail, so couldn't keep up with the stopping and starting of the music. Instead, like many households, we watched the children unwrap their presents and play with the contents, we ended the ruder presents and began to think sensibly; we grew up.

I remember those days so well as I sit with my eldest and his children. They play with new phones and iPads, each in a world of their own, but I smile and remember our childhood. The crepe paper, the chains, the Christmas pass the parcel and I wonder, how will my grandchildren remember their youth? What Christmas traditions will carry them through into old age and bring a crinkly smile to their faces?

Remembering

Written and Read by Margaret Payne

I remember that Christmas we all had flu
And everyone stayed away.
We curled up on the sofa wrapped up in our quilts
And just watched old films all day.
I remember that Christmas the weather was bad
And the roads were so thick with snow
That all the cars just got stuck on the drive
And our visitors couldn't go.
I remember that Christmas we had vegan guests
And I didn't know what to cook
So on Christmas Eve we had to rush out
For a vegan cookery book.
I remember that Christmas the tree fell down
And the lights all broke on the ground
And all over the room we found splinters of glass
So we couldn't go into the lounge.
I remember that Christmas the turkey was raw
When the dinner was ready to eat,
So we dined on sprouts and carrots and spuds
And stuffing without any meat.
I remember that Christmas we got smelly cheese.
From the shed the stink still drifted in
So we had to sneak out at dead of night
To throw it into a street litter bin.
I remember that Christmas the in-laws came
And thought all our traditions were wrong
They demanded champagne and smoked salmon for lunch
And they stayed for far too long.
I remember that Christmas the heating broke down
And when it was time to eat
We all sat in the kitchen around the stove
To keep warm by the oven's heat.
I remember that Christmas Aunt Jane got so drunk

She stood on the table to sing
The next day when she asked us what had gone on
We said no one remembered a thing.
I remember that Christmas we set fire to the cloth
When we lit the Christmas pud
We threw water all over the table and food
And the pudding still tasted good.
I remember the Christmas the Baileys got lost
Although we looked everywhere
I know I put it up on the shelf
But the next day it just wasn't there
Maybe there was a Christmas when all went well
When everyone had fun
With gorgeous presents and excellent food
But I don't remember that one

Nativity play – Written and read by Joy Hodge

'I want to be a shepherd,' said William defiantly, 'I was a shepherd last year with a lamb for the baby Jesus, all swaddled in the manger.'

The lamb was a cuddly toy, white and woolly with little ears and big black eyes hurriedly and specially purchased by his parents, who were only too pleased to encourage the normally recalcitrant child in any reasonable pursuit. William immediately christened the lamb Rupert and was thereafter rarely to be seen without him.

'Well William, this year you are going to be one of the stars. Won't that be nice?' encouraged Miss Richards.

'I don't want to be a star. I want to be a shepherd like last year with a lamb for the baby Jesus, all swaddled in the manger. You said I could, you did, you said,' accused William.

'Why don't you want to be a star?' deflected Miss Richards.

'Because its only a little star. Not the big shiny guiding star. Neil's going to be the big shiny guiding star.'

'But the lttle stars are shiny too.'

William looked sceptical.

'Yes they are,' affirmed Miss Richards, 'if you look out of your bedroom window tonight, you'll see lots of little stars and they will all be shining, all clustered round the Moon.'

'Janet Smith's going to be the Moon,' interrupted William. 'She's going to have a special face, very big and yellow and '

'Yes I know,' said Miss Richards, 'well you don't want to be the Moon anyway do you William?'

'No Miss. I want to be a shepherd like last year.with a lamb for the baby Jesus, all swaddled in the manger.'

Miss Richards sighed. This years class 2 nativity play seemed rather fraught. There were just too many children for not enough roles. There were far too many shepherds this year and scuffles had already

broken out among the more belligerent shepherds bearing wooden crooks. Last year they had introduced crabs and a lobster and then Gordon had insisted on being seaweed. Heaven only knows where we'll end up this year. Suddenly she had a brain wave.

'William,' she cajoled, 'would you like to be the Chief Little Star. It would say it in the programme.'

William brightened up. At break time he went round telling everyone he was going to be Chief Little Star. Somehow it sounded more like Cowboys and Indians. But Miss Richards could not afford to be fussy. With a glance at the darkening sky and in the best theatrical tradition, she could only hope it would all be alright on the night.

A little bit of what you fancy

Written and Read by Sharon White

A little bit of what you fancy - they say it does you good,
With Christmas coming forget your diet- I really think you should
A sliver, a morsel, a blooming great slab
A salmon, some prawns and a magnificent crab
A tiny piece, a miniscule slice, the tiniest of portions
Surely fish is good for me - this doesn't need my caution
A passing tray of sausage rolls captures my attention
I wolf down three in quick succession—what a glorious invention!
Canapes, dips and bowls of crisps and crudités for the taking
Our host has worked so hard all day, blending, mixing and baking
Port and sherry, mulled wine and beer
Prosecco, champagne and gin
With a gleam in my eye I grab a glass and prepare to jump straight in
A glass of Bailey's? Oh yes please—what am I saying? `1'10'111
Full of cream and sugar too I'll have to let it go
I ask instead for a small G & T and pass the Bailey's by
I'm handed a G & T so weak - I can hear the Gordon's sigh!
Sugared almonds, figs and dates
So much food to celebrate
Turkish delight, liquers and coffee
Long mint sticks and ferrero roche
Advocaat, port and brandies call
Shouldn't have a real drink—but perhaps a small snowball?
Fizzy and delicious, yellow and merry
But perhaps best of all - it comes with a cherry!
The merest hint of pudding, a teaspoon of brandy sauce
Shave the pastry off the mince pie—I can't eat that of course!

A modicum of cheese cake, just show it to the cream
A tablespoon of trifle, - any more is just a dream
I mustn't touch the nuts at all, cashews, brazils or pistacchio
The oil in them is crazily high, oh blimey - here comes black forest gateau!
Then I spy my favourite pud, it's a raspberry pavlova
Oh dear lord this is so hard, - when will it be over?
Glace fruits, marshmallows, chocolate and panetone
Wish I was petite and slim —yeah well, I'm not, - if only
They've got hot chocolate with whipped cream on top
After our walk on a cold Christmas Day
We didn't have a walk though, - and it's mild outside
But we'll drink it anyway
And now the cheese-board comes in sight just a moment after
Stilton, brie and camembert, this could spell disaster
It smells delicious, - maybe just a little bit?
No - nearest I'll get to cheese tonight is if I lean over and inhale it!
The lure of cake to me is like a bee's attraction to pollen
I'll do my best to ignore it all - DEAR GOD here comes the stolen!

So if it's true it does you good your fancy to indulge
Perhaps today I'll go for it, and not worry if I bulge
For after all what matters most is what we are inside
And if the outside's not so good, - just own the rest with pride!

If only I'd known – Written and Read by Sharon White

If only I'd known I could've been of quite some help to you

Unpacked crates, hung the curtains and laid some carpets too

If only I'd known I would've been over there early morning

But I didn't know - I couldn't have - you didn't give me any warning

If only I'd known - I should've asked - "when is your moving day?"

I could've been a muscle man - one less for you to pay

If only I'd known I would've proved to be of great assistance

Two strong arms loading up - not just seeing you leave in the distance!

If only I'd known I should've been more than happy to oblige

Made the coffees, got the lunch and lots more jobs inside

If only I'd known I could've helped by turning off the heaters,

Cleaned the fridge and the kitchen sink and by reading all the meters

If only I'd known that you were stuck I would've been there like a shot

I should've noticed the van outside, - but somehow I did not

If only I'd known, - "what's that you say?" you sent me a little note?

I wouldn't have trusted the Royal Mail - they're always losing post

Well never mind, what's that you say? -you left a voicemail on my phone?

Well - every time I try to hear my messages repeated

I don't know how but I usually find they've somehow been deleted

What? - what's that you say? You also sent an email?

That high-tech stuff is lost on me-I'm a luddite and a female!

A weekly check is always my plan

But no! - nothing there! - it must have gone to spam!

If only I'd known - what's that you say? -you move again in July?

Do let me know the moving date I'll definitely drop by

What's that you say? The 28th will likely be the day?

Oh what a shame, - my diary says - I'm going to be away