

It's Christmastime

Stories
Poems
Jokes
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mp3-Dateien

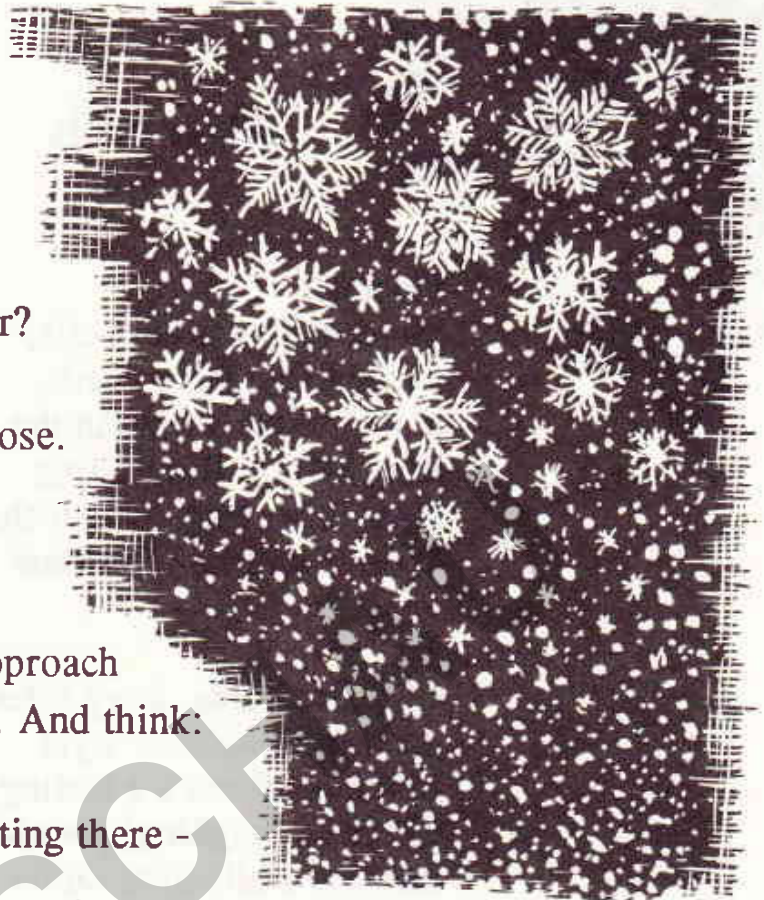
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Verlag für Lehr-, Lern- & Arbeitsmittel
Postfach 1086 - 71610 Ludwigsburg
Tel: 07141/871670 - Fax: 07141/871753

Snowflakes

And did you know
That every flake of snow
That forms so high
In the grey winter sky
And falls so far,
Is a bright six-pointed star?
Each crystal grows
A flower as perfect as a rose.
Lace could never make
The patterns of a flake.
No brooch
Of figured silver could approach
Its delicate craftsmanship. And think:
Each pattern is distinct.
Of all the snowflakes floating there -



The million million in the air -
None is the same. Each star
Is newly forged, as faces are,
Shaped to its own design
Like yours and mine
And yet ... each one
Melts when its flight is done;
Holds frozen loveliness
A moment, even less;
Suspends itself in time -
And passes like a rhyme.

Clive Sansom

Christmas is a happy time, after all!"

"Mmm, yes. How much time have we got?"

"The advert says the BBC want a cassette tape by 15th November at the latest. That gives us five weeks."

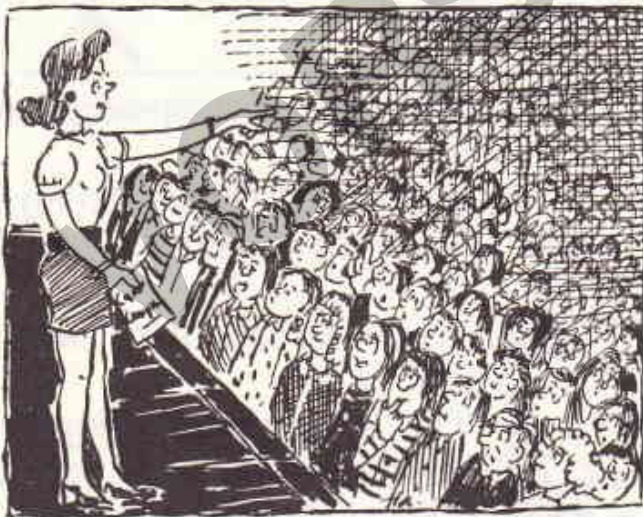
"Five weeks?? You're joking. We can't write the words, compose the music and practise with the choir and orchestra in just five weeks!"

"You mustn't be so negative, Miss. Of course, we can. Just think! You'll be famous! We'll make a record and get hundreds of pounds for it and then give them to the Worcester Fund for Ben Smith, the boy with leukemia. Please, Miss, call a meeting. Yes, a meeting for all who are interested!"

"When shall we have it? Next week? Perhaps on Friday?"

"No, tomorrow after school. We have no time to lose. Write:

**COME TO THE BIG CHRISTMAS CAROL
COMPETITION.
YOU TOO CAN SING ON TV!"**



Nunnery Wood School has 961 students. Of these, seventy-nine came to the meeting on the next day. Miss Barton explained everything about the competition and wrote down the names of all who promised to come to extra choir practices. Then she asked Sue and Oliver: "Can you compose a new carol for us?"

Sue replied: "I think we can. But first we need a text. What about you, Debbie? Write a text for us. Just three verses. After all, it was your idea, wasn't it?"

"I don't know", said Debbie. "I've never written any poetry or any songs; but I'll try. How long have I got?"

In Bethlehem at midnight
The stars are shining bright,
And there is peace and joy
This Christmas night.

"Yes, I like it very much. It's great!" said Miss Barton. What do you think, Sue and Oliver. Can you use it for your music?"

"No problem, Miss. The carol is fantastic! Many thanks, Debbie. We ... "

"Now all we need is a solo singer for the carol," interrupted Kevin, the trumpeter in the group.

"Doreen Higgins isn't bad," Spike suggested. But Oliver disagreed: "Doreen sounds like a fog-horn. I say we choose Anne Milton."

"We all know you're sweet on Anne!" Spike was quite angry.

Miss Barton stopped the quarrel. "I suggest we have an audition for the lead singer. But first things first. Oliver and Sue will have to write the music. We'll meet here again in four days' time."

Sue and Oliver did not finish the music in four days.

"We're not miracle workers, are we? Give us a chance", Oliver told Debbie and Miss Barton. "We're having a sort of inspiration session with the 'Deadly Dozen' this evening. You can come, Debbie, if you want to. It's at my gran's house. She's very deaf. So she doesn't mind the noise! If you're lucky, we'll get the carol right tonight and I can write it all down tomorrow. Bring your tape-recorder tonight, will you, Sue?"

Two days later, the 'Deadly Dozen', Sue, Oliver, Debbie and about twenty boys and girls of the special Carol Choir met in the music room. The date was 25th October. They had three weeks left until 15th November when the BBC wanted the tape for choosing the best carols.

"If we practise a lot and meet here twice a week ...", began Oliver. But Miss Barton interrupted: "Three times a week after school at four o'clock. Then we'll beat them all", said Miss Barton. "I think this carol is a winner!"

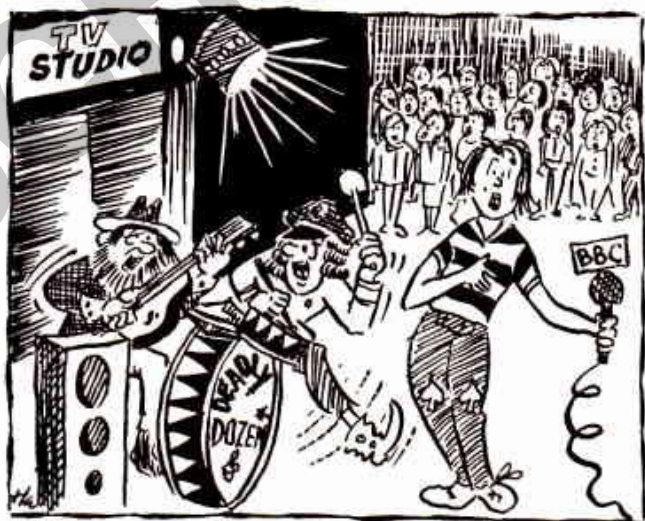
"All right. On which four days do you want us, Miss? I can't come on Mondays. I have netball practice on Mondays."

No-one was hurt. But the choir needed transport. Could he send back the first bus for them?

The BBC producer was tearing his hair by now. "I'll take the other two choirs first. But it is twenty-nine minutes to twelve now. If your bus doesn't get here by a quarter past twelve, I'm afraid you're out of the competition!"

At twelve o'clock the programme began with a marvellous all-girls choir from a convent school near Manchester. The carol they sang about holly and a Christmas tree was very pretty but a bit boring. Then, at seven minutes past twelve, the choir from Eton College sang a very complicated and beautiful carol in Latin. Debbie and Mr Brodrick could not bear to listen. They rushed out of the studio. Only six minutes to spare. Where was the Worcester bus? Their question was answered two minutes later when it arrived, covered in snow and with frantically waving students at the windows.

Miss Barton and Mr Brodrick rushed them to the studio. The producer came out of the control room and gave them all a few last instructions. And then the great moment had arrived! "Ladies and gentlemen," said the host of the programme, "here is the last choir in our competition.

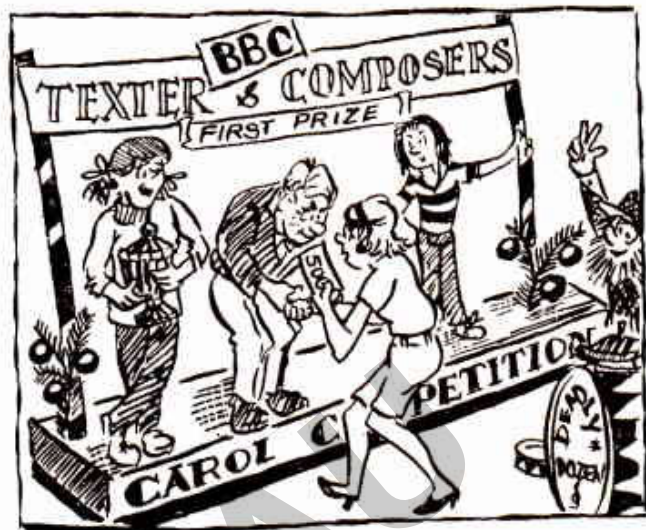


It is from Nunnery Wood School in Worcester and it will sing to you the last carol. Words by Debbie Appleton and music by Sue Jackman and Oliver Harvey."

Sandra sang beautifully and the choir was really great. They all forgot about the cameras and the lights. It was all over very quickly. They were terribly excited when they had finished. They sat down at the back of the studio while a Welsh singer from the BBC choir sang an old Welsh carol. The judges sat in a corner and tried to

come to a decision about the best carol and the best choir. It took them eleven minutes to decide. And then the chair-person of the judges announced the result in reverse order: "The third prize goes to St Mary's Convent School. They sang beautifully. Thank you!

Eton College came second, but first prize goes to Nunnery Wood School, Worcester. Their carol was really new and exciting and it was sung beautifully. Congratulations. And now I'm going to present the two composers and the author of the carol with a cheque for £500 and this fine crystal bowl.



"Finally for our viewers just a few words from Debbie!"

"I only wrote the words, you know. But in the name of Sue and Oliver, the composers, Miss Barton, the conductor, the choir and the 'Deadly Dozen' group and our lead singer Sandra, I'd like to thank you for this wonderful bowl and for the cheque. The bowl will have a place of honour in our dining-hall. Thank you again!"

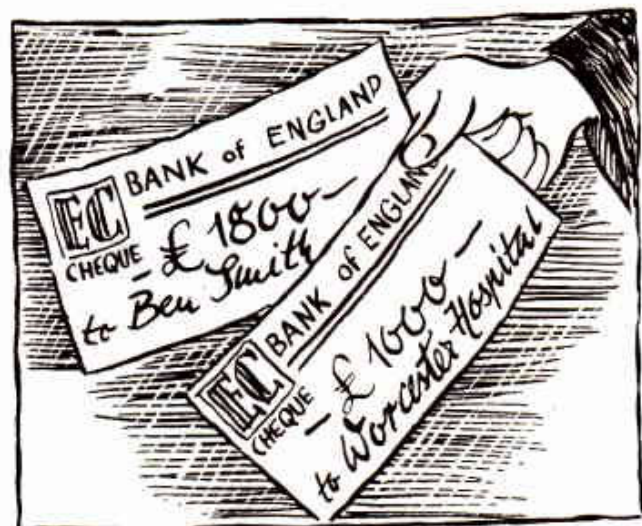
Then the Nunnery Wood choir sang their carol a second time and went off to lunch in the BBC canteen. There an agent from a London record company offered Miss Barton a contract to make a record of the carol.

"We can pay you an advance of £1,000", he told her.

To cut a long story short, the record was also a great success.

And the school was able to give £1,000 to the Worcester Hospital x-ray scanner appeal as well as £1,800 to the Ben Smith appeal.

"Do you still think my ideas are funny, Dad?" Debbie asked her father. He smiled and said: "I'm sorry, darling, I think you're the greatest!"



"Give money to the poor?!" Scrooge had exclaimed angrily. "People should work at Christmas. Then they wouldn't be so poor! You'll get no money from me. I have to look after myself!" The gentlemen had left, shaking their heads sadly. And Scrooge had cursed Christmas, and all people who asked him - in the name of the Lord - for charity.

A couple of carol-singers had also dared to start singing outside Scrooge's window. But he had driven them off. "We're working here. Stop that damned noise and get on your way!" he had shouted angrily at them through the open window.

Then his nephew, Fred, had called in. Fred was Scrooge's only living relative, the son of his dead sister. Fred had recently got married. He didn't see his uncle very often, and wanted to invite the old man to meet his wife and have Christmas dinner at their house. "Merry Christmas, Uncle!" Fred had shouted cheerfully.

"What do you mean, 'Merry Christmas'?" Scrooge had answered sharply. "I've no time for Christmas. And why should I want to see your wife? What did you get married for, anyway?"

"Because I was in love, dear Uncle," came the good-natured reply.

"Ha! Love!!" growled Scrooge. "There's only one thing in the world that counts, my boy, and that is money. Now please excuse me. I'm busy."

Fred had simply smiled and left. As he went out of the office he wished Bob Cratchit a "Merry Christmas". This annoyed Scrooge. "I suppose you want the day off tomorrow?" he growled at his clerk.

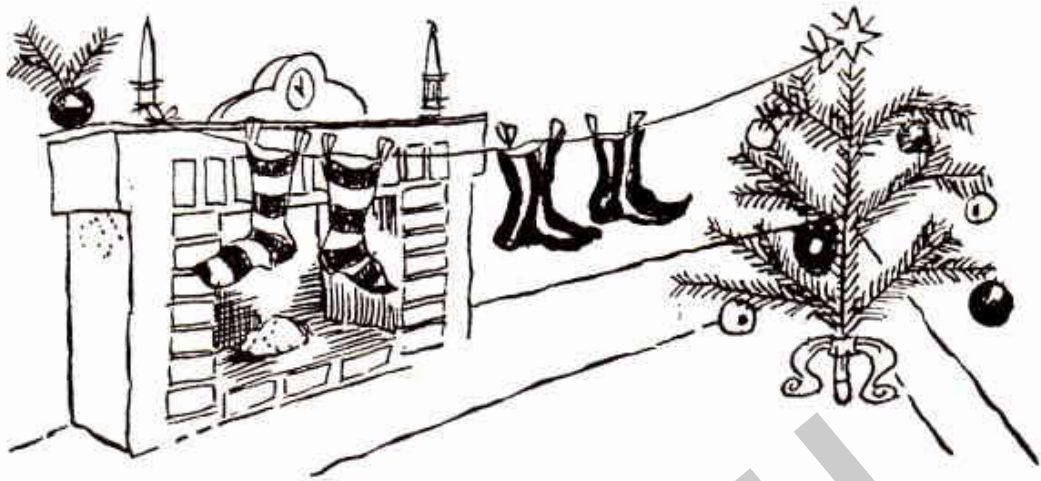
"If it's convenient, sir."

"Well it's not convenient. It's damned inconvenient. And it's also robbery, expecting me to pay you a day's wages for no work!"

"But Christmas is only once a year," Bob had said gently.

"Christmas! Bah! Christmas is humbug! What does Christmas have to do with me? All right, you can take tomorrow off. But be here all the earlier the next day!"

The night before Christmas



'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse.
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care
In hopes that Saint Nicholas soon would be there.



The children were nestled all snug in their beds,
While visions of sugarplums danced in their heads
And Mamma in her kerchief, and I in my cap
Had just settled down for long winter's nap

When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from my bed to see what was the matter.
Away to the window I flew like a flash, tore open the shutter,
and threw up the sash.

