

The Portal

A cool collection of short stories and poems

***We now have stories/poems in Spanish!**



Santa's Ride By DiVitto Kelly

Santa's sleigh had hit rock bottom. A half century of flying the same ride had taken its toll on his toy-delivering machine. The transmission was shot and the reindeer were tired of picking up the slack. You see, the reindeer really didn't power the sleigh; they were there more for show, kinda like Retsyn, which doesn't really freshen your breath. Sorry Certs.

On a clear October Saturday morning waiting at Bumble's Auto Repair, Santa eyed the cover of the North Pole edition of Consumer Reports. There was a beautiful looking sleigh, decked out with all the holiday trimmings and chrome railings. He eagerly began thumbing through the pages.

"No, don't need a waffle iron, or toaster. No need for air conditioners or riding lawn mowers – thank you very much" he uttered. Suddenly

there was an avalanche of falling magazine subscription cards. Santa grumbled. After picking them up, he found what he was looking for.

"Ah, here we are. Sleighs, sleighs, and more sleighs."

There were at least a dozen styles, from the no-frills Kia model to the high-end Sky Rover.

"Hey now," exclaimed Santa, salivating over the polished brass railings and cushy interior. Santa scanned the detailed review intently, reading it aloud. "With its plush Corinthian leather interior, the new Sky Rover handles like a dream, but the electrical wiring is a problematic nightmare."

"What is it about British cars and their wiring," said Santa, remembering all the headaches he had with his candy red Jaguar E-Type roadster. "I swear the mechanic had that car more than I did."

Santa took out a pen as browsed through all the reviews. "A Saab Turbo 9000 Sleigh? Hey Brumble, what do you think of Saabs?"

The tall, bleach-white hairy mechanic was hunched over a Subaru, finishing up an oil change. He bumped his head on the hanging florescent lights above – yet again. "Stay away from the Swedish sleighs. They ain't too reliable. Now the Subaru here – that's a good sleigh."

Santa glanced at the Subaru reviews. "Nothing but little red dots, always a good thing in Consumer Reports," said Santa. "Looks splendid, but I think I need a little more room, if you know what I mean."

"Yeah, I was thinking the same thing," replied Brumble with a giggle.

"Careful my tall furry friend or I'll be calling Hermey to take care of

that tooth problem of yours. Bumble groaned.

"But seriously, I need something ASAP or I'll be taking a cab this year. Any suggestions?" asked Santa.

"If I was you, I'd stick with the Japanese models, Toyota, Honda. Even the South Korean brands are solid."

"What about GM?"

Brumble grimaced. "Do I really need to answer that question?"

"I'll take that as a no," replied Santa.

Later that afternoon, Santa visited Sam the Snowman's Sleigh Showroom. The lot was full of sleighs, some rickety and old, others shiny and new. The roundish white . . . snowman sat in his office thinking he needed a big sale or there'd be no Christmas vacation for he and the misses. He glanced out his office window and spotted a familiar red hat. "Ka-Ching!"

He sprang for his chair and dashed away out of his office. "Mr. Claus, what can I do for you this fine afternoon?"

"Just browsing Sam," he said. "How are the twins? Both must be in high school, am I right?"

"Just started tenth grade," said Sam. "And in no time it'll be college – oy!"

"I know that'll cost a bundle of dough. I know what you'll be hitting me up for Christmas. Ho, ho, ho!"

Sam laughed too. "Ain't that the truth. So how's the XJ 3000 model holding up?"

"Actually, it's time for an upgrade. I need something newer with lots of room. It's gotta be reliable, and not too expensive."

"I think my dad sold you that old sleigh."

"He was a good snowman. Kinda sad how he went."

“I know, but I warned him. Snowmen and tanning beds don’t mix. Pop always thought he looked too pale.”

“I guess that’s the nature of the beast,” said Santa.

Sam started to tear ice cubes. “I’m sorry Santa. Okay, okay, back to business. I got just the thing for you.” Sam waved the bearded man over and around the showroom of sleighs until he came upon a slightly used model.



“A Saab? I don’t think”

“This baby can handle any type of weather,” boasted Sam, “and it even has heated seats.”

Santa perked up, thinking heated seats would be just the perfect thing, especially as he flew over the Polar Regions. “No one hates a frosted keister more than me,” joked Santa. “Only thing is my mechanic, Mr. Brumble, said to stay away from them like poison.”

“Brumble schmumble,” barked Sam, the used sleigh salesman juices oozing out of his packed pores. “This baby is top of the line, trust me Big Guy.”

“You sure? I’d hate to have a problem on the big day.”

“Tell you what, I’ll knock off two G’s and I’ll throw in free maintenance for the first three years. You can’t beat that.”

“Sounds good, but the Toyotas are supposed to be quite reliable.”

“Reliability is overrated,” said Sam. “And besides, I could really use the commission to pay for my operation.”

“Operation? I hope it’s not anything serious,” said Santa.

“Well . . . I don’t mind helping out a friend in need. Let do this thing.”

Sam beamed like a Cheshire cat as he shook Santa’s hand. “Best deal you’ll ever make.”

December 25, somewhere over Hoboken, New Jersey.

The reindeer were in perfect synch, everything running smoothly. The sleigh percolated like a well-oiled machine when it abruptly died. “Freaking Saab!” screamed Santa. The reindeer all turned, their faces full of disgust.

Dasher turned to Dancer, “What moron buys a used Saab sleigh?”

“Apparently, the fat man,” replied Dancer.

Rudolph turned to his fellow reindeer. “Time to kick it up a notch, guys.”

Santa and his team of hard-working reindeer barely managed to complete their mission of Christmas. Exhausted, Santa sat down in his red La-Z-Boy reclining chair and gulped down a Gatorade. “That Sam. I should . . . hmmm.”

Santa made a few phone calls and found out where the ‘less than honest’ sleigh salesman was hanging out.

Sam was at the plastic surgeon getting a few pounds of snow shaved off and little work done on his crooked nose.

Santa appeared just outside the operating room where Sam was recovering. He waved the nurse over.

“Hi Santa, can I help you?”

“Sorry to interrupt you at such a precarious time, but I need to see my old friend real quick. Is he alright?”

He’s fine, but I can’t let anyone in just yet.”

“Oh that’s okay,” replied Santa. “By the way, did you get everything you wanted for Christmas?”

“Well, the sweater was nice, same with the curling iron and perfume, but . . .”

“What did you really want?”

“I love the new Audi Q5,” said the nurse. “Maybe next year.”

Santa whispered in her ear. The nurse beamed.

She looked in every direction. “Right this way Mr. Clause.”

Santa snuck in and reached for a large surgical knife. Sam, still groggy, turned his head towards the bearded man dressed in surgical garb. “Doctor, I thought we were all done.”

“Oh no Mr. Sam, I just need to do a little more trimming.”

“Uh, okay,”

Santa pulled down his surgical mask. “By the way Sam, thanks for the Saab!”

Screams ensued.





The Island of Hazardous Toys By DiVitto Kelly

You want to know the real truth about the Island of Misfit Toys? You know the place – the one featuring cowboys riding ostriches, squirt guns that shoot preserves (raspberry or boysenberry I believe), and wooden trains, in particular, a caboose with square wheels -- those toys.

The conventional wisdom was these oddities were deported from the grips of children simply because of a few snafus at the factory. But the real reason was . . . lawsuits.

As you may or may not recall, the lasting image from the Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer television special was these misunderstood toys parachuting from Santa's sleigh all over the world. It was truly the feel-good story of our generation. But then reality soon struck like a sledgehammer.

Thanks to shoddy craftsmanship and opportunistic trail lawyers, these "misfit" toys posed serious hazards to unsuspecting children everywhere, which is why they were permanently banished to some God forsaken, block of ice island -- the real frozen tundra; not the often referred to 'Lambeau Field' in Green Bay, Wisconsin.

In the United States alone, dozens upon dozens of innocent

children received injuries from these toys and the lawyers were salivating like Santa eyeing a plate of sugar cookies. The jam-shooting squirt gun caused severe eye irritation; one child was left partially blind in one eye. A handful of children in Texas, expecting to receive a "Howdy Pardner" type of Christmas gift, instead were greeted by "Howdy Poultry." Needless to say, the children were extremely traumatized and had to seek therapy. The square wheels on the caboose . . . well, that was just plain dumb. The supervisor who allowed that oversight to occur was quickly terminated, but later found a cozy job with the federal government.

Oh, there were other misfit blunders; too many to list here in this story. A recent model Tickle Me Elmo doll developed groping issues and the Easy Bake oven, a holiday gift mainstay for girls, kept broiling those cute little cakes into submission, prompting health officials to take immediate action. Then there was the problem with Sea Monkeys, a gag gift consisting of harmless brine shrimp eggs. You simply add water and the eggs blossom into swimmingly minuscule creatures. Somehow, piranha eggs were unknowingly mixed in, which in due time, ultimately led to numerous missing fingers.

Since Santa flatly refused to accept any sort of responsibility, the toys were ultimately returned to the Island of Misfit Toys. King Moon Racer, the Flying Lion who ran the joint, was soon up to his mane in oddball toys and the like. And every year it was the same story; more arrived via courier or boat, all clinging to hope that Santa would fly by and scoop them up in time for Christmas delivery. But with neon orange hazard labels now slapped

on each and every one of them, there was no way Santa Claus wanted to be implicated or sued for delivering hazardous goods. Been there, dodged that. Besides, Santa already had a lot on his plate, and not just food. He was dealing with striking elves.

After much brainstorming with business partner friend and greedy gold-obsessed prospector Yukon Cornelius, King Moon Racer (KMR for short) hit upon a brilliant idea. "We shall repackage, remarket, and clearly relabel these uniquely special treasures for children everywhere and sell them exclusively at the finest stores like FAO Schwarz."

Mr. Cornelius, with his trusty pick in hand, licked his chops with excitement. In fact, the bearded man was so ecstatic at this 'prospect' he abruptly retired his line of haphazard sled dogs and never looked back.

In mere months, the two entrepreneurs were up and running, creating a highly successful business selling misfit toys. Their website, www.giftedgoofs.com proved to be an Internet sensation. The jam-shooting squirt guns alone fetched three hundred clams. The block-wheeled caboose? Not so much.

In due time, the Island of Misfit Toys became a North Pole hotspot. Site seeing tours popped up with people eager to catch glimpses of the misfit toys in their natural habitat. An eco-friendly lodge opened, even a ski lodge. There were even rumors of the winter Olympics being held there. Not really.

Still, all parties were ecstatic: KMR, Yukon Cornelius, and especially the misfit toys, who finally found a way to be loved. And as an

added bonus, each toy received a nice commission, but trouble was lurking underneath like a thin dusting of snow.

The misfit toys, as it turns out, were being undercut by the ruthless, pick-wielding Cornelius. Not satisfied with their minuscule cut, the toys secretly created a side business, replicating their own model designs in China and selling cheaper versions of themselves on eBay and Amazon.com for cold hard cash, undercutting KMR altogether.

Unfortunately, the mighty KMR, without a dumb bone in his big cat body, discovered their clever rouse and did something oh so cruel. He shipped them all off to dollar stores.

Merry Christmas!

Side note: Although no one in the United States wanted a Charlie in the Box, preferring the standard Jack, the misnamed toy quickly became a huge sensation in France.



Marriage Christmas By CP Bialois/Ed White

Joan Schmitt stretched in the morning light filtering through the curtains of the bedroom and let out a groan. She couldn't help but smile at the beautiful golden light. After the constant snow storm the last couple of days, seeing anything besides white and gray clouds was something to rejoice in.

She remained under the comforter for a few minutes basking in the glow and warmth of the bed. Nothing was quite like Christmas. Every year it brought some form of magic into their house. The magic of that year was two-fold. First, her husband would be coming home after being stuck in an out of town hotel on a business trip due to the weather. It'd been a week since she last saw him and it gave her the chance to find him the perfect gift.

Thinking of his present caused her smile to widen and gave her a burst of energy to start the day. Throwing off the comforter, she swung her legs out of bed and rested her bare feet on the hard wood floor. The feeling of the cool wood helped to stimulate her. Her husband would have lectured her about not wearing socks or slippers, but she didn't care. This was going to be a great day and one to

remember if she had anything to say about it.

The cold floor gave her a charge that the strongest coffee would have a difficult time in matching as she moved about the bedroom picking out what to wear to greet her husband. After a few minutes of riffling through her closet, she settled on the dress he bought her their first Christmas together. It was white with red cherries scattered over its surface and a medium green collar shaped as Christmas trees. With a brief flourish, she slid it over her head and straightened it.

Normally, she didn't like to hurry when getting dressed, but she didn't know how long she had until Phillip walked through the front door and she wanted to be ready for him. For that reason, she turned to look in the mirror and smiled. Somehow, her hair hadn't been messed up as she feared while sleeping. With a few strokes of her brush, her light-brown shoulder length hair looked like she just stepped out of the hairdresser. The sight brought another smile to her face as she knew it would please her husband even without her wearing any makeup.

Phillip was many things, including predictable. Despite his best effort to appear nonchalant and impulsive, she knew what his every action and response would be. It was how she knew what to get him for Christmas, after all.

Pleased with her appearance, she hurried downstairs. Humming her favorite Christmas song, she reached the bottom of the steps and pressed the power button on the cd player. With Dean Martin's voice filling the room, she made her way into the kitchen to finish the ham she prepared with honey glaze.

“Just like Phillip likes it.” Joan giggled at herself for speaking with no one else around. It was one of the many habits she had that drove her husband crazy, but if he wasn’t there she couldn’t get into trouble.

As she put the ham in the oven and turned it on, her thoughts went back to how she picked out Phillip’s present. Of all the things she could’ve chosen for him, this year’s gift was the most difficult one she had ever had to figure out. She had to give him credit. For the first time in their ten year marriage, he had managed to keep something from her. If only she had figured it all out three years before, she could have given him the perfect gift so much sooner!

Oh well, it’s too late to worry about that now. At least he’ll get it this year. Joan straightened and looked around the kitchen. She had everything else ready to go, but she had to wait a couple of hours until the ham was mostly cooked. Shrugging at her own efficiency, she turned and headed back to the living room as another song by a singer she didn’t know played.

She stopped in the center of the room and looked around. Everything looked perfect, just as she always had it for the holidays. A feeling of fulfillment at seeing all of her hard work pay off swept through her. There was just one more thing she had to check on before Phillip returned.

Turning on her heel, she made her way across the living room to the door to her right that led into Phillip’s den. She paused when her hand came into contact with the doorknob. A moment of doubt passed through her that her husband would like her present. It wasn’t something she could give him every year, which made it all

the more personal and special. At least, she thought so.

Certain Phillip would appreciate her effort, she turned the doorknob and opened the door a crack, just enough so she could peak inside. When she saw her present was still as she left it, Joan closed the door, turned, and rested her back against the door. She closed her eyes and imagined the look on his face when she would open the door for him to see it. The image in her mind filled her with a warm pleasant feeling she hadn’t felt in a long time.

Her mind was so wrapped in what she expected to happen, that he didn’t hear the front door open and her husband enter until he spoke her name.

“Joan? Are you all right, sweetie?” He set suitcase on the floor and his jacket over the back of the recliner as she opened her eyes and greeted him with the widest smile she could manage.

“I’m fine. How was your trip?” He pushed off from the door and met Phillip in the center of the room, embracing him. The sound of his heartbeating under her ear and the smell of his cologne caused her head to swim.

His hold on her tightened as he exhaled. “Aside from being kept away from you?”

She let out a laugh and pulled away from him. “As much as I’d like to take credit for that, I think some of it belongs to our home.”

Phillip’s face split into a grin as laughter burst from him. “And who makes our home what it is?”

Joan’s face flushed a deep red and he pulled her back into his arms and kissed her. Her body tingled from his kiss. She never could resist him when he was near her. It was one of the few times where she could lose herself and

the problems of the real world. Things were different this time as she stepped back and smiled at him.

“Not yet. You have your Christmas present and dinner. Then we can begin the festivities.” Her eyes glinted with a mischievous spark.

Phillip smiled and let out a low growl. “Do we have to wait?”

Joan’s smile widened and turned, taking him by the arm while guiding him to his den door. “You wouldn’t want the gift I worked so hard to get you to languish while we partake, would you?” Just like his presence infused her with a feeling of desire, she knew her words had the same effect on him.

After a second of thought he nodded. “Okay, we’ll do it your way.”

A soft chuckle escaped from Joan that promised of many wonderful things to come. Phillip continued to grin like a foolish school boy. *This is the look I fell in love with. It’s so fitting right now.*

Joan’s free hand reached for the doorknob, but before she opened the door she glanced at her husband and raised an eyebrow. “Are you ready?”

Phillip let out a gleeful laugh as he nodded. “I guess I am.”

“Good.” Joan turned the doorknob and pushed the door open while watching Phillip’s reaction.

He turned his attention from her to his den. It took a minute for the scene before him to register and she took a pair of steps into the room. “Sarah...”

On his desk with her hands and feet bound, was his secretary. Her insides were pulled out and spread across her favorite school girl outfit she liked to wear for him during

their “working weekends”. A long, jagged gash ran from the yoke of her throat to her navel and her eyes were glazed over from the agony of her death.

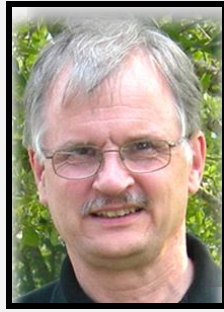
Joan allowed Phillip to enter before her so she could slip a large crescent wrench from its hiding place on the table next to the opened door. “It took me a long time to find you the right gift. Merry Christmas.”

Phillip started to turn toward her, but she struck him on the back of the head with the wrench as hard as she could. Blood spurted out, covering her dress as it mixed with the cherries on a macabre decoration and Phillip fell to the floor without a sound.

Joan waited and watched him for a few minutes as she wondered if he appreciated her present of the effort it took for her to bring Sarah to their home and prepare her the previous night.

A smile played across her face as Joan knew he liked his present as much as she did choosing it. She set the wrench aside and closed the door while humming a Christmas hymn.

She still had a dinner to finish and enjoy. *It's too bad Phillip isn't feeling well enough to eat with me.*



Joe's Story By Rick Weber

In June Joe Pearson's wife, Adele, passed away following a long bout with cancer. They had been married for 37 years, and Joe retired from the Post Office three years earlier to care for her. Now, in December, he was in no mood to celebrate. Driving to the airport two days before Christmas in the morning rush hour was brutal, and only made him more depressed. He could have gone with his children and their families to Orlando for the Holidays instead of driving them to the airport, but he chose to stick it out at home this year. He was still in this darkest stage of grief, and those closest to him were well aware of it.

Joe's son, Ted and his daughter Margie planned the trip to Disney World shortly after their mother died, and they begged Joe to come along. Margie was able to rent a large house in Lake Kissimmee where he would have had his own room with a separate bath. It would have cost him nothing, but Joe would hear nothing of it. They left the door open for him to come along up until the night before when they had to check in with the airline on line. Yet, Joe still turned down their request telling them that he had to be home to plant flowers on Adele's grave Christmas Day.

Joe had everything to be proud of. His kids had done well for themselves. Ted was a CPA with a good practice. His wife Julie was an attorney in a big law firm, and they had two sons. Margie was a stay at home mom with three daughters. Her husband, Bill, was a computer engineer who made this possible, and he even bought her a large passenger van for her duties as a Girl Scout leader. Joe used it to get everyone to the airport. Now, he was glad to be parking it in his garage. It reminded him too much of the mail truck he used to drive.

Inside the foyer of his quiet residence Joe looked around. Not a single decoration was up. No tree, no wreaths, no lights; nothing to show it was Yuletide. It was the first moment of total silence Joe had in years, and he had no plans. In stark contrast to past Christmases celebrated in this home when the decorations outside made it the biggest attraction in the neighborhood; the lights outlining the entire frame of the house, the Nativity display on the lawn, and Santa's sled on the roof could not be outdone. Last year, Joe had gone all out by laying out a train garden throughout the first floor inside the house passing by the bay window in the living room for the entire world to see. It brought the biggest smile to Adele's face that Joe had ever seen. Those decorations now were in boxes in the basement, attic, and garage.

Joe remembered going to church last Christmas Eve with Adele and begging God to spare her, but it did not happen. In March, she had her last round of chemotherapy which only made her feel worse with Joe by her side during all of it. In May, Adele went into Hospice Care when Joe could



no longer tend to all of her needs. Joe, standing at her bedside when she finally succumbed to the dreaded disease, found himself numb by the doctor's pronouncement.

After the funeral, he sent out thank you notes to people for their expressions of sympathy. With the help of Margie and Julie, he cleaned the house and donated Adele's clothing and other personal items to charity. He ordered and took delivery of her headstone. Alone and looking at the granite marker for the first time, Joe broke down in tears and cried out, "Where was God when you needed him?" After prodding from his kids, Joe had his will re-written. Now in December, he realized he was alone, and asked himself, "Now, what am I gonna do?" Before he could decide, Joe heard a knock at the front door. It was Michael, the next door neighbor's teenage son, holding a covered dish in front of him. "Come on in," Joe beckoned.

Stepping inside Michael said, "My mother just made a batch of those cookies you like, and she wanted you to have them while they're still hot out of the oven."

Joe closed the door. "Well, tell your mom, thanks. You got me at a good time. I just came back from dropping Ted, Margie, and their broods off at the airport. They're going to the Magic Kingdom. What are you doing for Christmas?"

Handing Joe the cookie dish, Michael let out a sigh and his shoulders drooped. "I'm doing community service hours for school at the church mission both on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Not my idea of fun."

"What will they have you doing at the mission?"

"Christmas Eve, I'm one of Santa's Elves giving out presents to the kids, and on Christmas Day, I'll be serving dinner to the families."

"Michael, that's great! You'll be helping out a lot of less fortunate people."

Michael shuffled his feet and let out a groan, "That's what my parents said. If you think it's so good, why don't you try it?"

Without hesitating, Joe answered, "I might. What time do the festivities start tomorrow night?"

"Things kick off at seven," Michael grumbled.

On Christmas Eve, Joe arrived early at the mission to see some people already lined up outside the front door. Looking down at the far end of the building, Joe saw Michael standing by a side door with some of his friends.

Michael's face lit up when he saw Joe and he said, "I didn't think you'd show up."

"Well, I'm here. I've known you since you were in diapers. Have I ever let you down? Now, what can I do to help?"

"Let's go inside. I want you to meet Brother Paul. He runs the place. He'll get you squared away."

Michael and Joe made their way back into the kitchen where a tall beefy man in a red flannel shirt and blue jeans about Joe's age stood with his back to them talking to a couple. "Brother Paul," Michael interrupted. "I have someone I want you to meet."

Brother Paul turned, and Joe saw a San Damiano cross around his neck and an infectious broad smile on his face. "And who would that be, Michael?"

Without any further help, Joe spoke up with an outstretched hand, "Brother Paul, I'm Joe Pearson, Michael's neighbor. I

understand you could use some help here tonight and tomorrow."

Brother Paul pumped Joe's hand firmly. "We can always use some help. What brings you out on Christmas Eve?"

Joe quickly replied. "My kids are out of town with their families, and it got kind a lonely at home."

Brother Paul loosened his grip. "If you don't mind working in the kitchen, we'll be glad to have you. We'll be serving a light dinner, soup and sandwiches, before the pageant starts. Some of these folks haven't eaten all day and that includes the kids."

"Let me hang up my coat," Joe said as Brother Paul took him back and introduced him to the other volunteers while Michael went off with his friends to don their elf hats.

Joe helped get the serving line ready just in time for the doors to open. Over the next two hours, he worked with the others serving food to a couple hundred people who had no place else to go. The grateful looks on their faces was all Joe needed to see.

Brother Paul watched the food line dwindle down to only a couple of adults waiting, and he walked to the front of the dining room picking up a microphone. "Merry Christmas, everyone! Have you all had something to eat?" Every head in the room nodded, "Good, since we didn't have a chance to say Grace, let's bow our heads now to give thanks." The room fell quiet as Brother Paul gave a quick invocation. After he finished, the sound of bells jingling could be heard from the back of the room followed by the booming words, "HO! HO! HO!"

Santa appeared at the door and walked down the main aisle waving to the families seated at tables on

either side. Making his way up to Brother Paul, they shook hands and Brother Paul handed him the microphone. Santa asked, “Have you all been good boys and girls?”

“YES!” came the loud unified response.

“GOOD! Let’s get started. I have a lot of others places to visit tonight.”

Santa sat on a large chair at the end of the aisle. With the help of his elves, he read a child’s name from the tag on the first gift, and asked if that child was in the dining room. A shy little girl about three or four years old stood up next to her mother, who took her by the hand down the aisle to see Santa.

In the back of the dining hall while Santa passed out gifts, Brother Paul joined Joe who was stacking trays by the kitchen door. “You have quite an operation here, Brother Paul.”

“I know. I hope we can keep it going.”

“Why is that?” Joe asked the cleric in a pressing tone.

“Over the past year, some of our benefactors had to cut back on their support. The economy has been tough on everyone. To boot, we have more people asking for help this year than in the past. The factory closing in town last month right before Thanksgiving put a lot of people out of work. Some, who worked in the plant and helped out last year, were in line for turkeys this time. We didn’t have to turn anyone down, but I knew we really had to pull out all the stops if we wanted Christmas to be a success. After New Year’s it’s going to get tougher with all the local agencies going after fewer resources.”

“Maybe, I can give you a hand, Brother Paul. I used to have a mail route near here. I might be able to

reach out to some of my old business customers to see what they can do.”

“Like I told you, we can always use help, but right now it looks like Santa wants mine,” Brother Paul told Joe pointing to Santa who finished passing out gifts and was waving the friar up to the front of the room to conclude the program.

Joe finished up a little after midnight and walked out of the building with Michael and his friends. Before getting into his car, he told them, “See you tomorrow.”

Early the next morning Joe called Ted and Margie to wishing all of them in Orlando, a Merry Christmas. “You’re up early,” Margie said to her father when she answered the phone.

“I wanted wish all of you a Merry Christmas before you took off for Cinderella’s Castle,” Joe retorted hearing laughter in the background.

“You’re sounding chipper. What have you been up to?” Margie asked.

“I was over at the mission last night with Michael from next door. I served food, and it looks like I’ll be doing the same today. They sure need support.” Joe outlined to Margie, and later during the same call to Ted, his conversation with Brother Paul and his plans to help the mission.

Ted listened quietly to what his father had to say before speaking. “Dad, they do a lot of good work. I may be able to give you a hand finding donors when we get back, but right now, I’ve got an appointment to see the Seven Dwarfs.” Hearing his grandchildren yelling in the background for his son to hurry up, Joe thanked Ted for his interest and hung up before the cries got any louder.

Joe returned to the mission and saw many of the same people who were there the night before in line for Christmas dinner. He joined Michael and his friends in the kitchen to lay out the feast. It was another great day for Joe, who enjoyed giving to those in need. As the day was winding down, he was able to sit down with Brother Paul to eat. Joe promised to be back in touch after he contacted his old mail customers.

Between the Holidays, Joe went over his old route. He was surprised to see that some of the smaller businesses had folded, along with a couple of larger ones. A market was Joe’s first potential prospect. He found the place still run by Lionel, a gregarious old man who was the fourth generation of his family in the grocery business.

“Joe, I thought you were retired. I wish I were in your shoes,” Lionel shouted when he saw Joe at the customer service desk.

“I am, but I’m volunteering at the mission. Do you have a few minutes to talk?”

“For you, old friend, yes.”

Lionel took Joe back into his office for a private discussion. “Lionel, I chipped in at the mission on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. They’re in a tight situation and could use a hand. I know you get hit up all the time by different groups, especially at this time of year...”

Before he could go on, Lionel broke in. “Joe, you’re right. I get solicited a lot for donations, and I do what can. That mission, from what I’ve seen, does a lot of good work. So, what do they need?”

“They definitely need food. They have a lot of mouths to feed. As for the other things, I’m not quite sure.

I just started looking around to see what resources are available. If don't mind, I can bring Brother Paul, who oversees the place, here to see you. He's the best person to talk to."

"That sounds good. Give me a call sometime next week so we can meet one day before I open up," Lionel told his friend. "That will give me time to talk to some of the other business owners in town to see what they can do."

"Lionel, that's great!" Joe said in a loud voice as he stood up to shake Lionel's hand before leaving.

Joe put in more time between the holidays working in the food line and touching base with potential sponsors. He met every day with Brother Paul, to discuss the results of those contacts. Brother Paul was impressed with Joe's work. But one day during a briefing, Brother Paul looked at his watch and asked Joe, "Don't you have to be someplace now?"

Joe, a bit befuddled, replied, "No, I don't think so. My appointments are all done for today."

Brother Paul smiled, looked Joe in the eye, and softly whispered to him, "The airport." Without making any comments, Joe ran out of the mission, and after switching vehicles at his house, he sped to the airport in Margie's van. He pulled up to the baggage claim area just in time to see everyone walking out of the terminal, each wearing a pair of Mickey Mouse ears.

As winter became spring, Joe learned, not only, more about working at a charity, but also, more about himself. In June on the first anniversary of Adele's passing, he visited the cemetery.

Standing over the freshly mown grass at Adele's grave, he began his usual out loud conversation when visited the cemetery. "I still miss you, Kid. I'm doing okay. I told you about helping out at the mission. It's going pretty good there. I'm meeting a lot of good people. They're in bad shape; no jobs, nothing to eat. I thought it was tough with your cancer, but when I see so many people with so little, I'm glad to be there. I wish you were with me to be part of it all. I know it's not possible. Here's look-in' at you, Kid. I gotta run. I have to meet Brother Paul. We're setting up a fund raiser." Joe, with a spring in his step, made it back to his car and waved good-bye to Adele from inside it before driving off.



Twos A Family's Christmas By Jamie White

The holidays were always a chaotic time for the Phillips family; there were parties to attend and host all across their little section of New York. Not to mention all the shopping that had to be done. Sarah had actually begun to see it as more of a chore than anything else as the years went by. Especially once the kids had started making their own plans. Sarah and her husband saw no reason to stop them; they were both almost out of High School and would be leaving

to attend college soon anyway. The result was they were around much and holiday gatherings didn't hold the same appeal without wide eyed children around to enjoy it.

Sarah was an interior designer who lived for her work. She decorated the house for the season with a large tree full of lights, garland and colorful ornaments. Around the living room, she set out their Christmas pictures in the special holiday-themed frames. On the one table, she created an elaborate winter scene with different ceramic figurines. She also set out some diffusers with pine and other holiday-type scents in it. It was beautiful; too bad she'd mainly done it so she could take photos to display on her website to give people an idea of what she can do. Lucky for her she married Robert, a business man equally obsessed with advancing career-wise. Together, they had raised two over-achieving kids who also managed to join every club humanly possible at school. Christmas morning the whole family was up at the crack of dawn getting ready for the big day. Robert was going to spend the morning at the office while Sarah would be meeting with a client before picking up a quick dinner on the way home. The kids, meanwhile, had been invited to some friend's Christmas parties. They couldn't wait! It was only one of the biggest parties of the year! Unfortunately, there was one thing they didn't plan on...

The youngest, Kathy, opened her bedroom curtain to see a huge blanket of white outside with more raining down like a torrential downpour. "Ugh!" She never did like snow much, especially when it could end up interfering with her plans. Kathy ran downstairs to turn

on the TV and see what the weather report had to say about this. When she got there the rest of her family was already there and not looking too happy. Her brother, Sam, was already complaining about not being able to go to his party. “Is it that bad?”

Her father looked up from the TV, nodding. “No one’s going anywhere today. And I really wanted to get those contracts nailed down.”

“I better called my client to reschedule our meeting... this is going to throw the whole project off schedule!” Sarah complained, picking up her cell phone. “Kids, why don’t you go into the kitchen and see what we’re going to have for dinner later?” They were going to have to come up with something now that her take out idea was now a no-go as well.

“Alright, Mom.” Sam and Kathy hurried into the kitchen. They spent the next 20 minutes arguing over whether they were going to eat the frozen pizza like Sam wanted or the lasagna like Kathy wanted.

“What’s going on in here?” Mr. Phillips asked.

“He won’t let me co-,” Kathy began

“We had lasagna a week ago, I want-,” Sam interrupted.

“ENOUGH!” Mr. Phillips was beginning to feel a migraine coming on. “Ok, I’m going to break the tie and I vote for Pizza, ok? End of discussion.” As he turned to walk out the door, Sam shot a gloating look Kathy’s way. She glared at him, but she didn’t dare say a word. Not with her dad in earshot anyway. She wasn’t really in the mood for getting lectured at the moment. She’d just have to get Sam back later.

The group returned to the living

room where Mrs. Phillips was hanging up the phone, having rescheduled her meeting. “So what did we decide?”

“Pizza,” Robert replied. The look on his face warned them not to even think about opening up a debate again.

With that all settled, Kathy took her cell phone out to text a friend and Sam signed on the computer to check his fantasy teams. Mrs. Phillips went upstairs to find her sample book while Mr. Phillips retreated to his office to go over a few documents. Within minutes the house was plunged into darkness.

“Awe, man! I almost had my team set! I’m so going to lose this week!”

“Too bad,” Kathy teased “My phone’s working fine.”

Suddenly, Sam jumped up and tried to grab it from her hands. She just barely dodged him, almost bumping into her father in the process. “What now?”

“Sam tried to steal my phone!”

“Did not, I just wanted to borrow it a second to fix my roster!”

“What is all that racket?” Mrs. Phillips walked into the room holding some candles.

She handed them to her husband, raising an eyebrow at the kids while waiting for them to explain themselves.”

“Never mind,” they mumbled both sitting down on opposite ends of the couch.

“That’s better.” Mrs. Phillips sat down in a chair across from them while her husband lit the candles and put them on the table.

The whole family sat there in awkward silence for several minutes. They almost didn’t know what to do with themselves if they weren’t rushing around to get ready to go somewhere. Finally, Sarah

couldn’t stand the silence anymore and suggested they play one of the old games that were tucked away in the closet. The kids groaned, both clearly thinking that was a boring idea.

“Why not?” Mr. Phillips got up, taking one of the candles with him to light his way to the closet. “Sam, would you come help me carry them please?”

“Alright, Dad.” He clearly wasn’t happy to be the one volunteered to help with this but he figured complaining wouldn’t get him anywhere at the moment so he kept his mouth shut. Mr. Phillips handed the candle to his son while he pulled a few games down from the shelf. They both returned to the living room and set the games down on the floor. After several minutes of debate, they decided to start with Monopoly because the game would last longer than the others. The tokens led to another pretty lengthy argument where both kids wanted to take the car. Once everyone’s tokens were selected, the dice rolls began. Kathy smiled smugly at her brother when she ended up winning the right to go first.

A couple hours later, they were all laughing as they started talking about past Christmases for lack of much else to talk about.

“Remember that time we snuck downstairs to try and get a peak at some of the presents and we heard that noise?”

“Do !! You practically jumped a foot in the air before you almost knocked me over trying to get upstairs!” It’d actually been their old dog trying to get into the trash can. “So that’s what you two were up to when I caught you sneaking back into bed. I thought you might’ve but nothing had been touched.” Mrs. Phillips shook her head. It was a

wonder they'd managed to keep any of the kid's presents a secret from them at that rate. She smiled; they'd been so cute back then, buried in a pile of wrapping paper with huge smiles on their faces.

"How about that Christmas pageant a few years ago? They were great... why don't you two do shows like that anymore?"

"Dad, we're too old for that stuff" complained Sam. "Those costumes were so embarrassing!"

"It was kind of fun, though," Kathy mused. "You were just upset you didn't get the lead part!"

"Well, I was better but the costumes were terrible. The guys didn't let me hear the end of it!" Now that he thought about it, it had been kind of fun and he'd made a few friends that year through it.

Finally, just as they were about to start their second game of Uno the lights came back on, the TV blaring some silly sitcom none of them liked. Mr. Phillips reached for the remote, considering changing the channel. He looked over at Mrs. Phillips a moment before shutting the TV off all together. Instead of getting up and leaving, the kids stayed put with Kathy asking for hot chocolate.

"That sounds good," Mr. Phillips agreed. "How about making some extra?"

"Alright." She looked over at Sam. "Would you like some too?"

"Sure!"

"Hey Mom, can we make some of those cookies you used to make every year?" Kathy's eyes were practically watering with the memories of the gingerbread men her mother was a master of.

"Why not?" They both headed into the kitchen while Mr. Phillips and Sam blew out the candles and started putting away a few of the

games. On the way back to the living room, Mr. Phillips took an old Christmas record out on impulse and put it on. 'Twas the season....



The Homeless Man By Etheridge G. Lovett

Like so many days prior, the homeless man sat at a bus stop in the big City of New York, waiting patiently. His unkempt, gray hair danced with each winter wind gust. He shoved an overused, black briefcase closer to his shivering legs. With a slight tug he pulled his dirty coat tighter around his frail body. His sea-blue eyes glanced up at the gray clouds floating over the skyscrapers surrounding him. Leaning back on the bench, he crossed his legs, displaying his dingy red All Star sneakers.

The strong stench of urine, intermingling with his body odor, permeated the area surrounding the bus stop. Crumbs from his morning meal decorated his scraggly beard. He rubbed his hands together for warmth from the harsh winter cold. He watched the city bus turn the corner. A smile formed upon his face when he noticed

several people stepping from the bus. They sat down beside him at the bus stop on that cold Christmas Eve.

One black teenager dressed in a New York Yankees sports outfit and white sneakers, got a good look at the homeless man, frowning, saying, "Damn, you really stink, dog. You need to go somewhere and take a serious bath or do

something... You smell funky as hell dude." The teenager jumped up from the bench, walking away from the homeless man. He turned the music up on his cell phone. His head bobbed up and down to the beat of his favorite rap lyrics. Every so often the teenager would twist his woolly hair, which stuck up on his head like tiny fingers. The homeless man looked at him, smiling. He shoved his hands down into his coat, glancing at an elderly Hispanic woman sitting on his right.

"Excuse me, ma'am, I haven't had anything to eat this morning, do you have a dollar that I can have to get a warm cup of coffee?" the man asked. The old woman looked over at the man, frowning. She ignored him as if he didn't matter. The man asked her again, but the woman clutched her purse tight, stuck her nose up, stood up and walked away. She stood off in the distance, staring at the man as if he had three heads.

The teenager exploded in laughter, pointing at the man, saying, "I told you he was funky and stank as hell."

"Here, Sir," an attractive black woman said to the man in a calm, pleasant voice. She was a heavyset woman with her hair neatly cut. Her nails were also well manicured. She was dressed in a fine dress and a long overcoat. "It's truly a shame how people treat others these days, especially during the Christmas season," the woman said. She handed the man a dollar.

"Thank you so much," the man replied, pulling his briefcase forward.

"Well, that's how I must be if I plan to get to heaven some day. You can ignore those two sinners over there. Your smell and looks

don't bother me none," the woman admitted.

"So, I see you believe in God," the man said.

"Yes, I sure do. I've been a Christian for seven years and nothing's going to turn me around. I'm on my way to church right now to enjoy a Christmas play," the woman said.

"Where is your church located?" the man inquired.

"It's the One Way Church of God in Christ just a few blocks down the street. The Reverend, Timothy T. Johnson is our pastor and overseer," the woman expressed.

"Can I go with you to church today," the man requested.

"Oh sure, I have no problem with that at all," the woman responded.

"Is it okay if I go dressed like this because I don't have anything but the clothes I have on my back," the man confessed.

The woman looked at the man, hesitating a moment, then she said, "Why don't you go by the Salvation Army up the road and get cleaned up first, then come visit us?"

"You know, when I was a young boy, I can remember the minister at my church telling us that God would accept us as we were. Isn't God the same as he was back then?" the man asked.

The woman looked at the man, saying, "Well, if I take you to the church looking like that, my friends, and Pastor Johnson, will certainly look at me funny."

"Don't worry, you can keep your dollar," the man said, handing the dollar back to the woman as he released a warm smile. He pushed his briefcase back underneath his legs.

"Are you sure you don't need the money?" the woman asked.

"I'm quite sure I don't need it," the man said.

"That's fine with me," said the woman, shoving the dollar back inside her purse, snapping it shut. She pulled her purse near her bosom and began humming a gospel hymn.

A short time later, the man's eyes darted over to his left at a young black woman, talking to a little boy. The boy begged his mother for something to eat as he held his stomach. The man

reached into his pocket, pulling out a Snickers candy bar, handing it to the little boy.

"This should hold him until you get him home to eat something," the man said.

Tears welled up in the young woman's eyes as she said, "You're very kind, but I wish I still had a home to go to."

The man became deeply concerned. He slid closer to the young girl, asking, "Tell me—what happened to your home?"

Tears trickled from the young woman's innocent brown eyes like raindrops as she explained; "I was living with my father until he suddenly became ill, eventually passing away. When he died of cancer, I lost the house we were living in. Because of this, my son and I have been surviving the best way we could."

"What about the child's father and your mother?" the man asked.

"His father was shot dead while selling illegal drugs one night and my mother walked off and left my father when I was a little girl. My life has been a living hell ever since. I survive by scrounging through waste cans near

restaurants for scraps of food for my child. Lately, I've been tempted to even sell my body to make sure that my child survives. He's all I got," the woman said.

"Where are you headed now?" the man asked.

"Wherever the bus takes us... We ride the bus to stay out of the harsh winter cold. When the buses stop running, that's when I'm really afraid for my child. We're then forced to wander the streets until we find somewhere to sleep. I try to sleep where there's a lot of light," the young woman divulged, hugging her child.

The man looked up at the gray sky, inhaling the frigid air; then exhaling. Tears fell from his eyes.

He turned to the young woman, asking, "What is your name?"

"Tameka Terrance," she answered.

The man shook Tameka's hand, saying, "I'm Daniel Weinstein. Tameka, look over there across the street, do

you see that limousine parked and running?"

"Yes, I see it," Tameka answered.

"That's my vehicle and driver," Daniel revealed.

"But why are you dressed like that, sitting out here in the cold?" Tameka asked.

"To help precious people like you, Tameka. You see; I was once very poor when I was a child living in the Midwest. I was so poor that my mother would cut out cardboard to put inside my worn out sneakers to stop the rain water from getting to my socks. People mocked my family wherever we went, calling us poor white trash, but my father was rich in intelligence, wisdom, and patience. He struggled for many

years to finish his college education with the money that he made from working several odd jobs, graduating top in his class. With his engineering knowledge, he revolutionized the way we travel today. He designed and developed an engine that runs on electric, water and sunlight. Because of my father's unyielding efforts, I'm wealthy beyond your wildest imagination. And what better way to spend my money than to give some of it to a good hearted person like you who want to do good in life, but are caught up in unexpected circumstances," Daniel said. He grabbed the briefcase and stood up.

"Come, walk with me, Tameka. Please forgive the strong putrid smell. It's only fake urine and body odor spray I purchased from the prank store down the street," Daniel confessed.

They laughed as they walked towards the limousine. The driver of the limousine opened the back door. Daniel sat the tattered briefcase on the seat, opening it. Inside the briefcase were stacks of one hundred dollar bills, neatly wrapped in plastic.

"Inside this briefcase is one million dollars in cash. You can do whatever you want to do with the money. Hopefully you'll do the right thing. And here's a check for another one million dollars... Merry Christmas young lady," Daniel said, handing Tameka the check.

Tameka hugged Daniel tight, saying excitedly, "Thank you so much... You don't know how much I appreciate this. Merry Christmas to you as well... I can't believe this is happening. Mr. Daniel, thank you so much." Tameka screamed with excitement, kissing Daniel on the cheeks.

"You just take good care of this little champ for me. I want him to become someone great in life some day so that he could help someone else," Daniel said, patting Tameka's son on the top of his head.

"He will, Sir, I promise you that he will, thanks to you," Tameka vowed.

"I've also taken the liberty of calling one of my private cabs for you since you have so much ready cash on hand. I want you to head straight to my bank on 53rd Street and tell them that I sent you. Here's my business card. Call me whenever you need me," Daniel said. He hopped into his limousine and the driver shut the door. Tameka got into the cab and rode off. Her son stared out of the back window of the cab at the generous man as he waved goodbye. Daniel waved back.

"Gregory, make a u-turn and pull in front of the bus stop," Daniel requested. The limousine whipped around, stopping in front of the bus stop. The back window went down where Daniel sat.

"What's up, dog? I knew that was you climbing your filthy butt inside someone's limo," the teenager said when he saw Daniel sitting in the limousine, gazing at him over the tinted window.

"Sweet Jesus, is this your car?" the heavysset woman sitting on the bench asked. The old lady was also stunned to see Daniel sitting in the limousine.

Daniel only smiled, saying, "The lesson for you three on this Christmas Eve is to never judge a book by its cover and to always be true and caring from the heart. Yes, I am a multibillionaire. The young woman with the little boy that walked over to my limousine is now

a millionaire simply because she didn't judge me by my

appearance. Merry Christmas you three and make sure you work on those personalities," Daniel said. He let his window up as the limousine rolled away, weaving its way through busy traffic. The people at the bus stop stood dumbfounded. They watched the sleek limousine drive away down the snow-kissed streets of New York as the winter snow began to fall once again on that cold Christmas Eve.

**H
HOLIDAYS
HAPPY**



Portal Poetry Corner



“’Twas the Night Before Christmas” By Clement Clarke Moore

’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 St. Nicholas soon
would be there;

The children were nestled all snug
in their beds,
While visions of sugar-plums
danced in their heads;
And mamma in her ’kerchief, and I
in my cap,
Had just settled down for a long
winter’s nap,

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

The moon on the breast of the new-
fallen snow
Gave the lustre of mid-day to
objects below,
When, what to my wondering eyes

should appear,
But a miniature sleigh, and eight
tiny reindeer,

With a little old driver, so lively and
quick,
I knew in a moment it must be St.
Nick.

More rapid than eagles his coursers
they came,
And he whistled, and shouted, and
called them by name;

"Now, DASHER! now, DANCER!
now, PRANCER and VIXEN!
On, COMET! on CUPID! on,
DONDER and BLITZEN!

To the top of the porch! to the top of
the wall!
Now dash away! dash away! dash
away all!"

As dry leaves that before the wild
hurricane fly,
When they meet with an obstacle,
mount to the sky,
So up to the house-top the coursers
they flew,
With the sleigh full of toys, and St.
Nicholas too.

And then, in a twinkling, I heard on
the roof
The prancing and pawing of each
little hoof.
As I drew in my hand, and was
turning around,
Down the chimney St. Nicholas
came with a bound.

He was dressed all in fur, from his
head to his foot,
And his clothes were all tarnished
with ashes and soot;
A bundle of toys he had flung on his
back,
And he looked like a peddler just
opening his pack.

His eyes -- how they twinkled! his

dimples how merry!
His cheeks were like roses, his
nose like a cherry!
His droll little mouth was drawn up
like a bow,
And the beard of his chin was as
white as the snow;

The stump of a pipe he held tight in
his teeth,
And the smoke it encircled his head
like a wreath;
He had a broad face and a little
round belly,
That shook, when he laughed like a
bowlful of jelly.

He was chubby and plump, a right
jolly old elf,
And I laughed when I saw him, in
spite of myself;
A wink of his eye and a twist of his
head,
Soon gave me to know I had
nothing to dread;

He spoke not a word, but went
straight to his work,
And filled all the stockings; then
turned with a jerk,
And laying his finger aside of his
nose,
And giving a nod, up the chimney
he rose;

He sprang to his sleigh, to his team
gave a whistle,
And away they all flew like the down
of a thistle.
But I heard him exclaim, ere he
drove out of sight,

HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO ALL,
AND TO ALL A GOOD-NIGHT!

A Christmas Present...
By Desiree Roland

I heard a knock on my door one
 Christmas Eve,
 As I looked out my window a man I
 could see,
 he was cold and seemed so lonely
 and upon a bended knee
 he asked me can I spare anything
 for him to eat...

I opened up the door and as I
 helped him in,
 he looked up at me with such a
 peaceful grin,
 As he drank down some coffee and
 had a bite to eat,
 I put more wood on the fire so he
 could warm his feet...

Over there by the fireplace he
 warmed his tired hands,
 I wonder where did he come from,
 this quiet white haired man,
 but I wasn't at all afraid of his
 peaceful ways you see,
 there was something special about
 him, in which he could be...
 As he left he turned and thanked
 me for all I had done,
 but he forgot to take his gloves, so
 out the door I run,
 He was gone in the blizzard and I
 couldn't hardly see,
 so I took his old gloves back to the
 house with me...

Just a little after midnight I awoke in
 the dark,
 there wasn't a bit of fire just glowing
 cinders in the dark,
 and where I'd placed his gloves by
 my little Christmas tree, there laid a
 brand new pair, and a Christmas
 Card for me...
 and it read...
 You gave me shelter and food to
 keep me warm,
 you even tried to bring me my

gloves in the storm,
 so here's you a new pair,... the
 finest ever seen...

**AS AN ANGEL OF THE LORD,
 I'LL BE SURE TO TELL THE
 KING...**

Merry Christmas to everyone and
 their families!



Jingle Bells
by James Lord Pierpont

Dashing through the snow
 On a one horse open sleigh
 O'er the fields we go,
 Laughing all the way
 Bells on bob tail ring,
 making spirits bright
 What fun it is to laugh and sing
 A sleighing song tonight

Oh, jingle bells, jingle bells
 Jingle all the way
 Oh, what fun it is to ride
 In a one horse open sleigh
 Jingle bells, jingle bells
 Jingle all the way
 Oh, what fun it is to ride
 In a one horse open sleigh

A day or two ago,
 I thought I'd take a ride,
 And soon Miss Fanny Bright
 Was seated by my side;
 The horse was lean and lank
 Misfortune seemed his lot

We got into a drifted bank,
 And then we got upsot.

Oh, jingle bells, jingle bells
 Jingle all the way
 Oh, what fun it is to ride
 In a one horse open sleigh
 Jingle bells, jingle bells
 Jingle all the way
 Oh, what fun it is to ride
 In a one horse open sleigh

Jingle Bells, Jingle Bells,
 Jingle all the way!
 Oh, What fun it is to ride
 In a one horse open sleigh.
 Jingle Bells, Jingle Bells,
 Jingle all the way!
 Oh, What fun it is to ride
 In a one horse open sleigh.

Now the ground is white
 Go it while you're young
 Take the girls tonight
 And sing this sleighing song
 Just get a bob tailed bay
 two-forty as his speed
 Hitch him to an open sleigh
 And crack! you'll take the lead

Jingle Bells, Jingle Bells,
 Jingle all the way!
 Oh, What fun it is to ride
 In a one horse open sleigh.
 Jingle Bells, Jingle Bells,
 Jingle all the way!
 Oh, What fun it is to ride
 In a one horse open sleigh.



**Holidays, Families, and Friends.
Oh my!
By Barbara Jean Kaufman**

I miss my family on Holidays!
Most of them have died. I have friends, but, it's not the same.
WAIT A MINUTE! How can I miss such yelling, bickering and criticism!
Conversations like: "You were supposed to bring this!"
"Why didn't I get that!" I hate this gift! Mom likes you better than me!
There was no REAL Dad
Well at least the food was great
We baked Slovakian sweet breads
Poppy seed, walnut, and cheese.
All rolled up in swirled rings!
Delicious! Ah tradition
I like real trees, not some plastic colored one
The smell of pine cones: sweet, fresh.
Fir trees: rich green, moist to the touch.
Friends are nice. And I am grateful!
But, no matter how BAD the Holiday was.
And, at times, I didn't want them.
I still MISSED my family. I Still MISS my family!

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From picture books to novels, stop by and discuss your ideas. Submit your short story or poem to be published in the monthly Portal to Michael DiVitto Kelly at mkelly@broward.org.

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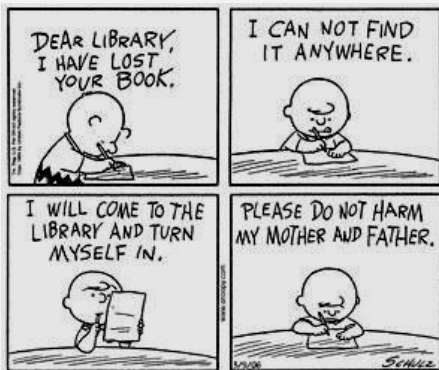
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FEEDBACK CORNER

We want to hear from you! Let us know what you think of our stories. Feel free to email Michael Kelly, head of the writer's group at mkelly@broward.org or call (954) 201-8870.



The Writer's Group meetings are held the second Monday of every month in the second floor conference room from 6:00 – 7:30pm.

Check out our website at www.thewritersportal.yolasite.com to view back issues and more.