

Dreaming of A White Christmas
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Dreaming Of A White Christmas

Julie Duffy

The old man stomps through the house, wearily shedding layers as he goes: a fur-lined boot on the front mat; the other four feet away; gloves fall on the carpeted hall floor; his red, fur-trimmed jacket ends up over a kitchen chair where he has paused to accept a steaming mug of cocoa from the missus.

"What a night." He scratches deeply into his thick white beard and yawns. "I'm getting too old for this."

"You say that every year." His wife smiles and pushes him towards the living room and his waiting armchair. "And while we're reliving old conversations, you never did tell me what you wanted for Christmas."

"What I always ask for and never get," he says. "A little snow and a nice, quiet, normal Christmas afternoon."

"With that lot out there?" she nods out of the window, where a flurry of activity continues, outside. "They never stop do they? Sometimes I wonder if they ever sleep."

*

Outside, in the floodlit yard, a huddle is forming.

"Snow?"

"Yup, he said he wanted it to snow."

"But it doesn't snow here. It's too cold."

"Actually, it's more about humidity and air pressure..."

"Shut up, Murray."

"Right."

"So how do we make it snow for him?"

Four hands reached up under four identical hats and scratched four small heads.

"They have those machines at ski resorts. We could take the

sleigh, borrow one and be back here in no time."

"Yeah right. And they're just going to lend us thousands of dollars' worth of valuable capital assets are they?"

"Murray!"

"What? I'm serious."

"We'll tell them it's for him. No-one's going to refuse the Big Man."

*

"What are they up to now?" His wife is still looking out of the window.

"Hmmm?"

"They're doing something with the sleigh."

"Oh. They said they'd put it away and rub down the 'deer for me. Now come on, love. Come and sit with me for a bit. Maybe we can have one of those famous peaceful Christmases I keep hearing about. Don't you have some knitting to do?"

"Done and gifted," she says, settling down into the chair across from him. "You know this is the one day a year when I don't knit a stitch." He grunts. He has forgotten. "Now, pass me that novel will you?"

He hands her a slim book.

"'The Buggymaker's Daughter'?" He raises an eyebrow.

"Amish Romance. Big with the moms this year. That copy got a bit dog-eared. I thought I'd give it a try."

The old couple look at each other and smile, enjoying the moment of peace. Peace?! But scarcely has the look of alarm had time to flash across their faces when there's a clatter and some high-pitched hollering from the yard outside. He rolls his eyes.

"At least we always know where they are," she says.

*

He has just closed his heavy eyelids for the third time in as many seconds when the soothingly busy noises from the yard stop again.

A voice shouts 'now'. There is a moment of absolute silence and then the air around them erupts. Picture frames dance. The armchairs beneath them jiggle across the floor powered only by the vibrations of ... what? An earthquake? A Dreamliner crashing to earth outside? A tornado carrying a freight train past their front window? The old couple drag themselves out of their chairs and stagger to the window -- he catches a chipped cherub figurine on the way -- and stand there, reaching for each other's hand as they wait for the world to end.

But there is nothing to see. The day is as dark as you'd expect up here. And the windows are shaking to the repeating thrum-thrum-thrum of some gigantic....generator? As their heart-rates begin the downward scramble back towards normal, he rolls his eyes heavenward once again. Something catches his gaze. What is that moving in the sky? His wife reaches out to stop a Llandro shepherd from jiggling off the windowsill imperiling his nine remaining fingers, but his eyes don't move from the inky afternoon sky. A mass of ... something is falling towards them. He braces, ready to run, but then it hits.

Snow.

A great wave of snow, as if the Titans themselves had started a snowblowing service, hits the front garden, the house. The pine-tree at the end of the drive bends almost double under the assault. The mailbox disappears entirely and all the time the generator thrums and the snow roars down upon them.

He looks at his wife.

"The elves," they both say, and head for the back door.

There are a few confused minutes of arm waving and mime-shouting through the infernal roar of the SMI Wizzard snow-maker deluxe. Words like 'thought you wanted' and 'missing the point' are bandied around --- along with 'completely'. Before much longer, four drooping hats can be seen scurrying around a

piece of machinery, disconnecting hoses and dragging the beast back towards the sleigh.

"A normal Christmas afternoon! That's all I want," he roars from the doorway, shaking his head. "And clean this lot up when you get back, would you?" He jerks his thumb towards the piles of snow covering everything in the yard.

*

Back in their armchairs, his wife hides behind her Amish romance but he can see her shoulders heaving.

"It's not funny," he says.

"No dear," she manages.

"Do you need any help in the kitchen?"

"It's all in the oven. You just take a nap there in your chair, why don't you?"

He harumphs, but snuggles deeper into the cushions. Maybe just a few minutes. It has been a long night after all.

*

He is sitting on a white sandy beach. There are palm trees and sweet scents in the air. A girl in a grass skirt is walking towards him, smiling, and holding a sweating iced drink on a tray. He sighs and turns to his left to look at his wife. But where she should be is instead a huge, bearded man on a Harley Davison. He has just kicked it into life and the roar of its engine takes over the world. The beach cracks and the sand begins to run away through fissures in the ground. The girl in the grass skirt swirls away into the sky as if being pulled down the plughole of the universe and he realizes, somewhat belatedly, that he has been dreaming.

He opens his eyes. The Harley-roar continues. He closes his eyes again. When he opens them, his wife is at the window.

"Snowblower?" he groans.

She can't speak, but she nods.

*

The third time the sleigh pulls back into the yard, it is free of

snowmaking and snow-blowing equipment. Four chastened elves clamber down from it, wielding orange-bladed shovels as large as themselves and set about digging out the mailbox with a will. He watches them from the window. Murray keeps getting his shovel stuck under a too-heavy load. Ephraim is throwing snow back into the space George has just cleared. Midge, the smallest of them all, seems to be the only one actually making any progress. He can't stand it. He retrieves his fur-lined coat from the kitchen chair, raising a warning hand to his wife. "Don't ask," his eyes plead. She shoves a tea-towel into her mouth but even it cannot stifle her giggles. He stomps back down the hall retrieving boots and gloves along the way.

*

When she pokes her head out of the door at 3pm Murray and Ephraim are making an frontal assault on some sort of snow fort affair, while George and Midge creep around the side. On top of the fort her beloved husband is beating his chest and waving warning snowballs at the approaching elves. Ice is forming in his beard but it keeps shaking loose with each belly-laugh.

"Ten minutes," she calls and goes inside inside to set the table and check the TV listings. Good. An hour from now they should all be dozing nicely in front of George Bailey's opening monologue from *It's A Wonderful Life*.

And to think, he complains that they never have a normal Christmas...

I hope you enjoyed this piece of seasonal silliness.

You can find the full collection of Christmas stories, *[Christmas Ornaments](#)*, and my other books at my author page at Amazon: <http://amzn.to/1OGF4V4>

In the meantime, Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays, and watch out for those elves!

Julie Duffy