

MIKE FORDE

PARSLEY MIMBLEWOOD PRESENTS

*How to*  
**SAVE**



**CHRISTMAS**

Illustrated by Rebecca Sampson



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CHRISTMAS**



*(Even if you're wearing a mask and holding  
your breath and all the windows are open and  
you have to wash your hands AGAIN)*

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Rebecca Sampson

*This story is dedicated to Wensleydale class at  
Ingleton Primary School, the best home-schoolers  
(and school-schoolers) in the world!*

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CHAPTER 1

# THE WORST PRESENTS IN THE WORLD

Monday 21st December 2020

My brother, Bo, gives the WORST Christmas presents. Last year, he gave me a Nose-Picking-Stick. It was just a stick that he found in the garden and it didn't even fit up my nostril. I got him a "Grow-Your-Own Christmas Tree Kit". (Really it was just a pinecone and a bucket of mud.)

Unfortunately... that was his favourite present and he spent all day splashing mud on everyone's Christmas jumpers and the pinecone went to visit baby Jesus in the nativity scene.

The year before, we gave each other imaginary gifts. Everyone knows that clothes are the most boring present in the world, so I gave Bo imaginary clothes for Christmas.

Unfortunately... he spent all day running around the house only wearing his imaginary clothes. His present for me was an imaginary fart (which I suppose is better than a real fart). It's called Bart and it lives in a little glass jar on a shelf in the bathroom.

Usually, we have this competition to give each other the worst gifts possible but this year, things are a bit different. We've all

had to put up with so much handwashing and facemasks and missed birthday parties, so I think we deserve to have the BEST CHRISTMAS EVER. Even Bo deserves a proper present. And I know exactly what he wants more than anything in the world.

His very own... Nose-Picking-Stick!

I've been searching all month for the perfect nostril-sized stick AND it'll save him from having to wash his hands so much.

I've got tons of ideas to make this year even better than usual so I thought I'd write this little book in case any of you want to know...

### **How to have the BEST CHRISTMAS EVER!**

(Even if you're wearing a mask and holding your breath and all the windows are open and you have to wash your hands AGAIN.)

## CHAPTER 2

# HOW TO DRESS A TREE

Tuesday 22nd December 2020

While we were getting out the Christmas decorations this morning, I found something. Well, actually, I found lots of things. I found a tangle of broken fairy lights knotted around a herd of little reindeer. They'd been tied up all year so they were very grateful when we untangled them. Bo found a very very old chocolate coin. He added it to his coin collection (which is mostly just battered old pennies that he finds in the dirt). But underneath all the decorations and tinsel was a dusty old package wrapped up in green paper. It was a leftover Christmas present! We must have forgotten it last year.

It didn't have a label or a card so Mum said that me and Bo had to share it. But Bo ripped off the paper without asking me. Then he stared glumly at the present. It was a huge dusty old book. (Bo hates books. Well, actually... that's not right. What Bo really hates is sitting down. But books are much easier when you're sitting down)

The book was called, "Tales of Yule for Children". This made me very curious because I'd never heard of a Yule before. It sounds like some big feathery beast that flies over the

North Pole searching for lost elves. Or it could be a little village in the far north where it's Christmas every day of the year.

But it wasn't about feathery beasts or faraway villages. The book is full of stories about old-fashioned kids who call their parents "Mother" and "Father" and drink ginger beer and lemonade. And the boys are always going off and having Christmassy adventures in the snow whilst the girls stay at home and make mince pies. But my favourite part was all the old-fashioned Christmas traditions.

Did you know that people used to...

- **Eat goose for Christmas dinner**

We don't eat meat in our house but I've met a few geese (and been chased by them too). If anyone deserves to be eaten at Christmas, it's a goose.

- **Roast Chestnuts on an open fire**

Just like in the song.

- **Play Parlour Games**

These are Christmas games that you play in the parlour.

We don't have a parlour so me and Bo played in the porch. (That's our only room beginning with P.) My favourite parlour game is: "Are you there Moriarty?". Two people are blindfolded and given a wrapped up newspaper each. Then they try and bash the other person over the head.

- **Make someone the Lord of Misrule**

In the olden days, they would choose some poor person who would get to be in charge on Christmas day and they could order everyone else around and they could even ask the king for figgy pudding. I thought about making Bo the Lord of Misrule but decided this would mean we'd spend Christmas day in the mud digging up worms for Christmas dinner. But if I'm the Lord of Misrule then I can make sure this really is the best Christmas ever.

- **Dress the Tree**

The book didn't really explain what dressing the tree meant but I thought dressing our Christmas tree would be much more fun than just decorating it. And now that I'm Lord of Misrule, everyone has to do what I want.

First, we tried dressing the tree in a Christmas jumper but it was too small and sort of crushed all the branches together. Next, we tried the old coat and hat which we keep for dressing up snowmen.

The tree looked very well dressed but we needed to keep those things ready in case it snows on Christmas day. In the end, Mum found this enormous red and gold dress which she wore one Christmas when she was pregnant with me. It was just the right size.

We found some sparkly golden high heeled shoes for its feet and looked all over the house for the right hat. I found it in the corner of the attic behind the Christmas decoration boxes. It was a top hat. We glued a whole packet of sequins to it and placed it right at the top where the star normally goes.

It was perfect. The best dressed Christmas tree we've ever had.

I think making myself the Lord of Misrule was a very good idea and will almost certainly SAVE CHRISTMAS. Maybe everyone should have a Lord of Misrule this Christmas.

What do you think?

- *Who should be Lord of Misrule in your family?*
- *If you were Lord of Misrule what would you do?*
- *Whose clothes would you use to dress the tree?*

## CHAPTER 3

# HOW TO BUILD A GRAN-BOT

Wednesday 23rd December 2020

Normally, I hate waiting. Like when you have to wait for Bo to take off all his coats and scarves and extra trousers so that he can go to the toilet AGAIN. But at Christmas, waiting is different. (It's not as good as the presents or the food or dressing up Meatball the dog like a chubby little reindeer but Christmas waiting is still pretty good).

And the best type of waiting is the waiting for everyone to arrive. Normally, me and Bo spend hours standing at the end of our road trying to be the first one to spot the cars.

We live in the middle of the Yorkshire Dales (just beyond Wensleydale), miles and miles from anywhere so you have to go a long way down the lane before you find a road with any cars going past. Sometimes we wait for ages and Mum makes Bo wear all his clothes so he doesn't get cold. As he puts on more and more jumpers and hats and scarfs and coats, he gets rounder and rounder until he can't even walk... He can only waddle like a penguin who's eaten too much Christmas pudding. One year, when it snowed, he couldn't even waddle so I just rolled him down the road until he turned into Bo-man the Snowman.

This is who usually comes for Christmas:

**Auntie Eleanor:** She arrives on a motorbike and has different coloured hair every year. (Somehow, she's always wearing a beautiful sparkling dress under her black motorbike leathers.)

**Great Uncle Mervin:** He drives a rusty old truck which is half full of bits and pieces that he finds in skips at the side of the road. Uncle Mervin is Bo's favourite person in the world and, usually, by this time, Bo is really cold so he clambers in between the engine parts and broken bird cages and they drive down the road together.

**Duncan:** I don't really know what Duncan is. Mum thinks he might be a second cousin but she's not sure. He doesn't have a car so sometimes he takes the bus or gets a lift with an old farmer in his tractor. One year, he walked here and didn't arrive until three days after Christmas. He doesn't say much and no-one knows what he does the rest of the year but he always turns up for Christmas and he's the best cook EVER, so no-one minds if he's a bit odd.

Gran is usually the last to arrive but I don't mind waiting because she's MY favourite person in the world. She decorates the inside of her car with tinsel and holly just for me and there's always one Werther's Original sweet wrapped up with



a tiny red bow, sitting on the seat waiting for me when I get in.

But this year, not everyone's allowed to come together so we'll only be waiting at the end of the road for Great Uncle Mervin and Duncan. I asked Mum if we could swap Duncan for Gran but she said it didn't work like that...

This will be my first Christmas without Gran. And we can't have the best Christmas ever if Gran isn't here. But don't worry... I'm the Lord of Misrule and I've had a BRILLIANT idea...

### **GRAN-BOT**

Gran-Bot is made out of:

- A remote control car
- A broom handle
- An old green fleece
- Mum's phone (I'm allowed to use it because I'm Lord of Misrule... and because Mum doesn't know)
- Some Werther's Originals that I found in the cupboard. (I taped them to the back of the car in case Gran wants to give someone a sweet.)

Today was only a practice for Christmas Day but it worked pretty well. Gran-Bot just had to give me directions and

I drove her all around the house. She thought our tree was the best dressed she'd ever seen and she gave me four Werther's Originals.

There were only two problems... Gran-Bot gives very bad cuddles because she's mostly just a broom handle. Also, Gran's directions weren't very good so we kept on crashing into things. Mum's phone was getting a bit scratched around the edges so I shut down Gran-Bot for the day to stop real Gran getting into trouble.

I'll need to invent some better hugging technology before Christmas and Gran-Bot needs to practice her directions. Maybe she should have a Werther's Original catapult too... And a 3D present printer. And a drone mode! Once she's finished, Gran-Bot will be the most technologically advanced Grandmother in the world!

- *Who normally comes to your Christmas?*
- *Who would you make into a robot if you could?*
- *What other features should Gran-Bot have?*

## CHAPTER 4

# HOW TO CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS IF YOU'RE IMAGINARY

Thursday 24th December 2020

Kids don't have much time to think about their imaginary friends on Christmas Day itself so it makes sense to have an imaginary Christmas the day before. I have loads of imaginary friends so organising an imaginary Christmas is a big job.

My imaginary friend, PomPom the Ninja, LOVES Christmas. (PomPom is an imaginary ninja who looks after the imaginary unicorns at the end of my garden.) Every year, he puts reindeer antlers on all the unicorns and tinsel around their horns and he makes them pull him on a sleigh up and down the garden.

Evil Eggbert is another of my imaginary friends but he HATES Christmas. Eggbert is about the size of an egg and he sits on my shoulder telling me to do shockingly evil things. One Christmas, he told me to swap all the labels on the presents. Mum opened boxes and boxes of plastic dinosaurs and Bo got a lovely pair of sparkling crystal earrings.

And my imaginary friend, Detective Inspector Dracula, always holds a Christmas Murder Mystery Party. DI Dracula is a vampire who is also a detective. Quite a lot of the time, it turns

out that he was the murderer as well as the detective which makes the Murder Mystery Party a bit awkward.

But my favourite part of Imaginary Christmas Day is my special, one-day-only Christmas imaginary friend. His name is Samuel Claus and he's Santa's younger brother. He lives at the South Pole and his sleigh is pulled by penguins. The problem is that no-one believes in him except for me so the penguins can't fly very well. Instead, they swim across the ocean pulling the sleigh through the waves. It's much slower than flying reindeers so it takes them half the year to get here and half the year to get back. Luckily, he only needs to visit my house because I'm the only one who believes in him.

Samuel Claus always gives unbelievable presents. One year, he got me a Brother-Shrinking Device. And last year he got me a Book-Portal-Gun that makes a portal into the book you're reading so you can walk right into the story. This year, he gave me a Christmas-Pudding-Exploder (with two sticks of dynamite INCLUDED)

This afternoon, after we'd eaten the imaginary Christmas dinner, Great Uncle Mervin was helping me to build Gran-Bot's Werther's Original catapult and I told him about my

Christmas-Pudding-Exploder. He thought it was a brilliant idea. Everyone in our family hates Christmas pudding but no-one hates it more than Great Uncle Mervin. He hates the burnt bits around the outside and he hates the soggy bits in the middle but more than anything, he hates THE RAISINS.

That's when Evil Eggbert popped up on my shoulder with a fantastically evil plan. What if Great Uncle Mervin and me built a REAL Christmas-Pudding-Exploder? In the Best Christmas Ever, you shouldn't have to eat something as disgustingly burnt and soggy and raisin-y as Christmas pudding. It wasn't even really an evil plan because no-one even likes Christmas Pudding.

Uncle Mervin said that we'd need to find some explosives but Mum told me she'd run out of dynamite and she didn't have time to go to the shops. The best thing we could find was the brandy that you pour over the Christmas Pudding to set it on fire... but that wouldn't explode it. That would just make it even more burnt than normal.

I looked in Uncle Mervin's truck too but all I could find was big strips of metal and rusty springs and little metal bottles.

I was about to give up when Uncle Mervin gave me a huge wrinkly smile and a wink. He started fiddling around with the

big rusty springs and strips of metal and he wouldn't tell me what he was building even though I'm the Lord of Misrule.

But slowly, I realised his plan... he was giving Gran-Bot a Christmas Pudding Catapult. It even had a little bottle of brandy and a lighter to set the pudding on fire as it flew through the sky!

Evil Eggbert was very excited about flaming Christmas puddings flying through the sky and he told me that this was the best imaginary Christmas ever. Hopefully, real Christmas will be just as good. I can already imagine the delicious taste of NOT eating Christmas pudding. I can't wait for tomorrow!

- *How do your imaginary friends celebrate Christmas?*
- *What part of Christmas dinner would you set on fire and catapult through the sky?*
- *Is there any part of Christmas that we should get rid of forever or should Christmas always stay the same?*

## CHAPTER 5

# CHRISTMAS DAY!

Friday 25th December 2020

What do you think is the worst start to Christmas morning?

- a) No snow
- b) A very angry little brother with a stocking stuck on his head
- c) No presents
- d) ALL OF THESE!!!

Bo had woken up very early. He always does on Christmas. He's not allowed to open any presents until everyone else gets up so he just stares at them all and shakes them and sniffs in case they're something tasty. That's why, he was the first to find out.

When he couldn't see any presents in his big green stocking, he tried sticking his head inside. He managed to get it all the way over his shoulders and arms before he got stuck. The first thing I heard on Christmas morning was a crash and a muffled little voice crying, "HELP!"

I rescued Bo and that's when I saw my stocking. There wasn't a single present. Not even an orange at the bottom. Not even a lump of coal!

I started to worry... Had Santa forgotten us? Were we on the naughty list? There was the time that I trapped Bo under a washing basket all morning. And the time that I turned mum's favourite crystal necklace into buried treasure (then lost the map). And I couldn't even count all the naughty things Bo's done...

Then, I saw the first clues. The mince pie was gone. The brandy had been drunk and the carrot had clear evidence of reindeer nibbles! Santa had come! But the presents were gone. It was a Christmas mystery!

Bo was shouting about what he would do to the Christmas burglars when he found them. He'd managed to find an enormous stick and was swinging it around at imaginary robbers. Meanwhile, me and Detective Inspector Dracula hunted for more clues. Upstairs, we found the second. Mum and Great Uncle Mervin were MISSING! And Duncan still hadn't arrived. They weren't anywhere in the house.

The third clue was on the Christmas tree. Actually, the third clue WASN'T on the Christmas tree. The golden top hat was gone. And there was a tiny trail of golden sequins across the kitchen floor and out the back door.

Outside, we saw someone. They were wearing the golden top hat and staring straight at us. I had to grab Bo to stop him

charging with his stick. It wasn't a Christmas burglar. It was Gran-Bot!

Mum's phone wasn't turned on so we couldn't ask real Gran what was happening but the remote control car trundled down the garden. We helped it over the wall and followed it through the big field beyond. In the woods at the far end of the field, we could see huge people in big coats. Bo was still holding his stick but he was holding my hand now too.

As we got closer and closer to the woods, I saw that they weren't people. They were trees! Someone had dressed all the trees in the wood. There was one dressed up as Santa and one dressed in a kilt and one tree was wearing an enormous pink bikini. And underneath each tree was a present!

We were carrying so many presents, that we almost didn't see them. Right in the middle of the woods... was Gran. Real Gran! Mum was there too and so was Great Uncle Mervin and they had built an enormous fire and a sort of cosy Christmas den full of cushions and fleeces and tinsel.

Later on, Mum told us that Duncan had entirely forgotten about Christmas. He thought it was still November. He's going to come and visit us next month. And instead, Real Gran had come to surprise us!

We spent all day in the woods. We ate Christmas dinner out of big thermos flasks (which is the best way to eat Christmas dinner). You have to tip your thermos flask on to your plate and you don't know which part of Christmas dinner might come out. It could be a roast potato or a ball of stuffing or a brussels sprout. And at the bottom of the thermos, all the gravy and the mashed potato and the stuffing combine together into a delicious mixture. I called it Christmas Goo and that's what we're going to have for dinner every year from now on.

Instead of Christmas pudding, we had marshmallows. Bo had gotten everyone nose-picking sticks but they turned into excellent marshmallow roasting sticks.

Just before we went back inside, Great Uncle Mervin drove Gran-Bot to the edge of the woods and we set up her catapult. Bo got to set the Christmas pudding on fire and I got to press the release button. The flaming pudding soared through the air and exploded with a huge splash in the centre of the river.

It was the Best Christmas Ever! I hope your puddings fly just as well and your trees are all well dressed and you get to see all your favourite real people and Robo-people.

Mum told me that I should finish by saying... Merry Christmas from all the Miblewood family!

## SOME ADVICE FOR SANTA

Saturday 26th December 2020

Dear Santa,

I want to start by saying, on behalf of all the children in the world, thank you for all the brilliant presents. It's very kind of you to travel to every house giving everyone gifts.

However, please don't put me on the naughty list but... I just have a few suggestions for you to try next year to make Christmas even better.

1. Why not give the reindeers a rest and try another animal pulling your sleigh? I hear penguins would be very good fliers if enough children believed in them.
2. Does your sleigh have any protection against Christmas burglars? If you wanted, my Great Uncle Mervin could build you a catapult that could throw flaming Christmas puddings at anyone who tried to steal the presents.

3. Your red suit is nice and looks very warm but wouldn't it be a bit more fun if you wore something different next year? We have a lovely pink bikini that's just about your size!

Thanks again for all the presents. Say hello to the reindeer for me.

Lots of love,

**PARSLEY MIMBLEWOOD**

**XXX**



If you liked this story, you can discover more  
of Parsley's adventures at

[parsleymimblewood.wordpress.com](http://parsleymimblewood.wordpress.com)