Part 1

She pushed a spoon idly around the breakfast bowl of muesli, her mind on thoughts other than eating. Seated about the kitchen table, her 16-year-old daughter and 14-year-old son were multi-tasking. Emma, nibbling at toast and thumbing an ‘*OMG – R U serious!!!*’ reply on her phone’s social media app and Harry, spooning down a sugar-loaded rice cereal whilst on a killing spree in an online cyber war. Her husband, Dennis (who never ate breakfast), was engrossed in the sports pages of the newspaper.

‘I’ve decided what we’re all doing on Christmas Day’ she exclaimed suddenly, wishing to gain their absolute attention.

‘Oh, really darling?’ her husband replied, feigning only as much interest as required to appear mildly engaged in the conversation whilst maintaining concentration on the cricket news. Emma and Harry remained oblivious.

‘Yes, I’ve given it a lot of thought and I’ve decided that we’ll go and visit Great Grandpa in the nursing home, then bring him back here for Christmas dinner. We haven’t seen him for ages and it’ll be nice to have him with us at Christmas for once. I’ll let the home know of our plans but we’ll keep it a big surprise for him.’

*That should get their attention,* she thought.

It did.

Emma looked at Harry, who looked at Emma, shock and despair obvious on their faces, and it was Emma who responded first.

‘You *are* joking Mum? Like, seriously? Great Grandpa’s like, mega ancient. He’ll only fall asleep on the lounge and, like, snore all afternoon. What a way to spend Christmas Day. I may as well shoot myself now.’

‘We’ll be bored to tears for sure’ Harry joined in, pleading.

‘Don’t be so childish – show some respect please. You two don’t know just how good you’ve got it and it won’t hurt you to cheer up your great grandfather. It’s not beyond the realms of possibility that you might actually enjoy it. Anyway, my mind’s made up, he’s coming to visit.’ she admonished firmly.

At this point, Dennis let the newspaper drop and addressed the children. ‘Your mother is right, it’s not as if you two believe in Santa anymore and Christmas should be more about connecting with, and appreciating, your family. More so than gift giving and receiving.’

‘Besides,’ he added ‘it could have been worse.’

‘I doubt it!’ Emma mumbled.

‘Oh yes it could young lady - your mother could have insisted on us all going to church on Christmas morning!’

Part 2

Bill Parmenter had a mind as sharp as a 16-year-old, but at 93 years of age, a body that had surrendered any vestige of youthfulness many decades ago. It was the morning of December 25th and he was sitting in his armchair, catching the morning sun streaming through the window of his room, having just finished the previous day’s online crossword on his tablet (his one concession to a truly modern world). The room was small, but cosy and serviceable, and the staff were friendly and helpful enough. Not bad for a nursing home really. He’d heard stories of worse places to be incarcerated and he didn’t mind too much being at this one, but he did miss the contact with his family which consisted of a son overseas, and a married granddaughter with young’uns living not far away. He was thinking of Christmases past and the fun they’d had all those years ago. Although the nursing home staff tried hard to enliven Christmas Day, he wasn’t particularly looking forward to the Christmas dinner they provided. Having to wear silly coloured paper hats and read out recycled Christmas cracker jokes that *might* have been mildly amusing eighty years ago, just didn’t appeal to him. In fact, he felt as tired as the jokes.

Bill knew exactly what would happen at the nursing home Christmas table. Much the same as it did every year.

*This turkey’s as tough as a boot.*

*Put your teeth in you idiot!*

*Yeuch! The gravy’s bloody cold*.

*Where are my baked spuds*?

*Dammit! They know I don’t like brussels sprouts.*

*For heaven’s sake someone open up the windows – Charlie’s farted again!*

It was almost too much to be bothering with and Bill had a good mind to stay in his room for the day listening to his old wireless.

His ruminations were interrupted by a soft knock on the door. He eased himself up from the chair, groped for his walker nearby and was shuffling across the room when the door opened and his favourite carer, Marie, polite as ever, popped her head into the room ‘Visitors for you Mr Parmenter.’

Bill’s frown of puzzlement turned to a smile of delight as he saw his granddaughter and family come into view.

Maybe, just maybe, having to wear a silly paper hat and tell bad jokes might make for a wonderful day after all.