

A Christmas Story

'Hi mum, it is good to be home and see you again. Have you been crying? I'm back home for Christmas and I will soon cheer you all up.'

'Tom...'

'I've really enjoyed my first term at uni but I have really missed you all. I didn't say anything but during the first couple of weeks I was very homesick but I got over it. I have even missed our Laura and I'll bet you never expected to hear me say that. She was obnoxious when she was thirteen but she definitely improved by the time she started sixth form. I expect I was the same.'

'Tom...'

'I have decided that when you and dad were nagging me about my schoolwork and my unsuitable friends you were right and I was wrong. I am a more mature person now and I really appreciate everything you and dad have done for me. That's another thing I bet you never expected to hear. I never understood the saying "absence makes the heart grow fonder" but I do now. You don't look well mum but I'm home now so things will pick up.'

'Tom...'

'When my dad used to ask me to go down to the Rose and Crown for a drink I always used to make some excuse but not now. Me and the old man can go for a drink together. We will give you a call when we want picking up. You don't mind do you mum? Bringing home the two men in your life after a night's drinking?'

'Tom...'

'I hope you didn't mind me asking you if we could have braising steak, chips, mushrooms and onions tonight. Uni food is ok but we never get real red meat. You would not believe what they can do with mince but I am desperate for some real red meat. Your chips are the best in the world and I mean that mum.'

I've also missed my old bedroom. Pathetic isn't it? You haven't taken in a lodger or worse still let our Laura have it? That really would be a killer.

The traffic on the M6 wasn't too bad at all. You can never predict what it will be like. Sometimes it is like a giant car park, other times it's great. Don't worry mum I never break the speed limit. I said that with a straight face, didn't I mum?'

'Shut up! Shut up! I think I am going mad. I don't know what is happening. Everything seems normal, me and you chatting in the kitchen like we used to. I have missed you so much and now this. It all seems so real.'

Tom... you are dead. You died last Christmas on the motorway, coming home from university.'