

## **One for the road**

She shook his shoulder. 'Come on, you need to wake up'

'I really don't think I can go in tonight'

'You must. People are relying on you'

'But I'm sick of working over Christmas. It always seems to fall to me. Why can't someone else take a shift?'

'Well, you can retire in January, so this is the last time.'

'Thank God. I'm way too old to be working nights, it plays havoc with my sleep patterns.'

'But you have always enjoyed being a delivery driver in the past.'

'I know, but it's a whole different ball game now. So many people ordering so much. It was simpler when people had one or two gifts delivered. They were happy with a ball or a tangerine.'

'Ah, the good old days before you became a grumpy old man.'

"Hmmp" he replied, then laughed.

Dragging himself out of bed, he held on to the wall as he negotiated the trip to the bathroom.

Slowly and unsteadily he made his way downstairs, holding carefully onto the banister.

'Here is your jacket, I have made your favourite; marmite sandwich, and I've put a nip of whisky into your coffee flask to help keep you warm.'

He managed to raise a small smile as he kissed his wife on the top of her head and headed out for the final shift of the year.

As he made his rounds, he was surprised at how many people had left out a glass of sherry or whisky. He assumed they were for him and gratefully swallowed each one. He knew he shouldn't be drinking but the hot toddy in his flask had given him the taste. Anyway, it was making him feel more cheery. Hopefully he would be home before the snow settled. He was glad that he had finally made the decision to retire.

As the sun began to rise, he heard the loud siren of a police car and slowed down for it to overtake. As it speeded past, an officer pointed at him and shouted 'pull over.'

He skidded to a halt, just managing to avoid sliding into the back of the police car.

'Evening Sir' and then with a stifled giggle 'what have we got here then?'

Several hours later he was fumbling to get his key into the front door lock. He wanted to get in without disturbing his wife, but she was already up and about. She didn't look worried, just very angry, her arms folded in front of her chest, her eyes scowling as they stared into his.

'You ok love?' He asked  
'No I'm not, look at this.'

She banged the morning newspaper down onto the table. There on the front was a photograph of him, and the headline "Santa charged with drunk driving".

Nick hung his head in shame, he opened the back door and threw a bag of apples out for the reindeer, 'Oh well, it saves me from retiring, tomorrow's headline will be "**Santa gets the sack.**" Now, pass me some paracetamol please, I need to go to bed and sleep off this hangover.'