

It was Christmas morning.

The log fire crackled and glowed, its flames reflecting on the tinsel and baubles on a tree which seemed to dominate the room. The brightly coloured paper chains moved in the warmth and the gilt-tipped holly peeped around picture frames and out of brass mugs and bowls on the dresser next to a tray upon which a bottle of Amontillado sherry and several glasses waited.

The large table had been fully extended and laid for 14 people with the best china and gleaming silver cutlery and a cracker on every side-plate.

Wonderful smells came from the kitchen next door where a pudding bubbled in a large pot on top of the cooker. The vegetables had long been prepared and the massive turkey was in the oven.

The cooker was mum's pride and joy. For many years she had managed to produce wonderful cakes and pies and vast meals for her large family on an out-of-date and uncertain stove. Now, she finally had a new model, and this was its first big test.

Children's excited voices could be heard as some of their cousins and other family members and friends arrived, stamping their feet and rubbing their hands, glad to be out of the cold.

More presents went under the Christmas tree and while the adults sipped their sherry, or a beer for the men, the children made their escape and could be heard laughing and squealing in another part of the house.

After a while mum said: 'Well, I'd better go on check on the lunch.'

A couple of minutes later a loud wail came from the kitchen and a distraught mum appeared in the doorway. She had set the timer to cook the huge turkey but unfortunately, she'd got it wrong. It switched itself off after a mere 3 hours so though it had started to cook it was almost raw!

But, after some tears and wringing of hands mum, ever practical, jointed the turkey, turned on her shiny new oven, without the timer of course, and lunch became an early dinner.