

A Christmas Story

by Michael Gillan Maxwell

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Slogging through the semi-frozen slush in the parking lot I hear a jingling bell and off tune singing from just inside the doorway.

Ah shit! SHE'S here again. Where do they find these people?

Automatic door swings open and I'm greeted by a short, chubby, gnome-like woman, wearing an ugly Christmas sweater and a pair of bent wire holiday reindeer antlers jammed down on top of her head. Dancing the boogaloo near the Salvation Army donation kettle, ringing the bell in some kind of cadence to whatever music blasts through ear buds. She's sings along in the key of whatever, twirls like a back up singer in a soul band, swings her left arm in a circle and points at me.

I'm ready for this. I'm prepared. I take the crumpled up dollar bill and try to stuff it into the donation kettle. It's not like the old days where you just tossed money into an open pail. This is a locked steel box with an opening so tiny I can hardly stuff a dollar bill in there. You can put money in, but you can't take it out. It also has serrated edges, so if you are stupid enough, or desperate enough to actually stick your finger in that hole, good luck trying to get it back out. Kind of like driving over those spiky things in a parking garage.

God save the queen, I mutter.

Merry Christmas to you too! she yells back.

She looks a hell of a lot like my old college friend who started the Jews for Jesus group on campus. Only he's about 50 years older and Wonder Bread white. Whatever happened to that guy anyway? Disappeared into the void like most of the people I knew back then. Seems like everyone either started shooting heroin, became a born again something or other or a corporate lawyer living in some dystopian suburban purgatory.

Me? I'm just trying to get some last minute Christmas shopping done. You know. Put Christ back into Christmas. By shopping at Dollar General. The place where class and style go to die.

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Hello. What have we here? A Trump Troll doll. Naked as the day I was born. The perfect stocking stuffer for the person who has everything they want but nothing they need. I envision myself, basking in the cozy glow of the living room tannenbaum as I turn this into a voodoo doll on Christmas Eve. Although this could have been so much better with tiny hands and an even tinier penis. And flatulent! Yes flatulent! One of those dolls that farts. They make those, don't they?

I pay for 3 Trump Troll Dolls and a package red licorice twizzlers and head back toward the door. Dancing Gnome Girl is there to greet me. I stick a twizzler in the teeth of the donation pail.

Long live the king! I grumble.

Merry Christmas to you too.

