

Three Hearts

Olivia was sitting by the bay-window overlooking her small cottage garden. In her hand was a hot steaming cup of coffee, and in her mind a collection of memories. Everything looked miserable outside. The sky was grey, the flowers were not blooming. There were no green leaves on the trees, making the gravelled path leading to the front gate the dominant part of this usually pretty garden. Ironically, the mood outside matched how she felt inside. The mix of sadness, unhappiness and powerlessness has been with her for some time. Not self-pity exactly, but rather a feeling of hopelessness and even despair.

Only five weeks to Christmas and it might not be the most happiest of time for them. Olivia listened to the laughter of her two children drifting across from the living room. Bless them for their innocence. Daniel was fifteen and Annabel fourteen, both were the bright lights in her otherwise bleak existence. Daniel was part of her worries. He was a good boy, but he has become very withdrawn and sat at his piano for hours. Olivia wondered if he sensed the bleakness around her. She was trying very hard not to show them that all was not well with their world at the moment. Only five weeks to Christmas and no way of knowing how to even put a turkey on the table, let alone Christmas presents. Her mind drifted back to past Christmases in Australia.

Olivia met her husband when she was only seventeen and they married when she was nineteen, and moved to Australia. What an adventure it was for her! In the beginning their first five years were fantastic, and she loved Australia. They were living a life of prestige in a waterfront mansion in Rosebay, a suburb in Sydney, and Olivia had everything she could dream of. A beautiful house and family, plenty of money and a husband who adored her. She was living the dream, a fairy tale no less. But she should have known that it was too good, too perfect for it to last. The bubble did not burst all at once, but slowly deflated until there was no life left and the dream became a nightmare.

Olivia was abruptly taken back to the present when Annabel put her arms around her and placed a big kiss on her cheek. Annabel was such a softy and she had the instinct and wisdom of one much older, she must be an old knowing soul.

Annabel's beautiful eyes looked questionably at Olivia, "What's the problem mum, you look worried?"

"It's ok darling, nothing for you to fret about, I am just looking at the miserable weather outside. It is starting to rain now and I have to drive down to the market to get groceries. I wonder if it is ever going to snow this year, it has been a rather mild winter so far."

"I am disappointed too mum, I love playing in the snow and our garden needs a snowman, don't you think?" Annabel suggested.

"Yes and we also need a Christmas tree," Olivia added.

"You both can look after each other while I go to the market and to the department store as well. I won't be too long and I will cook our favourite food tonight, which is....."

"Pizza!" Daniel finished his mother's sentence.

"Of course we'll look after everything while you are out mum, don't worry we are fine."

Olivia kissed both of her kids, put on her warm coat and left the house.

She reached into her coat pocket for her car keys and the one hundred dollar bill she knew was there as well. This will help me with food for a few days and for the purchase of a Christmas tree. Her thoughts drifted back to the day she found the money.

It was a cold windy day and she was walking back to her car after a visiting the rehabilitation Centre where her mother was recovering from a stroke. She found the money right there in the gutter where it had stuck against the wall of the curb. She recalled her surprise joy when she picked up the slightly wet and dirty looking note only to discover that it was in fact a one hundred dollar bill.

Olivia took the note out of her coat pocket, and unfolded it and once again to stare at the three small intertwined red hearts, which were painted on the note. They seem even more vibrantly red than last time. Just imagination she told herself.

First the department store. Olivia decided to look for something special. Maybe she could put down a deposit for some Christmas presents too! Then to the Farmers Market to find a small Christmas tree. After all her years in Australia she would never have a plastic Christmas tree again. The smell and look of a freshly cut pine tree is part and parcel of Christmas for her.

The car park was busy as Christmas shopping was in full swing but finally she found a parking spot. Upon entering the main entrance she was greeted by Christmas carols blaring from the loud-speakers. Suddenly a siren began to scream right next to her, stopping briefly only to start again. What had she done? What is going on? People are turning around to see what the noise is; all eyes are on her. Olivia felt like a thief caught stealing, which is of course is absurd she would never do something like stealing, no matter how desperate she might be.

A man in a suit is walking hurriedly towards her. He came to a stop right in front of her and he had a big smile on his face. His name tag told her that his name is Adrian, Store Manager. Great, what does he want? I have done nothing I just want to find some specials, surely no crime in that.

“Hello, my name is Adrian and I am the store manager. You are in luck ma’am you are our first winner in our Christmas promotion.” His smile was getting bigger as he grabbed Olivia’s hand and started shaking it, enthusiastically. “What is your name?”

Olivia was in a daze. Many shoppers were now gathering around them. Is this for real? Firstly, why would I win anything and what did I win?

Adrian continues,” Olivia you are the first person in our five week ‘Share the Goodwill’ Christmas promotion. You have won the first \$1000.00, our give-away for this week. Every week until Christmas another lucky winner will be the receiver of a \$1000.00 voucher he or she can use for purchase in our store. It is all random, just the luck of the draw. We never know when the siren goes off. All we know is that it will happen once a week, congratulations again!”

Adrian handed Olivia the \$1000.00 voucher and a bunch of flowers. Cameras are now clicking and a reporter asks her how she feels being the first winner in this promotion? He got his note book and pen ready and looked at her to answer.

“This is absolutely heaven sent, I now believe in miracles. It could not have come at a more needed time in my life.”

Olivia feels the tears rolling down her cheeks. I must be having a breakdown of some kind she thought, because she couldn't stop the tears, and the words just keep coming. She found herself telling this stranger about the serious unexplained illness, which kept her bed-ridden for three months. Blaring out about how she lost so many photographic jobs, and above all that she could not finish her pride and joy, the calendar of pet photography she produced every year. Olivia informed the reporter that many pet owners pay a small fortune to have their pets photographed by her and to be chosen for her yearly calendar.

Her eyes take on a loving glow as she told the reporter about Daniel and Annabel. Both of them had been so great while she was sick, without the help of my mother, who was in hospital herself. Olivia finished by saying.

“This \$1000.00 voucher will tide us over until I get work again; this money will make sure that we are having a great Christmas. I am so thankful to the department store and I thank the universe for picking me to be the person to walk through the door at the right moment. For me it is it is a Christmas miracle.”

The crowds dissipated and Olivia was sitting by herself finally. She was still in shock. Suddenly Olivia got to her feet, “I have to go home, I can't wait to I tell Daniel and Annabel.”

She picked up a pizza on the way home. Usually they make their own pizza, everybody putting on their favourite ingredients and it is a little fun they have together. Olivia also

shouted herself as bottle of champagne to celebrate the win. \$1000.00 might not be much for some people, but to her it would make all the difference. In her mind Olivia could see the anticipation and excitement in Daniel and Annabel's eyes when they opened their Christmas presents. She could picture them eating turkey, chocolate and all the other wonderful Christmas goodies. This will be the best Christmas, she told herself before entering the house to tell her kids the good news.

One hour later the kids were enjoying their dessert of chocolate cake and Olivia was pouring herself a second glass of champagne.

"Mum I love you so much you are the best mum in the whole wide world." Annabel came over and gave her a big hug. Daniel smiled at her as he finished his cake. For the second time today tears were rolling down Olivia's face.

"I love you both more than I can imagine. Together we can overcome anything, together we are strong. I will forever be here for you and keep safe and loved, that is my promise now and forever." Looking at Daniel she added, "If either of you ever has any questions, maybe about your father or anything else, don't keep it inside, come and talk to me; promise?"

Annabel assured her, "Of course Mum, I will."

Daniel only nodded his head as the three of them took a seat at the bay-window to watch the few snowflakes, which were starting to fall, covering everything in a light coat of white. Maybe not enough to build a snowman, but enough to give them hope for a white Christmas.

The next morning, was Sunday, Olivia decided to go and see her mother. She hoped the kids would want to go to. Olivia knocked at her their bedroom doors

"Hey Daniel and Annabel I am going to see Grandma, do you want to come?"

The sleepy voices from inside their rooms declined.

"Okay then see you later, I cooked some porridge and it is on the stove, just heat it up. Carroll from next door will come and stay with you until I get back."

Olivia took advantage of this sunny crisp morning by walking the thirty minutes it took to get to the rehabilitation Centre. She talked to herself as she started walking down the street towards the community Centre.

"The walk will do me good and I am in a much better place than yesterday; money does help. Money might not be the way to happiness, but it certainly makes life easier."

There is music coming from the community Centre, which is only a few blocks away from home. Christmas carols again, but this time the sound of beautiful children's voices gave the songs a festive and cheerful quality. A man, about her age, is sitting in a wheelchair outside, strumming his guitar in tune with the songs. She could see that he only had one leg and he is collecting money. He has plenty of dollar notes and countless coins already in the guitar case in front of him. She stopped to listen for a while.

"You play beautifully. I can see by all that money other people must think the same."

"Lady I'll let you in to my secret, but promise not to tell," he looks at Olivia with mischief in his clear blue eyes.

"I promise, my lips are sealed," she answered, playing along.

"Most of this money is from my collection yesterday. When passers-by see that there is some money in my case already they are more likely to give more, I speak from experience."

"You are not only a great musician, but smart as well." Pointing to the community Centre Olivia inquires "What is going on inside, some kind of rehearsal?"

"Don't the kids sound lovely? Yes, they are practising for their Christmas performance here at the Community Centre in four weeks time. All the kids here have challenges. Some are from broken homes, some are what you would call 'special kids' and others are homeless. Nathan and his wife Rita are the couple who started this, helping kids get off the streets, give them support, and show them that there are people who care. Rita is a dance teacher and Nathan a music teacher and very good friends of mine. I help them raise money, but why don't you go inside and have a look and listen for a while."

"I would love too, but I have to go and visit my sick mother who is recovering from a stroke. I promise I will be back, because I know what it is like to be down on your luck."

With that Olivia pulled out the one hundred dollar note she still had in her coat pocket and dropped it into the guitar case.

"Have a look at the note and let the hearts be a sign that all will be ok. I know this note is special as it brought me luck, only yesterday. Anything is possible." Olivia smiled. She continued her walk, satisfied that she had done a good deed.

On her walk back home from her visit she decided to stop by the community Centre to listen and watch the kids for a while longer. As Olivia drew closer she could see two kids, with their backs to her, walking in the same direction. Their hoods were pulled down and their heads held low. They stood in front of the musician now who was still playing his guitar. Suddenly, one of the kids bent down and grabbed as much money as

possible from the guitar case. They then ran away as fast as possible and within seconds disappeared around the next corner. First Olivia was stunned, but she began to run towards the community Centre, of course there was no chance of catching the kids. Breathless she stopped in front of the steps looking at the disbelieving face of the man in front of her.

“What just happened? These kids stole money from you. This is unbelievable, why would anybody want to steal from people who need it most?”

“Unfortunately, this is not the first time! This has happened before! We can never catch any of them or even prove who it is! This is why we installed the camera.”

He pointed to the right side of the community Centre door.

“With any luck we managed to get a picture. There are always bad apples, but, this does not mean we give up helping those who sincerely want and need our help.”

Olivia realized that she did not even know the name of the man.

“Sorry I have not even introduced myself. My name is Olivia, Olivia Wakefield.”

“Nice to meet you Olivia I am Stephen, Stephen Miller.”

“How much did they get?” Olivia asks.

Stephen looks at his guitar case for a moment. “I guess about three hundred dollars including the one hundred dollar note you gave.”

“Let’s go inside,” said Stephen and he started to push himself up the wheelchair ramp.

“Can I help?” Offered Olivia

“No thanks, I don’t need any help I have been doing this for over four years. I have traded my ‘P’ plate in for a full driver’s licence.” he looks at her and laughs.

Inside they saw Nathan and Rita walking towards them.

“Yes it has happened again, those boys are back. Nathan can you check the camera and see if we can get any usable pictures. Let me introduce you to Olivia,” Stephen continued, “She donated a one hundred dollar bill and it was one of the bills the kids have stolen.”

“Nice to meet you and thank you for your kind donation. You are more than welcome to stay around and listen to the rehearsal.” Rita offered. They all shook hands and Nathan walked away to check the video.

Olivia sat down next to Rita as she called the kids back to the floor to continue the rehearsal.

Rita started by saying, to the children,

"First of all I have some bad news. The two kids have been back and just stolen more money today. Hopefully we got them on camera. If any of you hears anything please come to me, Nathan or Stephen right away. On a brighter note we have a guest today, her name is Olivia and she will be watching for a while, so do your best. Everybody for the dance rehearsal please stay and the others can wait next door, Nathan won't be long."

Olivia stayed around until there was a break and Rita told the kids to take few minutes rest.

"Rita this was absolutely magnificent, the kids are so talented. You have done such a great job with them."

"Those kids are so close to my heart. I was an orphan, but I was lucky my adopted parents are the best, I love them so much and will be thankful for the rest of my life that they chosen me as their daughter. Now I just love to give some of that back and help others to fulfil their dreams. I was a dancer for many years and I travelled the world with a ballet company, that's when I met Nathan. We both love to help children, especially those who have so little and who have the desire to help themselves. It is so rewarding to see them blossoming and becoming their own persons by gaining self-respect and self-worth. You will see when you come to watch them perform, the dancing, singing and the playing, so much talent and it just needs to be nurtured. What do you do Olivia?"

"I am a photographer and I work from home."

"Do you have children?"

"Yes a boy and a girl. Daniel plays the piano and he loves it and Annabel is always writing something, she loves reading and writing."

Nathan returned, "No luck with the video." He said. "The kids are smart, the faces are covered and we cannot identify them. Stephen is still watching trying to find some kind of clue." Nathan looking at Olivia now, "Oh sorry I interrupted your conversation, but I need to have a word with Rita."

"It's okay, I have to go anyway. My neighbour is looking after my children and it's time I went home. I'll be in touch, I would love to bring Daniel and Annabel and introduce them to what you are doing here. Please say goodbye to Stephen for me."

They exchanged phone numbers, and as Olivia started on her way home, she could hear the voices of the children singing.

Daniel, Annabel and Carroll are in the living room when Olivia got home. Daniel was playing the piano and Carroll and Annabel were watching television. Olivia told them about the community Centre and the kids stealing the money.

“Would you two like to come to the community Centre with me next time? We might be able to help.”

Annabel was very enthusiastic, but Daniel just nodded his head. Olivia thought to herself that it is time have to have a chat with Daniel, before this goes on for too long. She decided that it was time to find out what was bothering him.

Monday morning greeted Olivia with new snow-fall, just enough to keep the previous days light blanket of white from melting away. She was waiting for the kids to get up and was making their lunches. The TV is on, but the sound is low. She glances over just in time to recognise the community Centre and Nathan speaking to a reporter. She pressed the remote for volume and gets the last bit of the interview.

“Oh my God, I can’t believe this!” Olivia yells out. Apparently there had been a vicious break-in at the community Centre overnight. It resulted in extensive damage. The shelves were ripped from the walls, and all the mirrors smashed. Most if the instruments were destroyed, including the piano.

“What's the matter mum,” Daniel asked as he walked into the room.

“The community Centre has been broken into, and a lot of damage has been done. I need to go and see them. I feel so sorry for them. What will happen to their concert? Oh the poor kids, they have worked so hard. Sometimes life is not fair.”

Before Daniel and Annabel left for school they offered their help.

“Thank you kids I will let you know what is going on. I will go over there now to find out more.” Olivia kissed her to children and left.

At the community Centre Rita was outside and Olivia could tell that she had been crying. Olivia gave her a big hug which only made her cry again. Both women walked up the stairs and into the front hall. Nathan and Stephen were in the middle of the room; the place looked like a bomb hit it. Olivia couldn't believe the mess.

“Oh dear me, what happened here, who is responsible for such a senseless crime?”

Stephen, on crutches today and not in his wheelchair, walked over to Olivia and explained everything they knew, what they have found out meanwhile.

“The police just left and they have taken fingerprints and whatever else they do in situations like this. The community Centre is not the first one to be hit, a bottle-shop got broken in to last month as well. The police believe both offences were committed by the same kids.”

“Stephen, do you think it might be the same kids who stole the money yesterday?” Olivia asked with a worried look on her face.

“Yes, I am pretty sure. I showed the police the video and they took it with them for further examination. I hope that the police have more luck.” Sighed Stephen

Rita and Nathan joined them and Olivia offered to help with cleaning up.

“My children Daniel and Annabel also want to help, please let us know what we can do.”

“Thank you so much we will certainly take you and your kids up on your offer, we are so grateful.” Nathan replied.

Rita still couldn't stop her tears as she realised that they don't even have the money to rebuild anything, never mind buying new music instruments.

Olivia smiled, “I have an idea.”

“Could I speak to Jack Cavanaugh please, I am Olivia Wakefield

A woman replied, “Please hold while I connect you to Jack.”

After a few moments a voice came on the line, “Hi this is Jack, how can I help?”

“Hello Jack, this is Olivia Wakefield, you might remember me I am the one who won the \$1000.00....”

“Of course I do. How are you? Spending the money I hope.”

“Not just yet, but I sure will before Christmas. Firstly I must thank you for your article, which was written with a lot of compassion and managed not to sound too sappy. I am calling today to ask you for a big favour. Did you hear about the break-in at the community Centre?”

“Yes it is awful and it was front page news, but I did not write the article,” Jack replied.

“Well, that is not why I am calling you, I need you to write a different article.”

The next morning Olivia picked up the newspaper from the letterbox. Front page, how did he do that, thank you Jack. There it is in black and white and with a big picture of the destroyed community hall, smashed mirrors and instruments, a rather disturbing looking image, very graphic. Underneath in big black lettering it said,

'YOU CAN HELP.... Story on page three'

The article included more photos of Rita, Nathan and Stephen in his wheelchair and also a picture of Olivia with the words

'Olivia the lady who won the first \$1000.00 in the department store promotion is at the forefront to give a helping hand.'

The article was great and the words were well chosen, asking for help from the community. It talked about the work Rita, Nathan and Stephen were doing for the under-privileged kids and the production they were putting together for their Christmas presentation.

As soon as the kids left for school Olivia was out of the house and off to the community Centre. When she arrived she saw there were many people gathering around the front steps. With the newspaper paper in her hand Olivia was looking around, trying to spot her new-found friends. Rita saw her first.

"Hey Olivia, what have you done? This article, it was you, wasn't it?" That is so wonderful, we have been getting phone calls for the last hour or so, everybody wants to help."

By the afternoon a whole army of people had pledged their help and the repair and clean up began. The donation has already passed the \$2000.00 mark and the four of us are just flabbergasted at how a community can come together when it is really in need. Stephen was sitting on the front steps, waiting for Olivia to come out.

"I have been waiting for you, to thank you. We hardly know each other and you went out of your way to help. Thank you again."

"I really haven't done much. I know what it is like to need help, I have been there." For some reason Olivia felt a connection to Stephen and without thinking she started talking about the bad times in her life. She told him about her husband's gambling problem and his later arrest for fraud, the loss of their house and finally the bankruptcy. She also told him about her husband's secretary, with whom he had been having an affair for months.

"I stayed by him for a so long, but when I found out about the cheating I could not take anymore. One day I simply took the kids and moved back to America. I lived with my parents so I could start from scratch. It was so hard going, but I had my parents and good friends who helped so much. Then my dad died, a year later my mother had a stroke and then I got very sick. A terrible drawback, but when you have children you don't have time to feel sorry for yourself."

"You are a strong person Olivia. What are you doing now, besides looking after your kids and your mother?"

“I am a photographer. Because my parents helped so much, I was able to study during the day and at night I worked in a supermarket filling shelves. But enough about me, how did you happen to lose your leg? I hope you don't mind me asking?”

“I lost it while I served in Iraq. Maybe we can have dinner together one night and I can tell you the whole story.”

“Yes... maybe... I'll think about it.” Olivia smiled and said goodbye.

The next few weeks leading up to Christmas were hectic. Annabel, Daniel and Olivia spent most of their free time at the community Centre. Everything is looking great. Rita cried again whilst thanking all the people who helped with cleaning, rebuilding and donation. Everyone had tears in their eyes at one stage or another as they witnessed that kindness has not died and saw what can be achieved when a community pulls together. The ticket sales were astounding. There was no way to fit all the people in the Community Hall.

Another act of kindness came from a church just a block away. The pastor offered the church for the kid's performance, perfect to say the least. But what made it so special for Olivia was the change she could see in Daniel. He took it on himself to be there at the forefront with the kids, he seemed to be their leader. Daniel was taking this role so seriously and he loved it. He even offered his piano as a replacement.

“Rita,” Olivia yells out from across the room. “I am going down to the shop for some food and drinks.”

“Great, Olivia can you please bring the newspaper back with you. I think Jack has written something about our opening night in two days time.”

The line at the shop was long, three people in front of her and four behind. Olivia looked at the boy in front of her and thought to herself. How can kids grow up healthy eating junk food like this? The boy had coke, chips, chocolate and ice cream in his basket. What do the parents teach their kids these days, she wondered.

The boy put the goods on the counter and took a note out of his pocket. Unfolding it he put it on the counter with his purchases. Olivia couldn't believe her eyes. This was her one hundred dollar bill, the one with the three hearts painted on it. Was he one of the boys? What should she do? Think fast Olivia, she told herself, there is not much time. She glanced over the boys' shoulder and commented on his one hundred dollar bill.

“Look at those lovely intertwined hearts, how pretty and vibrantly red. Did you paint them?”

The boy turned around and looked straight into Olivia's eyes. Did he recognise her? It seems he did, because without a word he pushed her over and Olivia toppled into the woman behind her and they both fell to the ground. Olivia yelled out,

"Don't let him get away he is a thief!"

The last man in the queue stepped right in front of the get-away boy, who bounced off the man's big chest and found himself sliding into a display of sugary breakfast cereals. Olivia tried to get up, but she felt a little dizzy and light-headed, and she couldn't get up. The shopkeeper called the police as the burly man held the boy in a head-lock. Within minutes the police arrived and soon after the boy was transported away in the police car to be interrogated at the police station. Still sitting on the floor Olivia took out her phone to ring for help.

"Nathan can you please come and get me I am at the corner shop, there was an incident here. I'll tell you everything when I see you."

Later at the doctor's surgery, the doctor cautioned Olivia.

"If there is any dizziness or nausea and it is essential that you give me a call,"

Olivia agreed. Next stop the police station where she told her story to the waiting police officer.

"What a coincidence" Rita said, when she heard what had happened "I still can't believe it. This was a chance in a thousand to stand right behind one of the boys, amazing!"

"Was it really by chance? I like to call it divine intervention. I believe the one hundred dollar bill wanted to be returned to me again." Olivia replied with a knowing look in her eyes.

She took the note out of her coat pocket and unfolded it.

"See those red hearts, there are magical they seem even more vibrant now. After I found this special one hundred dollar bill events set into place leading us to where we are today; right here, right now. Maybe the three hearts are Annabel, Daniel and me, or maybe Rita, Nathan and Stephen. It does not matter, what matters we are all here now and everything turned out exactly as it suppose to. Just let's celebrate our good fortune and put on the best show we can, I know all will be well."

The church was packed. The giant beautiful decorated Christmas tree at the back of the podium was alit and cast a haunting glow on the darkish stage. The kids are ready and so excited and can't contain their happiness. Olivia's mum has a place in the front

row. She was doing so much better and Olivia was so glad she could bring her here today.

The music started and the lights went on. A dozen kids in their costumes were ready for their first performance. Everything was going so wonderfully and the audience gave many standing ovations along the way. After the performances Rita took the stage.

“I hope you have enjoyed the kid’s performance. Once again thank you everybody so much, because without you this would not have been possible. With this I also would like to extend our gratitude to Olivia, she was heaven-sent when we needed help most. The time has come to announce a surprise performance to finish off this magical evening.”

The lights dimmed again the piano appeared in the spotlight. Daniel walked out, sat down and began to play. It was the melody Olivia had been hearing for the last few weeks. It was his own composition. Olivia saw her mother’s eyes start to fill with tears and so did hers. Daniel played superbly and received a standing ovation too! After the applause died down Annabel stepped on the stage next to Daniel and the piano. She took the microphone in her hand and announced.

“Please everybody give thanks to the kids who performed, to Rita, Nathan and Stephen who put so much effort to get this show on the road. But a special thank you must go to our mum. We are not going to say much, because not many words are necessary. She knows we love her with all our hearts and she is the best mum in the whole wide world.”

Those damn tears again, but Olivia can’t help it.

Annabel continues, “I am going to finish this evening with a little poem I have written.

We all can make a Difference

*Many people everywhere who need help can't you see
Do you say, let it be somebody else who helps don't bother me.
Have you been where homeless people sleep at night?
Or seen kids walk the streets like a lost child
What if you were hungry, no food, how would you feel?
Would you go hungry or would you rather trying to steal
What would you say to children from broken homes where nobody cares?
Would you say, I am so sorry, I know life is not fair
We need to open our eyes, our arms our hearts
Why don't you try it it's not really that hard.
Don't wait too long, you don't need a reason
A good time to start is this Christmas season*

The stage then filled with the entire cast and one of the children stepped forward.

“My name is Elliot and I am speaking for all the kids here tonight. We would like to thank everybody from the bottom of our hearts for being here and we hope you enjoyed our performances. Many of you in the audience also helped with rebuilding the community Centre not just with donations, but with giving your precious time as well. We would not be able to share this special evening with you if it were not for your selfless support.”

Rita, Nathan and Stephen joined the kids on stage.

Elliot continued, “We would like to express our appreciation and gratitude for each and everyone here tonight, you opened your eyes, arms and hearts; YOU MADE A DIFFERENCE. From our hearts we wish you a wonderful Christmas and once again to thank you for making this the best Christmas ever. Where there was nothing before, we now have hope.”

The small organ at the back of the church started to play and the kids voices once again drifted through the air and beyond to the wintery night outside. Everyone stood to join in with the kids singing ‘Silent Night Holy Night’.

The group was greeted with heavy snow fall as they stepped outside and into the darkness of the night. The world looked peaceful, covered in a thick white blanket of snow, truly a white wonderland. Olivia, with her mum and her beaming children by her side could not be happier tonight. She hugged Rita and Nathan and wished them a good night. She turned around to look for Stephen and she spotted him walking down the steps of the church. He had a new Prosthetic leg fitted a few days ago and was learning fast how to use it, he will be running soon! Her eyes brightened as she strode over to Stephen, gave him a hug as she whispered in his ear, “The answer is yes, tomorrow, seven o’clock dinner at my place, bring the wine.”