



# Christmas Reflections

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“I can’t believe Mrs. Stowe gave us homework over Christmas break,” muttered Doug.

He pushed his notebook aside with a sigh. He looked longingly out his bedroom window where the snow was falling silently. He could see down the road that joined his home to the Shrine of Our Lady. Tomorrow, carloads of visitors would arrive to admire the Christmas Festival display. Doug’s parents

worked at the shrine and were responsible for the organization of the festival that took place before Christmas each year.

“Doug, are you finished with your homework yet?” Mom called from downstairs. “We have a lot of signs to put up, and your father still has to set up some of the outside Christmas scenes.”

“I can help, Mom,” said Doug, as he came downstairs with his coat. “I can’t think

of what to write my paper about anyway.”

“What paper is that?” asked his Mom.

“Oh, Mrs. Stowe wants us to write about what lessons we can learn from Christmas. I don’t even know what she means.” Doug pulled on his boots. “I mean, Christmas is a time to enjoy celebrating. Why drag school stuff into it?”

“Hmmm,” said his mother absently, wrapping

her scarf around her neck. “Maybe you’ll get some inspiration tonight.”

That night, before the festival opened, Doug and his parents, and the other staff of the shrine (including Doug’s friend, Sister Margaret) would have a sneak preview of the international nativity display. There were crèches from all over the world. They had figures of Mary, Joseph, Jesus, shepherds, and wise men made out of every type of material imaginable. Some were hand-carved wood, others were bamboo, clay, stone, or fabric. They ranged from life-sized down to tiny miniatures.

Doug and his parents had finished the rest of the setting up by the time it was dark. After a quick supper, they hurried over to tour all the nativity sets. Doug loved

looking at all of them. But there was one special set he’d have to wait to see.

“No, you can’t see it either,” Sister Margaret had said with a smile. “You’re no exception to the rule. I want to keep mine a surprise.”

“But tomorrow I’ll be helping to welcome the visitors at the information table. I won’t have time to see it,” pleaded Doug.

“No,” said Sister Margaret, laughing. “I think you’ll be able to find a few minutes to sneak over to see it!”

But the next day, Doug was kept very busy until late afternoon. Sister Margaret came through the crowds looking for him.

“Doug, have you seen it yet?” she asked. She looked so excited that Doug became even more curious than ever.

What could be so special about this nativity scene?

“Not yet, Sister,” said Doug. “But I really want to.”

“I’ll stay here at the table so you you can go,” she said.

“It must be a really cool nativity set. You seem so excited about it!” said Doug with a grin.

Sister Margaret threw back her head and laughed. “Christmas always makes me feel excited—like a kid on Christmas morning! Go on now. I want to know what you think of my nativity set.”

Doug made his way through all the people filling the shrine. When he got to the chapel where the mystery nativity was, there was a huge line. The “Oooooos” and “Ahhhs” coming from the front of the line made waiting

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unbearable. Was the thing made of solid gold or what?!

Finally it was Doug's turn. He had noticed people bending down to peer inside a box. Now he looked into the square opening. The familiar figures of Mary and Joseph knelt next to Jesus, lying in the manger. The donkey and the cow reclined on the straw. The shepherds and wise men were there, too. The figures were all made of

smooth, clear glass. But suddenly, Doug realized that the inside of the stable was all mirrors. When he looked at each character in just the right way, the set-up of the mirrors showed him his own face on the face of the figure.

He leaned a little to the side, and there he was as a shepherd!

He leaned a little the other way, and there he was as Joseph!

For a moment, it seemed that time stood still.

Imagine, he thought. To have been right there, in the stable, when Jesus was born....

Doug came back to earth as he heard the people behind him in line getting impatient. He got up and went to find Sister Margaret. He just had to talk to her about this amazing nativity. He knew now he would have no problem writing his paper for Mrs. Stowe.

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