

Christmas, actually

PART I

5 ladies sitting drinking tea. They start off with a very friendly tone

- 1) 3 weeks today and it will all be over!
- 2) Gosh yes!
- 3) We'll be sitting eating leftovers
- 4) With a sprouts hangover
- 5) Eating our new chocolates
- 3) Smelling of our new perfume
- 2) **W**earing our new thermals(*all look at her*) erm, lingerie
- 4) But it's better to give than to receive of course
- 5) Of course it is. Couldn't agree more.
- 1) Oh yes, of course, Christmas is all about the gifts actually
- 3) Ooh it is! Finding that perfect present.
- 2) And all mine are found for this year, just need to wrap them now
- 4) Mine were done by the end of October
- 1) Really?
- 4) Ooh yes. I've got to have them bought, and wrapped by half term
- 3) I bought all mine in the January sales
- 5) I haven't finished (*they all gasp*) **making** mine yet.
- 1) Well ... I think it's important to support the local economy
- 3) Oh, so do I. In January
- 1) And I like to wait until the last moment so that each present is as relevant as possible
- 2) I'd rather *be* present over Christmas, than **wrap** presents
- 4) Exactly. Christmas is all about the people actually, isn't it.
- 5) That's so right. People enjoying their home-made gifts
- 3) We have 13 people round the table for Christmas lunch
- 1) Yes.... it is hard isn't it to narrow it down to so few I mean. We visit 8 sets of family in 3 days. It feels like everyone wants a part of us, and we can't bear to disappoint
- 2) We've invited our elderly neighbours before the John Lewis advert you understand
- 5) I'm helping at a soup kitchen
- 4) It will just be us around the Christmas table this year. We've decided to prioritise our family. The children won't be children for long will they? And, well, Christmas is all about the children, actually.
- 3) Ooh you're so right. I love watching them all in their nativity plays. My little Louisa is

playing Mary this year

- 1) Oh that's sweet. Susie's going to be the angel Gabriel I think it's because she's so blonde and pretty
- 5) Freddie is the stage manager. He's like me you see
- 3) Not a natural star
- 5) Preferring to allow others to shine, rather than crave the limelight for ourselves
- 2) Jack is going to be the innkeeper
- 3) Oh I'm sorry
- 1) Maybe Joseph next year
- 2) But the whole thing is going to be told from the innkeeper's perspective. He has a lot of lines. He manages an array of emotions with great integrity
- 4) Impressive for a 4 year old
- 2) You're little Tommy is the back end of the donkey, isn't he?
- 4) Yes. He is on stage throughout. A great responsibility. Mrs Hartley told me she knew that I would be able to handle the costume requirements
- 5) Yes... it's amazing what you can *buy* now, if you want the same as everyone else
- 3) Oh I love to see them all dressed up
- 1) Yes, Christmas is all about dressing up actually
- 2) Ooh yes! I love to make a bit of an effort
- 5) We all get new Christmas jumpers
- 1) Do you knit them?
- 5) Gosh no! Where would I find the time?
- 4) Well, we did wonder
- 5) No I just do all the matching hats, gloves, scarves and socks
- 1) Of course you do.
- 2) Actually, I wasn't just thinking of the clothes. I've already got my Christmas hair cut booked
- 3) I've got my Christmas nails booked
- 4) I've got my Christmas eye-brows booked
- 1) What about dressing the house? I like it all to be co-ordinated. Purple and silver are the colours this year
- 3) We've just got our tree down from the loft
- 2) Oh we only do the real thing. We need to go and choose ours this weekend
- 5) We need to go and dig ours back up
- 4) We're just doing lights and twigs this year. Trees are so twentieth century
- 3) But it's tradition. Each of us have our own personalised baubles
- 2) Each of our ornaments comes from somewhere we've travelled to

- 1) Ours are new every year. Keeps it fresh
- 5) I've knitted all mine and all our trees outside have scarves
- 4) We have lights outside. It feels like we're sharing the joy with others
- 3) We have live reindeer on the front lawn
- 2) My husband stands on the roof all of Christmas Eve, dressed as Santa. Christmas is all really about Santa, actually.
- 1) Ooh yes. We leave a biscuit, a carrot and some sherry out for him
- 5) We leave a rice cake, an organic carrot and some water.
- 4) What? In case he outgrows his home made sweater
- 5) How did you know?
- 3) We always put reindeer dust on the lawn on Christmas Eve so they know where to come
- 2) There are floury footsteps in ours on Christmas morning
- 1) At ours, the sherry and biscuit have gone, the carrot has a bite out of it, there are sooty footprints and we scatter some chocolate raisins, just for extra effect.
- 4) Gosh! How.....er..... Christmassy....
- 1) Well Christmas is all about that Christmassy feeling, actually
- 3) Ooh yes! I always get that feeling when I hear carols being sung
- 2) Ooh, I get that feeling when I see the decorations going up in the shops
- 5) July then
- 4) I get that feeling when I open the first window of the Advent calendar
- 1) That's so traditional
- 4) and see what colour nail varnish I've got
- 5) What?
- 4) This is day 3
- 5) I can't believe that
- 4) I know! I'm a day behind but I'll make it up.
- 5) Well, my advent calendar can always only ever include one thing
- 2) Don't tell me – wool
- 5) Sorry?
- 3) Mittens
- 1) bobble hats
- 4) knitted nativity scene
- 5) Chocolate
- 2) Oh. Right.
- 5) Fair trade
- 3) Obviously

5) Well, Christmas is a lot about the food, actually

1) Organic nut roast by any chance?

5) How did you know??

4) It's got to be turkey for my lot. It's already in the freezer

3) We like a choice – goose AND turkey, delivered fresh on Christmas Eve

2) We just have a small duck

1) Well that's nice

2) In a poussin

4) nice

2) In a chicken, in a goose, in a turkey

5) Oh goodness

2) We're thinking of adding a final layer of emu next year

Silence

1) Well, we just have a turkey

The others look at her suspiciously, knowing there must be more to come....

2) And....

1) And all the trimmings. Simple and traditional

5) Well I approve of simple and ...

1) Of course – it has to be British farmed

4) Oh yes of course

1) And corn fed

3) Oh yes, turkey AND goose

1) And free range

5) indeed

2) All of our birds had a happy and fulfilling life

1) And of course, we've hand reared Trevor from a chick

2,3,4,5) What???

1) Well, it is Christmas. You have to make an effort for Christmas, ladies, actually.....

She sits back in the marvellous knowledge that she has won. The conversation from now gets gradually more manic

2) I make my own mince pies

3) I make my own pastry

4) I make my own mincemeat

5) I grow my own raisins

2) We enjoy relaxing as a family

3) We play games together

- 4) We gather around the piano to sing carols
- 1) We write each other poems
- 5) We knit socks for refugees
- 2) We make biscuits for the teachers
- 4) We give presents to all our neighbours
- 3) We post cards of encouragement to random strangers
- 5) I've knitted socks for the cat
- 1) I've bought a gift for Trevor – but he'll have to open it a bit early
- 2) And I do it all on my own
- 4) Without any help
- 3) Nobody else bothers
- 1) They just think it all happens by magic
- 5) And besides, no one can do it quite right
- 2) Quite the way I like it
- 3) Quite like I can
- 4) They'd just spoil it
- 1) So I do it ALL on my own
- 5) The weeks in advent are a nightmare
- 2) I usually end up with a cold
- 3) Completely run down
- 4) Frazzled
- 1) So that by the time Christmas actually comes
- 2) I hate everything I've got to do
- 5) And everyone in my house
- 3) And I'm just willing the whole thing away
- 4) Packed up in the attic
- 2) So I don't have to think about it for another year
- 3) Or until the January sales when I start buying next year's presents
- 1) Because
- 2) that's what
- 3) Christmas
- 4) is all about
- 5) actually

PART II

- 1) This year I will try to do things differently.
 - 2) I will seek out the treasures along the way
 - 3) And I will not make myself too busy to stop and enjoy them
 - 4) Or too tired to celebrate what's really important.
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- 5) I will not make this a competition
 - 1) But will appreciate other people's efforts
 - 2) And be content with where I put my own time and energy.
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- 3) I will make time to catch up
 - 4) to share memories
 - 5) to create new traditions
 - 1) to laugh
 - 2) to thank God for the people He has given me
 - 3) And I will seek special ways to thank them too.
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- 4) I will acknowledge that I'll never feel ready
 - 5) so there's no point in waiting for that before I start enjoying myself
 - 1) I will be kind to myself
 - 2) And patient with others.
 - 3) I won't miss the party because of the preparations.
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- 4) And I will recognise that my Christmas is not a scene from a Hollywood movie
 - 5) where nothing gets messed up, or broken, or out of place
 - 1) And I will remember that God is in the business of mess too
 - 2) That's why He chose our imperfect world
 - 3) For his perfect son
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- 4) I will make time, to read, or hear, or remember
 - 5) The story of that first Christmas,
 - 1) Of a young, faith-filled but frightened couple
 - 2) As unprepared as they could be
 - 3) And a world waiting for the Messiah to come and save them
 - 4) Not noticing the Christ Child in the filthy manger

5) Word made flesh, God amongst us

1) And I will remember

2) That my heart will never be ready for such a gift of grace

3) But it's there for me to receive.

4) Yesterday, today, and forever

5) That gift which Christmas is all about

1) Love, actually.
