

It had been a quiet start to Christmas. The living room, which had sometimes been a bus, or a train, or a pirate galleon when the boys were younger, was only ever a room now. Mostly, whoever was in the room just sat watching the TV on the wall opposite. From her position, fixed on top of the tree, Florabelle could never see the screen, only the people watching it. Their faces moved sometimes, but mostly, they were still. After the long months in the attic, keeping one another entertained with word games, jokes and memories of Christmases past, the decorations had been hoping to have more to talk about.

“Haven’t Michael and Alfie grown?” said Florabelle.

“That’s what children do. What did you expect?” barked Toy Soldier from the branch beneath her.

“How are the presents looking, Monkey?” asked Snowman. When it came to hang him up, the boys had lost interest. So, he was stuck facing the centre of the tree, desperate for news.

Monkey, hanging beneath the lowest branch, said, “Not as many as last year. No big boxes. Michael and Alfie have got one each that looks exactly the same.”

“I was a present, once,” said Florabelle.

“We *all* know that,” said the Other Angel, who had been demoted to a lower branch when Michael and Alfie’s great-grandmother had given Florabelle to them. Florabelle knew that she could be a bit of a bore about the old days, but there had been so much more life to Christmas. People had sung songs, played party games. It was all so much more – Christmassy.

In the morning, the decorations watched with excitement as the presents were opened. After the bags of chocolate money, which the family always opened first, after the customary show of pretending they couldn’t guess what they were, the twins opened their small boxes. They were both very pleased – these were “the best presents”.

It was hard to see what the best presents were at first, but it was soon obvious. Either side of dinner, up to the call to the table, from the second they could get down, they were glued to them. Even the TV was ignored. At one time, their mum and dad, uncle and grandmother were all there at the same time, each looking at their own little screen while the TV played in the background.

Florabelle and the other decorations could only hope that by next year, Michael and Alfie would be bored of screens and that there would be more to watch, so that they would have more to talk about during the long months in the attic.