

# Tinny

a short story by

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I'm sure we can all remember what it was like trying to get to sleep on Christmas Eve. All kids go through it. It's a joyous time that ends all too quickly. I well remember how the slightest creak in the house would have me awake and peeking out from under the covers to see if it was Santa. Never did catch him, even though me and my brother laid traps for him; string tied across various routes he would have to take in order to get to our room. Never worked.

Little Jack was just the same. At five years of age, he was bursting with excitement at the thought of Christmas morning. He'd been in bed for well over an hour but was even more awake now than he had been at tea time. Tiredness eventually did catch up with him, though when he awoke to a silent house, he didn't realise he'd been asleep. There were no voices from downstairs, and no sound from the TV so his parents must have gone to bed. He had no idea of the time, or how soon morning would come.

Shortly after waking, he heard a sound that made goose bumps go down his back. Was it Santa? He was so excited he could hardly contain himself. As slowly as he could, he turned over so as to be facing the room and not the wall. He tried to be as silent as possible so as not to frighten Santa away. It didn't work though, cos when he peeked out from under the covers, Santa was nowhere to be seen. A terrible sense of disappointment came over him, but it was shattered by another noise from the corner of his room. The noise was very soft, but in the silence of his room it was unmistakable. Jack strained his little eyes trying to see what was in the corner, but to no avail.

The noise came again. It was almost like a cough this time, as though someone was clearing their throat. Hearing it made Jack want to clear his throat too, and without thinking, he did it. The noise replied instantly and Jack was excited again. He responded to the noise, and the noise responded back, only this time it was more like a muffled word than a cough. Jack imitated the sound of the word, as children do, and there was a chuckle from the corner. Jack chuckled back, and a little voice said, "Hello, my name is Tinny, what's yours?" Little Jack was so excited he forgot to reply. "What's your name?" Came the voice again. This time Jack was able to answer, "My name is Jack." He replied softly not wanting to wake his mum and dad. "Want to play?" The voice asked. "Yes please," Jack replied excitedly. There was a movement in the corner and a pair of eyes lit up. Jack heard very soft sounds like little motors, and Tinny began to walk across the floor towards Jack's bed.

Tinny took very small steps, so it took a few moments for him to reach the bed. Jack watched excitedly as all this happened, giggling softly. Tinny arrived and Jack could at last see his face. He looked just like that toy robot Jack had seen in the toy shop. Tinny smiled and reached out a metal hand for Jack to take hold of. Jack did and was

surprised at how warm it was. Tinny's eyes blinked in the darkness and he gave a gentle tug for Jack to follow him. Jack jumped out of bed and followed Tinny over to the corner of the room where he had come from. There, in the darkness was a very big box. It had Tinny's picture on it, and there was wrapping paper on the floor near by it. Tinny motioned Jack to avoid treading on the paper and making a noise. Jack obeyed.

Tinny's box was on its side with the lid open. Tinny went in pulling Jack behind him. Once inside, the box seemed very much bigger and Tinny pulled the lid closed behind them. When it was closed, a light came on that made Jack wince. When he opened his eyes again, Jack saw the controls. The box was a vehicle of some kind. Tinny got Jack to sit, and turned to the controls to operate them. Lots of coloured lights came on and Jack felt the box move, though he wasn't sure which way it moved.

Suddenly, windows appeared in the sides of the box and Jack could see out of them. They were flying high over the small town where Jack lived. He could see all the houses far below, and the shops where his mother had taken him earlier that day. There were cars parked, they looked so small through the windows, much smaller than when Jack walked past them with his mum. "Hold on," Tinny said as the box picked up speed. "Weeee," Jack laughed. Tinny laughed too. "Where are we going?" Jack asked. "You'll see," Tinny answered without turning around. It was then that Jack noticed the label tied around Tinny's neck. It was a price tag and read, four pounds seventeen shillings and six pence. It made Jack remember his mum saying it was too expensive when he had pointed it out to her in the shop. He remembered feeling disappointed, but had soon forgotten all about it. There were lots of other toys in the shop.

Jack looked down again and saw green countryside far below. They had left the town a long way behind. "Here we are," Tinny said, and the box came in to land. There was a slight bump as it did so. The coloured lights went off, and Tinny opened the lid so they could get out. Jack followed him out into the sunshine, it was a beautiful day. "Where are we?" Jack asked excitedly. Tinny turned, and smiling he said, "This is the place of discarded toys." He turned and called out, "Come out and play everyone, this is Jack." Jack looked all around to see who would come out. Slowly, the toys came out and looked up at Jack. Some were old, and some very dirty, but all of them were very glad to see Jack and Tinny. "Hello." Jack said sitting on the grass. Lots of little voices said, "hello" back to him. Jack could hardly believe how many there were. He reached out and touched some of them, and each one he touched smiled warmly at him, as though they were his long lost friends.

Tinny came and sat beside Jack and introduced him to each toy in turn. There was one little toy soldier there who had lost an arm, and a doll with only one eye, but it didn't matter, Jack loved them all. Before long, they were all playing together. Jack's favourite was hide and seek, but he was so big that the toys found him easily. They played for a long time until Tinny said, "It's time to go." Jack didn't want to leave all his new friends, and they certainly didn't want him to go, but they all knew he must. Jack said good-bye to each one, thanking them for playing with him. When he was getting back into the box, they all said, "And thank you for remembering us." The lid closed and it went dark again.

"Jack... Jack, wake up honey it's Christmas." Jack's mum was leaning over him smiling. Jack reached up to his mum for her to lift him out of bed, she did so and carried him downstairs to the roaring fire in the front room. There under the tree where his presents. His mum sat him on the mat in front of the fire and his dad came over to him with a present in his hand. "Happy Christmas son," he said with a smile, handing the present to him. Jack was really excited by now, and yelled, "Thanks dad," as he ripped off the paper. Jack got the box open, and inside was a beautifully painted toy soldier. Jack remembered, and, holding the toy up said, "Thank you dad, it's the best present ever."

That night, Jack went to bed clutching his new friend, the toy soldier. He lay in bed thinking of all the discarded toys he had played with, especially the one armed soldier, and vowed he would never discard his new one. Jack was soon sound asleep with his new friend by his side.