

## THE TINY TOWN MIRACLE

BY KAYE SCHMITZ

“Holly! Wake up!”

It was Christmas Eve and my seventh birthday. Hence...the name Holly.

Mom had planned to name me Merry, but when Dad came to the hospital, he brought the biggest holly wreath he could find. That clinched it.

Fine with me. It was way better than my five-year-old sister’s name.

Olissa—that was hers. Pretty fussy, if you ask me, for so tiny a person. But I knew why Mom did it—a combination of my grandmothers’ names—Olivia and Alyssa. Sure, I loved them both, but I was secretly glad my sister was the one saddled with that name instead of me.

For my part, I called her Scooter. Scoot for short.

I opened my eyes to see her tiny face only a nose away from mine...her blue eyes mere points of light reflected from the candle by my bed. I thought she was afraid, since the power had gone out right after dinner, so I reached for her, ready to snuggle her against my fuzzy flannel nightgown.

But she stood firm, her chin set and her honey-colored curls bobbing up and down in refusal.

“Santa’s missing,” she said. Her mouth was close to my ear and I heard the quiver in her voice. Accustomed to the dark by then, I saw that her eyes filled and threatened to spill over, down her rosy cheeks.

“You have to come!” She pulled at my bed covers.

Her distress was obvious. But I understood.

The minute the power went out, we both started worrying that Santa might not find the house without my grandmother’s—Olivia’s—signature lighted Nativity scene blazing its colors like a beacon from the front yard.

I threw back the comforter, slipped into my bedroom shoes, slung a blanket around Scooter’s shoulders, and followed her to the kitchen.

“I heard a noise,” she said. “From Tiny Town.”

\*\*\*\*\*

Tiny Town. It was the thing I loved most about visiting my grandmother—Grammy to us—at Christmas.

Every year she transformed the space between the top of her kitchen cabinets and the ceiling into a magical Christmas Village with more than eighty lighted porcelain houses—all decorated for Christmas—complete with lighted Christmas trees and a skating pond. Arranged in tiers, the little houses formed neighborhoods, a town square, a municipal district, and mountain settlements, all covered in snow and peppered with evergreens.

But my favorite part was the villagers. Hundreds of tiny porcelain people gathered outside the homes and shops and town square, their little vignettes highlighted with miniature spotlights. Earlier in the day, Grammy let Scooter and me climb her big ladder to see everything up close.

Sure enough, there was Molly, standing in the gazebo—centered in the town square—and waving to the photographer on the lighted bridge. And Bonnie and her grandmother held their arms out to each other, positioned in the breezeway of Daniel’s Cheese Shop. As always, Officer O’Shaughnessy stood watch outside the police station with his dog, Copper, while the firemen next door laughed at their Dalmatian, Spot, whose head was stuck in a bucket.

Yes, all the townspeople were in their places—where they had been every Christmas of my life. Even Santa had been sitting in his big chair in the town square, right outside the Christmas Shop, with lines of children waiting for a turn on his lap.

But Scooter was right.

Santa was gone. There was just enough light from the full moon to see.

I dragged a stool over and climbed onto the counter.

Santa’s disappearance wasn’t the only change. The townspeople were no longer in their normal places—they were all on the edge of the cabinets, facing the wall. It appeared that they were actually looking up.

Then I saw why.

\*\*\*\*\*

All of the miniature spotlights had been moved. To the top of the clock tower, ringing it like a wreath. And the four boys who normally threw snowballs in front of the flower shop sat in the middle of the lights, as if arranging them.

Then I found Santa. He sat atop the Grand Theatre, right next to the clock tower.  
The hair on the back of my neck rose.  
If I hadn't known that these were porcelain figures who couldn't move, I would have sworn they were engaged in an effort to send some sort of signal.  
But to whom? And for what?  
As I watched, the whole town was still.  
Of course.  
So I couldn't figure out how the figures had changed positions.  
And I wasn't about to try and move them back. I knew the care Grammy took with their placement. Besides...I wasn't tall enough to reach them, anyway.  
Sighing, I climbed from the counter and put the stool away.  
"But..." Scooter said, "what can we do? What about Grammy?"  
"I don't know how it happened," I answered. "But...maybe she will."  
As we walked back toward the hallway, I heard something. Just before we reached the corner, I turned.  
And I saw it.  
A beam from the top of the clock tower shone brightly through the skylight just above it.  
Like a beacon.  
And I knew...  
It was a signal for Santa Claus.  
"Scooter! Look!" She turned just in time...and hugged me around my waist.  
We went back to bed and woke to the smell of frying bacon and the sound of Christmas music. The power was back!  
We ran to the kitchen, without even stopping to see what Santa had left under the tree.  
We wanted to see Tiny Town.  
Everything was in place.  
Exactly as it had been the previous afternoon, before we lost power. Even Santa sat in his chair, waiting for the next child.  
It's been forty years since that Christmas and Scooter and I have been over it a thousand times during the years..  
But we both saw it. As plain as day.  
As we stood there, smiling, the porcelain Santa lifted his hand and waved to us.