

PETER AND THE
PLASTIC
SNOWMAN

Roger Hartopp

Dedicated to Peter and Simon

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The book I mention in this story is 'The Snowman', the story that helped to give me this wonderful idea for an adventure.

If you have never heard of this book or seen the very popular video (well, it is possible, because I'm sure you are all very young!) then do ask Mummy and Daddy to find Raymond Briggs's delightful tale.

You may even find it better than this one!

Anyway.

I hope that you, the reader, and the children who listen to (or read) the story enjoy it very much. It is for the 6-10 age group, but adults can enjoy it very much too as there are many levels to the story.

This is not going to be the only book. The next Plastic Snowman book is going to be very, very different. You have been warned.

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1. SNOWING!

It was the first Friday immediately after the Christmas and New Year holiday and the first snow of the winter had finally arrived. But it wasn't just a flurry or a few snowflakes; it was lots and lots of the stuff.

Seven-year old Peter Peddington was sitting quietly by the window in the kitchen of his house. All morning he had been watching the snow settling and covering the garden. Now it was snowing very hard and the depth of the settled snow was now, he reckoned, up to the level of the top of his shoes.

Mr. Peddington, or Daddy as we and Peter shall call him, was also sitting in the kitchen, reading a TV magazine and drinking his tea. He wasn't due back at work until the following Monday: his company gave its workers a long winter break over the Christmas and New Year period.

'Daddy?' asked Peter, turning to Daddy. 'Are we still going to see Auntie Anne?' Peter had three Aunties, but he only got to see Auntie Anne once a year as she lived so far away. They were due to make a three-hour drive to her house that afternoon to spend the weekend there before his parents went back to work. Peter wasn't due back at school until the following Wednesday.

'Sorry Peter,' said Daddy sadly, looking down from his magazine. 'There's a lot of snow out there now. But hopefully we'll go when the roads have been cleared. I hope the council get their gritting lorries and trucks and shovels down here fairly soon. I don't really fancy driving out in this snow.'

Peter turned and looked out of the window again. It was clearly snowing harder than ever. He felt sure they would not be going anywhere in these conditions. But there was still quite a bit of time yet.

‘Daddy, can we go outside and make a snowman?’ asked Peter hopefully, as Daddy went back to his magazine.

Usually Daddy would play with Peter when he was in the mood, which wasn’t that often. This was not because he didn’t enjoy it, but he often found himself doing other things at home such as using the computer or reading a book or magazine. But to Peter’s surprise he quickly put the magazine down on the table and closed it. His eyes were very bright and he had a big smile. ‘You know what, Peter?’ he gleamed. ‘That’s an excellent idea. I used to enjoy making snowmen when I was a little boy, and you know what, I really fancy making one now! Let me just finish my cup of tea.’

Then Mrs. Peddington, who we and Peter will call Mummy, came into the kitchen, looking serious and purposeful. She was the kind of lady who always needed to have something to do and couldn’t sit still. ‘I’m glad it’s a good idea too Daddy. You need to get a bit of exercise and play with your son a bit more! And before you two go out,’ she added kindly but firmly to both of them, ‘you both make sure you wrap up warm!’

‘Okay Mummy!’ shouted Peter gleefully.

‘Okay Mummy!’ added Daddy, smiling.

So Peter rushed into the hall to his clothes peg. He lifted off his thick winter coat, and put it on, making sure that all the buttons were fastened well. He then put on his thick woolly hat, his thick woolly scarf, his thick woolly gloves, and his thick winter boots. ‘There! I’m ready!’ he shouted.

‘So am I!’ added Daddy, zipping up his winter coat.

‘Have fun!’ called Mummy. ‘And look after my little boy!’

‘She always says that,’ said Peter, smiling.

‘She does, but she loves you very much,’ said Daddy, opening the back door.

'Wow!' shouted Peter as he walked out of the house. Although he had seen the snow falling from where he had been sitting by the window, seeing it for real was something else. He had never seen so much before, and as he walked off the doorstep, he found that it had now reached the top of his winter boots. It was still snowing heavily.

And then without warning, Daddy picked up some snow and rolled it into a ball within his hands. 'Snowball fight!' he laughed, as he gently threw it at Peter's coat.

Peter chuckled. Running out into the garden, he also gathered up some snow and threw a snowball back at Daddy. Very soon the pair were throwing lots of snowballs at each other.

2. THE SNOWMAN

After a few minutes of hurling lots of snowballs and getting well covered with snow, Daddy put up his arms in mock surrender. 'Okay chap!' he laughed, 'You win!'

'Can we make a snowman now?' grinned Peter.

'Of course we can!' said Daddy, smiling. 'You watch and learn!'

He then began to roll a snowball along the ground. It very quickly got bigger and bigger as it gathered up snow, leaving a green trail of uncovered grass in its wake.

'Wow!' said Peter excitedly, 'so what happens next?'

'This is just the first part of him,' said Daddy. 'Now I will make two more big snowballs, then plonk them on top of each other so I can make him big.'

Daddy made another two large snowballs. It took him a bit of effort to pick them up and put them on top of each other as they were quite heavy. He looked relieved when this was done. 'Gosh, not as young as I used to be,' he grinned, and began to add more snow around the snowman to fill the gaps that were between the snowballs so that he could make a nice round body, smoothing things out either by using his gloved hand or with a small shovel; it was almost like making a simple sculpture.

He then made one more snowball. This one was about half the size of the others. Daddy was relieved that this one was not as heavy as the others – there was no way he could have lifted another large snowball up to the height of his head. He then made two large, thick arms that lay down by the snowman's sides. He then made another two, but smaller snowballs. He positioned them close together at the base of the snowman so they clearly looked like snowmen feet.

When he finished, he stood back with Peter to look at the snowman.

He was quite pleased with his work. 'Do you like it?' he asked Peter.

Peter wasn't too sure. 'Well, er, yes,' he said doubtfully, 'but it hasn't got a face or a scarf.'

'I know what we'll do,' said Daddy smiling. 'You go inside and ask Mummy for things to make his face, and to give you a hat and a scarf! Oh, and get my camera. We should take a picture of him!'

'Okay Daddy!'

*

After a few minutes, Peter returned to the garden with Daddy's camera. He also brought with him several buttons, a carrot, and an old brown cloth cap and green scarf. He handed them to Daddy.

'These are perfect,' Daddy said. He used the two big black buttons for the eyes, the carrot for the nose, ten little red buttons for the mouth, and three big red buttons that he stuck to the snowman's tummy for his coat. Finally, he wrapped the scarf around the neck, and placed the hat on the head.

'There! Finished!' he announced, and stood back to admire this new piece of handiwork.

Peter joined him. 'Wow!' he shouted. 'That really is the best snowman in the world! Thank you Daddy!'

'Thank *you*, Peter,' said Daddy proudly. 'Let's take a few pictures. Go and stand next to the snowman and give us a big smile.'

So Peter did so, grinning broadly. As Daddy pointed the camera at him, some large snowflakes landed on his nose. It made it

itch, and he had to give it a little scratch. After that, he was happy. 'Cheese!' he said gleefully.

Daddy took about ten photos, each time with Peter standing in a different position around the snowman. When he finished taking all the photos he needed, Peter walked away from the snowman. He then turned to look at it again. It really did look like a perfectly well-built snowman.

'Will he melt?' he asked worryingly.

'Not for a few days,' replied Daddy in a voice that cheered Peter up again. 'It'll still be cold for some time, according to the weather forecast.'

'Okay boys, you've been out there long enough!' shouted Mummy from the kitchen window. 'Come on in now, dinner's ready!'

*

As the snow continued to fall heavily, it was becoming very clear that they would not be going to Auntie Anne's house. There was now a lot of snow on the roads, and the men whose job it was to clear them were unable to clear them fast enough.

After dinner Peter went back outside. It was not snowing so hard now, so he spent a long time running around and playing with his new snowman. But the short winter day meant it soon got very dark and very cold, and Mummy had to call him home.

After some supper and a hot cup of tea it was bedtime. Peter brushed his teeth thoroughly and put on his pyjamas. Daddy then came up to his bedroom to read him a short bedtime story.

'This one's called *The Snowman*,' he began.

'I remember this!' said Peter excitedly. 'It was a Christmas present from Auntie Anne! It's about this little boy who builds a snowman that comes alive, takes him to the North Pole, and they meet Father Christmas! But I remember it has a sad ending...'

'Ah, that's why you asked me earlier if the snowman would melt,' smiled Daddy.

*

When Daddy finished the story, he kissed Peter on the cheek and said, 'Goodnight Peter. Sleep well. See you in the morning.'

'Goodnight Daddy,' said Peter happily, and then looked at the window. 'Goodnight snowman.'

'Yes,' said Daddy with a smile, also looking at the window. 'Goodnight snowman. We'll see you in the morning.'

It had been a busy day. Very soon Peter was fast asleep.

3. THE PLASTIC SNOWMAN

A little later Peter suddenly woke up. He could just hear the TV downstairs. After a few minutes trying to get back to sleep, he got up and looked up at the window. He then quickly got out of bed and ran to it.

He wondered...

He crept quietly out of his bedroom, went downstairs, and tiptoed past the living room.

Mummy and Daddy had not yet gone to bed. Normally he would stop and peek through the door as they never shut it tight. But not tonight. They were watching a movie with lots of bangs and crashes, and so the television and the large speakers were quite noisy. There was little chance of him being heard opening the door.

Very quietly, Peter took his winter clothes from his clothes peg. He put them on and then, as quietly as he could, opened the back door to the garden.

It was a very cold night, but it had stopped snowing.

As Peter stood just outside the door, he looked up and saw that all the stars were out. There was a bright full moon.

Quietly closing the door but careful not to close it tight for fear of being shut out, he went straight to the garden and up to the snowman.

He ran up and put his arms out and hugged it.

But to his surprise, the snowman was not cold and wet.

In fact, it was nice and warm!

Very puzzled, Peter then took off his glove and touched the snowman with his bare hand.

And then he had an even bigger surprise - the snowman was not soft!

He knocked on it.

'Hello?' said a low voice above him.

Peter looked up. The snowman was looking down at him. And it was smiling!

'How are you, Peter?' it said.

Peter suddenly gasped and stood away, aware of the fact that what he was seeing was real. But very quickly that initial fear turned to excitement. 'You're alive!'

He went back up to the snowman and touched it again. 'But you're not made of snow!'

'No, I'm not,' said the snowman happily, as the ten buttons that made up his mouth suddenly danced around. They were moving in time with his voice, and it really looked like he was talking. 'Good! I'm made of nice warm plastic! Just as I should be!'

'Wow!' said Peter, 'I've got a Plastic Snowman!'

And then, to Peter's surprise, the Plastic Snowman put out his arms and looked at each one. He then said excitedly, 'Brilliant! I've got some nice arms... I'm been made with decent arms! Really good arms! A little short, but great, they're arms!'

He then looked down at his feet. 'Hey! I've got feet! Fantastic! You've made me with feet! Hey, I really look like one of the Really Important Snowmen!'

He started dancing around. 'I've got feet!' he shouted, hardly able to contain the enthusiasm he felt in having a pair of feet. 'Did you know Peter that ninety-nine per cent of snowmen aren't even made with feet, and I've got feet! Only the best snowmen get feet! Okay, not too much in the way of legs, but I shouldn't complain! Thank you! Thank you so much! I feel really important now!'

Peter could only stand there, his mouth wide open in surprise. He didn't know what to say next.

'I'm so happy,' continued the Plastic Snowman, 'In fact, I'm so happy and feel so important that I want to go somewhere. I don't

want to stand here all night. Hey, that's great! I can say, 'I don't want to stand', not 'I don't want to balance!' Dear me, I wonder... no I shouldn't, they don't really like it up in the Cloudland... but hey, I must have been made into an important plastic snowman for a reason...'

He shuffled about, clearly eager to go and do something. 'Well, I'm supposed to take you to... wait, I'm important looking! Peter! Can we go somewhere, Peter? Please! I feel like going somewhere! Anywhere! Give me some instructions! Give me a place to visit!'

Peter laughed. 'Okay!' he shouted.

'So where would you like to go?' asked the Plastic Snowman. 'To the mountains? The forest? A place where there's lots of animals?'

Peter already had the answer to this in his mind. 'Let's fly to the North Pole and see Father Christmas!' he said, jumping with excitement.

The stones that made up the eyes and mouth of the Plastic Snowman's face then re-arranged themselves into a face that clearly looked a little disappointed. 'The North Pole?' he said gloomily. 'Oh. Well, he's not up there now. He's probably sleeping it all off at the moment. And *fly*? Oh, we're always asked to do that. But Peter, I have to tell you that, well... you see, we plastic snowmen don't *really* fly, well, not as such. As you can see, we're not designed to do that. We don't have wings. Like you. I have arms, well not many snowmen even have arms, just twigs and branches, but can you fly with just your two arms?'

'Um...'

'You're not sure? Look, let me show you.'

The Plastic Snowman flapped his two arms to try and prove flying was not possible with two arms.

Peter just stared in silence as the Plastic Snowman ran round and round in circles, flapping his arms. Not surprisingly, he didn't fly.

'Well,' smiled the Plastic Snowman, now stopped. 'Look, I'll tell you what. We can go more or less anywhere we like, but not to Father Christmas. Think. Are you sure there isn't anywhere else you would like to go?'

Peter thought for a moment, and then said, 'Let's go and see my Auntie Anne!'

'Really?' said the Plastic Snowman, his button mouth curving from a smile to disappointment again, 'But... it's a bit late, isn't it? She might have gone to bed. Come on Peter, I hoped you would be asking to see places where there are hills and lakes and animals. Places where there wouldn't be—'

But Peter was beginning to get a little impatient. 'Come on, Plastic Snowman!' he shouted. 'Prove to me that you're a magic snowman. Let's go and see my Auntie Anne. *Please!*'

'Okay then, but it's definitely risky. It's somewhere I shouldn't really be going to,' said the Plastic Snowman with a big sigh. 'Now take my hand and hold it very tightly. And we're only looking at the house, okay?'

Peter looked at the Plastic Snowman's right arm. There was no hand on the end. 'How am I going to hold on if you haven't got a hand?' he asked worryingly.

'Ah, good point. Well, now then, watch this,' said the Plastic Snowman confidently.

He put his right arm out, and then Peter saw three little stubby fingers, a thumb, and a palm slowly grow out of the end.

'One hand from the end of my wonderful arm!' said the Plastic Snowman proudly.

Peter smiled. He then reached out and grabbed the right hand. He was surprised to find this right hand was nice and warm. Even more strangely, the chilly air around him suddenly turned from cold to pleasantly warm.

‘When you hold me,’ the Plastic Snowman explained, ‘I generate additional heat around my body and the child I am holding. Brilliant really. Don’t know exactly how that works, but I suppose there’s perhaps some magic to it, I’m not quite sure, but-’

‘So how are we getting there if you can’t fly?’ cut in Peter.

The Plastic Snowman then raised his left arm where there was already a hand at the end of that. He was about to click the fingers, but then stopped. ‘Okay, I’m technically breaking a rule here, but I’m a brilliantly made snowman so I must be like this for a reason, so I think it should be okay. Fortunately, the Chief Most Important Plastic Snowman’s a very understanding snowman. As long as no harm’s done I should be fine, particularly as you’ve given me feet,’ he said confidently.

‘What do you mean?’ asked Peter curiously.

‘Listen to me carefully, Peter,’ said the Plastic Snowman. ‘When I start running, you start running. When I hop, you hop. When I skip, you skip. And then when I say *jump*, you jump as high as you can into the air!’

‘So we *are* going to fly!’ said Peter, getting very excited.

‘Actually Peter, we’re not exactly going to fly,’ said the Plastic Snowman. ‘We’re actually going to do one, big, *enormous* jump. Now hold my hand very tightly.’

As he did so, the chilly air that made Peter feel cold now suddenly felt warm again. It was just like holding hands with a hot water bottle.

‘Ready?’ asked the Plastic Snowman.

‘Ready!’ replied Peter.

So they started to run down the garden. Although the Plastic Snowman only had short, stumpy legs that were stuck at the bottom of his body, these legs were not only able to lift him, but they could run quite fast, too.

The Plastic Snowman hopped.

Peter hopped.

The Plastic Snowman skipped.

Peter skipped.

And then the Plastic Snowman yelled, 'JUMP!'

And Peter jumped as high as he could.

And then they went up, up, UP into the air!

Peter could not contain himself any longer. 'WHEEE!' he shouted.

He could see his house beginning to get smaller and smaller. The snow-covered town where he lived was also getting smaller and smaller.

And still they were going up, up, and up, and soon all Peter could see were lots of little lights of all the towns and villages below him, along with the moving headlights of those few cars that had dared to go out into the snow that still covered a lot of the roads. He knew that the ground was a long way down, but even though he was only holding one hand, he felt as though his whole body was being held tightly, making sure that there was no way he would fall.

Then he looked up at the sky. The stars were so bright! The moon was so big!

'WOW!' he yelled. It was the biggest WOW he had ever said!

Peter could see many towns, villages, rivers, lakes and forests that were below his feet and that were lit up by the full moon, but he could now feel that they had reached the top of their jump and that they were slowly heading downwards. The lights on the

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