

PETER AND THE
PLASTIC
SNOWMEN
TWO

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*To the best boys in my life along with the best
mother and wife*

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PETER AND THE PLASTIC SNOWMEN TWO

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1. THE SECRET REVEALED

It was two nights ago that seven-year old Peter Peddington had had the most fantastic adventure of his life.

It was in the middle of a cold, snowy night, just after the New Year, that he got up and went outside to look again at the snowman that his dad had made the morning before, and then discovered, very much to his surprise, that it was now made of plastic. This particular surprise was nothing, however, when he also discovered that it was alive and it talked. It then took him on a small series of adventures, first to his very surprised Auntie Anne by making a big jump into the sky. It took him to a fantastic cloud where there was the biggest playground ever. There were also other plastic snowmen, some important plastic snowmen, and lots of other children.

Then the next thing he knew was waking up in his bed and back in just his pyjamas. His winter coat, gloves, scarf and boots had been put back in exactly the same place where he put them on. The snowman – that is, his Plastic Snowman – had also returned to the exact same place in the garden where he had originally been built.

Now all Peter could do was to go outside into the garden where it was still cold, where there was still plenty of snow on the ground, and where his snowman was still standing, still made of snow. It would only turn to plastic, so he was told by the snowman, if there was nobody else around.

But he really believed that what happened really happened. The problem was he could not prove it.

Mummy and Daddy, of course, just took his story as typical childish fantasy. Peter believed what he saw and yet the evidence told him the opposite. He had recently spoken to his Auntie Anne, but she did not say anything about that night

despite the fact that he was there at her house, and that he had even had a drink and a piece of chocolate cake while she was trying call his parents and his Auntie Jane. As far as she was concerned, her evening was spent just watching TV. He had spoken to Auntie Jane too, but she happily chatted to him without expressing any surprise or giving any kind of hint that she had received any kind of phone call from Auntie Anne when she had tried to contact her. He had even gone out the following night, convinced that there was absolutely nobody around, and at about the same time as the previous night of his adventure, to see if his snowman would turn to plastic and talk to him. It didn't, and it wouldn't.

But there had been *one* clue – just one – that perhaps he could bring his snowman back to life. It was something he'd heard on the fantastic cloud, something that the Most Important Plastic Snowman – a very official but not-so-friendly snowman - asked his Plastic Snowman. Peter had then asked him: "*And what does activated the standard way mean?*" to which the Plastic Snowman had answered, "*It means to start something working in the correct way.*" But what was that correct way?

The weather forecast had predicted the cold weather and snow would remain for some time, although a new forecast today said that warmer weather was expected by the Friday. It was now Sunday. Peter knew that if he was to be able to find a way of 'activating' his snowman, then it would have to be soon.

*

"What are you looking so sad about, Peter?" asked Daddy, who had just joined him outside in the garden. He playfully threw a snowball at him, hitting his back, and expecting one to be thrown back at him, which didn't come.

Peter thought quickly. "Um, it's because... Christmas is over and you're going back to work tomorrow," he said sadly.

“Of course, but you’re not back at school until Wednesday,” smiled his father, “so at least you’ve still got plenty of time to have some fun. Look, tell you what, I’ll build another snowman. How about that?”

“Okay.”

Peter didn’t really care about another snowman. He just stared at the one that he knew had taken him into the sky.

As before, Daddy made the new snowman from a series of large snowballs that were piled on top of each other, and then filling in the gaps with snow and rounding out the body. To make it more interesting, he built it at the other side of the garden, and made it taller and thinner.

After an hour, the job was finished. “There! What do you think?”

Even Peter had to raise a smile at this snowman. “It’s great Daddy. It’s not as good as the first one, but better than everyone else’s. You are the best snowman-maker ever!”

“Thank you!” grinned Daddy. “At least you’ve cheered up a bit!”

“I’ll go in and ask Mummy for some more bits to make his face and body,” said Peter gleefully.

“Don’t know if she’ll be happy about using more buttons and another scarf and hat,” said Daddy, “but see what you can do, okay. It’ll help if you smile and show Mummy that you’re now in a good mood.”

*

Ten minutes later Peter returned with some purple cardigan buttons and a large pink hat. He’d also brought a striped orange tie, one that Daddy often wore at work.

“I suppose Mummy thinks that’s funny,” he said, in a half-amused half-annoyed kind of way.

Peter arranged the buttons into a face similar to the Plastic Snowman's face, the result being that it had tiny eyes and a mouth shape limited to a simple grin. He placed the hat on top as Daddy tied the tie around the neck.

"Shall I get the camera out-" began Daddy, before stopping himself. "Oh, that reminds me Peter, I haven't shown you the pictures from the other day. I even took a little video outside. Want to come and look?"

"Okay," said Peter brightly, "but I didn't know you'd taken a video too."

"It's not much," said Daddy, "but it's quite nice. I only played it back on the camera last night. I'll put it onto the laptop so you can see them all."

*

After they had removed their thick winter clothes, Mummy prepared them both a hot drink as Daddy retrieved both his camera and laptop and set it up on the kitchen table.

Peter sat at the table, and for some reason that he wasn't sure about, began to feel a sense of excitement. He felt certain he knew what to expect, but...

Daddy connected the camera to the laptop and set everything up ready for a presentation. "Okay, here we go."

First up were the photographs. There were ten in total, with different poses made by Peter next to the Plastic Snowman.

Then came the video. The picture wobbled at first as Daddy was still getting into a comfortable position, but then held the camera steady to show Peter setting himself up for photographs. Snow was falling quite heavily, as it had done so most of that day. Then the video showed Peter scratching his nose as some particularly large snowflakes landed there. After that the film stopped.

“There you go Peter,” said Daddy brightly. “We’ll go out again in a bit and I’ll take some more photos of the new snowman. Peter?”

“Oh, er, sorry, Daddy,” said Peter, who had suddenly become deep in thought.

He wondered. Had he just seen how to activate the Plastic Snowman?

“Can I see the video again Daddy?”

And Peter saw the video ten times. He was mentally taking as many notes as he could, such as to where he was standing, how he scratched his nose, how long for, and so on. For a small boy of seven years old, there was a surprising amount of wise thinking going through this young mind.

*

For the third night in a row – around 11pm - Peter got up from his bed, crept downstairs and put on his winter clothes. He hadn’t slept at all as a deep sense of excitement had overwhelmed him. Mummy and Daddy had gone to bed early as they were both due back at work after the long Christmas and New Year holiday, and until Peter was due back at school, he would be staying with Grandma from tomorrow. She only lived a very short distance away so Mummy would be dropping him off and picking him up later.

Like that night his Plastic Snowman had come to life, the sky was cloudless and full of stars. The moon was large and bright, but a small part of it was now in shadow. On that fateful night it had been a full moon. It was now quite frosty and certainly the coldest night of the winter so far.

Peter slowly walked up to his Plastic Snowman. It was still dressed in its old brown cloth cap and green scarf. It still had two big black buttons for the eyes, a carrot for the nose, ten

little red buttons for the mouth, and three big red buttons that were stuck to the tummy for his coat.

He touched it. It was, as he expected, still made of snow.

He took a deep breath, shaking not through cold but with that strong sense of excitement. In the video he was standing in front of the snowman – he would now do the same. He was even wearing exactly the same winter clothes. The only differences were these: it was not daytime, it was not snowing, and he was aware of what he was about to do. If this didn't work, he thought, then he didn't know what else to do.

He stood in front of the snowman.

He rubbed his nose five times...

"Hello again Peter."

Peter quickly turned around to see the smiling face of his Plastic Snowman. "PLASTIC SNOWMAN! YOU'RE BACK!"

The Plastic Snowman grabbed him, picked him up from his feet and hugged him in his tight, warm, plastic arms. Peter felt the aura of warmth completely envelop his body and cut out the surrounding frosty air. He was so happy warm tears were now flowing down his cheeks.

"Well, I did not expect to be here or to see you again!" said the Plastic Snowman happily. "It's so wonderful to be given another go!"

"What about me?" said another low voice.

This particular voice was clearly filled with surprise and bewilderment.

The ten little red buttons that made up the Plastic Snowman's mouth had suddenly arranged themselves into an 'o' shape.

He then put Peter back on the ground.

Peter turned around.

The second snowman that Daddy had built earlier that day had also come to life.

2. THE SECOND PLASTIC SNOWMAN

“What about you?” said the Plastic Snowman. “Oh yes. This is Peter. He’s *my* friend.”

The six small purple buttons that made up the Tall Thin Plastic Snowman’s mouth moved up and down, creating a wavy line to show that he was talking. “*Your* friend? Hey now wait a moment! You’ve had your turn! He’s my friend now!”

“I’m sorry, but Peter activated *me*.”

“Hang on, he activated me too!” the Tall Thin Plastic Snowman shot back.

“But he didn’t mean to do that,” said the Plastic Snowman calmly. “You just happened to be there.”

Peter looked at the two snowmen in astonishment as both focused their attentions on each other and not on him.

“Um, can’t I be both your friends?” he asked timidly.

“Plastic snowmen are supposed to have only *one* friend,” said the Tall Thin Plastic Snowman gently. “They get one go and then they disappear.”

“What do you mean, they disappear?” Peter asked worryingly.

“It means,” said the Plastic Snowman, “that we only exist for the one night for one friend, after which... that’s it.”

“What? You die?” Peter was getting scared.

“No no, you’ve just simply had your turn,” said the Tall Thin Plastic Snowman in a reassuring voice to Peter. *“You then simply get sent to another area like marketing, maintenance, cleaning out, or at worst... Accounts. And I’m not waiting for such a long time to get my turn again. You’re now my friend. Aren’t you, Peter?”* he added meekly.

“Er...” said Peter. *“I... I don’t know. The Plastic Snowman is my friend... but... you can be my friend too!”*

“That is not possible,” said the Plastic Snowman solemnly. *“You can only have one of us as a friend. Even you were supposed to have only the one chance of being a friend to us snowmen. Which leads me to ask you, how did you know how to reactivate me?”*

“I – I guessed after watching a video of myself, I saw that I rubbed my nose a few times,” said Peter shakily.

Both snowmen sighed. *“Early twenty-first century modern technology strikes again. The Most Important Plastic Snowman needs to be informed about this,”* said the Tall Thin Plastic Snowman.

“You mean the Official Very Important Plastic Snowman,” corrected the Plastic Snowman.

The Tall Thin Plastic Snowman did not appear to hear what the Plastic Snowman had just said, or had chosen to ignore him, and continued speaking. *“Last time it was tablets. And we’re not talking about taking them for tummy upsets. Before that it was Blackberries and Apples. The devices, not fruit! And then there’s Wii, and we’re not talking about going to the toilet! These humans are useless when it comes to thinking up new names for their gadgets. Clearly the Bureaucratic Snowmen are not doing their jobs properly. I always tell them they should be sent to Atoz!”*

“Atoz?” said Peter suddenly. “That was mentioned when I was on the cloud! Where’s that? And what’s a Bureaucratic Snowman? What’s marketing? What’s Accounts? And what’s maintenance?”

“That’s not important at the moment, Peter,” said the Plastic Snowman quickly, and then adding, “I’d better inform the Official Very Important Plastic Snowman.”

“Now wait a minute!” said the Tall Thin Plastic Snowman, who sounded rather annoyed. “It’s *my* life today! *My* turn! You had your chance this winter! *I* should be going to see him!”

“But Peter chose to activate *me*, not you!” said the Plastic Snowman firmly. “He goes with *me* to the cloud.”

“*He shouldn’t have activated anyone!*” said the Tall Thin Plastic Snowman, now sounding very angry. “You said this yourself!”

“But he did. And it wasn’t meant to be you. I’m sorry.”

“NOOO!”

And suddenly the Tall Thin Plastic Snowman started to run. His legs were slightly shorter than the Plastic Snowman’s, but he was certainly no slower.

“You can’t do that!” shouted the Plastic Snowman.

“Can’t I? See me try!” the Tall Thin Plastic Snowman shouted back.

He hopped. And then skipped. And then he jumped high, high into the air, going upwards and onwards.

“I hope for his sake he doesn’t meet the Most Important Plastic Snowman,” said the Plastic Snowman darkly. “Overly bureaucratic lump of ice, that’s all he really is.”

And all through what was happening, Peter could only watch. He didn’t know what else to say.

But what he did notice was that where the Tall Thin Plastic Snowman had stood, there was a green circular patch.

This time, he knew he had not been dreaming.

3. RETURN TO THE CLOUD

“I suppose we had better go up to the cloud,” said the Plastic Snowman. “I’m obliged to report all this to the Official Very Important Plastic Snowman.”

Peter wanted to ask if they could jump too, but he knew that Plastic Snowmen were not allowed to do this except when taking the children home. His Plastic Snowman had problems with this before, particularly with the Most Important Plastic Snowman. This snowman had tried to get him into trouble before the boss, the head, or whatever you wanted to call him, or as Peter knew him, the Official Very Important Plastic Snowman. The correct way to travel was a far less exciting method: this involved clicking the fingers and suddenly re-appearing in another place.

“Hold my hand, Peter.”

The Plastic Snowman duly clicked his fingers, and the next thing Peter knew was suddenly falling several meters into what seemed like a great big fluffy white bath sponge which also acted like a trampoline, and he suddenly found himself going up again after landing. After landing and bouncing up and down two more times, he finally got to his feet. He knew where he was – the cloud was a fun place.

He looked around. To his surprise, there was no sign of the giant funfair, other children or other plastic snowmen of various shapes and sizes.

Even the Plastic Snowman seemed surprised. 'Somehow it looks like we've ended up on the wrong side of the cloud.'

Then Peter shouted, "Look over there!"

A black, bowler-hatted snowman was approaching them. It looked very similar to Peter's snowman, except that it was taller and had slightly longer legs. It was also wearing a large, black tie, and the eyes, nose and mouth were made up of several lumps of very black coal. Peter recognized it as the very official Most Important Plastic Snowman he met two nights ago, particularly as it was holding the very same black clipboard. Its expression was one of seriousness: not too different to the expression it had back then. It wasn't Peter's favorite snowman by a long way.

The Plastic Snowman spoke first. "Why have we appeared on this part of the cloud?" he asked politely, "and where's the Official Very Important Plastic Snowman?"

"Hello Petal," said the Most Important Plastic Snowman to Peter.

"My name's Peter, not Petal," said Peter sternly.

"My apologies. Anyway, you are going to the playground."

"With my Plastic Snowman?"

"No Petrol. Your Plastic Snowman has to appear before a disciplinary commission to ascertain –"

"What do you mean?" interrupted Peter. "You're using a lot of big words! I'm only a little boy! And I'm *Peter!*" Peter felt the Most Important Plastic Snowman was saying his name wrong deliberately.

The Plastic Snowman then spoke quietly to Peter. "It means that I am going to have to stand in front of a group of other snowmen. They're known as the Council of Cloudland Snowmen, and I have to explain why I did a certain thing, and if they decide that it is a very bad thing I've done, I'll get a punishment for it."

He then turned to the Most Important Plastic Snowman: "Who has told you to do this?" he said loudly and firmly. "Why hasn't the Official Very Important Plastic Snowman come to see me? Where's the official notice?"

"Here, attached to my clipboard," said the Most Important Plastic Snowman sniffily. He unclipped it and handed it to the Plastic Snowman.

He looked hard at it. "Well, it certainly looks like his signature."

"But you haven't done anything!" shouted Peter, "all you did was –"

"Peter, at this time please don't say anything that might be used against me while I try to argue about whatever it is. Anyway, the Official Very Important Plastic Snowman is a good snowman, so it must be serious if he has decided this. I'm sure he'll ask you about the things that happened and you can tell them him what happened. Assuming it *is* about something you saw. By the way, what have I supposed to have done?"

"Not for me to say," said the Most Important Plastic Snowman.

If Peter was scared, he wasn't showing it now. "Mr. Most Important Plastic Snowman," he said firmly. "If my Plastic Snowman is going to stand in front of this group of Very High - thingy Plastic Snowmen, I want to be with him. I was there, I know what he did!"

‘Only on the night you were with me,’ said the Plastic Snowman quietly. “We still don’t know for sure.”

Suddenly two more snowmen appeared from nothing to stand on either side of the Most Important Plastic Snowman. This time, these Plastic Snowmen were very broad with small heads, and had no feet. Their arms were very fat. They then started hopping to the Plastic Snowman to stand either side of him. Peter recognized them as the same snowmen that had stood either side of the Most Important Plastic Snowman when they first met. They looked to him like the snowman equivalent of bodyguards or security men.

“Petter, you will now go and join the other children. We will give you another Plastic Snowman to be with,” said the Most Important Plastic Snowman, his voice showing no sign of feeling any sympathy or pity for the little boy.

“I don’t want to be with another Plastic Snowman, and you know my name’s not Petter, IT’S PETER!” shouted Peter angrily. “Have you got that?”

“It is not up to you,” said the Most Important Plastic Snowman drily.

He suddenly clicked his fingers, and disappeared, along with the Plastic Snowman and his two snowman escorts.

All Peter could now see was the cloud he was standing on, going into the distance either side of where his feet were. He suddenly felt very alone as he looked around.

“*Plastic Snowman?*” he whimpered in hope.

“Yes?”

The voice came from just a few meters away. But it was not the familiar reassuring deep voice. It was a voice that was high-pitched and lacked authority.

A Plastic Snowman who, like the others, had simply just appeared, came bouncing up to Peter. It was half the size of his

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