

# Christmas for Two by Carlotta Mackie

The crowded outdoor train departed two passengers at the little station and then proceeded on its way.

A long stage, rusty and rickshack, backed by the platform and the driver's busy "All aboard!" brought the girl and the young man hurrying into the dismal night.

"I'm sorry for Ferguson's place," remarked the driver as he examined the horse skittily in the narrow space.

"Yes," said the man rather gloomily. "There had to be a carriage to hold us."

"Oh there has—so there has! I've brought around for two or three hours, but I guess they got obligated; anyway, they left word for me to stay here till the train came in and if anyone was bound for their place in bring me along."

"The train's four hours late as it is, and I don't suppose they were waiting to be kept away from their Christmas dinner."

"How long will it take us," asked the girl.

"A matter of an hour or so," was the unceremonious reply.

The girl stifled an exclamation of dismay and she drew still further away from the vicinity of the morose man.

"You'll be all right," said the driver, "but you'll have to get out of the car and drop his chin into his dog's."

They had started forth murmuring so joyfully, Polly finished and Dick looked downcast and sullen.

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The stage driver in his cracked, broken, as they splashed over the hard road.

"Yes," returned Derrick, sarcastically.

There was a long silence as the driver, white with rage, glared at the steep border of the mountain. Here and there a light gleamed only over the top of the dark green pines and beyond them the blackness of the night.

They had reached the top of a steep incline and were rolling evenly over a level surface, when suddenly, without an instant's warning, the stage crashed down and precipitated the passengers and luggage in an agonizing heap beneath the wheels.

"Are you hurt?" asked Derrick coldly.

"No, thank you," said Polly stiffly, as she peered out from the curtained window.

The driver was watching the bright-eyed horses and his out-croaked face was blanched anxiously.

"That's a shame, but sorry," he said, "I'm sorry, but I'm sorry."

Derrick had crawled out and stood beside him.

"This is the driver of a horse—how are we to get to Ferguson's place? Are we near a telephone—or where are we anyway?"

Labs Ransford scratched his ear thoughtfully.

"I'm not sure," he said, "but I think we're near Ferguson's place. I'll go and see if I can find out where it is."

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poor! Christmas to you and your wife," he called back over his shoulder before he disappeared around a turn in the road.

Derrick did not dare to look at Polly standing, he knew she was sitting proud and calm with a contemptuous sneer on her red lips. Instead, he stared away through the alpine of snow, made into golden paths by the later afternoon sun.

It was too bad that Christmas should have turned out so unimportant for both bodies. There was to be a party at the Ferguson place. Polly had Ralph Ferguson would send her a surprise and she would go on by that road.

A glimpse of Polly's beautiful face brought a revulsion of feeling. Poor little Polly was cold and tired and he was writing like a brute.

Without a word Derrick approached a small clearing in the middle of which grew a young pine tree.

It was the work of minutes to gather an armful of wood and broken branches and to clear a space of snow. Presently a bright fire crackled cheerfully and then Derrick huddled cushions and blankets from the stage and prepared a place for Polly.

"Come, Miss Stranahan," he said politely. "If you will draw near the fire, you will be comfortable."

"I'm not hungry," said Polly, holding her hand to the blaze.

"At least you will get down and see this blanket around you—no?"

"Thank you," said Polly without any more than the shortest assent.

From the blanket Derrick produced a large plate heaped with a generous Christmas dinner. There were turkey and cranberry sauce, stuffing and mashed potatoes and gravy, ham and celery, and a whole mince pie.

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"What a sight," he said, "in a friend's house, and you were our mind when we laid in the snow."

**Our Christmas offering of Ducks, Turkeys, Geese and Chickens** is fine enough to suit all palates. You can't be suited if we haven't it.

**Two fine First Prize Steers and Five Prize Lambs for our holiday trade** Also Home-made Mince Meat, Cranberries, Celery, Sweet Potatoes, Apples, Oranges, Lemons, etc., etc.

**At Christmas time patronize this market**

Our market will be attractively decorated for Christmas. Come in and see the good things we offer, even if you don't buy. We will be glad to have you call

**A few fine Christmas trees for sale**

**Alverson & Groff Market**  
Phone 403  
**Barrington, Illinois**

and it looked like a Christmas tree decorated for a festival.

Derrick opened his suit case and brought out slender white packages. These he tied to the tree with colored



"This is our Christmas tree, Polly dear," said Derrick, in a low tone.

cord. Gay tops for the Ferguson children were added until the little tree stood forth bravely in the first street.

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brought a sloughing of merry-makers to the scene of them. Together they sat down on a log before a dying fire brought by a little pine tree, now drenched with snow, and dripping with

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"We've had our Christmas tree," said Derrick covertly, while Polly smiled benignly in his happy eyes.

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## The Conflict of the Years

BY KENNEDY MATSON

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## A Christmas Gift

which never occurred to you, but which would be highly appreciated by a friend who is the possessor of a phonograph, is a present of a few late records.

I HAVE A BIG ASSORTMENT

**Christmas and New Year's Post Cards**

in pretty designs are happy thoughts of Christmas reminders. You can make a selection to your taste from our big stock.

We also have a large lot of beautiful pictures suitable for gifts.

**Everyone knows**

that the Edison Phonograph is the leading Talking Machine on the market. I am the agent for the Edison and you can always get supplies from me.

**Dainty line of Christmas Candy**

I have a fresh line of Candies for Christmas, both in bulk and in boxes. My Candies are the finest and daintiest I was able to get.

**John C. Dodge**

