



## *Greetings, Old Friends*

Well, another Yuletide is upon us, which means it's time for the annual proclamation of our existence. Or, as I've learnt from the middle-school-aged nephew last year, the time to be 'unboxed' is nigh!

Let me start off to let you know that our sector of the Ceramic Dickens Christmas Village set—the estate of Her Lady Third-Child—is faring well. Better than expected, actually. After the Great Division of Yore, when our well-preserved, beloved, sprawling town of heirloom quality was cleaved apart, and sent to the four corners of the family Kingdom. Cradled in aged tissue paper and wrapped in traditions and expectations too optimistic to bear, our smaller segment was roundly ignored for a many a solstice. Though we were ceremoniously proffered and divvied up according to the interest and fairness by her Holiness, The Queen Mother, those tendered to the care of Lady Third-Child stayed packed in a softening cardboard box marked “Holiday Stuff—House” until Lady Third-Child did indeed procure a home upon which to holiday. Imagine our delight when we were ousted from the attic to be unsheathed and birthed, like the baby Gesu himself.

Oh, 'twas a delight to be assembled again! Our contingent included not only my millinery storefront, but also the grocer, the cobbler, and village pub, Ye Hound and Hearth. We do also have the village jail, but without the boardinghouse nor the bank nor the manor estate, the vagrancy and criminal mischief is lacking in our little hamlet. Old Nevil Crumbottoms has been perpetually sleeping off an indulgent night from Miss Glennon Carlile's holiday punch for years now as the only occupant of the one-room cell and he seems just dandy about it.

One item to note is that Her Lady Third-Child and her betrothed have appeared to have procreated in the intervening years. While we have had some issues—rest well in peace, broken street lantern—our frameworks have largely been spared the tiny, sticky hands of their progeny. My millinery is chipped from a harrowing tumble from a toddler's clammy grasp but Lady Third-Child quickly repaired my shutter with a warm adhesive application, and I felt renewed for it. Also, the progeny tend to leave large treats we believe are called “Cheerios” on the glass skating slab, so we tolerate the occasional grubby-handed juggling for a hamlet peppered with honey-nut and apple-cinnamon feasts.





Quite interestingly, a new cardboard box has shown up from the postmaster as of late. We all rejoiced to think it was more of our beloved Ceramic Dickens Christmas Village kin, but alas, these newcomers are not of clapboard design nor ornately decorated like our hovels and homes. Instead, they are very white and simplistic in style. However, they still hold votives, so how different can they be? Besides, the white porcelain finish does give a lovely organic glow—not like that Kinkadee nuisance, with his overdone insistence of English cottage illumination. Ugh, indeed! Reverend Shirley believes the new housing development to be of Scandinavian descent, and while these new village pieces do not match our aesthetic, we do welcome some new blood and interests. A year is a long time to be packed away, so we treasure our five or six weeks of assemblage and holiday merriment. We truly are lucky to at least have that. Makes me think of our poor brethren in Brigadoon, with their one day of life in a century's span. Could one call that *life*? What a curse those Scots have!

Alas, it is nearly time to close shop for evening tide and doff my own chapeau. We are gathering at the Hound and Hearth for Glennon's wassail and some caroling around the bottlebrush trees. Be well, Ceramic Dickens Christmas Village kinfolk. We hope to see each other again but until then, I will keep your memory in my heart: One collective, spread upon the closed-top grand piano, aloft on soft tufts of glittered pillow batting, with the mechanized locomotive circling our peaceful town. Until then, let me leave you with the words of our humbled namesake, Charles:

"Happy, happy Christmas, that can win us back to the delusions of our childhood days, recall to the old man the pleasures of his youth, and transport the traveler back to his own fireside and quiet home!"

Yours, from this Solstice to the next,

*Genevieve*

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