

Cinderella A Christmas story by Posy Simmonds

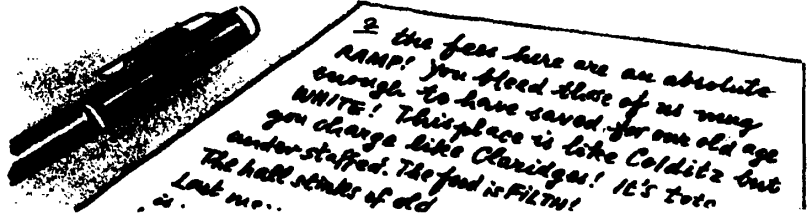
I'm Desmond Duff, 85. Widower. Room 3, Active and Able Wing, Coffingham Court Residential Home.



I suppose if Matron hadn't gossiped about the Clissolds' party, none of the peculiar events would have happened. ("Who are the Clissolds?" I hear you ask.) They're in property. Absolute LEECHES. They own this place, Coffingham Court, where I've been incarcerated since 1998. Anyway, Matron gossiped. And it was surprising, considering that none of us were invited to this party, how excited people got. Even Miss Cinder - dour old bat, if ever there was one.



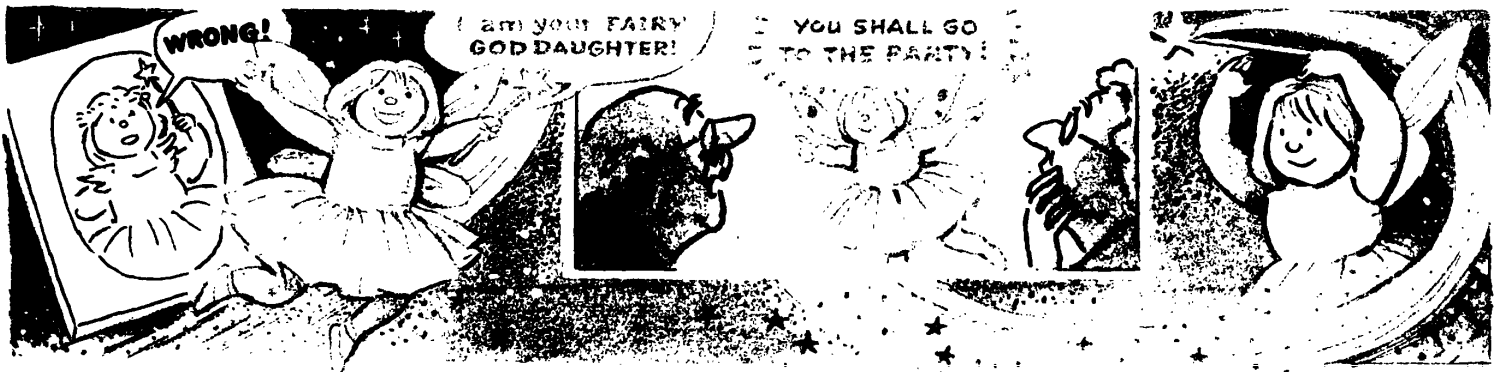
I sat down and wrote the Clissolds one of my stinkers.



The Clissolds didn't reply. They never do. Water off a duck's back. The next time I saw them was on December 22nd, the day of their party, when they came over for the Residents Christmas Tea. Their son, Dominic, came too. And the daughter, India, who looked at us with frank disgust. And who could blame her when Mr Eggar treated us to one of his shameless outbreaks of wind. (The full repertoire of Trumps, Onion Bumbles, Cushion Creepers, Seated Cannonade...)



That's always Mrs Clissold's trump card. The HELL HAG! She knows bloody well I can't afford anything better. And round here, as everyone knows, there's even worse homes than Coffingham Court. Sherry in Miss Cinder's room only intensified my black mood. (But at least her radiator was working.) The long, dreary days of Christmas stretched endlessly ahead – no excitements, nothing to look forward to. (The poinsettia and telephone call from my son in Brisbane are not enough.) I longed suddenly for a cigarette, for warmth, love... laughter... LIFE!



It was most queer! I seemed to shoot up out of my chair. I found I was in my old dinner jacket. I was slim. I had my teeth. A full head of hair. Skin like a baby's! I was like I was in 1946! I was 30 again! And as for Joan Cinder!



We waded through the door of Coffingham Court, out into the frosty night... down the hill to the Clissold's residence. And there, hungry for music, wine, love... we made our entrance.

Continued on Thursday