

Adventures in
ODYSSEY

FOCUS ON THE FAMILY PRESENTS

12

THE IMAGINATION STATION



Danger on a Silent Night

MARIANNE HERING • NANCY I. SANDERS



Danger on a Silent Night

BOOK 12

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**FOCUS ON THE FAMILY • ADVENTURES IN ODYSSEY
TYNDALE HOUSE PUBLISHERS, INC. • CAROL STREAM, ILLINOIS**

Danger on a Silent Night

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ISBN: 978-1-58997-739-6

A Focus on the Family book published by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188.

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Cover design by Michael Heath | Magnus Creative

Cataloging-in-Publication Data for this book is available by contacting the Library of Congress at <http://www.loc.gov/help/contact-general.html>.

Printed in the United States of America

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 / 16 15 14 13

For manufacturing information regarding this product, please call 1-800-323-9400.

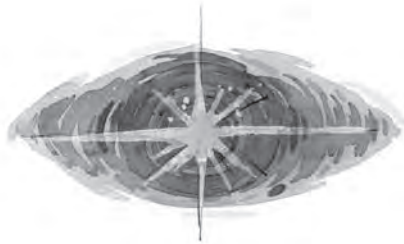


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Present Problems

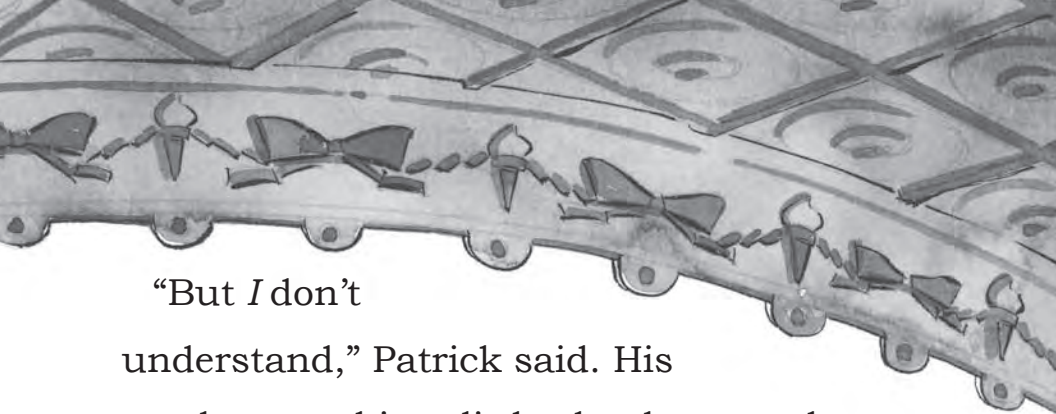


Patrick's boots crunched in the snow on the sidewalk. He was on his way to Whit's End. His cousin Beth walked beside him.

Patrick's nose felt frozen. He clutched a small gift bag in his hand. It had a big red bow on it.

"I still think your decision is weird," Patrick said to Beth.

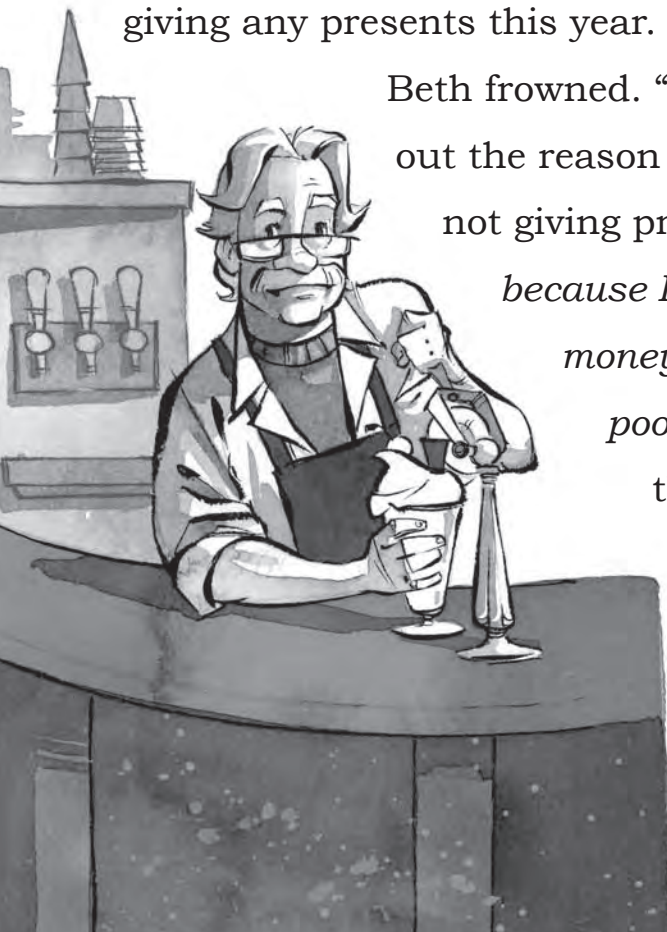
Beth shook her head. "Mr. Whittaker will understand."



“But *I* don’t understand,” Patrick said. His words turned into little clouds around his mouth. “I’m bringing him a present. But you’re going to tell him that you’re not giving any presents this year. To *anyone*.”

Beth frowned. “You left out the reason *why* I’m not giving presents. *It’s because I’m saving my money to give to the poor.*” She said the last part in a dramatic voice.

Patrick opened the



Present Problems

door to Whit's End. The bell on the door jingled as he stepped inside. Beth followed close behind.

Mr. Whittaker stood behind the counter. He was making a milk shake. He looked up and smiled. "Merry Christmas!" he said.

"Merry Christmas!" Patrick and Beth said together.

Patrick walked to the counter and held out the bag to Whit. "My mom baked these for you," he said.

Whit took the bag and looked inside. He closed his eyes and sniffed deeply. "I *love* gingerbread cookies. Thank you," he said.

"You're welcome," Patrick said. He glanced over at Beth.

Beth looked away.

"Do you mind if I share these?" Whit asked

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Patrick. He put the gift on a shelf behind him. “If I eat them all myself, I’ll gain weight. Then I might have to ask for a new belt for Christmas.”

“Sure,” Patrick said. “They’re yours. You can do whatever you want with them.”

The cousins took off their mittens and sat at the counter.

Whit busied himself with making mugs of hot chocolate. “Are both of you ready for Christmas?” he asked them.

“Almost,” Patrick said.

“I am,” Beth said.

Whit raised his eyebrows. “You’ve already done *all* your Christmas shopping?” he asked her.

Patrick looked at Beth to see how she would reply.

Present Problems

“I’m not shopping for Christmas this year,” Beth said. “I’m not giving gifts.”

“Oh?” Whit said.

Beth lifted her chin proudly. “I’m giving my money to needy families,” she said.

Whit looked impressed. “Well, that’s a sacrificial thing to do,” he said.

“She didn’t say she wouldn’t *take* any gifts,” Patrick said in a sharp tone. “She said she isn’t *giving* any.”

“I’m not asking for any gifts this year. I have told everyone not to give me gifts,” Beth said. She frowned at Patrick. “I don’t want any money spent on me. It should go to the poor instead.”

Patrick looked at Whit. “Help me, Mr. Whittaker,” he said. “What’s it going to be like with no Christmas presents under the

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tree? It's crazy."

Whit rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "You don't always have to *buy* gifts," he said. Then he turned to Beth. "You could make something by hand—like decorate a picture frame or knit a scarf."

"I would still have to buy the supplies," Beth said.

Patrick put his face in his hands and groaned. "You can't have Christmas without presents. It's . . . it's . . . *tradition*."

"It wasn't always tradition," Beth said. Then she looked doubtful and asked Whit, "Was it?"

Whit put some mugs of hot chocolate on a tray. "Let me deliver these drinks. Then I'll *show* you the answer," he said.

"Show us?" Patrick asked. Then he

Present Problems

realized what Whit was saying. “An Imagination Station adventure?”

Whit chuckled as he walked away with the tray.

Patrick looked at Beth. Beth seemed excited for a second. Then her expression changed to serious. “This won’t change anything,” she said firmly.

“Are you sure about that?” Patrick asked.

“You’ll see,” Beth said.



Whit led the cousins down a set of stairs to his basement workshop. They crossed the room to a large machine. It looked like the front of a helicopter. The Imagination Station! Patrick patted its side and felt the cool metal.

The Imagination Station was one of

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Whit's inventions. It was kind of like a time machine. It let kids experience history for themselves.

Whit pushed a button, and the door slid open. The cousins climbed inside and sat in the seats.

Whit pushed several keys on the machine's control panel. The Imagination Station started to hum. Lights flashed on and off.

"I hope you enjoy yourselves," Whit said.

"What will this tell me about giving gifts?" Beth asked.

Whit smiled and waved. "Push the red button when you're ready," he said. The doors slid closed.

Patrick reached out and pushed the red button.

Present Problems

The Imagination Station started to shake. It seemed to move forward. Then it rumbled. Then it whirred.

Beth gasped.

Patrick felt the machine speed up. It zoomed along through a kind of tunnel. The tunnel seemed to get smaller and smaller.

Suddenly, everything went black.