Richard Curtis is an award-winning film director and screenwriter, and the creator of *Four Weddings and a Funeral, Love Actually, Notting Hill* and *Mr Bean.*

Rebecca Cobb is a picture-book writer and illustrator based in Cornwall. She won the Waterstones Children's Book Prize for Picture Books with her book *Lunchtime*, and has been shortlisted for the prestigious CILIP Kate Greenaway Medal three times.

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Unwrap three heartwarming Christmas tales . . .

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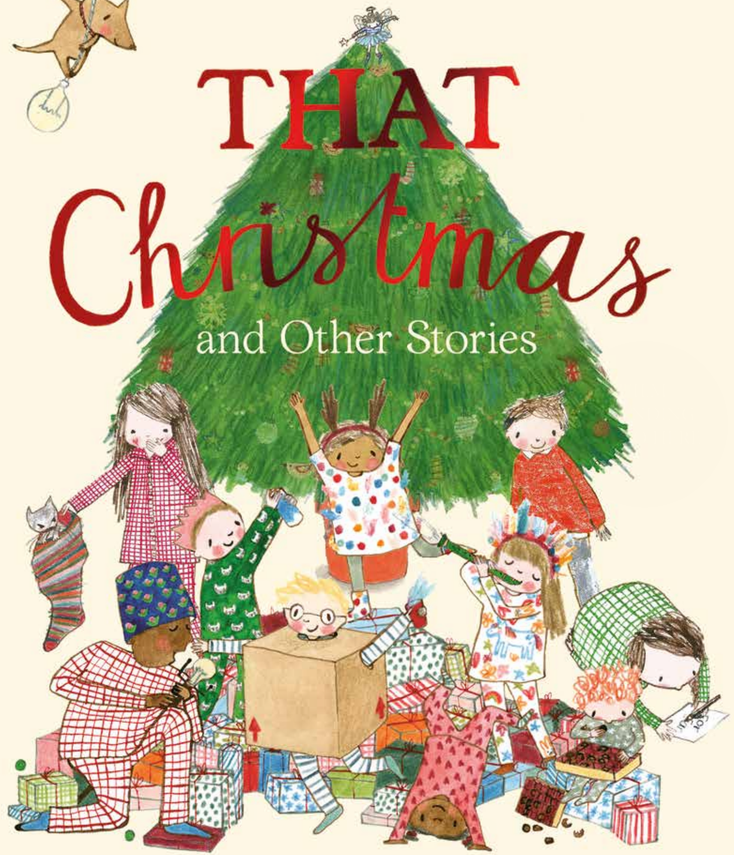
THAT *Christmas* and Other Stories ★ Richard Curtis ★ Rebecca Cobb

THAT *Christmas*

and Other Stories



Richard Curtis ★ Rebecca Cobb

From international film and TV writer, Richard Curtis, and award-winning illustrator Rebecca Cobb, come three heart-warming tales of three magical Christmases.

Gathered together for the first time, this is the ultimate Christmas trilogy – filled with joy, drama and all the trimmings.

In ***The Empty Stocking***, it's Christmas Eve and there's one very important question on everyone's mind – have YOU been good this year? For twins Sam and Charlie this is a big worry. Charlie has been especially naughty and everyone is sure that she won't get any presents AT ALL. But when Santa makes a mistake, it's up to Charlie to put things right . . .

Welcome to ***Snow Day***, the most magical day of the year . . . When Danny goes to school one very snowy morning, the last thing he expects to find at his deserted school is his least favourite teacher. And Mr Trapper wants him to spend the whole of Snow Day studying. But what starts as the worst day imaginable ends up as Danny's best day ever.

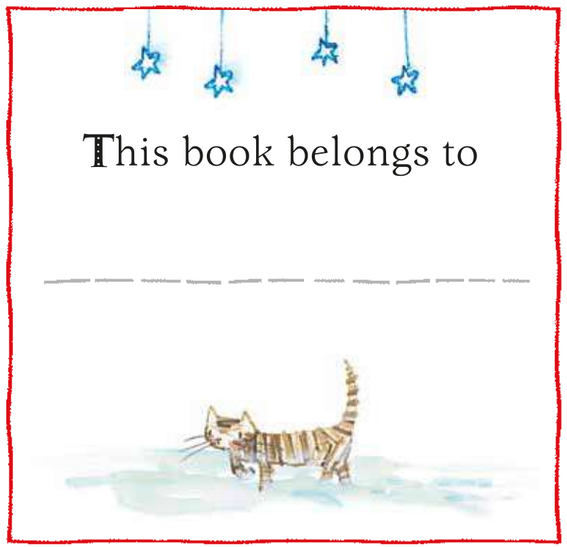
Christmas is the same every year, isn't it? Same food, same traditions, same visiting the neighbours, and going for a boring walk. Except for the year of ***That Christmas***. Find out what happens when parents aren't there on Christmas Day - chaos reigns and everyone finds out what Christmas is really about.

The Empty Stocking, Snow Day **and** ***That Christmas*** **have now been woven together into a major animated Netflix film.**

U.K. £20.00

This book is dedicated to Mandy, Bindy and Jamie -
my joyful Christmas companions.
–Richard Curtis

Dedication
–Rebecca Cobb



THAT Christmas
and Other Stories

PUFFIN

It's such a pleasure seeing these three books all together. Working on them was one of the sweetest experiences of my professional life. I wrote the first book – *The Empty Stocking* – just after my brother Jamie and his wife Fiona had their twin girls, Poppy & Harryo. I had so many happy memories of Christmas with Jamie when we were young, and I enjoyed writing a story about twins, now twins were in our lives.

The big challenge then was to find someone to illustrate the story. I remember looking through literally hundreds of my children's old books to see if I could find a style that really suited the story. I hadn't really found the perfect one when, out of the blue, Penguin sent me an early copy of Rebecca Cobb's first book. She was instantly and absolutely right – fun, tender and quirky, but also very emotional. I loved everything about her work. I was so thrilled when she said 'yes', and then getting back her first sketches was a great day: it was like the first time Rowan Atkinson performed one of my sketches – completely what I hoped for, but MUCH better. I felt like Bernie Taupin, hopefully sending lyrics through to Elton John and getting back a masterpiece of a song.

Inspired by Rebecca's work, I then wrote the next two books – every time feeling that her work was just getting better and better. Her illustrations were like the best Christmas present a person could get.

Quite why I'm so passionate about Christmas is a bit of a mystery to me; I'd already written the film *Love Actually*, with all its stories set at Christmas. I think the reason is because I've always loved Christmas in the simplest of ways – presents, Santa, family – but also it's a kind of dramatic deadline. Have you been naughty or nice all year? Does the person you're in love with love you? Are you a happy family or a family falling apart? Christmas is a sort of emotional magnifying glass: it can make sad and difficult times harder, but also make joyful and happy times even happier.

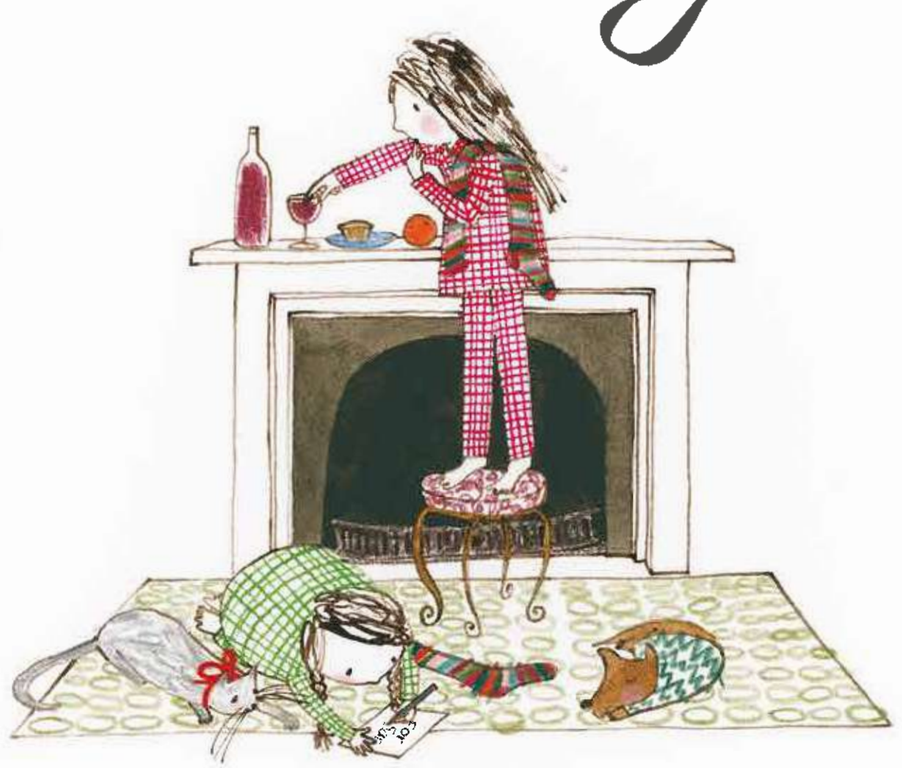
Christmas has also got these big, exciting, extra ingredients: Santa; snow that can cause a lot of trouble; and all the traditions – the school Christmas play, the big Christmas lunch and, where I come from, the terrifying Christmas Day swim. So, there's a lot of juicy ingredients and in the books I tried to take advantage of a lot of them.

And then, over the last five years, I've worked on an animated film called *That Christmas*, which ties all the stories of the books together into one place and one big, very special Christmas. And, like the writing of the three books, that's been an awfully big adventure too – adding extra elements to all of the stories, linking them all together and relishing the amazing magic of animation and the way it creates a completely new world.

Over the years, a lot of people have been very sweet to me, saying their children have enjoyed the books. I'm so thrilled to have them all put together in this one pretty package and I hope that'll you'll enjoy my little stories and Rebecca's gorgeous pictures. And may all of you NEVER have an Empty Stocking and have lots of wonderful Christmases to remember.

Richard Curtis

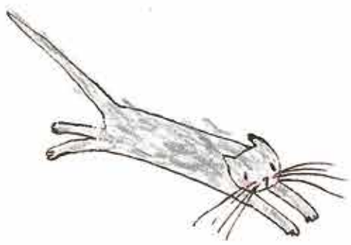
The EMPTY stocking



IT was Christmas night and Mr and Mrs Weston were excited.

As were their twins, **Sam** and **Charlie**.
Who were, despite their names, both girls.

Sam was *Samantha* and Charlie was *Charlotte*, but they were never called those names – they were always called Sam and Charlie. They were also, always, twins – both having been born
on June the 21st,
Midsummer's Day,
seven years
before.



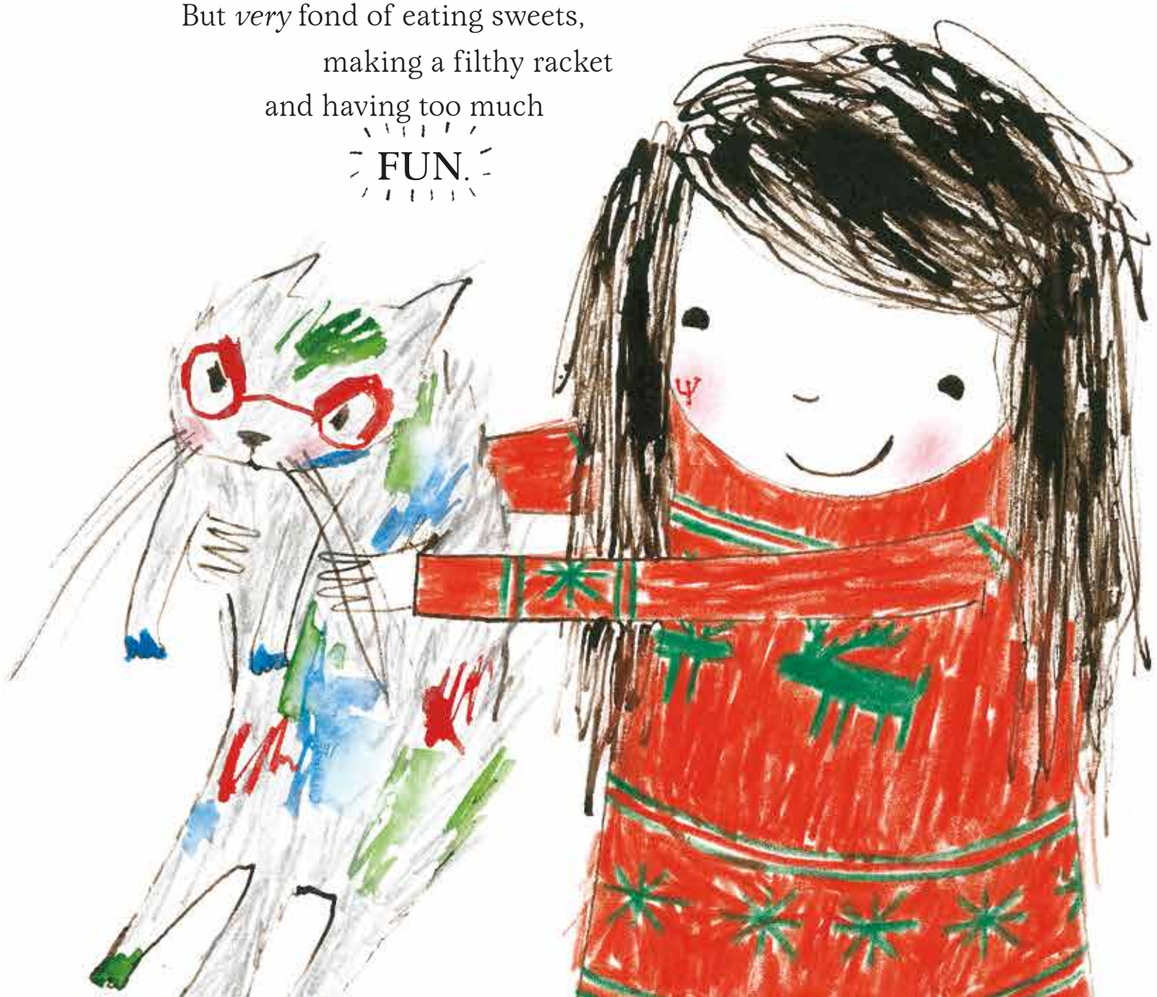
But their birthday was not the only thing about them that was the same. They also looked *exactly* the same – although of course people who really loved them could completely see the difference.

Sam ALWAYS wore her hair in **pretty plaits** –
and Charlie had a little **scar**
on her cheek in the
shape of a fork.

But actually, as children, they couldn't be more **different**. And on Christmas night that was a serious worry – because Sam was always *very* well behaved and Charlie was, well, not to mince words, because this is basically what this story is about –

Charlie was *quite* **bad.**

Not *really* bad, but, you know, *very* naughty.
Not interested in being obedient. Quite often very grumpy.
Not very fond of telling the complete truth.
But *very* fond of eating sweets,
making a filthy racket
and having too much
FUN.



Her parents of course *still* loved
her to bits, loved her as much as Sam,
because that's what parents do.

But, for instance, her teachers found her *very* annoying –
because she was **particularly** naughty at school.

And her next-door neighbours hated her –
because she was *very* naughty at home.

And shopkeepers didn't like her one bit –
because she ate A LOT of their sweets
and ***very rarely***
paid for
them.

Anyway – it was Christmas night and as usual
the family watched *Elf*, which was just great. Then Dad read
them *The Night Before Christmas*, which was very good,
and *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, which was even better.

Then Mum sat at the piano and made them all sing "Santa Claus
is Coming to Town" and, as always, when they got to the bit
about Santa knowing whether you'd been good or bad,
everybody couldn't help looking for
just a moment
in **Charlie's**
direction.

Because this **was** a worry.
There was no way Santa *wouldn't* know
what Charlie had been up to
this year.