



WOODBROOK BOYS MAKE A SNOWMAN

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On his first morning in Toronto, Barry saw the white powder falling on the roofs of nearby buildings. He had never seen anything like it before.

“That’s snow,” his cousin Trevor said.

Barry stared as the snow covered the pavement on the opposite side of the road. What a pretty sight, he thought.

“Would you like to come to school with me today?” Trevor interrupted.

“You mean you can go to school in the snow?”

Trevor said you had to go to school even when it was snowing.

The morning was very quiet, no cocks crowing, no dogs barking. It was very different from Woodbrook.

Barry did not feel like going outside. It looked so cold! But he had not come to Canada to stay in bed under blankets. He had come to spend the Christmas holidays and he wanted it to be fun.

Until a few months ago Barry and Trevor had been in the same class in Woodbrook.

Now here they both were in Toronto watching the snow falling. In Port-of-Spain the sun was probably shining and he wondered what his friends were doing.

Trevor had come to Canada with his parents and they had settled down in a large apartment block, high up on the 15th floor. You had to ride an elevator to get up and down.

Trevor's father was a mechanic and every morning he drove to work, stopping on the way to drop Trevor's mother off at the bank where she worked as a secretary.

Trevor's school was near to the apartment and he walked to and from school.

This was the last day of school and Barry was going along too. Before leaving the apartment Barry had to put on a sweater over his shirt and then on top of that a heavy coat. It made him feel so fat! They took the elevator down to the street and as the door opened Barry could feel the cold on his face. Snowflakes fell on his head and he tried to catch some in his hand. They melted.

"Real snowflakes!" he said to Trevor.

"Wait until we really get a heavy snowfall," said Trevor, "then we'll build a snowman."

Trevor's school was a large red brick building where the blackboards were really green and were built into the walls. The children were mostly Canadian but there were some children who came from other countries, as far away as Greece, Italy or Malta and of course those from Barbados, Trinidad, Grenada, Antigua.

“No uniforms?” asked Barry when he saw the children in slacks and jeans and sweaters.

“No uniforms here,” replied Trevor. “And no straps for beating with either,” he laughed.

The classes were called Grades instead of Standards and the classrooms were not as crowded as in Trinidad. Each child had a desk of his own and in fact there were more desks than children.

The teacher was a young woman and she greeted Barry and wished him a Happy Christmas in Canada.

Barry and Trevor did not go home for lunch but ate hamburgers in the school canteen.

After supper that night they watched television and Barry was surprised at the number of programmes he could see, and in colour too.

“We can see several Canadian stations and American ones as well,” boasted Trevor. “This is a real big place.”

Barry agreed with that.

On the first day of the holidays they explored the city of Toronto. It was then that Barry saw a peculiar vehicle rolling down the middle of the street. It was neither a bus nor a train.

It’s a street car,” said Trevor who had taken many rides in such vehicles.

“Dad told me that we used to have street cars in Port-of-Spain but they were called tram cars. That was before we were born. I like the tram cars though. They

move fast and work by electricity. None of that horrid exhaust from motor cars and buses.”

“Port-of-Spain should have kept its tram cars,” said Barry. “Then we wouldn’t have so many traffic jams.”

The street car came to a stop where they were standing and as people got off Trevor pointed to the pole that connected it to the overhead electricity line.

“That’s where the street car gets its power,” said Trevor.

They got on and paid their fare.

The street car rolled past the shops, parks and squares where Barry saw real Christmas trees growing out of the ground. They were more beautiful than he had imagined.

After the street car ride, they boarded a bus. The bus was shiny and red and Barry craned his head out of the window to look up at the tall office buildings. The bus made its way between cars and other buses and more vehicles than Barry had ever seen in his life.

“No donkey carts on this road eh, Barry,” said Trevor.

Barry laughed at the idea.

After several blocks they got off because Trevor had something else to show his cousin.

“We’re going underground now,” Trevor said.

“Underground?” asked Barry surprised.

“Yes, come and see.”

From the edge of the pavement they went down a flight of concrete steps and entered a tunnel. Then they went down some more steps, paid their fare to a ticket collector and waited on a long platform for the train.

“It’s an underground train,” said Trevor. “It runs all the way under the city and when you reach where you want to go, you simply walk back up the steps and out to the pavement.”

The underground train roared towards them and the doors opened by themselves. Trevor and Barry got in. Somewhere along the platform a whistle blew, the doors closed and they were off again along a dark tunnel deep under the streets.

The underground train, like the bus and street car, was crowded and at every station people got on and off.

“Where do all these people come from?” asked Barry, “and where are they all going?”

“Toronto is a big city,” said Trevor. “People are going to work or coming from work all the time.”

At the station nearest to their apartment they got off the train and walked up the steps to the pavement.

“How about some pizza?” asked Trevor.

Barry said yes though he didn’t know what it was.

“It looks like roti!” he said when he saw it.

“Well yes,” said Trevor. “But it’s made of sausage, cheese, anchovies and other things.”

Soon it was Christmas Eve and Trevor’s parents were celebrating in much the same way they did in Trinidad. There were black cake and pastelles and baked ham, and on Christmas Day everyone opened his presents. Barry and Trevor got some lovely games and they were so busy playing with these that they did not notice the darkening clouds—and then the heavy snowfall.

Everything for miles around was white.

“Look at all that snow!” exclaimed Barry when he looked out of the window. Suddenly he felt very excited.

He rushed out of the apartment down the elevator and into the yard closely followed by Trevor. They scooped up handfuls of snow and threw it at each other.

“Let’s build a snowman,” said Barry.

They gathered piles of snow and slowly the snowman began to take shape. First the big belly, then the well rounded head. They shaped the face, using vegetables for the eyes, mouth and nose.

When the snowman was finished Trevor’s dad took pictures of everyone standing around it.

In January it was still snowing in Canada but Barry was back in Woodbrook and when school reopened he showed the pictures of the snowman to his friends at school.