

The Goloknip Stories

by Roderick Ramage

Christmas Eve

Ben had to go to sleep for two or three hours in the afternoon, in order not to fall asleep during the midnight service at the tiny, pretty little church. The children were to play a nativity scene. Ben was the third shepherd, because he played truant so much from Sunday school. The Goloknip loved the little church and, invisible, played with the organ and embarrassed the prim and proper organist with occasional very unladylike noises. The organ builders came and tested it and could find nothing wrong with it, and the organist began to notice, that it was only when Ben was in the church that one heard these noises, particularly as he could not stop himself laughing.

In fact, he was tired and had nothing against a sleep. Ben and the Goloknip had had an exciting morning at the Christmas market.

Before going to bed on December the 4th Ben had put his freshly polished boots in front of the fireplace and, as he slept, St Nicholas left him a book. A Rupert Bear annual. Ben taught the Goloknip exactly how to dress as Rupert Bear. For the Goloknip it was easy to grow two arms, two legs and a head, even a bear's head. It was not so easy for it to grow the limbs and a head in the right shape or size or in the right places. The colour was of course easy, yellow plaid trousers and scarf and red pullover.

On Christmas Eve morning Ben's mum was busy with Christmas preparations.

'Ben, can you be sensible? I need some nutmeg. Please run to the spice stall in the market. And come back immediately.'

When Ben came out of the house into Old Mill Lane, he heard a pop and there was the Goloknip, already looking like Rupert Bear.

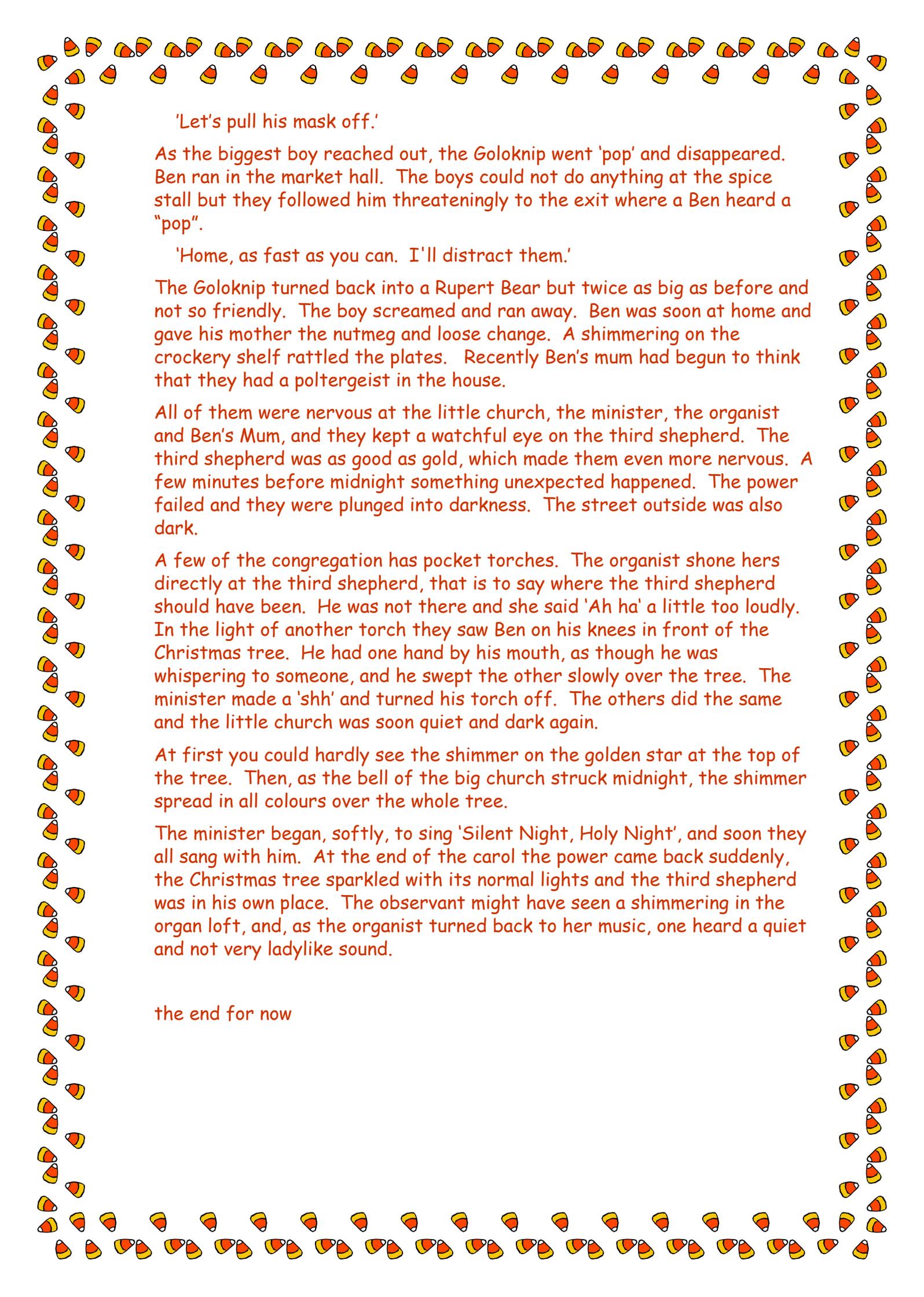
'We can have fun at the Christmas market.'

All the parents and the children turned round, pointed the Rupert Bear out to each other and laughed and some even applauded. Ben and the Goloknip looked at each other questioningly and then looked around and saw the bookshop opposite the market. In its window was a large display of Rupert Bear books and a life-size poster of Rupert Bear.

Some bigger boys came to them.

'Who is in the little bear costume then?'

Ben and the Goloknip stood frozen to spot and did not say anything.



'Let's pull his mask off.'

As the biggest boy reached out, the Goloknip went 'pop' and disappeared. Ben ran in the market hall. The boys could not do anything at the spice stall but they followed him threateningly to the exit where a Ben heard a "pop".

'Home, as fast as you can. I'll distract them.'

The Goloknip turned back into a Rupert Bear but twice as big as before and not so friendly. The boy screamed and ran away. Ben was soon at home and gave his mother the nutmeg and loose change. A shimmering on the crockery shelf rattled the plates. Recently Ben's mum had begun to think that they had a poltergeist in the house.

All of them were nervous at the little church, the minister, the organist and Ben's Mum, and they kept a watchful eye on the third shepherd. The third shepherd was as good as gold, which made them even more nervous. A few minutes before midnight something unexpected happened. The power failed and they were plunged into darkness. The street outside was also dark.

A few of the congregation has pocket torches. The organist shone hers directly at the third shepherd, that is to say where the third shepherd should have been. He was not there and she said 'Ah ha' a little too loudly. In the light of another torch they saw Ben on his knees in front of the Christmas tree. He had one hand by his mouth, as though he was whispering to someone, and he swept the other slowly over the tree. The minister made a 'shh' and turned his torch off. The others did the same and the little church was soon quiet and dark again.

At first you could hardly see the shimmer on the golden star at the top of the tree. Then, as the bell of the big church struck midnight, the shimmer spread in all colours over the whole tree.

The minister began, softly, to sing 'Silent Night, Holy Night', and soon they all sang with him. At the end of the carol the power came back suddenly, the Christmas tree sparkled with its normal lights and the third shepherd was in his own place. The observant might have seen a shimmering in the organ loft, and, as the organist turned back to her music, one heard a quiet and not very ladylike sound.

the end for now