

The Lady



21/28 DECEMBER 2010

£1.80

CHRISTMAS SPECIAL

...WITH
THE ROYALS

...IN THE
BLITZ

...ON THE
ROAD WITH
RUDOLPH

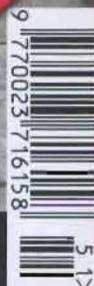
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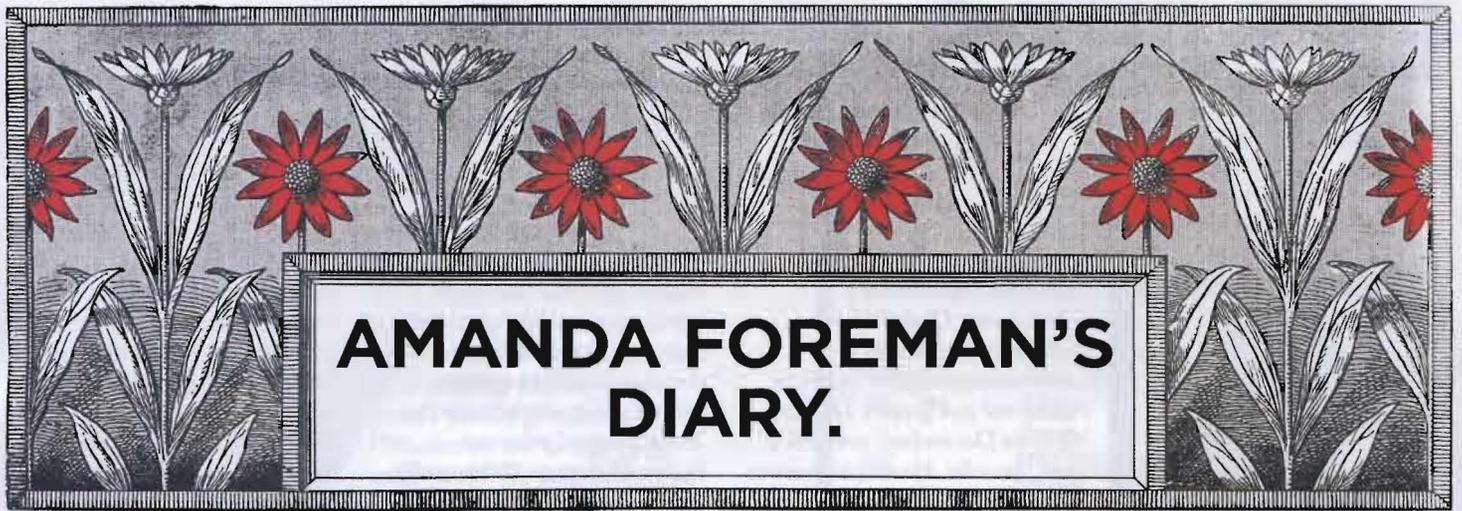
Our exclusive
SHORT STORY

PEGGY ARCHER
First Lady of radio

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& THE BIG QUIZ





AMANDA FOREMAN'S DIARY.

AFTER YEARS of experimentation – and a lot of mistakes – I now realise that giving a magazine subscription or a book for Christmas really does work out best for value-for-money, plus recipient satisfaction over the long term. I also know that a baked brie (gas mark 6/200°C for 10 minutes) will lift the mood of any gathering no matter how dire the conversation. In that vein, experience has also taught me that all children over the age of seven will play with a new magician's set, no matter how many they own.

Like most people, I have learned to keep a few extra presents in my cupboard in case I've forgotten someone. The emergency cupboard also contains Day Nurse and Night Nurse; Pringles, freeze-dried soup and a panettone; spare torches and candles; long-life milk and a plug-in kettle for the car. I guess becoming older really does have its benefits.

But while I can keep the forces of chaos at bay, I am not so good at keeping my emotions in check. Fear and Guilt are never far away for me: Fear that it might yet all go wrong, or not be as good as last year, or never as good again. Guilt that I should have, could have, done better. Added to that, whenever I read the papers or watch TV around Christmas I get an attack of Fear and Guilt combined. There is always some dreadful horror story that makes me utterly depressed.

Not everyone feels this way, I know. Yet more and more I meet people who share my rage and frustration when we hear about some terrible case of cruelty or neglect that went unchecked because nobody intervened. Baby P, anyone? It's enough to take the shine off the turkey dinner. With that in mind, my Christmas gift to *The Lady* is the story of Tracie Lee Dean from the city of Atlanta, Georgia.

Almost four years ago this week, Tracie was driving through southern Alabama on her way home to Georgia when she stopped at a petrol station in the little town of Evergreen. It was past midnight and she had 300 miles to go. While paying, she looked down and saw a little girl staring intently at her. Tracie

smiled at the child and went towards the exit. The girl said nothing but followed her to the door. Still saying nothing, when Tracie opened the door the little girl slipped in front and blocked the entrance. At this point a gruff older man appeared and shouted at the child to come back over to him.

Tracie returned to her car deeply troubled. Nothing about the encounter with the child seemed right. Nor had she liked the haunted expression on the girl's face. So she noted the licence plate of the car and, when she got home, called the police to report her fears. Several phone calls later, it became clear that neither the police, nor the FBI, nor the National Centre for Missing & Exploited Children were prepared to take her fears seriously. She was fobbed off at every attempt.

But instead of giving up, Tracie took a day off work and drove back to Evergreen. The station manager allowed her to look at the surveillance tape of that night, and while they were watching it a State Trooper arrived. He offered to run a picture of the child and the older man through the

system. Behold, the man turned out to be Jack Wiley, a sex offender from Wisconsin. A few days later, the police swooped on a filthy trailer park and rescued not just the little girl but also a teenage boy who had also been held by the depraved Wiley. Later, when Tracie was asked by the TV network CNN what had led her to undertake this epic adventure, she replied: 'Something told me I was the little girl's only chance.'

We will never have Peace and Goodwill to all. But we do have shining lights who hold the darkness in check. God bless the Tracies of this world. God bless them every one. ♦



BRITSTOP

An A-Z of all things British, by Iain Aitch

28. BOXING DAY

While the rest of the world gets on with life as normal from about 5pm on Christmas Day, we Brits draw the whole thing out by adding Boxing Day on 26 December. The day is said to be when servants were given their 'Christmas box', usually some kind of bonus, by their employer, though the name may also be derived from this being the day when drunken or hungover members of the aristocracy were most likely to beat (or 'box') their charges. The tradition of fisticuffs on Boxing Day was continued by football fans, as the day once saw local Derby matches played between teams such as Arsenal and Tottenham Hotspur. Fans of these teams still have songs in their repertoire that boast 'we shall fight for ever more, because of Boxing Day'. I am sure that some families would be only too willing to echo those sentiments.

IAIN AITCH is the author of *We're British, Innit*, published by Collins.



AMANDA FOREMAN is an award-winning historian and author of the bestselling *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire*, published in 1998. Her latest book, *A World on Fire: An Epic History of Two Nations Divided* is published by Allen Lane at £30.