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Christmas Time and Space

by Daniel Judd

The news spread quickly through the village of Little Hodcombe; they were to have a new vicar. Not that they thought they needed a replacement for the old one but time marches on.

A lottery win or the discovery of a body in the library were just two of the wild reasons put forward for the swift departure of the Rev Hawlings. The fact he took with him a box held in reverence since pagan times marked it out as a 'rum do' by many, especially after the postmistress broadcast it to Juno Baker (and therefore half the village) on pension day.

The new vicar seemed nice, well nice probably wasn't the right word. Charismatic, definitely. In a sort of hypnotic way. Those eyes. Very much an advocate of high church and the use of incense which pleased many but gave visiting writer Miss Lavinia Smith a headache.

All seemed tickety-boo and they'd even got a postcard from Cole from Rome. Not that the handwriting looked his usual best. He was on a Chameleon Tour, so maybe his numbers had come up.

Curiously, some villagers had responded to a calling for members for a new choir. It was all strictly hush-hush. I say curiously because not a note was heard not even a minim. Those with an enquiring mind would have spotted a rush of a white gowns down to the crypt. Sensibly, the new issue included a matching white hood.

Surplus to requirements some might say but vital in cold, damp places or at stone circle services. The vicar, when prompted, said there were surprises in store, making some jokey reference to Fight Club and Gareth Malone.

And then the goats went missing. And the odd virgin.

Of course, if they had their own resident white witch, a Miss Hawthorne or even a Mildred, the residents of Little Hodcombe could have asked them to flutter their hands and predict what was coming.

Lavinia's journalist niece would have weeded out the truth and no mistake. It wasn't rocket science.

For murder will out but by then another saying would gain substance; time and space waits for no man. For as soon as the new vicar arrived they disappeared without a bye or leave you.

Now, what was she called again? The Reverend Majester, that was it. But what's in a name?