

# Loneliness

## Alone Never Lonely

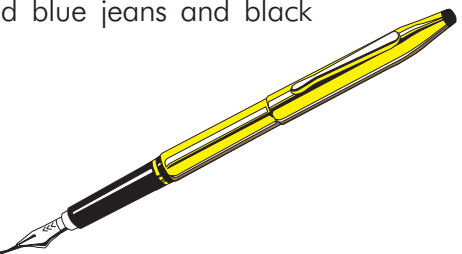
**S**ummertime in Australia wasn't the Christmas setting I was used to, but seasonal song filled the air with a familiar refrain: *jingle bells, jingle bells, jingle all the way . . .*

On a raised platform at the front of a large crowd, a uniformed band drummed and tootled a rousing beat. Flanking the band left and right, rows of women dressed in crisp whites gaily waved multicolored tinsel streamers. To my left stood a fellow with a long-armed, iridescent orange monkey hugging him around his neck. To my right, a grizzle-faced, bear-shaped man held onto a child's ride'em truck. In the toy truck rode a small person wearing a black leather jacket; a cigarette dangled from his mouth.

Everywhere I looked, cuddly pandas, fuzzy lions and tigers, plush toys by the hundreds reposed in the arms of the oddest assortment of patrons ever assembled on the front lawn of Perth City Library.

To be celebrating Christmas in Western Australia was memorable enough by itself, but apparently I had stumbled upon a Christmas Toy Drive jointly organized by the Salvation Army and Bikers Unlimited. I couldn't imagine a more unlikely pairing of Samaritans or a more whimsical climax to a Saturday afternoon at the library. Chalk another one up to serendipity I mused with inward glee as I joined in singing with joy and gusto.

When Jingle Bells came to a straggling finish, a dubious looking Santa came on stage with his entourage of elves – a motley band of helpers dressed in pointy green caps, mustard colored shirts, tattered blue jeans and black biking boots.





Santa grabbed the microphone and enthusiastically shouted in a distinct Aussie drawl, "Ain't this fun mates?" The mates and I responded with whoops of approval.

Santa continued, "But it's too dammed hot here downunder. Me and the elves gotta get back to the North Pole quick. But before we go, let's have three cheers for the police. They've been pretty good to us this year."

And so, amid hoots of "HIP HIP HOORAY!" the Bikers Unlimited folk gradually dispersed to their Harley's, Suzuki's and Yamaha's and roared off into the blue yonder, one and all presumably contemplating future good deeds.

And me? Brimming with Christmas spirit, I sauntered into the library's cool interior and resumed my holiday letter-writing with much more motivation than only an hour before.

[\*See Going Solo Tips\*](#)

*Alone*