



## Spirit in the Sky

by Karen David



Her lipstick had all but come off, transferred to the cigarette butts that lay nestled in the snowy pavement by her feet. She'd found the *Rosy Apple* lipstick in a pub toilet months ago, but it had brought her no cinnamon warmth.



She wondered if there might be a gold-gilded stick of something more appropriately named – *Iced Berry* perhaps – discarded by the sinks in this pub. She smiled wryly and lit a cigarette.

She had hoped someone would notice her shivering outside, but she was invisible to passersby, and to the locals inside celebrating the end of another year and the hope of the new with warm apple cider and roast goose sandwiches.



She was visible only by the clouds of smoke that exited her faint *Rosy Apple* lips. The cigarette smoke and warm breath in sub-zero temperatures blended into a mystical fog of double density. She took a last drag and dropped the cigarette butt in a puddle, where it extinguished with a *fizz-ppttt* and flashing ultraviolet sign 'All Night' read briefly as a ripple. Reflected in the puddle, the 'alright'. But it was not alright. She took another match from the box and swiped its head against the red phosphorus, listening to the crackle and savouring the brief heat and sharp sulphurous wisp up her nostrils as her eyes drank in the enormous Christmas tree and, to its right, the pub's jukebox channelling Doctor and the Medics' *Spirit in the Sky*.



She lit another cigarette, inhaled and blew a thick smoke ring, poking it with her finger, which itself poked out of a fraying woollen glove. Her hope was also disintegrating and she was freezing cold. Time moved slowly as she stared into The Open Arms, willing someone to look up and meet her gaze. Her cold, throbbing head was filled with visions of sitting by the fireplace, or up on a wobbly bar stool, munching some Scampi Fries with a colour-coordinated lime cordial.

An unusually large snowflake fell on her cigarette. *Fizz-ppttt*. Then *fwoosh* as she swiped another match. *Pow*. Fire and sulphur. The pub door opened and a gush of hot air passed over her face, making her sad eyes water. The match was blown out before wandering moment, by the backdraft. An exiting black cat very briefly looked up at her looking up. She lit another match and, at precisely that window, a shooting star could be seen by anyone who happened to be Only one match remained in the box. Staring, now, through the with renewed concentration, her nose was pressed up against its icy crystalline surface, creating a perfect circle where its tip met the glass.

