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It is nearly Christmas. In the old city of Cambridge, the market square is full of people — families buying last minute presents and children warmly dressed against the cold. The market stalls, with their cheery striped canopies, are brimming with oranges, nuts and presents. Christmas trees are stacked up

Christmas in Cambridge

*Drawing by Aditi Laddha, Std. 7,
The Shishukunj International School,
Indore, Madhya Pradesh.*



ready to be bought. There is a smell of cooking. A man with a lighted brazier shouts, 'Roasted chestnuts, get your roasted chestnuts here', while scooping them up and dropping them, hot and crisp, into paper bags for the children to buy. An old man with a white beard stops to warm his hands. A boy and a girl watch. "It's Father Christmas," whispers the girl.

"No, not him. He works in the bike shop," laughs the boy.

"Why shouldn't Father Christmas work in the bike shop?" his sister asks, blowing on a chestnut from her bag.

In the middle of the square a Christmas tree stands high as a house, swathed in lights blinking off and on in the evening shadows.

Near the market is an old stone church. Outside, a hand written sign leans against the wall, *Carol Concert Today*. A line of people queue to go inside. As they stand waiting, feathers of snow drift down, gently settling on the ground, and on the upturned faces of children. Inside the church every thing is ready. A choir sits to one side and people take their places in the pews. Each is given a candle and before the choir begins to sing, one candle is lit. The person holding it lights the next person's candle and so on, until all the candles are lit. The flames get brighter and brighter, their shadows flickering on the ancient walls. And then the choir, the mothers and fathers and the boys and girls, begin to sing, *Peace on Earth, Goodwill to all Men*. In the church tower bells ring out, while the market square slowly, slowly turns white in the falling snow.

— Peter Stockwell, Cambridge, United Kingdom.