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**Autor:** McCarty, Tim  
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## LOLLIPOP STICKS - A CHRISTMAS STORY

by Tim McCarty

Once upon a time there lived a candy maker, his wife, and two children.

They lived in a small town, so they didn't sell a lot of candy. Still, they were very happy because their candy shop was always full of children.

That is...until one day, a new store moved into town. The new store sold not only candy, but toys as well. Now, instead of coming to the candy shop, the town's children bought their candy at the other store.

Times were bad at the candy shop. The candy maker sold barely enough to care for his family. They could not afford new clothes so the children's pants had patches on the knees. One day the candy maker said to his wife "If we don't sell more candy, we may have to sell the shop. Christmas is coming soon. We need to come up with something new. Something that will get children to come back." They thought and thought, but nothing new came to mind.

Time passed, then one afternoon, the candy maker came home from an errand. On the front step there sat his little boy and girl, Mitchell and Melissa. They were eating away on great big candy lollipops. They looked very happy with their cute little sticky faces. The candy maker smiled and went about his chores. Later that day, Mitchell came into the shop. He had eaten all of his lollipops, and even half the stick. The candy maker's wife said; "Mitchell, I wish you wouldn't eat the stick. It's not good for you."

"That's it!" shouted the candy-maker, "Lollipop sticks that you can eat! What a great idea!" The candy maker went to work. Day and night he cooked.

A month before Christmas, the candy shop's windows were filled with boxes of white lollipop sticks. They looked so good, but two weeks went by and no one bought them. "Maybe it's the color" the candy maker guessed. Christmas was nearly here.

That night, his wife and children began decorating their Christmas tree. They had few decorations. Sadly the candy maker thought; "We must sell the lollipop sticks or we can't buy the children any Christmas presents. Maybe the new store will buy them from me." "Wife, I'm going out for awhile," he said.

The candy maker went to the new storeowner and asked him to buy his lollipop sticks. The owner said "Sure I'll buy your lollipop sticks, but I'll only pay half what you ask."

The candy maker agreed. At least it was enough money to give his family a Christmas, though not enough to save the shop. With his head down, he slowly walked home.

The candy maker opened the candy shop door. His jaw dropped. There was his wife pulling a sheet pan from the oven. All the heavy oven doors were left open making the stove lean. Many trays were in the oven. These were filled with lollipop sticks. The heat was curling the top of the candy sticks.

At the table sat Mitchell and Melissa, painting red stripes on the bent lollipop sticks. Some of the completed lollipop sticks were hung on their Christmas tree.

They were all smiling. Melissa said, "Look! We made decorations!"

The candy maker said nothing to his family. He joined in the festivities, helping complete the tree. That night he prayed for help.

The next morning the candy maker woke, and looked out the window at a new fallen snow. "Come quick!" yelled Mitchell from the candy shop. The candy maker and his wife sprang from their bed.

They ran into the candy shop. It was packed with people, and many more were outside. Mitchell sat on a counter, a red and white striped lollipop stick in his mouth. "What a great idea!" they heard a man say. "Christmas decorations that you can eat! I want two boxes!" Another yelled, "I want three boxes!"

"Where's Melissa?" the candy maker asked.

"Outside," Mitchell mumbled between bites.

The candy maker and his wife looked out the window. There stood their daughter in the middle of the crowd. She was calling out "Get your decorations here!" She held a sign high. A tear ran down the candy maker's cheek. The sign read-

Candy Canes !

...and the rest is history.

THE END