

Sometimes the holidays can be horrifying for all the wrong reasons...

MERRY CHRISTMAS, YOU ALL



By Randa|| Brooks

Little Carol Ann was scared to death, and rightfully so! She hid underneath her bed, her breath coming in short spurts, every nerve aware, the pigtails in her blonde hair feeling like they were standing on edge.

She had been sitting at the kitchen table, doing her homework, just like her older brother Brian had told her to do, when she had heard a noise that grabbed her attention immediately. She looked up out of reflex, and before she could comprehend what was happening next, a knife came down and lopped her off her left hand. She had screamed out in shock and pain and fear, watching her small hand fall to the floor and land with a sickening thud, blood practically spraying all over the kitchen from her stump.

She felt like she would pass out, but instead, she pulled herself together and got up and started running through the house as fast as she could in a full blown state of panic. She ran straight for her bedroom, shut and locked the door behind her, then hid under the bed, crying hysterically.

She was in a profuse state of pain, her entire arm aching, the pain throbbing, making her feel like screaming out at the top of her lungs, but she withheld her urge, and bit down on her lower lip and quietly whimpered, a few tears sliding down her small cheeks.

She was practically covered in blood at this point, the wound still spraying blood out with every beat of her heart, and the blood spraying everything in its path. She had almost stopped crying, but started all over again. She just wished that Brian would hurry up and get back home in time to help her.

She laid perfectly still, not moving a muscle, too afraid to even breathe, and the fear intensified when she saw her bedroom door open, and then could see feet slowly walking across the floor toward the bed. It was all she could do to hold back the scream that was clawing at her throat, itching to get out.

There was a sudden loud buzzing noise that filled the entire room, and filled Carol Ann's mind with the worst sense of dread imaginable, then something came ripping and tearing its way through the bed and tore right into her leg and cut it off.

She screamed in pain and horror as she watched the chainsaw retreat and then come back down toward her, aiming for a different spot this time. She screamed even louder when she saw who her attacker was.

Her last thought was of her brother Peter.

Peter had been lying in bed listening to his stereo and fallen asleep, so he didn't hear most of Carol Ann's screaming, or the chainsaw roaring in the room right next to his own. At 14 years old, it didn't take much to wake Peter Crawley, but this time he had sunk into one of the deepest sleeps he'd had since early childhood, around the ages 2 or 3. He slept like a rock, so to speak, and enjoyed every last minute of it.

He was suddenly awoken by a loud thumping noise at his bedroom door, and he bolted out of bed wide awake, making a mad dash for the door before whoever it was knocked it down from knocking so hard.

"Wait a minute, Clarissa, I'll have to unlock it," Peter said, shuffling across the floor in his pajamas, his tiny feet scurrying along pretty hastily.

There was a very loud thud, suddenly followed by another, causing the bedroom door to shake in its frame, and Peter froze in place, staring awkwardly at the door, wondering who was on the other end, and why they were pounding on his door so hard.

Another loud thud, and it appeared that there was now a large crack in the middle panel, and Peter still stood frozen as stiff as a board, slowly backing his steps back toward the bed, almost tripping over his own two feet.

Something shiny, like steel, appeared, flashing in the moonlight that streamed in through the bedroom window, and Peter broke his paralysis long enough to turn and run to the adjoining bathroom that connected to his bedroom, and closed and locked the door behind him.

He was now frightened beyond belief! He wondered where Clarissa was. She must have gone out, he thought, as he heard footsteps crossing the hardwood floor of his bedroom, coming closer to the bathroom. His mother should really consider hiring a better baby sitter, he thought, as he cowered in a far corner of the room.

The doorknob turned, slowly at first, then violently, followed by a loud thud against the cheap wooden bathroom door. It didn't take long before a huge gap was knocked out of one of the panels, and the same shiny object appeared, the steel bright and cold looking under the light of the bathroom's overhead bulb.

It was an axe! Peter realized, and screamed at the top of his lungs.

A face appeared in the door, and a voice whispered:

"Merry Christmas, boy!"

Peter recognized who it was, and screamed again, screaming himself hoarse, his voice almost going out.

His last thought was of Janice.

The television blasted loudly with plenty of pictures and sounds, but Janice wasn't really paying it too much attention. She was too busy thinking about her potential new boyfriend, Tommy, a new boy at school whom she liked a lot and who appeared to like her in return. He had short curly black hair, wore glasses, and sat next to her in class, and all she could do all day long was daydream about being married to him.

Janice was at the that tender age where girls first start discovering boys, and she was already falling in love with practically every boy she laid eyes on; but she thought Tommy was just extra special, peachy keen, so to speak. Her mother had told her several times lately that she felt like Janice was twelve going on thirty, and she was still a child, and to enjoy it while she could, and Janice would just scoff and laugh and try to change the subject.

She and her identical twin sister, Carol Ann, had oft-times been told that not only did they look exactly the same, they also acted the same, and appeared to even think the same, but Janice felt that they were growing in separate ways the older they got and wished that other people could see it as well.

Her attention turned to the TV long enough for her to consider changing the channel, hoping she wouldn't be caught sitting up late like she was watching late night horror movies, because she knew what would be said: she was too young to watch such gory and filthy stuff, and little girls didn't watch stuff like that.

Well, she did! And she was not ashamed of it! Matter of fact, it was one of her biggest enjoyments, well, outside of dreaming about boys like Tommy, something she just recently started to do.

She sat in a recliner, sipping Kool Aid, running her fingers through her long, beautiful

blonde hair, getting a little nervous thinking about maybe calling Tommy and asking him to a dance that was coming up at school later in the season. She thought she heard footsteps behind her, but dismissed it to being because of the movie she was watching causing her to imagine things. She did love scary movies, and had seen quite a lot in the short time she'd been on this earth, even though she was too young to fully understand most of them, except for the gore and violence, which is what she really watched them for to begin with.

She started getting more into the movie, temporarily forgetting about Tommy, and something happened that made her almost jump out of her seat. She had even almost screamed, but had refrained at the last minute, remembering how late it was and didn't want to wake the whole house.

She jumped again, and this time she did scream. But not because of the movie. But her gaze was fixed on the screen, and she was bolted to the chair. Literally. Someone had snuck up behind her and had shot a nail gun at her, shooting nails into her tiny hands, sticking them all the way through and into the arm of the chair.

Two really powerful hands shoved down, forcefully, on both of Janice's shoulders, as something made a "clip, clip, clip" noise as she felt something in her hair. She screamed again, even louder than before this time, hoping now to wake everyone in the house. She for some reason began to wonder how Jason was doing, when a hammer came down with a powerful force to her skull, knocking her out cold.

Blackness.

"Wow, this really is such a hectic season!" Ann Crawley declared, sitting her cup of eggnog down and picking up another slice of pecan pie. She was hosting this year's office Christmas party for her legal firm, where she had been employed for the past 10 years. Ann was a legal secretary, and was very proud of her job, a job in which she enjoyed and took much pride in. She worked for one of the most prominent attorneys in the entire Knoxville vicinity, and couldn't imagine working for anyone else. She had started the job straight out of college, and then married and had five children, two sets of twins, and then had went through a very messy divorce. She was happy being a single mother, and her oldest child, Brian, the only child without a twin sibling, usually helped out with a lot around the house.

"Tell me about it," Sherry McClain, Ann's best friend at work and co-host of the party, said as she reached over and poured herself another cup full of eggnog. "Girl, I really and truly don't know how you do it, especially juggling your job with raising five children all by yourself. And I don't know how the hell you're able to tell those two sets of twins apart! I have trouble every time I see them, I do declare." Sherry tossed her head back and laughed, lightly, then took a huge sip of eggnog.

"Well, it really is a hand full at times, but it usually balances out in the long run," Ann said, herself sipping eggnog, and lighting a cigarette, looking around for an ashtray, and then deciding to use the paper plate her pie had been setting on. "About the only thing I really worry about lately is that Jason is the only one who is recently feeling that he doesn't have his own identity, his own personality. He seriously thinks I only love him because he looks and acts so much like his twin brother, Peter. I don't know what to do about it sometimes, because he has even said lately that he doesn't think I even love him at all anymore." She

looked completely perplexed and exasperated.

"I just hope for your sake that he doesn't do anything drastic to try to get your attention and make you pay closer attention just to him. You know how little boys can get sometimes when they suspect they're being neglected," Sherry said, lighting a cigarette of her own and leaning over and using Ann's plate as an ashtray.

"That's the exact same thing I'm concerned about myself, Sherry!" Ann declared, her voice faltering a little, sounding a bit strained from not only all the holiday stress, but from all the stress at home with her children as well. "Also, my oldest, Brian, the 16 year old, seems to be feeling a little left out because he doesn't have a twin. I told him to feel special because that he was an original, and one of a kind, and there wasn't another like him in the whole wide world." Ann reached over and stubbed her cigarette out and immediately lit another one, still exhaling smoke from the first one when she inhaled from the second one. "I gave him some money the other day to go shopping and buy gifts for his two little brothers and sisters, but I'm almost afraid that he won't buy them anything and spend the money on himself. He's been acting so jealous of them lately. But, he seems to love them so much at the same time. Matter of fact he volunteered to stay home tonight and babysit so I could come to the party, and miss out on a party he had been invited to. He didn't complain a bit."

"Well, that's because you've done such a good job raising such a fine young man," Sherry said, reassuringly, hoping to cheer Ann up a bit because she could see her friend was starting to look a little down in the dumps.

"Thank you for saying that, Sherry, I mean it, that really means a lot to me." Ann poured herself another cup of eggnog and gulped it down in one large sup, then set the cup down on the table. "I just hope everything goes alright tomorrow at Mom's. We're all going there for Christmas dinner this year. Matter of fact, I'm going straight over after the party and help Mom cook all the food up tonight." She sighed a huge sigh of relief. "Merry Christmas, Sherry."

"Merry Christmas, Ann." Sherry said, and raised her cup as if to toast.

"Merry Christmas, you all."

Christmas morning started off pretty cold, with temperatures reaching down into the low 30's, with a threat of snow from the looks of the dark clouds lingering around. Brian had got to his grandmother's without any problems around noon, just as scheduled, and had carried in several presents packaged in large boxes, as his mom and grandmother put the last touches on dinner, and were now preparing to set the table.

"Oh my goodness, Brian, you sure do have a lot of presents there. I sure am so glad you didn't get mad last night over me asking you to baby sit and making you miss the Christmas party with your friends," Ann said, speaking to her son from the dining room, where she and her mother were now sitting, finally relaxing after a full night of cooking. "No problem, Mom, I was glad to do it," Brian said as he walked over and kissed his mother lightly on the cheek.

Wilma Helton, Ann's mother and Brian's grandmother, looked around the room, noticing something that Ann obviously hadn't yet noticed -or just hadn't mentioned it yet- and turned her attention on her grandson.

"Brian, where are your brothers and sisters?" Wilma was honestly curious, stumped that

her smaller grandchildren hadn't already come running and screaming at the top of their lungs into her apartment, announcing their arrival, and their excitement that it was Christmas, their favorite day of the year.

"Oh, I thought Mom had already come by and picked them up this morning," Brian said, sounding honestly baffled in his response, looking at both women sitting at the table.

Wilma shot Ann a frightened stare, then grabbed at her heart in a very over-dramatic gesture. "Ann's been here with me all night, Brian. Haven't you, Ann?" Her voice sounded frail and panic stricken, fearing the worst, especially since she had been hearing some very horrific stories lately on the news about children being abducted this time of year.

Something seemed to click in Brian's mind, kind of flinching mentally, making one of his eyes take on a nervous tic.

"Well, come on you two, I'm sure there's nothing to worry about, they probably got up earlier than me and just decided to take the bus over." Brian didn't know why he was saying what he was, or really why he was even saying it. He knew it really made no sense what-so-ever, yet his mouth moved and those words just came out involuntarily. "I bet Dad came by unexpectedly and picked them up," he added, not realizing how that sounded in his mother's ears at a moment like this. He tried yet even more-so to try to calm the situation. "Come on and open the presents I got for you." He then reached over and picked up some of the gifts he had carried in, read the nametags, and then handed them out in the correct order.

Something else clicked in Brian's mind, again feeling an odd flinch, as he remembered that last night was a fast and furious night, for he had went to one of parties he had been invited to after all, and had blown practically all of his money on beer.

Who got these presents then? he wondered suddenly. Am I going insane? Did I just dream that I went out partying last night and left my siblings home alone all by themselves, or did that really happen?

Ann had opened one of her gifts, and had a look of horror on her face as she looked into the box and saw a bloody left hand.

Wilma let out a bloodcurdling scream when she opened her gift and saw a heart, dropping the box to the floor and clutching her chest again.

The front door opened, and Jason Crawley walked in, smiling.

"Merry Christmas, you all. Hope you all like the gifts!"

THE END

