

MERRY BLOODY XMAS

Christmas carols on a loop, rude customers, long shifts – nothing destroys one’s faith in humanity like working in retail during the holidays. Instead of going home after a gruelling shift, Anna drove an hour to her Aunt Penny’s house for Christmas Eve dinner.

It began to snow as Anna pushed the door of her aunt’s house open, the extravagant wreath flopping against it. Her triplet cousins ploughed into her, screaming as they shoved past, not even acknowledging her presence.

“Hello to you too.” She muttered to herself as she removed layers of clothing. It was stifling inside.

Anna walked into the living room where everyone was already seated at a long table. The centrepiece of the room was a massive Christmas tree. It was draped in white ornaments and glowed with lights. In an armchair next to it, her dad was fast asleep, undisturbed by the cacophony of screaming children, babbling adults, and clinking glassware.

Everyone seemed to notice her at once, yelling over the top of each other to admonish her for being late, question her life choices, make fun of her work uniform, and complain about how far away she lived. Her great uncle even managed to work in an offensive comment about ‘the gays’.

Anna’s left eye began to twitch. Her breaths became shallow and uneven. Her shoulders tensed as she worked hard to calm the rage inside.

Her cousin Paul chose that moment to barrel into her with a bowl of

eggnog, dumping the entire contents down her back.

“Watch it Anna!” he snapped, unapologetic. *Typical.*

Standing in a pool of sticky judgement and overwhelm, Anna snapped.

She released a guttural scream, snatching the eggnog bowl and bringing it down onto Paul’s head. It made a sickening crunch, and Paul crumpled to the floor, the gash in his forehead oozing blood and mixing with the yellowish gloop of the eggnog.

Jumping over Paul’s body, she launched herself at the dregs of humanity she had the privilege of calling her family.

Several moments later Anna found herself standing in the middle of the long table, surveying her work. Her relatives lay about the room dead or dying as warm blood dripped off almost every surface. Anna held the carving knife tightly at her side, blood oozing off the tip of the blade.

Breathing hard, her attention was drawn to the beautiful tree. It was the only item in the room that had escaped her rage, still glowing ethereally in the midst of the carnage.

“I’m sorry Anna.” Paul apologised, pulling her back out of her dark fantasy. “I’ll get you a towel.”

“Thanks, Paul.” The noises of playing children and half drunk adults came back to her as she felt the eggnog soaking into the top of her underwear.

It was cathartic to imagine ending them all in a graphic way, but now the rage was draining out of Anna and she was looking forward to her aunt’s famous turkey. She was starving.

“Hope you’re all hungry!” The bird in question came through the door, perched on a platter held by Aunt Penny.