

Gold, Frankincense and Murder

Christmas Wish

BY

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Scott. For Gods sake Lucy, the taxi has been waiting for ten minutes, come on you look great, let's go.

Lucy. (*Slightly flustered*). The wine! Should we take red or white?

Scott. I've got the wine, the flowers and the Christmas gifts. Lets just go.

Scott and Lucy make their way out of the apartment into the cold evening air holding onto each other as they walk through the thick snow to the waiting taxi. They have their long black coats on and red scarves wrapped around their necks. The street is softly illuminated by the street lamps and snow is falling slowly in big fluffy flakes all around them.

Lucy. Oh! I love Christmastime, don't you Scott?

The taxi driver and Scott look at each other and Scott replies ..

Scott. Yes, its lovely, now come on hop in.

The black taxi arrives at a large, detached property. The house has a large oak front door, with a beautiful Holly Wreath fastened to it. Scott pays the taxi driver who then drives away leaving tyre tracks in the snow as he disappears into the veil of the Christmas Eve Night. Scott and Lucy stand together for a moment a share a silent kiss before approaching the imposing door, hand in hand. Scott pulls the bell chime. A beautiful woman in her early thirties answers the front door, wearing a short black skirt, and a tight red top.

Sarah. Merry Christmas! God you look beautiful Lucy and Scott ... grrrrrr I'll be getting the mistletoe out for you later! Come in, come in, Nigel's in the dining room, please go through.

Sarah kisses Lucy and Scott as they enter through the front door into a large open hallway, which has a beautifully decorated Christmas tree in the corner. Sarah takes their coats and ushers them into the dining room.

Sarah. Nigel, Scott and Lucy are here.

Scott and Lucy enter the dining room and Nigel rises from his seat.

Nigel. Lucy, lovely to see you again (*Nigel kisses Lucy*) and Scott, you're both looking very well. Can I get you a drink?

Scott. I'll have an Irish please Nigel and Lucy will have

Sarah. ..two glasses please kind Sir. I'll get a bottle of wine from the fridge, come on Lucy into the kitchen, time for girl's talk, I think! Nigel take the gifts from Lucy and put them under the Christmas tree, there's a love, and we'll take care of the wine!

Sarah and Lucy exit to the kitchen. Nigel and Scott look at each other. Nigel walks out to the hall to place the Christmas Presents under the Tree and then returns to the dining room.

Nigel. Right. Two large Irish I think! Sit yourself down Scott I'll bring the bottle over.

The scene switches to the kitchen where Sarah and Lucy are sitting at the table, drinking wine, whilst the pots and pans simmer on the range.

Sarah. How are things now? Are you and Scott back on squeaking terms? (*she giggles*).

Lucy. Oh! Sarah, yes were fine now thank you ... well I think we are. I was really upset, especially when I got the first phone call from that bitch Laura saying that she was telling me about their affair for 'my own good'. To be fair to Scott when I confronted him he did explain how he fell into it. It wasn't because he didn't love me it was that he was under a lot of stress, what with the big mortgage and the new job, he sort of just 'lost his way'. To be honest I think it was probably my fault. I always assume he's in control; maybe I should have been a little more attentive (*Lucy drifts off slightly*) things are great now thanks. (*She takes a drink of wine*). Anyway enough of me, how are you and Nigel these days?

Sarah. Fantastic. Nigel's business is doing whatever it is supposed to be doing, the credit card bills keep getting paid, the BMW keeps getting filled up and the milkman is giving me regular special deliveries! *(She winks and takes a gulp of wine).*

Lucy. *(In hushed excited tones, nearly choking on an olive).* The milkman?

Sarah. *(Giggling).* I haven't had a milk bill in ages, Lucy. Look, I do love Nigel but, well, he's, well, shall we say he's semi skimmed and I'm a girl who needs her full cream, if you get my drift *(Sarah licks her lips).*

Lucy. You are so naughty Sarah!

The girls laugh out loud and raise their glasses.

Sarah/Lucy. Merry Christmas!

Meanwhile the men are chatting in the Dining Room. The c.d player is playing a selection of instrumental Christmas carols.

Scott. How are you mate? God we haven't seen each other in ages.

Nigel. Busy to be honest, Scott. I'm always working. The company is doing well and Sarah seems to be happy so I shouldn't really complain but I just feel a little bit empty in myself. I know we've got the houses, the cars; the Christmas Tree *(he laughs)* but there is just something missing. *(He looks thoughtful and takes a sip of his drink).* You know I flew back early from Madrid last week and bumped into the milkman, just getting into his float. He looked really content, no pressure, and no complications. I actually envied him for a moment.... Oh! To hell with it, you can't have everything can you?

Scott. *(Topping up his own glass).* No you can't mate, mind you I nearly lost the lot earlier this year. I'm sure you have heard about my little misdemeanour? Between you and me I was just having a little bit of fun and then, bang! This Laura bird wants more. I told her that Lucy and I were trying for a baby, you know just to get rid of her and then she phones Lucy up.

It was awful mate, Lucy was devastated for a while but I think she's getting herself back together, finally. I guess I'll have to be a little more careful in the future, what with the New Year Party season just around the corner!

Both men laugh and raise their glasses.

Nigel/Scott. Merry Christmas!

The two girls now enter the dining room. The room is warmed by a large open fire, which has a decorated mantel with two stockings hanging, one at either end. Sarah sits beside Scott and smiles suggestively at him. He smiles back. Lucy sits in a single armchair nearest the fire and looks into it. Nigel does the rounds with the drinks.

Sarah. Dinner will be ready in about 45 minutes, so don't hog the nuts Nigel! You know I like my nuts (*She winks at Scott*).

Suddenly the power cuts out and only the flicker of the fireplace lights the room.

Nigel. Don't worry, hold fire, I'll check the fuses.

Nigel leaves the room.

Sarah. My Yorkshires! They'll be as flat as pancakes.

Scott is laughing out loud. He places his glass where he thinks the table is. It isn't. The glass smashes on the wooden flooring and Scott carries on laughing.

Lucy. Do you have a sponge Sarah?

Sarah. A sponge? I can't even see you Lucy (she starts to laugh and stroke Scott's leg ... un-observed).

Nigel returns holding candles and a torch.

Nigel. The fuses seem to be fine. I would guess that the heavy snow has brought down the electric cable somewhere.

Sarah. What about dinner? The roast will be completely

Nigel. Come on, look the power will probably be back on in a minute, we've got loads of booze, a roaring fire and candles. Don't worry, it's Christmas.

Next Scene.

All four are sitting on the floor with their shoes off. The firelight is illuminating them and glistening through their glasses.

Lucy. Nigel, now that you are a success is there anything you really miss about Christmas?

Nigel. Oh! Lots really. I miss not having children ripping the presents open before Christmas Day or maybe I just miss being a kid and being so desperate to see what I've got that I just can't wait. Maybe I miss not wanting to go to sleep on Christmas Eve, or maybe I miss playing Slade instead of bloody choral Christmas classics (he laughs). Actually I'll tell you what I really miss, I miss the innocence. You're good all year and Father Christmas gives you a present. No complications or hidden agendas. Nobody is going to undercut you, stab you in the back, not turn up. It's just that real sense of total trust, faith and warmth I miss. [*He tops his glass up*]. Here's to innocence [*he takes a sip*].

Everyone is quiet.

Lucy. I'll tell you what I miss. It's those sheets of shiny coloured paper at school. I remember making paper chains and then being given a sheet of gold, a sheet of red, and sheet of blue and ...

Nigel. I liked the silver.

Lucy. Yes, the silver, that was beautiful. All the children in the classroom sat and cut out Christmas Trees and Stars and then out came the glue ... so much glue [*wistfully*], I can still remember not washing the glue off my fingers so that it would dry and then I could pick it off my finger tips [*Lucy looks back at the fire and wipes a drunken tear from her eye*]. It was just so simple back then wasn't it.

Scott. Guess it's back to the shops with the Nurse's uniform then!

Nigel and Scott laugh whilst Sarah gives Lucy a cuddle.

Sarah. My turn I guess. I actually miss my Mum. Fill this glass up Nigel [*Nigel obliges and tops all the glasses up*]. Yes, poor Mum, she was my Christmas. She never drank all through the year, not even a glass of wine, but at Christmas Dad used to get the Drambuie out and keep her topped up throughout the day. All around her was chaos, screaming children, toys having to be made up, toys not working She was always there ... putting the toys together, giving us a cuddle, playing pin the tail on the donkey and cooking the Turkey. All the time Dad was topping her glass up. You know she use to burn her hands on the cooker but she was so tipsy she never seemed to feel it? I'll tell you what though the dinner was never spoilt. We used to all sit down and pull our crackers, put our hats on and tuck in I can almost smell those sprouts even now.

Nigel. That's not the sprouts, I think its Scott, just look at the state of him, I think he's dead!

Scott is slumped and slurring supported by a footstool. Suddenly there is a knock at the front door. Sarah says she needs some fresh air and gets up off the floor and makes her way to the front door. She opens the door to find a portly gentleman, with a white beard, white hair peaking out from under his duffle coat hood and a pair of black boots on his feet. He is silhouetted by the steady falling snow. The night is very still and very, very dark.

Sarah. Hello, can I help you?

Man. I've broken down I'm afraid. I was wondering if you could make a call for me, I've got such a busy night ahead of me and I really need to get back on track.

Sarah. Oh! Come on in from the cold. The telephone is over there by the candles. Make your call and please pop into the dining room when you've finished, I've got a few friends over, you're free to join us if you want.

Man. Thank you so much, very generous. You were always a good girl.

Sarah, not sure of what she has heard returns to the dining room.

Nigel. Who was that love?

Sarah. Some poor chap who's just broken down, he's just making a call on the phone.

The man enters the Dining Room holding a candle. He has unbuttoned his duffle coat and in the flickering candlelight the four pairs of drunken eyes focus on a man who looks a little, just a little, like Father Christmas.

Scott. *[Who has just opened his eyes]*. Bloody hell! Have you brought me an Etch o Sketch at last? *[He giggles]*.

Man. No, but it's not Christmas Day yet. Who knows what you'll get. *[They all laugh]*. Thank you for your generosity, I've been told help will be at hand in thirty minutes time so I'll wish you all a most Merry Christmas and I'll be on my way.

Lucy. No! Please!

Sarah. Lucy's right, please sit down and have a whiskey and a mince pie, while you wait. It is Christmas Eve after all.

Man. If you're sure, I don't wish to impose but could I possibly have a Sherry in place of the whiskey? To be honest I never

really liked Sherry but I've had so much of it over the years I've developed a bit of taste for it. Tradition I suppose [*He laughs*].

Nigel. Our pleasure, Mr?

Man. I am so sorry, I'm Nicholas and I'm, so pleased to make your acquaintance.

Nigel. A Sherry and a mince pie it is then Nicholas.

Lucy. Nicholas, we were all talking about what we miss at Christmastime, do you have any stories of your own ... please Sorry, only if you want.

Man. [*He laughs deeply and smiles*]. Oh! My dear Lucy, always so polite I've had so many Christmas Eves in so many Countries, towns and villages, some in the sun, some in the snow, but I do remember one in particular [*He takes a sip of his recently delivered sherry and a bite from his mince pie*], it was the winter of 1963 in England. So cold, so much snow, I remember it like it was yesterday.....

Lucy, Nigel and Sarah are enthralled as they listen to his story, his friendly, comforting face is illuminated by the open fire. Scott is smiling contentedly as he slips unconsciously toward Christmas Day.

Scene changes.

The portly man buttons his duffle coat and places the hood back upon his head. He is standing with his back against the closed oak door with the holly wreath directly behind him. He looks out into the falling snow and smiles as he bends down to pick up a sack, which he places over his shoulder. He stands still for a short moment and smiles. As he smiles the expensive coloured lamps adorning the garden trees twinkle back into life. Nicholas walks into the falling snow and disappears into the night. Church bells can be heard ringing from the midnight mass and we can hear the distant sound of carols being sung.

We return to the house, passing through the front door into the entrance hall, past the Christmas tree and its un-opened presents. We enter the dining room. There is half a glass of sherry and the crumbs of a

mince pie sitting on a china plate resting upon the mantel above the warm open fireplace. Slowly we move downward. There is blood everywhere. We see four bodies with their throats cut, lying contorted and in disarray whilst “God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen” plays quietly in the background.