

Gold, Frankincense and Murder

**I SAW THREE SHIPS COME
SAILING IN...**

BY

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Scene opens by fading into focus through a window- pane. We hear bird song, and see two teenage boys in a big garden throwing snowballs and wrestling each other. They are laughing and dressed up warm against the weather in colourful woolly scarves and hats.

The camera then turns and we see a close upon the eyes of a woman watching them through the window – the camera zooms toward her eyes and everything blurs.

When the screen clears we see her. She is a tall and good looking forty year old. Her hair is cut in a short wavy bob, and she is wearing a 1950's style dress tied at the waist. On top of this she is wearing an apron.

She is looking out of her kitchen window at the boys playing. A snowball comes dangerously close to the window, and hits the wall next to it with an audible thud.

She smiles to herself then walks across her kitchen floor and picks up a big mixing bowl. Her kitchen is large and expensively fitted. It's very nice, and beautiful warm sunshine gives the room a warm, golden glow. A three year old trundles in and bangs into her. He is a little boy in a knitted Christmas jumper and Christmas velvet trousers.

Child: More!

Woman: More what?

Child: More presents. More toys.

Woman: *[Looking distant, but kind]* More presents? But we've only just finished unwrapping everything from under the tree. I'm afraid young man you are going to have to wait until Santa comes again next year.

Child: I want more. *[He runs out of shot]*

Woman: Why don't you ask your father? I'm busy cooking Christmas lunch.

She adjusts the heat under a battered, dirty and old aluminium pan on the stove top, then puts on some Christmas oven gloves and pulls out a tray of roasting potatoes. They look delicious, and are sizzling in the hot fat. She puts her face as close as she dare and smells the aroma. "Mmmmm", she says. "Smells good, even if do say so myself".

We look to the dining table. There are big dishes piled high with sprouts, parsnips, chestnuts and mini sausages. At the centre of the table is a golden brown turkey on a platter.

We see the woman spoon the potatoes into another dish, and pour some thick brown gravy into two jugs. This takes a minute or so. She smells each dish and smiles. It looks absolutely delicious. She is humming to herself and is very happy at her work. She suddenly stops and cocks her head, listening, then shouts:

Woman: Darling, the baby's crying.

We can hear a baby crying faintly in the background. She carries on fussing, putting out Christmas crackers and carefully positioning them. After that she stands back to survey the table. "Perfect", she says. She then glides her hand over her work surface and does a little pirouette in the middle of the floor. "A perfect Christmas table in my perfect kitchen." Then, "Darling, the baby's crying! Now let me see, what about some Christmas music to go with Lunch."

The woman turns on the vintage Roberts Radio and fiddles until she finds some Christmas Carols. The radio plays "I saw three ships come sailing in...."

Woman: Oh, my favourite carol.

The toddler reappears holding an old smudged doll.

Child: It's Christmas, I want more presents to open.

Mother: *[Laughing at his earnest demand]* My darling child, I've already told you, we've opened all our presents, and you got your heart's desire. A shiny red fire truck, books and videos, a jumper with a picture of a horse on it. My little soldier, you've got pictures to colour, and pens to colour with. Now why don't you let me finish cooking lunch?

The child sits down on the kitchen floor looking upset, and plays disconsolately with the doll.

We can still hear the baby crying, a fraction louder now. "I saw three ships" is still playing. She turns it up slightly.

We then hear a distant shout from the boys playing and wrestling in the garden, and the thud of another snowball near miss. The woman looks out at them.

Woman: They're having a fine time out there aren't they? They'll have to go in for their dinner soon though. Won't they?

Child: I want to go out.

Woman: Don't start with that again love. You know you can't it's not safe playing with the big boys.

Child: Not fair! Stupid Mummy.

We hear the baby crying a fraction louder. The woman turns up the radio again to compensate. She shouts:

Woman: Darling, could you *please* see to the baby?

Child: I want to go out, I want more presents. Not fair.

Woman: My precious boy, why do you want to go out? You're here in this beautiful house, with every present you wanted and a Mummy who loves you so very much. They are the most important things in the world. Please don't shout.

The baby is crying very loud now. The woman turns the radio up loud – still on the same carol – but the baby is louder.

Woman: *[Shouting]* Will you shut that baby up!

Child: *[Shouting]* Stupid Mummy. I want more.

Woman: Lets sit down and have lunch.

We see again the beautiful Christmas table, laden with the finest fare. Candles burning in the centrepiece.

The woman stares at it wistfully.

Woman: It's so very, very beautiful.

The baby is now shrieking, and we hear a shout from the boys outside. We see one of them make a snowball and throw it. This time it hits the window. We see the window smash in slow motion, and the snowball flying in a silent, graceful arc.

Then, real time and real sound flood back in.

It is a half brick, not a snowball that finishes its flight through the glass. It lands with a sickening crash on an old stained cooker with the same dirty pan boiling on top.

We see through the window not a snowy garden but a concrete wasteland covered in graffiti and littered with burnt cars and upturned shopping trolleys. Some teenagers are terrorising the neighbourhood. They are congregated under a half dead tree poking up through the asphalt. Two of their number, wearing baseball caps and football scarves are being cheered on as throw missiles at the flat windows.

Inside the window, in a small, reeking bedsit sits a boy at the table dressed only in a dirty white vest holding the charity shop doll. Behind him a baby is howling in its cot. The place is dingy, dark and depressing.

The same woman has her hand over her mouth in horror as she sees whatever gruel she was cooking wasted in the smash. She is dressed in dirty cheap clothes though, and has her hair tied back off her face.

Woman: *[Shouting through the broken window]* I've called the police. They'll get you for this.

She stares around the awful squalor of her bedsit, then fat tears roll down her cheeks.

The child shouts at her.

Child: I want more!