

Christmas at the Andersons

By Ari Yaffe-Inoue

Christmas. While most devout Christian families would see themselves sipping mugs of cocoa, wrapping paper haphazardly strewn across the rug, this wasn't the case for the Andersons. It was Christmas at the Andersons, and somebody had to die. That's just how it worked. Every Christmas for the last however many years, a member of the Anderson family had died, or rather, been murdered. The most notable case of this holiday cheer occurred in 1989, when Evelyn Anderson was found inside the chimney, dressed in full Santa suit and beard, fireplace roaring with vigor, air filling with smoke and the wretched smell of burnt hair.

On this Christmas, the Andersons sat at a long table, Christmas ham seated regally on a large metal platter, the aromatic smoky, sweet smell wafting in great plumes through the air. The white satin tablecloth glimmered in the low lighting. It had belonged to Jamie Anderson, before she inevitably met her end at the hands, or should I say blades, of an industrial paper shredder on Christmas eve of 1962.

The current matriarch, Sandra Anderson, sat at the head of the long table conducting her understudies in the traditional Anderson family Christmas blessing.

"God, I hope it's not me," prayed Callie Anderson, the eldest of the youngest Anderson generation.

"Well, it's one in sixteen," remarked John, her father. "At least it's better than ol' Aunt Laramie had it." Ol' Aunt Larami, left widowed by her husband (yep, curse got him too), had one child, Stewart. Thus, that fateful Christmas, Aunt Laramie had a 50-50 chance of surviving

the night. Unfortunately for her, the coin landed tails side up, as her son Stewart, in a fit of rage, pushed her down the stairs. Oh, I can only imagine how much mopping up Stewart had to do that night, what with the deep-red splatters of blood and thin white shavings of bone, spread across the floor as if one had just sharpened a pencil with reckless abandon. It was, in his words, "The biggest mess until my mother-in law passed. "

"Remember how Laramie's daughter-in law died?" mumbled Callie.

"Yeah. She was working as a housekeeper right here," replied John.

"Hunter shoved her face into the business end of a juicer," he continued.

"Is that how she got the nickname the Minute Maid?" inquired Callie.

"Right on," answered John.

To the right of Sandra sat Hunter and Brandy, the newlyweds. Married just short of six days prior, this was Brandy's first family gathering as an Anderson, and she was in for a shock. "You did what!?" cried Brandy.

"That's how it is here. We're cursed. We only do this once a year."

Brandy leaned back in her seat and threw her arms up, appalled. On Brandy's right were Brian and Samuel, the brothers. Since their respective births, they had been the spitting images of the other. Their hate grew from small conflicts as adolescents to their current predicament, their war for ownership over the family hunting business. "I'll kill you," whispered Brian, sharply.

"Not if I kill you first," retorted Samuel. To his right sat Marcus, perched upon his seat like a vulture searching for festering carion, his beady little eyes locked onto the woman across from him. This lady was none other than Sabrina Costner, his ex-wife. Dragged into the family by her skeeving husk of a husband, she divorced him in an attempt to remove herself from the

Anderson curse. But as the saying goes, once an Anderson, always an Anderson. She was, no doubt, plotting to murder him that night. "Let me propose a toast," crooned Sandra, a knowing twinkle in her eye. "To hoping that we don't get murdered."

"To hoping that we don't get murdered," agreed the rest of the table, raising their glasses high. As quickly as the Andersons raised their glasses, they set them back down, forfeiting the traditional post-toast drink. Confused, Brandy lifted her glass to her lips, puckering them as she tilted the glass downwards. "No. Don't drink it." muttered Hunter under his breath.

"Why not?" Brandy replied.

"It might be poisoned."

This fear was quite reasonable in fact, as for the past twelve years, the wine at the Anderson Christmas gathering had been laced with cyanide, just to catch those newbies not familiar with the family history.

"Oh, you told her about the curse. You're not baiting her. Good for you Hunter!" complemented Sandra with a wry smile. She was overjoyed at the thought.

"What's baiting?" Inquired Brandy, her voice trembling with fear.

"Ah, well that is a great question Brandy," praised Sandra.

"Baiting was a technique first pioneered by Thomas Walter Anderson in 1940," she began. "One night, he was at a bar in Scottsdale when he laid eyes upon a young woman sitting alone in a booth. Sensing an opportunity, he walked over and sat next to her. They got to talking. By the end of the night, they were lovers. They got married on December 23rd, just in time for the yearly family gathering. As the Christmas ham was being divvied up that night, so were his

new wife's brains after Thomas pulled out a double barreled shotgun and blew her head to kingdom come. You see, he never really loved her, he was using her, baiting her, as a sacrifice."

"Sound familiar?" snapped Sabrina, revealing a deep scar on her forehead.

"It was one time," rebutted Marcus.

"Well now it's my turn!" roared Sabrina as she pounced on Marcus, leaping across the table and tackling him to the floor. As both punches and plates were thrown, Brian leapt from his seat, charging at his brother Samuel. The sound of shattering glass tore through the air like a knife through canvas.

"If anybody is to die tonight, it shall be you, Samuel! Not some inconsequential sad sack left disturbed from a broken marriage!" screamed Brian. At that moment, Brian pulled out a revolver from within his overcoat and pointed it at Samuel. Samuel leapt up, and ran towards the door, dodging bullets left and right.

He attempted to open the door to no avail, for it was locked from the outside. "Nobody leaves before midnight!" roared Sandra.

"The Anderson legacy dies tonight! No more will suffer at the hands of our curse!" With that, she pulled a Molotov cocktail from her pocket, lit it, and threw it to the ground. As the carpet burst into flames, the house burned down, and with it, the Anderson legacy.