

Christmas at My Place

Category: Coming Undone

written by Anonymous | October 10, 2023

I turned back to look at him only once, that insane parody of Jesus on the rood, his face turned away in death, arms stretched wide, a small white towel draped over his manhood. I stood there in the E.R. covered in the blood he'd spray-painted me with as he lay dying from a gunshot wound to the chest. Blood spray in my hair, my eyelashes, on my lips and in my mouth. My new white shoes with the stylish aerating holes, also bore the shocking red of a life too soon ended.

And now, there he lay, in the glaring light of the florescent tubes, the pitiless scent of antiseptics sterilizing even death. Earlier that evening, he had courted his own death by going into the toughest bar in the old part of town, a place known widely for the thin nerves of customers, bad-news folks armed to the teeth with sheer hate and .25 jump guns, both tempered to hard steel by drugs and liquor. With great focus and determination, he had strode forward to attack the local gang leader, unarmed with anything but his own blind rage. I doubt he even had time to hear the sound of the gun before he fell.

As the doctor broke the news to the man's mother, her guttural cry of agony and loss rose to the heavens and then sank down to freeze in my blood forever. The L.P.N. who was with me turned to see me covered with his carnage. "My God," she said. "you're white as a sheet and trembling all over. How can I help you?"

I'll never forget. It was the graveyard shift. Strains of "O Holy Night" drifted from the intercom.

For those who work in the E.R., every holiday is haunted by its own ghosts.

Anonymous