

## **Merry Christmas**

*by Eileen Guibone*

The year is 2016. The scene is Christmas eve. It's 6:23pm.

"Fuck off, how could you have fucked a 24 year old? You are so weak. So weak!" I hear my mother screech as she lunges at my father with wild eyes. She is standing in the middle of their room and her stance could rival a lion devouring its prey. I'd be dead if anyone ever looked at me that way. Her hands look like claws and her eyes brighter than the Christmas lights displayed in every corner of the house.

Obviously, things are about to get festive in this yuletide season.

The scene in front of me is shocking and jarring but I feel like I'm too jaded to feel anything anymore. They'd been at it before I was mistakenly born and they'll continue to go at it until God knows when. She is not the mother I know. Right now all I see is a big gigantic wound.

Throbbing.

Pulsing.

Seething.

My 64 year-old father stands near the doorway with shoulders slumped in defeat. What else could he do? Even breathing next to her would be a crime. But is there a crime more damaging to the soul than a loved one's infidelity? Not loving yourself, maybe.

And here I am in the corner feeling like time is freezing to a glacial stop. A momentary lapse.

*Thump!* My mother's hands are faster than a camera shutter and twice as powerful as an image that speaks a thousand words as she pushes my father to the wall slamming him in the head. I've always found their power dynamics a bit eccentric. Mother wears the pants. Father gives the money. As long as there's money, mother heals like wolverine. She covers her wounds with full coverage concealer and goes on with her life but,

not without carnage,

not without blood,

not without trauma.

Her tight grip on my father's arms could rival a boa constrictor. It feels like a jungle in here and I am the overprotected proverbial seed whose growth is stumped by the inclination of humans

to put the things that they love in a cage. Will I be good? Will I be bad? Will I survive? Will I be good enough? Am I merely the last attempt of saving grace to a sabotaged marriage gone sour between two baby boomers?

And to think that all my past experiences have led me to this very moment.

24 years old. Only three years older than me.

Suddenly it dawns on me why I dated a 31 year old at 18.

I no longer feel things as intensely as I used to. Saying I love you is as hard as swallowing a bitter pill. But just like my mother, I feel more like a volcano gone dormant. When will the next explosion occur? Next Christmas?

Maybe if I didn't hate my parents so much I wouldn't be so much like them.