

I'll be Home for Christmas

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by J. Mykell Collinz

While I'm searching Marge's clothing on the floor, feeling for weapons, the doorbell rings again. I backpedal across the room, keeping my gun trained on Marge. She's staying close to the hot air radiator while still half naked. When I peek out the window, I see a full moon rising, and I'm feeling weird vibes.

"Who's there?" I shout through the door.

A timid female voice returns: "It's Ursula, I'm looking for Marge, have you seen her?"

"Who's Ursula?" I shout across the room.

Slipping into her dress, Marge replies: "She's harmless. Let her in. It's fucking cold out there."

I unbolt the front doors, and shout: "Come in with your hands up. Get down on the floor."

As I bolt the doors, Marge says: "Don't rape her, too. She a virgin."

"What are you talking about?" I snap: "I didn't rape you."

"Not completely, no, but the night is young," she returns, smiling defiantly.

"Listen," I say, struggling to remain calm: "I recently had a woman pull a gun on me in my pickup truck. And, without going into detail, I just want to say, I'm not allowing anybody to stay here until I'm absolutely sure they don't have a weapon concealed on their person. If you don't like it, there's the door."

Ursula is a teenager, fifteen or sixteen, possibly younger. I'm not an expert observer, she could be older, too. But, if she's a virgin, she won't be for long, not with a body like that, showing advancing signs of womanhood. Marge is intently watching me while I watch Ursula undress. Erotic currents run through my body as I fondle Ursula's cloths on the floor. Events are happening too fast. I'm free falling

into the future and I can't stop myself from reaching out to touch her velvety smooth inner thighs with my hand just as the doorbell rings again.

"Who's there?" I shout.

"It's the wicked witch of the west," a gravelly voice comes back at me: "Open the goddam door and let me in. I'm freezing my ass off out here."

"That's Hildegard," Ursula informs, rushing to put her clothes back on.

"Come in with your hands up and get down on the floor," I shout after unbolting the doors.

Hildegard is a big woman in her forties or fifties, maybe even a strong and healthy sixties. She struts through the doorway like she owns the place, and says: "Put that silly gun away. Why do you think you need it? What have you been doing to these ladies? Um, what's cooking? It smells delicious. I hope you made enough for all of us. I'm starving."

Marge applauds Hildegard's confrontational approach. Ursula, now fully dressed, stands by the heat radiator watching intently.

"I can't continue with this," I say, thinking aloud: "Just because one woman pulls a gun on me, am I going to suspect every woman I meet of having a gun?"

"Yes, please, enough with the guns," Hildegard responds: "Show us the way to your kitchen."

"Wait a minute," I say: "Who are you ladies? What are you doing here? You don't look like homeless street people to me."

"Oh, you finally noticed that," Marge interjects, applauding.

Hildegard silences Marge with a wave of her hand, and says: "You've been chosen, Daniel. The three of us arrived here at the same time, which confirms it. This is the place, you are the man, the host with the most. We are reincarnated spirits, so to speak, from another dimension. Each of us has, at some time in the past, lived on earth in human form. And now, during this particular solstice period, while the sun slows to a stop at its northernmost position and then reverses direction, we are able to repossess our previous body for

the evening, like we were on the day of our earthly demise. We will be gone again from this world before sunrise. Now show us some hospitality and serve up some of that deliciously smelling food."

I usually cook enough to last me for a few days but this evening I cooked more than usual for no apparent reason. I remember wondering why as I prepared it. Now I see the extra food as a sign, an instance of precognition. I'm not buying Hildegard's bit about reincarnated spirits. Or the sun stopping and reversing direction. And my name isn't Daniel. Yet I feel compelled to assume the role of generous host with enthusiasm while going along with the charade to see where it takes us.

In the bright illumination of the kitchen, all three women are stunningly attractive. And very well dressed, I observe.

Ursula commands my attention the most and I find myself looking in her direction at every opportunity while preparing the table. She quickly looks away whenever our eyes meet.

Marge smiles when I notice her watching me as I watch Ursula.

Hildegard's eyes follow me as I bring food to the table. A thick black bean soup with freshly chopped onions and peppers added. Green leafy salad with tomatoes, feta cheese, and scallions. Olive oil and vinegar dressing. Baked salmon with sweet potatoes and a lemon flavored sauce.

Standing at the head of the table, I say: "Before we begin, a prayer of grace is in order, giving thanks to God."

"Thanks, God," Ursula replies quietly with her head bowed.

"Amen," Marge chimes, looking at me sidewise.

"Good enough," Hildegard mutters, crossing herself, adding: "Let's eat."

I have questions and I want answers but I wait until they've enjoyed their food before interrupting. While they're still eating, I run down to my basement wine cellar for two bottles of a fruity tasting white wine with woodruff. I've been saving it for a special occasion because of its aphrodisiacal properties.

"When did you previously live, Ursula?" I say, breaking the silence as I pour wine into her glass.

"Don't ask her that, please," Marge says, shooting me a sober glance.

Ursula stops eating for an instant but she doesn't look up.

Hildegard drops her knife and fork, and says: "She died a martyr's death as a young virgin at the hands of Huns who raped her repeatedly. Just as you or any other man would like to do. You want to fuck her, don't you? Admit it."

"I want to fuck all three of you," I say, reaching across the table to pour Hildegard's wine.

