

## **Avoiding Christmas: Amy Hutton**

A bump woke me. A bump followed by dragging. Someone was downstairs with the Christmas presents I'd spent the whole day wrapping. I couldn't decide if I was scared or pissed off. Tip-toeing to my bedroom door, I opened it a crack. The lights from the tree shone up the stairs casting a colourful glow.

I didn't like Christmas. I'd do anything to avoid it. But this year I was trapped. Because I was in charge of the family lunch. The turkey was defrosting in the fridge. The turkey. What if the thief stole that, too?

I dragged an old cricket bat from my wardrobe—the one my dad had given me to protect myself—held it high and slowly descended the stairs. No one was ruining the Christmas I'd been forced to work so hard on. Stopping on the bottom landing, I peered into the gloom of the red and green illuminated room. The flash of a figure startled me, and I swung my bat. A crack echoed off the walls as the wood collided with something hard. It grunted and dropped with a thud. The force of the impact propelled me backwards, and I sprawled across the floor. I quickly pushed myself up, limped towards the light switch and flicked it on. My eyes landed on a large, red sack beside the tree. I'd been right, someone was stealing my Christmas presents. Except, the gifts that spewed from the sack's opening were not wrapped in the same paper I'd used. My gaze narrowed as it slowly travelled to the foot of the stairs. A pair of shiny black boots were poking from the darkness. With the sofa between me and the Christmas present thief, I shifted to the side, gasping as the rest of the image revealed itself. Fluffy white trim on a red suit, a round belly cinched tight with a large belt buckle, and a white beard on the chin of a rosy-cheeked man obviously dead on my floor.

I grabbed my phone from the kitchen counter, dialled triple zero and requested police and an ambulance, then dropped onto the sofa to wait. I'd accidentally killed Santa Claus. Guess I really would do anything to avoid Christmas.