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All I Want for Christmas

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**Milk and Cookies** Maryanne Zamora

All I Want for Christmas

Taylor M. Jariz

Christmas morning and
there was no tree.

No laughter echoing from the living room.
No innocent anticipation of what was held within
pristinely wrapped boxes, soon to be torn to shreds.

Replaced by deafening silence which even
Christmas music couldn't drown out.
By clenched jaws and gnawed nails.
Countless words left unsaid.

Mom's lips pursed ever so tightly.
Tears tempting the corners of
her already bloodshot eyes.

Children dreading the idea of opening gifts.
Questioning how they could possibly fill
the void in our hearts.

Yet we trudged through it for
a taste of normalcy to
wash down the unforgivable bitterness.

This house was not a home.

A day for rejoicing stolen by fear.
By silent knowledge of
what was so obviously missing.

He had been gone for two weeks already.
His family unsure of when [or if]
he would ever return.

Our hearts were breaking.
His was failing.

Christmas morning and
Daddy wasn't there.