Milk and Cookies

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All I Want for Christmas
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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.