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Robin Sandiford. These Books Must Be Destroyed!

All art by Zombie Rust

ISBN 978-1-304-68961-0

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Black **Xmas**

1. Informal short for Christmas.
2. The annual commemoration by Christians of the birth of Jesus Christ on December 25th.
3. The time of the year on which people are encouraged to stop resisting consumerism and still remain guilt free about it.

It's a cold, windy and stormy Christmas eve. A beautifully seasonal Christmas home sparkles in the snow, there is a giant Santa sleigh lit up and a 'Santa Stop Here' sign illuminating the street. It's the biggest and boldest decorated house on the block. Inside, the coal fire burns away, as the whole living room is decorated with golden tinsel and various Christmas ornaments. The Blake family gather round the Christmas tree, consisting of mother and father around the age of forty-five and two teenage kids, Billy aged seventeen and Lucy aged fifteen. They all take it in turns to exchange one gift at a time. The mother takes her turn and with a beaming smile on her face she turns over the attached marked:

To Mommy, Happy XMAS

Love

Santa

XXXXX

She continues to carefully unwrap her gift, tearing the paper off to reveal a

beautiful snow globe. Inside there is a large house, decorated with lights and ornaments for Christmas, a snow man etc. All around its base there is a pattern of little happy Santa heads. It has a built in music box, she can't wait to wind it up to play the tune that accompanies the globe. She winds the globe carefully as the jingle of 'Silent Night' pours out. The mother is touched by the gift and with a knowing look, it brings a tear to her eye, she smiles and thanks Santa.

Billy shouts out how the whole scenery in the globe reminds him of their house and the nearby neighbourhood. Billy unable to contain himself then blurts out he was in fact the secret Santa. This was typical of Billy, he always spoils everything. He says how the resemblance to the family home was also the main reason why he bought the present. The mother takes the snow globe and places it in prime position of the room, on the mantelpiece.

Midnight approaches and they all retire

to the bedroom. The house is completely silent but the mother can't sleep. She gets up and goes to the kitchen, prepares a glass of milk and takes it over to the fireplace, she sits down and relaxes into the recliner. Its beautiful to sit back after all the madness of Christmas and have some time alone. The fire in the room is simmering but she can't quite take her eyes off the globe on the mantelpiece in the centre of the room. Feeling drawn to it, she takes hold of it, winding it up before finally giving it a good shake. The snowflakes swirl round the house in a flurry of white and glitter. When the flakes start to clear, the scenery in the globe has changed somewhat dramatically, and with it the smile on her face begins to subside into a look of confusion with a slight hint of a frown. The once glistening house has been replaced by a black charcoal mess as if it has been completely burnt out, everything is charred and blackened including the few trees outside that are

also black and empty of their leaves. Strangely enough even the smiley Santas on the base of the globe have eerily been replaced by hollow skulls. The beautiful Christmas jingle has been replaced by an unbearable shrill static noise. The globe shatters into a hundred tiny shards, cutting into her bare palms, and causing her hands to bleed profusely. The room begins to feel somewhat different and she can feel another presence watching her in the room. She's still standing in front of the mantelpiece, feeling isolated and stunned in complete shock and fearing to turn around. She turns around slowly, her neck stiff in fear and she's afraid that the gulp she just uncontrollably produced would be audible enough to alert the person in the room. When she turns around she sees a shadow hiding behind the Christmas tree. The shadow begins to slowly emerge from behind the Christmas tree, revealing itself as a tall figure dressed as Santa, with a pale and ghostly

face within its hood, unforgettable and stumbling awkwardly in the dark towards her. His face is unearthly, grotesque and like the skull of a skeleton. She screams a blood-curdling cry.

The morning after there is a lot of fuss outside the Blake residence. A fire truck is parked up, still hosing down the family's house windows. The house is blackened. A passerby taking his dog for a morning stroll asks one of the firemen on the site,

"What has happened?"

"There has been a terrible fire. No one got out." The fireman replies.

