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# Christmas Season

## By Jay Lake

17 June 2002

Every year come the Friday after Thanksgiving, Pawpaw gets to cleaning his shotgun. "Millie Ann," he always tells me, "this is gonna be our best Christmas ever." What he means is we'll eat Christmas sausage for months. That's good. Daddy don't earn much, and we won't take government handouts, so we don't get food stamps or nothing.

Pawpaw is Ma's Daddy. On account of Ma dying when I was four and Daddy's work on the oil rigs keeping him away so much, Pawpaw pretty much raises me himself.

Pawpaw sits there singing "On Comet, on Cupid, on Donder and Blitzen" while he cleans the barrel of his old ten-gauge. He likes carols about reindeer and Santa's sleigh.

"Up on the housetop, click, click, click," as he loads the shotgun shells. Pawpaw smiles at me. "Next year, Millie Ann, when you're thirteen, you can help me with the reloads."

"Thank you, Pawpaw." This seems like a good time to ask. "Can I come tonight? I hate staying with Aunt Gemma. Her trailer smells like cat pee and her cookies are always stale."

Pawpaw smacks his lips as he stares at me. That means he's thinking. "I reckon you're old enough this year, girl."

"Goodie!" Pawpaw doesn't think I'm a little kid any more. I grin so hard my teeth feel like to fall out.

It's real early Saturday morning, so early it's almost still Friday. Our hunting blind is at the edge of some trees above a long, sloping field with more trees at the bottom. There's a few other blinds around. When we got here those folks made a big fuss over my first Christmas season. That was nice, and it made me feel important. Now it's so cold my hands ache. Pawpaw drinks coffee to keep

warm, but I can't have none 'cause it'll make

## [Before Paphos](#)

by Loretta Casteen

8 January 2007

It starts again. The baby begins to cough and choke.

## [Locked Doors](#)

by Stephanie Burgis

1 January 2007

*You can never let anyone suspect,* his mother told him. That was the first rule she taught him, and the last, before she left him here alone with It.

## [Heroic Measures](#)

by Matthew Johnson

18 December 2006

Pale as he was, it was hard to believe he would never rise from this bed. Even in the darkest times, she had never really feared for him; he had always been strong, so strong.

## [Love Among the Talus](#)

by Elizabeth Bear

11 December 2006

Nilufer raised her eyes to his. It was not what women did to men, but she was a princess, and he was only a bandit. "I want to be a Witch," she said. "A Witch and not a Queen. I wish to be not loved, but wise. Tell your bandit lord, if he can give me that, I might accept his gift."

## [Archived Fiction Dating back to 9/1/00](#)

