



Forgotten At Home

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The day before Christmas is usually relaxing. Everyone just sleeps in and forgets about all of their worries. But, my family must've had other plans this year, because no one is home. Not my mom, dad, or sister. The only person that decided to stay and keep me company is my dog, Artemis. No one had answered my phone calls or text messages, it's like they were erased from the face of the planet. It was all strange.

I reclined on the couch, Artemis curled on my lap. He was sleeping like a baby, so I didn't want to move in fear of waking him. Well, I couldn't really move anyways, he was a pretty big dog. I gazed upon the unopened presents that rested underneath the evergreen tree. The fireplace was lit, the wood crackling and popping. A few years back I learned Santa wasn't real. If he was, he'd get toasted when he came down our chimney.

Hours passed with no sort of contact with my family. A feeling of worry crept around inside me, like a spider lurking towards a fly that got caught in its web. I'd pieced together the possibility that they had gone somewhere without me, considering I'd woken up in the afternoon, but one would think that they'd at least call or something, especially since the sun was now succumbing to the moon.

I looked out the window, viewing the beautiful yellowish-red color of the sunset being cast upon the driveway. As I was admiring the honeycomb light, a metallic black truck pulled into the driveway. *Who is this?* I thought. My mom owned a gray car and my dad drove a red truck. So who was this in the driveway? My first thought was that it was a family member. Maybe they were worried because their calls weren't being answered either.

My pondering was quickly answered when the driver's door opened. A tall man stepped out of the vehicle. He wore a black puffer coat, matching with his black pants, boots, and ski mask. *Ski mask?* It was cold outside, but not to the point where goosebumps would appear on goosebumps. Definitely not ski mask weather.

The passenger door opened, revealing a figure that had features depicting a woman. Her long, black hair flowed out of her red ski mask that had a rose printed on one of the cheeks. Her coat was white and pants black. She held a

large duffel bag over her shoulder. The two began walking up the driveway toward the front door. They observed their surroundings, creeping up to the front door and rattling the doorknob; Artemis awoke to the sound. Thankfully, the door was locked, and now I knew for certain that these weren't relatives of any sorts. *These were burglars.*

I hopped off of the couch and sprinted up the stairs, Artemis followed. I dashed into my room. I needed my phone to call the police. I glanced at my dresser, but my phone wasn't there. "Where is my phone?" I mumbled to myself in a panic. I reached in my pocket, retrieving nothing but lint. I must've placed it somewhere earlier and left it. *The kitchen!* I remembered. I'd made myself breakfast when I woke up, even though it was in the afternoon.

Flying down the stairs, I raced into the kitchen. My phone wasn't on the counter. I checked the pantry, the sink, even the fridge. It was nowhere to be seen. I could've sworn that I'd brought it in here. The only other place I could think of it being would be. . .the couch cushions.

Just as I was about to head into the living room, I froze. The sound of the front door creaking open overpowered that of the fireplace.

They'd opened the door. Must've picked the lock. I heard the door shut behind them before they began talking.

"No cars were in the driveway, and it looks like no one is home." A deep voice spoke out.

"So everything is ours for the taking then, right?" The voice of a woman asked. I could hear my own beat. I was scared. I couldn't even move. This was just a bad time to misplace my phone. I took a deep, yet quiet breath while I stood in the kitchen, trying to calm myself down. I heard the sound of a zipper being dragged along its chain and things ruffling around in the living room. The only thing in the living room that'd be worth taking would be the presents under the tree. I can't let them take those, that would ruin Christmas.

This thought seemed to motivate me enough to get me moving. I opened the fridge and grabbed a carton of eggs, opening it to see four eggs resting. Gently closing the fridge door, I lurked to the living room, an egg now in my hand. My vision was met with the two burglars who were already grabbing presents.

"There's enough room for the boxes in the bag," the woman said, "open them first." The man nodded with a grunt. Little do they know, I wasn't going to let that happen. I winded my arm back and sent an egg flying through the air

towards the man. Just as he looked in my direction, the shell cracked on his face, leaving the yolk to drip down his mask. He groaned in pain, dropping the present he was holding in order to hold his face.

The woman looked at me, her eyes wide. I pulled another egg out of the carton, ready to take aim. All of sudden, she began sprinting across the carpet. I chucked an egg in her direction, but it zipped past her. *Uh oh*. She had closed the majority of the distance between us, throwing another egg wouldn't be effective anymore, and I wouldn't have time anyways. Her hand compressed into a fist wound up and ready to attack me.

I heard the sound of nails tapping against the wooden stairs. Out of nowhere, Artemis bolted between my legs and jumped up onto the woman, pushing her to the floor.

"Ugh, get off me mutt!" She exclaimed, flailing her arms.

"Good boy, Artemis!" I said, turning around in one swift motion and hurrying up the stairs Artemis just came down. I entered my room, grabbing a pair of shoes from under my bed that I didn't wear. I unlaced both shoes and tied the strings together at the ends. Grabbing a roll of tape from my dresser, I headed out into the hallway, taping the ends of my now enlarged string to the walls, creating a tripwire.

I was smart enough to know that I couldn't clash with the burglars head on. My plan was to stall for time, hopefully until someone gets back home. But, as if it was on queue, the sound of heavy footsteps infiltrated their way into my thinking. Artemis rose from the stairs seconds before the man, who seemed to be chasing him. Artemis managed to hop over my trip wire, but the man wasn't so fortunate. He was sent to the ground with a loud thump. Artemis growled at him while he was on the floor.

"Come on, Artemis!" I said, running back the way that the man came, leaping over my own tripwire, planting a foot on the man's back. He grumbled a swear as Artemis and I soared down the stairs once again. Reaching the last step, a pair of hands grabbed my shirt. It was the woman, who was hiding around the corner. She lifted me off of the ground holding by my collar, but she let go when Artemis bit her ankle. She yelped, looking down at me. Once my feet landed back on the ground, I dashed towards the door that separated the garage from the house.

Practically forcing the door open, I moved around my mom's car, spotting a lighter on the driver's seat through the window in the corner of my

eye. I paid no mind, she's always been an active smoker. I headed over to the wall, grabbing the snow shovel that was mounted there. It hadn't snowed this year, but my parents had bought it just in case. The woman charged through the door, and I charged back at her, using the shovel as if it was a lance. For a moment, it felt like I was in a jousting match.

The shovel made contact with the woman's stomach, pushing all the way back inside the house and through another open door: the bathroom door. She curled up on the floor, holding her stomach. I quickly turned on the sink, grabbing a large handful of paper towels and shoving it down the drain, clogging it. I then used the handle of the shovel and used it to strike the sink knob repeatedly.

The knob was knocked to the floor. Now the water can't be turned off. That can always be fixed, but Christmas can't. I left the restroom, closing the door behind me and sprinted to the dining room and grabbing a chair. The thing about our bathroom door was that you had to pull it to enter and push it to exit. If I used a chair to lock the door, the bathroom would flood with the woman stuck in there. I hoped that the fear of her drowning there would shift her attention away from me.

As I headed back to the restroom door, the brawny man descended the stairs. I ignored him, running past to the door and tilting the chair just under the knob. He spotted me and began running towards me, resulting in my retreat to the garage, Artemis right behind me.

My eyes moved along the wooden shelves along the walls of the garage, viewing things like trowels, cans of air freshener, extension cords- wait. *Air freshener*. A light bulb shined above my head as I snatched the can from the shelf. I then tried to open the car door, but it was locked.

Artemis began barking at the man who'd just entered the garage, his face red with anger. In a time crunch, I thrust the can into the car window, shattering it on impact. I reached in and grabbed the lighter from the seat as the heavy stomps grew louder. In one swift moment, I turned to face the man, holding the lighter in front of the air freshener can, letting the flame live. I then began spraying the air freshener, causing the flame to enlarge and attack the man. *Homemade flamethrower*, I thought.

Scared, the man ran out of the garage and fled up the stairs. Artemis and I followed, but he was fast. However, he'd forgotten about the tripwire. A loud thump bounced around the walls of the hallway. He didn't stay on the ground

for long, pushing himself up and continuing to run down the hallway, going through the door at the end of it: my parents room.

Instead of chasing after him, I took this opportunity to finish my initial plan. I ran back downstairs and into the living room, sifting my hand through the couch cushions. My fingers grazed the edges of a rectangular object. Barely managing to grab it, I retrieved my phone from the endless abyss, trying to turn it on. However, the screen remained black. The battery was dead.

Loud banging could be heard from the bathroom door. The woman was trying to get out, but her attempts were to no avail. I grabbed another chair from the dining room and dragged it up the stairs and down the hallway, using it to lock the door to my parents. Well, at least trying to. This door couldn't be locked from the inside.

With the bottle of air freshener and the lighter shoved into my pocket, I developed a new idea. *Charging my phone.* I ran to my room, lifting my charger cord from the ground and clumsily plugging it into my phone. After a few seconds that felt like hours, the screen illuminated. I was immediately bombarded with missed calls and unanswered text messages from my parents.

"So, *now* they want to check up on me?" I scoffed, rolling my eyes. Just as I was about to dial my mom's number, the man burst into my room, ears steaming. I pulled out the lighter and can of air freshener. However, the lighter was out of juice. Each flick just produced a mediocre spark. I shoved the can back into my pocket.

The man ran at me with intimidating, powerful steps. He was separating me from the door. I dropped my phone on the dresser, trying to find something to defend myself with. I wouldn't be able to reach my closet in time, and taking my eyes off of him to look under the bed would be risky. I only had one option.

I ripped the blanket from my bed, holding it up by the corners. The man attempted to grab me, but I leaped forward and covered his face with the blanket. His curses were muffled while he tried pulling the blanket from his face. I quickly grabbed my phone from the charger and dashed out of the room, leaping over the tripwire and headed down the stairs. I heard his weighty steps behind me, but they halted for a moment, only to be followed by a booming bump. He'd fallen again.

"How many times are you going to fall for that?" I laughed, frantically dialing my mom's phone number.

Ring.

Ring.

Ring.

“Hello?” Her voice spoke from the phone.

“Mom!” I exclaimed, surprised that she answered. “You need to come home now! There are burglars in the house!”

“What are you talking about?” She questioned. Before I was able to respond, I was met with three beeps. The call had ended. Moving my phone to my field of vision, I was met with a black screen. It had died. It hadn’t charged for long enough.

A pair of arms wrapped around me tightly. Glancing over my shoulder, I saw the dark mask of the burglar. *I’d let my guard down.* It was almost impossible to break free from his grasp. I needed help.

“Artemis!” I called out. I’d lost track of him due to all of the instantaneous action. Artemis came running from the garage, jumping at the man without hesitation. He bit, clawed, and pushed. After a cacophony of grunts and groans, I was freed. I slipped the can of air freshener out of my pocket and sprayed the man in the face. His eyes were forced shut from the burning sensation.

I stood there for a moment, trying to catch my breath. Bad mistake. The man’s eyes opened as he reached out to grab me once more. On quick feet, I jumped back, turning around and running for the kitchen. With the man right behind me and the kitchen being a dead end, there was only one thing I could do.

I grabbed onto the handle of the refrigerator door and swung it open with all of my strength, slamming it into the man. He fell back, landing on the floor. He didn’t get up.

“I guess you could say, he’s out cold.” I joked, looking at the fridge, hoping it would laugh. It obviously didn’t do anything. I heard the click of a car parking in the driveway moments before the front door opened. I stumbled back into the living room, there stood my mom, dad, and sister.

“I have the craziest story to tell y’all.” I said.