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A.P. Literature and Composition

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A Very Cookie Christmas

'Twas' the night before Christmas, and I helped carry my Aunt Angie's ever famous bar cookies into the house and stepped in through the front door. She stood close to me, the top of her head not reaching my shoulders, and her Brunette hair covered in white speckles of snow. She took off her shoes and put them in line with the others, sizes ranging from children's 2 to men's 17. Her cookies I had taken into the kitchen were one in a million, balancing a blend between cookie and brownie that make people's taste buds run amok.

I cannot wait to eat these.

The cookies were by far the best thing I had helped carry in yet, though I had carried in shoes, coats, crock-pots of food, wallets, keys, and crazy Uncle Frank's light-up party hat. The bar cookies were just a small fish in a big pond considering all the food that had been brought, creating a smorgasbord for anyone to eat.

"Meeerrrry Christmas!"

Aunt Angie declared to me gregariously, just like she does every year in her high pitched voice.

I have never quite understood why, but it is always the same exact greeting in the same exact way from her to *me* every year; no one else. She was probably the twentieth guest to arrive, and many more people were still coming.

As I skedaddled around the house, saying hello to every person I saw, the snow outside kept falling. The flakes were falling in big chunks, making for the best snow-man building snow for all the young children attending my family's Christmas Eve Party.

Before the party had arrived, my siblings and I had to be very obsequious to my mother as she worked us hard cleaning up the house.

"Did you dust? Is the tree set up properly? Did you vacuum? Is the living room clean?"

She asked all these questions at least three times, making sure the house would look nothing less than perfect. We understood how she was feeling, so we didn't say anything to her about it. This was always the best time of the year for all of us for many reasons: my whole family came together for a special day, it was by far everyone's favorite holiday, and my brother was not so querulous because he did not have to work. Querulous Nic - a skinny, freshly shaved man with a wonderful wife and two daughters - always loved Christmas more than most of us, and he made it quite entertaining.

The party was at its maximum now, filling each part of the house with something. There were a lot of guests this year, including my: mom, dad, and siblings- Chris, Steve, Nick, Sam - Aunt Angie and extended family, Aunt Joanie and

her extended family, crazy Uncle Frank and his extended family, even crazier Uncle Ted and his extended family, Aunt Trisha and her extended family, Grandpa Morales and Aunt Di Di., then capped off with my brothers old high school friends. I have probably forgotten some, give or take 15.

The night went on, and the game of "Gag-Gift" was in full stride in the living room; this was the main reason that many family members attended this party, and what brought the fun. Every year, any family member who was above the age of 18 brought a sarcastic item wrapped up in Christmas wrapping paper to use for the game. All members participating would pick a number out of a hat, and that would determine when their turn was. The person whose turn it was could either pick an unopened present or pick an item from someone who had already opened one, forcing them to open another present and play the guessing game. If you had drawn the number one, you were to go first, then after everyone else had gone, you could get the last choice and precisely pick which present you wanted from anyone.

The game was simple, but it was also focused on strategic play because if you liked the gift you had picked out, you don't want anyone to take it; as a result, you hid the present near you so no one would remember you had it. The gifts that consistently came every year were lottery tickets, snuggies, sports jerseys, and a dancing figurine of some sort - nobody ever wanted that gift.

As the game was through half the numbers, I made my way into the other room to find my oldest brother, Chris, sitting in front of the television watching a college football bowl game eating a sloppy joe and macaroni and cheese.

"How is everything? Any recommendations?" I asked as I snagged a paper plate to put my dinner on.

"The sloppy joe is to die for-- the meatballs and mac-and-cheese up there are pretty good as well," he exclaimed while he took another bite of the sandwich.

If I had to choose, Chris would probably be my favorite sibling. He is about my height, 5 foot 10 inches, with a grown man's beard, but a young boy's personality.

"I think I am going to grab a sloppy joe and meatballs and mac-and-cheese and chips and baked lasagna and watermelon, oh, and a *small* salad." Without even looking at him, I could feel his motionless face looking at me in disbelief wondering how I could even come close to eating that much. I grabbed the plate, juggling it with a bottle of water and a few napkins, and walked to the seat next to him, trying not to spill everything I had just gotten. I had anticipated the first bite ever since I put it on the plate, my mouth watering as I wrapped my hands around the sandwich...
crunch.

The food rested in my stomach nicely, and the snow outside continued to fall faster and faster. Screams roared from a room over, loud enough to make the long icicles hanging from the gutters fall into a pit of white fluff. The game must have been getting intense; I heard people say they had snaked back around to the number one. I was not old enough to play, so I stayed where I was, enjoying the Christmas atmosphere that was given to us.

The moon light sparkled off the calm snow, making yet another Christmas Eve a fantastic one. The people had gathered and left, leaving behind all of their

wonderful waste items for my family and I to pick up. However, as I picked up the last piece of trash, the moment I cherished the most every year was taking place right in front of me. My mom and siblings stood shoulder to shoulder, gazing through a window into the cloudless night sky; searching for Santa and his reindeer.

So as I ended the night with a cold, refreshing glass of milk and a famous bar cookie, I remembered why I adore the Christmas season so much. With all of my family in town from across the nation, smiles constantly fill the room, making my heart fill with happiness. They kept the belief alive, just as they had done since I was younger.