

REDCOAT WEATHER

A SOUTHERN GOTHIC HOLIDAY HORROR



ANTHONY KINCAID

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A Southern Gothic Holiday Horror

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For the readers who step willingly into the dark—
and keep turning the page anyway.

FOREWORD

To whoever picked up this little slice of darkness—thank you.

Stories like this don't come from a place of comfort. They crawl up from memories, from old creaking houses, from things our parents swore weren't real. You choosing to walk into the fog with me means more than I can cleanly say.

Christmas is supposed to be light, warmth, and promises kept. But some of us grew up knowing the holidays carry shadows too—quiet ones that sit on the porch steps and wait. This story came from that place, somewhere between faith and fear, between joy and the things that gnaw at it.

So here's my gift to you: a tale wrapped in butcher paper, tied with twine, still warm from the swamp's breath.

Not meant to frighten you, not entirely. Just meant to remind you that even in the darkest corners, something human still flickers.

Merry Christmas.

And if the fog turns red where you are tonight... don't open the door.

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THE RED FOG

Cypress Parish didn't have winters; it nursed a damp, simmering resentment of December. The cold never won, so the swamp cheated—pushing out a feverish steam that clung to the skin like wet wool. Christmas lights sagged under the humidity, their cheap reds and greens bleeding into the fog like bruises coming in fresh.

Isaac Reed stood on his front steps with a chipped mug of instant cocoa that tasted like hot cardboard and childhood propaganda. He was trying—God knew he was trying—to pretend this was a normal Christmas Eve. Inside, Mae was wrapping gifts with the enthusiasm of a girl who'd learned too young that magic was a luxury.

Kids in Cypress Parish stopped believing in Santa early. They learned about **Redcoat** instead.

Isaac stared at the tree line where the fog drifted around the cypress knees in slow, deliberate breaths. The swamp wasn't masking anything—it was watching.

A bloody light began to pulse within the fog. Isaac's knuckles went white on the mug.

“Daddy?” Mae’s voice floated from the doorway, thin and worried. “The fog’s turning red again.”

Isaac gripped the mug so hard it creaked. He didn’t want to look.

He looked anyway.

The fog pulsed with a deep, venous crimson—old blood swirling through bathwater, a dying sun sinking behind storm clouds. It glowed faintly, alive.

“Just swamp lights,” he lied. “Methane gas. Makes strange colors.”

Mae didn’t even blink at the lie. “Miss Ada said the red fog means he’s close. That he’s sniffing around.”

His smile cracked like mud in the heat. “Miss Ada says a lot.”

“But she’s always right,” Mae whispered.

A warm gust rolled through the pines, carrying magnolia sweetness spoiled by a sharp, copper rot. Isaac’s skin prickled.

“Inside,” he said, low and firm.

Mae slipped inside without argument. Isaac followed, bolting the door—a gesture as useful as locking a coffin from the inside.

Thirty minutes later came the tapping.

Tap.

Tap. Tap.

Not the front door.

The kitchen window.

Isaac moved toward it, every instinct howling *don't*. The red fog pressed up against the glass like muscle against skin. Something long and pale dragged a blackened nail down the pane—

Scrrrrape.

A crimson smear slid down the glass like a droplet of weeping blood.

Mae's whisper trembled from the living room. "Daddy... is he coming for us tonight?"

Isaac couldn't answer.

Outside, the fog brightened—no longer tinged red but burning like coals under a banked fire.



THE LEGEND OF REDCOAT

No one in Cypress Parish slept when the fog bled.

Isaac lit every lamp and candle, but the shadows moved like they had their own agenda. Mae curled on the couch clutching Mr. Hopps, one-button eye staring accusingly at the room.

A hard knock rattled the door.

Three sharp raps.

“Isaac Reed! Open this door right now! It’s Miss Ada!”

He yanked it open. Ada stormed in, wrapped in a shawl reeking of cedar, sassafras, and something old enough to remember the first mud. Her eyes were flint.

“Boy,” she said, “you’re in trouble.”

“We know,” Mae muttered.

Ada eyed the pulsing fog outside. “He’s early. Means he’s hungry.”

“I locked everything,” Isaac said. “Salted the sills, iron horseshoe—”

Ada sucked her teeth. “Baby, salt and iron keep haints out. Redcoat ain’t a haint. He’s consequence. He smells guilt like a dog smells meat.”

Mae's eyes pinned him.

Ada's gaze sharpened.

Isaac stared at the floor.

Outside, the fog throbbed like a slow heartbeat.

"You know the real story?" Ada asked, settling into the armchair like a storm cloud taking a seat. "Not the sugarcoated trash they tell at the general store? Listen fast."

THE WINTER SAINT

THAT ROTTED

The settlers dragged a northern legend down here—a benevolent winter spirit. The swamp rejected it. The heat warped it. The whispered sins of the parish soaked into it like tannins into water. It absorbed every lie, every cowardice, every buried shame.

The gift-giver turned debt-collector.

Redcoat.

Father Consequence.

The Christmas Reckoner.

"He only comes," Ada said, her voice low as the swamp's own hum, "for folks with rot inside. And he don't leave 'til he's cut it out."

A heavy *thump* shook the porch. Isaac opened the door.

Fog. Only fog.

But a small package lay at his feet.

Inside was Eleanor's wedding ring—cold, slick with river water, the one she wore the night she drowned. The one Isaac never retrieved because he froze on the bank and lied about trying.

Mae gasped.

Ada crossed herself.

And a cold breath brushed Isaac's neck—wet, earthy, and patient.

Redcoat had picked up the scent.



THE YEAR OF RECKONING

Isaac ran. Grab Mae. Get to the road. Get anywhere that wasn't here.

But the world stopped fifty feet from their home. The truck choked and died, smothered by the fog thick as flesh. They ran for the church.

Inside, panic had shape. Families clung together. Preacher Cole stood at the pulpit with a shotgun instead of a Bible.

“He don't like bright light,” Cole whispered. “Confuses him.”

Isaac shoved Mae into a pew. “Why us? Why always us?”

Cole's gaze flicked over Isaac. “Because someone's lying.”

The lamps fluttered. The stained glass glowed red.

The swamp breathed against the windows.

Ada's voice sliced across the room. “Say it, boy. Say it before he does.”

Mae looked at him—small, scared, knowing.

Then came the bells.

Clang... drag... clang...

Rust on stone.

Chains on bone.

Cole paled. “He’s marked someone.”

Isaac’s heart stuttered.

Through the window stood Eleanor—hair full of river moss, skin bloated, eyes pleading. Her hair dripped river water that hit the ground without a sound. Her hand beckoned and her mouth moved, forming his name, but the fog swallowed the sound.

Cole barked, “Don’t look! He mimics memory to drag you outside!”

But Isaac was already stepping forward.

Mae’s fingers clamped his sleeve. “Daddy, please—don’t. That’s not Mama.”

The bells stopped.

Silence slammed into the church.

A predator’s silence.



THE KNOCK ON THE TIN ROOF

All light died.

The darkness wasn't absence—it was presence. Heavy. Breathing. Rot-scented.

Then—

THUD.

The roof bowed inward. Dust rained. Something massive paced above them, dragging bells that screeched like metal on bone.

Cole raised the shotgun. “He can't come in unless we give fear room!”

A polite knock tapped the door.

Tap. Tap. Tap.

The oak door unlatched itself.

And Redcoat stepped through.

He ducked under the frame.

His shadow entered first.

The cold followed.

Wrongly tall. Too long in every direction. Beard a snarl of moss and river rot. Coat the color of clotted blood. Boots squelching with something that wasn't water.

His eyes were twin embers sunk deep in shadow.

The dripping sack in his fist hissed on the floorboards.

Cole lifted the shotgun—then flew backward, chest bursting not with blood but with black soil and roots.

Mae screamed.

Redcoat's head swiveled toward her. His voice seeped out like a drowning man's final gurgle:

“A... debt.”

Mae's breath seized—she was suffocating under the weight of him.

Isaac shoved himself between them. “Take me! It's my debt!”

Redcoat waited.

Isaac's confession tore out of him, each word a shard of glass ripped from his throat.

“I let her drown! The skiff flipped and she screamed for me and I froze! I never jumped in—I lied! I lied to everyone! I lied to my daughter! I lied to God! I didn't save her because I was scared,” he whispered. “I let the river take her because it was easier than facing it.”

He dropped to his knees.

Redcoat leaned down.

Blink.

Slow.

Final.

Mae's breath released.

Redcoat reached into the sack and dropped a sprig of holly at Isaac's feet.

Then he turned and walked into the mist.

His bells jingled once, soft as a last heartbeat.



CHRISTMAS MORNING

Mae woke on the porch swing, wrapped in a wool blanket.

Clean air.

Golden sun.

Fog burned away.

Not a trace of red.

But the house was empty.

No struggle. No sign.

Isaac was simply... gone.

On the welcome mat sat a box.

Butcher paper. Twine.

Inside, resting on clean moss, was her father's wedding ring—warm, polished, untouched by sin or river.

Mae clutched the box to her chest.

A single bell chimed from deep in the cypress grove—clear, final, and almost peaceful.

“Merry Christmas, Daddy,” she whispered.

A soft wind shifted through the pines, almost like an answer.

And all of Cypress Parish exhaled.

The End?

