

'T WAS THE NIGHT BEFORE THE UPRISING

'Twas the night before Christmas,
when all through the house
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse.
The boards had been nailed 'cross the windows with care
In hopes that the dead would pass by, unaware.

The children were sleeping--the ones who'd survived,
Though no one could say dreams of sugar-plums thrived,
And mama with her chainsaw, and I with my gun,
Were just praying our brains would be ours come the sun.

When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from my place to see what was the matter.
Away to the window I flew like a shot,
Prepared to do battle with ruin and with rot.

The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow
Gave the lustre of mid-day to zombies below.
When what did my wondering eyes there discern
But a miniature sleigh in a full four-point turn,

With a steely-eyed driver, a knife in his teeth,
Come here to distribute some holiday grief.
More rapid than eagles his coursers they came,
And he whistled, and shouted, and called them by name!

"Now Vincent! Now, Stephen! Now, Mira and Jessie!
On, Robert, Romero--time's come to get messy!
To the top of the porch! to the top of the wall!
Now dash away! Dash away! Dash away all!"

As dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly,
When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky.
So up to the house-top the coursers they flew,
With the sleigh full of weapons, and Santa Claus, too.

And then, in a twinkling, I heard on the roof
The prancing and pawing of each little hoof.
Then fire from heaven came showering down,
Igniting the zombies who clustered around.

They stumbled and fell, faces melting like tallow,
As a voice from behind me said, "Youth can be callow,
But son, this is war! Best find your guts quick!"
I turned, and I found myself facing...Saint Nick.

His eyes, how they squinted! His mouth, how it frowned!
He was angry and lean, not a spare ounce or pound.
A bundle of weapons was flung on his back,
And he looked like a soldier, just opening his pack.

"The dead have come looking for good girls and boys,
And they're not singing carols, they're not bringing toys.
You'd best come with me, if you want to survive.
You believed in me once. Let me keep you alive."

It may have been madness, it may have been fear,
But something about him made everything clear,
So I called for my children, I nodded my head.
"We've been good this year. Save us all from the dead."

He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work,
Booby-trapping the house 'gainst those undying jerks,
Then he led us all up to the roof and his sleigh,
Where we took to the air, and we soon were away.

There are undead galore at the North Pole, it's true,
But I'd rather give blood than be made into stew,
So we joined Vampire Santa and flew out of sight...
Happy Christmas to all, and to all, a good bite.

— MIRA GRANT, AUTHOR OF
FEED AND *DEADLINE*

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