

A Christmas for Vicky



Merry Christmas 2012



Chapter 1



“Women say ‘baby’ differently than men.” Spoke my bench companion.

I looked up from my reverie and stared a moment at the stranger with absolutely no recognition of where I was and what I was doing. A small bit of clarity flushed through my brain. I finally focused my thoughts on my temporary companion. His worn finger pointed towards a group of women and children. We were in a local park sitting hard against the playground. My absent gaze gave cause for him to repeat what he had just said.

“Women say ‘baby’ differently than men.” He repeated.

With little else to do today, I cocked my ear and listened to a conversation between two ladies. I heard the word ‘baby’ more than once and indeed women did say the word differently than men. I looked back toward my temporary companion and nodded in agreement.



“I agree. I don’t know how to exactly explain the difference, but it sounds more personal when they say baby.” I replied.

He nodded in the affirmative as if to formalize our understanding and then resumed his personal deliberations. The brief interlude did little to interrupt my thoughts. I regained my internal distance from the world quickly. I did note the bench was a bit harder today. Last night’s cold spell had stiffened the boards making sitting more uncomfortable. Still I preferred this perch. At least here I could watch Christmas come to town.

My wife was at her work and the kids were in school.

This left the house to me for more than a few hours. Longevity out of the daily workforce had provided a means to learn how to reduce the domestic duties to just under an hour most days. So to avoid the solitude and its heavy reminder of my current state of unemployment I usually took walks around the community. Often I ended up here, on the park bench, staring vacantly out towards nothing in particular.

More than a few times others would join me, mostly men, but on occasion a few females. So my current bench mate and his sudden comments weren't a surprise. All of us usually had one commonality, we had been actively employed for years and suddenly lost our positions. After years of trying to find new work, we now shared a state of hopelessness. Even the government no longer considered us unemployed. We had "left the workforce".

Unfortunately I found out first hand that job loss, especially

long term job loss, can not only make a person depressed, they can lose hope.

That loss of hope is what destroys a person's soul and makes them bitter. That was why I loved the Christmas season and the spirit the Christmas season brought. Christmas was more than love, it was hope, at least to me. When all else failed, the Christmas season gave me the will to carry on. It always had. I understood the need for Christmas.

Still Christmas wasn't year round. My family and I had to make a living. So I had turned to freelance work. While not regular employment it had stabilized our home income. Sometimes I even made more in freelance work than I made as an employee.

Still I missed the stable income and dependable insurance.



“Here she comes again. Time of year I guess.” My bench companion said as he pointed another finger towards a single woman walking slowly along the path.

I looked at the woman and thought I recognized her. She stopped at a spot just a few yards away and then looked around. She saw me looking and I quickly averted my eyes. I glanced her way again and watched her drop slowly to the ground. She touched a piece of ground before her and seemed to begin a silent sob. She caught it in her throat, stood up quickly and strode off in the direction she had come.

“Thought I recognized her.” I said to my companion.

“Probably did. But that was a few years ago. Her brother died right there.” My companion replied.



I turned to look at the spot and recall what I had forgotten. I turned back to ask my companion and saw that he had already left. Vanished actually, I didn't see any trace of him leaving or walking in any direction. I returned to my reverie until my phone indicated it was time to make dinner. I had become quite the chef since my layoff, to my wife and kids continued amazement and pleasure.

I rose and walked past the small plot of land the woman had so lovingly touched. I paused to give a measure of peace to someone I didn't know. I then left to stroll through town towards home. I smiled as I walked. It was the Christmas season again, holiday season to some I reminded myself. In any event the stores and streets were laden with decorations and the latest gifts and gadgets. On one occasion I was able to hear a small gathering of Christmas carolers just burst into song. It was a

wonderful moment. Hope was in the air.

I reached the old homestead and realized it was about time to get out the decorations for our home. Might even get the tree soon although getting a cut tree every year was often stretching the budget. I was willing to relinquish this small tradition when times got real rough a couple of years back, but my wife would have none of it.

She knew how much the cut tree meant to me. She knew of its hold in my memory of my own family. She knew it was Christmas for me. She also knew how much Christmas meant to me. So we got what we could afford. It was a straggly old tree, but it was a cut tree. We decorated it best we could and placed the few small gifts we were able to scrounge under it. It was a sad reminder at the time of how far we had fallen. But it was also a measure of hope of what we would overcome. I remember it fondly now. It was my Charlie Brown tree.



Chapter 2



Dinner went fine. The kids, teenagers actually, came home and dug in immediately. I had to fend off more than a few attempts at the main course to ensure there was adequate sustenance for mom when she arrived a bit later. I ate my meals with my wife. This gave us a few moments to share the day and allow my kids to finish any homework.

Dinner finished I toddled off to my office. Mom and kids cleaned up the kitchen. We had agreed some time ago that if Dad cooked they would clean. It worked for me as it gave me time to check my emails for potential jobs and freelance work. As I scurried through the emails I found one or two freelance possibilities and replied. No responses were given to the latest job applications so I set back and opened up the browser. I wanted to see if I could recall the small woman's name I saw earlier at the park.



It didn't take long. With the park as a search term and a date set for a few years earlier it all became crystal clear in the images splashed across my screen. I remembered it well once my memory was jarred awake. There was a young man that had been shot and killed in the park. The assailant had been acquitted at trial after claiming self-defense. The shooting and trial had enraged the town polarizing those supporting the gunman and those supporting the slain. It was sordid and messy. I had not known it had happened just yards from where I frequently sat in the park.

I saw the woman's face in the crowd. I did some searching

and found it was the young man's sister. The pictures showed a frightened, lost, and sad young girl. I had never really noticed her until now. I also had never really noticed he died so close to Christmas.

I do remember the death and trial drove a stake in this town. Opportunists on both sides saw it as a means to address their issues and push their causes. The news media, desperate to sell a few more ads, published only the most sensational information. The results of this confrontation, and so many later incidents, lead to a hardened electorate and legislatures unable and unwilling to yield on any issue.

I printed out a few of the articles and took them to share with my wife. My wife, as usual, was succinct in her assessment.

"I wonder. How is she doing now?" She asked.



I wanted to talk about the societal implications and larger macro issues of the day in regards to this incident. But my wife was concerned about the person. It made me feel a bit small.

"I don't know. She seemed fine. A little skittish." I replied.

"I wouldn't be fine if someone killed my brother." Sarah, my teenage daughter said as she walked in on our conversation.

"All evidence to the contrary, sis." Evan, my teenage son said as he took a seat across from Sarah.

Sarah threw a pillow at him and stuck out her tongue.

"I could make an exception." Sarah grinned.

The conversation continued and evolved, but I could not get the question out of my mind.

"How is the young woman doing now?"





Chapter 3

Morning routine done, I headed out the door to see what the town had in store. I made up my mind to do a little window shopping and see if I could find something nice for Christmas for my wife. I had stashed a little freelance money aside just for the occasion. I ended up at the local coffee house and walked in for light refreshment. However, the great smell and warmth inside created a desperate need for a small cake along with the coffee. I decided to linger a bit.

“Little girls squeal when they play. Seem to like it.” A familiar voice said.

I looked up from my coffee and saw the same worn finger from the park pointing to a group of kids playing on the town square. The kids were running around the square and sure enough the little girls were squealing with some delight.



“Seems to be a requirement.” I replied and smiled.

He nodded at my reply and took to drinking his coffee. Shortly his finger pointed at the door to the coffee house.

“I think she is with child.” He said.

I looked up and coming through the door was the woman from yesterday. She cowered as she walked through the door neither looking right nor left. But, she was with child.

“I believe she is.” I said and turned to look at my mysterious companion.

But once again, he was gone. A young couple were sitting at his table. I looked back toward the small woman. She had her cup of coffee, but could find nowhere to sit. I stood up and offered a chair. She looked at me with terror filling her eyes. Without a word she went quickly to the door and out into the cold. I was stunned at the reaction.

I related the encounter to my wife at that night's dinner. I am not a tall man, nor am I singularly athletic. In my wife's terms I am very "non-threatening". So neither she nor I could fathom why the offer of a chair could strike such terror in one woman. The incident seemed destined to remain a mystery, so my wife and I started drawing out the boxes to begin decorating for Christmas.



My spirits lifted immediately. Christmas was my favorite time of year. Though we were not as well off as years past, times were moving forward. I looked forward to sharing what we could with family and friends. It was a time for joy. It was the one time of year we could all envision peace. I believed in Christmas and the Christmas spirit. Anything seems possible at Christmas.

After unpacking the Christmas boxes and developing a plan for decorating. We took inventory of necessities for completion of our self-appointed tasks. A lack of milk, butter, along with suitable ornament hangers demanded a late night trip to the local big box before I turned in. As the wife had an early meeting I volunteered to retrieve the necessary articles by myself. It wasn't too long before I was bundled against the cold of the night and

headed out the door.

The hour was getting late and the store park-



ing lot was quite empty. A few cars here and there towards the front were the on-

ly signs of activity. I parked in the most convenient place close to the entrance and exited my car. A figure stood next to their car looking away from the lighted entrance of the store. The figure seemed quite familiar. When its hand extended to point in the direction of a dark and isolated part of the lot I knew it to be my unnamed companion.

“Darkness has no sound.” My companion said.

“Not that I know of.” I replied.

I was rather pleased to see him actually. I was beginning to think I had been imagining him.

“She looks alone.” He stated.

I looked to where he was pointing. A car sat dark and unmoving. Inside was a figure. A light from a passing car shown in the interior and revealed the woman I had seen earlier. She did appear alone and lost.

I reached into my car’s trunk and retrieved the flash light I stored there for emergencies. I flipped on the light and began walking over to the woman’s car. I looked back for my companion, but he had vanished once again. These encounters with him were beginning to get a bit confusing.

I made my way over to the vehicle ensuring my flashlight led



the way. I fully expected the woman to start her car and drive off as soon as she saw me. The woman did try to start the car when she saw me. But it obviously wouldn’t begin to start. She beat on the steering wheel

and reached over to make sure all of the doors were locked.

Then she sat in terror as I approached.

I did hesitate when I saw her reactions to me coming toward her car. I slowed my walk and approached the car more cautiously. When I got to the driver side window I leaned down and shined the light to reveal my face.

“Hello. My name is Paul. Do you need some help?” I asked.

The woman shook her head no and pleaded with her eyes to ask me to leave.

“Do you want me to get the police?” I asked.

That seemed to set her off in a frenzy. She violently shook her head no once again. Suddenly what I could describe as a severe cramp hit her hard. She bent over and her whole body tensed in one tight spasmodic muscle. I had seen something similar to this when my children were born. My wife had these type of cramps and often used them as a moment to curse me and all men. I knew I couldn’t leave her there. As soon as the cramp passed I spoke again.

“What is your name?” I asked.

She looked at me and breathed heavily. She was frightened and alone. She knew she needed help, if not for her, the child.

“Vicky.” She said.

“Look Vicky. I can’t leave you out here. If you won’t let me call the police is there anyone else I can call to help you?” I asked.

She nodded her head no.

“I’m going to get my car and take you to the hospital.” I said.

Vicky hesitated then nodded her head in agreement. I moved quickly to my car and drove it over to get Vicky. After an awkward fashion we had her in the passenger’s seat and began

the short drive to the hospital.

“Please don’t tell anyone



I'm here." Vicky pleaded.

"Why would I? Who would I tell?" I asked.

"The news media. The police. Anyone. Once they know I am here it will all be bad again." Vicky started to cry and sob.

"Why would it be bad?" I asked more than a bit bewildered.

"Because of my brother." Vicky said with a sad voice.

"The one that was killed some time back?" I asked.

Vicky went dark for a moment, then came back to the present.

"Yes." Vicky said so very softly.

Another cramp hit Vicky and I held her hand as she worked through it.

"Tell me about your brother. What was he like? Did you get along?" I said.

I hoped the conversation would take her mind off of the cramps. I also hoped calming her down

would give me a chance to make it to the hospital. I didn't want to give birth in my car.

Vicky smiled at me at the request.

"You're the first one to ask me about him." Vicky said.

"So tell me." I replied.

"He loved Christmas." Vicky smiled at the recollection. "We used to get all excited about Santa. He would tease me unmercifully. He would sing too. He had a great voice and loved to sing. He was so tall. At least to me he was. He was my big brother and made sure I was looked after. Wouldn't take nobody messing with me. His eyes shown with wonder and he looked so forward to the future. He was strong, tall, and handsome. He was a loving brother and I was his sister."



Vicky sighed at the last revelation. She looked out the window as if recapturing a very fond memory. Her mood quickly changed.

“He wasn’t that monster the news media made of him. He was a human being. He wasn’t a cause.” Vicky spat out.

I started to pull into the emergency room entrance and Vicky became nervous again.

“If I give them my name the news media and all those kooks will show up here. What should I do? I don’t want my baby to have to deal with that.” Vicky said in a panic.

“Don’t worry. I’ll handle it. You just go have the baby.” I said.

The woman just needed to be here and have the baby. I sure didn’t need her in my car. I did what I had to and made sure she got care. That is how I adopted a new child in a matter of moments.





Chapter 4

I pulled up to the entrance and helped her out of the car. Medical personnel moved forward to help us as soon as they saw her condition. They moved her toward emergency care as I asked them to take care of my daughter. They appeared a bit surprised, but continued working. I told them I would be right back as soon as I parked the car.

They disappeared inside the hospital. I joined them shortly wondering how all this was going to work out. When I re-entered the hospital a nurse took my arm and led me down the hall.

“Vicky won’t let us do anything until her father is here. You need to come with us.” The nurse demanded.

I remember thinking this had gotten out of hand quickly. But I followed the nurse and soon found myself at Vicky’s side once more. As soon as Vicky saw me she relaxed and the nursing staff went to work. I sat on a stool at the edge of all the commotion in clear view of Vicky at all times.

“It’ll only be a few hours more.” The nurse replied to my unspoken question.

I realized I should call my wife. I didn’t really know how that conversation was going to play out so I just dialed.

“Sharon? Yeah. I’m alright. I’m just at the hospital with our daughter Vicky. Yes. Vicky. She is going to give birth in a couple hours so I am staying here with her. Yeah. I’m pretty sure I



could use the help.” I said.

I have to give it to my wife. She didn’t flinch. I don’t know what that says about me or her, but she was on her way. Vicky meanwhile was grinning between her cramps. I just threw up my hands and nodded. The nurse’s left us alone for a bit and Sharon wouldn’t be here for a while. I moved over to Vicky to offer help and some conversation.

“Mind telling me why you were alone?”

Vicky’s smile left her face and she sighed the sigh of the weary.

“When my brother died, it became a cause for different sides with multiple beliefs. Gun rights, second amendment rights, gun-control, someone even involved child pornography. My brother just became a cause, a symbol to use for or against someone’s agenda. The glare of the spotlight was



so bright. It became so hard. Every action my brother did or had done was scrutinized for its relevance to a cause. Every time I went to school, or a movie, every time I wanted to be alone it was written about and analyzed.

Do you know they even made targets of my brother’s image? Then they took guns and rifles and shot at it and laughed. As if he wasn’t human? As if he never cared, had compassion, or loved? Almost as if he wasn’t anything but an image. My god he was my brother! Not a thing to mock. He was seventeen when he was killed, an unarmed seventeen year old boy.”

Vicky paused to regain her composure from her outburst then continued.



“The trial and result only heightened our family’s exposure to these causes. My family fell apart. You have to understand. My family was a loving family. We reveled in each other’s company. Christmas was our favorite time of year. It was how we connected as a family. We looked forward to it and enjoyed carols, candy, presents, and the great food. But when my brother died so close to Christmas even this small joy was ripped from our lives. My mom was so devastated by her loss she became a vicious activist. My father became just sad. He lost his will to live and eventually died.

When I got pregnant I realized that I was lost. I no longer had any hope. If I was going to make it for me and my child I had to find myself again. I figured if I could get Christmas back, get hope back, in my life, maybe I could reclaim that lost part of me. The best Christmases we had were here where my brother had been killed. So I came back here. I thought that maybe, maybe, if I came back and had Christmas



here I might bring it back into my life, chase away the demons. But I had to be careful. All the kooks and causes would come out if they knew I was back in town. Last time they found out where I was at they were picketing everywhere. I lost my job and had to leave in the middle of the night.”

Vicky sighed again and steeled herself against another cramp.

“The reason I am alone is because I have to be. I’m sorry I treated you so bad. But I thought you might just be another one

of those kooks. I was terrified they were going to find me again. Paul, please understand. This may be a cause to some, but to me he was my brother. He was my family. I loved him and he loved me. I wanted my child to know his love and love Christmas as we had. I wanted Christmas and the Christmas spirit back in my life as I began a family once more.”

I sat and listened to Vicky tell her story as tears filled her eyes with the memories. I started welling up more than once at the telling. It had never occurred to me how our obsessions affected real people. The opinions we profess, the causes we embrace, have real living people behind them. They are all affected by what we say and do to and about them. But I personally knew how important Christmas could be. It suddenly became important to me to make sure Vicky got her Christmas and her Christmas spirit.

As another cramp hit, Vicky grabbed my hand causing excruciating pain in my bones. Just then Sharon walked through the door with Sarah close at hand.





Chapter 5

Both Sharon and my daughter Sarah had big grins on their faces, seemingly having some inner pleasure with my discomfort. I on the other hand was a mixture of sheepish guilt and terrible pain. I had forgotten how powerful a woman's grip was when she was in labor.

Sarah moved over and grabbed a cloth, wetted it with cold water and patted Vicky's brow.

"How you doing, sis?" Sarah grinned.

Vicky looked bewildered at me.

"Your sister Sarah decided to accompany your mother Sharon." I replied to the stare.

Vicky grinned.

"Doin' fine right now, sis. They say only a couple more hours." Vicky replied.

Sharon stood with her arms crossed at the door. I had seen that stance more than once and I knew explanations were due.

"Uh, Vicky. I have to talk with your mom right now. Sarah will look after you. I'll be right back."

I followed Sharon out the door and we made our way down to the coffee shop. I started to speak on the way and Sharon held her finger up. I waited until we found a small table away from any prying ears. I then related everything to Sharon up to the moment they entered the emergency room.



"I send you to the store for milk and ornaments and you

come back with a child and baby. You are no longer going to the store without supervision. Let's get back to see how my grandchild is coming." Sharon grinned.

I really loved Sharon at that moment. We made our way back to the room. On the way I noticed a bit of commotion at the Emergency Room receiving desk. An angry man was being rebuffed by the attending nurse. With a threat of security imminent he turned and left. The nurse turned briefly towards me with a look of exasperation on her face. Curiosity compelled me to move forward to ask about the incident.

"He's insisting the sister of that murdered teenager is in the hospital. Some axe to grind about his personal rights." She replied in a fluster. "As if his issues are important at this hour."

I thanked her and went back to Sharon. She and I couldn't believe it. We wondered how long this harassment had been going on. When would they leave this woman alone? When would she have her brother, her Christmas, again?

Sharon went back into Vicky's room and promised not to say anything about what had just happened. I called my son and asked if he could bring my laptop to the hospital. I then took up a position by the room Vicky was using for her delivery. I was determined to ensure that no one intrude on this, her one moment to be with her child. Shortly Evan arrived with my laptop. His confusion as to be called out to the hospital at this early hour brought a small grin to my face. I told him to go in and talk to his mother and sisters. That remark even caused more confusion.



Chapter 6



I sat down at one of those hard plastic chairs under the glare of cold luminescent lighting surrounded by beige hospital walls. I opened the laptop and found a wireless service I could use. With what little skill I had developed in my time working in public relations, and as a freelancer, I composed a note. In the note I told of the personal pain inflicted on so many for the personal causes of others. I pointed out that these people they scandalized and idolized were in fact just people. They didn't want to stand, nor did they stand, for any cause.

I told them that tonight one of those people was celebrating a new life. One of those they turned from the kindness of humanity and the love of Christmas was under my care. Tonight those who wanted to grind an axe or promote a belief were not welcome. They would not pass tonight. Tonight was not for them. Tonight was for action, not activists.

I signed the note and then sent it to the various blogs and social networks I subscribed. I didn't know if would help or hurt. But I believed I had to do something. I closed my laptop and leaned my head back to gain the courage I had try to convey. In a few moments the door to the hospital room opened and Evan came out. He had his smart phone in his hand. If forgot he was on one of my networks.



"You aren't alone, Dad." Was all he said and sat down next to me.

We sat as guards against an uncertain storm. I was never so proud. Shortly Sarah poked her head out. She saw father and

son of one mind. I turned at the opening of the door just in time to see her smile.

“Vicky is getting really close. It shouldn’t be too long. Mom’s got it under control. Don’t worry about us or Vicky.” Sarah gently told us.

The angry man could be heard shouting at the end of the hall. I got up to confront him if necessary. My son stood with me. We could see him waving a sign and trying to force his way through. Just as we thought I was going to have to defend my words two burley security guards grabbed him by the arms and literally threw him into the street. One of the guards remained by the door and the other one followed the nurse back towards us.

“Not tonight.” Was all the nurse said as she walked by.

The guard stood next to us with arms folded.

“Not tonight.” He said as he nodded his commitment.

Time passed slowly as we waited for the baby to join us. Evan, the guard, and I paced, sat, and paced again nervously as we waited. The guard’s radio crackled and he was asked to come to the admitting desk. He motioned us to stay there and he moved back to the main room. We could see a number of guards moving into the main waiting area as a horde seemed to be forming outside the door. I began to wonder if what I had done was the right thing to do. I worried for my wife, son, daughter, and Vicky.

I moved forward to see what was happening and cautioned

Evan to stay by the door. I looked through



one of the small windows
placed in each door and wit-
nessed something I never



thought to see. Men, women, teens, and children of all stripes were holding hands and facing out. Joining them, standing behind them, was hospital security. Not a sign, nor a placard, nor sound came from these solid people. They just stood silently between a group of activists and the door to the emergency room.

I motioned to Evan to come and take a look. He moved forward and saw what was happening. Then he moved through the door and joined the group silently standing. I watched and the silent group grew larger and larger as more people came. The more that came the more they pushed the activists back. Finally the activists could be heard no more and peace entered the hospital. I went back to the door in amazement of what had happened. As I began to set down, Sharon opened the door.

“Time to come in grandpa.” She snickered.

I rose and went into the room. There stood Sarah next to Vicky, both with huge smiles upon their faces. In Vicky’s arms was a lovely child.



Chapter 7

The news media had come to report on what was happening. Many of the news outlets were egged on by the activists. But by the time the media got there all the activists and most of those guarding the emergency room had left. Of the remaining few they tried to interview they merely replied, "Not tonight." With little more than a simple comment to report, the whole incident died before it became news.

Later that week, after escaping the hospital in the middle of the night, Vicky came to stay with us for a bit. Sharon, the kids, and I never mentioned any of what happened to family or friends. Vicky came to us in a judgment free zone. She also came in time to create Christmas.

We decorated the tree, sang Carols, wrapped presents and saw way too many Christmas shows.

Sharon and I acted like the proverbial grandparents cooing and picking up the baby just to play with it. Evan and Sarah were as good as an Aunt and Uncle could be, as well as a loving brother and sister.

Suddenly Christmas



was upon us and it couldn't have been any better. We all opened presents, played with the baby, laughed with each other, and ate a large Christmas meal. Vicky had gotten totally into the spirit and made way to many cookies, candies, and cakes. We thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. But it just wasn't done.



At a pre-determined time I made my way to the park to sit where I usually passed the time. I looked around and saw the lights and looked for strangers. I waited and watched and when I was sure it was time I called Sharon.

A few minutes passed then I heard the voice. My bench companion was here.

"Baby's don't cry like everyone else." He said as he pointed to the path.

I looked down the path and saw Vicky, Sarah, Evan, Sharon, and the baby coming towards us. I listened and heard the baby cry.

"No they don't. Seem to use two syllables." I said.

"She looks like she found Christmas." He said.

I looked at Vicky as she knelt where her brother had died. She cried a few tears and then placed the baby on her lap as she patted the ground. A smile crossed her face and a spirit not seen before returned to Vicky's soul.

I turned to look at my companion. He looked at me and a smile crossed his worn face. It was a smile as warm and comforting as any I had ever known. Christmas filled my soul to over-



flowing. I heard the baby cry and turned back to Vicky. When I turned my head towards my companion he was gone.

The “takers” and “activists” got the message at the hospital. They stopped stalking Vicky. She was actually able to have a life. She never forgot that Christmas. To this day Christmas and the Christmas spirit is always kept close to her heart. Vicky eventually found a job and moved on. She always came back for Christmas, bringing our “adopted” grandbaby with her. Evan and Sarah might as well have been her real sister and brother. As Aunt and Uncle they excelled.

I would like to say I found a steady job and returned full time to the work force. But as it turned out I apparently was well read over the Internet. The freelance work began to take up so much time I had no time left over for “real” work. To Sharon’s delight I still cook while she pursues an unexpected career she loves.



The whole night is burned into my memory including the terror in Vicky’s eyes and the fool that tried to storm her hospital room. When I write my articles now or work with other’s I try to remember that no matter what I see before me, they are just people. They live, laugh, cry, and love just as I do. They are not toys to be played with or statistics to move across a spreadsheet. What I say or do has consequences on their lives. I wonder if we all remembered this would the whole country be less polarized and less afraid. Would they work together to



solve our problems instead of
fight to prove a point? The
paranoid “kooks” and



“takers” have had the stage for far too long. It’s time for them to
retire. It is time for the rest of us to stand and say “not tonight.”

Of course that may just be the meaning of Christmas and the
Christmas spirit, everyone working unselfishly together to make
it better for all. I wonder what my bench companion would say
to that.



Happy New Year!

Don't Forget Santa's Cookies!

