

BLACK FRIDAY

**A Short Story by
Rory R. Olsen © 2007**

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There was a sense of excitement and purpose in the faces of the ladies at the breakfast table this Black Friday morning. Perhaps the most excited of all was Judge Sean Riley's bride, Jolene. Jo, his tall, freckle faced barefoot brunette in a blue robe the color of her eyes, was going to hit the stores with her two step daughters—Pat and Mo—in an hour or so.

Pat, in a bright red robe, was also barefoot and had blonde hair as long as Jo's dark brown mane, which trailed down to way past her shoulders. Although normally serious and reserved, today Pat was in a warm and smiling mood.

Mo had shoulder length blonde hair and was wearing a very sensible long, blue nightshirt with the Southern University logo emblazoned on its front side. She was also wearing a pair of moccasins. Mo wasn't quite as peppy and outgoing as she usually was. Instead, she was radiating a calm serenity, akin to the mood of Sean's two cats—Law and Equity—who were sitting on the sofa in the living room.

Judge Sean Riley looked as drab as a monk in his ratty old gray robe, well worn tattersail pajamas and bedroom slippers. He was looking forward to going back to bed to nap with his two furry mistresses for another hour or two before doing some running and then watching football.

As they finished their breakfasts, the ladies were in a good mood. Jo had a big grin on her face—justifiably so as things had turned out.

“Anyone of y'all want to argue now with my description of my family's annual Thanksgiving's get together as havin' a bit of everything—blood, corn whiskey, a fist fight or two and gunfire included?”

Mo, Pat and Sean all shook their heads. It was just that Pat shook her head much more slowly than her sister and father.

While Jo was refilling everyone's coffee cup, Mo added some ice to the ice bag on Sean's right hand. Mo said,

"If it still hurts tomorrow, we'll need to get you to a doctor to get an X-ray."

Sean flexed his hand and said that it felt a lot better. He indicated that he hoped that by tomorrow he would be able to use the hand again without discomfort.

Mo looked skeptical and said, "Let me check it out tomorrow before you decide to use it too much."

Pat said, "Sister dear, helping out on one delivery didn't quite make you a doctor. Let daddy alone! He's a big boy."

Jo intervened before Mo and Pat got into one of their sororal spats, saying,

"You should be happy to know that I was able to wash the smell out of your jeans last night. Aren't you glad that I brought along an extra flannel shirt. The washing machine wasn't able to do much for it though."

Pat added,

"Mo, you'll need to clean out daddy's truck today and get all that straw and hay out of the back seat. How'd you manage to get that stuff all over you yesterday? You didn't happen to roll around in the hay with that cute, young vet after delivering the calf, did you?"

Sean stepped into the conversation saying,

"Mo, I'm sure that when you complete your med school applications, you'll be able to work in your assisting in delivering a calf somehow. That will probably catch their eye."

Pat smugly suggested that maybe Mo should consider going to vet school instead of med school after graduation. Mo said that if she did, it would certainly help her deliver Pat's first baby, which she guessed would be coming around in a year or so, based on what she'd seen last night.

Jo interjected,

"I see that you two discovered why the Scruggs Family annual Thanksgiving bash is always so much fun. You can talk about what happened there afterward for days on end. Momma invited that young vet, Dr. Tannenberg, because he wasn't able to go home for the holiday 'cause he was mindin' the store for the older vet that he works for. From what I

gathered, he won't be there too much longer. He told me that come next school year, he'll be teaching at the vet school at State, his alma mater."

Mo smiled at that and said,

"Pat, you shouldn't knock veterinarians. Their practice is just as difficult as practicing medicine on people, but they have to have a better bedside manner."

Pat thought about saying something cute at the comment, but her headache reminded her that she was equally vulnerable, so she just smiled. Mo continued,

"They have to be very good, gentle doctors—better than human doctors—because their patients all come with either sharp teeth, horns or outweigh them considerably. When their patients are unhappy, they have a lot more immediate concerns than malpractice suits."

Jo said,

"Mo, its a shame that Dr. Tannenberg received the call when he did to deliver that calf. You missed out on all the fun."

Mo asked,

"How did Pat manage to out shoot you; your brother, Danny; and that young Marine lieutenant that she was flirting with to no avail?"

Jo said,

"I didn't shoot because of being pregnant—the gunfire carries too many toxins for a pregnant woman to be around. So, as after a few preliminary rounds, the competition had only four people left in it—Lt. Ackermann, Danny, Pat and Sean. Danny wiped out on the next round, which really annoyed him to no end, since being beaten out by an old ambulance chaser who never served his country was a major blow to his ego."

Jo sipped on her apple juice for a second and continued,

"Sean fell out on the next round, but it was close. After that, it was Pat and Lt. Ackermann. By the time that Pat finally won, they were shooting at a range of 125 yards. I'm amazed that either of you could hit anything with an old, revolver like that."

Sean jumped in here.

“I guess that Lt. August Ackermann must have been really impressed with Pat’s shooting ability because after that, I noticed that he could take his eyes off of her. I guess that those naval academy grads haven’t changed much, have they Jo?”

Jo laughed and said,

“Sean, you know my father will say without prompting that the only thing that keeps the Corps runnin’ is the non-coms and the mustangs.”

Pat said,

“Jo, I didn’t make a fool of myself did I?”

Jo smiled and said,

“Fortunately, Momma cut those corn squeezin’s with enough water and ice to protect the lieutenant’s virtue. A couple of inches more and things might have turned out different.”

Mo giggled and Pat blushed at the comment.

Jo, not wanting Pat to suffer any more than she was already, turned to Sean and said,

“I gather my forecast was accurate.”

Sean said,

“Precious, the Delphic Oracle couldn’t have done a better job. Just as you predicted, if I beat Danny at target shooting, he’d try to provoke a fight, which he did about twenty minutes later.”

Jo laughed and said,

“Either Danny’s gettin’ old or has slowed down his drinkin’. I was surprised that it took him that long.”

Sean said,

“And as you predicted, your father took all of the males present into the barn, where he said that if we had a problem, we could solve it the Old Corps way—with our fists. So, we stripped to the waist. We listened to your father explain Queensbury Rules to us and shook hands. Then your father signaled us that it was time to begin.”

Jo asked, “Did you taunt him like I told you to?”

Sean said,

“Once we got into the center of the ring, but a bit out of range, he started to trash talk. I ignored him and feinted a couple of time, when he finally stopped spouting off, I said something like, *Danny, you’ve probably made it through life intimidating people with your size. But seeing you with your shirt off, I realize that you’re too damn fat and old to do much more than talk. You better apologize before I have to hurt you.*”

Jo giggled and inquired,

“Did it work?”

Sean laughed and said,

“He performed just as you predicted. He closed the distance and swung a big, slow roundhouse punch with his right to my head. I ducked and let him have two sets of two right to the breadbasket. When he doubled over, I threw a left hook for his jaw but he backed up just far enough so I hit him squarely in the nose. After that, he fell to his knees and threw up. Your dad, just to add insult to injury, hosed him down when he was on the ground.”

Jo said,

“My guess was that Danny and his dogs will be sleeping together for the next days—the poor dogs. I predict that in the next few hours, his poor wife, Lydia, will call to apologize and on Tuesday or Wednesday of next week, you’ll receive a handwritten apology.”

When Sean asked, “You sure about that?” Jo replied,

“Lydia knows just what to do. She’ll wear her shortest and sexiest night gowns every night until Danny grovels for forgiveness. Part of her price will be for him to write a nice letter of apology.”

Sean, being a man, understood that Lydia had the upper hand in that situation. Mo and Pat both had looks on their faces that indicated that they were storing away this knowledge for future use.

Jo ended the conversation by saying,

“Momma and daddy were wonderin’ if we’d be willin’ to hold the next family Thanksgiving here, since they’re sellin’ the farm to Danny. Mo and Pat, I’ll have a young baby, your father and law school to contend with. Will you help?”

Mo said, “Sure. Can I invite a date?”

Jo said, “Okay, but only if he promises not to deliver any calves until the dishes are all done.”

Mo laughed in response.

Pat responded, “Sure. I’m not sure that I’ll have a date.”

Jo smiled and said, “I’m sure that both of you will.”

Sean just smiled, knowing that he was badly outnumbered, his lovely daughters were growing up nicely and Jo had been accepted as the mistress of Chez Riley. He had much to be thankful for that day.