

LAW MAN SHORT STORY

“A Christmas with the Lawsons After CUBS WIN!!!”

MARA

“**A**RE YOU SERIOUS?”
“What?”
“How many of those do you have?”

Mitch jerked his head toward the t-shirt I was wearing.

A tee that had a white flag with a big blue “W” on it, red fireworks exploding around it with the Chicago Cubs’ “C” under it.

One could say I went a little bit nuts this season (and last, and pretty much every season) buying Cubs tees. But definitely this season.

I looked back to my husband and answered, “Seven thousand, two hundred and twenty-two.”

He grinned at me and asked, “Did we get another closet I don’t know about?”

“Don’t be smart,” I retorted.

“You married me because I’m smart.”

I absolutely did not.

I married him because he was beyond perfect. He loved me. He loved my niece and nephew, Bud and Billie. He took care of all of us like he was born to do just that. And because he was outrageously hot.

Mitch came to me and put his hands to my hips.

Bending his head to me, he kept up the interrogation (not a surprise, he was a cop). “We all gonna get Cubs gear for Christmas?”

My eyes slid to the side because that was a yes and no answer.

The no part was that they weren’t *only* going to get Cubs gear for Christmas.

The yes part was that they were all definitely going to get a bunch of Cubs gear for Christmas.

It wasn’t just because Mitch was a cop that he read my face astutely, prompting him to remark, “You do know, outside you, this is a Colorado Rockies family. Not to mention, Bud’s living and breathing the dream to play for the Rockies one day.”

I knew this. I survived this knowledge every day.

My nephew, who lived with Mitch and I, was loved by Mitch and I like we’d made him ourselves and loved Mitch and I like crazy, was a really good baseball player. That’s what he wanted to be when he grew up. And all he could talk about was playing for the Rockies.

I could handle this, just barely, due to the fact we lived in Denver.

I was still hoping to sway him toward my Cubbies.

“You’re not gonna give up tryin’ to make him love the Cubs,” Mitch noted.

I narrowed my eyes on him.

Really?

Sometimes having a husband who was a cop, who was smart, who knew me through and through and who didn't know when to keep his mouth shut was annoying.

Luckily, he was hot, so even through narrowed eyes, I could still see him and that made my being annoyed not *that* annoyed.

I decided to change the subject and asked, "Are we going to the Christmas party Tyra's throwing at the Compound?"

Mitch blew out a sigh and looked over my head, muttering, "How I got to the point my social life includes hangin' with a bunch of vigilante bikers at their Compound, I will never know."

"Yes you do," I retorted. "You were there, helping to save Tyra's life when that lunatic kidnapped her. It's not like bikers aren't loyal, Mitch. You did that for Tyra and Tack, you're forever part of the Chaos posse."

"Yeah," he mumbled his agreement, not looking too broken up about that.

Still, I understood. He was a cop. They were vigilante bikers. It was what it was with that twain not likely to ever meet.

But since they were family too, of a sort, it worked.

"So does that mean we're going?" I pushed.

He grinned again at me. "Yeah."

That made me smile at him.

Which made him kiss me.

"Gross!" Bud shouted, coming in and throwing his baseball mitt on the kitchen bar.

Billie, tagging along after her big brother like she always did, just came right to us and threw her arms around our hips, her head tipped back, a huge smile on her face.

She was growing to be not such a little girl anymore.

But she'd always be our little girl.

"Hey, gorgeous," Mitch murmured to Billie.

"Hey, Mitch," she stated brightly back.

Mitch's already soft face got even softer staring down at our girl.

I just watched.

I watched a lot.

Because it was always a good show.

I was really glad the Cubs won the World Series (like . . . *really*).

And I loved Christmas with my family so I couldn't wait for the big day.

But I didn't need either.

This was due to the fact that every day was Christmas for me, Bud and Billie.

And this was due to the fact that we had Mitch.

* * *

MITCH

"YOU LIKE IT? Do you like it? Do you like it, like it, like it, Auntie Mara?" Billie asked excitedly.

Mitch watched as his wife didn't move.

She just sat there on the floor of their living room by the tree with the mess of Christmas wrapping all around,

their spent cups of coffee, the kids' empty mugs of cocoa, the scraped-clean plates of the sausage, cheese and egg Christmas breakfast casserole Mara served up during the festivities, and she stared at the long, narrow frame in her hands.

"Does she like it?" Bud leaned into Mitch to whisper.

Mitch continued to watch his wife so he saw the tear slide down her face.

"Yeah, Bud, I think she likes it," he whispered back.

Mara lifted her eyes to Mitch.

Another tear fell.

While it did, she smiled.

Yeah.

She liked it.

* * *

IT WAS AFTERNOON Christmas day when Mitch got out his measuring tape, a pencil, his hammer and the picture hook.

He went to the wall by the TV, measured, made the mark on the wall and then tapped in the picture hook.

He set his tool aside, hefted up the long, narrow frame that he'd rested against the media cabinet, and he hung it by the wire at its back on the hook. He straightened it. Stepped away. Moved forward to straighten it further. And he stepped away again.

It was perfect.

Starting at one side with a round white patch with a stitched blue circle at the outer edge, a big red "C" in the middle that started the word "Cubs" there were five pictures beside it of Mara wearing a Cubs jersey.

The first, she was sitting on the couch holding a toss pillow to her chest, the edge of it lifted and pressed to her lips, her eyes glued to the TV screen, her body, even arrested in the photo, visibly tense.

The second, the pillow was forgotten. She was leaned forward, her hands up at her sides, her face in profile expectant, her lips parted.

The next, she was caught in the middle of leaping from the couch, the pillow flying, her hands over her head, her mouth wide open, her face a picture of joy.

The next, the kids were bouncing around her, holding on to her as she held on to them, all of them clearly in the middle of an exultant celebration.

And the last, she had her hands clasped together under her chin, her face illuminated by the television screen, a happy smile on her lips, tears running down her cheeks.

This ended with another white patch with a big red "C," a blue bear cub walking through it.

In gold letters under the photos were the words, Cubs Win! 2016 World Series.

As he studied the shadow-boxed array, he felt Mara's arms wrap around him from the back.

"I love you, Lieutenant Mitchell James Lawson," she whispered.

She did.

So it was a Merry Christmas.

Not a surprise.

That happened when you went into it having everything you needed.

The End
"Cubs Win!"