

# The Three Sisters

By R. Todd Woodstock

Mischief began swirling in their deceitful, little minds. They could see the house, as all four of them hiked back from Dairy Whip, each carrying a famous Polar Milk Bomb in their hands. Oh, how they loved to create havoc on the decrepit, two-story home. This time, though, it wasn't going to be the normal throwing of rocks from behind the large fence that separated the street from the front yard. No, this time, Dill Buxton had a slingshot, and he made it especially for the brand new windows that were installed from the last attack.

"So how . . . far d'ya tink it will shoo . . . Dill?" asked Frankie Perkins. It was surprising to the rest of them that he was able to get the words out with his mouth full of Milk Bomb.

"Ya fat pig. Quit speakin' with your mouth loaded. Damn, can't understand a stinkin' word from yer yap," replied Dill. He was the leader of the group, and the proud owner of a slingshot named The Launcher. It was his idea to start testing the boundaries of vandalism and to rid the small town of boredom. The area had nothing to offer, before Dill moved to the quiet little community, but as he familiarized with the town of Willowby, Dill's hooliganism and popularity soared with the other teenage boys. He had become idolized for his tomfoolery.

His mom brought him to Willowby after Dill's father committed suicide about a year ago. She felt there were too many memories from the high-class neighborhood they had left behind. Also, the finances had begun to run dry. It was quite a difference from the 2,000 square foot, four-bedroom ranch, to a small two bedroom duplex, but she was determined to make it work.

It wasn't long before Dill bonded with Danny Woolford and then Petie Lower. Danny and his folks had recently moved to Willowby after Danny's dad started buying up real estate in the area. Frankie was considered the so-called fat kid of the group and was given the nickname Lardo, because of his immense consumption of food. He met Dill, Danny, and Petie at the Dairy Whip months ago, which was bought by Petie's parents a couple years back, and an immediate connection of friendship was made. It wasn't long, however, before Frankie was often screamed at by the other three, due to his inability to outrun trouble. On several occasions, his father, the local sheriff, caught him for his inappropriate behavior. He never ratted, though; he stayed tight with his blood brothers. It was important to him to stay tight with them, because they were the only friends he had.

"Yeah, Lardo, why don't ya move yer fat ass s'oze we can see the house. Yer blockin' the view, blimp," laughed Danny. He has always been the smart aleck of the group; often enjoying his own put downs and had the strength to back himself up.

"Shut the hell up, Dann-O, just 'cuz yo daddy owns half the town, don't mean ya can be a comedian. It's not my fault yer freckles affect yer looks. Why don't ya do us all a favor and run in front uv'a truck and end it all, ya loser."

Petie busted out in laughter in front of the old, two-story house. Dill didn't even crack a smile; he was concentrating too hard on finding the right weaponry to bombard those beautiful, new windows.

"Lardo, I'm gonna blast yer blubber right off ya . . ."

"Cool it!" Dill interrupted. "What d'ya guys want—for us to get caught? Damn, all we need is another run in with Lardo's pops before we get a chance. Now help me find some good shellin',

so we can get some good shootin' in. I still haven't tested this out yet and there ain't no tellin' when the old hags are gonna start playin' in that stinkin', old weed field they call a garden."

The boys searched along the fence line and into the small wooded area that bordered the property. It didn't take long before announcements were being made.

"Dill, try this here, stone."

"Dill, I got a piece of pipe, fer ya!"

Then Danny found the most perfect, form-fitting piece of slingshot ever—a railroad spike! Dill's eyes lit up. A normal slingshot wouldn't have been able to handle such a chunk of steel, but this was no ordinary slingshot; this was The Launcher. They all stared; eyes glued in excitement, as Dill nested the rusty object into the rubber.

"Get ready to take cover; I don't know what's gonna happen. Might not make it . . . might make it, never know," he said, as he pulled the band back as far as his skinny arms could stretch.

The launch couldn't have been better; within seconds, a loud explosion of brand-new glass shattered from the window frame. It was a direct hit and, man, was it an awesome sight! All the boys cheered, as they fled the scene.

"Damn, Dill, that was so cool!" screamed Petie. "Did ya see that window go? There was nothin' left."

Dill smiled, as he ran.

The four boys had split up, but eventually got together in Dill's shed behind his house. His mom was at work, so they didn't have to worry about questions being asked of why they were running into the backyard. Frankie was the last to reach the wooden structure.

"Glad, ya could finally make it, Lardo. What happened, did tourists stop ya to take pictures of the fattest kid on earth?" chuckled Danny.

Danny and Petie erupted in laughter.

Frankie ignored Danny's comments. "Listen, I think I saw some strange stuff on the way back."

"What are ya talkin' 'bout, Lardo?" Dill inquired.

"Yeah, what did ya see, yer reflection?" Danny continued to taunt.

More laughter.

"Knock it off!" Dill demanded. "I wanna hear what he's got."

They both quieted down.

"Go 'head, Lardo?"

"Well, ya know how we all split up on our way back here? Well, I headed back through the woods and saw . . . like weird scarecrows or somethin'. They was placed in the old hags' backyard, like decorations or somethin'."

"I think yer the scarecrow, Lardo. If I was a crow, I'd be scared of ya," Danny teased again.

Again, Frankie ignored Danny's cut downs, and Dill was intrigued with Frankie's information. "How many did ya see?"

"It was about . . . maybe . . . three, maybe four. I didn't get a real close look, but they seemed real strange . . . like kinda freaky somehow."

"Aww, c'mon, we all been back in the woods before and ain't never seen no scarecrows or whatever yer talkin' 'bout, Lardo," said Dill. "Are ya pullin' our legs, Lardo?"

"Probably is. Probably makin' it all up, ain't ya, Lardo," interrupted Danny.

"Naw, I ain't. Honest. There's some kinda . . . what are them things called in the store windows? Manna . . . somethin' . . ."

“Mannequins,” Dill responded.

“Yeah, what ya said. Well, they’re sorta like that, but extra creepy like, and they’re out there, I swear to it.”

Dill thought for a moment. If, indeed, Frankie was telling the truth, he wanted to know; this was something new and exciting.

“Whatcha thinking ‘bout, Dill?” asked Danny. “Ya don’t believe this walkin’ whale, do ya? Ya know we ain’t seen nothin’ like that before, he’s bullshittin’.”

“I don’t know, but I wanna find out. Tonight! Yeah, tonight we’ll pay the old hags another visit.” Dill hesitated. “Ya better not be bullshittin’ me, Lardo.”

Frankie answered, “I’m not, ya’ll see.”

The boys hung out in the shed for the rest of the afternoon, but couldn’t wait until dusk; that was when they normally went out for some more fun. That was when they would find out what was going through Dill’s devilish mind and how he was plotting out the next course of playful malice.

They arrived before nine, in close, but different spots in the woods. The sun was just starting to disappear in the sky, but there was enough light to see. Frankie was right; they could see the strange looking scarecrows in the sisters’ yard, after all. Dill was glad that Frankie was telling him the truth and when he looked over at him, Frankie was giving him a look of, ‘See, I told ya so’. Suddenly, all three of the elderly women came out of the house and approached their garden. The boys quickly made themselves unnoticed. Danny and Dill hid behind the same large pine tree.

“What d’ya think they’re doin’, Dill?”

No tellin’. I just wanna get close enough to those dummies. Come on ya stupid, old hags, get back yer house.”

The boys watched from the woods, as the ladies pulled some herbs from their garden and slowly began to file back in the house. Dill knew that this was his opportunity to get a closer look at the scarecrows.

“Okay, now’s our chance.” Then he pulled a straight razor from his pocket.

Danny looked confused, but was always into whatever diabolical scheme Dill had planned.

The boys quietly rushed the scarecrows. No sooner, did they get in the sisters’ backyard, then lights came on from the back porch.

“Damnit!” exclaimed Dill. “I was gonna make ‘em headless.”

Three of the boys took off, making it back in the woods, but Frankie didn’t, when the elderly ladies appeared again. Instead he slowly walked up closer, as if to get a good look at one of the scarecrows. The others watched; wide-eyed and mouths ajar, from the woods, as the sisters approached Frankie and began speaking to him. They couldn’t make out what the sisters were saying to him; then the women led Frankie into their house and a light from, what appeared to be, the kitchen went on. They could see Frankie in the window still talking with the elderly women.

They continued standing behind trees in the woods, hearts still racing, even as the night sky was approaching.

“Whatta we do?” asked Danny.

There was hesitation.

“Well, I don’t think we should leave ‘em,” said Dill.

“I think we should. His loss, dumb fat ass, should’a ran with us. I hope they’re layin’ into ‘em; gettin’ a hold of his ole man, serve ‘em right,” said Danny.

“I’m with Dann-O, I think we should let the lard get what he deserves,” said Petie.

“Look!” shouted Dill.

They noticed, as one of the sisters came back outside. She grabbed something from the garden and headed back into the house. All the lights from the porch and kitchen went out.

“I think we need to get the hell outta here,” said Danny.

“I’m with Dann-O,” said Petie.

Dill raised his hand. “Remember this?” He lit a small lighter and placed it near his right hand, to remind Danny and Petie of the red scar that was still on the inside of his palm. “We’re blood brothers. We all made a pact to protect each another and that means Lardo, too.”

The boys were silent for a minute.

“Yer right, Dill,” Danny said, looking down at the dark ground in front of him. “But what do we do? I mean we can’t just knock on the door, ya know?”

“Why not? They’re just senile, old bats. We’re a group of teenager boys; so why can’t we? Don’t tell me yer scared of some old lady sisters, Dann-O?”

“Yeah, Dann-O, what’s a matter ya wussy?” mocked Petie.

“I ain’t neither, Petie. Ya wanted to leave ‘em, too, ya little shit.”

Immediately, Petie shut his mouth.

Then Danny looked over at Dill. “Let’s go then.” The three of them pushed past the pine trees and into the backyard. None of them stopped to get a close look at the scarecrows, but marched right up to the back door. “Call me a wuss, will ya.”

Danny banged on the door, as the other two waited.

There was no answer.

“Hit it again, Dann-O,” Dill said.

So Danny pounded on it a second time, only this time the door opened.

There was still no sound of anyone coming to the door.

“What’ll we do?” Danny questioned.

“Get outta the way,” demanded Dill, and then he shoved Danny out of his path. Dill was in the sisters’ dark kitchen.

“Hello, we’re lookin’ fer our friend. Lardo, ya in here?” Dill yelled.

Still nothing.

“Dill, see if ya can find a light,” remarked Petie.

Dill started running his hands along the walls. Soon, the other two joined Dill in his quest to find a light switch. There was minimal light shining from the moon outside, which helped.

“I think this is it.” Dill flipped it on.

“What the . . .” said Danny, as the three boys couldn’t believe their eyes. The whole kitchen was full of wonderful baked goods and candy. There were cakes, pies, cookies, candy canes, bowls of gum drops, lollipops, and any other assortment of confection that would cause any young adolescent to salivate. So much of it was lined up on the counter tops, the kitchen table, and anywhere there was an open spot.

Dill noticed a plate with a half-eaten cookie and an empty pie tin with crumbs in it. “No wonder the fat ass never answered. He’s probably keepin’ his mouth shut, s’oze he can have all this fer himself,” Dill stated.

Petie nodded, “Yeah, probably makin’ friends with the sisters, s’oze they can really fatten him up.”

“Well, I’m gettin’ mine,” said Danny. “That walkin’ whale ain’t gettin’ it all.”

Within seconds they were gobbling up cookies, pieces of pie, gum drops, and whatever else they could get their hands on.

“Slow down, slow down. Relax, there’s more than enough,” said a white haired lady.

The three boys felt awkward and stopped pigging out immediately. They never noticed her enter the room. “There’s enough for all of you. My sisters and I are always baking goodies. You’re welcome to all you want.”

All three just looked at one another with their mouths full.

“Is . . . this kine . . . of some . . . sick . . . oke?” asked Dill, while cookie crumbs were falling out his mouth.

“Don’t talk with your mouth full, sweetie. It’s not polite and I wouldn’t want you to choke. But anyway, no, this isn’t a joke; we just want to make friends. I don’t believe my sisters and I have met you boys before.”

Petie was the first to stop chewing. “Where’s our friend, Lardo?”

“Lardo? I’m not familiar with that name.”

Danny interrupted, “The big, fat whale that walked in with ya.”

“Oh, you mean Frankie Perkins? Well, yes, he’s downstairs at the moment. He’s having a problem with a small tummy ache.”

Suddenly, the three boys all began to feel light headed. The three of them dropped to the floor, and just as they felt powerless, they noticed the other two sisters and Frankie walk into the kitchen.

“Oh, maybe it was you three with the tummy aches,” the old lady snidely remarked.

“Hi guys,” said Frankie, happily. “I see ya finally met one of my great-aunties. Isn’t she sweet?”

Dill held his side, as a dull pain shot through his body. “Ya know them, Lardo?”

“It’s not Lardo, Dill, it’s Frankie. It’s not walkin’ whale, it’s not fat ass, it’s not fat pig, I’m Frankie Perkins. Ya guys been callin’ me names fer long enough, and I’m sick of it, so now you’re sick. How’s it feel?”

“You see boys, we will do anything to protect our cute, pumkin’ and that includes protection from bullies like you, who only run our little boy down. Isn’t that right, poor, poor Frankie?” Then she squeezed Frankie’s plump cheeks. “Soon, the burning sensation will start to move throughout your entire body and you will have excruciating pain. It will, however, take several hours for the poison to completely dissolve your innards. So get use to the agony.

Oh, and by the way boys, don’t worry, you’ll join the other special scarey-crows out in the garden to protect our herbs, so we can feed our homegrown poisons to any other meanies who pick on our poor Frankie. Your parents won’t miss your rotten filthy mouths, and besides his dad is the sheriff. He’ll make sure your imaginary bodies are pulled from the river that you all three supposedly drown in, and we’ll make sure you are made up so you’re not noticeable, especially with your straight razor, Dill, naughty, naughty. Maybe one day you boys will learn to be nice to older ladies and other boys that might be carryin’ a little bit ‘round the middle, but then again, it’s too late for that now ain’t it.”

Muffled screams echoed through the cellar walls, but only for a little while. The three sisters were magnificent seamstresses, as well as toxic bakers, so the cries from the incapacitated boys didn’t last long, but their suffering did. They sat on the back lawn, overlooking the garden, for

those special occasions—those special occasions when the three sisters felt it necessary to protect their precious Frankie.