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DAY OF THE BARNEY

Mrs. Thompson kissed her two children, Jenny and Robby, and sat them before the television set. Their eyes widened and gleamed as the picture faded in, revealing the one who had become a dear and cherished friend over the last few months. Mrs. Thompson smiled at their captivated wonder, and went to the kitchen to prepare dinner. As she readied the vegetables for stir-fry, she peered into the living room and watched the blubbery, purple dinosaur prance and roll across the screen.

"Silly fat reptile," she muttered, and went back to her preparations.

If Jenny and Robby were annoyed by her remark, they made no sign of it. Instead, they listened and watched in rapt attention to Barney the Dinosaur, who was being broadcast live from the nation's capitol. The plaza was filled with thousands of wide-eyed youths, who wriggled and squirmed for a closer look at the Purple One. Off to the wings, the green dinosaur known as Baby Bop giggled and preened, occasionally blowing a kiss to the children in the crowd. Finally, following a light song and dance about sharing, Barney sauntered up to the podium and spoke:

"Hello, all my friends out there! I'm so happy you could make it to my special concert. Have I told you lately how much I love you?"

Children world-wide simultaneously burst, "I love you too, Barney!"

The Purple One giggled and for a moment appeared to blush. "Love is such a wonderful thing. Especially the love you and I share for each other. I also want you to know how much of a special friend you are to me. Are you my friend also?"

The response was thunderous, rising from the kids in the plaza, across the living rooms scattered across the nation. "!!!YES!!!"

"Well, that's wonderful!" reeled Barney. "But do you know what, kids? I have

something really, really sad to tell you." He sighed, letting his immense, dead eyes roll to the floor. "Not everyone is Barney's friend.... some people don't even want you to be my friend."

Protests and cries began to rise collectively within the entranced mass. The Beast of Purple quieted them with a raise of his hand. He continued:

"There are people who don't want me to love you, and want to take you away from me. These people are very bad, and want to hurt your loving friend Barney. Some of them may be people who are very close to you. But do you know what?"

The audience of children silently yet anxiously awaited the answer. An unholy stillness had fallen upon the crowd. Many of the adults began to feel isolated, targeted..... unwelcome.

"None of them, not a single one, loves you as much as I do. I'm your only real friend in the world. I really love you, I do! But these bad people don't. Some of them may be your neighbors. Some of them may be your teachers. And some of them....."

"Who, Barney, who?!?" shrieked a young girl from a barricade.

"...some of them may be your parents!" he replied.

Children began screaming and crying instantaneously, their teeth and fists clenched in rage. Security guards who had been trying to keep the children back behind the lines began to fidget uneasily, as the sea of wide-eyed, growling, gurgling children began rising against them. Some guards broke from the line and ran down the street, screaming frantically. Others tried to push the youngsters back but were pulled in by grasping, clawing hands.

The cries were horrible.

One guard, as he was being simultaneously crushed and pulled apart by the mindless horde, looked back upon the stage. The Purple One and his green sidekick were laughing and dancing demonically about the platform, which was now spattered with blood and torn clothing. Next moment the world went dark and the guard was lost forever amidst the torrent of violence and unholy chanting...

I love you, you love me.....let me have your family.....with a quick stab or kick, we'll set the children free....don't you know you were meant for me.....

Mrs. Thompson finished washing the vegetables and figured either Jenny or

Robby could take out the trash. She walked out into the living room only to notice the children were gone and the TV station was giving a dull, whining tone and a test pattern.

"Jenny? Robby? Are you here anywhere?"

Perhaps they've gone outside, she thought. She returned to the kitchen and looked upon the counter. Her tinsel-steel paring and slicing knives were gone. But they were there just a moment ago, she thought. Then, just as a flash of steel slashed across her legs and another just above her waist, she heard a muffled giggle and caught a glimpse of purple and green out the corner of her eye. She collapsed into a pile of her own entrails and blood, her life seeping into the tile. As the world faded to a lifeless grey, she heard a familiar tune sung by two familiar voices...

"I love you, you love me, let us join with Lord Barney...with a great big kiss and hug, from me to you....let's purge the world of adults too...."

Mrs. Thompson stopped breathing.

"He's NOT a silly fat reptile!"

The moral of this story? Stop Barney before it's too late.

--BCB