

CRACKED
(excerpt)*

By

Marieke Davis

Larry Horton's mother had always advised him to remain calm no matter what, to never lose his head. And Larry had agreed with his mother's sentiment, even when the men in the white coats had dragged her from their house kicking and screaming, babbling something along the lines of: "I'll kill 'im! I'll kill that no good, lazy, stinkin', half-brained, tobacco spittin', Lawrence Welk-watchin', sack of bull chips!"

He had watched from the living room window as the paramedics, kneeling on the floor behind Larry, attempted to extract the armadillo shell letter opener—a treasured family heirloom—from his father's shoulder blade.

"I don't freakin' believe it!" his father howled. "The damn bitch stabbed me!"

Larry was only nine years old at the time of his poor mother's meltdown, but something in that moment filled him with a feeling of fascination. It occurred to him that his mother had been perfectly normal—until she wasn't. Why?

A group of neighbors began to gather. Through the screen, Larry could hear the comments:

"Always knew she was two sandwiches short of a picnic."

"She got throwed off the wagon a few too many times."

"She's a few chickens short of a coop."

They all nodded in agreement that Larry's mother was, in fact, cracked. As the men loaded his mother into the back of the square, white ambulance, Larry distinctly remembered turning from the window to his father.

"Pa?" he had said, causing his groaning father to look at him with a face painted with agony. Like a miniature professional, Larry straightened his spine, cleared his throat, and announced to everyone in the room: "I know what I want to be when I grow up. I want to be a psychologist."

***A full, unedited copy of this short story is available for purchase! Please click on [Store](#).**