



The One-Handed Carpenter

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The One-Handed Carpenter

Chapter One: The Cry That Silenced the Room

The storm came early that night.

Thunder cracked like a war drum over the sleepy English village of Wexley Hollow. Rain lashed against the stained-glass windows of the countryside hospital, and inside, cries filled the air—sharp, urgent, full of life.

Then silence.

Nurse Thompson froze, her gloved hands hovering midair. Dr. Harrows, hunched over the delivery table, stiffened. Janice Martin, pale and exhausted, searched their eyes, panic rising in her voice. “What’s wrong? Why isn’t he crying anymore?”

Simon Martin gripped his wife’s hand so tightly his knuckles turned white. “Is our son okay?” His voice trembled, not with fear—but with the terror of a father trying not to imagine the worst.

Dr. Harrows didn’t respond right away. Instead, he turned slowly toward the nurse, nodding toward the infant wrapped in a towel. The nurse hesitated—just for a moment—before stepping forward to lay the child on Janice’s chest.

The boy whimpered now, the tiniest sound, but that wasn’t what drew Janice’s breath to a halt. Her eyes widened. Her lips parted, searching for words. One look was all it took.

He was beautiful.

Perfect brown eyes. A head of dark, curly hair. Tiny fingers and wriggling toes.

But only one arm.

The One-Handed Carpenter

His left side ended in a soft shoulder. There was no stump, no deformity—just absence.

A void where something should have been.

Simon's breath caught. "Is this... a birth injury?"

Dr. Harrows cleared his throat. "No. It appears to be a congenital limb deficiency, likely from an interruption in vascular flow during the early stages of pregnancy. These things sometimes go undetected on scans. I'm truly sorry."

Janice stared down at the baby on her chest. His eyes opened just slightly, and she swore he looked straight at her. There was no fear in them. No shame. Just curiosity.

She smiled.

"I don't care what he's missing," she whispered. "He's ours."

Simon leaned over and pressed a kiss to her forehead. "Welcome to the world, Andrew Martin."

Outside, the storm thundered on, but in that small delivery room, something stronger than fear was born: hope.

The whispers began the very next day.

"Did you hear about the Martin baby?" "The boy with one arm—such a pity." "I hope the family's coping alright..."

Back home on Hawthorne Lane, life moved forward—but differently. Simon built a custom crib, changing it with one raised side so Andrew could push himself upright using his stronger arm. Janice sang lullabies every night and traced letters in the air with his tiny fingers.

The One-Handed Carpenter

Grace and Jocelyn, both older and curious, doted on their little brother. Grace, the thinker, asked quiet questions. Jocelyn, the bold one, simply said, “He’ll be stronger than all of us. Watch.”

And she wasn’t wrong.

Andrew grew fast. Determined. Observant. By four, he was already showing signs that his mind worked like a clock—ticking, planning, drawing.

But children are cruel without meaning to be. On his first day at nursery school, another boy tugged up Andrew’s sleeve and shouted, “Look, he’s missing!” The room erupted in laughter. Andrew didn’t cry. He didn’t run.

That night, Janice found him in the shed, trying to glue a block of wood to his shoulder.

“I’m making an arm,” he said calmly. “So nobody stares anymore.”

Tears welled in her eyes. “You don’t need to build one to fit in,” she told him gently. “You’re already enough.”

He looked up at her, expression serious. “I’m not doing it to fit in. I just want to see if I can.”

By age ten, Andrew had already become known as “the clever boy with one arm” in the village. He shocked everyone with his speed on the field and precision on the baseball pitch. His most famous trick? Catching a fastball with his glove strapped to his stub twisting, and throwing all in one seamless motion.

People came just to watch him play.

But he never smiled during those games. Not really. The applause felt distant. He wasn’t chasing fame. He was chasing belonging.

The One-Handed Carpenter

That feeling came only when he was alone in the shed, now transformed into his workshop. He collected scraps from neighbors, built birdhouses and broken tables, fixed drawers and knobs. And in the back, always on his workbench, sat the blueprint of a wooden arm.

He'd carved five over the years. None worked. But he kept trying.

Every groove he chiseled into the wood whispered to him, You were made for this.

On the eve of his 21st birthday, something strange happened.

Andrew walked home from the hardware store, his right hand tucked under his coat, protecting a freshly sharpened chisel. The streets were quiet, the sky unusually still. The old Cooper estate loomed in the distance—long abandoned, with rusted gates and vines strangling the stone.

But tonight, something was different.

A flicker. In the attic window. Then again—movement. Light. A silhouette.

Andrew stopped in his tracks.

No one had lived there for years. The townspeople said the place was cursed. A fire long ago had gutted part of it, and the owners had vanished without a trace. But now... someone—or something—was inside.

The wind shifted. A creaking sound. Then the attic light went out.

Andrew stood still, heart thudding in his chest. He took one cautious step toward the gates.

Something told him: This is the moment everything changes.