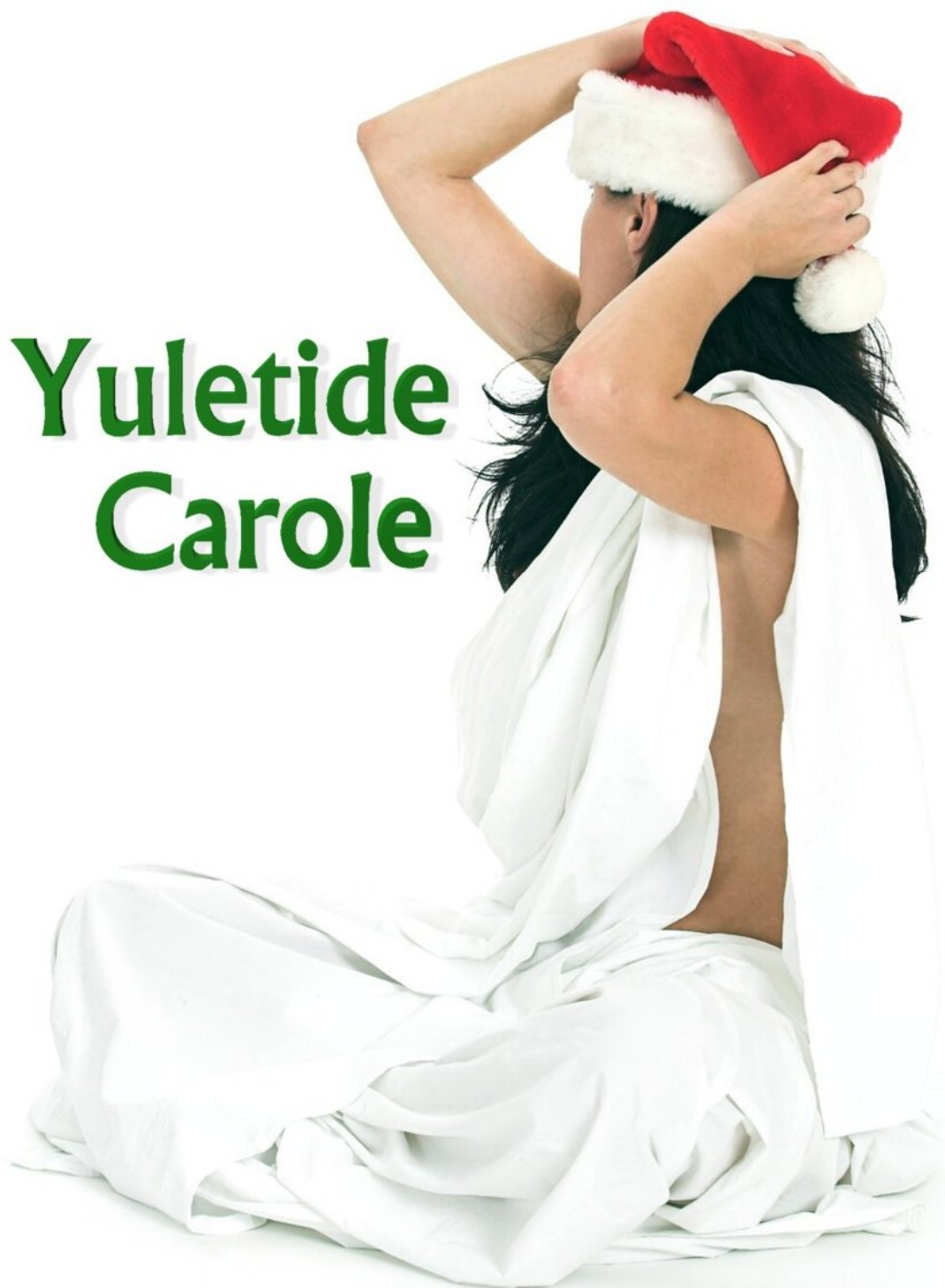


# NIA LITTLE

## Yuletide Carole



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Carole loved Christmas. She always had. All the pretty lights sparkling through the cold, frosty air seemed brighter than diamonds set in platinum. It was one of the reasons everyone called her “Yuletide Carole.”

Her eyes sparkled with joy and she gave a squeal of delight when she heard her lover’s key in the door.

“I’ve been waiting for you all day,” she said.

“I hoped you would,” Chet said as he shed his gloves, muffler, and coat.

She stood on tiptoe and gave him a quick kiss before leading him to the loveseat in the den.

“What’s that?” he asked as he pointed to a chafing dish of cashews balanced on the hearth, close to the flames.

“Silly.” Carole chuckled and reached for a potholder. “Those are yours.”

“Mine?”

“You know.” She lifted the hot metal dish and poured a few cashews into a bowl. “Chet’s nuts, roasting by an open fire.”

He popped a few into his mouth, then hers. “I love the way you suck the salt off before you nibble so daintily.”

"I only do that with yours," she smiled and handed him a mug. "Cocoa?"

They sat close together and watched the flames for a short while before drinking their libations. "Let's get it up now. To be honest, darling, I sort of started without you."

"Oh?" He said, surprised.

"I wanted everything to be especially moist, so I added a little something special to ease the way, let it slide right in." She smiled and put a hand on his chest. "I'm always amazed at the girth."

He smiled and cupped her face. "I would never disappoint you with a scrawny twig, Carole." He leaned forward and kissed her, tasting of hot chocolate and peppermint schnapps. "Mmm," he murmured, "So when do you want to do it?"

Carole rose and tugged his hand. "Right now." She pulled him to his feet.

She didn't know how he continually surprised her, but it was the biggest she'd ever had. "I can't get my hands around it!"

"Don't worry, I'll hold it for you." He grunted with the effort. "I can't tell where it's going. Is it close?"

"Yes, you're right at the edge. A little to the left... yes! Right there!"

"Are you sure? I'm feeling a little resistance here."

"Wait, you've moved... uh, lift up just a little... okay, there! Shove it in!"

"No, no, there's a little more to it than that, my dear." His voice strained and rose in pitch. "I was always told to ease it in, be gentle. I don't want to shove it too far too fast and damage something."

"I made it extra slippery—it should glide in fairly smooth—yes! That's the spot! You got it, honey!"

"Can you see how it looks?"

"I'm underneath... wait, uh let me shift here... God, that thing is thick, isn't it? Oh, Chet! It's filled the slot completely. Can you wiggle it up and down?"

"No," He panted. "I think it's wedged in there pretty darn well. I sure hope it's straight; I don't think I could pull it all the way out and get it back in the same place."

"You don't have to, darling." Carole patted his arm. "It's exactly where it should be. And now the balls?"

"Big blue ones."

"Why, they're definitely larger than I expected. This one hangs a little low, don't you think? Let me prop it up a little..."

It didn't take long before they sighed as one and admired the Christmas tree, snug and secure in its well-oiled stand with large blue orbs among tiny fairy lights.

Carole spread a brilliant red faux fur tree skirt beneath the lowest branches, creating a lush and soft circle all

about the tree. "It's perfect," she said and wrapped her arms around Chet's waist.

"Wait," Chet mused, "the tip needs definite attention."

Carole clapped her hands. "Ooh! I have just the thing. Its hole is a bit small though; I wonder if it will stretch? I'd hate to have to cut anything off the top, it's a perfect size and shape."

"My father never snipped his tip; mother always found a way to work something onto it." Chet smiled into Carole's glistening hazel eyes. "Here, let me. Just relax and watch the master's practiced hand."

She bit her lip at first, but she could tell he'd thought about his method carefully. True to his word, he eased the thick tip into the little hole, slowly and gently working it all the way in.

"There." He let go. The porcelain angel sat perfectly straight atop the very tip of the tree, her expression serene and her hands spread in benediction.

Chet turned to Carole. "Would you like my package under the tree now?" He kissed her with lingering tenderness.

"Yes, oh yes," she sighed. "Give me just one second."

She hurriedly turned out all the lights save those on the tree. Shadows capered about, thrown from the fireplace's dancing flames.

Carole brought two fresh mugs of cocoa and schnapps to him, wearing her Santa hat and a smile.



"Wow," he breathed and pulled the small wrapped box from his pocket. "I meant this package."

"That too," she said and sat on the floor beside the green boughs.

Chet carefully sipped his drink and watched as she reached for the iPod docking station on a small table next to the tree. Soon a chorus of voices singing "Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas" filled the room.

He took their mugs and set them next to the source of the music. "Who do we have this year?"

"'The Sons of Orpheus Chorus.' Don't they sound divine? This is my favorite tradition of Christmas," she said and opened her blouse.

"Mine, too," he said, removing his tie. He wrapped her into his embrace, gently lowering her to lie upon the faux fur. He sang along with the music as they continued to disrobe one another.

"Deck my balls and make me jolly," he sang in a soft baritone, his lips grazing her left breast.

"Fa la la la la," she replied. "Oh my, Santa! Is that the North Pole or are you just glad to see me?"

"Absolutely ecstatic. Would you like to kiss Rudolph on his red nose?"

"Mmm, I think Rudolph would be nice and warm in the barn."

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She sighed with contentment and wrapped her legs around him. "I'm the angel and you're my tree... yes, oh yes there! Keep singing."

Chet joined in on the chorus, though not exactly in time. "Oh... what... fun... it is... to ride."

"I love Christmas traditions," she sighed.

"Me too," he said, kissing her hair before resuming his performance. "Jack Frost licking on your toes," he sang with the music, moving back and forth. "'Yuletide Carole' being nailed near the choir, and queens dressed up in fuzzy robes..." He gasped, reached over, and cranked up the volume.

"Ooh! Mutual crescendo!" Carole cried, breathless. "I love it when Santa comes!"

THE END