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# Making Merry

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*Holiday eBook Freebie*

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“Midnight clear, my patootie.”

“It’s *ass*, Mer. Midnight clear, my *ass*. Nobody says ‘patootie’ anymore. Can’t you even suspend that sugary protocol long enough to use a curse word occasionally?”

Merry gave her parka a vigorous shake, wrinkling her nose as a thick layer of snow scaled off and fell at her feet. She hung it on one of the many hooks by the door and rubbed her arms for warmth. “It’s snowing like a big dog out there, buddy. We’re going to need more than a reindeer’s red nose to get through this one.”

Alwyn scratched absently at his striped stockings, intently studying the array of electronic equipment before him. In the Great Hall full of decorated pines, evergreen garlands, and mistletoe, his console looked oddly out of place, like a spaceship that had landed in the woods. “GPS navigation equipment on line. Directional satellite info looking good. Thumbs up from Nexrad. I don’t like the planetary alignment for this trip. Venus is playing coy behind the cloud cover. Bitch. And a touch of Mercury is still in retrograde. No-fly zone list updated. And there’s so much crap in the air and light pollution, you can barely see the stars to set your course. But Kris is a *machine* when it comes to getting it done, so I’d say we’re a go, unless the weather gets worse.”

He paused to light a candy-striped cigarette, blowing smoke in her direction. “Did I ever mention how much I hate this freaking Elfin clothing? I mean, seriously—patterned hose and a pointy hat on a grown man? C’mon, Mer, you’re a Union member in good standing. Can’t you do something about this?”

Every year was the same. The last-minute frantic rush. Undependable weather. Alwyn whining about every little thing, and Santa barely making it off in time.

As much as she tried to keep an upbeat attitude about it, there was very little magic in Christmas for Merry anymore. After so many years, the process was routine. As an elf in a fairly high position, it was her job.

Oh, she loved her small part in bringing happiness to others, a little gladness to the world. The little ones who looked forward to this day were precious to her. She tried to maintain a sweet disposition, spread a little cheer, and see that the final preparations went smoothly. But in the end, it was still just a job.

“Lighten up, Al. The traditional gear’s only mandatory on Christmas Eve, and you get paid well enough. Although really, I’d pay you more *not* to wear the costume. It’s too revealing. Cramming socks into your crotch isn’t what they mean by ‘stocking stuffer’, y’know. It’s just false advertising.”

“I told you, it’s not what you think. It’s a boner barrier. Those effing reindeer are the worst crotch sniffers—”

“Not listening, not listening, *fa-la-la-la-laaa!*” Merry laughed, covering her ears. “For goodness sake, Alwyn, it’s Christmas Eve. Show a little class.”

She paused at the sound of approaching jingle bells and lowered her voice to a whisper. "Just remember what it is we do here, Al. We make merry. We deliver *love*. Think of the innocents, the children, the smiling faces. Being there for the kids is the important thing. So do your job, so Mr. Kringle can do his. I have an uneasy feeling about this trip."

"Mer, you surprise me. Old Santa's never failed to deliver the goods before, has he?"

The blaze in the huge stone fireplace surged in welcome as Kris Kringle strolled into the room, a huge smile lighting up his face. He'd come fresh from the shower, Merry guessed. He smelled of his standard holiday soap, plus a centuries-old mixture of myrrh and sizzling-hot man, and his jeans clung to his moist skin in a way that banished the cold from her body.

His cell phone continued its jingly tune, and he snapped it open and turned aside to speak a few private words. It allowed her a moment to wipe the impending threat of drool from the corners of her mouth.

This was the only magic that Christmas still held for Merry. Over three hundred years in the workshop hadn't diminished her feelings for Kris Kringle one bit. Seeing him eighteen hours a day during the holiday rush and being able to work closely with him was an agonizing aphrodisiac. She cursed and counted the days in between, looking forward to the pain every single year.

Boyishly-curly brown hair that begged to be tousled. A body both muscular and supple, with a sprinkling of dark hair over his broad, bare chest. And a round, ripe butt, something a girl could hold onto for dear life at just the right time, displayed to perfection by the tight jeans.

If human females could see beyond the "jolly round elf" image he projected, ol' Santa would never make it out of those houses alive.

But at least they'd stand a chance. Kris made it clear to all elves who came here to work that there'd be no fraternization with the management. Ever since he'd caught the now ex-Mrs. Kringle ho-ho-ho-ing in an elfin orgy, he'd been firm in his word. And Santa's word was the law here.

It also meant that Merry would never have a chance with him. And since the first day she'd laid eyes on Kris, having him was the only gift she could imagine wanting.

"If Blitzen's got a sore hoof, I want him to stay home." Merry watched him move around the room like a big cat, abs flexing as he tucked the phone beneath his stubbled chin and grabbed a pair of leather boots. "Yeah, I know they don't really do any running, but no point in risking further injury. It's just a routine gig. Take him off the roster. And who the hell allowed reindeer games this close to Christmas *anyway?*"

Flipping the phone shut, he turned to her with a grin that made her want to melt. "I'll have to have a word with your new boyfriend, Merry. He was in charge of my team this year, wasn't he?"

Merry cringed and made a big show of removing her own boots. She hated being teased this way. Everyone in the workshop assumed she was getting it on with Frankle because he'd recently declared an interest in *her*. Frankle, who insisted on wearing his elfin suit every day of the year. Frankle, who thought farting in public was *funny*. Frankle, whose nose was at least two lengths long, and who bragged about being able to satisfy a woman using that alone.

Suppressing a shudder, she put on her happy elfin smile and adjusted the golden wreath on the door. The Great Hall was especially beautiful this year. Living pines, allowed to grow through the hardwood floor, filled the command center with exhilarating scent, proudly wearing their star-bright crowns. Tiny lights embedded in lush, looped garlands flickered like fireflies besotted with summer. And still, the most glorious sight in the room was Kris, effortlessly sexy as sin.

"I don't know what Frankle does with his time. But I've taken care of my end. All of the sacks have been carefully loaded. The sleigh is decked out with big red bows and streamers on the side. And I tucked a large thermos of warm brandy under your seat, just the way you like it."

"And lots of glitter on the sled's detailing? You're my ray of sunshine here, angel, but when I'm on the go, you know how Santa likes his glow."

"Yes." She couldn't resist a smile. If the body made him hot, the boyishness definitely made him loveable. She'd overseen last-minute details for the big ride for well over three hundred years. And she knew her Kris very well. *He* was the one without a clue. If he knew some of the naughty thoughts she had about him... "Lots of glitter."

Alwyn leaned back in his chair, eyelashes fluttering. "And did you pack a supply of our best peppermint condoms for Santa, just in case? There's a bumper crop of fine women out there, just waiting for somebody to stuff their chimneys, and—"

"Don't be crude, Al," she snapped.

"Yeah, man, watch it." Kris' teasing smile softened. "Our sweet Merry's not used to that kind of talk."

"Hey, I'm just sayin'. Kris is a single guy, after all. Nothing wrong with him getting a little bit on a cold winter night. Huh. The holiday's all about sharing, isn't it?"

"This is a business trip for Mr. Kringle, navigator. Fortunately, all men don't think like you do."

"Well, actually they do, babe. They're just not careless enough to say so." Kris slipped into his well-worn boots, studying her. "I must admit that I do like the ladies' Christmas costumes. You look very pretty tonight, Mer. All windblown and soft. Red velvet becomes you. And you've gotten a little glitter in that golden hair of yours. It suits you."

A simple "thank you" would've ended that particular thread very nicely—but she couldn't seem to manage it. Her throat went dry as she sucked in air and forgot to breathe it out.

A compliment on her appearance? From *Kris*? No wonder it was snowing so hard. Hell had just frozen over.

He continued to stare at her, even as his cell phone jingled briskly away. "Alwyn? I'd like to have a word alone with Merry, if you don't mind."

"Don't mind? Well, of course I do. My instruments and projections are all set up for flight within the next half hour or so. Any delay in takeoff could mean—"

"Alwyn?" Kris moved toward her, a curiously intense expression on his face. "How'd you like an STD to go with your new crotch socks for Christmas?"

"I'll just go clean the snow off that satellite dish outside, shall I?"

Merry retreated a step as Kris approached. He came to a stop scant inches before her, tall and broad-shouldered, his eyes silver and sharp.

She tugged nervously at the short skirt of her suit, her heart hammering as his gaze cruised the length of her legs. Was it possible? Out of all the elfin females, after all the years they'd worked together, all the times she'd taken him to bed in her most intimate fantasies—was it possible he was actually beginning to *notice* her?

"Merry?"

A tight, whispered word scratched its way out of her throat. "Yes?"

His hand reached up and snared one of her long, dangling curls, smoothing it through his fingers. "You've neglected to tell Santa what you'd like for Christmas this year. I've looked over my list. Checked it twice, in fact."

*What would she like? Velvet ropes around his wrists, secured to the headboard of that glacier-sized bed he was rumored to have, with no elfin interruptions for days and days and days...*

A bare-chested Kris Kringle radiating intoxicating male heat from inches away was a dangerous beast. She took another tentative step back. "After a few hundred years of the best gifts from the ultimate source, there isn't much left to ask for."

"Oh, come on." His voice deepened, all dark, silken sex. "I want this year, of all years, to be special. Anything you want. I promise. Isn't there something I can get for you, Mer?"

*Naked. On the floor. With her on top, riding him hard, taking him deep. Right this minute...*

She wasn't imagining it—was she? He was really coming on to her. After all the long years of wanting him, aching for him, he was close enough to kiss—and moving in for the kill. And now, despite all the slick bedroom talk she'd practiced in private, she didn't know what to say! One more retreating step, and nowhere else to go. Her back was against the wall. "I can't think...this year? Why? What's so different about this year?" She tried to swallow, and failed. "Is something special going to happen?"

He ran his tongue over his lips, as if anticipating a taste, and braced his arms against the wall, effectively trapping her. “Yes, Merry. It is.”

Images of him taking her on the marble hearth before a raging fire, in the cushioned curve of the back of his sled, on all fours, or any way he pleased strobed through her mind. Damn the rules against fraternization. This was the moment she’d been waiting for, all she’d ever want for any Christmas, ever again. “Are you—are you trying to tell me something, Kris?”

“I’m handling it badly enough—but yes. I need to tell you that...”

His lids lowered, impossibly long lashes hiding his eyes. “Merry? You’re fired.”

## CHAPTER TWO

Apparently, his insistent jingle bell ringtone had driven her temporarily insane. Merry tilted her head one way, then another, trying to set the world right again. “Excuse me?”

“I said you’re fired.”

His words echoed through the Great Hall, and still she couldn’t believe what she’d heard. “I’m fired?”

“Yes. I’m sorry.”

“Is this a joke?”

“Afraid not.”

“But...but Kris—Mr. Kringle—you can’t fire me. I’m a member of the Union!”

“That doesn’t mean I can’t fire you, Mer. It just means you have the right to appeal to your organization.”

What was this? What the hell was this? “So you’re just going to give me the shaft?”

“That’s a curious expression to hear from you, Mer. You’re always so very genteel in your choice of words. But, if you insist on putting it that way, the shaft it is.”

“But you can’t. It’s Christmas Eve.” Her bare toes curled beneath her, and she could hear the misery in her voice. She sounded like a child being sent to bed without supper. “Is this is your idea of a *present*?”

“You recently reached the top of the wage and benefits charts, Merry. This is a bad economy. I can bring in two apprentice elves for less than you’re making right now. And then there’s this little—er, affair you’re having with Frankle. I won’t call it ‘sordid’, but it doesn’t exactly set a good example, y’know.”

Merry huffed and spluttered, tempted to take a bite out of his bicep. “*Sordid*? How *dare*...I am not...I *never*...”

“Don’t worry, Mer. You’ve been a good, loyal little helper for ages and ages. Tell you what. I’ll give you the next two weeks to submit your retirement papers before I have to officially fire you, okay? You’ll get a nice pension, and you could probably pick up a little part-time gig at one of our arctic substations if you get bored.”



A good, loyal little helper? Ages and ages? Why didn't he just toss her a bone, or leave her out on an ice floe to freeze to death? And why couldn't she express how pissed she really was about this? Had she pretended to be the merry little elf for so long she'd lost track of her own emotions?

"You're upset. I can tell by the flush in your cheeks. I really am sorry, Mer. I hate to think of us ending such a long working relationship with resentment." He gave her a platonic buss on her forehead and turned away as the muted sound of music warmed the cold, snowy night. "Listen. The rest of the elves have started their annual Christmas party. Why don't you wander over to the workshop? Have a few drinks. Commiserate with Frankle. Being with someone you care for always makes things better."

She coughed, a dry, useless noise. "That's not been my experience."

He was checking Alwyn's radar screen, tracking the snow storm. Without saying the words, he'd summarily dismissed her and moved on to the business at hand.

And here she stood—stunned, useless, and tossed aside. She'd not only lost her silly Santa dreams, but her home, and the people who were both friends and family to her. How was it possible that the moment she'd thought might be the happiest of her life had turned out to be the worst?

Merry quickly wiped her eyes before he could see the threatening tears, dashing them away. She'd kept her feelings secret for so long they'd seared a hole in her heart. But at least she had some small measure of pride left. "I think we need to discuss this further, Mr. Kringle."

"No time," he said, distracted. "Remember, eager little faces are peering out of windows, watching for Santa even as we speak. Don't take it personally, babe. I've got a business to run."

Yes. Why should she take the fact that he'd laid waste to her merry little world in one deft stroke personally?

The flush in her cheeks suddenly seemed to fan out, inflaming every inch of skin on her body. Dammit, she *was* angry. Dear little Merry, everyone's angel of joy, was *tired* of being merry. And he wasn't going to get away with dismissing her like this. "I think we need to *discuss* this, Kris."

"If you want a retirement bonus—fair enough. But the discussion will have to wait until I get back. And I'll have a word or two with Frankle then. Make sure he gets you settled, somewhere new. Now, if you'll excuse me, I need to get it in gear, and—"

"No. No, I don't think I will excuse you."

"I beg your pardon?"

As well he should. But that wasn't what she wanted from him right now. "You promised. A special gift, anything I wanted for Christmas, you said. You gave your word."

Kris turned back toward her with an odd expression. So that was what a guy looked like when you had him by the short and curlies. She nearly smiled, enjoying the brief sense of power.

“You’re right, Merry. I promised. So? What’ll it be?”

With a new-found energy in her step, Merry sashayed over to the oversized chair before the fire, where elves had made their Christmas requests for centuries. She gave the deep cushion a sharp slap and winked at him, beckoning. “I want you to listen, and listen well to what I have to say. That will be your Christmas gift to me. So park that hot little ass of yours right here, Santa. We’ve got some sharing to do.”

### CHAPTER THREE

The sound of suggestive limericks had replaced the sincere holiday songs, and laughter wafted through the night air to the Hall. The Elfin Christmas Eve party was on, and by now the eggnog was eighty-proof.

Merry paced around the chair, ignoring the questioning arch of Kris' eyebrow when she didn't sit demurely on his lap as usual. She was trying to keep her temper intact. It was so hard to be angry with him. He was too damn gorgeous. He looked like a god sitting there, waiting to dispense his favors.

"I really don't have a lot of time, my angel. So tell me. What—"

"I am not your angel. I don't want to be *anyone's* angel. And I'm not going to take this shit anymore." She stomped over to stand in front of him, furious beyond belief. "Who do you think you're messing with, Kringle? You can't get away with this. I'll call for a strike. Incite the elves to riot. You think the economy's bad now? I'll put your little toymaking operation so far in the hole you'll never be able to wind it up again."

He sat back in the plush old chair, eyes wide. "Well, I must say—whatever I might've expected to hear, this isn't it. Are you threatening me, Merry? Because if you're really going to waste my time this way—"

"Sit down," she said as he made to rise. "You are not leaving here until we get a few things straight."

"But Mer. The *children*. You've always been about the happiness of the kids. The little ones are waiting."

"Screw that. Put 'em on hold. They waited all bloody year, they can damn well wait a little longer."

He ran a hand over his rough cheek and burst into laughter. "Merry? I don't think I've ever heard you speak this way before. What's gotten into you?"

"It's what *hasn't* gotten into me that pisses me off." And after this little drama, it never would. But she was on a roll, and had no intention of stopping. "Just so we're clear on all the facts you used to fire me? I have never slept with elf Frankle, never had any interest in doing so."

"Is that right?"

"Damn straight."

Making use of her last bit of nerve, Merry stormed the chair and climbed aboard, straddling his legs instead of sitting in his lap. They were nearly eye-to-eye this way, and she slid closer, watching for his reaction, his breath hot against her lips.

"I sincerely hope Frankle will find the right girl one day. But it definitely isn't me. I don't want a nose job. Know what I'd really like for Christmas, Santa? I want a man with a really huge yule log."

*Jackpot.* She felt his erection spring to life beneath her, pressing desperately against his jeans. Merry squirmed provocatively against him, purring with pleasure.

"You want a—a what?"

"Someone who understands that Merry is my name, not my job description. A man who's good with his hands, and can't keep them off me, even if he's got important things to do. I want a big, horny guy with a thick, stiff cock, who knows how to wield it. I want him banging against my butt for all he's worth. I want him pounding his heat into me during the frozen nights, and holding me gently in the wee hours of day. I want to learn every curse word known to man, so I can scream them at the top of my lungs every time he makes me come. And come, and come, and come..."

*Whoa.* Santa's body was actually trembling against hers, his brow beading with perspiration. His eyes had melted into dark quicksilver, and his hips pressed intimately against her hot core.

Without a word, his fingers opened the top button of her velvet costume, then moved to the next, and the one beneath that. Afraid to breathe, she remained perfectly still, watching the determination on his face. "Kris?" Her voice was hoarse with excitement. "What are you doing?"

Reaching the bottom button, he peeled the top apart, the hard length of him growing beneath her. "Unwrapping my present."

His huge hands cupped her breasts, and Merry sighed as his thumbs flicked sharply against her nipples. "The only drawback to this job is that nobody ever asks what I want for Christmas. Fortunately, I think we're on the same page with this."

He took her mouth with a desperation that left her limp, his lips moist and hungry against hers. "God, Mer." He groaned, tasting her again and again, his fingers grabbing fistfuls of her hair. "Do you have any idea how long I've been divorced and alone here?"

"Two years, eleven months, seven days, and three hours." She laughed hysterically and reached for his zipper, struggling against the massive pressure from the other side to get it open. "I wanted to comfort you every minute."

"You don't know how much I've wanted you." He worked a trail of kisses down her neck until his lips found her breasts and sucked. "The last time you sat here on my lap, I nearly jollied all over myself."

"Wait, wait a minute. I can't do this," she murmured, even as he raised her hips and ripped her red satin thong away. "You've implemented a no-fraternization policy."

You were mean to me today, on Christmas Eve, of all days. How could you fire me, then expect me to...”

He grinned, that rakish, irresistible grin that always made her smile in return. “You fired me so we *could* fraternize! Why, you devious son-of-a—”

“Contrary to popular opinion, I’m no saint. I think you’d be a great candidate for management, Merry. And then there’d be no conflict of interest. I’d intended to have this conversation with you when I got back. You made that impossible. And one of us is wearing too many clothes.” Too impatient to wait for her shaking fingers, he freed his shaft, positioned her body over him, and sank inside her with agonizing slowness, as if savoring every inch of discovery. “It was Frankle’s bragging that brought out the jealousy in me. I’ve hardly slept for weeks, not wanting to believe it, imagining you in his arms. But now that I know the truth...”

There were no words. She wrapped her arms around him and, closing her eyes, moved with him, quickly becoming attuned to his body. Each climax brought her closer to him, to the edge of insanity, until she couldn’t stop, couldn’t think, couldn’t possibly want any more pleasure than this.

And when he clutched her to him, and wickedly whispered in her ear, “Santa Claus is com-ing,” she rode the wave with him, firmly convinced that there was, indeed, a very special magic about Christmas.

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“Kris? Kris, is that you?”

Alwyn turned his back to the wind, teeth chattering as he spoke into his phone. “I can hardly hear you, man. Are you—are you *growling*?”

Making his way toward the Hall, he kept Blitzen beside him, using the reindeer’s bulky body for warmth. “Kris, it’s been over an hour. This run is going to be seriously late, bucko, even if you take off now. I’m coming back to recalibrate the equipment, and—what? You’re busy with a last-minute gift request? Huh? What d’ya mean you’ll break my face if I show up at...hello? Hello?”

Lost the signal. It had to be the freaking storm. The conversation was broken, and Al must’ve misunderstood. Nothing on earth could make Kris deliberately delay his departure. He was a *machine* that way.

Sliding silently along the wall of the Great Hall, Alwyn wiped the frost away from the nearest window with his gloved hand. Peeking through the glass, he stared for a long, disbelieving moment before turning aside, bracing his body against the bricks and smiling foolishly to himself.

Nothing on earth his patootie. And he couldn’t be happier for both of them.

“So, what d’ya say, Blitzen? Shall we make our way back to the other party until we’re called? At least it’s warm there, and—hey, stop that. Back off! Damn crotch-sniffing, furry little perv, I should...huh...well, hell. What do you know? Actually, that

doesn't feel too bad, man. Wait, let me get rid of these extra socks. One of us is wearing too many clothes..."

~~~ THE END ~~~

### **Author Biography**

I am a Weaver of dreams, a teller of tales. In the privacy of my own little cottage, under the watchful eyes of guardian cats, I create seductive heroines, brooding heroes, my own worlds, my own reality.

And everyone is invited to come.

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