



The Elves and I

Catrina Calloway

Red Garters, Snow and Mistletoe Series

The Elves and I

A Red Garters, Snow and Mistletoe Tale

By Catrina Calloway

Resplendence Publishing, LLC

<http://www.resplendencepublishing.com>

Resplendence Publishing, LLC

P.O. Box 992

Edgewater, Florida, 32132

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Copyright © 2009, Catrina Calloway

Edited by Jessica Berry

Cover art by Rika Singh

Electronic format ISBN: 978-1-60735-063-7

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Electronic release: September 2009

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Chapter One

“This is ridiculous!” Marni Sands hissed through clenched teeth.

Her lawyer whispered from the corner of her mouth, “Sit there and be quiet.”

“Just who does that judge think he is?”

The attorney rolled her eyes. “He’s the one who’s going to decide your fate for the next ninety days.”

BANG!

Marni jumped when Judge Nicholas Saint pounded the gavel.

“Counselor, this is the last time I’m going to tell you—control your client.”

He scanned the documents in front of him. “Speeding in our traffic circle, eh, Ms. Sands?” He narrowed his eyes. “Driving while intoxicated?”

“I was framed!” Marni shot to her feet. “My butler and maid planted those two opened vodka bottles on the floor in back of my Mercedes. They’d do anything to get me in trouble because I fired their sorry asses for stealing.”

Behind her, the two arresting officers snickered—loudly. Marni placed her hands behind her back and lifted one of her middle fingers. She wished she could personally tell the two arrogant assholes to fuck-off.

“Ms. Sands, do you expect me to believe such a load of nonsense?”

“Your honor, may I speak?” Marni’s lawyer ventured.

“Go ahead, counselor.” The judge leaned back in his chair, folding his hands across his ample belly.

She rose and placed a hand on Marni’s shoulder, shoving her down into her chair.

“My client is a law-abiding citizen, and a respected member of her community. She’s also been forced to live in the limelight because of her family’s wealth and reputation.”

“I’m well aware of that, *counselor*.”

“Yes, well, my point is that my client’s notoriety attracts the paparazzi. Ms. Sands was forced to speed through your town’s traffic circle by the photographers pursuing her and—”

“Why didn’t she call the police?”

“Unfortunately, my client could not reach her cell phone.”

The judge stroked his long, white beard. “Doesn’t she have that new-fangled, what the heck is it called?” He glanced at one of the bailiffs. “My brother San, he’s got one in his sleigh—you get your phone calls through it, and navigation—”

“It’s called ‘My Gig’ your honor.” The bailiff replied.

“Right. My Gig.” Judge Saint leaned forward, resting his robed forearms on top of the bench. “Does your client have one of those?”

She sighed. “Yes, she does.”

“Then she should have used it to call the police for help. Instead, she chose to speed through our traffic circle. The officers say she was doing sixty in a twenty-five mile an hour zone. And...” He held up his index finger. “She refused to take a sobriety test.”

“Because I didn’t have anything to drink!” Marni objected. Panic well inside her. It was time to pull out the big guns if she didn’t want to spend the holidays in jail. “Your honor, may I approach the bench?” She used her silkiest tone.

He crooked his index finger. “Come forward.”

“I don’t think this is a good idea.” Her attorney whispered. “You know how these small towns are. Just plead guilty, pay the fine and we’ll get you out of here.”

“No.”

She brushed past her lawyer and stood in front of Judge Saint.

“You’ve got exactly...” He pulled a gold watch from his pocket; it dangled on a long chain. “Two minutes, starting now.”

She licked her lips, tossing back her blonde hair over one shoulder.

Marni lowered her voice. “How about we work this out, *together*, in your chambers?” She batted her eyes, pushing out her new, “C” cup, surgically altered breasts. “I’m sure we could come up with a sizable donation, which I’d be willing to make to the town of River’s End, *if* you catch my meaning.”

Marni knew how to work her angles. She had quite a few judges in her pocket—this one would be no different.

Seconds went by. It became so quiet, Marni thought she could hear a pin drop in the courtroom.

“Ms. Sands,” the judge finally said. “I’m older than dirt. I’ve seen it all and heard it all, but you take the proverbial cake.” He rapped the gavel on the bench.

She jumped out of her skin for the second time that evening.

“I’d throw you in jail if I thought it would help, but I can see that you’ve got a lot to learn. I’m suspending your driver’s license and I hereby sentence you to thirty days of community service in Christmas Town.”

She scowled. “Christmas Town? What the hel—I mean, heck—is Christmas Town? Is that like the outlets?”

“It is *not* a shopping mall.” The look he gave her could freeze water. “It’s a small, self-contained community within our little town of River’s End.”

“What am I supposed to do there?”

“You’ll just have to wait and see, now won’t you?”

* * * *

Snow crystals landed on her cheeks and nose as the two bailiffs escorted Marni outside. Her breath formed a puffy white haze each time she exhaled.

CRUNCH!

She stepped in snow that had hardened from the frigid temperature. “I can’t walk in this. It’ll ruin my leather boots.”

The two bailiffs smirked. “Should we carry you, *Madame*?”

“These boots cost more than you two make in a month.”

They ignored her snide comment and said, “Here’s your ride now.”

Marni watched a large, old-fashioned sleigh driven by eight reindeer slide to a halt in front of them. The reindeer stomped their hooves, bending their heads to sniff at the snow.

A young man and woman emerged from the sleigh dressed in bright green elf costumes.

“What the hell is going on?” Marni fumed. “Is this some sort of joke?” Her eyes widened. “Oh no, please don’t tell me I’m on that show ‘Gotcha!’—the one where they have the hidden cameras?”

“Hi Bill, hi Dan!” The young woman addressed the bailiffs.

She wore her auburn hair tucked beneath a three-pointed hat with a large plume. Her bright green dress cinched her waist, its full skirt swirling around her legs.

Bill spoke. “How’s it going, Celyn? I see Santa let you drive tonight.”

Marni rolled her eyes. “Oh, for heaven’s sake. This is *insane*.”

The lead reindeer turned his head and Marni stared in shock. The damn thing’s nose glowed bright red.

She quickly turned around.

I must be seeing things...

“Where’s your buddy, Celyn? Did Santa let you drive by yourself?” one of the bailiffs asked.

Celyn beamed, her freckled face splitting into a wide smile. “Aardel’s here, but I would have been all right alone. It was a smooth landing.”

The other ‘elf’ jumped down from the sleigh. Although short, he had a muscular body. He walked over to shake hands with the bailiffs.

“Happy holidays, guys,” he said with a grin. “How are your families?”

One of the bailiffs puffed out his chest. “Sally’s expecting our third.”

Aardel whistled. “Congratulations.” He pumped the man’s hand again.

Celyn stuck her nose in the air. “My driving was just fine, Aardel. I didn’t need *you*.”

Marni saw something flash in Aardel’s sherry-colored eyes. He tapped Celyn on the nose with his index finger. “I didn’t want you driving at night alone. Maneuvering around those shooting stars can be tricky.”

“I’ve handled Santa’s sleigh before!” She stamped her booted foot in the snow.

Marni was fascinated. She’d never seen such authentic costumes or make-up. The suede lining the toes of their boots turned upward, forming a perfect curl. Their pointy ears and slanty little brows gave their faces a pixie look one would expect from...well, elves.

Aardel took Celyn's hand. "You did a fine job tonight. I was proud of you."

Celyn blushed to the roots of her red-gold hair. For a few seconds, her eyes locked with Aardel's

"Well, here's your charge." The bailiffs handed Marni over to them. "See you around Aardel! 'Bye, Celyn."

They walked back inside the building with a small wave.

Marni ran after them. She pulled on the closed door. It wouldn't budge.

"Ms. Sands, we've got to leave now. Santa's waiting."

Marni rapped her forehead against the door. "This can't be happening. *This can't be happening.*" She chanted.

"Ms. Sands?" Celyn called out. "Are you okay?"

She turned to face them. "Go away."

"The sled won't move unless you're on it." Aardel stated.

She gave the young man a dark look.

"Santa's orders." He shrugged.

"You expect me to believe this bullshit?"

Aardel clapped his hands over Celyn's ears. "Ms. Sands! Watch your language. Santa wouldn't—"

"How much?" Marni dug through her bag.

Celyn frowned. "How much what?"

"How much money will it take to make you leave me the hell alone?"

Aardel clapped his hands over Celyn's ears again.

Marni withdrew her checkbook. "Will a thousand dollars each cover it?" She started to write.

Celyn laid a hand across hers. "Santa wouldn't dream of making people pay for a ride on his sleigh."

Aardel nodded. "She's right. Santa's not like that."

"Would you knock off the Santa shi—stuff?"

Celyn's eyes filled with tears. "You don't believe in Santa Claus?"

"For Pete's sake!" Marni shoved her checkbook into her bag. "Don't cry."

“Ms. Sands, this isn’t a joke,” Aardel said. “We’re here to take you to Christmas Town. Santa is waiting. We need to leave now before the weather gets worse.”

“Fine. Go.” Marni wagged her fingers at the sleigh.

“Like we said, we can’t leave without you.”

Celyn reached for her hands. “You’ll enjoy the ride. We promise.”

“I’ve been on a sleigh ride before, plenty of times.”

“Not like this.” Celyn grinned.

* * * *

WHOOSH!

Marni’s eyes widened, her mouth falling open while Celyn guided the sleigh into the wintry night sky. The stars twinkled and the moon hung full and golden as they rose higher. A shooting star passed by, then another, leaving a trail of glittering light in their wake.

“Go Dancer, go Prancer, go Donner and go Blitzen!” Celyn shouted above the wind. “Good job, Rudolf. Santa’s going to be so proud when I tell him how you led us.”

Marni gazed at the front dash of the sleigh where an intricate navigation system guided them through the night.

My brother, San...he’s got one on his sleigh...

“Well, I’ll be a...that judge wasn’t kidding.”

“Pardon me?” Aardel asked.

“Nothing.” She shook her head. “This ride is pure magic.”

He grinned. “Elves never lie.”

“Yeah, right.” She snorted. “Everyone lies, honey. *Everyone.*”

“Elves always tell the truth.”

No one she knew *ever* told the truth—especially to her.

Marni looked down. An ominous, gray castle loomed in the distance.

“Is that Christmas Town?”

“Gosh, no!” Celyn replied. “That’s where the evil elf, Glint lives. He’d do anything to destroy Christmas Town and the Holiday Spirit. You must never, ever go there, Ms. Sands. Glint is a bad elf.”

“Ooooooooookay. If you say so.”

Marni wondered if her drinking had finally caught up with her.

She sucked in a breath as another magnificent shooting star flew by, its fiery tail bursting into thousands of shimmery sparks all around them.

A few minutes later, another castle came into view, a magnificent red and green fortress with gold spires that rose high into the sky.

“Is that Christmas Town?”

Her heart beat wildly and her excitement built, which amazed her even further. She couldn’t remember the last time she’d been excited or thrilled about anything.

“Isn’t it beautiful?” Aardel looked out over the town with a smile.

“It is.” Marni agreed without hesitation.

White lights twinkled from every window. Huge gold and silver ornaments dangled from the branches of pine trees surrounding the castle.

“Those ornaments are made of real silver and gold.” Celyn told her.

Marni whistled. “Damn things must be worth a fortune.”

“That’s how Santa pays for what we need throughout the year. He sells off a few of the ornaments each Christmas.” Celyn told her.

Aardel placed a hand on Celyn’s shoulder. “You shouldn’t be telling everyone Santa’s business.”

She shrugged him off. “You’re not the boss of me.”

He shook his head and sighed, his eyes filled with longing.

Marni’s mouth curved into a smile. Their banter was cute, and she thought it clearly displayed that Aardel had the hots for Celyn.

That made her smile—again. Amazing. Here she was, grinning like a loon, and she didn’t even need a drink to accomplish it. Lately, booze was the only thing that made her happy.

She heard the swish of curved metal blades as Celyn landed the sleigh.

“Well done!” Aardel placed an arm around Celyn’s shoulders.

The young woman beamed, her smile reaching from ear-to-ear.

Aardel kissed Celyn’s cheek, and her lovely mouth formed a perfect ‘O.’ He jumped off the sleigh, his arms extended so he could help Celyn. She slid against him, their eyes locking for a few seconds.

Then she pulled away, her pink cheeks turning bright red. “Th-thank you.”

“My pleasure.” Aardel murmured.

He then turned to escort Marni from the sleigh. They all walked together, the snow crunching beneath their feet.

At the entrance to the castle, two tall, life-like wooden soldiers stood guard.

Marni poked one in his chest. He winked.

“Holy shi—I mean—wow.”

“Santa’s got a hundred of them.” Celyn whispered. “Aren’t they handsome? When they all march together, I get such chills. Brrrrrr.” Celyn shivered.

Marni angled her head. “What’s that old saying? ‘There’s something about a man in uniform.’”

BANG!

Marni jumped when Aardel used the large, gold knocker on the door.

“Next time, warn me.” She grumbled.

“Sorry.” He shrugged. “But we have to be announced.”

The large door swung open and a female elf greeted them. “Aardel, Celyn...we’re glad you’re back. Everyone’s waiting.”

She ushered them inside.

Warmth surrounded Marni, along with the smell of fresh-baked cookies and cinnamon.

A petite, older woman with short, white curly hair walked over to them. Her long green and red checked gown stopped just short of her ankles, revealing a pair of black high-button shoes with laces and thin, six-inch heels.

Marni shook her head, thinking she imagined it, but when the older woman turned, she caught a glimpse of black fishnet stockings.

The woman’s soft voice floated by Marni’s ears.

“I’m glad you finally made it. Word is we’re getting a blizzard.”

Celyn took Marni by the hand. “Elise, I’d like you to meet Marni Sands.”

“Well my dear, I can only say we’ve been waiting for you with great anticipation.”

“You have?” Marni raised a brow.

“Of course. Nicholas said to expect you.”

“Nicholas?”

The woman smiled. “Nicholas Saint. My husband’s brother.”

“The judge! He looked like Santa Claus.”

“That’s because Nicholas and Santa are twins.”

Marni rolled her eyes. *This is getting very weird.*

She noticed that the older woman didn’t have one wrinkle on her smooth, peaches and cream skin, yet something about her spoke of times long past. Maybe it was the dress—it had a bustle on the back. Or maybe the shoes or...

The fishnet stockings? Women didn’t wear sexy stockings in olden times...or shoes with six-inch heels...

Elise’s voice cut through Marni’s musings. “Mister Claus and I were looking forward to your arrival.”

“Okay, while this whole thing seems nuts, if you want me to go along with the charade, fine. I’ll play.”

It became very quiet. All eyes were on Marni.

“Whatever do you mean, dear?”

Marni folded her arms beneath her breasts. “Either you all take the holiday season waaay too seriously, or someone slipped something into my drink and this is all one, big fantasy.”

The older snapped her white brows together. Pushing her gold, horn-rimmed glasses up her nose, she replied, “You were drugged? By whom?”

“Oh!” Marni threw her hands up in the air. “Just forget it. I already said I’d play along.”

The older woman clapped her hands. “Splendid. Mister Claus will be so pleased.” She lowered her voice. “And we always want to please *him*.” She wagged her index finger at Marni. “You must always be a good girl, never naughty.” Her cheeks turned pink. “Or Mr. Claus won’t be happy.”

“Whatever you say, honey.”

“That’s Claus, dear. Missus Claus. But you can call me Elise—everyone does. Now let’s go into the great hall. Santa is waiting there, and so is the elf council.”

Marni did as the older woman bade, wondering if she'd completely lost her mind.

Chapter Two

The great hall teemed with elves. Some lounged in groups, while others lingered by a long table bearing trays of cookies. A fire glowed in a big hearth. Torches burned bright, providing the room with additional warmth and light.

A male elf announced their arrival.

“Missus Claus to see you, sir.”

Santa’s face lit with a smile. “Hello, my dear. What an assortment of goodies we have—you must have been a good girl and worked very hard.”

Elise walked up to Santa and he patted his thighs. She crawled into his lap, nestling her head against his chest. Santa wrapped his arms around her, kissing the white curls on the top of her head.

Envy tore at Marni’s heart. Strangely, she longed to cuddle on Santa’s lap, too.

“Celyn and Aardel have finally returned, Santa,” Elise said. “They’ve come home with a guest.”

Her eyes locked with Santa’s while he sat on his golden throne. Bright, white light surrounded him, his aura of love and holiday cheer a powerful presence.

Three tall, male elves flanked him—two on his left, one on his right.

“Ho, ho, *hoooooooooooo*.” He crooked a finger at Marni. “Come closer my dear, come meet Santa.”

Next, I’m going to hear the Easter Bunny is alive and well, too.

She refused to believe that she actually stood in the presence of the great, jolly Santa Claus.

Marni gazed at the three tall, handsome elves.

Her pulse raced.

Men! They’re men, not elves, damn it! They’re wearing costumes. It’s all just pretend.

Her eyes settled on the one with the tawny hair and lean, fit body. He folded his arms across his chest and bowed. She could see the play of muscle on his upper arms, beneath the sleeves of his tunic. He rose to his full height and grinned, his blue eyes locking with hers.

“This is Kip.” Santa nodded in the tall elf’s direction. “He is part of my council.”

She swallowed fear and something else...desire.

Kip stepped forward, reaching for her hand. He turned it over, placing a soft kiss on the pad beneath her thumb. His lips lingered for a few seconds, sending shockwaves of sexual need through Marni’s body. He released her hand, giving it a gentle squeeze before letting go.

“We’re pleased to have you as our guest, love.”

His British accent captivated her.

Desire flowed freely through her veins. It mixed with her blood, heating it.

“How did you get the name ‘Kip’?”

“I’m named for Kippering, a smoked fish delicacy enjoyed by my native Brits.”

He sighed, his voice filled with longing. “I sorely miss that treat.” His eyes settled on her mouth. “But I see another standing before me.”

Careful, Marni. He’s a man—and all men are shits.

“This is Noel. He’s part of my council, too.” Santa’s voice rang out.

Another tall elf stepped down from his place near Santa’s throne. Marni’s eyes flew to the large bulge between his legs, visible beneath his dark green woolen tights. She sucked in a breath when he took her hand, running his thumb across the back of it. She wondered what his hands—particularly his thumb, would feel like if he touched her between her legs.

“A pleasure to meet you, lass.”

Her knees turned to rubber when his brogue floated by her ears.

Her traitorous hormones played with her body while she imagined what it would be like to take *both* elves to bed.

Shame on you, Marni!

The final elf standing on Santa's right made her pulse kick up yet another notch. His deep chocolate brown tunic matched his dark eyes and hair. She couldn't stop staring at the expanse of his wide chest and powerful shoulders.

"My second in command." Santa told Marni. "May I present Eldan?"

He stepped forward. Kip and Noel bowed slightly, giving him a wide berth.

Marni's feet stayed rooted to the floor. She felt her body grow smaller with each step he took toward her.

"Ms. Sands." He murmured in a deep, sensual voice.

He didn't take her hand. He didn't tell her it was a pleasure to meet her.

He didn't bow.

Marni felt compelled to bow before *him*.

She gazed at his strong jaw, at the sharp angles and planes of his chiseled face, where she noticed the shadow of a beard. The only thing that softened his countenance was the dimple set dead center in his chin.

She tried to smile, but her trembling lips refuse to obey her command.

Eldan reached out, running a thumb across her mouth.

She gasped, the contact of his thumb against her lips sending a shockwave of need to the little nubbin of flesh nestled between her legs. It quivered just like her lips.

He swept his hand out.

"This is Santa's kingdom. All are welcome and safe here."

But not from you.

* * * *

Eldan took Marni by the hand, leading her out of the great hall. She practically had to run to keep up with his long, powerful strides.

She glanced at Eldan's handsome, serious face, wondering if it would crack if he attempted even the slightest grin.

"You seem a little...dour for an elf. I thought elves were happy little campers."

"I'm very content."

Okay, not much of a talker.

They passed table after table of potted plants bearing bright red and pink blooms.

"What are those flowers?"

“They’re called amaryllis. They bloom year-round here in Christmas Town.”

“I don’t think I’ve ever since such gorgeous flowers.”

He stopped walking and folded his arms across his chest. “Maybe it’s because you never bother to notice the beauty around you. You’re too busy worrying about petty things.”

“Are you trying to say I’ve never stopped to smell the roses?” Her voice dripped acid. “Is this supposed to be elf psycho-babble?”

“Just an observation.”

“You elves *observe* a lot, don’t you?”

The look he gave her could have melted chocolate. “A lot more than you think.”

“That’s a good thing.” She ran a finger down his chest.

He captured her hand in his.

“I’m not like the men you’ve known in the past; don’t think you can fool me.”

She pulled her hand away, his touch sending a little zing down her spine.

“You use sarcasm to keep people away.”

“You’re still here.”

“*That* should tell you a lot.”

They walked on in silence.

“Where are we going?”

“Wardrobe.”

She frowned. “Wardrobe?”

“You need to get into the proper clothing.”

Marni stopped and licked her lips, sliding her tongue across them.

“Don’t you like what I’m wearing now?”

She lifted her skirt, revealing her thighs. Marni hated wearing underwear. This time, she was particularly glad she didn’t have a shred of lace on underneath her skirt.

Eldan’s dark eyes lit with a spark of need, their centers glowing.

She tossed her hair over one shoulder, raising her skirt higher to reveal her naked pussy.

“Like what you see, Eldan?”

“Very much.” He murmured.

He stepped forward, accepting the invitation. Usually, men just drooled then touched her clit awkwardly, making a mess of the entire sex thing.

Not Eldan.

He stroked each thigh, sliding the tips of his fingers upwards, skimming the smooth-shaven skin lining her pussy.

She could sense his desire, watching his eyes dilate with passion.

“All you have to do is get me the hell out of here and I’m yours,” she told him.

His jaw tightened. He dropped his hand.

Marni felt bereft at the loss of contact.

“Nicholas warned me about you.” Eldan folded his arms across his powerful chest. “I’m not taking any of your crap.” He dropped his arms and pointed his index finger at her pussy. “I’m not interested.”

Her eyes flew to the bulge between his legs.

“Ohhhhhhhhhhh, I beg to differ.” She grinned.

“When I want a woman,” he shoved her skirt down to cover her, “I let her know in my own way. Besides, Santa’s got a list of all the naughty things you’ve done.”

She laughed, the sound brittle. “Yeah, right.”

“Only you know just how naughty you’ve been.”

“Okay, then.” She lifted her chin. “Tell me one bad thing I’ve done that only *I* would know about.”

He stroked his hand across his jaw. “You fired your butler and maid.”

She slashed a hand through the air. “You could have found that out from the judge. I told him that in court.”

“Yes, but you said in court you fired them for stealing, which we both know isn’t the case. You fired them because you couldn’t stand to see them happy. You were jealous of your butler. You had the hots for him, but he didn’t give a damn about you. When you caught him making love to your maid, you—”

“Enough.” Her voice vibrated with anger.

A corner of his mouth lifted.

“Don’t look so damned satisfied.”

She blew out a breath, wondering what else he knew.

“Now, are you going to behave and put on elf attire?”

“What happens if I don’t?”

Seconds went by. He didn’t say a word. Marni bit her lower lip, wondering if she hadn’t just screwed herself royally.

Then again, she always managed to fuck up everything she touched.

“You have a choice,” Eldan said. “You can either get into an elf costume by yourself or...”

She wanted to push the ‘elf’ to his limit, curious to see what he would do. Usually, men simply did as she bade.

Not Eldan.

“Or what?” She raised a brow, but it quivered.

“I’ll get you into the damn clothes myself.”

He pushed open a door. Marni peeked inside to see a room filled with racks of tunics, tights, dresses, boots and those silly three-cornered hats.

“That might be fun.” She made her voice sound light.

A low growl escaped his throat. He lunged, but she skipped away, sailing through the door. She shut it, locking it behind her.

“If you’re not downstairs in the Toy Shop, dressed in proper elf attire in fifteen minutes, there will be consequences.”

Marni didn’t answer.

“Did you hear me? Fifteen minutes.”

Seconds went by, then she heard his retreating footsteps.

She leaned her back against the door, shutting her eyes, the idea of defying the commanding Eldan making her clit beat in time with the holiday music piped into the small room.

She reached under her skirt, placing her fingers against her wet pussy. She rubbed her clit, the tip of her middle finger sliding across the little bud, her mind filled with Eldan. She imagined it was *his* hand between her legs.

She came, but still felt frustrated.

Eldan played with her head as well as her body.

He was so damned sure of himself, so damned masterful, so...

She glanced at the elf clothing, an idea blooming in her head like the amaryllis flowers in the hallway.

Chapter Three

Fifteen minutes later, Marni walked into the Toy Shop.

Hundreds of elves sat on benches around long, wooden tables. Heads bent, intent on their tasks, they worked diligently, their nimble fingers fashioning an array of toys.

Celyn lifted her head, spotting Marni from across the room. Her eyes widened.

Kip walked over and took her hand. “You look wonderful, love.” Marni stepped away so he could admire her. “Green is your color.”

Noel joined them and made a spinning motion with his index finger. “Turn around, let me see.”

They both whistled their approval while Marni pivoted.

Noel’s warm breath tickled her lobe. “That outfit is terrific, lass, but you’re playing with fire.”

She followed the direction of his gaze. Eldan stood in the center of the room, his dark eyes smoldering. His eyes roamed over her body, his hand clenched at his side.

Marni lifted her chin. She wouldn’t cower.

Instead of donning an elf dress like the one Celyn and the other females wore, Marni had chosen a pair of lacy green tights, boots and a short tunic designed for a male elf. Most of the tunics were too large for her, but she discovered one intended for a teenager. It stretched across her breasts, outlining their rounded glory. The belt around her waist highlighted her curved hips, her bottom and her long legs.

She refused to wear one of those ridiculous three-cornered hats the other elves wore, so she fashioned her own out of a piece of green felt she’d found in the dressing room. The small cap with its jaunty white feather hugged the crown of her head.

The feather flopped over, covering her face, tickling her nose.

“The darn thing won’t stay put,” she complained to Kip and Noel.

She stuck her lower lip out, blowing hard, forcing the feather upwards.

Kip laughed. “You are a delight.” He ran a finger down her chin.

She shuddered pleasurably.

“Let me adjust that.” Noel bent the feather. “There now.” He stepped back to admire her. “Kip’s right: you are a delightful holiday treat.”

Kip leaned over and kissed her ear. “I think I’d like to take a bite of you right now, love.” He nipped her ear lightly with his teeth.

A shiver of longing snaked down her spine.

Her eyes strayed to Eldan. He stood at his full height, arms across his chest.

“Time to pay the piper, lass.” Noel gave her a nudge. “Go on now. Don’t be afraid. Eldan’s bark is much worse than his bite.”

She walked toward Eldan, feeling every eye in the room on her back.

“I’m going to get an outfit like Marni’s!” Celyn whispered to another female elf.

Aardel’s eyes widened. “You will *not*.”

“Will, too.” She lifted her chin, aiming it at Aardel.

Celyn flashed a beautiful smile at Kip. He just rolled his eyes and shook his head, ignoring her.

Aardel’s face fell. He walked away from Celyn, taking a seat at another table.

A strange feeling came over Marni—compassion. She suddenly felt very bad for Aardel.

She continued her march to Eldan like a condemned prisoner making her way to her execution.

One of the female elves reached out, squeezing her hand. “Way to go, Marni.”

“You look great.” Another little female elf beamed in her direction.

Soon, all the female elves chattered.

“I love your hat.”

“Terrific outfit.”

“I want to look like *her*.”

The male elves all sat there, drooling.

Except for Eldan.

She didn’t think he had an ounce of drool in him.

Finally, she stood before him, placed her hands at her waist and jutted her right leg to the side. The curled tip of her boot bumped his.

“Nice hat.” He nodded.

Her mouth curved into a smile. “Is that all you have to say?”

“Apparently, you have trouble following directions.”

She raised her chin. “I changed into elf attire as ordered.” She gave him a brisk salute.

A corner of his mouth lifted. “I’ll concede the point. This time.”

“That’s the best smile you can manage? I thought this was the land of holiday cheer?”

He was so close she could smell him. Woodsy. Musky...

Male.

He pointed to an empty seat at a lone table.

“Sit.”

She did as he bade, flopping down onto the bench.

He bent and reached around her, placing a wooden block on the table in front of her.

“Time to work.” He whispered next to her ear.

“Wh-what am I supposed to do?”

“Paint the letters on the sides of the block.”

She shrugged. “Easy enough.”

She reached for a clean brush, dipping it in some blue paint, brushing it across the letter ‘A.’

Marni continued to paint, her strokes quick, the color smearing on the letters.

He placed a hand over hers. “It isn’t a race. The block has to be made with love and care.”

Eldan’s hands strayed down to the waistband of her tights. He slipped his fingers inside.

“Now, be a good girl and paint the right way.”

Marni dipped the brush in some water, but her hand shook.

While she painted the toy, *he* toyed with her clit, sliding the tips of his fingers across it.

“I-I...oh my *God*.”

He chuckled next to her ear, the sound warm, rich and wicked.

“You’ve got fifty blocks to finish by tonight.”

He removed his hand.

Her clit throbbed, her thighs quivered. Eldan had brought her to the brink of satisfaction, and left her dangling.

“Bastard,” she hissed.

She picked up the brush, chipping a nail in the process. Her temper flared.

“Now look what you made me do!” she wailed. “My nails are ruined.”

The other elves laughed.

Marni rose from the bench. With a glower, she reached over, grabbed the container filled with dirty water, and tossed it at Eldan, soaking his tunic.

He looked down at the front of his shirt. Then he lifted his eyes. They flashed with anger. A muscle quivered in his jaw.

“Apologize.” He commanded.

“Go to hell! This is stupid!”

She tossed the block across the room. Several elves ducked.

“Children don’t play with blocks.” Marni looked over at another elf as he finished painting a wooden locomotive. “And they don’t play with wooden trains, either.” She swept the blocks from the table. “This is bullshit. I’m getting out of here.”

She was angry for allowing Eldan to take control. Furious at him for playing with her body. Enraged that he had left her panting for more.

No one did that to Marni Sands.

He was just like her ex-husbands. They never knew how to satisfy her—physically or mentally.

She wouldn’t take it anymore.

She looked over at Kip and Noel for support.

They stood with their arms folded across their chests, their jaws set in firm lines.

In the next instant, Marni's feet left the ground. Eldan tucked her against his side, carrying her to a vacant chair. She kicked her feet and screamed.

"Put me down!"

"Oh, I will." He growled. "I most certainly will."

He sat in the chair, tossing her facedown across his lap.

Her thin tights were no barrier for Eldan's wide palm. He smacked her bottom, his hand raining fire on Marni's flesh. The more she kicked and struggled, the more he spanked her.

The elves cheered.

Her bottom stung, but her pride hurt more when she heard Kip and Noel urge Eldan on.

She sunk her teeth into his muscled thigh. He didn't flinch; he just continued to spank her.

SWAT!

Marni beat on his leg, her fists connecting with hard muscle and bone.

SWAT! SWAT! SWAT!

"I'm in charge of you, Marni."

"Go to hell!"

SWAT!

"I won't let you ruin the good work that goes on in Santa's Toy Shop."

"Go fuck yourself!"

SWAT! SWAT! SWAT!

"Such a beautiful body, one I can't resist, but you have a filthy mouth and a terrible disposition. You push people away with your bad attitude."

SWAT! SWAT! SWAT!

Tears filled her eyes. She wasn't sure if it was because her ass hurt like hell or because he was right.

He stopped spanking her, lifting her from his lap.

She stood on shaky legs.

He didn't bother to help steady her.

Marni ran from the Toy Shop, shame washing over her.

She hadn't cried since she was a child.

Not since the fateful day life played on her the dirtiest trick of all: stealing the love of her life.

* * * *

That evening, she sulked in her room, smoking cigarette after cigarette. She reached for the flask she kept hidden in a secret part of her handbag, carefully sipping the few precious drops of vodka that remained.

"Fucking elves." She spoke aloud, her words slurred.

She lifted the flask and took another drink.

She paced back and forth, not even attempting to sit down.

A knock at the door interrupted her sulk a few moments later.

Marni squashed the cigarette butt in an ashtray, slipping it under the bed, wincing when her backside brushed the heels of her boots.

Anger returned.

No one ever spanked her—and in public! Oh, if she got her hands on Eldan, she'd...

Probably *beg* him to do it again. He wasn't so immune to her after all.

She had a body he couldn't resist.

She rose to her feet and stashed the flask in a drawer in the bedside table.

"Who is it?" She waved at the lingering smoke in the air.

"It's Celyn. Can I come in?"

"J-just a second."

She blew at the offending smoke. When she was satisfied the air had cleared, she opened the door.

Celyn walked in.

"I just wanted to see how you are."

Marni folded her arms beneath her breasts and leaned against the doorjamb, her sore backside connecting with the wood.

"Ow!" She screwed up her face, dropping her hands.

She used one to soothe her stinging bottom.

“I brought you this.” Celyn held up an ice pack. “And this.” She thrust a pillow into Marni’s hands.

Marni felt touched by Celyn’s concern.

“Thanks.”

Celyn snapped her brows together, glancing around the room. Marni followed the direction of her gaze—right to the ashtray peeking out from underneath the bed skirt.

Celyn’s eyes widened. “You’re smoking? That’s not allowed in Christmas Town.”

She wanted to reply, ‘Fuck Christmas Town’, but thought better of it, remembering how Aardel covered Celyn’s ears when she used bad language.

These elves were a sensitive bunch.

Celyn walked over to the bed and got on her knees, retrieving the ashtray from its hiding spot.

Marni scowled. “I suppose you’re going to rat me out.”

“Nope.” Celyn grinned. “We female elves had a meeting—we decided you’re tops.”

“Y-you did?”

Celyn nodded. “It took guts to do what you did this afternoon, to dress the way you did.”

Marni noticed Celyn’s hat. “I see you’ve made your own with the green felt.”

“We also decided we want you to design new elf wardrobes for all of us.”

“Really?”

“Really.”

Marni plopped down on the bed. “Ow! Shit.” She hopped off the bed, rubbing her bottom. She looked at Celyn. “Cursing is another one of my bad habits.”

Celyn bit down on her lower lip. “Can I ask you something?”

“Shoot.”

“Can I try one of your cigarettes?”

“No way. It’s a dirty, nasty habit.”

Celyn angled her chin. “But you do it.”

“That doesn’t make it right, Celyn. I know you’re young, and sometimes, youth makes us—”

“I’m not a baby.” Celyn lifted her nose in the air. “Even if Aardel thinks I am.”

Marni’s lips curved into her first smile in hours. “I think Aardel likes you.”

“He’s such a geek. Besides, I like Kip.”

“Kip?” Marni frowned. “Isn’t he a little old for you?”

Celyn clapped her hands together. “He’s so dreamy. I love his accent.” She flopped down on Marni’s bed, drawing her legs up. She hugged her knees. “Kip isn’t nerdy like Aardel.”

“If I were you, I’d watch who you call a ‘nerd.’ It’s the quiet ones that get you.”

Celyn glanced at the half-opened drawer in Marni’s nightstand.

“What’s in there?”

She got up off the bed and opened the drawer, reaching for the flask.

“It’s uh...” *Crap!* “...medicine.”

Celyn’s eyes filled with tears. “You’re ill? That’s terrible! I’m going to go and tell the Claus’ right now.” She started to walk away.

Marni grabbed her arm. “That was a lie, Celyn, please don’t tell them anything. I’ve got Vodka in that flask and—”

“Can I have some?”

“No.”

Celyn angled her head. “I just may have to tell everyone you’re smoking and how that’s going against the rules here in Christmas Town.”

“I thought you weren’t going to rat me out.”

“Maybe I changed my mind.”

If word got out that she was smoking, Eldan would tell Judge Saint and he’d surely throw her in jail.

“You can have one sip, but that’s it.”

Marni passed her the flask. Celyn took a deep drink of the vodka, licking her lips.

“It has no taste.”

“Or smell.” Marni replied.

“Then no one knows you’ve been drinking! That’s wonderful.”

“It sucks, to be quite honest. You can’t hide your bad, nasty habits from anyone for very long, particularly booze.”

Celyn passed her the flask. “It’s no big deal. I don’t really like it.”

“That’s a *good* thing.” Marni lowered her voice. “Tell me something.”

“What?”

“Mr. and Mrs. Claus, they don’t seem, well...old. I mean, they don’t seem like what I imagined them to be.”

“So?”

“I saw how she sits on his lap, and how he looks at her. And I swear she was wearing fishnet stockings under her dress.”

Celyn giggled. “I’ll tell you about them, in fact, I’ll *show* you.”

“Show me?”

“Come on.” Celyn whispered. “I think this is the room with the little peephole. She walked around, running her hands over the walls. Her face lit with a smile. “Bingo. I found it.”

Just then, a low moan came from the room next door.

Celyn glanced at the clock on the nightstand. “It’s time.”

“For what?”

“You wanted to know about Elise and uh... *Pappa* Claus, as she calls him. I’m going to show you.”

Marni held up both hands. “No, oh no...I’m not into that kinky voyeur stuff. I’m...oh hell.” She grinned. “Go ahead, show me.”

“Just look through that little peephole. You’ll see *everything*.”

“You’re positive they won’t know I’m watching?”

Celyn grinned. “They enjoy it more when someone does.”

Chapter Four

That same evening, Eldan paced the confines of his room, his mind filled with Marni.

She had the female elves rioting and demanding that Mrs. Claus fashion new outfits—clothes they wanted only Marni to design. All the male elves were half in love with her.

Well, who wouldn't be? With a beautiful body like that? And the face of an angel...it was just too bad she was ugly inside.

He couldn't change that with a spanking. Only one thing could turn a rotten human being into a wonderful elf.

He refused to think about it, knowing the effect it would have on his dick.

A loud knock on his door shattered his lustful thoughts.

"Enter."

Kip and Noel strode in.

"It's not like you to miss dinner, Eldan." Kip held out a plate filled with cookies.

"I wasn't hungry."

Kip flopped down into a chair. He swung one long leg over the arm. "When you don't eat, I know you're upset."

"I am upset!" Eldan sighed. "And it's all because of Marni. Santa and Elise think Marni is here in Christmas Town because she wants to be here." "Elise can't stop talking about the new outfits she is going to sew for the female elves, based on Marni's designs, and now I've heard through our little elf 'grapevine' that Marni's got some new fangled ideas on how to make toys—she spoke to Santa about it at dinner."

Kip raised a brow. "What's wrong with that?"

"Kip, she's here because Judge Saint decreed it—she was arrested for speeding and drunk driving."

Kip whistled. "I had no idea."

"She's one messed-up human being," Eldan replied. "I won't burst Santa or Elise's cheery little bubble by telling them that."

"They're such optimists," Noel replied. "They believe in goodness, in holiday spirit."

"Well, I won't allow them to be hurt, and I won't let a spoiled, selfish human ruin the year-round holiday spirit of Christmas Town, either."

Kip munched a cookie. "Then what do you propose we do? Turn Marni into a happy little elf?"

"I think the lass wants to be good little elf," Noel chimed in. "She just doesn't want to admit it."

Eldan slashed a hand through the air. "She's a spoiled, childish woman—a bold, brazen little troublemaker. She thinks everyone's going to kow-tow to her."

Kip piped in. "Except for you."

"Yeah, except for me."

Eldan wished someone would tell that to his swelling cock. He'd had a hard-on for Marni since she arrived. He'd read about her antics, her sexual escapades. She was the darling of the paparazzi—a wealthy, media sensation who's money allowed her to do whatever she desired, but her list of naughty deeds didn't stop his attraction for her.

In fact, it challenged him.

Noel spoke, cutting through his musings. "Look man, she deserved that spanking. If you weren't here to do it, one of us would have. We're behind you all the way." He grinned. "Pun intended."

Kip popped another cookie into his mouth.

Eldan frowned. "Where'd you get those? I thought we were all out of cookies."

"Mrs. Claus has been on a cookie-baking binge. I can't seem to get enough of these." Kip licked his fingers. "Marni is going to need a lot of loving to turn her into an elf."

"She's got to truly *want* to become an elf," Eldan replied. "She doesn't have one shred of kindness in her, not one elf-like quality."

Noel grabbed a cookie. He chewed it thoughtfully.

“She’s got a lot of demons riding her back. All her ‘swagger’ is just for show.” He grinned. “Donning that sexy little elf costume was just to get our attention.”

“She got mine.” Kip leaped into the air, clicking the curled toes of his boots together. He landed on the ground. “I don’t mind taking charge of Marni. I think it’ll be fun.”

“You think *everything*’s fun.” Eldan growled.

His right hand tingled. If Marni were here now he’d paddle her again. She was one human female who probably needed a paddling every day of her miserable life. He showed her who was in charge: him. He’d spanked the arrogance from her—at least temporarily. That was evident by the shocked look on her face earlier, and the wash of tears lining her beautiful, high cheekbones.

“Eldan, you’re at odds with yourself.”

He glanced at Kip. “What’s that supposed to mean?”

“You’d much rather make love to her than spank her.”

Elf psychobabble...

He tried to shove thoughts of Marni aside, but his stiff dick wouldn’t allow it.

Kip winked at Noel.

“Poor girl must be hurting. I think Noel and I will have to tend to her luscious little bum. Just think: we’ll have to remove her lacy tights—slowly.”

Eldan shifted his stance.

“We’ll have to soothe the sting from her tender skin.” Noel sighed. “Sliding our hands over her tight, firm backside.”

Eldan swallowed—hard.

“That beautiful, tear-stained face. I’ll have to kiss it, and every other part of her.”

“I imagine her breasts will need kissing.”

“Her belly button, too.”

Noel drew his brows together, a thoughtful look on his face. “I wonder if it is an ‘inny’ or an ‘outy.’”

“But the job of soothing Marni would be easier if there were three of us.” Kip grinned.

“Enough!”

They both looked at Eldan.

“Something wrong?” Kip asked.

Eldan swore it was the most innocent look Kip had ever mastered.

Noel angled his head. “Eldan, you look positively...pained.”

The only pain Eldan felt was in his cock. It got so hard, he swore it would bust through the woolen tights covering it.

“No more talk of making love to Marni.” He growled.

Kip laid a hand over his heart. “We didn’t mention one word about making love to beautiful, sexy, *gorgeous*, Marni, we only—”

“Shut up.

Kip tipped his head back and laughed. Then his eyes met Eldan’s.

“Sooooooooooooo, you *would* rather make love to her than spank her.”

“I never said *I didn’t* want to make love to her.”

“Eldan, it is the only thing that will turn a human into an elf.”

The room got very quiet.

“She’s our charge, Eldan. It’s up to us to help her reform, especially if we don’t want to let on to Santa and Missus Claus about the real reason Marni is here.”

Eldan sighed. “We owe them too much to burst their bubble of happiness.”

“Remember, a human must be turned into an elf by Christmas in order for Santa to make it official.”

“That doesn’t leave us much time.” Kip stroked his chin.

“Humility, forgiveness—those are two elf traits Marni *must* demonstrate before we can make love to her.”

“She must desire us as much as we desire her.” Kip grinned. “I personally volunteer for that job.”

Eldan shook his head. “Are you ever serious?”

“Only on Thursdays.”

Eldan rolled his eyes.

“She must become humble and forgiving.” Noel added. “Eldan’s right about that.”

“That’s not happening in *our* elf lifetime.” Eldan grumbled.

Noel smiled. “Miracles do happen, my friend. Especially during the holidays.”

Chapter Five

The next morning, Marni went in search of a cup of coffee. She needed a shot of caffeine—badly. And sweets—she was dying for a taste of something sugary.

After what she'd seen last night, maybe she needed a shot of booze, too. The thing was, lately, booze made her see the strangest things... like what she saw through that peephole in her room last night...

Yeah, it was definitely time to give up drinking.

The odor of cinnamon and fresh-baked cookies wafted by her nose, making her mouth water. She stopped at the entrance to a large kitchen. Mrs. Claus worked inside, removing some cookies from a pan. Santa stood behind her, his arms around her waist. He kissed the back of her neck, raising her skirt to run his hands across her bottom.

Okay, so maybe I wasn't imagining it...

Marni grinned, catching sight of Elise's red, lacy thong. Mister and Missus Claus definitely weren't an old, staid couple.

They were young at heart.

Marni wished she could feel that way, too. Sometimes, she felt exactly what Judge Saint said *he* was—older than dirt.

She was suddenly very tired of feeling that way.

But what could she do to turn back the hands of time? Could she really change anything now?

She cleared her throat, announcing her arrival.

Santa stepped away, pushing his wife's skirt down.

"Ho, ho, *hoooooooooooo*. Good morning, Marni. Did you sleep well?"

"Yes, thank you, Santa, I did."

He walked over to her, stroking his long, white beard.

"I've discussed your toy ideas with Eldan."

She raised a brow. “Y-you have?”

“I had no idea you owned Sands Toy and Game.”

“I inherited the company from my father when he passed away.”

“Yes, I was sorry to hear about that. He was a good man who helped me out plenty of times.”

Her mouth hung open. She snapped it closed. “Y-you knew my father?”

“Of course. There were several years when we ran short and your father generously donated several thousand toys to my bag.”

“I don’t believe it.”

Santa angled his head. “Why is that?”

He was a cheap, miserly bastard who detested everyone...he had no holiday spirit.

“Never judge a toy by the packaging, Marni. You must open it, and play with it, to get the real joy. Now, your ideas on toy production are sound. I told Eldan to confer with you this morning.”

Eldan wouldn’t give me the time of day. Not after the way I acted.

“Eldan, Kip, Noel and the rest of the elves are expecting you—I told them you’d do a presentation of your ideas at ten a.m. sharp.”

Marni’s eyes widened. “A-a presentation?”

“I have a feeling you know toys like the back of your hand.” He patted hers.

“Now, I’ve got some work to do. Christmas will be here before you know it, and I’ve got to be ready.”

He walked out of the kitchen, his jolly laugh echoing down the hall.

Marni shook her head. “Is he always this happy?”

“Always.” Elise beamed. “Now, how about some cookies and tea?”

“Tea?” Marni screwed up her face. “I was hoping you had coffee.”

“Oh dear me, no. We have green tea or white tea.”

“I’ll take white tea.” Marni flopped into a chair.

“My dear, I’m so glad you volunteered to come to Christmas Town. We appreciate all your help and ideas.”

Marni’s heart beat a staccato rhythm in her chest.

Elves don’t lie...

I'm not a damned elf! There are no such things as elves. What do I care if she thinks that I'm here voluntarily? Let her believe what she wants.

But elves don't lie...

Marni took a deep breath. "Elise, I think you've got the wrong impression."

"Oh, no dear, I couldn't possibly. I'm never wrong about people."

"Yeah, well, there's a first time for everything."

She raised one white brow while she put a plate of cookies and a small pot of tea in front of Marni. "Why do you say that?"

Marni reached out and grabbed Elise's hand. "I'm here because Judge Saint ordered me to do community service. I was arrested for speeding and drunk driving."

Elise gave her a long, level look. "The reason you came to Christmas Town doesn't matter. It's what you do with the time you're given here that counts."

Marni chewed and swallowed a cookie, but it tasted like sand. Tears clogged her throat.

"I've seen what you're capable of. You fit right in with all of our female elves here—and you've made them so happy with your new wardrobe ideas." She beamed at Marni. "And you've made me and Santa very happy." She winked. "I've noticed how Eldan, Kip and Noel look at you. You've made them, happy, too. They didn't have it easy when they first came here. They share a special bond because all three came to us when their parents died in a tragic accident during the holidays. The boys were holy terrors when they arrived." Elise grinned. "Three little 'curtain climbers'. But soon, with love, they grew into the fine, strong elves they are today." She took a seat next to Marni. "And they adore you. I can tell."

Marni squirmed in her chair, shifting her right butt cheek, then her left. Her ass still stung.

Elise patted her hand. "Sometimes, when we're naughty, we need to be punished. But it doesn't make us bad people."

"I don't think Eldan sees it that way."

"He did what was best for you, Marni. Eldan looks out for everyone here at Christmas Town. So do Kip and Noel. Especially now that Santa and I are getting on in years." She rose from the table. "Why don't you go speak to Eldan?"

“I doubt very much that he wants to speak to me.”

“Elves never carry a grudge.”

Marni sighed. “Is that more elf legend?”

“It’s fact. Now go and do what you feel in your heart.” Elise patted her chest.

Marni got up from her seat.

She wasn’t sure she had a heart, never mind feelings, but she would give it a shot.

* * * *

Sometime later, Marni stood in front of the elves, all eyes on her.

“What I want each of you to understand is that you have unique talents. We have to put those abilities to good use and not waste them.”

One of the elves piped up. “Why change what we’ve done these last few hundred years?”

Marni bit back a smile. “May I ask you something?”

The elf nodded, folding his arms across his chest.

“First, what’s your name?”

“Pepper.” He grinned.

Marni scratched her head. “That’s an elf name?”

“My full name is Pepper Minstix.”

The other elves giggled.

“Silence!” Eldan’s voice boomed. The walls shook. “Ms. Sands is making a special presentation on behalf of Santa Claus. We owe her our attention and respect.”

She blew out a breath, wondering how she would manage to get through this without throwing up.

“Pepper, haven’t there been years when you’ve felt rushed to meet the holiday deadline? Years when there hasn’t been enough toys, and Santa had to scramble to fill all the orders of every little good girl and boy?”

Pepper scratched his head. “Well, sure, but—”

“All I’m asking is for you to try my production line idea. Instead of picking one toy and creating it from start to finish, you work on one specific aspect. Like you.” She pointed at Celyn. “You’re very talented.”

“Me?” Celyn looked around. “What am I good at?”

“Adding hair to the dolls’ heads and styling it. I saw you do it. You fashioned curls and waves on some of those dolls that would make the world’s greatest hairdresser jealous.”

Celyn beamed.

“So, you should do the hair and Pepper can dress the dolls.”

“Only the male dolls!” One of the elves called out.

There was a round of giggles.

Marni laughed, too. “Yes, perhaps Pepper should only dress the male dolls, but if we take it one step further, we can set aside a group of you to work on dolls only. Then another group of elves can work on toy trains, a group can work on toy cars, etc. The work will go much faster with each of you specializing in one toy, and one part of that toy’s completion.”

“Will the toys still be made with love?” Eldan’s voice rang out.

The room became quiet. Marni licked her dry lips.

“Always.” She replied, her voice steady. She wouldn’t let Eldan rattle her.

“This will guarantee we meet our deadline?” Kip asked.

“Yes.”

Noel spoke. “More toys in less time, is that what you’re saying, lass?”

“Precisely.”

Eldan rose to his feet. “Now, if you all will be so kind as to visit the tables where you can sign up for the special group you want to work with. We have them all labeled—dolls, trains, cars, blocks, etc. Then we’ll see you all back here bright and early tomorrow morning, when we begin our new assembly line production.”

Marni blew out a relieved breath.

She watched the elves linger by the tables, chattering about the ‘new way’ of making toys, signing up for the different groups.

Marni felt something besides relief—pride. She’d actually contributed something worthwhile.

She couldn’t remember the last time she felt pride in something she’d done.

“Marni.” Celyn tugged on her sleeve. “We’ve got to get going.”

Marni followed Celyn out of the Toy Shop. “Where?”

“This is the day we visit the sick children who are in the River’s End hospital during the holidays.”

Marni stopped dead in her tracks.

“I-I can’t.”

Celyn angled her head. “Why not?”

“I’ve uh, I’ve got to get started on this ‘assembly-line’ thing, I’ve...”

“Celyn, will you excuse Marni for a minute?”

Eldan stood directly behind Marni. Strange, but she felt his presence even before he spoke.

“Sure.” Celyn curtsied then walked away.

Eldan took Marni’s hand.

“We’ll have more privacy in here.”

He opened two large gold doors that led into a solarium where tiered fountains spilled water from one level to another. A giant Christmas tree made of individual red poinsettia plants stood in the center of the room. White doves flew overhead, landing on the tree, the sound of gentle, running water filling the room.

Eldan shut the door then turned and faced her.

“I wanted to say...” They both spoke at once.

Marni’s heart raced, Eldan’s presence made her feel like she was five.

“I should go first,” she said, “before I lose my nerve.”

He nodded.

“I’m sorry, Eldan. I’m sorry for the way I behaved. Sorry for the trouble I’ve caused you.”

He held up a hand.

She stepped away. “You’re not going to use that on me again, are you?”

That made him laugh, but he sobered quickly.

“It pained me to have to punish you.”

“Yeah, well—” She rubbed her backside. “You weren’t the one getting spanked.”

He grinned.

“Wow, you really *can* smile.” She walked up to him, dipping her finger in the cleft of his chin.

He stepped away. “You shouldn’t do that. Not unless you mean it.”

“You think I’m not sincere?”

“You’ve known many men—men who haven’t given a damn about you, except for your money. Here, we care about one and other. Truly care. If you’re not ready for that, then I’m not the man for you.”

She swallowed back tears—and his rejection.

“Can’t we be friends?”

He looked like he wanted to say something, but then simply nodded his head.

She bit her lower lip. “Celyn mentioned something about going to a hospital.”

“A group of us go each holiday season to the River’s End Hospital to bring cheer and happiness to some very ill children.”

Her heart raced. “That’s really *not* my forte, if you know what I mean. I’d rather—”

“Sit in your room and smoke? Nurse your emotional pain with liquor?”

Her eyes widened. She’d kill Celyn for ratting her out, she’d—

“Don’t look so surprised. It’s all on Santa’s naughty list.”

She blew out a relieved breath, but fear returned quickly.

She hated hospitals. Hated their smell. The stark white rooms, the...despair.

“Come.” He held out his hand. “Give it a try. Help children who can’t help themselves.”

She walked with Eldan, holding onto his hand as if it was a lifeline.

I can do this...I can do this...

“It will be all right, Marni. You’ll see.”

Elves don’t lie.

Right.

Now, if she could only tell that to her sweating palms and knocking knees.

Chapter Six

“...and so, the little dog brought good cheer and happiness to everyone, reminding them of the real meaning of Christmas.”

Celyn closed the book, placing it on the table next to a little boy lying in bed. She stroked his hair, giving him a sip of water from a cup.

“Did you like that story, James?”

Marni clenched her hands in her lap. Her stomach roiled, the smell of antiseptic filling her nose. Machines hummed and clicked, people strode in the corridor outside where holiday decorations lined the stark, white walls.

PING!

Doctor Sloane, paging Doctor Sloane...

The boy yawned. “I like when you read to me, Celyn.” He shut his eyes, his breathing deep and even. “I like it a lot,” he murmured, his voice sleepy.

“Let’s go.” Celyn whispered. “I think he’ll doze for awhile. We’ve got another child to visit.”

Outside in the hall, Marni slapped a hand across her mouth. Tears filled her eyes. She gagged, nausea rising in her throat.

Celyn grabbed her arm. “What’s wrong?”

“I-I have to get out of here.”

“Why?”

“I-I don’t feel good.”

Celyn patted her arm. “I’ll find a doctor.”

“No!” Marni shouted. “No.” She shook her head. “Drive me back to Christmas Town. Please.”

“But—”

“Celyn, *please*.”

Celyn led Marni down the hall and out of the hospital. They boarded Santa's sleigh.

"Hold on, Marni. I'll have you back at Christmas Town in no time."

Celyn cracked the whip in the air. The reindeer moved, their hooves sliding across the snowy pavement. Soon, they lifted high into the sky.

A few minutes later, the sleigh touched down at Christmas Town.

"Marni! What are you doing back so soon?"

She ran past Elise and Santa.

Elise looked at Celyn. "What's wrong?"

"She doesn't feel well. She said she needed to come back to Christmas Town."

"Oh my. Santa!" Elise called. "Please drive back to the hospital—go get Eldan, Kip and Noel."

"Why?"

I have a feeling they're the only ones who can help our Marni."

* * * *

The setting sun cast a warm glow in the solarium. Marni watched it, her heart aching. She couldn't get that little boy's pale face or his bald little head out of her mind.

He has a rare form of leukemia...

The doctor's pronouncement rang in her ears.

Her head pounded, her stomach cramped. She hadn't felt this sick in years.

Huddled in the corner of the solarium, she drew her legs up to her chest and wrapped her arms across her shins, squeezing them tight. She bowed her head, laying her cheek against her knees, wishing she could blot out the painful memories tearing her heart into pieces

She heard a creak then the door opened.

"Marni, lass, are you in here?"

Her heart pounded. She swore it beat through her chest.

Footsteps echoed in the room.

"Ah lass, there you are."

Noel squatted on his haunches, taking one of her hands in his. "You're freezing." He rubbed her hand. "It's warm as toast in here, and yet, you're cold."

She shivered violently. Glancing upward, she saw Kip's face through a watery veil of tears.

His usual, playful tone vanished. "Celyn told us you were upset."

"Oh God, please, just get me out of here." She scrambled to her feet, but fell against the hard wall of Noel's chest. He steadied her.

"You're not well enough to go anywhere." He held her against his chest. "It will be all right, lass, if you'd just let go of all those painful memories."

She beat her fist against him.

Her eyes flew to his. They were filled with sadness, mirroring her pain.

Marni tore away from him, only to collide with Kip.

"Whatever it is that's upsetting you, we can make it better."

She lashed out, hitting Kip in the chest. "You can't make anything better!"

She buried her face in her hands.

Kip eased her into his arms, stroking her hair.

"Have a good cry." He whispered.

She looked past Kip's shoulder to see Eldan. His tall frame filled the high back of a large, ornate gold chair decorated with an intricate pattern of cherubs dancing in the clouds.

For a second, she thought one cherub's face resembled Trevor's.

It can't be!

"Come." He held out his hand.

She needed a drink...and a cigarette.

Marni walked over to him on shaky legs. She crawled into his lap, settling her head against his chest.

Kip and Noel followed. They sat at her feet, reaching up to stroke her hair, her back.

She buried her face in Eldan's chest, her voice muffled.

"D-did you ever love someone so much, that you'd do anything for them?"

He grasped her chin with his thumb and index finger. Lifting it, he replied, "Yes."

"That's how I felt about Trevor."

Kip ran a hand across her shoulder, kneading her tense muscles. “Who was Trevor?”

She sucked in a breath. “My brother. He was six years younger than me.”

Tears welled in her eyes.

Eldan lifted the hem of his tunic, using it to wipe the moisture from her cheeks.

“Did something happen to him, lass?” Noel laid a hand on her knee. He gave it a gentle shake. “You can tell us.”

“He died.” Her voice broke. “He had cancer. He suffered so much, and then, he died, wh-when he was only six years old.”

She settled against Eldan’s shoulder, absorbing his strength.

“I felt so helpless when Trevor got sick. When he died, I felt so alone. Our mother died a few years before—we hardly got a chance to know her. And I was left alone with a father who hated me. My father wished that I died, not Trevor. ”

“He loved you.” Eldan told her. “He was hurting, he couldn’t have wished that.”

“He hated me. And that’s why I hate *everyone*.” She scrubbed her hands across her face. “But I can’t stand feeling this way anymore.”

“Let it go, Marni. Try to forgive your father.” Kip told her.

“Forgive him? How can I do that?”

“By putting yourself in his shoes. He lost his son.”

“And he lost his daughter by treating me like shit. All he ever gave me was money. Our fortune was supposed to solve everything in his eyes.”

Eldan grasped her shoulders. “Then his pain doubled when he lost you. Maybe he realized he couldn’t get you back, so he gave you a gift, instead.”

“Money.” She snorted. “That’s what he gave me.”

“He gave you a head for business and a sense for what people are truly worth. Money can’t buy that, or replace it.”

It was the first time she had ever spoken about her misery over Trevor’s death and her father’s rejection. For many years, she could only remember Trevor as he was when he was ill, fighting for his little life. Now, in her mind’s eye, she saw him, happy, smiling...just like he was before he got sick.

She cuddled against Eldan, her bottom nestled on his muscled thighs. Night settled over Christmas Town. The glittering ornaments and twinkling lights made her feel at peace.

Eldan lifted her in his arms and kissed her forehead.

He strode out of the solarium with her tucked against his chest, while Kip and Noel followed behind.

For the first time in years, Marni felt cherished.

Money couldn't buy *that*, either.

* * * *

Eldan carried Marni to her room and laid her on the bed as if she was made of the finest crystal.

The need to mate with her was strong. He had to fight the urge to strip them both of their clothing. His dick swelled. All he wanted to do was pump into her, make her his.

Sadness washed over him. She had come so far, yet...

She had to surrender—not only her painful memories, but she also had to relinquish her desire to control everyone around her.

He started to walk away when she grabbed his hand.

“Stay.”

Kip and Noel stood in the doorway.

“I want you all to stay.”

Noel shook his head. “I think it’s better, lass, if we leave and let you get some rest.”

She rolled to her side, nestling her head in the palm of her hand.

“It’s the strangest thing. I was so tired before, but now, I feel energized.”

“It’s because you finally let go of what ailed you.” Kip tapped the side of his head. “Up here.”

Noel patted his heart. “And here.”

She licked her lips. “There it is again—that weird feeling.”

“What?” Eldan frowned.

He glanced at the tip of her pink tongue, but quickly looked away, the sight making his woolen tights painfully tight.

“I want something...”

“Sweet?”

She looked at Noel. “How did you know?”

“Ah lass, ya have a hankering for cookies, is that it?”

“Yes. Cookies.” She sat cross-legged on the bed. “Maybe Elise made some.”

“Marni, do you have any idea why you crave sweets so much?”

She glanced at Eldan. “I really haven’t given it much thought.”

Kip nodded towards the mirror hanging above her dresser. “Take a look at yourself.”

“Huh?”

“In the mirror.”

She rose from the bed and walked over to the mirror.

“My ears!” She gasped, grabbing each one. “They look pointy.” She peered closer. “My eyebrows have this odd slant.”

Eldan held his breath, wondering if vanity would win out or she’d accept the change in herself. He thought she looked beautiful.

So did his cock. He had to fight the urge to sink himself inside her warm, moist channel.

Marni smiled. “Am I an elf?”

“Almost.” Eldan murmured.

“What else has to happen?”

Eldan glanced at Kip and Noel. They nodded.

“You have to make love with an elf.”

“I see...more of that old elf folklore, is that it?”

“It’s fact, lass. If you truly want to become an elf—”

“A good, kind, cheery elf—” Kip added.

“An honest, hard-working, sincere, elf, then you must mate with one,” Eldan finished. “It’s the last step.”

She collapsed on the bed, laughter bubbling up inside her.

“Oh my. *That is* the most original line any guy has ever used to get in my pants.” She shook her head. “And you said *I* wasn’t sincere.”

Eldan's face fell; his heart plummeted too. "You think we're not?"

"Elves mate for life, Marni." Kip told her.

"He's right, lass. If you make love with us—"

"Then you're ours. Forever." Eldan's voice was deep and soft.

She folded her arms beneath her breasts. "Okay, prove to me that you all mean that. Show me that you're sincere, that it's just not about screwing me."

"You don't trust us." Kip and Noel said in unison.

"Why should I?"

Kip sighed. "There's only one way to show you, love, just how honest we are."

They walked toward the door.

"Wh-where are you going?"

Eldan turned to face her. "Elves never lie, and they never force anyone to do anything they don't want. That includes making love."

He opened the door. The three of them sailed through it, leaving Marni alone.

She sat there, her mouth hanging open.

Every time she thought she had them figured out, they turned the ornaments on her.

What in hell was happening?

She scrubbed her face with her hands. She was starting to think and say the 'elfiest' things, but she couldn't deny that her heart felt light.

Elves mate for life...

If that were the truth, then she'd be stuck here in Christmas Town forever. When she first arrived, that very idea seemed like a death sentence.

Now, it felt as if her life was just beginning.

She wanted a fresh start. She wanted her three elves.

Badly.

Chapter Seven

The sweet smell of warm, fresh cookies drew Eldan, Kip and Noel to the kitchen.

“When did Elise start baking at night?” Kip asked, furrowing his brow.

Noel shrugged. “Beats me. I thought she spent her nights with Santa.”

Eldan sniffed the air. “Chocolate. It’s melted chocolate.”

“Maybe she made chocolate chip cookies!” Kip leaped into the air, tapping the curled ends of his boots together.

He collided with Noel.

“Calm down, man.”

“It must be a special occasion.” Eldan murmured. “Why else would she make chocolate chip cookies?”

They stopped at the entrance to the kitchen, their eyes wide. Table after table was strewn with racks of fresh-baked, chocolate chip cookies.

Missus Claus stood nearby, removing cookies from a pan, placing them on a rack, letting them slide slowly off her spatula. Then she turned, bending down to retrieve another pan from the oven, her rounded bottom on display. She didn’t have a stitch on underneath her short, green dress, where a frilly, white crinoline peeked out from beneath the hem.

“Elise?” Eldan’s mouth hung open and he covered his eyes.

He’d never seen her dressed like *that*.

She turned and gave them a jaunty wave.

Kip shook his head. “That’s not Elise.”

Noel grinned. “It’s Marni.”

Eldan’s heart pounded. His cock did, too.

“Cookie?” She held one out on the end of the spatula. It’s heady, sweet fragrance drifted by his nose.

Her smooth, naked thighs were visible just below the short hem of the dress.
Shoes with six-inch red heels and shiny patent leather graced her slender feet.

The minx!

She bent to slide another cookie off the spatula, her deep cleavage beckoning.
Fresh baked cookies and sex...no elf could resist such a potent combination.

“We promised, man.” Noel spoke from the corner of his mouth. “We’re not going to touch her.” He swallowed, his Adam’s apple bobbing.

“I want you.” Marni’s stroked them through their haze of desire. “All three of you.”

Kip took a bold step toward her. He snatched a cookie from the spatula, grinning, then chewed and swallowed the treat, licking his fingers.

A small bowl sat on the table. He dipped a finger into it, holding it up for all to see.

“Melted chocolate.” He angled his head. “I’d like to try it.”

He placed a dab between Marni’s breasts. She tilted her head back, pushing her chest out. He bent his head and licked the melted candy, his long tongue delving into her cleavage.

“Kiiiiip.” She moaned.

She clutched his head, her fingers threading through his thick, tawny hair.

“Tonight, you’ll have more pleasure than you’ve ever dreamed, love.” He kissed each breast then stepped away.

Noel approached. He lifted the hem of her dress, revealing her naked pussy. Placing a dab of the melted chocolate above her clit, he knelt before her and licked his way down.

“Ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh.”

Marni wrapped her arms around his neck, pulling his head closer.

Her eyes locked with Eldan’s. The sight of Kip and Noel pleasuring Marni made his already-stiff dick throb.

All he needed was a nod of her head, a final affirmation of her desire.

He held his breath, anticipation coursing through him.

“Eldan.” She gasped. “Eldan, I want you. Do you want me?”

“More than you can ever imagine.”

* * * *

Noel sucked her clit into his mouth. Kip moved behind her, dipping his hands into the front of her dress.

Tonight, you'll have more pleasure than you've ever dreamed...

Kip slid his hands around to unbutton her dress, his fingers brushing the skin on her back. It sent a pleased shiver down her spine. He pushed the top of her dress down, revealing her breasts, their tender tips sliding against the heavy velvet of his tunic.

Her clit pulsed.

His lips trailed down the side of her throat, across her shoulder and the bony ridge just above her breasts. He bent his head and kissed her nipples, sucking them gently into his mouth. He kissed her long, hard and deep, the taste of chocolate on his lips.

Noel stood behind her, pushing her dress down around her hips. It landed at her feet, a green puddle against the red of her shiny patent leather heels.

Kip knelt before her. He grasped each of her ankles, encouraging her to lift her feet.

He tossed the dress aside.

Marni stood before them naked as the day she was born.

Except for her feet.

Noel bent to remove her shoes.

“No.” Eldan held up a hand, his dark gaze penetrating. “Leave them.”

Wearing just the shoes made her feel barer than without.

“You’re beautiful.” He whispered.

His eyes roamed over her nakedness.

She shivered.

Kip dropped to his knees. “Our gift to you.”

He fastened his lips to her pussy, driving his tongue deep inside her. She clutched his shoulders, grinding against his mouth.

“Oh, my.”

He licked her little bud, drawing his tongue upward. The tip kissed her clit. He lingered there, pushing gently against her swollen button of flesh until her thighs quivered.

Noel stood behind her and wrapped his arms around her waist, using one hand to knead the tender flesh of her breasts. He stroked his other hand across her bottom, sliding his index finger down the cleft. Kip's agile tongue and the sensual strokes of Noel's finger almost sent her over the edge. She shut her eyes, pushing her backside against Noel's hand.

She stood on the brink of orgasm.

"Surrender, Marni." Eldan whispered.

"I-I don't know what you mean."

"We're going to make love to you for the next three days."

She gasped.

"I want you ready." His dark eyes smoldered.

Sweeping his hand across the table, he pushed everything aside, including the sweet treats.

"Bend over."

His commanding tone made her little bud throb—it ached for release. Anticipation and desire mingled together. She bent over the table, not knowing what to expect. Kip and Noel moved so that they stood in front of her.

Her essence drenched her pussy.

Eldan ran his hands across her bottom.

"When I spanked you," he whispered in her ear. "I wanted to see your beautiful, naked bottom. Now, my holiday wish is granted."

She turned her head to see him dip his index finger into a small bowl.

It was the oil she'd used to grease the cookie pans!

She rose up on her hands, rearing back when he touched her bottom hole, pushing his finger inside. He kept his finger inside, reaching between her legs with his other hand, stroking her pussy.

Knowing that Kip and Noel watched heightened the excitement.

Tears of pleasure washed over her face, the exquisite, full feeling in her bottom, and the delicious throbbing of her clit sending her over the edge of oblivion.

Marni lay across the table, wondering if she'd ever be able to move again. Eldan wrapped Marni's dress around her body, lifting her like a rag doll. The three elves took her to a secluded room in a wing of Santa's castle.

A huge, canopied bed decorated in red and green sat in the center of the room. A fire burned in the hearth, filling the room with warmth. Through the windows, she could see that a light snow blanketed the ground outside.

Eldan eased her onto the bed.

Noel slid beside her, coaxing her into his arms.

Kip lay on her other side. He cuddled his long, sinewy body against her, running a hand over her hip and bottom.

"What is this room?" she murmured. "It's so pretty." She let go of a yawn.

"It's the 'elfing' room." Eldan replied. He tossed another log on the fire. "We'll be here for three days and nights."

Three days! And nights...

Just the elves and I.

She giggled.

Noel raised a brow. "What's so funny, lass?"

"Nothing." She stretched her arms high above her head and grinned.

"Everything!"

Noel and Kip returned her grin, stripping while Eldan kissed her clit. Never had a kiss felt so wonderful! He lifted her legs, placing them over his shoulders, allowing him better access to her bud. He kissed and sucked until her pussy dripped.

Marni squirmed, bunching the covers in her fisted hands.

When he nipped her pussy with his teeth, she ground her bottom into the mattress, her orgasm just within reach...

He pulled back, removing his clothing while Kip and Noel joined her on the bed.

Kip massaged her breasts, rolling her nipples between his fingers. She felt the jolt of pleasure clear down to her toes. She wiggled them in response, sliding her leg up his shin. The hair on his leg felt wonderful: soft—silky and smooth.

She eased onto her side, rising up on one elbow. Noel slid behind her, his large cock poking her bottom.

Kip rolled onto his back.

From the other side of the room, Eldan watched, his dark eyes intense.

He opened his legs, his cock rising upwards.

She placed her knees astride each of his hips. He grasped her hands in his.

“Ride me.”

Marni rose up so that his cock slid insider her.

Noel rose up on his knees to steady her body, grabbing her waist from behind.

She moved—up and then down—the slow steady rhythm filling her body with new sensations. She felt like one of those shooting stars she’d seen during her ride on Santa’s sleigh—like she’d burst into a thousand little pieces of glittering light.

Noel moved aside while Kip stretched out his long legs. She wiggled her bottom, feeling Noel’s hands on both of her cheeks.

He slipped his dick inside, quickly filling her backside.

“Noel!” She shouted when he grasped her around the waist. “Noel...” She sighed. “Kip.”

While she rode Kip, Noel rode her.

Marni’s need built once more, her clit throbbing in time with their mingled strokes.

Exquisite torture. Sublime pain.

Her orgasm rammed into her with such force that she could barely breathe.

Kip spilled his seed inside her, while Noel filled her with his.

She collapsed on top of Kip. He grasped her head between his hands, kissing her mouth, her cheeks, and finally her nose.

Noel eased out of her. He rolled onto his back. Marni settled between the two of them, letting her body—and her mind—come back to earth.

She couldn’t move a muscle.

Eldan approached them, his stride wide and purposeful.

She bit her lower lip, wondering what he would do.

I can’t move...I can’t!

Kip and Noel rose up off the bed as Eldan sat down, stroking Marni's breasts and clit. Then he stretched his legs out wide.

"Wrap your legs around my waist." He told her. "Come towards me." He eased her closer.

The satin coverlet skimmed Marni's backside, igniting a fire of need all over again.

The tip of his big cock kissed her clit. While he wiggled his dick against her slick opening, he massaged her breasts.

He pressed down on her little bud with the pad of his thumb.

"Eldan!" She gasped. "More. *More.*"

He chuckled. "Delighted."

He pushed his cock inside her, while his thumb circled and rotated her clit. Eldan took his time, sliding in then out of her with slow, even strokes. Each time he pushed into her, he made sure the tip of his cock touched her clit. She matched him, stroke for stroke, her body's rhythm in time with his.

"Faster!" she begged.

He slowed the pace even more. "No. You'll enjoy it more this way."

"I want to come." She sucked in a breath, her body on the brink of release. "Now, Eldan. *Now.*"

"My little elfmate." He sighed. "When are you going to surrender totally? To me?" He pushed into her again, the slick, wet tip of his penis rubbing against her swollen bud of flesh.

Her body hummed, the crescendo of need rising up until she gripped his shoulders, her nails digging into his skin.

"Eldan!" She cried, her orgasm making her clit pulse.

She came with such force that her eyes rolled back.

"Eldan." She repeated, her voice just above a whisper.

Marni didn't think she could string an entire, coherent thought together. Her body and mind were spent.

Eldan lay beside her. She moved to his chest, her head pillowed against his heart.

She could hear its beat.

Lub dub...lub dub...lub dub.

Kip slid next to her. He kissed her temple, his lips moving across her skin like the satin coverlet on the bed. Noel stretched out by her head. He stroked her hair, massaging her scalp.

Eldan kissed her forehead. His lips stayed there while her body spooned against him.

His heartbeat was like a lullaby, the soothing sound making her eyelids heavy.

She gave in. To sleep...to him.

To all of them.

Her surrender was complete.

Chapter Eight

For three days, Eldan, Kip and Noel loved her body.

She could only leave the bed to munch cookies and sip hot chocolate, which they took turns feeding her.

Once, she rose from the bed while they all slept, padding quietly into the bathroom. She shut the door and went about her business.

At the sink, she splashed some water on her face.

The bathroom door opened. She glanced in the mirror to see Eldan stroll in, his tall, naked form behind her. His big cock lay flaccid along his thigh, but the minute he touched her, it nudged her bottom.

He pushed some of her hair aside, nipping her earlobe with his teeth.

One of his hands strayed to her breast.

She shut her eyes, shuddering with pleasure at his touch.

“Open your eyes.” He commanded. “Watch us—in the mirror.”

He dipped his index finger into her wet pussy then slid his middle finger in, too. He pushed in and out, eliciting a moan from her. She could see his actions reflected in the mirror, doubling her pleasure.

Eldan turned her around, positioning her arms against the wall.

“Stick your bottom out.” He patted her butt.

She did what he asked, pushing her backside against him.

Marni glanced over her shoulder and saw Eldan in the mirror. He bent his knees, easing his cock inside her.

“Oh my...I-I.”

“This is good for your G-spot.” He chuckled low in her ear.

He knew just what to do to please her.

He allowed her release then he came, his cock pulsing inside her.

“Naughty girl.” He whispered.

Her eyes widened. “Is this going on Santa’s list?”

“No.” He smiled, his grin wicked. “On mine.”

* * * *

At the end of the three days and nights, Marni felt like a new person. She had the most urgent sensation to do something good—all the time.

She showed up for work in the Toy Shop after her time alone with Kip, Noel and Eldan, eager to help the other elves.

“I hear you’ve mated,” Celyn announced upon Marni’s arrival.

Marni’s face grew hot.

“There are no secrets here in Christmas Town.” Celyn smiled.

Some of the other female elves giggled.

Marni sighed. “I guess not.”

“Have you decided?” Celyn swept up a doll’s hair into a fancy up-do.

“Have I decided what?”

Celyn lowered her voice. “Whether it’s Eldan, Kip or Noel?”

Wait—she had to choose just one? How could she make up her mind? She couldn’t choose one over the other.

“Is this more elf folklore?” Marni’s heart raced. “That I have to choose one elf over another? Why would you say something like that, Celyn?”

Celyn drew her pointy little brows together. “So you understand how we do things. Ask any of the female elves. They’ll tell you.” She lifted her chin. “Elves choose only one mate. Ask Elise, if you don’t believe me.” Celyn glanced away, resuming her work. “Besides, you know that elves never lie.”

Marni left the toyshop, tears filling her eyes.

* * * *

That evening, Marni watched the sunset. It glowed, a huge orange ball of fire in the wintry night sky. She sat in her favorite spot—the window seat of the solarium.

Her heart plummeted with every inch the sun dipped below the horizon. Celyn’s voice rang in her ears.

Have you decided?

She'd rather leave Christmas Town than have to choose.

The elves and I...

She loved the sound of it.

She loved them. Eldan, Kip and Noel.

"Marni?"

Eldan's deep voice cut through her thoughts.

"I've been looking all over for you." He snapped his dark brows together. Lifting her chin in the palm of his hand, he wiped away her tears with the pad of his thumb.

She grasped his hand, holding it tight.

"Want to tell me what's wrong?"

"Please don't make me, choose, Eldan. *Please.*" Her voice wobbled.

"Choose what?"

"You, Kip or...Noel."

He took both her hands in his. He ran his thumbs across the back of them. "Who told you that you would have to make a choice?"

"Celyn."

He shook his head and squeezed her hands. "You belong to all of us, and we belong to you."

Her heart pounded so loud, she could swear someone in China heard it.

"Celyn said that elves select only one mate, that it is part of elf lore, but I can't, Eldan, I just can't choose only one of you."

"When we spoke about you becoming ours—mine, Kip's and Noel's—Santa gave us his word that it would be so. And *his word* is law here in Christmas Town." He grabbed her face between his hands and kissed her mouth. "On Christmas Day, when your 'elfing time' is officially over, Santa will make his pronouncement—that you belong to us. We tried to keep it a secret." He gave her a sheepish grin. "We wanted to surprise you."

"Oh, Eldan!" She threw her arms around his neck, hugging him tight.

"My little elf-mate." He rested his forehead against hers. She played with the collar of his tunic, fingering the soft, chocolate brown velvet.

“The next time you’re upset, just speak to one of us—to me, Kip or Eldan.” He gave her waist a little squeeze with his hands. “Otherwise, I may just have to paddle you again.”

She raised a brow. “Oh, really?”

“Actually, I’ll let Kip and Noel spank you this time. I’ll watch.” He grinned sardonically, wagging his brows.

“Oh you!” She swatted his arm.

He kissed her. Hard.

“Now, I’ve got to get going before it snows again.”

“Where?”

“The children’s hospital. Your toy production idea has worked so well that we were able to make more toys for the children. Kip, Noel and I are going to deliver them.”

“Could I go with you?”

“Are you sure you want to?”

“I-I’d like to see that little boy again, the one with leukemia.”

Eldan smiled. “He’s better, I’m told. Our last visit cheered him up.”

“Will you wait for me?”

“Santa’s sleigh doesn’t leave for another hour yet.”

“I made some extra special toys for the children.”

He smiled. “Go get them. And dress warm. It’s getting cold outside.”

She turned to leave, then ran back to Eldan. “I have to wrap them.” She glanced at her watch. “Will you promise to wait for me?”

“Always.”

* * * *

Kip and Noel helped Eldan to load the sleigh, placing toy after toy into Santa’s large, red sack nestled in the rear seat.

“Did you find out what Marni was upset about?” Noel hefted a large box into the sack.

“I was about to ask you that same question.” Kip chimed in.

Eldan placed two more brightly wrapped packages in the back of the sleigh. It was filled to the brim with toys and treats.

“Celyn told Marni she had to choose only one of us.”

Noel’s auburn brows rose. “She didn’t!”

“Celyn’s been doing a lot of naughty things lately.” Kip scowled.

“She used to be such a nice little elf.” Eldan angled his head. “What’s she been up to?”

“Yesterday, the lass took Santa’s sleigh for a joy-ride without asking him.”

Kip’s frown deepened.

“Someone’s got to take that girl in hand.”

* * * *

An hour later, Marni rushed out of her room carrying a bag filled with brightly wrapped boxes, the red, silver and gold foil paper gleaming in the light. For the first time in her life, she wanted to make someone else’s life a little brighter.

A little cheerier.

Anticipation grew when she realized she’d spend the entire day with Eldan, Kip, and Noel.

Just the elves and I.

She hummed along with a familiar Christmas carol, stopping when she smelled an acrid odor...

Smoke.

A haze formed and swirled in the air, heading straight for her.

“Marni!”

She turned around to see Noel barreling toward her.

“Come with me.” He tugged her hand. “We’ve got to get out of here.”

Smoke filled her nose. She coughed violently.

Noel’s voice filled with despair.

“The Toy Shop is on fire.”

* * * *

Outside, Marni watched Santa’s Toy Shop blaze, the wooden timbers crumbling from the intense flame.

She wanted to collapse into a heap, too.

All the elves’ hard work vanished in a puff of smoke.

A brigade of elves lead by Aardel and Pepper Minstix splashed buckets of water onto the flames. They worked for over an hour, bringing the fire down to a smolder.

The Toy Shop lay in ruins, a few plumes of smoke rising up in the air from the dying flames.

“How could this happen?”

Marni placed an arm around Elise’s shoulders. Deep wrinkles lined her face. Only a heavy heart could cause such distress on Elise’s smooth skin.

“For hundreds of years, children all over the world received toys from me and now?” Santa shook his head, his voice sad. “It looks like there will be no Christmas.”

Some of the elves cried. Others stood off to the side, shock evident in their eyes.

“I-I can’t believe this.” Marni shook her head. “It isn’t fair.”

She choked back tears, wishing her father still lived. If he did, she’d swallow her pride and get him here with his stock of toys.

Noel placed an arm around her waist, kissing the top of her head. “Ah, lass. I’m just glad I found ya in the hallway by your room, and got ya out of there in time.”

“I want to know what caused the fire.” Eldan’s hand clenched at his side.

“Maybe it was this.”

All eyes turned to Pepper Minstix. He held up a package of cigarettes and matches.

A collective gasp went up from the crowd.

Pepper walked over to Marni. “Aren’t these yours?”

“I saw her.” Celyn pointed her index finger at Marni. “She was smoking near the Toy Shop.”

“That’s n-not true.”

“When you first came here, you offered me a cigarette.” Celyn lifted her pointy little nose in the air.

All eyes settled on Marni. “I-I didn’t offer her a cigarette.” Marni’s lips trembled. She glanced at Celyn, but Celyn wouldn’t look at her. “I told you what a bad, nasty habit smoking was and that’s the truth!”

“I think it’s best if we all go inside—into the great hall.” Santa’s voice rang out. “I’ll decide this matter there.”

“Eldan, please. You’ve got to believe me.” Marni clutched his arm.

“Did you smoke when you first arrived at Christmas Town?”

“Yes, but—.”

“And Celyn was in your room when you were smoking?” Kip shook his head.

Marni’s heart sank. Her guts twisted inside. “Yes.”

“She offered me vodka, too.” Celyn pointed at Marni. “She hides it in a flask in her bag.”

“Did you do that, lass? Did you give Celyn vodka?” Noel asked her.

Elves don’t lie.

“Yes.” Her voice shook. “But I didn’t mean—”

“What makes you think we can believe you when you say you didn’t offer Celyn a cigarette?” Eldan questioned her, his voice flat and devoid of emotion. “When you admit that you offered her liquor?”

Then they all turned away...

Looking anywhere except at her.

Chapter Nine

“Here ye! Here ye! Santa’s court is in session. All rise for the great jolly man himself.”

An elf page rapped a long, golden staff on the floor next to Marni.

Santa made his way to his throne, flanked by Eldan, Kip and Noel.

Marni wanted cry, only she didn’t think she had any more tears left.

“Celyn, do you hereby attest that your words are the absolute truth?”

Celyn nodded, giving Marni a snide smile.

“It’s not only me who saw her smoking.” Celyn nodded toward a group of female elves. “*They* all saw Marni smoking by the Toy Shop, too.”

Marni lashed out at Celyn. “I quit smoking.” She lowered her head. “And drinking. I ditched all my bad habits.”

“Ladies, do you confirm Celyn’s story?”

Celyn elbowed one of the little female elves in the ribs. “Ow! Cut it out.” She rubbed her side.

“Well?” Santa raised a bushy white brow. “I’m waiting.”

Seconds went by. Quiet descended upon the great hall.

Then the little female elves spoke at once.

“We saw her smoking by the Toy Shop.”

“Marni did it. She started that fire.” One of them pointed at her.

“She was smoking cigarette after cigarette.” Another murmured.

The look on Santa’s face bespoke of great sadness...and disappointment.

“Marni.” He shook his head. “You’ve done a very naughty thing. I expected better from you. If we didn’t have so many witnesses, I wouldn’t believe a word of it.”

Tears flowed down her face. She looked over at Elise, who quickly turned her head, wiping her eyes with a handkerchief.

Eldan, Kip, and Noel stood ramrod straight.

There'd be no bending, no changing anyone's mind.

Damn them! Damn these fucking elves!

Marni glanced at Celyn. A smug, satisfied look twisted her features.

Her heart shriveled, she could feel a cold chill slice through her soul.

"Marni, as much as it pains me to do so," Santa continued. "I must banish you from Christmas Town."

"No!" She clapped a hand across her mouth. "Please...don't, I—"

Santa rose from his throne. He seemed tired and old—Eldan helped him to stand, his eyes locking with Marni's.

They were filled with sadness.

"You are to leave. Now."

She bit back a sob.

"Never to return."

* * * *

Noel wandered the snow-cruled grounds outside Christmas Town long after Marni departed.

He wouldn't come inside, even when Elise tempted him with cookies.

His heart was broken. No cookie, no matter how sweet, could mend that.

Only Marni could.

Tears clogged his throat. They stung his eyes. It had been some time since he'd wanted to bawl like a child.

Probably not since his parents died in a car crash.

He felt a similar sense of loss now.

Noel rounded a corner of Santa's castle, stopping dead in his tracks. The smell of smoke drifted by his nose. He saw the glow of something red, thinking it was Rudolph's bright, crimson nose. His eyes widened when he saw a cigarette butt go flying into the snow.

"Celyn, what are you doing?"

She turned around quickly, away from his prying eyes.

"Lass, I asked you a question!"

He approached her. "What're ya doin'?" His brogue deepened.

She didn't answer.

He grasped her shoulders between his hands and gave her a shake.

She coughed and sputtered. Smoke left her mouth in a great puff.

Kip rounded the bend and stopped.

"Eldan's looking for you, he..." He sniffed the air. "Is that smoke?"

Noel gripped Celyn's hand.

"She's been smoking!" His voice sliced through the wintry air.

Celyn shivered. She tried to pull away, but he held her fast.

"Let me go!" She continued to struggle within his hold.

Kip narrowed his eyes. "Celyn, I want the truth. Did *you* cause that fire in the Toy Shop?"

Her eyes filled with tears. "Yes," she whispered. "I did."

"But why?" He shook his head. "You've always been such a good girl, and now...smoking? Why, Celyn? Why draw all this bad attention to yourself?"

"Because I love you!" She wailed. "And you wouldn't pay any attention to *me*!"

"Oh, Celyn." He shook his head. "This is horrible."

"We have to tell Eldan," Noel urged. "We have to tell Santa and Missus Claus."

"Oh no, nooooooooooooooooooooo." Celyn pulled on Noel's hand.

He growled low in his throat and tossed her over his shoulder. "Lass, you're not gettin' away."

Kip drew his usually happy face into tight, angry lines.

"I know one little elf who's got an awful lot of explaining to do."

* * * *

A few minutes later, the great hall filled to capacity with curious onlookers as Celyn stood before Santa.

"Celyn, I'm ashamed of you." Santa's voice boomed. He stroked his long white beard. "What's worse is that you encouraged others to go along with your story." He gazed out onto the crowded hall. "My shame extends to several of you today."

Many of the little female elves bowed their heads.

Elise wagged a finger at them. "You naughty elves. You *should* bow your heads."

“Elves don’t lie.” Eldan’s voice rang out. He crossed his arms over his chest. “You’ve broken the golden rule.”

Noel looked at all of them. “You’ve caused someone we have come to love a great deal of pain.”

Kip’s anger festered inside him. He longed to put Celyn over his knee and give her a spanking she wouldn’t forget. He glanced out the window where the snow fell. It swirled through the air, falling to the ground, piling against Santa’s castle in drifts.

Almost a foot had fallen since Marni left.

Worry filled his mind...and heart.

“Celyn, you are to be punished.” Santa’s voice rang out.

“No!” She cried. Her body shook. “No, please, don’t!”

Santa nodded his head. “I always grant one elf a special holiday wish each Christmas. This year, I choose Kip.”

Kip’s eyes flew to Santa’s.

“Kip, what is it you wish this holiday? Name it and it’s yours.”

A corner of his mouth lifted, his playful nature returning. “I choose to punish Celyn.”

“Granted!” Santa sat down on his throne. “Proceed.”

Kip walked over to Celyn. He dragged her by the hand, until she stood directly in front of Aardel. “You’re going to punish her.”

Aardel’s eyes grew wide. “Me?”

“Yes, you. Good luck, Aardel.” He gave her a little push. She collided with Aardel’s wide chest. “You’re going to need it.”

Celyn’s lovely mouth formed a wide ‘O’ of shocked surprise.

So did Aardel’s.

Eldan stepped down from Santa’s throne. He bowed before him.

“Sir, you banished Marni from Christmas Town. Kip, Noel and I are asking your permission to use your sleigh so we can go find her.”

Santa nodded. “Permission granted.” He rose to his feet, his black boots and red suit standing out like a beacon in the great hall. “Bring her back to us.”

“We owe her an apology.” Pepper Minstix removed his little felt hat, holding it in his hands.

“Yes, we do.” Elise joined Santa on the steps, her checked skirt swirling around fishnet-clad legs. “And I know some naughty little elves who will be delivering that apology *personally*.”

* * * *

A little while Pepper Mintstix helped Marni into the sleigh.

“Santa said to take you as far as the border of Christmas Town and River’s End.” Pepper told her. He moved to the front of the sleigh, where the reindeer stood waiting for him. For one crazy minute, Rudolf turned to look at her.

His nose didn’t glow quite as bright, his eyes looked sad, too.

She hid *her* swollen eyes behind a pair of dark glasses. She hadn’t cried this much since Trevor died.

Damned elves! They had gotten under her skin and into her heart, now they tore it to bits.

“We’re ready, Miss Sands.”

She looked at Pepper. “I’ll bet you’re real happy to see me leave.”

“I don’t know if you’ll believe this, but I’m not.”

“Right.”

He climbed up onto the sleigh. She couldn’t take it anymore. “Don’t do me any favors.” She pushed him off the sleigh, sliding one of her legs out onto the snow-crusted ground. “I’d rather walk all the way back to River’s End.”

“That’s crazy! You’ll freeze to death. It’s colder than—”

“An elf’s nose?” She replied, her voice dripping with sarcasm. “Is that more elf lore?”

“Look, Miss Sands, Santa ordered me to take you to River’s End; I don’t question Santa’s orders.”

“Obviously.” She snorted. Marni pushed at Pepper. He slid backwards, falling into a pile of snow. “Just leave me alone...I don’t need anyone.” Her voice cracked.

Pepper rose from the snow. “But—”

“Go!” She shouted.

The reindeer lifted their heads and stomped their hooves. Before she could utter another word, she was thrown back against the seat, the reindeer tugging the sleigh until it rose high into the sky.

“Miss Sands!” She heard Pepper shout. “Come back! You should have said ‘go!’ – the reindeer thought you meant them!”

She didn’t know what to do. The reindeer were out of control, each pulling the sleigh in a different direction. She rocked from side to side, desperately trying to hold on.

In the next minute, the sleigh pitched down. Before she knew what hit her, it landed on the ground with a jarring thud.

She spilled out of it, the snow covering every inch of her.

One snowflake fell, soon followed by another...and another.

They landed on her cheeks and nose.

She rose to her feet and started walking.

It was just too bad she didn’t know where in hell she was going.

* * * *

Marni didn’t know how long she trudged through the snow, her body shaking.

Her fur jacket was no match for the wind’s icy fingers. They swirled around her head, tweaking her nose.

Her fingers felt numb. She placed them against her mouth—her lips were numb as well.

She was tired, so tired...

She drifted in and out of consciousness, wondering how she continued to walk in the bitter cold, her feet as numb as her hands and mouth.

Up ahead she saw lights. A great castle loomed before her...

She was back in Christmas Town!

Marni ran, tripping once, landing in the snow. When she looked up, several elves stood over her. One held a lantern in his hand.

“Who goes there?” He asked, shining the light on her.

“It’s Marni!” She called out.

She rose to her feet, wiping the snow from her jacket.

A tall elf stepped forward. His dark eyes met hers.

“Eldan?” She whispered.

A corner of the dark elf’s mouth lifted.

“Glint’s the name, holiday gloom is my game.”

She fainted dead away.

Chapter Ten

A little while later, one of Santa's other sleighs rode high in the sky, flying past the moon.

Eldan's hands guided the reindeer through the swirling snow. He glanced down to see Glint's fortress. As they neared, a familiar blonde head came into view...

His heart lodged in his throat.

"Land this blasted thing, Eldan." Kip shouted over the wind.

The closer they got, the more Eldan could see. Glint and his evil little band of elves had Marni in their clutches.

"We've got to save her, man. Before it's too late." Noel reached over to grab the reins from Eldan.

The sleigh careened to the side.

Noel tried to pull the sleigh to the left, but the fierce wind made it impossible.

The reindeer tugged the sleigh, bringing it closer to earth.

CRASH!

The sleigh landed in a group of holly bushes. Eldan shook his head, and rose to his feet, brushing the snow from his tunic. Noel followed suit.

"Where's Kip?" Eldan frowned.

They heard a muffled 'Here I am!'

Kip had landed in a snowdrift head first, his long legs sticking up in the air. He kicked them wildly, trying to dislodge his head and shoulders from the snow.

Noel pulled Kip free.

"Thanks." He rose to his feet and shook the snow from his head and shoulders.

"Look!" Eldan pointed towards Glint's castle.

A group of elves led Marni toward the main gate.

"Marni, lass!" Noel cried.

They ran after her, their long legs eating up the snow beneath their booted feet.

“Marni!”

She turned her head, a look of disbelief on her beautiful face, then her eyes widened. “Eldan! Kip! Noel! Help me.”

Glint turned when he heard her call out.

“Get her inside! Now!” He ordered his elf guards.

She disappeared before their eyes, the huge castle door shutting behind her.

* * * *

Eldan held a snowball against his eye, the throbbing there matching the anxiety twisting his gut.

“Here, let me see that.” Kip shook his head and sighed. “You’re gonna have quite a shiner.” He flopped down on a log next to Eldan. “Well, we certainly showed *them*.”

He glanced at Glint’s castle where the guards marched back and forth.

“We gave as good as we got.” Eldan grunted.

Noel chimed in. “But not good enough.”

Kip rested his chin in the palm of his hand. “How are we going to get Marni out of there?”

Eldan jumped up from the log. It tipped, dumping Kip into the snow.

“This is no time for your antics.” Noel sighed.

Kip rolled his eyes. “Like I was playing.” He brushed the snow from his legs.

“What’s goin’ on in that head of yours, man?” Noel glanced at Eldan.

“The answer’s right in front of us. In fact,” Eldan lifted one booted foot, “it’s right below our feet.”

“What’s right below our feet?” Kip scrambled to his.

“Snow.”

“Huh?” Noel scratched his head.

“We surprise them... with snow.”

Kip looked around. “If only we had a catapult—something to toss snowballs with.”

Eldan picked up a ball of snow in his hand and tossed it at Noel. It bounced off his chest. “*We’re* going to be the catapults. We’ll fill Santa’s sleigh with the snowballs. The guards won’t know what hit them.”

Noel grinned. “Now you’re talkin,’ man.”

* * * *

Glint shoved Marni into a chair. He pushed a box of cookies in front of her.

She read aloud, “Kleeber Elf Cookies.” She rolled her eyes. “Is that your idea of a bad joke?”

“Eat.” He nodded toward the box.

“Kiss my...cookie crumbs.” She aimed her chin at him.

Glint sat in a high-backed chair. He dangled a leg over the arm. “Maybe you’d like a drink, instead? Or a smoke?”

“You’re disgusting.” She shook her head. “How did you become such a bad elf?”

She had to keep him talking, especially now that she knew Eldan, Kip and Noel were nearby.

Hope bloomed in her heart.

“I thrive on other people’s despair, especially during the holidays.” He glanced casually at his fingernails. “I do so love to see the suicide rate go up, especially at this time of year.” He grinned sardonically. “Ah, the holidays. Such a nice, lonely time of year, isn’t it? Especially for those who are susceptible to depression.”

“Well, you’re not going to make me sad. I won’t let you.”

Just then, the door flew open. Two guards pushed a kicking, screaming elf at Glint. She fell against him, her big green eyes wide...

“Celyn!” Marni gasped. “What are you doing here?”

“Marni!” She pushed away from Glint and ran to Marni.

Marni wrapped an arm around her shoulders.

“I’m so sorry. For everything.” Celyn sniffed back tears. “I got you in so much trouble because I was jealous of all the attention Kip was giving you. Can you forgive me?”

Marni brushed some of Celyn's red-gold curls from her eyes. "I forgive you, Celyn." Beneath Celyn's contrite expression, Marni noticed a loving glow lined her pixie face. She wondered how it got there.

"You really do forgive me?" Celyn asked. She lowered her voice. "Aardel and I hooked up. You were right...Kip's not for me." She blushed to the roots of her auburn hair.

"Oh really?"

"Really." Celyn winced, touching her backside. "The ride here was a little...uncomfortable."

Marni smiled. "Well, I'm glad you and Aardel worked things out. And I understand, Celyn. I was young once, too. I did some very foolish things."

Glint rolled his eyes. "Holiday hogwash."

Marni lifted her chin. "Your cynicism can't hurt us. I've got too much holiday cheer."

He crashed his hand down on the table. "Enough! I'm throwing you both in my dungeon."

Celyn gasped, huddling against Marni.

"Your holidays are over."

Glint's evil laugh echoed through the castle.

* * * *

Eldan, Kip and Noel tossed snowball after tightly packed snowball into Santa's sleigh. The freezing temperature turned them into hard little weapons, capable of felling even the strongest elf.

Kip sighed. "If we run out of snowballs, we're sunk."

"The objective is to breach Glint's castle. You two will stay out here and bombard those elf guards with these snowballs, while I sneak inside and get Marni."

Noel frowned. "I don't like the idea of you goin' in there alone, man. It's too dangerous."

"What else can we do? There should be enough of these..." Eldan tossed a snowball into the air and caught it deftly in his hand. "To keep the guards distracted."

“I just wish we had reinforcements.” Kip told Eldan. “A few more good elves would help. Then you, Noel and I could breach Glint’s castle together.

“And just where are we going to get reinforcements?”

“Look!” Noel pointed at the night sky.

They all glanced up to see a sleigh driven by several reindeer head straight toward them. A few minutes later, it touched down on the icy ground.

“Aardel, Pepper...what are you doing here?”

Pepper Minstix helped a female elf down from the sleigh.

“Eldan.” She curtsied. “Hi Kip. Hi Noel.”

“Erlina...” Noel shook his head. “Why are you here?”

Her little face turned pink. She crooked her finger. Noel bent his head so he could hear what she had to say.

“Pepper didn’t want me to come, he said it was dangerous, but I snuck into Santa’s auxiliary sleigh and hid under a blanket. I felt so bad about what I, Celyn and the other female elves did to Marni.”

Noel patted her hand. “It’s good you want to help Marni, but Pepper’s right, you should have stayed in Christmas Town. Glint’s castle is no place for ya.”

“Don’t worry, Noel.” Pepper folded his arms across his chest. “She’ll get her punishment later.”

Her pink face turned crimson.

Kip leaped into the air and clicked the curled toes of his boots together. “I got my wish! Reinforcements.” He shook Aardel’s hand. “I’m glad you’re here.”

“I don’t want anything to happen to Celyn and Marni.”

“Marni *and* Celyn? How did Celyn get inside Glint’s castle?”

Aardel folded his arms across his chest. “Celyn and I have come to an understanding.”

“Ah.” Kip held up a finger. “So the punishment went well, I take it?”

Aardel’s face fell. “Sort of. I told her that things wouldn’t be right between us unless Celyn made it right between her and Marni. Celyn took it to heart and ran off to find Marni and apologize. Now, she’s Glint’s prisoner, too.”

Kip clapped Aardel on the back. “Don’t worry, we’ll get them both out.”

Eldan smiled. His first since Marni left Christmas Town.

“Reinforcements. Well, jingle my bells. Kip, it looks like all of your holiday wishes are being granted this season.”

“I guess I’m just a lucky, little elf.” Kip grinned.

* * * *

“Ohhhhhhhhhh, Marni, there’s spiders down here in this dungeon.” Celyn huddled close to Marni’s side. “And I’m freezing.”

Marni tossed her fur jacket across Celyn’s shoulders, lifting the collar around her neck.

“But you’ll be cold.” Celyn’s teeth chattered.

“I’ll be fine.”

Marni glanced at the windows lining the walls. They were too small for even Celyn to crawl through. The walls were too high to climb.

Despair washed over her.

She beat it back, knowing any bad feelings would provide Glint with the edge he needed.

“There has to be a way out of here.”

She drummed her fingers against the wall, but pulled her hand away when she made contact with something slimy.

“I’ve got it!”

“What?” Celyn shivered, despite the fur jacket.

“Slimy walls...hmmmmmmm...slimy little male guard elves. They should be easy to trick, and I’ve got one heck of an idea.”

“I-I’m w-willing to try anything at this point.”

Marni walked over to the door. “Oh Guard! Mister Elf Guard.” She batted her eyes. “We need to use the facilities.”

A beady-eyed elf sentry peeked through the small opening on the door.

In the next instant, it opened.

Marni stuck out her size ‘C’ breasts, lowering the collar of her tunic.

The elf’s eyes widened.

She poked him in the eyes with two fingers.

“Arghhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!” He fell back against the wall.

“Come on Celyn!”

They took off at breakneck speed, running down the hall.

Only to collide with Glint and two other elves.

“Going somewhere?” He grasped her shoulders. “But you haven’t tried my Kleeber chocolate mint elf cookies.”

“Let me go!” She struggled in his grasp.

One of the other guards grabbed Celyn.

She screamed at the top of her lungs.

“Stop that infernal screeching!” Glint clapped his hands over his pointy ears.

She kept at it, stopping only to take a breath. Elbowing Marni in the ribs, she told her. “Join in anytime. Elves can’t stand the sound of loud noises. It hurts their ears.”

Marni rolled her eyes. “More elf folklore?”

Celyn grinned. “You bet.”

They yelled together.

Suddenly, there was a commotion in the hall. Several guards fought off three tall elves and a short, muscular one...

“Eldan!” Marni cried. “Kip! Noel! We’re here!”

Celyn called out when she saw one of Glint’s evil elves take a swing at Aardel.

“Aardel! Oh, Aardel, be careful.”

Marni watched the four elves battle Glint’s guards, feeling helpless. They dodged blows from the evil elves’ clubs.

She hated feeling powerless.

While Eldan fought off one guard, another raised a club over his head.

“You leave him alone!”

She ran for the guard, leaping onto his back.

Celyn joined in the fracas when one of the guards punched Aardel.

Marni beat on the guard’s head.

“Don’t you dare hurt these elves! I love them.”

Suddenly, they stopped fighting.

The guard tossed her from his back. She landed on the stone floor—on her butt.

“What did you say?”

She scrambled to her feet. “You heard me, I said I love them.”

Glint’s guards scratched their heads. “Love?”

“Idiots!” Glint strode over to them. “Lock them all in the dungeon.”

Not one of his guards moved.

“I had no idea they loved each other.” Glint’s guard shook his head.

Glint rolled his eyes. “Love stinks.”

Celyn lifted her chin. She hugged Aardel around the waist. “Love is beautiful.”

Glint turned to the guards behind him. “Get them! Now,” he growled.

They shook their heads. “They’re way too cheery. Isn’t there some kind of elf rule that says if you harm a cheery person during the holidays, you’ll get coal in your stocking?”

Glint rolled his eyes. “Don’t be ridiculous. That’s elf nonsense.”

“It’s true!” Marni piped in. “If you get Santa mad, he’ll do a lot more than put coal in your stockings.”

“You work for Santa?” One of the guards asked.

“You bet.” Kip stated.

The guards walked over and stood behind them.

“So do we!”

“You idiots!” Glint stomped his feet. “You work for me, not Santa!”

“Not anymore!” Eldan growled low in his throat.

He balled his hand into a fist and did a very un-elflike thing: he punched Glint right in the nose.

Hopefully, Santa would forgive him.

Epilogue

“...and so, the elves worked together to rebuild Santa’s Toy Shop, each lending their own unique talents to the job. They finished in time for Christmas, enabling Santa to deliver toys to children all over the world.”

Marni closed the book then cuddled against Eldan’s chest. He wrapped an arm around her, pulling her close. She snuggled next to him, her clit pulsing each time he played with the tips of her breasts.

“Did you like the story?” She reached up to stroke his face.

“Yes. The children will like it, too.”

“Maybe I can read it to them the next time we visit them in the hospital.”

Noel lay next to her, his fingers threading through her hair, massaging her head. Beneath the covers, he stroked her pussy, his fingers teasing her little bud. Each pass of his hand made her wet—her need for release building.

“You’ve got quite a gift for the written word, lass.”

She beamed with pleasure—and pride.

Kip stretched out at her feet. He massaged each one, lifting her big toe to suck it gently into his mouth. She gasped when his long tongue slipped between her big toe and the one next to it.

Her body ignited.

She shifted against Eldan, allowing Noel to stroke her back and butt. He slipped a finger inside her ass, giving her that wonderfully full feeling.

Playful Kip.

He dipped his head under the covers. She lifted the sheet to see the top of his head. When his lips teased her bud, her clit throbbed, begging for release.

“Ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh.”

Noel removed his finger, filling her backside with his shaft.

Eldan rolled to his side, watching his friends work their holiday magic on Marni.

Then he took her, sliding his cock inside, bringing her, and him, to orgasm.

“You’re a wonderful holiday present, lass.” Noel grinned.

Kip winked. “A sweet holiday treat.”

“I love you.” Eldan said softly.

Her eyes filled with happy tears.

“We all love you, Marni.” Kip and Noel said in unison.

“And I love the three of you.”

She’d received the best Christmas gift of all: one simple wish, just...

The Elves and I.

About the Author

Catrina Calloway adores writing romance, and her motto is: 'Two, hot, hunky heroes are better than one.' Born in Alaska, the land of the midnight sun, and now currently residing in New York, Katrina was an avid reader of romance for many years before penning her first erotic ménage romance story, 'Eight Erotic Nights.' Katrina loves to hear from her readers and fans so please feel free to email her at:

www.myspace.com/catrinacalloway

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***Unwrap Me, I'm Yours* by Demi Alex**

Hope Verdetti lies to her mother about having a phenomenal fiancé who surprises her on a trip to Vegas. Now her family expects him to come home with her for the holidays. She needs a man that fits the bill—and fast!

After seven interviews with hired, handsome applicants in three days, she finds her solution in the neighborhood coffee shop. Sexy and irresistible Jon Edwards volunteers for the task, having an agenda of his own.

With their holiday agreement set, Jon turns up the heat and gives Hope the present of her life...himself.

***Red Ribbons and Blue Balls* by Tia Fanning**

After Nicolas punishes her for being naughty, the usually nice but now sexually-frustrated Winter arrives at their secluded mountain cabin bearing gifts—special gifts that will ensure his submission and her revenge.

With only seven days left until Christmas, Nicolas expects to spend the night decorating the house for the approaching holiday, but Winter has other plans...

Christmas might be coming, but if Winter gets her way, Nicolas won't be.

***Nice and Naughty* by Mia Jae**

Cassie Franklin has to prove herself. After all, she's the first female head of the English department at the university. But that doesn't mean she has to prove herself sexually to Eric Marsh, a fellow professor in the English department, does it?

Then there is Ryan. Strong and sexy, with hands that can ease away the tension of most any job, he almost makes her forget her risky escapades with Eric.

Until Cassie realizes that Ryan and Eric have a closer connection than she ever could have imagined, and they have very specific plans for her...

***Eight Erotic Nights* by Catrina Calloway**

The holiday season is a time for joy, but Laney Taylor couldn't be more depressed. She's selling the last piece of her grandmother's exquisite antique china to feed the hordes of 'new' homeless living in their cars in an abandoned parking lot on the outskirts of town. But on the way to the shop, an accident lands her in the hospital—and into the arms of the two hot, hunky Samaritans who saved her life.

Josh Goldman and Zach Brenner share a successful construction business, and a secret longing. They can't believe their good fortune when they save Laney Taylor from a freezing to death. Both men have desired Laney since high school, and made a pact that if they ever had the chance to have a relationship with the sexy, full-figured woman of their dreams, they wouldn't mind sharing.

When a winter storm gives Josh and Zach an opportunity to share the pleasures of the 'festival of lights' with Laney, and a chance to fulfill their long-held erotic fantasies, they can hardly believe the good fortune the Hanukkah holiday has brought them. While fate and circumstance may require their eventual separation, all three are determined that they will not waste a moment of their...

Eight Erotic Nights.

Handcuffs and Lace

Resplendence Publishing's Erotic Romance Line of Law Enforcement Themed Stories

***Ticket Me More* by Tia Fanning**

Hailed by the bridal flower world as an artistic genius, Meli works long nights making bouquets for women lucky enough to find love, while she herself lives a life of solitude. She yearns to share her heart and body with someone other than Bob, her *Battery Operated Boyfriend*, but acute shyness keeps her from engaging the “living” world.

However, Meli's quiet and predictable existence takes an unexpected turn when she is pulled over and ticketed by the most gorgeous cop she has ever encountered—Officer Michael Johnson. Though he doesn't seem to notice her as anything more than a traffic violation, Meli makes plans to overcome her timid nature and seize the police officer's attention...using any speed necessary.

***Cuff Me Lacy* by Demi Alex**

Three months is way too long to wait for some simple, low-down, straight forward sex. It's not like Officer Chrissie Hansen is asking for prince charming to offer her the love of a lifetime. All she wants is a good orgasm that she doesn't have to work for alone.

At least with “The Bull” she knows what to expect. But when Patrick MacKlick returns to her life and tempts her with new options, she discovers that lace can imprison a heart better than handcuffs can.

***Search Me Baby, One More Time* by Melinda Barron**

Wren Thornberry's life isn't going according to plan. She let her father talk her out of marrying Bryan Stockard, the man she loves, and moved halfway around the world. Now she's back home in Texas, babysitting her grandmother while grandma and her boy-toy work through their list of sexual exploits, making themselves the talk of the town.

But what Wren doesn't know is that things in her hometown are about to heat up even more, and it will have nothing to do with her grandmother. It seems that Bryan Stockard is still around, he wants to get back into Wren's life—by any means necessary, and now

he has just the tools to do it: A police uniform, handcuffs, and the authority to make Wren *assume the position*.

***What the Cuff?* By Celia Kyle**

God really should have reconsidered making werewolves. That, or Lyssa needed to get better taste in men and stay away from those with wandering eyes—and other things. Drunk as a wolf, she stumbles to her best friend's house to sleep off her whiskey induced haze and wakes to... *cuffs*?

Caleb sees his chance and takes it. His buddies on the force ribbed him but good for buying silver plated cuffs. But with a werewolf in his bed, the woman he's yearned for since they were teens, he wasn't taking any chances. Lyssa was his. She just didn't know it yet.

***Going Commando* by Catherine Chernow**

Bounty hunter Shyra Lawrence listens to her favorite radio station one morning where the DJ's are discussing "going commando" —*a.k.a* wearing no undies. Captivated by their conversation, she decides to shed her panties in favor of the freedom that wearing no underwear brings.

Enthusiastic, Shyra sends an email to her best friend, Donna, detailing the delights of panty-freedom, but unbeknownst to Shyra, she's hit the send key...to the wrong email addy!

When Derek Grayson opens his emails that morning, he discovers that his #1 employee and top bounty hunter, Shyra Lawrence, has sent him an erotic, enticing message about going commando. Derek has always been polite, professional, and so damned attracted to Shyra that it's almost painful. Working day in and day out with voluptuous woman has sent Derek's hormones into overdrive on more than one occasion.

Now, Shyra's shed her panties and Derek's got all he can do to contain his lust when she announces that she's... GOING COMMANDO.

***Handcuffs and Lies* by Bronwyn Green**

Sometimes promises to friends are the hardest to keep. Undercover police officer, Michael Tanner, promised his dying partner that he'd take care of the man's little sister. Trouble is, after her brother's death, Doctor Tori Spinelli wants nothing to do with Michael—or any other cop for that matter.

Tori has always fought against overprotective men and deception. Forced into protective custody with Michael, she's now faced with both in the same package. Despite their differences, Tori falls in love with him, but how can she trust a man who lies for a living?

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