

Santa's
Elf
Dwilia Rain



Loose Id

SANTA'S ELF

Qwillia Rain

Loose Id.®

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Dedication

For my mom, who never let me give up writing.

Chapter One

It didn't seem fair, Elfina Jeffries decided, as she shut the door to her apartment and chalked up another failed attempt to gain Dayton Kringle's interest. Although it hadn't been an "in your face" attempt to draw the hardheaded toy maker's notice, it was an effort. Kicking off her green slippers, Elf dropped onto the sofa. She glared at the pale green stockings she'd spent three days searching for.

And did he even notice?

No! Ten minutes had been wasted getting the darn garter belt fastened and attached to the bloody things. All for nothing, she determined, reaching beneath the skirt of her green velvet dress to unfasten the clips.

How was any self-respecting woman supposed to seduce a man who was oblivious to her cues?

If she were a block of oak or a premium wood finish, she could probably get the blasted man's attention. She grumbled quietly, tugging the black leather belt from around her waist. Considering the different women Dayton had escorted in the three years she'd worked for him, she damn sure knew the man wasn't gay.

Based on similarities each of his dates possessed, it appeared he preferred Nordic Amazons. So perhaps she'd never had a chance from the beginning, and all this work was for nothing. While she could dye her chestnut hair blonde, there was no way she could add another eight inches to her five feet two, or go from a C cup to a D.

Allowing a resigned sigh, which sounded more like a groan, to escape her lips, Elf wriggled around on her sofa until she was comfortably stretched out, and closed her eyes. Maybe she should just give up. In the last six weeks he hadn't responded to the shorter skirts, the nosebleed-inducing high heels, more revealing blouses, or her sexy perfume. All the subtle little tricks the magazines and books had suggested were not working.

Maybe wrapping a red velvet ribbon around her naked body and draping herself across his drafting table would get the reaction she was hoping for. She thought about it for a moment, and then shook her head. Nope. Doing so would only result in having some blueprint or diagram taped to her body. Most likely someplace where the removal of said tape would result in pain and Dayton asking her to hold part of whatever prototype he was assembling. Another groan slipped out as she pressed her fingertips against her closed eyes and sank deeper into the overstuffed green leather cushions.

Why was she doing this to herself, she wondered. She was a mature, grown woman of thirty. Schoolgirl crushes were supposed to have been out of her system by the time she graduated high school, if not college.

Maybe that was the problem. At six feet four inches with prematurely gray hair, Dayton was a walking fantasy. The plaid flannel shirts and jeans he usually wore around the office emphasized his broad shoulders, narrow waist, and muscular legs. In a suit...Elf sucked in a breath and forced away the images that tended to send her running for a cold shower.

Clichéd as it may sound, there was no way anyone could mistake Dayton Kringle for a boy.

Sighing again, she snuggled deeper into the sofa and let her mind wander. Behind closed eyelids, her favorite fantasy unfolded, one she'd indulged in just after her first Christmas with Kringle Toys.

A beautiful wingback chair, painted gold and upholstered in red velvet and occupied by Dayton, dressed as Santa, is beside her. Decorations fill every window. Like every Christmas, a stately blue spruce stands in the corner behind Dayton's chair and reaches the twelve-foot ceiling. As she glances around, Elf realizes there isn't anyone in the building except her and her boss. The store is still, all the lights off except the soft recessed one above the throne-like chair and the blinking strings wrapped around the Christmas tree.

Dayton relaxes into his chair, the classic red velvet Santa suit perfectly tailored to fit his broad-shouldered frame. The wide, black leather belt snug over his flat, muscled abdomen matches the shiny knee boots. His blue eyes twinkle as he turns his gaze on her. Sliding the red velvet mittens from his hands, he crooks his finger then pats his knee.

As she moves to take a seat, Dayton sweeps the back of her dress up so the flesh exposed by her green silk thong is warmed by the sinewy muscles of his thigh beneath the velvet. Warm, calloused fingers caress the inside of her thigh from knee to hem before sneaking beneath her skirt an inch or two. The touch steals her breath and makes her nipples tighten and press against the green velvet in anticipation.

"Have you been a good elf this year, Miss Jeffries?" His husky voice drifts past her ear as his tongue and lips nibble and explore the length of her neck exposed by her upswept hair.

"Y-yes," she stammers, distracted by the fingers sliding along her leg, teasing the edge of her panties.

A wry grin lifts his lips, as he shakes his head. "Don't lie to Santa," he advises her, his fingers dipping beneath the silk to tease the damp curls.

Against her hip, Elf feels the hard ridge of his cock pressing against his velvet trousers. Wriggling on his knee, she eases her thighs apart as his fingertips slide over, then between, the damp lips of her pussy. Wanting more, Elf leans into his shoulder.

"Good little elves don't tease Santa, Miss Jeffries."

"I'm not doing the teasing," she complains, her hips shifting, attempting to press the tingling knot of nerves against his exploring touch.

"If you want a present, Miss Jeffries, you have to show Santa you deserve it." His unoccupied hand rises to pluck at the taut peaks of her nipples as they press against the soft material.

"But haven't you seen me doing all my good deeds?" Elf queries as she slides free the wide white buttons marching from her collar to the black belt encircling her slender waist, allowing him access to her sensitive breasts.

"Oh, you've helped the needy." Dayton grins that half-grin she finds so adorable as he snaps the front catch of her silk bra open and teases a straining nipple with his calloused fingers. "But, what have you done for Santa?"

She allows her eyes to go wide in surprise. "You are so right, Santa, I haven't done anything for you." Pressing her hip against the hard evidence of his interest, Elf smiles. "I know *just* the present for you." She slides her hand beneath the band of white faux fur edging his coat to stroke his swollen length.

His groan makes her smile as she eases the zipper down and encounters only warm flesh beneath. A wicked grin lifts her lips, "Oh, Santa, you feel so warm."

"And you feel so wet." His fingers easily slip into her tight pussy.

Her hands stroke his engorged cock from base to tip. She follows his groaned instructions on how much pressure to exert. Smoothing her thumbs over his broad crest, Elf massages the drops of precum into his flesh to better lubricate her sliding hands.

Dayton tweaks the nipple of her other breast, plumping the pale flesh around the dark pink crest as his head descends and his lips capture hers. His tongue thrusts in tandem with his fingers, slow then fast, making her squirm on his lap. She never stops her motions, matching his rhythm, his pace.

The sound of tearing fabric can barely be heard over their panting breaths. Tossing aside the tattered remains of her thong, his fingers slide free of her pussy, and his lips pull away from hers. At first she protests the loss of his touch, but as he begins to shift her position, she assists him in turning her into his arms to straddle his lap.

Against the swollen petals of her sex, she feels his body. Then she realizes it's his penis sliding into her tight, wet channel. One fierce thrust has him buried so deep she feels the

erotic rasp of his pubic hair against her sensitive flesh. A cry escapes her lips at the delicious feeling of completeness his possession engenders.

The phone rang, pulling Elf from her fantasy and the edge of climax. Cursing, she rolled upright and snagged a tissue and the phone from the end table. Grinning at the name displayed on the caller ID she hit the talk button. "It was a total bust."

"Damn." The disappointment in Jodi's voice matched Elf's feeling exactly.

"Tell me about it. I spent three days looking for these darn stockings, and nothing."

"Nothing? Not even a look?"

"Not even a look. I don't know about this plan," Elf voiced the concern that had been building in her.

"You have to give it time," Jodi tried to assure her, but Elf could hear the tinge of doubt creeping into her voice.

"It's been six weeks, and nothing has worked."

"Well, the articles and books said..."

"Fuck the books and articles, Jodi! I'm dying here. I'm so horny I'm buying the economy-size packs of batteries for my vibrator," Elf complained. Flopping back onto the sofa, she glared up at the ceiling.

"Better not let your mom hear you," her friend since ninth grade teased.

Elf snorted. "She'd probably go off on her spiel about needing to know what satisfies you because most men need to be trained."

Jodi laughed. "You were so embarrassed when she sat us down and lectured us about masturbation being a natural thing."

"We were sixteen, for Christ's sake." Elf shook her head, remembering the frank discussion her mother had initiated after finding the stash of erotic novels Elf had hidden in her closet.

"Hey, I appreciated your covering for me."

"It wasn't like I hadn't read them," Elf admitted, studiously avoiding mention of Jodi's aunt's reaction if she'd been the one to find them. As unconventional as her mom was, Elf was glad she'd been blessed with her and not the unfeeling, dictatorial, bitch of an aunt who'd raised Jodi.

"So, what's the plan for tomorrow?"

When Elf had complained to her friend, after one too many Fuzzy Navels, about her employer's inability to see her as a woman, they'd concocted a scheme to get his attention. If it hadn't been for Jodi, Elf would have given up after the first week. "I was thinking of giving up," she began.

"No," Jodi interrupted. "You've got a couple of weeks left before Christmas Eve. When we hatched this plan, you agreed to Christmas Eve as the cutoff date."

"It isn't working."

"You don't know that."

"Jodi --"

"No, listen. This is the first guy you've been interested in since Dean the Dickhead. I'll be damned if I'm gonna let you give up a chance to finally have multiple-orgasm sex."

"I doubt it'll be that great." Elf chuckled. Despite the many fantasies she indulged in regarding Dayton Kringle, she didn't believe she was capable of multiple orgasms. Although she had no problem bringing herself to climax, of the men she'd dated, only four of them had lasted more than six months.

"Your mom's nickname for him is The Walking Orgasm," Jodi reminded her with a snicker.

"My mom talks too much," Elf groused. "Why are we even worrying about my love life? It's not like I haven't dated."

"Hey, I wasn't the one crying into my drink about being a thirty-year-old virgin."

Elf grumbled, "It was the alcohol talking."

"No, it was your frustration." Jodi paused as if debating what she wanted to add.

Knowing what would be coming, Elf said it herself, "And seeing Dean the Dickhead and his skank."

"There is that. I never could figure out why you dated him for so long."

"Me neither." But Elf knew.

After the nasty breakup, she'd examined what had attracted her to Dean. It had stunned her to realize he bore a vague resemblance to her employer. By the time she'd run into Dean at a restaurant with another woman practically in his lap, she'd realized the similarities were only on the surface.

"Listen," Jodi interrupted her mental meanderings. "Wear something completely professional."

"Why? That hasn't worked before..."

"It'll throw him off guard. Up until now you've been showing him what he's been missing. Now, you can spin it so he knows what you're hiding under the conservative clothes."

"But he doesn't care." Elf tried to be reasonable. "If I go back to wearing what I always have, he'll still be ignoring me."

"I didn't say you had to stay ultra conservative," Jodi replied. "Leave a few more buttons than usual open, show a hint of cleavage."

Chapter Two

Dayton Kringle watched through half-closed eyes as his door opened and *that* woman entered the room. The instant she came near, his body went on alert. Whether he was on the phone, in the middle of a meeting, or catnapping after a long evening's work, he was capable of locating his administrative assistant without looking.

Elfina Jeffries's sensible, low-heeled navy pump kicked a wadded ball of paper lying on the floor, eliciting a heavy sigh and a resigned shake of her head. The swing of her chestnut hair glinted in the thin beam of light sneaking through the curtains. She crossed the room, collecting the various pieces of discarded paper as she went, and his ears barely picked up her mumbled words.

"You would think a guy who can design and build the most popular toys in the country could learn to pick up after himself."

He fought to keep from smiling while he watched as she leaned over to drag a discarded pencil stub from next to the overflowing wastebasket beside his drafting table. Her navy skirt stretched across her heart-shaped ass and rose to reveal the sensitive flesh behind her dimpled knees. Closing his eyes to savor the sensual images sliding through his mind, Dayton went through his list of things to do.

The idea for the wooden automaton powered by tiny solar batteries had kept him hunched over his drawings and diagrams until the sun began to peak over the horizon. After shutting the curtains, he'd stretched out on the extralong suede sofa Elf had ordered for his office.

He could hear her picking up more discarded papers and pencil stubs. The whisper of her stockings as she moved about the room brought his cock to instant attention. How such a tiny woman could have such long, sexy legs, he didn't know, but he'd fantasized about those limbs wrapped around his hips.

Focus on something else, he warned himself.

Work.

Kringle Toys.

Think about the company.

The year's line was already solidly in production and exceeding the projections set by the marketing team. It was good, but didn't satisfy him. Although Christmas was still two weeks away, it didn't exempt him from exploring ideas for next year's toys. Which meant Elf would likely be finding messes like this every day.

A scene unfolded against his closed eyelids of her pretty little ass beneath a sensible skirt, and her plump breasts pressing against her blouse. He drifted off to sleep with images of his favorite fantasy of coaxing Elf onto his lap for a special Christmas ride playing through his mind.

A soft snore brought a smile to Elf's lips, and her bright green eyes turned to the burgundy suede sofa. Dayton had complained when she'd decorated his office eighteen months ago.

After the first time she'd found him sound asleep on it, she had never heard another complaint about the furniture. Shaking her head at the rumbling snores coming from him now, Elf moved to cover him. A thick blue and black plaid blanket was kept tucked into the coat closet. Three years ago, when Kringle Toys built its new offices and factory on the outskirts of town, Dayton had included a luxury penthouse -- why still baffled her since Dayton continued to sleep in his office instead of two floors up.

As carefully as she could, Elf tucked the blanket around his broad shoulders and quietly exited his office. Yep, the extralong, extrawide sofa had been the right choice to hold her boss' six-feet-four-inch, two-hundred-pound frame.

The instant she covered him, he fought the urge to drag her down on top of him. It didn't matter how soundly he slept, one touch from her, and his body was wide awake and ready.

The woman was driving him insane.

Dayton waited until Elfina left the room to rise up on his elbows and gaze at the closed doors. It couldn't continue, he determined, as he thrust his hands through his hair. For three and a half years, he'd watched the curvy little witch steam roll her way through his life.

His business.

She was a foot shorter and eight years younger than him, and she treated him like a pesky fly. In the office, she put on a good show of placating him, as if he needed her approval. The irony of being born with the name Kringle assured him worldwide

recognition, but the reputation he'd built as a sound and skillful businessman was what kept his name amongst the Fortune 500.

Hell, he counted several powerful businessmen, two senators, and a world-famous photojournalist as friends, and Elf responded to him the way Sister Agnes had when he was growing up at the St. Rose Orphanage. To add insult to injury, sometime in the last six weeks, Elf had decided her wardrobe needed revamping.

The shorter skirts he could handle. It was the CFMPs -- Come Fuck Me Pumps -- and the way they put a sway into her rounded hips that had him sweating. Every time she sashayed into his office, the impulse to find out if the flavor of her lips would be the same as the taste of her sex washed over him. He needed to know if her lips, nipples, and pussy were all the same deep, rose pink color. Most of all, he wondered what she'd sound like as she climaxed with his cock sunk deep in her pussy, or hard up her ass.

He'd spent the last forty months harder than a railroad spike at the mere thought of her bent over his desk, her round ass bare and waiting for his attention. Well, damn it, this year he was getting his Christmas wish, come Hell or high water. He'd plotted and planned for the last eight months. He would be damned if he didn't get himself a piece of Elf before the clock struck midnight on Christmas Eve.

Chapter Three

Her first gift arrived on Monday, twelve days before Christmas.

It appeared when Elf stepped out to get her lunch, and lay in the center of her desk as she pushed through her door, hands filled with the covered plastic bowl containing her salad and a bottle of iced tea. Elf stood staring at the gold foil-wrapped box as the door swung shut behind her. Setting her lunch aside on the reception area coffee table, Elf examined the square box covering half of her desk blotter. Expensive gold foil and silver fabric bows decorated it, making her reluctant to follow the simple "Open me" instructions on the vellum tag taped to the top.

Taking a seat in her comfortable executive chair, Elf lifted the gift. Returning it to the desktop she contemplated it for a moment, wondering who could have given it to her. Carefully peeling away the tape, she removed the paper, revealing a deep blue, velvet box.

Fingers trembling, Elf raised the hinged lid. A sheet of vellum, like the tag on the wrapping paper, was folded in quarters covering the contents. Lifting the paper, Elf gasped at the four chains tucked into the eight-by-ten-inch box.

All four were made of alternating silver and gold links, each small enough to still be feminine while large enough to resemble the chain used to secure gates and hold dogs in a yard.

Pulling the shortest chain free, she estimated its length to be just over fifteen inches, with a single clasp on one end and an O-ring at the other -- a necklace of sorts, Elf guessed. Returning it to its tray, she pulled out the second one, and was more certain of its purpose considering its length was close to thirty inches with the same clasp closure and O-ring at each end.

In high school she'd briefly indulged in the trend of wearing a waist chain. The second gold and silver chain reminded her of the short-lived fashion accessory.

As for the third and fourth chains -- their purpose stymied her. Putting the waist chain back, she pulled the shorter of the two remaining chains out, and studied the clasps at both ends of the twelve inch strand. The longer of the two also carried the clasps at both ends, but it was at least twice as long as the third. About nine inches from each end, three round, onyx beads -- maybe an inch in diameter -- replaced the third, sixth, and ninth links on the remaining six inches of chain.

Settling the last chain in its place in the box, she turned to the paper, thinking perhaps it held the answers.

My Elf,

On the first day of Christmas...

Santa needs to break his reindeer to the harness for the long ride on Christmas Eve.

Harnessing his Elf, though, can prove as adventuresome as the journey around the world.

You may accept these bindings, knowing full well the wearing of them indicates your willingness to submit yourself to your Santa's will.

His every command is yours to fulfill while your every pleasure is his only goal.

Know that eleven days remain before you're claimed, and in that time the sight of my collar around your throat excites me nearly as much as imagining my cock thrusting inside your cunt.

In anticipation,

Santa

Visions of the catalog she and Jodi had laughed and commented about filled her head. It wasn't possible...she thought, remembering the slave devices photographed on the glossy pages. From clamps to weights, she and Jodi had investigated the various items, remarking on the mention of them in the erotic novels they'd read.

As a friendly dare, they'd each selected an item from the BDSM supply catalog and purchased it. Her choice of nipple clamps had seemed tame compared to Jodi's violet flogger.

Eyes wandering back to the chains, Elf could feel her cheeks heat even more. She imagined they were a fiery red by now, as the purpose for the third and fourth chains became clear.

The third chain could serve as a leash for the collar-necklace. The purpose of the fourth chain would be stimulation. Secured between her thighs and connected, front and back to the waist chain, the onyx beads that had looked so innocuous before, would...

She could feel her breasts swell and her nipples peak at the images forming in her head. The explicit books she indulged in purchasing online had described the devices in different ways, but actually being gifted with them...

Between her thighs, her panties grew damp. Fingering the smooth spheres her mind conjured pictures of Dayton settling each one into place. His calloused fingers spreading the swollen lips of her pussy open and pressing the first of the three beads against her sensitive clit made her breath catch. The second he would settle at the mouth of her vagina, and the last would be left to rub against the pucker of her ass.

Wearing the chain would be stimulating. Trying to walk, bend, or stretch, movements she was constantly making during the course of her day -- Elf shook her head, those kinds of moves would be torture. Exquisitely arousing, she decided, but torture nonetheless.

Giving herself a moment to think, she stepped away from her desk and collected her lunch. Leaving the open jewelry case in front of her, she alternated reading the note, eating, and stroking the chains.

Could she do this?

Though her mind envisioned Dayton as the gift giver, it was possible someone else had left it. If she'd still been dating Dean, she could see him trying to send this to her. Even Greg down in Marketing, an inveterate flirt, had shown an interest when she'd started her campaign to gain Dayton's attention. There was always Howard in Accounting. She shuddered to think of *him* sending such a gift. At the best of times, she dreaded contact with him.

From his door, Dayton watched with a slight smile as Elf read and reread the note. Her hands caressed the chains in the box while her eyes remained focused on the paper.

When he'd purchased them for her, he'd known exactly what he wanted to say in the note. Unfortunately, telling a woman you've never had a personal relationship with that you could see her ivory smooth skin glowing against gold and silver bindings would have created a bit of a panic.

He'd written the first note while his mind was still entranced with the images the chains stirred. Visuals of using the onyx beads to rub her rose-colored nipples into stiff peaks had filled his head. He could see himself warming the cool stone on her breasts so his lips could suckle the aroused buds. Once heated, his fingers would sift through the tight brown curls between her thighs, appraising the readiness of her clit.

His cock had gone stiff as he contemplated sliding the chain down her belly. Trailing his lips over every new inch of flesh, he would carefully fasten one end to her belly chain before spreading her lips and using the juices he'd coaxed from her body to lubricate the beads. Attention would be paid to her clit, rolling the bead over and around it, getting the nubbin of flesh familiar with the texture.

The second bead would be slid into place, and then the third. After fastening the rear clasp to the back of the chain, he would tug on the gold and silver links. First in the back then the front, observing the bowing and flexing of his Elf's body as the onyx stimulators pressed against the sensitive tissues he would explore.

Fucking her would come only after he'd used the beads to induce multiple climaxes. Watching her eyes dilate, her mouth gasp for air, her body reach for bliss, would assist in his training of her. Pushing her body to its limits would provide a challenge for both of them.

Each of the fantasies flickering through his mind was included in his first note. So detailed and erotic were the images his words had created, he knew the letter might send alarm scurrying through his Elf, thus making it unusable. But Dayton had kept it. With luck he would be able to share it with Elf. Later.

Tamping down his desires, he'd penned the note she currently perused, hoping it would stir her desires without frightening her away. Her repeated reading of it must mean he struck just the right chord of mystery, something to entice her curiosity.

While he contemplated whether to approach Elf or not, the phone beside her rang, drawing her attention. After finishing the call, he watched his Elf hastily close the jewelry box, lock it in the drawer where she kept her purse secured, and discard the trash from her lunch.

Present one delivered, just eleven more to go...

* * * * *

Much of her afternoon was lost to musings about her gift. Scenarios flitted through her mind. Scenes in which Dayton called her into his office, ordered her to remove her clothes so he could examine his gift against her skin.

In a gravelly voice, he'd command, "Tease those pretty round tits. Show me how you like to play with yourself. What makes your nipples hard, Elf?"

With him leaning back in the chair behind his desk and her facing him, she would comply, aroused by his commands, knowing her power lay in choosing which directives she would follow. Stroking around and over her breasts, her slender fingers never quite touching her nipples, she'd tease her body while exciting Dayton as well.

When he motioned her closer, Elf rounded the desk to stand between his spread thighs, her eyes captured by the straining erection hidden behind the placket of his jeans. His hands reached up, replacing hers, and calloused fingertips explored the puckered nipples, exerting pressure with his thumbs and forefingers.

Just as pleasurable pain bloomed under his attention...

"Damn that idiot Hayes!" exploded behind her, shattering the fantasy and thrusting her full force back into the present.

Dayton came storming out of his office, "Call Halsey and see if he's still got some of the cedar in his warehouse, then meet me in the finishing room."

* * * * *

The homeless shelter was noisy and crowded, smelling of unwashed bodies, peppermint sticks, and wood shavings. Elf's feet ached in the pointed green slippers, and her legs were tired from the long day at the office. Trying to keep up with Dayton had been tantamount to running a series of 100-yard dashes all day. Her muscles ached after first chasing down the issue of the ruined order of cedar, and then discussing Dayton's idea about increasing production without decreasing quality with two foremen. She'd had to trot after Dayton just to keep up with his powerful strides.

Glancing around the brightly lit room, with its cafeteria-style tables and cots folded against the wall, Elf looked for Dayton in the crowded shelter.

Leaning against the wall watching a man slowly eating his dinner, Dayton's fingers stroked the neatly trimmed white beard he grew every winter. Curling gray hair brushed the collar of the red crushed velvet suit hugging his broad shoulders and muscular thighs. The knee high, black leather boots were polished to a high shine, as was the wide belt that fastened snug over his flat belly with a gleaming brass buckle. There was no padding beneath his costume, only trim, taut flesh kept in shape by hours of walking the factory floor and working beside his employees, hefting heavy boxes of product in the warehouse.

Squashing the frustration she felt at being ignored, Elf crossed the room to stand beside him, and turned her attention to the man Dayton watched. She noticed he had two toys and saw how carefully the man touched them as they sat beside his plate. First, he stroked the red-painted smokestack of the engine, then the glossy black wheels of Dayton's gift. Then he would play his trembling fingers over the marred surface of another train engine, this one faded and worn, before dipping his spoon into his bowl.

Wearily, bloodshot brown eyes never left the toys as he lifted his spoon. His shaky grip spilled much of the soup back into the bowl so only a small sip actually reached his lips, but the man didn't seem to care. His sole focus was the toys.

"His name's Charlie." Dayton's voice was a deep rumble beside her. It didn't reach beyond her ears to those around them.

Elf didn't move her attention away from the elderly man.

Dayton continued, "He's been in and out of this shelter for the last six years."

"What happened to him?"

"A drunk driver killed his wife and little boy. Charlie was there and he couldn't save them."

Looking again at Charlie's trembling hands and bloodshot eyes, Elf asked, "Was he the driver?"

"Nope. Charlie doesn't drink. His back and leg were permanently damaged in the accident. He's in constant pain. He doesn't sleep well." Dayton grew quiet for a moment. "He blames himself for the accident."

"If he wasn't driving, how can he blame himself?"

"Because he thinks he should have noticed that his wife was intoxicated. He'd cut his hand on the toy." Dayton's head dipped in the direction of the battered train engine. "He was trying to fix it for their son. It was a deep cut and he asked his wife to take him to the hospital. They couldn't leave their son alone since he was only five. By the time Charlie realized how dangerous his wife was behind the wheel, it was too late."

Tears welled up in Elf's eyes as she watched Charlie caress the toys. "How awful. Isn't there anything that can be done to help him?" Elf turned her gaze up to Dayton.

He shook his head, "He doesn't want to be helped. He's just waiting to be with his little boy." Reaching down, Dayton smoothed away one of the tears slipping down her cheek. The lashes around his dark blue eyes were damp. Sliding his fingers over her shoulder to her waist he turned her toward the front of the shelter and away from the wall. "We should go. Long day tomorrow and we need to get some rest."

Elf didn't argue. Looking back at Charlie, she wondered how she would feel if she were in the heartbroken man's place. The thought of losing a spouse was painful, but the loss of a child? She shook her head. The guilt would be crippling.

Thinking of her own mother, Elf wasn't sure her own reaction wouldn't be similar to Charlie's. Despite every belief she held, Elf couldn't stop herself from offering up a prayer of hope that Charlie's pain and suffering would soon come to an end. Feeling the tug of Dayton's hand on her wrist, she followed him to the shelter's office to gather up the empty velvet sack and their coats.

* * * * *

The blue velvet case lay open on her bed, the chains gleaming in the pale light cast by her bedside lamp. Taking her time, she read the note again, her body heating at the message hidden between the lines. In her fantasy world, Dayton would be the giver.

After his actions at the shelter, a tiny part of her whispered that he was as aware of her as she was of him. She imagined walking into the office in the morning, the necklace fastened around her throat, the waist chain beneath her blouse, and Dayton's cobalt gaze focused on her. Just thinking about his interest caused her nipples to peak, pressing against the soft cotton of her oversized T-shirt.

From the instant she'd lifted her eyes to see him stride through the office on the day they met, she'd recognized the force of his nature. Dominant and unwilling to bend, Dayton had surveyed her presence behind the desk handed down to her by Nadine Haggerty, his retiring administrative assistant. His calloused hand had swallowed hers when he'd taken it,

and the firm grip had communicated both his strength and his ability to temper it when necessary. In the ensuing three years, she'd never had cause to doubt her estimation.

If he had been the person to leave her the gift, her wearing his mark of ownership would constitute an agreement she had been reluctant to give any of the men she'd dated in the past. "Frigid bitch" had been Dean's sneered response after she'd dumped his lunch in his lap when she'd caught him with his lover at the restaurant. "Incompatible," "cold," and "ice queen" had been other remarks thrown at her when she wouldn't allow intimacies to extend beyond kisses and heavy petting.

Until she'd creamed her panties the first time Dayton walked through the office door, she'd been inclined to believe them. Now, the images flitting through her mind assured her the deficiency hadn't been all her fault. In her estimation, Dayton would have overrun any protests she might have made. He would never have forced her, but he wouldn't have given up so easily when she put the brakes on intimacy.

Wearing the collar, which she'd determined was the true nature of the gold and silver links, would signal an interest in exploring a part of her nature she'd wondered about. An interest in erotic tales of submission and bondage was a secret she'd only shared with Jodi. Since they'd run across the first story as teenagers, Elf and her best friend had discussed and run through what-if scenarios. Fantasies of submitting, being bound while a lover's attentions were solely focused on arousing every part of her body, had titillated Elf's mind for years. Finding a man to instill the desire to give way to her fantasies had been the difficult part.

However, this, she thought as her fingers stroked the cool metal, was different. The man who'd left this was intent upon exploring all manner of arousing her. Satisfaction, both hers and his, was his goal. Pushing past any barriers she'd try to erect would be part of the plan. Relinquishing control to him was only the first step. Wearing the collar would be a visual acknowledgment of her surrender.

What she had to decide was if she was willing to take that step.

Chapter Four

The sight of his collar around her slender throat almost had him coming in his jeans. Drawing a deep breath, Dayton focused on keeping his body under control while he listened to Elf read off the day's schedule. While her eyes were directed at the list in front of her, he allowed his gaze to drift over her purple blouse and black skirt. Black shoes with the sexy spiked heel added height and showed off the length of her sleek legs.

It was the sight, though, of the gold and silver links around her neck that tested him. She'd fastened it so it hugged the base of her throat with the excess chain dangling down her back. His mind visualized the other chain in place around her waist, and when it began to drift into images of the black beaded chain, he forced himself to focus on her voice.

The next surprise was hidden in his apartment upstairs. He'd watched her long enough, and knew the best time to deliver it would be at the end of the day. The temptation to leave it on her desk when she left for lunch was there, but he would be away at a meeting so wouldn't be able to see her reaction. How she responded to this present would solidify the invitation the collar at her throat had extended.

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The second gift was resting on the seat of her chair when she entered her office after changing into her elf costume in the bathroom. Stepping out into the hall, Elf glanced at the empty corridor, not sure if she should expect someone to suddenly spring out and admit they were the gift giver or if the mystery would continue.

Returning to her office, she carefully approached her desk to examine her newest present. Fingering the collar around her neck, she eased back her chair.

A wooden chest, the arched lid banded with black leather straps and brass nails, covered the seat of her chair. The clasp and hinges were also made of brass, as was the old

fashioned lock hooked through the clasp's rings. A skeleton key lay on her desk, the note addressed to "My Elf" beneath it.

Before opening the chest, Elf held the key in her hand, her fingers smoothing over the cool metal as she unfolded the note and read it.

My Elf,

When you unlock this chest, you enter into a world of pleasure you have never experienced. Don't be afraid of the contents, they are merely meant to bind you for my delectation -- and yours, of course.

It is for you to decide if you will allow Santa to show you the surprises awaiting you once you have slipped into your gift.

Only ten days remain between us.

Santa

Taking a deep breath, Elf smoothed her green velvet skirt with a damp palm. She lifted the chest by its brass handles onto her desk. It wasn't overly large or heavy. At a guess, the chest was two and a half feet long, eighteen inches high, and two feet deep.

The wood was smooth as silk, cool to the touch, and stained to resemble rosewood. The leather and brass accents gave it the look of a pirate chest.

The thought stirred memories of fantasies she'd entertained as a teenager of being swept off by a dangerous pirate captain. Now, those same fantasies zipped through her mind, but the face of the pirate captain was tantalizingly familiar. As was his distinctive silver gray hair.

Shaking away the images, Elf fit the key into the lock, turned it, set the lock aside, and eased the lid up.

A great deal of attention had been paid to the interior of the chest, as well as the exterior. The scent of cedar drifted into the air from the sanded wood lining the top and sides of the chest. A tray with sectioned areas, made of the fragrant wood but padded and lined with rich, royal blue satin, fit across the top. Each of the five compartments of the tray was empty. Pulling it out, Elf set it aside to examine the box tucked into one of the four partitioned areas of cushioned blue satin along the bottom of the chest.

Made of the same wood as the exterior of the chest, it had no leather and brass accents, and no lock clasp. A simple brass hook held it closed.

The breath she'd been holding since touching her gift left her in an aroused sigh as she opened the second box. On a bed of blue satin lay matching hammered silver bracelets.

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He knew she would figure it out. His Elf was a stickler for details. Perhaps he should have waited and made the chest and its contents a later gift, but leaving her unaware of who wanted her grated on his sense of fair play. The clue had been as inconspicuous as possible. If she found it, fine, if not it merely meant extending her curiosity another few days.

Knowing her as he did, Dayton had been sure she would find his hint. Her sharp eyes would have narrowed in on his initials carved into the locks of the cuffs within moments of looking at them. And he was right.

She stood in his doorway, the cuffs in her hands, wearing her green elf costume. "You?" Her voice was part question, part surprise, matching the look of confusion on her face.

Dayton nodded, leaning against his desk, legs crossed at the ankles, hands loosely curled over the rosewood he'd taken hours to polish.

"Why?" Elf came farther into the room. The door closed soundlessly behind her.

"Why else?" He replied, his eyes drifting over the green velvet. The familiar response of his body didn't surprise him as he admired the length of leg her above-the-knee skirt and flesh-toned stockings revealed.

Disbelief creased her brow and narrowed her eyes as she stopped in front of him. "I don't understand..."

Rising, Dayton towered over her. Her gaze never left his, the green eyes curious, but unafraid. "I've wanted to fuck you for three years, Elf." He saw her eyes widened at his blunt confession. When she didn't voice a protest he continued. "Every inch of this office has had you knelt on, bent over, or spread across it in one fantasy or another of mine, and I'm tired of denying it."

"But..."

"No buts, Elf. If you don't want me in the same way, we'll go back to the way things have been and I'll not bother you again," Dayton assured her. Although inside he was sure he'd die of a permanent hard-on if she didn't return at least a small measure of his attraction.

He'd tried working up an interest in other women, and though he could stir himself enough to perform, the moment his cock slid inside them, his mind would replace his partner's face with Elf's. It had become too much of a chore to keep from calling her name when he came, so he stopped trying. His hand never cared whose name he called and it wasn't as if eighteen months of celibacy was new to him -- he'd gone longer without sex before.

Lost in his own thoughts, Dayton almost missed Elf's soft reply.

"It's not that..." she started, her eyes shifting away from his.

Dayton felt his heart begin to race. Stepping closer to Elf, he gently lifted her chin with the fingertips of his left hand. "What?"

Her eyes seemed to search his face. He wasn't sure she would find reassurance there since habit kept it neutral.

"I'm not sure what you want," she told him.

He read the confusion and worry in her eyes, but wasn't sure he could appease them. There was nothing flowery or romantic about his needs. Or the proposal he was going to make. "Sex," he offered bluntly.

"Yes, I know that, but" -- she lifted the bracelets closer so he could see the loop of chain dangling from each, as well as the locking mechanisms allowing them to be fastened closed -- "these connote another element entirely."

His dark blue eyes drifted over her face, looking for any clue as to her feelings about the subtle hint his gift represented. Hedging her question, he asked one of his own. "Do they frighten you?"

Elf appeared to think about it. Her head tilted to the side. She drew the silver bands closer to her breasts before her head moved to indicate denial. "I don't think they do, Dayton. It makes me nervous, jumpy inside, if I dwell too long on the idea, but, no, I'm not frightened."

"And if I were to use the word 'bondage'?"

Her breath paused then resumed, just a bit more rapid than before.

He watched the rise and fall of her breasts. When she shook her head again, he added, "What about 'domination'?"

Before she answered with a soft, "No," he noticed another flutter of the pulse at the base of her throat.

Dayton felt his cock swell with anticipation and his heart thrummed with excitement. Slipping his hands over hers, he eased the cuffs from her grip. Intentionally stroking his fingers over her full breasts, he reveled in the feel of her peaked nipples pressing against the velvet dress.

Keeping his eyes on hers, Dayton eased first one cuff, then the second, beneath the white, fuzzy trim, and over Elf's wrists and locked them. He'd designed the gift so the raised starburst on his signet ring would slide the locking mechanism into place, "How about 'submission'?"

When her eyes never wavered from his and she held her hands up and still for him to secure the bracelets, Dayton's excitement grew. He could read the anticipation in her eyes. The scent of her arousal drifted to his nostrils.

The slow shake of her head spurred him on to test her further. Moving to stand behind her, Dayton eased her arms around until they rested in the small of her back. Leaning down, he pressed against her, ensuring the firm length of his penis straining against the fly of his jeans rested squarely in the palms of her hands. His lips whispered over the pulse fluttering beneath her ear as his fingers found the special links in the bracelets' chains. A slide and a twist, and the chains were intertwined, leaving Elf's wrists secured behind her back.

“Shall I tell you one of my favorite fantasies, Elf?” Dayton cupped one of his hands over hers, pressing her fingers around his aroused cock while his other hand gently turned her chin, so he could once again meet her gaze.

Her emerald orbs were wide, the pupils dilated so the green was a thin rim around the black centers. Her arousal was equal to his, and apparent in the rapid rise and fall of her breasts, the swollen nipples clearly visible beneath the velvet, and the caress of her fingers over his flesh.

He moved his touch from her hands to her lips, tracing the rose-hued flesh. “We’re in my apartment.” His lips slid over hers, sipping at the tiny puffs of breath escaping them. “My bedroom. Naked. You’re such a pretty sight.” He moved his hands to the round, white buttons closing her costume, easing them open and baring her breasts to his touch. “Lying there, ready for me. Bound hand and foot to my bed.” He easily slipped the front catch of her bra open and freed her breasts to his touch. “These pretty, round tits,” he continued as he squeezed gently, fingertips stroking the hard peaks, plucking at them, “all slick with sweat and flushed from fucking.”

Elf’s grip on his cock tightened at his description, halting him momentarily. “You like that, huh?” His soft chuckle whispered through the quiet office. “In my fantasy, Elf, my cock has been marking your hot little pussy for hours and it just can’t get enough.” His lips moved to cover hers, using the tip of his tongue to dampen her bottom lip before trapping it between his teeth for a quick nibble.

At her gasp and a second stroke of her fingers over his swollen length, Dayton drew back and centered his teeth’s attention on the lobe of Elf’s right ear. One hand abandoned its teasing of her nipples to slip beneath the hem of her skirt. “Mmmmm. You do taste sweet, Elf, and your fingers are distracting me from my story.

“Like I was saying, your pretty little tits are all pink and wet, like your pussy lips,” Dayton’s fingers discovered the moisture soaking her panties just before dipping beneath the edge to tease the very flesh he’d described. Teasing her clit, he eased between puffy labia to gather the juices slipping from her vagina to better lubricate the stiff bundle of nerves. “But it’s your mouth that has all my attention. Open and gasping, I just can’t ignore your need, and mine, to slide my cock inside. Press my tool so deep it feels like you’ve swallowed me whole just before you start sucking.

“So I do.” His fingers abandoned the stiff peak of her breast to delicately trace Elf’s lips, half-open as she gasped for air. “These pretty little lips stretch around my dick and your quick tongue strokes me long and slow. I like to picture you being able to take all of me. Picture you swallowing every inch as I fuck your mouth.” The stroke of his fingers had her hips rolling forward, begging for just a little bit of pressure to send her building climax spiraling into completion. Dayton held back and continued to describe the erotic scene he’d envisioned innumerable times over the last three years. Sliding his index finger over her lips, he slipped it inside her, imitating the motions of sex.

"I thrust and thrust, loving the hot, wet cave of your mouth as you swallow and suck and lick my cock. Then..." His fingers paused in their stroking of her clit, drawing an involuntary moan from Elf, while he fought to still the response building in his chest as her lips clamped down on his finger and her tongue stroked the calloused digit.

The suckling of her lips and the caress of her tongue on his finger shot sensations down his arm to the aroused flesh she gripped in her bound hands. Dayton could hear the need in his own voice as he continued. "When I'm about to pull out so I don't come in your mouth, you use your teeth to keep me inside." Reluctantly, he pulled his finger from her mouth, allowing the wet digit to slide over her chin and back to her breast. His lips brushed hers as he finished his fantasy. "And I climax, filling your mouth, shooting down your throat." Between her thighs, his finger applied just the right amount of friction and the tight spring of arousal broke inside Elf.

Her eyes squeezed shut and he smiled against her lips, enjoying her orgasm nearly as much as she had. Plucking her nipples, Dayton pressed his arousal against her bound hands and she caressed him. "Do you want that, Elf, taking my cock down your throat?"

Her grip on his body tightened.

A low chuckle rumbled from his chest as he eased around Elf, and stepped toward the sofa. Sliding the extra links of the collar from the back of her neck to the front, he tugged lightly on them, drawing her with him, and growled, "God, the thought of fucking that sweet little mouth..." Dropping onto the sofa he pulled her between his thighs.

Slipping his fingers beneath her skirt to fondle the wet flesh of her pussy, he leaned forward, teasing Elf's lips with a soft kiss, his tongue dipping inside for a taste. Between her thighs his fingers circled the tight channel, still wet and dripping from climax. Keeping his lips against hers, tasting the sweet interior of her mouth, he smiled against her lips when he slipped one blunt-tipped digit into her vagina. "So wet and tight and ready," he whispered, "but I'm not ready to fill this pussy yet, Elf. Ten more days, but I'm so hard. Will you let me? Let me fuck these pretty lips?" He traced her lips with his tongue, his eyes holding hers captive.

Breathless, her body flushed from orgasm and the fulfillment of her own fantasy, Elf didn't hesitate. She nodded. The pressure of his finger slipped away, drawing an involuntary moan from her. Stroking the damp flesh as he eased her back and to her knees between his thighs, she saw Dayton smile. His deep blue eyes glistening, he assured her, "I'll take care of you, My Elf."

Keeping his gaze locked on hers, Elf watched him ease the buttons open on his jeans. Lifting his hips, he adjusted his clothing to release his aroused flesh. She eyed the firm length, feeling her pussy spasm at the idea of the thick cock filling her. Flushed nearly purple, the broad plum-shaped head appeared to be the same size as her palm. A small part of her noted how different an aroused penis looked when viewed in person rather than in a

video or magazine. Elf leaned forward to first caress his length with her cheek. The heat and scent of his skin sent excitement washing through her belly. Growing more curious, Elf slid down to lick the base of his shaft before working her way up to the broad swollen crest. Dayton's intense focus on her every move felt almost physical.

As she caressed him, she could feel him pulling her hair loose from the elegant roll at the base of her neck.

Dayton wove the fingers of one hand through her hair while the other guided his cock to her lips, "Take it in, Elf. Suck it, baby."

Tentatively, Elf licked the broad crest, surprised at the warm, tangy taste. The pulsing vein underneath drew her attention. Taking her time, enjoying the tortured groan slipping from her employer's lips, Elf stroked the silky skin of his penis. Marveling at the firmness hidden beneath the thin layer of skin, Elf explored the shaft from tip to base and back.

A warning growl erupted from Dayton at her continued teasing. The press of his cock against her lips increased. The broad tip pushed past lips and teeth filling her mouth with his flavor. Their combined groans echoed in the room.

Elf's focus narrowed, her eyes closed, as she savored the tastes, the textures filling her mouth. Stroking over Dayton's firm flesh as it advanced further, she could hear him speaking but the words made little sense to her. Suckling and caressing his cock, she licked at the underside of the tip and rubbed her tongue along the thick vein throbbing along its base.

In the back of her mind, she registered the wet slurping sounds her mouth made as she swallowed more of his flesh before Dayton would pull back, and then press forward again. The intimate act she performed felt like a natural extension of the feelings she had for him. Knowing her touch, the flick of her tongue, her suckling of his flesh brought pleasure to him, augmented the arousal building in her belly.

A part of her was surprised at the delight she took in being bound. With her eyes closed, she could imagine the sight someone would have if they came through the door. Dayton slouched on the sofa, head thrown back, fingers buried in her mussed hair as her head bobbed over his flat belly, bound hands gripped in fists as she grew more aroused. Beneath her skirt, she could feel her pussy dribble moisture into her already soaked panties. Her breasts ached to be caressed, her nipples hard and swollen. The scent of Dayton's skin, the feel of his penis pressing deeper into her mouth, aroused her nearly as much as his touch had earlier.

The grip on her hair tightened as a spurt of cum pulsed against her tongue. Elf opened her dazed eyes and met the intense look in Dayton's.

"I'm gonna come, Elf." His words were more a question than a warning.

A question Elf answered by exerting a minute amount of pressure with her teeth.

It was all the confirmation Dayton needed as he threw back his head, groaned, and his seed flooded her mouth.

Chapter Five

"It isn't a relationship, Elf," Dayton informed her as he exited the en suite bathroom, his jeans fastened and plaid shirt tucked neatly into the waistband again. "I'm not looking for that. After New Year's, things will probably return to normal."

Hands trembling as she attempted to thread the buttons of her dress back through their holes, Elf was glad the green costume came with frilly little bloomers. The panties she'd been wearing were soaked and useless. In his absence, she'd switched to the decorative underwear.

A part of her heard Dayton's rationalization, but another part was still trying to deal with what she'd done. The silver bracelets still encircled her wrists, the small loops of chain swinging wildly with the continued trembling of her fingers. She wasn't sure about much of anything anymore. Not with the feelings and thoughts racing through her mind.

She fought to keep from laughing as she remembered the disgruntled looks her boyfriends had given her when she'd refused to go down on them. Curious as she was, and tempted to see if it would stimulate a response, she'd never let any of them -- never let any man -- she closed her eyes... What was the term she'd once read? Ah, yes, fuck her face.

"Elf?" Dayton's warm palms covered her hands, drawing her from her thoughts.

Easing her fingers from the buttons, Dayton patiently refastened her dress, all the while studying her face. She wondered what he saw there. With the jumble of emotions roiling through her she barely knew what she was feeling, let alone what her expression was giving away.

"If I say no..." Inside her head, a tiny voice laughed uproariously. *Yeah, right, say no to him?*

He shrugged. "I'll be disappointed, but I won't force you."

"And you think you won't want me after the New Year?" Was that disappointment in her voice?

Dayton looked closely at her as he slid the last button home and straightened the fuzzy collar around her neck. "I won't guarantee that."

"But, you said..."

"I said I want to fuck you. And I do. I also said that things would 'probably' return to normal after the New Year. That doesn't mean there's a shelf life on my attraction to you. I can assure you I'm not asking for or offering a relationship, Elf."

"What you're saying is you're horny --" She couldn't believe the words were coming out of her mouth. By his expression, Dayton seemed somewhat taken aback by them as well. "And I'm just convenient."

"What I'm saying is I've reached a point where I don't want to deny my interest anymore." Stepping away, Dayton leaned against his desk. "After what just happened, you have to admit the feeling is more than mutual."

Unable to deny it, Elf nodded her head.

"You want me." Dayton wasn't asking.

Again she nodded. "Yes."

"I want you." Stepping closer to her, he smoothed loose tendrils of hair behind her ear. "I'm offering a means for us to satisfy the curiosity we both have."

Elf didn't respond. She kept her eyes on Dayton, waiting for him to say more. Hoping he would say something. Something to reassure her that her heart wouldn't be broken any more than she suspected if she agreed to his plan.

He didn't. Instead he asked, "Do you want to share sex with me? Yes or no, Elf, that's all you have to say." Simple. Direct. Just like Dayton.

"Yes." The word seemed forced from her lips. Even knowing she was bound to regret the decision, Elf wouldn't allow herself to pass up the opportunity to get as close as possible to this man.

"If I ask anything of you that you aren't sure about, all you have to say is 'no.'" Dayton assured her. "Do you trust me?"

Again Elf nodded.

"Say you trust me, Elf."

"I trust you."

"You'll spend Christmas with me?"

"Yes."

"And the days after?"

Elf swallowed around the lump in her throat and choked down her protest declaring she wanted to spend the rest of her life with him.

If all he wanted was Christmas and some days following it, she would accept it. Accept it and find a way to move on with her life. "Yes, for as long as you want me, Dayton, I'll stay."

* * * * *

Elf lay in her queen-size bed reviewing the events of the afternoon and evening. The fact she'd let such an intimate act take place -- first in the work place, and second with her employer and the owner of the company -- made Elf shake her head in dismay. At the same time her pussy grew wet and swollen, and her breasts felt warm.

The jarring sound of her telephone ringing beside her ear shattered Elf's already disjointed thoughts. Groaning, she fumbled the cordless handset out of its stand, "Hello?"

"Hey, sweetie," Eleanor Jeffries-Lincoln's cheery voice greeted her.

"Hi, Mom." Elf sat up, breathing deeply to still her thudding heart.

"Did I wake you?"

"No, no, I was" -- *dreaming of fucking my boss* -- "just resting."

"Well, I wanted to let you know that we have to change our holiday plans."

Elf could hear the excitement in her mother's voice. "What happened?"

"The cruise Doris and Edward were scheduled for -- they can't go and they can't cancel. So, they're giving me and Gerry the tickets for a very good price."

Elf had to grin. "That's great, Mom. I'm so glad you and Gerry will get an opportunity to spend time together somewhere exotic."

"The ship leaves next Friday and we'll be gone until after the New Year."

"You two are going to have so much fun." Elf tried to keep her voice upbeat. She'd miss not having her mom around for Christmas, but she knew how much they deserved this treat.

"I just worry that you'll be alone..." Eleanor's enthusiasm was dampened a bit.

"Mom, I'm thirty years old. I think I can survive one Christmas without my mother. Besides," she reminded herself as she said the words that they weren't really a lie, just an exaggeration of the truth, "I'll be spending the day with Jodi."

"Oh, I'd forgotten about that. Maybe --"

"No..." Elf cut her off. She knew her mother was debating canceling in order to keep the promise she'd made to share Christmas dinner at Jodi's. "She'd never forgive you if you gave up this trip because of her." *And I'd never forgive you if I had to give up a single minute with my Sexy Santa.*

"But, we promised."

"And I'll be there to keep the promise. You and Gerry deserve to have a little fun." *Just like I intend to*, Elf grinned to herself.

"Well," Eleanor sounded torn, "If you're sure..."

"Mom," Elf made her voice stern, "you and Gerry didn't get a honeymoon when you got married. You may never get this opportunity again, so don't pass it up."

"Now you're starting to sound like me." Eleanor chuckled.

"I should hope so. I've only had to listen to your lectures all my life." Hoping to change the subject, Elf offered, "Maybe we can go out Saturday and pick up a sexy little swimsuit for your cruise."

"The plane leaves on Thursday night."

"So, we'll meet for lunch tomorrow. I think Dayton is scheduled to meet one of his suppliers tomorrow, so I'll be able to take a little more time."

"I'd like that, honey."

A man's voice sounded over the telephone line. Elf recognized it as her stepfather, and her mother confirmed it, "That was Gerry. We have to get luggage for the trip, so I have to go."

"Love you, Mom."

"Love you, too, hon."

* * * * *

"So?" Jodi's voice was cool as Elf rolled upright and stared into the darkened bedroom, the phone pressed to her ear.

"It was him."

The enthusiastic squeal on the other end of the line had Elf shaking her head and laughing. "I should be worried that you're as excited as I am to find out who my Secret Santa is."

"Give me a break." Jodi snorted. "I'm living vicariously through your adventures, friend of mine."

"Why don't you try finding out who 'elevator boy' is," Elf taunted.

"There was nothing boyish about him," Jodi groaned.

Wanting to delay the inquisition for as long as possible, Elf asked, "So, have there been any more 'nightly visitations' from your hunky mystery man?"

"No. I didn't call to prattle on about my frustrations, so why don't you spill with what happened when you showed up wearing the necklace?" Jodi pushed aside the attempt at delay and went right for the jugular.

"He propositioned me."

"And?"

"And what?" Elf prompted.

"What did you say?"

"I told him I was appalled at his crass --"

"You lying bitch." Jodi laughed. "Tell me what really happened before I come over there and beat it out of you."

Chuckling, Elf settled into her pillows and related the events in Dayton's office without revealing the intimate scene that had played out between them.

"So, he just wants to have sex?"

"That's what he's telling me." Elf could hear the disappointment in her voice and knew Jodi could hear it as well.

"Are you going to agree?"

"I already have."

Jodi stayed quiet for a moment. "You don't sound as happy as I'd thought you'd sound."

"I may regret agreeing to do this," Elf admitted, voicing the concern that plagued her.

"Why?"

Taking a deep breath, Elf stared through the darkness toward her ceiling. "I'm afraid."

"Of what?"

"Becoming attached." *Too late*, a voice inside her head chimed. To Jodi she continued, "Of getting hurt when he ends it."

"Life doesn't come without a price," Jodi responded after a few seconds of silence. "You just have to decide if you're going to look back and regret not taking the chance."

Elf gave in to the temptation to whine, "This isn't helping me."

"It's not supposed to."

"Some friend you are," Elf huffed. "You're supposed to be on my side."

"I am on your side, Elf," Jodi assured her. "You're more animated and alive talking about Dayton Kringle than you ever were when you talked about any of the guys you dated. Even Dean the Dickhead couldn't make you gush. And I'm not just talking metaphorically, here. I don't know how many times I've listened to you fantasize about jumping his bones."

Feeling the heat in her cheeks, Elf squeezed her eyes shut, "You can stop any time now."

"No, I can't. Not if you're gonna chicken out on this one opportunity to get what you want." A hint of envy seeped into her voice as Jodi continued, "You've dreamed of doing this for months now, Elf. How often does a woman get the chance to live out her fantasy? Don't fuck it up by wussing out."

"As a motivational speaker" -- Elf snorted -- "you suck."

"I'm not trying to motivate you, lady. I'm trying to kick your ass verbally so you can see what you're passing up."

"I see it."

"So, then tell me the truth, will you regret not spending the time with him?"

"Yes, but --"

"Nuh uh," Jodi cut her off. "It's either yes or no. There are no 'buts' involved in this."

"Okay, then yes, I would regret not spending the time with him."

"Okay then."

"What about what happens after?" Elf asked.

"I'll be here and so will your mom. If you need us to help pick up the pieces, we will."

There was silence, and then Jodi's chuckle sounded over the line. "What?" Elf demanded.

"Well, I was thinking about something I read in a magazine."

"And?"

"If you really want to keep him after the holidays are over..."

"Yes?"

"The advice from the magazine," Jodi's laughter was interspersed with her words, "suggests if you give him the greatest fuck of his life -- I mean mind-blowing, knock your socks off, amazing sex. He's more likely to want to stick around, and attach some strings instead of walking away."

Elf thought about it, then had to laugh along with her friend. After the interlude in his office, she wondered if it would be possible to reach him that way.

Chapter Six

Her gift was waiting in her in-box on Wednesday morning. A broad red ribbon wrapped around the white, shirt-box-sized present. The note tucked inside the loops of the bow read:

My Elf,

Within are the garments that should always adorn a body such as yours. Their colors match your true nature while the fabrics from which they are made are nearly as silky as the skin upon which they will rest.

After you have opened your gift, come to me so I might assist you in preparing for this day. The image of my gift caressing your nipples and hugging your pussy as I have so long dreamed of doing will make our remaining nine days feel like an eternity trapped within a single second.

Santa

She delayed opening the box by placing her freshly laundered elf outfit into the coat closet beside the door. Draping her jacket over one of the wooden hangers as well, Elf avoided looking at the gift. Tucking her purse into her desk, she settled into her chair, drew a deep breath and slid the red ribbon off. Easing up the lid, she separated the red tissue and moaned.

Bright against the deep red paper were easily a dozen matched sets of lingerie in vibrant, jewel tones. Elf drew each out and placed them on her desk blotter. Each set consisted of a pair of thigh high stockings, a thong and a bra. Silk, satin, and lace slid sensuously over her fingertips as she examined the expensive garments. Some of the tiny labels had her gasping. She'd read an article recently about the prices some of the pieces

garnered. La Perla, Agent Provocateur, even a C. Gilson were mixed in with the more familiar Victoria's Secret, and Fredericks. Dayton had easily spent more than she earned in a month on this gift.

She carefully placed each of the items back in the box and reread the note. He wanted her to come to him after she opened her gift, and she would. Holding the box clasped against her chest, she rose and crossed to the doors connecting her office to his.

Easing the door open, Elf spied Dayton in the pose which had endeared him to her for the last three years. Hunched over the drafting table, his tanned features set in focused concentration on a single task, his fingers flew across the sheet of paper fastened to the table by masking tape.

Hoping to be able to watch him for a few minutes, Elf moved away from the door. Unfortunately, his hearing remained as keen as ever. Hovering just inside the door, she'd taken no more than three steps toward him when his head popped up and his eyes turned to pierce her where she stood.

"You like?" he queried, one gray brow rising.

Elf could feel the heat move over her cheeks as she nodded. Admiring the risqué lingerie he'd given to her and admitting it to him were two different things entirely. "They're beautiful, but..."

He waved aside her protest before she could finish. "They're a gift. The price is irrelevant." Dayton's smile seemed predatory. Rising from his chair, he crossed the room. "Come with me." He turned her toward the private elevator leading up to his apartment.

Once upstairs, he accompanied her through the living room and into his bedroom. He moved so quickly she had only a brief glimpse of the sparse, masculine furnishings.

Easing the box from her grip, Dayton guided her toward a tall cheval mirror. He drew her suit coat from her shoulders, neatly folded it, and set it aside on a wingback chair upholstered in navy brocade.

"Tomorrow," he told her as he stroked the curve of her breast before unbuttoning her blouse and setting it on top of her jacket, "don't wear anything beneath your clothes." His calloused fingers pulled off her silky bra before teasing her nipples into stiff peaks. Grinning into the mirror at her breathless expression, he informed her, "I'll dress you."

She reached back and attempted to stop his fingers from unfastening her black skirt, "I can't let you..."

Dayton shook his head, his eyes holding her reflected gaze as he crouched behind her, helping her step out of the skirt. He set it aside before rising and returning his attention to her breasts. Plucking at her tender nipples, he reminded her, "If you trust me, you can."

"I do trust you, it's just..." Elf found it difficult to concentrate as he eased his hands down her belly, over the links of gold and silver, and beneath the front panel of her panties.

"Then let me dress you." His smile was hidden in the neatly trimmed beard and moustache. "And undress you."

The heat of his body warmed her as he eased her thong over her hips to her thighs then let the silky fabric drop to the floor. His fingertips explored the plain band of elastic at the top of her stockings. "I'm glad I didn't know you normally wore this to work, Elf."

"Why?"

In answer, Dayton pulled her hips back toward his, releasing a mingled groan and chuckle.

Elf gasped at the feel of his aroused cock pressing between the rounded cheeks of her ass.

"If I'd known, my Elf, Santa would have been indulging himself at the office before now."

Exerting little effort, Dayton turned her into his arms and lifted her off her feet. Instinctively, Elf wrapped her legs around his hips, settling her throbbing cunt against the hard ridge beneath his jeans. Her arms curved over his shoulders, fingers digging into his silver waves as she pressed her swollen breasts against his chest.

"I want you to leave your gifts with me until Christmas, Elf."

The cool raw silk duvet had her arching into him as Dayton laid her in the center of his huge bed. Keeping his body covering hers, he eased her arms from around his neck and her thighs from his hips. Pressing her limbs into the nubby green fabric, he ordered again, "Leave your gifts with me until Christmas. This way we can both enjoy them through the holiday."

Imagining coming to him each morning and having him help her dress smacked of an intimacy that went beyond a brief affair. It hinted at more than a simple sexual encounter. Nodding, Elf agreed with his request, "As you wish." The phrase came naturally, without sarcasm or insincerity.

"Thank you." Dayton pressed a soft kiss against her lips. Easing off her body, he stepped away from the bed. She watched him as he seemed to admire the sight of her ivory flesh against the deeper jade silk. Elf remained in place on the bed as he stepped away to collect her bracelets from her pirate chest resting beside the cheval mirror and the white box of lingerie.

She looked beautiful draped across his bed, her pearly flesh glowing in the wash of morning light coming through the floor-to-ceiling windows on either side of his bed and the skylight above. Between her thighs her pussy glistened with arousal. The juices dewed the pink lips and enticed him to taste her. Climbing onto the mattress, he straddled her waist and raised her arms so they rested above her head, before securing the bracelets around her wrists and fastening the bindings together.

"You look beautiful, Elf," he whispered as he slid from the bed and opened the box. He knew just the set he wanted her to wear. The deep azure blouse would keep the peacock hue from showing through, while knowing the brilliant fabric was caressing her snowy breasts would keep his cock hard.

Stroking the silk over peaked nipples, Dayton smiled at the way her body responded to his touch. "Feels good, huh?"

She seemed unable to speak as she gazed up at him and nodded.

He touched his lips to hers again as he stroked the thong over her belly. "Your skin is so soft. Like warm velvet," he whispered. He braced his right forearm beside her bound wrists. His fingers caressed the palms of her hands, sliding over the delineated folds of her heart and life lines before dipping between each finger to rub the sensitive, nerve rich skin.

He swallowed her gasps, easing his tongue past her lips to taste the moist haven that had brought such pleasure to him the night before. Images of her sucking his cock had kept him restless in this bed all night.

She tasted of spicy tea and milk and just a hint of blueberry. Her tongue tangled with his, sliding over and around, encouraging his explorations as his hips settled between her thighs. The need to taste her overwhelmed his desire to extend their kiss.

Pulling away, he met her smoky gaze, thrilled his lips, his touch could turn her normally sharp green gaze vague. His eyes drifted down between their bodies to the nest of reddish brown curls crushed against his jeans. "I'm curious." He barely recognized the gravelly tone of his voice. "Your mouth is sweet, but..." Sliding down her body, he teased her breasts with lips, teeth, and beard before moving further down to dip his tongue into her belly button. Finally, kneeling beside the bed, he'd reached his goal. "What does your pussy taste like? Is it as sweet?"

Her eyes grew wide as she watched his head dip.

The soft hair of his beard tangled with her silk. He breathed deep, savoring the scent of her arousal and the subtle hint of some floral scent.

"Smells appetizing," he whispered, watching his breath stir her curls. She tried to close her thighs. He pressed them open, the fingertips of his left hand tracing the moist slit before spreading her labia and exposing her clit to his inspection.

His eyes fastened to hers, he took his first sip, sliding his tongue slowly up the moist petals before pressing against the swollen knot of nerves.

"Mmmm. Sweet and spicy." Intoxicated by her flavor, Dayton lost himself in her flesh. His eyes squeezed shut to narrow his senses' focus. He wanted to gorge on the taste of her, the texture of her rosy flesh, and the smell of her excitement. Again and again he lapped at her lips, swallowing her honey before moving to nibble at her clit.

Her cries and the way her body arched beneath his hands barely registered as he thrust his tongue deep into her tight sheath. He lost track of the number of times he stroked,

nibbled, and suckled her to climax, so focused on drinking down the elixir her body spilled into his mouth. He pressed closer, wanting to push deeper, but limited by the squeeze of her vaginal muscles.

Her cries echoed in the room, turning to sobs as she shuddered beneath his mouth in a final paroxysm of pleasure. The contractions of her pussy against his lips and tongue sent him over the edge.

For the first time in his life, Dayton was unable to control his body. His orgasm washed over him, exploding from his cock and soaking the front of his jeans. Sated for the moment, he pillowed his head on her heaving belly, marveling at how his heart hammered in time with hers as they slowly came back to earth.

As he regained a semblance of control, Dayton became aware of the dew of sweat rapidly cooling on Elf's body. Aware also of the damp fabric chafing his softening cock, he reluctantly rose, snagged a pair of jeans from his closet, and moved into his bathroom. Not sure how long Elf would remain still, he shed his jeans and shorts, cleaned the drying semen from his belly, thighs, and cock before tugging on his clean jeans and fastening the five buttons. Splashing water on his already wet beard, he reluctantly rinsed and dried away her flavor. Grabbing a fresh hand towel and dampening another washcloth, he returned to his bed to find Elf shakily trying to don the peacock blue panties.

"Let me," he offered, moving to the bed.

Her hair was tumbled around her shoulders, her breasts quivered and dried tear tracks had smeared mascara down her cheeks. When she shied away from him as he sat beside her, an involuntary growl rumbled in his throat, making her eyes widen in distress.

Taking the panties from her trembling hands, he first freed the links of her bindings before gently brushing the cool cloth over her cheeks. Smoothing the evidence of her tears from her face, he murmured nonsense words to her as he calmed her.

"Did I hurt you?" He had to know. Dayton watched her face closely as he waited for her response. His hand trailed the cloth over her breasts to her belly, washing away the sweat.

Elf shook her head, her eyes avoiding his. "No," she whispered.

Lifting her chin so she would meet his gaze, Dayton deliberately stroked the cloth between her thighs with his left hand. "Was I too rough?"

Again she shook her head. Her teeth gnawed on her full bottom lip, unable to hide the arousal his touch appeared to engender.

He smiled. "Now you understand how I felt last night." He couldn't help chuckling when her eyes grew wide as he bathed away the moisture his mouth and her body had deposited on the inside of her thighs. Sliding his tongue over her lips, he asked. "Did you like sucking my cock yesterday?"

He could see her throat vibrate beneath a heavy swallow before she gave a tiny nod.

“Me, too.” Easing her back onto the duvet, he tossed aside the cloth, brought his fingers to his lips and wet them in his mouth before returning them to her soft curls, damp from the cloth. “I really enjoyed eating your spicy little muff, Elf.”

His fingers opened the delicate slit, searching for the hidden button. Stroking over the flesh and drawing out a tiny trickle of moisture from her sheath, coating his fingers in her juices. “In fact,” he brought them to his lips again and sucked them into his mouth, his eyes holding hers as he licked away her taste from his fingers. “I may have to make you my breakfast.”

Elf groaned. It seemed she was overwhelmed by the thought of repeating the sensual torture every morning until Christmas.

Chuckling, Dayton pushed away from her and lifted the panties from the duvet. “Sounds like you like the idea.”

Elf lay dazed on the bed, her mind fogged by the multiple orgasms. The sight of Dayton licking the taste of her body from his fingers sent naughty images flowing through her head. She could barely breathe so protesting his dressing her was definitely out of the question. Although, by the time he finished, she was ready to scream.

He tortured her by slowly easing the silk lingerie onto her body. The thong he adjusted twice, each time smoothing his broad fingertips down her belly, stopping to tug and adjust the gold and silver chain draping it before moving down, between her trembling thighs and over the curve of her ass to make sure the silk was positioned just so.

He helped her sit up so he could get the front fastening bra around her back and over her shoulders. The design of the bra caused Elf's cheeks to flush with arousal and embarrassment. The cups of the garment left her nipples bare. The tiny edging of lace at the top of each cup abraded her rosy crests, drawing them into stiff peaks.

The stockings were an exercise in arousal. Having her lean back on her elbows on the jade green, raw silk duvet, Dayton urged Elf to relax. Then he carefully eased each length of silk over her toes, making sure the backs of his fingers stroked the flesh he was covering. Up her calf, over her knee, until the lacy tops hugged the curve midway up her thigh. Her left leg first, then her right.

When he finished, Dayton leaned over her, easing her back until she was once again lying down. He braced his forearms on the bed on either side of her head and teased her lips with gentle kisses. Snuggling his hard cock against her new panties, he promised, “When we come back from the women's shelter tonight, I'll help you take these off.”

With a groan, Elf nodded.

Rising, Dayton collected her blouse from the pile on the chair and helped her slip it on. Her taut nipples pressed against the azure silk. Through his beard, she could see the smile lifting his lips. His calloused fingers outlined her nipples, drawing slow circles around each

peak before pinching them between thumb and forefinger, then releasing them. Dayton left her blouse unbuttoned enough to bare her cleavage, yet still remain decent.

* * * * *

The shelter was a beehive of activity. Neatly made military-style cots lined the walls, while foldaway beds were tucked between them to better accommodate the cafeteria tables. One small corner was left clear to allow the placement of a tall Christmas tree decorated with red and green construction paper chains, strings of popcorn, and hand drawn ornaments. The desk chair from the shelter director's office had been placed beside the tree for Dayton to distribute the toys. The carefully wrapped gifts were stacked neatly at her feet. She would tell him a name and he would call out for the child.

Dayton spoke with each youngster that came to him. Some would sit on his lap, while others would merely lean against the arm of his chair. With each child, he would carry on a quiet conversation, an exchange she could barely hear. Once he'd finished his discussion, he would turn to her and she'd hand him the gift to be passed along to the child.

She only paid cursory attention to what was going on, her mind spinning with thoughts of what would happen when they returned to Kringle Toys and she followed Dayton upstairs to his penthouse. Her body had been tingling all day. At the oddest times, she would suddenly recall Dayton's mouth nibbling on her pussy, and her new panties would grow damp with her arousal. Several times she'd had to make her escape to the ladies room to wipe away the moisture pooling between her thighs.

A child's cry and a woman's scream from the front of the building pulled her back to her surroundings. The sound had shelter workers scrambling to gather up the children and women, and herd them toward a corner far away from the disturbance.

"Take her." Dayton didn't wait, he thrust the little girl he'd had sitting on his lap into her arms. "Go with Alana." He pointed toward one of the nearby workers with the crowd of children, before he turned to follow the few men toward the woman struggling with a man near the entrance to the shelter. The child who'd cried out was huddled against the wall, sobbing.

Her heart hammering in her ears, Elf hurried to Alana and passed the frightened girl to her mother before turning back to watch Dayton. When she saw the glitter of light off the blade of a knife, Elf didn't think, she began to run toward the knot of combatants.

Dayton moved a blur of red velvet and white fur. Snaking in under the man's slashing arm, pulling the woman away and grabbing the wrist of the hand holding the knife. Ignoring the woman as she was caught by one of the other male shelter aids, Dayton slammed the intruder up against the cinderblock wall. Crowding in close to press his left arm across the man's throat he kept the hand clutching the knife pinned helplessly above the assailant's head.

Halfway across the room, Elf slowed her pace, realizing the altercation was over before it had begun. As she drew nearer she noticed Dayton's knuckles were white as he exerted enough pressure on the guy's wrist to make him drop the knife. The shelter director picked up the weapon and motioned toward her office. A female worker helped the traumatized woman and her little boy move away while two of the men, one an off-duty police officer, cuffed the man and helped Dayton lead him into the office.

Hoping to calm some of the frightened children, Elf moved back to the dissipating crowd and asked two of the older children, a teenage boy and girl, to help her hand out the remaining presents.

Chapter Seven

Thursday found Elf somewhat reassured of Dayton's interest in continuing their explorations. The anticipated caresses she'd looked forward to the night before had never happened.

Their trip back to the office had passed in silence. Elf hazarded a glance or two in Dayton's direction, but didn't say anything. The tension in his shoulders and the way he'd gripped the steering wheel made her suspect the attack at the shelter was still preying on his mind.

She'd followed Dayton into his apartment, slightly apprehensive at the distracted behavior her Santa was exhibiting. His hands had been gentle, solicitous, as he helped her remove her elf costume, her shoes. He had her leave on the green stockings she'd changed into earlier. The blue ones hadn't matched the costume. His lips had caressed hers, drawing her into a deep kiss more comforting than arousing. The caress of his fingertips over her breasts and nipples was more searching than sensual, as if he needed the reassurance of touching her flesh.

After discarding her bra and panties, Dayton held her close. He remained quiet, taking his time, smoothing his hands from her shoulders, down her back, and over the curve of her hips and bottom. Pulling away, he'd kissed her and helped her don the skirt and blouse she'd worn during the day. While she slipped her feet into her low heeled pumps, he'd turned away to strip off his Santa suit, and pull on jeans and a T-shirt.

Still silent, he'd escorted her down to her car and kissed her gently before seeing her settled behind the wheel. Leaning through her open window, he reminded her, "Come a little early. We're going to need to get you dressed and back to the office in time for my meeting with Halsey at nine."

“Are you all right?” Elf couldn’t hold back the question. She knew the incident at the shelter had disturbed him, but she was still leery about pushing him.

He gave a lopsided grin, but the humor never reached his blue eyes. “I’m fine, Elf.” The blue heated slightly as he moved in to kiss her again. “I usually eat breakfast around six, but I’m sure I’ll still be hungry when you show up.”

Elf felt her cheeks heat at the memory of his words, and how he’d put action to those words when she’d arrived at work just after seven this morning. Having learned from her experience on Wednesday, she’d remembered to bring her purse with her to his apartment. After screaming herself hoarse from her orgasms and the slow tortuous way Dayton dressed her, Elf had taken a few minutes in his bathroom to detangle her hair and apply her usual dash of mascara and lip gloss. They’d made it down to the office with fifteen minutes to spare before Dayton’s nine o’clock appointment.

Glancing at the cherry Banjo Grandmother clock beside her door, she noted it was nearly ten and he was still in his meeting with Bryce Halsey. Thinking about how her day had started, she had to swallow hard and take a deep breath. Her breasts swelled and the copper colored lace he’d dressed her in teased her hard nipples.

Groaning, Elf eased away from her desk and headed for the bathroom. Her body’s reaction to him was becoming damned inconvenient. Wiping the moisture from her pussy, Elf flushed the toilet and moved to the basin. Staring at her reflection as she lathered her hands, she noticed the increased color in her cheeks. Her lips were full, plump, and even without lipstick they were a dark rose color.

The brown sleeveless sweater dress accented her shape without clinging. She’d even worn a pair of her strappy, high heels, wondering what Dayton’s reaction to the sexy foot gear would be.

He hadn’t disappointed her this morning. Even after making her climax five times, and coming himself, his blue eyes had shimmered with heat when she’d escorted Bryce Halsey into Dayton’s office.

Smiling at how much she approved of this more sexual person she was becoming, Elf dried her hands, gave a nod to Jodi’s voice as it encouraged her to “go for it!” and left the bathroom.

Her fourth gift was propped on the keyboard of her computer. A simple vellum envelope with “My Elf” scrawled across the front.

Four business card-sized pieces of ecru cardstock tumbled from the letter when she opened it.

My Elf,

I find myself replaying the events following the receipt of your second gift. Each time I envision you before me, my cock warm and

snug between your lips, I cannot help but wish for the same succulent treat again.

I know you enjoyed those moments as much as I.

Enclosed you will find invitations which allow you the opportunity to fulfill my fondest wish at a time you determine.

Though I have only presented you with four invitations, should you require more -- and both my cock and myself pray you do -- more will be provided.

With alacrity.

Yours, most eagerly receptive,

Santa

Picking up the cardstock, Elf examined the invitations. A thin copper border surrounded each of the cards, matching the embossed text. All four bore the same inscription:

Bearer requests the recipient allow her the indulgence of performing one act of fellatio

A smile lifted her lips as she imagined presenting one of the cards to Dayton. She remembered the sound of his enjoyment when she'd suckled his flesh. It didn't take much to bring the details of the encounter to mind, but a part of her hesitated as she held the cards in her hand.

So far, she hadn't needed to be the aggressor in their encounters. She enjoyed knowing Dayton wanted her. He made his desires clear and she could accept or refuse as she saw fit. It made her nervous thinking of advertising her needs to him. Taking the chance he would reject her advances.

Shaking the thoughts away, Elf tucked the invitations inside the note. She returned them to the envelope and slid it away in her purse. Later, she promised herself, she would examine the jumble of emotions later.

Since the note had been on her keyboard, she assumed the meeting with Mr. Halsey had concluded and Dayton was alone in his office. Scooping up the stack of mail requiring a response and the letters needing his signature, Elf moved through the connecting door.

Seated at his drafting table bent over some diagram, Dayton appeared to ignore her entrance. Stepping behind his desk, she straightened the rolled-up blueprints, several pink "While you were out" phone message slips from the previous day, and the wooden cup holding a dozen sharpened pencils and a few pens. Placing the papers in the cleared area, she informed him, "There are some letters you need to sign and a few items in the mail requiring your attention."

Though she didn't hear him move, her body sensed his approach just before he eased in behind her. Squeezing her between him and the desk, his lips slid down her neck. He placed

a rectangle of ecru cardstock on the pile of papers. An invitation similar to the four he'd given her, trimmed and embossed in copper. The words were similar to those on her cards:

Bearer requests the recipient allow him the indulgence of performing one act of cunnilingus

Heart slamming in her chest, Elf picked up the embossed rectangle to read it a second time. Dayton's hands eased beneath her skirt to slide her panties from her hips. While she was still taking in the request, one of his hands roughly shoved aside the stack of papers, rolled-up blueprints, desk blotter, and pencil cup, clearing the top of the desk.

Head spinning, Elf quickly found herself on her back, draped across the polished rosewood, skirt hiked to her hips, and Dayton's lips caressing hers before she'd taken in what had been written on the card.

"Someone..." she tried to protest.

"Lunch is an hour away, Elf, and breakfast was a long time ago. I'd like a little snack." Smiling down at her as he adjusted her legs and sank into his chair, Dayton urged, "Lean back, baby. Let me have a taste."

"You just..." She gasped as his lips trailed fire from her belly button to her clit, sending her hips bowing upward.

"This is just an appetizer, my Elf." Dayton held her gaze as his fingers threaded through the soft curls sheltering his prize. "When we go to lunch I'll have a salad, main course, and maybe a dessert."

"Lunch?" she tried to focus on his words, but the stroke of his fingertips over her clit distracted her.

"Umm hmm..." His eyes dipped to between her thighs as he circled the stiffening nubbin. "I want to bring you up to date on the meeting I just had with Halsey."

A groan slipped free at his ministrations. Recovering, Elf asked, her hands fisting against the polished rosewood, "Why can't we just discuss it here?"

"Lunch. Now, let me enjoy my treat." His eyes rose to capture hers. "I'll probably want a snack before we leave for the shelter." His low growl vibrated against her aroused flesh. "Will you deny me, then?"

She gasped as his fingers spread her nether lips, allowing the stiff hair of his beard to tickle the delicate tissues exposed.

"No," she assured him, her thighs opening wider to accommodate his broad shoulders. Her fingers threaded through the wavy, gray locks, flexing and releasing in time to the suckling of his mouth.

"Good, because I'm sure my cravings will take several servings to satisfy, Elf." His head rose again so he could meet her heavy-lidded gaze. "Several servings," he assured her with a wicked grin, moisture from her body glistening in his beard.

Biting her lip to keep from crying out, Elf focused on breathing while her body tightened in anticipation. Her toes curled inside her shoes as his fingers stroked over a particularly sensitive point.

* * * * *

The atmosphere of the restaurant was subdued, intimate. Tiny candles flickered in red globes on each table while the delicious aromas of hearty Italian food filled the air. Conversation was a muted buzz around the room, interrupted by the click of crystal or the infrequent scrape of silverware against china.

Elf allowed her gaze to float around the room, still not sure how Dayton had convinced her to join him for dinner. The low rumble from her belly answered her unasked question. The amused grin and flash of laughter in her escort's eyes increased the heat flooding her cheeks.

"You really need to eat more at lunch, my Elf," Dayton teased as he sipped the water the waiter had poured before leaving with their dinner and drinks order.

"I would have," Elf hissed, pulling one of the warm, crusty rolls from the linen covered basket. "If I hadn't been..." The heat washed back into her cheeks and down her neck.

"Coming?" he prompted, his face a mask of innocence.

"Distracted," she replied, stuffing a bite of roll into her mouth and chewing furiously.

Reaching across the table, Dayton lifted her water glass and set it closer to his place setting. "Slide over here." His words were a command, not a request.

Not allowing her eyes to stray to the tables nearby, Elf collected her plates and silverware, and slid along the booth's bench seat. The table was in a secluded corner of the room, the high-backed booth enhanced the illusion of privacy just as the low lighting promoted intimate conversation.

When they'd returned from the shelter, and were riding the elevator up to his penthouse, her stomach rumbled its protest at being ignored. Dayton had chuckled beside her, his fingers already slipping the broad leather belt from around his waist. "We'll get changed and hit La Paloma," he'd advised her as the doors slid open on the living room of his apartment.

Stepping through with him on her heels, Elf protested, shaking her head, "I can get something on the way home..."

His hand at her waist had ushered her toward his bedroom while his voice vetoed her suggestion, "There's no reason for you to do so. La Paloma is just around the corner. I'm hungry. You're hungry."

"But, I..."

Refusing hadn't been an option. Just as being stripped of her sexy undergarments hadn't been debatable. Seated beside him, feeling the soft, knit material of her sweater dress against her naked breasts and bottom, Elf squirmed a bit.

"You'll get used to it," Dayton assured her.

"Get used to what?"

"Being nude."

Elf didn't respond since the waiter chose that moment to approach their table and set the dinner salads and drinks in front of them. After administering a quick grind of fresh pepper, he departed.

Even after he left, Elf didn't know what to say. The situation was so foreign to her. Yes, she'd had lunch with Dayton before, but always when it involved work. As had happened earlier in the day when he discussed the changes in the contract with Halsey Unlimited. Keeping her attention on the contents of her salad, it was a moment before she sensed he was staring at her. Turning to meet his gaze, she finished chewing the bite in her mouth and swallowed. "What?"

Pushing the half-finished plate away, Dayton folded his arms on the edge of the table and grinned at her, "I never quite pegged you as shy."

"I'm not." She shrugged, pushing her own plate aside and using the napkin to dab at the corners of her mouth.

"You're not usually so quiet, either." Dayton leaned back as the waiter approached and removed the salad plates. Another server hovered behind him bearing a tray with their entrées. Once they were alone again, he continued, "I expected some kind of conversation..."

"Hello, Elfina." The newcomer stood in front of the table, his gaze on Elf after a cursory look at Dayton.

Elf's expression went taut, her spine straightened, and she offered no smile, "Dean." Her cool eyes turned to the woman beside him, "Lana."

Dayton quickly assessed the other man. Probably six feet, light blond hair, blue eyes, wearing a tweed blazer, khaki slacks, tan shirt, and brown shoes. The woman beside him was overblown. Her blonde hair was artfully tousled. A sleek red dress skimmed her surgically enhanced breasts, slender waist, and curving hips. Matching heels raised her to the same height as her escort, but the expression on her over-made up face and in her brown eyes was one of boredom.

"I'm surprised to see you here."

The way the man was allowing his gaze to drift over Elf's face and body, ignited a spark of anger in Dayton's belly. When his eyes lingered on the curve of Elf's breast, so obviously free of confinement beneath her knit dress, Dayton determined it was time to issue a warning.

Standing, he offered a polite smile even as he stepped closer to Dean, invading the other man's personal space and forcing him to retreat a step. "I'm sorry, we haven't met." His hand was presented and grasped by the younger man.

"I'm sorry, Dayton." Elf performed the introductions. "This is Dean Reynolds and his...friend, Lana DuLaine." Her voice grew chilly. "Dean, Lana, my boss, Dayton Kringle."

"Dean Reynolds? Abrams, Denton, and Reynolds Construction?" Dayton asked. A quick battle over whose grip was strongest was decided when Reynolds flinched and Dayton released his hand.

"Yes. My father is one of the owners," Dean responded coolly.

Resuming his seat, Dayton tugged Elf against his side, sliding his hand over her thigh, and beneath the hem of her skirt. Stroking over the copper silk stockings and up to the lace bands securing them high on her thighs, he noted the heat entering Reynolds's eyes and the flare of his nostrils. Keeping his tone conversational Dayton nodded, "I've heard it's an old-fashioned firm." His tone implied old-fashioned didn't necessarily mean good.

Dean's cheeks flushed; behind him the maitre d' cleared his throat. Offering a tight smile, Dean said, "We'll let you get back to your dinner. Mr. Kringle." His eyes shot daggers at Elf. "Elfina."

His Elf merely nodded back, her hand gripping her fork as she stirred the penne pasta into the sauce on her plate. Waiting until the other couple had moved away, he sampled his dinner, never removing his hand from beneath the hem of her dress. "I take it Mr. Reynolds is an old friend?" he asked after several tense moments of silence.

Against the gentle caress of his fingers along the inside of her thighs and the back of her left knee, he felt Elf begin to relax. At his question, she shook her head. "No." She finished chewing the bite of pasta. "Not a friend anymore."

"The woman with him?" He knew instinctively Reynolds had made the mistake of stepping out on Elf. As his fingers skimmed the warm curve of her thigh, edging closer to the damp curls he knew were waiting for him, he wondered how the man could be so stupid.

Elf shook her head. "No, but one just like her." A reluctant smile curved her lips as she met his gaze. "In fact, I was surprised the maitre d' didn't recognize me, considering I dumped a whole plate of lasagna in Dean's lap when I caught him here."

His chuckle spilled out as he envisioned just how his Elf would have dealt with a man cheating on her. "And the other woman? What did she get bathed in?"

Elf set down her fork and wiped her mouth with her napkin. "It would have been lobster bisque, but my friend Jodi, and my mom, who were with me when I saw him, said she was TVTH."

"TVTH?"

“Too vacuous to hate.” Elf had to grin at his amusement. Even as he laughed at her retelling of the incident, she had to stifle a gasp as his fingers dipped between her labia and circled her clit.

The humor lit his gaze, but a cunning smile curved his lips. Leaning close, his breath whispering across her cheek even as he squeezed her sensitive knob between his forefinger and middle finger, he commanded, “Move to the edge of the seat, Elf, and pull your skirt up.”

She didn’t hesitate. As discreetly as possible she edged to the end of the banquette, shifting her skirt to her hips. The warm leather adhered to her skin, making little squeaking noises as she rocked against his strumming fingers.

“Stay still, my Elf.” His voice remained low. Setting aside their meals, he motioned the waiter over even as his fingers smoothed open her pussy and traced the channel dripping with her arousal.

Elf kept her hands folded on the table, her expression, she hoped, remained bland as she fought the need to push against the teasing caress of his fingertips. Calloused skin moved around the protruding flesh of her clit, before dipping into her wet sheath and pressing deep. With her attention split between the need his touch sent twisting through her belly and the muted conversation with the waiter, Elf wasn’t surprised at the curious glance the server shot her before he moved away from the table. Her hands moved to grip the table as his strokes increased their pace, driving her closer to orgasm.

Body trembling with the need to move, her teeth tugged at her bottom lip, and her eyes squeezed shut. The warm brush of his breath against her throat nearly broke her concentration. The heat emanating from his broad shoulders engulfed her like a blanket, spreading over her, surrounding her in his warmth.

“You feel it, my Elf?” His words drifted across her cheek, the scrape of his beard tickled her jaw.

She didn’t trust herself to speak without crying out, so she nodded, a jerky little gesture that earned a chuckle.

“You may not climax until I give you permission.” His voice brooked no argument.

Heavy lids lifted over her eyes to try focusing on his. A soft whimper escaped her lips.

“Look over my shoulder.” His lips nibbled at the sensitive spot just behind her left ear.

Elf tipped her head to give him better access and did as he told her. Scanning the occupants of the dining room, she wasn’t shocked to notice Dean and Lana had been seated within view of their table. In fact, Dean’s gaze seemed intent on watching them.

Turning her own lips to Dayton’s ear, she nipped at the lobe, and begged, “Please.”

Fabric was pressed into her hand as the pace was again increased. The thrust and retreat of his fingers rasped over one particular spot that threatened to break her control.

“When you come, press this close,” he directed. “You’re so wet, you’re sure to ruin that pretty dress of yours if you don’t use something to catch your juices -- much as I regret wasting such good honey.”

Sliding her hand beneath the table, Elf held the napkin under his stroking hand.

“Now, let him see you.” He ordered, his hand moving faster, thumb circling and pressing her clit. “Let him see you come and know who you belong to.”

Elf did. She waited until Dean’s gaze was locked with hers and allowed her climax to course through her. Shuddering deep inside, she felt her face flush, her breasts swell, and her vagina grip and contract around Dayton’s touch, all the while holding Dean’s eyes across the room. A throaty laugh slipped free as she recognized the stunned comprehension on her ex’s face just before she melted into Dayton’s arms.

His hand cradled hers as he held the napkin against her quivering pussy, stemming the liquid heat of her orgasm. Even when the waiter returned the boxed remains of their dinner, and set a single slice of cheesecake on the table, he didn’t release her.

The stamp of his ownership firmly marked her as his possession to anyone caring to look into the darkened corner of the room. Elf couldn’t argue it, and, more importantly, she didn’t want to.

Chapter Eight

Friday after lunch Elf returned from running a document down to the legal department to find her newest present set square in the middle of her desk blotter. The fifth note rolled up inside the slim black jewelry case along with his unique gift read:

My Elf,

I decided to keep with tradition -- in a manner. I gift you with five gold rings, but these are not rings to be worn on your fingers or toes.

When I imagined you wearing nothing but my rings, I knew the most fitting place of adornment was your lovely breasts -- so I crafted this nipple chain for you.

Each day, when I watch you so neatly dressed, your clothes so prim and demure, I want to know that beneath a single layer of silk or cotton, Elf, your nipples are tight and aching for my attention, just waiting for me to suck them, pinch them.

Seven days remain, Elf.

S

Elf gazed down at the contents of the case. Five solid gold rings. The largest could easily fit over her thumb. On either side of it was a ring large enough to encircle her middle finger then the last two on the outside were just big enough to slip over her little finger. Fine gold chains no more than six inches long stretched from the smallest rings to two loops of clear rubber with small gold sliders. Her breasts tingled in anticipation of the loops being secured to her taut nipples. The sustained pressure would be arousing enough. The thought of Dayton watching her, his knowing blue gaze lingering over the fabric hiding his gift, made her pussy wet and her breath catch.

The slide of two calloused palms over her shoulders startled her from her thoughts. They didn't stop until the buttons of her blouse were opened to the waistband of her skirt. The silk cups of her burgundy bra were pushed beneath the aching flesh they covered.

Elf didn't bother protesting, the office was quiet and knowing Dayton as she did, the likelihood of their being interrupted was minimal. She watched as he cupped her breasts in his large hands, his thumbs rubbing her nipples into firm peaks.

"Do you like my rings?" His lips traced the vein pulsing along her throat while his fingers continued to arouse the tips of her breasts.

"Ummm," Elf moaned her appreciation of his caresses, "yes, they're very...unique."

His breath huffed against her cheek as he chuckled at her response. Dropping his hands to the arms of the chair, he spun her around to face him. Kneeling between her thighs, Dayton leaned forward, traced one puckered bud first with his fingertip, then with his tongue, before pulling it into his mouth to suckle delicately upon it. His lips caressed her breast and his tongue laved the taut peak for several minutes before releasing it and capturing its twin.

Her attention centered on Dayton's ministrations, Elf dropped the jewelry case into her lap in order to bury her trembling fingers in the thick gray waves hovering over her chest. Mimicking his actions, Elf stroked Dayton's hair before digging her fingers through it to knead his scalp with the same rhythm he used on her breasts.

Elf leaned her head back and kept her eyes closed to better enjoy Dayton's tending. Each stroke, every pull on her nipple seemed directly connected to her pussy. With every pulse, Elf felt her pussy grow moist, preparing itself for the stroke of his cock, which wouldn't materialize until Christmas Eve. If she was lucky, he'd present her with another invitation like he had after dinner last night, and again this morning just before ten.

When his lips left her, she languidly opened her eyes and looked down. From her lap, Dayton collected the golden chain and rings. With his eyes focused upon the wet, rose-colored crests, he slipped first one loop, then the other, over each nipple and fastened them snugly in place. Her fingers clenched within his gray curls as the pain zinged from her tits to her pussy, causing her sheath to spasm and spill her juices into the burgundy-colored thong she wore.

"Liked that?" Dayton whispered as he eased the cups of her bra back into place and began sliding the buttons of her blouse back through their holes. A small smile played across his lips as Elf nodded. "Just seven more days, my Elf." He petted the raised peaks of her breasts through her blouse. "Come into work tomorrow morning," he whispered.

The following day was Saturday, Elf absently reminded herself as she debated just spending the night in her office on the off-chance Dayton might give in to his desire. Having worked beside the man as long as she had, Elf knew nothing outside a bomb blast or natural disaster could move him from any planned action. Since his seduction of her had definitely

been plotted out, nothing outside of his original designs would cause him to change those plans.

He waited for her to nod, which she did slowly. After stroking her distended nipple through her blouse he returned to his office. At the threshold, he stopped. Turning to face her again, he added, "Bring the other chains with you." He didn't wait for her reply before entering his office and closing the door.

The images conjured by that simple command had her creaming her panties a second time. Walking on wobbly legs, she made it to the restroom to wipe away the moisture between her thighs. If this kept up, Elf reasoned glancing around at the partitioned stalls and granite sinks, she might as well set up her office in here since this was where she seemed to be spending most of her time lately.

* * * * *

The stroke of warm, calloused fingers over her breast brought Elf to her senses. Through the skylight above the bed she spied the shine of several stars. They had appeared so much closer just a few moments ago. Her fuzzy mind was slow to correct her imagination. The lights that had exploded across her vision had nothing to do with the heavens. They possessed a more earthly connection.

The bed shifted beneath her, making her aware Dayton had risen to get a warm damp washcloth to bathe between her legs. Having had him perform the task every morning and evening for the last three days, Elf was afraid she was becoming a bit spoiled by his pampering.

"I'd forgotten you visit your mother most weekends," Dayton stated as he reclined next to her on the bed. He stroked the warm fabric along the wet crease he'd paid so much attention to, then over her damp thighs. Satisfied, he shifted to toss the towel toward his bathroom.

It amazed her how tired she always was after he redressed her each night. "Yes. She and Gerry live about forty miles outside of town."

"And you were going to be working on the Christmas party committee tomorrow afternoon, right?" His blue eyes watched her, drifting down her body.

Though he lay propped on his right elbow, his left hand traced the softening crowns of her breasts, skimmed the gleaming gold and silver links, and the gentle curve of her belly. It registered in the back of her mind that she seemed to find nothing unusual about lying naked beside her boss while he still wore his jeans and an unbuttoned blue and black flannel shirt.

"Yes, I'm meeting with the committee around two to make sure all the decorations, centerpieces, tables, et cetera, have been taken care of." She watched him closely as she added, "Then we have the homeless shelter we need to visit from three to five thirty."

"Following which, we have to present ourselves at the party."

Nodding, Elf took a deep breath before asking, "Where do you usually spend the holidays?"

Dayton shrugged, "Here and there."

"What about your family? Don't you spend any time with them?"

His face went stony. Leaning down he touched his forehead to hers. "I'm feeling a bit selfish, requesting you come visit me in the morning tomorrow."

Another evasion, Elf tried again. "Do they live close by?"

He ignored her question. "I can spare you for the morning if you'd rather be with your parents than here."

Shot down again. Tentatively, Elf raised her hand to stroke the angle of his jaw, threading through the soft gray whiskers. She'd worry about getting information out of him later. Instead she let him know his request for her company the following morning wasn't intruding on any previous plans. "I won't be going to see my mom and Gerry until after the beginning of the year."

Pulling back, Dayton met her gaze, his eyes searching. "Did you have a fight?"

"No, I talked to my mom last night..."

"After you left here?"

Elf grinned and nodded, remembering her mother's comments. "Yes. She told me she's glad I didn't come dragging into the house sounding like I did last night when I was in high school."

Dayton pulled away, his expression a mixture of disbelief and affront. "You told her you'd been with me?"

Moving slowly, Elf sat up, perplexed at his attitude. "It was kind of obvious, don't you think? I've only been participating in your Santa visits for the last three seasons."

"Yes, but that doesn't mean she would have guessed about us."

Nodding, she informed him, "My mother knows I'll be spending the holidays with you, if that's what you're asking." She was still a little surprised that she'd told her mother what her plans were, but keeping secrets from her mom had never been part of their relationship. Eleanor Jeffries-Lincoln didn't pass judgment.

Apparently, Dayton didn't see it that way, Elf decided.

"For God's sake, Elf, why would you tell her about your personal life?" Rising he strode away from the bed, hands scraping through his gray hair. "My personal life."

Reaching for her blouse, Elf ignored the hand he reached out in an aborted attempt to stop her dressing. "She's my mom, Dayton. I've never kept secrets from my mom."

"And she's so pissed you're going to spend the holidays fucking your boss she's stopped talking to you!" he snapped, his blue eyes glaring.

Elf gaped at him, stunned at his assumption. "No."

Moving forward, Dayton fastened the tiny pearl buttons of her blouse before holding her skirt for her to step into. "Don't lie to me, damn it. I'll bet she puckered up like she'd just sucked a lemon the minute you told her..."

Her laughter stopped him mid-comment, "Do you even remember my mom?" She finished closing the clasp on her skirt's waistband as she watched him shake his head. Taking pity on him, she reminded him, "She's the reason you now offer free cab rides home from the company Christmas parties for those who imbibe too much."

"She's the one who spiked the eggnog with rum year before last?"

Elf nodded. "In February you made me promise there wouldn't be any Jell-O or pudding among the desserts this year. You also wanted to make sure there wouldn't be any cans of whipping cream sitting on the tables."

Dayton dropped onto the bed his stunned eyes blinking as he finally grasped who Elf's mother was. "She talked Preston's wife into seducing her husband in the office by letting him paint her in chocolate pudding and whipping cream? On Valentine's Day?"

"Yeah." Elf nodded. "Not many corporate accountants get caught licking dessert off their wife in the boardroom." Her smile was wide and wicked. "You might expect him to get caught with a secretary, but not his wife."

"Not to mention it was your mother who suggested the person who could down the most vodka Jell-O shots should decide the décor in my office."

Sliding her feet into her heels, Elf laughed. "You're only angry because I beat you fair and square."

"You never told me you could down fifteen of 'em without any effect," he grumbled.

"My mom taught me well."

"So, I guess getting you drunk in order to redecorate isn't likely to work, huh?"

"Nope." Picking up her purse she shrugged. "Besides, you have to admit the furniture I picked is much more comfortable than any of the items you were looking at."

Shaking his head, Dayton snapped the fasteners on his flannel shirt and rose to follow Elf out of the bedroom. "I guess I spoke too soon about your mom."

"Yup."

"So..." He slipped his arm around her waist as they entered the elevator. "I take it she isn't upset with our arrangement?"

"Nope."

"So, why won't you be seeing her over the holidays?"

"A couple they know had to give up tickets to a Bahaman cruise, so Mom and Gerry were able to get the tickets cheap." She began digging in her purse for her car keys. "I was thrilled for them when she told me."

"You don't want to spend the holidays with them?"

"No, I love spending Christmas with Mom. She's usually dancing around at five in the morning waiting for me and Gerry to wake up so we can open presents."

"So, why be glad they're going to be gone?"

"Because, when they got married," Elf paused to glare down into the dark confines of her bag. "Mom assured Gerry she didn't need a honeymoon, although she's always wanted to take a cruise." A quick jiggle and she could feel the edge of one of her keys against a fingertip. "I think Gerry bought the tickets from their friends before he even talked to Mom just so he could surprise her."

"Aha!" she cried brandishing her keys. Once she had them in her hand, she added, "Their flight left last night for Florida. They'll be back around the second or third of January."

At her car, Dayton took her keys to deactivate the car alarm and unlock the door before handing them back to her. Pulling the door open he leaned down to brush his lips over hers. "Did she give you any motherly advice about how to handle me?"

She nodded. "She said to close my eyes and think of England."

His calloused palm slapped her bottom lightly making Elf jump. The tingle zinging through her already over-stimulated sex made her gasp.

His blue eyes heated. "Liked that, huh?"

Shaking her head she stammered, "N-no."

"Liar." His teeth nipped her bottom lip.

"When?"

He grinned, "Just now and when I asked what your mom said."

"Maybe." She eased into the car and cranked the engine. "But if you really want to know what advice she gave me, ask her yourself when she gets back to town." Lowering the window, she closed the door and smiled up at him. "Mom, isn't shy, she'll tell you exactly what she told me."

He kissed her again. "I don't know. I might be afraid of what she has to say."

Chapter Nine

The sun hadn't crested the horizon when Elf pulled into the underground parking lot at Kringle Toys. The building was quiet. The only cars in the parking lot belonged to the staff of the store. She eased into her assigned space, slid from behind the wheel after silencing the engine, and moved toward the elevator.

It was barely six in the morning. She reasoned it would be at least another hour before Dayton would be up, let alone in the office. Using her passkey, she entered the building and headed for the interior elevator, waving a quick greeting to Eldon, the night security guard.

She'd dressed casually in jeans and a fleece pullover. The weather had taken a turn during the night. According to the radio, temperatures weren't supposed to climb above fifty degrees for the entire weekend. By Monday though, it was supposed to get back into the midsixties.

On the elevator ride up, she absently rubbed at the rectangle of cardstock she'd hastily shoved into her back pocket. Blind to her reflection in the chrome doors, Elf focused her attention on the changing numbers on the display. By coming in this early, she hoped to beat Dayton into the office, thus giving her time to build up her confidence. Her breasts tingled at the anticipated pleasure of the nipple chain he'd gifted her the day before.

He'd only left it on for a few hours, calling her into his office every twenty minutes or so to tug at the largest ring. A ripple of sensation, from her nipples to her womb, accompanied each pull. When he'd released the sliders, the influx of blood to her taut peaks nearly sent her to her knees. He'd caught her with a soft chuckle, finding pleasure in her uncontrolled response to the rush of sensation. The feeling was so intense, she didn't realize she had climaxed until Dayton had carried her into the bathroom adjoining his office and propped her limp body on the marble basin.

Kneeling before her, he'd peeled her panties off and slurped at the liquid pleasure coating her thighs and spilling from her pussy. A second orgasm slammed through her body as he'd thrust his tongue deep, lapping up the flavor of her ecstasy.

Her legs were wobbly with the memory as she crossed the hall and opened the glass doors of the receptionist's lobby. Her own office was beyond the semi-circular desk. Sliding the door closed behind her, she closed her eyes and breathed deep. Usually the scent of sandalwood and cedar from the bowl on her desk eased her nerves, but the smell of warm male flesh and the tang of Dayton's distinctive woodsy scent scrambled her thoughts.

He was waiting for her, dressed in his regular uniform of jeans and flannel. A blue velvet bag dangled from the fingertips of his left hand as he leaned in the doorway separating his office from hers. Crossing the floor toward him, Elf was not sure what to expect.

A slight smile lifted his lips as he leaned down to settle his lips over hers. The stroke of his whiskers enhanced the caress of his kiss. With just a bit of pressure his tongue eased into her mouth to tease her, stroking and twining with hers. Only their mouths touched. When she attempted to press against him, Dayton pulled back and whispered, "Follow me."

She followed him into his office, onto his private elevator, and up to his apartment without another word being exchanged.

Still silent, Dayton led Elf into his bedroom. Once there, he relaxed into the wingback chair beside the bed. The faint glow of sunrise coming through the floor to ceiling window behind him hid his face in shadows. He lounged there, his legs spread, eyes focused on her. Her mind centered on Dayton and what could possibly be concealed in the bag dangling from his fingertips, Elf fought the urge to more closely examine her surroundings.

She did notice the custom made bed, much larger than a king-size, with four solid wooden posts rising toward the arched ceiling. Having spent the last three mornings sprawled across its expanse, she was surprised she'd never registered its size. Something was carved into each post as well as the rails and the footboard but she couldn't make out what. The headboard was a series of intricately twisted and curved lengths of wrought iron.

"Strip."

His gruff order made her wet. Turning away from the bed to face him, Elf enjoyed being the center of Dayton's attention. As he lounged in the chair, his blue eyes wandering over her body, her fingers slipped the buttons on her jeans free as she toed off her sneakers and kicked them to the side. Sliding her jeans down and off, Elf kept her gaze bound to his. Baring herself to him, first by removing her jeans, then by tugging her soft fleece pullover off, she could feel her body readying itself for his attentions.

Outside the window, the sun had broken free of the horizon, its reddish gold glow cloaking the room with the colors of fire. The silver of his hair changed to flame. For just those few moments between dawn and morning, her Santa could have easily been mistaken for a devil. By the time she stood before him naked, Elf could see Dayton's cock was fully

erect behind the confines of his jeans. His right hand stroked the cloth-covered bulge as he watched her set aside her clothing.

“Get your gifts,” he commanded while holding out the blue velvet bag.

Instead of taking the bag, Elf moved first to her purse and removed the chains that matched her collar and belly chain. Then she strode to the tall mirrored wardrobe facing the huge four poster bed and opened it. Kneeling, she opened her wooden chest, collected the cuffs and nipple chain from within, and closed the chest and wardrobe. She returned to Dayton and held the cuffs out for him to fasten around her wrists. The gold rings and chains, clutched in her fist, absorbed the heat from her body.

Once bound, Elf offered the chains to him. Disappointment whispered through her when Dayton set them on the nightstand. She accepted the pouch and eased it open. The letter was drawn out first, before she set aside the bag and its contents. As she began to read, Dayton’s voice whispered the same words into the dim room.

My Elf,

As I lie in bed and imagine all the delectable ways I might bind you for my enjoyment, I am reminded that six is the number we have reached. Therefore, my gift comes in six parts -- four fours, a six, and a twelve -- although the last is a treat I shall hold in reserve until Christmas Day when Santa will most enjoy the unwrapping of this particular gift.

We have reached the midpoint of our adventure, My Elf. With it my cravings for you swell just as my cock does when in your presence.

Yours, most aroused,

Santa

Heart pounding in her ears, Elf refolded the note and tucked it into the velvet bag. One by one she pulled each of the six items from inside the supple fabric. Four lengths of silver satin rope with silver clasps on each end, about four feet long. Next she pulled out a six-foot length of the same silver satin rope with the same shiny metal clasps. The last length of silver satin rope was without clasps and Elf figured it measured twelve feet in length, just like the note stated.

“Do you remember when I gave you the bracelets?” Dayton rose from the chair to tower over her.

Looking up, Elf nodded. “Yes.”

“I asked you if the word ‘bondage’ frightened you.”

Elf felt a tingle shiver down her spine just as she had four days earlier. The grin lifting his lips made her assume he had noticed her body’s reaction.

"Remember the fantasy I whispered to you?" he asked as he gathered the two longest lengths of rope, coiled them, and returned them to the velvet bag.

Again, Elf could only nod.

His blue eyes gleamed, darker than usual. She watched as Dayton picked up the remaining four lengths of rope and proceeded to circle the bed. As she followed his progress, he took his time wrapping an end of each rope around the posts before securing the clasp through the rings embedded in the wood.

After securing the last one, he returned to stand over her. "I promised if there was anything you didn't want, all you had to say was no."

Elf nodded. She didn't trust her voice to remain steady.

"Will you allow me to restrain you?" His fingers stroked her cheek.

"Ye --" Her voice cracked. Clearing it, she tried again. "Yes."

"Lie down on your belly, facing the wardrobe."

A quick glance over her shoulder produced a flush to her cheeks. She could feel the heat steal down her throat. Meeting his eyes, she wondered if his directions were made to make sure she could watch herself with him.

The grin lifting one side of his mouth assured her he knew exactly what she was thinking. "Mm hmm." He nodded. "I want you to watch us."

Scooting to the center of the bed, she shivered in anticipation, her body hyper aware of the nubby fabric stroking her flesh.

"On your belly, baby," Dayton whispered as he moved to straddle her hips.

Lying on her stomach, Elf's eyes were drawn to the mirrored doors ten feet away. She watched Dayton's image loop the ropes around the footboard posts again before fastening the silver clasps to the chains on her bracelets.

She continued to watch him as he eased from her hips. Dayton opened one of the nightstand drawers and withdrew two pieces of black fabric. The rasp of Velcro was loud in the still room. The feel of the bindings around her ankles had her legs trembling. Dayton's warm calloused hands soothed her as the clasps snapped into place on the silver D-rings attached to the bands. Her body lay belly down, spread-eagle over the silk duvet.

Easing back over her, Dayton leaned down to whisper in her ear, "I bought these for you, my Elf, because hammered silver would create bruises." Meeting her gaze in the mirror his lips lifted in a seductive taunt, "especially when you start pulling."

Sliding from the bed, he began stripping. In the mirror, Elf enjoyed the slow shedding of garments. She'd seen his bare chest before. Broad-muscled shoulders, well-defined pectorals, and eight-pack abs were tanned a deep bronze. His narrow waist and hips she'd admired while he was clothed, but when he slipped his jeans and boxer briefs off, Elf had to stifle her gasp. The same bronze tan covered his entire body. Then there was the thick length

of his cock. Stiff with arousal and nearly reaching his navel, the plum-sized tip glistened with precum and bobbed high and proud as he tossed his pants and underwear into the chair.

"Vixen is our safe word." He told her as he moved onto the mattress and knelt between her splayed thighs.

"What?" She tried to see him over her shoulder.

He turned her head to face the mirror as he explained, "Our safe word will be 'vixen.'" When she continued to look puzzled, he added, "If you become uncomfortable with anything I do to you, all you have to do is say the safe word."

"O-okay," she stammered as his hands began to caress her back. She didn't need to look at the mirror to know Dayton was settling into the space between her thighs to feed from her pussy.

His breath caressed the rounded curve of her bottom while his fingers stroked the sensitive flesh between her legs. In the mirror, she watched her hips rise to meet his touch, her knees braced as much as her restraints would allow. The expression on his face was so intent, it surprised her. She'd never seen him look so focused, not even with one of his pet projects. He acted as if the exploration of her flesh, the stroking of her skin, were a matter of national importance. His attentions, his single-minded interest, thrilled her heart. It gave her hope. Perhaps there could be more to their relationship than just sex.

She looked so beautiful beneath him. Dayton stroked the pale skin glowing like ivory against the jade green duvet. The design of the bed's footboard allowed her an unobstructed view of the mirrored wardrobe. He wanted her to watch. To see what drew him to her. Experience the glow of her skin as she neared climax. How the flush tinting her cheeks colored her breasts and perfectly matched the rosy hue of her pussy when orgasm faded.

Sliding a pillow beneath her hips as they rose to his touch, he elevated her bottom, bringing the scent of her arousal closer. Dipping between the petals, he drew her cream out to lubricate the press of his finger on her clit.

Her instant response to his touch aroused him more than any past lover. His proximity to her seemed to have the same stimulating effect on her that hers had on him. In the last eighteen months, he'd lost track of the number of times he'd had to hide his hard-on by turning away or scooting his chair beneath his desk when she'd stepped into the room.

The opportunity to explore her body, to indulge his desire to slide his fingers over every inch of her flesh these last four days, had gone a long way toward preserving his sanity. The fact she appeared to be a born submissive only heightened his cravings. His need to test her boundaries pressed at his restraint. He anticipated exploring his sexual limits with her. Even now, he found himself fighting the urge to leap ahead in his introduction of the more exotic practices.

When he'd originally pictured this scenario, he'd expected to lie on his back. Now, with his unruly cock ready to explode, he chose to reign in his body by remaining on his belly. Keeping his penis pressed into the bedding, he laved her glistening nether lips, holding her hips still as she arched beneath his touch.

Against his shoulders, he could feel her thighs quiver with building excitement. Her warm channel pulsed around his tongue. It spilled her juices into his mouth. Each swallow fed his growing addiction to her flavor. Gasps and cries whispered past her lips, filling the silence of his bedroom as she climbed closer to climax.

Just as she began to peak, he pulled away. Rising to his knees he planted a firm slap to one ivory buttock. Beneath him, she stiffened and cried out, more in surprise it seemed, than any real pain. He slapped the other rounded cheek as she swiveled her head to gaze over her shoulder at him in surprise. Cupping her mound in his left hand, he smiled at the amount of cream spilling forth when he spanked her bottom a third, then a fourth time. "Like that?" he taunted.

When she tried to shake her head, he swatted her again, twice. "Liar." Lifting her hips, he pressed his cock between the swollen petals, bathing it in her arousal. Sliding forward and back through the wetness, he continued to apply firm strikes against her bottom. First the left, then the right, until the rounded cheeks bloomed a bright pink.

On the edge of coming, Elf pressed upward into his paddling, pumping her hips in an attempt to slide his cock into her empty sex. Dayton stopped her actions by pressing down on her, forcing her to still. Pushing his hands beneath her he grasped her taut nipples between thumb and forefinger of each hand and squeezed. Hard.

Elf climaxed. The pulse of her hips and the flutter of her labia over his swollen penis set off his own orgasm. With a muffled curse he coated her pussy and the pillow with his seed. Visions of shooting deep inside her, flooding her with his semen, had him shaking his head in denial.

No. A week. That was all he needed from Elf. A week to get his obsession behind him. To sate himself on her tender body and relieve this desperate need to fuck her that distracted him from what was important.

Elf was cognizant of the restraints being released as the last pulses of her climax shuddered through her. The pillow was removed from beneath her and the ankle cuffs were slipped off before she'd fully regained awareness. Eyes closed, she felt the bed shift as Dayton moved off. From the bathroom, the rush of water signaled his preparations for bathing her. Rolling onto her back, she let her fingers drift to the moisture coating her pussy. Lifting her fingertips to her face, she drew in the scent of Dayton's climax before flicking her tongue out to lick away the flavor.

A muffled curse had her opening her eyes as her fingers returned to stir through the fast-drying pool on her stomach. Dayton's eyes burned as he approached the bed, the damp

washcloth fisted in his left hand as he watched her return her coated fingers to her mouth. As she watched, his cock swelled, making her body ache to have him fill her.

The feelings he engendered within her, the needs he drew from her, frightened and confused her, while thrilling her at the same time. Seeing him approach the bed -- his pace slow, deliberate -- only tightened the knot of arousal in her core. She craved the salty-sweet taste of his flesh, the scent of his skin, and the flavor of his seed.

The mattress shifted beneath his weight as he knelt before her, between her legs. Sitting up, Elf leaned forward, dragging in the smell of his skin as her face pressed against his belly. The heat of his cock on her cheek made her smile before she turned her attention to it. The muscles in his thighs tensed beneath her hands as she stroked her tongue up the length of his arousal, then swirled it around the tip, bathing away the pearls leaking from the slit.

Down, then up, she kissed and licked the pulsing vein on the underside of his penis before moving to the heated sac beneath. Fingers threaded through her hair and tightened, drawing her away from his flesh. Blue fire stared down at her.

"Quit fucking around, my Elf," he growled. One hand holding her still, he used the other to guide his cock to her parted lips.

Holding his gaze, she opened her mouth, bathed her lips with her tongue, and drew the crown of his penis inside.

Their groans mingled in the quiet confines of the room. Whispered curses and encouragements mingled with the moist sounds of her mouth sucking him. The primal scent of arousal, both his and hers, saturated the room as they raced toward climax. The thrust and retreat of his length within her mouth increased with the curses and demands slipping from his lips.

"Take it, baby." His guttural command floated past her ears as his fist tightened in her hair.

The sting of her hair being pulled only heightened her passions. Fingers scraping over his thighs as she fought to take more of his length, Elf marveled at how his demands aroused her more than any of the men she'd ever been involved with.

As his pleasure exploded over her tongue and spilled down her throat, it finally made sense why she'd never bothered having sex. The control had always been on her side. The decisions were hers to make and none of her previous companions had ever pushed for more.

With Dayton, he held the reins. Her body was his to command and control. And that excited her. More than anything ever had before.

Swallowing the last of his climax, Elf carefully bathed his length with her tongue, before easing away from him.

Amusement glittered in Dayton's blue eyes as his fingers smoothed the mussed strands of her hair. "Well done, my Elf," he murmured, leaning forward to press a kiss to her lips.

His praise sent a shiver of pleasure through her.

* * * * *

Bing Crosby's voice sang of a white Christmas as Elf mingled with the different employees and guests in the gaily decorated cafeteria. When the new factory had been built, a spacious eatery had been provided to feed the factory, store, and office workers.

The landscaped grounds were visible through the two-story-high windows, making up two sides of the room. Each of the tables, both inside and out, had been set with red linen tablecloths, poinsettia centerpieces, and gold-edged, red-and-white-striped linen napkins. A local restaurant had been hired to cater the buffet-style dinner, and a live band made up of several employees or their family members was just beginning to set up on the stage at the far end of the room. Several tables had been cleared away earlier in the afternoon to make room for dancing.

Throughout the evening, she'd received curious looks from different employees. Dayton staying beside her, introducing her to business associates and their wives, may have been one reason for the looks. Another may have been the way he seemed to constantly touch her. A stroke to her shoulder, his arm around her waist, or a whisper at her ear, every caress noted by the employees of Kringle Toys.

She enjoyed his attention, and in her heart she hoped it was a sign his interest might last beyond the New Year. The protests and warnings her common sense kept trying to bring to her attention were easily ignored because her heart truly did not want to recognize the eventual end to her dreams.

"You might as well get used to it," Mattie Halsey chuckled beside her.

"Get used to what?" Dayton had introduced her to the woman earlier in the evening. He'd been pulled aside moments earlier by Bryce, Mattie's husband, leaving Elf alone for the first time this evening.

Mattie's chocolate eyes gleamed with amusement as she sipped her drink, "Receiving the evil eye from the single women." A few strands of silver were threaded through her curly chestnut hair, pulled into a loose knot and secured with several jeweled pins. A chain of delicate platinum links encircled her neck with matching bracelets on each wrist. Her amber colored gown highlighted the light olive tone of her skin, while the high waist and long flowing sleeves draped her slender frame without trying to hide her growing pregnancy. As she watched Elf, Mattie's elegant fingers stroked the curve of her belly.

Elf had noticed some decidedly angry glares from several female employees and guests. "Why?" She'd suspected the glares were connected to Dayton's interest in her, but she wasn't sure.

"You've landed a very popular fish." Mattie nodded toward where her husband and another man were laughing with Dayton. "Ever since he put his business on the map, there have been women crawling from the woodwork trying to get to him."

Elf had to agree. During her three years, she had been present when women from various levels of business had attempted to gain Dayton's attentions. "We're not..." she tried to deny.

"Sweetheart..." Mattie smiled, linking her arm with Elf's and directing her to a nearby table. "Let's sit down." She patted her belly. "The tumbling trio is getting a bit restless." Once seated, she stated, "Your Mr. Kringle has been tied up in so many knots about you for the last eight months, Bryce has laughed his ass off."

"Your husband? But how did he..."

"Bryce is very observant." She looked lovingly over at her husband and received a similar look back. "Most pirates are. And I married a very talented pirate. He's watched the way Dayton pays attention to you every time they've had a meeting." Taking another sip of her drink, Mattie chuckled.

Feeling a bit uneasy at discussing her personal life with a woman she'd just met, Elf shook her head, "I really don't think..."

Mattie seemed to read her reluctance to talk about her relationship. "I'm sorry if I'm being too forward, but I thought, since I've been in the same situation myself..."

"Situation?"

"In love with the boss and he only wants sex."

Mattie's matter of fact tone cut through some of the resistance Elf felt. "I didn't say..."

Pushing her empty glass aside, Mattie leaned forward. "You didn't have to say anything, Elfina. It's very subtle, and only someone who knows how to hide the feelings can spot them in someone else." Patting Elf's clasped hands as they rested on the table, she added, "I just wanted to talk to you. That's why I sicced Bryce on Dayton, so I could get you off to yourself for a little bit."

Elf remained quiet, not sure if she liked knowing this woman was aware of her feelings. "Why?"

"I wanted to let you know it's worth it."

"What is?"

"Loving Dayton." Mattie's gaze drifted back to her husband, the smile on her lips soft with memory. "At first it's a little frightening to share yourself and think it's only your body he wants." Bringing her gaze back to Elf her smile grew wider. "But it changes."

"Were you and he..." Elf didn't think she wanted to know if Mattie had been a lover of Dayton's.

Mattie laughed and shook her head, "No. I only know him through the business he and Bryce conduct." Rubbing her belly, she explained. "I was Bryce's admin until two years ago when I got pregnant with our twins. He does a lot of his work from home now. Richard does most of the day-to-day work for Halsey's."

"Then how..."

"Bryce." As she said his name a new wine glass of golden liquid was set in front of her as her husband eased into the chair beside her.

When Mattie sipped the drink, Elf couldn't keep from asking, "Should you be drinking champagne in your condition?"

Bryce chuckled, "Lawrence is on a strict diet of ginger ale with these guys." He stroked his wife's belly. Leaning forward, he placed a kiss on Mattie's throat just above her necklace.

"Lawrence?" Elf was confused.

Dayton took a seat next to her, explaining with a low chuckle, "Bryce always calls his wife by her maiden name."

"I spent eight years calling her Lawrence."

"Oh, and seven years of marriage and six children, plus three more on the way, doesn't count," Mattie teased, leaning into her husband's touch as he continued to stroke her stomach.

"Maybe we'll discuss it after eight years of marriage," he teased. "But right now, I'd like to dance with the prettiest lady here."

"She's taken." Dayton grinned, wrapping his arm around Elf's shoulders and tugging her close to his side.

"No offense..." Bryce smiled at Elf, his green eyes glittering with humor, "yours is cute, but my wife's got her beat." Tugging Mattie to her feet, he led her away from the table and onto the dance floor.

"Did she say 'six children'?"

Dayton nodded. "Bryce complains he'll be broke by the time he puts all of their kids through college." Sliding his hand from her shoulder, he smoothed the ruby silk covering her back. "Less than a year after they married, Mattie gave birth to a set of triplets. Two boys and a girl. They'll be six in May. I think she had a boy two years later, and a year after him, she had a set of twin girls."

"And she's pregnant again?"

"Due in March with another set of triplets." Dayton shook his head. "Richard says Bryce is just trying to live up to his namesake's reputation."

"Who?"

"Bryce was named for his, I think, great-great-grandfather. The first Collas Brysson Halsey was a pirate who produced nine children with his wife, Margaretta."

She'd heard the name before. Thinking back to some of the local history she'd read, Elf finally connected it. "Isn't he the man the original Mexican residents named the city for?"

Dayton chuckled. "Yep. Halsey was the 'Saint Devil' to the residents when he first arrived in the early 1800s. He'd won a Spaniard's land grant in a game of dice just before he stole his wife from the ship taking her to her fiancé."

"That must have made for a turbulent marriage."

"It probably was, but the local historians swear the two were deeply in love with one another. Margaretta and Halsey produced nine children and were married well over sixty years."

"So, that's why Mr. Bennett said Bryce is trying..."

"To create his own baseball team." Dayton chuckled.

"How do they manage them all?" Elf wondered aloud. The thought of having so many children made her dizzy.

Dayton shrugged, "He can afford nannies, but most of the time it's Mattie and Jacob, Bryce's father, who take care of the kids. Bryce is there most days, if he isn't here in town at his offices."

"Enough about them," he ordered. Pulling Elf to her feet, Dayton announced, "Right now, I'd like to do a little dancing, too."

* * * * *

As the night progressed, Elf grew used to the long looks and whispers when she mingled beside Dayton. She also noticed Case Henderson, the younger of two brothers Dayton hired to do background checks on prospective employees and new clients. Case seemed to know Bryce and Richard Bennett, Halsey's Senior Vice President, and their wives.

From a quiet table in a corner, Elf had slipped away to sit down and relax a little. Only a smattering of people remained. Midnight had already come and gone, and the clocks were edging up to two when she focused on how intimately Case held Becka, the woman married to one of Dayton's most powerful business associates.

The approach of one of the toy company's accountants and her husband had Elf rising to exchange good-byes and wishes for a happy holiday. By the time they'd turned for the door, Dayton had returned. He wrapped his arms around her waist and rested his chin on her crown.

Leaning into him, she let her gaze drift to the dance floor where Case danced with Becka, his hands stroking seductively up and down the flesh bared by the woman's elegant evening gown.

"Can't quite figure it out, huh?"

His voice vibrated against her back, but didn't reach beyond them. "Don't their husbands care?" She knew they did; she'd seen the loving expressions exchanged between the couples, but there seemed to be no reaction to the advances Case made to their wives.

"He's their third."

Elf peered over her shoulder at him. "Their what?"

A wicked grin lifted his lips as he leaned closer. "Case joins them in bed."

Elf's head whipped back to stare wide-eyed at the two couples. Mattie was snuggled against her husband, laughing at something he whispered in her ear. Richard collected his wife in his arms, and kissed her deeply after Case escorted her from the dance floor.

"You mean?" Elf wasn't sure she could complete the thought.

"Bryce and Richard and their wives enjoy *ménage à trios*. When he was still single, Richard was Bryce and Mattie's third. After he married Becka, Bryce asked Case to take his place, and Richard has him join him and Becka."

It didn't take much for her imagination to conjure up images of either woman being pleased by their husband and the handsome PI. Her breasts tingled at the idea of being the recipient of two men's attention, and an even naughtier thought had her tummy tightening.

What would it be like if Dayton invited another man into bed with them? Would she hesitate?

Some of the racier novels she'd read contained depictions of *ménage*, and she'd been aroused by the descriptions. In nearly all of them though, the encounter usually included anal penetration. Thinking about that aspect, Elf wasn't sure if she would want to participate.

Before she could stop herself, Elf asked, "Have you ever?"

"Had a threesome?" His voice tickled her ear.

She nodded.

Dayton's hands stroked her belly before moving upward to caress her ribs and tease the underside of her breasts. "Yes, when I was in college, one of my lovers invited Case's older brother, David, to join us."

"Weren't you upset?"

Dayton turned her in his arms and watched her face carefully as he explained. "It was a new experience for me. I was curious. I'd had two women pleasure me. I wanted to see how a woman would like to be handled by two men."

"Imagine it," his sultry voice whispered, his eyes holding hers until nothing existed but them. "You're lying in my bed, my mouth on your pussy while another man suckles your breasts. Our sole focus pleasuring you. Stroking your body with our hands. Our tongues." He leaned in close. "Our cocks."

Elf could feel her sex clench, the moisture soaking her panties. Unconsciously, she pressed her belly against him, craving the feel of his thick length, swollen and straining against his trousers.

"You like that." He smiled. "Let's see if you like the next step." His hands caressed her back, settled on her ass and pulled her in close. "I let you ride him, this other man in our bed."

He slides his hard cock into that sweet little candy box of yours. I watch, my hands squeezing your tits, tugging on your tight nipples. Then, I press you down..." His lips were warm against her ear, keeping their words private. Just for the two of them. "And open your pretty round ass."

Elf's breath caught. Her heart slammed against her breast. She made an attempt to pull out of his arms, but he held her fast.

Turning her to face the room again, Dayton pressed his arousal against the small of her back. Much as he'd stroked himself to orgasm this morning, using the crease separating her rounded cheeks, he reinforced his words with the feel of his body.

"Two men buried balls deep in both your holes. Our cocks wet and throbbing as we slide over you, in you, forcing you to feel every nerve quiver, every muscle twitch. Then, when you think you can't take anymore, we increase our pace. We hammer our hips against yours, slamming you into an orgasm that makes all the others pale in comparison."

She could imagine it, Elf realized. The heat generated by two large males sandwiching her between them, their cocks pushing her to the edge, then over. The muscles in her pussy clenched, her breasts swelled and her nipples, clamped by her chain of golden rings, throbbed, desperate for release.

"Unfortunately," Dayton's voice was wry and his head shook against hers. "I'm feeling very greedy, my Elf."

One broad palm settled low on her belly, his fingertips tapping the sensitive flesh of her mound.

"I don't want to share you. Not yet. Much as David and I enjoyed pleasuring women together," he smiled when she turned a startled look over her shoulder at him. "I want to keep you all to myself this holiday season."

Chapter Ten

Again on Sunday Elf entered her office to find Dayton waiting. The trip up to his apartment and into the bedroom was silent, save for the stroking of his hand over her back. His blue eyes glittered as the elevator door opened, and she raised her gaze to his.

"It's very difficult to keep from stripping those jeans off and fucking you right here in the elevator, Elf." Dayton's hand dipped beneath the waistband of her jeans to slide over her naked bottom. "Knowing you're naked and wanting me under these clothes."

Elf gasped, her breasts swelled, and her pussy grew wet with the image his words elicited. The card she'd never gotten around to using the day before was tucked into the back pocket of her jeans again. On wobbly legs, she exited the private elevator and waited for him to lead her into his bedroom. On the bed rested a beautifully wrapped box.

As on Saturday, Dayton seated himself in the wingback chair while Elf stripped out of her clothes. She removed her chains and silver bracelets from her chest in the wardrobe. Before she closed the chest, Dayton spoke.

"Bring one of your ropes."

Selecting one of the four foot lengths of silver cord, Elf moved to stand before him. Again he set the jewelry on the nightstand after fastening the cuffs to her wrists and coiling the restraint around his hand.

She eased onto the green silk comforter covering the massive bed. The box was carefully unwrapped under Dayton's watchful gaze and when the lid was lifted, Elf paused. Vibrantly colored silk scarves filled the box beneath the familiar vellum note paper. Keeping the box on her lap, she lifted the missive and began reading:

My Elf,

*I confess my imagination may have faltered a bit with this gift,
reverting to sinful fantasy. Though the "Dance of the Seven Veils"*

doesn't exist, I could not resist providing Seven Silken Veils for my Elf.

Though I, and my cock, would find pleasure in draping you in these seven scarves, then watch your body sway as you removed them, I must confess my true intent for this silk is to heighten your senses while rendering you blind to my actions.

Yours, most indulgently,

Santa

"We'll use the gold one," Dayton informed her as he rose from his seat to approach the bed.

Pulling out the colored scarf, she relinquished her gift box to him and waited while he covered it and set it aside on his chair. Returning to her, he took the silk from her hand and used it to stroke her skin.

"Feels good, huh?"

She nodded. "Yes."

Over her breasts to the taut peaks crowning them, around her throat and against her belly, he caressed her flesh with the cloth.

"It reminds me of your skin. Soft, sleek," he told her as he held the scarf just close enough to brush her nipples while he folded the fabric into an amber blindfold.

She watched him raise it until it was poised just in front of her eyes.

"Elf." His voice was quiet, tight with arousal. "Do you trust me?"

She dipped her chin in a small nod, not sure if her voice would work.

"Do you remember our safe word?"

"Vi --" She paused to clear her throat. "Vixen."

His smile made her heart clench. For a split second, she imagined she saw immense pride in his gaze as he smiled at her and nodded. *He has to feel something besides lust*, she told herself. Physical attraction didn't make a man look as if he felt a sense of pride when the woman he was seducing acknowledged her trust in him.

"Close your eyes," he whispered, easing the scarf over her eyes and securing it behind her head. He took care not to entangle any of her hair in the loose knot keeping the blindfold in place.

She felt the bed depress next to her as Dayton moved onto it. Elf braced her palms against the silk duvet as her torso swayed toward the dip Dayton's weight created in the mattress. Against her back she could feel the coarse fabric of his jeans, making her realize he was standing behind her on the bed. Taking a moment, Elf allowed her other senses to make up for her missing sight.

Above her head she could hear something, like the whisper of fabric over metal. Concentrating hard, she realized it reminded her of the sounds made when Dayton had wrapped her ropes around the bedposts the day before. Though the posts were made of carved wood, the metal in the head- and footboards had come into contact with the silk cords, especially when she'd fought to free herself so she could touch Dayton as he made love to her.

"Okay, baby." His voice startled her from her thoughts. Warm hands settled at her waist. "I'm going to help you. Keep you steady. Climb onto your knees."

Feeling slightly awkward, Elf was able, with his help, to rise up on her knees on the mattress.

"Good. Now scoot back until I tell you to stop."

She could feel the heat from his body hovering beside her even though his hands had slipped from her waist. Taking it slow, she inched backward toward what she thought was the center of the bed. In her mind's eye she could visualize the simple wrought iron canopy frame, a rectangle with a large X in the center. She suspected her rope had been wound around the center crossbars.

"Stop. Lift your arms."

Thinking he would connect the links before securing her to the clasps, Elf was surprised when he fastened each cuff to a clasp. She had to keep herself erect. Her arms were given just a little bit of play but not enough to allow her to sit more relaxed in the center of the bed.

"Is it too high?"

"I feel a bit stretched," she offered.

His fingertips whispered over her breasts, "You're supposed to." His lips touched hers, caressing them before dipping his tongue inside to play with hers.

Pulling away, he chuckled against her throat. "Now we get to play a little game."

"What kind of game?"

"Twenty strokes."

She tilted her head in confusion. "I've never heard of it," she told him as she felt the bed flex beneath the loss of his weight.

"Probably because I made it up."

Being blind had heightened her other senses in just a few minutes. Things she may have never noticed before were now apparent to her. The whisper of fabric over flesh reached her ears. The sound of a door opening was followed by the rattle of glass and metal. Wondering about the game Dayton had mentioned, she asked, "How do you play it?"

"I stroke your body with an object and you have twenty strokes to figure out what the object is. If you figure out what it is before the last stroke I get to bring you to climax."

“What if I don’t guess?”

“No orgasm. Until you figure out what an item is.”

She could smell his arousal. The subtle fragrance of male musk drifted to her, making her nipples peak. “May I ask questions?”

He seemed to debate her request as he shifted something nearby. “It has to be phrased so the answer is either yes or no.”

Elf nodded, “Okay.”

The bed depressed and her body swayed forward. Something warm rubbed her nipples. First the left peak.

“Stroke one,” Dayton whispered.

Then the right.

“Stroke two.”

It drifted over her belly to explore the rounded curve of her hip.

“Three.”

“May I guess?”

“Yes.”

“Your fingers.”

“No.” He chuckled.

The touch moved down her thigh. “Four. Use your senses, Elf.”

She tried. The distraction of the coarse item sliding over her flesh made it difficult to focus. If she listened carefully...

“Five.”

It dipped to the inside of her thigh, sliding upward. A scent drifted to her nose.

“Six.”

The smell of leather. Coupled with the rough texture rubbing against her flesh...

“Seven.”

...and the fact she could feel each distinct finger as he stroked her.

“Eight.”

“A glove?”

He chuckled. “Very good.” The glove was removed and his fingers took over teasing her clit. Stroking the damp petals of her sex as his lips suckled one breast, while his free hand kneaded the other.

* * * * *

She would never underestimate the potential eroticism in everyday objects again, Elf decided as she lazed on the bed beside Dayton. He'd insisted on them showering separately, but after bathing, had her return to lie on his bed. He stroked her nipples back to taut peaks and slipped the nipple chain on. His penis was hard against her hip despite his having climaxed twice; once against her belly, and the last time by sliding his thick shaft between the cheeks of her ass.

Enjoying his soft touches, she closed her eyes and let her mind drift. It was quiet in this room. The warmth of the morning sun beat down on her through the skylight, increasing her lassitude. As her mind wandered, she recalled the dream she'd woken to this morning.

How exciting it had been to imagine Dayton in her bed, stroking the long length of his cock while she watched. His eyes never leaving her face as he'd cupped his balls before moving upward to the base of his shaft. It excited her to watch him use his hands in tandem to squeeze the base of his cock while the other hand stroked back his foreskin and smoothed the pearly drops of precum over the plum-shaped glans.

When she attempted to approach him in her dream, his eyes warned her away, while his gruff voice ordered. "Just watch, Elf."

Each stroke, every squeeze, the ragged sounds sliding past his lips fed her own growing arousal, both when she had dreamed the sight, and now as she lay beside him, her body recovering from the multiple orgasms his game had given her.

"Show me what you do to make yourself climax, Elf," he'd intoned in her dream.

Caught up in her own excitement, Elf slid her fingers toward her aching flesh.

"Show me," he demanded again. "Lay down, so I can see that hot cunt of yours. I want to know how you touch yourself. What strokes you use."

"Penny for your thoughts." His husky whisper broke the sensual spell of her fantasy.

Elf could feel the heat flood her cheeks, streaking up from her swollen breasts. Shaking her head, she was hesitant to meet his gaze, fearful he would be able to read her sexy dream in her eyes.

His fingertips drifted from her cheeks to the taut peaks of her breasts, stroking over her rosy skin. "Had to have been some heady stuff to create this much heat," he murmured. His head dipped to nuzzle at the sensitive spot just where her neck met her shoulder.

"I'd rather not" -- she croaked, swallowed, then continued -- "I'd rather not say."

His eyes studied her for several long minutes. Propping himself on an elbow beside her, Dayton spoke candidly. "Fantasies should be shared between lovers, Elf. If the play is restricted to only one person's desires, then the rewards are equally one-sided." His palm settled on her belly, ring and little fingers positioned over the curls on her mound. "You have fantasies, right?"

She nodded, one hand tentatively reaching down to rest over his.

"Are there things you would like me to do to please you?"

The heat climbed her cheeks again as she shook her head. "Not...not really. I...I just...I can't..."

Placing a gentle kiss on her lips, he caressed her cheek, "If you don't feel comfortable voicing your desires now, I understand, Elf. I just hope..." the hand on her belly eased up and tugged the golden rings connecting her nipples. A zing of sensation shot from the sensitive crests to the overstimulated nodule of nerves between her thighs. His chuckle vibrated against her cheek, "I just hope before you leave my bed this holiday, you'll have overcome your reticence and divulged a few of your hot little secrets."

Still reeling from his touch, Elf could only nod weakly.

From the nightstand, Dayton collected the gold and silver chains she'd brought. Holding her gaze, he clipped one end of the shorter chain to the largest ring on her nipple chain and the other end to the links around her waist.

The other piece of jewelry he cupped in his hand, rolling the onyx beads in his right palm, warming them. "These may take some time to get used to, my Elf." The smile on his face was provocative rather than commiserating. "Watch how you move and be careful when you sit down." His left hand dipped between her thighs, stroking through the evidence of her arousal, before sliding inside her passage.

Eyes at half-mast, she watched him lower the beads to his left hand. None too surprised, she felt his finger withdraw to be replaced by one of the beads. The way he manipulated the jet sphere inside her, coating it in her cream had her hands fisting in the duvet beneath her. Three times he did it, pushing a bead inside, swirling it on the shaft connecting it to the links before and after it, then plucking it free to replace it with another bead.

Attaching the clasp to the same link connected to her nipple chain, he rolled her onto her side, and threaded the stimulator between her thighs before latching it to the back of her waist chain.

Rising from the bed, he collected the box of lingerie from the dresser drawer. Unearthing a rose pink bra and thong set, Elf waited as he returned and eased the thong over her feet and up to her thighs.

"I remember you mentioning having brunch with a friend," Dayton commented as he tugged the panties into place. He took his time to make sure the thin string was nestled between the cheeks of her butt, while avoiding tangling the chain in the fabric, before letting her stand so he could slide the bra on her.

Focusing on his statement instead of the sensations building between her thighs, Elf answered. "Yes, I'm meeting my friend, Jodi, at the Firehouse. We both like spicy food and I love their five-alarm chili."

He held her jeans out for her to step into, followed by her socks and sneakers. The sweatshirt was a bit trickier, but when he tugged it down around her hips, Dayton leaned forward to press a soft kiss to the corner of her mouth.

They made small talk as he escorted her to her car in the garage, discussing meetings scheduled for the following week and the remaining shelters and homes they would visit in the few days before Christmas. Elf avoided injecting anything personal into the conversation, not wanting to deal with the wall of resistance that would slam down the instant she did.

He leaned into the open window of her car once he'd unlocked the door and seated her inside. "Enjoy your lunch with, what was her name?"

"Jodi Clark. I've known her since ninth grade and I used to work with her at Baxter Industries."

"Devin and Erik's company? I didn't realize you used to work there."

Elf nodded, "I was only a temp. It was just before you hired me." Shifting in her seat, she gasped as a bead tapped against her clit, and another pressed on her back entrance.

"Hurt?"

She shook her head.

Leaning in the window, his fingers slid through her hair. "No matter how much you may want to, my Elf, you are not allowed to come." His eyes held hers, the command in them firm. "The chains stay until I remove them."

Drawing a deep breath to fight the need winding in her belly, Elf nodded. "I understand."

His lips caressed hers before he released her. "Good." Dayton stepped back and shoved his hands in his pockets. "See you at four."

Chapter Eleven

The doorbell pulled Elf from her dreams before her alarm could. Rolling onto her back, she glared at the illuminated numbers, and then cursed as the doorbell echoed through her apartment again. Dragging an oversized T-shirt over her naked body, Elf stomped to the door, and yanked it open, ready to read the riot act to whoever decided they needed to get her out of bed at five in the morning. The words never left her lips as Dayton pulled her into his arms. Stepping through the door and slamming it shut, he pressed her body between the cool metal and his own warm frame. His mouth devoured hers in a hungry kiss. Tongue stroking over hers and thrusting deep, his calloused hands drifted to the hem of her T-shirt, lifting it to stroke over her sleep-warmed flesh. Easing her thighs apart, he lifted her against the door, and settled his hard, jeans-covered cock where she desperately wanted him to bury it.

The rasp of hard flesh behind rough fabric where she was most sensitive had Elf crying out beneath his lips. Her back arched, and she wrapped her legs around his waist, dragging him closer.

Dayton echoed her, thrust his hips against her weeping pussy twice, before pulling away, and setting her on her feet. His lips were as reluctant to let her go, but he seemed to find the strength to set her aside, and step away. It didn't last for long.

Eyes half open, Elf watched him watching her. Face flushed with need and nipples pressing against her thin T-shirt, she must have been too tempting for him to ignore, because Dayton swept her off her feet and demanded. "Bedroom."

Still trying to wake up, let alone reason out what had brought him here, she motioned toward the hall. "Second door on the left."

He made short work of the distance, pushing the door open, and spent even less time stripping her out of her nightshirt, before laying her upon the rumpled sheets of her bed.

He'd settled himself between her spread thighs, and braced the majority of his weight on his bent forearms when he returned to kissing her.

The musky smell of his flesh, the heat of his body, and the pulse of his hips against her tender pussy, had Elf clutching at his back. Her nails scored the soft flannel-covered muscles.

With a throaty growl, Dayton nibbled his way down from her lips to her neck, stopping for just a moment at the collar she wore even when she slept. "Very good, my Elf," he praised her, his fingers stroking over the gold and silver links, while his eyes held hers. "I see you understand the importance of my collar."

Nodding, Elf responded, "You're the only one who can remove it."

"Until our connection is severed," he added.

Elf fought the protest that hovered on her lips. She prayed her expression hadn't betrayed the pain she felt at the thought of severing their relationship. And, despite his denials, what was between them was a relationship.

The nip of his teeth against the taut tendons had Elf arching into him. Her thighs eased open, allowing his body to settle in the notch provided. The sting of his teeth warned Elf she would probably need to apply some makeup to cover the love bite on her throat.

At her breasts, he again paused to suckle and tease the hardened peaks. His calloused fingers circled and kneaded the swollen mounds. He lifted each to receive attention, then tugged at the taut nipple before moving to the other breast. He worked the crests before moving further south, dipping his tongue into her belly button, and stroking her spread thighs even wider.

Elf's fingers were threaded through his silver gray hair, flexing in time with the attentions he showed her body. They clenched, pulling him closer, the instant his tongue stroked her pussy. Her breathe shuddered from her lungs and her thighs tensed.

Her body arched beneath his first stroke, both terrified and enamored of his attentions. Even as she enjoyed the sensual concentration he paid her flesh, Elf worried about what would happen when Dayton turned away from her. She freely admitted her addiction to his touch. When it was gone, would she be able to function on a day-to-day basis with him in the room next to her? Hearing his voice, seeing him, imagining him in her bed would be painful. Most hurtful, though, would be seeing him with another woman.

Before she could dwell too long on her thoughts, Dayton's tongue thrust deep within her. At the same time, his fingers tugged on her nipples, and then his teeth scraped over her clit. Climax exploded inside her, radiating out from between her thighs to wash up through her belly and chest, and down her legs.

Long minutes later, her breathing slowed, Dayton lay over her, his erection pressed into her through the confines of his jeans. "Christmas Eve seems like years, Elf, not just four days."

His lips and beard were damp with her body's secretions as he nuzzled her lips.

“We could...” she began to offer, her pussy clenching at the thought of his rock-hard length stretching it. Filling her.

“Not a bad idea, Elf,” he chuckled pulling away, and lifting her from the bed, at the same time, “but I have plans.”

Elf groaned, submitting to his redressing her in the T-shirt he’d yanked off.

As she stood swaying beside the bed, she watched him pull a mesh bag from beneath his shirt and drop it on the bed. Through the holes, she could see flesh-toned lace.

Dragging her out to the living room again, Dayton steadied her wobbly steps. “I would dress you myself, but I know you’ll want to shower before you take my gift. Knowing, though, that the undergarments you’re wearing were chosen by me, and warmed against my body before you put them on, will keep me hard all day.”

He pulled an envelope from his back pocket and held it out to her. “Come to me when it’s time to go to the shelter. Not before, or we’ll never get the presents to the kids.” Leaning forward for one last, brusque kiss, he yanked open her door, and escaped.

Sliding down the wall to the floor, Elf tried to regain her equilibrium by breathing slowly. Tearing the envelope open, she nearly dropped the small appointment card enclosed with his note.

My Elf,

This day has been set aside for you. Indulge yourself. Let me pamper you in a way you deserve while allowing myself just one small request.

Your taste is exquisite. The flavor indescribable and the sight of your soft pink flesh more arousing than the most intimate touch of another. I only wonder if your pussy would taste as sweet without the sight of your pretty chestnut curls.

Yours, ever hopefully,

Santa

The appointment card listed her expected time for today at nine. The spa was an exclusive one, nearly an hour outside of San Diablo, and usually requiring an appointment be made weeks in advance. This meant, Elf decided as she pulled her wobbly legs beneath her and stood up, that Dayton had been planning his seduction as long as she’d been trying to get his attention.

* * * * *

The sound of their footsteps echoed in the quiet of the parking garage. Abandon tugged at the leash he’d wrangled onto it hours earlier when Elf had sauntered into his office. Her arrival, minutes before they had to leave for the shelter, precluded his anticipated

explorations. The smile on her lips, and the teasing glint in her jade colored eyes, assured Dayton his lover suspected his plans. Her tardiness had been timed to circumvent play.

At the shelter, he'd watched Elf as she wandered from group to group, talking with parents and playing games with the kids. His imagination, working overtime, wondered if she'd honored his request to have her sex waxed. Several times she glanced over at him, drawing out the moment for them to leave and be alone.

Now, as the elevator doors slid open on his living room, Dayton's fingers itched to slide her dress off. Every time he'd caressed her thigh during the ride to and from the party, Elf had halted his fingers at the hem. The flesh-toned stockings she wore matched the bra and panties he'd left with her when he'd delivered her gift.

Dressed in nothing but the flesh-toned lace, there would be no leaving things to his imagination. The dark rose of her nipples would be visible behind the delicate fabric. The soft red-brown curls over her sex would peek through the lace of her thong.

If the curls were still there, he wondered if he'd be disappointed. It surprised him that he'd even think about reacting. He'd made similar requests of past lovers. Some had agreed and found the sensitivity of their denuded pussy invigorating, while others had merely refused. He'd never been invested enough emotionally in the relationship to care one way or the other. Those who refused were simply missing out, in his estimation.

But the thought his Elf would refuse the request gave him pause. He halted in the middle of the dimly lit living room. Watching her unwrap one of the mints in the dish on the coffee table and pop it in her mouth, he wondered at the urge to punish her if she didn't fulfill his command.

Punishment was reserved for a partner, for those relationships reaching beyond the superficial. He'd not had one of those in nearly a decade.

The image formed without his conscious thought. Elf bent over the overstuffed ottoman, buttocks bared. The ivory turning a vibrant pink as his palm cracked against the rounded curves. Whimpers, slipping from her lips, were those of arousal and not pain. Her thighs wet with her juices, as her pussy wept for attention. His cock strained at the red velvet encasing it. Four more days he reminded himself, as he watched the sway of Elf's hips as she sidled into his bedroom.

In the doorway she stopped. Looking over her shoulder at him, he could read the hesitation in her eyes. Despite her confident pose and the self-assured tilt of her head, Elf was uneasy. Nervous. The wrong word would have her bolting for the exit. Dayton could see it in her eyes.

Unsticking his feet, he smiled at her. The wary look faded. Ushering her ahead of him into his bedroom, Dayton eased the buckle of his broad black leather belt free. "Strip." He gave the order just as he had every night they'd returned from a shelter or home.

This time, though, Elf ignored him.

Stepping forward, she helped ease his velvet coat off. Curious to see what she was doing, Dayton simply watched her. Ivory fingertips stroked the colorful embroidery on the wide suspenders holding his red velvet pants up. Sliding the straps off his shoulders, Elf settled into a kneeling position at his feet. From inside her blouse, she drew out a small cream colored rectangle.

Dayton's heart stopped, and then began pounding in his ears as he took the card from her fingertips.

He watched as Elf eased the button open and slipped the zipper down its track on his trousers. Her chestnut hair, bound in a sedate twist drew his fingers. The cool caress of her fingertips releasing his cock from the red boxer briefs drew a groan from his lips.

Deep jade eyes looked up at him as her fingers explored the swollen length of his penis. The pulsing shaft, the rounded tip, even the heat of his balls weren't spared her touch. When her lips parted and the tip of her pink tongue peeked out, it took everything he had to stand still. She laved the underside of his cock, stroking up to the tip before dipping into the tiny hole.

His fingers flexed in her hair, pulling some of the pins free. Dayton didn't realize he'd crushed her fellatio request card in his fist until it fell free when he reached down to pull the rest of her hairpins out. The crumpled cream vellum remained on the carpet, soon joined by the black fasteners keeping Elf's mahogany tresses coiled against her head. As the last pin hit the card, Elf's lips settled over his cock, and suckled his length into her mouth.

A curse exploded from his lips. "Christ, woman!"

The twin sensations of heat and cold engulfed his flesh, as her head rose and fell. The instant his wet shaft hit the air, breath hissed through Dayton's teeth. Prickles of sensation skated down his dick, through his balls, and up his spine. Only to be extinguished and rekindled as Elf swallowed his length, and stroked the flesh with her tongue. Again and again the sensations were repeated, as Elf worked over his cock, until his knees threatened to buckle.

With every stroke, every lick, every swallow, Elf's eyes watched him. Recording his expressions, the gritting of his teeth, the tensing of his body as climax approached. Looking down at her, Dayton met her gaze, his fingers flexing in her tangled hair. "Take it. Swallow it all, Elf," he commanded as his seed erupted, filling her mouth.

Her fingers clenched on his hips, her eyes held his as she swallowed his release. Suckling the length of his still firm cock as he eased from her mouth, her eyes held his. Once free, he pulled her to her feet. His lips settled over hers, tasting a combination of flavors. The salty taste of his semen, her own unique sweetness, and the bite of peppermint, all registered as he swept his tongue over her lips before dipping inside.

"You didn't do as you were told, Elf." He warned her, smiling when excitement filled her eyes at the suggestion of repercussions for misbehaving.

She shouldn't feel the zing of arousal arrow through her wet flesh at the thought of a spanking, Elf's rational mind told her. The primitive part of her brain turned the voice off. The taste of his climax lingered along with the hint of peppermint candy from the dish in the living room.

Following Dayton's lead, she slid the buttons free, slipped the black belt from around her waist, and then stepped out of the green velvet. While unbuttoning her dress, she watched Dayton gracefully move back toward the chair positioned near the bed. *How can he maneuver so gracefully with his pants around his thighs?* she wondered. Having just given him a damn fine blowjob, Elf was amazed at his ability to walk, let alone do it backward and still sense where the chair was when he sat down. She watched him watching her as he tugged his boots free, dropping them beside his seat. The jacket and pants of his Santa suit were tossed toward the closet, leaving him clad in red T-shirt and boxers.

His eyes flared in approval when he spotted the bare flesh beneath her panties. Stripping off the last of his clothes, a wicked grin lifted his lips as he relaxed into the cushions, settling in to observe the little wriggle of her hips as her dress fell to the floor, before she shed her pretty undies.

His attentions stirred her libido. Against the scalloped edges of her bra cups, she could feel her nipples peak and her breasts swell. Slipping off her shoes, Elf reached for the elastic band on one of her stockings.

"Leave them on," Dayton commanded, his voice quiet, eyes fixed on hers. "Get rid of the rest."

Keeping her gaze locked with his, Elf stroked her fingertips up her thighs before stopping at the elastic band of her thong. The same scalloped lace trimmed the waistband. Her manicured nails scraped the embellishment, teased beneath the elastic, before sliding up to snap open the front closure of her bra.

"That's two, Elf." He warned.

She didn't pretend to not understand. Her teasing had enlivened Dayton's semi-aroused cock. It now stood fully erect, swaying against his taut, eight-pack abs. Her already soaked panties received another dousing at the thought of his possession. Hands shaking, she pushed her thong down and shimmied out of it.

"On the bed." Dayton rose from his seat.

She followed his approach, her mind whirling with the various acts he might indulge in. Wanting them all, but fearing his punishment for her teasing. Worried one of the consequences for her disobedience could be denying her climax, Elf climbed onto the thick silk comforter. She remained still, upper body braced on bent elbows, legs held tightly together and dangling over the edge of the mattress.

He'd waited for this all afternoon. From the instant he'd seen her walk into his office, Dayton's mind had imagined how he would explore the naked flesh of her pussy. Knowing the sensitive skin would be tender to the slightest touch, he'd decided to examine her with his fingers. As he approached, though, he noticed the gleam in Elf's gaze, the anticipation flushing her cheeks, swelling her breasts, and increasing her respiration.

Perhaps he would conduct a little experiment before making any final decisions about what could and could not be done this evening.

"I'm glad you granted my request." He smiled. Stepping closer he smoothed his hands from her ankles to her knees. Settling her heels at the edge of the mattress, Dayton eased her thighs open to stand between them. Leaning forward, his calloused fingertips stroked the pale flesh from her hips to the lace-topped stockings, his eyes watching her every response. "Did you enjoy my gift?"

He grinned at the sight of her nod. Her throat flexed as she swallowed heavily. Her thighs trembled beneath his gentle strokes. Watching her lips part as he shifted closer, Dayton focused on her reactions to the heat of his body, the weight of his erection against her denuded curves. She looked so beautiful beneath him, responding to his attentions, immersing herself in the sensations his touch evoked.

The scent of her arousal stirred his interest. "How does it feel?" He stroked her naked skin with his cock.

"W-what?" Reclining into the bedding, back arching involuntarily, Elf's body's response to his nearness had his lips lifting.

His grin widened as he settled his weight onto his forearms while leaning over her. "How does it feel?" he asked again, rocking his hips, sliding his tumescence over her plump curves, enjoying the smooth silky feel.

"Hot," she responded, distracted.

Dayton chuckled, moving closer. "I wasn't talking about me," he teased. Caressing her breasts with his chest, he savored the feel of her pebbled peaks. The sound of her breathing increased. Beneath his hard-on, her hips pulsed upward, as if seeking the relief his body could provide.

"Neither was I," Elf assured him as her hands lifted to grip his taut flanks. Pulling him closer, her thighs spreading farther to accommodate his hips, she continued, "After the sting wore off, I started noticing how sensitive I was to...to everything."

"Do you like it?" Dayton stroked his fingertips over her brow, drawing her gaze to his. Her arousal expanded the pupils of her eyes, until they swamped the emerald rings surrounding them. Only a thin circle of green was visible.

Beneath his touch, she nodded, her body pressing upward, reaching for his. "Yes," she gasped, her newly manicured nails digging into the tensed flesh of his ass.

Shifting higher, Dayton rasped his coarse pubic hair against her soft skin. "How about this?" he asked.

Her every muscle quivered beneath his frame. Her eyelids squeezed shut. Pearly white teeth ground together tight enough to be heard. He didn't need a verbal response. Pressed tight against her vulva, the sensitive skin covering his scrotum was coated with the fluid of her arousal. Her heat had his cock bobbing in response, and Dayton gritting his own teeth to hold back his orgasm.

Her hips lifted as her orgasm snaked its way through her. Little half-moon indentations decorated his ass as he held her still, fighting his own climax. Shifting his left hand from the death grip he had on the comforter, he reached between their bodies and parted the dewy folds. Sliding upward, he settled his sac between the fluttering tissues of her labia, intensifying the burn on his already tormented nuts while stimulating the nerve-rich tissues of her pussy.

Incoherent sounds fell from her lips. Heated fluid again spilled over his balls. The scents of peppermint, her skin, and sex swirled around him, pushing his own climax closer. Her legs wrapped tight around his waist as she peaked a second time before going still beneath him.

Dayton was positive he could have held off long enough to push her into orgasm a third time if she'd refrained from wrapping her legs around him. Stars exploded behind his closed lids as her legs tightened around his waist. The motions of her body, the scent and feel of her pinnacle, all conspired to force him over the edge into climax. Muffling his cry against her throat, Dayton felt his body explode.

He held his body over hers, emptying his balls onto her beautiful, round breasts and over her pale belly. As he forced his breathing to slow, a fleeting image of her ivory skin rounded and firm with life drifted through his mind. The hammering of his heart increased, along with his breathing, before he could force the visual away.

Permanent connections weren't a part of their agreement.

Needing to distance himself, he pushed away, ready with an excuse should she protest.

It wasn't necessary.

The soft thump of her slack hands and legs hitting the mattress, as well as a less than ladylike snore rattling past her lips, had Dayton fighting laughter.

Well, this is a first, he thought. None of his other lovers had fallen asleep after sex. *Then again, this is Elf*, he reminded himself, as he examined her collapsed form. *Nothing should surprise me about her.*

The coating of semen and sprawled limbs would have her waking sticky and sore. Knowing his own preferences, as well as those of his fastidious admin, Dayton moved to fix the situation. A quick trip to the bathroom, the swipe of a damp cloth over her breasts, belly, and between her thighs took care of the sticky.

Before he could balk, he stripped off the stockings, pulled back the covers, and settled her beneath them. Her chestnut curls glowed against the silver and gray striped silk sheets. With the green comforter pulled up to her chin, Dayton watched her snuggle into the bedding and find a comfortable position.

He didn't argue with the part of him refusing to wake her. Instead, he avoided the dilemma by returning to the bathroom for a hasty shower. Beneath the pounding spray, Dayton focused his thoughts on the agenda for the following day, making sure to push away any whispers that might surface about what Elf's presence in his bed could represent.

After stepping from the shower, Dayton wiped away the beads of water coating his skin with a few cursory swipes of a towel. The same treatment was given to his wet hair before he padded naked into the bedroom. In the darkness of the room, Elf was a lump beneath the covers. While he'd been in the bathroom, she'd burrowed even farther beneath the bedding so the tangled mass of her curls and the crown of her head were the only visible part of her.

Trying not to wake her, Dayton slid between the sheets. The cool silk stroked over his naked body, reminding him of the feel of her skin beneath him. Rolling onto his side, he pushed the covers away from her face. Though no longer flushed with arousal, Elf's delicate features seemed to glow in the dim light filtering from the skylight above them.

Forcing his thoughts from the renegade path they tried to tread, he turned his focus upward. Dayton gazed at the blanket of stars visible through the tempered glass. Usually lost in the light pollution and hazy air generated in other California towns, San Diablo could actually boast beautiful clear skies nearly year round. The air currents and coastal breezes from the Pacific eliminated any buildup of pollution in the city.

A sound beside him drew his attention back to Elf as her eyes fluttered open.

Silky covers cocooned her. The distinctive scent she associated with Dayton -- a crisp mixture of wood and musk -- teased her nose. Blinking sleepily, she forced her eyelids up. Elf realized she must have dozed off when she opened her eyes to find Dayton watching her.

"Ohhhh, don't tell me," she groaned, squeezing her eyes shut.

"Tell you what?" Dayton chuckled.

She watched his hand approach. The calloused fingertips, traced over her brow, gently pushing strands of hair from her face. Fighting the urge to curl into his arms, Elf rolled into a sitting position. "I'm sorry," she apologized, flipping the covers aside.

"Sorry?"

Rounding the bed, she could see Dayton sit up, watching her. "I didn't mean to fall asleep." Elf stepped into her discarded dress. Though the scent of his body clung to her skin, in her mind Elf thanked him for bathing away the residue of his lovemaking. She could hear

the bedding shift as she slid her arms into the sleeves and tugged the top of the costume over her shoulders.

"Why apologize?"

Elf shrugged. How did she explain to this man she might be in love with the difference between sleeping in his bed and participating in a no-strings liaison? "I need to get home," she hedged, keeping her gaze focused on her trembling fingertips as she fed buttons through buttonholes. The rasp of fabric over flesh assured her Dayton was pulling on clothing.

"If you're too tired..."

"I'm fine."

Firm hands turned her to face Dayton. His chest was bare, jeans hung on lean hips, zipped, but not buttoned.

"If you're too tired," he said as he focused his gaze on her, "I have no objection to your staying."

"Not yet."

His brow furrowed, "Explain?"

Tugging from his hold, Elf threaded the belt through the brass buckle as she crossed the room to her shoes. "Accepting gifts is one thing." She intentionally kept her eyes from him. "I'm not ready to stay the night."

"Are you going to hurry home every night during Christmas?"

His sharp tone had Elf watching him cautiously before answering. "No."

Dayton turned away from her to snag a shirt from the closet. Elf wondered at the strength of the flannel considering how angrily he was stuffing his arms through the sleeves.

"How is staying tonight different than staying next week?"

"There's no reason for me to stay."

"There's every reason," he snapped, shoving his bare feet into battered sneakers.

She wouldn't be swayed. "Name one."

"You're tired."

"No more than any other night this week."

His face went still. The blue eyes watching her felt like lasers cutting through flesh. "You're telling me you were practically asleep on your feet every time you've left here?"

"Yes." Elf moved out of the bedroom and into the living room to collect her coat. Somewhere in the apartment the deep, sonorous chimes of a grandfather clock announced the witching hour.

"Damn it, Elf," he barked, helping her into her coat before grabbing his own. "You should have told me."

"I'm a big girl, Dayton." Elf watched him gather up his keys as she settled her purse onto her shoulder. "I was fine..."

"Stop." His hand came up and he shook his head.

The way he stabbed his key into the elevator call switch and twisted had Elf flinching, worried the bit of brass would snap.

"Let's just get you home if you're so damned determined not to stay here." His touch was firm, uncompromising, as he tugged her into the elevator, and punched the button for the garage.

* * * * *

It didn't make any sense, Dayton decided as he followed Elf through the empty streets toward her home. His anger wasn't directed at her though, but at himself. How the hell had he missed the smoky shadows of exhaustion beneath her jade eyes? Was he so damned blind in his lust he didn't notice how tired she was when he escorted her to her car every night?

Even after she'd pulled safely into her marked parking space, and he'd climbed the stairs behind her to her door, the feeling smoldered in his chest, burning at his lungs, twisting his belly into knots. He didn't trust himself not to snap at her again.

After opening the door, he motioned for her to stay near it. He inspected each of the rooms, flipping the lights on, checking the windows were secured, and confirming no potential danger lurked behind a door or in a closed closet.

He ignored the smile and shake of her head when he returned to the living room to find Elf hanging up her coat.

"All safe?" she teased.

"For the moment." He waited until she'd closed the closet door before crowding her against it. Cupping her face in his hands, he growled against her lips, "Get some sleep, baby, because sure as Santa has eight little reindeer, you're not gonna be gettin' any after Christmas."

Not waiting for her reply, he ground his lips against hers in a brusque invasion. Rocking his hips against her belly, he used every weapon available to wind her up. Sliding his hands from her face to her ass, he lifted her tight against him, easing beneath her skirt, and stroking the damp crease between her thighs.

Feeling the flutter of her pussy, he thrust two fingers into her vagina. Pressing deep, stroking fast, then slow, he pushed her high and hard toward climax before stopping.

Beneath his lips she cried out. Her fingers clutched at his back, her hips and breasts heaved beneath him. Pulling away, he watched the green disappear into her expanding pupils. She was there, hovering on the cusp, straining toward fulfillment. Holding her gaze he waited.

The dew of her body coated his fingertips and palm, dampened the insides of her thighs, and kissed the hidden rosette of her ass. He waited until the last possible moment before whispering against her lips, "Come for me, Elf," while stroking his thumb into her ass and thrusting his digits farther up her pussy than they'd been.

He muffled her scream with his mouth and held her tight as she convulsed in his arms. Taking his time, he lifted her into his arms and carried her to the bedroom. Settling her on the sheets, he left long enough to dampen a washcloth in the bathroom. Efficiently stripping away her clothes, he wiped at her damp cheeks before cleaning between her thighs. Dragging her bedding over her, he returned the cloth to the bathroom.

In the darkened room, he sat on the bed waiting and watching as her orgasm eased and her breathing relaxed.

"Don't ever take chances again, Elf," he warned her. "If you're tired, tell me. I'll bring you home." Brushing the curls caught in her lashes, he continued, "Our situation may be temporary, but both our needs are paramount. Do you understand? *Both* our needs."

He watched her until her chin dipped in a nod and she replied, voice husky. "Both. I understand."

"Good." Pressing a soft kiss to her brow, he settled the covers beneath her chin. "I'll see you in the morning."

She smiled, "For breakfast?"

He chuckled at her cheek. "Definitely."

Chapter Twelve

“She likes her.”

“Who?” Dayton didn’t bother looking up from the invoice he was examining.

“Lawrence.” Bryce leaned back in his chair as the waiter refilled his coffee and removed the nearly empty plate in front of him.

Nodding his thanks to the server as the remains of his lunch were taken away and his coffee topped off, Dayton shot a perplexed look toward his friend. “Lawrence, your wife?”

“Yes.”

“Likes who?”

Bryce shook his head and chuckled, “Haven’t you paid any attention to this conversation?”

Setting aside the papers, Dayton admitted, “Not really.”

“Lawrence told me how much she liked meeting your Elf at the Christmas party.”

“That’s nice.” Dayton knew his voice held a distinctive *and this means what to me* tone.

“She also told me I needed to warn you not to fuck things up.”

The hairs on the back of his neck rose, like the hackles of a dog guarding his favorite bone. Dayton protected his privacy vigorously, and at times, aggressively. The thought that Bryce’s wife felt the need to butt into his affairs stirred those instincts. “I didn’t ask for your wife’s opinion.” His eyes met the ice green of Bryce’s. He’d counted the older man as a friend for nearly two decades, and he didn’t want to offend him, but he had boundaries no one was ever allowed to cross. And Mattilda Lawrence-Halsey had just toed up to one of them.

White blond brows arched above turquoise eyes as Bryce met his stare. His lean features tightened imperceptibly, but Dayton could tell the friend was taking a back seat to

the husband. "You may not have asked for it. And I certainly didn't request it, but my wife is giving you advice you need to think about."

Dayton leaned forward, forearms resting on the table, hands folded around the cream ceramic mug of coffee. He waited for Bryce to finish.

Bryce didn't disappoint. His lean frame settled into a pose similar to Dayton's. "I've watched you since Elf first waltzed into your office. I can probably tell you right down to the exact minute when you figured out some plan to seduce her into your bed." Taking a swallow of his coffee, Bryce settled the cup carefully back into its saucer before continuing, "From what I observed at the party Saturday night, your plan seems to be working."

"Not that it's any business of yours," Dayton reminded him.

Bryce nodded his agreement. "No, it isn't my business. But having been in the same situation myself, I thought it prudent to offer a warning."

"What's between my Elf and me is just that, between us," Dayton growled, downing the last of his coffee and shoving aside the cup and saucer. His knuckles were white with the force of his clenched fingers.

"Make sure you're willing to pay the price, kid," Bryce warned him.

"What price?" Dayton glared at his friend. Bryce may be ten years his senior, but the man was treating him like a child around a hot stove. "It's just sex. She and I agreed to simple, no-strings sex."

"Then don't mark her."

"Excuse me?"

"Fuck her. Make her come before, after, or when you come," Bryce advised, his eyes cold, face emotionless. "Marking her isn't an option. If all you're doing is scratching an itch, do it. Keep it straight, simple vanilla sex."

"Vanilla?" Dayton stifled the laughter pressing to escape. "This from the Master Dom himself?"

Bryce nodded, crossing his arms over his chest. "I trained you, Dayton. I know your strengths."

"I remember."

"And your weaknesses."

Again Dayton agreed. "I know."

"Saturday, I watched her." Bryce's gaze was steady.

Dayton fought back the urge to leave. He'd learned his lessons well under Bryce's tutelage. Control had been a hard-won battle, but he'd mastered it. The primal need to warn off his mentor surprised him. He waited for Bryce to continue.

"Elf's a sub."

Dayton nodded again, but stayed quiet.

"Mattie spotted it as well. That's why she sent the warning," Bryce admitted. "She isn't like the other women you've been involved with, Dayton. She isn't playing at D/s or dabbling in role playing." Leaning forward, his gaze intense, Bryce seemed determined to convince him of something. "Elf is a born sexual submissive."

Dayton shook his head, ignoring the voice in his head shouting in agreement with Bryce. "You've never seen her pissed off, Bryce..."

The shift was subtle, but profound. None of the patrons of the restaurant observed it, but they certainly felt it. An aura of power emanated from Bryce without his having altered position. Even the waiter, who'd moved toward the table to see if the men were interested in ordering dessert, stopped in his tracks, and turned away.

The Master took over.

Dayton listened.

"Unless you're willing to take on the responsibility of keeping her, Dayton, you need to be careful. No bondage. No spanking. No clamping. You do not come on her or in her." His gaze and tone were implacable. "When you fuck her, use a condom and Missionary position. Keep it straight, simple, no-strings vanilla sex. Don't ruin her for the Master she'll eventually choose."

There went those damn hackles again. Dayton kept his expression smooth. He wanted to give no indication to his mentor of his intentions. There was no way he'd allow Bryce to dictate his liaison with Elf. She was his until the New Year. If the thought of another Dom training Elf twisted his guts into knots, he'd deal with it his own way. "I'm capable of making my own decisions."

"Are you?" Bryce shook his head. "Don't fuck it up, Dayton. For her, for her next lover, or for you."

Dayton didn't bother responding, he simply met Bryce's direct gaze and waited.

Not a flicker gave away the thoughts of the older man. Much as he wished he could figure out what Bryce's thoughts were, Dayton's primary focus was on not revealing the fact he'd already indulged in the acts he was being warned away from. During his four years of college, he'd trained under Bryce Halsey and Richard Bennett. He respected the man across from him. He respected him as a businessman, an investor in his company, and as a teacher.

When he'd first begun his seduction of Elf, Bryce's lessons had been front and center in his mind. Every gift he'd given her had been calculated to push her comfort zones. He needed to know the level of trust she was willing to offer him. Something in his expression must have given him away, Dayton decided as he watched Bryce shake his head, and squeeze his eyes shut for a moment.

"You've already started." It wasn't a question. Leaning back in his seat, Bryce crossed his arms over his chest and shook his head. "Damn it, Dayton."

"Stay out of it."

"When you've finished with her, let me know."

"Bored with your wife already?" Dayton snarled. The image of his Elf submitting to Bryce made him want to vomit.

Bryce's eyes narrowed. "I'll make arrangements for David to complete her training." Carefully gathering the documents and tucking them into the leather portfolio he'd brought, he signaled for the check.

Neither spoke as the bill was paid and they walked out of the restaurant together. As they waited for their cars to be returned by the valet, Bryce offered one last bit of advice. "If you're going to do this, Dayton, make sure you're willing to commit to it long term. If you can't provide that, then make sure you both can walk away clean."

* * * * *

Her latest gift was waiting for her after lunch. Wrapped in silver-striped paper and a red ribbon, the box was tucked into her chair. Glancing toward the closed doors of Dayton's office, she wondered if he'd dropped it off before heading to the restaurant. Or maybe, she considered, setting the heavy box in her lap and pulling the ribbon free, he'd placed it in her chair before heading into the factory. Stripping away the paper, she examined the wooden box, stained to resemble rosewood, like her pirate chest.

Just over four inches deep and eight inches high, she opened the lid, hinged similar to an old-fashioned doctor's case, to find nine stoppered bottles. Silver-embossed, hand-lettered labels identified the liquids inside each antique-style apothecary jar. Elf smiled when she pulled the stopper on a container and sniffed the peppermint scented contents.

The letter was tucked into the top of one side of the box. Pulling it from the envelope she read:

My Elf,

Last night's adventures illustrated an element in both our natures I'm anticipating exploring further. Though I'd hesitated at delivering this gift, your inventiveness with my candy inclines me to believe you would not balk at the implications associated with it.

Your silky skin and delicious flavor need no enhancements. The thought of anointing your flesh with these oils arouses me nearly as much as the remembrance of your mouth on my cock.

Though your pussy tastes fine without any flavorings added, I look forward to experimenting with your gift tonight.

Yours,

Santa

Her nipples peaked beneath her blouse and her panties grew damp with her arousal. Imagining Dayton massaging the different oils into her skin interfered with her breathing.

His touch already heated her body to an explosive level, so just how much more arousing would it be for him to use scented or flavored lotions? Settling the letter back into the case and closing it up, Elf placed the box into the large drawer of her desk. She expected Dayton to request the box sometime after he returned from the factory, and she wanted to have it available should he ask.

He didn't.

* * * * *

Not until they'd returned from the homeless shelter and he'd assisted her out of her elf costume and underwear did he mention it.

"Do you have your gift?" His voice was casual, attention focused on buttoning the flannel shirt he'd pulled on after replacing his Santa suit with worn jeans, shirt, and sneakers.

"It's in my desk," she assured him as he turned his focus toward helping her into the blouse and slacks she'd worn to work.

His bedroom was illuminated by the milky glow of the moon through the skylight and the lamps in the living room. He made no move toward her other than to help fasten the last of the buttons on her silk shirt.

Handing her the garment bag containing her elf dress, he motioned her out of the room. "Let's go." Settling his hand into the curve at the base of her spine, Dayton led her through the living room, and back onto the elevator.

"Where are we going?"

Leaning down, Dayton pressed a light kiss to her lips. "I've been thinking about how sleepy you seem to be every night when you leave me."

She nodded, remembering the incident from the previous night. Exiting the elevator when the doors rolled open on the floor their office's occupied, she admitted, "I usually drop into bed and sleep like the dead." Elf glanced up, not sure what she expected to read in his face, but he'd schooled his features to remain flat, blank.

"Get your gift."

He waited at the door while she gathered her box from the drawer. Keeping her garment bag draped over her left arm, she carried the wooden case as far as the door. Dayton eased it from her hold and turned her back into the elevator.

At the garage level, he escorted her to the parking space where they'd left his SUV. "I don't like the idea of you driving when you're so tired." Moving beyond his vehicle he waited beside her car, hand extended for her keys.

"I've been okay." She handed the keychain over, and waited as he disengaged the alarm and unlocked the door.

He helped her into the driver's seat of her car. The garment bag was deposited on the passenger seat. He waited for her to roll down the window then shut the door. "I'll follow you to your apartment." Leaning into the open window, he kissed her softly on the lips. "We only have three more nights. I don't want to take any chances with you." Stepping away, he added, "Wait until I get there before you get out of your car. We'll go to your apartment together."

* * * * *

Just as he had the evening before, Dayton left Elf at the door while he checked through the apartment to make sure no one lurked in a corner.

He no longer carried the case when he came to collect her at the door. Securing the deadbolt and the chain, he led her back to her bedroom. Two plush bath towels covered the comforter on her queen size bed. The decorative pillows and matching shams had been tossed onto the floor beside her dresser. The pillows she slept on pushed to one side.

Taking his time, Dayton removed the pins holding her hair in its neat twist. Next he removed her blouse and slacks, carefully folding them into a pile on the dresser. Motioning her to take a seat on the bed, Dayton removed his own shirt and toed off his sneakers.

The tray of bottles sat on her nightstand. Flickering scented candles illuminated the room. At Dayton's urging, Elf lay belly down on her bed, the bath towels beneath her. Cheek resting on folded arms, she watched him examine each bottle, lifting it free of the velvet cocoon to read the label. Then he'd pull the stopper, sniff at the contents and shake his head. When he reached the fifth bottle, he grinned. "This one," he told her, keeping the label hidden so she couldn't read it.

Pulling her arms above her head, he pressed them into the bedding, "Don't move, Elf." The mattress depressed beneath his weight as he climbed onto it.

The *or else* was in his tone, but she wanted to confirm it. Glancing over her shoulder she asked, "If I do?"

"I'll use this if I have to, but I'd rather not."

Tilting her head up, she watched as he threaded the belt of her white terry cloth robe through the headboard. Slip knot loops were tied into each end of the belt.

He started by dribbling liquid along her spine. She arched in surprise, because it was cold. His chuckle vibrated through her. Squeezing her eyes shut she waited, her head turned, and cheek resting on the fluffy towel. Clad only in his jeans, Dayton straddled her legs. He braced himself on his knees with only the slightest amount of his weight registering against her body.

Starting at her neck, he'd stroked away the tension and knots in her shoulders. The smell of jasmine filled the room. He smoothed over her upper, then lower arms, and caressed each finger, and then her palms until it felt as if there were no bones left in her hands. From

there he returned to her back, teased her ribs and the sides of her breasts, before moving down to her hips.

The stroke of Dayton's calloused hands as he smoothed the scented oil into her skin had her purring. She didn't move when his hands left her, but quietly moaned a protest. The splash of more oil along the base of her spine stifled it. Elf could feel him shifting his position on the bed.

Taking his time, Dayton moved his caresses to encompass the rounded curve of her bottom. Each full cheek was thoroughly fondled, the oil rubbed into her flesh, before he moved to the muscles in her thighs and calves. First her left leg then the right was carefully massaged, pressing out any tension knotting the tissues.

"Roll over, baby." His gruff voice sounded at her ear.

Eyes still closed, body heavily relaxed from his attentions, Elf, with Dayton's help, rolled onto her back. She returned her arms to the position he'd placed them in above her head.

Her eyes refused to follow her directive to open, but she didn't worry about it. She was feeling too relaxed to worry about much of anything. The stroking of his hands over her body was soothing, so different from his usual seductive touch. Much as she enjoyed the build up and climax he'd provided these last seven days, the attention he was giving her now felt more personal and directed at pleasing her, not just as a prelude to sex.

Dayton's hands began at her feet this time. The oil coating them allowed enough lubrication to ease even the most recalcitrant knot from her shins and thighs. Her torso was ignored in favor of her arms. Again he massaged first her upper arms then forearms before moving on to her hands and fingers. The slide of cloth over her fingertips and the tightening of the loops around her wrists had her eyelids fluttering open.

"Why?" She tugged at the restraints.

Dayton positioned the lengths of fabric across her palms and curled her fingers over them, "Because you may need to hold on to something."

The wicked grin and twinkle in his eye caught Elf's breath in her throat. She watched as he placed the jasmine-scented oil back in its space and pulled another bottle free. Recognizing the red stopper and fluted lip, Elf couldn't stifle the groan slipping from her lips.

"You like the jasmine. Let's see," Dayton chuckled at her expression as he opened the bottle, "what you think of this one."

Drips of cool liquid fell onto her breasts, circling the nipple, but not touching it. The sharp scent of peppermint drifted to her nostrils just as the tingles began in her breasts. Taking his time, Dayton stroked the oil over her skin, drawing the stimulating fluid to the edge of her nipples but not onto them. She gasped at the intense hot and cold sensations the peppermint lotion generated. Blended with Dayton's sensual massage, Elf's relaxed body grew taut with arousal.

His broad palms smoothed the oil down onto her belly. Calloused fingertips teased the dip of her navel before spreading his fingers across the cradle of her pelvis. Again and again, his fingertips drifted from her breasts to her hips, teasing, stroking, never staying still, always arousing, touching.

In her belly, Elf felt the tension coil, winding tight and deep. His attentions drew every muscle, every nerve to its breaking point before relaxing just the slightest bit when his touch slowed or grew soft. Her breasts ached, her nipples jutting out, desperate for his caress, the firm press of his fingertips squeezing the nubs between thumb and forefinger. Between her thighs, her body wept for his attention.

"You like?" he teased.

His breath coasted over her lips as he pressed a kiss there before the bed shifted beneath his weight. Drowsy lids lifted to watch as he eased her thighs open and draped her legs over his jean-clad knees. Air hissed between her teeth as the sting of peppermint oil on his hands contacted the sensitive inside of her thighs.

"Damn, you look so pretty, Elf," Dayton whispered, his eyes focused on the flushed petals of her sex. He coasted his hands along her thighs, from knee to hip, flexing his fingertips as he neared her delicate opening. "Ripe and wet. Waiting." His fingers edged closer to her opening, coating her naked mound with the stimulating oil on his hands.

Watching him watch her twisted her arousal tight, but the added tingle of the peppermint had her hissing through her teeth. "Please."

"Please, what, my Elf?" His blue eyes twinkled and the wicked smile looked sinful in his beard.

"Touch me."

"I am touching you." He stroked his calloused fingertips along the creases where thigh met hip.

Gripping the belt tight, Elf arched against him. Levering her hips up, she wound her legs around his hips, and pulled him in close. The rasp of denim along her inner thighs helped, but not enough.

Dayton clucked his tongue and shook his head. "Naughty Elf," he taunted, bracing himself over her on his elbows. His eyes held hers as he teased her breasts. Sliding each forefinger from base to crown, he smoothed the ivory slopes, but avoided contact with the taut peaks.

Elf could feel her thighs quiver, her belly spasm with the need to climax. Her body wept for his attentions. Cream coated her thighs, dampened the front placket of his jeans, and still he remained motionless against her.

"You feel it," Dayton whispered against her lips.

He didn't have to explain it, Elf realized as he held her gaze. She understood he meant the tight coil of arousal twisting in her belly. The clawing need to surrender her body to his

command frightened and seduced her at the same time. “Y-yes.” She stammered, breathless and aching.

“Good. You’re almost there.” He assured her, his fingers moving from stroking to kneading her breasts. Still he avoided her nipples. “Just a little more.”

Elf knew she couldn’t take much more. The need was too great. Her grip on the belt binding her tightened; her breath grew choppy, labored, as she gripped him tighter with her legs. Chewing on her lip, she fought the urge to cry out, beg for release.

In his eyes there was no mercy. No matter if she begged or cried out, Elf knew release would come only if Dayton allowed it. Seeing it, recognizing the deliberateness of his actions stirred to life an ember of something deep within her. Her rational mind shied away from it. The primal part of her reached for it, gently breathed on the spark until a single flame ignited.

Again Dayton seemed to delve into her inner most thoughts. His head dipped in a slight nod. “Yes.” He breathed, his lips moving to cover hers, his fingers pressing almost painfully into her swollen breasts. “That’s it, my Elf, that’s it.”

Tinder caught, flared into a steady burn, rendering her mental protests ash. Before she fully recognized what it meant, Elf heard the word, felt what she’d been desperately waiting for.

“Come,” Dayton demanded, voice firm, commanding as his fingertips captured her nipples.

Orgasm exploded through her, washing over her. She gasped and cried out as her body convulsed beneath his heavy length. His fingers pinched her sensitive peaks, while his teeth settled in the curve between shoulder and throat, and his body forced her hips into the bedding.

No sooner had the first wave receded than a second swelled, brought on by the tweaking of her nipples, and Dayton’s gruffly ordered, “Again.”

Twice more he demanded, and her body complied. Elf gave up protesting. Her senses were on overload, and exhaustion weighted her limbs. Breasts sore, legs aching, and hands cramping from having gripped her bonds for so long, she waited for the muscles in her belly and between her thighs to settle.

Eyes closed, she felt the bed shift as Dayton rose. Water ran in the bathroom sink for several minutes. Too tired to open her eyes, she waited. Gentle hands loosened the knots and freed her hands. A warm damp cloth stroked over her body, bathing away the mist of sweat, and the residue of her climax. Lifting her, Dayton removed the soaked bath towels from beneath her.

“Don’t fall asleep, yet, baby,” he warned.

Weighted lids rose to watch as he carried the used towels into her bathroom. He’d tugged on his shirt, and buttoned it half way up his chest, but the bronzed muscles of his

chest covered in the light dusting of gray curls, was visible when he returned to the bedroom. He held her short terry cloth robe in his hands, the belt returned to it.

"Here." He held up the robe.

She wanted to shake her head, but his grin stopped her.

"You need to lock up behind me, my Elf." Tugging her to her feet, he pulled one sleeve over her arm, and then maneuvered the second into its sleeve.

While she haphazardly tied the robe closed, Dayton pulled her hair from beneath the collar. She watched as he settled the peppermint oil bottle into its spot in her box, before folding the lid closed, and latching the two brass hasps.

Dayton carried the box with him as Elf followed him to the door of her apartment. The porcelain mantle clock on one of her shelving units began to chime. Ten o'clock? That had to be wrong. The heavy feel of her body, the exhaustion dragging at her eyelids made her think more than two hours had to have passed since Dayton opened her apartment door.

His fingers stroked the hair from her cheek, tucking it behind her ear. "Get some rest, baby. I'll see you tomorrow morning." He leaned down, his lips brushing her brow, the bridge of her nose, before settling on her lips. His free hand cupped the back of her neck while his tongue stroked over her lips and then dipped inside to tangle with hers.

It was a gentle exploration. Soft, careful. He coaxed her into sharing her flavor then eased away.

"Lock up behind me," he ordered, opening the door and stepping across the threshold.

Shutting the door, Elf listened for the retreat of his footsteps. Nothing. Sliding the deadbolt into place she waited, listened. Again nothing.

"The chain, too, Elf." His voice wasn't loud enough to disturb her neighbors.

Trembling fingers fumbled the chain into place.

"Good girl."

She barely heard the sound of his footsteps departing over the thump of her heart. Two simple words. Those two simple words thrilled and frightened her at the same time.

Unwilling to dwell on the jumbled thoughts spinning through her sexually overloaded mind, Elf stumbled through the darkened apartment back to her bedroom. Stripping off her robe, she crawled beneath the sheets. Gripping one of her pillows tight to her sore breasts, she let oblivion overtake her.

Chapter Thirteen

“Vixen.” The word slipped from her lips the instant she finished reading his note.

The pear-shaped box remained in her lap as she set the latest letter from Dayton on her desk beside her half-eaten turkey and cheddar sandwich.

Hips propped on the edge of her desk, Dayton stayed quiet. She could feel his steady gaze on her, but she fought the compulsion to blurt out an excuse. Of all missives, this was perhaps the most erotic, and the most frightening. Though bluntly worded, there seemed to be a hidden message, something within the context hinting at...she wasn't sure what. It prodded and stirred the embers she'd fought so hard to extinguish after last night.

“Are you sure?”

The softly voiced question drew her eyes to his face. No hint of censure or disappointment showed on his impassive features. Tentative fingertips smoothed over the surface of the box in her lap. It was cool to the touch. Though she hadn't looked at the contents, Elf could guess, based on the note what the pear held.

“Elf?” he prompted again.

“I'm sure.” She held the box up to him. “I'm sorry, I just...” She couldn't finish. The words from his letter kept repeating in her head.

My Elf,

Do you recall our conversation at the Christmas party? The one regarding threesomes? As I prepared this gift I wondered again whether or not I could invite another man to share in the delight of your body. The answer, again, was no. During the time we share, I'm selfish and want your attention solely focused on me.

I know how tightly your body will hug mine when we finally come together on Christmas Eve. What has plagued my imagination,

since the party, is just how snug your ass would be around my cock. I visualize myself sliding deep inside your rear, the blending of pain and pleasure cascading, rocketing through your body. Your cries fill the room, building and falling with my every thrust and retreat.

With this in mind, Santa gifts you with Pleasure in a Pear. In order to prepare you for my attentions, your body needs stretching. Make use of it these next two days.

Yours, most impatient,

Santa

"No excuses are necessary, Elf." Dayton assured her as he collected the pear, and set it on the letter beside him. Standing, he drew her out of her seat. "This time is about both our pleasure," he reminded her. His fingers slipped the silk-covered buttons of her blouse free of their holes. Parting the fabric, the back of his fingers slid over, and around the taut peaks of her breasts. The golden rings of her nipple chain quivered against the cocoa lace cupping her ivory curves.

Taking his time, Dayton eased the slides free and removed the chain. "Let's leave this off for a while, hmm?" he suggested, tucking the gold rings into his pocket with one hand, while the other cupped and stroked her tingling crests. Soothing away the sensations zinging through her nipples, he watched her.

Elf could feel heat flush her chest and cheeks. Her head dipped, resting against his shoulder while her hands settled at his waist. His touch was calming, helping relax her taut peaks before he pulled her toffee-colored blouse closed.

Setting her away from him, Dayton began pushing buttons back through their holes, watching the color subside in her cheeks. As he fastened her blouse, Elf couldn't keep her gaze from straying to the desktop. He had to notice, she thought. She kept looking back at the wooden pear. The pale gold surface showed no seams, but she knew it had to open somehow.

"Would you like to see it?" he asked, his head tilting toward the gift.

His words startled her, but curiosity had her nodding. "Yes."

In his broad palm, the pear appeared delicate. Nearly eight inches long, the bulbous base measured about four inches in diameter before tapering to half the size at the top. There were no hinges or latches that she could see.

"You open it," he placed his thumb half way up the base on a slightly darker area in the grain of the wood. His middle finger moved to a similar curl midway across the top and pressed, "by pressing these circles. Pretty much the way you check the ripeness of a pear." Two soft clicks could be heard before a thin seam appeared separating the halves of the box.

Elf laughed up at him. "What a great puzzle box." Reaching out she lifted the lid, exposing the contents.

Dayton's answering grin leveled out as she clutched the lid to her chest and stared at his gift.

"It won't bite," he assured her.

Elf looked from him to the contents, and back. Surely Dayton could understand why she was reluctant to use this...this thing. Admittedly, the images in his letter and the teasing whispers from the Christmas party titillated fantasies she hadn't been aware of having. The primal element he'd stirred to life last night shivered through her, but she balked at taking this particular step.

"Touch it," Dayton urged. Removing the lid from her hold, he set it on her desk before placing the other half in her hands.

Legs weak, Elf settled into her chair, her sole focus the item nestled in midnight blue velvet. Probably no more than six inches long from base to tip, the cock-shaped plug was the same pale golden brown as the wooden container holding it. Beside it the box held a small bottle of anal lubricant.

Desire kindled in her belly, pulsed between her thighs, and snaked through her sensitive breasts. Her imagination created startling pictures in her mind. She could see herself, belly down on her bed, crying out as Dayton slowly worked his cock into her ass. The thoughts sent shivers down her spine, and not in a bad way.

Forcing the visuals aside, she traced her fingers over the toy. She'd expected it to feel alien and hard. It didn't. Instead the texture reminded her almost of skin, pliable and soft on the surface, but solid beneath. She was reluctant to pull it from the box. With Dayton watching her, and having already voiced her trepidation, she wasn't sure how he might interpret her curiosity.

Her concerns must have been visible on her face, because Dayton propped his hips on the desk again. "You've already used our safe word, Elf. If you're curious about my gift, you can check it out. I won't expect anything from you until you actually ask for it."

Pulling the plug free of its nest, Elf stroked the rounded head. Flared like the head of a penis, the device measured about an inch and a half in diameter at the tip. From there, it gradually widened ending at a base three inches across.

As she continued to stroke the toy, Dayton leaned forward to pull the bottle of lube from the box. "This," he flipped open the top, "is the best on the market."

Two clear drops fell onto his fingertip. Rubbing it between the pad of his thumb and forefinger, he snapped the cap closed and tucked the bottle back in place. "You can't really feel it on your fingertips," he spoke matter-of-factly as he lifted her free hand from her lap and transferred the liquid from his fingers to hers. "On more sensitive skin it has a slight numbing effect to ease penetration."

Elf rubbed at the fluid on her fingertips. Not really oily, but a bit thicker than water, she brought it to her nose and sniffed. There was no real scent, just a slight smell reminding

her of petroleum jelly. She had to shake her head at the sight she must make. Fingers damp with lubricant on one hand and a six-inch butt plug gripped in the other. This was definitely turning out to be an unusual Christmas.

Leaning across the desk, Dayton plucked two tissues from the dispenser and wiped first his hand, then hers. Crumpling them into a ball, he tossed the tissues in the trash.

"Do you...I mean...have you..." Elf didn't know quite how to phrase her question.

Dayton chuckled and finished for her. "Are you asking if I've ever 'gone in the backdoor'?"

She couldn't meet his gaze. Paying attention to replacing the plug in its velvet casing, Elf nodded. Her cheeks hot with embarrassment. "Yes." She croaked.

"The answer is yes. Some of the women I've been involved with find anal sex...stimulating."

She could feel his eyes on her as she traced her fingers over the velvet holding the plug and lube in place. Her mind conjured visions of Dayton with some faceless woman's body beneath him in his bed under the skylight. Sweat coating their skin, voices crying out as he urged his lover to climax just as he had with her.

"Have you?" His question burst through her thoughts.

"What?" She stammered. "Have I what?"

"Ever allowed one of your lovers to bugger you?"

"No!" She didn't mean to sound so indignant.

Her response made him laugh. Smiling, he assured her. "Okay. I wouldn't condemn you if you had, Elf."

"But..."

"If you aren't ready to take that step with me, I understand." Dayton shrugged. Leaning forward, he replaced the lid on the pear. Setting the gift on its note, he turned back to brace his hands on the arms of her chair. Holding his lips close to her ear, the soft brush of his beard tickling her jaw, he whispered, "Just so you know, I've imagined it so many ways. In a bed. Against a wall. In my office -- now that's my favorite. Can't you see it..." he suggested. "You bent over my desk, your skirt flipped up, no panties. Your pretty, pink cheeks quivering as I feed my cock up your tight little hole. Each husky cry from your lips just makes me push a bit deeper until I'm all the way in." Dayton pulled back, his eyes nearly black with passion as he met Elf's.

Elf didn't move away. Her breathing was labored as he described the scene. She could feel her nipples harden, pressing against the silk of her blouse. The thong he'd covered her in this morning was soaked from the juices pooling between her thighs. Still, she couldn't find her voice to stop him. She wanted, needed to hear him tell his fantasy. Share with her the scene that stirred his blood. If she was honest, hers as well.

Dayton eased to his knees before her, sliding his hands from the arms of her chair to her trembling thighs, he smoothed her knee-length skirt up to make room for himself between her stocking-clad legs. "Once I'm all the way in, Elf, I just pulse there." His eyes shifted away from her flushed face to the swollen breasts and taut nipples visible beneath her toffee-colored top. "Just so your pussy doesn't feel neglected, I slide a finger or two inside. My thumb circles and rubs your clit. Then when you're ready, I start to move. At first slow, then a bit faster until I'm hammering my cock in and out of your ass. I've waited so long to do you, dreamed of taking you like this, Elf, I'll probably only last three or four thrusts before I come inside you. At least, the first time."

Breathing heavily, Elf fought to bring her heart under control. As arousing as his words were, she still hesitated. "I...I can't." Elf's voice broke. The fantasy pulled at her senses, but some small part of her knew surrendering this battle could destroy any chance she might have of surviving this affair. She was already exposing her heart to untold damage simply by agreeing to this liaison. Allowing herself to submit completely to his attentions would leave nothing for her to fall back on. No small crumb of pride would remain for her to hold up as an example of how she protected herself from allowing him full control over her.

* * * * *

The door was locked and chained. The rumble of Dayton's SUV had departed the parking lot, but Elf didn't move away from the door. Just as he had last night, Dayton had stripped her out of her elf costume and under garments. He stuffed her into the toffee silk shirt and chocolate-colored skirt she'd worn for the day and followed her back to her apartment. No mention was made about the gift she'd balked at accepting and refused to use. Once again the oils were applied, this time the soothing scents of cinnamon, clove, and apple were massaged into her skin. Unlike the previous night, Dayton made no effort to coax an orgasm from her limp body. Focused only on easing the tension in her frame, he kept his touch relaxing.

Elf wasn't sure if she was thankful or depressed at his altered attentions. A part of her worried his drawing back stemmed from her reluctance to bring into play his latest gift. Logically, she believed him when he assured her that her fear was understandable and his interests were attuned to mutual pleasure, not just meeting his needs. Her worries were such she didn't feel comfortable voicing them to Dayton.

But she did have someone she could talk to. Crawling between the covers of her bed, Elf snagged the phone from her nightstand and dialed.

"It's about damn time." Jodi's groggy voice greeted her after the fourth ring.

"Did I wake you?" She glanced at the clock and cursed. "I'm sorry, go back to sleep..."

"No way," Jodi replied. "I'm dying here waiting to find out what you got today."

"A..." She could feel her face flush with embarrassment even as she blurted it out, "a butt plug."

The silence on the other end of the phone increased the heat in Elf's cheeks. "I just...I didn't..." She didn't know what to say.

"So the Sexy Santa of San Diablo is into anal," Jodi quipped, laughing at the groan Elf emitted. "What did you think of it?"

"I didn't."

"What do you mean you didn't?" Jodi asked.

"I froze." Elf flopped back against her pillows and glared into the darkness over her bed. "I stuttered and stammered and I wussed out."

"Well, considering you've never even had vanilla sex, it's understandable..." Jodi started.

"Look who's talking," Elf taunted, "You've never had sex either, but I don't see you using a plug."

"Actually, I have."

Elf held the phone away and stared at it for a moment. "You're lying."

"Nope," Jodi assured her. "Remember that catalog we looked at last Christmas?"

"Yeah." She recalled it was the very same one that had helped her identify her first gift.

"Well, they had a two-for-one special about six months ago."

"Two for one?"

"Never mind. Suffice to say, I was curious and I bought a small."

"And?"

Jodi laughed, "I tried it."

"And?"

The laughter grew louder, "Aren't you getting a little personal?" Jodi teased.

"Damn it, Jodi, how am I supposed to make decisions if you won't help me out a little?" Elf grumbled.

"What did you want to say?"

Elf didn't have to think about it. "Yes."

"So, why didn't you?"

"It seemed too much."

"How?"

"I've already agreed to sleep with him for a week. He keeps stressing that it isn't a relationship," Elf tried to explain. "It just seemed like, agreeing to *that* was going too far."

"How so? You're already going to be having sex with him. The collar you're wearing shows him that you're willing to submit to his requests. How is anal sex going too far?"

Her friend's reasonable tone seemed to scoff her rationalizations for denying her curiosity. "Would you let a guy do that to you?" Elf decided to turn the tables.

"If I trusted him, yes."

Jodi's matter-of-fact response surprised Elf. "Really?" she asked.

"Yeah." Jodi paused. "Maybe it's just me, Elf, but the books we've read make me curious. All the research I've done and the toys I had to keep hidden from Lorraine didn't changed that. You can call me weird or whatever, but if I loved a guy and I trusted him not to use it against me, I'd do it and enjoy it."

Elf didn't know how to respond to that.

"You love him, don't you?" Jodi asked when Elf had remained silent.

"Yes."

"Do you trust him?"

"Yes."

"I sense a 'but' in there. And I'm not talking the one with two 't's," Jodi quipped.

"I just don't want to lose the last bit of control I have," Elf explained.

"I understand. You have to do what's right for you, Elf. If keeping this one thing reserved for a man you love and who loves you, is what you want, then I'm not faulting you," Jodi assured her.

"I just..." Elf paused, "I just need to know that even with everything I've done, and am going to do, I kept one small part of me safe."

"Safe?"

"It's gonna hurt like hell when this is over," Elf admitted. "Much as I know it shouldn't, my pride is going to take a beating and I just need to know that I didn't give him all there was to give."

"Not to be a devil's advocate," Jodi replied. "But, have you considered maybe this is your opportunity to explore every sexual fantasy you've ever had. With a man you trust implicitly. By not doing this, you're denying yourself more than you're denying him?"

Elf thought about it. "I hadn't looked at it that way," she confessed.

"Keep in mind, too, that Dayton is living his fantasies, as well."

"So?"

"Who's to say, despite all his denials and plans, his emotions don't get wrapped up in this, too? He may find it just as hard to let you go when the week is up, as you'll find walking away from him will be."

"I can only hope," Elf whispered. "I can only hope."

Chapter Fourteen

Christmas Eve was only twenty-four hours away. One more day and the waiting would end.

Watching him now as he cuddled a young boy on his lap, Elf again wondered if she would be capable of walking away from the affair with her pride intact. She'd relinquished her heart with no regrets.

"He was always such a caring boy," spoke a quiet voice beside her, startling Elf from her thoughts.

"Excuse me?"

"Dayton," the woman was older, possibly in her late sixties more likely in her early seventies. Her brown eyes glittered with affection as she watched the man seated in a battered folding chair, head bent to hear the request of the child in his lap. "He was always taking care of the younger children."

"You knew him?"

The woman smiled at Elf. "Oh, yes. He was placed here just after his parents were killed." Streaks of gray had overwhelmed the dark blonde strands of her hair and time had added numerous creases around the deep brown eyes, but quiet strength was still present in the direct stare and squared shoulders.

"How old was he?" Elf turned her attention back to the man under discussion.

"Oh, my, I believe he had just turned eight. He was such a quiet child. Kept to himself most of the time. Dayton Kringle was a boy sent by the angels to watch over others. He always made sure the younger children were protected both here at the home and at school. The older boys looked up to him once he proved he wouldn't be intimidated.

"Even after he left, Dayton made sure the others were well-protected and taken care of by the older children."

Elf watched as another child took the place of the last and Dayton smiled and eased the nervousness of the little girl. "Did he have any relatives?"

"No, Dayton was alone in the world after his family was taken from him."

"Where did he learn about making toys?"

"He learned to work with wood when a cabinet maker helped to remodel the kitchen of the orphanage."

"How old was he?"

"Barely nine, perhaps ten. He loved working with the different tools Charles brought him. The toys were something he experimented with on his own."

"Dayton would carve toys for all of the children from the scraps Charles would give him. He always fixed any broken ones." The woman nodded at an older child hovering near the doorway just beyond the chair Dayton occupied. The girl smiled and hurried away.

The line of children had dwindled and Elf knew there would be a few minutes of visiting before Dayton would signal her to join him. Much as she anticipated the short journey back to his apartment, she craved a few minutes more with this woman. An opportunity to learn just a bit more about the man she loved didn't often present itself. "How long was he here?"

"Until he left for college."

Elf was surprised. "Wasn't he eligible for adoption? Or foster care?"

"Oh, Dayton rejected any attempts at placement." The older woman read Elf's surprise easily. "Any time a couple expressed an interest in adopting him, Dayton would refuse to meet them. He wanted nothing to do with having another family. As for foster care, Dayton was placed once in a home when he was ten."

"Not long after, he appeared back on our doorstep. His lip was bloodied, and he had several bruises on his face and back. Two other children were with him."

"What happened?"

"Apparently the woman in the home had a vile temper, and when Dayton stepped between her and her own child, she turned her temper on him. Dayton waited until evening, and left the home with the other foster child and the foster mother's seven-year-old daughter."

In her mind, Elf could picture Dayton as a quiet ten-year-old, facing up to an adult, and not backing down when he deemed the situation wrong. "He must have been very brave."

"Yes, brave, but also very much alone."

The girl returned through the door behind Dayton as he set the last child on his feet, and handed him a small wrapped package. Smiling shyly, she approached the chair, and offered a plate of cookies, and a glass of milk to him. He took a cookie as well as the milk,

and said something to the girl that had her blushing and nodding. Stepping away, the girl moved to a group of children, and passed the remaining cookies around to them.

As Elf watched, he finished the cookie and milk before rising to his feet. His gaze easily found her in the crowded room before moving to the woman beside her and lingering there for several seconds. After setting his empty glass on the table beside his chair, he moved toward her, and Elf knew her chance to learn anything else about him was at an end.

"Hello, Sister Agnes." Dayton leaned down and pressed a gentle kiss to the older woman's cheek. "Not telling nasty stories about my past, are you?"

"Dayton, you have been missed." Sister Agnes reached up and patted his bearded cheek. "The children enjoy your visits. You are such an angel to do this for them every year."

"Hmmm" -- he looked down at her -- "avoiding the question."

"Of course, boy, we women have to keep you on your toes somehow." Turning to Elf, Sister Agnes nodded, "Perhaps someday you can come for a visit, and I'll tell you all about his years with Lady Catherine's. Now I must see about getting the youngest ones into bed." Exchanging another brief hug with Dayton, Sister Agnes moved off.

Elf hoped her expression didn't reflect the secrets she'd learned about him. His eyes studied her for several moments.

"You ready to go?" he finally asked.

She nodded, "It's been a long day."

Settling his hand at her waist, Dayton led her to the room where they'd left their coats. The velvet toy bag was gathered from beside the chair. Several children ran to offer final hugs good-bye, before he opened the door and followed her into the chilly winter evening.

* * * * *

As she drove to her apartment with Dayton following, Elf thought again about Sister Agnes. If the older nun ever saw some of the gifts her "sweet boy" had bestowed on her these last ten days, her heart just might skip a beat. Elf's had, but not for the same reason.

Her smile widened when she recalled this morning's present and its delivery. Her gold chain had been loosely clamped onto her erect nipples, still damp from his attention. Following that, he added the short links connecting the rings to her belly chain, and then came the careful placement of the beaded chain between her thighs. Dayton had focused on dressing her, his usual playful teasing and caresses absent as he eased her panties on and tucked her breasts into the matching bra. Stockings, slacks, blouse, and shoes quickly followed before Dayton placed a large flat package in her lap.

While he watched from the wingback chair beside the window, Elf slipped the silver bow from the ivory box and lifted the lid. Beneath the vellum note lay a stack of matted illustrations fifteen inches high and seventeen inches wide. Wrapped in plastic, she lifted print after print until all eleven were spread over the bedding. Every one of the images was

vaguely familiar. Tracing a fingertip over the colorful depiction of a couple intimately entwined and facing one another, Elf remembered seeing something similar in a copy of the Kama Sutra. "They're beautiful," she murmured.

"They are," Dayton agreed his eyes focused on her as if determined to read the most remote expression fluttering across her face. "You'll need frames, but otherwise they're ready to hang."

Returning each of the prints to the box, Elf lifted the paper and read the note.

My Elf,

Only one day remains. Although my own imagination seems to be endless when providing ideas for how I want to indulge my desire for you, I thought we might find inspiration in renderings from a famous text.

I'm sure, during our days and nights together, we will get an opportunity to try each of these eleven illustrations. Perhaps even more can be explored.

I'm sure we could invent a position or two of our own, should it be necessary.

Twenty-four more hours, My Elf...

Santa

The box rested beneath the garment bag holding her elf costume on the passenger seat. When Dayton had stripped off her costume and underwear, then removed her all the chains except the one at her throat, he'd mentioned the prints.

"We'll take them to your apartment." His fingers deftly redressed her in her slacks and blouse before he changed out of his Santa suit. Jeans and flannel shirt were pulled on before he carried her things down to her car.

At her apartment, Elf waited near the door until Dayton disappeared down the hall toward her bedroom. Shaking her head at his determination to make sure there were no threats prowling her home, she hung her coat in the closet, tossed her garment bag over the sofa, and moved to turn the lights of her Christmas tree on. The long flat box was placed beside the gaily wrapped packages her mother had left.

Settled on the carpet, watching the twinkling lights reflect off the silver and gold ornaments, Elf wasn't aware Dayton had returned to the living room until she heard him calling her name.

"Damn it, Elf, where did..."

"I'm right here," she laughed. Twisting just enough to see him standing near the door, she patted the carpet beside her. "Come join me." The hall light illuminated his features. He'd tossed his leather jacket over her garment bag and stood, arms crossed over his chest, glaring at her tree.

When he reached to switch the lights on, she stopped him. "No, don't do that. I like having only the tree lights on." Shifting to face him, she wrapped her right arm around her drawn up knees, and again tapped the floor with her left, "Sit with me."

Again he ignored her invitation. Rounding the sofa, he dropped into the overstuffed cushions. Stretching out his legs, he crossed them at the ankle. His arms separated, one hand moved to rest in his lap while his left dropped onto the armrest, fingers absently drumming.

Propping her chin on her knees, Elf watched him deliberately ignore the Christmas tree. Moving from the shelves to the prints on her walls, Dayton never allowed his eyes to return to her tree.

She wondered what he thought of her apartment. All four and a half rooms -- bathroom, bedroom, living room, dining area, and kitchen -- would easily fit in the living and dining rooms of his penthouse. Glancing around, she noticed her Christmas stocking dangling from the edge of one of her bookshelves, held in place by a carved resin Christmas elf. The wreath on her door matched the one hanging on the wall between the kitchen and dining room. Poinsettias decorated the table cloth, with napkins in the same fabric.

She tried to recall the decorations in Dayton's home, but she couldn't remember seeing any. The more she thought about it, the stranger it seemed. A man nicknamed the Sexiest Santa of San Diablo had nothing in his home indicating the holiday season had arrived. "You don't have a Christmas tree," she blurted out, her head rising off her knees.

Dayton watched her face blanch as she made her declaration. Under his breath he cursed. To her his response was cool, "No. I don't."

He'd noticed all the little items strewn throughout her apartment. Thinking about her affronted tone when she'd declared him treeless stirred his humor. Laughing, he watched her scramble to her feet, and sit beside him on the couch. Curled onto the cushions next to him, her legs folded beneath her, he knew she was thinking of something else. He absorbed the heat of her small frame against his. The scent of her skin filled his nostrils; wisps of hair dangled in front of her ears, drawing his eyes away from her lips.

"We need to get..."

Hell no, his mind denied, to her he shook his head. "No."

"But how can you *not* have a tree? Where do you put your presents?"

Dayton had to smile at her disbelief. "I don't get presents."

Her eyes narrowed. "You do so," she reminded him.

"Well, yes," he remembered the gifts she'd given him for Christmas since she'd worked for him. "I get the gift you give me each year, but otherwise..."

"That's terrible."

He could see she was getting worked up on his behalf so he stopped her. Wrapping his right arm around her shoulders, he tugged her closer. "It's okay, my Elf. I don't really celebrate Christmas, so my not getting presents, doesn't bother me."

"Not celebrate," she looked stunned.

He chuckled at her expression. "I haven't celebrated it for a very long time."

"But," she motioned to his hair and beard, "you're Santa."

Laughter escaped despite his efforts to stifle it. "No, I just play Santa for kids who deserve to still believe in magic." He couldn't stop the urge to press a kiss against her forehead. His hand stroked across her shoulders before coasting down her back. "Besides, I'm too old for Christmas."

Elf snuggled into his side, shaking her head. "Don't say that around my mom. She thinks that no one is too old for Christmas." Shifting on her seat until her head rested against his shoulder and one pale hand played with the buttons of his shirt, she quietly asked, "So, on Christmas morning what do you do?"

"Draw. Work on designs. Go over the books." Dipping his hand beneath the hem of her blouse, he teased the flesh beneath the waistband of her slacks, "This Christmas, I plan on staying in bed with you."

"All day?"

"Yes." He teased, his left hand stroked over her right leg, drawing it across his lap and tilting her body closer to his.

Elf pulled away, "I won't be able to."

Irritation snaked through his belly, but he kept it from showing in his voice. Her withdrawal irked him, but he let her shift further down the sofa and crossed his arms over his chest. "What do you mean?"

Elf could tell from his flat expression he was angry. Not mad, she admitted, more miffed, if that term could be applied to such a domineering man. She hurried to explain. "I'm having dinner with my friend, Jodi. My parents and I were supposed to go to her house for Christmas dinner. We'd made the plans just after Thanksgiving."

He continued to watch her without saying anything.

"Since my mom and Gerry are on their cruise, I can't let her spend the holiday alone. It's her very first Christmas," Elf tried to convince him.

"First Christmas?"

"Yes." Elf rolled her eyes. "Jodi's aunt, Lorraine, would never let her celebrate holidays."

"Never?" Dayton looked surprised as he leaned into the corner of the cushions, his arms sliding to the back and arm of the sofa.

Wanting to return to the spot she'd been in, Elf inched a little closer. "Never. Jodi spent her first Thanksgiving with me, my mom, and Gerry after Lorraine died in September." She laughed. "In October she had the best decorated house for Halloween, even though there weren't any trick-or-treaters."

"They probably didn't expect to get anything if your friend and her aunt had lived there for a long time." Dayton reasoned.

Elf nodded, "That's what she said, but she's hoping by next Halloween the kids will start coming around."

"So, she's trying to make up for holidays she didn't get before."

"Yes, and I don't want her to have it alone."

"There's no problem, Elf." He assured her. "If you've already promised your friend you'll be there..."

Elf watched him for a moment then hurried to suggest, "You can come with me. Jodi will have plenty of food."

He started to shake his head. "No, I think..."

"Come on." She smiled at him, shifting closer so her knees rubbed his thigh. "She's a good cook and you're not doing anything else, are you?"

"Let me think about it." He relented. "I'm not guaranteeing anything." He settled his arm around her shoulder and pulled her into his side. "We can talk about it again Christmas morning, okay?"

"Sounds fair."

Dayton leaned down and pressed a soft kiss against her forehead then rose. "I should go," he suggested, tugging on his jacket.

"But..." Elf watched him over the back of the sofa.

"You need to get some sleep." he advised her. "With tomorrow being Christmas Eve, I have some special plans. Plus we'll be in the store all day."

* * * * *

Sitting in the dark, staring into space Dayton tried not to think. He'd left Elf's nearly two hours earlier and he was still trying to figure out what had pushed him out her door before he'd had his fill. Watching her achieve orgasm heightened his arousal and increased his need to push her to ever higher peaks. Tonight, though, he'd left without touching her beyond a caress.

Twenty-five-year-old Lagavulin slid smooth as silk down his throat, but it didn't help answer his question. He'd planned on wringing several climaxes from his Elf before he left. Instead, he shook his head as he remembered the chaste kiss he'd pressed to her lips. He'd

run like a scared rabbit. Something so antithetical to his nature he wondered what made him walk away before completing his plans for the evening.

Thinking of the orders Bryce had given during lunch Dayton considered the possibility his retreat may be linked to the admonishments. Through Halsey he'd learned control and discipline. When combined within a consenting relationship the two elements augmented release, heightened satisfaction and empowered the participants with knowing they determined how their bodies would respond. All the lessons he'd learned from Halsey reinforced this awareness. He wanted his Elf to know of and experience the power within her.

Before he was drawn any deeper into his thoughts, the ringing phone broke the silence. Checking the caller ID display, Dayton shook his head, and lifted the cordless handset. "Yes?"

"What the hell did you do to piss Halsey off?" David Henderson demanded. He didn't give Dayton the opportunity to respond before continuing his tirade. "It's bad enough I've got Case climbing on the diving board over the deep end of the psychic swimming pool from Hell, Delilah Baxter is pitching the mother of all hissy fits because Erik's choice for wife doesn't have blue enough blood, now I've got to field calls from Bryce about fixing some screw up you've made."

"Stay out of it." The softly spoken words surprised Dayton as well as his old college roommate with their intensity and underlying threat.

"I'd be more than happy to, Day," David assured him, "but the old man mentioned Elfina and..."

The tumbler of Scotch settled on the glass-topped end table with a sharp snap. "I'm taking care of her." He informed his friend.

The tense silence lasted several seconds before the sound of an exasperated sigh echoed in Dayton's ear. David asked, "What he told me is true, isn't it?"

"Explain."

"Bryce gave me the impression you'd begun...introducing Elfina to our scene."

"It's none of his concern." Irritation drew Dayton to his feet. "Or yours," he added. Snatching up his drink, he strode to the expanse of windows overlooking the landscaped grounds behind the factory, office building, and store.

"Was she at one of the clubs when you hooked up?" David sounded skeptical. "I mean, she's a good looking woman, but not one I'd normally identify as..."

Dayton cut him off, "I said you don't have to concern yourself. I'm taking care of her. Halsey shouldn't have involved you..."

"He and Rick Bennett trained us, Day. If what you're doing is serious enough to have Bryce calling me up, I've got an obligation to look into it."

Tossing back the last of his Scotch, Dayton fought the urge to hang up. David had every right to be concerned. They'd trained under the Doms during their four years at university. Having one of the Masters involve himself in a situation did not bode well for anyone. "Hands off my Elf," Dayton warned.

The silence on the phone lasted longer than was comfortable. Cursing his impulse to reinforce his temporary claim on Elf, Dayton didn't bother clarifying his intentions. He simply waited for David's customarily cutting comeback.

"Then quit pissing off Halsey." David growled. "Like I said I've got enough with my little brother and the Baxter matriarch, I don't need Bennett or Halsey climbing on the bandwagon."

Dayton stayed quiet, his own thoughts spinning when he stopped to consider the repercussions of his association with Elf. He'd looked at his situation from every angle before he'd approached her, but since the delivery of his second gift he hadn't taken time to reevaluate whether or not the landscape had changed or remained static. Perhaps...

David interrupted his ruminations, "Listen, I know how you are around the holidays. I didn't tell Bryce, but I think he has an idea you aren't using your usual caution."

"This has nothing to do with the holidays..."

"All I'm saying, man, is, keep it cool. I like Elfina, she's a nice lady, but if she isn't already part of the scene don't start breaking her in." David unknowingly repeated Bryce's rebukes.

"And if I do?"

"Don't." David snapped. "You have never been, and probably will never be, interested in committing to a full relationship with a sub, and Elfina has sub written all over her. If you start, but don't finish her training I'll be asked to step in. Right now, I just don't have the fucking time to deal with it." He paused to let his words sink in. "So, to spare me having to pick up pieces. Keep it straight vanilla with your assistant."

"I'll think about it."

David groaned.

Dayton could practically see his college roommate throwing up his hands as he exclaimed "I tried" before he hung up.

Tucking the phone back in its cradle, Dayton moved into the kitchen to rinse out his empty glass. He thought about his actions and how they seemed to be perceived by two of his closest friends. It was possible he was blind to the damage he might inflict if he continued along the path he'd designed for his Elf. Hell, rethinking his plans might be wise if he was getting lectured twice in as many days for his attentions to his Elf. He flipped the light off and wandered back into the living room.

The outside lights threw his reflection back at him in the windows. His shoulder-length white hair and close-cropped beard and mustache could have belonged to any number

of department store Santas. In the mirror-like image facing him, for the first time he noticed the disparity between the austere leather, wood, chrome, and glass furnishings of his home and his holiday visage. Anyone entering his apartment would never guess Christmas was just over twenty-four hours away. No tree filled with ornaments, or decorations of any kind adorned his walls.

It was the complete opposite of his Elf's home. Color, lights, candles, decorations were everywhere you looked. He hadn't paid much attention to the details the few times he'd been there. Until tonight.

Seeing Elf curled up in front of the white flocked tree with its color coordinated silver and gold presents, red apples, and the velvet angel topping the tree, Dayton had felt his belly twist. Memories of sitting just like her bombarded his mind, reminding him of the delight his mom and dad had taken in the Christmas holidays. The smell of gingerbread and cinnamon would fill the house from all the cookies his dad would bake while his mom fussed over the placement of every ornament on the tree.

Swearing, Dayton turned away from the windows, the memories, and headed down the hall to his bedroom, stripping out of his clothes as he went. Remembering was a useless waste of time and energy, he reproached himself. Thinking about what had been didn't get anything accomplished. Elf's remarks about getting a tree for him were foolish. He didn't need a damned tree. He didn't need decorations.

He was getting what he wanted for Christmas.

His Elf would warm his bed until he'd satisfied his craving for her. Then he could get back to what was important -- his work and his business.

Chapter Fifteen

Pressed against the locked door, Elf focused on stifling the cries welling in her throat.

“Tell me again, my Elf, what dreams you’ve had about your Santa.” His voice caressed her ear while his lips teased the skin beneath the gold and silver collar. Between her thighs, his fingers stroked her bare mound, parted the swollen petals, and coaxed the sensitive kernel to full prominence.

Shaking her head, she gasped, “I can’t...I don’t...”

Head lifting away, Dayton gazed down at her even as his fingers continued to toy with her pussy. “Shall I remind you?” he asked, easing back, and turning her to face the door.

Set a foot from the top, a square window looked out on the sales floor of the toy store. Through the two-way mirror, Elf could see parents and children wandering through the store, but her primary focus was the gold and red velvet chair just visible through the arrangement of the shelves.

“Hands on the door, my Elf, and tell me again about your fantasy,” Dayton ordered. “Let me start it for you,” his body pressed against hers even as the back of her skirt was raised, exposing the cheeks bared by the cut of her red-and-white-striped thong. “We’re in the store alone...” His free hand smoothed over her ass, dipping between the cheeks to tug at the chain nestled between her thighs.

Though his fingers still teased her clit, Elf was able to drag her thoughts into some semblance of order. “We’re, we’re here at the store and ev...” She moaned at a particularly forceful tug on the chain. “Everyone is gone and only the lights of the Christmas tree illuminate the room.”

“And,” Dayton queried, his fingers doing something with her skirt to keep it out of the way while he stroked over her ass.

“Aa...aaa...and,” she fought back the gasp as first one digit then a second delved between the folds, gathered the moisture seeping from her slit, and smoothed it over the button of nerves he continued to tease with his thumb. “And, you let me sit on your lap.”

“Have you been a good elf?” His voice rumbled against her throat.

Having been through the scene so many times in her mind, Elf easily fell into the dialog, “Yes. Haven’t you watched me?”

A low chuckle vibrated against her ear as his fingers pressed, stroked, and then squeezed her sensitized clit, provoking another stifled cry. “Oh, yes, my Elf. I’ve watched you and all the good deeds you’ve done. For others. But what have you done for your Santa?”

Remembering the scene she’d recounted for him while they’d shared their lunch, Elf’s body pulsed in anticipation. Would he use this opportunity to finally end her torture? Not sure whether she should be excited or disappointed, Elf responded as she always did in her fantasy, “You are so right, Santa.” Turning her head to look at him over her shoulder, she rubbed her bottom against the bulge of his cock.

Another sharp tug on the beaded chain had her lifting on her toes, head arching back to fall against his shoulder, and fingertips pressing into the door beneath the window.

“Naughty Elf,” Dayton purred. His fingers slid from her body as he stepped back. “Turn around.”

Elf turned to face him, her breathing unsteady as she watched him lick her juices from his fingers. Heat filled her cheeks as she saw him draw a slender vibrator from his pocket and hold it out to her. “That’s...”

“Yours, yes,” he grinned unrepentantly. Leaning close, he slipped it into her hand. Holding her gaze, he commanded, “Go to the sofa and show Santa how you like to fuck yourself.”

On wobbly legs, Elf walked past the two round tables and settled into the cushions of the sofa. As she watched, Dayton pulled one of the chairs, tucked under the nearest table out, and placed it directly in front of her.

“Take off your panties and remove your chain. I want to see how you like to touch your pussy.”

With him seated so close, she practically had to straddle his lap to slip the panties off, and free the clasps on the chain. He took both items, storing the chain in the pocket of his suit. The panties he lifted to his nose and drew in the smell as if it were the sweetest perfume.

“Pull your skirt up, so we don’t stain it.” He directed.

Lifting the back of her dress, Elf settled onto the nubby fabric, slipped her shoes off, and placed one foot, clad in a red-and-white-striped stocking, on the cushion. Holding Dayton’s gaze, she eased the front of her skirt out of the way, licked two of her fingers, and lowered them to her pussy. As she teased over the sensitive knob, dipping down to coat her

fingers in her liquid, Elf lost herself in the pleasure of knowing Dayton's gaze was just as arousing as the slide of her fingers over her body.

"Let me see my cunt, my Elf."

Elf's breasts peaked at the possessive way he claimed every part of her. It seemed right that he think of her pussy as his, just as she knew all of her belonged to him. Whether he wanted her to or not, he owned her heart, as well as her body. Dropping her vibrator on her belly, she used her fingers to hold open the swollen lips, exposing the most intimate part of her flesh to him.

She stroked her fingers in and out of her sheath, over and around her clit, taking her time, enjoying the building sensations. Drawing satisfaction from watching Dayton's eyes follow every motion of her fingers, the flutter of her labia as she started to peak, although she held back, waiting for his permission.

"No. Don't come." He commanded. "Now, the vibe."

Using her body's juices to lubricate the sleek purple tube, Elf switched it to its lowest setting and began working it in. The expression on Dayton's face was so well schooled she found it difficult to decipher his reaction, until she looked at his eyes. The deep blue had intensified. Nearly as black as his pupils, Dayton's eyes burned through her as she eased her vibrator in and out, slowly, allowing only four of the eight inches to penetrate.

"Take it all. Show me how you want your Santa's cock inside you."

Gasping at the images flooding her mind, Elf pressed her vibrator deeper, forcing resistant muscles to accept the full length, and glorying at the sensations bombarding her. Picturing Dayton over her, thrusting deep, whispering words of encouragement and coarse descriptions of what he would do to her -- and what he wanted done to him -- had her climax building, tightening her belly, swelling her breasts. Head thrown back, Elf squeezed her eyes shut, lost in the visuals, the tingling feelings rolling through her.

"Can you see me fucking you, my Elf?" His breath whispered across her lips. The heat of his calloused palm covered hers on the base of her toy.

Eyes fluttering open as she answered, "Ye-yes."

"What do you want to say to your Santa, my Elf?"

"Please."

"Please, what?"

"Please fuck me, Santa."

He chuckled, a wicked gleam in his eyes, "Not yet, my Elf, But I will show you."

God, she looked so good spread beneath him, it took everything in him, all his training to keep from wrenching open his pants and shoving his cock into her pretty pink pussy. The slide of her vibrator made wet sucking noises in the quiet of the employee break room. Her

half-smothered cries just increased his arousal. Drawing her left leg off the sofa cushion he pressed it toward her chest with his right hand as his left maneuvered the toy in and out of her sheath in quick, sharp strokes. A twist of his fingers had the setting switched to high between one stroke and the next, causing his Elf to arch beneath him, fingers scratching at the cushions beneath her.

“Oh, yes,” he assured her as he worked her pussy with the purple vibrator. “Santa’s gonna love fucking his pussy. His Elf is so wet and hot,” he whispered. “Do you like how Santa fucks his Elf?”

“Yes, yes. Please, Dayton, I can’t...” Her head thrashed against the cushions, her chestnut curls wet with sweat, tangled around her face, and plastered to her cheeks.

He could see it, feel it in the tension flooding her body. The desperate need to come twisted inside her, controlling her, driving her to thrust against his hand, take each stroke of the vibrator and beg for more. “You can’t what, my Elf?” He needed to hear it.

“I need to come. Please, Dayton,” her eyes fluttered open to hold his gaze, tears glistening in the jade depths. “Let me come.”

Holding her gaze for several long moments, Dayton waited, then nodded, “Yes, my Elf, you can come for your Santa.”

Before the waves of climax washed over her, she smiled a beautiful, sweet smile that froze his heart, and whispered two words that nearly ripped his soul out.

“Thank you.”

* * * * *

Before the last three customers were shown to the door, Elf and Dayton exited the store through the back door. A brick path wound through the grass to the main building and factory. Still clothed in their green and red velvet costumes, Elf smiled at the sight they presented to the few employees finishing up their work.

“I always expect some desperate parent or photographer to jump out of the bushes.” Elf laughed. She suspected Dayton kept his pace slow and his strides close together to accommodate her shorter legs and stiletto heels.

Dayton chuckled, “It’s not the parents or cameras I worry about. My mind conjures visions of a mob of kids swarming across the grounds to raid the factory.”

She laughed leaning into the arm he’d settled around her waist as they entered the building and stepped onto the elevator. “After watching you with the kids at the shelters and homes, I can’t believe you’d be afraid of them.”

“You’ve never seen a toy-crazed mob of nine-year-olds.”

“True, but I think they’re fun.”

“Fun, as long as they get to go home with someone else,” Dayton chuckled.

Taking a chance, Elf asked, "Don't you want to have kids some day? You know, to pass the business on to?"

Nothing in his expression or demeanor reflected unease. "I've never thought of it. Maybe someday." Pulling a set of keys from one of his boots, Dayton eased a key off, and handed it to her. "Here, I have to head over to the factory as soon as I change, but I assume you brought some clothes and personal items for tomorrow."

Elf nodded. Smooth change of subject equals not allowing you to go there, she interpreted.

"You'll need the elevator key to get up to the apartment. While I'm at the factory, you can get your things put away then I'll meet you back in the office by six."

"Sounds good," Elf hoped her voice didn't betray any of the nervousness snaking through her body.

They separated at the office, with her going in to collect the bags she'd brought, and him continuing on to the penthouse to get changed, and leave. Stopping at her desk she checked the number of call slips left by the receptionist before moving to the closet. Her small duffle bag held a few changes of clothes, makeup, toiletries, and two novels she'd tossed in on the off chance she would get to read them. She doubted, despite Dayton's claims to the contrary, they would spend the entire two weeks following Christmas making love. A large, white zippered tote bag hid the surprises she'd decided to bring for Christmas morning.

As she carried her things to the elevator and inserted the key, the doors slid open and Dayton grinned at her. Tugging her toward his desk, he divested her of her bags, lifted her onto the shiny mahogany surface, and eased her skirt up.

"I only have a few minutes," he growled, sliding the panel of her thong aside and dipping first one finger then a second into her moist sheath. "You're always so wet, Elf," he whispered against her lips as his thumb stroked her clit and her back arched, pressing her swelling breasts against his chest.

"Dayton," she pleaded, rising to meet his stroking digits, legs slipping over his jeans-clad hips to drag him closer.

"I have to watch you come, my Elf," he told her, leaning back to watch her face. "But, I have to make it quick," he warned. His fingers picked up the pace as his thumb massaged the sensitive nubbin, stroking her arousal higher and faster than he'd ever done before.

It spiraled so quickly through her Elf was breathless, unable and unwilling to stop the rise and explosion that shook her. Her climax began where her body clutched at his touch, drawing his strokes deeper, as the heat arrowed up, filling her belly, her breasts. At his waist her thighs clenched, pulling him close, while her lips suckled his, their tongues engaged in a seductive tug-of-war. As she braced herself on the slippery surface of the desktop with her left hand, the other rose to thread through his silver waves to hold him close.

Long moments later, he eased free of her hold, licked the evidence of her arousal from his fingers, and smoothed her panties and skirt back into place. "Have to go, babe." He settled a soft kiss on her lips, and moved away from the desk. "I'll see you around six, okay?"

Elf didn't trust her voice, so she nodded.

"Dinner, then," his eyes glittered with promise, "dessert."

Anticipation stirred the butterflies in her belly as she nodded again and watched him leave. Drawing another deep breath, she eased off the desk, careful to make sure her wobbly legs were capable of supporting her. Once she was sure of her ability to walk, she gathered her bags, and moved back toward the elevator.

In the apartment she hovered at the closed elevator, gazing across the broad expanse of the living room at the double doors that opened onto his bedroom. There they were, she thought, the last barrier to cross before ending twelve days of seduction. They looked so...normal, Elf decided. Simple dark mahogany frame, brushed brass hardware. Edging forward, she took the time to really look at the panels decorating them.

She'd never done that, she realized, stepping closer. The number of times Dayton had led her through the portal to his bed, she'd never taken a moment to look at the passageway she stepped through.

Like most of the furniture and frames in his apartment, Elf knew Dayton had completed the finishing touches in his home himself. The double doors were dark in color, glossy. The designs carved into the panels indistinct yet compelling. Moving nearer, her hands weighted by her bags, Elf examined the four sections carefully. Each of the four parts was in the shape of a rectangle, measuring, she guessed, three feet across and three and a half feet high. Two set above each other with a flat piece of trim framing them made up a door.

On the left top panel the image of a reclining couple surrounded by trees, leaves drifting over their entwined frames had her heartbeat increasing. The faces were turned away or hidden beneath a tangle of loose hair and falling leaves, leaving her wondering whom Dayton had chosen as the model for the woman. In the frame and muscular form of the man, Elf could easily see similarities between the figure and Dayton.

The same couple was visible on the top panel of the right door. This time their bed was made of snow, flakes settling over their forms while snow-laden branches bent toward them creating an arch over the lovers. Anticipating a season change to spring in the third panel situated in the lower section of the left door, Elf felt the bags slip from her grip when she identified the image carved into the dark wood.

Her gaze shifted to the right lower panel to confirm the images were similar. They were. The lower left panel showed the woman, lying alone beneath a circle that could represent the sun or moon, the trees empty of leaves, branches bent away from her form. The right panel repeated the solitary image only with the man's body stretched beneath the disk and the branches stretching outward, avoiding the figure beneath them.

Shivering at the implication the carvings represented, Elf pushed the doors open, hurried inside to settle her belongings, and change clothes. There were still several tasks she wanted to complete before Dayton returned. Stripping off her Elf costume, she pulled a red skirt and a green-, white-, and red-striped blouse from the garment bag, grinning at the fact her selection of clothing so accurately fit the striped lingerie Dayton had presented her with this morning.

She zipped her elf dress into the garment bag before slipping her heels back on. Her gaze moved back to the open doors and she wondered at the time it must have taken him to complete them. Elf placed her duffle on the bed and put away the few clothes she'd brought -- shirts, jeans, and skirts were hung in the small area Dayton had cleared for her. Hanging the garment bag in the closet, her doubts surfaced again. Maybe, she thought, he hadn't emptied the space for her specifically. Perhaps the clear spot was left there to accommodate any woman he was involved with. Just because he expected her to remain with him for the next two weeks, it didn't necessarily follow he would clear away...

"Stop," she demanded shaking her head. "You're over thinking the situation," Elf grouched. Dragging her toiletries bag out, she folded her duffle, shoved it in beside her tote bag, and pulled the door closed.

In the bathroom, she opened her bag, gathering what she needed to refresh her lip gloss and mascara and forcing her thoughts away from the morass of doubts trying to ruin her confidence.

Taking a last look at her reflection to assure herself the nervous anticipation building within her wasn't visible. Elf turned out the light in the bathroom and returned downstairs to the office.

On her desk blotter was a cream vellum envelope addressed to "My Elf." While she'd been recovering from his attentions, he must have left her last missive on his way out the door.

Inside was a list on the same vellum along with a short note.

My Elf,

Did you think there would be no gift on this last day? It's Christmas Eve and thoughts of this evening have my body clamoring for release.

I have enclosed a list of things I have planned for us. Review them. Together, we will check off each item.

Until the last.

My intent, my Elf, is the completion of the final entry on my list will find us both too exhausted to bother with checking it off.

Santa

Elf set aside the note and examined the list. Her breath caught at the numbered items marching down one column labeled “Things To Do” on the page.

First on the list was *Play Santa and elf at store*. On the line beneath it was *Return to office and change clothes*. Separated into three columns with the items being the widest and the other two labeled with her and Dayton’s names above them, Elf reached for her pen to place a tick mark next to the check marks Dayton had set beside first two items.

The list continued on with innocuous things such as dinner, dessert, and return to apartment. It was the last item on the list which set Elf’s heart racing. In the same bold script as all the rest were the words:

Twelfth Day means twelve hours of fucking.

Now that the time was here, Elf’s belly was jumping with butterflies. She carefully folded the list and note, and tucked them back into the envelope. Sliding it into her purse, she gave herself a moment for her nerves to settle before reaching for the stack of mail requiring attention.

* * * * *

While he listened to Doug Crenshaw drone on about the two men he’d suggested to replace the retiring shift supervisor, Dayton’s mind only took in half of what was being said. The other half of his concentration was centered on the list of activities he’d left for Elf to read. Anticipation hummed through his body, amping up his nerves to the point his senses were picking up on every sound, smell, and flavor he came in contact with.

“...and after Felix cut off his hand we were able to reattach it with the staple gun,” Doug informed him.

“What?” The question exploded from his lips once Doug’s words made sense.

Crenshaw laughed, his age-lined face wrinkling even more as he shook his head, “Son, your head just isn’t on business right now.”

Dayton didn’t take offence to Doug’s chastisement. “Did Felix...?” he started to ask then chuckled at his own gullibility.

“Course not,” Doug slapped Dayton’s shoulder. “I know better than to put that fool near any of the machines with a blade.”

The blow was firm, the calloused palm heavy despite the two decades separating their ages. Doug Crenshaw had been one of his first hires when Dayton opened his store, and he’d never regretted putting the man in charge of the factory floor. Looking at the few staff members cleaning their stations and organizing their tools in the boxes or racks where they were stored, Dayton admitted, “You’re right, my mind isn’t on business right now, but I do want to see the recommendations you have for the position.”

Doug nodded. “I’ll get a report to you after the holiday, but before the end of the year.”

"Good." Something in Doug's face had Dayton suspecting there was more he wanted to say. "Was there something else, Doug?"

"She's a good choice," the older man offered, his voice gruff but direct.

"Who?"

"Miss Elf." Doug pulled out the rag he kept in his back pocket, and wiped his hands with it. "She's a good choice for you."

Dayton could feel his grin fade, but Doug kept talking, ignoring the warning he knew was in his eyes.

"She's always listened to the workers when they had a question, or a complaint, or a concern they wanted to bring to you, and she's got a good eye for what product will sell, and what won't." Shoving the rag back into his pants, Doug met Dayton's glare with one of his own.

Crossing his arms over his broad chest, the older man continued, "I know you didn't ask my opinion, but I'm givin' it to you. Miss Elfina is a good woman, and she deserves the best. Around here, the best is you. I'll also give you fair warning," he wagged a gnarled finger at him, "you don't treat her right, and there's plenty of bucks around here more than willing to offer a shoulder to cry on, and arms to hold her if you hurt her."

The fury churning in his chest confused Dayton. Feeling it was expected. He'd always hated the constant observation and butting-in at the orphanage when he'd been growing up, but he understood it was the kids' way of protecting what they considered theirs. Just as he understood his employees' concern motivated their interest in his private life. No, he realized, it wasn't the advice or interference Doug's advice represented pissing him off, it was the fact other men thought they had the right to approach what was his.

The instant the thought entered his mind, Dayton's heart stopped then resumed beating at twice its normal rate. Just as it had unnerved him last night and this afternoon, the possessiveness he felt toward Elf was inexplicable. He'd never experienced it with any of his other lovers. Why, he demanded of himself, was he feeling it now?

Knowing Doug was still watching him, Dayton schooled his features into the implacable mask he'd learned to don during the holidays. The older man had unsettled him with the forthright opinion, but showing the extent to which he'd been annoyed wasn't acceptable. "I'll take it under advisement, Doug. Why don't you have the crews pack it in and head on home?"

Doug shook his head. Rough fingertips scratched his thinning, gray hair, cropped close, and exposing his weathered scalp. "I'll tell 'em." The expression in his copper brown eyes was resigned, sad almost as he watched Dayton, but he refrained from adding any other comments to his gruff farewell beyond a wish for a happy holiday.

* * * * *

"I thought for sure," Elf muttered as she pulled items from her toiletries bag, dropping them onto the granite counter top. The different bits and pieces lay in front of her, but not the makeup remover she used to strip the mascara from her lashes. "Maybe." She eyed the mirrored medicine cabinets. Reaching for a knob, she pulled it open. Nope, nothing related to female needs lined the shelves, just shaving cream, razors, a few first aid items, and a grooming kit.

The next cabinet was tugged open, but still no luck. Pushing them closed, she moved on to the drawers.

"Looking for something?" Dayton's reflection grinned at her.

"Yes."

He moved in beside her, leaned his hip against the sink and offered, "Can I help?"

"Well," she explained with a lopsided smile, "unless you want to look at raccoon eyes all night, I could use some eye makeup remover. I forgot mine and I thought..."

He chuckled and shook his head, "Sorry to disappoint, but I've never had use for the stuff, personally."

"But what about..."

Again he shook his head, "Do you ever recall seeing a woman leaving my office as if she'd stayed the night?"

Elf thought about it. "No." Her nerves had her avoiding his gaze. Turning back to her things, she started collecting the items strewn over the granite. Fumbling for the tube of mascara beside his hip, her knuckles bumped a white plastic disk, sending it skittering across the counter's edge to bounce off Dayton's bare foot.

Before she could grab it, Dayton bent, and retrieved the case of birth control pills. Elf could feel her cheeks flush as he examined the white disk, and popped the lid. As she watched him, his gaze raked over the blister packs inside before he pushed the top closed.

Holding the case out to her, he waited until her eyes met his. "Are you trying to tell me something?"

"No." At his arched brow she snatched the case from his fingers and shoved it into the makeup bag. "I was going to talk to you about..."

Pulling open one of the drawers she hadn't searched, Dayton reached inside. Keeping his eyes focused on her, he set the large, silver box of condoms in front of her. "If you were worried about protection, I wasn't going to ignore it."

Elf zipped the bag closed, took a deep breath, and faced him. "I trusted you would handle it. I also, well" -- she cleared her throat -- "I thought I'd, we'd..." Not sure how to continue, she looked up at him and shrugged.

The blue of his eyes darkened, edging closer, Dayton settled his hands at her hips, drawing her against him. "If you're trying to bring up health issues," he offered, his lips easing along her jaw toward her ear, "I can assure you, I'm clean."

"Me, too." She cleared her throat, and repeated, "I mean, you don't have to worry, if..."

She felt so awkward. Stammering through a discussion about whether or not either of them had a sexually transmitted disease was not how she'd pictured the evening. A smile curved her lips. No, she'd imagined, after reading over the list he'd given her, that they'd have a leisurely dinner, linger over dessert then return to his home for a little intimacy. Similar to the preceding eleven days, she'd pictured Dayton easing her into the bedroom, shedding first her clothes then his own before moving to the bed.

Just as he had over the last week and a half, Elf had expected him to use his hands and mouth to build her arousal, tumbling her into climax at least twice before he finally satisfied both their desires.

But, no. Instead, here she stood, face burning with embarrassment, body heating at his nearness. Conversation focused on whether or not either of them was contagious.

"Elf." His teeth nipped the lobe of her left ear, drawing her attention back to him.

"Y-yes?"

"Where'd you go?" He chuckled as he leaned back to watch her face.

"I...uhmm."

The first and middle finger of his left hand silenced her when he touched her lips with them. "Not to destroy the mood or anything" -- he grinned -- "but, I know some women prefer not to deal with the mess. If you want me to wear the condoms, even though you're on the Pill, I will."

She was stymied. How was she supposed to respond to his offer? After the hundreds of discussion she'd had with her mother growing up, Elf was more than aware that intercourse wasn't a neat and tidy activity. Dayton's offer would satisfy her naturally fastidious nature, but the primal part, the voice that had dominated her decision to enter into this affair, spoke up again to protest allowing any type of barrier between their bodies.

Having experienced his touch and the erotic texture of his tongue, she wondered at what his cock would feel like inside her. Would it still remind her of velvet sheathed steel?

Again his teeth nipped at her ear, drawing her mind back to the present. "Elf?"

The heat in his eyes engulfed her. "No." She shook her head, hands gripping his waist as she arched toward him. Pressing her lips to his she assured him, "You don't have to wear anything, unless" -- she pulled back, searching his gaze -- "unless you want..."

Lifting her from her feet, Dayton strode out of the bathroom and into the darkened bedroom. He followed her down onto the mattress, his weight heavy against her as he pushed her skirt to her hips. Against her throat he growled, "Baby, I'm about to explode knowing I don't have to put anything between your sweet body and mine." Dipping his fingers between her thighs, Dayton eased the red-and-white-striped panel of her thong away from her bare mound to stroke the damp petals there.

His touch zinged fire through her veins. Her hands rose to clutch at his arms, while her thighs fell open easing his access to her aroused flesh, inviting him to explore, touch, and stoke the fire building within her.

"You feel so good," Dayton groaned, his lips tracing her jaw, caressing her lips, before trailing to the swell of her breasts. First one finger, then a second slipped between her thighs, testing her body's readiness. The rough pad of his thumb explored, gathering the juices beginning to flow from her body to better lubricate the circular motions he supplied in order to coax the nerve rich flesh from beneath its hood. "Twelve hours isn't gonna be near enough time, my Elf," his gruff warning vibrated through her as he rose over her.

Hair drifting into his glittering blue eyes, breath coming in heavy, panting gasps, Elf recognized the aura of unleashed need surrounding him. Her own arousal was twisting, gaining strength with every stroke of his thumb, each thrust of his fingers.

"I can't..." he gasped, pulling away, his fingers dragging free of her gripping flesh, as she hovered on the brink of climax.

Elf cried out, her hands, losing their grip on his shoulders, dropped to clutch at the comforter beneath her.

His retreat was temporary. Shaking fingers dragged her panties off, dropping them onto the carpet, before tugging her shoes free. When she tried to rise, Dayton held her in place with one broad palm on her belly, while his left hand fumbled the belt free, and opened his jeans. "I'm sorry," he apologized as he made quick work of shedding his pants, and ripping his shirt off over his head.

From one breath to the next, Dayton moved between her thighs, snaked his arms beneath her back so his hands cupped her shoulders and eased the head of his penis into place.

"I'll go slow next time, baby," he promised, pressing forward, his eyes holding hers as his tip slid through her tight opening. "Christ," he hissed. The heat and fist-tight grip of her pussy fought his possession. Sliding his left hand from her shoulder, he retreated, shifted enough to adjust the position of her right thigh, so it rested higher on his hip, closer to his waist, opening her body to his.

Beneath him, Elf arched as his cock slid deeper, edging past the resistance at the mouth of her vagina. The heated walls fought his every move. He cursed and sweated, sweated and cursed, as he rocked forward, slid back, then pressed deeper, wanting, needing to bury himself completely in her.

"You're so fucking tight, baby," he didn't know if his words were meant to be a reprimand or praise, Dayton tried to focus on taking his time. Sweat burned his eyes, trailed between his shoulder blades, and dripped from his body onto hers as he fought the need to simply force her to take everything he had.

Hell, he reminded himself, she was over a foot shorter than him. Even with the amount of attention he'd spent on preparing her body for his, she'd still had difficulty taking two of his fingers, let alone his cock which was easily twice as thick. Sliding his fingers over her hip, across her quivering belly, Dayton slipped his length back so the juices coating him dripped onto his fingertips. Stroking the moisture upward, he again worked her clit to full prominence.

Alternately circling and pressing on the sensitive bud, Dayton breathed a bit freer as her body responded. Muscles that had been working against his advance, now fluttered and pulsed, drawing his body in.

The logical part of his brain urged him to stay reasonable. There was no way, it tried to remind him, her delicate body could take his full length. Even some of his past lovers, who'd stood nearly equal in height to him, had experienced difficulty accommodating all ten and a half inches.

The primitive part of him, pushed the caution aside. He could hear his voice, gritty with arousal, urging her, "That's it, my Elf, take it. Take every bit." Words of praise mingled with curses as heat bloomed at the base of his spine. He could feel his balls draw up as the last inch settled into place.

"So good, Elf." He growled, drawing back then thrusting forward. "You're so wet and tight. Just for me." His eyes met hers. "Only for me," he ordered.

Eyes wet with tears, face flushed, and sweat pooling above her top lip, she croaked, "Yes. Just for...only for you."

"Good girl," he crooned, his hand slipping from between them to slide under her shoulder. Holding her in place, his knowing smile held a hint of menace. In her eyes, he could read the tinge of fear, but the arousal outstripped the other emotion. Beneath his breath, Dayton cursed, "Fuck. You are a dangerous woman, my Elf."

Her pink tongue slipped out to stroke over dry lips. "H-how?" she dared.

He drew back slowly, held her gaze. "Because," he answered, "you make me want to test your limits." The tip of his cock butted up against her cervix as he bucked against her. Her whimper had him pausing, "Am I hurting you?"

"Yes. No." She couldn't seem to decide.

Rocking his hips back then forward, he jarred her body again. "Good hurt or bad hurt?"

Back arching, fingers clutching at his hips, Elf stammered, "G-g-good."

"Good," he echoed, picking up a steady rhythm of retreat and advance. After several minutes he spoke again, "My Elf."

He had to repeat himself three times before her dazed eyes gained focus and she mumbled an incoherent response.

Around a self-satisfied chuckle, he asked, "Do you remember the safe word?"

Her head bobbed in ascent.

"Tell me what it is," he asked.

"Vi...oh...yessss," she moaned, arching into his thrusts, thighs wrapping tight around his hips.

"Tell me," he demanded, voice firm, implacable.

"Vi...Vix...Vixen," she finally muttered.

His eyes held hers as he paused. Holding her gaze, he shifted his body higher over hers. His left arm he braced on the bed above her head while the crook of his right elbow cradled her leg, easing it up, and to the side, opening her to his body further. "I'll go slow next time, baby. If it starts to hurt, or I frighten you, just say our word, okay?"

The heat in his eyes dried up the words in her mouth. Instead of answering, Elf nodded. Muscles tightened in anticipation, but he shook his head.

"Don't," he warned. Holding her gaze he started moving again. Rocking forward and back; advance then retreat.

Slowly, slowly, before gradually picking up speed until his hips pistoned between her thighs, stealing her breath. Tension mounted, arousal tightened, twisted to a fiery knot that grew, enveloping her body until nothing mattered, nothing existed, but the man making love to her, and the explosion hovering just beyond her reach.

She scrambled to hold on, her fingers dripping with their mingled sweat as she fought to grip his back. Sliding free, unable to find purchase, Elf latched onto the flexing bicep holding him over her.

"Wait," he commanded. "Not yet." His eyes focused on hers, snared hers as he willed her climax into submission, even as he pushed her arousal higher, beyond any limit he'd set for her in the last twelve days.

Lost in the need, Elf's eyes held his.

Again he ordered, "Wait," as his hips hammered away at hers, penis rasping against cervix with every thrust.

Fighting the urge to beg, cry out to him, by sinking her teeth into the tender, swollen flesh of her bottom lip, Elf couldn't hold back the whimper of relief as he nodded, snapping out, "Now! Come for me, my Elf."

His hips slammed home once, then a second time. She could feel his climax flood her body as she convulsed beneath him, her sheath contracting and massaging his length as he settled close, hips locked with hers, his mouth capturing the cries escaping her lips.

Chapter Sixteen

The sound of the Beatles "Love Me Do" barely registered in Elf's mind as her exhausted body fought to surface from the sex-induced fog shrouding it. Blinking toward the floor-to-ceiling window on one side of the bed, she mentally noted the sun had turned the horizon pink when the melody stopped then resumed. Even as she remembered the ringtone had been selected by her mother, she lost the thought beneath the wave of heat rising from her belly to her breasts.

Rolling her so she lay beneath his sleek frame, Dayton grunted, "Ignore it." He dipped his head to capture her mouth. The stroke of his tongue entwined around hers distracted her, but not enough.

Pulling back, she gasped, "It's my mom." Despite her protests, Elf made no effort to move away.

The slide of his body into hers had Elf arching beneath him. Overworked muscles and tender tissues protested his invasion, but Elf stifled her cry against his shoulder. Unfortunately, she wasn't quick enough to hide the reaction from Dayton.

Cursing, he held her gaze as he eased free, "I guess you might as well..." he started then stopped when the ring tone finished and didn't repeat.

Elf wondered at the concerned look in his eyes as he watched her. He hovered over her, arms braced on the tangled sheets, one leg resting between hers while his arousal pulsed against her hip. When he seemed about to say something, the telephone beside the bed rang, echoing through the room.

"It's the holidays, for God's sake." He grouched reaching across her to pluck the handset from the charger stand. "Kringle?"

"Okay, Mr. Studmuffin Santa, quit fucking like little bunnies on Viagra and let me talk to my daughter." Eleanor's voice was loud enough Elf could hear her as Dayton braced himself over her.

"Mom," Elf covered her face with one hand and reached for the phone with the other.

On the phone another voice could be heard, "Eleanor! Do not torment the man..." Gerry made an attempt to curb his wife's tongue, but it didn't work.

"What am I supposed to say to the man, Gerry?" Eleanor's reasonable voice chirped from the phone.

Dayton shook his head and rolled away, smiling as Elf slapped at the hand holding her off. She followed, listening to the conversation between her mother and stepfather.

"Mr. Kringle, when you get finished boinking my daughter could you have her call me before next year?" Would you prefer I lead in with that?"

"Mom," Elf laughed, reaching across Dayton for the phone only to have him shift away again.

"Mrs. Jeffries?"

"Lincoln, dear. Jeffries-Lincoln," Eleanor corrected.

"It's barely eight, ma'am." Dayton grinned at Elf's chagrined look.

"I know. And I wouldn't have resorted to calling *your* phone if Elfina hadn't been ignoring hers." There was a significant pause. "She was just ignoring it, right. You haven't actually been burning up the sheets..."

"Mother!" Elf gripped one of said sheets against her breasts. Straddling Dayton's waist, she was finally able to wrestle the phone from him. "Don't you start."

"Start what, sweetie?" Eleanor laughed.

"Merry Christmas, Mom." Elf redirected the conversation while trying to ignore Dayton's hands tugging at the soft, silk covering her. Sending a stern look down at him, she tightened her hold on the sheet.

"Merry Christmas, baby. Have you checked out your presents yet?"

"Not yet. We were up kind of late..." She pressed the phone against her shoulder to muffle the sound of Dayton's laughter then lost the struggle to keep the sheet. Putting the phone back to her ear, Elf added, "I haven't had a chance to open my gifts, but I'll get..." She gasped when his mouth opened on her breast, whispered over the slope, and captured her nipple. Fighting to sound normal, she continued talking to her mother. "I'll get to them later this morning."

"Have you talked to him about Christmas dinner?"

Strong white teeth nibbled on her taut peak, distracting Elf from the conversation. "Him? Dinner? Oh." She hissed at a particularly sharp tug on one breast, before his attention switched to the other. "Yes, it's still up in the air, but I'll be, be..." Elf couldn't stop her body

from reacting to the heat of his belly against her pussy as he slid the sheet from between them. "I'll be going over to Jodi's around two."

The drift of his fingers over her naked mound had her grabbing the headboard with her free hand and concluding the call. "I've got to go, Mom."

"Talk to you later, Mrs. Jeffries-Lincoln." Dayton chuckled just before Elf disconnected. Glaring down at him, she dropped the phone onto the jumble of blankets and pillows that had found their way onto the floor beside the bed.

"You couldn't behave long enough for me to talk to my mom?" She snapped as Dayton shifted beneath her.

Easing her off his belly, and up onto her knees, his lips drifted from her breasts to her stomach before stroking over the hypersensitive tissues spread for his attentions. "What would be the point, my Elf? You told me she knows about our arrangement." Calloused fingertips eased the puffy lips apart, exposing the reddened flesh glistening with her arousal.

"She may know about it" -- Elf relaxed her grip on the bed frame, swung one leg over his waist, and eased off the bed -- "but I don't necessarily want her to *hear* me..." She caught herself before she said "making love." Stooping, she picked up the phone, walked around the bed, and settled the handset in the base. Slipping on the shirt he'd discarded the night before, Elf fastened a majority of the buttons leaving the tail of the shirt loose from mid-thigh down. Needing something to distract herself, she began picking up the jumbled bedding and clothing littering the bedroom floor.

Elf could feel Dayton's gaze on her as she tidied the room, but he refrained from commenting.

"You were the one who told your mother." Dayton reminded her. Unself-conscious of his nudity, he lay on his left side watching her, head propped on his hand.

"I know I told her where I would be while she was away on holiday," Elf conceded, tossing the extra pillows they'd shoved aside the evening before back onto the bed. "What I didn't expect was to have you..." She folded the discarded green silk comforter with fast, jerky motions. Throwing it across his feet while trying to come up with a diplomatic way of explaining her discomfort, she finally settled on, "...fondling me while I was trying to carry on a conversation."

When she turned for the closet, Dayton rose, and followed her. Inside the darkened space, his hands turned her to face him. Lifting her onto one of the built-in drawer units, he stepped between her thighs. "My fondling you..." he growled, wrenching the two sides of her borrowed shirt open and sending buttons pinging off his chest and the cedar shelves beside her, "...is the least of your worries, my Elf."

The stroke of his fingers through the sore petals of her sex had her gasping. His lips covered her, taking her breath and swallowing her protest as he easily rekindled the heat her mother's phone call had doused.

Tugging her hips close, Dayton held her belly to his, trapping the engorged length of his cock between their bodies, stroking the base of his shaft and the firm warmth of his balls over her sensitive clit and the damp opening of her vagina. His tongue tangled with hers as his left hand snaked upward to her breast to pinch the taut, strawberry pink nipple before treating its twin to the same.

His words barely registered as he played her body, drawing her closer to climax. Making her crave his possession despite the pain it would involve. When she did decode them, it was only so she could stammer out "Why...what do you mean?"

"I mean" -- Dayton's lips smoothed over her cheek, the soft rasp of his beard just as arousing as the stroke of his flesh or the touch of his lips -- "making you come while you're talking to your mother, or in view of strangers when we're in a public place, is the least of your worries after the deception you pulled last night."

Elf tried to decipher his expression. The cool regard of his blue eyes, the implacable set of his features, even the stiff way he held himself while tormenting her body with pleasure, warned Elf his anger was real.

The thinning of his lips, and the cold seeping into his gaze, halted her denial.

"Good girl," he crooned. "It's best not to increase your punishment by denying it."

"How?" Her whisper carried a hint of unease beneath the husky tone of unfulfilled arousal.

He finished the question for her. "How did I know I became your only lover last night?"

She nodded, trying desperately to read which emotions he'd connected to the gift of her virginity. In the hammering of her heart, she was sure he would figure out how she felt about him, but surprisingly she didn't see any indication he realized how deeply she loved him.

"The feel of your body," he explained. "The way your sweet little pussy fought every inch I put in it."

She didn't try to deny his conclusion. As he'd said, lying about it wouldn't do her any good. "Do you want me to leave?" Elf dreaded his response. Worrying about the motivation connected to her trepidation, she wondered if it was because her body hovered on the brink of climax due to his attentions, or if her anticipation of this time alone with him had conjured fantasies of him returning her affections.

"I want to know why." He substituted a question for his answer.

"Why?"

His head dipped, and his lips drifted over hers. Heated palms slid the ruined shirt off, dropped to her hips, and tugged her close. His erection settled snug between the spread petals of her sex. "No warning, my Elf. Full disclosure would have been appropriate."

"Isn't that a bit of a double standard?" She objected.

His head tilted, eyes holding hers. "Explain?"

Elf settled her hands on his shoulders, stroked down his defined biceps. The need to touch, stroke, feel his body was impossible to deny. Shrugging, she responded, "Would you have disclosed your sexual history if I'd told you about my lack of one?"

Before he could answer, she posed another question. "If I had been the one to approach you, would you have volunteered your information?"

His eyes carefully examined her face. Analyzing each feature thoroughly before moving on to the next, Elf found it difficult to remain still beneath his scrutiny. Inside, she suspected, any hint of embarrassment, emotional discomfort, or hesitation on her part could result in his ending their time together.

"You do have a point," Dayton admitted with a short nod. Stepping back, he gripped the full curve of her bottom and lifted her from her perch.

Hands and legs wrapping around his shoulders and waist, Elf waited for him to continue.

Stepping out of the walk-in closet, he turned toward the bathroom. "But it also means my plans have to be altered somewhat."

He set her down on the closed commode, his lips quirking when she squeaked at the chill, and moved to the sunken tub. Twisting the brushed brass knobs until the water temperature met his satisfaction, Dayton watched the water level rise. When the tub was just over half filled, he turned off the flow, gathered Elf in his arms, and stepped into the tub.

Resting against his chest, Elf stifled a low moan of contentment as the warmth caressed her sore flesh. "What plans do you have to change?" she asked, settling her hands over his as he gently stroked up her belly toward her breasts.

Taking his time to answer, Dayton shifted his hold back to her legs. "I had determined we would spend most of this morning figuring out which of your oils you liked best." Cupping his hands beneath her thighs, he positioned Elf's feet to the outside of his knees.

Her new position left her body open to the warm lapping of the water, the stroke of his fingers along the insides of her thighs, and over her separated labia.

"H-how?" She stammered as Dayton's fingers returned to pluck at her taut clit.

"Well..." Dayton whispered against her throat as he nibbled along the damp flesh of her neck and shoulder. "I thought I'd drip a little right along here." His fingers stroked the puffy flesh surrounding her opening. "Then coat my fingers before sliding them inside." His forefinger tapped the sensitive bud seated above her sheath. "After you offered a response I assumed I'd move on to testing *my* satisfaction with each of your oils."

His fingers moved away from the weeping opening at the juncture of her thighs causing Elf to arch upward, and her hands to capture his wrists. She tugged at them to try to

get him to return his attentions between her thighs, but he gently shook off her hold and teased the pearled points of her breasts.

"Wh-what..." Elf cleared her throat and tried again. "What do you have planned now?" she asked.

"I thought I'd let you relax a bit. Have some breakfast..." Dayton offered.

"How mag..." She gasped, back arching again as his teeth nipped her throat just above her collar, and his hands massaged her breasts. "Magnanimous of you," she teased. "Just who was going to be making this breakfast?" Settling in to enjoy his attentions, Elf stroked her hands over his.

His chuckle rumbled against her back. "Well, considering I provided dinner --"

"Paid for at a restaurant," Elf injected.

-- I thought you might be willing..."

Considering it fit perfectly in with her plans for the morning, Elf wasn't too put out by his assumption she could cook. Still there was the issue of his having referred to "punishment" earlier, so she asked. "You mentioned reprisals? What punishment were you talking about?"

The deep rumble of his laughter vibrated against her back. "You'll have to wait to find out, my Elf." His fingers plucked at her nipples, while he snuggled his hard cock into the crease between the cheeks of her bottom. "For right now, I want you to let the warm water sooth your tender pussy. Let it remind you, as it gently laps against you, of the attentions of my lips, my tongue. Stroking, tasting, drinking down the juices hidden there."

Elf suspected he could feel the increased beat of her heart as his words whispered against her ears, his fingers exploring, caressing her breasts in mimicry of his words.

"Can you feel it?" he asked.

"F-feel what?"

"That sweet knot, twisting in your core," he encouraged. "Growing tighter and tighter, with each wave of liquid slipping in and out of your body?"

Immersing herself in the visuals his words created, Elf closed her eyes, and allowed the sensations to build. Heat was curling in her belly, between her thighs. The slide of his calloused fingertips over her breasts, the rasp of his beard against her throat, all combined with the advance and retreat of the water between her thighs reigniting the arousal he'd stirred before their confrontation in the closet.

The flex of his jaw beside hers hinted at the smile she couldn't see while the rocking of his hips against her butt reinforced the state of his arousal, and ratcheted hers higher. "The water isn't as hard or as full as me, my Elf, but its advance and retreat in and out of your tight body will help ease the ache my attentions wrought while preparing you for later." His hands

cupped her breasts now, squeezing, massaging. "In and out. In and out," he rasped, rocking his hips to increase the flow of the water.

Her hands gripped his wrists, hips pulsing with his until the twist in her pussy begged for release.

"Can you feel it?" he asked again.

Unable to speak, unable to breathe, Elf jerked her head in a frantic nod.

"So close, my Elf," he teased. Up and down, his body pushed her. "So very close you can taste it, can't you, my Elf?"

"Ye-yes." She choked, desperate need throbbing in her voice.

"Come for me, my Elf." He whispered. "Come." His order was clear, precise, and triggered her orgasm as easily as the ministrations of his body had throughout the night.

* * * * *

She wondered if he was going to ignore the Christmas stocking beside his plate for the entire meal. After his vehement refusal of a Christmas tree, Elf had decided surprising him with the stocking would be less likely to create a stir. The way he was avoiding the white and red velvet gift, she worried how he would react to the other little touches she'd placed around the apartment.

He had to have seen the poinsettia on the coffee table in the living room as well as the twin wreaths decorating the French doors on the east and north walls. Both led onto sections of the roof. The north onto an open area that wrapped around toward the west, while the east exit opened into a huge greenhouse filled with miniature fruit trees, root vegetables, and flowering plants.

It wasn't just his lack of acknowledgment of the changes she'd made, but his appearance which had Elf squirming in her seat. He'd shaved his beard off, exposing the sharp lines of his high cheekbones, and square jaw. Even a shade paler than the rest of his face, the skin along his jaw and around his lips still held color from the hours he spent outdoors.

"Sore?" His question startled her from her thoughts.

"What?"

Bracing his elbows on the table, left hand holding a fork, right cupped over left, he held her gaze. "You're shifting in your seat. I wondered if you were sore. From last night."

Elf could feel the heat creep up from her chest to her cheeks, but she held his gaze. "No, just" -- she motioned to his face with a forkful of fluffy scrambled eggs -- "you look different."

He resumed eating. "You've seen me without a beard, my Elf."

"And" -- she grinned -- "it startles me every time the holidays are over and you walk into the office clean shaven."

"Why?"

"I don't know." Elf tried to examine her reaction to his altered appearance. Without the closely trimmed white beard there was very little different about Dayton's features. The high cheekbones, firm square jaw, all of it looked the same just no longer sporting a coating of white whiskers.

Deciding it was better to know than guess, Elf asked, "Are you angry?"

He seemed confused, his brow creased as he finished chewing, before asking a question of his own. "Angry about what? Your virginity?"

Elf felt her cheeks heat. She didn't want to go there yet. "No." She motioned to the stocking and the other bits of Christmas she'd placed around his home. "The decorations."

"No, but I am curious." He set his fork down and settled his hand over the stocking, fingers stroking the velvet, examining the shapes hidden beneath the cloth. "I told you I don't celebrate Christmas. So, why bring them?"

Shrugging, "No one should be without Christmas decorations." Before he could protest, she hurried to explain, "My mom is really big on Christmas. It's why she named me Elfina."

"But you weren't born at Christmastime." He leaned his forearms on the table.

"According to her, I was conceived on Christmas Eve." Elf smiled. "Mom has a hard time passing houses that don't have lights up and wreaths on the door." Chuckling, she added, "It used to piss Lorraine off whenever Mom would put a wreath on her door."

"Lorraine? Your friend Jodi's aunt?"

She nodded, surprised and pleased that he'd remembered the detail from only a single conversation. "Yes, after I met Jodi, and the first Christmas I found out she didn't celebrate it, Mom went charging over in the middle of the night, and placed a wreath on their door."

Dayton's lips quirked up on one side. "You're mom is --"

"Deranged," Elf finished for him. "I know, but I love her. And loopy as she is, she loves me."

"You've never mentioned your father."

"I don't know him." Elf gathered her empty plate and glass, and carried them to the sink.

"Did he leave when you were little?" A hint of disgust colored Dayton's voice.

Surprised at his response, Elf smiled over her shoulder at him, as she rinsed her dishes, and tucked them into the dishwasher. "No. He never knew my mom, other than the one night she went home with him."

His brows drew together in a perplexed frown. "I don't follow."

Turning to face him, Elf dried her hands while leaning against the counter and explained. "Mom wanted a baby, but not a husband. So, she went to a fertility specialist to make sure it was possible for her to conceive. After she was told she should have no problems, Mom tracked her cycle for a few months. When she knew she was in her fertile period, she picked up a guy at a nice club, went home with him for a weekend, which just happened to be Christmas Eve and Day, and then left."

"She intentionally got pregnant by a stranger?"

"Yup."

"That's insane."

"That's my mom. She talked to him while they were in the club for about two hours, was impressed with his intelligence and his good looks."

"Did she ever tell him? You know, that he had a child?"

Elf nodded and returned to gather the other empty dishes from the table. "Yes. She went to his home in February, after she was sure she was pregnant, and had a polite discussion with him and his fiancé."

"His what?"

Elf nodded. "Seems their relationship had hit the skids around Thanksgiving, and after his weekend with my mom he decided to give it another shot. I guess Mom listened to his sob story between bouts of boffing his brains out, and the advice she gave him took."

Dayton's chuckles made her smile as she rinsed plates and cups before settling them into the dishwasher.

"So, have you ever met your father?" Dayton reached around her to rinse his own plate.

With his body snug up against her back, Elf had to concentrate in order to answer his question. "Yes. I met him and my two half brothers and two half sisters when I graduated from high school." Leaning out of his reach, she shut the dishwasher and dried her hands.

Easing an arm around her waist, Dayton led her out of the kitchen into the living room where the pile of presents surrounded the poinsettia on the coffee table. "You haven't heard from him since then?" He collected the Christmas stocking from the table as they passed it.

Smiling at the gesture of acceptance, Elf shrugged. "I've gotten a letter or two. He and his family moved out of state just after I graduated. We hadn't been in touch very much before that. Mostly it was just Mom and me."

"It doesn't sound as if you regret that?"

Elf thought about it. "No. I never thought much about my situation. Mom is great." Settling into the cushions, she rested her left elbow on the back of the sofa and her chin in her hand, watching as Dayton continued to prod at the contents of the stocking. "You know, it's not going to bite you."

Relaxing next to her, Dayton shook his head, "I'm not so sure of that." He smirked. "What about those?" he asked, motioning to the gifts spread over the smoked glass and chrome coffee table.

"We'll get to them," she grinned.

"They can't all be for me?" Dayton remarked noting at least a dozen gifts in various wrappings covered the coffee table.

"No, not all of them," Elf assured him.

"Good." Standing, Dayton moved toward his bedroom. "Wait here."

Elf didn't protest. Her eyes followed him until he disappeared into the bedroom. Hoping his leaving didn't hint at disapproval, she remained in her place on the sofa, knowing he would expect her to be in the exact same spot when he returned.

As he collected the packages from the closet, Dayton shook his head at the fanciful mood that had struck him the morning after his Elf had seemed so distraught at his lack of Christmas tree. After scouring the internet for some items, and paying for next day delivery, he'd braved the local malls searching for other gifts.

With the half-dozen boxes wrapped and decorated with ribbons and bows stacked in his arms, he exited his bedroom and set the presents beside those Elf had brought.

"I thought you said you didn't do Christmas." She grinned at him.

"I don't."

"Then what are those?"

"I said" -- Dayton settled onto the sofa beside her -- "I don't do Christmas. I never said I don't buy gifts for other people." Pulling the largest box from the bottom of his stack he held it out to her. "This one is first."

The look in his eyes must have forestalled the protest he could see in her expression. Instead, she carefully removed the bows and paper before lifting the top off the garment box. When she pushed aside the tissue, her breath caught, and she lifted her head to smile at him.

"It's beautiful." She sighed, lifting the jade-colored robe from the box.

Reaching over, Dayton removed the box from her lap so she could stand up. The fabric was heavy. "The sales person said it's made of silk brocade and lined with raw silk."

Elf's hands stroked over the leaf pattern stitched into the material.

"Put it on," Dayton suggested, enjoying the sight of her slender fingers sliding over the material, fingering the trim around the collar and turned-back cuffs.

When she moved to slip it over her shirt and jeans, he shook his head. "No. I want to see it against your skin."

The flush in her cheeks made him stifle a chuckle. Even after the various forms of foreplay he'd introduced her to, the sight of her blushing still heated his blood. Leaning back,

he adjusted the fit of his jeans to accommodate his stiffening cock. It excited him even more that she no longer hesitated when following his directions.

The robe was laid on the sofa cushion beside him, before she slipped buttons through their holes, and eased her shirt off. Another button, followed by the downward slide of the zipper, and she shimmied out of her jeans and thong. Her belly chain gleamed around her waist, the nipple chain dangled between her breasts, and her bare pussy drew his gaze. Even as he watched, he could see the flesh grow plump and dewy.

Holding the robe out to her, he watched her ease her arms through the sleeves. She sighed at the sensual feel of the fabric. Again her hands stroked along the collar, before flipping it up, and snuggling it against her cheek.

"Do you like it?"

She smiled and nodded. "Yes. It's beautiful."

Motioning her toward him, he waited until she stood between his spread legs before telling her his intentions. "Later tonight, after you've recovered" -- he chuckled at the color that washed up into her cheeks, amused that he could actually see the tide ripple from her belly, over her breasts, and along her throat before it entered her face -- "I'll untie the belt on your robe. Using the lining, I'll rub your breasts until your nipples grow hard, and then I'll take them in my mouth." His fingers smoothed over the slope of her breasts, teasing, but never touching the hardened tips pinched by the clasps of her chain. "Once I've satisfied myself there, I'll slip the belt free and bind your hands behind your back." Taking her wrists, he secured them in the small of her back with one hand, while the other caressed the heated flesh of her mound. The pink lips parted, each petal glistening with her juices.

"Put your left foot on my thigh."

She did.

Dipping forward, he settled his lips over her exposed clit and suckled it, tickled it with the tip of his tongue, before nipping it with his teeth, and then smiling against her as she arched in excitement.

Releasing her hands, he eased her leg back to the floor, pulled the robe around her body, and tied the belt at her waist. "Let's finish opening our presents, hmmm?" His hands settled at her hips until she stopped swaying and eased onto the cushion beside him.

Chapter Seventeen

The water caressed her body as she knelt in front of Dayton. The smell of his aroused flesh made her dizzy as she bathed his erection with her lips and tongue before sucking it into her mouth. Massaging his balls as he'd taught her, Elf circled the broad tip with her tongue, lapping at the sensitive vein underneath.

The distant sound of a ringing phone made her hesitate, but the fingers thrust through her wet hair returned her focus to the task at hand. Relaxing her throat, she suckled his length, taking as much as possible, and then with the muscle contractions she used to swallow, caressed the sensitive tip while tightening her hold on the flesh she couldn't accommodate.

The fingers in her hair tightened, Dayton's other hand clamped over hers, while his cock pulsed and flexed in her mouth. Salty-sweet fluid filled her mouth and flooded her throat. Swallowing quickly, Elf savored her ability to bring him to climax in the same way he luxuriated in satiating her needs. Taking her time, she bathed his length clean before releasing his still-firm sex and lifting her face to the water washing over her. Eyes closed, she savored the warm cascade, and practically purred when she felt his hands stroke over her brow, down her nose, and across her kiss-swollen lips.

She looked beautiful kneeling before him, her face turned up to the shower, eyes closed. Images of her kneeling beside his chair, her only coverings his collar, the nipple chain of golden rings, belly chain, and one of the seven silk scarves he'd gifted her, flooded his mind, kicking his arousal into high gear. Similar scenes had been enacted by other Masters and slaves at the club he frequented. Never before had he been drawn to such blatant displays of ownership. With his Elf, though, parading her through the club, laying her across one of the tables, and fucking her in front of the other members, marking her as his for all to

see, felt inevitable. The need to show others her full submission burned in his chest, reverberated in his head, until the only way to drown it out lay in possessing her again.

Reaching down, Dayton lifted her to her feet, meeting her questioning gaze. Her heavy lids lifted, eyes growing wide, reading something in his expression which brought heat to her cheeks and made her nipples peak.

A rough twist of his wrist, and the water ceased. Snapping a towel from the heated bar, he swiped at the majority of the moisture coating their skin, wrapped her hair turban style, and exited the shower. Guiding her ahead of him into the bedroom he left the bathroom light on as the only source of illumination. Beside the bed he turned her face up to his, and captured her lips. The mingled flavors of his seed and her unique taste appeased some of the hunger driving him. Moving to the delicate shell of her ear, he tugged at the lobe before whispering, "Belly down on the bed, baby. Knees tucked, and ass in the air."

The hitch in her breathing, the flush on her cheeks, reassured him her excitement matched his. Just as it had the night she'd presented the tenth gift to him and assured him she was ready to experiment. Releasing her to gather what he needed from the nightstand drawer, Dayton watched her climb on the bed, and arranged herself in the middle of the mattress. Knees tucked against her belly, ass resting on her heels, Elf settled a single, soft pillow beneath her cheek as she watched him sheath his cock with a condom, and slip the cap from the tube of lubricant.

As he applied the gel to the condom, her pretty, heart-shaped ass tilted up toward him. The rounded cheeks slightly parted, providing a glimpse of the taut rosette hidden there. The flush on her cheeks, and the little wiggle of her hips, assured him this new aspect of their lovemaking was as exciting to her as to him. Settling in behind her, Dayton stroked her pussy, grinning at the honey coating her lips. Dipping first one finger, then a second inside her, he stroked her heated channel, urging a response.

"You like this, don't you, my Elf?"

Her purr slid into a gasp as her hips pushed back at him, riding the penetrating digits until he pulled them free. A mixture of her juices and the lubricant rimmed her ass as he worked his first and middle finger past the first ring of muscles. "That's it baby," he urged, spreading the lube, scissoring his fingers to open her. "Push back."

He watched her body tremble, swallow his fingers, and arch beneath the sensations. Setting aside the lube, he moved in, the tip of his cock pressed to her tight opening. Without instructing her, he felt Elf pushing back, relaxing as much as possible to allow first the tip, and then the rest of his length to slide inside. Rocking forward and back, Dayton kept the pace slow, steady, knowing her body was still adjusting to his possession. Feeling the pulse and contraction of the muscles around him, Dayton fought the urge to increase his thrusts. Smoothing one hand over her hips, and up and down her spine, his fingertips registered the quiver of her flesh, the rasp of her breath as she pushed back into each motion of his hips.

Paying close attention to her, Dayton felt his hold on his dominant nature slip when Elf buried her face in the pillow to stifle her cries. Bowing over her body, he forced their bodies to still. The loosely wound towel had slipped free, spilling her damp, tangled hair across the sheets.

Shoving the pillow away from her gripping hands, Dayton secured his hold on her by twisting her hair around his wrist. Tugging her upright, he settled her on his lap, her legs straddling his thighs, his cock buried balls deep in her ass, and his hold on her hair arching her back, thrusting her breasts out in front of her.

A part of him thrilled at her lack of protest. Instinct in most women would be to struggle, or reach back to clutch at the hands gripping her. His Elf did neither. Her breathing grew ragged, heat flushed her cheeks, beaded nipples blushed a deeper rose, and her hands rested, palms up, on her own thighs.

Willing to see how far she would allow him to push, Dayton nipped at the curve joining neck to shoulder below her collar, while his free hand reached for her nipple and pinched it. Hard.

He felt her jump, her body reacting to the bit of pain, but she didn't cry out. The smile on his own lips was growing, he could feel it.

"What do you want, my Elf?" he whispered against her delicate throat.

Incoherent sounds answered. Her body trembled against his, the muscles in her thighs bunching.

A sharp slap to the outside of her thigh halted her attempt to move and drew a shocked gasp.

"No moving, until I instruct you, my Elf." His fingers moved over her thigh to the juncture between. "Tell me what you want," he ordered again.

"Please..." whispered past her lips, her eyes focused on the bedding beneath his knees.

"Please, what, my Elf?"

Her voice grew louder, firmer with her next answer. "Fuck me. Please, fuck me." She asked, her eyes still downcast, her hands trembling against her thighs.

"Here?" Dayton asked, his fingers stroking over her swollen clit, before delving into the wet channel of her pussy.

Her body arched, pushing down on the delving digits, gripping the invaders with delicate internal muscles. "No." She shuddered, moaning.

"Tell me, my Elf," he ordered again, his fingers pulling free of her pussy to lightly smack the underside of her left breast. "Tell me where I should fuck you."

"My ass," she gasped.

"Tell me again."

"Please, fuck my ass." She cried out, body quivering as she fought the urge to move.

"Whose ass?" He pushed needing to hear her concede to his ownership.

"My..." She cleared her throat, a shiver working its way through her body. "Your ass. Please fuck your ass," Elf begged.

He smiled against her throat before turning her head to meet his gaze. "Very good, my Elf. Now, what is my name?"

He watched, expecting to have to deliver a punishment, knowing she would use his given name. When she stayed silent, her gaze locked on his for long moments, Dayton urged her to continue, "Use my name and tell me what you need."

The trembling eased beneath his touch, her liquid green gaze held his as she responded. "I need you to fuck your ass, Master."

Two emotions twisted through his mind and heart as the words whispered past her lips, and registered in his ears. Fear and joy. He wasn't sure which was more powerful. The joy surged as he acknowledged the level of trust his Elf had bestowed with the utterance of her understanding his mastery over her body. The fear stemmed from the peace flooding his body knowing she was his. Belonged to him body and soul and trusted him to see to her safety.

Her safety. Shaking off the images trying to swamp his mind, Dayton focused on the contracting muscles milking his cock. "Again, my Elf," he demanded.

"Please." She arched beneath his hold, pressing down on his engorged length. "Master, fuck your ass." Her eyes never left his. Voice never wavered.

Elf savored the first heavy thrust of his cock as he began loving her in earnest. Pain mingling with pleasure as the pace increased, she fought the climax building, knowing she had to await his permission.

Again the sound of the phone ringing registered, but again it was ignored as Dayton's pace increased. The pleasure-pain of his thrusts bound the knot of arousal in her belly. Beneath them, the bed, heavy as it was, shifted just enough to thump against the wall.

Soft cries whispered from her lips, but she resisted the temptation to beg. The need to prove her worth, her ability to hold off orgasm until given permission had been a hard-learned lesson both before and after her first gift. Trying to focus on not coming, Elf let her mind wander over the last ten days as Dayton's lover.

After Christmas morning, he had taken every opportunity to touch her body, taste her flesh. All the attention overwhelmed her senses, drowned her emotions in his closeness, and, she was afraid, marked her as his for the rest of her life. Elf couldn't see allowing another man the intimacies she'd shared with Dayton.

The taste of him, the heat of his flesh, the weight of his body were permanently imprinted on her psyche, and she didn't see her attachment to him fading any time soon. If ever.

Whether his lovemaking took hours from kiss to climax or, if like the day before when they'd gone out to eat dinner, he simply found a shadowed corner, and fucked her against the wall smothering her cries with his lips, Elf was sure her addiction to him was never going away. His need for her seemed to match hers for him.

Elf had to grin when she remembered how thankful she was most of the employees weren't around, especially given Dayton's need to live out the fantasies he'd whispered to her. He thought nothing of calling her into his office, flipping up her skirt, and bending her over the conference table, all the while praising her body's response to him.

Though he never said the words "I love you," the fact he still wanted her gave Elf confidence that something besides sex connected them. Her own admission was still bottled up inside her, but it was a battle to keep it there.

Like now, as she approached climax and could feel the advance and retreat of Dayton's cock increase, she bit her lip to hold back the words. Her body tensed fighting the orgasm.

His hold on her hips slid upward, cupping her breasts. His sweat-dampened chest settled against her back as his thrusts grew shorter, harder.

"Now, Elf," he commanded, his voice gruff, breath puffing across her shoulder to caress her cheek.

Elf let go. The explosion shuddered through her frame, setting stars off against the inside of her eyelids as the pulse of his body within hers signaled his own release and loosened the admission she'd held back for so long. Much as she wanted to take the words back, her cry of "I love you" seemed to echo in the room.

The sound of their breathing, and the palpable tension seeping from Dayton's taut frame to hers was shattered by the ringing of the telephone.

Chapter Eighteen

Dark gray clouds blanketed the sky. A chill wind tugged at the coats and scarves of the few mourners who'd braved the weather to attend the graveside service. The usual sunny California landscape had turned bleak and damp in the three weeks since the phone call. Rain had begun to fall and the mercury had dipped below freezing over the last two days.

Dayton's mood had changed just as suddenly, Elf decided as she stood beside him next to the open grave. Beside him, but not touching. Touching was no longer allowed. Her body shuddered as an eddy of wind swirled around her ankles, and eased under the hem of her coat.

It hadn't just been her telling him she loved him that created this fissure. The phone call had been responsible for some of it as well.

In her coat pockets, her hands balled into fists as she glanced over at Dayton. The cold, unapproachable expression had become permanent not long after they'd arrived at the hospital to find Sister Agnes waiting for them.

"I knew you'd want to be here, Dayton," the older woman had greeted them.

"What happened? Where did they find him?" Dayton had fired the questions at the older woman, oblivious to Elf's presence. Moving away, he helped the sister ease into one of the worn chairs along a wall to discuss the details, leaving Elf standing by herself in a corner near the door.

In a corner, like a naughty child being punished. She fumed silently, ignoring the heavier wind that tugged at the ends of her crocheted scarf. A week of being relegated to the side, left to manage the various issues that cropped up at the office, while Dayton spent hours exhausting himself at the bedside of a man who'd been part of his childhood.

She didn't begrudge Charlie the comfort of Dayton's presence. What she resented was the way Dayton consistently pushed her away whenever she tried to offer him comfort. No

hug was returned. When she'd try to talk to him about the situation, he'd brush her off, and ask questions about what fires she'd quelled at the office while he was gone.

Ten days after the phone call, Charlie died. Having been in pain, and missing his little boy the way Dayton had told her, a part of Elf was happy his suffering was over.

Hers, unfortunately, had just begun.

She'd woken alone in their bed. Drawing on her robe, draped over the end of the bed, she'd moved into the living room to find Dayton sitting on the sofa, hands gripped around a steaming cup of coffee.

"I've packed your things." His voice was brusque, eyes shuttered, hiding all feelings.

None of the decorations she'd put up were in evidence. Even the shoes she dropped next to the elevator doors the night before were gone.

"While you were sleeping, I took your stuff to your car. I left some clothes for you in the closet." Dayton sipped his coffee, his eyes moving from her to the object in front of him.

On the glass-topped coffee table before him, her treasure chest sat locked with its antique-style lock, key still inserted in the keyhole.

"Why?"

"It's over."

"Because I told you I love you?" She had to know.

The slight tensing of his body before he rose to move past her into the kitchen was her only hint. A hint she could only decipher as reluctance to respond.

"No." He rinsed the cup and turned. Facing her, hands crossed over his flannel-clad chest, ankles crossed as he leaned against the counter. "I don't want you anymore."

Hiding the pain, she had nodded.

"I told you this wouldn't be a relationship, Elf." Shadowed blue eyes watched her.

Elf wondered if her expression gave any hint to her feelings. The change in how he addressed her hurt more than she expected. Knowing Dayton was hiding from his emotions was bad enough. If she thought he could see how his words were ripping the heart from her chest, she didn't think she'd be able to work with him any longer.

"I remember," she assured him. Taking a deep breath, she asked, "I need a shower. I assume it is okay for me to do that here?"

"Yes." Moving back into the living room, he hefted the treasure chest. "I'll go put this in your car."

At the graveside, Elf watched the descent of the casket and likened it to her own deepening sorrow. Her proximity to Dayton had her body humming.

Donning her underwear every morning was an exercise in torture, as she remembered the stroke of his fingertips over her flesh, and the attention he'd paid to her needs. The tips

of her breasts ached from the chain she continued to wear. His collar still adorned her neck, and the waist chain rested on her hips. Matching bracelets and anklets he'd given her on Christmas morning helped her maintain the illusion that, even though he might deny it to himself, she still acknowledged his ownership of her.

Even as he solicitously held her elbow as they moved through the cemetery to their cars, Elf wondered at his stubborn refusal to admit what he really felt. How he could deny the sexual commitment he'd made to her, trained her to expect. She knew him too well to accept that he didn't love her.

Too many times in the days they'd been apart, she'd seen the gleam enter his eyes. The sudden twisting of his body to hide his arousal, or the absent slide of his hand over her hip or ass before he caught himself, reassured her his passion and attraction was still present. It was just getting past his damned, inflexible intention to stay isolated, that prevented their being together.

Even the heat of her body through the wool coat sent his body into over drive, Dayton admitted. Seeing his brand on her in the form of his collar, and the chains encircling her wrists and ankles, had his body and mind at war.

Mentally cursing his errant needs, he helped her into her car. Leaning down he braced himself in the open doorway. "I'll see you back at the office. I need to take Sisters Agnes and Rachel back to the youth center."

Her nod was the only response before she tugged the door closed, started the car, and drove away.

"She's a lovely girl, Dayton."

The gentle voice of Sister Agnes drifted past his shoulder. "And a hard worker," he assured the woman who'd helped raise him.

"You need to stop fighting it, son." The throaty chuckle should have belonged to a woman decades younger than the one who'd helped raise him. The sound alone made him look at her closely as he escorted her to the aged sedan, and held the passenger door open for her.

He waited until he'd opened and held the door for Sister Rachel before responding. "I'm not fighting anything," he denied. Sliding behind the wheel, he started the car and gave it a few moments to warm up.

"Lying was never your strong suit, boy." Sister Rachel snorted.

Looking at her in the rearview mirror, Dayton had to smile at the sardonic expression and shaking head the nun sent his way. "When have I ever lied to you?"

"The night you and the little Spencer girl fornicated beneath the outside steps of the center." She raised a graying brow at his surprise.

His expression must have amused the older women, because Sister Agnes patted him on the hand as he shifted the car into drive and eased onto the paved path through the cemetery.

"We're nuns, dear, not saints," she reminded him.

"And we understand when a man is interested in a woman," Rachel assured him. "Like you're interested in your Elf."

"My Elf..." He silently cursed the slip of his tongue, and hastily corrected himself. "Elf just works for me."

A sadness entered Agnes's eyes followed by an expression of disappointment. "You need to stop running, Dayton. Take the chance God has given you to be happy."

Dayton deliberately ignored the advice, turning the conversation to something mundane. He refused to listen to the voice in his head shouting its agreement with Sister Agnes.

An hour later he was still fighting the instinct to claim Elf as his when he returned to Kringle Toys and was immediately called to the workshop floor.

The black suit coat and navy silk tie were abandoned as he stepped in to help assist in the repair of one of the smaller pieces of equipment. Though the majority of his mind focused on the machine before him, Dayton allowed his mind to sift through the emotions Sister Agnes's advice and admonitions had stirred.

Yes, he still desired his Elf. Hell, she belonged to him in a manner none of his other lovers ever had. Even his two past relationships with subs had never reached the same depths of trust he'd experienced in the two weeks he'd had his Elf in his bed.

Loving her was out of the question. But wanting her was a battle he was growing tired of waging. She still wanted him. The admission she'd given regarding loving him could still send his heart hammering in his chest.

A woman like his Elf would demand everything in return for giving her heart, and that was a price he was unwilling to pay. The pain was too great when...

He forced his thoughts away from that box just as Elf's voice sounded behind him.

"Dayton, Mr. Tenadon --"

Unfortunately, the minor distraction came at the wrong moment. The instant of inattention had his hand slipping off the casing he'd been adjusting and skipping over the sharp blades, slicing open his palm from wrist to the base of his forefinger.

Cursing, he stepped away from the machine, and turned toward the first aid room, colliding with his Elf. Blood dripped from his palm onto his shirt, before hitting the concrete floor. The other worker snapped out orders to get the foreman and the on-duty nurse, but Dayton's full attention was focused on the woman in front of him.

"Oh, my God." Her breath washed over him as her cool palms cradled his larger, rougher hands. "Let's get you into the first aid office." She tried to tug him toward the room.

Other words were tumbling from her lips, but the heat filling his cock, the scent of her body so close to him, added to the frustration and anger building inside. He needed her touch, hungered after it like a starving man craved a banquet. And he hated that need, hated the weakness binding him to her, threatening to destroy him.

Because it would, he admitted. It would destroy him if he lost her the way he had his parents. The way he'd lost Charlie. The feral part of him that fought for protection reared up.

If he drove her away, the *need* would go away, it argued. He could ignore it, and, eventually he would be safe.

He had to be safe, Dayton told himself.

Pulling away from her, he snapped. "Damn it, Elf, I don't need your help."

Only the whirl of the smaller machinery echoed in the cavernous building. The workers fell silent, watching the exchange, eyes wide.

"I was only..." Jade eyes held confusion.

"I don't need you hovering over me," he snapped.

"I wasn't hovering." Her voice was choked.

Shaking his head at her, he sneered. "You can't stay away, can you? Can't you get it through your head, I don't want you anymore?"

"What?" She pulled away, cheeks going pink with embarrassment.

He had to send her away, he reminded himself. "I told you it was only sex." Push her so far out of his life he couldn't be tempted to give in again. "A couple of weeks of fucking doesn't give you permanent rights to my attention."

Elf flushed an even darker red.

"If you're so hard up to get laid, find someone else."

The crack of her hand across his cheek echoed in the silence. Grumbled curses and angry glares registered, but the pale features of his Elf had him fighting the compulsion to take her in his arms.

Her eyes held his a moment longer before she turned on her heel, shoulders back, head up, and calmly walked out of the building.

Success didn't taste as good as he'd thought.

"You're a damned fool, Dayton." Doug Crenshaw growled as he gripped Dayton's arm, and pulled him into the infirmary.

Nodding, Dayton agreed. "Yeah. But I'm a safe fool."

"No, boy..." Doug shook his head, turning to the door as the nurse began examining the wound. "You're just alone."

* * * * *

Elf could feel the tears building behind her eyes, but she fought letting them free. There was no damned way she was going to allow Dayton the satisfaction of seeing her cry. Neither was she going to let any of the workers in the factory see how much his words hurt her.

If the damned man wanted to be alone, let him. She was through trying to figure out the whys of his behavior. Knowing the urge to hurt Dayton the second he walked through the office door would be hard to suppress, Elf took the path of least resistance. Scribbling a quick note that she'd be leaving for the afternoon, she arranged to have the receptionist answer any incoming calls, gathered her purse, and entered his office.

Setting the note on his desk, she took a deep breath, and severed the last tie she'd allowed him to have to her. Taking her time, she removed the chains from her nipples, waist, ankles, and wrists, and set them on top of the note. Unable to suppress the tears, she loosened her collar with trembling fingers, dropped it beside the other jewelry, and left.

As she pulled away from the office, Elf admitted she wasn't surrendering the war for Dayton's heart, just this particular battle. It was now his turn to decide which path their relationship would take. Absently rubbing the fingers of her right hand over her belly, she admitted to herself, she had other, more important, concerns to distract her.

Chapter Nineteen

"He's an asshole," Elf grumbled as she paced her living room.

Curled on the sofa, a cup of hot, spiced chai tea in her hand, Eleanor smiled at her. "Yes, dear, but he's your asshole."

"Ha!" She snorted. "Not after this."

"Liar."

Facing her mother, Elf planted her hands on her hips and glared in exasperation. "Mom, you're supposed to be on my side."

"I am, sweetie." She sipped her tea.

Pushing her mother for clarification would do no good. Elf knew from years of trying. When Eleanor was ready, she'd explain herself.

"If you didn't love him so much, his boorish behavior wouldn't have upset you."

Add that to the box of little plastic sticks in my purse, and you might get an idea about the situation, she groused silently, wishing her mother, supportive as she was, could have picked a better time to drop in. Instead, she complained. "He practically called me a slut in front of all the swing shift workers." Elf dropped into the oversized chair.

"Which was embarrassing to you, and rude of him, but you don't hate him for it?"

"No." If she were completely honest, Elf had felt a little thrill that he'd claimed their time together so publicly. It was as if by announcing it, no matter how crudely, Dayton had linked himself with her for all to see. *And boy, will they "see" it in about five months, if one of those sticks develops a little pink plus sign.*

"What pissed you off was the fact that he felt he had to push you away."

"Exactly." Elf crossed her arms over her chest. "It isn't like I've been trailing after him, wringing my hands and sobbing for him to take me back."

Eleanor chuckled. "You would never do something like that."

"Right."

"Honey." Leaning forward, her mother set her mug on the coffee table, and met Elf's gaze with a probing, determined stare. "Can you honestly tell me you didn't see this coming?"

She thought about it. Having known Dayton for the last three years she'd seen both the good and bad in him. Generous as he was during the holidays, the rest of the year Dayton was selfish about his personal time. His company came first -- before anything or anyone. When he ended a relationship, he ended it. There was no going back, no staying friends.

The steadfast determination to remain isolated had always bewildered her. Learning about his parents' deaths, and the one foster home he'd been in, she could now better understand his need to not depend on anyone besides himself.

Facing that information, and taking into consideration her mother's question, Elf nodded. "No. I can't say I didn't see this coming. But I thought our relationship meant more to him."

"Did he ever do anything to embarrass or insult his previous lovers?" Eleanor prompted.

Elf shook her head. "No. At the end of his other affairs he merely told his lover it was over, and that was that."

"What about the ones who clung?"

"Nothing. He ignored their calls and messages. If they came by the office, he had a private chat with them, and it was done."

"So..." Eleanor picked up her tea and leaned back into the cushions again. "Why do you think he went to such lengths to drive you away when, according to you, you hadn't been 'hovering' over him?"

Thinking that over carefully, Elf offered, "Because he doesn't want to need me?"

Eleanor quirked a brow and sipped her tea.

"If he didn't want me, like he said, there would be no need to embarrass me." Elf worked the situation out in her own head, using her mother as her sounding board, as she had so many times in the past. "But he does still want me."

The hidden erections, the touches, all came to mind along with a grin. "He's fighting himself, and he wants me to leave, so he doesn't have to anymore."

"And why would that be necessary? From all that you've told me about him, I don't see Dayton as a weak man, unable to stop himself from doing something he doesn't want to do," her mother prompted.

"Because." Elf could feel hope surge through her body. "The part that's afraid to love me is being overtaken by the part that wants me, needs me."

"What are you going to do about it?"

"Let him stew for a while."

* * * * *

Elf's absence from the office didn't surprise him, but his gut clenched and twisted when the niggling fear that she wouldn't return whispered through his mind. That twist didn't dissipate until he'd thoroughly examined her desk and noted the various personal items that were still in place.

Going through to his own office his throat constricted around a furious growl. The setting sun glinted off gold and silver links as he approached his desk. Bracing his uninjured hand on the desk, he glared down at the two separate piles. The larger one, he readily acknowledged having expected to find, eventually.

But the collar. The fucking collar was *his* to remove. Denying his ownership wasn't... He stopped the thought.

As his sub, she had every right to reject his ownership. Especially when his very words and actions implied the connection had been severed. Drawing a deep breath, he carefully untangled the anklets and bracelets before looping them over his undamaged hand. The collar was shoved into his left pocket.

Beneath the chains he found the note she'd left saying she was taking the afternoon off. Folding it, he tucked it into his pocket with the collar. Gathering his keys, he moved into the elevator and up to his apartment.

Stripping out of his suit and ruined shirt, he grimaced as he tugged on jeans and a shirt. The chains were placed on the nightstand beside his bed. Stuffing his feet into battered sneakers, he pulled on his leather jacket -- the collar, note, and his wallet shoved into the inside pocket -- before he headed for the garage.

Pulling out into the evening traffic he reviewed the events following the scene in the factory. The company nurse had insisted on his going to get stitches in the emergency room. He'd done as she'd asked and gotten more than the tetanus shot, stitches, and prescription for pain relievers he'd anticipated.

Too many thoughts had crowded his mind as he'd waited on the hospital bed watching the other occupants of the open treatment area.

A woman, heavily pregnant, leaned on the man beside her as they watched a nurse and doctor examine a child on the bed in front of them. Images of Elf, her belly round with their baby slipped past his guard. His heart clenched thinking of her face bearing the same pain and worry as the young mother's across the room. Protecting his Elf was going to be a difficult habit to break.

If he wanted to break it at all, a part of him observed.

You need to, demanded the nervous voice that had driven him to deride his woman in front of his employees. Staying safe is important, it reminded him. No one can be trusted to stay. They all go away.

Elf hadn't. He remembered all the nights he'd dropped into bed after dragging himself from Charlie's hospital room. Snuggled beneath the covers, his Elf would pull him close, warming his body with hers, holding him before he could voice his need for it.

The more he recalled, the more the other voice in his head demanded he not count on his Elf's remaining with him. The more it protested, the more he recognized it as his own voice.

The same intonation he'd used to beg his parents not to leave him when he was eight.

Sitting on that hospital bed, watching the stitches march down his palm, Dayton realized what an ass he'd been. All the barriers he'd erected over the years had done nothing to protect him.

Watching Charlie slowly fade away, he'd known the pain of losing him. Though not as keen as the hurt he'd experienced at the loss of his parents, seeing a friend, and the man who'd taught him the artistry in woodworking, die was just as hard to bear.

His Elf's presence had helped ease the ache. Holding her, feeling her against him, even without the intensity of their lovemaking, Dayton knew his need for her was unique. Different than any other lover he'd had. She belonged to him. As the last stitch had settled into place, he'd determined walking away from his Elf was the last thing he wanted.

* * * * *

Helping her mom on with her coat, Elf waited for her to settle the long strap of her purse over her shoulder, before escorting her to the door. A heavy knocking sounded as she reached for the knob. Pulling it open, her heart stopped then resumed pounding in double time as she met Dayton's dark blue gaze.

"Can I come in?" His voice was gruff, hands buried in the pockets of his jacket.

"Give me a moment, honey," Eleanor warned stepping around her, and pulling the door closed, leaving Elf inside, and her mother and lover on the porch.

Dayton wasn't sure how to react to the cold glare his Elf's mother was raking over him. He now understood where his Elf's intensity came from, as well as her lack of height. Eleanor Jeffries-Lincoln stood an inch or two taller than her daughter, but even with her low heels, her head barely reached his chin. Her narrowed gaze, however, could strip dozens of layers of finish from an antique desk without marring the wood.

Clearing his throat, he tried for a pleasant tone. "Good evening, Mrs. Jeffries-Lincoln."

"We'll see about that, young man." Stepping closer, she dropped her voice, so no one besides him could hear her. "I'll only give you this one warning. You hurt my little girl and

I'll cut your balls off and feed you my own special recipe of Rocky Mountain Oysters. Is that clear?"

Dayton fought the urge to laugh. He didn't doubt for one second his Elf's mother wouldn't make good on her threat. But the very fact she was making it, reassured him his chances in reclaiming her were good.

Nodding politely, he instilled a sufficient amount of respect in his voice. "As crystal, Mrs. Jeffries-Lincoln."

Eleanor's shrewd gaze seemed to probe for confirmation her warning had been taken seriously. "Good."

Reaching back, she opened the door. "Call if you need anything." She smiled at her daughter.

His Elf stepped out on the porch and hugged her mother tight. "I will, Mom. Love you."

Returning the hug, Eleanor replied, "Love you, too." Her eyes met his again as she stepped around him and headed down the stairs to the parking lot.

"May I come in?" he asked again.

"Why? You said all you needed to say at work, I thought."

Crowding closer, he hid his grin at the scent of her arousal. His own attraction was impossible to control or subdue. "Not enough, I think."

"Plenty in my opinion." Elf groused, but she held the door open for him.

As he moved past her, he deliberately let his arm brush the peaked nipples beneath her T-shirt. The low-rise jeans hugging her curves, and the sight of her bare feet had him erect and desperate to claim her as his again.

Her gasp was quickly stifled as she shut the door and followed him into the living room.

"I wanted to apologize for my behavior today," he began.

When she would have cut him off, he forestalled her with a shake of his head. "No, let me." Dayton moved close, shedding and tossing his coat onto the back of the sofa. He settled his hands at her hips and drew her closer. "I should never have taken my frustration and confusion out on you."

She stayed still under his touch. Through the thin green T-shirt he could discern the distended nipples of her breasts.

Her hand smoothed over his bandaged one. "You were in pain. I understand that." Then she stepped out of his hold.

Wanting to curse her retreat, Dayton stilled his tongue and tried another tack. "We need to talk."

Nodding in agreement, she motioned to the sofa.

He didn't protest her taking a seat in the chair rather than on the cushion beside him. Instead, he studied her face, noting the faint redness around her eyes that had to have come from tears. Again he castigated himself for his outburst at the factory. "I want you." Putting his needs into words was difficult, so he stuck with the easiest path.

"For what? Sex?"

The mutinous look on her face and stiff way she held herself warned him it wasn't going to be easy. He nodded, "Yes."

"Not good enough."

The fight in her, the fire, had always drawn him, tempted his need to dominate. Her response kicked his needs higher. "You want me." He pushed.

"Not enough."

Leaning forward, he held her gaze, watching the fire, the heat, the desire build as his words spilled out. "Yes, enough, my Elf." His claiming of her made her blink, encouraging him further. "Your pretty little nipples are desperate for my attention. Your panties are soaked, and that bare pussy of yours is begging for a good swat or two before I fuck you."

Swallowing convulsively to wet her dry mouth, Elf forced herself to remain in her seat. His every word was correct. Her breasts did ache for his touch. The bare swollen lips of her pussy yearned to be fucked by him, but she wasn't going to let him deny his feelings for her again.

She couldn't afford to.

Damn it, the man loved her, and she deserved to hear it. "I didn't say I didn't want you, I just said those weren't good enough reasons for me to come back." Elf kept her tone cool.

Having known him as long as she had, she could see a part of him shying away. In his eyes was the instinctive knowledge that what she'd ask for could be more than he was willing to give, but he voiced his question anyway. "What do you want from me?"

"You need to trust me."

A simple thing. "I do trust you," he assured her.

"No." She pushed herself out of the chair, and paced the stretch of carpet between her living room and dining area. "You may trust me to work for you, but you don't trust me enough for me to sleep with you again."

"Sleep was the last thing I had in mind." He tried to tease her.

"Don't be an ass, Dayton." Her hands gripped the back of her chair until her knuckles turned white. She glared over at him and said, "If you trusted me the way I trust you, you wouldn't ignore me when I ask you about your past."

"I didn't..." He tried to deny.

She could tell he was reluctant to admit she was right. His expression grew tight, almost austere. "I've asked you multiple times about your family. You ignore my questions. If I push, you shut down."

"Why is that so important?"

Elf watched him. "Because they were important. To you. To the man you are. To the man you'll become in the future."

"They're dead." He shrugged, but the ease wasn't there. She could still see discomfort in his eyes as he rose from the sofa to make his own circuit of her carpeted living room.

"And you still mourn them." She shook her head when he would have protested. "You should mourn them, Dayton. They were your parents. But shutting them away as if they never existed, denying their presence in your life, that's wrong. You hoard your feelings, your emotions, away like a surly dragon afraid someone is going to steal everything you have."

"How does that have anything to do with us?" he demanded.

"It has everything to do with us, Dayton." She sighed. "This emotional distance you demand isn't what I want. It isn't what I need, nor is it what I deserve." Daring to bring up a subject that could explode in her face, she added, "And if we should ever have children? What then? Do you keep them at a distance, just out of arm's reach? Will they constantly have to wonder why they aren't good enough, special enough, for you to love?"

Shaking her head, her arms crossed over her stomach, she continued. "I love you, Dayton. But if you can't let me in, if you can't trust me with your feelings, all I see as a plus in our relationship is great sex. And even that gets old pretty quick when there are no feelings attached."

His reaction wasn't what she expected. Grabbing his coat from the back of the sofa, he stuffed his arms through the sleeves. In his eyes, she could see he was waging a battle of some sort, and she could only hope the winning side was one willing to negotiate with her.

After a long silence, he held his injured hand out to her. "If you really want to talk, you need to come with me."

Chapter Twenty

In the dark, the path was harder to see. Having tread it so many times over the years, Dayton knew where every stone lay and how to avoid the spindly roots ready to trip the unwary. Beside him, his Elf remained silent, just as she had during the short drive from her apartment. Only the tight grip of her hand in his betrayed her nervousness.

When they reached the clearing, he stopped. The blanket he'd dragged from the back of his SUV was spread over the damp grass. The lights from downtown San Diablo cast a glow over the hill while the trees blocked the security lights surrounding the factory to the east of them. Clouds hid the stars and moon from sight, while the smell of rain hovered on the breeze.

"This was Mom's favorite place." His voice was quiet in the darkness. His Elf stayed quiet, seeming to sense his need to start slow. "You wanted to know about my family." He glanced over his shoulder at her, legs curled to the side as she sat on the blanket. "This is where she made Dad bring us every Sunday afternoon. Rain or shine she'd drag us up here."

Returning to the blanket, he stretched out beside his Elf and propped himself on his side, elbow holding him up. "When I was seven, Mom got pregnant. It's all pretty vague, since I didn't have anyone to discuss the memories with, but something happened and she lost the baby.

"There must have been medical bills, or something else going on, because the visits slowed down. My mom had to get a job, and there wasn't time to come out here as often."

He tried to read her face in the shadowed light, but all he could see was the shimmer of tears. Sitting up, he pulled her close. "Don't cry, baby."

"You must miss them terribly." She whispered, tears making her voice rough. Her arms snaked around his waist, hugging him.

The stroke of her palm over his back sent a sharp pain through his chest. Answering her question, he nodded. "Yeah, I do."

"What happened to them?"

"I killed them." The guilt twisted his belly, making him pull her closer, needing her warmth to fight off the pain of the memories.

"Dayton."

"It was a week before Christmas and we hadn't gotten our tree." He answered her unspoken question, his voice spitting out words in a rush, trying to get his confession over with as quickly as possible. "Mom and Dad were tired, and the weather was miserable, cold and rainy, but I was so damned determined we had to have a Christmas tree, I just wouldn't let up."

Threading his fingers through her hair, he stroked the silky mane while images of his parents filled his head. "I loved Christmas, my Elf. The Christmas tree my mom decorated while my dad baked cookies. She was a great cook, but she always burned the cookies. But that year, everything was different."

Leaning back, Dayton eased himself and his Elf down onto the blanket, still keeping her tucked in tight. "I think I just wanted things to go back to the way they'd been. And in my mind that meant a Christmas tree in the living room would make them happy. So I pushed and whined until they gave in."

"We should never have been on the road. The Christmas tree lot we usually went to was closed, but Dad said he knew of another one. It was like, once we were in the car, he started to understand how important that damned tree was. Mom was even smiling a bit."

Shaking his head, he continued. "I don't remember how it happened, but somehow, maybe because of the slick roads, another car slammed into ours." Rolling onto his side, he rose up on his elbow beside her, his fingers tracing the curve of her cheek, absently running along the line of her jaw as he continued. "I woke up in the hospital and was told both my parents were gone. Dead. And I knew it was all my fault."

"No." Her chilled hands cupped his face as she gazed up at him. "No, Dayton, it wasn't your fault. It was an accident."

He was sure his expression must have soothed her, but his words helped ease the tension in the body beneath him even more. "I know, baby. It took some time, but I figured out I wasn't to blame for them dying. But I did know I didn't ever want to feel that much pain and be that out of control of my life ever again."

"Your need to dominate." She smiled.

"Exactly, my Elf." He nodded down at her. "Then you completely fucked all my plans up the second you sat down in my office."

In the dark it was easier to admit and give in to the truth he'd been fighting. Natural submissive that she was, his Elf completed him in a way no other woman ever had. She gave

her body, her trust, and her heart so freely. Living without them would be impossible for him. Sliding her coat off, he made quick work of stripping off her T-shirt. Her bare breasts gleamed in the subdued light of the city below them.

Above, a three-quarter moon broke through the clouds, throwing its glow over them. "Three years." His hands stroked her belly before unbuttoning and releasing the zipper of her jeans. "You twitched your sweet little ass in front of me until I couldn't see straight."

One palm eased beneath the denim to squeeze and stroke her bottom, before working the fabric off her hips and down around her ankles. The loafers she'd slipped on her feet were tossed to the edge of the blanket to be joined by her jeans.

"That was never my intention," Elf protested, shivering as a breeze swept over her naked form.

"But you didn't stop it either, did you?" Dayton demanded, spreading his coat to cover them. Using his forearms, settling his thighs between hers, he braced his weight over her, and lowered his lips to hers.

Wanting to reestablish his ownership, his uninjured hand cupped first one breast then the other. Reaching into the interior pocket of his coat, he pulled his collar out. Beneath him he felt her body tremble, with pleasure instead of cold if the smell of her arousal was any indication. "This should never have been removed without my permission, my Elf."

Jade eyes held his gaze, never wavering. "You said we were over. That I should find another man to fuck me." Her voice cracked as she recited his crass words.

"And eventually, I'll find another man to fuck my Elf." He informed her, his arousal growing at the mixture of fear and anticipation in her wide eyes. Lowering his lips to hers, his voice gentled. "Once, my Elf. I want you to experience the sensations of two men fucking you, at least once. Filling pussy and ass at the same time, and driving you insane with pleasure."

"Will I have a choice?"

"Always, my Elf. Your trust is something I would never betray." He again held the collar up. "This needs to return to its proper place."

The question was hidden within the command. Just as every command and order he'd given held an unspoken query. And like every one that had come before, Elf submitted to this one as well. The look in her eyes and the way she lifted her head just enough for him to snake the gold and silver links beneath her neck had him fighting off climaxing in his jeans.

As he secured the collar at the base of her throat, Elf's hands weren't idle. Under his coat, she slipped buttons through their holes and tugged the shirt from the waistband of his jeans, before moving on to the five steel buttons restraining his arousal.

He gave her just enough time to release his cock from the confines of his boxer briefs, and then sucked one taut peak into his mouth. Throaty moans whispered into the darkness

around them as he licked and nibbled the sensitive tip, released it to the cool air, and paid the same attention to its twin.

Leaving her breast, his hand skated over her undulating belly and dipped into the damp silk of her thong. "Hmmm." He hummed his appreciation against her breast as he stroked the petal-smooth flesh of her mound. "Very good, my Elf." He encouraged, parting the swollen folds, and teasing her clit. "You've kept yourself waxed for me."

No response had been required, but her breathy sigh drifted across his ear as her hands flexed against his ass, "Yes, for you, Master."

Rising over her, he held her gaze while easing first one, then a second digit into her heated core. The need flared in her jade eyes before her head tilted back and she arched into him. Swiping his tongue over first one breast then the other, he demanded, "Whose breasts are these?"

"Yours," she replied as he watched her fight the climax pulsing inside.

His eyes held hers as he thrust his fingers deep into her sheath, rasping over the spot that twisted her arousal higher. "Whose pussy is this?"

Teeth gripped and then released her bottom lip before she gasped, "Yo-yours."

"You belong to me."

"Yes."

"Tell me who you are." His fingers stilled inside her.

A whimper sneaked past her lips. "I'm your Elf."

"And what" -- he eased his straining erection closer to her, rubbing the crest between the weeping petals of her pussy -- "does my Elf want?"

Her voice cracked this time, tears pooled in her eyes, and leaked onto her cheeks. "For her Santa to love her."

Dayton had to close his eyes against the sting of his own tears. "Damn it, my Elf." He cursed his hips shooting forward, sealing his body in hers. His lips captured her cry as she convulsed beneath him, her orgasm swamping her control.

By sheer will he held off his own climax until hers had finished and his Elf was slowly regaining awareness. The flex and pull of her internal muscles coasted over his cock, while he waited. When her eyes fluttered open and met his, he grinned.

"Naughty Elf," he murmured, rocking his hips forward then back. Voice serious, eyes wary, he demanded, "Tell me again?"

"I love you." She didn't hesitate or flinch. Arching into his strokes, she met his body and matched him.

"This is very good, my Elf." He nodded, his undamaged hand sliding around her waist to explore the taut hole hidden between the cheeks of her ass.

Keeping her eyes on his, she asked a question of her own. "Why?"

"Because you belong to me."

"And?"

"This Santa loves his Elf, and I'm never letting you go."

Her moan echoed in the darkness as he slipped first one then two fingers inside her back entrance to press against the advance and retreat of his cock in her pussy. "I'm glad," she whispered, her lips suckling the side of his neck. Moving upward, her teeth nipped his ear as she added, "Now, Santa's Elf says fuck me like you mean it."

Their laughter lingered in the air even as the slap of bodies furiously reaching for release broke the evening silence to be quickly followed by commingled cries of completion.

The first snowflake settled on Dayton's neck, drawing him from the soft, hazy sensation that always followed climax with his Elf. Beneath him, he felt a shiver ripple through her as she became aware of the chill air and light gusts drifting through the trees.

Disgruntled at the weather's interference, Dayton growled. "Damn nature. Has to ruin everything." Shaking his head, he shifted over her, sliding his semi-aroused cock free, and tucking it back in his jeans.

Fastening all but the top button, he shrugged on his coat, leaving his shirt open beneath. Leaning to the side, he dragged her clothes and shoes from the edge of the blanket, and dumped them in her lap. Ignoring her cry at the chilly cloth against her warm skin, he flipped the edges of the blanket up and over her, wrapping her like a child, and lifted her in his arms.

"Dayton!" Her arms fought free of her cocoon, and reached for his neck.

Dayton's grin flattened when he caught sight of her taut, peaked breasts bared to the moonlight. His penis hardened, pressing at the buttons of his jeans. "Cover your tits." His growl whispered through the darkness as his steps slowed. "Or we'll never make it back to the truck."

Hoping the look in his eyes warning her not to press her luck was heeded, he returned his focus to the woods surrounding them. Progress along the path was slower, due to the increase in snowfall, and his need to take care of his Elf. Reaching his truck, he loaded her, blanket and all, into the passenger seat, secured the seatbelt over her, and shut the door.

Within minutes they were back at the company, and exiting the elevator into his living room. Though the ride had been as silent as their first one, this time it was a companionable silence.

Neither spoke as he carried her into the bathroom, set her on the commode, and ran a bath. The steam rose from the tub, slowly filling the room. As he turned to help her, Dayton smiled.

Never one to wait, his Elf had carefully folded her clothes, set them on the counter, and was in the process of folding the blanket when he faced her. "Tub, my Elf."

Setting the blanket aside, Elf took his outstretched hand and stepped into the warm water. He watched her sink up to her neck, smiling as she moaned, savoring the heat as it dispelled the chill. Stripping away his own clothes, he left them where they landed before taking his place behind her.

"I've missed this," Elf admitted as his uninjured hand stroked over her breasts and his lips nibbled at the flesh above her collar.

"I've missed these." His fingers squeezed the plump mounds, plucked at her nipples, before dipping between her thighs. "And this." Long, calloused fingers eased between her damp labia and thrust into her sheath.

Still sore from his lovemaking, but desperate for his touch, she lifted her hips, impaling herself on his digits even as she reveled in the hint of pain. Against her bottom, the hard evidence of his arousal pressed for attention.

* * * * *

Hours later, too exhausted to sleep and nervous of Dayton's reaction, Elf turned in his arms. "Dayton?" She hoped he was sleeping so she could avoid this discussion.

Instead, his gravelly voice replied. "Ummm hmm." A calloused hand stroked up her back, over her shoulder, before settling on her ripe breast.

"Remember on Christmas Eve when I asked you about kids?"

His explorations stopped. "Yes." This time his voice was clearer, the fog of sleep ripped away by her query.

"Well, I..." She didn't know how to put her suspicions into words.

Easing onto his elbow over her, Dayton turned on one of the bedside lamps before turning back to her. "You've never been afraid to say anything to me in the past, my Elf."

Although he waited for her words, she could tell by his expression, he suspected what she would say. Taking to heart the fact that he hadn't left the bed immediately following the notion she could see in his eyes, Elf blurted it out. "I think I'm pregnant."

Before he could ask anything, she let the information spill out. "I had a feeling I might be just after we got the phone call about Charlie. I haven't seen a doctor yet, but I asked mine if it was possible, and she said yes. That the dosage of birth control she had me on was the lowest level and it c --"

His fingers pressed against her lips, stilling her words. "Did you use one of those home tests yet?"

She shook her head.

“Do you have one?”

She nodded. “In my purse.”

Sliding naked from the bed, he tugged her with him out to the darkened living room where her purse had been dropped on the sofa. She watched as he upended the bag, found the blue and white box, and turned to hand it to her. “Take it now.”

Not sure how to interpret his behavior, Elf headed back into the bedroom, Dayton a step behind as she moved into the bathroom.

Three minutes later he was standing behind her, his arms wrapped around her waist, hands covering her belly as the little pink plus sign appeared in the window. His injured hand eased the stick from her hand, and tossed it into the trash. Against her backside, his thick arousal nudged at the crease between her cheeks.

“Well.” The tone of his voice was smooth, unconcerned as he ushered her back into the bedroom and beneath the covers. “This definitely proves my theory.”

“What theory is that?” She responded, gasping as he eased between her thighs, fingers stroking her clit, increasing her arousal, hard and fast. “That you have pretty persistent swimmers?”

“No.” His chuckle vibrated against her lips as he settled his cock in place, and drove home. Deep inside, her muscles spasmed around him, fighting orgasm while milking his length with each hammering thrust. “The perfect recipe for kids is: Santa.”

He rocked back, holding her gaze as he pushed in, filling her.

“Toys.”

This time the thrusts were fast and close together. As he lowered his head to press his lips to her ear, he nodded his permission for her to come.

Barely cognizant of the room, Elf still couldn’t prevent her laughter when he whispered the final ingredient for kids against her ear as his own orgasm pulsed through him.

“And Santa’s Elf.”

 THE END 

Qwillia Rain

Qwillia Rain grew up loving books. From an early age she was creating stories to go with the pictures. By high school she was penning romances for her friends and shocking them with the graphic nature of the love scenes. After leaving her home in Las Vegas, Nevada for Anchorage, Alaska, Qwillia discovered there were other authors who enjoyed throwing open the bedroom doors and exploring the darker side of human nature. She left Alaska for Billings, Montana, but the travel bug struck again. Currently, Qwillia resides in Raleigh, North Carolina, drawing inspiration from the history, scenery, and rich diversity of the South.

Santa's Elf is the result of a simple *what if?* What if Santa had a naughty side and his interests were on a particular elf? What would some of his gifts be?