



CHRISTMAS CRACKERS

THE CHRISTMAS BOX

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The Christmas Box

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Warning: This book contains sexually explicit content which is only suitable for mature readers. This story has been rated *Total-e-burning*.

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Dedication

To Lord T - Happy Christmas!

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Chapter One

Snowflakes. I've always loved them; to me, there is nothing more romantic than staring out of the window on a dark winter's night and watching soft, fluffy flakes of snow spiral to the ground. But when that same snow is pelting hard against the windscreen of your car, making it almost impossible to see more than a couple of feet ahead of you, and you're on a winding, unlit country lane you've never driven along before, there is nothing soft and romantic about it.

It was late afternoon on Christmas Eve, and I had been on the road since leaving the office at lunchtime, which had begun to seem like an awfully long time ago. I'd hoped to reach my destination well before now, but the gradually worsening weather and my unfamiliarity with the area had put paid to that. I knew the house couldn't be much farther, but the directions I had been given involved looking out for local signs and landmarks, most of which had been obscured by the rapidly falling snow. When my father had offered to buy me a satellite navigation system for Christmas, I'd told him it was the last thing I needed, a comment which sounded incredibly foolish in hindsight.

But that was before Joe Collymore had got in contact with me, asking me to spend the holiday at his late aunt's home in the Yorkshire Dales. He apologised for sorting out all the arrangements so close to time but, having been left the place in her will, he had decided on the spur of the moment to host a celebration there before putting the property on the market in the New Year. "It's just too big for a man on his own," he told me in his e-mail, "but it's absolutely perfect for a party." He mentioned he had invited another half-dozen of his good friends, some of whom I would know from our time at university, others who he had met in the years since I'd last seen him.

I had been very close to Joe since the day we'd found ourselves neighbours in the same dormitory block, though we'd never been involved in any kind of romantic sense—he'd been a bit too much of a geek for me, always wrapped up in the latest physics experiment he was working on for his course, and had a lanky, six-foot-four frame that he hadn't quite grown into. As for me, even if I had fancied Joe, I had willingly made myself unavailable. I was

intent on keeping up my relationship with Mike, my boyfriend from home, even though by the end of my first year in Nottingham it was obvious that we had grown too far apart to really make it work. Meanwhile, Joe and I had always been there for each other when problems arose or the second-term blues struck hard, and the fact that we had never been anything but good mates meant we were still in touch long after many of our other university friendships – and my relationship with Mike – had fallen by the wayside.

That was why I'd broken a family tradition of many years and decided not to spend Christmas at my parents' home. My mother was clearly disappointed when I rang to let her know, but my father was more realistic.

"She's twenty-eight, Janet," I heard him say to my mother, his hand doing a poor job of muffling the telephone handset. "She needs to spend time with her friends for once."

And it wasn't as though they would be on their own; my brother would be taking his eighteen-month-old daughter over for Christmas lunch so they could spoil her rotten. I felt easier about my decision as I put the phone down, but I knew my father, at least, believed that I intended to spend Christmas with a serious boyfriend, and that was why I was prepared to drive halfway across the country to get there. Chance would be a fine thing. There had been a heavy round of job cuts at the firm I worked for during the summer, and though I had been spared redundancy, those of us who were left were now working twice as hard to make up for the shortfall in staff. Finding the right man – or any man – was a long way down my list of priorities at the moment. Still, just spending time with Joe and some of our other old friends would help me forget about the mountain of paperwork which would be waiting on my desk when I returned to my office, and my lack of a decent sex life.

I fiddled with the settings on my car radio, eventually tuning it to a station which was relaying a carol concert from one of the colleges of Cambridge University. Good King Wenceslas was looking out on snow which was deep and crisp and even. *That sounds familiar*, I thought as I peered through the slushy mess the windscreen wipers struggled to clear away, looking for any sign of a house in the distance.

Finally, I noticed lights shining dimly at the end of a long driveway. This had to be the place. Though, by now, I was so tired and fed up that even it wasn't, I would fall on my knees and beg whoever lived there to let me have a bed for the night. I brought the car to a halt in front of the house, wondering whether I would ever manage to get it started again,

and pulled my overnight bag from the back seat. Turning the collar of my winter coat up against the hideous weather, I trudged through snow which already reached to mid-calf level and banged hard on the wrought iron door knocker.

For a long moment, it seemed as though no one had heard me. I considered knocking again then the door swung open. There, much to my relief, was Joe—though not the Joe I remembered from our university days. He'd sent me the odd snapshot of himself over the years, always attached to a long, chatty e-mail, but none of them had quite done justice to how much he had changed. The once-gawky body had filled out nicely, his new physique emphasised by the navy blue t-shirt which currently stretched across his pecs. His hair was longer and shaggier, the fringe almost falling into his soft brown eyes, and he'd grown a beard, which suited him. He stared at me as though he couldn't quite believe I was standing on the doorstep then he enfolded me in a big, welcoming hug.

"Natasha, it's great to see you," Joe said as we finally pulled apart. "You look amazing."

"You don't look so bad yourself, Collymore," I replied, though at that moment what my body was actually screaming was, "My God, you're hot!" Just being wrapped in Joe's arms had left me feeling breathless, and it wasn't all down to the strength of his embrace. I couldn't help wondering what he might look like stripped of that tight t-shirt. Did the hair on his chest trail down his stomach to disappear enticingly into the waistband of his jeans, or was his skin smooth to the touch, inviting lips to flicker over it? I shook my head slightly to clear it of the image, afraid Joe might notice the blush which was rising to my face. I let him take my coat from me, and kicked off my boots so I wouldn't trail snow into the house, then followed him through into the drawing room. Though the décor was slightly gloomy, with various pieces of dark mahogany furniture dotted around the room and a painting of a winter hunting scene hanging on the chimney breast, a fire burnt vigorously in the grate, keeping away the chill.

"So where is everyone else?" I asked, having expected to be the last of Joe's guests to arrive. Instead, I was surprised to see the room was empty.

"I think you're going to be the only one to make it," Joe said, handing me a snifter of brandy. I took a grateful if unladylike gulp, feeling the alcohol warming me through as it slipped down my throat. "Dave and Jenny got as far as York, then called me to say they were

booking themselves into a hotel for the night. I don't think most of the others even bothered setting off when they saw the bad weather closing in."

"It's not going to be much of a party for you, is it?" I asked, as he sat on the sofa beside me.

"Well, it's not exactly the send-off I had planned for this place," Joe admitted, "but I still think the two of us could have a pretty good time on our own." His gaze met mine briefly, then we both glanced away, a little surprised at the depth of the look which had passed between us. In that moment, I realised I wasn't the only one looking at an old friend with suddenly admiring, lustful eyes.

"But all the food you must have got in..." I continued, trying to keep the conversation light.

"Oh, we were mostly going to have nibbles tonight," he said. "I'm sure those will keep. You and I have got some catching up to do first." As he spoke, he caught hold of the point of my chin, stroking his fingers along the soft skin of my throat. I'd never experienced such an intimate caress from Joe before, and I felt liquid heat rushing to my sex. Joe's lips met mine, kissing me gently at first, then with a sudden fierce hunger. I wondered briefly whether I was doing the right thing—I had seen friendships fall apart so many times when those friends had become lovers—but it was Christmas, I told myself. The season of goodwill to all men. Time to let myself go for once. Catching Joe's urgent mood, I pulled his t-shirt out of his jeans, anxious to explore the planes of his chest and stomach. His big hands were on my breasts, teasing my nipples into aching peaks even through the layers of clothing I'd worn to make the journey to his aunt's home.

"Let's get you out of some of this," Joe said, tugging my thick sweater over my head to leave me in only a skimpy camisole. He pushed the straps down off my shoulders, baring my breasts. The smile that crossed his face told me just how much he liked the sight of me like that, half-dressed and wanting him. I straddled his thighs, pressing briefly against what felt like a nice bulge in his jeans, then leant over him so that my nipple was temptingly close to his lips. He was straining up towards it when a sudden, insistent banging echoed through the house.

"What the..." I said, as Joe rolled me off his body so he could rise to his feet.

"Someone's at the door. I'd better go see who it is," he said, ignoring my pout of disappointment. "Looks like we might have more guests after all."

I shrugged my camisole back in place and curled up on the sofa as though Joe and I had been doing nothing more than having an innocent chat. When he walked back into the drawing room, it was with another man in tow; a man I didn't recognise. The stranger was a couple of inches shorter than Joe, with streaky blond hair and vivid blue eyes. He had the stocky, muscular build of a rugby player and one of the most engaging smiles I'd ever seen. Looking at that smile washed away a little of the frustration I'd felt at being left high and dry by his unexpected appearance.

"Natasha, this is Ian," Joe said, as I rose to my feet. If Ian had noticed that we both looked slightly dishevelled, he didn't say anything. "Ian's a mate of mine from work. Natasha I've known since I was at university."

Ian stepped forward and gave me a kiss on both cheeks. I caught a brief whiff of spicy aftershave underlaid with an unmistakably male musk, heightened by spending the last few hours cooped up in a car. "You wouldn't believe what it's like out there, mate," he said to Joe. "I didn't think I was ever going to make it."

"You should have given me a ring, let me know you were on the way," Joe told him.

"I forgot to charge my phone this morning," Ian explained. "The damn thing died on me a couple of hours ago."

"Well, I'm glad you're here," Joe said, even though he didn't sound entirely convincing. I was sure he was just as disappointed as I was that our private party had been gate-crashed. "I'll get some dinner on the go and leave you and Natasha to get to know each other."

Joe sloshed a little more brandy into my glass and poured a generous measure for Ian, before disappearing in what I assumed was the direction of the kitchen. I arranged myself cross-legged on the sofa, while Ian made himself comfortable in a leather wing-backed armchair. We soon fell into an easy conversation, Ian fascinated to know what Joe had been like when I had first known him while I quizzed him about Joe's more recent exploits. Ian turned out to be witty and charming, and I could see why he and Joe got on as well as they did. Indeed, if I hadn't just discovered the way Joe apparently felt about me, I would have been busily attempting to find out whether Ian was single and available.

Ian was in the middle of telling a story about what he and Joe had got up to on some stag night in Amsterdam when Joe popped his head round the door and announced that dinner was served. We followed him down the hall into the kitchen, which still had all its original dark wooden beams intact and was dominated by an Aga cooker. Joe had set a couple of candles burning in the centre of the scrubbed pine kitchen table and laid three place settings with white Denby china and gleaming silver cutlery. Strings of tinsel and paper chains in every shade of the rainbow hung from the exposed ceiling beams, and there was a Christmas tree in one corner of the room, its pine aroma mingling with the delicious cooking smells. Joe caught me looking at a small pile of what appeared to be presents beneath the tree.

"I thought we'd eat, and then exchange gifts," he said. "I know Christmas morning is the traditional time, but tonight will be more fun."

Dinner tasted as good as it smelt and was more substantial than the nibbles he had mentioned earlier. Joe had always done his share of the cooking back in our university days, but that had usually been a pan of stew or chilli, something he could leave bubbling away on the stove unattended while we sat listening to music in his room or mine. Tonight, he had really pulled out the stops, serving seared tuna with lemony roast potatoes and steamed green vegetables, followed by a rich white chocolate cheesecake studded with raspberries. We polished off a bottle of French merlot as we ate, the softness of the wine complementing the food perfectly. It was a long time since I'd enjoyed a meal quite so much; Ian and Joe had me laughing throughout as they swapped stories, and I thought how lucky I was to be spending Christmas Eve in the company of two such funny, gorgeous men.

I could have sat at that table all night, but Joe had other ideas. He stood to clear the dessert plates from the table. "I'm going to make some coffee, so why don't the two of you go and fetch the Secret Santa presents I asked you to bring and we'll open them in front of the fire? I know they probably won't be going to the person they were intended for, but it's all just a bit of fun anyway." When we'd been making the arrangements for this get-together, Joe had asked each of us to choose a number between one and eight. Each of those numbers had corresponded to one of the guests, for whom we were then required to buy a present, spending no more than five pounds on whatever we bought. As he had said, it was just a bit of fun, a way of breaking the ice among people who might not have met before tonight.

Joe had left Ian's and my bags in the hall, and we went to fetch the presents, giggling like schoolchildren as we did. We were quickly joined by Joe, who had a cafetière and cups on a tray, along with a bag of chocolate coins like the ones I'd always had in my stocking as a child and a present wrapped in paper which bore the message 'Peace On Earth' in gold lettering on a burgundy background.

He pushed open the drawing room door. "It should be nice and cosy in here," he said.

He was right; with the fire burning merrily away, it was easy to forget that outside the night was dark and the snow was still falling. Once we were settled—all three of us sitting side by side on the sofa this time—and Joe had poured the coffee, it was Ian who handed out the first present. "I had to buy something for a woman, so I should really give this to Natasha."

He handed over a small package, beautifully wrapped in blue and silver paper with matching silver ribbon. I unwrapped it to discover a G-string consisting of a scrap of frothy ivory lace, so tiny that it would barely cover anything once it was on. I found myself blushing as I looked at it, even though it hadn't originally been intended for me.

"It was for Jenny," Ian explained. "Dave's always saying how much he likes it when she wears sexy lingerie in the bedroom, so I thought I'd give both of them a Christmas treat."

"Well, it certainly is sexy," Joe said approvingly. "What do you think, Natasha?"

"It's not the sort of thing I'd usually wear," I admitted. "I prefer something a little bit more substantial."

"You know what?" Joe said. "You should model it for us. Try it on, right now. I'd like that, and I'm sure Ian would, too."

I stared at him, unable to believe what he had just suggested, but I decided that if he wanted to play games, I would play them right back. "Okay, if you just show me where the bathroom is, I'll nip and change into it."

Joe shook his head. "I want you to put it on here. And I want you to take everything else off first." There was a tone in his voice I'd never heard before—compelling, dominant. And the way he was behaving excited me, even as I protested that I couldn't possibly do what he asked.

"Well, maybe you'd like Ian and me to strip you naked instead?" Joe retorted. I wanted to admit that yes, there was a part of me which would like that very much indeed. Instead, I

meekly unbuckled the belt of my jeans, then unzipped them and pushed them down and off. My socks followed, the two men watching avidly as I gradually bared myself for them. The erotic tension in the room crackled like the fire in the grate. My nipples stood out hard and dark beneath my flimsy camisole, and it would have been impossible for me to deny that I was excited by what was happening. Off came the silky garment, to join the little pile of clothes on the floor. Ian shifted in his seat, as though his combat pants were suddenly too small for him, and it was clear he and Joe were getting more than a little turned on by my display. I was still all too conscious that both of them were fully dressed, while I was about to remove the only thing that remained to protect my modesty. Maybe if I hesitated long enough, one of them would actually make the move and tear my knickers from me...

Slowly, I eased my knickers down, aware that if either of the men examined them, they would see just how wet they were. I could smell my own arousal, sharp and briny, and I was pretty sure they could, too. Finally, I stood before them naked, fighting the urge to cover my breasts and pussy with my hands. Neither of them said a word as I stepped into the tiny G-string; as I had suspected, it did almost nothing to conceal my most intimate places, my puffy lips bulging out around the lace.

"Beautiful," Ian breathed as he looked me up and down. "Poor old Dave's really missed out there."

"Turn round, Natasha," Joe ordered. "I want to see the back view." I did as he asked, letting him get a good look at the bare cheeks of my arse. "Now bend over," he instructed. I could only imagine what I must look like as I obeyed, with only a thin strip of material covering my rear hole. The next thing I knew, fingers were on my backside, caressing and squeezing, before moving down to rub my pussy through the lace and draw whimpers of lust from me. I wanted to turn my head and see which of the men was playing with me so blatantly, but I heard Joe say sternly, "Stay where you are."

I had never reacted so submissively before. I had no idea where this new side of my sexuality had come from and why I was enjoying it so much. The unknown fingers continued to explore, pushing under the G-string to stroke my clit, then one dipped into my cunt, thrusting in and out. I clutched the edge of the coffee table, afraid I would lose my balance as the fingers continued to push me relentlessly towards an orgasm. Then, just when

I was right on the edge, gasping and almost begging to come, whoever was frigging me withdrew and I was ordered to stand.

"Time to open another present, I think," Joe said, not giving any clue as to whether it was he or Ian who had got me so hot and bothered. "No, I tell you what, mate, why don't we both open them at the same time? After all, I know exactly what you're getting, because I bought it for you."

In unison, the two men tore the wrapping off their gifts. I glanced over my shoulder, curious to see their reactions to what they had received. The corners of Joe's mouth quirked upwards as he looked at what I'd given him. It wasn't the most appropriate present—a wooden-backed hairbrush of a size designed to be carried in a handbag—but then its intended recipient had been Cheryl, another of his female friends. However, something about the way he was rolling the brush between his hands before experimentally smacking the back of it against his palm made me think he wasn't quite as disappointed with it as he might have been.

Meanwhile, Ian was examining what appeared at first sight to be a pack of playing cards. On closer inspection, each one of them turned out to have a photograph of a different sexual position on one side, and a description of how to perform that position on the other. Joe had in all probability bought it for his friend as a joke—a way of getting a laugh when a group of people were gathered together having enjoyed a good meal and plenty of alcohol—but given everything which had just happened, it suddenly seemed a lot more serious.

"Well, I think we can find a use for both of these," Joe said, "but before we go any further, we need to decide which of us is going to spank Natasha and which of us is going to fuck her."

"Joe..." I began. I wanted to object. No one had ever expressed an interest in spanking me before, and if they had, I was certain I would have refused. And given that I was only wearing the ridiculously skimpy thong, I couldn't begin to imagine what it would feel like to have that hard little brush slapping down on my unprotected backside. So why did the thought of it suddenly excite me? Surely it couldn't just be that if I took my spanking like a good girl I knew I would be rewarded by feeling either Joe or Ian's hard cock sliding into me?

"I think the only fair thing to do is toss a coin for it," Ian said, reaching for the little bag of chocolates. "Whoever guesses right gets to choose what they do to Natasha." I half-turned at the mention of my name, and he looked from Joe to me. "Everyone happy with that?"

I didn't think I had much of a say in what they decided between them—something which, if I was honest, thrilled me tremendously. I wanted them to take the responsibility away from me for a little while, so I could just enjoy having both these hunks pleasure me in their different ways. Joe merely said, "I call heads."

Ian flipped the chocolate coin, slapped it down on the back of his hand, then pulled his hand away, laughing. "It's tails. Natasha, I'm going to fuck you—once Joe's spanked your cute little arse." From where I stood, it looked as though both men were more than happy with the arrangement. As for me, all I could do was wait a little apprehensively for whatever might be about to happen next.

Joe went to sit in the armchair. "Come on, over my knee," he said, spreading his thighs a little way apart. I did as he asked, feeling rather foolish as I arranged myself on his lap. Even without an audience, this would have been embarrassing, but Ian had made sure to come close and get the best view he could of the proceedings. I raised my head for a moment, only to see him watching with a smirk on his face as Joe gently brushed the bristles of the brush over my bare arse cheeks. The prickly sensation made me squirm a little, but I knew he was only teasing me. The real spanking was yet to begin.

All too soon, I felt the brush's wooden back strike my buttock, not hard, but it was such a contrast to the tickling I'd just been receiving that I yelped. "Shh," Joe whispered, smoothing his hand over the place where he had slapped me, "take it easy." His sudden tenderness made me melt. I was loving the way he could be so dominant one moment and so caring the next.

Joe delivered what must have been seven or eight smacks to each of my cheeks, alternating between one and the other. After every one, he would rub my bottom as he had done before, but each time his hand would move a little lower, so that gradually he worked his way into my cleft. My juices had begun to flow, my body reacting to this unfamiliar but thrilling combination of pain and pleasure. When his fingers encountered the dripping wetness he found there, Joe laughed. "It seems as though you're enjoying this rather more than you should be," he commented.

I whimpered, unable to voice a response as he gave my clit the lightest of strokes, then returned to the serious business of chastising me again. I had the feeling this probably wasn't the first spanking he'd dished out, but it was hard to wonder too much about that as the brush thudded against my hot, tender flesh once more.

Everything about this experience was so new, so exciting. Being spanked, being watched, being able to give in to the part of me which got off on being told what to do had really got me hot and bothered. I squirmed on Joe's lap, brushing against the solid bulge in his jeans. I was eager to discover how it would look and feel when it was released from his clothing, but I knew it was Ian's cock I would be playing with once my spanking was over.

Not that, in truth, I was paying too much attention to Ian. At Joe's invitation, he had also taken the opportunity to put his fingers between my legs and feel how wet I was, but right now, all I could think about was Joe, and the soft words he was murmuring between each strike, words which told me how sexy I was, how desirable I was. I was responding to him in a way I had never expected, my pussy lips blossoming even as my bottom turned a fiery red under the wicked swats of that hairbrush.

At last, Joe seemed to decide that I'd had enough. He kissed the top of my head tenderly, whispering, "You took that really well, Natasha."

I glanced over to see that Ian had begun to undress, taking off his shirt to reveal a smooth, nicely muscular torso. Before he could go any further, Joe said, "Let's make this a bit more interesting," he said. "Natasha's not had too much choice in all of this so far, so why don't we let her choose what position you're going to fuck her in?"

The deck of *Kama Sutra* cards was lying on the coffee table where Ian had left it. While Ian stripped down to a pair of black trunks, Joe shuffled the cards and offered them to me to pick one, as though he was a magician performing his favourite trick. I slid one out from the pack, hoping it wouldn't be anything too elaborate, or a position which would be uncomfortable on my recently spanked backside. I looked at it to see that I had chosen a card which showed a dark-haired man leaning against the wall holding a delicate Oriental beauty, whose legs were wrapped around his hips. It was a position which required a certain amount of strength on the man's part; a strength which, looking at Ian's firm biceps and thick thighs, I was sure he possessed.

I showed the card to the two men. "Looks good to me," Joe said. He sat back in the chair to watch as Ian and I gently eased down each other's underwear. I almost gasped as Ian's cock bobbed up, fat and hard. It was beautifully in proportion to his six foot frame, and I couldn't wait to feel it inside me.

Ian paused in the act of slipping my G-string down my thighs. "Joe, mate, could you fish my wallet out of my jeans?" he asked. "There's a couple of condoms in there if you could get them out for me."

Joe retrieved the little foil packets from the wallet while Ian finished undressing me. He tossed one over to Ian, who ripped it open and encouraged me to roll the condom down over his erection. Happy with my work, Ian lifted me up. He was every bit as strong as I'd suspected, and he was easily able to manoeuvre me into the position demanded by the card I had chosen. I was soaking wet from all the stimulation I'd received, and though Ian's cock was one of the biggest I'd ever had the pleasure of experiencing, I slid down on to it without too much difficulty. Like the model in the photograph, I crossed my feet behind Ian's taut buttocks as we began to fuck; it felt deliciously decadent to be in this position, light as a snowflake in the arms of my lover, held fast by him as I shifted up and down on his length.

I looked over to see that Joe had undone his fly and brought out his cock so he could stroke it while he watched us. If anything, it appeared to be even bigger than Ian's, and I couldn't wait till I had the opportunity to take it inside me. As Ian continued to fuck me with a power and assurance I had never experienced with any of my previous lovers, I pictured myself taking the head of Joe's cock in my mouth and sucking him, thrilling to the sensation of being crammed full at both ends. I could hear the rhythmic slapping sounds of Joe's hand working on his erection, faster and faster as he grew closer to the moment of release. Ian was groaning, with pleasure rather than the effort of holding me in place. Sharp sensations overtook me and I came hard, clinging on to Ian as my muscles fluttered around his thick shaft and colours seemed to dance behind my eyelids, bright as Christmas lights.

I heard Joe mutter something incoherent and looked over to see the come spurting up from the end of his cock and splashing down on to his busily wanking fist. Ian continued to thrust up into me for a few moments longer, then he, too, was coming. He slumped back against the wall as he regained his composure, still holding me tight. "That was amazing," he murmured.

Ian gently laid me down on the sofa. What would happen now? Were the two men satisfied, or would they decide they were still ready for more and swap places? I didn't think I could take another spanking tonight, but having seen Joe's gorgeous cock, I would have no objections if he pulled another card from the deck of sex positions and fucked me however it specified.

Instead, Joe looked over at the clock on the mantelpiece. "It's almost midnight," he said, doing his best to stifle a yawn. "I think we should call it a night, but tomorrow, I'll give you both the grand tour of the house."

Ian and I gathered up our scattered clothing and let Joe show us to our respective rooms on the first floor. The exhaustion of a long day suddenly hit me, and I didn't pay much attention to my surroundings as I brushed my teeth, pulled on my nightdress and slid underneath the covers. Despite my tiredness, I couldn't stop thinking about the fantastic sex I had just enjoyed. If someone had told me I would let one of my oldest friends dominate and spank me, and I would be fucked by a man I had only met a couple of hours earlier, and enjoy every minute of it, I would never have believed them—but that was before tonight. Images of Ian's broad, naked back and buttocks, and Joe's hand wrapped around his own erection, danced in my mind. Almost before I knew it, I had drifted off into a sleep so deep not even dreams of our wild threesome could punctuate it.

Chapter Two

The following morning, I was woken by a gentle knocking on the door. As I struggled up into a sitting position in the big bed, Joe entered the room carrying tea and croissants on a tray. "Merry Christmas," he said.

"Mmm, breakfast in bed," I replied, breathing in the tempting aroma of warm, buttery pastry. "I could get used to being spoiled like this."

"That's what Ian just said, too." Joe set the tray down at the bottom of the bed. He had set it beautifully, with pots of butter and damson jam, a little milk jug and a neatly folded napkin resting on top of the plate. "There's plenty of hot water if you fancy a shower. I'll be downstairs in the kitchen when you're ready to join me."

He didn't mention anything about the events of the night before, and I began to suspect it had been nothing more than a one-off, fuelled by alcohol and a sudden lack of inhibitions between the three of us. Then, as he was leaving the room, Joe turned at the door and said, "Wear a skirt today, and don't bother with any knickers. I'd like to have easy access to you for the whole day, and I'm sure Ian would appreciate that, too."

The tone of his voice and the filthiness of his suggestion made my pussy give a little flutter. Immediately, my mind went spiralling back to the night before, and the feeling of Joe's fingers caressing me. I knew it wouldn't take very much to get me just as wet and excited I had been then, and I suspected he knew that, too.

I watched as Joe crossed to the window and flung open the curtains. After we had all gone to bed so late the night before, he seemed full of vitality, whereas I could have happily enjoyed another hour's sleep.

"It looks beautiful out there," he said. "Reminds me of that afternoon we bunked off lectures and went for a snowball fight in the woods. Remember that?"

I laughed. I remembered that incident very clearly. It had been part of his efforts to cheer me up at a time when things hadn't been going too well with Mike, and I found myself feeling suddenly guilty that I had never appreciated those efforts quite as much as I might have. "And do you know the most important thing I learnt that day?" I asked him.

“What?”

He was clearly expecting me to make some comment about the importance of friendship, or knowing when to work hard and when to play hard. Instead, I replied, “Never run round in the snow in suede boots. I never got the white marks out, you know.”

It was amazing how easily we had picked up from where we last left off. Joe was just as kind and funny and generous as he had always been, the qualities any woman wanted in a man, if she were honest. Qualities which had been sadly lacking in more than one of my relationships, I now realised.

Silence hung between us for a moment, ripe with possibilities, and then Joe said, “Well, I can’t hang around here forever. The dishwasher’s not going to unload itself. I’ll see you downstairs in a little while. And remember, no knickers.”

I stared at the door for a long time after Joe had closed it. So he wanted me to be naked and available for him, did he? Well, I was willing to oblige him in that respect. It seemed the more I saw of his kinky side, the more I liked it—and I had the feeling I would be seeing a lot more of it before this visit was over.

When I had finished my croissants, I poured myself another cup of Earl Grey and got out of bed—a little reluctantly, it has to be said, as I was so comfortable under the covers. Joe had pulled open the curtains, which gave me the opportunity to look out of the window at the extensive grounds belonging to the house while I sipped my tea. I was amazed at how deep the snow was. It was so rare to see a snowfall of more than a couple of inches in London, and even then, it would usually thaw and turn to a dirty slush within a few hours of settling, but here it lay thick and untouched, softening what was an already beautiful landscape. The woods which surrounded the house stretched away into the distance, and I pictured myself walking through them with Joe, hand in hand, both of us wrapped up snugly against the cold. My fantasy broadened out to include a couple of dogs, running ahead of us and snuffling at the snow-covered ground. We could be so happy here, I thought, then wondered where that thought had come from. My feelings for Joe obviously ran much deeper than I had realised the night before; if I wasn’t careful, I was in serious danger of falling in love with him.

As Joe had suggested, I took a long shower, lathering myself up with strawberry and almond-scented gel and luxuriating under the hot, powerful spray. Joe’s aunt might have

been a tad old-fashioned in her tastes when it came to decorating the house, but the plumbing was, thankfully, thoroughly modern. I picked out the dress I had been intending to wear for Christmas dinner, made of black crushed velvet with long sleeves, a modest neckline and a short, flared skirt. Beneath it, I put on nothing but a pair of lacy hold-up stockings. I felt a little vulnerable, but undeniably sexy as I fastened dangling silver earrings in my earlobes before making my way downstairs to join Joe in the kitchen.

Ian was already there, stacking the dishes from his breakfast tray by the sink. I set my own tray down alongside his, scooping up a stray blob of jam from my plate before licking it off my finger.

"Did you sleep well, Natasha?" he asked.

I nodded, wondering what he would say if he knew I had followed the instructions Joe had given me and was bare beneath my dress. "And now I'm refreshed and raring to go."

"Good," said Joe, "because the turkey is roasting in the oven and it's time to show you both round Aunt Belinda's home. You've already seen the kitchen and the drawing room, so we'll start the tour upstairs."

"You seem really keen on this house for someone who's not intending to keep it," Ian said as we climbed the main staircase.

"Well, I do like it," Joe said. "It might be out in the middle of nowhere, but it's so quiet and peaceful here compared to London. But looking at it realistically, it's far too big for a single man with no family. So I'm just making the most of it before I sell it."

As he spoke, he slipped a crafty hand up under my dress to check that I had done what he'd asked. I didn't protest, not wanting to draw attention to what he was doing. His fingers brushed against my naked pussy. "Good girl," he whispered in my ear, as I clung on to the banister. "But let's not let Ian know about this just yet. It can be our naughty little secret for the time being."

I wanted to tell him that I didn't mind if Ian found out—indeed, it would have been even more arousing to have the pair of them touching and fondling me whenever they felt like it—but they were entering the bathroom and Joe was clearly impatient for me to keep up with them.

We went from room to room, admiring everything we found. Most of Aunt Belinda's furniture was antique, and I was sure that if Joe sold it at auction he would make an absolute

fortune. Not that I was able to concentrate too hard on what I was being shown. Every time he had the opportunity, Joe would rub me between my legs, letting his fingers tickle my clit and the soft, sensitive skin between my two holes. The pressure was always just enough to push me close to the edge, but he would inevitably stop before I could come. I was sure that between the little gasps of lust I was uttering and the sound of Joe's fingers slithering in my juices that Ian would realise what was happening, but either he didn't notice a thing or he was happy to let Joe keep my lust on a rolling boil in this way. By the time we had almost finished our exploration of the first floor, I was ready to beg the pair of them to drag me to the floor and fuck me senseless.

Finally, Joe paused at a door at the far end of the upper landing, opposite the room where I had slept so peacefully the night before. "This was Aunt Belinda's room. Would you believe I haven't actually been in here yet? I wanted to save something so that it was as much a surprise for me as it was for you. It would have been the attic, but I had to check to make sure there weren't any bats or a massive wasp's nest lurking up there."

Joe pushed the door open and we stepped inside. In contrast to what we had seen of the rest of the house, it was a surprisingly austere room. The only luxurious item was a large, canopied bed. Thin rugs covered the bare floorboards and there was a tarnished gold-framed mirror on the wall facing the bed. On the cupboard beside the bed stood an ornate red Chinese lacquer box, chipped and discoloured with age. I examined the pattern on its lid, quickly realising that I was looking at a beautifully carved, incredibly obscene representation of a man entering a woman from behind. Indeed, from the position in which she was crouched, I suspected his cock was actually buried in her arse.

"If this is genuine, it must be worth a heck of a lot of money," I said, remembering a similar—if more sedately decorated—box I had once seen on an antiques valuation programme. "Did your aunt have a thing about Chinese erotica, Joe?"

"Not as far as I know," Joe replied. "She always seemed like a sweet, respectable old lady to me." He took a closer look at the carving on the box, quickly coming to the same interpretation of its design as I had. "Though obviously not as respectable as I thought."

"I wonder what she kept inside it," Ian said.

"Do you think we should look?" I asked, feeling in some strange way that if we opened the box we would be invading the woman's privacy.

"Of course," Joe said, lifting the lid off the box. "It might have been something important. You never know, maybe it contains a secret will and I'll find out she didn't actually leave the house to me after all." He reached inside, clearly expecting to find old documents or photographs. Instead, what he pulled out was what could only be a dildo, carved from some dark, hard wood. It was around six inches long and polished smooth, with a realistic looking, uncircumcised head, and Joe hefted it thoughtfully. "You know, I'm starting to think Aunt Belinda was a bit of a dark horse."

Further investigation of the contents of the box revealed a second dildo, slightly longer than the first and made of ivory, some lengths of silken rope and another carved wooden object, this one much shorter and squatter than the first. "Is that a butt-plug?" Ian said, sounding a little shocked.

"You make it sound as though we've only just invented kinky sex," Joe said with a laugh. "Did you know the Victorians liked to stick bits of peeled ginger root up each others' arses? Apparently they reckoned the way it burns really adds something to your orgasm, though I can't see it myself." He rolled the butt-plug between his fingers. "It's funny to think of my aunt using all this stuff, though, particularly as she never married."

"Now who's the prude?" Ian retorted. "This place could have been a hotbed of vice, for all you know. After all, it's not as if there are any neighbours to complain about people swinging from the chandeliers. Your aunt could have been throwing all kinds of wild parties..."

Just like the one we had last night, I almost added. "What I'd like to know is how much of this equipment did your Aunt Belinda use on herself, and how much did she use on other people? I mean, she was clearly into bondage, but did she like to be tied up, or was she the one doing the tying up?"

"Well, which do you prefer, Natasha?" Joe asked, grinning wickedly at me.

I didn't particularly want to answer that question. It would reveal how much less experienced I was than Joe's apparently prim spinster aunt. I was sure I was blushing as Joe and Ian looked at me expectantly. Finally, I admitted, "I don't know. I've never actually tried it."

"Really?" Joe said. "Because I think you'd look just beautiful, tied to the bed and unable to do anything about it as someone had their way with you. What do you think, Ian?"

Again, I could feel the erotic tension building, just as it had the previous night. Ian didn't need to answer; the bulge which was visibly forming in his trousers did that for him. How would it feel, I wondered, to be bound and helpless while these two gorgeous men pleased me, bringing me to the brink of ecstasy again and again but not letting me come until they decided it was time? It would be the kinkiest thing I'd ever done—or had done to me—and, suddenly, I desperately wanted to find out.

"What about our tour of the house?" I asked, trying to keep my voice light.

"Oh, we've got plenty of time to finish that later," Joe replied, reaching for one of the long strands of rope. "You've seen what the snow's like out there. I don't think either you or Ian will be able to leave here for a little while yet." He fixed me with his gaze, and his voice dropped, taking on a seductive, commanding tone. "Why don't you share our little secret with Ian, Natasha? Show him what I asked you to do this morning."

It was starting again—Joe gently requesting that I submit to him—and my body responded just as it had done last night. A pulse beat hard between my legs and I could feel my juices trickling down the insides of my thighs. Almost on autopilot, I reached for the hem of my dress and gradually lifted it to reveal first the tops of my stockings, then the creamy flesh above them and finally my knickerless pussy.

"You bad girl!" Ian exclaimed, his blue eyes twinkling wickedly at the sight. "By rights you ought to get another spanking for your shameless behaviour. But I think Joe was right. I think you need to find out what it's like to be tied and teased."

I was certain the two friends had never worked as a sexual team before last night, but something about the powerful chemistry between the three of us encouraged them—and me—to attempt things they had never tried before. Somehow, they knew exactly how to push my buttons, turning me on and encouraging me to go far beyond my previous limits. And where one led, the other was more than happy to follow, seizing on a suggestion and doing whatever it took to enable us to act it out.

"Come on, then, Natasha, let's have that dress off," Ian continued. "Show me those lovely little tits of yours again."

"Allow me," Joe said, moving behind me so he could pull the garment completely up and off. Again, I was left as good as naked in front of two fully dressed men. It seemed to be

the natural order of things, now, and I found myself having a highly exciting vision of being made to walk round in the nude for the rest of my stay.

Joe guided me on to the bed. I knew what was coming, and I didn't resist. He wrapped one of the lengths of rope around my wrist, using it to secure me to the bedpost, then repeated the action with the other. I wriggled experimentally in my bonds; he'd left a little bit of give so I wouldn't be in any discomfort, but I knew there was no getting free until either he or Ian untied me. Next came my ankles. By the time Joe had finished, I was spreadeagled, my legs parted widely so that my cunt and anal hole were completely on display. I had never been so exposed, and I knew whatever the two men chose to do to me, I would be helpless to resist. The thought excited me beyond belief, and I squirmed on the bed, eager to feel their hands and mouths on my body.

"Back in a second," Ian announced, before disappearing from my line of vision. Before I could ask where he was going, Joe sat on the bed beside me. He ran a finger along my throat and down between my breasts.

"You're okay with all of this, aren't you?" he said. "You know, if you need to, you can stop this at any time."

"I don't want to stop it," I assured him, as his finger continued to make its way south, coming to rest in the small patch of curls on my mound. "Joe, I haven't felt so alive in a long time. This is turning into the best Christmas I've ever had, and it's all thanks to you."

I might have gone further and admitted what I really felt for him, but at that moment, Ian came back into the room. He was carrying more condoms, a bottle of what looked like lubricant and one of those nylon eye masks which are given to passengers on long-haul flights, all of which he placed down on the cupboard alongside Aunt Belinda's Chinese box.

"Thought you might need these," he said.

I looked at the things he had brought. The condoms and lube I could understand—you could never have too much of those—but what was he planning to do with the eye mask? Unless... I made the connection at the same time as Ian began to gently ease the mask over my head, effectively blindfolding me.

I started to protest, but Ian put a finger to my lips. "Just think how much fun it'll be for you, Natasha, not knowing which of us is doing what to you."

Immediately, my mind started racing with thoughts of hands, tongues and cocks stimulating my body while I tried to guess who they belonged to. If both of them were working on me at the same time, would I be able to tell them apart, even though Ian had already fucked me so wonderfully the night before?

Joe's voice cut into my reverie. "Let's make this a little bit more interesting. Natasha, I'm placing the three toys from Aunt Belinda's box on the bed. I want you to choose one of them—just say 'right', 'middle' or 'left'—and whichever one you pick is the one we're going to use on you."

Whatever happened to traditional Christmas games like charades? I wondered. Joe and Ian seemed intent on playing a very adult version of blind man's buff, and though I could call a halt to proceedings at any moment, I think all three of us knew I had no intention of doing so. Aware that the two men were waiting for me to make my selection, I pondered the options for a moment. If I could choose any of them by sight, I would opt for the wooden dildo. Its ivory counterpart was thicker and longer than any cock I had ever known, and as for the butt-plug, I couldn't imagine how it would feel to have it inserted in my virgin arse. Finally, I blurted out, "Centre," and hoped I had made the right choice.

When neither of the men said anything for a moment, I asked, "What is it? Which did I choose?"

In answer, I felt a finger, slippery with lubricant, slowly begin to circle my tight rosebud. That could only mean I'd picked the butt-plug. I shuddered in my bonds and Joe said, "Relax, Natasha. You're going to be nicely prepared to take it."

So did that mean he was the one fingering my arse? With my vision cut off by the eye mask, I was relying on my other senses to guide me, but though I strained my ears, I couldn't hear anything which might give me a clue, and all I could smell was the vaguely minty lubricant and the heavy scent of my own arousal.

I was distracted by the feeling of a mouth closing around one of my nipples. I couldn't feel any trace of a beard tickling my skin, and realised it must be Ian who was sucking the hard little bud. So did that mean it was Joe's finger slipping inside me with almost embarrassing ease, or was Ian kneeling beside the bed, taking care of me above and below?

It was all too confusing, and I decided the easiest thing to do was just enjoy the pleasure I was being given, and not worry too much about who was providing it. Soon, a second

finger joined the first, stretching the untried passage. At the same time, Ian's mouth was alternating between my breasts, sucking and nibbling on first one nipple then the other. I was moaning deliriously, so wrapped up in what Ian was doing to me that I barely had time to register the moment when the fingers were pulled out of my arse and quickly replaced with the lube-sticky butt-plug.

"I've never seen you look so beautiful, Natasha," I heard Joe say. I could only imagine how I must appear to him, naked apart from my lacy stockings, blindfolded, bound and with an antique wooden butt-plug protruding from my arse. "The only thing which would improve the picture would be if you were impaled on a big, hard cock."

"Then do it," I replied. "One of you, fuck me, please."

"Not just yet," Ian said. "There's something I want to do first. Something I didn't get the chance to do last night."

Before I could ask what that might be, I heard him climb on to the bed. The next thing I felt was his head settling between my thighs and his warm mouth enveloping my pussy. I gave a contented sigh as he began to lick me—first long, broad sweeps of his tongue, then tight little circles around my clit. Tied as I was, I could barely raise myself up towards that clever mouth, much as I wanted to; instead, I had to let Ian dictate the pace. He pushed a finger into my cunt. It was enough to make my pleasure peak, my muscles clenching around his finger and the wooden toy that still plugged my arse.

"Now," I begged. "I need a cock inside me, now!"

I felt the mask being pulled off, and turned my head to see Joe standing by the bed, naked. His body was every bit as mouth-watering as I'd hoped it would be, with broad shoulders, a taut, toned stomach and that beautiful cock rising proudly from the dark hair at his groin. As Ian released me from my bonds and helped rub the feeling back into my limbs, Joe fitted a condom to his sturdy erection, then came to join me on the bed.

At first, all we did was kiss, sweet and slow, our hands exploring gently as we finally began to get to know each other intimately after all these years. Ian made himself comfortable at the end of the bed, watching us while he slowly stroked his own hard prick. I could have enjoyed Joe's caresses forever, but soon he lay back, encouraging me to straddle his groin.

I had become so used to the subtle, insistent pressure of the butt-plug inside me that I had almost forgotten it was there until Joe's cock began to ease up into my cunt. Suddenly, I was fuller than I had ever been before, Joe's shaft rubbing against the hard wooden object in my arse through a thin layer of skin. The sensation was too much for me, and though I'd already come under the lusty ministrations of Ian's tongue, I was rapidly plunged into another orgasm, far more powerful than the first. Joe kept on fucking me as I rode out the spasms. Where the sex I'd enjoyed with Ian the night before had been something raw and primal, this was more tender, more deeply emotional.

He reached up, pushing my breasts together, thumbs teasing my nipples till they were hard as pebbles and aching for the feel of his mouth. I fell forward, letting him suck and bite them, rocking shallowly on his cock. When he could no longer stand my teasing, he pulled me down hard on to him and ordered me to fuck him harder. I did as he asked, the long muscles in my thighs contracting and releasing as I rode him. Sweat glistened on Joe's chest as his body writhed against the crumpled sheet beneath him. I traced my fingers lightly over his skin, caressing his smooth pecs and the flatness of his belly, getting to know every gorgeous inch of him.

I gazed into his eyes, seeing the depth of the emotions I was feeling reflected back in his soft brown gaze. He didn't say much as we fucked, but he didn't need to. It was clear from the way we would pause in our movements from time to time to share a long, soulful kiss that we had made a connection words would struggle to express. Although we were both still vaguely aware there was another person in the room, we had drifted into a place where nothing really mattered but each other. A tear of happiness trickled down my cheek, and he gently wiped it away. He was my lover, my soulmate, the man I had looked so hard and so long for and yet had been so close to me the whole time.

Faster I moved as he urged me on, his cock hitting that sweet spot deep inside me. For long minutes, we moved in perfect rhythm, clinging tightly to each other, then Joe could hold back no longer. His head fell back and his eyelids fluttered shut as his climax began to build in him. Finally, he gave a roar and shot his seed into the condom. As he came, he called out my name, then, as his body stilled and his breathing gradually slowed, he said the words I realised I had been waiting all weekend to hear him utter. "Natasha, I love you."

Lying in his arms on that big old bed, safe and warm and secure, I was happier than I had ever been in my life. Then Ian's voice intruded on the perfect peace of the moment.

"Do you think one of us should go downstairs and check on the turkey?"

Epilogue

The thaw set in the day after Boxing Day, but though the snowploughs were soon out and about clearing the major roads, it was another two days before the narrow winding lanes around Aunt Belinda's home were finally passable. In that time, the three of us, aided by the deck of sex cards and the treasures in the Chinese box, experimented with every sexual combination we could think of. We pretty much lost all track of time, only pausing to eat and sleep, and it became easy to forget that there was actually a world beyond the old stone walls of the house. I received an unpleasant reminder of that world when I charged up my phone and discovered a series of increasingly irate calls from my boss at work, asking where on earth I was and why I hadn't had the courtesy to let him know that I wouldn't be coming in on December twenty-eighth as expected. My response to him was not to grovel and tell him I would be back as soon as possible, but to hand in my resignation and say that when he did see me it would be because I'd gone in to clear my desk.

It was a decision I knew I wasn't going to regret. Joe and I had had a long heart-to-heart conversation, one night as we lay curled up on the sofa together while Ian dozed in the wing-backed armchair, tired out after another threesome.

"You're sure you're doing the right thing?" he asked, softly stroking my hair. "I mean, it's not the greatest time to be giving up your job."

"Absolutely," I told him. "I'm starting to feel as though I've just been marking time, and I'm not prepared to do that any more. Not now I know where I truly want to be—and who I truly want to be with." I heard Ian give a gentle snore. "It's funny. When I first met Ian, I thought he'd be the perfect guy to have a fling with, and he is. But you... Joe, you're like a dog."

"I beg your pardon?" Joe looked a little wounded by what I'd just said.

I dropped a kiss on his lips. "Yes, because you're not just for Christmas. You're for life."

"That's the sort of remark which could earn a girl a spanking," he told me, his hand smoothing over the cheeks of my bum and waking all my nerve-endings once more.

Despite the jokey way in which I had phrased it, I was utterly sincere in my feelings. Indeed, there was no use either of us pretending that we weren't head over heels in love with each other. Everything which had happened over the last couple of days had proved that. The more we talked, the more we realised how discontented we both were with our lives as they stood. Joe was just as tired as I was of the pace of London life and the demands being placed on him by his job. And that's when he had a wonderful idea. Instead of selling Aunt Belinda's home, he would put his flat on the market and move up here. All I had to do was give my landlord a month's notice, then I could join him. Together, we would renovate the house, turning it into an exclusive bed and breakfast retreat. To honour his aunt's sexually inventive nature, which had done so much to bring the two of us into each other's arms, we would aim the place specifically at those who fancied a very adult getaway. We would, Joe suggested in a moment of inspiration, make her bedroom into a dungeon playroom. In that room, adventurous couples could play the roles of mistress and slave, learn, as I had done, how good it felt to be placed in restraints and explore their sexuality to the full. The only time the B & B would be closed to guests would be Christmas, when we would spend a couple of days making exclusive use of the facilities ourselves. And if Ian wished to join us for the holiday, he would be more than welcome to do so. The only condition was he would have to bring as our present a game which was kinkier and more imaginative than the ones we had played this year; a Christmas game designed especially for three...

About the Author

Elizabeth Coldwell is the author of numerous short stories and two full-length novels, *Calendar Girl* and *Playing the Field*. Her stories have appeared the best-selling *Best Women's Erotica* series and Black Lace's popular *Wicked Words* collections. Formerly the editor of the UK edition of *Forum* magazine, Elizabeth now contributes a spicy monthly column, 'The Cougar Chronicles', to its pages. When she is not busy writing, she is an avid supporter of the Rotherham United Football Club and can be regularly found on the terraces at weekends, cheering her boys to victory (hopefully!).

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