

ELLORA'S CAVE PRESENTS

LANI
AAMES

Santa's
TOYS

ELLORA'S CAVE *Quickies*®

Santa's Toys

Lani Aames

This book is loosely tied to Miss Aames' other holiday stories, Santa's X-mas and Santa's Lap.

Riley Sinclair will play Santa this year—a very naughty Santa. He dons the red velvet suit and looks forward to an after-hours rendezvous with the love of his life and a bag of hot new sex toys.

Delta can't wait to slip away and enjoy the pleasures to be found in her sexy Santa's arms...and his surprising bag of tricks.

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Santa's Toys

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SANTA'S TOYS

Lani Aames

Chapter One

"When can I ride the North Pole Express?" Delta Nicely murmured into Santa's ear. To emphasize the innuendo and remove all doubt as to exactly what she was talking about, she slipped her hand between their bodies and molded her fingers to the shape of Santa's long, hard pole that pointed true north, toward her.

Santa groaned, sliding one hand up under her short elf skirt to cup one of her butt cheeks while his other hand pulled down the stretchy shoulder of her fur-trimmed top. His blue eyes twinkled wickedly. "You have a lifetime pass to board any time."

Delta's giggle faded into a moan when Santa exposed her breast and took the tip between his lips. His fuzzy white beard tickled her skin while he licked and sucked, turning her nipple into a taut, sensitive point. His tongue swirled around and around then his mouth surrounded it and pulled gently.

Thrills of pleasure repeatedly rocketed through her body from nipple to pussy. She closed her eyes, enjoying the sensations. Her knees grew weak and she leaned back against the shelving where he pinned her to keep from sinking to the floor.

Santa seducing her in the office of the new Sinclair's Ladies Boutique excited her more than she'd ever experienced. Knowing any employee at Sinclair's Department Store could walk in on them at any moment electrified her beyond words.

"We forgot...to lock...the door," she said, alternating the words with gasps for breath.

Santa withdrew his lips from her breast long enough to say, "We'll do it in a minute."

"Mmmm...kay." Delta wasn't too concerned because of a fluke with the placement of the room that housed the boutique to the short stairwell connecting it to the rest of the department store. Anybody in the boutique could hear someone climbing the steps

unless the person tiptoed. They had covered the stairs with thick carpeting but the sound still carried through the walls.

When Santa pushed her top down farther and began nibbling the nipple of her other breast, Delta inhaled sharply and didn't care if every store employee walked in at that moment and ogled them. She wasn't about to stop Santa Claus from giving her a very merry Christmas.

She really didn't have a St. Nick fetish. The man wearing the red velvet Santa suit was her long-time boyfriend, Riley Sinclair, and second cousin to the brothers who owned the store. Riley had been hired last year in preparation of expanding the store when the attached building next door became available.

The brothers, who had started the tradition a few years ago of playing Santa Claus instead of hiring someone from outside as they'd done in previous years, had asked Riley to do it this year for the store holiday promotions as well as the annual office Christmas party.

He unexpectedly nipped hard and kneaded her butt cheek with a strong, firm grip, using the action to bump her mound against his cock in a slow, sensual rhythm. Delta moaned again, tingles of pleasure rippling through her limbs. Her swollen clit, a bundle of titillated nerves, throbbed in time with the motion. After three years of exclusive dating, every time Riley touched her was still as exciting as the first time had been.

She brushed off his Santa cap and ran her fingers through his thick brown hair. All she wanted to do at that moment was rip the red velvet from their bodies, spread her legs wide and let Riley plunge his cock inside her as far as it would go. She'd ride his North Pole Express as hard and fast as she could until lights as bright and colorful as the Aurora Borealis burst through them in a shower of kaleidoscopic sparks—

Well, maybe she carried the Arctic references a bit too far, but she'd been appointed to play elf to Riley's Santa. She wore the matching red velvet elf suit with its miniskirt and fur-trimmed elasticized neckline, which could be worn modestly high while

keeping an eye on the children lined up to tell Santa what they wanted for Christmas or seductively low for an after-hours rendezvous with Santa Claus himself.

This rendezvous had come as a surprise. They'd been at the office party where Riley pulled each gift from beneath the tree and called the recipient's name and then she handed it out. They had agreed to exchange their gifts on Christmas Eve and not at the party. Her gift for him was safely tucked in a desk drawer in the boutique office, where he wasn't likely to stumble across it as he might if she'd kept it at her place. Of course, the way she'd wrapped it, he'd never guess what she'd bought him.

She was surprised when he said her name and gave her a small red envelope with a large gold bow attached to it. She had sent him a questioning look, but he merely smiled, softening the sharp, angled facial features he'd inherited from the Sinclair family and picked up the next package.

By the time the last gift had been distributed and she started to open her envelope, she looked around to find no sign of Santa. She'd pulled the expensive note card free, flipped it open, and read, *Meet me in the boutique*.

She'd frowned, her first thought that something else had gone wrong and the boutique wouldn't open the day after New Year's after all. When Tasha and Chelsea, the wives of the Sinclair brothers, had hired her as manager for the boutique she'd learned the original plan had been for the boutique to be part of the expansion in the new building. Tasha and Reed had a six-month-old baby boy, Russell, continuing the family tradition of R names, and Chelsea was pregnant.

The boutique—stocked with lingerie and bed linens, both economical and expensive to attract as wide a customer base as possible, and adult novelties and toys—had been the Sinclair women's pet project. Although they'd oversee the business, they wanted someone not distracted by a growing family to manage the store. Delta had learned of the opening through Riley and applied. When Tasha and Chelsea had offered her the position, she'd accepted, excited to manage the store opening from the ground up and without interference from anyone, including Sinclair's office manager, the

matriarchal Miss Monroe, who struck fear into the heart of every employee. Delta would answer only to Tasha and Chelsea but they'd been casual friends for years and worked together well. And Delta's vision for the boutique matched theirs.

The Sinclairs had finalized the purchase of the empty building about the same time they had taken on Riley, but with the tanking of the economy they had decided it was a bad time to expand. The other building still sat empty but the Sinclair women had decided to convert a storeroom that had held mattresses since the store opened decades ago into the boutique until the economy rebounded. They had moved the stock of mattresses to the underutilized basement and redesigned the extra-large room, an odd area reached by a short flight of stairs, into an office, stockroom for the novelties and toys, and the main display room for the lingerie and bedding.

The first of December had been the target date for the grand opening but delays in the arrival of some of the merchandise had forced them to push it forward to Christmas. Then there'd been a mix-up with the company supplying the security cameras. With the holidays, the company couldn't install them until the week between Christmas and New Year's Eve. So once again they'd pushed the opening date ahead to the second day of January.

The whole project had been fraught with one mishap after another and they all wondered if the store would ever open.

Before disappointment could fully seize her, she realized Riley wouldn't wrap up bad news in red and top it off with a gold bow. The command to meet him in the boutique came as a gift so he must have something special planned.

Something special? For the past month or so, she'd gotten the feeling from him that he was keeping something from her. She chalked it up to a Christmas surprise but it sometimes crossed her mind that he might pop the question. It had been a while since they'd talked about marriage and, at that time, they had agreed they weren't ready for that major step. Still, he might have changed his mind, choosing the holiday season to propose.

Even with the worry of what might await her in the boutique, the thought of them alone with sex toys, silk lingerie, and satin bedding made her heart beat faster as she hurried through the darkened store and flew up the short flight of stairs.

They hadn't had time for intimacy in nearly two weeks. Family commitments and store business had consumed most of their time. Although they'd seen each other every day, usually sharing a meal when away from the store, they hadn't had the time or energy for making love. Some evenings, they'd been almost too tired to muster up a kiss goodbye.

Riley's cryptic invitation had invigorated her, making her body throb in expectation. She certainly hoped this was Riley's way of saying it had been too long, time to fuck our brains out, and *not* his way of asking her to be his wife.

As soon as she'd entered through the door, Riley hadn't disappointed her. He'd caught her and kissed her, walking her across the room and into the smaller office. He'd backed her up against the shelves and that's when the question about the North Pole Express had popped into her head and out of her mouth.

Riley pulled off the Santa beard and continued the sensual assault on her body, sucking her nipple, kneading her butt cheeks, and rubbing her mound against the hard length of his cock, until she thought she would explode or melt or maybe explode *then* melt. His lips trailed up from her breast to her neck, right beneath her ear.

"Do you want to sample some of those toys in the stockroom?" The question was a seductive murmur with his lips still against her skin.

Delta nodded, unable to speak in anticipation of the pleasures she knew Riley would provide.

Anxious to shuck the Santa suit and make love to Delta, Riley brushed aside stray strands of her dark auburn hair and kissed her soft, creamy skin. The red velvet suit had been as constrictive as a chastity belt all evening long as he watched his sexy elf organize the presents under the tree. The miniskirt rode high but didn't quite reach the

plump curves of her ass even when she bent over. The red tights covering any bit of lace she wore underneath ensured no revealing accidents.

Still, it seemed like years since they'd made love and his imagination worked overtime. In reality, it had only been a couple of weeks. Because it seemed like forever, his cock didn't quite understand the concept of waiting for later. He'd spent most of his time finding subtle ways to hide his throbbing hard-on by using the suit and nearby furniture and by making sure the jacket adequately covered his tented trousers whenever he sat.

Why should they have to wait until the party ended, they helped clean up, and then endured the drive to his or her apartment? Probably hers because he'd be a gentleman and not make her get out in the cold to go home the next day. Besides, she had to feed her cat.

Riley's thoughts had kept returning to the boutique, chock full of lacy lingerie and sex toys, euphemistically called adult novelties to appease the more prudish standards of the community. When the original opening date had been set for December, adult toy companies had sent small packages of Christmas-themed samples to entice the boutique to place orders from them. Delta had showed him the collection of flavored edible lotions and lubes, vibrators, dildos, and novelty condoms among other wickedly playful wares.

Slowly, the idea had worked on him until he'd found himself in the department store office where he quickly scribbled a note, stuffed it into a red envelope and stuck a gold bow on it. When he returned to the employee break room where they were holding the party, he'd surreptitiously placed the envelope under the tree among the other presents.

When it had come time to hand out the presents, he'd gone through half of them, picking up each one, reading off the name and handing it to Delta to give out before reaching for the red envelope. When he read her name and handed it to her, she had given him a curious look because they had agreed not to exchange gifts at the office

party but he'd just smiled and chosen another colorfully wrapped package. As soon as the last present was handed out and before she could start asking him questions, he'd disappeared from the break room. On the way through the store, he'd found a red tote that would pass for Santa's bag of naughty toys and had just finished filling it when he heard her footsteps hurry up the stairs.

He had waited until she came through the door, immediately taken her into his arms and kissed her into the office. He'd planned to hit the divan but he couldn't seem to go a step farther at that moment.

He wanted to touch her, taste her, tease her right then and there. Wanted to see her nipples harden and hear her breath come in rapid little gasps in her arousal. He knew every inch of her and never tired of exploring her again and again and seeing her reaction to the things he did to her.

Even after she nodded her agreement to his suggestion of trying out the toys, he almost chucked his plans out the window but he was looking forward to using them to bring Delta near the point of no return when he'd then fuck her into oblivion. His balls ached with the thought of the things he could do to her when he dipped into his Santa's bag of tricks. Tonight would be a night of teasing temptations.

Suddenly, the divan, tucked in a corner and up against the two walls, seemed too small. He wanted Delta comfortably spread out before him so he could see all of her. And he couldn't find anything near the divan where he could fasten the fur-covered cuffs, one of the toys he'd chosen.

What to do, where to go? Then he remembered the large display table in the center of the main room. It was at least six feet long and sturdy, with several drawers on each side. The drawer handles would be a perfect place to attach the other end of each pair of cuffs, securing Delta's wrists.

With a plan in mind, he meant to sweep Delta from the office and into the other room but he couldn't move. He didn't want to take his hands off her luscious body or

remove his cock from her hot mound. He knew it would be fun to have her laid out on the table but she felt good right where she was.

He rubbed his cock against her again and shuddered at the sensations ricocheting through him. He did remove his left hand from her but only to brace his arm against the bookshelves. With his free hand, he grappled with her miniskirt, raising it over her hips. He yanked hard on the tights that fit like a second skin and didn't want to budge. Finally finding the edge of the elastic waistband, he slipped his fingers under it and the lacy bits of her underwear, peeling them down over her firm ass until he touched soft, warm skin and a curly thatch of hair.

His cock knew where it wanted to go and fought against the nylon and lace but his fingers found her pussy first, delving into her hot honey. Her hips jutted forward toward him and he probed deeper, his thumb resting on the little bump at the top of her slit. She was already slick and he rotated his thumb against her clit as his fingers eased in and out.

She moaned and gasped. He thought she somehow managed to do both at the same time but his fevered brain couldn't distinguish the order of anything because all the blood had rushed to his erection.

It was his turn to gasp and make primitive rumbles when she started groping him, seeking a way through his Santa trousers and his own slacks and briefs. The layers of clothing unzipped and parted under her determined touch. Then his cock was free and immediately coddled by her expert fingers.

She knew exactly what to do and did it oh so well, squeezing, massaging, and rubbing the sensitive spots she knew he liked and turned him on even more. He made more guttural noises, blending with her mewling and creating a symphony of sexual chords that sounded of lust, love, and mating with the perfect match to his heart, mind, and soul.

He increased the tempo of his thumb until her shifting hips caught up to his timing. Her mewls of pleasure turned to whimpers of passion as her pussy undulated against

his hand in excited strokes. She was close to coming and so was he as he drove his cock into her curled fingers. He leaned forward, covering her mouth with his and catching the sounds she made as her orgasm approached its peak.

He'd been too long without her, every day a lifetime, each week an eternity. He might as well have been living in limbo, where he could see and hear but not touch or possess. What he desired always just out of reach. He loved her more and more each day, with or without sex, but their lovemaking was the cherry on top of a perfect dessert.

Their orgasms hit at the same time. Riley's body stiffened as Delta gyrated her pussy against his hand. It took all his concentration to keep up the motion with his hand while his own body strained with release.

He kissed her deeply, thrusting his tongue between her lips and raking across hers, as they came down off their high. Their bodies slumped against one another, and he continued to prop his arm against the shelves. Delta put her arm around him to hold herself steady.

That had certainly taken the edge off his physical desire but hadn't diminished his need for Delta at all. The evening was still young and they had plenty of time to rouse their passions again. Just the thought of the bag of toys he'd rounded up and how he'd use them on her made his cock quicken again, and she hadn't even had time to turn him loose.

She looked up at him from beneath lowered lashes, her whiskey brown eyes still misty. "Wow, you are horny tonight."

"It's been too long," he said and kissed her again. "Much too long."

"I know. I've missed you, missed *this* with you." She sighed. "We shouldn't let it happen again, going so long without this. Even if it's just to lie in bed and hold one another for awhile."

"We won't."

"Good." She straightened up, removing her hand from his cock. She walked to the desk and grabbed tissues to clean the cum from her hand. "I enjoyed your surprise present very much."

"Oh, it's not over yet." He walked over to her. "We still have the toys to sample."

Her eyes widened but she smiled playfully. "I'm glad you still want to. I was looking forward to trying them out."

He put his arms around her and kissed her. "Oh yeah, that was just an appetizer. Now it's time for the main course."

She snuggled into him. "Sounds great but there's no place to do anything here except the divan. And it's so small."

He laughed. "Never underestimate Santa. He can work miracles."

"Really?" she murmured.

"Yes, just come with me."

They walked arm in arm into the main room. When he came to a halt, so did she. He finally found what he was looking for on some shelves near the dressing rooms. At the long table, he gathered all the garments in one sweep and dumped the armload on a chaise longue in the corner.

"Oh, what are you doing?" Delta said, hands on her hips. "It took Tasha, Chelsea, and me a long time to decide what to put on that table and how to display it."

They had looked all mixed up to him but there must have been some method to their mad mixture that his masculine brain couldn't identify. "Oh, they're still here, just all jumbled up. I'll help you put them back in order tomorrow."

"Well, okay, since they're already messed up."

After taking a down comforter and a set of satin sheets off the shelves, he returned to the table. The comforter would cushion the hard surface and a sheet would keep them warm enough because it seemed a little cool in the large room. Smiling, Delta helped him spread the comforter and unfold the sheet.

Riley put his hands on her waist, picked her up, and sat her on the edge of the table.
It was time for Santa to undress his elf.

Chapter Two

When Riley put his hands on the bottom hem of the elf top, Delta raised her arms and let him pull it off. He then unfastened her strapless bra and it fell away too. Everything stirred in her as he looked her over with his deep blue eyes, his hungry gaze resting on her breasts. He reached out to fondle them, his fingertips tweaking her nipples and bringing them to tight peaks.

She gasped at the currents of passion skittering through her body, making her hot and wet for him. Once hadn't been enough since it had been so long. A million times during a lifetime with Riley would never be enough.

Then he trailed his fingers down her body and caught the waistband of her skirt. She braced herself with her hands on the table and lifted her hips so he could slide it off. After the skirt dropped to the floor, he peeled her tights and panties off as well.

She leaned back on her elbows and said, "It seems Santa is still overdressed. Your turn."

He grinned that loveable, lopsided grin of his and undid the front of the Santa jacket. After that fell off his arms, he pulled off the T-shirt, revealing his hard, muscled chest, lightly covered with coarse hair. His nipples were taut points, and she licked her lips, wishing she could run her tongue over them.

He dropped the Santa trousers then unzipped his own. By the time his pants and briefs were scattered on the floor, his cock had lengthened and hardened, jutting from the nest of coarse brown hair. She scooted back and sank into the down comforter, which was thick enough to protect her from the hard tabletop.

Holding out her arms to him, she said, "Come on, Riley, I'm ready for you."

"Not just yet." He stepped away from her and toward the office door. "Santa needs to get his bag of toys."

He was back in a flash, carrying a red tote bag that Sinclair's sold. He climbed onto the table and knelt between her legs, sitting back on his heels.

She watched him open the bag and wondered what he had chosen from among all the sex toys in the stockroom. Knowing Riley, he would have given some thought to his choices. He always gave her gifts for her birthday, Valentine's and Christmas, and other just-because days, that he knew she would like and had meaning. He wasn't one of those men who just grabbed something at the last minute, and it was one of the reasons she loved him.

The first item he brought out was a box with a Christmas winter wonderland scene on it. A naked female elf was handcuffed to what could only be the North Pole, and Santa was eyeing her lustfully. Delta laughed at the coincidence. She'd forgotten about that one.

"Thought you'd get a kick out of it." He winked and turned the box around to read, "Naughty Elf Kit. Get your holly-jollies with fur-covered cuffs. Bind your elf to the nearest pole and have your merry way with her. Includes edible lick-n-stick snowflake nipple pasties and thong to nibble your way to mouthwatering peppermint pleasure with your naughtiest elf."

The copy on the package made her giggle. And turned her on. Something about sexy Christmas puns, even corny ones, combined with their Santa and elf costumes and the holiday season made her horny. Truth was, Riley made her horny any time of the year whenever she looked at him, touched him, or even thought about him. While she truly enjoyed her alone time, she couldn't wait to spend time with him. He was always on her mind and in her heart.

"So, what else do you have in your little red bag, Santa?" she asked.

He withdrew another identical box. "There's more, but I have two of these. Two sets of cuffs. Since there's no pole to cuff you to, I thought we could use the drawers on each side of this display table. That okay with you?"

She stretched out her arms. "A Santa's gotta do what a Santa's gotta do, and I've been such a naughty elf this year."

His cock bounced up in response, and she repressed another giggle because she didn't want him to think she was laughing at him. She watched him secure one of her wrists to the handle on a drawer on one side of the table then do the same with her other wrist on the other side.

"Are you comfortable?" he asked.

It felt strange at first, being bound with her arms out to the side. She couldn't move them more than a few inches. Worse, she couldn't touch Riley, run her hands over his warm skin, follow the contours of his hard muscles, or wrap her fingers around his long cock. She wasn't sure if she liked this or not. She knew all she had to do was say the word and he'd release her but she thought she'd give it a try for a little while longer anyway.

On second thought, that meant all she had to do was lie there and Riley would take care of all her needs. She kind of liked that idea.

"I'm fine," she assured him.

"Too bad we don't have a couple more kits. Then I could cuff your ankles too."

"What else is in the box? Snowflake pasties?" Delta asked.

"Yep, and an edible thong. Both peppermint flavored." He grinned wickedly. "I love peppermint too."

He pulled out the pretty white six-pointed snowflakes that looked like decals. He licked the backs and stuck them over her nipples. He had a little difficulty because she was already aroused and her nipples were hard little peaks. Finally, though, he managed to get them covered.

"Cute," he said. "Of course, your nipples are cute without anything on them."

"Why, thank you, Santa," she murmured. "Yours are too. Why don't you put the other set of snowflakes on yours?"

He made a face. "Nah, I don't think so. Pasties are for girls."

"So not fair," she protested. "I like peppermint too."

"Well, I'll hold one of your breasts and you can lick off the snowflake," he suggested with an evil gleam in his eye.

She rolled her eyes. "In your dreams."

"I like watching you touch yourself," he murmured. "But not tonight. Tonight is for you...and for me to enjoy watching you enjoy everything I'm going to do to you."

Next, he pulled out the scrap of material that was called a thong. She raised her hips while he placed the edible underwear in place and gingerly knotted the string ties without breaking them.

The peppermint felt cool on her pussy and heated her up.

"You'd better hurry," she whispered and spread her thighs wide, "or the thong's going to melt before you get to taste it."

He moved between her legs, but settled with his mouth near her breasts, his forearms holding his weight on the table on each side of her. He shook his head. "I have to start at the top and work my way down."

"Is that a rule?"

"It's a rule for naughty elves. Otherwise, you get to the good part too soon." He wagged his eyebrows. "There has to be some punishment for being naughty."

He leaned down and took one nipple into his mouth, his tongue working the pasty-covered peak.

Delta closed her eyes and enjoyed it. He had her trapped with his body, but her hips wouldn't be still. They humped him slightly, though she wasn't able to rub pussy against him. The gentle bumping was enough to increase the achiness within her.

Pulling away for a second, he said, "The peppermint tastes good but it's a little strong."

He continued sucking and licking her nipple. After that snowflake had dissolved, he moved to the other one and swirled his tongue around it until that pasty too was gone. After a gentle nip with his teeth, he started backing away while tracing a path down across her ribs, stomach and belly with the tip of his tongue. The closer he got to her mound, the quicker her hips moved and the readier she was for him.

When he reached her curls, he put his arms under her thighs and raised them, bending her knees, then settled down. His tongue laved the crotch of the mint-laced thong until he finally bit and tore through it and his mouth touched her bare flesh. He licked her outer lips tenderly at first, then more vigorously, occasionally dipping into her slit. At last, he touched her clit and she nearly bucked from the table, a whimpering moan starting at the back of her throat and escalating in sound and depth.

He dabbed it with his tongue, flicking it from top to bottom and side to side until she wanted to crawl out of her skin. Her hands dug into the thick comforter and twisted.

"Oh...oh, Riley!" She thought she screamed his name but the words came out in a breathless, ragged rush.

When she felt as if she might shatter like falling glass, he pulled away, leaving her dangling on the edge. He removed the remains of the thong and thoughtfully wiped his face clean on one end of the sheet. He then reached for the red bag.

"Oh, Riley, can't we just do it? Now?" she asked, her voice cracking in anticipation and frustration.

"Not just yet." He dug in the bag, pulled out a tube, and read, "Pumpkin Pie Edible Lube, a sensual blend of cinnamon, ginger, cloves and brown sugar flavors. Make your sweetie's pie taste like sweet pie for the holidays."

Delta laughed out loud, but even the punny description couldn't dampen her desire. She squirmed against him, urging him to give up the bag for her.

He was persistent, however. He tossed the tube aside.

"You taste sweet enough as it is and I don't think the pumpkin pie flavors would mix well with peppermint. Let's see, what else do we have?" He searched the bag again and brought out two objects, one red-and-white striped in the traditional candy-cane shape with the hooked end and the other a dark green, lumpy cone. "Candylicious fun with a rotating red and white vibrator. Sure to make your honey horny. Uses four AAA batteries for XXX fun. And...Everhorny Evergreen, a Christmas tree-shaped dildo in dark forest green that's everready for everfun."

This time Delta groaned. She didn't need a vibrator or a dildo. She needed Riley. *Now.*

Instead of tossing those, he reached for the lube. "Which do you want to try first? The candy cane or the Christmas tree?"

"The candy cane doesn't have batteries," Delta pointed out.

"Santa thought of everything." He winked and pushed the switch on the attached battery pack. The candy cane started humming and writhing in his hand.

Delta watched as he turned it off then opened the lube and liberally spread the pumpkin-colored liquid on the candy cane's thick shaft. He rubbed her pussy with the lube and when he slipped his fingers through her lower lips. Her hips rose to meet his touch. She closed her eyes and sighed with satisfaction. She didn't have time to object when he withdrew his fingers because he immediately replaced them with the candy cane shaft. The intense vibration nearly pushed her to climax but she evened her breathing as best she could and held back.

Sensations rippled through her as the rotating beads within the shaft worked their stimulating magic. Delta's hips rose and fell and, with each upward thrust, Riley made sure the tip of the soft jelly hook of the candy cane touched her clit. She squirmed against it, each contact sending a thrill through her.

When her hip movements became more frenzied, Riley pulled the candy cane free. He massaged her pussy and rasped, "Don't want you to get *too* excited. Save some of that for me."

Trembling, Delta nodded. She didn't know how much longer she could last but Riley must think she could continue for a while because he lubed up the dildo. She took a deep breath and tried to relax, wanting to prove him right.

The classic cone-shaped Christmas tree was made of soft, jelly-like material too and little nubs stubbled the lumpy "branches". She hadn't noticed before but the tip of it was slightly elongated and curved for G-spot stimulation. When he finished with the lube, he gently rubbed the tip over her clit.

Delta's hips pushed up into it and twisted, rubbing her clit against it. Just as her body tightened, Riley dragged the tip down and slid it into her vagina. Her hips surged forward, taking the whole lumpy tree within. She rode the tree, the tip grazing her G-spot, but the nubs were too large and became uncomfortable.

"Not that," she murmured and pushed with her inner muscles.

When the tree popped free, Riley set it aside. "Didn't feel good?"

"Not really," she said with a shake of her head.

"Then don't put that in your inventory next year."

"We won't," she agreed.

"Now, it's my turn," Riley said and dropped over her, catching his weight on his hands. "Oh, wait a sec." He sat back on his heels again and looked in the bag then dropped it. "I forgot the Red-Nosed Reindeer Rubbers."

Delta giggled while she wiggled, trying to entice him to make love to her without any more gimmicks. "We don't need condoms. Come on, Riley. I'm ready *now*."

"I know, but I wanted to see if they really glow red in the dark." He recited the copy from the box that she only vaguely recalled, "Find your way in the night every time with the condoms that have glow-in-the-dark red tips."

"You memorized the package description?"

"It was catchy." He hopped off the table. "I'll be right back." He leaned down to kiss her then quickly kissed her again. "I'll really be right back."

"Okay." She pouted then shivered as cool air wafted across her skin. With Riley's warm body gone, the air had definitely dropped a few degrees. "But cover me with the sheet. It's a little chilly in here."

She made a mental note to have someone check the thermostat. They wouldn't want customers to get chilled while trying on the nightgowns and robes in the dressing rooms.

"I won't be gone long enough for you to get cold."

She batted her eyelashes at him. "Pretty please. If I catch a chill, I might just get out of the mood."

His eyes widened. "We wouldn't want that to happen."

He drew the sheet up, tucking it over her shoulders. He kissed her one more time before he hurried across the room, opened the stockroom door, and rushed in.

"Remember not to close the door..." Delta heard the door slam shut and finished with, "behind you."

"Damn!"

Riley's curse was muffled from within the room. He turned the knob then shook it. Then he rattled it until she thought surely the door would fall off its hinges. No such luck.

"I don't believe this," he said.

She heard a *bump* as if he'd dropped his forehead against the door.

"Don't tease me, Riley!" she warned. "This is not the time and it's not funny."

"I'm *not* teasing you, Del. It really is stuck." He shook the knob again. "Why didn't y'all get a new door when you redecorated?"

Delta closed her eyes. "We like that door. It's an antique, solid wood, and looks like it was hand carved. We meant to get someone in to fix the sticking problem, but with all the other difficulties, we never got around to it. Besides, it only sticks every once in a while. If you keep working with it, you can get it open."

"It would have to choose now to stick," he said with a growl. He twisted, turned, rattled, and shook the knob again and again, but it still wouldn't budge.

"Try a gentler touch on it," she suggested. "Sometimes brute force makes things like that worse."

"Hey, can't you get out of those cuffs?" he asked. "They're just novelties and aren't really locked. It said on the box that you can break them open if you give a sharp tug on them."

"Oh, okay. I didn't think about that. I'll try." She yanked first one hand and then the other, but neither broke loose. She tried it again and still nothing. Before she knew it, she was grunting and groaning with the effort of pulling and twisting on the stupid cuffs.

"Try a gentler touch on it," he called out, throwing her words back at her.

"Very funny."

"Sorry, sweetheart," he said. "I'll try the door again."

There came timid, gentle sounds at first then they grew louder and more frantic again as Riley lost his temper.

"I don't fucking believe this," he repeated, more colorfully this time. "Del, see if you can pull one of the drawers free."

"Okay." She pulled on the drawer with her right hand but she only managed to get it out a few inches before she was unable to stretch any farther. She knew it would be the same with her left hand but tried anyway. Then the sheet started slipping so she gave up and lay still. If the sheet fell off, she'd get cold *and* she'd be naked if someone found them. *When* someone found them. Not *if*—*when*.

And who would find them tonight? Maybe someone would think to look for them after the party broke up but wouldn't they just assume she and Riley had slipped away and gone home? Would they even notice that their cars were still in the parking lot? It could be sometime the next day before any of them realized that neither she nor Riley

was around and no one could get in touch with them. Either Tasha or Chelsea, or both, might decide to drop by the boutique, but neither Reed nor Rob, nor any of the other Sinclair employees, for that matter, had any reason to come in here.

"I can't reach far enough. Riley, please keep trying to get that door open," she called out and nearly sobbed. "Can you take the pins out of the hinges?"

"Good thinking. I'll see."

She sighed. Surely, they'd be free in just a few more minutes. It wasn't hard to take the pin out of a door hinge. She wasn't much of a handywoman but she'd done that before. She'd removed the paneled closet doors in her apartment and replaced them with folding louvered screens. The worst part was the messy oily buildup from years of use that seemed to get everywhere.

"Are there any tools in here?"

"No. It's a room to store sexy lingerie and adult toys, not a workshop."

"With this door sticking the way it does, you should have put a screwdriver and hammer in here at least. Your antique door is so old the pins are frozen in the hinges. I can't move either one." He banged what she assumed was his fist on the door.

"Now, what are we going to do?" she cried out. "What if no one comes looking for us? They just might think we left early."

"I don't know." He sounded defeated.

Then it sounded as though he rammed his whole body against the door. The frame seemed to shudder but the door didn't move an inch.

"Don't do that. You might hurt yourself," she said.

"I think I already did."

"Anyway, the door opens in toward you, not out."

"I know. I was trying to pop loose the bolt mechanism, if that's what's sticking."

"Oh, Riley, are you sure you're all right?"

"I'm fine. My shoulder hurts a little, that's all. That is one solid piece of wood."

"Don't try it again," she advised. "That door won't give and we won't be able to get help for you if you really hurt yourself."

"Well, we have to get out of here but I think I'd have more luck trying to break through the drywall."

There was only one thing for her to do. She would have to keep tugging and pulling on the cuffs until either one of them broke free or she managed to squeeze one of her hands loose. She chose her left hand. It might be slightly smaller because she used it less. She had a feeling it probably made no difference at all.

Delta pressed her lips together tightly so she wouldn't make a sound. She didn't want Riley to know what she was doing. She could very well hurt herself doing this, pull a muscle or even break a bone.

That was another reason to use her left hand. Injuring it wouldn't be as bad as hurting her right hand. At least, she'd still be able to write and do normal things while her left hand was in a cast. So, okay, she'd gotten carried away, frightening herself by making it sound more dangerous than it was. It would hurt but she wouldn't do any permanent damage to it. Probably she'd end up with some nasty bruises at the most. She hoped.

Besides, they had run out of alternatives.

"I'll keep trying the doorknob," Riley said, followed by the grating of the knob as he twisted and turned and rattled it. She noticed he didn't lose his temper with it this time.

She folded in her left hand as small as she could make it and pulled as hard as she could. The red-and-white striped fur-covered metal tightened around the widest part of her hand, just at the base of her thumb, and stuck there. She drew in a deep breath and pulled even harder, until tears sprang into her eyes from the discomfort and the effort. It seemed to slip a fraction of an inch but she had a feeling it was going to take a long time and a lot of pain before she'd freed her hand — *if* she managed to do it at all.

In a moment of silence, between tugging on her hand and Riley shaking the doorknob, she heard something else. A couple of hollow *thumps*, like someone climbing the stairs.

Chapter Three

Delta froze. She heard a few more *thumps* before Riley rattled the knob again. He'd lost patience again and the sound filled the room.

"Riley!" she said in a loud whisper but had to raise her voice over the noise he was making. "Riley, stop it. I think I heard something."

"I'm making enough noise to raise the dead," he called out. Then it sounded as if he threw his weight against the door again, out of frustration.

"Shhh! I hear something else, footsteps, like somebody coming up the stairs."

A few seconds of dead silence followed.

"You're joking," he said quietly.

She heard another few *thumps*, much closer, as if they were right outside the entrance of the boutique. The door they'd never got around to locking.

"No. I'm not," she said in a loud whisper, hoping only he could hear, at the same time the knob on the front door turned.

"Shit," he mumbled as the front door opened.

Delta cringed as the door swung inward. With luck, it would be Tasha or Chelsea. Either one would laugh it off, having had their own adventures in Christmases past. Bad would be Reed or Rob, Riley's cousins. Thankfully, the sheet still draped across her and hadn't slipped off while she tried to squeeze her hand through the cuff. It would be awkward but the guys could joke about it in Christmases future. Worse would be Stu Denison, the night watchman, who might have heard their shouting and decided to check it out. The absolute worst, the most humiliating of all would be—

Miss Monroe, the office manager stepped into the room and Delta thought she'd die from embarrassment and utter mortification.

The prim and proper, strict and daunting Miss Monroe, her silver-gray hair neatly cut in a severe short style with only the feathery, curling ends giving a trace of femininity, stopped short and said in a wispy voice, "Oh my."

The heat of shame burned Delta's cheeks. The office manager, who had been with the store since its inception, carried a lot of weight with the Sinclair brothers. If she was disgusted by this vulgar display of sexual depravity and complained, giving the brothers an ultimatum—either get rid of Delta or Miss Monroe resigned—Delta knew who they would choose. Miss Monroe knew *everything* about the store's operation and Delta was the new kid on the block. She wouldn't blame them in the least for choosing Miss Monroe over her—after all, they'd repeatedly talked her out of retiring—but she was afraid it might cause hard feelings between Riley and his cousins.

While this worst-case scenario played out in her head, Miss Monroe took a step back, as if to leave.

"I...we...I mean...I..." Delta stumbled over what to say, words failing her. "I...I..."

"Never mind, dear," Miss Monroe said.

Dear? Delta gulped. She'd never heard Miss Monroe address anyone with any kind of endearment in the few months she'd been at Sinclair's. Miss Monroe was always the epitome of stark professionalism.

"I'm sorry for the interruption. If I'd had any idea, I never— Well, I'll leave you to your private holiday celebration." Miss Monroe turned sharply and headed for the door.

"Wait!" Delta cried out.

When Miss Monroe stopped and looked back, Delta felt her face flush even hotter.

"I-I...I mean..." Delta swallowed hard and waved one cuffed hand. "Could you, please. I can't get these open and the...the stockroom door is stuck again and we...well, we're kind of in a jam."

Miss Monroe walked over to her and examined the cuff. She turned it one way and then the other, looking for a way to release the clasp.

"Th-Thank you, Miss Monroe," Delta murmured.

"Minerva. My name is Minerva. After this unexpected intimacy, you may call me Minerva...for tonight."

Delta's eyes widened. She could never in a million years call the staid woman by her given name. She managed a small smile to show her appreciation of the older woman's gesture. Then Miss Monroe smiled too, changing her countenance dramatically, and Delta realized the office manager wasn't quite as old as most everyone thought.

"You young people think you invented clandestine sexual trysts." She finally managed to find the way to open the cuff. "I came of age in the sixties – pre-AIDS, pre-herpes, the summer of love, Woodstock, love-ins. I didn't participate in free love on a grand scale, mind you, but I did fall in love. And made love in this very room."

Miss Monroe pulled the cuff away and Delta used her now-free hand to pull up the sheet that had been threatening to slip off. She didn't know how to respond to the woman's uncharacteristic confession so she said nothing at all. Miss Monroe moved around the table and began to unfasten the other cuff.

"As you know, the mattresses were stored in this room until Tasha and Chelsea decided to turn it into a boutique. I met the man I fell in love with here as often as we could when we were young and hormone-driven. Less often as the years passed and we grew older. Store policy forbade fraternization between employees, which has been relaxed the past few years and a good thing, all things considered, but we felt we were above all that."

With the second cuff open, Delta clutched the sheet closer with both hands and remained still and silent.

"He was all about work except for those stolen moments and the time we spent together away from the store. He had no interest in marriage and having children. All he wanted was to succeed in business. I understood all that and loved him still."

She crossed the floor to the stockroom door, gave the knob a certain twist, leaned hard against it, and shoved it open. Riley caught it before it swung all the way so that only his head appeared.

"Thank you, Miss Monroe," he said with a lopsided grin.

"That door has been sticking for decades. It's certainly time to have it repaired." She tilted her head and another smile stole over her lips as she stared at Riley. "You know, I think you favor Roger more than either Reed or Rob, even if your hair isn't as dark as theirs."

Dumbstruck, Riley just stared back at her with that silly grin frozen on his face.

Miss Monroe walked around the table, returned to the front door and stopped. "Next time, remember to lock *this* door and not shut *that* one. Have fun, kids."

Delta sat up, clutching the sheet around her and called out before Miss Monroe closed the door. "Why did you come up here? I mean, were you looking for one of us or did something happen at the party?"

Miss Monroe smiled one more time but this one was small and sad. Delta thought she detected a slight blush in the older woman's cheeks as she sighed, a soft sound that seemed to convey a world of regret.

"I came in here, as I do on occasion, to remember, but with the remodeling, it's not the same." Miss Monroe looked around at the freshly painted and decorated room. "Far different from the dark, unfinished walls and plank floor that used to be here. Times change, rooms change, and I suppose this is my cue to change with them and get on with my life."

The door snapped shut behind her and she was gone before Delta could say anything else. It was just as well because she had no idea how to respond to the

woman's loss of the place that had held so many memories for her. She looked up as Riley approached the table.

They could only stare at one another as the sound of her footsteps grew fainter until she had reached the bottom of the stairs and they could no longer be heard at all.

"Oh my God," she finally murmured, still shocked by the office manager's revelation. "Miss Monroe and —"

"Uncle Roger," Riley finished.

She pulled a corner of the sheet over one shoulder like a toga. "Why do you call him uncle? You were cousins, weren't you?"

"First cousins once removed, but he and Uncle Robert, Reed and Rob's father, were around the same age as my father. So my brothers and I and all the other distant cousins always called them uncle out of respect for the age difference."

"It's sad, don't you think?"

"Sad?"

"I mean Miss Monroe and Mr. Sinclair," she explained. "They loved one another, but spent a lifetime sneaking around to express that love."

"Uncle Roger was always a funny duck. Work was all that ever mattered to him, or so we thought. There might have been more to him than we ever knew."

"But doesn't it make you sad? Years and decades of having to hide the way they felt about one another, when all they had to do was get married." The more she thought about it, the angrier she became. "Roger Sinclair owned the store and made the rules. Why didn't he just marry her? Why go to all the trouble of hiding their relationship for decades just to keep in line with the store policy that he created? It doesn't make sense."

Riley perched on the edge of the table next to her. "Some people are loners. Uncle Roger certainly was. I don't think I saw him more than a dozen times outside of this store. When I was a teenager, I worked here a few summers but he treated me no

differently than any other stock boy. I had to call him Mr. Sinclair while on the clock but I rarely saw him."

"That's different. He loved Miss Monroe."

"Maybe he did." He shrugged one shoulder. "Or maybe she was a convenience."

"Oh, Riley!" she frowned. "What a horrible thing to say."

"Well, we'll never know for sure, but it wouldn't surprise me if he thought of her that way. With Miss Monroe conveniently at the store every day and conveniently in love with him, he never had to worry about dating or female companionship."

She nodded reluctantly. That conclusion meshed with everything she'd ever heard about Roger Sinclair.

"What's really bothering you, Del?" he asked in a quiet tone.

Her anger over Roger Sinclair's attitude toward Miss Monroe trickled away and now she only felt sad for them again. "Us."

He sighed. "I thought so."

"Are we going to be like them in forty years?" The backs of her eyes stung with threatening tears over the wasted years of those two, but she held them back, determined not to cry. "Together but not. In love but —"

"We've never hidden it. Rob knew we were seeing one another when Tasha and Chelsea hired you to run the boutique. His only concern was that if we had personal problems that we didn't bring it to the store. It's the same rule they follow. We both assured him that wouldn't happen."

"Oh, I know. I just..."

"As for us, we've discussed this. We like our relationship as it is. We're together when we want to be, and we have our own space when we need it."

Delta nodded, relieved at his words. Her fear that he might be planning to ask her to marry him dissolved in light of what he'd just said.

Riley moved in closer, placing his hands on her bare shoulders. "And we've never said we'd never get married. In fact, I can see that in our future. I love you, Delta, and I can't imagine my life without you in it."

It wasn't the first time he had said that and she always responded in kind. She couldn't imagine her life without Riley Sinclair either. She put a hand over one of his and squeezed. "You know I feel the same."

"Then what's worrying you? We're not Roger and Minerva, and we won't be. Roger was an anomaly. My parents are happily married. So were Reed and Rob's. And look at them with Tasha and Chelsea. If they were any happier, you'd go blind glancing at them."

She laughed softly. He was right, and she was worrying over nothing. More than likely, she was courting disaster, her unnecessary concern creating a problem where none existed if she let it eat at her. She loved her life the way it was—for now. When the time came for marriage, she and Riley would know it and not shy away from it.

"Now." He picked up the package he'd brought with him but set aside when he came out of the stockroom, letting it dangle from his fingers. "It's time to try out the Red-Nosed Reindeer Rubbers."

Delta shook her head in disbelief. "Are you serious? After the fiasco with the cuffs?"

Riley flipped a cuff off the table where it hung suspended from the drawer handle. "Since they didn't break open as easily as they were supposed to, you need to write the company and tell them their cuffs are a piece of shit."

"I'll do that."

"Which means," he leaned down and kissed her, "we need to try out the condoms and see if they hold up. And if they actually glow in the dark."

"You seem to be obsessed with that," Delta said with a laugh.

He shrugged. "Just curious. I've never seen glow-in-the-dark condoms before."

"Well, you'll have to turn out the lights, but with no windows, it'll be awfully dark in here." She snapped her fingers. "I know. You can turn on the white twinkle lights Tasha and I strung along the shelves back when we thought we'd be opening in December. No one has gotten around to taking them down yet."

"Or..." Riley hunted for and found the Santa bag and pulled out two tall, thick candles, each molded in the shape of an erect penis, and a book of matches. "Cocky Candles to set the holiday mood in festive red or green. We have one of each."

He cleared a nearby small table and lit the mushroom-shaped tips. He found the cords to the twinkle lights and switched them all on and crossed the room to flip off the light switch.

Then he returned to Delta.

With one hand, he clutched the sheet and slowly drew it off her body. She let the satin run from her hands and lay still as he watched her being unveiled an inch at a time.

"You're beautiful," he murmured hoarsely when the sheet revealed her toes at last.

She shivered a bit from the cooler air as well as from the way he looked at her from head to toe and back again, hungrily eyeing all points in between. The way he visually devoured her, his blue eyes dark and smoky with desire, never failed to send a thrill through her. She never doubted how much he wanted her and loved her.

His cock, fully erect and long and beautiful, bobbed in anticipation of what was to come. She reached for it, and he stepped closer so she could easily curl her fingers around it. She stroked him with firm, even movements, and he groaned in response, rocking his hips to push his cock back and forth in her hand.

Unable to resist any longer, she sat upright. His thick, curved shaft, bulging with corded veins, was at its fullest and stiffest and seemed ready to reach its peak and release. She knew from the experience of their long relationship that he could hold back and keep going indefinitely.

She moved to the side of the table and knelt in front of him. Starting at the bottom, she trailed the tip of her tongue along the underside of his shaft until she reached the tender spot just beneath the head where she swirled her tongue around and around. He groaned once more, louder this time, and pushed his cock toward her. Instead of taking the head in her mouth, she continued to excite him by running her tongue up and down his length, only stopping at the top to tease that spot before skimming down again.

His hips started moving faster. After one last trip with her tongue down and up, she fitted her lips over his cock head and took it in her mouth. As he kept up the pumping, the tip touching the back of her throat, his hands glided into her hair, cupping the back of her head and holding her steady.

Grasping his shaft in one hand, she sucked him hard with each stroke and, with her other hand, alternated between massaging and squeezing his sac and running her nails along the side of his cock. His balls tightened even more each time she touched them and he made guttural noises when she traced circles on the sensitive area where his sac connected to his groin.

Sucking him and playing with him and hearing and feeling his responses made her hot for him. Her body rocked back and forth, her hips humping with each forward move. Her clit burned and throbbed, sending flurries of excitement through her. She didn't know how much longer she could stand it without Riley's cock inside her, plunging in and out, relieving the ache deep within.

As much as she loved giving him head, they had had too many interruptions. It was past time to get it on. She gave him one last suck and long lick then pulled her mouth away. She scooted back on the comforter and lay down, inviting him in by spreading her legs for him.

Chapter Four

Riley enjoyed Delta having her way with him. Her hot mouth, supple tongue, and agile fingers worked their magic all too well. At the last moment, she pulled away and it was a good thing. One more lick, one more suck, one more breath and he would have been past the point of no return. He inhaled deeply and steadied himself.

As much as he loved Delta's blowjob, he was glad she'd stopped. He didn't want it to end that way. He wanted Delta, wanted to fuck her hard and fast as well as slow and sweet and come inside her, her pussy surrounding him with its tight, wet heat.

She'd lain down again, her legs wide open and ready for him. Her brown eyes, dark and mysterious, as if she knew all his secrets, looked up at him. True, she knew most of his secrets—his hopes and dreams, his aspirations, the things he wanted and desired in life that he'd never told anyone else. And, like anyone, his plans for that future might or might not come to pass because one never knew how life would turn out, no matter how hard one worked toward those goals.

There was a secret she didn't know, one he'd been carrying in his pocket for more than a month. He could never seem to find the right moment to give it to her, afraid she'd misinterpret his intentions. He'd finally decided to give it to her on Christmas Eve because they had carved out that evening to spend alone together, come hell or high water, family, friends or business.

Although she agreed with him on their foreseeable future, he'd been wondering if she really knew her own heart and, if confronted with the present in his pocket, she might find it uncovered deeper feelings she'd never realized before. Their earlier conversation, after Miss Monroe's unexpected visit, convinced him otherwise, and he never should have doubted that Delta, the smartest and strongest woman he'd ever known, would know exactly what she wanted in life and when.

He retrieved his pants and pulled the small box from one of the pockets and then grabbed the package of condoms where he'd left them on the smaller table nearby. He crawled onto the comforter with her and lay on his side next to her. She rolled into his embrace, putting her head on his outstretched arm, her body snug against his. He placed his hand on her thigh and hiked her leg over his hip, her pussy spreading for him. His cock found her hot entrance and he sank into the soft, velvety folds that promised and delivered heaven every time.

Then he just held her, sliding in and out in slow, even strokes, simply relishing the feel of her. Not just the tightness that surrounded his cock, but her body, warm and silken, against his. Her leg wrapped around his hip, squeezing each time she surged forward to accept him. Her arm over his shoulder. Her fingers threaded through his hair. Her breath brushing across his neck. The feathery ends of her hair tickling his arm. All of her, all of Delta.

He kissed her, his lips lingering over hers. When he pulled back, he halted their motions and looked deeply into her eyes.

"I meant to wait until Christmas Eve to give this to you, but after our talk, I think now's a good time."

When Riley opened his hand to reveal a small, square jewelry box, something sharp fell to the pit of Delta's belly and it had nothing to do with sexual desire. She blinked. After their earlier discussion, she was shocked to see Riley's gift for her. Was he really planning to ask her to marry him? What could she say? She loved him more than life itself but she wasn't ready for that. Neither was Riley. They enjoyed having their own space and their own time too much to get married and give up their individual lives at this point.

"I'm not asking you to marry me right now because I don't think either one of us is ready for that. We'll both know when the time comes. We like our freedom too much, having our own places, even though we love one another and neither of us has any desire to see other people. So this isn't an engagement ring," he finished in a rush.

Relief swept through her, and she let out a pent-up breath. She reached up and flipped open the top to reveal a stunning diamond ring. The simple elegance of the marquise-cut stone, a long oval with tapered, pointed ends, on the narrow platinum band glittered in the candlelight and took her breath away.

"It's a token of the love we have for one another and the life we'll one day share completely." He pulled his arm from underneath her head and took the ring from its slot in the dark blue velvet bed. He grasped her right hand and started sliding the solitaire onto her ring finger. "Delta, will you not marry me right now, but accept this ring as a symbol of our love?"

"Oh, Riley." She gasped, laughter bubbling from within. Leave it to Riley to make asking her to not marry him an honor. She threw her arms around him. "Yes. Yes, I will not marry you right now."

He let out a deep breath too. "So you're not disappointed or think I'm a jerk or anything?"

"Oh no, of course not. It's the sweetest non-marriage proposal I've ever heard." She pulled away, lying down again, and looked up at him. "In fact, I sort of panicked when I saw the box before you explained. I didn't know what I was going to say had you asked me to marry you. The answer would have been no, not right now, but I didn't know how to tell you that without hurting you. I'd never want to hurt you, Riley. I love you too much for that."

"Good. I'm sorry, but I guess I should have explained before showing you the box." He kissed her. "Right now, there's just too much to do. Both of us with new jobs here at Sinclair's. Reed and Rob are hoping we'll be able to expand the store next year and that's going to take a lot of work. And the boutique will need your undivided attention until it gets off the ground."

"That's so true," Delta agreed. "We couldn't plan a wedding or think about combining our households—your place or mine or do we find a new one altogether—just yet. All that will take time and energy we won't have for the next couple of years."

Riley nodded. "I'm glad we understand one another so well and agree it's not the time. But we'll get there, Del. We'll get there."

"I know we will."

"But right now, at this moment, there's something else we need to do that we've been putting off much too long." He moved over her.

"Oh yes," she murmured and wrapped her arms and legs around him. She felt the weight of the ring on her finger, but it wasn't a bad feeling at all. She didn't often wear jewelry, but she'd never remove this symbol of their love and devotion to one another.

His cock nudged her wet center, but he pulled back before he ever entered her.

"I almost forgot," he said and rose to kneel between her legs.

"What? *What?*" she muttered. What on earth could he have forgotten? What else did they need but each other?

He felt around on the comforter and finally picked up the other package he'd brought with him.

"The glow-in-the-dark Red-Nosed Reindeer Rubbers." He grinned then tore open the box and pulled out the small pack.

Delta shook her head in defeat. He was a man obsessed with some goofy glow-in-the-dark condoms that would probably break at the first thrust. Luckily, they didn't need to depend on condoms. She used birth control and they'd been exclusive so long there was no worry of transmitting anything between them.

She watched him rip open the pack and pull out the condom. It really did have a red "nose", the reservoir tip a dull red until he held it near the candlelight for a few seconds. When he returned, she helped him fit it in place and roll it over his erection. The rest of the rubber was a murky shade of brown, representing the color of a reindeer, she supposed.

Riley pulled the sheet over them to create the darkness the condom needed. The nose now glowed a somewhat brighter red, and they laughed.

"Hey, it really works," he said happily and threw back the sheet. "Just hope it holds up."

"Me too. It'll be great if I can recommend them next Christmas."

"I think they'll be a good seller," he said, bobbing his covered cock up and down.

"They will if other men are as fixated on them as you are." Delta lay back down and spread her legs. "How about putting that red nose to the test?"

"You bet." He moved between her legs.

She nearly lost it when he first plunged inside her, red-nosed reindeer and all. He filled her tight wetness completely and then some. His hard cock drove deep into her again and again, nearly sending her over the edge of passion. She wasn't ready for release yet. She wanted to continue the sensations his pounding cock created in her, wanted to feel his hot heat make her pussy undulate heavily with need. Each powerful thrust of his cock felt so wonderfully good inside.

She matched his rhythm, loving the feel of their hips pummeling one another and increasing the friction of the heat that generated between them. Her nails dug into his back and she tightened her legs around his waist to bring them closer together. He fucked her with long, hard, hot strokes and her body rocked with him, their fierce union wild and stormy. They twisted the sheet and wadded the comforter beneath them.

"Del...Del, tell me you need me, you need this," he rasped in her ear. "Tell me you love me."

"I do," she cried out and clung to him, close to the breaking point. "I need you, want you, love you. Riley...oh, Riley...oh..."

Words turned into incomprehensible whimpers that rose and fell as the explosion of passion discharged within her. Her back bowed and she shuddered hard, grinding her pussy against him. More fireworks went off each time he hammered into her. When the cascade of lights and tingles started to subside, Riley plunged into her hard, one last time.

His body arched then stiffened as he went through his own release. He groaned, a sound from deep within his chest that seemed to come from the depths of his soul. She held onto him tightly, savoring the way his body responded to their passion. Did he feel as if he were coming apart at the seams? As if a thousand points of light all turned on at the same time? As if electrical currents shot to the ends of his fingers and toes?

Though she applied those words, they didn't quite convey the sensations because the act defied description. No words existed to adequately express what happened in that one breathtaking moment in time.

After Riley collapsed beside her and disposed of the rubber, which held up to their vigorous lovemaking, she snuggled next to him, pulling the satin sheet over them. With her ear against his chest, she listened as his heartbeat slowed and their breathing evened. Their evening had been a special time together and more than made up for the past few weeks when they hadn't had a chance to be intimate, given their busy schedules.

She looked at her ring again and thought it was time to get her present for Riley and give it to him. She lifted her head and pecked him on the cheek, whispering, "I'll be right back."

He caught her arm as she started to slide away beneath the sheet and drew her back into his arms. He tilted his head up and placed his lips over hers in a provocative kiss.

When they breathlessly parted, he murmured, "Where are you going?"

"You'll find out," she said and escaped his hold this time.

"Don't be long."

She hopped barefoot onto the cold floor and mentally made a note to get some scatter rugs for the boutique, especially near the dressing rooms. She ran to the office door and flipped the switch just inside. The bright, harsh light blinded her for a moment and she blinked. When her eyes adjusted, she went to the desk and opened the bottom drawer. The shoebox, wrapped in metallic gold paper and topped with an elaborate decoration of curly ribbons, wire tinsel, plastic holly, and a couple of jingle

bells was right where she'd left it. She hadn't affixed a name tag to it yet, but Riley probably wouldn't notice.

After cutting off the light, she hurried back to their makeshift bed and got under the sheet. She moved close to Riley, seeking his warmth, and placed the gift on his chest.

"Merry Christmas," she said with a smile.

"What's this?" He lifted the gift and shook it but nothing rattled except the bells.

"Open it and find out," she urged.

He sat upright and started removing the decoration.

"Since you gave me my gift early, I thought it was appropriate I give you yours." She raised her head and propped it on her hand. "I just happened to hide it here, in the office."

"So you thought I'd snoop around your apartment, eh?" He glanced at her while finishing tearing off the paper. "I'd never do that."

"I know. But you spend so much time at my place I thought you might accidentally run across it."

Paper disposed of, he lifted the lid of the shoebox...only to uncover a smaller box wrapped in metallic green with a less ostentatious bow inside. Delta giggled when the expression on his face let her know he understood what she'd done.

"Ah, like one of those Russian dolls, with a smaller doll nested inside each one." He plucked the bow and tore the green paper. "I wonder where this will end."

The next one was wrapped in metallic red with a simply tied gold ribbon bow. She'd run out of extra room for anything elaborate on that one and the next. The last box was covered in metallic silver with a blue ribbon around it but no bow at all. He tore that away to find a square ring-sized jewelry box, covered in gray velvet instead of dark blue as hers had been.

He held it up and looked at it. "You're kidding."

"Nope, that box is the real one."

"Strange how our minds came up with the same thing for Christmas gifts for one another."

"Well..." Delta started then hesitated. She had to tell the truth, even if it might disappoint him. "I didn't have the same reason in mind as you did when I picked it out, but if you don't mind, I'd like to make it that way now."

He smiled down at her. "Hey, that's all right. It would be *really* strange if you did have the same reason. Making it so now sounds like a great idea."

Delta sat up and tapped the unopened ring box. "I christen thee a token of our undying love and devotion and a symbol of not getting married right away."

Her silly banter got a chuckle and a kiss from him then he opened the box.

"Oh, wow," he said and turned the box side to side so the stone could catch the twinkling lights from behind them.

"Your birthstone is sapphire, but I didn't want to get you any old sapphire," she explained. "When I saw that oval star sapphire and the way it reflects the light, I knew it was perfect because the dark blue reminds me of the color of your eyes. I had the jeweler change it to a platinum band, thinking I was being original and different."

Riley put his arm around her and laughed. "The same reason I chose platinum for yours."

"We're more alike than we realize," Delta observed.

He nodded. "I wouldn't have it any other way."

Delta took the wide band from its slot then reached for his right hand. She slid it onto his ring finger and kissed the back of his hand. She then spread out her right hand and smiled at both rings sparkling in the muted light, tangible declarations of their love and devotion to each other. He took her hand in his and squeezed, placing a kiss at her temple. She sighed happily.

Tasha and Chelsea had warned her that mixing a Sinclair man with Christmas, the Santa and elf suits, and the department store then adding a heaping dollop of love was bound to create something special. She now knew it to be true.

Sinclair's was indeed a wonderfully romantic place for the most magical time of the year.

About the Author

Lani Aames resides in west Tennessee with her family and a clowder of cats. She is multi-published in a variety of subgenres of erotic romance, and also writes romance as Lanette Curington. For the latest updates, visit her websites.

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