



*Twelfth Night:
Ghost of Christmas Second Chance*

By Amy Ruttan

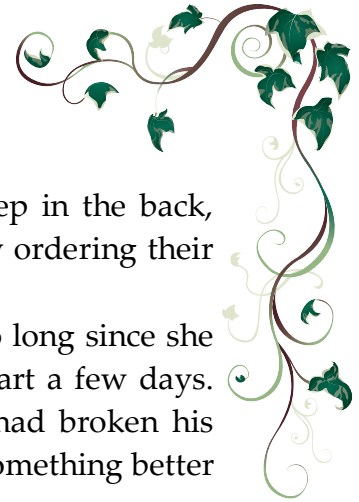


Twelfth Night: Ghost of Christmas Second Chance

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He sat in the crowded coffee house in a booth deep in the back, away from the crowded counter where people were busily ordering their seasonal lattes and coffees. Most importantly, he was alone.

All she wanted to do was watch him. It had been so long since she had seen him, yet at this moment, they had only been apart a few days. Right now, it had been only a couple of days since she had broken his heart and traveled across the country thinking she'd find something better in California.

She hadn't.

Then, like a Victorian classic tale, a ghost came to visit her, promising her everything would change. She could have happiness again... if she made the right decision at this moment in the past.

"Melora?" Turning around, the Ghost of Christmas Past stood behind her. The handsome phantasm was decked entirely in white except for the mop of chestnut curls on the top of his head and his swarthy Mediterranean complexion.

"I know." Melora turned and looked at him again.

Henry. She hadn't seen him years. Of course, that wasn't the case at the moment. This was her second chance to make things right.

"You can do it, Melora. If you want to make things right with your life, then this is your chance. You've been given a do-over."

"You're sure I won't wake up tomorrow running out into a street in my pajamas, still old and taking a turkey to my poor overworked assistant and his cripple boy?"

The ghost looked at her with indulgent amusement. "No. If you screw this up, then you'll just live another life full of regret." He shrugged his shoulders nonchalantly. "This is a rare chance. A chance to relive your life. I don't think any Dickens character was given that opportunity."

An uneasy and nervous laugh escaped her lips. She ran her hands down her skirt smoothing out any wrinkles. "It's kind of an unfair advantage though; I know what the future holds."

"If everything works out the way it should, your old life will fade at the stroke of midnight. You'll remember nothing." The ghost reached

forward and gently nudged her in the right direction. "I know you're nervous, but what are you losing?"

The ghost was right. What did she have to lose? A life of loneliness ended by dying alone in her apartment and not being found for days because she had no one? Living in regret for the remainder of her days? She thought there had been something better out there.

And there really wasn't.

By the time she had figured it out, she found out Henry had been killed in a traffic accident a week after they broke up.

On Christmas Eve no less.

Melora had been given the chance to save two lives here tonight: Henry's and hers. She was not going to blow the opportunity. She'd keep him from driving away in that car and getting into a wreck, and she would live a happy life. The life she truly wanted, but never had.

"Go on, Melora."

Steeling her resolve and trying to swallow the lump which formed in her throat, she nodded and took a step from the shadows.

"Wait..." She spun around, but the ghost was gone. A shiver ran down her spine as she turned back to the busy scene of the overcrowded coffee house a couple of days before Christmas.

"Can I help you?" the barista asked.

"No, no, just meeting someone." She walked past the busy counter and headed to the booth in the back.

What if he's angry with you? What if he won't talk to you? What if he gets in that car? How can you stop him?

Shaking her head, she tried to dispel all the *what if's* from her mind. Melora didn't have time for them tonight. She would do whatever it took to keep him off the highway tonight. She wasn't going to let him get on the 400 and drive to the Muskokas. She was going to keep him in Toronto, even if she had to duct tape him to the top of the fucking C.N. Tower.

Henry didn't look up when she stood in front of him. He was staring intently at the newspaper. His familiar scent wafted up to her, and her knees began to knock. Her heart beat just a bit faster, her body reacting to his.

Finally, he looked up, his green eyes widening in surprise—and for

a moment, delight—until his expression soured as he kept his emotions in check.

“So, when do you leave?” he asked gruffly, turning to his paper as he noticed her luggage in her hand. The luggage she should have been checking at Pearson International if she played out her life the same way she had done.

“I don’t,” Melora whispered.

He didn’t look up at her. He just began to smooth out the wrinkles in the paper. The sound of the paper crinkling echoed like thunder, and Melora could barely hear the noise of the busy café behind her. Everything seemed to still in this moment. Henry had closed his heart, or at the very least, he was guarding his emotions.

Who could blame him?

Melora placed a shaky hand over his and slid in the booth across from him. Henry’s body tensed under her touch, and he looked up at her. His green eyes betrayed the hurt she had caused him.

The tears began to wrack her body. Years of loneliness and guilt pouring out of her.

“Oh God, Henry. I am so sorry. So sorry. I was a fool.” She couldn’t help it. She hid her face in her hands and let the tears come. Henry’s arm slipped around her shoulders.

“Mel, come on, not here.”

She buried her head in the crook of his neck, her body snuggling against his hard chest.

“I can’t help it. Henry, I made a mistake.” Melora looked up at him and saw his stiff resolve was melting. “I’m so sorry.”

Henry smoothed her hair. “Come on, let’s get out of here. Go somewhere to talk in private.”

Nodding she went with him as they left the busy coffeehouse and headed out into the cold Toronto afternoon. It was Christmas Eve, and the shops lining Queen Street were closing. They weren’t right downtown. These were cute boutique stores, antique stores. Snow fell down in a thick blanket. They waited as the streetcar passed and ran across the street to where his car was parked, his arm around her the whole time.

They settled in his car and he began to drive down Queen Street

toward the Gardiner. When they were on the Gardiner, Melora became uneasy.

"Where are we going?"

"To my cottage in the Muskokas. We need a quiet place to talk. Besides, my family is up in Bracebridge. I promised to see them Christmas Day. I was going to tell them about us." He let out a sigh of regret.

"We can't go to the Muskokas."

Henry looked at her in confusion. "Why not? You have your luggage with you. You quit your job, sold your condo. You have no family so there's nothing stopping you from coming up to the cottage with me."

Melora reached out and gripped his arm. "We can't go to the cottage. Not tonight. Please, Henry. Let's just go back to your place."

Henry didn't look convinced. "No, I think the cottage is the best place. Let's go. We need to talk, we need the privacy. You love the cottage...at least you used to."

"I still do," she murmured. The hairs on the back of her neck began to stand on end. It was somewhere north of Barrie where he died on the highway. Between Barrie and the cottage, she couldn't let him drive. She had to think of something. Something fast to keep him from making the trip, but she couldn't think of a logical reason to keep him from going up there.

They drove in silence. The tension between them was palpable. When they came to the 400 exit, Melora cringed as dread crept up her spine. She was going to blow it. This second chance to make things right. Only this time they would both be killed.

"Melora? Are you all right, you look kind of pale?"

"No, I feel sick. Can we stop somewhere?"

"Sure. There's a gas station with a burger joint at the next exit. Did you eat today?"

Melora shook her head. "No, I didn't."

Henry smiled. "How you survive the day without eating I'll never know."

Melora laughed as Henry exited the 400 and headed toward the rest stop. This was buying her time. She just hoped she could keep him here, overnight. After Henry got gas, he parked the car and truck stop

seemed almost deserted. It was one of those generic kinds which had gas, a burger joint and a sleazy motel. In her first incarnation, she never would've been caught dead in a place like this. She thought a place under four stars was beneath her; now it looked like a beacon of hope. A port in a storm, literally.

They walked into the burger joint, and Melora moved quickly. She fainted. Well, not really. She let her body go limp and heard a lot of shouts as Henry caught her and eased her down.

"Melora, oh my God, Melora, speak to me. Are you all right?"

"She looks kind of peaked mister."

"I don't feel so good," Melora moaned. "I need to have a rest, a nap or something."

"Okay, if you're certain." Henry helped her to her feet. "Could you rest in the car?"

Melora shook her head. "No, it's my neck. I think I pulled something, it's making me dizzy."

Henry seemed annoyed, but he was also concerned. "We'll get a room."

Melora felt like dancing for joy, but if she did that, then he would make them drive the rest of the way to Bracebridge and their doom.

The motel had a room. The honeymoon suite, which featured a very cliché heart-shaped Jacuzzi. The room was also decorated in a lot of reds, so much so it almost burned out Melora's retinas. She could tell by Henry's expression the tacky room wasn't up to his taste.

"Are you okay to share a room tonight? I mean, I could sleep on a cot," he offered.

"Henry, we've slept together before, and I want you back. We can share a room tonight."

He shut the door behind her. "Maybe I don't want to share a room with you."

Melora's heart sank. "I see." She shrugged out of her coat and laid it across the chair. Kicking off her shoes she wandered to the bed and sat down on the edge, watching Henry as he placed the luggage down and took his own winter coat off. He was wearing his Aryan sweater. The sweater she had painstakingly knit for him two years ago, their first

Christmas together. She loved that sweater. She loved wearing it as well.

He had sent it back to her. Mailed it to her on Christmas Eve before he had been killed with a note, telling her he would always love her. It made her happy to know she had stopped part of the chain of events that was trying to unfold tonight.

So far so good.

The real question now was could they make it? Well, she was going to try her darnedest.

Henry sat down in the chair after hanging up her coat. He leaned forward, staring at the floor. When he looked up at her, his lips were pursed together.

"Why did you leave?"

"I was a fool." She was going to tell the truth, as much of it as she could. "I thought I wanted something more. Somebody more, but I came to my senses."

"Somebody more?" he asked quizzically.

"As I said I was a fool, an idiot."

Henry got to his feet and began to pace. She stood up and walked towards him, but kept her distance.

"Henry, I want you back. If I have a chance, I need you in my life. You don't know how much I need you in my life."

He stopped pacing, his back to her. His muscles were tense. Melora wanted to reach out and wrap her arms around him, but she resisted.

"How do I know you won't leave me again? Leave me for somebody more?"

"I can tell you, I will never leave you. I will regret it for the rest of my life. I love you, Henry. You're all I need."

Before Melora had a chance to say anything else, Henry spun around and wrapped her up in his strong arms, crushing her in a passionate kiss full of raw urgent need. A kiss that took her breath away, one she had been dreaming about since she got word he had died. His hands snaked through her hair, holding her against her. Then she felt his hands travel down her back, undoing the zipper on her skirt.

There were no other words needed. Melora knew he believed her, knew if she could keep him here all night then he would live. The crash

wouldn't happen, and they wouldn't be separated.

She pulled the sweater over his head and ran her hands over his chest as he undid the buttons of her blouse, peeling it off her shoulders. His hands were hot on her breasts as her bra disappeared. He pushed her down on the bed, so she was sitting in front of him.

She heard him give a faint growl as he went to undo his belt but she leapt forward. She stood up and grabbed hold of his hands on his belt. "No, let me do that."

His hands stilled on his belt as she ran her fingers over them. She gently pulled his hands away and slowly undid his buckle. She never broke eye contact with him as she slid his belt out of the loops of his pants.

She rubbed her pussy up his thigh between her legs as she undid the button of his khaki pants and pulled the zipper down slowly. She let his pants fall to his knees as she felt his hard cock straining against his tight boxer briefs.

Henry sucked in a deep breath, throwing back his head and closing his eyes. "If you do that much longer, I might come," he said through clenched teeth. He moved her hand away and held her wrist in his large, rough hand while pulling her closer with his other arm.

She licked her lips, her pulse racing as their gazes locked together. He backed her up against her bed, the back of her knees hit against the edge and she fell back. He stepped out of his pants but kept his black boxer briefs on as he leaned down over her.

"Do you know what you do to me? How you haunt my thoughts and dreams? I was heartbroken when you left," he whispered, breathing on the pulse point of her neck, causing a thrill to rush through her. Her nipples tightened in excitement with him braced over top of her.

"I'll never leave you again. I promise."

"You're beautiful, so beautiful."

A sob welled up in her throat. No man had ever told her something like that. She should know. She had lived it already. She kept the tears in check and felt herself grow wet with her cream, her cunt screaming to be touched, her nipples begging to be sucked.

She sucked in a deep breath as his hands found her breasts and cupped them. His thumbs stroked her tight, sensitive nipples.

He bent down and drew one of those nipples into his mouth. Sucking it slowly before he teased and flicked it with his tongue. His tongue was so hot on her, branding her.

"You like that?" he asked, nibbling up her neck to her lips. "What else would you like?"

She pulled his face closer and slipped her tongue deep inside his mouth as his hand found her pussy. He was stroking her through the damp fabric of her lace panties

He knelt on the floor at the edge of the bed and slipped her panties off.

"Oh my God, you're fucking beautiful. I can't wait to taste you."

She was going to say something else until she felt the hot searing kiss on the inside of her thigh. Her body tensed like a well-strung instrument.

"That's it, baby, watch me."

She watched as his head dipped down between her thighs. His eyes were focused on her as he slowly slid his tongue up the crease of her labia. "You taste so good," he said before sliding his tongue in farther, "so good."

She felt his fingers as he splayed the lips of her pussy open, his tongue licking her sensitive clitoris. His thumb began to rub her clit, slowly stroking it, the pleasure building in the pit of her stomach. She moaned as she began to rub her hard nipples.

"Do you like that?" he asked as he slipped two fingers inside her.

"Mmmm."

"Do you want more?"

"Yes, oh yes."

He moved his hand and began to eat her cunt, nibbling at her clit. His fingers pushing in and out of her, fucking her. She reached out and grabbed his head, holding him there while she rocked her hips against his face.

His tongue licked and stroked her clit. She couldn't help it, she came violently. She cried out as her body tensed and the waves of pleasure washed over her. She couldn't remember an orgasm so strong, so full of pleasure before.

Her body was still shaking as she fell against her bed. She felt the heavy weight of him on top of her and his hard cock through his underwear pressing against her wet core.

"I think it's your turn," she said breathlessly, pushing against his chest, but he couldn't be moved.

"No way, I plan to bury myself deep inside you and make you come again and again until you can't take it anymore. It's my turn now. You can have your way with me later."

He moaned as he pulled his underwear off. He spread her thighs and quickly thrust into her. She cried out as he stretched her, filling her so delightfully. "Right now, I'm going feel you come around me. You feel so damn good, so tight and wet."

He began to slowly slide in and out of her. His arms braced on either side of her head. His cock hit her at every angle, he was so huge. He bent down and captured one of her breasts in his mouth. He sucked on her nipple, laving it with his hot, wet tongue.

She began to rock her hips, trying to urge him to go faster. He groaned, and his mouth let go of her breast. He closed his eyes and threw his head back. She ran her hands along his back, watching the cording in his neck as he strained against her. Soon she won out and he began to thrust in and out of her, pistoning faster and faster. He pinned one of her legs up over his shoulder and rubbed her clit.

"Come with me, baby," he groaned. "I'm so close."

She felt the pressure, the delightful swirling in the pit of her stomach building up again. She came, her pussy clenching his hard cock as she felt him come deep inside her.

"Christ," he groaned. He let her leg go as he collapsed against her. She licked his shoulder. She loved the smell of his sweat, musk mingled with his cologne. "I love you, Melora. Never leave me again. I couldn't take it."

She ran her fingers through his hair, holding him close before he rolled to the side. He was staring down at her, his fingers tracing over her skin.

"I will never leave you Henry. You're the man I want. Forever."

It seemed to be the right thing to say. He pulled her against him,

kissing her tenderly. They held each other close. She drifted off to sleep, for how long she didn't know, but she felt a niggling sensation in the pit of her stomach. She turned over looking at the clock on the nightstand in the motel room. Melora watched as the motel clock flicked over to midnight. She had done it. She had saved his life. They were together again, and she knew they would never be apart. She wasn't going to throw this away. Her eyes became heavy as she drifted in a deep sleep with his arm wrapped around her securely.

* * * * *

"Melora, sweetie. Melora, wake up."

Melora woke up to the sound of Henry's voice. Only Henry was much older. She looked up at him and smiled, and took his hand in hers. Everything came flooding back to her.

She didn't die alone from a myocardial infarction at the age of sixty. Henry had been there and saved her. She was in a hospital bed, and when her eyes adjusted to light she saw faces which looked like hers and Henry's, all watching her in concern.

"Merry Christmas, Mom," a young man said, and as she smiled at him she could feel the tears stinging her eyes. Henry kissed her on the forehead.

"You're going to be all right, Melora."

She saw a flash of white in the hallway. A man...no, the Ghost of Christmas Past. The ghost who had given her the second chance was standing there. Smiling, he waved and disappeared into thin air.

"Melora?" Henry squeezed her hand as years' worth of happy memories filled her mind.

"Yes," she said happily. "Yes, everything will be all right."

The End

Author Bio

Amy discovered her love of the written word when she realized that she could no longer act out the fantastical romances in her head with her dolls. Writing about delicious heroes was much more fun than playing with plastic men dolls with the inevitable flesh-colored “tighty whities.” She loves history, the paranormal, and will spew out historical facts like a volcano, much to her dearest hubby's chagrin.

When she's not thinking about the next sensual romp, she's chasing after two rug rats and reading anything spicy that she can get her hands on. You can learn more about Amy's books at <http://www.amyruttan.com>.