



*Twelfth Night:
Holiday Traditions*

By Christine D'Abo

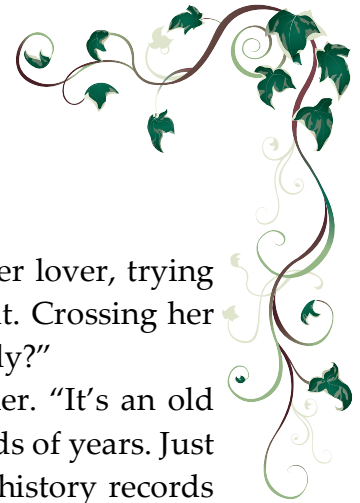


Twelfth Night: Holiday Traditions

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Christmas Eve, Xion Outpost, 3154 AD

Ardara stared at her head of engineering and former lover, trying to figure out what the hell kind of game he was playing at. Crossing her arms, she looked him up and down and chuckled. "Seriously?"

Grayson put his hands on his hips and glared at her. "It's an old Earth tradition. Millions of people participated for thousands of years. Just because the Planetary Conglomeration meddled with the history records doesn't mean we shouldn't try to carry on and pay homage."

"Seriously?"

Everything he'd setup in her temporary lodgings on the space station looked to have a purpose, though she'd be damned if she knew what all the stuff was for. Her family barely celebrated birthdays, let alone old religious holidays. Still, there was something appealing about the red pants and black leather vest he currently wore standing there bare chested, face unshaven.

There were blinking lights placed in random spots around the room in the oddest mix of colors. Off in the corner was a picture of some sort of tree. Not like he'd be able to get a real one with the intergalactic ban on agriculture. He'd even managed to collect a variety of cakes and drinks, all piled high on a small table.

Ardara smirked as she sauntered closer. Fuck, he looked good enough to eat like this. *No, no, girl. Bad things lay there.* "And who are you supposed to be again?"

Grayson straightened and hooked his thumbs into the loops of his pants. "Some guy they called Santa Claus. He flew some sort of shuttle call The Sleigh which was powered by a Rudolph and gave coal to people. Must have been during the energy crisis. Bastard could orbit faster than anything else on record at that time."

She thumbed the edge of the leather vest, letting her nail scrape across his skin as it slid between her fingers. The red trail marked him as hers despite their mutual departure from their relationship a few months earlier. It was never a good idea to fuck the help—even if he was the most

gorgeous man born in the Cerna sector. It really was too bad she missed his company as much as she did. Probably why she hadn't kicked him out of her quarters the moment she walked in and saw him.

Ignoring the arousal heating her pussy, Ardara lifted an eyebrow and pursed her lips. "So he's some sort of hero?"

"Who else would I chose to dress up as?" He winked at her and rolled his shoulders back. "He wore a leather hat, too, but I couldn't find one on short notice. You like?"

Walking to the table, Ardara did her best to ignore her heated face and not-so-sudden pang of want. "What's this supposed to be?"

"The merchant couldn't remember the exact name, but he said they used to light these things called candles every night for a bunch of nights. Apparently, if you light eight then Santa knows you've been good and he'll bring you stuff."

Grayson pressed up against her back, bracing his hands on either side of her body. She was pinned in place looking at a beautiful candle holder. Doing her best to ignore how her ass grazed his erection and the heady scent of his pheromones in such close quarters, Ardara forced all her concentration forward.

"What happens if someone wasn't good? Did they not get to light their candle? Did they get punished?"

As he leaned forward, Grayson's shoulder length black hair swept across her cheek, tickling her neck. His chest molded to her as he rocked his hips in a gentle rhythm. "Well, it's a very intense process. Apparently, he had lists of things people could and couldn't do. They went through rigorous testing to ensure the right people made the good list. But the naughty ones...well, Santa had ways of teaching them how to be good."

Ardara moaned, unable to stop herself from arching back into him. They'd been in deep space for so long, focused on simple survival rather than enjoying their time, she'd forgotten how much she missed this. Missed him.

"Have I been good?" Her voice was thick, the words too heavy for her tongue. Pressing her ass back, she reached up and moved her hands up along his naked arms. "Or have I been bad, Gray?"

His teeth sank into her neck, the sharp sting of pain chased away

by the subsequent laving of his tongue. "I guess you'll have to wait to find out, Captain."

"Gray—"

"We have a few more traditions to observe first." He pulled away so quickly, it took a second for his heat to dissipate.

Ardara pouted. "Why do I get the feeling I'm not going to like Christmas?"

He waved her away. "Shut up, you'll love it." He pulled out a chair and sat down, the vest pulling wide to expose his pecs. "Part of the tradition is for you to come over here and sit on my lap and tell me the things you've done to be good. Then you tell me what you want for Christmas."

"I thought you said he gave everyone coal?"

"Will you just get over here and do it?"

Popping the top two buttons on her jumper, she walked over as slowly as she could, extending the impromptu game. Honestly, if someone had told her yesterday Grayson would be dressed up like some mythical hero, acting out the traditions of some ancient Earth holiday, she'd have laughed in their face. As she walked over, there was something else skirting around behind his boyish look of pleasure.

Grayson was nervous.

Pushing the thought away, she stopped half a foot from where he sat and cocked an eyebrow. "Now what?"

"Sit down." He patted a well muscled thigh. "Santa needs to determine if you've been good."

She could near instantaneously calculate how to fly a cruiser through a gas nebula, but it took her an embarrassingly long time to determine how best to get her ass to rest comfortable on his lap. When she finally turned sideways and fell on top of him, her body seemed to figure the rest out. Grayson helped by swinging her legs around so they were now draped to the side.

In this position, she could feel the heat from her pussy increase as she was now resting fully on his cock. It didn't help when he shifted his hand to cup the side of her thigh, while the other teased the third button of her shirt.

"So Captain Raion, tell me what you've done that's been good in the past three hundred and sixty five days."

She opened her mouth to answer, snapped it shut again, and frowned. With a shake of her head, she wiggled down against his cock. "Why three hundred and sixty five?"

"Not sure, but that's what the computer told me. Now answer, unless you are afraid of the consequences." To reinforce his point, Grayson reached up and tweaked her nipple through the fabric of her jumper.

"Fuck, Gray!"

Squeezing harder, he simply grinned.

It was too hard to think with him touching her there. She wanted to take that hand and shove it between her legs, fuck his fingers until she came. He'd probably let her, too, but for some reason she wanted to see where this game would lead them.

Taking a deep breath, she did her best to ignore the way he rolled the tip between his fingers. "I managed to deliver a shipment of med supplies to the colony out in the omega sector. I gave my crew a whole week off to enjoy the pleasures of this station. I think I may have even paid everyone on time, too."

He released her nipple, only to move on to undo the remaining buttons on her shirt. Ardara had known this was where he was heading since she'd first seen him standing there. They'd been good together, even if things hadn't gone the way either of them had wanted. So what if their relationship had been rocky at times, he'd always been a fantastic lover. Maybe she shouldn't have been so hasty in calling things off.

Ardara whimpered as he opened the shirt, exposing her breasts, and reached up to loop her hands around his neck. "Have I been good enough? Or is Santa going to punish me now?"

Leaning in, he pressed an opened mouth kiss to her neck and sucked on her collarbone. "I'm sorry, Captain. I'm afraid the rules have gotten quite strict, and it's much harder to get on the nice list. I'm going to have to spank you now."

"Spank?"

Ardara squealed as Grayson flipped her around so her ass was in

the air, and all the blood rushed to her face as she hung across his knee.

"Now, I wonder how many spanks you deserve? Santa is a fair man, but I need to make sure you've learned your lesson. I wouldn't want you to regress."

"Gray, I swear I'll kick your ass if you lay so much as a—*ouch!*"

She could hear the smirk in his voice as he leaned forward, fingers caressing the small of her back. "One."

"You bastard. When I get up from here—"

Slap. "Two."

Ardara moaned as he landed three more in rapid succession. She'd never been in a position like this before, hated how her body writhed and twisted beneath the palm of his hand. God, why was she getting turned on by this? Grayson held her ass high enough she couldn't grind her clit against his thighs, giving her no relief. Heat spread from where his hand had connected to her ass cheeks, warming her pussy and beyond. She couldn't get enough air into her lungs, making her head spin and the sensations coursing through her body that much more potent.

By the time he rolled her onto her back, her pussy was soaked, and she could barely keep a breath in her body. Grayson was panting as hard as she, his eyes dark with lust and his lips red from where he'd been biting down. She was completely at his mercy.

She really liked that.

"Am I good now?" Ardara didn't care how breathless she sounded, how close her voice was to sounding like begging. She wanted him, every last thing he was willing to give her.

"Do you want to be good?" Grayson ran his thumb across her lips and down her chin. "Because I think I like you on the naughty list."

Arching her back, a draft from the ventilation system blew across her nipples, making her shiver. "Me, too."

As if he'd been waiting for her approval, Grayson stood, easily gathering Ardara in his arms as he went. She wasn't sure exactly how they made it to the bedroom, didn't really care as long as he kept kissing her like *that*. They fell together onto the bed and Ardara locked her legs around his waist, grinding her clothed pussy against his cock.

"You better fuck me soon," she muttered into his mouth. "Or else

"I'll fire your ass."

"Yes, ma'am."

Jerking the leather vest from his body, he sent it flying across the room as he proceeded to yank the red pants down his body. *God, he was beautiful.* The raw power and sexuality of Grayson's body was rivalled only by the sparkle of amusement shinning in his eyes. He was sexy, strong, and knew what she needed before she did. Hell, it had been one of the things she'd both loved and hated about him. Their constant power struggles had been the main source of their fights.

"Strip for me." His gaze locked onto hers—no doubt in his tone. "I want you naked in less than a minute."

She didn't think as she pulled her shirt free and she toed off her boots. "What else does your Santa hero do to bad girls? I want to make sure I get my coal."

"You're going to get something."

Her pants landed squarely in the middle of his chest. "I think you're making all this shit up, Gray."

Ardara scooted back along the bed as Grayson crawled up the length of it toward her. "I'll have you know, I've done extensive research on this. Santa used to go around blessing the people by chanting the words *ho, ho, ho*. He also had many helpers called elves who did all his work. They made sure he got there on time and that the coal was loaded into his shuttle."

"Sounds like you. Maybe you're in the wrong role?"

He wrapped his hands around her ankles and pulled her legs wide. Ardara hadn't been able to get her panties off in time, the fabric now pulled tight across her clit. Grayson smirked as he pushed her legs wide.

"Another notch on the naughty list. Didn't follow my instructions."

"Not like you played fair. It hasn't been a full minute."

Large fingers brushed across her stomach and the sensitive juncture of her thighs as he wrapped his hands under the top of the panties. "No one said life was fair."

"Not even for Santa?"

"Especially for Santa." He jerked hard, tearing the delicate fabric. "I'll buy you another pair when we hit Terran Five."

"I'll hold you to that." Not that she honestly cared, especially with him looking at her like *that*.

It felt odd, being naked in front of Grayson again. Ardara fought hard not to squirm under the intensity of his gaze. Her pussy clenched in anticipation, remembering how full she'd felt the last time she'd been in this position. He shifted his body so her legs rested on the tops of his thighs. She was stretched open—no place to hide.

"Touch yourself." His voice was a rough whisper. He swallowed hard and licked his lips. "I want to watch you get ready for me."

Ardara *almost* said no. He knew she didn't like this, being vulnerable and on display. Still, the thrill of slowly dragging the reactions from him was too tempting to resist.

Sucking her bottom lip into her mouth, she slowly slid her hand between her breasts and down her stomach until her fingers grazed the top of her pussy. Teasing the black curls of her pubic hair, Ardara forced her air in an out of her lungs in a steady rhythm, before holding it and pushing a finger on either side of her clit.

"Fuck," Grayson muttered, his grip tightening against her thighs. "You have no idea how perfect that looks."

She couldn't look at him anymore, not if she wanted to keep some semblance of control. Turning her head and squeezing her eyes shut, she massaged either side of her clit, teasing the sensitive skin without actually touching it. Moisture clung to the curls, transferring to her fingertips as she circled her entrance. When she pushed two fingers inside, Grayson moaned.

"Yeah, that's it. Keep doing that." His breath was hot on her clit. It was the only warning she got before he sucked it into his mouth.

Pressing up hard against the top of her walls, she squeezed around her fingers as Grayson lapped at her with his tongue. He flicked the hood in a steady rhythm with the tip of his tongue, stopping every once in a bit to circle the nub. She tried to increase the rate of her thrusts, but he pulled her hand away and replaced it with his own.

Longer fingers, thicker—they pushed her right up to the edge. Grayson always knew how to play her body, have her dancing to his commands, like one of his ship's engines. He curled his fingers, milking

her, pulling her closer to heaven. Every nerve in her body fired, her skin amplifying even the lightest of touches. Nipples painfully hard, she reached up with her free hand to roll one, moaning as it sent a jolt of pleasure through to her pussy.

"I forgot how good you tasted." He dipped his head down and jammed his tongue in beside his fingers, spearing her.

Ardara drove her hands into his hair in a vain attempt to move his head where she wanted it. He was too strong to be directed, never moving where she needed him to go to give her what she wanted. Grayson flattened his tongue, licking a path from below her opening all the way past the top of her clit. Ardara's body began to shake—she was so close to the edge it would only take one or two more times.

Grayson jerked his head up, causing Ardara to cry out at the loss. "*Dammit, Gray.*"

"Oh no. I want to be deep inside you when you come. I want to feel you clamp down on my cock as you're screaming my name."

She whimpered at his words and went limp as he crawled over her body and settled his cock against her pussy. Only once he was settled did she wrap her legs around him and cant her hips up.

"Fuck me," she whispered, biting on his neck, mimicking his earlier move. "Fuck me hard."

With a shimmy of his hips, he was lined up and thrust into her with a single motion. They both gasped, Grayson holding still to let them both adjust.

There was no time for casual sex when they were out in the depths of space. If they weren't fucking another crew member, then the only relief they got was by their own hand. Ardara knew Grayson hadn't been with anyone else on the ship, and he'd been her last fuck. Things were going to be over faster than either of them would like.

When he pulled back, she wanted to moan at the emptiness, the intensity of the vacuum he'd left behind. Then he started the steady in and out, thrust and loss of him filling her pussy to capacity. Leaning forward, he ground hard against her clit, pulling her higher and higher, making her wetter than she'd ever imaged she could get.

"So good," he muttered against her neck. "Missed this. You."

"Gray."

As he pounded into her, Ardara arched her back, mouth falling open in a silent scream as her orgasm hit. It lasted for an eternity of seconds before she was able to suck in a breath and scream. Grayson moaned just as loud, thrusting wildly into her, all control stripped away. His guttural cry echoed in her ears and pulled another, smaller pulse of release from her body.

Sweat slicked, Grayson rolled onto his back, but pulled her with him. Now half draped over his body, she rested her head over his pounding heart. She felt him swallow and sigh.

"Ho, ho, ho?" she asked, looking up at him.

"You have no fucking idea." He grinned and placed a kiss on the top of her head. "So, you liked your Christmas Eve?"

She circled his nipple with her fingertip. "I did. What brought all this on anyway?"

His arm tightened around her. "Nothing, just thought it would be a fun way to spend a night."

"I think you're going to end up on the naughty list."

She didn't think he was going to answer her at all. Still, when he rubbed his chin on the top of her head, she wasn't ready for his answer.

"I've been thinking a lot about things. Us, really. I got wondering if maybe we should give things another go."

"What?" She pushed up on her arms and turned to look at him. "Are you serious?"

"We weren't that bad you know. Sure I was an asshole sometimes, and you can be pretty stubborn when you want to be." He brushed a strand of hair from her face and gave her a lopsided smile. "But you have to admit, we were pretty awesome together."

Her stomach flopped over, and for once it had nothing to do with the food in the mess hall. She could really have this—him—and stop spending her nights alone in her cabin, tucked in with her memories and regrets.

Ardara smiled back at him, pressing a kiss to his chest. "I think I might like that."

"Really?"

"What, you thought I'd say no after all this? Santa lacking in confidence?"

He chuckled. "Maybe a little." Capturing her chin in his hand, he leaned closer, lips only an inch away. "It's also customary to give loved ones presents on Christmas."

"It is?"

"Yup. Want one?"

Her breath caught, and her heart raced as Grayson kissed her. Not a lust fuelled one like earlier. This time it was simple and sweet, a promise of what they could make happen together. When he pulled back, they were both grinning.

"Merry Christmas, Dara."

"Merry Christmas." She turned her head and placed it back over his heart. She'd nearly drifted off to sleep when a thought popped into her head. "Next year, can I be Santa?"

The End

Author Bio

Christine d'Abo loves the world of science fiction, fantasy and romance. By combining the elements of those genres into tales of adventure and love, Christine creates the types of stories she loves to read. She is fortunate to have begun her publishing career with Ellora's Cave and is thrilled to be expanding her publishing credentials.

When she isn't dealing with the multitude of story ideas bouncing around in her head, she's working at her day job, or driving her children between "social events." Please visit Christine at her website <http://www.christinedabo.com> or over on Twitter as Christine_dAbo.