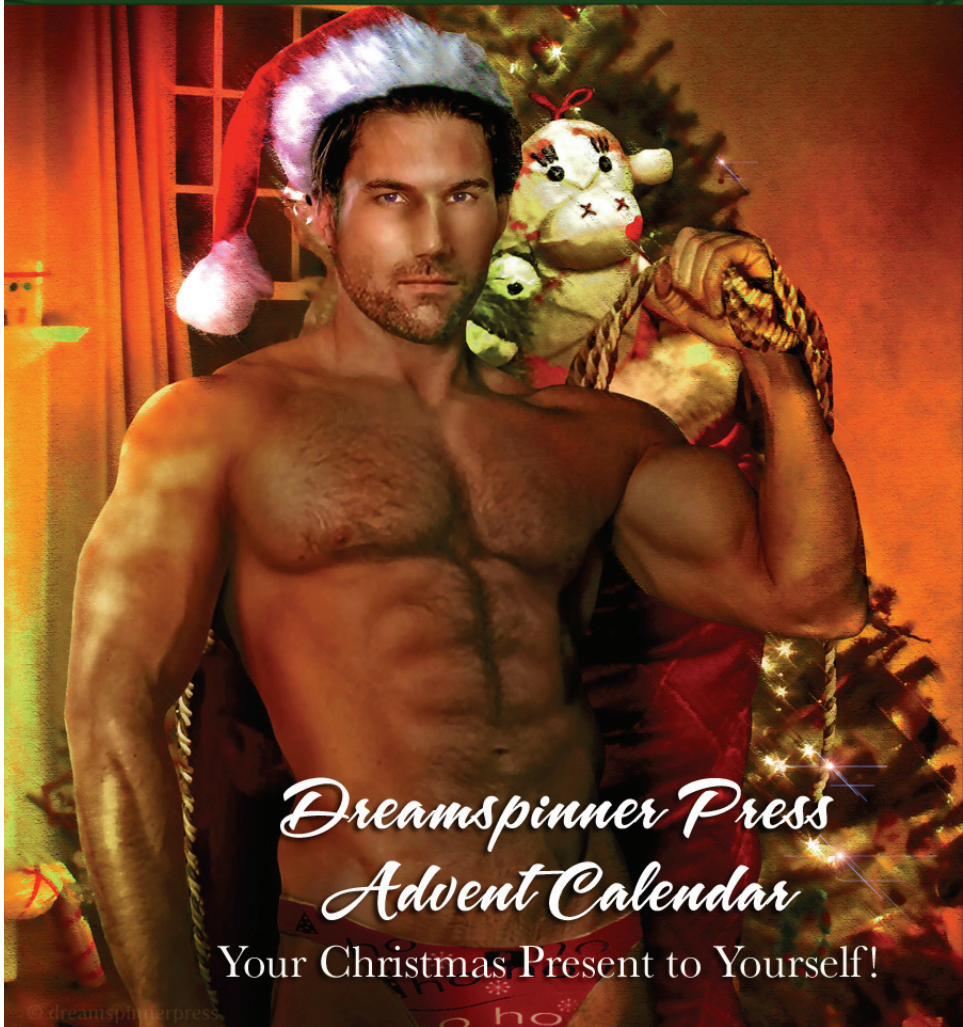




CHRISTMAS LUCK

Bethany Brown



*Dreamspinner Press
Advent Calendar*

Your Christmas Present to Yourself!

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SETH could not believe the run of bad luck he was having.

First, Jonathan, his boyfriend of seven months, broke up with him over the phone. From Hawaii. Where he was spending Christmas with his new boyfriend, Carlos, who was their personal trainer at the gym. Well, he'd been Seth's personal trainer. Seth was now looking for a new trainer. And possibly a new gym. He'd always thought that there was something off about the way Carlos and Jonathan had interacted.

He was also starting to wonder how long Jonathan had been sneaking around. Seth admitted to himself that they had been heading for a break-up, but he'd thought that they would at least have lasted through the holidays. Apparently not.

Second, he was going to be spending Christmas alone. Even though they'd been having problems, Seth had been looking forward to spending Christmas with Jonathan. It would have been the first Christmas he'd spent with a partner in four years. Having planned an amazing Christmas dinner for them that he was going to cook himself, Seth had turned down his parents' invitation to spend the holidays with them, and now it was too late to

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change his mind. He was going to be eating turkey leftovers for a flipping month.

And last but not least, it was Christmas Eve, and he was in the emergency room with a doctor pulling slivers of wood out of his back. The holiday he normally loved was turning into a nightmare. Seth hissed in pain as strong fingers pressed against his back.

“Sorry.”

Seth craned his neck to look at the man behind him. With dark hair, blue eyes, and wearing scrubs and reindeer antlers, the doctor was easily the most adorable man Seth had seen in a while. Seth had to admit that the good doctor was much more attractive than Jonathan. His ex was a good-looking man, but his looks were artificial. That was one of the reasons Jonathan had spent so much time at the gym with Carlos. Seth was beginning to think sex was the other reason. He was also starting to become rather jealous of the attention that Jonathan had most likely been giving Carlos. Attention that Seth had never received.

“So, Mr. McAllister, do you think you could tell me how you managed to get so many pieces of wood stuck in your back?”

Seth sighed. “It’s kind of embarrassing.”

“I’m all ears.” There was an amused lilt to the doctor’s voice. “Or maybe I should say I’m all antlers.”

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Damn, hot and funny? Please let him be gay. “You know those antique wooden lobster traps that people put in their yards as decoration?”

“Yeah.”

“Well, I fell on a stack of about five of them.” He felt horrible about it too. All he’d wanted to do was help Mrs. Walker, and instead he’d crushed her lobster traps. The nice older woman had loved those things.

“Okay. Can you explain how you managed to land on them with enough force to send pieces of them through your sweater and into your skin?”

“I *may* have been on the roof when I fell.”

The hands on his back stilled. “You fell off your roof?”

“No, I fell off my *neighbor’s* roof.”

“You need chest X-rays.” The hands started moving over his back again, and Seth could feel them pressing against his ribs looking for further injuries.

“I don’t need X-rays. I just need you to pull the wood out of my back.”

“You could have cracked ribs.”

“I don’t.”

“How can you be sure?” The hands moved off of his ribs and returned to his back.

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“I know what cracked ribs feel like.” Seth hissed as another shard of wood was pulled from his back. “Ouch.”

“Sorry.”

“No, you’re not. You’re punishing me because I don’t want X-rays,” Seth replied. He smiled when he heard the doctor laugh. “So, are you going to tell me what your name is?”

“Why do you want to know?”

“I need to call you something other than Hot Dr. Reindeer Antlers.” Seth shifted slightly as he waited for an answer. How the doctor answered his question would determine whether he was interested. Recent dumping aside, Seth really wanted him to be interested.

Warm breath ghosted across Seth’s cheek. “Dr. Noah Hunter.”

Seth shivered as he felt one of Noah’s hands move around his body to brush softly against his stomach in small circles. “Although I have to admit that I like Hot Dr. Reindeer Antlers.”

When fingers brushed the waistband of his jeans, Seth shuddered. It seemed like his luck might be changing for the better. He may have been dumped at Christmas, but he was now free to explore the mutual interest he seemed to share with Noah. Seth had never been felt up in the emergency room before, and he was starting to wonder if they could get away with pulling the curtains closed and having sex in the middle of the ER.

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“Even full of splinters and covered in blood, you have a gorgeous back.” Gentle fingers brushed over the patch of skin between his shoulder blades. “I like this.”

Seth shivered at the naked lust in Noah’s voice. Jonathan hadn’t liked his tattoo. When Seth had returned home from a trip to Scotland with his clan emblem tattooed between his shoulder blades, Jonathan had accused him of mutilating his body. He’d then avoided touching it. It has been ages since Seth had felt fingers on that part of his body. Of course, Jonathan hadn’t really been big on touching at all. Seth was starting to think that he was getting a tad touch starved.

“God, I love the way your hands feel on my skin,” Seth moaned.

“Even though I’m pulling slivers out of your back?”

“Uh huh.” Seth moaned again as fingers soothed the injured area after another sliver was pulled free.

“You know, maybe after we could –”

“Noah!”

Seth jumped at the shrill sound of a woman’s voice and hissed in pain as the sudden yell caused Noah to jab him in the back with tweezers. At least he hoped it was a pair of tweezers and not a scalpel. Turning his head, Seth spotted a striking blonde woman standing just inside the ER. The young boy at her side looked ready to burst into tears.

Bright red lips curved into a sneer. “So, molesting patients now?”

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Seth gaped at the cruel words and tone, especially since they made the boy flinch. Strong fingers curved around his hip and gave a light squeeze.

“Excuse me, Seth. I’ll be right back.”

“Okay.” Seth watched as Noah walked over to the pair. While he was taking the opportunity to ogle the rather fine rear end walking away from him, he also noticed that the other doctors and nurses were slowly moving away from the area. It looked as if they were expecting a fight. Seth nervously bit his lip as Noah approached the angry blonde. He had a feeling that whatever was about to happen was not going to be pleasant.

NOAH was livid. He hadn’t been on a date in months, and the minute he met a nice guy, his ex appeared. Susan had the worst timing ever, especially considering she was supposed to be at her parents’ with their son. Seeing Brady standing at her side sent up warning flags.

“Susan, what are you doing here?”

“Well, you weren’t at home, so I had to come here.” She tossed her hair over one shoulder. “I’m dropping Braden off.”

Looking at his son, Noah saw the barely contained tears in his blue eyes. He gave a quick glance to the strawberry blond, green-eyed man still sitting on a bed, then smiled at his son. “Hey Brady, could you do something for me?”

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“What?”

“See that guy over there?” Noah pointed at Seth. “He hurt his back and is feeling pretty down. Could you go and keep him company for me while I talk to your mother?”

“Sure, Dad.” Brady attempted to give him a brave smile before heading to where Seth was.

Once sure that Brady was far enough away, he rounded on Susan. “Why did you bring him here? You’re supposed to be having Christmas with your parents.”

“Reg called. We’re going to the Bahamas.”

“What about Brady?”

“He can have Christmas with you.”

“Susan, we did Christmas last night. He’s been looking forward to seeing his grandparents.”

Susan’s eyes narrowed in anger. “He can see them some other time.”

“You know, when I was awarded full custody, the only reason I didn’t cut you out of his life was because I thought Brady deserved to know his mother. If I had known you were going to be such a bitch, I would never have let you near him.”

Susan’s hand connected with his cheek with a stinging slap. “How dare you threaten to take my son from me!”

“You treat him like luggage! The moment Reg crooks a finger in your direction, you drop any plans with Brady.”

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“Reg is better than all the men you parade through his life.”

“I do not parade men through his life!”

“It’s no wonder he’s such a wimp, being raised by a gay man. At least with Reg around he can see how a real man is supposed to act.” Susan’s mouth was twisted in to an ugly sneer.

“Get out of here before I forget that I don’t hit women and pop you one across the face.”

“You wouldn’t dare!”

“Don’t tempt me, Susan. As it is, I’m leaving it up to Brady if he wants to see you again.”

“You bastard!!” Susan’s voice had turned into a high-pitched shriek. Her hand flew up again, but Noah managed to catch it before it made contact with his face. Unfortunately, he missed the other hand. The punch hit his jaw with enough force to make him stagger and tilt his antlers. Noah straightened and touched his fingers to the corner of his mouth. They came away bloody.

“Susan, leave now before I have security escort you out of the building.”

“I hate you.”

“The feeling is mutual,” Noah replied. He was gingerly prodding his sore jaw. Susan gave him one last sneer then turned and stalked to the exit.

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Noah sometimes wondered how his sweet son ended up with such a shrew for a mother. Ron and Jennifer, Susan's parents, were wonderful people. Brady always had a good time when he visited them, and they had actually been supportive when Noah had filed for custody. Susan had seen him as a pass to the good life, so she had drugged him into sleeping with her, intending to trap him into a marriage with a fake pregnancy. Unfortunately for Susan, Noah's father was a lawyer, and she really had ended up pregnant. With proof that she had drugged a gay man, it hadn't been hard to get the court to agree to Noah getting full custody. Noah had wanted his son to know his mother, so he had allowed Susan to be a part of Brady's life. He was starting to regret that decision.

Noah sighed as he turned around to head over to his son and the man he had been hoping to take home. He had no idea what to do. Since he had been anticipating spending Christmas alone, his house was full of beer and frozen pizza. At least he still had some Santa presents for Brady hidden in his closet, but how could he make it a good Christmas without a real Christmas dinner?

SETH sat up as the boy who had been standing with the blonde woman headed towards him. When he got close, Seth noticed that he had Noah's blue eyes. He also noticed that the blue eyes were full of unshed tears that the kid was trying to hold back.

"Hey there."

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The boy wiped his eyes and managed to give Seth a small smile. “Hi.”

“So, I’m Seth. What’s your name?”

“Brady. My dad said that I should keep you company while he talks to my mom.”

Dad, huh? Good to know. “I’d like that. I didn’t really want to be alone.”

“Cool.” Brady climbed onto the bed next to Seth. “Why are you here?”

“I fell off my neighbor’s roof and landed on a stack of wooden lobster traps. Your dad has been pulling slivers of wood out of my back for about forty minutes.”

“Ouch. Can I see?”

“Sure.” Seth smothered a laugh as Brady twisted around so he could see the mess that was his back. Boys of every age seemed to love seeing blood.

“Wow! There are cuts everywhere!” Brady moved back and smiled at him. His eyes didn’t look quite as sad anymore. “And I like your tattoo.”

“Thanks.” *Dad and the kid like my tattoo? I’m really starting to like this family.* “So, what are you doing here on Christmas Eve?”

The light left Brady’s eyes. “I was supposed to spend Christmas with my mom and my grandparents, but her boyfriend called and now she’s going to the Bahamas, so I

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don't get to go any more." Teary blue eyes looked up at Seth. "Do you think they'll be mad at me?"

"Who?"

"My grandparents."

Hoping that he wouldn't leave blood on him, Seth wrapped an arm around Brady's shoulders. "No, I don't think they'll be mad at you."

"I don't want them to be mad at my dad, either. With his job it's hard for him to find time to drive me out to see them."

"I don't think they'll blame your dad, but they probably won't be that happy with your mom."

"I'm not that happy with my mom."

A loud slap echoed across the room. Seth quickly looked towards the arguing pair and saw the slightly red area on Noah's cheek. He felt Brady tense beside him as the blond woman pulled back her fist and decked him. Noah stumbled slightly.

"Shit."

"Sometimes I hate her," Brody whispered. Feeling the trembling in the small frame, Seth pulled him tighter against his side. Brady practically huddled against him.

Seth was seething. He couldn't believe that she had actually punched Noah where their son could see. He wanted to head over and hit her just as hard as she had hit Noah. Seth had two older sisters who had spent a good

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portion of his childhood tormenting him. He had no problem hitting girls.

Surprised at how strong his feelings for the doctor already were, Seth watched with his heart in his throat as Noah headed back towards them. The tall man was gingerly rubbing his sore jaw in a way that Seth found rather arousing. He wanted to be Noah's jaw at that moment. The desire to have the other man's hands back on him was so strong that he had to suppress a shudder. Despite his surprisingly strong feelings, Seth was pretty sure that coming on to the man while his son was sitting next to him was a bad idea. Unfortunately, that conclusion didn't stop the feelings.

"Are you okay?" Seth reached out and righted the crooked antlers as Brady launched himself off of the bed and into his father's arms. Noah grunted and wrapped an arm around his son's shoulders.

"Dad, I'm so sorry!"

"It's not your fault."

"But she hit you!"

"Evil bitch," Seth muttered, low enough that the upset Brady wouldn't hear him. When blue eyes lit with amusement met his, he realized that while Brady may not have heard him, Noah certainly did. He flushed and lowered his eyes. *I need to learn to keep my mouth shut.*

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“Don’t worry about me, Brady. I’m just sorry that she ruined your Christmas. I don’t have anything in the house for us to eat.”

“You guys could come and have Christmas dinner with me,” Seth offered. When two pairs of blue eyes turned to him, Seth felt the blush that had been fading return full force. He ducked his head shyly. “It’s just going to be me this year, and I wasn’t really looking forward to eating Christmas dinner alone or having enough leftover turkey to feed me for a month.”

Noah moved closer, placed a hand on his thigh, and looked into his eyes. “You don’t have to do that.”

“I want to,” Seth whispered. “Please don’t make me spend Christmas alone.”

“Can we, Dad? I like Seth. He’s a lot nicer than the last guy you dated.”

Seth stared in shock while Noah sputtered in surprise. As Noah attempted to find the words to tell his son that they weren’t dating, at least not yet, Seth noticed the wicked smirk on Brady’s face. When Brady looked over at him, he started to laugh. “I like your kid.”

“I’m kind of fond of him myself.” Noah ruffled his son’s hair. “Although, I’m not quite sure what I’m going to do with him for the next three hours. That’s how much of my shift I have left.”

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“I have an idea,” Seth injected. He smiled as two pairs of blue eyes focused on him once again. “Brady, do you know how to play chess?”

“No.”

“I bet you that they have a chess set somewhere in this hospital. Why don’t you go and ask the nurse to help you find one while your dad pulls the rest of the wood out of my back, and then I’ll teach you how to play while he finishes his shift?”

“Cool!” Brady gave him a bright grin then turned and dashed towards the nurses’ station. Seth chuckled as he watched the small blond boy tug on the sleeve of one of the nurses.

“You didn’t have to do that.” Noah moved back around him, and Seth once again felt gentle fingers treating his back.

“I like chess.”

“I meant inviting us over for Christmas dinner.”

“I was telling the truth, Noah. I don’t want to be alone for Christmas.” Seth hissed slightly as Noah pulled a rather large splinter from his poor back. One final tug made Seth whimper and then a cool cloth was running over his damaged skin.

“I think that’s the last of them. Just let me wash your back off so I can get a better look. There’s still a bit of blood.”

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As the strong hands ran over his back, Seth sighed in contentment. “God, you have great hands.” He tried to suppress the whimper as the agile fingers danced over his back. “I want to feel them everywhere.”

“Really?”

Seth felt a hot flush and dropped his head in embarrassment. “I didn’t mean to say that out loud.”

“I’m glad that you did,” Noah replied. Fingers curled around his hips and Seth could feel Noah’s warmth against his back. Hot breath caressed his ear. “I wouldn’t mind putting my hands everywhere.”

“Oh God.” Seth could feel his cock start to harden in his pants. The pain from his back faded from his mind as Noah’s fingers brought need rushing through his body. He couldn’t remember the last time he had responded so quickly to a simple touch. Not even when he and Jonathan had first started dating. Of course, Jonathan had never really enjoyed touching him. Now that he thought about it, his sex life with Jonathan really hadn’t been that enjoyable.

Seth shuddered as Noah’s lips brushed against his neck. He flexed slightly, in an attempt to press more of his skin against Noah’s strong body, and his back gave a scream of protest. He felt wet heat run down his back as one of the lacerations split open once more. “Ouch.”

“I think we should save this until after I finish patching up your back.” The words were breathed against Seth’s neck, making him shudder.

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“Then you’re going to have to back away from me, ’cause all I can think about right now is the way that your skin feels against mine.” Seth moaned as the strong hands ran over his back. “God, your hands feel so good.”

“You’re repeating yourself.”

“Sorry, can’t help it.”

“I’m liking the effect that I have on you.”

Feeling a lick to the patch of skin just behind his ear, Seth shuddered. “Oh God.”

“I found a chess set!” Brady exclaimed. He bounded over to them with a chess set clutched in his hands. “Are you done yet?”

“Just about. I just need to put a few stitches in Seth’s back. Want to watch?”

“Cool!”

“You make sure he does a good job, kiddo.”

“You got it,” Brady replied. A serious look took up residence on his young face before he headed around Seth and out of view.

“You ready for this?”

“Ready as I’ll ever be,” Seth replied. He felt a brief caress to his back before the needle went into his skin. Seth had received stitches before, but instead of the pain that he had felt the last time there was just a slight tugging sensation. “You are really good at that.”

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“Doesn’t hurt?”

“Not at all.”

“Good.” Noah leaned forward and Seth felt warm breath against his cheek again. “I don’t want your back too sore.”

“Bad man,” Seth whispered. He shivered when Noah nipped his ear. With a last lick, Seth felt Noah move away from him and continue to finish his back. “How’s it look, Brady?”

“It looks good. I’d say it’s some of Dad’s best work.”

“Good, I don’t want to look like a patchwork quilt.” Feeling Noah finish placing the bandages over his abrasions, he gave an experimental stretch. He felt a slight tug, but there was no pain. Yet. He was a tad worried about how it would feel when he was lugging a turkey around in the morning. He shivered slightly as both Noah and Brady moved so they were standing in front of him. “So, think I could get a shirt? The one that I was wearing when I got here was kind of shredded.”

“I’ll find you something. Hang on.” Noah gave his shoulder a squeeze and walked to the nurses’ station. Seth watched the enticing way that the scrubs clung to his ass as he walked.

“You’re drooling.”

“Sorry.” Seth wiped at his mouth in embarrassment. “You know, I’m usually more together than this. I think it’s the drugs.”

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“It could just be my Dad. He has that effect on people.”

Seth turned his attention away from the temptation of Noah’s ass to Brady’s laughing blue eyes. “You seem surprisingly okay with your dad being gay.”

“I’ve had a while to get used to it.” The blue eyes suddenly turned serious. “Don’t hurt him. He may seem like an easy-going guy, but he’s been hurt a lot.”

“I can’t promise that I won’t hurt him, but I can promise that I won’t do it on purpose.” Seth watched as Brady digested the information. He hadn’t been expecting to have this conversation so early. He especially hadn’t been expecting to have it with a ten-year-old boy.

Brady gave a small nod. “I can accept that.”

“Found you a shirt,” Noah announced. He was holding a navy sweatshirt in his hand. “It might be a little big, but it’ll keep you warm.”

“Thanks.” Seth took the offered shirt and started to pull it over his head. He winced as his back protested. Strong hands pulled the shirt from his arms and helped to smooth it over him. With Noah helping, it was much easier for Seth to get the shirt on. As the warmth settled around him, Seth thought he could smell Noah on the fabric.

“You all set?” Brady was practically bouncing with excitement. Seth had never before met anyone who was that excited to learn how to play chess.

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“I’m good. I just need to tell my neighbor that I’m going to stay here with you and then take a cab home,” Seth replied. Mrs. Walker had been very insistent on taking him to the hospital herself. Thankfully for Seth, he had been in enough pain that he hardly notice the eighty-five-year-old woman’s erratic driving. He pushed himself off of the hospital bed and to his feet. He ended up rubbing against Noah as he stood. Seth shivered against the press of the other man’s body.

“You sure you don’t mind sitting with Brady?”

“I don’t mind.”

“And Christmas tomorrow?”

“The two of you better show up.” Seth curled his hand around Noah’s hip with a smile. “I don’t want to spend Christmas alone.”

“We’ll be there.”

“Good.” Seth gave Noah’s hip a squeeze then stepped around him. He shoved his hands in his pockets and smiled at the youth. “Ready?”

“Yep! Let’s go!” Brady grabbed his hand and tugged him away. Seth cast one last glance over his shoulder at Noah as Brady dragged him away. When the other man smiled at him, Seth felt his heart flutter in his chest. Things were definitely looking up.

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NOAH straightened with a groan as his back muscles stretched. That was the one thing he hated about working long shifts. His back always ended up protesting his every movement. Thankfully, he had the next day off. The last thing he wanted was to show up at Seth's with a sore back.

Noah still couldn't believe that he'd picked up a patient. He'd never done that before. Noah had always kept his work life and his personal life separate. He'd watched his co-workers take home patients left, right, and center, but he'd never done it. Of course, he'd never met a man who tempted him as much as Seth did. He'd spent the entire exam fighting the urge to lick all of the smooth skin that had been visible, especially the tattoo. Noah had never been into tattoos before, but looking at Seth's just did it for him.

With a yawn and one final rub to his back, Noah headed to the doctor's lounge to get his stuff. He needed to collect his belongings and take his son home. He wanted to make sure that he got some rest before Christmas dinner. Noah had some rather active plans for the later part of the evening. He was hoping that Seth was as flexible as his mind thought he was.

"Dr. Hunter?"

Noah turned away from his locker to face the woman behind him. She was wearing nurses' scrubs and biting her lip nervously. Noah ran a hand through his hair as he tried to remember her name. "Nancy, right?"

"Yes."

"Can I help you with something?"

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“Is that Seth McAllister playing chess with your son?”

“Yes. Why?”

“You need to keep him.”

“Excuse me?”

“Do you have any idea who he is? I mean, have you seen his work?”

Noah stared at her, hoping that his confusion was evident in his face. “Nancy, I have no idea what you’re talking about.”

“He’s loaded.”

“What?”

“He’s *the* Seth McAllister of *McAllister Carpentry*. Do you have any idea how much his hand-carved wooden furniture goes for? He’s a keeper, Dr. Hunter, and you shouldn’t let him get away.” With that said, she turned and left the room. Noah was left staring after her feeling vaguely stunned.

Everyone in the area knew *McAllister Carpentry*, but Noah hadn’t connected the names. He had been having too much fun just talking to Seth. Seth had just been an attractive guy who had perked his interest and offered to cook Christmas dinner for him and his son. He was just hoping that this new knowledge of who Seth was wouldn’t change the way that Noah saw him. Noah knew how much his furniture went for. His dining room set was a *McAllister* original.

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Noah pulled his coat out of his locker and put it on, quickly fastening it. He didn't want Seth to notice that he had put it on over a T-shirt. The last thing he wanted was for Seth to realize that Noah had given him his shirt to wear. The sight of Seth in his clothes had filled Noah with a warmth that had lingered for the remainder of his shift. Noah didn't want Seth to notice and try to give the sweatshirt back. In fact, he wasn't sure if he wanted it back at all. He liked the way that it looked on Seth.

Noah gave his locker one last look to make sure he had everything he needed for the next few days. Since he'd covered Christmas Eve, he didn't have to be back at the hospital until the 27th.

Stepping out of the doctor's lounge, Noah slung his bag over one shoulder and headed to where he could hear Seth and Brady. He stepped around the corner and spotted them sitting in the waiting area chairs with a chessboard on the table between them. There was a look of fierce concentration of his son's face. Seth was watching him with an indulgent smile on his face. Noah leaned against the wall and watched as the two of them played chess. Biting his lip in concentration, Brady picked up a piece and moved it. Once he had completed the move, he looked up at Seth.

"Nice move, Brady."

"Really?"

"Really."

"It looks good from where I'm standing," Noah replied. He smiled as they both turned to look at him. Noah

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managed to catch the once over that Seth gave him before the younger man blushed and looked away. *Oh, this is going to be a good Christmas.*

“Dad, are you done?”

“Done and ready to go. You two ready?”

“Two?” Seth asked. He’d pulled his hands inside the sleeves of the sweatshirt and was giving Noah a rather confused smile.

“You don’t really think I’m going to make you take a cab home after you stayed and kept my son company, do you?”

“You don’t have to give me a ride home.”

“We’re giving you a ride home.” Noah turned his attention to his son. “Brady, could you give the chess set back to the nurses?”

“Sure, Dad. I’ll be right back.” Brady quickly but efficiently packed up the chess set, then took the box and dashed to the nurses’ station.

“You don’t need to give me a ride home, Noah. Giving me your shirt is enough.”

Noah moved closer with a smile. “How did you know it was mine?”

“It smells like you.” Seth leaned into his personal space until Noah could practically feel the heat of his body.

“Sorry.”

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“Don’t be. I like the way that you smell.” Seth proved this by leaning the rest of the way into his space and sniffing his neck. Noah had to hold back a moan. “You still don’t have to drive me home.”

“You’re not going to talk me out of this. I’m driving you home. This way, I’ll know where your house is for Christmas tomorrow.”

“I guess that’s a good point.”

“It really is.” Noah leaned down slightly and breathed in Seth’s unique scent. He gave a small moan at the smell. It was close to intoxicating. “You smell pretty good yourself, Mr. McAllister.”

“Thank you, Dr. Hunter.”

“Dad, I’m ready to go.” Brady had appeared at his side and was smiling up at him. Noah wrapped an arm around his son’s shoulders and pulled him to his side. Smiling at Brady and Seth, Noah started walking to the exit. He heard a sigh from behind him as Seth fell into step with them.

The three of them trudged through the snow that had accumulated in the parking lot while Noah worked. After starting the car, Noah bundled Brady into the back and situated Seth in the passenger seat while he cleaned off the outside of the car. Seth had protested, insisting that he could help, but Noah wouldn’t let him. All he had on was Noah’s sweatshirt, and Noah didn’t want him to catch a cold. By the time he had the outside of the car cleaned off, it was nice and warm inside. Noah buckled himself in and pulled onto the street.

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They drove in silence for a few moments. Stopping at a red light, Noah glanced in the back and looked at his son. Brady had fallen asleep. “It looks like your chess lessons wore him out.”

“He lasted longer than I thought he would. I thought I’d lost him an hour ago when he started yawning.”

“You didn’t have to sit with him, Seth.”

“I didn’t mind. He’s a great kid, Noah.” Seth stretched and ran a hand over his face. “Take a left up here.”

With that, Seth started giving him directions. Noah slipped into the state of mind that he used to memorize things and listened to all of the directions that Seth gave him. With any luck, he would be able to find the house without any problems the next day. He didn’t want to get lost on his way to Christmas dinner.

“It’s the third house on the left.”

“The one next to the one that’s glowing?”

“Yeah, that’s the one,” Seth replied. Noah could hear amusement in his voice. The amusement was understandable, especially considering that Noah now had an idea of what Seth had been doing on his neighbor’s roof.

The house next to Seth’s looked like it was auditioning to be a float in a Christmas parade. There was a Christmas Candy village on the front lawn, with all of the buildings looking like they were made out of gingerbread. There were Candy Cane lamps and little Gingerbread Men playing on the lawn. An entire team of reindeer, complete with sleigh and

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Santa, were on the roof. Noah could see the small stack of broken lobster crates on the ground in a flattened patch of garden.

“So, your neighbor really likes Christmas.”

“Yes, she does. I swear every year Mrs. Walker has something new.”

“Wow, I am definitely not going to have a problem finding your house tomorrow.”

“Remember, it’s the one next to the glowing house.”

“I’ll remember.” Noah shifted in the seat until he was facing the other man. He reached out and ran a finger down a soft cheek that was lightly dusted with stubble. “It’s not something that I want to forget.”

“Good.” Seth briefly leaned into the caress and then pulled away. “See you and Brady tomorrow.”

“Bye.” Noah watched as Seth climbed out of the car and ran to the house. It was cold enough outside that Noah could understand why he was running. While Seth was unlocking his front door, Noah took the opportunity to ogle his ass. It was a nice ass.

Seth unlocked his door, turned and waved before stepping into the house. Once the door was closed, Noah put the car in reverse and headed for home. He glanced back at his sleeping son and smiled. His bad day had turned itself around with such amazing results that he was looking forward to the next day. He had some plans for the

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ass that he had been staring at, and most of them involved said ass being naked.

THE smell of Christmas dinner saturated the entire house. Thankfully, it was a good smell. Seth hadn't burned anything. Yet. And he was hoping to keep it that way. Taking one last look around the kitchen, Seth slipped off the oven mitts and headed out of the room. With the cooking under control, it was time for him to finish getting ready.

As he stepped into the hall, he heard a small whine. Seth looked down at the golden lab sitting just outside of the kitchen door. He smiled and reached down to give the dog a scratch. "Don't even think about it, Dusty. You are not getting in that kitchen."

Seth could have sworn that Dusty sighed at him as he flopped down on the floor. Dusty had been trying to get into the kitchen to sneak food since Seth had started cooking. It hadn't worked. Seth had ordered him out after the first attempt. He had a very well-trained dog. Seth shook his head as he left Dusty behind him and headed up the stairs. He wanted to change out of his T-shirt and jeans before Noah and Brady arrived.

Seth stepped into his bedroom, pulling off his T-shirt as he went. Before he had started cooking, he'd laid the clothes that he wanted to wear on the bed. Quickly shedding his jeans, he pulled on the black slacks and reached for the dress shirt. Fastening the shirt and the pants, he turned to face the mirror as he rolled up the

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sleeves. Looking at his reflection, Seth smiled. It seemed as though his ex had been right about one thing. The forest green shirt really did look good on him.

Dusty gave a bark just before Seth heard a knock on his door. Swallowing his nerves, Seth dashed down the stairs. Dusty was standing at the door, tail wagging slightly as he looked at Seth. “You ready?” Seth laughed when Dusty actually gave a small bark. Taking one last deep breath, Seth pulled open the door. He felt his breath catch at the sight in front of him.

Noah looked amazing. His dark hair was slightly tousled by the wind, which had also added some colour to his cheeks. The blue eyes were smiling at him, and Seth could see the collar of a royal blue shirt peeking out from underneath the blue, green, and white striped scarf. Standing next to his father, Brady had a hat that matched his own red scarf on top of his blond head. He was bouncing slightly on his feet.

“Come in.” Seth moved to the side to let them into the house. The moment they were inside, Dusty headed for Brady demanding attention.

“Wow, you have a dog!” Brady dropped to his knees and started to lavish Dusty with attention.

“His name is Dusty. If you aren’t careful, he may lick you to death.” Seth turned his attention to Noah. “Can I take your coat?”

“Sure.” Noah slid the coat from his shoulders and handed it to Seth. As Seth took it, his fingers brushed

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against Noah's, sending sparks of sensation up his arm. When Noah flipped the scarf around his neck and pulled him closer, he had to smother a moan. It was not good form to molest guests in the entranceway, especially not when their children were playing with his dog. Seth had to force himself away from Noah before he embarrassed himself.

After putting Noah's coat and scarf in the closet, he managed to get Brady's off of him, along with the backpack he hadn't noticed. Once everything was in the closet, he led them into the living room, where he had the tree set up. They all sat down with Brady settling on the floor with Dusty, who seemed to have decided that Brady was his new best friend. Noah was sitting close enough that his thigh brushed Seth's.

"What happened to those presents?" Brady asked. He was pointing at a small pile of rather crushed presents in the corner.

"They had an accident." Seth gave the pile a small glare. They had been for Jonathan, but he wasn't going to get them now. Now that he wasn't as angry, Seth felt a tad silly for crushing them. Maybe one of the sweaters would still be salvageable.

"Ex?" Noah asked. He stretched his arm across the back of the couch and brushed the back of Seth's neck with his fingers. Seth shivered and tried not to lean into the touch, even though he wanted to.

"Bad breakup." Seth smiled at them. "So, Brady, I think there might be something under the tree for you."

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“Really?” Brady’s face lit up.

“Why don’t you take a look?” Seth grinned as Brady dashed over to the tree. Settling back against the couch with Noah’s arm warm along his shoulders, Seth watched as Brady pulled the handcrafted wooden box with a bow on it out from underneath the tree. When Brady lifted the lid of the box, his face lit up in pleasure.

“Wow, Seth this is so cool!” He lifted one of the hand-carved chess pieces out of the box. “Did you make this?”

“That is the first chess set that I ever carved. Do you like it?”

“I love it! Can we play later?”

“Why don’t you bring it into the kitchen, and you and your dad can play while I finish with dinner.”

“Sounds good to me,” Noah replied. He smiled at his son and Seth felt a hand squeeze the back of his neck.

Seth pushed himself off of the couch and headed into the kitchen with the Hunters following behind. Dusty followed them as far as the door of the kitchen and settled himself on the floor just outside of the door with a forlorn look on his doggie face. Seth went back to cooking dinner as Brady set up the chessboard for him and Noah. There was a warm feeling of pleasure inside Seth knowing that Brady liked his present.

When Seth had first started making money with his furniture, he had decided to try his hand at carving smaller things. Since chess had always been his favorite game, he

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had started with a chess set. It had turned out better than he had expected. He'd sold several, but kept the first few that he had made. He'd enjoyed being able to give Brady a Christmas present.

Dinner turned out perfectly. Seth hadn't overcooked the turkey, which he had been known to do, and the stuffing wasn't soggy. The sweet potatoes were cooked all the way through, unlike the year before, and the vegetables were nice and crisp. Seth thought the mashed potatoes tasted just as good as his mother's, and if the amount that Brady consumed said anything about them, he thought they were pretty good. By the time Seth pulled out the pies (pumpkin, apple, and pecan) they were all stuffed.

Then there of them moved back to the other room where they were joined by Dusty. Seth popped *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* into the DVD player. They had been talking during dinner, and he had learned that while Brady had seen the live-action Grinch movie, he had never seen the cartoon. Seth sat on the couch and found himself pulled into Noah's arms. He went without complaint and rested his head against the strong chest, enjoying the feel of arms wrapping around him. Brady curled up on the other couch with Dusty. By the time the movie was over, he was asleep.

"Looks like he's worn out," Seth remarked. He shifted to get more comfortable, but he didn't leave Noah's arms. He felt Noah's hand slide down his side and start to tug at his shirt.

"He does seem to be."

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Seth gasped as his shirt was pulled from his pants and fingers touched his skin. “I have a guest room, if you want to put him to bed.”

“And where would I be sleeping?”

“I have a suggestion.” Seth actually whimpered as talented fingers danced along his side and tried to get beneath his waistband.

“Would that suggestion be in your bed?”

“Only if that’s something that you would be interested in.”

“I would have to say yes,” Noah replied. His hand clenched on Seth’s side and pulled him closer while he tilted his chin down.

Seth raised his head and pressed his lips to Noah’s. He moaned softly at the first tentative brush of lips. Noah’s lips were soft and gentle against his. When he felt a tongue lick against the seal of his lips, he opened with a moan. Noah’s tongue slipped inside his mouth, and Seth pressed himself against Noah’s strong chest. He wrapped his arms around the older man’s neck and swung his leg over Noah’s thighs so he was straddling him. A groan slipped past his lips as he felt Noah’s hands land on his ass. Noah’s tongue ran over the roof of his mouth, and he broke away to gasp for air.

“Wow, you’re good at that.”

“And you have a great ass.”

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“Your hands certainly seem to like it.”

“That they do.” Noah squeezed his ass.

Seth laughed and buried his face in Noah’s neck. “You’re going to need to let go of it if you want to put Brady to bed while I put the rest of the food away.”

“Where’s the guest bedroom?”

“Up the stairs, second door on the left.” Seth sighed and climbed off Noah’s lap. He went to step away from the couch, but Noah grasped his hand. He looked down at the slightly mussed, but still amazingly attractive, doctor sprawled on his couch.

“Where will you be?”

“If you take longer than me, in my room, waiting for you.”

“And which room is that?”

“It’ll be the one with the open door.” Seth leaned down and pressed a kiss to Noah’s hand before walking into the kitchen. He let out a breath as he entered the safety of the kitchen. That one kiss from Noah had him practically shaking with desire and need. Sex was going to be interesting.

Seth couldn’t wait.

NOAH pulled the door to the guest room closed as he left his son sleeping in the rather large bed with Dusty curled up on

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the bed next to him. Brady had looked so small in the bed with the dog curled on the other side. Noah rested his head against the door as the faint stirrings of the anger he felt towards Susan surfaced. It wasn't Brady's fault that his mother was a bitch, and it wasn't Seth's fault that they had ended up at his dinner table. In fact, Seth had seemed quite happy to have them.

Seth.

Noah smiled and pushed away from the door. That kiss on the couch had left him aching. Trying to put Brady to bed without letting his son see how turned on he was had been difficult. Thankfully, Brady was a heavy sleeper. Noah was planning on pulling all sorts of sounds out of Seth. Turning his head, Noah spotted an open door down the hall that had soft light coming out of it. Feeling his desire increase once again, Noah walked towards the light, slowly unbuttoning his shirt. Reaching the doorway, he took a moment to look around the room.

The wall opposite the door had French doors covered with dark green drapes that were pulled back showing the exit to the balcony. Noah caught a reflection of flames in the glass and turned his head to the left. There was a fireplace on one wall with a warm fire inside of it. That and the moonlight coming in through the doors were the only sources of light. Turning the other way, Noah's eyes landed on the bed. It was massive, king size or larger, and from the detail he could see on the four posts Noah was certain that Seth had made it himself. He noticed that the covers had

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been pulled back, but Noah had no idea what colour they were because that was the instant he spotted Seth.

His back was to the door with the fire making the bandages on his back look orange. He was in the process of folding the shirt he had been wearing and placing it on the wooden chest at the foot of the bed. Noah could just make out the darker area of his back where the tattoo was. He must have made some sound because Seth turned to face him.

“Is Brady okay?”

“He’s sound asleep with Dusty curled up next to him.” Noah stalked forward, tugging his shirt out of his pants as he moved. When he reached Seth, he released his shirt in favor of placing his hands on the smooth skin that was tempting him.

Noah slid his arms along Seth’s shoulders, enjoying the slight tremble that went through the younger man’s body. Seth’s skin was as soft as he remembered. He ran his hands over the powerful shoulders. Years of construction work had given Seth a strong, muscled body that Noah couldn’t wait to feel wrapped around his own. Noah moved his hands off of Seth’s shoulders and ran them down the defined chest. When his thumbs brushed over the dusky nipples, Seth gasped and arched into the touch.

Dropping his head the few inches it took to reach Seth’s mouth, Noah pressed his lips to the carpenter’s. He felt strong hands clutch at his shirt as Seth opened to him. Thrusting his tongue inside, he sought out the taste that had

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eluded him earlier. The taste that was purely Seth. He wrapped his tongue around Seth's and sucked on it, causing Seth's hands to tighten on his shirt. Noah thought he heard the fabric rip.

Pulling away from the talented mouth, Noah slid his shirt the rest of the way off and dropped in carelessly to the floor. He grabbed the ass that had been tempting him all evening and pulled Seth back into his arms. He ravaged his mouth as he walked them both to the bed. Just when they reached the edge of the bed, Noah spun them, so that when they fell, Seth landed on top of him. He didn't want to hurt Seth's injured back.

Seth pulled away with a gasp as they settled on the bed. "So, should I be offended that you brought pajamas and extra clothes with you for you and Brady?"

"No, you should be flattered that I was hoping to spend so much time with you." Noah licked along the line of Seth's jaw, enjoying the moan that came pouring from his mouth. He ran his hands down the muscled torso until he reached to top of Seth's pants, and he moved one hand to knead at the tight ass while the other trailed along the bare skin at Seth's waist. "You have a very nice ass."

"You keep telling me that. Don't you want to see it naked?"

"Fuck yes!" Noah rolled them over slowly. Once he had Seth on his back, he began to kiss his way down his chest.

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Remembering how Seth responded to just his fingers on his nipples, Noah licked the one over his heart. He was rewarded with a deep moan. Smiling against the warm skin, Noah pulled the nipple into his mouth. When Seth's hands took up residence in his hair, he figured he was on to something. Running his teeth over the captured bud, Noah used his fingers to torment the other one. Seth was panting beneath him with his fingers clenching and unclenching in his hair. Noah replaced his mouth with his fingers and turned his attention to the neglected nipple.

"Noah." Seth's voice was a ragged groan. "Naked would be good."

"Getting there. Stop whining." Noah started to lick his way down his chest. Seth moaned and gasped at every brush of his tongue. Noah loved how responsive he was. He couldn't remember the last time he had a lover so eager for his attention. Seth was responding like a man who was starved for touch. By the time Noah reached Seth's navel, the skin beneath his lips was trembling. Small whimpers were escaping Seth's lips, and Noah could feel his hands clutching at his hair and any other part of him Seth could reach.

Noah pulled away and got to his feet, despite Seth's whimpered protests and grasping hands. Looking into the glazed green eyes, Noah put his hands on the waistband of Seth's pants. He popped the button, and Seth moaned. He could already feel the heat of Seth's erection against his hand. He slowly lowered the zipper, being careful to keep the teeth well away from Seth's straining flesh.

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Once he had the zipper undone, he let go of the pants and moved his hands back to Seth's waist. He tucked his fingers beneath both the pants and Seth's boxer-briefs and tugged slowly, pulling the fabric off of the toned body beneath him. Seth lifted his hips to help. Noah knelt as he reached Seth's knees and gave the garments a final tug. Pulling one of Seth's socks off, he pressed a kiss to the ankle and then repeated the gesture with the other foot. He climbed to his feet and gazed at the feast spread out before him.

Seth was magnificent. The strength of his torso was echoed in the rest of his body. While his chest was bare of hair, his legs were lightly dusted with fine, blond strands. His erection rose out of a nest of darker blond hair to smack against his abdomen. Noah reached out and ran a finger along one strong calf. Seth's leg trembled and strained towards the touch. Noah smiled into hazy green eyes. "You are amazing."

"And you are still wearing too many clothes."

"Turn over and let me get a good look at that ass while I get rid of these clothes," Noah instructed. He grinned as Seth groaned and swiftly turned over. He shed his pants as fast as humanly possible and took a good look at the ass that had been tempting him. Ignoring the bandages that covered a good portion of the strong back, he focused his attention on the trim waist and the pert, tempting bottom.

When he'd rolled over, Seth had crawled into the center of the bed. Noah climbed onto the bed behind him and ran his hands over the back of Seth's legs. He enjoyed

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the way that the legs twitched under his touch and tried to press closer to his hands. He let his hands caress the smooth globes of Seth's ass before leaning down and nipping one of the cheeks. Seth moaned beneath him and lifted his ass. Noah transferred his grip to Seth's hips and continued to lick and nip at his cheeks. When he tugged Seth up slightly and moved his hands in order to spread his cheeks, Seth moaned into the pillows.

Holding him open, Noah licked along the crease. He smiled as Seth started to whimper. When he pressed his tongue to his hole, Seth went wild beneath him. His tongue was forced deeper as Seth thrust back against his face, nonsense words falling from his mouth. Noah was pretty sure some of the words weren't even in English. He loved the reaction that he was getting. Some of the men he had dated had hated being rimmed, but Noah loved to do it. He paused in his ministrations to sink his teeth into the meat of Seth's ass. When all Seth did was moan, Noah pressed his teeth in harder and started to suck up a mark.

"God, Noah! More! Please, more!" Seth's pleas were followed by restless shifting. It was almost as if he didn't know whether he wanted the torment to continue or if he needed to get away from it.

Turning his attention back to the eager hole, Noah slipped his thumb in along with his tongue. He licked and nibbled while thrusting with his finger, slowly working Seth open. Seth started to babble incoherently when Noah managed to get a finger to brush against his prostate. Giving one last lick, Noah pulled away. "Seth."

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A strangled moan came from Seth's mouth. "No, please, don't stop."

"Lube, baby. I need lube and a condom." Noah kept one hand running over Seth's skin as he asked. From the sounds and reactions coming from Seth, Noah was pretty sure that if he stopped touching him completely he would fall apart. And not in a good way.

"In the nightstand. God, please don't stop touching me."

"I'll touch you for as long as you want, baby." Noah pressed a kiss to Seth's spine before he leaned over him to reach the nightstand. He let his body drag against Seth's as he moved. The sensation of his aching cock dragging over all that muscle tore a groan from his throat. He fumbled the drawer open and managed to grab the lube and a condom on his first try. With the necessary items clenched in one hand, he leaned his body more fully against Seth's. "How do you want this?"

"You in me."

Noah chuckled softly. "I guessed that, but I meant how do you want it to go? I want this to be good for you."

"How about the way that has as much of you touching me as possible?"

"Okay. I can do that." Noah pressed a kiss to the back of his neck and pulled back. "Roll onto your side."

Once he had Seth position the way that he wanted, Noah spooned up behind him, coated a finger with lube, and

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slipped it inside the already loosened passage. He used his knee to nudge Seth's top leg forward so he had more room. As Seth's head came back to rest against his shoulder, he added another finger while licking along the smooth throat. Seth moaned and started to rock back against the fingers. Noah nipped at his neck, loving the way that Seth responded to his touch. He added a third finger and Seth shuddered in his arms. When the whimpering and tiny, backwards thrusts started, he couldn't hold back anymore. He removed his finger and pulled away from Seth in order to get the condom on.

Sheathed and slicked, Noah lifted Seth's leg and propped it up with his own in order to hold the other man open. He then slowly began to sink inside. Seth's babbles increased as he inched forward. Noah groaned and rested his head against Seth's shoulder as he was swallowed by the tight heat. "God, baby, you're tight."

"Been a while." Seth groaned as Noah finally worked himself all the way in. "You feel so good."

Panting, Noah clutched at Seth's hips. "I thought you and your boyfriend just broke up?" The crushed presents that he had seen by the tree had seemed to indicate that the break-up had been recent.

"We did, but he wouldn't top me. Didn't like to do that." Seth whimpered softly. "God, I missed this. Move, please move."

"Anything for you, baby," Noah murmured. As he pulled out and slid back in, Noah realized that he meant

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what he had said. He would do anything to make the man in his arms happy. Remembering what Seth had said about touching, Noah wrapped his arms around him and pressed his mouth to his shoulder. He kept his thrusts slow and smooth, wanting to wring as much pleasure out of this first time as possible. He felt Seth's fingers link with his and squeeze.

Noah pushed Seth's leg up higher and shifted his hips slightly. On his next thrust, Seth gasped and trembled in his arms. *Bingo. Prostate.* Making sure not to lose his position, Noah increased the speed of his thrusts. Seth started to whimper in his arms and thrust back. Noah could feel Seth's pre-come on his hands from where his cock kept bumping against their joined hands. Keeping their hands linked, Noah lowered them and grasped Seth's weeping erection. Seth moaned into the touch.

Feeling his own orgasm fast approaching, Noah increased the speed of his thrusts and strokes. Seth came with a wail, wet heat falling over his hand as the tight ass tightened even more. Noah gave one last thrust and buried his teeth in Seth's shoulder as orgasm overtook him. He trembled and shuddered as Seth came apart in his arms. Seth was still shaking as Noah's breathing returned to normal.

"Seth?"

"Oh God."

"Baby? You okay?"

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“God, that was amazing.” Seth’s head flopped against the pillow as he panted.

Releasing the grip he had on Seth’s hand, Noah slowly pulled out of his lover. Seth made small noises of protest as he moved away. Noah pressed gentle kisses to his shoulder. “Where’s the bathroom up here?” Noah knew where the downstairs bathroom was, but he didn’t really want to walk downstairs naked.

“Bedroom has an attached bathroom.”

“I’ll be right back.” Noah pressed another kiss to the bite mark he had left on Seth’s shoulder then crawled out of the bed. On still unsteady legs, he made his way across the room. Thankfully the door was open so he didn’t have to guess where it was. Once in the bathroom, Noah disposed of the condom and cleaned himself off. He ran a washcloth under warm water and wrung it out before carrying it back to the bed.

Seth’s eyes had fallen shut by the time he returned. His breathing was still too erratic for sleep, but it had calmed a bit. Noah gently wiped the evidence of their lovemaking from Seth’s skin. Sated green eyes blinked open at him. Noah watched as the sweetest smile he had ever seen crossed Seth’s face. He leaned forward and pressed a soft kiss to Seth’s swollen lips.

“Come back to bed.”

“Just let me put the cloth back in the bathroom.”

“Leave it on the floor. Just get in here and hold me.”

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“I think I can do that.” Noah dropped the washcloth and climbed back into the bed. Pulling the covers up with him, Noah settled behind Seth once more, pulling the other man back against his chest. Seth gave a sleepy sigh of contentment as he snuggled back. Noah linked one of his hands with Seth’s and kissed the marked shoulder. He could see a perfect imprint of his teeth.

“Thank you.”

“For what?”

“For giving me a good Christmas.”

“You’re welcome.” Noah kissed his neck once more. “Get some sleep, baby.”

“Night.”

“Night.” Noah held Seth tight as his lover swiftly succumbed to sleep. Knowing that the fire would die out while they slept, he made sure that the blankets were tucked around them before settling more firmly into the mattress. With Seth in his arms, Noah drifted to sleep a great deal happier than he had been the day before.

SETH woke feeling warm and content, something that hadn’t happened for a while. He was also still in the same position he’d fallen asleep in. Noah had apparently taken him at his word that he wanted to be held and had refused to let go while they slept. Seth snuggled back into the warm body behind him and felt arms tighten around him. He smiled and ran his hand down the arm that was wrapped around

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his waist. A kiss was pressed against his neck as fingers started to stroke his stomach.

“Happy Boxing Day,” Noah murmured.

“Morning.” Seth rolled over so he was facing Noah. Sleepy blue eyes smiled at him, and he found himself the recipient of a tender kiss. Seth deepened the contact and curled himself more firmly against Noah’s chest. The feel of fingers trailing over his back caused happy tingles to run through his body. Seth pulled away with a contented sigh.

Noah rolled onto his back, pulling Seth with him. “How’s your back?”

“Not as bad as I thought it would be. You do good work, Dr. Hunter.”

“I try. I was worried that I’d hurt your back last night.”

“Trust me, I felt no pain. It was all good.” Seth grinned and nipped Noah’s chin. The small laugh he got from Noah caused him to lean closer. He pressed his face to Noah’s neck and breathed in his scent. “You smell good.”

“I smell like you and sex.”

“It’s a really good smell on you.” Seth licked Noah’s neck.

“We need a shower.”

Seth shivered as Noah’s hands ran down his back and began to knead his ass. He moaned as a thumb slid down

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his crease. “We do. I happen to have a very nice one in my bathroom.”

“I noticed that last night.”

“We could test it out.”

“Dad! Are you and Seth awake yet? I’m hungry.” Brady’s voice came clearly through the closed door.

Seth moaned and pressed his face into Noah’s chest. “This is embarrassing.”

“I guess we’re going to have to postpone the shower until after breakfast. And we might just have to take separate ones.”

Seth placed his hands on Noah’s chest and pushed up until he could look into the other man’s eyes. “Can I ask you something?”

“You can ask me anything.”

“Are we dating?” Seth tried to hide his nervousness as he asked the question, but he had a feeling that he wasn’t doing a very good job. Hope flared as he watched Noah’s face soften into a tender smile.

“Yeah, baby, we’re dating.”

“Oh good, I was hoping we were.”

“I can hear you guys talking! Come on! I want breakfast!”

“Sorry, baby, I think that’s our cue.”

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Giving Noah one last kiss, Seth rolled out of his arms. He padded to his dresser and pulled out flannel pants and T-shirts for both of them. After pulling his own, he watched as Noah dressed. He liked seeing the older man in his clothes. He preferred the way that he looked naked, but naked was not a good way to eat breakfast when a child was present. Of course, they could always eat breakfast in bed another day.

“What is that look?” Noah asked.

“What?”

“That look on your face. What are you thinking about?”

“I was just thinking that we should have breakfast in bed some time.”

“That’s a great idea.” Noah moved closer and Seth found himself pulled into the strong arms. Seth sighed happily and leaned into the kiss that Noah planted on him. His lips were licked and teased open, allowing Noah’s tongue to slip inside. Seth twined his tongue around Noah’s and wrapped his arms around the taller man, pulling him closer. The kiss broke when air became necessary. “Come on. We’d better get out there before Brady gets hungry enough to come inside.”

“I’m hungry! You’ve got two minutes, and then I’m coming in!”

“Calm down, you little monkey, we’re coming!” Noah laughed and headed for the door. Following him across the

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room, Seth watched as he opened the door and pulled his son into a one-armed hug.

Seth watched they walk down the hall, Dusty following behind, with a smile on his face. He could hardly believe how quickly his luck had changed for the better. Falling off his neighbor's roof had turned out to be the best thing that had ever happened to him.

"Come on, Seth! Dad's going to raid your fridge and make us breakfast."

"Coming," Seth replied. He left his bedroom with a smile on his face. He already had ideas for next Christmas.

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BETHANY BROWN is a 27 year old with a BA in English, Language and Literature, and a bit too much time on her hands. Hopefully, her new barista job will keep her occupied enough that her mind doesn't wander too far. Unfortunately, that most likely won't be possible. Her mind is too full of stories.

Having been interested in writing since her first trip to the Young Authors Conference in the fourth grade, Bethany finally gave in to the voices in her head and wrote them a story. Since all that accomplished was to make the voices louder, she's looking forward to continuing the *Lost Boys and Love Letters* Series with Ashlyn.

Bethany spends her free time reading, and watching TV and movies while pairing up her favorite male characters. She is always looking for something new to get Ashlyn hooked on. She also spends a great deal of time trying to convince Patrick, who lives in her head, that just because he won't leave doesn't mean he gets to be in all of the stories. Unfortunately, it's not working very well.

Bethany would like to take this opportunity to address the administrators who wouldn't let her into the Creative Writing Program at the University of Windsor. I have a writing career! Choke on that, suckers!

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