



M&M PRESENTS:

Christmas

Mandy M. Roth
Michelle M. Pillow

M&M Presents:

CHRISTMAS

A romance duet

With stories by

Mandy M. Roth

And

Michelle M. Pillow

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Trust in the Season

By
Mandy M. Roth

Chapter One

Victoria Resa focused hard on the computer screen in front of her, hoping that her boss of two years, Frank Hewitt, would just pass by without stopping to do his normal song and dance.

Please, just keep on moving,

“Vicki, did you happen to get the updated customer service component packs together? I got stuck with the damn training seminar again and I’d really like to be prepared this time, sweetie,” he said , with a wink that made her stomach turn. She hated being called Vicki and really hated his pet names for her.

She wanted to take his neatly trimmed blond head of hair and ram it through the wall. Of course she had the packets of information ready. She always had everything that sleazebag needed done ahead of time. It wasn’t her fault that the jerk had left them at his mistress’ house the night before last year’s seminar. Frank didn’t tell his superiors that. No, he told them that his assistant had failed to get them done in time.

Lies, all lies.

Victoria could have spoken out against him, but what was the point?

The company would never move her any higher than her current position.

Frank had told her that the minute she refused to sleep with him.

He cornered her in the copy room, after hours, and made it very clear that if she wanted to advance her career, she could do so by servicing him first. It would be a cold day in hell before that happened. Victoria had immediately begun the search for a new job, but couldn’t figure out why no one seemed to call back. She overheard Frank giving her a rather nasty reference on the phone and knew then why she hadn’t been able to get another job.

Her Master’s Degree in Marketing seemed pointless now that she was no more than Frank’s glorified secretary. He ordered her around like a dog

and she jumped at his every whim, or almost every whim. Maybe if she took that one last step, she could be free of him. It's not as though she ever had any better offers. She worked so much that she never socialized and Frank had spread rumors around the building that she was his, so no men asked her out.

Her vibrator had become her best friend, and when she realized that she was buying batteries in bulk on a regular basis, she knew things had gotten bad. The touch of any man sounded good at the moment.

Frank wasn't a bad looking man. On the contrary, most of the women she worked with were so jealous that he was her boss that they didn't speak to her. She swallowed back the vomit in her throat as she pushed the idea of screwing Frank out of her head. Making a mental note to seek psychiatric help if she should ever entertain sleeping with him again, she forced herself back to reality.

"Hello, Vicki?" Frank asked, leaning on her cubicle so hard that she was sure the damn thing would tip over. "Packets of info?"

"Yes, Mr. Hewitt, they're all done. Check the bottom drawer of your center filing cabinet and you'll find enough for up to eighty participants.

Nancy, the one in charge of seminars, told me that they'd only had fifty sign up for it so far and that they were closing registration. The room capacity is seventy-five so you should be covered."

Frank stood there with his mouth open. She smiled at him sheepishly and went back to working on analyzing the data from last month's sales records. If she didn't die of boredom, she'd be done and out of the office on time for once.

Being behind on Christmas shopping and having ten shopping days left, she was up a creek if she didn't get it done soon. Or, rather, get it started.

Frank turned slightly but didn't leave. "Oh, Vicki, I need you to stay late tonight and let the people setting up for the company Christmas party in please."

"But, Mr. Hewitt ...?"

He grunted. "Now, Vics, I've told you at least a thousand times to please call me Frank."

And I've told you a thousand times that my name is Victoria , not honey buns, sweetie, Vics, or Vicki!

“Right, Frank.” She nearly choked on the words. “But I thought that Mr. Ruth’s secretary specifically requested you to be here when they dropped everything off.” She knew damn well that they’d requested Frank be there personally because she’d been the one to take the message from Betty, Frank’s actual secretary.

Frank rolled his eyes and loosened his tie. “I can’t be expected to micro-manage. Just sign my name wherever it’s needed. It’s not like the man will ever know. Last I heard he was at the German branch. Why the man even shows up for work is beyond me. He’s one of the richest men in the world. Albert P. Ruth III, with a name like that you know he’s got money. Have you ever seen him? He looks more like a biker than a billionaire. Guess it’s one of the perks of being the boss. Anyways, I’m off.”

Victoria should have known better than to think the jerk would do his own job. “Can Betty stay? I really have to get a few things done tonight.”

“Betty’s grandson is in town and picked her up about an hour ago.

Listen, I need to go meet my wife for dinner before she skins me alive. See you in the morning, sweet cheeks, unless you’d rather I stay a bit longer and keep you company? Say the word and I’m all yours.” He touched her shoulder lightly, running his fingers through her hair. “How do you get it so black?”

She resisted the urge to cringe and turned her head towards him. “I was born with it that way.”

“I love long hair. I wish all women had it.”

No, you love hearing the sound of your own voice.

He leaned down and put his mouth close to her ear. “Tell me, Vicki, is *all* of your hair this dark?”

“You better get going, Frank. You wouldn’t want to keep your *wife* waiting.”

Pulling back from her quickly, he let out a sigh as he walked away.

Victoria felt like she needed a shower. Having his hand anywhere near her made her blood boil.

She put her hand in the air and flipped him off. It seemed to be her normal 'goodbye wave' whenever Frank was concerned. Fighting the overwhelming desire to throw her stapler at the back of his head, she turned to finish her job.

* * * *

Philip made his way through the glass doors, Christmas tree in tow.

He smiled at Mr. Kingston, the night watchman. He'd known him since he was just a boy.

"You want me to call up for some help for you there, Philip?"

"No, sir," he said, pulling the tree the rest of the way in. "I'm planning on dragging it down the hall to the board room."

The elderly man tipped his hat slightly. "Well, see, there'd be your problem. Mr. Hewitt decided to move the party to the top floor. Said something about being more dramatic ... making some sort of statement."

Phillip shook his head. "Did he now?"

The phone rang and Philip stood silent as Kingston answered it.

"Yes, Ms. Resa, I sure have seen the man here to drop off the party stuff."

The old man's brow furrowed. "No miss, there's just one person."

Philip motioned to him. "Have her send Mr. Hewitt down." He very much wanted to meet the man that thought he was in line to run the New York office.

Mr. Kingston relayed his message and hung the phone up. "Ms. Resa will be right down to help you out, Philip."

"Where the hell is Hewitt?"

Kingston shrugged. “That’s not really any of my business. I keep to myself here. It’s best to not see everything that happens, if you know what I mean.”

Philip was just about to ask him to clarify himself when the elevator doors opened. His breath caught in his chest. At first, he couldn’t tear his eyes away from the long set of caramel colored legs that stood before him.

It took him a minute before he was able to take in the rest of the beauty before him, and oh, what a beauty she was. Around five seven, with a head of long onyx-colored hair, she stared out at him from large dark brown eyes.

She looked like she was only around twenty, but the way she carried herself made him add a few more years to that.

Kingston let out a deep laugh and touched his shoulder. “Breathe.”

He did and caught the scent of her light floral perfume. Oh, God, she was perfect. Shifting slightly, he hoped that his erection wasn’t obvious through his tight jeans.

The woman flashed him a brilliantly white smile that made her full lips look even more luscious. “Hi, they’ve got you working late too, huh?”

She glanced down at the evergreen on the lobby floor and laughed. “Well, I kind of thought you’d show up with an artificial one in a box, but this is loads better. Hmm, can you give me just one second? I’ve got some clothes in my bag from the gym. I’m not trying to sound like a priss, but I’d rather not tempt fate to see if stains from that thing come out of my clothes.”

Philip wanted to respond, say something witty and look like the suave man that he truly was. Nothing but a straggled croak came out followed closely by a weak shrug.

She smiled wide at him again. “Hello?”

Kingston gave him a good hard thump on the back of the neck and he jerked back to his senses. “I’d like to put it in you ... *shit*, I mean ... I can get this onto the elevator myself. If you want to change and help with the rest of the stuff in my car, that would be great.”

She let out a throaty laugh and pushed the elevator button. “Suit yourself.”

Philip grabbed hold of the trunk and dragged the tree to the elevator.

The exotic goddess before him held the door open as he fought to get the twelve-foot long tree into the elevator with them. He gave one final tug, and she let the door release.

“Do this often?” she asked.

“Do what?”

“Deliver trees?”

He chuckled. “No, I don’t do this often. How about you? You work this late all the time?”

“Whenever my boss tells me to,” she said sardonically.

“Let me guess, you don’t care for him much.”

She cast him a sideways glance and put her hand out, changing the subject. “I’m Victoria Resa.”

Victoria, the name bounced around in his head as he reached for her hand. It was so soft and warm that he instantly wondered what it would feel like wrapped around his cock. He hadn’t thought about a woman sexually since his ex-fiancée had run off to the Bahamas with one of his biggest business rivals close to five months ago. Even when he’d been with her, he’d never had random thoughts of steamy sex pop into his mind.

All he wanted to do to Victoria Resa was push her up against the elevator wall and fuck her until she passed out in his arms. Letting his eyelids flutter closed, Philip focused on clearing his head and hopefully easing his erection.

“So, do you have a name?” She had one of those voices that sounded like it would be perfect on the receiving end of a nine-hundred number.

“Philip Ruth.”

She laughed. “Any relation to the almighty Albert P. Ruth ... *the third?*” The way she added the third to his name told him that she didn’t think highly of him for some reason.

His mind raced with various ways to get out of the situation with her number and hopefully her naked underneath him. Opening his mouth to speak, he stumbled as something slashed past his face quickly, slamming his body into Victoria’s. She grunted as they both tumbled to the floor.

* * * *

“What the hell?” Victoria cried out as the weight of Philip’s large body crashed down onto her.

Her brain screamed at her to push him off her, but her body, in its state of deprivation rubbed against his of its own accord. She’d been taken by him the moment she’d walked into the lobby to find him standing there in his black leather coat, faded jeans, and black boots.

The fact that he had a head of long brown hair that hung past his shoulders coupled with a body that screamed perfection left her drooling on the inside. She amazed herself by speaking in complete sentences and not panting, yet here she was, rubbing her lower region against the hard bulge in his pants. But, oh what a bulge it was.

Strands of long brown hair covered his face as he lifted his head slowly. “Ouch,” he said, ducking back down close to her face. So close now, that when he opened his mouth to speak, his lips brushed hers.

Moaning, she shifted beneath him. Heat flooded her between her legs as his hips ground into hers. She wanted to move in and steal a kiss from him. Hell, she wanted to fuck him, to heck with just a kiss.

Philip moved his head to the side and glanced back at the now fully extended Christmas tree. “Hmm, may have misjudged the strength of the twine I used to tie that up.”

She laughed as he tried to move off her. “Gee, you think?”

“We could always go with the theory that I planned this, just to get to lay on top of a goddess.”

Goddess? The man had obviously been smelling evergreens too long.

He was delusional.

“I guess that’s one way we could look at it, but saying we did go with that theory, then we’d have to assume that you planned on seducing Mr. Hewitt, since he was the one who was supposed to meet you.”

Philip’s eyes widened. He opened his mouth, only to close it again.

His square jaw twitched for a moment, and she had to fight the urge to kiss a line to the tiny dimple at the corner of his mouth. Apparently, questioning his manhood had left him speechless. It was too cute for her to pass up.

“So, tell me. How long did it take you to find breakaway string?

Frank will be so very disappointed that he missed this. I mean, after all the hard work and planning.”

“ Victoria , I can assure you that I am not ... oh, to hell with it,” he said, dropping his mouth down to hers.

She gasped, allowing him the play he needed to slip his warm tongue into her mouth. He pushed his lower body against her more, causing her to cream her panties from the excitement of it all. He pulled back from her quickly, letting out a small cry as the tree attacked him once again. “I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have done that. Please, accept my....”

Victoria grabbed hold of the back of his head and yanked his face back down to hers. This time it was she who initiated the kiss, not wanting to pass on what could be the opportunity of a lifetime, or at the very least, a man who didn’t turn her stomach when he touched her.

She pulled at his shoulders, trying desperately to crawl through him as their tongues dove in and out of each other’s mouths. He tasted like peppermint and the smell of the tree above them made her in the mood for more than just Christmas. Going too long without sex, and living with the endless line of Frank’s advances, had left her horny, and in need of some attention.

Victoria eased her hands down his body and in search of one thing, his left hand. When she found it, she relaxed a bit, hoping that he wasn't one of those men that were married, but didn't wear their ring.

His lips curved as his fingers laced in hers. "No, I'm not. Are you?" he asked, seeming to read her mind.

"No."

* * * *

Philip could barely contain himself when Victoria slid her fingers over his, obviously checking for a wedding band. He'd never been married.

Sure, he'd come close five months ago, but it hadn't happened. Part of him was still upset that it hadn't worked out. Sonya was a money hungry whore, so it wasn't her that he missed, it was the idea of being married. He wanted a wife, someone to come home to, share his thoughts, dreams, fears. He'd always wanted children and hoped that someday he'd find a woman who was only interested in him, not his money. So far, Victoria seemed *very* interested in him, and she thought he was just the decoration guy.

Hmm, could she be the one?

Philip shook the thought from his head, not wanting to put too much stock in a chance meeting. He knew nothing about Victoria . But, he did know that his body reacted to hers like never before. His cock was actually throbbing. If he didn't free it soon from his jeans, they'd slice right through him.

The elevator doors opened and the tree fell partially out of the elevator, freeing his body enough to climb off Victoria . Not that he wanted to. No. He wanted to stay above her the rest of the night, and if he played his cards right, he just might be able to.

"Looks like we're here."

"Yeah," he said, a bit upset that she didn't seem to want to finish where they'd left off.

Rolling to his side, he surveyed the situation. Beautiful goddess on the floor next to him, and tree blocking the exit--there really was no choice, but duty called. He got to his feet and extended a hand to Victoria . She took it and let him help her up. The doors began to close on the tree and she pushed the button quickly to keep them open.

“So, Mr. Tree-guy, how do you propose we get off ... *errr* ... get it off?” Her caramel complexion turned slightly rosy and before he knew it, he was reaching out to touch her smooth skin. She turned her face just before he touched her and he could see the confusion in her big brown eyes.

A piece of him was happy that she seemed to second-guess what they'd done. That meant she most likely didn't do that sort of thing with just anyone. Another part of him wanted her to throw caution to the wind and let their attraction for one another run wild.

Philip wasn't about to push her and cause her any discomfort, so he focused on the current problem--the stupid tree he'd insisted on. Why he hadn't let the guy at the lot deliver it was still beyond him. He could have paid someone to handle all of this. That's what people always expected him to do, but he didn't care for the way society thought he should be tucked away calling the shots. He loved people and enjoyed interacting with them as an everyday kind of guy. It'd been hard at first, being born with a 'silver spoon' in his mouth and all, but he'd adjusted and could blend in as an everyday Joe when needed.

He gave the tree a good shove. It didn't budge. He tried again, this time pushing against the back of the elevator with his feet as he went. In one quick movement, the tree broke free of the elevator and he landed flat on his face.

“ *Oomph!* ”

“Are you okay?” Victoria asked, appearing above him suddenly. She looked like an angel to him in her off white dress suit. Waves of black, loose curls spilled down around him and he closed his eyes, picturing her straddling him, riding him, as her hair encompassed them. His cock twitched and for a second he thought for sure that he'd come in his pants, but he managed to hold on. “Philip, are you hurt?”

“Are we, or aren't we counting my pride?”

“I like you. You're a funny guy.”

By the look in her eyes, he knew that that small confession cost her a lot. He got the sense she didn't tend to like too many people. Guilt over misleading her washed over him, but to confess now that he was owner of the company would leave him always wondering if anything they had was real or not.

"I guess I should get that thing where it needs to go."

"Yeah," she said, sounding slightly disappointed. "Do you need me to help with the other stuff?"

"Only if you want to."

Her smile beamed down at him and he felt his heart twist. *Shit, she has me. If she truly wants me, then I'm hers for all time.*

Chapter Two

Victoria made her way down the hall, to the employee lounge. She wanted to grab her gym bag and change into her running suit. It wasn't the most flattering thing she owned, but it'd save on her dry cleaning bill, which was going to be big enough already.

She glanced down the hall, in the direction that Philip had dragged the tree inside, but saw no sign of him. For a delivery guy, he sure knew his way around the building.

She shrugged, and headed into the lounge. "Vicki, there you are!"

The sound of Frank's voice made her flinch.

What the hell is he doing here?

She turned slowly to find Frank running down the hall towards her.

"I was worried about you. I called, you didn't answer, so I decided to stop in and make sure you were okay. The damn elevator was stuck. I had to run up twenty-six flights of stairs." He closed the distance between them fast.

"You're okay, aren't you, baby?"

“I’m not your ... I’m fine. Thank you for your concern.” Her nostrils flared as she spit the words out. “Sorry for spoiling your dinner with your *wife* .”

Frank dismissed her words with his hand. “Don’t worry about that. I was looking for any excuse not to have to sit there and look at the prude.

I’ve got a hard on the size of Texas and all she can talk about is her day at her latest Ladies Group.” He looked around the office. “Where are the people who were supposed to set up for the Christmas party?”

She began to answer but he cut her off.

“Looks like we’ve got the place to ourselves.” He winked at her.

“Alone at last.”

Panic welled up in her. She understood why he’d really come back.

He wasn’t the least bit concerned about her. He wanted sex and knew that she’d be at the office, late, and alone. She looked back hoping to see Philip, but didn’t. The thought of screaming seemed an overkill, so she did the only thing she could think of--she laughed. “I should probably be heading out. I’ve got tons to do and....”

Frank grabbed hold of her and pulled her to him. His eyes were wild with lust and she had to swallow hard to keep the scream down. “Oh, I could think of a few other things that you need to get done before the night is out. Can’t you?” He leaned in close enough to kiss her.

* * * *

Phillip saw red when he walked around the corner to find Victoria in another man’s arms. It wasn’t just any man either. It was Frank Hewitt, her boss. Rolling his eyes, disgusted with himself for having fallen so hard and fast for a woman who would sleep her way to the top, he turned around and took the back flight of stairs.

He hit the lobby door with such force that it bounced off the wall.

Kingston jerked around in his chair and stared at him wide eyed. “What’s the matter with you, boss?”

“It’s Philip.”

“I know that, but you come flying through that door like you was about to tear someone’s head off, so I just wanted to remind you that I know you’re the man in charge around here.”

Philip forced a smile to his face. It was silly for him to behave this way. Victoria didn’t owe him anything. He hardly knew her. It still hurt that she opted to have an affair with a very married man. It didn’t surprise him one bit that Hewitt had a little something on the side. He’d made it his business to find out about his top executives and buzz had been generating for some time about Hewitt’s habits. He’d wanted to meet the man face to face and have a little talk with him about it tonight. That was the reason he’d requested that Hewitt be here personally to meet with him, but Victoria had been such a shock to his system that he hadn’t thought once about

Hewitt since he’d laid eyes on her.

“Sir, if you don’t mind me asking ... where are Mr. Hewitt and Ms.

Resa ?”

Philip bit in the inside of his mouth to keep from yelling, “They’re upstairs about to fuck each other’s brains out.”

He smiled at the elderly man. “Upstairs.”

“You left him alone with Ms. Resa?”

“They seemed like they needed some time.”

Kingston stood slowly. “If it’s all the same, I think I’ll go do my rounds now, sir.”

Philip looked down at the security monitors and instantly saw

Victoria and Frank on one. “Is there sound on these?”

“No, sir.” Kingston headed towards the elevator slowly. “If I don’t catch you before you go, it was good to see you again. You turned out to be a

fine man. Your father would have been very proud. I think I'll go do those rounds now."

"What's going on?"

"It's not for me to say, sir. But I do think that I'll start my rounds on the top floor tonight."

Philip watched the black and white screen. He saw Frank move

Victoria back against wall. Without sound, he couldn't tell exactly what was going on, and Frank was almost as tall as he was, leaving Victoria blocked out for the most part.

He looked over at Kingston and found the man studying him intensely. "Is she using him to advance herself in the company?" Shocked by his own question, Philip didn't meet Kingston's eyes.

"I see a lot of things that go on here. I can tell you that Ms. Resa has *never* used anyone to advance her career, Mr. Ruth," Kingston said, with an edge of anger in his voice. "She's a good girl, brings me coffee every morning, from one of them fancy coffee shops down the street. She doesn't eat with anyone in the lunch room because ... well, that's not for me to say either, but I can tell you that she keeps to herself and that what you think you're seeing on that screen isn't what's going on."

Philip soaked in the man's words and felt the bottom drop out as he realized what Kingston was trying to tell him. "He's forcing himself on her, isn't he?"

Kingston was quiet for a minute as the elevator doors opened. "It's not for me to say, sir. I just think that now would be a real good time to go to the top floor and do my rounds."

"Shit, I left her alone with him!" Philip yelled.

* * * *

Victoria tried to break free of Frank's grasp. He held her tighter and brought his lips to hers. Jerking her head to the side, she managed to

avoid kissing him. He scored a direct hit with her neck though, and began planting wet, sloppy kisses all over her skin.

“Stop it!” she yelled, pushing on his chest.

“You want me, Vics. I can see it every time you look at me. You’ve been dying to know just what it would feel like to be fucked by me. Admit it.”

She pushed hard at his face. “Get off me, you pig!”

He grabbed her breast and let out a heavy sigh. “I knew that your nipples would be hard the instant I touched them.”

“I’ll press charges,” she said calmly, not caring anymore if it cost her, her job. She’d move back in with her parents and work at a fast food restaurant before she let this asshole near her.

“It’ll be your word against mine. Who do you think the authorities will believe? A little Latino whore, whose been screwing her boss and begging him to leave his wife, or me, the Ivy League man with a flawless record?”

She ignored the racial comment and concentrated on the rest of his line of crap. “I’m not sleeping with you. I told you no.”

“Yeah, about that ... everyone here thinks different. You see, if they haul in your coworkers and the rest of the management team they’ll back up my story. They’ve all heard the rumors.”

“The rumors that you started!”

“Like that matters. Trust me, Vicki, I’ll win, so what do you say you give in and enjoy the ride. If you’re a decent little lay, I might not write you up for insubordination.”

Something within her snapped as he pressed his body against her harder. She brought her knee up hard and fast, coming into direct contact with his groin. He fell back from her, clutching himself. “The name is Victoria . Remember it when you try to fire me. I will fight you on this.

The first place I’ll start is with a phone call to your wife.”

Victoria didn’t wait for his response, she ran like hell for the back staircase. She’d worry about what he’d do next, once the office was crowded with people again. Now wasn’t the time to play the heroine.

* * * *

The elevator door opened and Philip shot out of it like a bullet, scanning the area for Victoria . He looked down the hall he'd last seen her in, but saw no one. Running full force, he almost flipped over Frank's body on the floor.

“What's going on here?”

Frank, facing the other direction, clutching his groin, moaned slightly.

“I'll tell you what's going on here ... that bitch attacked me.”

Philip snatched him off the floor, possessed with a strength he wasn't aware he had, and slammed him against the wall. “Tell me, Hewitt, do you often go around calling your employees bitches?”

Frank's eyes widened when he saw Philip. “Mr. Ruth, I didn't expect to see you this fine evening.”

“Cut the shit, Frank. Where's she at?”

“I don't know. She attacked me and ran towards the back staircase.

I'm firing her first thing tomorrow morning.”

“No you're not.”

Frank's jaw dropped. “She attacked me.”

“Did she have any reason to attack you? Think long and hard before you answer that. I'd hate for any more of this to go on your record. You're already going to have a hell of a time finding a job after I'm done spreading the word about you. Now, get out of my building before I have you escorted out.”

“You can't fire me! That little bitch has been after me from the day she started. I see the way she looks at me. Ask anyone here, she's been giving it to me all along, begging me to leave my wife for her.”

“Excuse me, sir, but Ms. Resa has only given him the bird on a regular basis. I can pull out the security tapes if you need me to. For some reason they’re all lumped together in a safe place,” Kingston said from behind him.

Frank’s face paled considerably.

Chapter Three

Victoria let her head fall back against the rim of the oversized tub.

Thoughts of being penniless and still having to make her student loan payments, and other bills, scared the hell out of her. She closed her eyes and decided to do her best to get through the night without any more thoughts of money.

Her parents wouldn’t care if she couldn’t afford to get them anything for Christmas and her brothers would not only understand, they’d most likely kill Frank. That was just one of the benefits of being the only girl in a large Latino family.

Her thoughts went to Philip, the mysterious tree man. He’d managed to stir things within her that she hadn’t even known existed. Sliding her fingers down her stomach, she stopped when she touched her cleft.

Wondering what it would feel like to have his fingers dive into her pussy, she slid one finger in.

Someone pounded on her front door and she jerked upright in the tub.

Not expecting anyone, she climbed out carefully, wrapped a towel around her and picked up her cordless phone. With her finger on the emergency speed dial button, she approached the door with caution.

Victoria opened the door slowly, making sure that the chain was still in place. Her jaw dropped when she saw Philip’s large frame filling the hallway. He looked flushed and a bit out of breath.

His blue eyes went to her. “ Victoria , open the door, please. My God, I’m so sorry I left you with him. When I came around the corner it looked like you were fine with him holding you. It wasn’t until Kingston hinted that you might not be okay with Hewitt touching you that I ...are you hurt?”

“I’m fine. You know Willy?”

“Mr. Kingston? Sure, since I was just a boy. He gave me your address.”

Victoria shut the door in his face, and unlatched the chain. When she opened it again, she found Philip walking down the hall slowly. “Philip?”

He stopped and turned slowly to her. “I thought when you shut the door ... I thought you didn’t want to see me.”

“Would you like to come in?”

“Umm, I just wanted to make sure that you were okay. I don’t want to impose. I ...”

“Philip?”

“Yes.”

“Do you want to fuck me or not?”

His eyes widened, as his gaze raked over her. She could feel it burning through her body and knew that he wanted her as much as she wanted him. Smiling to herself, Victoria let the towel open on the side, giving him a small glimpse of what she had to offer.

Philip took a step towards her and the shocked look on his face changed to a feral one. “Yes, I want to make love to you.”

“Then get your butt in here. I don’t like putting on a show for the neighbors.”

* * * *

Philip covered the distance between them quickly, afraid that Victoria would change her mind. The underside of her breast showed through the slit in the towel, and his cock sprang to life. He’d been so worried about her that the hard on he’d been sporting since he’d laid eyes on her had actually taken a few minutes off.

At six foot five inches tall, he towered over her. She made him feel protective, primitive, and manly. He wrapped her in his arms and pulled her chin up. Her brown eyes locked on him and he knew that this woman truly did hold the key to his heart.

Will she crush it when she finds out I haven't been honest with her?

He brought his lips down on hers and savored the sweet taste of her mouth. She was perfect in every way and he wanted to taste all of her, and soon. He moved her back into her apartment, enough to shut the door behind him before dropping to his knees before her.

Victoria gasped as he tore the towel away from her, exposing her glorious body to him. His gaze went to the narrow patch of black curls between her legs. "You've trimmed it to the point that it's barely there."

"You don't like it?" she asked, sounding hurt.

He parted her folds with one hand while reaching around to grab her soft ass cheek with the other. "No, I love it." Her swollen clit was ripe for the picking and he leaned in and let his tongue flicker over it. She smelled so good that he kneaded her ass cheek as he buried his face further into her pussy, licking and sucking on her clit as he went.

Victoria swayed her hips slightly. She rocked her body against his face as she moaned, sending stabs of need throughout him. He had to taste her while she came. There was no choice in the matter. She had him and now he would have her.

He pushed her legs further apart and positioned two fingers near her soaked entrance. "I want to taste your cream as you come on my face."

"Philip, I need you in me now ... please, just take me ... please."

"All in good time, goddess. All in good time." He plunged his fingers into her tight channel and bent lower to lick her faster. Her legs gave out as she screamed his name. Keeping his fingers in her, he used his other arm to guide her gently to the floor. Still finger fucking her, he now had a full view of her pink pussy and knew that if he didn't bury his cock in her soon, he'd die.

Her fingers made their way to his jacket and she worked it off him quickly. He helped her with his t-shirt and drew a sharp breath in when she raked her nails down his abs lightly, purring like a kitten as she went.

It took him a bit longer to get in a position to enter her. His boots and jeans had needed to come off first, and since he wasn't one for underwear, he was all set to go. He placed the mushroom shaped head of his penis near her entrance and looked down at her. She was so beautiful, spread out on the floor, open and willing for him to take her.

He slid in slowly, feeling her body stretching in an attempt to accommodate him. Bending down, he supported his weight on his arms, and went for her lips. The feel of her full lips parting for him as her slit allowed him to fill her drove him over the edge. He drove himself in to the hilt, leaving Victoria clawing at the backs of his arms, and crying out his name.

“Did I hurt you?” He was suddenly concerned that he had caused her pain.

She wrapped her legs around his waist and thrust her hips up at him.

He lost his rhythm then, slamming his body down on hers, grinding her into the floor, and letting out tiny animalistic growls. He wanted to climb through her--force her to be one with him.

“Stop, please stop ... give me a second ... I'm going to come again and

I want it to last....” Her pleas only served to send him into an endless spiral of quick thrusts and long kisses.

Philip managed to slow his pace long enough to feel her pussy clenching down on him, rapidly. His body shook as his balls drew up and he spilled his seed into her. It felt as though his orgasm lasted for hours when it was only seconds. The spurts of semen continued to soak her pussy.

With the amount of come he'd just shot out and considering how intensely he'd just made love to her, he should have been sated. Instead, his cock throbbed back to life, still buried within her, and he moved his hips again.

Victoria's tongue flickered over her lower lip. “Mmm, I could get used to this.”

“That's good, because I'm planning on keeping you.”

“Really? What if I don't want to be kept?”

Philip let out a deep laugh. “ Victoria , I’m a man who is used to getting what he wants.”

She didn’t look scared, not that he’d wanted her to. “What is it ... you want Philip?” she asked as he rammed the length of himself into her repeatedly.

“You.”

“You don’t even know me,” she mused.

“Doesn’t make me love you any less.”

Chapter Four

Victoria shifted in her sleep slightly before jerking awake. She had a natural alarm clock and it never seemed to take the weekend off.

It’ll be taking longer than that now that I’m unemployed.

She didn’t want to dwell on the episode with Hewitt anymore than she had to. No. She wanted to concentrate on Philip, who lay sprawled out on the bed next to her. He snored softly, which after growing up in house with four brothers was nothing. They could shake the floor with their combined sleeping noises.

Victoria laughed softly as she took in the sight of Philip lying next to her. How was it that she could have the worst and best day of her life all on the same day? It amazed even her. Philip seemed too good to be true. He’d all but come right out and said that he loved her last night. She’d wanted to question him about his comment, but feared that she would jinx whatever it was they had.

This was all so unlike her. She didn’t invite men she’d just met in to have sex on her floor. Granted, it was mind-blowing sex on the floor, but still. Plus, at some point in the night they had moved their sexual expedition to the bathroom and then to her bedroom. She’d never met a man who could go so many times in one night and wasn’t sure she could stand doing that every night.

She glanced down at his now sleeping cock and had a wicked thought enter her mind. Sitting up slowly, she positioned her head over his

dormant penis and licked him softly before drawing him into her mouth. Now that he wasn't fully erect, she could take all of him in, and roll him gently around her warm mouth.

Philip's cock grew hard almost instantly and she was left no choice but to use her hands to help steady him. He was too big for her to take all the way into her mouth now, but she intended on pleasing him.

Looking up, she found his blue eyes locked on her. She felt so powerful, sucking on his cock as he laid there. He made her feel beautiful, sexy, and cared for. She pulled her mouth up, almost off his shaft, and licked the tip.

"Ah ... I want you to ride me, and if you do that again, I'll be done before you start."

Victoria laughed as she licked the tip of him once more before moving up to straddle his body. Sucking on him had left his cock glistening and wet, so he slid in with ease as she worked herself onto him.

He felt larger this way and it took a few deep breaths and some soothing caresses from Philip to calm her down enough to accept all of him.

Once she did, she began to move with a steady rhythm.

"That's it baby, ride me," Philip said, reaching up to pull her long hair back from her face. "Do you like that? Do you like the way I feel in you?"

She shook her head yes, unable to get out anything but a strangled cry. He felt so good inside her that she never wanted to get off him.

"Oh..."

"That's it, come for me, Victoria." He pulled her head back and brought it down towards his. "I'm going to fill you with my come now. Are you ready for it?"

"Yes."

She pushed down on him as she felt his cock twitching within her.

Warmth filled her womb and she smiled sheepishly as Philip pulled her into a tight hug. "I love you, Victoria."

She froze, unsure if she'd heard him right. Her chest tightened, partly in anticipation and partly out of fear that whatever it was they had may have just spiraled out of control. There was no room for love in her life. She needed to find a new job and focus on her career, not a man.

“Did you hear me? I just told you that I love you, and I meant it.”

She laid still.

“Damn it, Victoria . I don't go telling every person I meet that....”

Climbing off him quickly, she ran to the bathroom and shut the door.

It was childish, but it was the best she could come up with. How had it gotten to this point? She'd only just met him and here he was confessing his love for her. There had to be some mistake.

She splashed cold water on to her face and opened the medicine cabinet in search of anything that would calm her nerves. She spotted her pink birth control box and pulled it out. Opening it with shaky fingers, she drew in a sharp breath when she looked at the pills within it.

I haven't taken them for over a week! How the hell could I forget something this important?

She already knew the answer to that question. She'd been working long hours, and hadn't had sex in so long that it had slipped her mind. Now, as she backed up, shaking her head slightly, she realized the severity of her situation.

“ Victoria ?” Philip knocked softly on the bathroom door. “Honey, I didn't mean to scare you. I know that I shouldn't have told you how I feel, but I just wanted you to know before you found out that....”

Her eyes widened as the worst care scenario ran through her head.

Grabbing the door handle, she flung it open. “Oh my God, you lied to me, you really are married, aren't you?”

* * * *

Philip was dumbfounded for a moment. He'd been on the verge of telling her that he owned the company she worked at, in addition to several others when she'd thrown the door open, assuming that he'd lied about being married. "What?"

"Are you married?" Her entire body shook and tears moved down her cheeks.

Philip reached for her, but she backed away from him quickly, throwing her hands in the air. He noticed the pink pill container in her hand and registered right away that it was her birth control. She looked at it too, and her hand shook so bad that she dropped it.

He dropped down and scooped it up. Victoria lunged for it and he artfully caught her around the waist, while still keeping the pills out of her reach. "What in the world has you so shaken up?" He asked, popping the container open. It took him a minute to register what had upset her, since he wasn't prone to taking birth control, but from the looks of it, she'd missed a good deal's worth of pills. "Victoria?"

"I would have never ... I can't believe that I, we ... I'm never careless ... just go!" she screamed out, as she pushed at his chest.

He wrapped her tighter in his arms and threw the pills behind him.

"*Shhh*," he whispered, into the top of her head. "Everything will be fine."

She punched him hard in the chest and he almost lost his grip on her.

"Everything will *not* be all right! I hardly know you. I just lost my job and...."

Unable to help himself, he laughed softly. She hit him again. He deserved it so he let it go. "Honey, you didn't lose your job, and I've already told you that I love you. Hell, I was thinking of creative ways to convince you to marry me and spend the rest of your life with me, but seems like this may have done it for me."

"Are you insane? This is not a good thing. Do you understand that there is a very good possibility I might be pregnant now? We had sex like six times!"

Philip did his best not to laugh again. “Nine.”

“Nine what?”

“We made *love* nine times total. Not six.”

“ *Oooo* , you are not helping here, and what do you mean I didn’t lose my job?”

She was not in the right state of mind to listen to his confession right now, and he didn’t want to upset her further. “Listen, why don’t you go in and take a nice warm bath while I run out and pick us up some breakfast?”

She opened her mouth to protest, but he covered it with a kiss first. “I’m not taking no for an answer on this one, Victoria. Go relax and let me take care of you.”

Her shoulders slumped. “Okay, fine. There’s some money in my purse if you need it, *lover-boy*, ” she said wryly.

It warmed his heart that she offered him money, even with the idea that she’d lost her job floating through her head. No woman had ever offered him a thing beside the threat of using him only for his money.

Victoria was different. She was the one he’d been looking for, and if fate were on his side, she’d be his wife and mother of his child.

He waited until he heard the water running before he plucked his cell phone from his jacket pocket and called his personal assistant. There were a few things he wanted ready for tonight and he’d make damn sure the evening went off without a hitch.

Chapter Five

Victoria hung the phone up and looked over at Philip. He sat there with a smug smile on his face. “So, who was on the phone?”

She bit her lower lip as she answered him. “It was Albert P. Ruth’s personal assistant, or at least that’s who the man claimed to be.”

He cocked an eyebrow at her and gave her a dubious smile. “And ...?”

“And he insisted that I come to the company Christmas party tonight.”

“Guess you’re not fired then.”

She looked back at the phone, still unsure if she’d heard the man right. “No, he assured me that my job was secure. He also told me that Mr. Ruth would be sending a car to pick me up.”

“You don’t sound happy about that.”

She snorted. “Why would I be happy about that? It’s bad enough that the entire friggin’ building thinks I’ve been having an affair with Hewitt, now if Ruth sends a car for me they’ll think the same thing. I should really call Luis.”

Philip slid his chair back from the table. “Who’s Luis?” A jealous tone was evident.

“Goofball, Luis is one of my brothers. He’s the one the family calls when they’ve got a problem.”

“Why’s that?”

“He’s a hired hit man.”

Philip spit the orange juice he was sipping. Victoria couldn’t help but laugh. Every thing he did made her smile. She handed him a towel and laughed slightly. “Don’t worry. He’s legitimate. He works for the government. At least most of the time,” she added, just to watch him squirm.

“How many brothers do you have?”

“Four, Luis, Raul, Daniel, and Jaime. Luis is the only hit man though.”

“Good to know,” he said, looking over at her phone. “So, are you going to the party tonight?”

“I’ve got a little too much on my mind right now to care about some company party.”

Philip rose slowly and bent down on one knee before her. Her brow creased as she looked him over for signs of what he was doing. “Philip?”

He reached into his back pocket and pulled out a small black box.

Victoria tried to move away from him. She needed air. The kitchen suddenly felt too small for the two of them.

“Victoria Resa, will you do me the honor of being my wife?”

“What?” she asked, even though she’d heard him the first time.

He flashed her a bad boy grin and pulled her hands into his.

“ Victoria , will you marry me?”

Her mind screamed “no” for a million different reasons, but that’s not what came out of her mouth. “Yes.”

Philip pulled the ring from the box and her heart went to her throat.

“ *Ohmygod* , Philip, take that back this instant. It had to cost a fortune. I can’t wear that on my finger. Take it back. I don’t need a ring to prove that you care for me.”

Something crossed over his face, and she wasn’t sure if she’d hurt his pride or not. “ Victoria , you have no idea what it means to me to hear you say those words to me, but you’re wrong about something. I don’t just care for you. I love you. I never believed in love at first sight, not until you anyway.”

“I know.”

“You know that I didn’t believe in love at first sight or you understand what I’m saying?”

She swallowed back the lump in her throat. “I know what you mean, Philip. I felt it too. The minute I looked at you I knew that I ... I knew that I loved you.”

“Hot damn, woman! I wondered if you’d ever say it to me!” he exclaimed as he shot to his feet, taking her with him. “Oh, here,” he said, sliding the ring onto her finger. It fit perfectly.

“Philip, I can’t accept this. Please, we’ll get something smaller.

What if we’re,” she glanced down at her stomach and back up at him, “expecting a little one?”

“If it’s a little girl, I’ll buy her diamonds too. If it’s a boy I’ll think of something,” he said, with a wink.

She pushed on his chest. “Be serious for a moment please. This is all so fast--too fast. I’d like for you to meet my family and I’d like to meet yours, and ... you know that I have no idea where you live. I don’t even know your phone number. What have I done? This can’t be.” She went to tug the ring off her finger.

He pulled her tightly into his large arms. “I can’t wait to announce this to the world, and to meet your family. Well, everyone in your family except Luis. I’d love to show you my house, *our* house. It’s a *little* bit bigger than your apartment, but if you’re adamant on staying here, we can.”

“Philip, I don’t know what to say.”

“Just say yes and mean it. I want to spend the rest of my life with you, or at least until you’re sick of me.”

“Sick of you? How could I ever get sick of you? You’re full of surprises.”

* * * *

Philip drew back from her at her choice of words. She had no idea how many surprises he had in store for her tonight. He kissed the top of her head and hugged her tight. “I need to run out and take care of a few things.”

“What about the Christmas party? I kind of thought that you might want to come with me.”

She wanted him, and that thought alone was enough to send his heart soaring. “I’ll meet you there. There’s a dress on your bed. I think you’ll find it to your liking and I think you’ll look stunning in it.”

“A dress? What do you think you’re doing spending all this money on me? I’m not used to it, and I’m not very comfortable with it.”

“I want to. It makes me happy.”

“But I’d prefer it if you didn’t. Please?”

He didn't respond to her plea. He had money to spare and he'd see to it that she had the finest of everything, whether she liked it or not. "I'll meet you tonight. I love you."

"I love you too."

Chapter Six

"Mr. Ruth," Nancy from human resources called out to him. He planted a smile on his face and double-checked his watch. Victoria was already thirty minutes late and he decided that if she didn't arrive in the next ten minutes, he'd go looking for her.

"Hi, Nancy, you look lovely as always this evening. What can I do for you?"

She leaned in close to him. "I got a strange phone call from Frank Hewitt this morning at home. I was shocked that he even found my personal number, but more shocked by the threats he made against you and the company."

Philip let out a deep sigh and nodded his head. "Did you report his call to the police?"

She shook her head. "No, I wanted to discuss the matter with you first. He was in line to take over the New York office so I wasn't sure if you wanted the press to catch wind of it or not."

Philip motioned to the young security guard. "Stay alert tonight, please."

The young man nodded. "Kingston called me at home, as well as the rest of the men working and told us that if we should happen to see Mr. Hewitt that we were to contact you immediately ... along with the authorities."

"Did he now?" Philip held back his smile. "Thanks, and thanks for working when you should be enjoying yourself."

The man nodded in appreciation and walked off. Philip looked around the large room they'd used for everything from board meetings to seminars trying to find Victoria. He had just about given up on her when he heard her nervous laugh. He jerked his head around to find her standing there

holding the attention of the entire room. The red dress he'd picked out for her clung to her curves and was open down to almost her ass. She had her hair pulled up, but had left long curls hanging loosely and randomly around her head.

Victoria scanned the room, and looked right at him several times.

She didn't seem to notice him.

How odd?

Philip moved in closer to her. She turned from him and began peeking in the other direction. He tapped her shoulder and she jumped.

"Philip?" Her eyes widened as she looked him over. "You clean up well! Wow, I wasn't expecting you to be in a tux."

"Is it that bad?"

"I like the jeans better, but damn ... a girl could get used to all this."

He took her hand in his and brought it to his lips. He needed to kiss her and wanted to make sure that she still wore his engagement ring. She did. "I love you."

She leaned in close to him, her eyes darting around the room, as she whispered, "I love you too, but umm ... people are staring at us."

"Oh, yes, about that," he said, pulling her close to him. "Are you sure that you love me?"

"Yes."

He looked the room over once and Victoria was right, the entire crowd was staring at them. "Thank you everyone, for joining me to celebrate the holidays. You are what makes our company strong and I hope that you're enjoying yourselves this fine evening. I apologize for not making it to the last two Christmas parties, but I was held up in the German branch for a bit. I'm home for good now and hope to catch up with old friends, and introduce myself to the new faces." He drew in a deep breath and tightened his hold on Victoria's hand. "For those of you who do not know me, I'm the man whose name is stamped on your checks." He held his hand up as they all laughed--everyone except Victoria. She looked up

at him with a puzzled look on her face. “The company letterhead likes to refer to me as Albert P. Ruth, but my friends call me Philip.”

Victoria tried to pull her hand from his, but he held tight to her. “I think that most of you are acquainted with my fiancée, Victoria Resa.”

There was a silence followed closely by whispers before several women began to converge on them. “Oh, Victoria , I had no idea that you were engaged to Philip.”

The people continued to close in, each giving their shocked congratulations. Victoria managed to free herself from his grasp and ran for the doors. “Excuse me,” he said, to the crowd.

Philip ran after her, desperate to explain himself to her. “ Victoria , please!”

He caught sight of her running towards the back staircase. He was about to yell to her again, but stopped when he saw her fly backwards.

Time felt as though it stood still as he saw Frank Hewitt appear above her.

Frank delivered another blow to Victoria and Philip bolted down the hallway towards him, drawing a crowd as he went.

Frank seemed focused only on Victoria . “You bitch! You ran around here thinking you were too good for me ... making me want you every second of every day. You’re a tease. Always dressed sexy and looking at me with those eyes. You’ve been lying to yourself, Vicki! I couldn’t let the men in the boardroom laugh behind my back. I had to let them think you were handing it out to me.” He spat his words at Victoria . “Now, because you wouldn’t just give in and open your legs for me I’ve lost my job! That asshole actually took your side. Can you believe that? He took a little bitch’s side.”

Frank pulled his foot back to kick Victoria and Philip lunged at him.

The weight of his body hitting Frank’s sent them both hurdling through the door to the stairwell, and tumbling down the first flight of stairs.

Shaking his head, as he hit the landing, Philip rolled off Frank and got to his feet. Frank tried to stand up, but Philip bent down and punched him hard in the face. “Don’t ever call my soon-to-wife a bitch again! Got it?”

“Philip!” Victoria screamed from behind him. He turned to look up at her. Tears rolled down her cheeks as she raced towards him. “Are you okay?”

“You’re not mad at me for not telling you that I own the place?” he asked, hopeful that the gathered crowd would keep Victoria from losing her temper.

“No, I’m furious with you for that, but it doesn’t change the way I feel about you. I still love you and I’m still not comfortable with how much you spent on my ring,” she added quickly.

He chuckled as he headed up the stairs to meet her. There was a loud bang, followed closely by a white-hot pain in his shoulder. The stairwell seemed to spin and he reached out to steady himself.

Kingston appeared from behind Victoria and pushed her to the side, his firearm drawn, and aiming straight at Philip. “Get out of the way, boy!”

Philip ducked down as Kingston fired. It was then that he realized that Hewitt had shot him. Victoria reached for him, screaming, and fell down on to the stair next to him. “Philip....”

“I’m fine,” he said, as the darkness swallowed him.

Epilogue

Victoria bit her inner lip to keep from laughing as her father and three of her brothers swarmed Philip. His blue eyes found her and pleaded with her to save him from the onslaught.

“Okay, boys, back up and give the man some room. You don’t want to scare him off from marrying me now, do you?”

All eyes turned to her. Philip reached out with his good arm and touched her father lightly. “Sir, there is nothing in this world that would stop me from marrying your daughter. I love her with all my heart.”

“Nothing, huh? That’s a mighty big promise from a man we hardly know.”

Victoria turned to see her oldest brother, Luis standing in the doorway. His dark eyes narrowed on Philip. She walked over and socked him in the arm. “Knock it off. He’ll be your brother-in-law so get used to it.”

“He’s so ... white.”

“He can’t help it--now go make him feel welcome.”

“Is it true he took a bullet for you?”

Victoria shrugged. “Hewitt confessed to the police that he was aiming at me, so yeah, I guess he did.”

A strong arm wrapped around her waist, and came to rest on her lower stomach. Philip caressed her abdomen tenderly. “And I’d do it again in a heartbeat.”

Luis’ gaze dropped to her stomach and he cocked an eyebrow up.

“Does *Mamá* know?”

Victoria shook her head. “No, and don’t you go telling her. She’ll make me sit in one spot for nine months and *papá* will box Philip’s ears.”

“I’ll take the ear boxing if it means I’ll know that you’re safe and in one spot,” Philip whispered to her.

Luis laughed and put his hand out to Philip. “Welcome to the family *el cuñado* . Take care of my baby sister or I’ll....”

“Luis!”

“Sorry, sis, I just love you and want to make sure that you’re fine.”

“I love her too, Luis, and I can assure you that I will always take care of her, and our child.”

The End

Look for other Resa family stories from Mandy M. Roth and if you would like to read more excerpts from her other works please visit www.mandyroth.com

The Christmas Curse

By

Michelle M. Pillow

Chapter One

Megan Sinclair hated Christmas. When she was four, the first Christmas remembered, she'd broken her arm in two places by falling down a flight of stairs. She'd been waiting for Santa Claus and had to spend the holiday in the hospital where the doctor told her there was, in fact, no Santa Claus. At five, she came down with the chicken pox. It had been so bad that they were in her eyes, her nose, and her throat. At six, her father had left them for his secretary--a story so generic it still stung to think about it even after twenty years.

As soon as she moved out of her mother's house, she'd vowed never to celebrate the Christmas holiday again. What was the point? Christmas was bad luck for her and the way she saw it, it was only a way for stores to make money. It was why she normally kept her New York bookstore open late on Christmas Eve. She made a great profit on last minute holiday shoppers and she had an excuse not to join in any celebrations.

Hearing the bell tinkling on her door, she looked up.

"Take your holiday decorations down already?" an elderly woman asked with a glance over the shop. "It's not even Christmas Eve yet!"

Megan smiled at her. "Never put them up. It's bad luck."

"What do you mean bad luck?" The woman looked appalled by the very idea. Her round features bordered on offended. "Whoever heard of Christmas decorations being bad luck?"

“The last time I hung up decorations I was seventeen,” Megan answered, reaching up to stock a high shelf with Christmas cookbooks.

“The Christmas lights shorted and burnt down half our house and all the presents.”

The woman paused and then began to laugh in a nauseating way that made Megan grit her teeth. “That’s a reason all right. I thought you were going to tell me you were a Pagan. I won’t spend my money in a Pagan store.”

Megan glanced down to her right and saw the row of books on Wicca and witchcraft, but didn’t say a word. She didn’t care what religion a person was, so long as you judged the person on merit. Sighing, she turned back to the cookbooks, waiting for one of them to drop on her head. It had already happened twice.

She couldn’t help being in a bad mood this time of year. It wasn’t as if the best memories of her life that occurred on Christmas day. After she rang up the woman’s purchase, she sighed and moved to watch the snow falling beyond the storefront window. Pretty soon, the street would slow as everyone went home to their families.

Megan’s mother had tried for years to get her to celebrate the holiday.

Every year she called and invited her home for dinner. Every year Megan said no. That was until this year. Her boyfriend Sean had wanted her to agree to go and, like a fool, she’d said yes. Yesterday, he’d broken up with her. Looks like the Christmas curse struck early this year. That’s what she got for trying to celebrate.

* * * *

Megan’s mother and stepfather lived several hours outside of the city in the home where she’d spent most of her teenage years. It was a quiet neighborhood in a quiet town. Her room still carried hints of her past—an old poster of Nirvana on the closet door, a bed with the black and red comforter that screamed of her teenage angst. Seeing it, Megan grinned.

No doubt her mother had put it on the bed just to make her laugh. She really doubted her parents' 'guest room' now done in pale green and yellow pastels regularly sported the somber tastes of a moody teenager.

Throwing her duffel bag on the floor, she sighed as she crossed over the window to watch the gently falling snow. She missed Sean, even if his way of dumping her had been harsh. Who broke up with a note delivered to their favorite restaurant?

She'd only been with Sean for just under a year, but she'd never been happier. There was something about him from the first moment. He made her want to melt into his solid chest and hold on. The winter snow had just thawed, or so she'd thought. She'd been on her way to work. He'd just been getting off. The first thing she remembered was his dark brown eyes looking into hers, piercing through her soul. His mouth curled into a breathtaking smile. She flipped her hair, trying to look sexy. Then, her foot slipped on a slick grate. She'd like to say she fell into his arms and never left them. Unfortunately, she'd fallen onto the cement, knocked his coffee on his favorite T-shirt, and accidentally kicked him in the balls with her flying foot.

"H--hi," was his breathless, suffering groan, as he gripped his injured pride on the ground next to her. People strode by them with hardly a glance.

All she'd managed was a nod as she lay on her back. Her tailbone was broken by the fall and she hadn't been able to sit for a week.

Megan shook her head and chuckled. He'd asked for her number before they even left the sidewalk. Turning from the window, where she saw the outline of a snowman family in the lawn, she crossed over to her duffel bag.

If she was anti-Christmas, her mother, Frieda, was just the other extreme. Frieda and Jeff Truman wore matching red sweaters with obscenely large Christmas trees knitted onto the chest. No doubt her mother made them herself just for the occasion. Even their miniature Chihuahua, Jock, had one. Megan almost felt sorry for the dog.

Tinsel and garland clung tastefully to everything that didn't move.

Christmas music pumped throughout the house, jingling and tingling and so very merry. Bright packages overflowed from beneath the giant tree.

Taking the presents from her bag, Megan gathered them in her arms.

She frowned, seeing the present she'd bought for Sean. A wave of sadness passed over her heart as she turned, leaving the gift in her bag.

Downstairs, her mom was waiting for her on the couch with a big smile. Jeff handed her a glass of champagne, stopping to give her a big bear hug.

"Merry Christmas, kiddo!" he called, happily. "We're so glad you're here!"

"Thanks, dad," Megan answered, returning his big hug. He really was more of a dad to her than her real father.

"Oh, Jeff, she's just so thin!" Frieda fussed. Her blonde hair was sprayed into position, not a hair out of place. Her mother had that same hairstyle since she was a kid. "Megan, honey, don't you eat? Jeff, look at her. Don't you think she's thin?"

Megan just smiled and took a deep drink of the champagne. It was going to be a long night.

Chapter Two

"Didn't you say you were bringing a friend down?" Jeff asked, smiling at her from across the living room. He was a good man and had been a really good father and husband over the years.

"Christmas curse strikes again," came her response.

"Curse?" Jeff chuckled. "Well, I can't blame you for thinking so.

What year did you get the snake again? When you were seven?"

"Nine. Mom bought me a bunny. The pet store messed up and gave me a snake. I hate snakes. The damned thing jumped out of the box and bit me." Megan lifted her glass for a refill before pulling her shirt to the side to show two puckered scars on her neck. "See, right here. Seven is the year Buddy was hit by the car Christmas morning."

"Megan, honey, phone for you!" Frieda called, waving the corded handset at her from the kitchen, where she was putting the finishing touches on her sugar cookies for the neighborhood gift bags.

Megan frowned. Who would be calling her at her parents' house?

Pushing up from the couch, she smiled at her mother as she was handed the phone.

“What are those?” Megan asked, checking out the sugar cookies. She nearly choked. They were strangely shaped blobs that looked suspiciously like turgid male cocks.

“Ornaments,” her mother answered, as if it was obvious. Then, waving to the phone, she grinned in giddy excitement and whispered loudly, “Answer it. It’s a man!”

Megan turned her back before her mother saw her laughing at the ridiculous cookies. “Hello?”

“Hey, babe, I better be the only man calling you.”

Megan froze, feeling as if a truck had run over her. Sean! The sound of his voice gave her chills of desire. Her lips tingled, hearing the laughing tone in his words. He was the best kisser, knowing just how to massage his tongue against hers in slow strokes that he would later mimic with his tight body.

“Listen, Meg, I’m...” The phone cut out and she couldn’t hear the rest.

Numbly, she pulled the phone from her ear and hung up. Why in the world was Sean calling her now? Was he trying to make the wound worse just in time for Christmas?

“That was fast,” Frieda commented.

“Telemarketer,” Megan lied. “They can track you down anywhere.”

Megan left the kitchen, going in search of something a little harder than champagne, as her mother stared after her.

* * * *

Sean frowned into his cellular phone as he lost Megan on the other end. Tossing the phone onto the seat next to him, he gripped the wheel of his dark blue 1949 Mercury. The 'Merc' was his pride and joy, refurbished into an original hotrod with blue and green flames painted on the black exterior. It had leather seats, suicide doors, and the cleanest motor he'd ever come across.

Sean sighed. He didn't know why Megan didn't wait for him before leaving the city. He hoped nothing was wrong. Then, remembering her stupid superstition about Christmas being bad luck, he grew nervous.

Hopefully, she didn't try to ditch him over a make-believe curse.

He remembered the first time he'd seen her, lying on the ground next to him, as they writhed in pain. She'd had the most beautiful eyes he'd ever seen and lips that would make a saint fall from grace. Sean was no saint, in fact far from it, so he'd instantly asked for her number. To his great surprise, she'd given it to him.

Megan was quite the woman--smart, well read, witty. She had an easiness to her manners, an easiness he'd watched disappear as the holiday season came upon them. Oh, and was she damned sexy. Just seeing her walk across the room towards him could make him nearly come in his jeans.

Sean shifted uncomfortably in his seat as he drove faster. Thinking about her wearing the lingerie he'd gotten her for Christmas was giving him a massive hard-on.

She never crowded him. Didn't follow him around like a lovesick puppy or call him with suspicions if she hadn't heard from him all weekend.

In the past, girls assumed he cheated just because he didn't turn in a schedule to them. He'd tried to tell them he was a tattoo artist and artists worked on the weekends if they wanted to make money--long, long hours that sometimes lasted until dawn. And, since he owned the shop, it meant he worked every weekend.

Sean sighed. He didn't believe in curses, let alone a Christmas curse on Megan. And this year, he was going to make sure she stopped believing in it too.

Chapter Three

Megan didn't want to open her eyes. She was drunk, beyond drunk.

Jeff had opened the liquor cabinet and proceeded to make martinis until neither one of them could see straight. Then, feeling like a teenager, she'd tried to hide the fact that she was wasted from her mother. Frieda eyed her suspiciously, until Jeff graciously broke out into a round of Jingle Bells to distract her mother so she could make a clean get away.

Megan was in bed, trying to sleep. She'd been sleeping until something had woken her up. Feeling the stroke of that something working along her calf, she moaned. Lips, warm and wonderful, were touching her leg. Little shivers of anticipation rolled over her. They worked in light caresses under the sheet. Grimacing, she scolded, "Jock, stop it."

Under the sheet, Sean froze. Jock? Who in the hell was Jock?

Megan swept her leg across the bed in a long swoop and pushed him off the side. He landed with a thump, hurting his tailbone on the fall. Then, trying to sit up, he banged his head on the edge of the night stand.

"Shit!" He cried out in pain, cradling his skull as he lay on the floor.

"Stupid dog," Megan mumbled. She turned on her side.

Sean tried to sit up more cautiously. The door opened and he froze.

"Megan, honey, are you all right?"

Sean peered under the bed and saw two fluffy pink slippers. He concluded that it was Megan's mother. He'd never met the woman and didn't think now was a good time to hop up for an introduction. Looking down over his trim body, he saw the bugle of his arousal pushing up from his boxer shorts. Almost laughing, he could just imagine the woman's horror as she went to shake his extended 'hand'. Nope, not exactly the first impression he wanted to make.

Megan didn't answer and her mother shut the door. Sean lay on the floor for a long moment until he was sure the coast was clear. It wasn't lost on him that he was in his thirties, sneaking into his girlfriend's bedroom for a little late night action, and hiding from her parents. Megan was often asleep when he got off work and had never minded his little wake-ups before. In fact she claimed to enjoy it immensely. She said it mixed with her dreams of him.

Crawling back onto the bed, he drew his half-naked body next to hers.

He dug his hands beneath the sheets, finding the warm flesh of her stomach beneath her T-shirt. Megan was the type of woman who could make anything look sexy. A light moan left her, prompting him to begin licking and nibbling at her neck.

“Mmmm, Sean,” she moaned in approval, beginning to squirm beneath his touch.

Venturing up, he knew her breasts would be naked and waiting for him. Finding the small globe, he massaged it beneath his palm, circling the nipple with his thumb until it was a hard bud. She worked her legs restlessly against his thighs, hooking around him as she naturally angled her body towards his.

His heavy cock spasmed as her leg worked up against it. He glided his hands boldly down, over her flat stomach to dip between her thighs. He found her wet, drenched with cream, and so hot it felt as if his fingers melted. Megan was always wet and ready for him. Knowing she liked sex as much as he did was intoxicating and he moved his mouth to claim hers.

She lazily returned his kiss, dipping her tongue deep inside his mouth so he could suck it. Little whimpers left her throat, begging him to continue. She glided her hands over the hard muscles of his arms, along the folds of his chest to play with his small nipples.

“Ah, Sean, yes,” she said airily. She pressed her fingers lightly to his shoulders and he grinned against her mouth, knowing what she wanted.

Sean kissed a trail over her jaw, down along her long neck to her collarbone. He worshipped her with his tender lips. Lifting up her shirt, he found her naked breasts arching for his attention. Lightly, he flicked his tongue over them, teasing them until Megan writhed and squirmed for more.

He dragged his tongue over her stomach, detouring to her navel, as he reached for her hips. With a jerk, her pajama pants came off and he pulled them out of his way.

Instantly, the sweet smell of her arousal hit him. His mouth watered, wanting to taste her delicious cream. Her thighs parted in natural invitation and he couldn't resist. Adjusting her thighs over his shoulders,

his hot mouth latched onto her awaiting clit. He worked his tongue, pressing it along the sensitive flesh of her folds, parting her, drinking from her. She was so hot and he couldn't keep his tongue from dipping inside her tight passage to drink her up.

When Megan began to moan louder, he grinned and instantly shot up along her softer body to cover her mouth with his. Murmuring along her lips, he whispered, "Shhh, Meg, your parents."

Her answer was a soft, disarming giggle. "Mm, Sean, don't stop."

Sean's mouth was drawn hard upon hers at the sound of his name on her lips. Her hips bucked, rubbing her moist slit along his hard stomach in invitation. His cock was full, wanting to explode at that very moment.

Rising up, he pulled his boxers down just enough to guide his body to hers.

Soft pants mingled between them. Her cream coaxed him inside, helping his body to glide as he pried her open.

Megan whimpered, caught in the all too real haze of her drunken dreams. It was so real. She felt Sean, smelled him, tasted herself on him.

She wound her hands into his short dark hair, the locks so silky and smooth.

She urged him on, not caring if it wasn't real. She wished it to be real, wanted it desperately.

Her heart ached even as the pleasure built inside her body. She pulled his mouth to hers, loving his taste. He thrust harder, faster, deeper, answering her body's silent cry for more. She trembled, panted, moaned.

Tension built in her hips and she knew she was close. Sean lifted her knee, angling her just as she liked, putting the perfect amount of pressure on her clit as he worked in and out. It was too much. Suddenly, she exploded, trembling with her hard climax. Her tight passage squeezed him hard, milking the hot seed from his cock as it clenched and unclenched in earthshaking tremors.

"Sean," she whispered, almost mournful. Her hands dropped down beside her head, landing in her hair. Almost instantly, her mind went blank.

Sean gasped for breath. No matter how often they came together, she still took his breath away. Lifting up, his body still inside hers, he moved to nuzzle her temple. A light snore sounded from between her lips and she didn't move.

“Meg?” Sean asked. “Megan, honey?”

Footsteps sounded outside the hall and a woman's voice softly called,

“Megan?”

Sean's eyes rounded in panic, as he pulled the covers up over Megan's body. Lying atop of a gorgeous but naked Megan was the last place he wanted her mother to meet him. He jumped from the bed, stumbling as he grabbed his clothes off the dark bedroom floor. Looking around, he opened the closet. It was full of bolts of material and plastic containers. The footsteps got closer. He panicked, deciding to leave the way he came. Hopping to the window as he yanked on his jeans, he pulled it open and climbed out into the cold winter night. As he pulled the window closed, the bedroom door opened.

He crouched against the white siding, trying to keep his bare feet from slipping in the snow on the roof. Megan's room was on the second story and he'd had to scale the side just to find it.

“Brrrr, its cold in here,” he heard Megan's mother to say. “I don't know how you can sleep with the window open in winter.”

Closing his eyes, Sean heard the window hit all the way shut and the latch turn, locking him out.

“Shit!” Leaning over, he tried to look in. The curtains were drawn and he couldn't see inside. He waited, hoping Megan would come and get him. She didn't.

He slipped his t-shirt over his head, frowning as he realized he'd grabbed Megan's shirt from the floor instead of his own. His fingers shook as he tried to open the window. His bare feet slipped on the roof and he lost his footing. Sliding down the slight incline, Sean managed to catch himself on the gutter.

It was in the middle of the night and he was swaying back and forth on the gutters of his girlfriend's parents' house, half dressed, in the dead of winter. Looking down, he frowned to see the bushes far beneath him. By

sure will alone, he let go. His arms and legs flailed in the air. This was really going to hurt!

Chapter Four

Megan awoke with a massive headache. She moved her legs restlessly on the bed and frowned. Her pajama bottoms were down by her ankles, a pant leg hooked onto one foot. Had she been so drunk she'd fallen into bed without even dressing? Feeling her head pound, she knew it was entirely possible.

"Sean," she mumbled, feeling her dream anew in the chilly stillness of morning. She started up at the ceiling, feeling sorry for herself. It was Christmas Eve--just one more day until she was home free for another year.

With the ache in her heart, she didn't see how things could get any worse.

Things did get worse. Not exactly 'curse' worse, but worse nonetheless. Frieda gleefully informed her daughter she'd made arrangements to have them sing with the Christmas choir in the holiday parade. Obviously, her mother thought being on a float in the middle of town was therapeutic. To a hung over Megan, it was just plain cruel.

She sarcastically chuckled to herself, in a bad mood. Maybe she'd get lucky and the float would crash. That would put her out of her misery.

"Oh, look! One of the neighbor kids was out making snow angels!"

Frieda exclaimed, pointing out her kitchen window. Megan glanced. It was right below her bedroom window. There were tracks in the snow and a large, crushed spot but she saw no angel.

"How nice!" Frieda gushed. "Did you see anyone, Megan?"

"No," she said.

"Let's go!" Jeff called.

Soon she was sitting in the back seat of her parents' Town Car.

Megan closed her eyes as Jeff backed out of the garage. It was going to be a very long day.

* * * *

Sean woke up when he heard a car engine and lifted his head from the steering wheel to look around. After falling from the second story, he'd scrambled his way back to his car and spent the night huddled in the front seat. Megan's face pressed close to the glass in the back seat. Her eyes were closed and he scrambled to roll down the window to get her attention.

The car took off before he could call out to her. Sean hurried to follow them, chasing them the short distance it took to get down town.

Parking was nearly impossible and he had to stop nearly a block past the Trumans' car.

He jumped out and tucked his coat around his shoulders, hiding the fact he wore Megan's pink girlie shirt with a fluffy kitten on the front brandishing his claws. Cursing because he hadn't taken the time to change the night before, he locked his door, and moved through the gathering crowd to find Megan.

When he finally caught up to her, she was standing under a long tent.

He smiled. She looked tired, but so very beautiful. Pushing through the crowd, he called, "Megan!"

She looked around at the sound of her name.

"Megan!" He called louder. Finally, her eyes turned to his and her face paled slightly. Sean's smile fell. She didn't look happy.

"What are you doing here, Sean?" she asked. Her parents looked at him questioningly. A lady, dressed like Ms. Claus, moved closer, her head angling to hear what was going on.

"Meg, I..." he began, blinking in light of her hostility. She glanced around before moving to push towards him.

Under her breath, she asked, "Are you here to rub it in? Okay, you broke up with me, fine. Now, go away. If you've come to get the stuff you left

at my apartment, call me when I get back to the city. I'll be happy to throw it out the window for you. Now go away."

"Broke up? Meg--?" he tried.

"Mrs. Witherton," Megan called sweetly, but the almost vindictive light in her eyes struck him as odd. "Look, I found you a replacement elf.

Sean here has never been in a Christmas parade before."

Mrs. Witherton, a large woman covered in red, was Mrs. Claus. Her eyes rounded to see the tall, handsome man, volunteering for the job.

Clapping, she trilled, "Oh, wonderful, Megan! You've saved the parade.

When Mr. Turner called and said he had the flu, I was sure we'd never find a replacement ..."

Sean opened his mouth, trying to get in a word, but the bubbly Mrs. Witherton didn't seem to stop for breath. He turned to Megan. She frowned at him and turned her back. The woman grabbed his coat and yanked it off his shoulder. He'd forgotten about the pink kitten shirt until several of the passersby stopped to laugh. Almost self-consciously, he covered his exposed midsection.

"Well," Mrs. Witherton chuckled. She took in his tattoos. "Aren't you just the most colorful elf we've ever had? My son got a tattoo of black stuff around his arm. I hate it. I don't know what you guys see in those things. Though, I did think I'd like a small butterfly or something small on my ankle, but my husband's the mayor and I don't think he'd approve...."

Sean had no choice as Mrs. Claus grabbed his arm and yanked him towards the makeshift dressing room. With a heavy push, she urged him inside.

"Suit up, my little elf, let's not keep the children waiting!"

* * * *

Megan's heart hammered nervously in her chest. What was Sean doing in her hometown? Had he come to apologize to her? Get back together? She had to admit that if he'd come to reconcile, she'd really consider it. When the waiter first handed her the note, she'd thought it was a mistake. But, after reading the message, which was written on the colorful tattoo shop stationary he'd designed himself, ten times and then proceeding to wait alone at her table for two hours, she'd known it was true.

However, being as she was cursed this time of year, she didn't dare jinx a relationship by getting back with Sean over the holiday season. The last relationship she'd started during the holidays had ended with her boyfriend in the arms of another man. She'd been sixteen and he was the high school football halfback.

The only safe Christmas was the one she didn't celebrate, as was proven by her track record. Every year she worked and played Scrooge, nothing happened. Looking around at the choir lined up around her on the parade float, she frowned, knowing she was just begging the fates for trouble. She couldn't get more Christmas than this.

Chapter Five

Sean did not want to leave the dressing room. But, as Mrs. Witherton insisted he come out or she'd be more than happy to come in and get him, he had no choice. Clad in Christmas green tights and a matching tunic that jingled when he walked, the big, bad tattoo artist was forced to stand in the middle of the main float. Santa, the town's mayor, and his wife had the throne of honor while he was handed a large red sack to throw candy to the children.

After the first block of being pulled behind an old ford pickup, Sean was receiving whistles of appreciation from the crowd. Never one to give up an opportunity to have some fun he made the best of it, flexed his arms for the women, and loaded the children down with sweets. Even the men were busy laughing at his display. At the end of the parade, Mrs. Witherton pinched his ass and gave him a wink as she handed him his coat from beneath her chair.

Unfortunately for him, the parade floats were being directed away from the makeshift tent they'd started at. Sean was forced to walk through town dressed as an elf. His black coat couldn't hide the fact that he was a grown man wearing bright green tights and bells on his shoes.

Slipping past Santa and Mrs. Claus, he hurried to find Megan. She'd taken off her choir robe and was walking down Main Street with her parents. Children blocked his way in their excitement, begging for more candy. Sean merely shrugged, directed them to Santa in the crowd behind him, and patted their heads as he tried to work his way past.

* * * *

“Meg!”

Megan flinched and tried to walk faster, pretending not to hear Sean's voice in the crowd. She'd thought sending him with Mrs. Witherton would've run him back to New York screaming. Taking her mother's arm, she tried to make her walk faster, asking, “So, mom, what's planned for dinner? I'm starving!”

Frieda, always pleased to feed anyone who'd eat, grinned. “Oh, good, you're way too thin. I've got a turkey started for tonight, but thought we could have--”

“Megan Sinclair! Stop! Please!”

Megan closed her eyes. Her mother stopped walking and was turning around. Sean appeared before them, breathless and red cheeked. Oh, but he was handsome. Why was it every time she saw him her heart fluttered in her chest? She was like an awkward schoolgirl standing before the Prom King getting asked for a dance.

Sometimes, when she saw his gorgeous body and handsome, chiseled face, she thought she was dreaming. At first his tattoos had put her off, but they were part of his character and she'd grown to love them. The artwork was beautiful and she'd always been a firm believer in self-expression.

Besides, he really was the nicest man she'd ever met.

Megan bit her lip nervously. “Sean--”

“Oh, Sean, I'm so sorry we didn't have a chance to introduce ourselves,” Frieda began. “I'm Frieda, Megan's mother, and this is her father, Jeff.”

“Nice to meet you,” Sean answered, grinning good-naturedly at them as he shook their hands.

Megan turned away from his smile. It was a mistake. She looked at his muscled legs beneath the tights and her body sparked to life. There was something wickedly erotic about a man’s body in skin tight material. Her fingers flexed and she shoved them into her pockets. The thoughts that filtered through her head were definitely not in the traditional spirit of Christmas. Unless wanting to play ‘ride the naughty elf’ counted as a tradition.

“So, Sean,” Frieda began, “I do hope you’re coming to the house.

I’ve made up the extra guest bedroom for you. Megan’s told us so much about you.”

Megan balked. She’d done no such thing. Of course she’d mentioned him to her mother on the phone, but she’d never ‘told so much’ about him.

“Did she?” Sean’s lip curled up, so sexy in its natural charm.

“Mom,” Megan broke in. Today really was the first time she’d stood face to face with him since he’d broken up with her and it was killing her not to reach out and grab his hand in hers. Swallowing nervously, she said, “I think Sean has to get back to the--”

“No, not at all. I’d love to stay,” Sean answered, his eyes lighting with a strange challenge.

“Wonderful!” Frieda announced. “Megan, honey, why don’t you go with your young man here and show him how to get to the house? We’ll see you at home.”

Megan watched as her parents walked off. Turning to Sean, she frowned. “What are you doing here?”

“You invited me,” he answered, confusion passing over his features.

“That was before.”

“Before what?” Sean placed his hands on his hips and looked down at her. Hearing children nearby, they both turned.

“Where’d you park? This isn’t the place to talk about this.” Megan looked up at him expectantly.

“Not until you kiss me,” Sean demanded.

“Sean--”

“Nope, I don’t want to hear another word. Now, greet me like a proper girlfriend and slip me some tongue and try to cop a feel.” Sean grinned.

Megan’s heart skipped again. Damn him! He was just so devilishly handsome.

She couldn’t move as his hand lifted to touch her face. Warm fingers skimmed down her neck, curling around her nape to tangle into the blonde strands of her hair. His lips parted and she didn’t dare breathe. Her lids grew heavy as the strokes of his fingers sent shivers down her spine. Sean always knew how to make her melt.

It was just chilly enough that the white puffs of their breath mingled before their mouths. His tongue met her before his lips did. It slid smoothly between her teeth, rolling into her mouth with liquid warmth. It was a strange contrast to the cool chill of winter on his lips. Instantly, her body responded. Her nipples rose to press her shirt beneath the jacket. A sharp agony hit her between the thighs, soaking her with her body’s natural cream.

Megan moaned. Her arms lifted to coil around his neck. In the moment of his perfect kiss, nothing else mattered. She fell against his hard length and his arousal pressed her beneath the edge of his coat. Knowing he wanted her as desperately as she wanted him did something wicked to her senses. If he didn’t stop soon, Santa’s little helper was going to get the ride of his elfin life.

“Hey, do you know Santa for real?”

Megan gasped and took her mouth from his. Turning to look down, she saw a four year old girl with blonde ringlet curls. Her wide eyes gazed up at Sean. Megan pulled back, her cheeks red more from embarrassment than from the cold.

“Yes, I do,” Sean announced. Leaning over he, tweaked her nose.

“And he said you’d better not try and stay up too late this year waiting for him.”

The girl giggled. Megan felt tears come to her eyes. The child's mother smiled gratefully and ushered the child away.

"Kids are great, aren't they?" he asked, his voice absent. "I wish I could still believe in Santa. Good thing there's really an Easter Bunny though, or I'd be crushed."

Sean chuckled and made a move to wrap his arms around her. Megan smiled weakly. It was a pathetic effort and she knew it. Slowly, she backed away from him.

"What's up with you, Meg?" Sean demanded, worry crossing his brow. "You're acting strange. Is this about your curse nonsense?"

"It's not nonsense," she defended. "I am cursed."

"Just because a car ran over your foot when you were twelve?" Sean shook his head in disbelief.

"Thirteen. Twelve is when Tommy Butcher shaved a strip out of my head with his father's clippers thinking to give me a Mohawk." Megan shook her head. "It's not important."

"Megan, honey, please. Don't let this come between us," Sean begged.

"Just because you pretend something didn't happen, doesn't make it go away, Sean." Megan's lips still stung from his kiss. Oh, did he taste good! "Your being here today doesn't change what you've done."

"What I've done? Are you talking about last night?"

"Last night?" Megan repeated, shaking her head. "I'm talking about you sending me that note. I'm talking about you ... you know what. Never mind. We're going to be late and I see more kids coming. Let's just go."

Chapter Six

The Merc cruised through the back streets to avoid after parade traffic, as Megan directed Sean to her parents' house. Suddenly, the car turned into a wooded area, no longer following her directions. Sean pulled over and turned to look at her.

“You know, I don’t know what’s put you in such a sour mood, but we need to talk.” His eyes dipped over her frame.

“There’s nothing to talk about,” Megan defended.

“I disagree.” Sean sighed, but kept the engine running. Heat blew out of the dash, warming them. He unbuttoned his coat and pulled it off his broad shoulders. Megan couldn’t help her small laugh as she saw his costume. “What?”

“I can’t believe you actually paraded through town as an elf.” She laughed harder. It was just too funny. The big, bad, sexy man dressed up as Santa’s little helper. Her eyes roamed over the tight outfit. It was obviously made to fit a smaller man and pulled tight to his frame.

“Hey, I saved Christmas, didn’t I?” He almost looked offended as he moved to reach into the back seat. Bending over, he reached for his bag.

Megan’s laughter died. The costume molded to his thick legs. The effects of his kiss still lingered within her and before she could stop herself, she lifted her hand to glide over the taut muscles of his perfect ass. The cheeks flexed beneath her palm, indented in just the right spot as they moved. She ran her fingers around to the inside of his thighs from behind, reaching up to stroke him. Skimming past his balls, she found the hard indentation of his cock. A light groan left his lips as she caressed his growing erection through the tight green material.

“Weren’t you just fighting with me or something?” he asked, pushing his hips back to give her better access.

“Mmm,” Megan answered. Her body was on fire. “Consider this a temporary truce.”

“Ah,” he groaned when she gripped him tightly.

“I’ve always wanted to have my way with you in this car,” Megan admitted, almost giddy. “Though, I must admit, you weren’t wearing this outfit.”

Megan pulled up in her seat, and moved to dip her hands up into his tunic, playing with the hard stomach she found. Grabbing his waistband, she pulled the stretchy material down off his hips, taking his underwear with it.

“What do you say?” Megan gasped, leaning over to bite lightly at a hard ass cheek. “Want to try and inject me with a little of your Christmas spirit?”

“Damn, it’s sexy when you talk like that.” Sean said, moving to sit back in his seat. Megan chuckled naughtily in response.

His long, thick cock stood straight up from his lap and she leaned over to take it into her mouth before he’d even worked the costume off his legs. She flicked her tongue back and forth over the mushroomed head before nibbling it with her teeth. His hips bucked in approval.

“Ah, please,” he begged after she’d tortured him thoroughly. They’d played this game before and he knew she’d only continue when he asked for it very nicely. “Please, suck it, baby. Suck my cock for me. Ah, yeah, just like that. Fuck!”

Adjusting her hips, she came up on all fours for better leverage.

Rolling her tongue over the solid length, she moaned in delight to taste him.

She alternated between sucking and blowing as her head bobbed over his shaft. He was too much for her to take completely into her mouth, so she used her hands to stroke the extra length, letting her long fingers brush along his balls as she worked up and down.

“Oh, damn, Meg,” Sean said. “Your mouth feels so good--hot and wet.”

She moaned in response, working her lips faster. Sean made primitive noises in the back of his throat. He curved his hand around, running over her back. When he couldn’t reach her ass, he angled his hand to caress her breasts.

Megan felt him begin to tighten beneath her and she pulled her mouth off before he could come. Sitting up, she wiggled out of her pants. Sean tried to help her, but his hands only got in the way as he fumbled beneath her shirt to release her breasts from her bra.

“Are you wearing granny panties?” Sean asked, chuckling.

“Shut it,” Megan said, grinning to soften the effect. “My mother insists on doing my laundry when I stay with her and I couldn’t exactly bring the crotchless thongs.”

“Come here,” he commanded lightly, moaning. Megan eagerly straddled his hips. It was tight in the car, but Sean moved his seat back to give her room. Taking her naked hips, he drew her forward to rub his hard shaft along her moist slit. Groaning, he told her, “Tell me how you’re going to fuck me.”

“What? Santa’s little helper likes it when I talk dirty to him?” Megan purred. When she’d first met him, she’d been embarrassed to say such things during sex. But, seeing how her wicked words turned him on, she soon learned the joy of a little dirty talk. “He wants to feel my soaked pussy stroking him?”

“Shit, yeah, baby,” Sean grinned, his tone a low growl.

“Have you been a good boy this year?” Megan asked, nearly purring.

“Does Santa’s little helper deserve to have my wet pussy on him?”

“Oh, yeah, I’ve been good. Real good.” Sean pulled her down hard, impaling her hot, tight passage on his cock. “Ah! Fuck, yeah! Santa’s helper wants you to ride his cock hard and deep.”

Megan gasped as he filled her up. He slid his hands under her shirt and freed her breasts and pinched, pinching her sensitive nipples. She moved, taking his full length in and out as she worked their bodies together in her own rhythm. Sean moaned in approval, pulling her shirt over her head and out of his way. He tossed it behind him and pulled the cups of her bra down, so he could suck a ripe breast deep into his mouth.

The tension built between her thighs until she was slamming her hips hard onto him, rotating them in small circles, as she moved faster and harder. She pushed him deeper until his thick cock was pounding her core.

His mouth did wonderful things to her breasts and she nearly screamed as she fought for release.

His hips rose to meet hers. Their heavy breath mingled in the car, fogging up the windows. Megan didn’t care.

“Oh, you feel so good, baby,” Sean said. “You’re so damned sexy. I love fucking you.”

Suddenly, she exploded, tensing as she came so hard her whole body shook. Sean's body answered her call, releasing his seed into her as her tight passage clamped down hard onto him. Their yells of pleasure echoed beyond the running car.

"Ah hell, Meg, the things you do to a man," Sean said in masculine approval. "I don't think I'll ever get tired of sleeping with you."

Megan tensed, wondering at his words. They were broken up, weren't they? But, Sean wasn't acting like they were. What was going on?

Too dazed to ask the right questions, she climbed off his lap and reached for her pants.

"Meg?"

"We've got to hurry. My mom's cooking dinner and she'll send out my dad to look for us if we don't get back." Megan buttoned her fly and looked at him expectantly.

"I feel like a teenager," he chuckled. He turned to grab his bag from the back.

Megan's body jerked with excitement to see his naked ass and she forced her eyes away as he got dressed. The last thing she wanted at that moment was to go to a family dinner and pretend that she wouldn't rather force Sean under the table to suck her clit. Banishing the naughty thoughts from her head, Megan worked on latching her bra.

Chapter Seven

Sean pulled the car into the front drive. They'd been quiet on the ride home. Turning off the engine, he turned to her. "What's this all about, Meg? Are you mad at me for leaving you last night? Would you rather I stayed with you? I didn't want to put you in an awkward position with your parents. It is their house."

"Last night? You mean?" Megan blushed. "That wasn't a dream?"

Sean chuckled. "I must have done something wrong if you forgot it already. Don't worry. As soon as I get you alone, I'll make it up to you. I promise. If you want, I'll let you boss me around again."

Megan blushed further. She found it funny how she could talk dirty during the heat of the moment and then blush like a virgin the next. But, she couldn't seem to help it.

"First though, I have to know," Sean said. "Why'd you leave the city without me?"

"Sean, your note made it pretty clear you didn't want anything to do with me." Megan felt tears threaten and moved to pull the handle.

"What note? I don't know what you're talking about."

Megan stopped to look at him. "The note you sent me when we were supposed to meet at the restaurant. It said you weren't coming and that it was over. It said never to speak to you again. When you didn't show up, I knew it wasn't a prank."

"I didn't come because I had to go to the airport to pick up our guest artist from Germany for the shop. He got an earlier flight and kind of sprung it on us. Problem was I had to drive to Chicago to pick him up. The note I sent said I'd come over to see you after I got him settled. I came over as soon as I got back, but you were already gone."

"No, the note you sent was to break up with me. That girl from your shop with the pink hair delivered it."

Sean's face fell. "Sam delivered it?"

Megan nodded.

"Damn Rich, I told him to do it himself." Sean sighed. "Sam came on to too many of the customers and I had to let her go. Rich must have caught her while she was heading out the door. I didn't send that note, Meg. You should know me better than that. I'd never do something that heartless."

"I," Megan's lips trembled. "I didn't want to believe it. But, when you didn't show and didn't call..."

Her words broke off with a choked sob.

"Oh, baby, I'm so sorry." Sean pulled her over into her arms. "I did try calling, but since you don't have an answering machine I couldn't leave you a message. If I see Sam again, I'll wring her vindictive little neck. Promise."

Sean kissed her trembling mouth before pulling back. Megan sniffed and gave him a bright smile. He stroked her cheek.

“So, we good?”

Megan nodded. “Yeah, we’re good.”

They got out of the car and headed towards the house. Sean reached over and pulled her under his arm, staking his obvious claim to her. His eyes lit with mischief, as he said, “So, if that little display back in the woods is how you act when I break up with you, I just might have to break up with you every night.”

Megan hit his arm. Then, stiffening, she pulled back. “Oh, no.”

“What?”

“The curse. We shouldn’t have gotten back together until after tomorrow.”

“We were never apart,” Sean defended. “You really have to let this curse thing go, Meg.”

“You don’t understand. Every year I’ve done anything to celebrate

Christmas, something bad has happened. This year I rode on the float and sang Christmas carols.” Her eyes rounded to look at him, worried. “We’re doomed for sure.”

* * * *

“Does your mother make adult novelties?” Sean whispered seriously, holding up the sugar cookie Frieda had given him for dessert. They’d just had Christmas dinner--a feast of turkey, potatoes, rolls, and every side dish imaginable. Since Megan and Sean had gotten home late from the parade, they’d missed lunch. Instead, they had a quick snack before going to shower--separately--and to dress for the nice dinner that Frieda planned.

Hearing his words, Megan choked on her wine. She began to cough, as Sean leaned over to hit her back.

“Megan? Honey? Are you all right?” Frieda called from the kitchen.

“Yes, mom!” Megan turned to Sean, trying not to chuckle. So they couldn’t be overheard, she answered, “They’re ornaments.”

“They kind of look like....”

Megan leaned over and bit off the tip. Sean frowned as she made a great show of chewing.

“That’s just not right,” he said, handing her the rest of the cookie.

Megan flicked her tongue seductively over the frosting. Sean shook his head. “No, too late. The damage is done. Poor guy never had a chance.”

“What are you two laughing about?” Frieda asked, coming into the living room. She smiled, taking a seat across from them.

“Nothing,” Megan mumbled. Sean leaned back, draping his arm about Megan’s shoulders.

“I was just telling your daughter how silly her Christmas curse was,” Sean said.

“Well, you can’t blame her for thinking that,” Frieda said, glancing up as Jeff joined them. “She had the darnedest luck growing up.”

“You call snake bites and a smashed hand darnedest luck?” Megan asked.

“Smashed hand?” Sean inquired, turning to nuzzle her temple with his nose.

“Eight, locked car door and lost keys,” Megan explained.

“But your journal in the washer? That’s hardly tragic,” Frieda chuckled.

“It is when you’re ten and just finished your first written masterpiece.”

“Enough,” Sean told her. Frieda nodded in agreement. “We are going to celebrate Christmas and I’ll prove to you that there is no curse upon your head.”

“You have your work cut out for you,” Megan grumbled, uncertain.

“I look forward to a good challenge,” he answered.

* * * *

That night, long after the house had stilled, Sean sneaked into Megan’s bedroom. Crawling into her bed, neither one of them spoke as he began undressing her. When he had her naked, he grinned and began the long journey over her flesh, kissing and biting a hot trail of desire over her form. His lips found her heated moist center and he drank eagerly of her warm cream, rolling it on his tongue as he brought her near climax.

Afraid the bed would squeak, Megan threw the thick black comforter on the floor and crawled down on her hands and knees. Sean’s eyes filled with excitement as he slowly sank to his knees. She crawled up to him and kissed his erection, all the while rubbing her hand over his glorious flesh.

Unable to wait any longer and desperate to feel his cock inside her, she turned around on all fours. Wiggling her ass in the air, she offered her body to him. Sean breathed heavily, grabbing her hips as he pulled her tight body onto his waiting shaft. He thrust long and slow within her, delving deep into her womb. The tension built, swimming violently in their blood.

With earth shattering force, they met their trembling climax.

Afterwards, Sean held her close, nestled next to his beating heart.

Megan whimpered, loving the feel of him. She’d been so scared when she’d thought he’d broken it off with her. Now, having him with her like this, she felt complete.

Chapter Eight

Sean looked up from the couch as Megan came down the stairs. Man, she was gorgeous, even ruffled and sleepy. Her hand fluttered before her mouth as she yawned. Seeing him, she smiled. It took his breath away.

He'd wanted to stay in her room with her, but respected her enough to go back to the guest room so he didn't embarrass her in front of her parents.

"Decide to sleep in?" Frieda called from the kitchen, with only a touch of scolding in her voice. "We've all been up for an hour!"

Megan blinked and looked at the clock. It was eight o'clock. She'd hardly consider that sleeping in. "Do I smell something burning?"

"Burn--what?!" Frieda yelled, panic in her voice.

"That wasn't very nice," Sean scolded, smiling.

Megan shrugged and leaned over the back of the couch to give him a brief kiss. "I missed you this morning."

"Did you now?" Sean flicked his tongue over her mouth.

Hearing footsteps, she stood. "Morning, Dad."

"Here, kiddo, you look like you could use this coffee." Jeff handed her a mug. "I promise I've checked all the gifts this year. There are no live animals, no dead animals, and no fruitcakes."

Sean chuckled. Megan's brow lifted, and said, "Laugh at me all you want, but if this house falls on your head or if we get a freak tornado I'm blaming all of you."

"Is everyone ready for presents?" Frieda called. "Sean, honey, be a dear and pass them out would you? I've arranged them in piles."

Sean winked at Megan as she came around to sit on the couch.

Getting up, he obligingly handed out the gifts, even finding several for himself. When they were all passed out, Frieda announced that they could open them.

Megan chuckled. Her parents had gotten him socks and a Christmas sweater. She laughed as he put it on. However, as she unwrapped her own bright red Christmas sweater, her laughter faded.

"Put it on!" Frieda said in excitement, as she slipped a matching one over her head. She glanced at Jeff and he held up his and winked. Megan slid it over her head. It clashed with her pajama pants.

“Oh, look,” she mumbled. “We all match.”

“You look so sexy in that,” Sean whispered in her ear.

Megan rolled her eyes about to respond when her mother called, “Oh, Jeff, look! Sean brought us something!”

Megan looked at him in surprise. She pushed her small pile of new clothes, various beauty products, and kitchenware that her mother had gotten for her aside. Sean winked.

“I wonder what it is,” Frieda paused in her unwrapping to grin.

Slowly she lifted the lid to the box. Her smile wavered. “Oh.”

Sean leaned forward, glancing at Megan. His smile fell in concern.

“Well,” Frieda swallowed, slowly holding up silky lingerie from the box. “It certainly is beautiful.”

Sean paled. Megan’s eyes got round. Her mouth fell open as her mom held up a very sexy, very crotchless teddy.

“Oh,” Jeff broke in, clearing his throat. He reached over and swiped it from her hands. “Yeah, that’s from me. I think the tags on the boxes must’ve got messed up.”

“Jeff!” Frieda whispered, giggling in surprise. “Well.”

Sean blinked in confusion. Megan watched as Jeff leaned over into her pile and sneakily tore a tag off a present only to hand it to her. “This is the one I saw you bring in, wasn’t it, Sean?”

Sean nodded.

“Oh, well, I guess I got too excited that I messed up the cards.”

Frieda opened her new package, happily pulling out a set of Christmas bath towels. “Thank you Sean, they’re perfect!”

Jeff shot Megan a look and took a deep breath. Megan nodded her thanks. Sean was still pale and confused next to her. She laid a hand on his leg, drawing his attention around to her.

“Here,” she said. “I got you this.”

Megan handed him a package. He grinned, tearing it open.

Laughing, he pulled out an old t-shirt with an old soda logo on the front. It was like the one she ruined the day they first met. “Where’d you find this?”

“Thrift store,” she answered, grinning.

“I got you something too,” he answered, leaning close to whisper in her ear.

Megan glanced over to her mother and laughed. “I saw.”

“I got you something else,” he murmured, his voice husky.

“Ah, Mom, we’re going to go get dressed. Thanks for the presents.”

Megan stood and began gathering her opened gifts into her arms.

“Oh, all right.” Frieda was blushing like a schoolgirl, whispering to Jeff.

Megan motioned Sean to follow her. Slowly, they both climbed up the stairs. Reaching the top, she turned to fall into his arms. Her lips pressed to his, kissing him soundly.

Pulling back, she whispered, “I can’t believe you gave my mom lingerie.”

“Just wait until you see what I got you,” he laughed.

“It was the wrong box, right? Please tell me that was meant for me.”

Megan let him lead her through the hall to the guest room.

Sean winked. “Jealous?”

“Maybe,” she purred, as she pushed the door closed behind her.

Instantly, she threw off her shirt and pushed her pajama pants from her hips.

“So, let’s see this present you’ve got for me.”

Sean reached behind him and grabbed a package. Boldly, she crossed over to him, running her hands down his sweater as she pushed him back into the post of the frilly guest room bed. She put her hands on his waist, unbuttoning his jeans before working them down.

When he was half stripped, she pulled the package from his fingers and opened it. It was a hand-woven Christmas blanket. Megan smiled and spread it out behind her on the floor.

“Lay down,” she ordered.

Sean grinned and pulled the sweater over his head. He moved to kiss her and she pulled back, not allowing him to. His grin only widened as he lay on his back. Looking up at her as she moved to stand over him, he licked his lips.

“Damn you’re sexy,” she said.

“So are you,” he whispered back. He lifted his hand. “Come here. I want to give you your present.”

Megan looked at his cock, standing ready for her. She slowly sank down, straddling his hips. “I’ve been thinking about this all morning.”

“Me too,” he whispered, groaning in the back of his throat as her body rubbed back and forth along him. “Do you think they’ll let us share a room tonight?”

Megan giggled, leaning over to lick and kiss his muscular chest and arms. “What they don’t know won’t hurt them.”

“What if we were engaged?” Sean asked, going still beneath her.

Her lips were over his heart, its rhythm speeding beneath her. She pulled back, blinking, not sure she’d heard him right.

When her eyes met his, he smiled up at her. “I love you, Megan, and want to break the curse. I want to give you new memories on Christmas, memories of us and our life together. Will you marry me?”

Tears came to her eyes and she began to shake. Sean lifted his hand.

A small diamond ring was on his pinkie. Licking her lips, she slowly nodded. Her voice a breathless whisper, she answered, “Yes, oh yes. Sean, of course I’ll marry you! Oh, baby, I love you.”

Sean grinned. He rolled his hips, artfully moving on top of her.

Their legs tangled together. His mouth met hers and he kissed her gently.

When he pulled back, he slid the ring off his finger and onto hers.

“Tell me the curse is over,” he whispered. He moved his hips so his cock lay against her moist opening. His hips flexed, ready to take her as he waited for her to answer him. “Tell me you no longer believe in it.”

“Yes,” she whispered, thrusting her hips up to meet his. She moaned, feeling him all the way to her core. She found she really believed it. How could she believe that such a beautiful, perfect day was cursed? “I don’t believe in the curse anymore. But I do believe in us. I love you, Sean.”

Sean grinned, moving his body inside her, slow and sweet. They made love, doing their best to be quiet. They let their hands roam in worshipping caresses and their mouths fall open in silent pleasure. Sean pierced into her with his eyes as their bodies met with release. Afterwards, Megan pulled the blanket over them as she lay in his arms.

“Now, tell me truthfully,” she said, hiding her grin. “That lingerie was really meant for me, wasn’t it?”

Sean just laughed, pressing his mouth to hers once more. He kissed her soundly before pulling back to cradle her in his arms. Everything was perfect.

“Um, Sean, wasn’t it?” she insisted, laughing.

“Yeah, baby, it was for you,” he chuckled.

The End

To read about more Michelle M Pillow’s titles, please visit her website (www.michellepillow.com).