

*He's not supposed
to have her,
but he's keeping her.*

Bagged

BY
THE ELF

ABBY KNOX

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Edited by Aquila Editing

Cover Designer: Cormar Covers

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Bagged by the Elf

A PARANORMAL HOLIDAY ROMANCE

ABBY KNOX



Bagged by the Elf

Cyran

The elves frown upon the idea of falling for humans. But Ivy makes me ache for a companion. The moment I spotted her asleep by the tree on Christmas Eve, I knew I had to keep her forever. Perhaps I was too hasty when I magicked her away in my toy sack. Certainly, Santa Claus won't approve when he learns what I've done. Let the law come down on me. Ivy is mine. She's simply ... mine.

Ivy

As much as my humdrum life sucks at the moment, I never asked to be spirited away in my sleep by a weirdo who thinks he's a Christmas elf. Well, Cyran can go peddle his North Pole baloney somewhere else, because I'm not buying it. His brooding good looks, chiseled jaw, cozy cabin, comfy bed, and delicious food have NO effect on me whatsoever. I'm getting the heck out of here ... right after I have another snack.

Warning: This story is about a Christmas elf who takes who and what he wants. If you read Elf-Napped, you're going to want to read this companion holiday stand-alone short read! Grab your favorite cozy blanket and settle in for a spicy winter's night!

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Chapter One

I vy

I wheel my shiny new suitcase out the door and into the southern Florida sunshine, excited to begin my trip across the country for Christmas.

A vacation like this is not one I can typically afford. But the other nannies and I pooled our money to book a suite, and we're all meeting for three days and three nights of wine, amazing food, and sweater weather.

My heart skips a beat when my Lyft driver pulls up. Here we go. I wave to the driver excitedly, just as the Frosts' SUV pulls up behind it.

The twin 12-year-olds, Sunshine and Starlight, exit the SUV and sprint straight into the mansion. Neither of them acknowledge my presence, nor wish me safe travels.

Returning home from a pre-vacation family spa treatment, Gwen and Brad, my employers, do not look super relaxed when they meet me on the front steps of the house. "Where are you going?" Gwen asks.

Uh, has she been hit on the head?

"To the vineyard, remember? For my winter vacation? Remember, I told you about the nanny group on Facebook and how we're all meeting for the first time on the West Coast to spend the holiday together?"

Gwen frowns, genuinely shocked at this news. “I just don’t understand how you can walk out on your duties.”

My stomach drops. “What do you mean? I have the time off. I put in for it months ago.”

“Yes you did, and you’ll be on vacation with us!” Gwen says, her smile returning as if she’s just waved a magic wand.

Have we had a massive misunderstanding or is she lying to me about what we discussed?

As the Lyft driver kindly hoists my bags into the trunk, I search my memory banks, going back to the day I requested these days off.

When they first hired me as their nanny six months ago, Gwen and Bradley Frost assured me that I wouldn’t have to “work” over any holidays.

I remember what Brad had said to me after I filed my request. “You’ll have so much downtime, it will feel just like you’re on an exclusive vacation by yourself,” he’d said.

I’d been on my laptop in organizing mode—in the process of booking the family’s Christmas Day flight to the private boutique ski resort owned by their spiritual guru in Colorado. More on that later.

The point is, I was spinning so many plates to create all the Christmas magic for the children that the comment barely registered.

As I stand here with my heart racing and my stomach still plummeting, I remind them, “But I earned time off. Time off means away from my duties.”

Gwen pulls out her phone and taps something in a search bar. Meanwhile, Brad shifts his weight from one foot to the other and scrubs a hand over his chin, as if he’s trying to solve a puzzle. I look at him pleadingly. “I think there’s been a miscommunication. I have a vacation in the Pacific Northwest, and my flight leaves in two hours.”

Brad drops his hand from his face and folds his arms across his chest, his frown matching his wife’s energy.

“Honey, is that correct?”

Gwen shakes her head no and shows me her phone screen. “Here. See? You signed a contract.”

I read it, and now I see the fine print that I missed.

My mouth dries up as I read the words that Gwen has highlighted for me.

Oh my gosh.

I am such a sucker.

Gullible.

A rube.

Whatever you want to call it, that’s me.

Why do I believe this about myself, you ask? Because my employers hoodwinked me into working on Christmas.

Although the contract clearly states I wouldn’t be supervising children, cooking, or cleaning on holidays, I would still be accompanying the Frosts on all their vacations.

Since I’ve only been working for them for a few months, this is the first time this stipulation has come up.

“You can go on your cute little nanny retreat, but is it worth losing your job?” Gwen says with a sickeningly sweet tone.

It should be no surprise to me that I’ve been fooled by these people. The Frosts co-own one of the most lucrative financial investment companies in the country. They spend their days convincing the uber-rich to trust them with their money. I’ve heard them on the phone with clients; I don’t know much about high finance, but I do know their promises often sound too good to be true.

I should have taken that as a warning.

The pay, along with room and board, was too good to pass up, though.

“I can’t believe this,” I breathe, dejected and sad.

Brad chuckles and says with a patronizing tone, “The ski lodge is unlike anything you’ll ever get to experience on your own. No offense,” he says. “You won’t be sorry, Ivy. Besides, why would you want to go to the soggy Northwest when you can ski?”

Gwen gives him a stern look over his familiar tone with me, and Brad clears his throat. “I mean, Ms. Snow.”

Ever since a friend of theirs left his wife for their au pair last month, Gwen has been extra weird and bristles at any interaction between Brad and me. She has nothing to worry about, though, as Brad is terrified of her. Not only that, Brad is not my type. Married, fake tan, too-perfect teeth, a weird, fake-sounding laugh—shall I go on?

“If you don’t need my services on your holiday, then I might as well take a real break,” I try.

No dice. “But you’re so good in a pinch. We can’t manage a thing without you,” Gwen says, then laughs, “It’s your own fault for making yourself indispensable. Besides, it’s not like you have a family to go home to.”

Ouch.

I was so looking forward to getting away from these people. I was so looking forward to meeting my online friends in person. I don’t have a home to go to, as my parents are both dead and I don’t have any siblings. My childhood friends are scattered all over the country and all have families of their own.

I have a choice. I could quit my job here and now and join my friends on vacation. Or I could keep my job, pay off my debts, and be assured of a positive recommendation when I move on from here.

I sigh, pay the Lyft driver for her time, and retrieve my pretty pink suitcase, filled with sweaters and books and knitting and all the things I don’t have the time or inclination to enjoy here in sweaty southern Florida.

Which means instead of heading out early for a long weekend with my fellow au pair friends, I’m going to be at the

beck and call of the Frosts as they spend three days skiing and meditating and whatever it is they do with their spiritual guru and their fellow disciples.

I head back downstairs to my room and refuse to cry as I unpack my things.

Later, as Gwen and Brad prepare to leave for their Christmas Eve party with their clients, Gwen gives me the rundown of everything that needs to happen tonight. I can barely hide my stink face as I stare at her in her floor-length gown which reminds me of the White Witch from *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe*.

“Make sure you do the fake footprints on the hearth, so the girls know that Santa came. And use the corn starch, not flour. It photographs better.”

I try to smile blandly and pretend to give a shit.

“And please set out something unique for the reindeer. Carrots are so cliché, and everyone’s doing it. And don’t forget to move the elf one more time.”

That dang elf. Sure, I’ll move him. Right into the trash compactor.

“Babe, we gotta go. The driver is waiting.” Mr. Frost is anxiously checking and rechecking his phone.

“The girls are in the media room playing with their new video games if you want to say good night,” I say to the Frosts. “It is Christmas Eve, after all.”

That last part was a step too far, and Gwen bristles at the implication that she’s forgotten what day it is.

“That’s very thoughtful of you, but we said our good nights. We’ll see you first thing in the morning. Please have the girls packed and ready to head to the airport by 8 a.m.,” Gwen says icily.

I’ve never seen these people kiss their daughters goodnight even once in the six months I’ve worked here.

Her mouth curves up in a knowing smile, both of us aware of who made Christmas happen. Who shopped for and

wrapped all the gifts? I did. Who baked Christmas cookies for Gwen's Instagram while herding the twelve-year-old twin girls who were so over it they started a food fight with the flour? I did. Who addressed and mailed the Frost family Christmas cards? That would be me. Who shopped for and delivered teacher gifts? Again, me. Who decorated the tree? Well, not me. That would be a professional decorator, the one who barked orders at me all dang day while the girls were in school.

“Yes, ma'am.”

Gwen scurries off to join her husband, the short train of her floor-length sparkly gown trailing behind her.

The door closes, and I feel like I'm more stuck than I've ever been.

But I get on with it. I read *The Night Before Christmas* with the twins, despite their complaints that it's old-fashioned and silly. I say goodnight to them, then head to the kitchen to make the cookies for Santa and prep some non-cliché vegetables for the reindeer. By the time all this is done, it's almost midnight.

I'm exhausted but also fuming, and too worked up to go to bed.

I stand and glare at the fire, the Christmas tree, and the festive decorations. Then I glare at the palm tree outside. I want snow, dang it. I want spruces and snowball fights and hot chocolate and wine. The weekend weather report at the vineyard is supposed to be perfect, with an inch of fluffy snow overnight.

As I'm brooding, I get a text from Gwen.

Gwen: And make sure you run the photos by Pamela. The Halloween photos of the girls were a disaster; we have a social media manager for a reason. Thanks!

This is my breaking point. I've had enough.

I march to the fridge, pull out the forbidden eggnog, and pour myself a glass. Then I bust into the Frosts' liquor cabinet and top it off with some super-expensive rum. A lot of rum.

I take the spiked eggnog and the platter of Santa and reindeer food into the den, turn on some soft Christmas music on the stereo, sit in front of the fire with a blanket, and have a great time enjoying this little bit of rebellion.

I'm just going to sit here and eat all of these cookies and drink all of this eggnog, and then I'll go to bed.

There's just one problem. This fire is so nice, I don't want to put it out. The tree is so pretty, I want to stare at it all night.

I'm just going to curl up next to the tree and rest my eyes. Someone should enjoy this crackling fire after a long day.

Yeah. I'll just rest my eyes for a minute, then I'll go to bed.

Chapter Two

C yran

I shouldn't be out on Christmas Eve, but duty calls.

As the North Pole's chief reindeer wrangler, I usually spend this night alone in my house, resting and congratulating myself for keeping the nine reindeer happy, healthy, and strong for one more year.

But this year, Santa asked me to fill the role of a reconnaissance elf, one who makes sure the coast is clear for the big guy and helps fill the stockings.

"You spend all your time alone with the animals, and yet more alone in your house," went Santa's speech last month. "I'm changing things up for you, and for all the elves this year. I don't want anyone stagnating in their jobs."

I don't say no to Nicholas. No one does. And now I'm here, and the messenger elf, Eliyen, is at home, prepping the barn to receive the tired reindeer after a job well done.

I hate this.

In the times before the elven revolt, every elf had a specific duties that never changed. Some Common elves worked in security, keeping the North Pole Village cloaked in secrecy. I and my mother before me and her father before her—we've all served as Common elves who are closely tied to nature. Specifically, my people are the reindeer elves. That's

what we do. We groom them, feed them, and keep them happy and fit. It's all I know.

The Uncommon elves possess a much more wild magic. They can teleport, turn invisible, and be in multiple places at once, making them important to the work of Saint Nicholas when it comes to delivering presents. In the old days, the wild magic of Uncommon elves aided the surveillance of children and kept the old “naughty and nice” lists updated.

But the times, they are changing. At the end of the elven revolt, the Common and Uncommon elves united and crowned Eldrin the Uncommon as our new Saint Nicholas. This new Nicholas did away with spying on children and declared everyone worthy of presents. That was controversial enough. And now he wants everyone to trade jobs?

I love Nicholas like a father, but his micromanagement makes me tired.

Our last stop is at 834 Pacific Court, the Frost residence. The digital readout in the sleigh monitor shows me the rundown of the family. A mom, dad, twins, and a nanny live here. I pull up the feed that shows the fireplace, at which there are only four stockings.

Sadness pricks at my chest when I think about the kind of family that would leave out a nanny.

Santa nudges me in the ribs. “See that? I think that’s one of the twins. You’ll have to magic that one back to her room before I can go down the chimney.”

I squint at the screen and peer at the dark figure on the floor, but all I can see is a vaguely human shape, perfectly still.

Moments later, I’m down the chimney, trying to remember how this is done. I can do magic, as any elf can, but human mind manipulation is not one of my strong suits.

When I’m standing before this tiny human female who is curled up next to the presents under the tree, the realization hits me like a ten-ton sleigh on a winter jet stream: I have not prepared for anything like her.

This is not a child. This is an adult.

This is the nanny. The one who doesn't have a stocking on the fireplace waiting to be loaded with gifts from Santa.

Long dark waves hang like a curtain over half of her sleeping face, and her skin glows in the firelight, more lovely than the aurora borealis. Her full lips part slightly, her even breathing telling me she is in a deep slumber. And the sweet scent of her breath is redolent with nutmeg and strong sugar. I believe the humans call it "rum," a weaker version than the spirits the mountain trolls hand out as their "Secret Santa" gifts. Everyone knows to watch out for that stuff. What mountain troll whiskey would do to a human I shudder to think.

This particular human may be suffering from an intoxicating unconsciousness, a fact that gives me a queasy feeling about staring at her body.

Ivy. That's her name.

A sense of injustice overwhelms me. How could anyone wish for a queen like this to be left out? I bet it's nothing unusual for her to sleep on the floor.

I gaze upon her, where she lies on her side with one arm tucked under her head and a fuzzy blanket draped over her body. Her small feet are covered in cozy Christmas socks decorated with snowflakes. Despite the folds of the blanket hiding her figure, one hip juts out dramatically. I swallow the urge to peek under her covers and see all of her.

That would be wrong. From her tiny feet to her hips, her shape reminds me of a priceless vase lying on its side.

An unseemly thought occurs to me then. She is built for breeding. I feel it more than I think it.

It is frowned upon to be aroused by humans—low creatures who are not of our species—yet the sight of her makes my cock ache.

If she were an elf, I would claim her as mine—after a proper courtship, of course.

Humans are not subject to the same arcane rituals, so if I took her home with me, I could claim her immediately. After all, isn't that how our new Santa took Mrs. Claus for himself? There was some mishap in the woods during his exile...an exile that he earned from his lifelong obsession with the human he guarded.

Under new regulations related to elf-human relations, it would be a grave offense if I took her without her consent.

My mind can hardly grasp that I'm mulling over the idea of doing this...but I cannot seem to shake the thought that she's mine. She's simply mine. I feel it as if it has already been foretold. I never understood the way Nicholas—formerly Eldrin—talks about his Clara, but now I'm starting to relate...

“Cyran? Report.”

I've neglected my duties. Santa's still in the chimney, awaiting my reconnaissance.

The drive to keep her for myself is the topmost priority and I have to think fast.

I move aside the small porcelain plate covered in crumbs, smiling at my female's healthy appetite for Santa's cookies.

“I'm coming down now,” Santa gruffly says, followed by a loud grunt and the thud of his boots on the crackling embers below.

I use a combination of my weak magic and brute strength to bag her up in my depleted sack of toys, just in time to avoid Santa noticing what I'm doing.

“All clear?” Santa's sooty face is peeved.

“Y-yes, sir.”

He gives me a harrumph, eyes me suspiciously, then sets about filling the stockings of the ungrateful Frost twins and their hideous parents. It's homes like these that make me wish we could bring back lumps of coal and the naughty list.

“Has it been a long night for you?” Santa asks, a smile in his voice.

“No, sir. Just...thought I heard something, but it was traffic outside. Not a creature is stirring.”

Not even my voluptuous little mouse, who snores away sweetly inside my bag of toys.



What have I done?

The female sleeps for so long, I worry that I overdid it with the magical tranquilizer.

Twelve hours is nothing in my world, but I understand that's not natural for a human.

I go to my bed and press two fingers against her throat. Her heart beats a steady rhythm. She breathes.

She drools on my pillow, and I can't control the smile that cracks the hard lines of my face.

The human is so fragile. I never should have bagged her up and brought her here, to the North Pole, without permission.

I've already broken so many rules of the elf code of conduct. If she had died in transit, or in my bed, I'd never forgive myself.

Facing the elven tribunal and answering to Santa Claus would be harrowing enough. Losing Ivy would be lifelong torture.

Perhaps I was too hasty.

I should have waited and sought permission from Nicholas to make contact with a human. Nicholas, Santa Claus, Eldrin the Uncommon — whatever we choose to call him — has instituted an application process to keep the mating of elves and humans on record. We at the North Pole do not want too many humans learning that Santa is real and that he and his minion elves live at the North Pole where they make toys in factories run on Christmas cheer. We prefer that it is left to folklore. But revealing the truth would cause a mass panic. At

worst, a human government might bulldoze their way in and colonize our magical resources for their own benefit.

So I understand why the system is in place.

But as soon as I set eyes on Ivy, I knew the orderly application process would take too long for my liking.

Ivy is perfect, and I have to have her now.

Nicholas should not be surprised at all at this influx of elven/human romances. Because we no longer keep a record of a people's "goodness" or "badness," we no longer look down our noses at the pitiful humans and their inability to solve hunger or war. We've developed compassion—or as much as elves are capable of it.

But we are still forbidden from making contact without permission.

And certainly, administering a tranquilizer to an unwilling female and shoving her into my bag of toys is highly illegal.

Ivy stirs under my touch, and I hide. It's better to let her adjust to her surroundings before meeting her mate.

Chapter Three

I vy

I wake up, and the first thing I notice is the crick in my neck.

I shouldn't have slept under the Christmas tree. Who do I think I am? The family dog?

This most recent bad decision involved too much rum, which led to curling up next to the Christmas tree, which led to "I'll just rest my eyes for a second."

That "second" turned into passing out on the floor, which may have been fine in my younger days, but I'm not 22 anymore.

But then I realize something strange. I'm no longer on the floor.

Not prepared to open my eyes just yet for fear of a dreaded morning-light-induced headache, I blindly run my fingers over the exquisitely soft surface on which I lie. I must have drunkenly moved to the sofa at some point.

That can't be right; the sofa has never felt this cozy. My employers do not own any comfortable furniture.

So...where am I?

Carefully, I open my eyes. I find myself in a dark room lit only by a fragrant fire that blazes in a fireplace big enough to walk into. The fireplace has an iron stand for cooking, and on

the hearth is a mess of iron tools I don't recognize. The floor is made of massive stone tiles. Upon closer inspection, the dancing firelight reveals that each stone is intricately, beautifully carved.

Did I stumble down to my room last night? No. Whatever I've been sleeping on is still much nicer than my Ikea bed. The Frosts have pledged to finish renovating the partially finished basement where I sleep behind a partition next to the creepy, spider-infested furnace room but haven't yet made good on that promise.

This is not a sofa at all. This is not my bed, nor is it the Frosts' magnificent primary bed, which I've occasionally sneaked onto for a nap. I have no regrets about that.

As nice as this place is, I have no idea where I am. And that's a problem.

I'm in a stranger's extremely luxurious room, wrapped in the softest fur I've ever felt.

I sit up and rub my eyes, examining my surroundings, and try to think about where I might be.

I didn't think I had that much rum last night. But I don't remember boarding a plane with the Frosts, either.

I scoot off the bed, and I'm immediately hit by the scent of warm spices and fresh pine emanating from the crackling fireplace.

I should have a hangover, but I feel...different. Fantastic, actually, other than the crick in my neck.

And this room is not like any hotel room I've ever seen. It's round, and everything in it has soft, rounded edges. The doors and windows are all gothic arches. There's a desk built into the rounded wall. Two cozy-looking chairs sit by the fireplace, laden with welcoming blankets. The exposed beams of the ceiling are hung with herbs, holly, dried flowers, vines, and mistletoe.

I reach for my phone to take pictures of this place, because it's truly the weirdest hotel I've ever stayed in, and I need to post them on Instagram immediately. Brad said it would be

unlike anything else I've ever experienced. This must be the boutique ski lodge owned by their guru. He might be a scam artist or a cult leader, but I have to give it to him—he knows how to make a place feel cozy and exclusive.

The Frosts must've trundled me onto their private jet and mercifully let me sleep. And then, somehow carried me to my room?

Seems crazy, but what other explanation could there be?

I'm sure the twins have posted an unreal number of candid photos of me passed out and drooling by now. I wince at the thought.

But I don't hear the twins or their parents. The only sound is the popping of wood in the alpine-detailed fireplace that's big and deep enough to roast a beast on a spit.

They all must have abandoned me for a gourmet Christmas brunch. Figures.

Where is my phone, anyway?

The pockets of my pajama pants are empty when I pat them down. I throw open the duvet and search the bed. No phone.

No night tables exist where I might have set down my things. That's going to go into the suggestion box when I leave.

Dammit, why can't I remember anything? This makes zero sense to me because I've never blacked out before.

I scoot out of the bed, and my bare feet touch something strange when they hit the floor. That feels like...dirt?

I knew this so-called spiritual retreat was too good to be true. Dirt? No, I'm not having it.

"This has now gone from eccentric to stupidly weird," I mutter as I glance around for a rug or my shoes.

"Weird is a matter of perspective, human," says a booming voice behind me.

I scream and jump three feet off the floor.

When I recover my senses, it's difficult to see anything clearly, but I can make out a silhouette at least eight, nine feet tall, with a wild mane of white hair and pointy, bat-like ears.

In the firelight, he's human-ish shaped. Heavy on the ish.

"Who are you? Where am I? Did they send me to hell? Am I being haunted? Am I dead?"

A soft, masculine chuckle caresses my ears. The dude is amused by me. Well, that's helpful. Maybe I can keep him laughing until I'm able to make a run for it and get help.

Unless I am actually in hell. Then I suppose whatever's out there is far worse than whatever this thing wants with me. I step backwards, toward the fireplace.

"My name is Cyran, head elf in charge of reindeer care and feeding at the North Pole. It may seem strange for us to be matched, but I assure you, I am more than equipped," the guy says, lighting a candle and then another and another until the whole room is filled with the soft glow of white candles of all shapes and sizes, on every surface of the room.

He has a smooth way of talking that makes me temporarily forget that his words are crazy-pants.

Reindeer? North Pole? Matched?!

"Equipped for what exactly?"

"For taking care of you."

My stance softens. Taking care of me? Like a waiter? A chef?

Then several things start to click.

The Frosts are in some kind of weird cosplay cult. No way this guy thinks he's an elf for real.

He said his name was Cyran. What was the name of the Frosts' guru again? I can't remember.

"But what does that mean?" I ask, backing up closer to the fireplace.

Cyran nods solemnly. “Of course, you wouldn’t know that. It means I’m here to cater to whatever you want. Whatever you need.”

He does have a sexy, Henry Cavill glower about him.

As much as I don’t like the Frosts, maybe if I play nice with this cult disciple, I’ll get information. Maybe I’ll get accidentally-on-purpose sucked in, and then I’ll escape with my brood of Henry Cavill’s babies, and Netflix will make a documentary about me and then I’ll get a book deal.

What’s the worst thing that could happen?

Well, dummy, he could be a predator or have a cache of weapons. He could have a hundred sex partners. He could be into some seriously terrible shit. Like wearing matching clothes or something.

Cyran approaches, and my voice quavers. “Don’t come any closer.”

“I won’t hurt you, Ivy.”

“How do you know my name?!” I ask in a panicked shout.

Nice going, Ivy. Don’t try to keep him guessing or anything.

“It’s not what you think,” he says. His dark eyes convey kindness and genuine concern, but I’m not buying it.

I take another step back, and my elbow comes into contact with something cold and metal. It’s the fireplace poker. This is good. Without taking my eyes off Cyran, I curl my fingers around the iron rod.

It’s much heavier than I anticipated, and when I try to swing it at Cyran, the poker goes thudding to the dirt floor.

Shit!

Cyran steps closer. His face is made of striking, inhuman angles, a chiseled jaw, and a mouth set in a hard line. His eyes aren’t just dark, but a deep, solid black. As in, no irises that I can see. Those eyes are both chilling and mesmerizing. His skin is equally fascinating in the way it reflects the firelight.

He seems impossibly lit from within. I would ask about his moisturizing regimen if I wasn't about to piss myself.

“What were you going to do with that rod, tiny human?”

Cyran has the strangest accent. He wears a rustic, leather kilt and a tunic of fine silk. Nothing about this rings a bell. That bulge in his kilt, though, could ring mine a hundred different ways. Theoretically.

Rod? What the heck? Then it clicks. Oh, that rod.

“D-defend myself?”

“I said I won't hurt you.”

“I don't know if you're lying. I don't even know who you are or where I am. I think a woman has every right to arm herself against her kidnapper!”

He towers over me, his tunic hanging open, revealing too much of that glowing skin. He smells like the spicy, woody scent in this room. Cyran smells like Christmas in the forest. It's enough to make me forget that I've been kidnapped. Almost.

The man with the pointy ears seems genuinely perplexed. “You seem unhappy to be here.”

Now my fright is slowly transforming into frustration and anger. “Where is here? And stop coming closer. You're freaking me out!”

The man pauses and shows me his palms, the universal sign that he's not going to hurt me, which is surely meant to get my defenses down.

“Would you like some tea?”

I narrow my eyes at him. “You clearly know nothing about humans. I'm not about to accept a drink from a stranger.”

Then he drops a bombshell I did not see coming.

“We are not strangers. You are my mate.”

Chapter Four

C yran

The human tilts her head in the most fetching way.

“Mate? Are you kidding me?”

“I do not kid. Most of the time, kidding around doesn’t make sense to me. Though I do enjoy reading the letters from children that include jokes. Those are great fun.”

“Children send you letters? Why? Do you have a dozen illegitimate children around the world who call you Daddy? Because I have to say, I wouldn’t be surprised.”

Her eyes glance down to my middle for the briefest of seconds. The blush that creeps into her cheeks is quite alluring.

“I believe such a claim in your world would denote virility. Elves do not reproduce at such a pace. When we come of age, we are matched with one elf mate and only one, with the sole purpose of furthering the species. But there is no pleasure in it. At about the age of 30, our libidos fade and we get on with the more important tasks of life.”

But with human biology in the mix, the slow breeding cycle of elves seems to be extended. That’s based on Eldrin and his Clara — Santa and Mrs. Claus — now laden with four children in the span of twelve human years. I honor the feeling

that I should not tell Ivy all of these observations. Something tells me she won't take it well.

“What are you, a cosplayer? The ears are pretty convincing.”

I have no idea what she's talking about, nor do I understand why she's now pacing the room. I do not know what cosplay is. The only thing I know to do is start from the beginning and be completely honest.

I back away from her and motion to my most comfortable chair. “Please sit and allow me to make you some tea.”

The pleasing smile that spreads across her face makes her pretty eyes disappear into her plump cheeks.

“Sure, I'll have some tea,” she says, changing her tone with a delightful chuckle, then seats herself, pulling a blanket over her lap and stretching her feet out in the heat of the flames.

She's up to something.

“Lay it on me, elf.”

Ivy is not what I expected. She's full of questions. Loud ones at that. I get on with preparing the loose-leaf tea. I press my hand to the kettle and the water boils instantly, while positioning my body between Ivy and my kitchen so as not to let her see my magic. She's not ready for it.

“That was quick,” she says, but she's still smiling as she takes the tea. “I'll need cream and sugar.”

“No, you won't,” I assure her. “Elves make superior tea to anything you've ever tasted, and you will not need cream and sugar.”

“I'm telling you, I will.”

“Just try it,” I say, standing over her, biting back my offense. Is Nicholas's wife like this? Is it normal for humans to argue about the dumbest things? Am I being too bossy?

Ivy rolls her eyes, and I find that aggravating but also arousing.

The second I saw her sleeping, I was awash with new feelings. Now that I have her in my house and she's talking and asking questions, the arousal seems to spike in concert with my annoyance. She's challenging, and the heat inside my stomach spreads out to my limbs every time she pushes back.

Though my mind is regretting this, Ivy's argumentativeness makes my cock stir.

"Fine, I'll try it. Geez," she says, taking the cup and blowing the steam across it. "Talk about committed to the role."

I've forgotten what we were arguing about when her lips purse to blow steam across the surface of the tea. Her mouth was slack and pliable and kissable as she slept. Charming when it drooled on my pillow. But now those lips are puckered in such a way that I can't help but think about it wrapped around a finger.

A tongue. Someone's penis.

A wave of jealousy washes over me. No, there can be no other. No one must touch her from here on out. She's mine. Ivy is mine.

"What's wrong with you?"

My gaze snaps to hers. "Nothing."

"You had a weird look on your face."

I take her teacup from her and sip, showing her that there's no poison in it.

"What sort of look?" I ask when I hand it back to her.

She hesitates, then finally sips her tea. "Murderous."

"Oh," I say dumbly.

Ivy hands the teacup back to me. "And it needs cream and sugar, thank you."

"You can't be serious," I say, puffing my chest out. "The North Pole makes the finest teas in the world."

“I would never joke around with an elf,” she says, her wide eyes glimmering with what I suspect is sarcasm.

Put the milk and sugar in the tea, Cyran. She wants it, she’ll get it one way or another. Play nice until you can send her back to America, somehow.

Of course that will involve stealing a sleigh, and there’s no way for me to do that undetected. Vixen and Comet are terrible gossips.

Right. Tell the truth. It’s all you can do.

After adding the cream and sugar, I hand it back to her, trying not to make a face.

“I should have told you everything in greater detail from the beginning. As I said, my name is Cyran, a Christmas elf. You are in my home at the North Pole, and it is Christmas Day. You are here because...because I saw you sleeping on the floor on Christmas Eve and I didn’t think. I reacted. I liked you, so I took you. And now we are here, together. Preferably forever. That is, if Nicholas grants you the same special dispensation he was granted so he could keep his human.”

By the time I’m finished talking, Ivy is finished drinking her tea.

“That is quite the story,” she says, setting down her cup against the wooden table. Her tone indicates that she’s placating me, as if trying to play nice with a villain. “Now if you’ll excuse me, I need to go and find the Frosts. I’m sure they’re wondering where I am.”

I’ve frightened her; I can feel it. She’s telling me that people will be looking for her as a way to warn me that I should send her back.

“Wait,” I say. “Don’t go.”

“Good luck with everything. I promised I’d meet the Frosts five minutes ago. I’m sure they’re looking for me.”

Her hand is on the door, and she pushes it open.

She won’t get far.

“Wait!”

“Bye now,” she says, stepping outside and disappearing into the blowing snow.

Chapter Five

I vy

Who in the hell builds their house inside the rock face of an ice mountain?

The second I stepped outside into the biting wind, I knew I was in trouble. There's nothing but snow and ice and a snow-packed narrow path winding precariously back and forth down the cliffside.

The wind nips at my cheeks. My feet are wet in these bedroom slippers, and I have no winter coat on, only these thin pajamas. There has to be a ski town or a proper lodge around here somewhere. Right?

He did say this was the North Pole, but surely that's not true. And besides, there aren't any mountains on the top of the world, are there? What do I know? I sucked at geography in school.

I must be so cold I'm delirious. I'm out here entertaining the fact that elves are real and that I'm at the North Pole.

I tuck my cold hands into either armpit to take advantage of body heat. If I keep moving, I'll make it to the ski village and report this very hot weirdo to the authorities. Assuming the cult doesn't own the town.

My feet go numb as I trudge down a trail that is dangerously close to the edge of a sheer drop. I don't dare

peek over the edge. I hold out hope that if the wind blows me off the trail, a snow drift below will break my fall.

I don't get too much time to wonder about this scenario. The packed snow hides some loose rocks, and my feet slip.

The next thing I know, I'm falling to my death.

I let out a howling scream as I slide down the wall of snow, ice, and rock, my hands scrambling to hold on to anything. I manage to grab on to a frozen rock jutting out of the rock face. It's barely a handhold, but it at least stops my downward tumble.

Above me, through the blowing snow, someone appears.

"Ivy!"

Cyran calls out to me, his voice rising over the sound of the wind.

Do I want my kidnapper to be the one to rescue me? Do I have a choice?

Not really.

But what can he do? Unless he has some rope.

My astonished eyes watch Cyran clamber down the slope toward me, his legs agile at this dangerous angle. He might be magic after all, or else he's part mountain goat. He reaches me just as the brittle rock begins to crumble under my icy fingers.

My hazy brain forms one thought—there's definitely something magical about this man ...

Is he magic? For real?

Are elves real?

My vision goes dark around the edges of Cyran's outstretched hand. The numbness has spread through my arms and legs. I'm feeling a little sleepy and very much sapped of energy. I'm just going to let go and close my eyes for a minute and try to summon the energy to accept his help.

In the moment before everything goes dark, I see something that will change my life forever: Cyran's

unnaturally warm hand clasps around mine, and it glows blue.



The taste of something warm and delicious against my lips wakes me.

The surprise causes me to inhale sharply and cough on the liquid. Cyran is here, he's close, and his strange eyes stare straight into mine.

When I'm done spluttering, he looks at me impatiently, gesturing toward me with a spoon. "Stop choking and take it," he says firmly.

Once again, I'm sitting in this luxurious bed, my back propped against the ornate headboard. My body shivers violently.

I open my mouth on instinct like a baby bird and accept the odd-smelling broth. It's different from anything I've tasted, but so good. Instantly, I am warmed down to my toes.

It's far superior to the wretched elf tea, I think.

So wait. Am I accepting that this is true now? Elves are real?

"More," he insists.

"Give me a minute," I say peevishly. Gosh, he's so bossy for a Christmas elf. If that's even what he is.

And it's now that I notice I'm naked under these furs. "Where are my pajamas? Where's my underwear?"

"You need to take this as quickly as possible to get warm before the magic wears off," Cyran says, ignoring my questions.

Magic... he said magic.

That's ridiculous, but I can't deny the weird things I've seen.

The blue glow in his hands. The broth instantly making me feel better. The way he clambered down the steep slope to rescue me, without a rope or rappelling equipment...

The pointy ears that don't look prosthetic. And then, there's his alarming height and inhumanly dark eyes.

I could keep explaining things away, but I'm left with this: I'm alive because of some magic.

“Why did your hands glow?”

“Take your broth if you want to live.”

“Not until you tell me why your hands glowed blue,” I say, my teeth once again starting to chatter.

Cyran sighs heavily and gives me a baleful stare. “You ask too many questions.”

I tug the furry blankets up around my chin, but it doesn't make the cold go away. “Excuse me? You're the one who's keeping me prisoner.”

“I didn't know how much you enjoyed tormenting elves.”

“Torment? Me? You made me horrible tea, and I almost froze to death! Lovely neighborhood, by the way. I might build here myself. Does it have a park with a pickleball court? What are the schools like?”

Cyran's face looks pained, and his body shudders. “And if you had died, I'd have never forgiven myself for bringing you here,” he says, ignoring my sarcastic questions.

Bringing me here?

“What does that mean?”

“Take the broth, woman.”

“You're not the Frosts' guru or one of the disciples after all, are you?”

Cyran looks at me like I've just suggested he's besties with Stalin. “Certainly not. I would never align myself with employers who would make their nanny sleep on the floor.”

I shrink away from him in shock. “How do you know all of that, if you don’t know the Frosts?”

“Because I work for the big guy. Santa. He sees everything, and by extension, so do I.”

Santa is real? Elves are real?

All of it? Santa, elves, the North Pole.

If it’s not real, I got hit on the head.

“Wh-why did you take me?”

Cyran pauses as if gathering his patience. “You were so peaceful when you slept near the tree. I could not resist your beauty when I went ahead of Santa to deliver the presents. I wanted to keep staring. I didn’t want to leave you behind. And so I panicked and shoved you into my toy sack.”

He says all of this as if the details don’t matter.

I stare at him for several long minutes, letting him feed me broth as I process what he’s telling me.

I cannot deny the healing and warming effects of the broth. I can’t deny he has some sort of healing magic in his hands. The strangeness and magic of this place is real.

Somehow.

Still, if what he says is true, then he took me while I was asleep.

That makes him a criminal, someone who took away my agency.

And I’ve had enough of people messing with my life, thank you very much.

Chapter Six

C yran

Wisely, the little human takes more broth.

The more broth she drinks, the louder she becomes.

After that brief scare when she ran away, I now find I don't mind her pushback as much. I'm becoming accustomed to the sound of her voice in my home. Her sarcasm is growing on me, and her outrage is adorable. Ivy makes me smile.

And I'm very happy she's not dead.

"How dare you kidnap me!"

"I don't understand why you're so upset. You were unhappy with the Frosts."

Ivy tilts her adorable head to the side, studying me. "Are you for real? Anybody would be unhappy. A cactus would die of neglect under their supervision. They could gaslight the world's biggest narcissist. Of course I was unhappy."

I study her for a moment as a signal goes off inside my brain that perhaps replying that I don't see the problem is a bad idea.

We stare at each other for a long moment. Her throat bobs where it's visible above the fur blanket. Her skin looks flushed and healthy once more; the broth did its work.

“I am sorry that I brought you here against your will. But I will not be returning you to those people.” My words come out more forcefully than intended, but my brave Ivy does not shrink away from me. I like that. I would hate to think that I frighten her when I’m stern with her.

She seems to be mulling over her options. It gives me time to steal glances at her hair, still damp from the melted snow, and the way it clings to her delicate throat. Ivy looks so sweet and vulnerable in my bed.

She pouts. If she knew how badly I’d love to bite that lip.

Do humans enjoy biting? I don’t know.

I don’t want to say what I’m about to say, but the compassion for this human being is strong. “I will...return you to America if you wish. Where would you like me to take you?”

It seems that I’m not the only person who is stealing glances. I catch Ivy’s gaze drifting over my body like a caress. I ache for her, but I will let her go if necessary.

She bites her bottom lip, and I fight against the growl this triggers deep in my chest. “This might be the stupidest thing to admit to a magical stranger, but I have nowhere else to go.”

I should not be happy about this fact. Yet my baser instincts feel justified in taking possession of this woman.

“Then do you wish to stay here?”

She snorts. “Do I have a choice? It’s a blizzard out there. Unless you can magic me back home.”

“You do have a choice,” I say, nodding. “What do you wish?”

Ivy sighs, and her shoulders slump dejectedly. “As much as my mind doesn’t want to accept that any of this is what you say it is, that Santa’s real, I...don’t want to be alone on Christmas.”

I do not like this.

And yet the pain in my chest settles. She’ll stay, then.

Another long moment passes, and her eyes travel over my body, pausing briefly on the erection that I know is evident through this utility kilt and long tunic.

She blushes when she meets my eyes again and looks away.

“Do that again,” I tell her.

Instead of being coy, my Ivy makes eye contact again and does a very obvious survey of me, head to toe, pausing for a while at the length that throbs in her direction.

“You are no longer angry with me for kidnapping you, then, human?”

Her raspy little laugh makes me want to lunge at her, but I keep still. Watching. Waiting for the mating ritual to begin. Or has it already begun?

“Just because I’m mad and confused and silently freaking out at you doesn’t mean I don’t want you to kiss me,” she says.

“Silently?” I ask. “Hardly.”

She smirks. “You’re not getting any closer to that kiss, mister.”

Just like that, everything in me freezes up.

I did not know Ivy would want me to kiss her.

I’ve seen reindeer lick each other’s faces. Santa is private with his Clara, but I’ve heard that they kiss often and for long periods of time.

“It’s best if we skip that, if it’s all the same to you.”

Chapter Seven

Ivy

It's not all the same to me, and I'm super confused.

"Sorry," I say, shrinking back against the headboard. "I thought you were interested in me. Like, sexually."

"I thought it obvious with the way my body reacts to you."

Geez, could he be a little bit more robotic, I think sarcastically. I hold it in, because I don't want to confuse him any more than I already have.

"The thing about me, Cyran, is I need kissing first. What's a Christmas romance without a little kissing?" I ask, giving him a teasing look.

He thinks about this for a moment. "May I sit down?"

I nod. Cyran sits on the bed and faces the wall, bending over to rest his elbows on his knees. The posture is endearingly human, even though it does nothing to make him seem less intimidatingly tall. He lets out a sigh.

"I'm not familiar with kissing, and I worry it will not please you."

"We'll never know if you don't try."

"Very well." Cyran pivots his torso toward me and leans in. I suck in a breath, ready for whatever magic elves deliver with their kind of kissing. I close my eyes and purse my lips,

meeting him in the middle. And then I feel something large and wet dragging over my mouth, chin and cheek.

I gasp and open my eyes. “Did you just lick me?” I shriek.

“Is that incorrect?”

Although it was bizarre and a little disgusting, I’m not mad about it. “It’s not traditional to humans,” I say, wondering why I’m being so careful not to hurt my captor’s feelings.

“Do elves often lick when they court each other?” I ask, chuckling and wiping the saliva off my cheek.

“Elves are private with each other, and the mating rituals are few and far between. So I haven’t seen how it is done.”

“And you don’t have, like, media? Entertainment?”

He turns back to me. “We have plays and musicals. Ballet. Puppet shows for children. There are all forms of art and culture.”

I nod. “And in those plays, does no one kiss? Or...pretend to mate?”

“Mating is...”

“Private. Got it,” I finish for him, thinking. “And where does the licking come from?”

“From watching the reindeer mates groom each other after they breed,” he says.

It is so utterly stupid that I find this hot, while at the same time hilarious: the image of Cyran standing in a field watching reindeer sex, taking mental notes.

“You like to watch reindeer fuck, do you?”

Cyran sits up tall. “Of course. I must do so. I note every mating interaction to ensure the most accurate records of a female reindeer’s heat and gestation.”

Gestation records, tracking animal ovulation periods—okay, that’s way less hot. We need to change the subject fast.

“Would you like me to show you how to kiss?”

Cyran arches an eyebrow skeptically. “Would it please you to view me as your pupil?”

Oh, brother. “You overthink everything. Showing you how to kiss would be my pleasure. I’ve been staring at your lips for hours, and I can’t get the shape of them out of my head.”

“And that’s good?”

I nod and glance down at his erection, pushing against the material of his tunic. “Penises aren’t the only thing that gets erect when humans are aroused. Thinking about kissing your lips makes me quiver between my thighs.”

He blinks and wets his lips. “Say more about that. I want to understand everything about you.”

I feel my tiny muscles contract with delight. “It’s like, everything feels tighter and looser at the same time. I have a bit of tissue that gets hard when I want someone to touch me there. I get wet and sort of flex involuntarily. Sometimes I leak.”

Understanding washes over his face. “I also am leaking for you right now.”

This is the craziest conversation I’ve ever had with a potential sex partner, and yet it’s working for me.

Captor. He’s still your captor, even if he did offer to bring you back to the States.

My sexy, sexy captor.

Maybe I’m just a dumb bish. Or incredibly horny. Or both.

“I think you’re going to like this,” I say, tossing all those red flags aside one last time. I lean in close until our mouths are inches apart.

A gentle smile that reaches his eyes. “I liked licking you,” he murmurs.

“Save that for my pussy.”

Confused, he says, “I have no desire to lick a feline.”

“Shut up.”

He takes this as a cue to close his eyes, and I'm good with that.

I meet him in the middle once more.

Cyran's lips are softer and warmer than they appear. His elvish face may be made of hard corners and chiseled stone, but he is pure heat against my lips.

I sweep my lips over his full, velvety ones, feeling his shuddering breath against my face.

I kiss him gently and playfully at first, coaxing him out. I show him how fun it is, slowly and sweetly, letting him figure out how to kiss back.

Teasing out that instinct doesn't take long. Soon, Cyran kisses me back with added pressure that sends tingles all over my skin.

He pulls back from the kiss and studies my face with wonderment and curiosity. "I like this as much as the licking."

"Then you might like this part even more," I say, easing back in and licking the tip of my tongue lightly over his lips, urging him to open his mouth.

When he does, I slip my tongue past his lips, touching it to his.

This ignites a fierceness in him that I had already sensed was there. And thank God for it.

The growl in his throat vibrates into me, spiking my arousal.

He lets go and takes control. He cups my face and pushes his tongue into my mouth, which I gladly accept. He licks into me, and our tongues slide, one over the other, and everything is warm and wet and delicious.

His nose bumps mine, and I laugh quietly. Cyran takes my face in his hands again and tilts me this way and that, looking for the best angle.

"This is good. Move me however you want me. I like it."

He explores my mouth, his hot breath growing more ragged. “I thought you liked being in control.”

“Not as much as you do,” I breathe, closing the distance between us again.

Cyran’s hands pet my hair. “That is true. It is my natural instinct to dominate over the weaker species.”

“Maybe don’t talk about me being a weaker species and the domination might work for me.”

“You humans have many questions and many requirements leading up to the mating ritual,” he says, his brows coming together.

I let the blanket drop to my waist so that I can reach for him, because kissing is no longer cutting it for me. I need more.

“But I promise, it’s all worth it.”

Chapter Eight

Cyran

Her breasts are like nothing I've ever seen. Round, plump and flushed with excitement. Her pink nipples are hard and call out to me.

Ivy draws in a shaky breath. "Are these different than what you were expecting?"

I tell her the truth. "They are far, far better."

"Touch me, Cyran."

I lift one breast, noticing how it fills my hand, noticing the heaviness. The skin is soft everywhere as I trace my fingers around and around. Everywhere is smooth, except the puckered nipples. I do the same with the other breast, noticing Ivy's reaction. She emits little gasps and moans as I run my fingers across each one.

"Is this what you meant by your erection?"

She stifles a laugh by biting her luscious bottom lip. "No, not exactly."

Too bad, because I'm currently fascinated by her breasts.

"If you're going to fondle my tits, you'd better be kissing me at the same time."

The urge to do exactly that is overwhelming, and I welcome the invitation to kiss her full breasts. She stifles a

moan as I lean over and take one nipple into my mouth, squeezing her other one between my first two fingers. They grow tighter in response to my mouth and my touch. My cock begs to be set free, for me to be as bare as she is.

“Cyran,” she whispers with urgency.

I wonder if the opposite nipple tastes the same as this one. I let her breast slip out of my mouth and see it shining with my saliva, putting filthier thoughts in my head. I would very much like to see her breasts, her throat, and her face wet with my spend.

My eyes lock on her in fascination as Ivy rises up on her knees.

“What are you doing, my pretty Ivy?”

“Kneeling. So you don’t have to bend over so much, tall boy.” With a wink, she holds one perfect teat aloft and feeds it to me.

I take it into my mouth hungrily, inhaling her tender flesh with long pulls, thoroughly enjoying how her skin is flushed where I’ve kissed her.

My teeth skim over her nipple, and her delicate body jerks against me.

“Cyran,” she whimpers, and I feel her pelvis nudge me.

I reach down between us and cup her sex, petting her soft, short curls.

“Oh my God, you’re making me insanely wet. Your teeth...your hand...”

There’s a desperate note to her words that I can’t deny. I understand this feeling, for it’s also the same urgency I feel.

“I need to bite you. It won’t hurt.”

“Do it!”

I suckle her again, grazing her with my teeth and leaving a love bite on the side of one soft round teat.

I pull her closer and give her another tonguing kiss that she likes and that I'm starting to grow addicted to.

“I would like to feel your erection now, Ivy.”

Chapter Nine

I vy

“My...my what?”

“You said...”

Oh. I remember now.

I climb onto Cyran’s lap and straddle his long legs.

When I do that, the lines in his face grow harder and his glowing skin seems tight over his bones.

“What is it, Cyran?”

“Your scent. It is overwhelming.”

“Is that good or bad?”

He makes eye contact with me and grits out, “It is exquisite.”

My anxiety calms down, and I give him a relieved smile. “Thank you.”

“It makes me want to do unspeakable things that I dare not say aloud.”

I reach out and take one of his long-fingered hands and guide him between my legs as I say, “Trust me, you won’t shock me. Say anything. I promise it will only make it better. Unless you want to have a threesome because I’m not good with sharing you.”

“Sharing is not an option,” he rumbles. “You are mine and mine alone, Ivy.”

Inwardly I shiver at his words. They excite me in the moment, because I know this is temporary. He only wants to use me, and for me to use him, for now. To get through the loneliness of Christmas.

“Yours alone,” I say, nodding.

“Good little human,” he replies.

His words make me wetter.

Cyran’s shoulders ripple as his fingers explore my folds. “Something trembled when I said that.”

“Say more,” I whisper.

“What do I say?”

I let go of his hand. “Say whatever you’re thinking and feeling.”

“This slickness between your legs is for me and no one else. The thought that I make your human cunt wet and ready is utterly intoxicating. I want to leave a mark on your throat, on your teats. I want to make your teats, your mouth, and your cunt swollen and raw from our mating. I am overwhelmed by every aspect of you. I want to rut into you like an animal even though you are so small, so vulnerable.”

“You should do that. I can handle it. Except don’t call them teats, those are what cows have.”

“Very well,” he says. “And I suppose when you’ve finished feeding our child, you won’t then let me have my fill?”

Wh-what did he just say?

His long thick fingers find my tight button, and I cry out.

“Cyran!”

As if some spell has been broken, he abruptly removes his hand. And I am empty.

No, no, no. What did I do wrong?

Chapter Ten

C yran

“Have I hurt you?”

The moment I found the tiny feminine erection between her lips, I felt triumphant. I thought Ivy wanted me to find it.

And yet she cried out like it was all too intense.

“No,” she insists. “Not hurt! You didn’t hurt me! Please touch me again, it felt wonderful.”

“But you acted as if I hurt you.”

Ivy climbs off of me, her breasts heaving. She makes a sound like a frustrated animal, then grabs my shoulders and pulls me on top of her on the bed, her legs spread wide.

“I get loud when I’m ready to come. Don’t you dare freaking stop or I’m going to start cussing for real!”

Throughout her intoxicating kisses, she places my hand back where she wants it. Again, I find her delicious heat and feel her honey spill over my fingers.

I make contact with her clit and she jerks. “Yes, there! Oh my God...”

Her eyes squeeze tight.

“Here?”

“Yes! Circles,” she squeaks. “Make circles and fuck me with your finger!”

Ah. I understand. It’s much, much too small to fist like my own erection. Circling it with my thumb, I sink my biggest finger into her heat. The muscles of her sweet cunt grip me tightly, and my release closes in.

I fight it back.

Not yet.

Her small cries rise in pitch as she thrusts against my strokes. I push in and out while circling her clit, and I can’t help but think she would enjoy this more if she were on top once more.

I sit up and roll her onto my lap. Her eyes fly open in surprise, and she rolls her hips forward, riding my hand properly, grinding, and rolling her head back in pleasure.

“You are beautiful, my Ivy,” I rasp, nuzzling my face between her round breasts.

“Cyran! Yes, yes, yes!” Ivy hisses, and I feel something alter inside her. Her cunt spills her honey, hot and sticky, as her muscles grip my finger. Ivy arches her back as her release takes over, sending her into a fugue state. I recognize this feeling, though it is far more intense than anything I’ve experienced before.

“That,” she says, once she’s caught her breath, rubbing a hand through my long hair, “was my pussy you just destroyed.”

“Destroyed?” I ask, alarmed.

Ivy laughs and collapses against me, wrapping her arms around my neck and tackling me onto my back with wet, playful kisses.

“It’s an expression. Wow, you really have zero contact with the human world, don’t you?”

“But now I have you to teach me everything.”

She smiles, and it fills the empty spaces in my chest. She belongs here, lying on my chest, smiling at me. She'll be the perfect wife and mate and mother of our young, if that is meant to be.

“Want me to show you something else that humans like to do?”

“My Ivy, I want you to show me everything.” I cup her face and draw her down for another hungry kiss.

When she pulls away, she blesses all of me with her sweet, soft lips. She uses her tongue and mouth on the skin of my chest and stomach.

“What do you want me to do, Ivy?”

“Just lie there and look pretty,” she says.

I bark out a laugh, but this is rapidly followed by a wild intake of breath as I watch those swollen lips kiss the head of my cock.

“Ivy!” I grind out.

I've lost the ability to speak. I sense only Ivy and her wet, warm mouth teasing my erection, sucking it in, licking off my precum and swallowing. Looking down, my eyes lock with hers.

I watch in amazement while desperately trying not to explode down her throat.

“I c-can see why humans...like this.”

It's becoming embarrassing now, how talented this human is with sex in comparison to me.

Ivy milks my length with her hollowed-out cheeks and lets it pop free of her lips. “You're holding back, Cyran. Let it go. It's okay...I can't wait to tell everybody I know that I swallowed for a ding-dang Christmas elf.”

“No,” I grit out. “Not down your throat. I...I...” I'm afraid if I say another word, it will all be over.

Ivy sits up. “Tell me. Say it.”

“I want to see how it looks on you.”

Slowly, understanding dawns on her lovely face. “Oh. You want to come on my tits. That’s normal, Cyran.”

“Is it normal to also want to release on your face?”

She laughs. “Totally. But one thing at a time, big fella. Nobody makes that much semen.”

“Now I get my chance,” I say, arching an eyebrow, “to teach you a thing about elves.”

“Teach me, then. And say when,” Ivy says, crawling down my body and taking me into her mouth once more. As she pumps me with her mouth and licks her hands to use those at the root, I am spellbound by my sorceress of a human.

When I hit the back of her throat, I almost forget where I am or what I’m supposed to do.

“When,” I grunt. “When!”

Ivy pops me out of her mouth and closes her eyes. I watch in awe as she squeezes and pumps my release all over her pretty face. I come and come, spilling down her soft cheeks and over her chin, dripping down her perfect throat.

She angles over me as I come and come in violent bursts, releasing my seed over her bitten breasts.

“So much...there’s so much!” Ivy cries.

I reach my hand down to pet her hair, threading my fingers through it.

“I know.”

Ivy looks up at me and licks her lips. “Can I? Please?”

“If you wish.”

My Ivy takes me into her mouth once again, and I wrap her hair around my fist.

Chapter Eleven

I vy

Cyran tastes like snow, sugar, and cream in my mouth.

Next time he makes his terrible tea, I'll just ask him to nut in it before serving it to me.

This is it. I'm officially ruined for human men. Every little thing about Cyran makes me fall for him. His kisses are addicting enough. Lord almighty, I'll never be able to look at a puny human erection again. Not when I've had that baseball bat shoved down my throat.

My Christmas lover pulls me up by the hair to kiss me fiercely. His orgasm doesn't seem to have abated his arousal at all.

"Lie down, my queen, and let me paint you."

At first I have a passing thought that he might want to paint a picture of me. But then I see it. As I lie back on the fur, his long elven fingers smear through the mess he made. He then proceeds to paint me with it. First my nipples, then my lips.

My spent body trembles as I watch him use my body as his canvas.

When he's satisfied with his artwork, he kisses me fearlessly, spearing his tongue into my mouth. His still-rigid erection presses into my thigh.

“How are you still hard?” I ask.

“Because all I can think about,” he says, “is feeding from you as you fed from me.”

Cyran underlines this by cupping my mound, sending a fresh wave of pleasure through me.

“I thought I was finished but...yes, please!”

I love how this creature half-asses nothing the second I give him permission. I love the way he knocks my legs apart and spreads open my lips with his fingers, growling as his eyes feast on me first.

“You’re swollen and needy again,” he says through gritted teeth.

Did I mention I can’t get enough of his bare-bones descriptions? He has no time for flowery words.

I barely have a second to reply, “Please” when Cyran buries his face between my thighs and plasters his long, wide tongue over my sex. He takes his time, slowly building me up again, spearing his tongue into my cunt, delivering loud, licking kisses to my clit, devouring every inch of me until my back rises off the bed and I come so hard that when I scream, I make no sound.

I’m a puddle, and I’m pretty sure I’ve made a puddle.

Chapter Twelve

C yran

“It is time. You are ready to take me now,” I say, lifting her limp, flushed body onto my lap, her back to my front.

“Okay...”

“If you want me to keep going.”

“Yes, Cyran. Um, protection?” She looks back at me over her shoulder, her glassy eyes curious.

I think I know what this means. “It is unlikely that we will reproduce unless you are in your heat.”

She blushes. Even after I’ve had my greedy mouth between her legs, this can make her blush. She’s more charming by the minute.

“I’m not ovulating, if that’s what you mean, reindeer man,” she says with a sultry smile.

I groan against her back, kissing the bumps along her spine, enjoying the little shivers that gives her.

“Up,” I order her, and my good little Ivy comes up on her knees.

“Now bend forward a little so I can mount you, wife.”

She laughs but does as she’s told.

I sink my cock into her, inch by inch until I’m fully seated.

A curse erupts from my mouth as I'm overwhelmed with the sensation of her slickness gripping me tighter than I ever dreamed.

She squeezes impossibly tighter, and I let out a grunt of pleasure.

With my hands locked on to her thick hips, I begin to move her.

I've found my human. I've found my forever person. I've found my home.

Chapter Thirteen

I vy

I feel like a rag doll, in the best way possible.

I have given in to Cyran's manipulations, trusting him to take care of me. He has my legs spread wide over his thighs, my feet hooked under his knees.

Up and down, in and out, again and again, Cyran ruts into me from behind. There is so much skin-to-skin contact that we slide together, my back and thighs sweating all over his damp chest and legs.

I can't think of any way this would work naturally with a normal partner, but Cyran is anything but normal and natural.

He's supernatural, driving into me with such power, while his strong hands pump me. Using me. I've never been so happy to be used.

Everything he does, every which way he moves me hits me in a new, mind-bogglingly perfect spot.

I close my eyes when the rhythm becomes a meditation.

I wish I could see his face.

I reach back and run one hand through Cyran's mane of white hair.

When I do this, he whispers praises into my ear.

“You are perfect. Beyond words, my queen.”

All this talk of queens and perfection is making my heart ache for what I know he can't give me. It's just sexy talk. It's just words that elevate good sex into amazing sex.

My hand travels down over the angles of Cyran's regal face, that chiseled, tight jaw. I can feel that he's close: The muscles of his chest bunch hard against my back. His growling and grunting grow louder.

I reach my other hand downward, caressing my clit that's inexplicably tight and throbbing again.

I'm overwhelmed with the dual sensations, lost in the arousal in me that builds faster and faster.

My orgasm pulses through me as Cyran spasms, releasing thick jets inside me.

My pussy tightens around him, and he roars.

“Ivy!”

“Give it to me.”

“You have all of me. You can have everything you want,” he grits out.

I'm not expecting such sweet words, and again I feel that tightness in my chest.

He's making me want to turn around and kiss him, but I let his spasms slowly recede, enjoying the way he groans against my damp skin.

I'm trembling through my aftershocks, feeling thoroughly fucked.

As if I truly am a rag doll, Cyran lifts me off of him and lays me down gently on the bed.

I lie there, breathless, aching for a kiss. A cuddle.

We'll have to work on his aftercare technique.

I notice his dick is still hard as he gets up from the bed, leaving me alone and trembling on the fur blanket. It bounces as he gets up and pulls on his leather kilt, and I can still see it

moving under the material as he pads barefoot to the kitchen area, his bare back marked by my fingernails.

“Do you...do you want to go again?” I ask.

“I am content. It is now time for you to eat and build your strength back up.”

“You’re still hard.”

“Elves do not require a refractory period once they are settled with their mate.”

I try not to think too hard about the terms he uses. Mate and settled. He is a different species. It doesn’t mean the same thing that it means to me, a human. There aren’t emotions attached to all of this.

I’ll just have to get over it.

“Okay. Do you need some help?”

“I do not.”

Cyran has no refrigerator or anything that looks like a human kitchen. But there is a compartment that when he opens it, seems to be built inside a tunnel of snow. He pulls several items out of it and in moments, there are delicious scents coming from the cookstove in the fireplace.

I’m happy enough to watch him, but I’m feeling silly just lying here. “I’d like to help. I mean, I’m not half bad in the kitchen in my own world.”

Cyran shoots me a pleased look over his shoulder. “Very well. Join me, my talented mate.”

Every time he uses the word “mate,” I melt a little more. I think I’m starting to fall. Starting to have real feelings for Cyran.

Quickly, I throw on my pajamas that are drying on a screen near the massive fireplace, and I notice it when Cyran gives me an approving gaze despite my fumbling and hopping.

“I will seek help from the Uncommon Elves to sew some finer, more suitable clothes for you,” he says.

I'd hate for anyone to go to that much trouble for a visitor, but I wouldn't say no to something to wear other than these pajamas.

I join him at the cooking area, and he hands me a strange utensil to push a spicy-scented meat around on the cooking surface over the fire. "Not exactly a Kitchen Aid stove, but I'll manage. You stoke the fire."

He chuckles as he deftly picks up the poker, the same one I dropped on the floor earlier in my feeble plan to fend him off.

How insanely quickly I went from threatening him, my captor, to lust, to catching feelings.

And what will become of us? Me and a Christmas elf, for Pete's sake.

Sometime soon, I'll have to sign a nondisclosure agreement in Santa's lawyer's office and be on my way, never to speak of this encounter again. Probably.

"Was it you who made the cookies for Santa?"

"I did," I say. "My grandmother taught me to bake and cook. I don't do half as well as she used to."

He chuckles again and reminds me, "You must be good at it since Santa didn't even get a single cookie this year."

"What?"

"You ate them all."

"I did not!" I say with a laugh.

"You most certainly did. There was a plate of nothing but crumbs on the floor next to you when I found you."

"Lies. All lies," I say.

"I can't lie, but I will try if it allows you to keep your pride, my mate."

There's that word again. Don't swoon, Ivy. It doesn't mean anything.

I laugh a little too forcefully as I bottle up my feelings. "It would save me my pride, thank you very much," I say as I

watch him slice chunks of fluffy, seeded bread.

He butters the bread, skewers the slices, and places them over the flame. “I don’t see how it matters. You should be proud to have such an appetite. I’m going to enjoy feeding you. I’m sure the cookies were as delicious as you are.”

I feel myself blush. “They were pretty good.”

“Will you make them for me next Christmas?”

Hmm. Does this imply a yearly booty call? I’m down for that. I’m down for anything that gets me away from the Frosts. I bristle then as I realize that I most likely will not have a job with the Frosts after this disappearing act, whether I was kidnapped or not.

“It’s a deal,” I say.

Moments later, I’m back in the easy chair where he’d first fed me that terrible tea.

This time, he pulls up a seat next to me and places a tray of delicious-smelling foods between us. Besides the buttered, toasted bread, there’s a pungent hunk of cheese that Cyran assures me is fine to eat even though it’s green. There’s a cup of dried fruits and nuts. Something that looks like roasted purple and yellow carrots sits in a bowl, and I smile.

“What is it?” Cyran asks.

“Mrs. Frost said that leaving carrots out for the reindeer is so cliché,” I say.

Cyran laughs. “They do like their carrots, but they prefer radishes and beets.”

I pout at him. “Don’t start telling me Gwen Frost is right about something. I’ll get jealous.”

Cyran leans over the tray of food and presses a gentle kiss to my lips, then hands me a skewered meat.

I take it from him and, still smiling, bite into it. It’s a bit gamey, but it’s salty and tastes good and reminds me of venison that my grandfather used to preserve after deer hunting every fall.

“I’ll have to make you jealous more often. It gives me a good reason to practice kissing you.”

“You don’t need an excuse,” I say, blushing.

The whole exchange feels so homey that it makes my heart ache.

When we’ve devoured everything on the tray including the strange-looking cheese that ends up tasting like something close to aged Swiss, Cyran takes my hand, and I smile.

I wonder if he’s going to take me back to the bed, which I would very much like.

Instead, he guides me to sit on the floor in front of the fire, where he proceeds to spoon-feed me a sweet, custard-like substance. There’s a big bowl of it, and only one spoon for us to share. Okay. I’m good with this. We did swap spit and lots of other bodily fluids already. It tastes like vanilla and cinnamon and has a pleasant enough texture.

“Interesting dessert.”

“This is the tradition. After an elf feeds his mate, they return to the marriage bed to continue breeding.”

He holds the spoon out to me, but this time I don’t take it. Instead my mind is reeling as I unpack these phrases.

“Mate,” I repeat. “You keep saying that, and now I’m starting to think you mean it.”

“Yes,” he answers, his top lip curling up on one side.

Gosh, he’s beautiful. But I need answers. “Tradition... breeding... marriage bed?”

Cyran blinks down at me. “Yes?”

“What’s happening here?”

“We’re married now, my love. You are my mate, and now we are fulfilling the ancient tradition of carrying on the species.”

I choke on the rich dessert.

Chapter Fourteen

C yran

Ivy is so delicate, even when eating food. She chokes easily, gets lost easily. What else will I have to protect her from?

“I will have to keep a better eye on you from now on,” I say, rubbing her back as she slurps down her tea once her throat is clear of the dessert she choked on. “I’ve nearly lost you too many times now.”

To my surprise, she gets up and stands behind the cozy chair. I don’t like the look on her face. She’s confused. Upset.

“Ivy?”

“What in the H.E. double-hockey-sticks are you talking about? We’re not married!”

“I know marriage rituals where you are from may be different, but I assure you we are joined forever now. We have completed the ritual.”

She shakes her head. “No, we had great sex. Awesome sex. Sex that will be forever burned into my brain. That’s not wedding bells where I come from.”

I do not understand why my wife is suddenly so angry.

“Did you not wish to marry me?”

“Marry you!?”

“I told you we were mates.”

“I know you did, but I didn’t take that literally. I thought it was just pillow talk.”

“Do pillows talk where you come from?”

My wife makes a noise of outrage.

“I need to go for a walk,” she says.

“No, we’re not doing that again.”

Ivy pinches the bridge of her nose. “Fine. Where can I go that is safe to take a walk? I need air, and I need some distance.”

We stand off for a time, while my heart breaks. I don’t understand why she is fighting this. I don’t understand what I did wrong.

“I said you were mine. You said you were jealous of me with anyone else. Everything was clear.”

Ivy shakes her head, and my heart is on the floor. “You said all those words, but I didn’t understand what I was getting into.”

I draw myself tall and say indignantly, “I speak perfectly plain English.”

Ivy’s chin trembles. “Maybe you don’t.”

While I’m trying to figure out what she means, the door suddenly flies open, and Eliyen, the village messenger, enters unannounced.

“I’m the middle of something!” I bark.

“Santa requests your presence,” Eliyen replies in her regal tone. “Which is why I didn’t knock.”

If Ivy was not already outraged, she is now. “Who are you?”

I make awkward introductions. “Eliyen, this is Ivy. Ivy, this is Eliyen, Santa’s snitch.”

Eliyen draws herself up to full height. “Are you coming with me or not? Nicholas is already annoyed that he has to

deal with a hearing on Christmas Day, when he should be sleeping.”

“A hearing?”

“Don’t act like you don’t know what this is about. Come along.” She reaches for me, but Ivy, to my surprise, steps between us. “He’s not going anywhere.”

Eliyen sighs as if she’s being put upon, then turns to me. “Will it help the situation if the human accompanies you? He’s going to want to speak to her too.”

The three of us come to an agreement that Eliyen will transport us to the village in her sled, but first I insist on bundling up my wife in a spare fur coat and leather boots. And she won’t survive the descent without the special broth to keep her warm.

Fortunately for everyone involved, Ivy drinks from the thermos of broth and doesn’t shrink away from me as I hold her tightly next to me in the sled. For a human, this trip is a harrowing, speedy descent down a narrow, steep path with many twists and turns. My Ivy looks adorable, squeezing her eyes shut and clutching the broth.

“This is crazy,” I hear her mutter. “I’m going to freaking kick you in the gonads when we get to the bottom.”

“You may. But please spare me my ability to procreate.”

Ivy is still angry with me, but I adore her spirit even if I don’t understand.

Upon our arrival at the village square, I expect to see a crowd, ready to demand that I be brought up on charges of kidnapping. But then I remember it’s Christmas Day. Everyone is either sleeping or getting drunk with the mountain trolls.

I help Ivy exit the sled, holding her close to me as I set her dainty feet on the ground.

Eliyen gestures for us to follow her to the meeting cave.

“I’m going to take that walk now,” Ivy says.

“You don’t know the village. You’ll get lost.”

Ivy shakes her head. “I won’t go far. I just need some space to breathe and to think, Cyran.”

Eliyen nods. “I would grant her her space, considering what you’ve done.”

I would like the know-it-all of the North Pole to stick her uppity attitude where the sun doesn’t shine. But rudeness won’t get me anywhere, I’m afraid.

I reach out and take Ivy’s hand. “If you run, I’ll never stop looking for you. And no, that’s not a threat. It’s a promise.”



Inside the ice-sculpted meeting chamber, Santa Claus sits alone, glowering at me as Eliyen, my escort, waits for the hearing to begin.

“You can go, El,” Santa says. “Thank you.”

The messenger elf puffs up her chest proudly, then leaves. “It’s an honor to serve.”

“Suck-up,” I whisper.

She shoots me a look over her shoulder as the door closes behind her.

The ice walls of the cave glow with lights that have been magicked to imitate the aurora borealis. Santa has set out a pot of tea on a tree trunk that doubles as a table. Who knows why the man insists on such rustic surroundings when we live in a perfectly modern village. Perhaps it has to do with his time spent in exile, many years ago, before matters were set right.

“Cyran,” he says, pouring my tea, “Am I a patient boss?”

“Yes, Eldrin. I mean, Nicholas.”

“Are you somehow unsatisfied with my leadership?”

I feel as if I’m going to be exiled or punished no matter what I say, so I speak the truth.

“Personally, I think rotating jobs is bullshit.”

Santa raises his eyebrows at me. “Do you? You sound like my wife.”

“Perhaps you should listen to her,” I say.

Santa glares at me as he drinks his tea down and pours another.

“However,” I add, “if you hadn’t made us rotate, then I wouldn’t have met Ivy.”

He pauses with his teacup halfway to his mouth, then sets it down.

“So kidnapping Ivy wasn’t some sort of rebellion?”

“No, sir.”

“What was it that made you take the girl?”

I swallow, fighting back against the tremble in my spine under the gaze of the man in charge of Christmas.

“It was...”

“Yes?”

“Love, sir.”

He sits back and studies me for an uncomfortably long time.

“How do you know it was love?”

I shouldn’t say it, but I blurt it out anyway. “How did you know it was love when you took Clara?”

Humans might be surprised to hear the jolly old elf give a territorial growl, but not us elves. He’s a good Santa. The best Santa in recent memory. But he’s an ancient, powerful, and dangerous creature, like the rest of us. Cross him, and you’ll be praying for the demon Krampus to come and intervene.

Santa leans forward in his seat and fixes me with a baleful stare. “This will go better for you if you keep my wife’s name out of your mouth.”

“Yes, sir.”

He sits back and picks up his tea. He's waiting for me to beg forgiveness, to beg to keep my job.

"Your waiting period is ridiculous," I say.

"Is it?"

"Yes. I saw her, and I knew. I just knew I couldn't wait on this system that you've put in place. You meant well, but that, too, is bullshit. I've done nothing wrong. Except for the part where I took her against her will as she slept. But I apologized to her for that. And now, we are married. I did inform her that we were mates, and I do regret not being clearer on what that meant because now she doesn't want to speak to me. But she is my mate in every way possible."

Santa gulps down more tea and refills mine. "Sounds like you two have a lot to talk about."

I blink at my boss. "I'm not being punished?"

He shrugs. "Clara's softened me up on the rules. If you would like, I can put you on official probation while you have a honeymoon. Just so everything looks on the up and up. This is what Clara calls 'the boys looking out for each other.' But I can't seem to find fault with you, not for anything worse than what I did."

I can't believe he's letting me off the hook. "Thank you, sir."

"Go find your wife and take her home."

Sheepishly, I say, "If I knew where she was, I would."

Santa laughs and rubs his belly.

"Let's see. She's a human, alone, at the North Pole. In desperate need of a friend to talk to, if I know anything about human women."

"I am her friend, and I'm right here," I say dumbly.

The old elf levels me with a serious look. "I'm talking about my wife, Cyran."

All this stress has made me a bit thick-headed. "Of course. But how do I fix this mess?"

“Humans need space and time to process.”

“I’m afraid I’ve spent too much time alone with animals and not enough time with elves, or humans, for that matter. All I want to do is wrap her in furs and keep her indoors to watch over her every second so she doesn’t hurt herself anymore.”

He settles me down with a wave of his hand. “Just take care of her. She came to your bed before. I believe, if she’s anything like Clara, she’ll open her heart to you very soon.”

Time and space.

That gives me an idea.

Chapter Fifteen

Ivy

Clara knows how to make tea that's palatable.

The only other human at the North Pole, Clara, found me walking briskly in the cold around the small village and invited me into her house.

And now, I'm sitting in front of a fire, drinking tea at freaking Santa Claus's house. I'm also wearing an assortment of items that some so-called Uncommon Elves delivered upon my arrival at Saint Nick's house: a cozy, thick robe, a long silky tunic, warm leggings, luxurious socks and gorgeous fur-lined boots. I admit it, I don't hate it here. Certainly fresh clothes and human company have boosted my mood.

Clara has listened to me vent my entire story, and now she has questions. "...So he told you that you were his mate before he...well, before he slept with you."

I nod. "'Slept' is not quite accurate, but yes."

"Honey, he gave you way more notice than Eldrin did with me."

Eldrin, from what I've gathered, was the birth name of the dude who's now Santa Claus. I'm just taking everything at face value because if I think too hard about it all, my head will explode.

"He did?"

She nods and sips her tea, and I sip mine. Dang, this is good tea. What does she do to it?

“Eldrin informed me I was his mate about five minutes after we did the deed. I was pretty pissed. But I got over it fast.”

“How? How did you get over it?”

She shrugs. “Because the human world is a dumpster fire. Here, everything is snow and sugar and cream. Easy peasy.”

Clara sees me blush at her words and winks. “Yeah. That part is pretty good, too.”

I cover my eyes.

“Honestly, could you ever go back after that?”

I think for about half a second. “No,” I laugh.

“You could demand that he take you home. He may have kidnapped you, but these guys are just giant teddy bears despite their arrogant exterior. He’ll take you home if you have something there you really want to get back to.”

I think about this and drink my tea.

“Okay, you have to tell me how you made this. I can’t stand Cyran’s tea.”

Clara laughs. “Oh, it’s spiked with mountain troll whiskey. That’s the only way we humans can stomach it.”

As we’re laughing about this, who should burst through the door unannounced but Cyran.

“Ivy! You have to listen to me.”

“Cyran? Knock much?”

“Almost never,” he says, kneeling down in front of me. “I have to talk to you.”

Clara sets down her tea and stands up, stretching. “Good talk, girlfriend. I look forward to many, many more.” She pats me on the shoulder as she walks out the door and into the snowy village outside.

I stand up as Cyran kneels at my feet.

“What is it you want to tell me?”

“I don’t have a speech prepared. But I just want to say that I did this all wrong. I saw you, and I took you. Plain and simple. Was it selfish? Yes. Illegal. I suppose.”

I snort and cross my arms over my chest.

“Should I have been clearer about the fact that by mating with me, we’d be married?”

There’s a long pause.

I shriek, “Yes! Duh!”

He nods. “Yes, yes. You’re right.”

“Thank you for saying that.”

“But I’m not sorry,” he tells me.

“See, now you lost me.”

“I’m sorry for scaring you, for confusing you. But I’m not sorry that I married you.”

This should piss me off. Why isn’t it pissing me off?

“Go on,” I say.

“If you want to leave, I’ll respect that. But we can’t simply set aside the connection we had.”

Behind him, the door creaks open, and it’s a tall, white bearded fellow in a red suit. I blanch as Cyran goes on, “...the connection we both felt when I was deep inside you, filling you...”

“Oh, excuse me,” Santa Claus says, backing out and closing the door. Outside, I hear Clara howling, “I told you our house was occupied at the moment!”

I might pass out. Santa Claus just heard all of that.

Cyran is unfazed. “...Our souls collided, Ivy. You can’t deny that.”

I swallow hard. He’s right. But that’s nothing to base a relationship on...is it?

“Let me give you another option. You could stay in the village, and we could see where this goes. I’ve already found a house for you, where you can be alone and decide when and where you want to see me. If you want to see me.

“If you choose either of those options, I’ll be fine. I could wait for you. Or I’ll live in torment forever because that’s what I deserve. To live alone without my one true mate.”

I roll my eyes. “You don’t deserve eternal torment. That’s stupid. Maybe a little torment.”

His throat bobs. “So you wish to leave.”

“I didn’t say that.”

Cyran shoots to his feet. “You’re staying! I knew it!”

“Shut up, I didn’t say that either,” I laugh.

He kisses me so hard it scrambles my thoughts. What was he groveling about already? Oh, right. Marrying me in a pretty freakin’ sneaky way.

“But you’ll stay.”

I stare up at him for a long time.

Finally, I say, “You know, it could be the mountain troll whiskey talking, but yes. I’ll stay.”

Cyran lets out a giant whoop and scoops me up into his arms, princess-style.

He kisses me again and presses his forehead to mine. “Forgive me, wife.”

I rub the tip of my nose against his. “You elves don’t have, like, multiple wives or anything, do you?”

“No,” he says. “But we can pretend, if it will make you jealous.”

“Don’t ever pretend,” I say, feeling the green monster form in my belly. I guess I don’t even like him to joke about that stuff.

“I promise. And I promise to make your sacrifice worth it.”

I think about what Clara said. It's not much of a sacrifice, compared to the life I lived before. I'm not going to tell him that, though, not yet. The groveling is too much fun.

“And I promise that in time, you'll come to love me and see me and accept me as your husband.”

The fact that he went to the trouble of finding me a place to stay, to give me my space, speaks volumes about who he is.

“I've already decided,” I tell him. “I'm staying with you.”

Cyran closes his eyes and whispers, “I love you, Ivy.”

“And I already love you, Cyran.”

My Christmas elf kisses me again. I close my eyes, and I see forever.

Epilogue

C yran

About fifty years later

Where is my wife, so that I can take her somewhere private and flip her skirt up over her head?

Ivy is lost among the crowd on the village square. Although I'm not a fan of parties, I have to give my wife credit. This is the most raucous party the North Pole has ever seen. Drunken elves are climbing the light poles. The trolls have taken over the karaoke stage. Wood sprites fly to and fro over the crowd of revelers, dumping glitter over everything and laughing maniacally. I tried to escape the scene by sneaking away to the reindeer barn, only to find an unknown human having relations with an orc in Santa's sleigh. I didn't have it in me to chase them out. The human seemed on the verge of a "breakthrough." Also, orcs are notoriously mean when interrupted.

Who invited the orcs, anyway?

That'd be my wife, Ivy. My perfect present who confounds me and drives me mad with desire, even when she's away from me. She and our three little half-elves are all I think about.

I trudge to the food table, ready to fill my stomach with something tasty to pass the time.

As I scan the food buffet for something other than pizza and corn dogs, a gruff voice behind me asks, “Who invited the mountain trolls?”

I turn around and there is Santa Claus, his red cheeks and nose showing evidence that he’s been into the troll whiskey.

“Ivy invited them, sir.”

He grunts and peers past me, examining the food table. “The humans are taking over,” Santa sighs, picking up a mozzarella stick and sniffing it.

“You started it!” Clara chirps. Santa’s human wife snatches away the cheese stick before her husband can toss it in the trash.

“I suppose I did start that tradition,” Santa says.

The old man can complain all he wants about the unrefined tastes of humans, but I see the way he watches his wife wrap her lips around that cheese stick. She blushes under his gaze.

I turn away, leaving them alone with their sultry looks and their suggestive cheese moment.

Surely, my Ivy is ready to leave the party by now.

At the North Pole, a fiftieth anniversary isn’t considered that great of an achievement, but Ivy has become pretty damn popular around here — almost as popular as Clara.

Clara and Ivy were pioneers who blazed quite a trail of followers. The North Pole has welcomed a dozen more human/elf matches in recent years — including all of Ivy’s favorite friends from back home. The resulting baby boom would have presented a housing crisis if it weren’t for, well, Christmas magic.

That’s the thing about Santa. The North Pole never runs out of food, shelter, heat, or water. Human aging slows to the same pace as the elves. No one fights or commits crime. So, the population boom is a non-issue.

My Ivy wanted a huge celebration for our 50th year together, and she made it happen.

Clara and Ivy enlisted my help to festoon the downtown square with cheerful, blinking lights, ice sculptures and greenery. A dozen or so elves have helped prepare the most exquisite food known to elven kind, alongside the aforementioned pizza and corndogs and cheese sticks.

A loud screeching has me covering my ears and I whip around to locate the sound.

At the center of the village square is my Ivy on stage, singing a karaoke duet with one of the orcs.

I watch this display in befuddled amusement. I do not like the way her singing partner stares at her. He's so tall, he can see down the neckline of her low-cut fur-trimmed dress.

My rosy-cheeked Ivy is oblivious to the leering. When she sees me approach, she jumps up and down, waving at me, her barely-covered breasts bouncing joyfully.

That's it.

I'm on top of the situation before I give it another thought.

The orc protests as I take the stage and haul away my wife, bending her over my shoulder. "Hey! We were just getting to the bridge!"

"We're done here," I snap, and though I doubt any orc has ever backed down from an elf, I don't have time for a fight.

Ivy squawks as we make our way across the village square. I'm headed back to the barn. "Cyran! What are you doing?"

"You've had enough fun without me for one day."

"But the party!"

"Will go on without you for five minutes."

"Five minutes!? Is that all it takes?" Ivy teases.

I slap her plump bottom for that one.

Ivy squirms on my shoulder but it only increases my need for her.

The door to the reindeer barn slides open with an thud, though I don't remember touching it. It could have flung itself out of the way by the sheer force of my approach.

“Out!” I roar.

The people hooking up in Santa's sleigh sit up in fright, then scatter with their tails between their legs. Some of them with actual tails.

“Wait! Not the tack room!” Ivy protests, her words slightly slurred.

“Would you rather I find an empty stall with fresh clean straw? Not the most convenient for bending you over.”

“Straw is fine!”

She must be joking. Straw? My Ivy would never.

When I push open the tack room door, she tries one more time to halt me. “But think of the children!”

I cackle at this. “Our three little ones are at a sleepover with...”

I trail off at the sight of the tack room. In the center is an enormous, hand-carved work table that wasn't there before.

This throws me off so much I have to set my wife down to examine the table.

I say nothing at first, but run my hands over the smooth wood top, the raw edges, the ornate carved legs. “Where did this come from?”

“Merry Christmas, husband.”

Spinning to face my wife, I spot the sheepish look on her face. “I wanted to keep you busy so you wouldn't be tempted to visit the barn until we opened our presents later tonight,” she says.

I'm confused. “So, you threw the biggest party the North Pole has ever seen? That was somehow supposed to keep me away from my present?”

Ivy shrugs. “It was a bit overdramatic. I admit it. Do you like it?”

I capture Ivy in my arms faster than words can leave my mouth.

Our lips meet in a passionate kiss. I slide my arms around her middle and pull her close, her barely-covered breasts heaving against my ribs. “I love it. And it gives me the perfect opportunity to give you your present.”

Ivy tilts her head to ask a question but then her eyes go wide as I let go of her and drop my kilt, freeing my cock.

She gasps, then gets a heated, excited look on her face. Slowly, she turns and bends over the side of the table like the good girl she is.

“Hold on tight,” I instruct her.

Her trembling fingers barely have a moment to curl around the rough wood edge on the far side of the table before I plunge into her.

“Yes, Cyran!”

I’ve taken such good care of her that she wants for nothing. All my Ivy wanted for Christmas this year was a surprise secret moment with just the two of us. We’ve been so busy raising our half-elves that we never seem to have time to ourselves anymore.

I thought that a lack of foreplay would hurt her, but I find my wife slick and ready. And so tight I gasp for air.

I push so hard the legs scrape against the slate floor. “Is this what you wanted? No foreplay? Just my whole cock buried inside you at once?”

She squeaks a barely audible, “Yes!”

“Ready yourself, woman.”

“Yes, Cyran.”

My favorite words from her ruby lips echo in my head as I drive into her, putting all my love and need and possessiveness and jealousy into her.

“Did you like the way that orc was leering at you, wife?” I grip her hips and pull her back against me as I thrust. She’s forced to let go of the edge, and I love the way she scrambles for purchase.

“Did it make you jealous?” Ivy asks.

I lean over and growl into her ear. “You know it drove me mad.”

“Then I liked it,” she says. “I think jealousy made you even bigger.”

I answer with a pounding thrust that has her moaning and squeezing me so tight I can barely breathe.

With her face resting on the table, she looks back at me and spreads her legs wider. My mouth waters at the sight of the tiny rosette between her cheeks.

“Do it,” she says, reading my mind.

Ivy writhes against the table, and I find myself feeling jealous of the wood itself.

Quickly, I position her so she grips the closest edge, allowing her to push back as she pleases, and allowing me to reach around and finger her clit as I thrust into her. Soon enough, her luscious body jerks as her orgasm takes hold. She contracts around me and I can’t hold back, releasing into her.

While she moans through her release, I pull out and kneel behind her and let my hunger take over. Spreading her plump cheeks, I move in close, and taste that dainty, tight spot.

Come again? I just might.

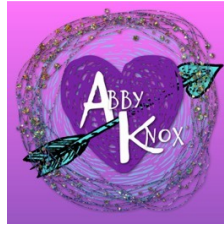
“Cyran! Oh my god!” Ivy cries.

“You are still my perfect present, my little human,” I growl between long, deep licks of her sweet sugar. “My perfect present. Every year.”

THE END

Thank you for reading [Bagged by the Elf](#)! If you enjoyed this story, please consider leaving a review. Also, don't forget to check out the companion holiday short read, [Elf-Napped](#), out now!

About the Author



Abby Knox writes feel-good, high-heat romance that readers have described as quirky, sexy, adorable, and hilarious.

Abby's favorite tropes include: Forced proximity, opposites attract, grumpy/sunshine, age gap, boss/employee, fated mates/insta-love, and more. Abby is heavily influenced by Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Gilmore Girls, and LOST. But don't worry, she won't ever make you suffer like Luke & Lorelai.

If any or all of that connects with you, then you came to the right place.

Say hello at authorabbyknox@gmail.com

Find links to all my social media pages, and be sure to sign up for my newsletter at authorabbyknox.com to get free stuff!



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