

THERE AROSE SUCH A CLATTER

...TALES FROM THE NAUGHTY LIST



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There Arose Such a Clatter

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First published by Meduas Editoriale 2021

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First edition

Illustration by Niuniente - interior illustration

This book was professionally typeset on Reedsy

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Foreword

Author's Note:

Beware, dear hearts!

This quintet of short Krampus tales is a vast departure from the world of Cambric Creek.

Please mind the content warnings listed below, and do what you need to take of yourself.

There Arose Such a Clatter is a short anthology of bite-sized scorching hot tales from Krampus's Naughty List. ***CWs include: dubious consent, forced punishment, spankings, sex as punishment, sex work, forced orgasm, human/non-human relationships, and a fantastically long tongue.*** ***This anthology features monster/human relations of an extremely sexual nature and is only intended for mature audiences.***

Though our horned lord of punishment may glorify forced spankings and dubious consent, please know that your author does not. The attitudes and opinions of the characters are not necessarily held by the person on the other side of the keyboard.

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Santa's Workshop, or: A Good Girl's Lament

To regularly spend one's evenings at Santa's Workshop was a pretty good indication that one had hit rock bottom. Just off the highway, along an under-lit stretch of road and surrounded by adult toy stores and twenty-four-hour greasy spoons, the seedy exterior gave only a small hint to the debauchery within. To be spotted with one's car in the parking lot was an advertisement of one's not-so-secret depravity, a sign to all that your predilections and proclivities were not something that could be discussed in polite company. Yes, being a regular patron of the Workshop indicated rock bottom.

To work there, on the other hand: a sign one had started to dig.

There were more undersized cars belonging to elves in the tight employee lot than what one might find at Santa's *actual* workshop, Krampus thought sardonically, trudging through the slush. It seemed a sad testimony to the state of things, particularly with the holiday only just having passed. One would surely think there would be a need to review results and forecast next year's workshop needs, but one would likely be disappointed with the truth. Once, the immediate post-season period would have meant machine maintenance and upgrades, advanced training courses, skilled carpenters refurbishing work areas, and staffing needs reassessed before the start of the second fiscal quarter, when the whole cycle of gluttonous consumerism would start all over again. But now . . . now things were different.

Late-stage capitalism had reached Christmastown at last. Once thriving toy factories were now fulfillment centers where hundreds of tractor-trailers were emptied every week, cheap electronics

and soft goods shipped overseas and stored in the warehouses, sorted by unskilled, poorly compensated elves armed with scanners and untenable hourly pick goals. The master craftsmen had all but disappeared from the landscape of Christmastown, the older unionized generation retiring to Boca, and in their place — handheld urinals to assist the new generation make their fulfillment center goals and a desperate need for truck drivers to get the merchandise from one warehouse to the next. He'd watched a yeti getting a blowjob beside the cab of his eighteen-wheeler only a week earlier, recognizing the scrunched, fur-colored face as being a former line cook at the diner across the parking lot from the Workshop. *At least some people are moving up in the world.*

It was an unsurprising turn of events. Now that more than half of the product bearing the highly coveted *From Santa* gift tag was outsourced electronics, a vacuum of under-employed elves and other Santa helpers were left behind, quite literally in the cold. *Tough shit.* There was a rumor going around that the front office wasn't happy about the uptick in workshop employees seeking employment at the *Workshop*, but the big man needed to offer a better benefits package if he didn't want his employees to spend their off time gyrating their hips in foiled red and green g-strings, jockeying for space on the strip club's shallow runway. A job was a job, especially in this economy. *Tough shit*, he thought again. It had been a hard year, and times were tough, tough for everyone.

He'd begun picking up shifts at the Workshop around mid-summer, with the expectation that by December, he'd be back on his hooves with a full schedule of homes to visit and wrong-doers to punish, an entire month of back-to-back expense reports to file and the promise of a full belly for months to come . . . but things hadn't quite worked out to plan. The holiday was different this year. People's hearts were heavy and their celebrations small. Families were separated, and as a result, the Christmas wishes made were not rooted in vengeance and retribution, leading to his own unfortunate reversal of fortune and no promise things would improve next year. All he knew, Krampus thought tiredly, was his back ached from the weight of his basket, carried in vain at this point, and even though his cock regularly wound up chafed after a shift on the raised, black throne in one of the dungeon rooms as patron after patron bounced and shrieked across his caprine lap, the throne's cushioned seat would be welcome that evening.

Santa's Workshop's ground floor was your run-of-the-mill titty joint, populated with elves and other seasonal cast-offs from the Santa machine. The week between Christmas and the New Year holiday would be busy as people sought respite from their families, now that the false piousness of the holiday was behind them. Unsurprisingly, there were more cars in the patron lot that night than there had been in the previous two weeks. The din of high-pitched, inebriated laughter told him it was

ladies' night, and sure enough, a swift glance into the club's main room showed him one of the reindeer handlers pinwheeling his fat little cock in the faces of a cluster of shrieking suburbanites, his pulled aside g-string stuffed with bills. Shaking their assets for dollar bills was an honest way to make a living and far more lucrative than the fulfillment center, regardless of the big man's feelings on the matter.

The crowds that gathered on the main floor on weekend nights were a pedestrian sort, there for the cheap thrill of nudity and being performed for, the occasional housewife wanting to be photographed as she held a workshop elf's half-erect cock between her lips, letting it fall as soon as the desired photo was obtained. He'd watched one or two enterprising elves move from mouth to mouth on a busy Saturday, collecting cash and growing harder as they went, attempting to cajole one of the giggling guests to finish them off, or else parting with a fistful of their take backstage to be sucked off by one of their orally talented peers. It was only the occasional patron of the strip club who was audacious enough to ask for more than just a lap dance; a tragic waste, for he'd never met a workshop elf who couldn't suck the chrome off a car bumper with ease, but they rarely got the chance to demonstrate their skills upstairs unless it was on each other.

It was *downstairs* where the deviants gathered.

The Workshop's dungeon boasted fetish rooms of every flavor; peepholes and glory holes, tiled stalls with drains, and accessories of every kind. The patrons who sought the dungeon's forbidden pleasures were a different sort than the giggling bachelorette parties and horny business people who gathered upstairs. Illicit sex, punishment and degradation, desires that could not be slaked in their everyday lives — *that* was why the downstairs customers came. Came for and came so regularly that they were soon shirking their families and responsibilities to visit the Workshop over and over; to be paddled and punished by the nightmares of Christmas and he — he was there to oblige.

It had been a hard year, after all.

Belsnickel was seated upon the throne when he entered the red-painted room at last. Cackling madly, his hands digging into the fleshy thighs of the screaming young man he thrust into, the lesser Christmas boogeyman took no notice of the dark shape now hovering over him.

There were other stations he could take, Krampus considered with a sigh: a St. Andrews Cross, a padded bench, fastenings on the walls for bound whippings . . . but it was the cushioned throne he wanted, the chance to rest his feet and expend little energy, and he wasn't willing to let the issue slide. *He* was the one the people feared, who punished the wicked and greedy, regardless of age. If he needed to give a reminder of the pecking order every once in a while, well, he was happy to do so.

The young man's eye bulged comically when clawed hands seized him by the neck and dragged him off the weeping cock that had speared him. For the briefest of moments, Belsnickel looked as if he had a mind to complain, but one glance up to the malevolent figure who loomed over him was enough to change his mind, and he quickly vacated the tufted cushion, chasing after the young man with another cackle.

Krampus took his time. The bedraggled Belsnickel always left his station in a state, no matter where he was in the dungeon, and the cushion needed plumping and brushing off, the floor around the throne tidied, and he needed to settle in first. A groan slipped past his lips as he dropped back against the throne's equally cushioned back, taking his weight off his cloven hooves at last. If he could just spend the next week here, right here with his feet up and his eyes closed, things might not be so bad . . . a cleared throat, impatient and insisting, the elf standing at the velvet rope separating the throne from the rest of the floor, gesturing meaningfully to the line of dungeon-goers already queued up. *Another day, another sweaty, filthy dollar.*

The first supplicant was a shadow-eyed girl with limp, straw-colored hair, familiar to him. Krampus let out a world-weary sigh, which was precisely what he was, knowing there was no way to put off the inevitable. *Time to work.* She approached the throne like a creeping shadow, hesitating a few feet away.

"P-please," she stammered through dry, cracked lips. "Please, I need to be punished. I've been a *bad* girl." There was nothing coquettish in the girl's voice, no simpering smirk or boastful challenge. She was one of the regulars, wholly addicted to the lack of accountability in the submissiveness of her role here and the mindlessness of physical sensation. He chuckled when the girl dropped to her knees, crawling forward until she was able to place her hands on the coarse, black fur covering his splayed-open legs, raising slowly to press her lips reverently to the seam of his sac. The heavy testicles rose slightly at the girl's touch, and he grunted. There were certain *perks* to this job he didn't much mind, it was true. The workshop elves weren't the only ones who knew how to orally service, after all. Many of the regulars knew the drill, and those who didn't . . . well, they caught on soon enough. When the girl's lips began to travel upwards along his fur-covered sheath, a sharp pull of her hair directed her back downwards.

"Are you in a hurry, sweetling?"

His voice was a throaty black rasp, and the kneeling girl's eyes widened, her head shaking quickly before sticking her tongue out to lave at the pendulous sac once more. He kept a hand in her hair to better direct her as the girl sucked and licked his bollocks, giving her attention to one, then the

other. His cock made its entrance under her ministrations — sliding from its sheath bright red and glistening, jealous at the attention lavished upon its southernmost neighbors, and he rested his head back against the throne's padded back once more with a sigh. Being a Workshop employee was as exhausting as any other job, but the perks were an absolute plus . . . at least, they were for him. Another sharp tug of her hair to correct the situation, her hooded eyes blown wide once more. His cock had withdrawn to only half its length, but it would already be a mouthful for the girl. *This is what she paid for, after all.*

“Suck.”

No further direction proved necessary, as the girl leaned forehead, her desperate mouth swallowing his cockhead. They always thought it was that easy, he thought, tipping his horned head back against the throne as her straw-colored hair bobbed. It was how the Workshop stayed in business, he supposed. They came meekly or desperately or boastfully, always thinking they could control the situation by pleasing the dungeon's staff adequately. The girl brought a hand up to massage his balls as she sucked, which *did* please him, and he grunted again. She'd learn soon, but it was an appreciated touch.

Sure enough, she was taking him as deeply as she was able, but all too soon, it was simply not enough. He did so enjoy being an *active* participant, after all. His clawed hands spanned her head, and he felt the moment when her panic rose, a frantic gasp of air which only fed his pleasure. The girl's arms pinwheeled, finally understanding that she was not at all in control, that this *was*, indeed, a punishment. Thrusting upwards, he groaned, finally finding the proper amount of stimulation as her stuffed-full throat sucked and quivered around his cock. He could quite happily fuck her this way for hours—off his feet, expending the bare minimum of effort, enjoying her gagging convulsions until he spilled himself into her throat, filling her with fire again and again. Perhaps he would do precisely that, he thought. Only then would he pull her back, lifting her to drop her cunt-first onto his drool-covered cock before starting the whole process over again, chasing his pleasure and teaching her the lesson to be careful what you wished for.

“That won't do any good,” he chuckled as the girl began to struggle, unable to draw a proper breath. Her lungs were likely burning at this point, her throat too overstuffed with his fiery red rod, lungs deprived of much-needed oxygen, and the burn would only intensify once he came. “I thought you wanted to be punished?” He laughed as her arms flailed, attempting to push off his legs, an action that only increased the speed of his thrusts, chasing his approaching climax. The first spill of the day was always the most pleasurable, the longest and hottest, his biggest load and the quickest to reach,

and his heavy balls were already beginning to contract, eager to empty themselves. “Don’t you worry, sweetling, there’s plenty more in store after this.”

He groaned in pleasure at the first pump of his release, his cock convulsing rhythmically in the girl’s throat, filling her with ropes of his fire as she attempted to scream. Her hands scrabbled at his fur-covered hips, attempting to push herself away in vain. Her throat fluttered with her choked scream, stimulating his cock further as it erupted, and Krampus sighed happily, hoping the other supplicants in line were watching, were prepared to kneel before him and worship his cock in the same fashion, preventing him from needing to get up. They would, he already knew. Some things never changed. *They never, ever learn . . .*

* * *

The neon sign blinked crudely against the backdrop of the overpass, red and white with several light bulbs missing, illuminating the parking lot and the twenty-four-hour diner across the stretch of pavement. Dara took a shuddering breath, attempting to slow her hammering pulse.

She had left the house that night with her nerves jangling, feeling like an exposed wire: tingling and electric, a buzz beneath her skin that demanded she get in the car and drive. She couldn’t explain why she drove in circles for what felt like hours, taking unfamiliar turnpikes and back roads, nor why she directed her car down the seedy stretch of road beside the highway on the edge of town, pulling at length into a lot bearing the lurid, candy cane-striped sign, advertising the adult club. *Santa’s Workshop*. It seemed exceptionally obscene, she thought, invoking Santa’s name for a place like this, but obscene, she conceded, was why she had come. She had heard of this place. She knew what it was, what happened here. She knew why she’d come, and there was no way around it. Despite that self-awareness, as she stared up at the sign through the car’s windshield, Dara was unable to make herself get out.

Why can’t you just be normal? Why are you like this? Why can’t you just be happy with things as they are? Her boyfriend’s words buzzed through her mind like static on the radio; his face creased with frustration and disgust. *Ex-boyfriend*, she reminded herself. He’d ended things the week before the holiday, vacating their townhouse for good the day before Christmas Eve, leaving her with a heap of extra gifts beneath their small tree. She wasn’t sure what the etiquette was in the situation, in the end deciding to give her parents the presents she’d bought for his and stiffening up her drink every time her mother began lamenting the relationship’s demise.

Why are you like this, Dara? Why can't we have a normal night without you wanting me to beat you black and blue? I can't do this anymore; this isn't the kind of life I want . . . She didn't blame him, she truly didn't, but she was unable to help the things she craved, the desperate need to be punished. It seemed apt that her relationship had fallen apart at Christmastime. After all, that was when it had all started.

She'd been just a year or two out of university at that point, her roommate someone who'd answered an ad. She and Juliette got on well enough, and neither of them was home often enough to get on each other's nerves. She did the dishes and kept the common areas clean, and Dara had foolishly thought that was all that mattered. Her lack of knowledge of her roommate's extra-curricular activities came to a head on Christmas Eve, their first year living together. She'd worked the early shift at her retail job that morning and would be driving to her parents' house the following morning. The heavy rap upon the door had startled her from where she wrapped last-minute gifts at the miniature kitchen table, and when she'd heard the blood-curdling scream Juliette had let out, she'd tried to run. Tried and failed spectacularly, but at least she'd tried, she told herself.

She was uninvolved, an innocent bystander, but it hadn't mattered to the creature who'd entered the apartment. Large black horns and the hindquarters of a goat, it was draped in chains and carried a heavy-looking woven basket, and produced a hand-tie of branches. It was there to punish Juliette, but Dara had been collateral damage, guilty of nothing more than being in the wrong place at the wrong time, but the creature hadn't cared, only laughed that she ought to be more selective about the company she kept. She'd felt the bite of those branches against the curve of her ass and the sting of its broad palm against her thighs, the press of its knuckles into the hot cleft of her sex before the spanking had continued. She'd watched Juliette be used over and over again, had screamed when it was her turn, eyes streaming as she was rutted from behind by the creature . . . she didn't know when the pain had turned to pleasure, couldn't account for the way her muscles clenched around the monster's cock as she came again and again, why the scent of cloves and orange peel had played at her nostrils for weeks after. By the time sunlight began to stream through their windows on Christmas morning, it was as if nothing had happened. She'd woken curled in her bed, tucked in with the blankets pulled up to her nose. The living room had been unmolested, and the tipped-over furniture and strewn cushions righted, Juliette staggering groggily from her room as if she'd spent a night too long at the bar. They'd never spoken of the things that had happened that night, and Dara had moved back home shortly thereafter, determined to put the memory of that Christmas Eve behind her.

Much like her attempt to escape, she'd tried and failed spectacularly. It had been exhilarating, blinding pleasure and excruciating pain, twisting and melding into a sensation she'd never before experienced, one she'd been chasing ever since. Not a week went by when she didn't dream about the bite of branches against her skin, of being spanked until she was unable to stand, and fucked until her legs were numb, citrus and spice and something a touch smokey clouding her senses.

Now she was free once again, another relationship down in flames, free to seek out the experience she craved. It had been impossible finding someone who could meet her expectations as the years passed, which was how she'd wound up seeking out the candy cane-striped sign of this sleazy club. She'd heard rumors that this place catered to certain *desires*, and she was here to test the veracity of those claims. *It's now or never. Did you drive all this way to sit in the car, or are you going to check it out?* Dara sucked in a deep breath and stepped out into the night.

Payment and ID check at the door, no cellphones permitted, a signature required to sign away the club's liability and confirm that she understood what she was getting herself into, and then she was through the door. The ground floor was a strip club, but she had no interest in the gyrating bodies she spied shimmying down the short runway. Several pointed-eared elves executed impressive feats on the poles, while a small, muscular man thrust his hips for several tables of shrieking women, the green foiled g-string pulled aside to show off his erect member. Dara remained unmoved. It was the downstairs she wanted, the place where she might find something to fill the gaping hole where her decency had once resided. She turned down the concrete steps, the overhead light illuminating the black-painted walls, up a short hallway, and then down another painted concrete staircase, the red-lit room opening up before her. It was seedy and stunk of depravity, of sweat and sex and industrial-strength cleaner, impersonal and profane. It was perfect.

She immediately came upon a young woman on her knees, being taken from every angle by a handful of pointed-eared elves, their small bodies thrusting without abandon, a double penetration spit roast as a circle of frantically masturbating onlookers surrounded the scene. *No, definitely don't want that.* Gulping, Dara moved further into the dungeon. She saw a man with a gag in his mouth being whipped by a leather-clad woman; another young man spread eagle on a large wooden cross. Finally, a girl around her age bent over a leather bench, her ass high in the air, reddened skin and raised welts showing just exactly how long her spanking had lasted. The man who wielded the slim cane being used on the girl was hunched and shabby looking, in a long, tattered coat, absent of horns. She couldn't hear the words the man spoke, but the girl begged, whether for the punishment to end or last indefinitely, Dara did not know, but she found herself yearning to be in the young woman's place.

This was what she craved. She decided to wait for her turn before moving on, feeling slickness pool between her thighs as the girl cried out.

The unkempt man had a high-pitched cackle and he loosed it then, laughing maniacally as he increased the pressure on the squealing girl's thighs, but Dara barely heard it, her attention captured by a different sound, one that she knew well, one that wrapped around her ear as she slept and prevented her from having normal relationships. Across the room, at just that moment, a rougher, raspier laugh curled around Dara, raising goosebumps on her skin as her core quivered in remembrance.

She *knew* that sound. *It's not possible . . . it can't be possible.* Drifting away from the scene before her, she followed the deep, throaty growl until she was standing before a large black throne. There was a velvet cord separating the throne from the room at large, a bored-looking elf manning the short line that she entered. On the throne sat the creature who had invaded her apartment, her dreams, and her fantasies, ruining her for normal relationships, who'd blown into her life that long-ago Christmas Eve like an unexpected snow squall, leaving just as abruptly with a hole in his wake. *And now*, Dara thought, balling her hands into fists to control the tremor in her hands, *he's going to fill it.*

* * *

“Do you remember me?”

She stood before the creature, fists clenched, wondering if it could see the way she trembled. Its black head cocked, regarding her with detached amusement. She remembered the way it had looked at her that night, so long ago, the same amused consideration. *Such a shame you decided to be home this night . . . careful of the company you keep, little one.* “Do you?” She was unable to hide the tremor from her voice, feeling her breath stutter when the creature chuckled.

“You'll need to come closer for that, sweetling. There's no way to tell from such a distance.”

She nearly stumbled over her own feet as she shuffled closer, the heady smell of cinnamon and clove filling her nose. Her breath caught in her throat when her hair was gripped by long, hooked claws, dragging her forward, and she remembered *that* as well, the tug at her scalp and the loss of balance as she fell forward. The creature leaned in, pressing its face to her hair. It was *smelling* her, Dara realized, her heart climbing up to her throat.

“Christmas Eve, 2013,” he rasped, rubbing a strand of her dark hair between his fingers. “Money laundering, theft, fencing stolen goods. You were a spare, if I remember correctly . . . I see your luck has remained absent, little one.”

“You,” she accused in a voice that still shook, with what emotion she wasn’t sure. “You’re the one who did this to me. You *ruined* me! You made me . . . want these things, these terrible things! And then you—you just left! What kind of monster are you that you ruin lives and then go on your merry way as if nothing happened? You’re nothing but a—”

“I restore the balances,” the creature interrupted haughtily, releasing its grip on her hair. “Wrongdoers must be punished, the scales must be set even. You ought to be thanking me, sweetling.” Garnet eyes glittered over her, and he smiled. “I give second chances, and it doesn’t even cost you anything.”

“It cost me *everything*,” Dara whispered, feeling the fight die out of her, shoulders slumping . . . but she’d come here for a reason. “And I want you to do it again. I *need* you to do it again.”

The creature’s laugh was low and throaty. “How unfortunate for you. Alas, sweetling . . . I’m quite comfortable where I am.”

The world seemed to grind to a halt at his words. She’d never expected to come face-to-face with him again, had fully planned on moving from one poor substitution to another forever, always chasing that horrifying mix of pleasure and pain. To find him here now, to be *so close!* to having her darkest desires sated and slaked . . . she couldn’t leave. Dara clambered onto the beast’s lap, using the back of the throne as leverage.

“No, that’s not . . . I’m not leaving. I can’t leave. Tell me you can give me what I need.” The creature cocked its head, considering her with an amused look, but he’d shifted his fur-covered hips slightly, preventing her from toppling backward. The smell of him — bright, juicy oranges and spicy cinnamon and cloves, the scent of hot mulling spices and icy cold nights — was completely different and nothing that she remembered. The smell of him that long-ago night had been one of ash and cinders; a cold, abandoned fireplace that would never keep her warm . . . this smell, by contrast, was nothing but warm, and she leaned forward to inhale against him in a mirror of his actions. The air was forced from her lungs as one of those sharp claws dragged up the back of her knit dress with a *shink!* as she exposed it to him, the material parting like tissue paper. Dara shivered as his knuckle moved down her spine, slicing through the back of her bra with ease, the scrap of her panties doing the same.

“I seem to remember you screaming so prettily,” his grinding voice hissed, a long, red tongue dropping from the corner of his mouth to flick against her ear. “Are you so eager to scream for me again?”

The tongue dropped further, unspooling from his mouth in an endless coil to slip between their bodies, wriggling between her legs to slide in her slickness. Dara remembered this as well, remembered the way it tickled and teased, making her arch in pleasure before it brought the hard branches down across her again. She wanted to feel the sting against her skin, the release of control . . . she was once more at the goat-man's mercy, she realized: splayed open over his lap, a position she'd placed herself in, exactly where she wanted to be with his claws at her back and his hot, red tongue curling around her clit, pulling a cry from her throat.

"Sweet as cherries," he murmured, setting to work. Dara didn't know if this was part of the normal service here, but she liked to think she was getting a repeat customer perk he set to work, licking her cunt with precision and focus that no mere human tongue could match. The constant pressure against her clit had her shaking against him completely overwhelmed by sensation, and he growled in pleasure as if he were enjoying the task as much as she was enjoying his efforts.

She didn't have a chance to react when she was abruptly lifted, never even saw the long spear of the beast's cock before it breached her, hot and too thick and burning like fire. Her mouth opened, but she was unable to make any sound her body slowly slid down the molten length, stretching her wider than she'd even been stretched . . . well, with the exception of that Christmas Eve night. This, though, felt different. That night she'd been taken roughly, had been punished alongside Juliette. This was a slow opening, a deep stretch that made her ache in a way she would be able to feel for days. The pressure of being so full took her breath away, but Dara was forced to admit — it was beginning to feel good. Black, leathery hands gripped her hips again, raising her, lifting her completely off his lap before dropping her, her own weight forcing him in to the hilt, and then she *did* scream. It was too much, too hot, she was not ready or prepped and it felt like she was being cleaved in two. Pain clouded her mind, seized her body when he thrust up into her and another scream built in her throat . . . when that long tongue, hot and wet, dropped from his mouth and curled around her clit once more, squeezing and sliding until the scream became a moan.

This was what she wanted. Blazing red pain edged with intolerable pleasure, like nothing she'd ever experienced outside of that Christmas Eve night. She continued to moan and gasp as the beast fucked up into her with his burning cock, his vulgar tongue teasing at her clit, his hands slamming her down fully on every pained thrust. When she came, there were tears in her eyes, her cry of pleasure cut short on a squeal when his hand raised, coming down on her ass hard enough to make her teeth rattle. *There was nothing like this anywhere else.*

"Is this what you came for, sweetling? Have you found what you're looking for?"

She had fallen forward against him when he spanked her, and his mocking question was a hiss in her ear, dragging her off his cock and dropping her unceremoniously to the floor before she could form an answer. Dara barely had time to draw a full breath before her mouth was filled, huge hands gripping her head tightly as he used her throat for his pleasure, thrusting his cock into her mouth until he came with a grunt. She was reminded of the red hot cinnamon candies she'd been fond of as a child, if those same candies had been set on fire. Spicy and burning, her eyes streamed as he ejaculated, filling her with what felt like a gallon of magma, mixing with her drool to leak down her chest until she was dropped, his spent cock slipping from her swollen lips.

For a long moment, she could nothing but sit there at his feet, attempting to catch her breath, heedless of the mess down her front. It *was* what she was looking for, she thought, exactly what she'd been desperately seeking . . . but now that she'd found it, found *him*, she knew she'd not be satisfied with one night. *He works here, you can come back whenever you want.* But was *that* what she wanted? To come back to this club week after week, to diminish her savings and risk word getting out that she was a visitor? To be forced to go days at a time without, always jonesing for a fix until she was stealing away in the middle of the week to be paddled in the dungeon? It wasn't what she wanted, wasn't at all what she wanted, and she didn't understand why she'd found him in this place.

"Why are you here?" she demanded, raising her head.

"Why does that matter?" he countered immediately. "A job is a job. Times are tough all over, little one. We all do what we need to do to ensure our survival, do we not? Isn't that why *you're* here as well?"

"Yes but . . . is-is this where you *want* to be?"

The creature considered her for a moment before answering.

"I hardly think that's relevant. In any case, it doesn't matter at the present moment."

Dara pulled herself unsteadily to her feet, using the base of the throne for support. The thick leather padding was not dissimilar to the recliner in her small living room, the chair her ex had sat in while she curled into the corner of the sofa in the evenings. The recliner had since become a catch-all for household detritus: her coat, a pile of unopened mail, shopping bags from more than a week earlier, the lack of a body stretched out in its leather confines leaving the room echoing and empty in the evenings. She clambered back onto his lap before he could protest, pressing her palms to his broad chest.

"May-maybe we could work out an arrangement," she stuttered out feeling that live wire electric buzz beneath her skin once more at what she was about to offer, but she was *so* close to getting

exactly what she wanted . . . “A private arrangement. I-I have a condo, and I live all alone, it’s paid for and I have a good job. You wouldn’t need to work here, not-not unless you wanted to . . . surely I have something you want. Couldn’t we . . . couldn’t we work out a trade?”

* * *

Krampus cocked his head, considering. A private residence where he could hide away for the year, a steady supply of food and sex, and a willing slave . . . on the surface, there seemed to be no downside to the girl’s implied proposal. He’d never fancied himself as a house mouse, a kept pet, which is absolutely what he’d be, and there might be other complications that would arise, true enough . . . but he’d be free of Belsnickel’s mess and the non-stop line of patrons at the Workshop. Come next Christmas, perhaps things would be different, things might be back to normal and he’d not need the girl . . . but that was a long ways off. His cock swelled again at the thought of such creature comforts he might enjoy, grunting in satisfaction when her small hands gripped it where it rose between their bodies, stroking him steadily.

The girl did not protest when he lifted her hips again, and the thought that she never would, regardless of what he might do to her made his balls contract in excitement as he slid into her, easier now that she dripped with his seed, the evidence of his release running down her thighs. He would not grow gentle, would not become some simpering, coddling human pet, would *not* . . . he brought a hand down on her ass as if to punctuate his thoughts, gratified by the way her breath caught. He’d not be gentled, but it would not benefit him to cause her an injury.

Her shredded dress lay in a crumpled heap at the base of the throne and she was bare as she bounced on his cock, tits jiggling. He would send her out of this place with his own furs to cover herself with, to stay warm and hide her nakedness. It wouldn’t do to allow her to catch hypothermia and expire before he had a chance to enjoy the comforts he offered him, after all. She gasped again when his tongue curled around a pebbled peak, whimpered as the points of his fangs scraped over a puckered areola. When his long tongue dropped again to tickle at her clit, his hand striking her ass again, she cried out, a beautiful sound. He encouraged her to roll her hips against him, setting her own pace as she rode his cock, her thighs trembling, stretched wide.

For once, Krampus hoped there were no onlookers as he fucked the girl, keeping his tongue circling her steadily as she whimpered and mewled, and when she came again, clenching around his cock with a breathy cry, his mind was made up.

“I’m sure we work something out, sweetling” he murmured, lifting her from his lap to drop her in a heap on the ground before him, a reminder that he was still in charge, would always be in charge, leaving the cushioned throne for the first time that night to mount her from behind, his tired feet forgotten. There was a birch switch beside the raised dais, and he took it up, admiring the red outline of his hand on the girl’s peaches-and-cream skin. *She would redden beautifully.* Yes, she could leave the club draped in his fur, a mark of ownership that would protect her delicate skin from the cold. “In the meantime, sweetling, we have work to do. You’ve been an exceptionally bad girl this year, and you need to be punished.”

“Yes,” Dara agreed on a gasp, arching when he brought the branch down against her thigh. It was everything she wanted. “Yes, I do.”

The Sub, or: Krampus Meets His Match

Angels we have heard on high . . .

The Christmas carol bounced off the cupboards and the smell of gingerbread filled the kitchen, spicy and sweet. The counter top was littered with the evidence of the morning's endeavors: molasses and spices and bowls of sugar and eggs, several spatulas in various states of use, and a spray of flour across the marble. Aubrey was still kicking herself over the ginger situation. Ground ginger had been on her shopping list, had been one of the red-capped bottles placed in her shopping cart the previous week, she'd been sure of it . . . but when she went to line up her ingredients that morning, there had been two shakers of allspice, and no unopened ginger to be found. The bottle in the cupboard was nearly empty, was barely enough to make two batches of the cookies, but there had been fresh ginger in the refrigerator. *When life gives you lemons, tuck 'em into your bra and keep smiling.* It wasn't ideal, but she could make it work.

There was a conference call with the sales team that morning, the only thing on her agenda, allowing her to bound out of bed before the sun and go right to the kitchen, slipping an apron over her short nightgown and diving in. The cookie exchange for her son's scout troop was a yearly event — her chance to shine, to remind everyone that she *was* a good mother, that she was *involved*. She and her ex endeavored to get along, to co-parent their son and ensure that their divorce and his subsequent remarriage was not something for which he was punished. They were all doing the best they could, she reminded herself often, but it was still hard; hard not having Jacob under her roof seven days a week, hard bearing the snide comments from older family members who intimated she'd chosen her career over her family, hard to not feel like she was screaming in a locked, windowless room where

no one could hear her. It didn't matter, Aubrey reminded herself, folding the beaten eggs into her dry ingredients. It didn't matter if she traveled often for work, didn't matter if Jacob spent more nights eating someone else's cooking than he did at her table — she would do anything for her son, including getting up at dawn to make homemade cookies before she even put a bra on.

Glo-ooo-ooo-ria, in excelsis deo . . .

She'd need to have a conversation with her ex, she thought, pulling the latest batch from the oven, needed to bring up Jacob's recent complaints that he wanted to quit the scouts. His step-brother made fun of him, she'd wheedled out, every time he donned the yellow neckerchief and dark green camp shirt of the Woodland Scouts, teased him enough that he wanted to quit. She didn't begrudge her ex his new family and made a point to get along with his new wife, but Aubrey had never liked the woman's own son, several years older than Jacob with sly eyes and a smile that vanished the instant he thought he wasn't being watched. She couldn't abide bullying, *wouldn't* abide it, whether she was there every day or not.

After her cookies were cooled and plated, she needed to start wrapping presents. It might have only been December fifth, but she needed to get a jump on things now. There was an upcoming trip to Phoenix that would eat up a full week of the month — five days of meetings with the sales team and a production office, then two days booked at a boutique hotel that boasted a fantastic spa and was only a few blocks away from a BDSM dungeon, her Christmas gift to herself. There was a swinger's club in the neighboring city, but the thought of indulging her kinks right in her own backyard made her nervous. She didn't need word getting out that she liked to be spanked, that she got off on pain and exhibition, that being a boss bitch in the board room made being a submissive in the bedroom feel *so damned good*. Theirs was a small suburb, and any hint of scandal spread like wildfire. Much safer to play out of town, which she did often.

From the front of the house, the cat yowled, pulling her from her thoughts. The sound of the coat rack hitting the floor with a muffled *fwump!* was one she knew well, and Aubrey sighed, deciding to ignore it for the moment rather than cleaning the flour from her hands. The cat was easily spooked and the top of the coat rack was his favorite place to perch, a terrible combination. *It's probably the mailman, and Cheddar is already hiding in the closet.* Her cookies were more important just then and the coats could wait. The ginger would need to be peeled back further if she wanted to get another batch out. The pre-ground stuff had a higher concentrate, necessitating her to use more of the

fresh if she didn't want to put her baking on pause to run back to the store, a chore she did *not* want to undertake.

She'd just turned back to the counter when it happened. The small spoon she was using to peel the ginger missed its target as a slice of icy cold air hit her bare legs, an indication that the front door was open. Aubrey whirled, her mind processing a hundred different scenarios in the space of a few seconds, each more terrible than the last as she clawed for the paring knife beside her cutting board, but it was too late. Someone stood in the kitchen doorway, the worst of her fears coming true, blocking her escape and trapping her amidst her cookie preparations.

Not someone, she realized, taking in the huge black shape in the door. *Something*.

A scream built in her throat at the sight of the intruder. A great black beast draped in furs blocked the door, the curve of its horns scraping the ceiling. Her grip tightened on the paring knife as she took in the hooved hindquarters, the dense black fur covering its body, the narrowed red eyes. *This isn't happening, this can't be happening! You fell and hit your head and this is all a hallucination.*

"I'm here for the child."

Its voice was a deep rasp, its demand a parent's worst nightmare, punctuated by the toneless iron bells on the strap of the giant basket it carried on its broad back. It seemed completely unperturbed by the scream that finally broke loose from her mouth, and once that scream had dislodged itself, Aubrey could do nothing *but* scream, the panic she felt leaving her unable to formulate a plan of escape or process where she'd left her cellphone, the horror that this monster was asking for *her son!* Overwhelming her until eventually, the creature had enough. A wave of a pitch-black, clawed hand and her scream was silenced, the sensation of ashes choking her.

"I'm here for the child," the beast repeated. "The Tyler child."

For a long moment, Aubrey gaped. *Tyler?* Tyler, and not Jacob? Tyler was her son's stepbrother, the miniature bully she disliked. Elation filled her, the euphoric relief that her child was safe, before it was doused by guilt. *That kid is a jerk, but you're not going to hand him over to Black Philip, what kind of person are you?!*

"T-Tyler doesn't live here." Why would it be seeking him at her house? Why would it be seeking him at all?! "What-what do you want with—"

"Tricks will not keep me from what I seek on this night."

Aubrey's eyes narrowed, annoyed with being cut off. She dealt with pricks like this all week long, and monster or not, *this* one was going to learn not to interrupt her.

“It’s barely eight in the morning, so you’re a bit early for the ‘this night’ crap, and if you’re going to mansplain to *me* about who lives in my house, you can just get the fuck out now. He *doesn’t* live here. That’s my ex’s stepson, why would he live with me?!”

The beast paused, considering her for a measured moment before reaching into the grey furs and withdrawing a . . . mobile device? “Tyler McLoughlin, twelve years old, born the twelfth night in June.” Garnet eyes squinted as he read off her address, scrolling the details on the screen it clutched in clawed hands. “Secondary address, Waterford Court—”

“Thirty-two forty-seven Waterford Court, that’s my ex-husband’s house, like I said, asshole!” she exclaimed, the thrill of being right causing her voice to raise. “He doesn’t live here, are you deaf? What do you want with him?”

“It is Krampusnacht.”

The creature gave the answer as if it was the only one she needed, huffing in aggravation as the mobile device was replaced in the furs and the basket hitched a little higher. Aubrey couldn’t be certain, but she was positive the beast muttered something about *idiotic office assistants* before it began to turn away. She couldn’t understand why this nightmare creature would have come to her house looking for Tyler, the only child who would list her home as a secondary address would be . . . Aubrey gasped, dropping the knife with a clatter as dread flooded her. Jacob was the only child one might find at her location, did that mean the creature would be seeking him as well?

“Wait! Why-why are you looking for children, what are you going to do to them?”

“It is Krampusnacht—”

“Just because you keep saying that doesn’t mean it’s going to start miraculously making sense,” she snapped. “What are you, some sort of pervert? You know what, why don’t you stay right where you are. I’m calling the police.”

The laughter that filled the room was like a scrape of metal, flinty and cold, reigniting her initial terror.

“It is not my fault if you are ignorant of the old ways, human. Traditions do not go away simply because they don’t fit into your narrow little world, they simply move over your ignorance. Children naughty enough to be placed on the list are visited on this night, and this child will know the bite of my branches before the sun rises, as will all children whose name I possess, I can promise it.”

“Let me see this list,” she demanded, flushing when the creature chuckled again. “What-what if there are other children there? What will you do to them? Is-is my son on your list? He’s a good boy, please . . . please don’t hurt my son. Or the other boy.”

The monster smiled, a horrible stretch of pointed white teeth, and she shuddered again.

“Children who do misdeeds together are punished together. Go ahead and make your call, sweetling. It will make no matter.”

If the creature went to her ex’s house seeking Jacob’s stepbrother, he would Jacob as well, Aubrey realized. *And you went and verified the fucking address!* She needed to do something, needed to be there, be *present*, needed to stop this from happening somehow. She was able to hear her mother’s voice in her head, lamenting her divorce and the fact that Jacob would live with her only a few days a week. *Miss busy career woman, too busy for her husband and her little boy, always putting work first . . .* It wasn’t true, and she *knew* that. There was no choice a woman could make that wouldn’t she be condemned for by someone, and *her* job was the one that had paid the mortgage, paid for little league and science camp and jiu-jitsu, but it mattered little in the eyes of others, and she’d been trying to prove her worth as a mother since. *And now you have your chance.*

“What—what can I do to change your mind?”

“There’s nothing you can do to stop the punishment that will be—”

“Punish me instead.”

Her voice came out as a whisper, thin and mouse-like, but her shoulders straightened. She couldn’t allow her son to be accosted by this goat-like nightmare. *The bite of his branches, he said.* Spanking was not an activity with which Aubrey was unfamiliar, after all. The tokens to three different BDSM clubs in three different states lived on her phone. Taking a spanking for her son was the least she could do, all things considered. “I-I’m the parent. Parents are responsible for the way their children behave. Let me take the punishment instead.”

Another low chuckle, a shiver up her neck. “And why would I agree to that?”

Aubrey kept her breath steady, refusing to look away as the creature stared her down. *Why. Why should he agree? Give him a reason.* She’d been on the receiving end of office mishaps before, mis-relayed information and improperly entered data . . . she knew how it could derail a day, how her entire schedule shuffled because of it.

“Because,” she began tremulously, raising her chin in a way she hoped projected confidence, “because you’re already here. Let me take the punishment, and cross the name off your list. You don’t need to waste any more of your day because of someone else’s mistake and you can get on with your schedule.”

The creature huffed to himself, and she knew she had him. “There will be no reneging if you begin this, little one. If you do this, you will be accepting the punishment reserved for adults.”

“I-I understand.” She didn’t, of course she didn’t, but how bad could it be? “I’ll take whatever punishment you give.” The timer on the oven went off then, catching both their attention. “As long as you let me get my cookies out of the oven.”

She felt the beast’s eyes on her back as she turned to the oven, hands shaking as she took up her oven mitts. The gingerbread was perfectly crisped, warm brown and fragrant. She would take this punishment, whatever it was, and then return to her baking, ensuring her son would go to his cookie exchange with an ample supply, Aubrey resolved. She’d not let him down.

“Your baking attire is poorly suited to your task, but it works very well for mine.”

She stiffened, feeling the cold air from the front hall lick up her bare legs once more. Changing out of her short nightgown hadn’t seemed like a priority several hours earlier when the heat of her oven had warmed the kitchen, but now she wished she’d donned a suit of armor, wished

she’d put on *something*. His words were laced with mocking, but a clawed hand raised, slicing through the air and the front door slammed, abruptly cutting off the icy current of air.

Aubrey felt her heart stop as the beast approached her from behind, pulling the apron tie at her neck with its clawed fingers. Another chuckle, claws carding lightly through her hair before gripping it tightly, yanking her back. She fell flush against the beast’s broad chest, its grey furs and basket having been discarded. The coarse hair that covered it tickled her bare arms as her hair was lifted, and she realized it was smelling her.

“You will remember these lashes for the rest of your existence, sweetling. You may be ignorant now, but the name Krampus is not one you’ll soon forget.”

Aubrey yelped when she was lifted, the creature’s strong arms handling her as if she were no more than a doll, clearing her kitchen table in one swipe, her laptop going crashing to the ground along with a mountain of paperwork, Jacob’s most recent science club project, and the remnants of her meager breakfast. Dropping her face down on the newly cleared center, the monster gripped her hips, dragging her up to her knees.

“Last chance to change your mind, little one. If we proceed, there will be no turning back.”

“You’d actually let me stop?” she asked in disbelief, flushing when the beast laughed again. She had no intention of stopping, but that it was even an option was surprising.

“Of course not, but I do like to create the illusion of hope . . . did it work?”

The hem of her nightgown had only a short distance to travel as it was lifted, and she squeezed her eyes shut as the monster chuckled at the sight of her bare ass. “You’ve made this so easy, I really

ought to be thanking you. Such efficiency for our task . . .”

She wasn't twenty anymore, a fact she was reminded of every time she looked in the mirror and was reminded once more as its hand palmed an ample cheek; a little fuller, with a bit more jiggle than it had only ten years earlier, kneading her skin before giving it a hard slap. Producing a hand-tie of branches from its basket, the monster leered down. The first crack of the branches against her skin was sharp and she jolted, a second quickly following. *Krampus*. Aubrey thought she'd heard of this beast, hazy memories of foreign folklore and cheesy pop culture that paled in comparison to the bite against her skin, not dissimilar to the bite of the flogger to which she was more accustomed.

She'd fallen into the scene shortly after university. An older boyfriend, one who liked to spank her and be called *Daddy*, who took her to clubs and fetish balls to show her off. It had been the start and that relationship short-lived, but Aubrey had discovered she quite liked the sting of a flogger on her bare skin, had learned that the climaxes after a good paddling were always stronger and more satisfying. When she was at the club she didn't need to worry about being a good enough mother or the things her family said; didn't need to carry the stress of work home and lay in bed thinking about projects and meetings and trips.

There were many reasons why people joined the scene — for her it was the release. The release from obligation and expectation, the freedom that came with absolute submission and the pleasure the lack of needing to care about every little thing under the sun allowed her to feel. She would make the appropriate noises for this Krampus, if that's what he needed to hear, if that's what would save her son . . . and then she'd relieve herself with her vibrator once it had left.

Aubrey closed her eyes, and imagined herself far away, kneeling on a padded bench and not her kitchen table, surrounded by a circle of horny onlookers and not the makings of her Christmas cookies. She wasn't in her kitchen being whipped by some nightmare creature, she was in a club being spanked in front of masturbating strangers, free of responsibility, free to focus on her body and the sensations she felt, free to feel unfettered pleasure through the superficial pain.

The branches whipped her ass relentlessly, occasionally landing at her fleshy thighs, and she yelped every time they did so, feeling her arousal grow. She'd been spanked this hard once before, by a stranger in a leather harness who'd made her suck his cock as he reddened her ass, and when he'd fucked her against the leather bench after letting the flogger drop, she'd come so hard she'd nearly passed out. Heat bloomed between her legs with every crack against her tender flesh, and she

wondered if the Krampus be able to smell her arousal as she slickened. She tried to imagine the monster moving to stand before her, forcing his cock down her throat as he whipped her, if he even *had* a cock. *I wonder what it looks like. Human or goat? He's strong . . . he'd be a good addition to the community, too bad he's probably just a hallucination and you're dreaming this whole thing.*

“I think you’re ready for the strap, don’t you agree, sweetling?”

It was meant to be a further punishment, she immediately understood. The club she visited out of town had a similar progression of devices: floggers to straps, paddles to canes. She disliked the sharp sting of the cane and the welts it raised on her skin, but the belt . . . the belt was her favorite. If being spanked with a belt was the worst punishment she’d endure from the beast, Aubrey considered she ought to be grateful she wasn’t paying for it. *Not that he needs to know that. It's fine, just pretend that you hate it. Maybe you can cry.* She’d not need to let the monster know she enjoyed its punishment, she resolved.

“It’s strange,” he rumbled, producing the strap from the basket — a well-worn leather, cracked and pliable — “I expected more screams, sweetling. Begging, crying. It’s almost as if you’re *used* to this.”

She whimpered when the Krampus gripped her ankles, forcing her knees together, her so-called resolve crumbling like sand. She knew from experience that the lips of her sex would be on prominent display in such a position, that the strap might catch her on her most sensitive anatomy. Surely if the beast could not smell her arousal, he’d be able to see it glistening on her lips, her cunt betraying her with its neediness.

“I-I didn’t want to . . . to upset you! I thought screaming might make you mad and I — oh, *please* don’t hurt me with that belt!” It was a compelling performance, she thought.

The first strike of the strap made her hiss, a sharp *slap!* across the back of thighs. The second strike landed soundly across her ass and Aubrey yelped, thinking again that the beast would be an excellent addition to the scene. The third strike slapped her pussy, the jolt of pleasure making her cry out again, and she could only hope it sounded convincing. Thighs, ass, pussy; thighs, ass, pussy; pussy, pussy, pussy . . . she keened, dropping to her elbows and sticking her ass out, desperate for the relentless slapping to find her throbbing clit, unable to keep up the facade any longer, and the creature laughed, long and terrible. When he raised a hand to her cleft, Aubrey knew he would find her sopping.

“I wonder how much of a punishment it is when your cunt is dripping, sweetling.”

The fingers pushed into her were rough and she cried out again, more worried about the claws slicing her open than she had been about her tender ass, but they seemed absent as he coated his hand in her slick. *Retractable? Is that what his dick does as well?*

She expected anger at the discovery, perhaps another slap. Instead, thick fingers rubbed circles against her, finding her clit and trapping it between his knuckles, pinching it until she cried out again, quivering in pleasure. *Well, this is **not** what you expected!*

“I wonder, if I were to hit you there again, would you be learning any sort of lesson?”

Aubrey keened as her ankles were pushed apart and her face held to the table. When the leather struck her wide-open lips again, she cried out; when it slapped against her clit, she saw stars.

“We’ll have to find a way to make this less enjoyable, little one. I wouldn’t want you to feel like your sacrifice somehow came up short.”

The peppermint sticks had been purchased on a whim, thinking she’d use them as stocking stuffers for her son and niece. They were squat and fat, the size and circumference of cigars, and she knew exactly what the creature planned as the cellophane wrapper was shredded. The red and green confection was pressed to her mouth, her hair tugged until her lips fell open, allowing him to push the peppermint stick into her mouth, moving it over her tongue until it was sufficiently wet, pulling it from her lips and pressing it to her clit in one fast movement. It was a pleasant tingle, and if she wasn’t already wet from the spanking he’d administered, the rub of the peppermint against her would have had her juices flowing . . . which was a problem, Aubrey realized immediately.

This too was a sensation with which she was well-versed. Creams and oils designed for such delights, sensations she grew accustomed to until she’d been forced to up the ante . . . balms and ointments for sore muscles had the highest concentrations of menthol, and the icy burn they caused could make her climax with the barest hint of pressure on her clit. The peppermint stick was, in comparison, child’s play. She whimpered, hoping it was convincing.

When the candy cane breached her, Aubrey said a prayer for her vaginal flora and bit her lip. Being fucked with a candy cane was not something she thought she’d be able to boast about when she began her baking that morning, but wonders never ceased.

“Please,” she begged, “please no more, this is terrible. I can’t take anymore!”

It wasn’t a lie, for while the peppermint stick was girthier than a typical candy cane, it was nothing like a cock, nothing she could clench around. She was desperate to be filled, and wondered again about what the beast might be packing, trying to get a look at his crotch without him catching her. They were hard to distinguish in the coarse black fur that covered his lower half, but between his

goat legs hung fat, fur-covered testicles and a short sheath. The Krampus made a noise then, a small grunt, whether it was in amusement at her lie or in frustration she couldn't tell. It wouldn't do to test his patience with her obvious enjoyment, and she quickly lowered her eyes. When his hand gripped her chin, forcing her to raise her gaze to him, the garnet eyes that glowered down had narrowed to slits.

“Sweetling, I can't help but feel as if you're *trying* to challenge me. If so, I have to warn you now — my creativity knows no limits, I assure you. I wonder if you'll still be mewling in a moment . . .”

Aubrey followed his garnet gaze to the hand of unpeeled ginger on the counter, and a shudder moved through her as the beast smiled wickedly. Her stomach flipped in anticipation as his hand placed the peppermint stick aside, palming the ginger. It would be fine, she tried to convince herself as a ripple of genuine fear moved through her. *Oh yeah, fine. It's a freaking medieval torture method, sure it's fine.* ...But then again, medieval peasants didn't have pots of tiger balm in their bedside table, she reminded herself, bowing her head in what she hoped was passable fear. It was a burn she knew well, but she didn't need to let him know that. *Best to let him think this is a punishment and not a typical Saturday.*

“This is a special punishment I so rarely get to employ,” he gloated, a curled claw neatly peeling the front arm of the ginger, “but then, you're a very special girl, aren't you.”

Aubrey watched as he fashioned the thumb of ginger into a rounded plug, smoothing out the pits and bumps until it was perfect. When he turned with a flourish, she knew she was meant to be terrified, regardless of the quiver of anticipation that moved through her.

“I want to hear you scream, dear heart,” the monster purred, flipping her to sit on the edge of the table, moving to stand between her open legs before rubbing the ginger through her slick folds, circling her clit. His tongue was long and obscene, lolling from his mouth like a ruby red snake. As she watched, it unspooled further, dipping between her legs, and she was unable to prevent her shuddering gasp as it licked her, hated to admit how *good* it felt.

“Hmmm. Quite the curiosity, aren't you. You smell like a good girl. You *taste* like a good girl . . . but you'd make very fine Naughty List material. Very interesting, sweetling. What a happy accident this was . . . for me.”

A pinch to her clitoral hood from his thick fingers forced the swollen pearl out, his laughter a pitch-black curl as he pressed the ginger to it. With a slice of his nail, her nightgown came apart easily, dropping to the floor with the remains of her breakfast. Aubrey worked hard to control her breathing as that long tongue curled around her nipple, attempting to keep from squirming or

vocalizing how good the ginger nub felt rolling over her clit like a toy. It took several minutes before she began to feel it. A slight tingle, a tickle of nerves that did make her squirm, heating steadily. It was glorious. The noise she made then was involuntary, a yelp as if she were an animal with her tail caught in the door, her legs twitching, held open firmly by the monster.

“Not so wanton now, are we dearest?”

The heat steadily increased, a burning that didn't quite have the icy edge of the contents of her medicine cabinet, pleasure blurring into pain. She shuddered and the monster laughed, a strangled moan pulling from her throat. It burned, fire enveloping her clit, and she *loved* it, loved every *fucking* second of it. *Well, that answers one question — yes, you're into this too.* If he were to raise his thick fingers to her again, Aubrey had no illusions that she would come immediately. He began to roll the ginger over her throbbing pearl again, to ensure the burning did not immediately subside, and it was over. White spots clouded her vision as she arched, crying out. She clenched, muscles convulsing, and she wished there was something inside her, *anything*, even that goddamned peppermint stick. The burning did not stop as she shook, gripping the heavily muscled arm of her captor for support, crying out as she was unexpectedly flipped again.

This was supposed to hurt as well, she knew without question as he dragged her back to her knees. She wasn't adequately prepped and she would never recommend such actions to any newbie in the scene, but the ginger plug was coated in her slick, well-lubricated as it pressed to her ass, and this too she knew well. She'd take plugs quadruple this size before, and the ginger nestled between her cheeks with ease.

“We may as well continue your spanking since you're enjoying yourself so much, sweetling.”

She tensed when he brought the leather strap down against her ass again, claws grazing her scalp as he pushed a hand through her hair, forcing her head back. The Krampus moved to stand before her at the table, keeping his grip on her hair tight, and Aubrey gasped, another question answered.

His cock was thick and bright red, the same scarlet of his glistening tongue, with a bulbous head and ridged underside. It was bigger than any she'd had before . . . at least, a real one. There was an entire industry of fantasy-shaped dildos out there, and she'd experienced more than her fair share. She wondered if she would get the chance to feel *this* fat peppermint stick within her. *Stop it, stop thinking that way . . . okay, but still, low-key hope so!*

“Suck,” he instructed, jerking her hair, an unnecessary but appreciated show of force. It was not the way she'd expected to spend the day and she was worried about getting her cookies done, but she couldn't help feeling that she was coming out the victor in this little swap. The pre-come that pearled

at his cock-tip tasted like fiery hot cinnamon candies, and she laved him with her tongue, enjoying the flavor and the slight burn. She wondered if she pleased him adequately enough like this, perhaps he'd get on his way. Not that she wasn't enjoying herself, of course, but those cookies weren't going to make themselves.

"I said *suck*," the Krampus snapped, pulling her head roughly, forcing her to swallow his cock, leaving her gagging. The plug's burn in her ass was just starting to be felt, the ginger's oil seeping into the delicate tissue, and when he brought the strap down once more, Aubrey understood the punishment in full. She yowled in genuine pain then, for as the belt came down, she instinctively braced for its bite, tightening around the ginger in the process. Fire bloomed through her, and before she had a chance to acclimate herself, the strap spanked her again, and once more she tightened around the ginger. Her scream choked around his cock as she was seized with a burning agony the ginger in her ass feeling like a lit fuse. She could either brace for the spanking, which meant her muscles tightening around the ginger plug, forcing its oil to seep into her; or else keep her muscles loose and take the full force of the strap.

Krampus began to laugh then, black and terrible, forcing his cock a little further down her throat. He was sadistic and cruel, was taking an inordinate amount of pleasure from her pain, if the fiery cinnamon taste of the pre-come that flooded her mouth was any indication . . . he would make an excellent dungeon master, she thought. The strap came down again, sloppier this time, for he'd been slightly too focused on gripping a larger handful of her hair to better control her mouth on his cock, but on the next sharp slap against her skin, the belt landed square on her cunt. Aubrey clenched and screamed again, and again and again and again, as the belt found its target on her lips, an impeccable aim that left her helpless to tighten, sending the ginger oil through her like an inferno. It was an intolerable pain, the worst she'd ever known, *far* above her pay grade as a sub, but she would have been lying to herself if she pretended she didn't love every horrible minute of it.

She gagged when the cock in her throat pulled back, shrieked when she was lifted with inhuman strength and spun like a doll, and sobbed when her ass came down to sit on the edge of the table, forcing the ginger in a little further. He smelled like oranges, she realized, holding onto his shoulders as her body screamed in pain. Bright and juicy, like the tangerines she candied for Christmas Eve, citrus swirled around sharp clove and sweet cinnamon, like a rich, mulled cider. She'd never again be able to have a cup of spiced cider with a sugared orange on the rim again, she thought, and not think of this day. This of this day and get wet doing so, if she were honest.

“You’ve taken your punishment well, sweetling,” he hissed, obscene tongue darting out to taste her throat, “but I need to be getting on with my schedule. Plenty of naughty children to visit on this night. You’d do well to make sure your welp isn’t on my list in the future, if you want to avoid a repeat of this.”

She gasped when his cock filled her, his goat-like hips pistoning with urgency, and his long tongue unspooled once more, curling around her clit with ease. It felt good, she couldn’t pretend otherwise. She’d never been eaten with such skill, had never had a partner who seemed to know exactly what her clit needed to make sparks shoot behind her eyes, and she didn’t realize as he began to laugh again that this was her final punishment. When she came under the monster’s tongue, her body clenched — clenched around his fat cock, clenched around the ginger, fiery pain obliterating the pleasure that had caused her peak, clenched so hard she milked them both.

His moan of pleasure was obscene, his claws digging painfully into her hips as he buried himself deep within her. Oil seeped from the plug, making her scream anew, and the cock within her exploded, filling her as he groaned. Aubrey thought she knew what fire felt like at that point, was positive the ginger in her ass was the worst burn she would ever know, but the Krampus pumped her full of liquid pain as his cock erupted. Burning, blazing, gallons of it, immolating her insides until she felt as though she might be able to breathe it out and incinerate the whole town of gossiping busybodies. She screamed and he laughed, and the world disappeared in pain-filled cloud of smoke.

When her eyes opened, she was back in her nightgown, the apron still tied snugly around her neck. The remnants of her breakfast sat on the kitchen table beside Jacob’s science project, and the oven dinged with notification that her cookies were done.

Glo-ooo-ooo-ria, in excelsis deo . . .

“Let this be a lesson to you, sweetling.” The beast was still there, once more draped in his furs, basket upon his back, about to disappear up the hallway to her front door. “You do not want to be on my Naughty List. Ensure your child is a good boy, and you won’t need to see me again.”

That was what she was meant to hope for, what a sane person would be praying . . . but all Aubrey could think of was how nice it would be to have a repeat scenario when she didn’t have to worry about getting her cookies in the oven.

“Wait!” she cried, stomach flipping at his words. She would never, *ever* allow Jacob to be accosted by this nightmare creature, not this one or any other, would lay down her very life to prevent it. . . . But that didn’t mean she wouldn’t be interested in this Naughty List. Aubrey thought she might like a permanent entry, preferably near the top. She fished a business card from the bag on the back of the chair, and gave the Krampus a somewhat sheepish smile.

“Why don’t you call me sometime. There’s, uh, no reason to wait until next Christmas to do that again.”

Gruß vom Krampus, or: a Reminder, Dear Hearts, That This Is A Punishment

Through the window, from the steel cage of the demon's arms, she could see the glow of a Christmas tree in the apartment building across the lot, twinkling gaily in red and green and gold.

Nessa's eyes filled with tears at the festive sight, so warm and inviting. It looked like the sort of old-fashioned tree she would sit and admire for hours at her grandmother's house, with silver tinsel branches and a kaleidoscope of color reflected on the walls, delicate glass ornaments, and a colorful star perched atop. She would tuck under the lowest branches like a mouse, meticulously arranging and rearranging the presents beneath the tree, lining up the ones that had her name on the gift tags by size, then by shape, the mystery of what each contained making her giddy with anticipation of Christmas Day. She had loved the holiday as a child, loved the decorations and carols, the presents and parties with her cousins . . . she wasn't sure when exactly she'd lost her holiday spirit. There were no holiday decorations in her own flat, no tree or mistletoe, no beribboned angels or shining stars.

She had been a very bad girl. That was what it told her after she'd opened the door, thinking the knock harkened the arrival of someone else, someone more familiar . . . in hindsight, she should have known better. It had been a heavy, thudding hammer, accompanied by the slight drag of chains and the dull tinkle of toneless bells, but she'd opened the door anyhow. She hadn't kept the spirit of the holiday, hadn't been a good friend or neighbor, hadn't thought of others, the monster said. She had been placed on his Naughty List, and now she was being punished for her seasonal transgressions.

And now she was trapped, trapped in a nightmare of her own making. The smell of cinders was choking her, and she didn't know how much longer she could keep this up, she thought as tears filled

her eyes, clawed hands tightening around her arms. Nessa didn't know how she'd ever again be able to stomach the smell of a fire cracking in the grate on a cold winter's night, provided she lived to see another night, of course. The monster laughed then, laughed as if it were able to read her thoughts; as if it were able to sense her tears.

“Is that contrition I sense, sweetling? Regret for your actions? Shame over your behavior? Or is it only remorse for being caught and for your punishment? Hard to believe you've experienced such a change of spirit so quickly . . . you'll need to do a bit better than a few sniffles, little one. I'm unconvinced.”

She screamed when fire consumed her once more. Fire and pain, cramping her insides and making her feel as if she were being incinerated at the seams, and the all-consuming smell of cinders and ash choking her. Grey soot had settled into the crevasses of her brain, into the gaps and holes where her decency was lacking, until she was enveloped in soot and ash and cinders, and there was no end in sight.

* * *

The gingerbread house-making party her sister had organized sounded stupid, she'd thought.

“Nessa, can you bring the cups? You don't have to cook anything; I'm just asking that everyone brings a dessert to share and I know you don't bake. Just stop at the grocery store on your way and pick up some holiday cookies or something, and get me four bags of the big red plastic cups, okay? I'll send you the money on CashMe right now.”

The notification had popped up on her phone when she'd been at the salon getting her nails done, serendipitous timing as she used the app to pay for her service. She had no intention of going to the stupid party. It didn't matter that Della had spent weeks organizing it, or that her family was expecting her presence. The bar was hosting holiday happy hour specials, an event she didn't want to miss, and she wasn't that interested in seeing her grandmother anyways.

Similarly, she'd never asked to be involved in the office adopt-a-family drive.

“Nessa, I'm going to have you drop the bags of gifts off, okay? I've already cleared it with Cheryl, you'll get an hour on the clock. The charity's intake center is downtown, right on Center Street.”

She'd never asked to be involved. She didn't particularly care about kids she didn't know — hell, she didn't especially care about the kids she *did* know for that matter. The sign-up had gone around the office several times at that point, and she'd passed it off each time it landed on her desk. She had no intention of perusing the toy section of a crowded big-box superstore and parting with a chunk of her paycheck for a stranger, no matter how many beseeching email memos Marcie in accounting sent out.

Her co-workers, it seemed, had been easier to dupe. Brightly wrapped packages began to appear beneath the office tree the very first week in December, the pile growing with an alarming speed as the days went on, and if she hadn't known they contained only worthless toys, Nessa thought she may have filched a few. The toys had been loaded into the trunk of her car, several giant sacks full, to be delivered to the charity's intake center on behalf of the entire office . . . loaded into her trunk, where they still sat. She'd never made the time to drop them off, had used the hour of paid time at work to get her nails done, the same day she'd used her sister's money to pay for her French tips.

Now it was Christmas Eve. Her mother had left several messages, questioning when she was coming over, and should they hold dinner for her? She hadn't planned on having dinner with the family, had never responded to the group text between her mother and sister and two aunts, hadn't asked to be included. She was more concerned with calling him, to whine that she desperately wanted to see him. That wasn't necessarily true, of course, for she didn't desperately need anything from anyone, but she liked the note of panic that would spark through his voice when she called at inopportune times when she knew his wife and children would be there.

She had never intended things to go as far as they had, at least, not at first.

It had been a flirtation, a lark, completely harmless . . . she hadn't considered it cheating, even though she knew he had a wife at home. *She* was single, after all. She wasn't cheating on anyone. It had been easy to initiate, leaning over his desk, giving him a good, long look at the ample cleavage she displayed, bending over slowly in short, tight skirts to retrieve dropped pens beside his desk. He'd gotten in the habit of having her take dictation in his office, a completely antiquated notion, and in turn, she'd gotten into the habit of perching on the edge of his desk to do so, leaving her panties behind.

It had been easy, *so* easy! Almost too easy, for she normally enjoyed a bit of a challenge, but he provided the shine of an attractive trophy, his corporate title alone being worth the effort. She'd been sitting on the edge of the desk, had already given him a peek of what she wasn't wearing beneath her skirt. As she gazed down at the growing bulge in those tailored trousers, she'd slipped off a spiked

heel, resting her bare foot against his clothed erection. He'd grunted in surprise and pleasure, letting her stimulate him with heel and toes until he'd undone the leather belt with shaking fingers, letting his swollen cock spring free. She'd dropped from the desk, sinking to her knees before him, putting her mouth to work, glad that she'd been born without a conscience. She'd let a dribble of his come coat her lips when she'd returned to her own desk, already planning her next move.

Since then, it had become a game. How tightly she could keep him wound, held by an invisible lead attached to his cock, at her beck and call every time she gave the line a tug. She didn't care about him, of course, was certain she didn't even like him, but it wasn't as if that mattered. When he'd done up his trousers, leaving her apartment to go to his wife's office Christmas party several nights earlier, she'd pouted, had pulled him back to bed, gliding her nails down his chest and back into his pants, coaxing his cock into forgetting his other obligations. Christmas didn't mean anything to her, any more than he did, but her other plans had fallen through and the night had been young.

She'd thought it might have been him that night when the knock sounded at the door. That had been hours ago. Hours and hours and she were choking on soot and the smell of smoke and her body was on fire.

She'd looked at the photo on his desk before — a smiling quintet of upper-class blandness, taken at a marina; two high-school-aged children and one who looked a bit younger, the smiling woman at his side completely oblivious to the sham her happiness was, Nessa had snickered to herself. It wasn't her problem, and it wasn't her fault, as she reminded herself often. *She* was single, was twenty-five and beautiful, and assumed she always would be. Her partner had been sloppier though, hadn't borne the weight of his conscience as smoothly, and the smiling woman in the photograph hadn't been as ignorant as Nessa assumed. A Christmas wish had been made, a wish for vindication, for each to pay for ruining her Christmas, and Krampus had answered.

She should have known it wasn't him knocking, should have known from the heavy, rapping thud, but her ego had not allowed her the possibility that it *wouldn't* be him. The creature outside her door was massive, with the curling horns of a ram and the hooved hindquarters to match, as black as the night, and she'd screamed, high and shrill and as loudly as she was able, loud enough for one of the neighbors to hear. *They'll hear and they'll come to help*, she thought, at the very least they would call the police. As the demon-like creature pushed its way into the apartment, she held her breath, waiting. Surely, *surely* someone had heard her scream, someone would help . . . the black-cloaked

figure released the basket it had been carrying upon its back, leaving her terrified at what might be inside, and no sound came from the empty corridor beyond her door.

Nessa remembered then, with a sinking heart, the way she'd let the elevator door close on her neighbor when her arms had been full of groceries, just two weeks prior, and how she'd slipped a rude note under the door of another, complaining about the smell of the cooking spices they used. No one was coming to help.

"A year's worth of misdeeds and selfishness," the creature mused, chuckling as it reviewed her file. "Your lack of generosity and decency has landed you on my Naughty List, and you ought to be glad your punishment is not worse. Krampus is here to see you understand the error of your ways. You've been a very bad girl, Nessa."

It started with a spanking, a punishment for a year's worth of greediness and uncharitable actions. The bundle of sticks it wielded was a poor substitute for the crack of a leather strap, however, and she remained stoic as it ineffectually paddled her. The creature seemed amused by her attitude, swatting lazily with the branches as if he had all the time in the world. Nessa realized too late that she might have had the power to end things then: if she'd wept, if she'd been contrite, it may have ended the punishment.

"There's nothing I enjoy more than breaking a bad girl of her spirit, sweetling. I assure you, before this night is done, you will have learned your lesson."

She'd been baited, she realized when its razor-sharp claws ripped through her clothing as easily as slicing butter, leaving her completely bare. She'd been baited into further bad behavior, for as she was yanked forward across its bristly, fur-covered legs, the creature displayed a sure-handed prowess it had not displayed only moments earlier. The branches had more of a bite across her bare skin, and Nessa jolted at the first lash. One, two, three, four . . . on the fifth swat, the creature's hand stilled. A rough palm slid over the swell of her ass, smarting from the spanking, before delivering a hard slap that made her cry out before it resumed striking her with the branches.

It hurt, of that there was no doubt. It hurt . . . but it wasn't intolerable, wasn't an inhumane whipping in the town square, and as the monster's hand slapped her bare skin again, she was forced to admit she didn't hate it. Nessa didn't want to admit to herself that she was turned on, didn't want to accept in her rational brain that being stripped naked and spanked by some nightmare creature was something she *enjoyed* . . . but her body responded to the way its hot palm slid over her reddened

flesh every dozen strokes, the way the force of its spanks moved her over its furred lap, that the way it had splayed her over its caprine legs simulated her clit in just the right way.

The beast seemed to read her mind. The next time it smoothed a palm over her ass, it drifted lower, pressing against the lips of her sex and gathering the moisture that pooled there. It laughed, deep and ugly, a sound that made her stomach tighten in apprehension. A dozen more strokes with the bundle of sticks and then . . . *then!* The creature's tongue was a long, red snake of an appendage, dropping more than a foot from its mouth, hot and glistening as it slid over her cleft. She was unable to hold back a moan as it licked into her, pushing through her hot folds to lave at her juices, lifting her hips until it could reach her clit, curling and stroking until she mewled. Its laughter was a rumbling vibration that only heightened her pleasure as it pulled her legs open wider, licking her clit with a precision her business suit-wearing partner in infidelity had never mastered, unceasing in its attentions. When she came against its tongue with shaking legs and a spasming cunt, she was horrified at how enjoyable it had been.

"A choice," the beast chuckled, gripping her tightly by the wrists once it spun her on its lap, "you'll continue to receive your lashes, or you may choose to receive your punishment in a more . . . creative way." The inhuman tongue curled and coiled around her breasts, teasing at her nipples, until it dropped once more, seeking the source of her heat. Coarse black hair covered its lower body like a pelt, and it laughed again when she moaned, a rasped sound as that hot, red tongue pushed into her, pressing against her walls, fucking her as deeply as any cock had or could, a sample of its *creativity*. It wasn't long before she climaxed again, enjoying the ripple that moved up her spine when it licked over her pulsing clit.

"I think I like your creativity."

She should have known better. The monster smiled, wide and terrible, showing the glint of fangs as he rose, dropping her unceremoniously to the floor, revealing a cock as red and wet as its tongue. It would fill her completely, would stretch her beyond what she was used to, and if *this* was her punishment — being fucked by that thick, straining cock and having her clit licked until she came again and again — Nessa would ensure her behavior the following year was even more heinous. *You'll definitely steal the presents under the office tree next year!*

Rising on her knees, she nosed and licked the large, fur-covered testicles, taking note of how heavy they seemed, heavy and full, before moving on to the swollen shaft. *With balls that full, this probably*

won't even last that long! You can suck him off and be at the bar before ten. The curving cock rose from a sheath, red as blood against the beast's black pelt and riddled with thick, pulsing veins, with curious ridges up the underside. It was hot against her tongue, as she licked a broad stripe up to the head, laving her tongue over and around, finding the winking slit in the tip. She moaned, sucking the bulbous head, into her mouth giving him her best porn star look, something that always worked during her illicit office extracurriculars.

The beast only chuckled. "Do you think this is how things will work, sweetling? You'll suck my cock and all of your misdeeds will be forgiven? Isn't time on your knees what got you into trouble in the first place?" A clawed hand scraped into her hair, gripping it tightly and pulling, her first hint that she wasn't at all in control. "Well, dearest, if you want to suck, start sucking properly."

His cockhead was hot in her mouth, the bead of spicy pre-come hot on her tongue, the rest of his burning shaft hot in her throat when the monster thrust forward without warning. The hand gripping her hair drove her face down on the burning length until her airway was blocked, and she realized, too late, this was a punishment, not a prize. *If she please it, it'll leave*, she thought desperately . . . after all, this was something she was good at. She'd relaxed her throat with resolve, gripping the back of a furred thigh for leverage as its long tail swished, hips thrusting against her mouth. If a big cock was her "punishment" for a year of behaving badly, she thought resolutely once more, she saw no reason to repent.

Now she knew differently. Soot and ash and cinders, coarse black hair scratching her skin, and that hot, red cock, unceasing in its pumping.

When it had tired of her mouth, she was pulled off its length by the hair, a river of drool running down her chin, before spinning her around and mounting her without pause. Glinting, wide black hooves squared off beneath her as that burning, bulbous head pressed into from behind, a reminder that this creature — this *monster!* — was inhuman, that she was being fucked by some animalistic demon.

That reminder didn't prevent her gasp as he filled her, the dizzy, delicious pressure of that thick cock, with bumps and swells in all of the spots she needed, rubbing her inner walls as he began to thrust. It felt *good*. Better than her married lover, better than any of the bar boys she brought home. *Hardly a punishment!* she gloated again, for the full pressure it provided was a blissful torture all on its own. The monster had laughed at her moan of pleasure, laughed at her stupidity. Again, she should have

known better . . . this was a punishment. A hard fact to remember as she came again, convulsing around the thick cock with a shudder, something she'd never managed to do without external help.

"I'm so glad you're enjoying yourself, little one. After all, we've only just begun."

Its tongue moved down her body, a slithering red snake, slobbering over her skin until it reached its intended target. Nessa welcomed the pressure against her clit, welcomed the steady flicking stimulation as she was pumped into by the beast. She would straddle her married lover's face, giving him access to lick her clit and eat her pussy until she'd come over and over against his face, a fantasy she entertained every time she swung her leg over his head . . . but it rarely ever worked out that way. He would lick at her with gusto for a time, sloppy and rushed, never centering the attention on her clit at the angle she needed, and eventually, it would become an annoyance. She would feign breathy little moans until she was dislodged to play with his cock, her fantasy dashed every time. This was the best of both worlds, Nessa told herself. A thick cock inside her and a tongue at her clit, a threesome without the extra work. She came again, finding no reason to change her ways.

She was a fool.

Hours had passed since then. The demon had not slowed, not stopped, its cock as thick and hard as it had been when it had first speared her, unyielding as it rutted wildly, battering her insides with a ferocious, indefatigable intensity.

"Aren't you glad you wanted creativity, sweetling?"

Its voice was a mocking hiss, tickling at her ear and she whimpered miserably when the equally red, equally hot tongue tickled at her inflamed clit once more. When she'd come against the pressure of its tongue the first time after it had begun to thrust within her, she'd shuddered in pleasure, congratulating herself on her choice to forgo the spanking. Its heavy balls slapped against her, the pace of its hips not slowing, and Nessa had braced herself, waiting for the beast to erupt, certain it would happen at any moment. Instead, its tongue slithered between her legs again, finding the swollen bud of her clit, and Nessa felt the first twinge of discomfort. She needed time to recover after the several orgasms she'd already had, the first time in her life she'd ever come more than once in a single session, but the monster seemed not to notice. When she attempted to shift her hips away, clawed hands landed on them, holding her in a vice-like grip.

She was pressed to the monster's back, legs opened wider, unable to shift away, and the tongue once more sought its prize. Again and again, it curled around her, pushing back the fleshy hood and stroking directly over her abused pearl until she screamed. Too much, too long, she had been worked

over repeatedly, made to climax continually, and pleasure was eclipsed by pain each time. Licking, stroking, over and over; the additional stimulation, coupled with the thick cock that seemed to throb within her, was once more enough to make her stiffen, shaking against the coarse fur as the demon cackled. Her muscles contracted painfully as the slithering, stroking tongue teased another weak orgasm from her abused body, clenching around the creature.

It was the only thing that stilled the beast. Each time it forced her climax, the monster groaned, ceasing its movement to enjoy the squeeze of her muscles around its cock, its tongue continuing to slide over her clit as she pulsed around its burning length. The stimulation was an intolerable pain, but her cry of distress only made it laugh again, resuming its rutting with brutal efficiency. *This is what got you into trouble in the first place.* Nessa wondered if it would ever end. Surely her body could not take anymore, that she would reach a breaking point and simply crumble to dust in the monster's clawed hands if it did not end the once-pleasurable torture. It was going to kill her, or else, keep this up for eternity, and the thought made her sob.

As she stared at the twinkling Christmas tree through the window, Nessa accepted for the first time that she'd brought this on herself. If she'd gone to her sister's party, she perhaps would have made plans with Della and their old school friends who would have been there, she would have been out that past weekend with them, rather than coaxing her boss to miss his wife's Christmas party. If she'd delivered the toys as she was meant to, she might have met the handsome young man who volunteered at the charity intake center, someone she didn't even know, yet could envision clearly from the cage of the monster's arms. He might have asked her out, might have made her realize that a man who would cheat on his wife wasn't worth her involvement, no matter how bored she was. If she'd been nicer to her neighbors, they might have been willing to hear her screams, if she'd gone to spend Christmas Eve with her family in the first place, she wouldn't have been home to have this punishment meted out. Tears flood her eyes at the realization, that she could be sitting at her mother's table at that moment, playing Uno with her young cousins, catching up with the family she'd opted out of seeing for months for no reason other than she couldn't be bothered. If she'd taken the monster's lashes, this might already be over. Instead, she'd acted the tart once more, had tried to make it a game, get the upper hand.

One simple act of decency could have set everything right.

Clawed hands abruptly pushed her forward over the arm of her sofa, ass in the air. The throbbing cock slid impossibly deeper in the adjusted position, moving against that spongy spot within her repeatedly, forcing her to come undone. *You can't! No more!*

“Oh, I think you have one more left, sweetling.” Its voice was mocking, once more reading her thoughts. The smell, the intolerable smell of soot and smoke and ash clouded around her as it pressed its knuckles to her clit, working it steadily. The climax hurt, made her ache, feeling as though her innards had been completely rearranged, and she was unable to hold back her scream. For the first time since this torture began, the beast did not slow to enjoy its own pleasure; she realized it has impossibly picked up speed.

“I think you’ve learned your lesson . . . for now. A bad girl is a bad girl, down to her core. I hope we can enjoy this again next year, sweetling. I do love being *creative*.”

There was no chance to respond, no chance to beg or plead that she would change, no chance to do anything but scream as the creature came with a roar. Liquid fire erupted into her, a scorching inferno punctuated by its obscene moan of pleasure, ejaculating what felt like gallons of pure magma. She was sorry, sorry for all of it, wished she could take back every instance of callousness and cruelty, wailing her repentance into the couch cushion as those heavy balls emptied inside of her at last; igniting her insides until she knew she would be completely burned out, a pile of soot and ash. She realized that was the smell she’d been inhaling—the burned-out remains of others who’d been punished into oblivion by the Krampus. The monster began to laugh, holding her tightly to his furred hips as he spurted his last bit of fire within her, and Nessa felt herself fade away.

A last whimper and a puff of smoke, and then she was gone.

Her eyes fluttered open slowly, finding the grey glow of morning bathing the room. Tugging the plush blanket from her sofa around her shoulders, she pressed her face back to the cushion. It had been an odd dream, one that tugged at the corners of her consciousness, but the memory was clouded and smokey and unclear . . .

Smoke!

Nessa jolted beneath the blanket, suddenly aware of how odd it was to be sleeping on the sofa in the first place, realizing she was naked beneath the covers. Sitting up slowly, a sudden stab of pain twinged up her body, and it all came rushing back, every terrible minute. She’d never crossed the apartment so quickly, barely making it to the bathroom in time to retch, her head spinning. *It was a*

dream . . . it had to be a dream. Walking back to the living room on shaking legs, she drifted back to the sofa, picking up her phone from the low table with a shaking hand.

It was shortly before nine a.m. on December twenty-fourth. Christmas Eve . . . again.

The exhalation she let out left her sagging back on the cushions, relief flooding through her until she thought she might sob from the pressure of it. *It had been a dream, just a dream!* She'd text her mother, she thought, sitting up quickly, would ask her what she could bring over for dinner tonight . . . after she stopped at the ATM to get the money she owed her sister, would stop somewhere and by her a generous spa gift card as an apology for missing her party. After she dropped the toys off at the charity intake, she might pick up some cookie trays for her neighbors . . . *It had been a dream.* She felt like Ebenezer Scrooge, waking on Christmas Day with a fresh start yawning before her. She laughed then, the sound leaving her throat as a hiccup of tears, imagining herself throwing open the sash of her window to exclaim down to passersby, asking what day it was. It had been a dream, but that didn't mean she couldn't make some changes.

Nessa pushed herself to her feet, eager to get started, to begin righting the wrongs she'd committed against the people she loved. *And when the office reopens after the holidays, you're putting in your notice.* It was then that she saw it. At the end of the table rested a small pile of soot, incongruous considering she didn't have a fireplace. A ripple went through her as she remembered, falling back on the sofa. She remembered all of it, remembered the smell of soot and ash, remembered the creature who knocked on her door. A pile of soot, all that was left of the person she'd been.

From outside, the church bells up the street chimed the hour, oddly toneless and dull, sending a curious thud echoing through her as the snow softly fell.

The Stroke of Midnight, or: a Well-Mannered Host

The tree was truly magnificent.

Everyone had said so, each guest who'd come through that night, doffing their furs into the arms of a waiting servant, air-kissing her cheeks in the glow of the twinkling golden lights. *Davina, that tree is simply magnificent! You've outdone yourself this year, darling!* It was true, she thought dreamily, gazing up at the coniferous wonder. Eighteen glorious feet of Fraser fir, trucked in from some far-off farm on the opposite end of the state and stood upright at the base of the wide, curving staircase, giving guests who wandered up to the second floor a view of the upper branches. The tree was strung with garland and twinkling lights that reflected on hundreds of glass and crystal ornaments, the crowning star unfurling ribbons of red velvet that cascaded down the branches like a rich waterfall of blood, slashing through the blue-green needle-tipped boughs. It was a stunning display, and she *had* outdone herself that year.

Waist-coated servers had kept the table of hot hors d'oeuvres replenished in a never-ending procession of lobster rolls and prime rib pasties and savory vegetable tarts; the champagne flutes topped with the bubbliest vintage, no guest needing to worry about an empty glass at any point during the night. All evening, the bite of cold from outside sliced through the foyer as friends and neighbors and assorted other merrymakers dropped into the Devlin's annual Christmas open house, the fête of the season, a non-stop flow of cheeks to kiss and arms to embrace. The guests were resplendent in their holiday finery, sipping champagne and gliding around the dance floor; graceful waltzes followed by upbeat foxtrots, the tuxedoed quartet she'd hired for the evening playing without rest for hours.

Yes, the fête of the season which the whole community looked forward to, and Davina Devlin did not disappoint.

The house was quiet now, the strains of the quartet long ago faded to echoes in the rafters. The holiday merrymakers had moved on to other celebrations, to their own homes to tuck expectant children into their beds and indulge in a final eggnog before retiring themselves, in anticipation of a visit from old Saint Nick. The guests had left and all through the house, not a creature stirring, a thought that made a burble of laughter make its way up her throat, nearly choking her as she pursed her painted lips, refusing to let it out. Davina stepped over the shards of glass beside the staircase, pausing to stare up in dreamy wonder at the tree, at the wide-open space that had been filled with bodies such a short time ago.

What a difference a few hours could make, she thought, coming to stand before the stately grandfather clock in the alcove behind the stairs. It was nearly midnight now, close to the witching hour. The final guests had departed more than two hours earlier, a span of time that somehow seemed too enormous to be real and like no time at all.

It would all be over soon. She'd heard tales of the creature who came to punish wrongdoers at Christmastime, with whips and chains and other horrors, and she had no doubt in her mind that tonight it would come for her. She had, after all, been rather naughty.

She wasn't especially worried. It may have appeared to onlookers that Davina Devlin's main strengths lie in the pedestrian folds gracious hostessing, acting as a pillar of the community, and performing the role of a perfect trophy wife, but onlookers only tended to see a very small prism of reality. They saw what she wanted them to see, for Davina Devlin's secret superpower was the ability to control her own narrative, an enormous point of pride, if she did say so herself. Grand diversions and simple magician's patter were usually enough to alter perceptions, and as they said, perception was reality. Tonight she would employ every trick she knew, would turn the demon visiting her to her side, convince him that she had simply been acting in self-preservation, paint herself as sympathetically as she knew how, until he too was rooting for her. She was certain she would be able to enact her particular brand of subterfuge on her last guest of the evening, her own personal guest of honor, and in the event that she wasn't, well . . . she had always been a believer in divine retribution. If she got what was coming to her at long last, at least she'd had a good run.

She'd only just taken up her wine glass when the hour began to chime. Davina counted each reverberation from the belly of the grandfather clock as she sipped, straightening up once the clock

had struck ten, crossing the foyer back to the bar before it had reached twelve. She had another glass already prepared.

Candied orange sugar on the crystal rim, a cinnamon stick and several whole cranberries already placed within. The wine had been slow-mulled since that morning and maintained throughout the evening, a hit despite the argument it had caused before the guests arrived. It was the perfect marriage of a dark, jammy red and a generous glug of Grand Marnier, simmered with whole cloves and star anise, an abundance of cinnamon sticks and cardamon pods, and only the brightest, juiciest oranges. Orange slices had been candied to place on the rims of each stout-stemmed toddy glass, and guests had enjoyed cup after cup, long into the night. The grandfather clock completed its audit of the hour, echoing through the silent house, and before its last chime faded completely, a different reverberation shook its way to where she stood.

The door knocker, a stately lion's head, rapped with a force that rattled the windows in their casings. Davina closed her eyes and took a long, steadying breath. This was to be her finest performance, and it was showtime. There was no reason to go scurrying off to answer the door at this late hour, no sense in taking a chill from the blowing snow and wind outside. She would pour her wine and wait. It would come to her, she knew.

She was not kept idling long. A slice of icy air cut through the entry hallway and foyer, reaching her from where she stood beyond the tree, this newcomer to her holiday celebration. The creature silhouetted in the foyer entrance was a solid mass of black, huge and looming. She was able to pick out the curved horns of a ram with matching hooves and bent hocks, shaggy black fur covering the goat-like legs of her newest guest.

"Won't you please come in?" she called to this latecomer, still welcome regardless of the hour, for it was Christmas Eve and she was nothing if not a consummate hostess.

He was draped in gray furs, strapped in leather. The toneless bells upon his straps made a flat little jingle as he stepped further into the house, the animal-like ruby glow of his eyes fixed on her firmly. Upon his back was a great basket and Davina shivered, not allowing her smile to break.

"Welcome," she greeted with a beatific smile. "I'm so glad you've arrived safely, I hear the roads are a fright with this snow! Please, take off your furs and warm yourself by the fire. I hope it's not too late for you to join me in a glass of wine," she greeted her newest guest. "I'm afraid the food has already been put away, but if you're hungry I can go to the kitchen and find you something. But first . . . a Christmas toast."

The newcomer to her holiday open house surveyed the empty dance floor, the broken crystal and spill of crimson across the floor, eyed her magnificent tree. He took his time examining the scene before him, took several steps up the staircase as if to view the room from a different perspective, chuckling darkly to himself as he did so. When he turned to her at last, his smile revealed gleaming white fangs, setting his basket and furs at the base of the staircase before stepping over the shattered glass, his cloven hooves dragging through the crimson puddle upon the tiles.

“What lovely manners you have, sweetling. I’m happy to share your wine. It has indeed been a very long night.”

She laughed as he approached, a warm, engaging sound; one designed to cocoon its recipient into a feeling of cozy camaraderie, feeling herself shrink as he grew larger with every step.

“Well, manners are all we have, are they not? It’s the only thing that sets us apart from the animals.” He was broad and well-muscled, an admirable partner for this final holiday farce. “Slow-mulled with cranberries and oranges, traditional glühwein spices, and fine orange brandy. The wine is one of the best summer vintages from our cellar, and I had it mulled just for the occasion. My husband was furious that I would waste such a good cask for such a ‘silly flight of fancy,’ as he called it, but only the best for my guests and after all, it *is* Christmastime. What better time to celebrate with friends?”

“There is no one who can claim you do not keep the spirit of the season, Davina Devlin.” His laughter was a low scrape, colored in amusement. “And this is a very fine vintage indeed, dear heart. I believe you already know why I’m here, do you not? It pains me to admit it, but you have been a very naughty girl. It is time to face the punishment for your wicked deeds, but I do appreciate the civility. It’s quite missing in the world these days.”

“I couldn’t agree more,” she nodded seriously, laying a warm, conspiratorial hand on his wrist before sipping from her own glass. The creature brought with him the smell of the cold — of icy pines, thick with sap, and drifting snow, but there was also something warmer there . . . bright orange peel and cinnamon, reminiscent of the drink they shared. “Too many people these days simply don’t care about decorum. Gentility is sorely lacking in society.”

Another glimmer of white fangs before he took a long swallow from the glass. “And you provide it in the places it’s lacking. Opening your home to all, a generous benefactress of all the local charities. A heart overflowing with the spirit of the season . . . but that’s not why I’m here. You know that of course, don’t you, clever girl.”

It was not posed as a question. The first flutter of fear moved through her, surprised to find she was well-matched by this man-creature. She didn't know why she thought he would arrive on her door a slobbering, uncouth beast, as artless as the easily subdued fools that surrounded her. She imagined she'd be able to offer him food and drink, show off her generosity and her festive house, perhaps regale him with a few tales of holiday mishaps, and see him on his way, warmed by the wine. She'd not been expecting this towering man-beast, as well-spoken as she. He finished the glass of wine, setting it carefully on the edge of the long banquet table, already stripped of its linens, waiting to be folded and stored by the morning cleaners until it was needed for the next soiree. She wondered, with a flare of genuine remorse at the thought, if it would ever have use again. *Nothing to worry about yet — just call his bluff.*

"I'm sure you're quite eager to finish your tasks for the evening, and I hate to ask for any favors, but perhaps you'll indulge me in a dance first? My guests danced all evening, and the music was so lovely . . . but a hostess never has a moment to stop, you know. Friends and neighbors to greet, making sure the food is kept hot, the drinks replenished, that everyone is having a good time. I never had a chance to enjoy a single dance."

She moved to the antique phonograph cabinet as she spoke, allowing her words to set the stage direct the actions that would follow. The creature made no move to stop her as she set the needle to the edge of the record, a static crackle issuing from the old-fashioned trumpet speaker before a Christmas waltz filled the space.

"A glass of your finest spiced wine and now a dance? How can I resist such hospitality?"

She met him at the base of the steps, meeting his outstretched hand, beaming when he led her to the center of the floor. The creature's hand dropped to her lower back, pulling her with improper closeness to his caprine form, and her heart fluttered on fairy wings. *Steady, girl. You're still in control.*

"But it makes no matter what pleasures we might share, sweetling — you'll still receive your punishment all the same."

He was a surprisingly nimble dance partner. They spun and whirled, one melody bleeding into the next, steps never faltering. Davina leaned into the broad, densely-furred body of her partner, the events of the previous hour falling away. She had loved to dance, once, had nearly made a career of it. An international ballroom championship had once been hers before she'd become Mrs. Devlin, trading title for title, one aspiration for another. She'd never had a chance to miss the glamorous costumes, for her new wardrobe had been just as ornamental; the smiles she'd once given to judges

just as false as the ones she flashed for her husband's coterie of well-heeled society friends. The trick to ballroom dancing was keeping up the illusion of fluidity, that the movement of one's feet had no bearing on the regal carriage they presented, and she was, after all, a master of illusion.

She *had* missed the music. The music and the closeness, the matched heartbeat of having a partner in step with her, *that* had been something she'd never been able to recapture. She was close now, *so* close to getting everything she wanted. This night would be one more hurdle to clear, and then she'd be free. For the moment though, her surprisingly graceful partner and his strong arms would do.

"Do you have any requests for the evening?" His voice was nearly a purr against her neck as they glided over the tiles. "The end result will be the same, of course, but such gracious hospitality deserves a reward."

"A-a request?" she squeaked, ignoring the tacit threat. *The end result.* "I'll have to think on that, I suppose."

"Think quickly, sweetling. Bribery, embezzlement, defrauding a charity . . . your naughty list was jam-packed *before* this night, and now . . . well, you've outdone yourself. But I do so love a bit of civility."

A stone turned in her stomach, the realization that the beast knew everything, making all of her machinations seem rather pointless. She wasn't in charge at all, and she hadn't been from the instant he knocked at her door. The music swelled and she was spun, returning to the strength of his arms without so much as breaking a step, a sudden weightlessness dissolving the stone. She was reaping what she'd sown and had long ago accepted this possible outcome. *Well, not **this** outcome, but punishment surely.* It wasn't imprisonment or public castigation from her peers. The creature would whip her, torture her, would go out of his way to break her spirit, but she could at least enjoy another dance before all that.

"I think what I'd like most," she managed in a tremulous voice, still playing the role of the perfect hostess, "is to keep dancing like this, for at least a bit longer. Is that an acceptable request?"

"I was expecting precisely that, sweetling," he chuckled, claws lightly grazing her skin as the music changed again.

Every time they took a turn at the corners of the room, his hand steadied at the small of her back and she leaned into him on the turn. At first, it had been a way to keep their footwork neatly matched, but her pelvis pressed to his wide hips in an unexpectedly delicious way, one that soon had her seeking the friction even as they glided in a straight line. A tilt of her hips, a quickening in her steps, and soon she was able to keep the pressure as if their bodies were fused.

Her actions did not go unnoticed by the beast. She gasped when he turned abruptly, taking advantage of her momentary bobble to grip her leg by the knee, lifting it over his soot-black hip, opening her in a way that made her see stars as he ground their bodies together.

“Is this more to your liking, sweetling?”

Davina was unable to answer, her breath suddenly coming in great, heaving pants. She was no longer an active participant in the dance as the creature lifted her just high enough to continue moving without her free toes dragging on the ground. The cutaway nature of her dress created a dramatic silhouette — the frothy, swinging skirt just barely brushing her knees, cascading in a graceful tail at her back with a slight train. It had been cumbersome to flit about all evening without dragging, but the effect had been well worth it. Now though . . . now the dress’s design was positively indecent, raising the hemline over her thigh as the creature held up her leg. Her undergarments were flimsy and thin, and the spread open lips of her sex were pressed flush to the coarseness of his furred body, rubbing against her as he continued the waltz without her.

Another turn as the corner of the room, the hand that pressed to her dropping to cup her bottom as they whirled, a white spark of stars as his leg moved forward, grinding against her tingling pearl in a way that made her shudder. *This* was not at all what she had anticipated from her midnight visitor, but all men, she had learned, were the same. Easily turned, easily led. This goat-man would surely be no different, she thought, once more certain she could control the situation. *If he decides he wants to fuck you instead of punishing you, are you really going to complain? Let him have his fill and be on his way.*

Strings and horns, festive waltzes and foxtrots, one after another, the music continued long beyond what she thought the record might be capable of. Her partner never slowed, hitching her leg a bit higher on his hip until he practically carried her like a doll. Davina was reminded of illicit afternoons in her youth, sitting on the corner of the dryer as it tossed and rumbled, bringing herself to weak orgasms before she even knew the word for the physical sensation she experienced. The varying pressure of her dance partner’s body as he moved was not constant enough for her to reach that level of satisfaction, but she still found herself gasping on every turn, a lightning bolt of pleasure making her arch against him every few steps.

When the hand holding her against him slipped beneath the hem of her skirt, Davina’s manners failed her, all of her witty retorts drowning in a flood of arousal. Her lingerie was modest but expensive — beribboned silk, tissue-thin and soft to the touch, and the sensation of a long, thick finger grazing her cleft over the silk nearly made her light-headed as he turned once more. Back and forth, a

slow, feather-lite massage against her clit, she felt the points of claws and the slight press of his knuckles as the Viennese waltz slowed to one of English measure, and all too soon the delicate silk was damp and sticky with her arousal. He caressed her through the silk as adroitly as he danced, and despite her desire to remain in control, her body wanted more.

“It seems to me, sweetling,” he purred into her ear, a red snake of a tongue darting out to taste the skin of her neck, “that what you’re most in need of is a good fucking. Perhaps if your husband had been a bit more astute in ensuring he was taking care of you in that department, you might not have gotten up to the mischief that you did. What is that silly saying? Spare the rod, spoil the child? Well, the same is true with ambitious little wives. Spare the rod, and she’ll cause all manner of trouble with her excess energy. Keep her well fucked and she’ll be well behaved. Fortunately for you, sweetling, I believe in laying down a rod of both pleasure *and* punishment.”

She could feel that rod, rising up between their bodies like a club, hot and thick, pressed to her front. She had only just wondered what it might feel like pressed to her own dripping sex when the monster relieved her of her ruined panties with a slice of his claws, pleasure and heat blooming through her as she gasped. Magic seemed to hold her in place as he positioned her legs around his waist, his leading hand still gripping hers as he moved through the dance alone. She was wide open now, his swollen member flush against her slick folds, and as he turned at the corner of the room, she was able to feel the ridges on his cock, sliding over her swollen bud in a way that made her cry out, desperate for completion. *A rod of both pleasure and punishment.*

The monster’s laugh was a slow rumble that began in his belly and moved up his chest. She could feel it vibrate against her, felt it reverberate against her body, leaving his obscene mouth in a dark wave, like plush black velvet. He would not help her further. This was the start of her punishment, she realized: set her on fire and let her smolder without fanning the flames.

Davina was gasping, the need to come slowly obliterating all other desires with which she’d started the night, as his every turn gave her a hint of the climax she might experience with her legs wrapped around his waist in such a way . . . but she’d need to do the work herself. When she whined in frustration, the volume of the music increased, his shining red eyes slipping closed with a serene smile on his face. There was something intoxicating about the smell of him, the curious combination of cold and spice and sparkling citrus making her lean into him to inhale, the heady mix only adding to her arousal. A shift of her hips and she gasped, finding the friction she needed, if only for a moment, exactly what she needed . . . she realized what she’d need to do, her cheeks coloring.

Heat pooled in her belly as he continued to waltz, her heartbeat thudding in her ears, matching the pulsing between her thighs. Davina wondered if he could feel it, could tell how wet she was; if he could feel her quickened pulse. *Of course he can, this is a game to him.* She'd started the night thinking she could control the outcome, not realizing her guest would be a game player himself, but she *could* control this. If he wants to play games, let's show him how well we can play.

The first raising of her hips was almost enough to cause her to lose her grip on his neck as she slid, the swollen lips of her cunt wrapped around the equally swollen rod of his cock, the weight of her body making her drop like she was sliding down a fire pole. Once . . . twice . . . the third time she raised herself against him she cried out, a yelp of unrestrained pleasure that broke through the music. Her shame was lost then, the pleasure of his ridged cock against her clit the only thing in the world that seemed important. Davina humped against him like a beast, as mindless as an animal, chasing a wave of pleasure that seemed increasingly in her reach. Her dance partner laughed again at her undignified display, but she was too far gone to care. When she came at last, the lights of the tree towering above them blurred into a million pinpricks of rainbow light, her core clenching in time to the music as the wave of ecstasy carried her away.

She didn't have a chance to react when he lifted her, guiding the bulbous head of his cock to her opening.

"I'm going to stretch this hungry little cunt of yours," he smiled, a flash of fangs and glimmering red eyes, "and fuck you the way you should have been fucked all along, sweetling, hard enough to knock the naughtiness right out of you."

It was too much, she wanted to scream as he breached her, every inch feeling like he was stretching her far beyond her body's ability, certain he would protrude right through her belly. He was squeezed in tight, so tight, a burn that made tears well in her eyes when he bottomed out with a grunt. She sucked in a breath when he began to move, prepared to scream . . . moaning instead when she felt the press of those ridges within her, the tight squeeze of his cock rubbing her in a way that nearly made her sob. When he began to use her in earnest, Davina knew she was lost. There would be no playing games with this creature, no gaining the upper hand. He fucked her like a toy, gripping her hips and raising her up and down the long, thick length of his cock like a sleeve.

"It's such a shame, dear heart," he said in a conversational tone as she fell apart, the sounds coming from her throat once more making her sound like a mindless animal. "If you had been fucked half so well and punished regularly, it may not have come to this. You might have been a docile as a

lamb, your mind too clouded by pleasure to come up with your devious schemes. If only . . . too late for regrets, though.”

Her muscles contracted painfully around him as she came a second time, a wail that cut through the swelling strings, clenching around his cock and flooding him in her heat, the room spinning wildly. She cried out again when they dropped against the staircase, the lights of her beautiful tree nearly blinding her. It was his turn to rut her like a wild animal, fucking into her hard enough that it nearly made her teeth rattle.

“As I said, it’s too late, unfortunately. I’m glad to have offered you this final accommodation though, sweetling. Lovely manners deserve a reward, no matter how naughty the recipient. Thank you for the wine and the lovely dance.”

He came in an explosion of burning heat and her legs seized at the pressure of it, the obscene, sloppy squelching of their bodies drowning out the music as he thrust through his climax. She was able to feel him filling her, overflowing her, felt his hot release running down her thighs and pooling under her ass, spoiling her dress. When he pulled out, it was like unstoppering a bottle. His spend gushed out of her, her muscles spasming anew at the unexpected emptiness. Davina watched as the viscous fluid dripped off the step, mingling with the spilled wine and pooling blood, a grotesque display.

“If your husband had fucked the naughtiness out of you, he might not have wound up like this,” he mused, gesturing to the rigor-struck crumple at the base of the steps, the broken crystal framing him like snowflakes.

“He shouldn’t have argued with me over the wine. He couldn’t just leave it be, couldn’t let it go. Do you know how much wine he has down there? Why does it matter if I took one fucking cask for my party. He wouldn’t have even known it was missing if the servants had gotten rid of the barrel as I asked. Can you blame me for making sure I had my own income? A girl needs to be able to support herself when she’s thrown out in the cold.”

His laughter was an echoing ring, the supernaturally-extended record finally coming to an end.

“You-you’re going to punish me now.” Her voice trembled, but she would persevere, Davina told herself. He could beat her and whip her, torture any way he wanted. She would persevere. She always had.

“I’m afraid not, dear heart. Krampus’s punishments are for those still able to be saved. It’s too late for you, Davina Devlin, but I am glad we shared a dance.”

She watched as he rose, stepping over the gore at the base of the wide staircase, redressing in his furs. The bells on his straps were flat and joyless, a chill sound that made her shiver. Furs restored, once more ready to venture out into the cold, he lifted the basket.

“It’s time to get in, dear heart. This is the end of the road, I’m afraid.”

She could have tried to run. She could have scurried up the steps and hid in the house, could have made a dash out into the cold, could have fought and bit. Instead, she sat there mutely, not protesting when he lifted her easily. She believed in divine retribution, after all. The basket appeared to be empty when she was dropped into it, and the world went black.

Mele Kalikimaka, or: The Vacation

It was almost possible to convince oneself that the air here was perfumed with the sweet scent of plumeria every moment of the day. It was bullshit, of course, for if one was paying attention, they would smell the kitchen's grease traps, the industrial disinfectant used in the dining rooms and bathrooms, and the smoke from employee cigarettes as they clustered in service hallways, out of guest sight lines. Still though — an easy fantasy to concoct, surrounded as one was by the landscape of craggy rock face, lush greenery, and an endless stretch of crystal blue sea. The smell came from the non-stop procession of the strung blossoms forced over his head every time he turned around, catching on his horns and knocking his floppy hat askew, but he welcomed the additional element of daily subterfuge as he made his way around the resort grounds.

His phone buzzed across the cabana's small teak wood table then, vibrating against the wooden surface where it sat beside the aforementioned lei and upsetting the bright blue contents of his hurricane glass in its clamor. It ceased after a moment, a voice mail chime following, and he grunted at the delicious pressure between his shoulder blades, the sweet smell of the flowers once more clouding his mind. It was the office, he knew without looking. The girl used her elbows to dig into his back with more strength than he'd been expecting from someone of her small stature, hitting a spot that made him groan all the same.

This vacation was what he needed. Time away, time to rest. Christmas had bounced back with a vengeance that year, and with it, the typical wishes for retribution and revenge — families fractured by politics, uncles emboldened by social media to raise a ruckus at holiday dinner, children being irredeemably spoiled and lovers once more engaging in extra-relationship trysts. He'd been on his

feet non-stop since the start of the season, visiting house after house, delivering spanking after spanking, and his feast day on the fifth had been a fitting tribute — no less than he deserved.

He'd been adequately positioned for the seasonal rush. The months he'd spent with the human woman had been well-spent: well-rested, well-fed, and well-fucked. Becoming a house mouse had not been as bad as he'd feared, for the girl had been a willing, enthusiastic supplicant — eager to please, eager to scream, and he'd been right — she *had* reddened beautifully. It had been a nice little diversion, creating a scale of punishments for her daily transgressions; acting on them an enjoyment for them both.

If she turned the lights on while he slept or made too much damnable noise — time spent over his lap, writhing as he corrected her with birch branches and the palm of his hand, sliding over the smooth curve of her ass as his cock rose between their bodies, fingers pressing into her hot cleft and coating in her wetness. Her hair was long and thick, and he would curl it around his hand like Santa with his reins, using it to direct her head as she sucked him like a grocery store candy cane, a favorite evening activity, holding tight as he pushed in further, not allowing her escape as she gagged. There were few things he enjoyed more than having his cock sucked and the mouth had never really mattered, only that it sucked him well, but the girl had learned exactly how to best please him that way, an enormous mark in her favor.

She learned to make schnitzel the way he liked, with veal rather than actual baby, an annoyance he was forced to accept, and as she stood over the sizzling pan of oil — wearing nothing but the scant apron he insisted upon, he would take her from behind, pushing her closer and closer to the hot stove with every thrust of his cock. He would empty his balls inside her with a grunt as the hot oil popped, occasionally catching the creamy globe of her barely-covered breast, making her yelp. She'd turn the sizzling schnitzel with trembling hands as he pulled out, unleashing a gush of hot seed, running down her legs and puddling on the floor, a lovely sight to behold.

It had been a perfect way to spend the off-season again, no less than he deserved — but when he'd left, at last, it had been with a full belly and no small measure of relief. It felt good to be back on the road, to be doing what he was meant to do . . . and there were other reasons as well, he was loath to admit. The girl had gazed up from the floor where he'd dropped her on that last night, his seed still smearing her thighs, her round, saucer-like eyes full of unshed tears. He'd ignored her sniffles as he'd packed his basket and gave a non-committal response when she entreated him to return.

It would be unwise, he knew. The girl had been enjoyable to punish, had been eager to feel the sting of his strap, and had seen to his every whim throughout the year . . . but she'd also been soft and warm and sweet-smelling, and losing himself in the pleasures of her plush curves and open legs had often come without his branches and harsh words. *Too* often, if he was being honest.

He'd woken on more than one occasion in the comfort of her bed with her curled to his front, as content as a little lamb, and even more unconscionably — his arm would be around her, draped over as if to keep her close, pressing her soft warmth against him. Days at a time would go by when he didn't raise his branches to her at all, when he found no reason to pull her hair or punish her for minor misdeeds, taking his pleasure from her body and giving her equal pleasure in return, using his long tongue on her daily. He would lick her clit as he fucked her, enjoyed the moment when her pleasure crested and her sweet cunt tightened around him, would empty within her without feeling the need to slap her ass as he did so, had begun to prefer that exact coupling!

He'd reorganized the cupboards, deciding his layout was an improvement to her nonsensical collection of glasses and casserole dishes, ensuring the dishwasher was emptied each morning, things put away exactly where he thought they should go. He'd learned to use *all* of her high-tech appliances by then, taking it upon himself to wash the bedding several times a week. He'd always valued tidiness, Krampus reminded himself as the sheets were loaded into the dryer, adding a lavender-scented square that prevented static . . . but that didn't quite explain why he'd then put in a load of towels, or empty her clothes hamper into the washer, ensuring to use the cool water settings that would not damage her delicate things. She would exclaim happily when she came home, giddy to find the chores completed — a ridiculous reaction that made him wonder what her past paramours had been like, as she leaned up to press her lips to his jaw . . . and it was *nice*.

It was unbecoming behavior for one of his station, troubling to contemplate, and he shuddered to think about what might have happened if he stayed. So instead, he left; left with her laying in a heap, weeping on the floor with her sticky, come-smeared thighs cooling in the chill November twilight from the open door as he vanished into the darkness. The fervor of the holiday season kept him busy and thoughts of her well out of mind, and once Krampusnacht arrived, he was too busy to have *feelings*, the way it was meant to be. The holiday passed, his expense reports were paid, and he desired a full belly and warmth once more . . . but there were other ways to fulfill that longing.

Two weeks at an all-inclusive luxury resort in the south Pacific, a chance to trade his basket for a garish, palm-printed shirt and his branches for tropical drinks and a stripe of zinc on his nose. To the locals here he was nothing but a tourist, a completely unknown entity there to soak up the sun and surf,

to stuff his face with seafood and not expend any thought on troubling things like *emotions*. There were no expectations of punishment or retribution, no expectation of *work*, precisely what he needed after the busy holiday.

The silky-haired locals that had crowded to sit on his lap a few nights earlier at the swim-up tiki bar had not begged for mercy or for him to hurt them — they'd only wanted him to buy them drinks. Two had marveled over his horns as their tits swung in his face, while another had stroked him beneath the surface of the water, tiny hands straining to span around the girth of his dark red cock. The night had ended on a smoothed-out blanket upon the sand, the three giggling girls left gasping as they lined up on the sheet with their legs spread wide. He tickled their clits with his long tongue and rutted each of them in turn until his cock was satisfied, his hot release sizzling in the water that lapped around his hooves as he staggered to the waves.

He'd smiled grimly in satisfaction as he spurted into the sea, happy with his decision to take this trip. None of them needed to know who he was nor where he came from, no one asked how long he was staying. A good thing, as he himself had no idea.

The phone buzzed again on the table, its vibration seeming more insistent. He didn't need to look to know who it was so rudely interrupting his time away, he thought again, didn't need to see the screen to know it would be the office, demanding to know the exact date of his return. Well . . . the fat man could kiss his ass, he thought as the girl's strong hands moved up his well-muscled thighs, pressing into the glutes of the aforementioned ass Santa was welcome to kiss. They had been displeased with his disappearance after last Christmas, annoyed with his absence at the Workshop, leading him to believe the big man was on the take there as well.

"I expect a bit more consideration this year," the big man had blustered, calling him into his well-appointed office just a few days after the holiday. "We can't have you just up and vanishing for months at a time. You didn't respond to emails, didn't log into the video calls. This is still a business, and the prep team needs to be able to get in contact, understand?"

He had no idea how the *holly jolly* myth was still perpetuated in this day and age, not when the genuine article bore such a scant resemblance to his seasonal stand-ins across the globe. Broad, barrel-chested, and heavily tattooed, the big man was anything but *jolly*. Light blue eyes that were permanently bloodshot from the booze, garish gold crowns winking from his smile, his jowls covered in prickly-white stubble: hardly the sort young mothers ought to trust with their precious cargo. He was a mobster, always had been, as crooked as the candy canes gracing the glass canister upon the

desk. Krampus rolled his eyes as the big man glowered, making the appropriate noises of agreement while still refusing to disclose the human girl's address. He wondered, as Santa blustered, how many times the twenty-two-year-old receptionist who'd ushered him in before having her ass slapped by the boss in would need to suck the head cock before she was made the new Mrs. Claus, a revolving door of tight asses.

As an independent contractor, he didn't owe the office shit, he reminded himself, the press of the girl's shockingly strong thumbs working into the swell of muscle, making him hiss. It was the hardest working ass on the seasonal circuit, in all of Christmastown! and he *deserved* a break, Krampus thought with aggravation. He didn't need to tell them when he'd be going back, might never go back! He'd subsidize his beachfront massages with metal detector findings and live at the resort permanently if the office didn't leave him alone.

"Turn, please." The girl's lightly accented voice was a pleasant chirp as he rolled, palming the phone easily from his new position, silencing it for good. *Santa can kiss my ass and eat it for good measure. Call Belsnickle if you need someone right this second. I'm on vacation.*

* * *

The first time it happened was at the aquarium. He was strolling through a tunnel of sharks, admiring the graceful beasts with a mai tai in hand, minding his own business when he felt the press of eyes on his back. It was strange, how exposed he felt without the weight of his basket there shielding him, how dependent he'd become on it, like a turtle's protective carapace. Instead, his broad back was encased in nothing but a thin layer of fabric, dark blue emblazoned with orange and pink sunsets, practically non-existent as some unseen presence bore into him.

She was pretty and plump, an ivory-skinned creampuff with full curves and a halo of golden hair, he observed in the reflection of the rounded glass tunnel. A pink terrycloth sundress brought out the rosy apples of her cheeks, dimpled ankles leading to matching pink flip-flops. Her arm was outstretched, holding the hand of a stocky man dressed in tourist attire similar to his own. The man chattered with an older couple and had taken several steps forward, but the girl had remained rooted to the spot, motionless and gawking. Krampus decided to wait. So far, no one else had paid him any mind; he would remain equally motionless as the girl and wait for the family accompanying her to move on, forcing her to move. The plan worked, as he knew it would, but he felt her staring until she

rounded the corner and disappeared, an uncomfortable bristle he shook off. *Fucking tourists*, he thought, downing his drink.

* * *

He wondered, after that day, how he'd not noticed the girl before, for she seemed to turn up like a bad penny everywhere he went. His initial hope that they were visiting the aquarium on a day pass proved in vain, for it was evident that the girl and her travel companions were also guests at the resort. He saw her at the pool, saw her in the piano bar, saw her every damned place he went, and each time the same thing happened: she would stare with wide, blue eyes and her jaw hanging slack, her head turning to follow him as he moved. Her reaction was the one he'd initially feared from all passersby, but since his arrival, she was the only person who gaped in seeming recognition.

It wasn't until the evening of the third day after the afternoon in the aquarium that she acted. He felt the girl's eyes on his back as he moved through the buffet, filling his plate with king prawn. He'd felt her eyes on his back as he'd stood on the observation deck that morning above the crystal blue water, had felt her eyes on him as he left the massage cabana that afternoon, had felt their sapphire weight the instant he'd entered the resort's dining hall. Pulling the ti-leaf trimmed sun hat a bit lower on his brow, he added another prawn to the pyramid atop his plate, ignoring the huff of the septuagenarian behind him. He didn't care about whoever the girl was, and put her out of mind as he made his way to a table in a shadowed corner to snarfle up his feast.

He didn't care to be recognized, didn't care to make conversation, but no sooner than he'd returned from the dessert table that his hopes of flying under the radar were dashed. Plump and pretty with a cherubic face . . . and sitting at his table. Blue eyes fringed in nearly invisible blonde lashes widened as he approached, his hooves clicking on the tiled floors. Halting in aggravation, the prospect of enjoying his parfait in peace dissipating as the girl's rosebud mouth opened and closed like a fish.

"You-you're . . . you're him!" Her voice was hushed as if she were sharing a great secret, and Krampus clicked his tongue as he resumed his seat, swallowing up a spoonful of the chocolate confection defiantly. Of *course* she was German. Bavarian, from the outer suburbs of Munich, if he had to hazard a guess based on the accent, practically from his own backyard.

"Everyone is someone, liebchen. If we weren't, then everyone would be no one. As far as declarations go, that's a bit weak. Why don't you go back to your own table and contemplate the

futility of existence, and let me enjoy my dessert.”

Her brow wrinkled in consternation at his dismissive tone, stub-like fingers curling over the edge of the table. “You’re the Krampus,” she hissed, eyes saucer-wide. “Are . . . are you here to steal the children?”

There was no way he could enjoy the layers of rum-soaked sponge cake nestled between the rich, chocolatey layers with the girl gaping at him, and the notion of going back up for seconds was absolutely out of the question until he managed to evict her.

“Does it look like I’m stealing children? Or does it look like I’m being interrupted from my meal? Only one of those options is currently true, sweetling, and if I am who you say I am, do you *really* want to end up on my Naughty List?”

He allowed a hint of growl to slip into his rough voice with the threat, leaning forward with menace. Her pink cheeks darkened, stumbling as she pushed up from the table, turning back to give him one last, lingering look before disappearing into the throng of people crowding around the buffet.

Krampus sat back with a huff, hoping that would be enough to do the trick. It wouldn’t do for this little busy-body to go running to resort security with wild accusations, disrupting his perfect holiday. *Hopefully that won’t be necessary*, he thought, returning to his dessert, scraping his spoon against the bottom of the parfait cup after a few moments. *Definitely seconds of this . . . and maybe more of the prawn*. Although, he considered, sidling up to the buffet line once more and dodging a pack of out-of-control, unsupervised children, perhaps his services would be valued here. A spanking room, on-site discipline for the over-privileged brats whose parents could afford to bring them to a place like this, who dropped them off at the pool for the staff to babysit the rest of the day. *All they have to give me in return is room and board . . .*

* * *

If he thought the tacit threat would be enough to put off the wide-eyed creampuff, he would have been wrong, he realized the following afternoon when she appeared at his elbow.

“What would happen if I were on your Naughty List?”

I’d paddle that bottom raw and have you choke on my cock for good measure.

“Liebchen, you’ve never done a naughty thing in your life. If you’re trying to land on my list, I can promise it will not go well for you.”

Blonde brows drew together, her full pink lips puckering into a pout. She smelled of cinnamon and flour, chopped butter and cold walk-ins . . . *a baker*. No, he corrected, taking a lock of her hair between his fingers to sniff — her eyes widened, mouth opening in shock as he leaned in, a small gasp leaving her throat — *the baker's wife*.

“How-how do you know that?” she whispered, and he fought the urge to roll his eyes. The big man's reach must be waning if even in Bavaria they had the temerity to ask questions.

“I know everything, liebbling. You'd do well to remember that. Now, shoo. Don't come pestering me again.”

But by dinner, she *had* found him again, carrying two of that night's dessert special as she pulled out the chair across from him. *At least she's learning*, he thought ruefully, snatching the layered cup away before she changed her mind. It was a lesson learned: he'd remove the other chair tomorrow.

“What would you *do* to me if I was on your Naughty List?”

Lemon and white cream, separated by thin layers of ladyfingers, grappa towards the bottom of the cup. ***Definitely getting another***. He was going to leave this resort with a bit of a belly, he thought ruefully, closing his garnet eyes to savor the bright flavor. When he opened them, the girl was still sitting there, waiting expectantly.

“I'd take you over my knee. Have you ever felt the bite of branches against your bare skin? The sting of a strap? I'd leave you red and smarting, bruised with my handprints. How do you think you'd fare the next day, rolling dough and bending over your ovens, every movement a reminder of your punishment?”

Her cheeks flamed scarlet, whether at the horror of being punished in such a way or at the further demonstration that he *did* in fact know everything, he wasn't sure.

“Is-is that all?”

He blew out a breath in exasperation.

“No, sweetling, it's not. We'd take a break during your spanking and I would feed you my cock. Do you have a gag reflex? We'd cure you of that in short order, if you do. I would use your mouth like a cunt, like a toy for my pleasure. Have you ever tasted the fires of damnation, little one? Mine is a burning rod of justice, and I would choke you with its heat.”

The poetic embellishment sounded ridiculous even to *his* ears, and he nearly made himself laugh at the absurd epitaph, but the girl was listening at rapt attention.

“It wouldn't make a difference how much you struggled or gagged, liebbling, wouldn't matter if you couldn't breathe, because your struggles only provide more pleasure for me. I wouldn't stop until

I had filled your throat, and then we'd go right back to your spanking, because it's what you deserve. Is that what you want, little one? For your throat to be my cock sleeve? To have my burning come running down your chin while I spank your ass raw?" The girl had flushed as red as his tongue, her lower lip caught in her teeth and her eyes like dinner plates, hands twisting in the table linen. "Go back to your table now, liebchen, before I drag you back to my room and do exactly that right now, and fuck you for good measure. Is that how you want to go back to your husband? A come-smeared strumpet, paddled by Krampus? Go, and don't come pestering me again . . . *Go!*"

She jumped from the table and scurried away, and he sighed in relief. *That was that. Burning rod of judgment indeed!* He snorted, inordinately pleased with himself. She'd not come pestering him again, he was sure of it, and if she did, he'd make good on his promise once and for all.

* * *

He had no idea when he'd lost his ability to reliably predict the truth. It must have happened sometime in the endless months he'd spent at the Dara girl's home, shredding her sheets with his hooves in retaliation for being so soft and sweet, enjoying her cooking and the smell of her hair and the taste of her cunt, completely losing touch with what he was meant to be: an arbiter of punishment, free from weak emotions. It must have been then, he considered when the creampuff turned up at his elbow shortly after breakfast as he looked out over the sea, invading his space.

"What-what if I *want* to be on your Naughty List?"

He snapped his fingers in aggravation, his tail swishing irritably. *They always want to be on the list, so they think . . .*

"Is that so, sweetling? Christmas is very far away, do you think you can wait that long to feel Krampus's strike?" The answer she gave shocked him. It was so rare that he was surprised by anything anymore, but the audaciousness of this little creampuff left him speechless as she reached out and cupped his balls, as brazen as any horny workshop elf. He did *so* love for them to be fondled in such a way, and her grip was firm as she squeezed him, even if her cheeks had flushed and her breath seemed thready. The sugary delicacies in her husband's bakery were well kneaded if her grip on his sac was any indication, and his groan of pleasure stuck in his throat as she rolled him in hand. His cock thickened in its sheath, and its red tip would be begging to peep out if she kept this up, necessitating him to go back to his room and drag her along to be his afternoon's amusement.

"Is this your plan, little one? If you wake the beast, you'll have no choice but to see this through."

“I know,” she shot back, tugging and squeezing again. “You-you said you’ll take me back to your room and-and—”

He wanted to do exactly that; wanted to stretch her thick thighs wide and fuck her until she was unable to stand, wanted to leave his handprints all over her creamy white skin, to fill her mouth and her cunt equally until she dripped with his release . . . but he’d had enough of having the girl as a shadow. The sanctity of his vacation was in jeopardy if he didn’t teach her a lesson immediately. *Let her see what the Naughty List entails.*

With a snap of his fingers, the resort melted away. Balmy, tropical air was replaced with the bite of Alpine frost; the sweet smell of plumeria wiped out by pungent firs and snow. The forest was a black expanse, rocky and magnificent, the birthplace of old magic and creatures, home to both him and the big man alike. The old gods were still worshiped in places surrounding this forest, and it was here where his magic was most potent. Krampus wondered if Santa still made a point of visiting to recharge his powers, or if he’d grown so accustomed to the new world luxuries and the ease of online ordering that he’d determined it was no longer a necessity.

“Where-where are we?!”

The girl’s voice was a panicked exclamation, her eyes darting like a deer, and he laughed, laughed loud and long and without mercy. This was what she wanted, after all. He loomed over her, his tourist garb traded for his basket and bells, as menacing as he was when he showed up on doorsteps all season long.

“This is what you wanted, sweetling,” he echoed his thoughts, his voice a rough scrape. “You wanted to be punished by the Krampus, did you not? This forest is very old, ancient. Can you smell the trees, smell their age, feel their eyes? These trees are older than your new gods, and it is here that what you know as *Christmas* was born.”

Another snap of his fingers and the girl was left bare, her blue sundress vanishing along with her underthings, leaving her nude and vulnerable beneath the steel-grey winter sky. Round hips and thick thighs, she too would redden beautifully. She trembled beneath his gaze, gooseflesh rising on her milky skin. Krampus chuckled, pausing to cup her heavy breasts, nipples puckered tight in the cold. Quick little breaths that made her shoulders shake had replaced her audacious bravery of earlier, and he smiled grimly at the smell of fear that rolled off her. She would learn soon enough, he thought, reaching up to the tree he’d backed her against, snapping off what he would need before pulling with a startled yelp over his knee.

“It’s time for your punishment, liebchen. Perhaps in the future, you’ll learn to be careful what you wish for.”

She cried out at the very first strike. Unused to punishment or perversions, not a naughty day in her life. He swatted her again, and again, and each time she gave a little shriek, her milk-white skin giving evidence to his actions immediately. Her ass was thick and round, the sort that begged to be cuddled on long winter nights, and it rippled with every swat, a beautiful display. She would provide a delicious cushion for his wide, caprine hips if he fucked her, which he still might do, he decided.

Pausing after a dozen lashes, he admired the red welts against her skin. She whimpered when he smoothed his palm over her, tensing when his fingers probed the lips of her sex. *So much for wanting to be on Krampus’s Naughty List*, he thought ruefully, softening his touch. Fear had outrun her bravery, no longer as brazen as she’d been beneath the bright, tropical sun, and she tightened, expecting pain. *A bit of pleasure to temper the punishment*, he thought, rubbing slow circles against her pussy, coaxing her clit into pleasure, not stopping until she was wet for him and he was able to coat his fingers in her honey. He sniffed her skin again as he rubbed her, confirming the initial whiff of her hair: clean and sweet, full of love and incredulousness and misplaced bravery, not a naughty day in her life. She was a good girl, as good as the Dara girl had been before Christmastime retribution had blown him into her life — full of kindness and consideration.

Worshippers of these asinine new gods mistakenly believed chastity was the mark of goodness, chastity and pioussness, but these ancient trees knew better. There was no crime in passion or in loving freely, for seeking pleasure with others was one of the scant ways these humans had to express joy, and worshipers of the old gods knew this. Ritual sex and pleasure had always been a part of the ancient celebrations, and it was unfortunate that such merrymaking had been lost to the winds of change . . . he hoped the stocky baker knew what a jewel he had, and rubbed his sweet little wife’s pussy half so well every day.

His long tongue lolled, unable to resist taking a taste, and she was as sweet as he had suspected, as sweet as the treats she helped make each day. The girl’s fearful whimpers turned to soft, breathy moans as he lapped her, his tongue flicking over her clit with a relentlessness he knew she’d be unable to fight. Sure enough, she shuddered almost immediately when his thick fingers entered her, fucking into her with a solid pump of his wrist as she came, flooding his hand with her juices.

She was a good girl, a sweet girl, and rewarding such goodness was not strictly a part of his job description, but he was not finished tasting her, he decided. Besides, his cock was eager to join the party, his balls pulsing with need, and it would be easier to enjoy her after she’d already had her own

pleasure. He turned her on his knee and the girl cried out, holding onto his horns when he lowered his face to her pussy to drink her up, right from the source.

“Oh . . .” she moaned, a soft, breathy little exhalation, raising her hips, a bit of that audaciousness returning. “Oh, ja . . . ja, ja . . .”

She gripped his horns for leverage as she moved against him, her head dropped back and a beautiful flush reddening her tits and throat, grinding her cunt against his nose and mouth wantonly. Krampus chuckled to himself, allowing himself to be used, amused that the creampuff was using his face as a fucktoy, the same threat he’d made against her the previous day. Her thick thighs trembled as he slurped and sucked, bathing her clit with his tongue until she came again, convulsions that made her contract, back arching. A delicious pussy, to be sure.

“Very nice, lieblich, a very tasty treat. I always like a bit of pleasure to break up the pain.” Her eyes widened, mouth dropping open in shock as he stood her upright a nearby pine, her hands bound to the trunk with a snap of his fingers. “I hope you didn’t think we were done, dear girl. I have a reputation to keep up, you know. Do you think anyone would fear me if all I did was go around licking pretty little cunts all day? I’d have every *fräulein* in the world desperate for me to call! No, your punishment isn’t over just yet . . . You *wanted* to be on my Naughty List, remember?”

The needles of the tree were soft and springy, but in his hands, they sharpened to needles for his task. Heavy and full, the milky round globes of her tits were an overflowing handful as he palmed one and then the other, kicking open her feet to shoulder-width as he kneaded them, pinching her nipples to hardness. Krampus let his long tongue drop, finding her clit once more, and the girl sighed as tickled the sensitive little pearl, still swollen from her orgasm. There was nothing in the world more delicious-tasting than a good girl’s pussy, he thought, and no sweeter sound than her screams. He increased the pressure on her clit as the pine needle pierced her nipple, and the sound that ripped from her throat was unsure of itself, whether it was pleasure or pain or a terrible, *wonderful* combination of both. The second needle sliced cleanly into the hardened peak, a ripple of old magic binding her to the tree with an unseen tether, and he picked up his Ruten once more.

She squealed and thrashed when the branches struck her bare cunt, biting against the place where he had so recently given her pleasure, four, five, six lashes. On the eighth, Krampus dropped his bundle. His cock was out, hungry and thick, and he couldn’t resist any longer. Old magic flowed through him, invigorated by the forest that bore him, an energy that made his cockhead and bollocks throb. The ancient power of the forest aided him in raising the girl, pulling her up the trunk by her

nipples as her scream rippled through the forest, high enough for him to sink his cock into her with ease.

The tight grip of his fingers would leave bruises on her hips as they melted into her redolent flesh, warm and wonderful, thrusting his cock into her fully before setting a deep, driving pace. He had to hand it to her, Krampus thought — she struggled mightily. Her dainty little foot attempted to dig into his side, to dislodge him from her, and little balled up fists pinwheeled wildly. She was tight around him, tight and hot, but he was hotter. His balls ached, eager to spill, and he chuckled again at the girl's unfortunateness — she'd bothered him early in the day, before he'd had a chance to rub one out into the rolling sea. His first spill of the day was the longest and the hottest, his biggest load, and his desperate need to come was being fed by the forest. The girl had not stopped shrieking, was still held suspended by the pine needles through her nipples which beaded with blood, but her panicked, pained shrieks were a whimper compared to the sound she made next.

He hoped she'd learned her lesson, he thought as he roared out his release, flooding her womb with the first burst of his burning seed, the scream she let loose an ear-splitting rattle. Krampus continued to thrust as his balls convulsed, tongue dropping to lick her clit once more, knowing her orgasm would extend and heighten his own. The girl thrashed against his ministrations, no longer wanting the pleasure he brought to her pussy, no longer wanting his spanking, no longer wanting to be on his Naughty List . . . but her body was helpless to respond. He continued to fuck her, continued to come, continued to tongue her clit until she clenched around his cock, her scream becoming a sob as she shook, and he groaned, relishing the way she tightened around him.

With a snap of his fingers, she dropped, breasts bouncing free as her nipples were released, impaled on his cock, and he let them tumble to the forest floor before covering her body with his own. He continued to thrust against her, rutting wildly against the blanket of fine needles beneath the ancient trees, tickling his own asshole with the end of his tail and wishing there was a workshop elf around to fill it.

“Remember, liebchen,” he hissed in her ear, increasing his pace as his end neared, “you don't *want* to be on my Naughty List. You're a good girl. Stay a good girl, and Krampus will never come knocking on your door.” His balls spasmed a final time, a ripple of pleasure he felt up his spine as they emptied fully, one last gush into her as she wailed, and then he was done.

The girl cried out when they were once again on the sunny deck, the softly rolling waves of the pacific forming white caps in the distance. The sun blazed down, and he adjusted the hat he wore

once more fluffing up the orchids and plumeria encircling his neck. Her habiliment was similarly restored: her sundress in place, nipples as smooth and unblemished as they'd been before she'd ever come to this south pacific resort, her skin unbruised, and her hair unmussed. It was as if it had never happened at all, except for one small, steaming detail: her legs were smeared in his semen, her cunt still dripping with his copious release, soaking her panties, no doubt.

“I hope you're happy, liebchen. A come-smeared strumpet, just as I promised. Remember this day, for I can take you back to that forest whenever I wish. I never forget a smell.” *Or the taste of a pussy that sweet.* “Now go. So help you if you interrupt my dinner again.”

* * *

That night he feasted on Poké and stone crab, kālua pig and more king prawn, the parfait feature of the night being berries in the snow, of which he enjoyed three. He watched the impressive show put on by the fire dancers, enjoyed the dance program of the graceful, skirted women, took a long walk on the beach after the festivities to burn off a sliver of the calories he'd consumed. He loved it here, he thought cheerfully; loved the warm air and delicious food, the abundance of ripe flesh and the relaxation of the sweet-smelling flowers . . . but something he'd been avoiding for weeks twisted his stomach as he walked, something sparked by the creampie.

He was ready to go home.

It was a word that tasted odd on his tongue, and he disliked the foreign strangeness. He liked having a good girl to curl around at night, to protect from other nightmares like himself. The sweet, clean smell, the delectable taste . . . he was ready to go back. The thought of returning to Santa's Workshop was untenable now, and the previous years he'd spent retreating back to that ancient forest, to hibernate in his tree left him cold. He was ready to find the Dara girl and see if her door would still be open to him. Not that it would stop him in the event it was not . . . but still. He hoped it would be, and that too was a foreign emotion.

* * *

The following morning was another perfect day: the sky an endless azure and the waves below a crystal-clear expanse, dotted with people. Krampus sucked in a slow lungful of the plumeria-sweetened air, too aware of the menthol cigarette smoke that laced it from the service corridor,

shrugging the disruption to his perfect vision away. Perhaps he'd indulge in another massage that day, and that evening, find himself a couple to bend to his will. There would be no one like the workshop staff here, nothing as pleasurable as burying himself in the tight cunt of whoever the current Mrs Claus happened to be, with the thick, cervid spear of one of the reindeer shifters balls-deep in him. There would be nothing quite like that, but he was sure he could make do.

His contemplation of finding a couple to play with, the cheerful thought of his cock in a tight cunt and a cock in his tight ass broken when a small hand gripped his wrist.

“You could take me back, maybe?” The creampuff gazed up with her wide blue eyes, blinking her transparent lashes at him. Behind her, smelling equally fresh and kind, was the baker. “You could . . . do that again? With the tree? And my husband could watch?”

Naughty List, he thought furiously, yanking his hand back with a scowl. *Naughty List, Naughty List, Naughty List! Naughty List for them both!* His perfect afternoon disappeared in the face of her guileless eyes, his delicious evening contemplations . . . Krampus paused, cocking his head. Well, he considered, this would save a bit of time searching. No need to comb through the bars looking for a receptive couple when one had presented themselves so willingly. His balls contracted in agreement and he smiled, giving the couple a flash of his fangs. They were good to the core, both of them, that was clear . . . but perhaps this addition to his Naughty List would not be so terrible after all.

Overhead, a seagull squalled and the waves crashed, and Krampus laughed, gripping the wrists of the baker and his wife. He loved the sun and the warmth here, and perhaps he would return next year with Dara . . . but there was no time for thoughts of that, not time to put his feet up. Lord Krampus had work to do, and he did so love his job.

A Good Girl's Triumph, or: To All A Good Night

There'd been a man in his chair.

The snow had been falling softly, illuminated in the halo of the streetlamp against the black sky. From where he stood in the street, Krampus had been able to see a body stretched out in the leather recliner, head tipped back in sleep, the white-blue light of the television reflecting on his pasty skin. Humans were fickle and capricious and were always searching for the next thing in which to cling . . . but their lives were so short, so fragile. The world was large and cold, and they, with their limited sight and small minds, could only perceive a tiny sliver of it. He could not fault the girl for seeking out a partner with whom she might weather an uncaring world.

. . . But it was *his* chair. *His* soft, sweet-smelling human, *his* off-season diversion to recapture. He did not see the girl from his vantage point — she was not curled like a cat in the corner of the loveseat, crochet needles clacking softly, nor was her silhouette visible in the kitchen. It was late, he realized, too late for her to still be awake, for she rose early each morning to go to her job.

He'd grown soft. It was a bitter pill to swallow, but one he was forced to choke down all the same. Too many months of creature comforts in her home; too many nights spent with her tucked beneath his arm, her small face pressed to his chest as she slept, the red shape of his handprint all over her ass. Black anger welled within him at the thought of her in bed alone, curled into a tiny ball in the vast sea of cold sheets, with no one there to keep her warm, no protective arm to keep her safe. If this human could not even do the bare minimum in that regard, Krampus certainly could not trust that he was satisfying the girl in the way he knew she craved; the things she felt shame over, shame and guilt, absolutely preposterous, but that she craved all the same. A craving only *he* could satisfy.

He watched the man in his chair until the sky had lightened, the late winter dawn a raspberry smear at the horizon. It was time to leave, but he would be back, he decided, would monitor the citation carefully.

She'd cut her hair. It had been another early dawn morning, another morning spent watching. Her long spill of sable hair had been chopped short, barely swinging past her jaw as she padded around her kitchen, far earlier than she needed to be up. She stood at the counter beside the sink, and he tried to imagine the flaky croissant she might be slathering in jam, or the poffertjes of which he'd become inordinately fond, which she purchased from the Dutch bakery near her work. She turned to the stove before he learned the contents of her breakfast, lifting a small saucepan instead of the tea kettle he'd been expecting. Krampus watched as she poured the amber contents of the pan into her mug, squeaking as she fished a cinnamon stick from the hot pan. That too was a sound he knew well — her little yips and yelps, the way she would gasp and moan when he was buried within her and her cries of pain when he spanked her; the tiny, kitten sighs she made when she slept and her shuddering snuffles as he'd packed his basket before leaving her alone. He watched as the mystery of what she'd been preparing was revealed: a tangerine slice that she floated on her mug, lifting it with both hands to hold under her nose, her dark lashes fanned on her pale skin as her eyes closed.

He'd seen enough. The situation was intolerable and needed immediate correction. He was an arbiter of justice, restored the balance, and gave all entries on his Naughty List a chance to redeem themselves after his punishment . . . but Dara was a good girl, even if she herself might argue that fact. It was not one's bedroom preferences that determined such things after all, but the contents of one's heart, their generosity and unselfishness. Meddling in the affairs of the righteous was not his job . . . but he knew someone who might be able to adjust the situation in his favor. He was loath to go to the big man for help with anything, but if nothing else, Krampus reminded himself, hitching his basket a bit higher as he snapped away from the scene of the girl inhaling the smell of her spiced cider and oranges, he knew Claus, as well as he knew himself. Santa was a gangster, a thug, always had been, and always would be, and Krampus knew where all of Santa's bodies were buried. They were born of the same black forest, the same old magic, and he would remind his holiday twin of their equal status, if necessary.

It had been easy to arrange. The big man valued the bottom line, how a situation might benefit him, what perks he could finagle and what additional boons he might skim from the top. When Krampus arrived in the office several days later, with the explanation that there had simply been no cellular reception in the south pacific and that he'd come in as soon as he retrieved the missed messages, but

my, didn't he have some interesting news to relay, the big man sat back with his feet up on the desk, listening intently.

There had been a boastful human on his flight back, one with an eye on starting his own holiday gift fulfillment business. He'd already acquired A-round funding for an app that would put Christmastown out of business for good, would be taking his brilliant idea to the biggest Silicon Valley venture capitalists next, and Krampus hoped his good friend Santa Claus was prepared to have his candy cane sucked by backstage workshop elves as he shimmied for giggling suburbanites at the *Workshop*, along with him and all of the underemployed elves. The big man's ruddy complexion had darkened as Krampus spoke, turning as red as the suit his dupes all over the world donned, golden crowns glinting as he grit his teeth.

He'd clapped Krampus on the back as they rose. A good friend, a loyal employee, a true Christmastown professional. It was so good of him to have paid attention to the human's words, to have had the foresight to follow him and take note of his address. Santa would take care of things from here, he always did, there was no reason to worry. "Just make sure you're giving the planning team advance notice of when you'll be back," he admonished from the door, shaking his finger as if he addressed a naughty child.

Krampus did his best to look contrite, filching a peppermint stick from the desk on his way out the door, giving the receptionist a wink. *That*, he thought, staring out at the grey slush of the parking lot as the door swung shut behind him, *was the easy part*.

* * *

It had been a shit year. Dara sighed, slouching at her desk as a voice on the conference call droned, reminding herself that it was only a few days into February, and calling the whole year now, with only a few weeks checked off the calendar was laughably premature. *Still not wrong though*.

She'd spent the holidays with her parents, a staid affair now that her cousins and sibling were scattered across the country, replaced with friends of her parents she'd never met, whose own families were suffering from the same far-flung condition. Although, she'd considered on Christmas Eve, the anniversary of everything, as she'd sat in the corner of the sofa, listening to her parents'

chatter and laugh with strangers in the dining room, that she wouldn't have been good company regardless of the guestlist.

She'd not expected it to hurt so much when he'd left. She knew it was a temporary situation, knew that the creature she'd allowed into her home and her bed didn't actually possess any feelings for her; knew that he'd be fulfilling his role as a Christmastime boogeyman when the holidays rolled around once more, knew *all* those things . . . but it hadn't kept her from crying, hadn't kept her from feeling utterly bereft in the weeks that followed.

Her friends had rallied once Christmas was over, dragging her out of the house and she'd inevitably met someone. He'd reminded her of the ex-boyfriend, the one who'd left just before Christmas the previous year. This one would leave as well, Dara had no doubt, once he learned what a deviant she was, once he learned the terrible things she craved. As a consequence, Dara tried her best to shield her heart, bracing for the inevitable. She hadn't expected it to happen so quickly. They'd had dinner plans and she'd sat there at the edge of the sofa, waiting for the lights of his car to turn into the driveway . . . and waited, and waited, slumping back into cushions and tucking her feet up, flicking on the television as she drummed her fingers on the pillow. The holiday romance movie that was just starting when she'd turned the television on ended more than an hour later, and still she sat there alone. He'd not picked up when she called, her first message nervous that something had happened, and then when she realized she'd been ghosted several days later with no response, an expletive-filled tirade telling him exactly where he could go. *Another one bites the dust.* And she'd not even needed to tell this one she wanted to be spanked before the inevitable end, she chuckled darkly to herself. *How ironic.*

When the end of the workday finally arrived, she'd trudged home, not entirely sure what she was rushing home for. It wasn't as if anything waited for her, other than the laundry she'd been letting pile up and the mail she hadn't opened in nearly a month. A trip to the Cantonese takeout place next door to work, because mercy she knew she was tired of wasting the effort expended on cooking for one. She struggled with her bags, fishing for her keys and stumbling through the doorway, heaving her bags onto the counter.

She smelled him immediately. It was a smell she had been chasing for several months, trying to recreate it with mulling spices and candles and citrus clove room sprays, but nothing quite matched the bright, juicy orange peel and warm cinnamon smell of him, tempered with cold, icy air and the breath of faraway pine. Nothing had come close, but she inhaled it now, the genuine article

permeating her kitchen. In the doorway, silhouetted by the grey light coming from the living room, was the Krampus.

“You left.” Dara was unable to keep the waver out of her voice and dug the crescents of her nails into the meat of her palm as she balled her fist, trying to put a bit of steel into her spine. He filled the doorway between the kitchen and living room, a solid black outline with glowing red eyes, and her heart thumped pitifully.

“I had a job to do, liebchen. My Naughty List was quite long this year.”

“Then why didn’t you visit me?” she shot back. “Why wasn’t I on your Naughty List? I should have been there, and you should have come to punish me, why didn’t I rate with everyone else?”

From down the hall, she was able to hear the thump of the clothes dryer, and as she turned to relieve herself of her work bag, the dishwasher stood open and empty, a task she’d been meaning to complete for several days, finding it easier to simply use it as another cabinet as the dishes steadily stacked in the sink, but the sink was empty as well, she saw immediately, the dishes washed and put away.

His laughter was a scrape of steel against stone, rough and grating as he stepped through the doorway. His horns seemed extra large and curving, and he loomed over her, broad and intimidating, larger and more terrifying than he had seemed when he’d left her back in November. She wondered if it was the holiday season that fed him, the punishments he dealt that sustained him. It made sense, she supposed. He was a creature of Christmas and did not belong in her world, not truly. *You expected too much.*

“You’re not a naughty girl, sweetling, you never have been. You’ve never been on my list and I can’t imagine you ever will be.”

“But—”

“*That* has nothing to do with *anything*.” A note of irritation crept into his voice then, his fingers snapping impatiently. He’d come to a stop before her, and Dara was obliged to tip her head back to take him in. She held her breath when his hand raised, tracing her outline in the air, never quite touching her. “You’re the only one who calls yourself a deviant, sweetling, and any of your humans who would agree aren’t worthy to be graced with your presence. A kind heart, a generous spirit, that is what earns you a place on the Good List. Some of the most sainted individuals in your human history have enjoyed being fucked like animals, enjoy punishment and pain, and they’re still on the Good List.”

She felt rooted to the spot when his thick fingers gripped her chin, tipping her head back from where it had bowed, forcing her to meet his shining red eyes.

“Then why does it make me feel so dirty?” Her voice came out in a whisper, but Krampus only shrugged, lifting her by the hips to sit on the edge of the counter as if she were a doll.

“Prudish Christian deershit? You must let go of such silly mortal conventions. The old gods care not for such foolish notions, my lieblich. And in any case . . . I am back, for now.”

“For now,” she echoed, her heart leaping. *For now* was good enough.

“There will always be another Christmas, sweetling. As long as there are people, there will be a Naughty List.”

She ought to tell him to leave. She ought to force him out, she thought, ought to try invoking the laws of hospitality that bound the fae, or so she’d read, or else revoke her invitation as if he were a vampire. Instead, she’d let him rip the clothes from her body, let the wet heat of his tongue travel down her stomach and slip between her legs, allowing him to slide into her wetness. Dara pressed her nose to the side of his thick neck, corded with muscle, inhaling deeply. The scent of pine and cold was stronger than she remembered, but the spicy-orange smell she knew well was still present, sweet and spicy and like nothing she would have expected from a creature who delighted in punishing the wicked. He did not stop the oral onslaught until she was gasping, her legs held open by her ankles, slowly raised until they rested on his shoulders. She felt desperate to be filled, to be stretched and spread by his thick, red club of a cock, which currently lay flush against his belly, rising from its furred sheath like a torch.

“Is this what you need, sweetling?”

Dara whimpered pitifully and her pussy clenched. It was what she needed, needed it desperately.

“I’m afraid you need to receive a punishment first, dear heart. I had to wash the stink of some stranger off my chair, and for that, you need to be spanked.

She yelped when he hauled her unexpectedly over his shoulder, striding down the hallway to the bedroom. Dara knew the drill. She scrambled to her hands and knees on the center of the mattress, inhaling the scent of lavender dryer sheets. The bedding was still warm, and she suspected he’d cleaned anything that had held the scent of his temporary replacement. From the large basket he’d placed beside the dresser, where it lived all of last spring and summer, Krampus removed his birch branches, and electricity sparked in veins. This was exactly what she wanted.

“You’re a good girl, Dara,” he crooned, bringing the branches down against her ass. She squealed on the first strike, and the second and the third. By the fourth, the lag time had all but disappeared. A

constant torrent of branches against her bottom, against the back of her thighs, against the exposed mouth of her sex. “But even good girls need to be spanked now then, to remind them. I think a good spanking and a good fucking is what you need, that will set everything right. Don’t you agree?”

“Yes! Yes, that’s what I need!”

Every strike against her skin landed true, and the sting burn was nearly intolerable. She knew not to squirm, as that would only extend the time he spent spanking her, even if she wanted to crawl away, to hide beneath the pillows at the top of the bed.

“Look at how rosy red we are now,” he observed in satisfaction. “I think you’ve about learned your lesson, sweetling. At least, the first lesson.”

Much like the unceasing flurry of branches against her ass, the press of his burning member against her entrance came without warning. He paused for the briefest moment, coating the bulbous head in her juices before breaching her, pausing once his head was enveloped in her tight warmth. Dara moaned, attempting to push backward, desperate for him to fill her completely. In retaliation, he slowed his movements, pushing in with agonizing slowness. She felt her pussy lips spread, gobbling him up inch by inch as if they’d been starved, which she supposed they had.

“Please,” Dara begged, her voice coming out in a long whine. “Please, I can’t wait any more and you’ve been gone for so long.”

Krampus laughed, dark and full of mirth, but the hand that stroked down her back was gentle, his long claws completely retracted.

“How can I resist my good girl when she begs me so sweetly?”

When he began to fuck her in earnest, Dara felt like she might sob. She quivered around him, the girth and ridges of his oversized cock tight within her, and the pressure of such fullness made her see stars. She could feel the sting from his lashes, the coarse hair of his goat-like haunches rubbing her raw. She’d likely not be able to sit tomorrow, but the uncomfortable soreness would be well worth it. The pleasure that built behind her navel was ratcheting tighter and tighter, the relentless hammer of his hips driving his cock into her hard enough that his heavy balls slapped into her on every pass and rubbed that magical spot within her with every thrust, sending shock waves of pleasure shaking up her spine. When his magically-enhanced tongue slithered its way to her clit once more, she was finished. Her pussy clenched and her eyes rolled back, mouth open in a silent scream as she throbbed, the ability to see or make any noise leaving her as her body shook. She felt the rumbling growl vibrate against her back a moment before he released inside of her, the spurting rush of his burning hot seed flooding her until she was in danger of overflowing, stoppered only by his still thrusting cock.

Dara felt as if she had fallen from some great height when he withdrew from her at last, her head heavy and the room spinning. Strong arms came around her, her head dropping to his chest, her neck unable to support its weight, and she prepared herself to be dropped on the floor. Instead, she was gently placed beneath the coverlet, her cheek pressed to his chest. She was exhausted and sore, and she knew without question it would be worse in the morning, but she was also inexplicably happy, feeling as if she was right where she was meant to be.

“Just rest now, sweetling. My good girl has had a very long Christmas, but it’s all over now.”

His good girl. He’d never called her anything before the holiday; before he’d left her to punish those on his Naughty List, those who lied and stole and cheated. *A kind heart, and a generous spirit.* She had envied those on the list before, who would receive a visit from Krampus at Christmastime. She had resented their punishment and coveted their place on his list . . . but perhaps that was misguided after all, Dara thought, feeling herself drift to sleep on a cloud of citrus and spice and a whisper of pine. Perhaps there was value after, in being a good girl.

After all, he visited those on the Naughty List . . . but he had come home to her.

* * *

Krampus and his Naughty List will return . . . next year







About the Author

C.M. Nascosta is an author and professional procrastinator from Cleveland, Ohio. As a child, she thought that living on Lake Erie meant one was eerie by nature, and thus her corresponding love of all things strange and unusual started young. She's always preferred beasts to boys, the macabre to the milquetoast, the unknown darkness in the shadows to the Chad next door. She lives in a crumbling old Victorian with a scaredy-cat dachshund, where she writes nontraditional romances featuring beastly boys with equal parts heart and heat, and is waiting for the Hallmark Channel to get with the program and start a paranormal lovers series.

Want updates on when new books release? Do you love exclusive shorts? Sign up for my newsletter at: cmnascosta.com and receive exclusive shorts and publication news. Find me on social media—I love to chat with fans!

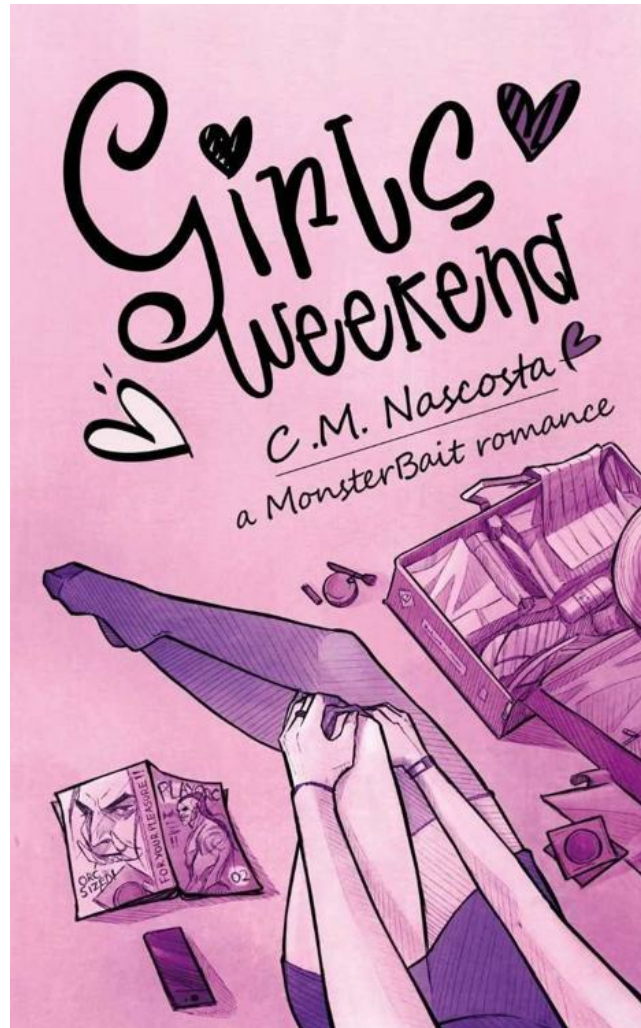
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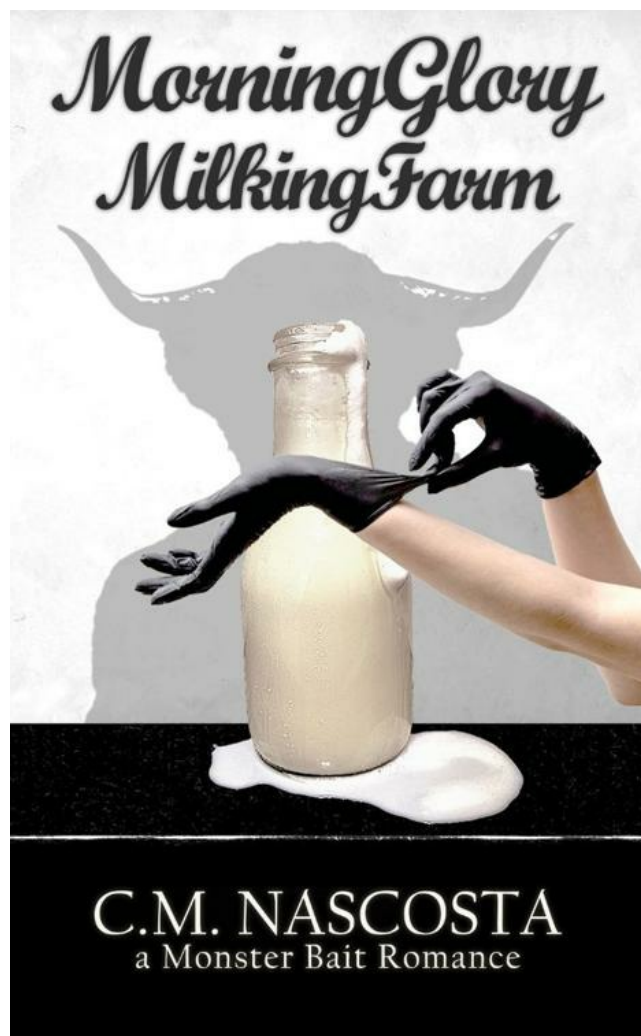
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Girls Weekend

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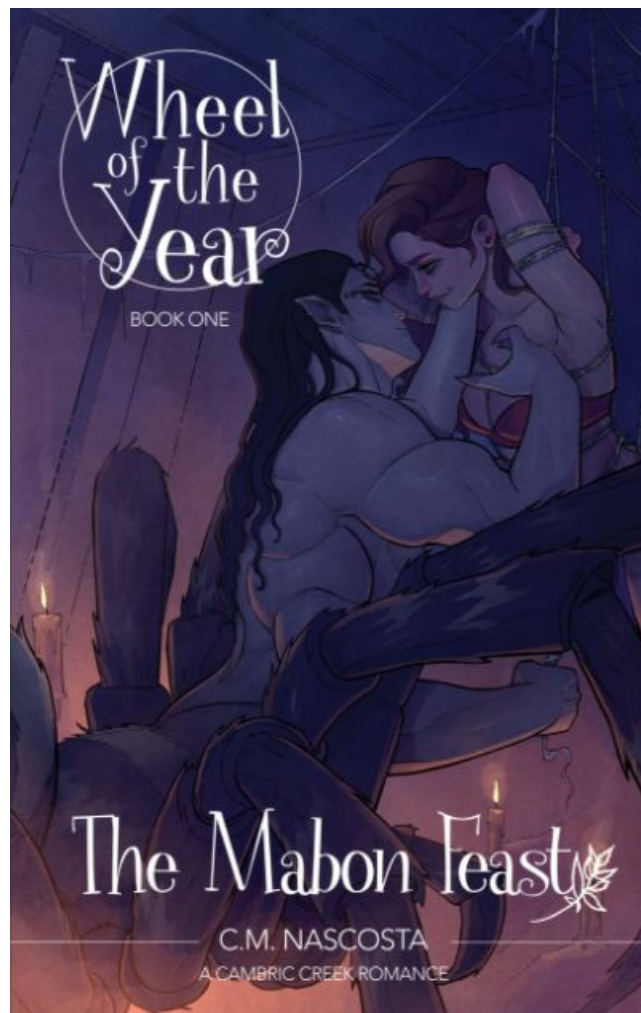
A weekend with friends, fun in the sun, and huge, naked orcs. What could be better? That's what three suburban elves think when they book a trip to an orc nudist resort, well known for its libidinous residents and hedonistic parties. Ris, Lurielle, and Silva arrive with plans to sample the DTF locals and work on their tans, *not* catch feelings. When Lurielle meets a syrupy-voiced gentleman who seems interested in more than just a weekend fling, she finds sticking to the plan is easier said than done. From a public bathhouse to a back alley pub, the trip has unintended consequences on the lives of the three work friends and the orcs they meet. Can a weekend of no-strings sex actually end in love?



Morning Glory Milking Farm

<https://amzn.to/3BvGHV9>

Violet is a typical, down-on-her-luck millennial: mid-twenties, over-educated and drowning in debt, on the verge of moving into her parents' basement. When a lifeline appears in the form of a very unconventional job in neighboring Cambric Creek, she has no choice but to grab at it with both hands. Morning Glory Farm offers full-time hours, full benefits, and generous pay with no experience needed - there's only one catch. The clientele is Grade A certified prime beef, with the manly, meaty endowments to match. *Hands-on* work with minotaurs isn't something Violet ever considered as a career option, but she's determined to turn the opportunity into a reversal of fortune. When a stern, deep-voiced client begins to request her for his sessions at the farm, maintaining her professionalism and keeping him out of her dreams is easier said than done. Violet is resolved to make a dent in her student loans and afford name-brand orange juice, and a one-sided crush on an out-of-her-league minotaur is not a part of her plan—unless her feelings aren't so one-sided after all.



The Mabon Feast - Weel of the Year, Pt 1

<https://books2read.com/u/b5oLk1>

In an aging Victorian on a tree-lined street in Oldetowne, the Brackenbridge witches have practiced the craft for generations in a circle unbroken — until the chain was passed to her. Ousted from her coven, hurting for clients, and struggling to keep her aging family home from falling into disrepair, painfully awkward witch Ladybug is at the end of her rope. When she rents the attic bedroom to an unsmiling, spider-like araneaen, she hopes her fortunes are making a change for the better. But Ladybug knows nothing about the secretive spider-folk; not what they eat, what goddess they worship — or anything about their mating needs. The blustery winds of Autumn usher in the rain and the second harvest . . . and a strangely enticing smell that seems to permeate the seams of Ladybug's very existence. The darkness beyond her bedroom door hungers, and she is helpless to offer herself up as its feast.