

This takes place before *Within the Mind*. Clearly, you don't have to have read *Within the Mind*, since it's not out yet! Now, I'm going to warn you that I gave myself like a day to write this. That also means that it was not edited, since I wasn't going to force my editor to look over it when she is enjoying her holiday.

"Chevy! Chevy!" Seneca calls.

I grudgingly look over at my partner from the department, who is currently sitting on a chair in the middle of the office. There's a woman on his lap, grinning like this is the ultimate gift. Seneca's wearing a Santa hat that partially covers his blond hair and an ugly sweater that's full of tinsel and gaudy colors. On anyone else, it would look ridiculous, but he's pulling it off like it was knitted for him by angels. The man could wear anything, no matter how ridiculous, and look gorgeous. It's clear he knows it since he's currently wooing the entire office as everyone takes a turn sitting on his lap.

"Chevy!" he calls again as if I hadn't already heard him.

Everyone in the police department turns to look at me, and I realize that if I don't answer him, he's going to embarrass me until I do.

"What?" I ask warily.

The girl on his lap gets off and he holds a hand out to stop the next person from hopping on board. Mortified, I realize it's our boss, Keith, who is back for round two.

"Come here," he says as he motions for me.

"I'm busy... working. Doing our job." While we are forced to be here for half a day, it's clear that no one plans on working besides me.

Seneca shows off his perfectly white teeth as he smiles at me. I swear half the office swoons. "It's Christmas Eve. Come here."

For some reason, I walk toward him. I don't know why. I know I should turn around, rush away. I should actually get some work done so I can get out of here.

But instead, I find myself walking toward him. Clearly, my feet have a mind of their own. "What do you need?" I ask, assuming he wants something. Probably a mirror.

"Sit on Santa's lap and tell him what you want, you naughty boy," he says as he pats his leg.

I glance down at his lap. Then suddenly, I'm thinking about climbing on his naked lap. Riding him as he watches me with those dark eyes of his. Showing him how naughty I can be.

Oh no. No. No. NO.

What is wrong with me? Did someone spike the cookies? I *knew* they tasted weird.

Seneca keeps smiling at me.

My brain has stopped working. My brain shut off. How dare it let such morbid delusions fill my mind?

I quickly spin around to flee from my perversions when Seneca grabs my wrist and tugs me toward him. Since I'd been preparing to run, the movement sets me off balance, and I end up stumbling over someone's chair. I trip and fall right onto his lap, hand slapping down on his dick. I jerk my hand back as I look up at him in horror.

He has the biggest grin on his face as he looks down at me. "Oh, Chevy. I didn't know I was what you wanted to unwrap this holiday season."

I jump to my feet, but since Seneca had been leaning over, I end up slamming into his nose.

“Shit!” he hisses as he jerks back. He looks at me with tearing eyes. “If you’re that jealous of everyone sitting on my lap, all you needed to do was tell me!”

“I’m leaving! Have a Merry Christmas, everyone!” I say as I decide I would rather die in the elevator than have these people stare at me any longer, judging me for maiming Gorgeous Santa. If I don’t leave soon, they’ll string me up with the Christmas lights and chuck me out the front door.

I step into the elevator, but before the doors can slide shut, Seneca slips in.

“Did I embarrass you?” he asks.

I glance at him. “The only thing embarrassing is how ridiculous you look.”

He glances down at the sweater he’s wearing with all its gaudiness, then flashes me his best smile. “You like it, don’t you?”

“No.”

“Just admit it.” He leans into me. “Say, ‘You look *damn* sexy, Santa. I wanna ride on your sleigh tonight.’”

“Sounds awful.”

His laughter fills the small elevator, making me grin. I don’t want him to know that I find him funny, though, so I try to aim my body away from him.

I’m thrilled when the doors slide open and I can stop thinking about riding Seneca’s “sleigh.”

“You’re thinking about it, aren’t you?” he asks as he rushes after me.

Yes. “No! Did you even finish up your work?”

“It’s Christmas Eve! I only had to put in half a day. I showed up, let a few people bounce on my lap and whisper Christmas gifts into my ear. There’s only one naughty boy left on my list.”

“Careful, or I’ll jingle your bells and not in the way you’re wanting,” I warn.

He starts laughing as he hurries after me. “And there’s the naughty boy I was looking for. All joking aside, what are you doing for Christmas Eve?” Seneca asks.

“I’m going to go home and sit on the couch with my dog. Maybe read a book, but probably mindlessly stare at the TV.”

“Come out with me.”

“Absolutely not.”

“Please? I have no one to go with.”

“You had a whole line of people ready to come down your chimney.”

He grins at me. “I’m not sure what that means. I honestly don’t think you do either, but I liked it.”

I chuckle. “Good, it was all I could think of.”

“So?”

“No! Don’t you have pages of girlfriends and boyfriends you can call? Or is the book so big you have trouble lifting it?”

“I don’t date so no, I don’t. And I learned from last year that if you ask someone to do something on Christmas Eve, they automatically think they’re dating you and start asking you to go meet the family.” He shudders. “Since you’re practicing celibacy, and will die a virgin, I thought I’d ask you. I didn’t even have to guess that there’d be no one under your mistletoe tonight.”

“Number one: I’m not practicing celibacy. Number two: I’m not a virgin. Number three: I have a date.”

“Your dog doesn’t count.”

“Of course he does.”

“Please. Don’t make me beg, because I’ll do it. Do you want me to do it?” He drops to his knees, right in the middle of everyone trying to make their way out the door. “Please, Chevy. Please!” It sounds more like someone moaning in the bedroom than begging. And everyone around us laughs whether they know him or not. Who am I kidding? He knows everyone in this building.

Why do people like such an embarrassing man? “Fine!”

“Did you hear that, baby Jesus? It really is a Christmas miracle! Chevy is going to leave his house!”

I storm out of the department as he chases after me.

“I’ll pick you up at eight.”

“Eight? Why so late?”

“Are you five? Do you have a curfew?” he asks.

“Yes, it’s at eight-thirty. That means I’ll only have to see you for half an hour. Yay!”

“Oh, I last a whole lot longer than half an hour,” he calls after me.

“That’s not what I’ve heard. It was something like, ‘One star. Do not have mirrors in the bedroom or he’ll come just from glancing at himself. Very unsatisfied.’”

He grabs his chest. “You kill me, Chevy. A shot to the heart.”

“Well, at least two of us don’t have hearts, now,” I say.

I hurry over to my car feeling strangely happy. I know it’s just because of the holiday spirit. Not because Seneca asked me to do something. Definitely not that. It’s not like anything will ever come out of going anywhere with Seneca. He doesn’t date and I don’t do one night stands. I need to know someone a long time before feeling comfortable enough to sleep with them.

It’s just the holiday cheer.

Right?

Oh no. Please don’t tell me I’ve fallen under his spell.

I look up and see him smiling at me. I should just hit him with my car. Just run him over. Then all this horribleness will be over with.

I flip him off before driving out of the parking lot as quickly as I can.

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There’s a knock on the door at eight o’clock sharp.

I open the door just a crack, so I can push my dog back.

Seneca shoves his face against it. “The Grinch is here to steal your virginity.”

I slam the door in his face and look down at Jinx, who is wiggling at my feet. “Well, looks like it’s just us tonight.”

Seneca’s laughter seeps through the door. He pushes it open and looks in at me. “Ready?”

“Please, no.”

“Come on.”

I pat Jinx on the head before following Seneca to the car. He rushes to the passenger door and pulls it open.

“Don’t pretend to be a gentleman. We both know that under that pretty face is a wretched personality.”

“You think my face is pretty?” he asks.

Shit. “Pretty annoying.”

Even I am disappointed in that comeback. I sound like a ten-year-old. Seneca doesn’t mind. He just shuts the door as soon as I’ve crawled in and heads over to the other side of the car.

“I feel so pretty,” he says as he sits down. “Oh, so pretty. I feel pretty and witty and—”

“Where are we going?” I interrupt.

“North Pole.”

“Is that what you call that janky strip club you go to?”

“No, that’s the North Hoe. Get it?”

“I got it.”

“Did Keith talk to you?” Seneca asks, looking serious for once.

“About the lady he wants us to use our gift on?” I ask.

“Yeah. The one who doesn’t remember what happened and doesn’t want to know.”

“Yeah.”

“What if we use your gift to go into her memories and... I don’t know... end up finding something that will hurt her? Your gift has a habit of finding some pretty bad things.”

“Once we’re in her memory and know what it is... we can talk. We don’t have to share everything with her.”

“I’m glad you understand.”

“No more work stuff,” I say.

He nods. “No more work stuff. Unless you want to talk about how sexy I looked as Santa Claus.”

“That guy who works on the corner of Fifth and Front is a better Santa than you,” I say.

He thinks about it for a moment. “Wait a minute... He’s just some guy who pretends to be homeless for change!”

“I’d still sit on his lap before yours.”

“That’s dirty.”

“Maybe I like it dirty.”

“Then you’ll really like my house. It needs cleaned.”

I shake my head because I’ve been coerced into going into his place before and it definitely wasn’t dirty.

He pulls into a place with an overwhelming number of cars.

“Where are we?”

“I told you. The North Pole.”

“I’m still convinced this is a stripper joint.”

“Are you? With the kids and stuff?” he asks with a grin.

“Your children will probably know no other way. ‘Daddy, do we have to go to the strip club *again*? The bouncing boobies scare me.’”

He stares at me.

“What? Was it supposed to be a male strip club? I lose track of what gender you’re into for the week.”

“Call me Daddy again.”

Why did I come?

“Do it,” he whispers.

“No.”

“Say, ‘Yes, Daddy, yes!’”

“Why do people even like you?” I ask as I quickly get out. I don’t know why I had been disappointed in how late he was picking me up. Now, I’m glad he picked me up late so I can go home sooner.

“I don’t know but you must like me the most,” he says as he gets out. “You’re all shy and quiet around everyone else and over here calling me Daddy.”

“No, Daddy,” I say dryly.

A woman looks over at us, and I quickly look away. Of course she heard.

Seneca is loving it, grinning like a Cheshire cat. “Look at all the lovely couples. After nine o’clock, only adults are allowed.”

“Are we ice skating?” I ask as I look at the dome building.

“We are!”

“Alright, I can get on top of that.”

He raises an eyebrow. “What else can you get on top of?”

“Let’s see... like... muscled men. Really bulky. I only like them when they have at least an eight pack. But I want them all dark and mysterious. Like... brooding. Maybe like a brooding biker guy,” I say as I try to think of the complete opposite of Seneca’s blond hair and constant smile.

“Well...” He lifts his arm and flexes it. It’s hard to see his arm through the highly fashionable coat he’s wearing, but it’s clear he isn’t overly muscled. “Muscles change. My amazing personality is with me for life.”

“I was really hoping it was something you’d grow out of. Why are you even trying to sell yourself to me? You don’t date people! I’ve known you almost two years and you’ve never dated anyone.” Which is something he just dismisses every time I bring it up. Our running joke is that instead of dating people, he sleeps with everyone. Although, I know that he honestly doesn’t sleep around as much as I joke he does. He never corrects me because he likes telling me that I’m jealous.

“I want to thaw that cold heart of yours. Help it love again.”

He reaches for my chest, but I make sure to sidestep him. Definitely don’t need his hands all over my body. Sliding under my shirt, fingers brushing over my nipple. Dammit.

This is torture.

Clearly, he wants to ruin my holiday season.

He pulls open the door for me like being good-looking isn’t enough. I grab the other door and go through it which makes him laugh.

Right inside is a Santa sitting on a chair with a line of kids waiting for him.

“Ho, ho, ho!” Santa Claus calls.

I grab Seneca’s arm. “Seneca! He knows your name!” I say, like I’m shocked. “He must be the real Santa!”

“What?” he asks as he listens. “You’re right. I need to sit on his lap.”

“You’re not sitting on his lap.”

“We’re getting a picture together. Come on. We could both kiss Santa’s cheek at the same time.”

And forever haunt me with that horrible picture? “Absolutely not.”

I hurry away from him, and he dutifully follows after me with a grin on his face. We go into the skating rink where Seneca heads over to the window to pick up skates. We get our correct sizes, then walk to a bench as the children begin to leave. Soon, only adults are skating.

I look over at him as I stand up on the wobbly skates. “I haven’t been skating since I was ten. I’m sure you’re amazing at it.” Just like everything else.

“I... haven’t either, if I’m being honest. But you’re right, I’ll probably be amazing,” he says with a grin.

We awkwardly waddle to the entrance of the rink, and I step inside. I skate forward a few inches, testing them, before skating a bit more. It’s not as hard as I thought it would be. It really is kind of fun. That’s when I hear a loud *thump* behind me.

I look back to see Seneca sprawled out on the ground. “Are you okay?” I ask. I’m not quite sure how to turn without falling on my ass, so I let myself skid into the side of the wall where I hang on.

“I’m perfect! I like the view down here,” he says as he struggles to get up. Every time he starts to put his foot forward, it slides out from under him and he drops back down. “Chevy! Come back! I can’t get up!”

For some reason, seeing Seneca flail around makes my night so much better. Maybe I really don’t have a heart, but I feel like this is in exchange for all he has put me through.

“Come on, Daddy. You can do it!” I call as I pat my leg like he’s a dog.

“Chevy! Save me!” he cries. Then he starts crawling on his hands and knees for me. “Chevy! Please!” He’s trying not to laugh as I grin. “Chevy, don’t look at me! I don’t want you to see me looking so unattractive!”

“I can’t look away!”

“Shield your eyes!”

I look around and realize that everyone is staring at us. Well... maybe not everyone. How horrible. “People are staring! Get up!”

“I can’t!”

He finally reaches me, still on his hands and knees, and looks up at me. “Hey, baby. I never knew you wanted me on my knees so much.”

I reach down and grab his arm to help him up. He’s clearly made of Jell-O because part way up, he slips and slams into me. That’s when we both go down, him on top of me.

“Are you alright?” he asks, face hovering above mine.

“Yes. I’m just glad I didn’t smash my head against the ice.”

“I like this position. Let’s just skate like this. You on your back. Me riding you like you’re a sled.”

“Get off me!” I flip over and try to squeeze out from under him without maiming him with my skates. That’s when he grabs for my coat, but his hand slips off and he latches onto my pants. Since I’d forgotten to put a belt on, he yanks my pants halfway down my ass, revealing it for all to see.

“Oh, ho ho ho... I really am on Santa’s nice list this year,” Seneca says as he gives my ass a smack with his gloved hand.

I decide that I will just die. I wonder how long it’ll take for the ice to murder me. Although, my face is so red, I’m sure I’m melting the ice as I lie here.

“I’m going to beat you.”

"I'm really sorry," he says as he pushes my pants back up. "If it makes you feel better, you have a very nice ass."

"That doesn't make me feel better!" I say as I get to my feet.

"Exquisite ass."

"I'm leaving you here," I say as I hold onto the wall again.

"No, please help me."

This time I hang tightly onto the wall as I help him to his feet. Once he's finally standing, he takes a deep breath.

"Well, that was an experience."

"Sadly," I mumble.

"A good one. I enjoyed it."

"As long as you're happy."

He smiles at me and I smile back. I hate it when my face betrays me. My dick too. Man, does my dick love betraying me around him. Sexy guy? Nope. Seneca? At attention!

"Are we good now? Let's try to make it around at least once."

"As long as you don't start mooning everyone again," he says, like it's my fault he pulled my pants down.

"Deal."

"Help me." He holds his hand out to me.

I stare at it.

"We hold hands for work all the time. Don't act like you're allergic."

I grimace as I take it but steadying him does seem to help him as we skate around the rink. He squeezes my gloved hand as he looks over at me.

"See? Isn't this fun?"

"Not as fun as you flailing around, but it's alright," I say. Honestly, it doesn't matter how I feel about any of this. We're friends who will never be anything more. But when he takes my hand and looks at me like that, it makes me long for something more.

Stupid. Stupid. Stupid.

"We should play hockey we're so good at this," he decides.

"I can't imagine you skating anywhere without holding onto me. You'd be on your face."

"And you with your ass out."

"Don't ask me to go anywhere with you again."

"You say that every time, yet you *always* join me the next time I ask."

"I'm a weak man, Seneca."

He bumps his shoulder into mine. "That's alright. You may be weak, but you're still a pretty great friend. We're probably even BFFs at this point. I know for sure you don't have any friends besides me, and I happen to like you more than my other friends. We have officially become BFFs. I'm getting you a best friends necklace that you are required to wear."

"I refuse."

"I'm so excited."

"Please don't. I will throw it in the trash while you watch."

"Your words are always so prickly, but I know beneath that chastity belt is a pretty great person."

"I honestly believe you think you're saying kind things when you're really evil."

He grins at me. "Not me."

We spend a while skating before Seneca buys me some hot chocolate even though he'd already paid for everything that night. I let him since it's his fault I'm in this mess.

When he pulls up to my house, I look over at him.

"Um... thanks... for inviting me," I say as I look over at him.

"Anytime you need someone to drag you out from your little secluded hole, let me know."

I know I won't because then I'll find myself expecting more and be disappointed when nothing else happens. "Yeah, there's no way I could tolerate you again outside work."

He grins. "Keep telling yourself that."

"Thanks and have a wonderful Christmas, Seneca."

I reach for the door, but he grabs my arm.

"Wait."

"What?" I ask as I turn to him.

He leans across the seat, one hand sliding into my hair. My eyes drop to his lips as I lean into him. His grip tightens when he realizes that I'm not pushing away. I swallow hard as I look at him. My body aches to lean toward him. The dumb part of my brain is telling me to give in, give him everything he wants. Taste those lips. Those lips I have spent far too long looking at. Just give in. I reach out and pluck the side of his head. "Not going to happen."

He grins at me, lips inches from mine. "Can't blame a man for trying."

"I would think you'd eventually learn."

"I don't. It's a weakness. There's a part of my brain that shorts out occasionally."

I pat the side of his face a few times. "Merry Christmas, Seneca."

"Merry Christmas, Chevy."

It takes everything in my body to leave. To not press into him, kiss him. Say fuck it. What does a one night stand or friends with benefits hurt?

I take a deep breath and get out. As I walk around the front of the car, he presses on the horn, making me jump.

What a child. How could I have nearly given in to him?

I walk inside to my dog who eagerly greets me. "You're the only one I need, right, Jinx?" I ask.

Jinx wags his tail, agreeing with me. I sigh and sink down to the floor and pet Jinx. I give him a kiss on the top of his head. Better than any kiss with Seneca, I'm sure.

Well, I hope you enjoyed a little sneak peek of Seneca and Chevy's relationship. If you want to know more about them, check out *Within the Mind*, releasing sometime in January! I hope you have an amazing Christmas (or whatever you're doing on Tuesday).

If you haven't already joined, check out my reader group on Facebook. There's an exclusive short story there, and a different one for signing up for my newsletter!