

## Magic Under the Mistletoe

Shrieks of giggles and laughter pierced through the air followed by the stomping of many tiny feet on hardwood floors. The sudden noise caused Lucy to start, losing her place in the book she was reading. She furrowed her brow with irritation and cast a cold glare, the intensity enough to freeze a small sun, at the little cousins stampeding past her on the couch in the study. Not that they noticed; they didn't even glance her way, too preoccupied, laughing and chasing little Brad and the black top hat he waved above his head while sporting a fake mustache scribbled above his top lip by a black marker. A fluffy white giant lumbered after them all. Uncle Ralph wore white pillows strapped to his chest, legs, and arms, with bits of leftover ribbons. He looked more like the Pillsbury Doughboy than Frosty the Snowman. As he passed, he tilted his head and gave Lucy a quick wink. He shirked a little when Lucy's freeze rays hit him, making him feel more like a snowman than he looked. He hurried away after the little cousins.

Feeling somewhat consoled that her cultivated stare did not go wasted, she sighed. It is only going to get worse as more and more family members arrive for Christmas dinner. She would hide in her room upstairs if not for the inevitable mother factor that would accuse her of being rude and sulky. Lucy didn't want another lecture and guilt trip. It's better to just stay here and try to ignore the ruckus. It'll have to end sooner or later.

She bent her head down and focused on her book and just as she began to lose herself in the words, someone sat down beside her. She was about to let loose her icy eye blasts again when she saw who it was – Darren.

“Hey kiddo,” he said with that rakish smile of his. Out of all of her older sister's previous boyfriends, Lucy liked Darren the best. Well, “like” was a strong word. Let us just say that unlike the others, Darren was not completely preoccupied with sport teams or the shiny truck or car they drove. Darren was intelligent enough to debate Lucy on topics without relying onto rhetoric and stock phrases.

“Hey Darren, so you arrived,” she said. “Pretty cold outside, huh? Megan is upstairs, still getting ready.”

“That's alright,” he said, taking off his coat. “I could use a few minutes to settle myself. I'll spend the time waiting with you.”

Lucy was about to give one of her sarcastic quips but stopped; he looked a little off from his usual confident and happy-go-lucky self. She attributed it to the cold outside affecting him and it would be fair to give him a minute to warm up before any verbal sparring.

“So what are you doing here and not enjoying Christmas with everyone else?” he asked her.

“Christmas is corporate endorsed propaganda designed to prey on people's tendency for consumerism.”

“Isn't that a little too jaded,” Darren said, “even for a teenager?”

“I refuse to be manipulated,” she said simply.

“Lucy, I think you’re too darn smart for your own good. Do you rather be always right and be miserable, or be wrong a little and enjoy life a tad?”

“That’s a ridiculous notion. I shouldn’t have to dumb myself down to enjoy life.”

“So you find nothing fun about Christmas.”

“Nothing.”

“Santa Claus?” he asked. “What can you find wrong with Santa Claus?”

“An overweight fat man in a red suit propagating greed in little children. Yeah, nothing wrong with that at all.” She rolled her eyes to make certain there was no mistaking her sarcasm.

“Christmas turkey?”

“Panned up animals reared on steroids.”

“Christmas trees.”

“Fire hazards. And what have trees ever done to you to deserve getting cut down in the prime of their lives, huh?”

“Ok,” Darren said determinedly, “what about mistletoe. You can’t possibly find anything wrong with mistletoe. A kiss can be magical.”

Lucy sniggered. “Do you know the origin of mistletoe? The Old English Anglo Saxon word ‘Mistletan’ literally translates into poo sticks. Yes, poo – bird droppings on branches. You’d have more chance of getting hit by droppings than finding something magical under mistletoe.”

Darren turned his gaze away when he heard Megan coming down the stairway. She wore a light green frock that Lucy had to admit made her sister look particularly lovely. Darren could not take his eyes from Megan even as he spoke. “I’ll make you a bet, Lucy. If something magical happens under the mistletoe tonight, you promise to make an effort to have fun with Christmas.”

“Something magical?” Lucy said haughtily. “Yeah, that’ll happen. Some pixie dust and unicorn hair is all we’ll need, right? Fine. I’ll make that bet. If there is magic, I promise to start having fun.” She rolled her eyes again.

Darren stood up, took a deep breath, and smiled. “Remember Lucy, you promised.” He started walking toward Megan.

Lucy called after him. “It’ll take more than you smooching with my sister to make magic, you know!”

He did kiss Megan, but that was not all. Darren took Megan by the shoulders and positioned her underneath the mistletoe. Then in a most unexpected move, Darren went to his knees. With a

flick of a wrist, like a magician producing a hidden card from his sleeve, he held an iridescent diamond ring in his left hand. His voice was somewhat shaky but resolute as he proclaimed his love and affection to Megan and asked her to marry him.

Lucy watched the pair with abated breath, mesmerized. She saw Megan tremble with liquid eyes as Darren placed the ring on her finger. Involuntary tears swelled around Lucy's eyelids and a surge of warm emotions fluttered in her stomach. Lucy had to confess, the feeling of joy for her sister felt...magical.

“Darn it,” she whispered. “Now, I’ll have to start having fun this Christmas.”

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Word Count: approximately 990-words