

Beginning of December.

“I’m worried it’s too big,” fretted Paige, trailing behind Judson who was hauling a seven foot Douglas Fir Christmas tree on one beefy shoulder.

The reindeer headband bobbed on her pink head, jiggling the bells adorned. He made it look effortless.

And wasn’t even breathing heavily though it must weigh a ton and he wouldn’t let her help. Her very own lumberjack.

She always joked he must wrestle kangaroos back home.

“That’s what she said,” she caught him murmuring, dissolving her into girlish giggles as she followed him through the condo.

They were moving into a new house at the beginning of January, so this would be their last Christmas in his condo. She was a little sad but a lot excited to dig into a new house and make new memories that were neither just hers nor his, but *theirs*.

“I’ll cut the top off if it is.”

“Noooo.” She whined and made him laugh, and he cut her a delicious glance over his shoulder as he lowered the tree to the living room floor where the stand and tray were waiting for it. “We’ll make do,” she amended as a compromise, even if they had to squash it in somehow. Their condo ceilings weren’t that high but it would be a crime to cut the tree she deemed perfect at the tree farm.

Jud gave a hum of agreement as he went about fixing the tree to the stand.

It looked magnificent. Regal and just *festive* already.

She beamed at him when he emerged from under the branches and climbed back to his feet before he slipped a long arm around her waist, she instantly

nestled into his ribs against her comfortable spot. “What do you think, got the lady-bug stamp of approval?”

“It’s big.”

“Yeah.”

“And so, so lovely, Judson. You picked a good one.”

“Thank fuck, can we toss some shit on it now and get it done?”

Paige chuckled. Her New Zealand man might have been a quiet man for the last few years but he was finally coming back to the man she *first* knew years ago and he didn’t mince his words.

“You can hand me the shit, so none get tossed everywhere, how does that sound?”

Lips traveled over her forehead. “Deal.”

And that’s what they did.

Reaper carefully put his hand into the box of special ornaments she’d collected when she didn’t know she was the treasured wife of a biker with the largest heart. She placed them on the branches, sang along to MTV playing Christmas songs, even shimmied her hips to rile growls out of him.

He loved her totally.

And Paige adored him *entirely*.

His eyes said he knew just how much as he smiled from one corner of his mouth when she tossed him a grin and jingled her headband just for him.

Flirting was alive and well in their household even dressed as she was in casual leggings and a pair of his thick socks. She suspected her Judson would mount her even if she were wearing a Trader Joe’s bag.

Maybe another wife or girlfriend wouldn’t appreciate the small gesture of decorating a Christmas tree, but Paige did. *So much*.

She soaked up each memory with Reaper like a sponge and pushed it into her heart so she never forgot them. Never forgot him again.

So many lost years still caused her to have bad dreams and wake in the middle of the night desperately searching the bed for her phantom love.

Only now, when she reached out, Reaper was there to pull her tighter into his arms and soothe her fears with a few softly spoken husband words and a kiss.

Never would she take for granted just what it meant to place glass ornaments on a tree branch while she watched her husband grab out four more from the box and let the hooks dangle from each finger, patiently waiting for her to choose the next one.

Nor would she ever overlook the glances Reaper was giving her.

Low-lidded, altogether too hot.

The scents of Christmas enveloped them and it was magnificent, she never wanted the seasons to end. They had so many parties to go to that he was already complaining it was too many. *Impossible*. Besides which, it was all his biker friends throwing the parties ... or their women, so they were obligated to go. The big New Year's Eve bash at the clubhouse was going to be the party to end all parties and Paige couldn't wait.

Out with the old and ready to greet the new with gusto.

The song said it was the most wonderful time of the year, and it would be right. Spending the last few Christmases with Reaper without knowing they were married meant they became special days she longed for all year, but somehow they both still felt lost.

Now they were found and she could love him as deeply as her soul yearned to do. She intended to go all out this Christmas, even if her Judson grouched a little. One thing she knew about him, *always* had known about him, he caved to her wants so easily.

She intended to take advantage of this trait of his.

“Jud?”

“Yeah, bug?”

“How much do you love me?”

His eyebrow winged up and she had to bite her smile to stop it from going full wattage.

“I have a feeling I’m about to be tested. What do you want, bug?”

“There’s a Christmas market in Denver.”

His eyebrow stayed on his forehead, eyes so deep-set and gorgeous setting a fast pitter-patter to her pulse. “And a Carol service on Friday and an eggnog party after it ... and maybe late night shopping this weekend.”

He positively loathed shopping, preferring to do it all online and have Amazon deliver it to the door with no interaction from the courier either. Her antisocial little snowflake.

Paige was a toucher, she liked to hold things in her hand and decide if it was a want or a need before a purchase. But more than that, she wanted the romantic memory of walking around the Mall holding his hand and pointing out the decorations while crunching through a massive bag of candied almonds.

She wanted to cook the best things and have him try them all, even gain a few pounds on his too perfect lean body. She wanted to have all their friends over for loud Christmas parties and watch sappy movies curled on his lap.

Paige basically wanted a Hallmark movie, in the mountains of Colorado, with her husband who made her oh-so happy.

The happiest she’d ever been and that included when she climbed a tree and scared ten years off his life.

She was aware they weren’t the same people as they once were, but not for a second did it ever mean they didn’t love each other with *their all*.

With every rapid beat of their joined hearts.

Reaper was passionate in showing her, telling her.

And so was Paige.

Every chance she got.

Even now as she slipped both of her arms around his trim waist and inhaled his pine scent from being covered in Christmas tree, he smelled gloriously festive and it did a number on her pulse.

Before he could answer, she nuzzled her nose on the thin cotton t-shirt, smelling him. His hand dropped to her hip. Her voice small. "And there might be a parade..."

She felt him inhale. "Anything else?"

She smiled. "That's all." For now. She was sure to think of another hundred things. It was twenty-one days until Christmas after all.

Lips touched her temple and Paige sighed, content. "Anything you want, lady-bug."

Love flowed from him to her and back again.

She had her ways of making him enjoy the season too.

But she could already feel the Christmas spirit in him as she burrowed into his chest for a quick nuzzle before drawing away.

Leaving him with the backdrop of white twinkling lights behind him.

Thrilling her.

At the door, she smiled.

His eyes as always, watching her. His head low and tipped, leaving his chin length hair in his face.

Gorgeous man. Every day it worsened until some days her belly would not unclench with all the euphoria she had bursting to get out.

"Where you going, bug?"

A little lip bite. A tiny quirk of a smile. She looked at him through strands of her fallen hair. "There's mistletoe in the bedroom."

His growl was hot and almost made her trip up as she continued to back into the hallway. "Wanting to be kissed are you?"

"Yeah, Jud."

"Never needed a plant to kiss you."

This was true.

She grinned and beckoned him forward with a bend of her finger.

He stalked like a great prowling beast and her heart pitched into her belly, snapping mental pictures as he walked towards her.

Memories stacked up now.

And she squealed as he chased her down the hallway.

She'd get her Christmas kisses and so much more.

Bliss saturated her senses as he caught her and took her down to their bed.

She tangled her fingers into his hair as his mouth latched onto the side of her neck, sucking hard.

"Merry Christmas, Jud."

His husky laugh practically skated over her skin. "About to be," he grunted.

And it was.

It really, really was.

Jingle bells had nothing on Reaper, who put the Christmas spirit into her for hours and hours.

And the days following.