

Home
A Whyborne & Griffin Christmas Short Story

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NSFW

(Author's note: "Home" takes place shortly after the events of *Widdershins*)

I'd spent last Christmas Eve alone.

Not the entire day, of course. Ma and Pa had done their best to bring some Christmas cheer into the house, and the air still smelled of the apple pies Ma baked and the mulled cider Pa poured for the hired hands once the day's work was done.

I'd passed the daylight hours in my room, curled up on my bed. Sleeping, sometimes, but mostly listening to the sounds of movement: the voices of the hired men, or Ma bustling around in the kitchen, or Pa's hearty laugh.

When it was time for supper, Ma brought a plate up. She perched on the edge of my bed and put her hand to my hair. After I left the asylum, the locks had been so matted and lice-ridden Ma had simply shaved them down to the skin. The stubble had grown out, but I still didn't recognize myself in the mirror sometimes.

"You're putting on weight," she observed with a hopeful smile as I took the plate from her. "Come spring, maybe you'll be ready to work with your pa in the field, the way you used to."

The way I used to, when this had been my home. Before I'd been caught in the barn with the neighbor boy. Before I'd had to leave town and make my own way in the world. Before I'd joined the Pinkertons and moved from assignment to assignment, apartment to apartment, bed to bed, never staying in any one place too long.

She left to tend to the men downstairs. In time, the hired hands departed for their own houses, their own families. The floorboards creaked as Ma and Pa moved about the house. "We're leaving for church in another hour or so," Ma called through my closed door.

Eventually I crept downstairs, to find them both dressed in their best clothes. "Are you coming with us?" Ma asked as she tied on her bonnet.

I looked away from the hope in her eyes and shook my head. I'd belonged here once, in this house, this community. But the townsfolk had long memories, and nine years of exile still wasn't enough for them to have forgotten the scandal.

Perhaps once I could have borne their judging gazes, sat in the pew by Ma and Pa, and dared anyone to speak against me. But not now. Not after the asylum.

Not when I felt as though any wrong movement, any wrong word, would break apart all the jagged pieces inside.

I watched the lantern on their wagon fade into the early darkness. When they were gone, I wrapped myself again in the heavy quilt Ma had patched together years ago, when I still belonged here. Despite the cheerful fire, I shivered as if I'd been the one to go out into the bitter night. In truth, I couldn't remember the last time I'd felt warm.

When I finally dragged myself away from the fire and back to bed, I paused before climbing between the sheets. Knelt beside the bed, hands clasped, as I'd done so many times as a child. Maybe God didn't listen to the prayers of men like me on ordinary days, but on Christmas Eve? Surely, if there was any night when a prayer might be heard, it was this one.

So I prayed. Not for anything grand. Just to let me find some solid ground, somewhere to stand and feel like I might not break.

And maybe God heard me, because a year later everything had changed.

~ * ~

I had my own house now; my own business. I still had fits, and some days felt as though I were nothing but a poorly patched vase, the pieces mismatched and the glue barely holding. But I had a great deal to be grateful for this Christmas Eve.

The sound of footsteps from the room above my head brought a smile to face. A great deal to be grateful for indeed.

I checked the turkey roasting in the oven. Another two hours, perhaps, before it was ready. Plenty of time.

I made my way up the stairs. The entire house was redolent of roasting turkey, cinnamon, and evergreen, and that alone would have made me smile this year. But I had other reasons for my light heart. New books sat on the study shelf—treatises on cryptography, scholarly works on hieroglyphics, journals concerned with the development of languages—alongside the popular novels I preferred to read. A warm knitted blanket I'd never seen before draped over the back of a chair. A pair of slippers, too big for my feet, waited on the hearthrug. All little touches, little signs, reminding me I was no longer the only person living in this house.

I poked my head inside the second bedroom, which I'd used as storage up until a few days ago. It had been thoroughly cleaned and transformed into a cozy little bedroom, one I meant to spend half my nights in. The other half, both of us would sleep in my room, so neither would seem neglected, should anyone think to look.

The wardrobe door stood open, blocking my view of the man in the room. "Making progress?" I asked.

There came a rattle—I'd startled him—and a mild curse. "I think I'm done, actually." He stepped back and closed the wardrobe.

If anyone had told me a year ago—hell, a month ago—that Percival Endicott Whyborne, estranged son of one of the richest men in America, would be my lover, I would have laughed. If they'd gone on to say I would have completely lost my heart and asked him to share a home with me, I would have thought them as mad as the poor souls I'd known in the asylum.

He was tall, with an unfortunate tendency to stoop, and thin as a rail. Dark hair stuck out in all directions, defying either comb or oil to tame it. Society would never claim him particularly handsome, and yet there something about him had drawn me from the first. I'd wanted him, ached for him...fallen in love with him.

"All moved in, then?" I said, as though it were an ordinary event, not something equal parts wonderful and frightening.

"Yes." He closed the valise sitting on the bed and stored it beneath a table. "Dinner smells incredible, by the way."

"Hopefully it will taste incredible."

"I'm sure it will." He sat on the bed, his posture betraying awkwardness, as if he wasn't quite certain what to do next. "You didn't have to go to such trouble, you know."

I entered the room and leaned against the bedpost, looking down on him. "I wanted to. Besides, the leftovers will serve us in good stead. I'm sure you'll be famished after dining with your parents tomorrow."

"They'll have enough food for twenty people," he objected.

"And will you eat any of it?" I asked with an arched brow. "Or just push it around on your

plate, longing to escape?”

For a moment, he looked surprised. “How did you know?”

“As much as I’d like to impress you with my abilities as a detective, it hardly took a great feat of deduction,” I said wryly. “You don’t eat when you’re nervous or unhappy. You cut your food up and shove it into piles to keep it from being terribly obvious, but you seldom put more than one or two bites in your mouth. And, given how upset you were the last time you ate with your family, I expect you’ll be starving by the time you come home.”

Home. Here. Our house. The thought sent a little thrill through me.

“Oh.” Surprise gave way to wonder, then a look of tenderness that softened his features. “You see me,” he murmured. “I’m not...not used to that. I mean, not *really*. They look, but they don’t see.”

Then they were blind fools. “Of course I see you,” I said. I traced the line of his jaw with my fingers, then bent to kiss him. He returned the kiss eagerly, and my cock stirred in response.

I sat beside him on the edge of the mattress. “You’ve finished unpacking,” I said, “and there’s nothing in the kitchen that needs my attention at the moment.” I ran my hand over the comforter. “Shall we test your new bed?”

A delightful pink blush spread across his cheeks, but his eyes darkened with desire. “Y-yes.”

I caught his tie and pulled him close. Our lips met again, and the hunger in his kiss enflamed me. As unbelievable as it seemed to me, he’d been a virgin when we met, and the raw passion I’d apparently awoken in him stole my breath with its intensity.

I unknotted the tie, then shoved his suit coat from his shoulders. He wrapped his arms around me, and I stretched out on the bed beside him, one hand buried in his hair and the other unfastening his vest. He did the same to me, and before long his fingers touched my bare skin, pinching lightly at my nipples until I groaned into his mouth.

I wanted him to touch me more, to touch me everywhere. I’d worried, when I first decided to pursue him, that I’d freeze at the wrong moment, transported back to the asylum and the cruel hands of the attendants. But to my relief, it hadn’t proved the case. Perhaps the experiences were simply too different.

I drew back, so I might see his face. I slid my hand down to cup the bulge in his trousers, and a soft sound of pleasure escaped him.

“I want you to bugger me,” I said, squeezing gently. We’d done it the other way around twice, and I thought he might suggest it himself, but he hadn’t. A lack of desire to try, or of confidence to ask?

The latter, considering how his hips shifted, pressing his cock more firmly against my hand, even as his face turned crimson. He swallowed. “Y-yes?”

“Yes?” I teased. I leaned in closer, brushing my lips against his neck, before whispering. “Yes, what?”

“Yes, I’d like to try,” he said. I could feel the heat of his blush against my own cheek.

I fondled him through his clothing. “I want you to fuck me. I want you to give me every inch, and ride me while I beg for more.”

He made a strangled sound, and I grinned. My raw talk both scandalized and aroused him, and it was even better when I made him say such things to me in turn.

But not this time—I didn’t wish to make him nervous, or distract him. I undid the buttons of his trousers, then pulled both trousers and drawers off him at the same time. My own clothes followed suit, and soon nothing impeded the press of skin on skin. I relished the feel of his body against mine: lanky and tall, his prick hard against my belly and leaking with need.

He drew back after a few moments, his breath short. "I should get the, um, the petroleum jelly," he said, flushing again.

"I already put some in the bedside table for us," I replied. "I thought it would come in handy sooner or later."

That drew a shy smile from him. While he opened the drawer, I grabbed one of the pillows and stuffed it under my hips. I wanted to see him, at least this time. To look up into his face, in case I needed reminding it was his hands on me, his body breaching mine.

I watched him as he opened the jar. A little line sprung up between his brows, as though he set himself to solve a complicated puzzle.

"There's no need to overthink things. Just be generous with the jelly," I told him. "And go slow."

"Oh, I, y-yes. Of course." He took up position between my legs, but instead of starting, he simply looked at me. Caressing me with his gaze, from my balls to my chest to my hair. "You're so handsome," he said, sounding bewildered. "And you want *me*?"

I laughed, because how could I not desire him? "Yes, I want you, you ridiculous creature. Now *do* something before you have me begging."

So he did. Fingers first, slick and gentle, searching for just the right spot. He caught my cock with his other hand, stroking until I moaned and clutched at the blankets. "Yes," I panted. "Fuck me now, please."

If Ival had ever dared venture into a bathhouse, he would have found himself very popular indeed due to the generous hand he'd been dealt—so to speak. Any other man, I would have complimented on the size of his cock, but I had the feeling it would only have made him too self-conscious to continue, so I held back.

He took me slowly, as I'd asked. And it felt good, so good, to have him ease into me, his cock stretching me, slick and hard and *his*.

"Is this good?" he asked anxiously, his breath coming in short gasps. "Slow enough?"

"Perfect." I arched my back a little, half-tempted to try and tug him in faster. "God. Are you enjoying this? Do you feel it, how my body wants yours?"

"Yes. Griffin..."

His lips were parted slightly, his eyes shining with desire and pleasure and something more, a tenderness that stole my breath. Then we were pressed together, bodies tight, and he bent over and kissed me hard.

"Ride me," I growled, when I could speak again.

We moved together, a little awkwardly at first, then finding our pace. I wrapped my hand around my cock, stroking myself in time with his thrusts, and knew I wouldn't possibly last long. "Yes, like that, don't stop," I babbled. "I love this; I love you."

"Griffin," he gasped. "I love you, too, please—"

I didn't know what he pleaded for, because he shifted slightly, and the change in angle pressed just right against the place inside of me. I felt as though I were coming apart, unraveling, lost in everything he was making me feel, from the way he filled me to the way he smelled, to how my heart felt so impossibly full at just the sight of him.

I arched, hot seed spilling over my belly. He made a startled sound—then thrust into me twice in quick succession, before stilling as he climaxed.

Our breathing evened out slowly. He bent again and kissed me tenderly, slipping free as he did so. "Was that all right?" he asked. "You enjoyed it?"

I grinned lazily and tugged him down to sprawl beside me. "I would have thought it obvious,"

I teased. “But yes. Very much so.”

His smile had a sleepy edge. “I wanted to make certain.”

“Such a gentleman.” I kissed him.

“Mmm.” He returned my kiss. “Merry Christmas, Griffin.”

“Merry Christmas, Ival.” I looked around the room, at his newly settled things. At the seams of his life, which might yet blend with mine.

And perhaps I spoke to myself as well as him, when I said, “Welcome home.”



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