



## The 15<sup>th</sup> of December

*A WesLizNickEmilieBaileyCharlie Christmas*



## December 15<sup>th</sup> Omaha

*The Orpheum Theater*  
*8pm*

Wes

I couldn't take it.

Seriously, was this for real?

We were sitting in the dark – five rows back from the front – and the orchestra was going *hard* on the Nutcracker theme. I'd just witnessed some sort of fever dream on stage, where knife-wielding ballerina mice were dancing around on a boat *what the hell why would there be a boat*, and now

fake snow was falling while ballerina snowflakes spun all over the place and snow queens (*maybe?*) swung from the rafters.

On actual swings.

It was quite the spectacle, but I couldn't tear my eyes from Liz's face.

Because her expression was fucking *ridiculous*.

Over the course of my life, I'd studied those green eyes and freckle-kissed cheeks like there was going to be a quiz and I couldn't afford a bad grade. I knew the arch of her brows right down to the exact degree of angle.

It was a known fact that I was obsessed with that particular face.

But when it did *this*, this thing where it morphed into, like, a little-girl-seeing-Santa-in-her-own-living-room kind of rapt expression, I found it hard to breathe. Her eyes were wide, her mouth curled up into a near-smile, and every bit of her attention was focused on the stage.

She was radiant.

She was a masterpiece. My body was still as I took in every detail like I needed to commit it to memory. Dancing eyes, soft mouth, softer curls.

I wanted to kiss the breath out of her, but I didn't dare interrupt.

"What are you doing?" she whispered out of the side of her mouth, leaning her head closer but keeping her eyes on the stage.

"Watching you," I replied, rubbing my nose against her cheek, inhaling her perfume.

"Do you hate the ballet?" she asked, finally looking at me. "Is this awful for you?"

"No." *Nothing is awful with you.* "I've waited my entire life to see a pack of wild rats go toe-to-toe with a toy soldier. This shit is epic."

I loved the smile she gave me, the one that was all *i-shouldn't-validate-his-idiocy-by-laughing-but-I'm-kind-of-into-it*, and she whispered, “By the way, did I tell you how hot you look in your holiday sweater?”

I'd bought a red sweater especially for the evening, mostly because I knew Lib would go full-on delighted-elf over the way we matched in our holiday colors. She was wearing a red plaid dress and a pair of shiny black boots that had been giving me *all* the thoughts since the minute she'd crossed her legs in the front seat of my car.

Talk about a present.

*All I want for Christmas is you.*

“No,” I said, “But it's obvious in the way that you're ignoring me to ogle a man in tights.”

“I'm not ogling,” she whispered, her eyes squinting as she giggled.

“You lie, Ogler.”

“Shhhhhh,” someone shushed from behind us.

I made a stern dad face at Liz and pointed, which made her giggle again.

Which made the shushing person shush again.

Which made me snort.

Which made her giggle.

“Come on,” she whispered, her eyes bright and her grin huge. “Let's go get a drink before we get kicked out.”

“No,” I whispered back, “I don't want you to miss this.”

“It's almost intermission, anyway.” She stood – *hot damn that was a hell of a dress* – and grabbed my hand. I followed those boots as she led me into the aisle and through the dark theater, a sea of faces on each side of us as we headed for the exit. As the *Land of Snow* portion of Tchaikovsky's suite

played, all soft flutes and floaty harps, I knew my brain would forever tie it to the sight of Lizzie in motion.

And as I took it all in, I realized something monumental.

I fucking loved the ballet.

## Liz

“You are a menace,” I said as soon as the doors shut behind us, but I didn’t mind.

Because every second of that day had been perfection.

The walk in the park as snow fell on the lit-up trees, dinner at Nicola’s, hot chocolate at Zen Coffee - Wes had made the evening *everything*.

And he was taking me to Ted and Wally’s as soon as the ballet ended, so things were only getting better.

His dark eyes were twinkling – they were always twinkling – as he said, “I’m so sorry.”

He didn’t look remotely sorry.

And he smelled crazy-good.

We passed by the quiet lobby of the old theater, the sounds of the ballet now cocooned behind the closed doors, and my chest was full of warm, gooey happiness as Wes’s fingers squeezed between mine like they were meant to be there. He was absurdly good-looking that night in his cashmere sweater and *nice* pants, and I was having a hard time keeping my eyes on anything but him.

I knew I shouldn’t leer, but baseball players looked *good* in dress pants.

*And he looks even better.*

In fact, the Orpheum building itself – a historical architectural landmark – was reduced to a simple holiday background in my eyes, like its sole purpose was to serve as a festive accessory to the

eye candy that *was* Wes Bennett. Ornate chandeliers, grand staircases, Christmas trees, garland; it was all there to accentuate a very tall boy with dark hair and flashing eyes.

“So can we talk about the tights situation?” he asked, giving me a sideways glance as we approached the staircase, his deep voice making my eyes dip down to his Adam’s apple. “I’m enjoying the ballet, but the tights that those guys are wearing keep zero secrets.”

“You seriously want to talk about this?” I asked, grabbing the marble railing as we started down the stairs. “About how we can totally see what perfect butts the ballerina boys have?”

“No.” His eyebrows scrunched together and he gave his head a shake. “No, I was thinking we’d do it in more of a mocking way. One that would make me feel better about myself. Are we not doing that?”

“Sorry, kid,” I said, “But this is a mock-free zone.”

“The ballet in general?” he asked, then pointed in front of him. “Or these stairs? Because I’m happy to go someplace else, if that makes a difference.”

*This is what I love most about him.* He was a million things that I loved, but Wes made everything fun. *Everything.* We could be locked in an empty closet together and I wouldn’t even look for a way out, because it would be the very best closet time anyone had ever had.

“Wait - is there even a bar down here?” I asked when we reached the lower level. I could see ornate seating areas and restrooms down the long hallway, and a coat check closet that wasn’t being used, but there wasn’t a concessions bar to be found. I’d been here every year for the ballet (since I was five), but this was the first time I’d ever ventured downstairs.

“Hmm,” he said, his eyes scanning the corridor. Christmas music was playing softly from somewhere – ceiling speakers, maybe – and it was the Harry Connick Jr. version of *What are you doing New Year’s Eve.*

I loved that song.

“It’s not looking good,” he said, *at the exact second I said*, “It’s not looking good.”

NO.

I looked at Wes and *shit*, he hadn’t missed it. His eyes sparked electric as his mouth slid into the naughtiest of grins, good God.

“Ten,” he said, looking so ridiculously happy as he starting counting.

“Wes. *No*,” I said, ruining my seriousness by letting out a giggle as I looked over my shoulder. “Not here.”

“Nine – *rules are rules Buxbaum* – eight,” he counted, his face all lit up as he grinned.

*Gabbbbbbb!*

A few weeks ago, when Wes and I happened to say ‘I love you’ at the same time, he decided that “jinx” was just too low stakes. He complained *no one even cares anymore*, which made me point out that no one had *ever* really cared since second grade, but he was not one to be deterred.

Wes was Wes, after all.

He’d called his cousin Charlie, who was just as ridiculous as he was when it came to creating games, and they’d set entirely new parameters for the couples-version of jinx. Under the new rules, when two people said something in unison, they had a 10-second countdown before they each had to shout – loudly – a “spontaneous love outburst.”

They’d cackled like children while coming up with their nonsense.

Basically, you had a 10-count before you each had to yell a compliment. But it had to be very specific and entirely accurate; it couldn’t just be *I love you* or *you’re pretty*. Whoever finished their declaration first was the winner, and the winner then tickled the living shit out of the loser. No matter where you were or what time it was.

Last time this happened, at the bus stop (and yes – everyone DID stare at us), Wes screamed *YOUR EARLOBES ARE SO TINY!* at the same second I yelled *YOUR FINGERNAIL BEDS ARE SPECTACULAR!*, but he was quicker.

Which meant I ended up dropping to the sidewalk in front of the bus bench (while screaming on my knees like a lunatic) as he tickled me.

The sad reality was that as an extremely ticklish person, I had no choice but to participate in these very public displays of tomfoolery.

“Wes, come on,” I tried, holding up a hand. Everything in the Orpheum was elegant and refined, and by the sounds of things, intermission was upon us.

Which meant we were seconds away from having a lot of elegant and refined *company*. I said, “Be reasonable.”

“Seven – *I am reasonable but these are the rules* – six – *I already have my compliment ready* – five--”

“Noooooo,” I said, shaking my head as I could see hordes of well-dressed ballet-goers coming down the stairs to use the restrooms.

“Four, three--”

I grabbed the knob, pulled open the coat check door, pushed Wes inside and shut the door behind us.

“Two,” he continued in the empty closet full of coat racks. The room was dark, but a safety light next to the door made it possible to see his huge smile when he said, “One.”

“*YOUR FACE IS SYMMETRICAL!*” I yelled as fast as I could.

“*YOU TAKE HYDRATION VERY SERIOUSLY!*” he yelled at the exact same time.

We stared at each other, grinning, because there was no way the people outside this door didn’t hear us. The closet was obscenely quiet as we listened to the sounds of a *lot* of people



converging upon that hallway. He calmly said, as if this was normal behavior, “Do you really think my face is symmetrical, Buxbaum?”

It was hard to speak around the giggles when I answered, “No one’s eyes have ever been so even.”

“You know, that really means a lot to me.” He put his big hands on my shoulders and started moving, propelling me backward until I felt the wall at my back. “By the way, did we actually finish together?”

“Yes,” I said, relieved he wasn’t going to dispute it and tickle me anyway. “The exact same time.”

“Maybe I should text Charlie and get a ruling on this.” His hands slid up my neck to cradle my face – *God, I love it when he does that*, and I felt almost drunk with giddy happiness as he smiled down at me. “Ties are unprecedented.”

“Well you *could* text your cousin,” I said, setting my hands on that very wide chest and trying not to faint as wild brown eyes gazed down at me in the dark, “Or you could see if that door locks.”

**Wes**

She didn’t have to tell me twice.

I left her to check the door – which did *not* lock but it was one of those weird old doors where you could open the top half without the bottom so who the hell knew about a thing like that – then went right back to where she waited.

Where the tiny closet light showed me the tiny grin on her face.

*God, I love her*, I thought as my hands found her waist.

“Did you lock it?” she asked, and something about the breathy sound of her voice in the darkness made me fucking crazy.

“It doesn’t lock,” I said, leaning my body into hers, pressing her against the wall while I lowered my mouth to her ear. “Tell me you don’t care, Lib.”

I heard her sharp intake of breath as her fingers grabbed onto the front of my sweater, and I felt the noise she made in the back of her throat when I opened my mouth on the side of her neck. *This woman will never not make me drunk with want*, I thought as my heart rate spiked and I tasted her skin on my tongue.

“How could I care,” she breathed, her fingers sliding into my hair, “When I’m with you?”

I had to kiss her then, because nothing in the world was like kissing Liz. It was almost as if the universe used her mouth as a tool to remind me that nothing would ever be as perfect for me as she was.

My lips found hers and suddenly we weren’t playing anymore. She kissed me like there were only ten seconds left before she’d never kiss again, like she was desperate to consume every detail of my mouth before it was taken away for all of eternity. Lips, teeth, tongue – they were everywhere at once, demanding, inciting a fucking riot inside of me.

It was breathy and hot, needy and seeking, and I was just her fool.

Her lackey.

I’d happily do anything she asked and beg for more.

*I’ll forever take your crumbs, Buxbaum.*

I let go of her waist to hold her face, to hold her in place while I absolutely lost my cool. I angled my head and went deep, devouring her hot cocoa mouth in the darkness as her nails dug into my pectorals and she made a noise that I felt in my chest.

Liz’s reactions were everything, and reading them like a map, like an instruction manual, was my favorite thing in—

“The switches are in here.” Lights flooded the coat check closet as the door swung open. I turned around as two men stepped inside the room, then froze when they saw us.

“Oh,” the tall one said, his eyes moving knowingly between Liz and me.

“We didn’t know, um,” the shorter one said, squinty eyes darting back and forth like he wasn’t sure what to look at. “That anyone was in here.”

“We needed to hang up our coats,” Liz blurted, pushing away from me as she tucked her hair behind her ears. “That’s why we’re in here.”

I turned and looked down at her. Her eyes were bright and her lip gloss was a little smeared, but those things paled in comparison to the hot color that was blazing on her cheeks.

God, my beautiful liar.

Neither of us had a coat in that closet, so she wasn’t fooling anyone, but they wouldn’t have been fooled anyway.

“Well you turned off the exterior lights,” the tall guy said, pointing behind her.

I looked to where he was pointing and *oh, shit*. I’d been pressing Liz’s back against a panel of switches.

She swallowed and tucked her hair behind her ears again, trying so hard to look unfazed as her face went full-on pink. “Sorry.”

Only she said it at the exact second that I said, “Sorry.”

Bright green eyes narrowed on me and she held up a finger. She pointed at my chest and said, “Not now, Wes, you know that--”

“Ten,” I interrupted, loving the way this turn of events had her fast blinking. “Nine--”

“No, Wes,” she giggled, looking at the maintenance guys and then back at me. “We *can’t*.”

“Eight – *rules are rules* – seven – *you’re looking ticklish, Lib* – six—”

“Nooooo,” she said around a laugh, shaking her head. “Wesley.”

“Five – *I love it when you call me Wesley* – four--”

“I’m not doing it, Wes,” she squealed as the two dudes looked at us like we were crazy.

“Three – *you’re gonna look cute on the floor* – two – *after I tickle under your arms* – one--”

“*YOU KISS LIKE YOU HAVE A PHD IN KISSING!*” she shouted at the top of her lungs in the small coat-check closet in the now-busy hallway.

I, on the other hand, said nothing.

Both of the maintenance technicians looked at her like she was out of her mind, and I could sense people looking our way from out in the corridor. It took everything in my power not to laugh as her big green eyes stared at me in shock.

“Well thank you, honey,” I said, reaching out and grabbing her hand. “But maybe say it a little quieter next time. I think you scared these nice gentlemen.”

“No - *no*, it’s a rule,” she said to the men as I led her to the door, looking shocked by my betrayal. “It’s a game. He was supposed to yell something, too.”

“Ah,” one of the guys said, his eyes narrowed.

“No, *really*,” she insisted, glancing at me as we exited the room. “Now he lost and has to be tickled. Tell them, Wes.”

“I lost and have to be tickled,” I said over my shoulder as the long line of women waiting to use the ladies room all looked at us.

“You are seriously evil,” she said under her breath, ruining it with a giggle as she shook her head. “I cannot believe you did that to me.”

“But you’re the winner.” I let go of her hand so I could wrap my arm around her shoulder and puller her closer. “Now you get to tickle me, Lib.”

“That’s true,” she said, narrowing her eyes like she was thinking hard while I brought her even closer and kissed the top of her head.

And twenty minutes later, when she tickled me during the dance of the sugarplum fairies, making me squeal like a psychotic pig in the front of the entire quiet theater, I knew the universe was right.

Nothing would ever be as perfect for me as she was.



December 15<sup>th</sup>  
Omaha

*Nicola's Restaurant*  
8pm

**Emilie**

“Leave room for the lemon cake.”

I sunk the fork into my last meatball, but paused before eating it to say, “I don’t like lemons.”

“Oh, I know,” Nick said, looking amused as I shoved the entire meatball into my mouth.

“But you’ll like this cake. Trust me.”

“I trust you, but a. you’re not getting out of taking me to Ted and Wally’s after this, and b. all non-chocolate cake is trash.” I held up a finger while I chewed my food, swallowed, then took a sip of my water. Only then did I add, “That’s just my worldview, bro.”

His smirk slid into a smile as he shook his head. “*Bro*, she says.”

I couldn't hold in the grin as he mocked me, contentedness pouring through my veins and settling into every cell in my body. Nick – who looked ridiculously hot in his thick wool fisherman's sweater - had taken me to see the afternoon performance of *The Nutcracker*, which I thought he would've hated but he'd shocked me by loving.

Although that wasn't really a shock at all.

I was getting used to the fact that he always surprised me. He loved to cook, knew how to play piano, was fluent in ASL and had seriously considered buying a motorcycle; Nick Stark was anything but predictable.

*That* was only thing predictable about Nick, the way he was a walking contradiction.

After the ballet we walked around downtown in the snow, taking photos by the holiday lights before dipping in and out of the Old Market shops. He bought a screaming rubber chicken and an RBG calendar for his mom at City Limits, and I bought a white sweater at Nouvelle Eve and some roasted nuts from the guy on the corner.

Then he took me to dinner.

I'd never been to Nicola's before, but everything about the place was so Nick-coded that it seemed right that I'd waited. Not only did the entire staff seem to know him, saying his name like he was a favorite cousin instead of a customer, but the Italian restaurant oozed with a charm utterly unique to itself.

Just like Nick.

It was small, with no more than ten or twelve tables. Framed photographs of Italy adorned the walls, the food was plate-licking good, big band Christmas music was coming from somewhere in the establishment, and the artificial tree in the corner had twinkling lights that danced alongside the melodies.

It was perfection, I thought, watching out the window as the streetlights illuminated the falling snow.

The entire day had been perfection.

“Come on, Hornby,” he said, pushing his empty dinner plate out of the way. “Just try the cake. It takes the bite out of the garlic and settles your stomach.”

“Are you an Italian grandmother right now?”

“I just might be.”

“Okay. Well I will eat this cake,” I said, pointing my fork at the cake that honestly looked amazing even though I hated lemons, “If you’ll discuss the thing we aren’t discussing.”

A dark eyebrow went up as he reached *his* fork across the table and dug it into the huge slice. Dear *God* he was an attractive person, especially when he was giving me flirtatiously challenging half-smiles that made me want to engage in an epic battle of truth-or-dare with him. “You want to discuss this now? Tonight? On the eve of our romantic Christmassy date?”

“Why not?” I shrugged and tried playing it cool, but the truth was that I wanted it.

Badly.

But I didn’t want him to know I wanted it badly.

In case he didn’t.

*But I was pretty sure that he did.*

“Let’s recap the facts, shall we?” he said, sliding the fork between his teeth and making me feel...*something* as he took a bite of the dessert. I waited patiently as he chewed, those eyes on me, and then he finally said, “You lost our bet.”

“That’s correct,” I said, nodding in agreement.

“So you are supposed to get a quote tattoo of my choice,” he continued, his voice deep and quiet and a tiny bit growly at the moment. “Somewhere on your body.”



“Yep,” I said, my voice barely there.

“Somewhere to be determined by me.”

I swallowed and wondered if it was hot in there or if I was on fire. “Correct.”

“And even though I told you that you don’t have to, you’re insisting on going through with it.”

“It’s only fair,” I said, clearing my throat. “I made the bet.”

His face was a little unreadable as he looked at me, serious and intense in the way that only Nick Stark’s face could be, and Harry Connick Jr.’s voice shimmied out of the overhead speaker and up my spine, leaving a shiver behind.

*Maybe I'm crazy to suppose, I'd ever be the one you chose--*

“I mean, I’m not gonna lie, Em – the idea makes me crazy, okay? It’s a little hard for me to breathe every time I think about it. Words that I chose, crawling down your spine? *My* selection, climbing along your hip bone? Dear *God*.” His throat moved around a swallow and he leaned closer, lowering his voice to a level I could barely hear over the sounds of the restaurant and the Christmas music. But his lips found my ear and I *felt* them in the center of my chest when he asked, “But is it too soon? I don’t want you to have regrets.”

I turned my head slightly, so our eyes were level (though mine were slightly unfocused), and I confessed, “It feels like I’ve loved you forever, so I don’t know how it could be too soon.”

His eyes were everywhere on my face as his jaw flexed. “Is that right?”

*God, I love that tiny little movement.* It always felt like an emotional tell, like he was *feeling* things when his jaw jumped. I took a deep breath and said, “It is. But the beauty of the tattoo being the result of a wager is that we don’t have to overthink it. If you dump me tomorrow – which would mean I’d have to figure out how to bury your very heavy body but that’s a whole other thing – the tattoo won’t be anything more than some random something I got when I lost a bet.”

“A random something, huh?” he said, and I wished I could read his mind when his face looked like that. Because sometimes, when those fathomless blue eyes swept over me, it felt like they could see everything.

Like he was weighing all the information they were capturing, and he was forming imperative decisions based on those observations.

“Yep.” I reached my fork over and grabbed a bite of the cake. “The only thing I’ll regret is that *I* wasn’t the one to win. Then I could’ve given you a face tattoo that says *Em is a goddess.*”

“Face tattoos were against the rules, remember?”

“Oh, that’s right,” I said, taking a bite. “As were asses.”

“As were asses,” he agreed, his lips quirking the tiniest bit.

I chewed - *holy crap that cake is delicious* – and still wasn’t sure where we were with the tattoo. “Okay, well—”

“Okay, well.” Nick slammed both hands onto the table, like his decision was made, and he said, “If you’re doing it, so am I.”

“*What?*”

“I find myself very inspired by Emilie Hornby’s commitment.” His calm sarcasm was still there, but his eyes were dancing and he looked...*energized* when he said, “We should do it tonight, if Dante has an opening.”

“Wait.” I almost choked on my cake. “*Tonight?*”

“Unless you don’t want to,” he said, a crinkle forming between his brows. “Which is totally fine.”

“No, I want to.” I swallowed and reached for my water, trying to downplay just how excited I actually was. Because the idea of Nick’s words on my skin? *Hell, yes*, I definitely wanted that. But I was calm and cool when I said, “Do you think he can fit us in?”

“I do,” he said, his mouth sliding into a half-smile. “Tattoos were not on my agenda for tonight, Em, but I fucking love this. Eat your lemon cake and let’s brainstorm.”



## Nick

“Yours better not say ‘*hold on tight, spider monkey*’ or I will rage.”

“Oh, my God, I forgot you’ve read *Twilight*. And don’t worry,” she said, grinning as she carefully wrote the words onto a piece of paper. She was sitting beside me in the lobby of the tattoo shop, but holding up a hand so I couldn’t “copy” off her paper. “I would never stain your skin with Edward Cullen’s words.”

“Good girl,” I said, ignoring her giggles as I scrawled out *my* quote and then said, “Done.”

She looked up. “That was too fast.”

“It’s one tiny sentence.”

“Write it again,” she said, pointing at my paper. “If it’s going to be on my skin forever, I want it to be legible and your handwriting’s atrocious.”

“Who’s going to be reading it but me?”

She rolled her eyes and pointed. “Again, but slower.”

I knew she was waiting for me to do it right, so I wrote as slowly as humanly possible, sticking out my tongue and slow-rolling every letter like a kindergartener concentrating on their first ABC’s.

“Nick Stark,” she said, a laugh in her voice. “You better not write something stupid.”

“As if I would ever.”

Thank God Dante – my former boss - had been kind enough to squeeze us in. Neither one of us had left the house that night with a plan to get tattoos after the ballet, but once Emilie’s brain sparked, there was no stopping her.

And why the hell would anyone ever want to?

She’d looked at me in the quiet Italian restaurant and said, “What if we each pick a quote – from a book, song, or movie – for each other, but we don’t share it beforehand. So it’s a surprise.”

Now, if anyone else did this, or told me about someone doing this, I would tell them they were out of their minds. *Who would be that stupid, to not know what’s being needled into their skin forever?* But I trusted Em so much that I wanted whatever words she chose. It could say BEEPBEEP and I would fucking love my beepbeep tattoo because it was created by her.

By the time we headed toward 402 Ink, she’d gone all Emilie the Planner on me and next-leveled the shit out of our idea. We were each *writing* the other’s quote and getting it tattooed in our respective handwriting, which I wanted to make fun of because it was over-the-top cheese, but I also was mildly obsessed with the idea of being able to look down at my arm and see her perfect cursive for the rest of my life.

Even if it said beepbeep.

“Emilie?” Dante called her name from the counter and gestured for her to stand. “You’re up.”

She gave me a grin as she stood, a smile that teased a waterfall of giggles, and I felt that smile like a physical touch. God, I was in love with the way she looked that night. She was wearing a fuzzy black sweater with a short plaid skirt, and the black ribbon in the back of her hair made it feel like she was my Christmas gift.

*It feels like I’ve loved you forever.*

Sometimes her words came out of nowhere and punched me in the gut, and what she said at dinner - *It feels like I've loved you forever* - was like a rock-solid uppercut.

Even though it shouldn't be.

Because we weren't new anymore. Em and I exchanged I love you's like our lungs exchanged oxygen for carbon dioxide; constantly and without consideration. There was no doubt in my mind that we were "end-game," to use an annoyingly overused phrase.

Hell, I didn't even feel pathetic *thinking* that because it was just a fact.

Em was my center.

I could recognize her sighs in a line-up, and I knew her face as well as I knew my own. She was the biggest thing in my universe, yet at the same time she was small and comfortable, like the soft blanket that lived on the arm of the couch.

But her casual reciprocation of those enormous fucking feels never failed to shock me. And now she *wanted* to get this tattoo.

I wasn't sure why I'd thrown down the wager to begin with, but once I had, the idea of some part of me being permanently *on* her made me nuts. Possessive and proud and fucking *insanely* bewitched.

Of course, the same went for *her* words being tattooed on *my* skin. Emilie's mind was my obsession, this perfectly beautiful mystery that I never wanted to solve, so the thought of her carefully-curated words being etched on my body was mind-boggling.

In the very best way.

"Stark," AJ (the other tattoo artist and my former co-worker) said, shaking his head like I was embarrassingly cuffed. "Let's go."

"See you on the other side, Hornby," I said, laughing as she grinned at me over her shoulder.

"Not if I see your first, Stark," she replied, giving me a wink.

I followed AJ to the back, where he was going to permanently ink whatever the hell Em wanted, wherever the hell Em wanted, and I was a thousand percent comfortable with this decision.

It was madness, how hard I fucking loved her.



“Okay – who gets to see theirs first?” Emilie asked excitedly as we exited the shop, the snow coming down even harder than before. “I’m equal parts scared and excited, by the way.”

“Yeah, same,” I replied, grabbing her hand and wondering what she’d think of the quote I’d chosen. “You can go fir--”

“No, no, I want you to see yours,” she interrupted with a grin, tightening her fingers around mine and pulling me over to a bench beside a fully-lit Christmas tree. “And if you hate it I’ll pay to have it lasered off.”

“You will?” I asked, wanting to laugh as she pushed me down to a sit.

It was ridiculous, but I couldn’t stop staring at her. She was so fucking pretty, all the time, but Em with snow on her hair was another thing entirely.

Absurdly gorgeous.

“I don’t know – does that cost a lot? Maybe,” she said sheepishly, the wind blowing her curls in front of her face as she sat beside me. “Now go. Unwrap your tat.”

“Tat, she says,” I muttered, raising the sleeve of my sweater for “the reveal.”

“What else should I call it?” she asked, her perfume finding my nose. “Your *ink*?”

“Hornby,” I said, looking down as the clear wrap became visible, “You can call it whatev—”  
Holy *shit*.

I felt like the wind had been knocked out of me as I looked down at my forearm, at the fresh tattoo.

Holy *shit*.

I couldn't believe it.

Twisted around my existing tattoo, in Em's perfect cursive, was the line from *Everywhere, Everything*

*'til our fingers decompose*

"You're not saying anything," she said, her smile gone. "Do you hate it? I really *will* pay for the removal if you--"

"No. Em," I interrupted, strangely at a loss for words. The fresh snow was soft and quiet, insulating the world so everything went silent except for Em and I.

It felt like we were the only two people on the snowy earth as I said, "Just shut up and lift your shirt. *Now*."

## **Emilie**

"What?"

I looked at Nick, clueless as to what was going on. Why hadn't he said anything about his tattoo yet?? Did he hate it? And why was he looking at me like *that*, like he'd just slammed two Red Bulls and he was about to explode?

His eyes were bright and a little intense when he said, "It's your turn. Raise that sweater for me, honey."

"I need to find a mirror," I said, nervous to see the words that were now written on my spine.

"I'll take a picture of it," he said, and his Adam's apple moved around a swallow.

“Are you okay?” I asked, turning on the bench so he could take a picture of my back. Nick wasn’t always easy to read, but this unexpected wildness in his eyes was really freaking me out.

“Shhhh,” he said as he pushed up my sweater and carefully straightened the wrap that covered the tattoo. I felt his warm fingers between my shoulder blades as he held up my sweater. “Just wait.”

I heard the sound of him taking the picture as the cold wind and snow shocked my bare skin, then I felt him lowering my sweater. He was holding out my coat as I turned back around, and I shivered and slid into my jacket.

“Are you ready?” Nick asked, his voice kind of gravelly.

“I don’t know – am I?”

Suddenly I wasn’t sure. *Was* I ready?

“You definitely are not,” he said, opening his photos. I looked at the screen as he held his phone in front of me, and when I saw the tattoo on my spine, I squinted and moved my face closer. It looked like it said--

“Oh, my God!”

“Right?” he said, sounding just as shocked as I felt.

I grabbed his phone and stared at the picture, unable to believe what I was seeing. It wasn’t possible, was it? Out of all of the quotes in the world, he chose that one?

It was just impossible.

Scrawled out in Nick’s all-cap handwriting was the quote from *Everywhere, Everything*.

**KEEP MY HAND IN YOURS**

I absentmindedly handed back his phone as my mind reeled. “Howww is this possible?”

He shook his head as his mouth curled up at the corners. “It isn’t, Hornby.”

“We chose the same song.”



“We chose the same song,” he repeated. “And I finished your lyrics.”

“I wanna love you ‘til we’re food for the worms to eat,” I quoted the line, absolutely in-shock.

“‘Til our fingers decompose,” Nick sang quietly. “Keep my hand in yours.”

“What does this mean?” I turned toward him on the bench, scooting closer because this was too much. I squeezed both of his thighs and shouted into the night, “How could this have actually happened?”

He shook his head, and his dark eyes were twinkling when he said, “I think we both know what it means.”

I couldn’t stop the smile if I’d wanted to. “Enlighten me, Stark.”

“It either means a. you used more of that voodoo magic you got from Eric and controlled my choice without consent,” he said, grabbing the front of my coat and sliding me even closer to him, “b. you looked at my paper and changed your answer because you think you’re the *literal* mastermind and want me to believe it’s fate--”

“Like I could read your writing enough to copy,” I interrupted.

“C,” he said loudly, shutting me up with his hand on my mouth and a stern daddy look that didn’t work because his eyes were happy-squinting, “It *is* fate.”

*God, I love him.*

I got lost for a second, just staring into those cerulean eyes, before I moved his big hand from my mouth and said, “I think C. Fate.”

“Yeah?” he said quietly.

“Yeah,” I agreed, lost in his gaze. “Fate. I like that.”

“Oh, you do, huh?” Nick pushed back my hair, his mouth sliding into an intimate smile that curled my toes. “Well I like *you*, Hornby.”

He lowered his head and kissed me the way he always kissed me.

Like he was trying to convince me he knew everything there was to know about kissing.

Like he was going to get arrested if he failed to prove that he was legitimately the best kisser in the land.

Like his only goal in life was to render me breathless and weak.

His fingers slid into my hair and he angled my head, slanting his mouth over mine and sending heat everywhere inside me as the snow came down in showers. I grabbed onto the front of his sweater as he fed me hot kisses, and in spite of the Christmas-themed date and the lights twinkling all around us, I didn't actually have a Christmas song going through my head at that moment.

No, I had Noah and Gracie's song on my mind while he rendered me breathless and weak.

*Everywhere, everything  
I wanna love you 'til we're food for the worms to eat  
'Til our fingers decompose  
Keep my hand in yours*



## December 15<sup>th</sup> Omaha

*Orpheum Theater*  
*8:40 pm*

### Charlie

Where the hell was she?

It was snowing harder now, and the crowd exiting the theater had dwindled down to a few random slow people who obviously were in no hurry. It was the only exit door, so where the hell was she?

I leaned her surprise against the side of the building, pulled out my phone and texted: *How was the ballet?*

I wasn't supposed to be back until tomorrow, but I found an earlier flight to surprise her. We'd originally had an entire Christmassy date planned for tonight – The Nutcracker with my cousin

and his girlfriend, dinner at Nicola's, caroling in the Old Market – but then my dad changed *his* holiday plans so I was out-of-town for an early Christmas with him, instead.

She'd acted like it was no big deal, but I knew she was disappointed because Bay was like a child when it came to the holidays. She loved every single thing about it. She wanted all the lights, all the cookies, all the wrapping; she was a goddamn human elf.

A goddamn human elf that I was goddamn obsessed with.

My phone lit up and her text shocked the shit out of me. *I didn't go, actually.*

I grabbed her bulky surprise and started walking away from the theater, wondering what the hell I was supposed to do now. I texted: *Why not?*

I had no idea where I was going, yet I kept walking.

*Bailey: When I got downtown, I realized I don't like ballet enough to sit there for an hour and watch your cousin drool all over Liz. It'd just make me miss your dumb face.*

I looked up long enough to say *excuse me* as I dragged that thing around two people trying to remember where they parked, then texted: *I thought you were dying to do the Nutcracker thing.*

The snow was starting to stick to the ground as I crossed at the corner. Every tree in the greater downtown area appeared to be decorated with twinkling white lights, and Bailey needed to see it.

She'd fucking love it.

I needed to get to her.

*Bailey: I was dying to do it with YOU because I knew you'd create a stupid game to make it fun.*

I would have – she was right, but the reason *why* I would've done it was because it would've made her do the quiet giggle thing I loved more than anything in the world. Something about the breathlessness of her laughter, when she attempted to keep it quiet, made me insane.

I texted: *So where are you now? Home?*

Please say no, please say no.

*Bailey: I'm still downtown.*

“Thank God,” I muttered to myself as I switched arms and kept walking.

Her surprise was getting heavy as hell.

I didn't want to give anything away, but I needed more information than “downtown” if I was going to find her. I texted: *Send me a downtown selfie, Glasses.*

She immediately responded with: *I'm not getting arrested for you or for anyone, pervert.*

*Such a little smartass.* I texted: *What if I beg?*

The smell of roasted nuts – the cinnamon ones they sold from the back of a truck in the Old Market – found my nose and made me hungry.

*Bailey: FOUL. You know I can't resist a groveling Chuck.*

I glanced up from my phone just in time to *not* barrel over an old guy with the surprise I was getting really sick of lugging along beside me. “Excuse me.”

I moved out of foot traffic and stopped outside of the Farnam Hotel. I messaged: *You can't resist a Chuck PERIOD. And I'm waiting for my selfie...*

I needed her to be close. I didn't want to drive, and I didn't want to wait. I wanted Bay to be nearby and close enough to touch momentarily.

*Bailey: You DO have your irresistible charms, though demanding a selfie like a frat boy saying SEND A PIC is not one of them.*

I glanced up and when the two women passing by smiled at me, I realized I was grinning. I was just standing there, on the snowy street, grinning like a damn fool.

It was her fault.

Bailey Mitchell had become my constant smile.

I texted: *I just miss you, Glasses, and want to see your face.*

Her response was quick: *Gabbbbbbb dammit I hate that!*

I coughed out a laugh because I could almost *see* the crinkle between her dark eyebrows. I replied: *That I miss you and want to see your face?*

*Bailey: No, I hate when you ruin perfectly snarky banter by being wonderful.*

I texted: *I should be an asshole?*

*Bailey: Shut up, you wonderful asshole, so I can take a selfie.*

Yesssss. I sent: *Commencing shutting upping.*

I felt a rush of something – serotonin, maybe – when I saw the conversation bubbles bubbling, and I felt fucking *happy* when the message came through.

God, I loved that face.

She was grinning at me through a shower of snow, wearing a red turtleneck with those glasses, and suddenly I was desperate to get to her. I'd wanted to surprise *her*, but as I looked at curved lips and pink cheeks, it felt like I was the one being gifted with the unexpected.

Fuck, I needed her *now*.

I narrowed my eyes and looked closer.

She was outside.

Downtown.

I moved the phone closer to my face, brushing away the flakes of snow collecting on the screen, and I felt like I recognized the background of the photo. She was definitely nearby – glowing trees were everywhere in the shot – but it took me a second. Everything felt very familiar yet I couldn't put my finger on it, until...

BINGO.

I knew where she was.

I texted: *I know where you are – don't move.*

I put my phone in my pocket, picked up that surprise that suddenly felt like it weighed no more than an ounce, and I started running.

Fucking fast.

I yelled *excuse me* and *on your left* as I sprinted past people, darting in and out of fellow pedestrians as I flew down the sidewalk.

There was no way in hell I was slowing down.

Sorry not sorry.

Because there was a girl in glasses on a swing in the park in the snow, and I was coming straight home to her.

## **Bailey**

I texted: *Why exactly am I not supposed to move?*

I knew I was smiling like a moron as I sat on one of the two-person swings, all by myself, surrounded by families and couples who were out doing Christmassy things in the center of town, but that was just what Charlie did to me. He was impossible to figure out, all the time, and that puzzle was my absolute favorite challenge in the entire world.

Because it was a trustable impossibility.

He might be erratic and all over the place, but he was sweet and thoughtful and the funniest person I'd ever met. So even though I never had any idea what wild ride we were about to go on, I always knew he'd keep me safe, happy, and entertained (while holding on for dear life. And screaming, usually).

He didn't respond, which should've made me move because my ass was totally frozen on the metal swing, but where did I have to go? Charlie had been gone for an entire week, and even though I'd done fun holiday things with my mom and Scott, life wasn't the same when he was gone.

It was like the lights shined a little less brightly – in the world – without Charlie Sampson’s presence.

*Charlie: Take another selfie in ten seconds. AND I MEAN A LEGIT TEN. As in, count it down with Mississippes.*

I was giggling as I started counting under my breath, not knowing why but absolutely one thousand percent *in*.

*Ten mississippi. Nine mississippi. Eight mississippi. Seven mississippi. Six mississippi. Five mississippi. Four mississippi. Three mississippi. Two mississippi. One mississippi.*

I held out the phone to take a photo, and I saw him the second I pressed the button.

Charlie was behind me.

“Charlie?!” I turned around and almost fell off the swing.

Holy *Christmas* balls.

He was standing there, tall and beautiful in his wool coat and mischievous eyes, holding up a Christmas tree in his right hand. A Christmas tree that was as big as he was and covered in (what I assumed were battery-operated) twinkling white lights.

“I got you a tree,” he said with a shrug, as if this was absolutely no big deal whatsoever.

But it was.

It was a *very* big deal.

Since Scott was allergic to real Christmas trees, he and my mom put up a wimpy little 4-ft artificial thing that I *hated*. So when Charlie called the other night, I’d whined to him (like a toddler) about how it wasn’t Christmas without the smell of pine needles in your nose and the sticky ick of sap on your fingers.

And now here he was, with a tree.

For me.



“How are you even here?” I squealed as I jumped off the swing and into his arms, wrapping myself around him as my brain registered *warm* and *solid*. “With a tree?”

“Moldova me first, Glasses,” he said, his eyes squinting around the sweetest smile as he wrapped his free hand around my waist. “Then we’ll talk.”

I raised onto my tiptoes and found his mouth, pulling his face down to mine and kissing him like I hadn’t seen him in over a week and needed to show him just how much I’d missed him. I made it quick, since we were in the center of the bustling city park, but those three seconds were packed full of teeth, tongue and greedy want.

And *whoa*. His eyes were dark and hot when I pulled back – *dear God I love that face* – and he raised his eyebrows, shaking his head.

“God bless Moldova,” he said around a slow-sliding dirty grin.

“God bless Moldova,” I repeated, happiness spreading through every single part of me.

“Now tell me how you’re here. With a tree!”

“Well it’s simple,” he said, his hand sliding away from my waist to find my hand. “I switched flights and picked up a tree. Walk with me, though, will you? We don’t want to be late.”

“Be late for what?” I said, squeezing his gloved fingers between mine and walking alongside him, because I’d go wherever he wanted me to go.

“Well we may have missed the ballet, but there’s no reason we have to miss out on caroling and the whole Ted-Wally ice cream thing.” I was distracted, as I listened to him, by the way the tree he was carrying totally lit-up his handsome face. “Right?”

“Well of course,” I said around a laugh as every single person in the vicinity was staring at this boy who was dragging a fully illuminated tree with him like it was normal. “But please explain this tree.”

“You wanted a live tree,” he said, as if that explained everything.

“Yes...?”

“So you should have a live tree. And I know you can’t have one at Scott’s house, but why not have one for the night, while we carol?” He said it very matter-of-factly, like his mobile tree was the soundest of logic. “This way we’ll bring festive joy everywhere we go, you get to sniff the pine and stroke the sap, and then at the end of the evening, we can leave it somewhere magical for the public’s enjoyment.”

My heart was going to explode from joy. That was a thing, right? “Example of magical places, please.”

“Uh, next to a porta-potty to spruce – *get it, the tree reference?* – it up, or underneath the bridge where it’s illegal for people to camp but they still do and could use a little holiday cheer, or even on a median, so everyone who stops at a red light gets to enjoy the vibes.”

I loved the way his mind worked. “Those are good examples.”

“And I’d love to keep discussing them with you, Glasses,” he said, “But we really need to start caroling before all the holiday bustlers go home. It’s snowing pretty hard, and people in this town are pussies about the cold.”

“Okay.” I let go of his hand to flip up the collar of my coat. “So what’s the plan?”

“The plan?” He looked over at me like I was an idiot, then said, very slowly, “The plan is that we sing. Christmas carols.”

“But, like, where do we meet up with everyone else?” I asked.

His eyebrows scrunched together. “Everyone else who?”

“Everyone else who’s caroling,” I said, walking around a couple who’d stopped to take a photo in the falling snow.

“Are other people caroling?” he asked, looking confused.

“Aren’t they?”

“Are they?”

“Charlie!” I yelled, laughing at the ridiculousness. “What is the story with caroling?”

“I just thought we’d walk around town, singing Christmas carols,” he said, smiling like a little kid, shrugging. “Isn’t that how it works?”

“Just us?” I asked, wondering if he’d added the lights to the tree or if he’d bought it that way.

“I mean, for now. I’m sure people will join us, if Hallmark has taught me anything, and we’ll force Wes and Liz to do it with us when we get to Ted and Wally’s.”

He was serious. His face was dead-serious as he looked over at me like he was waiting for my response. His “we’ll go Christmas caroling” suggestion, when we planned this night, had literally meant – to him - that he and I would walk around downtown, singing songs.

While he dragged along a Christmas tree.

I wasn’t sure it was possible, but it kind of felt like I loved him more, at that moment, than I ever had before. I reached into my pocket for my warm hat with the pompom on top and said, “What song should we start with?”

“*A Nonsense Christmas?*” he suggested.

“Too sexy.”

“*Might Ruin Christmas?*”

“No one knows that song,” I said.

“You do.”

“True, but let’s go traditional.”

“Okay,” he said, tilting his head like he was really wracking his brain for the perfect carol. “I think you and I will totally slay – *get it* – the *White Christmas* duet from the Michael Bublé album, don’t you?”

“Enough with the puns,” I said, “And absolutely we will.”

“I call the Shania part, though,” he said. “Because her *I-I-I* falls in the sweet spot of my vocal range.”

“Obviously.”

“And I think we need to skip,” he added, nodding while he took the hat from my hands and pushed it onto my head, his eyes all over my face. “Skipping is far more festive than walking.”

“Can you skip with the tree in your hand?” I asked, my breath catching in my throat as he placed a tiny kiss on the tip of my nose.

*Dear Lord, I could get lost in his face.*

“Don’t insult me with your ridiculous questions, Glasses, of course I can. Are you ready?”

I’d never felt more in the Christmas spirit as I looked up at Charlie through the chunky flakes of snow, the lights of the tree twinkling beside him. “Let’s do this, Sampson.”

I don’t know why it shocked me, but I stood there, frozen in place, when six-and-a-half-foot Charlie start skipping down the street, dragging that tree behind him.

While yell-singing a Christmas carol.

“I’M DREAMING OF A WHITE CHRISTMAS  
JUST LIKE THE ONES I USED TO KNOW!”

“Hey, that’s *my* part,” I laugh-shouted, speed-skipping to catch up to him.

“Then sing, Bubl ,” he yelled back, grinning at me when I reached his side.

So I did.

“WHERE THE TREE TOPS GLISTEN,  
AND CHILDREN LISTEN,  
TO HEAR SLEIGH BELLS IN THE SNOW!”



December 15<sup>th</sup>  
Omaha

### *Ted and Wally's*

Wes

"I'm giving him two more minutes and then we're gone."

Liz looked out the window, where the snow was falling *hard* now. "So impatient."

"I *am*," I said, anxious to get out of there. Christmas was still ten days away, but I had a whole big surprise scene planned when we got home – along with her gift - and it couldn't wait another day.

That thing was burning a hole in my pocket and I was dying to give it to her.

And we'd been *just* about to leave when my cousin texted nonsense.

Which was totally on-brand for Charlie.

*Don't leave Ted and Wally's – I'm on the way with songs.*

I had no idea what that meant, especially when he was supposed to be out of town, but it'd been twenty minutes since he sent it and I was done with waiting. Also the place was packed, with a line stretched all the way back to the door, so I was *positive* people were giving Liz and I side eye for occupying a booth when our ice cream was clearly gone.

“Oh, my God – look!” Liz pointed out the window and I leaned closer, peering through the snowy darkness to see what was making her laugh.

“Holy shit.” It looked like Charlie and Bailey were skipping over to the building, with two people chasing them *what the hell*, and Charlie was dragging what appeared to be a dead Christmas tree behind him.

Covered in twinkling white lights.

And they were singing so loudly that we could hear it from inside the ice cream shop.

Everyone in line was craning their necks to see what the hell the noise was outside.

*Yes, ladies and gentlemen, that is my cousin.*

“Come on,” Liz said, or *giggled*, actually, scrambling out of the booth.

I followed her – *and those boots dear lord* – out into the mini-blizzard, and it was honestly jarring, just how loud their singing was.

How loud *Charlie* was as he belted the chorus to *Christmas Tree Farm*.

“UNDER THE MISTLETOE, WATCHING THE FIRE GLOW!”

Bailey was laughing but absolutely committed when she leaned her head closer to his and yell-sang, “AND TELLING ME I LOVE YOU, OOH OOH OOH OOH!”

The other couple was apparently *not* chasing them, because they were singing, too. Liz immediately abandoned me to jump beside Bailey and join in, *of course*, and when the group finally

finished their very terrible but kind of awesome Christmas carol, everyone in the vicinity – on the sidewalks and in the streets - broke into applause.

“Thank you and merry Christmas!” Charlie yelled dramatically, grabbing Bailey’s hand and taking a bow.

“Happy holidays!” Bailey added, her words barely understandable because she was cackling.

“Merry Festivus...?” The guy I didn’t know muttered, and the girl beside him laughed and said something I couldn’t hear.

“I thought Charlie was out of town,” I heard Liz say to Bailey.

“He surprised me in the park – with a *tree!*” Bailey wrapped herself around Charlie’s arm, and he didn’t even try to hide the lovesick expression on his face. He’d always been kind of an asshole – even though he was hilarious and I loved him, but since he and Bailey got together, he was like an entirely different person.

“I’m fucking charming,” he said to me, grinning like he was a god. “And thoughtful. A catch, is what they call me.”

*Okay, not a different person exactly,* but like a happy version of himself.

“I bet that’s not *all* they call you,” I corrected, which made him laugh and say, “Fair.”

“We’ll be right back,” the girl I didn’t know yelled to Bailey as she and her dude ran toward the ice cream shop.

“Who’s that?”

“No idea,” Charlie said, shrugging and brushing the snow off the top of his hair. “They were sitting on a bench when we skipped by and asked if they could go caroling with us. I think their names are Nick and Emma, maybe...?”

“Emilie,” Bailey corrected, then asked me, “So are you two going caroling with us now?”

“Hell, no,” I said at the exact second Liz answered, “Hell, yes!”

*Damn it.* I was dying to get her alone, to steal her away from the world and have her all to myself. But the way she was smiling through the flurries, like she was a gorgeous escapee from a Hallmark holiday movie, made it impossible for me to deny her anything.

Especially when she raised her mouth to my ear and said, “Pleeease? Just for a little bit?”

I looked into those emerald eyes that had become my whole world, and I did what any red-blooded man would do.

I said, “Only if Kelly Clarkson’s next.”

And I said it loud enough for my cousin to hear.

“What?” Liz asked, looking confused.

“Fuck, yes, Wesley,” Charlie said, untangling himself from Bailey and running over to me (while still dragging the tree) with a wide smile on his face. *I knew he’d remember.* “Throwback to Christmas 2015 at Grandma’s, the year also known as ‘the dinner where our dads almost threw hands.’ Link up with me, bro.”

Liz was watching with her eyebrows scrunched together as Charlie linked his free arm with mine.

“Do you, like, count it down or something?” I asked as the snow blew directly into my face.

“Let’s skip for a four-count and then launch into the number,” Charlie replied as if it was a serious question.

“Wes,” Liz said around a huge grin. “Can I just say that this might be the sexiest thing you’ve ever done?”

“Don’t distract him, Buxbaum,” Charlie said in disgust. “And *of course* it is. He is a very sexy man. Are you ready, Wes?”

“Ready,” I said, winking at that redheaded little shit as we started skipping and she laughed her ass off at me.



“Four, three, two, one,” Charlie counted as we skipped down the snowy sidewalk like two absolute boobs.

And then we started singing.

“YOU’RE HERE, WHERE YOU SHOULD BE  
SNOW IS FALLING AS THE CAROLERS SING!”

We hauled ass down the block, getting laughed at by every person we passed as fat snowflakes slapped at our cheeks and Charlie hauled that pathetic tree behind him like it was our chonky little illuminated mascot.

Bailey and Liz caught up, as did Nick and Emilie (who turned out to be pretty cool), the four of them singing along with us at the top of their lungs.

And as we traversed the city like a festive band of idiots, I was positive there had never been a better December 15th.



*You’re all I need  
Underneath the tree—*



**The End**



Public Playlist

# WESLIZNICKEMILIECHARLIEBAILEY XMAS

lynn painter • 53 likes • 8 songs, 28 min 27 sec

🎵 🔍 ⌚ 🔄 ⋮

Q Custom order ☰

#	Title	Album	Date added	
1	All I Want for Christmas Is You Michael Bublé	Christmas	1 week ago	2:52
2	What Are You Doing New Year's Eve? Harry Connick, Jr.	When My Heart Finds Christmas	3 days ago	4:50
3	Everywhere, Everything (with Gracie Abrams) Noah Kahan, Gracie Abrams	Everywhere, Everything (with Gracie Abrams)	3 days ago	4:18
4	A Nonsense Christmas Sabrina Carpenter	A Nonsense Christmas	16 minutes ago	2:33
5	Might Ruin Christmas New Rules	Might Ruin Christmas	17 minutes ago	2:39
6	White Christmas (with Shania Twain) Michael Bublé, Shania Twain	Christmas (Deluxe Special Edition)	1 day ago	3:37
7	Christmas Tree Farm Taylor Swift	Christmas Tree Farm	1 week ago	3:48
8	Underneath the Tree Kelly Clarkson	Wrapped In Red	2 days ago	3:50

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/28pUtqvNQGBodw5MldK5oS?si=848f97c8733f41d3>

