



**Leah Hamrick**

**First Holiday  
A Frost On My  
Pillow holiday  
short**

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## **First Holiday**

### **A Frost On My Pillow Holiday Short**

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## Lyla

“Hey, Christmas is almost here,” Ethan whispered, pulling me closer to him, resting his head on my back. His hand that was lying on my belly was so warm it seemed to brand my skin through my silken nightgown. I closed my eyes and tipped my head back on the pillow. The feelings for Ethan were ever rising. Sometimes, I didn’t know what to do with myself.

I sank deeper into his embrace, wondering what the strange word “Christmas” was. When I thought about it, I imagined that I saw something on TV about it—a commercial maybe—or at the store? Who knows? I never really paid attention anyway. I was usually always busy staring at Ethan. With his blue eyes and slightly curly brown hair, it was hard not to look. He was handsome.

“What is that?” I asked.

He jerked back. “*Seriously?* Please tell me you are joking, Lyla. God, what did they do to you over in the Summer Solstice?”

I was from a place called the Summer Solstice, a place where people with fire powers—like me—live... or should I say, I *lived*. I made a run for the real world a few months ago, leaving behind my abusive stepdad, and also, my best friends, Lacey and James. I was called a Fire Bringer, and Ethan was an Ice Bringer—a person with ice magic. He and I couldn’t be more different, but I loved him anyway. He was my rock and protector. For that, I would always be grateful for him. I was living with him because Rylan—the guy who found me in the park the day I escaped the Summer Solstice—said something on the phone that I didn’t like, so I took off from his house. It was so cold outside that I nearly died. If it wasn’t for Ethan, I would have. Everything was fine now with Rylan, it was just a bad misunderstanding.

“No, we didn’t have anything like that. Do you care to elaborate?”

He sat up, and sighed. “Well, Christmas is the time of year for lights and presents and all that good stuff. You know, like the decorated pine trees, the snowmen, reindeer, tinsel, desserts... Christmas is the time when Christ was born.”

So *that was* why I’d been seeing lights and snowmen decorations all over in people’s yards and on their houses. I just thought they wanted to decorate, because sometimes we did that in the Summer Solstice.

“Christ?” I asked, rolling over to look at him.

His blue eyes stared at me. My cheeks heated up.

“Christ came to earth two-thousand years ago. Christmas Day is when he was born. He was born to save everyone from their sins. His mother was Mary. She was a virgin when she gave birth to Him. An angel came to her and told her about the Good News, he told her that she would give birth to the Savior of the world. The same angel visited Joseph to tell him that he must wed Mary. Not long before her baby was born, the emperor in Rome ordered everyone to return to the town of their birth for a census. They traveled to Bethlehem in Israel. She gave birth in a barn, sort of. He is the Savior of the world.”

That was a lot to take in. “How could she have a baby when she was a virgin? It isn’t possible, Ethan,” I said sourly. I crossed my arms over my chest, and when I realized I probably looked stupid since I was lying down, I got up and resumed my position with narrowed eyes. I bit back a laugh because I knew I was making a fool out of myself.

Ethan chuckled quietly.

“It was a *miracle*. You *do* believe in miracles, right? Anything is possible,” he said, climbing off the bed.

I followed him.

“Why haven’t you ever spoken about this Christ until now? Do you worship him?” I asked.

Ethan nodded. “In my own way, I do. I pray, Lyla. I used to go to church, but I stopped. I just felt like I was an abomination because of my ice powers. In the Bible, it tells us that magic is wrong.”

I let out a “spare me” sounding breath, and walked to the door that led to the upstairs. Ethan and I were on a holiday vacation from school, so we had three weeks to do whatever the heck we wanted, which was pretty amazing. The “whatever” we wanted mostly consisted of lying in bed, making out.

“What is the true meaning of Christmas? I mean, what am I supposed to feel like?” I asked.

“You will have to learn that by yourself... I can’t make you feel anything.”

I blushed. “Sure about that?” I asked in a rough, suggestive voice.

Ethan let out a choked sound.

I looked back. Ethan had a mischievous grin on his face. I knew he was up to something. Usually I felt as if I knew him from inside and out. The bond we shared was like something I’ve never experienced in my life. If he ever left, my heart would dry up and crack into a gazillion tiny pieces that would never be put back together again. I took my hand off the doorknob, and turned to face him.

“What?”

He stalked toward me and lifted me up off my feet. He twirled me around. My heart sang in delight. I laughed and laughed, and then he kissed me. My insides melted, because it was such a sweet, pure kiss. I couldn’t ask for better.

He wrapped his arms around me and held me to him. “Did I ever tell you how much you mean to me?” he whispered in my ear.

I shivered slightly.

“I think I know.” I giggled.

“Anyway, I wanted to know if you would help me put up the Christmas tree.” I started to say something, and he held up his hand to stop me. “And yes, I will show you what to do. Don’t be afraid.”

Me? Afraid of a tree? Never. If I was, that would make me a very, very weird and sad person, don’t cha think? “Okay, but where are we going to get a tree? We have to put it in the house, right?”

Ethan nodded eagerly. “Essentially.”

## Ethan

I went up to the attic to get down all of the decorations— and the tree. Lyla watched me with excited eyes. She had her hands behind her back and bounced up and down. I knew she was excited. This was a first for her, so I had to make it as special as I could. I didn't want to leave anything out. Any little detail of this whole thing she had to experience. I would have to ask my mom about all that just to make sure that I was not missing anything. If I overlooked something, I was going to be mad at myself.

When I came down the stairs the last time with the tree box, my mom was standing next to Lyla with her hands on her hips.

“Why don't you go out and get a real tree? I'm sure Lyla would just love the smell of fresh pine.” My mom sniffed the air, and I groaned. She was sort of messed up from her cancer meds, so she acted weird.

All. The. Time.

But that didn't make me love her any less. I loved her more than anything in the world.

“I think that's a good idea.” I said, looking at Lyla. “Did you want to go out? I know it is cold, but—”

Lyla cut me off with a laugh. “Ethan, the cold is okay... let's get going. I want to go pick out a tree. I want it to be really cute and little and frilly and all that good stuff. It's going to be my tree, and I'm going to call it... *Berry*,” she said while shaking her head and smiling, letting me know she was kidding.

My mom clapped her hands together. “Yes, Ethan, *Berry* is a *good* name! It almost sounds like mine, *Cherry*!”

Her name wasn't actually *Cherry*, but that's what she had people call her, so whatever. What I was going to do about it?



I went back up the attic stairs and dropped off the faux tree, and then clomped back down the stairs. My mom was gone. Lyla held out her hand for me to take, and I did. Her hand was small in mine, but I liked that. It was sort of comforting having someone's hand to hold.

We went to the front door and shoved on our coats and winter boots. I snatched my keys off the hook and called out a goodbye to my mom. I didn't know where she disappeared to. Knowing her, she was reading or making tea or something of that nature.

Ψ Ψ Ψ

By the time we pulled into Frank's parking lot, Lyla was so thrilled. I couldn't help but smile at her. Aside from everything I told Lyla earlier, Christmas was a time for love. My stomach fluttered slightly. I took in her long brown hair, rosy cheeks, small button nose, slim waist... I climbed out of my truck feeling the blood from my brain leave and go into a different area entirely.

We met on my side of the truck, and took each other's hands. Our boots crunched under the fresh snow, and the air was frigid and smelled good. I'd always loved the winter smell. I don't know if it was because my body *was* winter, or it was because I actually *liked it*, liked it without any ice magic influence. I wondered which season Lyla preferred?

"Lyla, which season do you like better?" If she said summer, it was probably because of her fire.

"Fall. You?"

I sighed. At least I didn't like winter because of my body. "Winter."

"That's cool."

"So, what size tree did you want?" I asked Lyla, coming to a stop. Frank's was a place that I'd come to since I was a little kid. It was a mix between an apple orchard

and pumpkin patch, and there were animals and greenhouses. They always had something going on. It didn't matter what season it was. They even put the carnival out here during Toledo Days.

She looked at me. "I think one that's five-feet tall will be great."

I nodded and tightened my hold on her. "That will be perfect." We usually got a bigger one, but I was letting Lyla run the show this year. I was sure she was happy, women always liked being in control... hmm, not a bad thought... *okay, enough*, I told myself. *None of that crap here.*

We walked around for at least ten minutes before Lyla jumped and squealed and took off running. She almost slipped in the snow, but managed to catch herself. God, she was so hyper sometimes. She pointed at a tree, and I knew she'd found the one she wanted.

After we found a worker and they cut it down for us, I paid, and they helped me tie it onto my roof. I was worried about it scratching up my truck, but whatever. Scratches could always be fixed.

When we got home, I set the tree up, and added water in the thing that it sits in. I didn't remember what it was called, but that was okay. I didn't think it really mattered; I wasn't getting tested on this...

I started sorting through the tote with things that I made in school as a child. I pulled out the angel that was made with a white lunch-bag for the body, yellow pipe cleaners for the wings, and a white foam ball for the head, googly eyes, and brown yarn for hair. The thing was so badly damaged that my mom had to glue it together these last couple of years. I really had to make another one and put this one away. I don't even remember making the thing, but I always felt so special when I looked at it that I couldn't even begin to explain why.

“What the hell is *that*?” Lyla demanded, pointing at the droopy-headed angel.

I hugged it to my chest. I felt as if she had made fun of it... *her*. I patted the angel’s head. “I made this when I was in first or second grade. She used to be prettier.”

Lyla’s gaze softened. “Aww, that’s sweet, Ethan.”

I nodded and set it gently on the mantle. “Well, I’m going to get the other stuff. You can look through that box if you want.”

While I pulled down all of the ornament boxes from the second floor, Lyla yelled that she was going to go get changed. She complained that she was too hot.

That she was. Not gonna lie.

I started taking out little glass snowmen, elves, various Santa’s, deer, and a bunch of weird stuff that I always forgot we had until I opened this box in December. I clipped on the hooks, and lined them up on the side of the tote so Lyla could have easy access to them.

She came flying into the living room in a pair of short shorts and a tank top. I swallowed hard, and turned my attention away from all the bare skin. Why did girls always seem to torment us guys? *Why*? It wasn’t fair!

“So, Lyla, did you want to help me put the lights on the tree?” I pulled gently on the twisted cord until it unraveled. I plugged them in to test the bulbs, and Lyla laughed.

“Oh my God, I *love* this! How come we didn’t ever have this back home? What is *wrong* with those people? The Summer Solstice sucks big time!”

## Lyla

I stared at the bright, sparkling string of lights. They were absolutely wonderful. All the reds, blues, greens, pinks, and purples flickered back at me. It was so magical; I couldn't find any other way to describe it. I knew my eyes were probably wide as I grabbed the string of lights with Ethan and helped him wrap it around the tree.

The lights blinked and flashed. It was so marvelous that my head spun in complete awe. This was something that I would look forward to every year now. There was no way in heck that I was going back to the Summer Solstice.

Ethan held out an icicle with a green hook on top of it. "Here, Lyla, you can put on the first ornament."

I took it from him, and looked at it strangely. I really didn't know what I was supposed to do with this. I glanced at Ethan. He waved his hand toward the tree—he wore a smile on his face. I was embarrassed to tell him that I didn't know what to do, but I think he already knew that. He stood up, guided my hand over to one of the trees branches. My hand, not moving of its own accord, gently slid the hook over the branch. Then, Ethan made me pinch the end closed ever so slightly.

I smiled to myself, and then went to get another one, and then another, and then another, until the whole tree was filled with different colored "bulbs," which really just looked like spheres. There were all these other funky things as well, but I didn't ask Ethan what they were, I just hung them up.

When that was done, he held me up while I added the silver star to the top of the tree. He then plugged it in, and it immediately began to glow softly, lighting up Ethan's face like he was an angel or something.

I stepped back to look at our magnum opus... or should I say, *masterpiece*?

It was beautiful. I almost started crying when I looked at it. Ethan came around me, and hugged me from behind. I leaned into him, and watched the lights go in and out.

Ethan tucked his face into the crook of my neck, gently kissing my favorite spot. “Lyla, you did an outstanding job... God, baby, I l—”

“Oh, kids, this is lovely!” Cherry shouted happily, walking into the room. “I’m so glad that getting a real tree worked out with you.”

Ethan and I exchanged pleased grins, and he let me go. I didn’t want to have another conversation with Cherry about our personal time... She always wanted to know what we were doing, or more so, weren’t doing.

“Now you can decorate the front of the house... have at it. I have everything upstairs that you will need. You don’t have to do it today since it is getting dark out, but maybe some other time? Like, tomorrow or something?” Cherry wrung her hands, and she couldn’t keep the excitement off her face even if she tried. “There are light up reindeers, blow up things, lighted trees, net lights, and all that good stuff.”

Ethan sighed, but had a slight smirk on his face. “Maybe, only if you’re good,” he teased his mom.

Cherry came forward and ruffled up Ethan’s mass of dark curls. He blushed from his forehead, down. “I have such a good boy. And my boy has such a good, caring girlfriend. This is going to be a really great Christmas this year, right?”

“Yes, Cherry,” I responded with a smile, putting my hands behind my back.

Ethan’s room was in the basement, so after we tromped down the stairs and into the cold basement air, there was a loud knock on his window. I almost smacked my hand over my face. The last time this happened, it was his ex-girlfriend, Miranda. She always seemed to turn up

when we least expect it. She was quite annoying, but what could we do about it?

He and I shared a look, and he turned off his light so he could see better when he opened up the black curtain.

*Please don't let it be Miranda. Please don't let it be her.* I don't want this spectacular day to be ruined by seeing her. Since there was no school, that meant that we didn't have to see her for a while, which was fine by me. I don't think anyone wanted to deal with her unless they had to.

Ethan wordlessly opened his window. A dark, petite figure slid down the wall, and released the windowsill. They landed on the ground with a short smack, and I almost laughed. *Good, I hope she hurt herself.* Whoever it was swore softly, and stood up.

I flicked the light back on and sighed in relief. It was only Katie, our friend from school. She smiled warmly at us both, and reached out the open window to grab a huge bag that had cartoon pictures of snowflakes all over it. What the heck kind of purse was *that*? Snow drifted down from her dragging the thing into the room. I shivered. It was really cold out there. I was betting on ten degrees. But that purse...

I snickered.

"Hey, Raven." Ethan said.

"*Raven*?" I questioned, moving closer to them.

Katie looked at me. "Yeah, it's my nickname that he calls me sometimes. It's because of my black hair, right?" she asked Ethan, who nodded in response. "Well, I brought over you guys' presents. I know Christmas is in ten days or whatever, but I didn't want to forget. You can just give me my stuff whenever. Knowing you, Ethan, you haven't even gone shopping yet." She dug her hand into the large snowflake bag, and pulled out two envelopes. She handed one to me and the other to Ethan.

I tore open the paper, and found a card with a picture of some type of cute baby animal on it lying in

snow. On the inside, it said, *Merry Xmas, Lyla XOXO love you*, in big, thick black marker. I opened the little flap that was on the second page, and a smaller card fell out onto the floor. I stooped over to pick it up, and it was a twenty-five dollar gift card for a store called... *Barnes and Noble*... I think that was the bookstore down the street from us. What a sweet, thoughtful gift. I thanked Katie, and went to Ethan's side to see what he had.

His card consisted of a big white bear and its babies. He opened up his card, and it said, *You should be happy I got you something, you deserve coal... okay, I'm totally kidding. Enjoy! Merry Xmas*

Ethan lifted up the flap, and he pulled out a card that said twenty-five dollars *Hot Topic*. What the heck was a hot topic? I asked as much, and then remembered that Katie didn't know I wasn't from here, but she didn't even bat an eyelash at my question.

"It's a place where heavy metal folks go, like our boy, Ethan here," Katie said, jerking her thumb in his direction.

We all laughed.

"Thank you, now I can go get another tongue stud!" Ethan said. "I just *can't believe* you came over here to bring us gifts in this super cold weather... I love you!" His voice was almost a squeal, and I found that really sexy and comical. He hugged her super tightly.

I should have been jealous that he told Katie he loved her when he hasn't even said that to me yet, but I wasn't. Those two were good friends, and he has known her forever. Of course, he would love her in some way.

"*Ethan*, you're... squishing... me," Katie rasped, trying to wiggle out of his arms. He let go, and she began to take deep breaths. "Anyway, I have more." She grabbed the bag again, and went over to the couch to sit down.

Ethan and I sat on either side of her. She reached into the bag, and handed Ethan a large present. “Here, you go first.”

The package was wrapped in shiny paper—something I’d never saw before. It was so cool! So *this* was a present!

He tore off the paper, and came face to face with a box full of shirts. He took them out one by one. There had to be at least twenty of them. I caught the words *Slayer*, *Rammstein*, *Slipknot*, *Korn*, *Cradle of Filth*... Okay, they must all be band shirts.

“Thank you.” Ethan said, hugging her again. “Where did you get all this money? These shirts usually cost twenty dollars each unless they’re holding a sale for half-off or something.”

Katie blushed. “Uh, I used my dad’s credit card. He really doesn’t limit my spending. You know, he isn’t around, so whatever. I’ll do what I want with it.”

Ethan shook his head, raised his eyebrows, and smirked.

Next, she handed me a huge package that was wrapped in paper that matched the bag. The only difference was that the snowflakes were different colors.

I tore off the paper, and came across a brown box. I lifted the lid, and inside was an assortment of various things. I pulled out sock-slippers, a pink sleep-mask that said *I hate mornings*, a coconut lotion/body wash gift set, a couple of pairs of stretchy pants that had the word *Pink* written across the butt, frilly thongs, a few books, and a large makeup set. I jumped up and gave her the biggest hug of my life. This was so cool!

“So, you guys like everything?” Katie asked, standing up.

Ethan and I both said yes.

“Okay, well, I better go. My mom is expecting me back soon. I think my grandma is coming over.” She rolled



her eyes. “My grandma is a total God freak. I mean, I believe in God, but she is just really, really crazy about it.”

I exchanged a look with Ethan, and he smiled one of those lopsided smiles that I really liked. I just wanted to pinch his cheeks because he was so cute.

After Katie climbed back out of the window, he and I began putting our presents away. Well, I was mostly looking at it all still; Ethan was done way before I even got started. When I had my last present in my hand, I made my way across the room back to the dresser.

“Ethan?” I said, putting my lotion stuff on top of the dark wood.

“Yeah, babe?” he called from the bathroom. I could hear the sink running, which meant he was most likely shaving.

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