



A Royal Christmas Wish

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IF ANYTHING, HE WAS MORE handsome than I'd remembered.

He wore a slight smile and a dazzling dress uniform, medals gleaming on his chest like a paragon of princeliness while I stood there wearing glitter, fake ears, and a champagne-doused elf costume which was now sticky as well as itchy—and he'd just heard Margo talking about my supposed princess credentials.

Perfect. He probably thought I was some obsessive prince stalker.

"I..." Should I curtsy? Was that what you were supposed to do when you realized the man you'd accidentally assaulted earlier in the day was royalty? "Your Highness," I mumbled, sinking into a sort of bob that I really hoped looked more graceful than it

felt. The last thing I wanted was for him to realize how flustered I was, but right now I felt about as cool and collected as Prince Harry.

Prince Harry. As I straightened, the realization hit. “You probably know the real Prince Harry, don’t you?”

Dom’s mouth twitched. “Distant cousin,” he admitted. “Ninety percent of the royals in Europe are descended from Queen Victoria.”

I cringed. “Of course you are.”

“Don’t worry,” he assured me. “He would probably love the dog.”

“That’s not what you said earlier.”

“At the time, I believe I was still trying to recover from being tackled.”

I groaned. “I can’t believe I tackled a prince. And then I argued with you about princes!” Though I could barely remember what I’d said past the mortification, couldn’t think about anything beyond the fool I’d made of myself.

“You did seem very passionate on the subject.” His smile was soft and forgiving—the man really was a prince. “And I liked getting your take. I was never much for fairy tales.”

“Of course not.” He was busy *living* one. “I’m so sorry. I had no idea who you were—”

“I figured that much out.”

The doors to the kitchen swung open again and I moved out the path. Dom gently caught my arm and tugged me with him into the shadows beneath one of the room’s balconies. He released my arm almost instantly, but my breath still went short at the touch and I could feel the lingering imprint of his fingers. I

couldn't meet his gaze, scared he would see my inappropriate awareness of him written all over my face.

"I will admit at first I thought it was a pretty impressive scheme to meet a prince—I've never had someone try to knock me over with a dog before—but then I realized you really had no idea who I was."

"I'm so sor—"

"You apologize too much, you know that?" His mouth curled up slightly.

"I do actually know that," I admitted. "But I also have a tendency to do way too many things that need apologizing for."

He ducked his head slightly, meeting my eyes. "I meant it when I said it was nice. Meeting you. I don't get a lot of that—people treating me like I'm just another guy."

"I didn't think you were just another guy," I blurted—then felt my face explode with heat. "I mean, not that I, that is, I..." I sighed. "Why can I never turn invisible when I want to?"

Dom laughed, his eyes crinkling—and I realized he was standing under mistletoe again. Seriously, how much mistletoe had they put up at this party? My gaze locked on the stuff and my mouth went dry.

"I would think invisibility would come in handy for one of Santa's elves," he said, and it took me a moment to catch the reference—my embarrassment intensifying at the reminder that I was standing there talking to a prince in a freaking *elf* costume.

"I'm not a full-time elf. This is just a side gig."