

A woman with a white fur hat and a dark patterned winter dress stands in a snowy forest. She is smiling and holding a small amount of snow in her hands. The background is filled with snow-covered evergreen trees.

Leah Hamrick

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

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First Holiday

A Frost On My Pillow Holiday Short

Leah Hamrick

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 tropped 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.

Ethan

“When can we go Christmas shopping?” Lyla’s sweet voice reached my ears. I was shaving my face. It was getting too scratchy.

“It’s pretty late now, but we can leave first thing in the morning if you want.” I said loudly, rubbing the last of the shaving cream from my face. I didn’t want to go anywhere right now anyway; I was tired from hauling the tree up into the house earlier. Lyla just stood there and watched. I didn’t care. I didn’t want her to hurt herself. The tree wasn’t light, that was for sure. I brushed my teeth and flossed, and then I heard a banging sound. What the heck was that girl *doing*?

I tugged off my shirt and exited the bathroom. Yeah, I was ready to go to bed. I yawned, and midway through the yawn, I stopped to watch Lyla climb up onto my TV stand, and start tacking lights up along the ceiling. Her little butt wiggled while she reached, and I couldn’t help but stare at it. I was a sick pervert, yes, I knew that. It was Christmas time and I was getting off by watching my girlfriend string lights. What was *wrong* with me?

I chuckled, and startled her. She turned around part way and gave me a guilty grin.

“What?” she asked.

I smirked. “You’re totally caught. You can’t be sneaky around me, babe. I know you too well.”

She grinned. “Maybe you should put a shirt on so I can concentrate. If I fall off, it’s all on you.”

I shrugged. “Fine with me, that means I can play the hero and catch you, right?”

She ignored me, and moved on. Once she couldn’t go any farther, I got the stool out, and helped her finish. My room wasn’t small, so I couldn’t even tell you how many

times I got off and on the stool and how many times I ran out of tacks and had to go get more from upstairs.

By the time I was done, I was sweating and breathing heavily. “I need to get in shape.” I muttered to myself just as Lyla’s hands came around me from behind.

“No, you’re perfect,” she whispered onto the skin of my back, making me shudder with unanticipated pleasure. Her hands were around my middle, resting by my belly button. I swallowed.

I turned around swiftly, and caught her lips with mine. She tasted of girl and snow, and it was perfect. She was so amazing that I couldn’t imagine my life without her. I didn’t want to. The only thing I knew was that if she ever left me, I would crumble from the inside, out. I didn’t understand why I loved her so darn much.

I pulled back. “Where did you get these lights from?”

She smiled shyly. “Uh... from up in the attic... when you were taking your time shaving, I ran up and got them.”

“Well, do the honors and plug them in just to make sure they work,” I said.

Lyla went over to the plug, and picked it up. “You know, maybe we should have tested these out first just in case.”

I cleared my throat loudly, put my hands on my hips. She looked at me and waited for me to say something.

“*We?* Maybe *you* should have thought of that. I was just being a nice guy and decided to help a pretty girl out.”

Lyla blushed and looked down, connecting the plug with the outlet.

When I saw the colors of the lights, I busted out laughing. I laughed so hard that my stomach started to cramp up.

“*What, Ethan?*” Lyla glared at me in a mocking sort of way.

I pointed while still laughing. “They’re orange and purple. These are Halloween lights!”

She quirked an eyebrow, and put a hand on her teeny tiny, hourglass waist “What the *heck* is Halloween?”

That made me laugh even more. First she didn’t know what Christmas was... then Halloween? It was too much. That freaking place messed her up. She had never gone trick-or-treating... Yeah, definitely next year we were going out. I didn’t care that I was almost nineteen. Lyla needed to experience all of this stuff.

I told her, and she sighed. “It doesn’t matter, right? After all that hard work, we should just leave them up.”

I yawned and nodded. Yep, I was drained. I went over to the bed and climbed in. The twinkling of the lights made me smile tiredly. Wait, who said orange and purple couldn’t be Christmas colors?

“You can stay up if you want, but I’m exhausted, darling. Turn out the lights before you go to bed... unless you want to leave them on.”

Lyla pulled the plug and came running and jumped onto the bed. She pressed a kiss to my bare back. Then she tugged the blankets up over my shoulders, and I snuggled into the pillows, shutting my eyes.

I felt Lyla settle in beside me. “Ethan?”

I blinked my heavy eyes open, trying to see her in the dark. “Huh?”

“Please, please, please don’t get frost on my pillow tonight. Try not to freeze my hair, either. I hate when you do that. Because when I have to move, I end up ripping out tons of hair, and I take the whole pillow with me. It’s somewhat maddening.”

That worked a fatigued chuckle out of me. “I can’t promise, but I’ll try. Goodnight, sweets.”

“Night, night,” Lyla whispered, pressing her warm lips to the side of my face.

I smiled, and drifted off to sleep.



The next day we got up bright and early to go Christmas shopping. Lyla picked up her check from work, and she pocketed about a hundred and fifty dollars. I gave her a wad of cash, and she tried to decline it. I ended up throwing it at her, and she reluctantly tucked it into her purse with a scowl.

We ended up at the mall. That was the best place to shop because usually they had everything since there were so many different kinds of stores.

She and I went our separate ways after I explained to her that she just had to buy things for people that she thought they would like. She had never done this before, so I had to make sure she knew what she was doing... Oh God, that meant I was going to have to teach her to wrap. I bet she didn't know how to do that either. It shouldn't be that hard of a job. It was pretty self-explanatory. Just cut the paper, cover the gift in it, and wrap. Oh, and put nametags on.

I ended up buying Lyla clothes, CDs, movies, and a few gift cards. I also got my mom, Katie, and Hannah something. Lyla had a lot of different things, and I really didn't remember the stuff that she already had, and I sort of forgot all the stuff that she told me she hated. Hopefully I got things that would please her.

We met back up in the front, and I was glad for the un-see-through bags. At least I didn't have to take my coat off to hide anything. There were a few times I'd had to do that when I went shopping for my parents when I was little. I always used to hide the bags in my coat. I even got busted for trying to steal when I hid something in my pocket because my dad was in the store. It was like, come on, a five-year-old kid didn't know any better—they don't think, they just do.

After we got back into my truck, I saw a sign for the zoo. I got to thinking... I could take Lyla to see all the Christmas lights when it got closer to the twenty-fifth... yeah; I think she would like that. I didn't know if any of the animals would be out since it was literally freezing, but she might get to see some polar bears and wolves. Those things were always out in the cold.

"Did you want to help decorate the front of the house when we get home? We still have to do a few stops yet, and I'm pretty hungry," I said.

Having nothing to eat this morning was really wearing on me. I had no energy.

Lyla put her hand over her belly, and I think I heard it growl. "Me too... So, are you going to teach me how to wrap the gifts?"

Bingo, I knew she didn't know how! I nodded. "Yeah, that was the plan. It's rather easy."

"Ethan, is Christmas supposed to feel like presents and lights?"

I glanced over at her. "I don't know what those two things feel like to be honest with you."

She gave me a "yeah, right" face.

"I'm dead serious, babe. I can't tell you what it's supposed to feel like, because that is all up to you, ya know? Whenever you figure it out, *truly* figure it out, I want to know. Okay?"

She shrugged, and continued looking out the window. I drove in silence to Applebees, wondering what she was thinking. Sometimes, it seemed like she was upset when she didn't say much. I didn't think that was the case, but you never knew with women. They got mad over the littlest things.

My phone rang. I huffed and pulled it from my pocket. It was Miranda. "Yeah?" I answered tersely. I didn't wanna answer her, but then she would keep calling and

calling if I didn't. I didn't wanna put up with her crap today.

"So... you guys are at Applebees," she said. It wasn't a question.

I swiveled in my seat, and saw her car pull out of the lot. Are you *kidding* me?

"Are you following us?" I asked, looking over to Lyla who was watching me with wide eyes. I mouthed, *it's Miranda*. She rolled her eyes and sighed loudly, smacking her hand against the door handle. Lyla shook it and mouthed the f-word because it hurt. I tried not to laugh. I just held my hand over my mouth, hoping she wouldn't notice that I was trying not to laugh at her.

"No, I just saw you and wanted to let you know. Like, why in the fuck are you still with her? Remember our Christmas together last year? Tell me that didn't mean anything to you, Ethan. Remember how good I suc—"

I cut her off. "You know what, Miranda? I have nothing to say to you. Goodbye." I hung up and shut my phone off. She'd better not turn her stupid car around either. I really didn't want to deal with her right now. I didn't want her to ruin this treasured time for Lyla and I. She'd better not even call me on restricted either.

After we got to our booth and placed our order, Lyla and I talked about what we would decorate the house with. I knew we had a lot of stuff—more than enough. It was going to be cold as hell out there, but whatever. We were going to have a lot of fun, and that was all that mattered. If our fingers, lips, and toes turned blue, we would deal with it then.

My face paled at the thought. The thought of Lyla being near-frozen again tugged painfully on my heart.

When our loaded plates of creamy noodles and chicken arrived, we spent more time eating than talking, which was fine by me. The warm food felt good settling into my empty belly. I started to get boosted up just after a

few bites. I slurped on my Mountain Dew, which seemed to disappear just after a few minutes. I was glad for the extra refills. I could drink this stuff all day long and never get tired of it.

After ten minutes, my energy level spiked, and I didn't know if it was the food to blame or the drink. Probably the drink, considering it had both caffeine and sugar in it.

When we were both full, we left and went home. I had other stops to do, but it was getting late and I didn't want it to be dark out when we adorned the house with lights and the works.

Ψ Ψ Ψ

By the time I got done hauling everything outside, I was sweating so much I would probably get sick from being in the cold. My shirt clung to my stomach, and I was panting like a freaking dog. This time Lyla helped, but she didn't really do much other than bring down the strings of lights.

"So, what do we do first?" she asked, dragging the ladder across the ground. She had her pink coat buttoned up, and her cheeks were a nice pinkish color.

"Uh, you can start putting up those deer and inflatable snowman. I'll take care of climbing the ladder and stuff." I didn't want her up on the ladder considering it started snowing five minutes ago. If she got hurt, I would never forgive myself. The thought of her lying on the ground clutching a broken arm or leg physically wounded me.

Going up onto a ladder was a man's work, anyhow.

The snow sparkled as it fell, causing a riot of sensations to enter my body. I was really decorating my house with a girl. That was something that I never thought I would ever do. Happiness and merriment swept through

me, and I smiled in gratification. Lyla caught the look on my face and grinned back.

A little bit later, while Lyla was bent over trying to get a white tree to stand up. She was huffing, puffing, and cursing, and it was so hot that my traitorous body started to respond—again. This was the tenth time in an hour, I think.

But, I had an evil plan. I bit my lip, and made sure she wasn't paying attention while I swooped down, catching a large fistful of snow into my gloved hand. I stalked toward her, feeling like I was a mountain lion sneaking up on a rabbit. I tried my hardest not to laugh. I tiptoed. When she heard my foot crunch in the snow, she turned slightly.

The snow was then extracted from my outstretched hand. I grinned widely. This was going to be great. I haven't had a snowball fight in years. The last time I did, I was probably twelve, and it consisted of Hannah, Katie, me, and my mom. It was fun.

Within two seconds, the snow made its impact onto the side of her face. She swiped it off, but laughed.

“Seriously, Ethan?”

I scooped up another soft, cold white ball, beginning to pack it between my palms. “You wanna go, shorty?” I teased, throwing it at her stomach. It bounced off, leaving white residue.

“Who you calling shorty, Sears Tower?” She bent down, and grabbed her own small pile of snow.

“I'm not that tall.” I said, slowly bending over. Wait, why the heck was I picking up snow when I could create it with a thought? I took my gloves off one by one, and tucked them into my pocket.

“You're over six foot. That's tall. Now shut up.” She hit me in the face.

I closed my hands together, and opened them up to find a solid ball of ice... Okay, I needed to tone it down a little bit. I don't think getting hit with a ball of ice would

feel very good, or make Lyla too happy. She would probably light me on fire.

It took a few tries to get it precise, but I eventually got it. I wasn't used to using my powers. Lyla seemed kind of flabbergasted that I was making snow out of absolutely nothing... maybe us Ice Bringers and Fire Bringers *were* evil. Magic wasn't normal, nor was it natural to create something out of nothing at all. It was almost a sin.

Lyla heated up her hand to a glowing red, and reached out to block the snow I threw at her. It melted instantly, and she smiled like she had just won a trophy or something.

The snowball fight went on for over an hour before we were both breathless. We fell onto the icy ground and leaned against the other. I wrapped my arm around her slender shoulder, and held her tightly. I don't remember a time when I'd had so much fun. It felt sort of good after everything that had been happening lately. From the calls to the stupid shadow people, everything has been sort of overwrought.

I laid my head on her shoulder when an idea popped up. I smiled an impish smile, and grabbed some snow. I fake stretched, and then shoved my whole fist down the back of her coat, into her shirt. I let the snow fall. Lyla jumped up, screaming.

"You son of a gun! Why in the heck did you do that? It's so freaking cold!" she shouted, jumping around frantically, trying to shake the white powder from her clothes.

I started laughing and laughing. I rolled over onto the ground with tears streaking down my face. I clutched my stomach. The laughs kept coming and coming. Lyla was standing there, biting back a grin. She fell down next to me and gave me an awkward hug.

"Aww, you didn't mean to do that, did you, Ethan?" she asked.

I looked her in the eyes. “Actually, I did.”

She pursed her lips, and pressed a kiss to my cheek. “Well, that’s all right. I forgive you.” Her lips met mine, and the kiss was one of those that can register as “barely there,” but it was amazing.

I started shivering. I noticed Lyla’s fingers were sort of purple, and I knew we had to go in before one of us got frostbite. Not so much me considering I can make ice, but I was worried about her. She can make fire, so that probably meant she was more at risk.

“Did you want to go in?” I asked, standing up and dusting myself off.

We’d been outside for hours. The only time we went in the whole time was to grab all the stuff we put up.

“The yard looks good. You did a good job, baby. I love—” *you*, I wanted to say, but I didn’t. “I love it.” I said instead.

She grinned knowingly.

I turned around and started walking back to the house. It was getting late, and that meant I had to get some stuff done—

Suddenly, there was a hard shove to my back. My foot hit ice, and I was going down. I yelped, spun in the air, and landed with a hard impact. I felt the burn start in my finger immediately, and I cursed.

I lay on my stomach, trying to figure out how this happened. Did Lyla just... *push* me? Her amused laughter gave me my answer. I looked at my burning finger, and found blood flowing freely down it, staining the pure, white snow. It started to melt it, and I lay my head down on the cold ground. I breathed heavily, trying to shake the sick feeling away before I made a move to get up.

“Oh my God, Ethan! I’m so sorry! I didn’t know you would get hurt!” Lyla said loudly, coming over to me, helping me into a sitting position.

I gave her a “really?” look. “Lyla, I think when you push someone when it’s this slippery out, they have a good chance of hurting themselves. Don’t you think?”

She picked up my hand to inspect my finger.

Damn, it stung like a bitch.

Her bottom lip quivered. I pulled her to me so fast that I didn’t even worry about getting blood on her new coat.

“Hey, it’s okay. It’s just a cut.” I said soothingly to her. *Please don’t cry, please don’t cry!* I thought frantically. I didn’t like seeing her with tears running down her face. I was such a sap. She was my girlfriend and I loved her so freaking much, even though I was hesitant and couldn’t tell her those three thrilling words. I wanted to so bad, but I just couldn’t.

She pulled back, and she had a few tears come down from her eyes. “But I hurt you! I never wanted to hurt you...”

I chuckled. “It’s okay, trust me. I just need a Band-Aid. It wasn’t like I snapped my neck or anything.”

That made her cry harder.

I wiped the wetness away before it froze to her skin. “I’ll patch it up when we get inside, okay?” she said.

I nodded. “How does some soup sound? I was thinking about making a really huge pot of it.”

Lyla

After we got back into the house, I went into the bathroom to grab the medicine and a bandage for Ethan's finger. I just couldn't believe that he hurt himself. I felt so bad about it. I never wanted to be the one who caused him any pain, in any form.

I met Ethan back in the kitchen, where his mom was ogling over his finger.

"Ethan, you need to be more careful. You might have to get your finger cut off now. You know parasites and all those other microscopic wiggly wormys can get inside and make you really sick. You don't want to be sick and in the hospital on Christmas, do you? You've seen the show *Monsters Inside Me*, right? I think I have it recorded on the DVR if you wanted to w—"

"Mom, I'll be okay. Promise," Ethan murmured.

"I hope so. Okay, I'll let you two kids get back to socializing. I know you don't want your mom in the way." Cherry said, backing up and leaving the room.

Her fast footsteps hit the stairs. She ran up them. Why the heck was she running? I loved Cherry even though she was really weird most of the time.

Ethan sighed, and I set everything on the table. He removed the blood-covered paper towel and held out his still oozing finger to me. I really thought it needed stitches. I gently dabbed at his skin with an alcohol wipe, making him hiss loudly in pain.

"I'm sorry!" I cried, blowing on it for him.

"It's fine," Ethan said through gritted teeth.

"It is not fine! What if you need stitches? No, you *do* need stitches!"

"I'll manage, Lyla, okay? I'll be fine, I promise."

We stared each other down, until we both smiled at the same time. I continued wrapping him up, being extra

gentle this time. I didn't like seeing him in pain. I just can't believe I caused it. What the heck was wrong with me? I'm really disappointed in myself. I should be. Who purposely hurts the person they care about and love?

"So, did you want me to help you make the soup?" I asked, throwing everything into the trash.

"I got it, Lyla. Got sit down and warm yourself up."

"But you're hurt..." I whined, getting ready to stomp my little foot on the floor. I'm sure Ethan would just love that, considering he liked when I acted like a spoiled rotten kid. He said it made me cuter than I already was.

"Lyla, I don't have a broken leg. It's just a cut finger. Now go take a shower or something and let me get to work. Chicken has to be cooked and vegetables need to be cut and sliced up."

"Fine," I said, walking away and heading down the basement stairs.

Ψ Ψ Ψ

By the time I was done showering, the house was starting to smell really, really good. I didn't know how Ethan could cook so well, but it really amazed me sometimes... okay, all the time. Men in the Summer Solstice never cooked. It was something us women did. Just like the laundry and cleaning house. Ethan did those both, and back home, women did it all. It was frowned upon if a man did anything like that.

I stood in front of the body-length mirror and brushed my hair to remove all the snarls and knots that came from having a snowball fight. I puckered up my lips at myself, and put on some of the new makeup Katie got me. Silver shadow, black mascara, thick black liner, pink lip stain... and then I slipped into a slightly revealing pink dress. I felt so bad about hurting Ethan that I had to give him a show.

When I made it back up the stairs, I found Ethan cutting up cooked chicken and adding it to the pot on the stove. He was humming something. I don't think he knew I was there. I was debating on going up and wrapping my arms around his middle, but I didn't want to scare him, making him burn himself, or cut himself, or whatever the heck else could happen while cooking. This time he might lose a finger, and I didn't want that to happen. I liked his fingers.

I took a few louder-than-normal steps to let him know I was in the kitchen before I said anything.

“Smells good,”

He smiled at me. “I know.” He gave me a once over, starting to blush. “You're beautiful,” he whispered.

I turned crimson. “Thank you.”

ψ ψ ψ

Sometime later, Ethan and I found ourselves sitting on the couch in the living room with an empty pot sitting in front of us. I moaned and held my stomach. I really couldn't believe we just ate all that. I tried to focus my thoughts on the Christmas tree, but my stomach was vying for attention, letting me know that it was too full. I don't think I was going to move for a whole day. There was no way. I ate so much noodles, chicken, and carrots and drank so much broth that it was unbelievable.

Ethan was in a similar state. I'd never saw him look so uncomfortable. He held his hand over his stomach, and it appeared he was a few months pregnant.

“Uhhh, Lyla, we weren't supposed to eat the whole pot!” He moaned, clutching his belly.

I smirked. “We must have been really hungry. Look at all the work we did today...” Wait. “We never wrapped our gifts!”

He chuckled unenthusiastically. “Too tired now, Lyla, maybe tomorrow.”

“Yeah, tomorrow will be good.” I replied, trying not to think about my painful mid-section.

I made myself ignore my belly and stared at the colorful twinkling lights. The room smelled like pine and burning wood from the fireplace, and it was really nice. Ethan and I were cuddled up together. When I looked over to him a few minutes later, his eyes were closed. I knew he wasn't in a deep sleep because his normal frost wasn't coming out of his mouth.

I carefully got up so I wouldn't disturb him, and unplugged the tree's lights. I looked back over at my sweet sleeping boy, and went over to the recliner and grabbed the blanket. I covered him up. He sighed.

“Thank you,” he whispered, pulling the blanket away from himself so I could join him.

I did just that. I got onto the couch, and went to his side.

We tangled our limbs around each other. Ethan pulled the seat back so we could lie down. The warm orange glow from the fire illuminated him, making him look sort of angelic.

I kissed him softly, and that went on for a few more seconds before he took the kiss deeper, turning it into something searching and desperate. He pulled back, and breathed heavily. I could feel his heart hammering against his rib cage.

I didn't know what I would do without him. I loved him, but I just didn't know how to tell him. How could saying three little words be so freaking *hard*? What happened to the Lyla that always used to say anything that was on her mind? I really think that girl was long gone, replaced by this shyer, more fragile me. But that was okay. I wouldn't trade what I'd become to go back to my old self for a million dollars.

Ethan's soft breathing tickled my neck. His male scent of spiciness and boy wafted up to my nose. I took a deep, satisfying breath and looked up. His beautiful cobalt eyes were focused on me. I smiled, and touched his cheek. He nuzzled my hand, and kissed my palm. I tingled all over. My stomach throbbed... I whimpered... I kissed his sweet spot below his ear...

"Lyla, no... not on the couch," he whispered huskily.

"You're right... maybe we should go to sleep."

We both said goodnight, but my mind was still wandering. I *wanted* to do something... but I didn't know what... My heart was thoroughly disappointed.

I pushed the thoughts from my mind as I drifted off to sleep in the arms of the boy I adored with my whole heart... and missing soul.

Ψ Ψ Ψ

By the time I woke up the space next to me was cold. I blinked my eyes open. Ethan was gone. The fire in the fireplace had died down, and there were just small embers burning now. It still crackled here and there, but it was nothing like the *pop-pop-pop* of fresh, whole logs. It was sort of chilly in here, but that was okay. It was winter, after all.

I sat up, and that's when I heard a peculiar noise coming from the other room... *rip... rip... crinkle, crinkle...* I stood up, and followed my ears into the hallway. I listened, and started walking down further. I've never been to this section of the house before, and it sort of felt like I was snooping. I giggled silently and kept walking. The floor creaked as I moved, and I passed closed door after closed door. The house was old. I was surprised more than the floor didn't creak. Everything was in

immaculate condition, letting me know that over the years this house was very well taken care of.

When I was sure that I was at the right door where the sound was coming from, I tried turning the handle, but it was locked. I jiggled the handle again just to be sure, and—

All movement beyond the door stopped.

I rapped my knuckles gently across the heavy wood.

“Ethan?” I called out.

Footsteps moved in my direction. The door was slowly pulled open just enough to reveal one of his eyes and the side of his face.

“Yes?” he asked slowly, like he was hiding something. He probably was.

I tried pushing into the room, but he was holding the door shut.

“What the heck are you doing? Let me in!” I hissed, pushing harder.

If he was doing what I thought he was doing in there... I wouldn't put it past him, seriously.

“Lyla, I'm wrapping your gifts. You can't come in here.”

“Oh. Well, I'm going to wrap yours. I don't think I'll need help. I'll figure it out.” I said, backing away.

“Okay. See you in an hour!” he said in a singsong voice, slamming the door in my face and locking it up tight.

I narrowed my eyes at the closed door and stuck out my tongue. He at least could have given me a morning kiss or hug or something...

I pulled my phone out of my pocket and decided to give Rylan a call. Rylan was a demon, but he was a good demon. The phone rang and rang and rang, and then went to voicemail. He always answers my call. “Rylan, call me back... it's Lyla.” I said, rolling my eyes at myself. Of course he would know who it was; my name would show up on his missed call list.

Within a second, he called.

“Hello? Lyla? Are you okay?” he said in a rush.

I giggled. “Hello to you too, Rylan. Why do you sound all hurried and out of breath?”

“I was in the shower; I didn’t hear the phone ringing.” Oh. “So what did you need?”

“Nothing, I just wanted to hear your voice. I miss you.” Okay, maybe that wasn’t the best thing to say considering Rylan liked me. We shared one kiss, and I don’t think he came onto me accidentally.

I could hear his smile in his voice. “You’re sweet, love.”

“Yeah? Well, I’m going to wrap Ethan’s Christmas presents in a little bit. I’ve never wrapped before. I just take the paper and put it around the gift and then tape it, right?”

“Yes, that would be correct.”

“Do you celebrate Christmas?” I asked.

It took Rylan a few seconds to answer. “No.”

ψ ψ ψ

Two hours later, I sat in front of fifteen or so badly wrapped gifts. I began bringing them upstairs and setting them under the tree, just as I saw mine were. I got Ethan some clothes, some gift cards, a piggy bank, a pink-metal tongue stud, some cups that had boobs on it from a place called *Spencers*, and a big stuffed elephant. I didn’t know what an elephant was until a few weeks ago, but I sort of fell in love with them. They were large, but they seemed to be very gentle creatures. They were family orientated, and very adorable and interesting. I would like to have one. Oh, and a camel. I liked those, too. Some people in the Summer Solstice had them, and I was always sort of jealous about that. Why did my family have to have *chickens*? I liked the bigger animals. They were usually more gentle... it was really reversed, but... yeah.

Ethan wasn't in the room anymore. I didn't know where he went to. I had to find him, because I had to be at work in a few hours.

When I saw that his boots were gone, I put mine on, and my coat, and went outside to look for him.

His tracks led to the backyard. I happily followed them while I listened to my feet squish-squish-squish in the snow. I sort of liked the sound. I jumped up, and then landed hard, earning me a loud *SQUISH*. I giggled loudly, and did it again.

"Lyla, what the heck are you doing?"

I beamed when I heard his voice, but that didn't make me stop what I was doing. I was going to keep squishing this snow until I couldn't anymore. I jumped again and again. I possibly looked like a rabbit or something, but that was okay. Guys liked rabbits, right?

"Lyla?" he asked again.

"What does it look like I'm doing? I'm playing!" I shouted.

He came closer, grabbed me around the middle, and hauled me away from my half-destroyed pile of snow.

"Be nice to the snow, baby. What did it ever do to you?" he whispered into my ear, causing my body to melt.

"I pulled away. "No, Ethan, I know what you're doing! It isn't going to work this time. You wanna know why? Because I know what you're trying to do!"

He laughed. "And what is that, sweets?"

I whipped around and pointed at him. "You're trying to get me... GAH! I don't have a word for it, well, I do, but I can't tell you."

Ethan

Christmas was tomorrow, and I was wrapping Lyla's last present. Also, it was the final one that I would allow her to open. It wasn't much, but since I was too chicken shit to tell her what was on my mind, I wrote it down, and stuck it into an expensive box from Pandora.

When I was sure she wasn't looking, I snuck up the stairs, and into the living room. She was nowhere to be found, which was weird. I ignored that thought and added the small present under the tree. I smiled, and began turning around when a squeal stopped me in my tracks. It was coming from outside. I furrowed my brows slightly.

I went over to the front window and peered out, squinting at the brightness. There, standing in my driveway, was Hannah and Katie and Lyla. Hannah had two small bags of presents.

"Okay, I guess it's gift time." I said to myself.

I grabbed their stuff from under the tree, and went over to the door, popping it open.

"Hey, you guys can come in!" I hollered, waving the gift bags around enticingly.

Cold air soaked into my skin, but it felt good.

All three of them came running, and stormed into the house. It sounded like they were trying to bust my floor out. I didn't know one-hundred-twenty pounds of each girl could make that much noise... wait, Lyla was probably one-hundred, if that. But the thing about her was that she wasn't overly skinny like you think someone that weighed that much would be. Everything on her was just really tiny.

We all sat on the couch, and I was handed the first bag. I tore into it, and gasped. Hannah got me a Mariners teddy bear. It was so perfect that I could have cried.

"Thank you."

Everyone knew I loved the Mariners, the baseball team.

She shouldn't have got me anything. Her family really didn't have the money to spend. MBL stuff was always expensive, and I knew she probably had to order this online considering that was the only way to get the team's stuff.

"You're welcome. Now, here, Lyla." She gave Lyla her present, and Lyla took it, and her eyes got really big and round.

She dug her hand into the bag, and pulled out a pink teddy bear that was wearing a pink dress and ballet slippers. Lyla hugged it to her chest, and cried a "thank you" so high-pitched that I didn't really catch it until I thought about what she said. "She's so cute! I'm naming her Molly!"

I picked up their bags from off the floor, and handed them to each. "These are from Lyla and me."

Hannah went first, pulling out a bedspread that was pink and had different colored stripes on it. She pulled out a matching pillowcase and drapes and everything else that was supposed to be in a bedroom set. I had the women at Macy's pick it out. I was leaning more towards something blue and black.

"*Thank you*, how did you know I needed new stuff?" she asked, hugging it all to her chest.

I chuckled. "Well, I sort of overheard you talking about it a few weeks ago at school. You were trying to be secretive about it, but I still caught every word... and then some."

Hannah and Katie looked at each other and blushed. Lyla looked at me to elaborate, and I mouthed *later*. I hoped she didn't want me to repeat what I heard those two talking about, but if she wanted to know I would tell her.

When Katie got her present, she dug her hand into the bag, and pulled out a case of different scented oils, clear

bottles to store them in, and a few mixers. She made her own perfume, so I thought this would be a good present.

“Awesome!” she sang, putting everything away. “Lyla, I *so* have to make you a scent. You will love it.”

Lyla smiled and nodded. I don’t think she knew what Katie was talking about.

After a little while, the girls left, and it was already getting dark out. I wanted Lyla to open that small present so bad, that when she wasn’t aware of what was going on, I snuck back upstairs to grab it. I cradled it in my hand, and debated on giving it to her... what if she didn’t feel the same way and I made a fool out of myself?

I walked slowly into my bedroom, and met Lyla over on the bed. I climbed in. She looked back and forth from me and the small gift before I handed it to her.

Lyla

I plucked the small box out of Ethan's hand. He was going to let me open something on Christmas Eve... Okay, I had one for him too. I was going to save it until tomorrow, but I really couldn't wait any longer for him to see what was inside.

I wordlessly got up off the bed, and went to rummage around in my underwear drawer. I hid it in there because I knew he always stayed away from that kind of thing. If he was a panty pervert, I hadn't caught him yet. If I caught him, I was going to smack him.

End of story.

When I felt the small foil package, I grabbed it, and tossed it up onto the bed next to Ethan. "Okay, we can open these at the same time, okay?" I fingered the paper, trying to find a good end to tear it off.

He nodded. "Okay."

"One, two, three." We both tore into the wrapping paper, and pulled out a small box. I was a little shy about mine, but that was okay. Ethan didn't look too comfortable either, considering he was wiggling around.

I threw the paper to the floor just as did.

I opened my box first, and pulled out a small piece of paper. Tears sprang to my eyes. It read: *I really and truly love you. Thank you for being here with me during the holidays.*

My eyes were wet as I gave him a watery smile.

He opened his box. He read the paper, and his eyes were misty like my own. I remember everything that I wrote down to the dots on the I's. I re-read it so many times before I had the courage to wrap it up that I think I dreamed about it.

Dear Ethan,

I know what the true meaning of Christmas is. After spending these last few weeks with you, doing all this festive stuff, I know now. The true meaning is spending it with the people you love. Love is the reason for the season, nothing else. I just wanted to tell you that I care about you deeply, and that I love you with my whole heart. I may not be brave enough to tell you yet, but there it is.

Love, Lyla. XOXO ♥♥♥

Leah Hamrick

Leah Hamrick lives in Michigan with her partner in crime husband Jon, young daughter Khloey, and plethora of reptiles, fish, and a tree frog named Sticky. She can always be found with her nose in a YA book, daydreaming and thinking up new ideas for a story, and trying to figure out how to make a characters chemistry clash with one another's. She is a fan of romance, and anything paranormal. She gets the inspiration for her stories from things that have happened in her real life—except the paranormal/fantasy aspect... She wishes she were that awesome! She enjoys listening to heavy metal music, traveling, watching bad reality TV, and everything pink. She hopes that one day she can be become a well known author, and to keep writing stories for everyone to enjoy for years to come.

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