Darling, When Christmas Comes

Summary

It's Christmas time in Purgatory. The gang celebrates in their own way. After the year they've had, they deserve a bit of peace, right?

Right?
Part 1

Purgatory, December 23rd

"There has to be an easier way to do this."

"Well, yeah, obviously, but someone in town told me about this place. They're supposed to be hidden out here so nobody else can find them."

"Not only can you not find them, you can hardly even get to them," Wynonna huffed, ducking under a snow-laden branch.

Wynonna and Waverly found themselves in a patch of woods just to the northeast of town, trekking through eight inches of snow that blanketed the ground.

"How are we even gonna get it back to the truck?" Wynonna asked.

"Drag it?" Waverly offered.

"Back the way we just came? I don't think so. I've done enough bush-whacking for today, and I'd rather not have to lug a fifty-pound--"

"Do you have a better idea for getting it out of here?" Waverly shot back, glancing over her shoulder at Wynonna. They crouched under more branches, dodging falling clumps of snow. "And, if I'm remembering correctly, you were the one who offered to drive us out here in your truck."

"Except you didn't tell me we'd have to hike two more miles through the woods and practically scale a cliffside," Wynonna wheezed. She was having a hard time keeping up with Waverly, determined to reach their destination before they ran out of daylight.

Waverly paused, waiting for her sister to catch up. "Oh, it wasn't that big. You're just mad because I'm making you actually work for this instead of doing it your way."

"All I'm saying is," said Wynonna, shuffling up to Waverly, "I know of easier ways to handle this."

"Since when have we ever done the easy thing, though?" Waverly glanced over her shoulder. "Besides, look how pretty it is out here!"

The two sisters stood in silence, surveying their surroundings.

It was quiet out here. The snow hadn't been touched by any living thing in a long time. Everything was coated in an extra layer of ice crystals, catching the last remaining beams of the day's light. No people. Hardly even any animals. It deterred visitors and intruders with the unpredictable terrain. The perfect hiding spot.

"And why did we have to bring these with us?" Wynonna broke the silence, gesturing to the axe she had slung over her shoulder as well as the one Waverly clutched. "Could've done it with Peacemaker."
"You were going to shoot it?" said Waverly incredulously. "And just how did you think that was going to go?"

"Baby girl, there's a lot Peacemaker can do."

"I think this job might be too big…even for Peace Maker." Waverly trudged forward, scanning the horizon.

"You sure you know where you're going?" Wynonna looked in the general direction Waverly was headed, but couldn't see anything worthwhile.

"They're just supposed to be over this hill…I think…And I can hear you rolling your eyes!"

Wynonna grimaced, but pressed forward, following in the tracks dug by her sister. They clambered up a low bank, hauling themselves up by grabbing onto bushes, steadying themselves against tree trunks.

"Good, because I'm pretty sure my frostbite has frostbite. I'm gonna need a--OOF!"

Wynonna nearly toppled over when she reached the top of the bank. Ramming into Waverly's back, who had stopped suddenly at the peak. Luckily, the high snow drifts were enough of a buffer to keep her upright. Regaining her balance, she shuffled through the drifts to stand next to Waverly, who was captivated by something ahead of them.

"There she is," Waverly said with an air of reverence. Her breaths emitted from her in soft, puffy plumes.

"Does it have to be a she? Can't it just be…an 'it'?" Wynonna suggested. But Waverly ignored her, still mesmerized by something towering forty feet before them.

"It's perfect isn't it?"

Before them stood a cluster of perfectly snow-frosted pine trees, standing about ten feet high, dwarfed by the rest of the forest. Compared to the rest of the forest, they looked as out of place as Doc Holliday in a disco club, but there they were, untouched by the rest of the world.

"Well, come on, let's go check them out!" Waverly dropped her axe and bounded down the other side of the bank toward the trees. Wynonna, still catching her breath, picked up the other axe and followed her sister.

"I'm not going to have to help you decorate this thing, am I?" asked Wynonna as she approached, "I feel like I'm being generous enough just by letting you have a tree."

Waverly shook her head, circling the tree toward the front of the bunch, inspecting every part of it. "No, you don't have to help me decorate. Nicole's coming over after she's finished with work…"

Waverly checked her watch. "Which is soon, so we need to bag this and get back to the homestead."

"First you chastise me for not using the proper pronouns, now you're telling me to 'bag' a tree. Giving me mixed signals here," said Wynonna. She held out the other axe to Waverly again.

Waverly shouldered her tool. "Just help me cut one, will you? I don't want anybody to see us out here."

"And, what, run back to town and tell everyone else the best Christmas trees are at the end of a
three-mile wilderness trek?"

Waverly didn't respond.

"Who is it that told you about this secret place anyway?" Wynonna pressed on, looking the tree up and down.

"Mabel at the embroidery shop. I heard her talking to the person before me, and...I had to ask."

"Of course you did. Couldn't've just left it to the professionals. With a tree lot right across the street from Shorty's..." Wynonna let the axe slide off her shoulder, the head flipping toward the ground, hitting the snow with a muffled *thud*. "Well, what are we waiting for?" Wynonna gripped her axe, shouldered it, then swung it at the base of the tree.

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By the time they pulled into the driveway of the homestead, the sun had already set, leaving a gentle glow of orange sunlight to brim the horizon. Nicole's patrol car was already parked out front.

Wynonna had barely turned off the truck when Waverly leapt from the cab, practically bouncing all the way to the front door, leaving a bewildered Wynonna sitting in the truck, still unbuckling her seatbelt.

"Don't worry, I'll just unload it myself!" Wynonna hollered, receiving no response as the front door shut behind Waverly. Shaking her head and smiling to herself, Wynonna climbed out of the truck and began to untie the ropes holding the tree down.

Fortunately, the front door opened again, revealing a lean, red-headed figure, already out of her work uniform, meandering toward the truck.

"You look like you could use a hand," Nicole called, bracing herself against the cold. She wandered to the other side of the bed to untie the ropes.

"You'd think she'd want to be involved in every part of this," said Wynonna, pulling one of the ropes loose. "Finding the tree, cutting the tree, unloading the tree, naming the tree..."

"Don't worry, she ignored me, too. Waverly ran right past me and went straight for the attic to dig out decorations," said Nicole.

Together, they unloaded the tree and lugged the tree into the house--where Waverly was still nowhere to be found--managing to wrestle it into a somewhat upright position in the tree stand in the corner of the living room. When they were finished, Wynonna offered Nicole a high-five, which she halfheartedly returned.

"Waverly asked me to bring over some lights. Had a few extras stored away." Nicole gestured to the small plastic containers stacked next to the fireplace. "Wynonna do you think you can give me a--" She trailed off as soon as she saw that Wynonna had already shed her coat and parked herself in the armchair on the other side of the living room, legs slung over the side. Nicole just shook her head and grabbed a bundle of lights, and began to string it along the branches.

"Guess I'm doing this part myself." She dragged a chair over to the tree to start draping lights across the top.

"You got it, Haught Stuff," said Wynonna. "I thought I would be able to avoid the whole tree thing
altogether, but, lo and behold, two days before Christmas, she has me hauling ass out to the middle of nowhere to find this so-called perfect tree which we then have to lug two miles back through the woods."

Nicole stepped down from the chair to glance over the tree. "I mean, she did pick out a pretty decent tree."

"Oh, don't you let her hear you say her tree is just 'decent'. You'll be back out there with her trying to find a different one."

Nicole disregarded the remark, ducking behind the tree to test the string of lights. "How's it look, Wynonna? Did I miss any spots?" When she didn't receive a response, Nicole peeked her head around the tree, finding Wynonna absorbed in her phone. She shrugged, climbing back out and grabbing another strand of lights.

Nicole worked in silence, working her way down the tree, wrapping the colored lights meticulously around every branch.

"You seem very…indifferent about the whole Christmas thing around here," said Nicole casually.

"Yeah, I don't do Christmas." Wynonna didn't even look up from her phone.

"Then why aren't you harping on Waverly about it? She's practically bouncing off the walls getting this place ready for Christmas."

Wynonna pocketed her phone and looked over at Nicole. "Gus and Curtis always did Christmas with her. They did it right. I was long gone by that point, though. Not that Christmas had been particularly holly-jolly up until that point, either. Especially after Mama left. We were lucky if we even got a piece of candy in our stockings. Daddy was always drunk on the extra-spiked eggnog. Set the tree on fire a couple of times."

"Sorry Christmas never really worked out for you," said Nicole.

Wynonna shrugged. "I'm not gonna fight it. But I'll be dead and in the ground before you'll have me singing 'Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas'."

Nicole cracked a smile. "Suit yourself." She grabbed one last bunch of lights to finish off the bottom of the tree. "By the way…I was wondering if I could run my Christmas present for Waverly by you…"

Before Wynonna could respond, Waverly reappeared, coming down the stairs carrying a large cardboard box and several bags slung over her arms. By the looks of it, the bags were stuffed full of every kind of Christmas decoration imaginable.

"You guys got the tree up!" exclaimed Waverly, depositing her load on the floor in front of the tree.

"Don't worry, we didn't need your help getting the tree in the house at all," said Wynonna.

Waverly opened her mouth to retort, but was interrupted by a text alert from Wynonna's phone.

"Saved by the bell!" Wynonna pulled her phone from her pocket, swiping the screen to read the message. "Dolls…"she commented, "…needs me to come in to the Black Badge office to talk demons…" She swung her legs over the arm of the chair, grabbing her coat.
"Liar!" Waverly quipped. "You're just saying that to get out of decorating!"

"See for yourself, baby girl," said Wynonna slyly. She held her phone out to Waverly. Squinting at the screen, she read the exact words Wynonna said aloud to her.

"Fine," Waverly huffed. "Do you know when you'll be back, though? We might put on a Christmas movie and make cocoa later."

Wynonna shrugged. "Dunno. He didn't exactly say what kind of demon stuff he wanted to talk about. I promise I won't let you miss out on anything fun." She planted a sloppy kiss on her sister's cheek and offered a quick wave to Nicole.

"See you two later. And, if you get up to anything...else...just don't knock over the tree."

Brushing off Wynonna's comment, Waverly and Nicole promptly got back to work as Wynonna's truck grumbled off toward town.

"I got the lights all put up for you," said Nicole, gesturing to the tree.

"It looks so great, baby," said Waverly excitedly. "But we're not done!" She scrambled over to one of the shopping bags she brought in and dug around in it, emerging with a shiny bunch of gold and silver garland.

"Waverly, by the time you're done with this place, it'll look like some kind of Christmas nuclear explosion."

"I know," said Waverly timidly, "I just want this year to be special, you know? I mean, we're all here, and Wynonna's back...You don't think I'm going overboard, do you?"

"Hey." Nicole caught Waverly by the shoulders, pulling her close. "I don't know what else you seem to have up your sleeve, but I know it's going to be amazing. Because you're amazing." She leaned in and kissed Waverly. Waverly draped her arms around Nicole's shoulders, stretching up on her toes to meet her. Nicole's hands slid down to Waverly's waist, her fingers trailing along the hem of Waverly's shirt. But as they crept under the fabric, gliding along the warm, bare skin of Waverly's back, Waverly broke off the kiss.

"That tickles," Waverly giggled.

Nicole smiled, her dimples on full display. "Sorry, baby." She planted another slow kiss against Waverly's lips. When they parted, she rested her forehead against hers. "Mmmm...This is nice."

Waverly hummed in agreement. "And as much as I want to do...other things..." Waverly's fingers trailed along the collar of Nicole's top. "I also really want to finish decorating the tree."

For a few minutes, they worked in relative quiet, passing each other ornaments, fluffing the strands of garland to emit the right amount of sparkle.

"There's...actually something I do need to talk to you about, Waves," said Nicole.

"Is everything okay?"

"Yeah," said Nicole, distracting herself with the garland strands on the tree.

"You don't sound too convincing with that tone," said Waverly pointedly, hanging plastic candy canes on a few of the lower branches.
Nicole grimaced, avoiding Waverly's gaze. "I just… I have to work on Christmas."

Waverly's jaw dropped open. "You have to work on Christmas? I thought Nedley gave you the day off!"

"He did," said Nicole, stepping out from behind the tree. "It was Lonnie's turn this year, but apparently yesterday he busted his knee playing hockey with his rec team, and he's out for at least two weeks."

Waverly stuck out her lower lip.

Nicole gave her a sympathetic look in return. "I'm sorry, Waves, I know Christmas is a big deal for you and you wanted to make it special this year…" She took Waverly's hands, entwining their fingers. "But the misfits of Purgatory don't exactly take the holiday off, either. Someone's gotta keep the town in line. Or, try to."

"Hey," Waverly untwined one of her hands and rested it at the nape of Nicole's neck, curling her fingers around the soft, short hairs. "It's okay. Christmas is just a day. We'll make it work…in our own special way. Okay?"

Nicole smiled, relief washing over her. "Okay."

Waverly stood on her toes to plant a chaste kiss on Nicole. "Even if it means having to give you your present a day later," she said.

"I think I can manage…somehow," said Nicole slyly. She took a step back, admiring their work thus far. "I think we make a pretty good decorating team, babe. I'll admit, it's been a long time since I've trimmed a tree."

"Really?" asked Waverly skeptically, reaching into another bag for some brightly colored baubles. She handed a few to Nicole. "Why's that?"

Nicole stood on her toes to distribute some more ornaments toward the top of the tree. "I've had a hard time keeping a Christmas tree. Calamity Jane seems to have a personal vendetta against all things Christmas."

"Really?" Waverly chuckled.

Nicole laughed along with her. "Yeah. No joke, two Christmases ago I came home to find not only the tree knocked over, but also the lights had, somehow, been pulled tightly around the entirety of the tree because there was a cat who tried to drag the tree out of the house by the light string."

For a little while longer, they continued their work in a steady, quiet rhythm, save for the occasional opinions on ornament placement.

It wasn't until all of the shopping bags were empty that Waverly finally declared the tree adequately trimmed. The tree, no more than a few hours after it had been retrieved from its forest home, was decked out in every kind of colored light, garland, and shiny decoration. The lights danced around the room. Nicole and Waverly stood a few steps back, arms around the other's waist, admiring their work.

Waverly let out a contented sigh. "We did pretty good, didn't we?"

"Not bad for someone who hasn't decorated a tree in a few years, huh?" Nicole nudged Waverly playfully.
Waverly nodded in agreement. "And now that that's finished..." She turned to face Nicole, her hands snaking back up to rest on Nicole's shoulders, "We can get back to...what we started earlier..." She rested a hand against Nicole's cheek, closing any remaining gaps between them, capturing Nicole's mouth in a deep, tender kiss. Nicole sighed against her mouth, her arms encircling Waverly's waist.

Waverly began to move them toward the staircase, but Nicole broke away. "You know I have to work in the morning, right? And we don't exactly know when Wynonna's going to be back..."

Waverly crinkled her nose. "I know...At least can we have our cocoa and make a blanket nest and cuddle for just a little bit? I've got a couple of movies that we can watch, too."

Nicole smiled sweetly, planting a kiss to her forehead. "I think I can make that work."

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Wynonna pulled into the parking lot of the station, now beginning to empty as the nine-to-fives began to trickle out. Snow crunched underfoot as she hustled into the building.

Wynonna strolled into the office, snatching a cookie from the platter (delivered the day before by Linda over in Nedley's office) set on one of the tables. She landed in one of the rolling office chairs, swinging her feet up to rest on the desk. Dolls stood in front of their crime board, Jeremy was tinkering away with something at his desk.

"Thank God you called. You rescued me from partaking in Yuletide merriment," Wynonna said in between bites of cookie. Dolls remained focused on the board. Jeremy, however, looked up.

"Not feeling the Christmas spirit this year?" he asked.

Wynonna shook her head. "Nothing there to feel in the first place, kid."

"My family never did Christmas, either, but I sure am a fan of all the lights people put up," he continued. "New AV advances have allowed for some pretty spectacular displays. I tried to show Doc a video of some, but he then he just got that...confused and bewildered look in his eyes and walked away."

"That's because you were showing it to a man who comes from a time where player pianos were the height of technology," Wynonna deadpanned, taking another bite of cookie. "You might've overwhelmed him."

Jeremy shrugged. He grabbed his computer and then sauntered off to the back office.

"Anyway," Wynonna pressed on, her attention shifting back to Dolls. "What's with the SOS call?"

Dolls finally turned around. "Got an anonymous tip saying some Revenants have been hanging around just north of town. Causing some mayhem with some of the truckers who are traveling across the highway."

"And? Are we gonna go get 'em or what?"

"No."

"No?"

"Yes."
"Yes?"
"No!"
"No?"
"Wynonna!"

"What?" Wynonna snickered, swiping another cookie off the tray. "Why aren't we going after them?"

"It's just one tip," Dolls argued, "We need to work at it for a few more days, see if anything else comes up. See if it's legitimate."

"Okay," Wynonna mumbled, a few crumbs falling onto her shirt, "if we're not going after Revenants, then why'd you call me down here?"

"I, uh…" Dolls shoved his hands into his pockets. "I actually wanted to give you something."

Wynonna raised a suspicious eyebrow to Dolls. "You know Waverly would eviscerate you if she heard you were doling out presents before Christmas."

Dolls smirked. "I figured you'd want a few days to prepare yourself." He pulled out a slip of notebook paper from this coat pocket, dropping it on the table in front of Wynonna.

She eyed it nervously. "You know I don't do the Christmas thing, right? Never pegged you as the gift-giving type, either."

"I think you're gonna like this one." Dolls folded his arms over his chest, casually leaning against one of the desks.

Wynonna popped the last bit of her cookie in her mouth as she reached for the slip of folded paper. She cautiously unfolded it, her eyes flickering back and forth to Dolls.

_to Wynonna, From Dolls_

Christmas night

_one call to Gus and Alice_

Her eyes raced over the words again, hoping that, somehow, they would transform into something else, something that didn't make her feel like her stomach hadn't dropped and her insides weren't curdling and her heart hadn't stopped. After a minute or two--or perhaps it was even a whole hour--of silence, of not being able to breathe because all the air had been sucked out of the room, Wynonna looked up from the note.

"What the hell are you trying to play here, Dolls?" she said in a low voice, her eyes narrowed dangerously.

Dolls shrugged, a smirk pulling at his lips.

"What is this?!" Wynonna yelled, slamming the note on the table.
"Little Christmas present."

"Are you shitting me right now?" She threw the note back at Dolls. It flew off the table and fluttered to the ground. Dolls's words stared back up at him.

"You know I can't see her. You know I sent her away to keep her safe," she exclaimed, slamming her hand down on the table.

"I know, but I thought--"

"What if someone traces the call? Then everything we've done to keep her safe will all go to shit."

"They won't," Dolls assured her, holding his hands up in defense. "I'm working with Jeremy to set up a temporary line just for this. Will be virtually untraceable."

"Jeremy was in on this, too?!" Wynonna hollered. She turned toward the open door. "CHETRI! GET. IN. HERE!"

Seconds later, Jeremy skidded through the door to the back room. "What? What's happening?"

Wynonna bent down and snatched the note up from the floor. She displayed it to Jeremy. "What the hell is this I hear about you helping Dolls set up a call with Gus?"

Jeremy's mouth hung open. "I--I mean… I was just--" he stuttered.

Wynonna marched over to him, grabbing his shirt collar, yanking him up to her eye level. "Why would you do that," she fumed. "You know she's supposed to stay hidden."

Jeremy gaped, looking frantically between Dolls and Wynonna for some form of assurance. "I… Uh… I…"

"WELL?!" Wynonna seethed.

"Dolls asked me! He thought it might make you happy--"

Wynonna released him, taking a few steps back. She paced frantically around the room, raking a hand through her hair.

"Wynonna, I didn't mean to--" Dolls began, but was cut off immediately by Wynonna.

"I can't know where she is, NOBODY can know where she is! I can't believe you even thought this was a good idea!" She threw the note back at Dolls. She stomped out of the office, slamming the door shut behind her. The glass panels rattled, making the only sound as Dolls and Jeremy stood, stunned, silent, and alone, in the Black Badge office.

Chapter End Notes

That's it, that's part one! Hope you enjoyed it! This will be continuing for the next two Sundays, so stay tuned!

Kudos and comments are much appreciated!
Come say hi over on Twitter (@Teachearp_) or Tumblr (emeraldcitynerdfighter)! :)

December 24th

Light metallic ringing greeted Nicole as she stepped through the door of the pawn shop. She needed to make this quick. Her lunch break would be over in half an hour, and she was due back at the station. The store was empty, thankfully. This was one visit--one exchange--she'd rather not have to explain to anybody. Nobody else needed to know why she was there…

The ringing of the doorbell alerted the shopkeeper, bent behind the counter organizing that day's trade-ins. They stood up to survey the newcomer.

"Officer Haught," they greeted, wiping their hands on their apron. "To what do I owe the pleasure?"

"Hey, Logan." Nicole approached the counter, tugging off her gloves. "I know it's Christmas Eve, and you might not have much left, but I need you to make me a deal," she said. She reached into her jacket pocket and fished out something small. Something that had been lying untouched for too long in a box shoved in the back of her closet. Something that should have been discarded long ago…

Nicole set the velvet box down on the counter, opening it for the shopkeeper.

They looked down at the box, then back up at Nicole, a nervous, expectant look on her face.

"Are you interested in making a trade today, Officer?"

Nicole felt a rush of heat creep into her cheeks. "No, uh, not today, thank you. I was just wondering…" She adjusted the box on the counter, scooting it closer to the shopkeeper. "How much can you pay me for it?"

Logan picked up the box, appraising its contents with a critical eye.

"It's solid gold. Fourteen-karat," Nicole informed them.

Setting the box back on the counter, the shopkeeper pulled a pair of white flannel gloves from their apron, which they slipped on. They then removed the gold ring from the box, holding it up for a closer look. They placed the ring back in the box.

"I can give you three-hundred for it."

"Five-hundred," insisted Nicole.

"Three-fifty."

"Four-hundred. Beg your pardon, but it's…hardly been worn. Almost new." Nicole set her jaw, stood up a little taller.

Logan sighed resignedly, assessing the ring and Nicole one last time. Then, they leaned over to the register, punching a few buttons to open up the cash drawer. They pulled out a wad of cash. Thumbing through the bills, they laid a couple on the counter.
"Four-hundred, Miss Haught."

Nicole smiled in relief. "Thank you, Logan." She swiped the bills from the counter, then extended her other hand to shake the shopkeeper's.

"Don't spend it all in one place," Logan chuckled, swiping the black box off the counter, stowing it on the shelf behind the register. "And...I'm sorry...things didn't work out for you."

Nicole cracked a smile. "It's okay. It was mutual. And I think I'm somewhere much better now. Maybe even one of those forever things."

They raised their eyebrows at the officer's remark. "You sure you're not interested in a trade? We've got a nice selection of other rings, if you wanted to take a look."

Nicole shook her head. "Not today, but thank you. I've got something else planned. This'll help. A lot." Nicole held up the wad of cash before stowing it away in her jacket. "Thank you, again." Nicole shook the shopkeeper's hand once more.

"Pleasure doing business with you, Officer Haught."

The bell on the door bid Nicole farewell as she exited the shop.

She turned around the corner, making her way back to the station, smiling to herself at the shopkeeper's insistence in a trade. Indeed, she already had plans for the money, and she needed every cent possible to make it work.

Besides, she already had her own ring in mind...but that was for another day.

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Across town, Waverly was on her own mission. She was never one to leave Christmas shopping until the last minute, but there was one very important gift she still had to pick up...

She entered the shop she'd frequented many times over the last few weeks. A young, dark-haired woman knelt on the floor beside the register, organizing the display shelves, busying herself between customers.

"Hey, Maggie!" Waverly called to her. She walked up to the register, setting her bag on the counter.

"Hey there, Waverly," Maggie called back. She stood up and met Waverly at the counter. "I'm sorry to make you have to come back on Christmas Eve. Things have just been so backed up here because of the holidays. I'm sorry I didn't have this ready when you picked up--"

"Oh, that's okay, don't worry about it," said Waverly, waving her hand. "I'm just glad you were able to finish it in time for Christmas."

Maggie nodded. "My mom put the finishing touches on it last night. She hasn't been doing whole projects lately, but she wanted me to tell you that she worked on this one from start to finish, since she knew it was so special for you."

Waverly smiled. "That's so sweet of her. I can't wait to see it."

"I saw a little bit of it when she was working on it. I think you're really going to like it." Maggie smiled wryly, then turned to dip behind the curtain that covered the entrance to the back room.
Waverly leaned against the counter as she waited. "So your mom's not in today?"

"She usually takes Christmas Eve off to get our house all ready for our big Christmas party tomorrow night," Maggie called back to her. "Just me today. Only have to keep the shop open for a few hours anyway, so it's not too bad." She emerged a few moments later, carrying a black box. She opened it for Waverly to inspect.

Waverly gasped when she laid her eyes on what was in front of her.

"Per your designs, I'm hoping."

Waverly beamed as she gazed at the finish product that she had spent so long meticulously designing. Only the best for her Nicole...It was perfect.

"It really is a beautiful piece, Waverly. You really do have a good eye for these things," Maggie beamed.

Waverly's heart swelled, thinking of Nicole's reaction when she opened her gift. "I'm glad you were willing to do it. Not many places around here make these by hand anymore."

Maggie shrugged, closing the box. "That's why they call us the best in the west. Do you want me to wrap this for you?"

Waverly shook her head. "No, thank you. I really like wrapping presents."

"Fair enough," Maggie chuckled. She handed the box over to Waverly. Waverly stowed the package in her bag.

"That Nicole's a lucky one," Maggie remarked.

Waverly smiled, shouldering her purse. "I think I'm the lucky one." A familiar warmth spread over her as her thoughts briefly drifted to her girlfriend, a feeling she never knew she could have with anyone else...And they were about to spend their first Christmas together...

"Waverly?" Maggie's voice disrupted her reflection.

"Sorry," Waverly smiled sheepishly, her cheeks flushing. She paid for her purchase, offering Maggie a departing wave. "Merry Christmas, Maggie."

"Merry Christmas, Waverly."

Waverly stopped when she reached the door; she turned back to Maggie.

"And Maggie?"

"Yeah?"

"Thank your mom for the other one, too. It really turned out beautifully."

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Shorty's was quiet, odd for the middle of the day. Anybody who walked in the doors, looking to kick off their Christmas Eve happy hour, was immediately deterred by the bar's lone occupant.

Wynonna sat on the bar stool, slumped over the counter, nursing her fifth glass of whiskey. Peacemaker loomed on the counter next to her, ready to intimidate anyone who dared to infringe...
on her solitude.

Doc staggered down the stairs, buttoning his shirt. He surveyed the bar, noting the surprising lack of patrons.

"Slow day?" he called to Wynonna.

Startled by his voice, Wynonna's head shot up, her hand instinctively reaching for her gun. "Must be," Wynonna replied casually, relaxing back onto her stool. "People seem to be drinking at home for the holiday."

Doc sauntered behind the counter, pulling out a glass of his own. He reached for the whiskey bottle in front of Wynonna, pouring himself a robust drink. He took a long, slow sip, eyeing Wynonna, who was suddenly captivated by the scrubbed wood of the counter.

"You want to talk about last night?" Doc inquired.

"What's there to talk about?"

"About how you burst in here and---"

"Yeah, I remember what happened. I was there," said Wynonna coolly.

"All I'm saying is it's been a while since--"

"Did you enjoy yourself?"

"Well," Doc scoffed, "Of course, but I know that the two of us can be--"

"Good. We're two adults who enjoyed ourselves and now we're two adults drinking whiskey like adults do." She clinked her glass against Doc's, then downed her drink.

Doc slowly raised his glass to his lips, tentatively sipping, watching Wynonna fill her glass once more.

Doc set his glass gently on the counter. "Something's still bitin' at you, though."

"What makes you say that?"

"I have a feeling Peace Maker's been of use today…and not just for threatenin' Revenants." He nodded toward the gun. "And you almost took me out, too."

Wynonna pursed her lips. Damn, he was good. She took a sip of whiskey, begging the scorching brown liquid to give her courage.

"You know how I sent our hours-old daughter away to an intentionally unknown location so there would be a less-than-zero chance of any Revenants ever finding her?"

Doc blinked.

"Well now, thanks to Xavier Dolls, that plan might totally go to shit."

"Why?"

Wynonna took a long swig straight from the whisky bottle. "Deputy Marshal Xavier Dolls thought it would be a brilliant idea to contact Gus and set up a call so we can see Alice for Christmas and
"why the hell are you smiling?"

Doc's face fell immediately. He rubbed the back of his neck nervously. "Well...it might be nice to..."

Wynonna just shook her head. "We can't do it. It's not safe."

Doc shrugged his shoulders. "Well, knowing the deputy marshal, I'm sure that he's taken all necessary precautions."

"We still can't do it."

Doc furrowed his brow. "Why not? You sent her to live with Gus, did you not?"

"Yes."

"And Gus is also aware of the stakes involved in our daughter's protection?"

"Yes."

"Then why not do it? It might be nice to see how she's doing."

"No, Doc. We're not doing it," Wynonna insisted, her voice rising. "Dolls said the line would be secure, but there's still something that could happen."

"Like what?"

"I said we're not going through with it!" Wynonna slammed her glass on the counter, sloshing droplets of whisky onto the bar. The bang resonated through the empty tavern.

Wynonna hung her head, her hair a curtain over her face. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to yell at you." Another sip. Another chance for courage.

"How long has this been on the table?"

"Yesterday," Wynonna answered. "Not long before I came over...And it was never on the table."

"Oh."

She chanced a look at Doc, and they locked eyes. His were clouded over, deep in thought. Wynonna's chest ached the longer they looked at each other.

"You want to do it, don't you?"

Doc looked at Wynonna imploringly. He opened his mouth to respond, but shut it when no words surfaced. He pursed his lips, tipping his head down so the brim of his hat covered his eyes. Wynonna looked down, picking at the dissolving label of the whisky bottle that sat in front of her. Alice was his daughter, too. He lost her that day, just as Wynonna had...just as they all had.

She looked up at him. "You know why we can't do this, right?"

Doc's kept his gaze down as he gave Wynonna a nod. "I know that was your choice, and yours alone, to send our daughter away," he finally said in a low voice. "Just it will be your choice, and yours alone, whether or not you want to see her. And however you want me involved, I will honor that." He looked up, his eyes misty.
Wynonna blinked away tears as they came hot and fast. She looked away from Doc so he couldn't see. "I don't…I just don't want to risk anything. After all we did to get her out of here."

"I understand."

"Good." Wynonna took one last swig straight from the bottle, setting it on the counter with finality. "Then we're done talking about this." She hopped off the stool and grabbed her coat, slung over the seat next to her. As she turned to walk out the door, the front door of the bar flew open, hitting the wall with a bang.

"There you are!"

Waverly stormed down the stairs and over to the bar. "I've been looking everywhere for you! Why haven't you been answering your phone?"

Doc and Wynonna shared a nervous glance. "I've been busy." Wynonna hopped back onto her stool.

Waverly shook her head, dismissing her comment, saddling up to a stool next to Wynonna. "Have you been here since yesterday?"

Wynonna shot her a sideways glance. "Maybe…I also went into work, remember?"

"Okay, then what's the scoop from Dolls?"

"Just leads right now," Wynonna murmured. "Nothing worth calling home about."

"Well, let's go back to the office and see if…” Waverly hopped off her stool, headed in the direction of the door again, but paused when she noticed Wynonna wasn't following.

"Wynonna?" She turned around to find Wynonna sitting with her back to her, her shoulders drooping.

"I don't know that she and the deputy marshal are on particularly good terms at the moment," said Doc.

"Why? What's going on with Dolls?"

Wynonna didn't respond. Doc busied himself with clearing his whisky glass and other discarded glassware left on the counter.

"I'll leave you two ladies be," Doc tipped his hat and ambled off downstairs, slamming the door shut behind him.

"Are you going to tell me what's going on?" Waverly walked back over to the bar, reclaiming her spot next to Wynonna.

"He's mad at me."

"What'd you do this time?" Waverly swiped a clean glass and poured herself a glass of whiskey. Wynonna slid her glass over to her. Waverly hit it with a splash of whiskey.

"It's not me. It's Dolls."

Waverly looked at her quizzically.
Wynonna tipped her glass back, draining all the liquid. "Dolls set up a call with Gus," said Wynonna. "And Alice."

Waverly's jaw dropped, her drink halfway to her mouth. "What?"

Wynonna nodded solemnly.

"Well, did you tell Dolls to cancel it?" asked Waverly. She set her glass on the counter and turned to face Wynonna.

"In so many words," Wynonna shrugged, sipping her drink.

"Well, let's look at our options," Waverly began. "There's always going to be security risks with setting up a temporary line of communication, right? So--"

Wynonna rounded on her. "Waverly are you serious right now?"

"I'm just…"

"You're just what?" Wynonna snapped.

"I'm just…trying to make sure you're not going to regret your decision," said Waverly.

"Yeah, well I already made my decision."

"I'm just saying--"

"Alice can't be found, Waverly!" Wynonna cried, tears springing into her eyes. "If the call is traced or bugged or someone overhears it or some weird satellite picks up anything and it falls into the hands of a Revenant…They'll take her and they'll---they'll kill her!"

Waverly sat, mouth agape, stunned at her sister's outburst. Wynonna buried her head in her hands, her shoulders shaking. "I can't…I can't even let myself think about what would happen if they found her," she said, her voice tight.

Waverly let out a long exhale and leaned against the counter propping her head up on her fist. "You know Dolls would never want to put her in danger. I don't think he'd be doing this if he knew there was a chance they would find her," she reasoned.

"That's what I keep trying to tell myself," Wynonna mumbled. "I didn't think I was ever going to see her again. Now Dolls is out planning a family reunion. It's easier if I don't even think about her. It's just…easier this way."

Waverly ran her thumb along the rim of her glass. "What does Doc think?"

Wynonna sighed, lifting her head and resting her chin in her hands. "I think Doc wants to see her…And he should, really. He should get to see his daughter on Christmas. We still can't risk it, though..." Wynonna murmured.

"What about you?" Waverly reached over to lay a hand on her sister's arm. "Do you want to see her?"

Wynonna looked up, resting her elbows on the bar, twirling her glass. She watched the amber liquid slosh against the sides.

"It's her first Christmas, Wynonna," Waverly pointed out.
"Please spare me the Christmas nostalgia," said Wynonna. "I was going to miss all of her other 'firsts' anyway. Why should this be any different?"

"Because you still want to be a part of her life."

Wynonna looked at Waverly. "I made my choice before she was born. And now I have to keep my promise. To keep her safe. To end the curse so she never has to carry it."

"I know." Waverly wrapped an arm around Wynonna's shoulders, rubbing her arm soothingly. Wynonna leaned into her sister, letting her head rest on her shoulder.

"You're scared, aren't you?"

Again, no answer. After a few moments of silence, Wynonna gave the faintest of nods.

Waverly sighed. "You're scared that, if you see her, you'll regret sending her away. And you'll want her back." She rocked her sister back and forth, continuing to rub comforting circles against her back, letting Wynonna's tears soak into her shirt.

"What kind of mom doesn't want to see her own kid?" Wynonna mumbled after a moment of quiet. "I should be excited, right?"

"Gus'll understand."

"You're saying this to the kid who was institutionalized at thirteen."

"I'm saying this to the woman who gave up her baby so she could have a better life." Waverly leaned back, holding Wynonna's face in her hands. "You don't have to be anything or do anything, okay?" said Waverly. She wiped away the stray tears falling down Wynonna's cheek.

Wynonna gave a shaky nod, wiping her nose on her sleeve. She leaned back against the counter. "Can we... just stop talking about this now? Talking about it... isn't really making me feel all that much better about it."

Waverly smiled, giving Wynonna's arm a supportive squeeze. "Sure we can... Can I show you Nicole's present?" A mischievous smile spread across her face.

"Sure," said Wynonna, giving Waverly a bemused look.

Waverly dug around in her purse, pulling out the black box she just picked up from Maggie. She opened it for Wynonna.

Wynonna nodded approvingly. "Well done, sis."

"Think she'll like it?"

"You could give Nicole an actual lump of coal, and she'd think it was the best present ever," Wynonna smirked.

"I wish I could've given it to her tonight," said Waverly, stowing away the box. "Kinda defeats the purpose."

Wynonna shrugged. "Guess you'll just have to keep her around until next year." She gave her sister a small wink before draining the last remaining drops of her whiskey. She slid off her stool onto her feet, wiping her mouth on her sleeve. "Let's go home. I need a better distraction."
Waverly hopped off her stool, grabbing her purse. She linked arms with her sister. "You know me: Waverly Earp, Master of Distraction."

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December 25th

Christmas morning came and went at the Earp homestead. Waverly had cinnamon rolls baking. A fire roared in the fireplace. The world's best Christmas tree glittered in the corner. Their stockings, hung along the stair railing, were stuffed with presents and goodies, placed there by Waverly during the night.

All day, though, Wynonna was restless. Pacing through the house. Polishing Peace Maker incessantly. Checking the time. Waverly tried to get her to settle down by opening a few gifts--a bottle of gun polish and a pound of artisan coffee from Nicole, a sweater from Waverly, a coffee mug from Jeremy reading "This is probably whiskey"--but to no avail. She couldn't even tempt her with Christmas cookies for breakfast.

By mid-afternoon, Wynonna was sitting on the staircase, tugging on her boots, reaching for her gun holster and the keys to her truck.

At the same moment, Waverly rounded the corner from the kitchen, carrying a plate of Christmas cookies. "Where are you going?" Waverly wondered.

"Work." Wynonna buckled her holster around her waist, Peace Maker settling in its rightful place against her thigh.

"It's Christmas," Waverly pointed out. "Nobody'll be there."

"Dolls'll be there."

"Dolls is always there," Waverly argued. "There'll be nothing to do, though."

"There are Revenants out there that need to be taken down. Dolls has a few leads, and I want to make sure they have the most unholy night back in Hell where they belong."

"This isn't you trying to throw yourself into danger to distract yourself, is it?" Waverly asked pointedly.

Wynonna sighed, pursing her lips. She looked at Waverly. "I'm going into town to track down demons because that's my job. I'll try and not stay too late."

"Then I'm coming with you." Waverly set down the tray of cookies and began to pull on her coat and shoes.

"Waves, you don't have to," said Wynonna. "You should be here, waiting for Nicole to get here, so you two can be all cute and merry…feeding each other Christmas cookies…"

"Hey," Waverly grabbed a scarf off the rack next to the door, draping it around her neck. "Nobody should be alone on Christmas. Even when we're going out to kick some Revenant booty."
Not fifteen minutes later, Waverly and Wynonna were striding through the door of the municipal building, along the unusually quiet hallway. Every office dark and empty.

Except one.

Waverly stopped at the corner before they turned into the Black Badge Office. She shared a knowing look with her sister.

"Give me a second, okay?" she told Wynonna. "Tell Dolls I'll be there soon."

Wynonna nodded, then turned on her heel down the other corridor.

Waverly continued in the other direction down the hallway toward the only open office.

The Purgatory Sheriff's Department was quiet, empty. Half of the office was dark. Even the drunk tank was vacant. Save for one lowly cop, scratching away at a stack of papers, illuminated by the amber light of her desk lamp.

Waverly knocked on the doorframe as she poked her head through the door. "Hey, you."

Nicole's head shot up. "Hey!" A smile spread across her face, grateful for the break in monotony. "Waves, what are you doing here?"

"I brought cookies!" Waverly raised the platter to show Nicole before sliding behind the front counter. She perched herself on the corner of Nicole's desk and offered her the plate.

Nicole took a ginger snap off the top of the pile. Waverly opted for chocolate chip.

"Anything exciting today?" Waverly asked as she broke off a bit of cookie and popped it into her mouth.

Nicole shook her head as she finished chewing her cookie. "Just some calls about neighbors fighting over light displays. Missing plastic Nativity lawn ornaments. Willie keeps trying to catch wild reindeer to incorporate into this annual live re-enactment of 'T'was the Night Before Christmas'."

"He knows that they're actually elk, right?" Waverly giggled.

"That's what I keep telling him." Nicole swiped a sugar cookie before settling back in her chair. She reached for Waverly's hand, entwining their fingers together. "Thanks for coming to visit me, baby."

Waverly smiled in return, giving Nicole's hand a squeeze. "I wish I could stay…but I'm actually going to work."

"On Christmas?" Nicole cocked an eyebrow.

"You said the misfits of Purgatory don't rest on Christmas. I guess Revenants don't, either." Waverly bit her lip. "Plus, Wynonna's having a bit of a personal crisis right now. She kind of needs a distraction."

Nicole's brow creased in worry. "Anything I can help with?"

"No, just your normal run-of-the-mill demons," said Waverly nonchalantly.
Nicole shook her head in disbelief, a smile pulling at the corner of her mouth. "Just be careful out there, yeah? I'm going to have a hell of a time trying to return your Christmas present if you don't."

"You know I will." Waverly leaned down and pecked Nicole on the lips before hopping off the desk. "Try not to have too much fun."

"I still have an hour. Who knows what can happen," Nicole teased. "Night shift's coming in to trade me out at six."

"I know. I'll tell Wynonna to step on it," said Waverly.

"Meet you back at the homestead?" asked Nicole.

"Sounds good," Waverly smiled down at her girlfriend. "Love you."

"Love you, too." Nicole stood to give Waverly another quick kiss. "Go get 'em, Waves."

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Dolls looked up as Wynonna marched into the BBD office. "Wynonna…What are you doing here?"

"Coming to work," said Wynonna nonchalantly, strolling over to Dolls' desk. "You said we have some demons on the radar. I say we take 'em out." She crossed the office to the crime board, covered with maps, charts, and newspaper clippings.

"Earp, I just said we have a tip. That's almost nothing to go on," Dolls sighed, pinching the bridge of his nose. He swiveled around in his chair to face her.

"Why not? You said you know where they are. Waverly's on her way over, too. She's ready."

"I said I might know where they are. I want to wait a few days, see how it plays out." He stood up and walked over to join Wynonna.

Wynonna shook her head. "And risk losing track of one of the seventy-seven? I don't think so. Besides," she turned away from him, an icy edge to her voice, "it's not like I have anything big planned for tonight."

Dolls reached out a comforting arm to her. "Wynonna, if you're still mad at me because of the call-""

"Of course I'm still mad at you!"

Dolls stepped back, holding up his hands defensively. Wynonna's voice echoed around the room, an uncomfortable silence settling in.

"Wynonna, I'm--"

"I don't want to talk about it," she rounded on him. She took a deep breath, letting out a long, measured exhale. "These Revenants. You said they're a threat. I'm the Earp heir. And it's my job to send 'em back to Hell. So let me do my job."

"Wynonna, you don't have to--" Dolls started, but Wynonna interrupted him again, this time in a much quieter manner.

"Please, Dolls. I can't focus on anything else today. Might as well make myself useful."
Before Dolls could say anything else, Waverly entered the Black Badge office. "Sorry, I'm late…"
She trailed off as she saw Wynonna and Dolls were nearly nose-to-nose with one another. "Did I
miss anything?" she asked cautiously.

Dolls cleared his throat, shifting away from Wynonna. "No, nothing…We were just…talking
strategy. Jeremy!"

Jeremy poked his head through the door to the back office. "What's up, boss?"

"We're going demon hunting. You have that map for me?" He motioned for Jeremy to join them.
Jeremy ambled into the main office. He sat at his desk and began typing furiously away at his
computer.

"Jeremy's been running and cross-tracing coordinates for me," Dolls continued, casting a sly glance
to Wynonna.

Wynonna looked at him in disbelief. "I thought you said you--"

"Demons don't rest, Earp. Gotta keep myself busy while the team's off enjoying their Christmas."

"We need to get you out more," Waverly commented.

"Got it!" Jeremy called, interrupting the conversation. The gang crowded around Jeremy and his
laptop.

"So where're these bastards hanging out?" asked Wynonna, leaning over Jeremy's shoulder.

"Well, the tip was that the attacks have been happening on the north end of town, out by the
highway, right?" Jeremy pulled up a digital map of the Ghost River Triangle.

"Riiiiight…"

Jeremy's cursor landed in a quadrant north of Purgatory, and he zoomed in.

They all squinted at the screen. Waverly leaned in closer to get a better look. "Wait a second, is
that…"

"Oh, you've got to be kidding me!" Wynonna groaned. She shot a sideways glance at Waverly,
who was trying hard to hide her amusement.

Dolls and Jeremy looked at Wynonna. Jeremy raised a puzzled eyebrow. "I know you guys are
close enough that you're starting to get that weird sibling-telekinesis thing, but can you please tell
me what's going on?"

Wynonna covered her face with her hand. "The other day Waverly dragged me out to some spot to
find the world's best Christmas tree."

"And?"

Wynonna peeked between her fingers. "It's about a mile south of where the camp is." Waverly
pressed a hand over her mouth as she suppressed a giggle. Wynonna rolled her eyes.

"So you know where we're going?" asked Dolls.

"Yes," replied Wynonna bluntly. "Can even show you the shortcut. The one where you don't even
have to scale a cliffside."
"Alright," Dolls nodded approvingly. "Then let's go check it out. Let me get my surveillance gear. Meet you guys out at the car." He and Jeremy scurried off to the back room to pack up, leaving Waverly and Wynonna alone.

Wynonna glowered at Waverly, still attempting to hide a proud smirk. "Don't you say a word."

Waverly nudged Wynonna playfully. "Told you it was a good spot."

"Please spare me the gloating." Wynonna rolled her eyes, though traces of a smile began to materialize.

"You know I love a good gloat!" Waverly returned the smile in full. She wrapped an arm around Wynonna's shoulders. "Now…Let's go roast some Rev-nuts over an open fire."

Chapter End Notes

There's part 2, folks! Tune in next week for the finale!

As always, kudos and comments are appreciated. Thanks for all the love so far!

Come say hi over on twitter (@Teachearp_) and tumblr (emeraldcitynerdfighter).
Things to expect in the finale of this saga: WayHaught cuteness, an Earp sister love fest, Doc Holliday being the mushy cowboy we all know and love...and the appearance of a very special little guest.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Purgatory, Christmas night

The team stumbled back into the Black Badge Division office exhausted, sweaty, and victorious.

Waverly collapsed into a chair, hoisting her shotgun onto the table. Wynonna, sporting a smattering of scratches along her cheek, followed her, taking Jeremy's chair. Dolls and Jeremy followed, carrying the bags of surveillance gear. Jeremy dropped his immediately upon walking through the door, leaning against his desk.

"Anyone else surprised by how easy that was?" Waverly asked. Wynonna and Jeremy halfheartedly raised their hands.

"You think the rest'll be that easy?" Jeremy asked optimistically as he let his hand drop to his side.

"Fat chance," Wynonna grumbled. She propped her head on her hands, her eyelids already beginning to droop.

-------

It had taken longer to hike back and forth to the campsite than it did to put the Revenant in the ground. It wasn't as easy carrying forty pounds of surveillance gear up a mountain and back.

Lit by only their flashlights and the brilliance of the northern lights, Wynonna, Waverly, and Dolls tracked the Revenant into the woods. Jeremy fed them directions from the car as they trudged through the darkened woods.

They spotted the campfire through the sagging boughs of the fir trees. The Revenant sat alone, bundled in a fraying blanket, transfixed by the dying embers of his campfire.

"Please. I'm just trying to make it out here," he'd said in a scraggly voice when he finally spotted them. "Bobo kicked me out of the trailer park months ago.

"You'll be happy to know that Bobo's rotting at the bottom of a well now," Wynonna told him, her hand hovering at her holster.

The Revenant's face lit up. 'So I can go back--?'
"No," Wynonna said slowly. She whipped out Peacemaker, aiming it for the Revenant's forehead. "That's not how this works."

He and Wynonna considered each other another minute, staring each other down the glowing barrel.

"You're the heir, aren't you?" The Revenant's glowing eyes narrowed.

"The one and only."

'Rumor has it that you had a--'

He didn't get to finish his sentence before Wynonna pulled the trigger and the Earth opened up, swallowing the demon into a glowing pit. The crevasse closed up, leaving an untouched patch of snow in its place.

-------

“Here.” Dolls tossed a first aid kit onto the table in front of Wynonna, startling her awake. "Patch yourself up."

Jeremy looked curiously at Wynonna and the box. “I thought you said the Revenant went down easy?"

“He did,” said Dolls. “What didn’t go down easy was a particularly feisty…tree branch on the way back to the car." He cleared his throat to stifle a laugh.

Wynonna glowered at him as she pulled out a swatch of cotton to hold against her cheek. She raised her middle finger at him.

"Alright," Dolls pressed on, leaning against the far wall of the office. "So now we know the next time we have to go after someone at night--"

"Can we just skip the debrief tonight? It's Christmas. Can't it wait 'til tomorrow?" Waverly pleaded. She flashed a pleading smile at Dolls. "Consider it a Christmas present for the team?"

Dolls looked between Waverly, Wynonna, and Jeremy, all giving him the same piteous look.

"My blisters have frostbite, Dolls. I want to go home," Wynonna chimed in. "And Waverly just wants to get home and huddle up with her Haught-y girlfriend. So, really, any effort to get us to stay is futile," Wynonna deadpanned.

Dolls rubbed his face with his palm, scanning the faces of his team again. "Fine. We'll call it a night. I'll see you all tomorrow."

"Great!" Wynonna quickly stood up, immediately heading for the door.

"We've got cookies and presents at the Homestead," called Waverly cheerfully, meeting Wynonna in the doorway. "You coming Jeremy?"

Jeremy shook his head. "Nah, I've got leftover Chinese food and all five of the Die Hard movies waiting for me. Kind of a tradition I've made for myself."

Wynonna and Waverly exchanged a skeptical look. "You know that isn't actually a Christmas movie, right?" asked Waverly, her arms crossed over her chest.
"You two don't watch Die Hard at Christmas?" Jeremy scoffed.

"Must've misplaced the VHS in the move to the homestead," said Wynonna dismissively, turning on her heel for the door. "See you tomorrow, kid."

"Earp, wait…" Dolls called after Wynonna as she turned on her heel to leave the office.

Wynonna caught herself on the threshold, turning back to him. "I thought you said no debrief."

"I did…" He shoved his hands in his pockets. "I need to talk about something else, though."

"Well, what is it?" Waverly asked.

Dolls didn't answer; his gaze had softened, looking expectantly toward Wynonna.

"What…" Waverly looked worriedly at her.

"It's okay," Wynonna sighed. "I think this one's just for me, baby girl…” Wynonna squeezed her arm. "Go, I'll meet you back at the homestead."

Waverly nodded, then gave her sister a quick hug. She waved to Jeremy and Dolls, grabbed her purse, and left the office, shutting the door behind her.

The moment the door clicked shut, Wynonna rounded on Dolls. "What is it?" she demanded. She walked back over to where Dolls stood, arms crossed over her chest.

Dolls shrugged, his hands still in his pockets. "My offer still stands. I haven't…Gus is still scheduled to call in. I wanted to wait to see if you would change your mind."

Wynonna shook her head in disbelief. "So you still didn't listen to me?"

Dolls furrowed his brow. "What?"

"Exactly. For once, though, you didn't." She pointed an accusing finger at his chest. Dolls swallowed, maintaining his composure.

She looked over at Jeremy, still slumped against the post. He gave her a sympathetic shrug. She bit her lip, shaking her head in exasperation. Finally, quietly, she asked. "When?"

Dolls furrowed his brow. "What?"

"When were you going to have Gus call?"

Dolls checked his watch. "Right about now."

Wynonna considered him, her lips pressed tightly together.

*Dolls wouldn't go through with this if he knew it wouldn't be safe…*

"It's your choice," he reminded her.

Wynonna swallowed hard, taking a deep, shaky breath. "Okay."

"Okay?" Dolls raised his eyebrows. "You sure?"

Wynonna looked up, biting her lip. "Yeah. I'm sure."
"Alright, then…I'll go set it up." He began to move toward the back room when Wynonna called out to him.

"Wait!"

Dolls promptly turned back around, seeing Wynonna quickly pulling out her phone.

"There's someone else who should be here, too."

-------

"You still in?"

"What?"

"The call. Are you still in?"

"…"

"Doc?"

"It's up to you."

"But you're part of this, too."

"Only if you want me to be."

"I do."

"…"

"Doc?"

"I'll be there as soon as I can."

-------

Wynonna pocketed her phone. "He'll be here soon."

"I'll go set up the call, then." Dolls turned on his heel, heading toward the back office. Jeremy lingered out front with Wynonna.

"I'll be out here monitoring the line, in case anything weird starts to show up," said Jeremy, a nervous edge to his voice. He looked down at his sneakers. "Wynonna, I'm sorry. I just thought that after what we talked about with the--"

"Jeremy," Wynonna held up her hand to stop him. "It's okay. I know you were just trying to help. Don't beat yourself up about it. I'm sorry for yelling at you." She grasped his shoulder. "And thank you. We wouldn't've been able to pull this off without you."
Jeremy smiled gratefully back at her. "I just don't want you to think I'd ever put Alice in danger, but I'll make sure she and Gus stay safe...wherever they are."

"And the second anything weird happens?"

"I pull the trigger, punch a few buttons, and the line disappears. Forever," said Jeremy resolutely.

"Good."

At that moment, Doc burst into the Black Badge office, out of breath and dusted with snow, catching the attention of Jeremy and Wynonna.

"Did you run here?" asked Wynonna incredulously.

Doc, doubled over trying to catch his breath, didn't answer.

"I should go help Dolls," said Jeremy hesitantly. "Need to monitor the connection until you're ready..." He followed Doll's trail, leaving Wynonna and Doc alone.

Doc, now standing upright again, dusted the snow off his jacket. Wynonna walked over to him, wiping some of the snow off the brim of his hat.

"Thanks for coming," she said.

"Oh, I wouldn't miss this for anything," he said, his breathing still evening out.

"I'm sorry about yesterday," said Wynonna quietly, dusting the last bit of snow off his shoulder. "And all of this."

Doc shook his head. "There's no need to apologize. You were doing what you thought was right for our daughter."

"I still don't know if it is," said Wynonna. She stepped back from him, leaning against a desk. She crossed her arms over her chest, her eyes trailing to the floor.

"Of course it is," Doc scoffed. "I didn't think you were actually going to go through with this."

"Yeah, well. It's Christmas," Wynonna shrugged dismissively.

"Awful nice Christmas present," said Doc softly. He perched on top of the desk across from Wynonna, his hands resting on his belt. "And unless I am mistaken...this'll be the first time the three of us will be together."

"Don't," Wynonna shook her head briskly, feeling a hot set of tears threatening to appear. "You know she's not going to remember us anyway."

"Makes no difference to me," Doc shrugged. He hung his head. "I just wish it could've been different for her."

"Me, too."

Jeremy poked his head around the door to the back office, knocking on the wood of the threshold to get their attention. "It's...it's all set up," he said solemnly.

Wynonna turned to Doc, offering her hand to him. "You ready?"
Doc took her hand. "I am all in."

Together, Doc and Wynonna followed Jeremy into the back office, where a plain laptop sat on the table. Dolls knelt beside the table, toying with wires running from the laptop.

"You ready, boss?" Jeremy asked, ushering Doc and Wynonna into the room.

Dolls nodded as he rose to his feet. "It's just a temporary connection," he informed them. "This far out in the country, it's hard to keep a line stable, not to mention for how far we have to throw the call…With as many firewalls as we have up, I can promise you twenty minutes, tops, before the line collapses. I'm sorry I can't get you more time."

"You've done more than enough," said Doc, offering Dolls a small smile.

Dolls pursed his lips. "All you need to do is press 'Take Call'. That'll patch you through to Gus." He squeezed Wynonna's arm and clapped Doc on the shoulder.

"One more thing," Wynonna caught Dolls by the arm as he exited the room.

"Anything."

"Please…Never do anything like this again. Not until…not until it's all over," she said, her tone steady and serious. "Whatever information you have, destroy it. Then destroy it again. Burn the damn laptop if you have to. We can't let anything about their whereabouts slip through the cracks."

Dolls nodded understandingly. "I promise. And I'm sorry."

"I know." She stood on her toes to plant a slow kiss on his cheek. "Thank you."

Dolls smiled down at her. "Tell Alice 'hi' from me." Without another word, Dolls and Jeremy left them, closing the door behind them.

They were left in silence, save for the soft beeping of the "Call Waiting" message on the screen of the laptop.

Wynonna looked at Doc anxiously; he gestured to the two chairs set up at the table. Slowly, they sat down. Doc removed his hat, setting it on the table beside the laptop. He ran a hand over his hair, smoothing it back.

"She might not recognize you without your hat," Wynonna nudged, in an attempt to relieve the tension. Doc offered her a small, sympathetic smile in return.

"You're pretty banged up yourself." Doc gestured to the scratches on her cheek.

"Nah, I'll look the same. Got my face smacked against a pool table right before she was born, remember?"

Doc's smile faltered, remembering the chaos surrounding his daughter’s birth…the Widows…Clootie’s resurrection… Rosita's betrayal…

"Whenever you're ready," came Jeremy's voice from the other room, reminding them that they had very little time left.

Wynonna reached for the computer, her fingers hovering over the keyboard. She looked at Doc one more time. He gave the smallest of nods.
Wynonna leaned over and gently pressed a kiss to the corner of his mouth. She leaned back to see tears shining in his eyes.

"Merry Christmas, John Henry."

Wynonna reached over and tapped the mouse.

*~RETRIEVING CALL~*

Suddenly, Gus McCready's face appeared on the screen before them. She sat, alone, in a warmly lit room, a Christmas tree and a fireplace framed in the background behind her. "Well, would you look at the two of you."

Wynonna let herself smile at the familiar face. "Hello, Gus."

"Ma'am." Doc nodded curtly.

"Never thought I'd see much of you two again, much less under these circumstances," said Gus, cracking a smile of her own.

"They say you can take the girl out of Purgatory…" Wynonna shrugged. "And you did just kind of…up and leave after you sold Shorty's."

"You know, when the demons come calling, you need to know when it's time to throw in the towel," Gus sighed.

"Well, Doc owns Shorty's now, so…we managed to at least keep it in the family."

"Kept most of Wyatt's possessions in the bar," Doc commented. "The people seem to like that…"

Wynonna's focus quickly faded away from the conversation. He fingers fidgeted in her lap. Her eyes flitted to the clock on the wall. Time seemed to quicken. The line could drop at any moment…

"Gus…" Wynonna interjected. Gus stopped mid-sentence, looking between Wynonna and Doc. Wynonna bit her lip, unsure of how to proceed. "Could we…?"

"Yeah, I suppose it's not me you're really hoping to see." Gus paused again, sensing the apprehension on the other side of the line. She gave them a kind, knowing smile. "I'll go get her."

Time slowed to a snail's pace when Gus disappeared. Wynonna's leg bounced nervously. She felt her pulse quicken, her throat tighten. She felt Doc reach over to give her arm a reassuring squeeze.

"Here she is…Kid sleeps like a rock, I tell ya…"

Wynonna didn't hear the rest of what Gus said. Her breath caught in her chest when Gus came back into view, settling back in her chair, carrying a sleeping Alice Michelle.

Wynonna fell in love with her daughter all over again.

Gus had her dressed in red, green, and white-striped pajamas. Soft, dark curls sprouted from her head, framing her peaceful, sleeping face. Wynonna studied every feature, familiar and new at the same time. Her tiny hand, curled into a fist, shoved into her mouth. Her long eyelashes. Her little button nose…

After a few moments of silence, the infant stirred, blinking awake, revealing bright blue eyes. They
searched around before finally landing on Wynonna.

Wynonna felt her chest tighten as she locked eyes with her daughter.

She slowly reached over to grab Doc's hand. He squeezed back.

This little girl…their little girl…she was okay. She was more than okay…

Gus stayed quiet, letting the moment unfold between the little family, together for the very first time.

"H-…Hi," Wynonna spoke softly, even though her voice trembled. "Hi, Alice. I'm your m-mom." She gave a tentative wave to the screen. At her voice, the infant on the other side of the call turned her head in interest, as if she recognized it. She let out a tiny, contented coo.

Doc cleared his throat before speaking, mustering up some semblance of composure. "Hi there, sweetheart. I'm your daddy," he said, his voice cracking. Wynonna squeezed his hand again.

Another pause. Alice looked around for the new voice as well.

"She recognizes your voices," Gus chimed in.

Wynonna's chest ached, her stomach clenching with deep sadness and longing. Alice shouldn't know her voice. That meant she knew Wynonna. She would ask about her…But there was still some part of her that wanted Alice to know about her…to know everything about her and her crazy family…

"She's gotten bigger," said Doc, and Wynonna immediately flashed back to the moment, months ago, lying on a pool table cradling her newborn daughter. Now, just a few months later, her daughter was giggling and fussing and smiling and fascinated with everything around her.

"Babies tend to do that," Gus replied. She reached behind the screen and handed Alice a teddy bear to occupy her. Alice let out an excited squeal as she grabbed onto it, breaking out into a smile.

"You gonna smile for us?" she heard Doc chuckle beside her. A halfhearted smile pulled at the corners of Wynonna's mouth.

Gus and Doc continued to chat aimlessly, but Wynonna couldn't talk. She just wanted to stare at the tiny human fussing in Gus's arms. As long as time would allow. Eventually, Wynonna watched as her eyes darted around every time she heard her daddy's voice. As her fingers curled tighter around the fur of the teddy bear. Wynonna watched as Alice settled against Gus's chest once more, her eyelids drooping as she nodded off to sleep. As her breathing evened out, her tiny belly rising and falling in a steady rhythm. As her lips twitched as she dreamed.

Still, Wynonna watched. She could never watch enough.

Her fingers yearned to reach through the screen and pluck the child from Gus's arms, to bring her back to her family where she could be loved by all these people in this weird little town.

But she still wouldn't be safe.

That's why she's there…and not here.

Someday?

Wynonna's stomach dropped when she heard Gus's voice begin to cut in and out, the picture
becoming staticky.

Their time was running out.

Gus suddenly looked worried. The same appeared to be happening on the other end of the line.

"I think we're losing the line," Doc said quietly.

Wynonna gave a faint nod. But she couldn't bring herself to tear her eyes from the tiny being in Gus's arms—a tiny, perfect little human who was thriving in her life outside the Ghost River Triangle.

She had made the right decision after all. Her choice didn't screw up her kid.

"Don't suppose we'll be doin' this anytime soon," Doc's low voice pulled Wynonna from her trance.

"Suppose not," said Gus solemnly. "Dolls informed me that this was kind of a one-time deal...until you, Wynonna, get all this demon nonsense figured out."

The stream fizzled in and out again.

"I guess this is good-bye, then. For now." Gus smiled sadly at them.

"Yeah. For now," said Wynonna quietly. "Bye, Gus. Thank you. Again. For everything."

Gus nodded solemnly. "We'll be here waiting for you. Give my best to everyone else." She raised the baby's tiny fist to wave at the camera, just gentle enough to not wake her. "Say good-bye to your mama and daddy."

Doc waved at the screen. "We love you, darlin'. We'll see you soon," he said, his voice thick.

Tears stung at the corners of Wynonna's eyes as she gave a small wave back. "Bye, Alice." She felt her throat tighten. "We all love you so much, baby girl." She pressed a kiss to her fingers, then touched them against the screen, against the image of her daughter.

The screen crackled one more time, then went dark, Wynonna’s hand still pressed to the screen.

Doc and Wynonna sat in silence, watching the screen of the computer power down. Wynonna pulled her hand back, setting it in her lap. Doc slowly shut the laptop. He settled back in his chair. He let out a long exhale.

"Merry Christmas, little girl."

Those were the words that finally broke the dam. Wynonna's face crumpled as she collapsed on the table, her body shaking, her sobs echoing around the room. Doc rested a hand on top of hers, his other hand resting on her back. He bowed his head next to hers, his own tears dripping down his face.

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When Waverly rolled up the driveway of the homestead, she found Nicole's car parked in front of the house. She could see the lights of the Christmas tree through the front window.

The house was warm, she could smell spices mixed with the wood of a fire crackling away in the
fireplace wafting through the rooms as she stepped inside. It relaxed her, having someone--Nicole--to come home to…

“That you, Waves?”

“Yeah, it’s me.” Waverly felt herself smile as she toed off her boots. She rounded the corner into the living room, finding Nicole sprawled on the couch with a steaming mug, a blanket draped over her legs.

"Hey, you," Nicole called over her shoulder. “How’d it go?” She pulled her legs up, making room for Waverly.

“I mean,” Waverly sighed as she sank onto the couch. “We got him.”

“Waverly, that’s so great.” Nicole set her mug on the floor, scooting over to be closer to Waverly. She craned her neck to look back toward the door. “Is Wynonna…?”

“Still at the station. She’ll be home…later, I think.” Waverly bit her lip, her eyes avoiding Nicole.

"Waves, what's going on?" Nicole asked worriedly.

"Dolls set up a call so Wynonna could see Alice for Christmas."

"Oh," Nicole raised her eyes in surprise. "But I thought we already--"

"We did," Waverly confirmed, shrugging her shoulders. "But I guess Dolls wanted to go that extra step…" She trailed off, gnawing on her bottom lip.

Nicole snaked an arm around Waverly's shoulder, pulling her close. Waverly rested her head on her shoulder, her arm finding its way around Nicole's middle.

"You miss her, don't you?" Nicole asked after they sat in silence for a bit. She felt Waverly nodded against her shoulder. Nicole smoothed her hair down, resting her cheek on the top of Waverly's head. "That's why we had our plan, though, right?"

Waverly nodded. She leaned in and planted a sweet kiss to Nicole's lips, resting her chin on Nicole's shoulder. "Thank you, for everything you did to help get her out of here."

"Waves, it's been months..."

"I know," said Waverly. "But you didn't have to do any of this."

"Oh, sure I did." Nicole smiled at Waverly. "Gotta take care of my Earp girls. All of you." She pressed a kiss to her temple. “And, I know what might cheer you up…” Nicole rose from the couch and crossed the room, snatching a still-wrapped present from under the tree. She settled back on the couch, handing the gift out to Waverly. “From me, to you.”

Waverly grinned, her eyes lighting up. “I have something for you, too!” she exclaimed. She bounded over to the tree as well, grabbing the box that had been sitting, unknowingly, next to Nicole's. She sat back on the couch, cross-legged, across from Nicole.

“Waves, you should open yours first.” Waverly held out her box to Nicole.

"If I must…” Nicole cracked a crooked smile, setting her gift to Waverly aside. "If I must…” Waverly handed over the box, her hands quickly retreating to her lap, where they nervously...
fidgeted with her rings. "I hope...you don't think it's too much," said Waverly quietly.

"I'm sure it's perfect, Waves," said Nicole. She gave her knee a reassuring squeeze and continued to unwrap her present. Undoing Waverly's careful wrapping job revealed a plain black box. Nicole opened it, pulling tissue paper aside. When she laid eyes on the contents, her face broke out in a huge grin. She pulled her gift out of the box to examine it better.

"I know that it's late for this year...but hopefully you can use it next year," said Waverly.

It was a simple flannel stocking, a deep maroon color, embroidered with silver and gold stars and swirls. At the top, in shimmering gold thread, was her name.

“Oh, Waves...” Nicole breathed, holding the stocking out in front of her.

"It's kind of a family tradition," said Waverly timidly, watching Nicole look over the stocking. "Every new person, whether someone's born or, you know, becomes part of the family...they get a Christmas stocking. There’s a lady in town who’s been making them for years...my mom got mine and Wynonna's from her. I don't know if you have one at your house or had one growing up, but...I wanted you to have one. And, if Calamity Jane is hell-bent on destroying all things Christmas, you can keep it here at the homestead Because you're a part of the family. My family." Nicole glanced down at the stocking again, running her fingers over the sparkling gold of her name.

Nicole peeled her eyes away from her gift to look at Waverly. "Did you design this?"

Waverly nodded. "I thought something you'd like something simple. Classic. And, if you don't like it, I can take It back and—"

Nicole cut her off by capturing Waverly's lips in a kiss, a hand resting against Waverly's cheek.

"Waves, I love it," said Nicole quietly once they parted.

"You do?"

"Yeah, I do. I really do. I haven't had one in a couple years. The stocking I had as a kid got lost in a move." She leaned forward again to press a sweet kiss to Waverly's lips. "Thank you, baby."

"And you don't care that you have to wait until next year to use it?" asked Waverly.

"Not in the slightest," Nicole replied, kissing Waverly again. "And until then..." Nicole stood up, crossing the room back toward the staircase, where all the other stockings were hung. She hung hers right next to Waverly's. "There. Right where it belongs." Waverly grinned back at her from the couch.

Nicole returned to the couch, snatching up her box, and presenting it to Waverly. "Merry Christmas, Waverly."

Waverly looked at Nicole expectantly as she ran her finger under the taped seams of the package. But Nicole was unreadable, composed, waiting patiently for Waverly to unwrap her gift. Waverly tore the paper off, revealing a black patent leather book. Waverly smiled, looking up at Nicole, also smiling shyly.

"I think you should see what's inside."

Waverly undid the clasp and cracked open the book. On the inside cover, written in Nicole's careful curly penmanship: Where you go, I go...as long as you'll have me.
Waverly flipped through the first few pages of the book, finding pictures of her and Nicole. The Solstice Party. A picture of them that Waverly insisted on taking when she dressed in her Blue Devils cheer uniform. Waverly curled up with a book on Nicole's couch, Calamity Jane nestled next to her. Waverly thumbed through the rest of the pages, finding them all blank, save for a few inscriptions written under blank picture spaces. Stargazing. First Anniversary. Rock Climbing. Our Trip to the Ocean.

Waverly tore her eyes from the book, looking up at Nicole. "Baby…"

"I have some money saved up. I thought, you know…" Nicole rubbed the back of her neck. "For how crazy this last year has been…we can maybe spend next year making some good memories. And now that we know you can leave the Triangle…"

Nicole was cut off by Waverly's lips crashing against hers. Waverly kissed her with such vigor that Nicole nearly fell back against the arm of the couch. Nicole let out a yelp as she steadied herself, but Waverly continued to kiss her. With one arm she steadied herself, her other hand finding its way to the nape of Waverly's neck.

When they broke apart. Waverly's eyes were watery. “I take it you like your present,” Nicole chuckled, brushing away stray tears that fell down Waverly’s cheek.

"This is probably the sweetest thing anyone has ever done for me." Waverly ran her fingers through Nicole's hair, resting her hand in the crook of her neck. “You really want to take me to all of these places?”

Nicole nodded. "I remember the day you locked me in Nedley's office…” A furious blush crept into Waverly's cheeks. "…you told me the things that you wanted to do, things that scared you. And I thought maybe…you'd want to do them together…Except skydiving. I'm drawing the line at skydiving."

Waverly crinkled her nose in disappointment.

"But," Nicole rested her hands on Waverly's arms, "I'll be on the ground, waiting for you, watching you fly."

Waverly looked back down at the photo album, scanning the pages once more and smiling to herself. "You forgot one important event, though," said Waverly playfully.

Nicole's smile dropped, worry flashing in her eyes. "What did I forget?"

Waverly just smiled, pulling her phone out of her pocket. "Our first Christmas." She leaned in, extending her arm to frame her and Nicole in view of the camera.

"Merry Christmas, Nicole." Waverly planted a sweet kiss on Nicole's cheek as she snapped the photo. She hoped she was able to catch the adorable look of surprise on Nicole's face.

She pulled away, smiling at her girlfriend, still blushing from Waverly's sweet gesture. She pulled Nicole closer to her, their lips meeting. Waverly slid onto Nicole's lap. Nicole shifted her legs up onto the couch, wrapping her arms around Waverly. She stroked Waverly's hair as she snuggled against her chest. She pressed a kiss to the crown of her head.

"Merry Christmas, Waverly." Waverly relaxed into Nicole's arms, letting her eyes sink shut, Nicole's steady heartbeat lulling her to sleep…

It wasn't long, however, until the rumbling of an engine disrupted their quiet moment. They both
sat up in alarm, illuminated by the headlights shining through the window.

Waverly and Nicole both rose from the couch and crossed the room, pulling back the curtain to investigate.

"It's just Wynonna," said Waverly, relaxing back against Nicole.

Footsteps resonated on the porch. Waverly furrowed her brow, listening for them to enter the house. They never did. Waverly drew the curtains, stepping away from the window.

"I should probably go check on her," said Waverly apologetically, looking up at Nicole. "I won't be long. I promise."

Nicole smiled, wrapping her arms around Waverly's waist. "Don't worry about it. Your sister's gonna need you, I think."

Waverly nodded, but still couldn't manage a smile.

"Hey." Nicole lifted Waverly's drooping chin with her finger. "I love you."

"I love you, too."

Nicole gathered her in her arms, stroking the back of her head. She pressed a kiss to her temple. Nicole retreated upstairs to the warmth of Waverly's bed with its three duvet covers and a peaceful Christmas night's slumber, as Waverly headed for the frigid embrace of outside. She grabbed her coat and a blanket before heading out the door.

She found Wynonna sat in one of the wicker chairs, knees gathered up on the seat, staring off into the distance, past the boundary of the homestead. Her eyes were puffy, dried tear tracks stained her cheeks. She barely acknowledged Waverly as she approached. Waverly sat down in the chair beside her.

Waverly offered her the quilt. Receiving no reply, she sat down in the chair next to her. She draped it over the both of them, letting the quiet of the night settle around them. Waverly shivered as a breeze wafted across the porch, and she snuggled deeper under the blanket.

"Wynonna?"

Wynonna hummed in response.

"Are you okay?"

No response.

"How was it?" Waverly continued warily. "Did everything…go alright?"

"Yeah," Wynonna finally replied, her voice barely above a whisper. She kept her gaze forward.

"Any problems at all?"

Wynonna shook her head.

Waverly sat back in her chair, drawing the blanket tighter around her.

Silence filled the space between and around the Earp sisters like the snow had settled on the ground beyond the porch, but there was something that was begging to fill the silence as well.
Waverly, with questions she was scared to ask; Wynonna, with answers she was scared to give.

"So…How was she?"

Wynonna's chin trembled, her gaze still facing forward. "She's amazing," she shrugged, her voice thick. "She already looks so different. Gus…Gus has been taking really good care of her." She pursed her lips, tears spilling over again. "She's beautiful. Doc says she looks like me. Got the Earp hair and everything. She's got his eyes, though."

Waverly reached over to wipe the tears off her sister's face. Wynonna finally turned to look at her.

"I wish you had seen her, too," said Wynonna in earnest, touching her forehead to her sister's. "She looked so…happy. And that's what she deserves. She deserves to have a quiet life."

Waverly leaned against Wynonna, linking their arms together. "You're not still mad at Jeremy are you? Even though he told Dolls?"

Wynonna shook her head again. "No. It's not all his fault. I was the one who asked him to track down Gus and Alice in the first place. He just made it easier for Dolls…" Wynonna shifted in her seat to face Waverly proper. "I guess if he thought he could discretely send a package to them then setting up a non-detectable communications line could be possible, too."

"Just shows how much we all miss her. We all wanted to make sure that she knows we love her, even when she doesn’t know us. That's a pretty lucky little girl…I can't believe we actually pulled it off," Waverly said.

"Me neither," Wynonna replied.

"Does that mean she got our present?" asked Waverly hopefully.

Wynonna nodded. "I saw it hanging up on Gus's fireplace. With her name on it and everything." She looked at Waverly, another tear sliding down her face. "Thanks for believing that she deserved at least one Earp tradition."

"She's our baby, Wynonna. We can't let her forget us." Waverly quickly wiped the tears away. "What about the teddy bear?"

"She was holding onto it the whole time. Stetson and all." The corner of Wynonna's mouth twitched upward. "That was…really sweet of Nicole."

"We all miss her, Wynonna," Waverly sighed. "You still think it was the right decision?"

"To send her away?"

Waverly nodded wordlessly.

"After what happened earlier?" Wynonna stood up and wandered over to the railing, leaning against one of the posts. "Of course I do. These Revenants…they come out of nowhere. Sure, that one tonight was easy. But they aren't all easy…"

Waverly stood up and crossed the porch to join her sister.

"Tonight, when we cornered the guy in the woods, and I looked into his eyes, and…all I could think of was Alice. I was scared. Thinking about what would happen if they found her…or if, by some sick twist of fate, she'd have to become the Earp heir, too. That's why I stormed out to hunt
down a rogue Revenant because that's my job…and I'll be damned if that little girl ever has to do it, too."

"Do you think we'll ever get her back?"

"If, by that, you mean I'll break the curse, then yes," said Wynonna

"That's not what I asked, though," said Waverly pointedly.

Wynonna shrugged, taking a deep breath. "I don't know. Even after the curse is broken…What am I supposed to do? I can't raise a kid. She's still better off with Gus."

"You don’t have to do it alone," Waverly insisted. She rested her hand on Wynonna's arm. "Don't ever think for a second that you'd have to do this by yourself. You have me and Doc and Jeremy and Nicole--"

"Already recruiting your girlfriend for baby-sitting duties?" Wynonna teased.

Waverly nudged Wynonna playfully. "My point is…whatever happens, whatever you decide, we'll all be here. When you break the curse…and you decide to bring her back or let her live her life outside the Ghost River Triangle…Even if we have to wait ten, twenty years for that day to come…” She wrapped her arms around her sister, resting her head against her shoulder. Wynonna leaned into her sister.

"Whenever it comes…we'll be waiting for her."

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And you won't understand
But you will learn someday
That wherever you are and whatever you face
These are the people who'll make you feel safe in this world
My sweet blue-eyed girl

And if, my baby girl,
When you're twenty-one or thirty-one
And Christmas comes around
And you find yourself nine-thousand miles from home
You'll know whatever comes

Your brothers and sisters and me and your mum
We'll be waiting for you in the sun
Whenever you come
We'll be waiting for you in the sun

Chapter End Notes

There it is, fam. Your Wynonna Christmas Special.

This was an immense pleasure and challenge to write. Thanks for tagging along for the ride.
Thank you to everyone who's read and commented so far. It really means a lot.

The lyrics at the end are from Tim Minchin's "White Wine in the Sun", which is where I also got the title for this work. Give it a listen.

Thanks for the love <3

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