'Twas the Night Before Christmas...
by mydeira

Summary

Who can ever sleep on Christmas Eve?

Notes

Written for jacklemmon for the LJ btvs_santa 2004 secret Santa fic exchange.

While Andrew knew there really wasn’t a Santa Claus, he still felt guilty being up long past midnight on Christmas Eve. Well, technically it was Christmas Day. But you say potato, I say potato. No wonder people thought he was strange. He even sounded like an idiot to himself most of the time. But things had slowly been getting better with the Watcher training and everything. Even some of the slayers seemed to respect him. That was nice for a change. And a few of them even listened to his stories. He might be somebody someday after all.

His train of thought was currently derailed as he tripped on the living room rug and landed flat on his face.

“Ow!” he cried, realizing too late that everyone else in the house was asleep except him. Good one, Andrew. So much for respect.
“I should have known,” he heard a chuckle, and looked up to see tall man looming over him, shadowed by the firelight. Then he recognized the voice.

“Xander!” he jumped up excitedly, nearly knocking them both over as he gave his fellow fighter in the good fight a crushing hug. Or as crushing as his one hundred and thirty-five pound frame would let him give. “We didn’t think you’d make it!”

Xander hugged him back before stepping back and smiling good-naturedly. “Thought I’d surprise everyone.”

Andrew took some pride in the fact that this had all been his idea. Since Sunnydale had fallen nearly two years earlier, the great warriors who survived the destruction of the Hellmouth had hardly spoken to each other as they spread out across the world to train and guide the new slayers that had arisen. It was when everyone had come together last spring to help clean up the mess made by Angel and his misguided band that Andrew had seen how much the Sunnydaleans missed each other. So he’d started plotting and eventually brought the plan to Mr. Giles to stage a great Christmas gathering. He helped sell the idea with the fact that it would be a prime time to plan out strategies for the coming year.

The only one who had been any trouble winning over to the idea was Xander. Once they’d been able to get a hold of him. Xander had become like the Man With No Name. He walked alone, traveling from village to village, doing what needed to be done, then moving on. Those last few weeks in Sunnydale had left more than physical scars on the talented carpenter, the man who had grown to accept and embrace his abilities as a normal human. A life he should have shunned for all the pain it caused him, he instead embraced, losing himself in it and drawing away from his friends. In the end he had politely declined the offer, saying that while it was a great idea, there was just too much going on for him to get away just now. But here he—

“Andrew? Hey, Andrew!” Xander shook him.

Andrew came back to the present.

“You’re narrating again, aren’t you?”

He blushed.

“Just tell me I wasn’t Clint Eastwood again.”
“Um...”

Xander shook his head, smiling. “Don’t ever change, Andrew.”

“So, how was your trip? Did you have to ride with chickens this time?” Andrew asked, trying for some normal conversation.

“Pigs and one poor cow. I think it mooed the entire time. But hey, guess it proves that pigs do fly,” he joked.

And that was why Andrew liked Xander. They thought alike. And it really seemed that Xander actually understood him. At least he got the nerd references.

“And what are you doing up this late?” Xander questioned him.

“I can never sleep at Christmas. Stupid, isn’t it,” he replied sheepishly. “I know Santa won’t come and there won’t be gifts under the tree from him in the morning, but I still can’t help hoping.”

“Well, according to Giles, there is a Sicht Nikl’aos demon in Norway that dresses in red and likes to sneak down people’s chimneys. But it usually takes things.”

“Oh! Since you’re here,” Andrew ran over to the tree and poked through the gifts until he found the gift he’d gotten Xander. He carried it over to the coffee table. “I was going to mail it out tomorrow if you didn’t show. But I’m an incurable optimist and thought you might show up at the last minute.”

Xander joined him. “This isn’t a good time of year to be alone. Plus getting to see everyone, definitely of the good. They did make it, didn’t they?”

“Dawn and Buffy have been here for about a week. And Willow flew in alone yesterday.”

“Her and Kennedy really did break up then?”
“Right after L.A.,” Andrew informed him. “Willow says it’s because the sex was so great that she didn’t realize sooner. Eep! I mean, um…”

“Relax, Andrew. Though I am surprised Will would tell you something like that.”

“You should have seen the look on Mr. Giles’ face when she said it. Even Buffy was shocked.”

“Willow’s come a long way. We all have, I guess,” he sighed. Then looking at the gift, he asked, “You want me to open this now?”

“Yeah, kinda, if you would,” Andrew pleaded. “I’d rather get laughed at in private.”

Xander gave him “the look.” The look that said, don’t underestimate yourself Andrew, you’re a good guy. Or so he liked to think.

“Hey, my grandma used to wrap my presents like this,” Xander said, tracing the boxes of Sunday morning comics. “It served the double duty of keeping you entertained while you had to wait your turn. That and she was too cheap to buy wrapping paper.”

Great, Xander thought he was cheap. But the smile he had didn’t say he was upset.

Soon the paper was off and Xander was opening the box.

“Andrew, you didn’t!” he gasped, picking up the first edition, mint copy of Giant-Size X-Men #1. “How did you get this?”

“Where else do you get that hard to find gift? Ebay,” Andrew said.

“This must have cost you a fortune!” Xander looked at the book with awe.

“I actually got it in a trade. So not as much as you think.”
“But still... Andrew, this is too much, I can’t accept it.”

“Why not? Don’t you like it?”

“Don’t I like it? I’ve only wanted this since I knew what comic books were. But Andrew, this is—don’t you want it for yourself?”

“Who wouldn’t? But those are the best gifts to give,” he said simply.

“I could kiss you, you know that?”

“Not your type, remember,” Andrew teased, ignoring the thrill that went through him at the thought of Xander kissing him. Maybe in some parallel universe. But in this one, wouldn’t happen.

“I have always had a thing for blonds,” Xander teased back.

“So that is why you kept Spike in your basement. I owe him ten bucks.”

“There will be no collecting of bets!” he protested. “Spike was there because Giles’ girlfriend was in town.”

“Sure he was.”

“And he dyes his hair.”

“Then you’re saying if he really was a natural blond that he would have been there because you wanted him to be?”

“I didn’t say that!” Xander sputtered.
“You’re cute when you’re flustered, Xander.” As soon as he said it, Andrew had the “Oh shit, I didn’t just say that out loud” moment. “Uh, I mean, that, um...well, I think it’s time I went to bed. Up too late and look at the crazy things I say! Yeesh, I tell you. Glad you like the gift. I’m going now.”

He jumped from the couch and ran from the room. Or attempted to run from the room, but collided with the doorjamb.

“Damnit!” Could he not be clumsy, just once in his life?

“Andrew.”

He felt a hand grip his shoulder firmly and turn him around. He didn’t look at Xander. Couldn’t look at Xander. Not when he was such an idiot.

“Andrew.” A bit more forceful this time, leaving him no choice but to look up. “I have one eye. I’m not blind.”

Andrew blinked.

“I’ve suspected awhile. There’s nothing to be ashamed of,” he said softly.

“Don’t tell the others, okay? I’d never hear the end of it.”

“I wouldn’t do that to you, Andrew. Yeah, you used to get on my nerves from time to time, but that’s no way to pay you back.”

“So, we’re cool then?” he asked hesitantly.

“You’re the only person around this place who gets my off the wall references. Of course we’re cool,” Xander looked at him unblinkingly and Andrew knew he was telling the truth.
Andrew let out a deep breath. “Okay. Well, Merry Christmas, Xander.”

And with that he turned to make a more proper exit, but he didn’t go anywhere. Xander’s hand was still on his shoulder.

“Andrew.”

“What?”

Xander nodded up.

Andrew looked and cringed. Could this night get any more embarrassing?

“I exempt you from the mistletoe rule, Xander,” Andrew reassured him. “It’s a stupid tradition.”

But instead of replying, Xander leaned forward and kissed him. On the lips. Xander was actually kissing him. On the lips! And it wasn’t a quick peck either. No, it was a real kiss, firm but gentle.

After an eternity, Xander stepped back with a goofy grin. “Merry Christmas, Andrew.”

Andrew had never had a merrier Christmas in all his life.

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