

She Made it Nice:  
Merry Christmas, Dorinda

by Corey Podell and Jamie Silberhartz

Dorinda knocked back a shot of Skinnygirl tequila and chased it with a glass of Ramona's Pinot Grigio before happily gliding over to the oven. Time to baste her ham. Dorinda loved Christmas, and she always made it nice. But this year, she was outdoing herself.

Bluestone Manor was decorated to the brim with every Christmas adornment one could imagine, but Dorinda was proudest of her special tree. She'd made one of her 16 trees a "family tree," decorated with family heirloom ornaments. The women in generations before Dorinda loved Christmas too. Hannah's childhood ornaments hung alongside pictures of Dorinda's parents; her sister, Melinda; and her love, John. She couldn't wait for all of them to see it.

Dorinda glanced up at the clock: 3:45pm?! She must have lost track of the time in her Christmas haze. John and her family should have arrived by now. She checked her phone—nothing. She tried calling Hannah, but couldn't get through. Bluestone Manor had everything a girl could want, except consistent cell coverage. But Dorinda wouldn't let worry ruin her Christmas Eve. There was probably traffic on I-87.

Dorinda believed worrying never helped a situation, so she continued with her day. It was close to her naptime. For years now, she took a daily 45-minute nap at 4pm. It was a particularly posh act of self-care that she picked up when she lived in Europe with her husband, Richard.

Since Dorinda forgot her luggage (again!), she didn't have her pajamas, so she dug through her closet and found a silk

nightgown, a gift from Richard. She pulled it over her head and climbed into bed, her heart tugging at the memory of how Richard bought this on their first trip to Dubai. Before she could imagine his kind eyes and warm smile, her head hit the pillow, and Dorinda was sound asleep.

Dorinda woke hours later with a start. The wind howled and tree branches violently hit the windows. She reached for her phone and saw numerous news alerts on the screen: "Nor'easter Hits New York," "Blizzard of the Year!"

Dorinda didn't even realize that a storm was coming. She hadn't checked the news or weather all month since the only media she consumed in December were Christmas movies, Christmas music, and Watch What Happens Live. But surely her family had gotten on the road in time?

That's when the texts from Hannah and John finally came through, even though they were sent hours before. They didn't make it out of the city in time. Neither did her parents or Melinda. There was no visibility on the roads, and the Governor declared a state of emergency. Stranded!

"Honey! Are you okay?" Dorinda practically screamed into the phone at Hannah.

Hannah assured her mother that everyone was fine; they were stuck in Dorinda's city apartment and would get to Bluestone as soon as they could. Dorinda could hardly breathe. She'd never spent a Christmas without her family, and she certainly never spent a Christmas alone. She choked back her tears and

told everyone she loved them on speaker right before her phone died. Damn it! She never remembered to charge it during naps!

Dorinda drifted like a zombie downstairs and into the kitchen. WHY?! Why was this happening to her? On any other day of the year, fine, but today of all days?!

What does one do alone on Christmas Eve, she wondered. “Drink. Drink the good stuff,” a small voice inside whispered. She knew it was the voice of God herself.

Dorinda followed heavenly direction and dusted off a bottle of 1990 Petrus. She and Richard got this wine for an anniversary, but Richard was gone before they were able to enjoy it together. After that, she never considered drinking it. Tonight, however, was different. “If not now, when?” she asked no one in particular.

Dorinda aimlessly walked around Bluestone, clinking her glass with every Santa decoration. “Cheers,” she winked at each one of the 93 St. Nicks. But nothing could cheer her up—Christmas was absolutely ruined.

She sank down into the couch and finished off the last of the wine while staring into the fire. That’s when she saw something from the corner of her eye.

“Who’s there?!” she yelped with the wine bottle raised high above her head. She would defend Bluestone to the death. “I’ll kill you and your whole family!” she slurred into the darkness.

“I certainly hope not,” replied a low, sophisticated, undeniably masculine voice.

Could it be? Dorinda slapped her own face to make sure she wasn’t hallucinating. Richard, her Richard, walked out of the darkness with a smile on his face.

“I always loved that nightgown on you,” he said, ignoring the wine stain splashed on the shoulder.

How could it be? Was he real? He certainly felt real. Or was he a ghost? She didn’t care. Richard, ghost or not, was here with her on Christmas.

True to form, he asked for a drink. Dorinda was horrified that she had finished their special bottle, but Richard just smiled, winked, and made himself a Skinnygirl cocktail.

Dorinda couldn’t take her eyes off of him; she was scared to blink or he might disappear. But the more they talked, the more she became herself. They sat on the bearskin rug in front of the fire for hours, catching up on the small details of life, as well as the big picture. Richard complained about politics just like he used to, and Dorinda talked about Hannah. They laughed and laughed.

After a bit, Richard became quiet. He cleared his throat and said, “Dorinda, I just want you to know I’m so proud of you. And I love John. He’s wonderful, and I give you my blessing, not that you needed it.”

Tears sprung from Dorinda's eyes. "I didn't need it, but I wanted it," she said, grabbing Richard's face in her hands before kissing him deeply.

Richard and Dorinda's chemistry was stronger than ever. He picked her up, brought her upstairs to the bedroom, and laid her down on the bed where they made love. Ghost love. Many people don't realize just how talented ghosts are at making love. Dorinda never felt like this before—it was amazing and other worldly.

"Are all ghosts this good in bed?" she asked as she mounted him for the fourth time. Eventually she fell asleep in his ghost arms, her Christmas lights illuminating her happy face.

Dorinda woke up the next morning feeling like she was on top of the world. She reached over to caress her ghost lover, Richard, but only felt a pillow. She opened her eyes to see she was all alone, again. As if her heart could break more this Christmas. Did she imagine the whole thing?

Wait...Dorinda sniffed the air. Bacon? Yes that was bacon she smelled wafting up from the kitchen. And coffee? Richard's favorite meal was breakfast. He was downstairs!

Dorinda tied her robe around her as she ran downstairs. "Darling!" she called out.

"There she is!" cried a loud and bombastic voice.

But it wasn't Richard's voice. Dorinda rubbed her sleep-filled

eyes, finally coming into focus on John, her John, flipping pancakes. She looked over to see her parents and Melinda doing the Times crossword puzzle over coffee at the table, and Hannah pouring coffee into a mug that read "#1 Daughter."

Dorinda was so confused but so happy. She loved Richard, but this was better than anything she could've imagined.

"How? When? Is it really you?" Dorinda asked as they all came to embrace her.

"Merry Christmas, Mom!" Hannah said.

"But the storm of the year?" Dorinda continued.

John explained that Dorinda's friends Ramona and Sonja were the ones who saved the day. Apparently, Sonja had a pilot friend who had a crush on Ramona. Ramona agreed to a date with him if he flew Dorinda's family to Bluestone during the blizzard. Ramona and Sonja knew how much Christmas meant to Dorinda, and they would both be arriving to Bluestone the next day after celebrating the holiday with their own daughters.

"They're not full of shit after all," Dorinda said to herself as she looked to the heavens, giving a silent prayer of thanks to her angel, Richard. He certainly had a hand in this Christmas miracle.

With her tangled sex hair, runny makeup, and ghost-sexed body, Dorinda raised her breakfast glass of Pinot Grigio.

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“Merry Christmas to us. We made it nice.”