

Christmas Eve at the Pie Hole

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*(Pushing Daisies) A lovely little bit of Christmas cheer involving a narrating dog and a pair of gloves.
Pairings: Chuck/Ned and onesided Olive/Ned **WARNING:** brief mild language*

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Veni Scripsi Vici

NOTES: Allo. This is currently my only Pushing Daisies fic. I wrote this a long time ago...around Christmas, actually! I thought I'd be interesting for Digby to narrate something. Rated for Emerson's foul mouth.

Christmas Eve at the Pie Hole

It's closing time at the Pie Hole (as in "shut your"). Ned, Chuck and Olive are in the back, closing everything down. I'm sitting under my favourite booth, chomping on some leftover piecrust. Rather good crust, actually. I hear footsteps coming toward me. I look up to see Ned walking over with my scratcher arm. I scoot myself back against one bench so he can slide into the other without touching me. I wait until I feel the wooden fingers relieve the itch on my back and then go back to scarfing down my crust.

"Hey, Digby?"

I swallow the rest of the crust and look up. The table is blocking my view. I turn around and hop onto the bench. I'm tempted to put my paws on the table or something cute like that. Olive and Chuck love it when I act cute. Ned would likely frown upon dog paws on the clean table, however, so this is as cute as I'm going to get. Oh, wait... I lied. I cock my head to just the right angle to show him I'm listening.

Perfect. This is as cute as I'm going to get.

"Digby, do you really mind that I don't touch you?" He looks sort of embarrassed and awkward. I want to tell him I don't mind. I don't want him to feel guilty or anything like that. But...the truth is... I do mind, a little. I see these other dogs and their masters all of the time. I see them wrestling and playing and being petted. We play, but it isn't the same. When we play fetch, I have to bring the toy back and set it a full six feet in front of him, then back off so he can pick it up again. He pets me, but not really. He has to use that wooden arm...device that doesn't even feel like real fingers. I can't jump on his bed at night. I'm not angry with him for the situation we're in. It isn't his fault that I wasn't paying attention. It isn't his fault that I didn't see the truck coming. He just wanted me back and I don't blame him. I'm glad that we've been together all these years. I just wish it could be different. I wish that we could play like normal dogs and people play. I wish he could pet me for real and not have to worry about losing me. I wish I could jump up and lick his face like I did when he was nine. I wish I could tell him all of this, but I can't. So I smile a doggie smile and cock my head the other way. It's my way of saying, "I don't mind, Ned. I wish that we could touch, but you're still my best friend."

He laughs quietly. "Good boy, Digby."

I hear the tinkle of the bell on the door. I crane my head around to see who's coming, but the who has already arrived at the table.

"Scootch over, dog," Emerson grumps at me. He looks very cold and very bothered. I think I'll stay right here.

Chuck comes out from behind the counter, holding something behind her back. "I think he'd prefer to be called by his own name." Yeah. You tell him, Chuck!

"I don't care what you call 'im as long as you can get the pooch to scootch," he grouses in his Emerson-ish way.

Chuck still comes to my defense. "What if the pooch doesn't want to scootch?" She leans over and scratches my ear. "You don't want to scootch, do you, Poochie?" I love this girl!

Emerson gives an exasperated smile. "Well, Poochie ain't been out in the freezing cold snow with a bunch of confused cops trying to get a dead guy out of a pond and freezing his @\$ off 'cause the hat he was making ain't done yet, has he? Now, he gonna scootch whether he wants to or—"

Ned breaks into the conversation. He looks a bit exasperated as well. "The topic of scootching pooches aside, did you say 'dead guy in a pond'?"

Emerson glares at me. Oh, no. I'm not backing down. He rolls his eyes and turns back to Ned. "Dead guy in a frozen pond. Took hours to get the guy out, so I had to stand there," he glares at me again, "the whole time. I swear it'll be New Year's before they find his damn head."

Ned swallows and raises his eyebrows. "His damn head?"

Emerson nods, still casting annoyed glances in my direction. "Yes. His damn head. And once they find his damn head, he'll be taking a little road trip down to the morgue, which we should also start doing right about now."

Ned sighs, waits for Chuck to move safely out of the way, and stands up. While Ned's at the coat rack, I lie down and roll over. I look at Emerson and Chuck upside down, my tongue lolling out of my mouth and my paws waving in the air.

"Aw," Chuck coos, scratching my chin. "Isn't he just the sweetest little Poochie?" She's deliberately trying to bother Emerson. I admire that in a person. Emerson just rolls his eyes again. Ned comes back over, pulling on his worn gloves. I don't know why he doesn't get rid of those. They're paper-thin and have countless holes in them.

"Is Dead Girl comin'?" Emerson asks, nodding toward Chuck.

"Not this time," she responds, still scratching my chin. "I promised Olive I'd help her wrap presents."

"Fine by me," Emerson grumbles. He's really having a bad day. Maybe I'll give him the seat when they get back. Maybe.

"But before you go," Chuck takes her hand out from behind her back, revealing a small package wrapped in candy cane striped paper and topped with a red bow. "Santa left something for you." She holds it out to Ned.

He takes it, giving her one of his lopsided smiles. "I know it's from you."

She smiles. "Ho, ho, ho?"

He laughs softly and tears the paper off. Inside the box is a pair of gloves. They look comparatively better than the one's he's wearing. His smile disappears, however. "Chuck, they're leather," he whispers, looking thankful and awkward at the same time. "You know I can't touch—"

"I know," she retorts, the sweet smile never leaving her face. "They're faux. Touch all you like."

The smile comes back to his face. "Thanks, Chuck." He looks like he wants to hug her. I know he does, but a smile has to be enough. He starts to take his holey old gloves off when Emerson butts in.

"I hate to ruin your touching little moment, but we got a dead guy to talk to."

Ned puts the box on the table, taking the gloves. "I'll put them on in the car. See you." They keep smiling at each other. How can two people smile so much? As Emerson and Ned walk out the door, I roll back onto my stomach and see Olive. She's leaning on the counter, staring wistfully at the door and looking rather melancholy. She snaps out of it after a few seconds and comes over to our table.

"Well, Dig-a-roo, it's just you, the girls, and the wrapping paper tonight." She scratches the back of my neck. Chuck joins in. In the middle of all the love I'm getting, I look up and notice that Chuck is still smiling. Is this girl ever unhappy?

That night is a monstrosity of fun. We are at Olive's apartment, which is quite cozy after you get past

the fact that everything matches the wallpaper. The girls are on the floor, wrapping presents and watching old movies. I'm alternating between the floor and the couch and I occasionally take a romp through the wrapping paper, prompting them to pet me for my awe-inspiring cuteness. It's good to be me.

When they've finished their wrapping, they make popcorn and join me on the couch. I assume a very comfortable position with my head in Chuck's lap and the rest of me in Olive's. It's really good to be me.

Halfway through Casablanca, there is a knock on the door. Chuck tries to stand up, but I'm not letting anyone disturb my luxury. "Who is it?" Olive yells. I cover my ear with my paw. She has a really loud voice for such a tiny body.

Ned voice, slightly muffled, comes through the door and into the room. "It's Ned. I'm here to pick up Digby." Olive promptly springs up from the couch. No! Olive! You're disturbing the luxury! She hurries to get the door, leaving me behind to fly up in the air and come back down onto the couch. My luxury thoroughly disturbed, Chuck and I hop down from the couch and go to greet Ned. Olive passes us, saying that Emerson's waiting downstairs and she's going to find his present. We stop a good way away from where he stands in the doorway. He winks at Chuck. That's odd. He never winks. Then, he kneels down and claps his hands together. "Come here, Digby." He's smiling again. I don't get it. He hasn't done this since he was a kid. "Come on, boy." I know I shouldn't. What if I die again? Why would Ned do that? He wouldn't. Would he? I want to stay, but basic canine instincts get the better of me. I slowly trot towards him. As soon as I'm right in front of him, he puts a hand on either side of my face and shakes my head back and forth, like I've seen other dog owners do. He then scratches my neck and my ears and my back. First I'm scared. Then I'm confused. Why am I not dead? How is he touching me? What's happening? He pats my side, smiling again. "Merry Christmas, Digby." That's when I notice. He's wearing the new gloves. I want to tell him how much that meant to me. I want to tell him how glad I am. I can't, so I'll show him. His hand is resting on his knee. I shove my nose under it, then gently close my jaws over his hand. A dog did this in a book. Chuck told me about it. The Call of the Wild, maybe? Whatever it was, when the dog did that to his master, it meant something special. That's what I want this to be. I want to show him how much I care, like he just did to me. After a few seconds, I let go of his hand. He smiles and stands up. I think he got the message. Merry Christmas, Ned.

Finis