

A man and a woman are shown in profile, facing each other. They are both wearing red Santa hats and red sweaters with white snowflake patterns. The man is holding a red Christmas ornament. They are standing next to a Christmas tree decorated with red and gold ornaments. The background is a warm, indoor setting.

**PG FORTE**

**COUNTING ON  
CHRISTMAS**

A scenic view of a snowy mountain landscape. In the foreground, there is a calm lake reflecting the sky and the buildings. The middle ground shows several houses with snow-covered roofs and chimneys, surrounded by evergreen trees. In the background, there are snow-covered mountains under a clear blue sky.

**An LA Love Lessons Short Story**

# **Counting on Christmas**

**PG Forte**

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## Part One

*Mike*

“I still don’t know how I let you talk me into this,” I groused as I navigated the snow-covered road leading into Big Bear, California. ‘This’ was leaving Los Angeles, where we both had perfectly comfortable homes, and driving up into the mountains so that we could spend Christmas in the snow. I was missing my home, I was missing my pet parrot, most of all, I was missing my Jaguar. The SUV we’d rented for the trip might have been more practical in light of the weather and the mountainous terrain, but it sure didn’t compare to the Jag in terms of comfort or handling. “If snow at Christmas was such a big deal for you, I’m surprised you ever left the Midwest.”

Claire didn’t bother to respond; there was really no reason why she should. She just smiled at me from the passenger seat, shaking her head, rolling her eyes at the absurdity of my complaints...and wearing that sweater. We both knew how endlessly grateful I was that she had not stayed where she’d been born-and-raised. If she had, we never would have met, she never would have had the film career that made her a star, and I would have missed out on my life-long obsession with her.

As for how I’d gotten talked into making this trip? There was really no mystery about it. This was Claire Calhoun I’m talking about! There’s damn little that woman can’t talk me into with almost no effort at all. I am and always have been putty in her hands. And that’s even before you factor in the sweater...

Okay. Having mentioned it twice already, I suppose I had better take a moment to try and describe this particular garment, although I’m not sure I can do it justice.

First of all, it was unexpected. If I’d been asked to describe Claire’s fashion style I would call it understated elegance. I’d grown used to seeing her in yoga pants and fitted Ts at the fitness center she owned and operated; or in sequined dresses and heels at gallery openings; in slinky gowns and strappy sandals at cocktail parties, tailored suits when she met with investors; or in some of the sexiest lingerie I personally have ever seen. That last was at home, just the two of us, just before I stripped every last piece of it off of her.

In short, the clothes she wore were, in general, tasteful, appropriate, sophisticated. This sweater was none of those things. It was impractical, to start with. If the thick knit made it too warm for LA, its off-the-shoulder styling made it too cool for pretty much anywhere else. The busy, red-and-white design was vaguely Nordic-looking and clashed with her hair. If she’d told me she’d purchased it used at a charity auction, I’d have believed her. It was loosely fitted

and overly long—hitting her just above mid-thigh. As for the design worked into the yarn? I don't even know if I can find the words to describe that.

Have you ever seen one of those optical illusions where, if you look at the drawing in one way, you see a couple kissing, but if you look at it in another way, you see a goblet? That's how it was with this sweater. If I focused on one part of the pattern—for example, the chunky block of mostly-white that started a few inches below the neckline and stretched across the front of the sweater—I would see what appeared to be a line of sloppily executed, drippy white icicles hanging from Claire's chest. But if I looked at the spaces between those drips, what I saw instead was a row of giant, erect penises rising from the sweater's hem. Bright red, straining upward, they alternated between cut and uncut, between those that spouted like geysers and those whose bulbous crowns dripped with thick, white...well, you get the idea.

Like I said, not the kind of thing I'd have expected Claire to wear. On the other hand, this was not exactly the first time I'd seen her dressed in a somewhat similar fashion.

Claire and I rarely discuss the films she made early in her career. It's kind of a touchy subject for a variety of reasons. But that sweater looked like something straight out of *Spank Me, Santa*, a holiday classic in which a very young Claire played a naughty sorority girl who gets considerably more than a lump of coal from Father Christmas.

I'll admit it was not one of her better films. But the way she played it, with a gleam in her eye and a playful smile that invited the audience to laugh right along with her at the absurdity of the movie's premise, that got me every time. My favorite part, of course, was when Santa put her over his knee for a well-deserved spanking; but, then again, that's always been a particular fantasy of mine.

It was a fantasy Claire and I had come close to reenacting just once, back when we were first dating; but close, as they say, is no cigar. And phone sex, while very enjoyable, doesn't carry the same impact as a real life encounter. In real life, however, a spanking was never going to happen.

Much as I longed to make her backside grow warm and red beneath my hand, or watch her squirm as her body tried to decide did it want to get closer to those stinging slaps, or move farther away; much as I craved the sound of her gasps and sobs of excitement, or ached to leave just one, red handprint on the pale cream of her ass, I knew there was no way I could ever raise a hand to strike her, not even in play. Thanks to what little she'd told me about abusive ex-husband number three, I couldn't even bring myself to broach the subject with Claire. It didn't matter what I wanted—or what I thought she might enjoy as

well. Like it or not, that was one fantasy that was fated to stay locked away inside my head.

## Part Two

*Claire*

“Where to now?” Mike asked as we pulled into town.

Was there a hint of annoyance in his tone? It was a distinct possibility. His control-freak tendencies could not be happy with the fact that he had no idea where we were headed. The truth is I’d been more than a little secretive about the accommodations I’d booked for us. It was all part of my Christmas present to him. I hadn’t even let him program our destination into the SUV’s GPS. That might have been overkill. I was almost positive the address itself meant nothing to him. Although, given his stalker-like habits, I couldn’t be too sure.

As my accountant, he knew exactly how much I liked my splurges, so I’m sure he wouldn’t have been surprised to learn we had reservations at the town’s most exclusive resort. He might even be hoping for it. Instead, “I thought we’d stop at the store and pick up some groceries,” I told him.

He glanced across at me, eyebrows raised in surprise. “We need groceries? I thought we were staying at a hotel?”

I smiled serenely back at him. “Nope. I rented us a house, It’s just outside of town. If you like, we can stop and have lunch first too.”

Mike was still looking grumpy an hour and a half later when we finally pulled up in front of the house; and I was still pretending not to notice. I felt like I’d been biting back a smile for days. I knew he’d never complain; he’s too used to indulging my every whim. He hadn’t even said a word about this absurd sweater I was wearing. He’s really kind of adorable that way.

I used to think there was nothing better than being openly desired by a man—or by a whole roomful of men. And, don’t get me wrong, I still love that feeling. What’s not to like, after all? But being worshipped and adored by just one special man? That’s ever so much better. It’s the kind of thing that makes you want to go all out in return, especially at this time of year.

When I thought about all the joy Mike gives me, all through the year, I was really stumped by the question of how to show him how I felt. Sure, I had money enough to spend on the usual type of gift—a spa weekend, a Rolex watch. And I know he’d have appreciated either one. But what I wanted to give him was something money couldn’t buy—a piece of my soul. That’s not the kind of thing they sell in even the fanciest boutiques, not even in Beverly Hills. When I saw this house was available for vacation rentals, I knew exactly what I wanted to do.

Mike knew I cared about him, but I wasn’t sure he knew how much. I was counting on this Christmas present to really show him how I felt.

“Can you handle bringing all the bags in by yourself?” I asked Mike as I hopped out of the SUV. “I want to get inside and make sure the heat’s been turned on. It’s cold out here!”

Mike nodded gravely. “Of course.” He glanced critically at my sweater once again, frowned at my bare shoulders and said, “You must be freezing. Get inside. I’ll take care of the rest.”

Adorable. Just like I said.

I was chuckling quietly as I let myself into the house. I turned on some lights—dark comes early this time of year—and took a quick look around. It had been awhile since I’d been here, and I’d been a bit worried. It was possible the house had been remodeled so extensively in the meantime, that it would be unrecognizable. It wasn’t. In fact, the décor was largely the same, an uneasy melding of shabby-chic and lumberjack that, to my mind at least, had never looked anything at all like what I’d imagined a sorority house should look like.

I hurried into the downstairs powder room to remove my pants and pull out the Santa’s hat that I’d concealed in my purse. I waited until I heard Mike lock the front door behind him before I emerged from hiding, wearing nothing but the sweater...and a smile.

The look on his face was priceless. Confusion, recognition, more confusion, and finally wonderment and a dawning realization that, yes, Virginia, the whole “white Christmas” excuse for this trip had been nothing but a convenient rouse. The weather outside had nothing to do with why we were here. In fact, I’d consider the entire week a dismal failure if we stepped foot outside the house even once.

Color flared in Mike’s cheeks as his gaze swept over me. His breath caught in his throat, causing him to stutter as he said my name. “C-Claire? Is this..? Are we..?”

“Hello, Santa.” I slowly sauntered over to where he stood, hiding my hands—and the cap— behind my back. “I hope you brought me lots of presents?” I had to go up on my toes to put the hat on his head. My chest brushed against his as I slid back down. That may have been intentional. “Or have I been too naughty?”

Mike blinked at me. I think he was speechless. I wasn’t worried. He gave great improv. It just took him a little while to get warmed up, sometimes.

“I’ll take that as a yes.” I bit my lip and tried for a worried look. “I suppose you’ll have to punish me now, won’t you?”

Mike exhaled—a great big, gusty sigh. He reached for me and pulled me close. When his hands slid down my back to palm my ass with such a lovely, firm grip I had to sigh myself. It was beginning to look like this week might turn

out even better than I'd hoped.

"Oh, fuck yeah." Mike shook his head, still looking a little starry-eyed but quickly getting into the spirit of things. "You've been a very bad girl."

"Naughty," I corrected, going up on my toes once again to kiss him. "And you have a whole week to show me all the things I need to do to get on the 'nice' list."

I smiled as his lips closed over mine. Oh, yeah. This was going to be a Christmas to remember, all right. Count on it.

## **About the Author**

PG Forte inhabits a world only slightly less strange than the ones she creates; filled with serendipity, coincidence, love at first sight and dreams come true. Originally a Jersey girl, PG now resides in California where she writes contemporary and paranormal romance in a variety of sub-genres. Learn more about PG and her books, including the LA Love Lessons series, at [www.PGForte.com](http://www.PGForte.com)