



# *A Christmas Smile*

Ren (No Last Name)

Fable, Magic

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Flurries swirled around and rode on the tips of the wind. Behaving as if they were minuscule dancers being escorted up and up and up until they were never to be seen again. But even the most talented dancers are able to be replaced, and they were no exception. Once one gust of wind spirited them away, another drew from the pile of snow sending them into motion. A perpetual circle of beauty and departure.

A smile slid onto the young man's face. Lady Winter had finally arrived to bring calm to the usually frantic lands. Seeing her was like drinking a sip of water after being dehydrated for so long. It eased his pain to the point of almost forgetting it. Almost being the keyword. After all, it was impossible for him not to feel the sharp stinging jolt of pain. But he could ignore it for a bit, because along with Lady Winter came the promise of hope, of joy, of happiness, and of a future that he would perhaps be able to take part in.

Without the hope that Winter provided him with, he did not know how he could have survived the "holiday season". As people gathered 'round him, singing loudly, shining bright lights everywhere, he kept his eyes on the light blue horizon. He watched snowflakes dancing and icicles falling. He watched trees become covered in frost. He longed to be with them.

The warmth was nice and all, but he wished his tree was covered with frost and the only sound he could hear besides the whispers of the wind, would be the small heartbeat of the woodland creatures taking refuge in his tree's branches.

A dryad wasn't meant to be indoors, and his tree wasn't meant to be cut down and thrust inside for the promise of holiday cheer. It was wrong, utterly and completely wrong.

The humans bustled around, wrapping themselves in fabric and such. Most of the humans left, but one was a bit slower than the rest.

"Water the tree, boy! Can't have it dying on us," called the largest person as he left.

Time appeared to stop moving quite as quickly as the water sloshed from the glass, through the air, and carelessly spattered in every direction.

The boy left, and it was silence. Silence should have been refreshing, but it was not. The silence was paired with horror.

A hissing noise matched with a prickling sensation soon turned to a crackling roar and the uttermost pain he had ever felt. Alas, his tree had morphed into what a human might consider a bonfire. His tree was covered from the top to bottom with flames. He could feel them biting at him, each taking a chunk out of his lifeforce.

He was getting weaker and weaker, there was only one option left that he could possibly imagine doing. He left his tree behind and hurried out into the cold weather.

He barely made it out before his legs collapsed and he fell into the snow.

The cold felt nice over his burning skin, it almost made him forget about the pain. But he could not forget. After all, one could not forget the feeling of fading out of existence.

Nymphs were singing, creatures were sleeping, and overall one could simply hear the sounds of Christmas. Laughter filled the air, taunting him.

Pulling his face out of the snow, he spotted a figure. Her divine presence provided him with the strength he needed. The dryad's arms circled around, grabbed onto something and pulled his weakening body towards Lady Winter.

She looked and kneeled down to him, where she could easily help him.

With his last breath, he looked up at her, his eyes pleading.

She reached her hand down and gently supported his head. Oblivious to all of his pain, or perhaps ignoring it she spoke. "Smile, after all, it is Christmas and you have no reason to not smile on Christmas."

He did as she ordered. A smile was on his face to mask his pain as he finally burned up into nothingness. After all, it was Christmas and you were supposed to smile on Christmas.

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