

First Christmas by ***Branwen777***

Brian has never bought Justin a real present ... birthday's, valentines Day's - all passed by without a thought. So really why should Justin be so disappointed this time around?

Story word count: 3419

Title: *First Christmas*

Author: *Branwen777*

Rating: *T (PG-13)*

Pairing: *Brian/Justin*

Warnings: *Male/Male pairing (but of course you should already know that), language (again with Brian it's a given), angst, drama (should be expected most of the time with Brian/Justin)*

Summary: *It's Justin's first real Christmas with the family and most importantly for him, with Brian. In the four on and off again years that they've been together though Brian has never bought Justin a real present ... birthday's, valentines Day's - all passed by without a thought. So really why should Justin be so disappointed this time around?*

You love me - you are sure -

I shall not fear mistake -

I shall not cheated wake -

Some grinning morn -

To find the Sunrise left -

And Orchards - unbereft -

And Dollie - gone!

I need not start - you're sure -

That night will never be -

When frightened - home to Thee I run -

To find the windows dark -

And no more Dollie - mark -

Quite none?

Be sure you're sure - you know -

I'll bear it better now -

If you'll just tell me so -

Than when - a little dull Balm grown -

Over this pain of mine -

You sting - again!

~ **Emily Dickenson**

()

I looked around with a fond smile at everyone crowded in Debbie's small living room with piles of presents beside them. It was our first real Christmas with the entire gang together, and my first real Christmas with Brian. All of the Christmas' before Brian and I had either been separated, Brian had been out of town on business, or like during our first Christmas I hadn't been considered a permanent fixture in the family yet. This year was different though. We were together - partners; and I had finally been able to shop for Brian a Christmas present. I had spent hours in the mall, going from expensive store to expensive store - searching for that perfect gift.

They were the exact pair of Armani cuff links that I had noticed Brian eyeing in a magazine just the a few days before, and I couldn't have been more excited to see the look on his face when he opened them. It had taken forever to find them, and most of the money I'd saved from working overtime at the diner to get, but I'd been so excited that I'd actually found the exact ones he wanted that I had nearly given them to Brian that very day.

I opened my own gifts slowly as I watched Brian out of the corner of my eye, waiting for the moment he would notice the box with the silver wrapping paper and black ribbon. It was so small though that Brian came to it last, and I held my breath as he picked up the box and studied it with appreciation. I had picked that wrapping paper knowing that Brian would approve. I'd seen the way Brian disdainfully eyed the brightly wrapped Christmas presents, with Santa Claus and Christmas tree prints, under Lindsey and Melanie's tree days before, so I'd painstakingly searched every store for something more to his taste.

"Oh, who is that one from Brian? It looks expensive," Lindsey commented drawing everyone's attention, and I wanted to hiss at her in anger. I would never get a real reaction out of Brian now with everyone staring.

Brian flipped the small card open nonchalantly, but I did see a bit of surprise as he read my name from it. "It's from Justin," he answered them without looking up.

Brian then flipped the small box over looking for a place to tear and began to open it. I watched with bated breath as he got the paper off and then opened the lid of the Armani stamped gift box inside. His eyes widened slightly and he paused for a moment - but that was all that I got before the moment was interrupted.

"Well what is it?" Michael asked from his seat on the sofa beside Ben and Hunter. "It's not a ring is it?" he then joked, but I could see that the comment had only caused Brian to close off even more and I wanted to strangle Michael.

Brian carelessly tossed the box over to Michael before going back to his other presents - and I felt my heart clench in disappointment. I had wanted him to be excited. To stand up and kiss me, say thank you - hell look at me ... *something*, but he didn't even seem all that pleased that I had gotten him something he'd wanted... that I had noticed he wanted it in the first place.

What had I been expecting though - a declaration of love... yeah right.

"Oh those are beautiful Sunshine!" Debbie cooed passing the cufflinks over to Lindsey and Melanie. I tried to offer her a smile, but I could tell by the way her face fell a little bit and she glanced in Brian's direction that it had come off flat.

"Oh wow Justin those must have cost quite a bit," Lindsey commented and I merely shrugged as if it were nothing to me - as if I spent that type of money all the time, before going back to my own presents. If Brian was going to act nonchalant about it then so was I. Obviously, it hadn't meant as much as I thought it would, and I wasn't going to sit here and mope about it.

Melanie, Lindsey, and Gus had gotten me a set of really nice paintbrushes, chalks, and pencils. Ted and Emmett had pitched in together to get me new paints and some really good quality drawing paper. Michael, Ben, and Hunter had gotten me some of the newest drawing software for my computer - which I had been meaning to start saving for after I'd bought Brian's Christmas gift - and Debbie and Carl had gotten me a beautiful wooden case to organize and put everything in.

As I got to the end of my pile I frowned in confusion. There was something missing...

There was nothing here from Brian.

I checked each of my presents nametags once again and then double checked the area around me, thinking that maybe I had missed one in all the paper flying around, but there was nothing with his name on it to me. I glanced over at the tree thinking maybe Carl had missed one, but there was nothing there either.

Then I glanced over at everyone else's piles too, but no... everyone had the right gifts. I had been the one to wrap all of Brian's presents, and I knew mostly what everyone else had gotten for the others having shopped with them, talked to them about it, or been at their house helping them wrap.

I frowned down at the new paintbrushes I held in my hand. Brian had never gotten me a present before for anything birthdays, Valentines Day, hell even Easter - so really why was I so disappointed? Maybe it was because this was our first official Christmas together and I'd thought that our relationship had advanced to that level where at least he thought of me as part of the family and not 'that stalker kid who was still lurking around'.

Perhaps I had been wrong though because looking over at Brian now he didn't seem to even notice me as he spoke to Lindsey about something Gus had done at pre-school - at least he was acknowledging his son though. That was a step forward for Brian, although I couldn't help feeling a little jealous - as pathetic as that was. I looked around for the cufflinks I had bought for him, and was relieved to at least find them sitting beside him on his chair.

Things had been going great for us recently, or so I had thought.

Brian hadn't been going out as much anymore, and instead we'd started staying home, eating dinner together and watching a movie - or attempting to watch a movie. Usually we got about fifteen minutes into it before Brian's hands started roaming - not that I was complaining or anything, but I'd thought that our relationship had finally started to settle into something more real.

I guess I'd thought wrong.

"Sunshine?" Debbie suddenly question frowning at me worriedly. I must have gotten lost for a moment, because it seemed as if she'd been trying to get my attention for a while. "Don't you like your gifts?"

"Yes... of course. Thank you guys - they're perfect," I answered forcing a smile, even though it physically hurt to do so. "I just umm... think I need some fresh air."

"Well okay Sunshine, but we're about to eat," Debbie replied and I could feel her eyes on me the whole time I was walking away.

"Yeah..." I waved off absentmindedly as I opened the front door and walked out into the cold December night - perhaps this hadn't been such a good idea I then thought as the cold air hit me square in the face.

I wasn't going to make a big deal out of this this though - I wasn't. It was stupid of me to have gotten my hopes up anyway. I shouldn't have expected anything of him - but I had and that was the fucked up part... I had. I'd been so excited these last few weeks. I'd finally thought Brian and I were getting somewhere.

We were *together*, together... strolling through the park holding hands while Gus ran ahead of us together, going out to dinner on a *date* not at the diner together, laying in bed and holding me *after* sex together - but as they say all good things must come to an end and it was about that time when Brian started getting cold feet.

I tucked my freezing hands into my pockets and cursed myself for not grabbing my gloves or scarf on my

way out. I didn't want to go back inside just yet though so I bore it and stood on top of the icy steps gazing into the neighbors living room window, which had a colorfully lit Christmas tree displayed in it. I could see just beyond the branches a mother and father watching cuddled on the couch as their son and daughter played happily with their new toys.

I sighed longingly.

That was a real family. That was what Melanie and Lindsey had with Gus, what Ben and Michael had with Hunter - it would never be something I had with Brian, and most of the time I was okay with that. I would take what Brian could give me and cherish every moment, but it was moments like these when the longing crept up. When that void was felt - when my heart ached.

I loved Gus to death, and I loved Brian more than anything in the world, and every now and then I let myself dream that we could be that family - that we could be a family.

It was only ever just a dream though, and a stupid one at that. I didn't want a cookie cutter life myself. That to me was totally boring, and I loved the excitement and spontaneity of my life with Brian, but I wanted something, anything to let me know that Brian wanted me in his life - *something* permanent, some sign, some symbol to let me know that he wanted me here. Otherwise, I was still just that kid who stuck around too long.

I wasn't talking a ring or anything, but... just - *something*...

I sighed and ran a frustrated hand through my hair. I was being ridiculous. I should just be thankful that Brian hadn't already kicked me to the curb. He'd done so much for me already I had no right to ask him for anything more.

"Here you forgot these," a soft voice interrupted my pity moment, causing me to jump in surprise. "Jumpy are we," Brian teased with an amused smile as I took my gloves and scarf from him with my own numb hands.

"Thanks," I answered simply trying to tug the warm black wool over my icy fingers.

"Fuck you're freezing Sunshine. Your fingers are practically blue," Brian stated with a frown, that almost looked concerned, as he took my gloves back from me and pulled them over my hands, and then grabbed my scarf and wrapped it securely around my neck. I felt like a fucking four year old going outside to build a snowman, but at the same time it was moments like these that reminded me why being with Brian was worth it.

"So, you ready to ditch this thing or what?" Brian asked enthusiastically, and it was almost enough to make me smile.

"Brian we promised Debbie we'd stay and eat," I reminded, and couldn't help but smile at the cute pout that overtook his face. No one ever got to see Brian like this - only me, and really that was all the gift I needed

from him. I laughed softly and kissed his cold lips, but then again mine were probably even colder if the grimace that crossed his face was anything to go by.

"Well, lets get inside then. I'd hate for that cute little ass of yours to get frost bite," Brian stated giving my bottom a light smack, and with a laugh I walked back into Debbie's house with him trailing behind me.

We ate and talked cheerfully, and I decided to forget that Brian hadn't gotten me anything when I reached over to take his hand beneath the table and he didn't let go - I could have sworn he even squeezed mine back, but I'd probably just imagined it. Gus left the table early and walked into the living room, immediately taking out the miniature art kit I'd picked out for him, and my heart swelled with happiness that out of all his gifts he picked that one to play with first.

After a few moments I got up as well and walked over to help the toddler set everything up on Debbie's coffee table. I knelt on the floor beside Gus and we giggled while we drew crazy portraits of each other and everyone else. I felt familiar eyes watching us intently and looked up to see Brian staring with something unreadable in his expression. I offered him a sunshine smile, which only grew as it was returned with a small one of his own.

It was another hour before Brian asked if I was ready to go again and this time I was. Gus was nearly asleep, and Debbie and Emmett were in the kitchen doing the dishes. We said our goodbyes to everyone, and to my surprise Brian wrapped an arm around my waist to keep me steady as we walked down the icy sidewalk to the car. When I got in he buckled my seatbelt for me and closed my door, both actions made my heart flutter and wonder why Brian was being suddenly so chivalrous.

I didn't question it though, knowing that would only cause him to close down once again. The drive back to the loft was done in silence, but it wasn't an uncomfortable or suffocating silence. It was just the perfect peaceful silence of a clear winters night - when the stars were at their brightest and you knew that it was possibly below zero outside, but you were warm and toasty and safe... then slowly Brian reached over and took my hand, twining our fingers together, and it was just ... perfect.

We reached the loft and Brian once again guided me safely inside and didn't remove his arm from around my waist even as we entered the elevator. Once the doors had closed I realized that the button above our floor had been pressed, and turned to tell Brian so.

"I've still got to give you your Christmas present Sunshine," Brian answered when I'd pointed it out, and my mouth dropped open in surprise.

"You - you got me something?" I questioned unable to help myself.

"Of course I did," he answered looking at me with a frown of confusion. "That's what you do on Christmas isn't it."

"Yeah, but I -"

"You didn't think I'd gotten you anything?" Brian cut in pulling back from me. "Fuck Justin, I got the munchers a gift and you didn't think I'd get you anything?"

"Well, I didn't think - I mean I wasn't expecting you too..." I trailed off uncertainly.

"Well I did," he stated firmly. "And you better fucking love it, because I fucking love the gift you got me."

"You did?" I asked in surprised happiness.

"Of course I did," Brian answered wrapping an arm around my waist once again. "I tried to buy a pair the other day but they were sold out and wouldn't be getting more because they're a limited edition set. I'll be the envy of the office come Monday. I know quite a few guys who wanted a pair."

I felt warmth spread from my chest to the rest of my body at hearing that not only had Brian liked my gift, but he was going to show it off at work, and when asked where he'd gotten them from Brian would tell them "from Justin". Most people wouldn't have gotten so sappy over something so small, but for me it was like a declaration of love - or as close to one as I'd probably ever get.

When the elevator finally stopped Brian pulled my back against his chest and covered my eyes with one hand while the other kept a firm grasp on my hip to keep me steady as he led me forward. I walked wherever he led me without a word - trusting him completely. I felt giddy as I heard a metal door slide open and then his hand was gone, although his warm presence remained pressed against my back.

I blinked a few times to get my bearings straight, and then blinked a few more times out of shock. "I - I - Brian I -"

"You love it right?" Brian stated, dragging me further into the room. "I figured instead of you renting that rundown hole all the way on the other side of town I'd just buy the place for sale right above the loft and convert it as a Christmas gift - so you can't say no," he added quickly knowing I wasn't one for extravagant gifts, and normally I would have protested had it been anything other than this.

"I've got a guy coming in a few days to see about putting a staircase in for easier access from the loft. I couldn't have him come in before now and giving away the surprise. I hope the windows are okay. The renovator said they'd give you the best light during the day, and they have electric blinds so that you can regulate exactly how much you want. Then the art supplies and shelves and stuff - I had an interior decorator do all that so I hope they fucking did it right. If not I'll sue their asses. There's plenty of room to hang your art too - like your own gallery. I figured you could invite clients up here or whatever - I mean it's your studio."

I was speechless, even as I noticed that Brian was uncharacteristically rambling as he awaited my reaction. My mind couldn't process what I was seeing though, floor to ceiling windows, hardwood floors, blank canvas' and art supplies perfectly organized on their own shelves, a seating area for clients - just everything an artist could want in a studio. I couldn't wrap my mind around it therefore, I did the only thing I could process at the moment and turned and threw myself into Brian's arms, kissing him soundly.

"I take it you like it then," he stated with a smirk as I finally pulled back and turned to look at the room again.

"Like it - Brian I - I fucking love it! It's - it's perfect... everything's perfect," I answered knowing that my words still weren't enough to express what I was feeling. It wasn't just the studio it was the symbolism behind it. It was what it meant - what Brian wasn't saying. This was what I'd been hoping for - something permanent. This was my sign. Brian wanted me around. He wanted me to stay.