

Gillian's Christmas Wish  
by Elise Whyles

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## DEDICATION

For all my fans.

To Maggie – the best beta reader... you rock girl!

Gillian stared at the massive blue spruce taking up most of the living room, her fingers tangled in the gold thread of a tree ornament. The white dove glittered with each movement of her fingers. Inhaling she moved around the tree to stare at another bare branch.

Jack was at the station. He'd elected to take a couple of extra shifts before Christmas so they could spend the upcoming holidays together. He'd insisted they needed to be together over Christmas. Initially, she'd balked at the idea, inwardly she'd been jumping for joy. Having Jack love her was still a bit of a shock even after a year and a half of marriage. A wave of heat colored her cheeks as she thought about her plans for him when he got home.

Brand new silk ties were tucked away in the bedroom along with some holiday colored candles. Indeed, he'd be truly pleased at what she'd planned. Jack, she knew would be over the moon. If there was one thing he loved it was her special surprises.

Yeah, Jack would appreciate the tiny red teddy and matching briefs she'd bought as a special treat. Dark green silk sheets were in place on their massive king sized bed. She bit her lip, a brief thought of how Luke and Sean would react to their skipping the party they'd invited them to. Of course their friends would forgive them, both of them knew what it was like to be away from the one you loved for days at a time.

“Well dang it.” Gillian shook her head to clear the line of thoughts. Focus girl, you're decorating a tree. She walked around the tree to hang the ornament from a thick branch. Stepping back, she sighed and turned to the silent cd player. “Perhaps a bit of holiday music would make this more entertaining.”

With the familiar strains of a Christmas carol playing in the back ground, she turned to the box of ornaments. The peel of the doorbell filled the house as she bent to pick up another dove. Ornament in hand, she hurried to the door and opened it.

A young girl wrapped in a worn blue parka with a scarf over her face stood shivering on the step. Snow caked sneakers offered little resistance to the elements, or warmth. Her hands tucked deep into the pockets of her coat, she glanced down at the step. “I'm sorry to bother you Missus Payle, but could I use your phone? I need to call my mom.”

“Come in, Sharon, its a bit too cold to be standing on the doorstep.” Gillian stepped back, ushering the girl inside. With a practiced eye she noted the worn elbows, the too short sleeves and sighed. Obviously Sharon was in need of more than just a phone, but then Sharon had often had to make do with too little. “Lets get you something hot to drink, its got to be twenty below out there.” Gillian

closed the door and gestured to the scarf. “Why don't you take that off and come into the kitchen?”

“Yes, ma'am.” She offered a weak smile, her red cheeks deepening in color. “A warm drink sounds wonderful.” She rubbed her bare hands together, huddling deeper into her coat.

Gillian sat her down at the island and turned to fill the kettle. “This is hot chocolate weather. The roads are not passable, my husband called an hour ago to warn me he wouldn't be home until Saturday since tomorrow was his day off.”

“I interrupted your decorating.” Sharon nodded toward the bare tree and boxes of ornaments on the floor. “It looks like you just got started. I am sorry –”

“Don't apologize, Sharon, I'm still new to decorating such a massive tree.” Gillian reached for two cups and set them on the counter. With a quick glance over her shoulder, she reached for the fridge door. She pulled out some fruit, meat slices, and cheese. A few minutes later she set a sandwich and fruit in front of her guest. “Here you go.” She offered the hot chocolate. “Its best not to sit inside with your coat on. You'll start to sweat and catch pneumonia when you go back outside.”

Fear flashed in the girl's gaze before she dropped it to the plate. “I uh...”

“Don't worry, its okay.” Gillian patted her hand, understanding the girl's fear. She'd seen the way she was treated at the center, the way her own mother had screamed and ranted over everything Sharon did. The situation was all too familiar, and she'd taken the young woman under her wing. “You're safe here, now come on. Eat your sandwich before you call your mother. I imagine she's been worried about you.”

Her heart stuttered with a bit of envy as the girl took off her coat, exposing the too tight man's t-shirt stretched over her burgeoning belly. She'd shared nearly every step of Sharon's pregnancy, a marvel that had left her fighting her own bitter mixed feelings. “I really appreciate this MissusPayle. When Darel dropped me off I wasn't sure if I should bother you at all. My mom will pay you back for your help.”

“Don't you go worrying about paying me back. After all, what are friends for if not to give a helping hand?” Gillian patted Sharon on the shoulder as she walked passed to the living room. She knew all too well Sharon's mother didn't have anything to spare. Not with four children to raise and a distinct love for the whiskey. With the sounds of music in the background, she set to work decorating the tree. Periodically, she'd glance into the kitchen to where the girl sat hunched over. She noted when Sharon reached for the phone and dialed it.

“Hi Mom. Yeah, the weather's really picked up. I don't know if I'm going to make it tonight.” Sharon pushed at the crumbs on her plate. Her voice dropped a note of fear and uncertainty creeping into it. “No, I don't think so. Sure. Yes, I'll see.” She hung up, her fingers plucking at the counter top.

“Something wrong?” Gillian set the bell down and hurried over to the counter.

“Mom said she can't pick me up.” Sharon's tear-filled eyes rose to meet Gillian's. “She said I should try and walk home.”

“In this weather? Nonsense, you can sleep here.” Gillian sighed, and wrapped a hand over the girl's wrist. “Sharon, you can't possibly walk home in your condition.”

“Mom doesn't know, I've managed to keep it hidden.” Sharon sniffled, a lone tear tracking down her cheek. “I can't tell her. She'd kill me for getting pregnant. Always said she didn't want me to make her mistakes.”

“Well, you can't change being pregnant. You're getting close to your due date.”

“Yes, another two weeks.” Sharon inhaled around a shaky smile. “I figured out what I'm going to do.”

Gillian forced a smile. “That's great, I'm happy to hear you've come up with a plan.”

“I'm going to put it up for adoption.” Sharon smiled, another tear running down her face. “I love my baby, but I can't raise it. So I found someone who really deserves to have a baby, who will love her like a Mom should.”

Pulling Sharon into a hug, Gillian blinked at the tears in her eyes. She clung to the teen, her lips pressed tight to keep the sobs from escaping. Envy, hurt, and disappointment slipped through her. The one thing she wanted to give to Jack, the one thing that would make their lives complete was missing, and it hurt. Resentment burned, but she just held tighter. It wasn't Sharon's fault her past was a horror story.

“Come on, lets get you settled. You can borrow a pair of my pjs then help me decorate the tree.” Gillian swallowed against the tears clogging her throat. Forcing a smile to her lips, she padded down the hall. She dug out a pair of sweats and a t-shirt and handed them to Sharon who hovered in the door.

“Thank you Missus Payle...”

“Gillian,” She patted her shoulder as she walked passed. “I'll make more hot chocolate.”

Gillian shuffled down the hall, her shoulders hunched at the thought of how readily other women were having children and how a senseless act of violence had taken any hope of her having one away. Determined not to show Sharon her emotional upheaval, Gillian busied herself in the kitchen. By the time Sharon crept back into the room, she'd gotten her emotions under control and a smile on her face.

“Thank you again Missus...um Gillian. I appreciate the help. I wish I could have stayed at the center. It was nice of you to open it.”

“It was needed.” Gillian twisted her wedding band, the center for troubled youth was something she'd felt compelled to do. Something that gave back to those who didn't have the stability or

understanding of a healthy household. "I'm just glad I was able to provide something for young people. Now, enough of this melancholy what do you say we finish decorating the tree."

"Sounds good. I love decorating. Its a lot of fun for me."

"Why don't you go in for training to be a decorator?" Gillian asked as she picked up a roll of silver and red ribbon. "You could attend school and start your own business."

"No money." Sharon flushed at the admission. "I'd love to though."

"Money can be tight, but I'm sure there are scholarships and such out there. Why don't you let me have a look around see what I can find out for you."

"Thank you." Sharon smiled and enveloped her in a tight hug. "Thank you so much."

Gillian returned the embrace. "You're very welcome."

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Smoothing the short, pleated skirt she wore, Gillian watched the old Chevy pickup roll into the driveway, her body fairly vibrating with energy as her husband stepped out onto the snowy driveway. Dressed in his blue uniform, he carried a small overnight bag and his coat.

Jerking open the door, she darted out, ignoring the cold as she hurried down the walkway. Jack's warm laughter wrapped around her as he caught her mid leap, her arms and legs wrapping around his waist. "Mmmm did you miss me?" Jack chuckled against her lips. His warm hands crept beneath the flare of her skirt to the silk of her panties.

"You have no idea." Gillian rained kisses across his face, the tickle of his whiskers sending shards of heat straight through her. She rubbed against him, her pussy throbbing at the thought of his hard cock buried within her folds. "Been thinking of you since yesterday. Naked, stretched out on dark green sheets as I tempt you until you can't stand it and ravish me."

Jack groaned. "God woman, the things you say to tempt a man. Of course you know you're reading my mind." He kicked the door shut without letting her go. Holding her gaze steady, Jack made short work of the walk down the hall, pausing only long enough to bend his head, the rasp of his stubble fanning the flames burning within her. She sucked in a quick breath as his teeth pinched along the tendon of her neck, her fingers tightening in his hair.

"Jack, please." Gillian giggled as he dropped her on the bed, his weight coming down on top of her.

"Do you know what I spent the last four nights doing?" Jack's rough whisper tightened her already strumming nerves.

"Sleeping?" Gillian wrapped her arms around his neck. "In that cold, narrow little bunk. All alone with nothing but the snores of the guys for company."

"Nope." Jack nipped at her throat before soothing the wound with his tongue. "Imagining what I

was going to do to you when I got home. Some of the images were so fucking hot, baby, I couldn't sleep. Guys were thinking I'd lost it, up pacing around at all hours." Each word was punctuated by a hard kiss as his fingers unfastened the buttons of her blouse.

She shivered as he peeled the silk back to reveal the black lace bra she'd put on. A faint smile danced across her face at his tortured groan. "You like?"

"Oh yeah." He ground out, as he studied her. With a grin, he slid his hands down her body, over her hips to gather the hem of her skirt into his hands. He lifted it to reveal the dark lace against her mound. "I like it a lot."

She giggled when he flipped onto his back, taking her with him. Her legs spread, sliding into place to lock around his hips as he his hands trailed down her back to cup her ass.

"Woman, there ain't a damn thing about you I don't like." Jack nuzzled into her chest. She shivered at the warm path of his tongue on her skin as he dipped it beneath the black lace. "Especially when its wrapped in this."

Gillian gasped when his lips closed around a nipple, her hips rolling on his groin. The throbbing cock teased her. She could feel herself getting wetter, her body burning with need. Leaning down she tugged on Jack's hair until he looked at her. "Slow and sexy later, lover," she nipped at his lip. "Right now I just want you inside me."

"Really?" Jack thrust upward, his cock pressing through the stiff material of his uniform.

"Yeah." Gilli ground down, her hips rolling with each word. "A. Good. Hard. Fuck." Peppering in kisses between each word she gasped when his hand slipped between them.

"God damn, baby, you're wet." Jack sat up on his elbow, his lips a hairs breath from hers as he slid his fingers across the moist silk of her panties. "Wet, and hot. I betcha you're tight to." She bit her lip, her hips undulating with each slow swipe of his fingers. She cried out as his finger slipped beneath the elastic of her panties to ease into her hot core.

"Don't tease." She clutched at his chest her body humming toward an impending orgasm. "I want you in me when I come." Ducking her head to hide the flush even after almost two years of being in his bed, Gilli gasped when he slapped her ass.

"Raise up baby," He groaned, his fingers making short work of his belt and zipper. Her hands joined his as they pushed the material passed his pulsating cock. "Ooh, you're good." Jack threw his head back when she wrapped her fingers around him and pumped. "Enough." He brushed her hand aside. "I want to come inside you."

Lifting her ass a bit, Gillian moaned as he held himself steady while she sank onto his length. The tight, too hot feeling of having him inside her only added to the stimulation. Sinking down as far as she

could, she paused, her eyes meeting his lust clouded gaze.

“God, babe, you feel so good.” Jack rolled pinning her beneath him as he withdrew. Gillian moaned when he slammed forward, burying himself in her warmth. With each thrust, she could feel the coil of arousal tightening, the need building until it shattered. Stars danced behind her eyelids as she cried out his name.

Her trembling body welcomed the warmth, the weight of her lover as he sank down on her. “Damn, Gilli, at this rate I’m not going to live to see forty.” Jack chuckled against her neck. “But what a way to go.”

He gathered his weight before he rolled to the side, his hand resting on her hip. She snuggled against him, her racing heart slowing with each languid caress of his hand. “Mm, I love you.” She pressed a quick kiss to his lips, her eyes drifting shut.

“I love you to.” Jack pulled her flush against him for a quick hug before the bed dipped beneath his weight. Gillian sighed as he peeled the layers of clothes off and tugged the duvet up over their cooling as he crawled into bed.

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Gillian snuggled deeper into the warmth of the bedding as she listened to Jack moving around in the kitchen. The smell of frying bacon and fresh coffee wafted from the kitchen. She pressed a hand to her rumbling stomach. With a soft sigh, she reached for the dark rimmed glasses on the nightstand and slipped them on. Tossing the covers back, she slid her feet into the slippers Jack had left for her as she reached for a robe.

The peel of the phone filled the silence as she stepped into the bathroom. Leaving Jack to get it, she adjusted the water temperature and dropped the stopper into place.

“Hon?” Jack knocked once before opening the door. He held the cordless out to her. “Its for you.”

“Me?” Gillian took the phone, a frown tugging her brows together. “Probably a problem at the center. Thank you.” She smiled as she watched the sway of his ass disappear before lifting the phone to her ear.

“Hello?” Absently, Gillian dipped her fingers into the tub.

“Hi Missus Payle, uh Gillian its Sharon.”

“Oh hi, Sharon, did you make it home okay?”

“Yes, ma'am.” Sharon sighed. “I talked to my mom, told her about the baby, she wasn't happy but at least she didn't kick me out. I think she was a bit more understanding when I told her what I'm going to put it up for adoption. I'm at the shelter. I was wondering if you could come down for a bit. I need to talk to you about something.”

“Is everything okay? Did she...”

“No, Mom's being very supportive. Said it was my decision and praised me for being mature enough to know I need to give my baby more than I have.” A note of worry crept over the line. “It's just, well I've been looking over things and there's some papers I need to fill out but Mom can't help me and I need to have them ready before the baby comes.”

Biting back her emotions, Gillian sighed. “I'll be down in an hour.”

“Thank you.” Hanging up, she sat frozen on the edge of the tub. What papers did Sharon have to sign? Maybe custody or adoption papers? With a shake of her head, Gillian looked longingly at the tub before turning the water off and pulling the plug.

“Everything okay?”

“Yes,” Gilli smiled at Jack who appeared in the doorway. “I need to go meet one of my kids. Sharon told her mom about the baby and well, I have a feeling things didn't go as well as expected.”

“You want me to come with you?”

“No,” Gillian pressed against him, her palm cupping his jaw. “Keep the bed warm though. You have to go back to work in two days and I don't plan on letting you out of it when I get home.”

“Mmm, now that's a plan I can totally get into.” Jack laughed and slapped her on the ass before heading for the kitchen.

Dressing in jeans and a t-shirt, Gillian grabbed her purse from the kitchen counter. She paused when Jack held out a travel-mug to her. “Take it. Coffee. Breakfast will keep.” Jack nudged the cup into her hand. “Drive safely. If there's a problem call me.”

“Yes dear.” Gilli smiled and took the mug. She set it down to pull on her boots and parka before stepping out into the white expanse of a Prairie winter. Shivering at the chill in the wind, she darted to the car and slid into the cold interior.

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Leaving the empty travel mug in the car, she headed into the center. Kids of every age hung out in the main room, clustered around the television and the two pool tables. The cafeteria doors were open and the older, heavy set woman she'd hired to tend the kitchen was handing out steaming bowls of something Gilli didn't want to think too hard about.

She smiled a greeting at two youngsters before heading down the hallway and into her office. Stumbling to a halt she stared at Sharon who sat before her desk, a stack of papers before her.

“Good morning.”

“Morning Mrs Payle, I 'm sorry for calling so early.”

“Nonsense. If you need my help,” Gillian shrugged and set down behind her desk. “Now what can

do for you?"

"I have all these papers to go through and I don't understand them. Can you help me?"

"Sure, let me have a look." Gillian took the papers. The only sound in the room was the flipping of pages and the ticking of the clock as she read through them. Folding her hands, she looked at Sharon. "Do you understand everything about this? Once you give up all rights to this child you are no longer a parent."

"I understand." Sharon fidgeted in the chair, her teeth worrying her bottom lip. "I talked to Mister Hendley."

Gillian nodded at the lawyer she kept on retainer for the center. She'd worked with Tom Hendley to get a child placed in foster care after allegations of abuse. He was a good man, a bit older and sterner than she'd like but still. He had the kids best interest at heart. "And?"

"He explained to me what it would mean if I put the baby up for adoption. I've decided to put the baby with someone I know. That way at least I know the baby'll be loved."

"Okay, that makes sense. Do you need help filling these out because I'd be happy to." Gillian gestured at the documents on her desk.

"That's kinda what I wanted to talk to you about." Sharon ducked her head, a flush crawling up her face. "Mister Hendley told me you wanted a family."

"Yes, but I can't..."

"I know." Sharon swallowed audibly. "I've spent a lot of time thinking about this and there's only one solution that I can see. I want my baby to be loved, you want a baby to love." She looked up, tears pooling in her eyes. "I want you and Mister Payle to have my baby."

"Sharon, do you know what you're saying?" Gillian croaked a tiny flicker of hope blossoming in her chest. "I'm honored you'd think of us but..."

"I talked to Mom, and she said you're the best person she knows. You and your husband have been better to us than most of our parents. Its not rocket science." Sharon shrugged. "Please, Missus Payle, I think this is the best for all of us."

"Sharon, I couldn't." Gillian leaned forward. "If I did and you changed your mind. No, I can't do that. I understand wanting the best..."

"Please." Sharon hurried around the desk to kneel next to her chair. "I know this sounds stupid but there's something inside of me that says everything that's happened is for a reason. You have such a gift for helping others, why not let me help you. I promise I'm not going to change my mind. I've already asked about home visits, inspections and stuff like that. Please."

"I don't know." Gillian wavered. To have her dream within her grasp, to give Jack a son or daughter.

Granted it wasn't of her flesh but still...he'd love the child as his own. Her heart raced as she thought about it before she focused on the girl kneeling at her feet. "Let me think it over. I have to discuss this with Jack as well. Its not a light decision."

"I know its not," Sharon offered a teary smile. "But I think its the best one for all of us." She climbed to her feet and threw her arms around Gillian's neck. "You're going to make an amazing mother."

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Long after Sharon had vanished out the door, Gillian sat staring out the window. Her mind a racing torrent of indecision, of agonized thoughts. To have a child to cradle, to love, to give everything she'd never had. It was a dream come true.

A slow smile spread across her face as she pictured a tiny bundle wrapped in a pastel blanket. Its softness cuddled against her, rosebud mouth parted in sleep. Tiny hands clutching at her hair.

"So you're going to do it then?" Tom's voice pulled her from her thoughts.

Gillian looked at the doorway. "I haven't decided. I have to talk to Jack about it first."

"Christmas is just around the corner. Sharon's baby is due near the new year. She keeps saying two weeks but the doctor said its closer to four. Talk to him. Jack loves you enough to be give you this chance."

"And if he doesn't?" Gillian frowned. "It would devastate me. It would break Sharon's heart."

"Jack's not a fool." Tom slapped the doorjamb as he turned and disappeared into the hallway. "And the man's not dumb either. He knows you better than you think." His words echoed long after his footsteps had faded.

"I know." Gillian stared at the papers on her desk. "That's what scares me the most. Jack will give me this if I ask. But could I handle it?"

The ringing of the phone pulled her from her confusion. Lifting the receiver she offered the usual greeting, her mind racing with images.

"Hey baby, you on your way home yet?"

"Yeah, just leaving." Gillian glanced out the window. "Honey, what do you think about adopting a child?"

"Babe, if you want to adopt a child I'm all for it." Jack's sigh reach through the phone. "You know I'm going to support you no matter what."

"I know." Gillian smiled and reached for the sticky note next to the phone. "I'll be home shortly."

"Drive safe baby. Love you." Jack hung up.

"Love you to." Gillian whispered. Tapping the number on the paper she sighed and dialed the phone.

Raspy, broken the harsh voice of Sharon's mother grated over the phone. "Hello."

"Can I speak to Sharon please."

"Whose calling? Ain't another of those..."

"Gillian Payle, ma'am." Gillian interrupted the tirade. "I work..."

"I know who you are." Her voice softened. "Sharon told me she spoke to you about the baby. Said you was going to take it for her."

"Yes, I am."

"I love her, but it pains me to see her so young and pregnant. I was her age when I had Sharon. Best mistake of my life, but I wasn't ready for it. She's smarter than I was. Hang on and I'll get her."

"Of course." Gillian held the phone away from her ear as the other woman shouted at her daughter.

"This is Sharon."

"If you're certain you want me to be the baby's mother," Gillian sucked in a quick breath. "Then you can pick up the papers on Monday."

"You mean it?"

"I mean it." Gillian laughed at Sharon's excitement. "Now, I'm headed home. Have a Merry Christmas."

"You to. And thank you so much." Sharon's voice broke. "You don't know how much this means to me."

Gillian chuckled at the dial tone filling her ear. "Yes, yes I do."

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Jack stood next to the massive tree in the living room and stared at it. The tiny flickering bulbs seemed to dance to an unheard tune. It had been decorated with skill, with a color scheme in mind. Honestly, he thought it looked fantastic. That is until he got to the middle branches of the tree. Wrapped in silver and gold tissue several items lay on the branches.

He glanced over his shoulder to see where Gillian was. She stood at the kitchen counter, a pale blue robe clinging to her shoulders as she made coffee. Reaching out he plucked the first one from the branch and shook it. The rustle of paper filled his ear but there wasn't anything to give him a clue as to what it was.

"You could just open it." Gillian's hands crept around his waist.

"You're absolutely right." Jack chuckled and ripped at the paper. His confusion grew as he stared at the small package of face clothes in pastel colors. "Uh what is it we're supposed to do with these?"

"Keep going." Gillian pinched his side and moved to sit on the couch, a mug of hot chocolate in her hands. "You'll like the end result."

With a smile at his wife, he turned back to the tree. Unwrapping each item with care, his uncertainty growing with each passing moment. Ten minutes later, he stared down at the collection of baby things. Lifting his gaze to Gillian who smirked behind her cup he shook his head. "I thought you said you couldn't...are you pregnant?"

"No." For a split second the light went out of her eyes before she hid it. "But I wanted to say congratulations anyway. We're about to have a baby."

"Since when?"

"You remember Sharon?"

"The girl from across town that stays at the shelter?" Jack frowned as he thought back on the multitude of kids who took advantage of the center's many resources. "Isn't she pregnant?"

"Yes. And she wants us to adopt her baby." Gillian froze, a look of doubt creeping into her eyes.

"And you've agreed haven't you?" Jack stared into the face of the woman he loved. It didn't surprise him she'd jump at this chance. No, it was part of who she was. And he loved her all the more for it. He pulled her into his arms when she nodded. "God I love you. The only woman in the world who would risk so much for so many. Makes me thankful that you're mine."

"I love you." Gillian pressed a quick kiss to his lips. "Thank you."

"Thank you." Rocking her back and forth in his arms, Jack glanced upward. A baby for Christmas, what more could he ask for? He chuckled and hugged Gilli tighter. He'd gotten lucky twice now. The greatest woman he'd ever known was his, and now a child to call their own. Maybe Gillian's wishes weren't so bad after all.

The End

For more information on the Canadian Heroes Trilogy and other books written by Elise Whyles, you can stop by her website at [www.elisewhyles.com](http://www.elisewhyles.com).

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