

RAW PROVOCATIVE HUMANE PLAYS

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Christmas for New Year's
by Jennifer Reichert

Lights rise on a snowy Amtrak platform. A small ticket office, adorned with colored Christmas lights, casts light onto the falling snow. MATT, late 20s, scruffy, wearing a thin coat and hospital scrubs, scrambles quickly onto the platform.

Matt Andy? Andy!

Matt sprints down the platform, pulling out his phone. He dials, searching the windows of the train as he runs down the platform.

Matt *(cont'd)* Andy! Pick up, pick up. No-no-no!

The sounds of the train releasing its brake and pulling out of the station. Matt lurches to a halt.

Behind him, ANDY, a girl in her 20s, bundled up, drags her wheelie suitcase from the ticket office.

Andy Matt?

Matt turns and sees her. He runs to her and picks her up in his arms, spinning her around.

Matt You stayed.

Andy Put me down!

Matt sets her down.

Matt I thought I missed you. When it pulled out...

Andy That's the train to Portland. My train isn't for another five minutes.

Matt Oh.

Andy What are you doing here?

Matt You're really going to LA?

Andy Yes. You got my message.

Matt We had plans. You can't just cancel our Christmas plans.

Andy We were only going to hang out for a few hours, Matt. And it seemed like you might not be able to anyway... I was talking to Mike, and he asked me to come out for the week.

Matt The musician? You haven't seen this guy in years.

Andy He's a good friend. And he's free.

Matt You're ditching me for that guy? Because he doesn't have a job? You'll be on the train on Christmas Eve. On Christmas. When are you coming back?

Andy The third.

Matt You'll be there for New Year's.

Andy You cancelled New Year's. Mike has a gig then. I've missed him. And since I didn't have anything else going on—

Matt But you did. We had plans for Christmas.

Andy We had plans for Thanksgiving, too. And I ate a turkey by myself. And you barely asked me to come over for Christmas. That's not plans.

Matt That's not true.

Andy And you had New Year's Eve.

Matt I thought I explained—

Andy In a forty second voice mail this morning.

Matt I just found out this morning.

Andy A *backdoor* voicemail—

Matt I said I was sorry. What's your problem?

Andy I bought a dress, Matt. If you didn't notice, I don't wear dresses. But I bought a dress. A smokin', back cut down to nothing, black, sparkly, thigh slit dress. But you took an extra shift, jerk.

Matt So wear it to Mike's gig!

Andy I wanted to see your face when you saw me in it. You're an asshole.

Matt It was either New Year's or Christmas—

The sounds of a train approaching. Andy checks the time.

Andy Well, Christmas doesn't have kissing. I thought if we were together for New Year's Eve, if I was in that dress... When midnight came, we'd be at that party where we don't know anybody, and you would look at me and say "Happy New Year!" And that's when I would kiss you, Matt. And in that dress, you would kiss me right back. If you saw me in that dress? Really saw me? Not just good ol' let's-watch-hockey-Andy, but frickin' sex-bomb-Andy-who-can't-be-denied. *(beat)* But you cancelled. You cancelled it. You were the reason I stayed in this town, when everyone else left, Matt. So now I'm going to LA. I don't know if I'm coming back.

The train has pulled into the station, hissing to a stop.

Matt Charney said I had to choose Christmas or New Year's. He's my boss, and I *had* to choose. Which day I was going to spend with you. For me Christmas is the day you spend with the people you're close to. Or want to be close to. *(beat)* I made reservations. Three weeks ago. For the duck inn. I got us tickets for the skating pond. As a surprise. So. I hoped this Christmas *would* have kissing. *(beat)* And now I fucked it up. It's all fucked.

Matt's beeper goes off. He silences it.

Andy How was I supposed to know that?

The train whistles. Andy checks the clock.

Matt Please stay here with me.

Andy You're on shift?

Matt Yeah. I stole an ambulance.

Andy Matt!

Matt I'm kidding. But I'm not supposed to be here.

Andy You need to get back to the hospital.

Matt I will.

Conductor All Aboard!

Matt That's your train.

Matt's beeper goes off. He silences it and shoves the beeper in his pocket. She looks at him. The sound of the train doors closing, and the hiss of the train releasing its brake. Matt looks at her, just standing there.

Matt *(cont'd)* You stayed.

Andy drops her suitcase and pulls him into her arms, holding him tightly. He picks her up and spins her around.

Andy How could I go?

He sets her down and picks up her suitcase. They walk down the platform side by side.

Andy *(cont'd)* Do you think they'd mind if I wore a slinky black dress to their Christmas inn?

Matt I don't give a damn if they mind or not. Festive is festive.

Andy reaches over and takes Matt's hand, as they continue off the platform.

END OF PLAY.