



## A Very Dare Christmas

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A month before Christmas, Riley Dare strode through the mall, taking in the holiday décor. The mistletoe, thick tinsel wrapped around every post and railing, the candy canes hanging from the ceiling and the Santa Claus at the far corner, all reminded her it was Christmas time. Having grown up in Florida, she didn't need snow or cold weather to tell her it was the holidays. She'd take her seventy degree Miami weather any time.

She walked past Santa's set up. The line for the jolly man stretched throughout the entire first floor filled with mothers and screaming kids. She was grateful she and Ian had brought their daughter, Rainey, and son, Jack, to meet Santa a few days ago, before the crazy lines began. Her four-year-old had taken one look at Saint Nick and screamed bloody murder. Needless to say, the photograph they'd taken hadn't been the happy one they'd hoped for.

Today, she was alone and on a mission to buy gifts. It might be early but she had good reason to get a head start. She didn't have much family, just her stepmom, Melissa. But Ian... when she'd married him she'd married a large, extended family.

Ian had four siblings - two brothers and two sisters - each of them married, two with kids. Ian also had two step brothers - one of which was married, and a step sister. And if that crazy amount of people wasn't enough to keep up with and buy gifts

for, his New York family was coming to town on Christmas day, including three cousins, all married, two of whom also had children.

Was it any wonder she was laden with bags and gifts and utterly exhausted? But she loved everything about her life... except her daughter's night terrors. Rainey woke them screaming most nights and though the pediatrician promised it would pass, waiting, worrying and suffering through the painful shrieks wasn't easy and made her bleary eyed during the day. Not to mention her son wasn't a great sleeper... and life wasn't easy at the moment.

She could have done her shopping online but there was nothing like seeing something in person, touching it, and knowing you were choosing the perfect gift for each person. Besides, her mother in law loved to spend time with Rainey and Jack, so she'd freed Riley up to shop.

Oh! She'd forgotten her mother in law, Emma and her husband, Michael! Two more people to add to her list. She walked to the side of the aisle and dropped her bags close to the wall. She began to dig through her purse for her list. She hadn't put it on her phone, preferring a handwritten page she could cross out and make changes on. She added the two names, shaking her head at her forgetfulness.

Before she could gather her bags again, her cell rang. She pulled it out of her purse and saw Ian's name on the screen. "Hi," she said, more breathlessly than she'd like.

"Hi, baby. How's it going?"

She laughed, a wry sound escaping her lips. "My shopping list is growing. Are you sure your family isn't getting bigger as we speak because it sure feels like it is."

He laughed. "I told you to let my assistant handle the gifts."

"And I told you that's rude," she chided.

"So? I don't like how exhausted you sound."

She smiled at his protective tone of voice. Over the years, he hadn't mellowed and she understood the way he expressed his love. Ian could be... overbearing but he adored his family and felt it was his job to care for them all.

And she wanted to be the one who took care of him. It was just that lately, she was always so exhausted. Too tired for dinners out alone, too tired for her to cook his favorite meals, and too tired for sex... and that wasn't like her... or them. Not at all. From the minute they'd met, the sexual attraction had been off the charts and he'd never hesitated to tell her exactly how much he wanted her, how he intended to take her, and follow through on every word. Those days felt like a long, long time ago not a few short years.

"Don't worry. I'm almost finished for the day," she said. Though her list was extensive and long, she'd been working her way through it. But she was dragging more with each step and she didn't want him overly concerned. She'd just have to make a final shopping trip another time.

"I'm leaving the office now. I'll meet you at home," he said. He was the owner of the Miami Thunder football team and

his work never ended, but this was early for him to take off for the day.

"Is everything okay?" she asked.

"It'll be better soon."

She frowned at the cryptic answer. "Ian -"

"Love you, baby. See you in a few." He disconnected the call before she could reply. "I love you too," she muttered.

She gathered her bags up in her arms and decided she'd head home and meet her husband. She'd have to pick up Rainey and Jack from her mother in law's, but she wanted to see Ian first.

A little while later, she walked into the house, having noticed his car parked in the garage. She dropped the bags on the mudroom floor and strode out through the kitchen.

"Ian?" she called out.

"Right here." He stood in the center of the family room, a red scarf in his hand.

"What's going on?" she asked, a spark of excitement shooting through her at the obvious silk garment he'd used on her before.

"Come here," he said in a commanding voice she hadn't heard in too long.

A full body tremor took hold. Her nipples puckered, as if even they remembered the times he'd use that voice right before pinning her to the wall, her hands above her head, his lips on hers, his hard cock pressing into the softness of her sex.

She stepped towards him. "Why is that out now?" she asked, pointing to the scarf, her physical awareness of what was

obviously to come a tangible, exciting thing.

"Turn around."

She swallowed and did as he asked. He wrapped the scarf around her eyes and tied it behind her head. "Now you're mine."

Her heart pounded hard in her chest. "I've always been yours," she murmured. "What is going on?"

"You'll see," he said and before he could argue, he lifted her up and into his arms.

She wrapped her arms around his neck and held on as he carried her through the house and outside into the warmer air. He placed her in a car, then settled in beside her.

So he was in the back too, she mused. They were obviously in a limousine, Ian's favorite form of travel.

"I have to pick up the kids," she reminded him.

"All taken care of." He slid her skirt up her thigh and placed his hand on her bare skin. She shivered at his masculine touch.

With her sight gone, all she could do was focus on the things going on around her. The movement of the vehicle, headed heaven knew where, and her husband's fingers moving upward, those talented fingers trailing their way north, until his roughened fingertip slid over her sex.

She sucked in a shuddering breath. "What are you doing?"

"What does it feel like?" he asked, chuckling, a low, pleased sound.

She swallowed hard. "Arousing me," she whispered, hoping that the sound proof divider was up separating them from the

driver of the limo. She trusted Ian enough to assume it was.

"You are definitely wet, baby. It's been too long since you've come for me." His fingers danced over her clit and she exhaled a low moan.

"Keep it up and we'll be rectifying that very soon." She wiggled her hips in an attempt to get him to continue.

But instead of increasing pressure, he slapped her lightly on her sex. "Gotta build up the tension first."

She shivered in arousal and frustration as he removed his hand.

Throughout the remainder of the drive, his palm clamped hard on her thigh, a reminder of what she wanted... needed... and couldn't have.

Yet.

#

Ian Dare was a man of action. When he desired something, he took control and made it happen. So how had he let his personal life get so off track?

One little tyrannical mini-Riley and a baby, that's how. His children occupied their every thought, action and plan they made. He adored his munchkins but he missed his wife.

Which was why he now led her, blindfolded, out of the limo and carefully up the stairs to his private jet. He kept one hand wrapped securely around her waist.

"Step," he instructed her. "Step again." He continued the process until she entered the main cabin.

Thank fuck this plane had a bedroom because after sliding

his fingers over her damp pussy, he couldn't wait to taste her, devour her, and make love to the woman he adored.

Once he had her onboard, he pulled off the blindfold. "Welcome. We're going on vacation," he told her. He'd managed to pull this together in the span of thirty minutes, calling in friends and favors.

She blinked as she focused on her surroundings, her pretty brown eyes opening wide. "Ian! What about the kids?" she asked.

"With my mother for the weekend."

Concern etched her features. "But... the night terrors."

He'd worried about the same thing. "Mom assured me she's raised enough children to be able to handle them and the baby." He folded his arms across his chest, not willing to give in on this argument. They needed time together and they needed it now.

"Okay," she said, still obviously worried about her children. He was too but he trusted his mother.

"Where are we going?" she asked.

"I debated not telling you until we landed but you don't look thrilled about this trip yet so I'll fill you in. Turks and Caicos," he said, naming the Caribbean island. "I rented a house from Lola Corbin and Rep Grissom," he said of the famous singer and her Miami Thunder player husband.

Pleasure finally lit up Riley's expressive face. "Ian!" She jumped into his arms and he caught her, falling back into the plush seats.

"I guess this means you're happy?" He brushed her hair off her face, the tight grip on his chest easing.



She wrapped her arms around his neck, wriggling her sweet pussy against his hard erection. "It means I've missed you." She pressed a kiss against his lips, warm and delicious and everything Riley. "I've missed *us*," she whispered.

"Me too. And We're going to spend this weekend catching up with each other and then we're going to plan on alone times so we don't lose one another ever again." He rubbed his nose against hers and she sighed, obviously pleased.

That's all he wanted. To keep this woman happy for the rest of her life.

"Excuse me, Mr. Dare? It's time to take off," the flight attendant said, interrupting them.

Ian kissed Riley once more before urging her up and off him, placing her in her own seat. "Seatbelts, baby. But once we're in the air, that bedroom has our name on it."

She grinned and buckled in. He did the same and soon the plane was taxiing down the runway.

He kept his hand on her thigh and waited until they were at a steady, safe altitude before he unhooked her seatbelt and carried her to the bedroom in the back of the plane.

"Get ready," he instructed her, placing her down on the bed. "I'm going to let them know we don't want to be disturbed, but then I'm all yours." He stared at her flushed, eager face. "Or should I say you're all mine?" He couldn't wait to get his hands on her sweet curves.

Except when he returned from assuring their privacy, his wife was fast asleep. He sat by her side and stroked her cheek,

for the first time, really seeing how exhausted she was. He frowned, knowing something had to change. She was stubborn and wanted to raise her family the old-fashioned way but he didn't work so hard just so she could run herself ragged.

A plan formed in his mind as he let her rest, watching over her.

He'd let her rest for now. They'd have complete privacy and time to enjoy one another soon enough.

#

Riley didn't have a chance to explore the rental house, which was completely gorgeous, from what she could see at a glance. The entire back wall showed off the infinity pool out back and the spectacular turquoise ocean beyond.

No sooner had they walked into the house than Ian pointed to the carry-on bag he'd put together for her. "Bikini. Now."

And there was the bossy man she'd missed while they were busy living life.

"Yes, sir!" Riley gave him a sassy retort, feeling refreshed courtesy of her nap on board.

He swatted her ass with a nearby towel.

She jumped, squeaked, felt the sting of arousal travel through her and ran for the bedroom, rolling her carry on along with her. She had a hunch Ian had packed her very few pairs of panties and clothes. Which was just fine with her. She wouldn't be needing them.

She opened her suitcase and pulled out a red bikini, Ian's favorite that she wore when she sat out at the pool behind the

house... or had before her second child. With her even more well developed curves, she hoped it fit now.

As she put it on, her breasts plumping out of the cups and her hips visible, she realized Ian wouldn't care. And wasn't she a lucky girl?

She strode into the other room, strutting a little because she knew he was waiting. She stopped short when she caught sight of him. Wearing a pair of boarding shorts, his tanned muscular body on display, her body perked up at the sight.

"See something you like?" he asked.

"That and something I haven't seen... or paid attention to in too long." She strode over to him and hooked her finger into the waistband of his shorts, running her fingers over his taut stomach. "I missed you," she murmured.

A seductive grin lifted his sexy mouth. "I missed you too. And you look good enough to eat."

Ignoring her hands in his pants, hands that wanted to travel downward so she could wrap her hands around his cock, he picked her up like she weighed nothing. She immediately wrapped her legs around his waist, causing his hard erection to press against her core. A delicious wave rocked through her and she sighed with pleasure.

"Oh, Ian. Thank you for this. We needed it."

"Anything for you, baby." He grasped the back of her head, sealed his lips over hers and nothing else mattered.

He kissed her hard, pushing her up to the nearest wall. She moaned, hooking her heels behind his back and rubbing herself

against him. With a low, throaty groan, he thrust his tongue into her mouth at the same time he rocked his hips against hers. Dizzying swells of desire took hold and immediately brought her close to a fast climax. One she desperately wanted and needed.

She tangled her fingers into his hair and pulled, indicating what she needed. "Ian please." She had to come. Needed to take the edge off the building arousal.

He broke the kiss, staring into her eyes. "Trying to run the show?" he asked.

"Trying to come," she said, her voice a hoarse rasp.

He let out a low laugh. "I'll let you have your way but only because this weekend is all about you." He eased back, holding her against the wall with his hips and slid his fingers into the waistband of her bathing suit. He coated his fingers with her moisture and rubbed her clit, back and forth slicking over her exactly how she liked.

She groaned, her arousal spiking. She arched her hips, giving him better access and he curled his finger, gliding inside her core. She squeezed her inner walls, clutching around him.

"You're so hot, so wet, baby."

"It feels so good. Harder," she said, writhing against him.

He pressed his thumb against her clit and began steadily pumping his other finger inside her.

"Ian!" She held onto his shoulders and rode out the orgasm that slammed into her, as he continued to flick and rub at her clit until she collapsed in his arms.

He kissed her lips before carrying her to the bed in the master nearby. He sat her down on the mattress, sliding her legs to the edge of the bed. He pulled off her bikini bottoms and hooked his thumbs into his waistband to shuck his shorts as well.

His thick cock stood erect as he spread her thighs. "Got a few things to tell you before I fuck you, baby."

She blinked, her brain fuzzy. She might have come already but one look at him and she imagined the feel of that hard cock inside her. But she recognized that tone of voice. Whatever he wanted to say, it was important.

"I'm listening." Even as her sex pulsed all over again and the desire to have her husband thrust into her was overwhelming.

"We're getting a live-in nanny. You need someone to take the burden off you so you have time for everything else in your life."

His words took her off guard. They'd discussed this. He knew her feelings. She wanted to raise her children herself. Have Rainey and Jack know their mommy woke them up and put them to bed.

"But - "

He shook his head. "But nothing. What's money if we can't use it to help make life a little easier? And we need time together as a couple as much as we need it as a family."

As if to punctuate his statement, he gripped his cock and pumped his hand up and down with his hand, come glistening at the tip. Then, not playing fair, he glided the hard length along

her clit.

"Oh," she said moaning at the delicious sensation. But she knew he was distracting her, assuming he'd get his way if she was too sex-drunk to care.

"I respect you want to do it all yourself, but there are ways to manage things so you can have it all."

She bit her lip. Yes, she'd always argued against help in the house, wanting to take care of her husband and her kids, on her own. She'd given up work after Jack was born, not an easy decision but her desire to stay home with the kids outweighed the desire to go to the office. And she was lucky enough to be able to make that choice.

She knew they were fortunate but she wanted to raise her own kids. She also knew her husband wouldn't give up.

And he continued to tease her clit with his erection.

She swallowed hard, digging into her reserves to negotiate. "I'll take a live-in housekeeper," she managed to counter. "I can still be the one who handles the kids."

"Uh uh. A mix of both. You need flexibility," he said, his tone insistent.

She processed it quickly. With that kind of situation, she could control what was her domain and what wasn't, so decided not to argue. "Agreed."

"See? I can compromise." He grinned and slid his thick cock into her sex.

Finally. She arched, pulling him deeper so he pulsed deliciously bare inside her. And then reality intruded. "Ian,

you're not using protection." A slight panic took hold.

She'd gone off the pill before having Rainey and he'd used condoms afterwards because she hadn't wanted to keep playing with her hormones. But they hadn't talked about more kids just yet and they really did have their hands full with two. Still, the thought of another infant had her heart filling already.

He stilled, his hands on her thighs. "I'm good with another baby... now that you've agreed to my terms and will allow help," he said with a knowing grin.

Terms. As if her agreeing to support around the house and with their children was such a hardship. He was such a silly, controlling man. If he'd come to her and had the conversation like a rational human, she'd have agreed. But that wasn't Ian's way. He liked to impose his will when he thought he was doing what was best for her or his family.

He arched his back and thrust forward, grinding his hips against hers. "Need an answer," he reminded her through clenched teeth. "Am I pulling out?"

"No," she groaned, completely okay with rolling the dice on another baby. As long as he kept going. "Fuck me, Ian."

He didn't make her wait. He pounded into her, his eyes on hers the entire time. With Ian, it didn't matter how fast or slow, how hard or soft, each time was special. Each was making love. Each cemented the bond they had between them.

He knew how to make her soar.

He knew how to love her.

And when she climaxed, he came with her on a shout and full

body shudder that triggered a second orgasm for her before he eased down on top of her.

#

Ian made sure the rest of the weekend passed in an orgasm induced haze for his wife. A butler arrived at the house to cater to their every meal, cocktail, whim and need. They had all the time in the world to focus on each other... to talk, walk on the beach, lay in the sun, soak in the pool, catch up, make love and call home.

Often.

Because at the end of the day, they had a little girl and a baby boy they adored and were worried about and they were a family. And, Ian thought, with a little luck that family was about to grow. He was so damned lucky and he would never take his good fortune for granted.

#

A few weeks later, Riley had purchased all the presents for the family and her house was decorated for Christmas. In a little while, Ian's family was set to descend en masse. She wasn't nervous, she just anticipated being overwhelmed and if she was going to feel crazed, she was worried Rainey might react as well.

"Come here, princess."

"What, mommy?" Rainey walked up to her and crawled onto the couch seat beside her.

Riley wrapped an arm around her daughter's little shoulder. "So remember I told you we have a lot of people coming over



today?"

"Yes. All my aunts and uncles and cousins."

Riley smiled, brushing Rainey's brown curls, so similar to her own, out of her face. "That's right. I just want you to know you can come find me for a break any time you want."

"Are they bringing presents?" Rainey asked.

Riley sighed, doing her best not to laugh. "I don't know and it's rude to ask, right?"

Rainey bobbed her head. "Yep. But it's Christmas so they're probably bringing me toys!"

Riley rolled her eyes. With the big Christmas tree already loaded with wrapped presents on display in the living room, was it any wonder her daughter expected more gifts? Which was just one reason they were going together to drop off toys at the women's shelter tomorrow. So her daughter didn't grow up unaware of what it meant to give to others.

And when her son was old enough, he'd join them on those trips. Right now, he still napped, thank goodness, which was where he was right now. Sleeping in his crib.

"How are my girls?" Ian asked, joining them in the den.

"Daddy!" Rainey ran for him and he scooped her into his arms. "Ready for a big day?" he asked.

Before she could answer, the doorbell rang, indicating the gang had started to arrive.

He carried her to the door and opened it. Riley came up behind him. His step-brother, Alex and his wife Madison were first to arrive. Madison had a casserole dish in her hands and

Alex had a huge box with a big red bow. Looks like her daughter was, in fact, going to be loaded up with presents.

"Alex!" she said to the man who'd been her best friend even before she'd met Ian. "Madison! It's so good to see you. Right?" Riley nudged Ian with her elbow as he put Rainey down.

"Good to see you, man." Ian shook Alex's hand. Their truce had come at a hard-won cost thanks to their father's behavior, but they'd managed it and now got along. Even if they occasionally pretended it was still a hardship.

"Come on in," Ian said.

Alex paused though, and knelt down to get eye to eye with Rainey. "Someone's gotten to be a big girl!"

"You just saw her last week," Riley reminded him.

He laughed and handed her the present. "Think you can add this to your pile under the tree?" he asked.

"For me!?" she screamed, causing Alex to wince.

"Better get used to the decibels," Madison said with a grin.

Riley glanced at her. "Why? Are you...?"

"She's pregnant!" Alex said with a proud grin.

"Great way to ring in the holidays. Congratulations," Ian said.

Riley was already too busy hugging Madison and congratulating her. She was thrilled her sister in law and friend was pregnant because now she didn't have to do her own nine months alone.

Yes, she had news for Ian. He'd gotten her pregnant that

weekend on the island.

"Oops more company," Alex said, glancing over his shoulder. "Let's get inside."

Alex's siblings came next, Jason and Sienna, the only two single ones left in the family. They also loaded up Rainey with presents. Rainey was in heaven.

Riley was about to shut the door when another two car loads of family arrived. The New York contingent showed up straight from their hotel. Gabe, Izzy and their son Noah, who was a little younger than Rainey, walked in.

Rainey greeted them, grabbed her cousin's hand and off they went, according to Rainey, to find cookies.

"Gotta love these kids," Izzy said. "Good to see you but I need to make sure Noah doesn't eat the whole plate full!" She blew a kiss and followed after the kids.

"Good thing our new nanny runs the kitchen as well as the kids," Ian said, laughing.

As usual, when Ian made a decision, he implemented it with speed and thoroughness. He had Loretta vetted and hired within a week of returning from their vacation. Riley had to admit she adored the older woman.

Gabe grinned. "It's the best, isn't it?" He stared after his wife and child, a loving look on his face.

Ian slapped his oldest cousin on the back. "Nothing better," he agreed. "Let's go have a drink. The others can find us when they make their way inside."

Riley waited by the door, greeting Amanda and Decklan and

their daughter, Hannah, along with Max and Lucy. Finally, Ian's last siblings trickled in, Dylan and Olivia and their toddler daughter Annie, and Scott and Meg, and their son Cole. Last but not least, Avery and her rock star husband, Grey arrived. Riley's stepmom was traveling with her husband and couldn't make it, and Ian's mom was home with the flu, her husband Michael taking care of her.

After hugs and kisses and directions to the tree for all the gifts, Riley finally closed the front door behind all her guests.

Nobody had mentioned or invited Robert Dare. Even if Ian and his siblings wanted to forgive him for living a double life and having another family, the current rumors of him cheating on Alex and his siblings' mother, Savannah, killed any good will some of the children had left. It was sad, but he reaped what he sowed. And as for Savannah, well, she'd known he had a wife when she'd had her initial affair with him, so it shouldn't be a surprise he'd repeat patterns now.

The entire Dare family was under one roof and Riley, who'd grown up with an angry man as her father, knew how lucky she was that fate had given her Ian along with his big clan. So she did the smart thing now. She headed inside to enjoy her family. The ones who mattered.

#

Ian wasn't an easy man. He wasn't easy to know, to deal with or to love. He knew this. And as much as Riley had changed him, there was much that remained the same. She loved him

anyway, thank fuck. It went without saying that she was his world.

But he loved his family too. It hadn't been too long ago that in his mind, family had consisted of his two brothers and two sisters, period. He had refused to acknowledge his half-siblings because his father had not only cheated on his mother, he'd had an entire other family he'd hidden from them. Time and Riley had changed that and now Ian had not just accepted them but invited them into his home. And yes, into his heart. His New York cousins were an added blessing.

As he watched them mingle and interact, he counted those blessings, his gaze drifting to his wife. Riley rushed around to make sure their company was fed and had drinks in hand, despite having help to serve and clean up. All while running after Riley, who managed to find trouble no matter what. White out she showed her cousin, highlighters she'd discovered in the kitchen, and chocolate she wasn't supposed to have any more of before lunch.

And she did it all with an indulgent grin on her face.

He pulled her aside. "Come with me." He led her into their bedroom and shut the door behind them.

"Ian, we have company."

"That doesn't mean I can't have a few minutes alone with my wife," he said, nuzzling her nose against his.

She sighed. "I love you," she said, wrapping her arms around his neck.

"I love you too."

She bit down on her lower lip. "I wasn't going to do this now but... why not? It's Christmas. I want to give you your present," she murmured.

He arched his hips against hers. "Yeah? Right now?" His cock nestled into the vee of her thighs.

"Not that, your dirty man. Get your mind off of sex for a minute."

He laughed. "Okay what's my present?" he asked.

She leaned in and whispered in his ear. "You're going to be a daddy again. Merry Christmas."

His heart skipped a beat. "Seriously?"

She eased back, meeting his gaze. "I wouldn't joke about that."

"God, Ri. That's the best gift you could ever give me. I love you so damned much. And I love our family."

"And I love you, Ian Dare." Her lips found his and locked in a long, wet, sensual kiss... until a loud banging sounded on the door.

"Mommy! Daddy! I spilt milk on my dress!" Rainey wailed, the loud banging continuing.

They broke the kiss, laughing. "This is what we asked for," Ian said with a grin.

He stepped over to the door and swung it open. "Mr. Dare! I'm sorry. She got away from me."

"That's okay, Loretta. I've got her," Riley said, rushing over to her crying daughter.

"We've got her," Ian said. He grabbed her and lifted her up

into his arms. "Let's go clean you up, princess. Then you can get back to your cousins."

Riley slipped her hand into his and together they took care of their daughter and headed back to enjoy Christmas day with the family. After all, they had a lot to celebrate.

Dear Readers:

I hope you enjoyed revisiting Ian and Riley and the rest of the Dare clan. Over the last few years, so many of you have written, asking me for more Dare stories and I hope to bring you just that at the end of next year. In the meantime, happy holidays, happy new year, and thank you for your unwavering support.

All the best,

Carly