

**Encounter: Christmas Clock (Love in the Wild)**  
**Saloni Quinby**

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## Christmas Clock (Love in the Wild)

It was strange to think of butterflies in the middle of winter, but John Smith couldn't help it because of the metaphorical butterflies in his stomach. His future husband, Earl Eli Rossi, had picked him up at the airport a few hours ago and they had just arrived at Earl Eli's ranch style house in rural Maine.

Earl Eli eased his black pickup truck into the driveway to park. The men hopped out, John with his travel bag slung over his shoulder. "I still can't believe you're here for Christmas," Earl Eli said as he unlocked the front door.

"I'd hoped you'd be happy about it. I know we hadn't planned for me to come here until closer to the wedding."

"The sooner the better. You know that."

They stepped into the foyer and John had no sooner closed the door than Earl Eli pulled him into another powerful hug. He covered John's mouth in a possessive kiss that made John lose coherent thought. All he could do was take in the wonderful overload of senses. He breathed in Earl Eli's scent, felt the warmth and hardness of his body and rediscovered the delicious, unique flavor of his lips and tongue.

When the kiss broke, they stared into each other's eyes.

"Man, did I miss you," Earl Eli said.

"Likewise."

John placed his travel bag on the floor and glanced around while he and Earl Eli shrugged off their coats and hung them on the simple wooden rack near the door.

John peered into the living room where a fat tree stood in front of the window. The aroma of pine wafted through the house. Several gifts were arranged under the tree. John turned toward the kitchen. There were a few dishes left to dry on a towel near the sink. The front of the refrigerator was

covered with various magnets from local businesses as well as moose, bear and other animals native to New England.

"Strange as this sounds, I feel like I'm home," John said.

"You *are* home."

John smiled and kissed Earl Eli again. It was true. From now on, this was John's house as well. He and Earl Eli planned to marry in early summer. John had intended to spend Christmas in England and join his lover in the States in the spring. Then his mother had decided to spend Christmas in the Caribbean with her latest boyfriend and his dad was working on an important project and wouldn't take the holiday off. Though John had been invited to spend Christmas with his friend Martin, he'd instead asked Earl Eli if he could move in ahead of schedule. John's book about legendary creatures had recently been accepted by a major publisher, and with the advance he'd received, he felt comfortable leaving his librarian job sooner than expected. He'd already applied for several positions at libraries in New England and hoped to hear back from potential employers soon.

"I know. It just feel... I don't know," John said.

"I put all your stuff in here."

Earl Eli led the way to where the boxes John had sent from England were piled neatly in the middle of Earl Eli's music room. Earl Eli's violins were displayed on the walls. A wooden chair and a sheet music stand stood in a corner. One wall had a built in bookcase. In front of it stood a keyboard on a stand and a black leather stool.

"You didn't open anything," John said, a bit surprised.

"It's not mine."

"We're getting married. What's mine is yours and vice versa, at least that's what you've told me."

"It didn't feel right, opening your stuff without you being here."

John gazed at Earl Eli and grinned. At times the man was like a big, hairy, loveable pup. It just took a while to see past his gruffness to the sweet guy underneath.

Glancing around, John noticed the music room had some Christmas decorations as well. A handmade fabric wreath hung on the wall and a small wooden clock painted red and green with white snowflakes rested on a table next to a pile of sheet music.

“Cute clock, but it’s not working,” John said, stepping closer to pick it up.

“My granddad made it for my grandma for their first Christmas together,” Earl Eli explained. “It stopped the day she died. We’ve tried winding it, but it won’t go for longer than a few minutes. I don’t have the heart to get rid of it, even though it doesn’t keep time.”

“Of course you shouldn’t get rid of it. It’s lovely and the story behind it is even lovelier.”

Earl Eli wrapped his arms around John from behind and rubbed his bearded cheek against John’s. “Are you tired after traveling?”

“A bit jet lagged. You know what I need?”

“What?”

“Bed.” John turned and kissed Earl Eli’s mouth while sliding a hand between them to knead his crotch. His cock hardened to John’s touch. Excitement darted through John and his cock stiffened, too.

“Yeah. Bed sounds good,” Earl Eli murmured against his lover’s lips. They hurried to Earl Eli’s bedroom, or rather their bedroom, and pulled off their sweaters. Between kissing and caressing each other’s bare torsos, they managed to pull off their boots, socks and jeans.

“Come on,” Earl Eli said, grabbing John roughly and falling onto the bed with him.

John chuckled and groaned as Earl Eli kissed and licked his way down John’s stomach. His eyes half closed and his heart pounding, John spread his

legs, giving his lover easier access to his cock and balls. Within seconds, John was moaning, nearly overcome by pleasure as Earl Eli's warm, wet mouth teased him.

Their months of separation had left them both longing for each other and at the moment neither could get enough of the other. As much as John enjoyed being pleased by Earl Eli, he wanted to do the same for his lover.

He shifted his weight and pushed Earl Eli onto his back. John slid down the bed and ran his hands and lips over the expanse of Earl Eli's muscular, hairy chest. Earl Eli spent most of his life working outdoors and his body reflected the ruggedness of his lifestyle. He was easily one of the fittest men John had ever met.

John stroked Earl Eli's cock and then he took it in his mouth. He teased Earl Eli relentlessly, as his lover had done to him.

"Oh, man, you're killing me," Earl Eli said breathlessly. He pushed away from John only to reposition himself so that they could pleasure each other at the same time. He smiled, thinking how they'd have an entire lifetime to explore all sorts of pleasures, in bed and out.

He couldn't think long, though, because sensation drove off all coherent thoughts again. All he could focus on was the drives of his body. He wasn't sure who came first, but all he knew was that they were both writhing and groaning, gasping and swallowing. Finally, they lay in a warm, panting tangle.

After a moment, John said, "You certainly know how to welcome a man."

Earl Eli chuckled.

John rose, pulled on his jeans and headed for the door.

"Where are you going?"

"To find my robe. It's in one of those boxes."

Earl Eli also stood and tugged on his jeans. He followed John back to the music room where he watched his lover open a box.

"You can help if you want," John said.

Earl Eli was about to assist when he heard ticking. "What's that?"

"What?"

"Hey. Look at this." Earl Eli walked to the table where the Christmas clock stood. It was working just fine.

John came to stand next to Earl Eli. "Wow. It's almost like a sign. Like it's your grandparents sending us good wishes or something."

"Could be," Earl Eli murmured. He picked up the clock and stared at it. "It was their first Christmas and now it's ours. But a message from beyond, John? That's kind of unbelievable."

"At one time, I would have agreed, but we did find Bigfoot once."

"Yeah." Earl Eli grinned and held John's gaze. "We did."

He put the clock down and took John's hand.

"This is going to be the best Christmas ever," John said.

"I can't argue with that."

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