
Hating Christmas

By

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Part of the Holiday Series by Carol Rose:

1. Hating Christmas
2. No Bunny But You

CHAPTER ONE

Holly Fitzgerald hated Christmas and never more than at this moment. She stepped into the body of the airplane and looked down the crowded, chaotic aisle, shrugging her shoulder to keep the heavy carry-on and her computer bag from slipping off. The narrow aisle between the rows of seats was clogged with harried travelers—several men in suits who looked annoyed by fathers loaded with strollers and stuffed toys and harassed mothers with whining children. Several Hating Christmas (Holiday Romance Series, Book 1) (Holiday series) passengers were shoving bags that looked as heavy as hers into overhead bins ...and everywhere people kept offering 'Happy Holiday' salutations like it was a silly talisman.

Horse hockey.

All the way through the airport concourse, Christmas music had blared and, of course, red and green tinsel sprang out from every shop along the way, trying to convey that spending money there would ensure Christmas bliss for loved ones. It was sickening.

Firming her mouth with determination, Holly shrugged the straps Hating Christmas (Holiday Romance Series, Book 1) (Holiday series) up again and inched along the aisle behind a tall guy who liked good tailoring.

She really should have been in an editing booth right now, wrestling with the cuts that would make her best interviews shine and show the reality of the chronic poverty and hunger in Tanzania. Africa wasn't sexy these days and too damn many crises were competing since Michael Moore got everyone interested in documentaries.

She really had to make this film speak out.

Holly huffed a frustrated sigh. She didn't have time for all this friggin' mistletoe crap. This was always a stupid time of the year, filled with forced gaiety and disappointed expectations. She hated the whole holiday season.

And now she had to make this rescue mission, spending ten days she couldn't spare right now, going to Minnesota for the Christmas holidays! Her mother had wanted her for two whole weeks, but Holly just couldn't spare the time. They'd compromised.

As the line of boarding passengers shuffled a few steps forward, the guy in front of her looked

back over his shoulder and admonished her. "I think they're moving as fast as they can."

Holly made a face at the back of his dark, well-shaped head. She wasn't in the mood for this. This trip—at the worst travel time of the year—was irritating as hell, and on top of that, she was worried about her mom.

Did people develop dementia at fifty-two? When they hadn't had any previous symptoms?

Her normally level-headed mom needed her immediately. Even if it was a bad time for Holly to leave LA, her mom needed her like never before. Her mother had to get out of this impulsive marriage now and Holly was the one to make her see it. From the time Holly had gotten her mother's giddy call—from a cruise ship, no less—announcing her impending marriage to a guy she'd just reconnected with after forty years, Holly had known they were facing an emergency.

Holly Hating Christmas (Holiday Romance Series, Book 1) (Holiday series) had been in Zambia Hating Christmas (Holiday Romance Series, Book 1) (Holiday series) at the time and she hadn't been able to fly back to bring her mother to her senses in time to put the brakes on this mess.

Her mom hadn't even Hating Christmas (Holiday Romance Series, Book 1) (Holiday series) dated much since her father's death twenty years before—and suddenly Hating Christmas (Holiday Romance Series, Book 1) (Holiday series) she gotten married to a man she hadn't seen since they were Hating Christmas (Holiday Romance Series, Book 1) (Holiday series) kids! A man she met again on a singles cruise, for heaven's sake!

So here Holly was trekking to western Minnesota to convince her mother get a divorce, if an annulment wouldn't fly.

Over the dozen or so years since her dad's sudden death, Holly and her mom had been a team. They faced the world together, taking on everything from annoying landlords to difficult high school Hating Christmas (Holiday Romance Series, Book 1) (Holiday series) teachers to the IRS, when her mother's records had gotten lost. No one listened to her with as much interest as her mom when Holly vented her frustrations in making Hating Christmas (Holiday Romance Series, Book 1) (Holiday series) her first documentary and no one cared more about the issues that burned brightest for her Hating Christmas (Holiday Romance Series, Book 1) (Holiday series) now. Mom had been her only parent and her biggest supporter.

Holly was determined to do the same for her mother now.

If only this stupid holiday stream of airline passengers would find their seats!

"Good grief!" Holly muttered aloud to herself, hitching up the shoulder bag and her computer again.

The man ahead of her glanced over his shoulder, this time saying with a charming smile, "I'm sure your family will hold Christmas dinner."

“I couldn’t care less about Christmas dinner,” Holly retorted, spotting her seat row ahead. She was only barely conscious of the amused glance the man in front of her threw her way as she shuffled forward to claim her Hating Christmas (Holiday Romance Series, Book 1) (Holiday series) spot.

Popping open the overhead bin, she hauled her carry-on up to thrust it into the space, keeping the lighter computer bag to work during the flight. While her arms were still lifted to shove the recalcitrant luggage into the space, she saw that the annoying businessman with the well-shaped head slide into the seat in front of her.

Hating Christmas (Holiday Romance Series, Book 1) (Holiday series)

Her seat.

He tucked his slim briefcase under the seat in front of him, adjusting his expensive suit jacket to make it settle on to broad shoulders before he took a Blackberry out of one pocket.

Holly glanced quickly at the ticket stub in her hand. “Ummm. I think you have my seat.”

The man smiled at her, a mixture of amused condensation and flirtation. “I know this travel experience has been frustrating for you so far—“

“What!” she exclaimed as several passengers pushed past her. “You don’t know anything about me, mister.”

“I beg to differ--” He offered what Hating Christmas (Holiday Romance Series, Book 1) (Holiday series) would have Hating Christmas (Holiday Romance Series, Book 1) (Holiday series) been a charming smile if he was hitting on her in a bar in Los Angeles. “No one observing your impatience with the boarding process could remain ignorant of your frustration.”

“What the--!” Holly sputtered, shifting to the side as a heavy man muttered “Excuse me” as he moved past her.

“Flying at this time of year is frustrating,” her seat-interloper said with smirky condensation.

She stood in the narrow aisle, registering him more fully as he continued.

“I try to avoid Hating Christmas (Holiday Romance Series, Book 1) (Holiday series) traveling during the holiday season at all costs, but when you’re in the middle of the chaos, it’s best to just go with the flow.” His smile was white against his narrow, tanned face.

He looked familiar to her, but she worked in the entertainment world where dark-haired men in really great suits abounded. The downside of making documentaries was that she dealt with all kinds of powerful snakes who drove fast, flashy cars. She just wished she could afford the cars. The snakes she could do without.

Shifting to one side as another passenger arrived to sit in the row Hating Christmas (Holiday Romance Series, Book 1) (Holiday series) in front of hers, Holly tried again. “Look, you’re

sitting in my assigned seat and I'd appreciate it—“

A flight attendant appeared next to her. “Is Hating Christmas (Holiday Romance Series, Book 1) (Holiday series) there a problem? We have a full plane today and we need to clear the aisle.”

Hoisting her laptop again, Holly responded pleasantly, sending the woman a quick smile, “I'm trying to clear the aisle, but this guy is sitting in my seat.”

She held her boarding pass Hating Christmas (Holiday Romance Series, Book 1) (Holiday series) up for the attendant to read. “See?”

The attendant glanced at Hating Christmas (Holiday Romance Series, Book 1) (Holiday series) her boarding pass and then said to the dark-haired man, “Excuse me, sir—“

Rolling Hating Christmas (Holiday Romance Series, Book 1) (Holiday series) her eyes upward as she recognized the woman's deferential tone, Holly maintained her silence, knowing nothing good would come of her pointing this out.

“—could we look at your ticket?”

The request was made almost apologetically, which irritated Holly more. The guy was sitting in what was clearly *her* assigned seat and the flight attendant was acting like the situation was open to interpretation.

“Of course,” the dark-haired suit-guy stood, the bulk-head above the seat requiring him to bend his head and shoulders as he reached into his pocket. “Here we are.”

Handing Hating Christmas (Holiday Romance Series, Book 1) (Holiday series) the boarding pass to the attendant, he met Holly's gaze with the same warm, flirty smile that made her Hating Christmas (Holiday Romance Series, Book 1) (Holiday series) want to hit him.

“I'm Hating Christmas (Holiday Romance Series, Book 1) (Holiday series) sorry, sir.” The flight attendant sounded genuinely regretful. “Your seat is actually in the row behind this.”

The guy looked at down at the boarding pass in his hand. “Well. So it is. My mistake.” He smiled at the woman as if she were his friend.

“No problem, sir. Can I help you move any carry-on luggage?” The attendant almost twittered in her eagerness to respond to his smile.

“No, thank you. This is all I have.” The Hating Christmas (Holiday Romance Series, Book 1) (Holiday series) man got his briefcase Hating Christmas (Holiday Romance Series, Book 1) (Holiday series) and moved into the aisle before glancing up at Holly in brief acknowledgement. “My apologies.”

She had to remind herself not to beam at him in response like the silly flight attendant.

“No problem,” she said, keeping her brief smile neutral as she stepped into the place he’d just vacated.

As the other passengers settled down around them, the plane fell quiet, just the hushing sound of the circulated air and the occasional low-voiced conversation from the people in the other seats. Unfortunately, Holly found herself more aware of the dark-haired man behind her than she should have been. She unzipped her laptop case and tried to focus on her work for the four hour flight, but to her irritation, she noticed when he cleared his throat or spoke to his seatmate. Her concentration on the script in front of her was even interrupted by his short conversation when another attendant pushed the drink cart down the aisle and paused to get his order.

Hating Christmas Holiday Romance Series Book 1 Holiday Series

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