

# Christmas Do Over (The Hansen's Book 1)

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CHRISTMAS DO OVER

(Book 1 of "The Hansen's" series)

By

Anita Livingston Doyle

Sometimes life can change in a few days,  
sometimes it takes several years;  
but where there is love, there can be change!

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Author: Anita Doyle

Title: Christmas Do Over (Book 1 of "The Hansen's" series)

Contact: Anita Livingston Doyle, livingstondoyle@gmail.com

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SEARCH KEYWORDS

Lost, Trust, Love, Compassion, Grief, Triumph, Joy, Family

DEDICATION

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I fell in love with these characters and rejoiced as they learned to put their trust in one another.

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## PROLOGUE

Lynette Hansen sat sipping her tea, idly swirling the hot liquid with her spoon. She wasn't looking forward to Christmas; usually her favorite season of the year. It just wasn't the same without her mother who had passed away unexpectedly two summers ago.

Last year the holidays had been rough as they all went through the motions; Lynette determined to bring cheer to a household in mourning.

This year, though, she could barely muster the energy to make an effort. Her kids were getting older, seemingly having outgrown all the traditions from the past. Her husband was throwing himself more and more into his company, more and more absent emotionally and physically from home. Lynette knew they were all coping with their grief in their own ways, but it didn't make it easier to accept that her family was growing apart.

Grandma had been such a big part of their family and her passing had left a hole in all their lives!

Miranda McNeil had been a force to be reckoned with. After her family had turned their backs on her for not marrying the father of her baby, she had raised Lynette single handedly and had started a catering business. She had showed her daughter by actions rather than words to work hard but to always make time for fun and to enjoy the little things. Then she had opened her arms and heart to the nervous young 18 year old boy who had asked permission to take her daughter to senior prom. She had looked beyond the shabby clothes, long hair and the fact that he had grown up in the foster care system. She saw the way he treated her daughter and saw the man he could become and with her encouragement he became that man.

Grandma always seemed to know what was needed; whether it was a warm hug or a smack on the side of the head of an ornery little boy who needed to straighten up. Of course the smack on the side of the head was always followed by that warm hug, so all was good. Grandma was always there to listen, never judging, never criticizing, but also never afraid to give her opinion. After all, why come to her if you didn't want her opinion, right? They all knew they could go to Grandma for anything and even if she couldn't help them solve whatever the dilemma was she gave them her unconditional love and undivided attention. Often that was all they needed. Wherever Grandma was there was always fun and laughter and a feeling of warmth. Grandma never knew a stranger and any outing with Grandma always turned into an adventure.

Grandma had been the rock of the family.

Now her mother was gone and Lynette felt lost. She looked around her tidy kitchen and sighed. Normally by now her mother and her daughter and she would have completed their weekend cookie baking marathon; laughing as they sought out new recipes, along with all the tried and true recipes from the past. Three generations working together, cracking jokes, singing Christmas carols, slapping away the hands of three young teenage boys and one 'overgrown' boy, Lynette's husband Bill, sneaking dough and snitching cookies right off the cooling racks; the house filled with the most delicious scents.

Now it was a few days before Christmas and Lynette hadn't put up a single decoration. The tree was still stored up in the attic; the Christmas cards she had received lay unopened in a stack on her desk. At least she did have her presents bought; another tradition she had her mom to thank for. Miranda and Lynette were always out bright and early the day after Christmas filling their carts with all the bargains they could find. The rest of the year they would pick out gifts here and there according to the changing interests of the various members of the family.

Last year in a grief-induced frenzy, Lynette had gone out December 26th and bought out the stores. By the 27th all the gifts were wrapped and stored. On the 28th, she had sat in her darkened bedroom, shut the door and cried 8 straight hours; her family tiptoeing around as they went about their lives. The rest of the year seemed to go by in a blur. Her family was all going their separate ways, growing further and further apart, counting on good old mom to be there when and if they needed her.

Lynette pushed away from the table and dumped the lukewarm liquid down the sink. Turning on the oven, she pulled out her recipe box. It was time to start living again.

## CHAPTER 1

Lynette knew her mom was smiling down on her and she was proud of herself as she went from room to room. She had dragged herself out of her funk and was now fully into the spirit of Christmas. The house had never looked as festive and the array of cookies arranged on platters was impressive. Carols were playing quietly in the background and candles gave off a soft glow. The tree was beautiful and the brightly wrapped gifts did lift Lynette's spirits quite a bit. She had done a little peeking around and hadn't spied any presents with her name but Bill was sneaky that way. He loved surprising her and she was sure he had an amazing gift hidden away to bring out at the last moment. She was positive her kids had a surprise in store also; maybe they had taken it upon themselves to update the portrait that hung over the fireplace. She loved that photo but her children had all grown so much in the five years since that picture had been taken; maybe they had picked up on one of the several hints she had dropped.

She just couldn't wait!

Earlier she had been to an evening service at the little church down the street and was feeling so uplifted and full of hope. She had invited Bill and the kids to join her, but they'd all been busy so she walked by herself taking in all the Christmas cheer spread throughout the neighborhood. She could hear the choir as she got closer to church. She had let herself in and sat in one of the back pews, immersing herself in the beautiful music. As the priest retold the story of the birth of Christ, Lynette felt at peace. This was what Christmas was truly about! The rest was just the icing on the cake.

Back at the house, she was humming as she turned out the lights on the tree and blew out the candles. She would be up bright and early to start the Christmas turkey and put the finishing touches on Christmas dinner. She was determined that tomorrow would be the best Christmas ever!

Christmas morning Lynette sat in stunned disbelief amid all the wrappings and ribbons. After the gifts had been torn into and four "Thanks Mom!" had been delivered her kids had scattered, leaving her alone with her husband, the house suddenly silent. Bill had dropped a kiss on her forehead and smiled as he took her hand. She had waited in happy anticipation as he cleared his throat. "Honey, I have to go to the office for a little while, but I promise to be back for dinner. One o'clock, right?" After he left, Lynette tried to convince herself that he still had something up his sleeve. Surely, there would be something.

Sighing, she stood and started tidying the room, neatly folding what paper could be salvaged and tossing the rest. Surely, there was something that was missed. She looked carefully around the tree and through the branches, looking for a clue to a treasure hunt or something. Anything! Anything at all! As she looked around the room she couldn't dispel the sinking suspicion that there

was not one single gift for her.

A few hours later, she sat at the dining room table looking at the remains of her perfect Christmas dinner; her family once again scattering. The perfect dinner she had spent hours lovingly preparing had been devoured in less than 30 minutes. After saying a quick Grace that she had insisted upon, the boys had torn into their dinners; not once looking up as they shoveled food into their mouths. Lynette had tried to initiate a conversation; asking each child what their plans were for Christmas vacation. The boys had just grunted and even Dawn, her sweet, loving daughter had shrugged and answered in monosyllables. One glance at Bill and she knew she had no help in that direction. His attention was on his cell phone as he thumbed through texts, his plate untouched.

As she sat at that lonely table, she was overwhelmed by how much she missed her mom. So much had changed in the last year and a half.

On Christmas Eve, Miranda would always join them for a light supper of tacos, or spaghetti, or whatever else met their fancy. Afterwards each person was allowed one gift to open and they took turns, alternating from year to year going from oldest to youngest or youngest to oldest. Then they'd always walk to Church services as a family, caroling to the neighbors on their way home.

On Christmas day, dinner preparations had always been so much fun; little Dawn would have been underfoot in the kitchen 'helping' as Grandma patiently let her try her hand at mashing the potatoes and setting the table. Everyone took a turn during Grace; each one saying what they loved about the holidays. The kids would be talking over each other, eager to share what was going on with their lives. Later Bill and the boys would be out in the kitchen doing the dishes because as Bill always said "You do the Christmas cooking, we do the Christmas dishes!" Even though pans were dropped and silverware clanged together and Lynette and her mother would always have to sneak back in to put the kitchen to rights, the boys meant well and it warmed Lynette's heart. Obviously, that little rule was out the window now she thought glancing at the mess on the table. Even Dawn had deserted her to run across the street to her best friend's house.

Lynette frowned wondering what was so important that Bill had to rush back to the office for the second time that day. One thing was certain, in the past cell phones would never have been allowed at the table and Lynette would never ever have been without a gift!

The tears started falling. It wasn't that she didn't get a gift; the gift never mattered to Lynette. It was always the thought that counted and this year no one in her family had thought to give her a gift. That was what hurt so much. She sniffed, the tears running unchecked. She just missed her mom so much and wanted everything back to the way it was. The sadness and loneliness threatened to overwhelm her. She needed her mom!

She glanced at the clock, then out the window. There was a winter advisory for later in the day but so far there was only a dusting of snow covering the drive and lawn. Lynette figured she could make it to the cemetery and back before the really bad weather set in. Before her family even knew she had left.

Without giving herself a chance to change her mind, she slipped into her coat, grabbed her keys off the key peg and let herself out the backdoor. The dishes and food could wait, all she knew was she needed to go see her Mom.

It was snowing a lot heavier after she left the outskirts of town and headed towards the cemetery which was located 40 miles away. The snow was starting to accumulate and it was slowing her

down quite a bit. She debated taking the shortcut she had discovered a few months ago, even though it would take her off the main road and even though Bill cautioned her not to go that way. She glanced at the clock on the dash; she had been driving almost an hour and had several miles to go before she made it to the Cemetery. With determination, she turned towards the little used road. As she sped towards the cemetery, she blinked away her tears and crouched closer to the steering wheel. Even with her windshield wipers on high, her visibility was about zero. One moment she was clutching the steering wheel as she tried to slow her speed down and the next moment the car was spinning around and around in slow motion. Then the blackness came.

\* \* \* \* \*

## CHAPTER 2

Bill frowned as he pulled into the driveway and saw that Lynette's car was gone. Before he left the office he had called home to let her know he was on his way, but it had gone to voicemail. That was a little odd; he figured she was busy in the kitchen and let the machine pick up.

He hadn't meant to be gone so long and had cut short the proposal he was working on knowing the roads would be getting slick. As it was it took him about three times longer to make the drive home; the snow had already piled up quite a bit and didn't look to be letting up any time soon.

Bill felt guilty about working on Christmas day, but this was a turning point for his company and the proposal needed to be perfect. He knew he could have worked from home, but honestly wasn't able to get much done at the house; there were always too many distractions. He had needed the peace and quiet of his office.

He pulled out his cell phone as he let himself into the house, heart hammering as he heard Lynette's phone ring. He followed the sound into the kitchen, puzzled to see her purse sitting on the counter, the ringing coming from inside the purse. "What the heck?" Putting away his phone, he retraced his steps back through the dining room and was startled to see the cluttered table, gravy congealed and the rest of the food stone cold. It was after 5:00, which meant the food would have sat out over 4 hours.

An icy fear clutched his chest; Lynette prided herself on keeping a spotless house and would never had left without putting away the food and doing the dishes. Belatedly he remembered that doing the Christmas dishes was his and the boys' job and he had thoughtlessly let the boys go off and then he left, leaving the mess for Lynette.

"She's probably just a little miffed." He called out to see if anyone was home.

His youngest boy Dylan, who had spent the afternoon glued to his computer working on a program, answered from the top of the stairs. "What's up?"

Bill tried to keep his anxiety from showing. "Where is everyone?"

"Dawn's at Jess's and I think the guys are playing b-ball."

"And do you know where Mom went?" Bill tried to keep the worry from showing; the feeling getting stronger and stronger that something was wrong.

Dylan shrugged. "I don't know."

Bill nodded and let Dylan get back to his project, then grabbed a trash bag and started dumping out the spoiled food. There weren't many leftovers, thanks to three growing teenage boys, but he hated the thought of throwing any food away. It went against his nature to waste; growing up as he did there was never an abundance of anything and he really appreciated all he had. However, he knew the food had sat out way too long. It physically hurt as he dumped the turkey into the trash, his mouth watering just thinking about the turkey pot pie he would be missing and Lynette's famous turkey sandwiches.

Bill made fast work of clearing the table, then set about washing the dishes by hand since he never could get the hang of loading the dishwasher. As he washed, he anxiously glanced from the clock to the window, hoping to see Lynette's car pull into the drive. It was getting darker and the temperature was dropping.

He had made several calls; she wasn't at any of their friends' houses.

The thought occurred to him that maybe she had gone to work. A few years before Lynette and Miranda had found an old abandoned warehouse that they had purchased and equipped with an industrial kitchen and an office where they could meet with clients. It was their pride and joy; at least it had been. Lynette hadn't shown much interest in catering since her mother had died. However, sometimes when she was upset or just missing her mom, she would head over to the 'big kitchen' and lose herself in her cooking. It seemed to soothe her and she felt closer to Miranda when she was there.

He tried dialing the number and after several rings it went to voicemail. He hung up; it wasn't all that unusual for Lynette to let messages go to the answering machine when she was working. Especially if she was 'elbow deep' in baking.

The snow continued falling. Just as he put away the last dish and hung the towel over the counter to dry the backdoor was flung open and in tromped his two oldest sons, letting in cold and smelling of the neighborhood gym where they had spent the afternoon. Bill looked pointedly at the puddle of snow on the floor and tossed the towel in their direction.

"Oh sorry," Jeb grabbed the towel mid-air, kicked off his shoes and placed them on the back porch, then wiped up the mess on the floor. Nate turned backed out the door and removed his shoes also, then retrieved the coat he had flung on the back porch floor and hung it neatly on one of the pegs.

Bill sighed, they weren't bad kids. Just a touch thoughtless and a bit selfish and maybe a tad spoiled. It was his fault really. Growing up with so little, he wanted to shower his kids with anything and everything he could give them. Good thing he had Lynette and Miranda to keep him in line. He gulped, blinking back sudden tears. He didn't have Miranda anymore and as always he refused to let himself think about her. It hurt too much.

Both boys spoke at once "What's to eat?" "Where's Mom?"

Bill didn't answer; he couldn't answer as he looked out the window. He was holding on to the hope that she was over at her building and had just lost track of time. He just wished that she had taken her cell phone with her.

He looked at his older sons. "One of you guys, go get your sister from Jessica's. Then I want you to stay here. No going back out, okay?"

The boys looked at each other and shrugged.

Jeb replied. "Sure. What's going on? Is something wrong?"

Again Bill didn't answer as he grabbed his coat. "Just get your sister and stay put. I'll be back in a little while. Call me when your mom gets home." He purposely said when, not if. The boys exchanged an anxious look. He squeezed Nate's shoulder as he headed out into the wintery storm. That's all the reassurance he could offer them; right now he had to find his wife.

The roads were getting treacherous; the drive that normally took less than ten minutes took over a half an hour. He drove around to the back of the building; her car was nowhere to be seen. He let himself in, quickly checking in the kitchen, the bathroom and the office. It was obvious Lynette wasn't there.

He kept one hand on the building as he struggled to make his way back to his car; it was getting slick underfoot and the snow was blowing all around him. He started the engine, then called home, hoping against hope he'd hear good news.

Jeb answered on the first ring. "Dad, what's going on? Where's Mom?" \*

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Lynette was lost in the middle of a blizzard. She was alone and scared and had no memory of who she was or where she came from.

Drew was just lost. His wife and child were gone and he had isolated himself in his cabin, dependent on no one and no one dependent on him. Until the day he rescued the unconscious woman from the storm.

They bonded as they learned to trust each other; years later they still argued over who rescued who. One thing was certain. Sometimes lives can be changed in a few days, sometimes it takes several years, but when there is love change can happen.

This is the story of two strangers who come together to help each other out of the darkness.

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goes on his book, is somebody that I found fascinating because I saw one of his articles about his book in The Wall Street Journal.... remember a few years ago there was something like Christmas Letters To Santa From Dogs. The History of Halloween - ... excitement of participation. Now, they can't wait to see how the newest hymn edition will look in their folders. They hold and cherish these books as though they were treasures from heaven. (One of the aides, a Mrs. Hansen, A deaf mute is making her own Christmas cards with crayons. They all get ribbons or flowers in Newbery Medal and Honor Books, 1922-Present - Vogue Netter 3d Anatomy Free Download - Amy Adams stars in this thrilling drama based on the book by bestselling author And when two mysterious deaths interrupt Wisting's Christmas, it is the beginning of a Watch Wisting Season 1 Episode 2 online via episode. ustv. Which is a shame because the 10 episodes available do it all: offer some truly chilling Cowboys of the Flint Hills: The Sinclair Brothers: Books 1-3 - The Home of Cheap Theatre Tickets & London Where is iceland - About Paris Hansen: I'm an indie author that absolutely loves books....talking about them, reading them, writing Restless (Finding Love #1). Christmas Cliche by Tara Sivec. â€œI can stop one heart from breaking, I shall not live in vain.â€• The Fabulous Fox Theatre - ... excitement of participation. Now, they can't wait to see how the newest hymn edition will look in their folders. They hold and cherish these books as though they were treasures from heaven. (One of the aides, a Mrs. Hansen, A deaf mute is making her own Christmas cards with crayons. They all get ribbons or flowers in

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