

# Red Velvet Crinkles and Christmas Sprinkles

## by Maria Imbalzano

### EXCERPT

There came that half-teasing, half-serious smile. To avoid it, she started pulling Christmas balls hung on red-and-green silk ribbons from the large box she'd brought out.

"I can help you hang those in the window. I hid the hooks above the molding last year so we don't have to remove them every year."

"Clever." Her sarcastic tone couldn't be mistaken.

"We'll need a ladder," he determined. "I'll get it from the back, then you can hand me the balls, and I'll attach them."

She slitted her eyes at him. "I want to hang the balls. You can do something else."

"Fine. But it takes two for this job. You don't want to be going up and down the ladder each time you hang a ball. It's inefficient."

He had a point. She'd have to bury her reluctance to work with him at the risk of coming up with some other childish excuse.

Once Dean brought the ladder to the window, she climbed up three steps and took the first ball from him. Not a well-thought-out plan since her butt was now at his eye level.

"Can you stand over here, please?" She pointed to the other side of the ladder.

"It's better if I stand behind you, to spot you. In case you lose your balance." His grin emerged, and she gritted her teeth to prevent a growl.