

A Christmas Wedding

By

Camille Gladney and Christine Chen

1 EXT. COUNTRY CHURCH, RURAL LOUISIANA - NIGHT 1

Lights shine through the stained glass windows of a small church sanctuary. It's Christmas Eve Eve, but you can barely tell its winter: all the evergreens look lush and verdant, as they do in Louisiana all year long.

2 INT. CHURCH SANCTUARY - NIGHT 2

BETHANY HEDGES, 40 years old and fit but hiding it in ratty sweats and a bandana, stands at the top of a ladder and stretches an elaborate garland across the sanctuary entrance. She secures it, climbs down, and stands back to admire her work. The entire sanctuary is decadent and lavish with glittering Christmas decorations. The PASTOR pokes his head in the main entrance.

PASTOR

You've been working hard! It looks great.

BETHANY

Oh thank you! Gotta make sure it all passes muster in the morning!

She digs through a box of supplies and pulls out thick, shiny ribbons and bows which she proceeds to attach to the pews.

PASTOR

I can't imagine that it wouldn't. This is some Hollywood-level glitz like Pinewood has never seen! Imogen should feel right at home.

BETHANY

I hope so. She ordered all the decorations and made her own mock-up so if she doesn't like it there's only so much I can do.

She indicates hand-drawn blueprints splayed on the floor.

PASTOR

My, that's certainly detailed. But I have all faith in your abilities. I'm heading home for the night. May I walk you to your car?

BETHANY

Oh, do I need to go? I still have a few things left to put up.

PASTOR

Take your time. I'll leave you the key. If you need anything, maintenance is on call.

BETHANY

Don't worry, I won't bother Mr. Jimmy with anything tonight!

PASTOR

Jimmy's out bow hunting with his boys this weekend. If you need anything, his nephew Nick will help you. His number is on my desk.

BETHANY

Oh, good to know, but I'm sure I'll be fine. I'm almost finished.

PASTOR

Very good. I'll see you tomorrow at the rehearsal.

BETHANY

Bring your appetite for the luncheon! We've got catering from Bergeron's and it's enough to feed an army.

PASTOR

Yes, I saw the boxes in the kitchen! I'm very much looking forward to it. Goodnight, Bethany.

BETHANY

Goodnight Pastor.

He exits. She finishes adding a bow to the last pew. She returns to the blueprints to check her work. She crosses a few things off the list before she sees something that makes her frown.

BETHANY

Twelve more bows??

She looks around her. Twelve more bows are the last things the room needs.

3 EXT. MOM & DAD'S HOUSE - NIGHT

3

Late that night, Bethany returns to her parents' house. Her car is illuminated by the colorful Christmas lights in the

yard and the firelight glowing through the living room windows.

4 INT. MOM & DAD'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

4

Bethany lets herself in and hangs her coat in the foyer before joining her parents, PATSY and RUSSELL HEDGES, in the living room.

BETHANY

It got cold quick out there! I needed a warmer jacket coming back than I did when I left home!

MOM

I can feel it in my knees. How did it go, sweetie? Did you get everything done?

BETHANY

Every last bow and sequin.

DAD

That's great, Beth. You still should have let me come with you, we'd have been back in time for dinner!

BETHANY

I told you, you're not allowed on a ladder anymore. Besides, who would have taken Mason to the Festival of Lights?

MOM

We all had a great time.

DAD

And we needed to escape the house anyway, what with Rhonda calling every two minutes.

Mom rolls her eyes. Dad reaches for his crossword paper.

BETHANY

Aunt Rhonda made it in?

MOM

Oh yes, she's over at Fairwater Bed and Breakfast. And of course it doesn't suit her so she had to let us know.

DAD

Nothing in Pinewood suits your sister.  
Fairwater is the nicest lodge in town.

MOM

You've made your opinion on the matter  
very clear, Russell.

BETHANY

Is that all she was calling for? To  
complain about her room?

DAD

When does she ever only complain about  
one thing?

MOM

She wanted to know when Imogen was  
getting in, what time we were doing  
every little thing tomorrow.

DAD

It's like she thinks it's her wedding  
and your mom is the coordinator.

MOM

Well she was very generous, taking  
care of all the catering for us.

DAD

Everything but the cake.

MOM

(aside to Bethany)  
He's still sore about the cost.

DAD

It cost more than my suit!

MOM

You buy cheap suits!  
(Back to Bethany)  
Anyway, you know how Rhonda is.

BETHANY

That doesn't mean she gets to throw  
her weight around, Mom. You should  
give a gift out of the goodness of  
your heart, not because you want  
something in exchange.

DAD

Feel free to remind her of that whenever you see her. I almost pulled the phone out of the wall.

BETHANY

(smirking)

I'll try to run interference when I can. Maybe you two can slip away in the crowds tomorrow. Seems like the entire town RSVP'd.

MOM

It has turned into quite the to-do.

DAD

It'll be the most people our church has seen since, what do you think, Patsy?

MOM

Oh probably since Immy's graduation.

DAD

That sounds about right. You remember that big shot L.A. guy who came out to meet Immy? Fancied himself some kind of freelance head hunter? He had more money than sense.

MOM

When you have that much money, you pay other people to have sense for you. Just ask my sister.

Dad chuckles. Then the phone rings and he crumples his paper in frustration.

BETHANY

Speak of the devil?

DAD

I'll bet the last of my eyesight.  
(to Mom)

If she says one more thing about having to cancel that silly cruise, hang up!

Mom walks to the phone and checks the Caller ID. Sure enough. She picks it up with a long-suffering air.

MOM

Hello? Not yet. I told you it was going to be late.

BETHANY

(quietly to Dad)

I'm gonna check on Mason.

She slips out into the hallway. As she walks off, Mom continues to placate her sister over the phone:

MOM

It could be any number of reasons, Rhonda, she's traveling all the way from California.

DAD

Tell her to go to bed!

5 INT. MASON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

5

Bethany peeks in to the bedroom where Mason, 9, is sleeping with a night light on. On the bedside table is a Christmas card with a photo. Mason rouses at the sound of the door.

BETHANY

Hey buddy. Just saying goodnight.

MASON

Is Aunt Imogen here?

She comes in and sits on the side of the bed.

BETHANY

Not yet. I just got finished decorating the church. It's like a-

MASON

Santa's Workshop Explosion?

BETHANY

I was going to say Winter Wonderland but yours is better.

They giggle.

MASON

Since you finished the church tonight, will we have time tomorrow to go to the animal shelter?

BETHANY

Aw honey, it won't be open on Christmas Eve, and I'll still be very busy with Aunt Imogen.

Mason looks crestfallen.

BETHANY

I'm sorry. I know you want a puppy for Christmas but I need you to be patient. A pet is forever. That's a big responsibility. And your mom has a lot of big responsibilities right now with your grandparents and your auntie.

MASON

(big sigh)

I know.

He looks away, over to his bedside table. Bethany follows his eye-line and sees the Christmas CARD with a photo of a MAN and DOG on it. She can make out part of the writing inside, it says "LOVE, DAD".

BETHANY

(compassionate)

Thinking about your Dad?

Mason nods yes.

BETHANY

What's the dog's name?

MASON

Lucky.

BETHANY

(mostly to herself)

Of course.

(She takes a breath and refrains from commenting further on her child's father.)

Just bear with me through this weekend okay? Let's get Auntie Imogen married and then we can focus on us.

MASON

Okay.



BETHANY

I love you, kiddo.

She kisses him on the forehead.

MASON

Love you too.

She gets up and heads to the door.

BETHANY

Oh before I forget, let's do our best to be quiet in the morning. I'm sure your aunt will be very tired from traveling. We should let her sleep in.

MASON

Yes ma'am.

BETHANY

Sweet dreams.

She exits.

6 INT. MOM & DAD'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

6

Bethany re-heats some left-overs and chats with her parents. Mom takes a tray of scones out of the fridge along with a jar of lemon curd.

MOM

Did we tell you we saw Hendrix on the TV when we got home from the festival?

BETHANY

You didn't.

MOM

It was the premiere of the new soap opera. And Immy's name was right there in the opening credits, all by itself.

Mom tries to pry the lid off the lemon curd but barely moves it before wincing in pain. She hands the jar to Bethany, who effortlessly opens it and gives it back to Mom.

DAD

How are they going to have time for their honeymoon if the show is just starting?

BETHANY

They've already filmed it all, Dad.

DAD

Oh, well that makes sense. I don't pay much attention to that stuff.

MOM

We know. I was just impressed it was all in Spanish.

BETHANY

Hendrix is from Mexico, Mom.

MOM

Yes but his English is so good.

DAD

I'm surprised the show is so popular with people I know. Since when did soap operas make a comeback?

MOM

They never went away! And you should be glad. That show's gonna pay for your cataract surgery.

DAD

(proud)

Who'da thought my youngest would be directing soap operas and paying my way?

Bethany's expression darkens a little, for just a second.

BETHANY

Where is the prodigal daughter, anyway? She should be here by now.

MOM

Come to think of it, I haven't spoken with her today.

Dad shrugs.

BETHANY

Did you check your cell phones?

MOM

Good question. I haven't seen mine in a while. Russell?

DAD

I put 'em in the drawer a couple days ago.

BETHANY

In a drawer??

She pulls out the drawer. Sure enough, the cell phones are there. She checks them.

BETHANY

Of course they're dead.

MOM

Sorry honey, we just so rarely use them. People still call us on the landline.

DAD

You know there's no reception around here anyway.

Bethany shakes her head.

BETHANY

You're lucky you live in Pinewood where everybody knows you and you can basically walk anywhere. Other places you would not be able to function without a cell phone.

DAD

We know. That's why we live *here*.

BETHANY

You have a point. I'm still charging your phones though. In case of emergency.

She grabs chargers from the drawer and plugs the phones in.

DAD

Good thing is, I can't remember the last time there was a real emergency in Pinewood. It's all a matter of perception.

BETHANY

That's either very wise, or very ironic.

A knock on the door. Mom and Dad rise cheerfully to answer.

7 INT. MOM & DAD'S FOYER - NIGHT

7

Dad opens the door for his daughter IMOGEN HEDGES and her two best friends UMI EIKO, an athletic, teacup-sized Japanese 30-something and TIARA FREEDMAN, a poised, towering Black 40 year old with a short, stylish pompadour. They are all road-weary but in good spirits and toting oversized luggage.

IMOGEN

Daddy!

DAD

Baby girl! Let me get that luggage for you.

IMOGEN

Don't you dare!

(casually dumping her things on  
Bethany)

Bethie, you're a complete doll.

Imogen gestures for the others to do the same. They pile their stuff on Bethany. Imogen hugs Mom next. Bethany drags the stuff down the hall as the conversation continues:

IMOGEN

I'm so glad to be back! L.A. has all the money in the world and still, there's no place like home for the holidays. You remember Umi and Tiara from the Emmys?

The women give tired, fake smiles.

TIARA

So good to see you again.

UMI

Thanks for having us.

Bethany returns from dumping the luggage and Imogen ropes her into a hug as well.

IMOGEN

Oh, Bethie! You've turned our little hometown church into my Christmas wedding dream, I just know it!

BETHANY

(skeptical)

I did my best.

IMOGEN

I have total faith in you. I know everything is going to be *perfect*.

MOM

Are you girls hungry? I can whip up some leftovers real quick.

TIARA

No thank you.

UMI

(checking the time on her phone)  
6 more hours to go.

IMOGEN

We've been fasting for the big day. Got to be camera ready!

UMI

Which reminds me! Say "Jingle Bells!"

IMOGEN

Good thinking!

Umi hops in front of everyone in the foyer and holds her phone up for a selfie. Only Imogen and Tiara are not caught off guard.

ALL

Jingle Bells!

IMOGEN

We've got to keep a steady photo log of the weekend. It's the only way to keep the paparazzi off our backs. After we get back to L.A. we'll sell the photos straight to tabloids and cut out the middle men.

UMI

Hashtag Girl Boss.

Tiara nods in agreement. The rest of Imogen's family is clearly a little mystified by this logic.

MOM

Okay then, sweetie. We're glad you're home safe.

She gives Imogen another big hug. She and Dad putter off.

TIARA

So, I don't wanna ruin your mood before bed, but talking about food just reminded me. We forgot to call the bakery and confirm the delivery time for the cake tomorrow.

IMOGEN

Ooh, you're right. Well, we can't do it now. Add it to the checklist for tomorrow.

UMI

Should we review the checklist now while we're thinking about it, just to be safe?

IMOGEN

Ugh, no, I am completely wiped out! Let's do it in the morning.

They all head down the hall to their respective bedrooms.

8 INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

8

IMOGEN

Bethie, could you show them the ropes? My brain is mush.

BETHANY

Sure.

IMOGEN

You're the best. 'Night, ladies.

TIARA

Goodnight.

UMI

Sleep tight. Don't forget to wear the sheet mask I gave you.

IMOGEN

Oh yeah.

UMI

And take a selfie while you're wearing it!

Imogen blows two kisses and retires. Bethany shows Tiara and Umi to their room.

9 INT. UMI & TIARA'S ROOM - NIGHT

9

Bethany swings the door to the guest bedroom open and Umi and Tiara choose their beds.

UMI

(noting the two twin beds)  
Cute, did this use to be your and Imogen's room?

BETHANY

Yep.

TIARA

Ha, wonder how much hair got pulled in here?

BETHANY

If walls could talk.

TIARA

Speaking of bedroom walls, where's your cute hubby?

UMI

(giggling)  
Yeah, where is that beefcake? Are you hiding him from us or is he on Daddy duty?

BETHANY

I'm not hiding him. He permanently excused himself from Daddy Duty about two years ago.

TIARA

(cringing)  
Ooh.

UMI

(unbothered)  
Has it really been that long since you were in the city?

BETHANY

Five, actually. Mason was four when we all visited.

(to Tiara)

And don't feel bad, I didn't expect Imogen to tell you.

TIARA

(playing it off)

Well that just means you have to come back out to Hollywood and let us set you up!

BETHANY

That's very kind of you to offer, but if I wanted the city life I'd still be with Henry out in Vegas.

TIARA

Fair enough.

BETHANY

So, bathroom's down the hall. Linens and towels are in the hall closet. Need anything else before bed?

UMI

What's the WiFi password?

BETHANY

Oh, sorry, no internet here.

UMI & TIARA

What?

BETHANY

Yeah, I *did* expect Imogen to tell you about *that*. Our parents are pretty old school and they are *not* alone here. Welcome to the time warp that is Pinewood, Louisiana.

TIARA

Should we be frightened?

BETHANY

That depends. Are you a fan of glamping? It's kind of like that.

Tiara pulls a very skeptical face.

UMI

It's all good, We'll just use our data. We can pretend we're in a small, terrible airport.

TIARA

Ooh, like when we were location  
(MORE)



TIARA (CONT'D)  
scouting for Immy's first movie.

UMI  
(nostalgic)  
*Unpaved Desires.*

Bethany leaves them to it.

BETHANY  
Goodnight, ladies.

As she shuts the door she overhears:

UMI  
What the- I have zero bars. I've never  
had zero bars before.

TIARA  
Uh-oh. It's gonna be a long weekend.

10 INT. BETHANY & IMOGEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

10

Bethany turns in for the night in the bedroom she's sharing with Imogen for the weekend. Imogen is already tucked in and wearing cheesy Christmas pajamas like a little kid along with a glittery gold sheet mask. She's taking a selfie when Bethany climbs into bed. Imogen snps a pic of the two of them before saying:

IMOGEN  
Thanks for letting me crash with you,  
sis! It's just like old times.

BETHANY  
Old times huh? Just promise you won't  
hog the covers or kick me off the bed.

IMOGEN  
I can't be held accountable for the  
things I do in my sleep!

BETHANY  
You haven't changed one bit.

IMOGEN  
Seriously though, I can't wait to see  
what you've done with the church.

BETHANY  
 (understatement)  
 Well you were pretty specific with  
 your plans.

IMOGEN  
 (mischievous)  
 I know, but the devil's in the  
 details!

BETHANY  
 You're telling me. Now go to sleep,  
 Princess.  
 (She gestures to Imogen's mask)  
 You need your beauty rest.

Imogen sticks her tongue out at Bethany, who rolls over and  
 clicks the light out.

11 INT. MASON'S BEDROOM - MORNING 11

Mason wakes early and looks out the window from bed. He  
 gasps. He jumps out of bed and runs out of the bedroom,  
 yelling.

MASON  
 Yeeahhhhh!!!

12 INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING 12

Mason runs into the empty living room and looks out of the  
 larger windows. He bounces around in excitement.

MASON  
 It's snowing! Mom! It snowed! It's  
 snowing! Yeah!!!

Bethany hurries out of her bedroom scowling.

BETHANY  
 Mason, what did I say about being  
 noisy this-  
 (she looks up and out)  
 Oh! Woah!

She presses her face to the window. Blinding white.

She goes to the door and opens it. Through the screen door  
 she can see the snow piled up several feet high against it.  
 Her jaw drops. She closes the door.

MASON

I'm gonna get dressed and go outside!

He runs off, passing Imogen peeling off her face mask, Umi, and Tiara as they meander into the living room. Bethany turns on the living room TV and flips to the news.

MASON

Hey Auntie Im!

IMOGEN

(groggy)

What's going on? I was having the best dream about all the wedding cake I'm going to eat tonigh-

She stops and stares at the TV as blizzard footage plays over the following commentary:

V.O. REPORTER

Christmas miracle or Christmas disaster? A freak snowstorm has walloped the country with tons and tons of the white fluffy stuff! Planes are grounded, roads are closed, tracks are frozen. If your loved ones aren't already within hugging distance, we hope you don't have far to go to reach them, because if you do, you might not make it before Santa!

Bethany shuts off the TV. Imogen, Tiara, and Umi stand behind her, agog. Everyone turns to Imogen to check her reaction. Her lip quivers. Uh oh. Crisis team activate.

BETHANY

Hey, don't worry yet! You don't know that anything has been affected. This could be the perfect finishing touch for your Christmas Dream wedding! Right ladies?

UMI

Right? White Christmas? Iconic.

TIARA

So iconic. And in Louisiana? Once in a lifetime!

Imogen runs to the bedroom.

BETHANY  
That fell apart quickly.

They jog to the bedroom.

13 INT. BETHANY & IMOGEN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

13

The women find Imogen clutching her cell phone.

IMOGEN  
I don't have any reception. I don't  
know if Hendrix has called!

BETHANY  
Call him from the land line.

Imogen grabs the phone from the dresser and dials while  
reading the number on her cell phone screen.

TIARA  
Get out, is that a rotary phone?

BETHANY  
I told you, it's a time warp here.

TIARA  
You weren't kidding.

IMOGEN  
(frantic)  
Hey, pookie. I forgot, there's no cell  
reception out at my parents' house so  
I'm calling from their landline. Call  
me when you get this! Nothing will  
stop our wedding from being beautiful  
and perfect! Except maybe time, or  
distance, or weather conditions, or a  
car accident, or-

Umi shakes her head and mimes for Imogen to cut it short.  
Tiara steps in and physically lowers Imogen's arms.

IMOGEN  
I hope you're safe! I love you!

Tiara puts the phone on the receiver.

IMOGEN  
I'm sorry. I'm panicking. They were  
supposed to fly out from Denver at  
7:00 but I assume that was all  
(MORE)

IMOGEN (CONT'D)  
cancelled.

TIARA  
Do we have his flight number?

UMI  
It's in the planner!

She runs off to get it. Imogen looks out the window into the haze of white.

IMOGEN  
I didn't think my white Christmas would be *this* white! This is going to ruin everything.

BETHANY  
Keep your chin up, ok? Nothing's ruined yet.

TIARA  
Yeah. What can we do right now to make you feel better?

IMOGEN  
I dunno, click your heels and make this snow fall tomorrow night?

BETHANY  
Anything slightly more realistic? Like coffee?

IMOGEN  
Hmm, could you check on all our stuff the Church? Make sure a tree hasn't fallen on the altar?

BETHANY  
Do you want to come with me? You need to sign off on my decorating job anyway.

IMOGEN  
(dramatic)  
I don't think my heart can take it if anything's ruined.  
(logical)  
Plus I need to keep trying to reach Hendrix.  
(honest)

(MORE)

IMOGEN (CONT'D)  
 And I actually would like some coffee  
 first.

Bethany rolls her eyes but doesn't comment.

BETHANY  
 Alright, I'll be back soon. Call the  
 church office if you need me.

14 EXT. COUNTRY CHURCH - MORNING

14

Bethany and Mason walk up the snowy path to the church. Mason is having the time of his life. Bethany unlocks the front door.

MASON  
 I'm thirsty!

BETHANY  
 I'm not surprised! You're gonna wear  
 yourself out. Remember we still have  
 to walk home after this.

15 INT. CHURCH - MORNING

15

Bethany and Mason enter the church. Beth clicks on the lights to the front hallway.

BETHANY  
 Electricity on. Roof intact. So far,  
 so good.

MASON  
 I'm gonna get a drink of water!

He dashes off down the hall.

BETHANY  
 Okay buddy, I'm going to check the  
 sanctuary.

She strolls off in the opposite direction.

16 INT. CHURCH SANCTUARY - MORNING

16

Bethany flips the lights in the sanctuary. Everything is just as she left it. She sighs in relief. Mason runs back in.

V.O. MASON  
 Mom!

He stops short when he sees all the decorations.

BETHANY  
Whaddaya think?

MASON  
Remember what I said last night?

BETHANY  
Santa's Workshop Explosion?

MASON  
Basically! Also, there's no water in  
the fountain.

17 INT. CHURCH HALLWAY - MORNING

17

Bethany checks the water fountain. It's quite dry.

BETHANY  
That's not good. Check the sinks in  
the men's restroom. I'll check the  
ladies'.

They pop into the nearby restrooms and return just as  
quickly.

BETHANY  
Anything?

MASON  
Nope.

BETHANY  
Mine either.

MASON  
Should we call the Pastor?

BETHANY  
Yes, but first we'll call the plumber.

18 INT. PASTOR'S OFFICE - MORNING

18

Mason fiddles with things he shouldn't while Bethany dials  
the number for NICK ANDREWS, Mr. Jimmy's nephew, which the  
Pastor left behind. Bethany waves him away from a delicate  
objet d'art while waiting for him to pick up.

BETHANY  
Don't touch anyth-Hi there, Mr.  
(MORE)

BETHANY (CONT'D)

Andrews? Yes, this is Bethany Hedges at Pinewood Church, so sorry to bother you but it looks like we're having issues with the plumbing- No, I didn't flush any unusual object, I just got here and my son- okay, thank you.

She hangs up.

BETHANY

Well he was rude.

MASON

Maybe he's mad about working on Christmas.

BETHANY

Maybe so.

MASON

Can we play outside while we wait??

BETHANY

You're not tired of the cold?

MASON

I wanna build a snowman!

BETHANY

That *is* a once in a lifetime thing around here. Okay, let's go.

19 EXT. COUNTRY CHURCH - MORNING

19

Bethany and Mason build a snowman in the churchyard.

MASON

We need a carrot for the nose!

BETHANY

We don't have a carrot. You'll have to get creative! Maybe you can make a face with holly berries.

MASON

Good idea!

BETHANY

Just don't eat any!



He runs off. Bethany finishes patting down the snowman's head. A big truck with chained tires rolls into the parking lot. A burly figure bundled from head to toe trudges up. Bethany stops to watch him approach, then whack! A SNOWBALL thuds against her arm.

BETHANY

Mason, you goober!

She scoops up a snowball to retaliate. Mason fires back but accidentally hits the MAN instead.

MASON

Oops!

BETHANY

Oh, sorry! Please excuse us. He's never seen snow like this. Come to think of it, neither have I!

MAN(NICK ANDREWS)

(muffled)

No problem. Couldn't feel it.

BETHANY

I'm Bethany Hedges. Are you Mr. Andrews?

NICK

Yep.

He's all business. Bethany and Mason follow him inside.

20 INT. CHURCH HALLWAY - MORNING

20

Nick sheds his layers slowly as he, Bethany, and Mason walk down the hallway toward the bathrooms and fountain. He starts with his gloves, then scarf, then jacket, then finally his balaclava.

BETHANY

Mason checked the fountain first and there's nothing, then we tried to run the sinks in both bathrooms and no luck there either.

NICK

Probably a frozen pipe, but I'll take a look here first to be sure.

Bethany gets a good look at his face and body for the first

time and nearly trips over her own feet, finding herself completely unprepared for his dashing handsomeness. He's not paying attention to much else than the water fountain.

NICK

Did you shut off the water anywhere?

BETHANY

No, not yet.

NICK

(finally looking at her)

What's the quickest way to the main valve?

BETHANY

(caught off guard)

Um, technically through the sanctuary, but please be careful as you go.

NICK

Will do.

21 INT. CHURCH SANCTUARY - MORNING

21

Nick stares at the over-the-top decorations in the sanctuary.

NICK

Wow. You folks really go all out for Christmas.

He walks down the aisle past the altar to the back door. Bethany and Mason trail behind him, Mason hard pressed not to mess with all the shiny things. He tugs at a bow and Bethany silently waves him away from meddling.

BETHANY

It's for my baby sister. She's getting married.

NICK

Babies getting married? I thought they outlawed that.

Mason giggles.

BETHANY

Not like that! I guess I just feel like her mother more than her sister sometimes.

NICK

Gotcha.

His foot gets stuck in a low-hanging tangle of garlands and lights.

NICK

Oops-

He goes to untangle it but Bethany swoops in.

BETHANY

Just stay still! I'll get it.

She deftly frees him.

BETHANY

I was up all night making things perfect, so you'll excuse me if I'm a little overbearing about the decor.

NICK

(dead-pan)

Oh, so this is perfect, huh?

BETHANY

It better be! At least, I don't want to have to deal with the fall-out if it isn't. Not that my sister is some kind of Bridezilla! She just has a special vision. That's why she's a Director.

NICK

I see. I'll be right back.

He slips out of the back door. Bethany furrows her brow, suprised to find herself flustered. She turns to find Mason is once again touching something he shouldn't.

BETHANY

Hey! I can't leave you alone for a second.

MASON

Sorry.

BETHANY

I wish I could bottle that energy. I'd sell it for a million dollars.

Mason bounces with excitement.

MASON

Then we could have TEN dogs!

BETHANY

Since when do you want *ten* dogs?!

He runs up and down the aisles, imagining.

MASON

Or a horse! And a goat! And a pot-bellied pig!

BETHANY

Slow down, Dr. Doolittle! You haven't even had a *goldfish* yet. Let's scale it back.

Nick appears from the back, almost colliding with Mason en route to the front doors.

NICK

Well I found your burst pipe. It's a mess back behind the choir loft.

Bethany trots along with him.

BETHANY

Oh no, what can we do??

NICK

For now, we can mop the floors but that pipe needs to be replaced.

22 INT. CHURCH HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

22

Nick opens a hallway broom closet and grabs a mop and bucket.

BETHANY

Can you replace it?

NICK

I could if I had the part. Which I don't. So I'd suggest a Plan B on the wedding tonight.

He strides back toward the sanctuary. She buzzes along beside.

BETHANY

Oh no, that can't happen.

NICK

It *did* happen.

BETHANY

There's no Plan B. There's nowhere else even open right now.

NICK

Exactly, which is why that pipe is not likely to get fixed today.

BETHANY

Listen, practically the whole town is invited to this wedding.

NICK

Congratulations on your family's popularity.

BETHANY

That's not what I mean. I just mean, the wheels are in motion, there's no turning back on this. It's got to happen.

NICK

Or what? Christmas will be ruined?

BETHANY

Yes! Exactly. For my sister, and my family by extension, Christmas will be ruined. I'm glad we're on the same page.

He rolls his eyes and gives her a final sizing up before waving the mop and saying:

NICK

First things first. Then I'll make a few calls and see what I can do.

Bethany softens instantly with gratitude.

BETHANY

Thank you! Thank you! You're my hero!

NICK

Don't get too excited, I'm not  
(MORE)

NICK (CONT'D)  
 promising anyone will have the parts  
 we need! Or even pick up the phone! It  
 is Christmas Eve!

BETHANY  
 I understand!

The phone in the office starts to ring.

NICK  
 Do you though?

BETHANY  
 I do! I'm sorry, I'm sure that's my  
 sister calling. I'll be back!

She gestures for Mason and jogs out.

23 INT. CHURCH OFFICE - CONTINUOUS 23

She grabs the phone just in time, a little breathless.

BETHANY  
 Hello, Pinewood Church!

She catches Mason's eye as he wanders back to the bookshelf.

BETHANY  
 (stage-whisper)  
 I'm watching you!

24 INT. BETHANY & IMOGEN'S BEDROOM - MORNING 24

Imogen talks on the rotary phone as Umi waves her cell phone  
 around in search of signal and Tiara digs a mini-bar bottle  
 out of her purse and pours it into her coffee.

IMOGEN  
 Hendrix just called me back. All  
 flights out of Denver were cancelled  
 so they had to drive to Cheyenne and  
 they're *just now* getting there! They  
 won't be able to make it in time for  
 the rehearsal.

V.O. BETHANY  
 Aww, I'm sorry honey. How are you  
 feeling??

Imogen reaches out as Umi deposits an enormous day planner

labelled 'OUR CHRISTMAS WEDDING' in her arms. She stares down a long guest list full of contact information. Tiara places the spiked coffee on the table beside her.

IMOGEN

I'm still in denial but I'm about to make fifty phone calls telling people not to come to lunch, so that should make it real.

(She shifts the phone to her shoulder so she can grab the boozy coffee.)

Please tell me that everything looks good at the church.

She takes a hopeful sip.

25 INT. CHURCH OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

25

BETHANY

Well, technically everything still *looks* good.

V.O. IMOGEN

Oh no.

BETHANY

Yeah. A Pipe burst. No running water.

26 INT. BETHANY & IMOGEN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

26

IMOGEN

Oh no! Is it fixable??

Tiara and Umi stop what they're doing to listen in.

IMOGEN

(to Umi and Tiara)

Keep looking, I swear there's a spot.

The women renew their search efforts with both their cell phones.

V.O. BETHANY

Mr. Jimmy's nephew took a look at it but he says the pipe needs replacing and no hardware store is open today!

IMOGEN

Mr. Jimmy's nephew? Where's Mr. Jimmy?

He can fix anything with like, two

(MORE)

IMOGEN (CONT'D)  
twist ties and a paper towel!

V.O. BETHANY  
He's on a hunting trip.

IMOGEN  
Of course.  
(She sighs.)

IMOGEN  
Well, we *really* have to cancel the luncheon then. Can you put a sign up on the door letting people know, just in case I can't call everyone in time? I'm having to do it one by one on the land line.

27 INT. CHURCH OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

27

BETHANY  
Sure. But what are we going to do with all the catering?

V.O. IMOGEN  
Ugh, I hadn't even thought of that.

BETHANY  
There's way too much to keep at Mom and Dad's house. Do you think Aunt Rhonda will want it back?

28 INT. BETHANY & IMOGEN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

28

IMOGEN  
No, you know how much she brags about how little she eats.

V.O. BETHANY  
You're right, everything would go bad but the olives.

Imogen smiles weakly.

IMOGEN  
Right. I don't know what else to do though. I've got so much to think about! Everything's up in the air now and it's not supposed to be! It's supposed to be perfect!

She starts to hyperventilate.



29 INT. CHURCH OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

29

BETHANY

Okay, breathe, sister! I'll figure something out.

V.O. IMOGEN

(pouty)

Thank you, Bethie.

In the background, Umi squeals in excitement, surprising Bethany.

V.O. UMI

I've got one!

30 INT. BETHANY & IMOGEN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

30

Umi holds the phone over her head near the corner of the room.

UMI

I've got a bar!

TIARA

Don't move! We'll bring the guest list to you. Put it on speakerphone!

31 INT. CHURCH OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

31

Bethany searches for a pen and paper while signing off.

BETHANY

See? Good things are happening already.

32 EXT. CHURCH - DAY

32

Bethany stands at the front door and tacks up a hand written sign regarding the cancelled luncheon, with her parents' phone number attached. She steps back to examine it when Nick blows through, knocking her off balance and into the snowman, toppling it as well.

BETHANY

Oh!

Mason finds this hilarious.

NICK

I'm so sorry. Are you okay??

Bethany sits up. Nick pulls her to her feet with ease.

BETHANY

(Brushing herself off)

I'm fine. The snowman got it worse.

BETHANY

Did anyone have the part?

NICK

I left a few messages. Even with Mr. Fix-It himself, Uncle Jimmy, although he's out in a deer stand with no phone. Now all we can do is wait.

BETHANY

(disappointed)

Okay. Well, thank you for doing what you could.

NICK

You're welcome. I have to admit, your sister sounds a little high maintenance but it's nice to see family sticking up for family. I respect that.

BETHANY

Oh, thanks. Um, you're doing a great job on your uncle's behalf.

NICK

Well he's given me a lot of opportunities in my life. I know what it feels like to not want to let someone down.

An alarm goes off on his watch.

NICK

And now I'm running late and about to let a lot of people down. Excuse me.

Something sparks and she doesn't want to let him leave.

BETHANY

Wait! Did you say a lot of people?

He turns back, curious.

BETHANY

We had to cancel the rehearsal luncheon, and there's all this delicious food left over. Could you use any of it, Mr. Andrews?

NICK

Call me Nick. And it's funny you should ask.

33 INT. NICK'S TRUCK - DAY

33

Nick, Bethany, and Mason bounce along country roads in Nick's truck with piles of food.

MASON

You do this every Christmas?

NICK

Every Christmas and every Saturday.

BETHANY

I grew up here and I didn't even know this existed! How did you find out about it?

34 EXT. SOUP KITCHEN - DAY

34

NICK

There was a time before I reconnected with my uncle when I needed their help myself. Now that I'm on my feet, I come and give back.

Nick parks and they lumber out with armfuls of food. Before shutting the doors, Nick reaches back to the back seat and pulls out a box with a soup ladle, chicken stock, rice, spices, and veggies.

35 INT. SOUP KITCHEN - DAY

35

Nick, Bethany, and Mason enter the Soup Kitchen, where a VOLUNTEER is serving soup to a small but growing line of hungry people. The Volunteer waves and nods at Nick, who leads Bethany and Mason to the kitchen area behind the serving line. A big pot of soup is boiling on the stove. A cook, DAMIEN, 40s with a tight afro and built like a tank, preps some veggies on the counter and smiles as they enter.

DAMIEN

Ho, ho, ho, Saint Nicholas!

NICK  
 (tongue-in-cheek but not mean)  
 Never gets old, Damien.

DAMIEN  
 Who are our new friends?

NICK  
 This is Mrs. Bethany Hedges and her  
 son Mason, and they've come bearing  
 gifts.

Mason struts forward with his packages.

DAMIEN  
 Is that Bergeron's? That's what I'm  
 talkin' about!

NICK  
 Right?

DAMIEN  
 Thank you very much, Bethany and  
 Mason! You're our Christmas angels!  
 May I?

He relieves Mason of his burdens and whisks them off to the  
 serving line.

MASON  
 Can I help??

Bethany looks to Nick for the answer.

NICK  
 Absolutely. Go wash your hands and  
 I'll grab you a pair of gloves. Care  
 to join us, Mrs. Hedges?

BETHANY  
 (struck with sudden inspiration)  
 It's Miss Hedges, actually. And I can  
 do even better. Is there a working  
 telephone here?

36 EXT. SOUP KITCHEN - A LITTLE WHILE LATER

36

Bethany greets Imogen, Umi, and Tiara at the front door. They  
 look around skeptically.

IMOGEN

Where are we? When you called I thought you were sending us to a cute brunch place to help distract me from my anxiety.

TIARA

Yeah, like one of those trendy pop-ups in the city where you have to be on a mailing list to know the hours.

IMOGEN

I love those.

UMI

It smells good in there, though.

37 INT. SOUP KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

37

Bethany leads them further into the dining room and they see the many people who have come in from the cold for a hot meal.

IMOGEN

Really though, what did we just brave the roads for, sister? On the phone, you sounded very excited.

TIARA

Is this a soup kitchen?

Imogen sees Damien taking an empty Bergeron's catering box to the back.

IMOGEN

Bergeron's. No wonder it smells so good.

(something clicks)

Wait a second. Bethany, is that my catering?

BETHANY

Now, don't be mad. It was going to go to waste.

IMOGEN

Did you bring *all* of it here?

BETHANY

I told you I'd think of something.

IMOGEN

Yeah, but, I thought you were going to find a deep freeze or something.

BETHANY

Do me one favor. You said you were anxious, right?

IMOGEN

To put it lightly.

BETHANY

Spend an hour here helping out with me and then tell me how you feel.

TIARA

I'm game. Can't be any less thrilling than sitting by the phone all day.

UMI

We already called everyone about the luncheon. The rest is out of our hands.

IMOGEN

Fine. If you all want to stay I don't have much choice. Can't very well hitchhike my way home.

BETHANY

That's the attitude!

38 INT. SOUP KITCHEN - LATER

38

Bethany and Mason help in the serving line alongside a gangly twenty year old VOLUNTEER. Tiara and Umi wipe down a few recently emptied tables while Nick and Damien tend the kitchen. Mason adds a biscuit to a small girl's plate:

MASON

Merry Christmas!

BETHANY

Merry Christmas!

Bethany brings an empty box to the back where Imogen is grabbing its replacement. Umi and Tiara join them with their cleaning supplies.

UMI

I have to admit I was a little nervous when we got here, but it wasn't at all what I expected.

TIARA

Right? I'm impressed.

NICK

Thank you very much.

DAMIEN

Would you mind shouting it from the rooftops so we don't shut down?

BETHANY

(nodding in agreement)

People should know about this. I can't believe I didn't.

NICK

It's a real challenge to keep this place in the black; we struggle for funding every year.

DAMIEN

Yeah. Usually Christmas time is when people donate the most, but this year has been tough and there are a lot of folks out there who need us.

IMOGEN

I'm surprised I didn't realize the need was so great in my own hometown.

NICK

Most people don't. But we try not to waste too much time feeling down about it and instead focus on what we can do.

Nick hands a big pot of soup to Damien who lugs it out to the front. Tiara sizes Damien up before chiming in and following him out.

TIARA

Let me help you with that! I haven't taken a turn in the serving line yet.

Bethany watches them go. Looking out into the dining area, she glimpses the family with the little girl, just as Mason approaches them to introduce himself. He pulls a box of crayons from his jacket pocket along with a small notebook. He offers them to the girl. She nods excitedly. He joins them at the table and they color together.

Bethany gets misty-eyed. Nick sees her watching.

NICK

Your little man is really something.

BETHANY

He's got *the biggest* heart.

NICK

Well, you must be doing something right.

He leaves her and walks over to the sink to wash dishes. Bethany smiles and lets her eyes follow him. Imogen catches her doing so and smiles knowingly.

39 EXT. SOUP KITCHEN - DAY

39

Nick waits at the door as the everyone else files out and huddles in the shallow edge of the snowbanks. Tiara and Damien are deep in animated conversation. A beat up old car rolls up slowly but Damien doesn't notice. The young man driver waves. Nick turns around and recognizes him.

NICK

I think that's your ride, Damien.

DAMIEN

Oh! That's my brother Devon. Great to meet y'all. If it weren't so cold out here, I'd hate to leave.

TIARA

You should stay! Let's find somewhere warm.

DAMIEN

(open to possibility)

Devon and I don't have any plans with our family until tomorrow morning.

The last Volunteer walks out and Nick locks the door behind him and pats him on the back for a job well done as they walk toward the group. Imogen's eyes light up; she counts the men from the Soup Kitchen one by one, mouthing numbers.

IMOGEN

Damien, Devon, Nick, that guy; that's four guys!



VOLUNTEER

My name's Miguel.

IMOGEN

Hi, Miguel. Four of them, four of us.  
You know what that means? We can do  
the rehearsal!

The other women are surprised at the new idea and look at the men who are confused. Bethany waves them off.

BETHANY

I'm sure Miguel has family to get home  
to.

IMOGEN

Miguel, hear me out! Please,  
gentlemen, do you have room in your  
hearts today for one more act of  
charity??

Devon rolls down the window and pokes his head out.

DEVON

What are you guys talking about??

Bethany tries to talk sense into her increasingly desperate sister.

BETHANY

Immy, these guys just worked for  
hours. Give 'em a break.

IMOGEN

A wedding needs a rehearsal, Bethany!  
(serious)  
I have to keep acting like this  
wedding is still going to happen  
tonight or else I'll go crazy. Please.

BETHANY

So much for taking your mind off  
things and helping you see the bigger  
picture.

IMOGEN

(faux-guilty)

I know.

(about-face to the men)

Now, what can I do to convince you?  
This is show-business, I won't ask you

(MORE)

IMOGEN (CONT'D)  
to work for free.

BETHANY  
I apologize for my sister, she's spent  
too much time in L.A. and has  
forgotten this is Christmas Eve in  
Pinewood.

DAMIEN  
Cali girls, huh?

UMI  
That's right!

TIARA  
You know it.

MIGUEL  
Cool, I've got cousins out in Santa  
Barbara.

IMOGEN  
Small world. I'm the director for  
*Secret Hearts*, it's set out there.

MIGUEL  
*Corazones Secretos*? My abuela loves  
that show!

IMOGEN  
Great! Does she want an autograph?  
Would you stand in at my wedding  
rehearsal for an autograph for your  
abuela??

MIGUEL  
Um-

Bethany is in the middle of scoffing at Imogen's suggestion  
when she has an idea.

BETHANY  
Imogen, wait.

Bethany takes Imogen aside.

BETHANY  
This is Christmas. It's no time for  
business negotiations.

IMOGEN  
Bethie, I'm desperate.

BETHANY

You are *not* desperate, Immy. It's like Dad says, it's all a matter of perspective.

IMOGEN

So what do you want me to do?

In the parking lot behind them Devon waves vigorously from the car once more.

DEVON

Hello?? What's going on?? I know y'all see me.

BETHANY

(to Imogen)

You're asking these men to be generous after they've spent the entire day being exactly that. It's your turn now.

Bethany looks over to the group and waves Tiara and Umi over.

BETHANY

You're supposed to be photo-documenting the entire weekend right? If you need these guys to help you, why not do something to give back?

A few moments later, the women return to the group.

IMOGEN

We have a proposition that may be able to bring attention *and donations* to your community Kitchen.

The men look intrigued.

NICK

Go on.

IMOGEN

Well, as Miguel mentioned, the show I direct has a pretty substantial following, and believe it or not, a lot of them are young enough to use the internet.

MIGUEL

My abuela can use the internet.

IMOGEN

Oh! Sorry.

BETHANY

She's only surprised because our mom can't. Or won't.

UMI

But the point is we can interview you and film your soup kitchen and put it on the show's website.

TIARA

And all our social media platforms.

TIARA & UMI

(gesturing to each other, self-congratulatory)

Which we run!

The guys look impressed except Nick is skeptical.

NICK

And what's the catch? We have to cater your wedding? Valet the cars in the snow?

Bethany looks at her sister to make sure she gets the next part right.

IMOGEN

Nothing. It's been too long since I've been home and I didn't know things were like this for so many people. I'd like to do my part.

BETHANY

We all do.

IMOGEN

(forced casual)

If you guys wouldn't mind hanging out with us for a *few* more hours that would give us plenty of time to interview you.

(as calm as possible)

And if you could *possibly* stand in at my rehearsal during that time it would really, *really* help me out.

BETHANY  
(mumbling to Imogen)

*But!*

IMOGEN  
But! It's okay if you don't. We still want to feature your kitchen on our website and fundraise for your charity.

Bethany nods approvingly at her sister's performance.

TIARA  
Trust us, we can rally the troops online.

UMI  
It's our specialty. You should have seen the numbers on our last fundraiser for Dolphins with Chicken Pox.

NICK  
How many dolphins with chicken pox are there?

UMI  
Just two. We really exceeded our projections.

TIARA  
(matter-of-fact)  
*And* they were cured.

DAMIEN  
What do you think, Nick?

NICK  
I dunno, could be too good to be true.

MIGUEL  
If we don't do it, can I still get the autograph?

UMI  
We should get a selfie before leaving no matter what.

IMOGEN  
You're right.

The girls strike quick poses in front of the confused guys and Umi snaps a pic. Devon honks the horn in frustration behind them, startling them all.

DEVON

Am I the Ghost of Christmas Past or something??

DAMIEN

(quickly)

I say let's do it.

He jogs over to his brother's vehicle.

NICK

Can't say no to free publicity, I guess.

IMOGEN

Is that a yes??

Nick looks at Miguel who shrugs.

MIGUEL

My parents are still at work.

Nick capitulates.

NICK

Let's get you pretend-married.

Imogen is ecstatic; the other women are relieved.

40 INT. CHURCH SANCTUARY - DAY

40

Nick and all the guys from the Soup Kitchen, Bethany, Imogen and the bridesmaids, Mason, Mom and Dad line up at the back of the sanctuary, waiting to proceed down the aisle. The Pastor guides them on the order of events.

PASTOR

Now, first Mom will be seated by the ushers, then the bridesmaids and groomsmen will follow. Imogen of course will be last.

Imogen takes her dad's arm sweetly; he looks very proud.

PASTOR

Hendrix and I will be waiting at the altar! Ready to give it a try?

IMOGEN

Ready!

The Pastor and Miguel walk down to the aisle while the others pair up.

BETHANY

How ya feelin', Mom? Did you take your medicine?

MOM

I was saving it for closer to show time. I'm okay for now.

BETHANY

You sure?

MOM

I'm sure.

Mom takes Mason's hand. Bethany keeps an eye on them as they proceed down the aisle. Nick watches Bethany thoughtfully. She turns to him and catches him already looking at her.

BETHANY

We're up.

She takes his arm. There's an exciting new energy in the way they look at each other. They walk down the aisle.

BETHANY

Thanks again for doing this. I know my sister can be a little, high-strung.

(laughing)

Probably not how you expected to be spending Christmas Eve, huh??

NICK

(smiling)

No, but I don't mind. Actually, now that I've met your whole family, I feel invested. I really hope I can get the pipe fixed for you.

BETHANY

You and me both!

They take their positions on either side of Miguel and the Pastor. Miguel is doing an awkward little sway.

MIGUEL

You said the bathrooms weren't working??

The Pastor shakes his head and Nick cringes as Umi and Devon proceed down the aisle to their places.

MIGUEL

So, are you going to have Port-a-potties?

The Pastor shrugs with uncertainty.

BETHANY

We're praying everything gets fixed before the wedding starts.

NICK

Waiting to hear back about a part.

MIGUEL

Oh. You're fixing it, Nick?

NICK

Gonna try.

MIGUEL

What if you can't?

Tiara and Damien take their places.

BETHANY

We'll have to find somewhere else.

MIGUEL

On Christmas Eve? That would be a miracle.

BETHANY

(unflappable)

Well, what better time for miracles than Christmas?

All turn their attention to Imogen and Dad as they approach the altar.

DAD

Who was that nice young man that walked your sister down the aisle?



IMOGEN

That's Mr. Jimmy's nephew, Nick.

DAD

Ah, you don't say.

IMOGEN

You're a good judge of character, Dad.  
What do you think?

DAD

Well, I was watching them just now,  
and I think I haven't seen Beth laugh  
like that in a long time.

Imogen nods. They make it nearly to the altar when the LIGHTS go out. Thankfully it's the afternoon, so some light still filters in through the stained glass windows. Various sounds of surprise and disappointment from the room.

IMOGEN

Of course! What's one more thing?

Nick pulls his keychain, complete with mini-flashlight, out of his back pocket and shines a light.

NICK

Everybody stay put. I'll be right  
back.

Imogen sits down on the floor. Umi and Tiara go to her side.

PASTOR

I'm sorry, Imogen. We're not the most  
high-tech or recently renovated little  
chapel.

IMOGEN

No water and now no lights. Oh but  
that's okay because there's also no  
groom.

BETHANY

Maybe it's just a quick blip.

Nick pops back in shaking his head.

NICK

Power's out on the whole block.

Imogen puts her head in her hands. Tiara and Umi console her.

IMOGEN

If I was in L.A. I could have a generator and port-a-potties on set in a heartbeat and this show would be back on the road.

TIARA

We're not in Kansas anymore. Or, Oz, we're not in Oz anymore. We're back on the pig farm in black and white, Auntie Im.

NICK

I've got a generator.

All eyes on him.

NICK

Still doesn't fix the pipe though.

IMOGEN

Please, I'll pay you whatever it takes. Double that. Anything!

NICK

All I need is gas. It'd be good to run home anyway, check on the animals. But, really, the pipe-

Mason's eyes light up. Nick is entertained.

MASON

What kind of animals??

NICK

I've got some chickens and ducks, a goat, and my dog just had a litter of puppies.

Bethany braces herself as Mason loses it.

BETHANY

Oh boy.

MASON

Mom!!! He's got puppies! He's got puppies!

BETHANY

(placating)

I know, that's very exciting.

MASON

Can we go see them?!

BETHANY

(gently)

Honey, it's not our place to invite ourselves over to Mr. Nick's house.

NICK

I'd love that.

Bethany is pleasantly surprised.

BETHANY

You would?

NICK

Sure.

(to Mason)

These puppies need to play a *lot* and they're getting to be too much to handle by myself. Do you think you could help me?

MASON

Yeah!

NICK

Perfect.

Bethany looks to Imogen and her family for their response. Mom and Dad are smiling.

IMOGEN

Sure, you power my wedding, the kiddo pets a puppy, everybody's happy. Just please make this church inhabitable by sundown! I'm begging you.

BETHANY

I'll try my best, but I'd like to say, in front of your whole group here so you're all aware of the situation: If I can't replace that pipe in time, that's all she wrote, folks. I respectfully suggest you get a gameplan.

IMOGEN

(snapping)

I'm sorry but where do you

(MORE)



IMOGEN (CONT'D)  
Meet us at home ASAP.

BETHANY  
Will do.

She marches out with the others. Dad brings up the rear.

DAD  
You kids have fun.

BETHANY  
I'm sure we will.

NICK  
(teasing)  
Don't drink all my cocoa, Damien!

DAMIEN  
I will!

MIGUEL  
Dibs on the bathroom.

The crowd retreats through the dark, leaving Bethany, Nick, and Mason at the altar. Nick seems curiously light-hearted.

NICK  
Ready?

MASON  
Yeah!!

Bethany can only smile for his exuberance.

41 INT. NICK'S TRUCK - DAY

41

Nick, Bethany, and Mason drive through the snowy woods toward Nick's house.

BETHANY  
I didn't know the roads ran this far  
back into the forest! Are we even  
still in Pinewood?

NICK  
Sure we are, these woods are why  
Pinewood is called Pinewood!  
Don't worry, I'll bring you back home  
before your sister gets herself into a  
(MORE)

NICK (CONT'D)

twist.

MASON

Too late!

BETHANY

Oh, we can let her twist a little.  
Even *she* can't control the weather.  
She just thinks she can from all the  
time she's spent on set playing Queen  
of Everything.

NICK

(sarcastic)

Can't imagine how she'd get that  
impression. You've spent the whole day  
making everything perfect for her.

BETHANY

Hey now, don't make my generosity out  
to be a bad thing.

NICK

Oh no, of course not. But if you don't  
mind me saying, you're making the  
classic Chihuahua Mistake.

BETHANY

I'm what??

NICK

You ever notice how it's always the  
tiniest dogs that make the most  
trouble? Barking, biting, getting up  
on the table, stealing food, you name  
it.

BETHANY

I guess so.

NICK

Well, you'd never let a German  
Shepherd or a Great Dane get up on the  
table. It's too big, right?

BETHANY

Yes?

NICK

But people treat little dogs like

(MORE)

NICK (CONT'D)

babies because they're so small. They let them get away with all sorts of stuff you wouldn't let a big dog get away with. And it may not be a big deal at first but over time the lack of boundaries leads to repeated bad behavior.

BETHANY

Okay, wow, not sure I appreciate you comparing my sister to a dog, but I get your point.

MASON

Is Aunt Imogen the chihuahua because she bosses everybody around?

BETHANY

Yep.

Mason cracks up.

MASON

Auntie Chihuahua-haha!

BETHANY

Don't you *dare* call her that.

(to Nick)

You're right though. I probably do cater to her too much. It's just, old habits die hard. Our parents have had a lot of health problems over the years and I sometimes felt like I was the only one holding the family together. I've taken on a Mom role for Imogen more times than I can count, but, honestly, it's been a long time now since she's *really* needed me like that. Clearly she's doing well for herself, by herself.

Saying this out loud triggers an unexpected twinge of emotion for Bethany.

42 EXT. NICK'S CABIN - DAY

42

They approach a cabin nestled in a clearing well off the main road; it's like a little piece of Heaven in the thick pine forest. It's got a stump with an ax in the middle of the yard, a well-organized pile of firewood against one side of

the cabin, a fenced in garden on the other side, rocking chairs on the porch, and chickens and goats in the yard.

NICK  
Here we are.

MASON  
Cool!

BETHANY  
(quietly impressed)  
Very cool.

Nick sees their reactions and smiles to himself as he parks.

NICK  
Thank you. It was a mess when I got the place but Uncle Jim helped me fix it up.

43 INT. NICK'S CABIN - DAY

43

Nick lets them in and guides them through the main room of his modest yet well-loved and meticulously tended cabin to a fluffy, oversized dog bed where the mama and litter are resting. Nick gently pats his dog.

NICK  
Suzie Q, how are you??

She wags her tail affectionately and licks his hand. The puppies are all over him. Mason hovers over them, marveling.

NICK  
Go ahead.

Mason delights himself with the puppies. Nick steps back.

NICK  
Knock yourself out. You'll run out of steam before they will.

BETHANY  
Don't be so sure.

NICK  
(to Bethany)  
I'm going to grab the genny and feed the chickens. Can I get you anything?



BETHANY

Oh no thank you. You need a hand?

NICK

Sure.

44 EXT. NICK'S BACK YARD - DAY

44

Bethany follows Nick around the back of the cabin to a small shed.

BETHANY

Thank you for indulging Mason. You didn't have to do that.

NICK

It's no problem.

BETHANY

He's really been on a kick lately about getting a pet.

NICK

(sly)

I couldn't tell.

He opens the shed door.

BETHANY

It's just, once you take the plunge, it's for life, right? Big responsibility, no going back.

45 INT. SHED - CONTINUOUS

45

Bethany follows Nick into the shed.

BETHANY

And I've got so much on my plate with work and taking care of my parents, and *being* a parent. I'm just not sure if Mason is really ready to step up yet.

Nick nods thoughtfully as he grabs the generator. He tries to also grab the nearby gas tank but Bethany swoops in for the assist.

BETHANY

I got it.

It's a small thing, but Nick takes an extra second to really notice her.

NICK  
Thank you.

They walk out of the shed.

46 EXT. SHED - CONTINUOUS

46

NICK  
(gesturing to the door)  
Would you mind getting that?

BETHANY  
Sure.  
(She does so.)  
So, what age were you when you first had a pet?

They head for the truck.

NICK  
Hmm, it was when I first moved in with Jimmy, so about fifteen.

BETHANY  
Oh, so you're saying I could put this off for six more years? Keep talking.

NICK  
(chuckling)  
You know what's right for your family, but I loved having a dog. My parents didn't want the hassle of looking after one when I was a kid. But I guess that's not surprising, they barely wanted to look after me.

He heaves the generator into the back of the truck with a THUD. Bethany frowns as she stows the gas can.

BETHANY  
I'm sorry.

NICK  
Not your fault. They had bigger problems than me. That's why Jimmy stepped in. Raised me like a son.

They head toward the chicken coop, stopping at the porch to

grab the bucket of feed.

BETHANY

Your uncle must really know the meaning of family.

NICK

He does. And I can see you do too.

BETHANY

Oh, thanks. I try.

He walks along and throws feed to the chickens.

NICK

That's all anyone can ever do.  
(Pondering for a beat)  
May I ask you a personal question?

BETHANY

Go for it.

NICK

Where's Mason's father?

BETHANY

In Las Vegas, with his one true love, gambling.

NICK

Ah.

BETHANY

I have full custody of Mason. Henry didn't fight to see him at all. It was pretty pathetic.

(She pauses, remembering.)  
So, in my own way I know what it's like to deal with a parent who can't handle the responsibility. One Christmas, I made all of Mason's gifts by hand.

NICK

That's really nice.

BETHANY

It could have been except the reason I did it was because Mason's dad spent all the money we had saved for presents at the Casinos.

BETHANY (CONT'D)

(bittersweet smile)

Mason doesn't remember though, he was  
4.

Bethany looks out on their idyllic surroundings and breaths deep, letting it all go. Nick looks at her with growing appreciation.

BETHANY

It's so beautiful out here, it's like  
a Christmas Card. It even *smells* like  
the holidays.

NICK

Nothing says Christmas like the smell  
Cedar and Pine.

BETHANY

I'll bet you could find the perfect  
Christmas tree right in your backyard.  
Why didn't you?

NICK

Eh, nobody to see it but me. I go to  
Uncle Jimmy's on Christmas Day and get  
my dose of holiday cheer.

BETHANY

But this place would look amazing  
decorated for Christmas! It would be  
magical.

They make their way back toward the porch to put up the feed.

NICK

(tongue-in-cheek)

Magical huh? Like the way you  
decorated the church?

BETHANY

Oh no, that's *all* Imogen and I don't  
have my sister's taste in, well,  
anything. Trust me, it could be very  
understated. Elegant even.

NICK

Oh but what if I want you to go all  
out?? Fifty foot popcorn garlands, a  
star on every tree for twelve acres?

BETHANY  
(in on the joke)  
A life-sized sled made of ten tons of  
tinsel?

NICK  
Yep.

BETHANY  
Santa legs poking out of the chimney??

NICK  
Uh-huh.

BETHANY  
Mistletoe in every doorway?

NICK  
Oh, I've got your mistletoe.

Bethany looks inquisitive.

NICK  
No, really. It's all around here.

BETHANY  
Is that so?

NICK  
Yup. Check it out.

He scouts the trees around them for a moment before finding  
one nearby.

NICK  
See that cluster a few branches up  
that looks like a ball of leaves but  
isn't growing from the branches' ends?

He points it out to her.

BETHANY  
Oh, yeah! It looks like a natural born  
Christmas wreath.

NICK  
Yeah, more like natural born Christmas  
tree killer. It's a parasite, feeds on  
other trees.

Nick takes a running jump at the tree and scales the low

branches to pluck the mistletoe. Bethany tries to conceal her dropping jaw. He easily hops down from the tree with a cluster in hand and returns to her. He presents her the greenery.

NICK

Funny how old traditions carry on,  
right? What wise guy hundreds of years  
ago was trying so hard to get a girl  
that he held some leaves over his head  
and said:

He steps in close to Bethany and holds the mistletoe over them.

NICK

'Quick! Kiss me in the name of  
Christmas!'

They laugh, but it dissolves into a heavy pause. Bethany realizes in this moment how much she wants to do just that. Their mutual gaze is intense.

BETHANY

(softly)  
I don't know if it's the mistletoe,  
but your argument is strangely  
compelling.

NICK

(breathy)  
It's the holiday spirit.

They close their eyes, tilt their heads, and lean in. All signs point to classic mistletoe kiss until SLAM! The cabin door swings shut and Mason jogs outside.

V.O. MASON

Mr. Nick! Mom!

It sounds urgent. Nick drops the mistletoe and they make their way to Mason.

BETHANY

Everything okay??

MASON

Yeah! Mr. Nick, can I feed your goat??

Bethany's expression is a mixture of relief, exasperation, and amusement, her classic Mason response.

NICK

Sure.

BETHANY

(checking the time)

Ooh, and then we need to head back. We don't want the others to worry.

But Mason is already sprinting toward the goat which is eyeing him with mounting suspicion and Nick is in hot pursuit. Bethany smiles at the sight of them.

47 INT. NICK'S TRUCK - DAY

47

Mason sits in the middle between Nick and Bethany and looks ruffled and a tad dirty but satisfied. Bethany shakes her head silently.

BETHANY

I'm so sorry, Nick.

NICK

Really, it's okay. It happens more than you'd think. Old Bill's got an iron stomach.

BETHANY

I didn't even know Mason *had* those G.I. Joes.

MASON

I just wanted to show him! I didn't know he'd do that.

BETHANY

Why did you need to show him? How can a goat play with G.I. Joes?

MASON

I dunno. I thought he might like them!  
(sheepish)  
Sorry, Mr. Nick.

NICK

It's okay, kid. I'm just glad you still have your fingers. That goat'll eat anything that gets too close to its face.

Mason's eyes bulge and Nick cracks a sly smile.

48 EXT. MOM & DAD'S HOUSE - DAY

48

The big truck pulls up to Mom and Dad's house and the three hop out.

49 INT. MOM & DAD'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

49

Mason, Bethany and Nick enter the living room. Imogen has recruited Mom and Dad to interview the men from the kitchen and Tiara and Umi are recording with their phones. Imogen is fussing with a table lamp trying to get better practical lighting "on set".

DAMIEN

Oh I follow all the cooking shows,  
from the state to the national level.  
Just because I'm a volunteer chef  
doesn't mean I don't take the job very  
seriously. They call it soul food for  
a reason, know what I'm sayin'?

IMOGEN

Cut.

Tiara and Umi stop recording.

That was great, but you were blinking  
a lot so I'm gonna move this light and  
we'll try it again.

NICK

Wow, you boys are getting a real  
Hollywood interview. I'll have to get  
your autograph when this comes out.

DAMIEN

Oh you're not escaping the hot seat.  
Your turn's next.

MIGUEL

I took public speaking classes this  
summer but there's something about the  
light shining in your face that makes  
you nervous no matter what you're  
talking about.

IMOGEN

Hey, how'd it go?

NICK

Got the generator.



IMOGEN  
Any word on the pipe?

Nick shakes his head.

NICK  
Negative.

Imogen sighs and massages her temples. Tiara and Umi watch her emotions closely.

MOM  
How about another cookie, dear?

Imogen shakes her head silently, looking grim. Everyone looks uneasy. Mom attempts to keep things light.

MOM  
How about our new arrivals, may I get you some cocoa?

She rises from her place at the couch but doesn't make it far; pain stops her in her tracks. Dad reaches out to her to steady her; she takes his hand.

BETHANY  
We've got it, Mom. Have you taken your medicine yet?

MOM  
No.

BETHANY  
Let's fix that.  
(to Mason)  
You know where it is, Mason?

Mason nods and dashes off. Bethany gestures to Nick.

BETHANY  
Cocoa's this way.

50 INT. MOM & DAD'S KITCHEN - DAY

50

Nick follows Bethany to the counter where the cookies and cocoa are waiting.

NICK  
Your family is very welcoming.

BETHANY

It's the least we can do, you've spent all day helping us.

She serves him cookies and cocoa.

NICK

Well, we appreciate your help at the kitchen too. It's not every day we get new volunteers.

BETHANY

Hopefully the makeshift documentary in the livingroom can change that.

NICK

I hope so. Until that happens, we could always use extra hands. No pressure, I know you've got a lot on your plate and-

BETHANY

I'd love to. Now eat that cookie on *your plate!* Family recipe.

He bites into his cookie.

NICK

Mmm!

A KNOCK on the front door startles him somewhat. He chokes a little. Bethany pats him on the back.

NICK

Ah, thanks.

V.O. IMOGEN

Bethie, couldja get that?

The knock repeats. Bethany heads for the front door.

V.O. AUNT RHONDA

Hello?? Patsy?? Russell?

Bethany stops short and rushes back into the living room.

BETHANY

It's Aunt Rhonda.

Mom and Dad roll their eyes and Imogen reacts in panicked frustration.

IMOGEN

Oh no, I don't have time for an unannounced Rhonda pop-in! This is just icing on the cake.

Imogen, Tiara, and Umi all look at each other and scream:

IMOGEN, TIARA, & UMI

The cake!!

IMOGEN

We never called the bakery!

TIARA

I'm so sorry.

UMI

This is totally my fault! I'll go get it!

IMOGEN

(checking the time)

It's too late now, we've got to start doing hair and makeup!

V.O. AUNT RHONDA

Bethany?? Imogen?? I can see your lights on! It's freezing out here!

DAD

I'm letting her in. If we leave her out there any longer we'll never hear the end of it.

He walks out.

IMOGEN

Guys, you're gonna want to slip out the back door now.

DEVON

Who is this lady, the Anti-Claus?

MOM

Ha! She's my sister, one of the few people who can manage to stay sour through anything, including Christmas.

IMOGEN

And I can't handle it. Not today, not right now. Come on girls, let's-

V.O. AUNT RHONDA  
Imogen Vidalia!

IMOGEN  
G-Oh! Aunt Rhonda! Merry Christmas!

Aunt Rhonda expands into the room wearing a fur almost as big as her hair and half as gaudy as her necklace. She sweeps in for the air kiss but without warmth.

AUNT RHONDA  
Now Imogen, dear, what on Earth possessed you with the idea to get married on Christmas Eve? I have to tell you, it's absolutely tacky and detracts from everyone's holiday plans.

IMOGEN  
I am sorry you feel that way.

AUNT RHONDA  
(steamrolling over Imogen's comment)  
Did I tell you I cancelled my cruise? It was for my 50th college reunion. Hawaii. It was a "once in a lifetime" event!

IMOGEN  
(fake smiling)  
You did. You wrote it on your RSVP card.

MOM  
Hopefully her wedding will be a once in a lifetime event too.

AUNT RHONDA  
Mm. We'll see. The other one didn't do too well on that front.

BETHANY  
Love you too, Aunt Rhonda.

AUNT RHONDA  
(looking around)  
And who are all these people?

IMOGEN  
You remember Umi and Tiara-

They wave politely. Rhonda scoffs.

AUNT RHONDA

Not them, who are these strange men? Groomsmen should *not* fraternize with bridesmaids before the wedding. It's completely improper. Really, Patsy, having modest means is no excuse to throw away *all* tradition.

Raised eyebrows all around but Mom stays cool.

MOM

They aren't groomsmen, Rhonda. They're volunteers.

AUNT RHONDA

For what? Are you some kind of holiday host family for foreign exchange students?

Miguel gives her the stink eye. Dad breezes in from the kitchen with cocoa and a small plate of cookies.

DAD

It's none of your business, Rhonda. Sit down and shove a cookie in it.

Rhonda makes a very sour face but accepts the cookies and cocoa nonetheless. She looks down at her plate.

AUNT RHONDA

I'd much rather have the petit fours from Bergeron's. I assume they are somewhere here since you cancelled the luncheon.

IMOGEN

Actually, we repurposed the catering.

MIGUEL

But those petit fours were delicious.

AUNT RHONDA

(sarcastic)

I'm certain.

IMOGEN

Aunt Rhonda, I'm so sorry to cut things short, but we were just finishing with these gentlemen when

(MORE)

IMOGEN (CONT'D)  
 you knocked. I have to get my hair and  
 makeup done now.

AUNT RHONDA  
 I see.

Imogen gestures and the girls rise to join her.

TIARA  
 (to Damien)  
 I'll text you when we get the  
 interview up on the website.

DAMIEN  
 Please do.

Imogen takes Tiara and Umi by the elbows and walks backwards  
 out of the room.

IMOGEN  
 Okay, thanks so much guys, that's a  
 wrap! We have your contact info and  
 we'll let you know when we upload the  
 content.

TIARA & UMI  
 Thanks!

IMOGEN  
 (trying to give her sister an out)  
 You coming Bethany?

Bethany looks at Imogen, then at Nick and the guys, innocent  
 bystanders to their family tension.

BETHANY  
 (to Imogen)  
 I'll be right there.  
 (to the guys)  
 Let me walk you out.

51 INT. MOM & DAD'S FOYER - DAY

51

The men put their thick winter coats back on and prepare to  
 leave.

BETHANY  
 Thanks again.

DAMIEN

We're gonna see you soon, right?

BETHANY

Next Saturday! Mason and I will be there!

DAMIEN

Sweet.

MIGUEL

Tell your sister to let me know if her soap opera is ever hiring.

DEVON

What, you just gonna move out to California, like that?

MIGUEL

I got cousins out there! That's what family's for.

They file out as Nick says:

NICK

Dream big, Miguel.

He hangs back as the others leave.

NICK

So what are you gonna do about the cake??

BETHANY

Ugh, call the bakery and pray that someone's still there, and that they have power, and that they answer the phone. But please don't worry about it, you've done enough. It's not your problem.

NICK

Oh it's not? How do you figure?

BETHANY

Excuse me?

NICK

Have I not been the one driving you around all day? You walked to the church this morning. How are you gonna

(MORE)

NICK (CONT'D)

get to the bakery if your car's snowed in?

BETHANY

Good point. And I'm not on Immy's rental car contract so I can't drive that. But I don't want to ask you for anything else; it's getting ridiculous. You might as well join the family!

She laughs at her own joke but he says calmly:

NICK

That wouldn't be the worst.

He closes the door and stays by her side. She smiles, but quickly re-focuses.

BETHANY

Okay. Gameplan. Aunt Rhonda just got here. Maybe I'll take her car to the bakery *and take her with me*, and get her off everyone's hands.

V.O. AUNT RHONDA

Is that so?

They look back to see Rhonda a few paces behind them, en route to the kitchen with an empty cookie plate in one hand and the last bite of gingerbread in the other.

AUNT RHONDA

I'm old but I'm not deaf.

BETHANY

I didn't mean to be rude-

AUNT RHONDA

Now what's this, you need a car?

NICK

She has no need, ma'am. I've just offered to transport her in my truck.

AUNT RHONDA

Good. There's a man with manners. I didn't drive here anyway, I had the Bed and Breakfast owners bring me in their horse-drawn sleigh.



BETHANY

You did??

AUNT RHONDA

Oh yes, I booked it months ago. Right after I cancelled the cruise. It's one of the only pleasant things about this town. Cost a pretty penny to take it across town, but it was worth it.

Bethany and Nick share an incredulous glance.

AUNT RHONDA

(wagging her finger)

So where are you two sneaking off to while the others are getting ready? Don't you need to get dressed? Or are you wearing *that* down the aisle?

BETHANY

I have to get the cake.

52 INT. MOM & DAD'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

52

Bethany makes for the living room telephone with Aunt Rhonda and Nick in tow.

AUNT RHONDA

The cake?? It's not already at the church??

BETHANY

It slipped through the cracks.

AUNT RHONDA

For Heaven's sake! What else could go wrong today?

BETHANY

I wouldn't ask.

Bethany looks through the phone book and finds the number. Nick has a mind to ease the tension.

NICK

(indicating the telephone book)

Ooh, haven't seen one of those in a while.

AUNT RHONDA  
 (judgmental)  
 You haven't seen a telephone book?

NICK  
 No ma'am, not lately. It's funny. A whole generation out there now, not knowing what a telephone book is. Makes you feel like the product of a different time. Kids today know Steve Jobs but do they know Alexander Graham Bell?

Bethany doesn't answer, still waiting for a voice on the other line. Nick looks at Rhonda, gauging her reaction.

AUNT RHONDA  
 I was a telephone operator for twelve years before I moved to New York.

Nick nods with interest as Bethany hangs up in defeat.

BETHANY  
 No answer.

AUNT RHONDA  
 How surprising.

BETHANY  
 They must not have the house number on file, or else I'm sure they would have checked in already. Immy's going to have so many missed calls when she gets back to L.A.

NICK  
 So where are we heading?

BETHANY  
 It might be a pointless waste of time; they must be closed by now.

NICK  
 I know this doesn't help, but it reminds me of something Uncle Jimmy used to say, "Poor planning on your part doesn't constitute an emergency on mine."

Aunt Rhonda laughs, surprising Bethany.

BETHANY

Appropriate, but you're right, it's not helpful. I know a man who *also* once said,  
 (recalling Nick's words from the soup kitchen)  
 "Try not to spend too much time worrying and instead focus on what we *can do*."

AUNT RHONDA

I like the first one better.

NICK

What can we do then? It's almost dark. Everyone's at home. You want to break in and steal a wedding cake?

BETHANY

Don't be silly.  
 (grasping at straws)  
 I'll just call again. Maybe someone's still there cleaning up.  
 (She scans the phone book again for the number)  
 There could be one baker left at Baron's on Christmas Eve. It might even be Mr. Carmichael himself. He's very meticulous. I'm not delusional, right?

NICK

I would never call a woman delusional.

Bethany sticks her tongue out at the jab but Aunt Rhonda looks suddenly intense.

AUNT RHONDA

Did you say Carmichael?

BETHANY

Yeah, Baron Carmicheal. He's gotten really big around here since he won a cooking competition last year.

NICK

Oh, I know about that guy. He won the Southern Estates Culinary Olympics last year.

BETHANY

How did you-

NICK

Damien is *really* into cooking. He put the show on in the kitchen while it was airing.

AUNT RHONDA

Drive me to that bakery, young man, we're going to get that cake.

Nick and Bethany hop to.

53 EXT. BARON'S BAKERY - DUSK

53

Aunt Rhonda, Bethany, and Nick arrive at the bakery. Sure enough, it's dark inside and they can see the outline of an elaborate wedding cake on the front counter, waiting for pickup. Bethany pines at the window.

BETHANY

So close yet so far away!

V.O. AUNT RHONDA

Baron!

Bethany turns to see Aunt Rhonda standing in the middle of the parking lot, looking up at the window of an apartment on top of the bakery. Nick looks surprised. Bethany walks toward her only to see Aunt Rhonda gather up a snowball and hurl it at the window. It strikes the pane. Nick is floored.

BETHANY

Aunt Rhonda!

NICK

Wow, Miss Rhonda, nice aim.

The apartment window shoots open and a seventy year old man peeks out, robed for bed and quite bald.

AUNT RHONDA

Baron!

BARON

Ronnie, is that you?

He scrambles to pull glasses out of his nightshirt pocket. He squints as Rhonda walks forward. Nick and Bethany hang back, giving her space to shine. Bethany is highly intrigued.

RHONDA

It's me, Barry. After all these years.

BARON

I never thought I'd see you again.  
When did you come back from New York?

RHONDA

Yesterday! My niece is getting married  
tonight!

BARON

Tonight?? In all of this??  
(It dawns on him.)  
You must be here for the cake!

54 INT. BARON'S BAKERY - DARK

54

A few minutes later, Baron opens up shop for the guests, now in some presentable clothes and clearly giddy to see Rhonda. Now that he's standing with the group his diminutive stature is glaringly apparent.

BARON

I never thought after fifty years my  
high school sweetheart would be  
throwing snowballs at my window.  
You've still got quite an arm.  
(to Nick and Bethany)  
D'you know that this here spitfire  
could throw a fast ball that'd make  
your head spin?

BETHANY

You played softball Aunt Rhonda?

AUNT RHONDA

(cheerfully modest)  
Oh, that was a lifetime ago. Why  
aren't you on the cruise, Barry?

BARON

Eh, I couldn't leave my employees on  
their own at this time of year, it's  
our busiest season. Plus, I looked at  
the guest list back in May and I saw  
that you weren't going, so.

AUNT RHONDA

Aw, Bar', you still looked for me  
after all this time?

BARON

Every reunion I look for you, Ronnie.  
Heck, I still remember when that lug  
from the football team stole my  
yarmulke-

AUNT RHONDA

Now, don't bore the kids with that old  
yarn.

BARON

Boring? Are you kidding me?

BARON

(to Nick and Bethany)

This lady's my hero. She threw a rock  
so hard it woulda knocked his teeth  
out if he hadn't been wearing his  
helmet.

BETHANY

(faux-scandalized)

Aunt Rhonda!

AUNT RHONDA

Eh, he deserved it. He was a jerk to  
everyone.

BARON

Never picked on us again, though, eh  
Ronnie?

Baron looks at Rhonda with goo-goo eyes. Bethany delights in  
witnessing. Aunt Rhonda seems relaxed and conversational,  
then she sees Bethany's amusement and rolls her eyes.

RHONDA

Alright, you, quit gawking and get the  
cake.

BETHANY

(still grinning)

Yes ma'am.

Bethany and Nick approach the cake. It's a towering spectacle  
of a dessert. As they carry it gingerly to the door, they  
overhear:

BARON

Ya know, I'm very sorry, my delivery  
driver couldn't make it to work today  
(MORE)

BARON (CONT'D)

because there were trees down on his road. I tried to call your niece a number of times this morning, but I kept getting a busy signal.

AUNT RHONDA

(to Baron)

No, don't be sorry. If the cake had been delivered on time, I would never have known you baked it. I would have gone right back to New York, alone.

BARON

But where's your Alfred?

AUNT RHONDA

He passed away, ten years ago now.

BARON

I'm so sorry.

AUNT RHONDA

Thank you.

Bethany and Nick ease out the door into the parking lot.

55 EXT. BARON'S BAKERY - DUSK

55

BETHANY

Wow, something's come over her! I think that's the first time I've ever heard her say 'Thank You.'

NICK

Did you know about these two before now?

BETHANY

No way! She was married to my uncle before I was born and they stayed together until he died. Honestly though, they never seemed very happy. But for all those years, I thought that maybe she just wasn't a happy person by nature. I guess I was wrong.

NICK

Maybe it's never too late to be happy again.

They carefully place the cake in the truck's back seat. Nick's cell phone rings once.

BETHANY

Wow, you have reception out here?

NICK

(looking at his phone)

One lonely bar. Looks like a voicemail.

He listens for a moment. His eyes light up. Bethany waits with bated breath.

NICK

It's Uncle Jimmy. He's back from the deer stand and he's got the part. He says he's on his way to the church.

BETHANY

Yes!!!

She's so ecstatic that she practically leaps into Nick's arms for a big hug. He gladly embraces her, caught up in the enthusiasm of the moment. She pulls back.

BETHANY

We've got to go! There's no time to lose!

They turn to look inside the bakery where Baron and Aunt Rhonda can clearly be seen getting close and cozy.

BETHANY

I almost hate to break them up but Immy will flip if we don't make it back soon.

A ringing from the truck. It's Bethany's phone. She scrambles for it. It's a call from Mom and Dad's house.

56 INT. UMI & TIARA'S ROOM - NIGHT

56

Imogen puts Bethany on speaker while Umi applies her blush and Tiara curls her hair.

IMOGEN

Where the heck are you?? I thought you were right behind us like thirty minutes ago!! You can't go AWOL on me right now, sis! Everything's going

(MORE)



IMOGEN (CONT'D)  
 wrong and I am *freaking out!*

57 EXT. BARON'S BAKERY - CONTINUOUS 57

BETHANY  
 Slow down, did something else happen??

58 INT. UMI & TIARA'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS 58

IMOGEN  
 Hendrix just called and said all their  
 luggage got lost on the way to  
 Shreveport!

V.O. BETHANY  
 Oh no! But at least that means they  
 landed safely, right?

IMOGEN  
 Yeah, but didn't you hear me?? They  
 have *no clothes!*

59 EXT. BARON'S BAKERY - CONTINUOUS 59

BETHANY  
 Well they're not sitting in the  
 airport naked, Imogen.

60 INT. UMI & TIARA'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS 60

Umi and Tiara struggle to accomplish anything as Imogen  
 becomes animated in her fury.

IMOGEN  
 Don't even play with me right now!  
 Where are you??

61 EXT. BARON'S BAKERY - CONTINUOUS 61

BETHANY  
 I'm out getting your cake! And we're  
 about to fix the plumbing too, so  
 wouldja pipe down, princess??

62 INT. UMI & TIARA'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS 62

It's clear Umi and Tiara overheard the chastisement.

IMOGEN  
 (turning on a dime, meek)  
 Oh!

V.O. BETHANY  
 Uh-huh.

Imogen sighs and unclenches. Umi and Tiara resume their work.

IMOGEN  
 You're the best, Bethie.

63 EXT. BARON'S BAKERY - CONTINUOUS 63

BETHANY  
 I know.

64 INT. UMI & TIARA'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS 64

IMOGEN  
 (whiny)  
 What are we going to do about the  
 tuxedos though??

V.O. BETHANY  
 (fed up)  
 I don't know, Immy!

Her shout makes Imogen jump a little, which makes Tiara and Umi jump too.

65 EXT. BARON'S BAKERY - CONTINUOUS 65

BETHANY  
 What's more important to you,  
 formalwear or running water??

V.O. IMOGEN  
 Do I have to choose?

BETHANY  
 Just meet us at the church.

Bethany hangs up and huffs.

NICK  
 Everything okay?

BETHANY  
 All the groomsmen's tuxedos are lost  
 somewhere between Cheyenne and  
 (MORE)

BETHANY (CONT'D)  
Shreveport.

NICK  
Uh-oh.

BETHANY  
Just one more thing Immy will panic  
about that is completely out of our  
control.

NICK  
Does she tend to have trouble with  
things she can't control?

BETHANY  
She does.

NICK  
That'll make life tough.

BETHANY  
Won't it though.

They plod through the snow back to the bakery.

BETHANY  
I learned to give that up after I  
worked at being the perfect wife and  
mother for *ten years* and could never  
manage to be more appealing to my  
husband than the blackjack table.

NICK

They stop at the door. Bethany looks at Nick sincerely.

BETHANY  
If you can't fix that pipe, it doesn't  
matter. Thank you for all your help.

NICK  
Just doing my job.

BETHANY  
Don't be modest. I have no idea what  
we would have done without you. You're  
my family's Christmas Miracle.

NICK

Bethany, I've been watching you all day. You're your family's Christmas Miracle.

He opens the door for her. She looks at him like no one's done that for her in a very long time.

66 INT. BARON'S BAKERY - CONTINUOUS

66

Bethany and Nick return to the counter where Aunt Rhonda and Baron are wooing each other.

BETHANY

I hate to interrupt, but we have to get going. We crossed one thing off the list and got handed two more.

BARON

Do you need help? Keeping that cake secure is a two-man job, believe me. Ronnie, I wouldn't want you to get icing on your coat.

AUNT RHONDA

You're too kind.

BETHANY

You don't have to do that Mr. Carmicheal.

BARON

Please, call me Baron.

BETHANY

Baron, you've been so gracious to open your shop for us after hours on Christmas Eve. We won't take further advantage.

BARON

Take advantage? This is a wonderful surprise! I was settling in to watch reruns and eat leftovers by myself when you showed up. I'd much rather help my Ronnie and her family.

BETHANY

(to Nick)

Can you handle another passenger?

NICK  
The more the merrier.

Rhonda slips her arm around Baron's.

AUNT RHONDA  
Consider him my plus one tonight.

BETHANY  
(timid)  
Aunt Rhonda, I'm not sure Imogen can take any more surprises right now.

AUNT RHONDA  
Young lady, I was raised in Pinewood Church and I paid for all the catering. I know for a fact that there's plenty of room and plenty of food.

NICK  
(lightbulb moment)  
*Catering.* Mr. Baron, I think I know a way you could help us.

BARON  
I'm all ears.

NICK  
Do you have any catering uniforms?

BETHANY  
Oh, great idea! Fancy caterers always have tuxes.

BARON  
Well, my team usually keeps their uniforms at home, but I actually just got a set back from the dry cleaners.

BETHANY  
Could we possibly take a look?? Our groomsmen lost all their luggage.

AUNT RHONDA  
What??

Bethany nods in grim confirmation.

BARON  
Of course, but I have to warn you,  
(MORE)

BARON (CONT'D)  
 they're not your standard James Bond  
 tuxedo. They were special made.

BETHANY  
 We'll take what we can get.

67 INT. BAKERY STORAGE CLOSET POV - NIGHT

67

Baron opens a closet door and Bethany steps forward to  
 scrutinize a suit we cannot see.

BETHANY  
 Actually, in a weird way, they're  
 perfect.

NICK  
 And even if they aren't, they're the  
 best you're gonna get on short notice.

BARON  
 They were custom made for the Yuletide  
 Jubilee. Nearly outshone the h'ors  
 d'ouvres and that's saying something.

BETHANY  
 I don't know all their suit sizes. Do  
 you mind if I take extras so they have  
 something to choose from?

BARON  
 Take 'em all.

She reaches in to scoop them up.

68 INT. NICK'S TRUCK - NIGHT

68

All four ride back to town in the truck. Nick drives as  
 Bethany holds all the suits, still obscured by the dry  
 cleaner's plastic wrap. Baron and Rhonda are nestled in the  
 back, securing the cake.

BETHANY  
 You got it back there?

BARON  
 I could do this in my sleep.

BETHANY  
 Alright, but no canoodling. We need  
 all hands on cake.

AUNT RHONDA

Who are you, our school chaperone?

BARON

Where's the mistletoe when you need it, eh Ronnie?

NICK

(to Bethany)

Teenagers, am I right?

Bethany shakes her head in pretend exasperation.

69 EXT. CHURCH - NIGHT

69

Nick's truck rolls up to the church. Jimmy's truck with attached flat bed trailer and the bridesmaids' rental car is already there. Jimmy is waiting at the door.

70 INT. NICK'S TRUCK - NIGHT

70

NICK

Let me go get the lights on so you can see where to put that thing. Stay here where it's warm.

He exits the cab and grabs the generator from the back, then strides over to meet Jimmy.

AUNT RHONDA

I don't think I ever saw Mason's father lift a finger to help you with anything. This one's quite the catch, Bethie. And you look good together.

BARON

Nothing like a happy couple at Christmas.

AUNT RHONDA

Indeed.

BETHANY

Oh, we're not a couple, Aunt Rhonda.

BARON

Oh?

AUNT RHONDA

(knowingly)

Not yet, maybe.

BETHANY

Well, after the way things went with Henry, I'm in no rush.

AUNT RHONDA

Oh *pshaw*. I've only spent a few hours with him and I can already tell he's nothing at all like Henry. Don't make him pay for another man's mistakes.

Bethany raises her eyebrows at the frank advice.

BETHANY

Alright. Point taken.

Bethany looks in her rearview mirror to see Rhonda and Barry holding hands around the cake box.

BETHANY

Since we're being so straightforward, may I ask you two a question?

BARON

Certainly.

AUNT RHONDA

Go ahead.

BETHANY

Why did you two wait all these years to be together now? Why didn't you stay together after high school?

Baron and Rhonda share the bittersweet smiles of a mutually remembered history.

BARON

(to Rhonda)

I'll let you tell it.

BETHANY

Things were different when we were growing up, Bethany. People were not so accepting of others', well, differences. Your sister marrying Hendrix, it would have never happened then. People didn't mix cultures, and my parents didn't approve of marriage between religions.



BARON

And of course, I'm Jewish.

AUNT RHONDA

It's a long story, but they kept us from being together in every way they could. Eventually, we stopped trying to fight them.

BARON

And it wasn't just her family. My parents also wanted me to marry a Jewish girl, and I wanted to marry Ronnie, so we compromised: I remained an old bachelor.

BETHANY

I was so disappointed in myself for giving in.

BARON

Hush, they didn't give you a choice.  
(to Bethany)  
They threatened to disown her. They were serious about it too.

AUNT RHONDA

They were. And so I tried to move on and forget. And eventually life moved on. Except I never forgot.

BARON

Me neither.

AUNT RHONDA

And when you said his name tonight, it was the first time I had heard it out loud in years, and it all came rushing back.

BARON

And you came running for me, 'cause *I still got it*.

They laugh.

BETHANY

Wow, that's incredible. I guess it's true then.

AUNT RHONDA  
What's that?

BETHANY  
It's never too late.

71 EXT. CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

71

The LIGHTS come on at the church. Everyone in Nick's truck lets out little 'aahs' of relieved cheer. At the same time, even louder hoots erupt from the bridesmaids' car; Bethany looks through the truck window to see Imogen, Tiara, and Umi high fiving each other.

Bethany gets out of the truck and opens the door for Baron and Aunt Rhonda. She spots and steadies them.

BETHANY  
Careful, watch your step.

They stick the landing.

AUNT RHONDA  
We'll take it from here, honey. Snow or no snow, I know this place like the back of my hand. Go help your sister.

BETHANY  
Okay. Take your time! Don't slip! It's easier than you think, trust me.

She dashes off as behind her, Baron says:

BARON  
Let's get inside where we can be alone.

AUNT RHONDA  
Oh, Barry, you scoundrel.

Bethany joins the others at the bridesmaids' car where they are daintily stepping into the snow. Bethany is the only one not already in her dress.

BETHANY  
Let me give you a hand!

IMOGEN  
There she is! We've got your dress.

BETHANY  
 (scooping up Imogen's train)  
 I've got *your* dress.

IMOGEN  
 Thank you!

Imogen leads the way up to the church with Bethany behind her, carrying her train in one hand and her own dress in the other. Tiara and Umi struggle to protect their own dresses from the snow while carrying their bouquets.

72 INT. SANCTUARY FOYER - NIGHT

72

The women stand in front of the closed front doors to the sanctuary.

BETHANY  
 Moment of truth.

She opens the doors so Imogen and the girls can step inside.

73 INT. SANCTUARY - CONTINUOUS

73

Imogen stares all around, silently taking in the scene. Umi quietly photographs the moment.

BETHANY  
 So?

IMOGEN  
 It's perfect. Thank you, sister.

BETHANY  
 You're welcome, sister.

They hug. While they do, Imogen starts to wiggle and practically dance with childlike excitement.

IMOGEN  
 Now go, go, go! Get ready! Somebody help her with hair and makeup!

Umi and Tiara spring into action but Bethany declines.

BETHANY  
 Don't worry. I can do it myself in ten minutes. Mom skills.

The girls look to Imogen for confirmation.

IMOGEN

Fine, just go! Hendrix and the guys  
should be here in half an hour!

Bethany runs down the hall but stops halfway.

BETHANY

Oh! Just so you know! That man you saw  
helping Aunt Rhonda carry the cake-

UMI

Is *the actual* Baron Carmichael!

TIARA

Who?

UMI

I read his cooking blog! He does  
gluten-free, sugar-free, fat-free,  
substitute recipes once a week and has  
like a million followers since he won  
the Culinary Olympics.

TIARA

(to Imogen)

That's called star treatment, baby;  
you're getting the *owner* of a famous  
bakery to hand deliver your cake.

BETHANY

Yes, that!

(sliding it in)

Also, he's apparently the love of Aunt  
Rhonda's life and is coming with her  
to the wedding!

Tiara and Umi's jaws drop. Imogen breathes deep and then  
shrugs it off, uncharacteristically.

IMOGEN

(shaking her head)

The more the merrier. Now go!

Bethany goes. Behind her, Umi carries on.

UMI

We've *got* to get a selfie with him.  
Think of the free publicity.

74 INT. CHURCH BATHROOM - NIGHT

74

Bethany stands at the bathroom mirror, now sporting a simple yet elegant updo and a surprisingly flattering, festively colored gown, and puts the finishing touches on her makeup. She applies mascara but before it has time to dry, she feels a sneeze coming on. She tries to stave it off but she can't.

BETHANY

A-CHOO!

Now she's got racoon eyes.

BETHANY

Perfect.

She grabs some tissue paper and adds a little hand soap. She turns the knob on the sink. The water flows!

BETHANY

Yes!!

She rushes to quickly fix her makeup and get on with the show.

75 INT. CHURCH HALLWAY - NIGHT

75

JIMMY and Nick walk down the hall toward the front door. Jimmy is still dressed in his full hunting camouflage.

NICK

You're a life saver, Uncle Jim.

JIMMY

No problem. You sure you don't wanna come over? Cold night like this, that deer stew is gonna hit the spot!

Bethany runs up in her full regalia.

BETHANY

You fixed it! You're my heroes! Thank you so much!

JIMMY

Well, look at you, little lady! Mind you don't outshine the bride.

Nick looks gobsmacked.

BETHANY

Aww, what would we do without you, Mr. Jimmy?

JIMMY

(with a chuckle)

I couldn't tell ya, but the way my nephew is looking at you, I'd say he's got a few ideas.

NICK

(joking)

Get outta here, you old dog. Can't take you anywhere.

JIMMY

Ha! I did what I came to do. See you in the morning, Nick! Merry Christmas, Bethany!

BETHANY

Merry Christmas, Mr. Jimmy!

He mosies out. Nick and Bethany share a pleasantly tense moment as the door swings shut and they are left alone in the foyer.

NICK

You do look beautiful.

BETHANY

(sincere)

Thank you.

NICK

How'd you do that so fast? I thought we drove here from the bakery but you look like you just stepped off the red carpet.

BETHANY

Oh, this is nothing. You should have seen me back in the day when I could do it left-handed with a baby under one arm in the same amount of time.

NICK

That *is* impressive. You're an impressive woman, Bethany Hedges.

BETHANY  
 (softly; touched)  
 Thank you.

She's working out what to say next when the phone rings in the Pastor's Office down the hall.

NICK  
 Think that's for you?

BETHANY  
 With the way things have been going, probably. Are you leaving??

*Ring!*

NICK  
 Well, I-

BETHANY  
 What am I saying, of course you are, you've been working all day! I'm sorry things got so crazy!

*Ring!*

NICK  
 It's okay. I-

But Bethany is already sprinting down the hall. She calls back:

BETHANY  
 I'll see you Saturday, right??

NICK  
 (with a smile that hides his disappointment)  
 Right.

He turns and walks out the door.

76 INT. CHURCH OFFICE - NIGHT

76

Bethany frantically grabs the phone and practically yells:

BETHANY  
 Pinewood Church!

V.O. HENDRIX  
 Bethany?

BETHANY

Hendrix! Is everything okay??

V.O. HENDRIX

We need your help.

77 EXT. CHURCH - NIGHT

77

Nick strolls out into the churchyard, past the toppled snowman from the morning. He sees it illuminated through the church windows and smiles to himself. He looks out into the parking lot and sees that Jimmy's truck is still there as is a new vehicle. Jimmy is still holding his tools and standing in the snow talking to Bethany's Mom and Dad, who are all dressed up for the evening in stark contrast to Jim's full body camo. Mason is there too, under the arm of Dad, who is trying to stop him from hopping around in the snow and ruining his pants.

JIMMY

Hey! You never answered my question about the deer stew!

MOM

We were just telling your uncle that you've been such a blessing to us today and we hope to see more of you!

DAD

Maybe consider going full time with your uncle, eh Nick? You two really take care of business.

JIMMY

He's a good kid.

(off Nick's look)

Sorry, I mean *man*. But I brag on him all the time, I do.

NICK

(sly)

Yeah, too much. I'm starting to get a reputation. You'll have to tell 'em the truth, Mason. You didn't have a lick of fun at my house, did ya? Tell 'em how terrible it was.

MASON

It was awesome! I fed a goat a G.I. Joe!



NICK

Yeah, that wasn't supposed to happen.

Chortles all around.

DAD

Thanks again.

MOM

We appreciate it.

Dad shakes Jimmy's hand, then Nick's.

NICK

I enjoyed meeting y'all. And your sister Rhonda too!

MOM

Oh now *there's* a charmer.

DAD

You shouldn't lie on Christmas Eve, son. There's still time to be put on the Naughty List.

NICK

No, really, she's a hoot. And I think when you go inside you'll find she's feeling very *merry*.

MOM

(laughing, but not derisive)  
Rhonda? Merry?? Wouldn't *that* be a miracle!

Mom takes Dad's arm unoccupied by Mason and they all walk toward the church.

MOM

(to Dad)  
I like him; he's funny.

Jimmy throws his tools into the back. When the couple is out of earshot he says:

JIMMY

It ain't bad to be in their good graces, kid. I dunno if you heard but their daughter that's getting married tonight is a big Hollywood director. Can be good to have friends in high

(MORE)

JIMMY (CONT'D)  
places if you ever need a favor.

Nick digests his uncle's words as he watches Mom and Dad approach the front door of the church. Before they can make it within arm's reach, though, it bursts open.

BETHANY  
Nick! Wait!

Bethany zooms out with a dangerous slide on her heels which almost sends her careening into the snow. Mason cackles.

MOM  
What's wrong Bethie??

Bethany doesn't stop trotting, as carefully and quickly as possible, over to Nick and Jimmy, bunching her dress up around her knees as she goes, so she can keep it out of the snow.

BETHANY  
Go inside and get warm! Nick! Please don't leave!

She skids to a halt beside them.

BETHANY  
I'm so, so sorry, but I need your help one more time. The groom's rental car broke down. He and his cousins are stuck on the side of the highway.

Nick eyes Jimmy and his flat bed trailer.

JIMMY  
I've gotcha covered, as long as they don't mind a little deer hair.

78 INT. CHURCH OFFICE - NIGHT

78

Imogen paces the office while Tiara lines up the bouquets on a desk for easy access and Umi takes selfies. Bethany enters.

BETHANY  
(bracingly)  
So, as expected, we're not a full house because of the weather. But plenty of folks still showed up. Turns out we know more people with giant trucks than I realized.

TIARA  
Unexpected positive side effect of  
living out in the woods.

IMOGEN  
Are they getting antsy yet?

BETHANY  
Not as antsy as you! *Deep breaths.*

She demonstrates. Everyone else imitates. Then a HONK  
disturbs their zen. Imogen jumps and squeals.

IMOGEN  
It's got to be them!

BETHANY  
I'll go see!

79 INT. CHURCH HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

79

Bethany dashes down the hall toward the front door as an  
ELDERLY COUPLE who have just arrived totter toward the  
sanctuary. They see her coming and greet her:

OLD LADY  
Hello Bethany!

BETHANY  
(polite even while running)  
Hello Mrs. Guidry!

OLD MAN  
You're looking lovely!

She zooms by them.

BETHANY  
Thank you Mr. Guidry!

She makes it to the door and swings it wide open.

80 EXT. CHURCH - NIGHT

80

The boys have arrived! Jimmy's truck is back in the parking  
lot with the rental car strapped to the trailer and GROOMSMEN  
popping out of the cab like clowns at a circus. Bethany waves  
them in like a frantic stage manager. They run in formation  
up to the door and file in.

BETHANY

Straight down the hall! Your suits are  
in the Choir Room!

Hendrix brings up the rear and stops to greet Bethany. He's a casual dreamboat with a head full of raven curls. A telenovela hunk who needs no vaseline on the lens.

HENDRIX

Thanks for orchestrating our rescue,  
and for getting us clothes.

BETHANY

Don't thank me until you see them. Now  
get in there! The bride is waiting!

He runs inside. Bethany looks out at the parking lot and sees Nick getting out of Jimmy's truck and returning to his own. He looks back up at Bethany and waves.

NICK

Merry Christmas!

BETHANY

Merry Christmas!

He opens his door and steps a foot in. Bethany looks torn.

BETHANY

(to herself)

*It's never too late.*

She gathers her hems.

BETHANY

Wait!

She beelines for Nick's truck. Nick turns around and sees her coming.

BETHANY

Nick! Wait!

NICK

You wait! You'll ruin your shoes.

BETHANY

It doesn't matter!

NICK

I'll come to you!

He meets her halfway. They stand in the snow.

BETHANY

Everything went wrong today and I still had an amazing time with you.

NICK

I did too.

BETHANY

I want to ask you something and it's probably weird, or the last thing in the world you'd want after being together all day, and I'm already making it really awkward and-

NICK

Just say it before you freeze to death!

BETHANY

Would you like to be my date to my sister's wedding?

NICK

I'd love to.

Bethany sighs with relief.

NICK

Are you sure you want to be seen with me, though? I'm a little underdressed.

BETHANY

Well, without your help today there would be no wedding, which makes you basically an honorary groomsman if you think about it-

NICK

I know what you're thinking and I don't like it.

BETHANY

Well, if you're worried about being underdressed, it's the only thing that makes sense.

Nick looks at her and shakes his head.

NICK  
 (accepting his fate)  
 I must really like you or something.

Bethany beams and takes his hand.

BETHANY  
 Come on, they're all in the Choir  
 Room.

They tromp through the snow back inside.

81 INT. SANCTUARY - NIGHT

81

It's showtime! Hendrix and the Pastor are waiting at the altar. Music plays and Bethany and GROOMSMAN 1 proceed in. Hendrix and all the groomsmen are wearing absolutely garish red, green, and gold tail suits with glittering cumberbunds and bowties. Guests smile and crane their necks to see.

Bethany reaches her place front and center and turns to face the crowd: she sees her Mom smiling benignly on the front row, and right behind her in the second pew is Nick, wearing the same garish tuxedo as all the other groomsmen. He pops his lapels with fake cockiness. Bethany laughs.

The other members of the bridal party take their places and now it's time for Imogen to shine: she enters on her Dad's arm looking like a vision of wintery loveliness and practically floats to the altar. When she joins Hendrix she's nearly sobbing with joy and relief. In hushed whispers, just before the ceremony begins, she confesses:

IMOGEN  
 Pookie, I thought you'd never make it!

HENDRIX  
 You have to have faith, my love.  
 Little miracles happen every day. I  
 should know, I'm marrying one.

IMOGEN  
 Hey, you're not allowed to woo me with  
 lines from a soap opera that *I direct*.

HENDRIX  
 I'm just reminding you of what you  
 already knew, like the fact that I  
 would have showed up for our wedding  
 tonight even if I woke up this morning  
 in the belly of a whale.



BETHANY

I think you look surprisingly handsome.

NICK

Well, in that case, may I have this dance?

BETHANY

You may!

Bethany and Nick reach the dance floor; there, they see three strange new figures in holiday-themed tuxedos that weren't present at the ceremony. It's the Soup Kitchen crew! Damien and Miguel are dancing with Umi and Tiara; Devon is break dancing with Mason.

NICK

Hey! Who let you in here? This is a classy affair.

DAMIEN

We could ask you the same thing, but it looks like they've already punished you by putting you in that clown suit.

NICK

Excuse me, I believe we're wearing the same suit.

DAMIEN

Yeah but it looks good on me.

TIARA

(confessing to Bethany)

I couldn't help myself. When Umi told me who Baron Carmicheal was, I called Damien and invited him to the reception, because we had talked about how much he loved watching the Southern Culinary Olympics.

DAMIEN

(indicating Devon and Miguel)

And these two tag-alongs were chillin' at my house eating some of my famous apple pie when you called, so we all decided to roll out and help y'all celebrate.

Baron and Aunt Rhonda waltz by and smile at Nick and Bethany.



Damien is starstruck.

DAMIEN

That was him, you guys! That was him!  
 (to himself)  
 He looks so much taller on T.V.!

TIARA

Let's dance over and get a picture.

DAMIEN

Do you think he'd say yes? That would  
 be so neat.  
 (gasping with sudden inspiration)  
 What if he'd let me share a recipe on  
 his blog?? I could give a shout out to  
 the Kitchen!

TIARA

That's genius!

They dance off.

MIGUEL

Apparently I need to dance off some  
 apple pie to make room for this  
 legendary cake.

UMI

(with a competitive spark in her  
 eye)  
 Did you say *Dance-off*?

MIGUEL

You're on. Devon's just a warm-up act  
 compared to me.

UMI

We'll see about that. I do Zumba three  
 times a week.

They bounce off into the crowd too. Nick and Bethany begin to  
 dance.

NICK

Everybody's having a great time. You  
 really pulled this thing off.

BETHANY

We did. And for what it's worth, I'm  
 not used to having someone to help me.  
 (MORE)

BETHANY (CONT'D)

It was-

NICK

Not the worst, right?

BETHANY

Definitely not the worst.

NICK

Would you say it's something you could see yourself getting used to?

BETHANY

(coy)

I think that I could.

NICK

Then I think I'd like that very much.

BETHANY

Really? After spending the whole day in the eye of the hurricane?

NICK

Oh yeah, I don't scare that easy. I'd like to stick around and help you with all sorts of things.

BETHANY

Do tell.

NICK

Animals, kids, family, you name it. In fact I'd like to apply for the full time position, if it's available.

BETHANY

As it so happens, *it is*.

NICK

How about that!

BETHANY

I've assessed your qualifications and I'm prepared to offer you the job, but there's just this one requirement. It may not be your style, though. It's kind of *old* and *traditional*.

NICK

Oh yeah? What's that?

Bethany points up. It seems that they have swayed to the center of the dance floor and are now standing underneath a very specific ornamental garland:

BETHANY

Kiss me under the mistletoe.

And he certainly does.

THE END.