

# **A MAGICAL MISTLETOE CHRISTMAS**

written by

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ACT ONE

EXT. FILM STUDIO - DAY

Establishing shot of a sprawling Hollywood studio lot.

Sparkling glass office buildings. Massive sound stages. A water tower wrapped with a colossal red bow and a gigantic banner: "MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM TRIMAX PICTURES."

INT. AUDITION WAITING AREA - DAY

MACKENZIE SNOWE (30), a focused, self-driven dreamer is escorted from a small audition room by smug, prematurely bald television producer CAL BENNINGTON (40s).

A sign reads: "TRISH OUT OF WATER AUDITIONS." Bennington flashes a superficial Hollywood smile.

BENNINGTON

Mackenzie, you are going to make the perfect Trish!

MACKENZIE

I can't wait to start, Mr. Bennington!

BENNINGTON

Cal! Please. You're a star now.

Bennington glances at his pretentious, diamond-studded watch.

BENNINGTON (CONT'D)

But I do have my next meeting in five so--

MACKENZIE

No worries. I'm headed home to rehearse my sides right now!

BENNINGTON

I knew I was going to love working with you! Be here tomorrow, seven A.M. sharp for the table read.

MACKENZIE

You can count on it!

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - NEXT DAY

Mackenzie enters a tiny room packed with actors, writers, and producers there for the table read.

Bennington motions for everyone to sit. Mackenzie takes a chair behind the name card: MACKENZIE SNOWE (TRISH).

BENNINGTON

Mackenzie, why don't you start us off at Trish and Sam's meet cute scene in Manhattan.

Mackenzie nods and recites the lines for her character Trish.

MACKENZIE

This city's just so big! So different from what I'm used to.

Another actor, NATHAN STONE (30s), a cocksure, wannabe-sophisticate delivers lines for the character Sam.

NATHAN

(vainly)

Different, as in no pigs and cows wandering the streets?

MACKENZIE

NO! You big city folks think small towns are just giant barnyards filled with hicks and hayseeds.

NATHAN

And you small towners think big cities are full of crime and squalor. So, I guess we're even.

MACKENZIE

(frustrated)

I'm sorry. It's just that since I moved here, I feel like a big 'ole fish out of water.

NATHAN

You mean a *Trish* out of water.

MACKENZIE

What?

NATHAN

Your name. Trish. So, you're a *Trish* out of water.

MACKENZIE

Now who's the corny one? Me, the  
cute girl from Sandy Creek or you,  
the pompous wiseguy from Manhattan?

The line gets a big LAUGH. Just then, Mackenzie's cell  
VIBRATES. She reads the text from her sister, Noelle.

NOELLE: "Sis, call me. It's URGENT! About Mom."

Mackenzie's eyes widen. Embarrassed but concerned, she  
displays her cell to the others.

MACKENZIE (CONT'D)

I need to take this. I'm sorry.

Mackenzie jumps from her chair. Races out the door. Nathan  
mumbles what others at the table are thinking.

NATHAN

Didn't take her long to become a  
prima donna.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Mackenzie finds a quiet corner and calls her sister.

INT. THE STARDUST - DAY

A charming vintage movie theater in need of renovation.

NOELLE SNOWE (25), snarky and playful, rolls down the aisle  
on her customized mobility scooter. She uses a grabber-claw  
to retrieve empty popcorn boxes and soda cups. When her cell  
chimes, she sees the caller ID and answers.

NOELLE

Mackie, sorry, I know you're just  
starting the new job, but-- Oh,  
Congrats by the way!

INTERCUT PHONE CONVERSATION

MACKENZIE

Thanks. Is mom okay?

NOELLE

Yes, but she's too proud to tell  
you, so I will. The finance company  
says she's going to default on the  
theater mortgage.

MACKENZIE

When?

NOELLE

You'll love this. The twenty-fifth. Christmas Day. Straight from "It's a Wonderful Life."

MACKENZIE

What happened? She's always taken pride in paying bills on time.

NOELLE

The Gynches happened.

MACKENZIE

What's a Gynches?

NOELLE

Don and Dawn Gynch. Owners of the finance company. Also, the largest commercial developers in town.

MACKENZIE

I thought Dad's banker friend, Arthur, was the lender.

NOELLE

The Gynches bought him out with an offer he couldn't refuse. And when mom applied for a second mortgage, they hid some legalese.

MACKENZIE

Didn't she read the contract?

NOELLE

Not until after she'd signed on the dotted line.

MACKENZIE

(sighs)  
Oh, no.

NOELLE

Oh, yes.

MACKENZIE

Well, what can I do from here, sis?

NOELLE

Nothing... from there.

A beat.

NOELE

I was hoping you'd come home. Just until we can figure a way to solve this. You know, like a family does.

Mackenzie hangs her head and turns to face the corner.

MACKENZIE

I don't see how I can right now, sis. We start shooting soon and--

NOELLE

I get it. If I was in your place, I'd probably say no too.

MACKENZIE

It's not that I don't want to.

NOELLE

I know.

(beat)

We're all really proud of you, Mackie! Work hard and get famous! Love you.

Noelle abruptly hangs up and cups her hands over her eyes.

Mackenzie gazes at her cell before stashing it in her pocket and trudging back to the table read.

INT. MACKENZIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

On a second-hand chaise in her living room, Mackenzie practices her sides. She sees a photo album titled "SNOWE FAMILY CHRISTMAS MEMORIES" and begins to flip through it.

SERIES OF SHOTS

Mackenzie smiles at a photo of Noelle and her as little girls sledding down a snow-covered hill.

She LAUGHS at one of the Snowe family--including her dad GENE SNOWE in a Santa suit--opening presents on Christmas morning.

She pauses on a particularly special photo--seven-year-old Mackenzie on The Stardust stage putting on an acting show for the sole audience member, her proud dad.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE STARDUST - STAGE - FLASHBACK

Mackenzie peers up at the tiny window slot of the projection room high on the back wall. Gene peeks out and SHOUTS to her.

GENE

Ready to roll, sweetie?

Mackenzie shoots her father a big thumbs up. He nods and ducks back into the projection room.

Suddenly the red velvet curtains SLIDE OPEN behind Mackenzie to reveal a huge stage-to-ceiling movie screen.

The WHIR of the film projector permeates the silence, and a bright light explodes from the window.

Mackenzie spins around to see Jimmy Stewart behind her on screen. She turns back around to face her dad and performs along with Jimmy as the character George Bailey. She really sinks her heart and soul into the scene.

MACKENZIE

Father in heaven, I'm not a praying man, but if you're up there and you can hear me--

She SOBS, reaches her hand in the air, and really hams it up.

MACKENZIE (CONT'D)

PLEASE, SHOW ME THE WAY!

She drops to the stage and continues to weep. The film stops. The house lights return. Her dad peeks his head out of the projection window. He blows his nose and wipes away tears.

GENE

That gets me every time. Mark my words, Mackie, one day--

Gene pauses to blow his nose again.

GENE (CONT'D)

One day, you're going to be a big Hollywood star.

Mackenzie bows for her audience of one.

MACKENZIE

Thanks Dad.

GENE

It's going to happen! Believe me. I'm your--

MACKENZIE  
Biggest fan. I know Dad!

GENE  
Just sayin.

RETURN TO PRESENT

INT. MACKENZIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Mackenzie drops the photo book on the chaise, snatches her cellphone, and makes a call. A proud, determined smile envelops her face.

MACKENZIE  
Noelle?!

NOELLE (O.S.)  
Mackie?

MACKENZIE  
I'll be there tomorrow. You're right. We do need to resolve Mom's situation. Just like a family does.

EXT. AIRPORT - NEXT DAY

In light snowfall, a commercial airliner touches down and rolls to the gate. A sign reads: "WELCOME TO MINNEAPOLIS-ST. PAUL INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT."

INT. AIRPORT COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Mackenzie marks up her TV script with a yellow highlighter as she waits in line for morning coffee. Beside her is the half-awake, typically unflappable ETHAN HART (late 30s) flipping through an armload of business documents.

Suddenly Mackenzie's highlighter slips from her hands. When she bends down to pick it up, she bumps Ethan. In turn, he drops his latte. The spilt coffee soaks every document in his hands. And the script in Mackenzie's.

ETHAN  
MY COURT DOCKET!

MACKENZIE  
MY SCRIPT!

The two strangers shoot laser stares at each other, their nostrils flared, jaws clinched. Then something occurs to quell the initial fury... their eyes meet.



They step back and smile ever so slightly. In that instance, if only for a second, there's a spark between them. And then, they catch themselves and return to reality.

ETHAN (CONT'D)  
I am so sorry!

MACKENZIE (CONT'D)  
I am so sorry!

They both LAUGH.

Mackenzie grabs napkins, offers some to Ethan, and they both attempt to salvage the coffee-stained documents.

ETHAN (CONT'D)  
It was just an accident. Wrong place, wrong time.

MACKENZIE  
Right. I can reprint my script.

ETHAN  
And I've got all my stuff online. So, no harm, no foul.

MACKENZIE  
Are you a basketball coach or--

ETHAN  
(chuckles)  
No, nothing that socially respectable. An attorney. You?

MACKENZIE  
Aspiring actor.

ETHAN  
Nice! That's way more chic than deeds, divorces, and disclaimers.

The BARISTA slides Mackenzie her coffee. She takes it, smiles at Ethan, and stashes the soiled script into her carry-on.

MACKENZIE  
Again, sorry for the accident.

She removes a ten-dollar bill from her purse and offers it.

MACKENZIE (CONT'D)  
I feel bad. Your next one's on me.

Ethan shakes his head, raises his palm.

ETHAN  
No, I'll write it off as a business expense. Accidental coffee spill.

MACKENZIE  
 (smiles)  
 Okay. Well, Merry Christmas--

ETHAN  
 Ethan.

MACKENZIE  
 Ethan.

ETHAN  
 And Merry Christmas to you--

MACKENZIE  
 Mackenzie.

ETHAN  
 Mackenzie.

They exchange smiles and go on their way, both feeling that something magical just occurred. They aren't wrong.

EXT. MINNESOTA BACKROADS - DAY

As fun holiday music plays in the background, an establishing shot highlights the vast, snowy meadows and farmlands of the North Star State. It's clear we're in a winter wonderland.

A compact car rolls down the blacktop two-lane road as gusts of snow whirl in the sky above.

EXT. MISTLETOE - DAY

The compact car rolls past a sign: "WELCOME TO MISTLETOE, MINNESTOTA." Mackenzie's hometown is a friendly, one-stoplight village of average, everyday Americans going about their simple lives--work, play, school, and *Christmas*.

Mistletoe's snow-dusted main street--aptly named *Main Street*--showcases twinkling snowflake-shaped lights and festive ornaments, pine wreaths on ribbon-wrapped streetlamps, and sidewalks lined with red poinsettias.

In the center of town beside the county courthouse, LOCALS install kiosks, holiday games, retail booths, and clear a spot for the town Christmas tree. A large banner reveals the reason why: "MISTLETOE CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL."

The compact car parks in front of a small brick building with an illuminated, flashing blade: "THE STARDUST." In block letters, the marquee reads: "MERRY CHRISTMAS MISTLETOE!"

Mackenzie steps from the car and CHUCKLES at the over-the-top decorative affair her mom and sister have installed.

Multiple strands of Christmas lights, garland, ribbons, wreaths, a Nutcracker, and a Santa and Rudolph. And that's just the outside of the theater.

Mackenzie grabs a poinsettia from the car and strides inside.

INT. THE STARDUST - DAY

A bell CLANGS above the front door to announce Mackenzie's arrival. She sees the theater lobby is just as decked out as the outside: A giant Christmas tree, classic Christmas movie posters, red ribbons, candles, white pinecones, fake snow.

A female voice calls out from the theater office.

VOICE (O.S.)

Sorry, but tonight's movie doesn't start 'til seven-

Mackenzie's mom, SUSAN SNOWE (60s), a nurturing, multi-tasking, All-American Mom, emerges. At the sight of Mackenzie, her eyes widen, and a smile engulfs her face.

MACKENZIE

Hope the fire marshal doesn't drop by mom. He might shut you down!

Susan and Mackenzie rush to each other for a big hug.

SUSAN

Mackie! I thought you weren't coming home for Christmas!

MACKENZIE

Noelle didn't tell you?

SUSAN

No, but you know her. She probably wanted it to be a surprise. Which it is. A wonderful one!

MACKENZIE

She convinced me to come home and help figure out your loan problem.

SUSAN

What about your new TV show?

MACKENZIE

I told the producer I had an important family matter to take care of. So, it should be okay.

Mackenzie scans the lobby crammed with poinsettias--white, red, green, mixed color. She glances at her own.

MACKENZIE (CONT'D)

Appears I'm a bit late with this.

Mackenzie's hands the poinsettia to her mom. She finds a place for it among the others covering the lobby floor.

SUSAN

There's always room for one more of my favorite Christmas flowers!

MACKENZIE

You're really something, you know that, mom?

SUSAN

I have my moments.

Mackenzie drapes an arm around her mother's shoulder.

MACKENZIE

How 'bout you take a break, and we catch up over that high-octane fuel Pam calls coffee.

SUSAN

Done. I'll text Noelle and ask her to meet us.

Mother and daughter stroll happily out the front door.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Table read, Day Two. The room's jam-packed with creatives. There is one empty seat, though. The one behind the name card: MACKENZIE SNOWE (TRISH). Nathan notices.

NATHAN

(to Bennington)

The prima donna call in sick?

Bennington smirks and shakes his head.

BENNINGTON

Said she needed a few days to resolve a family problem back home.

NATHAN  
Back in Hicksville, USA?

BENNINGTON  
Why don't you just worry about your  
own role.

Bennington motions for everyone to take their seats. He turns to an actress named CHLOE (mid 20s) seated across the table.

BENNINGTON (CONT'D)  
Chloe, could you read the Trish  
lines for us today, please?

Nathan fakes a cough and shakes his head with disbelief.

EXT. PAM AND EGGS DINER - DAY

Establishing shot of a tiny eatery with hand lettering on the front window: "PAM AND EGGS, BREAKFAST ALL DAY."

INT. PAM AND EGGS DINER - CONTINUOUS

Mistletoe's sole restaurant is a ten-stool, four booth, fifties-style diner. For this Christmas season, it's dressed up with peppermint candy canes, silver bells, multi-colored lights and mistletoe hanging above every doorway.

The crusty, seventy-two-year-old owner, PAM SAMUELS, greets Susan and Mackenzie.

PAM  
Well, looka here, there is a Santa  
Claus! Susie, is that your daughter  
Mackinzie or am I having a holiday  
hallucination?

The other CUSTOMERS spin around on their stools and peer up from the booths to check out the hubbub.

SUSAN  
It is she in the flesh. Fresh in  
from Hollywood, California.

This being a small diner in a small town, the customers CHIME IN with SHOUTS of "Hi Mackie."

MACKENZIE  
(blushing)  
Hi, everyone. Hi, Ms. Pam.

Pam hugs Mackenzie and motions her and her mother to a corner booth. Two regulars, OLD GUYS in red and black plaid winter coats, look up from their coffees and smile. Pam promptly kicks them out of the booth.

PAM

Move over to the counter, boys. We got us Mistletoe royalty here.

The old men scramble to the counter, making sure they take their personalized porcelain coffee cups with them.

MACKENZIE

(to the two men)  
Thanks fellas!

SUSAN

Pam, can we get two coffees? Oh, and a slice of Christmas cherry pie with two forks.

Just then, Mackenzie's younger sister, Noelle, appears.

NOELLE

Make that three cups and three forks, Ms. Pam.

The three women hug and make room for Noelle.

NOELLE (CONT'D)

The Three Amigos--reunited!

MACKENZIE

Wherever there is injustice you will find us!

They LAUGH. Pam brings their coffees, pie, and three forks.

NOELLE

I can only stay for a bit. My boss has a client coming and he wants me to sit in and take notes.

MACKENZIE

Aren't you working with mom at the theater anymore?

NOELLE

I am but I have another gig with a lawyer in town. Actually, the *only* lawyer in town. I'm studying to be a paralegal and he lets me work part time in his office.

SUSAN

I couldn't keep the theater doors open without Noelle. But, if I do have to give up *The Stardust*, then, well, she needs a backup plan.

MACKENZIE

Don't worry, mom. The Three Amigos *will* save the theater.

The three women hear RUMBLINGS and notice the diner patrons forming a line in front of their booth. Pam shoves her way to the front of the throng.

PAM

Mackie, the folks would love to get your autograph. You know, hometown girl makes good.

Mackenzie CHUCKLES and smiles at the gawking crowd.

MACKENZIE

We haven't even shot the pilot yet!

PAM

Oh, that don't matter to us. We just wanna get ahead of the fame and fortune coming your way.

MACKENZIE

Well, in that case, who's first?

Pam yanks a pen from her apron and slides it and a napkin over to Mackenzie.

PAM

Make it out to Pam, for the best Christmas pie in Mistletoe.

Mackenzie smiles and gets to work.

EXT. SUSAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Establishing shot of a charming Craftsman style two-story house with covered porch, gabled roof, and literally hundreds of dangling Christmas snowflake lights.

INT. SUSAN'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Mackenzie rolls her luggage into her childhood bedroom. It looks exactly like it did when she was a teen. Same boyband posters, Millennial pink bedspread, and matching wallpaper.

Susan strolls in to check on her.

SUSAN

I haven't touched a thing since you moved out west.

MACKENZIE

I noticed that.

Mackenzie spots trophies in a cabinet. She retrieves one, a gold-plated, winged woman in a flowing gown. She reads the inscription aloud.

MACKENZIE (CONT'D)

Mackenzie Snowe. Mistletoe High School. Best Female in a Leading Role for *Almost, Maine*.

SUSAN

Remember how proud dad was when you won that?

MACKENZIE

My first acting trophy. He built a shelf just to hold it.

SUSAN

Then you kept winning them and he had to build that entire trophy cabinet. He'd be so happy to see that your hard work paid off.

MACKENZIE

Even now, I see his face and yours when I'm on stage or in front of the camera. My biggest fans, right?

SUSAN

Always and forever!

Mackenzie places the trophy back and changes the subject.

MACKENZIE

Mom, who are these Gynches who tricked you with fine print?

Susan takes a deep breath and plops onto Mackenzie's bed.

SUSAN

Don and Dawn Gynch. About a year ago, they started buying up the mom and pops around town. Gas station. Mini mart. The hardware store.



MACKENZIE

What's their end game?

SUSAN

They plan to tear down everything and build a new high end Main Street with a new hotel, restaurants, expensive shops.

MACKENZIE

That makes no sense. Mistletoe only has, maybe three thousand people? I don't see it as another Sundance.

SUSAN

Except they're also gonna build a ski resort outside town.

MACKENZIE

You think that's why they want you to default? To kick you out and tear down The Stardust?

SUSAN

Not think. Know. They told me. They're just counting the days. And today, the magic number's fourteen.

Mackenzie wraps her arms around her mother.

MACKENZIE

Plenty of time to pull off a Christmas miracle.

Mackenzie's words are spoken with confidence. The look in her eyes, however, conveys quite the opposite.

INT. THE STARDUST - DAY

Mackenzie, Susan, and Noelle sit in the auditorium of the empty theater brainstorming ideas for saving The Stardust. The venue has seen better days: Thread-bare seating, gilded paint cracked and faded, hit or miss stage light bulbs.

The three women look around with sad, forlorn expressions.

SUSAN

Look at this place. Gene must be rolling in his grave.

MACKENZIE

Chin up, ladies. This is the day we get everything back on track.

(MORE)

MACKENZIE (CONT'D)

Let's brainstorm how to raise more revenue. Something we can do fast.

Noelle performs a drum roll on the arm rest of her chair.

NOELLE

A dunk tank! The Women's Club booth had one at the county fair last summer and we brought in six hundred bucks! We could dress the dunkee in a Santa suit!

Mackenzie scrunches her face and stares at her little sis.

MACKENZIE

Outside in thirty-degrees? Santa gets dunked, plops onto a sheet of ice, cracks his head, and dies of frostbite! Kids'll be traumatized!

Noelle crosses her arms and leans back in her chair.

NOELLE

Just trying to contribute. Geez.

MACKENZIE

It's an *original* idea. Just not outside. In Minnesota. In December.

SUSAN

So, my idea for an Ice Bucket Challenge is probably a "no" too?

Noelle pats her mom's hand. Both she and Mackenzie nod, yes.

MACKENZIE

Since we're trying to raise money to keep The Stardust afloat, how about we do something *inside*, here in the theater. Something with both a Christmas and a performing theme?

SUSAN

What if we show a different Christmas movie classic every day between now and Christmas?

NOELLE

I like it! Dad left a bunch of holiday movies in the storage room. I'll check to be sure they're still in good shape to project.

Mackenzie leans forward. A metaphorical light bulb goes off.

MACKENZIE

Remember how after dad closed for the night, he used to let me act out movie scenes on stage?

NOELLE

Yes! Dad and I always shared popcorn while we watched you!

SUSAN

He loved your performances. We all did. But will people pay to see you do that?

MACKENZIE

(laughs)

No, not me! I mean a holiday show. Where the performers are our friends and neighbors.

NOELLE

Love it! Hey, we can turn my favorite holiday movie into a play.

SUSAN

Not--

NOELLE

Yes, "Santa Claus Conquers the Martians!"

Mackenzie and Susan roll their eyes but CHUCKLE too.

MACKENZIE

That's another, uh, *fun* idea, Noelle, but I was thinking more in the line of a Christmas variety show. Singing, dancing, fun stuff.

NOELLE

I'm sold! We can ask my boss Ethan to design and build the set and--

MACKENZIE

Wait, what? I thought he was a lawyer.

NOELLE

He is but he was a studio carpenter in Hollywood before law school.

MACKENZIE

Sounds like a human Swiss army knife. What can't he do?

NOELLE

He can't spell very good.

MACKENZIE

You had to dig deep to find that flaw! Well, if he wants to help, it's good by me.

SUSAN

Better get started. We only have two weeks to pull off this miracle.

Mackenzie moves into planning overdrive.

MACKENZIE

True. Mom, could you get the word out for volunteers? Sis, can you search for those classic reels of Dad's? And I'm going to track down someone I know who'll make the perfect show director.

SUSAN

Project Christmas Miracle begins.

The three of them rush out to tackle their assignments.

EXT. MISTLETOE PARK - DAY

Straight from a vintage Currier & Ives postcard, TOWNSPEOPLE of all ages skate, sled, and play hockey on a frozen lake. It's "see your breath cold" but cozy and clear.

Wearing a jogging outfit, knit cap, gloves, and running shoes, Mackenzie trots past a hill packed with kids on sleds. All but one, that is, with a father and daughter onboard and it is out-of-control, careening straight toward Mackenzie.

As the sled gets closer, Mackenzie sees the problem. The steering apparatus is broken. Father and daughter jam their heels into the snow in an attempt to slow down.

Too late.

They crash into Mackenzie. She flies into a snowbank. The father and daughter fall off the sled and roll into the snow beside her. The sled keeps going and smacks into a pine tree.

Mackenzie wipes away the snow and peers up to see a familiar face hovering above her. Ethan Hart extends his hand and flashes an uncomfortable smile.

ETHAN

Long time, no see. You okay? No broken bones?

MACKENZIE

I'm good. You? Doing alright?

ETHAN

I make a living.

HOLLY HART (9), an adorable bundle of energy with braces, pokes her dad in the ribs.

HOLLY

Dad! That's not funny!

Holly turns to Mackenzie.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry. We couldn't stop.

MACKENZIE

It's O.K. Your dad and I have been bumping into each other a lot lately.

Ethan and Mackenzie CHUCKLE. Holly tilts her head, confused.

ETHAN

(to Holly)

Mackenzie and I met yesterday at the airport.

HOLLY

Mackenzie? Mackenzie Snowe? The famous actress?

MACKENZIE

Not really but it seems like everyone here thinks so.

HOLLY

You're Noelle's sister! She raves about you at Dad's office.

Mackenzie realizes who *Ethan* is.

MACKENZIE

(to Ethan)

So, you're the lawyer my sister and mom mentioned?

And, Ethan realizes who *Mackenzie* is.

ETHAN

Yes. And you're Noelle's sister,  
Susan's daughter.

HOLLY

Yes, Dad! Facts already established  
and attested to. Duh!

Holly turns her attention back to Mackenzie.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

I love your mom! She lets me sneak  
into The Stardust for all the  
classic movies. I've seen "Miracle  
on 34th Street" six times!

MACKENZIE

I loved it too when I was your age.

HOLLY

You know the actress who played  
Susan? She grew up to be a movie  
star in real life! Like you are!

MACKENZIE

Well, I'll be darned.

Holly beams. Mackenzie gives a knowing wink to Ethan. Caught  
off guard, he blushes and looks away.

HOLLY

Mackenzie--

MACKENZIE

My friends call me Mackie.

HOLLY

Awesome! I'm friends with a TV  
star! Mackie then, would you like  
to help my dad and me pick out a  
Christmas tree for his office?

ETHAN

Holly, I'm sure Mackenzie--

MACKENZIE

Mackie!

ETHAN

Right, Mackie. I'm sure *Mackie*  
doesn't want to tag along with us--

MACKENZIE

I'd love to!

Holly races to Mackenzie, grabs her hand, and shoots her dad a 'told you so' smile.

HOLLY  
(to Mackenzie)  
Great!

Mackenzie smiles at Ethan and shrugs. Ethan trudges behind the two new besties as he drags the broken sled.

EXT. CHRISTMAS TREE FARM - DUSK

Mackenzie, Ethan, and Holly stroll through the aisles looking for the perfect tree. Holly's running twenty feet in front, pointing at each and every potential choice.

HOLLY  
Wow, check this one out, Dad!

ETHAN  
Great selection.

Ethan whispers to Mackenzie.

ETHAN (CONT'D)  
Looks exactly like the last dozen she picked out.

Mackenzie smiles and whispers back. There's the hint of a flirt in her words.

MACKENZIE  
Are you a Christmas Scrooge, Attorney Hart?

ETHAN  
No, I'm just not very good at this. Holly's mom used to go with her to pick the tree, buy presents, all the holiday stuff.

MACKENZIE  
Holly seems to have taken after her mom.

ETHAN  
That's an understatement. How about you? You a Christmas fan?

MACKENZIE  
Not as much, since I moved to L.A. It's not the same without new fallen snow and chilly mornings.

ETHAN

I missed that too when I lived there. It's one of the reasons my wife and I decided to move back to Minnesota.

MACKENZIE

For snow and cold mornings?

ETHAN

(laughs)

Sort of. After I graduated from UCLA Law School, I had a half dozen offers to work for Big Law in L.A.

MACKENZIE

And you decided to set up a private practice in Mistletoe? Why?

ETHAN

Nicole, my wife. She grew up around here and she made it clear, she was not going to move to southern California. So, choosing Mistletoe over L.A. got a lot easier.

MACKENZIE

No regrets?

Ethan points to Holly, grinning from ear-to-ear.

ETHAN

Look at her. What do you think?

Mackenzie smiles at the sight. It brings back memories of her own simple, uncomplicated childhood. In Mistletoe.

MACKENZIE

I think your wife must have been a very special person.

Holly runs back to her dad and Mackenzie. She grabs Mackenzie's hand and pulls her toward the tree she selected.

HOLLY

Mackie! I found the *awesomeist* tree! Let's take it to Dad's office and decorate it. Together!

END ACT ONE



ACT TWO

EXT. THE STARDUST - DAY

Main Street hums with excitement as WORKERS continue to prepare downtown for Christmas.

INT. THE STARDUST - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Susan and Noelle add to the already excessive amount of Christmas decorations. Out the window, they watch the busy city workers.

SUSAN

Everybody's working their tails off for the tree lighting tomorrow.

NOELLE

Should be fun.

SUSAN

(nods)

I'm sure looking forward to it. Keeps my mind off the trainwreck we're facing.

NOELLE

You mean saving The Stardust from the Evil Kingdom of Gynch?

SUSAN

That medieval warlord's comparison does seem apt.

NOELLE

When you grow up in a movie theater, everything's cinematic.

Susan and Noelle stop talking when they see the monstrosity that just pulled up in front of The Stardust.

In SLO-MO we see DON AND DAWN GYNCH (40s) descend the stairs of a "wrapped" Winnebago sporting enormous closeups of the owners' grinning mugs. Block lettering cries out: "GYNCH FINANCE: SUCCESS IS A CINCH WITH GYNCH!"

The Gynches wear identical flame-red velour track suits, white sneakers, and blue baseball caps embossed with "I♥GYNCH." A casual observer could easily mistake them for living American flags.

Don is an ogreish 6' 3" to Dawn's elfin 4'11". Both sport white perms. Don's is a bad hairpiece. Dawn's, an 80's bubble perm straight from a bottle.

They slither into the lobby and station themselves, arms crossed, side-by-side, to block their prey's escape path. Susan and Noelle look at each other. And LAUGH hysterically.

DON

I wouldn't be laughing if I were in your shoes, ladies.

SUSAN

Don. Dawn. How's the grifting business these days?

DAWN

The only grifters around here are you two. Trying to avoid paying the company that owns your mortgage.

NOELLE

You mean the swindlers who changed the terms after twenty years of my dad and mom paying the original lender on time, every time?

DON

Look ladies, here's the deal. You will default on Christmas day unless you pay in full. It's in your contract. The one you signed.

SUSAN

Guess we'll see then, won't we?

Susan points to the door.

NOELLE

Adios griftmeisters.

The Gynches shake their heads as they exit.

EXT. THE STARDUST - CONTINUOUS

A SNICKERING CROWD OF WORKERS shoot wayward looks at the Gynches as they waddle back to their hard-to-miss Winnebago.

DAWN

(to the crowd)

What? Never seen patriotic Americans before?

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Wearing a backpack and carrying schoolbooks, Holly skips down Main Street on her way home from school. She stops at every corner and looks both ways before crossing.

As she skips, she notices a cute, curly-haired dog with bright eyes and a constantly wagging tail following her.

When she stops to cross, the little dog stops.

When she crosses, the dog crosses too.

After repeating this for several blocks, Holly stops in the middle of the street, turns, and faces her little follower.

The dog BARKS, runs toward Holly, and leaps onto her chest. Holly's books fly off and she plummets onto the sidewalk.

HOLLY

Why did you--

SCREECH! A car brakes, skids, and barely misses Holly and the little dog. The female DRIVER jumps out and races to them.

Oblivious, the cute little dog sits on Holly's chest, licking her face and wagging his tail.

DRIVER

(to Holly)

Your little pup here saved your life. I almost hit you!

HOLLY

I should have looked before I crossed.

The driver helps Holly up and retrieves her books. Holly and the driver look down at the dog. Tail still wagging.

DRIVER

He really looks out for you! Like Gabriel, the guardian angel.

The driver climbs back in her car and drives off.

Holly leans down and strokes the dog's neck. He promptly turns over on his back for a belly rub. Holly obliges. The little dog MOANS with delight.

HOLLY

What do you think about the name Gabriel? Maybe Gabe, for short?

The dog BARKS his approval. Holly and the newly named GABE scamper down the sidewalk.

INT. ETHAN'S LAW OFFICE - DAY

Holly races into the reception area cradling Gabe in her arms. A surprised Noelle looks up from her desk.

NOELLE

Who's this cute little guy?

HOLLY

My guardian angel, Gabriel. Gabe for short.

Gabe concurs with the introduction. WOOF! WOOF! WOOF!

Ethan hears the barking and steps out of his office.

ETHAN

Holly, why are you holding a dog?

NOELLE

Say hello to Gabe.

HOLLY

Dad, he saved my life. He's got magic powers. He knows when bad stuff is going to happen. Can I keep him? Please!

Holly flits her eyelashes and curls her bottom lip. Ethan SIGHS and realizes it's useless to argue with his daughter. Better to join her than fight her.

ETHAN

He is sort of cute.

NOELLE

Adorable!

HOLLY

Magical!

Ethan realizes Gabe's magic is too strong to overcome with any rational counter argument. Instead, he rubs Gabe's belly. Gabe's tongue lolls as he moans in ecstasy.

ETHAN

Okay, but if anybody shows up to claim him, we're gonna have to give him back.

EXT. MISTLETOE HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Establishing shot of a three-story, nondescript red brick building behind a sign: "MISTLETOE HIGH SCHOOL."

INT. DRAMA DEPARTMENT - DAY

Mackenzie pokes her head into a large classroom filled with band instruments, Klieg lights, and stage sets.

A thin, dignified man in a bowtie peers over bifocals. This is HANK PERRINE (65), affectionately known as Doc P., the school's longtime drama teacher. He smiles at his guest.

MACKENZIE

Doc P.!

DOC P.

Mackenzie? Or should I say *Trish*?

Doc P. rushes to Mackenzie and embraces her.

DOC P. (CONT'D)

Saw it in the trades. And *heard* about it at the diner, of course!

MACKENZIE

No doubt! Pam's is Mistletoe's version of the Hollywood Reporter.

DOC P.

Always proud to hear when one of my students makes it big. Last one even close to you was Kendall King. Made it all the way to the third round of "Minnesota's Got Talent"!

MACKENZIE

(chuckles)

Just wanted to say hi but also ask a favor of you.

DOC P.

Anything for my best student ever!

MACKENZIE

It's The Stardust. Mom got behind a bit on the mortgage and, long story short, she could default soon.

DOC P.

It'd be a tragedy to lose that grand old playhouse. It's the heart and soul of this town.

MACKENZIE

That's why we're doing a Christmas show to help pay off mom's loan.

DOC P.

What a dazzling idea!

MACKENZIE

Could you help me stage the show?

DOC P.

I'd be honored to but are you sure you want me? The school board just forced me to retire, you know. Said it's time for new blood.

MACKENZIE

(disappointed)

Shame on them. You're the reason I pursued acting as my career!

DOC P.

Thank you, Mackie. You know, I'm not ready to be thrown out to pasture. And this Christmas variety show of yours sounds like it's right up my alley. And for a great cause, too. Count me in!

MACKENZIE

That's great, Doc P. Thank you, thank you, thank you!

DOC P.

I would like one thing in return.

MACKENZIE

Name it.

Doc P. removes a pen and pad from his pocket and extends them toward Mackenzie.

DOC P.

My favorite actor's autograph?

Mackenzie's eyes water. She gazes at Doc P. and recites--

MACKENZIE

*There's not a life in this room you  
haven't touched. And each of us is  
a better person because of you.*

Doc P. beams with pride.

DOC P.

Richard Dreyfuss, "Mr. Holland's  
Opus."

Mackenzie nods, signs her autograph, and returns the pad to Doc P. She waves goodbye to him as she leaves.

EXT. THE STARDUST - DAY

Staked out on the sidewalk below, Mackenzie directs Ethan as he balances on the extension ladder, snapping block letters onto the marquee. Next to Mackenzie, Holly and Gabe crane their necks to watch with apprehension.

MACKENZIE

(to Ethan)

Perfect. Thanks so much! Just add  
the 'W' and you're done.

Ethan pops in the "W" to complete the phrase: "HOLIDAY SHOW AUDITIONS THIS WEEK."

Suddenly, Gabe starts to BARK WILDLY. He races to the cardboard box of block letters and uses his nose to shove it beneath the ladder.

Ethan begins to climb down. The ladder wobbles. He loses his grip and falls.

ETHAN

AHHHHHH!

PLOP! Into the box of marquee letters. Mackenzie, Holly, and Gabe rush over and peer into the box.

MACKENZIE

(concerned)

Ethan!!

HOLLY

Dad, you okay?

Gabe continues to HOWL.

Ethan peers at everyone from inside the box. He flashes a thumbs up and crawls out.

ETHAN

Lucky you placed that box there,  
Mackie! It cushioned my fall.

Mackenzie and Holly stare at each other, then at Gabe. His tail wags nonstop. Holly shrugs and cuddles Gabe.

MACKENZIE

Thank Gabe, not me.

HOLLY

*I told you he's magical!*

INT. THE STARDUST - AUDITORIUM - DAY

Noelle greets Mackenzie, Ethan, Holly, and Gabe. She peers over the stack of movie reels in her arms.

NOELLE

Little help here!

MACKENZIE

Sorry, sis.

They scramble to relieve Noelle of the heavy reels. All except one which she retains.

NOELLE

Five classics for the Christmas  
film festival. Dad saved them all.  
Including this one.

MACKENZIE

Why not include it with the others?

NOELLE

It's not for the general public.  
Just our immediate family.

Holly hangs her head, feeling left out. Noelle sees it and gives Holly a small hug.

NOELLE (CONT'D)

Holly, you're family! You can watch  
it with us.

Holly's head pops up. Her face sports a huge smile.

Mackenzie turns to Ethan.

MACKENZIE

You too, Ethan.

(beat)

(MORE)



MACKENZIE (CONT'D)

And, of source, Gabe, the magical,  
guardian angel dog.

Noelle smiles at Mackenzie and whispers into her ear.

NOELLE

Nice save, sis. We don't want Ethan  
to think you like him, do we?!

Mackenzie rolls her eyes. Ethan senses the sisters are  
talking about him. He changes the subject.

ETHAN

Okay, so, I'll get started painting  
the walls in here.

MACKENZIE

Good idea. I'll help you. Got the  
new paint and rollers in the lobby.

As she and Ethan leave, Mackenzie playfully sticks her tongue  
out at Noelle. Noelle scrunches her nose in response.

INT. THE STARDUST - AUDITORIUM - LATER

Ethan applies a new coat of paint to the walls while  
Mackenzie and Holly focus on the Christmas decorations.

Hundreds of snowflake-shaped lights hang above the red velvet  
curtains. White poinsettias line the stage front. Evergreen  
wreaths cover the walls.

HOLLY

(to Ethan and Mackenzie)

While we work, let's play Twenty  
Questions, Christmas Edition! Mom  
and I used to play every Christmas.

MACKENZIE

What are the rules?

HOLLY

One person thinks of something  
Christmas-related. Then the others  
get twenty questions to guess it!

MACKENZIE

Sounds good to me. You in, Ethan?

ETHAN

Yup.

HOLLY  
 Okay, I got one. Mackie, you get  
 the first guess.

MACKENZIE  
 Alright. Is it in this room?

HOLLY  
 Yes. That's one. Dad.

ETHAN  
 Is it on the stage?

HOLLY  
 (sulking)  
 OH! Yes, dad. That's two.

Ethan winks at Mackenzie. He knows Holly's weakness.

MACKENZIE  
 (chuckles)  
 Hmm. Since there are only White  
 poinsettias on the stage right now,  
 is it... White poinsettias?

HOLLY  
 (upset)  
 OH! Yes!

Ethan and Mackenzie smile. Gabe WOOFs dog laughter.

ETHAN  
 Okay Mackie, your turn.

MACKENZIE  
 Alright, I've got one.

HOLLY  
 Is it in this room?

MACKENZIE  
 (feigns disappointment)  
 Shoot! Yes. One.

ETHAN  
 Is it a decoration?

MACKENZIE  
 Sort of, yes. Two.

Holly looks around. Her eyes stop above the stage.

HOLLY  
 Is it Christmas lights?

MACKENZIE  
Not quite. That's three.

ETHAN  
Is it alive?

MACKENZIE  
Yes, but only if you pay attention  
to it.

ETHAN  
(smiles)  
Ah, is it mistletoe?

MACKENZIE  
(blushes)  
Yes!

Holly points to the mistletoe above the auditorium entrance.

HOLLY  
Dad, give Mackie a kiss under it!  
It is Christmas!

It's Ethan's turn to blush. Mackenzie's embarrassed too. They act as if they didn't hear Holly. Ethan thinks of a way out of this and glances at his watch.

ETHAN  
Sorry, I need to get back to the  
office. I forgot all about my  
client coming in this afternoon.

Ethan drops the paint roller and flees from the auditorium. After a beat, Mackenzie and Holly break into laughter.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. THE STARDUST - AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Performers fill the seats awaiting their chance at local fame. Judges Mackenzie, Susan, and Doc P. sit at a table on stage. Mackenzie addresses the participants.

MACKENZIE

Welcome everyone to our Christmas show tryouts!

Mackenzie leads the group in APPLAUSE.

MACKENZIE (CONT'D)

All proceeds will help us save The Stardust so thank you for being a part of this important cause!

More APPLAUSE.

MACKENZIE (CONT'D)

Alright, show us what you got!

SERIES OF SHOTS - STAGE

A) TRIPLE THREAT, a musical trio consisting of a xylophone player, a tuba player, and a drummer, butcher the song "Jingle Bells." The judges try to hide laughter.

B) CARL THE COMIC, a cherubic-faced guy in a sequined red tuxedo tells a Christmas joke that garners no laughs.

CARL THE COMIC

Do snow globes ever get scared?  
(beat)  
No, just shaken.

The judges squirm.

C) In a ballet leotard and slippers, Holly performs "The Dance of the Sugar Plum Ferries" to a recording of "The Nutcracker."

Her performance is phenomenal. The other hopefuls stop to APPLAUD even before she has finished. Judges Mackenzie, Susan, and Doc P. join in with APPLAUSE of their own.

DOC P.

(to Mackenzie and Susan)  
I think we have ourselves a dancer.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

INT. THE STARDUST - AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Hiding in the back row of seats, the Gynches eavesdrop on the tryouts. Disguised as potential performers for the tryouts, they're dressed as elves, in green tights and elf hats. Dawn can clearly pass, but Don's a real-life Jolly Green Giant.

DON

(whispers to Dawn)

If this silly show's a hit, our resort plans are dead in the water!

When the entire hall erupts in a STANDING OVATION for Holly's incredible performance, the Gynches take the opportunity to slink out of the theater. On stage, from the corner of her eye, Mackenzie's the only one to notice.

EXT. FILM STUDIO - DAY

Establishing shot of the Trimax Studios expansive film lot.

INT. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Studio Head BERNARD STONE (40s) a volatile, self-centered tyrant, reviews documents at his oversized desk. The extravagantly decorated office is packed with industry awards and grip-and-grin shots of Stone and the rich and famous.

Bennington trudges in expecting the worst. Stone is prepared to deliver it. Without looking up, he motions for his trembling employee to take a seat. He points to a document.

STONE

Know what is listed here, Cal?

BENNINGTON

Uh, sorry, no, Mr. Stone.

Stone looks up now and peers at Bennington.

STONE

All of the Trimax shows going into production right after Christmas.

BENNINGTON

Ah.

STONE

Know which one is scheduled for production first?

BENNINGTON

Uh, could it be—

STONE

Not could. Is. *Trish Out of Water*.  
Ring a bell?

BENNINGTON

I see where you're headed Mr. Stone  
but I assure you we will get back  
on schedule once—

STONE

Once what? We have a contract with  
Mackenzie Snowe, do we not?

BENNINGTON

Yes, Mr. Stone.

STONE

So *why* is she not here preparing  
with the rest of the crew? For a  
show that starts shooting in *less*  
*than two weeks?!*

BENNINGTON

Well, she had to go home for a  
family emergency.

STONE

Aw, how thoughtful of her. At  
Christmas too!

(beat)

GET HER BACK HERE, CAL!

Stone rises. Thrusts his face into Bennington's.

STONE (CONT'D)

IMMEDIATELY! Or both of you will no  
longer be working at Trimax.

BENNINGTON

Yes, Mr. Stone.

STONE

What are you waiting for? GO!

Bennington scrambles to his feet and rushes out the door.

INT. OUTER OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Bennington races past Stone's assistant, VAL, on his way out. After he leaves, she makes a call. We hear someone say "HELLO" on the other end.

VAL

Your father just told Bennington  
he's fired unless he gets Mackenzie  
Snowe back at once.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Wearing full-size headphones, Nathan sits on the couch entranced by a TV videogame. He juggles the controller in one hand while he talks on the phone using his other.

NATHAN

Excellent! Thanks Val.

Nathan ends the call. We pull back to see he's sitting next to Chloe. He turns to her while keeping one eye on TV.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Practice your lines, baby. That  
country girl is about to get her  
walking papers.

CHLOE

NATHAN! How'd you make that happen?

NATHAN

I just know people in high places.

Chloe wraps her arms around Nathan but he's too preoccupied with his video game to notice.

INT. GYNCH FINANCIAL - DAY

A serious-looking MAN IN A THREE-PIECE SUIT passes papers across the desk to Don and Dawn, who take turns signing. They finish and push the papers back to the man. He slides them into his briefcase.

MAN IN THREE-PIECE SUIT

That's it then. The two hundred  
acres just north of Mistletoe are  
all yours. I'll register everything  
at the courthouse first thing in  
the morning.

They shake hands. After the man leaves the office, Dawn rubs her hands together like an evil villain. The two of them linger over an architectural rendering.

DAWN

Gynch Mountain Ski Resort and Spa  
is about to become a reality.

They smile and exchange high fives. Don turns serious.

DON

All we need to complete the plan is  
The Stardust.

DAWN

And when we get it, what a Merry  
Christmas it will be!

INT. SUSAN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Susan and Mackenzie finish washing and drying the dinner dishes. There's a KNOCK on the front door.

INT./EXT. FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

They open the door to see a smiling, bundled up Ethan and Holly standing on the steps. Gabe wags his tail beside them.

HOLLY

Why aren't you ready to go?

SUSAN

Where?

HOLLY

The Christmas tree lighting!

SUSAN

Oh my! Everything that's going on,  
I forgot all about it!

ETHAN

We didn't mean to surprise you. We  
just thought you and Mackie might  
want to go with-

Mackenzie steps in front of her mother.

MACKENZIE

Of course! We'll grab our coats.



EXT. TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

The entire population of Mistletoe and then some have turned out for the Official Christmas Tree Lighting.

Young and old alike belt out holiday favorites as accompanying Christmas music plays behind them.

Hugs, kisses, laughter, handshakes, and high fives abound.

Friends and family, neighbors and tourists, one and all are in the Christmas spirit on this special, winter night.

Noelle emerges from the crowd with hot chocolate and cider for Susan, Ethan, Mackenzie, and Holly. She passes each one a cup, then leans down to Gabe.

NOELLE

Didn't forget you, little miracle  
pooch!

She hands Gabe a Santa-shaped dog biscuit. Gabe gulps it down in one bite and pleads for more. Noelle obliges.

On a podium near the towering Christmas tree, TOWN DIGNITARIES gather around a box with a red switch. They start counting and the AUDIENCE joins in with the countdown.

AUDIENCE

Ten, nine, eight--

Gabe BARKS along as the countdown continues. Finally, dignitaries join hands and throw the switch. Nothing happens. A hush comes over the audience.

One of the dignitaries looks out at the audience and shrugs. Another sees what's wrong. She lifts up the extension cord and plugs it into the electrical socket.

The tree lights up with red and white lights. It's beautiful, iconic, a memory residents will cherish until next December comes. CHEERS and APPLAUSE break out. And the audience joins in to sing "*We Wish You A Merry Christmas.*"

Mackenzie hugs Susan, Noelle, and Holly. Everyone hugs everyone else. Except Mackenzie and Ethan, neither one wanting to make the first move. He breaks the stalemate.

ETHAN

Merry Christmas, Mackie.

MACKENZIE

Merry Christmas to you, Ethan.

Their hug lasts a while. Neither one wants it to end. Finally, they stop, smile, and gaze at each other. Noelle nudges her mother.

NOELLE

There is definitely something going on there. Ever see two people ogle each other like those two are now?

SUSAN

Actually, yes. When your dad and I first attended the Christmas tree lighting right before...

Susan cuts herself off.

NOELLE

Mom! Come on, spill it!

SUSAN

(sighs)

Before we got married a year later.

Susan and Noelle keep looking at Ethan and Mackenzie. Mackenzie and Ethan keep looking at each other. The audience continues to sing Christmas carols.

EXT. MISTLETOE TOWN SQUARE - A BIT LATER

The tree lighting ends and the attendees disperse. Ethan, Mackenzie, Holly, Susan, and Noelle stroll past festive shops and Christmas displays.

Noelle whispers something into her mother's ear. Susan nods. Her face beams with excitement.

SUSAN

Say, Mackie and Ethan. Noelle and I would like to show Holly Santa Claus's Workshop. Lots of toys for girls and boys, they tell me.

Holly is at full attention. She pulls on Ethan's arm.

HOLLY

Dad, can I? I'll stay close to Noelle and Ms. Susan.

Holly crosses her heart and raises her pinkie finger.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Cross my heart and pinkie promise.

Ethan sees the excitement on his daughter's face. He CHUCKLES and gives Holly a light nudge toward Susan and Noelle.

ETHAN  
Go on. Have fun.

Holly grabs Susan's and Noelle's hands as they walk off. Ethan yells back.

ETHAN (CONT'D)  
Don't forget your promise!

Holly spins around and HUFFS.

HOLLY  
I won't!

Ethan smiles sheepishly at Mackenzie.

ETHAN  
I bet you attended lots of tree lightings and Christmas festivals over the years, eh?

MACKENZIE  
My share, for sure, especially as a little girl. I remember being excited like Holly when I got to go to Santa's Workshop and the ice--

Mackenzie notices the ice rink set up for the Christmas festival. It's filled with skaters possessing varying degrees of talent.

MACKENZIE (CONT'D)  
They still have The ice rink! Do you skate?

ETHAN  
I used to but--

Mackenzie grabs Ethan's hand.

MACKENZIE  
Oh, come on. It's fun!

EXT. ICE RINK - A BIT LATER

Mackenzie and Ethan skate around the crowded rink. She notices that Ethan's actually a good skater.

MACKENZIE

Why'd you hesitate to skate? You're really good.

Ethan shows off with a Camel spin and grins at Mackenzie after he finishes. She stops skating and glares back.

MACKENZIE (CONT'D)

Who are you?!

ETHAN

What do you mean?

MACKENZIE

I mean, you're a lawyer and a handyman and, what, a pro skater? Are you a super-hero of some sort?

ETHAN

You got me! I'm MINNESOTA MAN! Defender of the defenseless, rememberer of the unremembered, skater for the skateless.

Mackenzie shakes her head. Tries to hide a smile.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

No, really, I'm just okay at a lot of things but not great at any.

MACKENZIE

You seem pretty great at skating.

ETHAN

I was pretty good before I got hurt.

MACKENZIE

I sense there's a story here.

They find a bench off the ice rink to chat.

ETHAN

My plan was to become a pro hockey player. Played well enough to get a scholarship at U. of M. S'where I met Nicole. But I tore out my knee senior year and had to quit the team.

MACKENZIE

I'm sorry.

ETHAN

No, it's okay. I just pivoted and decided to go to law school.

MACKENZIE

At UCLA.

ETHAN

Right. And in Los Angeles, I apprenticed as a carpenter between semesters and at breaks.

MACKENZIE

Then you settled in Mistletoe.

ETHAN

Yep. Holly was born. I set up my law practice. Everything was coming up roses. But then when Nicole got sick--

Ethan stops and looks away. Mackenzie rubs his shoulder.

MACKENZIE

It's okay. Life has a funny way of turning right when we wanna go left.

Ethan regains his composure and turns to Mackenzie.

ETHAN

I showed you mine, now you show me yours!

MACKENZIE

My story's way less exciting.

ETHAN

(smiles)

I'll be the judge of that!

MACKENZIE

Well, dad and mom bought The Stardust before I was born. So, I grew up as a theater brat. Got the acting bug as a kid and decided I would someday be a star.

ETHAN

I've seen some of your work. You're really talented.

MACKENZIE

(chuckles)

The soaps and commercials? I wouldn't call that talent. But I believe I do have potential to be a good actress. That's why this TV pilot is so important to me.

Ethan does his best not to show his mixed feelings about Mackenzie's acting dreams.

ETHAN

Well then, the sooner we can solve your mom's financial woes, the sooner you can get back to L.A. and the pursuit of your destiny.

They smile at each other and bask in the magical feelings they're having, feelings they haven't shared in a long time.

A MAN IN A SANTA SUIT glides past pursued by a playful menagerie of LITTLE KIDS. Mackenzie and Ethan laugh along and jump back onto the ice to join the chase.

INT. THE STARDUST - AUDITORIUM - DAY

The PERFORMERS for the Christmas variety show prepare for a dress rehearsal. Dancers, singers, comedians, musicians. Mackenzie looks around nervously. She climbs onto the stage.

MACKENZIE

(to the performers)

Anybody see Doc P. today?

The performers shake their heads and murmur "No." Mackenzie's cell CHIMES. She answers. We don't hear the caller's words, just Mackenzie's answers.

MACKENZIE (CONT'D)

Oh no. No. Okay. Please, yes.

She ends the call, SIGHS, and addresses the performers.

MACKENZIE (CONT'D)

That was Evergreen Valley Hospital.  
Doc P. had a stroke.

The performers GASP. A tear glides down Mackenzie's cheek.

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Establishing shot of Evergreen Valley Hospital, a modern edifice of concrete and glass. Visitors and hospital staff enter and exit the revolving doors.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Get-well floral arrangement in hand, Mackenzie steps into a sterile, dimly lit room with an adjustable bed whose current occupant is Doc P. It's eerily quiet except for the HUM from monitors tracking his vital signs.

DOC P.

There's my favorite actor!

Mackenzie places the flowers on the nightstand, kisses Doc P. on the forehead, and sits beside him on the hospital bed.

MACKENZIE

And there's my favorite thespian educator.

DOC P.

Sounds a lot better than drama instructor.

Doc P. motions to a thin, bookish man named FORREST (63) sitting in a chair next to the bed.

DOC P. (CONT'D)

Mackenzie, this is Forrest, my husband.

Forrest bounds from the chair to shake Mackenzie's hand.

FORREST

So glad to finally meet you. Hank has been saying great things about you for years!

MACKENZIE

Nice to meet you too. I didn't know you were married, Doc P.

DOC P.

Twenty years next July. To a fellow teacher. Forrest is the art and music instructor at Roth Elementary.

Mackenzie flinches, surprised. Forrest sees the reaction.

FORREST

We try to keep it on the down low.  
Some parents still don't like to  
admit there are two happily married  
gay men teaching their kids.

MACKENZIE

Let's hope they get over it. I hear  
marriage between two people who  
love each other might be getting  
popular.

They all CHUCKLE. Mackenzie turns her attention to Doc P.

MACKENZIE (CONT'D)

You gonna be okay?

DOC P.

My doctor said I had a mini stroke.  
A few weeks recovery and I should  
be back at one hundred percent.

MACKENZIE

That's great to hear! Wait, a few  
weeks?!

Mackenzie reflects on the situation. Doc P. sees her concern.

DOC P.

I know. The first thing I thought  
about was what you're thinking--  
what about the variety show?

MACKENZIE

A little bit but the most important  
thing is for you to get-

DOC P.

I think you should direct it.

MACKENZIE

What? No, Doc, I'm not a director.

DOC P.

How long have you been acting?

MACKENZIE

About twenty years.



DOC P.

And during that time have you performed on stage, on television, in commercials, and movies?

MACKENZIE

Yes, but--

DOC P.

And how many directors have you worked for during those performances?

MACKENZIE

Dozens.

Doc P. leans forward and grasps Mackenzie's hands.

DOC P.

Do the math. Twenty years as a performer for a bunch of directors. And you don't think you could take the directing reins for a Christmas variety show from a guy whose only claim to fame is teaching high school drama class?

FORREST

Don't sell yourself short, Hank. You *did* have that part off Broadway.

DOC P.

As one of the puppeteers for *Trekkie Monster* in *Avenue Q*!

FORREST

Still... it was off Broadway!

Mackenzie brushes her hair behind her ear, a nervous habit.

MACKENZIE

I guess--

DOC P.

I don't guess. I know. I know you can do it. Probably better than me.

FORREST

Hank *is* a good director. So that's a real compliment, Mackenzie.

MACKENZIE

(sighs)

I just don't want to disappoint anyone.

DOC P.

The only person you'd disappoint is you, if you don't do it.

Mackenzie hugs Doc P. and accidentally nudges a sensor cord. His monitors begin to BEEP and BUZZ.

DOC P. (CONT'D)

Maybe we should save the hugs until after I get out of this joint.

INT. PAM AND EGGS DINER - DAY

Another busy day at the diner. Susan and Mackenzie sip coffee in a corner booth and share a slice of Christmas cherry pie.

A "DEVELOPING STORY" headline streaks across the bottom of a small TV on the wall: "LOCAL DEVELOPERS ANNOUNCE PLANS FOR MISTLETOE SKI RESORT." Pam increases the volume. The gossip and chit-chat stops as the patrons watch and listen.

On screen, correspondent BILL BILLSON (20s), a living cartoon character with an annoying, fake smile, speaks to the camera.

BILL BILLSON

I'm here with developers extraordinaire Don and Dawn Gynch of Gynch Financial. The duo is revered for the many improvements they've made in the local area.

The Gynches appear on camera. Don sits in a chair while Dawn stands beside him, so they appear to be closer in height.

PAM

(to the TV set)

Improvements? Is this a paid political announcement or the news?

OLD GUY AT COUNTER

Shhh, Pam. Let's hear what this joker has to say.

BILL BILLSON

And for their latest feat, the Gynches plan to open one of the largest ski resorts--

DON  
The largest!

BILL BILLSON  
Correction! *The largest* ski resort  
in the tri-state area.

DAWN  
Right, Bill. And in addition to the  
resort, we're going to give the  
town of Mistletoe a makeover too.

DON  
When we're done, even Sundance and  
Park City will pale in comparison.

PAM  
That's what I'm afraid of.

OLD GUY AT COUNTER  
PAM!

Pam rolls her eyes and returns her gaze to the TV.

BILL BILLSON  
Sounds fabulous! So, no obstacles  
to a grand opening soon?

DAWN  
Pfft. Bill, for folks like Dawn and  
me, there are no such things as  
obstacles. Just opportunities.

BILL BILLSON  
Sun Tzu, "The Art of War," right?

DAWN  
What? No, Scrooge McDuck, "Duck  
Tales: The Movie."

BILL BILLSON  
Huh. Still, my sources say there  
are holdouts reluctant to sell to  
you for the project.

DON  
Not for long, Billy. Not for long!

Pam snaps off the TV and stomps off. The regulars resume  
their gossip and tall tales. Susan SIGHS and shakes her head.

SUSAN

(to Mackenzie)

I might as well sign it over to them right now.

MACKENZIE

Mom, stop! We will not let them take The Stardust from you!

Mackenzie glances out the window and sees an angry-faced man, arms crossed, his eyes riveted on her through the diner window. After a double take, she realizes who the man is.

MACKENZIE (CONT'D)

Mom, could you give me a second? I have to talk to someone outside.

Mackenzie climbs from the booth and rushes out of the diner. A confused Susan watches with interest.

EXT. PAM AND EGGS DINER - CONTINUOUS

On the sidewalk, Mackenzie confronts the man, Cal Bennington.

MACKENZIE

Cal, what are you doing here?

BENNINGTON

I've come to take you back to LA.

MACKENZIE

I told you--

BENNINGTON

SNOWE! Not another word. You are under contract! TRIMAX is on my back. Finance, production, the cast and writers. Even Bernie Stone! For God's sake, Mackenzie! YOU GOTTA GET BACK TO WORK!!

Mackenzie sees her mom watching them from inside the diner.

MACKENZIE

I just need a bit more time, Cal.

BENNINGTON

There IS NO MORE TIME! We're *both* fired if you do not return for the next table read!

Mackenzie glances at her feet. Bennington breaks the silence.

BENNINGTON (CONT'D)

Snowe! Did you hear me?!

MACKENZIE

Okay. Okay. I'll be there.

BENNINGTON

Good. Get packed. The studio jet's waiting at the county airport.

MACKENZIE

I can't come right now, but--

BENNINGTON

Did you hear a word I said?

MACKENZIE

I did. And I take it seriously.

BENNINGTON

Snowe, the next table read is in forty-eight hours!

MACKENZIE

I said I'll be there.

Bennington SIGHS. He remains silent while he considers Mackenzie's response. He steps closer, eyes ablaze with rage.

BENNINGTON

If you aren't, you'll never work in Hollywood again. Mackenzie, talent like yours is rare, but TV is a cutthroat business. DO NOT waste the chance of a lifetime!

Mackenzie nods and watches as a chauffeur opens the back door of a black, stretch limousine. Bennington climbs in and the limo drives off. Mackenzie shuffles back into the diner.

INT. PAM AND EGGS DINER - CONTINUOUS

Back in the booth, Susan presses Mackenzie for info.

SUSAN

Everything okay?

MACKENZIE

All good. That was my agent. He was in Minneapolis for business and drove over to check on me.

SUSAN

How sweet! You're lucky to have an agent who really cares about you.

MACKENZIE

Oh yea, a heart of gold, that guy.

INT. ETHAN'S LAW OFFICE - DAY

Noelle is busy reviewing paperwork when a brawny man in a brown courier's uniform enters toting an armful of packages.

She looks up to see a gentle giant named OLAF HENDRICKSSEN (30). He's a friendly, reliable, first generation Swedish-American with an obvious crush on Noelle, though she's usually too busy to notice.

OLAF

God eftermiddag, Noelle! Can I put these in conference room for you?

NOELLE

May I?

OLAF

May you what?

NOELLE

No, you say *may* I, not *can* I. You're a big, strong guy so of course, you *can* put them in there. But when you ask for permission, you say *may* I.

Olaf thinks Noelle just complimented him.

OLAF

You think I'm big strong guy?

NOELLE

(confused)  
Have you looked in the mirror?

OLAF

Only when I brush teeth, comb hair, or floss.

Olaf flashes his freshly flossed teeth at Noelle. She tilts her head, wondering why she bothers with the grammar lessons.

NOELLE

That's nice.

(beat)

(MORE)

NOELLE (CONT'D)  
 Sure, you *may* put them in the  
 conference room.

Olaf unloads the delivery items. When he returns, Noelle is busy reviewing documents. He hovers silently over her desk. After a few seconds, she stops reading, and looks up.

NOELLE (CONT'D)  
 Yes, Olaf?

OLAF  
 Uh, well, ah, um--

NOELLE  
 Okay, now that we've gotten the  
 small talk out of the way, what did  
 you want to ask me?

OLAF  
 (quickly)  
 I was wondering if you should go  
 with me to the Classic Christmas  
 movie this week.

NOELLE  
 If I *should* or if I *would*?

OLAF  
 Whichever one you will say yes to.

Noelle smiles at Olaf's innocent sincerity.

NOELLE  
 You do know my mother owns The  
 Stardust where the movie is being  
 shown, right?

OLAF  
 Yes, but I intend to pay her  
 whatever price is for two visitors.

NOELLE  
 Customers.

OLAF  
 Visitor customers?

NOELLE  
 (exasperated)  
 No, not--look, Olaf, I'm really  
 busy right now. So, what say you  
 meet me in the theater lobby ten  
 minutes before the show starts. And  
 then I'll sit with you to watch it.

OLAF

So, is this what is called a--

Noelle places her finger over her mouth.

NOELLE

Shhh! Let's not call it anything.  
Just two people enjoying an  
unforgettable Christmas classic.

OLAF

Right. I won't call it a date. If  
I'm asked, I say I escorted Noelle,  
who I like much, to theater to see  
unforgettable Christmas classic.

Olaf nods a goodbye and spins around to exit. Noelle SIGHS  
and smiles. After a beat, she returns to the paperwork.

INT. THE STARDUST - AUDITORIUM - DAY

Ethan and Mackenzie admire their handiwork, the minor  
renovations, the painting and decorations.

MACKENZIE

This theater looks like it must  
have when mom and dad bought it.  
It's like stepping back in time.

ETHAN

It was a lot of work, but the  
results are really noticeable.

MACKENZIE

Mom will be proud to hold the  
Christmas film festival and variety  
show here.

Not thinking, Mackenzie embraces Ethan with a heartfelt hug.

MACKENZIE (CONT'D)

Thank you for all of your help!

Ethan is surprised by Mackenzie's gesture but as it becomes  
clear she's not letting go, he wraps his arms around her with  
a hug of his own. After a beat, Mackenzie steps back.

MACKENZIE (CONT'D)

I need to tell you something. My  
producer for the TV pilot, he--

Ethan waits for Mackenzie to finish but Holly interrupts. She  
runs down the aisle followed by a BARKING, animated Gabe.



HOLLY  
 Dad! Mackie! The high school choir  
 is in the lobby singing Christmas  
 carols. Come on, let's join in!

Ethan and Holly exchange smiles.

ETHAN  
 (to Holly)  
 Lead the way.

As they follow Holly up the aisle, Ethan turns to Mackenzie.

ETHAN (CONT'D)  
 Sorry, what were you saying about  
 your TV show?

Mackenzie shrugs and forces a smile. The SOUND of Christmas  
 carols grows louder as they near the lobby.

MACKENZIE  
 Not that important. Let's go sing  
 some Christmas carols.

As the auditorium doors swing open, Mackenzie joins in with  
 the Christmas carolers.

MACKENZIE (CONT'D)  
 Deck the halls with boughs of  
 holly--

Ethan and Holly join in.

ETHAN  
 Fa la la la la, la la, la la!      HOLLY  
 Fa la la la la, la la, la la!

END ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

INT. THE STARDUST - STAGE - DAY

Mackenzie addresses the performers who'll appear in the Christmas variety show. They include those from the earlier audition: Carl the Comic, Triple Threat, Holly in her ballerina outfit, plus a few newcomers.

Thankfully, the Gynch elves are nowhere in sight.

MACKENZIE

I have an update on Doc P. He had a mini stroke but he's doing well and on track to be one hundred percent within a few months.

The crowd lets out a group MOAN.

A MEMBER OF TRIPLE THREAT

We're all glad Doc P. is okay but who's going to direct, then?

MACKENZIE

Doc P. asked me to. Everybody okay with that?

APPLAUSE of approval. Mackenzie nods thank you with a smile. She pauses to sit cross-legged on the stage.

MACKENZIE (CONT'D)

Now, we have a very important decision to make together.

ANOTHER TRIPLE THREAT MEMBER

How to make Carl the Comic's jokes actually funny?

LAUGHTER blankets the crowd. Carl the Comic rolls his eyes.

MACKENZIE

No! We need to name the show.

NOELLE

How about *Gnomes for the Holiday*? We open Rockettes-style with a chorus line dressed like gnomes.

MACKENZIE

That has... uh... potential.

CARL THE COMIC  
 How about *A Holly Jolly Christmas Folly*? I'd headline the *Jolly* role with a bunch of new jokes!

Lots of head shaking for that suggestion.

MACKENZIE  
 Thanks Carl. Duly noted.

Susan rises. She's in one of her many Christmas sweaters.

SUSAN  
 Why not... *The Ugly Christmas Sweater Show*? We ask everyone who attends to wear a Christmas sweater. And the ugliest one wins the grand prize. Which is--wait for it--an ugly Christmas sweater!

MACKENZIE  
 Apparently *unique* ideas run in the family. But maybe something simple to say why we're doing this show.

From Holly's lap, Gabe BARKS three times. Holly strokes Gabe on the neck. He rolls over for a belly rub.

HOLLY  
 (to Gabe)  
 That's it, boy!

Holly stands up from her theater seat.

HOLLY (CONT'D)  
 Gabe has the perfect, simple name!

MACKENZIE  
 You understand dog barks?

HOLLY  
 I understand *Gabe's* barks.

MACKENZIE  
 Okay, let's hear... Gabe's... suggestion.

HOLLY  
*The Save the Stardust Christmas Show.*

Lots of nods from the performers.

MACKENZIE

I like it. How about everyone else?

A wave of APPLAUSE erupts from performers and crew.

MACKENZIE (CONT'D)

Okay, then. Thank you, Holly... and Gabe. The official name of our performance will be *The Save the Stardust Christmas Show!*

More APPLAUSE and CHEERS.

MACKENZIE (CONT'D)

Now, let's get to work!

EXT. THE STARDUST - DAY

Rehearsal is over. Mackenzie, Holly, and Gabe exit the theater. A sense of joy and excitement permeates the tiny village. Neighbors and friends share laughs. Kids toss snowballs. Shoppers haul Christmas presents to their cars.

MACKENZIE

This is amazing. Mistletoe gets as excited for Christmas as Hollywood does for the Academy Awards.

Holly sees kids tossing snowballs and building snow forts across the street. Gabe BARKS.

HOLLY

Gabe's got a great idea! Why don't you come home with us, and we'll build a snowwoman in our yard?

MACKENZIE

Gabe said all that in just a bark?

HOLLY

Yea. Dog is a really efficient language.

MACKENZIE

Huh. Well, I'd love to, but do you think it's okay with your dad?

HOLLY

Sure, he loves having you around!

MACKENZIE

He does?!

HOLLY

Of course! We *all* do. Dad, Gabe,  
and most of all, me!

Mackenzie's a bit let down that the 'most of all' doesn't refer to Ethan, but she recovers quickly.

MACKENZIE

Let's do it then. I haven't built a snowman since I was your age.

HOLLY

How about a snowwoman?

MACKENZIE

I've never built a snowwoman.

HOLLY

No worries. I got your back. I make the best snowwomen in town.

Gabe BARKS a firm "Yes" to that.

EXT. ETHAN'S AND HOLLY'S HOUSE - DAY

In the front yard, Mackenzie and Holly step back to admire their handiwork--a snowman and snowwoman.

They sport baseball caps, pebbles for mouths, buttons for eyes and coats, and stick arms with gloves for hands. The one deviation: the snowwoman's necklace of Christmas light bulbs.

Gabe looks at the snow couple, races to Holly, and BARKS.

HOLLY

You're right, boy. He noticed we forgot their noses.

MACKENZIE

Good catch. You sure he's a dog? He acts more like--

HOLLY

A magical, guardian angel. I know.

MACKENZIE

I was gonna say human but there is something angelic going on there.

Mackenzie eyes Gabe. He wags his tail and slobbers a smile.

HOLLY

Be right back with two carrots.

Holly races into the house with Gabe in pursuit.

As she waits for Holly to return, Mackenzie spots Ethan just off work walking toward her. The look on Mackenzie's face changes from an approving smile to a devilish smirk.

She crouches behind the snow couple and forms a snowball. When Ethan gets closer, she rises from her hiding spot and fires the snowball at her unsuspecting victim.

WHACK! Bullseye.

The snowball hits Ethan's shoulder and splatters on his suit. His eyes widen. First, with surprise. Then, with revenge. As Mackenzie forms another snowball, Ethan forms one of his own.

The snow battle begins.

Snowballs and LAUGHTER fly back and forth between the two winter warriors. Both soon drip with snowball carnage.

Holly hears the laughter outside and explodes onto the front porch. She tosses the two 'nose carrots' aside, joins Mackenzie's team, and flings a snowball at her dad.

SPLASH! Right on target.

Ethan wipes the snow from his jacket.

ETHAN  
(to Holly)  
What happened to family loyalty?

HOLLY  
Sorry dad, but I consider Mackie  
one of the family.

Ethan stops throwing and looks at Mackenzie. She shrugs. They burst into laughter. It's just enough of a pause in play for Holly to heave a perfect strike at her dad. Which hits him square on the jaw.

INT. ETHAN AND HOLLY'S HOUSE - A BIT LATER

Ethan lays on the couch with an ice pack on his jaw. Guilt-ridden, Holly kneels beside him.

HOLLY  
I am so sorry, dad. It was just a  
lucky throw.

ETHAN

From my perspective, it was an  
*unlucky* throw.

Ethan pats his daughter's hand.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

It's okay. Plus, it was kinda fun!

Holly raises her head, smiles at her dad.

HOLLY

It really was, wasn't it?

MACKENZIE

Not bragging, but I did start it.

ETHAN

So you were the real mastermind  
behind the snowball fight and my  
innocent daughter was simply a  
bystander caught in the moment.

HOLLY

Legally speaking, I was a willing  
accomplice.

ETHAN

I thought I was the lawyer in the  
family. How do you know this stuff?

HOLLY

Noelle lets me read your law books  
while I wait for you at the office.

MACKENZIE

Looks like there could be another  
attorney in the family fairly soon.

Ethan removes the icepack and sits up.

ETHAN

Well, the stomach of one of the  
lawyers in the family firm is  
growling from hunger.

HOLLY

Can Mackie stay for dinner, Dad?

ETHAN

That's what I was hoping.

MACKENZIE

Are you sure?

ETHAN

Like Holly said, we think of you as part of the family.

Mackenzie can't hide her wide grin.

MACKENZIE

Guess I better not let the family down then.

HOLLY

Yay!

ETHAN

Double Yay!

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ethan, Mackenzie, and Holly work together to prepare dinner. Ethan chops veggies, Holly assembles the salad, Mackenzie prepares the poultry for Chicken Marsala, and Gabe sits on the kitchen floor waiting for dropped ingredients.

Ethan's cell CHIMES. He glances at the caller ID.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

The mayor. Be right back.

Ethan takes the call in his study while Mackenzie and Holly continue with dinner prep.

MACKENZIE

(to Holly)

Sorry we didn't have time to work on your dance at rehearsal today.

HOLLY

That's okay. I think I have the Sugar Plum part down solid. Mom began me on ballet lessons when I was three, so--

MACKENZIE

Wow, you've become a pretty darn good ballet dancer in six years!

HOLLY

But everybody does the Sugar Plum dance. I want to make it special.

Mackenzie stops with chicken prep and turns to Holly.



MACKENZIE

I like your style! It's the same with acting and theater. Everybody does all the well-known stuff. "Mama Mia" and "Sound of Music"--

HOLLY

And "Annie." How many times can you see one of them before you get sick of the same songs and choreography?

MACKENZIE

What if you did a mashup?

Holly looks confused.

MACKENZIE (CONT'D)

It's when you fuse together two different elements to create something new. Like combining country music with reggae.

HOLLY

Or mac and cheese with hot dogs!

MACKENZIE

Yea, I suppose that would work.

HOLLY

What if I combined the classical Sugar Plum dance with hip hop?!

MACKENZIE

I think you're on to something.

Holly stops spinning lettuce and hugs Mackenzie. A radish falls on the floor. Gabe races over, gobbles it down, and immediately spits it out.

HOLLY

Thank you, Mackie. You are so creative. I wish you lived in Mistletoe again.

MACKENZIE

I'll just have to visit more often.

Holly shuffles to the counter and resumes salad spinning.

HOLLY

(sad)

Once you start your TV show, you'll forget all about us. I probably would too if I became famous.

MACKENZIE

I'd never do that. You and your dad have made me feel so welcome!

HOLLY

I know! I haven't seen Dad this happy since my mom died. For years, he has been out of it, just working all the time. But now, he can't stop talking about how much fun you are. I think he likes you. A lot.

MACKENZIE

A lot?

HOLLY

Yea. Whenever I mention your name, he gets this sort of dreamy look in his eyes.

MACKENZIE

Dreamy?

HOLLY

Yea, like--

Holly stares at the ceiling with glossy eyes. Mackenzie CHUCKLES. Just then, Ethan strolls into the kitchen.

ETHAN

(to Holly)

Why are you staring at the ceiling?

HOLLY

I was just showing Mackie how you look when--

Mackenzie realizes she needs to change the topic.

MACKENZIE

*When* you see all the Christmas lights around town. How you're still a kid at heart, just like her, at Christmas.

Holly scrunches her face and knits her eyebrows.

HOLLY

That's not--

MACKENZIE

Ethan, you're just in time to finish chopping!

Mackenzie shoots Holly a frown and returns to chicken prep.

EXT. ETHAN AND HOLLY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Dinner's over. Ethan and Mackenzie come onto the porch. Holly and Gabe follow. Ethan raises his palm at Holly and Gabe.

ETHAN

Whoa there, dynamic duo. Holly, you and Gabe need to get ready for bed.

HOLLY

Dad! It's Christmas break. You know there's no school tomorrow. Duh!

ETHAN

Duh yourself. Doesn't mean you can stay up all night. How about a compromise. Get ready for bed and we can watch *one* show.

HOLLY

Oh, okay. Grinch, the movie!

ETHAN

Too long. Grinch, the half hour animated special.

HOLLY

(defeated)

Fine. You'd love either version since you and the Grinch have so much in common.

Ethan and Mackenzie LAUGH. Holly gives Mackenzie a hug and heads back inside with Gabe.

Ethan stares at Mackenzie with the look Holly imitated at dinner. There's silence between them for a minute.

MACKENZIE

Thanks for dinner. I had fun. Sorry about your snowball injury.

ETHAN

All good. I heal fast.

(beat)

Why don't you let me walk you home?

MACKENZIE

No, I'm fine. It's only a few  
blocks and I'm pretty sure there  
hasn't been a mugging in Mistletoe  
since, well, never.

Mackenzie steps off the porch. Ethan touches her on the  
shoulder. She spins around to face him. They get closer. But  
Ethan chickens out. There will be no goodbye kiss tonight.

Instead, Ethan hands Mackenzie a tinfoil-wrapped plate.

ETHAN

For Susan and Noelle. I'm sure  
they'll enjoy your Chicken Marsala  
as much as Holly and I did.

Mackenzie takes the plate and nods. At the sidewalk, she  
turns to wave back. But Ethan's back is turned as he walks to  
the door, shuts off the porch light, and trudges inside.

Mackenzie SIGHS and begins the short walk home.

END ACT FIVE

ACT SIX

INT. THE STARDUST - AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Show night! Every seat taken. The stage lights flash off and on to signal the show is about to start.

The audience quiets down as the house lights dim and the Mistletoe High School Band begins to PLAY in the pit.

In the wings, Mackenzie, in a sequined red Christmas suit, offers Noelle the performer's version of "Good Luck."

MACKENZIE

Break a leg, sis!

Noelle grimaces, motions to her mobility scooter.

NOELLE

Way too late for that.

Mackenzie kisses Noelle on the cheek. The red velvet curtain opens. A spotlight follows Noelle as she glides onto stage.

Mike in hand, she stations her scooter in the middle of the stage. She's surrounded by a classic *White Christmas* set of majestic snowy mountains overlooking a candlelit village.

Noelle leads the audience in CLAPPING to the beat as she launches into a riotous rendition of a popular top forty Christmas classic. The crowd sings along.

When the song ends, the audience CHEERS. Noelle wheels off and Mackenzie takes the stage beneath a dramatic spotlight.

MACKENZIE

Give it up for my little sis,  
Noelle Snowe!

Mackenzie leads the audience in APPLAUSE.

MACKENZIE (CONT'D)

Welcome to The Save the Stardust  
Christmas Show. Even though I live  
in Los Angeles now--

AUDIENCE MEMBER (O.C.)

Trish Out of Water!

Mackenzie CHUCKLES along with the audience.

## MACKENZIE

Not yet, but... soon! Even though I now live two thousand miles from here, my heart will forever remain in our wonderful town of Mistletoe.

Mackenzie strolls across the stage.

## MACKENZIE (CONT'D)

I know you'll agree that The Stardust symbolizes Mistletoe's values and our shared memories. Especially at Christmas! For the Snowes--my late father Gene, mom Susan, sis Noelle, and for me--The Stardust is our family's legacy.

Mackenzie pauses as the audience APPLAUDS.

## MACKENZIE (CONT'D)

So, from our family to yours, thank you for turning out tonight. Because of your contributions, we have a chance to save this hallowed venue for future generations.

Mackenzie bows to APPLAUSE.

## MACKENZIE (CONT'D)

But... we intend to give you your money's worth! Because tonight we've got the Christmas show to end all Christmas shows. With a cast of familiar faces you've grown to know and love. Your neighbors, friends, and family members!

Mackenzie smiles, spreads her arms to stage right and left.

## MACKENZIE (CONT'D)

So, let's get this party started with our dancing troop... Gnomes for the Holiday!

## SERIES OF SHOTS

- 1) Dancers dressed like gnomes file onto stage in a Rockettes-style kickline and twirl to "Sleigh Ride Together."
- 2) As usual, TRIPLE THREAT butchers "Jingle Bells" but the forgiving audience applauds, nonetheless.

3) CARL THE COMIC enters the stage on a sleigh overflowing with Christmas presents. He grabs the mike and opens with a joke even more trite than his original snow globe material.

CARL THE COMIC

Great entrance, right? If it didn't  
sleigh you, I don't know what will!

SERIES ENDS

INT. THE STARDUST - STAGE - A BIT LATER

Mackenzie takes the stage.

MACKENZIE

We saved the best for last. I'm proud to present nine-year-old Holly Hart performing "The Dance of the Sugar Plum Ferries" like you've never seen it performed before.

Mackenzie strolls off stage as Holly prances on in a basic leotard and slippers. Mackenzie raises a thumbs up to Holly and watches from the wings.

The band begins to play. Holly sees Ethan and Susan in the front row and shoots them a smile and a wave.

For the first minute, she performs the traditional ballet balancés, arabesques, and pirouettes.

Suddenly, the music changes from Tchaikovsky to a faster, contemporary version of "Santa Claus is Coming to Town."

Holly ducks behind a large Gingerbread House on stage and emerges dressed in green sweatpants and sweatshirt and a red cap and sneakers. Her dancing becomes acrobatic with bounces, rocks, turntables on the wooden stage.

The audience goes wild. Susan and Ethan rise along with everyone else and CLAP along. Some folks dance in the aisles.

The Gnomes for the Holiday troop, Triple Threat, Mackenzie, Carl the Comic, and the rest of the cast race on stage to form a backdrop for Holly's mesmerizing performance.

Holly finishes with a jazz split, her arms raised over her head. The music stops. PANDEMONIUM erupts. The audience showers Holly with a STANDING OVATION and roses on the stage.

MACKENZIE (CONT'D)

Let's hear it for Miss Holly Hart!!

Holly takes a spot on center stage next to Mackenzie as the entire cast takes one last thank you bow.

The curtains close. But the APPLAUSE continues.

INT. THE STARDUST - STAGE - CONTINUOUS

The cast scurries off stage and filters into the wings. Mackenzie wraps her arms around Holly in a huge hug.

MACKENZIE  
You were incredible!

HOLLY  
Thanks to your mash-up idea.

Holly is surrounded by other well-wishers. Mackenzie spots Doc P. among the hustle and bustle.

MACKENZIE  
Doc P. I'm so glad you came!

Doc P. hugs Mackenzie, grasps her shoulders, and stands back.

DOC P.  
Wonderful directing and M.C. debut!

MACKENZIE  
Thanks, but I'm sure you would have done a lot better.

DOC P.  
Nonsense! And it looked like you were having as much fun as the performers and the audience.

MACKENZIE  
I was!

DOC P.  
You know why they call me Doc P.?

MACKENZIE  
Because you have a doctorate in theater arts?

DOC P.  
Technically, yes. But really, it's because I can diagnose when somebody has caught the bug. And you, my dear, have caught it!

He looks Mackenzie squarely in the eyes.



DOC P. (CONT'D)

You caught the acting bug as a child. Now, years later, you've caught the directing bug as an adult. Embrace it. There are thousands of talented actors but only a handful of great directors. My money says you can be one.

Mackenzie ponders her mentor's words. Doc P. spots Holly surrounded by fans.

DOC P. (CONT'D)

Now, if you'll excuse me, I have to fawn over that little dancing prodigy. Hope I'm not too late for an autograph!

INT. THE STARDUST - OFFICE - LATER

Susan's friends and family gather around with anticipation as she counts the show proceeds and shares the tally.

SUSAN

Thirteen thousand, nine hundred, ninety-five dollars.

She turns to Ethan who's holding a document.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Attorney Hart. What does the Gynch Financial letter say I owe?

ETHAN

It says the borrower, Susan S. Snowe, must pay the lender in full by December twenty fifth in the amount of--

Ethan pauses for dramatic effect.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

Fourteen thousand dollars.

Everyone CHEERS. Hugs abound. Susan frowns.

SUSAN

But I'm short.

Noelle rolls her eyes at her mother.

NOELLE

Mom, c'mon! I'll loan you the remaining five bucks!

SUSAN

In that case, we just saved The Stardust!

More CHEERS. Ethan hugs Susan and turns to Mackenzie. He pauses for a beat, then hugs her too. They both share the moment a little longer than your typical celebratory hugs.

Noelle sees the prolonged embrace and pokes her mom. They exchange knowing smiles and return to the celebration.

INT. PAM AND EGGS DINER - DAY

Mackenzie's at a booth with a cup of coffee and a bowl of ice cream when Noelle rolls in and stakes a spot beside her. She glances at her watch.

NOELLE

Ice cream?

MACKENZIE

Not *just* ice cream. Pam's homemade Christmas peppermint ice cream.

NOELLE

At nine in the morning?

MACKENZIE

There's no law against eating ice cream in the morning.

NOELLE

No human law. But it's clearly against natural law. What's wrong?

MACKENZIE

Nothing. At least nothing that Christmas peppermint ice cream at nine in the morning can't fix.

Noelle leans back and crosses her arms. Mackenzie notices.

MACKENZIE (CONT'D)

Okay! The studio says I have to get back in two days or I'm fired.

NOELLE  
 (concerned)  
 I thought you could stay through  
 Christmas.

MACKENZIE  
 Not anymore.

NOELLE  
 It stinks big time, but you gotta  
 do what you gotta do.

MACKENZIE  
 That's the problem. I'm not sure  
 what the 'gotta do' is anymore.

NOELLE  
 You're falling for him, aren't you?  
 Both of them. Ethan *and* Holly. I  
 knew it when I saw you three at the  
 tree lighting.

MACKENZIE  
 (sighs)  
 Why did this have to happen now?  
 I've been waiting for a chance like  
 the Trish pilot my entire acting  
 career!

NOELLE  
 There's never a good time when it  
 comes to matters of the heart.

MACKENZIE  
 H-E-A-R-T or H-A-R-T?

NOELLE  
 (chuckles)  
 If it makes you feel better, I have  
 the same dilemma.

Noelle snatches Mackenzie's spoon and finishes off the ice  
 cream. Mackenzie watches her and shakes her head.

NOELLE (CONT'D)  
 Olaf. He's starting to get under my  
 skin. I've been trying to deny the  
 feelings but he's so darned cute.

MACKENZIE  
 And a really nice guy!

NOELLE

That too. So, what are we gonna do about these two nice guys?

Mackenzie sees Pam clearing off the adjacent table.

MACKENZIE

Miss Pam, could you bring us two more bowls of Christmas peppermint ice cream?

NOELLE

And two spoons!

INT. SUSAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Susan rocks on her porch swing as the letter carrier, HENRY, hands her the day's mail.

HENRY

Got a registered for you today, Ms. Snowe. Gonna need your Jane Henry.

Henry hands Susan a pen and she signs.

SUSAN

Thanks Henry. Give Nora my best.

After he leaves, she glances at the letter. The return address reads: GYNCH FINANCIAL. IMPORTANT. OPEN IMMEDIATELY.

Susan opens the envelope and reads the letter aloud.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

You are hereby notified you are in breach of your loan agreement. In addition to the loan amount due on December twenty-fifth, service fees and late payment penalties are due in full. Immediately.

Susan plops down in the porch swing when she sees the total.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Twelve thousand dollars!

She tosses the letter aside, hangs her head, and SOBS.

INT. ETHAN'S LAW OFFICE - DAY

Ethan's at his desk, feet up, reading docs. His cell CHIMES.

ETHAN  
Ethan Hart.

EXT. SUSAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Susan's on the porch swing, registered letter in hand.

SUSAN  
It's over.

INTERCUT PHONE CONVERSATION

Ethan drops his feet from the desk and sits up.

ETHAN  
Susan? What do you mean, it's--

SUSAN  
I received a registered letter. The Gynches say I owe more money.

ETHAN  
How much more?

SUSAN  
Twelve thousand. Payable now.

ETHAN  
That's a crock of--

SUSAN  
Ethan, I'm tired. I can't keep fighting like this.

ETHAN  
We have a chance in court, though.

SUSAN  
That just prolongs the pain.

ETHAN  
I understand. But I can ask the court to quash the action until--

SUSAN  
Son. You're a good lawyer but a lousy listener. Please just prepare whatever is needed to turn over The Stardust to those two grifters.

Ethan rubs his forehead and SIGHS.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

And don't tell my girls. It'd break  
their heart. Like it does mine.

END ACT SIX

ACT SEVEN

EXT. ETHAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Outside the front door, Mackenzie takes a deep breath and tries to muster courage for what she's about to do.

MACKENZIE  
(to herself)  
Suck it up, Mackie. Just tell him  
how you feel!

INT. ETHAN'S LAW OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Mackenzie steps inside. A hand-written note on Noelle's desk reads: BACK IN FIVE. Ethan sees Mackenzie walk in and rushes out of his office to greet her.

ETHAN  
This is a nice surprise!

MACKENZIE  
You're not in the middle of  
something important, are you?

ETHAN  
I always have time for you.

MACKENZIE  
(nervously)  
I just wanted to tell you how much  
I've enjoyed spending time with you  
and Holly. I'd forgotten how much I  
love Christmas. And what The  
Stardust and this town mean to me.

ETHAN  
I know the feeling. You've made me  
realize there's more to life than  
my law practice.

MACKENZIE  
I'm starting to feel the same way  
about my acting career. I wonder--

Ethan tilts his head hanging on to Mackenzie's every word.

The door swings open and the outlandish, zoftig mayor of Mistletoe, YASMENE CHOPRA (35), struts in. She smiles at Ethan, disregards Mackenzie, and interrupts with entitlement.

CHOPRA

Ethan, may I have a word, please?

Ethan's caught off guard by the mayor's intrusion.

ETHAN

Uh, sure Mayor, but can I finish--

MACKENZIE

(to Ethan)

It's okay. It can wait.

The mayor spins around, strolls into Ethan's office, and plops onto the couch. Ethan turns to Mackenzie and shrugs.

ETHAN

Maybe we can catch-up later?

MACKENZIE

(hiding disappointment)

Sure.

Mackenzie smiles uncomfortably and leaves. Ethan rushes into his office and slams the door behind him.

EXT. ETHAN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

As she passes Ethan's office window, Mackenzie sees the mayor embrace Ethan and kiss him on the lips. She SIGHS and wastes no time in making a call on her cell.

MACKENZIE

Yes, I need a ticket for tomorrow  
on the first flight to Los Angeles.

INT. SUSAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A somber-faced Mackenzie slouches beside Susan on the couch.

MACKENZIE

I'm sorry, Mom, but I need to get  
back to LA.

SUSAN

You promised to stay through  
Christmas!

MACKENZIE

I never *promised*. I've been pushing  
my luck to stay as long as I have.  
And we raised the money to pay off  
your debt, so my job's complete.



Susan shifts uncomfortably on the couch, feeling guilty for not sharing the bad news about the additional unpaid debt.

SUSAN

What about Ethan? And Holly?

MACKENZIE

What about them?

SUSAN

You're getting on so well.

MACKENZIE

Getting on? What's that mean?

SUSAN

It means you two have goo-goo eyes for each other. Like two high schoolers on a first date.

MACKENZIE

Goo-goo eyes? Who says that?

SUSAN

Okay, probably too old school. How about you have the hots for each other, then?

MACKENZIE

Aye. Mom, I really like Ethan. And Holly. But their home is here in Mistletoe. And mine is back in LA.

SUSAN

Mackie, home is where your family and friends are. Where the people who love you live. Especially at Christmas. Do you have that in LA?

Susan's revelation is an epiphany for Mackenzie. She wraps her arms around her mom. They both tear up. After a beat, Mackenzie pulls away and looks at Susan.

MACKENZIE

I love you, mom. And I'd love to stay, but I'm already booked on the first flight to LA tomorrow.

Susan nods and vanishes into her bedroom to cry. Mackenzie slumps toward her bedroom to pack.

INT. BEDROOM - A BIT LATER

Mackenzie takes a break from packing to scroll through recent photos on her cell.

SERIES OF SHOTS

Mackenzie smiles at a selfie of Ethan and her at the ice rink, both gazing into each other's eyes, oblivious to the many skaters swirling all around them.

She admires a three-shot of Holly, Ethan, and her during their fun-filled search for the perfect Christmas tree.

She pauses at a closeup of Ethan and her, side by side, belting out Christmas carols at the Mistletoe Tree Lighting.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

Still smiling, Mackenzie stops scrolling and tosses her cell onto the bed. Her smile vanishes as she recalls the most recent memory of all.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT. ETHAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Mackenzie witnesses the embrace between Ethan and Mistletoe's Mayor. Long and seemingly enjoyable. Then, the kiss. On the lips! Something 'friends' or 'business associates' do not do.

RETURN TO PRESENT

Mackenzie snaps back to reality. She tosses more clothes into her suitcase, and continues to pack for the trip to LA.

INT. THE STARDUST - LOBBY - DAY

Olaf refills the concession stand shelves as Noelle calls out the brands and quantities.

NOELLE

Roarin' Red Hots. Twelve boxes.

OLAF

Check.

NOELLE

Fruity Tooties. Ten boxes.

OLAF

Check.

Noelle sees Mackenzie walk into the lobby with her suitcase.

NOELLE

Mackie?

Olaf's confused.

OLAF

How many boxes?

Noelle and Mackenzie LAUGH.

NOELLE

Olaf! Take a break. My sister's here.

Embarrassed, Olaf glances up from the concession stand.

OLAF

Oh! Sorry. Hi, Mackie.

MACKENZIE

Hi, Olaf.

Noelle wheels over to her sister.

NOELLE

You're really going back?

MACKENZIE

No other choice but to really.

NOELLE

You know that's not true. Have you told him?

Mackenzie hands two cards to Noelle.

MACKENZIE

That's what these are for. One's for Ethan and one's for Holly.

NOELLE

What am I supposed to do with them?

MACKENZIE

Can you see that they get them?

NOELLE

So, you sneak out of town, and I do your dirty work after the fact? And at Christmas? A bit cowardly.

MACKENZIE

Call me what you want. I can't say  
I don't deserve it.

NOELLE

I'm sorry, sis. It's your life.  
Your decision. I'll see they get...  
whatever these are.

MACKENZIE

Apology cards, I suppose.

The two sisters exchange a hug and a last look. Mackenzie  
grabs her luggage and heads for the door.

NOELLE

Mackie!

Mackenzie spins around and faces Noelle.

NOELLE (CONT'D)

Merry Christmas!

Mackenzie's eyes water as she replies.

MACKENZIE

Merry Christmas, little sis.

After Mackenzie leaves, Olaf comes from behind the concession  
stand to console Noelle. She smiles and pats him on the back.

NOELLE

Alright, break's over. Just because  
your boss is also your girlfriend,  
don't think you can take advantage.

Olaf raises his eyebrows, pleasantly surprised.

OLAF

So, if you're my girlfriend, I must  
be your--

NOELLE

*Man slave.* So, quit chit-chatting  
and get back to work! I've got to  
go see Ethan, pronto!

INT. ETHAN'S LAW OFFICE - DAY

Noelle races into the office on her mobility scooter. Ethan  
looks up as Noelle rolls to a stop beside his desk.

ETHAN

I thought you were off today.

NOELLE

I'm not here for work. I'm here to save you from a dark future filled with loneliness and despair.

ETHAN

What are you talking about?

Noelle tosses the two cards from Mackenzie onto Ethan's desk. Ethan reaches for the cards. Noelle slaps his hand.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

OW! What's wrong with you?

NOELLE

It's not me. It's you. And Mackie. Forget those cards for now. You need to stop her from doing something you'll both regret.

ETHAN

From doing what?

NOELLE

Leaving! She's on her way back to LA. If you care about her and your once in a lifetime relationship, you need to stop her.

ETHAN

Wait, what? Is she leaving or has she already left?

NOELLE

Both. She just left for the airport. But she hasn't gotten on the plane yet. So... GO STOP HER!

Ethan jumps up from the desk and races for the door.

ETHAN

Is she in a rental car?

NOELLE

No. Roy's cab.

ETHAN

That big yellow one?

ETHAN (CONT'D)

Yep. She might still be in town but  
if not, there's only one road to  
the airport. So, get going!

Ethan flies out the door and calls out without looking back.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

Thanks! Take the rest of the day  
off.

Noelle shakes her head at Ethan's forgetfulness.

EXT. SIDEWALK - CONTINUOUS

Ethan races to his car parked at the curb and jumps in.

INT. ETHAN'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

He turns the ignition key. The car makes a GARGLING noise,  
over and over again, but doesn't start.

In frustration, Ethan SLAMS his palm on the dashboard. His  
eyes widen as he gets an idea. He scans the contacts list on  
his cell and punches in a number.

INT. CAB - DAY

ROY (50s) a scruffy, unshaven cabbie answers his cell.

ROY

Roy's Cab Company. We get you there  
with a smile. Roy here.

INTERCUT PHONE CONVERSATION

ETHAN

Roy! Ethan Hart.

ROY

Oh, hey, Eth--

ETHAN

Don't say my name!

ROY

Oh... kay.

ETHAN

Is Mackenzie Snowe with you?

Roy glances in the rear-view mirror. Smiles at Mackenzie.

ROY

Uh... yes.

ETHAN

Have you left town yet?

ROY

No, just about to.

ETHAN

Okay, I need you to pull over by the city limits sign. Pretend your car broke down. And stay there 'til I get there. I have something to give her. It's a surprise.

ROY

Okay. But why would I want to--

ETHAN

I'll give you a hundred bucks!

ROY

Oh well, sure then. What're neighbors for?

ETHAN

I'm on my way.

Ethan ends the call, jumps from his car, and runs.

INT. CAB - DAY

Roy moves into action. Out the front window, he sees the city limits sign. He slips the cab into neutral and slowly takes his foot off the gas. The cab coasts onto the shoulder.

MACKENZIE

Why are we stopping?

ROY

I dunno. Engine just died.

Roy slams the cab into park and turns to Mackenzie.

ROY (CONT'D)

Wait right there and lemme check.

MACKENZIE

Could you hurry? There's only one flight to LA and I'm on it.

ROY  
Sure. Probably just a loose wire.

Roy pops the hood and climbs out.

EXT. CAB - CONTINUOUS

Roy ambles to the front of the cab. He makes a racket under the hood and tosses around a few colorful epithets to make for a more convincing ruse.

EXT. MISTLETOE STREETS - DAY

Ethan sprints down the road past the Victorian houses of Mistletoe, each one decked out in bold Christmas splendor.

He races past two blue-haired seniors named ARTHUR and IMOGENE using an air pump to inflate a plastic Santa in their front yard. They stop to watch and wave as Ethan races past.

ARTHUR  
Imogene. Was that--

IMOGENE  
Sure was. Ethan Hart. The lawyer.

ARTHUR  
What in tarnation is he--

IMOGENE  
Dunno. Let's find out!

Imogene drops the air pump and races after Ethan. Arthur SIGHS and follows Imogene.

As Ethan barrels through the neighborhood with Arthur and Imogene trying to keep up, other CURIOUS ONLOOKERS join in. Soon, a dozen men, women, and kids are following Ethan, none of whom are sure where he's going or, why they've joined in.

EXT. CAB - DAY

Roy peeks from behind the hood and spots Ethan in the distance followed by Ethan's fan club running behind him. Roy scratches his head and points Ethan to the back seat of the cab. Ethan nods. Roy ducks back under the hood.



INT./EXT. CAB - CONTINUOUS

Ethan reaches the cab and yanks open the back door. The crowd following him stops to watch.

In the back seat, Mackenzie bolts up, startled. Ethan smiles and raises a finger for her to give him a second while he catches his breath.

ETHAN  
(breathless)  
Mackie... you can't...

MACKENZIE  
Can't?

ETHAN  
Leave.

MACKENZIE  
Why?

Mackenzie SIGHS. She reaches into her carry-on, withdraws a water bottle, and hands it to Ethan. He chugs it down as the crowd watches and waits for what's about to happen.

MACKENZIE (CONT'D)  
Because why?

Ethan spots something in the front seat.

INT. CAB - CONTINUOUS

He climbs in and yanks down the mistletoe hanging from the rearview mirror. Dangles it over Mackenzie's head. And kisses her passionately. She doesn't want the moment to end. Ethan stops long enough to answer her question.

ETHAN  
Because I am head-over-heels in  
love with you.

Mackenzie is speechless. But only for a beat.

MACKENZIE  
You had me at the mistletoe.

She pulls Ethan closer if that's possible, closes her eyes, and kisses him long and passionately. Outside the cab, the group of onlookers see the kiss. They APPLAUD and CHEER.

At this most inopportune moment, Roy pokes his head inside the back of the cab.

ROY  
Whadya know, it was just a loose  
wire after all!

INT. CAB - DAY

Roy jumps behind the wheel and starts the engine. He glances at the rearview and sees Mackenzie and Ethan still kissing in the back seat.

ROY  
I assume we're not going to the  
airport now?

Mackenzie stops kissing and looks at Ethan. They LAUGH.

ROY (CONT'D)  
I'll take that as a yes.

EXT. CAB - CONTINUOUS

The cab makes a U-turn and heads back to Mistletoe. The crowd disperses but not before APPLAUDING what they just experienced a second time.

END ACT SEVEN

ACT EIGHT

INT. CAB - DAY

In the backseat, Ethan leans toward Mackenzie.

ETHAN  
Why were you leaving without  
telling me?

MACKENZIE  
I was mad at you.

ETHAN  
Why?

MACKENZIE  
You really don't know?

Ethan gets a guilty facial expression.

ETHAN  
You found out, didn't you?

MACKENZIE  
(angry)  
YES! I saw you kiss her.

ETHAN  
(confused)  
Kiss who?

MACKENZIE  
The mayor. I saw you two from the  
sidewalk. Through your window.

Ethan understands now. He smiles and shakes his head.

MACKENZIE (CONT'D)  
It's not funny, Ethan!

He places an arm around Mackenzie.

ETHAN  
You're right. It wouldn't be funny  
if I was the one *doing* the kissing.  
But what you saw was Mayor Chopra  
*kissing me*. She's had a thing for  
me since Nicole died.

MACKENZIE

(incredulous)

It sure looked like you were enjoying it.

ETHAN

Didn't you see me push her away?

MACKENZIE

No. I couldn't watch any longer.

ETHAN

Well, I did. I pushed her away and told her to behave herself. Then we discussed town legal business like nothing ever happened. And she left. A little mad, for sure. But she left.

Ever the eavesdropper, Roy glances in the rearview mirror and offers his own two cents.

ROY

Ethan's right. She kisses everyone. Kissed me once. Square on the lips!

MACKENZIE

Why would she do that?

ROY

She's just one of them kissers. Most politicians stop at kissin' babies. She smooches the adults too. At least the good lookin' guys like me and Ethan.

MACKENZIE

Thanks for that insight, Roy.

ROY

Anytime!

MACKENZIE

(softly, to Ethan)

I'm glad you told me. We need to be honest with each other. Always.

ETHAN

(with a tinge of guilt)

I know. So, I need to come clean. You know when you said you were mad, I thought it's because I didn't tell you what your mom asked me to do.

MACKENZIE

Which was?

ETHAN

I can tell you but I think she should tell you herself.

Roy's been taking in every word. He leans over the seat.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

Drop you at The Stardust then?

Ethan and Mackenzie give each other a 'can you believe this guy?' look and break into LAUGHTER.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

Yes, Roy. You're a mind reader.

ROY

At Roy's Cab Company, customer service is our pride!

INT. STARDUST - OFFICE - DAY

Ethan and Mackenzie surprise Susan as she vacuums.

SUSAN

You came back! I knew you'd change your mind--

Mackenzie frowns.

MACKENZIE

Is there something you need to tell me, mom?

Susan glances at Ethan. He raises his eyebrows. She recognizes the expression for what it is--time to come clean.

SUSAN

We didn't raise enough money to save The Stardust. So, I asked Ethan to prepare paperwork to transfer ownership to the Gynches.

MACKENZIE

But we did raise enough!

ETHAN

They added hidden service fees and penalties. Twelve thousand dollars, payable immediately.

MACKENZIE

(to Susan)

Why didn't you tell me?

SUSAN

I was ashamed. Your sister and you, Ethan, Holly, everyone in Mistletoe has already done so much.

MACKENZIE

We can *still* do more!

SUSAN

How? Another Christmas show? Too late for that. Now's a good time for a Christmas miracle but I'm not keeping my fingers crossed.

The bell above the front door RINGS. Don and Dawn Gynch squirm their slimy bodies into Susan's office.

DON

Just stopping by on this joyous Christmas eve to remind you about that payment due tomorrow.

MACKENZIE

You'll get your money. Until then, the Snowe family still owns this theater.

ETHAN

(to the Gynches)

Really classy move to make Susan pay you on Christmas day. You know it's a national holiday, right?

DAWN

Not for Gynch Financial. We're staying open just to see your faces when you sign over this dump to us.

DON

Which we plan to bulldoze to the ground the day after Christmas. WOOHOO! Love to tear down the old to make way for the new!

Susan shoots them a death-stare and points to the door.

SUSAN

GET OUT! NOW!

INT. THE STARDUST - LOBBY - LATER

The Snowes along with Ethan, Holly, and Olaf, pack up in preparation for the transfer of The Stardust to the Gynches.

SUSAN

I'm so sorry it came to this.

NOELLE

Mom, nobody could have saved The Stardust from those lowlifes.

MACKENZIE

Sis is right, mom. Besides, you can be so proud. Everyone in Mistletoe has fond memories of a film they saw or a special night they recall.

NOELLE

Mine were mostly in the balcony!

Noelle catches Olaf frowning. She offers an apology of sorts.

NOELLE (CONT'D)

It was way before I met you, babe!

Mackenzie grasps her mother's hand. They hold off tears.

MACKENZIE

The last few days of fighting to save this gem have reminded me why I wanted to be an actor. It's not the individual performance that makes for great film or television or theater. It's the work of the entire cast. The whole team.

Mackenzie grasps Ethan's hand beside her. She motions for the others to join hands as well.

MACKENZIE (CONT'D)

We are The Stardust. All of us here. And everyone in Mistletoe.

EVERYONE IN THE ROOM

WE ARE THE STARDUST! ALL OF US  
HERE. AND EVERYONE IN MISTLETOE!

NOELLE

Except the Gynches!

MACKENZIE

(smiles)  
Except the Gynches.

SUSAN

Thanks Mackie. It *has* been a wonderful ride. But all good things must come to an end.

SERIES OF SHOTS

The group boxes up items from the office, the concession stand, the projection room, the lobby. They cart off posters, photos, projectors, cables, computers. Sad faces abound.

RETURN TO SCENE

Mackenzie approaches Holly as she rolls up posters and places them in a box. Gabe SNORES nearby.

MACKENZIE

Holly, can you help me box up the storage room? Not sure what's in there so it could be an adventure.

HOLLY

Sure! Adventures are my specialty. Gabe's too.

At the mention of his name, Gabe awakens and races after Mackenzie and Holly as they tramp down the hall.

INT. THE STARDUST - STORAGE ROOM - DAY

Mackenzie flicks on the light. She, Holly, and Gabe survey the room. Cobwebs in the corners, dust on the floor, boxes piled high along all four walls. Hands on hips, Mackenzie SIGHS at the formidable task ahead.

MACKENZIE

Start wherever you like. It's all gotta go.

HOLLY

Can I keep any cool stuff nobody else wants?

MACKENZIE

Sure. Unless you find an Oscar or the original Citizen Kane script.

HOLLY

Hmm. I'll take that as a yes since I don't know what that stuff is.



The storage room gets Gabe's full attention. He goes on patrol, sniffing every inch of the forgotten room. Suddenly, there's a BARKATHON. Gabe won't stop howling.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

What is it boy?

Holly sees Gabe paw at a cardboard box. She removes a document marked "OFFICIAL." Gabe BARKS louder and louder.

MACKENZIE

What's he saying?

HOLLY

I'm not sure but he hasn't stopped since he found this.

Holly hands the document to Mackenzie. She reads it aloud.

MACKENZIE

This Property Easement Agreement is entered between "Grantor," the State of Minnesota, and "Grantee," Mr. Gene Snowe. That's dad!

HOLLY

Huzzah!

MACKENZIE

The easement will begin on December twenty-fifth, nineteen seventy-nine and continue in perpetuity.

HOLLY

What's that?

MACKENZIE

Perpetuity means forever. And this says the easement grants dad and our family exclusive rights for--

Mackenzie stops reading and stares at Holly.

MACKENZIE (CONT'D)

We need to show this to your dad and my mom. Come on!

Mackenzie and Holly race from the room. Gabe's close behind.

INT. THE STARDUST - LOBBY - DAY

Mackenzie, Holly, and the BARKING Gabe race in. Ethan, Susan, Noelle, and Olaf look up, startled.

MACKENZIE

Ethan, you need to look at this!  
Mom, you too. It was in the storage  
room with dad's papers.

Everyone gathers around as Ethan reads the document. Complete  
silence. Feet tapping. SIGHS. Finally, Ethan looks up.

ETHAN

I think we need to stop packing and  
start celebrating.

SUSAN

What?

Ethan waves the document in the air.

ETHAN

This is a property easement granted  
by the State of Minnesota to Gene  
as long as The Stardust remains in  
the Snowe family.

SUSAN

An easement? For what?

ETHAN

For the natural gas and sewer lines  
that run beneath the theater.

NOELLE

I know I'm studying to be a  
paralegal, but can you cut the  
legalese and speak English, Ethan?

ETHAN

(smiles)

The state has gas and sewer lines  
running below The Stardust. And  
this easement prevents construction  
of anything that could impact the  
lines. Such as--

SUSAN

A commercial development like the  
Gynch's ski resort?

ETHAN

Yup.

MACKENZIE

But what about the twelve-thousand  
bucks they say mom owes?

ETHAN

I'm gonna take them to court on that. But no matter what, they can never take over The Stardust while the easement is in effect.

MACKENZIE

Which is basically... forever.

ETHAN

Exactly!

CHEERS break out. Hugs. Smiles. High fives.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

Susan, do you want your attorney to call them with the bad news or would you like to do the honors?

SUSAN

Oh yes! This is a call I've been wanting to make for a long time!

END ACT EIGHT

ACT NINE

INT. THE STARDUST - LOBBY - DAY

Susan races to her office. The others listen from the lobby.

SUSAN (O.C.)

Hello Dawn. Susan Snowe. You might want to put Don on speaker. He needs to hear my good news too!

Susan pokes her head out of the office and gives a big thumbs up to the group. Mackenzie turns to Ethan.

MACKENZIE

Thank you. It's nice to have a good attorney on the payroll.

They stare at each other with what Susan calls goo-goo eyes. The silence is broken when Mackenzie's cell BUZZES. We only hear her side of the brief conversation.

MACKENZIE (CONT'D)

Hello. No, I understand it's a business. You too. Goodbye.

Mackenzie ends the call. The others remain silent for a beat.

ETHAN

Are you okay?

MACKENZIE

(smiles)  
I just got fired.

The others are puzzled by Mackenzie's reaction. She stares blankly into space, notices the concerned faces of the others, and begins to CHUCKLE nervously.

MACKENZIE (CONT'D)

I'm actually relieved! Now it makes my decision way easier.

ETHAN

What decision?

MACKENZIE

Whether to return to LA.

Ethan's eyes widen. So do Holly's, Noelle's, Olaf's, even Gabe's. Susan comes out of the office.

SUSAN

Did I just hear you might not go  
back to LA?

MACKENZIE

I'd like to stay if that's okay.

The entire group answers at the same time.

THE GROUP

YESSSS!

Gabe BARKS a "Yes!" also to make it unanimous.

Ethan pulls Mackenzie into his arms and kisses her with  
feeling. This time there's no need for mistletoe as an  
excuse. He pauses to gaze into her eyes.

ETHAN

Are you sure about this? What will  
you do in Mistletoe?

MACKENZIE

Well, there is this one idea I've  
been having.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. THE STARDUST - DAY

A group of ONLOOKERS (including Gabe) hover by a ladder  
beneath the theater marquee.

SUPER: CHRISTMAS DAY

Ethan stands on the ladder wearing an apron filled with black  
vinyl letters. Using the letters, he snaps words onto the  
marquee. Below him, Mackenzie and Holly steady the ladder.

Suddenly, Gabe goes into full BARKDOWN. WOOF! WOOF! WOOF!  
Aware of the dog's sixth sense, Ethan looks down at Gabe.

ETHAN

(to Mackenzie and Holly)  
Is he trying to tell me something?  
Every time he barks like that I  
seem to fall.

MACKENZIE

(laughs)

I think this time he's just saying  
your spelling needs work.

Ethan scrutinizes the marquee. The block letters spell out  
"OPENINGSOON: SNOW EATING STUDEO.

MACKENZIE (CONT'D)

Guess they didn't teach spelling or  
punctuation in UCLA law school, eh?

ETHAN

That's why I hired Noelle.

Ethan corrects the marquee so that it reads: "OPENING SOON:  
SNOWE ACTING STUDIO." Holly and Mackenzie shoot him a thumbs  
up. Gabe BARKS his approval.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

How the heck does Gabe know how to  
spell?

HOLLY

I told you dad. He's magical!

Ethan climbs down the ladder. Holly displays a blindfold to  
Mackenzie. She's confused.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

So you don't peek!

ETHAN

We want to show you the studio.

MACKENZIE

Great! I can't wait to see how  
you've fixed up the storage room.  
As long as the cobwebs are gone!

Holly puts the blindfold on Mackenzie and ties it snug.

MACKENZIE (CONT'D)

YOW! Who taught you to tie a  
blindfold, Blackbeard?

HOLLY

Just making sure you don't cheat!

They escort Mackenzie into The Stardust.

INT. THE STARDUST - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The group stops in front of the storage room. The door is wrapped in red foil and a giant white bow.

ETHAN  
(to Mackie)  
You ready to see your Christmas  
present?

MACKENZIE  
Absolutely.

ETHAN  
Okay, remove the blindfold and open  
the door.

Mackenzie uncovers her eyes, smiles at the Christmas wrapped door, and turns the doorknob.

INT. STORAGE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

They all step inside. Mackenzie, eyes wide open, covers her mouth and looks around with disbelief.

MACKENZIE  
Oh my--

What was once a drab, cobwebbed storage space is now a state-of-the-art acting studio.

Two rows of chairs in the back, an elevated stage up front, professional klieg lights, digital camera on a tripod, props and sets along the side walls.

The others watch as Mackenzie stops to rub her fingers over a photo of her as a kid with her dad watching her act.

ETHAN  
(to Mackie)  
What do you think?

Mackenzie runs to Ethan, wraps her arms around him, and buries her head in his chest to hide happy tears.

MACKENZIE  
I absolutely love it! Thank you!  
And everyone who made it possible.

ETHAN  
We're glad you like it but like  
they say on TV, wait, there's more!

On cue, Doc P. and the entire cast from the *Save The Stardust Christmas Show* appear from behind a curtain in front. Everyone joins in with a holiday greeting.

EVERYONE IN THE ROOM  
MERRY CHRISTMAS, MACKIE!

CHEERS and APPLAUSE break out. High fives, pats on the back, smiles on every face. Mackenzie is delighted.

DOC P.  
When does your first class start?

MACKENZIE  
I dunno. It's happening so fast I--

DOC P.  
How about the day after New Year's?

MACKENZIE  
Sure, but first I'll need students.

DOC P.  
Oh, I don't think you'll have any problem there.

Doc P. raises his hand and scans the room.

DOC P. (CONT'D)  
Who here plans to sign up for the Mackenzie Snowe Acting Studio's first class?

Every hand in the room flies up. Doc P. winks at Mackenzie and calls out to the group.

DOC P. (CONT'D)  
Sign up line starts behind me.

Ethan places his arms around Mackenzie and Holly. They watch as the students fight for a good spot in the sign-up line.

INT. GYNCH FINANCIAL - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

In a construction worker's jumpsuit, hardhat, and safety goggles, Don Gynch shambles in. He gazes at the architectural model for the Gynch Mountain Ski Resort and Spa covering the conference table.

Expressionless, he walks to the corner, retrieves a sledgehammer, raises it above his head and is just about to lower it when Dawn shuffles in. She raises her palm. He freezes in mid motion.



DAWN  
WOAH THERE, PARTNER!

Dawn is in the same get-up as her husband.

DAWN (CONT'D)  
I told you to wait!

DON  
(embarrassed)  
Sorry.

Dawn walks to the corner and retrieves another sledgehammer. She returns to the conference table, raises the weapon above her head, and calls out to Don.

DAWN  
Okay. Now.

They both SLAM and POUND and PUMMEL the model until all that remains is a pile of plastic rubble. When the dust clears, the Gynches remove their safety glasses and hardhats.

DAWN (CONT'D)  
(to her husband)  
Next time, let's make sure we check  
for easements *before* we go out and  
buy up all of Mistletoe!

DON  
Roger that.

They stroll out, sledgehammers slung over their shoulders.

EXT. STUDIO BACK LOT - DAY

Establishing shot of a massive sound stage.

INT. TV STUDIO - DAY

A live studio audience watches the taping of the pilot episode of "Trish Out of Water." There's a BUZZ of excitement in the bleachers and on set.

INT. BACKSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Holding hands, Nathan and Chloe prepare to walk onto the set.

NATHAN  
This is our chance to shine, baby.

CHLOE  
 (smirking)  
 Eat your heart out Mackenzie Snowe.

INT. TV STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

The STAGE MANAGER motions for the audience to settle down and signals for the cameras to roll. Nathan, in the role of Sam, and Chloe, as Trish, stroll onto the set designed to replicate a busy Manhattan street scene.

But when she sees the live audience, Chloe freezes. Nathan grimaces and tilts his head toward her, a signal for Chloe to deliver her lines. It doesn't take. She remains frozen. Nathan decides to deliver both Sam's and Trish's lines.

NATHAN  
 This big old city is different from  
 what you're used to, eh? No pigs  
 and cows wandering the streets.

Nathan feigns a laugh. Still no response from Chloe. He glances at Bennington watching off stage. Bennington motions for Nathan to keep going with the ruse.

NATHAN (CONT'D)  
 Of course, I know big city folks  
 like me think every small town is  
 just a giant barnyard filled with  
 hicks and hayseeds.

Nathan pauses hoping Chloe will snap out of it. No dice.

NATHAN (CONT'D)  
 And you small towners think big  
 cities are all crime and squalor.  
 So, I guess we're even.

The audience starts to squirm. The scene makes no sense.

NATHAN (CONT'D)  
 I suppose since you moved here, on  
 days like this, you feel like a  
 fish out of water.

Still nothing from the frozen Chloe. Nathan plugs away.

NATHAN (CONT'D)  
 I mean a *Trish* out of water. Get  
 it? Your name. Trish. So, you're a  
*Trish* out of water.

No laughs. Nathan finishes the nonsensical bloodbath.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Now who's the corny one? Me, the  
cute girl from Sandy Creek or you,  
the pompous wiseguy from Manhattan?

Nathan tries to correct the lines but it's way too late.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

I mean, me the pompous wiseguy from  
Sandy Creek or you, the cute girl  
from Manhattan. OH CRUD!

The stage manager makes an imaginary knife slash across his  
throat for the camera operators to stop filming. On the set,  
Chloe remains in a glacial state of paralysis.

In the bleachers, GRUMBLING audience members filter out of  
the studio. On set, Bennington shakes his head and mumbles.

BENNINGTON

Why on earth did we fire you,  
Mackenzie Snowe?!

EXT. SUSAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Toting opened presents, Mackenzie, Ethan, Holly, and Gabe  
emerge from the front door onto Susan's porch. Susan, Noelle,  
and Olaf say their goodbyes and one last "Merry Christmas!"

HOLLY

This was the best Christmas ever!

ETHAN

Why's that?

HOLLY

Well, my dance at the Christmas  
show was pretty good.

MACKENZIE

Better than good. It was great!

HOLLY

And, I found Gabe, my guardian  
angel, magic dog.

Gabe BARKS because, of course he does.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

(to Mackenzie)

And, because you decided to stay  
here and not return to Los Angeles.

Mackenzie wraps an arm around Holly.

MACKENZIE

Thank you, Holly. It was an easier decision than I thought.

HOLLY

For real? Mistletoe over Hollywood?

MACKENZIE

Well, sure. Does Hollywood have you and your dad?

HOLLY

No.

MACKENZIE

And does Hollywood have my mom and my sister and Olaf?

HOLLY

No.

MACKENZIE

And does Hollywood have all the aspiring actors who're gonna be in my first class?

HOLLY

Uh, well, yea. That's why they're in Hollywood. Like you were.

MACKENZIE

True. That was a trick question.

ETHAN

(smiles)

You forgot the most important thing Mistletoe has that Hollywood doesn't.

HOLLY

What?

ETHAN

Snow.

HOLLY

Dad, that's dumb. Lots of places have snow.

Ethan wraps his arms around Mackenzie.

ETHAN  
Not Mackenzie Snowe!

They all laugh. Ethan kisses Mackenzie. Suddenly, Gabe has another BARK attack. Ethan and Mackenzie stop kissing.

ETHAN (CONT'D)  
Am I going to fall off the porch?

HOLLY  
No Dad! Look, he's barking at that!

Holly points to a shooting star blazing across the night sky. Mackenzie, Ethan, and Holly join hands and watch as more shooting stars cross the heavens.

HOLLY (CONT'D)  
Like I said. Best Christmas ever!

Susan, Noelle, and Olaf stride onto the porch to share the dazzling performance on this star-filled magical Christmas night in tiny Mistletoe, Minnesota.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END