

LAST VIRGINIA CHRISTMAS

Written by

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EXT. VIRGINIA - DAY

Sweeping shots of the Virginia countryside in winter. And nestled in the wilderness is the quaint town of Staunton.

EXT. DOWNTOWN STAUNTON - DAY

Downtown Staunton is overflowing with Christmas decorations. Bundled up for the cold, people walk the charming row of shops and restaurants on a crisp winter day.

EXT. MARVIN HOUSE - DAY

A little ways off from downtown, where beautiful homes dot the road. One of them is particularly striking-- a large, gorgeous home covered in garland and Christmas lights.

In fact, the last of the Christmas lights are just being hung by JOHN MARVIN (late 50s), standing on a ladder as he staples a final strand into place.

John looks at his work. Satisfied, he holsters the staple gun and begins descending the ladder.

EXT. MARVIN HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

Like the house, the porch is also bursting with Christmas decorations. PEGGY (late 50s) puts on the final touch, hanging a giant wreath on the front door.

She straightens it and smiles-- *perfect*. Then, she walks off the porch into the front yard.

EXT. MARVIN HOUSE - DAY

Peggy meets John as he reaches the bottom of the ladder. They walk further into the yard to get a better look at the house.

Taking in all of the decorations, the house is breathtaking. They both stare at it with a smile, John throwing an arm around his wife.

PEGGY
It's beautiful.

JOHN
It really is.
(beat)
One thing I'm not going to miss is climbing that ladder.

Their smiles falter a bit at that, staring at the house for a moment in silence. Then, Peggy gives her husband a kiss. *

PEGGY *

Come on inside. You've earned a cup of coffee. *

Peggy starts heading inside, leaving John to take in the house for a moment longer. *

INT. MARVIN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Inside, the house is just as festive, overflowing with warmth and only made more inviting with the holiday decor. *

John enters the house, making his way to the large couch in the middle of the room. He sits down and sinks in. *

Peggy emerges from the kitchen with two mugs of coffee. She walks over to John and hands him a mug, sitting next to him. *

The two of them sip in silence for a moment, enjoying the quiet. After a beat: *

JOHN *

Gotta be honest, I'm not looking forward to telling the kids. Think they'll take the news okay? *

Peggy puts her hand on John's. *

PEGGY *

Bethany will be fine. She always is. And Mary... well, she'll need some time. *

John instinctively looks towards the ceiling. *

JOHN *

That's an understatement. *

Peggy smiles at that. A beat, then: *

JOHN *

What about Megan? *

Peggy thinks on that-- *a little more complicated.* *

PEGGY *

I don't know. The holidays aren't the easiest time of year for her. *

John nods at that. Another beat of silence. *

JOHN

Well, the important thing is we'll
all be together for Christmas.

John and Mary share a smile. They stare into each other's
eyes, and a classic version of "I'll Be Home for Christmas"
begins to play as opening credits start to roll.

INT. MEGAN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

A cute, modern home. A BLUETOOTH SPEAKER sitting on the
coffee table continues to play the song.

MEGAN (32) helps her daughter IVY (7) carry her luggage to
the front door.

SUPER: AUSTIN, TEXAS

MEGAN

Okay, the car should be here in two
minutes. Nice work, munchkin. That
was some fast packing.

Megan holds up her hand, and Ivy gives her a high five.

MEGAN

You excited to see grandma and
grandpa?

IVY

Yeah!

MEGAN

What about your aunts?

Ivy pretends to think on this. Megan laughs.

IVY

Just kidding. I want to see them,
too.

(beat)

You think we'll beat them to
grandma and grandpa's this year?

MEGAN

Definitely.

(then)

Well, maybe not aunt Bethany. You
know how she gets.

IVY

Yeah. She doesn't even let me win
at Scrabble.

Megan laughs again.

MEGAN

Knowing her, they're already in
Jersey.

The song continues to play as it carries us to--

CUT TO:

EXT. INTERSTATE 95 - DAY

A busy section of freeway in New Jersey. We focus on one car
in particular-- a sensible yet luxurious SUV.

SUPER: INTERSTATE 95, NEWARK, NEW JERSEY

INT. BETHANY'S CAR - DAY

Inside, the ride is smooth and quiet. The radio continues
playing our Christmas tune. *

Behind the wheel is BETHANY (30), dressed in a smart suit
like she just finished a day at the office.

In the passenger seat next to her is GEORGE (32). His outfit
is similarly stuffy, but leaning more academic than
corporate. Definitely a scholar of some kind.

George turns down the music and refers to his phone. *

GEORGE

So, from Long Island to Staunton,
it's exactly four hundred and
thirty-six miles. I suggest we stop
in Philadelphia to switch and grab
a bite to eat. *

BETHANY

Perfect. *

The two sit in silence for a moment, the music softly playing
in the background.

GEORGE

After, if we're feeling up to it,
maybe we could take in the U.S.
Mint? I've heard their coin tour is
really something.

BETHANY

Ooo, that sounds fun. *

There's not a hint of sarcasm in her voice. *

BETHANY
Time permitting? *

GEORGE
Of course. *

BETHANY
Wonderful. *

Bethany turns the radio volume back up, and the two continue their drive without another word. *

INT. MARVIN HOUSE - MARY'S ROOM - DAY *

The room looks like it's been decorated for a girl in high school. There's a LUMP underneath a mountain of covers on the bed, and it stirs as the lights on an ALARM CLOCK flash.

SUPER: STAUNTON, VIRGINIA *

A hand reaches out from the lump, repeatedly pressing a button on our alarm clock, lowering the volume on our song once again.

After a beat, the lump starts to struggle, tangled in the sheets. It finally manages to get free and toss them off.

MARY (22) sits up in bed, still half asleep, and groggily moves to the door.

INT. MARVIN HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY

Mary emerges from the bedroom door and steps into a hallway, the song still playing. Christmas decorations abound, including mistletoe hanging on the door frame just outside of every bedroom. *

She shuffles down the hallway, the walls lined with photos of the Marvin family. *

ON PHOTOS: Pictures of Peggy, John, Megan, Bethany and Mary throughout various stages of life. Graduations, weddings, travel, reunions-- all the signs of a close family. *

Mary reaches the railing at the top of the stairs, putting a hand on it-- and accidentally pops off a knob from the banister. *

She sighs, haphazardly putting it back in place, crooked, before heading down the stairs. *

INT. MARVIN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Peggy and John are still enjoying coffee when Mary makes her way downstairs. As she approaches, John holds up his mug of coffee, which Mary gratefully takes.

She plops down on a chair next to them and sips from the coffee. The three sit in silence, enjoying the morning. And filling the screen in big, festive letters:

SUPER: LAST VIRGINIA CHRISTMAS

Our song comes to an end perfectly in sync as we--

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

EXT. MARVIN HOUSE - DAY

A CAB pulls up in front of the house, and Megan and Ivy step out.

Megan grabs their luggage from the trunk, then waves goodbye to the DRIVER as the car drives off.

The two of them stand in front of the house for a moment, taking it in. Megan closes her eyes and takes a deep breath-- but is it in pleasure, or apprehension? *

Opening her eyes, Megan escorts Ivy to the front door. *

INT. MARVIN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

The front door opens, and Megan and Ivy head inside. The room is empty.

MEGAN

Hello?

Megan calls out to the empty room. A moment later, John enters the room.

JOHN

Megan!

MEGAN

Hey, dad.

John walks over and wraps Megan up in a hug. Then, he shifts his attention to Ivy, scooping her up and hugging her as well.

After a beat, John calls to another room:

JOHN
Peggy! Megan and Ivy are here!

Peggy appears at the top of the stairs, lugging a basket of laundry. She sets it down and joins everyone in the living room.

Ivy runs over and gives her a hug.

IVY
Grandma!

Peggy hugs her granddaughter with a smile, then turns to Megan who's walked over, hugging her as well. *

MARY (O.S.)
About time you got here. *

Megan looks over to see Mary emerging from the kitchen. Ivy lights up again. *

IVY
Aunt Mary!

MARY
Hey, squirt. *

Megan approaches her sister and hugs her lovingly. *

MEGAN
When did you get in?

Mary brushes this off with a wave.

MARY
Oh, it feels like months ago.

Peggy and John walk over to join them.

MEGAN
How's everything in Nashville?

MARY
You didn't hear? I got discovered.
Made an album, went platinum, no
big deal. *

Megan laughs. She doesn't notice Peggy give Mary a sidelong glance. *

MEGAN

Alright, I need to wash the airport
out of my hair.

(turns to Ivy)

Help me get the bags?

JOHN

I got them.

Before Megan can object, John grabs both pieces of luggage.

JOHN

Ivy, give me a hand, will you? *

Ivy snaps to attention, "helping" John carry the luggage. She
isn't doing much, but it sure is cute.

As they head up the stairs, Peggy turns to Megan.

PEGGY

I changed the sheets on your bed,
and your dad inflated the air
mattress.

From the stairs, Ivy yells back at them.

IVY

Dibs on the air mattress!

Megan smiles.

MEGAN

Thanks, mom.

Megan follows John and Ivy up the stairs, leaving Peggy and
Mary behind. Once they're gone, Peggy turns to Mary.

PEGGY

It seems like Megan is under the
impression you're still living in
Nashville.

MARY *

Did it seem that way?

Peggy raises an eyebrow-- *come on now*. Megan sighs. *

MARY

I'll tell her today.

PEGGY

Good girl.

Peggy gives Mary a kiss on the forehead before leaving the room.

OFF MARY, looking a little anxious.

INT. MARVIN HOUSE - MEGAN'S ROOM - DAY

The door to the bedroom opens, and John, Megan and Ivy enter. John sets the luggage onto Megan's bed.

JOHN

I'll let you get settled.

MEGAN

Thanks, dad.

John gives a nod before leaving the room. As Megan closes the door behind him, it doesn't click shut. She tries it again-- no luck. *

MEGAN *

Nice to know some things haven't changed. *

Ivy immediately walks over to an air mattress sitting on the ground next to the bed, plopping onto it with glee. As she sinks into the mattress, she smiles.

Megan smiles at her daughter before taking in the room. She looks around at the decor-- it's warm and loving, and filled with mementos from her childhood. Stuffed animals, old photos, books lining the walls.

Just like her daughter, Megan plops down in bed, staring at the ceiling. A small smile crosses her face... until she turns her head towards the nearby night stand and spots a framed photo sitting on top of it. *

CLOSE ON PHOTO: A picture of Megan, a slightly younger Ivy, and an unknown MAN (30), smiling with his arms around them.

Megan's smile fades, a look of sadness crossing her face. Then-- a KNOCK at the door. Megan snaps out of it, looking over to see Mary peeking her head in.

MARY

It'll probably be awhile before Beth gets here. Want to head into town? *

MEGAN *

I don't know, I'm kind of wiped.

MARY

Come on. It'll do you good.

Mary's eyes flick over to the picture frame. Megan notices, then gives her sister a solemn nod. *

MEGAN

Ivy, you want to go for a walk? *

But there's no answer. Curious, Megan peeks over the side of the bed... to see Ivy already passed out. Megan laughs.

MEGAN

Guess it's just you and me.

MARY

Woo! Sister trip!

Mary grabs Megan by the arms and drags her out of bed.

EXT. DOWNTOWN STAUNTON - DAY *

People walk the festive street on a bustling day. *

Megan and Mary walk and talk on the street, mid-conversation. *

MEGAN

You dropped out? *

Mary looks embarrassed as a couple PASSERSBY look in their direction. *

MARY

Maybe you can say it a little louder. *

Megan looks around, apologetic.

MEGAN

Sorry. I just... why?

Mary shrugs.

MARY

I don't know. I figured, why go into debt studying music when I could just perform? I mean, that's why people move to Nashville in the first place. Not to go to school.

MEGAN

And how'd that pan out?

MARY

Well, without student aid I ran out of money pretty quickly. Turns out busking isn't super lucrative. So... I kind of moved back in with mom and dad.

Megan sighs.

MEGAN

On, Mary.

MARY

Yeah, I know. I already had a whole talk with them about it. *

(beat)

I had to sell my guitar to afford a bus ticket. So please, I really don't need to be reminded how young and irresponsible I am.

MEGAN

I was going to say "hot mess."

Mary can't help but laugh. The two of them walk by a man dressed as SANTA, ringing a bell, collecting for charity. *

MEGAN *

Merry Christmas. *

Megan drops in a few dollars, and Santa gives her a grateful nod. As they continue walking: *

MEGAN

Does Bethany know? *

Mary gives Megan a guilty grin. *

MEGAN

You have to tell her. She can't be the only one who doesn't know.

MARY

I will. Eventually.

Megan just stares at her.

MARY

Come on, you know how she is. I'll never hear the end of it.

MEGAN

Mary...

MARY

Just give me until Christmas. No point in ruining the holidays. After that, I'll tell her. I promise.

Megan doesn't like it, but she holds up her hands in defeat.

MEGAN

Have it your way.

Mary smiles, grateful. The walk in silence for a beat. Then: *

MARY

So... how are you doing? Being back here and everything?

Megan takes a moment to consider before answering. Finally: *

MEGAN

I think I'm okay. Every Christmas I come back, it gets a little easier. But, even though it's been three years... everything here still reminds me of James. *

Mary reaches out, taking Megan's hand. Megan gives a sad smile in return. *

After a beat, Mary notices they've stopped in front of a cafe. She motions to the door. *

MARY

Buy you a cup of coffee? *

Megan smiles, grateful. Mary opens the door and the two of them step inside. *

INT. CAFE - DAY *

Megan and Mary enter the cute cafe and head to the counter to order. As they stand in line, something catches Mary's eye. She gives Megan a conspiratorial glance. *

MEGAN

What? *

MARY

You're not going to believe who's in here. *

Megan raises an eyebrow, intrigued. *

MEGAN

Who?

MARY

Here's a hint: you have some very embarrassing Winter Formal photos with him.

Megan turns her head towards where Mary is looking to see a very attractive man sitting a table, sipping coffee.

This is NASH (30s), and as of yet he hasn't spotted her.

MARY

(teasing)

Should we join him?

MEGAN

What? No! We haven't talked since college. And the last time we did talk...

MARY

You dumped him.

Megan turns away, trying to be inconspicuous.

MEGAN

Be cool. Please. I just got in. Reconnecting with my ex isn't at the top of my to-do list.

Mary shrugs-- *fine*. But she clearly finds this very amusing.

Megan breathes a sigh of relief as Nash looks out through the window, looking in the opposite direction.

Still looking at Nash, Megan walks towards the counter... and knocks over a display full of chips, sending it CRASHING to the floor.

Mary winces in embarrassment as Megan tries to clean up the mess, causing a small scene.

MARY

Wow. Super suave.

MEGAN

Did he see us?

Nash is indeed looking at them. As is most of the cafe. It takes him a moment, but then recognition crosses his face.

MARY

Yup.

MEGAN

Is he coming over?

Nash stands up and starts to walk over.

MEGAN

Uh-huh.

Megan looks embarrassed.

MEGAN

Do you think he'll recognize me?

NASH (O.S.)

Definitely.

Megan looks to see Nash is right behind her. He flashes her a grin.

NASH

As I live and breathe. Megan
Marvin, back in Virginia.

She returns his smile.

MEGAN

Hi, Nash.

The two just look at each other for a moment, taking each other in after what seems to be a long time.

Finally, Mary gets impatient. She clears her throat, bringing them both back to reality. When they look to Mary:

MARY

Megan, I can grab our coffees. Why
don't you two go sit down?

Nash gives Mary a smile.

NASH

Hi, Mary. Nice to see you, too.

MARY

Likewise.

Nash shifts his attention back to Megan.

NASH

What do you say, Megan? Care to
join me?

Megan gives Nash a polite smile. *

MEGAN *

Um... sure... *

Pleased, Nash leads the way to the table, Megan following him. Megan looks over her shoulder to Mary, who's grinning ear-to-ear. Megan narrows her eyes. *

When they reach the table, Megan's smile returns as they sit. *

NASH *

I can't believe I'm sitting across from you. How long has it been? *

MARY *

Ten years, give or take? *

NASH *

Yeah. Wow. *

Nash can't stop staring at her. Megan gets self-conscious. *

MEGAN *

So... what brings you to town? I thought you spent Christmas in L.A. these days. *

NASH *

Yeah, well, my parents decided to spend Christmas in Hawaii together, so I'm on my own this year. *

MEGAN *

And you decided to revisit the glories of Christmases long, long ago? *

Nash shrugs. *

NASH *

Something like that. I, uh...
(slight hesitation)
I actually moved back. Been here a few months, now. *

The look on Megan's face is utter shock. *

MEGAN *

Really? *

NASH *

Yeah. *

Megan raises an eyebrow. Nash laughs. *

NASH *

Why's that so hard to believe? *

MEGAN *

Are you kidding? You couldn't wait
to get out of here after college. I
mean, it's basically why we-- *

Megan stops herself from finishing that sentence. Nash nods
in understanding. *

NASH *

I know. *

Megan sits back in her chair, absorbing this news. They sit
in silence for a beat. *

That's when Mary returns, carrying two coffees in to-go cups.
She senses the tension in the air. *

MARY *

Sorry, I hate to break up this
awkward silence, but I just got a
text from mom. *

Megan snaps out of it, looking to her sister. *

MARY *

Beth and George just got to the
house. They want to start cooking
for the potluck. *

MEGAN *

Oh. Should we...? *

Nash gets it, giving Megan a nod. *

NASH *

Please, go ahead. Maybe we can meet
up over the holiday, grab something
to eat. *

Megan gives a nod. *

MEGAN *

Sure. Yeah. *

She stands up from her chair, taking a cup from Mary.. *

MEGAN *

It was... good to see you. *

NASH

You, too.

MARY

Bye, Nash.

Nash waves goodbye as Mary grabs Megan by the arm and leads her to the exit. Mary steals a glance back at Nash, who's watching them leave.

MARY

He's still staring at you, by the way.

MEGAN

Shh!

The two of them make it to the door. Before exiting, Megan gives a little wave to Nash before heading out the door.

OFF NASH, watching them go, a big smile on his face.

INT. MARVIN HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Megan and Mary enter the kitchen to find John, Peggy, Ivy, Bethany and George all preparing different dishes.

Having not been noticed, Megan calls out to Bethany:

MEGAN

Finally made it, huh?

Bethany looks up and gives a smile. She wipes her hands clean as Megan approaches and they hug. Then Megan gives George a quick hug as well.

MEGAN

Hey, George. Good to see you.

GEORGE

You too, Megan.

After they separate, Bethany and George's gaze shifts to Mary, who's still hanging by the door.

GEORGE

Hi, Mary.

Mary gives a nod to George. Very serious:

MARY

Professor.

Then, another nod to Bethany.

MARY
Counselor.

Mary walks over to them. She gives George a hug first. Then, after a small moment of hesitation, Mary and Bethany hug. It's a bit awkward. After they separate:

BETHANY
I trust you're well?

MARY
Oh, you know me. Life of crime.

Bethany gives a polite smile.

An awkward silence follows as neither of them know what to say. But before it goes on for too long--

JOHN
Well, what are you waiting for?
This potluck isn't going to cook
itself!

Megan smiles, and we--

CUT TO:

INT. MARVIN HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

The kitchen is now a whirlwind of activity as everyone's dishes are coming along nicely.

Megan is at the counter, chopping vegetables with the skill of a practiced chef.

Sweating over a pot of soup at the stove, Mary gives Megan an annoyed look.

MARY
Don't you think it's kind of unfair
to have a potluck as a Christmas
tradition with Megan being a
professional cook?

From a stand mixer, Peggy chimes in.

PEGGY
It's not a competition.

GEORGE
Tell that to Bethany.

Bethany just smiles, not acknowledging this as she and George work side by side on a cheese ball. *

Over at the oven, John checks in on his dish as he joins the conversation. *

JOHN
Speaking of which, how is work,
Megan? Still liking the restaurant?

Megan hesitates. Before she can answer--

IVY
Mommy quit!

Everyone looks over to Ivy, who smiles. Then they look back to Megan.

PEGGY
Really?

MEGAN
Uh... yeah. I wasn't really happy there anymore, you know? Figured I'd take the holidays to think about my next move.

BETHANY
That's... bold.

MARY
I think it's great. You deserve a break. It'll do you good. *

Megan shrugs-- *maybe*. Then, a BEEP comes from the oven. *

Megan steps over to it, pulling out a delicious, perfectly-cooked ham, adorned with pineapple rings and cherries. She's really good. *

Megan sets the ham on the island. Mary looks on, once again annoyed. *

MARY
So unfair. *

Megan just smiles, staring down at her dish.

CLOSE ON the ham as we-- *

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. MARVIN HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The ham, now sitting on a platter and surrounded by a large spread of various food. *

PULL OUT to see the rest of the spread as the family eats from their plates, nearing the end of the meal. It's fairly quiet-- the sure signs of good food.

John pushes his empty plate away from him, calling it quits as he throws his napkin onto the table like a white flag.

JOHN

That's it. I surrender.

(beat)

This has got to be the best holiday potluck we've had yet. Way to go, Marvins.

John holds up his glass. The rest of the family follows suit.

JOHN

To the successful beginning of our family Christmas celebration. May the next two weeks be filled with joy, love, and warmth-- and lead to the best Christmas we've ever had.

Everyone cheers and takes a sip from their drinks. Another quiet falls over the table, and Peggy fills the void.

PEGGY

Thank you, John. I think that's an appropriate segue into delivering our news.

The kids look up at that-- news? John gives Peggy a nod. *

JOHN

Right. Kids, your mother and I have something to tell you. *

Everyone waits for him to continue. When he doesn't-- *

PEGGY

What your father is trying to say is...

(dramatic pause)

We're selling the house.

All three kids react differently. Megan looks disappointed, but tries to cover it up. Bethany simply nods. And Mary: *

MARY

What?

She's upset.

MARY

Mom, you can't be serious! We grew up in this house!

(beat)

Right, guys?

Mary looks to Megan and Bethany for support. But:

BETHANY

It makes sense. No point in paying for a big house now that it's mostly empty.

John gives Bethany a nod.

JOHN

Exactly. This old place is falling apart, and it needs a lot of upkeep. It's too expensive for just your mother and me.

PEGGY

And of course, we had thought in the past that one of you girls might want the house for yourselves. But then Bethany moved to New York, and Megan to Austin...

(beat)

You've all started your own lives. It seemed like none of you had plans to live here.

This comment seems mostly pointed at Megan, who looks down and pokes at her food.

MARY

Well... what if I wanted to?

BETHANY

If mom and dad can't afford the upkeep, you think you can?

(beat)

Besides, you're still in school.

Mary looks away at that, not wanting to engage. John is about to say something, but Peggy puts a hand on his arm-- *not now*.

IVY

But, if you move... where will we
celebrate Christmas?

Mary looks back up at that.

MARY

Exactly! This is the one place we
actually see each other. You can't
just sell it.

(beat)

Where are we... you going to live?

JOHN

We already have a condo in mind.
Once we sell the house, we'll have
enough to retire.

PEGGY

You kids will love it. It's a cute
little community just outside
Phoenix.

Mary can't believe it.

MARY

Arizona?

Mary shifts her attention to Megan.

MARY

Megan, come on. You have to be with
me on this.

Megan looks up, as if lost in thought this whole time. But
she shakes it off.

MEGAN

We do have a lot of great memories
here.

Mary looks hopeful at this. But Megan turns to her parents.

MEGAN

And we'll make plenty more,
wherever we celebrate Christmas.

(beat)

I'm happy for you. Dad, you deserve
to retire.

John and Peggy smile, happy at how well Megan is taking it.

JOHN

I know this is sudden. But things
are moving fast. In fact, we have
some buyers coming to the house in
the morning.

PEGGY

If all goes according to plan...
this is probably going to be our
last family Christmas here.

Megan gives a smile, acting supportive-- but there's a tinge
of sadness. Bethany nods. Ivy looks down, somber. And Mary
just folds her arms, indignant.

PEGGY

We'll just have to make our last
Christmas here that much more
special.

The rest of the family looks at each other and nod in
agreement-- except for Mary, who still fumes.

MEGAN

We will, mom. It'll be the best
Christmas we've ever had.

OFF MEGAN, who gives her mother a smile.

INT. MARVIN HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Megan, Ivy, and Bethany walk upstairs and into the hallway.
From the bottom of the stairs:

PEGGY (O.S.)

Good night, girls!

Megan calls back down.

MEGAN

Night, mom.

As they walk to their rooms, Megan tousles Ivy's hair.

MEGAN

Alright, kiddo. Go brush your
teeth.

IVY

Okay...

Ivy sighs, but complies, heading to the bathroom. Once she's
gone, Megan turns to Bethany.

MEGAN

Well, that was an eventful start to the holidays.

BETHANY

No kidding. I think Mary's still at the table, sulking.

(beat)

How are you doing?

MEGAN

What do you mean?

BETHANY

Well, you didn't look thrilled when they told us the news. Despite what you told mom and dad.

Megan brushes this off.

MEGAN

I'm glad for them. Sure, it's... bittersweet. But it's for the best. The end of an era.

BETHANY

Yeah. We had some good memories here.

Bethany says this delicately.

MEGAN

Yes, we did.

Megan's eyes instinctively go to a picture on the wall-- a wedding photo of her and James. But she catches herself.

MEGAN

But my life isn't here anymore. It's in Austin. And... maybe it's a good thing to be moving on.

Bethany just nods at that. They stand in silence for a beat.

BETHANY

Okay. Just wanted to be sure.

Megan smiles, appreciative.

BETHANY

Night, sis.

MEGAN

Night.

Bethany heads into her room. Megan continues smiling as she closes the door behind her. *

But once Bethany is gone, the smile fades just a little. Something's on Megan's mind. But she quickly shakes it off and heads into her room. *

EXT. MARVIN HOUSE - MORNING *

A new day dawns on the Marvin house. *

A nice car pulls up to the front. The driver's side door swings open, and a heeled leg kicks out. *

LANE (30s)-- perfect, professional, and persistent-- steps out. She's dressed to kill in a pencil skirt and blouse, and lowers her sunglasses to look at the house. *

After a beat, she takes off her sunglasses and walks to the front door. *

INT. MARVIN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MORNING *

The entire family is enjoying a peaceful morning in the living room. *

John reads the newspaper as Peggy, Megan and Ivy hang stockings on the fireplace. Bethany and George both read books, and Mary sulks in the corner, on her phone. *

There's a KNOCK at the door and John looks up. So does everyone else. *

JOHN *

That must be the buyers. *

John heads to the door, swinging it open to reveal Lane. *

LANE *

Good morning, John. *

JOHN *

Morning, Lane. Please, come in. *

Lane gives a courteous nod and steps inside. John addresses the room: *

JOHN *

Everyone, I'd like you to meet Lane. *

The family gives a few "hellos" and waves to Lane, who smiles and waves back. *

LANE *

Hello. Lane Castle, Castle Real Estate. Wonderful to meet you. *

Lane approaches the family, handing out business cards. *

BETHANY *

You're their real estate agent? *

LANE *

Yes, but in this particular instance, I'll be handling a deal for myself. *

Off their confusion: *

LANE *

I never pass up a good investment property when it comes across my desk. So, I thought I'd make an offer. Well, me and my partner. *

MEGAN *

Partner? *

LANE *

Yes, he's covering half of the purchase. A lovely man. He's been doing work as a contractor on some of my properties the past few months, and when I learned that he was also looking for an investment property, we decided to team up. *

PEGGY *

Will he be joining us? *

LANE *

I spoke to him on the way over. He should be here any minute. *

Then, the sound of another vehicle pulling up. John and Lane look out the window to see a pickup truck parking. *

LANE *

Speak of the devil. *

We don't have a good glimpse through the window, but somebody steps out of the truck and walks up to the house. When he gets to the door, John is ready to greet him... and his face registers surprise as he shakes the man's hand. *

NASH (O.S.)
Hi, Mr. Marvin.

Nash steps into the house. Megan looks at him, surprised.

MEGAN
...Nash?

The rest of the family is just as surprised.

PEGGY
Why, it's been ages. So good to see
you!

LANE
You... know each other?

PEGGY
Oh, Megan and Nash go way back.
They were best friends all through
elementary school.

LANE
Oh. Well, then you must be pretty
familiar with the property.

JOHN
Of course he is. He and Megan were
practically joined at the hip. And
that was before they started dating
in high school.

Nash corrects her.

NASH
And college.

Megan looks away, a little embarrassed at all of this talk
about their relationship.

Nash addresses everyone in the room.

NASH
It's really good to see you all
again. Feels like it's been way too
long.

The family nods and smiles back. Except for Megan, who's
still trying to process the situation.

MEGAN
Wait. You're buying our house?

NASH

Yeah. I mean, we're thinking about it. I've always loved this place.

Megan can't believe what she's hearing.

MEGAN

I don't...

(beat)

Why didn't you mention this yesterday?

NASH

Well, honestly... I didn't know how you'd react.

(beat)

How are you reacting?

MEGAN

What?

Megan looks around, her family watching her. She composes herself.

MEGAN

I'm fine. I mean, it's a little weird. Right?

NASH

Well, yeah, I guess now it is.

They stand in awkward silence for a moment. Peggy turns to Lane.

PEGGY

Why don't we talk in the kitchen? I can grab us some coffee?

LANE

I think that's a great idea.

(to Nash)

Nash?

Staring at Megan, Nash snaps out of it.

NASH

Yeah, of course.

Peggy leads John, Lane and Nash towards the kitchen. As Nash passes Megan:

NASH

I'm sorry. We'll... talk about this later?

Megan nods, composing herself. *

MEGAN *

Yeah. Great. Sorry, I'm just *

processing. *

(beat) *

Go ahead. *

Nash smiles, then follows the group to the kitchen. Before *

Lane reaches the kitchen, she turns back to Megan. *

LANE *

It was wonderful meeting you all. *

You have a lovely home. It's going *

to make a beautiful Bed and *

Breakfast. *

With that, Lane leaves the room. A moment later: *

MARY *

What?

The remaining family members look to Mary. *

MARY *

Sibling meeting. Upstairs. Now.

With that, Mary moves to the stairway and heads up. Megan and *

Bethany share a look, and they-- along with Ivy and George-- *

follow her upstairs. *

INT. MARVIN HOUSE - ATTIC - DAY *

The attic is overflowing with furniture, decor, and relics *

from the Marvin family past.

In a corner is a semicircle of mismatched chairs, where the *

siblings gather.

Except for Mary, who paces in front of the chairs-- clearly *

the leader of this senate. Finally, she stops pacing, facing *

her siblings.

MARY *

We are not going to let this *

happen.

Mary stares her siblings down. *

MEGAN *

Mary...

MEGAN

This is where we grew up. Do you
really want to let your ex-
boyfriend turn it into a hotel?

*
*
*

GEORGE

He said it was a Bed and Breakfast.

*
*

Mary shoots him a look. George winces-- *sorry*.

*

GEORGE

I'll stay out of this.

*
*

BETHANY

Mary, this is none of our business.
If mom and dad want to sell, let
them sell.

*
*
*
*

MARY

What about Christmas? Megan, you
used to live for all of our family
traditions. What'll happen to them
when the house is gone?

*
*

Bethany interjects.

BETHANY

We can always make new traditions.
(beat)
It's just a house. We can meet
somewhere else for Christmas.

*

Mary rolls her eyes.

MARY

Stop being such a robot, Beth. You
know it's more than just a house.
(beat)
Megan, back me up here.

*
*
*
*

All eyes turn to Megan. She clears her throat, the floor now
hers. Finally:

*
*

MEGAN

Mary, I know how you feel.
Remember, I've got ten years on you
in this house. I know how special
it is.

*
*
*
*
*

MARY

Thank you.

*
*

MEGAN

But, what really matters is us
being together. And that will never
change.

(beat)

Mom's right. We should be making
our last Christmas here as
memorable as possible.

IVY

Yeah! We should do all the
traditions.

MEGAN

That's a great idea. Cutting down
the tree, making ornaments,
decorating cookies, making
gingerbread houses--

Ivy excitedly interrupts.

IVY

The Christmas light tour!

MEGAN

--Of course, the Christmas light
tour. All of the things that make
celebrating Christmas here special.

BETHANY

Agreed. So we say goodbye properly.

The rest of the family nods in agreement. Except for Mary,
who looks to Megan:

MARY

I don't believe it. I thought of
all people, you'd understand.

(beat)

Well, I'm not letting it happen.

BETHANY

And how exactly are you going to
stop it?

MARY

I'll think of something.

BETHANY

Come on, Mary. Let's try to be a
little more mature about this.

Mary scoffs at this.

MARY

You all can do what you want. But I
refuse to sit back and let them
sell our memories.

With that, Mary storms down the step ladder, leaving the
attic.

MEGAN

Well, that could have gone better.

BETHANY

I just hope she doesn't do anything
drastic.

OFF MEGAN, concern crossing her face.

EXT. MARVIN HOUSE - DAY

The front door opens and out steps Mary, who begins walking
toward the house next door.

EXT. BRANDON'S HOUSE - DAY

This house is a bit smaller and more modern than the
neighbors next door.

Mary reaches the front door and gives it a KNOCK. After a
beat, the door swings open, revealing BRANDON (24)-- athletic
and handsome with a boyish charm.

MARY

Hi, Brandon.

BRANDON

Morning, neighbor. What's up?

MARY

I need your help.

Brandon raises an eyebrow-- *oh?*

MARY

How do you feel about sabotaging a
real estate deal?

OFF MARY, a look of determination crossing her face.

EXT. DOWNTOWN STAUNTON - DAY

Downtown bustles with activity and holiday cheer.

EXT. LANE'S OFFICE - DAY

Establishing of a small office right off downtown's main street. A sign above the door reads "Lane Castle Real Estate."

*

LANE (PRELAP)
I just want to be sure.

INT. LANE'S OFFICE - DAY

Inside, the office is small but practical, and organized meticulously. Lane shuffles through paperwork at her desk.

Standing across from her is Nash.

LANE
We're putting up a tidy sum for the earnest money. And we can kiss that money goodbye if you simply get cold feet.

*
*
*
*

Nash shakes his head, amused.

NASH
I won't get cold feet. I do this for a living, you know. I've flipped plenty of properties without incident.
(beat)
Besides, you're reading into things. Megan and I dated ages ago.

*

*

LANE
Yes, for eight years, apparently. During the most formative years of your lives.

*
*
*
*

NASH
I promise you, neither of us are holding onto old feelings. We've moved on.

*
*
*
*

Lane gives him a look-- *whatever you say.*

NASH
I'm serious. Everything's more than under control. In fact, I'm on my way to the house later today for the home inspection, and I'm not even thinking about her.

*

LANE

If you say so. We need to be a team
on this. I can't afford this deal
without you, Nash.

*
*
*

Nash gives her a sly smile.

NASH

Yes. I say so. You have nothing to
worry about.
(beat)
So, if you'll excuse me...

*
*

Nash gives a nod and heads to the door. Before he leaves--

LANE

Nash?

He turns back around.

LANE

Just... think about what I said.
I'm all for reconnecting with old
flames. Just try not to ruin a
perfectly good real estate deal in
the process.

*
*
*
*
*

NASH

You're such a warm soul.

Lane gives him an icy smile-- *very funny*.

*

Nash gives her a wave and heads out the door.

*

INT. TOY STORE - DAY

*

Megan, Bethany, Ivy, John and Peggy shop in a toy store. The
place is bustling with Christmas shoppers, and John and
Bethany delight in Ivy's excitement at some old wooden toys.

*
*
*

Megan stands at a wall of wrapping paper, sorting through
rolls as Peggy walks over to her.

*
*

PEGGY

Hey, sweetheart.

*
*

Megan motions to the wall of wrapping paper.

*

MEGAN

Figured we should stock up. Ivy's
been firmly on Santa's "nice" list
this year.

*
*
*
*

Peggy smiles, and the two continue sorting through wrapping paper. It's clear Peggy wants to say something, but she's hesitating. Finally:

PEGGY

We didn't really get a chance to talk about what happened this morning. I just wanted to check in.

MEGAN

I'm fine. You didn't know Nash was going to show up any more than I did.

PEGGY

I know. But still.

Megan finishes grabbing wrapping paper, walking up to John who's at the register with a pile of gifts while Bethany distracts Ivy at the other end of the store. Megan hands the wrapping paper over.

MEGAN

Can you get these too, Dad?

JOHN

Of course.

PEGGY

We'll meet you outside, dear.

Peggy takes Megan's arm, escorting her towards the exit.

EXT. TOY STORE - DOWNTOWN STAUNTON - DAY

Peggy and Megan step outside, bundling up against the cold.

PEGGY

Honey, I wouldn't want to sell the house to Nash if you were uncomfortable with it.

MEGAN

Mom, really, it doesn't bother me. We dated forever ago. It's just like selling the house to anyone else.

PEGGY

We both know it's not. You've known him since the third grade. And when you started dating, you two were really serious.

PEGGY (CONT'D)

For awhile there, before Nash
left... we all thought he could be
the one.

Megan takes this in, getting a touch somber.

MEGAN

But he wasn't the one. And it was
because he moved away that I met
James.

(beat)

So I promise, you have nothing to
worry about.

PEGGY

Okay. I just wanted to be sure.

Peggy hugs her daughter, and a moment later the rest of the
family exits the store. Megan takes Ivy's hand, and the
family continues walking down Main Street, shopping bags in
hand.

As the rest of the family window shops at a Christmas
display, Megan spots Nash across the street, walking away
from Lane's office.

She quickly ducks out of sight, keeping an eye on him as Nash
disappears down the street. Once he's gone, Megan rejoins her
family at the window display, a conflicted look on her face.

INT. BRANDON'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Brandon and Mary sit in the cozy living room, mid-
conversation.

BRANDON

I don't know. Doesn't that seem
kind of... dishonest?

MARY

How is it dishonest? If anything,
it's the right thing to do. We're
pointing out what's wrong with the
house to a potential buyer!

BRANDON

With a few embellishments to
convince them not to go through
with it.

MARY

Can I help it if I'm a bit
dramatic?

MARY (CONT'D)

It's not like it's against the law
to bend the truth a little.

BRANDON

It's called perjury. Isn't Bethany
a lawyer? How did none of that rub
off on you?

Mary shrugs with a grin.

BRANDON

How do Megan and Bethany feel about
this?

MARY

They're both in denial.

(beat)

Well, at least Megan is. But trust
me-- this is for the best. I'm just
buying some time for my mom and dad
to see how important it is to keep
the house.

Brandon just looks at her, not fully convinced.

MARY

Come on, I wouldn't know where to
begin with this kind of stuff.

(beat)

I mean, if you really want me to
move away, fine. I get it. I just
thought we were friends and you'd
want to help me.

Brandon just sighs.

BRANDON

I have to admit, despite you being
more of an inconvenience than a
neighbor, it has been nice having
you back here the past couple
months.

MARY

Right? It's like middle school all
over again. Do you really want to
lose that?

Mary is joking around, and doesn't pick up on the fact that
Brandon really doesn't want to lose that.

BRANDON

Okay, fine. I'll help. But you owe
me.

Mary claps her hands together.

MARY

Good! Because the home inspector is
coming over today.

Brandon shakes his head with a grin.

BRANDON

You're really something.

OFF MARY, smiling-- *yeah, I know.*

INT. MARVIN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mary and Brandon enter to find Megan unloading an armful of
wrapping paper into a closet.

BRANDON

Hey, Megan.

Megan looks over.

MEGAN

Hi, Brandon! Good to see you.
(beat)
What are you guys up to?

Brandon starts to answer, but Mary quickly butts in.

MARY

Nothing. Just catching up.

Brandon bites his tongue.

MEGAN

Well, everyone's out back. I'm just
waiting for the home inspector to
get here.
(checks her watch)
Which should be any time now.

BRANDON

(sarcastic)
Wow. What a coincidence.

Mary elbows Brandon.

MEGAN

Mary, I know you're not crazy about
the house being sold. Especially
since you're living here for now.
But just...

MEGAN (CONT'D)

talk to mom and dad about it, okay?
I know you don't want to guilt them
into taking the house off the
market.

MARY

I'm not going to guilt anyone.

Brandon looks away at that.

MARY

But I'm not going to pretend to be
happy about it, either.
(pointed)
Like some people.

Megan just sighs.

MEGAN

Despite what you may think, I am
happy for them. And I know you'll
come around.
(beat)
Just please, go easy on mom and dad
in the meantime.

Mary holds up her hands, conceding.

MARY

Okay.

Megan smiles, satisfied.

Then, Megan spots something through the window. A TRUCK
approaches the house.

MEGAN

That must be the home inspector.

Then, another PICKUP comes into view. Curious, Megan watches
as they both park side by side.

The doors to both trucks pop open. Out of one steps a home
inspector, RANDY (50s). And out the other steps Nash.

MEGAN

What's he doing here?

MARY

Well, would you look at that. Guess
he wanted to oversee the
inspection.
(looks to Megan)

MARY (CONT'D)

Unless he's interested in more than
just the house?

*
*

Megan rolls her eyes at that.

Snagging a clipboard, Randy closes the door to his truck and
starts walking towards the house with Nash.

MARY

If you like, Brandon and I can show
the inspector around if you want
some time with Nash?

*
*
*
*

Mary grins.

MEGAN

Nobody wants that.

*
*
*

Then, a KNOCK at the door. Megan answers it to reveal Nash.
He looks very pleased that Megan answered the door.

*
*

NASH

Well hi there. I, uh... wasn't sure
you'd be here.

*
*

MEGAN

That makes two of us.

*

NASH

Yeah, well, you know. Figured I
should be here in case anything
serious pops up.

*
*
*
*

MEGAN

Sure. That's a very logical reason
for you to be here.

*
*
*

That remark seems pointed at Mary. Then, turning back to
Nash:

*
*

MEGAN

I guess I should get used to the
idea that we'll be seeing more of
each other.

*
*
*
*

NASH

It's not that bad, is it?

*
*

Nash flashes a grin. Megan smiles in return.

*

MEGAN

No, of course not.
(beat)
Won't you come in?

*
*
*

NASH

Happy to.

He motions over to Randy.

NASH

This is Randy. He'll be doing the inspection.

Randy gives them a nod. Not a man of many words, Randy.

MEGAN

Well, I'll let you get to it.

NASH

Actually, do you mind tagging along?

Megan raises an eyebrow at that.

NASH

Sorry, I just thought it might be helpful in case Randy needs some details that I don't have.

Megan nods-- *totally rational*.

MEGAN

Yeah, sure. Happy to help.

Nash is happy with that answer. Mary chimes in.

MARY

We'll all give you the grand tour.

Mary links her arm around Brandon's, and Brandon tries to suppress his smile.

NASH

Uh... yeah. The more the merrier. Where do we start?

EXT. MARVIN HOUSE - DAY

Megan and Nash stand in front of the house as Mary and Brandon hover near Randy on the porch.

NOTE: Throughout the tour, Mary and Brandon will be sticking very close to Randy while he works, while Megan keeps close to Nash for a more intimate conversation.

Megan stands next to Nash as he snaps a photo of the house on his phone.

MEGAN

So, fill me in. You're buying up old houses and turning them into B&B's now?

Nash smiles.

NASH

Not exactly. I mostly flip houses, but every now and then I come across a good business investment.

(beat)

And sure, the occasional B&B. I mean, who wouldn't want to stay here?

Nash snaps another picture.

MEGAN

It's just, the last time I saw you, you were moving to L.A. to work at your dad's new firm.

NASH

Yeah, I tried that for a couple years. Turns out I didn't want to be an architect as much as my dad wanted me to be.

(beat)

But, I always did like renovating. So I got my contractor's license and decided to use my talents elsewhere.

MEGAN

And how do you like it?

NASH

Honestly? I love it. There's nothing like taking something old and transforming it, you know?

(beat)

And sure, there's some risk involved. I've taken a few losses. Hopefully your house will help pick things back up.

Megan gives him a look-- *interesting*. Nash snaps another photo on his phone, then looks at the picture:

NASH

Man, it's crazy.

MEGAN

What?

NASH

Until yesterday, I hadn't seen this place in ten years. But... it looks exactly the same.

MEGAN

It pretty much is. That's one of the things I've always liked about it. This whole town, really.

NASH

Yeah, I guess I never really cared for that so much growing up. But now, it's kind of nice. Coming back here, standing in front of this house again... brings back a lot of memories.

The two stare at the house for a beat. Then:

NASH

You remember when I picked you up for Winter Formal?

Megan thinks on this. Nash helps her out.

NASH

Your dad had one of those plastic Santa and reindeer decorations on the lawn. And I was still learning to drive stick.

Megan grins, the memory coming back to her.

MEGAN

Oh yeah! And you gunned it and crashed right into them!

The two start laughing, reveling in the moment.

NASH

Poor Santa. And the reindeer-- all roadkill.

MEGAN

I think Blitzen was the only survivor.

They continue to laugh. Finally coming down:

NASH

We had a pretty good run there for
a while.

Megan nods, getting more serious.

MEGAN

Yeah. We did.

An awkward silence falls over them, neither sure what to say
next. Then, Mary yells from the porch:

MARY

You guys staying out there all day?

Megan and Nash look over to see Randy heading inside, Brandon
on his tail. The tension broken, Megan nods towards the
house.

MEGAN

Come on.

Megan starts walking to the porch. Nash watches her go,
clearly a little smitten. But he shakes it off and follows
after her.

INT. MARVIN HOUSE - ATTIC - DAY

Randy surveys the rafters with Mary and Brandon close by.
Brandon points to a spot on the floor.

BRANDON

Remember when we were kids and I
fell through the floor playing hide
and seek?

MARY

Oh yeah! I think my dad said
something about termites.

Randy raises and eyebrow at this, marking something down on
his clipboard.

INT. MARVIN HOUSE - MEGAN'S ROOM - DAY

Randy examines the door, noting that it doesn't close
properly. As he does, Megan points Nash to the door frame.

MEGAN

Remember this?

CLOSE ON DOOR FRAME, where a series of tally marks shows heights for Megan, Bethany and Mary over the years. There's even a few marks labelled "Nash."

Nash smiles, running his hand over the wood.

NASH
How could I forget?
(beat)
Now that's something we'll have to keep.

Megan gives him a look.

MEGAN
Really?

NASH
Of course. I want to touch as little of this house as possible. Little pieces of magic like that-- that's something you can't buy.

Nash walks off towards Randy, leaving Megan to ponder.

INT. MARVIN HOUSE - BATHROOM - DAY

Randy shines a flashlight under the sink, looking at the pipes. Brandon talks to Mary, just loud enough to be heard.

BRANDON
Did your dad ever upgrade from the galvanized steel?

MARY
Nope. Said it was too expensive to redo the whole house.

Mary calls to Randy under the sink.

MARY
Randy, is it a big deal for the house to flood occasionally?

RANDY (O.C.)
What?

Mary and Brandon share a smile.

INT. MARVIN HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY

As everyone exits the bathroom, Megan nudges Nash.

MEGAN

Want to see something horrifying?

NASH

That sounds promising.

Megan escorts Nash over to the wall of photos. She points out one in particular.

CLOSE ON PHOTO: A Winter Formal photo of teenage Megan and Nash. Their fashion sense is early 2000s, and it didn't age well.

NASH

Is that... our Winter Formal photo?

Megan just nods. Nash leans in close, taking it in.

NASH

Oh, man. I can't believe you still have this!

MEGAN

Of course I do. My mom won't let me take it down.

NASH

Take it down? With us looking this good?

(beat)

Oh, no. I forgot about the Rudolph bow tie.

Indeed, he's wearing a brown bow tie with little antlers and a red button nose. It's... not elegant, to say the least.

MEGAN

I'll never forget.

Nash laughs. He stares at the photo a beat longer.

NASH

I know you're joking, but I won't either.

Megan gives a genuine smile at that.

NASH

I remember, before we left you made that huge dinner for us. It was when you had just started cooking.

MEGAN

Oh, no. The pot pie disaster. That was probably the worst thing I've ever made.

NASH

Yeah, it wasn't great. But still... it's probably one of my favorite meals.

Nash and Mary share a look. These two are starting to rekindle things. Then, Megan looks away, a little embarrassed.

MEGAN

Fortunately, my cooking has gotten much better since then.

NASH

Yeah, I heard that you've been rocking it out in Austin.

(beat)

I know a B&B that's going to need a cook. If you want, I can pull some strings. Move your resume to the top of the pile.

Megan smiles.

MEGAN

You couldn't afford me.

Nash laughs. The two hold each other's gaze for a moment.

They snap out of it when Randy stands up and heads into another room, Mary and Brandon on his tail.

MEGAN

We should probably catch up with them.

NASH

I think Randy has it under control. He'll call me if he needs me.

(beat)

I'm more interested in this.

Nash points to the Winter Formal photo. Megan thinks on this.

MEGAN

Well, my mom does have some photo albums downstairs. We could flip through them, see if there are any other gems.

NASH
And maybe indulge in some of her
famous eggnog?

Megan considers.

MEGAN
I think that can be arranged.

NASH
Well then, I'm all yours.

MEGAN
You sure Randy will be okay with
Mary and Brandon?

NASH
I'm sure they'll take great care of
him.

Mary smiles, and as she leads Nash downstairs, we begin a few
QUICK CUTS:

EXT. MARVIN HOUSE - BACKYARD - NIGHT

Randy pops open the very worn circuit breaker. Inside it's a
mess of wires.

MARY
Careful, the electrical is...
temperamental.

BRANDON
I myself have been electrocuted
three times right where you're
standing.

Randy raises an eyebrow, writing on his clipboard.

INT. MARVIN HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Randy surveys the cupboards.

MARY
Here's a question: how many rats
are required before you classify it
as an infestation?

With a look of horror, Randy writes in his clipboard again.

INT. MARVIN HOUSE - MARY'S ROOM - NIGHT

*

As Randy inspects the walls:

MARY

I can tell you from experience, you should avoid sleeping in this room.

Mary points to Randy's clipboard.

MARY

Is there a section in there about ghosts? And would that be likely to affect the property value?

Randy just SIGHS, shaking his head as he leaves the room in frustration. Mary and Brandon high five and follow after him.

INT. MARVIN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

*

Megan and Nash are sitting on the couch, sipping eggnog next to a roaring fire.

*

*

The rest of the family has joined them, chatting amicably as they flip through an old photo album. Megan points at a photo and laughs.

*

*

*

MEGAN

Aww, look at us! That was the talent show we did together in fifth grade, remember?

*

*

*

*

NASH

Oh yeah. You made me dance with you in front of the whole school.
(beat)
Pretty sure I got beat up for that.

*

*

*

*

*

Everyone laughs, particularly Megan and Nash. John and Peggy share a smile, noticing how cozy the two of them are.

*

*

Their heads turn when Randy enters the room. He looks at Nash, about to say something... then thinks better of it. He just shakes his head and walks to the door.

Brandon and Mary enter the room after him.

NASH

Everything okay?

MARY

Totally. We were very thorough.

THROUGH THE WINDOW, Randy hops into his truck and starts it up. A moment later, he's backing out of the driveway and heading down the road.

NASH

Well. I guess I'll talk to him later.

Nash looks at his watch.

NASH

I should probably call it, anyway.

PEGGY

You sure? We still have plenty of eggnog.

*
*

NASH

That's very kind, but I feel like I've imposed enough.

Nash gets up, ready to say his goodbye.

*

NASH

But... it's been really great. I've missed this.

*
*
*

The family shares a smile. Megan stands up.

*

MEGAN

I'll walk you to the door.

*
*

Nash nods, and as they move to the door:

*

JOHN

Hey, Nash, what are you doing tomorrow?

*
*
*

Everyone looks to John. Nash shrugs.

*

NASH

I have a few errands to run in the morning. But my afternoon's free.

*
*
*

JOHN

Great. Why don't you stop by again? You can help us with an old Marvin family tradition.

*
*
*
*

Nash gives him a curious look. John addresses the entire family:

*

JOHN

We're already overdue for a
Christmas tree. The family
should've chopped one down together
the day everyone got in.

Ivy lights up at this.

IVY

Yeah! Where else are we going to
put all the presents we bought?

BETHANY

She has a point.

JOHN

And, seeing as you're here now...

The rest of the family thinks on this, conceding. Then:

NASH

I mean, it has been a while since I
went out there with you guys.
(looks to Megan)
Would you mind?

Megan is a little surprised, but plays it cool.

MEGAN

Uh, no. That's... fine with me.

Nash smiles.

NASH

Well alright then. I guess I'll see
you all tomorrow.

IVY

Yeah!

Nash gives them all a wave, and the family waves back. As
Megan walks him to the front door, John walks over to Peggy,
speaking softly.

JOHN

Megan and Nash seem to be getting
along well.

PEGGY

Yes they do. I haven't seen Megan
laugh like that in years.
(beat)
Is that why you invited Nash to
come over tomorrow?

JOHN

I have no idea what you're talking about.

John gives Peggy a quick kiss. Peggy smiles and shakes her head, watching Megan say good night to Nash.

EXT. WOODS - AFTERNOON

A beautiful afternoon in the woods behind the Marvin house. The entire family marches through the trees.

Near the front, John carries a BOW SAW. And bringing up the rear are Megan and Nash, a little removed from the rest of the family.

NASH

I forgot how crazy your family is. Most people just go to a lot.

MEGAN

No self-respecting member of the Marvin clan would buy their tree at a lot.

Nash chuckles.

MEGAN

I remember the first time I came out here. I wasn't much younger than Ivy when we first started doing this.

(beat)

Probably wasn't long after that when you started tagging along.

NASH

I remember. After watching your dad cut down the tree, I tried to convince my parents to do the same thing.

(beat)

Pretty sure that's the year they switched to the artificial tree.

Now Megan laughs. They continue to walk, more trees beginning to appear as they get further from the house.

Up ahead, Megan watches as John throws an arm around Peggy, who's holding hands with Ivy. She looks over to Bethany and George, holding hands. And then there's Mary, getting a piggyback ride from Brandon.

Megan notices how close she's walking to Nash. He seems to notice it, too. Before things get awkward:

IVY

Mom, catch up! We'll never get a tree walking this slow!

Megan and Nash laugh. Ivy turns back around and continues walking with Peggy.

NASH

It's pretty cool, you getting to share this tradition with Ivy.

MEGAN

It really is. It feels like yesterday I took her out here for the first time.

(beat)

Cutting down the tree is her favorite. She got that from her father.

Megan stares off into the trees, a sad smile crossing her face.

NASH

Megan, I'm so sorry about James. When my parents told me about the accident, I wanted to call you, but...

MEGAN

It's okay. I'm sure that would have been strange, calling your ex to comfort her about the man that came after.

NASH

Yeah, but... you weren't just my ex. For most of my life, you were my best friend. I should have been there for you.

She gives an appreciative smile, shaking her head.

MEGAN

It's okay. We're getting through it. But it's tough being back here.

(beat)

James and I had always talked about buying the house from mom and dad. Keeping the family Christmas going. But after James died, it just...

MEGAN (CONT'D)

didn't feel right staying here. I
guess I needed a fresh start.

*
*

NASH

So you moved to Austin.

*
*

Megan nods, and the two walk in silence for a beat.

*

NASH

It's kind of ironic.

*
*

Megan gives him a look-- *what?*

*

NASH

We broke up because I wanted to get
out of this town and you wanted to
stay. And now... I've moved back
and you're the one leaving.

*
*
*
*
*

He gives her a smile.

*

MEGAN

I love coming back here so much.
But it hurts. And it's like, all of
these incredible, magical moments
that James and I had together here
are... I don't know. A beautiful
kind of painful. You know?

Nash stares into Megan's eyes, not sure what to say. But it's
apparent that he's really feeling for her.

MEGAN

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to dump
all of this on you.

NASH

No, don't be sorry.

(beat)

We should have had this talk a long
time ago.

*
*

Megan gives him a grateful smile, and Nash smiles back.

Up ahead, Mary hops off of Brandon's back. She looks back at
Megan to see her and Nash smiling at each other. A small grin
crosses her face. Then:

JOHN (O.S.)

That's it!

At the front of the group, John and Peggy stop walking. They
stare towards us, looking up at something we can't see yet.

The rest of the family catches up, doing the same. When Megan and Nash arrive, Nash's face fills with wonder.

NASH

Wow.

REVEAL what they're looking at-- a large, beautiful Virginia Pine. The perfect Christmas tree.

NASH

I forgot what this felt like. You
can't get this at a tree lot.

*

John laughs, walking over to him.

JOHN

No, you really can't. And the only
feeling better than finding the
perfect tree... is cutting it down
yourself.

John hands Nash the saw. Nash looks at him-- *really?*

NASH

I gotta be honest, I always wanted
to do this as a kid.

(then)

But I'm gonna need some help.
Somebody strong.

*

*

*

*

Nash looks at Ivy.

NASH

Care to give me a hand?

Ivy lights up.

IVY

Yeah!

Nash turns to Megan, as if asking permission. She gives him a
nod, smiling.

*

*

Ivy runs over to Nash, and they both approach the tree. Nash
helps her set the saw in place, and guides her arms as she
begins sawing away at the tree trunk.

*

The entire family looks on as they work together. It's a
small, sweet moment, but apparently carries a lot of weight
based on the looks on everyone's faces.

Especially Megan's, who watches in wonder as Nash and Ivy cut
the tree down together. She tries to suppress the tears
springing to her eyes. Then...

The tree falls down, crashing to the ground.

OFF MEGAN, wiping her eyes while everyone else cheers.

CUT TO:

EXT. MARVIN HOUSE - BACKYARD - LATE AFTERNOON

John and Brandon drag the tree towards the house as the rest of the family follows behind, the sun starting to set.

Near the back, Bethany separates from George so she can walk with Megan, bringing up the rear.

BETHANY

You okay?

Megan nods, but her eyes tell a different story.

MEGAN

Yeah. Just... remembering simpler times, I guess.

The two walk in silence for a moment. Bethany looks ahead to see Nash and Peggy swinging Ivy between their arms.

BETHANY

So... what happened back there?

Megan just looks at her, feigning innocent.

BETHANY

I know you don't like to talk about this kind of thing. But we all noticed how you were looking at him earlier.

MEGAN

Bethany. We broke up ten years ago. There's nothing happening.

Bethany raises an eyebrow, not buying it.

MEGAN

Sure, he's still cute. And charming. But don't misinterpret things. We're just... reconnecting. As friends. I'm not looking for anything more.

(beat)

Let's just say that isn't on the table for me right now.

BETHANY

Why not?

Megan looks at her-- *you know why*. Bethany proceeds with caution.

BETHANY

I know you haven't so much as
looked at a guy in three years. And
you'll always have us to lean on.
But if you ever want something
more, like what you had with
James... you shouldn't feel guilty
about it.

Megan gives Bethany a nod. Bethany gives her sister a hug.

Then, she catches back up to George, leaving Megan to think on what she said.

INT. MARVIN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

John directs George, Brandon and Nash as they position the tree in the living room as Peggy, Bethany, Mary and Ivy look on.

JOHN

Alright, a little to the left.

The men comply, scooting the tree over ever-so-slightly. John looks to Peggy.

JOHN

How's it look?

PEGGY

Perfect. Thank you, boys.

The men walk away from the tree, Brandon moving to Mary.

BRANDON

You must be really impressed,
watching me carry a tree around all
day.

MARY

Oh, so impressed. You're basically
a lumberjack.

Brandon just grins.

BRANDON

Thanks for letting me tag along. My family firmly falls into the tree lot category.

MARY

Yeah, most normal people do.

The two stand in awkward silence for a beat. Then, quietly:

BRANDON

So... any updates on the house?

Mary pulls Brandon aside towards the front door.

MARY

Haven't heard back on the inspection report yet. But I can't say Nash hanging around so much is a good sign.

BRANDON

At least he seems to be making your sister happy.

Mary looks over at Nash, who's chatting with John and Peggy. Megan is nowhere in sight.

MARY

Yeah. I just wish that didn't translate to losing the house.

BRANDON

Can I ask-- why are you trying so hard to keep it from selling?

MARY

You really want to know?

Brandon nods, his curiosity piqued.

MARY

I can't bear the thought of not living next door to you.

Mary grins. Brandon just shakes his head, smiling.

BRANDON

You're so funny.

MARY

Yeah, I know.

Another awkward silence.

BRANDON

Well... I should probably head
back.

Mary nods. But before Brandon leaves--

BRANDON

I'm around. You know, if there are
any other top-secret missions you
need me to help you with.

MARY

I'll keep that in mind.

Brandon smiles, giving Mary a nod as he heads out the door.

OFF MARY, watching him go, a small smile creeping across her
face as well.

INT. MARVIN HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Inside the kitchen, Megan is in the middle of preparing
dinner, her skills as a chef on full display. Peggy enters,
walking over to her.

PEGGY

The tree is up. Everyone's deciding
if they have the energy to decorate
tonight.

MEGAN

We can't decorate it yet.

PEGGY

We can't?

MEGAN

No! We haven't made our ornaments.
We never decorate the tree first.

Peggy considers this.

PEGGY

I guess I didn't think we'd go to
the trouble this year.

MEGAN

We have to. Mom, this is our last
Christmas here. I don't want to
skimp on any of the traditions.

(beat)

It might be the last time for some
of them.

The room gets a touch somber. *

PEGGY *

You're right. I mean, it's not like
we'll be going into the Arizona
desert to cut down a Christmas
cactus. *

That lightens the mood again. Megan smiles. *

PEGGY *

It's nice to see you so invested in
the traditions again. You hadn't
seemed as interested in them the
last few years. *

Megan nods. *

MEGAN *

Well... maybe it's time to change
that. *

Peggy gives her daughter a smile. Then: *

PEGGY *

I think Nash is getting ready to
leave. You want me to send him in
to say goodbye? *

A small smile crosses Megan's face. *

MEGAN *

Yeah. Please. *

Peggy nods, leaving the room. Megan gets back to cooking. *

A moment later, Nash enters the kitchen. He walks over to
Megan, joining her at the counter. *

NASH *

Hey, I just... wanted to say
goodbye before heading out. *

(beat) *

I, uh... had a really good time
today. *

MEGAN *

Yeah. Me too. *

The two share a smile, neither not knowing what to say next.
After a beat: *

NASH

So... I got the inspection report back. Turns out, there are a lot of things around the house that need fixing.

MEGAN

Is that so?

NASH

I know you guys have a lot of Christmas celebrating to do. But, if it's not a nuisance, I could stop by over the next week or so, do some DIY.

Megan raises an eyebrow at this.

MEGAN

What's in it for you?

NASH

I'll need to fix it up eventually if I buy it-- why not get a jump start?

Megan looks him over. Nash gives her some more.

NASH

Okay. Maybe I don't want to take any chances with this house. I need to prove I can actually make this work.

(beat)

I don't want to go back to my dad and just get handed a company. I want to make my own way. You know what I mean?

Megan nods-- *she gets it.*

NASH

And, you know... with my parents in Hawaii, I'm not doing a whole lot of Christmas activities.

MEGAN

Are you just using the whole DIY thing as an excuse to muscle in on my family Christmas?

Nash feigns surprise.

NASH

Wow. I'm hurt. What an accusation.

Megan just smiles, thinking about it.

MEGAN

Well, it is the most wonderful time of year. It'd be a shame for you to miss out on it.

NASH

Truly.

MEGAN

And I guess it couldn't hurt to fix this place up a little.

NASH

So... is that a yes?

Megan thinks on it. Then:

MEGAN

I'll ask my parents.

NASH

Oh, they already agreed to it.

Megan smiles and shakes her head.

MEGAN

Then I guess I'll see you soon.

Nash lets out a relieved smile.

NASH

I certainly hope so.

They stare into each other's eyes for a long beat, just now realizing how close they are to each other. Almost imperceptibly, they inch closer together. Is there a kiss coming?

Before anything happens, Megan snaps out of it, shaking off the moment. Nash recovers graciously.

NASH

Good night, Megan.

MEGAN

...Good night.

Nash leaves the room, Megan watching him go.

Once he's gone, Megan leans against the counter, closing her eyes and taking a deep breath. And she smiles.

*
*

INT. MARVIN HOUSE - MEGAN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Dressed in Christmas pajamas, Ivy climbs onto the air mattress, ready for bed. Megan walks over to tuck her in.

*

MEGAN

You have fun today?

Ivy nods with a big grin.

IVY

Can I chop down another tree tomorrow?

Megan laughs.

MEGAN

Let's save some for other kids, okay?

IVY

I guess.

As Megan finishes tucking Ivy in:

IVY

I like Nash. He's nice.

MEGAN

Yeah. I like him, too.

Ivy lets out a little grin.

*

IVY

Aunt Mary said he was your boyfriend.

*
*
*

MEGAN

He was, a very long time ago.

*
*

IVY

I liked helping him cut down the tree. It... reminded me of daddy.

*

Motherly concern crosses Megan's face.

MEGAN

Oh, honey.

IVY

It's okay. It was a good feeling.

Megan can't help but smile at her.

MEGAN

You're really smart, you know that?

IVY

Duh.

Megan laughs, giving Ivy a kiss on the forehead.

MEGAN

Good night, munchkin.

IVY

Night mom. Love you.

MEGAN

Love you, too.

Megan kisses Ivy on the forehead. She walks to the door,
turning off the light before climbing into bed. *

Megan rolls to her side, catching a glimpse of the family
photo on the night stand. She kisses her finger, placing it
on James' lips in the photo. *

She lets out a deep sigh before rolling onto her back,
staring at the ceiling-- something clearly on her mind. *

EXT. MARVIN HOUSE - DAY *

In front of the house, Nash's truck pulls up. Nash steps out,
snagging a tool box and heading to the front door. *

He gives a quick KNOCK, and after a beat, Megan swings it
open. *

NASH *

Handyman, reporting for duty. *

MEGAN *

Wow, you weren't joking about
getting a jump start on things. *

NASH *

Oh, I never joke about home
renovation. *

Megan lets out a smile. *

MEGAN

Where do we start?

A classic, upbeat Christmas song starts to play as we begin a MONTAGE:

A) INT. MARVIN HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY

Wearing a tool belt, Nash fixes the banister at the top of the stairs. He glues a post back into place, assisted by Ivy. Nearby, Megan watches, giving Ivy a thumbs up.

B) INT. MARVIN HOUSE - BATHROOM - DAY

Nash works under the sink. Megan hands him a wrench, and Nash makes a few adjustments... before getting sprayed with water.

Megan laughs when Nash emerges from under the sink, soaking wet.

C) INT. MARVIN HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

The entire family is building gingerbread houses in the kitchen, to varying degrees of success.

Megan and Nash work together on one, putting on the final touches. Nash holds up his phone, looking at one of the pictures of the house he took earlier and comparing it to their gingerbread version. It's actually a pretty good recreation of the house in gingerbread form.

Megan and Nash high five, pleased. Bethany and George-- working on their own neat and tidy house-- look on, Bethany letting out a small smile at how close Megan and Nash are.

D) EXT. MARVIN HOUSE - NIGHT

Nash sets up a plastic Santa and reindeer display on the front lawn. He gives a signal to Megan, who plugs it in, and the display shines brightly.

The two of them walk further into the yard to take in the new decorations.

FROM BEHIND, we see them staring at the house, hands almost touching, as the house is beautifully lit with Christmas lights.

E) EXT. CAFE - DOWNTOWN STAUNTON - NIGHT

Megan and Nash emerge from the cafe, carrying coffees in to-go cups. They walk and talk along the main street, even prettier at night with Christmas lights aglow.

ACROSS THE STREET, Lane notices them. Thinking, she dials her phone... and watches as Nash retrieves his phone, looks at it, and puts it back in his pocket without answering.

Lane narrows her eyes, not happy at what she's seeing.

F) INT. MARVIN HOUSE - MEGAN'S ROOM - DAY

Nash installs a new dead bolt and strike plate on the door as Megan watches. He closes the door, and it locks in place.

From the other side of the door, Megan closes and opens the door a couple times, pleased that it's fixed.

When she finally opens it again, Megan and Nash are staring at each other through the open doorway, and their eyes drift up to the mistletoe hanging just outside the bedroom door... directly above them.

They stare into each other's eyes... until Peggy appears in the hallway, lugging a basket full of laundry. They quickly shake off the moment, both a bit embarrassed.

G) INT. MARVIN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

The family gathers around the coffee table, piled with glass ornaments, paint, and a variety of crafts. Everyone is creating their own personal ornament.

Megan shows her ornament to Nash, which has been painted in the likeness of the Rudolph bow tie he wore in the Winter Formal photo. Nash just shakes his head and smiles as Megan holds the ornament up to Nash's collar, cracking up.

The Christmas tune comes to an end as we--

END MONTAGE.

INT. MARVIN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A little later, everyone except John and George are gathered around the tree, all of their personal ornaments hanging on it. But aside from these and the lights already strung up, the tree is a bit bare.

NASH

Looks like there's still quite a bit of tree left to decorate.

MEGAN

Yeah, dad's up in the attic getting the rest of them. There have been a lot of handmade ornaments over the years that you've missed out on.

Then John and George enter the room, coming down the stairs carrying large boxes, which they set on the ground.

GEORGE

Finally found them!

JOHN

Let's get to decorating, people!

Everyone excitedly gets up and approaches the boxes, fishing out ornaments and hanging them on the tree.

John pulls out a small ornament in the shape of the Eiffel Tower, made out of wire. He looks over to Peggy.

JOHN

Remember this?

Peggy approaches, letting out a sigh of nostalgia.

PEGGY

Of course. That was ages ago.

IVY

What is it?

PEGGY

It's the Eiffel Tower. Your grandpa made this years ago after we got back from Paris.

IVY

You went to France?

Peggy brings the ornament over to the tree and hangs it up in a prominent spot.

PEGGY

Of course. We backpacked all over Europe in college.

JOHN

We had plenty of adventures before settling down here.

JOHN (CONT'D)

(beat)
And hopefully, we'll have plenty
more.

John and Peggy share a sweet smile.

Ivy digs into the box, pulling out an ornament of her own.
It's a small picture frame made out of popsicle sticks.

IVY

I remember making this one!

Megan looks over, concern crossing her face as Ivy turns the
frame over in her hands. Then she sees the picture inside.

CLOSE ON ORNAMENT: The frame, clearly made by a child, has
the words "Merry Christmas Daddy" written on it. And inside
the frame is a picture of Ivy, a couple of years younger,
sitting next to her father.

Ivy looks at the ornament, her face filling with sadness.
Megan moves to her daughter, hugging her as Ivy starts to cry
into her shoulder.

MEGAN

It's okay, baby.

A moment of quiet falls over the room as Ivy softly sobs.
After a beat, she looks up to her mother with tear-filled
eyes.

IVY

Mom... I don't want to go back to
Austin.

MEGAN

Oh, honey.

IVY

I don't want this to be our last
Christmas here. It won't be the
same somewhere else.

Ivy looks down at the picture in her hand again. Megan looks
into her daughter's eyes.

MEGAN

I know. But let's not forget all of
the great ones we've already had.
We should try and enjoy this one as
much as we can.

Ivy wipes her eyes. Finally, she gives her mother a nod.

MEGAN

That's my girl. Now, do you know what I think will help us feel better?

IVY

What?

MEGAN

Some of grandma's hot chocolate.

Ivy manages a smile, then looks over to Peggy.

PEGGY

I think that's a wonderful idea.

Peggy takes Ivy by the hand, leading her into the kitchen. When they're gone, Megan walks over to Nash.

MEGAN

I'm sorry. This isn't how I thought the night would go.

NASH

You don't need to apologize.

Megan gives him a sad smile, trying to lighten the mood.

MEGAN

You want to stay for some hot chocolate?

Nash considers this, desperately wanting to be with her. But he thinks better of it.

NASH

...No. I should get out of your hair.

MEGAN

You sure?

Nash wavers for a moment. But:

NASH

Yeah. Go be with your daughter.

Megan gives him a nod and a smile.

MEGAN

Good night.

Nash smiles back.

NASH

See you soon.

Megan leaves the room, heading to the kitchen. Nash watches her go.

EXT. MARVIN HOUSE - NIGHT

Nash exits the house and walks to his truck. When he reaches it, he pauses-- then looks back at the house. It's so beautiful all lit up for Christmas.

He lets out a deep sigh. After thinking for a beat, he pulls out his phone and dials. It rings a few times before going to voicemail. *

LANE (V.O.)

You've reached Lane Castle. Sorry I missed your call, but leave a message and I'll return as soon as I can.

BEEP.

NASH

Hey, Lane. Sorry to call so late.
(beat)
Can we meet for coffee tomorrow? We need to talk.

OFF NASH, his face resolute.

INT. MARVIN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Megan walks downstairs to find Mary sitting on the couch, typing into her phone. *

MEGAN *

You're up early. *

Mary looks up briefly. *

MARY *

Trust me, I'm just as surprised as you are. *

Mary looks back down at her phone, then smiles. *

MEGAN *

Who's that? *

MARY

Huh?
(playing it cool)
Oh, just Brandon.

She looks at her phone again, giggling. Megan raises an eyebrow.

MEGAN

So, what's the deal with you two?

MARY

Nothing. He was just... helping me
with something.
(shrugs)
We've been hanging out since I've
been back.

MEGAN

Oh really?
(beat)
He's kind of cute.

MARY

Okay. I'm stopping this
conversation.

Megan smiles. Then:

MEGAN

Well, I'm happy for you. Ever since
you guys started hanging out, you
haven't been as upset about the
house.

Mary thinks on that-- *interesting*. But:

MARY

Well... I'm still not happy about
it.

Megan gets a little more serious at that.

MEGAN

Yeah. Actually... neither am I.

Mary gives her a look-- *really*?

MEGAN

I didn't realize until these last
couple days. I'm finally starting
to feel like I belong here again,
after three years of denial. But...
it's not our decision to make.

MEGAN (CONT'D)

(beat)

We have to let it go. Right?

Even as she says it, Megan isn't so sure. Mary doesn't know how to respond to that.

Then, from the kitchen:

BETHANY (O.S.)

What?!

Megan and Mary both look to the kitchen.

MEGAN

Was that Bethany?

Megan and Mary share a look. They both rush to the kitchen.

INT. MARVIN HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Megan and Mary enter to find Bethany and Peggy talking.

MEGAN

What's going on?

Bethany turns to face Mary.

BETHANY

You dropped out of college?

Mary sighs-- *great*. Then she looks to Peggy.

MARY

Mom?

PEGGY

It just slipped. I assumed you had told her.

Bethany looks at Megan.

BETHANY

Can you believe this?

But Megan isn't acting surprised. Bethany notices.

BETHANY

Wait. You know?

Megan looks away, guilty.

BETHANY

Wow. Great. Everyone in the family knows except for me.

MARY

Yeah, because I knew you'd freak out.

BETHANY

Freak out? Mary, I'm trying to help you.

MARY

Bethany, it's so not a big deal. *

BETHANY

Not a big deal? I helped you write your application. I had to pull some strings to get you an interview. *

(beat)

What about the money I sent you this semester for books?

Mary pauses, not sure if she wants to say. Bethany waits for an explanation.

MARY

I... wanted to record a demo.

Bethany shakes her head-- *unbelievable*.

BETHANY

You...

(beat)

I can't even talk to you right now. You're so irresponsible. *

MARY

I'm sorry, okay? But you don't have to treat me like a child!

BETHANY

Yes, I do! Because you keep acting like one!

Mary stares at her sister, a mixture of anger, guilt and disappointment building inside of her. Finally:

MARY

I don't need to take this. I'll be staying at Brandon's if anyone needs me.

MEGAN

Mary, wait. It's Christmas Eve.
Don't go.

*

But Mary's already heading towards the exit.

MARY

Yeah, well, Merry Christmas. Maybe
I'll see you in the New Year.

With that, Mary leaves. Megan gives a look to Bethany, who only looks slightly guilty with how things turned out.

INT. CAFE - DAY

Inside the bustling cafe, Nash and Lane share a table. They're mid-conversation, and based on the look on Lane's face, it isn't a pleasant one.

LANE

Are you serious?

*

NASH

Yeah. I've given it a lot of
thought. It's just... not the right
move for me right now.

*

*

*

LANE

I have to say I'm pretty surprised.
You seemed so excited about the
house.

*

*

*

(beat)

*

I mean, I know the inspection
report wasn't exactly glowing...

*

*

NASH

It's not about that.

*

*

LANE

Okay... so what is it about? Why
the cold feet?

*

*

*

NASH

Because... this house is important
to them. Way more important to them
than it is to me. If you had been
there last night--

*

*

*

LANE

Ah. Of course.

*

NASH

What?

*

*

LANE

Nothing. I just told you this would happen. You have a history with Megan, so I guess it shouldn't come as a shock that you'd fall for her again.

Nash looks away-- he can't deny that it's true.

LANE

You're not thinking clearly.
(beat)
What is it, guilt? Why? Her parents want to sell the house. Everybody is on board. Except you, apparently.

Nash thinks on this-- *she has a point.*

LANE

Look, what you're feeling is natural. It's a big purchase. But, please... make the decision for the right reason. Don't back out because you feel bad for not doing anything wrong.

NASH

Then why does it feel wrong?

Lane reaches across the table, patting Nash's hand.

LANE

Because you're thinking with your heart instead of your head.
(beat)
Say you don't buy the house. What happens when Megan goes back home after Christmas? How does it help?

Nash doesn't have an answer for that.

LANE

Withdrawing your offer could do more harm than good. John and Peggy are anxious to sell. Isn't it better the house go to someone they know? Someone they trust will give it the love it deserves?
(beat)
Not to mention that you'd be leaving me high and dry in the process.

Nash sighs, feeling guilty. *

LANE *

Just sleep on it. I'm sure you'll
come to the right decision when
you've had some time to reflect. *

NASH *

...Okay. But if it still doesn't
feel right-- *

LANE *

The deal is off. *

Nash nods, feeling a little better-- but still not fully
convinced. He looks down at his coffee, deep in thought. *

OFF LANE, a look of concern crossing her face. *

INT. BRANDON'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY *

Mary lies on Brandon's couch, face down. Brandon enters the
room with a cup of coffee.

BRANDON

If you're done yelling into my
couch, I have some coffee for you.

A beat as Mary just lies there. Finally she sits up and takes
the coffee from Brandon.

MARY

She makes me so... furious. Just
because she has a career, and a
husband, and a tiny apartment in
New York doesn't mean she's better
than me.

BRANDON

Bethany doesn't think she's better
than you. She's just mad at you.

(beat)

Don't you think she kind of has the
right to be?

MARY

I don't know! Maybe. I guess.

Mary takes a sip of her coffee before leaning back in the
couch.

MARY

I just... thought I could make it,
you know? If I recorded a song, and
got discovered... maybe they
wouldn't be so disappointed in me.

*

BRANDON

Who do you think's disappointed in
you? Bethany?

Mary just shrugs, not wanting to admit it.

MARY

Her life is so together. And mine's
never been.

*

Brandon sits down on the couch next to Mary.

MARY

Maybe that's why I've been holding
onto the house so much. They have
their lives to go back to, but
me... once the house is gone,
that's it. I don't really have
anything else.

*
*
*
*
*
*
*

BRANDON

Yes you do.

*
*

She gives him a look-- *really*?

*

BRANDON

You have courage. I mean, putting
everything on the line to pursue
your dream in music? That takes
guts.

*
*
*
*

Mary smiles a little at that.

*

BRANDON

And you have talent. I've heard you
sing. There's no doubt in my mind
you'll make it if you keep trying.

*
*
*

Mary looks up at him.

MARY

You think so?

Brandon nods.

BRANDON

And that's not to mention
everything else you have.

*
*
*

BRANDON (CONT'D)

Passion, strength, beauty. Not to
mention me, which is super
valuable.

*
*
*

Mary can't help but laugh. She looks at him for a beat.

*

MARY

Thanks, Brandon.

Mary wraps him up in a hug. They hold each other for a
moment, both enjoying it. Mary catches herself smiling, and a
look of surprise crosses her face.

EXT. MARVIN HOUSE - NIGHT

The house is once again glowing in the night with Christmas
lights. Megan walks up to the house and steps inside.

INT. MARVIN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Megan enters the living room to find Bethany and George
working on their laptops side by side. They all look up when
Megan enters.

*

GEORGE

There she is.

*

BETHANY

Where have you been all day?

Megan walks over, sitting down next to Bethany.

MEGAN

I got lost for a while. Walked
around town. I almost forgot how
beautiful this place really is.

*
*
*

BETHANY

Starting to miss it?

*
*

Megan sighs.

*

MEGAN

I think I've always missed it. It's
hard not to. I just... wasn't
really focusing on the right
things.

*
*
*
*
*

Bethany gives her sister a smile.

*

MEGAN

Is Ivy around?

*

GEORGE

I saw her out back with your mom
and dad.

Bethany adds to that:

BETHANY

She seemed okay. Mom's been
spoiling her all day.

Megan manages a smile at that.

MEGAN

Good.

(beat)

Well, I guess I should go relieve
them.

As Megan stands up, a few voices trail in from another room.
Peggy, John and Ivy enter the living room from the kitchen.

IVY

Mom!

Ivy runs over, giving Megan a hug.

MEGAN

Hey, munchkin. I was just coming to
get you.

(beat)

You... doing okay?

Ivy nods.

IVY

I made sugar cookies with grandma
and grandpa. We ate all of them.

Megan laughs.

MEGAN

I'm sorry I missed that. I know
that's a tradition we usually do
together.

IVY

It's okay. But... there is one I
still want I want to do.

MEGAN

Oh yeah? What's that?

IVY

We haven't done the Christmas light
tour! And this is the last night
they do it!

MEGAN

You want to go on the tour?
Tonight?

IVY

Grandma says it won't be the same
in Arizona.

Megan looks to Peggy.

PEGGY

Well, it's true.

IVY

Please?

Ivy gives her puppy dog eyes. Megan's heart melts.

MEGAN

Of course we can go. Get your coat.

IVY

Yay!

Ivy runs up the stairs, excited. Bethany rises from the
couch.

BETHANY

The kid's right. We should all do
this one last time while we have
the chance.

GEORGE

I'll grab our coats, too.

George gives Bethany a kiss, heading upstairs as well. John
walks over to Megan on the couch.

JOHN

You sure you're up for this? I know
this was always kind of your and
James' thing.

Megan gives him a sad smile and nods.

MEGAN

Yeah. I know James wouldn't want us
to miss it.

John gives her a sad smile in return. Then, Ivy races back down the stairs, wearing a heavy coat.

IVY

Hey, mom?

Megan looks towards her at the bottom of the stairs.

IVY

Can we invite Nash?

Megan gives her a curious look.

MEGAN

Um... sure, I guess.

(beat)

You want him to come?

IVY

Yeah. He's fun.

(beat)

Plus, he makes you laugh. I don't want you to be sad on the tour just because it's the last time.

Megan can't help but smile at that. Then:

MEGAN

Okay. I'll give him a call.

Ivy flashes a grin as Megan stands up and leaves the room. Once she's gone, Ivy turns to Peggy.

IVY

Grandma, do you think mom likes Nash?

Peggy and John share a look.

PEGGY

I'm... not sure. But she does seem pretty happy when he's around.

IVY

That's what I thought.

OFF IVY, grinning.

EXT. DOWNTOWN STAUNTON - NIGHT

Megan and Ivy stand on Main Street, bundling up against the cold.

Nash rounds a corner down the street. Megan spots him, waving him over to join them.

MEGAN

Hey! Thanks for coming.

NASH

Of course. Thanks for having me.

IVY

It was my idea.

Ivy smiles.

NASH

Well, then thank you for the invite.

IVY

My pleasure.

Nash turns to Megan.

NASH

I didn't miss anything, did I?

MEGAN

The rest of the family's already started. But our ride should get here any minute.

Right on cue, a sound echoes down the street-- the CLIP CLOPPING of hooves. A beautiful horse-drawn carriage comes into view, pulling up right in front of them.

The DRIVER tips his hat, calling down to them.

DRIVER

You folks taking the tour?

IVY

Yes, sir.

The Driver smiles.

DRIVER

Well then, hop on up.

NASH

Here, allow me.

Nash approaches the carriage, lifting Ivy up into it. Then he helps Megan step in before following himself.

The three of them are pretty cozy, sharing the back seat, Ivy in the middle. But before they leave, Ivy calls up to the Driver.

IVY

Am I allowed to ride up front?

DRIVER

If it's alright with your mom, it's alright with me.

Ivy looks to her mom.

IVY

Can I?

Megan's a little caught off guard, but she nods.

Ivy quickly climbs up to the front, sitting next to the Driver.

DRIVER

Here we go!

He gently whips the reins, and the carriage starts to move. As they move off, Ivy sneaks a glance behind her.

Megan and Nash are now cozy in the back, just the two of them. Ivy faces forward again, letting out a grin.

OFF MEGAN AND NASH, who share an awkward smile as they both realize just how intimate the situation has become.

EXT. DOWNTOWN STAUNTON - LATER

The carriage moves through another part of downtown, where the lights are absolutely beautiful-- all of the shops have worked together to create a network of Christmas decorations that are a sight to behold.

Megan and Nash take in the lights, having a wonderful time. Then they look at each other, both letting out a small laugh.

NASH

So. This is kind of feeling like a date.

MEGAN

Yeah. I'm not sure it's entirely an accident.

Megan shoots a glance towards Ivy, who's still riding up front.

The two sit in silence for a beat, neither knowing what to say. Finally, Megan's gaze shifts back to the scenery.

MEGAN

My mom was right, though. This wouldn't be the same anywhere else.

NASH

No. It wouldn't.

Nash is looking right at Megan as he says that. But he looks away just as Megan turns to face him. The two stare into each other's eyes, the romance of the moment not lost on either of them.

MEGAN

I've really enjoyed being back here this Christmas.

NASH

Me too.

MEGAN

Can I ask you something?

Nash nods.

MEGAN

Is it a coincidence that out of all the houses you could have chosen to buy, you chose ours?

Nash shrugs.

NASH

I know that house. It's a good property.

MEGAN

So... you're not doing this for me, right? Buying the house to... I don't know. Try and rekindle something?

NASH

I wouldn't do that. I know how much you love that house, and I wouldn't use it like that.

Megan nods-- okay.

NASH

But... what if I did want to rekindle something?

Megan just gives him a look. *

NASH *

What, is that so crazy? Being back
here with you has been great, you
said so yourself. *

Megan struggles to find the right words. She looks to the
front of the carriage, making sure Ivy isn't listening. She
continues quietly: *

MEGAN *

Where do you see this going?

Nash is at a loss at that one.

MEGAN *

Since I've been back, I know we've
both felt... something. And
honestly, it's something that I
haven't felt in a long time. But...
it was an escape. A holiday break
from real life.

NASH

Megan...

MEGAN

In another week, Ivy and I are
flying back to Austin.

NASH

Why?

Megan is taken aback by that.

MEGAN *

What do you mean why? That's where
my life is.

NASH *

No, it isn't. Your life is here. It
always has been. *

Megan tries to comment on that, but no words come.

NASH

You quit your job, right?

MEGAN

It's not that simple. What about
Ivy? I just pull her out of school,
away from her friends?

NASH

To be with her family. She said she didn't want to go back.

Megan sighs, frustrated.

NASH

Megan, you belong here. We both do. You knew that ten years ago, and I was just too blind to see it.

MEGAN

Nash, I'm not...

(beat)

I'm not ready, okay? And I'm worried that if I stay here, I'm going to keep feeling the way I feel about you. And that terrifies me. Because there's always the possibility that I lose it again.

Nash just stares at her. His face is full of longing, frustration, and somber understanding. The look of somebody in love that can't be loved back. But before he can say anything:

DRIVER

Okay, folks. End of the line.

The Driver pulls on the reins, slowing the carriage to where they started the tour. The rest of the family waits at the curb, waving when they spot them.

Megan and Nash ride in silence as it comes to a stop.

Nash hops out, helping Megan and Ivy down. The Driver gives a nod, whipping the reins and riding off into the night.

Megan turns to Ivy:

MEGAN

Honey, can you give me a second?

Ivy nods, heading to the rest of the family as Megan pulls Nash aside.

NASH

So... you don't want to give this a chance? Pick up where we left off?

MEGAN

We can't pick up where we left off. We're not the same people.

(beat)

MEGAN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, Nash. But... I just
can't open myself up to get hurt
like that again.

Nash looks down, somber.

NASH

The last thing I want is to cause
you pain. So if it helps, you'll
never have to see me again.

(beat)

But I want you to know... I'm
withdrawing my offer on the house.

Megan gives him a look-- *what?*

NASH

If I'm going to be out of your
life... then I think I should be
out of it completely.

(beat)

You're not the only one scared of
getting hurt again.

He gives one last look to Megan.

NASH

Goodbye, Megan.

Megan tries her best to keep the tears from coming.

MEGAN

Goodbye.

With that, Nash turns and starts walking down the street.

Megan, confused and heartbroken, joins the rest of the
family. Bethany notices she isn't looking happy.

BETHANY

Hey, everything okay?

Megan just shakes her head, looking devastated.

Sympathy crosses Beth's face. She throws an arm around Megan,
and Megan leans into her sister as the two follow after the
family, now walking back home.

EXT. LANE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Nash walks through the quiet streets, deep in thought. He
comes back to earth when he notices one of the stores still
has its lights on.

Nash looks through the window to see Lane, hard at work. He takes a deep breath, then approaches the door.

INT. LANE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Lane sits at her desk, even more papers piled on it than before.

She looks up when there's a KNOCK at the window to see Nash. She waves for him to come inside as she straightens her desk.

LANE

Well, this is an unexpected surprise.

NASH

Are you... still working? It's Christmas Eve.

Lane just shrugs.

LANE

Christmas was never a big deal in my family. For me, it's simply December 24th.

(beat)

Did you need something?

Nash approaches her tentatively.

NASH

Yeah. I was just passing by, and...

(beat)

Can we talk?

Lane raises an eyebrow-- *this doesn't sound good*. She motions to a chair, and Nash sits down.

LANE

I take it you've thought about our conversation?

NASH

Yes. And I'm sorry, I know this is putting you in a tight spot, but I can't do it. I have to back out.

Lane rubs her temples, a little frustrated.

NASH

I know. It's exactly what you said would happen.

NASH (CONT'D)

I was thinking with my heart... and
it turns out my heart is pretty
stupid.

Lane softens at that.

LANE

So you and Megan...?

NASH

Yeah. It's over. I just... figured
I should be out of the picture
completely. For both of us.

She thinks on that.

LANE

You really care about her, don't
you?

NASH

Yes. I really do.

Lane lets out a deep sigh. But, she opens a drawer and pulls
out an envelope from her desk, handing it to Nash. Nash takes
it, raising an eyebrow.

LANE

Go on, open it. It's yours.

Nash does so, pulling out a check.

LANE

Your half of the investment. I'm
reimbursing you.

NASH

Really? You're... okay with this?

LANE

I can't force you into doing this,
Nash. I wouldn't say I'm pleased,
but... I understand.

Nash looks stunned.

NASH

Wow. I, uh... wasn't really
expecting this. Thank you.

LANE

We had an agreement. You've made
your choice.

(beat)

LANE (CONT'D)

And it looks like you're hurting
enough.

Nash stands up. He gives Lane an appreciative nod.

NASH

Thank you for understanding. I
wouldn't be doing this if I didn't
think it was the right decision.

LANE

I know. I just hope John and Peggy
can find another buyer soon.

Nash looks a little guilty at that.

LANE

Don't feel bad. I'm sure they will.
But, can I offer you some advice?

NASH

Sure.

LANE

If you care enough about Megan to
kill this deal... why are you
letting her go so easy?

Sadness crosses his face.

NASH

She doesn't want me.

LANE

Are you sure about that?

Nash looks away, not giving an answer.

LANE

Before you let her go... I'd be
certain of it.

He lets that sink in. He struggles with what to say. Finally:

NASH

I just wish there was a way for
everyone to get what they want.

LANE

Wouldn't that be the perfect
Christmas present?

Nash gives her a small smile as that hangs in the air.
Then... an idea crosses his face.

NASH

...What if there was a way?

Lane gives him a look-- *huh?*

NASH

I know that I have no right to ask you this, but... I need your help.

OFF LANE, raising an eyebrow, intrigued.

INT. MARVIN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The family enters the living room, happily chatting about the carriage ride. Except for Megan, who brings up the tail of the group, still a little somber.

When they enter, they find Mary sitting by the Christmas tree by herself. Bethany and Mary share a look, still wary of each other. Peggy looks to Mary.

PEGGY

Hi, sweetheart. I thought you were spending the day with Brandon.

MARY

I was. But his family came over, and I didn't want to ruin their celebration.

BETHANY

What about ours? Have any more news to help ring in the holidays?

Mary glares at Bethany. Mom intercedes.

PEGGY

Girls, be nice. It's Christmas Eve-- we should all be opening stockings.

Everyone else agrees, gathering at the couch as Peggy heads over to the stockings hanging on the mantle. Mary rises from the couch.

MARY

Go ahead, I was just leaving.

Mary starts to leave the room when:

MEGAN

Wait.

Mary turns to Megan, just now noticing how upset she looks.

MARY

Megan... is everything okay?

That causes everyone else to look over at her. Megan shakes her head.

MEGAN

No. I... have something I need to say. And I want everyone here.

Mary sits back down as the family gives Megan their full attention. John and Peggy look particularly concerned.

JOHN

What's the matter, honey?

Megan gathers her thoughts, taking a deep breath as everyone waits for her to begin.

MEGAN

Mom, dad. I'm sorry. I ruined things.

She looks down at the ground, feeling guilty. John and Peggy share a look, and John walks over to Megan, putting a hand on her shoulder.

JOHN

What do you mean?

MEGAN

Nash and I...

(beat)

Things got complicated. I told him I wasn't ready for us to...

She doesn't finish, but the family gets it. Their faces fall-- Ivy's in particular.

MEGAN

And because of that, he said he's withdrawing his offer. I didn't mean for it to happen.

PEGGY

Megan, it's fine. You don't need to be sorry.

JOHN

So long as you're okay.

MEGAN

But you guys were counting on this!

John just shrugs.

JOHN

We'll get another offer.

MEGAN

It's not just that. I feel guilty, because... the more we were celebrating Christmas, the more I remembered how much I love this place. And how much I don't want to let it go.

(beat)

It's like... I don't know. Maybe deep down, I let this happen. Like I sabotaged your plans because I was being selfish.

Mary looks away at that, feeling guilty herself.

JOHN

Why didn't you tell us how you felt?

MEGAN

I didn't want to ruin your plans. You deserve to retire, go on adventures. And if you knew how I felt, I was worried you might call off the sale.

(beat)

But I'll be fine. I promise. I'm not going to let you change your plans because of me.

Megan walks over to Ivy, kneeling down to her level.

MEGAN

Ivy, I know how hard this has been for you, because it's been just as hard for me. It felt like... losing the house would be like losing your dad all over again. And I wasn't ready for that.

Ivy looks down at the ground.

MEGAN

We'll always remember this house. And I promise you, no matter where we celebrate Christmas, your dad will be with us. Right here.

Megan points to Ivy's heart. A little tearful, Ivy gives her mother a nod, and they hug.

After a long embrace, Megan stands up and turns to the rest of the family.

MEGAN

I want to make the rest of this
Christmas count. I don't want us to
fight.

Bethany and Mary share a quick glance, then look down, feeling guilty.

MEGAN

I just want to celebrate with all
of you. Because if this is our last
Christmas here, we have to make the
memory as wonderful as possible.

Peggy holds out her arms, and she and Megan hug. After they separate:

PEGGY

Well, you heard her. Let's get the
celebration started.

The family smiles as Peggy ushers Megan over to the mantle, and the two of them start passing out stockings.

As they do, Mary stands up and makes her way over to Bethany.

MARY

Hey, do you have a sec?

Bethany gives Mary a wary look, then turns to George.

GEORGE

Go ahead. I'll have your stocking
ready when you get back.

She smiles at George, then follows Mary out of the room.

INT. MARVIN HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Mary and Bethany enter the kitchen. When they do, Bethany crosses her arms, on the defensive.

MARY

I was thinking about what Megan
said, and she's right. We shouldn't
spend our last Christmas here
fighting.

MARY (CONT'D)

(beat)

So... I wanted to say I'm sorry.

Megan is caught a little off guard by that. But her walls are still up.

BETHANY

Okay...

MARY

I shouldn't have lied to you. I was... ashamed, I guess. I didn't want you to be disappointed in me. Because sometimes that feels like the only dynamic we have anymore.

Bethany looks a little guilty.

MARY

Can I ask you something?

Off Bethany's nod:

MARY

What happened to us?

BETHANY

...What do you mean?

MARY

When we were kids, we used to be best friends. And now... sometimes it's like we're not really sisters anymore.

Bethany softens at that. She's at a loss for words for a minute, then finds her footing.

BETHANY

I guess we both grew up. And then we started our own lives and just... drifted apart.

Mary nods.

MARY

Yeah. I think that's what I was afraid of with the house.

Bethany raises an eyebrow at that.

MARY

I was in Nashville, you were in New York.

MARY (CONT'D)

Megan, who we thought would stay here forever, was in Austin. And then mom and dad said they were moving to Arizona.

(beat)

I freaked out. I didn't want what happened to us to happen to the rest of the family.

Bethany looks down. She knows what Mary is saying is true.

MEGAN

This house is kind of our anchor. I only get to see you once a year. And if we don't have this? Maybe we'd start missing Christmas. Maybe we'd keep drifting out of each other's lives completely.

Mary's eyes start to tear up as she speaks. Bethany notices, her walls coming down. Finally:

BETHANY

I'm sorry, too.

Mary looks up, a little surprised.

BETHANY

I know that I treat you like a child sometimes, and I don't mean to. I just... don't know how else to help.

(beat)

I've always played it safe. By the rules. And it's worked for me. But you... you have so much talent, and passion, and courage. And I've always been jealous of that.

MARY

You have?

Bethany nods. Mary can't help but smile.

MARY

I'm glad we're getting one last Christmas here together. It feels like... we're getting a second chance. And I want to make the best of it.

BETHANY

I do, too.

Bethany hesitates, something on her mind.

BETHANY

I... have some news. Something nobody else knows. And it's probably why I've been so hard on you lately, because honestly, it's kind of freaking me out.

OFF MARY, curious.

INT. MARVIN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mary and Bethany enter the room to find everyone sorting through stockings.

MARY

Everyone, listen up!

The family looks over.

MARY

We have a serious problem.

The celebration dies down, the family now concerned.

PEGGY

What's wrong?

MARY

Bethany has an announcement. And it's going to affect Christmas.

All eyes turn to Bethany. Bethany gives George a look, and understanding crosses his face. He smiles, giving her a nod.

BETHANY

We're going to have to hang another stocking next year.

Bethany puts a hand on her belly. It takes the family a moment to process... and then they erupt in cheers.

Everyone gets up and rushes over, wrapping Bethany up in hugs and offering congratulations.

EXT. MARVIN HOUSE - MORNING

A crisp winter morning dawns on the Marvin house. It's Christmas Day.

INT. MARVIN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

The room is quiet and empty. Underneath the Christmas tree, wrapped presents cover the floor, waiting to be opened.

INT. MARVIN HOUSE - HALLWAY - MORNING

Like the living room, all is quiet. As we move past the walls lined with photos, we notice a blank space where a picture has been removed.

The stairs to the attic are lowered, and we slowly PUSH IN on them.

INT. MARVIN HOUSE - ATTIC - MORNING

Megan sits alone on the floor of the attic. The room is illuminated with dozens of string lights, giving off a cozy glow. An open box labelled "Xmas lights" sits nearby.

Scattered around Megan are a few photo albums, all opened to various pages. She flips through an album in her lap, eyes teary, the cover of which is labelled "Marvin Family Christmas."

Megan takes in photos of Christmases past. They're not in any particular order-- different family members over different years, but they all have one thing in common-- the look of joy and magic on everyone's faces.

There's a photo of the house, a photo of the entire family in Christmas sweaters from years ago, and a candid snapshot of Megan, Ivy and James opening Christmas presents. Megan pauses at this last one, brushing her fingers over it.

Finally, Megan flips the page, reaching a blank page with no photos. She reaches to a framed photo on the floor next to her-- the one missing from the hallway-- and carefully removes the picture.

It's the photo of her and Nash at Winter Formal. She can't help but smile as she looks at it again.

MEGAN

Goodbye, Nash.

With a look of sadness, she reverently places it in one of the open slots in the album.

NASH (O.S.)

I'm not ready to say goodbye.

Surprise crosses Megan's face, and she looks toward the stairs to see Nash standing at the entrance.

MEGAN

...Nash?

Nash climbs the rest of the way up the stairs and into the room, making his way over to Megan.

NASH

Your mom told me where to find you.
I know I said you'd never have to
see me again. And I'm sorry, but...
I have to say something. Please.

Megan looks him over, but manages a nod.

MEGAN

Okay.

NASH

Megan... I've been in love with you
since the moment we met. And I
never stopped loving you. I felt it
the moment I saw you back here, and
even though it had been ten years,
the feeling was the same.
(beat)
You can't tell me you didn't feel
it, too.

Megan just stares at him, no words coming-- but she doesn't deny it.

NASH

We were brought back here for a
reason. I think we were both
running from something. That's
probably why it took me so long to
come home. Because the thought of
seeing you again would be too hard.
Too painful.
(beat)
I was stupid to ever let it go in
the first place.

MEGAN

I can't open myself up to this just
to lose it. Not again.

NASH

You won't. I promise, I'm not going
anywhere. And I don't think you
should, either.

NASH (CONT'D)

(beat)

I want to spend every day of the rest of my life with you. I want to go on a Christmas light carriage ride every year, and help you keep this house from falling apart, and watch Ivy grow up and take her own awful picture for Winter Formal.

Though teary eyed, Megan can't help but laugh at that.

NASH

I know that it's scary. But to me, the only thing scarier than giving it a chance... is missing out on all of the memories we could make together. Here. Where we belong.

Nash points to the photo album Megan was looking at earlier.

NASH

I don't want to be just a picture in the back of a photo album.

Megan nods.

MEGAN

I don't want that, either.

She walks over to Nash, staring directly into his eyes.

MEGAN

And even if it's scary... I want to give it a try.

With that, Megan and Nash kiss-- it's beautiful and perfect. Finally, when they separate:

NASH

I have something else to tell you.

Megan gives him a look-- *really?*

NASH

I... think there might be a way to get what you want. With your parents, and the house.

MEGAN

And us?

Nash smiles, nodding.

NASH
Yes. And us.

MEGAN
What is it?

Nash reaches into his pocket, pulling out a small Christmas present-- roughly the size of an envelope.

NASH
We haven't missed the family
opening presents, have we?

Megan smiles, shaking her head-- a hopeful look on her face.

INT. MARVIN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

The entire family-- minus Megan and Nash-- gathers around the Christmas tree, a roaring fire giving off a warm glow.

Ivy helps distribute presents to the family as Megan and Nash come down the stairs. Mary-- sitting next to Bethany-- notices Nash, raising an eyebrow to Megan. Megan just smiles.

IVY
Mom, it's time for presents!

Megan smiles as she walks over to Ivy, sitting near her. John turns to Nash.

JOHN
Nash, we're glad to have you. Come
on over.

NASH
Thank you, sir.

Nash walks over to join Megan and Ivy. Ivy smiles, pointing to an open seat next to her mom.

IVY
You can sit here.

NASH
Thanks.

As Nash and Megan get comfy on the couch, Ivy passes out the last of the presents.

PEGGY
Is that all of them?

Ivy nods, excitedly moving to her pile of gifts-- easily the largest in the room. *

BETHANY
So, who's going first? *
(beat) *
Ivy? *

MEGAN
Actually, I was kind of hoping mom *
and dad could go first. *

John and Peggy give her a look-- *oh really?* *

MEGAN
We have a last-minute present to *
add to the pile. *

Nash pulls the present from earlier out of his pocket again, handing it to Ivy. *

NASH
Ivy, would you mind giving this to *
your grandma and grandpa? *

Ivy takes the present, delivering to Peggy. She and John share a look. *

MEGAN
Merry Christmas. I hope you like *
it. *

Peggy unwraps the present, finding an envelope. She opens it, pulling out some folded papers. She unfolds them, reading something with a curious look. She hands it to John, who has a similar expression. *

MARY
What is it? *

John looks up. *

JOHN
It's a purchase offer for the *
house. From Megan. *

MEGAN
And Nash. *

JOHN
How did you...? *

NASH

I asked Lane to draft this up last night. I wanted it to be official.

PEGGY

Megan...

MEGAN

Mom, this is what I want. I know it's taken me some time to figure it out, but I really don't want this to be our last Christmas here. And this way, you and dad don't have to put off retirement. You can still move to Arizona.

NASH

And we're not taking a penny below asking price.

JOHN

This is too much.

MEGAN

No, it isn't. Nash is reinvesting his initial offer, and I'm going to apply for a business loan.

Bethany looks at Megan.

BETHANY

Business loan?

Megan nods.

MEGAN

Mom and dad are right. This place is too big for just a couple people. But... Nash has some great ideas for the B&B.

NASH

Yeah, and I've got a local chef to help me run it.

Nash and Megan share a smile. The rest of the family looks just as pleased.

MEGAN

Of course, there are going to be some ground rules. First of all, renovations need to be kept to a minimum. I won't have the integrity of this house compromised.

Nash holds his hands up in defense.

NASH

We're in agreement on that.

MEGAN

And second... the entire house is going to be reserved every Christmas for a very large, very rambunctious family.

Everyone smiles at that, liking where this is going. Megan turns to Ivy.

MEGAN

But I only want to do this if we're all on board.

(beat)

Ivy... do you still want to stay here?

Ivy smiles, huge.

IVY

Yes!

Then, Megan turns to her parents.

MEGAN

Mom? Dad?

John and Peggy share a look, nodding-- they couldn't be happier.

PEGGY

It looks like we'll be celebrating Christmas here for longer than we thought.

Everyone cheers, and John and Peggy hug Megan, long and hard.

PEGGY

I'm so happy for you.

MEGAN

Thanks, mom. I'm happy, too.

She steals a glance at Nash, who smiles back at her. Then:

IVY

Well, what are we waiting for? Let's open presents!

The family laughs, gathering around as Ivy moves back to her pile of presents.

CUT TO:

INT. MARVIN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

A while later, the family talks and laughs, open presents littering the floor. John dozes on the couch, Bethany and George snuggle next to each reading books, Peggy cleans up wrapping paper, and Megan and Nash watch Ivy playing with her new toys.

Only Mary looks a little somber, watching everyone else paired up together. Her eyes instinctively move to the front door... and she spots someone.

Through the window at the front door is Brandon. Mary excuses herself from the rest of the family and opens the door to greet him.

BRANDON
Merry Christmas.

She gives him a big smile.

MARY
Merry Christmas. I was hoping you'd come by.

BRANDON
Of course I came by. How else would I give you your present?

MARY
You... got me a present?

Brandon reaches out of the door frame, snagging a brand new GUITAR. Mary's eyes light up.

MARY
No way!

She takes the guitar in reverence, running her hand over it.

BRANDON
Megan told me you hocked your guitar, and that didn't seem right. Not with a voice as pretty as yours.

Mary melts a little. She looks directly into Brandon's eyes.

MARY

Thank you. It's perfect.

(beat)

I got something for you, too.

BRANDON

You did?

Mary sets the guitar down, then jumps into Brandon's arms. The two kiss, and Brandon is overjoyed.

After they separate, Mary snags the guitar and grabs Brandon's hand, dragging him inside.

MARY

Everyone, look what Brandon got me!

They all cheer as she shows off the guitar, causing John to wake from his slumber. *

Brandon smiles, sheepish. As the cheering dies down, Bethany calls out: *

BETHANY

Play something!

Mary gives her sister a look-- *really?* Bethany smiles and nods.

Mary just shrugs, then walks into the middle of the room, strapping on her new guitar.

MARY

Alright. I dedicate this song to the Marvin family Christmas. This year... and all of the years to come.

Everyone gathers around, waiting for Mary to begin. Mary closes her eyes and takes a deep breath, strumming the guitar. *

She begins singing a cover of "I'll be home for Christmas." It's slow, and folksy, and beautiful. This girl is good.

The family watches on with smiles. Nash throws his arm around Megan, and they kiss, totally in love. *

The song carries us out as we-- *

FADE TO BLACK. *

THE END *