

SHOOTING CHRISTMAS

Written by

Rick Garman

First Draft 6/15/16
Second Draft 7/21/16
Third Draft 8/24/16
Fourth Draft 9/7/16 (rev.)
Fifth Draft 9/15/16

ACT ONE

1 OPENING CREDIT SEQUENCE 1

We open on Christmases past of JESSICA MCELLIS and MATT LARSON. She's a movie star, 30, beautiful. Through photos, press clips, and videos, we see her holidays on a beach, at a ski resort, in a nightclub, and so on. *

He's a handsome every-man, also 30ish. In photos, home video, and local newspaper clips we see him with sister ZOE, a free-spirited woman in her early 20s, and daughter, SOPHIE, a cute but bookish 10-year-old. Their holidays are around the tree, with family their Homestead Lodge, and in various town events with Matt identified as Mayor. *

A1 EXT. LOS ANGELES - DAY A1

LA Christmas: beachgoers wearing Santa caps, a wreath on the grill of a Rolls Royce, a palm tree with lights, etc.

B1 EXT. BEVERLY HILLS STREET - DAY B1

An expensive neighborhood with gated estates. Outside one are a half dozen paparazzi, including IAN CARTER, a scruffy rogue of a guy in his late twenties. *

A black limo pulls up. The photographers shout to get the attention of the occupant of the vehicle, yelling "Jessica! Jessica!"

The gates open and the limo pulls into the estate, leaving the photographers disappointed.

*
*

C1 EXT. JESSICA'S HOUSE - DAY C1

The limo pulls up a large house, fit for a movie star. GAVIN WILLIAMS, Jessica's thirtysomething mountain of a bodyguard, gets out of the limo and goes to open the door for Jessica.

D1 INT. JESSICA'S HOUSE LIVING ROOM - DAY D1

The large room is dominated by a spectacular Balsam Hill Christmas tree, which ROSALIE EVANS, a sharp woman in her early thirties, is putting the finishing touches on. Jessica comes into the room and stops, staring at the tree like its an alien spaceship. Gavin stands in the doorway, silently.

*
*

ROSALIE
Hey, Jess! What do you think?

JESSICA
Rosalie, what is that?

*

ROSALIE
It's a Christmas tree.
(beat - no reaction)
A Balsam Hill Christmas tree.
Isn't it gorgeous?

*
*
*
*
*

JESSICA
Yes, it's beautiful. Why is it in my house?

*
*
*

ROSALIE
Because it's almost Christmas.
Everyone needs a tree.

*
*
*

Jessica goes over to put her hands on Rosalie's shoulders.

*

JESSICA
Rosalie, I'm fine. I know it's my first Christmas since I broke up with Vince but I really don't need a whole winter wonderland thing to cheer me up.

*
*
*
*
*
*

ROSALIE
So I should cancel the reindeer?

*
*

JESSICA

(smiles)

You know, Vince and I would always go to these crazy trips to exotic places for Christmas so I'm actually looking forward to a nice quiet holiday at home for a change.

She's a good actress so that statement is almost believable. Almost. But it sounds like she's trying to convince herself.

ROSALIE

Are you sure? Because you can always come to Seattle with me and Dean. I'm sure his parents would let you sleep on the convertible sofa in their den.

JESSICA

That's a sweet offer, but I'm good.

ROSALIE

What are best friends for?

JESSICA

Besides, we're spending the next ten days in Iowa shooting a Christmas movie.

ROSALIE

Yeah, but... you're doing the movie *with* Vince. And it's a movie about an actress that goes to a little town in Iowa and rekindles an old flame while learning the true meaning of the holiday. That's a little close for comfort, isn't it?

JESSICA

Don't worry. Art will not be imitating life.

ROSALIE

You're the producer on this. I still say you could've gotten someone else.

JESSICA

(shrugs)

It's fine. He's perfect for the part and he and I are... fine.

E1 EXT. HOMESTEAD - AFTERNOON E1 *

Homestead is one of those perfect small American towns. The picturesque snow-covered square has a gazebo and is festooned with decorations. An inflatable Santa, sleigh, and reindeer is suspended above a sign reading "Homestead Holiday Celebration! 12 Days Until Christmas!"

4 EXT. HOMESTEAD LODGE - AFTERNOON 4 *

The Homestead Lodge is a homey country inn all decked out for Christmas with white lights, a wreath, garland, and more. *

A4 INT. LODGE LOBBY - AFTERNOON A4 *

The inside is just as charming, with decorations giving the place extra warmth. Matt enters talking on his cell phone.

MATT

You and mom are going where? On a river cruise in Europe? What about Christmas? What am I going to tell Zoe and Sophie?

Zoe enters the lobby just as her name is mentioned.

ZOE
Tell me and Sophie what?

MATT
Mom and Dad won a raffle. They're skipping Christmas to do a cruise.

ZOE
Cool! Gimme.
(takes the phone)
Dad? Europe? No, this is the kind of thing you're supposed to do in your retirement. We're very happy. Yes, even Matt is happy about it.
(phone toward Matt)
Aren't you big brother?

Matt shakes his head. Zoe pinches him.

MATT
Ow! Yes, we're very happy.

ZOE
(into phone)
See? No, don't worry about the lodge. That's why you left the business to us; so you can go gallivanting around the globe.

*

She wanders away. Matt stands there, a bit perturbed, and then hears dramatic music, roars, and the clanking of what sounds like swords. He heads toward the adjacent parlor.

5 INT. LODGE PARLOR - AFTERNOON

5 *

This main room has homey furnishings, a fireplace with stockings, and a Christmas tree. Sophie is on the couch watching a movie on an iPad/tablet. He sits by her.

MATT
Sophie, what are you watching?

SOPHIE
"The Asterlight Chronicles Part Three: The Fires of Smeed!"

MATT
That's the movie about the dragons?

ZOE

(rolls her eyes)

Dad, it's not really about dragons.
It's about this girl, Helena
Asterlight, who saves the world!

MATT

(points at the screen)

Who's that?

SOPHIE

That's Jessica McEllis! She's like
the most famous, prettiest actress
in the world and she's gonna be
staying here, in our lodge! Isn't
that cool?

*
*
*

MATT

(unimpressed)

Yeah. Cool. Can you shut it off,
though? I need to talk to you.

SOPHIE

Dad!

MATT

Daughter! Please?

She sighs and turns off the movie.

MATT (CONT'D)

Thank you. Okay, so, your Grandma
and Grandpa aren't coming for
Christmas.

SOPHIE

Why not?

MATT

They won a cruise through Europe.

SOPHIE

But they're going to miss...

MATT

...Christmas morning, opening the
presents in our pajamas, I know.

SOPHIE

No! They're going to miss Jessica!

MATT

Aren't you a little bit sad that
they aren't going to be here?

SOPHIE
Sure. But they'll have fun on
their cruise, right?

MATT
Yes. I guess I'd just rather they
have fun here, with us.

SOPHIE
And Jessica! This is going to be
the best Christmas ever!

Matt gives a forced smile and nods.

MATT
Fa la la la la...

Matt is obviously not happy.

A5 EXT. BEVERLY HILLS STREET - DAY

A5

All the other photographers are gone and Ian is packing up as
a flashy convertible comes up to Jessica's gate driven by
VINCE HAWKINS, a movie-star handsome man in his 30s.

IAN
Vince! Hey, Vince - over here!

Vince kind of rolls his eyes and puts on a broad smile.

VINCE
How ya doin' Ian?

IAN
Good. So what's it going to be
like doing a movie with your ex-
girlfriend, Jessica?

VINCE
(smiles)
It's gonna be just like old times.

The gate opens for him and he drives in.

B5 EXT. HOMESTEAD LODGE - ESTABLISHING

B5

C5 INT. LODGE PARLOR - AFTERNOON

C5

Matt is looking at the Christmas tree and Sophie is watching
her movie when Zoe enters, just finishing up her call.

ZOE
Okay. I will. Bye.
(hands phone to Matt)
We'll get a million selfies of them
at the Eiffel Tower.

SOPHIE
Can we go to Europe next Christmas?

MATT
No! We spend Christmas here in
Homestead with family.

Zoe leans down to Sophie.

ZOE
Soph, we have to go to the town
meeting before the tree lighting
ceremony. Go get your coat?

She nods and runs off. Zoe joins Matt at the tree.

ZOE (CONT'D)
Be happy for them.

MATT
(unenthusiastic)
I am.

Zoe threatens to pinch him again.

MATT (CONT'D)
I am! I just...

ZOE
You just aren't good with change.

MATT
That's not true.

ZOE
Is this about the movie?
(beat)
Or Melanie? Christmas was always
her favorite time of year.

MATT
(beat)
I'm fine with change when something
needs changing. But some things
are perfect the way they are.
(beat)
We better go. The mayor shouldn't
be late for his own town meeting.

Matt puts his arm around his sister as they leave the room.

D5 EXT. JESSICA'S HOUSE - ESTABLISHING - DAY D5

Vince's convertible is now parked in front.

6 INT. JESSICA'S HOUSE LIVING ROOM - DAY 6

Jessica is sitting in the living room adjusting some ornaments on the tree as Vince comes in, looking at his phone. *

VINCE
I'm here for the meeting...

He stops short when he sees the tree. *

VINCE (CONT'D)
Nice tree. Whose is it?

JESSICA
What do you mean, whose is it?
It's mine. Apparently.

VINCE
Since when do you get a tree?

JESSICA
Since we're not going to Fiji this year. *

VINCE
(shrugs - sly smile)
We still could. I still have all the reservations. *

JESSICA
Vince, we're already stuck doing this movie together... *

VINCE
Stuck? Ouch.

JESSICA
I'm just saying, we agreed to do this movie before we split up and so... *

VINCE

So we should keep things strictly professional.

*

JESSICA

This is my first time producing a movie. My first big thing after the "Asterlight" series and I can't let anything mess that up.

VINCE

Classic Jessica.

JESSICA

What does that mean?

VINCE

It means you always have a detailed plan for everything and always stick to it no matter what.

*
*
*

JESSICA

I do not!

VINCE

We were together for three years, Miss I Don't Get In the Car Unless I Know Where I'm Going.

*
*
*

JESSICA

Well excuse me Mr. Play it By Ear, Get Lost in the Mexican Jungle Because I Refuse to Look at a Map.

*
*
*

They face off against each other, angrily.

VINCE

(sly smile)

You know, if this was a movie, this would be the part where we kiss.

JESSICA

I don't see any cameras.

Vince whips his cell phone out of his pocket (while he makes a "whip-pow" type of sound effect) and Jessica smiles. Rosalie comes to the doorway but stops short.

*
*

VINCE

Come on. Truce? It'll be good PR for the movie...

*
*

Jessica hesitates for a moment - it's hard to resist his charm.

She rolls her eyes and turns her cheek, pointing at it. He sneaks a quick kiss on her lips as he takes a picture of them.

*

JESSICA

Vince!

*

*

VINCE

This will look great on Instagram.

JESSICA

Don't you dare. People will think we're getting back together.

VINCE

Would that be so terrible?

JESSICA

I told you. No distractions.

VINCE

(smiles)

So you find me distracting?

JESSICA

Delete the photo, Vince.

He hits a button on his screen.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Thank you.

Rosalie clears her throat and enters.

ROSALIE

Barbara's here.

JESSICA

Let's go meet with our director.

Jessica exits and he checks his phone - he didn't delete it of course. He smiles and follows her.

7

EXT. HOMESTEAD STREET - AFTERNOON

7

Matt, Zoe, and Sophie are walking toward the square.

ZOE

It's freezing out here.

MATT

Come on! It feels like Christmas.

ZOE

It feels like winter. When we franchise and start opening other lodges the first one is going to be someplace warm.

*

SOPHIE

We're opening another lodge?

*

MATT
(exasperated)
No, we're not...

ZOE
Yes, we are, someday.
(pointedly, to Matt)
I didn't get a degree in hotel
management just so I could help run
my parents' lodge forever. *

MATT
(changing the subject)
So, Soph, who else is in the movie?

SOPHIE
Vince Hawkins! The action star! *
Dad, you should know this.

MATT
I don't have time for celebrity
stuff. I'm busy raising a kid and
running the lodge and being mayor. *

SOPHIE
They're staying at our lodge. You
should know everything about them! *

MATT
I don't know everything about any
of our other guests.

SOPHIE
Dad, if you embarrass me in front
of the movie stars...

ZOE
Don't worry Sophie, I'll make sure
he doesn't do anything dumb.

MATT
Are there dragons in the movie
they're doing here?

SOPHIE
(shakes her head)
I just can't.

Matt can't help but smile at that remark.

8

EXT. JESSICA'S POOL DECK - DAY

8

Jessica, Rosalie, and Vince are sitting at an umbrella-covered table next to the pool looking at photos of Homestead locations. Gavin is standing nearby, stone faced.

The director of the film, BARBARA MCKEEVERS, who looks like a harried mom-type in her mid-50s, is on the phone. *

BARBARA

(into phone)

Trevor, leave your sister alone. I don't care if she made fun of your turtle and the turtle doesn't care either. Be good. Bye.

(disconnects the call)

Sorry.

JESSICA

It's okay. How are the kids going to handle you going on location?

BARBARA

Oh it'll be "Lord of the Flies," but that's my husband's problem. My problem will be ten days of outdoor shoots in December in Iowa.

JESSICA

I know. I'm not good with cold and snow. *

VINCE

(smiling - teasing) *

Hmmm. Doesn't like the cold and snow but is doing a Christmas movie. Sounds like someone didn't think through their plan. *

Jessica scowls. *

ROSALIE

We fly out tomorrow morning. Gavin, do we have cars arranged?

Gavin nods.

BARBARA

You're going tomorrow?

JESSICA

My character grew up there so I want to get a feel for the place.

BARBARA

I'll be there Monday.

VINCE

Monday for me, too. I don't need
to get a feel for the place. I'm
playing a small town inn keeper so
it's not rocket science. I know
because I played a rocket scientist
who saves the world.

JESSICA
(smiling)
How many Oscars did that win?

VINCE
(smiles back)
How many did "Asterlight" win?

BARBARA
We'll need to be done by the twenty-
third. My family will notice if
I'm not there on Christmas Eve.

JESSICA
We're good with the town? Someone
said the mayor wasn't happy.

ROSALIE
They have these Christmas events
and he doesn't want us in the way.

BARBARA
That's why we wanted to film there.

ROSALIE
As long as we stay on schedule
we're fine. The town council
signed off on it.

JESSICA
I would think the mayor would be
excited. Think of the publicity.

They continue looking at the photos.

A8 EXT. HOMESTEAD TOWN HALL - NIGHT A8

A small civic hall with a sign reading "Town Meeting, 6pm."

9 INT. HOMESTEAD TOWN HALL - NIGHT 9

The room is packed with townsfolk including Zoe and Sophie.
At the head of the room is a table with five people including
PETE STEVERSON, a lovably persnickety man in his early 50s. *

Matt is standing near the table, addressing them.

MATT
We don't want the publicity.

PETE
Mr. Mayor...

MATT

Pete, you've known me since I was born. Call me Matt.

PETE

Mr. Mayor, this issue has already been decided by the town council.

MATT

But the tree lighting, the snowman building, the sleigh rides... these are our town's traditions. Isn't that what Christmas is all about? I mean, what's more important? A bunch of movie stars coming in and taking over the town... or family?

There is a pause.

SOPHIE

I want the movie stars.

The audience agrees. Pete bangs a gavel on the table.

PETE

Meeting adjourned. Let's go light the tree!

Everyone disperses, leaving Matt to wonder what happened.

A9 EXT. JESSICA'S HOUSE - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT A9

10 INT. JESSICA'S BEDROOM SUITE - NIGHT 10

Jessica is in her large bedroom sitting at a dressing table looking at her phone. Rosalie is moving stuff from a closet to a suitcase. Gavin is by the door, placid and emotionless.

ROSALIE

What about spending Christmas with your folks?

*
*
*

JESSICA

Rosalie! How many times do I have to tell you... I'm fine with spending it here by myself.

*
*
*
*

ROSALIE

I'm just asking. I'm sure they'd love to see you.

*
*
*

ROSALIE
Speaking of gifts, you wanted to
get something for the crew?

JESSICA
Yes, for working during the
holidays. What do producers
usually give their crews?

ROSALIE
Heartburn? Do you want this hat?

Jessica isn't paying attention. Rosalie looks to Gavin for
an answer and he shakes his head "no." The hat goes back.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)
So, what was up with that picture
of you and Vince?

JESSICA
Nothing. He's just being Vince.

ROSALIE
(beat)
Gavin, would you...

Gavin nods, takes the suitcases, and leaves with them.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)
Jessica, as your publicist, I want
to say that if you're considering
reuniting with Vince, we should
come up with a media strategy. But
as your best friend I want to
say... are you crazy?

JESSICA
I'm not reuniting with Vince!

ROSALIE
You guys looked very chummy.

JESSICA
Look, I loved him. Still do, I
guess. And maybe someday... if he
grows up. But not now. Now is
about the movie. I don't want
anything to mess it up. I don't
want to be just the "pretty girl"
who did the "Asterlight" movies.

ROSALIE
Okay. Good.

JESSICA

(beat - insecure)

What if I mess it up? What if I'm always just the pretty girl who did the "Asterlight" movies?

ROSALIE

Hey, you're more than just the pretty girl. You're Jessica McEllis, slayer of dragons. Slay this one.

*

Jessica doesn't look like she's sure she can.

11 EXT. HOMESTEAD TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT 11

Near the gazebo is a large, decorated but dark tree and a stage where people have gathered including Matt, Zoe, Sophie, and Pete. The entire town has shown up for the event.

A matronly woman is at a microphone, finishing up a warbled version of a Christmas carol. There is applause when she's done and Matt steps up to the microphone.

MATT

Thank you, Mrs. Flannery. That was great as always. Okay, let's kick off the Homestead Holidays with the lighting of the tree! Doing the honors this year is none other than my daughter... Sophie Larson.

*

Sophie joins her father and they walk over next to the tree where a ceremonial button stands on a table.

MATT (CONT'D)

(to Sophie)

You ready?

SOPHIE

I'm ready. Merry Christmas, Dad.

MATT

Merry Christmas, Sophie.

Sophie pushes the button and the tree sparkles to colorful life. The crowd cheers and Matt hugs Sophie tightly.

12 EXT. HOMESTEAD LODGE - NIGHT - ESTABLISHING 12 *

13 INT. LODGE KITCHEN - NIGHT 13 *

A professional kitchen has been taken over by Zoe and Sophie who are making Christmas cookies while Matt supervises. During the following he goes to a nearby counter where a pot of coffee is brewing next to a container of FOLGERS and pours himself a cup. *

SOPHIE
So do you think she'll be nice?

MATT
Who?

Sophie throws up her hands with an exasperated sigh.

MATT (CONT'D) *
Jessica McEllis? I don't know, sweetie. I'm sure she will be.

SOPHIE
Do you think she'll like me?

ZOE
Sophie, that's a no-brainer. How could anyone not like you?

SOPHIE
Hailey Shephard doesn't like me.

MATT
I thought she was your friend.

SOPHIE
That's the other Hailey. Hailey Shephard doesn't like me.

MATT
Well, she should, because you are the coolest, smartest...

SOPHIE
Dad!

ZOE
And Jessica will like you, too.

Zoe offers one of the finished cookies to Sophie.

SOPHIE
I'm not supposed to eat sweets before bedtime.

ZOE

Luckily, I know your father.

Sophie looks at her dad who nods as he does the "MUG HUG,"
and she takes the cookie.

*

14 EXT. HOMESTEAD LODGE - DAY - ESTABLISHING 14 *

15 INT. LODGE LOBBY - DAY 15 *

Zoe is at the front desk as Matt enters. Sophie is sitting in a chair in the lobby, watching another dragon movie.

MATT

I have to run over to the bakery to pick up the pumpkin pies. Soph, you want to come with me?

She is too engrossed in the movie to respond.

MATT (CONT'D)

(to Zoe)

Just a big ball of holiday spirit, isn't she?

Zoe smiles as Matt grabs his coat and heads for the door.

16 EXT. HOMESTEAD STREET - DAY 16

A black SUV with tinted windows is rolling down the colorfully decorated street of Homestead. It passes the sign in the square that now says "11 Days Until Christmas."

17 INT. JESSICA'S SUV - DAY 17

Gavin is driving. Jessica (who has on a cap and sunglasses and her hair in a ponytail) and Rosalie are in the back.

JESSICA

Look at all the Christmas stuff. The crew has done a great job with the set decoration.

*
*
*

ROSALIE

They don't get here until tomorrow, remember?

*
*
*

JESSICA

So all this is... the town did all this?

*
*
*

ROSALIE

Yeah, they really like Christmas.

*
*

Jessica looks out the window and shakes her head, a bemused smile slowly turning into an appreciative one.

*
*

JESSICA
Oh, hey! Gavin, pull over.

ROSALIE
What are you doing?

JESSICA
It's a bakery. I want to get
something for the crew. Cupcakes!
I'm going to be their favorite
producer ever. I'll be right back.

Jessica gets out of the car.

18

INT. BAKERY - DAY

18

Matt walks up to the counter at the bakery manned by a woman in her 60s, PAULINE. There is nobody else in the store.

MATT
Merry Christmas, Pauline.

PAULINE
Morning, Matt. Here for your pies?

MATT
It isn't Christmas without
Pauline's famous pumpkin pies.

PAULINE
Aren't you sweet. I've got them in
the back. Oh... and I have a
little something extra for Sophie.

MATT
You spoil her, Pauline.

She waves him off with a "pshaw."

PAULINE
Help yourself to some coffee.

MATT
Thank you.

Pauline exits into the back as Matt goes behind the counter to pour a cup of coffee. Jessica enters and approaches him, rubbing her hands together for warmth.

*
*

JESSICA
Brrr! It's so cold! Hi. Can I
get, like, a hundred cupcakes?

*

MATT
(no clue who she is)
Oh, I'm not...

JESSICA
Chocolate, vanilla, red velvet. Do
they have red velvet in Iowa?

MATT
(beat - offended)
You must be with the movie.

JESSICA
Yes. Do you want an autograph?

MATT
(confused)
No, that's okay.

JESSICA
Oh, don't be shy. Here.

She signs a napkin and hands it to Matt.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
Don't sell that on Ebay!

MATT
Why would I sell...

JESSICA
(interrupts)
Great. So the cupcakes...

MATT
You need to talk to...

JESSICA
Can they be ready on Monday? I'll
pay extra. That would be amazing.
I'll send someone back for them.
Okay? Thanks! Bye!

MATT
But...

But before he can protest any further, she is gone just as
Pauline comes out of the back with the pies.

PAULINE
Who was that?

MATT
I have no idea.

He crumples up the napkin and throws it away.

19

EXT. HOMESTEAD STREET - DAY

19

Jessica exits the bakery and Ian approaches with a camera.

IAN
Jessica. Jessica! What's going on
with you and Vince?

JESSICA
(annoyed)
You've got to be kidding. Where's
the rest of the horde?

IAN
Just me so far. How about an
exclusive?

JESSICA
Sure... you can have an exclusive
up close look at my bodyguard.

Gavin steps up to Ian as Jessica heads back to the SUV.

IAN
(hands up)
All right, Gavin. Stand down.
Jessica, I'm just doing my job.

JESSICA
(smiles)
You have a lousy job, Ian.

Gavin goes back to the SUV.

IAN
Tell me about it.

He checks his camera and walks away.

20 EXT. HOMESTEAD LODGE - DAY - ESTABLISHING 20 *

21 INT. LODGE LOBBY - DAY 21 *

Sophie is so engrossed that she doesn't notice when the front door opens and Jessica, Gavin, and Rosalie enter. Jessica hangs in the background while Rosalie approaches Zoe.

ZOE
Hi, welcome to the Homestead Lodge. *

ROSALIE
Hi. Checking in. Two rooms under
Evans and one for Williams. *

ZOE
Yes. Everything is set. Let me
get your paperwork from the back.

Zoe exits into the office. A roar of a dragon and Jessica's voice comes from the movie on Sophie's tablet

JESSICA (O.S.)
Stand back!

Jessica hears this and turns, seeing Sophie sitting in the chair. She walks over to her and stands there for a moment.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
What are you watching?

SOPHIE
(doesn't look up)
"Asterlight: Dragon Wars."

JESSICA
Is it any good?

SOPHIE
(ditto - shrugs)
It's not the best one.

JESSICA
It's not?

SOPHIE
"The Dark Forest" is better. But
my all time favorite is...

She finally looks up and stops dead in her tracks. Her eyes get wide and she stands up.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)
Oh man. Oh man! Oh wow. Oh man!

JESSICA
Hi, I'm Jessica. What's your name?

SOPHIE
Sophie Larson! I've seen all your
movies. Well, not all of them.
Dad wouldn't let me see "The Heavy
Heart" because of the kissing, but
I've seen the "Asterlight" movies a
billion times.

JESSICA
A billion? That's a lot.

SOPHIE
I can't believe it's really you!

JESSICA
I can't believe it sometimes
either. So are you staying here?

*
*
*

SOPHIE

No, I live here. Well, next door.

She grabs Jessica's hand and drags her to the window, pointing out the owner's quarters next door, a small cottage next door to the lodge. *

SOPHIE (CONT'D)

See? Right over there. *

JESSICA

Do your parents own the lodge? *

SOPHIE

My dad and aunt do.

Matt enters, carrying the pies.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)

Dad! Look, it's Jessica McEllis! *

MATT

(realizes)

Ohhhh! Okay... the autograph makes more sense now.

SOPHIE

You got her autograph?! Where is it? I want to see it.

Matt hems and haws for a moment

JESSICA

So you don't work at the bakery?

MATT

No, I was just there to pick up some pies... for the lodge... *

JESSICA

(embarrassed)

...that you own. Got it. Sorry.

MATT

I didn't realize who you were either so we're even. I'm Matt.

Zoe enters with the keys, recognizes Jessica, and gapes.

MATT (CONT'D)

And that's my sister Zoe.

JESSICA

Hi Zoe.

No response. Rosalie steps in.

ROSALIE

Hi, I'm Jessica's publicist Rosalie
and this is Gavin.

MATT

Welcome to the Homestead Lodge. *

JESSICA

Thank you, it's beautiful.

MATT

Thanks. We're very proud of it.
So, Zoe has your room keys and just
let us know if you need anything.

Rosalie gets the room keys from a still gaping Zoe.

JESSICA

Actually, could you help me get in
contact with the town's mayor?
(as if sharing a secret)
I've heard he's a bit of a stick in
the mud and doesn't want us
Hollywood types ruining Christmas.

SOPHIE

Dad is the mayor.

JESSICA

(oops)
You're the...

MATT

Stick in the mud. Hi.

JESSICA

Oh... I'm so sorry.

ROSALIE

(trying to rescue)
Why don't we set up time for you
two to talk tomorrow? Maybe you
can give us a tour of the town?
Ten a.m.?

MATT

(beat - forced smile)
Sure. We can do that.

JESSICA

Thank you. Listen, I just wanted to say that we are not going to be in your way. We don't want to change a thing. You won't even notice we're here.

Matt is skeptical to say the least.

22-23 SCENES ABSORBED INTO SCENE 21 22-23

24 EXT. OWNER'S QUARTERS - NIGHT - ESTABLISHING 24

25 INT. MATT'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 25

The clock on the night stand reads 4:32am when a low rumble is heard, sounding a bit like thunder in the distance, but constant. Matt stirs, lifts his head, and then sits up, trying to figure out where it is coming from.

26 EXT. LODGE MAIN DRIVEWAY - NIGHT 26 *

Matt comes out of the front door of the owner's quarters, putting on his coat. The rumble is getting louder. He steps toward the main road listening to the sound grow until we finally see what is causing it: a convoy of trucks pulling dressing rooms and more. It's an invading army.

27 EXT. TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT 27

The sign has been changed to say "10 Days Until Christmas!"

LOW ANGLE - STREET

An errant Christmas tree ornament is in the street and the lead truck pulls up and crushes it under its tire. Hollywood has arrived.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

28 EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY 28

It's a beautiful morning in Homestead and the movie crew is hard at work in the town square.

29 EXT. HOMESTEAD LODGE - DAY - ESTABLISHING 29 *

30 INT. LODGE LOBBY - DAY 30 *

Gavin comes down the stairs but just before he gets to the bottom, Sophie comes out and stops him in his tracks.

SOPHIE

Hi Gavin!

GAVIN

(beat - first time he speaks)

Hello.

SOPHIE

You're Jessica's bodyguard, right? I think I should get a bodyguard. I mean it's not like I have crazy fans, but I bet it would make Hailey Shephard jealous. She thinks she's special because she has a horse but I'd be all, big deal, I have a bodyguard.

Gavin looks around for someone to help him out of this.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)

Not all the time. Just like for school and when I go to my piano lessons. Do you think Jessica would mind if I borrowed you?

Gavin is trapped.

31 INT. JESSICA'S HOTEL ROOM - DAY 31

Jessica is finishing getting dressed when there's a knock on her door. Jessica opens it and lets Rosalie in.

ROSALIE

Are you ready?

JESSICA
Almost. How do I look?

ROSALIE
Fine.

JESSICA
I mean, do I look, you know, Iowa?

ROSALIE
What are you talking about?

JESSICA
I don't want to be too Hollywood.
I want to fit in. Get him on our
side. Just a regular girl talking
to a regular guy. *

ROSALIE
Sweetie, you're a movie star and
he's the mayor. You're both about
as far from regular as you can get.

JESSICA
I need to make up for the whole
stick in the mud thing. I should
have written notes. Can we call
the writer? Have him whip up some
stuff for me to say?

ROSALIE
Jessica, relax! We'll "ooh" and
"ahh", you'll turn on your million
watt smile, and by the end of the
tour you'll have him eating out of
your hand.

Jessica seems a little doubtful.

32

INT. LODGE LOBBY - DAY

32 *

Sophie has let Gavin off the stairs at least, but has not let
him get away. He looks painfully uncomfortable.

SOPHIE
So then last Christmas, I got the
"Asterlight Chronicles" books.
Like the whole set of real books,
which is so cool. And I read them
all but I think the movies are
better.

Jessica comes down the stairs into the lobby with Rosalie.

JESSICA

So do I.

Sophie runs to Jessica. Gavin seems relieved.

SOPHIE

Good morning, Jessica!

JESSICA

Good morning, Sophie.

SOPHIE

Dad said I could go on the tour as long as I don't bug you.

JESSICA

You could never bug me.

Matt enters from the parlor. He forces a smile.

MATT

(forces a smile)
Good morning.

JESSICA

(same)
Good morning.

ROSALIE

(and again)
Good morning.

Gavin nods and they all stand there awkwardly for a moment.

MATT

So are we ready for the tour?

JESSICA

Absolutely. I can't wait.

MATT

Great. Well, let's get started.

JESSICA

(quietly to Rosalie)
I can't imagine how this could be any more awkward.

At that moment, Vince comes down the stairs.

VINCE

Hey, where's everybody off to?

Jessica's eyes get big.

33 EXT. HOMESTEAD STREET - DAY

33

Everyone is marching down the street in Homestead, which is awash in holiday decorations.

MATT

And over there is the Homestead Cafe.

SOPHIE

They have the best hamburgers.

JESSICA

(overly enthusiastic)
Who doesn't love a good burger?

VINCE

You don't. You hate hamburgers.

JESSICA

No I don't.

VINCE

You do, too. Remember when we took the jet to Martha's Vineyard for the weekend and stopped at that little diner...

*
*

ROSALIE

(interrupts)
So Matt, did you grow up here?

MATT

Yes, born and raised.

JESSICA

And the lodge?

*

MATT

It was my parents' place. They retired to Florida a few years back and my sister and I took it over.

JESSICA

That's nice. Keeping it in the family.

VINCE

Jess and I stayed at this incredible inn when we were in Budapest. It was like a castle...

*
*
*

JESSICA

(to Matt)

And you're the mayor, too! That's impressive. You must really love this place.

MATT

I do.

JESSICA

Well, I can see why. It's got that great small town charm...

They turn a corner and the street in front of them is lined with production trailers, dressing rooms, and more.

MATT

(beat)

Yeah. Nice and quiet here.

They keep walking.

34 EXT. HOMESTEAD LODGE - DAY - ESTABLISHING 34 *

35 EXT. LODGE BACK YARD - DAY 35 *

Ian comes around the side of the lodge into the back yard where there is a deck and lots of trees. He is on the phone. *

IAN

I'm freezing, Mickey, that's how it's going. Yeah, I got a few of Jessica and some of Vince but nothing interesting. Oh, trust me, you'll be the first to know.

He disconnects the call and then looks at the back of the lodge - specifically the windows on the second floor. He sighs. *

36 INT. LODGE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - DAY 36 *

Zoe comes out of one of the rooms writing on a clipboard and goes to the next room. She knocks.

ZOE

Housekeeping.

There is no answer so she lets herself in.

37 INT. LODGE - JESSICA'S ROOM - DAY 37 *

Zoe enters the room and looks around, making a few notes. Then she glances out the window and sees Ian climbing a tree.

ZOE

What...?

She rushes out of the room.

38 EXT. LODGE BACK YARD - DAY 38 *

Zoe comes onto the deck putting on a coat. She marches over to the railing nearest the tree with Ian in it.

ZOE

Hey! What are you doing?!

Ian is startled and falls from the tree. Luckily there's a big pile of snow to cushion his fall. Zoe is horrified.

39 EXT. HOMESTEAD STREET - DAY 39

The walking tour of the town continues but is more complicated with them having to dodge all the movie crew equipment.

JESSICA

So Matt, how did all the Christmas festivities begin? Watch your head!

MATT

(ducks)

We've been doing it forever. Since before I was born.

SOPHIE

We have the best Christmases of any one. There's a big tree and sleigh rides and the snowman competition is tonight!

MATT

And it all culminates in the Festival of Lights on Christmas Eve. The entire town gets covered with Christmas lights.

JESSICA

I'm sorry we're going to miss that.

VINCE

Not as much as you're going to miss
Christmas in Fiji. There was one
year when we...

*
*
*

JESSICA

Hey Vince, can I talk to you for a
second? Excuse us.

Jessica pulls Vince to the side.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

VINCE

What do you mean?

JESSICA

What is with this walk down memory
lane all of the sudden?

VINCE

I don't know. Maybe it's the
holidays. They make me nostalgic.

JESSICA

Well, cut it out. I'm trying to
get this guy to like me.

VINCE

(concerned about this)
You want him to like you?

JESSICA

Not like that. I'm trying to
convince him that we aren't stuck
up movie stars and your stories
about us traipsing around the globe
aren't helping. We need to find
common ground.

VINCE

Oh! Why didn't you tell me?

*

Vince heads back over to the group. Jessica follows,
worried. Vince puts his arm around Matt.

VINCE (CONT'D)

So, Matt. You know, I'm playing an
inn keeper in this movie.

(to Jessica)

How's that for common ground?

Jessica just rolls her eyes as they keep walking.

40 INT. LODGE KITCHEN - DAY

40 *

Ian is sitting on a stool as Zoe fishes an ice pack out of the freezer. She hands it to him and he puts it on his knee.

ZOE

So are you like a paparazzi?

IAN

Paparazzo. Paparazzi is plural.

ZOE

Oh. So a bunch of vulture photographers is paparazzi and one vulture climbing a tree in my back yard is a paparazzo?

IAN

Class dismissed.

ZOE

How can you do that? Chase famous people around and invade their privacy?

IAN

We all have jobs to do. What's yours? Are you a maid here or...?

ZOE

My brother and I own the place.

IAN

Aren't you a little young to be a business owner?

ZOE

I intend to have a chain of these lodges around the country by the time I'm thirty, so no, I'm not too young. Aren't you a little old to be climbing trees?

*

IAN

Touche. Well, I better get going. No rest for the wicked and all that.

ZOE

If I see you back here again I'll call the sheriff.

IAN
Wouldn't be the first time. Thanks
for the ice pack... insert your
name here...

ZOE
Zoe.

IAN
Zoe. Ian Carter, Vulture. *

He smiles and tips an imaginary cap as he leaves. Zoe shakes
her head and returns to work.

41 EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY 41

The movie crew is hard at work as Jessica, Matt, Rosalie,
Gavin, Sophie, and Vince all come into the town square. *

JESSICA
I know this looks like a lot but I
promise once we get everything all
set up it'll be less intrusive.

MATT
Uh-huh. Well, this is the town
square where we have our tree and
our Santa...

He looks for the tree and Santa, both of which are gone.

SOPHIE
Where's Santa?

MATT
Where's the tree?

Barbara comes up to the group.

BARBARA
We had to strike them.

SOPHIE
They struck Santa?

JESSICA
Oh, sweetie, no, it just means they
took him down for a little while. *
Everyone, this is Barbara McKeever *
- she's our director. *

MATT
What is going on?

BARBARA

Oh, don't worry. They just weren't working for us. We'll put them back when we're done.

Barbara's phone buzzes.

BARBARA (CONT'D (CONT'D)

Excuse me.

(into phone)

Hello? Sarah? Give your brother back his turtle.

Barbara walks away.

MATT

This is crazy. Santa has been there every year since... forever.

ROSALIE

I'm sure we can get it worked out.

JESSICA

Yes, absolutely. Don't worry. I promise there won't be anymore surprises.

Cue Ian, who approaches with camera flashes going.

IAN

Jessica! Vince! Any truth to the rumors that you're getting back together?

Gavin moves to block Ian again and Jessica, Vince, and Rosalie scurry off, leaving Matt to stand there watching as movie crew members pass by him with the Santa figure that had been hanging in the square.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

42 EXT. HOMESTEAD LODGE - NIGHT - ESTABLISHING 42 *

43 INT. LODGE KITCHEN - NIGHT 43 *

The kitchen staff is preparing dinner while Zoe reviews the evening menu and Matt sits at the center island.

ZOE

It's not Christmas without Santa and his flying reindeer.

MATT

I hate to say I told you so...

ZOE

No, you don't. How did Sophie handle it?

MATT

Better than I did. She's too star-struck to think about Christmas.

ZOE

Oh, come on! You can't tell me you're not a little bit dazzled.

MATT

I'm not. I mean, sure, she's beautiful and famous and glamorous and... that smile...

(beat)

Do you know if her and Vince Hawkins are getting back together again? *

ZOE

No. Why?

MATT

Nothing. It's just something this photographer said.

Zoe looks at him quizzically.

MATT (CONT'D)

The point is, I don't care how famous she is, she can't come in here and take over the town.

ZOE

Being famous can't be easy.

MATT

Yeah, I'm sure the mansions and the private jets must be quite tiring.

ZOE

But there's also the constant spotlight, people climbing trees to get a picture of you...

MATT

Climbing trees?

ZOE

I'm just saying that underneath all that movie star stuff is a person.

MATT

Well, I'm not going to let it bother me. We have to get ready for the snowman competition! We're going to win this year.

ZOE

Our snowman always winds up looking more like a snow blob.

MATT

It does not!

They laugh and bicker like all good brothers and sisters do.

44

INT. JESSICA'S TRAILER - NIGHT

44

Jessica and Rosalie are sitting in Jessica's trailer looking at the script for the movie.

JESSICA

Do you think the kiss scene works?

ROSALIE

What do you mean?

JESSICA

It's like it only happens because she's nostalgic for the kind of Christmas she had as a kid.

ROSALIE

(shrugs)

When we get to it, try out something new. Improvise.

JESSICA

I wanted the writer to script a casual conversation with the mayor. I don't improvise.

There is a knock at the trailer door and Barbara peeks her head in, her phone to her ear.

BARBARA

Hi. Can I come in?

JESSICA

Of course.

Barbara enters on the phone.

BARBARA

(into phone)

Trevor... Trevor... Trevor...

She rolls her eyes and covers the phone with her hand.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

(to Jessica)

We have a problem. One of the cameras is broken. *

JESSICA

How long to get it fixed?

BARBARA

At least an hour. And we're supposed to be finished by seven.

JESSICA

We can go late.

BARBARA

That'll mean they'll have delay their snowman building competition.

JESSICA

Oh, no. We can't do that to them. Not after the tree and the Santa.

BARBARA

If we stop now I don't know how we catch up. We're already going to be pushing to get everything in before the twenty-third.

ROSALIE

You're going to go over budget.

JESSICA

I'll take care of the budget.
We'll figure something out. I
promised them no more surprises.

BARBARA

(shrugs)
You're the producer. I'll go tell
the crew we're done for the night.
(back on the phone)
Trevor... Trevor...

Barbara leaves and Rosalie gets up to follow.

ROSALIE

I'll go tell Vince.

Rosalie leaves also.

45

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

45

A crowd of townspeople has congregated on one side of the square, near the big banner that says "Snowman Building Competition, 7pm Tonight!" Matt, Zoe, and Sophie walk up to join the crowd with their supplies to dress up their snowman.

SOPHIE

I think our snowman should have
blue eyes, so he'll be special.

MATT

Our snowman is always special.

SOPHIE

Dad, it always looks like a blob.

Matt looks at Zoe.

ZOE

I don't know where she gets it.

Zoe notices Ian standing on the edge of the crowd with his camera. He waves at her. She tries to ignore him.

Pete comes into the crowd.

PETE

Everyone, could I have your
attention? We'll be starting
promptly at seven o'clock. This is
your fifteen minute warning!

Rosalie walks by and sees Matt.

ROSALIE
Oh hey, Mr. Mayor.

MATT
It's Matt.

ROSALIE
Listen, I just wanted to let you know that we're going to be done any minute now. Jessica insisted on it. *

MATT
She did?

ROSALIE
Yes. She's going to make sure there aren't any more problems.

MATT
Well... that's great. Thank you.

Rosalie walks off.

ZOE
See? She's not so bad after all.

Matt considers this.

46 EXT. HOMESTEAD STREET - NIGHT

46

Jessica comes out of the trailer to talk to Gavin.

JESSICA
Gavin, we're going back to the lodge. Can you bring the car around? *

Gavin nods and walks off. Jessica looks toward the square, seeing all the families and friends getting ready for the snowman competition. They are laughing and having a great time - it is practically the definition of Christmas.

Jessica sighs and then pulls out her phone. She dials.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
Mom? Hi, it's Jessica. I'm in Iowa working on the new movie. Yeah, it's... it's really nice here. So you and Dad are still going to Aunt Helen's for Christmas? I know, the azaleas. (MORE) *

*
*
*

JESSICA (CONT'D)

No, I'm just going to have a nice
quiet Christmas at home.

*
*

She looks out at the happy families in the square again.

*
*
*
*
*

JESSICA (CONT'D)
I'm actually looking forward to it.
(beat)
Mom, they're calling me back to the
set. Okay. Love you. Bye.

Jessica disconnects the call and stands there for a moment -
it appears that she is trying to hold back tears.

47 EXT. TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT 47

As the competitors get ready for the contest, Matt glances up
and sees Jessica going into her trailer.

MATT
(to Zoe)
Keep an eye on Sophie.

SOPHIE
Dad, where are you going? The
contest is going to start.

MATT
I'll be right back.

He heads toward the trailer.

48 EXT. HOMESTEAD STREET - NIGHT 48

Matt goes to the trailer and knocks on the door.

REVERSE ANGLE

Meanwhile, Ian is seeing all of this happen. He starts
taking pictures of Matt at the door of the trailer.

BACK TO SCENE

Matt knocks softly again. From inside...

JESSICA (O.S.)
Gavin?

Matt opens the door and pokes his head in.

49 INT. JESSICA'S TRAILER - NIGHT 49

Jessica is sitting and it's obvious that she has been crying.

MATT

Hi.

Jessica, surprised, tries to wipe away her tears.

JESSICA

Uh... what are you doing here?

MATT

I just wanted to... Are you okay?

JESSICA

Yeah. I'm fine.

MATT

I'm sorry to bother you.

He starts to back away.

JESSICA

It's okay... Come in. What can I do for you?

Matt comes in and shuts the door.

MATT

I just wanted to say thank you. Your publicist told me that you were watching out for us tonight. The snowman competition?

JESSICA

(shrugs)
It's nothing.

MATT

It's not. I mean, I know our Christmas traditions must seem silly to you...

JESSICA

I don't think they're silly.

MATT

You don't?

JESSICA

No. Christmas traditions are wonderful. I wish I had some...

She can't hold back the tears and she starts to cry again.

MATT

Oh... no... it's okay. It's uh...

He sits next to her and awkwardly puts his arm around her.

50 EXT. TRAILER - NIGHT 50

Ian tries to see into the windows but they are too high so he finds a trash can and climbs up. He almost falls but gets his balance and looks through the camera into the trailer.

From Ian's POV we see Matt sitting with his arm around Jessica. Ian starts taking pictures.

51 INT. JESSICA'S TRAILER - NIGHT 51

Jessica is still crying and Matt is still uncomfortable.

MATT

You know, we have a lot of traditions. Too many, probably. You can have some of ours.

JESSICA

(laughs a little)
I'm sorry. I don't usually cry in front of strangers.

She goes to the dressing table mirror to check the "damage."

MATT

Don't worry about it. I've done worse in front of strangers.

JESSICA

Like what?

MATT

(beat)
I sang karaoke.

JESSICA

(smiles)
Karaoke?

MATT

Yeah, I was... it was not long after my wife passed away and I was in Chicago for a travel industry thing. There was this little karaoke bar and for some reason it became very important to me to sing a Celine Dion song.

JESSICA
(laughs)
Really?

MATT
Yeah. Luckily no videos have
turned up on the Internet yet so I
think I have gotten away clean.
You're the only one who knows that.

JESSICA
Well, your secret is safe with me.

MATT
(beat)
So is yours. With me.

JESSICA
Thank you.

MATT
Anytime. Oh, and thank you again.
The snowmen are grateful.

He starts to head for the door. She gets up to let him out.

JESSICA
Good luck with the competition.

MATT
Yeah, we're going to need it, or so
I've been told.

She smiles again and he puts his hand on the door knob.
Jessica stops him.

JESSICA
Matt...

She leans in and gives him a kiss on the cheek.

52

EXT. TRAILER - NIGHT

52

Ian is still on the trash can, taking pictures.

From his point of view, it is not exactly clear that this is
just a kiss on the cheek. Ian smiles.

IAN
Hello.

He keeps smiling and shooting.

53 INT. JESSICA'S TRAILER - NIGHT 53

Jessica pulls back from the kiss.

JESSICA
Good night.

MATT
Good night.

He opens the door to the trailer and then stops.

MATT (CONT'D)
Hey... Would you want to come with
us? I mean it's just me and Sophie
and my sister building a snowman
but it's gotta be more entertaining
than sitting in your trailer.

A smile starts creeping across her face.

JESSICA
Give me a minute to change?

Matt nods and Jessica goes back toward the bedroom.

54 SCENE OMITTED 54

55 EXT. HOMESTEAD STREET - NIGHT 55

Ian gets down off the trash can and checks the shots on his camera. The one of the kiss definitely looks like more than just a peck on the cheek from this angle. Ian takes out his phone and makes a call.

IAN
(into phone)
Mickey? Yeah, I know it's late,
but you're going to want to start
making some calls. I have Jessica
and her new boyfriend.

He smiles.

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

56 EXT. TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

56

The snowman building competition is in full swing with more than a dozen teams working on their creations. Jessica, Matt, Zoe, and Sophie are hard at work on theirs.

MATT

We need more snow for the base.

JESSICA

I thought this was the head.

ZOE

No, that's the head.

SOPHIE

We're in so much trouble.

JESSICA

No, come on. We can do this!
Let's work on the body, here.

MATT

That's the base!

ZOE

How much time do we have left?

MATT

Twenty minutes.

SOPHIE

We are in SO much trouble.

They all look around at their piles of snow, a little lost.

JESSICA

You know, this would be easier if
this was an actor. Then we could
cover up his flaws with hair and
makeup and costumes.

Jessica gets an idea and looks up. Matt gets the same idea.
Zoe figures it out also. Jessica breaks out into a big grin.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Come on!

They take off running toward the production trailers.

57 INT. COSTUME TRAILER - NIGHT 57

The four of them come running into the costume trailer, startling the people who are working there.

JESSICA

Excuse me! Hi. Coming through.
Need to borrow a few things.

They raid the racks, laughing and enjoying the adventure.

58 INT. TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT 58

Pete is walking down the line of snowman entries with a couple of other people, judging the entries.

PETE

Nice. Good craftsmanship.

He goes to the next one.

PETE (CONT'D)

Well done, team! Impressive.

He goes to the next one - Matt, Sophie, Jessica, and Zoe's entry. Their snowman may not be the best snowman per se, but it certainly is the most stylish with an elaborate costume, a wig, and even a little makeup. Pete studies it and then confers with the judges.

PETE (CONT'D)

We have a winner!

Matt, Jessica, Zoe, and Sophie all cheer and high-five. Jessica hugs Pete and he blushes, and grins like a fool.

59 EXT. LODGE MAIN DRIVEWAY - NIGHT 59 *

Jessica's SUV pulls up to the main drive and Jessica, Matt, Zoe, and Sophie (who is carrying a small trophy) all get out, still high from their victory. Jessica goes to the driver's window - Gavin rolls it down.

JESSICA

Do you mind swinging back to pick
up Rosalie and Barbara?

Gavin nods and drives off.

ZOE

Come on, Soph. Time for bed.

SOPHIE
Okay. Night, Jessica. Thanks for
making our snow blob better!

JESSICA
My pleasure. Put that trophy
somewhere special.

MATT
I'll be right in.

Zoe and Sophie go inside. Matt walks Jessica toward the
front door of the lodge - they are perfectly framed by the
holiday lights and garland on the railings and posts. *

MATT (CONT'D)
I think she's going to sleep with
that tonight.

JESSICA
Tonight? When I won my Golden
Globe I slept with it for a week.

MATT
(curious - not surprised)
You won a Golden Globe?

JESSICA
Wow, you really don't know who I
am, do you?

MATT
I know who you are.
(teasing)
You were in that one movie with the
dragons. And then there was that
other movie with the dragons.

JESSICA
(smiles)
Oh yes, who could forget that one.

MATT
(smiles)
Okay, you're right. I don't know
who you are.

She holds out her hand.

JESSICA
I'm Jessica McEllis. *

MATT
Matt Larson. *

JESSICA
Nice to meet you.

MATT
You too.

Their handshake lingers until Vince comes up the walk, sees them, and decide he needs to stop it. He walks over to them.

VINCE
Hey you two, what's going on?

They release each other's hands, embarrassed.

JESSICA
We were just celebrating our win at the snowman competition tonight.

VINCE
That's great. Matt, you should teach me how to build a snowman. I could put one at the top of Mount Everest when I climb it... again.

There is a bit of an awkward silence.

VINCE (CONT'D)
Jess, we should probably turn in. It's an early day tomorrow.

JESSICA
Yeah, okay. Good night, Matt. Thanks again for inviting me.

MATT
Good night. Thanks for joining us.

Jessica smiles and goes inside. Matt smiles until he sees Vince put his arm around Jessica as they go up the stairs.

60 EXT. OWNER'S QUARTERS - NIGHT - ESTABLISHING 60

61 INT. MATT'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 61

Matt is sitting up in his bed, watching what sounds like one of the "Asterlight: movies on the tablet computer. He is completely engrossed. He gasps a little.

MATT
(quietly)
Look out!

JESSICA (O.S.)

Look out!

He flinches but keeps watching intently.

62 EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY 62

The movie crew is back at work setting things up as the sign is changed to "9 Days Until Christmas!"

63 EXT. HOMESTEAD STREET - DAY 63

Ian is on the phone as he sees Zoe across the street.

IAN

Yeah. No, that's great, Mickey.
Okay. Keep me posted. Bye.

He dashes across the street to fall in stride with Zoe.

IAN (CONT'D)

My knee is much better by the way.

ZOE

You owe me an ice pack by the way.

IAN

I'll put it on my shopping list.

They walk in silence for a moment and then he takes his camera and starts taking pictures of Zoe.

ZOE

Cut it out.

IAN

Oh, come on. I need some good stuff for my next show.

ZOE

You do shows? Of celebrity photos?

IAN

No, I just take pictures of regular people that inspire me.

He takes another picture of her.

ZOE

I can't inspire you. You don't even know me.

IAN

Inspiration is unpredictable.

Zoe gives him a glance to see if he's being genuine. It seems like he is. She smiles and he snaps a picture of her smiling, hair falling in her face.

ZOE

Stop!

He looks at the photo on his camera.

IAN

This is definitely going in my next show. Bye Zoe.

He walks away and she can't stop herself from smiling.

64

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY

64

Jessica and Vince are sitting in the gazebo, filming a scene with all of the crew around them.

BARBARA

And action!

JESSICA

I'm freezing!

VINCE

I'm getting you a parka for Christmas.

JESSICA

You're getting me a present?

VINCE

Why not?

JESSICA

We haven't seen each other since...

VINCE

We dated in high school. Just because you ran off to be a movie star after I broke up with you...

JESSICA

You didn't break up with me! I broke up with you.

VINCE

That's not the way I tell it.

JESSICA

I think you're misting the point.

(beat)

Misting? What is misting?

She and Vince laugh at her blooper.

BARBARA

Cut! Let's reset.

JESSICA

Sorry!

VINCE

(beat)

Do you remember what I got you?
For our last Christmas together?

JESSICA

Earrings.

VINCE

Antique earrings. With Sapphire
insets. Your birthstone.

JESSICA

They are lovely.

VINCE

Do you still wear them?

JESSICA

Sometimes. You always had great
taste in presents.

VINCE

Wait until you see what I got you
this year. I know, I shouldn't be
getting you a gift but I saw it and
you said you liked it once...

JESSICA

You remembered I said I liked
something... and got it for me?

VINCE

I know you think that I never
listened to you, but I did. So are
you going to make me take it back?

JESSICA

(beat)

No. It was very thoughtful of you.

VINCE
(satisfied smile)
You want to go out to dinner?

JESSICA
Tonight? I can't. I'm going on
the sleigh ride with the Larsons. *

VINCE
Who?

JESSICA
The people that run the lodge. You
know. Zoe and Sophie... *

VINCE
And Matt.

JESSICA
Yes. Matt.

VINCE
Okay. Another night then.

Vince is obviously not happy about this turn of events.

65 EXT. LODGE MAIN DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

65 *

Horse drawn carriages dressed up as sleighs line the lodge's
driveway. Matt, Sophie, and Jessica are waiting for a turn. *

SOPHIE
Hey Jessica. Did you know that
Hailey Shephard - this girl in my
class - she has a horse.

JESSICA
I did not know that.

MATT
We're not getting a horse.

SOPHIE
Of course not! That would just be
copying. We need something
special. Like a zebra.

JESSICA
A zebra would be special.

MATT
We're not getting a zebra, either.

Jessica and Matt smile at one another as the next empty sleigh pulls up and they climb aboard. Matt and Jessica take the seat while Sophie goes to look out the front.

MATT (CONT'D)

Here we go!

The carriage pulls away from the lodge. As they do, Vince steps out from the porch and watches them go, unhappily. *

66 INT. LODGE LOBBY - NIGHT 66 *

Zoe walks through the lobby and glances out the window. Ian is out there looking cold and miserable. Zoe sighs.

67 EXT. LODGE MAIN DRIVEWAY - NIGHT 67 *

Zoe comes out with a large paper cup, which she hands to Ian.

IAN

What's this?

ZOE

Hot chocolate.

IAN

Thank you.

ZOE

You're welcome.

She goes back toward the lodge as he looks inside the cup. *

IAN

No marshmallows?

Zoe stops and looks back at him, then rolls her eyes and nods her head toward the lodge. He follows her. *

68 EXT. MATT & JESSICA'S CARRIAGE - NIGHT 68

Sophie is in front as Jessica and Matt look at the lights.

JESSICA

It's beautiful.

MATT

We normally go down King Street...

JESSICA

But the movie stuff is in the way?

MATT

Yeah.

JESSICA

I'm sorry. I can call...

MATT

It's okay. We can change things up every now and then, right?

It's obvious that Matt doesn't really believe that. Sophie climbs down and sits between Matt and Jessica.

SOPHIE

What's Christmas like in Hollywood?

JESSICA

Well... warmer than this.

MATT

Oh... Here.

Matt gets a blanket and they all snuggle underneath it.

SOPHIE

Do you spend it with movie stars?

JESSICA

Christmas? Sometimes. There's usually a party going on somewhere.

MATT

But not this year?

JESSICA

No. Seems like everyone has other plans. Even my parents.

SOPHIE

You should spend it with us.

MATT

Sophie...

SOPHIE

It's a lot of fun. We have the festival of lights on Christmas eve and then I go to bed early so I can get up and we can open presents by the tree...

JESSICA

That does sound like fun.

MATT

Sophie, I'm sure that Jessica has better things to do than spend Christmas in Homestead.

SOPHIE

(scoffs)

What could be better than Christmas in Homestead? Look at it...

She points and it is beautiful - the Christmas lights on all the buildings, the snow, the moon.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)

It's like... perfect.

JESSICA

(beat - quietly)

Yes, it is.

Matt and Jessica's eyes meet - they are good together.

69

INT. LODGE DINING ROOM - NIGHT

69

*

Ian is sitting at one of the dining room tables, his camera and the cup of hot chocolate in front of him. Zoe enters with a bag of mini marshmallows and drops a few in his cup.

IAN

Thank you.

Zoe sits down at the table and studies him intently.

IAN (CONT'D)

What?

ZOE

I'm just trying to figure out why someone would do what you do.

IAN

Oh, see, and here I thought you were being nice to me.

ZOE

I am being nice to you. That's what we do here in Homestead. We're nice.

IAN

So you insinuate that I have made questionable life choices but you do it nicely?

ZOE
Something like that.

IAN
Why does what I do matter so much?

ZOE
It doesn't.
(beat - change subject)
Nice camera.

IAN
You know cameras?

ZOE
Melanie... my brother's late
wife... she was into photography.

Ian takes a moment and then pushes the camera to her.

IAN
Take a picture.

ZOE
What? Why?

IAN
I thought I'd try out that "nice"
thing you were talking about.

Zoe smiles a little and takes the camera.

70

EXT. MATT & JESSICA'S CARRIAGE - NIGHT

70

Matt, Sophie, and Jessica's ride continues.

JESSICA
What was Christmas like when you
were growing up here?

MATT
Loud. Singing and laughing and
opening presents and eating... it
was always just crazy.

JESSICA
That's the kind of Christmas I'd
like to have.

SOPHIE
So why don't you?

Jessica is a little taken aback by that. The carriage is pulling back up to the lodge's main driveway. *

MATT
Looks like we're almost home.

JESSICA
It's done already?

MATT
Afraid so.

JESSICA
That's too bad.

MATT
Well... we could go again. If you're not too cold... *

JESSICA
(beat - smile)
No... I think I'm getting used to it. You're sure they'll let us? *

MATT
Well, I am the mayor. I think I can pull some strings. *

SOPHIE
Yeah! Let's go around again!

JESSICA
(beat - smile)
Okay. Yes, let's do it. *

Seemingly from out of nowhere, Vince hoists himself aboard.

VINCE
Room for one more?

JESSICA
Vince?

SOPHIE
Hi Vince! Yes, sit here!

Sophie moves over onto her dad's lap and Vince squeezes in between Jessica and Vince.

VINCE
Well, this is cozy! Driver. Once more around the park.

The driver turns the carriage toward town again and only Sophie and Vince seem to be happy about it.

END ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

71 EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY

71

It's a new day and with it comes an updated sign - "8 Days Until Christmas!" Jessica, and Rosalie walk to the set.

ROSALIE

You went on a sleigh ride... with the guy from the lodge?

*

JESSICA

Him and his daughter, Sophie. She's great. We were having a blast until Vince jumped on and...

ROSALIE

Wait... Vince was there, too?

JESSICA

It's a long story. But Matt and Sophie are so sweet. We're going to the big bonfire tonight.

ROSALIE

That's... great.

JESSICA

What's wrong?

ROSALIE

Nothing. I just... You know we're leaving in a week. I don't want you to get too attached.

JESSICA

I won't. It's just a bonfire.

ROSALIE

Okay. Then have fun.

Rosalie is obviously concerned, Jessica may be a little bit also now. Barbara approaches.

BARBARA

Jessica, we're ready for you.

JESSICA

Okay. Thanks.

Jessica and Barbara walk toward the camera set up leaving Rosalie behind to think about the conversation.

72

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

72

The bonfire is already roaring. There are people around it, including members of the crew mixing amiably with the locals. In one part of the square Zoe is using Ian's camera to take pictures of Sophie, who is mugging for all she's worth. Meanwhile, Jessica is sitting on a blanket watching the fire while Matt is talking to Pete off to the side.

PETE

Mr. Mayor, we need to do something!

MATT

I couldn't agree more, Pete. I promise I will look into tomorrow.

PETE

Well, good. We can't let this kind of thing go unchecked.

MATT

Agreed.

Pete nods and walks off. Matt joins Jessica on the blanket.

MATT (CONT'D)

Sorry about that. Town crisis.

JESSICA

Oh no... what's wrong?

MATT

Zeke Van Heller is letting his dog run around without a leash.

JESSICA

(smiles)

That is a crisis.

MATT

Pete seems to think so.

JESSICA

What made you want to be mayor?

MATT

(points)

This. The entire community coming together. Friends and family celebrating Christmas. I wanted to make sure that never changed.

(beat)

Oh, and it was my turn.

JESSICA
Your... your turn?

MATT
Yeah, every member of the chamber of commerce takes turns and this year it was mine. It's mainly a ceremonial thing. Although, last month I did sign an actual ordinance. We increased the fine for jaywalking to ten dollars.

JESSICA
So now you're mad with power.

MATT
Today Homestead, tomorrow the world.
(beat)
Seriously though. I look at this town and it's like...

JESSICA
It's like it's a family.

Matt smiles, impressed that she "gets it."

73

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

73

Ian is showing Zoe how to use the camera while Sophie poses.
Ian looks around and sees Jessica and Matt.

IAN
Oh, hey... give me the camera.

ZOE
What? Why?

He takes it and starts to aim it at Jessica and Matt.

ZOE (CONT'D)
Ian! That's my brother.

IAN
With the movie star.

ZOE
No.

His phone rings and he sighs and hands her back the camera.
He steps away from Zoe so she can't hear the call.

IAN
Mickey, what's going on? How much?

He looks at Zoe.

IAN (CONT'D)
Listen, I don't know if I'm ready
to sell it just yet. Just because
I'm not, okay? Thanks, Mickey.

He disconnects the call, conflicted.

A72 EXT. HOMESTEAD STREET - NIGHT

A72

Vince comes out of one of the production trailers near the bonfire and sees Jessica with Matt. He heads toward them.

B72 EXT. TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

B72

Jessica and Matt continue their conversation.

MATT
So you don't have that in L.A.? A
sense of family?

JESSICA
No. Where I live it's all gated
estates and security guards keeping
people out, not inviting them in.

MATT
You must have friends...

JESSICA
Of course. But they all have their
own careers or own families or...
And I'm away so often working on
location. It's tough to connect.

MATT
Connections are a good thing.

JESSICA
(looks at him)
Yes, they are.

Vince walks up.

VINCE
Hey, I've been looking for you.

JESSICA
What's wrong?

VINCE
I'm having trouble with the scene
we're supposed to be doing
tomorrow. Can we run the lines?

JESSICA
Now?

VINCE
Well, I mean, if you'd rather we
just sort of wing it tomorrow...

JESSICA
No. That's okay. Matt I'm sorry.

MATT
I understand.

She gets up and heads off.

VINCE
Yeah, Matt. Sorry.

He smiles and goes after Jessica.

74 EXT. TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

74 *

It's the next night, which we know because the sign now says "7 Days Until Christmas!" An ice skating rink has been set up in the town square and it is being used to shoot a scene for the movie. Jessica and Vince are skating while cameras capture them laughing and having a good time. Townspeople including Matt, Sophie, Zoe, and Pete are watching on the sidelines. Barbara comes out to the edge of the rink.

BARBARA

Okay, cut! We're going to do it again so let's reset please.

Matt isn't pleased to hear this.

MATT

(looks at watch)
Again? We're already an hour late.

ZOE

Relax. Everyone is having fun.

Jessica skates over to the side of the rink where Matt, Sophie, and Zoe. They come up to join her.

SOPHIE

This is so cool!

JESSICA

We're going to be done soon and then everyone can join in.

SOPHIE

Zoe, let's go put on our skates!

ZOE

Okay. Race you!

The two of them go running off leaving Jessica and Matt.

JESSICA

I'm sorry we're running late.

MATT

(grudgingly)

It's okay. It seems like everyone is having fun anyway.

JESSICA

Are you going to skate?

MATT

Me? No. Know your limitations, I always say. Maybe I'll ask Santa for coordination this year.

Nearby, Rosalie walks over and sees Matt talking to Jessica - the two of them all smiles. It concerns her. Vince is nearby on the rink and he also doesn't look thrilled to see them together again either. He skates toward them.

MATT (CONT'D)

What did you ask Santa for?

JESSICA

(beat)

A good movie. And peace on earth.

MATT

Of course.

JESSICA

I hadn't really thought about it, to be honest. I'm lucky. I have everything I need.

MATT

Christmas isn't about what you need, it's about what you wish for.

Before Jessica can answer that, Vince skates by, showing off for the crowd of onlookers.

VINCE
Hey everyone!

He does something very impressive on the skates and the crowd cheers, including Jessica. Matt is more than a little intimidated. Barbara comes over to Jessica.

BARBARA
We're ready, Jessica.

JESSICA
(to Matt)
Tell Sophie to save a skate for me.

She waves and skates off. Matt is obviously smitten. Rosalie is obviously concerned.

75 EXT. HOMESTEAD LODGE - NIGHT - ESTABLISHING 75 *

76 INT. LODGE KITCHEN - NIGHT 76 *

Matt is in the kitchen doing an end of night inventory. Rosalie peeks her head in.

ROSALIE
Excuse me?

MATT
Hi. Come in. The kitchen is closed but if you're hungry I can raid the refrigerator.

ROSALIE
Oh, thanks. No, I'm good. I actually wanted to talk to you... About Jessica.
(beat)
This is none of my business but...

MATT
Jessica is your business.

ROSALIE
Yes, but I'm not here about that. She's under a lot of pressure with this movie. It's important and not just because of her career. I'm just worried about, you know, unnecessary complications.

MATT

(beat)
You think I'm a complication?

ROSALIE

She spent a lot of years building
up her walls to protect herself
from getting hurt.

MATT

But what if what's on the other
side of the wall is something good?

ROSALIE

I'd be all for it. I'd be leading
the parade. But Matt, we're
leaving soon. And leaving is never
easy, for anyone. Not for her, not
for you... not for your daughter.

That one hits Matt in the gut.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)

Some walls are there for a reason.

She smiles and nods then exits. He sits down, thinking about
the conversation and its implications.

77

INT. OWNER'S QUARTERS - SOPHIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

77

Sophie drags Jessica into her celebrity obsessed bedroom.

JESSICA

Wow. This is cool.

She sees a picture of herself in her "Asterlight" gear.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

I look so strong in that picture!

SOPHIE

You are strong.

JESSICA

No, I just play a strong character.

SOPHIE

What's the difference?

JESSICA

Strong characters make a movie
great. Strong people make the
world great.

SOPHIE
When I grow up I want to be strong.
And famous!

JESSICA
Famous for what?

SOPHIE
Just for being me.

JESSICA
Well, luckily that's why they
created the Internet.

Sophie takes a moment to compose her next thought.

78 INT. OWNER'S QUARTERS HALLWAY - NIGHT 78

Matt comes down the hall and stops when he hears voices. He
listens in on the conversation.

79 INT. OWNER'S QUARTERS - SOPHIE'S ROOM - NIGHT 79

Sophie and Jessica continue their talk.

SOPHIE
So where are you going to spend
Christmas this year? *

JESSICA
At home... in Los Angeles. *

SOPHIE
Why?

JESSICA
Because that's where I live.

SOPHIE
That's not what you said.

JESSICA
What do you mean?

SOPHIE
In "Asterlight: The Dragon's Lair"
you said "Home isn't where you
live, it's where you love."
(matter of fact)
It was my mom's favorite one, too.

JESSICA

(beat)

It was?

80 INT. OWNER'S QUARTERS HALLWAY - NIGHT 80

Matt is affected by this statement.

81 INT. OWNER'S QUARTERS - SOPHIE'S ROOM - NIGHT 81

Jessica and Sophie continue talking.

SOPHIE

Uh-huh. She went to heaven when I was little so I don't really remember but Aunt Zoe told me that she really liked your movies. And now I do, too.

Jessica's heart breaks.

JESSICA

You know, just because people aren't around, doesn't mean they aren't thinking about you.

SOPHIE

Really?

JESSICA

Sure. Look at Santa Claus. He only comes around once a year. But the rest of the time he is thinking about you and keeping track of whether you're naughty or nice.

SOPHIE

I'm nice!

JESSICA

Yes, you are. And he knows that. So when he comes on Christmas he can bring you the perfect gift.

SOPHIE

(nods)

Okay. That's cool.

JESSICA

Do you know what you want for Christmas?

SOPHIE
I think so.

JESSICA
What?

SOPHIE
I can't tell you. Christmas wishes
are just between you and Santa.

JESSICA
Got it. You're absolutely right.
Well, whatever it is, I'm sure
you're going to get it.

Jessica puts her arm around Sophie.

82

INT. OWNER'S QUARTERS HALLWAY - NIGHT

82

Matt, obviously moved, takes a moment to compose himself then
puts on a big smile and goes into the room.

MATT
Hey, what's going on in here?

Through the doorway we see the three of them looking more and
more like a family every day.

END ACT FIVE

ACT SIX

83 EXT. TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

83

The sign has been updated to "6 Days Until Christmas!" We pan over to the gazebo, where Jessica and Vince are ready to shoot a scene. Rosalie and Matt are standing off to the side watching as is Gavin who is standing next to Sophie.

Sophie is mimicking his posture. He crosses his arms and she crosses her arms. He puffs out his chest, she does the same. He looks down at her and she looks up at him and smiles.

BARBARA

Okay, we're ready. Everyone settle. And action!

JESSICA

I just wanted to let you know that I'm leaving tomorrow.

VINCE

Before Christmas? Why?

JESSICA

It's just gotten too... Everything was so easy before I got here.

VINCE

And now?

JESSICA

Now? Now it's complicated.

VINCE

It doesn't have to be. It really can be as simple as I love you.

JESSICA

That's not simple at all.

She turns and runs from the gazebo.

BARBARA

And cut. Great! Let's do it one more time.

Jessica goes over to Barbara - Rosalie joins.

JESSICA

Barbara, we don't have time to do anymore tonight. We have to be out of here for the snowball fight.

BARBARA

Snowball fight? Jessica, we're already running behind. Can't they wait?

Jessica looks over at Matt who smiles at her.

JESSICA

No. We promised. Look, we've all been working like crazy. Let's take a break and blow off some steam. We'll figure out where we can shave off some time. Okay?

BARBARA

Okay.

Jessica goes to talk to Matt and both Rosalie and Vince watch a bit dismayed for their own reasons.

84

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

84

It seems as if the whole town and all of the movie crew is standing in two groups around a big pile of snow. In the crowd we see Matt, Jessica, Sophie, Zoe, Vince, and Rosalie. Gavin and Barbara are off to the side as is Ian, who is taking pictures from a respectful distance.

Pete walks down the space between the groups.

PETE

Okay, you know the rules. You can only use snow from the big pile. We've made sure that there are no rocks or anything else that could hurt anyone. And everyone has to wear their safety goggles!

Everyone dons a pair of safety goggles. Pete has gotten to Jessica just as she puts on hers. She waves at him and he smiles, blushes, and giggles. Then he regains his composure.

PETE (CONT'D)

The rest is like dodge ball - just try to avoid getting hit. If you do, you're out. The last team standing wins! Got it? Okay... May the best team win in three, two, one... Snowball!!

There is barely controlled pandemonium in the square as everyone has a blast scooping up snow, making snowballs, and throwing them while trying to dodge ones coming at them.

Jessica and Matt are having fun, helping each other in the fight and Vince notices this - he starts to get competitive with Matt and Matt tries to compete back. Jessica notices this and takes Vince out with a snowball to the back. Vince goes down, feeling betrayed by Jessica, the Brutus.

Meanwhile, Sophie runs over to Gavin and holds out a snowball to him. He takes it and turns to Barbara.

BARBARA
(on the phone)
Steven, your brother is not...
(sees Gavin)
Don't you dare.

He very lightly tosses it at her.

BARBARA (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Mommy has go hurt someone now.
(to Gavin)
Oh, now you've done it.

Sophie laughs and Gavin and Barbara run to scoop up snow.

85

EXT. HOMESTEAD STREET - NIGHT

85

Ian is getting some good pictures of the battle. He hears an "ahem" and turns to find Zoe with a snowball, smiling.

IAN
Zoe, no... No. This is a very
expensive camera.

ZOE
You come to a snowball fight you
better expect to get hit.

She tosses the snowball but he dodges it. In the process he loses slips and falls into a big pile of snow. Zoe laughs.

IAN
Why do I keep falling into snow?

ZOE
Karma! Are you okay?

There is a beeping nearby.

ZOE (CONT'D)
What is that?

IAN

It's my phone. Where is it?

Zoe finds it first and glances at the screen.

ZOE

"They are offering double for the picture of Jessica." What picture?

IAN

I haven't sold it yet.

ZOE

What is it of... what are they willing to double their offer for?

IAN

(sighs)

It's of her kissing your brother.

ZOE

Kissing? What are you talking about? He didn't kiss her.

IAN

I've got the picture to prove it.

ZOE

Ian, you can't sell that!

IAN

We're talking about a lot of money.

ZOE

We're talking about my brother's life. He has a ten year old daughter. Do you know what the tabloids are going to do to them?

(beat)

Ian, please tell me you won't sell that picture. Please?

IAN

(beat - reluctantly)

Okay.

ZOE

Okay?

IAN

Yeah. Okay.

ZOE

Thank you.

Zoe turns and walks away and Ian sits back down in the snow.

86 EXT. HOMESTEAD STREET - NIGHT 86

Jessica, Gavin, Matt, and Sophie are walking toward Jessica's trailer, shaking the snow out of their clothes and laughing. Even Gavin is less stoic than usual.

JESSICA

Gavin, will you take them to the car? I'll be there in a minute.

Gavin nods and guides Sophie and Matt off.

87 EXT. HOMESTEAD STREET - NIGHT 87

Gavin, Matt, and Sophie are nearing the SUV.

MATT

I have Jessica's phone! She asked me to hold it during the snowball fight. I'll be right back.

Matt rushes back in the direction they just came from. Sophie looks up at Gavin.

SOPHIE

So exactly how tall are you?

Gavin has no idea what to do with her.

88 EXT. HOMESTEAD STREET - NIGHT 88

Jessica gets to her trailer just as Vince runs up.

VINCE

Jessica. Jessica wait a minute...

JESSICA

What were you doing out there going after Matt like that.

He takes her hand. Matt comes around a corner and sees this.

VINCE

I'm not acting.

JESSICA

You're not... what?

VINCE

In our scenes. When my character says how all these old feelings are stirring up. When he says how much she means to him. When he says "I love you"... I'm not acting.

JESSICA

Oh, Vince...

Matt, disappointed, turns and walks away.

VINCE

I know I said we'd keep it professional but... Just give me another chance.

JESSICA

Vince, I can't.

Disappointed, he lets go of her hand.

VINCE

Is it because of Mayor Matt?

JESSICA

No, it has nothing to do with him.

VINCE

But you care about him... right? I mean it's pretty obvious.

JESSICA

I don't...
(beat - realization)
Vince, I have to go. I'm sorry.
Let's talk tomorrow okay?

She hurries to her trailer leaving Vince behind, devastated.

89 EXT. HOMESTEAD LODGE - NIGHT - ESTABLISHING 89 *

A89 INT. LODGE KITCHEN - NIGHT A89 *

Matt is sitting in the kitchen, glumly picking at a pie, when Zoe enters. She grabs a fork and joins him.

ZOE

Mmm, pie. Yes, please.

He pushes it toward her as he goes to get a cup of FOLGERS coffee from the coffee pot on the counter. *

MATT
It's all yours.

ZOE
What's wrong?

MATT
Nothing. It's dumb. I'm dumb.

ZOE
Well, yes. Most big brothers are.

Matt smiles despite himself.

ZOE (CONT'D)
What, specifically, are you being
dumb about?

MATT
(beat)
Jessica.

ZOE
Jessica? You and Jessica?

MATT
Surprised?

ZOE
Not as much as you may think.

MATT
I thought I... I thought she was...
but then he was...

ZOE
Is there a chance you're going to
finish a sentence soon?

MATT
I thought there was something
there. For the first time since
Melanie died... but it's crazy and
now there's Vince and I can't
compete with that and even if there
wasn't Vince I still don't know how
she could ever... what do I do?

ZOE
(beat)
Be careful.

MATT
What do you mean?

ZOE

They don't call them stars for nothing. People like her have their own gravitational pull. It's easy to get caught up in that but you're going to have to deal with everything else in her orbit.

She makes a motion with her hands to simulate a planetary orbit.

*
*

MATT

(beat)

Zoe... that was a terrible metaphor.

ZOE

It was a great metaphor! Stars. Movie stars! Come on!

MATT

Give me back the pie.

ZOE

Get your own!

They continue to squabble merrily for a moment until Jessica pokes her head in.

*
*

JESSICA

Hi.

*
*

MATT

Oh, hi.

*
*

JESSICA

Sorry to interrupt, I just... you have my phone?

*
*
*

MATT

Oh right. Yes, it's over in my place. Do you want to...

*
*
*

JESSICA

Sure.

*
*

MATT

Do you want a cup of coffee?

*
*

JESSICA

Oh yes, please.

*
*

He pours her a cup and they head for the door.

*

JESSICA (CONT'D)
Good night, Zoe.

ZOE
Good night.

Matt gives his sister a glance as he walks out and she does the planetary orbit motion with her hands again.

90 EXT. OWNER'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

90

Jessica is standing outside the owner's quarters, enjoying her cup of FOLGERS, complete with the "mug hug." Matt comes outside with her phone, which he gives to her.

JESSICA
Thank you.

MATT
Of course.

They look out at the lights on the lodge.

JESSICA
It's so beautiful here.
(beat)
I could get used to this.

MATT
Really?

JESSICA

Sure. I mean, it's nice to be out of the spotlight for a change.

MATT

You have an entire movie crew and paparazzi and a body guard following you around. Seems like the spotlight to me.

JESSICA

None of that is around now...

MATT

(beat)
What about Vince?

JESSICA

What about him?

MATT

(beat)
He's still loves you.

JESSICA

(beat)
Yes. And I still love him. But I'm not in love with him anymore.

MATT

Are you sure? Because that's some pretty stiff competition.

JESSICA

(smiles)
No... it's not even close.

Jessica looks at Matt and they hold each other's gaze. She leans in and they kiss, sweetly, but then he stops it short.

MATT

I'm sorry. We shouldn't...

JESSICA

No, it's okay. I understand.

MATT

You're leaving in a few days.

JESSICA

(beat)
What if I don't?

MATT

Don't leave?

JESSICA

Yes. Maybe I should take Sophie up on her offer and stay for Christmas? See that Festival of Lights you mentioned?

MATT

Christmas ends. Even here in Homestead. What then?

(beat)

You may think there's not a spotlight on you here but there is. It was made for you. It just wasn't made for me.

She smiles a bit sadly and puts her hand to his face, then leans in to kiss him on the cheek again. She walks away leaving Matt to wonder if he made the right decision.

91 EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY 91

It's early in the morning as people are changing the sign to say "5 Days Until Christmas!"

92 SCENE OMITTED 92

93 EXT. HOMESTEAD STREET - DAY 93

Ian is walking down the street when his phone rings.

IAN

Hello? Mickey? What's up?

(eyes big)

You did what? Mickey, no! I said don't sell the picture! It's already on the... No... I gotta go.

He looks at his phone in horror.

94 INT. LODGE - ROSALIE'S ROOM - DAY 94 *

Rosalie is up and dressed when her phone buzzes.

ROSALIE

Rosalie Evans. Hey Barry, how are things at The Times? Comment on what? What picture? *

Rosalie's eyes go wide and she grabs her tablet computer.

95 INT. LODGE - JESSICA'S ROOM - DAY 95 *

Jessica is getting ready when there is a loud knock.

ROSALIE (O.S.)
Jessica! Jessica!

Jessica runs to the door and opens it and Rosalie storms in.

JESSICA
What is going on?

ROSALIE
This. You kissed him?!

She thrusts the tablet at Jessica and we see the photo of the kiss in Jessica's trailer between her and Matt, looking like more than it was, and the headline reading "Jessica's New Small Town Flame!" She swipes the tablet and another headline says "J Mac Caught Kissing a New Guy!" Another reads "JMac Dates Innkeeper on Screen and in Real Life." *

JESSICA
No!!!

She runs out the door.

96 INT. LODGE LOBBY - DAY 96 *

Matt comes out into the lobby as his phone buzzes. As he answer it, Zoe and Sophie come in through the front door, worried looks on their faces.

ZOE
Matt!

Matt holds up a finger as if to say one moment.

MATT
(into phone)
Hello? Sorry who's this? It's a bad connection. The picture? What picture? I'm sorry, what?

ZOE
Matt!

He puts his finger to his lips to say shhh.

MATT

I'm going to step outside to see if
the reception is any better.

He goes to the door as Jessica is barrelling down the stairs.

JESSICA

Matt! Matt!

Matt waves hi with a smile as he walks out the door.

97

EXT. LODGE MAIN DRIVEWAY - DAY

97 *

Matt comes out onto the porch and stops, shocked. It seems
as if every news crew and every reporter and every
photographer in the universe is in his driveway.

Flashes go off as the camera crew jostles for a good shot of
him. Sophie and Zoe come outside and then Jessica emerges,
which only makes things more chaotic.

For a moment, we think that Sophie is going to be scared of
the throng but then she moves forward, carefully, to the edge
of the porch, faces all the photographers, and strikes a
series of poses, smiling broadly as the cameras flash.

We leave them there, pinned in the glare of Hollywood's
spotlight.

END ACT SIX

ACT SEVEN

98 EXT. LODGE MAIN DRIVEWAY - DAY - ESTABLISHING 98 *

The horde of photographers is clamoring for a shot.

99 INT. LODGE - JESSICA'S ROOM - DAY 99 *

Jessica and Rosalie are in her room.

ROSALIE

I can't believe you kissed him!

JESSICA

That time it was on the cheek! It meant nothing.

ROSALIE

That time? Did you kiss him another time?

Jessica doesn't respond.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)

Are you falling for this guy?

JESSICA

It doesn't matter if I am or not. He's not falling for me.

ROSALIE

How do you know that?

JESSICA

Because I offered to stay.

ROSALIE

Stay? Here? Like forever?

JESSICA

No! Not... I thought just for Christmas and... it's stupid.

ROSALIE

Look, Jess, I get it. You're stressed out about the movie and Vince and suddenly you have this warm and fuzzy Christmas story come to life with the beautiful family and the sleigh rides and...

JESSICA

You're worried about my career.

ROSALIE

No, I'm worried about my friend. Give it all up and go live on a mountain and raise goats, I don't care as long as you're happy. But the story of the famous actress finding true love at Christmas in a small town? That's the plot of your movie. Not real life.

JESSICA

So what do I do? Go back to LA... go back to Vince?

ROSALIE

(horrified)

Oh, no! No! I will give it all up and go raise goats if you do that.

JESSICA

(smiles - then serious)

I really like him.

Rosalie sits and puts her arm around Jessica.

ROSALIE

(beat)

Matt, right? You like, Matt?

JESSICA

Yes!

ROSALIE

Okay. Just checking.

They sit there, contemplating what's next.

100

INT. OWNER'S QUARTERS KITCHEN - DAY

100

Matt is pacing in the kitchen of the owner's quarters, while Zoe is sitting, watching him pace.

MATT

What am I going to do? What is the town going to think! What are Mom and Dad going to think?

ZOE

Of you kissing a movie star?
They're probably already having it
made into Christmas cards.

MATT

This is what you warned me about.
The star's gravitational pull.

ZOE

I thought you hated that metaphor.

MATT

It makes more sense now.

ZOE

Okay, look, maybe it's not so bad.
I mean, the phones have been
ringing off the hook since this
came out with people wanting to
stay here. Maybe this is what
launches our franchise idea.

MATT

Zoe, enough with the franchise
stuff. It's not going to happen.

ZOE

Why not?

MATT

Because we're a family run lodge.
That's what we have always been.

*

ZOE

It doesn't mean we can't be
something else.

MATT

I hate change, remember?

ZOE

Matt, you know when we were kids I
always found the Christmas presents
you hid before you wrapped them?

MATT

You did not.

ZOE

Really?

(points at Christmas tree)
Because the watch under the tree
over there begs to differ.

MATT

Seriously?!

ZOE

The point is that you and I both like to know what's coming next. The difference is you want it to be the same thing over and over again. Can you imagine if you got the same Christmas present every year?

There is a knock at the front door. Matt goes cautiously to check who it is, then opens it to find Gavin there. *

MATT

Are you with Jessica?

Gavin shakes his head, no.

MATT (CONT'D) *

Is she okay? *

He nods his head, yes.

MATT (CONT'D)

Can I help you?

GAVIN

She wanted me to check on you... and your daughter. *

MATT

Sophie? She's fine. I'm the one who wants to hide under my bed.

GAVIN

That is a valid reaction. But you're sure she's okay? *

MATT

I think so. Do you want to say hi? *

Gavin nods. Matt lets him come in and shuts the door. Zoe gets up and motions for Gavin to follow. *

ZOE

Her room is this way.

Zoe leads Gavin down the hall.

101 INT. OWNER'S QUARTERS - SOPHIE'S ROOM - DAY

101

Sophie is scanning through things on her tablet computer when there is a knock and the door opens. Zoe pokes her head in.

ZOE

Soph? You have a visitor.

Zoe steps aside so Gavin can come up to the door.

SOPHIE

Hi, Gavin! Come on in.

Gavin enters reluctantly.

ZOE

I'll be right out here, okay?

She backs out of sight but stays close.

SOPHIE

(to Gavin)

Have a seat.

Gavin looks around - the only seats are made for children. But he sits anyway. She sits opposite him.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)

I've been looking but they haven't posted any pictures of me, yet.

GAVIN

You... you want them to post pictures of you?

SOPHIE

Doesn't everybody?

GAVIN

No.

SOPHIE

Why not?

GAVIN

Because some people like to keep their private lives private.

SOPHIE

I don't understand.

GAVIN

(struggles)

Why do you think Jessica needs me?
Why she needs a bodyguard?

SOPHIE

Because she's a movie star.

GAVIN

No... because she's a person. Just
like you and me. And sometimes she
wants to do regular person stuff.

SOPHIE

Like what?

GAVIN

Like... going to the store to get
Christmas presents. Or...

SOPHIE

The Christmas Parade? She was
going to go with us tonight!

GAVIN

I don't think she can do that, now.

SOPHIE

That's not fair.

GAVIN

No, it's not. You get a lot, being
famous. But you lose a lot, too.

SOPHIE

Bodyguards are with you always and
they watch out for you. So they're
like your best friend, right?

GAVIN

(a bit of a smile)

Right.

SOPHIE

Well, I know I was trying to get
you to come be my bodyguard but you
should stay with Jessica. She
needs you more than I do.

GAVIN

Yeah. I think you might be right.
But if you ever need help. You
call me, okay? I'll give your Aunt
Zoe my number.

SOPHIE

Okay.

She offers her hand and he shakes it, gently.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)

Do you want to see my stuffed
animal collection?

Beat - then he nods solemnly.

GAVIN

Yes, I do.

Sophie goes to grab some of her friends.

102 INT. LODGE LOBBY - DAY

102 *

Matt comes in and shuts the door quickly as camera flashes go off outside. He puts his head against the door for a moment and sighs, then turns around - Jessica is standing there.

JESSICA

Matt, I'm so sorry.

MATT

It's not your fault.

JESSICA

A thousand photographers in your
driveway? That is the definition
of my fault.

MATT

I guess the spotlight found us.

JESSICA

I'm going to fix this I don't know
how, but... Maybe some other
celebrity will do something dumb
and it'll take the pressure off.

MATT

(smiles)
We can always hope.

JESSICA

It's only for a couple more days.
Then we'll be gone and we can all
get back to normal.

MATT

Yeah.
(beat)
Normal is good.

They stand there for a moment, both knowing that getting back to normal isn't going to be easy for either one of them.

JESSICA

I better... I've got to go to work.

MATT

Okay. Yeah. Me, too.

JESSICA

Okay.

She turns and starts to head up the stairs but then stops.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Have you seen Gavin around?

MATT

He's having a tea party with my daughter and her stuffed animals.

JESSICA

(beat)
Maybe I was a little hasty on that "getting back to normal" thing.

Matt nods and she turns and heads up the stairs.

103 EXT. LODGE MAIN DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

103 *

Across the street, the pack of reporters is on watch as Zoe comes out of the lodge and heads toward the owner's quarters. Ian sees her and hurries to catch her. *

IAN

Zoe! Zoe!

ZOE

You promised.

IAN

I didn't do it. My agent, Mickey, did it. I didn't tell him to release the photos, I swear!

ZOE

I don't believe you.

IAN
Zoe, listen...

ZOE
Get off our property or this time I
really will call the sheriff.

She goes into the owner's quarters and slams the door. Ian
stands there for a minute and then turns to walk away.

104 EXT. JESSICA'S TRAILER - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT 104

105 INT. JESSICA'S TRAILER - NIGHT 105

Jessica, Barbara, and Rosalie are all there, exhausted.

JESSICA
Let's go through it again.

ROSALIE
Jessica, it's three in the morning.

JESSICA
We have to figure this out.

BARBARA
I'm telling you, we're not going to
be able to get it done in two days.

ROSALIE
How much more time do you need?

BARBARA
If we film until the sun comes
up... we might be able to get it
done with one more night. Maybe.

JESSICA
But that one more night is
Christmas Eve. We can't ask the
crew to do that. We can't ask the
town to give up their Christmas Eve
just so we can finish our movie.

BARBARA
I can take care of the crew.
They're a good group of people.
They'll understand.

JESSICA
The town won't.
(beat)
The Mayor, won't.

ROSALIE
So what do you want to do?

JESSICA
Go back in time and stop myself
from saying I'd produce this movie.

BARBARA
Look, Jessica, I know it's rough
with... everything that's going on.
We all want that work/life balance
thing. But sometimes something has
to come first. You just have to
decide what it's going to be.

Jessica doesn't like that idea very much.

106

INT. DARKENED ROOM - NIGHT

106

We are tight on a door leading outside, which looks a lot
like the one in Matt's owner's quarters. There is someone
out there knocking on it, repeatedly.

The lights in the room come on and the door opens to reveal
Jessica with Gavin standing a discrete distance behind her.

JESSICA
Hi. I'm sorry to wake you. But I
have a huge favor to ask.

REVERSE ANGLE

We see that it is not Matt, but town council member Pete,
appropriately stunned by the movie star standing there.

END ACT SEVEN

ACT EIGHT

107 EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY 107

We start with the sign that reads "3 Days Until Christmas."

108 INT. HOMESTEAD TOWN HALL - DAY 108

It looks like the entire town has turned out for an emergency meeting and they aren't happy. The town council, led by Pete, is back at the table and is joined by Barbara. Pete tries to establish some order with his gavel.

PETE
Order! Order!

The crowd quiets as Matt, who is with Zoe and Sophie, stands.

MATT
Pete, this is crazy. You can't just decide to let the movie film another night. Especially when that night is Christmas Eve!

PETE
Well, if you look at the town charter, Mr. Mayor...

MATT
Pete, I swear if you don't stop calling me Mr. Mayor...

The room devolves into chaos again. Pete bangs his gavel.

PETE
Order! Order!

ZOE
Somebody take away his gavel!

Pete is concerned by that suggestion. Barbara stands up.

BARBARA
Everybody, please listen. I know this is inconvenient, but we'll do our best to not to get in the way.

SOPHIE
But Christmas Eve is the Festival of Lights.

BARBARA

I know and we want you to go ahead with it. In fact, we want to feature it in our movie.

ZOE

Feature it how?

BARBARA

Well, while the lights are coming on for your festival, we want to do the final scene between our movie star and our innkeeper.

There is snickering at this. Matt is embarrassed.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

The characters in our movie, I mean. We think it'll be very special and your town will be playing a huge part in it. And it's not just the town... Guys?

Jessica and Vince enter, much to everyone's delight.

VINCE

Hello, people of Homestead. I'm Vince and this is Jessica.

Raucous applause.

JESSICA

We're so grateful for all the support you have given us.

VINCE

Yes, we are. And this final scene on Christmas Eve is going to be amazing. And guess what... we could use some extras. Who wants to be in a movie?

Everyone raises their hands including Sophie and Zoe. Matt, realizing he has lost the battle shakes his head and starts making his way to the exit. Jessica sees him go and follows.

109

EXT. HOMESTEAD STREET - DAY

109

Matt comes out of the town hall building and has only made it a few steps when Jessica comes out to stop him.

JESSICA

Matt! Matt, wait.

He stops and turns to her.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.

MATT

This is fixing things?

JESSICA

I'm trying! We're going to take care of everything. I'm going to pay for the entire festival so you can have the biggest one ever!

MATT

The festival we've had has been just fine. It's the one I grew up with. It's the one I take my daughter to. It's the one I took my wife to...

JESSICA

Matt, I'll make sure nothing goes wrong. Christmas Eve and then we're done. I'll be gone. That's how you wanted it to be, right?

*
*
*
*

Before they can go any further, several of the paparazzi show up and start taking pictures.

*

MATT

(more sad than mad)

None of this is how I wanted it to be.

*
*
*

He turns and walks off just as Vince is coming out of the town hall. Jessica trying to hold back tears, turns and runs off and Vince watches her go, feeling badly about how this has all turned out.

110 EXT. HOMESTEAD LODGE - NIGHT - ESTABLISHING

110

*

111 INT. LODGE PARLOR - NIGHT

111

*

Matt is standing at the Christmas tree in the parlor, admiring the homemade reindeer ornament and smiling. Vince walks up to join him.

VINCE
Cute reindeer.

MATT
Sophie made it when she was three.
Well, I made it but she supervised.

VINCE
It's nice.

MATT
How's the filming going?

VINCE
(smiles)
I have done dozens of movies. Some
great. Some not so great. Some I
can't even remember doing. But
this one I'm going to remember.

Matt considers that for a moment.

VINCE (CONT'D)
Do you know how our movie ends?

MATT
No.

VINCE
The movie star and the innkeeper
fall in love.

MATT
And they live happily ever after?

VINCE
No. She goes back to Hollywood and
he lets her because they both know
it could never work.

MATT
That's not a very happy ending.

VINCE
No, it's not.
(beat)
Kind of a shame, huh?

Vince heads out of the room and Matt looks back at the tree.

112 EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY

112

The sign now reads "2 Days Until Christmas!"

113 EXT. HOMESTEAD LODGE - DAY - ESTABLISHING 113 *

114 INT. LODGE DINING ROOM - DAY 114 *

Jessica and Gavin are in the dining room eating as Matt comes into the room. He stops short, a bit surprised to see them there, then powers through the room without a word.

JESSICA

That was fun.

Gavin looks at her, concerned.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

It's one more night. I'm fine.

GAVIN

(beat)

No, you're not.

Jessica is surprised to hear him speak.

JESSICA

What do you mean?

GAVIN

(shrugs)

I spend all day with you. I know you. You're not fine.

JESSICA

So what do I do about it?

GAVIN

Decide what you want.

JESSICA

If I could do that I would be fine.

GAVIN

Just look around. You'll see it. Until then, I've got your back.

JESSICA

(touched - smiles)

Thank you.

Suddenly, there is a din of excited voices coming from the lobby. Jessica and Gavin get up to go investigate.

115 INT. LODGE LOBBY - DAY

115 *

Barbara is greeting her husband, JOHN, and three kids ranging from ten to sixteen years old. There are hugs and kisses. Jessica and Gavin watch from the doorway.

BARBARA
(to John)
You made it!

JOHN
Of course we made it. You can't
spend Christmas Eve alone!

They kiss sweetly. Barbara sees Jessica and Gavin.

BARBARA
Oh hey! Jessica, Gavin. This is
my family. My husband John and my
kids Steven, Sarah, and Trevor.

JESSICA
(a big smile)
Hi everyone. Merry Christmas.

John shakes her hand and the kids wave, a little star struck.

JOHN
Nice to meet you.

They move on to greet Gavin and Jessica pulls Barbara aside.

JESSICA
(to Barbara)
I thought you said sometimes work
has to come first?

BARBARA
No, I said sometimes you have to
decide what comes first.
(shrugs)
I did.

Barbara returns to her family and Jessica goes back to Gavin.

JESSICA
That's what I want.

GAVIN
Then go get it.

JESSICA
How? I mean come on Gavin... we
all know how this movie ends.

GAVIN
If you don't like it, change it.

JESSICA
(beat)
Improvise?

She considers this as she watches Barbara and her family.

116 EXT. HOMESTEAD LODGE - NIGHT - ESTABLISHING 116 *

117 INT. LODGE KITCHEN - NIGHT 117 *

Zoe is pulling some things out of the refrigerator and putting it on the center island as Matt comes in.

MATT
What are you doing?

ZOE
Taking some of our extra stuff over to the movie crew. I don't think any of them had time to eat dinner. Sorry. Is this like giving aid and comfort to the enemy? *

MATT
It's fine. It's very nice of you.

ZOE
That's what we do here in Homestead. We're nice. Besides, they're our guests.

MATT
They're not all staying here.

ZOE
Not in the lodge but they're all guests of the town, right? They're part of the family now. *

Matt considers this.

ZOE (CONT'D)
At least the paparazzi is gone for the night. *

MATT
They'll be back in the morning. Unless some other celebrity does something dumb. *

ZOE

What?

MATT

Something Jessica said. They'll stay here until they have something juicier to go after.

ZOE

(brainstorm)

Right. Of course!

She scrambles toward the door.

MATT

Where are you going?

ZOE

To get something juicier.

She runs out.

MATT

What? Wait... what about the food?

Matt considers the food for a moment and then goes to the phone on the wall and dials.

MATT (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Pauline? Hey, it's Matt. Do you have anymore pies?

He smiles.

118 EXT. HOMESTEAD STREET - NIGHT

118

Not far from the dressing rooms, Ian is standing with his camera, shivering. Zoe walks up to him, determined.

ZOE

Do you feel badly?

IAN

What?

ZOE

About what you did. Do you feel bad?

IAN

Yes. Of course. I never meant...

ZOE

Great. So that means you want to fix it, right?

IAN

Sure. But how do we...

ZOE

Your picture is what caused all of this crazy stuff to happen, right?

IAN

Yes, but...

ZOE

So, do it again.

IAN

I don't understand.

VINCE

I do.

They turn to see Vince, standing there smiling mischievously.

119

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

119

The crew is setting up for another shot and they all look like they are about to drop. Jessica, Barbara, and Rosalie are among them, looking equally tired.

BARBARA

(loudly, to the crew)

Okay folks, I know we're all tired, but we can do this! You're all doing a great job.

JESSICA

Thank you everyone!

Barbara pulls them aside.

BARBARA

I don't know if we're going to make it. Everyone is ready to drop.

ROSALIE

What else can we do?

She trails off as she hears, quietly at first, the sound of carolers singing a Christmas tune. The tired crew members slowly stop what they are doing and look around, trying to figure out where it is coming from.

From a side street comes a large crowd of townspeople singing the Christmas carol. They are carrying baskets of food, thermoses of coffee, and more. Matt is leading the way with Sophie at his side. *

The carolers start spreading out among the townspeople and crew, handing out snacks, pouring coffee, and generally spreading good cheer. Jessica approaches Matt.

JESSICA
Did you do all this?

MATT
(shrugs)
I'm the mayor. Part of the job.

JESSICA
But... why? I mean, I sort of feel like we're ruining your Christmas. *

MATT
No... This... these people here... this is what Christmas is really about. *

JESSICA
(beat)
Can I ask you something?

MATT
Sure.

JESSICA
If I wasn't me... I mean, if I wasn't "Jessica McEllis." Could it have been different? *

MATT
If you weren't Jessica McEllis it wouldn't have been the same. *

JESSICA
(smiles)
Merry Christmas, Matt.

MATT
Merry Christmas, Jessica.

Sophie comes up to them, holding a cookie out to Jessica.

SOPHIE
Hi Jessica. Do you want a Christmas cookie?

JESSICA

Yes, I do! Thank you.

Jessica and Matt get pulled apart by the cheery crowd but he takes a look over his shoulder at her, happy to see her smiling. The look on his face seems to indicate that he is having second thoughts about letting her go and he even takes a few steps in her direction when town councilman Pete steps into his path, looking at his cell phone.

PETE

Well, this is good news, Mr. Mayor.

MATT

What is?

PETE

Looks like your little "scandal" is going to be forgotten now that Jessica McEllis is moving on.

MATT

What are you talking about?

PETE

Here...

Pete shows Matt his phone. On it is another tabloid - this time with the picture of Vince kissing Jessica that he took at her home in LA and the headline "Exclusive: Jessica and Vince Reunite!"

Whatever second thoughts Matt may have been having about Jessica are crushed.

PETE (CONT'D)

That's certainly a relief, isn't it?

MATT

(beat)

Yes. It sure is.

He casts a wistful glance over at Jessica who is laughing and smiling.

END ACT EIGHT

ACT NINE

120 EXT. TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

120

The sign now reads "1 Day Until Christmas" and an addition has been made: "Festival of Lights Tonight!"

In the square, everything is set up for the final scene as Barbara guides Jessica, Vince, Pete and some of the townsfolk through a brief rehearsal.

BARBARA

Okay, everyone, let's do a quick run through. Jessica and Vince, the camera circles you so we can see all the lights coming on around the square. And our extras start crossing in the background and the first lights come on and the camera is moving. And cue Vince...

VINCE

You can stay. Stay here with me.

JESSICA

There's nothing here for me.

VINCE

I'm here. Isn't that enough?

BARBARA

And more lights are coming on.

JESSICA

There's no such thing as a Christmas miracle.

VINCE

There is if we make them happen. I love you.

Jessica moves closer and puts her hand to his cheek.

JESSICA

And I love you. But sometimes we have to let go of the things we love before the very act of loving them becomes too much to bear.

BARBARA

And they kiss and the final lights go on and she leaves.

Jessica and Vince don't actually kiss.

BARBARA (CONT'D)
Perfect. We go in ten.

VINCE
Man... I hadn't realized how much
of a bummer this ending is.

JESSICA
Yeah. We're not doing a romantic
comedy where everybody lives
happily ever after.

VINCE
True. But maybe they do. After
the movie, maybe they realize how
dumb they are and wind up together.

JESSICA
(smiles)
How very sentimental of you.

VINCE
Yeah. Even I have my moments.
Which reminds me, you haven't said
anything about your Christmas
present. *

JESSICA
What do you mean? *

VINCE
You haven't seen it? *

He takes out his phone, makes the screen come to life, and
then hands it to her. She looks and sees the tabloid
headline about her and Vince reuniting. *

JESSICA
(aghast)
What!? What did you do?

VINCE
I had Ian Carter help me sell that
photo to the tabloids along with
the story that we're dating again. *

JESSICA
Why?!

VINCE

They wanted the story of who J Mac is dating. So now, that horde of photographers is following me all over town.

*
*

Jessica realizes what this means and is touched deeply.

VINCE (CONT'D)

Look, Jess, a part of me wishes this could actually be true. But, just because you can't be happy with me doesn't mean I don't want you to be happy.

JESSICA

Vince... I don't know what to say.

VINCE

(shrugs)
How about, Merry Christmas?

She hugs him.

JESSICA

Merry Christmas, Vince.

He smiles and then walks away.

121 EXT. HOMESTEAD LODGE - NIGHT - ESTABLISHING 121 *

122 EXT. LODGE FRONT PORCH - NIGHT 122 *

Zoe is standing on the front porch, enjoying the quiet night which is remarkably free of photographers - there are none in sight... until Ian walks up, a little sheepishly. He is carrying a holiday gift bag.

IAN

(looks around)
Looks like it worked.

ZOE

Yes. We are vulture free.
(points to present)
What is that?

IAN

It's a present. For you.

He hands her the bag. She reaches inside and pulls out a framed photograph - it's of her, taken a few days ago on the street, smiling with her hair falling in her face.

ZOE
(smiles)
It's beautiful.

IAN
(beat)
Yeah. It is. There's something else in there.

She reaches in and pulls out a piece of paper.

IAN (CONT'D)
It's a photo release. Says you're okay with me displaying this at a gallery. There's one in Chicago that wants me to do a show.

ZOE
(smiles)
I don't have a pen.

IAN
There's one in the bag.

She reaches back in and sure enough - a pen.

ZOE
You were pretty confident that I was going to sign this, huh?

IAN
More like hopeful.

She signs the document and hands it to him.

IAN (CONT'D)
Thanks. You know... Chicago isn't that far from here.

ZOE
No it's not.

IAN
(hopeful smile)
Okay... I better go. Merry Christmas.

ZOE
Merry Christmas, Ian.

He walks away and Zoe looks at the picture, still smiling.

123 INT. OWNER'S QUARTERS - SOPHIE'S ROOM - NIGHT 123

Sophie is on her bed, looking at the photo of Vince and Jessica on her tablet computer when Matt enters.

MATT

Hey. We need to get going. We don't want to miss the festival.

He sees what she is looking at and gently takes her tablet away. *

MATT (CONT'D)

Sophie, you shouldn't be looking at that. *

SOPHIE *

Why not? *

MATT *

Because it's grown up stuff. *

SOPHIE *

It's not like it's real. Jessica doesn't love Vince. *

MATT

How do you know?

SOPHIE

(whispers)
Can you keep a secret?

MATT

Of course. Always.

SOPHIE

It's what I asked Santa for... for you to fall in love.

MATT

With Jessica?

SOPHIE

No. Santa must have just figured that part out on his own. You love her, right?

MATT

Sweetheart, it's not that easy.

SOPHIE

(beat)
Shouldn't it be?

Sophie gives him a kiss on the cheek and runs off toward the living room. Matt looks at the tabloid photo again, thinks for a moment, and then makes a decision.

*
*

MATT

Wait for me!

He runs for the door.

124 EXT. TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

124

Jessica and Vince are in place, Pete is standing by to cue the town's lights, Barbara is behind the camera, and Rosalie and Gavin are watching from the sidelines.

*

BARBARA

Okay. Last scene... are we ready?

Matt runs in at the last second followed by Zoe with Sophie.

*

BARBARA (CONT'D)

Okay everyone, here we go. Places!

Jessica sees Matt. He comes over to her.

MATT

Stay.

JESSICA

What?

MATT

Stay. Here. For Christmas. We've been making this too hard. I've been making it too hard. I was so worried about keeping things the same that I couldn't see how much better they'd be if things changed.

BARBARA

Jessica, come on!

JESSICA

Matt, I...

MATT

I know it's complicated with your career and Vince but we'll figure it out. We have to at least try.
(MORE)

*
*

MATT (CONT'D)

Jessica... I think I'm falling in
love with you. Choose me... choose
us... stay.

*
*
*

BARBARA

Jessica!

Jessica is torn but she finally pulls away from Matt and goes to take her spot. Matt is obviously disappointed.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

Okay... here we go... and action!

The filming starts and colorful Christmas lights start appearing on the buildings around the square.

VINCE

You can stay. Stay here with me.

JESSICA

There's nothing here for me.

VINCE

I'm here. Isn't that enough?

More lights come on, washing the square in color.

JESSICA

There's no such thing as a Christmas miracle.

VINCE

There is if we make them happen. I love you.

More lights come on - it's a Christmas wonderland. Jessica moves closer and puts her hand to Vince's cheek.

JESSICA

And I love you. I do. But...

She looks over Vince's shoulder and sees Matt standing there with Sophie.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

But...

She looks the other way and sees Gavin, who told her to rewrite the ending. He smiles and nods. Jessica turns back to Vince but she's really talking to Matt.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

But maybe that is enough.

Everyone reacts to her going off script.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

I forgot what it was like to be loved. What it was like to feel like I was part of something. Part of a community. Part of a family. I spent so much time keeping people out that I forgot what it was like to let people in. This is when you're supposed to be with people you love. That's what Christmas really means.

All of the lights around the square are burning brightly now.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

(to Vince)

Ask me again.

Vince is a little paralyzed not knowing what is going on.

VINCE

Ask you...?

JESSICA

There's only one thing I want for Christmas and that's for you to ask me again. Take a chance... don't plan... don't think... just act. Ask me to stay.

VINCE

(beat)

I'll ask you over and over again until you say yes. Stay with me.

JESSICA

(smiles - nods)

Yes.

She leaps into Vince's arms and he lifts her up.

BARBARA

Cut!

Everyone cheers. Vince puts Jessica back down.

VINCE

That was incredible! Jessica you improvised!

JESSICA

I know! Let's do it again, but next time, kiss me. I think it should end with a kiss.

VINCE
(smiles)
I think it will...

He steps aside and Matt is there. Jessica goes to him.

JESSICA
Ask me again.

MATT
Stay?

JESSICA
Yes!

They go in for their kiss and it's a great one. Everyone cheers again. Sophie runs to join them and they all celebrate as a family with Barbara, Pete, Zoe, Gavin, Rosalie, and the entire town join in the celebration.

DISSOLVE TO:

125

EXT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

125

The cheering that started in the last scene is continuing as a title tells us it is "ONE YEAR LATER." There's a crowd in front of a movie theater under a marquee all lit up with the title: "A HOLIDAY HOMECOMING - STARRING JESSICA MCELLIS AND VINCE HAWKINS - WORLD PREMIERE."

*
*

Another sign, nearby says "Sponsored by Homestead Lodges - Four Locations and Growing!"

*

The doors open and Jessica and Matt come out with Sophie, all holding hands and smiling, a happy family. Vince and his family are there as is Zoe, Ian, Barbara, Pete, Gavin, and Rosalie.

A sleigh/carriage pulls up to the curb in front of the theater and Jessica, Matt, and Sophie climb aboard. Jessica and Matt settle into the seat as Sophie climbs up toward the driver again.

JESSICA
(to Matt)
Merry Christmas.

MATT
Merry Christmas.

They kiss and then are joined by Sophie to wave to the crowd as the sleigh starts down the street and we pull back to reveal that we are in Homestead, all lit up with colorful Christmas lights.

FADE TO BLACK.