

A SHOE ADDICT'S CHRISTMAS

Written by

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Based on the novel by Beth Harbison

ACT ONE

A1 INT. NOELLE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

A1

As upbeat Christmas music plays and as the opening credits roll we meet NOELLE CARPENTER (30s, smart, selfless to a fault, a natural beauty), who is getting ready for her day in her small but charming apartment, which already has Christmas decorations but no tree, yet.

As we move around the room, we'll see some of the photographs that are up on the walls. Many are artistic, black and white shots of people - an older man on a park bench, a young boy with an umbrella, and one that we take a lingering look at - it's a woman (not her mother) standing by a Christmas tree in an outdoor, public space.

There are also a few family photos here, including one of Noelle as a child, playing dress up with her mother and one of the family in their Sunday best in front of a church. We will notice in the photo that Noelle's mother is wearing a simple gold cross on a chain around her neck.

Interspersed with these glimpses of the photos, we'll see Noelle doing a final check of her hair, adjusting a strand of garland, and, notably, slipping on a pair of shoes that she admires in the mirror.

Finally, she goes to a nearby table where several necklaces are hanging on a stand, one of which is the same gold cross we saw in the photo.

Noelle takes a moment and considers it - but then passes it by and chooses something else.

She heads for the door and we focus on the gold cross.

1 EXT. CITY - VARIOUS

1

The opening credits continue over establishing shots of a bustling, snowy, unnamed city (not quite New York but not Omaha either) at Christmas. We see people hustling to and fro and decorations on the streets and even the cabs as everyone gets into the spirit of the holiday.

2 EXT. SIMON'S DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY

2

Establishing shot of Simon's department store in the downtown area of the city.

It is an upscale but not luxury institution here (not quite Nordstrom but not Macy's either), the kind of place where everyone goes shopping at some point during the holiday season. It is all done up for Christmas with decorations and elaborate window displays out front.

3 INT. SIMON'S DEPARTMENT STORE - SHOE DEPARTMENT - DAY 3

The inside of the store is equally decked out for the holidays with a big Christmas tree and lots of garland, poinsettias, and lights. It's plentiful but tasteful.

In the shoe section, we find Noelle stringing lights on a (Balsam Hill) Christmas tree near the register.

Her boss, the GM of the store, ALEX PRATHER (50s, nervous energy, a worrier) approaches.

NOELLE

Oh, Alex. Good. Here, hold this.

She gets him to hold one end of the light string.

ALEX

More Christmas decorations?

NOELLE

You can never have too much Christmas.

ALEX

Says the woman named Noelle.

NOELLE

(nostalgic laugh)
My mom loved the holidays. She wanted to name me Jingle, but my dad overruled her.

ALEX

My mother only loves the retail aspect of Christmas so let's not overdo it.

HELEN PRATHER (70s, refined, knows what she likes) approaches, eyeing the Christmas decorations as she does.

NOELLE

Speaking of your mother... hello, Mrs. Prather. Merry Christmas.

HELEN

(warm but professional)
Hello, Noelle.
(a little less warm)
Alex, is there a reason your HR manager is decorating the store? I wouldn't think that would be on her list of job responsibilities.

ALEX

Well, no, of course not, but...

NOELLE

(jumps in)
I volunteered to help. It's three weeks until Christmas so all hands on deck... "the halls."

Alex appreciates the joke. Helen, not so much.

HELEN

(looks around)
Well, I'm half-expecting Santa's elves to appear and break out into song so I think we can consider the halls fully decked. Besides, didn't you also volunteer to oversee the Christmas charity gala for the fire station?

NOELLE

I already spoke to Captain Pearson and we're meeting this week.

HELEN

Simon's is the major sponsor for the first time this year so we need to make a good impression. Think tasteful, refined, elegant.

Helen looks at the brightly colored lights they are holding.

HELEN (CONT'D)

The qualities our store has stood for over the last ninety years.

ALEX

(pushes lights on Noelle)
I'll make sure it's taken care of.

Helen nods and walks off. Alex turns to Noelle.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Are you sure it's taken care of?
This is very important, Noelle.

NOELLE
Alex, I promise it will be fine.
(looks at shoes; smiles)
Besides, a fancy Christmas gala
means I have an excuse to buy a new
pair of shoes.

ALEX
Everyone should have someone in
their life that looks at them the
way you look at footwear.

During the following Noelle holds up shoes as examples.

NOELLE
(laughs)
They're more than just footwear.
They're an expression of your
mood... happy, serious, fun,
flirty... Every pair tells a story.

ALEX
Just make sure the story they tell
is one my mother will approve of.

NOELLE
Don't worry...

Noelle smiles confidently.

4 EXT. FIRE STATION - DAY

4

Establishing shot of a fire station in the city.

NOELLE (V.O.)
The shoes and the fire station
charity gala will be tasteful,
elegant, and refined.

5 INT. FIRE STATION - DAY

5

A firefighter jumps down off of a fire truck after it has
backed into the holiday-decorated station. This is JAKE
MARSDEN (30s, all-American handsome, likes to joke around but
strong when needed). Other firefighters get off the truck
including TEDDY LI (30s, female, tough but quick to smile)
and PETER PHILLIPS (30s, nice guy, in love with Teddy).
During the following they work on stowing their gear.

TEDDY

Nice work out there, Jake. I especially liked the part where you slid down the fire escape to get back to the truck.

JAKE

It was faster than the stairs.
(roguish smile)
And more fun. The fire was out.

TEDDY

But it's not exactly appropriate for a future Deputy Chief.

JAKE

(evasive - re: decorations)
Should we do a Secret Santa for our Christmas party this year?

TEDDY

(to Peter)
Peter, in all the years we've been dating, does changing the subject ever work with me?

PETER

Never.

JAKE

Can I distract you with something shiny?

He holds up a sparkling ornament from the nearby decorations - she gives him a look that could kill.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Teddy, the job's not a done deal. I don't want to talk about it and jinx it.

TEDDY

You're sure it's not because you're having second thoughts?

PETER

Yeah, Jake, it's an office job. Aren't you going to miss being on the front lines with us?

JAKE

It's called a career path. I can't slide down fire escapes for the rest of my life.

He glances at the pole as if he wishes it were different.

TEDDY

Why not? Lots of people do. Your dad did.

Teddy points to a photo of Captain Bradley Marsden, Jake's father, on the wall. The man wears a formal firefighter uniform and has lots of badges and medals.

JAKE

My dad was the "hero firefighter." It's time I grew up and did my own thing. The only bad part is how much you guys would miss me.

PETER

We'd find a way to muddle through.

JAKE

(teasing)

No, it would destroy you. You wouldn't be able to function.

She points to equipment on the floor.

TEDDY

Just for that, you're stowing the rest of the equipment.

JAKE

Nope, sorry. I'm off. I'm moving into my new place tonight.

PETER

Are you sure you don't need help?

JAKE

The movers are bringing the big stuff this weekend. I'm just doing a few boxes, clothes, fuzzy antlers to wear to our Christmas party. Or maybe I'll save those for the charity gala.

PETER

Yeah. That'll make them take you seriously for the Deputy Chief job.

TEDDY

Two parties, two nights in a row, plus the Christmas day dinner? We spend way too much time together.

JAKE

Our party and Christmas day dinner are the fun parts where we get to cut loose. The Christmas charity gala raises money for the station so we have to be grown-ups.

TEDDY

(smiles)
And how are you going to manage that?

JAKE

(laughs)
Peter. Marry that girl.

Jake waves as he heads for the door.

6 EXT. SIMON'S DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY 6

Establishing shot of the department store.

7 INT. SIMON'S DEPARTMENT STORE - DISPLAY WINDOW - DAY 7

Noelle enters the display window facing the street and finds LORNA RAFFERTY (30s, funny, ambitious go-getter), who is working on a shoe-based Christmas display (a shoe Christmas tree and more).

NOELLE

A Christmas shoe tree. Lorna, I love it!

LORNA

I knew you would. Here...

Lorna hands her a pair of shoes and Noelle dives in to help.

LORNA (CONT'D)

You know, a picture of this would be "inspiring." Maybe even the "Most Inspiring Photo of the Year."

NOELLE

Lorna, come on...

LORNA

You need to enter the contest this year. They're showing the entries at the Christmas charity gala so it's like kismet.

NOELLE

I haven't taken pictures in years.

LORNA

Submit the one of the woman by the Christmas tree.

NOELLE

(wistful smile)

That is a great picture.

LORNA

You're a great photographer.

NOELLE

But I gave that up. Now I'm a great human resources manager.

LORNA

When I recommended you for the job it was supposed to be temporary. Just something to pay the bills while you got over breaking up with what's his face...

NOELLE

His name was Matt.

LORNA

I know, I just prefer what's his face. Noelle, that was three years ago. You need to get over him.

NOELLE

I am over him.

LORNA

You still follow his Instagram.

NOELLE

Because he's *still* a photographer...

LORNA

Sweetie, it is time for you to get back out into the world. Personally and professionally.

NOELLE

I'm out in the world.

She spreads her arms and someone outside on the street thinks she is waving at them. They wave back and Noelle smiles.

NOELLE (CONT'D)

See? Meeting new people all the time.

LORNA

Yes, with a thick pane of glass between you. If that isn't a metaphor, I don't know what is.

NOELLE

What does that mean?

LORNA

It means, you're still here working in a cubicle instead of doing what you love.

NOELLE

Lorna, this may not be my dream job but I'm making the best of it.

LORNA

Noelle, you know I love you but this isn't a time for "making the best of it." It's a time when you should be filled with the spirit of Christmas.

NOELLE

(laughs)

We work in retail. I just want to get through Christmas alive!

(off her look)

Listen, I appreciate what you're trying to do, but I promise, I'm okay. I work with great people, my Dad and I are good, I have a best friend like you...

LORNA

You're only saying that because I always get you shoes for Christmas.

NOELLE

No, it's because I love you.

(hugs her)

And because of the shoes.

LORNA

Okay, this year I'm going to mix it up. I'm thinking boots.

NOELLE

Yes!

LORNA

Like the ones you had - the black ones?

They continue working on the display as they chat about their mutual love of shoes.

8 EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT 8

Noelle is walking down the street when her phone "dings." She looks at it and sees an Instagram style alert - a picture of a man and a woman who are showing off the big engagement ring on her finger. Below the photo it says "MATT AND CHLOE ARE ENGAGED!"

She takes a moment and then sits on the stoop of a building, almost as if the news has knocked the wind out of her.

Noelle tears her gaze away from the phone and looks around - it's a festively decorated holiday street scene that seems to be populated by couples holding hands, kissing under mistletoe, and generally in love. It doesn't help.

9 EXT. GARY'S HOUSE - NIGHT 9

A well-kept suburban house has plenty of Christmas lights.

10 INT. GARY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 10

GARY CARPENTER (60s, decent but reserved) is watching a sporting event on TV and eating dinner off a tray table in the festively decorated living room when there is a knock on the front door, followed by Noelle letting herself in.

NOELLE

Hey, Dad.

GARY

Noelle?

She comes over to give him a kiss. During the following he pays attention to her but also to the game.

GARY (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

NOELLE

Nothing's wrong.

GARY

You never visit on Tuesday.
(to the TV)
Oh, come on! Defense!

NOELLE

I'm sure that at some point I have
visited on a Tuesday before.

GARY

You call on Friday and you visit on
Sunday. You don't visit on Tuesday
unless it's a holiday or something
is wrong.

NOELLE

Nothing is wrong!

GARY

Then is it a holiday? Is it
Christmas already and I just wasn't
paying attention?

Noelle phone "dings" with another alert. She looks and it's
another picture of Matt and Chloe, kissing. She looks at her
dad and considers...

NOELLE

Well, I guess there is...

GARY

(to the TV)
Yes! That's what I mean!
(to Noelle)
Sorry. There is... what?

Noelle shakes her head and forces a smile.

NOELLE

Never mind.

She looks at the wall where there are several family photos,
one of which shows a little girl with little feet in big high
heels, looking up at her mother, who is wearing the cross
necklace.

Gary notices her looking at the picture.

GARY

You two loved playing dress-up.
And her shoes... You know, we
could've had a much bigger house if
it hadn't been for your mother and
her shoes.

NOELLE

It runs in the family.

GARY

(notices)

Do you still have that necklace?

NOELLE

(beat)

I do.

GARY

I never see you wear it.

NOELLE

(beat - smile)

It doesn't go with my any of my shoes.

There is a lull - this is obviously a minefield that both of them would like to avoid.

GARY

Are you hungry? I could...

NOELLE

(heading for the door)

No, thank you. I should get home.

GARY

You just got here.

NOELLE

You're busy. I don't want to bother you. I'll call you Friday.

GARY

And see you Sunday.

Noelle smiles and nods as she opens the door to leave.

GARY (CONT'D)

Noelle... are you sure nothing's wrong?

NOELLE

(beat)

I'm sure. Good night.

Something happens on the game that draws his attention with a cheer and Noelle smiles, then leaves.

11 EXT. NOELLE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

11

Noelle approaches her brownstone apartment building carrying several bulky bags of groceries. In front of the building is a U-Haul style (do it yourself) moving van and a bunch of boxes and smaller pieces of furniture are blocking the entrance. Already in a not-so-great mood, this doesn't help.

Noelle tries to get around it but the bags make it impossible. Still, she is determined and just as she has gotten herself into a precariously humorous situation, Jake comes out of the building to her "rescue."

JAKE

Whoa, whoa... careful.

He stops her from crashing over with the bags.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Are you okay?

NOELLE

I'm fine. Is this your obstacle course?

JAKE

Yes, sorry. I'm moving into 3G.

NOELLE

I live in 2G.

JAKE

(attempts a joke)

I promise not to hold it over you.

(no reaction)

Because my place is... over yours.

NOELLE

No, I got it.

JAKE

Do you want help with the bags?

NOELLE

I think I can manage.

JAKE

Come on. It's the least I can do.

NOELLE

No, really, I can...

He tries to help her, but both Noelle and the bags tumble to the curb into a pile of snow. Jake is aghast but tries to make light of it.

JAKE

I'm making quite a first impression, aren't I?

NOELLE

Oh yes. I won't be forgetting this anytime soon.

He goes to help her stand but she wards him off.

NOELLE (CONT'D)

I got it, thanks.

She extricates herself from the snow, picks up the bags, and starts toward the door, which is still blocked by Jake's stuff. She looks at the stuff, then at him. He scrambles to move it out of the way.

JAKE

Right. Sorry.
(as she passes him)
I'm Jake, by the way.

NOELLE

Noelle.

JAKE

(tries another joke)
As in "the first?"

She gives him a look that could stop time.

JAKE (CONT'D)

I'll just call you 2G.

With a tight smile she goes into the building with the bags.

JAKE (CONT'D)

(to himself)
Totally not going to get a welcome to the building casserole.

He goes back to his boxes.

12

INT. NOELLE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

12

Noelle enters, sets down the bags, and takes off her coat. As she does, she notices the cross necklace on the stand again.

Noelle takes it off the stand and holds it, a wistful smile on her face. She even holds it up to her neck as she looks in a mirror, considering it. She closes her eyes... but then the smile fades and she shakes her head as if she thinks she is being silly.

She puts the necklace back on the stand and goes to unpack her groceries.

13 EXT. SIMON'S DEPARTMENT STORE 13

Establishing shot of Simon's department store. It is snowing heavily outside, a blanket of white blowing around in strong, blizzard winds making it not fit for man nor beast.

14 INT. SIMON'S DEPARTMENT STORE - HOUSEWARES - DAY 14

Noelle is walking through the cheerily decorated housewares section with some files when Alex catches up to her.

ALEX

Noelle, I need a favor. Can you find me an old employee file from the 1990s?

NOELLE

Oh... Hmm. We have everything back to 2000 on the computer but anything before that is paper files in the basement.

ALEX

I wouldn't ask if it wasn't important. It's part of a Christmas gift for my mother.

NOELLE

An old employee file? Wouldn't she prefer a sweater?

ALEX

It's all about people who worked here when my dad ran the store. I'm getting old photos and funny stories and putting them in an album for her.

NOELLE

That's very sweet.

ALEX
(shrugs it off)
The employee was Charlene Pennymar.

He hands her a slip of paper with that name on it.

NOELLE
I'll see what I can find.

ALEX
Thanks.

They are passing by doors to the outside, through which we can see how heavily it is snowing.

ALEX (CONT'D)
It's really coming down out there.
I hope you didn't have any big plans for tonight.

NOELLE
My Christmas tree came this morning so I'm just getting into my comfy pajamas and putting up decorations.

ALEX
Good plan! I'll see you tomorrow?

NOELLE
Yes, you will. Be careful out there.

Alex heads off and Noelle takes a moment to look at the heavy snowfall outside. Then she glances at the slip of paper in her hand and walks away with determination.

15 INT. SIMON'S DEPARTMENT STORE - STORAGE ROOM - DAY 15

The storage room in the basement of the department store is filled with boxes, old mannequins, broken furniture, and rows of filing cabinets - there is light coming through some high windows through which we can see the snow falling.

Noelle enters and looks around, a little daunted by the task ahead of her but she starts scanning the filing cabinets and opens one to get started.

We focus on the window and then...

DISSOLVE TO:

16 INT. SIMON'S DEPARTMENT STORE - STORAGE ROOM - NIGHT 16

The light is gone now that night has fallen and the snow is drifted up in front of the window.

Having gone through the last drawer in one of the filing cabinets, Noelle sighs and looks around.

NOELLE

Where are you Charlene Pennymar?

(glances at watch)

Well, wherever you are you're staying there until tomorrow.

She shuts the drawer and heads for the door.

17 INT. SIMON'S DEPARTMENT STORE - MAIN FLOOR - NIGHT 17

Noelle comes out of an employee only door into the store to find it dimly lit and deserted. She looks around, confused and checks her watch again.

NOELLE

Where is everyone?

She heads for the front doors.

18 INT. SIMON'S DEPARTMENT STORE - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT 18

Noelle gets to the front doors and finds them gated and locked. Through the windows she can see that it is still snowing heavily outside, drifts piling up by the doors. She turns around and shouts into the store.

NOELLE

Hello? Is anyone here? Hello?!

Noelle pulls out her phone and dials.

19 EXT. ALEX'S HOME - NIGHT 19

Establishing shot of Alex's large home, befitting the scion of a wealthy department store family, through the heavy snow. We hear a phone ring.

20 INT. ALEX'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 20

Alex is sitting comfortably in the well-appointed living room, reading a book by the fire. His cell phone is ringing on a table next to him. He answers the call.

ALEX

Hello?

We begin INTERCUTTING between them.

NOELLE

Alex? It's Noelle. Where is everyone?

ALEX

What do you mean?

NOELLE

I mean, the store is dark and empty and the doors are locked.

ALEX

(stands - horrified)

We shut down early because of the snow. I sent everyone home!

NOELLE

Alex! I was in the basement looking for that file!

ALEX

Oh, Noelle, no! I'm so sorry. I didn't know you were still down there.

NOELLE

Just tell me how I can get out. I don't have a key.

ALEX

There is no way out without one.

NOELLE

Alex! What am I going to do?

ALEX

It's okay. I'll come down there. Or I'll send someone.

NOELLE

Have you looked outside? It's snowing like crazy.

ALEX

I'll figure something out. And if I can't, I'll call the fire department and they can break down the doors.

NOELLE

Well, that's a little extreme.

ALEX

It's either that or you spend the night in there by yourself.

NOELLE

(looks around)

Well... there are worse places to be stuck overnight. I've got TVs in the electronics department and beds in the furniture department. There's even a restaurant if I get hungry.

ALEX

Yes, use all of that. Make yourself at home until I get there. But I am getting there, somehow. I'm not leaving you in the store all night.

NOELLE

Okay. Just be careful out there.

She disconnects the call and looks around the store. At first she has a worried look on her face but then it changes into a smile.

NOELLE (CONT'D)

Make myself at home, huh? Okay.

She nods and heads off.

21 INT. SIMON'S DEPARTMENT STORE - CHRISTMAS SECTION - NIGHT 21

Noelle is in the Christmas decoration section, filled with ornaments, wreaths, holiday accessories, and Christmas clothing. She pulls on a Christmas sweater and looks at herself in a mirror.

NOELLE

I think it's missing something...

She sees something, picks it up, and puts it on - a pair of reindeer antlers.

NOELLE (CONT'D)

That's better.

She smiles at the image.

- 22 INT. SIMON'S DEPARTMENT STORE - ELECTRONICS - NIGHT 22
- Noelle, still wearing the antlers, walks by the electronics department where several very nice cameras are on display. She stops, thinks about it for a moment, and then picks one up, enjoying its heft.
- 23 INT. SIMON'S DEPARTMENT STORE - VARIOUS - NIGHT 23
- We see Noelle in various places in the store taking photographs - the big Christmas tree in the main floor, the colorful chair that Santa sits in to hear kids' wishes, ornaments and lights glowing magically.
- 24 INT. SIMON'S DEPARTMENT STORE - LADIES APPAREL - NIGHT 24
- Noelle notices a gorgeous gown on display and takes a picture of it. Then she looks at the price tag.
- NOELLE
- Yikes. Maybe I'll just put this on
my Christmas wish list.
- She continues on.
- 25 INT. SIMON'S DEPARTMENT STORE - KITCHEN - NIGHT 25
- In the commercial grade kitchen of the store's restaurant, all we see is an open, large refrigerator door and the camera sitting on a nearby counter. A banging noise is heard from somewhere else in the store and the refrigerator door closes enough for us to see Noelle raiding the proverbial ice box, eating out of a big tub of ice cream. She listens for a second and the noise is heard again - more of a crash.
- A little worried, she puts the ice cream away and starts to go toward the door. Then she stops, backs up, and gets a frying pan from the rack above the cooking station.
- 26 INT. SIMON'S DEPARTMENT STORE - SHOE DEPARTMENT - NIGHT 26
- Noelle comes into the shoe department, the frying pan held aloft, to find a large display rack leaning at a precarious angle with a bunch of shoes strewn about the floor.
- Attempting to right the rack is an older woman, colorfully dressed in a festive holiday sweater and a bright red hat with a gift-wrap bow in front and a poinsettia flower sticking up on one side. This is CHARLIE.

Noelle puts down the frying pan and rushes to help the woman.

NOELLE

What... be careful!

They right the shoe rack.

CHARLIE

Oh, thank you, dear. Goodness, me. Well, would you look at the mess I've made? This isn't how it was supposed to go at all.

NOELLE

What happened?

CHARLIE

I needed a pair of shoes and they were way up on the tippy top...

NOELLE

So you climbed up the rack?

CHARLIE

These are very important shoes. They go with my hat. Do you like it?

NOELLE

It's very... Who are you? How did you get in here?

CHARLIE

(shakes her hand)

I'm Charlie. It's so nice to meet you, Noelle.

NOELLE

How did you know my name?

CHARLIE

Oh, I know all sorts of stuff about you. I've been watching you.

Noelle looks at her for a moment and then her hand slowly reaches out toward the frying pan that is sitting nearby.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Don't worry. They said you'd be skeptical.

NOELLE

Who is they? Are they doctors?

CHARLIE

They said, "She'll think you're crazy."

NOELLE

Whoever they are, they were right.

CHARLIE

Well, of course. They've been doing it a long time and I'm new to all this.

NOELLE

New to what?

CHARLIE

I'm here to help you get over your troubles, of course.

NOELLE

(beat)
I'm not troubled.

CHARLIE

I wouldn't be here if you weren't.

Noelle looks at the woman thinking she is seriously crazy.

27 EXT. ALEX'S HOME - NIGHT 27

The storm is blowing fast and furious.

28 INT. ALEX'S HOME - FOYER - NIGHT 28

Alex, all bundled up, opens the front door of his house and the wind and snow immediately attacks. It's quite a blizzard out there. He wants to brave it, but knows it would be folly so he pushes the door shut, taking a moment to recover.

He pulls out his phone and dials.

ALEX

(into phone)
Hello. This is Alex Prather with Simon's Department Store? We have a problem.

He gets ready to explain.

29 EXT. SIMON'S DEPARTMENT STORE - NIGHT 29
Establishing shot of the department store.

30 INT. SIMON'S DEPARTMENT STORE - SHOE DEPARTMENT - NIGHT 30
Back in the shoe department with Noelle and Charlie.

NOELLE
(laughing)
Alex sent you here with the key to have a little fun right? Ha, ha, Alex. Very funny!

CHARLIE
No, I told you, I'm here to help.

NOELLE
Help with what?

CHARLIE
You see, dear, at some point you just stopped trying. You stopped pursuing the things in your life that meant something to you.

NOELLE
What are you talking about?

CHARLIE
I'm not making any sense at all am I? I knew I should have read that part in the employee manual closer.

NOELLE
Employee? Are you trying to say you work here? I'm in charge of HR - I would know that.

CHARLIE
Oh, we're going to talk about your job, believe me. That's just one of the things you need help with.

NOELLE
Lorna. It was Lorna that sent you.

CHARLIE
Noelle, I'm here because something big is coming. And you can't miss it this time or it could be the last time.

NOELLE

What is it?

CHARLIE

That I can't tell you.

NOELLE

Why not?

CHARLIE

Employee manual. I remember that part. Bold letters.

NOELLE

Okay, then how are you going to help me if you can't tell me?

CHARLIE

Well, that's why I was climbing the shoe rack. You used to go shopping for shoes with your mother and then played dress up at home...

NOELLE

(shocked)

How did you know that?

CHARLIE

And when you put them on, you dreamed about... possibilities.

Charlie reaches down into the pile of shoes that fell off the rack and pulls out a pair. She holds them out to Noelle.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Put these on.

NOELLE

Why?

CHARLIE

Because you stopped having faith. It's like you know it's there but you never even consider it anymore.
(off her reticence)

Every pair tells a story. Don't you want to see what this one is?

Noelle looks at the shoes and then figures, what could it hurt? She takes them and sits down, taking off her shoes. She looks at the pair Charlie has given her.

NOELLE

I had a pair just like these.

CHARLIE

I know.

Noelle glances at her suspiciously but still puts on the shoes. She stands up.

NOELLE

Okay... I put on...

QUICK CUT TO:

31 **INT. NOELLE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK)** 31

Noelle's apartment is the same and yet different. A fully-decorated tree is in the corner and some of the furniture is different. Noelle is wearing a different outfit than what we just saw her in but is wearing the same shoes she just put on in the department store.

NOELLE

...the shoes. Now what happens...

Noelle trails off as she realizes she isn't in the shoe department anymore. She turns around in a full circle, stunned and confused. When she completes the revolution, Charlie is standing there, which only adds to the shock.

CHARLIE

Now, we visit Christmas past!

Charlie smiles broadly as Noelle gapes at her surroundings.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

32 INT. NOELLE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK) 32

We pick up right where we left off, in Noelle's festively decorated apartment on Christmas Eve, with Noelle gaping at Charlie.

NOELLE

What.... where...

CHARLIE

It's three years ago. Christmas Eve. Do you remember?

NOELLE

(notices the tree)

My tree... I haven't decorated my tree yet.

CHARLIE

That's a different tree. This is the one you had three years ago. Maybe this will help you remember.

The door opens and Lorna comes in carrying a grocery bag.

LORNA

Okay, I got wine and ice cream. I didn't know what kind of break-up comfort you'd need.

NOELLE

Lorna?

Lorna goes to the open kitchen and starts unpacking the bag as Noelle looks at Charlie.

CHARLIE

Don't worry. She can't see me.

LORNA

I can't believe Matt broke up with you on Christmas Eve. I mean, I can't believe he broke up with you at all, but on Christmas Eve? Who does that?

NOELLE

What's his face. You call Matt what's his face.

LORNA

Oh, that's good. Good idea. Never utter his name again. I like it.

Noelle looks at Charlie.

CHARLIE

Just go with it. You'll remember what happened.

LORNA

But it's going to be okay. You're better off without him.

NOELLE

You think so?

(to Charlie)

I said, you think so. I remember saying that.

LORNA

What?

NOELLE

Nothing. Never mind.

LORNA

He was holding you back. You're a much better photographer than he ever was.

Lorna nods toward a nearby table where there is a bunch of professional camera equipment. On the wall nearby are some of the framed photographs we saw earlier including the one of the woman by the Christmas tree. Lorna points to it.

LORNA (CONT'D)

That picture is incredible. Where did you take that?

NOELLE

At the tree lighting ceremony Downtown last year. I don't even know who she is, she just looks so... I don't know. Hopeful.

LORNA

You know what? I'm going to call my friend who owns that gallery. I bet he'd give you a show.

NOELLE

(hesitant - remembering)
I said...

(MORE)

NOELLE (CONT'D)

(to Lorna)

I don't need a show, I need a job.
I can't be Matt's assistant on
photo shoots anymore.

LORNA

You can go out on your own. I'll
call my friend right now.

NOELLE

No, Lorna, don't. I just can't.
Not yet.

LORNA

Well, then what are you going to do
to pay the rent?

NOELLE

Is the department store hiring? I
basically ran Matt's studio. I
hired all the models and the
support staff, I did payroll...

LORNA

There might be something in HR.
But you don't really want to do
that, do you?

NOELLE

It'll just be temporary. Let me
get my sea legs under me again.
(to herself)
Sea legs? Who says sea legs?

Lorna comes out of the kitchen with the wine and ice cream.

LORNA

Okay... as long as it's just
temporary.

Lorna passes by Noelle on her way to the couch.

CHARLIE

But it wasn't just temporary. It's
been three years and you're still
there. You never told her to call
that gallery owner. In fact, this
was the night you put away all your
camera equipment.

NOELLE

I... I don't understand. What is
the point of all this?

CHARLIE

To imagine the possibilities...

Charlie points at the kitchen and Noelle turns around.

33 **INT. NOELLE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK)** 33

Lorna comes out of the kitchen with the wine and ice cream.

LORNA

Okay... as long as it's just
temporary.

Noelle, shocked, looks at Charlie.

CHARLIE

How many times in your life do you
get a do-over?

Noelle looks at Charlie and Charlie gives her a smile of
encouragement. Noelle turns back to Lorna.

NOELLE

You know what? On second thought.
Go ahead and call your friend - the
gallery owner.

LORNA

Atta girl! Yay!

Lorna hugs Noelle and then releases her.

QUICK CUT TO:

34 **INT. ART GALLERY - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)** 34

A quick flash of Noelle at an art gallery. The picture of
the woman by the Christmas tree is on the wall with many
others. A crowd assembled is raising a toast to her as she
smiles broadly. Charlie stands off to the side, smiling.

QUICK CUT TO:

35 **INT. PHOTOGRAPHY STUDIO - DAY (FLASHBACK)** 35

Another quick flash of a professional photo shoot with Noelle
taking pictures of very handsome man wearing a Santa hat -
although we don't get a really good look at him at this
point. Charlie is nearby, watching with satisfaction.

QUICK CUT TO:

36 **EXT. STOREFRONT - DAY (FLASHBACK)** 36

One more quick flash - Noelle is standing in front of a storefront with an apartment above it and a "For Lease" sign on it. A woman hands Noelle a set of keys and shakes her hand as Noelle smiles and looks at the building. Charlie is again nearby, smiling.

QUICK CUT TO:

37 **INT. LOFT APARTMENT - DAY (FLASHBACK)** 37

Noelle is in an artistic and creative loft space, with big windows, a photography set-up in one corner (lights, a backdrop, etc.), comfortably stylish furnishings, and lots of photographs on the wall.

The apartment is fully decorated for Christmas with a big tree surrounded by presents, festive lights strung across the ceiling, lots of garland, a dancing Santa, and more.

Charlie is there and bumps into Noelle, as if she is dizzy.

CHARLIE

Oh, I'm sorry, dear. All this jumping around makes me a little dizzy. I haven't gotten the hang of this yet.

NOELLE

Where am I?

CHARLIE

Where you should be. About to celebrate Christmas in your home and photography studio.

NOELLE

My studio?

CHARLIE

Yes. You're one of the most sought after photographers in the city.

Noelle puts her hands up to her face and it's at that point she realizes she is wearing a wedding ring.

NOELLE

Is this... It that a wedding ring?

CHARLIE

(smiles)
It most certainly is.

The door to the loft opens and while we don't see the person coming in, we hear a man's voice saying...

MAN (O.S.)
Hi honey, I'm home!

Noelle turns toward the door and...

38 INT. SIMON'S DEPARTMENT STORE - SHOE DEPARTMENT - NIGHT 38

...suddenly Noelle and Charlie are back in the shoe department at Simon's where it all started. Noelle quickly takes off the shoes and backs away.

CHARLIE
Oh my! That was fun! Like a roller coaster. I miss roller coasters.

NOELLE
What just happened?

CHARLIE
Well, first I knocked over the shoe rack and then you were all, "who are you?" And I was all, "I'm here to help," and then...

NOELLE
I mean, how did you... what did you... I'm going to freak out now.

CHARLIE
That's totally understandable.

But before she can, there is a banging noise at the front of the store. Noelle holds out a hand to Charlie.

NOELLE
Don't move!

Noelle grabs her regular shoes, slips them on... carefully... tests them to make sure she's not going to slip into some alternate dimension, and then hurries toward the noise.

39 INT./EXT. SIMON'S DEPARTMENT STORE - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT 39

Noelle comes to the front door to see several firefighters outside as the snow continues to fall, attempting to get in.

NOELLE

Oh, thank goodness. I'm here! I'm
in here!

Outside, Teddy sees her.

TEDDY

Okay, just relax. We'll have this
open in a minute.

Peter pries open the door and the alarm starts going off.
They enter and Teddy goes to a nearby alarm panel.

TEDDY (CONT'D)

(loudly)

The manager gave me the alarm code.

Teddy punches in a code and the alarm shuts off.

TEDDY (CONT'D)

That's better. Are you all right?

NOELLE

I don't know. I'm not sure.
There's a woman back there...

TEDDY

We'll go find her...

NOELLE

She's in the shoe department. But
be careful! No matter what she
says, don't put on any shoes.

TEDDY

Okay...

Teddy waves to Peter and a couple of the guys and they head
off. That leaves Jake, who was hanging out near the back of
the pack, nowhere to hide. They recognize each other.

JAKE

Hey, 2G.

NOELLE

You're a fireman?

JAKE

I hope so. Otherwise I'd look
pretty silly in this get-up.

Jake waits for a laugh - doesn't get one.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Okay, not in a joking mood. Are you sure you're all right? You looked a little freaked out when we got here. Did something happen?

NOELLE

Oh, yes. Something definitely happened. There's this weird lady in the shoe department.

JAKE

Weird how?

NOELLE

It's... hard to explain.
(off his look)
Don't look at me like that. She's the weird one.

JAKE

Got it. I'll make a note.

Teddy comes back.

TEDDY

There was no one in the shoe department. The rest of the team is looking around but...

NOELLE

No... she was there. She had a big wacky hat. It had a bow on it and a flower.

TEDDY

I'm sorry, but so far we haven't found anyone in here but you.

Teddy shrugs. Noelle looks at Jake and then sees the way he is looking at her. She points at him, a challenge.

JAKE

(hands up)
Not the weird one. Got it.

Noelle huffs a bit and stalks off.

TEDDY

Do you know her?

JAKE

She's my new neighbor.

TEDDY

Good luck with that.

Teddy pats him on the shoulder and walks away, leaving Jake to wonder what he has gotten himself into.

40 EXT. NOELLE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT 40

Establishing shot of Noelle's building.

41 INT. NOELLE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 41

Noelle comes into her apartment and is a bit taken aback by how different it is from what we just saw, most notably the Christmas tree waiting to be decorated. She walks over to it and thinks for a moment.

NOELLE

Comfy pajamas, decorate the tree.
That will make everything okay.

She heads toward her bedroom.

42 INT. NOELLE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 42

Noelle, wearing comfy pajamas, is sitting in the living room, looking at the fully decorated tree. She looks a lot more relaxed. She shakes her head and laughs at herself. Everything is going to be okay.

43 EXT. NOELLE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY 43

A small group of young teenage boys is having a gentle snowball fight in front of the building as Jake walks up. One of the snowballs goes awry and splats harmlessly against his jacket.

The boys look at Jake, worried for a moment. He gives them a devilish smile.

JAKE

Okay, now you're in trouble.

He picks up some snow and joins in the fun, his goofy charm on full display until Noelle comes down the sidewalk toward her building carrying some wrapped Christmas presents.

Jake tosses a snowball gently and it hits Noelle by accident - she didn't see it coming and stops, giving Jake a look of "really?"

Jake looks at the boys.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Make a break for it. It's too late
for me.

The boys run off and Jake goes over to Noelle and starts to brush the snow off her coat.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Sorry about that.

NOELLE
No problem. Boys will be boys,
right?

Jake lets that one slide.

JAKE
How are you feeling today?

NOELLE
Better. Fine. I'm good.
(sighs)
I'm not weird.

JAKE
I didn't say you were.

NOELLE
You thought it. I thought it.

JAKE
You were locked inside of a big
store at night by yourself in the
middle of a snowstorm. That would
put anyone on edge.

NOELLE
(beat)
Thank you for that.

JAKE
You're welcome.

NOELLE
So, you're with the fire station
that's doing the Christmas gala,
right?

JAKE
Yes. Are you going?

NOELLE

Simon's is sponsoring it. I
volunteered to oversee it.

JAKE

(skeptical)
Really?

NOELLE

What? You don't think I can do it?

JAKE

I never said that.

NOELLE

For someone who doesn't say things
you sure do say a lot.
(off his confusion)
You know what I'm saying.

JAKE

All I'm saying is that the gala is
very important to the fire station.
It raises a lot of money for us.

NOELLE

I know. And I'll make sure it is a
huge success. In fact, I'm going
to call Captain Pearson right now.

Noelle puts the presents on the stoop, takes out her phone,
and fishes the business card out of her purse. She dials.

NOELLE (CONT'D)

(into phone)
Captain Pearson. Noelle Carpenter.
Good, thank you. I wanted to find
out when we can get together to
talk about the charity gala? Oh?
You're too busy to do it? Then who
am I going to be working with?

Noelle looks at Jake. His eyes get a little wide.

NOELLE (CONT'D)

No. I think I know how to reach
him. Thank you...

She hangs up the phone.

JAKE

(leery)
You know how to reach who?

NOELLE

Your captain just volunteered you.

JAKE

So... we're working together?

NOELLE

Looks like it. Isn't that...

JAKE

Weird?

She scowls at him, picks up her presents, and walks up the stairs to the building. He takes a moment and then follows.

44 INT. NOELLE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY - DAY 44

Noelle comes up the stairs into the hallway that leads to her apartment and is surprised to find Charlie standing next to her front door, a satisfied smile on her face.

CHARLIE

I think that went well, don't you?
I may be getting the hang of this
after all.

NOELLE

(shocked)

Where did you go last night?! I
thought... you know what? Don't
move!

Noelle puts down her things and hurries back down the stairs.

45 INT. NOELLE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - STAIRWELL - DAY 45

Noelle comes down the stairs as Jake is coming up. She takes his arm and pulls him up the stairs faster.

JAKE

What? Wait... Ow...

She doesn't let go.

46 INT. NOELLE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY - DAY 46

Noelle pulls Jake up into her floor's hallway and points toward her front door dramatically.

NOELLE

There!

Jake looks down the hall. It is empty.

JAKE
What am I looking at?

Noelle turns and sees that the hallway is empty. She looks around, looks up the stairs, maybe behind a potted plant. Jake watches all this with interest. Finally, she looks at a wreath hanging on one of the apartment doors.

NOELLE
(beat, covering)
I was thinking we could do something like this for the table centerpieces.

JAKE
(beat - nods)
Sure. That would work.

NOELLE
Great. Well... bye.

She collects her belongings and goes into her apartment as casually as she can muster.

47 INT. NOELLE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

47

Noelle comes into her apartment and shuts the door, leaning back against it, relieved that is over.

Charlie is sitting on the couch inside.

CHARLIE
That was awkward.

Noelle jumps and stares at Charlie, unable to believe she is there again.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

48 EXT. NOELLE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY 48

Establishing shot of Noelle's apartment building.

49 INT. NOELLE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY 49

Charlie is sitting calmly, a beatific smile on her face. Noelle is pacing - calmer but still unsettled.

NOELLE

How are you doing this? How can you just show up wherever and whenever you want?

CHARLIE

Well, I can't "show up" anywhere. Like in the middle of a Christmas parade. That would raise a few eyebrows.

NOELLE

You said nobody could see you.

CHARLIE

Oh, no, only when we take our little jaunts into your memories. I wasn't there when it originally happened, so I'm not there when you relive it. But I'm here now.

NOELLE

You're like... I mean, I could touch you?

CHARLIE

Of course!

Charlie gets up and goes over to Noelle who shies away at first but then reaches out to touch Charlie on the arm.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

See? I'm just as here as you are.

NOELLE

Except apparently you don't need a door to get in and out.

CHARLIE

One of the perks of the job.

NOELLE

I still don't understand *why* you're here.

CHARLIE

Because it's only two and a half weeks until Christmas and there is a lot of work to do.

NOELLE

What kind of work?

CHARLIE

Well, you can start by making sure you spend as much time as possible with that handsome fireman Jake working on the charity gala.

NOELLE

How did you... Did you make this happen? The two of us working together?

(Charlie just smiles)

Wait, is he the guy I'm married to? The "honey I'm home" guy?

CHARLIE

Now, don't go getting ahead of yourself. Thinking you know before you know you know is a good way of never knowing, you know?

NOELLE

(beat)

No. But regardless, I'm not looking for a romance right now.

CHARLIE

Who said anything about a romance? What you saw in that future was just one possibility. You have the power to change that by what you do or don't do and let's be honest, you haven't been doing much lately. Go live life! Have fun! Embrace the spirit of Christmas!

NOELLE

But all we're doing is planning a party. It's not all that exciting.

CHARLIE

We're talking about faith here,
Noelle. You've lost some of yours
and it's time to get it back.

Charlie pats her on the arm and goes to the door.

NOELLE

Great. Now she uses the door.

CHARLIE

Well, I could do it the other way
if you really want me to.

NOELLE

No! That's okay. The door is
fine. When will I see you again?

CHARLIE

When you need me.

Charlie smiles and leaves. Noelle sits down, flabbergasted.

50 EXT. FIRE STATION - DAY 50

Establishing shot of the fire station.

51 INT. FIRE STATION - DAY 51

Jake, Teddy, and Peter are working in the fire station,
rolling hoses and placing equipment on the trucks. Nearby
are boxes of decorations waiting for a tree.

JAKE

I have to meet her at the hotel to
look at a ballroom in an hour.

PETER

And she lives right downstairs?

JAKE

Yep. The phrase tread lightly
comes to mind.

TEDDY

I just don't understand how you got
volunteered to work with her.

JAKE

It was the captain's idea. He
thinks it'll look good on my resume
for the Deputy Chief job.

PETER

Well, she's pretty so there's that.

JAKE

Teddy! You're okay with your boyfriend saying that?

TEDDY

It's a valid point, especially when you haven't dated anyone in years.

JAKE

I have gone out on plenty of dates.

TEDDY

First dates. Maybe second. But you haven't had a serious romance since I've known you.

JAKE

Well... maybe when I get the new job I can work on that, too But for now, I'm concentrating on my career.

TEDDY

New apartment, new job, new attitude toward romance... who are you?

JAKE

I'm still me. I'm just trying to be a better version of me.

PETER

I just hope this version doesn't get so wrapped up in the cushy office job and nice apartment that he forgets how to have fun.

It's obvious that the comment resonates with Jake.

52 EXT. HOTEL - DAY

52

Establishing shot of a nice hotel in the city, which has plenty of Christmas decorations in front.

53 INT. HOTEL - BALLROOM - DAY

53

Noelle and Jake are checking out a hotel ballroom, currently empty, with EVELYN (50s, perma-smile) who is holding a clipboard and pointing as she talks.

The room is being cleared out from a previous party, which obviously was a Christmas spectacular with oversized decorations and lots of color.

EVELYN

We usually put the stage over there, the dance floor in front of it, and tables all around. The silent auction and the photo contest display can go over there.

JAKE

Photo contest?

NOELLE

"The Most Inspiring Photo of the Year." They're displaying the entrants at the gala and the photos will be in the silent auction. Whoever gets the highest bids wins.

JAKE

Nice.

Workers are removing a big, merry snowman - Jake laughs.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Looks like you had quite a party in here last night. We should use some of this.

NOELLE

I've been to the gala before. It's always elegant and refined, which is why Simon's wanted to be involved.

JAKE

Don't get me wrong, it's always... nice. It's just so... grown-up.

NOELLE

You want a kids' party? Dancing Santas and reindeer balloons? Maybe a snowball fight?

JAKE

(humoring her smile)
No, but we could have more...
(remember what Peter said)
... I don't know, more fun with it.
Let's lighten it up this year.

EVELYN

We have all sorts of whimsical decorations. We can do some festive lighting, special effects. We can even make it snow in here!

JAKE

Oh, now that would be fun.

NOELLE

The family that owns the store doesn't really do whimsy. I think it would be better if we just stick with what we know works. Simple. Classy. Grown-up.

JAKE

I'll make you a deal...

NOELLE

I didn't realize we were negotiating, but okay...

JAKE

Let's just take a look at what they can do and maybe we make some minor adjustments. Small things.

NOELLE

(beat)

Okay... but just small things.

Jake looks at the big snowman with a smile.

NOELLE (CONT'D)

Smaller than that.

Jake reins in the smile as they walk off with Evelyn.

54

EXT. HOTEL - DAY

54

Noelle and Jake are standing outside the hotel as they both look for a cab to no avail.

JAKE

Well... I think we're off to a good start on the gala.

NOELLE

We didn't agree on anything.

JAKE

That's not true. We agreed there should be a Christmas tree.

NOELLE

But we couldn't agree on how to decorate it.

JAKE

You have to start somewhere.
(looks around)
Why are there no cabs?

NOELLE

It's the holidays. Everyone is out running errands and shopping.

JAKE

We should complain to someone who works at a department store.

NOELLE

Can we tell your station that our building is on fire and ask them to stop by and pick us up on the way?

JAKE

The department has a tendency to frown on that.

NOELLE

(looks at phone)
I can't even get a signal to call for a car. This is the kind of thing I was just talking about with Charlie.

JAKE

(turns away from street)
Who?

NOELLE

I was just telling my... friend... that planning a Christmas gala is not as festive as it sounds.

JAKE

Hey! We agree on something!.
There is nothing jolly about all the work that has to get done.

NOELLE

It's like, the magic of Christmas? What's that?

JAKE

I know, right? Where is it?

As they stand there talking to each other a horse drawn carriage, completely done up for Christmas with garland, a wreath, lights, and more pulls up at the curb. Holding the reins steering the carriage is none other than Charlie, her trademark Christmas hat firmly in place.

CHARLIE

Merry Christmas! Do you folks need a ride?

Noelle's eyes go wide at the sight of her and she turns to Jake, wanting to say something but knowing she shouldn't. Jake, a bemused smile on his face, looks at the carriage then at Noelle.

JAKE

(shrugs)
Ho-ho-ho.

Jake helps Noelle into the carriage and she settles into her seat. While Jake is getting settled, Charlie turns to give Noelle a smile and a wink, then the carriage pulls away.

55

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY

55

Noelle and Jake are riding in the back of the horse-drawn carriage as it goes down a decorated street. It's a sweetly romantic moment that leaves both of these relative strangers in an uncomfortable silence for a moment. Charlie has her back to them so Jake never gets a close look at her.

JAKE

(to Noelle)
So... with a name like Noelle, you must go all out for Christmas.

NOELLE

We used to. All the family holiday trimmings. But these days I just go to my Dad's house. It's a pretty low-key day. You?

JAKE

My brother and I and his family go to my mom's place on Christmas morning. Presents, food, football.

NOELLE

In that order?

JAKE

Depends on who's playing. Later, Christmas day, all the families get together and have a big feast at the station.

NOELLE

Sounds nice.

JAKE

Yeah. We've been doing it since I was a kid with my dad.

NOELLE

He was a firefighter, too?

JAKE

Yeah. He was the captain at our station before Pearson. He was a legend there for a long time.

NOELLE

I'm sorry. I know what it's like to not have one of your parents around at the holidays. My mom passed away a few years ago...

JAKE

Hence the low-key Christmas. I'm sorry, too.

The two of them share a moment of connection over this. The carriage hits a bump, which knocks Noelle into Jake's arms.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Oh. Careful. Are you okay?

NOELLE

I'm fine.

CHARLIE

Sorry about that. We must have hit a pothole.

JAKE

Really?

Jake looks behind them and while he is distracted, Noelle looks at Charlie and mouths "stop it!" to her. Charlie simply smiles innocently and continues driving the carriage down the street.

56 EXT. NOELLE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

56

The horse drawn carriage pulls up to Noelle's building and Noelle and Jake climb out of it.

JAKE
(to Charlie)
Thank you.

CHARLIE
Anytime. Merry Christmas!

With a smile toward Noelle, Charlie hitches the reins and the carriage pulls away.

JAKE
I still don't understand why there weren't any cabs.

NOELLE
Yeah, it's a mystery.

JAKE
Listen, I'm going to go grab something to eat. Do you want to come with me? We can see if we can find something in common.
(off her look; quickly)
For the gala.

NOELLE
Right... for the gala.

There is another moment that passes between them - what if it wasn't just about the gala? But Noelle brushes it off.

NOELLE (CONT'D)
Thanks, but I brought home some work. I'll meet you at the hotel tomorrow like we planned.

JAKE
(beat)
Okay. See you then.

Jake walks off and Noelle turns to find an unhappy Charlie standing there. Noelle jumps a little, startled.

NOELLE
You really need to stop doing that.

CHARLIE
Why didn't you go with him?

NOELLE

What difference does it make?

CHARLIE

I told you - I can't tell you.

NOELLE

(shakes her head)

I can't have this conversation with you again. I have work to do.

Noelle goes inside the building leaving a frustrated Charlie.

57 INT. NOELLE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY - DAY 57

Noelle walks up to her apartment and finds a shopping bag on the doorstep. She picks it up, curious, and goes inside.

58 INT. NOELLE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY 58

Noelle comes into the apartment, sets down her purse, and takes off her coat, then reaches into the shopping bag to pull out a boot-size shoe box. She opens it and finds a very nice pair of dressy boots - she smiles.

NOELLE

Lorna!

Impressed, she sits down and tries them on. As soon as she gets the second one zipped up, she stands and...

59 INT. SIMON'S DEPARTMENT STORE - MAIN FLOOR - DAY (FLASHBACK)⁹

...she is now standing in the department store near the front entrance. The store is busy with shoppers bustling about trying to get their last minute Christmas shopping done. Noelle is wearing a different outfit but the same boots.

NOELLE

What...

(realizes)

Not again!

On Noelle's stunned look, we fade to black.

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

60 INT. SIMON'S DEPARTMENT STORE - MAIN FLOOR - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Noelle is still standing near the front door of the department store, clearly shocked. Charlie steps up to her.

CHARLIE

Oh, I just love the hustle and bustle of everyone doing their last minute shopping.

NOELLE

You! You tricked me. You ambushed me with footwear!

CHARLIE

I'm sorry about that. But I needed to bring you to the Christmas past again... To a moment where you didn't fight for what you really needed and missed a chance that could have changed everything. It's Christmas Eve, two years ago.

NOELLE

I knew these boots looked familiar! I should've known Lorna wouldn't get me the exact same pair.

CHARLIE

They're very cute.

NOELLE

They are, aren't they? I usually wore them with a nice skirt, but they work with pants, too.

(beat - realizes)

That's not the point! What are we doing here?

CHARLIE

Talking to your father.

Charlie gestures grandly toward the front of the store but the person who enters is not Noelle's father. Charlie lowers her hand.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

I was sure this was the right place. I'm so bad at directions. Do you have one of those map things on your phone?

Gary comes in the front door, not seeing Noelle at first.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Oh, thank goodness.

NOELLE
I remember this. I didn't know he was coming to the store.

CHARLIE
Go with it. It'll all come back.

Gary looks up, surprised to see her.

GARY
Noelle. What are you doing here?

NOELLE
I work here. Why are you here?

GARY
I forgot to get your Aunt June a Christmas present.

NOELLE
Why didn't you call me? We could've gone to eat or something.

GARY
I didn't want to bother you. Besides, we're eating tomorrow. Christmas dinner?

NOELLE
But that doesn't mean we...
(losing battle)
Well, do you want help picking out something for Aunt June?

GARY
You're working. I'm just going to grab a scarf or something. I'll be in and out in five minutes. I'll see you tomorrow, okay, sweetheart?

He gives her a peck on the cheek and heads into the store. Charlie steps over to Noelle again.

CHARLIE
You should have gone with him.

NOELLE
He didn't want my help.

CHARLIE

You should have insisted. You missed the chance to have a better relationship with your father.

NOELLE

By helping him shop?

CHARLIE

(gently)

How many real conversations have you had with him since your mother passed away?

(beat)

Or do you just not want to bother each other?

NOELLE

(beat)

Our relationship is fine.

CHARLIE

Noelle, he's your father. Things should be better than just fine. It's not too late - you could still catch him.

Noelle looks at her father walking away and thinks about it for a moment but then shakes her head.

NOELLE

No. This is...

She reaches down to start unzipping the boots...

61 INT. NOELLE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

61

...and as she kicks them off she is in her apartment again.

NOELLE

...silly. I don't need to...

She realizes that she is back in her apartment and sits down, staring at the boots warily. She gets up and walks away, assiduously avoiding touching them.

62 EXT. SIMON'S DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY

62

Establishing shot of Simon's Department store.

63 INT. SIMON'S DEPARTMENT STORE - STORAGE ROOM - DAY 63

Noelle is back looking for the file but obviously not having any luck. Lorna enters.

LORNA
You still haven't found that file?
Okay, you need a break.

NOELLE
What kind of break?

LORNA
One involving a little Christmas
retail therapy.

Lorna grabs Noelle's arm and leads her toward the door.

64 INT. CHRISTMAS MARKET - DAY 64

A big room (ballroom, auditorium, event space, etc.) has been converted to a colorful Christmas market with stalls of decorations, food, crafts, and much more. Cute, light-up whimsical street signs point the way down the various aisles.

65 INT. CHRISTMAS MARKET - CRAFT BOOTH - DAY 65

Jake, Teddy, and Peter are looking at crafts in a booth. Jake holds up a colorful Christmas decoration.

JAKE
Do you think my mom would like
this?

TEDDY
I've seen your mom's Christmas
tree. There isn't room for anymore
decorations.

JAKE
Trust me. She'll make room. She
takes a go big or go home approach
to Christmas. Maybe I should have
her talk to Noelle.

PETER
What's wrong now?

JAKE
The gala is only two weeks away and
Noelle has vetoed almost every
suggestion I've made.

TEDDY

Like what?

JAKE

I want to make it more lighthearted with fun food and decorations. A big snowman, giant candy canes, that sort of thing.

PETER

Does that "better version" of you that you were talking about approve of being lighthearted?

JAKE

I can be a better version and still have fun.

TEDDY

Well, they are paying for it and making a big donation so...

PETER

We could get the giant candy canes for the station's party.

TEDDY

(to Peter)

Don't encourage him.

(to Jake)

Are you inviting her to our station party the night before the gala?

JAKE

Why would I? That's for the crew.

PETER

You're allowed to bring a date.

JAKE

I'm not interested in dating her.

(beat)

Besides, she wouldn't come anyway.

TEDDY

You never know until you ask.

JAKE

I don't think it's a good idea.

TEDDY

What do you need? A sign?

JAKE

Yes, that would be nice.

Jake, Teddy, and Peter go back to handing out flyers.

66

INT. CHRISTMAS MARKET - AISLE - DAY

66

Noelle and Lorna are walking through the same market, enjoying the surroundings and chatting.

LORNA

Maybe you'll find something
"inspiring" here? Hint, hint.

NOELLE

Lorna, I'm not entering the photo
contest. I don't have time, not
when I'm planning a charity gala
with someone like Jake. He wants a
big snowman and giant candy canes.

Alex and Helen choose that exact moment to wander by.

HELEN

(aghast)
He wants what?

NOELLE

Oh, Mrs. Prather. Alex. Hi...

HELEN

Noelle, you know that Simon's
doesn't do that sort of event.

ALEX

Yes. Our family has never been a
big fan of... what do you call it?

LORNA

I think it sounds fun.

ALEX

Right, that's it. Fun. Not a fan.

NOELLE

I promise, we will have an
appropriate, tasteful event.

HELEN

Good. If you have any problems
with your liaison at the station,
just let me know.

(MORE)

HELEN (CONT'D)

All I have to do is make a phone call and they'll assign someone else.

NOELLE

I have it under control.

HELEN

Very well. Alex?

Helen walks off and Alex looks at Noelle beseechingly.

NOELLE

(sotto voce)

Sorry.

Alex nods and shrugs as he hurries after his mother.

LORNA

Well, I guess that pretty much does it for the big snowman and giant candy canes.

NOELLE

Yeah. If he wants all that he can have it as the station's party.

LORNA

Are you going?

NOELLE

No. I mean, he hasn't invited me.

LORNA

Do you want him to invite you?

NOELLE

(yes)

No...

LORNA

Well, if he does ask you, consider it a sign that you've been spending too much time in Simon's basement.

Noelle and Lorna have reached a crossroads at the market under light-up signs that read UNDER THE MISTLETOE LANE and REINDEER WAY.

LORNA (CONT'D)

Which way?

67 INT. CHRISTMAS MARKET - CRAFT BOOTH - DAY

67

Near the craft booth where Jake, Teddy, and Peter are located, Charlie is looking down the path where we see Noelle and Lorna looking at the signs - if they turn left they'll run into Jake. Charlie smiles, then steps out into the path.

As Noelle and Lorna look at their options, some of the letters on the light-up street sign go out (but they don't notice). Now it says TOE on top and DEER on the bottom.

Charlie looks at it and realizes it isn't right. A look of consternation crosses her face.

Now the sign says DERT on top and DAY on the bottom.

Back to Charlie, frustrated, she stamps her foot.

Now the sign says THIS on top and WAY on the bottom.

Back to Charlie. She smiles... but then realizes it is too late. Noelle and Lorna have gone the other way. Charlie is more than a bit vexed that her plan didn't work.

68 EXT. HOTEL - DAY

68

Establishing shot of the hotel hosting the event.

69 INT. HOTEL - HALLWAY - DAY

69

Evelyn leads Noelle and Jake up to a door marked "EVENT DECOR" in a backstage area of the hotel.

EVELYN

This is where we keep all of our decorations and lighting and special effects equipment.

(hands them stickers)

If you see something you like, just put a sticker on it and we'll hold it for you.

(opens door)

Take your time. I'll be back.

Noelle and Jake go inside and Evelyn walks off down the hall.

70 INT. HOTEL - EVENT DECOR ROOM - DAY

70

The large room is filled to the brim with Christmas props, from the aforementioned giant candy canes to oversized presents to plastic reindeer and more.

JAKE

Okay, I want all of this.

NOELLE

(shakes her head)

Jake, I'm sorry, but Simon's is...

JAKE

Traditional. Classy.

NOELLE

Is something wrong with that?

JAKE

No, but I think we can have some more fun with it.

NOELLE

Is that all that's important to you? Having fun?

JAKE

No. You may be okay with not having any fun but I'm not.

NOELLE

I have fun.

JAKE

You're the quietest neighbor I've ever had. Don't you ever listen to music or sing in the shower or yell at the TV? You really need to learn to live a little.

NOELLE

The fact that I don't sing in the shower or want inflatable reindeer at a tasteful Christmas gala somehow means that I don't live my life?

JAKE

It's symbolic. What was the last big risk you took?

NOELLE

I put on a pair of shoes.
(off his look)
Never mind. Look, not everyone is
able to run into burning buildings.

JAKE

That's not risky.
(off her skepticism)
I mean, of course it is, but we
have training and safety gear and
we never go in without a plan.

NOELLE

So what's your idea of risky?

JAKE

Well... I'm being considered for a
big job in the fire department.
Taking it would be a risk.

NOELLE

Why?

JAKE

Because it's stepping out of my
father's shadow. This is the first
time I'm asking people to take me
seriously.

NOELLE

So, which is it? You want to be
taken seriously or you want to have
fun?

JAKE

Can't you have both?

Jake dismisses the conversation and turns to see a cabinet
built into the wall. He opens the door and finds a big red
switch - a sign next to it says "TRAINED PERSONNEL ONLY."

JAKE (CONT'D)

Hmmm. What do you think this does?

NOELLE

It says trained personnel only.

JAKE

I'm trained.

NOELLE

A lot of big red switches in fire
fighting?

JAKE

Oh, come on... Live a little.

NOELLE

Jake, don't...

JAKE

I'm doing it.

He flips the switch and the lighting in the room changes. The regular ceiling lights go out and all of the Christmas lights come on - multicolored twinkle lights, festive theatrical lights that cast images of snowflakes and Christmas trees and reindeer on the walls and ceiling. Artificial snow machines start pumping flakes into the room, falling lazily as Noelle and Jake look at it all, amazed and delighted. Then Noelle catches a glimpse of Charlie peeking in the door, smiling.

Noelle smiles back and then she and Jake share a moment as they watch the snow fall. It's nothing short of magical and they are entranced by it.

NOELLE

Wow.

JAKE

You said it.

As Noelle looks around in wide-eyed wonder, Jake glances at her and something about the moment and the look of awe on her face makes him smile.

71 INT. HOTEL - HALLWAY - DAY

71

Noelle and Jake come out of the room just as Evelyn arrives.

EVELYN

Did you see anything you liked?

JAKE

(to Noelle)

We're going to add some of the lights and the snow machine, right?

NOELLE

I think as long as we stay away from the giant candy canes, we can make that work.

JAKE

(smiles)

I'm so glad I flipped that switch.

NOELLE

You know what? I am too.

Noelle and Jake look at each other and smile, the connection really starting to percolate now. They walk away and Evelyn looks in the room.

EVELYN

What switch?

She shrugs and closes the door, then follows Noelle and Jake. Behind her, Charlie steps out into the hall, smiling.

72 EXT. NOELLE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT 72

Establishing shot of Noelle's building.

73 INT. NOELLE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 73

Noelle is sitting on a chair staring at the boots, still on the floor where she left them. She considers for a moment.

NOELLE

Live a little...

Carefully, nervously, she puts the boots on. Nothing happens so she stands up, looks at the boots, stomps her foot on the floor... nothing. Just when she is ready to give up...

74 INT. SIMON'S DEPARTMENT STORE - MAIN FLOOR - DAY (FLASHBACK)4

...she is standing near the store entrance again, her father walking away into the store. She tries to decide what to do.

END ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

75 **EXT. SIMON'S DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY (FLASHBACK)** 75

Establishing shot of Simon's.

76 **INT. SIMON'S DEPARTMENT STORE - MAIN FLOOR - DAY (FLASHBACK)**6

Picking up where we left off, Noelle watches her father walking away, takes a breath...

NOELLE

Dad? Wait up!

She chases after him.

77 **INT. SIMON'S DEPARTMENT STORE - RESTAURANT - DAY (FLASHBACK)**7

Noelle and Gary are sitting at a table in the department store's restaurant, sipping from cups of hot cocoa and snacking on Christmas cookies. A small, merrily decorated present sits between them.

GARY

You really didn't need to take all this time.

NOELLE

It's okay, Dad. I wanted to. We should do it more often.

(beat)

Why don't we?

GARY

(beat)

Your mother was always the talker in the family, you know that. Since she passed... I guess you and I just haven't quite figured out how to fill the places where she used to be.

(change of subject)

You really think your Aunt June will like that?

NOELLE

It's her favorite perfume. She wears it on special occasions.

GARY

How do you do know that? She lives on the other side of the country.

NOELLE

Because this is what mom got her every year.

GARY

Yes, your mother was always much better at things like Christmas presents than I was.

NOELLE

(laughs)

Do you remember that one year when mom was busy putting together a Christmas pageant and she delegated the gift-buying to you?

GARY

(smiles)

I still say a savings bond was a very practical present.

NOELLE

I was six!

They share a laugh. It fades and they have a nice moment.

NOELLE (CONT'D)

(beat)

We should do this more often.

GARY

(smiles)

I agree.

He reaches out and takes her hand. As she does, there are a series of quick cut scenes that flash by.

78 **INT. GARY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK)** 78

The remains of a large meal are visible on the table in the background while Noelle and Gary watch a football game on TV together and cheer at what has just happened.

79 **INT. NOELLE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK)** 79

Noelle and Gary are engaged in an animated discussion in front of the closet door. Noelle shakes her head but Gary is insistent.

He opens the door, reaches in, and pulls out a box marked CAMERA EQUIPMENT. He puts it on a nearby table and opens it. He pulls out her camera and hands it to her.

80 **INT. PHOTOGRAPHY STUDIO - DAY (FLASHBACK)**

80

Another quick flash of the professional photo shoot we saw earlier with Noelle taking pictures of the very handsome man in the Santa hat - this is WILL (30s, charming, great smile).

This time we see Gary off to the side, beaming with pride as he watches. Gary steps over to the man and extends his hand.

GARY

Hi, I'm Noelle's father.

WILL

Hi. I'm Will.

(looks at Noelle - smiles)

Your daughter is a great photographer.

GARY

Yes, she is.

Noelle smiles at both of them, but especially Will.

81 **INT. LOFT APARTMENT - DAY (FLASHBACK)**

81

Noelle is back in the nice, Christmas-decorated, loft-style apartment we saw earlier. Charlie is standing next to her.

NOELLE

Wait... what happened?

CHARLIE

You and your father started opening up more, sharing, talking. He encouraged you to get back into photography and...

Charlie indicates the apartment to say that it went well after that.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

But that's not really the point.

NOELLE

It's not?

CHARLIE

No. This is.

Charlie shows Noelle other framed photographs on a credenza - candid ones of her and her father and of her with Lorna, all having fun, smiling, laughing, and happy.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Your father, your friends... you have good relationships with them, but you keep them at a distance.

NOELLE

I do not.

CHARLIE

Have you told anyone about what's his face getting engaged? Have you told anyone how that made you feel?

Noelle doesn't reply but the answer is obvious.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

That simple act of having cocoa with your father on Christmas Eve and really connecting with him again, helped you open up to your family, to your friends... to love.

Noelle looks down at her finger. The wedding ring is there.

The door to the loft opens and once again we don't see the person coming in, but we hear a man's voice saying...

MAN (O.S.)

Hi honey, I'm home!

Noelle turns toward the door and...

82 INT. NOELLE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

82

...in the blink of an eye, Noelle is back in her regular apartment.

NOELLE

Wait! No... who's coming in the door? Charlie?! Charlie!

Noelle sighs and sits in frustration. She takes off the boots and thinks for a moment. She smiles and goes to get her phone, dials, and waits for an answer.

NOELLE (CONT'D)

Hi, Dad. Nothing is wrong! I promise. I was wondering if... do you want to go get some hot cocoa?

She smiles.

83 EXT. FIRE STATION - DAY 83

Establishing shot of a fire station in the city.

84 INT. FIRE STATION - DAY 84

Jake and Teddy are putting a wreath on the front of a truck. They work in silence for a moment until Jake gets up the gumption to ask a question.

JAKE

Why don't you want me to get the Deputy Chief job?

TEDDY

(beat)

Is the wreath crooked? It looks crooked.

JAKE

Changing the subject doesn't work with me, either.

TEDDY

(beat)

I never said I didn't want you to get it. I just don't quite get why you want it. You love being a firefighter, Jake.

JAKE

Of course I do, but how far is that going to take me?

TEDDY

You could be captain someday. That keeps you on the front lines instead of sitting in an office.

JAKE

My father was the captain.

TEDDY

So?

JAKE

So... I want to do my own thing.

TEDDY

Even if it's not what you really
want to do?

Jake considers that for a moment.

TEDDY (CONT'D)

Look, I think it's great that you
want to forge your own path, but
maybe you should take some smaller
steps in that direction first.

JAKE

How?

TEDDY

Do you have a date for the gala?

She straightens the wreath and walks away, leaving Jake to
contemplate that notion.

85 EXT. HOTEL - DAY 85

Establishing shot of the hotel.

86 INT. HOTEL - BALLROOM - DAY 86

Noelle and Jake are standing in the ballroom where several
tables have been set up. Evelyn is nearby.

EVELYN

I hope you came hungry because our
chef has some yummy things for you
to taste. The kitchen staff should
be ready any minute so I'll leave
you to it.

Evelyn leaves Noelle and Jake alone.

JAKE

(awkward pause)
So... are you bringing anyone to
the gala?

NOELLE

(smiles)
As a matter of fact I am.

Jake looks a little disappointed.

NOELLE (CONT'D)

My dad. We're going to try to mix things up a little this Christmas.

JAKE

That's great. Probably better than going with your... boyfriend?

NOELLE

Oh, I'm not seeing anyone. And if I don't get off of Instagram I may never see anyone again.

He looks at her, confused, and she considers for a moment... this is exactly the kind of thing that Charlie was trying to teach her about.

NOELLE (CONT'D)

It's... My ex-boyfriend just got engaged. It's been three years since we broke up so I really shouldn't be bothered by it.

JAKE

I don't think there's a statute of limitations on things like that.

NOELLE

(beat - carefully)

What about you? Are you bringing anyone to the gala?

JAKE

I don't think so.

He looks at her and they share a moment.

JAKE (CONT'D)

I mean... maybe.

The moment leaves them unsettled and Noelle looks around.

NOELLE

I wonder what's keeping the chef?

JAKE

(heading for kitchen)

Let's go find out.

She follows him.

87 INT. HOTEL - KITCHEN - DAY

87

Noelle and Jake come into the big industrial kitchen. There is a person in a chef's outfit (white smock, white hat, etc.) reaching into the refrigerator, back to us.

JAKE

Excuse me? We're supposed to be getting a menu tasting for an event we're doing.

The person turns around with a big smile - it's Charlie. She has eggs and milk in her hands.

CHARLIE

Oh, wonderful! I have something very special planned.

Noelle gasps but manages to get her composure back quickly.

NOELLE

Really? Something special?

CHARLIE

Yes, very special. We're going to make Christmas cookies!

JAKE

"We" are?

CHARLIE

They taste so much better when you make them yourself, with love.

Noelle winces a little at the double meaning of that comment.

NOELLE

(forcefully)

What about the tasting? We need to finalize the menu.

CHARLIE

Oh, we'll get to that. First things first. Cookies!

Jake looks at Charlie, unable to quite connect the dots since she was dressed much differently when she was driving the carriage.

JAKE

Sounds fun. You look familiar. Have we met before?

CHARLIE
No, I don't think so. Well, should
we get started?

Charlie looks at Noelle and Jake expectantly.

JAKE
(to Noelle)
I'm game if you are.

NOELLE
(still thrown)
Sure. Why not?

CHARLIE
Okay, then put on your aprons. We
have work to do!

Jake goes to grab a couple of aprons from a nearby hook and Noelle takes the opportunity to do a silent, glaring, "What are you doing here?" kind of look/gesture at Charlie. Charlie just smiles and encourages her with a thumbs up.

88 INT. HOTEL - KITCHEN - LATER

88

Upbeat Christmas music is playing and Noelle and Jake are wearing aprons, up to their elbows in Christmas cookie makings. Charlie is "working" nearby but sneaking peeks when she can.

JAKE
So what's it's like doing HR at a
department store?

NOELLE
I like it.
(for Charlie's benefit)
I get to know all of the employees
so we're all a tight knit bunch.____
Like a big family. A close, happy
family.

JAKE
How did you get into it?

NOELLE
A friend of mine, Lorna, helped me
get the job. She does the window
displays. She did the Christmas
shoe tree one this year.

JAKE
Shoes. I don't get shoes.

NOELLE

What do you mean you don't get them?

JAKE

The fascination with them. I mean, they're just things to keep your feet warm aren't they?

NOELLE

No! A really good pair of shoes can change your life.

CHARLIE

I'll second that.

Noelle glances over at Charlie as if to say "stay out of this." Charlie nods and goes back to work.

JAKE

Change your life, how?

NOELLE

Every pair of shoes has a story.
Every pair creates a memory.
(glances at Charlie)
Sometimes all you have to do is put them on and you remember where you were and what you were doing when you wore them. And you think about... what might happen the next time you do. You think about...
(glances at Charlie)
...about the possibilities.

JAKE

(beat - genuine)
You know what?

Noelle looks at him hopefully.

JAKE (CONT'D)

I still think they're just things to keep your feet warm.

Noelle laughs and tosses some cookie dough flour at him. They laugh.

Charlie stands back and watches, pleased with herself.

END ACT FIVE

ACT SIX

89 OMITTED 89

90 OMITTED 90

91 EXT. FIRE STATION - NIGHT 91

Noelle and Jake walk up to the fire station.

JAKE

Thanks for walking with me to work.

NOELLE

No problem. It's on the way home... and it gave us a chance to argue about dressing the band up like Santa and his elves.

JAKE

There's a sentence I bet you never thought you'd say.

NOELLE

That's been happening a lot.

They get to the front entrance of the station. He starts to open the door but then stops and turns back to her.

JAKE

So listen... the station is having its Christmas party next week. The night before the gala.

NOELLE

You mentioned that.

JAKE

And I was wondering if maybe you'd like to come?

Before she has a chance to say anything, Charlie walks toward them - Noelle can see her but she is behind Jake. Charlie nods and gives a thumbs up to Noelle and keeps walking.

NOELLE

(tries not to laugh)
I'd love to come to the party.

JAKE

(smiles)

Yeah? That's great. Well, I need to get inside. We drew straws to see who would set up the Christmas tree this year.

NOELLE

And you lost?

JAKE

No, I won. Everyone else has to do equipment checks.

NOELLE

Well... if you need help...

Jake looks at her and smiles.

92

INT. FIRE STATION - NIGHT

92

Christmas tunes play in the background as Noelle and Jake are working on decorating a Balsam Hill Christmas tree (we see the box in the background). Other firefighters are working on equipment in the background but Teddy and Peter are watching Noelle and Jake.

PETER

Is it fair that he got a civilian to help him with the tree?

TEDDY

I did it last year all by myself.

JAKE

(smiling)

Don't you have hoses to check?

Peter and Teddy smile, shake their heads, and walk away.

Noelle pulls an ornament out of a box - a fire truck.

NOELLE

I'm sensing a theme.

JAKE

That was a present from my brother.

I got him a stethoscope ornament.

(off her look)

Doctor.

NOELLE

Firefighters and a doctor. Heroic family.

JAKE

(smiles)

It's the family business. We all have capes.

NOELLE

Did you always want to be a firefighter?

JAKE

I did. I used to come here when I was a kid and play on the trucks. I had my own little helmet with my name on it.

NOELLE

That's sweet.

JAKE

What about you? What was your big dream job?

NOELLE

I wanted to be a photographer. I was for awhile.

JAKE

Why did you give it up?

NOELLE

(beat)

Remember the ex that just got engaged? He was a photographer. I worked with him at his studio. When we broke up... I put the camera away. Big dreams are elusive.

(beat)

Is that new job - what was it? Deputy Chief? Is that your big dream now?

JAKE

(convincing himself?)

It is.

(beat)

I mean, I think it is. But I have to admit...

(looks around)

I can't imagine leaving this place.

NOELLE

These people are your family.

They regard each other for a moment, smiling.

NOELLE (CONT'D)

Well... it is almost Christmas.
That's a time when elusive big
dreams come true.

Jake smiles at Noelle and the two of them have another moment with each other.

JAKE

Hey... I have an idea. I'll be
right back.

Jake runs off while Noelle finishes putting the last few decorations on the tree, taking a moment to appreciate how beautiful it is.

Jake comes back with a camera. He holds it out to her and she looks at him, quizzically.

JAKE (CONT'D)

I borrowed it from one of the guys.
I was thinking maybe it would be
nice if we got some pictures of the
family around the Christmas tree.

Noelle smiles and takes the camera.

NOELLE

I can do that.

JAKE

(smiles - calls out)
Hey, everybody. We're ready to
light it up.

As the firefighters all head toward the tree, Noelle starts taking pictures and we see the moments through snapshots. The crew gathering... Jake plugging in the tree... the lights coming on as people cheer... the crew shaking hands and hugging...

Noelle looks at Jake, seeing how happy he is to be with his family. He looks at her and they share another smile.

Noelle and Lorna are in line at a sidewalk coffee cart. Noelle is scrolling through photos on her phone.

LORNA

What are you looking at?

NOELLE

I took some pictures at the fire station last night when they decorated their tree.

LORNA

You took pictures?!

(off Noelle's nod)

Does this mean you're entering the contest?

NOELLE

No. I mean, I don't think so.

LORNA

I'll take that as progress. Is this because of the handsome firefighter?

NOELLE

No. I mean, not entirely.

LORNA

Then what?

Noelle pauses, considering.

NOELLE

Okay, I'm going to tell you something and all I ask is that you find a nice pair of shoes to go with my straightjacket.

Lorna is intrigued.

94

EXT. SIMON'S DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY

94

Noelle and Lorna approach the department store.

LORNA

And all of this started with shoes?

NOELLE

I know. Irony, huh?

LORNA

Well... it's quite a story. You think she's... what? Your guardian angel?

NOELLE

You don't believe me.

LORNA

Noelle, you have to admit, it's pretty... out there.

NOELLE

Trust me, I know.

Disappointed, Noelle stands there for a moment, unsure what to say. Lorna looks at her and puts her around Noelle.

LORNA

I've known you for a long time and you are the most reasonable, down to earth person I have ever met. You don't engage in flights of fancy or get carried away with your imagination.

NOELLE

You're making me sound boring.

LORNA

Well...

NOELLE

Hey!

LORNA

No, look, in this case it's a good thing. You're not the kind of person who would make up something like this.

NOELLE

Thank you. Of course the question now is what do I do about it?

LORNA

Well, if it were me, I'd demand answers. Why is she here? Is Jake the mystery husband walking into the apartment? And what about the other guy at the photo shoot? Will?

NOELLE

What if she won't tell me?

LORNA

Then I'd get used to the shoes
you're wearing because until you
know the truth I wouldn't put on
another pair if I was you.

NOELLE

Yeah, that's not an option.

LORNA

Then you know what you have to do.

Lorna gives Noelle a quick hug and then leaves.

95

INT. SIMON'S DEPARTMENT STORE - STORAGE ROOM - DAY

95

Noelle is back on the file hunt. She shuts a drawer,
frustrated, and turns around to find Charlie standing there.
Noelle barely reacts this time.

CHARLIE

Hey, you didn't jump. You're
getting used to me.

NOELLE

I'm actually glad to see you. We
need to talk.

Charlie reaches over to a shelf and pulls down a pair of
shoes, holding them out to Noelle.

CHARLIE

Of course. But first, it's time
for another trip down memory lane.

NOELLE

(backs away)
No. Not until I get some answers.

CHARLIE

Oh, Noelle. What happened to
having faith? Believing?

NOELLE

I believe. I mean, I think I do.
But that's not the point. Before I
take anymore leaps, I want to make
sure the ground is going to be
there when I land.

Noelle heads for the door and Charlie follows.

CHARLIE

Then that's not a leap of faith at all, is it? Listen, I'm new to this but I think it's been going pretty well so far, don't you?

Noelle exits the storage room.

96

INT. SIMON'S DEPARTMENT STORE - MAIN FLOOR - DAY

96

Noelle comes onto the main floor of the department store carrying on her conversation, not realizing that Charlie isn't there at first.

NOELLE

I don't know how it's going. I just think that it's time that I...

Alex and Helen round a corner and see her.

ALEX

Noelle. We were looking for you. Who are you talking to?

Noelle looks around and realizes Charlie isn't there.

NOELLE

Uh... I was... Mrs. Prather, that's a lovely jacket.

HELEN

(raised eyebrow)

Thank you. But we need to talk. I spoke to Evelyn Moore at the hotel. She mentioned something about using a snow machine at the gala?

NOELLE

Oh, well, we were just looking at options. Jake was...

HELEN

Jake. As I suspected. This is the same man who wanted the snowman and candy canes, yes?

NOELLE

Yes, but we're not doing that...

HELEN

Still, it's obvious he doesn't share our vision for what the gala should be.

NOELLE

Well, it is for the fire station.

HELEN

But we're paying for it and it must fit with our brand, right Alex?

ALEX

(reluctant)

Right. We think it's time we made some changes.

NOELLE

Are you taking me off the project?

HELEN

No. We're taking this Jake person off the project. I'm calling Captain Pearson today to ask for a new liaison.

NOELLE

No! Please don't do that.

HELEN

The decision has been made.

Helen starts to walk away but Noelle stops her.

NOELLE

Wait. Please... let me tell Jake. I'll ask him to step aside. It'll be better for everyone that way.

HELEN

Fine.

Helen turns and leaves. Alex mouths a silent "I'm sorry" to Noelle and then follows his mother, shutting the door behind them. Noelle turns around and Charlie is standing there, obviously concerned.

NOELLE

Still think it's going pretty well?

Noelle turns and walks away, leaving Charlie behind to consider what she has done.

END ACT SIX

ACT SEVEN

97 EXT. GARY'S HOUSE - DAY 97

Establishing shot of Gary's house.

98 INT. GARY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY 98

Gary is cooking while Noelle sits at the kitchen table.

GARY

What am I supposed to wear to this big charity gala of yours? Do I need to get a tux?

NOELLE

No. A suit and tie is fine.

GARY

(kidding)

I have to wear a tie?

Noelle manages a weak smile on that.

GARY (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

NOELLE

Nothing.

Gary looks at her for a moment and then nods, turning back to the cooking. Noelle realizes she is falling into her same patterns and decides to change it.

NOELLE (CONT'D)

Let me ask you a question. How did you deliver bad news to Mom?

GARY

The same way I delivered bad news to you.

NOELLE

With milk and cookies?

GARY

No.

(thinks)

Well, sometimes.

(MORE)

GARY (CONT'D)

I remember one Christmas Eve, you were probably twelve or so, I had to tell your mother that I had forgotten to get you one of the presents you really wanted. I don't remember what it was.

NOELLE

I remember this. It was furry pair of boots that all the other girls in my class had.

GARY

That's it. Well, I was supposed to pick them up and forgot so I had to tell your mom that you were going to get up on Christmas morning and not have those boots. I needed milk and cookies for that one.

NOELLE

For both mom and me!

GARY

Sometimes bad news needs a little bit of sugar coating.

NOELLE

(smiles)
Thanks, Dad.

Gary goes back to cooking while Noelle thinks on what to do.

99

EXT. FIRE STATION - DAY

99

Jake is outside the fire station putting equipment on the truck when Noelle walks up with a plate of Christmas cookies.

JAKE

(surprised)
Hi. What are you doing here?

NOELLE

(forces a smile)
I uh... I brought you cookies.

JAKE

(takes the cookies)
Really? That's nice. Thank you.
Do you want to come inside?

NOELLE

No, I... I wanted to talk to you.

JAKE

About what?

NOELLE

The gala.

JAKE

Oh, good. I wanted to talk to you, too. I mean, really, I just wanted to say thank you.

NOELLE

For what?

JAKE

Planning the gala is this big responsibility, but you let me put my own stamp on it. I think that if I can do that with this, then I can do that with the new job. What I'm saying is that I'm having fun working on the gala with you.

NOELLE

(beat)
Me, too.

JAKE

Sorry, what did you want to say?

NOELLE

(shakes her head)
Nothing. Enjoy the cookies.

JAKE

Thanks. I need to get inside.
I'll see you later?

Jake goes into the fire station and Noelle stands there for a moment until Charlie walks up to join her, carrying the pair of shoes she wanted Noelle to try on.

CHARLIE

Those cookies looked delicious.

NOELLE

They were supposed to soften the blow when I told him he couldn't work on the gala, but I...

CHARLIE

Noelle, I'm sorry things have gotten a bit off track with Jake, but it'll all be fine. You just have to...

Charlie dangles the shoes.

NOELLE

Have faith. I know.

Noelle turns and looks at Charlie.

NOELLE (CONT'D)

But I need some answers first.

Charlie looks at Noelle and nods.

100

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

100

Noelle and Charlie are walking down the street.

NOELLE

Does everyone have... someone like you, watching over them?

CHARLIE

Oh yes. They are always there, working in the background in ways that you normally don't notice.

NOELLE

But not everyone meets theirs in the shoe department at Simon's?

CHARLIE

That's reserved for special cases

NOELLE

I'm a special case?

CHARLIE

Very.

NOELLE

Why?

CHARLIE

Well, now, remember, I'm a bit of a rookie, but as I understand it every now and then, someone strays off the path they should be on.

NOELLE

So, it's like fate?

CHARLIE

No, no... We all have choices and, as you've seen, there are many possible outcomes. But to get all the things people really want in life there are certain paths we try to nudge them back onto. Sometimes they need more than a nudge. They need a push. Especially when they start doubting that their prayers are worth being heard.

NOELLE

I'm that far off my... path?

CHARLIE

I'm afraid so, Noelle. And it's having a much bigger effect.

NOELLE

What do you mean?

CHARLIE

What we do, or don't do, makes a difference in the world around you. You just have to choose what kind of difference you want to make.

Noelle considers this as she and Charlie keep walking.

101 EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

101

Noelle and Charlie are walking down another street.

NOELLE

So wait... you said you're new at this. Did I have somebody else before you?

CHARLIE

Yes. They send us where we're most needed.

NOELLE

And they tried to... nudge me?

CHARLIE

Many times. Many, many times.

NOELLE

They should have nudged harder.

CHARLIE

(laughs)

That reminds me of a story. There was a great Christmas Eve blizzard and a man was trapped by the rising snow. He prayed to God to save him and soon, along came a sleigh, driven by a jolly fellow. He offered the trapped man a ride to safety but the man refused, saying that he had faith that God would save him. A little while later the sleigh came back and that jolly fellow offered again. The man refused. The sleigh came back a third time and even though the snow was up to his chin, he refused to get on board, insisting God would save him. And do you know what happened?

NOELLE

God saved him?

CHARLIE

Oh no... sadly, he passed away.

NOELLE

Okay... that's a terrible story.

CHARLIE

I'm not done yet. So the man is welcomed into heaven by God and the man says, "God, I had faith in you. Why didn't you save me?" And God said, "What are you talking about? I sent the sleigh three times!"

Noelle smiles and Charlie puts her arm around Noelle.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

The point is, the sleighs have been coming, Noelle, you just haven't been willing to climb aboard.

Charlie holds out the pair of shoes. Noelle considers for a moment and then takes them. She sits on a bus bunch and starts to put them on.

NOELLE

Where are we going this time?

CHARLIE
Last Christmas Eve. One year ago.

NOELLE
(putting on shoes)
Right. I remember these. I wore
them to the Christmas...

102 **INT. NOELLE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK) 102**

Noelle finds herself back in her own apartment with several people attending a Christmas party. Lorna and several co-workers and friends are in attendance. Noelle is wearing the shoes she just put on.

NOELLE
...party I had.

Noelle stands, once again stunned by suddenly being somewhere else. Charlie steps up next to her.

CHARLIE
Do you remember what happened next?

NOELLE
I don't... I'm not sure...

Lorna approaches with a gift wrapped box.

LORNA
Noelle, I know you like to wait until Christmas morning to open gifts, but open this one now.

NOELLE
(smiles)
Okay... thank you.

She takes the gift and opens it. It's a nice camera lens.

LORNA
It's a lens. The guy at the camera shop says it's the best one.

NOELLE
Lorna...

LORNA
I know, I know. You don't take pictures anymore, but I heard about this annual photo competition: Most Inspiring Photo of the Year.

(MORE)

LORNA (CONT'D)

The deadline is next week. You need to enter it.

NOELLE

Why?

LORNA

Because... everyone needs a little inspiration every now and then, don't they?

Lorna pats Noelle on the shoulder and walks away. Noelle looks at the lens.

103 **INT. NOELLE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK) 103**

Suddenly, everyone is gone and Noelle is standing in front of a closet with the lens in its box. Charlie is nearby.

CHARLIE

Do you remember what you did with the lens after everyone was gone?

Noelle looks at the closet, opens the door, and looks inside. There is a box marked "CAMERA EQUIPMENT." She hesitates but then puts the lens inside the box and shuts the door. Noelle turns to look at Charlie.

NOELLE

Let me guess. The lens was a sleigh.

CHARLIE

That's one way of looking at it.

NOELLE

Okay, so I get it... I turned down the chance to be a photographer multiple times. But we already covered the career stuff.

CHARLIE

This isn't about your career. It's about love.

NOELLE

Love?

CHARLIE

Just say yes.

NOELLE

Say yes to what?

104 **INT. NOELLE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)** 104

Charlie is suddenly gone and Noelle is standing in front of the open closet door holding the lens again. She hesitates, thinks about it, and then pulls the box of camera equipment out with a nervous smile. She shuts the door.

105 **INT. ART GALLERY - DAY (FLASHBACK)** 105

Similar to the earlier scene only this time, the photographs are part of an exhibit labeled "MOST INSPIRING PHOTOS OF THE YEAR." A man is shaking Noelle's hand, handing her a blue ribbon as he does.

106 **INT. PHOTOGRAPHY STUDIO - DAY (FLASHBACK)** 106

Suddenly, Noelle is back in the photography studio we saw earlier with the handsome man, Will, in the Santa cap, and her father standing off to the side. Gary steps over to Will.

GARY

Hi, I'm Noelle's father.

WILL

Hi. I'm Will.

(looks at Noelle - smiles)

Your daughter is a great photographer.

GARY

Yes, she is.

WILL

I'm not used to getting my picture taken, certainly not in a Santa cap, but Noelle is making it easy.

GARY

That's why everyone wants to work with her. Although, I think she sometimes works a little too much. She needs to save time for having some fun... maybe go out on a date.

NOELLE

Dad!

Will laughs. Noelle is mortified. Gary, proud of himself, walks away thinking his work is done. Will approaches Noelle.

NOELLE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry about that.

WILL

Don't be. My dad used to try to set me up on dates all the time. So... was he correct? Do you not have time to date?

NOELLE

Oh, no, I have time I guess. I just... haven't been asked out by the right guy, yet.

WILL

But if the right guy came along and asked you out, what would you say?

NOELLE

(beat - smile)
I'd say yes.

Before Will can follow up...

107 **INT. LOFT APARTMENT - DAY (FLASHBACK)**

107

Noelle is back in the loft apartment by herself this time (no Charlie) but with the wedding ring firmly in place.

She looks around and notices that some of the pictures are different. The ones of her and her family and friends are there but there's also a photo of her... in a wedding dress... standing next to Will, who is wearing a tuxedo.

They are laughing and smiling for the camera - a candid shot.

The door opens and Noelle turns to it. Will walks in the door with a smile...

WILL

Hi, honey. I'm home!

Noelle is shocked but before she can react...

108 **EXT. CITY STREET - DAY**

108

Noelle is back with Charlie sitting on the bench. Noelle stands, shocked.

NOELLE

Will? I'm married to Will?

CHARLIE

He's...

NOELLE

I thought it was going to be Jake.
Why have you been pushing me toward
him if he's not the guy that I'm
supposed to end up with?

CHARLIE

I've been trying to push you toward
taking chances, embracing joy,
being open to love. As long as
you're willing to take that leap of
faith with your heart, the details
aren't important. Your true love
is out there... and he's waiting
for you.

Charlie pats her on the shoulder and walks away.

NOELLE

(to herself)
But it's not Jake.

Noelle appears to be more than a little upset by this
revelation.

END ACT SEVEN

ACT EIGHT

109 EXT. NOELLE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT 109

Establishing shot of Noelle's apartment building.

110 INT. NOELLE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 110

It's three days until the Christmas charity gala and Noelle and Lorna are sitting on the floor next to the Christmas tree, stuffing holiday gift bags for the guests.

LORNA

How many of these gift bags are we doing for the gala?

NOELLE

Let's just say that it's a good thing we still have three days to do it all.

LORNA

You never told me how Jake took being told he couldn't play anymore reindeer games.

(off her silence)

Noelle!

NOELLE

I've got it under control. The gala is going to be very tasteful. Exactly what Mrs. Prather wants.

LORNA

What about what Jake wants?

NOELLE

I can't worry about that right now.

LORNA

Is this about what Charlie told you? Or showed you? That Jake isn't the "Honey I'm home" guy?

NOELLE

I was really starting to think it would be him. I was ready to get in the sleigh.

LORNA

What?

NOELLE

It's not important. The bottom line is Jake may not be the "one."

LORNA

So you're just giving up on him?

NOELLE

No. Charlie said we have free will so maybe... But that's why I haven't told him about Mrs. Prather. I don't want to hurt him. If I do, I don't think Jake and I could ever...

(beat)

I think what I really need is some inspiration.

Lorna gives Noelle a questioning look. Noelle gets up, goes to the closet, and takes out the box of camera equipment.

Lorna smiles off of Noelle's determination.

- 111 EXT. CITY STREET - DAY 111
- Bubbly Christmas music starts to play as we see Noelle taking photographs, of which we see STILL FRAME shots. They all have a Christmas theme - a little girl talking to a street corner Santa; a man and woman kissing under mistletoe; a family carrying brightly colored gifts down the street.
- 112 INT. FIRE STATION - DAY 112
- The music continues as we see Noelle taking more pictures around the fire station. Some are of Jake and the other firefighters prepping the room for their party and some are of the firefighters in action, sliding down the pole, getting in their gear, and jumping in the trucks.
- 113 EXT. NOELLE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT 113
- Establishing shot of Noelle's building.
- 114 INT. NOELLE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 114
- Noelle is at the table looking at a laptop computer showing the various shots we have just seen her take. Mixed in are some of the photos of the firefighter's tree lighting. She stops and looks at one of Jake, smiling directly at the camera next to the tree. She pages through a few more.

There is a knock on the door. Noelle goes to answer it and finds Jake there.

JAKE

Hi. I know how this sounds but could I borrow a cup of sugar?

NOELLE

Seriously?

JAKE

Your Christmas cookies inspired me. I'm making some for the station.

NOELLE

Come on in.

Jake enters as Noelle goes into the kitchen. He sees the photo of the station on the laptop.

JAKE

Oh hey, are these the pictures you've been taking? Can I look?

NOELLE

(slightly hesitant)
Uh... Sure. Of course.

He starts scanning through them and as he does we see that he is growing more and more impressed - even moved by what he is seeing. Noelle comes out of the kitchen with the sugar.

NOELLE (CONT'D)

What do you think?

JAKE

They're... these are incredible.

NOELLE

Thank you. I'm a bit rusty.

JAKE

If this is you rusty I can't wait to see what you do when you're running at full speed.

NOELLE

(points at wall)
That's back when I was doing it professionally.

Jake looks at the photos - he stops at the one of the woman by the Christmas tree.

JAKE

Wow. This is like... I don't know how to explain it but you have to enter this in the contest.

NOELLE

I would, but it was one of those spur of the moment pictures. I never got her name. I wouldn't feel right not giving her some sort of credit.

JAKE

(looks at laptop)

Well, I think you have a lot of other good candidates in here. You can submit more than one, right?

NOELLE

I think so.

JAKE

Submit them all! Can we get some prints of the ones at the fire station?

NOELLE

Sure. I'll do them in the morning and bring them to the party.

JAKE

So you're still coming?

NOELLE

Of course. I have to work tomorrow but I'll be there.

JAKE

Okay. I'll see you then.

NOELLE

Good night.

Jake stops as he goes out the door and looks back at the photo of the woman by the tree.

JAKE

That really is a great picture.

Jake smiles and leaves, shutting the door behind him. Noelle turns back and looks at the photo herself, smiling.

115 EXT. FIRE STATION - NIGHT 115

Jake walks up to the building with a container of Christmas cookies just as his cell phone rings. He answers it.

JAKE

Hello?

116 INT. OFFICE - NIGHT 116

In a fire department office we see an older man, OSCAR DUNHILL (60s, in charge), sitting at a desk talking on the phone. We begin INTERCUTTING between them.

OSCAR

Jake? Chief Dunhill here.

JAKE

(surprised)

Hi, Chief Dunhill.

OSCAR

Sorry to call so late but I wanted to let you know the Deputy Chief job is yours. Congratulations.

JAKE

(all smiles)

Thank you, Sir. I... I don't know what to say.

OSCAR

Well, deserved, son. Your father would be proud of you.

JAKE

(beat)

Thank you.

OSCAR

I'll have someone call you to talk details and timing tomorrow. And I'll see you at the Christmas charity gala.

JAKE

Okay. Thanks again, Sir.

Jake disconnects the call, shocked about what just happened. He looks up at the station, obviously conflicted about the opportunity and what it means.

117 EXT. SIMON'S DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY 117
Establishing shot of Simon's.

118 INT. SIMON'S DEPARTMENT STORE - SHOE DEPARTMENT - DAY 118
Noelle is showing Lorna prints of the photos she has taken.

LORNA

This is what you should have been doing all along. You're going to win that contest. And Jake is going to love these.

NOELLE

I hope so. Even if he isn't the guy I'm supposed to end up with.

LORNA

You never know until you try. And if he isn't, maybe the "Honey, I'm home guy" will be at the party. Maybe that's why Charlie encouraged you to get close to Jake.

NOELLE

Maybe. But, just in case, I think I should get a new pair of shoes.

LORNA

Absolutely!
(off her smile)
I like seeing you smile.

NOELLE

I feel like... for the first time in a long time, I think things are going to work out.

Her cell phone rings - she sees it is her dad calling.

NOELLE (CONT'D)

It's my dad.

Lorna nods and exits to give her privacy. Noelle answers.

NOELLE (CONT'D)

Dad? What's wrong?

119 INT. GARY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

119

Gary is in his kitchen on the phone with Noel. We begin INTERCUTTING between the two of them.

GARY

I get why that bothers you now.

NOELLE

(laughs)

Good.

GARY

But actually there is something wrong. Your Aunt June slipped on the ice and broke her leg. I may have to fly out there.

NOELLE

What? When?

GARY

Tomorrow.

NOELLE

But you'd miss the gala.

GARY

I'm sorry.

NOELLE

Dad, I was really looking forward to going with you.

GARY

I know, but your Aunt June doesn't have any other family...

NOELLE

But, you're my only family here...

The desk line on Noelle's phone lights up.

NOELLE (CONT'D)

My work line is ringing. I'll call you back later.

(switches phones)

Noelle Carpenter. Who is here?

Oh, no...

She hangs up the desk phone, grabs the prints, and rushes out of her office.

120

INT. SIMON'S DEPARTMENT STORE - MAIN FLOOR - DAY

120

Noelle rushes up to greet Jake near the front doors.

JAKE

Hi, I was in the neighborhood and thought I'd pick up the prints.

Alex and Helen approach. Noelle's eyes get wide and she shoves the prints into Jake's hands.

NOELLE

Here they are. See you tonight.

She tries to rush him away but it's too late.

ALEX

Noelle. Hold up a minute.

Caught, Noelle turns around - Jake does too.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Sorry, to interrupt but we wanted to add some people to the guest list for the gala tomorrow night.

JAKE

Great! The more the merrier.

HELEN

(to Jake - extends hand)
Hello. Helen Prather.

ALEX

Alex Prather.

JAKE

(shakes hands)
Oh! You're the family who owns the store. I'm Jake Marsden. I'm with the fire station. Thank you for everything you're doing for us.

HELEN

(recognition)
Oh... yes. I hope you understand about the change we had to make.

NOELLE

(to Jake)
Don't you have to go get things ready for the party tonight?

HELEN

It was nothing personal. I just felt it would be better if we had someone else working on the gala with Noelle.

JAKE

I don't understand.

NOELLE

Mrs. Prather, I'll follow up on those names for the guest list.

HELEN

Thank you. Nice meeting you.

Alex and Helen walk away. Jake turns to Noelle.

JAKE

What is she talking about?

NOELLE

(beat)

She heard about the things you wanted to do at the gala and she didn't want you working on it. I was supposed to tell you.

JAKE

So, all the things I thought I had added to the gala... the snow machine, the colorful lights, the things you said we'd do. We're not doing any of it?

NOELLE

Jake, I'm sorry, but Mrs. Prather is very particular...

JAKE

Which is fine. They're paying for it so it should be what they want. But I don't understand why you didn't tell me.

NOELLE

I didn't want to feel like...

JAKE

(beat)

Like I wasn't being taken seriously?

NOELLE

Jake...

Jake shakes his head and walks away, leaving Noelle with little choice but to watch him leave.

121 INT. SIMON'S DEPARTMENT STORE - SHOE DEPARTMENT - DAY 121

Noelle is walking back to her office, passing the shoe department, when Charlie steps out to greet her.

CHARLIE

Are you going to get ready for the party at the fire station tonight?

NOELLE

Party? I thought you were watching all the time. Didn't you see what just happened with Jake?

CHARLIE

Oh, he'll be fine, but you need to go to the party. It's important.

NOELLE

Well, I don't think he wants me there. And even if he did, I don't think I could face him.

CHARLIE

Noelle, trust me. Things have a way of working themselves out.

NOELLE

Do they? I mean, I finally started believing. In Jake, in my photography, my dad...

CHARLIE

That's wonderful!

NOELLE

And for what? Jake might not be my soulmate, I can't go to the party, the gala almost got ruined, my dad might miss Christmas with me... I thought this was going to be such a good holiday this year.

CHARLIE

It can be. You just have to have faith.

NOELLE

Stop saying that. I'm telling you Charlie, I'm having a hard time believing that anyone is sending any sleighs for me.

CHARLIE

I'm here for you.

NOELLE

Well, then, do something, please. Work your... magic, or miracles...

CHARLIE

Noelle, taking leaps of faith means accepting that you might not always land exactly where you want to... but believing that it's better than where you were.

NOELLE

Is it? I mean... before all this I was content. I liked my job, I had friends and family that I loved. Now, I'm no better off and I'm questioning everything.

CHARLIE

Don't say that.

NOELLE

(turns away from her)
It's how I feel. My mom had that kind of faith - I don't know if I can anymore.
(shakes her head)
I really wish you had never...

Noelle stops herself before she says it... Her shoulders sag a little and she turns back.

NOELLE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, I didn't mean...
(Charlie is gone)
Charlie? Charlie?

Sad and disappointed, Noelle looks around the store - Charlie is nowhere to be seen.

121A INT. FIRE STATION - NIGHT

121A

The station's Christmas party is in full swing with Teddy, Peter, and others having fun.

Jake looks at the Christmas tree he decorated with Noelle, a little melancholy for obvious reasons.

121B INT. NOELLE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

121B

Noelle is sitting in her living room, looking at her own Christmas tree, also melancholy over everything that has happened.

END ACT EIGHT

ACT NINE

122 EXT. SIMON'S DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY 122

Establishing shot of the department store.

123 INT. SIMON'S DEPARTMENT STORE - LADIES APPAREL - DAY 123

Noelle and Lorna are walking through the store.

NOELLE

I feel terrible.

LORNA

You haven't seen Charlie since?

NOELLE

No. I tried to apologize to...
well, thin air, I guess, but I
don't know if she heard me.

LORNA

I'm sure she did. What about Jake?

NOELLE

I called. Got his voice mail. I
didn't know what to say.

LORNA

Okay, well, look on the bright
side. The gala is in a few hours
and that's going to be great.

NOELLE

Is it? What if Alex and his mother
don't like it? What if no one
likes it and it's a huge failure?

LORNA

Noelle, stop talking like that.

NOELLE

I can't help it. Everything has
gone wrong and I'm just worried
that the gala will, too. Maybe I
shouldn't go.

LORNA

You have to go! You're the one who
put it all together.

NOELLE

But the volunteers are running it.
I don't need to do anything. I was
just going to go with my dad and
enjoy the night, but now he's not
even going to be there.

LORNA

Well, then just go and have fun.

NOELLE

I don't know. I'll think about it.
(off her look)
I'm okay. I'm going to go give one
last shot looking for that
personnel file Alex wanted. I'll
call you later.

Noelle heads off and Lorna watches her go, a little sad for
her friend but unsure what to do to help.

124 EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT 124

Establishing shot of the hotel.

125 INT. HOTEL - BALLROOM - NIGHT 125

The gala is underway with lots of finely dressed people
mingling amidst the very elegant, very tastefully done decor.
We'll see shots of people eating, dancing, chatting, and,
most importantly, making donations to the fire station.

Jake is off to the side watching as Teddy approaches.

TEDDY

The place looks great.

JAKE

(a little muted)
It does. It turned out well.

TEDDY

You're still bummed about this
whole thing with Noelle.

JAKE

A little. But it's not just that.
(beat)
They offered me the Deputy Chief
job.

TEDDY

(beat - smile)

That's great, Jake. I'm really happy for you.

(off his look)

Are you happy for you?

JAKE

I love being a firefighter. I love the excitement. I love the camaraderie... the family. I love being a part of my father's legacy. I'm going to miss it.

TEDDY

Then are you sure the new job is what you really want?

JAKE

No. But it's almost Christmas...

(smiles)

I can ask Santa to tell me what I really want.

TEDDY

Maybe you'll get that sign you were looking for.

JAKE

I'll keep an eye out.

Peter comes over and takes Teddy's hand.

PETER

Shall we dance?

Teddy looks at Jake to make sure he's okay. Jake smiles and nods and then Teddy and Peter go out on the dance floor.

Jake watches them for a moment and then he sees something that piques his interest.

126

INT. HOTEL - BALLROOM - SILENT AUCTION - NIGHT

126

In the area near the silent auction, there is a big sign that says "MOST INSPIRING PHOTO OF THE YEAR CONTEST" and several photos displayed. Jake walks up to them and stands there looking at one that we don't see. He is obviously stunned by what he sees. He turns to see Chief Dunhill coming in the door.

He looks back at the photo, then heads toward the Chief.

127 EXT. SIMON'S DEPARTMENT STORE - NIGHT 127

Establishing shot of the department store.

128 INT. SIMON'S DEPARTMENT STORE - STORAGE ROOM - NIGHT 128

Noelle is back in the storage room going through files. She finds what she has been looking for.

NOELLE

Finally!

Noelle takes a quick glance, then tucks the folder under her arm, shuts the file cabinet drawer, and heads for the door.

129 INT. SIMON'S DEPARTMENT STORE - MAIN FLOOR - NIGHT 129

Noelle catches up to Alex, who is all dressed up, heading for the front door.

NOELLE

(hands him the file)

Alex! I finally found that file.
Charlene Pennymar.

ALEX

Wonderful! Thank you.

(looks at file)

This will make a nice addition to
the gift for my mother.

NOELLE

I'm sure she'll love it.

ALEX

I think she will. I usually just
get her jewelry or a sweater so
this might be a little outside of
her comfort zone.

NOELLE

Sometimes that's a good thing.

ALEX

Yes, it is.

(looks at file)

Oh, good. There's even a picture.

NOELLE

May I see it?

Alex hands her the photograph. She's expecting it to be Charlie but it isn't... it's the woman by the Christmas tree in the photograph that Noelle took .

Noelle puts her hand to her mouth, emotional.

NOELLE (CONT'D)
Hello, Charlene Pennymar.

ALEX
Well... I need to go pick up my mother and get to the gala. Are you sure you don't want to go with us? It's no trouble.

NOELLE
I... don't have anything to wear.

ALEX
Well... luckily, we do.

He points at the nearby ladies apparel section. Front and center is the beautiful gown that we saw Noelle take a picture of when she was trapped in the store.

NOELLE
It's perfect... but it's missing one little thing. Can we make a stop on the way to the gala?

Noelle smiles.

130 EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT 130

Establishing shot of the hotel.

131 INT. HOTEL - BALLROOM - NIGHT 131

The party is going strong as Alex enters with Helen on his arm. They look around - Helen approves, turning toward Alex and giving him a kiss on the cheek as he beams.

As they walk away, Noelle enters, looking ravishing in the gown and a nice pair of shoes.

She is wearing her mother's cross around her neck.

Lorna comes rushing over.

LORNA
You came! And you look stunning!
Where did you get that dress?

NOELLE

At the store. A gift from Alex.

GARY (O.S.)

You do look beautiful.

Noelle turns around and her father, Gary, is there, looking handsome in a suit and tie.

NOELLE

Dad?

He approaches her, puts his hand out and touches the cross around her neck, and smiles.

GARY

(shrugs)

You were right. You and I are all we have left.

NOELLE

But what about Aunt June?

GARY

Turns out the break wasn't all that bad. So, she's going to come out here and spend Christmas with us.

NOELLE

That sounds nice.

GARY

Merry Christmas, sweetheart.

They embrace. As she is looking over his shoulder, she sees Charlie standing near a doorway, smiling sheepishly.

NOELLE

Dad, I see someone I need to talk to. Go get some punch and I'll catch up, okay?

He nods and leaves with Lorna as Noelle goes toward Charlie.

132

INT. HOTEL - BALLROOM - SILENT AUCTION - NIGHT

132

Charlie is standing near the displays of the photographs, which we don't quite see yet, Noelle approaches.

NOELLE

(beat)

I'm so sorry about what I said. I never should have doubted you.

CHARLIE

Don't be silly. You can't have
faith if there's nothing to doubt.

Charlie smiles and the two of them embrace. Charlie looks up
at the photos near them.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

I'm so happy that you got both of
your photos in the contest.

NOELLE

Both? No, I just submitted the
one...

She turns and sees two of her photographs on the contest
display. The one of Jake by the Christmas tree and the one
of the woman by the Christmas tree with a placard that says
"Charlene Pennymar." They are a perfect pairing
thematically. Noelle turns back to Charlie.

CHARLIE

I told you. Things have a way of
working themselves out.

NOELLE

In other words, if God sends you a
sleigh, you should get on it.

CHARLIE

And you will, I think...

Charlie indicates the cross and Noelle realizes how all of
this started. She smiles.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

It's been so lovely getting to know
you.

NOELLE

You, too. Will I see you again?

CHARLIE

(shrugs)

Anything is possible. But even if
you don't, I'll be around to give
you that nudge when you need it.

NOELLE

I promise I'll pay more attention.

CHARLIE

I believe you will. Oh! I have
something for you.

Charlie picks up a brightly wrapped box and hands it to Noelle. It is the size of a shoebox.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Don't open it yet.

(sly smile)

You'll know when the right moment comes along.

The nearby band finishes a song and it distracts Noelle for a moment. When she looks back, Charlie is gone. Noelle smiles and looks back toward the main room - all the lights and decorations and people.

Noelle sees Jake standing on the other side of the room. Her breath catches a little and she wants to go talk to him but before she can, Helen approaches.

HELEN

You did a wonderful job on the gala, Noelle.

NOELLE

Thank you, Mrs. Prather.

HELEN

I was thinking, though... maybe your firefighter friend was right. Maybe we could stand to have a little more fun with things.

NOELLE

Really?

HELEN

Well... no matter how things are supposed to be, we can always choose to make them different.

Noelle looks at Jake again and smiles.

NOELLE

Yes, we can. Excuse me.

Noelle hurries off in the opposite direction from Jake.

133

INT. HOTEL - BALLROOM - NIGHT

133

In the main part of the room, Jake is standing near the dance floor. In the background, we see Noelle talking to Evelyn who nods and walks away. Noelle approaches Jake.

NOELLE

(beat)

Jake, I'm sorry about...

JAKE

It's okay. I'm sorry, too. I think it was just with the party and the job...

NOELLE

The job? Did you get it?

JAKE

I did. And I turned it down.

NOELLE

Really? Why?

JAKE

Because of you.

NOELLE

Me? What did I do?

JAKE

The picture of me... and my Dad.

Jake points at the photo of himself by the Christmas tree in the station... at this blown up resolution, we can see that in the background on the wall is the picture of Jake's dad.

NOELLE

(smiles)

So what are you going to do instead?

JAKE

I talked to the captain of our station. He wants to retire next year and he thinks I'd make a good replacement.

NOELLE

(beat)

I think your dad would be proud.

The band starts up a new song.

JAKE

Do you want to dance?

NOELLE

(beat - smiles)

You know what? Who cares who the
"Honey, I'm home" guy is?

JAKE

(confused)

What?

NOELLE

Never mind. I'd love to dance.

Jake smiles and offers his hand. She puts down the gift wrapped box at a table where Lorna is sitting nearby and then they go out onto the dance floor. Just as they are nearing a spot where they can dance, Noelle's heel breaks.

NOELLE (CONT'D)

Oh, no! These are brand new!

JAKE

Well... so much for the dance.

She turns and looks at the table where she left the gift-wrapped package that Charlie gave her.

NOELLE

Wait here...

Noelle walk/limps over to the table, removes the gift wrapping, and finds a shoebox as expected. She opens it and there are a beautiful pair of pumps inside. She takes them out and admires them for a moment, then sits, takes off her other shoes, and slides the pumps on.

134

INT. PHOTOGRAPHY STUDIO - DAY (FLASHBACK)

134

Suddenly, Noelle is back in the photography studio we saw earlier with the handsome man, Will, in the Santa cap.

WILL

But if the right guy came along and
asked you out, what would you say?

NOELLE

(beat - smile)

I'd say yes.

WILL

Great. Because I know someone I
think you'd be perfect for...

135

INT. LOFT APARTMENT - DAY (FLASHBACK)

135

Suddenly Noelle is back in the loft style apartment. She looks down and sees that she is wearing the pumps she just put on. The door opens and Will walks in.

WILL

Hi, honey. I'm home!

And steps behind him, Jake enters carrying bags of groceries.

JAKE

That joke just never gets old with you, does it?

WILL

I'm the one who asked her about dating.

JAKE

So you could introduce her to me.

WILL

Yes, but I still met her first and she thought I was more handsome than you. Noelle, tell him.

JAKE

Noelle, ignore him.

WILL

See? My little brother gets promoted to captain of the station and now he thinks he can boss everyone around.

JAKE

Rank has its privileges. Come on. We need to get started on Christmas dinner. We have a lot of people coming!

As they head toward the kitchen, Noelle looks at the photos again. There is still the one of her in the wedding dress and Will in the tux but next to it is a bigger one - a formal wedding portrait of her in her dress and Jake in a tuxedo, holding hands as they walk up the aisle, smiling broadly.

Jake stops just before he goes into the kitchen.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Noelle? Is everything all right?

Noelle looks at Jake and suddenly...

136 INT. HOTEL - BALLROOM - NIGHT

136

...they are back in the ballroom, Noelle sitting down and Jake standing in front of her.

JAKE

Noelle? Is everything all right?

She takes a moment, smiles, stands, and then takes his hand.

NOELLE

What's your brother's name? The doctor?

JAKE

(perplexed)

It's Will. Why?

NOELLE

(smiles)

No reason. Let's go dance.

Jake leads Noelle out onto the dance floor and they start to twirl to the upbeat Christmas song playing. They move as if they have been dancing together for their entire lives.

As they do, we see Gary and Lorna, Alex and Helen, Teddy, Peter, and some of the other firefighters watching with approval - big smiles on their faces.

The song comes to an end and a slow one comes on next. Jake pulls her close and they start to sway as light flakes of "snow" start to fall. Jake looks up, surprised.

JAKE

What...? What's going on?

The entire room looks up and everyone, including Helen, is delighted at the sight of the snow falling in the room.

NOELLE

Living a little.

JAKE

Merry Christmas, Noelle.

NOELLE

(smiles)

Merry Christmas, Jake.

They continue kissing as they sway on the dance floor and the faux-snowfall effect rains down on them.

THE END