

WELCOME TO CHRISTMAS

Written by

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Based on the novel by Debbie Mason



Gage gives the girls a kiss - Lily appreciates hers, Annie doesn't seem all that interested.

GAGE

Good morning to you, too, Lily.  
Aunt Nell. Annie.

LILY

Good morning, Daddy.

NELL

Gage. I'll get your breakfast.

Nell gets up and he gives her a peck on the cheek on the way, which makes her smile.

LILY

We're making ornaments, so we need  
to know when we're getting a tree.

GAGE

Next week. Two weeks before  
Christmas so it's fresh when we  
open presents. It's a tradition.

LILY

I want to change the tradition.

GAGE

Then it wouldn't be a tradition.  
What are you making?

LILY

A reindeer, of course!

GAGE

It's very good.  
(for Annie's benefit)  
I'm happy to see someone is in the  
Christmas spirit.

ANNIE

(rolls her eyes)  
I'm not eight anymore, Dad.

GAGE

There is no age limit on Christmas  
spirit, Annie.

Nell holds out a bag to Gage.

GAGE (CONT'D)

My breakfast is in a to-go bag?

NELL

You're meeting the mayor at the Gingerbread Bakery to talk about sweetening the town's offer for the ski resort.

GAGE

I am?

NELL

Yes. Hartwell Enterprises needs to know that this town can compete with bigger cities. The mayor heard we're up against Mountain Park but we need this more than they do.

GAGE

I doubt where I have breakfast is going to factor into their decision making process.

NELL

(glances at kids)

Well, considering all the *changes* that might be happening, I would think you'd want to do everything you could for the town. You know... the place that's been your home since the day you were born.

Gage gets her point and takes the to-go bag.

GAGE

Girls, get ready for school.

LILY

But I'm not done with my reindeer!

ANNIE

We live in Christmas. They have reindeer on the street signs.

GAGE

School. Ready. Now.

Lily and Annie march out of the room and Gage turns to Nell.

GAGE (CONT'D)

Mountain Park doesn't stand a chance of getting that resort with you around.

Gage smiles and kisses her on the cheek as he leaves.

5 EXT. DENVER - DAY 5  
Establishing shot of Denver, Colorado.

6 EXT. HARTWELL ENTERPRISES BUILDING - DAY 6  
Establishing shot of an office building in Denver.

7 INT. HARTWELL ENTERPRISES - DAY 7  
The offices of Hartwell Enterprises, which builds and manages vacation resorts around the country. There are posters and architectural models of resorts - ski, beach, desert, etc.  
DANA PIRETTI (20s, funny sidekick) is busy decorating the space for Christmas, putting up garland and lights, when MADISON LANE (30's, beautiful, always put together) walks up, looking at a report more than she is looking around her.

MADISON  
Dana, I need to set up for the ski resort presenta...  
(sees the decorations)  
..tion. What are you doing?

DANA  
I'm decorating for Christmas. You remember Christmas, don't you Madison? It's that holiday with the guy in the red suit?

MADISON  
(laughs)  
I think I've heard of it. But we don't usually go quite this far.

DANA  
It's Mr. Hartwell's last Christmas before he retires. I wanted it to be special.

They start walking toward the board room.

MADISON  
That's very thoughtful, but you know Joe. He'll be so wrapped up in where we're putting the ski resort that he won't even notice.

DANA  
I thought you already picked Mountain Park.

MADISON

I did. And he's on board, but he wants to go over it one more time. It's all about the due diligence.

DANA

Have you heard anymore about who he's going to recommend to take over the company?

MADISON

It's going to be me or Harrison. I'm hoping if Mountain Park goes smoothly it'll give me the edge.

DANA

But Harrison is his nephew.

MADISON

Harrison runs the finance team. All he sees is the bottom line. Joe sees the big picture.

DANA

Well, this should help.

8 INT. HARTWELL ENTERPRISES - BOARD ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS 8

They enter the board room and Dana hits a switch. The room lights up in festive Christmas merriment.

MADISON

(smiling)

I don't know that Christmas decorations are going to do the trick but every little bit counts.

DANA

Where's your holiday spirit?

MADISON

I like Christmas as much as the next guy, but right now I just want to make sure nothing gets in the way of putting our ski resort in Mountain Park.

Madison and Dana appreciate the decorations for a moment and then get to work setting up for the presentation.

9 EXT. CHRISTMAS MAIN STREET - DAY 9

The Sheriff's SUV pulls to the curb. Gage gets out and takes a moment to look around, a smile on his face - he loves this place. Bundled in a warm coat, he heads down the street, carrying his "to go" breakfast bag.

He waves a greeting at a couple of people - he knows everyone and everyone knows him. Despite the merry decor, the town seems to be struggling a bit - we see more than one empty "For Lease" storefront along the way.

He passes a cheery toy store where WINNIE BLUTH (50s, neighborly) is putting decorative snowflakes on the facade.

WINNIE

Good morning, Sheriff.

GAGE

Good morning, Winnie. The store looks great.

WINNIE

Thank you. I thought it needed a little bit more Christmas spirit.

GAGE

(smiles)

Because we certainly don't have enough of that around here.

Winnie laughs as Gage continues on to the Gingerbread House Bakery, which looks like a gingerbread house.

10 INT. GINGERBREAD HOUSE BAKERY - DAY 10

Gage enters the bakery, which is a cute space with several tables, a display case filled with goodies, and a service counter. Behind it is CHELSEA SIMMONS (20s, cute, bold) who is trying to help Mayor ETHAN O'CONNOR (40s, self-assured) with placing an order on a tablet-style screen.

CHELSEA

Push the picture of the coffee.

ETHAN

I did! Can't I just tell you that I want a cup of coffee?

GAGE

Chelsea. Ethan. What's going on?

ETHAN

Gage, tell her this new computer ordering system is silly.

GAGE

You're the mayor. You tell her.

CHELSEA

It makes ordering easier!

ETHAN

Not if you can't actually order anything.

CHELSEA

You know what? Never mind.  
(gives them coffee)  
Merry Christmas.

ETHAN

Thanks... I kind of wanted a cruller, too.  
(off her glare)  
Coffee is fine.

GAGE

(laughs)  
Thank you, Chelsea.

Gage and Ethan head for a table. Chelsea jabs at the touch screen a couple of times, forcefully.

Ethan points to the bag Gage is carrying as they sit.

ETHAN

Breakfast in a bag?

GAGE

Nell is very determined about this ski resort business.

ETHAN

Thank goodness she never ran for Mayor. I'd be out of a job.

Hammering from across the street draws their attention to look out the window. A "FOR LEASE" sign is going up on an empty storefront.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

Julie's dress shop was there for 40 years. I told her to try to hang on for the ski resort but she just couldn't do it.

GAGE

(looks around)

You know, this used to be *the* place people went for holidays. We had the parade, the tree lighting, the ornament hunt... Now all we have is the Christmas festival.

ETHAN

I've been trying to figure out a way to bring some of those old traditions back, but we can't afford it.

GAGE

Well, maybe the resort will be just the Christmas miracle we need.

Ethan starts walking but Gage takes a moment to survey the town once again. The concern on his face is evident.

11 EXT. HARTWELL ENTERPRISES BUILDING - DAY 11

Establishing shot of the Hartwell building.

12 INT. HARTWELL ENTERPRISES - BOARD ROOM - DAY 12

Madison is showing a presentation that touts Mountain Park for the resort. At the table are several men and women including JOE HARTWELL (60s, good guy, loves his business) and HARRISON HARTWELL (30s, way too eager).

MADISON

So to recap, Mountain Park has infrastructure, a strong business community, and a population base that can help make a ski resort an instant success.

JOE

Nicely done, Madison.

(turns to others)

Well... I think I'm sold. Does anyone have any objections to Mountain Park?

Harrison is looking at a hard copy of Madison's report. He raises his hand - Madison braces herself.

JOE (CONT'D)

Harrison?

HARRISON

I was looking at some of the alternative sites. The town of Christmas is offering more tax incentives and the land is significantly cheaper.

Joe takes the report and starts thumbing through.

MADISON

Yes, but Christmas is too small. We do better when we're near bigger cities.

HARRISON

Small towns get bigger when we build near them.

MADISON

True, but Mountain Park is already bigger. It has restaurants, a mall, tourist attractions... We'd hit the ground running.

HARRISON

Madison, did you visit Christmas?

Madison is smart enough to know that Harrison is trying to undermine her but she doesn't have a way to stop him.

MADISON

(beat)

I didn't but people on my team did.

HARRISON

Joe, from a financial perspective, I think we should take a closer look at the town of Christmas.

JOE

I think Mountain Park is probably the best choice but what's it going to hurt? Madison, go visit it personally, and let's make sure that we've done the due diligence.

Madison glances at Harrison who smiles - knowing he has gained an edge here. Madison puts on a smile for Joe.

MADISON

I'll take care of it.

JOE

Great. I want this all wrapped up before Christmas.

Joe, Harrison, and the others start leaving. Madison looks a lot less encouraged than she did a moment ago.

13 EXT. GAGE'S HOUSE - NIGHT 13

Establishing shot of Gage's house. It is even more festive with all of the holiday lights ablaze.

14 INT. GAGE'S HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT 14

Gage comes into the house to find Nell putting up more Christmas lights along the staircase banister. Opposite is a wall full of family photographs.

GAGE

Where did you find those?

NELL

Your workshop, where you hid them.

GAGE

I didn't hide them. I was saving them. And our electric bill.

NELL

I'm hoping a little more Christmas cheer will inspire Annie to want to be in the family choir with us at the festival this year.

GAGE

If she doesn't want to sing, she doesn't have to.

NELL

She thinks she's too grown-up for Christmas, but she's going to regret not taking part in family traditions...

(looks upstairs; quietly)

...especially if you're going to run off to Denver.

GAGE

I haven't decided if I'm taking the job, yet, which is why I haven't told anyone but you.

NELL

Gage, you've been Sheriff forever.

GAGE

And maybe it's time for me to do something else. Something with more responsibility, a bigger department, more opportunity.

NELL

If we get the ski resort we'll have all of that here.

GAGE

Nell, I just think... I think maybe we need a fresh start.

A phone is heard ringing from the kitchen down the hall.

NELL

Fresh starts are all very well and good but only if you aren't leaving behind any unfinished business.

She heads down the hall. Gage goes to the wall of photos and looks at one in particular - it is of him and the kids with a pretty woman, their mother. He straightens the picture - even though it probably didn't need straightening - and looks at it with a wistful smile.

We hear a whoop from Nell who comes down the hall to Gage.

GAGE

What's going on?

She grabs him and pulls him toward the door.

NELL

That was the mayor. Hartwell Enterprises is coming to visit Christmas, this weekend!

GAGE

As in tomorrow? Must be good news then, right?

NELL

They're sending Madison Lane. She makes the recommendation about where to put the resort, so we really need to impress her.

(excited)

I'm going to call Rachel now and work on a presentation.

GAGE

Aren't we better off just showing her around town when she gets here?

RACHEL

Nonsense, we need refreshments and decorations and...

GAGE

(kidding)

Maybe bring in the high school marching band?

NELL

No, the marching band won't fit in the mayor's conference room. But, it was a good idea. Let's show this woman our civic pride!

Nell dashes off leaving a bemused Gage.

15 EXT. COLORADO MOUNTAIN HIGHWAY / INT. MADISON'S CAR - DAY 15

Madison's car is heading down a scenic highway in the mountains. Madison is talking (hands free) to Dana.

MADISON

This was all just because Harrison wanted me out of the way so he could lobby Joe for the job.

16 INT. HARTWELL ENTERPRISES BUILDING - DAY 16

We begin INTERCUTTING between Madison and Dana.

DANA

You don't think you'll change your mind about Mountain Park?

MADISON

No. I'm going to this meeting and then I'm coming home. I'm just arriving now in...

Through the windshield, Madison sees the big Christmas town sign with Santa waving.

MADISON (CONT'D)

Christmas. Now that's a sign.

Madison is looking at the sign and the car starts to slide. She steers to correct it but...

The car passes our POV and while we don't see what happens, we hear it - a thud and a crunch.

Madison comes to a jolting halt, the front of the car up against the Christmas town sign. It isn't a bad accident - a fender bender at most. She collects herself.

DANA

Madison?! What happened? Are you okay?

MADISON

I'm fine. Just a little fender bender. It could have been worse.

She hears a creaking noise and then the Santa figure comes crashing down on her hood. Santa Claus is cheerily looking through the windshield at Madison.

MADISON (CONT'D)

Oh no. Dana, I just took out Santa Claus.

She eyes the sign through the windshield.

17 EXT. CHRISTMAS TOWN HALL - DAY 17

Establishing shot of the merrily decorated town hall.

18 INT. CHRISTMAS TOWN HALL - DAY 18

A small group of civic leaders have gathered in the town hall for the meeting including Gage, Nell, Ethan, Chelsea, and Winnie along with RACHEL DANE (30s, PTA type, perma-smile). They may not have the marching band but the hall is beautifully decorated for the holidays and a refreshment table laden with Christmas goodies stands at the ready.

Rachel walks over to join Gage, who is nibbling on a cookie at the refreshment table.

GAGE

I can't believe you and my aunt put this together so quickly.

RACHEL

It's amazing what this town can do when we work as a team.

Nell walks by on her way to the other side of the room.

NELL

That tree is crooked. If you want something done right...

She walks off quickly - Gage and Rachel laugh.

RACHEL

Did you know she was on a twelve-foot ladder hanging lights earlier?

GAGE

Nothing surprises me anymore.

RACHEL

Well, if you ever need a break, you and the kids are welcome at my house anytime.

(beat)

I promised Beth I'd take care of you guys after she was gone.

GAGE

And she appreciated it.

RACHEL

She was my best friend.

(beat)

Maybe after the holidays you can come over and get a *real* home cooked meal.

Nell walks up to them just as Rachel says this.

NELL

I heard that.

Ethan joins the group.

ETHAN

Well, let's hope we can convince Madison Lane with our presentation today.

NELL

If it doesn't do the trick, we'll keep her here until she *is* convinced!

Everyone laughs about that except for Nell. Gage notices.

GAGE

The fact that you're not laughing worries me.

Before she can reply, Gage's phone rings. He answers.

GAGE (CONT'D)  
Sheriff McBride. Yes. Where?  
Okay. I'm on my way.  
(to the group)  
Minor car accident. I'll be back.

Gage heads toward the door.

19 INT. MADISON'S CAR / EXT. COLORADO MOUNTAIN HIGHWAY - DAY 19

Madison is on the phone while Gage stands outside.

MADISON  
Dana, tell them I'm running late,  
but don't tell them what happened.  
That's the last thing I need.

Gage knocks on the window. Madison holds up her finger, just a minute...

MADISON (CONT'D)  
I'm on the phone.

GAGE  
(smiling)  
I see that. I would be very  
appreciative if you wouldn't be.

Madison smiles back.

MADISON  
I gotta go. Thanks, Dana.

Madison hangs up and opens the door. She turns to Gage, still seated.

GAGE  
The paramedics are on their way.

MADISON  
Oh, I'm fine. I just bumped my  
head a little.

GAGE  
Why don't I take a look? I have  
EMT training.

MADISON  
Really, don't worry about it.

GAGE

It's my job to worry about it, but if you'd prefer to sit here with a possible concussion, that's totally your choice.

She thinks for a moment, then turns so Gage can examine her neck, check her eyesight (follow the finger), and so on.

GAGE (CONT'D)

What's your name?

MADISON

Madison Lane.

Gage's eyebrow goes up a bit - he knows who this is.

GAGE

Gage McBride. Carter County Sheriff. What happened?

MADISON

It's the sign's fault.

GAGE

Jumped out at you?

MADISON

It's too big and bright. It distracted me.

GAGE

So you decided to run it over?

MADISON

That'll show it who's boss.

Gage suppresses a smile.

MADISON (CONT'D)

How far away are we from the actual town?

GAGE

A couple of miles. The sign marks the city limits. Or did.

MADISON

I have a meeting in the town hall, and I'm late. I hate being late.

GAGE

A meeting, huh?

MADISON

My company builds resorts, I'm hear  
to listen to this town's dog and  
pony show for why it should be  
built in Christmas.

GAGE

(plays it cool)  
You don't seem to be looking  
forward to it.

MADISON

(shrugs)  
Oh, you know, it's part of the job.  
I have to hear them out.

GAGE

But you don't think the resort  
should go in Christmas?

MADISON

(confidentially)  
Just between you and me, I think we  
should build the resort in Mountain  
Park, but my boss wants to make  
sure we've done the due diligence.

GAGE

So you're just going to Christmas  
to humor them?

MADISON

No, it's just business. I don't  
have anything against the place.

GAGE

The sign might disagree.

MADISON

It was the sign's fault!

GAGE

Right. Well... I think you're  
okay, but we should probably wait  
until the paramedics get here.

MADISON

Can't you just take me? The sooner  
I get there...

GAGE

The sooner you can leave?

MADISON

I didn't mean it quite like that.  
But, I would appreciate a ride if  
it doesn't take you out of your  
way, please.

GAGE

(considers)

Okay. But you need to promise to  
tell me if you feel any pain or get  
dizzy or anything.

MADISON

Thank you! You'll be the first to  
know.

He helps her out of the car and they head to his SUV.  
Madison turns back to look at the damage.

MADISON (CONT'D)

Can you maybe not mention that I...

GAGE

Ruined the town sign?  
(off her nod)  
Our little secret.

He opens the door to the SUV and she gets in.

20 EXT. CHRISTMAS TOWN HALL - DAY 20

Establishing shot of the town hall. Gage and Madison are  
walking up to the entrance.

21 INT. CHRISTMAS TOWN HALL - DAY 21

Gage and Madison enter the town hall and are immediately set  
upon by Nell, Ethan, and Rachel.

NELL

Where have you been?

GAGE

Finding our guest. This is Madison  
Lane from Hartwell Enterprises.

ETHAN

Hello! Welcome to Christmas! I'm  
Ethan O'Connor, the mayor. We  
can't wait to show you what our  
town has to offer.

MADISON  
(a knowing smile to Gage)  
I'm looking forward to it.

ETHAN  
These are some of the people who  
worked on the presentation. We've  
got Rachel Dane, Nell McBride...

MADISON  
Wait. McBride. Are you related?

GAGE  
She's my aunt.

NELL  
Known him since he was a baby.

MADISON  
(to Gage)  
So you're from... Christmas.

NELL  
Born and raised. He knows this  
town better than anyone.

MADISON  
How about that.  
(to Gage - big smile)  
May I talk to you for a moment?

The two of them head toward a vestibule.

22 INT. CHRISTMAS TOWN HALL - VESTIBULE - DAY

22

Gage and Madison step into the vestibule for privacy.

MADISON  
You said you were the Carter County  
Sheriff. You didn't tell me you  
were from Christmas.

GAGE  
Christmas is pretty much the only  
town in Carter County.

MADISON  
How would I know that?

GAGE  
A map?

MADISON

Look, about what I said...

GAGE

The part about you having already made up your mind that Mountain Park should get the ski resort?

MADISON

I don't think I used those exact words, but...

GAGE

Then maybe you do have a concussion because that's what you said.

MADISON

Listen, this is not personal. Like I said, it's just business.

GAGE

It's personal to this town. Maybe someone else from your company can come to Christmas. Someone who hasn't already decided that we shouldn't get the resort.

MADISON

I'm the one who makes the final recommendation to Joe Hartwell and he usually goes with what I say.

(off his exasperation)

Look, I'm sure this is a lovely town, it's just not the right fit. But I'll keep an open mind... at least until my car is fixed.

Joking, she smiles - he doesn't.

23

INT. CHRISTMAS TOWN HALL - DAY

23

Nell is standing just outside the vestibule, and having heard everything, she is not happy. She turns and hurries across the room to where Ethan, Rachel, Chelsea, Winnie, and a few others are gathered, including a man wearing overalls and a cap. This is TOM HUBBARD (50s, salt-of-the-earth).

NELL

Listen up. We've got a problem.

(turns to Tom)

Tom... we need your help.

Everyone leans in to hear what's going on.

24

INT. CHRISTMAS TOWN HALL - DAY

24

Ethan is standing at a lectern with a PowerPoint style presentation on a screen behind him showing charts and graphs. Gage and Madison sit in the center of a semicircle of people facing Ethan, including Nell and Rachel, and it's obvious that Madison isn't 100% sold on what she's seeing.

ETHAN

...and with a name like Christmas,  
it should make it clear why we're  
"Santa's favorite town after the  
North Pole."

The final slide shows the town sign. Madison looks at Gage who shrugs with a bit of a smile.

There is enthusiastic applause from the small group of civic leaders and polite clapping from Madison. Everyone starts to get up but Nell sees that Madison isn't sold. She stands and walks toward Madison.

NELL

You know, that slogan needs a  
little work. We can change it...  
Or we could get the marching band  
in here if you think...

Madison smiles at her politely.

MADISON

No, this was... great. Thank you  
for the lovely presentation. I  
think you have a nice little town  
here.

Madison turns as if she is about to head for the exit. Gage jumps in quickly.

GAGE

You haven't seen much of it. Why  
don't we take you on a tour?

MADISON

Uh, sure... I guess I have time.  
Unless the... *issue* I had... has  
been resolved.

ETHAN

Issue?

GAGE

Car trouble. But here comes the  
town mechanic. We can ask him.

They turn to see Tom entering the town hall and headed toward them.

TOM

Hi, there. Tom Hubbard. I took a look at your car, Ms. Lane. I'm sorry to say it's not going anywhere anytime soon.

MADISON

What? But it didn't seem that bad.

TOM

It never does. Those fancy new cars. You breathe on them wrong and they're in the shop for days.

Everyone but Madison smiles a little, their plan afoot.

MADISON

Days?! I can't stay here. Can I rent a car and come back later?

NELL

Denver is four-hour drive from here! I'm sure it'll be all settled by Monday so by the time you got all the way home you'd have to come right back.

Madison doesn't look convinced. Nell, desperate, makes things up as she goes along.

NELL (CONT'D)

Besides, we have a big event we want to show you tomorrow.

GAGE

We do?

NELL

Yes! The... tree lighting. We're doing a big ceremony tomorrow.

She looks to others for support.

WINNIE

Yeah! It's a big tree.

CHELSEA

With lots of lights.

RACHEL

So many lights.

MADISON

(not impressed)

Sounds... nice. But I really need to get back to Denver.

NELL

But you're turning on the lights.

GAGE

She's what?

MADISON

I'm what?

NELL

You're pushing the big button at the tree lighting. We assumed you'd want to stay the weekend to get to know us better. It was going to be a surprise, right Mr. Mayor?

ETHAN

Yes! Surprise! That's quite a surprise, isn't it Sheriff?

GAGE

(vamping)

Yes, it is. And now that you'll be spending the weekend with us because of your car, this will be a good opportunity for you to do the due diligence. Isn't that how your boss put it?

That gets Madison's attention.

MADISON

(beat)

I'm going to have to make some calls, but... I guess there's no other choice. Is there a hotel...

RACHEL

As a matter of fact, I run a little bed and breakfast just down the street. I'll go make sure we have a nice room ready for you!

Rachel hurries off.

NELL

Ethan, why don't you take Madison back inside so she can make those calls and then we'll go.

Ethan points the way for Madison and they go back toward the town hall entrance and the others follow. Nell turns to the others.

NELL (CONT'D)

Call everyone in town. We need all the Christmas lights and ornaments we can find. And a big button. And a tree!

Winnie and Chelsea hurry off leaving Gage and Nell.

GAGE

We haven't done the tree lighting in ten years. How are we going to pull this off?

NELL

I don't know. But we didn't impress Madison Lane so now we have to wow her. If you have any Christmas wishes left over, now would be the time to put them to good use.

The two of them head off to get to work.

**END ACT ONE**

ACT TWO

25 EXT. CHRISTMAS BED & BREAKFAST - DAY 25

Establishing shot of a quaint B&B, decorated for Christmas.

26 INT. CHRISTMAS BED & BREAKFAST - SITTING AREA - DAY 26

Gage and Nell are in the sitting area conferring with Rachel.

NELL

We need a big banner for the tree lighting. 94th annual, etcetera.

GAGE

There is probably some sort of law against what we're doing.

NELL

Well, luckily I know the Sheriff.

Madison comes down the steps and Gage, Nell, and Rachel all stop talking quickly and give her big smiles.

GAGE

Madison. Hello!

RACHEL

Hi, Madison! Room okay?

MADISON

(this is weird)  
Yes... it's lovely. Hello again, everyone.

GAGE

We thought we'd take you on that tour of the town we promised and then get you a nice dinner.

NELL

At our house. A home-cooked meal.  
(pointedly for Rachel)  
Doesn't that sound nice?

RACHEL

Very nice. Nell is a great cook.  
Well, you have fun.

Rachel scurries off. Gage and Nell look at Madison, smiling.

GAGE

Shall we?

Madison forces a smile and goes with them toward the door.

27

EXT. CHRISTMAS MAIN STREET - DAY

27

Gage, Madison, and Nell are on the main street of Christmas.

NELL

Up until 1933, the town was named Bryce Valley and every year they decorated the streets and the buildings - turned it into a regular wonderland. And the people loved it so much they started calling it Christmas-Town.

GAGE

So one year, everyone got together and voted to change it. That's how we became Santa's "second favorite town after the North Pole."

NELL

That slogan really does need work. Maybe Madison can help with that?

MADISON

(smiles)

I'll give it some thought.

At that moment, Winnie comes out of the toy store with a big box overflowing with Christmas tree lights. Gage sees her and motions for her to get back while directing Madison's attention to a nearby park where people are working.

GAGE

Uh, and over there in the park is where we put on our big event: the Christmas Festival.

Just ahead of them, Chelsea comes out of the bakery carrying an arm load of Christmas tree ornaments. She sees Gage, Madison, and Nell, and ducks back inside the bakery. Nell distracts Madison.

NELL

Oh, it's wonderful. We've got games; recipes handed down for generations;

(MORE)

NELL (CONT'D)

ornaments and stockings made by hand right here in Christmas; a choir made up of families from around town...

MADISON

(trying to be positive)  
That sounds great.

NELL

It is. You'll have so much fun.

MADISON

Except I'm not going to be here.  
My car will be ready before that.

NELL

I'm sure you're right.

With her big smile she keeps walking. Madison gives Gage a worried look and he smiles encouragingly. As they go around a corner Winnie, Chelsea, and several other people come out of businesses with their boxes of lights and ornaments and hurry toward the park.

28

EXT. GAGE'S HOUSE - DAY

28

Gage, Madison, and Nell arrive at Gage's house and we get a better look at the place and its spectacular Christmas decorations in the daylight. Madison stops and stares.

NELL

(proud)  
It's something isn't it!

Nell heads into the house as Gage steps next to Madison.

MADISON

(to Gage)  
I think you missed a spot.

GAGE

A lesson you should learn quickly.  
With Nell, sometimes it's easier to just play along.

Madison nods as they head into the house.

29

INT. GAGE'S HOUSE - FOYER - DAY - CONTINUOUS

29

As Gage and Madison enter the house, passing a large Santa Claus statue/cutout that greets them in the entranceway, Annie and Lily approach them from inside.

GAGE

Hey, girls. Did you have fun at Marty and Lisa's?

LILY

Uh-huh! We made Christmas cookies.

Lily holds out a cookie - sort of a reindeer. Nell comes up behind them to inspect it.

NELL

That's beautiful, Lily.

GAGE

It sure is. Where's yours Annie?

ANNIE

That's kids' stuff. Lisa and I watched a video.

GAGE

Right. Of course.  
(remembers Madison)  
Oh, Madison, these are my daughters Annie and Lily. Girls, this is Madison. She's going to be having dinner with us.

NELL

Yes, because that's what we do here - welcome visitors with open arms.

LILY

(to Madison - serious)  
Do you like reindeer?

MADISON

Uh... Yes? I guess so.

LILY

(opens arms)  
Then I welcome you with open arms.

Madison doesn't know what to do at first but Nell urges her forward and Madison gives Lily an awkward hug.

NELL

Awww. Just like family. Okay,  
kids, let's get dinner started.

Nell takes the kids toward the kitchen. Gage and Madison start to follow but Madison stops by the Santa Claus cutout.

MADISON

(takes out phone)  
You know, I'm going to try my boss  
again. I'll be right in.

Madison turns around and leans up against the Santa Claus cutout as she dials. Gage sees this, goes to her, and carefully (and respectfully) but firmly moves her a few inches away from the Santa.

GAGE

Maybe not so close to Santa.

Madison offers him a tight smile then Gage goes inside. Madison walks outside in search of some privacy as she dials the phone.

30 EXT. GAGE'S WORKSHOP - DAY 30

Madison comes into the back yard, where there is a detached garage - aka Gage's workshop.

MADISON

Hi, Ellen. It's Madison again.  
You still haven't found him? Okay,  
well just let him know...

She sees Nell looking at her through the window. Nell waves. Madison waves back then spies the door to the workshop.

31 INT. GAGE'S WORKSHOP - DAY 31

Madison enters the garage to find one half of it set up as a workshop - woodworking tools and half-finished projects. The other side is filled with junk - boxes, old furniture, and something big covered by a tarp. Madison is on the phone as she looks around. She isn't snooping, she's looking for privacy for her call - she doesn't open any cabinets - but she checks out the tools, etc.

MADISON

I'm hoping to be back late Monday  
but at this point, who knows?

In a corner of the workbench is a partially finished Christmas tree ornament. Madison picks it up - it could be pretty if it were completed.

MADISON (CONT'D)

Dana can cover for me.

Gage enters, sees her holding the ornament, and gently but firmly takes it out of her hand and tucks it into a drawer.

MADISON (CONT'D)

Ellen... I have to run. Bye.

(disconnects call)

Sorry. I didn't mean to snoop.

GAGE

It's okay. It's just that this is kind of my... private space.

MADISON

Top secret Christmas ornaments?

GAGE

Something like that.

MADISON

Do you do make them every year?

GAGE

No. I haven't... for awhile.

(off her questioning look)

I'm busy. I have a job and kids.

MADISON

I have a job and I have hobbies.

GAGE

But you don't have children.

MADISON

How do you know?

GAGE

You hugged Lily like she was a cactus.

MADISON

I... she took me by surprise.

GAGE

Not everyone is good with kids.

MADISON

I'm great with kids! I was a kid  
once upon a time.

GAGE

Where did you grow up?

MADISON

Philadelphia was home.

GAGE

But Denver is now?

MADISON

Home? I guess. I travel so much  
I'm rarely there. And, I only moved  
there because of work.

GAGE

That must have been tough - leaving  
the place... the people you love.

MADISON

It was a great opportunity. You'd  
do the same, wouldn't you?

GAGE

I guess we'll find out.

MADISON

What does that mean?

GAGE

(beat - considers)  
I was offered a job on the police  
force in Denver.

MADISON

Great. One more place I have to  
worry about my driving.

GAGE

I'd worry about your driving  
everywhere, but listen... I'd  
appreciate it if you keep the job  
thing between us.

MADISON

You don't tell anyone about the  
sign, I won't tell anyone about the  
job.

Gage's phone buzzes with a text. He looks at it.

GAGE

It's Nell. She wants to discuss dinner options.

MADISON

You know, I appreciate all this but it isn't going to get me to change my mind about the ski resort.

GAGE

What's so great about Mountain Park?

MADISON

They don't have a giant Santa Claus sign distracting drivers.

GAGE

Neither do we. Anymore.

Gage smiles and points to the door. She hands him back the ornament and they both exit.

32 EXT. CHRISTMAS BED & BREAKFAST - NIGHT 32

Establishing shot of the B&B.

33 INT. CHRISTMAS BED & BREAKFAST - MADISON'S ROOM - NIGHT 33

Madison comes into her rustic, Christmas decorated room as she talks on the phone.

MADISON

Okay. Send me the numbers and I'll take a look at them tonight. Tell Joe, I'm on it. Thanks, Dana.

Madison disconnects the call and looks around the room - there is a big basket of Christmas goodies - cookies, gingerbread, etc. - on the bed. In the middle is a a postcard of the Welcome to Christmas sign she ran down. She shakes her head. A noise from outside draws her to the window.

MADISON'S POV

Through the window she sees Winnie and Chelsea in the street collecting dozens of Christmas ornaments that have spilled out of a box. Winnie glances up at the B&B and sees Madison. Trying to cover as if this is the most normal thing in the world, Winnie and Chelsea wave and smile as they try and hide the ornaments from view.

BACK TO SCENE

Madison smiles and waves back, a little curious about what's going on in this little town. She closes the curtains.

34 EXT. CHRISTMAS TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

34

A group is in town square near a large tree, around which are boxes of ornaments, lights, and decorations that people are sorting through, organizing, and starting to hang on the tree.

NELL

The tree isn't big enough.

GAGE

It's the biggest one in the square.

NELL

We should go get one from the park.  
(to the group)  
Who has a chain saw?

She walks off. Gage, smiling and shaking his head, turns to confer with Ethan as they help with the lights.

GAGE

I can't believe I'm aiding and abetting this tree lighting scheme.

ETHAN

What scheme? We're throwing a bunch of decorations on a tree. I don't know why we stopped doing it in the first place.

GAGE

Because it was too expensive and no tourists came for it anymore.

ETHAN

Well, right now there is only one tourist that counts.

(beat)

So, what's she like?

GAGE

You met her.

ETHAN

Yes, but I met the work version of her.

(MORE)

ETHAN (CONT'D)

I haven't met the stroll through town, meet your kids, and cook dinner for her version.

GAGE

They're both kind of frustrating.  
(off Ethan's grin)  
What are you smiling at?

ETHAN

Nothing.

Nell comes over to them.

NELL

We need a bigger tree.

GAGE

Ethan, tell her we might not have enough decorations to cover one this size.

ETHAN

I'm staying out of this.

GAGE

Do we really think this is going to make Madison want to put the ski resort here?

NELL

All we need to do is get her to fall in love with the town. Show off our charming traditions.

GAGE

That we don't really do anymore.

NELL

Well, now we have a reason to bring them back. It shows who we are and what Christmas spirit is all about.

GAGE

So, how are we going to make sure she sticks around until the tree lighting tomorrow night?

NELL

Two words... glue gun.

Nell heads off with a devious smile.

GAGE  
(concerned)  
Nell... Nell?

He goes after her.

35 EXT. CHRISTMAS BED & BREAKFAST - DAY 35

Establishing shot of the B&B.

36 INT. CHRISTMAS BED & BREAKFAST - PARLOR - DAY 36

Gage (not in uniform), Annie, Lily, and Nell are sitting at a table in the parlor of the B&B making Christmas stockings, while Rachel tries to keep it from being too much of a mess.

RACHEL  
Why are you making Christmas stockings here instead of at your own house?

NELL  
Because we're trying to wow her with a real town of Christmas holiday complete with all the trimmings.

RACHEL  
She's going to know what you're doing.

NELL  
(sees Madison coming)  
Shhh! Just play along!

Madison comes into the room, wearing the same clothes she had on yesterday, looking a little bleary-eyed and disheveled.

NELL (CONT'D)  
Madison! Good morning. We're making Christmas stockings!

MADISON  
Here?

NELL  
Rachel invited us.

RACHEL  
(brightly, playing along)  
Yes... I did.

NELL

And now, you can join us!

Nell sits Madison down in her seat and hands her a glue gun. Madison looks at it like it is an alien.

NELL (CONT'D)

Put a snowflake on there.

MADISON

(sotto voce to Gage)

Is this one of those times when it's just easier to play along?

Gage nods and Madison looks at the stocking and the glue gun with no clue where to start.

GAGE

Here, let me help.

MADISON

I am perfectly capable of putting a snowflake on a Christmas stocking.

Gage holds up his hands as if to say, "okay, good luck." The others watch as Madison attempts to glue the snowflake on the stocking. Predictably, it doesn't go well and glue goes everywhere. Rachel scrambles to clean it up.

MADISON (CONT'D)

Oh... sorry.

RACHEL

That's okay. I didn't really like this antique table very much.

MADISON

I don't usually make stockings.

ANNIE

See? She just buys hers like normal people.

MADISON

I'm usually on the road so I don't do all that much for Christmas.

LILY

That's too bad.

(looks at her)

Why is your hair all funny?

GAGE

Lily, that's not nice.

MADISON

She's right. I wasn't expecting to be away this long. I'm usually much more put together than this.

NELL

Gage I needed you to run some errands this morning anyway. You can take her shopping.

MADISON

Oh, you don't have to do that. Just point me toward the stores and I can do fine on my own.

NELL

Nonsense. Gage can show you all of the town's hidden treasures!  
(goes to Madison)  
Here, that glue gun can be tricky. I'll show you.

Nell starts to help Madison with the glue gun. Neither Gage nor Madison look thrilled about this development.

37

EXT. CHRISTMAS MAIN STREET - DAY

37

Gage and Madison, now with a couple of shopping bags, are walking down the main street. She sees lots of Christmas souvenirs and decorations for sale in the stores.

GAGE

Is there anyone you need to buy presents for? This is a good place to do it.

MADISON

Me? No. I did that weeks ago.  
(off his look)  
What? I like to be prepared.

GAGE

That's fine. As long as you're not too stubborn to admit when a better opportunity comes along.

MADISON

Subtle.  
(changing the subject)  
So, how did Nell end up living with you?

GAGE

(beat)

My wife, Beth, passed away a few years ago. Nell moved in to help... and then just never left.

MADISON

That's actually very sweet. I'm sorry for your loss.

Gage and Madison exchange a glance - probably the first that isn't filled with at least some antipathy.

GAGE

My folks died when I was young and she raised me. She can be...

MADISON

Intense? Bossy?

GAGE

Yes, but she has a heart the size of the Rockies. She's family.

They have another look - Madison breaks the spell.

MADISON

This would probably go faster if we just went to the mall.

GAGE

The nearest one is about thirty miles away.

MADISON

How do you get anything done?

GAGE

There are plenty of stores here. And there's always online. We do have the Internet, you know.

MADISON

Do the deliveries come via sleigh?

GAGE

You know, maybe I could just drive you back to Denver myself.

MADISON

Let me guess. Your postman looks like Santa.

GAGE  
Or you could walk...

The two of them walk down the street, continuing the bantering back and forth.

**END ACT TWO**

**ACT THREE**

38 EXT. CHRISTMAS TOWN SQUARE - DAY

38

People are putting decorations and lights on the tree, in front of which stands a podium with a large button on it. Gage, Nell, and Ethan are gathered nearby.

ETHAN

I sent in our new offer on the land to Harrison Hartwell today. He seemed really interested. Said our tax incentive package looked solid. I gave a copy to Madison, too.

GAGE

We still have to convince her, you know.

NELL

And, we'll do that by showing her something more than numbers... something that shows her how special our community is. The tree lighting is just the start.

GAGE

Where is she, by the way?

NELL

She volunteered to get supplies for Christmas cookies.

GAGE

(suspiciously)  
Volunteered?

NELL

I don't think she's ever baked in her life so she could be gone for hours.

GAGE

(points to big button)  
What is the button hooked up to?

ETHAN

Nothing. When Madison presses it, someone is going to plug in the really long extension cord.

GAGE

Not to be a killjoy, but what if we do all this and she still recommends Mountain Park?

NELL

As long as she's here we'll "snow" her with Christmas. We can do the holiday parade like we used to! We'll make Madison the grand marshal.

GAGE

I love your enthusiasm, but we can't put on a parade at the last minute!

NELL

Then something else. The ornament hunt! That was always fun and easy to do.

GAGE

You're not the one who had to make the ornaments.

NELL

You loved it and you know it.

GAGE

(phone rings - answers)  
Sheriff McBride. Hi, Sharon. No, Annie was supposed to come get Lily and walk her home. Okay... I'll be there shortly. Thank you.

Gage disconnects the call and gathers his things.

ETHAN

Trouble?

GAGE

Teenager.

Ethan nods knowingly as Gage leaves.

39

EXT. GINGERBREAD HOUSE BAKERY - DAY

39

Madison, in a new outfit she has bought, comes down the sidewalk carrying grocery bags with the cookie supplies while talking on the phone.

MADISON

Yes, I saw the new offer, Harrison.

HARRISON (O.S.)

It's a good deal. It makes more financial sense than Mountain Park.

MADISON

If you just look at the startup numbers, possibly. But there are longterm factors and intangibles that can't...

HARRISON (O.S.)

You don't build resorts with intangibles, Madison. Even Uncle Joe knows that.

MADISON

(deep breath)

Harrison, I really would like to get on the same page with you about this. Why don't we discuss it tomorrow when I'm back in the office? That way we can both be face to face with Joe. I'll see you then.

She disconnects the call as she nears the bakery where she sees Gage talking to Annie. Madison doesn't approach but can't help but hear the tail end of the conversation.

GAGE

You were supposed to go walk your sister home from the Jensen's.

ANNIE

I'm sorry. I was reading and forgot. I'll go get her now.

GAGE

No, I'll get her. Go get your stuff and head home, okay?

Annie goes inside the bakery as Gage notices Madison.

MADISON

Everything okay?

GAGE

What were you like when you were thirteen?

Madison gives him a little grimace - she was probably a bit of a terror when she was thirteen.

MADISON  
(pats him on the shoulder)  
Yeah, good luck with that.

Gage smiles and nods as he walks away. Madison sees Annie inside, gathering her stuff including a copy of Dickens' "A Christmas Carol." She thinks for a moment then goes inside.

40 INT. GINGERBREAD HOUSE BAKERY - DAY

40

Madison enters as Chelsea looks up.

CHELSEA  
Merry Christmas! Hi Madison!

MADISON  
Hi. You're Chelsea, right?

CHELSEA  
Yes! Welcome!

MADISON  
Thank you. Hi, Annie.

ANNIE  
Hi.

MADISON  
I saw you had "A Christmas Carol" there. It's one of my favorite books. My parents gave me a copy when I was about your age. Are you enjoying it?

ANNIE  
Yeah.

MADISON  
(beat)  
Okay.  
(to Chelsea)  
Could I get a cup of coffee, please?

CHELSEA  
Sure! Are you looking forward to the tree lighting tonight?

MADISON  
(forces a smile)  
Absolutely. Can't wait.

CHELSEA  
It's a big honor to push the  
button. When I was a kid I used to  
think it would be so cool to be the  
one who got to do it.

MADISON  
What about you Annie? Have you  
ever wanted to light up the town's  
Christmas tree?

Annie looks at Chelsea, confused.

CHELSEA  
(panics a little)  
You know, like we do in the town  
square every year?

Madison is not looking at Chelsea so she doesn't see her  
miming "just play along and say yes" to Annie.

ANNIE  
(beat - plays along)  
Oh... sure. Yes, I've always  
wanted to do that. Maybe next  
year.

Annie takes her bag and starts to leave. Madison takes her  
cup of coffee, smiles a thank you to Chelsea, and follows.

41 EXT. CHRISTMAS MAIN STREET - DAY

41

Madison catches up to Annie as they walk down the street.

MADISON  
Is it okay if I walk with you?

Annie nods.

MADISON (CONT'D)  
So... turning on the lights on a  
big tree is not your idea of  
Christmas fun?

ANNIE  
Not really.

Madison sees the festival preparations happening in the  
nearby park. She points.

MADISON

What about the festival? Everyone is all excited about that.

ANNIE

(shrugs)

Some of the games are cool. And the food is good.

MADISON

Cool games and good food? That sounds better than okay to me. What's not to like?

ANNIE

They want me to sing in the family choir, but it's all these little kids and their dads and...

(a fraction of a second)

...moms.

The way Annie pauses for that fraction of a second makes Madison get where Annie's head is at.

MADISON

So... which Christmas is your favorite?

ANNIE

Which... what?

MADISON

In "A Christmas Carol." Christmas Past, Christmas Present, or Christmas Yet to Come?

ANNIE

I'm only up to Christmas Present.

MADISON

Oh, that's a good one. But wait until you get to Christmas Yet to Come! There's this part where...

ANNIE

Don't ruin it!

MADISON

Okay! You're right. No spoilers.

They walk for a moment in silence.

MADISON (CONT'D)

But let me tell you one part...

ANNIE  
(laughs)  
No!

MADISON  
Come on. Just one little thing.

ANNIE  
Stop it!

It's obvious that Annie's concern about spoilers is all in good fun and they head down the street laughing.

42 EXT. CHRISTMAS TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

42

A lot of the town's residents have come out to see the tree lighting including Gage, Nell, Annie, Lily, and Ethan, who are gathered with Madison in front of the big button. Christmas music is playing and the tree has lots of different styles of lights and ornaments.

Gage leans over to Madison.

GAGE  
What do you think of the tree?

MADISON  
It's... It kind of looks like lights and ornaments from a bunch of different trees put together.

GAGE  
(plays it cool)  
It's all a part of the small-town charm. It's why people like to come here instead of places like Mountain Park with their boring regular Christmas trees.

MADISON  
Nicely played.

The two of them look at each other with smiles - a little bit of a spark happening perhaps? They both turn away from it.

MADISON (CONT'D)  
But it's still not going to get me to change my mind about the resort.

GAGE

Come on... look around. The community, the friendships, the spirit... That doesn't make you want to be a part of this?

Madison looks around and sees everyone talking, embracing, laughing, and generally appreciating the community spirit. Madison can't help but be charmed by it.

MADISON

Well, sure, okay, I get it. I'm not a robot. But this is one night. What are you going to do tomorrow night and the night after that to keep people coming back? I can't support a ski resort with one tree lighting ceremony.

Gage considers this and before he has a chance to respond, Ethan waves Madison up to the big button.

ETHAN

Madison, are you ready?  
(as people gather)  
Hi everyone! Thank you for coming to the Christmas tree lighting.

NELL

(coaches)  
Annual.

ETHAN

The annual tree lighting ceremony for the town of Christmas... Here to press the ceremonial button is Madison Lane with Hartwell Enterprises.

There is applause as Madison steps up to the button.

MADISON

Thank you. I appreciate that.

Madison looks and sees a very excited Lily and a less enthusiastic Annie standing front and center.

MADISON (CONT'D)

It's an honor to be here, but I need some help. Lily, Annie, will you come up here, please?

Lily goes without hesitation but Annie needs a little coaxing from Gage. They go to join Madison and all put their hands over the big button.

MADISON (CONT'D)  
Ready? One... two... three!

They punch the big button and... nothing happens.

GAGE  
(to Madison)  
Technical difficulties. Why don't  
you try that again?

Madison and the girls look at each other - they share a bit of a giggle and even Annie is amused by this.

MADISON  
One... two... two and a half...

ANNIE  
(laughing)  
Two and three quarters...

Madison whispers to Lily.

LILY  
(smiling)  
Two and seven-eighths!

MADISON  
(smiles)  
Three!

They punch the button and the tree lights up to the delight of the audience. Madison gives high fives to the kids and we see Gage watching this, appreciating it, and smiling himself. Madison looks up and catches Gage smiling in their direction. He mouths a "thank you" and she nods a "you're welcome."

43 EXT. CHRISTMAS MAIN STREET - NIGHT

43

Nell, Annie, and Lily are walking ahead of Gage and Madison.

GAGE  
You have to admit that was a  
memorable tree lighting.

MADISON  
Yes, it was. Very charming.

GAGE

But charming doesn't fill a ski resort. I get it. Okay, you're a smart, successful businessperson...

MADISON

Flattery won't work either.

GAGE

What would you do to make this something that Hartwell Enterprises would want to be a part of?

MADISON

I think the Christmas events are great. I would just do them bigger and more often. The small-town charm is great, but how does it drive business?

GAGE

(vamping)

Well... we have other events.

MADISON

That's good, and I wish I could stay to see them, but I need to get back to Denver. I'm sorry.

Madison walks on ahead of him and Gage considers options.

**END ACT THREE**

**ACT FOUR**

44 INT. REPAIR SHOP GARAGE - DAY 44

Gage, Madison, and Tom are inside the repair shop garage next to Madison's car.

TOM

It's probably going to take a week to get those parts in.

MADISON

A week?

GAGE

That's shocking.

MADISON

Yes... it's almost hard to believe.

She gives Gage a glare that says "I know you're up to something" but he just smiles innocently back at her.

45 EXT. HARTWELL ENTERPRISES BUILDING - DAY 45

Establishing shot of the Hartwell building.

46 INT. HARTWELL ENTERPRISES - BOARD ROOM - DAY 46

Joe and Harrison are at the conference table talking on a speaker phone. Harrison has a sheaf of papers with him.

JOE

How long?

47 INT. REPAIR SHOP OFFICE - DAY 47

Madison is on her phone while Gage and Tom are in the background chatting.

We begin INTERCUTTING between her and the board room.

MADISON

A week. But don't worry. I'll be back in Denver later today.

JOE

If your car isn't ready...

MADISON

It's not 1952. I can rent a car, I can get a ride, I can hire a helicopter. I'll figure it out.

JOE

Well, hold on. Harrison showed me the updated offer from the town. They dropped the price of the land and are throwing in some additional tax breaks.

MADISON

I know, but as I told Harrison, it's not enough to make it better than Mountain Park.

HARRISON

I think it's something we need to investigate. Due diligence, Madison.

Madison looks like she wants to scream.

JOE

As long as you're there, why not stay and really get to know them?

MADISON

You want me to stay here?

JOE

Madison, this means a lot to me. It's my swan song at a company I built from the ground up. Let's make sure we get it right.

MADISON

(beat)

Okay... I'll do my best.

We stay with Madison as she disconnects the call. She gathers herself, puts on a smile, and walks to the group.

MADISON (CONT'D)

So... good news. I guess I'm staying for a few more days.

NELL

Wonderful!

MADISON

Yes. It's... exciting. And, I want to really get to know Christmas. So, what's the next big holiday event?

There is a pause as the group thinks on their feet.

GAGE

The ornament hunt.

NELL

Yes! We hide ornaments all over town and people get points and there's a trophy and everything!

MADISON

Sounds great.

ETHAN

Yes, great. Gage, how are you coming on the ornaments we need to make this happen?

GAGE

(beat - dryly)  
I'm a little behind.

NELL

We'll get you some help. Madison can help. Won't that be fun?

Gage and Madison look at each other and offer smiles.

48 EXT. GAGE'S HOUSE - DAY 48

Establishing shot of Gage's house.

49 INT. GAGE'S WORKSHOP - DAY 49

Gage is working on the ornaments while Madison attempts to apply some decorative paint and glitter to the finished ones.

MADISON

I thought you said you hadn't made these in awhile. Job and kids?

GAGE

(beat - vamping)  
Right. I meant... awhile since last year.

Gage looks at the "work" that Madison is doing - it isn't great. Madison sees his expression.

MADISON

What?

GAGE

(forces a smile)

Nothing.

(points at a tool)

Hand me that, please?

She does and he continues the work on an ornament.

GAGE (CONT'D)

Thanks for including the girls last night. They had fun.

MADISON

My pleasure. They're good kids.

GAGE

Well, I appreciate it.

He looks at her and they have another of those moments - what should have been a quick glance, lingering. Madison changes the subject this time.

MADISON

How does this ornament hunt work?

GAGE

Ethan and some others from city hall hide ornaments... sometimes too well. One year we didn't find them all until the snow melted.

MADISON

Whoever finds the most wins?

GAGE

Yes. We have a trophy and everything.

MADISON

Seems like you could do more.

(off his questioning look)

I mean, it's great that you have people going all over town to find them but they don't actually spend any money anywhere, right?

GAGE

It's about more than money.

MADISON

Not if you're trying to lure a ski resort. Add prizes or coupons from local businesses. Find this ornament and you get a free coffee at Chelsea's place with the purchase of a gingerbread cookie.

GAGE

Good idea. I'll talk to Ethan.

MADISON

Really?

GAGE

I'm not too stubborn to admit when a better opportunity comes along.

MADISON

(smiles)

You really love it here, don't you?

GAGE

I do.

MADISON

Then why are you considering that job in Denver?

GAGE

Because... sometimes it's hard to let go of the past when you're surrounded by it all the time.

Madison appreciates that honesty - but Gage brushes it off.

GAGE (CONT'D)

Besides, I've been Sheriff here for a long time.

MADISON

So? Lots of people do the same job their entire lives.

GAGE

Is that what you want?

MADISON

For the right opportunity, sure... I'm in the running to head up the company when my boss retires. I could be happy doing that for the rest of my life.

GAGE

Then I guess it's just about  
finding the right opportunity.

Madison considers that for a moment. Nell pokes her head  
into the workshop.

NELL

Come on, you two. We're getting  
ready to make Christmas cookies.

Nell leaves and Gage turns to Madison.

GAGE

Aunt Nell's Christmas cookies? Now  
that's an opportunity you don't  
want to miss.

Madison smiles and the two of them head for the door.

50

INT. GAGE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

50

As jolly Christmas music plays, Gage, Annie, Lily, and  
Madison work on baking cookies, while Nell supervises.

NELL

Lily, don't be shy with the  
sprinkles. Gage, get those into the  
oven before they settle too much.  
Madison, you call that stirring?  
Put your back into it!

MADISON

Were you a drill sergeant?

LILY

She used to make tables.

NELL

Thirty years at the Christmas  
Furniture Factory. It was one of  
the biggest employers in town.

GAGE

I used to go visit when I was a  
kid. I think it's what got me  
interested in woodworking.

MADISON

What happened to it?

NELL

Times change. They shut down a few years ago and the town hasn't been the same since. Another reason why we need that resort. It would be a whole new beginning for Christmas.

Gage glances at Madison and we can tell that maybe she is starting to feel a bit guilty about her preference for Mountain Park.

NELL (CONT'D)

Maybe that could be our new town slogan...

GAGE

What's wrong with our old one?

NELL

"Santa's second favorite town after the North Pole"? It doesn't sing! Besides, I hear that something happened to the town sign so we have to replace it anyway. Madison, have you had any ideas?

MADISON

Not yet. I'll let you know.

They all go back to making cookies and as they do, we'll notice Gage and Madison glancing at each other when the other is not looking... And Nell notices it, too, with interest.

LILY

Dad, can Madison come with us tomorrow to get our Christmas tree?

MADISON

Oh, no... I don't want to intrude on a family thing.

NELL

It's no intrusion!  
(to Gage)  
Right, Gage?

GAGE

It's not. Please come.

MADISON

Okay... That would be nice.

NELL

Okay, I think we're ready for a new batch.

They all get back to cookie baking.

51 EXT. CHRISTMAS TREE LOT - DAY

51

Gage, Madison, Nell, Annie, and Lily are exploring a Christmas tree lot.

LILY

What kind of Christmas tree do you usually get, Madison?

MADISON

Well, it depends on where I am. If I'm traveling or on a job site I usually get a little mini-tree. Put in on the bedside table.

LILY

I like big trees!

GAGE

(trying to engage)  
Annie, do you see any trees you like?

ANNIE

(shrugs)  
They're all kind of the same, aren't they?

Madison sees that Gage is frustrated so she gives it a shot.

MADISON

(to Annie)  
When I was a kid, my family made finding the tree a game.

ANNIE

(intrigued)  
What kind of game?

MADISON

Well, all you have to do is pick something Christmasy that there are a lot of... like reindeer.

LILY

I'm listening.

MADISON

Okay, Lily, then you can start. Go over to a tree and name a reindeer.

LILY

(goes to a tree)  
Dancer!

MADISON

Great. Now Annie. You pick a tree and build on it.

ANNIE

(ditto)  
Dancer and Prancer.

MADISON

My turn. I'm going to name three reindeer and we keep going until someone gets stumped. The last person to correctly name all the reindeer wins and we take the tree they were standing next to.

(she goes to a tree)  
Dancer, Prancer, Comet. Nell, your turn.

NELL

(as she goes to a tree)  
Dancer, Prancer, Comet, Cupid.

LILY

Your turn, Dad.

GAGE

(goes to a tree)  
Dancer, Prancer, Comet, Cupid...  
Steve.

LILY

Steve wasn't a reindeer!

GAGE

Are you sure?

ANNIE

(laughing)  
Dad!

GAGE

Okay, uh... Dasher.

LILY  
My turn! Dancer, Prancer, Comet,  
Cupid, Vixen.

ANNIE  
Dancer, Prancer, Comet, Cupid,  
Vixen, Blitzen.

MADISON  
You guys are good at this.

ANNIE  
Hey, no stalling. It's your turn.

Madison laughs.

MADISON  
Okay, Dancer, Prancer, Comet,  
Cupid, Vixen, Blitzen, Donner.

Gage gives Madison an appreciative, silent "thank you." She smiles back at him.

52 INT. GAGE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

52

Gage, Annie, Lily, and Nell are decorating the tree. Madison enters the room from the kitchen, putting away her phone.

MADISON  
Sorry. I had about a million  
emails to deal with.

LILY  
Come hang ornaments.

MADISON  
No, that's okay. I have to get  
back to the inn and do some work.

ANNIE  
Come on, Madison. You can do  
these.

Annie holds out some ornaments to Madison, who looks at Gage for a tacit okay.

GAGE  
(beat)  
Sure. Of course. The more the  
merrier.

Madison hesitates, then takes the ornament from Annie, and hangs it - then continues to help.

ANNIE

Madison, what was Christmas like for you when you were a kid?

MADISON

A lot of fun. My folks would invite friends and neighbors over and we'd laugh and eat and sing Christmas carols. Inevitably we'd wind up in the front yard, having snowball fights.

GAGE

Let me guess. You always won.

MADISON

Always. It was everything you wanted Christmas to be.

LILY

Do you still have snowball fights with your family?

MADISON

(beat)  
No. Both of my parents are gone.

There is a beat of silence as everyone in the room has their own connection to that - Gage, the kids, Nell...

MADISON (CONT'D)

But I still have great memories and that's what's most important.

LILY

How are you going to celebrate this Christmas?

MADISON

Oh, I was just going to stay in Denver... maybe watch some Christmas movies on TV.

ANNIE

Alone?

GAGE

There's nothing wrong with that if that's what Madison wants.

LILY

You're helping decorate the tree so you're part of our family now.

Madison is touched by that.

NELL  
Okay. I think we're ready. Get  
the lights.

Annie turns off the lights.

MADISON  
No big button this time?

GAGE  
Not this time, no.

NELL  
Here we go... one... two...

MADISON  
Two and a half...

ANNIE  
Two and three-quarters!

LILY  
Two and seven-eighths!

NELL  
Three!

Gage plugs in the lights and everyone cheers.

53 EXT. GAGE'S WORKSHOP - NIGHT 53

Establishing shot of Gage's workshop.

54 INT. GAGE'S WORKSHOP - NIGHT 54

Gage is in the workshop working on more ornaments for the big hunt while Madison looks around the workshop.

MADISON  
How many more ornaments do you need  
to make?

GAGE  
The ornament hunt is tomorrow so as  
many more as I can make until then.

MADISON  
Well, obviously my help is  
invaluable.

GAGE

Obviously.

She finds a wooden cut out of a vaguely animal shaped object.

MADISON

What is this supposed to be?

GAGE

It's a reindeer. Background scenery for the festival.

MADISON

(with a smile)

How far in the background?

GAGE

(good natured)

Ha ha.

Madison smiles as she looks around the workshop.

MADISON

I don't know how you get anything done in here with all this stuff.

GAGE

It's not stuff. It's... evidence of a life well-lived.

MADISON

A nice way of saying stuff.

She moves a couple of things around and goes to lift the tarp off the big object hidden underneath.

GAGE

No, don't... that's...

Madison pulls back the tarp and we see that there is what looks like a sleigh underneath. She turns to him, a bit of a smile on her face?

MADISON

Santa? Is that you?

GAGE

(smiles)

Very funny. That's a different sleigh. No reindeer attached.

MADISON

Why is it in your garage?

GAGE

It was another town tradition. We had sleigh rides during the festival to go look at all the lights.

MADISON

That doesn't explain why it's here.

GAGE

(beat)

It was my dad's. It's been sitting there for years so it needs work.

MADISON

Maybe you should be working on this instead of...

(points - smiles)

Whatever that's supposed to be.

GAGE

It's a reindeer!

MADISON

Sure. We'll go with that.

GAGE

(smiles)

Let's get you back to the b&b. I'll walk with you.

She heads toward the door.

MADISON

I'm going, I'm going.

(stops by the door)

But, you know, we were talking about opportunities... that looks like one to me.

She smiles and leaves the workshop. Gage turns toward the sleigh and considers it for a moment, then follows.

55

EXT. CHRISTMAS BED & BREAKFAST - NIGHT

55

Gage walks Madison up to the front porch of the B&B.

GAGE

I'm sorry about your parents.

MADISON

It's okay. Like I said... happy memories. You have some, too, don't you?

GAGE

Yes. A lot.

MADISON

It was a good day today.

GAGE

Yes, it was. I was obviously wrong when I suggested you weren't good with kids. You are.

MADISON

It's because I don't treat them like kids. I treat them like small, moody adults... I've dealt with a lot of those.

Gage has to smile at that but then grows serious.

GAGE

I just want to make sure they understand that you're leaving at some point. I don't want them to be disappointed when you go back.

MADISON

Yeah... That would be bad... for them, I mean.

GAGE

Well... I better get back.

MADISON

Okay. Good night.

Madison goes to the door as Gage walks away but both look back over their shoulder at the other, an attraction growing. In the window, we see Rachel watching this with interest - she doesn't look exactly pleased.

**END ACT FOUR**

**ACT FIVE**

56 EXT. TOWN HALL - DAY

56

Residents of the town of Christmas have come together for the ornament hunt. Gage, Madison, Nell, Annie, and Lily are standing near the front of the pack.

NELL

Okay, I think we're in good shape. Tom's team is down a man so they're going to have a hard time keeping up. The Murphys just got back from vacation in Hawaii so they're soft.

MADISON

Is it just locals doing this?

GAGE

No, we have tourists as well.

NELL

But they don't know the town like we do so we don't worry about them. Our only true threat is...

Rachel approaches.

NELL (CONT'D)

Rachel! Merry Christmas.

RACHEL

And to you, too, Nell, Gage...  
(a bit surprised)  
Madison... Madison is on your team?

GAGE

We wanted to make sure she got the full Christmas experience.

Rachel is not pleased for a lot of reasons (the trophy, protectiveness of Gage) but she is not overt about it and keeps a friendly smile.

RACHEL

Well, that's... wonderful. I'm sure you'll have a great time.

NELL

She's going to have a fantastic time since we're going to win.

RACHEL

Oh, Nell... you're so optimistic.

GAGE

We're just here to have fun, right everyone? The spirit of Christmas.

MADISON

Right. Winning isn't everything.

NELL

Yes. A friendly competition.

RACHEL

Absolutely. Jingle all the way!

Rachel walks away and Nell sidles up to Madison.

NELL

Of course it's a friendly competition that I plan on winning.

Ethan steps up to the front of the crowd.

ETHAN

Hello, everyone! Before we begin, I want to remind everyone about the Christmas Festival. It's our town's biggest event and we still need more volunteers.

WINNIE

I have the sign-up sheets.

ETHAN

But for today, welcome to the Christmas Ornament Hunt!

NELL

(coaches)  
Annual.

ETHAN

Annual Christmas Ornament Hunt!

(applause)

The rules... teams can split up for the hunt but everyone has to be present when the final buzzer goes off. All of the ornaments were made by our very own Sheriff Gage McBride.

Ethan holds up an ornament - the paint and glitter looks like it was made by less than a skilled artisan. Several people look at Gage questioningly.

GAGE  
Madison helped.

Everyone gets it - they smile and nod toward Madison in well-meaning but faux approval.

ETHAN  
And a special treat this year.  
Every ornament is marked with a  
special discount for a local  
business!

Madison gives Gage a thumbs up. He smiles.

ETHAN (CONT'D)  
Whoever finds the most will get the  
coveted Christmas trophy!

He holds up a cute trophy - Christmas themed, of course.

NELL  
Annie and Lily, you're with me on  
Center Street. Gage and Madison,  
you take Main Street.

They are all in agreement.

ETHAN  
Is everyone ready? On your mark...  
get set... go!

The teams scramble.

57 EXT. CHRISTMAS MAIN STREET - DAY

57

Gage and Madison are working their way down Main Street together, searching for ornaments while other teams are doing the same. Madison finds one hidden under a bus bench.

MADISON  
Got one!

GAGE  
(high five)  
Yes! Nice.

MADISON  
Friendly competition. Please.

GAGE

I didn't say I didn't want to win.

MADISON

You want to crush our opponents but you want to be friendly about it.

GAGE

Something like that. Here!

Gage finds an ornament in a bush.

MADISON

So what's up with Rachel anyway? I get the feeling she isn't wild about me being around.

GAGE

She means well. She and Beth were friends so she can be a bit... overprotective at times.

MADISON

Is there... never mind. None of my business.

GAGE

Oh, you mean me and Rachel? We've talked about it but I don't date, really.

MADISON

Too busy?

GAGE

(beat)  
Not ready. Or I haven't been.

MADISON

I'm sorry. That must be hard. But you'll know it when you meet the right person. Some things can't be rushed.

Gage gives her a quick glance - could she be the one?

GAGE

(nods)  
What about you? Anyone special back in Denver?

MADISON

No. The travel part of my job makes it difficult to connect with people. I'm open to it but I just haven't...

GAGE

Met the right person?

MADISON

(glance at him)

Not yet... I don't think.

Before that train of thought can go any further, Nell, Annie, and Lily come around a corner, carrying ornaments.

LILY

Dad! Madison! Look at all the ornaments we got.

GAGE

That's great! We might just win this thing after all.

Annie spies an ornament hanging from a street sign.

ANNIE

There's one!

MADISON

Come on! Let's get it.

They start toward it but then see another contestant coming from the opposite direction, having spotted the ornament also. There is a mad dash and Madison and Annie make it first, Madison boosting Annie up to snag it and score the points. Gage, Lily, and Nell run up to join them and there are celebratory hugs all around.

ANNIE

We did it!

GAGE

Yes! Nice job!

Gage hugs Madison and then they let each other go, perhaps somewhat reluctantly and a little embarrassed.

GAGE (CONT'D)

We should...

MADISON

Yeah... time's almost up.

They turn and head back to the town hall.

58 EXT. CHRISTMAS STREET - DAY - CONTINUOUS 58

Rachel and Chelsea have been watching this interaction between Gage and Madison from across the street. Chelsea smiles broadly.

CHELSEA

Well, *that* was interesting.

Chelsea walks off, leaving Rachel behind - once again we see her overprotective nature, and possible feelings for Gage, coming out.

RACHEL

Yes, it was.

59 EXT. TOWN HALL - DAY 59

All of the teams are gathered as Ethan stands at the microphone. Winnie walks up with an envelope and hands it to Ethan. He opens it.

ETHAN

And the winners are... Team McBride!

Everyone cheers and Ethan hands Nell a trophy - a crowd gathers around them. Gage and Madison smile at each other as they shake hands with the townsfolk.

60 EXT./INT. CHRISTMAS BED & BREAKFAST - LOBBY - NIGHT 60

Madison and Gage walk up and enter - she is carrying the trophy.

GAGE

I'm surprised Nell let you keep that.

MADISON

Are you kidding? I'm never letting this out of my sight.

(off his smile)

What?

GAGE

Nothing. It's just kind of funny. You try to make it seem like you're immune to the small-town charm, but here you are all starry eyed over a twenty dollar trophy.

MADISON

I stand by what I said. Winning isn't everything... but it sure is nice.

GAGE

At some point it's going to be hard to keep the fact that you like it here in Christmas a secret.

MADISON

I'm not too stubborn to admit that this town does have some things going for it.

GAGE

Does that mean you're thinking about changing your mind about where the ski resort goes?

MADISON

To be honest? I doubt it.

GAGE

"I doubt it" sounds like progress to me. We're wearing you down.

MADISON

Mountain Park makes more sense for our company but... I have to admit there's something special about this place.

GAGE

Yes, there is.

Gage and Madison look at each other, having another one of those moments. She breaks it off first.

MADISON

Well... I'm going to turn in. Good night.

GAGE

Good night.

Madison heads up the stairs to her room. Gage smiles as she goes and then heads for the door.

61 INT. CHRISTMAS BED & BREAKFAST - MADISON'S ROOM - NIGHT 61

Madison enters the room and puts the trophy on a bureau, admiring it with a smile. Then she goes to the window and looks out.

MADISON'S POV

From her POV we see Gage walking down the snow covered street, the magical town of Christmas all aglow around him.

Madison smiles.

MADISON  
Something special...

**END ACT FIVE**

**ACT SIX**

62 EXT. TOWN HALL - DAY 62

Establishing shot.

63 INT. TOWN HALL - DAY 63

Gage, Nell, Ethan, Rachel, Winnie, and Chelsea are talking while a group of people sets up a Santa's Village in the town hall - some backdrops that look like Santa's workshop, a big chair for Santa to sit in and listen to kids' wishes, and lots of Christmas props around it.

GAGE

The town hasn't done a Santa's Village since I was a kid. Wasn't it part of the festival?

WINNIE

No, we always did it the week before to spread things out.

NELL

We're going to charm Madison into choosing Christmas if it kills us!

ETHAN

Gage, you're spending the most time with her. Do you think her affection might be growing?

Gage looks at Ethan, totally hearing that question wrong.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

Her affection for Christmas.

GAGE

Oh... It's hard to say. I think there might be something there.

RACHEL

How are we affording all this? We're not taking money away from the festival are we? It starts next week.

CHELSEA

That's our big event. A *real* event that we actually do every year.

ETHAN

Don't worry...

(eyes Gage)

We found some cost savings in the town budget.

Nell and the others look at Gage, also. He shrugs.

GAGE

The department can wait until next year to get a new patrol car.

NELL

You did that for the town?

Madison enters the park and approaches. Gage smiles.

GAGE

Yes. Anything for the town.

MADISON

(joining them)

Good morning. Look at all this!

NELL

Yes, it's our Santa's Village. All the kids get to make their Christmas wishes to Santa Claus.

MADISON

That's great. I love it.

(to the group)

Is there anything I can do to help?

WINNIE

I think we're in good shape. We have the scenery almost done and we've got a photographer coming to take pictures. Chelsea is bringing gingerbread cookies and cocoa.

MADISON

And Gage is playing Santa Claus, right?

Everyone stops - oops. They exchange slightly panicked looks. Nell steps in.

NELL

Yes, Gage is doing it.

GAGE

I am?... I mean, I am. Of course.

NELL

Gage just loves playing Santa!

GAGE

(smiling payback)

You know, Nell, we also need an elf  
to help out...

NELL

(caught - forces a smile)

Anything for the town.

MADISON

I can't wait to see this.

CHELSEA

What about Mrs. Claus? Who's going  
to play her?

GAGE

(smiles)

I think Madison should do it.

Madison laughs as everyone looks at her. Then the laughter  
fades when she realizes they are serious.

MADISON

Wait. Hold on...

Everyone, except her, smiles.

64

INT. TOWN HALL - NIGHT

64

Santa's Village is draped with Christmas lights and there is  
a line of families waiting to get a turn to tell Santa what  
they want for Christmas. Among them are Annie and Lily who  
are helping Chelsea pass out gingerbread cookies and cocoa.

The door to Santa's Workshop opens and Nell comes out first,  
dressed in a cute elf costume - she smiles and waves as the  
assembled group applauds. Next out is Madison wearing a Mrs.  
Claus costume. For the first moment she looks a bit  
uncomfortable but then the crowd cheers for her and she can't  
help but smile and wave. Finally Gage comes out dressed as  
Santa Claus and joins Nell and Madison in greeting the crowd.

GAGE

Ho, ho, ho! Merry Christmas!

The crowd goes wild. Annie and Lily, especially, are  
laughing and enjoying the show.

MADISON

(smiling aside to Gage)  
I can't believe I let you talk me  
into this.

GAGE

Opportunities like this don't come  
along every day.

She grins at him and they go to take their places as Nell brings the first of the little ones up to meet Santa. Christmas music begins as they do and Madison takes a moment to look around - the excitement, the energy, and the Christmas spirit is everywhere and she is moved by it.

Annie walks up to Madison.

ANNIE

You actually look pretty good.

MADISON

*Pretty good?*

ANNIE

(teasing)  
Well, you are wearing a wig and a  
costume after all.

MADISON

Speaking of which... we're short an  
elf and I just happened to see a  
costume that looked like it would  
fit you.

Annie starts backing away, laughing.

ANNIE

Oh no...

MADISON

Oh yes!

65 EXT. GAGE'S HOUSE - NIGHT 65

Establishing shot of Gage's house.

66 INT. GAGE'S HOUSE - LILY'S ROOM - NIGHT 66

Gage comes into Lily's very pink room to tuck her in. There are drawings on pieces of paper on the wall - pretty good ones for an eight year old.

GAGE  
Hey, Lily Pad. Lights out.

LILY  
Dad? When Santa let you borrow his suit tonight, did you tell him what you wanted for Christmas?

GAGE  
(smiles and sits on bed)  
I have everything I need.

LILY  
Everything?

GAGE  
Pretty much. Why? Do you think there's something I'm missing?

LILY  
No... not exactly. I just like seeing you smile. You should do that more often.

GAGE  
(laughs)  
I smile all the time.

LILY  
No, you don't. Not as much as you used to.

GAGE  
(beat)  
We all could use a few more smiles.

LILY  
Yeah. I think it's going to be the best Christmas yet.

GAGE  
(beat - smile)  
I do, too.

LILY  
What do you think Madison wants for Christmas?

GAGE  
I don't know. But, I bet she'd love one of your drawings.

LILY

Okay! I have to think about what I want to draw.

GAGE

Maybe it'll come to you in your dreams.

LILY

In other words, go to sleep, Lily.

GAGE

(laughs and kisses her)  
I love you.

LILY

I love you, too.

Gage goes to the door, pauses a moment to look lovingly at Lily, and then turns the lights off as he exits.

67

INT. GAGE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

67

Madison and Annie are sitting at the kitchen table enjoying Christmas cookies. Annie is still wearing her elf outfit.

ANNIE

Christmas Yet to Come!

MADISON

How can you say that? Christmas Past is the best one!

ANNIE

Scrooge doesn't change until he sees what the future has in store.

MADISON

Yes, but it all starts with him recognizing the mistakes he made in the past.

ANNIE

He has to accept the bad things in his past but it's looking forward that does it. We all want to have something to look forward to.

Madison let's that sink in for a moment.

MADISON

You know... I think you're right.

Gage enters.

GAGE  
Annie - time for bed.

ANNIE  
Okay. Good night, Madison.

MADISON  
Good night. And, thanks for being  
an elf tonight.

Annie smiles and shrugs.

ANNIE  
It was fun.

Annie exits the kitchen. Gage smiles at Madison.

GAGE  
I'll be back down in a minute and  
I'll walk you to the B&B.

MADISON  
Take your time.

Gages leaves and Madison sits, contemplatively, for a moment.  
Then she gets up, pulling out her phone.

68

EXT. GAGE'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

68

Madison comes out onto the front porch and looks out at all  
the Christmas lights and the town around them. She smiles  
and dials her phone.

MADISON  
(into phone)  
Joe, it's Madison. It's late but I  
wanted to leave you a message... I  
think Christmas might be more of a  
viable option than I thought. And  
I think I should probably stay a  
little while longer. Let's talk  
first thing in the morning.

She disconnects the call and looks up to see Gage standing in  
the doorway, eating a Christmas cookie and smiling.

GAGE  
Sorry, I didn't mean to eavesdrop.

MADISON  
I haven't totally changed my mind.

GAGE

I understand.

MADISON

I still think Mountain Park is the better place for the resort.

GAGE

Sure. Got it.

MADISON

I just think, maybe, Christmas is worth another look.

GAGE

Makes sense.

He smiles and she resists for a moment but then smiles, too.

MADISON

Oh, just eat your cookie. And give me half.

He breaks off half of the cookie and hands it to her, smiling as he does.

69 EXT. TOWN HALL - DAY

69

Establishing shot.

70 INT. TOWN HALL - DAY

70

A crew of people is putting up booths and a banner across the stage that reads "94th ANNUAL TOWN OF CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL DECEMBER 23-24." Gage and Madison are working together adding decorations to a booth - something that Rachel definitely notices from a booth not too far away. Annie and Lily are helping with minor tasks.

MADISON

I talked to Joe Hartwell this morning.

GAGE

Yeah? How did that go?

MADISON

He said he'd think about it. That's a good thing.

GAGE

And it *will* be a good thing, won't it? I mean, your resorts help the towns they're built near, right?

MADISON

Absolutely. New business, lots of tourists. It's great for growth.

GAGE

You've seen that happen a lot?

Madison has a realization.

MADISON

Well, I haven't seen it personally. I spend a lot of time in the towns getting the resorts ready to open and when they are, I head off to the next place. But I've seen the reports. Towns do well.

GAGE

I'm happy to hear that.  
(beat - considers)  
I guess that means you'll be spending more time here... Getting our resort ready to open.

MADISON

Probably... *if* Joe chooses Christmas. Wouldn't it be ironic if you took the job and went to Denver and I wound up here in Christmas?

GAGE

Yeah... ironic.

It's obvious that their attraction is growing. Nell comes over and pats Gage on the shoulder.

NELL

They need your help with the stage. Heavy lifting. Bend at the knees.

GAGE

Yes, ma'am.

Gage salutes and takes off and Nell smiles at Madison.

NELL

Looking forward to the Christmas festival? Day after tomorrow. You're staying aren't you?

MADISON

(evasive)  
It's a possibility.

NELL

The kids would love for you to stay. You could sing in the family choir with us!

MADISON

Oh, I don't know. You haven't heard me sing.

NELL

Trust me, you'll fit right in.  
(beat)  
And I know Gage would like for you to stay, too.

MADISON

(beat)  
You think so?

NELL

Absolutely. He wouldn't let just anybody spend time with his kids.

MADISON

With you around, I'm not sure he had much choice in the matter.

NELL

(loving)  
I know it may seem like I'm in charge of that house but it's only because he knows how much it means to me. He lets me get away with a lot because it makes me feel needed, I guess.

MADISON

You are. It's obvious.

NELL

Well, this has been good for him. You've been good for him.

MADISON

You think so? I figured you were just being nice to me because you wanted to get the ski resort.

NELL

Well, maybe at first. I love this town almost as much as I love Gage and the kids.

MADISON

I kind of got that.

NELL

We just need a little help to keep everything that makes Christmas so wonderful. Except for that slogan. That we can get rid of. Everything else stays.

Nell walks off, happily, but that last comment causes Madison to think - maybe a little flash of concern crosses her face.

71 EXT. CHRISTMAS BED & BREAKFAST - NIGHT 71

Establishing shot of the B&B.

72 INT. CHRISTMAS BED & BREAKFAST - LOBBY - NIGHT 72

Madison enters and heads for the stairs just as Rachel comes into the lobby from the parlor.

RACHEL

Hi, Madison. Turning in?

MADISON

I have a little work to do first.

RACHEL

Working on getting us the resort?

MADISON

(smiles)

We'll see what happens.

RACHEL

Everyone hopes you staying here so long is a good sign. Ethan wants to give you the key to the city.

MADISON

I think that's a little premature.

RACHEL

But that's why you've stayed,  
right? There's nothing else  
keeping you here, is there?

MADISON

(beat)  
No. That's it.

RACHEL

(beat)  
Gage and I have known each other a  
long time. He's a good man.

MADISON

Yes, he is.

RACHEL

And I feel like it's kind of my job  
to watch out for him - make sure no  
one hurts him.

MADISON

(hesitant)  
That's very nice.

RACHEL

Well, he needs someone who is going  
to stick around. Someone who will  
really be there for him. Someone  
local if you get my meaning.

Madison, buttons pushed, says something she shouldn't.

MADISON

Oh, I get it, but that might be  
harder to do if he takes the job in  
Denver.

Rachel is surprised. Madison instantly regrets saying that.

MADISON (CONT'D)

Rachel, I... I shouldn't have said  
anything about that. That was told  
to me in confidence.

RACHEL

I understand.  
(beat)  
Well... I'll let you get to work.  
Good night.

MADISON

Good night.

Rachel exits into the parlor and Madison stands there for a moment, unhappy with herself over what just happened.

**END ACT SIX**

ACT SEVEN

73 INT. GINGERBREAD HOUSE BAKERY - DAY

73

Madison is sitting at a table in the bakery with Chelsea and Winnie sharing cups of coffee and snacks.

WINNIE

And wait until you see what Chelsea and I are planning for the Christmas festival. We're going to do a toy train set running through a gingerbread town.

MADISON

That's sounds great. I'm looking forward to it.

WINNIE

Oh, Nell told me that you're going to come up with a new town slogan.

MADISON

You don't like it either?

CHELSEA

Santa's second favorite town? It's terrible. Christmas is so much more than that. We need something that tells people what we're all about. The feeling you get when you walk down Main Street.

Madison thinks about that as Gage enters.

GAGE

What are you ladies up to?

WINNIE

We're talking about a new town slogan to put on the sign... once we get a new one, that is.

CHELSEA

You still haven't figured out how the old one got damaged?

GAGE

It's a mystery. Isn't it Madison?

MADISON

Someone should call the sheriff.

GAGE

(smiles)

We better go. If we're late to family choir practice we will never hear the end of it from Nell.

MADISON

(to Winnie & Chelsea)

I'll work on the slogan.

Chelsea and Winnie wave as they exit.

WINNIE

Everyone knows Madison knocked over the sign, right?

CHELSEA

Of course.

They get back to discussing town business.

74

EXT. CHRISTMAS MAIN STREET - DAY

74

Gage and Madison are walking down the sidewalk.

MADISON

So let me ask you... Why do you love it here so much?

GAGE

Research for the new slogan?

MADISON

Of course.

GAGE

(considers)

You talked about what Christmas was like when you were a kid. You remember that feeling you had. The community. The family. Home.

MADISON

Of course.

GAGE

And where is home now? Where is the place you dream of spending Christmas?

MADISON

(never thought of it)

I guess...

(MORE)

MADISON (CONT'D)

I don't have a good answer to that.  
Denver is a nice city.

GAGE

Home is not a city. It's the  
people. That's what it's like here  
all the time. These people are my  
family. This place is my home.

MADISON

Does that mean you're not going to  
take the new job?

GAGE

I haven't totally decided yet,  
but... I think it might be  
important for me to stick around.

Those words resonate for Madison - they are the same ones  
Rachel used. She backs away.

MADISON

Gage... listen, about the job...

Nell comes rushing toward them from the park.

NELL

Come on, you two!

GAGE

We're coming!

Gage shrugs and heads toward Nell. Madison takes a beat,  
sorry she didn't get a chance to say what she wanted to say,  
and then follows.

75 EXT. TOWN HALL - DAY

75

Establishing shot.

76 INT. TOWN HALL - DAY

76

A group of families - moms, dads, grandparents, and kids -  
has assembled near the stage in the town hall. Lily and Nell  
are with the group while Annie stands on the sidelines. Gage  
and Madison enter the area and pick up their song books.

MADISON

(sees Annie)

You couldn't get Annie to join?

GAGE

No. She says she's too old for it.

MADISON

I don't know. I get the feeling this might be a little bigger than that.

GAGE

(nods)

She used to love doing it with her mom. I've tried to talk to her about it but...

MADISON

I think if you could just get her up there, she'd have fun. Do you mind if I give it a shot?

GAGE

(beat)

Go ahead.

Madison nods. Gage goes to join Lily and Nell while Madison goes to Annie.

MADISON

Hey, Annie. Can I watch them practice with you?

ANNIE

I thought you were going to be in the choir.

MADISON

Oh, I was, but then I realized, nobody wants to hear me sing. I just hope Lily isn't too disappointed. She really wanted all of us up there.

ANNIE

She did?

MADISON

I think she was remembering what it was like in the past... but looking forward to what it could be in the future.

Annie takes that to heart.

ANNIE  
(considers)  
Well... I guess... if Lily was  
really looking forward to it.

Annie smiles and Madison holds out her hand. Annie takes it and they head over to join the choir, much to Gage, Nell, and Lily's surprise. Gage gives Madison a grateful and appreciative smile as she joins the group and she returns it with a smile and a nod.

77 EXT. GAGE'S HOUSE - NIGHT 77

Establishing shot of Gage's house.

78 INT. GAGE'S HOUSE - ANNIE'S ROOM - NIGHT 78

Gage enters Annie's room as she reads "A Christmas Carol."

GAGE  
Time for bed.

ANNIE  
I'm almost finished.

GAGE  
I thought you already read that.

ANNIE  
I'm reading it again.

GAGE  
(beat)  
You know that was one of your  
mother's favorite books. She read  
it every year at Christmas.

ANNIE  
(quietly)  
I know. I wanted to read it before  
but she told me to wait until I was  
older. She thought I'd be scared  
by the ghosts.

GAGE  
(laughs)  
She told me the same thing. Maybe  
I'll check it out when you're done  
with it.

ANNIE  
You haven't read it?

GAGE

I've seen the movies.

ANNIE

Dad! It's not the same. The book is so much better.

GAGE

Yeah? How so?

He sits on the edge of the bed as Annie, more animated than he has seen her in a long time, starts to explain.

ANNIE

Well, for starters, you get a better idea of what Scrooge is thinking, so you really feel it when he realizes the true meaning of Christmas.

Gage smiles as Annie continues talking about the book.

79 EXT. GAGE'S WORKSHOP - NIGHT 79

Establishing shot of Gage's workshop.

80 INT. GAGE'S WORKSHOP - NIGHT 80

Gage enters the workshop and goes over to the tarp-covered sleigh. He moves some stuff around and then pulls the tarp off of it. Gage appreciates the sleigh for a moment and then reaches out to touch one of the pieces of molding on the side that has come loose. He nods as if to say "let's do this" and goes to get tools to make the repair. As he gets to work, Madison enters.

MADISON

You decided to bring her out of retirement, huh?

GAGE

Yes. I think it's time. I want it to be ready for next Christmas.

MADISON

What brought all this on?

Gage looks at her - he wants to say "you" but instead...

GAGE

I was considering leaving because I thought we needed a change. A fresh start.

MADISON

And now?

GAGE

And now, I think change doesn't mean you have to give up everything that means something to you.

He pats the sleigh for emphasis.

MADISON

I'm glad to hear it.

Madison's phone rings. She looks at it and excuses herself.

MADISON (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. It's work. I need to take this.

She steps out of the workshop

81 EXT. GAGE'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - NIGHT 81

Madison comes out of the workshop and answers the phone.

MADISON

Hi, Joe. What's going on?

82 INT. HARTWELL ENTERPRISES - BOARD ROOM - NIGHT 82

Joe and Harrison are in the boardroom as they talk to Madison on the phone. We begin INTERCUTTING between them.

JOE

I've been reviewing the town's proposal, the financial benefits, and what you've said about how charming the place is... and I've decided we're going to put the resort in Christmas.

MADISON

(smiles)

That's great. I'm very happy to hear that, Joe.

HARRISON

Yes. I'm happy that you came around to my way of thinking.

MADISON

Well, I did take the time to get to know the place. Making a decision like this is about more than just numbers on a spreadsheet, right Joe?

JOE

Absolutely.

HARRISON

But the numbers are important, too.

JOE

Of course.

MADISON

Important, yes, but not the only thing.

JOE

Are you two done?

Madison and Harrison go silent.

JOE (CONT'D)

After the holidays the three of us need to sit down and have a talk about the future.

HARRISON

That would be great.

MADISON

I'm looking forward to it.

JOE

Madison, you might want to think about who should take over the ski resort project.

MADISON

Take over...?

JOE

You might be spending a lot more time in Denver.

MADISON

(hadn't thought of that)  
Oh... Yes, I guess that makes sense.

JOE

I'm sure you'll be happy to get back home.

MADISON

(beat)  
Yes... I will be.

JOE

So when should we announce the decision?

MADISON

Well, they have a big festival starting tomorrow. The whole town comes out. It might be nice to do it here on Christmas Eve.

JOE

That sounds good. Madison, will you arrange it with the mayor?

MADISON

Of course. I think everyone will be very excited.

HARRISON

They should be. Just think of all the new businesses it'll bring to town. Malls and stores and restaurants. They'll be as big as Mountain Park in no time.

This lands on Madison.

MADISON

But... I mean, Christmas will still be Christmas.

JOE

Sure. Just a bigger, better, more modern version of it. We'll see you on Christmas Eve, Madison.

We stick with Madison as she contemplates what all of this means.

**END ACT SEVEN**

ACT EIGHT

83 EXT. TOWN HALL - DAY 83

Establishing shot.

84 INT. TOWN HALL - DAY 84

The Christmas Festival is underway with booths for food and crafts, games, a small stage for the family choir, decorations, and Christmas music playing through speakers.

Costumed characters interact with delighted visitors. Colorful lights adorn the Christmas trees and there are fun decorations like oversized ornaments, snowmen, and gift-wrapped boxes.

As Madison walks through, people wave greetings at her as if she is a resident. She smiles, but we can tell what Dana said about the job and about Christmas becoming more like Mountain Park is troubling her. Ethan walks by.

ETHAN

Madison. Hi. Are you having fun?

MADISON

I am. Everyone seems to be having a great time.

ETHAN

You're still going to be in the family choir tomorrow night with the McBrides right? It's Christmas Eve, the grand finale!

MADISON

That's the plan. They haven't kicked me out yet.

ETHAN

(confidentially)

I think right after that is when you can make the announcement about the resort.

MADISON

(beat - hesitant)

Okay... that sounds good. But keep it between us until then, okay?

ETHAN

You got it. This is going to be  
the best Christmas we have ever  
had.

A big, positive smile on his face, he walks off. Madison's smile fades a bit - she's unsettled.

As she continues walking she happens upon Chelsea and Winnie who are proudly displaying their gingerbread town train set. They wave at her and she gives them a smiling thumbs up.

Madison continues on and sees Gage, Nell, Annie, and Lily at one of the Christmas themed game booths. They are all laughing and having fun. Madison thinks for a moment, obviously worried. She takes out her phone and dials.

MADISON

(into phone)

Dana? Hi, I need help with some  
research.. on the places where  
we've built resorts.

(beat)

I want to know what happens to the  
towns after we build them.

Madison nods and continues walking.

85 EXT. GINGERBREAD HOUSE BAKERY - DAY 85

Establishing shot of the Gingerbread House Bakery.

86 INT. GINGERBREAD HOUSE BAKERY - DAY 86

Madison is sitting with Dana, a laptop and lots of reports and papers on the table between them - they are looking at the material with obvious concern. Chelsea is behind the counter, out of earshot.

MADISON

You didn't have to come all the way  
down here from Denver.

DANA

I thought you should see all this  
in person.

MADISON

This is not good, Dana.  
(points at papers)

(MORE)

MADISON (CONT'D)

When we put resorts near bigger cities like Mountain Park, it winds up being great but for small towns it's not always the case. They do fine on paper but it's usually at the expense of the businesses that already exist. Big chains come along and force the closure of the mom and pop stores.

DANA

So instead of going to this cute bakery on Main Street, people would go to the big new supermarket that will come into town. Well, change can be good, right?

MADISON

Sometimes...

Madison looks at Chelsea, who is at the counter, smiling and helping a customer.

MADISON (CONT'D)

I pick the sites and open the resorts and then I just leave... I never see what happens to the towns afterward.

DANA

That's not your fault.

MADISON

But this time it definitely would be, because bringing this ski resort here isn't going to save Christmas... it's going to destroy everything that makes it special and magical. I can't let that happen.

DANA

What are you going to do?

MADISON

I need to convince the town.

DANA

What about Mr. Hartwell? He's pretty excited now about putting the new resort here.

MADISON

Then I guess I need to convince him first.

She pulls out her phone and heads for the door.

87 EXT. CHRISTMAS MAIN STREET - DAY

87

Madison comes out onto Main Street. The Christmas decor up and down the street give it a magical feeling. She sees Winnie's toy store and Chelsea's Gingerbread House bakery and all of the other buildings that are styled to look like the North Pole. The Christmas Festival is happening in the nearby park, people laughing and having fun with the holiday excitement. She smiles at the scene, clearly fond of this place and all it has to offer. Her smile fades and she dials the phone.

88 INT. HARTWELL ENTERPRISES - LOBBY - DAY

88

Joe is walking through the merrily decorated lobby toward the elevators when his phone rings.

JOE

Madison! How are things in Christmas?

We begin INTERCUTTING between the two of them.

MADISON

Well... That's why I'm calling.

(beat)

Joe, I've been thinking about it and... I don't think we should put the resort in Christmas after all.

JOE

What? Why not?

MADISON

I'm worried about the impact it's going to have on the town.

JOE

Our resorts help places like Christmas.

MADISON

In some ways. I collected research on smaller towns where we have resorts... Parkersburg, Mill Valley, Shelter Lake...

(MORE)

MADISON (CONT'D)

all of them had main streets and town squares with family run stores before we came along. And now all of it's gone - replaced by strip malls and big chains.

JOE

That's called progress, Madison.

MADISON

Maybe for them, but it wouldn't be for Christmas... this town's character is what makes it so unique to begin with. This is more than just a collection of buildings, it's...

She looks around at Main Street again.

MADISON (CONT'D)

It's everything that the holiday is about. This town is the spirit of Christmas come to life.

JOE

I don't understand. Two weeks ago you had dismissed Christmas as a possibility, then you were for it, and now you're against it?

MADISON

I know. But now that I understand things more clearly, I believe that Mountain Park is the better choice.

JOE

The financial deal that Christmas is offering is very appealing. It has proven itself worthy of our investment. I would think you'd be on board with that.

MADISON

But I'm not. The cost to Christmas is too great. It's not just numbers. Instead of maximizing what Christmas is all about, we'd be changing it into something completely different.

JOE

Then why does the town want the resort?

MADISON

Because they don't realize that.

JOE

Is it our job to make their decision for them?

MADISON

No, but it is our responsibility to be upfront with them about what exactly the resort will bring. And, it is our job to consider better alternatives... for the resort, and for Christmas.

JOE

I hear you, but I worry that you're thinking with your heart here.

MADISON

Is that a bad thing? This town is all about heart.

JOE

It's about much more than the resort, Madison. There's a lot at stake here.

MADISON

I understand. But I think Christmas is worth fighting for.

Madison disconnects the call and looks around at the town again, very worried.

89 EXT. TOWN HALL - NIGHT

89

Establishing shot.

90 INT. TOWN HALL - NIGHT

90

The festival is full of people enjoying all of the Christmas fun, playing games, eating food, looking at the crafts.

Gage is near the stage where a small group of carolers is singing. Nell, Ethan, Rachel, Chelsea, Winnie, and Tom are watching when Madison approaches quickly.

MADISON

Gage... I've been looking for you.

GAGE

Madison! We've been looking for you, too.

Gage looks over to Ethan and gives him a nod. Ethan and Winnie head for the stage just as the carolers finish and the audience applauds.

MADISON

Listen, can we go somewhere to talk? There's something I need to tell you.

GAGE

Sure. Of course, but can it wait for a few minutes?

Gage points toward the stage where Ethan approaches a microphone. Winnie stands behind him holding something covered by a small drape.

ETHAN

Hello, everyone! Merry Christmas. I'm Mayor Ethan O'Connor and I'd like to welcome you to the annual Town of Christmas Festival!

People come closer as they applaud - the crowd gets larger.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

We have a special guest with us tonight. Madison... will you come up here, please?

Madison gets a little wide-eyed - this is not what she wants - but the crowd, especially Gage and Nell, encourage her to do so and she really doesn't have much of a choice. She goes up on the stage.

91 INT. TOWN HALL - STAGE - NIGHT

91

Madison comes onto the stage and joins Ethan and Winnie.

ETHAN

Everyone, this is Madison Lane from Hartwell Enterprises.

(more applause)

We have enjoyed having you here in Christmas and we hope to see a lot more of you in the future. So, on behalf of everyone in Christmas, I'd like to present you with the Key to the City.

Winnie removes the drape and reveals a ceremonial key. She hands it to an overwhelmed Madison as the crowd cheers. Ethan encourages her to take the microphone and she does so, albeit reluctantly.

MADISON

Thank you... I really don't deserve this... Listen, I know that everyone really wants the ski resort to come here, but... I need to tell you why I don't think that's a good idea.

There is disappointed and confused murmuring.

MADISON (CONT'D)

Let me explain. The resort is not going to be good for the town.

RACHEL

But it's supposed to bring jobs and tourism. That sounds good to me.

The crowd seems to agree with Rachel. Madison is quickly losing control of the narrative as everyone starts to unhappily discuss what is going on.

MADISON

No, wait... if you'll just let me explain.

Madison looks to Gage for support. He climbs up onto the stage and goes to the microphone and quiets the crowd down.

GAGE

Everyone, quiet, please! We should at least hear her out.

TOM

Why? It seems like she hasn't been straight with us.

That bumps up the unhappy murmuring again.

GAGE

Well, I want to hear what she has to say and I think you should, too. If you can't do it for her, then do it for me.

RACHEL

Why should we? I hear you're taking a job and moving to Denver.

That brings everything to a screeching halt. Gage looks at Madison.

MADISON

Gage... I'm sorry, I...

Gage shakes his head and steps back as the murmuring takes on a greater intensity. He heads for the steps off the stage and after a moment, Madison follows him through the crowd.

Madison catches up with Gage as he nears the exit.

MADISON (CONT'D)

Gage. Wait.

GAGE

(turns to face her)

How could you do that? How could you tell Rachel Dane, of all people, that I was thinking of leaving Christmas?

MADISON

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to, it just slipped out.

GAGE

Why didn't you tell me?

MADISON

I tried. I was going to. And then everything with the resort blew up. But we can find a way to fix it.

GAGE

How? In one fell swoop you ruined my credibility and yours. They're not going to listen to us.

MADISON

I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to... I really was trying to help the town but it seems like all I did was hurt it... I hurt everyone.

She starts to walk away.

GAGE

Where are you going?

MADISON

I'm going home.

She turns and walks out of the town hall. Gage, hurt, doesn't stop her.

92 EXT. GAGE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

92

Madison is standing next to her now repaired car at the curb in front of Gage's house, which is all lit up for Christmas, giving the scene a warm glow.

Nell, Annie, and Lily are there and no one seems happy. Gage is hanging back from the group - not standoffish, but also not eager to engage.

NELL

Thank you for stopping on your way out of town.

MADISON

It was the least I could do.

NELL

Madison... Tomorrow is Christmas Eve. Are you sure you can't stay?

MADISON

I'm sorry.

Madison hugs Nell and glances at Gage who doesn't offer her anything. She turns to the girls.

MADISON (CONT'D)

Annie. Lily. Merry Christmas.

ANNIE

What about the choir? Something to look forward to, remember?

MADISON

I know, but... you still can.

Annie nods, not happy, but accepting. She holds out a small gift wrapped package to her. On top is a reindeer drawing.

MADISON (CONT'D)

What's this?

ANNIE

Merry Christmas.

LILY

I did the drawing.

MADISON

Thank you. It's the best reindeer ever.

LILY

You're welcome.

Madison and Lily hug then Madison and Annie hug. Madison puts the present in her purse as she goes to Gage.

MADISON

Well... Merry Christmas, Gage.

GAGE

(beat)

Merry Christmas, Madison.

Madison gets in the car and drives away. The girls and Nell wave and then go back toward the house. Gage stands there watching Madison drive off, the lights glowing behind him.

**END ACT EIGHT**

ACT NINE

93 EXT. GAGE'S WORKSHOP - DAY 93

Establishing shot of Gage's workshop.

94 INT. GAGE'S WORKSHOP - DAY 94

Gage is working on the sleigh, which is starting to come back to life.

GAGE  
Good morning.

NELL  
(fondly at sleigh)  
Would you look at that.

GAGE  
Yeah... brings back a lot of memories, doesn't it?

NELL  
Good ones.  
(beat)  
Well, we should get over to the park. We don't want to be late for the family choir rehearsal.

GAGE  
Okay. I just need to clean up a bit out here and I'll be in.

He starts that process. Nell stands there silently. It's hard for Gage not to notice that.

GAGE (CONT'D)  
Nell? Something else on your mind?

NELL  
I'm just trying to figure out how to say something to you.

GAGE  
(laughs)  
When have you ever not known how to talk to me?

NELL  
This is important. I don't want to mess it up.

GAGE  
(gets serious)  
Okay.

NELL  
I loved Beth. I loved her like she  
was my own daughter.

GAGE  
She loved you, too.

NELL  
When she died she took a piece of  
my heart with her. But there's  
still room in my heart for new  
people to love. And there's still  
room in yours, too.

GAGE  
(beat)  
How do you know if you're ready?

NELL  
(shrugs)  
You just do.  
(beat)  
I know all the things we did - the  
tree lighting, the ornament hunt,  
Santa's village - all those  
traditions we brought back... we  
just did that to try to change  
Madison's mind but I think it  
changed ours, too.

GAGE  
How so?

NELL  
It reminded us of who we are. We  
are Christmas. We have Madison to  
thank for that.

She pats him on the cheek and leaves the workshop. Gage sits  
for a moment and then looks over at the sleigh and smiles.

Establishing shot of the Hartwell building.

96

INT. HARTWELL ENTERPRISES - MADISON'S OFFICE - DAY

96

Madison is packing up her office - putting things into boxes. Dana comes to the door.

DANA

What are you... Did Mr. Hartwell fire you?

MADISON

No. Not yet. But I'm sure he's going to recommend that Harrison become CEO when he retires and I don't know how I can work here anymore after everything that has happened.

DANA

There must be something you can do.

MADISON

I wish there was but I just don't know what it is.

Madison moves one of the boxes and it knocks over her purse. Items from inside spill out, including the present Annie gave her. Dana goes to help - she picks up the present.

DANA

Who is this from?

MADISON

Oh... it's from Annie.

She takes a moment and looks at the reindeer drawing, then opens the present. It is Annie's copy of "A Christmas Carol." The sight of it causes Madison's breath to catch.

She opens the cover and reads the inscription.

MADISON (CONT'D)

*Madison... for all your Christmases  
yet to come. Love, Annie.*

Madison sits, overwhelmed.

DANA

Are you okay?

MADISON

I'm Scrooge.

DANA

I wouldn't go that far.

MADISON

I used to go in and put these resorts in towns and I never worried about what happened to them. I just assumed things would get better for all these towns. But, that wouldn't be the future for Christmas. Because I know what Christmas really means. It means home.

We can almost see the lightbulb go off over her head.

MADISON (CONT'D)

Christmas means home... and that means there's another way.

She stands.

DANA

What are you thinking?

MADISON

When does Joe leave for Christmas?

DANA

Not until late this afternoon. Around five, I think. Why?

MADISON

I can't quit! The right opportunity may have just come along!

Dana is intrigued by that comment.

97 EXT. TOWN HALL - NIGHT

97

Establishing shot of the town hall - the sleigh that had been in Gage's garage is now parked out front.

98 INT. TOWN HALL - NIGHT

98

The festival is in full swing with the Christmas lights throwing splashes of color everywhere. The event is busy with lots of festively dressed people in attendance. Among them we see Winnie manning a carnival game, Chelsea selling baked goods at a booth, Tom examining some crafts, and Ethan and Gage proudly watching over it all with Joe and Harrison.

JOE

This is quite a festival you've got here, gentlemen.

GAGE

Thank you. We're proud of it.

JOE

I can see why. I think all of the good things I heard about this place are true.

ETHAN

We think so. Well... are you ready to get started?

JOE

Let's do it.

Gage, Ethan, Joe, and Harrison head to the stage.

99

INT. TOWN HALL - STAGE - NIGHT

99

Gage, Ethan, Joe, and Harrison come up to the stage as the crowd builds in front of it. We see Nell, Annie, Lily, Chelsea, Winnie, Tom, and Rachel all eagerly waiting for the big announcement.

GAGE

Merry Christmas, everyone. I just wanted to clear something up. Yes, I had a job offer in Denver but I'm not taking it. I'm staying here in Christmas. This is my home. It's... it's the best place in the world. And I'm going to make sure it stays that way.

(beat)

Okay... now let's get on with business. I'd like to introduce Mr. Joe Hartwell of Hartwell Enterprises.

There is more applause - everyone thinks they know where this is going.

JOE

Good evening, everyone. Merry Christmas. I know you think I'm here to talk about the ski resort project, but this afternoon before we left Denver, I was presented with another idea. To explain that, here's Madison Lane.

The surprise from the crowd is evident.

100 INT. TOWN HALL - NIGHT 100

The surprise murmuring from the crowd continues as they part to make way for Madison and Dana who is carrying a large, covered poster board. Gage and Madison's eyes meet - his questioning what is going on and her's smiling. Madison and Dana make their way up to the stage.

101 INT. TOWN HALL - STAGE - NIGHT 101

Madison goes to the microphone while Dana takes up a position near Joe and Harrison.

MADISON

Hi. When I first got here I didn't really get what Christmas is all about. I thought I did, but all of you helped me understand that...

Madison looks at Gage - he nods, encouraging her to go on.

MADISON (CONT'D)

Christmas is that feeling you get when you decorate a tree with the people you love. It's handmade ornaments, it's Santa Claus, it's baking cookies. Christmas is about family and home, and I want people to be able to experience those amazing feelings just like I have here. So that's why, instead of a ski resort, we want to invest in the town to make it a *year-round* Christmas destination. We'll bring back all of the traditions and create attractions that allow people to come together and celebrate the joy and magic of the holidays at Christmas and throughout the year. And imagine a brand new sign, welcoming people to town, telling them...

She motions to Dana who uncovers the poster board to reveal a sign design and a new slogan.

MADISON (CONT'D)

Christmas Means Home All Year  
Round.

There is appreciative chatter from the audience. She steps back from the microphone and looks at Gage. He steps forward.

GAGE

I say we put it to a vote...  
(he looks at Madison)  
Because this is an opportunity I  
don't think we can afford to miss.

Ethan steps up to the microphone.

ETHAN

All those in favor, say aye!

The ayes are thunderous and overwhelming. Jaunty Christmas music begins as there is a great deal of celebration, hugging, and handshakes. Madison and Gage are pulled apart for a moment and Joe and Harrison approach Madison.

JOE

Well done, Madison.

MADISON

Thank you, Joe.

HARRISON

Nice job... I mean that.

Harrison shakes Madison's hand and walks off the stage.

JOE

Do I get the impression you'll want  
to oversee the project yourself  
instead of coming back to Denver?

MADISON

Yes. I finally found a home...  
(looks at Gage)  
...just in time for Christmas.

Lily and Annie come onto the stage and take Madison's hands.

LILY

Come on, Madison. It's time for  
the family choir to sing.

Madison looks at the kids - at Annie, who smiles at her.

ANNIE

I know you were looking forward to  
it.

Madison hugs them both, and they head toward the group.

102 INT. TOWN HALL - NIGHT

102

The family choir is assembled on stage - with Madison between Annie and Lily, and Nell and Gage behind them. They are singing a Christmas carol as the audience, including all of our other major characters, watches appreciatively.

On stage, the kids are having a great time and Madison glances back to smile at Gage. He smiles back. The choir finishes up their song and the audience cheers. The group starts to disband and Madison makes her way to Gage - he takes her hands.

GAGE

You did it.

MADISON

We did it. You're the one who reminded me about the true meaning of Christmas. I just needed to come home to understand it.

GAGE

When you left it was like you took a piece of us with you. So don't do that again, okay?

MADISON

Okay.

GAGE

Because every time you leave... I'm worried you're going to crash into the sign again.

MADISON

(laughs)  
Are you done?

GAGE

For now.

MADISON

Merry Christmas, Gage.

GAGE

Merry Christmas, Madison.

The two of them kiss as the celebration continues around them, and we PULL OUT on the joyous festival and the town where Christmas Means Home.

**THE END**