

HAPPIEST SEASON

Written by

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February 28, 2018

EXT. DYKER HEIGHTS. NIGHT

Holiday revelers line the lavishly decorated streets of Dyker Heights, a upscale residential neighborhood in the southwest corner of Brooklyn.

ABBY (28), academic, patient, kind, and STELLA (27), sharp, feminine, confident, a natural beauty, walk with a tour group down the block.

The tour is led by TRUDY, 40s, high strung, wearing a Santa hat, a Christmas light necklace, and a shiny, red parka.

TRUDY

...and this house up here was originally owned by Herbert Flackshaw of Flackshaw Concrete. Mr. Flackshaw was known for having the most over the top display on the block. He even hired his nephew, Otis, to play Santa for many years. Otis was a neighborhood favorite until he was arrested for child endangerment in 1992. Now this house...

Abby pays close attention.

STELLA

God, I'm so bored.

ABBY

Shhh, she's about to tell the story about the woman who was smothered by her own Christmas tree-

TRUDY

You think Christmas trees are safe? Think again!

STELLA

Can't we just go off on our own?

ABBY

No, this is a tradition.

Stella rolls her eyes. Abby listens intently.

TRUDY

...and they didn't find her for 17 days! Because the scent of pine overpowered the stench of her decaying body, it took them a while to get to the root of the problem!

Trudy laughs. Abby turns to share the laugh with Stella, but she is gone. Abby notices her climbing the gate of an unlit home.

EXT. UNLIT HOUSE. NIGHT

Stella jumps down on the other side of the gate as Abby runs up.

ABBY
What are you doing?!

STELLA
No one's home. Let's climb up to the roof so we can get a view of the whole neighborhood.

ABBY
Are you crazy? This is trespassing.

STELLA
Only if we get caught.

EXT. TREE. NIGHT

Stella ascends the tree with ease. Abby struggles.

ABBY
I just want to go on record and say that I think this is a very bad idea.

Stella reaches the top of the tree, and jumps onto the roof.

EXT. ROOF. NIGHT

Stella helps Abby onto the roof.

ABBY
Maybe prison won't be so bad. I love to read, and maybe we can ask to be put in the same cell.

Stella takes Abby's hand and leads her to the edge of the roof.

STELLA
Look.

Abby looks out at the spectacular view. The neighborhood is aglow with twinkling lights.

ABBY
It's incredible.

Abby leans in to kiss Stella, but before she does-

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Hey! Who's up there?

ABBY
Oh shit!

MAN'S VOICE
I hear you! I'm calling the police!

STELLA
Run!

They run to the tree. Stella lets Abby go first.

ABBY
Prison will be bad! I won't make
it.

STELLA
Just go!

Abby hurries down the tree. She slips and loses her balance. She reaches out and catches a branch.

STELLA (CONT'D)
Are you okay?

ABBY
So great!

Abby hangs from the branch in front of a dark window. The light inside the room comes on and an ANGRY MAN in furry reindeer costume, holding the head in his hand, spots Abby outside. Another PERSON in a snowman furry costume appears behind him. Abby screams.

ANGRY MAN
Hey! Stop right there!

Abby drops to the ground. Stella scurries down behind her. They sprint to the gate.

EXT. BROOKLYN STREET. NIGHT

Abby and Stella run at top speed.

STELLA
That was amazing!

ABBY
That was awful!

They stop running, and try to catch their breath.

ABBY (CONT'D)

I can't believe we did that! It was irresponsible and dangerous-

STELLA

And...?

ABBY

And...great. It was great.

Abby takes a step toward Stella. They kiss.

TITLE CARD

BEGIN OPENING CREDITS

INT. ABBY AND STELLA'S BEDROOM. MORNING

A nice sized bedroom meticulously decorated with modern furniture, mixed with curated flea market finds. On the walls hang rare lithographs from famous artists.

On a bedside table is an old photograph of a 10 year old Abby with her PARENTS, a kind faced couple, standing in front of The Louvre Pyramid.

Abby finishes getting dressed. Steam pours out of the bathroom.

INT. ABBY AND STELLA'S BATHROOM. MORNING

Stella is in the shower. Abby walks in, a spring in her step.

ABBY

Babe, I'm taking off.

STELLA

Now?

ABBY

Yeah. Why, do you need something?

STELLA

No, it can wait.

ABBY

Are you sure?

STELLA

Totally. I love you.

Abby kisses Stella.

ABBY
Love you too. See you at the tree!

INT. ABBY AND STELLA'S LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN. MORNING

A bright, airy room, open floor plan with big windows and high ceilings. A Christmas tree overloaded with ornaments sits in the corner.

Abby exits the bedroom in a hurry. She puts on her coat and throws her messenger bag over her shoulder as she walks to the front door. Before she leaves, she stops at an advent calendar hanging next to the front door. She moves the little stuffed angel from the 19th to the 20th. She exits.

EXT. ABBY AND STELLA'S APARTMENT BUILDING. MORNING

Everywhere you look the holiday season is being celebrated. The city is bursting with Christmas spirit.

Abby walks out of her building and onto the bustling New York street. She pops in her ear buds, and turns up the volume on a pop-y Christmas song. She grins as she walks down the street. Abby sees TWO CAB DRIVERS hanging out in front of their yellow cabs.

ABBY
Happy holidays!

CAB DRIVER #1
Eat shit.

Abby doesn't hear him.

ABBY
Thanks!

Abby walks on. She spots a WELL DRESSED MAN with a JACK RUSSELL on a leash. The dog wears a Christmas sweater.

ABBY (CONT'D)
Awwww!

As she passes the Jack Russell, a SPORTY WOMAN with a GREAT DANE walks by. The Jack Russell attacks the Great Dane, the owners scramble to pull them apart. Abby is oblivious.

Abby stops at a red light. She looks up, happily taking in her festive, beautiful neighborhood, then...CRASH!

Abby is struck by an UPTIGHT WOMAN with a complicated double stroller, inside are 2 boys who are way too old to still be in a stroller. Abby stumbles into a giant pile of garbage bags, the ear buds fall out of her ears, and the music stops.

The woman keeps going without saying a word. One of the boys turns around, laughing at Abby. He gives her the middle finger. Abby is horrified.

An OLD WOMAN exits a nearby store. She notices Abby struggling to pull herself out of the garbage bags.

OLD WOMAN

That's not yours.

ABBY

I'm sorry.

Abby finally gets herself up. She and the old woman stare at each other. Abby finally breaks.

ABBY (CONT'D)

Happy Holidays.

OLD WOMAN

We'll see.

INT. SUBWAY STATION. DAY

Abby fights her way off the train. She passes by a tiled wall that reads, Columbia University.

EXT. COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY. DAY

Abby passes by the gift shop. She stops for a moment, then heads inside.

END CREDITS

INT. GIFT SHOP. DAY

Abby holds two shiny new Columbia ornaments in her hands, trying to decide on one.

JOHN (O.S.)

No.

Abby jumps. She turns to see JOHN, (30), an unapologetic, new world feminist (his words), who has appeared out of nowhere.

JOHN (CONT'D)

You do not need another ornament.

ABBY

What are you doing in here?

John holds up his phone, on the screen is a map with a flashing dot.

JOHN

I tracked you. I can't walk into the teachers lounge by myself. Not in this social climate. Put those down. Let's go.

INT. FACULTY LOUNGE. DAY

Abby and John enter the faculty lounge. Professors and TA's pick at the remnants of a holiday cookie tray.

JOHN

When do you leave for Stella's parents' house?

ABBY

Tomorrow morning. I'm a little nervous to meet them-

JOHN

I thought you met them over the summer.

ABBY

I was supposed to, but they ended up leaving the city early.

JOHN

Hm.

ABBY

What?

JOHN

Nothing. Just hm.

ABBY

Anyway, I think it will be nice for us to really dig in and get to know each other.

JOHN

Sounds terrible. I'm celebrating Christmas the way the lord intended- in the city, by myself, watching Golden Girls episode one through one-hundred and seventy-seven.

INT. ABBY'S OFFICE. DAY

Abby sits at her desk. Across from her is LOLLY, (20), eccentric (weird), political, wearing a t-shirt that reads, "Still Persisting". She eats a very crumbly vegan muffin.

LOLLY

...so I made a list of ideas for my thesis, like you suggested, and I just wanted to run them by you before break.

ABBY

Okay. Do you need a plate, or a napkin?

LOLLY

No, I'm good.

Lolly plops the muffin onto Abby's desk, then licks her fingers, and pulls out her iPad.

LOLLY (CONT'D)

Okay. 1. Post Impressionists were phoning it in. 2. The Italian Renaissance was neither Italian, nor a renaissance. 3. Emojis-

ABBY

Okay, Lolly, hold on. What speaks to you? What are you connecting with, and how does that inspire you?

Lolly thinks for a long beat.

LOLLY

Beyoncé?

INT. COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY HALLWAY. DAY

Abby waits outside of a classroom. The door opens, and dozens of young women pour out. At the back of the pack is a handsome young GUY (20), wearing a backwards facing LIONS cap. Trailing him is John.

JOHN
Excuse me. This is the uniform of
toxic masculinity.

The guy looks confused.

GUY
What is?

JOHN
This. That.

The guy touches his cap.

GUY
This?

JOHN
Yes. It is aggressive, and if you
want to succeed in my class, you
will leave your white, male
privilege at the door. Do you
understand me?

GUY
Yes, sir-

JOHN
I didn't tell you my pronoun.

The guy is frozen, terrified.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Get out.

The guy runs off. John turns to Abby.

JOHN (CONT'D)
God, he's gorgeous. Ready?

EXT. NONDESCRIPT BUILDING. NIGHT

Abby and John walk down the crowded street. Abby stops at the
unmarked door of a sleek building, and rings the doorbell.

JOHN
...and you sign up for the free
trial, then it's on you to remember
to cancel it! They're not going to
send you an email. What is this?
Where am I?

A STRIKING WOMAN, (40), dressed in black, hair in a tight bun, opens the door.

STRIKING WOMAN

Abigail?

ABBY

Yes.

STRIKING WOMAN

Right this way.

The woman walks inside, Abby and John follow.

JOHN

Do we need safe words? Mine is Steinem.

INT. HIGH END JEWELRY STORE. DAY

The woman leads Abby and John into the minimalist space. Diamonds sparkle from inside the spotless, glass display cases. A burly, humorless GUARD stands by the entrance.

STRIKING WOMAN

Have a seat. I'll be right back.

She points them to a pair of chairs. They sit.

JOHN

I'll be honest, I am very turned on right now.

A STRIKING MAN, (40), all in black, looks exactly like the male version of the woman. He holds a tray of mini champagne bottles with straws sticking out.

STRIKING MAN

Champagne?

John screams, startled, then quickly recovers.

JOHN

My favorite.

He grabs a bottle and takes a long pull from the straw, never breaking eye contact with the man. He chokes on the champagne. The man walks away.

The woman comes back out with a small, black box.

STRIKING WOMAN

Shall I?

Abby nods. The woman opens the box. Inside is a simple, yet elegant engagement ring. Abby beams. John is aghast.

JOHN

No.

EXT. SOHO STREET. NIGHT

Holiday shoppers exit stores, arms full of gifts. John and Abby pass them.

JOHN

Abby, what are you thinking? You want to engage in the most rampant assault on women in the history of the human race?

ABBY

No, I want to marry the love of my life.

JOHN

Oh, you say that, but what you are doing is enslaving the woman you claim to love, trying to make her your property. She's not a rice-cooker or a bean bag chair. She's a HUMAN BEING.

ABBY

I would never claim ownership over her. I love her and respect her too much to treat her that way.

A beat.

JOHN

Ok, that was a test, and you passed. When are you asking her?

ABBY

I know it's old-fashioned, but I'm going to ask her dad for his blessing, then I'll propose on Christmas.

JOHN

Ask her dad for his blessing?! Way to stick it to the patriarchy, Abby. God, you have so much to learn.

EXT. ROCKEFELLER CENTER CHRISTMAS TREE. NIGHT

Abby stands against the railing above the ice skating rink. She holds a tray with two Starbucks holiday cups, and scans the crowd, concerned. Abby pulls out her phone. She sends a text to Stella that reads, "Are you close? Your hot chocolate is getting cold".

Abby's phone erupts (Jingle Bells is her ringtone), a BOY (5), standing with his MOTHER, begins to dance, VERY into the song. Abby answers the phone, the song stops.

ABBY

Hey, babe-

INT. POLITICO OFFICE. NIGHT

The Politico office buzzes with millennials working at stand up desks. Stella, stands at her desk, phone to her ear.

*WE INTERCUT BETWEEN STELLA AND ABBY

STELLA

Hi-

BACK TO ABBY.

MOTHER

He was listening to that.

ABBY

Oh, but I-

BOY

Put it back on!

ABBY

It's just, I-

STELLA

Who are you talking to?

ABBY

No one-

MOTHER

(sarcastic)

Happy Holidays to you too.

The boy starts to flip out as his mother leads him away.

ABBY

Hi, sorry. Are you here?

STELLA

No. One of the candidates in the New Jersey special election just got caught drilling a glory hole in the men's bathroom at a Hanson concert. My editor is making me stay to cover it. I'm so sorry.

ABBY

Are you serious?

STELLA

We'll see the tree when we get back.

ABBY

It's not the same. It's a trad-

STELLA

It's a tradition, I know. I'm sorry.

ABBY

It's okay.

STELLA

I'll finish as soon as I can.

Abby hangs up, bummed. She looks up at the tree.

INT. ABBY AND STELLA'S LIVING ROOM. NIGHT

Abby is on the couch watching *It's a Wonderful Life*. She seems a little blue. She looks toward the sound of keys in the door. Stella enters. Abby looks back to the TV.

ABBY

Hey.

Stella walks over to the couch, both hands in her pockets.

STELLA

I know it's not the same, but...

She pulls out a lollipop in the shape of a Christmas tree. Abby can't help but smile.

STELLA (CONT'D)

I know the holidays are hard for you, and having our traditions makes them easier. I'm really sorry about the tree.

Stella pulls out a candy cane. Abby laughs.

STELLA (CONT'D)

Do you forgive me?

ABBY

Of course. I know it wasn't your fault. Maybe I'm too intense about our traditions. I mean, we're about to go spend Christmas with your family, and that's going to be my first Christmas as part of a family since I was 18. Maybe it's time for me to make room for new traditions.

Stella takes this in, she seems a little worried, but Abby doesn't notice. Abby takes Stella's hand.

ABBY (CONT'D)

Did you want to talk to me about something?

Stella hesitates.

STELLA

No. It was nothing.

Abby curls up to Stella.

EXT. RENTAL CAR LOT. DAY

A plane passes overhead as frazzled travelers hurry through the crowded lot.

INT. RENTAL CAR OFFICE. DAY

Abby and Stella are at the front of a long line. Abby is excited, Stella seems a little off.

ABBY

I can't believe I'm finally meeting your parents. Do you think they're going to like me? I hope they like me. And your sisters! God, having sisters must be so cool.

Stella is on another planet.

STELLA

Uh huh.

ABBY

You okay?

CAR RENTAL AGENT (O.S.)

Next!

Abby and Stella approach the counter. The cheerful CAR RENTAL AGENT, (30's), female, greets them.

CAR RENTAL AGENT (CONT'D)

Hi there. How can I help? That guy just got our last sleigh, so don't even ask!

She laughs a little too long.

ABBY

We have a reservation under Abby Holland.

The agent types into the computer, brow furrowed.

CAR RENTAL AGENT

I'm not seeing anything.

ABBY

We made this reservation a month ago-

CAR RENTAL AGENT

I got you! It's right here. Your face. Priceless! Okay, so we have you in a red Ferrari, correct?

ABBY

Oh, no-

CAR RENTAL AGENT

Got you again! Okay, we have you in a midsize, returning on the 26th. I just need a credit card, ID, and a swab of the inside of your cheek.

ABBY

You're kidding.

CAR RENTAL AGENT

I'm not. We need the swab.

ABBY

Uh...

The agent breaks.

CAR RENTAL AGENT
That's three times! Woo! The
holidays are fun.

INT. RENTAL CAR. DAY

Abby drives, Stella sits in the passenger seat. Abby sings
along with Christmas carols on the radio.

ABBY
...5 golden rings/4 calling birds/3
French hens/2 turtle doves/and a
partridge in a pear tree. On the
seventh day of-

Stella turns off the radio.

ABBY (CONT'D)
Hey!

STELLA
There's something I need to tell
you. It's totally not a big deal,
but you need to know before we get
to my parents' house.

ABBY
What is it?

STELLA
Remember when I said that I came
out to my parents over the summer,
and told them we were together, and
they took it really well?

ABBY
Yeah.

STELLA
Well, that wasn't entirely
accurate.

ABBY
They didn't take it well?

STELLA
No...I didn't tell them.

EXT. TRUCK STOP. DAY

The car is parked at the edge of the rest stop. Abby angrily
paces in front of the car as Stella pleads her case.

STELLA

...I was going to, but then my dad told us that he was running for mayor, and it just didn't feel like the right time, so I decided to wait until the next time I saw them, but then I didn't see them again, and now my dad is trying to get the support of this donor whose endorsement pretty much guarantees him a victory, so our whole Christmas is about impressing this person, which is stressing my mom out even more than usual. It just feels like a bad time to burden them with this-

ABBY

So I'm a burden?!

STELLA

No! Of course not. It's not about you. My family is very difficult. We don't really like to talk about those things-

ABBY

What things?

STELLA

Ourselves.

ABBY

So, who do they think I am?

STELLA

My roommate.

ABBY

They don't think it's weird you're bringing your "roommate" home for Christmas?

STELLA

Well, I told them your parents are...you know-

ABBY

Dead?

STELLA

Yeah. I told them you didn't have anywhere else to go.

ABBY

Oh great, this a pity invite.

STELLA

No!...Not entirely.

ABBY

I'm not going.

STELLA

Look, this actually a really good opportunity for them to see how great you are. They're going to love you, and that'll make it so much easier when I do tell them.

ABBY

I do want them to like me...

STELLA

They will. Let's just get there and see how it feels.

ABBY

See how it feels to pretend we haven't been in a committed relationship for almost 2 years?

STELLA

Yeah.

Abby looks defeated. Stella approaches and takes her hands. Abby resists a little, but eventually gives in.

STELLA (CONT'D)

I promise, as soon as the holidays are over, and my parents are in a better head space, I will sit them down and tell them everything. It's only 5 days. How bad can it be?

EXT. CALDWELL ESTATE. DAY

A blanket of snow covers the grounds of the grand estate. Gas lamp posts wrapped with garlands line the circular driveway. Abby and Stella wheel their bags up the walk way. They stop at the front door where a giant wreath hangs. Stella rings the bell.

ABBY

I can't believe I'm doing this.

STELLA

It's going to be fine. Oh, also, I didn't tell them you're gay.

Before Abby can say anything, the door flies open, and TIPPER, (65), looks 40, monied, oozes class, snaps a photo with a giant iPad.

TIPPER

Smile!

Tipper checks the photo.

STELLA

Mom, what are you doing?

TIPPER

Your father put me in charge of his feed. Instagram. It's important to post every day. Come in.

INT. FOYER. DAY

The inside of the house is furnished with polished antiques, a large chandelier hangs down, holiday decorations on every available surface. Tipper throws her arms around Stella.

TIPPER

Look at you. You get more and more beautiful every day. Did you bring concealer?

STELLA

Mom, this is Abby.

TIPPER

Pleasure to meet you, Abby.

Tipper shakes Abby's hand.

ABBY

Thank you for having me. You have such a beautiful home.

TIPPER

When Stella told us you had nowhere to go, we were so sad for you. You're lucky to have a friend like her.

Abby glares at Stella.

STELLA
Where's dad?

TIPPER
He's on a call.

Jane, (30), the middle sister, eager, unkempt, pops in. It is unclear how she comes from the same gene pool as Stella and Tipper.

JANE
Stella!

Jane goes in to hug her sister.

STELLA
Hey Jane. I didn't know you'd be here.

JANE
My place is just 10 minutes away, and I didn't want to wait one more minute to see my little sis, and...Abby, right?

ABBY
Yes.

JANE
I'm so sorry about your parents.

ABBY
It was a long time ago.

JANE
You're so brave.

Jane gives Abby a long hug.

TIPPER
That's enough, Jane. Abby, can I give you the tour?

ABBY
That would be great!

INT. LIVING ROOM. DAY

It's an elegant room, situated around an expensive grand piano. A 10 foot Christmas tree covered in ornaments stands tall in the corner, perfectly wrapped presents underneath. Tipper leads the three girls in.

TIPPER
This is the living room.

Abby is drawn to the tree.

ABBY
This tree is amazing.

Abby reaches out to touch a beautiful glass ornament. Tipper appears beside her.

TIPPER
Those are all one of a kind, hand
blown glass ornaments.

Abby, not getting Tipper's point, still touches the ornaments.

ABBY
They're gorgeous.

TIPPER
We don't touch them.

Abby pulls her hand back. They resume the tour.

INT. TED'S OFFICE. DAY.

A masculine office, deep greens and dark wood. TED (68), silver fox, charismatic, sits behind a giant wooden desk.

TED
(into the phone)
...you're sure Harry will be there
tomorrow night, right? Perfect.
We're going to lock down that
endorsement.

Tipper enters with the girls. Ted gestures to her, one minute.

TED (CONT'D)
Okay, Carolyn, my daughter just
arrived. I'll call you later.

Ted hangs up.

TED (CONT'D)
There she is! My perfect girl.

STELLA
Hi, daddy.

They embrace. Tipper snaps a photo.

JANE

Hi, dad.

TED

Jane, I'm glad you're here, the internet has been a little spotty-

JANE

I'm on it!

Jane rushes out of the room.

TIPPER

Honey, this is Abby. Stella's orphan friend.

TED

Oh yes, of course. Terrible. How did you lose your parents?

ABBY

Car accident.

Ted puts a hand on Abby's shoulder and shakes his head.

TED

There, there.

Ted breaks away.

TED (CONT'D)

Stell, I read your piece about the pervert at the teen concert. What do you think? He's gotta drop out, right?

STELLA

Definitely. His team is trying to spin it, but it's only a matter of time.

TED

That was a good piece.

Stella is moved by the praise.

STELLA

Thanks.

Abby sees an in.

ABBY

You know what was great was the speech you gave at the food bank on Thanksgiving.

TED

You saw that?

ABBY

I looked it up on Youtube. You're such a powerful public speaker.

TED

Thank you. You know, that speech wasn't scripted.

ABBY

Really?

TED

Yeah, just came to me.

ABBY

Well, that makes it even more impressive.

TIPPER

Alright, enough talking shop. Let's continue.

INT. SLOANE'S CHILDHOOD ROOM. DAY

The room hasn't been touched in 15 years. Everything about it screams "Overachiever". Plaques and trophies are everywhere.

TIPPER

This is Sloane's room. She's my eldest.

ABBY

That's a lot of trophies.

TIPPER

She was brilliant. She and her husband, Eric, were very high powered attorneys, but they gave it all up to raise their beautiful daughters- they are just darling, you'll meet them all tomorrow- and now they make gift baskets. Which is great.

Jane appears in the doorway, slightly out of breath.

JANE
What did I miss?

INT. STELLA'S CHILDHOOD ROOM. DAY

Stella's room is also a time capsule. It's very girly, with even more trophies than Sloane, the walls are covered with posters of shirtless hunks from the early 2000's and cheerleading paraphernalia.

Tipper leads the trio into the room. Abby takes it all in with great interest, Stella is embarrassed.

ABBY
This is somethin' else.

JANE
I know, is it hot in here, or is it just him?

Jane points to a poster of a nearly nude David Beckham.

STELLA
Mom, I thought you were going to turn this room into your office.

TIPPER
Men need offices, dear. Plus, I didn't have the heart to change your rooms.

Abby picks up a framed photo of a teenaged Stella in the arms of a very handsome young man, BRAD. They are wearing crowns.

TIPPER (CONT'D)
That's her high school boyfriend, Brad-

STELLA
Mom, I've asked you to put that away-

TIPPER
You know, he's still single-

STELLA
Mom!

TIPPER
Honey, you work so hard. You deserve a loving husband who will complete you.

STELLA
Please, stop.

TIPPER
Abby, do you have a boyfriend?

ABBY
No. Still haven't found Mr. Right.

JANE
Well, I hope you're having fun with
all the Mr. Wrongs. Sexually-

TIPPER
Jane, please. Come on, Abby, I'll
show you to your room.

STELLA
She's not staying up here?

TIPPER
Stella, I would never force two
grown women to share a bed. Abby's
staying downstairs in Jane's old
room.

JANE
Ooh! I can take her!

Jane grabs Abby's hand. As they exit, Abby looks to Stella
who shrugs and mouths, "I'm sorry".

INT. JANE'S OLD ROOM. DAY

A small room off the kitchen. It's the place they shove
everything they don't use, but don't want to throw away.
Plaques and awards for "Most Improved" and "Participation"
are hidden behind the mounds of junk. In the corner is a twin
sized bed, a table with a lamp, and an old teddy bear.

Abby stands in the doorway, Jane is behind her.

JANE
Cool, huh?

ABBY
Why is your room separate from
everyone else's?

JANE
I had night terrors. They put me
down here so I wouldn't wake
everyone up.

Tipper enters.

TIPPER

Thank you, Jane. Why don't you go home and give us a little break. We'll see you in a couple of hours.

JANE

Don't have any fun without me!

Jane leaves.

TIPPER

Sorry about the mess in here. Some people have a junk drawer, we have a junk room!

ABBY

No, it's great.

TIPPER

Better than your room at the orphanage.

ABBY

I was never in an orphanage. I was 18 when my parents died.

TIPPER

You're one of the lucky ones.

ABBY

Well...

TIPPER

I'll let you rest. Oh, and there's no lock on the door- Jane was always scared we'd lock her in, so we had it removed. But don't worry, you'll have total privacy.

Tipper leaves. Abby sits on the bed and looks around the cluttered room. She picks up the teddy bear and takes a selfie with it. She sends it to Stella with a message that reads, *"Guess I won't be sleeping alone after all"*. A moment later Stella texts back, *"Haha I'm so jealous"*. Abby waits for another text, but it doesn't come.

EXT. MAIN STREET. NIGHT

Mom and pop stores line the Thomas Kinkade-ian downtown. At the end of the street is a square with a giant Christmas tree, a shining bright star on top. A light snow falls.

INT. TED'S CAR. NIGHT

Ted drives, Tipper is in the passenger seat. Abby and Stella are in the back seat, Jane is crammed between them.

JANE

Let me know if you need more space.
I can make myself real small.

ABBY

I'm okay. This town is so cute. I
love all the lights!

TED

We go all out here. No one has to
be afraid to celebrate Christmas in
this town.

Abby laughs, then quickly realizes he's not joking.

INT. FANCY ITALIAN RESTAURANT. NIGHT

Ted, Tipper, Abby, Jane, and Stella are led to their table by COLLEEN, the hostess. As they move past tables, people greet Ted.

COLLEEN

Will this be alright?

TED

It's perfect, Colleen.

Colleen exits. Everyone takes their seats at the table. Abby goes to sit next to Stella.

TIPPER

Abby, why don't you come sit with
Ted and I.

Abby is delighted.

ABBY

Okay.

Abby takes a seat. Stella notices an empty seat next to her.

STELLA

Who else is coming?

Before Tipper can answer, BRAD (29), tall, movie star good looks, approaches behind her. Abby's face drops.

TIPPER

Brad! How funny to see you here!

BRAD

You told me to be here at 7-

TIPPER

Shhh! Have a seat!

Stella stares daggers at Tipper as Brad takes a seat next to her. Abby is wildly uncomfortable.

BRAD

Hello, Stella. Long time, no see.

STELLA

Brad.

TED

Good to see you, son.

TIPPER

(gestures to Abby)

Brad, this is Stella's friend, Abby-

BRAD

The refugee?

JANE

She's an orphan.

BRAD

Cool.

Stella and Abby's discomfort is palpable.

TIPPER

We were just looking at your prom photo this afternoon. The two of you were perfection.

BRAD

That was all Stella.

JANE

Awww.

A waitress approaches.

WAITRESS

Drinks?

ABBY/STELLA

Yes!

INT. FANCY ITALIAN RESTAURANT. NIGHT

A little bit later. They're having coffee and dessert. Stella, Brad, Tipper and Ted are all engaged in conversation. Abby strains to hear them as she half listens to Jane.

JANE

...and then in the third chapter they discover the gem stone that they thought was inside the gork was actually taken by an evil floam, which is kind of like a maggel but with less arms and more powers. Obviously this is a huge blow to the Shadow Dreamers-

There's a big laugh at the other end of the table. Abby can't help herself.

ABBY

What are you guys talking about?

TIPPER

Brad was just telling us about this modeling agent who has been trying to sign him for years.

BRAD

I'm terrible in front of the camera. Besides, I love my job. Wouldn't want to do anything else. The only thing missing from my life is an amazing woman to share it with.

Brad gazes at Stella who looks down. Abby tries to pull his focus away from Stella.

ABBY

Where do you work? Wall Street?

BRAD

The Innocence Project. The pay is terrible, but if I can give even one person their life back, it's all worth it.

JANE

Wow. You're a hero.

BRAD

No. The children who are fighting for their lives at the hospital I volunteer at are the real heroes.

Brad casually drapes his arm around Stella's chair. Tipper, Ted, and Jane look smitten. Even Stella has to fight being won over. Abby frowns.

ABBY

I've done a lot of volunteer work myself.

BRAD

Oh, yeah?

ABBY

Yeah. Mainly at this cat rescue. I saved thousands of cats.

STELLA

Didn't they shut that place down?

ABBY

It was discovered to be a hotbed for feline AIDS, but before that, we did a lot of good work.

Everyone at the table stares blankly at Abby.

BRAD

I should go. Those Meals On Wheels aren't going to cook themselves.

TIPPER

Can we take a quick photo before you leave?

STELLA

No, mom-

BRAD

Sure.

Tipper pulls out her iPad.

TIPPER

Okay, everyone squeeze in. Abby, would you mind?

She holds out the iPad. Abby takes it from her.

TIPPER (CONT'D)

Smile, Stella, you look like a divorcée.

Stella forces a smile. Abby snaps a photo, then hands the iPad back to Tipper.

BRAD

Good night all. Stella, always a pleasure. Nice to meet you, Amy.

ABBY

Abby.

STELLA/TIPPER/TED/JANE

Yep./Goodnight./Bye, son./See ya!

TIPPER

What a charmer!

Stella wants to talk about anything else.

STELLA

What did we miss over here?

ABBY

Jane was just telling me about her book.

STELLA

You're still working on that? It's been 10 years.

JANE

It takes a long time to build a world.

TIPPER

Jane, let's not.

TED

So, Abby, Stella says you're an art teacher?

Abby perks up.

ABBY

I'm an adjunct professor of art history at Columbia.

TED

Art history, huh? Where did that come from?

ABBY

My parents were big into art.

TED

You know, before law school, I took all the money I had and went to Paris. Spent every day at the Louvre. Have you been?

ABBY

It's one of my favorite places in the world. And MoMa.

TED

I love MoMa! We should go next time I'm in the city.

ABBY

That would be so cool!

Abby smiles. Colleen approaches the table.

COLLEEN

How was everything tonight?

TED

Perfect, as always. Let me give you a card.

COLLEEN

No need. The young man already took care of it.

TIPPER

Aww.

TED

Love that kid.

Abby's smile fades quickly.

INT. FANCY ITALIAN RESTAURANT. NIGHT

The group stands at the coat check. Abby stands near Stella, she's still a little bothered by the dinner.

ABBY

That was fun.

STELLA

I swear I didn't know she invited him. I'm really sorry.

ABBY

Am I going to have to deal with your mom trying to get you back together with your ex-boyfriend for the whole trip?

STELLA

No. I'll talk to her. Please don't be mad at me.

The backs of their hands touch. Abby begins to thaw a little.

TED

You girls ready?

Stella pulls her hand away.

STELLA

Yep!

KEN JOHNSON (60's), blue collar turned white, JACKIE JOHNSON, (50's), sweet, petite, enter the restaurant, followed by their daughter, RILEY (27), cute, boyish, kind.

TED

Ken Johnson! You bastard. Jackie, you're as dazzling as ever.

Stella sees Riley and shrinks. Abby notices.

KEN

If it isn't the most handsome son of a bitch in Connecticut. I hear Harry Levin may be backing your campaign.

TED

If all goes well.

TIPPER

Riley, your parents told me you're doing your residency at New York Presbyterian.

RILEY

Yeah.

TIPPER

Now, I have this mole-

TED

Honey...

The adults break off into their own conversation.

RILEY
Hey, Stella, Jane.

STELLA
Hi.

Stella is uneasy. Jane throws her arms around Riley.

JANE
Hi, Riley!

RILEY
Hi, Jane. I see you still give
those long hugs.

JANE
What can I say? I'm a hugger!

Abby reaches her hand out.

ABBY
I'm Abby.

RILEY
Riley.

ABBY
You work at New York Presbyterian?
That's right near me. I teach at
Columbia.

RILEY
Oh, cool. If you ever have a mole
you want me to look at, come by.
It's not my field, but I can refer
you to someone.

Abby laughs. Stella wants to get out of there.

STELLA
Let's go get the car.

ABBY
Nice to meet you.

RILEY
You too.

EXT. FANCY ITALIAN RESTAURANT. NIGHT

Abby catches up to Stella who hands the ticket to a VALET
GUY.

ABBY

Was that Riley, as in *the* Riley?

STELLA

I don't want to talk about it.

ABBY

Maybe another one of your exes will
pull the car around.

INT. TED'S CAR. NIGHT

Ted drives home, Tipper is in the front seat, Jane, has
fallen asleep between Abby and Stella. Her heads rests on
Abby's shoulder.

TED

That's impressive about Riley's
residency.

TIPPER

Very. It must be a relief for her
parents that she's been able to
have some success in spite of her
lifestyle choice...

Abby tries to sneak a look to Stella, but Stella consciously
keeps her gaze straight ahead.

TED

I know. Their only child.

Jane wakes with a start. She screams.

JANE

TAKE THE BOAT!! TAKE IT!!!

Everyone jumps. Jane realizes where she is.

JANE (CONT'D)

(to Abby)

Ugh. Night terror.

INT. JANE'S OLD ROOM. NIGHT

Abby pulls on a t-shirt. Tipper knocks, then immediately
opens the door. Abby jumps.

TIPPER

You all set in here?

ABBY

Yes! This room is perfect. The whole house is, honestly. You've done a really incredible job.

TIPPER

Thank you.

Stella appears in the doorway.

TIPPER (CONT'D)

Did you need something, sweetie?

STELLA

Just wanted to say goodnight to Abby.

Tipper stands there.

STELLA (CONT'D)

Mom, do you mind?

TIPPER

I get it. Girl talk. See you gals in the morning.

Tipper leaves. Stella closes the door, and faces Abby. The conversation from the car hangs heavy between them.

STELLA

I'm sorry again about tonight.

ABBY

It's okay.

STELLA

I think they really like you.

ABBY

You do?

STELLA

Yes.

Stella hugs Abby.

STELLA (CONT'D)

We can do this.

INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT. NIGHT

A small one bedroom with great Feng Shui. Judging by the decor in his apartment, John's one trip to Japan several years ago had an enormous impact on him.

John wears a kimono, and paints a very vaginal flower onto a canvas. His phone rings. He answers.

**We intercut between Abby in Jane's room, and John in his apartment.*

JOHN

Did you get permission to take ownership of adult, human woman?

ABBY

Definitely not.

JOHN

What's going on? You sound tense.

ABBY

Nothing. It's going well.

JOHN

Abby, I am very busy, I don't have time to unearth your truth.

ABBY

Okay, okay. Stella is not out, and her parents don't know we are together.

JOHN

This is exactly what I meant when I said "Hm"! I knew something was not right. You can't go nearly two years without meeting your significant other's parents. Believe me, I've tried.

ABBY

It's not that big of a deal. She's going to tell them after the holidays-

JOHN

Sweet Jesus. So they think their straight daughter brought her lesbian "roommate" home for Christmas? I'm doing air quotes around "roommate", just so you know.

ABBY
They think I'm straight.

JOHN
I need to lie down.

John stumbles over to his confusing, modern couch.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Abby, this is a hate crime. She has forced you back into the closet-

ABBY
I shouldn't have said anything-

JOHN
First they came for the Socialists-

ABBY
I'm hanging up-

JOHN
-and I did not speak out-

Abby hangs up. She lies back in bed. She pulls up Instagram on her phone and looks at Ted's feed.

First is the photo from dinner. The caption reads: *Dinner with family #blessed*. Abby scowls. The next photo is the one of Ted and Stella hugging in Ted's office. The caption reads: *Daddy's girl #nofilter*. Abby scrolls to the photo from when they first arrived. The caption reads: *@stellacaldwell is finally home! Also pictured is her #orphanfriend*. Abby turns off her phone.

INT. JANE'S OLD ROOM. DAY

Abby sleeps. A pair of shadows cross her sleeping form. Abby stirs. She opens her eyes, and screams when she sees identical twin girls, MADISON and MATILDA, (8), stoic, creepy, never the first to break eye contact.

MADISON
Who are you?

ABBY
Abby.

MATILDA
Do you work here?

ABBY
No, I'm a friend of Stella's.

SLOANE (O.S.)
Girls?! Where are you?

SLOANE, (36), put together, cold, appears in the doorway.

SLOANE (CONT'D)
What are you doing in here? Come
on.

The twins scurry out. Abby watches them go, disturbed.

SLOANE (CONT'D)
Sorry about them. I'm Sloane.

ABBY
I'm Abby-

Sloane is gone before Abby finishes her sentence.

INT. KITCHEN. MORNING

Sloane prepares breakfast, the twins wait at the table.
Stella seems a little tired, she pours a cup of coffee.

SLOANE
Tired?

STELLA
Uh huh.

Abby enters, no one notices her.

SLOANE
Not me. I like the morning. But I'm
also not out partying every night,
and I have something meaningful to
get out of bed for.

Stella glares at her. Sloane sets down two plates with
snowman shaped pancakes, berries for eyes and a sausage hat.

MADISON/MATILDA
Thank you, mommy.

STELLA
Aw, snowman pancakes. That's a lot
of work for something that's just
going to turn to shit- kinda like
your law degree.

SLOANE

It must be very freeing to be so self involved that you don't realize that's actually not appropriate language to use in front of children.

Abby is shocked by their hostile dynamic, she turns to leave.

MADISON

Where are you going, Abby?

Abby is caught. Stella finally sees her, smiles.

STELLA

Good morning.

ABBY

Morning.

STELLA

Did you guys meet?

ABBY

Yeah.

Abby gets a coffee and joins Stella.

ABBY (CONT'D)

Sloane, how was the drive up?

SLOANE

Fine.

Sloane offers nothing else. ERIC, (40), well manicured, great listener, a little too "graceful", enters carrying Sloane's purse. It looks right.

ERIC

We got everything out of the van.

SLOANE

Thanks, honey. This is-

ERIC

Abby.

ABBY

Yes.

They shake hands.

ERIC

You know, a teaspoon of virgin coconut oil will add some nice moisture to those hands.

ABBY

Oh, okay.

Jane pops into the kitchen.

JANE

You, big sis, me, Jane!

Jane bear hugs Sloane.

SLOANE

Hi, Jane.

When Jane gets to the twins, she balks, afraid to hug them.

JANE

You girls are so big! What are you, college students? What's your major?

MATILDA

We're in third grade.

JANE

No, I know, you've just grown so much. Have they recruited you to the NBA yet?

Jane laughs, the twins just stare. Tipper and Ted enter through the back door, both dressed in jogging clothes.

TED

There they are!

TIPPER

Oh! My babies!

Tipper makes a beeline for the twins. She hugs them, they stiffen. Sloane hugs Ted.

SLOANE

Hi daddy.

TED

Sloane! Did you get Stella's article I sent you?

SLOANE

I did.

TED

So good, right?

Sloane gives a tight smile.

SLOANE

Uh huh.

ERIC

Ted!

TED

Eric, my boy!

Eric and Ted hug. Abby is eager to be a part of the group.

ABBY

Good morning!

TED

Morning, Abby.

Ted looks around at his family.

TED (CONT'D)

Come here girls.

He opens his arms wide. Sloane and Stella try not to touch each other as Ted pulls his daughters into a group hug.

TED (CONT'D)

It's so nice to have all my girls
under one roof.

Tipper scrambles for her iPad and snaps a photo.

TIPPER

Oh, this is good.

Madison reaches into Jane's purse and pulls out a lip gloss. She hands it to Matilda who shoves it into her pocket.

TED

Okay. I have to go shower. Big
night tonight, girls. There's gonna
be a major potential donor at the
Club's party. Stella, I need you to
bring your A game.

STELLA

You got it.

SLOANE

Dad, do you need me to do anything tonight?

TED

Yeah, don't tell anyone what you ended up doing for a living.

Tipper and Ted laugh, Sloane is taken aback.

TED (CONT'D)

Kidding! Honey, you just show off that beautiful family. Who knows, these might be the only grandchildren we ever have.

Stella is a little stung.

TIPPER

Also, we'll take our family photo for the Instagram tonight, so don't wear anything that will strobe.
Jane.

Jane gives a thumbs up. Tipper and Ted exit. Abby can feel the tension between Sloane and Stella. Jane is oblivious.

JANE

Who's ready for some ice skating???

INT. MINI VAN. DAY

Eric drives, Sloane is in the passenger seat, Stella and Abby sit in captain's chairs, Jane sits between the twins on the bench seat. The van is so quiet you could hear a pin drop.

ABBY

So, Sloane and Eric, you make gift baskets?

SLOANE

"Basket" is such a crude word. We create curated gift experiences inside of handmade, reclaimed wood vessels.

ERIC

The vessels are gorgeous. She has impeccable taste.

SLOANE

No, honey, you have the eye.

Eric smiles and pats her on the shoulder.

ABBY

That sounds great.

SLOANE

Gwynnie seems to think so. Paltrow.
GOOP picked us up, and sales have
been through the roof ever since.

Stella rolls her eyes.

EXT. ICE SKATING RINK. DAY

A seasonal ice skating rink has been erected outside of the local mall. Stella and Jane skate effortlessly. Abby clings to a reindeer shaped ice skating aid. Eric gracefully glides across the ice, doing the occasional double axel.

Stella, Abby, and Jane approach Sloane and the girls. The twins looks like they are hovering, barely moving, but still drift along the surface. Sloane trips then recovers.

STELLA

Do you need to borrow Abby's
skating helper?

SLOANE

Please, I've always skated circles
around you.

STELLA

That was in your youth. You
wouldn't stand a chance now.

SLOANE

I could beat you right here, right
now.

STELLA

Oh yeah? Care to make a wager?

SLOANE

Name it.

STELLA

Whoever does the most laps in two
minutes wins. Loser has wait on the
winner hand and foot for the rest
of the trip.

SLOANE

Deal. Jane, time us.

JANE
I'm actually having fun just
skating-

STELLA
Put two minutes on the clock.

Jane pulls out her phone. Stella digs the back of her skate into the ice, drawing a line.

JANE
All right. Ready...

Stella and Sloane give each other the evil eye.

JANE (CONT'D)
Set.

They dig their skates into the ice. Abby looks concerned.

JANE (CONT'D)
Go!

Stella and Sloane take off. They are both surprisingly fast. They whip around the rink, dodging slow moving skaters. Parents pull their children out of the way.

STELLA
Need to take a break?

SLOANE
Maybe you should just focus on
yourself.

STELLA
Oh yeah, why's-

Just then Stella looks up and sees a HUGE MAN in her path. She leaps into the air and spins, narrowly avoiding him.

Sloane looks over her shoulder, laughing at Stella. She looks forward, her eyes widen when she sees a couple holding hands in front of her. She breaks through in between them. The guy falls down. Jane and Abby wince.

JANE
(to herself)
Man down.

Stella has caught up with Sloane who throws an elbow. They whiz past Eric, who doesn't seem to notice them.

JANE (CONT'D)
30 seconds!

Stella and Sloane shove each other, it's more roller derby than ice skating. The other patrons have moved to the side. The twins are in the center of the rink.

JANE (CONT'D)

10!...9!...8!...

Stella and Sloane are laser focused. They are in a dead heat.

JANE (CONT'D)

...7!...6!...

Abby watches. She notices the twins drifting into the path of Sloane and Stella as they make their final turn.

EVERYTHING SLOWS DOWN

Abby looks at the twins, then at Stella and Sloane. She makes a decision. Abby pushes herself off the wall, one hand on her skating aid. She lurches forward toward the twins. Jane sees Abby in harm's way.

JANE (CONT'D)

NOOOOO!!!

Stella and Sloane see Abby and wildly gesture for her to move. Abby bumps the twins with the skating aid, pushing them out of the way. She loses her grip on the aid, and flails.

Stella and Sloane reach Abby as she falls to the ground. Stella jumps into the air, and over Abby. Sloane tries to jump also, but is a hair too late. She trips over Abby and falls face first. Stella crosses the "finish line". Sloane slides on her stomach, stopping just short of the line.

EVERYTHING GOES BACK TO REGULAR SPEED

STELLA

I won!

SLOANE

No way! This is not a legitimate win! Your friend sabotaged me.

Abby struggles to get to her feet.

ABBY

I'm sorry, I was trying to save the twins.

SLOANE

The twins don't need your help. This race has been tampered with. No winner.

Sloane exits the rink, the twins and Eric in tow.

STELLA
That's bullshit.

Stella leaves. Abby still struggles on the ice.

INT. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT

Abby stands off to the side as Tipper arranges Ted, Stella, Sloane, Eric, Jane, Matilda and Madison in front of the tree. Everyone is cranky and restless.

TED
Honey, we have to go-

TIPPER
Ted, if we don't post the perfect family holiday photo, we don't deserve to have the account at all! Jane, get out of the middle.

Jane switches with Stella. Madison has vanished.

SLOANE
Where's Madison?

TIPPER
She's right there!

MATILDA
I'm Matilda.

Abby notices Madison hiding in the curtains, half of her face covered.

ABBY
She's over here.

Abby points to the curtains. Madison gives Abby a death stare on her walk to the tree.

TED
We're very late-

TIPPER
Okay, we're ready. Abby?

Tipper holds out the iPad to Abby. Abby takes it.

ABBY
Everybody say Christmas.

TIPPER

No, don't say that, just smile.

Abby takes several photos.

ABBY

Got it. I think you're really going to like these. I've been told I have a very good eye.

Everyone disperses. Tipper grabs the iPad and scrolls through the photos.

TIPPER

Blurry. Boring. None of these will work. We'll try again tomorrow.

EXT. COUNTRY CLUB. NIGHT

A sprawling Colonial style country club. Everything about this place screams old money.

INT. COUNTRY CLUB. NIGHT

A lavish Christmas party is in full swing. A live band plays holiday tunes. Abby and the whole family enters.

ABBY

Oh my god.

TIPPER

I know. They've really scaled back. In this economy, everyone needs to make sacrifices.

CAROLYN CHRISTIE, (50), powerful, chic, approaches with her assistant, LEVI, (late 20s), glasses, clean cut, cute.

CAROLYN

Good evening, Ted, Tipper.

Ted kisses Carolyn on the cheek.

TED

Carolyn, you are a vision. You remember my daughters, Stella, Jane, and Sloane. This is Sloane's husband, Eric, and their daughters Matilda and Madison. And this is Stella's orphan friend, Abby.

CAROLYN
Charmed.

TIPPER
Gorgeous dress.

ERIC
Chanel?

Carolyn is impressed. So is Levi.

CAROLYN
That's right.

Ted steps closer to Carolyn.

TED
Is the white whale here?

CAROLYN
Indeed. I'll take you over.

Ted holds out his arm for Tipper. She takes it.

TED
Stella, come with us. Abby, you
don't mind, right?

ABBY
Not at all!

SLOANE
Should I come too?

TED
No, honey, enjoy yourself.

Carolyn leads Ted, Tipper and Stella away. Levi follows.
Sloane swallows a pang of jealousy. She turns to Eric.

SLOANE
I'm going to take the twins to the
kids club. Please get me a drink.
Vodka soda, extra vodka, hold the
soda.

Sloane ushers the twins away, Eric heads to the bar.

Abby looks out into the sea of party guests and spots Riley
talking with a group of older people. An elderly man leans
into Riley showing her his ear.

Riley spots Abby and smiles. Abby smiles back.

Jane throws her arm around Abby's shoulder.

JANE

Looks like it's just us ladies.
Single and ready to mingle. I
haven't been "serviced" in quite
some time. Maybe tonight's the
night.

INT. PARTY. NIGHT

Carolyn leads Ted, Tipper and Stella over to HARRY (HARRIETT)
LEVIN, (60's), billionaire, dripping in diamonds, who stands
with her gorgeous young HUSBAND. Levi stands behind them.

CAROLYN

Harry, this is-

HARRY LEVIN

Ted Caldwell.

Harry holds out her hand, Ted shakes it.

TED

Ms. Levin, it is an honor to
finally meet you.

HARRY LEVIN

Yes.

TED

This is my wife, Tipper, and my
daughter, Stella. Stella writes for-

HARRY LEVIN

Politico. I'm familiar.

TED

You've read her work?

HARRY LEVIN

Yes.

Harry's tone is unreadable. She offers nothing more.

INT. KIDS CLUB. NIGHT

A winter wonderland has been set up inside the children's
play room.

Sloane drops off the twins with KYLE, (20), enthusiastic, tan, perfect teeth, and JODY, (20), perky, braces, impossibly high ponytail. They both speak way too loudly at all times.

SLOANE
You girls be good.

Sloane cannot get out of there fast enough.

JODY
Hi there little elves! Wanna join
Danny and Becca in Santa's
workshop?

KYLE
They're making snow globes!

The twins stare them down.

INT. BAR. NIGHT

Abby and Jane wait for drinks at the crowded bar. On the other side of Jane, A HEAVILY BEARDED MAN, (30), makes eyes at Abby.

HEAVILY BEARDED MAN
You're new.

ABBY
Yeah. I'm visiting.

HEAVILY BEARDED MAN
From where?

ABBY
I'm sorry, I'm not really looking
to meet anyone.

Jane sticks her head between them, she's in full seduction mode.

JANE
I am. Do you like cherries?

Jane holds a maraschino cherry up to his lips. The man backs away, but Jane pushes the cherry against his closed lips.

JANE (CONT'D)
(whispers)
Open.

The man leaves. Jane shakes her head.

JANE (CONT'D)
That one wiggled right off the
hook. I bet he was covered in hair.

Stella appears.

STELLA
Can you order me a drink?

ABBY
Already did.

The bartender hands Abby their drinks. Stella pounds hers.

STELLA
(to the bartender)
One more.

ABBY
Was that your first?

STELLA
My fourth.

The bartender sets down another drink. A gaggle of women, KELLY, (27), BROOKE, (27), and ASHLEY, in almost identical black cocktail dresses, spot Stella.

KELLY
Oh...

BROOKE
My...

ASHLEY
God!

KELLY/BROOKE/ASHLEY
Stella Caldwell!!

STELLA
No. Way.

Stella screams, they all jump up and down.

INT. PARTY. NIGHT

Sloane looks for Eric. She spots him talking closely with Levi and Carolyn. She registers this, then turns and is face to face with PAUL (38), masculine, rugged, the anti-Eric.

SLOANE
Paul!

PAUL

Hey, Sloane. Good to see you.

His presence completely disarms her.

SLOANE

You too. Are you still living in town?

PAUL

Yep. Can't seem to escape. Where are you?

SLOANE

Westchester.

PAUL

You left the big city, huh? With Eric?

SLOANE

Yes. Are you still playing music?

PAUL

If by playing music you mean unclogging people's drains, yes.

They stand in silence, electricity in the air.

PAUL (CONT'D)

You need a drink.

SLOANE

I do.

PAUL

Vodka soda, extra vodka, hold the soda?

INT. PARTY. NIGHT

Abby and Jane stand just outside the circle of Stella and her friends. Kelly shows off a giant rock on her finger.

BROOKE

It's a-mazing-

KELLY

I know-

ASHLEY

(too real)
You bitch.

STELLA
Congratulations.

Brad walks up. Abby stiffens.

BRAD
Ladies! I must be in a time warp,
because none of you look a day
older than you did in high school.

The girls swoon. Brad sidles up to Stella, and puts an arm
around her. Stella wiggles out of his embrace. Abby bristles.

BRAD (CONT'D)
Hey, Stella. You look stunning.

Stella is very aware that Abby is seeing this.

STELLA
Wish I could say the same for you.

BRAD
Feisty as ever. Hey, what would say
if I asked you to get a drink with
me after this party?

Abby chokes on her drink.

STELLA
I'd say I only hang out with people
who know how to ask direct
questions.

Brad laughs. This is a part of their banter.

BRAD
Good to know. I'm gonna go find my
boys. I'll catch up with you ladies
later.

Brad walks away.

KELLY
Ugh, he is one hot fuck.

BROOKE
Stella, why are you not hitting
that?

Stella is very uncomfortable, she deflects.

STELLA
You know, been there, done that.

The girls laugh.

JANE
Got the t-shirt!

The laughter stops. Tipper walks up to the group.

TIPPER
Stella, we need you.

Before Stella can say a word, Tipper has whisked her away.

INT. KIDS CLUB. NIGHT

Kyle and Jody check in at the various craft stations with all the kids.

JODY
Lookin' good, Kendra!

KYLE
Pablo Picasso in the house!

They approach the gingerbread house making station. Kids stand around the table looking very disturbed.

JODY
What's going on over here, we talking Christmas lists? I asked Santa for a FitBit.

The kids move out of the way. Jody stops short when she sees a grisly gingerbread massacre- headless gingerbread men in the "front yard" of a dilapidated gingerbread house, red frosting everywhere.

JODY (CONT'D)
Sweet Jesus...

KYLE
What's this you little devils?

MADISON
Christmas morning.

MATILDA
At your house.

Kyle is terrified.

INT. COUNTRY CLUB. NIGHT

Ted speaks passionately to Harry who wears a solid poker face. Tipper and Stella stand with them.

TED

...being mayor is no small task.
However, it's a task I am not only
up for, but eager to take on-

HARRY LEVIN

I'm going to stop you right there.
My backing has won 5 men a mayoral
seat. I have a perfect record, and
do you know why?

Ted is about to answer, but Harry cuts him off.

HARRY LEVIN (CONT'D)

Because I do my homework. In the
last election, I almost backed Dave
Grady.

TED

Dave Grady? Didn't his son-

HARRY LEVIN

Get arrested for illegal exotic
animal trading? Yes. I found that
out in the nick of time before I
gave my endorsement. I'm telling
you this because I'm not just
looking at you. This is a family
affair.

TED

Well, I can assure you, this family
has nothing to hide.

Stella forces a smile.

INT. COUNTRY CLUB. NIGHT

Abby and Jane stand near the dance floor. Jane moves awkwardly with the music. Abby's phone buzzes, it's a text from John "Do you get cell reception in your new closet?". She reads it, and before she can put the phone back in her pocket, "Jingle Bells" erupts from it. John is Facetiming her, a photo of him scantily clad at a gay pride parade fills the screen. Jane looks over her shoulder.

JANE

Hubba, hubba. Who is that?

Abby ignores the call and holds the phone to her chest.

ABBY
Just a friend.

JANE
"Just a friend". Okay.

Jane winks. The phone rings again.

ABBY
I'm sorry.

Abby heads outside.

EXT. PARTY. NIGHT

ABBY
What?!

JOHN (ON FACETIME)
Did you know you are standing
inside of a country club that
didn't allow black people to join
until Obama won the primary?

ABBY
Stop tracking me! What do you want?

JOHN (ON FACETIME)
I want you to break out of that
closet. You deserve to be with a
woman who shouts her love for you
from the rooftops-

ABBY
That's very sweet-

JOHN (ON FACETIME)
So stop being a doormat, you fool.

ABBY
John, this is temporary. She's
going to tell them about us, just
not on this trip. It's actually not
that bad.

JOHN (ON FACETIME)
Stockholm Syndrome.

ABBY
Did you need anything else? Or did
you just call to shame me?

JOHN (ON FACETIME)
I'm not shaming you, I just think
the choice you're making is dumb,
and you should feel bad about it
and yourself. Also, what's that
essential oil you wear when you're
menstruating?

ABBY
What?

JOHN (ON FACETIME)
I'm thinking of someone else. I
gotta go, love you!

She hangs up, puts the phone back in her pocket.

RILEY (O.S.)
Hi.

Abby spins around, startled.

ABBY
Hi.

RILEY
I was out here, taking a break from
diagnosing everyone's mystery
illnesses, and then you came out,
and you didn't see me, and I didn't
know how to tell you I was out
here. I'm sorry. I tried not to
listen, but...

ABBY
Oh.

RILEY
I can relate.

ABBY
To what?

RILEY
Nothing. I'm going to go back in.
My mom's hairdresser has a weird
finger she wants me to look at.

Riley exits, leaving Abby alone.

INT. PARTY. NIGHT

The band finishes a cover of "All I Want For Christmas Is You". The crowd applauds. Carolyn gets on stage.

CAROLYN

Thank you! Tonight, we have a special treat. Please join me in welcoming to the stage, my dear friend, Councilman Ted Caldwell!

The crowd cheers as Ted takes the stage. Tipper snaps photos. Abby finds Stella in the crowd. Abby is still thinking about her encounter with Riley. Stella is a little tipsy.

STELLA

Hey. Where were you?

ABBY

Bathroom.

Near them is Sloane who stands with Paul.

TED

Thank you, everyone. I know we're all having a great time tonight, so I will be brief. I've accomplished a lot in my life. Started a successful law firm. Married the love of my life and had 3 wonderful daughters. Serving you on the city council is right up there with the most rewarding experiences of my life.

Awwwws from the crowd. Eric, Levi and Carolyn listen. Harry Levin watches, charmed.

TED (CONT'D)

But I'm ready for more.

Stella looks at Abby who watches the speech. She steps closer to Abby. Abby's heart races as the backs of their hands touch. Sloane notices them standing close.

TED (CONT'D)

It's a crazy world out there, and the only way to ensure depravity doesn't seep in through the cracks of this community is for our town's leaders to make sure there are no cracks. I vow to protect our town, and keep us united.

(MORE)

TED (CONT'D)

Our foundation was built on family, tradition, and faith, and that is exactly what is going to keep us strong in these turbulent times.

Tipper watches, proud, Jane stands next to her, tears streaming down her cheeks.

TED (CONT'D)

This is a very longwinded way of saying, I hope I can depend on your vote...and your money.

Everyone laughs.

TED (CONT'D)

Kidding! For the most part. I love this city, I've loved being your city councilman, and I can't wait to be your mayor. Merry Christmas!

The crowd roars. Ted exits the stage.

Paul heads out. Sloane looks disappointed.

INT. KIDS CLUB. NIGHT

Madison and Matilda search the room, on a mission. Sloane appears.

SLOANE

Girls, let's go.

MADISON/MATILDA

Okay, mommy.

The twins leave. On their way out, Matilda swipes a ring of keys from the desk, she hides them in her coat.

KYLE (O.S.)

Are they gone?

JODY (O.S.)

I'm scared to look.

A beat later, Kyle sticks his head out from behind Santa's workshop. Jody emerges from the ball pit.

INT. JANE'S OLD BATHROOM. NIGHT

Abby brushes her teeth at the sink. Her phone buzzes. A text from Stella reads, "*What are you doing?*" Abby takes a photo of herself brushing her teeth and sends it. A few moments later, Stella sends a text that reads, "*Would you rather be doing this?*". After a beat, a photo comes through. It's a sexy shot of Stella's partially nude torso.

INT. KITCHEN. NIGHT

Abby's head pops out of the door. She scans the room. The coast is clear. She tiptoes through the kitchen.

INT. HALLWAY. NIGHT

Abby sneaks down the hallway. The door to the den is open, sound and light from the television spill into the corridor. Abby sees Eric sitting on the couch, transfixed, watching Magic Mike, sipping red wine.

Abby moves on. She turns the corner and hears Ted's voice.

TED (O.S.)

*...and I vow to protect our city,
and keep us united. The foundation
of this city was built on family,
tradition, and faith...*

INT. TED'S OFFICE. NIGHT

Ted sits at his desk. He listens to his speech from earlier on his iPhone. He mouths along.

TED (THROUGH THE PHONE)

*...and that is exactly what is
going to keep us strong in these
turbulent times...*

Abby peeks in. When Ted is looking the other way, she hurries past.

INT. STAIRCASE. NIGHT

Abby creeps up the stairs. All is quiet. She carefully makes her way to Stella's room. As she nears the door, Sloane appears out of nowhere, right in Abby's path.

SLOANE
Need something?

ABBY
No, I mean, yes. Towels. Do you
have towels up here?

SLOANE
We have *our* towels up here. Your
towels are in *your* bathroom under
the sink.

ABBY
Oh, great! Thanks. Night!

INT. JANE'S OLD ROOM. NIGHT

Abby texts Stella. "*Sloane busted me. Can't come up.*" Stella
does not respond. Abby is bummed.

Moments later, the door flies open, Stella comes in and drags
a stack of boxes in front of the door.

ABBY
What are you doing?

STELLA
(loud whisper)
I'm drunk.

Stella jumps on Abby.

INT. JANE'S OLD ROOM. DAY

Sunlight breaks through the curtains. Abby and Stella lie
naked, asleep in each other's arms. There's a knock at the
door, then Tipper tries to open it. The boxes are still in
the way. Abby and Stella wake with a start. They jump out of
bed.

STELLA
Shit!

TIPPER (O.S.)
Abby, honey, are you okay?

ABBY
Yeah! I'm fine!

Abby and Stella panic as they get dressed.

STELLA
(angrily whispering)
Why did you let me fall asleep?

TIPPER (O.S.)
I think something is in front of
the door!

ABBY
I'll move it!

Stella looks for a place to hide. She hides behind the door. Abby pushes the boxes out of the way, and Tipper immediately bursts in. The twins stand behind her.

TIPPER
Why did you block the door?

ABBY
I don't know, I must have been
sleepwalking.

TIPPER
That's very dangerous. I once took
too many Ambien and bought a race
horse online.

Abby nervously glances at the door Stella is hiding behind. The twins notice Abby's glances then shift their focus to where she was looking. They see Stella.

TIPPER (CONT'D)
I want to find Jane's old Gameboy
so these little ladies can see what
screens used to look like.

Stella lifts her finger to her lips, begging the twins for their silence. The twins look back at Abby, full of judgement.

Tipper starts riffling through a box. Ted appears in the doorway.

TED
Good morning, girls. Abby.

Abby and Stella's panic rises.

ABBY
Morning!

Ted walks all the way into the room.

TED

Honey, I'm going to the office.

TIPPER

But it's so early.

TED

I know, but I have so much to do.
Oh, and I invited Harry Levin and
her husband to our Christmas Eve
party.

Tipper throws her hands in the air.

TIPPER

What?

Abby notices Stella's lacy, pink bra on the floor. She reaches her leg out, trying to snag it, but before she does, Madison reaches down and picks it up. She shoves it in her pocket.

TED

You heard what she said. It's not just about me, it's about our whole family, and what's a better representation of our family than your Christmas Eve party.

TIPPER

It is legendary.

Ted holds Tipper's shoulders.

TED

Thank you.

Ted kisses her. As he turns to go, he notices the rest of Stella's clothes on the ground.

TED (CONT'D)

Glad to see you're making yourself at home, Abby.

Abby lets out a nervous laugh. Ted leaves. Tipper goes back through the boxes, muttering to herself.

TIPPER

Two more people on the guest list.
I basically have to reimagine the
entire party. It's fine.

Tipper finds the Gameboy.

TIPPER (CONT'D)
Here it is! Come on girls, let's
let Abby get back to
her...lounging.

Tipper takes the girls out. Abby shuts the door.

ABBY
That was close.

She tries to hug Stella, but Stella moves away.

STELLA
We shouldn't have done that. We
almost got caught.

ABBY
It was worth it.

STELLA
Maybe for you.

Stella instantly regrets her words.

STELLA (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, I just...that can't
happen again.

INT. KITCHEN. MORNING

Sloane sits at the table with the twins, Abby and Stella.
Jane cleans the breakfast dishes with Tipper, who does not
appreciate the help. Tipper rinses plates, Jane grabs a plate
and sticks it in the water.

TIPPER
We don't need to both do it.

JANE
Okay!

Jane backs off. Stella avoids eye contact with Abby. A
sharply dressed Eric enters.

ERIC
Good morning, ladies.

SLOANE
You look nice. Going somewhere?

ERIC

Didn't I tell you? Levi has a connection with a local potpourri vendor. He's going to introduce us.

SLOANE

Great.

Eric kisses her on the forehead, kisses the twins, then heads out. Sloane watches him go.

MADISON

Mommy, when are we going to see Santa?

SLOANE

I don't know if we're going to be able to see him this year.

MATILDA

But how is he going to know what we want for Christmas?

TIPPER

Take the girls to see Santa, this could be the last year they'll want to see him.

MADISON

Why? Is Santa dying?

TIPPER

No.

MATILDA

Are we dying?

SLOANE

No! Fine. I'll take you. I still need to get a White Elephant gift anyway. Did you guys get yours?

STELLA

Yep.

JANE

Yes, I'm making something so special.

ABBY

What's White Elephant?

TIPPER

Stella didn't tell you?

STELLA

I forgot.

TIPPER

It's a gift exchange game we do at our Christmas Eve party every year, but if you don't have a gift, you don't have to play.

ABBY

I can get something.

TIPPER

Great, you girls can tag along with Sloane to the mall.

STELLA

Actually, dad asked me to go to his office to help with his speech for Carolyn's dinner tonight.

JANE

I wish I could go, but I have to put the finishing touches on my Christmas gifts.

Sloane turns to Abby.

SLOANE

Guess it's just you and me. How fun.

Stella gives Abby an apologetic look.

TIPPER

Just make sure you're all back by four, we are getting that photo before we leave for dinner!

INT. BROOKSTONE STORE. DAY

Abby browses the hi-tech items. She sees a hand massager on display. She slides her hand inside and it immediately starts massaging. It's pleasant at first, but then it takes an aggressive turn. She tries to pull her hand out. A BROOKSTONE EMPLOYEE appears.

BROOKSTONE EMPLOYEE

Can I help you with anything?

ABBY

No, I'm good.

She's still trying to get her hand out. The employee reaches over and turns off the machine. Abby pulls her hand free.

ABBY (CONT'D)

Thank you.

INT. SHOPPING MALL. DAY

The twins sit on Santa's lap. Sloane stands near by.

SANTA

Ho, ho, ho. Have you been good girls this year?

MADISON

You're always watching. What do you think?

The Santa laughs, unnerved.

Sloane looks up and sees Paul walking out of a store carrying bags. He sees her and walks over.

PAUL

You know that's not the real Santa, right?

SLOANE

No.

They laugh.

SLOANE (CONT'D)

Hey, I don't know if you're busy Christmas Eve, but we're having our family party. You should come.

PAUL

That would be nice. I'll stop by.

A WOMAN dressed as an elf comes over.

WOMAN

Excuse me, could you come get your kids? They won't let go of Santa.

Sloane looks over to see the twins squeezing the life out of Santa.

INT. BROOKSTONE. DAY

Abby sends Stella a text that reads: *"Miss you. What are you doing?"* Stella writes back: *"Still with my dad. Pretty busy. See you later. Xo"*.

CRAIG, (40's), almost certainly lives with his parents, would mansplain flight to a bird, approaches.

CRAIG

Need help?

ABBY

Yeah, I'm looking for a gift that would be good for anyone.

CRAIG

What's he into?

ABBY

No, it's not for a guy, it's for any person. I'm doing this gift exchange thing, White...

CRAIG

White Elephant?

ABBY

Yes.

CRAIG

Sick.

Craig leads Abby over to a display.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

'kay. We got this levitating bluetooth speaker that pulses with the beat. Pretty sure it's just magnets.

ABBY

I don't know.

CRAIG

Cool, cool, no worries. How 'bout this waterproof bluetooth speaker? Probably has a sealant somewhere inside to keep the water out of the electronic motherboard.

ABBY

Maybe not a bluetooth speaker.

CRAIG

Okay, that's chill. Peep this, it's a box that plugs into your car, and when you take it outside, it plays whatever is on your radio.

ABBY

So, it's a speaker.

Craig gives Abby a blank stare.

ABBY (CONT'D)

I'll take it.

CRAIG

Sweet. You want it gift wrapped?

ABBY

Sure.

CRAIG

Baller.

Craig walks away. Sloane rushes into the store with the twins.

SLOANE

Can you watch them for a bit, I have to run an errand. Santa promised them the complete works of Sylvia Plath. Isn't that a nice thing for little girls?

ABBY

Sure.

Sloane looks around the store.

SLOANE

Ugh, no one has ever wanted anything from this store, ever.

Craig comes back with the wrapped gift.

CRAIG

That's \$46.57.

Abby freezes. She looks to Sloane who side eyes the gift.

ABBY

I'm going to keep looking.

INT. NORDSTROM. DAY

Abby looks around the upscale department store. The twins trail behind.

MADISON
Why was Aunt Stella hiding in your room this morning?

ABBY
We were playing a game!

MATILDA
Like hide and seek?

ABBY
Yeah.

MADISON
We love hide and seek.

ABBY
What do you guys think I should get for this White Elephant gift?

MADISON
How about this?

Madison picks up a large piece of costume jewelry. Abby looks at the price tag. It's a lot.

ABBY
That might be a little much.

Abby spots a large Christmas tree covered in very fancy ornaments. It calls to her.

ABBY (CONT'D)
These are gorgeous.

Abby checks for price tags, but doesn't see any. A snooty SALESWOMAN walks over.

SALESWOMAN
May I help you?

ABBY
Yeah. How much are these?

SALESWOMAN
They start at \$125.

ABBY

Oh. I'm looking for a gift that would work for a man or a woman that is under, let's say...\$50?

Madison slips the large piece of jewelry in Abby's bag. Abby doesn't notice.

SALESWOMAN

We don't have anything like that here. There's a Ross off the highway.

ABBY

Okay. Thank you. Come on, girls.

Abby spots Carolyn who is browsing at a make up counter. Abby approaches her.

ABBY (CONT'D)

Hi, Carolyn.

Carolyn looks at Abby. She has no idea who she is.

ABBY (CONT'D)

Abby. I met you the other night.

Still nothing.

ABBY (CONT'D)

I'm Stella's friend. The orphan.

CAROLYN

Oh yes! Lovely to see you.

Carolyn starts to turn away.

ABBY

I'm really looking forward to your dinner tonight.

CAROLYN

Okay.

Abby finally takes the hint.

ABBY

See you tonight!

Carolyn turns away. Abby walks out with the girls. As Abby exits, a piercing alarm blares. Abby looks around, confused, but keeps walking. A second later, 3 SECURITY GUARDS appear.

SECURITY GUARDS
On your knees!/Get down!/ON THE
GROUND!!

Abby quickly realizes they are screaming at her.

SECURITY GUARDS (CONT'D)
Hands up!!/DON'T MOVE!/WE ARE
AUTHORIZED TO USE FORCE.

Abby gets on her knees.

SECURITY GUARDS (CONT'D)
On your stomach!!! DOWN!!

Abby gets onto her belly, hands over her head. The twins smile, wildly entertained. Carolyn watches, horrified.

INT. MALL INTERROGATION ROOM. DAY

Abby sits at an empty table, metal light hangs down. One of the security guards, ED, has been rejected from the police academy 6 times, slams the necklace down on the table.

ED
Wanna explain this?

ABBY
I don't know how that got in my
bag.

From behind Abby, FRANKIE, only slightly more intelligent than the dumbest dog in any litter, barks next to Abby's ear.

FRANKIE
Oh, okay, so this is just a big
misunderstanding. We should
probably let you go, right?

ABBY
Yes!

On the other side of Abby, CRYSTAL, part time mall cop, full time amateur MMA fighter, speaks into Abby's other ear.

CRYSTAL
So, the necklace just grew legs and
walked into your bag?

ABBY
No, I-

CRYSTAL

Check it for legs, boss? Does it have any legs?

ED

Nope! Don't see any legs-

ABBY

I'm not suggesting it got in there by itself-

Ed tosses Abby's wallet on the table.

ED

New York City, huh? What are you doing in our little town? Pullin' a job? Jackin' a roost?

ABBY

What?

FREDDIE

You hocking crank? Breaking bad?

ABBY

I'm not doing any of those things, and I didn't take the necklace. Look at the tapes, and you'll see.

ED

Oh, you're telling me how to do my job? Fine, do my job if you think it's so easy-

Ed pulls his velcro name tag off his shirt and slams it down.

ED (CONT'D)

Here you go, hot shot, I guess you're in charge now.

CRYSTAL

You want me to make her talk, boss? I can make this little birdie sing.

The door opens and another DUMPY SECURITY GUARD walks in. He flips the light switch, illuminating the room. In the harsh light, it is revealed to be a dull break room, messy cubby holes, torn aspirational posters, industrial coffee maker.

FRANKIE

God damn it, Eugene!

EUGENE

I heard there were cruffins in here.

ED

Over there.

INT. MALL OFFICE. DAY

Ed leads Abby out of the interrogation room. Sloane waits with the twins. She is pissed. Abby is embarrassed.

ED

I don't want to see you back here.

INT. LIVING ROOM. DAY

Abby enters with Sloane and the twins. She sees Ted and Tipper talking to Stella. They all look at Abby, brows furrowed.

INT. JANE'S OLD ROOM. DAY

Abby paces the floor, Stella sits on the bed.

ABBY

...But I didn't do it. Do you believe me?

STELLA

Of course, but Carolyn told my dad she thinks it would be better if you didn't come with us.

ABBY

They hate me.

STELLA

I'm sure they'll forget about it. Eventually.

ABBY

Oh, god...

STELLA

How about this? I made plans with some of my friends for after dinner. Come meet us. It'll be nice to get away from my family.

ABBY

Okay.

Tipper barges in.

TIPPER

Stella, we have to go, we're late.

STELLA

Bye, Abby.

ABBY

Bye.

Stella exits. Tipper hangs back.

TIPPER

We weren't able to get the photo.
Again.

ABBY

I'm so sorry.

After a long, stern look, Tipper leaves.

INT. MOM AND POP RESTAURANT. NIGHT

A quaint, family run restaurant. Abby eats alone at a table. She picks up her phone and texts Stella: "*You still at dinner?*" She waits but gets no response. She glances over at a large family eating at a nearby booth. The frazzled mother tries to soothe a screaming toddler. Abby stares wistfully at them.

EXT. MOM AND POP RESTAURANT. NIGHT

Abby leaves the restaurant. She checks her phone. Still nothing from Stella. Abby looks up to see Riley exiting a store, gift bag in hand.

ABBY

Hey.

RILEY

Hi. No Stella?

ABBY

She had a family thing. I'm meeting
up with her later. What do you have
there?

RILEY

It's for that White Elephant party.

ABBY

You're going to be there?

RILEY

My family goes every year. I haven't been in a while.

ABBY

Oh. Cool. Hey, I'm glad I ran into you. I've been having this thing where, every time I stick my finger in my eye with great force, it hurts. What do you think that is?

RILEY

Hm. It sounds like a case of chronic moronitosis. There is no cure.

They laugh.

ABBY

Do you want to get a drink? Or can you point me in the direction of one?

EXT. THE FRONTIER NIGHT

A nondescript hole in the wall. No sign, just a small LGBT flag in the window.

INT. THE FRONTIER. NIGHT

The inside is small, but cozy. A pink neon sign reads, "The Frontier". A large vintage rainbow flag hangs above a small stage. Men and men, women and women, dance to remixed Christmas music. The mood is fun and festive. Abby and Riley sit in an intimate booth. Abby has just finished telling Riley about her day.

RILEY

Did you steal it?

ABBY

No! I think it was those twins.

RILEY

They give me the creeps.

They fall into silence.

ABBY

Can I ask you something?

RILEY

Sure.

ABBY

At the party the other night, when you said you could relate, what did you mean?

RILEY

Well, if what I think is going on with you and Stella *is* what's going on, that's something I can relate to.

ABBY

Okay. Let's say what you think is going on, is going on, what is the thing that you are relating to?

RILEY

What has she told you?

ABBY

That you were the first girl she hooked up with.

RILEY

That's it?

ABBY

Is there more?

RILEY

There's a little more, but I don't think it's appropriate for me to share.

ABBY

Nothing about this trip has been appropriate.

Riley considers for a moment.

RILEY

Stella and I were best friends, totally inseparable. Then freshman year of high school, it started to be more than friendship. No one knew.

(MORE)

RILEY (CONT'D)

We'd slip love notes into each other's lockers at school. One day, one of Stella's friends found a note I had left. She asked Stella about it, and Stella told her that I was gay and wouldn't leave her alone. Within a couple of days, the whole school knew. I was getting bullied, people wrote homophobic slurs on my locker. The worst part was Stella wouldn't talk to me, wouldn't even look at me. It was like everything we had together never happened.

Abby is stunned. She takes Riley's hand.

ABBY

I'm so sorry.

Their eyes meet for a moment, then Riley takes her hand back.

RILEY

The thing I relate to is being in love with someone who is too afraid to show the world who they are.

This throws Abby off.

ABBY

You don't think she's changed?

RILEY

I don't know. I haven't known Stella for a long time. What I do know is you're here with me, and not at the dinner with her.

ABBY

That's just because of a misunderstanding.

It's unclear whether Abby is trying to convince Riley, or herself. Abby's phone buzzes. It's a text from Stella: "Hey! Come meet me at 3470 Main St." Abby holds up her phone.

ABBY (CONT'D)

She wants me to come meet her.

RILEY

I'll go close out our tab.

Riley gets up. Abby's head swims. She looks around the room, and spots Levi sitting at a table with a woman who has her back to Abby. A moment later, Eric enters, and makes a beeline for Levi's table. He hugs Levi, then gives the woman a kiss on the cheek. Eric looks up and sees Abby looking at them.

Another text comes: *"BTW, dinner was zzzzzzzzzzzzz. Missed you."* This one gives Abby a little more relief. When she looks up again, Eric is gone.

INT. FRATTY'S. NIGHT

A douche-y college themed sports bar with bad lighting and worse clientele. Abby squeezes through the rowdy crowd, she sees a drunk Stella at the bar with Ashley, Brooke, and Kelly. As Abby gets closer, she sees Brad is there too.

ABBY

Hey.

STELLA

Abby!! We're doing shots. Have one!

ABBY

No, I'm okay.

BRAD

Come on, loosen up, Amy!

Brad hands her a shot.

BRAD (CONT'D)

One, two, three, go!

Everyone slams their shots. Abby winces.

ABBY

What was that? Antifreeze?

STELLA

I don't know!!!

Stella turns to talk with her friends. Brad pulls a guy over.

BRAD

Amy, I want you to meet my friend
Dozer. I think you're going to
really hit it off.

Abby looks up and sees that it's the heavily bearded man from the club party.

HEAVILY BEARDED MAN

We meet again.

Abby is not happy. A Maroon 5 song starts playing. Stella, Ashley, Kelly, and Brooke scream and run to the dance floor. Brad follows. Abby wishes she was anywhere else.

INT. FRATTY'S. NIGHT

It's a little bit later. Abby sits on a bar stool, Dozer sits next to her. They are both stone faced. Abby is watching Stella jump up and down on the crowded dance floor, her friends surrounding her. Brad keeps trying to dance with Stella. Abby is less than thrilled.

DOZER

You wanna d-

ABBY

No.

DOZER

You sure? If I get up off this stool, I might not come back.

ABBY

Great.

Dozer gets up and steps onto the dance floor.

Stella breaks away from her friends, and dances over to Abby.

STELLA

Hey, Ashley is having some people over tonight.

ABBY

I think I want to head home.

STELLA

I want to keep hanging out with my friends, I never get to see them. Is that okay?

Abby eyes Brad. It's not okay.

ABBY

Sure.

STELLA

Great!

Stella dances away.

INT. JANE'S OLD ROOM. NIGHT

Abby lies awake in bed. She looks at her phone. She sent a text to Stella an hour ago that read: *"Where are you?"* She sends another text that reads: *"Goodnight"*. She waits. She sends another: *"Text when you get home"*. Then another: *"Please."* And another: *"I love you."*

INT. JANE'S OLD ROOM. DAY

Abby wakes up and immediately picks up her phone. There's a text from Stella that reads: *"Home safe. Night."*

INT. STELLA'S CHILDHOOD ROOM. DAY

Stella is asleep in bed. Abby tiptoes into the room and walks over to the bed. She touches Stella's arm gently.

ABBY

Hey.

Stella stirs. When she realizes Abby is there, she sits up.

STELLA

What are you doing?

ABBY

I wanted to make sure you're okay.

STELLA

Of course I'm okay. Why wouldn't I be?

ABBY

You just weren't answering me last night, and I-

STELLA

I was with my friends, you knew that. Why do you always text me when you know where I am? Why can't you just give me some space?

ABBY

I worry about you-

STELLA

Don't worry about me. I'm an adult.

ABBY

It's just because I love you.

STELLA
Sometimes your love is a little
suffocating.

Abby tries to hide her hurt feelings.

ABBY
I'm sorry. The truth is, last night
I felt weird about you hanging out
with your ex-boyfriend. He's
clearly still into you-

STELLA
You need to trust me-

ABBY
So nothing happened between you and
Brad?

Just then, Sloane opens the door.

SLOANE
Is everything okay in here?

STELLA
Yeah, fine. What do you want?

SLOANE
Mom needs us to go pick up stuff
for the party.

Stella begrudgingly gets out of bed. Abby wants to keep
talking, but Sloane doesn't leave.

ABBY
I guess we'll just talk later then?

STELLA
Sure.

INT. KITCHEN. DAY

Abby stands at the counter sitting a cup of coffee. She sees
the twins making snowmen. Eric enters. He and Abby tense up.

ERIC
Good morning.

ABBY
Morning.

Eric walks over to the coffee pot.

ERIC

What are you up to today?

ABBY

Still have to get that white elephant gift.

ERIC

There's the sweetest little stationary store on Main. Tell Pierre I sent you.

ABBY

Thanks.

ERIC

That's a fun bar, isn't it?

Abby doesn't know what to say.

ABBY

Uh huh.

They stand in awkward silence. After a minute, Eric heads outside to be with the twins.

EXT. PROSPECT PARK. DAY

John power walks through the busy park, passing strollers with ease. He has his headphones in, he dials the phone.

EXT. MAIN STREET. DAY

Abby moves down the sidewalk, carrying a wrapped gift. She answers the phone.

*NOTE: WE INTERCUT BETWEEN ABBY ON THE STREET, AND JOHN AT THE PARK.

ABBY

Hi.

JOHN

Okay, the last time we spoke, I may have crossed a boundary. You were a friend in need, and wanted me to listen without judgement. I did not do that, and I am sorry. I am here for you now. What's going on?

ABBY

Stella's been acting weird. She was out all last night with her ex-boyfriend, I'm pretty sure her parents hate me, I got arrested at the mall for something I didn't do, and I found out Stella bullied her first girlfriend for being gay.

Long pause from John.

JOHN

I'm sorry, I can't do this.

He hangs up.

INT. LIVING ROOM. DAY

The house is buzzing with activity. Caterers set up food stations, and assemble the bars. Tipper barks orders.

TIPPER

No, do not put that there. What do you think this is, a barn party?

Abby enters with the gift.

ABBY

Where should I put my White Elephant gift?

TIPPER

I don't know, the oven? Jesus, Abby, what do you think? Use your head! It goes under the god damn tree! I'm sorry. You've probably never even had a Christmas tree-

Tipper takes a deep breath.

TIPPER (CONT'D)

We do this party every year, and no matter how early I start planning, I always feel unprepared. And on top of everything, I can't find my Christmas brooch. Have you seen it?

ABBY

No.

TIPPER

You can tell me. I won't be mad, I just want to know it's safe.

ABBY

I swear I don't have it.

TIPPER

Well, if it appears on my dresser,
I won't ask any questions.

INT. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT

Everything has been set up. Abby waits by the fire place,
sipping a drink. Jane enters carrying an oversized, flat
gift.

JANE

Merry Christmas Eve!

ABBY

Hey, Jane. That's a big gift.

JANE

This is my masterpiece. Whoever
picks it is going to be very
pleased.

Jane puts her gift next to the tree.

TED (O.S.)

Jane?

JANE

Yeah, dad?

TED (O.S.)

Internet!

JANE

On it!

She skips away. Stella, dressed for the party, comes down the
stairs, Abby sees her. The mood is immediately tense.

STELLA

Hey.

Tipper rushes in.

TIPPER

Stella, is that what you're
wearing?

It is.

STELLA

No.

TIPPER

Oh, thank god. Please change, and quickly. We're getting the family photo tonight. If I don't post it soon, people are going to talk.

Stella turns to go back upstairs. Abby stops her.

ABBY

Hey. I'd really like to finish our conversation.

Tipper reappears carrying her iPad in one hand and a tripod in the other.

TIPPER

Stella, why are you still wearing that?

Stella heads upstairs. Abby watches after her. Abby pulls out her phone. She sends a text to John that reads: "*I think something maybe happened between Stella and her ex-bf. I don't know what to do.*". The reply bubble appears, then quickly disappears. Abby feels very alone.

INT. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT

Tipper is setting up the tripod. Stella is dressed to the nines. She stands near Jane. Abby eyes her from across the room. Ted enters.

TED

Honey, is now really the best time? People will start arriving any minute.

TIPPER

It's the only time.

Sloane and Eric enter.

TIPPER (CONT'D)

Where are the twins?

SLOANE

They don't feel like getting their picture taken today.

ERIC

They said maybe tomorrow.

Tipper's mind is blown.

TIPPER

This is why you don't let children
think for themselves.

Tipper rips down the tripod and storms out of the room.

Abby takes a deep breath and approaches Ted.

ABBY

Hey, I just wanted to say what
happened yesterday was a total
misunderstanding. I would never-

Ted holds up a hand.

TED

You don't have to explain. Let's
just avoid any further incidents,
okay?

Abby swallows it, and nods.

TED (CONT'D)

Good.

INT. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT

The party is underway. Everyone is here. Abby, Stella, Jane, Sloane, Eric, Levi, the twins, Paul, Ted, Tipper (all smiles, in full hostess mode), Carolyn, Riley and her parents, Stella's friends.

Abby walks through the party, lost. She spots Stella standing with Harry Levin, her husband, Ted, Tipper, Jane and Sloane.

SLOANE

...the vessels are curated for each
individual. No two are alike. I
could make you one-

TED

Sloane was on track to make partner
at her firm before she left to
start a family. She's our super
mom, Stella's our powerhouse, and
Jane is the only reason the
internet ever works in this house.

JANE

I have a way with routers!

Sloane absorbs the blow. Stella is uncomfortable, Jane is oblivious.

TIPPER

Sloane, why don't you have the girls sing a song for us. They have the most beautiful voices.

SLOANE

Sure.

Sloane swallows her hurt and walks away.

INT. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT

Eric plays "Silent Night" on the piano, the twins sing. Their voices are beautiful, but very spooky. Sloane stands near by.

Abby is across the room from Stella who stands with Ted, Tipper, Harry and her husband. Jane stands next to the tree, a loving hand placed on her gift.

Levi and Carolyn stand together. Eric looks over and smiles. Sloane clocks it, so does Abby.

The song ends and everyone applauds. The twins bolt. Sloane follows them.

SLOANE

Girls, where are you going?

She looks up to see Paul walking towards her.

We're back with Abby. She watches Sloane take a step toward Paul and whisper in his ear, caressing his arm in a more than friendly manner. A huge smile spreads across Paul's face. He nods. Abby is dumbfounded.

Riley approaches.

RILEY

Having fun?

Abby is relieved to see Riley, the one bright spot in an otherwise dark day.

ABBY

Is there anyone at this party who is not hiding something?

RILEY

Besides me? No.

ABBY
I'm so happy you're here.

RILEY
Me too.

Abby leans into their connection until...

RILEY (CONT'D)
I want to introduce you to my
girlfriend. She just flew in from
Brazil.

Riley turns to a stylish Brazilian girl standing nearby.
Abby's face falls.

RILEY (CONT'D)
Isabella, come meet Abby.

Isabella extends her hand.

ISABELLA
Nice to meet you, Abby.

ABBY
You too.

RILEY
We're going to get a drink. Want to
join us?

ABBY
No, I'm good.

They walk away. Abby deflates.

Brad enters through the front door with his parents and
brother. Brad passes by Abby.

BRAD
What's up, Amy?

Brad makes a beeline for Stella.

ABBY
(to herself)
Abby, why are you here?

Jane appears beside her.

JANE
I ask myself that all the time. Why
are we here? Spinning on this ball
in the middle of outer space.
(MORE)

JANE (CONT'D)

In my book, that's the question the Shadow Dreamers are trying to answer.

JOHN (O.S.)

ABBY!

The whole party stops. Abby turns to see John at the front door. John's entrance gets Stella's attention for a moment, but then the gaggle of girls and Brad surround her.

ABBY

How are you here?

JOHN

When are you going to get it?
Tracking!

Tipper quickly approaches.

TIPPER

Hello, I'm Tipper. This is my home.
And you are?

John's voice drops 3 octaves.

JOHN

Kyle. I am Abby's cis gendered, heterosexual male on again, off again boyfriend who is very sexually attracted to her- a female. We are currently off, and I came here to get her back.

TIPPER

I see. It would have been nice to get a heads up that you were joining us, but now that you're here, enjoy.

Tipper walks away.

JOHN

She is fabulous.

ABBY

What are you doing?

JOHN

That text you sent me was a cry for help, so I came up with a fool proof plan to bust you out of here. Get your stuff.

ABBY
I don't want to leave her here with
him.

Abby gestures to Stella and Brad.

JOHN
That's the ex?

ABBY
Yeah.

John downplays his intense attraction.

JOHN
I guess he's handsome.

ABBY
I just feel like if I leave now,
then it'll be over.

JOHN
Maybe it already is.

Abby doesn't want to accept this. She looks over to Stella. She sees Kelly taking a selfie with Stella, Brad, and the rest of the gaggle. Brad's hand slides down toward Stella's ass, but before Stella can react, Abby snaps.

ABBY
That's it!

She charges over to Stella.

ABBY (CONT'D)
I'm done.

Abby leaves. Stella is panicked, she looks at Brad, angry.

KELLY
Done with what?

Stella goes after Abby.

TIPPER
Ok everyone! Take your seats, we're
starting White Elephant!

INT. JANE'S OLD ROOM. NIGHT

Abby storms into the room, and starts packing. Stella follows her in.

STELLA

Abby-

ABBY

I've put up with so much shit on this trip, and I'm not going to do it anymore. I'm going home. Hope you and Brad have a great night.

STELLA

Can we just talk?

ABBY

Sure, let's talk. What happened last night?

STELLA

You know where I was-

ABBY

Walk me through the night.

STELLA

We were hanging out at Ashley's house.

ABBY

Did something happen between you and Brad?

Stella hesitates for a long beat.

ABBY (CONT'D)

Don't lie to me.

Stella takes a deep breath.

STELLA

He kissed me-

Abby is pissed.

STELLA (CONT'D)

But I stopped it! I promise you, nothing else happened.

Abby continues to pack, furiously.

STELLA (CONT'D)

Abby, please. I know this has been hard for you, it's hard for me too-

ABBY

You are making this choice. But, I guess this is just what you do.

STELLA

What does that mean?

ABBY

I know what happened with Riley.

This stops Stella in her tracks.

STELLA

That was different.

ABBY

I don't think it is. Do you have any idea how painful it is to have the person you love want to hide you?

STELLA

I'm not hiding you! I'm hiding me. From the moment we were born, our parents expected us to be these perfect golden children- well, Sloane and I. Our whole lives were mapped out for us, what we studied, what sports we played, who we dated. Love in our house was not something you got for free, it was something you competed for, and if we veered off their course, it was all taken away. I know it's messed up, but that's how they are. They're my parents, and I'm scared that if I tell them who I really am, I'll lose them.

ABBY

If you don't tell them, you'll lose me.

STELLA

I don't want to lose you. I'm scared.

Stella cries. Abby softens. She takes a step toward Stella, and puts her arms around her. Stella kisses her.

SLOANE (O.S.)

Matilda? Madison?

They whip around and see Sloane standing in the doorway. Sloane sees them, and gasps.

SLOANE (CONT'D)
Mom and dad are going to love this.

INT. KITCHEN. NIGHT

Sloane looks for the twins. She opens the door to the backyard. They're not there. Stella and Abby are on her heels.

SLOANE
Matilda, Madison, where are you?

STELLA
Sloane, can we just talk for a second?

Sloane keeps moving through the house, opening doors, checking under tables, looking for the twins who are nowhere to be found.

SLOANE
What's there to talk about? You and Abby are in a romantic relationship, and you've been lying to the family about it for god knows how long. Does that sound about right?

Stella is caught, looks to Abby, then back to Sloane.

STELLA
Please, don't tell mom and dad-

SLOANE
Why, are you scared you won't be the favorite anymore? They deserve to know the truth.

Sloane turns and walks away. Stella goes after her.

INT. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT

The guests settle into their places for the game. John sidles up to Brad, still in character as Abby's boyfriend.

JOHN
You pump?

BRAD
I'm sorry?

JOHN
Weights.

BRAD
Yeah.

JOHN
Me too.

BRAD
Oh yeah? How much do you bench?

JOHN
About a thousand. Thousand plus.

Tipper gets the room under control.

TIPPER
Okay, everyone have their numbers?

CROWD
Yes./ What did she say?/ Yep!

TIPPER
Number 45 goes first. Who has
number 45?

No one speaks up. Tipper is already frustrated.

TIPPER (CONT'D)
FORTY FIVE!!!

An ancient woman slowly raises her hand.

INT. HALLWAY. NIGHT

Stella and Abby follow Sloane as she continues looking for the twins. Sloane rants, Stella seethes, Abby wants to disappear.

SLOANE
Honestly, I feel sorry for you. I
really do. Mom and dad are going to
be so heartbroken when they find
out you're living a lie.

Sloane hears a noise coming from the linen closet.

SLOANE (CONT'D)
Found you!

Sloane throws open the door and finds Eric and Carolyn wrapped in a passionate embrace. Stella, Sloane, and Abby stop dead in their tracks. Eric and Carolyn pull apart. Stella turns and screams...

STELLA

Mom!!!

Stella turns to run, and Sloane tackles her.

INT. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT

The ancient woman slowly opens a gift. John feels Brad's arms and pecs.

JOHN

Yeah, that's good mass. Solid.

The woman has made little progress, Tipper is losing her patience.

TIPPER

Just rip it.

INT. HALLWAY. NIGHT

Sloane is on top of Stella, they wrestle.

SLOANE

You don't know what's going on in other people's families, so just keep your mouth shut.

STELLA

(mocking)

They deserve to know the truth.

Sloane applies more pressure. Stella lets out a primal yell, then flips Sloane on her back. Abby, horrified, watches with Eric and Carolyn.

CAROLYN

I should run.

Carolyn leaves.

ABBY

Should we stop them?

ERIC

No. I got in the middle of them
once and Sloane took a chunk out of
my calf.

Sloane elbows Stella, Stella flies off of her, and Sloane
commando crawls to an accent table with garland on it. She
rips down the garland.

INT. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT

Jane stands at the tree, carefully selecting a gift. John and
Brad still talk muscles.

BRAD

What's your glute regimen?

John doesn't know what that is.

JOHN

Medium?

BRAD

I do 100 100 pound squats a day.
Keeps it tight. Feel.

Brad turns to let John feel his ass. John struggles to stay
in character.

Jane lifts up each gift, examining it. Tipper is losing it.

TED

Just pick one, sweetie.

JANE

So many choices. They all look so
nice.

TIPPER

PICK. ONE.

Jane picks up a Starbucks gift card.

JANE

Hmm. Wonder what this could be.

She laughs at her own joke. No one else does. She puts it
back and continues to decide. Carolyn rushes through the
room.

CAROLYN

Levi!

Levi scurries after her. Ted looks concerned.

INT. HALLWAY. NIGHT

Sloane sits on top of Stella choking her with the garland. Stella sees a Santa figurine on a table near Abby.

STELLA

Abby! Throw me the Santa!

Sloane looks up, fire in her eyes.

SLOANE

Stay out of this, Sappho.

Abby backs up. Stella crawls forward, Sloane still on top of her. She knocks the table over and grabs the Santa. She wields it, and smashes Sloane in the face. Sloane flies back. Stella scrambles to her feet, and runs out. Sloane gets up. She rips a giant cross from the wall, and goes after Stella.

INT. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT

Jane is bursting with excitement as Harry Levin opens her gift. She rips the last of the paper off. It's a detailed painting of Main Street. It's well done, but far too colorful.

HARRY LEVIN

What is this?

JANE

It's a painting of Main Street! I made it.

HARRY LEVIN

It's big.

JOHN

I LOVE it! I paint-
(he catches himself)
...Tools.

Stella flies into the room, with Abby in tow.

SLOANE (O.S.)

I'm going to kill you!!

Stella looks for an escape, then jumps into the center of the White Elephant game. Sloane appears, brandishing the cross like a weapon. John gasps and grips Brad's shoulder.

TIPPER

Girls, what is going on?

SLOANE

You want to tell them, or should I?

STELLA

I'm not the only one with a secret.

SLOANE

You wanna play that game, let's play.

Stella freezes, not wanting Sloane to out her. Ted is beyond embarrassed, he looks to Harry who's shocked by this display.

TED

Girls! Stop it.

Stella throws a handful of holiday M&Ms at Sloane who effortlessly bats them away. She takes a swipe at Stella.

TIPPER

Girls, you stop it right this instant!

JANE

Come on guys, let's just hug it out!

STELLA/SLOANE

Shut up, Jane!

Jane's brow furrows. Sloane advances. Stella is very aware that everyone she knows is watching.

STELLA

Don't do this, Sloane.

SLOANE

SO quiet all of a sudden, huh? Not me, I'm feeling chatty.

STELLA

DON'T.

SLOANE

Or what?

Stella looks around, desperate. She grabs a poinsettia out of a pot and hurls it into Sloane's face. It explodes all over her. Sloane snaps.

SLOANE (CONT'D)

Abby isn't Stella's roommate, she's her girlfriend.

John feigns shock.

STELLA

Shut up, Sloane-

SLOANE

I saw them kissing-

STELLA

Stop it-

SLOANE

Perfect little Stella is lesbian, she's been lying to all of us.

You could hear a pin drop. Everyone looks at Stella.

STELLA

That's not true! I am not a lesbian. She's lying. Sloane is the one who's hiding something. Right, Abby?

Abby, crushed walks out the front door. Stella watches her go, instantly rueful. Riley and John look on, saddened.

SLOANE

Sell out.

Stella turns her attention back to Sloane, rage bubbling up inside her. Stella grabs Jane's painting out of Harry's hands, raises it over her head, then slams it down onto Sloane's head, the entire canvas is shredded.

JANE

My painting.

TED

God damn it! Stop!

Stella swings the painting, Sloane stuck inside. Jane snaps.

JANE

Enough! I put one hundred hours into that painting and you just destroyed it like it was nothing. It was something! I am something! And guess what? I like myself. And maybe you all don't because I'M NOT FANCY!!!

{MORE}

JANE (CONT'D)

But whether you like it or not, I
am a part of this family, and I
will not be left out anymore!
AHHHHH!

With that, Jane launches herself at Sloane and Stella. The 3
of them crash into the Christmas tree, toppling it over,
revealing the twins who have been hiding there the whole
time. A trove of stolen items surrounds them, including the
keys from the club, and Tipper's Christmas brooch.

TIPPER

My brooch!

HARRY LEVIN

That's my Epipen!

Ted looks at his family. Everyone has unraveled.

EXT. CALDWELL ESTATE. NIGHT

Abby walks angrily to her rental car. She tries to open the
door, then realizes she doesn't have the keys. She slams her
hands on the roof, defeated. John comes down the walkway.

JOHN

Wanna go for a walk?

John holds up two fur coats.

EXT. STREET. NIGHT

Abby and John wear the coats. They walk in silence.

JOHN

I'm usually anti-fur, but this
really suits me.

ABBY

You were right. There were so many
red flags. I should have known.

JOHN

It gives me very little pleasure to
be right about this.

ABBY

She didn't love me as much as she
said she did.

JOHN

Stella not coming out to her
parents has nothing to do with you.
Everybody has to do it their own
way, and just because she's not
ready, doesn't mean she doesn't
love you.

ABBY

I want to be with someone who is
ready.

INT. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT

Most of the guests have left. Tipper cleans up. Jane and
Stella sit on the couch, heads down, arms crossed.

Sloane stands by the front door with the twins. She holds a
tray with the remaining stolen items. As people leave, they
examine the tray, and pick up their belongings.

SLOANE

What do you say?

MADISON/MATILDA

We're sorry.

The only thing left is a strip of condoms. The ancient woman
snags them on her way out.

Eric approaches. The energy between them is a little tense.

ERIC

I'm sorry.

Sloane nods, then begins to clean the living room. Tipper
finds something behind the tree. It's Abby's ring box.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Come on, let's get you two to bed.

TIPPER

Girls, where did you find this?

MATILDA

Abby's room.

Eric and the twins exit. Tipper opens the box and sees the
ring. She starts putting the pieces together. She closes the
box and tucks it safely behind a framed photo of a young,
smiling Stella.

Ted and Harry Levin emerge from Ted's office. Ted walks her to the door.

TED

Thank you for coming, Ms. Levin.
Again, apologies for the spectacle.

HARRY LEVIN

I'll call you.

Harry leaves. Ted turns to his daughters, furious.

EXT. ROAD. NIGHT

Abby and John walk in silence. They hear the angelic voices of a choir coming from the open back doors of a gorgeous stone church.

JOHN

It's beautiful.

ABBY

My parents and I would go see the tree at Rockefeller Center every year. After they died, I kept going. Seeing that tree is one of the only things that helps me remember what it felt like to be with them. When Stella and I got together, she started going with me. It was nice to not have to go alone.

Tears spring to Abby's eyes. John puts his arms around her. The song ends. People start filing out of the church. An OLDER COUPLE walks by them.

OLDER WOMAN

What a beautiful couple.

JOHN

Thank you.

INT. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT

Ted lectures his daughters. Tipper stands behind him.

TED

What the hell happened tonight?
Even when you were children you didn't behave this badly.

(MORE)

TED (CONT'D)

I expected more of you- especially you, Stella. You know how this world works. Reputation is everything, and tonight you jeopardized mine. Jane- I know you just wanted to be included.

JANE

It was really nice.

TED

Sloane- making up lies about your sister? You're better than that- at least, you used to be.

Abby enters with John. Everyone turns to look at her. She avoids eye contact with Stella.

ABBY

I just have to get my stuff, then I'll leave.

Stella looks at her dad, then back to Abby. She stands.

STELLA

Abby, wait!

Stella turns to her family.

STELLA (CONT'D)

Sloane wasn't lying. I am gay, and I am in love with Abby.

John's hands shoot to his mouth, his eyes wide.

STELLA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry I didn't tell you, but you care so much about appearances and reputation, and me being gay was not part of the plan.

Stella moves toward Abby.

STELLA (CONT'D)

I threw away a chance at happiness because I was scared you would find out I'm not who you wanted me to be. Well, I'm done being scared. I'm done keeping secrets. I'm so sorry, Abby.

Abby is speechless. John and Jane burst into applause, then quickly stop. Ted and Tipper's expressions are unreadable.

SLOANE

Eric and I are getting a divorce.

John and Jane gasp.

SLOANE (CONT'D)

He's my best friend, but we never had that spark. For a long time I thought it was the stress of our jobs that kept us from being happy, but even after we started making the vessels, we couldn't make it work. That's when I realized I didn't marry him because he was the right guy for me. I did it because he was the right guy for you. And you know what? I'm not sorry for giving up my law career. I like making the vessels. I don't care if you don't respect them. I've spent my entire life trying to earn your love. I'm done too.

Sloane stands with Stella. They look to Jane.

JANE

I don't have any secrets, but I am an ally.

Jane stands with them too.

JOHN

I'm not Abby's boyfriend! I'm a gold star gay, and very proud of it!

John joins the girls.

TED

Enough!

Ted looks around at his family, then storms out of the room.

ABBY

I'm going to go.

STELLA

But I did it! I'm out.

ABBY

Stella, your family doesn't accept me as your friend, they're not going to accept me as your girlfriend. It's just too late.

Abby exits to get her stuff. John looks at Stella and sees the heartbreak all over her face. He exits.

Tipper looks at Stella, she's never seen her so upset, then she looks at the ring box peeking out from behind the photo. She makes a decision.

INT. TED'S OFFICE. NIGHT

Ted sits at his desk, head in his hands. The door opens, Tipper enters and stands in front of Ted.

TIPPER

I've always wanted to try karate, but I know it's not elegant. I hate flowers. I don't know what dressage is-

TED

Tipper-

TIPPER

I'm very insecure about my Instagramming. There are too many filters, I don't know if I'm hashtagging right, and if Betty Wilkins doesn't like one of my photos, I agonize over it for three days-

TED

I see what you're doing-

TIPPER

We've been so worried about everything seeming perfect, but maybe we don't know what perfect is.

Ted takes this in.

TIPPER (CONT'D)

We have one daughter who has been miserable in a marriage that we wanted her to be in, and another daughter who just had her heart broken because she was afraid we wouldn't love her if she told us the truth. The only reason Jane is okay is because we gave up on her after she wouldn't stop biting in preschool. That is very far from perfect if you ask me.

INT. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT

Stella is being comforted by Sloane and Jane. Ted and Tipper enter. Ted is uncomfortable, Tipper gives his hand an encouraging squeeze.

TED

I have sunk almost all of our savings into this campaign. I gave up everything because I thought that if I won, it would be a legacy you could all be proud of. I'm scared that if I lose, it will have all been for nothing, and I'll just be another retired old guy, waiting for my number to come up, and that scares the shit out of me.

STELLA

We're already proud of you, dad.

SLOANE

We don't care if you win.

JANE

And money doesn't matter. When I sell my book, I'll be able to take care of all of us.

TIPPER

Jane, not now.

TED

Come here.

Ted opens his arms, and the three girls wrap around him. Tipper watches, moved.

TED (CONT'D)

I love you, girls, and I'm sorry for making you think anything could get in the way of that. Being your father has been more meaningful than all my other accomplishments combined. You are my legacy. All I want for you is to find the same happiness you have given me, no matter where or who it comes from.

Stella takes this in.

INT. TRUCK STOP. NIGHT

Abby walks up and down the aisles, miserable. John carries a basket full of junk food. He takes his time reading the label on a bag of Flamin' Hot Cheetos.

JOHN

...Maltodextrin, Monosodium
Glutamate, Autolyzed Yeast Extract,
Artificial Color, including Red 40
Lake, Yellow 6 Lake, Yellow 6,
Yellow 5, cause all the yellows
taste so different. I am disgusted
by the poison these corporations
try to pass off to the American
people as food.

John throws the bag of Cheetos into his basket.

ABBY

Why are you taking so long? Let's
go.

JOHN

Abby, we need to make sure we have
the appropriate supplies to get
through the trip.

ABBY

It's an hour drive.

JOHN

Exactly. Let's look at gum.

EXT. TRUCK STOP. NIGHT

A light snow falls. Abby and John walk out of the store. John carries two overflowing bags.

JOHN

If we get stranded on the side of
the road, you are going to thank
me.

Out of nowhere, a minivan screeches into the parking lot and stops in front of Abby's car. Stella jumps out.

ABBY

Stella? What are you doing here?

STELLA

I texted John and he told me where
you were.

Abby shoots an annoyed look at John.

JOHN
By accident.

ABBY
I just want to go home-

STELLA
No. You're not going home, because tomorrow is Christmas, and Christmas is a time for families to be together. You are my family, Abby. I want to build on what we have, not throw it away. Please, give me another chance.

JOHN
Do it!

Abby gives him a sharp look.

ABBY
What about your parents?

STELLA
It doesn't matter what they think. As long as I have you, that's all I need. Be with me.

Stella steps closer to Abby, and Abby rushes into her arms. They kiss.

INT. LIVING ROOM. DAY

It's Christmas morning. Abby and Stella sit on the couch. John sits with Jane, chatting away. Ted and Tipper divvy up the gifts.

JANE
...so the Shadow Dreamers can't land on Plandex because-

JOHN
-they never re-calibrated their phase tube-

JANE
Exactly!

Sloane, Eric, and the twins approach Abby and Stella.

SLOANE
Go ahead, girls.

MADISON
We put the necklace in your bag.

MATILDA
We're sorry.

ABBY
Thank you.

MATILDA
Can we open our presents now?

SLOANE
Yes.

The twins jump up and rush to the tree.

INT. HALLWAY. DAY

Abby exits the bathroom. Tipper is waiting for her, holding the ring box.

TIPPER
I think this is yours. The twins took it.

Abby looks surprised, she didn't realize it was gone. She takes it from Tipper.

ABBY
Thank you.

TIPPER
It's very chic. I hope you'll decide to use it someday.

Abby smiles, and turns to go, but Tipper grabs her arm.

TIPPER (CONT'D)
I watch Rachel Maddow. Not always for the news.

INT. LIVING ROOM. DAY

Christmas carols play in surround sound. The twins open their final gifts. They jump up and hug Eric and Sloane.

MADISON/MATILDA
Thank you, mommy and daddy.

ERIC/SLOANE
You're welcome girls/We love you.

Ted's phone rings. It's Harry Levin. He shows Tipper the phone, then exits the room.

INT. TED'S OFFICE. DAY.

Ted answers the phone.

**We intercut with Harry Levin.*

INT. HARRY'S LEVIN'S HOUSE. DAY

Harry lies on a chais lounge wearing a red cashmere robe. In the background her husband sits in a sea of gifts, wrapping paper flies as he tears into them.

TED
Hello?

HARRY LEVIN
Merry Christmas, Ted.

Before Ted can respond.

HARRY LEVIN (CONT'D)
I'll get right to it. I like you. I like your family. I think we can make this work-

TED
Ms. Levin, that's amazing-

HARRY LEVIN
Hold on, there's an if. Now I don't know if Sloane's...revelation last night was true, but if it is, and Stella is willing to adopt a "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy in regards to her private life, then I think you and I can be in business. What do you say?

INT. LIVING ROOM. DAY

Ted reenters. Tipper walks over to him.

TIPPER
Well?

TED
It's not going to work out.

Tipper embraces him.

TIPPER
I'm sorry.

TED
We'll figure something out.

Ted looks over and sees Stella and Abby holding hands and looking at each other lovingly. Ted catches Abby's eye and gives her a warm smile.

TED (CONT'D)
Honey, you want to get that picture now?

TIPPER
Oh, Ted.

INT. LIVING ROOM. DAY

The family stands in front of the tree.

TIPPER
Jane, get in the middle. John, would you mind?

Tipper holds the iPad out.

JOHN
I'd be delighted.

Everyone takes their pose. Abby stands next to John.

TIPPER
Abby, what are you standing over there for? Get in here.

Abby's heart swells. She steps next to Stella. Stella puts her arm around Abby.

JOHN
Everyone say Christmas!

TIPPER
No, don't say that.

John snaps the photo.

CUT TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK, A CHYRON READS, "ONE YEAR LATER".

INT. BARNES AND NOBLE. NIGHT

The place is packed with pasty fantasy nerds. There are multiple huge displays featuring Jane's book, "Shadow Dreamers and the Second Sister" stamped with "New York Times Bestseller". There is also a large, life sized cardboard cutout of Jane. She looks radiant.

Jane stands at a podium reading from her book.

JANE (O.S.)

...once they cross Corvall Chasm,
they will be smack dab in Floam
territory. With their shields gone,
having been taken during the battle
of the Blethers, the Shadow
Dreamers know they might not all
make it out with their Krindoll
intact. They look to each other,
then into the darkness. It is Glank
who takes the first step.

Abby sits in the audience with Stella, Tipper, Ted, Sloane, the twins, and John, who hangs on Jane's every word. Stella takes Abby's hand. We see the ring on her finger.

INT. BARNES AND NOBLE. NIGHT

The reading is over. Abby and Stella fight their way to the front of a very crowded line of fans waiting to get Jane's autograph. When they get to the front, they see Jane sitting in a chair, John beside her.

A very strange FAN holds up his shirt, showing Jane a huge tattoo of the Shadow Dreamers Kingdom on his stomach.

FAN

It goes all the way down. Wanna
see?

JANE

That's okay!

JOHN

I'll take a peek.

STELLA

Are you going to meet us when
you're done?

JANE

You bet!

EXT. ROCKEFELLER TREE. NIGHT

It's packed with families, and tourists. A group of carolers weave through the crowd, singing carols.

Abby and Stella walk up to the tree. Ted, Tipper and Sloane are already there, holding holiday drinks. They hand Abby and Stella their drinks. Ted puts his arms around them. They all gaze up at the tree. Abby beams.

THE END

END CREDITS

We scroll through Ted's Instagram feed.

- A photo of Jane from the reading. #watchoutjkrowling
- A photo from the Caldwell Thanksgiving, all our characters (including Abby, John and Paul) are there. #lotstobethankfulfor
- A photo of Stella showing off her engagement ring. #engayged! #lol
- The twins' horror themed birthday party #birthdaygirls #socute!
- Ted, Tipper, Abby and Stella in front of the Eiffel Tower #gayparis #lol
- Ted and Tipper with Stella, Abby and John at Gay Pride. #woke
- Ted on stage after winning the election #proudtobeyourmayor
- Ted stands on the stage at The Frontier, the huge gay pride flag behind him, a banner that reads "Ted Caldwell For Mayor", and a sea of LGBT supporters cheering him on. #fund-gay-ser
- A candid photo of Abby and Stella looking very much in love #truelove
- The photo John snapped of Abby with the family on Christmas #family