

The Anti-Claus

By
Ereq Edwards

c/o Ed Hernandez
Bridgeport, CT 06604
203-XXX-XXXX
writer@scriptron.com

FADE IN:

EXT. NORTH POLE -- NIGHT

SUPER OVER: 100 years ago. North Pole.

The wind howls and the snow is forced to dance around like the soft doormats that they are.

Through it, a twinkling of light in the far distance muscles its way through.

EXT. NORTH POLE - SANTA'S WORKSHOP -- NIGHT

The workshop looks like a candy-coated garage up to its windows in snow. White snowflakes swirl around it.

There are two huge wooden doors that is the entrance.

EXT. NORTH POLE - SANTA'S WORKSHOP - THE GATE -- NIGHT

Swirling snow whips around the scene as a continual loud thud emits from inside the shop. It sounds like someone is trying to break through the locked gate.

ON CLOSER INSPECTION- someone has lodged a big piece of timber in the door's lock mechanism. The timber is cracking under the pressure; the muffled noise of angry small men, mixes with the howling of the cold wind.

FAR FROM THE GATE-

-there is an individual, rushing madly away through the snow. It's MAXIM POWER, a tall man of about six foot one, wearing black flowing robe lined with black fur, matched only by his "oil-spill" black hair. He is out of breath.

MAXIM

Hurry, Montory! Hurry!

Yards behind him is MONTORY, an elf, wearing an all black tunic and cap, who is also running for his life.

Finally, the door is thrust open and within seconds, hundreds and hundreds of angry ELVES spill into the snowy scene. All wear their usual elf tunic colors: green, white and black.

1ST ELF spots the other two.

1ST ELF

There they are! Get the traitors!

ALL
Get them! Hang 'em! Tie them up
and feed them to the polar bears!

In unison, the elves angrily pursue.

HIGH ABOVE-

-a familiar silhouette of a sleigh and reindeer fly ahead
of the little people posse; the jingle BELLS a ringin'.

EXT. NORTH POLE - FURTHER UP -- NIGHT

Maxim is first, scared, looking back on occasion making
sure that his pursuers haven't caught up. He sees Montory.

MAXIM
Run faster, moron! They'll catch
you!

But Montory is running out of steam.

MONTORY
Go without me, master!

MAXIM
(yelling)
You think?!

Maxim can see Montory slowing down as a portion of the
swarm of elves catch up to him and engulf him.

Montory disappears inside the pack while the others continue
after Maxim, even angrier.

Maxim CONTINUES, peering from time to time behind him.
After a few minutes, he can see that he outran the angry
mob of elves. He sighs and tries to grab his breath.

But before he can, there's the jangle of sleigh bells
emanating from somewhere, from everywhere, from nowhere.

He stops and freaks. He looks to his right, nothing there.
Then to his left and nothing.

Suddenly, quickly from above, a flying reindeer comes into
view and hits him with a hoof. With a thud, Maxim is down
in the snow.

MAXIM
Oh. Ow.

The sleigh lands nearby as Maxim shakes the cobwebs.

Majestically, SANTA CLAUS steps down from the sleigh and slowly walks to Maxim. Santa's wearing the traditional clothing that he use to wear during the mid 1800s, and he looks a little slimmer but not by much. There is the recognizable GOLD BELT BUCKLE.

He appears to be very disappointed at Maxim. He shakes his head.

The hundreds of elves catch up, with Montory as their prisoner.

Maxim gets to his feet.

SANTA
(To Maxim)
I'm ashamed.

*

Maxim dusts the snow off himself.

MAXIM
Don't be ashamed?! I'm not.

Santa gestures to the elves. They immediately apprehend Maxim.

SANTA
And to think that I trusted you.

MAXIM
Yeah! That's another one of your weaknesses. Trust.

SANTA
I'm going to do something that I should've done a long time ago.

MAXIM
What is wrong with you? You have one of the world's greatest powers at your fingertips; a power to rule like a god and what do you do with it? You use it to... give presents? They're beneath you! They should be serving you and not the other way around.

Santa's angered.

SANTA
There's more to it than just giving presents, Maxim. It's about good will.

Santa takes a deep breath to calm himself.

SANTA

(calmly)

It's our moral responsibility. We are more than mere men so we are held responsible as such. You and I. Our little helpers here. We all have to set an example.

MAXIM

Listen to you! Who cares? Who's watching? No one! The gods abandoned this planet eons ago. With your power, you should be ruling men, not indulging them.

Maxim is reaching out his hand.

MAXIM

Look, if you can't handle it, let me. I know what to do.

Santa frowns.

MAXIM

I know! I could be like your advisor. We can share rule. We can...

SANTA

Is that all you think about? Ruling the world?!

Maxim takes a beat to think about it.

MAXIM

Is there anything else?

Santa huffs.

SANTA

Take them away!

The elves do just that.

Santa closes his eyes in sadness. With his head down, he sighs.

SANTA

Where did I go wrong? I thought I raised him properly.

BEEBEE, the shortest elf in the bunch, notices Santa's sad expression. He waddles over to Santa and sympathetically touches his leg.

Beebee is moving his head about as if he were talking to Santa but not moving his lips.

SANTA
Thank you, Beebee. But I can't
help feeling responsible somehow.

Beebee gestures again and smiles. Santa responds with a big smile himself.

SANTA
Well... I love you too.

Beebee hugs Santa's leg then waddles away.

Santa gestures to his number one, ALLTOY, the head elf.

SANTA
Alltoy!

Alltoy scampers up to Santa.

ALLTOY
Yeah, Santa?

SANTA
Do you remember the summer retreat
we built many years back?

ALTOY
In Antarctica? I thought we were
never to mention that disaster.
(curiously)
Why?

Santa's smile. There's a literal twinkle in his eye.

EXT. ANTARCTICA -- DAY

The sun just barely reaches over the horizon. For miles and miles, there's nothing but cold snow and ice.

EXT. ANTARCTICA - OVER THE PALACE -- DAY

There are FOUR ELVES holding Maxim and Montory for Santa. Alltoy is there.

In the background, there's a sleigh--more like a holiday-themed stagecoach with reindeer.

Out on the tundra, Santa seems to be feeling around for something. He has his eyes closed, sensing with his mind and outstretched hands. Then, he opens his eyes in delight.

SANTA
There you are!

The four elves force Maxim and Montory to where Santa is standing, release them and then walk back toward the sleigh.

Santa smiles at both of them for a brief moment, then he quickly grabs Maxim and Montory by their arms.

All three disappear into three columns of tiny lighted dots and sparkles. The lighted columns quickly drop into the snow below.

INT. SANTA'S PALACE--LIVING ROOM

The three columns of light appear down from the chimney, into the room, curves upward toward the ceiling then down into the middle of the room. Each column transforms into Santa, Maxim and Montory. It's dark.

SANTA
Here we are.

MAXIM
Here where?

Santa claps his hands twice and the place is lit. By magic perchance, every candle sparks to life.

Maxim studies the room and is disgusted.

MAXIM
Ugh! I can tell you were responsible for decorating this place. It wreaks of... ho, ho, ho.

SANTA
You better get use to it.

Maxim looks into Santa's eyes.

MAXIM
What do you mean?

SANTA
This is going to be your home for a little while. Until your head is cleared of this... madness!

Santa prepares to leave near the fireplace. Maxim is furious. Montory is just plain scared.

MAXIM

(angrily)

What?! You have got to be kidding!
I'm not staying here! You can't
do this!

SANTA

I can and will. I'll be checking
up on you from time to time, to
see if you've come to your senses.

MAXIM

(yells)

I'll never come to my senses!

Santa transforms into a column of tiny lighted dots and sparkles. The sparkled column rises, then sinks to the floor, makes its way toward the mouth of the fireplace and zooms up and away into the chimney.

Maxim is infuriated.

MAXIM

(yells)

Hear me, Santa Claus and hear me
well! I will never give up! If it
takes me a hundred, thousand years,
I will take your powers!

EXT. ANTARCTICA-OVER THE PALACE -- DAY

Santa appears from the snow. He can hear the muffled voice of Maxim.

MAXIM (O.S.)

(filtered)

I will take it and I will rule
this world once and for all!

Santa closes his eyes in sadness as Maxim's last words echoes throughout the tundra.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DESTINY FALLS, USA -- DAY

You can almost taste the clean air in this town. On the horizon, a snow-topped mountain overlooks the happy pine tree spotted town.

The song "JINGLE BELLS" plays.

In the foreground a sign reads: Destiny Falls - Population 5504

SUPER OVER: Present Day

EXT. DESTINY FALLS, USA - MAIN STREET -- DAY

The SONG CONTINUES.

Beyond the small town traffic, at the end of MAIN STREET, below the huge CLOCK of the HEART DEPARTMENT STORE and into a window of a board room, filled with SENIOR STAFF of the store itself, we see-

INT. HEART DEPARTMENT STORE - BOARD ROOM -- DAY

The SONG STOPS.

-NATE CAMPBELL (30ish) nervously making a presentation.

The senior staff includes ANDY HEART IV (40ish), sitting in the head chair, ANDY HEART III (60's), sitting at his left and ANDY HEART, JR. (80), sitting at his right.

SIX OTHER SUPERVISORS and MANAGERS fill the oblong table.

Nate is sweating. In front of him is a model of a Christmas show he's trying to sell to them. It looks like Atlas situated on snowy mountain, holding up the Earth. But Atlas is replaced by Santa. The Earth is surrounded by a ring of reindeer. Around the base of the snowy mound, models of elves seem ready to dance around the circumference of the model.

NATE

...as I said gentlemen, this will be huge, spectacular and magical. We will ensure with our many years of entertainment experience to bring wonderment to children of all ages and we will make the Heart brand name synonymous with holiday joy.

The two younger Hearts don't look impressed but Heart Jr. is smiling like a child.

HEART IV

How does it... ah... we'd like to see it work.

NATE

Um... you want to see it work?

HEART IV

Yeah.

NATE

Ah... okay.

Nate slowly reaches for the RED SWITCH. His nervousness makes it seem like an eternity. His finger hovers over the button. Sweat drips from his brow as he moves his finger closer and closer. Finally, he switches it to the 'On' position.

A recording of a large choir revs up. It is "Jingle Bells". The sound is coming from within the model. The reindeer fly around the model of the Earth. Santa Claus and the globe spin slowly as the elves spin in a dance.

Nate is relieved and smiles.

Heart IV and III are not impressed but Heart Jr. seems to be enjoying it.

Suddenly, the song speeds up. The globe also and so do the reindeer. The elves begin spinning faster also.

Nate appears worried. He presses the red button over and over again. It's not responding. The speed increases exponentially until it's a blur. A reindeer shoots out like bullet ricocheting off the walls with a spark.

Hearts IV and III duck. Heart Jr. looks on in a child-like exuberance.

Nate, the managers and supervisors hit the deck as all the reindeers and elves ricochet around the room. It's a war zone!

Finally, Santa and the globe explode and catch fire and the Earth model shoots straight up, crashes through the ceiling tile and out of view. The snowy mount melts. The song stops.

It's quiet as all who are on the floor, slowly get up; except Heart Jr. He's laughing and clapping.

HEART JR.

(jubilantly)

You're hired!

Heart IV and III are very disappointed and Nate can sense that. They get up from under the desk and dust themselves off.

HEART IV

Ah... we'll be in touch.

Nate expresses a look like he knows he's screwed.

EXT. DESTINY FALLS - TRIBRIDGE GROUP HOME -- DAY

It looks like an old school, except there are a train of large steel bars for a fence going all around it.

INT. TRIBRIDGE GROUP HOME - STAIRWAY

A JANITOR, listening to his portable CD player through his portable headset, is swabbing the stairs from top to bottom. At the-

-TOP OF THE STAIRWAY

ETHAN DECKER (9), rushes into the scene and heads down the stairs. But before Ethan reaches the next flight, he stops and peers down at the unsuspecting janitor cleaning the stairs. Ethan smiles deviously.

He continues his run down and bumps into the janitor. The janitor almost topples.

JANITOR
Whoa! Whoa!

ETHAN
Sorry.

Ethan continues to run away.

The janitor removes the portable headset.

JANITOR
(sternly)
Stop right there!

Ethan halts.

JANITOR
Turn around.

Ethan turns to face him.

JANITOR
Get back here.

Ethan, frightened, slowly approaches.

JANITOR
What's your hurry?

Ethan looks relieved about the question.

ETHAN

Oh. I... have to see Emma. She's coming to see me. She'll be here any minute.

JANITOR

Don't you have any manners, boy? No running down the stairs. You could've got hurt. You could've slipped and fell.

ETHAN

Oh, no. Not me. I have my sneakers on. They stick to anything.

JANITOR

Stick, huh. Well, stick or not, I don't want you running through here, especially while I'm mopping. Got it?

Ethan sarcastically respects.

ETHAN

Yes, sir.

Ethan turns.

JANITOR

Wait a minute!

He turns back.

ETHAN

What?!

The janitor sticks his hand out to Ethan like if he was expecting something.

Ethan sighs. He digs into his pocket and pulls out the JANITOR'S WALLET.

JANITOR

Your hands are not soft enough.

Ethan smirks.

ETHAN

(under his breath)
Whatever.

JANITOR

Now, get out of here.

Ethan runs to spite him.

JANITOR
 (yells)
 Hey?!

INT. DESTINY FALLS - TRIBRIDGE GROUP HOME - HALLWAY

The is the hallway where the administrator works. A conversation is emanating from one of the doors that reads:
 MRS. JEANNE HAMILTON - HEAD ADMINISTRATOR

EMMA (O.S.)
 Mrs. Hamilton, why?

MRS. HAMILTON (O.S.)
 I am sorry.

EMMA (O.S.)
 Isn't it your business to find a home for these children?

INT. TRIBRIDGE GROUP HOME - OFFICE

MRS. HAMILTON (50ish), is seated at her desk. EMMA KENSINGTON (30ish), British, is seated in a chair in front of the desk.

MRS. HAMILTON
 My business, as you so aptly put it Ms. Kensington, is to find these children a family, not just a home.

EMMA
 You know everything about me. I fit your profile perfectly.

MRS. HAMILTON
 Really?

EMMA
 I don't drink or smoke or swear. I go to church every Sunday. I run my own business. I am a very responsible individual.

Mrs. Hamilton is unbelieving.

MRS. HAMILTON
 Responsible.

EMMA
 Hm. You sound doubtful.

Emma pauses as she realizes something.

EMMA

Do you know what I'm beginning to think?

MRS. HAMILTON

No. What?

EMMA

I'm beginning to think that you don't like me.

Mrs. Hamilton begins to write something.

MRS. HAMILTON

Really? And what makes you think that?

EMMA

Can I be blunt?

MRS. HAMILTON

Please, by all means.

EMMA

I think that you are an old fuddy-duddy, living in the past. A past where it was acceptable for women to be chained to her cave surrounded by numerous children that were fathered by men who carelessly gallivant the world, killing woolly mammoth and dragging them home for dinner. You are biased because you don't believe that I, a single female, a working woman, an independent woman, can accomplish a "difficult" task of raising a child all by herself. What other reason would there be to reject my application over and over again? Hm?

Mrs. Hamilton takes the insult seriously. It shows on her face but she manages to subdue her anger. She interlocks her fingers on her desk.

MRS. HAMILTON

Ms. Kensington, our records will prove that we allow all types of "parents" to adopt our children whether single or married. We allow every race, creed, color and yes, even lifestyles. If they meet all of our requirements.

(MORE)

MRS. HAMILTON (CONT'D)

(beat)

And, there is one requirement that we do not, under any circumstance, stray far away from. And that is, a child or children has to be raised by a parent or parents that will love them, unconditionally, for the rest of their lives. We want parents that we know will sacrifice their very souls for them. After analyzing the psychological test you handed to us, we believe you do not fit this profile.

EMMA

Wha...?

Emma tries to interrupt but Mrs. Hamilton goes on.

MRS. HAMILTON

Raising a child should not be used to promote trivial matters.

Emma is at the end of her rope.

EMMA

I want to adopt Ethan because I love him. There is no ulterior motive on my part, Mrs. Hamilton. I know I can take care of Ethan. I know I'm suitable. I... I loved Ethan since the first day I laid my eyes on him.

MRS. HAMILTON

I don't doubt that.

EMMA

Ethan loves me too. He adores me. You've seen it yourself. I have been coming to this foster home for years just for him and our bond is stronger than ever.

MRS. HAMILTON

I am still unconvinced.

EMMA

Why? Why?

A pause.

MRS. HAMILTON

Ms. Kensington, on your application, you say that you have a Ph.D. What exactly are you a doctor of?

EMMA

I have a Ph.D. in Psychology and Sociology. I travel the country conducting seminars on domestic relationships. I help those who are in a troubled relationship cope with each other.

MRS. HAMILTON

So, you're a Relationship Counselor?

EMMA

That's right. I've written many books on the subject. I recently appeared on Oprah. You may have seen me.

MRS. HAMILTON

No, but I've read some of your books. You believe that women are from Venus and men are from some other god-forsaken planet.

Emma is amused.

MRS. HAMILTON

And even with all this knowledge, you say you were married... twice?

Now she's steamed.

EMMA

With all due respect, Mrs. Hamilton, but how dare you...

Emma's anger leaves her speechless.

MRS. HAMILTON

You wanted to know why.

Emma angrily nods.

Mrs. Hamilton gets up and walks to the window and looks through it. Her eyes wander away in thought.

MRS. HAMILTON

Traditionally, we house children who have lost their parents in some god-awful tragedy but recently, we've been taking in children that were "given up" by single women, working women, so-called independent women. Women much like yourself. These unfortunate children get "dumped" at our door--and many times, literally.

(beat)

I am going to tell something that you may find a little disturbing:

(beat)

Many years ago, before I became an administrator, I was a teacher at this group home.

(beat)

One morning, I was grading test papers.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TRIBRIDGE GROUP HOME - CLASSROOM - FLASHBACK

We see Mrs. Hamilton at her desk overlooking busily checking a bunch of exam papers.

MRS. HAMILTON (V.O.)

It was one of those beautiful mornings. My focus was on the exam papers that our students turned in the previous day...

She looks up and with urgency, rises from her chair to head to the window.

In the distance, there's a distinctive CRY of an INFANT.

She runs out of the room.

INT. TRIBRIDGE GROUP HOME - HALLWAY - FLASHBACK

Mrs. Hamilton comes down the stairs and exits through a side door.

EXT. TRIBRIDGE GROUP HOME - ALLEY - FLASHBACK -- DAY

She enters the alley. Her ears are honed to the cry. Her face is distressed at what she sees. The cries are coming from the-

-DUMPSTER.

She looses her shoes as she runs toward it.

She reaches in and pulls out a dirty and stained blanket with beautiful newborn crying aggressively rolled in it like an egg roll. She tries to comfort the baby as best she can.

MRS. HAMILTON (V.O.)

It was a newborn. The umbilical cord was crudely cut. The mother rolled him up like an egg roll in a filthy blanket. The cries told me that the baby was in agony. He was sick.

(beat)

For that moment, there was just no comforting him.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TRIBRIDGE GROUP HOME - OFFICE

Mrs. Hamilton looks into Emma's eyes.

MRS. HAMILTON

Do you know who that newborn was?

Emma is almost in tears. She shakes her head.

MRS. HAMILTON

Ethan Decker. That's right. Our little Ethan.

Emma gasps.

MRS. HAMILTON

That was nine years ago. Surprisingly, he pulled through. That's why we call him our special little miracle.

Mrs. Hamilton sits back down as she sighs.

MRS. HAMILTON

Weeks later, we received an anonymous letter from the person claiming to be the mother. She was a single and she needed for us to understand the reasons behind what she did to Ethan; giving him up the way she did. She was seeking forgiveness by trying to convince us, in so many words, that it was

(MORE)

MRS. HAMILTON (CONT'D)
justifiable to abandon a child to
further a career.

(beat)
We haven't heard from her since.

A long pause.

EMMA
Well... you don't think that...
I...

MRS. HAMILTON
No, no, no. I know it wasn't you.
Years later, through a private
investigator, we found who the
mother was. Without her knowledge,
of course. Needless to say, she
is a very successful business
woman.

Mrs. Hamilton leans over and sternly looks into Emma's eyes.

MRS. HAMILTON
Maybe you've missed the point, so
let me make it clear: It's going
to take a very special person to
convince us that Ethan's future
is in good hands. Do we understand
each other now?

Emma nods in defeat. She sighs.

EMMA
Yes.

Emma gets up, gathers her belongings and heads out.

EMMA
Good day.

Emma, dejected, exits.

INT. TRIBRIDGE GROUP HOME - HALLWAY

Emma is bemused. She somberly walks done the halls.

After a few seconds, Ethan can be seen quietly sneaking up behind her. He pulls on her dress to get her attention. She jumps in fright and turns to him.

EMMA
Oh, god! Ethan! Never do that!

Ethan reveals flowers as he stares intently at her. He enjoys her encompassing beauty and gracefulness. He can hear the SWEET MUSIC that always accompanies her. Or, so he imagines. He soon snaps out of it though.

ETHAN

Hi, Emma.

She cheers her up, almost to tears. She looks at him in a new light loves the flowers.

EMMA

Oh, these are so beautiful. Just like you. You are so thoughtful. I don't think I'm worthy of you.

ETHAN

She said no again, didn't she?

EMMA

Who?

ETHAN

Mrs. Hamilton.

She softly strokes the side of his face.

EMMA

Yes. She did.

He is saddened and lowers his eyes. She can feel that she broke his heart.

EMMA

Oh, honey, you have to understand. Foster homes like this tend to frown on a single persons adopting a child.

ETHAN

Why?

EMMA

They prefer to place orphans in a strong family environment. I don't blame them, though. Children should have all the benefits of a strong family. Don't you think?

Ethan continues to look down.

ETHAN

I don't care. I want you to be my mom.

Now her heart is broken. She kneels down to his level. She nudges his chin up so that he can meet her eye to eye.

EMMA

I know sweetie. I know. I'm sure
it will work out for the best.

She takes a whiff of the flowers and then kisses him on the cheek.

EMMA

Thank you.

He smiles.

EMMA

Want to go to lunch?

ETHAN

I can't. I promised to help Mrs.
Kensington today.

Emma is disappointed.

EMMA

Oh. Well... I'll pick you up later
today, okay? We'll do something
then.

Ethan nods. Emma then kisses him on the forehead. They exit.

INT. TRIBRIDGE GROUP HOME - LIBRARY

Ethan enters the group home's library. Mrs. Hamilton is already here sorting books of all sizes. There are columns of books everywhere.

MRS. HAMILTON

Hello, Ethan. Thanks for coming.

ETHAN

Hi.

He puts down his stuff.

ETHAN

What should I do?

MRS. HAMILTON

Here. Take these books and sort
them alphabetically. You remember
how to sort alphabetically,
correct?

He nods.

MRS. HAMILTON

Good. Once you're done, you can pile them over here, near this bookcase.

He starts. She starts another pile of books. After a beat...

ETHAN

Mrs. Hamilton, can I ask you something?

MRS. HAMILTON

Sure. What is it?

ETHAN

Why can't Emma be my mommy? She likes me and I like her. She's always buying me stuff. And she's pretty.

Mrs. Kensington smiles at the thought.

MRS. HAMILTON

Ethan, there are far too many reasons that I feel you're too young to understand. Mrs. Kensington is a "good person" but I think that she needs to settle down before she even considers starting a family.

ETHAN

Settle down?

MRS. HAMILTON

It means, she needs to stay home most of the time and not travel around so much. I believe children need a person's undivided attention. It would also help immensely if she had a partner for the task.

ETHAN

(to himself)

A partner.

MRS. HAMILTON

Someone that will back her in every aspect of raising children. I don't think it's easy for anyone really... you now... to raise

(MORE)

MRS. HAMILTON (CONT'D)
 children. My husband and I, rest
 his soul, spent every waking hour
 tending to our children.

She smiles.

MRS. HAMILTON
 And they're all doing well now.
 All of them great successes. I'm
 so proud of them.

She sighs.

MRS. HAMILTON
 It's the reason why I began working
 here in this group home. I want
 to be able to give children, who
 have no hope, a fighting chance.
 Especially in a world as tough as
 this one.

Ethan was listening intently.

ETHAN
 (to himself)
 A partner.

EXT. DESTINY FALLS - NATE'S OFFICE -- DAY

On a window of the office is written: CAMPBELL & SON -
 LIVE ENTERTAINMENT PRODUCTION. A phone is ringing. A woman
 picks up.

WOMAN #1 (O.S.)
 Hello? Campbell and Sons.
 (beat)
 Yes. One moment.

She uses an intercom.

WOMAN #1 (O.S.)
 Mr. Campbell? It's Heart the
 fourth. Line one.

NATE (O.S.)
 Thank you.
 (beat)
 Yes, sir Mr. Heart.
 (beat)
 Yes?

INT. DESTINY FALLS - NATE'S OFFICE -- DAY

The office is alive with Christmas show memorabilia like costumes and props. The walls are lined with many pictures of Nate, ranging from a young boy to manhood, with his father. And the pictures were always taken with some kind of Christmas event as the backdrop. There's one frame containing a obituary of Nate's father's passing.

The headline reads: "One of Destiny's Greatest Dies at age 78". The sub-text below that reads: "Francis George Campbell creator of the famous Hearts' Annual Christmas Spectacular, dies."

Nate is sitting at his desk talking on the phone.

NATE

I... understand but... No, sir.

If... just... I know. Yes, sir.

Thank you. Thank you.

(beat)

Good-bye.

He hangs up looking dejected. He takes a gander at the picture of his smiling father; a time when he was a strong young man.

NATE

Where'd I go wrong, pop?

Woman #1 comes sneaks a peek into the room. It's Nate's secretary, SALLY COPELAND. She notices the sad look on his face.

SALLY

Nate? Is everything all right?

He looks at her and barely gives a smile.

NATE

Actually, no. This time around, the Hearts went with somebody else.

Sally frowns as she enters fully.

SALLY

I am so sorry.

NATE

What am I going to do, Sal? For the first time in the history of our company, since dad started it, we are not going to produce

(MORE)

NATE (CONT'D)

Heart's Annual Christmas Show.
The show! It was the show that
put us on the map and I screwed
it up. It's all my fault.

He takes a long hard look at the picture of his father.

NATE

Face it, Sal. I'm not exactly the
brightest bulb on the Christmas
tree. Dad was the creative genius.
He had all the ideas. He made it
work.

(beat)

I'm a foul-up.

SALLY

Oh, Nate. Cut that out. You just
haven't found your niche yet.

NATE

I found my niche. F.T.U.

SALLY

F.T.U.?

NATE

Fouling things up.

SALLY

Special things happen during
special times. You'll see.
Something special is bound to
happen to you. You know what they
say, "One door closes as another
opens."

He barely smiles.

NATE

You think I've been a good enough
boy for Santa? Hm?

SALLY

Yes, sir, I do. Enough to give
you want you want.

NATE

You know what my Christmas wish
is, Sally?

She shakes her head.

NATE

To not be a failure. I want to be able to keep this production company afloat forever, if possible. I want to continue the success my father started so many years ago. You think Santa's bag is big enough to carry that? Hm?

SALLY

Santa always rewards good people.

He smirks.

NATE

Thanks for trying to cheer me up anyway.

He gets up and looks out the window and sighs.

NATE

I have to call in an emergency meeting to get the guys started on a contingency plan.

He pauses.

NATE

We need something or I'll have to... lay them off.

He sighs again.

NATE

Tell you what: why don't you take the rest of the day off, hm?

She appears worried.

SALLY

Well... there's still a lot to do and...

NATE

Go 'head. Take off. You won't get docked. You can finish tomorrow.

SALLY

Are you sure?

He nods.

NATE

Yeah. Good night.

She expresses sympathy. She heads for the door. With a smile...

SALLY
Okay. Good night.

She exits. He sits there, somberly looking out the window as the sun sets over the distant snowy mountain range..

EXT. ANTARCTICA -- NIGHT

Ice, snow and cold. It's barren.

INT. SANTA'S PALACE - DINING ROOM

In a magically lit room, Maxim and Montory eat their dinners. They say nothing. Each sit at the ends of the table and appear to be very miserable.

Maxim is nit-picking his food. It looks like raw fish.

Montory is enjoying his.

That annoys the heck out of Maxim.

MAXIM
What are you doing?!

Montory appears puzzled by the question.

MONTORY
What do you mean? I'm eating. I'm starved.

MAXIM
Do you have to be so HAPPY about it?!

MONTORY
What do you expect me to be, miserable?

Montory joyously continues his meal.

MAXIM
Yes! You can be a little more considerate! Be miserable with me!

Montory stops and gives Maxim an evil eye.

MONTORY
I've suffered long enough with you! You... you... reject!

Maxim angrily rises to his feet.

MAXIM

(yells)

Don't you take that tone with me!
You're talking to a superior mind!

MONTORY

If you're so superior, why have
we been stuck here for 100 years?!

MAXIM

How dare you speak to me like
that you!

MONTORY

Shut up!

Maxim rushes him and grabs his throat. Maxim shakes him
back and forth with every syllable.

MAXIM

No... one... speaks... to... me...
in... that... tone...

But Maxim slows down as he appears to have an epiphany. He
drops Montory as he falls with a loud thud.

MAXIM

Oh, god. Oh, no.

Montory tries to speak.

MONTORY (O.S.)

Ggghh... gghhhgg?

MAXIM

I'm having an epiphany.

MONTORY (O.S.)

Ggghh... gghhhgg?

MAXIM

You're right. Why didn't I see it
before? I'm a failure. I'm a
failure.

Somberly, Maxim kicks the reposed Montory.

MONTORY (O.S.)

Uhg!

Montory painfully gets to his feet as Maxim exits the room.

INT. SANTA'S PALACE--LIVING ROOM

Maxim enters and slowly paces. Montory is cautious as he enters.

MONTORY

Master?

MAXIM

I've failed myself. I've failed you. I've failed my friends.

MONTORY

What friends?

MAXIM

Don't you see? It's my fault.

Montory scratches his head.

MONTORY

Are you all right, sir? I mean... I'm the one that got kicked in the head just now.

Maxim begins to cry.

MAXIM

It's my fault. I belong here. I belong in this... prison. I am a... horrible person.

Montory is at a loss. He comes closer to Maxim and pats him on the back.

MONTORY

There, there. It's all right.

MAXIM

NO IT'S NOT! It's not all right, you idiot! I'm evil! Santa was right in putting me here.

MONTORY

No! Santa is the evil one! You're the good guy!

Montory thinks for a second then snaps his finger as he comes up with a new idea. He runs to the fireplace.

MONTORY

I can climb up the chimney--to see if the snow and ice cleared.

Maxim sobs.

MAXIM

We tried that a million times.
We've been trying that for a
hundred years! The ice is too
thick! We tried lighting a fire
to melt the ice but the melted
ice puts out the fire.

MONTORY

I know... we can dig our way out--
the front door!

Montory hurries to the front and opens it. It's blocked by
a thick sheet of ice and snow.

MAXIM

The snow is too heavy. How many
times have I saved you from being
crushed?

Montory slowly closes the door. He snaps his finger again.

MONTORY

A hole! We can dig...

MAXIM

(yells)

A hole?! You idiot! We did that
already! Remember?! We discovered
an ocean in that hole! We fish
from the hole now!

Montory gives up. Maxim is whipped and stops sobbing.

MAXIM

Face it, Montory. We're doomed.
We're finished. We'll be here
forever.

Maxim bows his head in failure. A moment of silence.

Then, an indiscernible rumble shakes the room. The
chandelier begins to shake.

Maxim and Montory appear frightened. They are drawn to
each other and hold tightly.

MONTORY

What is that?!

MAXIM

The palace is falling in on itself!

The rumble is getting deeper and fiercer--coming closer.
Debris is falling from everywhere. Then...

THE EAST WALL-

-crumbles as a giant churning metallic corkscrew contraption with bright headlights, forces its way into the room. It's a TUNNEL DIGGER.

The vehicle has a sign: ANTARCTICA RESEARCH LABS. The corkscrew mechanism stops spinning and the headlights switch off.

Maxim and Montory are in total awe of this unusual sight.

TWO MEN, dressed in white winter coats and goggles, step out from the vehicle. They look like scientists.

SCIENTIST 1 and SCIENTIST 2 are amazed at what they've stumbled into.

SCIENTIST 1

My, goodness! I wouldn't of believed it if I didn't see it with my own eyes. This appears to be... some kind of ancient living quarters of the indigenous population--frozen in time.

SCIENTIST 2

That's ridiculous! There is no such thing as an...

Scientist 2 is startled by Maxim and Montory who are shaken up.

SCIENTIST 2

...indigenous... population... in ...Antarctica.

Scientist 1 takes a good gander at the ceiling.

SCIENTIST 1

My word. They sure had good taste.

Scientist 2 taps Scientist 1 on the shoulder. Scientist 1 is too busy to take notice.

SCIENTIST 1

A chandelier?! How did these people get a chandelier? Odd.

(beat)

I must confess that this is all very, very peculiar!

Scientist 2 again tries harder to get his attention.

SCIENTIST 1
What! What is it?

He points to Maxim and Montory. Scientist 1 is now officially confused by the sight.

SCIENTIST 1
Oh... um... yes... hello? Do you speak English?

Maxim and Montory look at each other--as if they just got the same thought. With a battle cry, they lunge at the two scientists.

Both scientist grab hold of each other as they scream at the top of their lungs in fear.

EXT. NORTH POLE - SANTA'S WORKSHOP -- DAY

A happy, snappy song permeates the snowy atmosphere. It's the ELVES.

ELVES (O.S.)
(singing)
"Working happily, for the smiles
of girls and boys. Happens every
year, working hard to make the
toys."

INT. SANTA'S WORKSHOP -- DAY

A LARGE NUMBER OF ELVES are happily working in this workshop, synchronized with the MUSIC. Some are hammering, some are sawing and some are pulling huge boxes of completed toys with forklifts. In a-

-CORNER

Three disgruntled elves working on toys, JOESHIE, MACKMERE and FANDOR, are singing to their own tune while the other elves hum the chorus.

DISGRUNTELD ELVES
(singing)
"Who cares about these toys, my
back is almost torn in two. Santa's
way is mean, how mad we are he
has no clue."

JOESHIE
Oh, why can't we stop? I need a
break!

FANDOR
Me too.

MACKMERE

Keep working. We haven't met our quota.

JOESHIE

Quota, schmota! I need a break.

MACKMERE

Will you shut up? Santa hears everything.

JOESHIE

No he doesn't!

MACKMERE

Yes he can!

FANDOR

Shshshsh. Guys. He's watching us now.

They all sneak a peek at Santa, who is overlooking the entire workshop from a balcony high above. They notice Santa's stern glare. In return, they smile and wave in unison.

Mackmere talks through his smile.

MACKMERE

See? He can.

Santa departs into a doorway. They all breathe a sigh of relief.

JOESHIE

Why are we doing this? We should be the top of the food chain. I mean... look at us. We're smart. We're clever. We should have had our own racket by now.

FANDOR

If Maxim were here, he'd free us from this regime.

Mackmere shushes him.

MACKMERE

Don't mention his name. You want us to get into trouble again?

FANDOR

Maxim, Maxim, Maxim, Maxim!

A booming voice shakes the shop.

SANTA (O.S.)
 Joeshie, Mackmere, Fandor! Up
 here! Now!

They shake in their shoes.

The whole shop goes silent as the entire population of the shop watch Joeshie, Mackmere and Fandor take the spiral staircase up, toward Santa's office. As soon as they disappear into the doorway, immediately, the shop is back to its usual rhythm.

INT. SANTA'S WORKSHOP - SANTA'S OFFICE

If one can vomit candy cane colors, this office was the receiving end of that.

Joeshie, Mackmere and Fandor fearfully move closer to Santa's chair. It's turned away from them.

SANTA (O.S.)
 Hold it right there.

They stop.

JOESHIE
 You wanted to see us, chief?

SANTA
 Yes.

There's a moment of silence.

MACKMERE
 What about?

SANTA (O.S.)
 Have you seen your quotas?

FANDOR
 Our quotas, sir?

SANTA (O.S.)
 Yes.

JOESHIE
 Ah... no?

Santa spins in his chair revealing his anger to them. They jump.

SANTA
 Well, I have! And it's extremely
 below par!

Santa peruses though his paperwork.

SANTA

Fandor?

FANDOR

Yes, sir?

SANTA

You are thirty-four percent below quota. What are you going to do about it?

It's a hard question for Fandor. He's struggling to think for the answer.

FANDOR

Ah... mmmm... um.... work harder?
Work harder.

Santa says nothing. He just gives him a look that brings him a chill.

Sneaking a peek from one of the doors to the office, is 1st Elf.

SANTA

Mackmere? You're down fifty-six percent?

MACKMERE

Well, I'm trying very hard to up the ante and to give it that special...

SANTA

(loudly)
Try harder!

The office shakes.

MACKMERE

(squeakily)
Yes, sir.

Santa's attention is on Joeshie.

1st Elf appears concerned.

SANTA

And finally, Joeshie. You are down ninety-two point five percent. Ninety-two point five? Are you sleeping on the job?!

Joeshie is puzzled.

SANTA

Well?! What have you got to say?!

Joeshie thinks.

JOESHIE

Santa, don't you think you're getting pretty harsh on us? I mean... we work hard for you. We pull double shifts. Sometimes triples. Especially around Christmas time. We need more breaks. Remember when Maxim had the idea...

Before he can finish, Mackmere and Fandor gulp in shock.

INT. SANTA'S WORKSHOP -- EVENING

All hear Santa's booming voice.

SANTA (V.O.)

WHAT?!

The entire group in here gulp in unison, stop working and stare at Santa's door to his office. It's preceded by a deafening silence.

INT. SANTA'S WORKSHOP - SANTA'S OFFICE

Santa, in anger, slowly rises to his feet. Joeshie shakes.

SANTA

How dare you mention that traitor's name to me!

JOESHIE

Sorry, Santa.

Santa slams his fist on the desk.

SANTA

If any of you don't improve their toy output soon, I will personally see to it that you spend the rest of your days right along side of Maxim! GOT IT?!

The office shakes.

JOESHIE

But that's not fair....

SANTA
GET OUT!!

They hurriedly run off and slam the door behind them.

INT. SANTA'S WORKSHOP

Joeshie, Mackmere and Fandor appear from the door. Everyone in the workshop stare, but eventually, continue their work as usual.

MACKMERE
(to Joeshie)
Big mouth!

INT. SANTA'S WORKSHOP - SANTA'S OFFICE

Santa settles back into his chair, appearing depressed. 1st Elf comes in. He fetches Santa hot chocolate with a candy cane for a stirrer.

1ST ELF
You all right, Santa?

Santa wipes sweat off his brow.

SANTA
I don't know.

He hands the hot chocolate to Santa.

1ST ELF
You've been under a lot of stress lately. You're not your usually jolly self. What's wrong?

SANTA
I'm okay.

1st Elf is finding it hard to believe.

SANTA
Do me a favor, 1st Elf. Get me the Naughty List, will ya?

1ST ELF
Sure, sure.

1st Elf scurries to a cabinet, opens it and pulls out a DVD labeled "Naughty List".

He hands it to Santa. Santa curiously examines it.

SANTA
What's this?

1ST ELF
It's the "Naughty List".

SANTA
What?

1ST ELF
Don't you remember? We went
paperless about five years ago.

Santa remembers.

SANTA
Oh, yes, of course. Paperless.

He sighs.

1ST ELF
What?

SANTA
I miss the good ol' days when I
could write the naughty list by
hand.

1ST ELF
You miss spending thousands upon
thousands of hours writing the
names of billions of naughty kids
from all over the world?

Santa nods.

SANTA
And the "Good List" also?

1ST ELF
That's dedication for ya.

1st Elf pops the DVD in the jolly computer and boots up
the list. The he removes Santa's boots.

SANTA
I had something to look forward
to all year.
(beat)
Do you know what the naughty list
is?

1ST ELF
Yes, I do.

SANTA

It is a list of kids that are good at heart but for some reason or another, they begin to do bad things. I keep a close track of these children so that I have a chance to reform them.

1ST ELF

I know. You tell me this every single year.

Santa reads the list on the computer monitor.

At the top of the list, at number one, is ETHAN DECKER.

SANTA

See this kid?

He points to Ethan's name.

SANTA

He was on the good list just last year. Now he's number one on the Naughty List. He's my number one priority, now.

He sighs.

SANTA

Children always need an incentive. They always need to know why, when, where, how. They need a shepherd until they're old enough to go on their own.

1ST ELF

I know.

SANTA

Especially when the parents won't help or for some reason, can't.

(beat)

It's not easy work, you know.

1ST ELF

You are a very kind soul. Sometimes to your own hurt.

Santa sighs again. 1st Elf pushes Santa into the chair, fluffs a pillow and puts it under Santa's head.

1ST ELF

You need to relax more.

SANTA

Everything is so mechanical nowadays; so artificial; so commercial. Adults are losing faith in Christmas. And when adults lose faith in Christmas, the children lose faith in Christmas. And when the children lose faith in Christmas, they lose faith in... me. Then, there will be no purpose for me.

1st Elf is concerned.

1ST ELF

Is that why you're feeling so down?

SANTA

It's not about me. If we lose Christmas, we lose the children.

1st Elf covers Santa with a festive blanket. Santa closes his eyes. He's sleepy.

SANTA

(whispers)

We mustn't lose the children. We mustn't lose the children. We mustn't lose the children...

His voice trails off. 1st Elf tucks him in, sighs, then quietly leaves.

EXT. ANTARCTICA - TUNDRA -- NIGHT

There's ice and snow for miles and miles. There's a disturbance. A large hump has appeared in the snow. A low rumble displaces the silence. The hump gets bigger and bigger when suddenly, like a submarine from the sea, the tunnel digging vehicle emerges from below; headlights lead the way.

Moment's later, Maxim and Montory emerge from the vehicle. Montory is ecstatic about the whole situation. He dances around.

MONTORY

You did it! We're free!

Maxim smirks. A beat as both take in the gravity of the situation.

They scan the area and see nothing but cold snow and ice.

MONTORY

Now what?

For a moment, Maxim says nothing then, beyond the horizon, a low-level light show dances in the sky.

MAXIM

Look!

MONTORY

What is it?

MAXIM

That, my short, ugly and putrid friend, is civilization!

Montory is ecstatic again. He runs toward it.

MONTORY

Hooray! We're saved! Yay! Woohoo!

Maxim shakes his head in shame. He steps into the tunnel digger, revs it up and takes off, passing Montory.

MAXIM (O.S.)

Idiot!

Montory realizes the mistake.

MONTORY

Master! Wait! Wait! Wait for me!

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ANTARCTICA - HILL TOP -- NIGHT

The tunnel digger has come to a halt at the apex of a hill. Maxim stands there taking in the lighted scenery below him. After a few seconds, the out of breath Montory catches up. He sees-

EXT. ANTARCTICA - LOADING DOCK -- NIGHT

-a very busy loading dock with a giant ship, ANTARCTIC EXPLORER, moored and ready to ship out.

MAXIM (V.O.)

Montory, we are back in business.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DESTINY FALLS -- DAY

It's been snowing for days. The whole town is blanketed.

EXT. DESTINY FALLS - STREET -- DAY

It looks like Christmas has arrived at every corner. The streets and the shops are all dressed for it. Walking among the HOLIDAY SHOPPERS are Emma and Ethan, MOVING hand in hand.

EMMA

Isn't it beautiful?

Ethan is not impressed.

ETHAN

I guess.

A beat as she enjoys the sights and sounds of the Holiday as they walk.

EMMA

The whole thing reminds me of my home town in England, back when I was a little girl. It wasn't as festive and colorful as this but, it had the same atmosphere. My childhood memories are still vivid.

(beat)

On Christmas Eve, I was so anxious for Father Christmas--I mean, for Santa--to show up with our gifts. I just couldn't wait.

Ethan is listening intently.

EMMA

We'd carefully hang our stockings over the fireplace and immediately went to bed in the hopes that we'd get everything we asked for. The following morning, we would wake up to see, to our amazement, the stockings full of everything that we hoped we'd get.

(beat)

Later in the day, we'd eat our Christmas dinner: roast turkey, vegetables, mince pies, plum pudding, pastry cases, filled with chopped dried fruit.

She sighs.

EMMA

How I miss it so.

A pause.

EMMA

So, what do you want Santa to bring you this year?

Ethan scowls.

ETHAN

I stopped writing to Santa.

Emma is shocked.

EMMA

What? A child at your age giving up on Santa? Why, at your age, I was writing to Santa and...

ETHAN

I'm beginning to think that Santa doesn't care about me.

EMMA

That's ridiculous! Why would you think this?

ETHAN

I've written every year and he never gives me what I want.

EMMA

And what would that be?

ETHAN

You know.

She thinks about it for a second.

EMMA

No I don't.

ETHAN

You as my mom.

She empathic.

EMMA

Ethan honey, you can't give up hope. I'm sure there's a reason why he hasn't given you what you want.

(beat)

Maybe... it takes a lot of time-- I mean, we're talking about getting you a pair of human beings for

(MORE)

EMMA (CONT'D)

Christmas. I'm sure that's a lot
of work.

(beat)

Maybe he has a plan.

ETHAN

I'm not keeping my hopes up.

They walk off.

INT. TRIBRIDGE GROUP HOME -- ETHAN'S ROOM

Ethan is in bed reading a something with his small
flashlight.

On close inspection, they are newspaper clippings of
handsome men. He chooses one that seems to interest him.

The clipping has a picture of a smiling Nate with the
headline: NATE CAMPBELL, DESTINY FALLS' OWN - SUCCESSFUL
ENTREPRENEUR AND BACHELOR.

Outside the slightly opened door, Mrs Hamilton peeks in.

MRS. HAMILTON

What are you doing still up?

Ethan quickly hides his paperwork under the mattress.

ETHAN

Nothing.

She turns on the light, walks in and sits on the bed. She
strokes his hair.

MRS. HAMILTON

Is anything bothering you?

ETHAN

Can I ask you something?

MRS. HAMILTON

Sure.

ETHAN

Why would Santa give up on me?

She smiles.

MRS. HAMILTON

Ethan, Santa would never give up
on a child.

ETHAN

How do you know?

She pauses.

MRS. HAMILTON

When I was a child, I heard that Santa kept a list of girls and boys who have been good all year.

ETHAN

Why?

MRS. HAMILTON

Well, he likes to reward these particular children with toys to give them an incentive.

ETHAN

In--cent...

MRS. HAMILTON

Incentive. It gives boys and girls a reason to be good all year.

ETHAN

Oh.

MRS. HAMILTON

Now, on the other hand, when children go bad, they immediately turn up on his Naughty List and that means that Santa has to work even harder for them.

ETHAN

What for?

MRS. HAMILTON

To get them back on the Good List.

ETHAN

How does he do that?

MRS. HAMILTON

I don't know precisely. All I know is that he does something very special for them. In these cases, he uses more of his magic. Sometimes, he visits these naughty kids personally, to give them advice and hope.

Ethan is enthralled.

ETHAN

Oh.

MRS. HAMILTON

So you see, one way or the other,
Santa will never give up on you.

She touches his nose. Ethan thinks for a second.

MRS. HAMILTON

Okay?

He nods.

ETHAN

Thank you.

MRS. HAMILTON

Okay. Now, lights out. It's time
for bed.

ETHAN

Yes, ma'am.

She tucks him in. She heads to the door, opens it slightly
and shuts off the light. Before she exits, she peers back.

ETHAN

Good night.

MRS. HAMILTON

Good night, dear.

Ethan closes his eyes to dream.

She exits.

On top of the PILE OF CLIPPINGS, is the PICTURE OF NATE,
marked with a crudely DRAWN RED CIRCLE.

EXT. DESTINY FALLS - STREET — DAY

The area is snowy with the Christmas decorations dotting
the landscape.

Nate is coming down the street with groceries in hand.

Ethan is far behind stalking Nate, hiding behind a decorated
mailbox. He watches. He readies himself like a runner ready
for a sprint. Then, Ethan begins a fast walk.

At that moment, Nate takes out his car keys and readies to
open his car door when--

--he is purposely bumped into by Ethan. Nate is startled.

NATE
Hey! Watch it, kid!

Ethan smiles.

ETHAN
Sorry, mister.

Ethan nonchalantly walks away.

Nate is curious about the encounter. He brushes himself off and, for unknown reasons, checks his pockets. He finds something missing.

NATE
(to himself)
My wallet.
(to Ethan)
Hey, kid! Get back here!

Ethan runs with Nate not far behind.

NATE
Stop!

EXT. DESTINY FALLS - STREET - FURTHER UP -- DAY

Nate tries to keep the groceries in check but the stuff is just falling off with every bounce. Meanwhile, Ethan is running. He turns a corner.

EXT. DESTINY FALLS - ANOTHER STREET - FURTHER UP -- DAY

Ethan continues running as Nate turns the corner.

NATE
Stop!

After about ten seconds, Nate catches up to Ethan and grabs him by his winter hood and stops him.

NATE
You little hoodlum! You took my
wallet!

Nate and Ethan are out of breath. Ethan shows the wallet.

ETHAN
Okay, okay. You got me. Here.

Nate grabs it.

NATE
What is wrong with you?! I should
bring you to the cops!

ETHAN

Okay! Yes! Anything! Just don't bring me to my mom! She'd kill me!

NATE

Really?!

(beat)

You know what? I'm bringing you to your mom. How's that sound?

Ethan pretends to worry.

ETHAN

No, no, please!

NATE

Yeah! That's exactly what I'm gonna do.

ETHAN

I'll take you to her.

INT. NATE'S CAR -- DAY

Nate is driving Ethan, who is on the passenger side. Ethan's attention is on the outside world which is whizzing by.

NATE

Am I going the right way?

ETHAN

Yeah. Yeah.

A beat.

NATE

What's your name, kid?

ETHAN

Ethan.

NATE

Ethan what?

Ethan doesn't lose focus of the outside world.

ETHAN

Decker.

NATE

Why'd you steal my wallet? You need money? You hungry or somethin'?

ETHAN
I wasn't stealing.

NATE
Yes, you were.

Ethan turns his attention to Nate.

ETHAN
I wasn't stealing. I was doing
magic.

Nate giggles a little by the thought.

NATE
Magic? What are you talking about?
You're a crook not a magician.

ETHAN
I was doing magic. Like my idol.

NATE
Your idol?

ETHAN
Houdini!

NATE
Houdini? Harry Houdini? Houdini
did it for the spectacle; the
show. He did it to mesmerize an
audience. He was an entertainer.
You're not an entertainer. When
you do it, you hurt people.

ETHAN
I wasn't trying to hurt anyone! I
was trying to help.

Upset, Ethan turns his attention back to the outside world.

NATE
Look, Ethan... you're probably
thinking about how much fun this
stuff is but you're going to get
yourself in a world of hurt.
Believe me!
(beat)
You're lucky that you picked on
me today because I just happen to
be very lenient. I use to be a
young hood myself.

ETHAN
I'm not a hood.

NATE

Anyhow, there was little chance that you could have gotten away from me. Do you want to know why? Because I'm fast on my feet. I'm aware of my surroundings at all times. I was able to detect what you did in an instant. Like that!

Nate snaps his fingers for emphasis.

Ethan looks back at Nate with doubt.

NATE

That's right.

Ethan returns Nate's watch.

ETHAN

Magic.

NATE

Wha...?

Nate is wide-eyed. He checks his left wrist and finds an un-tanned portion where his watch once was. He's angered. He snatches the watch back.

EXT. DESTINY FALLS - EMMA'S HOUSE -- DAY

It's a beautiful house and there's snow everywhere.

INT. DESTINY FALLS - EMMA'S HOUSE

Emma is behind her desk checking on some paperwork. Her train of thought is interrupted by the VOICES coming from outside. She pulls the curtains to find--

--Nate, exiting his car with Ethan.

NATE

Come on. Come on.

ETHAN

Wait. I'm comin'.

Emma runs to the--

FRONT DOOR

She opens it catching Nate just about to knock.

NATE

Oh.

He's distracted by her beauty.

NATE
(softly)
Oh.

EMMA
(to Nate)
What's the meaning of this?
(to Ethan)
Ethan?

Nate snaps out of it.

NATE
Is this your son?

EMMA
No. What's going on?

NATE
No, huh? He told me that you were
his mom.

Emma turns to Ethan as he shies away.

EMMA
What?!

NATE
Look--this little guy took my
wallet and then ran off with it.
After I caught up with him, he
gives it back but then--get this--
he takes my watch! Right off my
wrist!

Emma is shocked.

EMMA
I can't believe that! Is this
true, Ethan?

Ethan nods slightly.

EMMA
Oh, my word.
(sternly)
Get inside.

Ethan enters the house.

Nate stares for a long beat.

NATE
You look so familiar.

EMMA
I'm really, really sorry about
this. He's usually a good person.

NATE
No harm, no foul. I was really
hoping to meet his mother though.

EMMA
Well... Ethan has no mother or a
father for that matter.

NATE
What?

EMMA
He's an orphan.

NATE
Well... now I'm disappointed.

EMMA
Why?

NATE
I was hoping you'd be his mom.

EMMA
Why?

NATE
Well...

He gets a little jittery.

NATE
... well... um... well... I was
hoping to get compensated.

EMMA
Didn't you say that he gave back
the wallet?

NATE
Not... for the wallet.

EMMA
The watch?

NATE
No.

EMMA

What then?

NATE

I lost some groceries during the chase; my dinner, actually.

EMMA

Well, I think I can compensate for the groceries. I just have to...

Nate smiles and thinks.

NATE

(interrupts)

There maybe another way.

She raises an eyebrow.

EMMA

Like what?

NATE

How 'bout, you buy me dinner?

She reels back a little. She takes a deeper interest in him. She flips her hair back.

EMMA

Nice try, but I'd rather pay for the groceries outright.

He's disappointed.

NATE

Oh.

She heads back in. He thinks for a second then he snaps his finger.

NATE

(whispers)

Wait!

Emma comes back with her purse and takes out a check book.

EMMA

How much was it?

NATE

Now I remember where I've seen you before. You're Dr. Emma Kensington. You're that therapist

(MORE)

NATE (CONT'D)
person who gives seminars on how
to improve relationships. You
were on Oprah.

Emma is a bit flattered.

EMMA
That's right.

NATE
Wow! A real celebrity right here
in Destiny Falls.

She smiles.

NATE
So... you hate men.

She frowns.

EMMA
I don't hate men!

NATE
I've read your book. I especially
liked the chapter where you
describe most men as adolescent
cowboys, seeking to rescue women
tied down on symbolic railroad
tracks by a vicious villain.

She chuckles.

EMMA
Is that your assessment?

He laughs.

EMMA
I'm surprised.

NATE
At what?

EMMA
Most men don't have the mental
acuity to get past the dedications.

NATE
Oh! Ha, ha. Funny. You're a funny
one. No, trust me. I can read
through the inflated, medical
mumbo-jumbo.

She laughs and lifts her shoulders in flirtation.

EMMA

What do you know about the human psyche?

NATE

I minored in Psychology back in college. My major was Fine Arts, though.

She smiles.

EMMA

I see. An arts graduate.

NATE

Well... I never said I graduated. My father needed me for the family business so I had to drop out.

EMMA

What business is that?

NATE

Entertainment... business.

EMMA

Really?

NATE

Well... we produce galas and extravaganzas; seasonal shows, Thanksgiving Day parades, Christmas shows, Fourth of July celebrations. Stuff like that.

EMMA

For television?

NATE

For anyone. But in recent years, we've had great successes in large retail outlets.

He digs into his wallet.

NATE

Here's my card.

She reads it.

EMMA

Oh, I see. Like for Macy's?

NATE

I wish! Macy's is the Golden Goose. No. Lately, we've had great success with the Hearts Department Store chain right here in Destiny.

EMMA

Hearts, huh?

NATE

Yeah.

They smile at each other.

NATE

By the way, I'm Nate Campbell.

He reaches for a handshake. She shakes his hand.

EMMA

Pleased to meet you, Nate Campbell.

He notices her small, delicate hands.

NATE

Wow! You're in need of protection.

She pulls back her hand and examines it.

EMMA

I beg your pardon?

NATE

Oh, no! It's that I always thought that anything that was small, soft and delicate, was always in need of a hard shell; for protection.

She smirks. He smiles at her.

NATE

So, how about that dinner?

She does the shoulder thing again.

EMMA

I usually don't date extravaganza designers.

NATE

Let me ask you something: Do you believe everything you write in your book?

EMMA
Of course I do.

NATE
Well... didn't you write that
there are ten signs indicating
when a person is interested in
another.

EMMA
Yes.

NATE
Well... I saw a few those from
you in these last few seconds. I
was hoping to see more.

She blushes. A beat.

EMMA
Okay. Dinner.

He's ecstatic.

NATE
Good! All right. I'll be right
here. Tomorrow night? Is tomorrow
night good? It's a Friday.

EMMA
Sure.
(beat)
However, Mr. Campbell, I have to
warn you.

NATE
Really. About?

EMMA
You're going to find that... I
already have a hard shell.

Provocatively, she enters her house. He exits with a huge
smile on his face.

INT. DESTINY FALLS - EMMA'S HOUSE

She is lost in a thought until she realizes Ethan is
watching her. She frowns and confronts him.

EMMA
I am shocked and surprised at
you. How could you?

Ethan bows his head in shame.

ETHAN

I'm sorry.

EMMA

What am I going to do with you?
Now I'm worried.

She gets on her knees and hugs him.

EMMA

(softly)

Oh, Ethan. If there's anything
bothering you, anything at all,
you can come to me for help. My
door is always open. You do
understand that, right?

He nods. She looks into his eyes and smiles again. He
responds in kind.

EXT. PORT OF HUENEME - CALIFORNIA -- DAY

A busy port.

SUPER OVER: Port Of Hueneme, California

EXT. PORT OF HUENEME — DAY

In the background, the Antarctic Explorer is docked.

INT. PORT OF HUENEME - WAREHOUSE — DAY

With a schedule in hand, Maxim walks to Montory.

DOCK WORKERS #1 and #2 are in the background checking the
two with curiosity and scorn.

MAXIM

There's an icebreaker heading to
Norway through the North Pole in
a couple of hours. We will be
confronting Santa soon enough.

Maxim can feel the scornful looks of the dock workers. He
yells at them.

MAXIM

What are you looking at?!!

DOCK WORKER 1

(To Dock Worker 2)

Wow! Look at this. We're getting
so desperate for workers, we're
hiring circus freaks now.

They both laugh aloud.

MAXIM
 (to Montory)
 Men are more presumptions and
 despicable then ever before. They
 beg to be led in chains.

Maxim looks around with contempt.

MAXIM
 (To Montory)
 Let's go.

EXT. DESTINY FALLS - EMMA'S HOUSE — NIGHT

Nate has just arrived in his car and walking up the walkway to the front door. He is handsomely dressed for the occasion.

He rings the bell. Out comes Emma, appearing very stunning in an evening dress. Her beauty has captured Nate's eyes.

NATE
 If you don't mind me saying so,
 you look absolutely beautiful
 tonight.

She smirks.

EMMA
 Thank you.

He puts out his hand.

NATE
 Shall we?

She refuses it.

EMMA
 Sure.

He pulls back, embarrassed.

NATE
 (under his breath)
 Okay.

They head for the waiting car.

INT. NATE'S CAR — NIGHT

Emma is sitting quietly on the passenger side, looking out of the window.

Nate is jittery.

NATE

So... tell me about yourself.

EMMA

What's there to tell?

NATE

You. Your family. Like, where are you from, originally?

EMMA

Well, I was born in Sheffield, England. My parents moved here to Destiny Falls when I was still a teenager. Nothing more to report.

She is quiet again. She looks out the window.

NATE

You know, you really look stunning tonight.

She suddenly turns to him.

EMMA

The only reason I'm doing this is because I want to repay the damage done by Ethan. Nothing more. Understood?

She peers out the window.

NATE

(under his breath)

Okay.

EXT. DESTINY FALLS - DESTINY RESTAURANT — NIGHT

A fancy restaurant rests in the serene and snowy scene.

INT. DESTINY FALLS - DESTINY RESTAURANT

Nate and Emma are in the middle of a meal.

NATE

...and when my father passed away, I immediately took over the business. My mother decided to move to Florida because she thought there were too many memories in this town.

Emma nods in disinterest.

EMMA

Uh-huh.

Nate notices this and is bothered slightly by it.

NATE

You know, it's okay to have a good time. No one's watching.

She's puzzled by that remark.

NATE

At least feign interest.

She smirks.

EMMA

Nate, I'm having a good time.

NATE

Was that your attempt at feigning?

That gets a real smile out of her.

EMMA

It was.

He smiles.

NATE

That's more like it.

EMMA

I have to apologize. It's been awhile since I've dated.

NATE

Me too.

She continues eating for a beat.

NATE

Let me ask you this: I have a friend, a guy, who's very interested in a beautiful woman he met recently and...

EMMA

I really don't want to talk business tonight.

NATE

This isn't business. This is about relationships. You're an expert.

EMMA

Relationships is my business. I hear these types of questions every working day. So please. Not tonight.

NATE

Oh.

He takes a bite out of his meal. A beat.

NATE

Hmph.

EMMA

Hm?

NATE

What?

EMMA

You said, "hmp". What's, "hmp"?

NATE

Nothing. Nothing.

EMMA

Tell me. What is it.

NATE

Oh, no. It's just that... you dedicate a whole chapter on ice breaking, correct?

EMMA

Yes.

NATE

Well, I thought your expertise was very, very illuminating. I followed it to the letter.

She smirks, then smiles.

EMMA

I'm sorry. I'm not quite making the grade here, am I?

NATE

Well, to tell you the truth, I could have had a better time with this cork.

He shows the wine bottle cork. She laughs a little.

EMMA

What a coincidence. That's what
my last husband said.

He laughs.

DISSOLVE TO: