

MY HOLIDAY ROMEOS

Written by

Tom Stohlgren

Writer:
Tom Stohlgren
Email: tjstohlgren@gmail.com
Representation:
Eleni Larchanidou, LLM
Literary & Talent Manager
GREECE: +30-690-9020698
(WhatsApp, Viber)
USA: +1-714-702-5507
email: managerelenilllm@gmail.com
Copyright

FADE IN:

EXT. NARROW FOREST ROAD - DAY

We see luxury brand black sedan swerve along a narrow forest road at breakneck speed.

INT. BLACK SEDAN - DAY

We see an attractive attorney, CAZ DARROW (30s), in a navy-blue skirt and matching coat that suggests she's all-business in the front passenger's seat. She reads tiny print on her upscale brand tablet computer, while ignoring others.

SUPER: "Caz Darrow, highly successful patent attorney and marginally successful single-mom."

Behind Caz, is her daughter, MERRY (9), who stares out the side window in disgust wearing noise-canceling headphones playing loud music. She can't hear the conversation.

CAZ

Slow down, Michael. You'll make her sick.

We see Michael (23) a handsome young man in stylish casual clothes, drives like a maniac until Caz speaks and he slows.

MICHAEL

Caz, I'd like to slow down now so I don't make Merry sick.

CAZ

Thank you, Michael.

Michael slows down considerably, as the car passes a sign that reads, "Holly's Woods 10."

Merry rips off her headphones and is furious.

MERRY

You said we were going to Hollywood!

Caz and Michael act surprised.

CAZ

What did that sign say? Holly's Woods?

MICHAEL

Clear violation of patent law. Misleading, spurious, and damaging!

Merry looks around, angrier.

MERRY

This is the wilderness!

(beat)

Where bears you-know-what in the woods! It's The Holiday Break. There's no place to shop and there are monsters out here!

CAZ

I mentioned I might be looking for a quiet place to telecommute from. I'm thinking of buying two cozy cabins in Holly's Woods, and on the property, there's a Mom and Pop diner...

Michael interrupts, correcting her. Merry puts on the noise-canceling earphones and turns in disgust.

MICHAEL

Not Mom and Pop, it's Mom and her two sons about your age, Caz. One's a B-movie producer, and one's a struggling stage actor on off-off-off-Broadway. Both single! Imagine that? Maybe you can hook up with one 'em, instead of that workaholic almost fiancé of yours.

CAZ

I'm interested in buying them out, not hooking up! Property's been on the market for over ten years, and it's quiet, peaceful, and wintery! And Herbert is none of your business.

MICHAEL

Merry don't like him either!

CAZ

Merry's nine. Doesn't know what she likes!

Michael motions for Merry to remove her headphones.

MICHAEL

(to Merry)

You might like the country, Merry. Snow, trees, fresh air... snow.

MERRY
You said snow.

MICHAEL
Did I say, trees?
(winks at Caz)
No Herbs.

Caz smacks Michael in the arm. He winces.

CAZ
(to Merry)
It's our first holiday in a small
mountain town. Just us two. Give it
a chance.

Merry looks pale and dizzy, as Caz leans forward to Michael.

CAZ (CONT'D)
Michael, see if you can get their
tax returns for the past ten years,
and get your hands on the most
recent appraisal.

MICHAEL
I will do all that immediately.

EXT. NARROW FOREST ROAD - DAY

Michael slams on the brakes. Caz gently helps Merry out of
the car as she prepares to vomit.

CAZ
Monsters? Don't be ridiculous!

Caz checks her smartphone: "No Service."

CUT TO:

EXT. SNOW HILL - DAY

We see a large, but blurry, white, furry, growling YETI crash
through branches, chasing an imagined victim across the snow.
In the b.g., we hear scary audio like a real monster film,
and the Yeti's costume is cheaply made.

Branches repeatedly hit the Yeti in the head. It's comical
rather than scary, and in the b.g., we hear scary audio.

Suddenly, we hear the Yeti scream as he loses his footing and
falls on his butt! The audio ceases. The Yeti continues
growling in pain.

Backing up from the Yeti, we see a film director, DASH BRENNAN (32), a handsome, charismatic Romeo-type in stylish brand winter-wear and a yellow scarf. He pulls down an old video camera and pounds his forehead with the palm of his other hand.

SUPER: "Dash Brennan, B-movie Producer/Director"

DASH

Cut!

The Actor (30), a big man, rips off his full Yeti mask and storms away from the director.

DASH (CONT'D)

Good stuff. Very scary! I'll edit out the fall. We'll add the victim scenes tomorrow! I need this film to save the family diner!

(yells)

See you tomorrow!

Dash hangs his head and mumbles.

DASH (CONT'D)

Where is that brother of mine when I need him?!

CUT TO:

INT. SMALL OFF-BROADWAY THEATRE - DAY

We see a handsome, struggling actor, IAN BRENNAN (30) acting as Romeo. He nervously sticks his head out of a cheap wooden prop of a food truck, whose sign reads: "Montague's Fish & Chips" in smaller print, we see "Cod be with you" next to a hastily painted crucifix. Ian is rugged-looking but shy.

SUPER: "Ian Brennan, Struggling Stage Actor."

Ian faces his love and his competition, Brittany (25) cute, innocent, and as lovely as Juliet, batting her eyes at Romeo, while sticking her head out of a second cheap wooden prop of a food truck with signs that read, "Capulet Pizza," and "You've gotta friend in Cheeses." They both wear greasy aprons and chef hats.

Juliet begins to blow a bubble with bubblegum as Ian/Romeo speaks in an emotionless monotone, devoid of even the slightest feeling.

IAN

My bounty is as boundless as the sea.

Brittany's bubble bursts. POP!

IAN (CONT'D)

My love as deep; the more I give to thee. The more I have, for both are infinite.

Brittany rolls her eyes in disgust.

BRITTANY

Yeah. Yeah.

We back up the view to see the Theatre TROUPE DIRECTOR (50s) with a look of absolute horror. He's sarcastic but sweet.

TROUPE DIRECTOR

Riveting. Absolutely riveting. One more time, please. Brittany, no gum. Ian, with feeling.

Ian giggles as he watches Brittany violently throw her gum away.

IAN

Ah, if I were gum upon thy hand.

TROUPE DIRECTOR

Your correct lines, Ian. With feeling!

IAN

My bounty is as boundless as the sea.

Brittany rolls her eyes in disgust.

IAN (CONT'D)

My love as deep; the more I give to thee. The more I have, for both are infinite.

(beat)

Is this where she drinks the poison?

Brittany unties her apron and tosses her apron and hat out of the truck in disgust. She storms off stage!

Ian looks bewildered, as the Troupe Director approaches, shaking his head in dismay.

TROUPE DIRECTOR

Ian, we're coming upon The Holiday Break.

(MORE)

TROUPE DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

Let me give you two pieces of advice to ponder before while we decide if you're right for the role, or if you're better suited as a stagehand... Or usher.

Ian hangs his head but quickly looks up.

IAN

I plan to be the world's greatest stage actor. Nothing can deter me!

The Troupe Director speaks slowly and purposely.

TROUPE DIRECTOR

John Lennon wrote that "Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans."

Ian turns his head with a puzzled look.

IAN

What are you saying?

The Troupe Director points to his heart.

TROUPE DIRECTOR

Until you profess your true love to another, no one is going to believe you on stage.

The Troupe Director slaps Ian on the shoulder.

TROUPE DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

Over the holiday, don't make plans, live life -- find love!

Ian's cell phone RINGS as the Troupe Director exits. Ian's caller-ID reads, "Ma." Ian reluctantly answers the phone, and paces as he speaks.

IAN

Hi, Ma! Diner busy today?

(beat)

It'll pick up over The Holidays.

Told ya, Ma. One week off.

(mumbles)

Maybe longer. Much longer.

(beat)

Nothin', Ma.

(beat)

Can your big news wait, Ma? I gotta catch that bus home.

(MORE)

IAN (CONT'D)

(beat)

See ya soon, Ma!

Ian puts his phone in his pocket and looks around sadly as if it's his final goodbye to the stage.

IAN (CONT'D)

Parting is such sweet sorrow.

He trudges off the stage.

CUT TO:

EXT. DINER - AFTERNOON

"Holly's Woods" diner looks quaint, unchanged since the 1950s, and covered with Christmas lights and garland. Michael drives the sedan to the side of the diner. Caz, Merry, and Michael hop out. They see two rustic cabins across the street, also heavily decorated. Merry removes her headphones and looks around in disgust.

MICHAEL

Couldn't be quieter if it was a ghost town. This the place you're buying?

CAZ

I'm just checking it out before I make an actual offer.

MERRY

Very funny! I've seen enough. Let's go to the real Hollywood.

CAZ

No harm in looking. My letter of inquiry said my firm would be sending you, a private investigator, to scope out the town.

MICHAEL

I'm your private investigator?

CAZ

Common in commercial property acquisitions to see if they have any skeletons in the closet.

Merry hops back in the sedan.

MERRY

Skeletons? I'm outta here!

Caz leans into the car.

CAZ
Figure of speech. They'll
drastically lower the price if they
have something to hide.

Michael looks puzzled.

CAZ (CONT'D)
Wanted to see if for myself,
incognito.

MERRY
Incognito?

CAZ
Without them knowing I'm the buyer.
If Michael acts like the private
investigator, they'll ignore me
when I'm looking around.

MERRY
We're staying at that fancy hotel
we passed, right?

CAZ
Yes. Swimming pool, hot tub, room
service, spa and massage. I've
rented one of the cabins over there
for Michael.

Michael looks at the cabins across the street, disappointed.

MICHAEL
You're at the fancy hotel and spa,
and I'm in the rustic dumpster?

CAZ
Yes, Michael. Now, why don't you
wait here, and I'll go in with
Merry, look around a bit, then ask
directions to the hotel and spa.

MERRY
But we know where the hotel is.

CAZ
We'll just peek inside. Five
minutes. Promise.

Michael grunts and gets back in the car, while Merry puts on
her headphones, shrugs, and follows her mom.

MERRY

Sooner we get to the hotel and spa,
the better. In a few minutes, I'll
be ordering a chocolate frozen
yogurt from the hot tub.

Caz gives Merry a thumbs-up sign as they walk around to the
entrance to the diner.

EXT./INT. DINER - CONTINUOUS

Caz sees an old, fading, "For Sale" sign in the window as she
enters the empty but cute diner, where MA BRENNAN (60), a
vibrant and beautiful woman, is wiping off a table.

CAZ

Hi, are you open?

Ma approaches Caz and Merry. Caz puts a hand out to shake,
but Ma goes in for a quick hug. Ma hugs a surprised Merry
too.

MA

I'm Millie Brennan, but everyone
calls me Ma. Welcome to Holly's
Woods.

CAZ

I'm Caz. My daughter, Merry, and I
are in town for a few days...

MA

We have two cozy cabins we rent.
One's reserved. Paid in advance!
(turns away)
I'll bet it's that no-good private
investigator.
(to Caz)
Where you two staying?

CAZ

The hotel and spa down the road...

MA

Don't be silly, dear. They'll
charge you over \$300 a night. Who
has that kind of money?

Caz looks away briefly. Merry looks around but can't hear a
thing. Ma looks curiously at Merry.

MA (CONT'D)

Running water. Flushing toilets.
They have everything but kitchens,
'cause the guests like to eat here.

Caz looks around at the empty diner.

CAZ

They eat here? I see.

GRAMPS (70), a grandpa-like figure in a greasy apron steps in from the kitchen with a hot apple pie he puts on the counter.

Merry sniffs the air with a warm smile. Gramps smiles back.

MA

That's Art, but everyone calls him
Gramps. He's the chief cook, bottle
washer, and handyman.

GRAMPS

Howdy, Ma'am. Howdy, Miss. Ma's
boys will be here any minute, and I
gotta prepare for the dinner rush.

Gramps exits to the kitchen. Ma whispers to Caz.

MA

We're all a little nervous tonight.
Some big rich lawyer from the city
is sending a private investigator
to spy on us before the lawyer puts
an offer on the place. We don't
trust lawyers, 'cause of what we
see on the TV. They can be very
mean.

Caz looks away and thinks for a moment.

CAZ

I... I... I should confess...

MA

What is it, dear? I know. I should
take that old "For Sale" sign from
the window. I don't want to sell.
And I'd never sell it to a dirty
old lawyer! And private
investigators are worse!

Caz speaks without thinking.

CAZ

Yes, private investigators can be awful.

Ma puts her arm around Caz and whispers.

MA

Digging up dirt on the family to lower the sales price.

CAZ

I've got to tell you something, Ma.

Ma looks suspiciously at Caz.

MA

What, dear?

CAZ

I reserved the cabin in advance. I didn't tell Merry 'cause I wanted it to be a surprise. Ya know, The Holiday Break, getting away for a few days.

Ma glances at Merry.

MA

A surprise for your daughter?

Merry still can't hear a thing.

CAZ

Oh, she'll be surprised.

Caz produces a receipt and confirmation number.

CAZ (CONT'D)

And I think the private investigator you were talking about gave us a lift from the bus stop. He said he was staying at the hotel and spa. I can assure you he seemed like a very nice young man.

Ma shakes her head, 'no.' Ma looks out the front window at Michael.

MA

No! He's spying on us! But I'm happy it's you two in the cabin.

Caz answers sweetly.

CAZ

I'll see if he'll help us get our bags to the cabin.

Ma takes Caz's arm like an old friend.

MA

It was \$50 a night. Can you afford it, dear?

CAZ

Yes, my boss pays me... barely a living wage. As a single mom, it can be...

MA

Don't you worry, dear. We'll give it to you for \$25 a night. Ya know, my sons are single too.

Caz smiles as she begins to pull Merry out the front door.

CAZ

Imagine that? Thanks, Ma. See you for dinner!

EXT. DINER - CONTINUOUS

Merry pulls off her headphones.

MERRY

We leaving now?

CAZ

Didn't that apple pie smell great?

Michael hops out of the car to chat with Caz and Merry.

MICHAEL

What did you think of the place?

Caz pulls Michael and Merry in for a huddle and whispers. Merry removes her headphones.

CAZ

Change of plans! Merry and I will be staying in the cozy cabin across the street, and Michael will be in our reserved room at the spa.

Merry is appalled. Michael does a happy dance with Ma peeking out of the window.

MERRY

What? Did she cast a spell on you?

CAZ

Ma thinks Michael is the mean private investigator working for the mean attorney, and that we're on winter vacation. Help us with the bags Michael, I'll text you work assignments.

Michael helps them to get their bags from the trunk to the cabin. Merry grabs her backpack and heads back to the car.

MERRY

I'm going with Michael!

Caz grabs Merry's arm gently and with a smile.

CAZ

The Holiday Break. Cozy cabin in the snow. Hot apple pie. It's just two nights. Play along. I can get to know the place to see if we want to buy it.

MICHAEL

So, I pretend I don't know you two?

CAZ

Right. You gave us a ride from the bus stop. You're the mean P.I.

MERRY

That's misleading, spurious, and damaging. And, it's lying!

Caz guides Merry to the Cabin.

CAZ

That's business, sweetie!

INT. CABIN - EARLY EVENING

Caz and Merry enter slowly. The "cozy cabin" contains a double bed, a twin bed, a small couch, a small sink, and a small refrigerator. The fireplace has a wood-burning stove insert with a few dry logs in it. The old mantle is fully decorated with garland and lights. A door leads to a small bathroom. Merry is stunned by the cold.

MERRY

My closet is bigger than this, and
much warmer. Turn up the heat.

They look for a thermostat together and end up staring at the
fireplace. Caz smiles.

CAZ

Just like the pioneers.

Merry shivers in the cold while checking her smartphone.

MERRY

I know why a lot of them didn't
make it! There's no cell service
here. Couldn't make a 9-1-1 call if
we tried!

Caz checks her phone with some disgust.

CAZ

Darn. Still no service. Can't call
Herbert and tell him we're okay.

MERRY

We're not okay, and you have the
'tele' part to telecommute anytime
you want! Like magic!

CAZ

I imagine the diner has Wi-Fi.

Caz looks at the unburned logs in the wood stove.

CAZ (CONT'D)

We'll just start a fire, go eat
dinner and send a few emails, and
when we come back, the cabin will
be toasty warm.

Merry looks at her mother like she's gone crazy.

Caz finds a few sheets of newspaper to ball up under the
logs, lights a stick match, and leaves the wood-burning stove
door wide open as she leads Merry to the diner.

Merry glances back at the cabin before they enter the diner.

INT. DINER - CONTINUOUS

Caz and Merry enter the diner to see Ma taking a dinner order
from her son, Dash, who is seated across from Brittany, the
cute theatre actress we met earlier.

Brittany is giggling and flirting in a subtle but noticeable way. Dash speaks softly and like an unassuming, charming Movie Producer: a Romeo.

Caz guides Merry to a side table, but they can hear everything loud and clear.

DASH

Ma, this is Brittany. Theatre actress with Ian, looking to make her name in Hollywood?

Ma smiles weakly.

MA

That's wonderful, Dash.

DASH

So great to be home, Ma!

Dash glances at Caz and Merry, who are both taken by the handsome and charming man.

DASH (CONT'D)

I told Brittany she could stay in the other cabin in exchange for her generous offer to act in my little film.

Ma hugs Dash's shoulders.

MA

Someday, you'll make it, dear. I just hope it's soon.

DASH

I've got calls in to other actors in the area, but it's the holidays and everyone is booked up. But with a leading lady as talented as Brittany here, the movie is bound to be a hit. We'll have two of the Blue-Plate specials, and two glasses of your finest wine.

Ma chuckles, hugs her son again, and exits to the kitchen.

Ian enters looking as handsome as Dash, but he's unshaven and in shabby clothes. Ian sees Caz and Merry first, and smiles. Then Ian sees Dash and Brittany at the other table, and Ian races to hug his brother.

IAN

Hey, Big Brother! How's your film coming?

DASH

(laughs, to Ian)

Much like your career in the theatre, I'm afraid.

(to Brittany)

Ian's gonna make it someday. I can feel it!

Caz and Merry smile at the loving brothers. Caz is smitten with Dash.

IAN

Thanks, Dash, but Brittany knows how much I struggle. You're the real Romeo in the family, Dash.

(to Brittany)

What are you doing here, Brit?

BRITTA

One week to score a screen credit. Didn't know Dash was your brother 'til tonight.

IAN

Maybe we can practice some lines in your spare time?

Brittany bats her eyes at Dash.

BRITTANY

Might be pretty busy with Dash, but we'll see, Ian.

Ma returns cradling a box of wine with a little wine poured into one of the wine glasses. She sets it before Dash, who chuckles when he sees the wine came from a box.

Caz and Merry look on curiously as Dash smells the wine, and holds the glass up to the light before taking a sip.

DASH

It's oaky, and yet, obtuse. We'll take it.

Everyone laughs. Ian pulls up a chair to Dash's table. Dash turns to Caz and Merry.

DASH (CONT'D)

Won't you join us? We're all family here, and the wine is...

(MORE)

DASH (CONT'D)
 (in French)
 Magnifique.

CAZ
 Thanks for the offer. We're fine.

Merry pouts at her mother.

Dash and Caz share a moment, as Ma heads over to Caz's table.

MA
 Care to start with a glass of fine
 wine. I hear it's...

CAZ
 (chuckles)
 Oaky and yet obtuse.

Dash smiles at Caz. Ma and Merry giggle.

Ian gets up and heads to a small stereo record player in the
 corner of the diner.

CAZ (CONT'D)
 No thanks, Ma. Coffee for me, and
 milk for Merry, please.

MA
 May I suggest the Blue-Plate
 Special?

CAZ
 What's tonight's Blue-Plate
 Special?

MA
 Whatever Gramps feels like making.
 It's always good.

Ma starts to leave to the kitchen. Caz and Merry stare at
 their smartphones.

CAZ
 Ma, what's the Wi-Fi here?

MA
 Good heavens, we don't have Wi-Fi
 way out here, but we do have Hi-Fi.

Ian has placed a Christmas record on the stereo and it SOUNDS
 great! Ian returns to his seat at Dash's table and smiles at
 Brittany.

Merry looks distraught at her smartphone until Caz breaks out in laughter. Everyone laughs.

IAN

Welcome to Holly's Woods.

Dash bursts into his well-rehearsed history lesson, as he glances back to wink at Caz and Merry.

DASH

Founded in 1853 by loggers by the name of Holly, the same year that Hollywood was established out in California. Meanwhile, our little town grew to be known as Holly's Forest. Later, in the 1920s, the Brennans, our clan, moved in. The logging town was booming. Paul Bunyan would be proud. Great-grandpa Brennan had the sense of humor. He officially established this town named Holly's Woods, after he saw his first silent film on his honeymoon in New York.

Dash turns to see Caz and Merry are glued to his story.

Caz smiles at Dash for his charisma and storytelling skills.

MERRY

Then what?

Now Merry is smitten with Dash.

DASH

Locals thought the name Holly's Woods was great, and that made me want to become a famous Hollywood Producer.

(shyly)

You may have heard of critically acclaimed films like "Queen Kong" and "Kill-her Whale." Now I'm working on "Return of the Yeti," and that's just the tip of ice-

IAN

Cube.

Dash and Ian laugh together.

IAN (CONT'D)

Just kidding, Big Brother. I want you to succeed so you can buy Ma's diner.

(hangs his head)

God knows I don't have the talent.

Dash moves to hug and comfort his brother.

DASH

Your day will come, Little Brother. Maybe sooner than you think!

Dash steps back and pats Ian on the shoulder.

IAN

What do you mean?

DASH

My leading man is debating walking off the set. Creative differences. I may need a leading man.

Ian smiles at Brittany.

IAN

With Brittany? You bet!

DASH

To save Ma's diner. We need to buy it before some creepy old lawyer buys it from under our nose.

Merry's eyes open widely. Caz reaches out and holds her hand.

Gramps brings out two Blue-Plate specials (hamburgers and fries) for Dash and Brittany, while Ma brings out two Blue-Plate specials, a cup of coffee, and a huge eggnog milkshake for Merry. Merry's eyes are huge.

MA

Wait, you said milk. This is an old-fashioned eggnog milkshake.

Ma starts to turn with the milkshake.

MERRY

Is it okay, Mom?

CAZ

Fine with me.

Ma delivers the milkshake to Merry, who smiles big.

Ma trudges back toward the kitchen.

MA

I just can't worry about this place any longer. The bills. The upkeep. That's it. If I get an offer -- any offer -- I'm selling the place!

Ma exits. Ian stands at Dash's table.

IAN

I'll do it, Dash! Ma needs us!

A smoke ALARM sounds from across the street in one of the cabins.

IAN (CONT'D)

Gramps, call 9-1-1.

Ian races out the door and across the street. Smoke fills Caz's cabin. Caz and Merry follow.

EXT./INT. CABIN - NIGHT

Ian opens the cabin door and smoke exits. He steps in and sees the problem immediately. He shuts the door on the wood-burning stove, and opens the windows in the cabin and bathroom. He steps out to see Caz and Merry are worried sick.

IAN

Smoke backed up in the flume. Cold chimneys do that. You're okay, and the Cabin will be fine after it airs out.

CAZ

Thanks...

IAN

Ian. Ian Brennan. And you are...?

CAZ

I'm Caz. Short for Cassandra. This is my daughter, Merry.

MERRY

As in Christmas. Mom spelled it that way so I'd always be Merry. Is Gramps your father?

Ian sits on the stoop. He whispers to Merry.

IAN

Are you an investigative reporter?

MERRY

Fourth-grader.

IAN

Ah. Then, no. But he volunteered to help Ma after...

(sadly)

Our dad was a firefighter who died going into a burning house after hearing a cry. He was holding a potbelly pig under his arms when the roof collapsed. I was about your age.

MERRY

What about the pig?

Caz is upset with Merry's line of inquiry.

CAZ

Merry!

IAN

That's okay. Everybody asks. I'm used to it.

(to Merry)

Dash wanted nothing to do with the pig. I named him Burny. He was my first and last pet. Loved him. He died two years later almost to the day of enzootic pneumonia. The vet said it was unrelated to the fire that killed my dad, but it was like reliving my dad's death a second time. Dash was right to ignore the pig.

Caz begins to tear up. Merry hugs Ian.

MERRY

No. You were right. You got to love something for two more years. My dad just never came home.

Ian hugs Merry back.

IAN

I'm so sorry.

CAZ

Afghanistan. Merry was two.

IAN
Better to have loved and lost...

CAZ
Than never to have loved at all.

Merry hugs her mom.

MERRY
I never heard that.

CAZ
Alfred Lord Tennyson.

Ian lightens the mood with a smile.

IAN
I can show you how to build a safe
fire that won't smoke you out.

MERRY
After my eggnog milkshake?

CAZ
Maybe tomorrow. We'll be fine
tonight.

Merry has a worried look.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

Caz and Merry sit at one table, with Dash, Brittany, and Ian at the other. Both are in quiet conversation, but Caz sneaks glances at Dash, and vice-versa.

Merry's finished her milkshake with a smile.

Suddenly, Michael enters in a black suit, white shirt, and sunglasses like in "The Men in Black."

Caz signals to Merry to keep quiet about Michael's identity.

MICHAEL
Name's Michael Watson, Private
Investigator.

DASH
Watson?

MICHAEL
The name 'Holmes' was already
taken. To whom do I have the
pleasure of addressing?

DASH

Dash Brennan. My Ma owns the place.
Ian's my little brother.

MICHAEL

I know all of that! Old news. I'm a
P.I., I told you that!

(beat)

Is Mrs. Brennan available? I'd like
to ask her a few questions.

DASH

She goes up to sleep pretty early
to watch old westerns.

IAN

Counts cattle. Puts her right to
sleep. What's this about?

Michael pauses to think.

MICHAEL

I don't know. Back taxes, maybe?

Caz looks alarmed by this news.

Michael wanders over to Caz's table, stands in front of her,
and sneaks her a note that reads, "Tried to call. No answer.
Left messages. The spa is excellent. The masseuse there..."

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Maybe I should come back in the
morning. Or send an email?

DASH

No Internet.

MICHAEL

Text message?

IAN

Rarely cell phone service.

MICHAEL

Landline? Are you kidding me? What
is this, the...

Caz kicks Michael in the back of the shoe.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Ow! Owl country.

CAZ
Maybe you should come back for
breakfast?

Michael turns to glance at Caz.

MICHAEL
Maybe I will come back at
breakfast.

Caz kicks Michael in the back of the shoe again.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Ow! Outstanding.

DASH
Breakfast here is at 7 AM.

Caz crumples up the note and shoves it in her pocket, as Michael steps away so as not to be kicked again.

MICHAEL
That's it then, 7 AM. See you all
then.

DASH
We'll be out filming.

Michael stares at Brittany, steps closer, and removes his sunglasses so only she can see him. They make eye contact and share a moment.

MICHAEL
Filming. I see.
(to Brittany)
Name?

Brittany sits up straight and answers quickly.

BRITTANY
Brittany. Just Brittany, like
Madonna, Cher...

MICHAEL
I get it.

DASH
(to Michael)
We can always use another murder
victim.

Michael puts on his sunglasses and glares at Dash.

MICHAEL

I'll find you if I have any questions. It's what I do. 7 AM.

Michael turns abruptly and exits. Merry's eyes open widely again, amazed by Michael's performance.

Caz shakes her head in disgust.

Dash and Ian stare at each other, worried.

INT./EXT. CABIN - MORNING

Merry and Caz are snuggled up on the double-bed, and fully clothed under a mountain of blankets.

They hear a light KNOCK on the door.

Caz gets up, careful not to wake Merry, and answers the door to see Ian dressed in rugged mountain (brand) clothing, but still unshaven.

CAZ

You're Ian?

IAN

(giggles)

Yes, I know. Came to see if you survived the night. Didn't see smoke from your chimney.

CAZ

After your story of your dad dying in a house fire, and after my difficulties lighting a fire, Merry was too scared to let me light another one.

Ian's head drops.

IAN

So sorry. Didn't mean to...

Caz pulls him inside the cabin. She whispers, while shivering.

CAZ

All Merry kept saying was how cold she was, but she didn't want a fire.

Ian is embarrassed and looks away.

IAN
No thermostat or central heat, I'm
afraid.

CAZ
Maybe you can show me how... to
light a proper fire.

Ian smiles as he sees Merry fast asleep.

IAN
I'd be honored.

Ian opens the door to the wood stove, removes the wood,
crumples up several pages of newspaper into balls, and
creates a stack in the stove.

IAN (CONT'D)
First, we have to warm the air in
the cold chimney.

Ian lights the paper and closes the glass door almost shut.

IAN (CONT'D)
Ma says the only thing the
newspaper's good for is to light
fires.

The paper ignites sending the heat up.

CAZ
I see.

He opens the door and adds kindling and bark, a little at a
time.

IAN
Add dry kindling and bark, a little
at a time in a pyramid shape.

The fire slowly gets going.

CAZ
Oh, I get it. Start off slow.

IAN
Like all good things in life.

Ian and Caz gaze into each other's eyes and share a moment.

Ian then adds larger and larger branches, as the fire builds.

Caz is mystified by the fire.

CAZ
 Something magical about staring
 into a fire. Different every other
 second.

Ian stares at the fire too. He chuckles.

IAN
 Beats TV any day!

Merry stirs then wakes. She sees her mom and Ian warming
 their hands on the fire.

MERRY
 Love that smell.

CAZ
 Ian was kind enough to show me how
 to light a proper fire.

IAN
 Good morning, Merry.

Merry leaps from the bed and begins warming her hands.

MERRY
 Good morning.

IAN
 Ma and Gramps got pancakes and hot
 chocolate ready when you are.

Ian turns to exit.

CAZ
 Thanks, Ian. We'll be over in a few
 minutes.

Merry waves goodbye, and Ian turns back to smile.

INT. DINER - MORNING

Ian sits at the counter studying his lines from Romeo and
 Juliet, when Caz and Merry enter.

Ma greets them with two menus under her arm, and two cups of
 hot chocolate.

MA
 Good morning. Hot chocolate and
 pancakes?

MERRY

Yes, please.

CAZ

Coffee for me, Ma. Black.

MA

Looks like Merry will have to drink both of these.

Merry is delighted, and Caz smiles.

CAZ

Pancakes. Times two.

Ian glances over at Caz.

MA

You've done a little waitressing.

CAZ

All the way through law...
(correcting herself)
Rence University.

IAN

Appleton, Wisconsin?

Merry looks perplexed, but her face is too deeply sunken into whipped cream to speak. Caz's voice quivers.

CAZ

Go Bulldogs?

Ian turns back to his script. Ma turns to the kitchen.

MA

Pancakes. Times two. Coffee. Black.
Coming up!

Ian reads the script, and points to the ceiling.

IAN

What is in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet.

CAZ

You're doing Romeo and Juliet?

IAN

Except they have food trucks instead of castles.

Caz looks bewildered.

IAN (CONT'D)
It's Winterset. Like Summerset
Theatre, except for losers.

CAZ
Can't be that bad.

IAN
Director's obsessed with food. Did
a version of Hamlet named Omelet
that played over the hollandaise.

CAZ
Sounds funny.

IAN
The audience threw the eggs.
(beat)
Much Ado About Nutmeg. We were paid
in nutmeg sugar cookies.

Merry lights up, while Ian rolls his eyes in disgust.

IAN (CONT'D)
And now Romeo and Juliet: A surf
and turf battle for the ages. A
fish and chips food truck versus a
pizza food truck.

CAZ
A surf and turf battle for the
ages?

IAN
That's my director.
(sadly)
If he doesn't find a better Romeo
over the break.

Caz looks away sadly for Ian, then she tries to cheer him up.

CAZ
But thanks for showing us how to
build a fire.

Michael storms into the diner, as Ma delivers two plates of
pancakes.

MA
You must be the evil private
investigator.

Michael stops and stares at the pancakes.

MICHAEL
Those buttermilk pancakes?

MA
Of course.

Michael stares at the syrup.

MICHAEL
Real maple syrup?

MA
Of course. And we don't owe back taxes! Never made a profit!

MICHAEL
Back taxes? Oh, sorry. Michael Watson...

MA
I know. The mean P.I. working for some evil law firm. But to be honest, we're getting too old to run the place.

IAN
But Ma...

Ma glares at Ian.

MA
Oh, shoosh! You and your brother don't want the business.

Merry leans in and whispers to Caz, but everyone hears her.

MERRY
Can we go to the hotel and spa now?

IAN
Thought you two would like to ride out to my brother's movie set.

Gramps, looking mean, walks in pounding a rolling pin in his hands. Then he smiles.

GRAMPS
Gonna start the holiday cookies, Ma!

CAZ

I'd love to see them film a Holly's Woods movie. How 'bout you, Merry?

Ma turns to Michael.

MA

Can ask us all the questions you want about the place, long as you're rolling cookie dough at the same time.

CAZ

I bet Michael would love to make cookies.

MICHAEL

(uncomfortable)

I would love to make cookies.

Michael looks trapped. Ian speaks with Gramps.

IAN

Gramps, can I borrow your truck for a few hours? Show 'em the ski hill?

Gramps throws his truck keys to Ian and turns to Merry.

GRAMPS

Gingerbread or peppermint-chip cookies tonight?

Merry is torn. She stares at her mom who offers no help. Merry smiles at Gramps.

MERRY

Peppermint-chip! If we're still here, I mean.

GRAMPS

Smart choice. Ma's great-grandma's recipe. Over a hundred years old.

MERRY

Hundred years old? Aren't they pretty stale by now?

EXT./INT. MILK TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

The old milk truck has a driver's seat, passenger seat, and a bench seat in the back with seatbelts. The cargo area is empty, except for a few plastic snow sleds and a tire tube.

IAN

Gramps was the milkman until people started buying milk from the store.

CAZ

The extra seat?

IAN

He drove us to school on snowy days so Ma could work the diner. And church on Sunday.

MERRY

In a milk truck? Cool!

IAN

Not when you're twelve.

They all laugh.

CAZ

I'm eager to see Dash's movie set. He's quite the storyteller.

IAN

It's amazing what he's been able to put together with that old camera of his.

MERRY

Long as there's no monsters.

Ian chuckles.

IAN

Movie monsters are make-believe. I'll show you.

Ian parks at a snow hill parking lot that looks deserted.

CAZ

Where is everyone?

IAN

Another snow hill just up the road has a food truck. Burgers and fries worse than Ma's. Truck makes a killing. Everybody goes there, so my brother films here.

(excited)

Come on, help me with the sleds!

Merry is overjoyed with all the snow, as they exit the truck and grab the sleds.

MERRY

It's not a total loss. Get to play
in the snow before we go to the
resort and spa!

Caz chuckles. Ian looks perplexed at Merry.

EXT. SNOW HILL - DAY

Ian, Caz, and Merry look down at the empty snow hill, holding
onto two sleds. Ian points to Dash and his camera and tripod
across the hill.

IAN

Dash is right over there. Must be
getting ready to film a scene.

Caz and Merry wave at Dash when they see the camera is
focused on them. Dash yells.

DASH

Action!

Behind them, the actor in the terrifying Yeti costume crashes
through the forest toward them. In the b.g., we hear scary
audio again.

Merry SCREAMS.

Caz races to protect Merry.

CAZ

(whispers)
He's not real, sweetie.

IAN

(whispers back)
Just an actor.

The Yeti stomps by Ian and knocks him down with a swing of
his big arm, and continues stomping down the snowy hill
toward Brittany who suddenly appears at the forest edge down
by Dash.

Brittany SCREAMS and tries to run on the snow, but it's knee-
deep and her progress is slower than the Yeti's.

Merry looks on yelling to Brittany.

MERRY

Run! Run!

The Yeti gives chase. Brittany SCREAMS louder. The Yeti GROWLS, gaining on Brittany, but he struggles in the knee-deep snow to a comical degree.

Suddenly, the Yeti falls flat on his face.

Brittany turns and throws up her arms in disgust. She blows a bubble with her bubblegum.

DASH

Cut!

The Yeti gets up in anger. He yanks his mask off to reveal a very unhappy monster of a man.

Upslope, Caz explains to Merry, while Ian dusts the snow off himself.

CAZ

You see, Merry, he's not a real monster.

Ian points to Dash who is unzipping the Yeti's costume from behind. The Yeti is mumbling bad words in a fit of anger.

IAN

Not so sure about that.

The Yeti removes his costume, turns, and decks Dash with a strong right hook.

The actor trudges toward the parking lot, as Caz and Merry sled down the hill toward Dash to comfort him.

Ian is bewildered.

Caz and Merry reach Dash.

CAZ

Dash, are you okay?

Dash rubs his jaw, as Brittany joins them.

DASH

I'm okay. But, that's a wrap. He walked off the set.

BRITTANY

Idiot from L.A. Never seen snow.

Ian slides down the hill, and the Actor falls on his butt by the parking lot.

CAZ

You should ask your brother to step in.

DASH

I don't want to insult him.

Brittany blows and pops another bubble, disgusted.

BRITTANY

Wait! I've seen his work.

Caz and Merry console Dash as Ian arrives.

IAN

Maybe Gramps can step in.

BRITTANY

Certainly not you, Ian!

IAN

I've got to practice my lines. You heard the director. If I don't know them, he'll fire me.

DASH

I'll check with Gramps. Guess I could change the title to "I'm not that old, Yeti."

They laugh nervously.

MERRY

Can we sled some more?

IAN

Sure.

DASH

I'll go see if Gramps can help out between the lunch and dinner rush.

Dash heads to the parking lot. Brittany is upset and stomps after Dash.

BRITTANY

The old man? What's he going to do if he catches me? Have a heart attack? This is supposed to be my breakout role!

(beat)

And I look as fuzzy as the Yeti in the video you shot.

DASH
We call them dailies.

BRITTANY
I call them fuzzies.

DASH
I need a new lens for my camera,
but can't afford one.

Caz looks compassionately at Dash.

DASH (CONT'D)
I'm doing what I can. Nothing is
going as planned.

MERRY
(mumbles)
For you and me both. I should be at
the spa.

Ian looks at Merry, then Caz with a suspicious look.

INT. DINER, KITCHEN - DAY

Michael has the time of his life making peppermint-chip
cookies with Gramps and Ma.

MICHAEL
I get it.
(beat)
If the peppermint chunks are too
big, they detract from the taste of
the sugar cookie.

Gramps smiles and nods, 'yes.'

GRAMPS
Uh-huh.

MICHAEL
Too much of a good thing.
(beat)
Like owning the town diner for too
long.

Ma kneads cookie dough without looking up.

MA
Five AM to nine PM every day. Seven
days a week. Folks love to eat out
on holidays, so we never got 'em.
(MORE)

MA (CONT'D)

Kids never had real vacations, and had to bus tables their entire lives.

GRAMPS

Sent them to college to escape, and let them find their own way.

MA

Took their dad's entire pension to send 'em, but don't you dare tell the boys.

Ma holds up the rolling pin.

GRAMPS

Or you'll never learn to make gingerbread cookies.

Ma and Gramps chuckle, then Michael smiles.

Ma sets down the rolling pin and gets serious.

MA

Truth is, we want to see them do what they love to do, even if we aren't able to retire and relax.

GRAMPS

They'd both come back to work here if we asked them. That's who they are.

MICHAEL

But you won't ask them?

MA

We'd never take a single smile from their faces.

Michael pauses with an earnest smile followed by a concerned look.

MICHAEL

If you sold the place?

MA

This is their home. Their place to return when things aren't going their way in the big world.

MICHAEL

I see.

GRAMPS

Where do you call home, Michael?

MICHAEL

My studio apartment, I guess. I'm hoping to work my way through school.

Michael checks on his cookies in the oven. They're burnt to a crisp.

MA

Not as a baker, I hope.

Dash bursts into the kitchen with a smile on his face.

DASH

Found someone to buy my old car. Holiday miracle! Ordered the new lens for my camera. Should be good to go this afternoon!

MA

Who bought that piece of junk from you?

DASH

Your renter, Caz. Paid cash. Magical! Told me she wants my film to be a success. They took the bus here. Now they can drive home in style, and I can pick up my new lens in town -- if I can borrow the milk truck this afternoon.

Michael looks perplexed. Gramps looks at Dash.

GRAMPS

You can finish shooting your monster movie?

Dash puts an arm around Gramps.

DASH

Funny you should mention it...

EXT. SNOW HILL - AFTERNOON

Dash admires his new camera lens, as Brittany takes her position part way up the snow hill. She wears a coat over her tank top, shorts, and snow boots.

Caz and Merry sit on the tire tube smiling at Dash as he focuses the camera across the slope in a grove of trees.

Ian is reading his "Romeo and Juliet" script paying little attention to the filming.

DASH
Quiet on the set.
(beat)
Action!

Brittany takes off her coat and throws it to the side as she runs from the Yeti.

We see the Yeti try to stomp through a grove of small trees. He has difficulty breaking through the smallest of branches, and in the b.g. we hear scary audio.

The Yeti finally breaks through the small branches and proceeds upslope in the snow toward Brittany.

Caz and Merry whisper.

CAZ
See, that's not so scary!

MERRY
Not when you see it in slow-motion.

Ian turns from his script to watch the action.

The Yeti stomps upslope slower and slower.

Brittany, as the victim, is forced to fall down more frequently, while screaming to make the chase appear closer.

The Yeti pauses, slumps over at the waist, and places his paws on his hips to catch a breath.

Brittany's next scream sounds forced.

The Yeti picks up steam, and finally chases Brittany down, but he falls flat on top of her in the snow with his face in her stomach.

The Yeti lets out a huge breath, totally exhausted.

Brittany lifts her torso up on her elbows, totally disgusted.

DASH
Cut! Lot of good footage right there!

Merry and Caz cheer in support of Dash and the actors.

BRITTANY
I think he's dead!

GRAMPS
Little winded. Not dead. Get this
mask off me!

Brittany pulls off Gramps's mask. He's sweating profusely.

BRITTANY
Think you could get off me?

Gramps slowly gets to his feet, as Dash races over to them.

DASH
Gramps, are you okay?

GRAMPS
You know I'd do anything for Ma,
but I'm not ready to die Yeti!

Dash laughs and hugs Gramps, as Ian, Caz, and Merry race up.
Ian is still holding his script.

Brittany gets to her feet and shakes the snow off her skimpy
outfit.

IAN
Gramps? You okay?

GRAMPS
Fine, fine. But I've got
gingerbread cookies to start on.

Caz and Merry circle around Dash like he's a rock star.

CAZ
Must be so great making movies...

MERRY
(interrupting)
Bet you'll win one of those Acme
Awards.

Dash engulfs up the praise with humility.

DASH
I'm just a storyteller, like the
fine actors with whom I surround
myself.

CAZ

Then what happens? Does Brittany outrun the Yeti with her superior speed?

MERRY

Like Wonder Woman?

CAZ

Does she turn and punch the beast in the face?

MERRY

Like Supergirl?

DASH

(quietly)

Well, not really.

Ian rolls his eyes and mumbles to himself.

IAN

Oh, brother.

Dash spins to Ian.

IAN (CONT'D)

I said, that's my brother.

(beat)

But I have to get going to work on my lines.

DASH

Let's call it a day. My new leading man is scheduled to arrive tonight. Thanks for substituting for today, Gramps. I owe ya.

BRITTANY

What about me?

DASH

I can shoot backstory footage in your cabin tonight, and tomorrow is your death scene.

Merry sounds a bit worried, as she, Caz, Ian, and Gramps walk in the snow toward the parking lot.

MERRY

Death scene?

IAN

It's all make-believe, Merry.

CAZ
It's still so exciting! The movie
business.

IAN
(to Caz)
Did you buy Dash's car so he could
get that new lens for his camera?

CAZ
I think everyone should have the
opportunity to be successful.

Ian is doubtful.

IAN
But you needed a car, right?

Merry looks at her mom, and then at the beat-up
rusty, (nondescript) USED CAR in the parking lot.

MERRY
(sarcastic)
Who wouldn't want to drive a beauty
like that?!

Everyone laughs, but Ian glances suspiciously at Caz.

INT. DINER KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

Michael is removing perfect gingerbread cookies from the oven
under Ma's watchful eye as Merry races into the kitchen.

MERRY
You should have seen it! You should
have been there! A great big
monster, a real Yeti, except it was
Gramps, was chasing that lady with
the little...

Merry pauses and Michael leans closer, eager to learn more.

MICHAEL
Her little what?

MERRY
Brain. And the monster chased her
up the snow hill, and...

MICHAEL
Tell me about...

Gramps, Ian, Caz, Brittany, and Dash enter the kitchen, and Michael's question switches gears.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Ma's recipe for gingerbread cookies.

MA

Michael's been a great help, while Gramps and you were playing in the snow.

CAZ

Very exciting day on the set, Ma. You'd be proud of your son!

Dash gleams.

MA

I'm proud of both my sons.

Ian looks away shyly.

CAZ

Very nice gentlemen.

GRAMPS

Good thing that other actor playing the Yeti comes in tonight. It's hard work chasing and killing people.

Ma kisses Gramps on the cheek.

MA

I'm sure you were the perfect monster.

Caz sees the beautiful cookies, Michael removed from the oven.

Brittany removes her coat and catches Michael's eye and Dash's eye.

CAZ

Did you make these, Mr. Watson?

Ma points to the sink where a tray of burnt, deformed gingerbread bodies lay dead on the tray.

MICHAEL

Those were mine. They put up a good fight.

Merry stares at the burnt gingerbread cookies.

MERRY

Not too good a fight.

MA

He tried.

Everyone chuckles at the burnt cookies.

DASH

I'm going to take some background clips of Brittany if anyone wants to help hold the lighting kit.

Michael is first to raise his hand, then Merry, then Caz.

MA

Take some fresh gingerbread cookies on the way out.

Merry grabs a handful of cookies.

MERRY

Thanks, Ma.

Michael struggles to remove his apron as Dash leads them out.

Ian rolls his eyes in disgust before getting serious with Ma, while Gramps begins to wash the pots and pans.

IAN

What kind of questions did that private investigator ask, Ma?

MA

Nothing about the business. He said he knew all about it. He asked how much sugar is too much sugar? What is a pinch of something?

IAN

So you pinched him.

MA

Of course. He giggled liked one of you did every time you asked me the same question.

Ian gets in Ma's face.

IAN

So, you gonna sell out?

Ma turns away.

MA

It was nice to have a young man volunteer to help us cook, that's all.

IAN

I've been busy, Ma! Learning my Romeo lines, perfecting my craft.

Ma looks into Ian's eyes.

MA

I know, dear. Your brother's been too busy too. Gramps and I aren't getting any younger.

Gramps laughs.

GRAMPS

I was almost the first Yeti admitted to the E-R.

MA

Michael said the law firm he works for didn't have an exact figure yet, but he was certain it would be more than enough to retire on.

IAN

You're thinking about it, then?

MA

Been planning it for some time. At some point, we'll have to take the risk and make a change!

Gramps turns with a sad look to Ma. Ma goes to hug him. There is a tear in her eye. Ma squeezes Gramps tightly.

MA (CONT'D)

I know, Gramps. I know.

Ian hangs his head.

INT. CABIN - AFTERNOON

Brittany's rental cabin is identical to Caz's and Merry's cabin. Brittany is putting on fresh makeup in the bathroom as Dash sets up the lighting kit.

Caz follows Dash's every move, still smitten with him.

DASH

Caz, I'll ask you to tilt the light up after Brittany lights the fire. Really appreciate the help.

Caz smiles at Dash, and they share a moment.

CAZ

Got it. No problem.

Merry bites into a gingerbread cookie (CRUNCH) and her eyes light up with joy.

MERRY

Best cookie I've had in my life! Ma is the best cook in the world.

Dash laughs.

Dash shakes a finger, jokingly scolding Merry.

DASH

But no cookie crunching after I say action. Gotta be quiet as a church mouse.

MERRY

Gonna be hard not eating Ma's cookie.

Dash laughs again.

DASH

Ian's the real cook. That's his recipe.

Caz and Merry are stunned.

CAZ

Ian? A cook?

DASH

Chef, really. Top culinary institute he graduated from said he could work anywhere he wanted.

CAZ

But he chose a career in the theatre?

Dash looks into Caz's eyes, with Merry glued to the conversation.

DASH

I tried to talk him out of it! I told him more than once that he had a special gift. He shouldn't waste it!

MERRY

What did he say?

Dash leans down to Merry at eye level.

DASH

He told me: There are two kinds of people in the world: Those who play it safe and do only what they're good at; and those who take risks to do what they love.

Caz pauses to think.

MERRY

What if you don't know what you're good at?

Dash pats Merry on the head and laughs.

DASH

Then you become a film producer like me.

(beat)

Actually, this is what I love.

Brittany comes out of the bathroom in cute, and sexy brand outdoor clothes, ready to film. Dash provides direction.

DASH (CONT'D)

In this scene, the girl is alone, lights a fire, suddenly hears the monstrous Yeti outside, and screams.

Brittany looks confused.

BRITTANY

But it's daytime.

Dash points to his camera.

DASH

Using a dark filter on my new lens.

Dash smiles at Caz.

BRITTANY
There's no Yeti to scream at.

DASH
I'll add the audio scream later in
post-production.

Brittany looks troubled.

BRITTANY
This is hard.

Dash smiles and comforts Brittany sweetly.

DASH
That's acting. Gotta earn the free
room and board! You can do this.

Brittany kneels by the wood stove. Crumpled up newspapers and
matches stand ready. Brittany nervously glances back at Dash.

BRITTANY
Ready.

DASH
Quiet on the set.

Merry stops eating the cookies.

DASH (CONT'D)
Action.

Brittany tucks all the paper under the wood in the stove.

Caz raises her eyes, knowing that disaster awaits, but she
remains quiet on the set.

Brittany lights the fire, and smoke bellows out. Brittany
looks perplexed then angry, as smoke fills the room.

Brittany SCREAMS.

MERRY
Ian knows how to build a fire.

Dash glares at Merry, which Caz sees.

DASH
Cut! Let's get out of here.

They grab the filming equipment and race out.

EXT. ICE SKATING POND - MORNING

Caz and Merry are waiting at the pond, lacing up their boots, when Michael arrives fresh from a night at the luxury resort.

Michael's eyes open widely when he sees a food truck parked by the skate rental kiosk.

MICHAEL
Breakfast burritos?

CAZ
Michael, we're here to talk
business.

MERRY
Except me. I'm here to skate.

CAZ
Didn't you have the breakfast
buffet at the resort?

MICHAEL
Morning workout, swim, hot tub,
then the buffet. Yes.

CAZ
Did you drop off the written notice
of intent to Ma, to make an offer
on the property pending an
appraisal which we'll pay for?

MICHAEL
Handed her the envelope, but she
didn't open it.

CAZ
We're switching accommodations with
you tonight. Don't want to be
around when they're discussing
everything as a family.

Michael hangs his head in sadness.

CAZ (CONT'D)
We'll talk on the ice.

Michael looks away.

MICHAEL
I can't, ya know, ice skate.

Merry chuckles.

MERRY

If you can walk, you can skate.

Caz and Merry head out to skate. Michael trudges to the skate rental kiosk.

LATER

Merry and Caz are smiling and laughing as Michael tries to skate for what looks like the first time while eating a horribly tasting breakfast burrito.

Caz slows down to chat with Michael as Merry skates happily.

CAZ

What did you find out?

MICHAEL

This breakfast burrito from the food truck is awful, lacing ice skates takes forever, and frozen water is very, very slippery.

Caz glares at Michael.

CAZ

About the business?

Michael wobbles on the ice with a frightened face but makes it to a garbage can where he tosses in the burrito.

MICHAEL

The chief pancake cook, Ma, is waffling about selling the place. She took the For Sale sign out of the window.

CAZ

It's bleeding money like syrup. All that place needs is satellite Internet and Wi-Fi and more customers for the diner!

MICHAEL

You like it here?

CAZ

My little cabin. The smell of pine trees, peace and quiet. It's exactly what I'm looking for.

MICHAEL

Exactly what you're looking for.

CAZ

Most important. Our loft in the city is so big, Merry and I hardly see each other even when we're home. Up here, we're not just mother and daughter, we're roommates!

MICHAEL

Why are you two taking the fancy resort tonight?

CAZ

It has to be Merry's final decision to buy the property.

MICHAEL

Once she gets a taste of the resort hotel and spa, she'll never want to come back here.

CAZ

That's a chance I have to take.

Michael stares at Caz like she's crazy, as she skates ahead of Michael.

Michael struggles to catch up.

MICHAEL

Wait up!
(catching up to Caz)
Get this. Neither Ma nor Gramps can fry an egg on their own.

CAZ

What?

MICHAEL

They follow detailed recipes for everything. Pre-heat oven to 350. Grease the pan. Everything they make is from a box or a kit, and all they do is follow instructions.

CAZ

I thought I tasted those pancakes before. What about Merry's eggnog milkshake?

MICHAEL

Ian's secret recipe. Exact amounts of everything down to one-fourth teaspoon of freshly ground nutmeg and two eyedrops of real vanilla extract.

CAZ

The Blue-Plate Special?

MICHAEL

Burgers and fries. Gotta order the Blue-Plate Special. It's all they make on their own. They miss Ian a lot.

CAZ

He was their chef?

MICHAEL

Best chef in the region.

Caz skates effortlessly while Michael struggles to keep up. Caz stops and stares at the food truck.

Michael wobbles past Caz, slips, and falls flat on his butt. He yelps as Merry races over to him.

CAZ

Two kinds of people in the world.

Caz and Merry chuckle as they help Michael to his feet.

MICHAEL

I'll go get my things from the resort and tell them you're coming.

MERRY

Won't that be fun, Mom?

Caz smiles weakly.

CAZ

Yes, Merry. It'll be great fun! Let's go get our stuff.

MICHAEL

Should we switch cars too? You don't have to drive Dash's junk heap.

CAZ

No. Let them think that you're the Private Investigator, and we met today at the ice rink by accident.

Merry looks away. Caz sees this.

CAZ (CONT'D)

It's business, Merry. It's always done this way.

Merry looks disappointed in her mother.

INT. DINER - NOON

Caz and Merry walk into the diner to see Ma and Ian going through a box of bookkeeping files.

MA

Here they come now. Bet you're starving!

CAZ

Hi, Ma. Hi, Ian. We could use a little something before we hit the road.

Merry tugs at Caz's sleeve.

IAN

Hi, Caz. Hi, Merry, Have fun ice-skating?

CAZ

We ran into that nice Mr. Watson at the Ice Rink.

MA

You did? Imagine that!

CAZ

He asked to trade us accommodations for tonight, if you wouldn't mind.

IAN

Why would he do that? That Resort and Spa is very elegant.

CAZ

Wanted to get the feel of your place.

Merry tugs at Caz's sleeve. Caz smiles at Merry.

CAZ (CONT'D)

What is it, Merry?

MERRY

They look awfully busy looking over all those papers. Maybe we should eat at the spa.

MA

Don't be silly, dear. Gramps could have a couple of Blue-Plate Specials out here in a New York minute.

Merry looks for mercy from her mom.

CAZ

Oh. I see. We wouldn't want to be a bother, and...

IAN

Tell ya what. What if I fixed you up a little something myself?

Caz pretends to be shocked.

CAZ

You? You know how to cook?

Ma giggles.

IAN

Used to do a little cooking. It would be fun. Want to see me in action?

Ian heads to the kitchen.

Merry tries to pull her Ma toward the front door, as Caz resists.

MA

I wouldn't fight this one, Merry. This will be the best meal of your life!

Merry stops dead in her tracks.

MERRY

Better than your eggnog milkshake?

MA

His recipe. I'd go watch him cook if I were you.

Merry smiles. Caz leads her back to the kitchen.

INT. DINER, KITCHEN - NOON

Ian has the ingredients laid out in a dozen little dishes and bowls.

IAN

Ma, Gramps, and I ate lunch already, but I was going to run lunch out to Dash and Brittany on the movie set.

CAZ

Did Dash get his new monster actor from California?

IAN

He didn't. Lunch will make him feel better.

Merry and Caz are mesmerized by the number of little dishes.

MERRY

What are you making?

IAN

Tequila lime shrimp and cauliflower rice with curry, cilantro, and mango.

CAZ

Sounds amazing, but we only have ten minutes.

Ian puts on an apron. And stands before two large skilletts, one cast iron, and one non-stick. He heats a tablespoon of oil in the cast iron pot.

IAN

It'll be ready in eight. First the cauliflower rice. I grated the washed cauliflower before you came in. I'll add it here, over medium heat, and add my sea salt and a dash of curry powder. Stir together.

MERRY

Smells good.

IAN

And it's only 25 calories per cup versus 218 calories for a cup of cooked brown rice.

Ian covers the iron skillet with a glass top.

IAN (CONT'D)

While this steams for three to four minutes, let's cook the shrimp.

Points to a bowl of uncooked shrimp (1 pound; seasoned), as he turns up the heat on the nonstick skillet to high.

IAN (CONT'D)

Seasoned with sea salt, pepper, and a pinch of a secret ingredient. If I told you I'd have to kill you.

Merry gasps then smiles. Ian smiles back.

IAN (CONT'D)

We add extra-virgin olive oil and the shrimp and ignore them for two full minutes.

CAZ

Ignore them.

IAN

Our attention is required elsewhere.
(raises his index finger)
To the liquor cabinet.

Caz is mesmerized by Ian's gracefulness and calm, Merry is entertained and engaged following Ian like a puppy.

Ian reaches up high in a cabinet to get a bottle of (brand tequila).

MERRY

Alcohol? I'm not allowed...

IAN

It all burns off, leaving a sweet scent of agave used in cooking for centuries in Central and South America.

MERRY

Oh.

Ian pours two ounces tequila in a small bowl, and returns the bottle.

He takes tongs, and expertly turns the shrimp over.

He adds spices to the shrimp from the small bowls in front of him (garlic, red pepper flakes, another secret ingredient).

While the shrimp cook for one minute, he takes the top off the cauliflower and stirs it.

IAN
Almost done.

Caz checks the time on her phone. Only 6 minutes have passed.

IAN (CONT'D)
We add the tequila to the shrimp.
And give it 30 to 40 seconds to
burn off.

Ian scoops the cauliflower rice in four bowls, and stirs in a small amount of diced fresh mango from another bowl.

IAN (CONT'D)
Fresh mango, another secret
ingredient.

Caz and Merry are captivated by the smells in the kitchen.

Ian removes the shrimp from the heat, squeezes lime juice liberally over the shrimp. It sizzles.

CAZ & MERRY
Yeah!

Ian sprinkles on chopped cilantro and stirs the shrimp on the way over to the four bowls of cilantro rice and mango.

IAN
Bon Appétit!

Caz and Merry dig in like hungry wolves.

CAZ
Oh, my! You're a genius!

MERRY
This is so good!

IAN
I'll race these other two servings
out the Dash and Brittany.

CAZ

I hope Dash appreciates you. This is the best lunch I've ever eaten. What's your secret ingredient?

MERRY

(alarmed)

Mom, he'll have to kill you.

CAZ

I'll take the risk.

Ian acts like the monster Yeti, puts his arms out, and trudges to Caz as if to choke her.

IAN

Cumin.

Ian gets closer to choking Caz. Merry laughs.

CAZ

(laughs)

How much?

Ian laughs switching from choking to "pinching" mode with his hands, as Caz sneaks a photo of the finished dish.

IAN

Just a pinch, of course.

Ian lightly pinches Merry who giggles and laughs.

CAZ

You set me up!

IAN

The situation called for levity. Dash is pretty bummed about his stand-in monster actor being late. I needed to cheer him up with lunch.

MERRY

Can't you be his monster?

Ian stops, and smiles weakly, and with sympathy to Merry. He crouches to be eye-to-eye.

IAN

Sometimes people you love walk a different path than you do. It's okay to let them go their way, while you go yours.

Merry doesn't quite understand.

MERRY

But you love your brother, right?

IAN

Of course, I do.

MERRY

Shouldn't you help him if he needs your help, especially at the holidays?

Ian smiles at Merry and Caz.

IAN

Dash, the big producer, is too proud to ask me for help. If I happen to deliver these lunches on set, I might mention in passing that I could help him out 'til his other actor arrives.

Caz swoons.

CAZ

That's so kind of you.

Merry smiles at Ian and they share a moment.

IAN

Have a wonderful time at the resort and spa tonight. Hope to see you both tomorrow. It's our annual Pre-Pre-Holiday Eve family dinner. We like to extend our parties.

Caz looks away.

CAZ

Sure we're invited?

IAN

Of course you are. I'm cooking. Hope to see you here.

Ian puts the two bowls of shrimp in a box, and grabs two brand soft drinks from the fridge.

CAZ

Not sure we can make it. Should get back to the city.

MERRY

Thanks for a great lunch, Ian.

CAZ

Yes, thanks very much. It was beyond delicious. Tell your brother goodbye for us. We wish him all the success in the world.

Ian stares into Caz's eyes. They share a moment.

IAN

I'll do that. Nice meeting you.

Merry hugs Ian spontaneously, so Caz joins in.

Ian smiles and races out with the lunches.

Caz and Merry's eyes follow Ian out.

CAZ & MERRY

(sadly)

Goodbye.

EXT. DINER - DAY

Caz and Merry walk slowly to Dash's old junky car.

CAZ

Sure you want to go to that fancy resort right away?

Merry turns happy.

MERRY

You think we should stop by the movie set? But we shouldn't disturb them.

CAZ

I could borrow binoculars from Gramps and Ma.

MERRY

We could watch from the parking lot.

They race into the Diner.

EXT. SNOW HILL - AFTERNOON

Caz drives slowly and quietly into the snow hill parking lot and parks the car.

Caz and Merry open the doors and exit with binoculars looking upslope. They're mortified by what they see.

Zooming in from Caz's binoculars she sees a very awkward Yeti trying to chase Brittany in the snow, but the Yeti falls flat every few steps and yelps in pain.

Brittany is forced to slow down and stop to make the chase loon look scarier.

Caz sees Dash at the top of the hill focusing the camera down at the action. She sees him pound the top of his head with the palm of his hand with a look of disgust.

Ian sneaks up behind Caz and whispers.

IAN

What are you two doing here?

Caz lowers the binoculars, surprised to see Ian.

CAZ

We thought you were the Yeti.

Ian points to Caz's fancy sedan at the far end of the parking lot.

IAN

Your friend, Michael, wanted to be a movie star.

Merry looks through the binoculars and laughs.

MERRY

Just like he ice skates!

Caz looks back at the Yeti and HEARS crying in the distance. The Yeti can't make it up a short, steep section of snow to continue the chase.

Brittany throws up her hands in disgust and goes back to help the Yeti, walking him up the steep part.

When the terrain levels out, the Yeti pauses until Brittany is five yards upslope.

The Yeti waves to Dash and commences growling and chasing Brittany.

Seconds later, the Yeti does another face-plant in the snow.

Dash yells as he pounds his forehead with the palm of his hand.

DASH

Cut!

Dash glances toward the parking lot and sees Ian, Caz, and Merry. He angrily stomps down toward the parking lot.

Michael just gets to his feet, when Dash passes him on the way to the parking lot and pushes the Yeti out of his way.

Brittany helps Michael up again, while Dash stomps the rest of the way to the parking lot. Dash yells at Caz.

DASH (CONT'D)

This is all your fault, liar!

Ian is stunned, as Caz and Merry look away.

Ian looks sympathetically at Caz.

IAN

What's this about?

Without looking, Dash points up the slope to Michael who appears to be putting the moves on Brittany.

DASH

I knew something was up with you two. Michael begged me to play the Yeti, but I told him he couldn't work for me until he told the truth! Movies are about truth!

Dash paces, proud of himself. Ian rolls his eyes in disbelief at his brother. Ian sounds Shakespearian.

IAN

To what, pray tell, did he confess?

DASH

He confessed that he was the mean lawyer putting a bid on our property.

(points to Caz)

That makes her the evil private investigator!

Dash stands proud of his detective work.

Ian laughs and scoffs.

IAN

Mean? Then why did she pay cash for your worthless rust-bucket of a car so you could buy that new lens and make your movie?

Ian is flustered and angrily walks in circles.

CAZ

Look, I can explain. I wanted to help...

Surprisingly, Ian defends his brother.

IAN

(interrupting)

Prove my brother is a failure as a movie producer, even if he had a great camera, and we'd be forced to sell out to Michael the evil lawyer and the worse actor we've all ever seen. But you knew that, didn't you, Ms. Private Investigator?!

Caz turns to Merry who shakes her head totally confused.

CAZ

Come on, Merry. Time to hit the resort and spa.

They grab their luggage and bags out of the car.

Caz tosses the keys to Dash.

DASH

What's this?

CAZ

Keep the car and the camera lens.

MERRY

I was just getting used to that car!

CAZ

(to Dash)

A gift from the mean private investigator!

Caz shakes her head in disgust and speaks angrily.

CAZ (CONT'D)

Michael will drive us to the resort and spa!

Merry sees Michael and Brittany kissing.

MERRY

He looks busy, Mom.

Dash, Ian, and Caz turn to see Michael and Brittany kissing and hugging.

Dash throws a temper tantrum, as Caz and Merry trudge to the nice sedan.

DASH

Get your hands off my leading lady!

IAN

Actually, she's my leading lady.

DASH

(turns to Ian)

My poor, disillusioned little brother!

(turns back to Michael)

You're fired, Michael! You'll never work in Holly's Woods again!

Ian addresses Dash while watching Caz and Merry trudge to the sedan with their luggage.

IAN

What are we going to do now, big brother!

DASH

What do you mean? I got my car back, and a new lens.

IAN

Ma and Gramps can't keep working the failing diner forever! I'm going back to the theatre after the holiday. And you just fired the only guy to make an offer on our property in ten years!

Dash paces and looks worried.

DASH

I think I have enough footage to piece together a pretty scary movie.

IAN

Not from what I saw.

DASH

It's all in the editing. I'll have a preliminary director's cut to show you at our Pre-Pre-Holiday Eve family dinner tonight!

Dash puts his arm around his brother with confidence.

DASH (CONT'D)

I think this film can save the diner. All the magic's in post-production. Edit out the bad clips. Mix in the background clips. Add in more frightening audio. Create suspense, danger, and most of all fear.

Ian stares at his fantasy-land brother.

IAN

I've got fear.

(beat)

We may have to light a candle at the church to give us hope.

Dash pats his brother on the back.

DASH

Insurance. Not a bad idea, Little Brother. Who is the patron saint of monster movies?

IAN

(chuckles)

One patron saint? You may need them all!

INT. FANCY RESORT SUITE - LATE AFTERNOON

Caz and Merry look freshly showered and are wearing fluffy white bathrobes with gold (brand) insignias on them. They sit in comfortable, over-stuffed leather chairs on opposite sides of the huge room. They have gloomy faces.

We see two empty glass chocolate sundae dishes, a silver coffee pot, and a fine coffee cup on a room service tray.

Caz types away on a brand tablet computer, while Merry stares into her brand smartphone. They speak to each other in dull tones without taking their eyes off of their devices.

CAZ

How was your hot-fudge sundae?

MERRY
Fine. Yours?

CAZ
Fine.

They continue to stare at their devices.

MERRY
Nice to have Wi-Fi.

CAZ
Catching up on email. Hope you
don't mind.

MERRY
(sadly)
I don't care. It's too clean here.
Just like our loft in the city. I
wonder how Michael likes our cabin.

Caz finally looks up to see Merry's sad face.

CAZ
I'm sure Michael loves the cabin.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Michael looks apprehensive as he pulls his suitcase into the tiny cabin. He looks around in horror.

MICHAEL
Uh uh! No! Uh uh! I don't get paid
enough for this!

Michael checks out the tiny bathroom and shakes his head in disgust.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Uh uh. No. Not up on my shots.
(beat)
Hey, wait! Brittany is staying next
door.

Michael smiles devilishly as he starts to exits his cabin.

He steps lively to Brittany's cabin next door and confidently
knocks on the door.

No answer.

He knocks again, with the same result. He hangs his head.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Sure, I get fired, lose my big chance, and lose my girl who thinks she can do better with Dash the famous film producer...

(beat)

Or Ian, the seasoned theatre Romeo.

Michael trudges back to his cabin.

BACK TO:

INT. FANCY RESORT SUITE - CONTINUOUS

Caz and Merry pace in the large suite. Both look concerned.

CAZ

What do you mean, this suite is too clean?

Merry looks flustered, and angrier as she speaks.

MERRY

I don't know. I'm just a kid. Can't know everything, but I do know it was wrong for you and Michael to lie to those nice people.

Caz is stunned. Then she races in tears to hug Merry.

CAZ

I know! I've made such a mess of things. Moms are supposed to teach their children to tell the truth by example. Can you ever forgive me?

Merry pauses, and Caz and Merry make eye contact and share a moment, and smile.

MERRY

It's the holidays. Of course I forgive you.

Caz melts in Merry's forgiveness.

CAZ

I've got to make things right.

Merry looks her Mom right in the eyes again.

MERRY

I think you should apologize.

Caz hugs Merry.

CAZ

If it's not too late.

(beat)

Come on! Let's get dressed. We have work to do.

They hurry to get changed.

INT. TAXI CAB - EARLY EVENING

Caz and Merry ride quietly in the back of a cab on a forest road on the way to Holly's Woods. Caz is stylish in a sleek red dress and heels, Merry wears a green Christmassy-looking dress with her favorite brand tennis shoes.

Caz glances to her right and sees a small church. She speaks to the Cab Driver (60s).

CAZ

Third time on this road, and I hadn't noticed that church before. Huh?

The Cab Driver makes eye contact with Caz in the rearview mirror.

CAB DRIVER

Often people only see churches when they need one.

Caz nods 'yes' in agreement and pauses to think. She slowly folds her hands together and closes her eyes to pray. Merry glances over at her mom and does the same.

They all hear and see the old milk truck barreling down the road toward them. Caz yells.

CAZ

Stop the cab!

The Cab Driver slams on the brakes.

Ian, driving the milk truck also slams on the brakes, and swerves off to the shoulder of the road to just miss the cab.

CAZ (CONT'D)

Thanks so much, I'll pay you for the return trip, and the tip will be huge!

Caz takes a wad of bills and pays the cab driver, who smiles and looks up to the heavens.

CAB DRIVER
Just glad he didn't hit us.

MERRY
We probably deserved it.

CAZ
Thanks so much.

CAB DRIVER
You three have a Happy Holiday.

Caz and Merry exit the cab.

EXT. FOREST ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Ian steps out of the milk truck with an unhappy face.

The Cab races away as Ian approaches Caz and Merry. Ian remains unshaven (trimmed three-day beard), and wearing clean outdoor-recreation clothes. The anger in his face disappears immediately when he sees Caz and Merry so nicely dressed.

IAN
I... I... was coming to pick you
up.

CAZ
I was coming to apologize.

Ian is smitten with Caz and is at a loss for words. Ian looks away.

IAN
I... I...

Caz waits for Ian to turn back to meet her gaze.

CAZ
Ever notice how it's easy to ask
forgiveness from above, and a lot
tougher to ask forgiveness face-to-
face with family and friends?

IAN
I think you're doing both at once.

CAZ
You're a smart man, Ian Brennan!
(looks Ian in the eyes)
And I'm truly sorry for not being
honest from the start.

MERRY

And for all the trouble she's
caused.

Ian and Caz turn to Merry, pause, and then laugh.

CAZ

Yes, and for all the trouble I've
caused.

Ian turns sad.

IAN

Ma got a red foreclosure letter
this afternoon. She and Gramps are
devastated.

CAZ

Oh, dear!

IAN

Michael is sitting with them now,
but he said we needed you for this
one.

CAZ

I could apologize at least.

Merry looks at Ian.

MERRY

She didn't mean any harm.

Ian squats to speak with Merry eye-to-eye.

IAN

Your mom and Michael were going to
buy our property. It's a great
place, so we can't blame them.

Ian looks at Caz.

CAZ

I guess so.

IAN

The foreclosure notice would have
come even if you never visited
Holly's Woods. Right?

Caz lacks conviction and speaks weakly.

CAZ

I guess so. I need to apologize for lying either way.

IAN

Let's see if there's magic in the night to brighten up our Pre-Pre-Holiday Eve family dinner.

Ian stands and heads to the milk truck. Caz and Merry follow in a solemn mood.

INT. DINER - EVENING

Michael, Ma, and Gramps drink coffee and sit at a table with sad, weary faces. The opened red foreclosure notice sits in the middle of the table.

Ian walks in slowly, with Caz and Merry behind him.

Michael stands up and fumbles for words.

MICHAEL

I... I...

Caz steps forward.

CAZ

Michael, this is my fault.
(making eye contact)
Ma, I've lied to you. Gramps, and Ian too.
(beat)
My name is Caz Darrow. I'm the attorney...

Ma interrupts, and point to Michael.

MA

I thought Michael was the evil attorney.

GRAMPS

I thought he was the mean private investigator.

IAN

Ma, Gramps, hear her out.

CAZ

I came up here looking to buy a small cabin to spend more quality time with Merry, and I wanted to see the place and ask a few questions before placing an offer.

IAN

You were spying on us.

Caz looks sadly at Ian before continuing.

CAZ

I had Michael investigate property values, tax records, and your current financial situation.

Ma sadly holds up the foreclosure notice.

MA

Must have called our bank.

CAZ

I wouldn't let Michael do that.

IAN

Bank did that all by themselves, Ma.

CAZ

Michael works for me as an intern before he heads off to law school next fall. He has nothing to do with this. It's all my fault we lied and I'm very sorry.

Everyone has their heads hung low, when Dash enters triumphantly with Brittany, in a short black dress, smiling and clinging to his arm. Dash also carries a brand large-screen laptop computer.

DASH

Our financial problems are solved!

Ma and Gramps are elated. Ian looks doubtful.

IAN

How is that, Big Brother?

DASH

You be the judge.

Dash sets up the laptop so everyone can see it.

DASH (CONT'D)
 I spent hours taking out the
 miscues, Yeti falls, and
 embarrassing clips.

IAN
 Big job?

Dash ignores the question.

DASH
 Then I added the creepiest,
 scariest background audio music I
 could find. I haven't added the
 kill scenes yet, or I should say
 Yeti, but I think I have a money-
 maker here.

Ma gets excited.

MA
 Good enough to save the diner?

Dash is overly confident.

DASH
 You be the judge, Ma.
 (looks at Merry)
 Don't be too frightened, Merry.
 It's only a movie.

Everyone's eyes are glued to the computer.

DASH (CONT'D)
 We're all seeing this for the first
 time.

Ian is shocked.

IAN
 You didn't screen the film?

DASH
 Doing it now. Wanted to see your
 faces, watching it with me. Proud
 moment for a filmmaker.

Dash starts the short film.

BEGIN MONTAGE - "Return of the Yeti"

-- We see the Yeti crashing through the forest, and the movie
 title "Return of the Yeti" Dash Brennan Writer, Director,
 Producer.

Everyone cheers.

-- We see Brittany in her cabin beginning to light a fire, with ominous music playing in the b.g. She hears the Yeti growl outside, but Brittany doesn't appear frightened.

DASH (CONT'D)

I added that growl.

Caz looks back at Ian, and Dash sees no one in the audience appears frightened.

-- We see a Brittany being chased by the Yeti up the snow hill. It looks convincing at first, but we see the Yeti stop, exhausted, and putting his hands on his hips.

Merry chuckles and tries not to laugh. Dash is humiliated.

DASH (CONT'D)

Missed that clip. It will be on the cutting room floor tomorrow.

-- We see and hear Brittany scream for no apparent reason, clearly outpacing the Yeti.

END MONTAGE

Dash reaches in and grabs the laptop, embarrassed, disappointed, and humiliated. Everyone is dead silent. Ian tries to sound positive.

IAN

The later shots looked sharp and focused with that new lens. Gotta feel good about that.

Dash turns to Caz.

DASH

Thank you, Caz.
(to Ma and Gramps)
Sorry, Ma and Gramps. I'm a failure. I can't save the diner. None of this turned out as I planned.

Everyone hangs their heads, sad.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

Everyone, except Ian, is present at dinner at a long table set in the middle of the diner.

The table is adorned with all manner of Christmas decor from the red tablecloth to the pine-bough centerpiece and red candles. They all are finishing beautiful gourmet salads (the one at Ian's seat is untouched). They all have glasses of eggnog.

Ma raises her glass of eggnog.

MA

Gramps and I are determined to make this the best "Pre-Pre-Holiday Eve" dinner ever, even if it's our last one in this diner.

Everyone raises their eggnogs and cheers, mildly.

Ian enters from the kitchen with a platter of specially prepared hamburgers. Ma, Gramps, and Dash cheer much louder than before.

IAN

Course number two, on a budget: my maple-apple hamburgers.

Caz, Merry, Michael, and Brittany cheer, eagerly waiting to try the burgers.

MA

We look forward to these every year.

They each grab a burger.

GRAMPS

Only night of the year he makes them.

IAN

For you newcomers, we're not allowed to use silverware for the rest of the meal.

DASH

Family tradition.

Caz inspects the burger.

CAZ

Looks delicious. I see a hamburger, and a micro-thin slice of a seared red delicious apple.

Caz takes a bite and lights up with joy. Everyone else does the same. Their faces tell the story.

MICHAEL

Best burger I've had in my life.

GRAMPS

Same here, and I'm much older.

MERRY

Only burger I want to eat the rest of my life, and I plan to be alive a long time.

IAN

What you don't see is a light glaze of one-hundred-percent pure maple syrup on the gluten-free bun.

Ma is suspicious.

MA

Tastes better than last year. What else did you do differently?

Ian is eating his salad.

IAN

(jokes to Ma)

Secret spices taking your taste buds to a new world, and beyond. If I told you, I'd have to kill you.

GRAMPS

Might be worth it if the rest of us get the recipe.

Ma glares at Gramps. Everyone chuckles.

Ma takes another bite and smiles.

MA

Better than all past years combined. What is it?

IAN

If you must know, it's a plant-based burger...

Dash sets his burger down interrupting.

DASH

I'm not eating a vegan...

IAN

Half of it's gone. You woofed it down. Must have liked it!

Everyone chuckles. Merry stands and yells.

MERRY

Best burger in the world! Merry Pre-Pre-Holiday Eve, everyone!

Merry sits.

MICHAEL

Thanks again for letting us crash your party. Wish things would have turned out better.

Caz stands.

CAZ

And they will turn out better!

Ian smiles at Caz. Caz thinks and talks as she paces.

CAZ (CONT'D)

First, you need to generate enough cash to hold off the bank. Couple of thousand dollars should do it until after New Year's if they know you're trying.

IAN

But how?

CAZ

Ian, you'll need to cut a rectangle in the back of that milk truck, and start competing with that awful food truck that works the new ski hill and ice rink. Sell your famous pancakes in the morning, and then your fabulous maple-apple burgers for lunch.

GRAMPS

I've got a generator and electric stovetop and range in my old fifth-wheeler!

CAZ

Dash, you might need to...

DASH

Quit the film business?

CAZ

No, replace the scary film clips with the outtakes -- all the funny things that happened.

Everyone nods in agreement.

CAZ (CONT'D)

Make it a comedy. Do a buzz-real and post it on social media to create a following for the feature.

IAN

Afternoons will be free to tape a few more comical scenes. I'll play the Yeti for you.

BRITTANY

(laughs)

And I'll play the damsel in distress. Get it?

DASH

That could be funny.

MERRY

Can I be the kid who makes friends with the monster after he tries to kill her?

Caz chuckles. Everyone laughs.

MA

What can Gramps and I do?

CAZ

Print a bunch of half-page flyers out with a map to the diner, and the photo I took of Ian's Tequila shrimp dish and prepare for a huge dinner crowd.

MICHAEL

I can help with the convert the moo truck to a chew truck tomorrow morning, and I'll whip out those flyers and spread digital copies over social media...

(beat)

If I had Wi-Fi.

CAZ

Okay, okay. If it's okay with Merry and the Brennans, we'll stay in the cabin tonight, and you can stay at the fancy resort and spa!

Merry nods 'yes,' and Michael stands and dances in delight.

IAN

Our cabins aren't that bad.

Michael goes comedian on the group.

MICHAEL

They put the heap in cheap.

(beat)

They put the rust in rustic.

(beat)

They put the eek in meek, the pall in paltry. Wait, pall is two 'l's.

Michael sees no one is laughing. He smiles.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

The mini in minimal?

No reaction.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

My bad.

DASH

I've got to get to editing.

IAN

I've got to wash the dishes.

Ian exits.

MA

I've got to get to bed.

GRAMPS

Me too. Night, everyone.

Gramps and Ma exit.

Michael starts to exit.

MICHAEL

I'll get my bags and get to the resort before the spa closes. I'm thinking a mani- and a pedi-, massage, nightcap at the bar...

CAZ
 You'll do the flyers and social
 media, and be back here at 6 AM!

MICHAEL
 I'll do the flyers and social
 media, and be back here at 6 AM!

Merry's eyes open widely at her mom.

Caz shakes her head 'no' at Merry, as Michael laughs.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
 Just kidding! I knew that!

CAZ
 And send an email to Herbert and
 tell him we'll be home soon.

Caz sees that Merry has an instant look of anger.

CAZ (CONT'D)
 Okay, forget notifying Herbert. If
 he wants us, he can find us.

Merry smiles. Michael exits. Caz and Merry shake their heads,
 chuckling.

Brittany and Dash begin to exit arm-in-arm. Dash freezes.

DASH
 Who's Herbert?

MERRY
 (sadly)
 Guy my mom is almost engaged to.

Dash looks toward the kitchen.

DASH
 Almost engaged? Huh! Didn't know.
 Well, we got a film to edit.

Dash and Brittany speak to each other as they exit.

DASH (CONT'D)
 Can you help me turn this thing
 into a comedy?

BRITTANY
 I've got a few ideas for new
 scenes.

Brittany smiles confidently as Dash glances back at Caz with a sad face.

EXT. DINER - MORNING

A side panel of the milk truck is already turned into a drop-down counter. Gramps and Dash are inside hooking up the electric stovetop, while Caz and Michael paint the truck to read, "Holly's Woods Catering. Chef Ian Brennan." Merry paints green holly leaves with red berries, all over.

Ian comes out with a kitchen bin full of pancakes. Ma follows with large jugs of maple syrup.

IAN

Looks fabulous everyone. How we coming, Gramps?

GRAMPS

She's ready to go.

Michael bursts into song.

MICHAEL

Come fry me to the moon...

MA

Slopes open soon. Better git!

IAN

Who's coming with me?

Brittany bounces up to Ian with a cheery smile.

BRITTANY

I'll come. If nobody buys anything, we can practice our Romeo and Juliet lines.

Caz looks suspicious at Brittany.

Michael sneers.

MICHAEL

Oooh. Pancake batter up.

CAZ

Merry and I will be along soon. Few things we need to do.

INT. BLACK SEDAN - DAY

Caz races down the forest road. Merry is buckled up in the back.

MERRY

Where we going, Mom?

CAZ

File a permit for Ian's food truck.

MERRY

You're like a guardian angel.

Caz laughs and smiles sweetly in the rearview mirror.

CAZ

First time a lawyer's been called that!

EXT. SNOW HILL - DAY

We see file footage of a busy snow hill, with skiers, snowboarders, and children sledding with their parents.

Off to the side of the parking lot, Ian's food truck is swamped with 20 smiling Customers (various types).

Ian is cooking up more pancakes with a smile, and Brittany passes out the plates. Michael collects the money while eating pancakes, and yells.

MICHAEL

Best pancakes in town. Get 'em while they're hot.

Ian laughs.

IAN

Get 'em before Michael eats them!

Next to the truck, Brittany holds the Yeti costume and is talking to Two Teenage Snowboarders (16), who give Dash a thumbs-up sign.

One of the teens takes the costume, and the two teens run up the snow hill.

Everyone is enjoying the pancakes, syrup, and coffee or hot chocolate.

LATER

Up on the snowboard hill, Dash films the two teens on an X-games-type snow course. One teen screams while being chased by the Yeti, as both do the pipes and jumps on the course. The Yeti eventually wipes out.

LATER

Caz and Merry hold hands and smile on the way to the food truck. They see a Sheriff finishing his pancakes and smiling as he investigates the food truck.

SHERIFF

Now if you can just show me the appropriate permit, I'll...

Caz hands the Sheriff the permit. Ian, Brittany, and Michael are stunned.

CAZ

Temporary permit. Right here.

Ian races out of the truck to kiss Caz's hand.

IAN

I can express no kinder sign of love, than this kind kiss.

Brittany snickers at Ian.

BRITTANY

What was that?!

Ian chuckles, and quips to Brittany.

IAN

Shakespeare, from Cymbeline. You said I should practice my lines.

Caz is slightly embarrassed, but Merry smiles big.

CAZ

Wow! You're good!

Michael is in the food truck panicking.

MICHAEL

We're out of pancakes! Out of pancakes.

Ian takes off his apron.

IAN

Gotta get ready for lunch.

Dash runs up to Ian from the snow hill. He carries a sled, and the Yeti costume.

DASH
Ian, I need a scene from you and Merry, if we can borrow her. Lighting is perfect!

IAN
Let me guess. Yeti on a Sleddy?

Merry jumps for joy.

MERRY
I'm all in! Okay, Mom?

CAZ
I can't stand in the way of your Holly's Woods debut.

Ian laughs, grabs the Yeti costume, and holds Merry's hand as they tromp up the snow hill. Caz hears Merry's laugh.

Dash glances at Caz.

DASH
Come on, Caz, and I'll show you how magic is made.

Caz doesn't take her glance off of Ian and Merry giggling on the way up the snow hill.

CAZ
I'm watching it now.

Caz follows Dash to the camera set-up.

LATER

Ian is in costume, sitting behind Merry on the sled. They wait at the top of the hill for Dash's signal.

Dash is behind the camera on a tripod, doing a last-minute check. He glances at Caz.

DASH
Caz, would you mind standing just a little upslope here to add perspective.

Caz is nicely dressed (not in "snow play clothes") but she walks up the hill a little.

CAZ

Here?

Dash checks the shot.

DASH

Left one step. One more step up.

Caz moves into position.

CAZ

Here?

DASH

Perfect.

Dash raises his hand, waves, and yells.

DASH (CONT'D)

Action!

Merry laughs and cheers as Ian and she sled down the hill.

Ian growls like a monster, making Merry laugh louder.

Ian's sled turns and heads straight toward Caz and Dash.

Caz's eyes open widely, and she has to dive into the snow to avoid being hit.

Merry falls off the sled laughing as Ian sleds right to Caz and dives off on top of her, causing Caz and Ian (as the Yeti) to laugh. Dash yells.

DASH (CONT'D)

Cut!

They all laugh and smile, as Caz remains pinned under the Yeti. Ian rips off the Yeti mask.

IAN

Sorry, Caz.

Merry comes to help Ian lift Caz to her feet.

MERRY

That was great!

Caz dusts off the snow and smiles at Ian.

CAZ

Yes, I suppose it was.

Caz and Ian share a moment, with smiles all around.

Brittany steps between Caz and Ian, glaring at Ian.

BRITTANY

You've got burgers to cook for the lunch crowd! And, how are you coming with your Shakespeare lines?

Ian panics and races to the food truck.

IAN

The burgers! I've got much adu!

INT. DINER - DAY

Ma loads bottles of brand catsup, mustard, and napkins into a cardboard box as two men in gray suits step into the diner: MR. RENNICK, a banker (50), and a Mr. Schofield (40), a real estate appraiser.

MR. RENNICK

Ms. Millie Brennan?

MA

Yes, but everyone calls me, Ma.

Mr. Schofield chuckles and whispers to Mr. Rennick.

MR. SCHOFIELD

Nobody ever evicted their Ma from her home.

Mr. Rennick glares at Mr. Schofield.

MA

What's this about?

MR. RENNICK

I'm Mr. Rennick from the bank, and this is Mr. Schofield, a real estate appraiser.

MA

But the bank gave us more time...

Mr. Schofield takes out a pocket rangefinder and shoots a few readings on the room sizes.

MR. RENNICK

Your cabins across the street are just fine, but the diner here...

MA

What about the diner?

MR. RENNICK

Was re-zoned for residential use only by the county and planning commission, but don't you worry...

MA

Don't worry about losing my diner that's been in the family for generations?

MR. RENNICK

Buyers will be lining up to pay you fair market value so they can build the Holly's Woods Condominium Complex.

MR. SCHOFIELD

Smaller than imagined. Two days, a dozer, and three or four dump trucks.

MR. RENNICK

(consoling Ma)

I'm sure you've gotten the emails we've been sending for the past three years announcing the planning meetings, comment period, and appeal process.

Ma stumbles to a chair and collapses into it.

MA

Emails? We don't have...

MR. RENNICK

Dozens of notices in the daily newspaper.

MA

Oh, dear. We burn the newspapers to start our wood-burning stoves.

(beat)

How... How long do we have?

MR. RENNICK

Ninety days, Ms. Brennan. Relax. We can postpone demolition until then, because that's what kind of people we are.

Mr. Rennick drops a stack of legal papers on Ma's table.

MR. RENNICK (CONT'D)
May want your lawyer to look these
over. We'll be back in ninety days.

Mr. Schofield chuckles and whispers to Mr. Rennick.

MR. SCHOFIELD
Might be Ma's last supper.

Mr. Rennick glares at Mr. Schofield, and pulls him out of the diner.

Ma stares at the stack of legal documents in sadness.

INT. FANCY LOFT APARTMENT - NIGHT

HERBERT INGRAM (40s) is in a tailored suit, staring at a laptop computer on the big desk in his den. He sees a note that Caz left him. It reads: "Needed to get away for a small-town holiday. Join us if you'd like. Interested in buying Holly's Woods Diner and Cabin Rentals."

On his laptop screen, he sees Michael's flyer for a "Tequila-Lime Shrimp Dinner at the Holly's Woods Diner."

Herbert takes out his smartphone and tries to call Caz. No answer.

Herbert reaches for his brand car keys on his desk.

EXT. SNOW HILL - AFTERNOON

Ian, still in an apron, cleans up the outside of the food truck, while Brittany wipes down the counter.

Dash, Caz, and Merry are finishing the last bites of their maple-apple hamburgers, and they smile with delight as a beautiful woman, Ms. GINNY SWANSON, (30s), in a designer ski outfit charges up to them angrily holding a half-eaten hamburger.

GINNY
Excuse me. Excuse me. Do you know
whose recipe this is?

Dash is smitten by the beautiful woman, and her passion.

DASH
Who's asking?

GINNY

Ginny Swanson, food critic for the Times!

Dash, Caz, and Merry have puzzled looks.

GINNY (CONT'D)

From New York, you backwoods Cretans. Who made this sandwich?

MERRY

You didn't like it?

Ginny looks down at Merry with disdain.

GINNY

I love it! That's the problem! Supposed to take one bite, and one bite only!

Ginny takes another bite and is furious with herself.

CAZ

I don't see the problem...

Ginny speaks angrily with a full mouth.

GINNY

One taste doesn't go to the waist!

DASH

(laughs)

I don't see your problem.

Ginny, while chewing, gets in Dash's face.

GINNY

Where did he study? What are his spices? What's his process? What are his motivations?

Dash is dumbfounded and near speechless. He mutters.

DASH

I had mine with catsup.

This angers Ginny more.

GINNY

Catsup? You're a caveman. You deserve roadkill.

Caz and Merry interject on Dash's behalf, while Ginny glares at Dash.

CAZ

We had ours just as he made them.
They were perfect! Again. The hint
of 100% pure Grade-triple-A maple
syrup.

MERRY

The sweet crunch of a sliver of
seared Red Delicious apple.

CAZ

A char-broiled fire-fall of flavors
in the palate with secret spices
taking your taste buds to a new
world.

MERRY

And beyond.

Ginny smiles, happy with the answers, points to Merry?

GINNY

Is she getting paid for this?

CAZ

Not money. There's more magic in
kisses and hugs.

Then, Ginny's anger rises again. She shows Dash the flyer
about the Tequila-Lime-Shrimp dinner at the diner.

GINNY

Tell me where this brother of yours
is, and where I can find this
Holly's Woods diner tonight or I'll
flatten you!

DASH

My brother is right over...
(points)
There.

They all turn to see Ian in the Yeti costume and mask,
kneeling on one knee, practicing his lines in the same boring
monotone to Brittany who looks down unimpressed from inside
the food truck. Dash whips out his phone to capture video of
Ian.

IAN

My bounty is as boundless as the
sea.

Caz chuckles then freezes as Ian turns to glare at her.

Dash whispers to Ginny.

DASH
Cook and fledgling Shakespearian
actor.

Ian turns his attention back to Brittany, who is chewing gum again, and disinterested in Ian's boring monotone.

IAN
My love as deep; the more I give to
thee.

Ginny scoffs and rolls her eyes.

IAN (CONT'D)
The more I have, for both are
infinite.

GINNY
Good thing he can cook.

Merry and Caz walk over to console Ian. Merry pats Ian on the back.

MERRY
(to Ian)
We thought you were great!

Ian hangs his head.

CAZ
On the plus side, a food critic
loved your hamburger.

Caz turns and points to Ginny who is shoving in her hamburger.

IAN
Real food critics don't eat like
that.

CAZ
This one does.

DASH
(to Ginny)
Where ya staying? I could pick you
up for dinner.

Ginny stares at Dash whose eyes are sincerely in love.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

Caz pores over a stack of legal papers, while Ma and Gramps look on.

We can hear pots and pans clang, Ian and Merry giggle and laugh as Ian cooks in the kitchen.

Michael struts in with Brittany on his arm. They gaze into each other's eyes, oblivious to Ma's financial disaster.

Michael sees the serious looks at Caz's table.

MICHAEL

Don't worry! The dinner crowd will be here for the Tequila-Lime Shrimp. They loved the pancakes and burgers! They all got flyers!

CAZ

Zoning change to residential.

MICHAEL

They get grandfathered in, right?

GRAMPS

Should think so?

Caz reviews the papers with a great sadness.

CAZ

Time for appeals passed.

MICHAEL

Appropriate notifications?

MA

Past two years, newspapers and email thingies.

MICHAEL

Uh oh!

Brittany swoons over Michael.

BRITTANY

Michael will save you! He's going to be a marvelous attorney when he finishes law school. What's that take? Six months? A year?

Ian chases a laughing Merry into the diner from the kitchen. He waves a rolling pin while smiling.

IAN
Come back here, Merry. You'll spoil
your dinner?

Merry holds up a Christmas cookie.

MERRY
You ate one first!

Ian sets the rolling pin on the table, riddled with guilt.

IAN
You weren't supposed to tell.

Dash, all smiles, races in with a laptop computer.

DASH
Brittany, you're a comic genius.
And Caz was right. This should have
been a comedy all along!

Dash shows scenes from the movie on his laptop, while the
group gathers around.

BEGIN MONTAGE

-- EXT. SNOW HILL - DAY. The original Yeti thrashes through
the forest with tree branches hitting him in the face.

The group chuckles.

-- INT. CABIN - NIGHT. We see Brittany crumpling up a
newspaper that reads, "New Zoning Approved," before the cabin
fills with smoke. Only Caz sees the news headline. The others
laugh at the cabin filling up with smoke.

-- EXT. SNOW HILL - DAY. The Yeti (Gramps) chases Brittany,
breathing hard, hands on hips, slowing down.

The group chuckles. Dash pats Gramps on the back. They smile.

-- EXT. SNOW HILL - DAY. Brittany goes back to help Gramps
(as Yeti) up a steep part of the hill.

The group howls with laughter.

-- EXT. SNOW HILL - DAY. Ian as the Yeti sleds down the hill
with Merry.

MERRY
That's me! That's me!

-- EXT. SNOW HILL - DAY. Merry falls off the sled, and Ian
crashes into Caz.

Everyone laughs.

-- EXT. SNOW HILL The Yeti (snowboarder) chases a snowboarder over rails and jumps until he wipes out big time. The other snowboarder slowly takes off his helmet and jacket to reveal Brittany in her skinny black dress.

Everyone laughs.

CAZ
This is great!

DASH
Wait 'til you see this.

-- The Yeti (Ian) poorly delivers his Shakespeare lines to Brittany in the food truck. We SEE the group's faces as they watch the video on the laptop; and we HEAR Ian's monotone voice.

IAN (O.S.)
My bounty is as boundless as the
sea.

Ian hears Caz chuckling on the video. He gazes sadly into her eyes.

END MONTAGE

Dash laughs while the others are quietly embarrassed for Ian.

DASH
They are going to eat this up!

Dash sees no one else is laughing. Merry hugs Ian.

Dash closes the laptop.

DASH (CONT'D)
Still a bit of editing and sound
mixing to do, but you get the idea.

MA
I hope it's a success for you,
Dash.

GRAMPS
Brittany, you were wonderful!

Ian slowly heads to the kitchen. Merry and Caz follow.

IAN
I've got shrimp to fry.

As Ian exits, Four Couples (various ages and types) wander into the diner. Each couple holds a flyer advertising the shrimp dinner.

MA

Sit anywhere. Right with you.

Gramps and Ma seat the couples, and bring water, and take orders.

CUT TO:

INT. DINER, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ian cooks Tequila shrimp like a serious professional as Caz and Merry look on with worried looks. Ian looks at them and smiles.

IAN

Hey, no feeling sorry for us. It's our Pre-Holiday Eve family dinner. No better time for a rebirth. I like cooking.

CAZ

But you love acting!

MERRY

And we were pretty funny on the snow sled!

IAN

You were fantastic, Merry. But it will be a while before we see "Shakespeare on Ice."

Caz and Merry chuckle.

CAZ

Or, "A Yeti Grilling Spaghetti."

Ian, Caz, and Merry laugh. The three of them share a moment.

Ian adds the Tequila to the frying pan and it sizzles and looks great!

IAN

Maybe what we do in life isn't as important as who we're with.

CAZ

What can we do to help?

Ian scans the kitchen.

IAN
Caz, you're on the cauliflower
rice.

Ian throws an apron to Caz, and she jumps to her station.

CAZ
You got it, Chef!

IAN
Merry, check with Ma and Gramps and
find out how many dishes we need.

Merry smiles at both Ian and her mom, then speaks as she
exits the kitchen to the diner.

MERRY
I hope I'm paid in cookies, and Mom
is paid in kisses and hugs.

Ian and Caz both raise their eyebrows at that remark. Caz
whispers to Ian, who keeps cooking.

CAZ
Think she made a friend.

IAN
Think I made two.

They smile and cook.

BACK TO:

INT. DINER - NIGHT

Everyone is enjoying salads. Dash sits alone at a table for
two, with two salads, and two large eggnog milkshakes.

The food critic, Ginny Swanson, enters wearing a forest-green
pantsuit and white silk blouse. Dash stands and moves to
greet her.

DASH
Ginny, over here.

Ginny sees his table for two.

GINNY
You were that confident I'd show
up?

Dash smiles. He's smitten.

DASH

Not in myself. In my brother's
cooking.

Ginny sees the milkshakes.

GINNY

First, I always pair my meals with
the finest wine.

DASH

Not tonight. This is my brother's
world-class eggnog milkshake. You
won't be disappointed.

GINNY

Must be a thousand calories!

Merry, giggling, races by the table.

MERRY

And it's okay to be a kid at the
Holidays!

LATER

The patrons enjoy coffee and tea, as Ian and Caz bring out
silver platters of peppermint-chip cookies.

The patrons clap and cheer for Ian, who bows politely, and
gestures to Caz and Merry.

IAN

I had a lot of help from Caz and
Merry, and Ma and Gramps.

Ginny stares at her empty milkshake glass and empty plate, as
Gramps buses the table, and Ma delivers coffee.

Ginny whispers to Ma.

GINNY

I had to unbutton the top button on
my pants.

Ma chuckles and winks at Ginny.

MA

Happens to me every time Ian cooks
for us. Wait 'til you try my great-
grandma's peppermint-chip cookies.

Ian stops by the table, and drops off two cookies, and Ginny
sniffs them.

GINNY

Maybe one... or two. I've got more buttons, ya know. My grandpa would ride his old gray horse two days from the mine to buy those cookies for the family. Their only gifts.

(takes a bite)

I see why they were enough!

Ian smiles.

Caz has an epiphany.

CAZ

That's it! We register the diner on the National Register of Historic Places. Gotta be more than fifty years old.

MA

A hundred.

GRAMPS

Hardly changed at all.

CAZ

Significance?

Ginny holds up a peppermint-chip cookie.

GINNY

The historic diner, and these cookies! What more do you need?

CAZ

A commitment to keep the place as is.

Herbert, Caz's almost-fiancé enters the door and sees Caz staring into Ian's eyes.

Merry sees Herbert but doesn't run to greet him.

Caz finally sees Herbert who points at Caz.

HERBERT

Do you know she wants to buy this place and throw you all out?

Silence.

Then Ian and Merry laugh. Then everyone laughs.

CAZ

Don't be silly, Herbert. I just want to buy one cozy cabin.

Merry runs to hug her mom and Ian, as everyone ignores Herbert, who steps aside to the dark corner by the hi-fi stereo system.

Ma stomps to the door and rips up the "For Sale" sign. Everyone laughs.

The Theatre Director sneaks in the door to observe the scene from the dark corner next to Herbert and the stereo.

GINNY

I could see to it that everybody hears about the great food here.

DASH

It's as good a place as any to film blockbuster movies!

MICHAEL

I could walk the application through the process.

BRITTANY

(to Michael)

I could help my litigious hero.

Everyone turns toward Brittany, amazed by her word choice.

BRITTANY (CONT'D)

I can be a veritable cornucopia of verbosity when I need to be.

The Theatre Director's eyes open widely. He's stunned.

Dash stands to applaud Brittany.

DASH

And a comic genius too. Go figure.

Ian steps over to hug Dash.

IAN

You taught me something, Big Brother. I may be a better cook than I am an actor. And that's okay.

DASH

It's time Ma and Gramps retire.
They've worked long and hard
enough.

IAN

Keeping the family together.
Keeping the diner in business.
Welcoming everyone in the spirit of
the holidays all year 'round.

Dash grabs Ian's shoulders and holds him at arm's length.

DASH

Little Brother, you are multi-
talented. You have a flare for the
three C's: comedy, cooking, and
compassion...

TROUPE DIRECTOR

(interrupts)

But has he been practicing his
lines?

Everyone's eyes turn to see the Troupe Director standing next
to the disgruntled Herbert.

Ian pauses, glares at the Troupe Director and Herbert, then
kneels before Caz. In a perfect Shakespearian tone and pace,
he delivers:

IAN

My bounty is as boundless as the
sea.

Caz swoons. The Troupe Director takes notice. Herbert
freezes.

IAN (CONT'D)

My love as deep; the more I give to
thee, the more I have, for both are
infinite.

The crowd cheers madly. Merry races over and hugs Ian.

MERRY

Now, that was magical!

The Troupe Director has tears in his eyes. He whispers.

TROUPE DIRECTOR

Bravo. Bravo.

Ian stands and hugs Caz. They gaze into each other's eyes for a long moment.

Anxious moments. Merry is especially glued to the scene.

IAN
Special thanks for all your help,
with everything.

CAZ
I was gonna say the same to you?

Merry whispers.

MERRY
Hugs and kisses!

Ian and Caz smile briefly at Merry before kissing her soft and warmly.

The crowd cheers.

Merry hugs Ian and Caz.

The Troupe Director claps loudly, then everyone does.

TROUPE DIRECTOR
Bravo! Bravo! Encore! Encore!
(beat)
So, Ian, Brittany, are you coming
back to our theatre troupe to
become stars on Broadway?

Brittany holds Michael's arm and kisses him on the cheek. She points to Dash.

BRITTANY
I think I'll take my chances with
the greatest producer and director
in Holly's Woods: Mr. Dash Brennen!

Dash bows to Brittany.

DASH
You'll be a star!

The Troupe Director is disappointed but turns to Ian.

TROUPE DIRECTOR
Sir Ian Brennan, will you return
with me to be a star of the stage
in the Big Apple?

Ian gazes into Caz's eyes once again.

IAN

Who would make Merry her favorite
peppermint-chip cookies?

Ian winks at Merry, and kisses Caz again for the cheering crowd.

Ian and Caz take a bow.

Herbert and the Troupe Director exit.

Ian and Caz include Merry for the next bow.

CAZ

(to Ma)

Think I can still buy that cute
little cabin across the street?

MA

I think you should buy that cute
little cabin across the street.

Caz glares briefly at Merry, then smiles.

MA (CONT'D)

It is Holly's Woods ending, ya
know.

Ma hugs Gramps and winks at Merry, who smiles at Caz.

The crowd cheers again.

FADE OUT.

THE END