

CHRISTMAS IN THE SUBURBS

Written by

Nathan Illsley

nillsley@comcast.net
508-269-4607

INT. AIRPORT - DAY

The entire place is teeming with travelers frantically running about, navigating the long lines and trying to zig-zag their way through the crowd to get to their gate.

The whole airport is decked out in Christmas decorations - snowflakes, tinsel, oversized ornaments hanging from the ceiling, and traditional Christmas music playing over the PA.

Amongst the hustle and bustle, one man in particular, mid NICK COEN, 30s, steadily walks towards an exit, a cell phone up to his ear and a small carryon bag around his shoulder.

NICK

I know, Mom, probably next year...
I know, it's not that I don't want to, it's just that we promised Vivian's family we'd do it with her family this year. They're flying in from San Francisco so we figured it'd just be easier for us to host than to travel.

EXT. AIRPORT - MOMENTS LATER

Nick emerges from the airport and walks towards a taxi stand, still on his phone.

NICK

Fine, I promise, I promise, next year I will be there.

He approaches a cab, hands his bag to the TAXI DRIVER, and gets in the back.

INT. CAB - CONTINUOUS

NICK

Yes, I know... Okay, tell Dad I said Merry Christmas.

The driver gets in and looks back to Nick. He puts a finger up to signal he needs a second.

NICK (CONT'D)

I love you too... Okay... okay...

He rolls his eyes.

NICK (CONT'D)
Okay... Mom, I... Okay, gotta go
now... Okay, bye.

He hangs up the phone and rolls his eyes.

NICK (CONT'D)
Sorry about that. I need to go to
seventeen fourteen Pringle Street
in Mission Hills.

TAXI DRIVER
Mission hills, you got it boss.

The cab pulls away.

INT. CAB - MOMENTS LATER

The taxi drives along the highway.

TAXI DRIVER
So, you here for the holidays?

NICK
No, actually just getting back from
a work trip.

TAXI DRIVER
Very nice. Spending the holidays at
home?

NICK
Yes, thankfully. Just me and my
fiancé. She has family coming in
for a day but that's it. Mostly
just a nice, relaxing week.

TAXI DRIVER
I don't blame you, low key is the
way to go.

A beat.

TAXI DRIVER (CONT'D)
You said you were on a work trip?

NICK
I was. Was in LA for a couple days.

TAXI DRIVER
Very cool. What do you do?

NICK
I'm a writer.

The driver perks up.

TAXI DRIVER
No way! Like books?

NICK
Movies actually.

TAXI DRIVER
Get outta here! I love movies! Hey,
I got an idea for a movie.

Nick looks annoyed - he's heard this before.

NICK
You do...

TAXI DRIVER
Yeah, I've been thinking about it
for a while actually, I think it
could be awesome. It's about a
secret agent who goes undercover as
a cab driver. Cool right!?

NICK
Uh... yeah, that's something.

TAXI DRIVER
So, you know, he beats all the bad
guys and this really beautiful
dispatcher ends up falling for him,
you know? And then, he, uh, you
know he saves the whole world.
Pretty sweet idea, isn't it!

NICK
That's definitely interesting.

The driver laughs.

TAXI DRIVER
Hey, I better not see that in the
theatre anytime soon or I'll come
looking for ya!

Nick fakes a laugh.

TAXI DRIVER (CONT'D)
Nah, I'm just kidding with you! So,
what kinda movies you write?
Anything I mighta seen?

NICK

Um... Maybe... have you seen The Senator?

Again, the driver perks up.

TAXI DRIVER

Get outta here! You worked on The Senator?

NICK

I did.

TAXI DRIVER

That won all those awards! Holy cow, I'm driving a celebrity right now!

Nick smiles. He's clearly flattered.

NICK

It's not that big of a deal. You know I always try...

TAXI DRIVER

(interrupts)

Hey didn't you make that other one afterwards? Welcome to Alcatraz? That was it, wasn't it?

Nick apprehensively replies.

NICK

Yeah, it was.

TAXI DRIVER

Wow, what a stinker that was, huh?

Nick looks annoyed as the driver laughs.

TAXI DRIVER (CONT'D)

Hundred years in the future and they reopen the prison as a cyber jail only to find out it's haunted. Man, that really got torn apart.

NICK

You know, not everyone is going to agree on a movie.

TAXI DRIVER

Yeah, but that thing got DESTROYED! I don't think I know anyone who liked it.

(MORE)

TAXI DRIVER (CONT'D)
I guess it's like they say, right?
The first one is easy, it's the
SECOND one that's hard.

NICK
Oh, they say that, do they? All
your screenwriter friends?

The driver chuckles to himself.

TAXI DRIVER
I should have been a writer, man. I
got you beat too, I already HAVE my
second blockbuster idea too. You
wanna abut hear it?

Nick groans.

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - DAY

Nick runs from the cab to his house.

INT. NICK'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

VIVIAN, 30s, sits at the kitchen table drinking a cup of
coffee.

Nick runs in and immediately gives her a hug. She appears
thrown off by the whole thing and not very affectionate.

NICK
Hey sweetie! I missed you!

VIVIAN
Oh, uh. Thanks. How was the flight?

NICK
Oh, it was fine, it was a short
one. I just kept thinking about how
you were on the other end and it
went by much faster!

He gives her another kiss, but again, she doesn't seem super
into it. He sits down at the table.

NICK (CONT'D)
So, how was your week, baby? Did
you miss me too?

Nick seems happily oblivious to her body language.

VIVIAN
Nick... I think we need to talk.

NICK
Great! About what?

He still isn't picking up on it.

VIVIAN
So... as you know, I love you very
much.

NICK
And I love you too sweetie pie!

She sighs.

VIVIAN
I just... I feel like we're going
in different directions here.

Finally, he seems to pick up on it. He also looks to the side
and sees that there are several suitcases sitting by the
door.

NICK
Are you... going somewhere?

VIVIAN
I just feel like we're different
people. And it's been so fast,
we've only known each other for a
year and we're already engaged.

NICK
Viv... are you... breaking up with
me?

She doesn't respond for a moment, trying not to cry.

NICK (CONT'D)
Why, what did I do?

VIVIAN
You didn't do anything. I just
think we're after different things.
And I think we rushed into this.

NICK
Please tell me you're joking... I
love you.

VIVIAN

I'm sorry, Nick. I know this is hard, but I just can't do this right now.

She gets up and walks out of the room, leaving a stunned Nick behind.

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - DAY

Nick sits on the front steps with his head in his hands. He removes his cell phone from his pocket, presses a couple of buttons and puts it to his ear.

NICK

Mom? Hey, uh... my plans changed... I can, uh... I can come home for Christmas.

I/E. SUBURBAN TOWN - DAY

Nick sits in the back of a town car as it drives through a small, homey-looking town, Christmas music blaring.

We pass a sign that says "Welcome to Garland!" And Nick shakes his head.

The town is the kind of place where everyone has lived in the same family house for a few decades and you can't go to the store without running into 20 people you know.

It has the quintessential small town vibe - mom & pop stores, diners, corner stores, and every single house is decked out in Christmas decorations.

After a while, the car pulls into Nick's parents' driveway.

EXT. NICK'S PARENTS' HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Nick gets out of the car and looks at the house.

On the front steps is a large snowman, which has been clothed in a Red Sox hat and a Patriots jersey. On the front lawn, there are 3 wooden reindeer, also wearing cute outfits. There is a flag pole coming off the house as well, with a flag reading "Santa, Stop Here!"

Nick looks across the street where there is a For-Sale sign on the front lawn.

He looks back to his parents' house and sighs.

NICK

Welp... here we go.

He walks up to the front door and knocks. After a few moments, his mother, CARRIE, 60s, answers.

CARRIE

Yay! Nicky's home!

She gives him a huge hug, clearly elated to see him.

CARRIE (CONT'D)

Ah, we're so glad you're home.

NICK

Hey, mom.

Hey separate.

CARRIE

Come inside, I have some food on the stove.

She runs back in and he follows.

INT. NICK'S PARENTS' HOUSE - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Nick drags his luggage inside while Carrie stands at the stove, a TON of food on the over in various pots and pans.

CARRIE

Sorry, I didn't want this to burn. I've been cooking all day for tomorrow. Your sister is getting here fairly early so I figured we'd have a big meal to celebrate the four of us being in the same place at the same time.

NICK

Mom, you don't need to go overboard, I'm fine with anything.

CARRIE

I know, but you haven't come the last few Christmases so I wanted to make this one extra special! Plus, I'm making all the batter for my cookies and goodies for the Christmas on the Common bake sale so I can just pop them in the oven a couple hours before it kicks off.

(MORE)

CARRIE (CONT'D)

That way everything will be warm
and gooey when they arrive!

He smiles.

NICK

Well, I'm sure whatever you make
it'll be great... Hey, are the
Henry's selling their house?

CARRIE

Finally. They've been talking about
it for five years now but they just
put it on the market. They're
moving to Florida as soon as they
can. They already bought a house
down there, so as soon as this one
goes off the market, they're
leaving on a jetplane.

NICK

Wow, I never thought that'd
happen... Where's dad?

CARRIE

Take a wild guess.

NICK

Living room?

CARRIE

That's correct. He's in his command
center watching movies and playing
some game on his iPad.

Nick laughs.

NICK

Sounds about right. How's he doing
with retirement?

CARRIE

Nick, you have no idea. He's has
EMBRACED it like you would not
believe. He calls me at work forty
times a day to tell me what the
cats are doing, to tell me about
the car that was just speeding down
the street. He makes lists all day,
look.

She picks up a piece of paper from the counter and hands it
to him. She speaks with a loving criticism.

CARRIE (CONT'D)

This one is a list of his favorite kinds of pasta. Not pasta dishes, kinds of pasta. Spaghetti, linguine, elbow noodles. He wants to keep it here so that "it's handy when we need it."

NICK

What does that mean?

CARRIE

We don't ask questions like that.

Nick laughs.

NICK

Wow, he's really making the most of his time, huh?

CARRIE

His new thing is that he collects Halloween ornaments year round. And he refuses to let me take down some of them. His new project is buying skeleton animals and naming all of them. We still have maybe fifteen of them scattered through the house.

She points to a skeleton bat hanging above the sink.

CARRIE (CONT'D)

That's Barry the Bat.

Nick laughs.

CARRIE (CONT'D)

Go talk to him. He'll tell you ALL about the things he's been working on. He's proud of himself.

INT. NICK'S PARENTS' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

MARTY, 60s, sits on the couch playing a game on his iPad. He has stacks of DVDs and BluRays next to him, as well as a stash of granola bars and candy. This is truly his command center.

Nick walks in, laughs to himself and shakes his head.

NICK

Hey, dad.

Marty jumps and looks over to Nick.

MARTY

Oh! Hold on, I gotta... one sec...

He looks back to his iPad and tries to finish his game.

MARTY (CONT'D)

Just a...

He loses whatever game he was playing.

MARTY (CONT'D)

Darn. I got distracted. That's okay, I can pick this up later.

He sets down his iPad and stands up.

MARTY (CONT'D)

How was the trip?

NICK

Oh, it was easy. Watched a couple movies on the way over.

MARTY

Ah, movie inspiration? Did you get any writing done?

Nick shakes his head.

NICK

No, not this time. I'm having a little bit of a writer's block to be honest.

MARTY

Ah, that's okay. You've always been full of ideas so I'm sure something will come to you soon. I remember even when you were a kid, you and your friends would be running around the back yard making movies. What was that one about the kid who gets into Harvard when he's only twelve?

Nick laughs.

NICK

Smarty Pants.

Marty laughs.

MARTY

That was it! You always had idea popping through your head, so I know you'll have another hit soon. You just have to let it come to you. Maybe a few days in the burbs away from the Hollywood is just what you need to get the juices flowing!

Nick nods.

NICK

Yeah, maybe.

Marty smiles.

MARTY

Oh, let me show you what I just started doing.

Marty retrieves a three foot tall plastic alien from the other side of the room.

MARTY (CONT'D)

I named him Gerry like your college roommate. I got one of those Twitters now, so I've been taking pictures of him doing different things and sending it out. Yesterday he wore a Hawaiian shirt and sunglasses.

Nick nods, feigning interest. Marty looks excited.

MARTY (CONT'D)

It got four likes!

Nick laughs.

NICK

That's great, dad.

MARTY

I'll show you more later, I have a list of things I need to tell you all about.

NICK

Well, I'll be here for a little while so I'm sure we'll be able to go over all of it.

MARTY

How long are you staying you think?

Nick shrugs.

NICK

Open ended. I figured at least the week.

MARTY

Stay as long as you want, your room is still your room you know. I know it might not be as exciting here as it is in the big city but you're always welcome to stay with us.

NICK

Thanks, dad, I'll play it by ear.

A beat.

MARTY

Mom... told me about Vivian.

Nick sighs.

NICK

Yeah... I don't really want to get into it yet if that's okay.

MARTY

That's fine, we don't need to talk about it yet... I just want you to know I'm here for you if you need it... and that I never liked her.

Nick laughs.

NICK

Thanks, Dad.

INT. NICK'S ROOM - LATER

Nick walks into his childhood bedroom and looks around, followed by Carrie.

NICK

Jeeze, you guys really haven't changed anything. It's like a time capsule.

He's right - the wallpaper and border is all goofy kid stuff, he has posters and miscellaneous sports awards all over the walls, and a few stuffed animals positioned on his twin bed's headboard.

CARRIE

It's YOUR room, Nicky, I've always said that. I don't want to change anything unless you tell me to.

NICK

You don't need my permissions to get rid of some of this stuff, mom. You can do what you want.

CARRIE

No, I don't want to touch anything without you here. You never know what's going to mean something to you or what you might want to keep.

He plops his suitcase on the bed and unzips it.

CARRIE (CONT'D)

You know... maybe if you came home more than once every couple years you'd be able to move some of this yourself.

NICK

I know, mom, I'm sorry. Please don't give me the guilt trip today, I'm just trying to stay above water mentally right now.

She nods.

CARRIE

Fine, fine. I'll wait a couple days, THEN I'll make you feel bad.

Nick chuckles.

CARRIE (CONT'D)

Alright, well, feel free to clean off your desk if you need a place to write or anything. Your father's been saving you things to read.

Nick picks up a pad of paper sitting on his desk with a bunch of hand-written notes, as well as some newspaper clippings.

NICK

What is all this?

CARRIE

I think your father still thinks
one day you'll move back to
Garland, so he keeps clipping
everything from the local paper to
make sure you're updated.

Nick smiles and shakes his head as he starts to look through
the clips.

Carrie starts to leave but remembers something and comes
back.

CARRIE (CONT'D)

Oh, when you come back downstairs I
need you to bring a pie over to
Terry next door.

NICK

Yeah, sure, no problem.

EXT. NICK'S - PARENTS' HOUSE - DAY

Nick exits holding a pie. He walks across his front lawn into
the neighbor's yard, right across the grass.

EXT. TERRY'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Nick rings the doorbell.

After a few moments, MEGAN, 30s, comes to the door. She looks
surprised but exceedingly pleased to see him.

MEGAN

Oh, my gosh! Nick Coen as I live
and breathe.

NICK

Megan? Wow, I didn't know you were
back.

She laughs.

MEGAN

Why would you, doofus?

Nick rolls his eyes and they hug.

NICK

Here, pie for your mom. It's
apple... or blueberry... or
pumpkin, maybe.

(MORE)

NICK (CONT'D)

I honestly have no idea, but it's probably good if my mom baked it.

She takes it.

MEGAN

Your mom makes the best pies. That's the highlight of Christmas on the Common every year, her pies.

NICK

She's actually making the batter for the bake sale right now.

MEGAN

That's exciting! She Has the best selling booth at the Christmas charity fundraiser every year. And she'll never admit it, but everyone who participates competes with each other. All the money they raise goes to charity, but they all still care about bragging rights.

Nick laughs.

NICK

I guess that makes sense.

MEGAN

So, what are you doing back, Mister Hollywood? We missed you, we haven't seen you in forever. Got some big movie filming in the burbs or something?

He laughs.

NICK

No, no... Just back for the holidays. It's been a while, so I thought it'd be nice to spend it home for a change.

MEGAN

Well, we are glad to have you. It's not every day a celebrity rolls through.

He rolls his eyes and brushes her off.

NICK

So, what about you? How long are you here for?

She smiles.

MEGAN

Believe it or not, I actually live
in town.

Nick's eyes widen.

NICK

Get out! That's great!

She shrugs, a little awkward.

MEGAN

Yeah, I guess so. I don't know, I
always said growing up that as soon
as I hit college I'd be gone,
but... I guess Garland just called
me back!

NICK

That's so fun, you're a townie!

She rolls her eyes.

MEGAN

Through and through I guess. I'm
actually a teacher here in town.

NICK

No way.

MEGAN

Yup, fourth grade.

NICK

Wow, they must love you. I would
have killed to have you as a
teacher instead of Mrs. Robinson.
She was evil.

Megan laughs.

MEGAN

Yeah, it definitely wasn't you at
ALL.

Nick laughs.

NICK

Well, either way, that's great, I'm
glad you're happy. Your mom must
love having you around.

She smirks.

MEGAN

Yeah, believe it or not, parents like it when you see them more than once a year.

NICK

Jeeze, you guys are brutal about that. I've been getting the guilt trip since I landed.

She jokingly punches him in the shoulder.

MEGAN

I'm kidding... It's good to see you. How long are you staying?

He shrugs.

NICK

Tee bee dee. Just gonna kind of play it by ear and stay as long as I can tolerate the suburbs.

She rolls her eyes.

MEGAN

You're too Hollywood to grace us with your presence more than a couple days? Need to get back to the Walk of Fame?

He laughs.

NICK

No, no... just don't know what my plans are yet.

She nods.

MEGAN

Well, either way, we should catch up and grab a drink or something before you leave.

The lightbulb goes off in her head.

MEGAN (CONT'D)

Oh! You should come to Castaway's tomorrow night! It's the Christmas Eve-Eve karaoke night!

Nick laughs.

NICK
That's still going on?

MEGAN
Of course it is! It's a Garland
town tradition.

He shakes his head with a smile on his face.

NICK
I can't believe that's still a
thing.

MEGAN
You should seriously swing through.
There's still a ton of townies and
people back for the holidays. It'll
be fun, you should really go.

NICK
Maybe... I'll think about it.

MEGAN
You still have the same cell phone
number?

NICK
I do.

She smiles.

MEGAN
I'll text you before I go. I better
see you there.

She gives him a fake evil eye.

INT. NICK'S PARENTS' HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Nick walks back inside as Carrie continues to cook.

CARRIE
Was Terry home?

NICK
Didn't see her, but I gave the pie
to Megan.

CARRIE

Oh, that's great. She's been around all the time lately since she moved back so I figured she might be there. That must have been nice, when was the last time you saw her?

NICK

It's been a while.

CARRIE

You know, in high school we always thought you two were going to date. College too actually, you saw a lot of each other during the summers. We all took bets on when it would happen.

Nick laughs.

NICK

Yes, mom, I remember. You and Terry told us that every time you had a couple glasses of wine in you.

She smiles.

CARRIE

I was just being honest! I don't think anyone would have been opposed to that. You're both so similar and always got along so well... How come that never happened?

Nick rolls his eyes.

NICK

Because sometimes people are just friends and that works. I don't know, we just never saw each other like that.

She scoffs.

CARRIE

Sure you didn't.

Nick shakes his head.

NICK

Keep dreaming.

CARRIE
 Whatever you say, Nick. Whatever
 you say.

INT. NICK'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nick lays awake in his twin bed with the lights off, looking up. On the ceiling are letters "NC" written in glow-in-the-dark stars.

After a few moments, his cell phone, plugged in on a bedside table, lights up. He picks it up and sees that Vivian is calling him.

He sighs and ignores the call before rolling over in bed with his back turned to it.

INT. NICK'S PARENTS' HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Nick walks into the kitchen where Carrie is once again whipping a whole slew of batters and cookie doughs.

CARRIE
 There he is! You really slept in.

NICK
 It's only nine, how long have you
 been cooking?

CARRIE
 Oh, just a few hours, it's fine.

His eyes widen.

NICK
 A few hours?

CARRIE
 You want breakfast?

NICK
 Um... I can make it myself when
 you're done, don't...

She slides an omelette from one of her frying pans onto a plate and hands it to him in one fluid motion. She's in the zone.

CARRIE
 Is a bacon and cheese omelette
 okay?

Nick laughs.

NICK

Yeah, it's perfect. How did you...

CARRIE

Oh, it's nothing, I heard you walking around upstairs so I tossed this on. Let me know if you want anything else.

She goes back to cooking something else without missing a beat

NICK

Thanks, mom. Hey, after I finish eating, I was thinking of heading into town to explore for a little while. I thought I might grab a coffee or something too. Is Johnny D's still open?

She scoffs.

CARRIE

Is that a real question? That coffee shop is an absolute staple of the town. It'll never close as long as Johnny is alive... and even then, I think his ghost would come back and man the register.

Nick laughs.

NICK

Do you need me to do anything around the house before I go?

CARRIE

No, no, go have fun. I have a whole process for making batter and it's going to take a little while anyways, so the fewer cooks in the kitchen, the better!

Nick smiles.

NICK

You're a cookie machine, mom.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Nick walks down the sidewalk past a number of other PEOPLE who are also out and about.

Every shop we pass by is covered in Christmas-themed decorations, and everyone has a smile on their face. This is a happy, festive town.

Nick enters Johnny D's, a small store covered with coffee-themed decor.

INT. JOHNNY D'S - MOMENTS LATER

Nick enters and the bell dings behind him. The place is PACKED with people, all sitting at tables drinking coffee out of ceramic mugs.

Nick approaches the counter where there is one other guy, LUKE FROST, 30s, in front of him. Luke is very slim and handsome.

Behind the counter is JOHNNY D, 60s, wearing a flannel shirt tucked into his jeans, which are held up by suspenders, and he has on a Santa hat.

JOHNNY D

So it's all good?

LUKE

We should be all set. All it needed was a new spark plug, so I replaced it and it's running fine.

JOHNNY D

Thanks, Luke, you're the best. What do I owe ya?

Luke brushes him off.

LUKE

Nothing at all. I had some extras in the tow truck, so don't even worry about it.

JOHNNY D

You're a good guy. We need more people like you here.

LUKE

Think nothing of it. Consider it a Christmas gift.

Johnny D slides him a coffee.

JOHNNY D
Well, in that case, consider this
one on the house.

Luke laughs.

LUKE
Thanks, Johnny.

Luke turns around and casually nods to Nick, but then double
takes as he realizes who it is.

LUKE (CONT'D)
Woah! Nick Coen?

Nick clearly doesn't recognize him.

NICK
Um...

LUKE
Luke! Luke Frost!

Nick's jaw drops.

NICK
Oh, my gosh, get out of here!

Luke gives him a huge hand shake.

NICK (CONT'D)
I didn't even recognize you, you
look fantastic!

Luke laughs.

LUKE
I appreciate that. All diet and
exercise.

NICK
You must have lost...

LUKE
Eighty three pounds.

NICK
Eighty three pounds!?

Luke shrugs.

LUKE

Well, depending on the day. If you see me at Christmas on the Common after I spend my whole salary on your mom's chocolate chip cookies, it might be a different story.

Nick laughs.

LUKE (CONT'D)

So what are you doing back in Garland, man? I haven't seen you in years.

NICK

You know, just... home for the holidays. Seeing the family and everything.

LUKE

That's awesome. I'm glad you can still make town for us small town folk after making it big.

Nick laughs, a little uncomfortable.

NICK

I've hardly made it big. Just got lucky.

Luke scoffs.

LUKE

Call it what you want, you're our hometown here. Look, Johnny even has a picture of you on the wall.

Nick looks to where Luke is pointing and there indeed is a photo of Nick on the wall along with a framed poster for a movie called "The Senator."

Nick purses his lips.

NICK

Welp, that's embarrassing. I was wondering why my mom kept asking for those.

LUKE

No, not at all. We're all proud of you, man. You did it, you followed your dream and you made something you should be proud of.

Nick sighs.

NICK
Yeah, followed by an absolute bomb.

LUKE
That doesn't matter. You still did something you should be proud of and we're all happy for you.

Nick smiles.

NICK
Thanks.

LUKE
You working on anything new?

NICK
No, not right now. Taking a break to recharge the batteries.

LUKE
Right on. Hey, are you gonna be around a few days?

NICK
Yeah, it's sort of open-ended when I'll be out of here, but at least a few days.

LUKE
Awesome, well, maybe I'll see you around. You coming to Castaways for karaoke?

Nick laughs.

NICK
I'm thinking about it.

LUKE
Sounds good, man. Maybe I'll see you there. Merry Christmas, Nick.

NICK
Yeah, you too, bud.

Luke smacks Nick on the back and leaves.

Nick approaches Johnny D at the counter.

NICK (CONT'D)
Can I just get a...

JOHNNY D
Medium decaf with low-fat milk and
no sugar.

He slides a coffee over to Nick, who smiles and laughs.

NICK
Wow, that's impressive.

JOHNNY D
I never forget an order.

NICK
I guess not! How much do I owe you?

JOHNNY D
Nothing. Celebrities drink for free
here.

Johnny winks at Nick.

EXT. JOHNNY D'S - DAY

Nick exits the coffee shop and walks onto the street. Almost immediately, he sees Megan walking by.

NICK
Hey! Megan!

She stops.

MEGAN
Oh, hey Nick! What are you up to?

NICK
Just getting my caffeine fix from
Johnny D.

She gives him a raised eyebrow.

MEGAN
I seem to recall you only drinking
decaf.

Nick laughs.

NICK
Yeah, I'm still doing that.

She rolls her eyes.

MEGAN
You're so weird.

NICK

Oh, whatever. What are you up to?

MEGAN

Going to see if Big Dan has any Christmas trees left.

NICK

Really? You're a little late to the game, aren't you?

MEGAN

It's for my mom, actually. She swore up and down that she wanted to get a fake one this year but now that it's up, she wants a real one. Said it doesn't have the same spirit.

Nick laughs.

NICK

That sounds like her.

MEGAN

What are you up to?

NICK

Not a lot, just exploring town a little bit. Seeing what's changed in the past few years.

MEGAN

Why don't you come pick out a tree with me?

Nick looks thrown off.

NICK

Oh, uh...

MEGAN

No pressure, though. You're probably busy and everything.

A beat.

NICK

No, you know what, I'd love to go with you.

MEGAN

Yeah?

NICK

Yeah, let's do it. Might as well do as many Christmas things as I can when I'm here, right?

She smiles.

EXT. BIG DAN'S CHRISTMAS FARM - DAY

Megan and Nick walk through a row of trees, inspecting a few as they go.

MEGAN

So, give me some more life details. What have you been up to?

NICK

What do you want to know? I'm not really writing anything right now, so...

MEGAN

(interrupts)

No, no, no, I don't mean movie stuff, I mean personal stuff. The Hollywood Nick is great and all, but I still like humble, small town Nick. I want to know what he's up to.

Nick smiles and laughs.

NICK

Well, what do you want to know? I'm an open book, ask away.

MEGAN

Alright, alright. Okay, first question, single or married?

Nick laughs.

NICK

Single.

She looks surprised.

MEGAN

Really? No Mrs. Coen?

NICK

Nope. RECENTLY single actually.

MEGAN

Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't...

He waves her off.

NICK

No, it's fine. Sometimes things just don't work the way you think they will.

A beat.

MEGAN

You... want to talk about it?

NICK

Nothing really to talk about. We were together about a year, I think we probably moved too fast, and then it ended.

MEGAN

That's it?

NICK

That's it. I wish there was some big catalyst that led to it, but it's really pretty boring. No cheating, no big break of trust, no family meddling... it just didn't work. Sometimes life isn't as exciting as the movies I guess.

She nods.

NICK (CONT'D)

So, what about you? No ring yet?

She laughs.

MEGAN

Not yet. Still waiting for Mister Right.

NICK

Well, I'm sure you'll find him soon enough.

She scoffs.

MEGAN

Yeah, we'll see. I've been like man-repellant up to this point.

Nick looks shocked.

NICK
That's hard to believe. Growing up
you were the "it" girl.

She laughs and brushes him off.

MEGAN
Yeah, right.

NICK
You absolutely were! I had such a
crush on you in high school.

She looks thrown off.

MEGAN
Seriously?

NICK
Oh, yeah.

MEGAN
Why didn't you ever say anything!?

He shrugs.

NICK
I don't know. Like I said, you were
the "it" girl. I was the theatre
nerd. It was amazing we were
friends at all, I didn't want to
complicate things.

She smiles and rolls her eyes.

MEGAN
You worry too much, Nicky. You have
to stop worrying about what people
will think and just say how you
feel.

He smirks.

NICK
I'm trying to get better at it.

They look at each other, smiling for a few moments.

Finally, BIG DAN, 50s, approaches, dressed like a lumberjack.

BIG DAN
Hey there, kids! See anything you
like so far?

Megan points to one tree in particular.

MEGAN
I was thinking maybe this one? What
do you think?

Nick gives her a nod of approval.

NICK
Looks really nice.

BIG DAN
Perfect, then it's settled! I'll
grab my saw and we'll get this
loaded into your car! First tree
for you two?

NICK
First tree?

BIG DAN
I mean first tree as a married
couple? You two have that just-
married glow, so I figured it was
your first time picking out a tree
together.

Nick laughs, a little awkward.

NICK
No, we're...

MEGAN
(interrupts)
As a matter of fact, it is!

She grabs Nick by the arm. He's thrown off at first, but soon
plays along.

MEGAN (CONT'D)
My one and only.

NICK
My ball and chain.

They both laugh, exaggerating their movements. Big Dan smiles
back.

BIG DAN

Well then I have something extra special for you.

He reaches into his pocket and pulls out a heart-shaped ornament made out of two candy canes.

BIG DAN (CONT'D)

This is my gift to newlyweds. Christmas is such a special time of year for love. Whether it be family, friends, or a spouse, Christmas is a time for you to think about what's really important and to spend time with the ones who really matter.

He hands the ornament to Megan. She and Nick both seem touched.

BIG DAN (CONT'D)

Make sure that's the first ornament you put on your tree every year and it'll ensure three hundred and sixty five days of happiness.

INT. TERRY'S HOUSE - DAY

The tree is now set up and decorated with ribbons, lights and ornaments.

TERRY, 60s, along with Megan and Nick stand in front of the tree admiring it.

TERRY

Thank you both so much!

MEGAN

This beats a tree out of a box, huh?

TERRY

Oh, it's beautiful. There's just something so special about having a real tree. It's just a different smell and a better atmosphere with this. You've both made my day.

NICK

I'm glad you like it.

TERRY

I love it! I'm so glad you were there, I don't know if Megan would have been able to carry it on her own.

They all laugh.

NICK

Well, I better head home. My sister was coming down today and I see her car in the yard.

TERRY

Oh, of course, don't let me keep you. It's so nice seeing you Nick.

She gives him a hug.

MEGAN

I'll see you at karaoke tonight, right?

Nick smiles.

NICK

I think you might.

She smiles.

MEGAN

Alright, good. Thanks again, Nick.

INT. NICK'S PARENTS' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Nick walks in where KATELYN, early 30s, is sitting on the couch with Carrie and Marty.

KATELYN

Work has been good, sorry I was late, I had a big presentation yesterday.

She sees Nick she immediately jumps up and gives him a huge hug.

KATELYN (CONT'D)

Nicky!

He gives her a tight hug right back.

NICK
Katelyn! Ah, it's so good to see
you!

KATELYN
You too, I missed you, big bro!

Carrie and Marty smile.

NICK
How was the drive?

KATELYN
It was nothing, there was nobody on
the road. My car isn't as fast as
Santa's slay, but it gets the job
done.

Everyone laughs.

From another room, we hear a timer go off. Carrie perks up.

CARRIE
That's the oven! Marty, help me out
with this.

Carrie pops up and leaves the room.

Marty rolls his eyes to Nick and Katelyn as he follows.

MARTY
I'm the eternal sous chef.

Katelyn laughs.

NICK
So, how are you doing, how's
everything?

KATELYN
I'M fine. How are YOU doing?

NICK
I'm doing fine. Yeah, everything's
good.

She raises an eyebrow.

KATELYN
Nicky... I'm not mom and dad, I'm
your sister. Be honest with me, how
are you doing?

Nick sighs.

NICK

I'm doing okay. It comes and goes to be honest. But I've been distracting myself and trying to keep myself busy since everything happened, so I really am doing okay.

She smiles.

KATELYN

Good, I'm glad. Ugh, I'm so sorry about everything.

Nick shrugs.

NICK

Hey, that's life, I guess.

KATELYN

I guess so. Have you heard from Vivian at all?

NICK

She tried calling me last night actually, but I didn't answer.

KATELYN

Good! Don't give her the satisfaction. She's going to come crawling back to you, mark my words. You're a great catch, and I'm not just saying that because I have to, I mean it.

Nick smiles.

NICK

Thanks Kate.

KATELYN

How have mom and dad been? Have they been grilling you with questions about this since you got back?

NICK

Not really, actually. They've more been guilt tripping me about not coming home more often.

Katelyn shrugs and raises her eyebrows, sarcastically.

KATELYN

Well! I mean they DO have a point
this time.

Nick rolls his eyes.

KATELYN (CONT'D)

I'm just messing with you, Nicky. I
won't layer it on too much, I
promise.

She winks at him.

NICK

So what about you? How's your love
life?

She scoffs.

KATELYN

What love life! I'm going to be
single until the day I die, I
already know it.

NICK

What happened to that guy you were
seeing? The advertising guy? What
was his name?

KATELYN

Jamie?

NICK

Jamie! What happened with him?

KATELYN

Well, we only went on four dates
and then he never called me again.
And by the way, that was almost six
months ago.

Nick winces, awkward.

NICK

Ugh, I'm sorry. I didn't realize it
was that long ago.

KATELYN

Well it was. And that's the last
date that I've been on. There's
almost eight billion people on the
planet, and I'm the only one with
no soulmate.

NICK

Oh, don't say that. You're just waiting for the right guy.

She laughs and pats him on the shoulder.

KATELYN

I appreciate you saying that, but that just isn't the case at all. I just never have the time to date or dive into a relationship. I feel like I'm married to my job more than anything. Every guy I meet just wants a girl who'll cook, and clean, and take care of the house, but that's just not me. When I do something I give it one hundred percent, and right now my career is what I'm focusing on.

Nick nods.

NICK

Unfortunately, I know the feeling all too well. Why do you think I never come home? It's not that I don't want to, I've just been so consumed with work that it's tough to focus on anything else... Maybe that's why Vivian left.

KATELYN

Vivian left because she's not good enough for you, whether she knows it or not. You're better off without her.

NICK

Thanks Kate. You'll find your Prince Charming too.

She rolls her eyes.

KATELYN

Yeah, sure.

NICK

Come on! It's Christmas, it's the season for love! You never know when it's gonna just take you by surprise!

She laughs and shrugs him off.

INT. NICK'S PARENTS' HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Nick and Katelyn walk in where Carrie is removing a tray of food from the oven and Marty is putting away some dishes.

KATELYN
That looks great, mom!

CARRIE
I hope it tastes as good as it smells!

NICK
I'm sure it will.

Carrie sets the tray down on the kitchen island. Marty sneaks behind her and tries to reach around to grab a piece of food, but she playfully smacks his hand.

CARRIE
Hey! No sneaking any food until we're at the table.

He rolls his eyes and everyone laughs.

INT. NICK'S PARENTS' HOUSE - DINING ROOM - LATER

Nick, Katelyn, Carrie and Marty all sit at the table with a beautiful dinner in front of them.

CARRIE
So, Nicky, how was your time with Megan earlier?

Katelyn gives him a raised eyebrow and a smirk.

KATELYN
Oh, you spent some time with Megan today, did you?

Nick rolls his eyes.

NICK
Oh stop.

Carrie smiles as well.

NICK (CONT'D)
I just ran into her on the sidewalk and she was going to get Terry a tree so I went with her to help carry it, that's all.

Katelyn laughs.

KATELYN
Anything you say, Nick, anything
you say.

Nick shakes his head and laughs.

KATELYN (CONT'D)
How's she doing?

NICK
She's good, she's actually a
teacher in town now.

MARTY
I thought I had heard that.

CARRIE
That's wonderful, I'm sure she's a
wonderful teacher. She always had
such a great disposition, the kids
must love her.

NICK
I'm sure they do.

KATELYN
So... now that Vivian is out of the
picture, can the two of you finally
date?

Nick's jaw drops as Katelyn smiles, proud of herself for that
joke.

NICK
Wow, you really don't like to
sugarcoat things, do you?

Katelyn raises her hands, feigning innocence.

KATELYN
I'm just saying! I think just about
everyone in town would kill to see
the two of you get together. Isn't
that true, mom?

Carrier shrugs.

CARRIE
Katelyn, I don't think your timing
is the best right now...
(MORE)

CARRIE (CONT'D)

but if I'm being totally honest, I do think people would do a happy dance if the two of you ever became a couple.

MARTY

Now, Carrie, let's leave the poor boy alone.

NICK

Thank you.

Marty smirks.

MARTY

You have to let the two of them realize they're in love on their own. You can't force these things.

Nick rolls his eyes.

NICK

You guys really like to say what's on your mind, don't you?

Katelyn pats him on the shoulder.

KATELYN

What are families for if not driving you completely crazy?

Nick laughs.

NICK

Very funny, sis.

They all resume eating.

CARRIE

So, what do you both have planned while you're home? Any old haunts you're going to try and revisit?

KATELYN

I'm not sure actually. I think a few others are home this week so I'll probably get dinner with the girls to catch up. What about you, Nick?

NICK

I'm not really sure. I was actually thinking of going to the Christmas Eve-Eve karaoke night for old time sake.

Katelyn perks up.

KATELYN

At Castaways?

NICK

Yup.

KATELYN

Wow, I can't believe they still do that.

NICK

I was surprised too, but Megan said it's a thing.

CARRIE

Of course it's a thing. It's only one of the most longstanding Garland traditions! Oh, you two should go, that would be so fun!

KATELYN

We definitely should!

Nick shrugs.

NICK

I don't know. Singing songs with a bunch of people I went to high school with doesn't seem like the most interesting thing to do tonight.

KATELYN

Oh, come on! It'll be stupid and fun.

NICK

I don't know.

MARTY

Come on, Nick, don't be a Scrooge.

KATELYN

Yeah, don't be a Scrooge. It'll be fun, I promise. We can do a duet!

Nick pretends to be frightened.

NICK

Woof, no thanks. Your singing voice would shatter all the windows in the bar.

She sarcastically fakes a laugh.

KATELYN

Good one, loser.

The rest of the family chuckles.

CARRIE

You really should go. Especially if Megan is going, that would be nice to catch up some more.

Nick sighs.

NICK

I'll think about it, okay?

INT. NICK'S PARENTS' HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Nick stands at the sink rinsing dishes as Katelyn puts clean plates into the cabinet.

After a few moments, Nick's cell phone beeps in his pocket.

He shuts off the faucet and dries his hands on a towel, then reaches into his pocket and removes his cell phone.

He looks at the screen and smiles when he sees a new text from Megan, reading: "Get those vocal chords warmed up, because we're going to Castaways at 8. See you soon! :)"

Nick smiles and starts to respond, typing: "We'll see about that. The vocal chords are a bit rusty ;)"

From across the kitchen, Katelyn notices Nick typing and sees the smiles on his face.

KATELYN

Okay. Out with it.

Nick looks confused as Katelyn rolls her eyes with a smile.

NICK

What?

KATELYN
What's with the big grin? You look
like your crush just asked you to
prom or something!

Nick rolls his eyes.

NICK
Nothing, nothing.

KATELYN
Oh yeah? Who was the text from?

NICK
Nobody.

She isn't buying it.

KATELYN
Wow, NOBODY really makes you smile,
huh?

NICK
It's nothing, it was just Megan.

Katelyn smirks and nods.

KATELYN
Ah, that makes more sense. What's
she want?

NICK
She was just asking if I was going
to karaoke.

KATELYN
She's going?

NICK
Yeah, she said she's going at
eight.

Katelyn looks up at the clock and we see that it's about
7:30.

KATELYN
Okay, grab your coat.

Nick laughs.

NICK
What?

KATELYN
I said grab your coat. We're
leaving.

NICK
Oh, come on.

KATELYN
Don't make me ask you twice, Nicky.
You may be bigger than me, but I'm
scrappier.

Nick laughs and shakes his head.

KATELYN (CONT'D)
If you think I'm joking then try
me, but we're leaving in five
minutes to sing our brains out.
Whether YOU like it or not.

NICK
You really want to go?

KATELYN
I certainly do, and you don't have
a choice in the matter.

Nick shakes his head.

NICK
Fine, fine. I'll go, but only for a
few minutes. If it's boring, I get
to say when we leave.

KATELYN
Deal... but it won't be boring.
Former classmates singing Christmas
music in a bar? There's nothing
more exciting than that!

Nick rolls his eyes.

NICK
One more thing... I get to pick
your first song.

She looks at him with a raised eyebrow, making him laugh.

EXT. CASTAWAY'S - NIGHT

The parking lot is FULL of cars, and the bar is decked out in
Christmas decorations on the outside.

We can hear music coming from the inside as Nick and Katelyn walk towards the entrance.

NICK
I can't believe how many people are here!

KATELYN
That's the beauty of small towns, the traditions are more sacred than anything else.

Katelyn smiles at him.

KATELYN (CONT'D)
Kinda makes you miss leaving all this for the big city, huh?

She turns around and heads towards the entrance while Nick stops and looks at the decorations with affection.

NICK
(to himself)
Yeah... it kind of does.

He resumes walking towards the bar.

INT. CASTAWAY'S - MOMENTS LATER

Nick and Katelyn walk in and look around.

The place is packed with people dressed in ugly Christmas sweaters, all signing along and having a great time.

At the front of the bar, we see a small stage where people are singing karaoke songs to the cheering crowd.

NICK
This place is really bustling!

Katelyn and Nick both look overly excited.

KATELYN
Seriously! I missed this so much!

They continue to look around and from across the bar, Nick spots Megan standing in a group of people.

NICK
I see Megan across the way.

KATELYN
Oh, great, lead the way.

She motions for him to walk over, but he hesitates.

NICK

Maybe we should grab a drink first
or something? I don't want to bug
her right when we walk in.

Katelyn laughs.

KATELYN

Oh my gosh, why are you so nervous?
It's not like it's your first blind
date, she just told you to meet her
here.

NICK

Yeah, I guess.

She gets behind him and pushes him by the shoulders.

NICK (CONT'D)

Oh, fine, fine.

He makes his way through the crowd towards Megan and after a few moments, reaches the group.

NICK (CONT'D)

Hey Megan.

She turns around and sees him and Katelyn. She looks elated and immediately gives him a hug.

MEGAN

Nick!

Katelyn smiles as she sees them embrace.

MEGAN (CONT'D)

I didn't know if you were gonna
come or not!

NICK

Of course! It's town tradition,
right? I wouldn't want to buck the
trend, right?

MEGAN

I hope you're ready to sing.

NICK

Let's see what happens?

He laughs.

NICK (CONT'D)
You remember my sister Katelyn,
right?

She gives him a raised eyebrow.

MEGAN
Nick, come on. I've seen much more
of her than I have of you over the
past few years.

She gives Katelyn a hug as well.

MEGAN (CONT'D)
Thanks for getting this guy out of
the house, Kate.

KATELYN
You know it.

Among the group Megan was with is Luke, as well as CRYSTAL,
BILLY, and NOEL, all in their 30s.

NICK
Hey, Luke. Twice in one day!

LUKE
Seriously, twice in one day and
twice in five years!

NICK
You remember my sister, right?

Luke looks amazed when he sees her.

LUKE
Hey Kate. It's been a long time.

Katelyn looks blown away as well.

KATELYN
Wow, Luke Frost? Holy cow, you
look... wow!

Luke laughs, a little embarrassed.

LUKE
You look great too. You always did,
but you still do.

The two of them are clearly smitten with each other. Megan
and Nick roll their eyes.

MEGAN

Anyways. I don't know if the two of you have met the rest of the crew or not. Crystal teaches with me, this is her husband Billy, and this is Billy's sister, Noel.

Nick and Katelyn exchange pleasantries with the rest of the group.

NOEL

This is crazy, I've never seen something like this before.

MEGAN

Well, that's Garland for ya.

BILLY

So, what's everyone's go-to karaoke song?

MEGAN

I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus.

Everyone laughs.

CRYSTAL

That was fast!

MEGAN

We take our karaoke seriously! You gotta come prepared. Kate, what about you?

KATELYN

All I Want for Christmas is You, obviously.

BILLY

Well, that's a classic.

NOEL

You better sign up fast before someone else takes it!

MEGAN

What about you, Nick?

Nick shrugs.

NICK

Um... I don't know.

Megan gives him a raised eyebrow.

MEGAN

What do you mean, you don't know?

NICK

I don't know, I guess I haven't done karaoke in a while so I hadn't thought about it.

The rest of the group looks aghast.

MEGAN

Oh, Nicky. I guess we're just gonna have to pick one for you!

They all laugh.

BILLY

Well, as much as we'd love to see this in person, I think we have to take off. We promised my mom we'd be home for dessert, so we have to take off.

MEGAN

Don't worry, we'll get it on camera!

CRYSTAL

Good, you better! It was nice meeting you guys, Merry Christmas!

They all exchange pleasant goodbyes and Billy, Crystal and Noel leave.

KATELYN

Have you seen anyone else from high school here so far?

MEGAN

A few... Chad's here.

Katelyn groans.

LUKE

Who's Chad?

Megan sighs and laughs.

MEGAN

Chad was my high school boyfriend.

LUKE

Oh my gosh, Chad Braxton! I totally forgot you two dated!

MEGAN

Yeah, that was a dark time in my life.

NICK

That dude always hated me.

Megan puts her hands up.

MEGAN

Oh, I wonder why!

NICK

What?

MEGAN

He hated you because you and I spent all our free time together! I spent more time with you than I did him and he was jealous.

NICK

Seriously?

Megan rolls her eyes and puts a hand on his shoulder.

MEGAN

You know, for a smart guy... you're not the most perceptive person I've ever met.

NICK

I guess I was just enjoying the moment.

He shrugs, sarcastically.

Megan rolls her eyes and they share a brief, but telling look with each other, which Katelyn notices.

KATELYN

Alright, well... Luke, do you need another drink?

He looks at his almost full beer.

LUKE

Um... not really, I just...

She smacks him on the shoulder.

LUKE (CONT'D)

Um, actually yeah. This one, uh... it has a hair in it.

(MORE)

LUKE (CONT'D)
Or it's warm, I guess. Kind of
flat, yeah, so, maybe we'll go
and...

Katelyn rolls her eyes.

KATELYN
Just come by me a drink doofus.

She grabs him by the arm and tugs him away, leaving a
slightly awkward but smiling Nick and Megan behind.

INT. CASTAWAY'S - MOMENTS LATER

Katelyn and Luke push their way to the front of the bar.

LUKE
What was that about?

KATELYN
Look... My brother and Megan...
they've very clearly been into each
other since, like, the third grade.
I know it, my parents know it, her
parents know it, and they both know
it.

LUKE
So why don't they just tell each
other that?

Katelyn sighs.

KATELYN
It's like a comedy of errors with
those two. When he's dating
someone, she's single, when she's
dating someone, he's single. When
they're both single, they live on
opposite coasts... but now they're
both single AND they're here, he
just got out of a really bad
relationship, so he's all nervous.

LUKE
He did? What happened?

She sighs.

KATELYN
His fiancé pretty much just dumped
him.

Luke's eyes open wide.

LUKE

Seriously? What happened?

KATELYN

Who knows. Said they were on different pages or something. It's gonna be the biggest mistake of her life.

LUKE

Well... maybe it was the perfect timing. If he and Megan are so meant to be, maybe this is the perfect chance for something to happen with them.

KATELYN

I don't know, maybe. I'm worried he's so hung up and in his own head about her that he might not be able to see it.

LUKE

Maybe... but maybe everything that happened with his has finally made him realize what else is out there. You know, sometimes you have to experience the bad to see how good you can have it otherwise. It shouldn't be that way, but it happens. Maybe everything that happened with his fiancé is finally helping him take off his blinders.

Katelyn smiles.

KATELYN

You know, you're more insightful than you look. You managed to become as thoughtful as you did handsome.

Luke laughs and smiles, a little awkward.

INT. CASTAWAY'S - MOMENTS LATER

Back across the bar, Nick and Megan have taken up seats at a high-top table.

MEGAN

Wow, so you were engaged?

Nick winces.

NICK

Only for a few weeks, but yeah.

Megan looks kind of floored.

MEGAN

Wow, I had not heard that. Usually everyone in town gossips about everything, but that one must have slipped through the cracks.

NICK

Well, it hadn't been long, so I'm sure it would have come through eventually.

He shrugs.

MEGAN

So... what happened? Sorry to be blunt, but I need some more details now. You told me before that you were recently single and left it as vague as possible, so now I need the REAL reason.

NICK

Wow, you don't sugar coat things, do you?

She smiles, slyly.

MEGAN

There's no time for that.

Nick sighs.

NICK

You want the real reason? We just weren't compatible. I was new to California, I had just sold my first movie and it was a huge hit... I was getting attention from every direction, and I settled on the first person who... I THOUGHT was actually interested in me. At first it was fine, she loved the parties, she loved meeting celebrities, she loved the attention... but then my second movie came out and it bombed.

(MORE)

NICK (CONT'D)

The attention I got wasn't the glamorous Hollywood life she wanted, and so... I think she got bored with me. She liked the lifestyle I lived when we first met... she never really liked me.

He shrugs.

MEGAN

You know what, Nick? You're better off for it.

He laughs.

NICK

That's the go-to line for everyone who's ever been dumped since the dawn of time.

MEGAN

No, I'm dead serious. I know all I need to know about her from that one story, and she was not good enough for you. She wasn't in love with YOU she was in love with the initial IDEA of you!

Nick's eyes widen and jaw drops.

NICK

Wow, thanks for the tough love!

MEGAN

You know I'm right! You can do so much better than someone who only cares about the life you provide. If she actually cared about you then she wouldn't care if you were successful, famous, rich, poor, whatever. She would just love you for you and that'd be enough.

Nick doesn't really have a response.

MEGAN (CONT'D)

You know I'm right.

He sighs.

NICK

Maybe you are... I guess I kind of got swept up in it all too.

(MORE)

NICK (CONT'D)

I think I cared more about the image of her than anything else. We never really clicked, I guess, we just kind of went with it because it worked... until it didn't.

He shrugs.

MEGAN

You're gonna find a great girl, I promise. You'll find someone who ACTUALLY appreciates everything you do. Even if you write something that doesn't get good reviews, you still wrote it! You have any idea how incredible that is? Everyone thinks they have an idea for a movie but you actually did it. And no matter what, nobody can ever take that away from you. You followed your dream, and you succeeded. There's nothing on Earth that can change that, and I for one am proud of you for it.

Nick smiles. That meant a lot.

NICK

Thanks... You're right, I'm still proud of it too.

She smiles.

MEGAN

Good. You should be! And soon enough you'll find a girl who appreciate your failures as much as most people appreciate your biggest hits.

She puts her hand on his.

NICK

Yeah... maybe.

She gives him a grin.

MEGAN

You know... Welcome to Alcatraz wasn't THAT bad.

He looks floored.

NICK

You're serious? You saw Welcome to Alcatraz?

MEGAN

Of course! My neighbor growing up writes a movie, I'm gonna see it! You're a hometown hero, Nicky, everyone's seen it!

NICK

Wow, I'm sorry if you paid anything for it, because it's a trainwreck.

She brushes him off.

MEGAN

It really wasn't that bad. I could see what you were trying to do with it. They tried to make it into a serious horror movie when it should have been a horror comedy.

Nick's eyes widen.

NICK

Yes! Yes, yes, yes! You got that?

MEGAN

Of course! You're too smart for anything else.

NICK

You're the first person to realize that. It was supposed to be a comedy but they tried to play it straight.

Megan laughs.

MEGAN

See, some people get it. We do exist. And you'll find a girl who can watch it and laugh at it for what you intended.

Nick scoffs.

NICK

There probably aren't too many more of you out there.

They look at each other with a smile for a moment, until a WAITRESS approaches with two glasses of champagne.

WAITRESS

Here you go, two glasses of Bobine
D'or.

NICK

Oh, we didn't order any champagne.

WAITRESS

This is on the house. Look up.

They do and notice that there is mistletoe hanging from the ceiling above them.

WAITRESS (CONT'D)

Castaway's tradition. The owner hangs mistletoe and the first people to sit at the table on Christmas Karaoke night get a free champagne toast to accompany their kiss.

Both of them smile awkwardly, slightly embarrassed as the waitress walks away.

They hesitate for a few seconds.

MEGAN

Well... it's bad luck to break tradition, right?

Nick smiles.

NICK

Yeah... yeah, I think it is.

They both start to lean in... but almost immediately they're interrupted by the arrival of CHAD, 30s, a pretentious-looking guy with his hair slicked back. He's handsome, he knows it, and he wants everyone around him to know it too.

CHAD

Hey, Meg.

Nick and Megan stop leaning in and both pull back. Neither looks thrilled to see him.

MEGAN

Oh... hey, Chad.

CHAD

Heard you were here. It's been a while, how are things?

MEGAN

They're fine. What about you?

He gloats - he was clearly hoping she'd ask. As he talks, he continues to act as if Nick isn't there, never looking his way.

CHAD

Well, you know, everything is pretty great. Working at my dad's firm, moving through the ranks. Know we have a couple days left, but we think it's the best quarter we've ever had. You see the Corvette in the parking lot when you came in?

MEGAN

Nope.

CHAD

Yeah, well, it's mine. Quarterly bonus was too good not to get it.

He bellows with conceit in his voice.

CHAD (CONT'D)

Sometimes you just have to treat yourself, you know?

Megan rolls her eyes.

MEGAN

Yeah, well, good to see you.

CHAD

Hey, so can I buy you a drink? It's been a while, I'd love to tell you more about what I've been up to.

NICK

I think her glass looks pretty full.

He points to the champagne.

Chad looks at Nick with a raised eyebrow.

CHAD

How's it going, Nick?

NICK

It's going.

The two look at each other, clearly at odds.

CHAD

I'm surprised you came back. I thought this bar might not be Hollywood enough for you... although I guess after that last movie, maybe you had to lower your standards a little.

Chad smirks, clearly proud of that joke. Nick smiles as well - he clearly doesn't care.

NICK

Yeah, I know. That last one really was a disappointment... Especially considering my debut feature got nominated for an Oscar and a Golden Globe, won an Independent Spirit Award, competed for the Palm D'or at Cannes, and won the Silver Bear for Best Script at the Berlin International Film Festival. It's just been so tough trying to live up to all that success, you know?

Megan smirks to herself while Chad's face drops, defeated.

NICK (CONT'D)

But, that's life, right? So, how's working for your dad going?

Chad stares at Nick with contempt for a few moments before looking back to Megan.

CHAD

It was good seeing you. Let me know if you want to catch up soon.

He turns and looks at Nick before walking away.

As soon as he's far enough away, Megan bursts out laughing.

MEGAN

You are RUTHLESS!

Nick shakes his head, smiling.

NICK

I really never ever liked him.

DJ (O.C.)
Alright, next up we have a duet of
the classic Christmas song, Let It
Snow.

MEGAN
Well... you're about to like me
even less.

NICK
Why's that?

Megan looks up at the speaker and so Nick listens as well.

DJ (O.C.)
Alright Garland party people, let's
give a big round of applause for
Megan and Nick!

Nick's face drops as Megan smirks.

NICK
No.

MEGAN
I told you I was gonna get you to
sing!

NICK
No. No, no, I don't sing!

Megan stands up and grabs him by the hand, pulling him
towards the stage.

MEGAN
It's karaoke, the worse you sing
the better!

She continues to yank him along and he begrudgingly follows.

Across the bar, Katelyn and Luke both burst out laughing as
they see Megan and Nick up on stage.

KATELYN
Yeah Nicky! Sing your heart out!

Nick and Megan both take microphones from the DJ and stand at
the front of the stage, looking at the monitor. Megan looks
excited and into it, but Nick looks nervous and awkward as
hell.

NICK
You have to carry me here.

MEGAN

No way, you're the lead, I just do
back up!

Megan laughs and Nick rolls his eyes just as the music for
"Let It Snow" starts to play.

When they start to sing, Megan carries a tune fairly well but
Nick sings in a monotone.

MEGAN (CONT'D)

Oh the weather outside is
frightful.

NICK

But the fire is so delightful.

MEGAN

And since we've no place to go.

NICK AND MEGAN

Let it snow, let it snow, let it
snow.

Megan jokingly shakes Nick by the shoulder.

In the crowd, Luke and Katelyn both cheer them on.

KATELYN

Sing it loud Nick!

LUKE

Feel the music buddy!

He and Katelyn both look at each other and laugh. On stage,
Nick looks like he's loosening up and embracing it.

MEGAN

It doesn't show signs of stopping.

NICK

And I've brought some corn for
popping.

MEGAN

The lights are turned way down low.

NICK AND MEGAN

Let it snow, let it snow, let it
snow.

By this point, Nick is totally into it and is enjoying
himself. As he and Megan sing, they make a full show out of
it, singing to each other and acting out everything they say.

NICK AND MEGAN (CONT'D)
When we finally kiss goodnight.

Nick blows Megan a kiss.

NICK AND MEGAN (CONT'D)
How I hate going out in the storm.

Megan fakes being cold.

NICK AND MEGAN (CONT'D)
But if you really hold me tight.

Nick gives Megan a quick hug.

NICK AND MEGAN (CONT'D)
All the way home I'll be warm!

He gives her a twirl.

NICK AND MEGAN (CONT'D)
Well, the fire is slowly dying. And
my dear we're still goodbye-ing.
But as long as you love me so.
Let it snow, let it snow, let it
snow!

The crowd is loving the performance, with everyone clapping
along.

NICK AND MEGAN (CONT'D)
Let it snow! Let it snow! Let...
it... snoooooooooww!

The crowd gives them a thunderous round of applause as the
song comes to an end, and so both give a triumphant bow
before looking at each other and smiling wide. They both
clearly had a LOT of fun.

INT. CASTAWAY'S - MOMENTS LATER

Megan and Nick return to the bar where Luke and Megan are
giving them a round of applause. All four of them are having
a great time.

KATELYN
Nick, look at you! You're a total
songbird and you never even told
us!

LUKE
Seriously, that was like a full on
Broadway show!

Nick facetiously takes a bow.

NICK
I'm just full of surprises.

MEGAN
And you acted all coy like you
didn't want to sing.

NICK
Well, I didn't at first!

LUKE
Don't be modest, a beautiful voice
like that needs to be heard.

Megan rolls her eyes.

MEGAN
So, think you'll be coming back for
more karaoke nights?

Nick laughs.

NICK
You know, as much fun as that was,
I think this is a once a year kind
of thing.

Megan shrugs.

MEGAN
You know what, once a year is a
start. Especially considering this
is the second time you've come back
this entire decade.

Nick rolls his eyes.

NICK
Here we go again.

She smacks him on the back.

MEGAN
I'm just kidding, don't worry.
We're all happy you're here.

She smiles at him and he smiles back. Megan notices and
smirks as well.

Luke looks at his watch.

LUKE

Alright, it's getting a little late for this old man, I think I'm gonna head home.

KATELYN

I think it's about the same time for us. Even though we're adults, we're still on mom and dad time when we're under their roof, so they're probably waiting up wondering where the kids are.

They all laugh. Nick looks to Megan.

NICK

Did you drive here too?

MEGAN

Luke drove me actually.

NICK

Oh, got it.

Katelyn slyly pokes Luke.

LUKE

Oh, uh... you know what, Nick do you actually mind driving Megan home? I'm on the other side of town and you guys live next door to each other. It'd save me a few minutes.

NICK

Yeah. Yeah of course!

MEGAN

You don't mind.

Nick fakes annoyance.

NICK

Ugh, it's like, SUCH a hassle for me, but I GUESS I can help.

She rolls her eyes.

MEGAN

Always the gentleman.

Nick smirks.

NICK

Why don't you two grab your coats
and I'll walk out and bring the car
around so it's warm when you get
in.

Megan smiles.

MEGAN

Sounds good to me.

Luke looks to Katelyn.

LUKE

It was really great seeing you...
maybe I'll see you again this week?

Katelyn smiles like a 13 year old girl with a crush.

KATELYN

Definitely.

Luke smiles back. They're vibing.

EXT. CASTAWAY'S - MOMENTS LATER

Nick walks through the parking lot twirling his keys around
his finger with a huge grin on his face. He's walking on a
cloud.

After a moment, CHAD and two of his GOONS pop out from behind
a car. They look ready to raise hell.

CHAD

Hey there, Mister Hollywood.

NICK

Chad... what's up?

Chad grins.

CHAD

You think it was funny to try and
make a fool out of me in there?

Nick rolls his eyes.

NICK

Come on, man, we just gave each
other a jab, it's not a big deal.
That's what guys do, right?

Nick chuckles, trying to downplay everything.

Chad smirks.

CHAD
Yeah, man... That's what guys do?

A beat. Chad and his goons stare at Nick.

CHAD (CONT'D)
Know what else guys do, though?

NICK
What's that?

CHAD
They SETTLE things like men...
unless they're just a scared little
boy.

Chad rolls up his sleeves.

CHAD (CONT'D)
You ready to put up?

Nick looks annoyed, but also slightly uneasy.

NICK
Come on, you're being serious?

GOON 1
Man up, bro!

GOON 2
Put up or shut up!

Nick looks confused.

NICK
What does that even mean?

CHAD
You and me, bro, let's go!

Chad puts up his fists, but almost immediately, we hear a car horn beep at the group.

Nick, Chad and the two goons look over to the sound where Luke has Chad's Corvette lifted up on the back of his tow truck.

Chad's face drop, but Nick looks relieved and smiles.

LUKE
Hey man! Next time don't park in a
tow zone!

Luke beeps twice more and pulls out of the parking lot, laughing as he does.

CHAD

No, no wait! That's my dad's car!

Luke and his two goons start SPRINTING down the street behind Luke, but they obviously come nowhere close to catching it.

CHAD (CONT'D)

He's gonna be so mad at me!

Nick laughs as he watches them run down the street.

NICK

Bon voyage, Chad.

Nick tosses his keys in the air and catches them as he starts walking to his car with a triumphant smile, whistling "Let It Snow" as he goes.

EXT. NICK'S PARENTS' HOUSE - NIGHT

Nick pulls into the driveway and all three get out of the car.

KATELYN

It was good seeing you, Meg.

MEGAN

You took, Kate. We have to do this more. Maybe even get the big shot to come out with us if he has the time.

She winks at Nick who rolls his eyes.

KATELYN

See you at Christmas on the Common?

MEGAN

Definitely. I couldn't miss out on your mom's famous cookies!

KATELYN

Perfect.

They hug.

Katelyn whispers to Nick.

KATELYN (CONT'D)

Walk her home. NOW.

She smacks him on the shoulder jokingly and he shakes his head, feigning annoyance.

NICK

Meg, I'll walk you home. Garland is REALLY dangerous during the holiday season, so it's just for safety. Your house must be a hundred and fifty feet away, so it's pretty treacherous.

She laughs as he puts his arm up.

MEGAN

Well, chivalry is not dead.

She grabs his arm and they start to walk over.

EXT. TERRY'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Nick and Megan walk up her front steps.

NICK

Tonight was fun, I'm glad you forced me to come out... and sing.

She laughs.

MEGAN

You know your voice isn't half bad when you put all your energy into it.

NICK

You're right, it's not half bad. It's worse.

She rolls her eyes.

NICK (CONT'D)

Really though, tonight was fun. I needed this.

She sighs.

MEGAN

I really have missed you, Nicky. We all have. I know I've been joking about it, but it's true... It hurt when you left.

Nick nods.

NICK

I know... I'm sorry, I didn't mean to just run out on everyone. I was just chasing my dream and I thought it was the right thing to do.

MEGAN

It's not that you left, it's how you left. We were all so happy for you, then we just never heard from you. It was like we weren't good enough.

NICK

No, that's not it. I was just selfish. I got caught up in the whole Hollywood lifestyle at first. Big city, parties, celebrities. That's not me.

He looks around.

NICK (CONT'D)

Being back has shown me that. There's something about small towns that the city just can't compete with. It just feels like...

MEGAN

Home?

He laughs and smiles.

NICK

Yeah... like home.

She nods and smiles back.

MEGAN

Well, we're glad to have you home. Even if you don't stay long.

NICK

We'll see what happens.

MEGAN

Yeah... well, I should head back in. Tonight was fun, Nick.

NICK

Yeah... yeah, it was. Hey, one, uh... one thing before I go. You still owe me.

He seems nervous, stumbling over his words.

MEGAN
Owe you what?

He takes a deep breath.

NICK
The kiss to go with our champagne.

He looks petrified, unsure of how she'll respond. Megan on the other hand looks like she's been waiting for that all her life. She smiles, leans in and kisses him.

This isn't any ordinary kiss. It's the perfect combination of attraction, affection and passion. Not too long, not too short, not too aggressive but not too tame either. This is the PERFECT kiss.

They separate, both smiling wide, their eyes closed for a second or two as they enjoy the moment.

NICK (CONT'D)
I... have wanted to do that... for
so long.

She nods.

MEGAN
Me too.

No more than two seconds later, a few snowflakes fall past their face. They both notice and start to laugh.

NICK
Well, if I wasn't positive already,
this confirms that that was the
single most perfect kiss in all of
history.

He leans back in and kisses her again.

INT. NICK'S PARENTS' HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Nick tiptoes in, a huge smile on his face, painstakingly trying not to make noise.

After a second he does a little happy dance in silence for a few moments, silently mouthing "YES!" and faux-cheering.

INT. NICK'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nick walks in, his face is still in a state of constant smiles.

He takes his cell phone out of his pocket and looks at the screen, causing his face to drop - he has 14 new text messages and 5 missed calls from Vivian.

He scrolls through them, and we see a combination of short "I'M SORRY!!!" messages as well as several absolute novels, pouring her heart out.

He rolls his eyes and deletes them before he clicks on his voicemail.

VIVIAN (O.C.)
Nick, I'm Sorry! Please call me
back, we need...

Nick hits delete and moves on to the next one.

VIVIAN (O.C.) (CONT'D)
Please pick up, Nick! We're meant
to be together, I'm so...

Again, he deletes the message and moves on.

VIVIAN (O.C.) (CONT'D)
(crying hysterically)
I... Am... So... Lost... Right...
Now!

She erupts into a tantrum of tears, causing Nick to pull his ear back from the phone, wincing at the loud, shrill screams.

He tosses his phone down on the bed and shakes his head.

NICK
Wow...

He starts to remove his jacket when his phone buzzes again. He looks down and sees that Megan has texted him. Nick's face again lights up. He reads the message which says, "Number one bucket list item - complete. Thanks for the AMAZING night," along with a kissy face emoji.

Nick picks up his phone and responds, saying, "If you told sixteen year old me that I'd be kissing THE Megan Scott in the snow during Christmas... Can't wait to see you tomorrow," with a happy face emoji.

He smiles to himself and shakes his head, still in happy disbelief.

INT. NICK'S PARENTS' HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

Nick walks into the kitchen where Carrie is already at the stove, while Katelyn and Marty sit at the kitchen table eating breakfast.

Katelyn gives him a smirk.

KATELYN
Morning, Romeo.

Nick gives her the evil eye, but neither Arty or Carrie catch on.

NICK
Good morning. Smells great, mom.

Carrie turns and hands him a freshly made omelet on a plate.

NICK (CONT'D)
How do you time that so well?

CARRIE
I put your old baby monitor back in your room so I know when you get up.

Nick rolls his eyes and sits down at the table.

MARTY
Your mother is ALREADY prepping to start baking.

CARRIE
Well, the batter is all set so now I'm just measuring out all the sprinkles, icing, glitter, the works. It's a science, but it has to be exact.

MARTY
I've never seen anyone take so much pride in something.

KATELYN
Can you blame her? She's a town celebrity for those cookies. It's a big mantle to uphold!

They all laugh.

CARRIE

Marty, can you go grab me some semi-sweet chocolate chips from downstairs?

Marty fake groans and stands up.

MARTY

Your wish is my command DEAR.

When he has left the room, Katelyn leans in and whispers to Nick.

KATELYN

So... what happened!?

She jabs him in the shoulder. Nick looks back to make sure Carrie is not paying attention.

NICK

It was... perfect.

KATELYN

Did you kiss?

Nick raises an eyebrow.

KATELYN (CONT'D)

Yes!

Katelyn puts her hands up in the air, but Nick quickly pulls them back down and shh's her.

KATELYN (CONT'D)

Sorry! This is so exciting!
Finally! This was such a long time coming, everyone has wanted this for years!

Nick smiles.

NICK

I know... me too.

KATELYN

So... what now? Are you gonna see her today?

NICK

I think so. She said she'd be at Christmas on the Common, I just need to text her to see when she's going.

Katelyn smiles.

KATELYN

This is so exciting. I'm happy for you, Nicky. You deserve this, really.

Nick shrugs and raises an eyebrow.

NICK

Vivian won't stop texting and calling.

Katelyn gives him a stern face.

KATELYN

Don't even think about it.

NICK

I haven't written or called back yet! I haven't said anything to her, don't worry.

KATELYN

Good... She made her choice, so now she gets to live with it.

Marty returns with a bag of chocolate chips, so Nick and Katelyn play it cool.

KATELYN (CONT'D)

So, anyways... Mom, what time is Christmas on the Common?

CARRIE

I need to be there at two to set up, so these cookies need to get in the oven ASAP.

NICK

Just let me finish this omelet and I'll help you get it going. It's Coen-Christmas-Cookie-Cookin' time!

Nick takes out his phone and texts Megan saying, "We're heading over at noon. Swing by and maybe I'll even give you a cookie on the house!"

INT. NICK'S PARENTS' HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

Nick, now wearing an apron, stands by the stove with Katelyn and Carrie.

CARRIE
First batch is ready! Time for a
taste test?

NICK
Um, YEAH!

Carrier removes a tray from the oven and they each take one
cookie.

CARRIE
Fingers crossed.

KATELYN
They're gonna be great, like
always.

They each take a bite of their cookies and slowly start to
smile. They're clearly delicious.

NICK
You outdid yourself, mom.

KATELYN
Seriously, these might be the best
batch yet!

Carrie breathes a sigh of relief and smiles.

CARRIE
Thank goodness! But this is the
easy part, we still have fifteen
batches to go!

KATELYN
Let's get to it then!

Almost immediately, the lights turn off.

NICK
What happened?

They look around and see that none of the appliances are on
either.

KATELYN
I think we lost power.

CARRIE
Oh no!

NICK
We must have blew a fuse or
something.

(MORE)

NICK (CONT'D)
It's probably from all the
Christmas lights outside mixed with
all the kitchen stuff.

Carrie puts her hands on her head.

CARRIE
What do we do! I still have so much
batter left to bake and the event
starts in a few hours!

Katelyn hurries out of the room.

KATELYN
I'll see if dad has any more fuses!

Carrie looks exceedingly nervous.

CARRIE
What do we do if we can't get the
power back on? They're counting on
me to bring all my sweets, the
entire bake sale is going to fall
apart if I can't get an oven!

NICK
Don't worry, mom, we'll think of
something.

CARRIE
This is the worst timing. How can
this be happening?

Nick thinks for a second, until finally the lightbulb in his
mind goes on. He smirks.

NICK
I think I have an idea!

INT. NICK'S PARENTS' HOUSE - DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Nick has his cell phone up to his ear.

NICK
Hey, Megan, it's Nick... I'm fine,
everything is good. Well, I think
it's going to be okay... Look... I
need a favor...

INT. SCHOOL - KITCHEN - DAY

The lights turn on illuminating a HUGE kitchen, filled with industrial size appliances, none of which are in use.

Megan hustles in, leading Carrie, Nick, Katelyn, and Marty, each with their arms full of baking supplies.

MEGAN

We should have everything you need!
It's school break, so they're not
gonna need any of the appliances
all week. Use whatever you need!

Carrie stops and hugs Megan.

CARRIE

You have no idea how much this
means to me. You saved Christmas!

She gives her another hug and runs along.

Nick smiles and he approaches Megan.

NICK

Seriously, thank you SO much. You
know how much the bake sale means
to my mom, I don't know what we
would have done without you.

She smiles back.

MEGAN

It's nothing, don't worry. I'm just
glad I could help! I don't know if
I'd be able to survive a Christmas
on the Common without one of Carrie
Coen's world-famous tollhouse
chocolate chip cookies.

Nick gives her a kiss on the cheek.

NICK

You're the absolute best.

She jokingly smacks him on the shoulder.

MEGAN

Save the lovey dovey stuff for
later - we have some cookies to
bake!

They both smile.

INT. SCHOOL - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Through a montage, we see Carrie, Nick, Megan, Katelyn, and Marty bustling through the kitchen as they make batch after batch after batch of cookies.

They spread the dough, toss them in the over, pull out steaming trays, and decorate the lot with holiday-themed sprinkles and frosting. These cookies are the real deal.

INT. SCHOOL - KITCHEN - LATER

Carrie puts the final cookie in a holiday tin and snaps the lid on tight.

She takes a look around and breathes a sigh of relief. There are tins upon tins upon tins on the counter.

CARRIE

That's the last one... I think we actually did it!

KATELYN

I can't believe how many we made!

MEGAN

Those industrial strength ovens really did the trick!

Carrie looks to Megan and smiles, grateful.

CARRIE

Megan, I cannot thank you enough. We never could have done this without you.

She starts to clap, as do the rest, giving her light cheers as well. Megan brushes them off, acting modest.

MEGAN

No, no, it was nothing. I'm glad I could help. Anything to make sure the bake sale goes off without a hitch.

CARRIE

Okay, no that everything is baked, we need to get the loot to the Common!

MARTY

Okay team, everyone grab a stack!

Marty, Katelyn, and Carrie each grab a stack of tins while Nick waits back with Carrie.

NICK

I have to help them set up, but
I'll see you soon, right?

MEGAN

I think I can swing that.

They both smile and he holds her hand for a moment.

NICK

Perfect. I'll see you in a couple
hours, okay?

MEGAN

I can't wait.

He leans in and gives her a kiss before separating and breathing a sigh of relief.

NICK

That already feels natural.

She laughs.

MEGAN

Get out of here!

She jokingly shoves him away and so he runs to catch up with his family.

EXT. TOWN COMMON - DAY

If ever there was a Christmas celebration, this is it.

The entire town common is decked out in Christmas decorations - trees covered in ornaments and lights, a manger, red ribbons, candy canes, carolers, Santa taking photos with kids, several reindeer, and booths every few feet selling baked goods, hot cocoa, trinkets and everything else you can think of.

In a gazebo in the center of the common is a DJ blasting Christmas songs.

At this point, Nick and his family have set up their booth with all the baked goods and there's a HUGE line in front of them. Carrie happily collects money as customers buy cookies, each one drooling as they look over the spread.

CARRIE
Can you believe this turnout?

NICK
Of course I can! People would line
up a day early for your famous
cookies if they could!

KATELYN
Mom, this is amazing!

Carrie smiles, pleased.

CARRIE
Why don't you two go explore for a
bit? Me and your father can handle
the masses.

NICK
Are you sure?

CARRIE
Positive. I'm a pro.

Nick and Katelyn laugh. Nick pats Carrie on the shoulder.

NICK
You got this, mom. We'll bring you
back some cocoa.

EXT. TOWN COMMON - MOMENTS LATER

Nick and Katelyn navigate their way through the thick crowd.

KATELYN
Wow, I can't believe how many
people are here!

NICK
I know, me either.

Nick looks around, clearly trying to find someone. Katelyn
smiles when she notices.

KATELYN
Looking for your boo?

Nick rolls his eyes.

NICK
Maybe you should go find Luke.

Katelyn smirks.

KATELYN

Well... As a matter of fact, he's already here. And if you feel like it, he's waiting for us at the hot cocoa stand.

Nick laughs and rolls his eyes.

NICK

After you!

Nick points ahead and facetiously lets her lead the way.

EXT. TOWN COMMON - MOMENTS LATER

Nick and Katelyn approach the cocoa stand where Luke is waiting with two cups in hand. As soon as he sees Katelyn, Luke's eyes light up.

LUKE

Hey there! Merry Christmas on the Common!

Katelyn gives him a big hug.

KATELYN

Good to see you.

He hands her one of the cocoas.

KATELYN (CONT'D)

Aw, thank you.

LUKE

Nick, sorry man, I should have grabbed you one too.

NICK

No worries, bud, I have to grab one for my mom anyways. You guys go explore, I'm gonna jump in line. I'll see you guys soon.

Nick gets in line as Katelyn and Luke walk off, exchanging small talk.

As he stands in line, he looks around the crowd, again trying to spot someone.

After a few moments, someone puts their hands around Nick's eyes from behind him. Nick smiles and laughs and he takes the hands off and turns around.

NICK (CONT'D)
I was trying to find you aro....

Rather than Megan, as he clearly expected, his eyes lock with none other than Vivian.

Nick's face drops, shocked and clearly not happy.

NICK (CONT'D)
Vivian...

She innocently shrugs.

VIVIAN
Surprise?

Nick stares for a few more moments, unable to speak.

NICK
Wh... what are you doing here? How did you even find me?

VIVIAN
I used that Find My Phone app... You didn't answer my calls, so... I just needed to see you.

EXT. TOWN COMMON - MOMENTS LATER

Nick and Vivian sit on a park bench far away from the crowd.

NICK
What are you doing here?

VIVIAN
I needed to talk to you. I've been trying to get in touch with you all week.

Nick sighs.

NICK
I needed some time to myself.

VIVIAN
I understand... I just... I wish you had called back.

NICK
What did you expect, Vivian? You broke up with me? You broke off our entire engagement!

She shakes her head, clearly distraught.

VIVIAN

I know, I know. I made a mistake. I screwed up, and I'm sorry. Nick, you will never know how sorry I am. I was just scared and I panicked and I made the worst decision of my life.

Nick sighs.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

Nick, please. That night I knew I made a huge mistake and I knew I lost the best guy I've ever known. I can't believe I was so stupid, but I will regret it for my whole life if I don't do everything I possibly can to get you back.

A beat.

NICK

You know... at first, you broke my heart. But then I realized...

Nick shakes his head and stands up.

NICK (CONT'D)

You were right - we don't belong together... I'm sorry you flew all the way out here. You should go home.

He walks off, leaving a tearful Vivian behind.

VIVIAN

Nick, wait! Please!

He refuses to turn around as she shouts.

EXT. TOWN COMMON - MOMENTS LATER

A distraught-looking Nick walks back to the cookie stand where Carrie and Marty are still busy working the table and Katelyn and Luke are standing around laughing with each other as well.

KATELYN

No cocoa? Mom's gonna be upset!

Nick looks out of it.

NICK

Yeah.

Katelyn picks up on it.

KATELYN

Hey? Nicky? Earth to Nicky, what's going on with you?

NICK

Nothing, nothing, I'm fine.

KATELYN

You sure?

He sighs.

NICK

I'll tell you about it later.

Nick's phone buzzes so he removes it from his pocket and looks at the screen. Megan has texted him, saying, "Hey! Just got to Christmas on the Common - where are you??"

Nick smiles when he sees it and types a message back, reading, "Come find my mom's cookie stand - first one's on the house" with a winky face emoji.

He looks back to Katelyn and Luke.

NICK (CONT'D)

So, how's the cocoa?

Katelyn looks at him like he has three heads, her jaw dropped.

NICK (CONT'D)

Was that THAT weird of a question?

He laughs.

Katelyn doesn't break her gaze, however.

KATELYN

Why is SHE here?

Realizing she is actually looking behind him, Nick turns around where a crying Vivian is standing close by.

Nick sighs and shakes his head.

NICK

I told you to go home. I have nothing else to say to you, we're done, okay? We're over. You and I aren't good together, we're not meant to be. YOU know it, I know it, anyone can see it.

At this point, Carrie and Marty have noticed Vivian as well and watch on with bated breath.

VIVIAN

You know that's not true, Nick! I LOVE you! You know I do and I know that you love me!

NICK

Yeah? Then why did you leave me? Why did you tell me we were going in different directions? Why did you try to end things with me the week before Christmas!?

VIVIAN

Because I was afraid! I've never met anyone like you before and I was afraid. Look at you, you're perfect. You're kind, you're sweet, you're handsome, you take care of me when I'm sick, you cook dinner if I'm having a tough day, you buy me flowers just because...

Nick shakes his head.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

You're smart, you love like nobody I've ever seen. You're every girl's dream, Nick!

NICK

Then you should have realized that before!

VIVIAN

I know... I know, I should have. I'm sorry I didn't... but I do now... BELIEVE ME, I do now.

Nick takes a deep breath. He seems to be softening. Katelyn, however, does not seem impressed.

NICK

It's too late.

VIVIAN

It's never too late. Especially now... It's Christmas, Nick... this is the time for miracles... and right now, I need a miracle. I need all the magic I can to help you forgive me for being such a fool.

He sighs.

NICK

Viv...

VIVIAN

Please... please, give me one more chance. Please, I will never hurt you like that again... Please don't throw this all away... we have a life together... we have a FUTURE together.

Nick stares at her, clearly struggling to process his feelings.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

Please... I love you... I need you.

Finally, Nick break.

NICK

Oh, Viv...

He leans in and gives her a huge hug, much to the chagrin of his family.

From a little ways away, we see that Megan is watching as well. As they continue to hug, she shakes her head, clearly upset, and storms off in the other direction.

Nick continues to hug her for a few moments, until the DJ starts to play Let It Snow over the speakers. The second that it starts, Nick's eyes widen, and after a moment he separates from Vivian.

VIVIAN

I knew you'd realize it, Nick, I knew you'd come back to me.

Nick isn't listening to her at all, instead focused on the song.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)
 You have to come back to California
 with me, we need to spend Christmas
 together tomorrow.

He still isn't paying her any attention, something she notices.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)
 Nick? Nick are you listening to me?

Still, no acknowledgement from him. He's in deep thought.

INT. CASTAWAY'S - NIGHT

Nick very briefly remembers back to signing on stage with Megan.

EXT. TOWN COMMON - MOMENTS LATER

Back to the present. Nick smiles as he thinks back and continues listening to the song.

INT. CASTAWAY'S - NIGHT

Nick thinks back to almost kissing Megan below the mistletoe.

EXT. TOWN COMMON - MOMENTS LATER

Nick laughs lightly to himself, throwing Vivian off.

EXT. TERRY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Nick thinks back to kissing Megan in the snow.

EXT. TOWN COMMON - MOMENTS LATER

VIVIAN
 Nick? Nick, are you even listening
 to me? Did you hear what I said?

Nick snaps out of it and looks directly at Vivian. His family continue to watch his every move.

NICK
 You know what? I did hear you. I
 heard you loud and clear... and I
 want nothing to do with you.

Her face drops as the rest of his family smiles.

NICK (CONT'D)

You can apologize all you want, but at the end of the day, it doesn't mean anything. You showed your true colors to me the first time around, and I'll never forget that. You don't care about me... you only care about the life I can provide you. You're selfish and you only care about yourself... find someone else to use.

Katelyn in particular smiles wide, proud, as she watches Nick put Vivian in her place.

NICK (CONT'D)

You and I will NEVER be together again... it's OVER!

Nick storms past her and into the crowd. Vivian remain behind, shocked and angry.

VIVIAN

Nick! Nick, don't you walk away from me! You're gonna regret this for the rest of your life!

Nick smiles and he walks away, refusing to turn back around.

Vivian turns to the rest of the family who are all smirking at her.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

What are you all staring at!

Katelyn giggles.

KATELYN

I think we're staring at someone who just got rejected.

They all burst out laughing as a mortified Vivian runs away.

EXT. TOWN COMMON - LATER

Megan, still looking incredibly upset and distraught, wanders through the crowd with her head down.

After a few moments, Katelyn and Luke catch up to her.

KATELYN
Megan! Megan, hey!

She replies slowly and with little passion in her voice.

MEGAN
Oh... hey, guys.

KATELYN
We've been looking all over for
you. Did Nick find you yet?

She shakes her head.

MEGAN
I think he's busy with Vivian right
now.

KATELYN
What? No, he isn't!

MEGAN
I saw them together before! They
were hugging and...

KATELYN
She showed up, but he told her to
leave. He doesn't love her Megan...
he loves you.

Megan snickers.

MEGAN
Yeah, sure.

LUKE
She's telling the truth. Right
after Vivian showed up he told her
to get lost. He doesn't want
anything to do with her.

KATELYN
He cares about you. Ever since we
were kids, all he's ever wanted was
you. He's been in love with you
since we were in high school.

Megan sighs.

MEGAN
It doesn't matter. He's just going
to leave again anyways.

KATELYN

I don't think he will... he wants to stay here, he... he just needs a reason.

Megan shakes her head.

MEGAN

Maybe... but it's not gonna be me.

She turns and starts to walk away.

DJ

Alright, folks, is everyone having a good time!?

The crowd cheers.

DJ (CONT'D)

I've been cranking the tunes all day, so now it's time to switch things up a bit. We've had a request for a duet singalong, so without further adieu, please welcome to the stage Nick Coen and Megan Scott!

Megan stops in her tracks and spins around to look at the DJ booth.

Nick is standing on the gazebo with a microphone in hand.

They make eye contact and he waves her up to the stage.

Just as the music starts to play, Megan reaches the edge of the gazebo. Nick leans over to talk to her.

NICK

Come on up here!

MEGAN

Nick, what are you doing?

NICK

Well, it looks like I'm doing a very lonely duet.

MEGAN

Just stop, this is stupid.

Nick puts his mouth up to the microphone and starts to sing, a smirk on his face.

NICK
Baby, it's cold outside...

MEGAN
Nick, stop it! This is dumb.

NICK
Baby, it's cold outside...

Megan shakes her head, looking slightly annoyed.

He removes the mic from his mouth and cover it with his hand.

NICK (CONT'D)
Megan... please, just... I'm really trying right now. I'm singing a duet by myself in front of a thousand people to try and make you smile... Are you really gonna leave me hanging like this?

For a few moments, she remains stoic, but as they stare at each other, she finally cracks a smile. Nick smiles back.

MEGAN
Give me the other microphone.

She runs up the stairs and joins him on stage, where the two give an impassioned performance of the song.

MEGAN (CONT'D)
My mother will start to worry...

NICK
Beautiful what's your hurry?

MEGAN
My father will be pacing the floor.

NICK
Listen to the fireplace roar.

Nick gives her a spin. They're having a great time.

MEGAN
So really I'd better scurry.

NICK
Beautiful please don't hurry.

MEGAN
Well maybe just a half a drink more!

NICK
I'll put some records on while I
pour!

NICK AND MEGAN
Baby it's cold...

They look at each other, smiling, and belt out the final line
in its big, triumphant - yet totally out of tune - glory.

NICK AND MEGAN (CONT'D)
Baby it's cold... out... side!

As soon as the last lines is done, Nick gives Megan a huge
hug, which he turns into a dip and a big kiss. The crowd goes
absolutely wild, especially Katelyn and Luke who watch from
the front row.

They slowly finish their kiss, and stand up to bow to the
applauding crowd.

They look at each other and smile.

INT. THE HENRY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Megan stands at the kitchen table placing saran wrap and tin
foil over a cooked casserole.

A caption briefly pops up, reading "One Year Later."

NICK (O.S.)
Almost ready?

MEGAN
Just about!

Nick pops into the room wearing his coat and a scarf.

NICK
We gotta get a move on!

Megan laughs.

MEGAN
I know, we have such a long trip
ahead of us.

Nick laughs as well and gives her a kiss on the cheek.

As Megan continues to wrap the casserole, we see that she is
wearing and engagement ring on her finger.

MEGAN (CONT'D)
Alright, I'm all good. Shall we?

Nick smiles.

NICK
We shall.

The two turn and walk out of the kitchen. As they do, they pass a huge, beautiful Christmas tree, covered in ornaments.

In particular, the heart shaped candy cane ornament that Big Dan had given them at the tree farm is front and center, with a photograph of the two of them behind it.

EXT. THE HENRY'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Nick and Megan walk outside, where there is beautiful snow all over the front lawn.

NICK
Wow, we really got a white
Christmas this year!

MEGAN
I know, it's so beautiful.

They walk down their driveway and look both ways into the street. No cars are coming, so they cross over... directly into Nick's parents' driveway.

As they cross, we see that a "SOLD" sign has been placed over the "For Sale" Remax sign that was previously on the lawn, revealing that they have bought the Henry's home that was on the market at the start of the film.

INT. NICK'S PARENTS' HOUSE - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Nick and Megan walk in, where Carrie is of course standing by the stove whipping something up. Carrie sets the casserole down on the counter.

NICK
Hey, mom.

Carrie turns around and gives him a huge hug.

CARRIE
Merry Christmas, Nicky!

She turns to Megan and gives her a huge hug as well.

MEGAN
Merry Christmas, Carrie.

CARRIE
Merry Christmas, honey. What's that?

MEGAN
We brought a green bean casserole.

NICK
It won't be as good as Gramie's used to be, but we tried to use the same recipe so hopefully we didn't mess it up too bad.

Carrie takes it from the counter.

CARRIE
Aw, I love it! I'm sure it'll be delicious.

NICK
Where's everyone else?

CARRIE
They're in the kitchen, go make yourself at home.

INT. NICK'S PARENTS' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Nick and Megan, each carrying a glass of wine, enter the room where Luke and Katelyn are already sitting on the couch along with Marty. Each is drinking a glass of egg nog and wearing a Christmas sweater as they play scrabble. Luke has his arm around Katelyn.

The room is festive as can be - huge Christmas tree with presents underneath, stockings and decorations everywhere.

NICK
Hey, everyone!

The group all look up with a smile.

MARTY
Hey, Nicky! Megan!

KATELYN
There you guys are! We didn't think you were every going to show up!

NICK
We hit traffic, what can I say?

Katelyn rolls her eyes as she gives him a hug. The rest of the group all trade hugs with him and Megan as well as they exchange general pleasantries.

LUKE
So, Nick, when's it coming out?

Nick smiles and tries to act modest.

NICK
Oh, who knows?

KATELYN
Come on, give us the details!

MARTY
Yeah, stop being Mister Modest!

Nick laughs and rolls his eyes.

KATELYN
Megan, you have to give us the information if he won't.

Megan smiles.

MEGAN
Well... he wanted to keep it a secret, but...

They all wait with bated breath and she looks at Nick with a smile.

MEGAN (CONT'D)
If we turn on the Heartfelt Channel in about an hour we can watch it live!

They all start to cheer as Nick tries to wave them off.

NICK
It's no big deal, really!

KATELYN
Nick, are you kidding! It's your latest movie! We have to watch it!

LUKE

We're definitely watching it!
Christmas in Garland - I wonder
where you got the inspiration for
that one!

He gives Nick a wink and a poke.

NICK

Alright, fine, fine, we can watch
it!

Carrie walks in with a cheese platter and sets it down.

KATELYN

This is so exciting!

LUKE

Seriously, congratulations, man.

Megan gives him a kiss on the cheek.

MEGAN

That's our Mister Hollywood.

Nick picks up his glass of wine and holds it up.

NICK

I want to make a toast.

Everyone else picks up their glass as well.

NICK (CONT'D)

A little over a year ago, if you
told me that I'd be moving from big
city California to small town New
England, I'd tell you that you were
crazy.

Everyone chuckles.

NICK (CONT'D)

But here I am. Here we all are. I
honestly didn't know what to expect
coming home last year, but when I
got here, there was something I'd
really been missing.

Everyone smiles as he continues to speak.

NICK (CONT'D)

Sometimes it takes being away for a while to realize what's really important, and when I came back, I realized exactly what my life had been lacking. Family...

He looks to Katelyn and his parents who all smile back.

NICK (CONT'D)

Old friends...

He looks to Luke who nods back.

NICK (CONT'D)

My future wife.

He smiles at Megan.

NICK (CONT'D)

Coming back was the best thing to happen to me... and I'm sorry it took so long for it to happen... But I'm here now... and I'm never going anywhere again. Because... this is where I belong. It's where my heart is. It's where I'm SUPPOSED to be. Merry Christmas, everyone. Cheers.

Everyone else repeats the "Merry Christmas" and they all cheers.

From the kitchen we hear a timer go off, putting Carrie on high alert.

CARRIE

That's the potatoes!

She scurries out of the room as everyone else laughs and settles down on the couch, continuing their small talk as "Let It Snow" starts to play over their conversation, drowning out any sound from the scene.

Two candy canes in the shape of a heart appear on screen, with the words "The End" written in garland on the inside.

FADE OUT.