

Designing Christmas

By

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FADE IN

EXT. MIDDLE CLASS SUBURBS - DAY

Spring's warm touch bathes the atmosphere with promises of things to come, while plants awaken, preparing their buds like guests getting ready for a grand ball.

KATHLEEN MYERS (35) walks out dressed in a chic business suit and briefcase. Once beat down, but now happily divorced. The mother of two.

Climbing into her small sedan, she drives away.

INT. INTERIOR DECORATING AND DESIGN COMPANY - DAY

A sparsely furnished reception area. A large sign reading; "ProDesign - Interior Decorators" arches across the wall behind the RECEPTIONIST'S desk.

Pulse racing, hands sweating, Kathleen gathers her courage and steps forward.

KATHLEEN

Kathleen Myers. I have a job interview with Mr. Parks.

RECEPTIONIST

Please have a seat. I'll let him know you're here.

Kathleen sits and picks up a magazine. She thumbs through without seeing, her shaking hands nullifies an attempted air of confidence.

The office door opens and a YOUNG WOMAN steps out followed by MR. PARKS.

PARKS

Thank you for coming. I'll be in contact in a day or two.

They shake hands and the woman leaves.

RECEPTIONIST

Ms. Myers is here for her appointment.

PARKS

Please come in, Ms. Myers.

Kathleen follows him into his office with all the confidence of a child sent to the principal's office.

INT. CAR - DAY

Kathleen opens the door and throws her brief case in. Behind the wheel, she puts head in hands. Failure is a bummer.

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

The car pulls up to Eastside Elementary, a plain brick building that resembles a prison more than a place of learning.

A GROUP OF CHILDREN, screaming with excitement, stand with a TEACHER.

Kathleen walks around the car just as DANIELLE (6) runs towards her. A hug later, she opens the door and Danielle climbs into her car seat.

INT. MYER'S RESIDENCE - DAY

The foyer looks like a page out of Better Homes and Garden. In fact, the whole house is a testament to Kathleen's designing talent.

Danielle runs down the hall to her room.

KATHLEEN

Put your backpack up and get some play clothes on. Jackson has a game tonight. We have to leave in half an hour.

KITCHEN - SAME

Kathleen makes two sandwiches; one she puts on the table with some milk, the other she starts eating. She yells down the hall:

KATHLEEN

There's a sandwich on the table for you.

Switching on the laptop, she's checks emails when one causes her hesitate. She clicks on it. Excited, she types rapidly, lost in the moment. Danielle walks in, sits at the table, and starts eating.

(CONTINUED)

DANIELLE

I couldn't find my other red shoe  
so I put a blue one on.

KATHLEEN

(still typing)

Okay.

DANIELLE

Do you think Lucy will be at the  
game?

KATHLEEN

I'm sure she will.

DANIELLE

Good, I've got a secret to tell  
her. When do we leave?

KATHLEEN

I said a half hour.

DANIELLE

But that was a half hour ago.

Kathleen looks at her watch.

KATHLEEN

Oh, my gosh. We have to go.

She jumps up.

KATHLEEN

Are you finished eating?

Danielle looks at her half eaten sandwich. She sighs.

DANIELLE

I guess so.

KATHLEEN

Get your jacket. And get one for  
Jackson while you're at it.

DANIELLE

Okay.

FRONT DOOR

They meet. Kathleen helps to put her jacket on and it's out the door.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - LATE AFTERNOON

They walk to the bleachers. It's a beautiful sunny day, perfect for a baseball game. Cheering PARENTS fill the benches.

DANIELLE

There's Lucy.

She runs ahead.

Kathleen spies her friend MICHELLE BLACK (25). She squeezes by a few people and sits beside her.

MICHELLE

You missed the start.

KATHLEEN

Sorry. I got an email from my college.

Kathleen finds her son.

EXT. PLAYING FIELD - SAME

JACKSON (12) guarding second base.

BLEACHERS - SAME

She waves.

KATHLEEN (CONT.)

They're having a contest. The winner gets a spot on a new reality series.

MICHELLE

What kind of series?

KATHLEEN

Whoever wins will be paired with a builder and given an old house to update and then decorate for Christmas. The winner gets cash and a chance to work for Design

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

KATHLEEN (cont'd)  
Magic: the biggest design company  
in America.

MICHELLE  
Where will the house be?

PLAYING FIELD - ON JACKSON

The ball is hit right to Jackson. He catches it and throws  
it to first base.

BLEACHERS - SAME

Kathleen stands, clapping.

KATHLEEN  
Whooo, way to go Jackson.  
(to Michelle)  
I don't know. It didn't say.

She returns to her seat.

MICHELLE  
But what about the kids? Their  
schooling?

KATHLEEN  
Actually, I was so excited, I  
didn't even think about it.

MICHELLE  
You already applied?

KATHLEEN  
That's why I was late. I guess if  
it was really necessary I could  
home school them. To work for a  
company like Design Magic would be  
a dream come true.

WIDE ANGLE - BALL FIELD

The inning is over. The teams switch sides.

BLEACHERS - SAME

MICHELLE

Why are you killing yourself? With your alimony and child support from John, you have plenty without having to work. And it's not as though he can't afford it.

KATHLEEN

Because I don't want to be dependent on him for any longer than I have to. Receiving child support is one thing, he owes them that, but I want to be totally free from him.

MICHELLE

Yea, I can understand that.

KATHLEEN

And being an interior designer is something I always wanted to do.

MICHELLE

And you're good at it.

KATHLEEN

Thank you.

MICHELLE

I have just one question.

KATHLEEN

What's that?

MICHELLE

Why does Danielle have one red shoe and one blue shoe?

KATHLEEN

Truthfully, I have no idea.

INT. MYER'S RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Toys scattered about spoil the "showroom" look. On the mantle, pictures of the Kathleen's and the kids smile down. Those of the ex-husband are glaring by their absence.

Kathleen flops down in a chair.

(CONTINUED)

KATHLEEN

Okay, you two, jump on your homework. Bedtime is not far away.

JACKSON

Will we be going to dad's for spring break again?

KATHLEEN

We'll cross that bridge when we come to it.

JACKSON

Mom, it's only two weeks away.

KATHLEEN

Are you sure?

JACKSON

Uh, yea. Everyone at school is talking about it. Last break before school is out - remember?

KATHLEEN

Okay, I'm sorry. I've been concentrating on my school work so much, I lost track of time.

JACKSON

It's okay. It happens to the best of us.

Kathleen throws a pillow at him.

KATHLEEN

Do you want to go?

DANIELLE

Yeaaaa.

JACKSON

We always go. Dad does really neat stuff with us.

DANIELLE

Yea, last time we went to the beach.

KATHLEEN

Well, I definitely can't compete with that.



JACKSON  
So, how did your interview go?

KATHLEEN  
Didn't. The job was already taken.

JACKSON  
You'll nail it next time.

Jackson grabs the pillow. Holding it close he twirls and bumps Danielle.

JACKSON  
And he blocks the attempt to get the ball, sets himself for the shot....

He throws it into Kathleen's lap.

JACKSON  
And he scores!

Jumping up and down like Rocky, he runs to his room with Danielle on his heels.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

A BMW sits in the driveway like a prize thoroughbred among draft horses. JOHN MYERS (40), a corporate executive and arrogant SOB who believes his money and position can get him anything, walks to the door. Kathleen opens it. She stands a moment, arms crossed, before moving over and letting him in.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

KATHLEEN  
You're a little early.

JOHN  
No, Kath, I'm right on time. You just haven't entered the world, yet.

Jackson walks into the hallway.

JACKSON  
Hey, dad.

Danielle runs down the hall, arms out.

(CONTINUED)

DANIELLE

Daddy.

JOHN

Hey, pumpkin.

John picks her up and tosses her in the air.

JOHN

You two ready for spring break?

JACKSON

You have no idea.

JOHN

I found the greatest place. You can drive mini cars, it has a three acre miniature golf course, horseback riding...

DANIELLE

I want the horses.

JOHN

Whitewater rafting.

JACKSON

Sounds great.

DANIELLE

Mommy, can't you come?

Her smile is a bit too cynical.

KATHLEEN

No, honey. This is your time to be with your dad. Mommy's just get in the way.

JACKSON

Mom.

JOHN

Don't make the kids feel guilty. You should be glad they have one parent able to provide a good vacation.

KATHLEEN

Actually, I am. I know they'll have a great time. And, if things go according to plan, I'll soon be in a position to give them one, myself.

(CONTINUED)

JACKSON

Mom's been going to night school to be an interior decorator.

JOHN

Yea, I hear they make a fabulous income. Well, shall we go?

He puts Danielle down.

JOHN

Go get your stuff.

Danielle runs down the hall. Jackson follows more sedately, looking behind to his parents.

JOHN

I can't believe the judge gave you custody.

KATHLEEN

It was the right thing for the children.

JOHN

Bull. You may have them now, but don't count on it staying this way.

KATHLEEN

You won't take my children away from me.

John's reply is cut off by Danielle running back with her backpack. She hands it to her father.

DANIELLE

Bye, Mommy.

Kathleen gives her a big kiss.

KATHLEEN

Good-bye, you two. Remember, I love you bunches.

As the door closes, Kathleen implodes. Her back against the wall, she wraps her arms around her stomach to keep the fear from bursting out. Why does he always have to win?

INT. HOUSE - OFFICE - DAY

Kathleen works on her computer. Intent. It's now more critical than ever that she make this happen. She sees something and writes it down. As she scrolls, the doorbell rings. Reluctant, she gets up to answer.

OVER THE SHOULDER - DOOR

She is met by STEVEN SELBY (30'S) holding a microphone. Behind him LESTER, his camera man, points the camera at her face.

STEVEN

Are you Kathleen Myers?

What the heck?

KATHLEEN

Yes.

EXT. MYER'S RESIDENCE - DOOR - SAME

STEVEN

I'm Steven Selby with Upson University.

KATHLEEN

That's the college I've been taking my classes with.

STEVEN

And do you remember entering a contest a while ago?

KATHLEEN

Yes.

STEVEN

Well, I'm pleased to announce, you've won.

Deer in headlights.

STEVEN

It's okay, you can breath.

Kathleen takes deep breaths, fanning herself with her hand.

(CONTINUED)

STEVEN

Actually, this happens a lot. You mind if we come in?

INT. FOYER - SAME

Kathleen looks around. Is the house in order? Are things picked up? She steps aside.

KATHLEEN

Please.

TRAVELING DOWN THE HALL - SAME

She leads them to the next room, picking up a doll along the way and discretely tossing it behind a chair.

KATHLEEN

We can go into the den.

INT. DEN - SAME

Steven looks around. He whistles low. The camera man pans the room taking in the showroom finished look.

STEVEN

Did you do this room?

KATHLEEN

Yes.

STEVEN

You're quite talented.

KATHLEEN

Thank you. Please, have a seat.

STEVEN

For camera purposes, we'll need to sit close. Can we bring these two chairs together?

He indicates two Queen Ann chairs sitting at opposite sides of a fireplace.

KATHLEEN

Of course.

(CONTINUED)

LESTER

The fireplace will make a good background.

KATHLEEN

Would either of you like some refreshments? I have some ice tea, water..?

Steve looks at his crewman who shakes his head.

STEVEN

No, thanks. We're fine. Now, if you'll have a seat, we can begin the interview.

Kathleen sits down.

KATHLEEN

Interview?

On camera? Now? She's fighting to relax. Deep breaths - don't clench the hands.

STEVEN

Do you remember on the application, it says the contest was for the "chance" to win a spot on a reality show?

KATHLEEN

Yes. I did wonder about that when I read it.

STEVEN

Here is how it works. For the show, itself, there will be only ten teams competing. The show will follow these teams for approximately eight months while they restore and redesign these old houses. We had thousands of applications, of which fifty were chosen.

KATHLEEN

So, it wasn't just Upson University holding the contest.

STEVEN

No, they were just one of several. The contest was held on a national level.

(CONTINUED)

KATHLEEN

Wow, I didn't know. So, how is the final decision made?

STEVEN

Which brings us to why I'm here. In ten minutes or less, you're going to tell me why you deserve to be the winner.

KATHLEEN

Now?

She looks down. Her clothes are for comfort, not a camera. Oh, God, what does the rest of her look like?

STEVEN

It's our producer's dry sense of humor. He doesn't want to give the winners time to construct a thought-out reason. He wants it fresh and gut-level.

KATHLEEN

Okay, just give me a moment.

She stands up and checks her hair in the mirror over the fireplace. She twirls back down. Not too bad. It will have to do.

STEVEN

What were you thinking when you filled out your application? What is your deepest desire concerning this contest?

Several deep breaths.

STEVEN

Careful, you don't want to hyper-ventilate.

Close eyes, breath, relax, sigh. Think. Dig deep.

KATHLEEN

My deepest desire is to do something I've wanted to do almost my entire life. When I walk into a room, it's like an art canvas waiting to be painted on. It's not what I want to do, it's who I am. I want to make my children proud of me. To give them the nice

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(CONTINUED)

KATHLEEN (cont'd)  
things they see the other kids  
have, but I can't afford. But I  
also want to know that, I can do  
this. I married right out of high  
school and divorced two years  
ago. Being at home is all I've  
ever done. I love my kids and my  
home, but I want to know what it's  
like to love a career as well.

STEVEN  
That was great.

LESTER  
And the first time.

Steve stands up to leave.

STEVEN  
Most interior designers are  
perfectionists. They want us to do  
multiple takes before they are  
satisfied.

KATHLEEN  
Which is rather against the point.

STEVEN  
Exactly.

He extends his hand which Kathleen takes.

STEVEN  
Thank you for your time. I'm  
sincere when I say, good luck. You  
should hear something in three to  
four weeks.

KATHLEEN  
Thank you.

STEVEN  
We'll find ourselves out.

LESTER  
Bye.

KATHLEEN  
Good bye.

Kathleen jumps up, drops to one knee and gives herself a one  
arm fist-pump.



INT. HOUSE - DAY

Kathleen works at her desk. She hears the door BURST open seconds before Danielle rushes in.

DANIELLE  
Mommy, we're home.

Jackson follows with a teen-age saunter.

JACKSON  
Hey, mom.

Kathleen hugs Danielle tight. A week without her kids is six days too long.

KATHLEEN  
Oh, I missed you soooo much.

DANIELLE  
I got to ride a real horse.

KATHLEEN  
You did?

She looks up at Jackson. He's smiling, but something is not quite right. Kathleen hesitates, wondering. Back to Danielle.

KATHLEEN  
That is so great. Tell you what, I'll get dinner started while you put your things away then you can tell me all about it.

DANIELLE  
Okay.

Danielle runs out.

Standing, Kathleen places her hand on Jackson's head as he passes. She turns it to see a large scratch. Her eyebrows go up.

JACKSON  
Minor go-cart accident.

KATHLEEN  
That's it, you're not driving until you're thirty.

Jackson smiles. He turns pensive.

(CONTINUED)

JACKSON

Dad says he wants to have custody;  
that he can support us better than  
you can.

Here it is. John has brought the kids into it, plowing  
through feelings without a thought for the consequences.

KATHLEEN

So, he says. And the truth is,  
he's right. He can provide for you  
better than I can, even if I got a  
job. I just happen to love you  
more.

JACKSON

Which is why we want to stay  
here. Dad's cool and all, but even  
when he was with us, he was never,  
you know, with us. We don't have  
expensive stuff, but at least  
you're here when we get home.

KATHLEEN

But if I get a job, that may  
change.

JACKSON

You'd still be here more than Dad  
ever was. Personally, I think  
you're a really great mom.

Kathleen gives him a hug.

KATHLEEN

Thanks, that means more than you  
know.

Jackson grins.

JACKSON

Which is why we're ordering pizza  
tonight, right?

KATHLEEN

Did I just get sideswiped by a  
slick sales pitch?

JACKSON

What can I say? I'm the best.

He runs down the hall before Kathleen can find something to  
throw.

## LIVING ROOM - EVENING

An intimate family moment eating pizza and watching a movie. It shows why you don't need money and expensive vacations to be close.

KATHLEEN

By the way, did I tell you guys I won a contest?

JACKSON

What kind of contest?

KATHLEEN

One that gives me the chance to be on a reality TV show.

JACKSON

That's awesome.

DANIELLE

Do I get to be on TV? I can do my ballet.

KATHLEEN

I don't know. First, I have to win.

JACKSON

Will the film crew come here?

KATHLEEN

No, ten teams will compete to restore and then decorate an old house for Christmas. We would have to go to wherever the house is. The winner gets cash and a prestigious job with a leading interior design company.

JACKSON

It sounds like just what you need. But what about school?

KATHLEEN

I don't know. I'm trying to take it one step at a time. First I have to win.

DANIELLE

You'll will, I'm sure of it.

INT. - GROCERY STORE - DAY

Kathleen pushes Danielle down an aisle when her phone rings. She takes it out.

KATHLEEN

Hello?

She listens for a moment. Her arms fly up as she starts screaming.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Kathleen packs her suitcase. Danielle runs in.

DANIELLE

I found my red shoe.

KATHLEEN

That's great, hon. Do you have the clothes you want to take laid out for me.

DANIELLE

Some of them.

KATHLEEN

Okay, I'm just about finished. I'll be in there in a moment.

Danielle runs out. Kathleen glances around the room. Seeing a picture of the children, she takes it on a whim, places it in her suitcase and closes it. She walks out.

DANIELLE'S ROOM

Typical child's room dominated by horses and ballet. Clothes are strewn everywhere with a big pile on the bed. Kathleen walks in.

KATHLEEN

Danielle, what are you doing?

Danielle pops out of the closet.

DANIELLE

Now I've lost my other blue shoe.

(CONTINUED)

KATHLEEN

Well, let's get this mess  
straightened up and maybe you'll  
find it. Come on, we have to  
hurry.

Kathleen pulls out clothes, places them in a suitcase. She  
picks up a party dress.

KATHLEEN

You sure you want to take this?

DANIELLE

Uh, huh. Girls have to look good  
wherever they go.

KATHLEEN

Where in the world did you hear  
that?

DANIELLE

At school. Kindergarten can be  
tough, you know.

KATHLEEN

Yea, I remember. There were boys  
at school who used to pick on me a  
lot.

DANIELLE

Know what you mean. Boys are a  
real pain in the bu..

KATHLEEN

That's okay.

Kathleen puts the last item in.

KATHLEEN

There, that should do it.

Danielle dives under the bed.

DANIELLE

And here's my blue shoe.

She throws it on top. Kathleen zips up the case.

KATHLEEN

You're all set. Can you manage  
this?

Danielle pulls it off the bed and drops it.

DANIELLE

Oh, yea.

She drags it out the door. Kathleen looks around, then follows her.

HALLWAY

Kathleen knocks on Jackson's door. He opens it.

KATHLEEN

All set?

JACKSON

Yea. Just give me a minute.

KATHLEEN

Sure. I'll be taking things to the car. We need to hurry.

EXT. - HOUSE - DAY

Kathleen carries her suitcase to the car, passing Danielle who still drags hers.

KATHLEEN

Need help?

DANIELLE

No, I got it.

Kathleen opens the trunk and puts her case inside. When Danielle arrives, she adds hers. Jackson appears at the door.

KATHLEEN

Come on, Jackson, we need to go.

Jackson walks up and puts his case in.

JACKSON

What's the hurry?

KATHLEEN

I want to be gone before your father finds out.

Jackson ducks his head.

(CONTINUED)

KATHLEEN

You didn't?

JACKSON

Sorry. I told him the other night when he called. I didn't see anything wrong with it.

KATHLEEN

It's okay. You didn't know. Maybe if we hurry..

A familiar BMW drives up.

DANIELLE

Daddy.

JACKSON

Too late.

Kathleen sighs, resigned.

KATHLEEN

Take Danielle inside, would you?

(To Danielle)

Honey, would you go inside and take one more look around for me? See if there's anything I've missed?

Danielle runs in. Jackson follows, throwing glances over his shoulder. John walks up. He's a bull ready to fight.

JOHN

Where are you going and why didn't you tell me?

KATHLEEN

I'm not really sure where we're going. It's someplace in upper New York.

JOHN

You're leaving and you have no idea where you're going?

KATHLEEN

The producer doesn't want the location made public. He's calling me tomorrow with the exact location

JOHN

You can't take them.

(CONTINUED)

KATHLEEN

It's only for a few months.

JOHN

Eight months.

KATHLEEN

Eight months. So? We'll be back.

JOHN

I don't like my kids being on a trashy reality show.

KATHLEEN

They're not the ones who are going to be on it, I am.

JOHN

You're just going to make a fool of yourself like you always do.

Pause

KATHLEEN

(Out loud)

Kids, we have to go. Say good-bye to your father.

JOHN

This isn't over. When I get custody, you'll be lucky to see them on leap-year.

Danielle runs up. John picks her up into a swinging hug. Jackson walks up.

JOHN

(To Jackson)

I want to know where you are and everything that's happening.

JACKSON

Sure. I'll call you sometime.

KATHLEEN

In the car, you two.

Kathleen belts Danielle in her car seat with trembling hands. In the driver's seat, she glances at John then SLAMS the door.

John watches them pull out and leave.



EXT. RURAL ROAD, UPPER NEW YORK - DAY

The sign the car passes says Glenloche. A block long, it looks like a cross between Mayberry and Thomas Kincaid with a little Daniel Boone thrown in.

KATHLEEN

We're here.

JACKSON

Wow, I feel like we've gone back a few centuries.

KATHLEEN

It is rather quaint, isn't it?

JACKSON

I prefer rustic.

KATHLEEN

Remember, we're not moving here for good. I hope they have good phone coverage.

JACKSON

I hope they have electricity.

They pull up to The White Stag restaurant.

KATHLEEN

Here is where we are supposed to meet Steven. Is everyone hungry?

DANIELLE

Yeaaa.

JACKSON

Okay, we get the point. She is so dramatic.

KATHLEEN

Unlike others.

JACKSON

At least I don't sing to my teddy bears.

KATHLEEN

No, you sword fought your desk chair.

(CONTINUED)

JACKSON

That was a long time ago.

Jackson gets out to end the conversation.

KATHLEEN

(To herself)

And where does the time go?

INT. - RESTAURANT - DAY

A bell RINGS when they enter. The room is decorated with hanging plaids and pictures of golfing and castles. An elk head hangs over a large fireplace.

KATHLEEN

This is so cute.

JACKSON

Countrified.

KATHLEEN

Cultured. Come on, grab a seat.

They sit at a scarred wooden table. Kathleen rubs her hand over the wood.

KATHLEEN

This looks like it was hand made.

MAGGIE, the waitress, puts down two menus. She's Scots, wearing a tartan pinned at her shoulder. She speaks with a strong accent.

MAGGIE

Aye, it's all hand made. This place is over a hundred years old. And what would you be wanting to drink?

KATHLEEN

I'll have sweet tea.

JACKSON

Do you have Dr. Pepper?

MAGGIE

That we do.

JACKSON

I'll take that.

(CONTINUED)

MAGGIE

And how about you, lass?

DANIELLE

I'm not a lass. I'm a girl.

KATHLEEN

That's what lass means. She'll have a chocolate milk.

MAGGIE

Coming right up.

Jackson opens his menu. He waits until she leaves.

JACKSON

Rustic.

KATHLEEN

Will you cut it out? It's a different culture. Enjoy it.

They look at the menus.

JACKSON

What is haggis?

KATHLEEN

I'll tell you later, just trust me you don't want it. Danielle, you want a grilled cheese?

DANIELLE

With fries.

JACKSON

So, when is this guy supposed to show up?

Kathleen takes out her phone and presses numbers.

KATHLEEN

He's already in town. I'm supposed to call when we arrive.

(on phone)

Hello, Steven?... Yes, we're at the restaurant. We just ordered lunch... Okay, I'll see you then.

She cuts the call then puts the phone away.

(CONTINUED)

KATHLEEN

He'll be here in a few minutes.

Maggie returns with their drinks.

MAGGIE

Now, what can I get you.

JACKSON

I'll just take a cheeseburger and fries.

KATHLEEN

I'll have a grilled chicken sandwich with a side salad instead of fries, oil and vinegar dressing. Danielle wants a grilled cheese.

DANIELLE

With fries.

KATHLEEN

I'm bad. With fries.

MAGGIE

Coming right up.

Jackson looks around.

JACKSON

So, what is this?

KATHLEEN

It's Scottish. The family who owns this place must be from Scotland.

JACKSON

Where's that.

Kathleen stares at him.

JACKSON

Hey, I'm only twelve, I'm not a geology teacher.

KATHLEEN

Geography. Okay, I'll give you this one. Scotland is above England.

DANIELLE  
What's that on the wall?

KATHLEEN  
It's an elk.

DANIELLE  
Where's the rest of him? Is he  
standing behind the wall?

JACKSON  
No, silly, he's dead and they  
cut...

KATHLEEN  
Jackson, don't.

JACKSON  
But, they did.

KATHLEEN  
You don't have to give her all the  
grisly details.

The bells RINGS and Steven walks in.

KATHLEEN  
Saved by the bell.

He sits next to Jackson.

STEVEN  
Hey, everyone. I hope you had a  
good trip.

KATHLEEN  
Not too bad...

DANIELLE  
Boring.

KATHLEEN  
..for some of us.

STEVEN  
The house is not far away. It's a  
beautiful two story that's over a  
hundred years old.

JACKSON  
Does it have electricity?

STEVEN

Oh, yea. It has been fully renovated.

KATHLEEN

So, it's in fairly good shape.

STEVEN

Let's just say your carpenter is going to be very busy for a while. Speaking of which, we were lucky to find one that lives close by.

KATHLEEN

That's good to know. How many bedrooms does it have?

STEVEN

Three, all upstairs. It has one bathroom down stairs that was added about twenty years ago.

JACKSON

There's only one bathroom?

KATHLEEN

A hundred years ago, they didn't have bathrooms.

Maggie brings their food.

MAGGIE

Here ya be. Would the gentleman be wanting something too?

STEVEN

Just some coffee, thanks.

She leaves.

KATHLEEN

I know we talked briefly about the kids on the phone. You said they won't be a problem.

STEVEN

I don't see that it will. The cameraman will be there everyday, of course, but he'll be careful not to film them.

(CONTINUED)

KATHLEEN

I appreciate that. What about school in the fall?

STEVEN

School starts here in September. That gives you three months to decide if you want to send them to a local school or have a tutor.

JACKSON

Tutor.

KATHLEEN

I'll have to think about it. Danielle will only be in first grade so that shouldn't be a problem. I'll need to talk to the school about Jackson, though.

Maggie sets down Steven's coffee.

KATHLEEN

I can't tell you how grateful and excited I am about this opportunity.

STEVEN

The panel was impressed with your sincerity and your desire to take care of your children. They wanted to give you the opportunity.

KATHLEEN

I hope I live up to their expectations.

JACKSON

You'll be great, mom.

STEVEN

Just remember, you're not doing it for the judges.

He points his finger at the kids.

STEVEN

You're doing it for them.

Kathleen nods.

EXT. - RESTAURANT - DAY

They walk out.

STEVEN  
Just follow me.

KATHLEEN  
I'll be right behind you.

EXT. - MC PHEARSON HOUSE - DAY

Two cars drive up. Kathleen can't help but stare as she gets out. It's a two-story with three great trees around it. The house looks uncared for, the bushes overgrown.

KATHLEEN  
It's lovely.

JACKSON  
It's old.

KATHLEEN  
Quaint.

JACKSON  
Antiquated.

DANIELLE  
Let me out.

Free at last, Danielle runs towards the house. Kathleen makes a grab for her.

KATHLEEN  
No, Danny, stop. You never run into an old house you don't know. It could have a bad floor.

JACKSON  
No problem, it'll just create a nice shaft for the elevator to the basement.

KATHLEEN  
Here, Danielle, take my hand.



INT. - HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Age and dirt cover the furniture as though time had come to a standstill. Open wood beams arch above them in the same wood as the paneled floors. A huge fireplace stands at one wall. Old tartans cover the windows.

STEVEN

The house was owned by a guy named Angus McPhearson.

KATHLEEN

Scots.

STEVEN

As it turns out, the whole town is Scottish. Angus died a year ago. The family decided to sell the house rather than let it fall apart.

KATHLEEN

It's beautiful.

STEVEN

Well, not yet, but it will be by the time you get finished with it.

KATHLEEN

The furniture looks antique.

STEVEN

It'll look great with new, up-to-date stuff.

They go into the kitchen.

KATHLEEN

The cabinets look in good condition for being so old.

STEVEN

Of course, everything will have to be renovated. You'll be given a budget for new cabinets, appliances and furniture.

KATHLEEN

I can't wait to get my hands on it.

STEVEN

Your handyman will be doing the hard labor. He's allowed to hire

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

STEVEN (cont'd)

one man to work with him. You, of course, will have full rein to do all the interior decorating. You will be able to hire one person to help with the cleaning. Also, we've hired a local person to do the gardening.

KATHLEEN

What if I want something major changed, like a fireplace mantle?

STEVEN

You'll discuss it with Jamie, your builder. Renovating is his area and on his budget.

They enter another room.

KATHLEEN

This looks like it might have been a library or office. Look at that beautiful wood paneling.

She points to a large gap where a stone is missing from the fireplace.

KATHLEEN

Look at the size of that hole. It's big enough for a rat.

DANIELLE

Can I go outside and look around?

KATHLEEN

Sure. The house looks in decent shape.

JACKSON

Define decent.

KATHLEEN

Would you mind going with Danielle and watching her? These old places used to have wells and other things she could get hurt with.

Jackson leaves with Danielle.

STEVEN

We've managed to rent a cottage nearby. It's fully furnished and ready.

(CONTINUED)

KATHLEEN

Great. Is there a store close where I can pick up some groceries?

STEVEN

You'll have to go down the road about ten miles. Keep your receipts. We'll reimburse them each week.

KATHLEEN

Thank you. Let's go upstairs.

The banister wobbles as they climb up.

STEVEN

You'll need to be careful with this until Jamie can get to it.

#### UPSTAIRS BEDROOM

It's large with no closet and dominated by a four-poster bed. At a wall stands a dresser while a rug covers the wood floor.

KATHLEEN

They would not have had closets when this house was built. They used wardrobes. Look at the window frame and the molding, all hand carved. It's beautiful. Let's look at the other rooms.

#### SECOND BEDROOM

Painted murals of animals cover the walls.

KATHLEEN

This must have been a child's room. The artist was pretty good.

#### DOWNSTAIRS

They descend the stairs.

KATHLEEN

When will the film crew and builder arrive? What's his name?

(CONTINUED)

STEVEN

Jamie McKnight. He should be here tomorrow. You can expect the film crew either tomorrow or the next day. Your official beginning will be Monday.

KATHLEEN

Four days, I can hardly wait.

STEVEN

How about we step outside. I have some papers in the car that I need you to sign: A contract, liability, things like that.

INT. - COTTAGE - DAY

A small two bedroom house, more rustic than modern. The Myers family walk in carrying bags of groceries. They gaze around.

KATHLEEN

Not bad. Could use a bit of cleaning. It's a little old-fashioned in a charming sort of way.

JACKSON

Backwoods.

KATHLEEN

Character

JACKSON

Countrified

DANIELLE

Can someone help me?

Danielle almost drops a bag. Kathleen puts her bags down and takes one from her.

KATHLEEN

(To Jackson)

I'm going to have to talk to your English teacher about putting your vocabulary to work somewhere.

They walk into the kitchen.

## KITCHEN

The groceries are put on the table.

KATHLEEN  
How about something easy  
tonight? I got chicken strips,  
chips and salad.

DANIELLE  
Did you get ketchup.

KATHLEEN  
Would I dare serve chicken without  
it?

DANIELLE  
Yeaaa.

KATHLEEN  
Why don't you guys wash up and I'll  
get everything ready.

Kathleen places the chicken in the oven and opens the chip bag.

## INT. BEDROOM - EVENING

Kathleen and Danielle share a double bed. Pillows prop up Kathleen, her hands busy sketching on a pad.

DANIELLE  
I like sleeping next to you. It  
reminds me of when I was little.

KATHLEEN  
Yes, you've grown so big. Where  
has my little girl gone?

DANIELLE  
I'm right here.  
(Pause)  
Mommy, why doesn't daddy love you  
any more?

KATHLEEN  
I'm not sure I can explain  
it. It's a grown up thing. He  
just decided he loved someone else  
instead.

(CONTINUED)

DANIELLE

I've met her. She's not as nice as you are. And she smells funny, like Jackson's room.

KATHLEEN

Gross. Stale socks.

DANIELLE

And sweaty shirts.

KATHLEEN

Stinky shoes.

DANIELLE

Left over food, with ants crawling all over it.

KATHLEEN

He'd better not.

DANIELLE

Oh, yea. You should see under his bed.

KATHLEEN

And it's going to be there for eight months. I'll kill him.

Danielle giggles and snuggles under the blanket.

DANIELLE

Good-night mommy. I love you.

KATHLEEN

I love you, too, sweetheart.

Kathleen kisses Danielle on her forehead. Her eyes shine with resolve. Whatever it takes, that SOB is not going to get them.

INT. - HOUSE -LIVING ROOM - DAY

Kathleen and the kids walk in.

KATHLEEN

Hello?

JAMIE (O.C.)

In the kitchen.

KITCHEN - SAME

JAMIE McKNIGHT (35) is Scots but does not talk with an accent. He is a man used to ignoring the sighs of the women he passes. In a plain shirt, jeans and tool belt, he's ready for work. Presently, a spot on the ceiling concerns him and he disregards the family that walk in.

KATHLEEN

Good morning. You must be Jamie.

JAMIE

Good morning.

KATHLEEN

I'm Kathleen and this is Jackson and Danielle.

JAMIE

I know. The whole town is cackling about you like a bunch of hens.

Taken back.

KATHLEEN

I'm sorry, did I say something wrong?

Jamie turns around and freezes. Whatever he was expecting, it wasn't this beauty. He does some fast back-pedaling.

JAMIE

No, it's not you. I'm sorry. It's the people in town.

KATHLEEN

What's wrong?

Jamie shakes his head, the answer is on his tongue but Danielle interrupts.

DANIELLE

Mommy, can I go outside?

KATHLEEN

Yes, but be careful. Jackson will you watch her?

JACKSON

Built in babysitter - no problem. It'll cost you a pizza, though.

(CONTINUED)

KATHLEEN

We'll discuss it later.

Jamie watches them leave, a furrow between his perfect, black brows.

JAMIE

You'll need to be careful they don't get near the work site. I don't want to be swinging a board and hit one.

KATHLEEN

I'll do what I can. Now, can we talk about the project?

JAMIE

I was just looking over the kitchen to see what needed to be done. For as old as it is, this place is still in pretty good shape.

KATHLEEN

I'll be replacing the cabinets, and I'm still deciding if I want tile instead of wood flooring.

JAMIE

You know all of this is original? It's been here for over a hundred years.

KATHLEEN

And it looks it. When I searched the web-site of this design company, everything they do is modern and up-to-date. I'm not sure stainless steel appliances will go with this house, but everything else will be modern.

JAMIE

You're making a mistake.

KATHLEEN

I'll decide that.

As soon she says them, Kathleen regrets her words. This isn't John. She can let down her sword and shield.

KATHLEEN (CONT.)

When we were here yesterday, I noticed a sagging in the floor on

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)



KATHLEEN (CONT.) (cont'd)  
the back porch and going into the  
mud room.

JAMIE  
Yea, I told Angus I'd repair it for  
him, but he refused. It's not a  
hard fix.

KATHLEEN  
And there is a large hole in the  
stone around the fireplace in the  
next room.

JAMIE  
That's supposed to be there. It's  
how Nipper gets in.

KATHLEEN  
Nipper?

JAMIE  
Angus' ratting ferret. Nipper is  
the last in a long line of ferrets  
that have lived in this  
house. They keep out the mice and  
rats.

Oh, no, this is a non-happening event.

KATHLEEN  
I don't care if he scrubs the  
floors, I don't want him coming  
in. Please fill in the hole.

Jamie's jaw clenches. He spits out the words:

JAMIE  
Yes, Ma'am.

LIVING ROOM - SAME

The atmosphere has become chilly for this time of  
year. Kathleen chides herself, what is wrong with  
her? Time to start again. She indicates the red, blue and  
green tartans on the window.

KATHLEEN  
I admit, the colors are Christmasy,  
but I'm afraid I'll have to get  
real curtains.

Jamie takes the offering with a smile.

(CONTINUED)

JAMIE

Actually, Angus never cared about silly things like curtains. It wouldn't have been a problem except he like walking around the house in the buff.

KATHLEEN

Oh, no.

JAMIE

One night Miss Rose happened to walk by just in time to see him. She said the sight so terrified her that she clutched her chest and screamed.

KATHLEEN

She had a heart attack?

JAMIE

To hear her say. However, Harry at the hardware store told me she bought a pair of binoculars the very next day.

KATHLEEN

(laughing)

Oh, that's terrible.

JAMIE

When Angus heard about it, he put the tartan up. He said,  
(heavy Scots accent)  
I'll not be given that woman any shows lest she pays for them.

They leave the house, Kathleen's laughter following them.

EXT. - HOUSE - DAY

KATHLEEN

Where will you start?

JAMIE

There are some safety issues that need to be taken care of first. The rails on the stairs for one, and I noticed some wiring.

(CONTINUED)

KATHLEEN

Besides cleaning, my first few weeks will be simply planning things; color schemes, furniture, decorations, basically everything that makes a house a home.

JAMIE

This poor house hasn't been a home for decades.

KATHLEEN

That's sad. Everyone needs a family to love.

Jamie looks up at the house.

JAMIE

Not everyone. Some are just as happy being in their own little world.

KATHLEEN

And what happens when that world collapses?

JAMIE

They usually collapse with it.

BACKYARD - SAME

A large shed stands behind the house.

KATHLEEN

Is there anything in the building?

JAMIE

It's mostly empty.

KATHLEEN

We can use it to store the old furniture and cabinets.

DANIELLE (O.C.)

Hey, mommy, look at this.

Kathleen walks behind the shed where Danielle and Jackson stand beside some bushes.

KATHLEEN

What is it, honey?

(CONTINUED)

DANIELLE

Look.

Jackson pulls back limbs to reveal a hidden enclosure. He slips in.

KATHLEEN

Jackson, wait. You don't know what's in there.

Too late. Danielle ducks in behind him. Kathleen carefully scoots through the opening, not noticing that Jamie stays outside.

INT. - GAZEBO - DAY

Inside, like a jungle shrine, is a huge gazebo/greenhouse with an overgrown garden. Dappled light, shining past the outside trees and slashing through the broken ceiling tiles, streak the air and illuminate patches of wild growing roses and flowering shrubs. In the center, a large, dry fountain encircles a statue shaped like a young woman dancing. A lost world, magnificent even in neglect.

JACKSON

Isn't this awesome?

KATHLEEN

Wow, this was beautiful at one time.

DANIELLE

Look at the flowers.

KATHLEEN

Those are roses. Be careful, they have thorns.

JACKSON

This would make a great fort.

KATHLEEN

Not a good idea. Snakes like these types of places. There's too many things you can get hurt on.

JACKSON

Come on, we'll be careful.

Kathleen sighs, it's hard to tell them no.

(CONTINUED)

KATHLEEN

Tell you what. When the gardener comes, I'll have him check around and make sure it's safe. And, I'll have him trim the entrance so you can get in.

JACKSON

But that's what makes it a secret fort.

KATHLEEN

Trim entrance or you're not coming in.

JACKSON

All right.

Kathleen crawls back out.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Jamie stands waiting, arms crossed.

KATHLEEN

It's beautiful. We can have the gardener clean it up for the contest.

JAMIE

No.

KATHLEEN

What do you mean? It will help make the place look lovely. I can put a Christmas tree inside with hanging lights and...

JAMIE

(forceful, angry)

I said, no. That puts a end to it.

Jamie walks away leaving Kathleen speechless.

EXT. - HOUSE - DAY

The start day arrives. Jamie spreads out his power tools under an open tent, stretching out power cords and organizing.

To the side, a small group of LOCALS stand watching. They are angry and upset. But, why? One walks up to Jamie

(CONTINUED)

LOCAL

Och, Jamie, don't do this.

JAMIE

If I don't do it, they'll just send in an outsider. At least this way, I can minimize the change.

The man nods, reluctant.

LOCAL

Aye, there is that.

He returns to his friends.

The film van arrives bringing Steven and Lester. Steven walks over and shakes Jamie's hand.

STEVEN

Steven, the contact person for the project. Looks like you're ready to go.

JAMIE

James McKnight, and I'm as ready as I'll ever be.

STEVEN

I see we've stirred up an audience.

JAMIE

Nothing happens around here that doesn't draw the attention of everyone within a ten mile radius.

STEVEN

As long as they don't get in the way.

JAMIE

That is highly likely. Kathleen is inside to start the clean up.

STEVEN

Thanks.

INT. - HOUSE - DAY

Kathleen is in close conversation with IONA (50's), the cleaning help. She is, of course, Scots. Every imaginable cleaning tool they'll ever need sits around her. She's come prepared.

(CONTINUED)

Kathleen turns as Steven walks up. Behind him, Lester peers through the camera.

STEVEN

What's your agenda for the first day?

KATHLEEN

We have to clean before we do anything else. I'll need to ask the men to help us move the furniture into the shed out back. Then Iona and I roll up our sleeves and start work.

STEVEN

Okay. We'll be following you around. Just pretend we're not here. Once in a while I may interrupt and ask you a question if I feel the audience needs clarification on something.

Kathleen nods. The camera stays with Steven as Kathleen walks into the kitchen.

STEVEN

Okay, Lester, let's see how it's rolling.

VIEW FROM LESTER'S CAMERA

The camera wavers then steadies on Steven. He's looking around, setting up the shot.

STEVEN

Is everything looking good? Okay, roll it.

INT. - HOUSE, BEDROOM - DAY

Jamie and TWO MEN; SEAN, Jamie's helper and DUNCAN, the gardener, get the furniture ready to go outside. After they move a dresser, Sean bends down and picks something up. He hands it to Jamie as they walk by taking the dresser outside.

FOCUS ON

A small portrait of a young woman that looks just like the statue in the gazebo.

CLOSE ON

Jamie tenderly gazes and then softly caresses the face.

RESUME

Taking the dresser out, the men pass Kathleen walking in. At the sight of Jamie, she stops, feeling as though she's intruding on something special. He looks at her and quickly tucks the picture into his shirt pocket.

KATHLEEN

Sorry to interrupt. I was thinking about re-doing something on the downstairs fireplace mantle and wanted your opinion.

Jamie grimly nods and follows.

STUDY ROOM

Kathleen rubs a shine on the last window. The room is now spotless, the hardwood glowing with new life. Picking up her supplies, she turns and squeals, dropping everything.

In the middle of the floor is a small black/gray animal watching her. She eases a large circle around it and then runs out the door.

EXT. - HOUSE - DAY

Placing one end of his measuring tape to a plank of wood, Jamie zips it down and marks off his cut. His attention shifts when an agitated Kathleen literally runs under the tent canopy. She throws one arm towards the house.

KATHLEEN

There's an animal in the study. It looks like the biggest rat I've ever seen.

Jamie continues measuring.

(CONTINUED)



JAMIE

That's just Nipper. He won't bother you.

One small foot stomps the ground.

KATHLEEN

He needs to leave.

Jamie peers up at the men watching. They've heard her, in fact half the county probably heard her. They mumble among themselves. Jamie stands firm.

JAMIE

He can't leave. He lives here. Just work around him.

KATHLEEN

James McKnight, I am NOT going into that house with that animal roaming loose. You need to get it out.

Kathleen points to the house. NOW. Jamie throws down his pencil. Kathleen follows him wondering about the angry glares thrown her way from the group on the sidelines.

INT. - HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Jamie and Kathleen walk in to find Iona holding the ferret, scratching under his chin. She looks up when they enter.

IONA

Look who came to visit? I haven't seen lil' Nipper in ages.

KATHLEEN

How can you hold it? It looks like a big rat.

JAMIE

Nipper was born here. His ancestors came over with the first Scots settlers. He's the last of his line.

KATHLEEN

I don't care if he's the last of the Mohicans, I don't want him in the house while I'm here. What if he bites one of the children.

(CONTINUED)

IONA  
He doesn't bite.

Kathleen sees she's losing. Frustration, desperation.

KATHLEEN  
Then why is he called Nipper?

JAMIE  
He was the runt of the  
litter. Angus took one look at him  
and said,  
(Full Scottish accent)  
"You be a tiny lil' Nipper, aren't  
you?"

KATHLEEN  
Maybe we can find him a new home.

JAMIE  
Kathleen, if you send Nipper away,  
you'll make an enemy of everyone  
living in this community.

Pause. She's angry now.

KATHLEEN  
So be it, but if anything happens,  
it's on you. Just keep him away  
from my children.

She storms out. Iona puts Nipper down.

IONA  
I'm sorry.

JAMIE  
It's not your fault. I'll give her  
some time and then go and talk to  
her.

IONA  
Aye, and whenever I see the Nipper,  
I'll send him outside.

Jamie spies a notebook on the counter. Curious, he picks it  
up and flips through pages.

JAMIE  
Wow, she's good.

He hands it to Iona.

IONA

She's very talented. I must say, everyone is a wee bit worried about the house being used as a TV show.

JAMIE

We need to give her a chance. I know I've been hard on her, and the town gossip is utterly ruthless.

IONA

Of course. I didn't like to judge someone before I get to know them.

She puts the notebook back on the counter.

IONA

I'll just take Nipper outside and...

They look around. Nipper is gone.

EXT. - YARD - DAY

Bushes rustle and part revealing Jackson and Danielle leaving the woods. They spy DUNCAN CONNERS (60's, Scots) trimming the bushes next to the house.

DANIELLE

Who's that?

JACKSON

I don't know. Let's find out.

Jackson approaches from the side, Danielle one step behind.

JACKSON

Excuse me.

Duncan turns and smiles.

DUNCAN

Good morning. You must be Jackson and Danielle.

JACKSON

Are you the gardener?

DUNCAN

That I am. My name is Duncan Connors. I'm pleased to meet you.

(CONTINUED)

JACKSON

Mr. Duncan, can you do us a favor?

DUNCAN

It depends on what the favor is?

JACKSON

There's a place over here we want to play in, but mom says we can't until you look and say it's safe.

DUNCAN

I guess I can do that.

Jackson and Danielle lead him to the hidden gazebo. The young boy holds the bushes back for Duncan to crawl through. He takes a deep breath.

DUNCAN

I haven't been here for years. Are you sure you're allowed to play here?

JACKSON

That's what mom said. As long as it's safe.

DUNCAN

Some things are best left alone.

DANIELLE

But we want to make a fort.

DUNCAN

I'm sure you do, but that doesn't mean you should. I'll look around and make sure it's safe, but you must promise you'll be very careful and not break anything.

JACKSON

Yes, sir. We promise.

BATHROOM - SAME

Kathleen finishes mopping the floor. She turns and jumps again. Nipper is laying on the hallway floor, watching her. Kathleen looks around for help - no one. She takes the mop and gently pushes him. Nipper jumps up hopping around in a "weasel war dance". Her brows furrow, then she smiles. He's just playing. She runs the mop in front of him. He attacks it, rolling and tumbling. She laughs.

(CONTINUED)

JAMIE (O.C.)

I always thought he would make a great dusting rag with all the crevices he loves getting into.

Kathleen spins around to see Jamie watching her.

KATHLEEN

He's rather playful. He reminds me of a kitten.

JAMIE

One thing a ferret does best is play.

KATHLEEN

I'm sorry I acted foolish. I plead stress.

JAMIE

It's okay, You're in a contest that may determine your future with a camera in your face most of the day - no worries.

Jamie scoops up the bouncing ferret. He holds it before Kathleen.

JAMIE (CONT.)

Here, pet him.

She reaches out a tentative hand and touches his head. Nipper sniffs her, but nothing more.

KATHLEEN

He smells.

JAMIE

Yea, ferrets are like that. You're supposed to given them a bath now and then.

He puts Nipper down who scurries down the hall and into another room.

KATHLEEN

Just like a kid.

JAMIE

Pretty much.

(CONTINUED)

KATHLEEN

Do I owe Iona an apology?

Jamie gives her a devastating smile.

JAMIE

Nah, she's good. But if you'll change your mind about Nipper, she'll be great.

KATHLEEN

Oh, no, Jackson does that very same thing. You're trying to sideswipe me with a slick sales pitch.

JAMIE

So, is it working?

She tries to make a show of being angry, but it doesn't work.

KATHLEEN

Yes, he can stay. I just have one request.

JAMIE

What's that?

KATHLEEN

I know my son. Jackson will run straight for Nipper. When you have a chance, will you show him how to properly handle him?

JAMIE

Consider it done. One word of caution, though.

KATHLEEN

What?

JAMIE

They're horrible thieves.

EXT. - HOUSE - DAY

Jamie walks out. He pauses and addresses the watching crowd.

JAMIE

Nipper's staying.

The men nod their heads in happy agreement. Jamie continues to his tent.

INT. - TOWN PUB - EVENING

A country pub like one would find in Scotland. The place is filled with MEN talking and drinking. Smoke from a dozen pipes swirls like fog over their heads.

Jamie walks in and sits at the bar. The owner, CONNOR KERR, greets him from the side.

CONNOR

Hey, Jamie, would you be having the usual?

JAMIE

Sure.

Connor draws a beer and plops it before him.

CONNOR

And how's the work doing on the house?

JAMIE

Pretty good. Nothing major so far.

CONNOR

Heard she took out the kitchen cabinets and wants to make everything different.

JAMIE

That's what happens when you renovate a house. You make changes.

DONEGAN, a broad, muscular man and Jamie's long-time nemesis, walks up beside him and leans facing him on the counter. The self-proclaimed spokesman for the group, he's nearly in Jamie's face.

DONEGAN

But some things should be left as they were.

Another MAN pipes in.

MAN

Aye, It's a Scots that built it and Scots who have lived there all this

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MAN (cont'd)

time. They have no right to change it.

JAMIE

They purchased it. They have every right.

DONEGAN

Of course you would think that. After all, you're not really one of us.

Jamie tries hard to keep calm. It's getting difficult.

JAMIE

Think what you want, Donegan. It makes no matter to me.

Another MAN at the counter joins in.

MAN AT COUNTER

Jamie, lad, you know we mean no harm, but our families have lived here for over a century. We've kept to our traditions and that's the way we like it.

Jamie slams down his mug and turns on the man.

JAMIE

And what do you have, aye McGregor? You have a town that is dying. Tell me, how many children live here?

The man shakes his head.

JAMIE

Exactly, because you've chased all the young people away. You've kept your traditions at their expense. Soon, there will be no one left but the very old, and then it will all die.

MAN AT COUNTER

But change will mean loosing what we've got.

(CONTINUED)



JAMIE

Change will come, whether you like it or not. You can either accept it and direct it or let it take over when you are all gone.

DONEGAN

Told you he wasn't like us. His mother made sure of that.

JAMIE

Leave her out of this or you won't be walking out any too soon.

Donegan is spoiling for a fight.

DONEGAN

Ye would like to try, wouldn't ya? I told Jenny you were no good.

Jamie surges to his feet. Several men quickly grab him from behind. He shrugs them off. Donegan throws a punch which Jamie ducks and then slams him with a right. Donegan staggers back. Several men come forward to hold them apart while Connor comes around and gets between them.

CONNOR

Hold it, both of you. You'll not be busting up my place just to settle your grudge. Take it outside if you must.

JAMIE

No. No good would come of it. I've got to go, anyway.

Jamie walks to the door.

DONEGAN

We'll settle this later, Jamie.

Jamie ignores him and leaves.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

SEEN FROM LESTER'S CAMERA

Kathleen stands before the house checking her clothes, brushing the dirt off. She runs her fingers through her hair.

(CONTINUED)

STEVEN (O.C.)

Ready?

Kathleen looks at the camera.

KATHLEEN

How do I look?

STEVEN (O.C.)

Beautiful as always.

KATHLEEN

Okay, ready.

Steven walks into the shot and stands next to her. They turn so that the house shows well behind them.

STEVEN

It's been a week, now. How is everything going?

KATHLEEN

Pretty good. We've finished the cleaning and I've figured out how I want each room to look. The kitchen cabinets and appliances should arrive any day and I've ordered the wall paints, drapes and some furniture.

STEVEN

Can you give us any details?

KATHLEEN

Only that the kitchen will be totally updated with marble floors, granite counters and new everything. I don't want to give too much away.

STEVEN

Have you found anything unexpected problems?

KATHLEEN

Other than a some dry rot in one of the back rooms, not really. This house was very well built. And, we found a bonus. There is a gorgeous gazebo in the backyard that I want to bring into the plan.

In the background, Danielle ballets into the shot. She takes a couple of twirls and falls on her rear.

(CONTINUED)

Steven's attention is drawn past the camera. It seems Lester is telling him something. He turns and watches. Kathleen turns.

KATHLEEN  
Oh, no. Jackson!

Jackson runs in and tries to pull a struggling Danielle off. Finally, he picks her up from behind and carries her. Kathleen hangs her head.

KATHLEEN  
I am so sorry.

Steven is almost laughing too hard to talk.

STEVEN  
Those are your children?

KATHLEEN  
Yes. Jackson is twelve and  
Danielle is six.

STEVEN  
I want to mention for our audience  
that, one of the things about Ms.  
Myer's interview that so inspired  
the judges was her desire to have a  
way to care for her children.

KATHLEEN  
I just want them to be proud of me  
and to be able to care for them  
while doing something I love.

STEVEN  
That's great, wrap it Lester.

RESUME NORMAL CAMERA

KATHLEEN  
Is the camera off?

LESTER (O.C.)  
Yep.

Kathleen follows her children.

KATHLEEN  
Danielle, you are in so much  
trouble.

INT. - JAMIE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

As most houses in the area, this one is over a hundred years old. Like a well-aged wine, it shows the evidence of great love and care. The antique furniture is tastefully arranged and decorated.

LADY ELISABETH (80's) sits reading by the fireplace, a tartan thrown over her legs. Once the matriarch of a large family, there is only her and Jamie, now. She is regal and elegant by nature with a touch of proud Scots. Jamie walks up and pecks her on the cheek.

JAMIE

Hello, Nana.

ELISABETH

Och, Jamie, you've been gone long today.

JAMIE

Just needed to finish up some things before I quit. It's easier doing the extra time then to drag the tools back out again.

ELISABETH

I ken see that. So, how's the house going?

JAMIE

Not bad. We're on schedule. I must say, that ol' house has never looked this good in years.

ELISABETH

Aye, it's a sad thing the way Angus let it fall apart.

Jamie drops his eyes.

JAMIE

I guess, in some ways, I can understand it.

ELISABETH

Nay, Jamie, but the living must go on living. Ya can't give up just because you've lost someone.

JAMIE

Even when the living is barely surviving?

(CONTINUED)

ELISABETH

Aye, even then. She's gone, Jamie, and you've got to let her go. Now, tell me of the lass you're working with.

Jamie's eyes go distant. A small smile tugs his lips.

JAMIE

She's a fair one. She's spirited, but I sense an uncertainty in her. She seems scared in some ways. She has two bairns; a boy and the sweetest little girl.

A memory draws up laughter.

JAMIE

Kathleen was doing an interview on camera when Danielle started dancing ballet in the background.

ELISABETH

Och, I would have loved to have seen that.

Jamie sobers.

JAMIE

She wants to renovate the greenhouse.

ELISABETH

That's wonderful. So, what did you tell her?

JAMIE

I told her no. I don't want it used for some publicity stunt.

ELISABETH

You truly think that is her intention?

JAMIE

It doesn't matter. I don't want it put on display like a movie prop.

ELISABETH

It's your decision, but think, lad, would it be so bad if it helps the lass out?

JAMIE

I'll think about it.

ELISABETH

Good. Now, why have you not brought her to meet me yet? She sounds lovely.

JAMIE

Did I mention the two children?

ELISABETH

I was bringing up bairn long before you were born, Jamie McKnight. I would love to hear their laughter again. Bring them over. Day after tomorrow - tea.

JAMIE

Yes, Ma'am.

ELISABETH

I'll have Anne make up a batch of shortbread.

JAMIE

And what about me? I've been working hard all day.

ELISABETH

Och, Jamie, you'd think you never got fed. She's got your supper waiting. A good beef roast with tatties and neeps.

JAMIE

Sound great, I'll get cleaned up.

He gives her a peck on the top of her head and leaves.

INT. - HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Jamie patches the holes left by the cabinets. The room is empty, waiting to be renewed. Kathleen walks in behind him. Her feet on the wood floors echo off the walls.

KATHLEEN

Wow, it looks so big without the cabinets.

(CONTINUED)

JAMIE

They should be coming any day.

KATHLEEN

Don't you do the floor before the cabinets are installed?

Jamie hangs his head.

JAMIE

I wish you would reconsider. These oak boards were put in about the time of the civil war.

KATHLEEN

I understand, but I can't. When I look at this company's work, I don't see any kitchens with wood flooring, it's all tile.

JAMIE

You don't have to do what everyone else does. Be original.

All the fears that Kathleen has been trying to mask suddenly explodes to the surface.

KATHLEEN

You don't understand. I don't dare. I've got one chance to get this right. If I mess up, I could lose everything.

JAMIE

How's that?

She's hesitant. Can she dare trust this man? It's Jamie's plunging ahead that breaks the dam that she has held so tight for so long.

JAMIE

Kathleen, I saw the album you've created. You do wonderful work. You don't need a contest to define who you are. What you need is the self-confidence to believe in yourself.

KATHLEEN

Easy for you to say, you didn't live with someone who never believed you ever did anything right.

(CONTINUED)

JAMIE

I'm sorry, I didn't know. But that doesn't change the fact that you're smart and talented and...

Jamie slows to a halt.

KATHLEEN

I can't. I'm too afraid of getting it wrong. There's too much at stake.

Her fear is too strong. He reluctantly gives in.

JAMIE

Very well, I'll lay it down tomorrow.

KATHLEEN

Thank you.

Kathleen turns to leave, but Jamie stops her.

JAMIE

By the way, my grandmother has instructed me to invite you for tea tomorrow.

KATHLEEN

Instructed?

JAMIE

If you knew her, you'd understand.

KATHLEEN

What about the children?

JAMIE

I was told that they are welcome.

KATHLEEN

Please thank her for me, but I don't believe they would be able to sit still for that long.

JAMIE

I don't think you'll find that a problem with my grandmother.

KATHLEEN

If you're sure.

(CONTINUED)



JAMIE

Absolutely. Our house is down the street, third on the right. Tea is always at 2pm.

KATHLEEN

We'll be there.

INT. COTTAGE - DANIELLE'S ROOM - DAY

Kathleen gets Danielle ready. They sit on the bed while she brushes her hair, every stroke in love.

DANIELLE

I want to wear my party dress.

KATHLEEN

Are you sure? If you get bored, you won't be able to go outside.

DANIELLE

I won't get bored. I've had lots of teas with Allison and Mr. Fuzzy.

KATHLEEN

But this will be different. The adults will be doing most of the talking, and you won't have your dolls to keep you company.

DANIELLE

Can't I take Allison? I promise she won't get in the way, and I'll make sure she stays real quiet.

Kathleen smiles. Keeping a doll quiet - right.

KATHLEEN

Okay, Allison can come, but you must promise you'll make her behave. You know how silly she can be.

DANIELLE

Oh, I know. Sometimes it's everything I can do to keep her under control.

KATHLEEN

Party dress it is, then. As you said, one must look her best.

OUTSIDE JACKSON'S DOOR - SAME

Kathleen knocks.

KATHLEEN

Jackson, are you ready?

The door flies open.

JACKSON

Mom, do I have to go? I don't want to sit with a couple of women, talking.

KATHLEEN

But Jamie will be there.

JACKSON

That's different. He's an adult. We have nothing in common. I'll be bored out of my gourd.

KATHLEEN

Jackson, these past few weeks, you've been able to do pretty much what you've wanted. All I'm asking is for one hour of your time to be polite. I think your gourd can handle that.

Jackson opens his mouth, but Kathleen stops him.

KATHLEEN

This is a non-negotiable.

JACKSON

If I do this, I want a return.

KATHLEEN

Like...what?

JACKSON

Like full access to the fort. Duncan has already checked it out and said it was safe.

Kathleen sighs, she just got side-swiped. She sticks out her hand.

KATHLEEN

Deal. But, that also means you have to keep an extra eye on Danielle so she doesn't get hurt.

(CONTINUED)

Jackson grabs her hand.

JACKSON

Deal.

INT. JAMIE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Everyone relaxes around a coffee table with a sterling tea set and shortbread cookies. Laughter fills the room like a comfortable blanket.

ELISABETH

...and then his hands slipped and he fell out of the tree just as one of the cows happened to walk by. He landed plop on it's back and the last we saw, he was riding it down the pasture and out of sight.

More laughter.

ELISABETH

Danielle, your Miss Allison is a well-mannered child. You've trained her well.

DANIELLE

Yes, she is, but she can be a handful.

ELISABETH

I can imagine.

Elisabeth looks at Kathleen.

ELISABETH

It's not easy raising bairns by yourself.

DANIELLE

What's a bairn?

KATHLEEN

Children. And she's correct, it's a lot of work. However, the rewards are far greater than the sacrifice.

ELISABETH

Well said.

Elisabeth raises her hand to cover a large yawn.

(CONTINUED)

ELISABETH

Och, forgive me. It's almost time  
for my nap.

Kathleen stands up and places her cup on the table.

KATHLEEN

No, forgive us, we've stayed and  
kept you too long.  
(To Danielle and Jackson)  
Kids, time to go. Please, thank  
Lady Elisabeth for her hospitality.

DANIELLE

What's hospita...what's that word?

KATHLEEN

It means being nice. Thank her for  
having us over.

JACKSON

Thank you for the great stories.

DANIELLE

And the cookies. Allison really  
loved them.

ELISABETH

You are more than welcome.

Jamie stands up.

JAMIE

I'll see you out.

KATHLEEN

Thank you for a wonderful  
afternoon. If I can help you in  
any way, please let me know.

Elisabeth gives her an appraising smile.

ELISABETH

Thank you, my dear. I'll remember  
that.

They leave. Jamie returns. He sits directly in front of  
Lady Elisabeth.

ELISABETH

What?

(CONTINUED)

JAMIE

What's your game? You've never taken a nap in your life.

ELISABETH

I just wanted to talk to you a moment and to tell you that you have my permission to marry her.

His mouth drops.

JAMIE

Marry her? I barely know her.

ELISABETH

You're the last of our line. When you die, the family dies.

JAMIE

Which is not for a long time to come, I hope.

ELISABETH

But not for me. Jamie, I want to see your bairns before I die.

JAMIE

That's not fair. You can't expect me to marry just so you can have grandchildren.

ELISABETH

I saw the way you looked at her.

JAMIE

Aye, she's a wonderful woman; smart, talented, resourceful, but that doesn't mean I love her.

ELISABETH

But you are interested.

JAMIE

In a way, yes. But that goes two ways. She's shown no interest in me whatsoever.

ELISABETH

I disagree.

Jamie can't help the hope that flares up.

(CONTINUED)

JAMIE

And how's that?

ELISABETH

Let's just say, I understand being a woman.

JAMIE

And I say you're seeing what you want to see. Please let it go. I'm still grieving about Jenny.

ELISABETH

Then you dishonor her memory.

JAMIE

Say again?

ELISABETH

I never knew anyone who loved life as much as your Jenny. She also loved you.

JAMIE

Then why did she leave me?

ELISABETH

If you'll be truthful to yourself, you'll remember it was after that fight you had. Didn't you say everything was off?

She's touched a still-raw wound.

JAMIE

But I didn't mean it. If she really loved me, she would not have run to Donegan.

ELISABETH

You hurt her, James. She was too sensitive to handle your rejection. Donegan gave her a shoulder to cry on. And remember, she and Donegan had known each other since childhood.

JAMIE

Which he is more than happy to remind me of every time I see him.

As Jamie remembers, the penned-up grief bubbles to the surface.

(CONTINUED)

JAMIE

I didn't mean to hurt her.

ELISABETH

You must forgive yourself, or you'll always be living in the past with no future ahead of you.

JAMIE

Maybe I don't deserve one.

ELISABETH

Posh! You'd just rather wallow in your pity. I'm telling you truly, Jamie. If I die before you wake up and realize this lass is worth the living, then I swear I'll come back and haunt you until the day you die.

Jamie can't help but smile.

JAMIE

(Full Accent)

Och, and just the thought of that would be enough to make al' Slewfoot, himself, walk straight.

INT. - HOUSE - MUD ROOM - DAY

Iona sweeps the dirt brought in from the outside. Kathleen joins her.

IONA

Hey, how's it going?

KATHLEEN

Pretty good. I've been sanding the stair rails. I hope the paint gets here soon. I'm anxious to get started.

IONA

Well, while you're waiting, why not come to the Highland Games tomorrow? It's a grand tradition and lots of fun. Men come from several states to compete. You'll even get to see some braw ones in their kilts.

(CONTINUED)

KATHLEEN

That is a great idea. It would give Jackson and Danielle a chance to meet the people.

IONA

Grand. It starts at nine at the meadows just down the street. You can't miss it.

EXT. HIGHLAND GAMES - DAY

The games are in full swing. WOMEN walk about in traditional skirts and tartans while the MEN wear shirts and kilts. In the midst of it all, Kathleen and the children hear the RING of clashing swords. On the side, booths, tables and benches have been set up for food and souvenirs.

Danielle, one hand in Kathleen's, uses the other to point at a group of Highlanders.

DANIELLE

Look, mommy, those men are wearing skirts.

Kathleen stops in her tracks. She kneels, spins Danielle around, and speaks sternly.

KATHLEEN

No, baby, you can't call them that. Those aren't skirts, they're called kilts. It's very important that you remember that.

Danielle's hurt.

DANIELLE

I'm sorry.

Kathleen hugs her.

KATHLEEN

It's all right. It's just that you'll hurt their feelings if you call them skirts.

JACKSON

Yea, last thing we need is a buffed up guy with hurt feelings.

(CONTINUED)



KATHLEEN

I wouldn't know whether to pat his back or run.

JACKSON

Depends on what he's got in his hands.

Danielle points to the side.

DANIELLE

Look, horses. Can we go see them?

KATHLEEN

Sure, why not?

JACKSON

Mind if I watch the log throwing?

KATHLEEN

Go ahead, we'll find you later.

They head in separate directions.

Kathleen and Danielle hear the sound of HOOOF BEATS. They look to their left. A horse PLUNGES as he sets his feet. When it's settled, he turns his head to reveal Jamie mounted on him like an ancient Highland warrior. He's spectacular in full dress with a broadsword strapped to his back. Kathleen looks shell-shocked.

DANIELLE

Mommy, isn't he beautiful?

She's looking straight at Jamie.

KATHLEEN

He certainly is.

Jamie can't help but smile. It's devastating.

JAMIE

I think she's talking about the horse.

KATHLEEN

I'm sure She is. I never thought of you as ... well, you don't have the accent.

JAMIE

I was raised in Missouri until I was fifteen. Just because I don't

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JAMIE (cont'd)  
talk it doesn't mean I don't hold  
to my heritage.

DANIELLE  
Can I ride the horse?

JAMIE  
Of course, that is, as long as your  
mother doesn't mind.

KATHLEEN  
If I don't, she'll give me the  
silent treatment for a week.

JAMIE  
And where did she learn that?

KATHLEEN  
You don't want to know.

JAMIE  
Can you lift her up?

Kathleen picks Danielle up and hands her to Jamie. He sits  
her in front of him and gives her a lank of mane.

JAMIE  
Grab onto this. Now hold tight.

He kicks the horse into a light canter. Danielle's happy  
screams follow them. Kathleen watches them ride the meadow.

MAN (O.C.)  
Hey, lassie, would you be wanting  
some company?

Kathleen sees Donegan in full Highland dress and broadsword  
walking towards her.

KATHLEEN  
Hello. Wow, I can see where the  
sight of a Highland warrior would  
make an enemy run back home.

He smiles.

MAN  
Aye, that it would. My name is  
Donegan. And who might you be?

KATHLEEN

Kathleen Meyers. I'm the one renovating the old McPhearson place.

Donegan's smile vanishes.

DONEGAN

Och, I've heard of ye.

KATHLEEN

Is that good or bad?

DONEGAN

Not many here about are happy with what your doing.

KATHLEEN

Why not? We're just fixing the place up.

DONEGAN

Because your changing what's been there for a hundred years and people here don't like change.

KATHLEEN

But everything changes. It's the way the world works.

DONEGAN

Aye, but that doesn't mean they have to like it.

HOOF BEATS signal Jamie's return. He pulls up the horse so close to Donegan that he has to take a step back.

DONEGAN

Hey, watch yer nag, Jamie.

Jamie hands Danielle to Kathleen and then jumps off landing between Donegan and Kathleen.

JAMIE

I was just making sure you gave Kathleen her space. I know how you tend to crowd the ladies.

DONEGAN

You do it again and it won't be a lassie I'll crowd. It'll be you with me fist.

Jamie smiles.

(CONTINUED)

JAMIE

And then I'd just have to mar that pretty face of yours. Why don't you run along so I can get back to showing Kathleen around.

Donegan stands a moment, hands in fists.

DANIELLE

Mommy, are they going to fight?

Both men snap back to reality remembering there's a child with them.

DONEGAN

Nay, lassie, not today. But tomorrow, maybe.

He turns and walks away.

KATHLEEN

Can you please tell me what that was about and what you meant by, "So I can get back to showing her around?"

JAMIE

Sorry, but Donegan and I go back years and not in a good way.

KATHLEEN

That still does not give you the right to barge into our conversation as though we were doing something wrong.

Jamie regroups.

JAMIE

Kath, I... Okay, how about I take this big guy and put him up and then show you around like I said?

KATHLEEN

No fists; no sword fights?

JAMIE

Only in competition. My round starts at two.

KATHLEEN

Really? Fists or swords?

(CONTINUED)

JAMIE  
Swords. It's been a hobby of mine  
for years.

KATHLEEN  
That, I would love to see.

JAMIE  
Okay.

He leaps on the horse in one movement.

JAMIE  
I'll be right back.

Kathleen can't take her eyes off him as he rides away.

DANIELLE  
Is he coming back?

KATHLEEN  
Yes, dear.

DANIELLE  
I like him.

KATHLEEN  
I think I do, too.

Kathleen and Danielle walk towards the crowds. Jamie runs up from the side and joins them.

MONTAGUE - THROUGH THE DAY

Watching the log throwing contest.

Eating scones while looking at the souvenir booths.

Jackson plays football (soccer) with the men.

Watching the women performing a traditional Scottish dance. Suddenly, Kathleen realizes Danielle is on the stage doing her ballet. She tries to retrieve her, but is pulled into the dancing, instead.

Jamie competing with the broadsword. Kathleen can't take her eyes off of him. He shakes his competitor's hand when he loses and leaves with his arm around Kathleen's shoulders.

## RESUME

The day is finished. Jackson has rejoined them. As they walk across the field to the cars, their high spirits is evident in their laughter. Kathleen looks up and stops dead in her tracks. Fear replaces her happiness.

KATHLEEN

Oh, no.

JAMIE

What is it?

KATHLEEN

(Barely a whisper)

John.

JACKSON

Dad's here?

John steps out of his car. He slams the door and stalks to them.

DANIELLE

Daddy.

She runs to him, but he pushes her to the side. Kathleen extends her arm, and Danielle runs to her, scared and confused.

JOHN

What the hell do you think you're doing?

KATHLEEN

We were enjoying the day until you showed up.

JOHN

You have my children running around with a bunch of back-woods yokels dressed in skirts?

KATHLEEN

Those are kilts, John. They're Scottish and extremely nice people.

JOHN

They must be since it looks like you're taking one home with you.

(CONTINUED)

JAMIE

(Full accent)

I still have me wee sword strapped to me back. Wud you like me to do some damage with it?

JOHN

Don't threaten me or I'll have every policeman in this backwater town here.

JAMIE

Och, that wud be my cousin. Wud you like me to call him for you?

KATHLEEN

John, why are you here?

JOHN

I came to get my children.

He pulls out a piece of paper.

JOHN (CONT.)

I have a court order giving me full custody.

KATHLEEN

What? You can't have a court hearing without me.

JOHN

Can and did. I happen to know a good lawyer who knows a good judge.

KATHLEEN

You're not taking my children away.

JOHN

I'm afraid I am and there's nothing you can do about it.

KATHLEEN

No...

She launches herself at John, but Jamie grabs her just in time.

JAMIE

No, Kath, not now. Not this way.

(CONTINUED)

KATHLEEN

He can't take my children.

JOHN

Earth to Kathleen, yes I can and I will. You can't take care of them and the court agreed.

Kathleen folds, tears flowing. Danielle comes and grabs her legs.

DANIELLE

Mommy, what's wrong?

Kathleen bends down and takes her into her arms.

KATHLEEN

You get to go and stay with daddy for a little while. Remember, I love you bunches and will see you soon.

DANIELLE

But I don't want to go. I want to stay with you.

KATHLEEN

It's only for a little while. I'll come and get you soon.

JOHN

Don't lie to her, Kathleen. You're not seeing them again for a long time.

Danielle grabs Kathleen's neck Kathleen reassures her the best she can.

KATHLEEN

It's okay, honey.

With a child's simplicity, Danielle gives one last protest.

DANIELLE

But I left Allison at the house.

KATHLEEN

I promise I'll take good care of her.

DANIELLE

She really likes the cookies Jamie's grandmother made.



KATHLEEN

I'll make sure she gets lots of them.

A final hug.

In his usual walk-over-people way, John takes control.

JOHN

Jackson, take Danielle to the car.

But Jackson stands, defiant.

JACKSON

No, dad, I'm not going.

JOHN

You have no say in this.

JACKSON

I don't care. I'm staying with mom.

Jamie kneels beside Jackson.

JAMIE

Jackson, a wise man picks his battles and his battlegrounds carefully. Your mother will fight this.

JACKSON

No, she won't. She always gives in to dad.

JAMIE

Because she never had anything as important as you two to fight for. Your job is to take care of Danielle, okay? Be strong for her because she's going to be very scared.

Jackson looks at his father. In his face, you can see an inner shift has occurred.

JACKSON

All right.

Jackson takes Danielle's hand. They walk to the cars, looking back as they go.

(CONTINUED)

JAMIE  
(To John)  
You've already lost.

JOHN  
How's that?

JAMIE  
You've just lost the love and  
respect of your children.

JOHN  
And why would that be a problem?

John follows the children. As they drive away, Kathleen burrows her face in Jamie's shoulder and cries while he holds her tight.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Kathleen sits on the stairs staring into space, wiping tears from her eyes. Around her are the paints and supplies she had been waiting for, but she doesn't see them. Steven walks in and sits beside her.

STEVEN  
When I first interviewed you, I was  
moved by the passion you had for  
your children and your desire to  
create the best life possible for  
them. So, what has changed?

KATHLEEN  
Everything has changed. He took  
them.

STEVEN  
You know, most fights aren't won  
with the first battle.

KATHLEEN  
This one was. He had a court  
order. He's never seen me as a fit  
mother.

STEVEN  
Is that true? Are you an unfit  
mother?

KATHLEEN  
No. Everything I did was for my  
children. John always had to be  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

KATHLEEN (cont'd)  
the best. He could never tolerate someone else beating him. When he left, he saw my obtaining custody of the children as a challenge to get them for himself.

STEVEN  
Kathleen, look around.

She does.

KATHLEEN  
Okay?

STEVEN  
What you're doing here is going out on national television. Your story is going out on national television. What you need to do is let the world know that you will fight for your children by winning this and landing that job. Then, when you do, you go to the courts and fight to get them back, and I guarantee you this whole country will be behind you. I'll make sure of it.

Kathleen looks around, a new resolve shining in her eyes.

KATHLEEN  
When does the furniture arrive?

STEVEN  
That's my girl.

LIVING ROOM

Kathleen rolls paint on the wall. A noise draws her attention. Nipper is running away with a small paint brush.

KATHLEEN  
Hey, get back here.

She puts the roller in the tray and runs after him.

## BEDROOM

The room is freshly painted. Kathleen stands on a ladder hanging brightly colored, modern curtains when Jamie walks in.

JAMIE

Kath, may I see you for a moment?

Kathleen frowns. He seems so serious.

KATHLEEN

Sure.

She finishes putting up the side and steps down from the ladder.

KATHLEEN

What do you think?

He looks around. He really doesn't like it.

JAMIE

It's....nice.

Kathleen's expectations fall.

## EXT. YARD - DAY

Jamie guides her to where the hidden gazebo. Holding back the bushes, he lets Kathleen in and then follows her.

## INT. GAZEBO - DAY

Kathleen breaths in the scent of roses.

KATHLEEN

Even growing wild, this place is beautiful.

Jamie takes her hand and leads her to the fountain. Kathleen looks up into the statue's face.

JAMIE

Her name was Jenny.

The news shocks her.

KATHLEEN

She was a real person?

(CONTINUED)

JAMIE

Yes. This gazebo was built for our wedding. The fountain was to be a surprise, but she never saw it.

KATHLEEN

But, why at this house?

JAMIE

Jenny was Angus' daughter.

Jamie collects his thoughts and emotions.

JAMIE

Ten days before our wedding, we had a terrible fight. It was so stupid. In the heat of the argument, I told her I was calling it off.

His voice tightens.

JAMIE

I swear, I didn't mean it. When she left, she went to see Donegan.

KATHLEEN

The man from the games?

JAMIE

Yea, they had grown up together. I think he was in love with her. He convinced Jenny my words were final, and that there was no hope. You must understand, she was an extremely sensitive person. She reminded me of porcelain. And, just like glass, she shattered.

Jamie stops, swallows.

KATHLEEN

What happened?

JAMIE

She tried to drive home in a torrential storm. She missed a curve and put her car into a tree. The ones who got her out said her face was wet and her eyes red and swollen though there was no rain inside the car.

(CONTINUED)

KATHLEEN  
You blame yourself?

JAMIE  
Every day of my life.

KATHLEEN  
Let me ask you; was she a kind,  
considerate and forgiving person?

JAMIE  
In every facet of her heart.

KATHLEEN  
And, if you stood before her and  
asked forgiveness, would she give  
it?

JAMIE  
Yes.

KATHLEEN  
Then accept it and forgive  
yourself.

Jamie shakes his head; he still can't take the  
step. Kathleen points to the statue.

KATHLEEN  
She's right there. Ask her.

Jamie's eyebrows furrow. He looks up into Jenny's face and  
understanding replaces the confusion. He is so caught up in  
his memories, he never hears Kathleen leave.

Jamie gazes at his lost love, tears streaming, barely  
holding it together. He falls to his knees.

JAMIE  
Jenny, forgive me. I am so  
sorry. I didn't mean  
it. Please...

Overcome, he can't continue. He bows his head and sobs.

EXT. YARD - DAY

Jamie finds Kathleen waiting when he comes out from the  
bushes. He smiles and puts his arm around her waist. They  
walk to the house together in silence.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Snow is falling.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

THROUGH LESTER'S CAMERA

The room has been painted and the curtains hung. The floor, ceiling beams, stairs and rails gleam with new stain and varnish.

Steven holds the mic to Kathleen's face.

STEVEN

You only have two months to go. Do you feel confident you'll be finished on schedule.

KATHLEEN

Absolutely. All of the painting is finished. James has been a wonder getting this place into shape. As you can see above us, he was even able to make the beams and ceilings look new.

Camera pans up for a moment.

KATHLEEN

All we have left is to place the furniture and pictures, a few touch ups and then the decorating.

STEVEN

Have you heard anything from your children since they were taken away?

KATHLEEN

No. John must have taken Jackson's cell phone. When I try the number, it just rings then goes to voice mail. He won't allow me to talk to them.

STEVEN

So why do you keep doing this?

(CONTINUED)

KATHLEEN

I can't just do nothing. I'm going to win this and get that job. Then, I'll go to court and fight to get them back.

STEVEN

Good girl. Let's hope that happens.

Steven draws his finger across his throat.

INT. LIVING ROOM - EARLY EVENING

Low music envelops the room. The soft glow of the Christmas tree and hanging lights are the only illumination. Kathleen and Jamie snuggle on the couch, his arm around her. Kathleen gazes around taking it all in.

KATHLEEN

I can't believe we're done. It went by so fast.

JAMIE

Actually, there's one other project.

KATHLEEN

What?

Jamie gets up and pulls her with him. He leads her outside.

EXT. GAZEBO - SAME

There's still enough light for Kathleen to see that the gazebo has been completely cleaned up, the weeds taken out and the bushes trimmed. The music of the water splashing from the fountain fills the air. She's amazed.

KATHLEEN

It's more beautiful than I thought it would be. Are you sure you want to do this?

He looks at Kathleen; his words a double meaning.

JAMIE

I've never been more sure of anything in my life.

She hears it in his voice. She looks into his face; her expression a question.

(CONTINUED)



Slowly, he kisses her. He raises his head and smiles.

JAMIE

When all of this is over, there are some things we need to talk about.

KATHLEEN

I think we do.

He hugs her close. She slaps him on the chest.

KATHLEEN

Now, I have more work to do.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Kathleen sits on the couch wrapping boxes to look like presents. She has snacks on the table beside her arrangements. A small fire and Christmas music give a festive feel to the room. Steven and Lester walk in.

STEVEN

Are you up to one more interview?

KATHLEEN

Sure.

Steven sits beside her.

LESTER'S CAMERA

LESTER

Only ten days to go. Getting excited?

KATHLEEN

I can hardly sleep at nights. When something is this important every day seems like forever.

LESTER

So, where are you in regards to finishing?

KATHLEEN

Just the touch ups. I'll wait until the day before to put out the live plants, so I'm staying busy doing the little things.

She holds up a "Christmas present" she just finished.

(CONTINUED)

STEVEN

I've noticed there's going to be a bonus for the judges.

KATHLEEN

I am keeping that a secret until they come. Everyone will just have to wait to see it.

STEVEN

Any words for your children?

Kathleen gives a wispy smile.

KATHLEEN

I think of you every day. Love you bunches.

STEVEN

That's a wrap.

NORMAL CAMERA VIEW

Steven gives a whimsical smile.

STEVEN

I was looking at this as just another job, but what I found was a cause worth fighting for. I mean it when I say, good luck.

LESTER

That goes for me, too.

Kathleen's eyes mist over.

KATHLEEN

Thank you. Both of you.

LATER

Kathleen kneels under the tree arranging presents. Picking up scraps, she walks through the kitchen to the back door. She switches on the outside light.

EXT. HOUSE - EARLY EVENING

A large trash can sits beside the door. Opening the lid, she throws the paper in and then ducks back inside leaving the door ajar and the light on.

INT. HOUSE -SAME

Jamie walks in to find her looking around, picking up what needs to be thrown away. She flows into his embrace and his kiss.

JAMIE

Nana would like you to come over  
for dinner.

KATHLEEN

Love to. Let me get my coat.

She puts the papers down and picks up her coat from the couch. Throwing it on, they leave.

EXT. HOUSE - EVENING

The wind is building, whipping the trees. A gust blows the back door partially open.

A small shadow approaches. From the glow of the light, the form of a raccoon emerges. It's a female followed by three kits. She sniffs the garbage can then the open door. Quietly, she slips in, babies in tow.

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - SAME

Walking through the kitchen, they head towards the living room.

LIVING ROOM - SAME

Following her nose, mama quickly finds the munchies on the table. The kits scramble to the presents to play hide-and-seek.

## STUDY ROOM - SAME

Nipper emerges from the hole in the fireplace. The sound draws him across the room.

## LIVING ROOM - SAME

Nipper's head peers around the door. His hunting instincts kick in and he heads for the kits.

## FOCUS ON

One spies him and chirps danger.

## RESUME

Instantly, the three head up the tree. The weight of three half-grown raccoons unbalances the whole thing and it tips, crashing onto the couch and coffee table, destroying the arrangement.

Mother falls from the table right in front of Nipper. She rears up, snarling. He circles, looking for a way past her teeth.

The kits run in all directions. One has found the garland and lights tied to the stair railing. He tries to climb ripping it off as he goes.

Another attempts to climb the curtain and brings it down, destroying a table with a nativity scene.

The third runs to the fireplace where garland flows off the mantle and hangs to the floor. He climbs up to the mantle. Across the top, he pushes everything off as he goes. His footing slips. To keep from falling, he grabs the garland and stockings, taking them with him. Some of the garland falls into the fireplace. Black smoke billows out.

## EXT. HOUSE - EVENING

Jamie and Kathleen walk up to the house. A crash inside alerts them to danger. They run for the door.

INT. HOUSE - EVENING

The door opens to reveal a total disaster. SMOKE FILLS their lungs. Jamie swats at the fog as though he can wipe it clean like a chalkboard. Seeing is impossible. Their eyes sting and tears run freely. Jamie gropes his way to the fireplace. Using the small shovel, he pulls out what is left of the melted and steaming garland and takes it outside.

Kathleen shoves opens the windows. She turns around to access the damage. As the smoke clears, pockets of devastation appear.

Jamie staggers in to find Kathleen in shock. His first reaction is to put his arms around her.

A tree limb RUSTLES. A baby raccoon crawls out. Movement in the corner reveals two more kits and the mother. Jamie runs to the kitchen. He returns with a broom and starts herding the mother towards the door. She leaves taking her kits with her.

Kathleen collapses where she stands. She can't even cry yet. Everything she has worked for and all hope of regaining her children are in ruins. Jamie sits beside her and pulls her into his arms. Another sound draws their attention. A little masked face peeks out from the tree limbs. In that moment, Kathleen surrenders all hope and cries.

INT - HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

In the light of day, the true amount of devastation is revealed. Kathleen, ragged, tired, and wearing the same clothes, walks among the carnage. It mirrors her life.

The door opens and Steven and Lester walk in. They stop, shocked.

STEVEN

How.. What happened?

KATHLEEN

Raccoons. I accidentally left the back door open.

STEVEN

I don't believe this. Is there anything you can do?

Kathleen shakes her head.

(CONTINUED)

KATHLEEN

Not with the time left. And, my budget is gone.

LESTER

Oh, this is bad. I am so sorry.

She's on the verge of crying again. She takes a deep breath.

KATHLEEN

It's over.

STEVEN

You know we have to document this? The audience needs to know what happened.

Kathleen nods.

STEVEN

You don't need to be in it. I'll just narrate what happened.

KATHLEEN

Thank you.

LATER

Jamie walks in to find Kathleen curled up on the sofa. Most things have been picked up, but the damage is still evident. He stands by the door.

JAMIE

Kathleen?

She looks up at him. His heart aches for the despair he sees in her eyes.

JAMIE

I've brought someone to see you.

Lady Elisabeth slowly hobbles in, her cane giving small thunks on the hardwood floor. A few feet within the door, she turns.

ELISABETH

Thank you, Jamie. I'll call when I need you.

Jamie smiles and closes the door on his way out.

(CONTINUED)

Kathleen jumps to her feet. It's as though the queen has arrived.

KATHLEEN

Lady Elisabeth, you didn't have to come. It's not that I'm not happy to see you, but...

ELISABETH

I've come because I wanted to see a friend when she's in need.

KATHLEEN

Thank you. Would you like to sit down?

ELISABETH

Not yet. There's something I want to show you. Shall we go upstairs?

KATHLEEN

Forgive me, but are you able?

Elisabeth slaps her with her cane.

ELISABETH

I'm old - not decrepit.

Kathleen walks behind her as she slowly navigates the stairs. At the top, she turns right into one of the bedrooms.

BEDROOM - SAME

The bedroom came through untouched, Kathleen's decorating talent evident in every detail of the room. Elisabeth looks around, sad.

ELISABETH

I was born in this room.

Kathleen's mouth falls open .

ELISABETH

Angus was my younger brother. My ancestor built this house and it's never been out of the family until now.

KATHLEEN

I didn't know.

(CONTINUED)

ELISABETH

How could you? The bed you put in the shed was built by my great-grandfather. It's the bed I was born in.

She points to a wall.

ELISABETH

Over there was the wardrobe.

KATHLEEN

It's in the shed, too.

ELISABETH

I thought so. My grandmother loved blue. That's why most of the walls were blue in some way. The curtains and bedspread were made from the wool of our own sheep.

Elisabeth leaves followed by Kathleen.

SECOND BEDROOM - SAME

Wallpaper covers most of the walls with matching curtains for the windows.

KATHLEEN

It used to have small animals painted on the walls.

Elisabeth nods.

ELISABETH

This was my room. My mother was a wonderful artist. She painted them just for me. I remember sitting and watching. As she painted, she would make up stories about the animal.

KATHLEEN

Lady Elisabeth, I'm sorry. I had no idea.

Elisabeth pats her hand as she passes on her way out the door.



## LIVING ROOM - SAME

Kathleen holds Elisabeth's arm and steadies her. As she descends the stairs, Elisabeth gazes around the room. Smoke damage mars the wood finish on rafters and floor. What curtains could not be fixed are missing.

ELISABETH

So many memories.

KATHLEEN

Did your grandfather make the furniture as well?

ELISABETH

He certainly did. He was a master craftsman. That's where Jamie got his talent. You've kept this room much the same except the walls were a deep green.

Kathleen giggles.

KATHLEEN

That was my other choice.

They walk into the kitchen.

## KITCHEN - SAME

Elisabeth looks at the new cabinets and the floor. Fresh sadness covers her face.

ELISABETH

My happiest times were helping my mother in this kitchen. It wasn't grand like this, but I could feel the rich history all the way back to the first McPhearson.

KATHLEEN

If I had a way to start again, I would change everything to the way it was. Give this house its history back.

ELISABETH

I was hoping you would say that.

KATHLEEN

What do you mean? There are only eight days left. How can I

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

KATHLEEN (cont'd)  
re-create a house in so short a  
time? I can't do it.

ELISABETH  
Och, lass, sure you can because  
when you create you don't do it  
from here.

She touches Kathleen's forehead with the top of her cane.

ELISABETH  
You do it from here.

She touches her heart.

ELISABETH  
Just believe in yourself.

KATHLEEN  
But there's not enough time, and I  
don't have any budget left. It  
can't be done.

Elisabeth smiles.

ELISABETH  
Oh, but there is.

LIVING ROOM

Lady Elisabeth walks to the front door and opens it. She  
raps her cane.

ELISABETH  
Come, Jamie. Time's a wasting.

A smiling Jamie walks in followed by Sean, Duncan, Iona and  
several MEN and WOMEN.

KATHLEEN  
What's this?

JAMIE  
Your work crew.

KATHLEEN  
But I don't have any money for the  
paints or decorations.

Jamie puts his arm around her waist.

(CONTINUED)

JAMIE

Don't worry about that. It's all been taken care of.

ELISABETH

I'll have Annie drive me home while you get to work. Kathleen, dear, God be with you.

Kathleen hugs Elisabeth.

KATHLEEN

No matter what, I'll never forget you.

ELISABETH

Oh, posh. You two get to work.

She leaves.

Kathleen takes out her cell phone. She punches in a number.

KATHLEEN

Steven, you need to come to the house - now. Okay.

She hangs up.

BEDROOM - LATER

Steven walks in while Kathleen folds covers, getting the bed ready to be removed.

STEVEN

What's happening?

KATHLEEN

We're going for it.

He looks dubious.

STEVEN

Don't get me wrong, I'd love to see you stay in, but I don't know if the rules will allow this.

KATHLEEN

Surely the rules don't take a family of raccoons destroying the house into account.

(CONTINUED)

STEVEN

I don't think it was ever considered.

KATHLEEN

And you must admit, these are complicated circumstances.

STEVEN

You don't have to convince me. Tell you what, let me talk to the committee. I'll explain the circumstances and see if we can't get you special permission.

KATHLEEN

That's all I ask. Until then, we work like crazy.

Steven shakes his head.

STEVEN

You are one gutsy woman.

KATHLEEN

Just don't tell my ex. I want it to be a surprise.

LIVING ROOM

Jamie supervises the work. While MEN take the new furniture out, others bring back the originals. A WOMAN walks up to him with a pile of cloth in her arms.

WOMAN

I've come to see if Miss Kathleen could use these curtains. They were my mothers, but they've been in my trunk for ages.

JAMIE

She'll love them. She's upstairs in the bedroom.

She disappears up the stairs.

Donegan enters the room. Jamie walks over and stands, his arms crossed in front of him.

DONEGAN

Nay, Jamie, I'm not here to fight you.

(CONTINUED)

JAMIE

Then why are you here?

Donegan suddenly finds his feet very interesting.

DONEGAN

I've come to help.

JAMIE

Why?

DONEGAN

Because no matter what I might have thought at the time, no woman deserves to have her children taken away. Plus, I saw her dancing with the lasses. She seems a good woman.

JAMIE

Aye, she is that.

DONEGAN

Good, then that's settled. I'll be helping the men to carry the things in.

Donegan spins around and walks away.

KITCHEN - SAME

The new cabinets are coming down. Jamie is in the middle of the work, supervising. He grins when he sees Kathleen come in.

JAMIE

You know, you could have saved us a lot of work if you'd just listened the first time.

KATHLEEN

I wish I had. What are we going to do about the floor?

Jamie pulls her into a corner. He ducks his head.

JAMIE

Well, I kinda cheated.

Kathleen is confused.

(CONTINUED)

JAMIE

When I put down the cement board to put the tile on...I put it on top of the floor.

KATHLEEN

So the floor is still under there?

JAMIE

Uh, yea. I couldn't bear the thought of tearing out the hardwood.

KATHLEEN

Does that mean you can take the tile out?

JAMIE

Yes.

Kathleen squeals and throws her arms around his neck and kisses him. In the sudden silence, they turn to see all the men watching. She takes a deep breath, pats his chest and practically skips out.

LIVING ROOM - LATER

The walls are back to their original dark green, the wood on the beams and floor gleam with new polish and wax. The tree stands back in place sans several ornaments.

However, the decorations looks sparse. Kathleen looks it over with a practiced eyes. She shakes her head. Picking a few ornaments from the tree, she tries to arrange them on the table, but it doesn't work. Iona and another woman polishing the furniture watch her.

IONA

You know, my nana would go into the woods and bring in pine limbs for the mantle and in baskets. Also, any holly she could find.

WOMAN

And mine would tie them together and make a wreath.

KATHLEEN

How would they wrap presents?

(CONTINUED)

IONA

They would put them in paper or  
cloth and tie them with string.

Kathleen's phone rings. She opens it.

KATHLEEN

Hello? Steven, what did they say?

She slowly closes the phone and puts it away. Suddenly, she  
raises both hands into the air.

KATHLEEN

YYYYEEEESSSS!!!

EXT. HOUSE - EARLY EVENING

Three SUV's drive up. A small army of JUDGES, STAFF, Steven  
and Lester get out. They look around for a first  
impression.

What they see are Highlanders in full battle gear arranged  
in a line in front of the house. To the side, Duncan plays  
the bagpipes. They don't know whether to be entertained or  
scared. They cautiously enter the house.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME

The low lighting dramatizes the glow of the lights on the  
Christmas tree, mantle and stair railings. Real pine limbs,  
artfully arranged, hang on the mantle, tables and in baskets  
around the room. Instead of modern, up-to-date decorations,  
much has either been taken from nature or borrowed from  
generations past.

The judges question Kathleen, writing down her responses and  
their observations while Lester follows them with his  
camera.

JUDGE 1

It looks like you've taken an  
old-world approach.

KATHLEEN

My first thought was to go modern,  
but then I met a wonderful woman  
who was born here. She told me of  
the rich Scottish history of this  
house, and I realized this house IS  
its past; they couldn't be  
separated. Everything you see is  
original and hand-made.

(CONTINUED)

They are looking at every aspect of the room.

JUDGE 2

I've never seen curtain cloth quite like this.

KATHLEEN

The cloth for the curtains and the throw rugs were taken from sheep raised here and spun by local residents.

JUDGE 1

Shall we look at the kitchen?

KITCHEN - SAME

The original cabinets are back on the wall, their varnished wood match the hardwood flooring. A judge gives Kathleen a questioning look.

KATHLEEN

Yes, these are the original cabinets built with the house.

JUDGE 3

I must say, this is a bold approach, but I rather like it. Let's head upstairs.

LIVING ROOM - SAME

The group comes down the stairs.

JUDGE 1

The house is beautiful. I understand you had a bad set-back not too long ago?

KATHLEEN

Yes, a family of raccoons got in and nearly destroyed everything.

The judge coming down the stairs first stops.

JUDGE 1

What is that?

Kathleen looks around him. Nipper watches them a few feet away.

(CONTINUED)



KATHLEEN

That, ladies and gentlemen, is Nipper the ferret. He's as much a part of the house as its history. His ancestors came over with the first Scottish immigrants that settled here. Watch.

Kathleen takes a small pine cone from the stair railing and tosses it. Nipper immediately jumps up with a weasel war dance and begins playing with it. Everyone laughs.

They continue down the stairs.

JUDGE 2

So, what do you believe you have learned from this experience?

Kathleen barely hesitates.

KATHLEEN

That there are houses that are more than just wood and plumbing. They are homes with a rich history, and to take that away would be a crime against the generations that lived there.

The judges quickly write something down.

JUDGE 1

Well, I think that pretty much does it.

KATHLEEN

If you will indulge me, there is one other thing I would like to show you.

EXT. - GAZEBO - EARLY EVENING

The gazebo is beautiful. White lights drape over the top with light strings trailing inside. At the front stands a huge Christmas tree covered in small white lights with red ornaments. Poinsettias sit everywhere. The water flowing from the fountain adds background to soft Christmas music.

Jamie stands beside the tree in full Highland dress. He bows to the judges.

(CONTINUED)

KATHLEEN

Ladies and gentlemen, may I present James McKnight, the master builder who did the work on the house.

JAMIE

(Full accent)

Good evening. I am pleased to meet you.

JUDGE 2

Mr. McKnight, you did a wonderful job on the house.

JAMIE

Thank you. It was a pleasure to be sure.

Judge three holds out his hand to Kathleen.

JUDGE 3

Thank you, Ms. Myers. Steven will be in touch with you. Our final decision will be telecast live from our New York office with all contestants present. We'll see you then.

As Jamie escorts the judges to their cars, Steven holds back. He takes Kathleen's hand.

STEVEN

Congratulations. I doubted that you could do it, but you did. It looks marvelous.

KATHLEEN

Thanks, Steven; for everything.

He smiles warmly and follows the judges.

Kathleen stands in the same spot when Jamie returns. She sighs.

KATHLEEN

It's over.

JAMIE

So, what are your plans?

KATHLEEN

Not sure. I wait to hear the verdict, then I go and fight for my children.

(CONTINUED)

Jamie takes her hand and leads her to sit next to him at the fountain. He plays with a poinsettia leaf.

JAMIE

Will you be leaving now?

KATHLEEN

I can't stay here. I have a home that I need to take care of. And, from what I understand, Jackson left a plate of food under his bed that is crawling with ants.

Jamie laughs.

JAMIE

They are fine children. You deserve to have them.

(Pause)

Kath, I don't want to lose you.

She looks at him sharply.

JAMIE

I lost one person I loved, I don't think I could handle losing another.

She smiles and lays her forehead against his arm.

INT. COTTAGE - DAY

Jackson's backpack sit by the open door. Kathleen comes out of her bedroom, Danielle's backpack and Miss Allison held tight. She wipes her eyes. At the door, she gazes back one last time, picks everything up and leaves.

INT. MYER'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Kathleen sits at the kitchen table searching through the help wanted ads. She circles one with a pen. The silence is deafening. Her phone rings

KATHLEEN

Hello? Hey, Steven...

SIMULTANEOUS WITH STEVEN'S CALL

Steven sits at his desk, leaning back, relaxed.

STEVEN  
Kathleen, how are you doing?

KATHLEEN  
I'm not sure, yet. I'm looking at wanted ads while waiting for the phone call.

STEVEN  
Any news on the children?

KATHLEEN  
No. John still refuses to allow me to talk to them.

STEVEN  
Are you ready to fight for them?

KATHLEEN  
With everything I've got.

STEVEN  
Good, because things are going to heat up pretty quickly. This may be the fight of your life.

KATHLEEN  
If it gets my children back, I'm ready.

STEVEN  
Good. I have a friend who is an investigative reporter. This is just the kind of thing she loves. We're going to begin checking out the legalities of what John did.

KATHLEEN  
When will I leave for New York?

STEVEN  
Next Monday. The tickets are being sent by Fed Ex. along with your itinerary and hotel reservations.

KATHLEEN  
I can't begin to repay you for what you've done.

(CONTINUED)

STEVEN

No need. You've helped me believe  
in the human spirit again. Bye.

DANIELLE'S ROOM - DAY

Kathleen puts away a stack of clean and folded clothing. She walks to the door, stops, and turns. Her gaze scans the room, every inch a memory.

A small table stands in a corner with Allison sitting in a tiny chair. Across from her, the other chair is empty, waiting. On the table between them, are two shortbread cookies: one for Allison, one for Danielle. A new resolve shines in Kathleen's eyes. She silently closes the door.

JACKSON'S ROOM - DAY

She brings in his clean and folded clothes. Placing them on the bed, she bends down and looks under the bed. She comes up chuckling - yep, it was there. She walks out leaving it.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

A Fed Ex truck driver walks to the front door and rings the doorbell. Kathleen opens it. He hands her a large envelope. When she steps back to close the door, two suitcases can be seen already packed and waiting.

EXT. NEW YORK - DAY

A plane lands at the airport.

INT. MAJOR STUDIO - EVENING

Kathleen walks up to the RECEPTIONIST'S desk.

KATHLEEN

Kathleen Myers with the interior  
designing contest.

RECEPTIONIST

Yes, Studio One, down the hall on  
your right.

She hands her a badge.

(CONTINUED)

KATHLEEN

Thank you.

It's the longest walk of her life. She fidgets with her purse; checks her hair; checks her dress. At a women's bathroom she ducks in, unable to help herself.

She comes out smoothing her lip gloss. Now lipstick is on her finger. Pulls out a Kleenex and wipes it off. Reaches the door, breaths deep, and walks in.

INT. STUDIO ONE - EVENING

A typical studio. A long table commands front with three chairs behind it. Ten more chairs face it. On each side are huge video screens.

A guard stops her. She shows her badge and is escorted to her chair. She looks around at the OTHER CONTESTANTS. She catches the eye of one and gives her a smile that is not returned. Oh, well. She sits and fidgets.

The three judges come in and sit down. She feels as though she's in a courtroom about to be sentenced. Steven walks in holding a mic. At the director's cue, he begins.

STEVEN

Good evening, everyone. Welcome to the Great Design Challenge. For the last eight months we have been following ten contestants rebuild, design, and decorate old houses for the Christmas holiday to see which one will win the grand prize: ten thousand dollars and the chance to work at Design Magic, America's largest interior design company.

INT. JAMIE'S HOUSE - EVENING

Jamie and Lady Elisabeth are sitting at the television watching the live telecast.

On screen:

STEVEN (MC)

Tonight, you will be shown each house and hear what our panel of judges have to say.

INT. TOWN PUB - EVENING

The bar is packed. Donegan is at the front cheering Kathleen on.

STEVEN (MC)  
Our first contestant comes to us  
from California...

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE, JACKSON'S ROOM - EVENING

Jackson and Danielle are glued to a small set.

DANIELLE  
I saw her. I saw Mommy.

JACKSON  
I know. Keep it down, we don't want  
dad to hear.

TIME LAPSE

INT. STUDIO ONE - EVENING

A Spanish style house is being shown on the screen.

STEVEN (MC)  
This contestant was given a Spanish  
style Hacienda for their remodel...

TIME LAPSE

JUDGE 1  
What we saw with this house was  
that the interior design chosen by  
the contestant didn't quite match  
the style of the house.

INT. TOWN PUB - EVENING

DONEGAN  
You can see they did it wrong. Ya  
can't make a pig into a riding  
horse.

The other men nod in agreement.

INT. STUDIO ONE - EVENING

Kathleen is tense. She's picked up a large rubber band from somewhere and is stretching and rolling it between her fingers. Suddenly, it flies across the room.

STEVEN (MC)

Our final contestant was given a house built in the early eighteen hundreds in upper New York.

The McPhearson house is placed on the video screen.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE, JACKSON'S ROOM - EVENING

DANIELLE

Look, it's the house we were at.

INT. STUDIO ONE - EVENING

STEVEN (MC)

This house was in fairly good condition and had a resident ferret.

A picture of Little Nipper - LAUGHTER.

STEVEN (MC)

After successfully finishing the house, this contestant had a set-back when a family of raccoons came in and fairly destroyed everything. With only eight days to go, she completely reworked every room to finish on time.

APPLAUSE.

JUDGE 1

This contestant had an excellent grasp of the style of the house.

As he speaks, pictures of her work shown on the screen.

JUDGE 1 (CONT.)

She blended modern with its history in a way that was both functional and aesthetically pleasing.

(CONTINUED)



JUDGE 2

I agree. However, I didn't see a lot of design; rather she took what was already there and just added a few extra touches.

JUDGE 3

I agree. In fact, I felt in some ways, she cheated a bit by using what's there instead of recreating...

INT. TOWN PUB - EVENING

DONEGAN

You don't know what you talking about.

CONNOR

Be quiet, man. We need ta hear it.

INT. - STUDIO ONE - EVENING

JUDGE 3

However, after hearing her explanation, I understood why she did it. And the gazebo was stunning.

STEVEN (MC)

So, are we ready to reveal the winner?

JUDGE 1

Yes, we are.

STEVEN (MC)

And we'll do it right after this commercial break.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE, JACKSON'S ROOM - EVENING

JOHN (O.C.)

Kids, time for bed. Lights out.

DANIELLE

No, we won't get to see mommy win.

(CONTINUED)

JACKSON

Quick, run and jump in your bed and pretend to sleep. When he's gone, come back here - but be quiet.

Danielle runs out of the room.

DANIELLE'S ROOM - SAME

Danielle rushes in and jumps into bed. She turns out the light and pretends to sleep.

John opens the door and peers in. Satisfied, he leaves, closing the door.

Danielle jumps up. She opens the door and looks out.

HALLWAY - SAME

John walks down the stairs. Danielle slips out and tip-toes to Jackson's room.

JACKSON'S ROOM - SAME

Jackson turns the TV back on.

INT. STUDIO ONE - EVENING

STEVEN (MC)

Welcome back. We have now seen all the houses and heard the judges impressions. Judges are you ready to give us your final verdict?

JUDGE 1

We are. It has been a hard decision. All of the houses were well crafted and designed. The work done was excellent, but there was one house that stood out above the rest.

JUDGE 2

Everything this contestant did was excellent from the new cabinets, marble flooring and chic design; everything we were looking for.

(CONTINUED)

JUDGE 1

That's why the winner is....Ms.  
Jennifer Stone.

STUDIO CAMERA

Jennifer Stone jumps up, hands raised like a boxer that has just won the match. The camera pans the other contestants. It stops at Kathleen. She's clapping politely while clenching her bottom lip to keep from crying.

INT. JAMIE'S HOUSE - EVENING

JAMIE

No. No. They can't do that. She  
worked so hard.

He turns the TV off.

JAMIE

Nana, I have to go to her.

ELISABETH

Of course you do. I'll be fine.

He kisses her cheek.

JAMIE

I'll see if I can bring her home  
with me.

ELISABETH

Only if you plan to marry her.

JAMIE

I've been planning that for quite a  
while, but first I need to ask her.

ELISABETH

Step carefully, Jamie, she's been  
through a lot in a short time. And  
she still has a battle ahead of  
her.

Jamie nods and leaves.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - EVENING

Jackson and Danielle stare at the TV, unbelieving, eyes misty.

DANIELLE

Does this mean we can't live with mommy anymore? You said if she won, we could go and live with her again.

JACKSON

I don't know. I've got to get my phone back so I can call her. Next time dad leaves, we'll look for it.

Danielle turns and lies down on the bed, crying.

DANIELLE

I want mommy.

Jackson lies next to her, his arm over her shoulders.

JACKSON

I know. We'll find a way.

INT. TAXI - EVENING

Kathleen sits in the back seat. She stares out the window, tears streaming freely. The phone rings. She takes it out and looks at the number. Pushing the receive button, she answers, her voice choked.

KATHLEEN

Hello?

INT. JAMIE'S CAR - EVENING

JAMIE

Kath, I'm sorry. It's my fault. I pressed you to make the changes.

INTERCUT Kathleen and Jamie

KATHLEEN

No, I made the choice.

JAMIE

Are you headed home?

(CONTINUED)

KATHLEEN  
Tomorrow morning.

JAMIE  
I'm going to meet you there.

KATHLEEN  
I should say no, but I could really  
use the support right now.

JAMIE  
Which is why I want to be by your  
side.

KATHLEEN  
Thanks. I guess this means John  
has won.

Kathleen breaks down as the full impact of this hits her.

JAMIE  
No, lass. We'll find a way. We'll  
fight him, and we'll win.

Her throat tight, Kathleen can only nod. Jamie understands  
the pause.

JAMIE (CONT.)  
I'll see you tomorrow, okay?

She barely whispers -

KATHLEEN  
Okay.

JAMIE  
Good night, love.

Kathleen hangs up. She wipes her eyes. The lights of the  
city reflect off the windows, but she doesn't see them.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

DANIELLE  
Hey, Jackson, they're talking about  
mommy on TV.

Jackson runs in from the other room. Danielle sits in front  
of the television, surrounded by Legos. Jackson bounces  
onto the couch.

(CONTINUED)

JACKSON

Turn it up.

Danielle does.

NEWS ANCHOR (O.C.)

For Kathleen Myers, her time on a reality TV show become a little too real when she was handed a court paper by her ex husband, John Myers, giving him sole custody of their two children. All of it played out on national TV.

John walks in.

JOHN

What is this?

DANIELLE

It's mommy.

NEWS ANCHOR (O.C.)

What makes this case stand out, though, is that, when investigated, it appears her children were taken from her with no court hearing and no opportunity for Ms. Myers to refute the charges laid against her.

LAWYER (O.C.)

It's an open and shut case of insider dealings between Mr. Myers, his lawyer, and the judge. I intend to take this to court and, when proven guilty, someone will be looking at jail time.

John grabs the remote and turns off the TV with a SNAP.

JOHN

Both of you, upstairs.

Jackson and Danielle high-tail it. John pulls out his cell phone.

JOHN

Cummings, what the hell is happening?....What do you mean you don't know? It's all over the television. Their talking about jail time....You'd better find

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JOHN (cont'd)  
out. I'm not paying you to sit  
around and let things happen.

He slams the phone shut.

INT. LAWYER'S OFFICE - DAY

Kathleen walks to the receptionist's desk. Behind her is a large plaque reading WILCOX AND FITCH, ATTORNEYS AT LAW. The RECEPTIONIST greets her with a smile.

RECEPTIONIST  
Ms. Myers?

KATHLEEN  
Yes. I believe I'm expected?

RECEPTIONIST  
You are. If you'll follow me.

She takes Kathleen down a hall and into a typical conference room. BRADLY WILCOX sits at one end, papers placed in neat stacks around him. He looks up when they enter.

RECEPTIONIST  
Ms. Myers.

Bradly stands and shakes her hand.

BRADLY  
Ms. Myers, please have a  
seat. Would you like something to  
drink?

KATHLEEN  
Water would be wonderful.

The receptionist leaves to get it.

BRADLY  
Reviewing this case, it looks  
pretty clear that your parental  
rights were taken away illegally.

The receptionist comes back and quietly places a bottle of water in front of her.

BRADLY  
What we're going to do is, first  
get your children back and then  
we'll do a criminal case against  
Mr. Myers and his lawyer.

(CONTINUED)

KATHLEEN

Mr. Wilcox, I'd rather not have John go to jail.

BRADLY

Then, you won't want any charges brought against him? Ms. Myers, he stole your children.

KATHLEEN

I don't want my children to go through any more than necessary. Seeing their father go to jail would devastate them. If you can just get them back, that will be enough.

BRADLY

Commendable. I will do everything in my power to do that, but it may have an effect on the custody case.

KATHLEEN

What kind of effect?

BRADLY

Without the criminal charges, the judge will be looking solely on who is the best parent for the children.

KATHLEEN

We'll cross that when we get there. I do have one question: Who hired you? Because, I certainly don't have the funds for a court case.

BRADLY

Don't worry about that. A third party which wants to remain anonymous has been following your case and has hired me to represent you.

Kathleen hesitates, forming her words.

KATHLEEN

I seem to be caught in a difficult decision: on one hand I hate feeling as though I owe something to someone I could never repay, yet without this gift, I could never get my children back.

(CONTINUED)



BRADLY

Then, just accept it as the gift it was meant to be and be thankful.

KATHLEEN

I am, believe me.

BRADLY

Good. I've already filed to have this case taken before a family court judge...

INT. MYER'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Kathleen and Jamie sit on the couch his arm around her in a comforting embrace. The conversation continues the one with her attorney.

KATHLEEN

Then, he said that a guardian will be appointed to look at both sides and talk with the children. At the hearing, the guardian will state what he found, and then the attorneys will argue their cases. I just get to sit there looking like a wall flower.

JAMIE

A very beautiful wall flower.

KATHLEEN

Funny. I hope it's not too long before I can see them.

JAMIE

Even if it is, you're strong enough, and I'll be right here with you.

KATHLEEN

Thanks, for the first time, I believe I can face him and win.

JAMIE

I almost feel sorry for John.

KATHLEEN

I don't.

INT. JUDGE'S OFFICE - DAY

JUDGE RAYMOND BUCHANAN sits behind his desk studying a stack of papers. Before him are Kathleen and John with their LAWYERS. The GUARDIAN, GARNER BROWN, has just finished his findings.

JUDGE BUCHANAN

Thank you, Mr. Brown. Now, I want to hear from the attorney for Mr. Myers.

John's attorney, GEORGE CUMMINGS, stands and addresses the judge.

CUMMINGS

Your honor, my client is requesting the continuation of sole custody of the children. Since the initial hearing, Mr. Myers has married and is now able to provide a stable home with two parents; whereas Ms. Myers remains single and unemployed.

JUDGE BUCHANAN

It's interesting that you say, "continuation of sole custody" for, if I remember, I allowed Ms. Myers sole custody. A decision which was reversed by another judge without a legal hearing. And, I also notice he terminated Ms. Myer's alimony.

CUMMINGS

A decision we deeply regret, your honor.

JUDGE BUCHANAN

I'm sure you do.

CUMMINGS

However, it doesn't negate the fact that Mr. Myers is now in a superior position to take care of the children.

JUDGE BUCHANAN

It will if he ends up in jail.

CUMMINGS

Ms. Myers has graciously decided not to press charges so as not to further distress the children.

(CONTINUED)

JUDGE BUCHANAN

Very commendable, Ms. Myers. I don't know if I would be so lenient, but it does show me a great deal where your priorities lie.

KATHLEEN

Sir, my children are all that matters.

JUDGE BUCHANAN

Yes, I believe they are.

JOHN

If the kids are all that matter, then I should have them. After all, I'm the one able to support them. She couldn't even win a job. Without me, they'd be destitute.

JUDGE BUCHANAN

(dripping sarcasm)

Yes, Mr. Myers, we're aware of your high salary position.

Cummings sees things heading in the wrong direction.

CUMMINGS

Sir, with the addition of a new Mrs. Myers, it's a clear case which home would create a more stable environment.

Cummings sits down and hisses between clenched teeth for John to shut up.

The judge indicates for Bradley Wilcox to come forward.

WILCOX

Sir, Ms. Myers has done everything she can to create a loving environment for her two children. As the Guardian indicated, when interviewed, the children said that, despite their father having the money, they preferred to live with their mother. She has been the nurturing influence for them from birth.

(CONTINUED)

JOHN

(Forceful whispers)

I'm going to have a talk with those little...

CUMMINGS

(Whispered back)

Shut up.

WILCOX

She's been taking college classes and has obtained a B.A. in interior design and is presently working on her Masters. The show she was on was an opportunity for her to obtain a good, high-paying job, and, despite unbelievable obstacles, she persevered and finished her project.

JUDGE BUCHANAN

Yes, my wife watched it faithfully. I was greatly impressed, Ms. Myers.

KATHLEEN

Thank you.

WILCOX

Sir, I believe it's only a matter of time before Ms. Myers finds employment. Her story has gone out nationwide....

CUMMINGS

Sir, that's a big "if".

KATHLEEN

Sir, may I be allowed to speak?

CUMMINGS

Sir, I protest...

JUDGE BUCHANAN

You can protest all you want, Mr. Cummings, this is still my room.

(To Kathleen)

Yes, Ms. Myers?

Nervous, Kathleen stands. Looks at John who shoots daggers at her, then gathers her courage.

(CONTINUED)

KATHLEEN

Sir, since our marriage, the only thing I ever heard from John is how incompetent I am, and I believed him. But during this contest, I learned that I can do something on my own. I can succeed. Even when those silly raccoons destroyed my work, I was able to remake it with the help of friends I gained on my own. I'm saying this because I'm afraid of what he's going to tell the children. Will he tell them they're stupid? That they can't do anything right? Will he destroy their self-confidence like he did me?

A growl turns her head. John's hate glows. She sets her shoulders.

KATHLEEN

He's taken away the alimony. That's okay, I can live without it as long as the child support is there to take care of the children. I will do whatever is necessary to give them a home full of love and support.

Judge Buchanan sighs.

JUDGE BUCHANAN

There's a lot to think through. I'm going to call a twenty minute recess during which time, Mr. Brown, if you could bring the children into my chambers.

JOHN

What's to think about?

CUMMINGS

(Between clenched teeth)

Mr. Myers, may I see you outside the office? Now!

Cummings heads out. John gets up, throws Kathleen a hated glare, and follows.

At Kathleen's glance, Wilcox shrugs his shoulders.

INT. OUTSIDE JUDGE'S CHAMBERS - SAME

Jamie waits outside. Kathleen slumps next to him, leaning on his side. They can't miss John passing by.

JOHN

Well, if it isn't the boy in skirts. Good luck with her.

KATHLEEN

I can't believe I took that for all those years.

Jamie kisses her forehead.

JAMIE

Freedom is wonderful. So, what happened?

KATHLEEN

The judge is having a break to talk with the children. It all comes down to my income verses John's wonderful salary and a new wife.

JAMIE

No contest.

KATHLEEN

Let's home the judge...

She's interrupted by Jackson and Danielle running down the hall, Mr. Brown running to catch up.

DANIELLE

Mommy!

Jamie is pushed aside by squirming bodies, hugs, and kisses. Their love warms his heart.

DANIELLE

We missed you. Please, let us come home with you. Please.

KATHLEEN

Darling, it's not my decision.

JACKSON

We've already decided, if the judge makes us go home with Dad, we're going to run away.

Kathleen looks up at Mr. Brown's raised eyebrows and smile.

(CONTINUED)

KATHLEEN

Honey, you can't do that.

JACKSON

Yes, we can, and I'm going to tell the judge that, too.

Tears form in Kathleen's eyes.

KATHLEEN

I love you so much.

MR. BROWN

Come on, kids, the judge is waiting.

Danielle throws a wave.

DANIELLE

Bye, bye, Mommy. Don't worry, we'll tell that judge.

Jamie holds her again. She sniffs, wiping her nose with a tissue from her purse.

KATHLEEN

How do I live without my children?

JAMIE

With me.

Kathleen looks into his eyes, a question on her face.

JAMIE

Yes, I am.

She smiles. It's all he needs.

INT. JUDGE'S OFFICE - DAY

The judge, Cummings and John are already seated. The atmosphere subdued. Cummings gathers his papers together, assured of a win.

Kathleen and Wilcox enter, both smiling. The judge looks up. His brows furrow. When they sit down with no further comments, he proceeds.

JUDGE BUCHANAN

My interview with the children was very enlightening. It vindicates what my thoughts have been telling

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JUDGE BUCHANAN (cont'd)  
me about the situation as a whole,  
especially their home life. Not to  
mention, their threat to run away  
if I did not make the right  
decision. Therefore, I am  
upholding my previous decision to  
award sole custody of the children  
to Ms. Myers.

JOHN  
That's ridiculous, you're going to  
let two children blackmail  
you? She's not married.

WILCOX  
Actually, sir, it turns out that  
will soon be remedied. As of a few  
minutes ago, Ms. Myers has become  
engaged to Mr. McKnight. I'm sure  
I can have his financial records on  
your desk in a few days, but, from  
what I understand, he is well able  
to take care of a family.

The judge is obviously relieved.

JUDGE BUCHANAN  
Thank you, counselor.

JOHN  
This is ridiculous. The man walks  
around wearing skirts.

KATHLEEN  
They're kilts, John. He's  
Scottish.  
(To Judge Buchanan)  
We were at the Highland  
Games. Jamie was wearing ancestral  
clothes.

JOHN  
He still looked ridiculous. Is  
that the type of man you would let  
my children live with?

JUDGE BUCHANAN  
Mr. Myers, do you know where the  
name Buchanan came from?



JOHN  
Why should I care?

JUDGE BUCHANAN  
Because it's Scottish.

Cummings slams his papers closed, mumbling:

CUMMINGS  
Of all the stupid, idiotic...

JUDGE BUCHANAN  
My verdict is for Ms. Kathleen Myers. The children are to be returned to her immediately.

KATHLEEN  
Thank you.

JOHN  
You can't do that.

JUDGE BUCHANAN  
Mr. Cummings, will you please tell your client just what I am able to do.

CUMMINGS  
John, SHUT UP. He can do whatever he wants, including throw you in jail despite Ms. Myer's dropped charges.

JOHN  
I'm getting another lawyer. I'm not through, yet.

JUDGE BUCHANAN  
Mr. Myers, if I see you in my court room again, I promise I will bring back the charges and throw you in jail. Ms. Myers, you are released. Have a wonderful day and congratulations on your wedding.

INT. OUTSIDE JUDGE'S CHAMBERS - SAME

Jamie sits, chin resting on clenched hands. He looks up at the door opening. John storms out, fuming. He only glances at him as he passes by, for once keeping his mouth shut. Expectations rising, he watches for Kathleen.

(CONTINUED)

She comes out, face radiant. He grins and grabs her in a bear hug. Danielle and Jackson run up to create a group hug.

Jamie pulls Kathleen close and, after a slight pause, kisses her passionately. This morphs into....

INT. - GAZEBO - EARLY EVENING

Jamie and Kathleen stand in front of a clergyman, finishing the kiss after their wedding vows. The gazebo is still decorated in white lights and the Christmas tree. Jackson and Danielle stand to the side.

After the kiss they look out over the audience sitting in lawn chairs around the entrance. Michelle, Lady Elisabeth, and the whole town have shown up.

Duncan reaches into his pocket to pull out a handkerchief. His watch falls. He reaches down to retrieve it just as Nipper runs in and grabs it.

DUNCAN

Hey, get back here.

Duncan PUSHES people aside in his attempt to get out and chase the ferret, creating a wave of LAUGHTER.

INT. HOUSE - EVENING

Even though it's months past, the house is still decorated for Christmas. All the lights are out except the tree and trim. In different places, candles add their glow.

The McKnight family cuddle together on the couch. Danielle sits in Jamie's lap, smiling and content. Jackson is next to Kathleen, safe with his mother's arm around him.

JAMIE

Guys, we have a surprise for you.

KATHLEEN

I didn't get to spend Christmas with you, so we decided to have it tonight. Are you ready for some presents?

Danielle's face lights up.

(CONTINUED)

DANIELLE  
I want a pony. Please.

JAMIE  
That's a pretty big present to put  
under a tree.

Her face drops.

JAMIE  
Now, hold on, let's see what you  
get.

He places her on the couch and goes to the tree. He has to  
move a nosey ferret to pick up a present. He comes back,  
one in each hand.

JAMIE  
Here ya' are.

They rip off the wrapping. Jackson's box reveals a new smart  
phone.

JACKSON  
Cool. I've been wanting one of  
these. Thanks.

Danielle is confused. She's holding up a bunch of straps  
with metal and a buckle.

DANIELLE  
What is it?

JAMIE  
That's a halter. It's what you put  
on a pony's head.

Her mouth drops open. She squeals, giving Jamie a neck  
choke hold.

JACKSON  
But she can't have a pony where we  
live.

KATHLEEN  
That's another present. How would  
you two like to live part of the  
year here?

JAMIE  
Instead of getting paid for the  
show, I asked if I could have the  
house. It's ours free and clear.

JACKSON

Leave all my friends and school?

KATHLEEN

No. For the school year, we'll live in the other house. We can come here for vacations and summer.

JAMIE

Duncan has volunteered to look over the place and keep Danielle's pony.

JACKSON

Sounds great. Except one thing.

KATHLEEN

What's that?

JACKSON

It only has one bathroom.

KATHLEEN

Well then, it's a good thing we have a carpenter in the family, isn't it?

FADE OUT

THE END