

THE MAGIC OF LETTERS

A CHRISTMAS STORY

BY

MOIRA VANISH

FADE IN:

EXT. ST. AUGUSTINE'S - OLD SCARY FIELD

SUPER DECEMBER 1st 2008

Two DERELICT HOUSES stand side-by-side.

MOIRA VANISH, 33, with the rustic elegance of a cowgirl, catches note of THE MAN, a youthful 70s.

His white beard dresses his chin in magnificence. He's calling her in, silently, with his hands.

MOIRA

I don't think so. I've heard that people going in there, come out changed.

At once, these houses are blinking to become:

EXT./INT. POSH OFFICE

Moira looks joyful and enters. In seconds- The Man SLIDES OVER A CONTRACT on an elaborate desk.

THE MAN

Just sign right here. And here. And here. And there. And here...

And Moira complies, quite happily.

MOIRA

Wow! You're buying my script!

She exits the Posh Office, but really she exits:

THE DERELICT HOUSE ON THE RIGHT

EXT. ST. AUGUSTINE'S - OLD SCARY FIELD - PRESENT DAY

A TELEVISION REPORTER speaks directly.

TELEVISION REPORTER

I'm standing outside of St. Augustine's North where Moira Vanish was last reported seen entering one of the two houses reported as haunted.

SUPER: NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA - CANADA

INT. CABIN

A large open room serves as kitchen and living room with an old wood stove and a black iron kettle boiling upon it.

A RADIO broadcast's the Television Reporter:

TELEVISION REPORTER O.S.

Authorities are still investigating, but time is starting to make her return look less likely. It's been a year today and people are still wondering. What happened to Moira?

Moira sits at her desk near a stuffed WOLVERINE hanging in the corner near a gun rack. She's typing at an old upright typewriter, but when she hears this, she looks up, confused.

MOIRA

I'm here. What are they talking about?

The broadcast jumps to DJ speak then a Christmas song. Back to the typing:

THE MAGIC OF LETTERS

Now Moira speaks directly to you, the Someone, who enquires.

SOMEONE O.S.

What are you doing?

MOIRA

I'm writing for a movie.

SOMEONE O.S.

Why on an old typewriter?

MOIRA

Cause I like old stuff; it's nostalgic. And, because I need money to build a transition house...

Every time she says, "transition", there's a loud clap of thunder. Strange. Moira only sees SNOW FALLING.

MOIRA
 ...for people in- well, in
 transition. Everyone's always in
 transition; so that's pretty
 important I think.

Moira pulls out a sketch from her desk and holds it up. Looks like a charming Bed and Breakfast.

MOIRA
 See?

SOMEONE O.S.
 Do you know how many people have
 the same kind of crazy notions? I
 think you might be wasting your
 time.

Moira looks at the stuffed wolverine hanging in the corner above her desk.

MOIRA
 What do you think wolvy?

Moira looks at you seriously, and says:

MOIRA
 He says "time is an illusion". And
 then she smiles like she's eaten
 chocolate.

SOMEONE O.S.
 Time is suspicious to say the
 least.

Moira jumps up.

MOIRA
 I need supplies!

She grabs her list and pushes you out the door into the snow covered forest.

Before she shuts the door, she notices a large Raven taking flight from the branch of an evergreen. She closes the door. And a new door opens out-

SUPER: VIRTUAL VANCOUVER

EXT. POSH OFFICE

Where she exits and does the macarena to:

MOIRA
I-I-I-I-I gotta contract...

FADE IN:

SUPER: THE MAGIC OF LETTERS - A CHRISTMAS STORY

Clink-clink-clink typewritten on the screen.

EXT. VIRTUAL VANCOUVER - MAIN STREET - DAY

This is where the action is, a long main street in Simply Vancouver dedicated to Christmas tradition.

Suddenly, as always happens, this wintry scape parts in the middle like the Red Sea and a warm golden path exists right down the center between the snow covered shoppers.

This path - it's bathed in sunshine and it must be summertime because this man-in-the-middle, he's walking without a shirt.

The Man from earlier approaches up the street. He's vigorous and his steps are forthright. Hard to know what to look at, the scenery or him, but he captures us with his voice-

THE MAN
Hi! I'm the-

He waves his hand across his chest as if to reveal something, but NOTHING'S there except his chest. THE WOMAN, 70s, jumps into frame, handing him a T-shirt.

THE WOMAN
Whoops. Just about forgot.

The Man smiles and puts on the T-shirt; thus announcing proudly:

THE MAN
I'm the-

His hands direct our attention to the name on his shirt:

NARRATOR

THE WOMAN
He's The Narrator.

THE MAN
You stole my line!

The woman shrugs then plays with her feathered hat.

THE WOMAN
Tell 'em who you are.

THE MAN
Not yet, this isn't my story.

The Woman brushes up against him.

THE WOMAN
But I like your story.

The Man snaps his fingers and presto: Sparkles and-

THE MAN
This is a story about:

Materializing on screen is Moira and she's hanging like a marionette from strings.

MOIRA
Hey get me down from here. This
wasn't the way I wrote it.

The Man, points like Uncle Sam. He even has a SHINY RING with a great SILVER 'S', glinting starlight in all directions.

THE MAN
You signed the contract.

MOIRA
But this is messing with my plans.

THE MAN
I have a better plan.

Moira stops fighting the strings and hangs limply.

THE MAN
Achem, Moira is thankful because of
everything that's happened to her.

(MORE)

THE MAN (CONT'D)
Even being up in those strings,
right?

Moira gives a grievous "yes" shrug.

MOIRA
Hey! Are you gonna introduce
everyone?! This could be long and I
need a drink.

The Woman steps in with a pair of scissors to cut the
marionette strings.

THE MAN
Don't cut her down yet. Hang on...

The Man walks out of frame.

THE WOMAN
Hey where are you going?

THE MAN
Have to wee-wee. Keep 'er occupied.

The woman smiles wickedly, holding up the scissors and
clipping them together. She looks at us.

THE WOMAN
Snip-snip.

Moira looks up.

MOIRA
I know it all ready, fall down go
boom right?

Moira falls. She FAAAAALLLLLS... all the way into the
headquarters of Simplyscripts.

SIMPLYSCRIPTS - HEADQUARTERS

KERPLUNK!!! Flat on her keister.

THE STRANGER O.S
I'm afraid you've fallin' for one
of the oldest tricks in the book.

MOIRA
Huh?

THE STRANGER appears, extending a warm hand. He's 30s with
wavy light brown hair.

STRANGER

Here let me give you a hand up.

MOIRA

What trick? ...

...looking around the room, FILLED WITH COMPUTERS and bedazzled for Christmas.

STRANGER

You went into one of the haunted houses on that vacant lot of St. Augustine's didn't you?

MOIRA

No I didn't.

STRANGER

Yes you did.

MOIRA

No I didn't.

STRANGER

No you didn't.

MOIRA

Yes I did.

Moira's face is now wrung with confusion.

MOIRA

You tricked me!

STRANGER

Correct, now. Yes. You. Did!!!

He lifts a PICTURE from his pocket. Yip, she's entering.

STRANGER

You thought you were entering a Posh Office. You thought you were selling your script. You thought a lot of things, but you thought wrong.

MOIRA

What's going on?

STRANGER

The Man you sold your script to is an entity that changes people and things and he gives them a bad virus. It causes Writer-wreckadelirosis. Very serious. Turn around, and things have changed.

Moira's seriously frightened.

MOIRA

Writer-wrecka-deliroses!!! It's serious?

MOIRA

But why? Why me?

STRANGER

Something to do with your wanting to build a transition house...

Thunder clap again.

STRANGER

It's just the effects manager. He's a little over zealous. ... Transition, obviously, means change of passage and I'm afraid that your dream drew you inside the Haunted House and invoked The Man and the virus.

MOIRA

Is it curable?

STRANGER

It is, but you'll first have to remember who you are.

MOIRA

Oh my gawd, who am I?!

STRANGER

You're Moira Vanish formerly of Windy Point who's now an actress playing Moira who is a grief counsellor of 7471 Clearview Drive. You live with your husband, Joseph, who's a professional party planner and you want to move out of your stuffy old office. Confusing huh.

MOIRA

But I don't wanna be a grief counselor. Why can't Joseph be a grief counsellor and I be the party planner? Wait, who's Joseph?

STRANGER

Your husband.

MOIRA

Am I cured? I mean, you told me who I am.

STRANGER

Not so easy. You can't be told. You have to live it to remember it. Moira falls down on her knees.

MOIRA

Please, there must be another way to get rid of this. Anything. Amoxicillin?

STRANGER

Sorry.

Moira stands back up.

MOIRA

(tapping her head)
Something stronger. Vancomycin?

STRANGER

Nope. Virus is resistant.

Moira's eyes lighten as she thinks she's got it.

MOIRA

OK, let's go the herbal route.
Pcnogenal. Co-enzyme Q 10...

Successive "no" nods from the Stranger.

MOIRA

Colloidal Silver? Oil of Oregano!
Superoxide dismutase?

No-no-no nods.

MOIRA

The old standby- ultra high doses
of vitamin C?
(MORE)

MOIRA (CONT'D)

For the love of Santa Clause, there
must be SOME other way to get rid
of Writer-wreckadelioses

STRANGER

Let's see... Any other way than
Grief Counsellor...

The Stranger crunches some numbers.

STRANGER

5x5x5=125- Nope, I don't see any
other way.

The Stranger walks away.

MOIRA

Hey wait! Don't leave me here! I
don't know my way around. What's my
address? Where's my office?

STRANGER O.S.

You'll figure it out. Don't worry.

Leaving Moira to recognize, It was all a half lie or a half
truth, depending how you look at it, 'cause if you take a
step back,

Things have changed: The whole marionette bit was all a movie
on a computer screen and-

The BACKS of The Man and The Woman exist next to one another,
seated in front of that same computer screen. The Man, AKA,
The Narrator, has just hit "pause".

THE MAN

I never put in the part of you
cutting her down.

THE WOMAN

I don't like seeing her in limbo.
She needed to get cut down so I did
the edit when you went for wee-wee.

An "oh-oh" smile rises on The Woman's face as she sees: The
Moira we've come to know as a marionette.

THE WOMAN

What a tangled web we weave when we
practice to dece- December! Happy
first of December! Fa-la-la!
Sisboomb- bah!

The Woman does a bit of a cheerleader thing.

MOIRA

Quit being dodgy. Why are you changing what I wrote?

THE WOMAN

We were just trying to "really live it" you know?

MOIRA

But I'm playing Moira and I need to represent her in the utmost truth.

THE MAN

You will-you will. Just give us some time.

MOIRA

If the REAL MOIRA shows up on Simply and we do a crappy job of her story, how will I feel? I'm representing her. It wouldn't be right if we make a mockery of her life.

THE WOMAN

We won't do that Moira, er, Moira the actress playing Moira. Really.

Moira suddenly looks confused.

MOIRA

Hey wait a minute. I am Moira. That guy, he went thata way and he said I have to remember it and then I'll be cured and I can go back to the cabin and live happily ever after.

THE WOMAN

I heard him and he didn't say that.

MOIRA

OK I paraphrased, but that's the gist. I am Moira, the actress playing the real Moira who's a grief counsellor or the other way around, I'm not sure.

The Woman gives a tsk-tsk; turns to The Man and whispers:

THE WOMAN

Do you think she's a little, you know, "touched"?

THE MAN

There is a phenomenon that happens sometimes where actors "turn into" those characters they play...

MOIRA

I heard that. You guys don't get it do you? This is a virtual world!

THE MAN

Oh well of course! You've got something there. Virtual can be very real.

MOIRA

I know and I'm just getting my bearings. I'm not good at virtual. I've never even played World of Warcraft. (proudly) I do my typing on an Underwood #5 vintage upright typewriter.

The Woman walks to Moira, puts her arm around her.

THE WOMAN

OK, you need to get rid of this virus. You need to remember who you are in this virtual world. Maybe we can help.

Moira brightens.

MOIRA

Really?

THE WOMAN

Sure. After all it is our fault that you're here, but we never meant anything by it. The Narrator here, achem, The Man, MY MAN, needed an actress and there you were, right out there on the street outside of St. Augustine's.

MOIRA

I mean, all I did was sign a contract.

THE MAN

I know. Contracts, they get people every time. Sorry.

BELLA ROSEMOND, (6) enters the computer room of Simply. Moira grabs Bella, an overprotective stir.

MOIRA

Don't mess with Isabel because she's lost her brother and been through enough.

Bella holds up a copy of the script and points.

BELLA

Says here that my name's Bella.

MOIRA

For crying out loud you changed her name?!

THE MAN

It was easier to pronounce and besides, everyone needs a nickname don't they?

FLASH TO:

INT. FREEMONT ELEMENTARY

MRS. FELIX chases down Bella, who has once again, stolen out of class and is wandering the halls. Mrs. Felix is middle aged with red curly hair and stout as a tea pot.

MRS. FELIX

Bella you really must stop wandering the halls. Come back to class.

INT. CABIN

Moira types at her typewriter as before.

SOMEONE O.S.

Brought the supplies. How's it going?

MOIRA

They're changing it.

Someone's hands place down a box of tissues and scads of scads of Christmas stuff. Christmas explosion.

SOMEONE O.S.

Who's changing what?

Moira bawls, opens the box, and pulls out a tissue.

MOIRA

The Man and The Woman. And the people outside, they think I've vanished... And I'm worried for Bella.

SOMEONE O.S.

Who's Bella?

MOIRA

She's a little girl who just lost her brother before Christmas and she keeps wandering the halls and doesn't want to do her school work.

SOMEONE O.S.

Maybe you can help her.

Moira dries her eyes.

MOIRA

Yeah. Yeah maybe I can.

EXT./INT. FREEMONT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - HALLS

SUPER: TUESDAY DECEMBER 1ST - 2009

Children deck the halls under the guidance of their teachers. Everyone's happy, 'cept one who stands, motionless, watching.

Our Bella. She studies the affairs with an indifference.

Mrs. Felix spots her, walks into Bella's lonely space and kneels down.

MRS. FELIX

Oh Bella. Won't you please join in?

No answer.

MRS. FELIX

Well, I'll put this one up for you, OK?

Mrs. Felix hangs a Santa wreath on the wall; then claps her hands to get attention from the others.

MRS. FELIX
Everyone, bring your decorations
back into the classroom it's just
about lunch time.

Everyone goes back into class except Bella. Bella wanders the
halls aimlessly.

INT. MRS. FELIX'S CLASSROOM

Mrs. Felix tries to gain order as she notices Bella's-

EMPTY DESK.

As She searches the room.

MRS. FELIX
Bella?

She exits the classroom.

HALLWAY 1

Mrs. Felix looks both ways. No Bella. She proceeds in one
direction and heads around a corner.

HALLWAY 2

There's Bella. At the far end of this hallway, staring out

THE WINDOW

Mrs. Felix watches Bella quietly for a moment. Bella watches
snowflakes falling to the ground outside.

A decorated Christmas tree is her view. A raven perches upon
one of its branches.

Mrs. Felix proceeds toward Bella; looks outside the window
along with her.

MRS. FELIX
Bella, could you please stop
wandering the halls? You really do
need to be in class and work and
study and learn like everyone else.
I can't keep giving you
preferential treatment. I mean,
special privileges.

Bella turns away from the window, stares for a moment.

BELLA

Mrs. Felix, please leave me alone.
She turns back to the window.

Mrs. Felix puts a hand upon her shoulder.

The raven flies off the branch. The branch sways.

INT. VICE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - LATER

The VP is GLENDA TAVISH, 40s. She arises from her desk. She appears as a strictress, with her hair tied up tight in a roll on the top of her head.

GLENDA

Ah Felly, this just adds to my glorious morn. This is exactly why I'm breaking up with my boyfriend. He thinks I should quit, but this is where I belong. With the kids.

MRS. FELIX

And kids like Bella need us.

GLENDA

Exactly.

Eyeing the ceiling for help, Glenda turns suddenly.

GLENDA

Why didn't I think of it before.

She writes down a name and number. MOIRA VANISH 555-2238

GLENDA

She's a good friend of mine and she's a grief counselor. Maybe she can help. Look, our Principal's away until next week, and I've gotta get my stuff moved out of my boyfriend's place. I'm putting you in charge for the day tomorrow. Call up a sub for your class.

Glenda rushes out, but stops for a moment to turn back.

GLENDA

Oh, and tell Moira we can start meeting for coffee again like the good ole days.

(MORE)

GLEENDA (CONT'D)
 Jerk Off Jeremiah and I are through
 and I won't be frying him anymore
 of his morning eggs.

Glenda clicks away, leaving Mrs. Felix, AKA- Felly in wonder.

INT. MOIRA'S OFFICE

Moira polishes the placard. GRIEF COUNSELLOR. Phone rings.

INTERCUT:

INT. MZ. MCADAMS' HOUSE

MZ MCADAMS, 60s, curly top, rushes around frantic, ringing the bells in her bell collection. And she's repeating:

MZ. MCADAMS
 Teacher says, "Every time a bell
 rings an angel gets its wings-t"...

Moira begins pacing too.

MOIRA
 Mz. McAdams, try and stay calm.
 These episodes. You know they
 always pass.

MZ. MCADAMS
 But I really NEED you to come over
 right now.

Moira reaches for her coat.

INT. MRS. FELIX'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT TIME

Mrs. Felix stands in her living room, dialing the phone.

MRS. FELIX
 Where are you Mrs. Vanish? Have you
 vanished off the planet? Living up
 to your name or what?

INT. SIMPLYSCRIPTS HEADQUARTERS

Moira freaks. She shakes The Man.

MOIRA
 Yeah! Where am I?

THE MAN

I think we have a little problem.

MOIRA

What kind of a problem?

THE MAN

You don't wanna know.

MOIRA

Yeees, I wanna know.

THE MAN

No you don't.

MOIRA

Yes I do.

THE MAN

No you don't.

MOIRA

Yes! I DO!

THE MAN

Yes you do.

Moira just about says it. "No"- She shakes her head suddenly.

MOIRA

Ah-ah-ah-ah. You're not going to fool me again with that one.

THE WOMAN

Might as well tell her.

THE MAN

You see... there's a little bit of danger in Virtual Reality.

MOIRA

I know- I know. Getting Writerwrecka-

THE MAN

No actually something a little more serious.

MOIRA

What could be more serious than that?

THE MAN

You see, The Virtual World is a precursor to The Spiritual world and it's kind of a training ground you might call it... so ee-ii-en-

THE STRANGER O.S

G. O. BINGO. You're in The Spiritual!

All three go: "What"?!

The Stranger flaps his arms and prances around silly-like.

THE STRANGER

The whole thing gets rather weird, but when you cross over the plains, you enter very changeable territories.

Bella claps her hands.

BELLA

Scary, but fun.

THE STRANGER

I'm really not supposed to tell you ahead of time, but I'll bend the rules: get yourself a good Kabbalah group and start studying.

BELLA

Oh I know that.

MOIRA

How do you know? You're only six.

BELLA

Your husband told me about it. It's a spiritual study. Good when you need more real reality.

Moira, trying to think, crinkles her brow.

MOIRA

My husband? Oh yes. Joseph.

BELLA

And he's got a baker baking a special cake for one of his clients who study it. A BIG party's planned.

MOIRA
Really? I love parties!

The Man puts his arm around Moira.

THE MAN
See? It's not so bad.

Moira looks up, thinking optimistic, but then drops a frown.

MOIRA
But I'm a grief counsellor!

THE MAN
Not exactly.

A "whuh" look.

THE MAN
You're a Catholic grief counsellor.

THE WOMAN
That's right! And Joseph's Jewish.
How 'bout that eh?

The Stranger shrugs and turns his palms up.

EXT. VIRTUAL VANCOUVER - NIGHT TIME

Swishing around like superman,

Here is a gorgeous JEWISH SYNAGOGUE, placard reads:
SIMPLYJEWISH.

And there is a gorgeous CATHOLIC CHURCH, placard reads:
SIMPLYCATHOLIC

And down the street further is a quaint little coffee shop.

You might have guessed: Simplycoffee, but you're wrong. Sign
says: ARISTOCRATIC COFFEE HOUSE, so there.

EXT. RUMLEY'S BAKERY

There she is again: Moira Vanish, the writer, the actress,
the grief counsellor.

She exits the coffee shop into the Christmas wonderland,
where shoppers busily do their thing with bags and packages.

Her cell rings; she retrieves it while heading under the awning cover of Rumley's Bakery and Confections.

Before answering she notices-

INT. BAKING WINDOW

The warm light inside betrays the cold and frosty outdoors.

BAKING YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS painted on the glass.

RUMLEY BRINKS, 30, heavy set, in the process of assembling what looks to be the beginnings of a clumsy FIVE TIERED CAKE.

Moira waves "hello" in a greeting of familiarity. Rumley waves back with a big jovial smile. He returns to his work, with the utmost seriousness. Moira answers her phone.

INTERCUT:

INT. MRS. FELIX'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Mrs. Felix holds a Christmas stuffed animal.

MRS. FELIX
Is this Moira Vanish?

EXT. RUMLEY'S BAKERY

Moira covers one ear to hear better.

MOIRA
Yes, this is me.

MRS. FELIX
You're a hard one to get a hold of.

MOIRA
I only learned awhile ago my phone had gotten clicked off.

MRS. FELIX
How did we ever manage without cell phones. Well Mrs. Vanish...

MOIRA
No need for formality.

MRS. FELIX

Moira, you can just call my Felly. I'm a teacher at Freemont Elementary and our Vice Principal says she knows you and to give you a call. She would have called you herself, but she's just broken up with her boyfriend and she's moving out and left me to fly the plane.

MOIRA

Glenda? Breaking up with Jeremiah?!

MRS. FELIX

Yeah, well, I have to say I saw it coming. So you can help?

MOIRA

Help Glenda move? Sure.

MRS. FELIX

No, sorry I mean she said that since you're a grief counsellor, you might be able to help a little girl we have at our school who just lost her brother. I went with them both yesterday to the grave. It was hard...

FLASH TO:

EXT. SIMPLY GRAVEYARD - YESTERDAY

Bella, ALICE ROSEMOND, 30s, and Mrs. Felix step to the grave:

JAKE ROSEMOND BORN NOVEMBER 16, 1999 DIED NOVEMBER 23, 2009

Bella rests a miniature hockey stick. Alice rests flowers. Mrs. Felix places a wreath.

BACK TO:

EXT. RUMLEY'S BAKERY

Moira notices the snow coming down harder.

MOIRA

I'm close to the Aristocratic right now.

(MORE)

MOIRA (CONT'D)

Do you feel comfortable driving? We
might be getting a snow storm...
OK, I'll wait.

EXT. CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

Bella and her mother, Alice, walk among various Christmas
Trees and exhibits. Very beautiful, but things aren't right.

BELLA

I don't like Christmas anymore.
Let's go home.

ALICE

Look at this one. It's beautiful!

BELLA

Why did you divorce Daddy?

ALICE

Because Daddy didn't want to be a
daddy.

BELLA

What do you mean?

ALICE

He wanted other things more than
us. And when he didn't come home at
nights anymore, I knew that it was
the right thing.

BELLA

Oh. I hope Grandma comes to our
house for Christmas. Then it won't
be so lonely.

ALICE

I'm trying to talk her into it.

BELLA

Are we going to buy Jake a
Christmas present?

Alice can't comprehend what to say, but-

ALICE

We can look for something.

Carollers walk past singing.

INT. ARISTOCRATIC COFFEE SHOP - LATER

Moira and Mrs. Felix sit at a booth together drinking coffee.

MRS. FELIX

I'm so sorry to call you in off hours, but I'm at a loss.

MOIRA

Not a problem, I get a lot of calls more often than you can imagine, and all from one person.

Mrs. Felix is about to question, but Moira shakes her off.

MOIRA

Never mind. It's a long story. Anyways, How'd you get the name Felly?

MRS. FELIX

Actually, my name is Gertrude, but I really don't like that name. Felly's close to Felix and I figure, everybody's gotta have a nickname right?

Moira stirs her coffee.

MOIRA

Mooooiiraaaa! How do ya get a nickname from that?

MRS. FELIX

You could go with your last name like me and have it Vanny.

MOIRA

Sounds too much like Fanny. I think I'll stick with what I've got.

The WAITRESS sets down a plate of french fries.

MRS. FELIX

My weakness. Sure you don't want?

MOIRA

No, I'm meeting my husband for supper at the Redstone.

Mrs. Felix's eyes bug out.

MRS. FELIX

The Redstone! Isn't that the place with all the big fuss about reservations? And they don't even have prices on the menu?

FLASH TO:

EXT./INT. REDSTONE - FINE DINING ESTABLISHMENT

A stuffy looking host with a too tight tie looks down upon the two poor potential DINERS, 20s- fresh from high school. He brushes the air like imaginary lint exists.

HOST

No reservations, no dice.

BACK TO:

INT. ARISTOCRATIC COFFEE SHOP

MOIRA

That's the place.

MRS. FELIX

All of a sudden these fries don't taste so good.

She shoves the plate away. Retrieves something from her purse- a PICTURE of Bella and Jake when Jake was still alive. She hands it across to Moira.

MOIRA

Ah, he was adorable. How's Bella's mother handling it?

MRS. FELIX

Well during parent-teacher interviews, she seemed to just try and put on a happy face.

MOIRA

People handle their grief differently. That's one way.

Mrs. Felix changes her mind and eats a fry. Moira hands the picture back. Moira stares questioningly at the french fries. Mrs. Felix notices. Moves the plate in the middle.

MRS. FELIX

Sure you don't want?

MOIRA
 Maybe just a few.

She blobs the ketchup. Dips and eats.

MOIRA
 Can you give me some insight into
 Jake? Might help me.

MRS. FELIX
 Well, he was really very playful.
 Didn't like working, would steal
 out and wander the halls. I
 remember once...

FLASHBACK:

INT. FREEMONT ELEMENTARY - FOYER - COAT ROOM

Bella and the posthumous JAKE ROSEMOND, 10, a mischievous
 glint in his eye attempts to put on yet another coat, turning
 himself into a very fatly coated boy.

Bella laughs at the sight. So do the others.

JAKE ROSEMOND
 I'm the Pillsbury coat monster.

He plunks awkwardly into THREE TEN YEAR OLDS.

Mrs. Felix, suppressing a smile.

MRS. FELIX
 Give back their coats.

INT. ARISTOCRATIC COFFEE SHOP

Moira scribbles down a date and time.

MOIRA
 Give this to Mrs. Rosemond. As a
 suggestion, that is. I know it
 sounds weird, but some people react
 very hostile towards people in my
 profession.

Moira notices the time on the clock above the counter.

MOIRA

I'd better be off. The Redstone is calling me. Nice meeting you, Felly. I'll do my best with Bella.

EXT. MAIN STREET

She's away in a hurry. When from behind her:

RABBI O.S.

Moira!

RABBI VERDI, 40s, looks burnt out, but he conjures what energy he has left and races after incognizant Moira.

RABBI VERDI

Moira!

Moira turns, she smiles upon seeing him.

MOIRA

Oh hi Rabbi-dabby. I'm late to meet Joseph.

RABBI VERDI

Where is that guy? I've been trying to get a hold of him all day long.

MOIRA

His phone probably got clicked off. My phone does that in my purse all the time. Gets jigged around.

RABBI VERDI

(pointing at her purse)
You've got an excuse with that suitcase.

Moira gives a pout.

RABBI VERDI

Sorry. But he's got pockets.

MOIRA

Actually, he always stuffs his phone in his suitcase.

FLASH TO:

EXT. FRASER STREET

JOSEPH VANISH, 30s, walks happily, carrying his JOSEPH'S PARTY PLANNING suitcase, emblazoned with rainbow letters.

He enters a parking lot, can't remember where he parked; so looks on searchingly. Spots his van.

JOSEPH

There you are Partheus!

His van has the name, PARTHEUS painted across it. He heads. Opens the door and plunks his suitcase.

BACK TO:

EXT. MAIN STREET

Moira eyes Verdi with a look of a concerned mother.

MOIRA

Oh, Verdi. You don't look too well.
Rabbing not going so good these
days?

A large piece of snow dislodges itself from an over hanging awning and PLUNKS right on top of Rabbi's head.

RABBI VERDI

Does that answer your question?
When I signed up for the job, I
never knew it was gonna be this
way. Tell him we need to talk OK?

MOIRA

Sure thing, Verdi. Well, off to The
Redstone...

INT. ALICE ROSEMOND'S HOUSE - NIGHT TIME

The Christmas tree glimmers, but not Bella's eyes, as she stares at it weakly. The lights pale. Bella's mother writes Christmas cards.

BELLA

How come you don't really talk
about him anymore?

Alice studies her for a moment.

ALICE

It doesn't mean I don't think of him. I just... I just think we need to be happy.

BELLA

And forget him?

Alice runs over.

ALICE

No honey no!

Alice hugs Bella and Bella hugs her back.

ALICE

Sometimes it's about what's right and not about the way things seems.

BELLA

It seems like you want to forget him.

ALICE

No. Not at all. But there's a whole lot of gray in the world.

BELLA

What's that mean?

ALICE

It means, that what seems like the wrong thing to do, is sometimes the right thing to do and what seems like the right thing to do is sometimes the wrong thing to do and it's different for everyone and at different times.

BELLA

That's complicated, but like when Eddie didn't want to go to Laura's wedding reversal because he didn't think they should get married?

ALICE

First of all, it's wedding "rehearsal" not reversal and yes, he felt it was right not to go.

BELLA

I feel it's right not to go to class because it takes my mind off of Jake and I don't want to forget him!

Bella dashes out of the room, knocking the tree. An ornament falls to the wooden floor and splinters to pieces.

INT./EXT. CABIN

Moira types "him"! And begins to cry again.

MOIRA

The poor child. It should never happen at Christmas! Christmas is a time for giving; not for taking away.

A KNOCK on the door O.S. Moira goes to answer it. She opens the door. Quiet. The snow falls, softly.

MOIRA

Hello? Helloooo?

She looks across to the cabin across from her, only several yards away. She exits her cabin to the other cabin. The cabins are seen to be blinking in and out to:

CABINS, HAUNTED HOUSES, CABINS, HAUNTED HOUSES...

OTHER CABIN

She knocks on the door. Enters, leaving the door ajar. No one there. She turns around slowly to see the door behind her

SHUT.

She runs to it, tries to open it, but it won't budge.

MOIRA

Who are you and why are you doing this?

A dark figure appears, PSEUDOS, eternal 30; handsome, a thick black upside down triangle for a goatee. His hair over-gelled, his fingers over-jewelled.

PSEUDOS

I'm Pseudos and I have a little score to settle with The Narrator, or The Man... details-details. He bet you'd write this thing and I bet you wouldn't. Seems like I'm currently winning. See?

MOIRA

But I have to write it. I have a contract.

PSEUDOS

That is a little problem isn't it? Well, I'm not above the law... unfortunately. But I am BENEATH IT. VERY LOW IN FACT, but THAT'S another story.

Pseudos rubs his goatee.

PSEUDOS

Maaaaybeee. Maybeeee you could write me into that plain your crossing over into and I'll let you go back to your typewriter. And I "promise", I'll pay you well.

MOIRA

I have an idea. I'll write you in and you make sure I get to come back here to the cabin and live happily ever after.

Pseudos thinks, nods, and extends his massive hand. Moira shakes.

MOIRA

Anyone ever tell you that you have a dark and scary kind of natural appeal?

Pseudos looks flattered and soaks in the moment.

EXT. GUIDO'S RESTAURANT - VIRTUAL - LATER

The neon lights flash: Yes, GUIDO'S

Moira and Joseph exit. Joseph patting his tummy.

JOSEPH

Boy that was good. I think I ate too much.

MOIRA

Good, but not as good as the Redstone.

JOSEPH

Sorry I forgot to make reservations. But Guido's was pretty good tonight.

Moira taps him gently on the chest.

MOIRA

I want the Redstone on our Million Dollar Street and I want it to be special like when you first proposed.

Joseph pretends he's in "party planning mode", writing.

JOSEPH

Redstone, gypsy theme... Gee work is 24-7 isn't it?

Moira smacks him. Joseph pulls out his cell and dials.

MOIRA

Still haven't gotten a hold of Verdi?

JOSEPH

No. Telephone tag.

MOIRA

His probably clicks off too.

Joseph is "whu?" Listens; waits. Nothing.

MOIRA

Never mind. Well, make sure you getta hold of him tomorrow then. He looked terribly troubled about something.

And just then, Moira's eyes light up as she sees: FATHER WILLIAM, AKA BENNY, 40s, strolling up.

MOIRA

Father Benny!

Benny's eyes light up too.

FATHER BENNY
Well how's Guido's tonight?

MOIRA
NOT as good as the Redstone.

Father nods sadly. Joseph gets it.

JOSEPH
Noh! They didn't turn away the
Father of St. Augustine!

FATHER BENNY
No reservations. No dice.

MOIRA
Well if themz be the rules... Enjoy
your meal here at lowly Guido's.

JOSEPH
The veggie burrito is quite good.

FATHER BENNY
I might try that.

Father waves off. Moira and Joseph step out onto the curb...

TIME CUT:

EXT./INT. MOIRA AND JOSEPH'S HOUSE - LATER

...and into their house. Through the corridor into

THE LIVING ROOM

Moira to the kitchen. Joseph slumps onto the couch. Moira
returns with two glasses of JD. They drink a toast

MOIRA
To Life!

JOSEPH
Le chaim!

MOIRA
I had a chat with a teacher from
Glenda's school today. There's a
little girl there that just lost
her brother.

Joseph looks up, smiling.

JOSEPH
A good call this time anyways.

MOIRA
She wanted me to hear the sound of
the new bell she just added to her
collection. She wanted to tell us
that today was a good day.

Joseph raises his glass once more.

INT. KITCHEN - NEXT DAY

WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 2 - 09

Moira places a single coffee down on the table in front of Joseph. He reacts with surprise.

JOSEPH
Where's yours?

Moira grabs her coat and is halfway out the door.

MOIRA
Glenda and I are going to meet for
coffee just like old times. She
just broke up with Jeremiah.

JOSEPH
I saw that one coming a mila-

A KISS hits him suddenly after Moira returns and leaves.

EXT. ARISTOCRATIC COFFEE SHOP - MORNING

Moira walks amid the seasonal cheer. She enters. As the door's chime rings, she and Glenda catch sight of each other. They hug and sit down, holding hands across from each other.

MOIRA
I'm so sorry Glenda.

GLEND
I know you knew it was coming.

MOIRA
Are you doing OK though?

GLEENDA
 Actually, yes. We can be
 girlfriends again.

MOIRA
 Your boyfriend never liked me.

GLEENDA
 That's because he knew you didn't
 like him.

MOIRA
 He was so selfish.

GLEENDA
 I don't know what I saw in him.

MOIRA
 I know what you saw in him.

Moira hugs herself up and down like a schoolgirl.

GLEENDA
 Yeah well... So Felly gotta hold of
 you about Bella?

MOIRA
 Yes, I'm waiting to feel out the
 waters with her mother.

Glenda looks out the window, notices Father and Rabbi
 crossing paths and stopping to chat.

GLEENDA
 That's strange. Wonder what they're
 talking 'bout.

MOIRA
 Not that strange, they both have a
 penchant for Letter Writing.

Glenda raises an eyebrow.

MOIRA
 Homilies, sermons... whatever you
 wanna call them.

EXT. ARISTOCRATIC COFFEE SHOP

FATHER BENNY
 Morning Verdi.

RABBI VERDI
Morning Benny.

FATHER BENNY
The Lord looketh upon us all.

RABBI VERDI
Indeed he does. Hey, did you hear about the parents that wanted to know what their little boy was going to be when he grew up?

FATHER BENNY
I don't think so.

RABBI VERDI
What they did is put a bible, a ten dollar bill and a bottle of beer in front of him. They figured, if he chose the beer, he'd be a drunk, if he chose the money, he'd be a business man, and if he chose the bible, he'd be religious.

FATHER BENNY
What happened?

RABBI VERDI
The boy was smart. He took the money, slapped it inside the pages of the bible and after he took that, he took a swig of the beer. His parents were surprised and said, "Holy Crum! He's gonna be a Catholic Priest!"

Father Benny laughs along and they depart for their days.

INT./EXT. ARISTOCRATIC COFFEE SHOP

MOIRA
Guess we should be off too.

Moira and Glenda exit, but not before Moira sees a WOLVERINE hanging above the cash register.

GLENDA
You look like you've seen a ghost.

Just then PSEUDOS, brushes past Moira, nudging slightly.

Pseudos is much scarier looking than before, his dark cast has intensified.

PSEUDOS

Good job.

GLEENDA

Do you know him?

MOIRA

I don't know. I mean. I think I had a dream of (at him) you, once.

PSEUDOS

Oh it was no dream.

He walks to a booth and sits down, while Glenda pulls Moira outside.

EXT. ARISTOCRATIC COFFEE SHOP

GLEENDA

I'll call the police. Something.

MOIRA

No don't!

GLEENDA

Why not? He's- he's evil I can tell. Could be a stalker.

MOIRA

I can't. Because-

GLEENDA

Because why?

MOIRA

Because he said he'd help me.

GLEENDA

Help you with what?

MOIRA

Oh Glenda. Maybe it was a dream, but I can't.

Moira and Glenda depart for their days.

THROUGH THE WINDOW:

Pseudos starts "circling" his index finger to a beat.

EXT. FREEMONT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - LATER

Glenda exits her vehicle and heads inside.

INT. MOIRA'S OFFICE BUILDING - LATER

Moira enters her office that says GRIEF COUNSELLOR. It's rather small and not that hot looking. Moira sits down and slumps at her desk.

MOIRA

But I don't wanna be a Grief
Counselor.

INT. JOSEPH'S HOME OFFICE

Joseph's on the phone to Rumley.

JOSEPH

What do you mean you can't get me
the cake by the end of-

He shuffles papers, looking for the date.

JOSEPH

You've got until Christmas Eve!
Are you a baker or what?

There's blah-blah coming from the telephone.

JOSEPH

What do you mean you're confused?
It's a Kabbalah party with over a
hundred guests and I need a five
level cake symbolizing Keter,
Hochma, Bina...

FLASH TO:

INT. SIMPLY BROADWAY DANCE FLOOR

Several Broadway dancers do the "FIVE LEVELS OF REALITY
DANCE" while transparencies are drawn on screen over them.

BACK TO:

INT. JOSEPH'S HOME OFFICE

Telephone voice... Blah-blah-blah.

JOSEPH
Re-Al-I-Ty. Get it?

Joseph pulls something out of his desk.

JOSEPH
Look Rumley, Abraham is my bestest
clients ever so just do it!

INTERCUT:

INT. RUMLEY'S BAKERY

Here we go, here is Rumley, sitting defeated in front of The
Leaning Tower of Cake.

RUMLEY
I've got Baker's block or
something. I just can't make it. I
can't just make a Kabbalistic cake
and not know what it is I'm doing!
It has to mean something. I have to
get the concept. I don't know how
to approach it. My whole reputation
as a baker is on the line here.
What are these "levels" you're
talking about?!

JOSEPH
You don't know? Then research it
for God's sake. My friend says he
gets up every morning at 3:00 am to
study. Why don't you try it? It
might do you some good. I'll send
you a link.

Rumley staggers to a chair.

RUMLEY
I'm a baker, I'm already up at 3:00
in the morning!

JOSEPH
Look all I'm asking is that you
give it your best shot.

RUMLEY

Just give me some kind of advice
wouja?

JOSEPH

My advice? Pat-a-cake-pata-cake
baker's man, bake me a cake as fast
as you can- That's my advice.

Joseph hangs up the phone gently and smiles.

He does a fond "pata-cake" with his hands in the air.

After that fun, He blows up a single red balloon. He
playfully taps it into the air.

JOSEPH

Okeeze, what's on the agenda for
today? Old Time Mickey Mouse Theme -
four pm - Let's have ad-her.

He grabs his coat...

INT. FREEMONT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

OUTSIDE GLENDA'S OFFICE

Glenda stands across from Felly.

GLENDA

Well that's good. At least her
mother is open to counselling.

INT. ALICE ROSEMOND'S HOUSE

Alice has a pleading look on her face.

ALICE ROSEMOND

Mom - Christmas alone just because
you're afraid of flying?!

INTERCUT:

GRANDMA ROSEMOND, 70s, looks up and out her living room
window to see a plane flying overhead. She is not on the
"yes" side.

GRANDMA ROSEMOND

I really don't want to fly.

Follow the plane into the wild blue yonder. And float down safely as a feather to hover above:

EXT. ST. AUGUSTINE'S - SCARY FIELD - AERIAL

Same as before- vast; two houses at the back of the property. Touch down to the two-

EXT. HAUNTED HOUSES

Side-by-side where the STRANGER exits the house on the right and heads- CURBSIDE-

-where MZ. MCADAM'S, 60s, comes 'round the corner, unaware of the Stranger's departure from the house on the right.

She approaches The Stranger who is gazing at the houses. And pulls a BELL from her purse. She RINGS it all around the Stranger.

MZ. MCADAMS

It'll give you protection! Those houses have a way of drawing you in and "INS" not where you wanna be. Well, not in there anyways.

THE STRANGER

What are you afraid of Mrs.-

MZ. MCADAMS

Mz... Mz. McAdams. I'm afraid that I've seen too many people come out of those houses and they're never the same. Those houses are both haunted by many ghosts and demons that mess with the minds of those who enter. NEVER-EVER enter them... On the other hand, some people come out in really good shape, DEPENDING

ONSTRANGER

DePENDING?

"Depending" echoes around the property and that can't be; so you need to talk with The Effects Manager.

He must be pissed at the criticism because we've Lost sound and color.

The two HAUNTED HOUSES, of St. Augustine's. Side-by-side in black and white. A grainy old image. Looks grim since it's supposed to be a Christmas movie.

STRANGER

(as if he doesn't know)
I'm just a little curious. Just
wanna see what it says on the door.

MZ. MCADAMS

Suit yourself.

Mz. McAdams walks away.

STRANGER

I almost forgot...

The Stranger walks back up to the house on the right.

The door reads SIMPLYHAUNTED with a great big coiling "S" as a door knocker.

He places a LETTER inside the door's mail slot. He dusts off his hand, mission accomplished style and leaves. But not us. The KEY HOLE is where we go.

EXT./INT. HAUNTED HOUSE

Here, through the key hole, SQUEEEEEZE, PLUUFFF.

Inside a very eccentric haunted house alright. What's that in the corner? A big box labeled "slush".

A winding staircase to travel upwards, but instead, a GHOST, comes down to meet us. He's tree-like, many branches as arms.

GHOST

Hello, you really shouldn't be here
you know... weird things happen
inside here. Best you leave
before... (laughing)

The GHOST, returns up the stairs and yes, we return outside, through that very same keyhole. But not before seeing THE LETTER on the floor that The Stranger had placed through the slot. It reads NEW CONTRACT.

SQUEEEEEZE, PLUUFFFEXT.

EXT. HAUNTED HOUSE

We're out. And there he is, that Stranger, still. As he walks, he notices that there's a bustle in the hedgerow that separates these two houses.

He's slightly alarmed and jumps back. But then, intrigue captures him. He bends down, looks inside the hedge, moves it around. Nothing. He walks off with a shiver.

STRANGER

Amazing how things change so quickly some times.

As The Stranger walks off...

Pseudos appears out of the hedgerow. He enters the house...

INT. HAUNTED HOUSE

...retrieves the letter and promptly RIPS IT UP.

INT. ST. AUGUSTINE'S

Father sits in his office doing his fathering. He writes his homily, every so often looking around a bit dazed and tired.

His secretary LEONARD FLEUR, (30s) enters excitedly. Leonard is a gentle looking male who looks rather high strung.

LEONARD

Father, it's Mz. McAdams again!
She's hit the holy high water
againin major nervous breakdown
mode!

Father jumps out of his chair and heads.

INT. MZ. MCADAMS' HOUSE - LATER

Mz. McADAMS is shaking all over. She's pacing back and forth.

MZ. MCADAMS

I don't know what to do? I don't
know what to do? My heart is
beating so hard and I'm in conflict
Father! I'm in complete conflict!

FATHER BENNY

Mz. McAdams, just tell me why and then maybe I can help.

MZ. MCADAMS

I can't. I mean I just can't. You just don't understand.

FATHER BENNY

Of course I don't understand if you don't tell me how can I understand.

LATER STILL

Mz. McAdams sits calmly now.

MZ. MCADAMS

Thank you so much Father, I feel much better now.

FATHER BENNY

But I didn't do anything. And you know that if you don't tell me, it's just going to happen again.

Mz. McAdams ushers Father to the door.

MZ. MCADAMS

God bless you Father. See you next time.

As Father gets outside and the door shuts...

EXT. MZ. MCADAMS' HOUSE

FATHER BENNY

What to do with that woman?

He walks up the driveway to his car.

FATHER BENNY

A job - to take her mind off whatever's troubling her.

He gets inside his vehicle.

INT. FATHER BENNY'S CAR

He thinks inside the rearview.

INT. MRS. FELIX'S CLASSROOM

The full classroom is quiet. The students busily practice addition while Mrs. Felix marks papers.

As she bends down to retrieve something from one of the drawers- Bella slinks down and crawls away out the door.

INT. MOIRA'S OFFICE

Moira opens a drawer. Pulls out a SKETCH of her dream transition house for people in need.

MOIRA

It would beat this by a mile.

INT. FATHER BENNY'S OFFICE - LATER

He dials the phone.

INTERCUT:

MOIRA'S OFFICE - LATER

Moira has her arm around CRYING MAN just leaving. The phone continues to RING as she shuts her door-

MOIRA

(satiric)

Well, that sure went well- She picks up.

FATHER BENNY

Hello Moira. How's it going?

MOIRA

Not well, Father. I really wish I could get out of this stuffy old office:

TIME CUT:

INT. ST. AUGUSTINE'S

CHAPEL

Moira sits with Father, gazing up at the cross.

MOIRA

Yes, I wanna build that transition house.

FATHER BENNY

That's why I called you. I've been thinking about what you asked me-

MOIRA

You've been thinking about it for a year, Father. That's a lot of thinking.

FATHER BENNY

Yeah I know, I'm sorry, but times are hard...

MOIRA

You're afraid to pay the fee so you find yourself somebody who will do the job for free- I know how the song goes.

FATHER BENNY

I think I have an idea... a- i-

Moira's eyes sparkle, but then she notices Father stuttering a bit on "idea, a bright idea... you know".

INT. FREEMONT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - SAME TIME

HALLS

Bella walks the halls again, aimless.

MRS. FELIX'S CLASSROOM

The classroom is still quiet. Mrs. Felix looks up, notices Bella gone. She heads out to search. The children whisper.

INT. VICE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE

Bella Rosemond, sits in a chair as before, swinging her feet underneath her.

GLEENDA

Bella, it's the 5th time this week you've been wandering the halls and it's only Monday. What's that mean?

BELLA

Means I'm sneaking out about once per hour. Pretty good, huh? Ya think I'm Ninja material?

Glenda looks away, trying to hide a smile.

GLEENDA

How 'bout this. You promise to go to classes and I promise to treat you to the biggest treat-fest at Rumley's Bakery.

BELLA

Is that a bribe?

GLEENDA

Well I guess it is.

BELLA

They won't send you to jail will they?

GLEENDA

I think I'm in the clear since I'm the Vice Principal. It's in my contract.

Bella reaches over the desk and extends a hand for shaking.

THEY SHAKE.

INT. ST. AUGUSTINE'S

CHAPEL

Moira now looks slightly suspicious.

FATHER BENNY

So, I've been thinking about it and there's this certain woman who calls me every day- sometimes several times a day-

MOIRA

You mean Mz. McAdams.

FATHER BENNY

Yes.

MOIRA

You want something don't you.

FATHER BENNY

And so do you.

MOIRA

What's your proposal?

FATHER BENNY

Well if you weren't married and I weren't a priest, I would ask you to marry me.

Moira smiles.

MOIRA

Flattery will get you everywhere, but if you weren't a priest, Glenda would be all over you like chocolate on a banana split.

Father's head tilts at a sharp angle. He shakes it off.

FATHER BENNY

What Mz. McAdams needs is something to take her mind off her troubles. She needs a job and you're the one who's going to give it to her.

MOIRA

No way! I can't have her ringing bells in my office and whatever it is that she does.

FATHER BENNY

Not even if I were to swing a deal and get you your transition house?

MOIRA

Really?

FATHER BENNY

And if I do, it will be the perfect place for her. You can get her cleaning or something.

Moira agrees and puts her hand out-

THEY SHAKE.

MOIRA

Ukay, I need a name. Hmmm....
 Helping Hands... Nah, sounds too
 cliché... Something Solei... Nah
 sounds like a rip off Circe de
 Solei.. Hmmm... How about The Big
 House?

FATHER BENNY

Might work 'cept that's actually a
 term they use for a jail.

MOIRA

Jail?

FATHER BENNY

As in "the slammer". How could you
 not know that?

MOIRA

Maybe 'cause I was home schooled
 and only picked up the good stuff.
 Slammer doesn't sound very nice.
 Well, I like Big House.

Moira looks up to notice, WOLVY up by the cross.

FATHER BENNY

Moira? You alright?

Moira steps up to the altar and looks down to Father Benny.

MOIRA

Father, do you believe that time is
 an illusion?

FATHER BENNY

Well, it is rather suspicious.

EXT. FIRST STREET

Bella walks home, snow glistening and beautiful when- PSEUDOS
 glides up next to her. Her head rises at the shadow-

She puzzles, but unafraid.

PSEUDOS

Hello Bella. Your dad told me to
 come and say he's sorry.

BELLA
Why didn't he come himself?

PSEUDOS
Cause he feels ashamed.

BELLA
He should.

PSEUDOS
I might be able to get your dad to come home again. And I might be able to tell you how Jake's doing.

BELLA
Jake?!?! You saw Jake?

PSEUDOS
Yeah. I'm one of those, whatcha call it, psychics. I might be able to tell you what he says, but I need you to do me a little favor first.

BELLA
What?

PSEUDOS
First of all, don't tell anyone, or that will cancel the deal, and second of all, I've heard you have connections with a Kabbalist.

BELLA
Oh, you mean Rumley?

Pseudos has the look of FALSE SURPRISE.

PSEUDOS
Oh yes! That would be him.

PSEUDOS
Wudya retrieve a little smidgen of his will? (laughing) Will ya? For your brother, of course.

BELLA
What's "the will"?

PSEUDOS
It's a- well it's a-- How duya explain it to a six year old?

BELLA
Is it like a "desire"?

Pseudos holds up that same "circling index" again.

PSEUDOS
That's it! It's desire! Rumley has a lot of that, and if you bring me back a tiddly-wink of it, I should be able to give you some news on Jake.

Bella nods "yes", waiting for instructions...

INT. HAUNTED HOUSE ON RIGHT

The Man scoops up the ripped NEW CONTRACT.

THE MAN
What's going on here. This was NOT in the movie. Everything had been fixed and now-

The ghost comes down the stairs again.

GHOST
He was very intriguing. Tha guy who ripped up the New Contract.

The Man turns.

THE MAN
Who was it? What did he look like?

GHOST
Well, he had...

INT. SIMPLY JEWISH SYNAGOGUE

RABBI'S OFFICE

Rabbi sits at his desk writing his lecture. His secretary walks in. It's BELINDA WERNCOF, (30s).

She's twiggy thin, with dark framed thick lensed glasses and wearing a big heavy sweater with a cowl neck. Rabbi gives her a concerned look.

BELINDA
Father-

RABBI VERDI
I'm a Rabbi, Belinda.

BELINDA
Sorry, my blood sugar is low.

RABBI VERDI
Belinda, you need to eat more. Are you sure your getting help for your anorexia?

BELINDA
I bought the cream and I've been putting it on.

Rabbi looks puzzled. Belinda lifts something from her pocket. She hands it to him. He reads the jar:

OREXIA

RABBI VERDI
Orexia? Belinda this is a female enhancement.

BELINDA
No wonder I've been...

RABBI VERDI
I'll put you in touch with someone. Two people. Someone who deals in eating disorders and a good optometrist. Now what did you want?

BELINDA
It's Mz. McAdams again. She's having a meltdown. Not too bad yet, but I sense it's getting worse.

Rabbi puts on his coat; absently- the cream in his pocket.

BELINDA
Rabbi? The cream?

He hands it back.

RABBI VERDI
Careful with that stuff.

Belinda's eyes blink a lot as she smiles.

EXT./INT. RUMLEY'S BAKERY

Glenda and Bella enter. Ice creamery and sweets abound as Bella glows at the sight of everything. Rumley's clerk at the front of duty.

JANET THE CLERK

What can I do you for?

BELLA

I want the vanilla bean cheesecake and a bag of red licorice and one of those golden nuggets gums and a handful of silver balls and...

JANET THE CLERK

Wa-wa-wait. I can't keep up.

BELLA

Is Rumley here?

JANET THE CLERK

He is, but I'm afraid he's pretty exhausted, he's started getting up early in the morning.

BELLA

He always gets up early. He says that that's what bakers do.

JANET THE CLERK

Well yeah, but one am is a little too early.

BELLA

One am?

JANET THE CLERK

Right after midnight.

BELLA

Oooh. Can I see him?

JANET THE CLERK

Go ahead.

Glenda chats with the clerk. Bella walks round the counter top to that baking area with the wide window where people see baking in action.

BAKING ROOM

No action right now, Rumley's slumped over the counter, his head resting upon thick Kabbalah texts.

Several books at his head: One is black and reads ZOHAR. Another is green and reads: KABBALAH FOR THE STUDENT

Bella crawls up to the counter and knocks on Rumley's head.

BELLA

Cong-cong. Hi Rumley.

Rumley wakes.

RUMLEY

Oh hi Bella.

BELLA

Janet told me you've been getting up at one am. How come?

RUMLEY

Well, I got a problem.

BELLA

Me too. I don't like Christmas anymore.

RUMLEY

Ah Bella-

BELLA

I'm getting used to it. I wander the halls at school, think a lot about things. I think it helps. But I said I wouldn't anymore. The VP said she'd treat me big time if I stay in class. That's why I'm here.

RUMLEY

Well I'm glad to see a pretty little face like yours.

BELLA

So what's your problem?

RUMLEY

Ever want to make something really special and you don't know how?

Bella thinks.

BELLA

I wanted to crochet blankets like Mom, but I don't know how.

RUMLEY

Well, what if you knew how to crochet, but someone asked you to crochet a blanket that represented everything you knew about everything and even the things you don't know about everything- like the whole world and the moon and the stars and well, everything...

BELLA

If I could crochet? Make a blanket like that? That would be hard.

RUMLEY

That's the problem I'm having. So I'm studying about it because I'm supposed to make a cake that kind of gets the concept across.

BELLA

Joseph told me, but "What's a concept?"

RUMLEY

A concept is an idea. Like this: He points to a bird ornament up in the corner.

BELLA

A bird is a concept?

RUMLEY

Not just a bird. It's a concept to me. An idea. Because I think of how birds, they fly. And flying to me means freedom. That's the concept.

BELLA

The bird or freedom?

RUMLEY

A little of both. When I look up at that bird, I think of how I'm free because I'm a baker. I'm doing what I want to do.

BELLA

But you're so tired.

RUMLEY

That's because it's important to me
to do things right. And sometimes
that can be hard.

GLEENDA O.S.

Bella!

Bella is having a hard time with her conscience. Finally, she
puts a PAPER before Rumley.

RUMLEY

What is that?

Bella stutters-

BELLA

It's ah- ah- ah-

RUMLEY

My goodness, I've seen fine print,
but this...

Some of the print- SO SMALL you'd need a microscope to read.

BELLA

It's basically, a request for- for
rights to taste and show your
Kabbalah cake when you get it
finished. My friend's mother's
mother's sister's brother is
entering this "taste and make"
contest. You know Chef Ramsayish
and...

RUMLEY

Well in that case, SURE!

Rumley signs his name and proudly dots the end.

GLEENDA O.S.

Bella-

Bella looks scared.

BELLA

I'd better go.

CONFECTIONARY COUNTER

Glenda hands Bella a big bag. Bella smiles big up to Glenda.

BELLA

I won't wander the halls ever
again.

They exit...

BAKING ROOM

Rumley thumps his head upon the counter.

EXT. RUMLEY'S BAKERY

...through snow, Bella dragging her hand on the frontages-

Pseudos shows up, smiling and almost convincing. Glenda gives
him a dark stare, but he just bends down to Bella's level.

PSEUDOS

Did your mom finish the letter?

BELLA

Yeah she did. She said thanks for
mailing it.

Bella pulls out a crumpled sheet.

PSEUDOS

We shall all have a wonderful
Christmas tea together. Te-he.

Pseudos walks off, contract in hand. Glenda looks alternately
to Pseudos and down to Bella.

GLEENDA

What did you give him?

BELLA

My mom asked if he'd mail a letter
for her. She's been awfully busy.

INT. CABIN

Moira fiddles with the Christmas stuff around her; Pseudos
stands behind her.

PSEUDOS

Your precious Bella has become
quite the liar.

Moira stands up to him.

MOIRA
This is all your fault!!!

PSEUDOS
My fault? You signed the contract.

Moira sits back down.

PSEUDOS
Don't worry. I won't hurt the girl.
It's The Narrator that I want.

Moira stands up again; throws her hands at the typewriter:

MOIRA
It's yours! Why don't you do it?!

Pseudos scrapes one shoe over the floor boards. It sounds like fingernails on a the old blackboards.

PSEUDOS
Alas, I don't have that ability.
I'm what you call a "go between".
Has its advantages, but the
transitions are hell.

A clap of thunder. Moira shoots a glare at the air.

PSEUDOS
And you already know what that's
about don't you buttercup.

Moira nods her head in agreement- a moment as Pseudos draws close; then realizes she's connecting with the "bad guy".

PSEUDOS
Ah-ah! You were feelin' it!

Moira is disgusted with herself. She hangs her head.

INT. MZ. MCADAMS' HOUSE

Mz. McAdams paces as before. She pats at her collar bone, pulls at her hair.

RABBI VERDI
Mz. McAdams, how can I help you if
you won't tell me what's wrong?

A LITTLE LATER

Mz. McAdam has calmed down.

MZ. MCADAMS
I'm OK now.

She ushers him to the door.

RABBI VERDI
You need to tell me-

MZ. MCADAMS
I'm sorry Rabbi.

EXT. MZ. MCADAMS' HOUSE

Rabbi stands outside talking on his cell.

RABBI VERDI
Joseph? Can you meet me at
Flanagan's. It's important.

INT. FLANAGAN'S IRISH PUB AND GRILL

Joseph and Rabbi find each other in the crowd. Joseph
scrunches his eyes, noting the Rabbi doesn't look well. Rabbi
sneezes. He's a burnt out mess.

JOSEPH
Verdi, what's wrong?

RABBI VERDI
There's a certain needy woman-

JOSEPH
Mz. McAdams?

RABBI VERDI
Yes, and I thought if you could
give her a job, it would take her
mind off her troubles.

JOSEPH
Oh no Verdi. I love you but-

RABBI VERDI
But you know how you've wanted to
move your business outside your
home?

Joseph nods...

RABBI VERDI

Well, I think that I might be able to pull some strings and get you the place if you can give her a job once you've got the space.

JOSEPH

Doing what?

RABBI VERDI

I don't know. Blowing up balloons or something.

JOSEPH

I get those from the dollar store. They have machines for that and... But- I'd actually have my own place?! I could call it... Joseph's Party Palace.

RABBI VERDI

I'd be careful. There's a brothel downtown with a similar name.

EXT. VIRTUAL VANCOUVER - SUNSET

The sun sets on this virtual day.

EXT./INT. MOIRA AND JOSEPH'S HOUSE - NIGHT TIME

They enter in from the winter wonderland to the
FOYER

Joseph unpacks and hangs up their coats before entering on

THE LIVING ROOM - Moira sweeps onward to the kitchen.

Joseph lights a fire. Moira returns with drinks.

MOIRA

To life!

JOSEPH

To life!

Their faces are charged with their secrets:

MOIRA

I have a surprise!

JOSEPH

I have a surprise!

MOIRA

But I don't want to tell you yet. I want it to be special. At the Redstone!

JOSEPH

Well I won't either.

MOIRA

Deal! Redstone Rah!

They ting their glasses and chug.

MONTAGE

A. Mz. McAdams dings each bell while reciting "Teacher says"

B. Rumley draws five large "U's" closed on top in vertical order and writes beside each: KETER, HOCHMA, BINA, ZEIR ANPIN AND MALCHUT phases on a large white board at the bakery.

Some of what he writes looks like gobbledeegook.

He scratches his head and writes: GOOBLEDEGOOK

He stuffs a clump of cake into his mouth.

C. Father enters his abode for the night. Pours a whiskey.

D. Rabbi enters his abode for the night. Washes a couple of aspirin back with a beer.

E. Bella's tucked in by her mother.

F. Glenda undresses. She looks through her closet and looks longingly at a black dominatrix outfit.

G. Pseudos enters Simplyscripts Headquarters in the night time glow of the unoccupied computers. He sits down and enters: CONTRACT #7162359-A2 DELETE

H. The Man and The Woman play Scrabble with words on the board: VIRTUAL, GAMES, XMAS

-on their record player- -SLEEP IN HEAVENLY PEACE plays- the night winds down until everyone is

IN BED - SNOOZING - EXCEPT

I. Mz. McAdams who is pacing the floor. She breaks down; begins dialing frantically. She calls: Rabbi, Father, Moira and Joseph each successively.

END MONTAGE

INTERCUT ON A ROTATING EARTH BALL

INT. FATHER'S ABODE, RABBI'S ABODE AND MOIRA AND JOSEPH'S HOUSE

-Father answers.

FATHER BENNY

It's alright Mz. McAdams. I just
wanna do what's right.

He pulls on a coat over his PJ's and heads out the door.

-Rabbi answers and snorts.

RABBI VERDI

Alright Mz. McAdams.

-Moira answers.

MOIRA

Alright Mz. McAdams.

She hangs up and shakes Joseph awake.

MOIRA

Come on. You gotta drive me to Mz.
McAdams.

JOSEPH

Why can't you drive yourself?

MOIRA

You know my night vision is bad and
I see halos all around lights.

JOSEPH

If I don't get my rest I'm gonna
die and I'm gonna start seeing real
halos if you get my drift.

MOIRA

If you don't be a good citizen,
you're gonna be seeing stars if you
get my drift.

INT. MZ. MCADAMS' HOUSE

Everyone is gathered around her, at a loss for what to do.

RABBI VERDI

Mz. McAdam, we've been through this so many times and if you don't tell us what's wrong, we can't help you.

MZ. MCADAMS

When my husband passed away, I know he asked you to watch over me, but this isn't about me-

MOIRA

Please tell us. Is it your husband? Do you see visions?

MZ. MCADAMS

No.

MOIRA

Do you hear voices?

MZ. MCADAMS

No. "Cept you guys, but I don't think that's what you're after.

MOIRA

Then maybe it's like a post traumatic stress disorder.

MZ. MCADAMS

Haven't fought in any wars.

MOIRA

But the stress of losing your husband-

MZ. MCADAMS

Moira, I've lost a lot of people in my life. I'm old. It's not that.

Moira looks helplessly to Father.

MOIRA

Father?

FATHER BENNY

Well it could be demons. That or thyroid.

Moira throws up her hands.

MOIRA
Gajeezers! We're not getting
anywhere! Mz. McAdams doesn't even
look remotely possessed.

A momentary happy nod from Mz. McAdams-

MOIRA
Worried and anxious yes.

A momentary overdone worry frown from Mz. McAdams-

MOIRA
Demons? No. But- But have you had
your thyroid checked?

A happy blitz as McAdams beams-

MZ. MCADAMS
Just had a complete physical. I'm
as fit as a fiddle!

Not so for the rest, they all look fiddle-be-damned, but Mz.
McAdams looks miraculously better.

MZ. MCADAMS
Would anyone like some tea?

They all nod yes, unhappily.

EXT. MZ. MCADAMS' HOUSE - LATER

It's still dark because it's the wee morning hours. Father
pulls Moira aside next to a

GIANT SANTA.

Joseph and Rabbi head towards the

OUTDOOR CRECHE

INTERCUT THE CONVERSATIONS

GIANT SANTA

FATHER BENNY

Look you've gotta give her a job
even though I don't have your
transition ...

Thunder again. They all shoot a look to the sky.

FATHER BENNY

...house worked out yet.

Moira looks down.

CRECHE

RABBI VERDI

Come on Joseph. Give her some kind
of work. I'll work out your Party
Palace as quickly as possible.

Joseph looks down.

GIANT SANTA

MOIRA

I can't do that. Someone else.

FATHER BENNY

She feels comfortable with you.

MOIRA

Don't throw a guilt trip on me. I
can't have that in an office
building. There are accountants
lawyers. We'll just have to tough
it out until you get things worked
out. Take it in shifts or
something.

CRECHE

JOSEPH

I need time.

RABBI VERDI

Time for what?

JOSEPH
Time to pad a few walls? Seriously,
I'll try and figure something out.

Rabbi pats him on the shoulder and looks at the creche.

RABBI VERDI
It's rather nice isn't it?

JOSEPH
Rabbi, we're Jewish.

RABBI VERDI
And your wife is as Catholic as
Benny and his jets.

JOSEPH
We try and make our families happy.

RABBI VERDI
Oh I'm sure getting married just
thrilled them to death.

JOSEPH
Well, Grandpa did kill himself
shortly afterwards, but I like to
think it was because he went
bankrupt.

A moment. Makes sense. Rabbi and Father head to their
vehicles and leave while Moira and Joseph meet in the

MIDDLE BETWEEN SANTA AND THE CRECHE

MOIRA
What were you two talking about?

JOSEPH
About family.

MOIRA
Family.

JOSEPH
Yeah and what it means and I've
been thinking and-

Moira turns away and walks to "Partheus"...

MOIRA

We've discussed this before and I don't want to start a family yet Joseph. I have so many things I want to accomplish in my life and-

JOSEPH

And you have to stop believing that what happened to your grandma is going to happen to you!!!

MOIRA

Things always skip generations. Look it up Joseph!

JOSEPH

She died giving birth to your mom because it was an accident. Not because of genetics.

MOIRA

Yeah well maybe accidents skip generations too!

They get inside Partheus and take the short drive home that is extremely LONG in the ugly silence.

INT. MOIRA AND JOSEPH'S HOUSE - LATER

They've caught a few hours and are freshly dressed.

KITCHEN

Joseph sits at the table, looking through party catalogues.

JOSEPH

I apologize.

Moira turns.

MOIRA

No I apologize. I'm just not ready to have a baby yet.

JOSEPH

It's OK. I'm just all about family.

MOIRA

Of course you are. You're Jewish. And I'm just a poor single mothered Catholic girl whose family is Seventh Heaven on DVD.

A cold silence, again.

MOIRA

I really AM SORRY. I'm just bitter.
Because it was me and Mom and
lonely.

JOSEPH

Who's lonely? Never met him.

That brings Moira a smile. Joseph gets up and holds her.

JOSEPH

But we could MAKE THAT FAMILY.

Moira's almost ready to fold; then, puts on the speed skates-
time to hurry. She turns to the counter. Joseph sits down.

Moira plates some toast and jam and pushes it forward.

JOSEPH

Not again.

MOIRA

Glenda needs me. Her whole world is
upside down.

JOSEPH

I thought you said she's doing
better.

MOIRA

She is and she isn't. Her bedroom
was a bad room and now it's good
and that's bad for her if you catch
my drift.

JOSEPH

Well at least sit down and have
half a cup of coffee with me.

Moira sits down, not relaxed.

JOSEPH

Come on. You know you want to tell
me about that "surprise". Let's not
wait 'till the Redstone tonight.
Tell me now.

MOIRA

No! That would ruin it. We'll wait
until tonight. I can wait.

She glances at the clock.

MOIRA

Oh no!

JOSEPH

What?

MOIRA

Today's my mother's annual letter writing day.

Joseph perks.

JOSEPH

Which runs right through our dinner date. That settles it. We'll tell each other now.

MOIRA

No! That's like getting married in Vegas or something. Not the same!

Joseph shakes his head.

JOSEPH

Your Grandma's letters are very special.

Moira becomes intensely reflective.

MOIRA

Without them, Mom wouldn't feel like she does. She says she knows her mom from the letters. Without them, what would she know? That her mom died giving her birth. That's all she'd know. But how Grandma corresponded with her sisters...

JOSEPH

Makes your mom feel better.

MOIRA

Yeah, like there's a connection.

More reflective. Quiet.

MOIRA

And then I grew up with these rituals we'd do and then we'd each write a letter to Santa and there was magic in that.

Joseph gets an evil grin.

JOSEPH
Hold it right there.

Moira sits up straight and backwards, wondering as Joseph exits and returns just as quickly flapping a pink paper letter in the wind.

JOSEPH
I can still smell the perfume. And this letter isn't just from the heart, it's from someplace very naughty!

Moira reaches to grab it, but Joseph snatches it away. She chases him around the table.

MOIRA
Give me that! Put that thing away!

JOSEPH
You want me to give it to you or put it away? Make up your mind you naughty girl.

MOIRA
Joseph, I'm serious. I don't want that floating around.

JOSEPH
A little quick morning nooky and I promise.

He waves the letter goading her out of the kitchen. Their voices disappear and melt into some easy moans.

EXT. VIRTUAL VANCOUVER - AERIAL

A song plays, amidst the splendor we witness from on high. The snow, the bustling city and excitement of the season.

STRANGER O.S.
Jolly old St. Nicholas, lean you're ear this way...

As if floating on a feather that's free, our descent is assured to be safe, landing on

EXT. ARISTOCRATIC COFFEE SHOP

Where Moira approaches again. The SONG OF The Stranger grows louder on approach. The Stranger stands, a guitar strapped around him. At his feet:

AN OPEN GUITAR CASE

And he sings,

THE STRANGER

Johnny wants a pair of skates, Susy
wants a Dolly, Nellie wants a story
book, she thinks dolls are folly,
as for me my little brain, isn't
very bright, choose for me old
Santa clause, what you think is
right.

And Moira stands staring at him until he finishes the chorus once more. He looks at her, wide eyes of The Stranger that you have to have known to really know.

MOIRA

Where do I know you from?

THE STRANGER

People are always mistaking me for
someone.

MOIRA

No really. I know you from
somewhere.

THE STRANGER

I don't think so. Any requests? I
can play Christmas or I can do
Dylan if you like?

Moira rubs at her neck. Digs for bills and drops them in.

MOIRA

Yeah. Dylan.

He begins to play THINGS HAVE CHANGED. Moira's captivated. A mystic moment as things shift at weird angles.

INT./EXT. ARISTOCRATIC COFFEE SHOP

THE STRANGER O.S

A worried man with a worried mind
 No one in front of me and nothing
 behind There's a woman on my lap
 and she's drinking champagne Got
 white skin, got assassin's eyes I'm
 looking up into the sapphire tinted
 skies I'm well dressed, waiting on
 the last train...

Moira snaps out of it; gives a thumbs up and ABOUT to walk
 inside the coffee shop when-

FREEZE FRAME

CUT TO:

EXT./INT. HAUNTED HOUSES

The Haunted Houses are actually PUMPING to the beat.

-through the keyhole again- there's a party going on inside
 and the ghosts are people dressed in costumes.

SANTA CLAUSES, LITTLE GREEN MEN, BIG BLUE GIANTS, JESTERS,
 GEORGIAN KINGS and QUEENS, FAIRIES and a life is like a box
 of chocolates assortment of colorful characters.

BACK TO:

EXT./INT. ARISTOCRATIC COFFEE SHOP

Undo the Freeze Frame- let's move, Moira!

She does, into the coffee shot and THE SAME DARN SONG ON THE
 RADIO is playing-

Moira turns back, opens the door and

LOOKS FOR THE STRANGER- NO ONE. BUT AN IMPRINT OF HIS GUITAR
 CASE IN THE SNOW. She goes back inside- the jingle of the
 door chime and a whoosh of cold air, to sit down with Glenda.

GLEND A

You look like you've seen a ghost.

MOIRA

Maybe I have. Or maybe it's just
the lack of sleep.

She waves and points to her cup, "coffee" at the waitress.
The waitress, coffee pot in hand, comes on order.

MOIRA

(centering herself)
Life is good.

GLEENDA

It is if you're doing this-

Glenda passes a picture to Moira.

Moira looks and a glint shoots from her eyes.

MOIRA

You and Jeremy did that!

GLEENDA

Yip. And I really miss that. Don't
miss Jeremy, but I miss that. I
know I can be a bit shallow, but-

MOIRA

No. No I think it's good that you
can be unrestrained. More people
should be like you.

Glenda smiles at the compliment. Outside the window, the
Rabbi and Priest cross paths again.

EXT. ARISTOCRATIC COFFEE SHOP

The Rabbi and Priest greet each other as usual.

RABBI VERDI

Mornin' Benny. Another day another
dollar.

FATHER BENNY

Mornin' Verdi. Another day another
dollar.

RABBI VERDI

So this Irish Priest asks a Rabbi a
question. Says, "I know in your
religion you're not supposed to eat
pork, but have you ever tried it?"

FATHER BENNY

He did didn't he?

RABBI VERDI

Oh yes, the Rabbi said he had tried Pork once. And then the Rabbi asked the Priest, 'I know in your religion you're supposed to be celibate, but have you ever gotten down with it?

FATHER BENNY

And the Priest says, "Yes. He did succumb to his primal urges at least once."

RABBI VERDI

Indeed, he said he did. And the Rabbi had one thing to add.

FATHER BENNY

What was that?

RABBI VERDI

Beats pork doesn't it.

They both laugh and head their ways in opposite directions.

INT. ARISTOCRATIC COFFEE SHOP

MOIRA

Good to see their resilient after last night.

GLEENDA

Wish I could say the same... So what's the status with Bella's mother?

MOIRA

I'm not sure yet. She says she wants Bella to be able to talk, but she's wondering if she should wait until after Christmas.

GLEENDA

Well I treated her out yesterday at Rumley's. She seemed to like that.

They both rise to leave.

EXT. ARISTOCRATIC COFFEE SHOP

As the two women travel away, it's nice to travel backwards toward the "Baking Window" of Rumley's.

BAKING WINDOW

Poor Rumley is hard at it again. His Kabbalah books are stacked in one corner as high as his cake. He's covered in flour and looks like he could cry.

Decorated sugar cookies fall softly to-

INT. SIMPLYSCRIPTS HEADQUARTERS

The Man and Woman sit at the computer.

THE WOMAN

I wouldn't worry, Dear. Just because it was ripped up doesn't mean anything. You can print up another New Contract.

The man is searching files.

THE MAN

So you would think, but no! No! No!

THE WOMAN

What?

THE MAN

Someone's went in and deleted the files!!!

PSEUDOS O.S.

(laughing))

Now who would do such a thing?!

The Man and Woman turn in a whip.

THE MAN

Pseudos! How did you get here?

PSEUDOS

Let's just say I get by with a little help from my friends.

His fake warmth disappears as he grabs The Man and hurls him away like he were made of straw. The Woman screams.

TIME CUT:

INT. PSEUDOS' QUARTERS

The Man is tied up. Pseudos has fun eating a meal and pouring a drink.

PSEUDOS

Thought you'd win the bet. Well you did. She's writing the script alright. Wrote the script. However you want to look at it. Details - details- but we all know that Time is just an illusion after all.

THE MAN

As such, you can't kill me 'cause there's no death without time.

PSEUDOS

No, but I can make living, very painful. Let's see, what would be worst-- How but what you did to me? Make you spend eternity alone. WITHOUT THE WOMAN? How's that for a start?

The Man looks on fearful.

THE MAN

Your Woman is still around. We just haven't found her yet.

Pseudos SMACKS his hand on a desk.

PSEUDOS

She's been gone for how long?!?!
How long in this godforsaken place?
And all because of you and your
GAMES!!!

THE MAN

Pseudessa is here somewhere! I know she is. I'm sorry, but I never meant to lose her.

PSEUDOS

When you find her, I'll let you go.
And to give you a little
encouragement... I want you to know
that Rumley's building a soul cake-
one that I have complete and legit
rights to.

THE MAN

Whose soul?

PSEUDOS

Moira's. And truthfully, I don't
think she minds one bit. She likes
her place inside the Haunted House.
Or is it The Cabin? And that's
where she wants to be.

THE MAN

You can't take her soul.

PSEUDOS

She's already given it willingly
I'm afraid. Couldn't resist my
charm.

THE MAN

Release whatever spell you've put
her under!

PSEUDOS

You find Pseudessa, and I will
leave Moira alone, but I must
admit, she has her charm too, but
Moira and Dos doesn't have the ring
that Dessa and Dos does. (smile)
Everybody's gotta have a nickname
right?

Pseudos does his happy dance to Sting's "Soul Cake".

INT. FREEMONT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

HALLS

Bella wanders them again.

INT. RABBI VERDI'S OFFICE

He's on the phone to someone. It's Father.

INTERCUT:

FATHER BENNY'S OFFICE

RABBI VERDI

I've just figured out where our
blessed children can do business.

FATHER BENNY

Please don't tell me you're
involved in the mafia or something.

RABBI VERDI

No nothing like that. You know
those two old houses that are
vacant on your church's property?

FATHER BENNY

Those houses are haunted.

RABBI VERDI

I thought you priests were good at
exorcisms and the like. Anyways,
the proper term is "psychologically
impacted".

FATHER BENNY

We can't do that to them.

RABBI VERDI

Do what? They don't have to know.

FATHER BENNY

Everyone in this section of the
city knows the story.

RABBI VERDI

Not Moira, remember?

FATHER BENNY

Oh yeah. She was home schooled. She
only got the good stuff. And not
Joseph either, he was brought up on
the island.

EXT. FREEMONT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

VP'S OFFICE

Bella sits in the chair again, swinging her feet.

RABBI

Joseph, guess what - I've got a location for your business and it won't cost you except to fix it up.

JOSEPH

That's excellent can I drive by and have a look?

MOIRA'S OFFICE

Moira picks up.

MOIRA

Oh Father that's wonderful. Can I drive by and have a look?
Wonderful!

EXT. HAUNTED HOUSE ON LEFT

INT./EXT. VAN

Joseph drives up. His jaw drops. He gets out; slams the door.

JOSEPH

A haunted house?! My Party Palace is going to be a haunted house?!

He stomps back into his van and speeds off.

EXT. CHURCH LANDS - HOUSE ON RIGHT

EXT./INT. MOIRA'S CAR

Moira drives up and the house comes into view. Her jaw drops. She gets out and slams the door.

MOIRA

A haunted house?! My Big House is going to be a haunted house?!

INT. CABIN

Pseudos sits next to Moira as she types. He puts his arm around her. She smiles at him.

MOIRA

You really are charming you know that?

He brushes his hand through her hair. She leans in.

PSEUDOS

What if I told you that you were in the Haunted House right now.

MOIRA

I'm at The Cabin. What are you talking about?

PSEUDOS

Strange then how the News Reports say you're missing. Don't you think?

Moira thinks, confused.

PSEUDOS

But you like it here don't you?

MOIRA

Yes. Yes I do. I really do.

PSEUDOS

That's what I thought.

EXT./INT. ST. AUGUSTINE'S

Moira marches up the steps, tripping, but finds her way in.

HALLWAY

Moira approaches Leonard from behind. He has his head poked into a newspaper.

MOIRA

WHERE IS!-

Poor Leonard jumps.

MOIRA

Sorry Leonard. Where is Benny?

LEONARD

Fa..ther Benny?

MOIRA

Don't cover for him. He's gotta
face me sooner or later.

LEONARD

He's not here.

MOIRA

Where?

LEONARD

He's in the chapel.

MOIRA

Oh! So he thinks he's safe there.
That I won't yell at him if he's
near the cross and the holy
water... Well!

She stomps out and into-

CHAPEL

Father is deep in reverent prayer, his head bowed.

MOIRA

Faaaa THER!

FATHER BENNY

Holy Lord, that thou knowest thou
good intentions...

MOIRA

FAAAAAAAA-.

INT. SIMPLY JEWISH SYNAGOGUE

RABBI VERDI'S OFFICE

FA-LA-LA-LA-LA... The music plays as the energy mounts in
fear of confrontation as the Rabbi peaks out the

WINDOW- Oh no. He spots an unhappy Joseph leaving his Van.

INT. ST. AUGUSTINE'S - CHAPEL

Father continues to pray aloud ignoring Moira.

FATHER BENNY
And that we shall make things
right...

MOIRA
FATHER!

He turns around finally and gets up.

FATHER BENNY
All it needs is a little sprucing
up.

MOIRA
It's haunted!

FATHER BENNY
How do you know?

MOIRA
Everybody knows!

FATHER BENNY
But you were home schooled. You
didn't even know that a jail is The
Big House!

MOIRA
Well I knew that!

FATHER BENNY
It just-but, look, it's not
haunted, it's psychologically
impacted... Give me a chance and
I'll make things right.

Moira stands her ground, but then softens.

MOIRA
Alright.

EXT./INT. SIMPLY JEWISH SYNAGOGUE

Joseph storms up the steps. He rounds a corner meeting
Belinda.

JOSEPH
Alright! Where is Verdi?

BELINDA
He said he had to run.

JOSEPH
Which way did he go.

Belinda points. Joseph dashes. Sees Rabbi rounding the turn.

JOSEPH
Hold it right there!

Rabbi stops, turns, puts his hands up like a gun is pointed.

RABBI VERDI
What are you gonna do?

JOSEPH
Tell 'em you ate pork at that
banquet back in '78. I'll tell 'em
all I will.

RABBI VERDI
How did you know?

JOSEPH
Mz. McAdams.

RABBI VERDI
(lowers his hands)
OK, I give up. I'll figure out a
way. I know it's a fixer-upper but-

JOSEPH
Fixer upper! The place is haunted!

RABBI VERDI
No-no-no. It's PSYCHOLOGICALLY
IMPACTED. And besides, Father says
he'd call in one of the heavies and
do the mother of all exorcisms.

JOSEPH
You don't exorcise ghosts, you
exorcise on people. It's called a
"cleansing".

RABBI VERDI
Oh. Well, it was worth a try. But
seriously, I'll get the money and
fix it up. Trust me. And have you
figured out what to do about
McAdams yet?

JOSEPH

Yeah, I'm going to have her spend some time with Moira's mother.

INT. FREEMONT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

HALLS

PRINCIPAL DALE, (50s) no nonsense looking, strides in long steps down the hall.

He comes upon our wanderer, Bella, who looks up as he heads toward her. He looks rather threatening, but Bella looks mature and stands her ground.

PRINCIPAL DALE

Young lady, WHAT are you doing out of class?

Glenda arrives on scene, pulling Dale away. She speaks softly just out of earshot from Bella.

GLEENDA

How was the seminar?

PRINCIPAL DALE

HOW WAS? Miss Tavish, we have other issues to address at this moment.

GLEENDA

I couldn't get a hold of you. Did your phone click off?

PRINCIPAL DALE

My phone does NOT click off.

GLEENDA

Ya sure, cause I couldn't- OK listen. Something tragic happened when you were gone.

Principal Dale changes his countenance immediately.

PRINCIPAL DALE

What?

Glenda whispers of "Bella's loss" into his ear. He frowns and approaches Bella. He squats down to her level.

PRINCIPAL DALE

How would you like to take a trip to Rumley's Bakery?

BELLA

We already tried that. It didn't work.

PRINCIPAL DALE

You wanna try again?

BELLA

OK.

INT. VICE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - LATER

Glenda calls up Moira.

INTERCUT:

GLEENDA

Do you think there's any way you can persuade Bella's mother to bring her to see you before Christmas. We're at our wits end around here.

MOIRA'S OFFICE

Moira's amongst a heap of boxes.

MOIRA

If she doesn't mind the state of my office. I thought I was going to have this beautiful place to move into, and now I find out it's that old haunted house on the north side of the church grounds.

GLEENDA

Ew- that sounds bad.

MOIRA

Father said he was going to have it fixed up though. I guess it will take a bit of time... Yeah, I'll try and talk to Mrs. Rosemond.

EXT./INT. MOIRA AND JOSEPH'S HOUSE

They both arrive home early, looking rather glum. As they enter the foyer, their eyes meet in sadness.

MOIRA

Things aren't going so well in the surprise department. I think we need to hold off on the Redstone.

JOSEPH

You too? Well I have to agree. I think I might have been counting my chickens before they were hatched.

MOIRA

Well, my chickens hatched alright, but they hatched some ugly ducklings.

JOSEPH

You going to your mom's for the letter writing?

MOIRA

Yeah. It's important.

JOSEPH

Ya think you could bring along Mz. McAdams?

MOIRA

Ah Joseph you didn't.

He looks like a sad little puppy.

MOIRA

No you're right. I'll pick her up. Mom won't mind.

Moira's about to get ready, but Joseph-

JOSEPH

Do you think you'd mind giving my letter to Santa to your mother for the ritual?

Moira looks stunned.

MOIRA

You? Wrote a letter to Santa?!

JOSEPH

Well, sure. It might work.

SILENT MONTAGE:

A) Moira hugs MOM 70s, introduces Mz. McAdams

B) Mom reading letter in a many candled light
 C) DEAR SANTA they all write on old fashioned stationary
 D) Moira and McAdams say goodbye
 E) Moira's mom walks up to The Haunted House
 She SLIPS the Santa Letters into the mail slot of the door.
 END MONTAGE

INT. HARD HAT OFFICE

RING! From the phone. #1 HARD HAT, (50s) picks up the phone.

HARD HAT #1
 All hours on the job, we work our
 butts off 'cause we're no slobs.
 (listens)
 OK Mr. Woods, I'll send someone
 out.

Enter: Rabbi and Father

FATHER BENNY
 We need your help and we need it
 fast!

RABBI
 We need the two houses on the St.
 Augustine property fixed up.

HARD HAT
 The haunted houses?!

RABBI VERDI
 Psychologically impacted.

FATHER BENNY
 Psychologically impacted.

HARD HAT #1
 I'm on it!

Hard Hat #1 punches buttons on the telephone and begins
 making calls like wild.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

HARD HAT #2 grabs a massive tool box.

HARD HAT #3 grabs ladders and saws.

HARD HAT #4 loads heavy duty machinery.

HARD HAT #5 grabs loads of pizzas and beer.

He looks right at us:

HARD HAT #5
What? Can't work on an empty
stomach!

END SERIES OF SHOTS

INT. MOIRA AND JOSEPH'S HOUSE - LATER

Moira returns home to find Joseph sleeping. She kisses him softly and places a cover atop him. She sits down to watch the fireplace with its flames.

INT. SIMPLYSCRIPTS HEADQUARTERS

The Woman paces the floor. The Stranger sits at the computer.

THE WOMAN
Pseudos just took him out of here
with the strength of a hundred men.
How could he get such power?

The Stranger is scanning through data. Lines and lines appear to scroll and he's reading THAT FAST.

THE STRANGER
That's why I was called on the job
here. I think I was overconfident
when I rewrote the contract. Pride
always comes before the fall.

THE WOMAN
What are you doing?

THE STRANGER
I've got hidden files here that no
one knows about. Looks like Pseudos
took part of Rumley's will and
applied it to his own. And that
cake of Rumley's is going to hold a
lot of soul.

THE WOMAN
Pseudos has rights to the cake?!

THE STRANGER

Not anymore. I'm pulling up new contracts and I just have to find the right one. Here we go:

NEW CONTRACT FOR:

THE MAGIC OF LETTERS - A CHRISTMAS STORY

THE STRANGER'S REVISIONS

BLACK

THE MAGIC OF LETTERS clicks on top the black as white snow.

EXT. RUMLEY'S BAKERY

There's a sign on the door. CLOSED 'TILL I RECOVER

INT. RUMLEY'S BEDROOM

Rumley puts on his bed cap.

RUMLEY

Must rest. Need rest. He crawls into bed.

RUMLEY'S DREAM PREMONITION

EXT./INT. RUMLEY'S BAKERY

Bella enters with Principal Dale.

BELLA

Can you choose? I want it to be a surprise.

She rushes to the back to see Rumley. He's as vexed as ever.

BELLA

Hi Rumley. How's The Concept?

Rumley looks up. Bella makes him smile, but he has no words.

BELLA

Still no good huh?

RUMLEY

'Fraid I'm coming up empty. I'm completely blocked.

Bella climbs up the chair next to the counter.

BELLA

Why don't you just make it an "everything" cake?

RUMLEY

Everything?

BELLA

Yeah. If the concept is like the whole universe, then why don't you do moons and stars and planets and rainbows and- and- She looks up at the bird in the corner-

BELLA

And birds! Freedom birds!

Rumley looks astonished.

RUMLEY

It takes a child to figure things.

INT./EXT. RUMLEY'S BEDROOM - ABOVE THE BAKERY

Rumley in his old fashioned "bed cap" awakes, amazed.

He runs to his window and looks out the same way Scrooge did when he was enlightened. He sees a BOY walking below him. He lifts the window to call out:

RUMLEY

Hey you Boy! It's not Christmas yet is it?

BOY

Over a two weeks left, Sir.

RUMLEY

Good! I need you to run and bring me the biggest groups of kids you can to help me with a project and I'll pay you all real good.

BOY

Alright!!!

The boy dashes. Rumley rubs his hands together excitedly.

RUMLEY
Yesin' deedy this is going to be
the best cake I've ever made!

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TORNADO

An hourglass spins. Clocks spin. Time? What time?

EXT. SUBURBAN STREETS - MORNING

The boy knocks on doors collecting friends like the Pied Piper. It must be the Christmas magic.

EXT. HAUNTED HOUSES

They still look haunted, but progress is being made it seems. A whole crew of workers are outside doing their thing.

INT. ARISTOCRATIC COFFEE SHOP

Glenda and Moira sit having coffee.

MOIRA
How's the bedroom front?

GLEENDA
Bad. Jeremiah and me couldn't get
along with anything, but we sure
did get along in the bedroom.

Glenda turns to the window and sees: Father and Rabbi cross paths again.

GLEENDA
This is so bad.

MOIRA
What?

GLEENDA
I think I feel the hots for Father.

MOIRA
Glenda!

GLEENDA
He's single.

Moira shakes her head, smiling like a cat.

GLEENDA
How's The Big House coming?

MOIRA
Not sure. I'll believe it's truly
done when I see it.

GLEENDA
Looks good on the outside.

MOIRA
Yeah well appearances can be
deceiving.

EXT. ARISTOCRATIC COFFEE SHOP

Father and Rabbi have their usual morning chit-chat.

EXT. MOIRA'S OFFICE - WAITING ROOM

Moira stands in the waiting area with Mrs. Rosemond just
outside her office. The office is pre-moving chaos. Boxes
stacked. Pictures down.

MOIRA
I think it will work. If you'll
just wait out here to give your
daughter some "free space", we'll
try and get this going. Oh, sorry
for the state of everything. My new
location is in fix up mode.

INT. MZ MCADAMS' HOUSE

Mz. McAdams rings her bells trying to ward off an attack.

MZ. MCADAMS
Look Daddy, teacher says, every
time a bell rings an angel gets his
wings.

From bell to bell she goes, but it's no good. She reaches for
her Emergency Numbers: On the list is: FATHER BENNY, RABBI
VERDI, MOIRA AND JOSEPH, but she turns the page and calls:

AMBULANCE

EXT. STREET

The ambulance speeds down the street, its siren howling.

EXT. ARISTOCRATIC COFFEE SHOP

Rabbi's cell rings.

RABBI VERDI

Are you serious? Alright.

INT. MOIRA'S OFFICE

Moira stops only to mention to Alice.

MOIRA

Keep in touch with her teacher and call me if you need to. I'm sorry I have to rush off, but a friend of mine is sick.

As she rushes out the door, she dials her cell to Joseph.

INTERCUT:

Joseph's in the middle of a party set up.

JAMES BOND 007 PARTY

Joseph picks up.

JOSEPH

No way. I'll be right down.

INT. SIMPLYHOSPITAL

They stand around the bedside of Mz. McAdams while the doctor explains.

DOCTOR

We're not sure really. We try our best but sometimes we just don't know. Her thyroid test seems to be alternating between completely normal and completely out of whack. We can't do anything if it keeps switching.

JOSEPH
What's happening then?

DOCTOR
An overactive thyroid at times is causing her heart rate to soar.

MOIRA
Mz. McAdams, you said you were as fit as a fiddle.

MZ. MCADAMS
I am fit as a fiddle aren't I Doctor.

DOCTOR
Yes I did say that. Except for this one thing, you're in great shape. Just keep doing your best with it and call your friends unless you feel it's out of control.

RABBI VERDI
Isn't there "something" you can give her?

DOCTOR
Well there are beta blockers to slow the heart rate, but like I said, it's too unstable.

INT. MRS. FELIX'S CLASSROOM

Mrs. Felix at her desk with Bella.

MRS. FELIX
So how did your chat go with Mrs. Vanish?

BELLA
She said you'd help me write letters to Santa Clause. That he's The Man and that he can help.

MRS. FELIX
Well, are you ready to get started?

BELLA
Yeah!

INT. VICE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE

Glenda stands talking with Rumley.

GLEENDA

I think that's a wonderful idea Rumley. All the volunteers have my permission to help you for the final days leading up to the holidays.

She turns to the secretary.

GLEENDA

Have some field trip forms sent out.

INT. RUMLEY'S BAKERY

Bella and Principal Dale enter.

BELLA

Can you choose? I want it to be a surprise.

She rushes to see Rumley. He looks up, peacefully from his Kabbalah text.

BELLA

Hi Rumley. How's the concept?

RUMLEY

Couldn't be better thanks to you.

BELLA

Me? But I- I lied.

RUMLEY

Bah! You wouldn't do anything without a good reason. You showed up in a dream I had and gave me the best idea ever.

BELLA

What did I say?

RUMLEY

You said, "If the concept is like the whole universe, then why don't you do moons and stars and planets and rainbows and-

Bella looks up at the bird in the corner.

BELLA
And Freedom Birds?

RUMLEY
And Freedom Birds.

BELLA
Rumley, do you believe in magic?

RUMLEY
I do now.

BELLA
Do you believe in The Magic of
Letters?

RUMLEY
What kind of letters?

BELLA
The letters you write to people and
especially to Santa Clause. Mrs.
Vanish says there's a magic in
writing letters and that she does
it all the time. Her mom does and
her Grandma used to too.

Rumley takes out something he's been working on. It's a large
Hebrew letter "Hey".

BELLA
What's that?

RUMLEY
It's the Hebrew letter, "Hey".

BELLA
Like "Hey you?!"

Rumley laughs.

RUMLEY
Actually, you're not far off.

BELLA
The letter "Hey" is the sound of
breath. Try breathing out loud like
this:

Rumley breathes out "Haa". Then Bella breathes out, copying.

RUMLEY

Now try saying something like, "How ya doin'?"

Bella speaks it excitedly.

BELLA

How ya doin'?

RUMLEY

Very good. Now say it without breathing.

BELLA

I can't do that.

RUMLEY

Well then, it must be a very important letter mustn't it?

BELLA

Yeah!

RUMLEY

When God creates and izifies us-

BELLA

Izifies?

RUMLEY

Makes us be, it's like he breathes inside of us and everything. Very very important.

BELLA

Rumley, you're really smart.

RUMLEY

No, I'm not so smart, but I'm trying.

INT. MRS. FELIX'S CLASSROOM

Bella writes:

Deer Santa, Rumlee ovr bacer sed he lernd sumthing frum a dreem. Can u let me tok with mi bruther in a dreem like wat hapend to Rumlee.

Luv, Bella

Bella brings the letter to Mrs. Felix. She reads it, smiling.

MRS. FELIX

You never know, Santa might be able to do that. Bring your brother to you in a dream.

BELLA

I have questions to ask him.

MRS. FELIX

I'm sure you do.

BELLA

Like what happened after Jake died?

Mrs. Felix nods, yes.

MRS. FELIX

Take it home to your mother, and she'll mail it to Santa Clause.

EXT. HAUNTED HOUSE - RIGHT SIDE

Moira looks at the house studying it for a moment. Progress.

MOIRA

I guess it could work.

Her face turns to a deep scrutiny as she sees: THE STRANGER-

He curls his arms in a calling motion at the door of the house. She comes.

INT. ALICE ROSEMOND'S HOUSE

Bella holds the letter, sitting at the kitchen table.

BELLA

I remember you said the postal system has a lot of problems sometimes. That it's often better to courier things.

ALICE ROSEMOND

That's for certain.

BELLA

But what's better than courier?

ALICE ROSEMOND

Well, I guess delivering it yourself.

Bella thinks.

BELLA

But the North Pole is too far to go.

Alice looks up, seeing Bella's letter.

ALICE ROSEMOND

Oh, you're talking about your letter. You've got it finished already? Well, you're fast. Let's see.

Bella hands it over. Alice smiles.

ALICE ROSEMOND

I think it's beautiful.

BELLA

But I don't want to send it through the mail.

ALICE ROSEMOND

It will be OK.

BELLA

No, you always say that sometimes you're better off going to the source.

ALICE ROSEMOND

The source?

BELLA

Yeah, like at the supermarket. When you had all those problems with getting a return. You said that "the manager" was the source.

ALICE ROSEMOND

Yes that's true.

BELLA

So I'm thinking that God is the Source and Santa works for him and God has these Managers that work for him.

ALICE ROSEMOND

Managers?

BELLA

Yeah that run things. Like Father Benny.

ALICE ROSEMOND

Well, sounds like you've worked this out in your head pretty thoroughly.

BELLA

So I'm gonna take the letter to him and tell him to pray about it for me and then Santa will get it when the Freedom Birds fly it over.

ALICE ROSEMOND

Freedom Birds?

BELLA

Rumley told me all about Freedom Birds and they can do anything.

EXT./INT. HAUNTED HOUSE ON RIGHT

Moira approaches The Stranger, walks up the steps.

MOIRA

I know I know you from somewhere.

THE STRANGER

There is a code of law and I can't say right now.

He takes her hand as he opens the door and draws her inside. She looks around.

The place has been transformed and truly does look like the insides of a cozy bed and breakfast. Right down to the fine curtains and even a vase of flowers sitting on a table near the window, where the light pours in.

THE STRANGER

Come upstairs with me.

The Stranger presses gently on Moira's upper back as he guides her in the direction of the first step. Her feet rise one, two, three...

INT. FATHER BENNY'S OFFICE

Leonard brings Bella in.

LEONARD

You have a visitor, Father. Father stands up to greet his young guest.

FATHER BENNY

Well hello, Bella!

BELLA

Hi Father. I'm coming to bring you a letter I want you to get to Santa Clause.

FATHER BENNY

Couldn't you just mail it?

BELLA

But you're closest to the Source...

EXT. HAUNTED HOUSES - RIGHT AND LEFT SIDE

Hard Hat guys come running out of there.

HARD HAT #3

Did you see that?

HARD HAT #2

It was a ghost! A real big and scary- He makes a "bubbling" sound with his lips and a crazy face.

LEAD HARD HAT

Come on men. We can't let this stop us. We've got work to do. And besides, maybe he's lonely. Try and cheer him up.

HARD HAT #2

But Boss, he's scary and it makes the hair on the back of my neck go all weird.

LEAD HARD HAT

Just get to it and I'll give you all a nice fat Christmas bonus.

INT. FATHER BENNY'S OFFICE

Father Benny sets the letter down on his desk and pats it firm.

FATHER BENNY

I'll make sure Santa gets it and
I'm positive he'll send you a
letter back.

Bella gives Father Benny a great big hug and heads out the door at which time, Leonard rushes in.

LEONARD

Father, it's Mz. McAdams again!

Father rushes out, leaving the letter upon his messy desk.

Leonard looks, sadly at the mess and begins to clean it up. He swiftly begins moving papers when The Letter- slow-mo FALLS into the trash can next to the desk.

INT. MOIRA AND JOSEPH'S HOUSE

Moira enters, surprised to see Joseph.

MOIRA

You're home early.

JOSEPH

As is you. What's up?

MOIRA

Something strange happened this afternoon. I remember leaving my office and then it's like I lost a whole chunk of time. I don't remember where I was or what happened.

MOIRA

Listen, I've been thinking about revealing the surprise at the big dinner we have planned at the Redstone, but I'm not sure.

JOSEPH

No?

MOIRA

It's just that I'm afraid that maybe this whole thing is a bad idea because people-

JOSEPH

People?

MOIRA

People aren't going to want to-

Moira stutters.

MOIRA

No maybe I'm wrong. Maybe I'm just thinking too negative.

MOIRA

Dinner tomorrow at the Redstone and we celebrate!

INT. REDSTONE - FINE DINING ESTABLISHMENT

A big sign on the door reads: RESERVATIONS REQUIRED NO EXCEPTIONS The stuffy host greets Moira and Joseph.

THE HOST

Do you have reservations?

MOIRA

Oui.

Moira giggles. The host smiles only slightly.

THE HOST

Very good then.

He checks his list.

THE HOST

Strange, I don't see you on here.

Moira gets the look of a demon.

MOIRA

Whadya mean we're not on there?!!!
I made reservations over two weeks ago! We have to be on there?!!!!

The Host then suddenly realizes, there's a second page for this day's reservations.

THE HOST

Oh, he-hee. (flipping the page)
There you are. Follow me to your table.

Moira impersonates Gollum behind The Host, "Follow me, I know the way..."

He brings them along... Among the glorious tables near a fireplace. Through areas with fish tanks and flaming lamps upon the wall, near quiet alcoves and even a harp player to-

This terribly plain table at the very back of the place right near the kitchen where there's a lot of racket. Moira and Joseph sit for a moment, then look up at him.

JOSEPH

Is this the best you have?

Moira's demon eyes are back.

MOIRA

Yeah! Is this the best you have?!

THE HOST

I'm afraid you made reservations for the busiest time of the day and the busiest time of the year. As you can see, we're all full up.

Moira stands up to The Host...

MOIRA

Do you know what's going on in my life right now? Do you know the people I'm trying to help by building a place where they can come and feel safe while they get their lives in order? Do you know that the only place that I've been able to acquire is a Haunted House that nobody's going to want to come to because it's- it's--

Joseph is staring, amazed.

THE HOST

Haunted?

MOIRA

Yes! It is haunted. And I'm going to look like a complete fool and a failure when nobody wants to even set foot in the place and at that point, nothing will matter because I'll be possessed by whatever is inside of the place myself.

THE HOST

Actually, you do look a little possessed...

Moira's hands rise like she's about to strangle The Host.
Joseph stands up.

JOSEPH

Moira!

MOIRA

And I'll be calling myself Moira or something like that.

JOSEPH

But you ARE Moira.

MOIRA

No I'm not!!! I'm the actress who's playing Moira!

JOSEPH

Oh my God, she's possessed. Did you go into the house before it was cleansed?

MOIRA

No. I don't think I did. Did I?

THE HOST

Would you like drinks to begin?

Joseph gently pushes Moira down.

JOSEPH

Yes, yes I'll have a lemon gin on the rocks.

MOIRA

Get me a FLAMING BLACK RUSSIAN!

JOSEPH

Maybe it's good that we're back here by the kitchen. Moira you wouldn't believe it, but my Party Palace that I've been dreaming of for all these years is going to become a reality.

MOIRA

That's wonderful Joseph. I'm happy for you. I just wish that I could be happy for myself too.

JOSEPH

Moira, I've got the same problem as you.

MOIRA

What?

EXT. HAUNTED HOUSES

Moira and Joseph stare in amazement.

MOIRA

You mean you and I are going to be neighbors? This is wonderful- well, kind of. But who's gonna wanna-

JOSEPH

We'll figure it out OK? But first we've gotta do something about that demon inside of you.

MOIRA

I have a demon inside me?

JOSEPH

It would appear so. It thinks she's an actress only playing you.

MOIRA

Oh my God! I'm an actress playing me? Are you serious?

INT. ALICE ROSEMOND'S HOUSE

Alice bundles up Bella in her prettiest coat and hat.

BELLA

But Mom, I'm gonna miss the field trip to Rumley's. And he needs help with the cake.

ALICE ROSEMOND

I know Bella, but your Grandma gets so lonely at this time of the year and we're lonely and I've decided that the only way to get her here is that if we go and bring her back ourselves. She's afraid of flying, but I'm going to put my foot down.

BELLA

Do you think Santa will get my letter back before Christmas?

ALICE ROSEMOND
I'll bet it will be back by the
time we get back.

INT. FATHER BENNY'S OFFICE

Father enters his office to notice the letter's gone. His desk pristine, all paper's stacked neatly. He begins to rummage through the stacks, checks the drawers - no letter.

FATHER BENNY
Shoot.

EXT. ARISTOCRATIC COFFEE SHOP

Father and Rabbi cross paths again. Rabbi starts to tell a joke.

RABBI
So did you hear about...

Father's deadpan.

FATHER BENNY
I should have listened to my
mother. She said that being messy
would get me into trouble one day.
Well, guess what-

INT. SIMPLY SHAMAN

The place is all hoodoo voodoo. Moira and Joseph follow SARAH SHAMAN through the clattering of wooden beads.

But not until, Sarah un-sticks, one of her braids from them. They sit down near an indoor fountain that burbles gently. Sarah runs her hand around Moira's auric field.

SARAH
You are not possessed.

MOIRA
I'm not?

SARAH
No. It's hormones.

MOIRA
Hormones?

SARAH
Yes, hormones. Congratulations.

MOIRA
What are you talking about?

SARAH
You're pregnant.

MOIRA
Pregnant!

JOSEPH
Pregnant!

SARAH
Is there an echo in here? Yes, I said pregnant. And I think it's going to be a boy.

MOIRA
But I can't be pregnant. Joseph and I have taken every precaution.

Sarah smiles.

SARAH
This isn't an ordinary baby. I think it's a divine conception and these kinds of things move along very swiftly; so be very easy on yourself in the next nine hours.

The Shaman exits for a moment and returns with a whole whack of baby supplies.

She THRUSTS them into the arms of Moira and Joseph.

SARAH
Here, you'll be needing these.

Moira and Joseph stand with their mouths open wide.

SUPER: NINE HOURS LATER

INT. MOIRA AND JOSEPH'S HOUSE

Moira paces the floor. Her face full of fear, her tummy full of baby, as round as if nine months just went by. Joseph neatly adjusts a blanket in the cradle.

MOIRA
I can't believe this is happening,
but how and why?

Joseph walks over to Moira to stop her pacing.

JOSEPH
I think maybe this is my fault.

MOIRA
What do you mean?

JOSEPH
Well you know that letter to Santa
I gave to you for your mom's letter
writing ritual?

MOIRA
You didn't!!!

JOSEPH
I didn't know it was gonna work!

MOIRA
You wrote to Santa for me to become
pregnant?!

JOSEPH
I'm sorry?

Moira softens. Then tries to hug Joseph, but forgets she's so big and bounces off him.

SUPER: A FEW DAYS LATER

EXT. ALICE ROSEMOND'S HOUSE

Mrs. Rosemond and Bella return home with GRANDMA.

GRANDMA
I'm so glad to be on solid ground
again!

Bella jumps to the pile of letters inside the door and hands it to her mom.

BELLA
Is there anything for me from
Santa?

Mrs. Rosemond checks through. Her lips grow tight.

MRS. ROSEMOND
I'm sorry Honey. It's just that
everything gets slow this time of
year. Santa gets bogged down. I bet
it will be here any day now.

Bella turns around and runs to the window. Looks out to-

INT. FREEMONT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

HALLS

Bella stares out that same window at the tree. Seems that
same raven is back and favors it.

BELLA
Are you a Freedom Bird?

MRS. FELIX
Who are you talking to?

Bella turns around.

BELLA
The raven. His name is Craven The
Raven. Rumley says that birds are
symbols of freedom because they fly
in the air with their wings.

MRS. FELIX
Well I think Rumley's a smart man.

BELLA
That's what I said.

MRS. FELIX
Why don't you come and write
another letter to Santa.

BELLA
He's not answering.

MRS. FELIX
What?! Well maybe it got lost in
the mail. The Post Office is
swamped at this time of-

BELLA

No. I took it to Father Benny because I knew that he could pray to God because he's close to the Source and that's better than trusting it to regular old mail delivery.

MRS. FELIX

So you took it to Father Benny?

BELLA

Yep.

Mrs. Felix gets a look.

MRS. FELIX

Would you write another letter to Santa just for me?

Bella looks straight in the eyes of Mrs. Felix who is talking at her level.

BELLA

OK, Mrs. Felix. Because I think you're a really good teacher.

MRS. FELIX

I've wandered my share of halls in my life too...

Mrs. Felix's voice trails away as they walk back to class.

INT. VICE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE

GLEENDA

He what?!

MRS. FELIX

He forgot or something, I don't know what happened.

GLEENDA

Well I'll deal with him. Glenda wraps a scarf around her, splats a hat upon her head and struggles angrily into her coat-

GLEENDA

He might be Father of St. Augustine's Oh.... Wait until I get a hold of that man....

INT. MRS. FELIX'S CLASSROOM

Bella writes her second letter.

Deer Santa, Y R U so meen?

She brings the letter to Mrs. Felix.

MRS. FELIX
Is that all?

BELLA
If I write anymore then I'll sound
mean and I don't want that.

Mrs. Felix gives a sad smile over to Bella.

MRS. FELIX
You know, how about we spell out
your words properly for this.

BELLA
But I'm using texting language.

MRS. FELIX
I know, but let's use old
fashioned "letter writing" hand OK?

Mrs. Felix writes: WHY ARE YOU SO MEAN?

BELLA
OK. I think I know why they call it
the good old days. Things were
better then.

Mrs. Felix nods.

EXT. VICE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE

Mrs. Felix has just told The VP the status with the first
letter. The VP's expression tells all.

EXT. ST. AUGUSTINE'S

The VP MARCHES up the sacred stairs as Father comes down.

GLEENDA
What is wrong with you?!!

FATHER BENNY

I was just heading out to apologize to Bella's mother.

GLENDA

Your apology to her mother isn't going to help Bella!!!

FATHER BENNY

Glenda, I admit I screwed up, but you've got a lot of nerve to talk to a priest like that.

Glenda PULLS Father Benny DOWN the stairs. He is under the force and wrath of GLENDA THE PROTECTOR. She pokes him on the chest three times as she proclaims:

GLENDA

You might be a priest, but I'M THE VICE PRINCIPAL!!!

McAdams shows up.

MZ. MCADAMS

I think you'd better listen to her Benny.

Now Moira rolls up together with Joseph in the Van.

MOIRA

Mrs. Felix called me. Is this true? You forgot to write a letter back on behalf of Santa Clause?

FATHER BENNY

Moira you're pregnant! Very pregnant!

Mz. McAdams looks, noticing, and is happily surprised.

MZ. MCADAMS

Now I've seen everything!

MOIRA

I know what I am. I'm the real Moira! Now did you or didn't you?

FATHER BENNY

I DIDN'T forget. I lost the letter somehow and I couldn't respond because I didn't know what was written and I tried to call Mrs. Rosemond, but I couldn't get a hold of her.

MOIRA

What do you mean you couldn't get a hold of her. We've got cell phones!

FATHER BENNY

Yeah, but it must have clicked off or something.

THIS, Moira understands and gives a sad nod.

MOIRA

That does happen a lot doesn't it?

MZ. MCADAMS

Well, fact of the matter is that Bella needs a sincere letter back from Santa Clause.

MOIRA

I have an idea! Not just a letter, but why doesn't Father Benny dress up as Santa and pay Bella a visit in person? Better still, he can come to The Big House for the Grand opening. It's ready right now isn't it Father?

FATHER BENNY

They said they're real close, but I still needs a good spiritual cleansing and that's just not my forte.

GLEENDA

Wait a minute, I don't think it will work. Bella will know it's Bennyboy.

FATHER BENNY

Did you call me Bennyboy?

MZ. MCADAMS

I think it's rather endearing. Somehow I think I feel a little better than normal.

GLEENDA

We need someone else to be Santa,
but who?

Rabbi rolls up.

MOIRA

That's who!

Rabbi looks confused and then awestruck.

RABBI VERDI

Moira you're pregnant! How?

MOIRA

Sometimes these things just happen
OK?! Life throws us all curve balls
sometimes.

MZ. MCADAMS

As curvy as that "S" on the doors
of the Haunted Houses of St.
Augustine's.

GLEENDA

You're gonna work together with
Bennyboy here, dress up as Santa
and help fix things for Bella.

FATHER BENNY

But we can't be seen working
together. A little chit-chat maybe,
but people can be staunch in their
religious views and-

MOIRA

This isn't about religious views.
This is about a little girl who
needs to talk with Santa Clause and
Santa Clause is busy at the North
Pole right now so you two are going
to make things right in her world!

GLEENDA

That's right!

JOSEPH

You know, seeing us altogether
outside the Chapel makes me think
this would be a great place to hold
a party. Right out front, I can see
it now-

Joseph realizes that no one's in a party mood.

MOIRA

Joseph, quick. Start the Van and take us to the Costume Emporium.

GLEENDA

(to Benny)

You're getting measured for a suit!

MOIRA

(to Verdi)

And you're gonna write the letter to end all letters.

Glenda and Moira begin shuffling Father and Rabbi to Joseph's Party Planning Van.

FATHER BENNY

You can't kidnap us!

RABBI VERDI

You can't kidnap us!

MOIRA

You can't stop us!

FATHER BENNY

Why?

GLEENDA

Because you're a good and holy man who wouldn't hurt a lady unless she asked for it, right Bennyboy?

Moira suppresses a giggle.

INT. CABIN

Pseudos and the possessed Moira dance.

PSEUDOS

You know this is getting out of hand.

MOIRA

Us or the script?

PSEUDOS

Both. You're close to 120 pages. I think you're pushing it.

MOIRA

From a man who knows the real meaning of pushing it - really.

Pseudos twirls Moira.

PSEUDOS

I really do miss Pseudessa.

MOIRA

I don't have the power to write her in. You know that. She's lost unless The Man can find her files... wait a minute... what if I write that he finds her files? Would that work?

Pseudos and Moira both raise happy eyebrows and sit down. Moira begins to type:

MOIRA

Oh no. This is going to be too long, I know it. This script will never do anything but wind up in the SimplyGraveyard for scripts.

Pseudos, shakes his head, sadly.

PSEUDOS

But the important thing is that you do the right thing, right?

Moira looks at him with kindness.

MOIRA

Pseudos, coming from you?!

PSEUDOS

Maybe someday I'll tell you my story.

MOIRA

If you do, I'll try to write it right.

INT. SIMPLYSCRIPTS COSTUME EMPORIUM

Rabbi is being squeezed into a Santa Clause suit.

MOIRA

You know it's really becoming.

Father Benny stands with a notepad.

FATHER BENNY
I have to agree.

GLEENDA
Got anything brilliant yet?

FATHER BENNY
Nothing. I feel totally stuck.

GLEENDA
Why don't you put on a suit too
then.

MOIRA
Yeah. Make it real ya know? There's
this phenomenon where actors can
become possessed by the characters
they play. Maybe if you put on the
suit, you'll know what to write.

FATHER BENNY
You might have something there.

EXT. SIMPLY COSTUME EMPORIUM

The two Santa's stand together Ho-ho-hoing.

FATHER BENNY
No like this, from the stomach.

Rabbi Verdi breathes into his diaphragm and lets out a hearty

RABBI VERDI
Ho-ho-ho!

FATHER BENNY
So what's the plan?

RABBI VERDI
We'll meet together.

FATHER BENNY
Your place or mine?

RABBI VERDI
Yours. It will get me all
Christmassy I think.

INT. MOIRA'S OFFICE

Moira is packing up stuff.

MOIRA
 Good bye stuffy little old office.
 Hello Big House!

EXT. FREEMONT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

THE SCHOOL BUS for the field trip to Rumley's stands waiting as kids board excitedly.

INT. SIMPLY JEWISH SYNAGOGUE - OFFICE

Rabbi Verdi slips on a ski mask for secrecy and heads off.

EXT./INT. ST. AUGUSTINE'S

CHAPEL

Rabbi enters, still masked. He's awe inspired as he gazes at the beauty of the chapel.

RABBI VERDI
 Nice. Verrry nice.

He does a genuflection then proceeds down a hall leading off the chapel.

Leonard stands polishing a brass lamp-stand. His back is turned away from Rabbi and he's unaware of his presence.

Leonard sings a song to himself when he gets that feeling of a presence. He turns and screams.

RABBI VERDI
 No-no. It's OK. I'm a- I'm a burn victim and I've come to see the Father.

LEONARD
 Oh thank God. I mean not that you're a burn victim, but I thought you had a gun.

Leonard points.

LEONARD
 Just follow to your right and down the hall at the end.

INT. FATHER BENNY'S OFFICE

Rabbi knocks and is called in.

FATHER BENNY
(grinning)
Burn victim?

RABBI VERDI
(taking off the mask)
You heard?

FATHER BENNY
If I tell a lie...

RABBI VERDI
God will punish me I know, but in
this case-

FATHER BENNY
You know any Shamans?

RABBI VERDI
Wha?

FATHER BENNY
Heard they're good for spiritual
cleansings.

RABBI VERDI
I thought priests were experienced
in that sort of thing. You know,
like in the movie, The Exorcist.

FATHER BENNY
Yeah, but I've got a confession to
make.

RABBI VERDI
Wait a minute. Other people make
confessions to you, not you to
them.

FATHER BENNY
I'm not really a Father. Well, my
name is Benny, but that's as far as
it goes.

RABBI VERDI
You're not really a priest?!

FATHER BENNY

No. I'm just acting. I went into that Haunted House years ago, and when I came out, I couldn't help myself.

RABBI VERDI

What happened?

FATHER BENNY

Well, there was this ghost that said that there was a shortage of priests and that everything would fall into place if I wanted to take over and so I did. You think I'm convincing?

RABBI VERDI

Bloody well right! You had me fooled, but the question is, would you believe me if I said the same thing happened to me?

FATHER BENNY

No!

RABBI VERDI

Yeah!

FATHER BENNY

Well this is amazing! Truly amazing! I'm not alone! I always felt so very alone!

RABBI VERDI

Hey maybe we shouldn't find a Shaman to cleanse the house.

FATHER BENNY

Why?

RABBI VERDI

Because if we do, then we lose the ghost that turns people into priests and rabbi's and maybe even Baptist Ministers who knows?

FATHER BENNY

Maybe possession isn't so bad after all.

RABBI VERDI

Maybe it's not so much PO ssession,
but a kind of OB session.

FATHER BENNY

Well we better get busy. What do
you think are the best words for
Bella? ...

EXT./INT. RUMLEY'S BAKERY

The kids file in. Rumley welcomes them.

MONTAGUE

A) The children decorate the five tier cake with every cool
thing a child can imagine.

B) Joseph and Moira walk happily between the hedgerows that
separate both Haunted Houses, that now look transformed.

C) Bella has a big smile on her face.

D) Moira CUTS the ribbon opening The Big House officially.

E) Rumley looks on happily at the cake.

It's veiled by a wall, but we see PART OF ALL FIVE LAYERS

END MONTAGE

CRISSCROSS PATTERN - cause it's better than plain old BLACK

RUMLEY O.S.

Truly beautiful!

EXT. ST. AUGUSTINE'S

Rabbi brushes past a stuffy looking JEWISH WOMAN #1, who
gives him a look of recognition. Dressed as Santa, this time
he has a phoney white beard over top of his real beard and
he's put on different glasses, but still-

JEWISH WOMAN #1

Rabbi?

RABBI VERDI

(low voiced)

No. Must have me confused with
someone else.

JEWISH WOMAN #1
(looking down at his
shoes)
It is you! What are you doing going
into a Catholic church?

Rabbi walks quickly away, up the stairs into the church.

MONTAGUE

A) The Woman makes a series of calls.

SPLIT SCREENS

B) Several people, having been notified, are aghast!

END MONTAGE

EXT. YOU'D BETTER BE JEWISH HEADQUARTERS

Several people outraged by the behavior.

JEWISH MAN #1
Completely wrong!

JEWISH WOMAN #2
Outrageous!

JEWISH MAN #3
Follow him. I wanna know what he's
up to.

EXT. YOU'D BETTER BE CATHOLIC HEADQUARTERS

Same outrage, different people, different place.

CATHOLIC WOMAN #1
No wonder they're always chatting
it up on the street together.

CATHOLIC MAN #2
They have no respect for
boundaries!

CATHOLIC MAN #3
Follow him, I want to know what
he's up to.

INT. ARISTOCRATIC COFFEE SHOP

The VP smooshes up close to Father Benny in the booth. "The Catholic Police" on his tail, spy him from another booth.

GLEENDA

Come on Bennyboy. Don't you feel
the maaagnetism between us?

FATHER BENNY

Glenda, not here.

GLEENDA

Oooh then SOMEwhere?

Father Benny pulls her out of the restaurant.

EXT./INT. RABBI VERDI'S PLACE

A KNOCK at the door. It's Belinda.

RABBI VERDI

Hello Belinda.

Belinda is a little stuck for words as she stands there in
the cold.

BELINDA

I just wanted to- wanted to thank
you for the referral. I've been
eating more and my new prescription
for the glasses is much better.

RABBI VERDI

Well come in.

Once inside, Belinda remains "stuck" on something. Her words
can't quite make it out and then,

BELINDA

Verdi- Verdi-

She kisses him. Rabbi is completely overtaken.

BELINDA

I think it's wonderful what you are
doing for the girl...

RABBI VERDI

Girl?

BELINDA

Bella?

RABBI VERDI

Oh yes. Which reminds me... Wanna come-?

BELINDA

Oh Verdi!!!

RABBI VERDI

I mean to Moira's Big House. I'm going to be Santa.

They're off.

INT. THE BIG HOUSE - FORMERLY JUST THE HAUNTED HOUSE

It's beautiful inside. Full of character and charm and decorated for Christmas to the hilt.

If you look, you can see a couple of ghosts sneaking through doorways and halls here and there behind Moira who stands admiring-

Rabbi sits in a big Santa Clause size chair that's red velvet and golden and studded with jewels.

RABBI VERDI

Ho-ho-ho, what is your wish this Christmas?

Bella crawls up on his knee.

BELLA

Santa, what I'd really like is to know where my brother is and even if he can't be right here, if I could just have a dream. A dream where it's as good as the real thing. Do you think I could have that?

RABBI VERDI

Well, let's see. Sometimes the magic doesn't always work. You know what? Santa gets a lot of letters each year and sometimes, I'm not able to respond to each one individually; so you know what I do?

BELLA

What?

RABBI VERDI

I send out one good letter that will work for everyone.

BELLA

Everyone? Wow, that must be a special letter.

RABBI VERDI

Dear Friends, I am so glad you want all this cool stuff. Some of you want toy trains. Some of you want Rock Band. I know a Johnny who wants a pair of skates, And a Susy who wants a dolly; I know a Nellie who wants a story book cause she thinks dolls are folly...

Bella laughs.

BELLA

That's a song.

RABBI VERDI

Well it is now isn't it? I know a Bella and she want to dream a very special dream, and if my magic works this year, then I won't be so mean.

BELLA

I don't think you're mean, Santa.

RABBI VERDI

Well thank you, Bella. That "means" a lot to me, because sometimes, no matter how good I am with the magic- when it works- things don't always work out.

BELLA

Why do you think that is?

RABBI VERDI

I think it's because of the way life is built. It's funny sometimes and sad sometimes too.

O.S. A commotion outside - the noise from an unhappy crowd.

They exit The Big House to see-

EXT. THE BIG HOUSE

The crowd hurling accusations.

JEWISH WOMAN #1
You're in trouble Verdi!

JEWISH MAN #1
Yeah. Take off the Santa suit and
own up to the truth.

JEWISH WOMAN #2
And that truth is that you're not
true to your faith.

Bella looks up confused.

BELLA
You're name is Verdi? You mean
you're not Santa Clause?

CROWD PERSON #1
You'll be removed from the office
you hold.

Rabbi kneels down to Bella's level.

RABBI VERDI
No. I'm sorry Bella, I'm only
Santa's helper.

Bella's face is very still for a moment.

BELLA
That's OK. You answered my
questions.

She gives him a hug.

The VP screeches up in her vehicle with Father and a crowd of
people in cars on their tale.

GLEENDA
What is wrong with you people?!

JEWISH MAN #1
That imposter is going to be
removed from his office.

CATHOLIC WOMAN #1
 And the same goes for
 (pointing to Benny)
 Him!

GLEENDA
 Well that's OK because THEY QUIT!!!

FATHER BENNY
 We do?

RABBI VERDI
 We do?

GLEENDA
 Yes you do because Moira needs a
 full time Santa here don't you?

MOIRA
 Of course! And Santa needs a twin,
 I mean I've read all about it in
 Christmas Digest and that's the way
 it works.

CATHOLIC WOMAN #1
 But you can't just quit like that!
 We need our Christmas service.

JEWISH WOMAN #2
 And we need our Hanukka!

At this critical moment, when the season's special services
 seem doomed... THE MAN from the beginning steps up.

THE MAN
 I could run a nice service.

SEVERAL OF THE CROWD
 Who are you?

The Woman steps up.

THE WOMAN
 He's the Narrator!

THE MAN
 You stole my line again!!!

THE WOMAN
 Sorry. I'm just so happy to have
 you back!

THE MAN

Anyways, I'm not JUST The Narrator; I'm a Kabbalist. Point is, I could do a lovely service for you all at the Holiday Inn? Get it? Holiday Inn?!!! Ha-ha-ha. Or should it be Ho-ho-ho. Ha-ha-ho- ho.

He begins to laugh and he almost keels over in amusement. The Woman runs up next to him and grabs him in concern.

THE WOMAN

Careful Dear. You don't want to get a hernia or something.

Mz. McAdams finally comes to the front also.

MZ. MCADAMS

I'm beginning to feel better and better.

MOIRA

That's wonderful Mz. McAdams. Must be the magic of Christmas.

MZ. MCADAMS

Actually, I've worked out my conflict. You see, I could never figure out where to be. What church was the right one and whenever I thought about it: it made me crazy. But now I know, it doesn't matter.

The crowd looks at each other. They start nodding their heads in agreement because Mz. McAdams has something there.

MOIRA

Oh no!

JOSEPH

What?

MOIRA

My water just broke!

Joseph helps her to Partheus.

INT./EXT. PARTHEUS - THE VAN

They speed away in an attempt to get to SimplyHospital. Moira has the look of anguish.

MOIRA
This can't be.

JOSEPH
What?

MOIRA
I can't wait. Joseph you must pull
over.

Moira unbuckles her seat belt. Joseph pulls over to the side
of the road. Moira lies down in the back.

MOIRA
This is happening so fast. The
contractions - they're coming one
after another.

Joseph looks frantic and happy at the same time.

JOSEPH
I don't know what to do.

MOIRA
Just hold my haaaaaand!

Moira pushes. And pushes. She has momentary relief, but then
it happens again.

MOIRA
This baby is coming out
Nooooooooooow... Uaarrrrhhh...

And with that, the child enters the world and Joseph scoops
him up, inverts him a bit for a moment and we hear THE CRY
and he swaddles him up with his coat.

JOSEPH
It's a boy! I have a son!!!

And Joseph is in tears and Moira is in tears.

MOIRA
And I'm alive! I didn't die like
Grandma!

JOSEPH
No sweetheart. You're alive!

MOIRA
What should we name him?

JOSEPH

How about Jacob. Jacob Partheus
Vanish?

MOIRA

How about that!

EXT./INT. HOLIDAY INN - CHRISTMAS EVE

CONVENTION CENTER

Rumley wheels out THE 7 FT. CAKE. It's loaded with childlike expressions of peace and goodwill towards men.

A very magical miracle as stardust sparkles around us.

The Kabbalists and the not-so-Kabbalists stand together in what is like a Remembrance Day minute of November 11, but it's Christmas Eve.

Moira and Joseph stand together. Joseph holds baby Jacob.

Father Benny and Rabbi Verdi stand together smiling along with Mz. McAdams, Leonard and Belinda.

And when all this sublime joy fades, it's time TO PARTY!!!

And they party so hard that a large decoration hanging above FALLS! Oh-no right on top of the cake, smashing it to smithereens!!! A moment of sadness and then-

RUMLEY

We'll make another one!

He begins plating it anyways and serves it up to the guests. Mrs. Felix and Bella help Rumley. Bella hands cake to her mom and to her grandma.

Hard Hats have a kind of "Village People" vibe going on. Joseph hands the baby over to Moira's mom.

Moira and Joseph dance along with many of the others.

Mz. McAdams is swept off her feet by one of the Hard Hats.

Belinda and Rabbi Verdi dance.

Leonard dances with Hard Hat #5

The celebration suddenly stops when,

PSEUDOS walks in.

It's an "aghast" moment. Fear all over. But following Pseudos is-

The Man, with PSEUDESSA, eternal 30, and-

The Man transfers Pseudessa to Pseudos, like a father giving away his daughter-

PSEUDOS

Do not be afraid. I have an announcement to make. This is not just any party. This is going to be a wedding. And this-

He puts his hand on The Man's shoulder:

PSEUDOS

Is not ANY Man. This, is my BEST MAN.

The crowd applauds and happy faces drip tears of joy. Oh look: a big and brash transition

DISSOLVE TO:

THE BAR AREA

Principal Dale and The Man stand, drinking it up.

PRINCIPAL DALE

We've got ourselves a fine celebration here I must say.

THE MAN

We sure do.

PRINCIPAL DALE

Say have you seen Glenda?

Principal Dale looks around searchingly. On the other side of the room, Glenda pulls Benny along to the outside of the convention room.

THE MAN

I am going to receive so much flack from the General Entertainment People.

INT. JUST OUTSIDE CONVENTION ROOM

Glenda pulls Benny along in a hurry.

DOWN THE HALLS
 INTO THE ELEVATOR AND UP TO

EXT. ROOM 311

Glenda grins eagerly as she swipes the key card. Benny's eyes are all sparkles.

GLEENDA
 We are going to have so much fun!

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HAUNTED HOUSE ON LEFT

Principal Dale exits the Haunted House and appears overwhelmed.

PRINCIPAL DALE
 For some reason I feel rather odd.

The Woman and The Man stroll off.

THE MAN
 Well, that went rather well I think.

THE WOMAN
 Sure did except for Moira.

THE MAN
 What do you mean?

THE WOMAN
 I wonder if she is the "real" Moira from that movie?

The Man and The Woman continue to walk down this Main Street in this Christmas Wonderland.

The road parts again like The Simply Red Sea, a summer path blazing in the middle as they leave us wondering.

But it's a half lie, because if you step back, you'll see The Woman and The Man at the computer screen, and behind them is Moira.

MOIRA
 That's not the way it was supposed to end...

Joseph strolls up. Does a magical edit and then does this:

EXT./INT. REDSTONE - FINE DINING ESTABLISHMENT

The Host welcomes Moira and Joseph and baby Jacob with:

HOST

Do you have reservations?

JOSEPH

No Sir, we DON'T.

HOST

Well, in that case, welcome anyways because today happens to be the slowest day of the year for us and we have plenty of room. How about a nice table for two in front of the fireplace here.

MOIRA

This is absolutely grand. Can I get a Flaming Black Russian?

INT. MZ MCADAMS' HOUSE

She busily rings all the bells in her bell collection over which the Christmas song plays-

COME ON RING THOSE BELLS

*

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Everybody likes to take a holiday
 Everybody likes to take a rest
 Spending time together with the
 family
 Sharing lots of love and happiness
 Come on ring those bells
 Light the Christmas tree
 Jesus is the king
 Born for you and me
 Come on ring those bells
 Every-body say
 Jesus we remember
 This your birthday
 Celebrations come because of
 something good-

Celebrations we love to recall
Mary had a baby boy in Bethlehem-
The greatest celebration of all
Come on, ring those bells
Light the Christmas tree
Jesus is the King
Born for you and me
Come on ring those bells
Every-body say
Jesus, we remember
This your birthday

EXT. CABIN - AERIAL

Fly down with the raven. Moira opens the door for him.

INT. CABIN

He flies to perch upon Wolvy.

She sits down at the #5 Underwood and continues to write.

THE END

FADE OUT: