IT TAKES A VILLAGE

Written by

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INT. ANNA’S HOUSE – ATTIC – DAY

In coats, MADDIE, 20s, pretty and brainy, and JEFF, 20s, handsome and almost as brainy, sift through the flotsam and jetsam of a long life.

They can see their breath in the cold as they cull through boxes and crates and an occasional bureau.

JEFF
Can’t this wait till it warms up?

MADDIE
No, whatever is left after New Year’s will go to auction. If we want anything, we take it now.

He shows her a velvet picture.

JEFF
What do you think?

MADDIE
Bring that home, and you’ll be sleeping with it.

She holds up an old, leather suitcase.

JEFF
And what exactly would we do with that?

MADDIE
Put it in our attic.

JEFF
Exactly.

MADDIE
It has their names, Anna and Nikita. We should keep it.

Jeff shakes his head.

JEFF
Sentimental always outranks practical.

MADDIE
I knew you’d see it my way.

He comes upon a box.
JEFF
Hey, Christmas ornaments. That goes with us.

MADDIE
They must be old. Grandma hasn’t had a tree for years.

He moves the box toward the door.

JEFF
If they’re really old, we’ll sell them on eBay.

MADDIE
In your dreams.

INT. KATE’S HOUSE – KITCHEN – DAY

KATE, 50s, dips a tea bag into a cup of hot water.

KATE
Christmas ornaments? Mother gave me hers when she stopped putting up a tree.

Maddie arrives at the table with a plate of cookies and a cup of coffee.

MADDIE
What can I say? The box is marked Christmas ornaments.

KATE
Wait, I think I remember something about something my father brought home. No, that was a velvet painting, the last thing I remember about him.

MADDIE
The painting was up there too.

KATE
You didn’t...

MADDIE
Not on a dare.

KATE
Are you going to use the ornaments?
MADDIE
We haven’t decided. I mean, we haven’t even looked at them.

KATE
Well, if grandma hid them in the attic, they must be hideous.

They laugh.

MADDIE
When are you going to decorate?

KATE
Tomorrow.

MADDIE
I’ll come over.

INT. MADDIE’S HOUSE – FAMILY ROOM – DAY

On tiptoes, Jeff puts a star atop a smallish tree set in the corner of this smallish room. This is a first house, something small and affordable. Into the room comes Maddie.

MADDIE
It’s up already?

JEFF
How do you like it?

MADDIE
Looks great. I thought you were going to wait for me.

JEFF
The spirit moved me.

She examines the tree and changes a few bulbs.

MADDIE
Were grandma’s ornaments that bad?

JEFF
Not ornaments. Come with me.

He leads her to the dining room where a Christmas village has been set up on the table.

JEFF
How do you like it? Odd fact, there are thirteen figures. You would think that unlucky.
She studies the quaint, old village and the little figures set amidst the buildings.

MADDIE
My god, it’s wonderful. I wonder why grandma never used it.

JEFF
The village is great, but look yonder.

He points to an elf, bigger, with something akin to a smirk on its face.

MADDIE
Ugly little bugger, isn’t he?

JEFF
Where do you want him?

MADDIE
Out of my sight.

INT. MADDIE’S HOUSE – SHOWER – DAY
Maddie showers, and she’s hot in suds.

JEFF (O.S.)
HEADING OUT!

MADDIE
TAKE CARE!

She rinses one more time and shuts off the water. Reaches out and retrieves a towel.

Wrapped in a towel, Maddie pulls back the curtain and lets out a little SCREAM.

On the floor, looking at her is the Elf.

She steps out and grabs the Elf.

MADDIE
Very funny.

INT. MADDIE’S HOUSE – JEFF’S OFFICE – DAY
Dressed, Maddie enters, the Elf in her hand. She pauses to look around a moment before she places it on top a filing cabinet. Smiling, she leaves.
INT. KATE’S HOUSE – FAMILY ROOM – DAY

Maddie adds icicles to a small tree set on top a table. She steps back to admire the decorated tree. Into the room comes Kate, several wrapped presents in hand.

MADDIE
How do you like it?

KATE
(adding gifts)
It looks great. Did you use grandma’s ornaments?

MADDIE
There weren’t any. It turned out to be a Christmas village.

KATE
I don’t remember a Christmas village. Oh wait, a long, long time ago, when I was five or six. God, I had forgotten all about that. I guess that was part of the bad year.

MADDIE
Bad year?

KATE
The Christmas that my father left us.

MADDIE
What?! I thought he died.

KATE
Grandma wanted everyone to think that, but actually, he left us on Christmas Eve.

MADDIE
You’re kidding.

KATE
I was too young to see it, but my father was not a good man. I was older when my mother’s friends told me how he abused her. Aunt Ethel said my mother invoked Baba Yaga, whatever that is.
MADDIE
Baba what? Is that some kind of curse?

KATE
How would I know? You and Jeff are coming for Christmas dinner?

MADDIE
Wouldn’t miss it.

INT. MADDIE’S HOUSE – BEDROOM – DAY
Maddie goes to the bureau and stops cold. On top the bureau is the elf.

MADDIE
(snatching Elf)
Ha, ha, funny boy.

She crosses the room to a second bureau. She pulls out a top drawer full of his underwear. She places the Elf on top.

MADDIE
Finish your shower, baby.

INT. MADDIE’S HOUSE – KITCHEN – DAY
Maddie stirs a pot of spaghetti sauce. Jeff enters and kisses her cheek.

MADDIE
Going commando, now?

JEFF
What?

MADDIE
Oh, I get it. A silent war.

JEFF
What are you talking about?

MADDIE
Never mind. We’ll see who wins.

She taps his nose and walks away, leaving him confused.
INT. MADDIE’S HOUSE – BEDROOM – CONTINUOUS

Maddie enters and looks around. No Elf. She goes to her bureau, and with care, she opens each drawer, expecting to find the Elf. But she doesn’t. Frowning, she leaves.

INT. MADDIE’S HOUSE – KITCHEN – CONTINUOUS

Maddie enters, opens the fridge, and jumps back with a CRY. The Elf stands on a shelf, a small knife cradled in its arms. She snatches at the Elf, and the knife cuts her hand.

MADDIE
(sucking finger)
Son of a...

She carefully removes the knife before she takes the Elf.

INT. MADDIE’S HOUSE – JEFF’S OFFICE – CONTINUOUS

Jeff sits in front of his computer as Maddie enters and slams the Elf on the desk.

MADDIE
Enough of the games.

JEFF
What?

MADDIE
(showing bloody finger)
That’s what happens when you do stupid things.

JEFF
I don’t know what you’re talking about.

MADDIE
Yeah, right. The next time I see that little bastard, it goes in the trash.

She storms out, leaving a baffled Jeff.

JEFF
(to Elf)
What the hell did you do?
INT. MADDIE’S HOUSE – BEDROOM – NIGHT

Maddie is in bed, her back to Jeff as he exits the bathroom. He slides into bed.

    JEFF
    I’m not exactly sure what I did, but I apologize. Oh, and the ugly little dude is sleeping in a file drawer, OK?

She doesn’t answer.

    JEFF
    Tomorrow is Christmas eve, and I don’t want to spend it fighting.

She turns over. She smiles, and they kiss.

Unseen, the Elf stands by the bureau, watching.

INT. MADDIE’S HOUSE – KITCHEN – DAY

Maddie sets the timer on the oven. In coat, Jeff enters and kisses her cheek.

    JEFF
    I’m off. Wine, fresh spinach, and whipped cream.

He heads for the door.

    MADDIE
    And mushrooms if you can find them.

    JEFF
    Consider them found.

He leaves. Happy, she looks around and heads out.

INT. MADDIE’S HOUSE – BEDROOM – DAY

Maddie comes out of the closet with a wrapped present. She looks around. No Elf.

INT. MADDIE’S HOUSE – FAMILY ROOM – CONTINUOUS

Maddie places the present under the tree. She walks over to the Christmas village and runs her fingers over the little figures.
INT. MADDIE’S HOUSE – JEFF’S OFFICE – CONTINUOUS

Maddie stands in front of the file cabinet. She takes a deep breath and opens the top drawer. Nothing. Frowning, she opens the next drawer. No Elf. She opens each drawer one by one. No Elf. Fuming, she slams the last drawer and leaves.

INT. MADDIE’S HOUSE – KITCHEN – CONTINUOUS

She enters, looks around, and grabs a knife from the wooden block. She means business.

INT. MADDIE’S HOUSE – BEDROOM – CONTINUOUS

On her hands and knees, Maddie looks under the bed. Nope. Nothing.

INT. MADDIE’S HOUSE – FAMILY ROOM – CONTINUOUS

Maddie looks behind the couch and under the chairs. No Elf.

INT. MADDIE’S HOUSE – KITCHEN – CONTINUOUS

Steamed, Maddie rushes into the room. She stops and looks around. Then, she looks up.

Elf stands on top the fridge.

MADDIE

Fucker.

She snatches the Elf and slaps him on the cutting board. She smiles as she raises the knife.

JEFF (O.S.)

MADDIE!

Jeff, sack in arms, stands in the doorway.

JEFF

What the hell are you doing?

MADDIE

What the hell did you do?

He sets the sack on the counter and comes toward her, even as she brandishes the knife.
JEFF
Whoa, whoa, let’s set down the knife, OK?

She puts the knife on the table.

MADDIE
Get that ugly fucker out of here.

Jeff grabs the Elf.

JEFF
Are you all right?

MADDIE
No, I’m not all right, not all right at all. Just take it away.

INT. MADDIE’S HOUSE – GARAGE – CONTINUOUS

Jeff pulls the lid off the trash can. He studies the Elf a moment before he hurls it into the can and slams the lid.

INT. MADDIE’S HOUSE – BATHROOM – CONTINUOUS

Maddie turns on the shower and strips.

JEFF
(through the door)
Maddie.

MADDIE
Go away.

JEFF
What can I do?

MADDIE
GO AWAY!

INT. MADDIE’S HOUSE – FAMILY ROOM – CONTINUOUS

Jeff stands in front of the Christmas village. He reaches out and touches a figure.

INT. MADDIE’S HOUSE – KITCHEN – LATER

Jeff and Maddie face each other, the food-laden table between them.
JEFF
I honest to god put it in the file drawer.

MADDIE
I don’t want to talk about it.

JEFF
It’s Christmas eve. You gonna stay mad at me?

MADDIE
Maybe.

JEFF
How about after dinner, we open one gift?

MADDIE
Giver’s choice?

JEFF
Absolutely.

INT. MADDIE’S HOUSE – FAMILY ROOM – LATER

Jeff pulls an ugly Christmas sweater from a box. He and Maddie laugh as he models it.

She opens a box and pulls out lacy, shorty PJs.

JEFF
You should probably try those on.

She laughs and heads out.

MADDIE
Turn out the lights.

He watches her go before he turns out the lights, leaving only the lit tree. He starts out. Out of the shadows leaps the Elf. Startled, Jeff steps back and trips on a chair. He hits the floor, dazed.

Even as he blinks, the Elf moves up his chest. Fangs appear in the Elf’s mouth. Jeff looks at the Elf as it grins hideously—right before it bites Jeff’s neck.

Jeff SCREAMS.
INT. MADDIE’S HOUSE – BATHROOM – CONTINUOUS

In lacy PJs, Maddie admires herself in the mirror. Humming a Christmas noel, she can’t hear the fading screams.

INT. MADDIE’S HOUSE – BEDROOM – CONTINUOUS

Maddie emerges from the bathroom and scampers into bed. Smiling, she looks at the door.

INT. MADDIE’S HOUSE – FAMILY ROOM – LATER

In PJs, Maddie enters. She looks around.

  MADDIE
  Jeff?

No one answers.

INT. KATE’S HOUSE – KITCHEN – DAY

Maddie and Kate drink coffee at the table.

  KATE
  He’ll come back.

  MADDIE
  It’s been a week.

Kate reaches out and takes Maddie’s hand.

  KATE
  He’ll be back.

INT. MADDIE’S HOUSE – FAMILY ROOM – DAY

The village buildings are already in the box. Kate picks up a figure, slides it into a baggy, and places it in the box. There is one figure left but no more baggies.

  KATE
  I need a baggy.

Maddie takes ornaments off the tree.

  MADDIE
  I counted out thirteen.

  KATE
  There are fourteen figures.
Maddie tosses a box of baggies to Kate.

**MADDIE**
That’s odd. I swear Jeff counted thirteen.

**KATE**
Thirteen is unlucky.

Kate slides the last figure into a baggy and places it in the box...right next to the Elf.

**FADE OUT**