

DEAR SANTA

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. HOUSE - DAWN

A small ranch. Nothing special. Snow flurries flutter through the air.

INT. HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAWN - SAME

The closed drapes keep the room dark despite the rising sun. Clothing from both a man and a woman litter the floor.

APRIL (25), a blonde bombshell, sleeps beneath the covers in a skimpy nightie. The bedside clock reads 6:49 AM.

KYLE WILLIAMS (31), a selfish jerk, sits on his side of the bed as he throws his clothes on, trying extra hard not to jostle the structure. He finishes and grabs his wallet/keys from the nightstand. Slips them into his pockets.

Kyle fails to notice the dark jacket lying over the back of a chair, hidden in the darkness, as he slinks out of the room, leaving the door open.

LIVING ROOM

Kyle reaches the front door. His hand grips the knob.

APRIL (O.S.)  
Seriously?

Busted, Kyle turns back to find...

April standing at the edge of the hall, arms crossed. Kyle's jacket is draped over her hands. Even though she is furious, she wears the emotion well.

APRIL  
It's Thanksgiving, you jerk.

Kyle grins uneasily as he goes to April. He lightly rubs her arm.

KYLE  
Come on, baby.

April jerks away from Kyle's touch.

APRIL  
Oh, don't you "come on, baby" me. I thought we were spending the day together.

KYLE

In my defense, you suggested it. I never agreed.

April shoots Kyle a look that could kill. Kyle puts on the charm as he takes April into his arms. She squirms at first but gradually surrenders.

KYLE

You know how I feel about you, sweetheart. I can't do my best work when I need a shower and a change of clothes, right?

April fights a smile but loses out.

APRIL

Right.

Kyle kisses April long and sweet. His cell phone inside his front pants pocket rings.

FEMALE VOICE (ON PHONE)

Call from Debbie Wright.

April instantly pulls back, angry again.

APRIL

Who's Debbie Wright?

Kyle grows jittery fast.

KYLE

My sister.

APRIL

You only have brothers.

KYLE

You didn't let me finish. It's my sister-in-law. She's married to Carl.

APRIL

Then why does she have a different last name than yours?

April snatches the ringing phone from Kyle's pocket and answers it.

APRIL

(into phone)

Who's this?

Kyle reaches for the phone. April turns away with it.

APRIL  
I'm his girlfriend... Oh, really?

April gives Kyle a bitter glance.

APRIL  
Well, he just spent the night at my place. I guess you were going to be his Thanksgiving dessert... Sure, hold on.

April holds out the phone to Kyle.

APRIL  
She wants to talk to you.

Kyle finds a wave of confidence as he takes the phone from April.

KYLE  
(into phone)  
Debbie, how are you?...

Kyle winces as he pulls the phone away from his face. He slowly puts it back.

KYLE  
Calm down. It's not what it looks like.

Click. The sound of Debbie hanging up. Kyle returns the phone to his pocket.

APRIL  
Get out of my house and don't bother coming back.

Kyle smiles pleasantly.

KYLE  
At least we're on the same page here.

April releases a grunt of frustration and hurls the jacket at Kyle. He catches it. April points to the door.

APRIL  
Get out!

Kyle hurries to the door and leaves.

April whips around and returns to her bedroom. The door slams closed.

EXT. HOUSE - DAWN - SAME

Kyle leans back against the house and sighs. His phone rings.

FEMALE VOICE (ON PHONE)  
Call from Casey Hill.

Kyle pulls his phone out and takes the call as he walks toward his car parked at the curb.

KYLE  
(into phone)  
Casey, great news. My calendar just opened up for dinner... My parents cancelled on me. Isn't that great?

Kyle gets in behind the wheel of his car. It starts and drives off.

EXT. PARKER HOUSE - MORNING

A car pulls into the driveway of the two-story house and parks.

INT. PARKER HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MORNING - SAME

Several family photos are displayed on a table. Some are of Jennifer and her husband Steve (in marine's uniform). Their two children are very young in a few, including Steve holding his newborn daughter in a family pic. They are a little older in others.

JENNIFER PARKER (30) straightens a Christmas tree in its stand in front of the window. Her kids, BEN (8) and CINDI (6), open a box of ornaments and lights, and look through them.

The doorbell rings.

JENNIFER  
That's either Grandma or Uncle Jason. Maybe they'll help us decorate the tree.

CINDI  
Yay!

Jennifer smiles at her kids as she goes to the door. She opens it to her brother, JASON SALZMAN (35), and mother-in-law, BRENDA PARKER (60). Each carries a couple of food totes.

JASON  
Look who I ran into.

BRENDA  
Happy Thanksgiving!

Brenda and Jason enter. Brenda lights up over seeing the kids.

BRENDA  
There's my babies!

BEN  
Grandma!

Ben and Cindi race to Brenda. She piles her totes on top of those Jason holds. He barely manages to not drop them all. Brenda hugs the kids.

CINDI  
We're putting up the Christmas tree!

BRENDA  
You are?

CINDI  
Come help us.

Cindi pulls Brenda along with her to the tree.

BRENDA  
We need your Uncle Jason to string the lights.

Ben pulls out a wad of tangled lights from the box and looks confused.

JASON  
Let me take this stuff to the kitchen first.

Jason steps out of sight in the kitchen's direction.

Jennifer lifts a silver locket into the open from under her blouse. It's very unique. She rubs it in her fingers as she stares at Brenda and the kids in lost thought.

INT. PARKER HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MORNING - FLASHBACK

A slightly younger Jennifer, seated on the floor, hands out gifts on Christmas morning to 3-YEAR-OLD BEN and 1-YEAR-OLD CINDI. She is on the floor, helping young Cindi with hers. Ben doesn't need help.

Brenda sits nearby, watching happily. Next to her is BRIAN PARKER (58). A pile of toys is already present with a few wrapped gifts still under the tree.

BRENDA

Boy, Santa has been very generous  
this year.

BEN

We were real good.

JENNIFER

Well...

The adults laugh. Jennifer grabs one of the remaining gifts.

JENNIFER

(to Ben)

This one's from your dad.

Jennifer hands the package to Ben.

BEN

How did he get it here?

JENNIFER

Syria has a post office.

BRENDA

And he sent it early to make sure  
it got here in time.

Ben tears into the gift. It's a very unique handmade wooden truck, something you wouldn't find easily in the U.S.

BEN

Wow.

JENNIFER

It was made in Syria by locals. He  
wanted you to have something to  
think of him by.

BEN

I love it!

Ben rolls his truck on the floor. Jennifer watches with a smile. She grabs a gift for Cindi.

JENNIFER

This one's to you from Daddy.

Jennifer helps Cindi open her gift. It's a very pretty and unique handmade doll. Cindi hugs it.

There's only one unopened gift left, a very small box. Jennifer picks it up and studies it.

BRIAN

What are you waiting for?

Jennifer gives her father-in-law a grin and opens the gift. It's her silver locket made in Syria with a unique design. Jennifer opens it. There's a picture inside of Steve in his uniform and one of Jennifer. She tears up.

BRENDA

Oh, my. How beautiful.

Jennifer puts the chain around her neck and admires the locket at the end. Cindi looks up and touches it.

JENNIFER

Pretty.

The doorbell rings. Brenda jumps up and opens the door to two MARINES in uniform. They look very solemn.

MARINE #1

Jennifer Parker?

Jennifer curiously gets up and moves to Brenda's side.

JENNIFER

Yes?

Marine #1 looks past Jennifer to the kids playing with their toys.

MARINE #1

May we come in?

JENNIFER

Of course.

The marines enter. Jennifer closes the door.

JENNIFER

Is this about my husband?

Marine #2 speaks quietly so the kids won't hear.

MARINE #2

There's been an accident. Your husband was on a chopper that went down in the desert last night.

Jennifer and Brenda stare in shock. Brian joins them.



JENNIFER  
Is he all right?

MARINE #1  
We're afraid not, ma'am.

Jennifer's legs start to buckle. She clings to Brian's arm to remain standing and breaks down into tears.

CINDI (V.O.)  
Mommy?

INT. PARKER HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MORNING - PRESENT DAY

Jennifer snaps out of her daze to find Cindi standing before her, tugging on her arm.

CINDI  
Are you gonna help us?

Jennifer smiles at Cindi.

JENNIFER  
We always decorate together, don't we?

Cindi nods. She takes Jennifer's hand and pulls her over to the ornaments. They locate ones inside the box that are missing hooks, then find loose hooks in the bottom and put those on the ornaments.

Jason walks in and gets to work untangling the lights.

JASON  
Let's see what we've got here.

Ben does his best to assist.

As Brenda helps the girls, she watches Jennifer with concern.

INT. PARKER HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING - LATER

Jennifer and Brenda cook Thanksgiving dinner. A turkey is in the oven. Pots boil on the stove.

BRENDA  
You're thinking about Steve this morning, aren't you?

JENNIFER  
I think about him every morning, and night. And every time I look at Ben or Cindi.

BRENDA

I loved my son more than anything  
in this world, but the kids need  
you, ALL of you.

JENNIFER

How did you manage when Brian died?

Brenda grins fondly as she works.

BRENDA

By living in the present and not  
the past. You'll never forget what  
you had and how you felt, but  
moving on is part of the grieving  
process.

Jennifer pauses to watch Brenda with awe.

INT. BRIDWELL ADVERTISING - RECEPTION AREA - DAY

A large area with a big desk where a RECEPTIONIST works. Two  
halls hold several private offices.

DAN BRIDWELL (50s), expensive suit, leaves a hall with a  
stack of small envelopes in his hand. He calls out loudly...

MR. BRIDWELL

Company meeting, NOW!

EMPLOYEES file out of their offices and gather before Mr.  
Bridwell, including Kyle. He nudges the MAN standing next to  
him.

KYLE

Must be our Christmas bonuses.

The man rolls his eyes, going unnoticed by Kyle.

Mr. Bridwell becomes all businesslike, fairly easy for him.

MR. BRIDWELL

Christmas is right around the  
corner. Instead of the typical  
holiday bonuses I normally hand out  
this time of year, I have something  
different in mind.

Kyle turns to the WOMAN standing next to him.

KYLE

A vacation would work, too.

The woman sneers at Kyle, who fails to notice.

MR. BRIDWELL

All of you represent the biggest advertising firm on the west coast. As representatives, image is very important. That's why I am assigning each of you a volunteer position over the next few weeks.

A look of disbelief washes over the onlookers, especially Kyle.

KYLE

This has to be a joke.

Mr. Bridwell moves around, handing out an envelope with a name on it to each employee. They open them to study the card inside with their assignment on it.

MR. BRIDWELL

As advertising agents, you realize how important it is to sell our brand. I expect you to accept your assignments with grace and uphold this company's image at all times.

Mr. Bridwell hands an envelope to Kyle and moves on. Kyle anxiously opens the envelope and removes the card inside.

INSERT - CARD

The card reads "Play Santa on weekends at Salem Mall. Report to the mall office at noon on Saturday for costume."

BACK TO SCENE:

Kyle goes into panic mode. He pushes his way through fellow employees to catch up with Mr. Bridwell, who hands out the last couple of cards. Everyone opens theirs with a mixed reaction.

KYLE

Excuse me, Mr. Bridwell, but there's been a huge mistake.

MR. BRIDWELL

What's the problem, Williams?

KYLE

I got the wrong card. Mine says I have to dress up as Santa at the mall.

MR. BRIDWELL

No, that's the position I chose for you.

(to all)

Those who make me proud will get double last year's bonus just in time for Christmas.

The announcement lightens the mood greatly. People scatter back to their offices, except for Kyle. He follows after Mr. Bridwell.

KYLE

But I don't like kids. I didn't even like myself when I was one.

Mr. Bridwell enters the main...

HALL

... and continues toward his office. Kyle keeps up.

MR. BRIDWELL

That's why the position is perfect for you.

Mr. Bridwell enters his...

OFFICE

Large and luxurious. A bookcase houses pictures of Mr. Bridwell's wife, grown kids, and several grandchildren. He's obviously very proud.

Kyle follows Mr. Bridwell inside.

KYLE

I don't understand.

Mr. Bridwell sits behind his desk and grabs a folder of papers from a stack. He looks through the client file as they chat.

MR. BRIDWELL

You're past 30 and can't even commit to a houseplant. I think this will be good for you.

Kyle slides up to the desk.

KYLE

With all due respect, sir, I like my life the way it is, without kids in it.

MR. BRIDWELL  
You don't have to play Santa. It's  
your decision.

Kyle lights up with relief.

MR. BRIDWELL  
But you'll forfeit your bonus.

Kyle turns panicked again.

MR. BRIDWELL  
I might even donate it to a  
children's charity in your name.

Mr. Bridwell focuses on the file. Kyle stands there, staring  
at his boss in disbelief. He finally turns away and schleps  
toward the doorway. Mr. Bridwell looks up.

MR. BRIDWELL  
Oh, Williams?

Kyle looks back.

MR. BRIDWELL  
You have to do a good job or no  
bonus.

Kyle sighs and then exits. Mr. Bridwell amusingly shakes his  
head as he returns his attention to the file.

EXT. PARKER HOUSE - DAY

A school bus stops out front. Ben and Cindi get off, each  
wearing a backpack and coat. They run to the house. The bus  
pulls away.

Jennifer opens the door and greets her excited children.

CINDI  
Mom, guess what?

JENNIFER  
Okay, I'll play along. What?

BEN  
Santa's going to be at the mall  
tomorrow!

CINDI  
(disappointed)  
I wanted to tell her.

JENNIFER

That's awesome. Now get inside  
before you become popsicles.

Ben and Cindi run inside. Jennifer smiles to herself as she closes the door.

INT. PARKER HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The kids remove their backpacks and coats, dropping both to the floor.

BEN

Can we go?

CINDI

Please?

JENNIFER

Maybe, if you're really good  
tonight, starting with hanging up  
your coats.

The kids grab their coats and hang them on the coat rack.

BEN

(to Cindi)

Let's go make our lists!

Ben and Cindi race up the steps. Jennifer's smile fades. She drifts over to the pictures and picks up one of Steve. Lightly touches his image with her fingers.

JENNIFER

I... we miss you so much.

Jennifer doesn't notice Ben and Cindi watching her from the steps. They exchange a troubled look and slip back upstairs.

BEN'S BEDROOM

The kids enter. Ben closes the door.

BEN

I wish there was something we could  
do to make Mom not be so sad.

CINDI

Maybe we could ask Santa to help  
her.

Ben smiles. Cindi returns it.

EXT. MALL - DAY

Garland and red bows decorate the mall exterior in synch with the holidays. The lot is nearly filled with cars.

INT. MALL - OFFICE - DAY - SAME

The mall manager, PHYLLIS BRYANT (40s), sorts through a stack of papers while Mr. Bridwell watches from her side.

PHYLLIS

There's really no need to hang around.

MR. BRIDWELL

You don't know my employee.

Kyle leaves a back room in a Santa suit. Stuffing underneath makes him look a little fatter. A white beard hangs sloppily from his face. The cotton ball on his hat hangs in his face. He looks like he hates the world.

KYLE

This isn't funny.

MR. BRIDWELL

It's not supposed to be, Williams.

Phyllis fixes Kyle's beard.

PHYLLIS

I think you make a dashing Santa.

KYLE

Are you sure you really need me today? Maybe the kids decided to stay home.

CUT TO:

INT. MALL - CENTER COURT - DAY

An area is set up to look like the North Pole. A chair made to look like a sleigh is in the center. Two FEMALE ELVES open boxes of candy canes and place them into two deep bowls.

A long line of KIDS waits excitedly with their PARENTS to see Santa.

TO THE REAR

Phyllis, Kyle, and Mr. Bridwell stop to survey the scene. Kyle totes a large bag that appears to be filled with gifts. He looks ill at the dozens of children who wait for him.

PHYLLIS

Now, the mall is known for its holiday celebration, including our Santa. So put on a good show for the children. Remember, jolly, jolly, jolly!

Phyllis walks off toward the offices. Kyle frowns.

KYLE

I can't do this, Mr. Bridwell.

Mr. Bridwell places an arm around Kyle's shoulders and chuckles.

MR. BRIDWELL

Oh, you will do it and do it well, or the bonus won't be the only thing you lose.

Kyle's eyes widen in alarm.

MR. BRIDWELL

Now go out there and make those kids happy.

Kyle swallows hard. He composes himself and heads to the sleigh, passing by the line of waiting kids. His performance is lackluster but he tries.

KYLE

Ho ho ho. Merry Christmas, everyone!

The kids bounce with excitement. Some call out Santa's name.

SANTA'S VILLAGE

The elves wait on each side of the sleigh.

ELF #1

You're late.

Kyle studies Elf #1 pleasantly.

KYLE

What's your name, sweetheart?

ELF #1

None of your business.

KYLE

That's an unusual name.



Kyle turns to Elf #2.

KYLE  
How would you like to sit on  
Santa's lap?

Elf #2 crosses her arms and glares at Kyle.

KYLE  
Ouch. Santa's feeling a little  
cold.

Elf #1 snatches Kyle's bag and lays it aside.

ELF #1  
Sit down and shut up.

Elf #1 shoves Kyle into his seat. Elf #2 removes the rope blocking the kids and leads the LITTLE GIRL (8) first in line up to Kyle.

KYLE  
Ho ho ho, Little Girl.

Little Girl hops onto Kyle's lap, causing him to groan.

LITTLE GIRL  
I stayed up late last night to make  
you a list.

Little Girl reaches into her coat pocket and pulls out a paper. She opens it to a lengthy list.

LITTLE GIRL  
I want a dollhouse and a new bike  
and an electric scooter...

Little Girl pauses to look at Kyle.

LITTLE GIRL  
Maybe you should write this down.

Kyle points to his head.

KYLE  
It's all up here.

LITTLE GIRL  
Are you sure? You might forget  
something.

KYLE  
I'm sure.

LITTLE GIRL  
I'll just give you my list. I made  
copies.

Little Girl returns to her list.

LITTLE GIRL  
I want a new puppy and a tablet...  
not one of those cheap ones but  
something nice, like an iPad.

AD-LIB Little Girl naming off more things from her list. Kyle  
already looks bored.

INT. MALL - SANTA'S VILLAGE - DAY - LATER

The line is just as long as it was earlier, only Jenny waits  
with Ben and Cindi. They're close to the front. The line  
gradually moves.

JENNY  
What are you two going to ask Santa  
for?

BEN  
We can't tell you that.

CINDI  
Yeah, we won't get what we want.

JENNIFER  
That's birthday wishes.

CINDI  
And Santa's list.

AT THE SLEIGH

A BOY (5) sits on Kyle's lap, staring into his face. The  
boy's MOM waits near them.

KYLE  
What can Santa bring you for  
Christmas, Little Boy?

Little Boy pulls on Kyle's beard, moving it away from Kyle's  
face. He quickly puts it back in place, although it's a bit  
crooked.

KYLE  
You mustn't pull Santa's beard or  
I'll have to put you on the naughty  
list.

The boy's protective MOM steps forward.

BOY'S MOM  
Don't be threatening my boy.

KYLE  
My mistake. I'm sure he's already  
on the list.

The mom grabs her son by the hand and pulls him away with her.

BOY'S MOM  
Come on, Timmy. Southview Mall has  
a much better Santa.

Kyle looks to Elf #1 standing next to him.

KYLE  
Are all kids this greedy?

ELF #1  
Yeah, but at least you haven't been  
spit on yet.

Kyle recoils at the thought.

IN LINE

Ben and Cindi are next. Elf #2 moves the rope for them.

ELF #2  
Santa's ready for you.

Jennifer and the kids step through the opening. Elf #2 fastens the rope in place. Cindi and Ben suddenly block their mom.

BEN  
Can we talk to Santa alone?

JENNIFER  
But I always go up there with you.

BEN  
We aren't little kids now.

CINDI  
You have to cut us loose sometime.

Jennifer fights a grin.

JENNIFER

I see. Well, go on then, but I'm still taking a picture.

Jennifer pulls her cell phone out, ready to use it. Ben and Cindi go to...

SANTA'S SLEIGH

... and stop before Kyle.

ELF #1

Who wants to go first?

BEN

We'd like to speak to Santa together because we want something really big.

Kyle slouches back and sighs.

KYLE

(under breath)

Here we go.

Cindi looks past the elves to Kyle.

CINDI

We don't have to sit on your lap or anything since there's two of us.

ELF #1

Don't be silly. Santa loves having his lap full of kids.

Elf #1 lifts Cindi up to one of Kyle's legs, then Ben to the other. Kyle looks uncomfortable but works to hide just how much.

KYLE

Ho ho ho. What would you kids like for Christmas? New bikes? A puppy?

CINDI

New bikes would be nice, but not this year, Santa.

BEN

We want something for our mom.

Kyle appears stunned. So do his elves. Ben looks over at Jennifer, who takes a picture of them with her phone.

BEN  
That's her over there.

Kyle gazes at Jennifer with an instant attraction.

CINDI  
Our dad died when I was just a  
baby.

BEN  
Mom's so sad all the time. She  
hasn't even dated any.

The elves grow emotional.

ELVES  
Awww.

Kyle struggles to find words in response.

KYLE  
I don't really...

CINDI  
Please, Santa? You can do anything.

BEN  
We don't care if we don't get any  
gifts this year. Just please make  
our mom happy again.

Kyle needs to swallow the lump in his throat before he can  
speak.

KYLE  
I'll see what I can do.

The kids light up happily.

CINDI  
Thank you, Santa.

BEN  
Thanks.

Elf #1 helps the kids down from Santa's lap. Elf #2 hands  
each a candy cane.

CINDI  
Bye, Santa.

BEN  
Bye!

Elf #1 escorts the kids to the exit, where Jennifer meets them. She walks her kids out of the area.

Elf #2 and Kyle watch sadly.

ELF #2

You shouldn't have promised something you can't deliver.

KYLE

You saw those little faces. And I didn't promise. I said I'd see what I could do.

ELF #2

To a little kid, it's the same thing.

Kyle stares silently at Jennifer and the kids as they move further away.

CENTER COURT

Outside the village, Jennifer walks away with the kids by her side.

JENNIFER

Are you sure you don't want to tell me what you asked for?

BEN

We're sure.

CINDI

And stop asking. You'll end up on Santa's naughty list.

Jennifer giggles. She does her best to stop herself.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

A three-story building downtown with several companies residing inside.

INT. H&C MEDICAL - JENNIFER'S OFFICE - DAY - SAME

A nice office on the second floor of the office building. Seated at her desk with the door open, Jennifer works diligently on her computer.

PATTY (50s) comes to the door.

PATTY

Mr. Howard wants to see everyone in the lobby.

JENNIFER

Must be our Christmas bonuses.

Jennifer joins Patty in the doorway.

JENNIFER

I've held off shopping until I get that cash.

PATTY

Haven't we all.

They leave the office together.

IN THE LOBBY

Several EMPLOYEES wait together in the nice area. Patty and Jennifer join them. Their boss, GRANT HOWARD (50s), strides into the room with confidence. He holds a stack of envelopes in his hands, one for each employee, and stands before the group.

MR. HOWARD

Good afternoon, everyone.

Mr. Howard waits for a response. Silence.

MR. HOWARD

As you know, we are only a few weeks away from Christmas. I love seeing the adoring faces of my employees each year at this time.

His employees stare at him with very little reaction.

MR. HOWARD

Unfortunately, there is some bad news this year to go along with the good. H&C Medical has been bought by a Japanese company.

Grumbles of complaint come from the employees as they speak to each other about the news.

MR. HOWARD

I know what you're thinking. "Is my job safe?" For most of you, yes.

(MORE)

MR. HOWARD (CONT'D)

However, the new owners want to downsize somewhat so a few of you will be receiving coal in your stocking.

Mr. Howard chuckles at his own humor. It fails to impress anyone else. He hands out the envelopes to the names listed on each one.

MR. HOWARD

If you receive a pink slip, you have my deepest sympathies. Please gather your belongings and head to the unemployment office.

Mr. Howard hands an envelope to Patty, then one to Jennifer. A couple more and he's finished.

MR. HOWARD

To those of you who receive your bonus, congratulations on staying part of the H&C Medical family... at least until the new owners change the name. Merry Christmas.

Mr. Howard goes to his office down the hall.

His employees tear into their envelopes. Most have a bonus check while a few remove a pink slip and instantly sour. A man who receives a pink slip complains...

MAN

Son-of-a-bitch. After all the years I have given this company.

The man angrily storms off to his office.

Patty cautiously opens her envelope while Jennifer watches, sealed envelope still in her hand. A smile of relief appears on Patty's face when she removes a check.

PATTY

It's even bigger than last year's.

Jennifer's hands tremble as she opens her envelope. She reaches in and pulls a pink slip out. Her face turns pale.

PATTY

I'm so sorry.

JENNIFER

What am I going to do? My kids' Christmas is ruined.



PATTY  
They'll understand.

Jennifer battles tears. She marches off to...

MR. HOWARD'S OFFICE

Very swanky and much larger than Jennifer's office. The door stands open. Mr. Howard talks on his desk phone.

MR. HOWARD  
(into phone)  
I just broke it to them... Nah, I didn't stick around to see what happened.

Jennifer comes to the doorway and pauses there to watch Mr. Howard. He notices her.

MR. HOWARD  
(into phone)  
I'll call you back.

Mr. Howard hangs up. He pulls a folder out of his drawer and tries to look busy with it while he obviously isn't.

MR. HOWARD  
Jennifer, what can I do for you?

Jennifer walks up to the desk, her envelope still in her hand.

JENNIFER  
I'm a single mom providing for two children and you fire me right before Christmas?

MR. HOWARD  
You aren't fired. It's more of a layoff.

JENNIFER  
With no chance of returning.

MR. HOWARD  
Under new management, I had to eliminate some jobs and combine others. Yours just happened to be expendable.

JENNIFER  
But I need this job.

MR. HOWARD

I'm really sorry but there's nothing I can do. I suggest you stop by the unemployment office on your way home so you can start receiving benefits ASAP.

Jennifer teeters on the brink of a breakdown. Sorrow in her eyes, she turns and exits. Mr. Howard looks up, slightly troubled.

EXT. PARKER HOUSE - DAY

Brenda parks her car in the driveway. She gets out, along with Ben and Cindi toting their backpacks. The kids race to the door. Brenda lags behind as she pulls a house key out of her purse.

INT. PARKER HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Jennifer is seated on the couch, drowning her misery with a cup of coffee.

Brenda opens the door and enters with the kids.

BEN

Mom's home!

Ben and Cindi drop their packs. They race to Jennifer and hug her.

JENNIFER

How was school?

CINDI

Andy Brown ate a stink bug. Yuck.

BEN

Grandma got us ice cream!

CINDI

You weren't supposed to tell her.

Brenda steps forward.

BRENDA

Why don't you two go upstairs and play until dinner's ready?

CINDI

Okay.

The kids remove their coats and hang them up. Then they grab their backpacks and go upstairs.

Brenda sits next to Jennifer and looks at her daughter-in-law with concern.

BRENDA

Are you going to tell me why you wanted me to pick the kids up from school today?

Jennifer takes a sip of her coffee.

JENNIFER

I figured you'd want to spend time with your grandkids.

BRENDA

Of course I do, but something else is going on here. Tell me.

Jennifer has a difficult time meeting Brenda's eyes.

JENNIFER

I got let go today.

BRENDA

Your job? Oh, my.

JENNIFER

A new company took over and considered me expendable.

Brenda reaches over and grips Jennifer's hand.

BRENDA

I'm sure something will come along for you.

JENNIFER

I was barely paying the bills as it was. What am I going to do now?

BRENDA

Well, I could lend you some money.

JENNIFER

No, you need that to live on. I'll have to figure something out.

The house phone on the end table rings. Jennifer grabs the handset and checks the display.

JENNIFER

I don't recognize the number.

BRENDA  
Probably just a telemarketer.

Jennifer answers the call anyway.

JENNIFER  
(into phone)  
Hello?... This is she... Really?...  
Sure, I can be there in half an  
hour. Bye.

Jennifer looks puzzled as she hangs up.

BRENDA  
What was that about?

JENNIFER  
That was someone named Kyle  
Williams from Bridwell Advertising.  
He said I won a prize package from  
some contest and wants to meet me  
at Mario's to sign the paperwork.

BRENDA  
I don't know, Jennifer. That sounds  
awful suspicious to me.

JENNIFER  
If he was a creep, I doubt he'd  
want to meet in a public place.

Jennifer puts the phone back and gets up with her coffee.  
Ducks into the kitchen.

JENNIFER (O.S.)  
I'll be extra careful.

Jennifer returns with her purse and puts on her coat from the  
rack.

JENNIFER  
Can you stay a little while until I  
get back?

BRENDA  
Of course.

Jennifer exits through the front door. Brenda watches with  
concern.

EXT. MARIO'S - DAY

A quaint little cafe with an outside seating area.

INT. MARIO'S - DAY - SAME

Half full of CUSTOMERS eating dinner. Jennifer enters and pauses near the door to scan the cafe. Kyle approaches her.

KYLE  
Miss Parker?

JENNIFER  
Mrs. Parker. Are you Mr. Williams?

KYLE  
Kyle. Let's have a seat and discuss why you're here.

Kyle leads the way to a vacant table for two. They remove their coats and sit down.

KYLE  
As I stated on the phone, you were chosen as a winner of our VIP package from my firm.

JENNIFER  
I really don't remember entering any contests.

A WAITRESS comes over and lays a menu before each.

WAITRESS  
My name is Marla and I'll be serving you today. Can I get you something to drink?

KYLE  
Coffee, cream and sugar.

WAITRESS  
(to Jennifer)  
And for you?

Jennifer looks somewhat ashamed.

JENNIFER  
A glass of water, please.

The waitress steps away.

KYLE  
You probably just don't remember. My firm sometimes sets up those things at malls where you fill out an entry and drop it in a jar.

Kyle opens his menu and studies it.

KYLE  
Their lasagna is excellent here.

Kyle looks up and notices Jennifer looking everywhere but at her menu.

KYLE  
Aren't you going to order something?

JENNIFER  
I'm not hungry.

KYLE  
This is part of your prize package.  
Please, order whatever you want.

Jennifer's eyes narrow.

JENNIFER  
I'm no fool, Mr. Williams. A dinner date is never part of any prize package.

Jennifer gets up and grabs her coat, ready to put it on.

KYLE  
Whoa there, Mrs. Parker. You have the wrong impression.

JENNIFER  
Do I?

KYLE  
Yes, you do. Now please sit down and let me explain.

Jennifer thinks a moment and re-takes her seat.

KYLE  
As an employee of an advertising firm, it's part of my job to make sure my employer is known around town. That's great for business. That's why we hold these drawings now and then.

Jennifer calms.

JENNIFER  
I guess that makes sense.

KYLE

Figure out what you want to eat and  
I'll tell you about your prizes.

Jennifer opens her menu and studies it. The waitress returns  
with their drinks.

WAITRESS

Are you ready to order?

KYLE

Yes.  
(to Jennifer)  
Ladies first.

JENNIFER

I'll have the Italian sub with  
chips.

KYLE

That sounds good. I'll have that  
also.

The waitress collects their menus and steps away. Kyle  
focuses on Jennifer.

KYLE

Your prize package includes dinner  
for four here, season passes for  
four next year to Kings Point  
Amusement Park, four tickets to  
Holiday on Ice this coming weekend,  
ice skating passes, and four passes  
to Liberty Cinemas good for the  
entire month of December. Do you  
have kids?

JENNIFER

Two.

KYLE

Then the prize package is perfect  
for your family.

JENNIFER

Actually, there's only three of us.  
My husband died a few years ago.

KYLE

I'm very sorry to hear that. You  
can still take the kids. They'll  
love it.

(joking)

(MORE)

KYLE (CONT'D)  
I never get tired of Holiday on  
Ice.

Jennifer loses out to a smile.

KYLE  
I knew there was a smile hidden in  
there somewhere.

JENNIFER  
This is a little awkward for me. I  
haven't dined with a man since my  
hus...

Jennifer stops herself and saddens.

KYLE  
You're doing great.

Kyle reaches into his inner coat pocket and pulls out an  
envelope, along with a release form and pen.

KYLE  
This is a standard release form.

Kyle lays the form before Jennifer.

KYLE  
It just says that my firm isn't  
responsible for any accidents or  
injuries caused during any of your  
excursions.

Jennifer glances at the legal paper. Kyle lays the pen before  
her. She signs the release form with it and slides both back  
to Kyle, who sticks them into his pocket. Then he pushes the  
envelope over to Jennifer.

KYLE  
Here are your tickets and passes.  
My business card is inside in case  
you need to reach me.

JENNIFER  
Thanks. This makes my day a little  
brighter.

KYLE  
Oh?

JENNIFER  
I don't know why I'm telling you  
this, but I lost my job today.



KYLE

I'm so sorry to hear that.

JENNIFER

I haven't even started shopping for my kids. Now I can't afford to if I want to pay my bills.

Kyle stares at Jennifer sadly.

EXT. KYLE'S HOUSE - DAY

A nice ranch in a middle-class neighborhood. Kyle parks his car in the driveway, next to another car already present. He gives the other car a sharp look as he walks to the front door.

INT. KYLE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Kyle enters and lays the keys on a table, next to a purse, as he closes the door. A very feminine voice comes from the kitchen's direction.

AMBER (O.S.)

Kyle?

Kyle reluctantly strides into the...

KITCHEN

AMBER GREENE (25), sultry even in her jeans and t-shirt, fries chicken in a skillet.

AMBER

I thought I'd surprise you with dinner.

Kyle grabs a single bottle of juice from the refrigerator. There are many inside.

KYLE

I just ate.

Kyle opens the juice and drinks some.

AMBER

And you couldn't give me the heads up?

KYLE

I didn't expect to see you today.

Amber places the cooked chicken on a plate and turns off the burner. She goes to Kyle.

AMBER  
That's why it's a surprise.

Kyle avoids eye contact. Amber studies his face.

AMBER  
Okay, what's going on?

KYLE  
Nothing.

Kyle sits at the counter. Amber takes a seat next to him.

AMBER  
Don't lie to me, Kyle.

KYLE  
I'm under a lot of pressure at  
work.

Amber stands behind Kyle.

AMBER  
I know how to fix that.

Amber massages Kyle's shoulders. Kyle jumps up with his  
juice.

KYLE  
Not now, Amber.

Kyle leaves the room. Amber stares after him for a moment  
before following.

LIVING ROOM

Kyle sits down on the couch. Amber stands before him.

AMBER  
What's your problem?

KYLE  
I wish you wouldn't come over  
unannounced.

Amber's jaw drops.

AMBER  
You never complained before.

KYLE  
Well, I'm complaining now.

AMBER

Fine.

Amber grabs her coat from a coat rack and puts it on. Then she picks up her purse and opens the door.

AMBER

You won't have to worry about me anymore.

Amber starts to leave.

KYLE

You still have my key.

Amber turns back and pulls a set of keys out of her pocket. Removes one of the keys and slams it down to the table. Closes the door hard behind her.

Kyle takes a drink of his juice.

EXT. PARKER HOUSE - NIGHT

The neighborhood is quiet. A light burns in an upstairs window.

INT. PARKER HOUSE - CINDI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - SAME

Cindi is settled into bed. Ben, in his pjs, sits next to Jennifer on the bed. Jennifer looks troubled.

JENNIFER

I'm afraid there might not be many gifts this Christmas since I'm out of work.

CINDI

Santa brings the gifts, Mom. You know that.

JENNIFER

Right.

BEN

Besides, we don't need any new toys.

CINDI

We have plenty.

Jennifer's eyes tear up.

JENNIFER

How did I get so lucky to be your  
mom?

Cindi shrugs.

CINDI

I don't know.

Jennifer smiles at her little girl.

JENNIFER

Well, there might not be many  
gifts, but this is going to be a  
fun month because of that prize  
package I won. We're going to  
Holiday on Ice this Saturday.

Both kids light up excitedly.

CINDI

Yay!

JENNIFER

And we'll go to the movies and ice  
skating.

BEN

We've never been ice skating  
before.

JENNIFER

I used to go with your dad when we  
were dating. It's pretty easy.

Jennifer grows sad. She stands.

JENNIFER

Come on, Ben.

Ben gives his sister a long look as he joins Jennifer. They  
move to the doorway. Jennifer looks back at Cindi.

JENNIFER

Good night, sweetie.

Jennifer turns the light off. She closes the door.

Cindi clutches her covers.

IN THE HALL

Jennifer walks Ben to his bedroom doorway.

BEN

Mom, it's okay to miss Dad, but you  
deserve to be happy.

Jennifer brushes the hair back from Ben's face with her hand.

JENNIFER

I AM happy, Ben. I have two  
wonderful children that are a part  
of the man I was blessed to love.

BEN

But you need more than Cindi and  
me.

JENNIFER

I have Grandma and Uncle Jason, so  
stop worrying and get to bed.

Ben goes inside and climbs into bed. Jennifer closes his door  
and heads to her room with a saddened look.

EXT. ARENA - MORNING

The lot is nearly full of cars with more trickling in. A  
large electronic sign reads "Holiday on Ice."

INT. ARENA - MORNING - SAME

FAMILIES take their seats for the upcoming show. The large  
stage is a skating rink.

Jennifer leads Ben and Cindi to their front row seats. They  
carry refreshments.

BEN

I can't believe we got front row  
seats!

They sit down, leaving one vacant seat next to Jennifer. Kyle  
walks up to the Parkers.

KYLE

Good afternoon.

JENNIFER

Mr. Williams, what are you doing  
here?

KYLE

My boss wanted me to check in on  
our ambassadors.

JENNIFER

Thank you for the wonderful seats.  
This is Ben and Cindi. Kids, this  
is Mr. Williams. His agency gave us  
the tickets.

BEN

Hello.

CINDI

Hi.

KYLE

It's wonderful to meet you both.

JENNIFER

Are you going to stay for the show?

KYLE

I tried to get a ticket but they  
were sold out. Have fun.

Kyle starts to walk away.

BEN

(to Jennifer)

We have an extra seat.

JENNIFER

Mr. Williams?

Kyle turns to look back.

JENNIFER

Since we have a seat we're not  
using, why don't you join us?

KYLE

I don't want to impose.

JENNIFER

You aren't.

KYLE

All right then.

Kyle sits down next to Jennifer. Cindi leans in to Jennifer  
and speaks quietly...

CINDI

He's cute.

Jennifer is instantly embarrassed. Kyle grins.

JENNIFER

Shhh.

Jennifer turns to Kyle uneasily and finds him fighting to make the smirk disappear. She grins.

EXT. ARENA - MORNING - LATER

People file out. Traffic jams the exits.

Kyle, Jennifer, Ben, and Cindi walk out together. The kids each carry a stuffed animal from the show.

JENNIFER

You didn't have to buy the kids anything.

KYLE

Are you kidding? It's torture for a kid to go to Holiday on Ice and not leave with a souvenir.

JENNIFER

Sounds like you speak from experience.

KYLE

Unfortunately.

They walk into the...

PARKING LOT

Jennifer leads the way to her car. The kids get into the back seat from the driver's side and leave the door open. Jennifer turns to Kyle.

JENNIFER

Thank you for a wonderful morning.

KYLE

It was my pleasure.

BEN

We're going ice skating tonight.  
Why don't you come with us?

Jennifer gives Ben a shocked look. She turns to Kyle with an embarrassed smirk.

JENNIFER

I'm sorry.

KYLE

Don't be. You wouldn't want to see me on ice. I'm about as graceful as an elephant.

JENNIFER

Well, now I have to invite you. That's a sight I can't pass on.

KYLE

Don't say I didn't warn you.

JENNIFER

We plan to be at the rink by 7 if you'd like to join us.

KYLE

See you then.

The two exchange a flirtatious smile. Ben and Cindi watch amusingly. Jennifer notices and closes the door. She gets in behind the wheel. Starts the car and backs out of her parking spot.

Kyle steps back and watches as the car drives away toward the nearest exit. He smiles to himself.

EXT. SKATING RINK - NIGHT

A large complex highlighting "Ice Skating" on a flashy sign. Numerous cars are parked in the lot.

INT. SKATING RINK - NIGHT - SAME

A few dozen SKATERS glide across the ice, having a great time. Music plays over speakers.

Jennifer and the kids sit together on a bench just outside the rink. Ben puts his own ice skates on while Jennifer secures Cindi's skates on her little feet. Jennifer finishes and puts on her skates.

CINDI

Let's go!

Cindi hurries to stand. She takes a step toward the ice but Jennifer catches her by the shirt.

JENNIFER

You wait for me.

Cindi sits back down with a sigh.



CINDI  
But you take too long.

JENNIFER  
Since when are we in a hurry?

Kyle carries a pair of ice skates over to them.

KYLE  
Good evening, Parker family.

Kyle looks out to the skaters with great unease.

KYLE  
I think I'll just be a spectator  
tonight.

JENNIFER  
Oh no you don't. The kids and I  
have never seen an elephant skate  
before.

Ben and Cindi laugh.

BEN  
(to kids)  
Funny.  
(to Jennifer)  
They're a real riot.

Kyle sits down and exchanges his shoes for the skates.

JENNIFER  
I take it this isn't your first  
rodeo.

CINDI  
We're not at a rodeo, Mom.

JENNIFER  
I know that, Cynthia.

CINDI  
Then why did you say we were?

Jennifer smiles at Kyle.

JENNIFER  
One of the many joys of having  
children.

KYLE

I tried ice skating once at a high school party. Let's just say I was known from then on as "Ice Boy."

JENNIFER

Ouch.

KYLE

That could happen here again, you know.

JENNIFER

Don't worry. I'll beat up the bullies for you.

Kyle ties his skates. Jennifer and the kids stand.

BEN

It's not that hard.

KYLE

That's what I thought once, too.

Jennifer extends her hand to Kyle.

JENNIFER

Come on.

Kyle takes Jennifer's hand and goes to stand. He wobbles but she catches him.

JENNIFER

All it takes is a little balance.

Kyle focuses and steadies himself quite well.

KYLE

That ice is out to get me.

JENNIFER

I'll help you.

Ben and Cindi lead the way onto the...

RINK

They take it easy. Once they step on the ice, they hold onto the wall rail.

CINDI

Come on, Mr. Williams!

Cindi and Ben stay near the rail as they skate away cautiously.

JENNIFER  
Stay by the rail.

Jennifer helps Kyle onto the ice.

KYLE  
This isn't a good idea.

The moment both of Kyle's feet are on the ice, he goes down and takes Jennifer with him. They laugh.

KYLE  
Are you all right?

JENNIFER  
I'm fine. Now get back up.

Jennifer stands up. She lends Kyle a hand but he's very wobbly. He makes it to his feet and grabs the rail in a death grip.

KYLE  
I think I'll just stand here.

JENNIFER  
Stop being a baby.

Jennifer steps away backward.

JENNIFER  
Hold onto the rail, for now, and walk this way.

Keeping his hold on the rail, Kyle glides toward Jennifer, using baby steps.

JENNIFER  
See? That's not so bad.

KYLE  
It's terrifying.

Jennifer backs a little further away and holds out her hands.

JENNIFER  
Come to me.

KYLE  
No way.

JENNIFER  
Mr. Williams...

KYLE  
It's Kyle.

JENNIFER  
All right, Kyle. You can do this.

Kyle reluctantly lets go of the rail. While he is still terrified, he makes awkward steps toward Jennifer and locks hands with her. He beams with pride.

KYLE  
I did it.

JENNIFER  
Of course you did. You're not going to let a 6-year-old show you up, are you?

KYLE  
Maybe.

Jennifer turns forward. Kyle teeters with her movements.

JENNIFER  
Relax. I've got you.

Kyle grabs Jennifer's arm. She starts moving on the ice, taking Kyle with her. While Kyle appears very nervous, he manages to remain on his feet. The two laugh like two teens on a date.

INT. PARKER HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The interior lights are off. Jennifer opens the door and switches the overhead light on. She enters with Ben and Cindi.

BEN  
That was so much fun.

CINDI  
Can we do it again?

JENNIFER  
We'll see. Go get ready for bed.

Ben and Cindi hang up their coats and race upstairs. Jennifer removes her coat. Ben descends the steps enough to peep over at Jennifer.

BEN  
I really like Mr. Williams.

Jennifer looks back. Cindi pops up by Ben.

CINDI  
Me, too.

JENNIFER  
Okay, off to bed.

The kids giggle as they dart back up the steps. Jennifer shakes her head amusingly.

INT. PARKER HOUSE - MAIN BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jennifer's phone lies on the nightstand, next to a framed picture of Steve and her. In her pajamas, Jennifer leaves the bathroom and turns off the light inside. She slips into bed.

Her phone rings. Jennifer grabs it and checks the display. Still looks confused.

JENNIFER  
(into phone)  
Hello?

KYLE (ON PHONE)  
I hope I didn't wake you.

Jennifer cracks a smile.

JENNIFER  
No, I just got into bed.

INT. KYLE'S HOUSE - MAIN BEDROOM - NIGHT - SAME

Kyle lies in bed with his cell phone to his ear.

KYLE  
Me, too. I knew we had a lot in  
common.

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

It's Jennifer's turn to smile.

JENNIFER  
What can I do for you, Mr... Kyle?

KYLE  
I just wanted to tell you that I  
had a wonderful time tonight with  
you and the kids.

JENNIFER  
We had a blast, too.

KYLE  
Good.

Kyle takes a long moment, wanting to say something he struggles with.

KYLE  
I hope this doesn't come across the wrong way, but can I take you to dinner tomorrow?

The question blindsides Jennifer.

JENNIFER  
Oh, well I'm sure the kids would love it...

KYLE  
I enjoy spending time with them, but I thought maybe we could go this one alone.

Jennifer freezes.

KYLE  
Was that too presumptuous?

JENNIFER  
No, it's just that I don't think I'm ready.

KYLE  
We don't have to call it a date. It's just two friends going out to get a bite. I'll be a perfect gentleman, I promise.

Jennifer remains silent as she ponders.

KYLE  
If I have overstepped my boundaries...

JENNIFER  
You haven't. Any woman would be lucky to score a date with you.

KYLE  
I don't agree, but if I did, that would make you a fool for turning me down, now wouldn't it?

Jennifer thinks another moment before a smile crosses her face.

JENNIFER

Would you like to pick me up at 6?

KYLE

Can we make it 7? I have some work to catch up on.

JENNIFER

Perfect. Let me give you the address...

KYLE

I already have it from the contest. I'll see you tomorrow at 7.

JENNIFER

Bye.

Jennifer hangs up, nearly looking giddy, and lays her phone aside. She turns to the photo and saddens as she picks it up. Jennifer adoringly touches Steve's face. Then she returns the picture to its spot and settles into bed, eyes on the photo.

INT. MALL - SANTA'S VILLAGE - DAY

Kyle is seated on the sleigh in his Santa costume. There's something different about him. He plays the role with enthusiasm.

Elf #1 leads a LITTLE BOY (4) over and places him on Kyle's knee.

KYLE

Ho ho ho. What can Santa bring you for Christmas?

The little boy look up shyly.

LITTLE BOY

I'd really like to have a bike.

KYLE

Santa will put in a good word with his elves.

The elves watch Kyle's performance with smiles.

EXT. PARKER HOUSE - DUSK

A quiet, cool evening in the neighborhood.

INT. PARKER HOUSE - MAIN BEDROOM - DUSK - SAME

Jennifer leaves her walk-in closet, wearing a nice dress. She goes to her dresser with a mirror and removes a pair of earrings from her jewelry box. Puts them in.

As she studies her reflection, her eyes lower to the locket's chain peeking out from her top. The locket is hidden within her cleavage. She pulls it out and studies it in her hand.

After a few moments of contemplation, she removes the necklace and places it inside her jewelry box.

INT. PARKER HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DUSK

Seated on the floor, Ben and Cindi play with building blocks on the coffee table. The doorbell rings. Ben jumps up and opens the door to Brenda.

BRENDA

There's the handsomest grandson in the world.

BEN

(embarrassed)  
Grandma.

Brenda enters. She spots Cindi.

BRENDA

And there's Grandma's adorable granddaughter.

CINDI

Do you want to build something with us?

BRENDA

I will in a bit. Where's your mom?

BEN

Getting ready for her date.

Ben returns to Cindi and continues building.

BRENDA

A date? I didn't know she was seeing anyone.

CINDI

It's just Kyle.



BRENDA  
The man who gave her the prize  
package?

CINDI  
Uh-huh. We like him a lot.

FOOTSTEPS approach. Brenda turns to find Jennifer walking  
down the steps, carrying a purse that matches her dress.  
She's a vision.

JENNIFER  
How do I look?

CINDI  
You're the prettiest mom in the  
world.

JENNIFER  
Thank you, sweetie.

BRENDA  
I thought you were going out with  
friends.

JENNIFER  
I am... sort of.

BRENDA  
Don't you find it a little  
suspicious how this man entered  
your life?

Jennifer's face tenses.

JENNIFER  
(quietly)  
Not in front of the kids.

The doorbell rings. Jennifer lays her purse aside and opens  
the door to Kyle. He drinks in Jennifer's beauty.

KYLE  
(joking)  
You clean up real nice.

JENNIFER  
So do you. Come in.

Kyle steps inside.

JENNIFER  
Kyle, this is Brenda, my mother-in-  
law and babysitter for the evening.

Kyle extends his hand to Brenda.

KYLE  
Nice to meet you, ma'am.

Brenda eyes Kyle suspiciously as she shakes his hand.  
Jennifer grabs her coat from the rack.

JENNIFER  
We should probably get going.

Jennifer starts to put on her coat. Kyle takes it from her  
and assists. Jennifer grins at him.

JENNIFER  
Thanks.

KYLE  
My pleasure.

Jennifer goes to the kids.

JENNIFER  
Be good for Grandma.

BEN  
We will.

Cindi jumps up and hugs Jennifer around the waist.

CINDI  
Have fun.

Jennifer grabs her purse. Kyle opens the door and they step  
out. As soon as the door closes, Brenda approaches the kids  
and sits down on the couch.

BRENDA  
What can you two tell me about  
Kyle?

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A HOSTESS shows Kyle and Jennifer to a table for two. Kyle  
pulls out a chair for Jennifer. She sits down. Kyle takes the  
other seat.

HOSTESS  
Your waiter will be with you  
momentarily.

KYLE  
Thanks.

The hostess returns to her station.

JENNIFER  
Are you always such a gentleman?

KYLE  
The honest truth? No. It depends on  
who I'm with.

JENNIFER  
Then I must be lucky.

KYLE  
Or deserving.

They exchange a smile. A WAITER walks over and lays a menu  
before each.

WAITER  
Good evening. Can I start you off  
with something to drink?

JENNIFER  
I'll have a water.

KYLE  
Same here.

The waiter steps away. They study their menus. Jennifer  
glances over the top of her menu and stares at Kyle fondly.

INT. PARKER HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Brenda is on the couch, sitting before a board game set up on  
the coffee table. Ben sits on the floor to play. Cindi looks  
out the window.

Brenda rolls the dice and moves her token the number of  
spaces.

BRENDA  
It's your turn, Cindi.

Cindi continues staring out the window.

CINDI  
Shouldn't they be back by now?

BRENDA  
They probably went somewhere after  
dinner.

Approaching headlights flash across Cindi.

CINDI  
They're here!

Brenda hurries over to Cindi and pulls her back from the window.

BRENDA  
Don't let them see you watching.

BEN  
Yeah, that's creepy.

Brenda seats Cindi at the coffee table and takes her seat on the couch. Cindi rolls the dice.

EXT. PARKER HOUSE - NIGHT - SAME

Kyle parks his car in the driveway.

INT. KYLE'S CAR - PARKED - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Kyle puts the car into park and turns off the headlights. He gazes at Jennifer sitting next to him.

KYLE  
I had fun tonight.

JENNIFER  
Ditto.  
(beat)  
You're really great with kids. Have you ever thought you might want one?

KYLE  
Kids? No, not really. But I'm starting to change my mind.

They gaze into each other's eyes and slowly move in for a kiss. Moments after their lips meet, Jennifer pulls back with a look of shock.

KYLE  
Was it that bad?

JENNIFER  
No, I just haven't kissed a man since Steve.

KYLE  
I understand how hard that must...

Jennifer kisses Kyle hard. He surrenders.

INT. PARKER HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - LATER

Brenda and the kids continue playing their game. Jennifer opens the door and enters. She removes her coat.

CINDI  
You're home!

Cindi races to hug Jennifer.

JENNIFER  
What about you, Ben?

BEN  
I'm not a baby.

Brenda goes to Jennifer.

BRENDA  
It's a phase.

Jennifer hangs her coat up with her purse.

JENNIFER  
Go get ready for bed, kiddos.

BEN  
But it's too early.

JENNIFER  
Kyle's picking us up in the morning  
for a surprise.

Ben jumps up and runs over to Jennifer.

BEN  
Surprise? What kind?

JENNIFER  
He wouldn't tell me but he said you  
kids would love it.

BEN  
Come on, Cindi!

Thunderous footsteps as both kids race upstairs. Jennifer goes to sit on the couch and starts putting the board game away. Brenda gives her a hand.

BRENDA  
So, how did your date go?

JENNIFER  
I wouldn't exactly call it a date.

BRENDA

Then what would you call it?

Jennifer looks at her mother-in-law with annoyance.

JENNIFER

I'd call it none of your business.

Jennifer returns to the game. Brenda stares at her with a glimmer of hurt.

BRENDA

I know I kind of suggested it's time to move on, but that doesn't mean you should date the first man who comes along.

JENNIFER

I happen to like Kyle.

BRENDA

What do you really know about him?

JENNIFER

More than you think.

Brenda looks at the front of Jennifer's blouse. No necklace visible.

BRENDA

You're not wearing the necklace Steve got you? I haven't seen you without it since the night you opened it.

JENNIFER

I felt like wearing it was holding me back.

BRENDA

Jen...

Jennifer finishes with the board game and stands.

JENNIFER

We have an early day tomorrow.

Brenda stands.

BRENDA

Just be careful, honey. This isn't only about you.

Brenda puts her coat on and grabs her purse. She gives Jennifer one last look as she steps out. The door closes.

Jennifer turns off the light and heads upstairs with the board game.

EXT. ROAD - MORNING

Kyle's car drives along a rural route.

CINDI (O.S.)  
Can't you tell us where we're  
going?

INT./EXT. KYLE'S CAR - DRIVING - MORNING - SAME

Cindi and Ben are fastened into the back seats, dressed extra warmly with heavy coats and hats. Their gloves lie between them.

In the front, Kyle and Jennifer are also dressed for the cold.

KYLE  
It wouldn't be a surprise if I did.

Jennifer indicates a very small amount with her fingers.

JENNIFER  
Couldn't you give us a tiny clue?

KYLE  
You're even worse than the kids.  
No, no clue. You'll just have to  
wait.

Jennifer looks back at the kids and smiles. They smile back.

The car zips along the scenic route. Mountains are ahead.

EXT. SKI RESORT - MORNING

The resort uses fake snow to entertain guests. One of two hills is meant for skiers. The other is for inner tubing. A rope constantly runs on each slope to help pull participants back to the top after they slide to the bottom. Many FAMILIES already enjoy the slopes.

PARKING LOT

Kyle's car pulls in. The kids are the first out, holding their gloves and marveling at the scenery.

BEN

Wow.

Kyle and Jennifer join the kids. Jennifer also takes in the sight.

JENNIFER

I've heard about this place but I never thought about going.

KYLE

It's one of my favorite spots for winter fun.

Kyle opens the trunk and removes a couple of deflated inner tubes. He also has an air pump that he uses to put air in them.

BEN

We're going tubing?

KYLE

You bet we are, but I'm afraid we'll need to be done by noon. I have to work later.

Jennifer watches Kyle fondly.

EXT. SKI RESORT - TOP OF TUBING HILL - MORNING

Tubes inflated, Kyle positions both at the top.

KYLE

Cindi, you ride with your mom. Ben, you'll go with me.

Jennifer takes an uneasy look down the hill.

JENNIFER

I'm not sure about this.

Kyle holds her inner tube for her.

KYLE

You'll have a blast. Go ahead and get in.

Jennifer sits in the tube with her legs hanging over. Kyle lifts Cindi and places her into Jennifer's lap.

KYLE

Just hold on tight and let the tube do the work.



The girls grab the handles tightly. Kyle pushes them off. They yell excitedly as the tube speeds down the hill.

BEN

Our turn!

Kyle settles into the other tube. Ben climbs on top, sitting slightly to the side. Kyle rocks the tube closer and closer to the edge. It finally slides off. Ben laughs deliriously.

AT THE BOTTOM

Jennifer and Cindi come to a stop.

CINDI

Again!

Cindi hops out. Jennifer has a little more difficulty.

JENNIFER

I think we should wait for the boys.

Kyle's tube slides to a stop near them. Ben and he climb out.

BEN

That was awesome!

NEARBY

Amber arrives with a few FRIENDS. Each carries a set of skis. She looks over and spots Kyle being chummy with Jennifer. They look like a happy couple. Amber stares daggers through them.

AT THE BOTTOM

Ben notices a refreshments window near them.

BEN

Could we get hot chocolate?

Jennifer looks uneasy with the question.

JENNIFER

I don't think...

KYLE

I don't see why not.

The group starts for the window, Kyle and Jennifer dragging their tubes along. Jennifer leans in to Kyle.

JENNIFER  
(whispering)  
I don't have any cash on me.

KYLE  
(whispering)  
You don't need it.

AMBER (O.S.)  
Hello, Kyle.

Kyle looks back to find Amber stepping up to his group. He pulls a ten from his wallet and hands it to Ben.

KYLE  
Go ahead and get some hot chocolate  
for you and Cindi.

The kids go join the line at the window. Jennifer sticks close to Kyle's side as both stare at Amber.

AMBER  
I guess this must be the tramp you  
dumped me for.

KYLE  
Amber...

JENNIFER  
Who exactly are you?

AMBER  
I guess Kyle didn't mention me. No  
surprise there. He probably doesn't  
remember my name. Are you sure he  
knows yours?

KYLE  
That's enough.

The girls are focused on their altercation.

JENNIFER  
Oh, he knows my name. He also knows  
the names of my kids.

AMBER  
Kids, huh? Just so you know, he  
hates kids. He's probably  
pretending to like yours to get in  
your bed.

JENNIFER  
How dare you.

Kyle takes Jennifer by the arm and starts to lead her to the refreshments window.

KYLE  
Just ignore her.

AMBER  
After he gets what he wants, he'll  
dump you. He always does.

Jennifer stops Kyle out of earshot of the kids and Amber.

JENNIFER  
Who was that?

KYLE  
My ex. She didn't take our breakup  
well.

JENNIFER  
Was that before or after we met?

Kyle hesitates to give an answer. He knows he must.

KYLE  
Is that important?

JENNIFER  
Of course it's important. If you  
broke up with her for me, she has a  
reason to be upset.

KYLE  
She thought our relationship was  
more serious than it was.

JENNIFER  
And I don't want to make the same  
mistake.

Kyle grips Jennifer's hand.

KYLE  
No one can predict the future, but  
I enjoy being with you and the  
kids. If you knew me from before,  
that would shock you. You bring out  
the best in me.

Jennifer withdraws her hand.

JENNIFER  
I wish I could believe that.

Kyle looks Jennifer straight in the eye.

KYLE

You can.

Jennifer stares back in uncertainty. Ben and Cindi walk over, each with a cup of hot chocolate. Ben hands Kyle his change.

BEN

Thanks for the hot chocolate.

CINDI

It's really good.

KYLE

You're--

JENNIFER

(interrupting)

Drink up. We're leaving.

BEN

Why are we leaving? Aren't we tubing again?

KYLE

Sure--

JENNIFER

No. We're going home.

CINDI

But Mom...

JENNIFER

I said we're going home.

The kids look up at Kyle sadly. He returns the look.

EXT. PARKER HOUSE - DAY

Kyle parks in the driveway.

INT./EXT. KYLE'S CAR - PARKED - DAY - SAME

Ben and Cindi remain in their seatbelts, eyes on the adults. Jennifer barely looks at Kyle.

JENNIFER

Thanks for taking us.

Jennifer opens the door and starts to get out. Kyle catches her by the arm.

KYLE

Please don't let Amber ruin what we have.

BEN

Is Amber the lady from the tubing place?

JENNIFER

Never mind, Ben. Tell Kyle bye.

Both kids are very sad as they unfasten their seatbelts.

BEN

Bye, Kyle.

CINDI

Bye.

The kids get out and head to the porch. Jennifer forces her eyes to Kyle's.

JENNIFER

Maybe you should go make up with Amber.

Jennifer gets out and closes the door. Kyle sighs.

Jennifer joins the kids on the porch and unlocks the door for them. They enter. Jennifer looks back just in time to watch Kyle's car back out of the driveway and head down the street.

Jennifer enters the house and closes the door.

INT. PARKER HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

In her robe and slippers, Jennifer is curled up on the couch with a hot cup of tea, watching a movie on TV.

In pajamas, Cindi makes her way down the steps. She drifts over to Jennifer.

JENNIFER

Ready for bed?

CINDI

Uh-huh.

JENNIFER

Last school week before Christmas break. Where's Ben?

CINDI

He went to bed.

Jennifer sets her tea aside.

JENNIFER  
Want me to come tuck you in?

CINDI  
Nah. I can do it myself.

Jennifer grins at her daughter. She returns her focus to the TV. Cindi continues to stare at her.

CINDI  
Mom?

Cindi sits next to Jennifer.

CINDI  
What did Kyle do to make you so mad at him?

JENNIFER  
He didn't really do anything.

CINDI  
Then why aren't you speaking to him any more?

Jennifer smiles adoringly at Cindi.

JENNIFER  
It's complicated.

CINDI  
But you like him, and I can tell how much he likes you. Can't you try to work things out?

Jennifer takes a long moment to think. She brushes the hair back from Cindi's face with her hand.

JENNIFER  
I'll think about it.

CINDI  
Promise?

JENNIFER  
Promise.

Cindi flashes a happy smile.

CINDI  
Good night.

Cindi hurries to the steps and jogs up them.

JENNIFER

Good night.

Jennifer sits back with her tea. While her eyes are on the TV, her mind is obviously someplace else.

INT. KYLE'S HOUSE - MAIN BEDROOM - NIGHT

Kyle lies in bed, looking off. He appears lost without Jennifer.

INT. KYLE'S HOUSE - ENTRY - MORNING

The DOORBELL rings. Dressed for work, Kyle jogs down the steps and opens the door to Jennifer. An awkward silence follows.

JENNIFER

Hi.

KYLE

Hi.

JENNIFER

Can I come in?

KYLE

Of course.

Kyle steps aside so Jennifer can enter. He closes the door.

JENNIFER

I think I owe you an apology.

KYLE

No, you--

JENNIFER

(interrupting)

Let me finish. Things were going so well between us... maybe I was just looking for an excuse to get out.

KYLE

So why are you here now?

Jennifer forces her eyes to Kyle's.

JENNIFER

An adorable 6-year-old made me realize I might be blowing things out of proportion.

KYLE

Be sure to thank Cindi for me.

JENNIFER

Will do.

KYLE

I'm on my way out to work. Maybe I can come by after?

JENNIFER

Sure. I have nothing else on my schedule today.

KYLE

I'm sure something will come along.

JENNIFER

Maybe, but it's not going to happen before Christmas.

Jennifer looks away. Another long moment of silence.

JENNIFER

I guess I'll see you later.

Jennifer opens the door, pauses to look back at Kyle, then steps out. The door closes. Kyle stares at it in thought.

INT. BRIDWELL ADVERTISING - RECEPTION AREA - DAY

Mr. Bridwell speaks with PAUL MANNING (50s), sophisticated.

MR. BRIDWELL

I'm sure we will be able to meet your advertising needs. I'll assign Susan Turner to you. She's one of my best employees.

MR. MANNING

Excellent. Your company's reputation is unbridled.

MR. BRIDWELL

Glad to hear it.

Kyle enters for work. He sees Mr. Bridwell and goes straight to him.

KYLE

Sorry I'm late, Mr. Bridwell. I got caught in traffic.



MR. BRIDWELL

Kyle, this is Mr. Manning of New Century Pharmaceuticals. We are working to land his account. Mr. Manning, this is Kyle Williams, also one of my best employees.

Mr. Manning extends his hand.

MR. MANNING

Nice to meet you, son.

Kyle takes his hand but stares at Mr. Manning's face.

KYLE

New Century Pharmaceuticals. You have a branch nearby, don't you?

Mr. Manning ends the handshake.

MR. MANNING

That's right. In Milford Heights.

(to Mr. Bridwell)

I look forward to seeing what your employee comes up with for my company.

MR. BRIDWELL

We'll be in touch.

Mr. Manning leaves the office. Kyle watches him go. Mr. Bridwell heads toward his office. Kyle hurries after him.

KYLE

Mr. Bridwell, who are you assigning to the New Century account?

MR. BRIDWELL

I thought I'd go with Susan. You're equally as good, but she's been here a little longer, and this is a huge account.

KYLE

Let me take it.

Mr. Bridwell turns back.

MR. BRIDWELL

Why would I do that?

KYLE

I landed us the Carson account, didn't I?

MR. BRIDWELL

Well, yes...

KYLE

And the Marcon account.

MR. BRIDWELL

I already said you're a solid employee.

KYLE

I can do this one, sir. I promise I won't let you down.

Mr. Bridwell stares at Kyle as he takes a long moment to think.

MR. BRIDWELL

I hope I don't regret this, but it's yours.

Mr. Bridwell continues to his office. Kyle lights up with excitement.

KYLE

Thank you, sir!

Kyle heads straight to his office.

INT. PARKER HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jennifer stands in the open doorway, looking outside. Ben and Cindi enter after school with their backpacks. Jennifer closes the door.

JENNIFER

How was school?

The kids remove their backpacks and coats.

BEN

You ask us that everyday.

JENNIFER

Right.

CINDI

Did you talk to Kyle?

Jennifer glows as she steps further into the room with her back to the kids.

JENNIFER

Well, yes, and I have a surprise  
for you.

Cindi and Ben rush over.

CINDI

What is it?

Jennifer turns to them.

JENNIFER

Kyle's coming by after work.

The kids are even more excited than Jennifer is.

CINDI

Yay!

Cindi turns sad. Jennifer notices.

JENNIFER

Hey, what's wrong?

CINDI

Couldn't you have fixed things with  
him yesterday before we left the  
tubing place?

Jennifer pulls Cindi closer.

JENNIFER

Sorry about that. Maybe Kyle and I  
can take you back one day.

BEN

Before Christmas?

JENNIFER

I was thinking after I get a new  
job.

Cindi sulks.

CINDI

That could take forever.

Cindi looks up and finds a stunned look on her mom's face.

CINDI

Sorry, Mom.

Jennifer's cell phone lying on the coffee table rings. She  
picks it up and checks the display.

JENNIFER

It's Kyle.  
 (into phone)  
 Hey.

INT. BRIDWELL ADVERTISING - KYLE'S OFFICE - DAY - SAME

Kyle does some research on New Century Pharmaceuticals on his computer as he speaks to Jennifer on his cell phone.

KYLE

(into phone)  
 I'm afraid I won't be able to make  
 it over today.

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

The joy drains from Jennifer's face.

JENNIFER

Oh. What happened?

Cindi and Ben exchange a solemn look.

KYLE

I picked up a new account today.  
 I'll have to work really late so I  
 have something to show my client by  
 the end of the week.

JENNIFER

That's great.

Kyle senses something in Jennifer's voice and turns his attention to the phone in his hand.

KYLE

Is something wrong?

JENNIFER

Not for you, anyway. Bye.

Click. Jennifer hangs up, leaving confusion on Kyle's face.

INT. PARKER HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Jennifer slowly lays her phone down. The kids watch solemnly.

CINDI

He isn't coming over, is he?

JENNIFER

I'm afraid not.

BEN  
What about tomorrow?

JENNIFER  
(snappy)  
I don't know, Ben.

The kids stare. Jennifer realizes and softens.

JENNIFER  
Sorry. Go do your homework while I  
fix dinner.

The kids grab their backpacks and schlep up the stairs.  
Jennifer enters the kitchen.

INT. PARKER HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Jennifer finishes eating dinner with the kids.

CINDI  
Can we go watch TV?

JENNIFER  
Sure.

Ben and Cindi take their nearly empty plates to the sink and  
leave them on the counter. They exit the room.

Jennifer scrapes a few pieces of food from her plate into the  
trash and does the same with the kids' plates. She starts  
wiping each off and sticking them into the dishwasher.

A knock at the back door demands her instant attention.  
Jennifer moves closer and looks around the blinds. She opens  
the door to Kyle. He steps in. Jennifer closes the door.

JENNIFER  
Why did you come to the back door?

KYLE  
I saw the light on and hoped to  
catch you here alone.

Jennifer returns to loading the dishwasher. Kyle moves to her  
side.

JENNIFER  
I thought you had to work late.

KYLE  
I did, and I should, but I need to  
find out what's going on between  
us.

JENNIFER

I don't know. You tell me.

Kyle stops Jennifer and turns her to face him.

KYLE

I know what you're thinking, that I'm lying about working late and running around with Amber.

JENNIFER

The thought never crossed my mind.

Jennifer adds dishwashing detergent to the dishwasher and starts it.

KYLE

(disbelieving)

Really?

Jennifer avoids eye contact with Kyle for a long moment. She finally surrenders.

JENNIFER

Okay, that's exactly what I thought.

Kyle moves in closer and lightly grips Jennifer's arms.

KYLE

Well don't. I was offered a chance at this very big account today and I couldn't afford to pass on it.

JENNIFER

I don't know what's wrong with me, Kyle. Why am I acting like I belong in the movie "Fatal Attraction?"

KYLE

It's probably because you have a hard time trusting a man after losing your husband. I totally get it.

JENNIFER

Then there's those things Amber said about you.

KYLE

All true.

Surprise fills Jennifer's face.

JENNIFER

You're not even going to spin the truth?

KYLE

I've been a player. I haven't had the urge to settle down and start a family, but something's changing since I met you.

JENNIFER

That's what all players say.

KYLE

I hear that women can see right through a man's lies. Look into my eyes and tell me what you see.

Jennifer gazes into Kyle's eyes. A grin creeps across her lips.

Ben and Cindi come to the doorway. Both gasp when they see Kyle.

BEN

Kyle!

The kids rush over to Kyle, interrupting the moment.

BEN

I knew you'd come back!

Cindi takes Kyle by the hand and tugs him toward the doorway.

CINDI

Come watch TV with us.

Ben follows after them. Kyle twists to glance back at Jennifer with a pleading look. Jennifer mouths "sorry." Smiling to herself, she watches the others leave the room.

EXT. PARKER HOUSE - NIGHT

All is quiet in the neighborhood. A couple of lights burn in the Parker's upstairs windows.

KYLE (V.O.)

And the prince moved into her castle, where they married and filled the lonely halls with the laughter of their many children.

INT. PARKER HOUSE - CINDI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - SAME

Cindi lies in bed. Kyle sits next to her with a children's book. Jennifer watches from the doorway.

KYLE

The end.

Kyle closes the book.

CINDI

That's my favorite story, except for one thing.

KYLE

What's that?

CINDI

The princess is strong, protecting the prince, but then they go and get married and all she wants to do is be a mom?

Kyle glances back at Jennifer. She arches her brow, anxious for a response.

KYLE

(to Cindi)

Well, your mom is tough, isn't she?

CINDI

Yeah.

KYLE

And she chose to have you and Ben with your dad. Just because you're strong doesn't mean you can't be happy raising a family.

CINDI

I guess you're right.

KYLE

Good night.

CINDI

Good night.

Kyle returns the book to the bookshelf and turns off Cindi's lamp. He goes to join Jennifer. They step out, Jennifer closing the door.



IN THE HALL

Jennifer and Kyle face each other.

JENNIFER

You are so good with my kids.

KYLE

I think I'm more shocked than you are.

They gaze at each other lovingly.

KYLE

I guess I should go.

Kyle turns for the steps.

JENNIFER

Wait.

Jennifer makes a beeline for the...

MAIN BEDROOM

She picks up her picture with Steve and studies it. Then she gently lays it into her nightstand drawer and closes it. Heads back to the...

HALL

She walks up to Kyle and kisses him hard. Kyle melts. Kissing passionately, they make their way into the...

MAIN BEDROOM

Jennifer closes the door quietly and locks it. They come together in another kiss and lie back on the bed.

LATER

Jennifer and Kyle cuddle afterward a steamy romp.

KYLE

You're being awful quiet.

JENNIFER

Sorry.

KYLE

It's okay to think about him. It has to be hard to detach yourself.

Jennifer pivots so she can look into Kyle's face.

JENNIFER

I didn't think about Steve during,  
I promise. It's just now hitting me  
a little, though.

KYLE

From what you told me of Steve, he  
was a great guy. He wouldn't want  
you to be lonely the rest of your  
life.

JENNIFER

I know.

KYLE

I hate to leave, but I have to be  
at work early and don't have a  
change of clothes here.

JENNIFER

That's fine. This wasn't exactly  
planned.

KYLE

We'll plan it out better next time  
when I can actually stay.

Jennifer smiles. Kyle slips on his clothes from the floor and  
kisses Jennifer.

KYLE

I'll see myself out.

Kyle quietly opens the door, peers into the hall, and steps  
out. The door closes.

Jennifer relaxes. This is the most at peace we have seen her.

SERIES OF SHOTS - VARIOUS

-- In his office, Kyle makes notes from the information on  
New Century Pharmaceuticals that displays on his computer  
screen.

-- Kyle, Jennifer, Ben, and Cindi walk through a park where  
there are holiday light sculptures displayed throughout. The  
kids are excited at every one they see. Kyle and Jennifer  
hold hands, looking like two teens in love.

-- Kyle is seated on his couch at night with a pad of paper.  
He scribbles an advertising phrase, then marks it out. There  
are several already marked out on the page.

-- Kyle and Jennifer at a club, dancing. They hold each other close and gaze into the other's eyes.

-- In Jennifer's living room. Kyle finishes setting up a small camping tent with help from Ben and Cindi. Jennifer is seated on the couch, watching amusingly.

The tent is ready. Kyle sits back and gestures for the kids to enter. Ben and Cindi grab Kyle by the arms and try to drag him inside. He laughs. The kids get him halfway inside before they fall on top of him. Kyle tickles both. They squeal.

Jennifer smiles at the sight.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

INT. BRIDWELL ADVERTISING - MEETING ROOM - MORNING

Kyle sets up a stand at the head of the room with a large paper display hidden beneath a blank top sheet. Mr. Bridwell enters.

MR. BRIDWELL

Ready for the big presentation?

KYLE

Yes, sir. At least I hope so.

Mr. Manning walks in.

MR. BRIDWELL

Good morning, Mr. Manning.

MR. MANNING

It will be if you knock my advertising campaign out of the park.

Mr. Manning takes a seat where he can see the presentation well. The receptionist comes to the doorway.

RECEPTIONIST

Can I get you some coffee?

MR. BRIDWELL

Yes, please.

The receptionist walks away.

MR. MANNING

Let's go ahead and get started. I have another important meeting at 10.

Mr. Bridwell and Kyle exchange a look. Mr. Bridwell sits across the table from Mr. Manning. Both look to Kyle and wait. Kyle clears his throat.

KYLE

The goal for New Century Pharmaceuticals is to show consumers that they spend extra time researching their drugs to make them as safe as possible with fewer side effects.

MR. MANNING

Very good, Williams. You memorized MY goal.

KYLE

Yes, sir, but that's a good lead-in for my presentation and the advertising campaign I would like to offer.

Mr. Manning crosses his arms and waits. Kyle swallows hard.

EXT. BRIDWELL ADVERTISING - RECEPTION AREA - MORNING - LATER

The receptionist takes a call at her desk.

RECEPTIONIST

(into phone)

I'm sorry, but Mr. Bridwell is in a meeting. Can I have him call you back?... Bye.

The receptionist hangs up the phone.

O.S. Laughing comes closer.

Mr. Manning laughs as he enters the area with Kyle and Mr. Bridwell.

MR. MANNING

That was one heck of a presentation, Williams.

KYLE

I'm glad you liked it, sir.

MR. MANNING

(serious)

I didn't like it.

Mr. Bridwell and Kyle look worried.

MR. MANNING  
(giddy)  
I loved it!

Mr. Bridwell and Kyle smile their relief.

MR. BRIDWELL  
Wonderful. I'll have your contract  
drawn up today and send it over to  
your office by courier.

KYLE  
I was thinking maybe I could take  
it myself.

MR. BRIDWELL  
Well...

MR. MANNING  
Let this young man bring it. It'll  
give us a chance to get acquainted.

MR. BRIDWELL  
Of course, Mr. Manning. Whatever  
you want.

Mr. Manning glances at his expensive watch.

MR. MANNING  
I'm running a little late...  
(to Kyle)  
but I will see you later. Maybe  
we'll go out for a drink to  
celebrate.

KYLE  
Thank you, sir.

Mr. Manning leaves the office. Mr. Bridwell pats Kyle on the  
back.

MR. BRIDWELL  
I knew I was right to choose you  
for the account.

Mr. Bridwell passes by the receptionist's desk on his way to  
his office.

RECEPTIONIST  
Mr....

Mr. Bridwell is so giddy that he fails to hear her. The  
receptionist looks at Kyle.

RECEPTIONIST

I haven't seen him that happy in...  
never.

KYLE

All part of the job.

Kyle goes down the hall to his office. The receptionist smiles after him.

INT. PARKER HOUSE - BEN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Ben and Cindi play a video game on the TV. Their backpacks stand together, stuffed with their contents. Jennifer pops up in the doorway.

JENNIFER

Grandma's here.

BEN

Can we finish our game first?

JENNIFER

Okay, but don't take too long.

Jennifer ducks out of sight. The kids continue playing.

INT. PARKER HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Brenda stands by the pictures, looking them over. She picks up the family photo of Jennifer, Steve, young Ben, and a newborn Cindi in Steve's arms.

Oblivious, Jennifer trots down the steps.

JENNIFER

They'll be down in a minute.

As Jennifer approaches, she sees the picture in Brenda's hands. Her pace slows.

BRENDA

Steve was thrilled to have a daughter. It broke his heart to go on deployment only days after Cindi was born.

Jennifer lays a hand on Brenda's shoulder.

JENNIFER

I remember. He tried to be strong so I wouldn't fall apart, but I knew just how much he was hurting.

Brenda returns the picture to its spot.

BRENDA

You were the first woman he brought home that I liked.

Jennifer smiles through building emotion.

BRENDA

When you lose your grown child who's married, you have a very hard time watching their spouse replace them.

JENNIFER

Is that what you think I'm doing?

BRENDA

Isn't it? My grandkids talk about Kyle as if he's their father, and he hasn't even known them that long.

JENNIFER

What happened to me moving on with my life?

BRENDA

You have those two wonderful children to give you all the love you need.

Jennifer is at a loss for words. Ben and Cindi come downstairs carrying their backpacks.

BEN

We're ready, Grandma.

Brenda puts on a pretend happy face for the kids.

BRENDA

We are going to have so much fun.

Cindi hugs Jennifer.

CINDI

Bye, Mom.

BEN

Bye, Mom.

As Brenda guides the kids to the door, she gives Jennifer a long look. The trio leaves.

Jennifer sits down on the couch and rubs her face with her hands. She looks over at the pictures.

LATER

Jennifer opens the door to Kyle. He holds a bottle of champagne.

KYLE  
Are you ready to celebrate?

Kyle enters. Jennifer closes the door.

JENNIFER  
What are we celebrating?

KYLE  
That new account I was working on?  
Guess who nailed it today.

Jennifer appears troubled, although she forces a grin.

JENNIFER  
That's wonderful news.

KYLE  
(announcer's voice)  
"At New Century Pharmaceuticals,  
patient safety is our number 1  
priority. We leave no pill unturned  
in our quest to develop the safest  
medication for our patients'  
needs."

Jennifer crosses her arms and looks down. Kyle sets the bottle aside on a table and takes Jennifer by the arms.

KYLE  
Hey, what's wrong?

Jennifer avoids eye contact.

JENNIFER  
Nothing.

KYLE  
Come on, now. Tell me the truth.

Jennifer sighs. Her eyes lift to meet Kyle's.

JENNIFER  
My mother-in-law doesn't approve of  
us seeing each other.



KYLE

I'm sorry to hear that, but it's really not her business.

JENNIFER

It kind of is because of the kids.

KYLE

No, it isn't. It's her business whether the kids are taken well care of, which they are. It's not her place to tell you when or whom you can date.

Jennifer stares silently.

KYLE

You hear me?

Jennifer nods.

JENNIFER

Yeah.

Kyle grabs the bottle of champagne.

KYLE

Now, let's crack this baby open and I'll order us dinner.

JENNIFER

Sounds great.

They go to the kitchen.

INT. PARKER HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Kyle and Jennifer are seated at the table with empty plates of pricey takeout and half-full glasses of champagne.

KYLE

Feeling better?

JENNIFER

You're just what the doctor ordered.

Jennifer sips her champagne while looking off. Kyle studies her.

KYLE

Something else is bothering you.

JENNIFER

I don't want to dump my troubles on you.

KYLE

Dump away. I insist.

Jennifer takes a moment to think.

JENNIFER

I haven't been able to find work. Unemployment doesn't even cover my bills. What kind of mom can't buy her kids anything for Christmas?

Kyle listens empathetically.

JENNIFER

I can't afford a single gift for them unless I open a new charge card, and I don't think that's even possible when you're out of work.

KYLE

Don't do that. Going in debt creates more problems than it solves.

JENNIFER

I can't bear to picture their little faces Christmas morning when they come downstairs and don't see anything from Santa under the tree. What do I tell them?

KYLE

Your family buys them gifts, I'm sure.

JENNIFER

Brenda and my brother Jason come over for Christmas breakfast and to watch them open gifts. Sure, they bring them things, but how do I explain why Santa didn't come?

Kyle thinks.

KYLE

Maybe you don't have to.

JENNIFER

What do you mean?

KYLE

Never mind. Just don't give up on them having a nice Christmas.

(beat)

Have they made any wish lists for Santa?

Jennifer shakes her head.

JENNIFER

This is the first year since they could talk that they haven't told me a single thing they want. I wish I knew what they told that mall Santa.

Kyle thinks again. He's uneasy this time.

KYLE

About that...

JENNIFER

What?

KYLE

That mall Santa was me.

Jennifer chuckles with disbelief.

JENNIFER

You're kidding.

KYLE

Haven't you wondered why I can't see you during the afternoon on weekends?

JENNIFER

No, because you said you were working.

KYLE

I was.

JENNIFER

(amused)

Get out of here. You don't strike me as a Santa type.

KYLE

Ain't that the truth. I was forced to do it by my boss if I wanted my Christmas bonus.

JENNIFER

Then you can tell me what the kids asked for. Maybe I can find some way to get it for them.

KYLE

You already have.

Jennifer looks at Kyle in puzzlement.

JENNIFER

I'm not following...

Kyle reaches across the table and takes Jennifer's hand into his.

KYLE

While all of the other kids had monster toy lists for Santa, your kids only asked for one thing. For their mom to not be lonely anymore.

Jennifer's light-hearted mood transforms into seriousness.

JENNIFER

What?

KYLE

Their request was so touching that I knew I had to do something for you.

Jennifer frees her hand from Kyle's grip.

JENNIFER

The whole thing was a set-up just so you could get into my bed?

KYLE

(offended)

No, that's not the way it was.

JENNIFER

There never was a prize package. You made that up just to slip into my pants.

KYLE

Jen...

Jennifer jumps up and opens the back door.

JENNIFER

Leave.

Kyle goes to face her.

KYLE  
Hear me out...

JENNIFER  
You've said all you need to.

KYLE  
Can I at least get my coat?

JENNIFER  
You'll find it on the porch.

Kyle reluctantly steps out to the chilly night air. His pleading eyes stare back at Jennifer until she closes the door in his face. She hightails it out of the room.

LIVING ROOM

Jennifer grabs Kyle's coat from the rack and flings it out to the porch.

EXT. PARKER HOUSE - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Kyle comes around to the porch, already shivering. He picks up his coat and puts it on as he stares at the closed front door with genuine sadness.

Reluctantly, he turns away and walks to his car.

INT. PARKER HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Jennifer leans back against the door and cries as she slides down it.

INT. MALL - SANTA'S VILLAGE - DAY

Dressed as Santa, Kyle looks distracted as a GIRL on his lap tells him what she wants for Christmas.

INT. PARKER HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Jennifer sips on a cup of coffee at the table. Ben and Cindi run in, still in their coats, and hug Jennifer. Brenda, in coat, comes to the doorway and watches.

Jennifer exchanges an uncomfortable look with Brenda.

INT. KYLE'S HOUSE - ENTRY - NIGHT

Kyle enters the lonely house. He turns on the light and removes his coat. Hangs it up and scans the house from where he stands. So empty of joy.

INT. PARKER HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jennifer sits on the couch, staring off into thin air. Cindi and Ben sit at the coffee table, very glum as they color in coloring books.

INT. KYLE'S HOUSE - MAIN BEDROOM - NIGHT

Kyle sits back on the bed with his phone in hand. He pulls up his pictures and flips through the last few dozen, pictures of him with Jennifer and the kids. They look like a happy family.

INT. PARKER HOUSE - MAIN BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jennifer lies in bed, looking at pictures of Kyle with her and the kids taken with her phone. The sight brings a tear to her eye.

A knock at her door. She wipes the tear with her hand and turns off the phone.

JENNIFER

Come in.

It's Ben and Cindi, dressed for bed. They approach their mom.

JENNIFER

Why aren't you two in bed? I know.  
I bet you're excited because  
tomorrow is Christmas Eve.

BEN

Can we ask you something?

JENNIFER

Sure.

The kids climb into bed with Jennifer.

BEN

Why won't you tell us about Kyle?

CINDI

Is he coming over for Christmas?

Jennifer needs a moment to contemplate an answer.

JENNIFER

I'm afraid things just didn't work  
out between us.

BEN

Can't you make up?

CINDI

You were so happy when you were together.

JENNIFER

Well, sometimes there are things adults have to deal with that kids just don't understand.

BEN

You can try to explain it.

JENNIFER

I could, but there's no point.

Jennifer gets out of bed and helps the kids out.

JENNIFER

Now let's get you back to bed.

CINDI

But you'll be sad on Christmas.

Jennifer kneels before Cindi and holds her hands.

JENNIFER

I will never be sad as long as I have you both here with me.

CINDI

Does that mean we can never move out?

Jennifer laughs as she stands.

JENNIFER

We'll talk about that in a few years. Now quit stalling. Off to bed.

Jennifer takes each kid by the hand and leads them out of the room.

INT. BRENDA'S HOUSE - ENTRY - DAY

Brenda opens the door to Kyle. Surprise comes to her face.

BRENDA

What are you doing here?

KYLE

We need to talk.

Kyle enters.

INT. BRENDA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Brenda pours herself a cup of coffee. Kyle stands near her.

KYLE

You obviously have a problem with me so go ahead. Don't worry, I can take it.

BRENDA

I don't even know you.

KYLE

No, you don't, so let me jump in. I'm not your son. That's the only issue you have with me seeing Jennifer.

Mentioning her son brings sadness to Brenda's face.

KYLE

Do you really expect her to stay single the rest of her life? Do you understand how cruel that is?

BRENDA

Jennifer can make her own decisions.

KYLE

And she did, until you told her you didn't approve. Her loyalty to Steve makes her just as loyal to you.

Brenda slams her hands to the counter in an emotional outburst.

BRENDA

You have no idea what it's like to lose your child!

Kyle softens.

KYLE

You're right, I don't. It has to be the worst thing I can imagine, but there's one thing that comes close. Not being with whom you love because they are being guilted into staying faithful to a spouse who is long gone.

Brenda grows teary-eyed. She grabs a tissue to wipe her eyes.



BRENDA

You said "love." Is that how you  
feel about Jennifer?

Kyle recoils lightly as he ponders.

KYLE

Yeah, I think it is. I've never  
felt for anyone like I do for her.  
And I love every moment I have with  
those kids.

Brenda nods. Kyle steps closer and lays a hand on her arm.

KYLE

I'm not trying to replace your son.  
He'll always have a place in  
Jennifer's heart, but there's room  
for two.

Brenda cracks a grin through her emotional pain.

KYLE

Now, I could really use your help.

EXT. PARKER HOUSE - NIGHT

Christmas lights on many of the houses twinkle in the  
darkness. Jennifer's house looks isolated by not having any  
decorations outside.

INT. PARKER HOUSE - CINDI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - SAME

Jennifer tucks Cindi into bed. Ben stands next to his mom.

BEN

I bet Santa's getting close.

Jennifer grows uneasy at the remark.

JENNIFER

I hope you two aren't too  
disappointed if you don't get what  
you wanted for Christmas.

CINDI

It's too late for that.

Jennifer's heart breaks.

BEN

It's okay if he doesn't come to our  
house. He can't give us the only  
thing we really want anyway.

JENNIFER

Then why did you ask for something  
you knew you wouldn't get?

CINDI

It was important enough for us to  
try.

Jennifer battles tears. She plants a kiss on Cindi's head.

JENNIFER

Well, no matter what, Grandma and  
Jason will be over bright and early  
for breakfast.

Jennifer guides Ben to the doorway. She turns out the light  
and smiles at Cindi. Cindi smiles back. Jennifer steps out  
and closes the door.

IN THE HALL

Ben looks up at his mom.

BEN

Don't worry about Cindi and me.  
We'll be fine if Santa skips our  
house.

Ben goes to his bedroom and closes the door. Jennifer leans  
back against the wall and looks up, tears building in her  
eyes.

INT. PARKER HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAWN

The tree is void of gifts. A click in the front door's lock  
as someone turns a key. Brenda opens the door quietly. She  
enters with a bag of gifts. Jason follows her in with another  
bag.

Brenda turns on a lamp in the living room. The two put gifts  
from their bags underneath the tree.

In her robe and slippers, Jennifer slinks down the steps.  
They speak quietly.

JENNIFER

What are you two doing here this  
early?

JASON

We thought we'd get a head start on  
the kiddos.

Jennifer joins them in the living room.

JENNIFER

I wouldn't count on them being up any time soon. They kind of have the feeling that Santa isn't coming this year.

BRENDA

(sly)

Maybe they're wrong.

Jennifer looks at Brenda in confusion.

CINDI (O.S.)

Santa came!

Cindi and Ben run to the tree and gawk at the presents.

BEN

But we didn't ask for anything.

Jennifer exchanges uneasy looks with Brenda and Jason.

JENNIFER

Those are all from Grandma and Jason.

The joy melts from little Cindi's face.

CINDI

Oh, that's okay.

Ben places an arm around Cindi.

JASON

Actually, I heard Santa is running a little late. His sled broke down over France.

BRENDA

Sleigh.

JASON

Sleigh. Right.

Jennifer gives her brother a stern look.

JENNIFER

(quietly)

What are you doing?

JASON

(quietly)

Just play along.

Jason places a hand to his ear to indicate listening.

JASON  
Do you hear that?

The kids listen. Bells are barely audible in the distance.

CINDI  
Is that Santa?

BRENDA  
I think it might be.

CINDI  
But we don't have a chimney.

BRENDA  
Santa doesn't need a chimney. He's magical.

KYLE (O.S.)  
Ho ho ho.

The kids gasp with excitement as they look to the sound of the voice, the kitchen. Santa emerges from the dark room, toting his stuffed sack over his shoulder and holding bells that he rattles. He uses a deeper voice.

KYLE  
Merry Christmas, everyone!

CINDI  
Santa!

A stunned Jennifer finally slips into a smile.

KYLE  
I hear there are two very good kids that live in this house. Do you know where I can find them?

Cindi and Ben jump up and down with a hand raised.

CINDI AND BEN  
Me! Me!

KYLE  
Let's see what Santa has for you.

Kyle reaches into his bag and produces a gift. He hands it to Cindi.

KYLE  
Here you go, Cindi.

Cindi excitedly rips into the package. It's a new doll.

CINDI  
Thanks, Santa!

Kyle removes another gift from his bag and passes it to Ben.

KYLE  
And something special for Ben.

Ben opens his gift. A remote control car.

BEN  
Cool!

Kyle unloads the rest of the gifts and stacks them by the tree.

KYLE  
There's a few more for each of you  
since you were extra good this  
year.

Ben suddenly saddens.

BEN  
What about our mom?

Kyle looks to Jennifer.

KYLE  
Santa tried to get her a special  
gift but things didn't work out.

CINDI  
Maybe you could try again.

KYLE  
Maybe I could.  
(to kids)  
But there's plenty for you two to  
open now.

Ben and Cindi kneel before the gifts from Santa and open more. Jennifer, Brenda, and Jason gather around to watch. Ben opens a new video game.

BEN  
It's the game I wanted!

Cindi opens a tea set.

CINDI  
I love it. Thanks, San--

Cindi turns to where she last saw Santa and sees that he's gone.

CINDI  
Where did he go?

The others look. Jennifer appears sad.

BRENDA  
He probably had other toys to deliver.

The kids return to opening gifts. Brenda places an arm around Jennifer and whispers...

BRENDA  
I was wrong about him.

Jennifer grins at Brenda.

LATER

Most gifts have been opened. There is a mound of wrapping paper to the side. Jennifer opens a new luxurious robe with excitement.

JENNIFER  
(to Brenda)  
Thanks... Mom.

Brenda holds a hand to her heart as she takes in the compliment. The doorbell rings. Cindi jumps up.

CINDI  
I'll get it.

Jason catches Cindi by the arm.

JASON  
I think you should let your mom answer it.

Jennifer grows suspicious. She goes to the door and opens it to Kyle without his Santa suit.

KYLE  
Merry Christmas.

JENNIFER  
Merry Christmas.

Kyle peers inside at Ben and Cindi.

KYLE

Are there two very good kids in there?

Ben and Cindi jump up.

CINDI

We're good. Santa said so.

KYLE

You met Santa? Wow. Well, I guess these won't be too exciting then.

Kyle ducks back out and returns, pulling a girl's bike with one hand and a boy's bike with the other. He brings them inside. The kids run over.

BEN

Are those for us?

KYLE

I think they're a little too small for your grandma and uncle.

The kids laugh. They check out their bikes. Cindi hugs Kyle around the waist.

CINDI

Thanks, Kyle!

Ben hugs Kyle.

BEN

Thank you!

KYLE

You're welcome.

Kyle steps up to Jennifer. They move out of the kids' earshot.

JENNIFER

Thank you for everything.

KYLE

I understand how my motives might have looked questionable, but I really care about you and those kids.

JENNIFER

I know.

Kyle reaches into his coat's inner pocket and produces a folded paper with a bow on it.

KYLE

This one's for you.

Jennifer accepts the paper.

JENNIFER

What's this?

KYLE

Just open it.

All eyes in the room watch as Jennifer unfolds the paper. A job application.

JENNIFER

A job application for New Century Pharmaceuticals? I don't understand.

KYLE

It's just a formality. I told Mr. Manning all about you and he just happens to need a new manager for his local branch. You have an interview tomorrow morning at 10...

Kyle leans in and says quietly...

KYLE

... but the job is yours if you want it.

JENNIFER

I don't even know what it pays.

KYLE

I don't have the exact numbers, but it's six figures.

Jennifer loses her breath. Their onlookers watch happily.

JENNIFER

Thank you.

KYLE

You're--

Jennifer interrupts Kyle with a kiss. The kids giggle. When the kiss ends, the couple exchanges a longing look.



BRENDA

I think we need some breakfast  
around here.

Brenda starts for the kitchen. Ben glances at the window and sees something amazing. He pulls the curtain back.

BEN

It's snowing!

Everyone gathers around the window to look. It's only snow flurries but it's something.

BRENDA

We'll take it.

Brenda momentarily lays a hand on Jennifer's arm as she passes by on her way to the kitchen.

EXT. PARKER HOUSE - MORNING - SAME

Ben and Cindi stand in the window, watching the snow flurries with excitement. Behind them, Jennifer and Kyle share a long kiss.

FADE OUT.