

State of Independence
an original script
by Jerry William Perry

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FADE IN:

EXT. DAY

Crystal Springs, North Dakota is a small story book town with a main street that resembles an old Dickens Village. The shops are small and the store fronts are decorated for Christmas. There are Christmas wreaths hanging from the lamp post, decorated Christmas trees on the street corners, and *Melody of Love* by Donna Summer can be heard playing from the speakers that are mounted on all of the lamp post. Snow is gently falling.

VALERIE O'BRYAN, 30's, slim, long brown hair, very beautiful, is walking along the downtown street. She steps over a pile of snow at the intersection then crosses to the other side of the street. She is in a good mood and is enjoying the snow and the music. She stops to look up into the sky to allow the snow to gently fall on her face. She closes her eyes, smiles, then continues on her way down the sidewalk.

She looks down the street to see her son PATRICK, 6, blond, cute, coming down the sidewalk with his grandmother ADELLE. Adelle, 60's, is a beautiful lady, short blond hair, nice figure, and confident. She is dressed in a coordinated suit and has a firm grip on Jason. She pulls Jason along as he kicks the snow.

ADELLE

Come on! Quit dragging your feet!

Patrick comes to a stop, looks toward Valerie and smiles. He breaks loose from Adelle's grip and runs as fast as he can toward Valerie.

Valerie holds her arms out to catch Patrick and gets down on her knees. Patrick slams into her full force and they both fall to the sidewalk laughing and allowing the snow to hit their faces. SHOPPERS just walk around the two and smile as though they have seen it all before.

They both get up and Valerie brushes the snow from Patrick's clothes and then her own. She looks down at the two wet spots on her pants and just shrugs her shoulders at Patrick.

Adelle walks up with a disappointing expression.

ADELLE (CONT'D)

(Sternly)

You're going ruin that boy's new pants!

VALERIE

Busted champ!

Patrick shrugs his shoulders. He looks down and begins to kick at the snow. He looks up at Adelle with a smile.

PATRICK

Sorry?

Patrick and Valerie burst out laughing. Adelle gives them a stern and disapproving look.

ADELLE

Are you going take him to work with you? I need to do some more shopping.

VALERIE

You gonna be good champ?

PATRICK

Promise!

VALERIE

Such a sweet child. Why don't I believe you?

ADELLE

Because he takes after his Mom. Well I have to go.

Patrick and Valerie stand at attention and salute. Adelle turns her head and storms off.

VALERIE

OK. What do you want to eat at the hotel.

PATRICK

Wings!

The music on the speakers changes to "*Lucky*."

VALERIE

Oh Patrick those are so gross. It's just chicken skin and bar-b-q sauce.

PATRICK

Please?

VALERIE

OK, but don't tell your Grandmother.

Patrick and Valerie turn to look down to the end of Main Street. They can see "The Grand Woodlands Hotel". It is a huge log cabin styled structure. A 20 foot decorated Christmas tree stands directly in front. Snow is piled up around the tree and several of the hotel staff are busy showing guest into the hotel. Other employees are shoveling snow and hanging a banner over the main entrance.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

I can't believe I get to work at such a beautiful place. Don't it make you feel like Christmas?

PATRICK

I'll let you know after I get my wings.

VALERIE

You are a bad boy. Such a little pig. But I love you anyway.

Valerie reaches down and squeezes Patrick's cheeks and he tries to break free.

PATRICK

Stop!

VALERIE

But I just love you so much!

He breaks free from Valerie's squeeze and starts to run down the sidewalk to the hotel. Valerie runs after him.

INT. LOBBY -- DAY

The hotel is busy for this time of year and the lobby is crowded. BELLMEN, all dressed in red uniforms and wearing Santa hats, are taking luggage to the rooms. KAREN, 23, blond, and attractive, is waiting on customers. Two HOTEL ASSOCIATES are hanging a banner behind the main desk.

The banner reads, "Christmas Charity Concert - Donna Summer."

Valerie walks into the lobby holding Patrick's hand and takes a deep breath.

VALERIE

OK Champ, you head to the kitchen and tell Chef that I said you could have some wings. Not to many. We don't want a repeat of last time. I hate cleaning up partially digested wings.

Patrick does not respond. He breaks free and runs through the crowd.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

You're welcome?

Valerie joins Karen at the desk and removes her coat and puts it under the counter.

KAREN

It's about time you got here! It's an absolute madhouse.

VALERIE

Hey! I'm the boss. I can do what I want.

KAREN

Yeah, Yeah.

VALERIE

Slowed down any?

KAREN

We're full. No more room at the inn.

VALERIE

Great. This is going to be this old hotel's best Christmas yet.

Valerie looks across the lobby to see JANIE, 18, ordinary looking, on a ladder decorating the Christmas tree that stands in the center of the room. The tree is twelve feet from the floor almost reaching the ceiling. There are two sofas on either side of the tree and STEVEN, 30's, dark hair, muscular, and handsome, is sitting there watching Janie hang the ornaments.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

You think he's enjoying the view?

From the front desk it appears that Steven is looking up Janie's skirt.

KAREN

You mean the Christmas tree?

VALERIE

No, I mean Janie's butt.

KAREN

I really think he's looking at the tree. He's been there a long time. Janie comes and goes.

Janie descends the ladder and exits the room.

VALERIE

Hmm.

Steven looks at the tree first one way then turns his head to get a different view. He picks up the newspaper that has been at his side and starts to read.

KAREN

He sure is cute.

VALERIE

Yeah, not bad.

KAREN

Are you insane? Look at that man!

VALERIE

Not bad.

KAREN

Well I think he's fine. Young, good looking, and dressed to kill. He looks like an actor.

VALERIE

Try to focus for me OK? When is Donna Summer arriving?

KAREN

Any minute.

VALERIE

Her suite ready? That room has to be spotless.

KAREN

We're set. Isn't this exciting? I mean I am too young to remember her but you probably frequented the disco's in your time.

VALERIE

In my time? How old do you think I am?

KAREN

Oh I didn't mean you were that old. You have to be at least 30 right?

Valerie just smiles.

VALERIE

Yeah right. Why would she pick Crystal Springs? There's nothing here?

KAREN

Who?

VALERIE

Hello? Your lights are on but there's not anyone at home is there.

KAREN

What?

VALERIE

(laughingly)

Nevermind.

Valerie points to the banner behind the desk.

KAREN

Oh. Right.

The doors at the main entrance burst open, snow blows in, and Donna Summer and her assistant SHARON run in. Sharon, 40's, red hair, slim, drops the baggage then starts to brush the snow from Donna Summers coat. Donna Summer appears aggravated with Sharons attention.

DONNA SUMMER

Stop it!

SHARON

Fine be wet!

DONNA SUMMER

What a beautiful place.

Sharon looks toward Valerie and Karen.

SHARON

Hey! Some help here?

Valerie and Karen run from behind the desk toward Donna and Sharon.

DONNA SUMMER

Be nice Sharon. It's Christmas.
Low profile OK?

SHARON

Listen! We've been on that plane all day to get to this God forsaken place. I'm tired, cold, and need some caffeine. You cut me some slack!

DONNA SUMMER

Excuse me? You know I do sign your check.

SHARON

And I do appreciate it. Now get a move on so we can get out of these wet clothes.

Sharon starts to shove Donna along.

DONNA SUMMER

Hey!

SHARON

Get a move on Miss Thang!

Valerie and Karen approach Donna and Sharon.

VALERIE

Your suite is ready. We can go right up.

DONNA SUMMER

Thanks. This is a beautiful hotel. Makes me feel all Christmasie.

Sharon start to push Donna along again. She stops, and gives Sharon an evil look. Sharon drops her suitcase and crosses her arms.

VALERIE

We work hard to make it feel like home.

SHARON

Yeah, yeah.

DONNA SUMMER

Please excuse my assistant. She has a bad case of humbugitis today.

VALERIE

That's OK. We can get her in the Christmas spirit really fast around here.

Valerie picks up Donna's luggage and starts to the desk.

SHARON

Hey! Mine too!

A huge gust of wind blows the entrance doors open. KENNETH O'BRYAN, 30'S, muscular, dirty looking, beard, and dressed in an old coat looks in at Valerie. Valerie just stops and stares. Kenneth looks in and then continues down the sidewalk. The doors close.

DONNA SUMMER

Scary looking man.

VALERIE

Tell me about it.

DONNA SUMMER

You know him?

VALERIE

He's my husband. Well soon to be x-husband.

Donna Summer makes a face like, OK foot in mouth. They all turn and head toward the elevator.

Sharon remains stationary with her arms crossed.

SHARON

Anyone going to help me?

Everyone continues to the elevators without her. Sharon picks up her suitcase and makes a mad dash for the elevator. The elevator door shuts just as she slides to a stop. She drops her suitcase again and pushes the elevator button.

INT. ELEVATOR -- DAY

DONNA SUMMER

I'm sorry about your husband. I wouldn't have said anything if I had known.

VALERIE

Not a problem. We're separated. It still hurts a little but I think we're behind the bad stuff right now. I'm sorry about your assistant.

Donna starts to laugh.

DONNA SUMMER

Did you see her slide to a stop.

Valerie and Donna continue to laugh hard.

DONNA SUMMER (CONT'D)

She's gonna give me a hard time about that but its worth it.

INT. DONNA SUMMER'S SUITE -- DAY

Donna and Sharon are unpacking. Donna opens her suitcase and removes neatly folded clothes. She brushes them off and places each one carefully in the drawer of the dresser.

Sharon turns her head away from her suitcase and carefully presses the latch. The lid springs open and wrinkled clothes explode onto the bed.

DONNA SUMMER

The wrong airport security guard is gonna open that one day and you'll find yourself in jail for carrying a bomb.

SHARON

Well Donna, you really put your foot in your mouth.

DONNA SUMMER

Uh huh.

SHARON

(laughingly)

You couldn't have had better timing. Why didn't you just go ahead and just call her husband a bum.

DONNA SUMMER

Yeah, you go ahead and have your fun. I'm telling you that woman had that "I still love you look" in her eyes.

SHARON

Oh you thought it was cute that I almost brained myself on the elevator door.

DONNA SUMMER

Don't change the subject. You know something wasn't right with them.

SHARON

Please don't start.

DONNA SUMMER

I want you to find out their story. Those two are still in love. I know it.

Donna turns her back to Sharon and continues to unpack her clothes. She neatly takes each piece of clothing out of the suitcase, brushes it off, and places it in the dresser.

SHARON

OK, here we go. Please can we just do this gig and get out of this do nothing town? I swear I'll kill myself if I have to stay in this hole-in-the-wall more than one day after Christmas.

Sharon takes a scarf from her suitcase and twist it into a rope.

DONNA SUMMER

Just find out.

Sharon puts the scarf around her neck and pulls it tight.

DONNA SUMMER (CONT'D)

It just breaks my heart to see two people in love that haven't got the good sense to be with each other.

Sharon pulls the scarf up like she is being hung and closes her eyes and sticks out her tongue.

DONNA SUMMER (CONT'D)

All they need is a little nudge toward each other.

Sharon falls backward on the bed and mumbles under her breath. Donna turns around quickly.

DONNA SUMMER (CONT'D)

(Bossily)

What's that?

SHARON

Nothing.

DONNA SUMMER

And I did try to press the door open button!

Sharon gets up from the bed and throws the scarf on the floor.

SHARON

Uh huh.

INT. LOBBY -- DAY

Valerie joins Karen who is working behind the front desk.

KAREN

Get everything squared away with Mrs. Summer?

VALERIE

Yeah I think so. I can't believe we have a real celebrity here.

Valerie glances toward the Christmas tree. Steven is still on the sofa admiring the decorations and drinking some coffee.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

Our friend's still there.

KAREN

Yep. I took him some coffee and came on to him.

VALERIE

You're shameless.

KAREN

I know I am but I think he's immune.
You know he's been there all day.

VALERIE

No luck?

KAREN

Nope. I think he's gay.

VALERIE

Oh right! He doesn't like you so
he's gay.

KAREN

Hey let's face it. I bet I can prove
it. Look at that man. Young, good
looking, no wedding ring...

Karen looks under the desk.

VALERIE

Don't embarrass me.

Karen pops up from behind the desk with an album.

KAREN

This'll be easy. He's really been
enjoying the Christmas music.

VALERIE

I told you to play Donna Summer.

KAREN

Well I'm sorry, "Bad Girls" just
didn't seem Christmasie enough.
Look at this.

Karen holds up Barbara Streisand's Christmas album.

VALERIE

Don't be silly.

KAREN

This'll get him. Oh, you might want
to consider coming into this century
and getting this old place a CD
player.

She puts the record on the turntable and "Jingle Bells" starts
to play. Steven looks toward the desk and laughs.

KAREN (CONT'D)

I don't know what that means.

VALERIE

It means it's a silly version of that song. Turn it off!

KAREN

It's Barbara Streisand...but he laughs?

VALERIE

Turn it off!

Valerie moves from behind the desk and starts toward Steven. He stands to greet her. Valerie turns and signals for Karen to stop the music.

Karen just smiles and lets the song continue.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry about my associate. She has a strange sense of humor.

STEVEN

No problem. I've just been admiring the Christmas tree. It reminds me of the trees my family used to have when i was a child. You don't see trees this size much. The smell is great.

VALERIE

We try to make it feel like home for our guest that are here over the holidays. That tree looks a little dry to me.

Steven reaches to the end table and picks up the tree topper; an ornate angel.

STEVEN

It needs this.

Barbara Striesand's rendition of "Jingle Bells" ends and Karen starts the music again. "She Works Hard for the Money" starts to play as Valerie starts up the ladder. Valerie looks over to Karen. Karen smiles back at Valerie and gives her a thumbs up.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

Would you like me to do that?

VALERIE

Old pro at this. No problem.

Valerie continues up the ladder.

The door burst open at the main entrance. TIFFANY, 6, curley red hair, wild acting, runs into the main lobby.

Her parents KENT, 30'S, distinguished, confident, and KATLIN, 30's, blond hair, snobbish, and dressed in designer clothes, stroll in behind Tiffany.

They approach the desk.

KAREN

Could I help you.

KENT

Yes. Our rental car has died and we will need accommodation in this charming little hotel of yours.

KATLIN

This is all your fault. If you had listened to me and had our driver bring us in the limo we could have bypassed this little...

Katlin looks around the lobby disapprovingly.

KATLIN (CONT'D)

distraction.

Karen remaining professional takes a breath and reaches for some literature from the counter.

KENT

Where's Tiffany?

They scan the lobby and see Tiffany standing by Steven. Tiffany and Steven watch as Valerie ascends the ladder with the angel.

TIFFANY

I want to hold the angel.

STEVEN

Not now. We're putting it on the top of the tree for everyone to enjoy.

TIFFANY

(angrily)

I want the angel! Now!

STEVEN

Let's go find your parents.

Steven grabs hold of Tiffany's hand. She pulls it away quickly and screams in such a high pitched tone that some bulbs explode on the Christmas tree. The needle slides across the Donna Summer record playing at the desk. Guest in the hotel stop and put their hands up to their ears. The mirror behind the desk cracks.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

Good Lord!

He looks up to see Valerie about to fall off the ladder. He pushes Tiffany out of the way and catches Valerie in both arms. The tree topper lands in Valerie's lap. Valerie looks into Steven's eyes for an interesting and uncomfortable moment.

VALERIE

Thank you. I don't know what happened. What was that?

Steven looks to Tiffany who is sitting on the floor unaffected by the surrounding events or the sudden push. She suddenly gets up, brushes off her butt, then runs off to join her parents at the front desk.

The entire lobby is silent.

Karen struggles to start the record again. Her hand shakes and the needle hits the record hard. "Could it be Magic" starts to play.

Steven is still holding Valerie in his arms. The Christmas tree shakes a little behind them. They glance at the tree and then both gaze in disbelief at the main desk.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

Well...Uh...I need to get back to work.

STEVEN

Can you join me for dinner?

VALERIE

What? Uh...I don't know.

STEVEN

Smooth huh? I didn't mean to surprise you with that request. I don't know what's wrong with me. Just dinner? Hopefully some pleasant company? I know it's Christmas. If you have plans I understand. I've been alone for such a long time I forget sometimes about the holidays but I will beg if I have to.

VALERIE

Uh...

After a brief pause Steven realizes that he is still holding Valerie in his arms. He gently puts her down. She straightens her clothes.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

What's wrong with me? You just saved my life. Sure, I would be honored to join you. Dining room at 6?

STEVEN

I'll look forward to it.

Valerie joins Karen at the desk. She is examining the cracked mirror. She turns to Kent.

KAREN

(slowly)

I'll get someone to show you to your room.

KENT

Just bill me for the damage.

KAREN

Your daughter has some voice there.

KENT

I'm not sure if it's a gift or a curse.

Karen rings the bell on the desk and ELLIOT the bellman, 17, dyed blond hair, chewing gum, handsome, wearing a uniform that he has tried to make look cool, comes to take their baggage. He is standing directly behind Kent, Katlin, and Tiffany.

Katlin turns to Elliot to give instructions.

KATLIN

(sternly)

Careful boy! That luggage cost a fortune!

Karen and Elliot watch as Kent, Katlin, and Tiffany get on one of the elevators.

KAREN

Well! I guess you've decided they could find their own room?

ELLIOT

Screw it! Let 'em guess where their room is. It's not like I would get a tip out of that old stone-faced b...

KAREN

(interrupting)

Elliot! Let's at least try to be professional.

Elliot struggles to pick the luggage up then heads for the elevator dragging one of the suitcases. He blows a bubble with his gum along the way.

ELLIOT

(mumbling)

Minimum wage and they want professional! Right! I'd like to show them a professional.

KAREN

You know I can still hear you!

Elliot is pulling at the suitcase with more intensity but stops, looks up, and salutes Karen.

INT. HOTEL DINING ROOM -- NIGHT

The large dining room with exposed beams is glowing with the light from candles that have been placed on the tables and from the blue lights on the Christmas tree that is in the center of the room. Red poinsettias circle the huge tree that is decorated with silver glass ornaments. "Silent Night" as sung by Babyface can be heard playing softly. The room is crowded with guests.

Donna Summer enters with Sharon. They are greeted by the HOSTESS, dark hair, 20's, wearing a Santa hat, that escorts them to a table in the center of the room near the Christmas tree. The other guest watch intently as Donna and Sharon pass their tables.

Valerie and Steven come in and sit a couple of tables away. Donna glances their way.

DONNA SUMMER

What's their story?

SHARON

Why?

DONNA SUMMER

She really looked at her husband today. You know, like there's something still there, but she's here with that fella. Now don't get me wrong, he's good looking.

SHARON

Oh know! I thought we settled this in the room earlier.

DONNA SUMMER

What?

SHARON

Leave it alone!

DONNA SUMMER

Leave what alone? I know when someone's in love and that girl and her husband are still in love. It's Christmas! Let's get them back together.

SHARON

Oh come on! We'll only be here a couple of days. You always start something and I have to do all the work.

DONNA SUMMER

Bet I can get them back together.

SHARON

Please don't do this. Please?

DONNA SUMMER

I'll bet you a months salary.

SHARON

(quickly)
Crap! OK!

DONNA SUMMER

And if you loose you have to carry my bags for a month.

SHARON

Hey I do that anyway! OK, but if you loose you carry your own bags for a month and give me an extra months salary.

DONNA SUMMER

(smiling)
Deal! OK, you find out the story. You know I have never, ever, lost a bet like this.

SHARON

I'm feeling lucky.

Sharon gets up.

DONNA SUMMER

I didn't mean now.

SHARON

No time like the present. We're only here 2 days. Besides you can carry your own heavy-ass luggage home.

DONNA SUMMER

We'll see.

Sharon smirks at Donna then strolls toward Valerie and Steven's table. She stops, puts her hands on her hips, and looks down at them.

Valerie and Steven look up at Sharon a bit confused.

SHARON

(unconcerned)

Would you like to join me and Donna
for dinner?

Steven looks at Valerie smiling.

VALERIE

We would love to, sure.

The three join Donna and pull up and adjacent table. Steven holds the chair for Donna and Sharon.

STEVEN

This is an honor for me Mrs. Summer.

DONNA SUMMER

You're such a gentleman. I'm just a
person. Let's have a good time
tonight. Call me Donna.

SHARON

Yeah just a person.

Donna gives Sharon a mean look.

DONNA SUMMER

Please forgive my assistant, she
always gets a lump of coal in her
stocking at Christmas. I love to
make new friends when I am on the
road. What's going on with you two?

SHARON

A bit personal?

DONNA SUMMER

No...They don't mind.

Donna reaches across the table and holds Steven's hand. She leans over a bit to look directly in his eyes.

STEVEN

We just met today. I was feeling
lonely for Christmas and needed some
company. Valerie was nice enough to
join me.

DONNA SUMMER
You're married?

SHARON
Could you be more direct?

STEVEN
(laughing)
No I'm not married.

DONNA SUMMER
Uh huh. What about you girl?
Married?

SHARON
My Lord Donna!

VALERIE
Yes, you saw my husband this
afternoon.

DONNA SUMMER
Oh yeah I remember. You two not
getting along right?

SHARON
(sharply)
Donna!

VALERIE
It's OK. No we don't.

Valerie looks sadly across at the Christmas tree.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
We were high school sweethearts and
married just out of college. Kenneth
swept me off my feet one Christmas
and married me. We've been in Crystal
Springs since.

DONNA SUMMER
What happened? It sounds like a
story book romance but he looks like
he's had some hard times.

Donna lets go of Steven's hand and focuses her attention on
Valerie.

VALERIE
Kenny always liked to party. I can
remember as far back as junior high,
he would be in his parents booze.
High school he was always out with
the boys trying to find something to
drink.

(MORE)

VALERIE (CONT'D)

You'd be surprised how many people will sell alcohol to underage kids.

DONNA SUMMER

Did his parents not see what was going on?

VALERIE

People want to see what they want to see I guess. I was the same. I thought he was just having a good time on weekends with his buddies. Then we went to college.

DONNA SUMMER

Oh know. I know that doesn't make it better. Frat?

VALERIE

Oh yeah. He drank nonstop. I still loved him. I would bring him home passed out in the car and leave him parked on the side of the road in front of my dorm. I would look out the window occasionally just to make sure he was OK.

Steven reaches over and rubs Valerie's hand. Sharon looks at Donna and raises one eyebrow.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

Anyway I ignored the signs and symptoms and we married just after college. My little angel Patrick came soon after. The drinking got worse. He couldn't hold a job. He started to be mean to me and Patrick so I had to get us out of that situation.

Valerie wipes a tear from her eye.

DONNA SUMMER

Oh honey.

Donna reaches for a tissue in her purse.

DONNA SUMMER (CONT'D)

Did he ever try to get help?

VALERIE

Oh yeah! He's been in rehab more times than I can count. Alcohol must be really hard to give up because he let it cost him everything.

DONNA SUMMER
You still love him though.

Donna starts to get misty and reaches for another tissue.

VALERIE
What's wrong with me?

STEVEN
We can't always control our feelings.
You love him for a reason.

Valerie wipes her eyes again. Donna does the same.

SHARON
(insincere)
Oh hell! Give me a tissue too.

Donna grabs her purse and slams it into Sharon's chest.

VALERIE
Enough of this. I'm bringing everyone
down. We should be celebrating.
It's not everyday I get to have dinner
with Donna Summer.

The three women wipe their eyes one more time.

DONNA SUMMER
Hey Val, it's my pleasure.

SHARON
(quietly)
Or plan.

STEVEN
Did you say something?

SHARON
That man!

Sharon points to Kent, Katlin, and Tiffany entering the restaurant.

DONNA SUMMER
That kid's got some voice on her.

SHARON
Tell me about it. My ears are still
ringing.

Kent, Katlin, and Tiffany walk past Valerie, Steven, Sharon, and Donna Summer. Tiffany sticks her tongue out at Donna as she passes. Donna looks at Steven and laughs.

Kent, Katlin, and Tiffany are seated one table from Valerie and her party.

DONNA SUMMER

You know that kid is trouble.

SHARON

Something's gonna happen. I feel it. I think we need to just save some time and take her to the kitchen and give her a good swat on the butt.

DONNA SUMMER

Sharon!

VALERIE

(laughing)

That girl cost me a very nice mirror.

Josh, the waiter, dressed in a classic tux, 20'S, clean cut, dark hair and tall, approaches the table to take the order from Kent, Katlin, and Tiffany.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

I have the entire staff on alert. See how Josh moved right in. Maybe we can get them out of here without to much trouble.

Back to Katlin, Kent, and Tiffany.

JOSH

Are you ready to order?

Tiffany interrupts.

TIFFANY

I want a hamburger.

KENT

No honey. You had McDonalds for lunch.

TIFFANY

(raising her voice)

Hamburger.

KENT

You'll like meat loaf. It's like hamburger.

Back to Donna Summer's table.

DONNA SUMMER

I think she's gonna scream.

VALERIE

No she'll kick the waiter.

SHARON
Throw the silverware.

STEVEN
I think she's gonna go for the meat
loaf.

DONNA SUMMER
Oh, no way!

Back to Tiffany's table.

Josh just stands there uninterested. He is shifting his weight from one foot to the other and giving a disapproving look occasionally to Tiffany.

TIFFANY
OK, I will eat the stinking meat
loaf.

Steven smiles at Valerie.

Tiffany jumps out of her chair, kicks Josh, throws a knife toward Steven which he ducks, then starts to scream.

The scream is so loud that everyone in the dining room covers their ears. The pitch of the scream makes glassware rattle and some burst. Several ornaments fall from the Christmas tree and explode on the floor. The guest start to duck for cover.

After she is finished, Tiffany calmly sits in her chair. The room is quite.

Josh rubs his leg and looks meanly at Tiffany.

CUSTOMER 1, 40's, bald, wide-open eyes, is seated across the room. He reaches behind his head and pulls the knife out of the wall next to his head.

DONNA SUMMER
Lord! That girl needs to be in a
cage.

Valerie motions to Josh to come to their table.

VALERIE
Are you OK?

JOSH
Yes thanks.

Josh starts to laugh.

JOSH (CONT'D)
Did you see that man pull the knife
out of the wall?

VALERIE

Focus, OK? Do whatever you can to get those three out of here. Tell the man that was almost stabbed, his dinner is on the house tonight. Oh, and on your way out will you have someone put some water in the tree in the lobby. It's looking a little dry.

JOSH

(still laughing)

Sure.

The dining room is quiet. The diners are in shock over what has just happened.

SHARON

Hey Donna! Why don't you liven up this room. Give us a tune.

DONNA SUMMER

Sing?

VALERIE

Oh would you? It would be a perfect ending to a great evening. Besides, I think the guest are shell shocked.

DONNA SUMMER

Well I don't have a mic. I would have to lip sync and that isn't really nice.

SHARON

I'm sure Brittany tells herself that regularly. Get up.

Valerie goes to the desk at the end of the dining room and changes the music. The melody of "Christmas Spirit" begins to play.

Valerie introduces Donna Summer.

VALERIE

Dear guest, we are honored to have a true music icon to sing for us tonight. Please welcome Donna Summer.

The diners applaud, Donna Summer smiles and begins to sing with the music.

Valerie dims the dining room lights. The blue glow from the Christmas tree shines along the outline of Donna Summers dark hair.

Valerie joins Steven and Sharon at the table. Valerie listens intensely to each word of the song and is brought to tears by the story. Sharon reaches in her purse for a tissue and smiles as she hands it to Valerie.

Donna Summer continues with the song as each guest listens intently. Tiffany is playing with the meatloaf.

Donna Summer starts to move around the room singing to the guest and stopping to sing directly to Valerie.

The room erupts into applause as Donna finishes the song.

DONNA SUMMER

Let's move this party to the Lobby!

CUT TO:

INT. LOBBY -- NIGHT

Very few customers are in the lobby but several more are entering from the dining room. The light is dim and the colors from the tree illuminate the room with varied colors. Several needles can be seen dropping from the sad dried up tree.

The lobby has been decorated to resemble a disco. There is a mirror ball hanging over the Christmas tree, colored lights are flashing, and the Christmas lights dance to the disco music. The music is "*Dim all the Lights*".

The guest are dancing and Donna Summer and Sharon are sharing the DJ duty.

SHARON

Don't you think it's a bit self-serving playing your own music.

DONNA SUMMER

Oh grow up Sharon. You're just mad 'cause you know I'll win that bet.

SHARON

Don't count on it.

DONNA SUMMER

We'll see. My plan's in action.

SHARON

Now I can do what I want to stop it right?

DONNA SUMMER

Sure, but don't be mean to anyone.

SHARON

Got it.

DONNA SUMMER

And here we go. I mean it! Don't
be mean.

At the main entrance Josh is coming in the door with Kenneth. Josh takes Kenneth's coat then walks away. Kenneth has been transformed. He is clean, shaved, sober, and dressed like a model in a designer tuxedo.

SHARON

Oh that ain't right!

DONNA SUMMER

Yeah he does clean up nice.

Several of the women in the crowd look at him lustfully.

SHARON

Well if Valerie doesn't want that
hunk of man, I'll take him.

DONNA SUMMER

And the plan continues.

Donna changes the music to "*I Love You*." A white spotlight illuminates a door at the top of the stairs. Josh opens the door and Valerie comes out. She is wearing a white sequin evening gown that is low cut at the bust and has a high slit traveling up the right leg. Her hair is perfect. Her makeup is in place and glamorous. Her tan is striking against the white dress.

Josh takes her by the hand and they do a disco turn and dip. The dress slides just enough up her shapely legs to make Kenneth smile. They descend the stairs in a slow, upbeat fashion.

Kenneth, watching from the bottom of the stairs, looks up at Valerie. He has a very tender expression on his face and is almost in tears.

BACK TO DONNA SUMMER AND SHARON

SHARON

Going for the movie moment huh?
It's a clever but over used move.
Be right back.

DONNA SUMMER

Don't be mean!

SHARON

Who me?

DONNA SUMMER

I'm your boss. I can still fire
you.

SHARON

Yeah, Yeah.

Sharon makes her way through the dancers toward Kenneth.

The music progresses into "Heaven Knows."

Kenneth is frozen near the back of the room looking up at Valerie. She sees him and smiles. She keeps site of him as she comes down the stairs.

Kenneth snaps out of his trance and tries to make his way though the dancing guest. Sharon grabs him by the arm.

SHARON (CONT'D)

Well you are some hunk of man! What are you doing in a small backwoods town like this.

KENNETH

Huh? Excuse me? I need to...

Kenneth tries to make his way past Sharon but she holds on tight to his arm.

SHARON

That's a very nice tux. I bet you didn't get that locally. You visit New York often?

Sharon turns Kenneth toward her. She plays with his collar. Kenneth struggles to get away and focus his attention on Valerie.

Valerie continues down the stairs as Steven enters casually the from a door near the bottom of the stairs.

Valerie sees him and smiles. Steven waits for her and takes her arm as she steps onto the floor.

STEVEN

I don't know when I've seen a more beautiful woman.

VALERIE

You're being to kind.

A look of disappointment and anger comes over Kenneth's face. He turns to Sharon.

KENNETH

What are you doing for fun here tonight?

SHARON

Looking for a nice looking man to buy me a drink.

At the DJ table Donna Summer has a look of panic on her face. She stops the music. The needle slides across the record. Everyone stops dancing and looks at her confused.

Donna Summer smiles.

DONNA SUMMER

Sorry about that folks. I've had a special request for two of you that I know are in love. I've been advised that you fell in love while dancing to this song at your high school prom.

The crowd applauds.

Donna Summer scrambles for the record. Sharon joins Donna and tries to disrupt her search. Donna finally pushes Sharon out of the way and puts the record on the turntable. Sharon is reaching for the record from behind Donna Summer.

The crowd looks on in disbelief as the two struggle. Donna finally pushes Sharon aside, composes herself, then looks up and smiles.

DONNA SUMMER (CONT'D)

I want you two to have this dance while we all remember our first love. Ladies and gentlemen I want you to make room on the dance floor for Kenneth and Valerie O'Bryan.

She starts the record. "Superstar" by The Carpenters starts to play.

SHARON

How sappy.

Two white spotlights illuminate Valerie and Kenneth at opposite ends of the room. They turn to face each other.

Josh takes Valerie's arm from Steven and escorts her to Kenneth who has made his way to the middle of the room under the mirror ball.

Kenneth takes Valerie gently in his arms and they begin to dance. All of the noise seems to disappear from the room as Donna turns the volume up on the song. Kenneth and Valerie look deeply into each others eyes.

KENNETH

You look incredible.

VALERIE

You're as handsome as ever Ken.

She leans in and gently smells his neck. Kenneth closes his eyes and enjoys the moment.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

Smell good too!

Kenneth laughs.

Sharon has made her way to the front of the crowd so she can get on the dance floor.

Donna Summer comes up and stands beside her.

Josh is standing behind Sharon.

Valerie puts her head on Kenneth's shoulder.

DONNA SUMMER

I told you.

SHARON

I can stop this in a second.

Josh overhears their conversation and steps a bit closer to Sharon and Donna.

Sharon lunges toward Valerie and Kenneth as they dance by. Josh grabs the scarf that Sharon has tied around her neck. It almost clotheslines her.

Valerie and Kenneth are unaffected by the noise in the crowd.

Sharon turns and tries to choke Josh as Valerie and Kenneth dance slowly past them.

Kenneth gently turns Valerie, dips her, and gazes lovingly into her eyes. She looks up a bit surprised and smiles back at him.

VALERIE

I dont remember this move.

Josh falls to the floor as members of the crowd try to pull Sharon off of him. The two are rolling around, Donna is laughing.

Valerie and Kenneth are unaffected and kiss under the mirror ball as the words "I love you, I really do" are heard as the song comes to an end.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY -- DAY

Valerie gives Karen a cup of coffee and then joins her on the sofa. They both gaze blankly at the drying Christmas tree.

KAREN

I need this. I was up to late last night.

Valerie sips from her mug.

VALERIE

Hummmmmmm... It's good.

KAREN

What do you think's wrong with that tree.

VALERIE

That thing drinks gallons of water and still looks like its about to dry out.

KAREN

It's a sad, sad, pitiful tree.

Several needles fall from a branch as well as a glass ball that breaks on the floor.

VALERIE

Did you see that?

KAREN

I hate that tree.

VALERIE

Me too. Let's burn it.

KAREN

Right here? No! I don't want to get up.

VALERIE

Me either.

KAREN

So tell me.

VALERIE

What?

KAREN

Last night. You know. Kenneth all cleaned up and pretty. You were drop dead gorgeous.

Valerie just smiles.

KAREN (CONT'D)

You went home with him?

VALERIE

Yes.

KAREN

I knew it! How was it?

VALERIE

We didn't do anything.

KAREN

Yeah right.

VALERIE

It was like we both opened up and finally cleared the air about what went wrong.

KAREN

Well it was him right?

VALERIE

Well his drinking. It totally destroyed our marriage. It ruined us financially. He couldn't work. He stayed passed out on the couch most of the day. He was a dirty, disgusting mess.

KAREN

I think drinking is one of the saddest things to have to live through. I'm gonna tell you though, he is still one handsome man.

VALERIE

Oh yes he is!

KAREN

Donna Summer's creepy assistant was making a move on him. You better watch her.

VALERIE

We're not together. He can do what he wants you know.

KAREN

You know you don't mean that.

VALERIE

Well anyway he's got Patrick today. They're doing some Christmas shopping. Well Kenny is shopping and Patrick is asking.

KAREN

You have that much confidence in him? Trust him enough? To take care of Patrick I mean.

VALERIE

He seemed like he had really changed. He's really missed being with Patrick and me. We both did a lot of crying last night. I'm gonna tell you though, that kiss while we were dancing made me weak in the knees. I felt like I was gonna melt away right there. Lord I miss that man.

KAREN

I can't take this.

Karen tears up.

KAREN (CONT'D)

I cry at the drop of a hat these days. Maybe it's Christmas.

Valerie puts her arm around Karen.

VALERIE

I really think we might have a chance. He's doing the steps. Now don't worry. It's going to work out. One way or another.

Another glass ball falls from the tree. Karen and Valerie jump as if they have been shot.

KAREN

I hate that stupid tree!

Donna Summer and Sharon come down the stairs. Valerie and Karen get up from the sofa and go to the desk to greet them.

DONNA SUMMER

You have a good time last night?

VALERIE

You made it possible for everyone to have a good time. This little town is going to be talking about this for along time

DONNA SUMMER

I'm talking about you!

Valerie ducks her head a bit shyly.

VALERIE

Yes I had a good time. Thanks for getting that dress for me.

DONNA SUMMER

Honey, anything for true love.

SHARON

Seen Steven this morning?

Donna Summer elbows Sharon in the ribs and smiles. Sharon stumbles a bit and gives Donna a mean look.

VALERIE

He hasn't come down for his coffee yet.

SHARON

Now that's one fine hunk of man.

VALERIE

He is nice looking.

SHARON

He likes you.

VALERIE

(unconcerned)

That's sweet.

Josh walks by. Sharon sticks out one foot and tries to trip him. He stops, gives her a go-to-hell look, then continues on his way with his nose in the air.

SHARON

I'm gonna get that boy.

VALERIE

Did I miss something?

DONNA SUMMER

Sharon is playing a game with the waiter. Just ignore them.

Steven enters and takes his seat on the sofa with his coffee. He looks at the tree and smiles.

SHARON

Hmm...

DONNA SUMMER

Let's go. We're gonna visit the shops. Don't work too hard.

VALERIE

Have a good time.

Donna Summer grabs Sharon by the arm and they start toward the door mumbling to each other. Sharon tries to break away from Donna but Donna jerks Sharon's arm back and secures it under her arm.

Valerie joins Steven on the sofa. Steven stands to greet her.

STEVEN

How are you this morning?

They both sit on the sofa.

VALERIE

I'm sorry I had to cancel our plans last night.

STEVEN

I understand. Don't think about it. I was just looking for some company last night, nothing else. You had some magic working.

VALERIE

Well, we'll see.

STEVEN

Everything is worth a second chance.

VALERIE

Sadly, I've given him more chances than you can imagine.

STEVEN

Well Christmas is a holiday of miracles. Maybe you're due.

VALERIE

That would be nice.

STEVEN

What would you want? I mean miracle wise.

VALERIE

Well right now a tree that didn't look like it was a thousand years old.

STEVEN

Yeah you do need a new tree. Really what would you want more than anything for Christmas?

VALERIE

The "Storybook Christmas." I know its sappy.

STEVEN

Hey don't under estimate the power
of the "Father Knows Best" Christmas.

VALERIE

You mean the one where Kitten opens
a box of new hair bows and they all
go to the kitchen, pray, and sing
Christmas Carols? I don't think so.

STEVEN

Not a Christmas person?

VALERIE

Most of my Christmas holidays were
spent watching Kenneth drinking
himself into a coma and me trying to
explain to Patrick why Daddy can't
play with him.

STEVEN

Hard huh?

VALERIE

Not many good adult memories of
Christmas here. Hey, wait!

Valerie gets quite and looks seriously at Steven.

STEVEN

What?

VALERIE

You're doing it again.

STEVEN

I don't know what you mean.

VALERIE

You're making me talk about myself.
You're gonna have to give something
up this time.

STEVEN

Humm...Like what?

VALERIE

(smiling)
Well you're a nice looking fella.

STEVEN

Well thanks.

VALERIE

Have all your teeth.

Steven puts his fingers in his mouth and tries to move his teeth around.

STEVEN
Yeah seem to be OK.

VALERIE
Can carry on an intelligent conversation.

STEVEN
But..?

VALERIE
You're not married?

Steven burst out laughing.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
What?

STEVEN
There's the question.

VALERIE
Well?

STEVEN
I've been married. Beth passed away a long time ago and I just haven't found anyone that I loved as much as her. It's been a long time and I do need to make a life for myself again.

VALERIE
I'm sorry. I really didn't mean...

STEVEN
No it's OK. You didn't know.

VALERIE
I didn't mean to bring up such a sad subject.

STEVEN
No. It's OK.

VALERIE
Well, I would imagine, that given the kind of person you are, she had to be an incredible person as well.

STEVEN
Beth was the love of my life.
(MORE)

STEVEN (CONT'D)

You know how you get all tingly and excited when you see the one you really love? You know how you can't stand to be away from your other half and how it aches when you are?

Valerie listens intently and begins to tear up.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

You know how you so know someone that a look communicates every feeling you have about another person? Have you ever just lived and breathed someone? That you could never imagine what life would be without that other person.

Valerie wipes a tear from her face then looks down. Steven takes her other hand in his.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

I know you know all these things. We all see it when Kenneth enters the room.

Valerie looks up at Steven.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

That man is the other half of your soul. You're empty without him. Just as I was without Beth. Is what he has done so bad that you can't possibly repair the damage?

VALERIE

(sniffling)

I...

STEVEN

Can you find it in your heart to let someone you love back in?

VALERIE

You don't know what he put me through. The constant worry, the financial ruin, the unstable home.

STEVEN

Hasn't that all passed? Are you ready to start your life again? Valerie, life is too short not to be with the one you love.

A glass ornament falls from the tree and breaks on the floor. Valerie is startled.

Karen approaches the sofa.

KAREN

Val you need to take this call at
the desk.

Valerie wipes her face.

VALERIE

Take a message Karen.

KAREN

It's important please take it.

CUT TO:

EXT. EMERGENCY ROOM ENTRANCE -- DAY

EMT 1 and EMT 2, both strong tall men, 20's, are taking a patient in on a stretcher. Visitors are walking in the entrance. MAINTENANCE WORKER 1, 40's, dressed in a heavy coat and cap, is shoveling the snow that is piled around the entrance.

VISITOR 1, 30's, well dressed, business man, walks past Maintenance Worker 1 just as Maintenance Worker 1 pitches a shovel full of snow over his shoulder directly into the face of Visitor 1. Visitor 1 is knocked off of his feet from the force.

Valerie steps over Visitor 1 and goes through the Emergency Room entrance.

Maintenance Worker 1 helps Visitor 1 to his feet. Visitor 1 shoves him and they both fall to the sidewalk.

CUT TO:

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM MAIN DESK AREA -- DAY

Valerie runs up to the Emergency Department desk. JADA, 30's, black, attractive, and full of attitude is working on some paperwork while on hold on the telephone.

VALERIE

I need some help.

JADA

Honey we all need help.

She slams the phone down and gets some head movement going.

JADA (CONT'D)

Now can I help you?

VALERIE

There was an accident, my husband.

JADA

Name?

VALERIE

Kenneth O'Bryan.

Jada types on the computer at the desk.

JADA

I'm not showing an O'Bryan.

VALERIE

I know he's here.

JADA

Excuse me.

Jada turns to the sound system and turns the volume up. *This Time I Know It's for Real* blast out over the Emergency Room sound system.

JADA (CONT'D)

I swear if it wasn't for Donna Summer
I'd loose it today.

Jada looks at NURSE 1, 20's, blond, and attractive, as she walks past the desk.

JADA (CONT'D)

Did you manage to get that IV started
in 2.

NURSE 1

Not yet.

JADA

Sometime before Christmas?

Nurse 1 just walks by unconcerned. Jada turns back to Valerie who has become very aggravated.

JADA (CONT'D)

You still here?

VALERIE

O'Bryan?

JADA

Listen, we don't have an O'Bryan in
the system. If there is one here I
can't tell you about it.

Valerie looks past Jada as OFFICERS SCOTT and KEITH, both 20's, muscular, walk into a room in the patient area. Valerie carefully goes past Jada when she answers another phone call.

Valerie listens outside the patient room.

SCOTT
How fast were you going?

KENNETH
I don't remember?

Valerie hears Kenneth's voice and steps in the room. Scott is on one side of the bed, Keith is on the other. Kenneth has a bloody bandage on his forehead.

KEITH
I'm sorry you can't be in here right now.

SCOTT
I know these folks Keith.

VALERIE
I'm his wife.

KENNETH
It's OK.

KEITH
Your blood alcohol was just under legal.

Kenneth ducks his head as Valerie looks at Kenneth disappointed.

KENNETH
Val I'm so sorry.

VALERIE
Are you ok?

Jada enters the room and puts a kit on the table next to the bed.

JADA
(smugly)
He's OK. Gonna have one hell of a headache though. The doc will be here in a few minutes. Get you stiched up and ready to go.

KENNETH
You're just a little ray of sunshine.

JADA
Well honey I do what I can.

Jada snaps her tiny body around fast, smiles, and leaves the room. Scott folds his pad up.

SCOTT

OK Kenny, you were the only one hurt
and there's no damage to anyone's
property so I can let this slide.

KENNETH

Thanks Scott.

VALERIE

Thanks Scott.

SCOTT

You two be good and try to have a
good Christmas.

Scott and Keith leave the room. Kenneth looks up a bit
embarrassed at Valerie.

VALERIE

Fall off the wagon?

KENNETH

Drove into the side of it actually.

VALERIE

What happened?

KENNETH

You have to ask?

VALERIE

Don't start with me Ken. Just tell
me!

KENNETH

You don't really care.

VALERIE

Why am I here Ken?

KENNETH

I don't know. To gloat? Feel good
Val? Say it! I told you so!

VALERIE

I don't need this crap Kenneth.
I've gone down this road before.
Merry Christmas!

Valerie yanks the cubical curtain back and leaves the room.

INT. HALLWAY EMERGENCY ROOM -- DAY

Valerie passes Kent and Tiffany. Tiffany has a bandage on
her hand. Kent stops Valerie in the hall.

KENT

My Tiffany cut herself on some broken glass from that dead-ass Christmas tree of yours.

Tiffany looks up and Valerie and puts her finger on display. She gives Valerie a smart-ass look.

VALERIE

I'm so sorry. Please send the bill to the hotel.

KENT

You can count on it. My attorney will contact you. This is probably going to need some stitches and a tetanus shot for sure.

VALERIE

Whatever!

Valerie walks off unconcerned. Tiffany looks at Kent surprised.

TIFFANY

I'm not taking a shot!

Valerie hears Tiffany and turns, smiles at Kent, then continues on her way out.

Jada goes to Kenneth's room with a syringe. Tiffanie's eyes get big as Jada stops, waves the syringe at Tiffany, then enters Kenneth's room.

TIFFANY (CONT'D)

I mean it I'm not taking a shot!

KENT

Oh come on Tiffany. It'll be alright.

Kent tries to pull Tiffany along but she is dragging her feet.

Jada sticks her head out from behind the curtain of Kenneth's room.

JADA

You two need to keep it down! There are sick people here.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM, KENNETH'S ROOM -- DAY

Jada starts at Kenneth with a syringe.

KENNETH

What's that?

JADA

Tetanus.

KENNETH

I don't need tetanus.

JADA

Funny.

KENNETH

Are you sure I need that?

JADA

Did you cut your head tonight?

KENNETH

Duh, well yeah.

JADA

Then you need a tetanus shot. We can do this in your arm.

Kenneth sits up in the bed and Jada pulls his hospital gown sleeve up to his shoulder.

INT. HALLWAY EMERGENCY ROOM -- DAY

Kent continues to drag Tiffany down the hallway.

TIFFANY

I won't do it! I won't do it!

Kent continues to drag.

KENT

Now baby!

Tiffany lets out one of her ear piercing screams.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM, KENNETH'S ROOM

Jada is startled by the scream and jabs the syringe into Kenneth's arm.

KENNETH

Son-of-a-b...

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM MAIN DESK AREA -- DAY

The needle slides across the record Jada had left playing.

OLD MAN, 80's, trips over his walker and falls face first onto the floor. Valerie runs over to assist him.

Two ornaments fall from the hospital tree.

As the scream stops everyone stands around looking confused.

Jada comes running to the desk and slides to a stop. She restarts the record. "Hot Stuff" starts to play. The visitors and hospital associates are happy to hear the music. Some move their heads to the beat, others dance in place.

In the waiting room across from the desk Steven has been sitting quietly admiring the hospital Christmas tree. The Christmas tree is in sad shape. Decorations are jumbled and the tree is dead. He sees Valerie walk past as she heads for the exit.

STEVEN
(calling out)
Valerie!

Valerie stops, Steven joins her, and they both exit the Emergency Room.

EXT. EMERGENCY ROOM ENTRANCE -- DAY

Steven and Valerie stop outside on the sidewalk just outside of the Emergency Room.

VALERIE
What are you doing here? Everything OK?

STEVEN
Just visiting friends. Hospitals at Christmas are sad. So much pain and unhappiness at such a joyous time.

VALERIE
Tell me about it.

STEVEN
Wazzup with you?

Steven is in a very happy mood.

VALERIE
Wazzup? Wazzup? You already been in the eggnog?

Steven laughs and looks around at the snow and takes Valerie by the hand.

STEVEN
Doesn't this beautiful day make you feel great?

VALERIE
Have to much on my mind.

STEVEN
Let's get away from this hospital. I'll buy you a cup of coffee downtown.

As they walk down the street they pass a Christmas tree lot. All of the trees are brown.

VALERIE

I don't know what's happened to the trees this year.

STEVEN

Sad bunch of trees for sure.

VALERIE

I'm sure they went out to the woods and said, "lets bring every dead tree we can find back to Crystal Springs".

STEVEN

(laughingly)

Looks like. How's Kenneth?

Valerie looks surprised and stops walking.

VALERIE

How did you know about Kenneth?

STEVEN

I saw the policemen bring him in.

VALERIE

Did they have to rough him up?

STEVEN

No, looked pretty civilized.

VALERIE

Dang!

STEVEN

(laughing)

You don't mean that!

VALERIE

I'm so sick of this crap! We're separated and I still come to check on him. It's not right.

STEVEN

Something's there.

VALERIE

Oh don't you start! What are you up to anyway? What's your story? Everytime I look up you're there to hold my hand.

STEVEN

Hey I'm just here for Christmas. I don't have anyone of my own so I meddle in other people's lives.

VALERIE

Listen, I know you have good intentions, but I think this thing with me and Kenny has ran its course.

STEVEN

What about Patrick.

VALERIE

Oh don't even go there! I've done everything I could on my own.

STEVEN

Boys need their dads.

VALERIE

You're full of it, you know it?

STEVEN

Well..

VALERIE

No. You have no idea how and what Patrick had to go through with Kenneth as a dad. He can't possibly have any good memories of Kenny.

STEVEN

Maybe we should change the subject.

VALERIE

I think so.

Steven and Valerie stop in front of the coffee shop. Donna Summer and Sharon are inside near the window.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

Listen, I'm not very good company right now. Care if we do coffee another time?

STEVEN

Sure. You gonna be OK?

VALERIE

I'm fine. I'll see you at the hotel.

INT. COFFEE SHOP -- DAY

Donna and Sharon watch as Steven gives Valerie a hug and then waives goodbye.

Donna puts her coffee down and looks at Sharon.

DONNA SUMMER
They didn't look happy.

SHARON
We have 2 more days here in this
lovely little town.

DONNA SUMMER
You're gonna so loose.

SHARON
Not likely. I have something in the
works now.

DONNA SUMMER
What are you up to?

SHARON
The party for the children is tonight
right?

DONNA SUMMER
It's not right to mess with kids at
Christmas.

SHARON
The kids will be OK.

DONNA SUMMER
Remember, no one gets hurt.

SHARON
Not to worry.

DONNA SUMMER
I mean it!

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL LOBBY -- NIGHT

The hotel lobby has been revamped. The dried out Christmas tree has been replaced and hundreds of decorations have been placed on the branches. Hundreds of plastic snowflakes hang from the ceiling. Miniature lights twinkle beneath cotton clouds over the snowflakes.

SANTA is seated in a grand chair at the end of the lobby. Donna and Sharon are standing at his side. Donna Summer is dressed in a stunning red velvet evening gown trimmed in white fur. Santa's helper was never so beautiful. Sharon is dressed like an elf with the pointed hat and shoes. She has a nasty disposition.

Sharon is helping the children up to Santa's lap. Donna Summer hands the children a gift and gives them a hug as they leave.

The children form a group around Santa's area as the other children take their turns on his lap.

SHARON

Hey! Santa's wife never dressed like one of the Supremes.

Donna holds up one finger.

DONNA SUMMER

Hey baby! I didn't work so hard, so long, to have to dress like some skank elf.

Sharon looks down at a child waiting to see Santa.

SHARON

Don't let Mrs. Claus kiss you with that nasty mouth of her's.

DONNA SUMMER

Be sweet.

Donna steps in front of Sharon to help TIM, 4 years old, red hair, on Santa's lap. She looks down at him as he settles down to read his list to Santa.

DONNA SUMMER (CONT'D)

What's your name buddy?

TIM

Tim.

DONNA SUMMER

Well Tim, don't pay any attention to Santa's bitter ol' elf. She was jilted at the workshop.

TIM

Huh?

Donna Summer smiles and walks toward the gifts. She looks toward the lobby entrance to see Valerie come in with a load of gifts. Donna signals to Karen at the desk. Karen changes the music to "*On the Radio.*"

As Valerie enters the lobbie from the main entrance she looks around the room in amazement. She walks up to Karen at the desk.

VALERIE

You guys did a great job. You got a nice tree too.

KAREN

You know how hard it is to find a tree this close to Christmas.

VALERIE

You're a miracle worker.

KAREN

Well Ol' Man Cooper wasn't using that tree anyway.

VALERIE

You're serious?

KAREN

All I'm sayin' is that trees are hard to find two days before Christmas.

The last child leaves Santa's area. Santa stands and stretches.

SANTA

Ho, Ho, Ho,...Let's go have some cookies and milk.

The children scream and laugh and circle around Santa as he makes his way to the dining room. Sharon follows the crowd. Santa drags 2 children that are clinging to his legs. They make their way by the main desk.

VALERIE

Let's go give Santa a hand.

KAREN

Ms. Summer wanted me to keep you here. She has a gift for you.

VALERIE

Me? Really?

KAREN

That's what she said. I'll go help Santa and the Elf.

Valerie walks over to Donna who is standing by a huge box with a big red sparkly bow that is next to Santa's chair.

VALERIE

You look absolutely beautiful. I bet lots of Dads were checking out Santa's helpers.

DONNA SUMMER

Oh I don't know about that.

Donna reaches behind the box and pulls out a pair of huge golden scissors. They glitter as the light hits them.

DONNA SUMMER (CONT'D)

Cut the ribbon after I go to the dining room. The kids will leave out the back.

VALERIE

What's going on? I thought this was just part of Santa's decorations.

DONNA SUMMER

You'll like it I swear.

Donna leaves quietly as Valerie examines the box. Donna stops at the desk to change the music to "*I Feel Love*." She walks over to the light switch and dims the lights. The trees are glowing in the dim light. Donna turns on the disco ball and the room comes alive with lights.

Valerie admires the room. She takes the scissors to the box and cuts the ribbon. The front of the box opens forward slowly. Valerie backs up so it can fall to the floor.

VALERIE

Oh my goodness!

Kenneth steps out of the box dancing to the music. He is dressed in red velvet Santa pants that are several sizes too large, a wide black belt, black boots, Santa hat, white beard, and no shirt. His muscular body glistens in the twinkling light.

Valerie laughs and sits on Santa's chair.

Kenneth makes his way to Valerie dancing in true male stripper fashion.

KENNETH

Hey little girl. You been good this year?

VALERIE

Not nearly good enough.

Kenneth takes his beard off and puts it on Valerie.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

It smells like Aramis.

KENNETH

You gave me that smell good.

VALERIE

I always loved the way you smelled.

KENNETH

What can I bring you this year little girl?

Kenneth continues to dance around Valerie.

VALERIE

Hummm....

KENNETH

Any new toys?

VALERIE

A new husband?

Kenneth stops dancing. He holds out both arms.

KENNETH

This not new enough for you? We're still married.

VALERIE

I could never resist you. You make it so hard sometimes Kenny.

Kenneth starts to dance again shaking his hips.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

Really hard.

KENNETH

Want to dance with Santa? Sit on my lap?

VALERIE

That's a bit perverted don't you think?

The music changes to "*Any Way at All.*"

Kenneth takes Valerie's hand and they move to the center of the room to dance. Kenneth pulls Valerie close and gives her a squeeze. He removes the Santa beard from her face. Valerie takes a deep breath and smells Kenneth's Aramis. She puts her cheek on his bare chest.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

I just melt away on your broad shoulders.

She stops and pulls away a little and looks at Kenneth's chest.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

You have glitter on your chest?

Kenneth laughs and just pulls Valerie against his chest.

KENNETH

What if I do?

Valerie sighs.

VALERIE

Honey, it don't matter right now.

They both giggle a bit and move slowly to the music. The Christmas tree can be seen in the background glowing in the darkened room. Kenneth looks deeply into Valerie's eyes.

KENNETH

Valerie I love you so much.

He takes his Santa hat off and lets it fall to the floor. They continue to move to the music.

VALERIE

I know Kenny.

He leans in to kiss Valerie passionately. Valerie keeps her eyes closed for a few seconds after the kiss. She has a look a absolute contentment and serenity on her face.

KENNETH

Don't think about it Val. I know you love me. You just have to.

She backs up a couple of steps and looks him over from the black boots to the chiseled features of his abdominal muscles and chest. The blue glow of the Christmas lights highlights his face.

Valerie smiles.

VALERIE

I swear you are the best looking Santa I've ever seen.

Kenneth grabs her hand and pulls her in close to him fast and hard.

KENNETH

I need a Mrs. Clause to keep me warm. It's no fun sleeping with the reindeer. They stink.

VALERIE

It does feel right.

KENNETH

Donna said she would watch Patrick for us at the party and carry him to Mom's after.

VALERIE
Let's go back to my place.

KENNETH
Serious?

VALERIE
You know how twisted it is to do it
with Santa?

Kenneth reaches down and gets the Santa hat from the floor.

KENNETH
(laughing)
It's just me. But you're right.

VALERIE
Where's the jacket to that suit?
Your gonna freeze your jingle bells
off.

KENNETH
(laughing)
In the box.

Kenneth walks to the giant package and gets the jacket to
the Santa costume. He puts it on but leaves it unbuttoned.

VALERIE
You just can't miss tonight. Clothes
on or off you are the best looking
Santa around.

Kenneth is looking for buttons on the jacket.

KENNETH
There are these big ol' buttons but
no holes. What's the deal?

Valerie walks over and looks at the jacket.

VALERIE
Velcro.

KENNETH
(laughing)
Let's get out of here.

Kenneth leaves the jacket open and picks the Santa hat up
from the floor.

They start to the lobby front entrance when the doors from
the dining room swing open. Sharon is running for her life
with children throwing cookies at her.

Sharon slides to a stop on the highly polished wood floors
of the lobby. She holds out her finger at the children.

They all slide to a stop.

SHARON

The next kid that throws a cookie
gets put on the naughty list.

Tiffany is at the back of the crowd and throws the first
cookie that bounces off Sharon's pointed elf hat.

Kenneth and Valerie watch in disbelief.

The children run at Sharon. Sharon tries to run but can not
get any traction on the polished flooring. She runs in place
a few steps then falls face first on the floor. The children
jump on top of her as if she was the first football player
on a fumbled ball.

VALERIE

OK now we've got to help.

Kenneth struggles trying to fasten his jacket. Frustrated,
he takes the jacket off and flings it to a nearby table. He
pulls the over-sized Santa pants up by the belt and pulls
the Santa hat tightly over his head. Valerie looks at
Kenneth.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

You ready?

KENNETH

Lord help us. Lead the charge.

Kenneth and Valerie rush to help Sharon. They lift children
one at a time from the pile until they reveal a ruffled
Sharon.

Tiffany is standing nearby watching closely.

SHARON

I hate kids.

VALERIE

Now is that anyway Santa's helper
should talk? Can we help you up?

Sharon looks up at Kenneth. His Santa hat is tilted to one
side. He grins down at Sharon and pulls up his pants. One
of his teeth sparkles in the Christmas lights.

SHARON

Well I'll do anything St. Nick wants.

Valerie grabs Sharon by the hand and yanks her so hard off
the floor that her elf hat flips off and lands on Tiffany's
head.

Tiffany takes it off, flings it to the floor, viciously stomps it, then runs off.

SHARON (CONT'D)

Lovely girl.

Sharon leans on Kenneth.

SHARON (CONT'D)

Well Santa. Let's go clean the workshop.

KENNETH

(smiling)

Never trust an Elf.

VALERIE

(coldly)

Ms. Summer is looking for you.

Valerie looks toward the dining room. Donna is angrily gazing at Sharon. She has her arms crossed and is tapping one of her feet.

SHARON

Dang!

KENNETH

If you'll go warm the car up I'll thank Ms. Summer for having the courage to keep Patrick.

VALERIE

Ok but don't forget to put your coat on. It's freezing out there.

Valerie continues out of the lobby.

KENNETH

Will do.

Kenneth starts toward the dining room and stops when he reaches Donna Summer. As he is thanking Donna, Sharon reaches behind the counter and pulls out a bottle of Jack Daniels. She puts the bottle under the Santa jacket then goes out of the main lobby entrance. She looks back and gleefully smiles. Kenneth gives Donna a hug then starts toward the door.

Kenneth stops at the table and picks up his jacket. The bottle of Jack Daniels roles off the table. He catches it in mid air.

Kenneth looks around to see if anyone has spotted him with the bottle. He sits the bottle back on the table and starts toward the lobby entrance. He stops and takes a deep breath. He turns and looks ashamed as he walks toward the bottle.

He puts the Santa jacket on then slips the bottle in his oversized pocket.

He slowly proceeds to the lobby entrance and stops one more time without turning around. He finally leaves the hotel.

EXT. PARKING LOT -- NIGHT

Valerie has started her car and is seated on the drivers side waiting on Kenneth. Red and green Christmas lights cast a colorful holiday glow on the snow that is piled up around the car.

Kenneth approaches the car. He knocks on the window. Valerie lets the window down.

VALERIE

Well it took you long enough.

KENNETH

I can't go Valerie.

VALERIE

I knew it!

KENNETH

I haven't worked in 3 months. A guy in the hotel saw me in this suit and wants me to play Santa for his little girls.

VALERIE

(shyly)

Oh come on! Don't make me beg.

KENNETH

A hundred bucks for about 2 hours work. That would go a long way on something for Patrick this Christmas.

VALERIE

(forgiving)

You're right.

KENNETH

Can I call you in the morning?

VALERIE

I guess...Ken?

KENNETH

Yeah?

VALERIE

You're trying to work through your problem right?

(MORE)

VALERIE (CONT'D)

I mean, you will call me if you need help, or call your sponsor?

KENNETH

I promise. Now lets have a kiss.

VALERIE

Hummm...kissing Santa in the parking lot. There's got to be a country song in there somewhere.

Kenneth leans over into the car and passionately kisses Valerie.

KENNETH

I'll see you in the morning.

VALERIE

Count on it. Ken, I mean it! Call me if you need me.

KENNETH

Hey you know what? I think I can come over after my Santa appearance.

VALERIE

OK. I'll see you later Mr. Kringle.

Valerie rolls the window up and drives off.

Kenneth stands still in the snow until she leaves. He takes the bottle from his pocket and stares at it for a few seconds. He takes a big drink. He makes a face and walks off disgusted with himself.

INT. VALERIE'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

The room is expertly decorated for Christmas. There is a majestic tree in front of the window decorated with Victorian ornaments and illuminated with golden lights. Greenery tops the mantle and a small fire in the hearth has the room illuminated with a soft glow.

Valerie turns on the radio. "*Lucky*" by Donna Summer is playing. She turns the volume up and begins to straighten up the room. She grabs up old newspapers, picks up Patrick's toys, grabs some glasses off the coffee table, and leaves the room.

INT. KENNETH'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

The room is dark and Spartan. The thin curtains are pulled to one side and are tattered. The furniture is ragged and dirty. Music from his radio is also "*Lucky*" by Donna Summer.

Kenneth enters and sits on the couch. He takes the bottle out of his coat and sits it on the coffee table. He picks up one of the several dirty glasses that are scattered on the table and pours himself a very generous drink. He drinks it quickly and sits the glass down. He looks sadly across to the window and watches as the snow falls gently.

INT. VALERIE'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Valerie enters the room with some candles. She arranges them on the coffee table in front of the sofa. She goes to the mantle and gets a box of matches and lights the candles and sits back to admire her work.

INT. KENNETH'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Kenneth slams down 2 more drinks then slouches on the sofa.

INT. VALERIE'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

The candles have burned halfway down. The room is quiet. Valerie is eating some cheese and crackers. She finishes the last cracker then leans over and blows the candles out. She goes to the wall switch and turns the tree off then checks to make sure the fireplace is OK. She sighs deeply, then leaves the room.

INT. KENNETH'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Kenneth is passed out on his sofa. The room is illuminated by the television. The animated version of "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" is on.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY -- DAY

The replacement Christmas tree is showing wear. Although it is only 2 days old the needles are browning and the limbs are starting to droop.

Karen is at the desk blankly staring out the main entrance.

Steven has his spot on the sofa drinking coffee.

Valerie comes in from the dining room entrance. She removes her coat.

VALERIE

Busy day huh?

KAREN

You know how Christmas Eve is.

VALERIE

I love it. All the guests have gone or are on their way to their families.

KAREN

It's a peaceful time around here for sure.

Karen and Valerie look at Steven on the sofa. Steven has his newspaper and his cup of coffee.

KAREN (CONT'D)

Well all of the guest but one. Go see if he's leaving so we can close this sucker up.

VALERIE

(laughingly)

I can't run him off. This is a business you know.

Valerie goes to the sofa and sits by Steven.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

What do you think's wrong with the trees we're getting?

STEVEN

You're having a run of bad luck with dead trees.

VALERIE

It's not just the trees. All the plants in the hotel are about to die.

STEVEN

I think the tree's too close to the fireplace. It's drying out.

VALERIE

We always put it here.

STEVEN

I don't know then.

VALERIE

Are you coming to the children's concert tonight?

STEVEN

Children's concert?

VALERIE

It's at the town hall. A group of children form a Christmas Choir. They give a concert Christmas Eve.

STEVEN

Sounds like a family gathering. I'll pass.

VALERIE

Oh come on! It'll give you a good feeling.

Valerie puts her hand innocently on Steven's leg.

STEVEN

I wouldn't miss it then. Patrick in that group?

VALERIE

Oh yes.

STEVEN

It's not that same group of kids that were here to see Santa is it?

VALERIE

Well...

STEVEN

Well don't feed them any sugar.

VALERIE

Good point.

Kenneth enters the lobby through the dining room entrance. He is all bundled up and has on a dark pair of sunglasses. He stops at the desk.

Josh walks by and theatrically drops a dead poinsettia in the garbage can next to the desk.

JOSH

(singing)

Another one bites the dust...

The noise makes Kenneth hold his head. He gives Josh a go-to-hell look then turns his attention to Valerie and Steven.

Josh just turns up his nose at Kenneth and walks in the other direction.

Kenneth approaches the sofa.

KENNETH

We need to talk Val.

VALERIE

I don't think there's anything to be said Ken.

KENNETH

Please.

VALERIE

It's the same ol' story right?

KENNETH

Don't be like that. Let's at least go out back and talk.

VALERIE

Go have some coffee Ken.

Kenneth grabs Valerie by the arm and brings her to a standing position.

Steven moves the paper off of his lap and sits his coffee on the table in front of the sofa.

KENNETH

I said let's go out back and talk about this.

VALERIE

Let go of me.

Steven gets up.

KENNETH

(Angered)

Oh your new boyfriend's going to protect you now?

Valerie stands up and puts herself between Steven and Kenneth.

VALERIE

Kenneth please just leave.

Kenneth pushes Valerie on the sofa and throws a punch at Steven. Steven slightly moves his head and the punch slides by his face. Steven follows the slip with a hard straight right hand to Kenneth's nose. Kenneth falls straight back on the floor next to the tree and is out cold. A bit of tinsel falls from the tree and lands on Kenneth's face.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

Oh my God!

STEVEN

I'm sorry Valerie.

Steven shakes his hand in pain and paces back and forth in front of the Christmas tree.

VALERIE

No. It's OK. It's not like this hasn't ever happened before.

Karen runs over and kneels by Kenneth. She looks up at Steven.

KAREN

What have you done?

Steven turns to leave. Valerie grabs him by the arm.

VALERIE

Are you OK?

STEVEN

I'll be fine.

Josh casually comes over

KAREN

Do I need to call the EMT's?

VALERIE

I don't think so. No blood. Let's drag him up to a room and bring him around.

STEVEN

I think I need to go for a walk and cool down some. I hate I did this in front of you.

VALERIE

What? Protect a friend?

STEVEN

I hate violence.

VALERIE

Well you handled yourself like a pro. You must have been a fighter in a former life.

STEVEN

It's all behind me now. I shouldn't have let it resurface.

Steven grabs his coat from the row of hooks by the door and leaves.

VALERIE

OK. Let's get him to the elevator and up to 204.

JOSH

I'll get his left arm you get his right.

Karen grabs his right arm and they start to drag Steven to the elevator. Valerie follows.

Donna Summer and Sharon come out of the dining room and are shocked as Karen and Josh drag Kenneth past the dining room door.

DONNA SUMMER
What's goin' on?

SHARON
Rough night?

Valerie stops to talk. Karen and Josh stand in place, holding Kenneth's arm, looking uninterested.

VALERIE
Personal issue. Not to worry.

DONNA SUMMER
OK.

SHARON
I'll warm up the car.

Sharon leaves by the front entrance.

DONNA SUMMER
I hear there's a concert tonight?

VALERIE
Yes! Town hall.

DONNA SUMMER
Can anyone come?

VALERIE
We would be honored to have you.

DONNA SUMMER
I wanted to ask something but since you are dragging your husband to the elevator I'm sorta afraid.

VALERIE
Last night?

DONNA SUMMER
Please tell me it worked out.

VALERIE
I thought it was going to be the night we settled everything but he did a no show.

DONNA SUMMER
He did what?

VALERIE
He came by to apologize this morning.

DONNA SUMMER
And you did that to him?

VALERIE

(laughing)

No...no. Steven was protecting my honor I guess.

DONNA SUMMER

So what's the deal with you two?

VALERIE

Well we were married and now we're seperated. That's about it. After last night I'm about 90% sure we are headed for divorce court.

DONNA SUMMER

No you and Pretty Boy.

Valerie looks surprised.

VALERIE

Steven?

DONNA SUMMER

Cuz girl I'm doin' my best to work some magic here and if you have something else goin' on it ain't gonna work.

VALERIE

He is a pretty boy!

DONNA SUMMER

Oh no!

VALERIE

But I swear nothing is going on between us. I honestly don't know what we have.

DONNA SUMMER

Come on let's talk about this.

Donna and Valerie head to the sofa and sit down. Karen drops Kenneth's arm and looks at Josh.

KAREN

Let's leave him here.

Karen heads toward the front desk.

Josh looks a bit disgusted, drops Kenneth's arm, and walks away leaving Kenneth in front of the elevator door.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY -- DAY

Donna Summer and Valerie are seated on the sofa next to the Christmas tree.

DONNA SUMMER

Ok spill.

VALERIE

When I am around Steven I feel all warm and special. No pressure to do anything but just talk. He listens, he has good advice, he's nice to look at, just a nice guy.

DONNA SUMMER

And the husband?

VALERIE

Lord help me. I turn into a love crazed teenager around that man. I just can't live with the alcohol problem. But you know there is something about that "bad boy" image that attracts me to him.

Donna pets Valerie on the shoulder and pulls her in for a hug.

DONNA SUMMER

It'll be OK.

Josh walks past with a dead poinsettia. He dramatically drops it in the waist can and leaves the room.

DONNA SUMMER (CONT'D)

(laughing)

What's up with the plants in this town. Ya'll specialize in brown?

Valerie and Donna laugh.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOWN HALL AUDITORIUM -- NIGHT

There are candles in every window. Greenery is draped on the backs of the chairs and over the stage. A 15 foot Christmas tree stands at the right of the stage. It is decorated with silver and blue ornaments and is illuminated with hundreds of tiny blue lights.

The children are positioned on the stage in several rows. They are dressed in white robes with red collars. Patrick is in the front. They all hold artificial candles that are lit by a single miniature bulb at the top.

Donna Summer is leading the children's choir in "*Away in the Manger.*"

Valerie is seated near the front and center of the audience. She is enjoying the concert and is smiling.

She occasionally points out things to Steven and Karen who are seated on either side of her.

VALERIE
(whispering)
Isn't he the cutest thing you've
ever seen?

KAREN
Absolutely.

VALERIE
You're not just saying that because
I'm your boss.

KAREN
(seriously)
Absolutely.

Steven smiles. Valerie turns to Steven.

VALERIE
Cute huh?

STEVEN
Absolutely.

Steven and Karen start to snicker.

VALERIE
You two are in this together. Yeah,
trouble makers.

STEVEN
Hey not me. This is great though.

A loud noise is heard at the back of the audience. Several people look back. The singers don't miss a beat.

VALERIE
What's that?

Kenneth is noisily struggling with his coat that he has caught in the door. He is unshaven and dirty looking; obviously drunk.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
Oh no!

STEVEN
Should I handle this?

VALERIE
Can you do it quietly?

STEVEN
I can but I don't know about Kenneth.

VALERIE

Please.

Valerie sinks down in her seat.

Steven makes his way quietly back to Kenneth.

Kenneth is still struggling with his coat but sees Steven approaching.

KENNETH

Oh no you don't!

Steven puts his finger up to his mouth to signal Kenneth to be quite.

KENNETH (CONT'D)

(more softly and
quietly)

Oh no you don't.

Steven smiles, walks up to Kenneth, helps him get his coat free, and escorts him to a seat at the rear of the auditorium. Steven takes the seat next to Kenneth.

STEVEN

(friendly)

Think you can behave yourself?

KENNETH

Yeah, thanks man.

Kenneth looks remorseful as he looks at Patrick singing.

KENNETH (CONT'D)

That's my boy.

STEVEN

I know.

KENNETH

You're seeing my wife.

STEVEN

No I'm not. I'm only here for
Christmas.

KENNETH

I bet.

STEVEN

Really. Do you have any idea how
much that woman loves you?

KENNETH

Man she hates me.

STEVEN

No she don't. She hates the things
you do when you drink. Do you have
any idea how obnoxious you are?
Like now?

KENNETH

What?

The music stops and everyone applauds.

INT. TOWN HALL AUDITORIUM STAGE -- NIGHT

DONNA SUMMER

Thank you very much. These kids
have done a great job! I would like
all the parents to stand up and be
recognized.

INT. TOWN HALL AUDITORIUM -- NIGHT

Several parents, seated in different locations of the
auditorium, stand up. Kenneth stays seated.

STEVEN

Man this is for you.

KENNETH

I can't. It will embarrass Valerie
and Patrick.

STEVEN

Your son is looking for you man.
Stand up in the aisle so he can see
you.

Kenneth slowly stands and moves in the aisle.

BACK TO THE STAGE

Patrick smiles and is excited to see Kenneth.

BACK TO THE AUDITORIUM

Valerie looks over the crowd and tears up at the site of
Kenneth at the back of the room.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

I don't want you to ever forget this
moment. Your son won't.

BACK TO THE STAGE

The applauds die down and Donna Summer takes the microphone
again.

DONNA SUMMER

Don't you think we need to get these kids home so Santa won't fly by?

The children are all excited.

DONNA SUMMER (CONT'D)

This will sound like shameless promotion but I want to remind everyone of the concert in the park tomorrow. All proceeds go to charity and there's a big need this year. Everyone come and have a good time.

Donna follows the children off the stage. Parents collect their children and start toward the exit.

Valerie and Patrick go to the back of the room to meet Steven and Kenneth.

Patrick grabs hold of Kenneth's legs and gives him a big hug. Kenneth gets down on one knee.

KENNETH

You did so good. I'm so proud of you son.

PATRICK

Really?

KENNETH

You may be doing lead next year.

PATRICK

Nah.

KENNETH

I'm serious.

VALERIE

We need to get this boy in bed. Santa is already out.

KENNETH

I'm staying at Mom's tonight. Can he come home with me?

VALERIE

You're not driving. Right?

KENNETH

I walked over.

VALERIE

It's to cold for him.

STEVEN
I can drive them over.

VALERIE
You don't mind?

KENNETH
You don't have to do that.

STEVEN
What are friends for?

PATRICK
What about Santa.

VALERIE
He knows where to leave your toys.
You've been a very good boy this
year.

Valerie rubs Patrick's head.

PATRICK
Awwwww...Mom.

KENNETH
OK little man lets head out.

VALERIE
Steven will you go ahead and take
Patrick to the car and let me talk
with Ken.

STEVEN
Sure.

Steven leaves with Patrick.

VALERIE
Ken you look like hell. I'm not
even gonna ask what happened to you
last night.

KENNETH
I'm sorry Val.

VALERIE
Listen I am willing to help you but
you've got to meet me half way. You
working with your sponsor?

KENNETH
Well obviously not.

VALERIE
Do you want to beat this?

KENNETH
You know I do.

VALERIE
We miss you a lot Ken.

Kenneth ducks his head embarrassed.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
I mean it. I miss you more than you
can know. This is killing me Ken.

Sharon is observing from few feet away from Valerie and
Kenneth.

Valerie gives Kenneth a hug.

KENNETH
(whimpering)
I love you Val.

VALERIE
I tell you what. Why don't I come
to your Mom's house and we can open
a few gifts.

KENNETH
Patrick would love it.

VALERIE
Me too. I'll have to go back to the
hotel to help Karen get things ready
for the night shift.

KENNETH
Great! See you in about 30 min.

VALERIE
Don't disappoint us tonight.

KENNETH
I won't. I swear.

Donna Summer joins Sharon. They are watching Valerie and
Kenneth from a few feet away.

DONNA SUMMER
I'm doing good.

SHARON
I have one more day. You can't fix
this mess.

Josh walks past Sharon, looks at her, then sticks his nose
in the air as he walks by.

SHARON (CONT'D)

Jerk!

DONNA SUMMER

What do you and that guy have going on?

SHARON

I don't like him.

DONNA SUMMER

You protest to much I think.

SHARON

Yeah right.

Valerie and Kenneth leave.

Josh is at the front of the crowd waiting to exit. Sharon and Donna walk up behind him.

SHARON (CONT'D)

We need a cattle prod.

Josh hears Sharon and looks back.

JOSH

Well if it ain't Ol' Bossie herself.

SHARON

Watch it you insignificant toady.

JOSH

Look who's callin' the frog green.

SHARON

Hey I'm not a toady! Tell him Donna!

Donna Summer looks surprised.

DONNA SUMMER

That's right. Personal assistant.

"*This Time I know it's for Real*," starts to play on the auditorium speaker system.

JOSH

(in sink with the
beat of the music)

Toady, Toady, Toady,....

Sharon tries to reach for Josh. Donna just stands back. Several children in the crowd join the chant.

CHILDREN

Toady, Toady, Toady,....

Sharon jumps for Josh. He ducks.

JOSH

Did you have to go to college to be a personal toady or is that on-the-job toady training?

SHARON

You had better look over your shoulder you grubby waiter. I'll be waiting.

JOSH

I am so scared!

SHARON

When you least expect it!

DONNA SUMMER

You are going to get us arrested for terrorism. Settle down.

SHARON

That piece of crap makes me so mad.

They all make their way outside.

EXT. AUDITORIUM -- NIGHT

People are making their way to their cars. Snow is piled around and is illuminated by the brilliant red Christmas lights hung around the windows and doors of the auditorium.

Donna and Sharon make it out to the steps.

SHARON

It's so frigging cold here!

A snowball hits the side of Sharon's head with such force she is knocked off her feet.

Donna leans down to help her.

DONNA SUMMER

You OK?

SHARON

Where is he!

Josh is behind a car laughing and chanting.

JOSH

Toady, Toady, Toady,....

DONNA SUMMER

You know if you weren't so skinny that wouldn't have knocked you down.

SHARON

Real sensitive Donna. Help me up!

DONNA SUMMER

Don't do anything rash.

Sharon runs down the steps as Donna watches. Sharon hits a patch of ice in the parking lot and slides about ten feet. She finally loses her balance and falls on her butt.

DONNA SUMMER (CONT'D)

Why will she not listen to me?

One more snowball hits Sharon on the head as she tries to get up. She loses her balance and falls to the ice again.

JOSH (O.S.)

Toady, Toady, Toady,....

DONNA SUMMER

Oh Lord!

Donna starts down the steps.

Josh makes a running exit and disappears into a stand of decorated trees.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY -- NIGHT

Valerie and Karen have hot chocolate and cider set up in the lobby. They are both having a cup. The lobby is quiet. No music and no guest.

VALERIE

Don't you love it when it's all over.
It's quiet and the kids are all tired
from playing with the new toys.

KAREN

Did Patrick have a good Christmas?

VALERIE

Oh yeah. We started out at the Mom-in-Law's house then Kenneth and his Mom came over to my house and we all watched while Patrick ripped up the entire living room. Then the next morning you know we had to do it all again to open Santa Clause.

KAREN

How was Mom-in-law?

VALERIE

How is she ever.

Valerie gets a thermos and fills it with hot chocolate.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

I think we're about ready to close
this sucker up and head to the park.

KAREN

Where's Patrick.

VALERIE

He's had a long day. The young one
just can't make it. He's with Kenneth
and his Mom.

KAREN

Let's get out of here and enjoy the
music.

VALERIE

Are we the last?

KAREN

Yep. All the guest have checked out
and gone. Employees are clocked
out. Oh! Even the Devil's spawn is
gone.

VALERIE

Who?

KAREN

How can you forget! Tiffany!

VALERIE

(laughingly)

Yeah that girl needed an exorcism.

Karen and Valerie leave and lock the main entrance.

A glass ornament falls from the dead tree.

EXT. PARK -- NIGHT

A round stage has been set up in the middle of the park.
The trees have clear twinkle lights placed on the trunks and
high in the branches.

Donna Summer is center stage. She is dressed in a white
coat trimmed with white fur. She is singing "*Heaven Knows*."

Steven is in the front of the crowd. Sharon is standing
directly behind him. Valerie and Karen join them.

VALERIE

Hey Steven. You staying warm? Isn't
this great!

STEVEN

I've been a Donna Summer groupie for years.

VALERIE

You don't look like the groupie type.

STEVEN

You would be surprised.

The song ends and the crowd applauds.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

Watch this.

Steven reaches in his coat pocket and pulls out a very old looking parchment envelope with a gold seal.

VALERIE

What's that.

STEVEN

A personal request for a song from Donna Summer.

VALERIE

Oh yeah right! I'm sure she opens mail from the audience regularly.

Steven just stands there and smiles.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

You've done this before!

STEVEN

She gives a benefit concert in a small town every Christmas. I always find out where she will be and follow her like a puppy.

Sharon looks over Steven's shoulder.

SHARON

I was beginning to think you didn't have a request.

STEVEN

How could I let you down.

Sharon takes the envelope then gives Steven a big hug.

SHARON

This means a lot to her. It means a lot to us all.

STEVEN

Get up there! It has specific instructions.

SHARON

Always the challenge.

Sharon makes her way to the stage. She holds the envelope so Donna Summer can take it from her hand. The gold seal sparkles in the light. Donna holds the envelope close to her heart.

DONNA SUMMER

I would like to open this envelope for you tonight. Every year I receive a generous donation to my organization just for singing a song of mine in an unusual way. I never know which song, or how to sing it, until I open the request.

Valerie looks surprised at Steven.

VALERIE

I can't believe this.

STEVEN

She can do it. She always does.

Donna opens the envelope and pulls out the card and a check. She acts like she is going to faint.

DONNA SUMMER

OK, This check is for one million dollars.

The crowd gasp.

Valerie opens here eyes wide and looks at Karen. They both look at Steven totally shocked.

DONNA SUMMER (CONT'D)

(reading from the card)

"*State of Independence*" as a Christmas song. Must include jingle bells and chimes.

Sharon looks at Steven and smiles.

SHARON

You are so bad.

Sharon suddenly spots Josh at the back of the crowd and starts to move stealthy in his direction. She stops for a second, looks back at Steven.

SHARON (CONT'D)

Excuse me.

Sharon continues in Josh's direction.

BACK TO THE STAGE

DONNA SUMMER

OK. I know we have jingle bells and chimes. I think something will come to me as I sing. Hit it boys.

The band is dressed in formal attire with Santa hats. They are all happy and having a good time with the music.

"*State of Independence*" begins but instead of the Caribbean flavor, jingle bells and chimes are added.

Donna Summer begins to sing.

Sharon makes it to the back of the crowd without being detected by Josh. She reaches for a double handful of snow and compresses it tightly into a snowball. She takes aim with all the care of a major league pitcher and flings the snowball in Josh's direction.

The snowball travels in slow motion toward Josh. It is spinning and leaving a tail like a comet.

Sharon leans over with anticipation and glee. Her eyes are wide open. She runs her tongue slowly over her upper lip.

As the snowball is about to strike Josh a breath of wind blows through the crowd and takes Josh's hat to the ground. He bends to pick it up just as the snowball is about to strike.

Policeman 2 is left standing in the path of the high velocity snowball. It strikes the side of his head so hard it knocks his hat off. He shakes the snow from his face and angrily looks in Sharon's direction. She freezes and looks wide-eyed and terrified.

BACK TO VALERIE AND STEVEN

Valerie looks at Steven with a new found admiration.

STEVEN

Let's walk.

VALERIE

Don't you want to hear your million dollar request.

STEVEN

We can hear it on the speakers in the streets.

When Donna Summer gets to the words "His truth will abound the land," she substitutes "It's Christmas in all His land."

Steven stops for just a second and smiles to himself.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

That's all I needed to hear. Walk with me please.

He looks back at Donna and smiles. Snow gently starts to fall.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

Ahhh. Look at this.

He holds his hand out to catch some snow.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

It's like icing on the cake. A perfect Christmas.

VALERIE

I wouldn't have believed you would be such a sucker for Christmas.

STEVEN

It's a special time. Filled with symbols of religion, hope, happiness, joy, and love. How can you not like it.

VALERIE

Oh don't get me wrong. I always enjoy it. I have to work hard during the holidays but I think I make Christmas special for a lot of people.

CUT TO:

EXT. KENNETH'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Kenneth is standing by his car and finishing a beer. He chugs the last bit, crushes the can, and drops it to the ground. He looks at Patrick who is asleep in the back seat of the car. Kenneth gets in the drivers seat and starts the car.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREET -- NIGHT

Steven and Valerie stop in front of a toy shop. They look in the window and then turn to the street. Donna Summer's concert can be heard over the speakers that are mounted on the lamp post.

STEVEN

Let's have a seat. The streets are quite. Everyone in town must be at the concert.

They start to the bus stop on the corner and have a seat on the bench.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

I'm leaving tonight.

VALERIE

You can't stay? What am I saying? Going to visit family?

STEVEN

No back to the job.

VALERIE

You never told me what you did for a living?

STEVEN

(smiling)
No I didn't.

VALERIE

Very elusive. Let me see. Work with the CIA?

STEVEN

No.

VALERIE

IRS? Have you been secretly checking my tax status?

STEVEN

Very creative but no. You'll never guess this one.

VALERIE

Well you're just going to have to tell me then.

STEVEN

Let's take a look at the things around here. Notice anything different this year than from the last several years.

Valerie contemplates the question in her mind.

VALERIE

Honestly no.

STEVEN

Let's look close to home and give it another try.

She is still at a loss for words.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

You strike me as being a religious person.

VALERIE

Well I believe in God sure. I go to church.

STEVEN

OK now let's look around the street. Have you noticed how fast the cut greenery turned brown this year?

VALERIE

Yeah that was sorta odd.

STEVEN

It was because of me.

VALERIE

(laughing)

No it's because we whack those branches off trees and take them in hot dry houses.

STEVEN

You ever see "*It's a Wonderful Life*?"

VALERIE

Oh now I get it you're an angel. Yeah right.

STEVEN

On Christmas one single angel is given the most special gift to give the world, big or small, to one person or many. This gift only makes it's way to me once in many years. I have to be very careful how I use it.

VALERIE

You take some kind of medication I bet. Let's go back to the hotel.

Valerie starts to get up from the bench.

STEVEN

I'm serious Valerie.

Steven grabs Valerie by the arm and holds her down. She looks bewildered, confused, and a bit scared.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

Death gets the gift this year and this is it.

VALERIE

Oh so you're death! Serial killer?

STEVEN

Where's Kenneth tonight?

VALERIE

He's at home I guess.

STEVEN

He's being called home Valerie.

VALERIE

Well I just said he's at home.

STEVEN

No I mean home to stay.

VALERIE

OK now you're just starting to freak me out. You're talking home to be with the Lord right?

STEVEN

I'm hear for more than just to use my gift Valerie.

VALERIE

Oh, you came for me? You've totally lost it!

STEVEN

I've come to retrieve a soul. Not yours.

An old beat-up car comes around the corner one block up and it is speeding.

Valerie and Steven look at the car.

VALERIE

That car's going to fast.

STEVEN

Yes it is.

VALERIE

Hey that's Kenneth's car.

STEVEN
It definitely is!

The car swerves from one side of the street to the other. Inside the car Kenneth is drinking a beer and struggling with the steering wheel.

VALERIE
Oh no!

The car comes directly at Valerie and Steven. Valerie tries to get up and run but Steven calmly grabs hold of her hand and holds her tightly to the bench. Valerie hides her head on Steven's shoulder.

Kenneth swerves away from Steven and Valerie at the last second. The car slams into the light pole on the opposite side of the street. Kenneth hits his head on the steering wheel and is unconscious. The Christmas lights on the pole spark and burst.

Valerie nervously struggles in her purse for her cell phone. She pulls it out and tries to dial. She is shaking so hard she cannot press the buttons.

Steven grabs the cell phone.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
Are you crazy? Give me that!

STEVEN
There comes a time when a choice is made. It's Kenneth's time. Calm down.

Steven puts his hand on Valerie's head. She instantly settles down and appears to be drugged.

VALERIE
What have you done to me?

STEVEN
I'm going to use my gift Valerie. Kenneth is being called home to be with our Lord. I can keep him here if your love for him is strong. If he stays will you help him? He's lost and needs you so bad.

Valerie just looks at Steven and doesn't respond.

STEVEN (CONT'D)
Right now he's at a state of independence. He can decide if he wants to stay or go home. You have to make him come with you if you want him to stay.

VALERIE

I don't think I can.

On the speakers on the street lamps Donna Summer can still be heard singing "State of Independence."

STEVEN

Do you want the chance?

Valerie almost closes her eyes.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

Patrick is in the car.

Valerie suddenly is terrified and panicked. She struggles to get up.

Steven places his hand on her head and she lapses into unconsciousness.

DISSOLVE
TO:

INT. TRANSITION STATE -- MOMENTS LATER

Kenneth is standing alone in a mist. A brilliant white light is in the distance.

Kenneth's GRANDFATHER, 70'S, distinguished, comes out of the light.

KENNETH

Grandpa?

GRANDFATHER

(Irish accent)

Kenny. I didn't think I would see you so soon.

He takes Kenneth's hand.

KENNETH

What's goin' on?

GRANDFATHER

All will be explained.

Valerie appears next to Kenneth. The music over the loud speakers comes in with Valerie.

VALERIE

Kenneth go with me.

Kenneth looks at Valerie a little surprised. He has a contented smile on his face and is very peaceful.

KENNETH

Did you ever meet my Grandpa?

VALERIE

Uh...Nice to meet you? You won't mind if Kenneth comes with me? Kenneth take my hand.

GRANDFATHER

(peacefully)

It's all up to him young lady.

His Grandfather releases his hand.

Valerie takes both of Kenneth's hands. Grandfather slowly backs up into the mist smiling.

Other people start to emerge from the mist.

VALERIE

Do you know where you are?

KENNETH

I think so.

VALERIE

Then you know you need to come back with me.

KENNETH

Val let me go. I've never done anything but cause you and Patrick trouble.

VALERIE

That's not true Kenny.

KENNETH

The drinking? The lying? Hell, no job?

VALERIE

I know you'll be different after this. You know it too. I think that you wouldn't want to say "hell" this close to heaven.

KENNETH

I feel more at peace than I ever have Val. No more cravings for booze. Can you feel the love and peacefulness here?

GRANDFATHER

The closer you come the more complete it is.

VALERIE
You're not helping!

GRANDFATHER
I am. You just can't see it.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREET -- NIGHT

Steven and Valerie are sitting on the bench. Valerie is slumped over lifeless against Steven. Steven gets up and allows Valerie to rest gently on the bench. He starts to walk to the wrecked car. Donna Summer's singing can still be heard loudly over the speaker system.

Steven approaches the car and looks in. Kenneth's lifeless, bloody body is slumped over in the front seat. Patrick is breathing but unconscious in the back seat.

Steven opens the back door and leans in toward Patrick. He places his hand slowly on Patrick's forehead and looks upward speaking silently in prayer.

Gasoline begins to rush from underneath the car.

Steven looks at the gas and moves away.

CUT TO:

INT. TRANSITION STATE -- NIGHT

Kenneth is holding Valerie's hand. He looks seriously into her tearful eyes.

KENNETH
I love you.

Kenneth releases Valerie's hands and starts toward the light.

Patrick appears suddenly next to Valerie. Valerie looks down in horror.

VALERIE
Oh know!

Kenneth turns as he is about to go into the light and see's Patrick with Valerie.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREET -- NIGHT

The wrecked car is beginning to smoke. Patrick is lifeless in the back seat and Kenneth still lifeless in the front.

Valerie awakens suddenly. She immediately struggles to her feet and looks around. The street is hauntingly deserted and silent. The Christmas lights flicker and pop over the top of the car. She makes her way slowly toward the car, struggling for every step.

Steven is standing on the sidewalk behind the car. His hands are in his coat pocket. He watches as Valerie approaches the car.

CUT TO:

INT. WRECKED CAR -- NIGHT

In the back seat Patrick takes a sudden, violent, deep breath. An instant later so does Kenneth.

Kenneth awakens and looks around confused. He realizes where he is and looks in the back seat at Patrick. He jumps from the car and stumbles while holding his head in a desperate attempt to control the pain and blood. He opens the back door and takes Patrick in his arms and makes his way slowly toward Valerie

Valerie is continuing her slow, agonizing walk toward the car when a string of Christmas lights above the car pops, burst, and falls toward the streaming gasoline in the gutter.

Steven walks slowly around the corner and disappears from sight.

VALERIE

(shouting)

Kenny!

The gasoline erupts in a brilliant explosion that illuminates the block. A trench of fire runs through the snow in the gutter. The blaze makes the white snow bright orange-yellow.

Kenny and Patrick fall forward onto the street. Valerie is lifted off of her feet by the force of the explosion.

The three end up in a heap in the middle of the street. Kenneth and Valerie sit up. Kenneth hugs Valerie and they both look down at Patrick. He slowly opens his eyes. Valerie takes her hand and moves Kenneth's head to one side so she can see the cut. She kisses him passionately then pulls Patrick up in her lap and hugs him tightly. Kenneth wipes tears from his face.

Sirens can be heard coming toward the fire.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARK -- NIGHT

The music has stopped and everyone is concerned by the orange glow coming from town. Donna Summer can sense the crowds unrest and concern.

Sirens can be heard in the distance.

POLICEMAN 3, 20'S tall, blond approaches Donna Summer, removes his hat, and whispers in her ear. He smiles and leaves the stage.

Donna is comforted by his remarks.

DONNA SUMMER

Can I have your attention please!

The crowd settles and turns to the stage.

DONNA SUMMER (CONT'D)

There was an accident downtown but this nice looking officer assures me it's under control and no one is hurt. He also has ask that we stay here for a few minutes until the fire is out. So with that bit of good news we can relax and I can finish this show.

The crowd applauds.

Steven is at the back of the crowd and turns to walk away.

The music starts and Donna Summer starts to sing "Christmas is Here."

Steven turns and smiles. He raises both arms over his head and is bathed in a warm yellow light. Donna Summer is able to see him from her vantage point and smiles. The crowd never looks around.

Steven's winter coat and clothes change to a pure white robe. He looks around at the town and smiles as he ascends skyward into the falling snow.