

Make Up Test

by
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Based on his novella

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FADE IN

EXT. ATLANTA OFFICE PARKING LOT - EARLY MORNING

A dreary, cold, overcast day. It's been raining.

JANIE MASON parks her modest but neat car in a lot in front of an urban Atlanta office building. A few soulless holiday decorations don't do much to brighten the drab. Janie is in her late 20s or early 30s, pretty in a brainy sort of way.

Across the street:

On the corner, SANTA CLAUS is ringing a bell next to a kettle. This Santa is a noble, lordly man, like a noble, Renaissance Saint from a stained glass window.

There's something a little seedy about him, though, some vibe of wild prophet or madman. His suit is a little threadbare. He might have slept in it. Not necessarily indoors.

He's standing with a LITTLE MAN in a red tunic over green tights, with a red cap on his head.

Seedy Santa and the Little Man watch Janie struggle with a computer bag and a stack of files. Another car parks in the space next to Janie -- moving way too fast. Janie jumps back, dropping some of her files. The car sprays her with water.

JANIE

Aw, crap.

The DRIVER climbs out, seeing Janie for the first time. The Driver waves. Janie glares as driver hurries away.

DRIVER

Merry Christmas!

Janie looks down at her splattered coat.

JANIE

(mutters)

Stupid Christmas.

Across the street, Santa nods and smiles.

SANTA

Her.

LITTLE MAN

What ... HER?!

SANTA
(firmly)
Her.

INT. AN OFFICE CUBICLE MAZE - AFTERNOON

Rows of office cubicles, uniform and drab, stretch as far as the eye can see. HOLIDAY MUZAK plays from a speaker in the ceiling, relentlessly cheerful.

A cheap, gaudy banner promoting the company's Festive Generic Multicultural and Non-Religiously-Specific Winter Holiday Party hangs directly above one of the cubicles:

INT. JANIE MASON'S CUBE - CONTINUOUS

The few personal touches here don't do enough to lessen the drab: a plant, a picture of smiling parents, a coffee mug printed with the message: Please, God, tell me it's Friday!

Janie sits at a computer monitor staring at a spreadsheet. Christmas lights strung behind her reflect in the monitor. She scowls and tries to turn her monitor. No luck.

She SIGHS and rubs her temples. Then she stands and stretches to tiptoe to see over the wall of her cubicle to:

THE CLOCK ON THE BACK WALL. It's not even three o'clock yet.

Janie sits back down and SIGHS again.

JANIE
(mutters to herself)
Great.

She rests her elbows on her desk, chin in her hands. It's just enough motion to knock over a stack of spreadsheets she'd stacked on the corner of her cramped workstation. PAPERS FALL as Janie scrambles to catch as many as she can.

JANIE (CONT'D)
Great. Just freakin' great.

Janie stands, hands on her hips, and looks at the mess. BETTY, the worker in the next cube, sticks her head over the fabric covered wall like a gopher looking up from the ground.

JANIE (CONT'D)
For this I went to college. And
bloody stupid grad school.

Betty shrugs sympathetically and sits back down. Janie scowls and kneels to pick up the papers. The MUZAK loop starts again.

JANIE (CONT'D)

(louder)

Oh GOD! Can we please do something
about this stupid music?

BETTY

(blandly)

It's festive.

JEREMY COHEN KNOCKS on the entrance to her cubicle. Jeremy, around 30, is a thin, freckled man with stylish black-framed glasses that might make him look hip if it weren't for the tie that doesn't quite go with his blue dress shirt.

JEREMY

Hi there. Uh ... little accident?

JANIE

(snaps)

No, I just like to keep a bunch of
papers scattered around down here.
Hides the ugly carpet a little bit.

JEREMY

Nice touch. Livens the place up.

With a shrug and a grimace to sort of apologize for the tone, Janie turns around, still on her knees.

JANIE

Hi there--

(notices his name tag)

Uh, Jeremy. Long time.

JEREMY

(smiles)

I didn't think you'd remember.

JANIE

Name tag. Uh, what's with that,
anyway?

JEREMY

(embarrassed)

It's a spirit tag.

JANIE

(you gotta be kidding me)

Spirit tag?

JEREMY
We'll all be wearing them soon.
Even you marketing folks.

JANIE
You're joking.

JEREMY
Accountants never joke.

JANIE
Why not?

JEREMY
Well, to tell you the truth, we're
not all that funny. Need some help?
With your, uh, floor covering?

JANIE
I've just about got 'em, thanks.

Janie scoops up the last of the errant papers and stands.

JANIE (CONT'D)
But come on. Name tags?

JEREMY
Spirit tags. Corporate's idea. They
think if we have any problems, it
must be because we lack team spirit.

JANIE
So we get name tags.

JEREMY
Spirit tags.

JANIE
Do they even know what we do here?

Jeremy shrugs. Janie sorts the papers as best she can.

JANIE (CONT'D)
I went to college so I wouldn't
have to have a job with my name on
my shirt.

JEREMY
(waggles his finger)
Now, now. It's best to keep a good
attitude. Otherwise, it's off to
spirit training with you.

Janie's eyebrows arch.

JANIE
Begone, spirit! Roll over spirit!
Sit, spirit! Good spirit!

JEREMY
Not so much.

Janie turns back to her stack of papers.

JANIE
It's too much to hope that we get
trained to drink spirits, I suppose.

JEREMY
It's more like boot camp for
cheerleaders. Total indoctrination.

JANIE
Check. Name tag or boot camp. I'll
wear it and smile, then.

She tries a smile. It's more of a grimace.

JEREMY
Be careful. Your face will freeze
like that.

JANIE
I'm smiling, okay? Jeez. I'm
frickin' pleasant.

JEREMY
My mistake.

JANIE
Rah, dammit.

JEREMY
That's the, uh, spirit.

BILL SPARKS pokes his head into the cube. He's in his mid
30s, handsome and stylish. The Windsor knot of his silk holly
print necktie is perfect. He uses a lot of gel in his hair.

BILL
(to Jeremy)
'scuse me there, Champ. I need to
say hey to the little lady here.

Janie brightens and hopes it doesn't show. Without thinking,
she smooths her skirt and blouse.

JANIE
Hey, Bill.

BILL
Got anything for me to look at?

JANIE
Soon, Bill. Okay?

He points at her, miming a pistol shot, winks, and leaves.
When he's out of earshot:

JANIE (CONT'D)
I don't think he even noticed me.

JEREMY
I know how you feel.

JANIE
(she forget he was there)
Uh, say what?

JEREMY
What are you working on, anyway?

JANIE
Sales report numbers for Bill.

JEREMY
Sparks? He's head of sales. You
work for Nadine in marketing.

JANIE
(defensive)
I'm just helping. Spreadsheets
aren't really his forté, if you
know what I mean.

JEREMY
Hmph. I've seen his work.

JANIE
He's a good guy. And a good salesman.

JEREMY
(smirks)
Sounds like a contradiction.

JANIE
That's not funny.

JEREMY
I remind you what I said about
accountants and jokes.

JANIE

I see your point.

(she gives up on the papers)

I'm going to have to reprint these.

She sits at her computer and hits the print command. The she stands and walks quickly out of her cubicle. Jeremy follows, hurrying to keep up.

JEREMY

So how does it look?

JANIE

(sighs)

To be honest, I can't make heads or tails of it.

They reach the communal printer. Jeremy grabs her document and looks it over before he hands it to her.

JEREMY

Let me see. Yeah. He always screws these things up, but at least he always does it the same way.

JANIE

(incredulously)

You understand these?

JEREMY

I wouldn't go that far. A mess is a mess. But like I said, it's a consistent mess. Given a little time, I could probably decipher these hieroglyphics for you.

She starts back to her desk.

JANIE

Really? I don't suppose you happen to have a little time now, do you?

JEREMY

Sorry. I'm just up here picking up some overdue paperwork from your boss lady. Year end reports.

She reaches her cubicle and sits.

JANIE

(disappointed)

Oh.

JEREMY
Speaking of....

They hear an APPROACHING RAPID-FIRE CLICK-CLICK-CLICK SOUND:
A woman's high heel shoes, approaching fast. Jeremy WHISTLES
the Wicked Witch theme from "The Wizard of Oz."

JANIE
(hissing)
Stop that!

NADINE SMITH, mid to late 30s, appears from around the
corner. She's tall, and thanks to the magic of bottles, her
hair is still platinum blond. She is an artist with makeup,
and she's used plenty.

NADINE
There you are. I've been looking
just everywhere for you.

JANIE
(forcing a smile)
I've been right here, Nadine. In my
cubicle. By my phone, and my e-mail,
and my Blackberry, and--

JEREMY
Hi, Nadine.

Nadine ignores him.

NADINE
Listen, er...
(she can't remember the name)
...dear, I just e-mailed you the data
from the customer focus groups.

JANIE
You did? I just checked e-mail, and--

NADINE
Darling, I mean I'm about to send
it. Obviously.

JEREMY
(amused)
Obviously.

NADINE
Can you correlate and analyze it?
Right away?

JANIE
Sure, Nadine. How soon do you need it?

NADINE

Darling, I just said right away.
But don't worry. I'm reasonable, of
course I am. Tomorrow will be fine.

JANIE

Tomorrow! Nadine, it takes weeks to
do that right!

NADINE

I know, I know. But I couldn't get
my part together till today. I work
better under pressure, you know.

JANIE

(mutters)

I don't. I work better when I have
a decent amount of time to do
things properly.

JEREMY

I think there's a policy against that.

NADINE

Oh, darling. That's your problem.
It doesn't have to be proper. It
just has to look proper. That's not
the same thing at all.

Janie realizes she is staring, slack-jawed, and shaking her
head slowly, but she can't think of a thing to say.

NADINE (CONT'D)

This is your chance to shine. This
is your chance to get noticed.

JANIE

(uneasily)

I'll do what I can.

NADINE

That's the spirit.

JEREMY

See? Spirit. Told you.

Nadine and Janie both ignore him.

NADINE

I'll e-mail you the first quarter
marketing plan in a few minutes.
Oh, and all that customer data, of
course.

JANIE

Whoa. Wait. You mean you've already done the marketing plan?

NADINE

(nods)

So correlate it all and make sure our data and Bill's sales reports support the marketing plan, okay?

Janie shakes her head, still confused.

JANIE

But Nadine, we're supposed to use the data to make the marketing plan.

NADINE

(patiently)

Well, it couldn't be, darling. You haven't even correlated the data yet, now have you?

JANIE

I think you're missing the point--

Nadine ignores her. Jeremy grins. They both ignore him.

NADINE

Don't be naïve, darling. We have to plan now. We can't wait until we have all that knowledge about the actual situation. Especially not at the holidays! Tomorrow is Christmas Eve, for Heaven's sake. Why, I'd have to work all night!

JANIE

I'll have to work all night.

JEREMY

(innocently)

Where's your team spirit?

NADINE

(acknowledging him for the first time and nodding)

Exactly.

Nadine digs in her purse for a cigarette. Jeremy shakes his head and smiles, obviously amused. Janie takes a deep breath and, through clinched teeth, begins again.

JANIE

But we need the data to make a
marketing plan that actually
reflects the customers--

JEREMY

(to Janie)

Careful. Logic and common sense'll
land you in spirit training for sure.

NADINE

Christ, you just can not believe
how busy I am.

Nadine lights the cigarette in front of a No Smoking sign.

JANIE

I'm busy, too.

NADINE

I know, Jenny.

JANIE

Janie.

NADINE

Of course, darling. So you'll have
the correlation reports? By tomorrow?
Of course you will. Marvelous.

She doesn't wait for an answer. Before Janie can speak, she
is already CLICK CLICK CLICKING away, leaving a trail of
smoke drifting behind her.

JEREMY

I don't know how she walks in those
things.

Janie turns, surprised. She'd forgotten he was there.

JANIE

And with her chest stuck out like
that...

JEREMY

It's a wonder she doesn't tip over.
In accounting we all call her
Nadine the Ice Queen.

JANIE

(defensive in spite of
herself)

Not especially imaginative.

JEREMY

(shugs)

Accountants. No so much with the funny. Remember?

(beat)

So anyway, it looks like you really need help with Sparky's spreadsheets now.

JANIE

But you said you didn't have time.

JEREMY

Not today.

(hopefully)

But I can come by tonight. Um, if it'll help, that is.

JANIE

(brightens)

Oh, I couldn't ask that. Not at the holidays.

JEREMY

You definitely need spirit training. Asking people to work at night over the holidays on projects that make no sense is what this company's all about. I think it's in the mission statement.

JANIE

Well, if you're sure. Thanks again--
(she takes a furtive look
at his name tag)
Jerry.

JEREMY

Jeremy. See you tonight.

He whistles as he walks away.

INT. JANIE MASON'S CUBE - LATER

THE CLOCK ON THE WALL now reads 6:45. Most of the cubicles are empty and the lights are dim. Janie SIGHS and runs her temples. She starts packing her bag to leave and hears A KNOCK behind her.

She spins around, and a sudden smile brightens her face. Bill is there, grinning. His white shirt is still crisp. Not a single blond hair is out of place.

BILL
Hi there. Still here?

JANIE
Nope. Left an hour ago and a half
ago. I get off at five, you know.

Bill doesn't smile or laughs. He looks at her with head
titled and a slightly puzzled look on his face.

JANIE (CONT'D)
Uh, still at it.

Bill looks down at his polished shoes and shifts
uncomfortably. Then he smiles his best smile. His teeth are
almost impossibly white.

BILL
I'm glad I caught you. There's ...
something I've been wanting to ask
you.

Janie flushes and looks down. Then she glances back up at
Bill through her lashes.

JANIE
What is it, Bill?

BILL
It's just ... gosh, I hope this isn't
inappropriate.

He smiles again.

JANIE
(she reaches out to touch
his arm lightly)
Ask me whatever you want to, Bill.

BILL
Well, I'm just going to come right
out and say it, then. Just like a
sales call.

Janie raises her eyebrows encouragingly.

BILL (CONT'D)
Do you have any plans for the
company Christmas party?

JANIE
The Christmas party?

BILL
I mean the, uh what-do-you-call-it thingee.

JANIE
(points to the banner
hanging over her cube)
The Festive Generic Multicultural
and Non-Religiously-Specific Winter
Holiday Party.

BILL
So are you? Um, free, I mean? That
is, you don't have special plans,
um, for the party, do you?

Janie smiles and flushes.

JANIE
I'm free.

BILL
Ah, good. See, I'm supposed to be
in charge of the decorations this
year, and I just don't see how I
can possibly find time to do them.
Can you be a pal and take care of
it for me?

JANIE
A pal?

BILL
Sure. See, Nadine wants me to take
her. As her date, you know.

JANIE
(stunned)
You're taking Nadine to the party?

BILL
And since you're already helping me
with my spreadsheets, well, I was
sure you wouldn't mind take care of
this, too.

JANIE
You want me to do the decorations
for you. For the whole party.

BILL
Just the usual stuff. Tinsel.
Wreaths. Snowmen.
(MORE)

BILL (CONT'D)
Lit up snowmen, if you can find
them. Just be sure they're generic.
And multicultural.

JANIE
Don't forget non-religiously-
specific.

BILL
That's the spirit. You're a champ.
I knew I could count on you!

JANIE
But--

Bill starts walking away.

BILL
(cutting her off before she
can finish her protest)
And hey, thanks again. Oh, and
Merry Christmas!

JANIE
(mutters)
Bah frickin' humbug.

INT. NADINE'S OFFICE - LATER

Nadine is at her desk, surrounded by a small pharmacy of
bottles and jars. She studies her face in a mirror as she
adjusts her makeup.

Janie sticks her head in and startles her.

JANIE
Uh, Nadine?

NADINE
Good heavens, darling. You scared
the valium out of me.

JANIE
I just--

NADINE
Later, please. I'm touching up.

JANIE
Touching up? You could paint the
whole stupid building with all
that.

NADINE

(sweetly)

Who's your date for the party, darling?

Janie scowls as she walks away with clenched fists.

EXT. VALU-MART PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Janie drives through the crowded parking lot of a giant in-town big box retail conglomerate. The traffic isn't doing much to improve her holiday spirit. The lot is packed.

She doesn't notice the LITTLE MAN from the opening scene, still in his elf costume, slipping between the rows of parked cars. He's watching Janie's car.

Janie finally spots an empty parking place and starts toward it.

At that moment, the Little Man whistles innocently and looks skyward. With a nonchalant WHISTLE, gives a SHOPPING CART a little kick. It starts moving.

Before Janie can reach the parking spot, two cars try pull in before she can get there. At that moment, the shopping cart rolls between them. Both cars swerve to avoid it, while still aiming for the lone parking spot, causing an accident.

The Little Man cringes. Woops.

As the DRIVERS leap out of their cars, SHOUTING, Janie bangs her head on the steering wheel. The HORN gets stuck. She pounds it until it stops. She closes her eyes.

JANIE

God I hate Christmas.

The Little Man slips away.

Janie opens her eyes again and looks for an escape. Across the street, she sees:

EXT. STEINBERG'S FIVE AND DIME - NIGHT

A shabby urban department store. The lot is not nearly as crowded. Janie backs up and heads that way.

She finds a spot. The WIND HOWLS FIERCELY as Janie climbs out of her car. It's raining. She runs to the store, scowling as she passes CAROLERS WHO SING HARMONY TO THE MERRY RINGING OF A SALVATION ARMY BELL.

INT. STEINBERG'S FIVE AND DIME - MOMENTS LATER

Janie finds the floor stacked high with toys that reach all the way to the ceiling, There are dolls that could walk and talk and cry and laugh. Trains with colorful engines puff and pull elegant passenger carriages.

There are doll's houses with running water and electricity, steadfast tin soldiers, velveteen rabbits, tall castles, bright picture books, dancing puppets, and model airplanes that fly and loop in dazzling feats of aerial acrobatics.

JANIE

(mutters)

No Pokémon or Sponge Bob? What kid wants to play with this crap?

ANOTHER SHOPPER nods her agreement.

SHOPPER

I bet there's not a single commercial for anything here. Not even on cable.

JANIE

(rolls her eyes)

How does this place even stay open?

Shaking her head, she pushes her way through the FAR-TOO-CHEERFUL CROWD and heads up the rickety escalator.

INT. STEINBERG'S FIVE AND DIME, SECOND FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER

It's CROWDED, but most of the SHOPPERS are heading for the gaudy throne where SANTA AND A CREW OF ELVES entertain NOISY, SHOUTING CHILDREN. The aisles of holiday decorations are more or less clear. Janie finds a cart.

A MAN CARRYING PACKAGES stacked higher than the top of his head bumps into Janie. He smiles.

MAN

Merry Christmas!

Janie scowls again -- and catches her reflection in a mirror.

JANIE

(mutters)

My face is gonna freeze like that.

Janie digs through piles of wreaths, tinsel, Chanukah menorahs, ornaments of brass and hand-cut crystal, porcelain manger scenes, and even hand-woven Kwanzaa mats before she finally finds some plastic snowmen and snowflakes.

Another SHOPPING MAN passes her, putting plastic snowmen and snowflakes in his own cart. As he passes:

SHOPPING MAN
(sympathetically)
Office party?

JANIE
(nods and rolls her eyes)
Winter may suck, but at least it's
generic and multicultural.

SHOPPING MAN
At least the cheap crap is cheap.

Janie fills her cart with strings of colored lights and gold tinsel. She adds more snowmen and a few boxes of candy canes.

She turns to leave and nearly trips over the Little Man. He still wears his elf costume.

LITTLE MAN
What are you thinking?

JANIE
(quickly)
I'm sorry. I didn't see you.

The little man raises a bushy red eyebrow, and one eye seems to bulge out from his face as the other narrows. He examines her cart with undisguised disdain.

LITTLE MAN
I mean with those ... those ... things!
What are you thinking?

Silver jingle bells on the curls of his tiny red shoes tinkle when he stamps his feet. Janie shakes her head, confused.

JANIE
I'm shopping for decorations.

LITTLE MAN
Oh for heavens sake, woman! You'd
put that stuff in your home? Where
someone might see?

JANIE
It's for my company office party.

LITTLE MAN
You mean to tell me you're
subjecting others to this... this...
cheap, tawdry, plastic junk?

JANIE

It's an office party. People go because they have to. They don't care about the stupid decorations. They just want to throw down a few free drinks, suck up to the bosses, and get it over with.

LITTLE MAN

But why?

JANIE

I guess so they can leave early to fight the crowds at crappy stores.

She pushes past him. He follows. The jingle bells on his curled shoes JANGLE as he hurries to keep up.

LITTLE MAN

Why even bother having a party at all if that's all it is?

JANIE

It's just something that's got to be done. Like time sheets. Nobody really knows why.

She puts some more snowmen in her cart. The little man puts them back on the shelf, one by one.

JANIE (CONT'D)

Hey! Stop that. Anyway. I've got better things to do than a stupid office party.

LITTLE MAN

Like what?

JANIE

(shakes her head as she tries to think of something. Then, firmly:)
Lots. Now if you'll excuse me--

She starts to walk. He follows her again.

LITTLE MAN

Wait! What about the sacred?

JANIE

Excuse me?

She pushes her cart a little faster. He keeps pace. He takes off his red cap and holds it against his chest.

LITTLE MAN

Midwinter has been a time of miracles and reverence since the dawn of civilization! When you hang up that ugly, tawdry junk--

JANIE

(shaking her head)

Uh uh. No way. This has to be generic, multicultural, and non-religiously specific.

He follows, picking up items to punctuate his speech and drops them in Janie's cart. Now, she's the one putting them back on the shelves.

LITTLE MAN

Then why not embrace them all? Don't forbid and exclude, include and share! Why, why, celebrate all the world's holy winter traditions. Do it in the spirit of mutual respect and kindness. Get menorahs with bright candles! Spin the dreidel! Find a lovely manger scene, for you don't have to be a Christian to be moved by the image of a child-mother and a babe shivering in the chill. You only have to be human. Light a Yule log! Hang Ravens for our North Pole neighbors! Spread out Kwanzaa fruit! I'm just getting started. For Ramadan--

Janie turns to confront him.

JANIE

You're not listening. Generic. Read my lips. Gen-er-ic.

LITTLE MAN

Ick.

JANIE

Non-religiously specific.

LITTLE MAN

Soulless.

Janie spins away again.

JANIE

Whatever.

The Shopping Man slips by again, turning sideways to pass in the cramped aisle. He gives Janie an amused grin as he passes. The little man shakes his head.

LITTLE MAN

So if there's no room at the inn
for the one, just shut them all out
and leave the lot shivering and
forgotten in the cold! Is that it?

JANIE

(moving faster)
That's about the size of it.
Nobody's offended.

The little man follows.

LITTLE MAN

Nobody's moved, either.

JANIE

It's sparkly. See? Lots of lights.

She adds more lights to the cart.

LITTLE MAN

But it's all artificial, like a
light bulb in a fireplace.

JANIE

It twinkles.

LITTLE MAN

Hmph. Light without warmth.

JANIE

The heat'll be on.

LITTLE MAN

Here, at least get better junk.
That stuff's all just going to wind
up in landfills, and the sooner the
better, I might add. Here...

He reaches for a string of crudely painted beads.

LITTLE MAN (CONT'D)

This is hand made, from all natural
and bio-degradable materials, no
less, by natives in--

JANIE

Oh, no. That stuff'll take forever.
And besides, it's expensive.

(MORE)

JANIE (CONT'D)
I don't even know if I'm getting
reimbursed for this.

LITTLE MAN
Wait, please, just look--

JANIE
No!

LITTLE MAN
Oh, okay then. But ... at least let me
give you something before you go.

JANIE
What? Store coupons? Look, I don't
have time--

LITTLE MAN
No, no, nothing like that. I promise.
Just a little Christmas magic.
(winks)
It's the season of miracles.

Janie reaches the elevator and pushes the button.

JANIE
The only miracle I need is a way
home through the traffic.

LITTLE MAN
What I'm offering you is a wish.
One wish. A Christmas wish.

JANIE
I don't believe in wishes.

LITTLE MAN
Everybody believes in wishes at
Christmas. They always have! People
believed in midwinter wishes long
before there even was a Christmas,
or a Chanukah, or a Yule, or--

JANIE
Not me.

The little man glares at the throne at the back of the store.

LITTLE MAN
You can never just give me even one
of the easy ones, can you?
(He turns back to Janie)
Come on, then. Just do it for me.
As a favor. Make a wish. Any wish.

The elevator DINGS as the door slides open.

JANIE

No.

LITTLE MAN

Please. In the spirit of the
season. In the spirit of Christmas.

She pushes her cart into the elevator.

JANIE

Wrong tactic. I hate stupid Christmas.

LITTLE MAN

Wait!

As the elevator doors slide closed:

LITTLE MAN (CONT'D)

(to the closed doors)

In the, um, spirit of Chanukah,
then! Or the Winter Solstice! Or...
or Ramadan! Or--

INT. STEINBERG'S FIVE AND DIME, FIRST FLOOR - LATER

The cosmetics department is located near the elevator on the first floor. As she passes through, she catches her reflection in a mirror. She frowns. She looks around at rows of bottles, powders, and lipsticks.

She picks up one item, then another. Soon, she's filling the child seat of the shopping cart with powders and perfumes, bases and blushes, lotions and eyeliners. She even chooses a few more exotic potions, like vanishing cream and something called FIRMING ANTI-GRAVITY LIFT CREAM.

Janie looks at the Anti-Gravity Lift Cream and frowns.

JANIE

(mutters)

Anti-Gravity Lift...! I don't even
know what that is...

She shrugs and tosses it into the cart.

INT. STEINBERG'S FIVE AND DIME, CASH REGISTER - LATER

Janie swipes her card and puts it back in her wallet.

CASHIER
Will you be taking your packages?
Or would you like them delivered?

JANIE
(astonished)
You deliver?

The cashier nods.

JANIE (CONT'D)
They don't do that at Valu-Mart.

CASHIER
It's a tradition here at Steinberg's.

JANIE
(as she scribbles down the
address)
That's terrific! You're a lifesaver.

As the cashier reaches for her bags, Janie grabs one.

JANIE (CONT'D)
Wait. Uh, not the make up. I'll
just carry that.

EXT. JANIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

An older brick building in a hip in-town neighborhood.

INT. JANIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The apartment is small but tastefully decorated. Janie's still in her work clothes. She's sitting at her kitchen table with the printouts spread out like a hand of cards. The bag with the makeup is on the table, too.

She SIGHS and rubs her temples. She is startled by a KNOCK at the door. She goes to answer.

She opens the door. At first, it looks like there's no one there. Then, she hears someone CLEAR HIS THROAT and looks DOWN to see:

THE LITTLE MAN, still wearing his elf costume. He stands in the hallway, glaring up at her expectantly, surrounded by packages wrapped in brown paper. He holds a clipboard.

LITTLE MAN
Miss Mason? Your delivery from
Steinberg's Five and Dime. Sign
here, please.

JANIE
(stares dumbly for a beat)
My delivery?

LITTLE MAN
From Steinberg's. Sign, please.

JANIE
My delivery.

LITTLE MAN
Do I stutter?

JANIE
It's just ... it was supposed to go
to my office.

The little man looks at his clip board.

LITTLE MAN
This is the address I was given.

JANIE
But it's wrong! I know I wrote down
my office address!
(to herself)
Didn't I?

The little man regards her suspiciously.

JANIE (CONT'D)
There must be some mistake. I can't
take all this--

LITTLE MAN
I'll have to check it out. Can I
use your phone?

JANIE
Uh, what?

LITTLE MAN
Your phone. Thing you talk into.
With the little numbers. Rings now
and then, usually when you're in
the shower.

JANIE
I know what the phone is.

LITTLE MAN
May I use it, please?

JANIE
Oh. Um, of course. Sorry. This way.

The little man follows her into the apartment, leaving his brown paper packages stacked in the hallway. Just as Janie points to the phone cradle resting on the bar, her eyes narrow. She turns back to the little man.

JANIE (CONT'D)
Wait a minute. Santa's elves are making deliveries now?

LITTLE MAN
(shrugs)
We're short on help. And don't you dare take that as an opportunity to make a short joke.
(He jabs a stubby finger in her direction)
You hear me? Don't you dare!

JANIE
(suddenly suspicious)
You're not here to deliver packages from that little store, are you?

LITTLE MAN
Little store? Is that another joke?

Janie turns and walks to her kitchen. He follows her.

JANIE
I'm calling nine-one-one.

LITTLE MAN
Wait! Okay. Look, I'll level with you. I'm an elf.

JANIE
One of Santa's elves. Yeah. We established that at the store.

She picks up the phone.

LITTLE MAN
(piteously)
Please don't.

JANIE
If I ignore you, will you go away?

She shoves past and goes into the kitchen. She opens the Steinberg's bag with the make up.

LITTLE MAN

I'm not a store character. I'm an actual, Honest to the Bumble elf. See? Pointed ears. No latex.

JANIE

(examines the ears)

An elf. Crap. I'm not ignoring you.

Janie chooses a jar of base, one that the LABEL promises will make her look youthful and make her skin glow. She pulls a mirror out of her purse. Dipping her fingers in the flesh-tinted goo, she smears it on her cheeks.

LITTLE MAN

Right. Elf.

JANIE

So why can't I get a tall hunky elf like that guy in Lord of the Rings?

LITTLE MAN

(sighs)

We make toys. We don't shoot arrows.

JANIE

You all make toys?

LITTLE MAN

Most. There's one dentist.

JANIE

So what does an elf want with me?

LITTLE MAN

Just what I wanted in the store. I want you to make a wish.

Janie studied her reflection appraisingly.

JANIE

I don't look younger. My skin's not glowing. This is me ignoring you, by the way.

She reaches for a jar that promises to smooth away wrinkles.

LITTLE MAN

C'mon. One wish. Huh?

JANIE

I don't want to make a wish. I want you to go away.

LITTLE MAN

Can't you just humor me? It's Christmas!

JANIE

Not for another two days, and besides, I told you. I hate the whole stupid season. So you'd better try someone else.

LITTLE MAN

Actually, I think that's why you were chosen.

JANIE

I was chosen.

LITTLE MAN

Just so.

JANIE

I was chosen to make a wish because I hate Christmas.

LITTLE MAN

That's it exactly.

JANIE

You realize that makes, like, no sense at all?

LITTLE MAN

(shrugs)

Marketing doesn't have to make sense. Does it?

JANIE

(mutters and rolls her eyes)

I hear that.

(a beat as it sinks in)

Wait a minute. Marketing?

LITTLE MAN

Marketing. Do you have a hearing problem?

JANIE

Hearing problem?

LITTLE MAN

You keep repeating everything I say.

Janie frowns at her reflection, then at the jar.

JANIE

Stupid makeup. My skin is far from flawless.

LITTLE MAN

Anyway, it's more like marketing research. You can't make a marketing plan without research.

JANIE

Great. The only person I can find who understands that has jingle bells on his shoes.

She digs around in the bag for another product.

LITTLE MAN

So you're our focus group sample.

JANIE

One person doesn't make a focus group.

LITTLE MAN

There's another somewhere.

JANIE

Two people don't make a focus group, either.

LITTLE MAN

Budget. You know how it is. Money keeps shrinking. Which, I might add, is not another opportunity for a short joke. You hear me?

JANIE

But it's not a meaningful sample!

LITTLE MAN

We can always make up the rest of the tests later.

JANIE

Now where have I heard that before?

LITTLE MAN

(glares at her)

How in the name of the aurora bleeding borealis should I know?

JANIE

I thought you people were supposed to know everything.

LITTLE MAN

Just about bad children.

JANIE

So elves ... market.

LITTLE MAN

Seriously. You should get those ears checked. Look, are you going to help me out here or not?

He folds his arms across his chest. His bells jangle angrily.

JANIE

Why do elves need to market?

The Little Man looks around, then whispers as though revealing a company secret.

LITTLE MAN

Christmas spirit is seriously on the decline these days.

JANIE

No kidding.

Janie chooses another jar and dabs a little under her eyes.

LITTLE MAN

(a curt nod)

Faith is a rare commodity in the information age.

JANIE

Well, you're barking up the wrong Christmas tree with this girl, pal.

LITTLE MAN

People need to believe again, Janie.

JANIE

Me. Wrong tree. Remember?

LITTLE MAN

You're the tree that was chosen.

JANIE

I don't like Christmas. I hate it, in fact. Sort of like the way I hate being a tree in this scenario.

LITTLE MAN

You didn't always. Hate Christmas, I mean. I can't speak to the tree thing.

JANIE

But I have for a long time. Ever since she was seven years old.

LITTLE MAN

Be that as it may. The thought is, if we grant a few wishes, well, maybe people will start to believe again.

JANIE

You're living a dream, pal.
(she looks at her reflection and scowls)
This crap is useless.

LITTLE MAN

You'd be surprised what a little faith can do. So humor me. You want me to leave? I'll leave. Right now. Poof. Gone. Hey, where did the handsome elf go? But please. What can it hurt? Just make a wish, Janie. Please. Anything. Anything at all.

Janie scowls at her reflection again.

JANIE

You want a wish? Okay. I wish all this crap I bought really did what it said it would do.

LITTLE MAN

The makeup? In those bags?

JANIE

Bingo.

LITTLE MAN

Your wish is granted.

He smiles, bows, and leaves.

INT. JANIE'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Back at her table, Janie is exploring the makeup again. She opens a bottle of Clarifying Lotion, sniffs it uncertainly, but doesn't use it. She studies her reflection in the mirror.

JANIE
(to her own reflection)
So what'd'ya think? A little color
for the cheeks? Yeah, me too.

She picks up a JAR LABELED BLUSH and touches a bit of red to each of her cheeks. There is another KNOCK at her door. Janie checks her reflection as she stands to answer. She is BLUSHING.

JANIE (CONT'D)
Good lord, what's wrong with me?

The KNOCK comes again. Janie's blush deepens. As she runs to answer, she waves her hands frantically in front of her face.

JANIE (CONT'D)
(calls)
Coming!

She pauses at the door for a second to compose herself, fanning her cheeks more frantically. Then she opens the door. Jeremy is there.

JANIE (CONT'D)
Hi! Uh...
(she looks down; no name tag)
...Jimmy.

JEREMY
Jeremy.

JANIE
Right. Sorry.

Her blush brightens.

JEREMY
I came to help you. Remember? With
Sparky's spreadsheets.

She looks down, blushing furiously.

JEREMY (CONT'D)
Uh ... can I come in?

JANIE
Oh! Oh, sorry again. Please. Um,
please come in.

Janie steps back and Jeremy looks around, smiling.

JEREMY
Nice place.

JANIE
It's small.

JEREMY
Like mine. But yours is a lot
homier. I like all the art.

JANIE
Thanks.

JEREMY
Uh, are you okay?

Janie looks down at her feet, avoiding his gaze.

JEREMY (CONT'D)
You look all ... flushed.

The flush deepens even more.

JEREMY (CONT'D)
Uh, you don't have a fever, do you?

JANIE
I've been working out.

JEREMY
In your work clothes?

As she races to her bathroom:

JANIE
Make yourself at home, okay? Just
grab something from the fridge!

INT. JANIE'S APARTMENT, BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Janie looks at her reflection -- still blushing like a
schoolgirl who's wandered into the wrong locker room.

JANIE
Jeez, what's wrong with me?

She splashes cold water on her face, smearing the new makeup
in the process. She's making a mess. More cold water, then a
towel. The makeup is gone, but her blush is under control.

JANIE (CONT'D)
Thank God.

INT. JANIE'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - MEANWHILE

Jeremy has pushed the Steinberg's bags with the makeup aside and scattered the spreadsheets on the table. He scratches his head and frowns. Janie ENTERS and pulls a chair around so that she can see.

JANIE
Is it that bad?

She sits next to Jeremy.

JEREMY
Worse than usual. Even for Sparky.

JANIE
How come?

JEREMY
(points)
See this column here? That's expenses. Sparky usually gets that much right, at least. He has to, to get paid back. And this is actual sales. See? Commissions come from this. He does that first. When he messes up, it's with the details, like tax and payment schedules.

JANIE
I think Nadine helped him. Maybe that's why it's different.

JEREMY
(surprised)
She did? That's ... odd. I mean, the two of them working together....

JANIE
How come?

JEREMY
(hesitantly)
You haven't heard?

JANIE
Heard what?

JEREMY
You're kidding, right?

JANIE
Don't make me hurt you, Jerry.

JEREMY

Jeremy.

JANIE

Sorry.

JEREMY

(shrugs)

It's okay.

JANIE

So you were saying?

JEREMY

Actually, I was avoiding the question. I guess office gossip isn't really my thing.

JANIE

Isn't New Years a good time to turn over a new leaf?

JEREMY

I think it's supposed to be a positive one. And besides, it's not New Years yet.

JANIE

Point. Anyway?

JEREMY

Well, the word is, either Nadine or Sparky is going to be named VP of sales and marketing. The loser reports to the winner.

JANIE

Ouch. I can't see either of them liking that arrangement too much.

JEREMY

That's why it surprised me that they were working together.

JANIE

Doesn't sound like Nadine.

JEREMY

Of course, it does explain why I can't make heads or tails of anything.

JANIE

Think Nadine's trying to screw them up to make Bill look bad?

JEREMY

Either that, or one of them's hiding something.

JANIE

Great.

(beat)

So which one?

JEREMY

What do you mean?

JANIE

Which one's ... you know ... with the hiding?

JEREMY

Search me. Sparky may not be too good with paperwork, but he's never struck me as unethical. Well, not for a salesman, anyway. Fudging paperwork takes time away from earning commissions. And Nadine, she always struck me manipulative and lazy, but mostly harmless.

JANIE

We need to figure this out.

JEREMY

So who are we trying to help?

JANIE

(uncertainly)

The company, I guess. I mean, it is our job, right? Or mine, anyway.

JEREMY

It'll be mine, too, at least when management sends this mess down to Accounting to have it explained.

JANIE

So there you go. Let's find out what's going on here.

JEREMY

That's not so easy. Like I said, I can't make heads or tails of this mess. And I'm an accountant.

JANIE
Great. Let me see.

As Janie reaches for the top spreadsheets, she KNOCKS OVER the open bottle of clarifying lotion. She catches the bottle quickly, but a large amount has spilled on the spreadsheets.

JANIE (CONT'D)
Aw, crap.

JEREMY
It's okay.

JANIE
They're soaked! I don't even have another copy.

JEREMY
No really, I think it's okay. See? They're just a little wet.

JANIE
(stands)
I'll get a towel.

JEREMY
We can still read them. In fact...
(his brow crinkles)
Hey, that's weird.

JANIE
What?

JEREMY
I can understand this now.

JANIE
You're kidding.

JEREMY
No! Look here, see?

Janie sits and looks at the spreadsheets. Her eyes pop open.

JANIE
Oh! I see it now. Jeez, what a putz I am! Why didn't I see that before?

JEREMY
(frowns and shakes his head)
I didn't see it either. But now--

Jeremy doesn't finish the thought. She flips through the rest of the spreadsheets.

JEREMY (CONT'D)
Now that's really weird.

JANIE
What?

JEREMY
I don't know. It's like I can only
makes heads or tails of the first two
pages. The rest are still gibberish.

JANIE
That can't be. Here, let me see.

Janie pulls the stack of papers closer and flips through
them. After a moment, her frown mirrors Jeremy's.

JANIE (CONT'D)
But that doesn't make sense.

JEREMY
Yeah. That's what I'm saying.
(he smiles at her)
See? The only ones that make any kind
of sense at all are the ones that got
wet. What is that stuff, anyway?

JANIE
It's clarifying lotion.

JEREMY
Well, it certainly worked.

JANIE
What do you mean?

JEREMY
The pages you spilled that stuff on
are clarified!

JANIE
(shakes her head)
That's not what it means. It just
washes away dead skin, and
moisturizes the rest.

JEREMY
Come again?

JANIE
It makes your skin look better.

JEREMY

Oh. Well, that's not all it seems to do.

JANIE

(snaps)

Don't be silly. I--

She freezes, mid-sentence. Then, with eyes wide and jaw hanging open, she looks at the jar of blush she'd used right before Jeremy arrived.

JANIE (CONT'D)

My wish.

JEREMY

(concerned)

Uh, you okay?

JANIE

You're going to think I'm freakin' nuts.

JEREMY

Try me.

JANIE

I went to this crappy little store to buy decorations for the holiday party. And while I was there, this obnoxious little elf guy made me make a Christmas wish.

JEREMY

Elf?

JANIE

One of Santa's frickin' helpers, okay?

JEREMY

(o-kay)

So what did you wish for?

JANIE

(swallows)

I wished that all this make up I bought would really do what it said it would do.

JEREMY

(whistles)

That's quite a story.

JANIE
(embarrassed)
No kidding. God! I don't know what
I was thinking, telling you that.

JEREMY
I'm glad you did.

JANIE
Why? So you can have a good story
to tell around the accounting water
cooler tomorrow?

JEREMY
Is that really what you think?

JANIE
I don't know what to think anymore.

JEREMY
(grins)
So why don't we test?

JANIE
Test what to think?

JEREMY
Actually, I was thinking we could
test your wish.

Janie shakes her head, confused.

JEREMY (CONT'D)
The rest of these pages still don't
make any sense at all, right?

JANIE
That's for sure.

JEREMY
Okay then. Let's try some more of
that stuff!

JANIE
The clarifying lotion?

Jeremy's eyebrows arched higher, reaching over the rims of
his glasses.

JEREMY
Why not?

JANIE
Because ... because it's just nuts!
That's why.

JEREMY
(smiles)
Aw come on. Where's your sense of
adventure?

JANIE
(shakes her head
uncertainly)
I don't know, Jerry.

JEREMY
Jeremy.

JANIE
Sorry.

JEREMY
I'm getting used to it. So what's
it gonna be?

Janie looks down at her hands, folded in her lap. She fidgets
uncomfortably.

JEREMY (CONT'D)
I won't tell if you don't.

JANIE
Well ... okay. You swear you won't
tell? Not a word?

JEREMY
I don't want to look like an idiot
either, Janie.

JANIE
And it's not like I can get more
embarrassed.

JEREMY
Exactly.

JANIE
You didn't have to agree with that
last part.

Janie hands him the clarifying lotion. He winks.

JEREMY
Here goes nothing.

Carefully, Jeremy dabs the lotion on every other page.

JANIE
You missed some.

JEREMY
I'm making a control group.

After a moment, Jeremy flips through the spreadsheets and whistles. Janie looks over his shoulder.

JANIE
I don't believe it. I just don't believe it.

JEREMY
Me either. This is spooky.

JANIE
No kidding.

JEREMY
But the result is clear. The ones with your lotion make sense. The others are just plain gibberish.

JANIE
But it can't be. It ... it's frickin' impossible.

JEREMY
(shrugs)
So what's your explanation?

Janie chews her bottom lip for a second as she thinks.

JANIE
Placebo, maybe? Yeah. Yeah! We're seeing the order because we expect to see the order. Right? We think it's going to make sense to us, so it does! It's all... it's all just some kind of mind game.

JEREMY
Well, there's one way to find out. What else have you got in that bag?

JANIE
Huh?

JEREMY
Let's try something else.

Puzzled, Janie pushes the Steinberg's bag toward him.

JANIE

Here you go.

Jeremy digs around for a few seconds.

JEREMY

Hmmm. Hair spray. I wonder what that would do for a bald man?

JANIE

(giggles)

What if you miss and get it on the furniture? I'll have to shave my table.

JEREMY

Good point.

He finds a bottle labeled Instant Bronze and holds it up.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Ooo... instant bronze!

JANIE

It's supposed to be a sunless, indoor tanning lotion.

JEREMY

If it does what it literally sounds like it would do, I bet it would be a great way to preserve baby shoes. Maybe we should try that.

JANIE

I, uh, don't have any lying around.

JEREMY

I don't suppose you have anything else you want bronzed?

JANIE

It hasn't been a pressing need for me.

JEREMY

Guess not.

He finds another bottle.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Oh. This ought to be good.

JANIE
Vanishing cream? You've got to be kidding.

JEREMY
Let's try!

Jeremy smiles with childlike excitement. He opens the jar and scoops a little of the cream on his fingers. Still grinning, he rubs the goop on the saltshaker. It vanishes.

JANIE
(whispers)
Oh my God. It's ... it's...

JEREMY
(softly, smiling)
Vanished. With vanishing cream.

JANIE
But that's not possible!

JEREMY
I'd say take it with a grain of salt, but I guess it's too late for that. Now that the, uh, shaker's gone and all.

JANIE
It's like a miracle. A weird, freaky-ass miracle.

Jeremy holds up his hand. The tips of two of his fingers seem to be missing.

JEREMY
You say this stuff washes off?
Gross!

JANIE
Be thankful you didn't use the Instant Bronze.

INT. JANIE'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - LATER

Janie and Jeremy sit on her sofa, sharing mugs of hot chocolate. The spreadsheets, thoroughly clarified, are stacked neatly on the coffee table.

JANIE
So what do you think it all means?

JEREMY

(shrugs)

To be honest, I don't know. There are a few irregularities here and there.

JANIE

Like what?

JEREMY

Well, that Michael's place that Nadine takes clients to for lunch is actually a shoe store.

JANIE

Ah. I thought that was a little much to pay for client lunches.

JEREMY

(astonished)

You mean it's not too much for shoes?

JANIE

Never mind.

JEREMY

How many pairs can one woman need? She only has two feet, right?

JANIE

It's complicated.

JEREMY

I mean, a black pair, a brown pair, sneakers--

JANIE

You're a man. You're not going to understand this, Jerry.

JEREMY

Jeremy.

JANIE

So what about the irregularities?

Jeremy picks up the spreadsheets and thumbs through them.

JEREMY

To be honest, there's not that many. I've been an accountant for some big companies. For heads of marketing and sales, this is nothing.

JANIE
So what's she trying to hide?

JEREMY
Or he.

JANIE
You think Bill's responsible?

JEREMY
They are his sheets, after all. But
yeah, I think it's Nadine. Sparky
doesn't understand spreadsheets
nearly enough to make this kind of
mess. Somebody did this on purpose.

JANIE
So back to my original question.
What's she up to?

JEREMY
(scratches his ear)
No idea, really.

JANIE
How about a guess?

JEREMY
Do you have one?

JANIE
Yes, but I asked you first.

JEREMY
Okay then. Well, if I had to guess--

JANIE
You do.

JEREMY
Then I'd say that Nadine made the
data obscure so that it would take
us a heck of a long time to sort it
all out. By the time we do, her
marketing plan will be approved.
Then, if anything goes wrong, she
can blame it on Bill.

JANIE
So she gets the plan she wants,
doesn't have to work over Christmas
and New Years, and Bill looks bad.

JEREMY

She slacks off and gets the promotion, no matter what happens. That's my guess.

Janie chews her lower lip thoughtfully.

JANIE

Only there's one thing that doesn't add up. Even with the clarifying lotion.

JEREMY

What's that?

JANIE

Nadine likes Bill. She's certainly got her hooks in him. And He's taking her to the party.

JEREMY

The company Christmas party?

JANIE

The Festive Generic Multicultural and Non-Religiously-Specific Winter Holiday Party.

JEREMY

I can almost hear you making the little circle-c copyright symbol when you say that.

JANIE

Careful. Now who needs spirit training?

Jeremy shudders.

JANIE (CONT'D)

So why would she go this far to make somebody she likes look bad?

JEREMY

Search me. I don't even understand the shoe thing, remember?

(beat)

So what do we do?

JANIE

I don't know. Let's get all this stuff back to the office. Maybe we can figure it out tomorrow.

JEREMY
That sounds like a good idea.

JANIE
(scowls)
Not that I'll have too much time.

JEREMY
Oh?

JANIE
I've got to put up the stupid party decorations.

JEREMY
Just be sure they're generic and non-religiously-specific.

JANIE
You forgot multicultural.

JEREMY
Oh, that's understood. I wear a spirit tag, remember? So you want some help?

JANIE
You'd help me? With the party?

JEREMY
Sure. Why not? Maybe it'll be fun.

JANIE
That'd be a lifesaver. Really. But I can't ask that.

JEREMY
You didn't. I offered. Again. Besides, I don't really have anyone ... anything special. I'd like to help. You know me. Totally multicultural and generic.

JANIE
Don't forget festive.

JEREMY
Especially festive.

JANIE
Thanks. Hey, I really, really appreciate this.

JEREMY

Don't mention it. Believe me, it's my pleasure. Who knows? Maybe it'll get me in the holiday spirit. How about you?

JANIE

Me?

JEREMY

Yeah. Got the spirit yet?

JANIE

I'm a total bah humbug girl.

JEREMY

You're kidding.

JANIE

Uh uh. I hate the holidays.

JEREMY

No you don't.

JANIE

This is what you want to argue about? Really?

JEREMY

Oh. Um. Well.

(looks around uncomfortably
for a moment)

Anyway, what are you going to do about ... you know. The other thing.

JANIE

Other thing?

JEREMY

The makeup. It may be a freaky-ass miracle, but it's still a miracle.

JANIE

Magic makeup isn't exactly in the pillar of fire or stone-into-bread class.

JEREMY

It has to mean something. Doesn't it? Janie, we have to talk about this.

JANIE

We pretty much are. Accept that I don't know what to say.

JEREMY

Well, what does this say about science? And elves. We know that elves exist now. We have to reconcile that with everything we know about biology and physics and Lord only knows what else.

JANIE

I don't really know much about either of those.

JEREMY

Me either, to tell you the truth. Thankfully, you don't have to just to be an accountant.

JANIE

So I guess it won't take long to reconcile what we know.

JEREMY

Are you kidding?

JANIE

Mostly. It's better than hysterics.

JEREMY

Not to mention Santa Claus. For Heaven's sake, I'm never going to be able to look at a department store Santa the same way again.

JANIE

How do you look a them now?

JEREMY

(changes the subject)
So why'd you buy all that stuff anyway?

JANIE

(hel-lo)
I'm a girl, remember?

JEREMY

Why so much all at once?

JANIE

I don't know. I wanted to be a little glamorous, I suppose. I wanted to be, you know, noticed.

JEREMY

You don't need makeup for that.

Janie looks up, surprised. She almost seems to be seeing him for the first time. And she realizes: he doesn't just want to help with the party. He's *interested*. And she might be, too.

JANIE

Thank you, Jeremy.

EXT. JANIE'S APARTMENT - MORNING

To establish.

INT. JANIE'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - MORNING

Janie's running late. She's grabbing her coffee and a muffin to go when a KNOCK AT THE DOOR startles her. She answers.

The little man, still in his elf costume, has come back. He stands in the hallway, the bells on his curled shoes jangling as he taps his foot impatiently. He holds a clipboard and glares up at Janie expectantly.

JANIE

Um, hi.

LITTLE MAN

High. That better not be a short joke. So help me Blitzen, I'll--

JANIE

It's just ... hi. As in hello. A greeting.

LITTLE MAN

Ah. One that says, 'why are you here?' rather than 'welcome,' right?

JANIE

Pretty much. I'm late for work.

LITTLE MAN

Then I won't keep you long. Just a routine follow up interview--

JANIE

Follow up?

LITTLE MAN

After your wish. Christmas spirit measurement. Got to record it all in a spreadsheet. I told you there'd be a follow up, remember?

JANIE

I don't remember anything about that.

LITTLE MAN

I told you about it.

JANIE

I don't think so.

LITTLE MAN

I'm certain I mentioned it.

JANIE

No you didn't.

LITTLE MAN

Well, I meant to.

JANIE

That's not the same thing.

LITTLE MAN

It's implied. It ought to be obvious, right? After all, marketing research, remember?

Janie opens her mouth, but finds no words. Instead, she simply stares dumbly, shaking her head slowly.

LITTLE MAN (CONT'D)

Now then, your wish was delivered satisfactorily?

JANIE

My wish? You're kidding, right?

The little man looks up from his clipboard, startled.

LITTLE MAN

What? Your wish came true, didn't it? The wish you made, let's see here, yes, last night?

JANIE

Well ... sort of.

LITTLE MAN

What do you mean sort of? It did or
it didn't. Which is it?

JANIE

(shakes her head)

It came true, but it wasn't what I
asked for!

The little man glares at Janie for a second, rubbing his
chin. Then he looks back down at his clipboard.

LITTLE MAN

Let's see here. Wish, Janie Mason.
Wants makeup to do what it says it
will do. Is that not what happened?

JANIE

Yes, but--

LITTLE MAN

Well then. There you go. Now. How's
your Christmas spirit?

JANIE

My what?

LITTLE MAN

You are hard of hearing. I knew it.
(makes a note on the
clipboard, then speaks
louder, almost shouting)
Your Christmas spirit! How is it now?

JANIE

You want to know how my Christmas
Spirit is?

LITTLE MAN

Should I come back with an elf who
knows sign language?

JANIE

(snaps)

I can hear fine.

LITTLE MAN

Ah. Just slow then.

(he makes another note)

Now then. Let me ask this slowly
and carefully. Take as much time as
you need to answer.

(MORE)

LITTLE MAN (CONT'D)
Has your Christmas Spirit improved dramatically, or just a little? In light of your wish, I mean.

JANIE
I don't even know how to answer that.

LITTLE MAN
(looks at his clipboard)
Actually, you're supposed to rank it on a scale of one to five, with one being only slight or modest improvement, and five being astonishing and life-changing.

JANIE
Zero, then.

LITTLE MAN
(checks the clipboard)
That wasn't one of the choices.

JANIE
It is now. It hasn't improved at all!

The little man looks up at her, his eyes and mouth open wide.

LITTLE MAN
What? Not improved at all?

JANIE
(smiles)
Would you like me to find a woman who knows sign language?

The elf glares and jabs a finger at a large, pointed ear.

LITTLE MAN
I can hear you fine!

JANIE
Ah. Just slow then.

LITTLE MAN
Don't get smart with me, girly. I have access to the naughty and nice list. Now how on earth can you not be just filled to the brim with the joyous flush of holiday spirit?

JANIE
I told you. I hate Christmas. The whole stupid season. Remember?

LITTLE MAN

But ... but ... that was before you
witnessed a miracle!

JANIE

That doesn't make a difference. And
besides, it was a stupid miracle.

LITTLE MAN

How can a miracle be stupid?

JANIE

I wanted to be beautiful. To get a
certain man to notice me.

LITTLE MAN

Then that's what you should have
wished for.

JANIE

But I didn't believe you!

LITTLE MAN

And now you do. Shouldn't that be
enough to make you believe in the
magic of the season? In the power
of winter enchantment that comes
with cold, starry nights when the
world is covered with a blanket of
crystal white snow?

JANIE

This is Atlanta. No snow. Besides,
I told you you had the wrong girl.

LITTLE MAN

The idea was to find someone
completely without spirit and fill
them with faith, like brandy poured
in a bottle.

JANIE

I guess it didn't work.

LITTLE MAN

It has to work!
(looks at the clipboard)
Are you sure it didn't? Not even a
little?

JANIE

Not so much.

LITTLE MAN

Something must be wrong.

JANIE

Something is wrong. Wrong girl. Jeez, you are a little slow, aren't you?

LITTLE MAN

Me? You're the nitwit incapable of being moved by a miracle! And don't think I missed the little slow.

JANIE

So what's the big deal, anyway?

LITTLE MAN

Big deal. Oh, you're funny, aren't you?

JANIE

(tries to shove past)
I gotta get to work.

LITTLE MAN

We're trying to elevate the sum total of holiday spirit in the world. I told you that. Who's slow now, eh?

JANIE

But why?

LITTLE MAN

Because we depend on belief. It's where our power comes from. Faith... faith makes us exist. The more faith there is, why, the more toys Santa can deliver to children who need a smile. It means that for one day, one precious, shining winter day, the troubles of the world can seem a little farther away. Our magic inspires people all over the world to be Santas for the ones they love. When that happens, we live in them, and their faith means we can reach that many more. It means we can touch people, children, whose only hope is a miracle.

(beat, smiles)

In times past, it was enough to let us visit every child on the planet in a single night.

(MORE)

LITTLE MAN (CONT'D)

It was enchantment enough to make
reindeer fly, at least once a year.
It was enough, Janie, oh, it was
enough.

JANIE

But not anymore.

LITTLE MAN

Soon it won't even be enough for us
to visit the few who need us most.

(beat)

It's all about faith, Janie. The
ability to believe in magic, and
old-fashioned things like
fellowship, devotion, joy, sharing,
charity, and yes, even love in the
darkest and coldest nights of the
year. Faith is like a candle in the
window that guides you home. It
shines and endures, bright and
golden. It makes reindeer fly.

JANIE

So, like, if people stop believing
you'll ... what? You'll, like, die?

LITTLE MAN

We'll fade, like shadows, and be
forgotten.

JANIE

Maybe it's time for that. If people
don't care any more--

LITTLE MAN

And what will be left, I wonder? What
happens when all the things that
bring joy become irrelevant? Is that
the world you want to live in?

JANIE

Not my problem. If I could forget
the whole stupid holiday season,
believe me, I'd do it in a
heartbeat. Now excuse me, please. I
have to go to work.

LITTLE MAN

But--

Janie pushes past, closing her door behind her.

JANIE
(firmly)
Goodbye.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - LATER

To establish.

INT. JANIE MASON'S CUBE - MORNING

Janie ENTERS. It's early. Looking around, she notices that the CHEERY HOLIDAY MUZAK is already playing through a speaker in the ceiling. Even more blinking Christmas lights have been strung around the office.

JANIE
(mutters)
Oh for cryin' out loud.

A FEW MOMENTS LATER:

Janie is at her desk, with Bill's spreadsheets and the bag of makeup. She glares at the speaker, and then grins mischievously. The music is awful. She rubs her temples and SIGHS. Then an idea occurs to her.

She looks around furtively, reaches into the bag, and pulls out a spray bottle labeled VOLUMIZING MIST. She sprays the speaker. Suddenly, THE MUSAK BLARES, WAY LOUDER.

All around, Janie's COWORKERS popup from their cubicles, MURMURING AND SHOUTING.

COWORKER #1
Hey!

COWORKER #2
What the hell--?!

COWORKER #3
Turn that down!

Another coworker turns the volume control frantically.

COWORKER #4
I can't!

COWORKER #3
Well turn it off, then!

CO-WORKER #1
Turn that damn noise off!

Mercifully, THE MUSIC STOPS ABRUPTLY. Janie allows herself a satisfied smirk.

INT. JANIE MASON'S CUBE - LATER

Bill Sparks stops by Janie's cubicle. Bill wears his usual blue sport coat with a Georgia bulldog tie. The bulldog wears a Santa hat, partially obscured by Bill's dollar sign tie tack. Not a hair is out of place. He turns on his smile.

BILL
Hiya, beautiful.

JANIE
Hi, Bill. How's it going?

BILL
Just trying to make a living. But to tell you the truth, I was about to ask you the same thing. Or rather, how's it coming rather than how it's going.

He chuckles at the cleverness of his own joke.

JANIE
I'm hard at it, Bill.

BILL
The spreadsheets?

JANIE
They were kind of a mess. I'm just putting all the data in the proper format. Want to see?

BILL
Oh, I have complete confidence. Just drop 'em on my desk when you finish. I've got to run to do a meeting. See if I can close a deal real quick.

JANIE
You're making a sales call? Today?

BILL
There's money on the table, Jenny.

JANIE
Janie.

BILL

I don't plan to leave it there. If I do, someone else'll pick it right up from under me. Better my wallet than the competition's, right? Am I right? Of course I am. Winners don't rest, Jessie.

JANIE

Janie.

BILL

Right, right you are. Oh, and thanks again! I knew you'd dot all those ts for me. Hey, you're a champ.

JANIE

Good-bye, Bill.

BILL

Hey, don't work too hard, now. You'll want to be sure you get finished in time for the party.

JANIE

I'll be at the party, Bill.

BILL

I know, champ. I'm counting on you for those decorations, now. See you!

JANIE

Good-bye, Bill.

He whistles Jingle Bell Rock as he walked away.

INT. JANIE MASON'S CUBE - LATER

Flashing CHRISTMAS LIGHTS are reflecting in Janie's screen again. More of them now, much worse. She's beyond frustrated.

JANIE (CONT'D)

Can't we do something about these stupid lights?

Betty pops her head over the cube wall.

BETTY

(accusing)

That's not very festive.

Janie gives her a glare. Betty sits down again quickly. Then, Janie smiles. Reaching into the bag again, she finds a tube of LIGHT CONTROL GEL.

She squeezes a but on her fingers and leaves her cube. As she passes the lights, she causally rubs a bit on the blinking bulbs.

Suddenly, THE LIGHTS GROW dimmer. The change is subtle but dramatic all the same, like switching from the gaudy glare of the Vegas strip to the soft glow of the Christmas Tree in Bedford Falls.

Coworkers pop up from their cubes again, confused.

COWORKER #1

Hey, what happened to all the lights?

COWORKER #2

Must be the power. One of those brownout things.

COWORKER #3

My computer's still working. Unfortunately.

COWORKER #4

Hmph. Corporate's saving money.

Janie's grin widens as she keeps walking.

INT. JANIE MASON'S CUBE - MOMENTS LATER

Janie returns with a steaming mug of coffee and finds Jeremy waiting at her cubicle. The blinking lights are off.

JANIE

Hey there, you.

JEREMY

(smiles)

I was just looking for you.

JANIE

Yeah, I kinda figured that. There's not a lot to do at my cubicle.

JEREMY

It's not really a hotspot, is it?

JANIE

It's not much, but I call it hell.

JEREMY

So what going on in Janie's inferno today?

JANIE

(a slight shrug)

Finishing up what we started last night. I managed to get Bill's spreadsheets in order, thanks to you and the clarifying lotion. Now I'm going to correlate Nadine's focus group data.

JEREMY

Do you have time?

JANIE

(sighs)

No. But I'm going to do this right. Somehow.

JEREMY

But what happens when it doesn't match Nadine's marketing plan?

JANIE

Not my problem. My job is to correlate the data properly. I'm going to do it, despite the fact that I don't have the proper time.

JEREMY

Have you thought about what'll happen when management sees your data and the plan submitted at the same time?

JANIE

No. Should I?

JEREMY

Well, it'll show the company has wasted a ton of money on research. And that the marketing plan for next quarter might be inappropriate.

JANIE

And that could be bad, couldn't it?

JEREMY

(nods)

Bad. It could get Nadine fired.

JANIE

(eyes wide)

That's not what I meant to happen.

JEREMY

Bill will probably get fired, too.

JANIE

Oh, crap.

JEREMY

The worst part is, whoever gets hired will probably want to bring in their own people. That means the whole department might wind up getting the ax. Including you.

JANIE

And people wonder why I hate the stupid holidays.

JEREMY

Are you still going to turn in the corrected data?

JANIE

Of course I am.

JEREMY

But why, Janie?

Janie looks at him, surprised.

JANIE

Because it's my job. Because it's the right thing to do.

MONTAGE:

As the day ticks away, Janie works on the marketing data.

At 2 o'clock, she stands and looks at the clock on the wall.

JANIE (CONT'D)

Joy. Three hours to do a week's work.

BETTY pops her head over the cubicle wall.

BETTY

Don't forget about decorating for the party.

Janie collapses in her chair and SIGHS, rubbing her temples.

BETTY (CONT'D)

Did you get snow men?

Janie glares at her. Betty sinks back down into her cubicle.

Janie keeps working. The pile doesn't seem to be shrinking.

At a little after four o'clock, her PHONE BUZZES. Leaving it on speaker, she answers.

JANIE

Janie Mason.

RECEPTIONIST (FROM THE SPEAKER)

Reception. You have a delivery.

JANIE

Where's it from?

RECEPTIONIST (FROM THE SPEAKER)

Steinberg's Five and Dime.

JANIE

Oh. It's the party decorations.
Have them leave it in the
auditorium, okay?

RECEPTIONIST (FROM THE SPEAKER)

Will do.

EXT. STEINBERG'S FIVE AND DIME - MEANWHILE

To establish.

INT. STEINBERG'S FIVE AND DIME, SANTA'S THRONE

A last KID is sitting on Santa's lap. His MOTHER SNAPS a photo. Santa rubs his tired eyes after the flash. As the mother and kid hurry away, Santa seems disappointed to see that there aren't any more kids in line. He SIGHS.

The Little Man ENTERS and clears his throat.

SANTA

Ah, Alassë. Welcome back.

Santa stands and hangs his "Back in Five Minutes" sign on the post near the throne. Santa motions for the Little Man to follow him through a tiny door behind the throne to:

INT. STEINBERG'S FIVE AND DIME, DRESSING ROOM

A shabby locker room with two metal chairs and a dressing table. Santa takes one of the chairs.

SANTA

Sit down, sit down. I trust your
mission was successful? Have a bite.

The Little Man doesn't sit.

LITTLE MAN

Well, I granted the wish. Just as you suggested. Though it still seems a powerful waste of good magic. It's getting rare, you know.

SANTA

(smiles knowingly)
So it is. But magic is like joy. Sharing doesn't diminish it. Take a load off, lad.

The Little Man sits in the chair by Santa's. He scowls. He doesn't like sitting so that his feet don't reach the floor.

SANTA (CONT'D)

How did our subject respond?

LITTLE MAN

(takes a deep breath
before answering)
Well, to be honest, I'm not sure it was exactly what she was expecting.

SANTA

(ho-ho-hos softly)
It seldom is. You gave her the survey?

LITTLE MAN

Well, as to that--

SANTA

Yes?

LITTLE MAN

That is to say, um, not all of it.

SANTA

Not all?

The Little Man hops down from the too-tall metal chair and paces.

LITTLE MAN

I never got past the first question.

SANTA

What? You didn't ask the questions?

LITTLE MAN

Alas, no.

SANTA
None of them?

LITTLE MAN
None. That is to say, none after
the first. Sir.

SANTA
Why not, Alassë?

LITTLE MAN
Ah. Well. As to that, you see, the
questions, that is, the questions
that follow the first one--

SANTA
Yes?

LITTLE MAN
You see, sir, they all seem to
assume that the subject answers the
first question in the affirmative.

SANTA
Excuse me?

LITTLE MAN
That is to say, they all seem to
assume that there has been some,
er, improvement in holiday spirit.

SANTA
I see. So there was no improvement?

LITTLE MAN
Not at all. Here, see for yourself.

The Little Man hands Santa his clipboard. Santa puts on his
tiny reading glasses and peers at the papers.

LITTLE MAN (CONT'D)
She claims to hate Christmas, sir.

SANTA
To be expected, I suppose.

LITTLE MAN
(surprised)
You knew?

SANTA
The holidays are hard for her.

LITTLE MAN
So why choose her for a miracle?

SANTA
(smiles)
Because she needs one.

LITTLE MAN
But it didn't seem to matter, did it? I mean, sir, her holiday spirit is unchanged...

SANTA
(nods)
Yes. Poor girl. That one forgot how to believe a long time ago.

LITTLE MAN
How can she not believe? She saw! Right before her eyes! She has proof!

SANTA
She doesn't believe. She knows. That's not the same thing.

LITTLE MAN
What's the difference?

SANTA
One has to do with knowledge; the other has to do with faith. Knowledge is easy. Faith, that's harder. It's a thing of the heart, not the brain. Here, have a cookie.

LITTLE MAN
(takes a cookie)
So what do we do? Find another subject?

SANTA
No, no, she's the one we need.

Santa stands and walks slowly back to his locker and rummages around through the clutter.

SANTA (CONT'D)
Let's see, where did I put it?

LITTLE MAN
But sir, we're running out of time, aren't we?

SANTA

I suppose we are. All the more
reason for you to hurry, then,
isn't it?

LITTLE MAN

I don't think my hurrying is going
to make a difference, begging your
pardon, sir.

Santa turns and looks at the Little Man.

SANTA

We need people to believe again, my
friend. Otherwise, I'm not sure
I'll even be able to finish my
rounds this year.

LITTLE MAN

If I could just chose someone else--

Santa turns back to the desk and finds what he's looking for.

SANTA

No, no, Janie Mason is the one. Ah!
Here it is.

Smiling, he holds up a tiny silver key. He uses it to unlock
a footlocker at the bottom of the locker.

LITTLE MAN

But sir, she's a hopeless case.
Hopeless! Believe me.

SANTA

There's no such thing as a hopeless
case. I never give up on anyone.
Never. Not even despairing elves or
spiritless girls. Here we go!

Santa pulls an envelope and a dusty box wrapped in faded
paper from the footlocker and turns around.

LITTLE MAN

What's that?

SANTA

(blows a cloud of dust off
the box)
Something for Janie. Here, give her
these.

LITTLE MAN

What is it?

SANTA
Something to remind her of the
child she used to be.

LITTLE MAN
How do I give to her? When?

SANTA
(smiles again)
You'll know.

INT. JANIE MASON'S CUBE - MEANWHILE

Janie CRIES. Betty pops her head over the cubicle wall.

BETTY
You okay?

Janie gives her a "how stupid ARE you?" glare.

BETTY (CONT'D)
What's wrong?

JANIE
I've done the bloody stupid
impossible. If I say so, I've done
a pretty amazing job. But you know
what? It doesn't stupid matter.

BETTY
Uh, say what?

JANIE
Now that I've got all the focus
group data organized, it's obvious.
Nadine's marketing plan is
completely inappropriate. And she's
already turned it in. It's sitting
on the CEO's desk right now.

BETTY
What are you going to do?

JANIE
(sighs)
There's nothing I can do. Unless...

BETTY
What?

JANIE
Unless I rewrite the whole damn
plan. I mean, creative's supposed
to have input, right?

She looks at the clock.

JANIE (CONT'D)
And I've got, like, thirty minutes.

BETTY
You are so screwed.

Janie turns to her keyboard, opens Nadine's document, and
starts typing like a madwoman.

JANIE
God I hate Christmas.

INT. JANIE MASON'S CUBE - LATER

Janie is still working furiously. Her PHONE BUZZES. She
answers, putting it on speaker.

JEREMY (FROM THE SPEAKER)
Hey there. You ready?

JANIE
(confused)
Ready for what?

JEREMY (FROM THE SPEAKER)
Um, weren't we planning to do some
decorating about now? You know. For
the Festive ... um ... what do you call
it again?

JANIE
Oh, crap! I forgot!

JEREMY (FROM THE SPEAKER)
Want me to meet you down there?

JANIE
I'm working on something. I need a
few more minutes.

JEREMY (FROM THE SPEAKER)
Janie, the party starts at seven.
That's not a lot of time.

JANIE
I know, I know. Look, I'll call you
in a few minutes.

JEREMY
Okay, Janie. Whatever you say.

INT. JANIE MASON'S CUBE - AN HOUR LATER

It's after six-thirty. The PHONE BUZZES. Janie puts it on
speaker again.

JEREMY (FROM THE SPEAKER)
You ready now?

JANIE
I just ... Damn I'm not even close.

JEREMY (FROM THE SPEAKER)
Janie, it's 6:30. The party starts
in thirty minutes!

JANIE
I know. Look, just give me fifteen
minutes. Okay? We can throw some
tinsel up in no time. It's not like
people are going to care. Not as long
as the bar's open.

JEREMY (FROM THE SPEAKER)
A little cynical, aren't we?

JANIE
Just give me fifteen minutes, okay?

JEREMY (FROM THE SPEAKER)
Fifteen minutes.

He hangs up. Betty's head pops up again.

BETTY
Fifteen minutes isn't going to
matter, you know. Fifteen hours
wouldn't make a difference.

Janie glares.

BETTY (CONT'D)
You are so screwed.

As Betty pops back down, Janie rubs her temples and SIGHS.
Then, abruptly, she sits up as an idea occurs to her.

She clicks the icon to print the pages she's actually managed to complete. She runs to the printer and runs back. She puts the printout on her desk.

JANIE

(mutters)

Okay. Seven pages out of more than three-hundred. This had better work....

She takes a deep breath. Janie reaches into her bag and pulls out a bottle of the makeup.

Closing her eyes for luck, Janie smears thick cream on the printed pages. When she opens her eyes, she grins. Sitting on her desk is a neatly bound document --324 pages, complete with charts and illustrations.

At that moment, Jeremy ENTERS. He sees the document. His eyes widen.

JEREMY

Is that--?

Janie grins again and nods.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

How--?

She beams as she shows Jeremy the jar:

JANIE

Finishing cream!

INT. OFFICE HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Jeremy and Janie walk fast.

JEREMY

I don't suppose you happen to have any, uh, decorating lotion in that bag, do you?

JANIE

'Fraid not. We're on our own.

JEREMY

Great. So what are you going to do with the plan?

JANIE

What d'you mean?

JEREMY
Nadine's already turned hers in...

JANIE
Oh my God. It's on the CEO's desk!

JEREMY
(thinking as they hurry)
O'Malley's office, huh?

JANIE
Maybe we can sneak upstairs while
everyone's at the party.

Jeremy frowns doubtfully.

They reach the auditorium doors, push them open and:

Janie and Jeremy find another surprise waiting for them. The caterers are setting up the food stations and the bars--in a fully bedecked auditorium. Steinberg's hasn't just delivered Janie's packages. They've decorated.

JANIE (CONT'D)
Oh. My. God.

The paneled, upholstered corporate blandness of the auditorium has been transformed into a wonderland. Boughs of greenery strung with sparkling white lights and red ribbons circle the room. In the windows hung the silver stars and crescent moons of Ramadan.

The doorways are hung with holly and black ravens. At the table by the door, a menorah holds candles blazing with flickering light. In the far corner, an evergreen tree bears twinkling lights and ornaments beneath a porcelain angel.

Dozens of glittered crystal snowflakes hang from every light fixture. And yet, somehow, the diverse elements don't clash. They blend with surprising and astonishing harmony, one complimenting another.

JEREMY
It's beautiful!

JANIE
No!

JEREMY
(astonished)
What's wrong? It's amazing!

JANIE

It's all wrong! This isn't even
what I bought!

JEREMY

I don't understand.

JANIE

There's a stupid Christmas tree for
crying out loud!

JEREMY

So what? I love it.

JANIE

People are going to be offended!

JEREMY

I'm Jewish. I don't mind the tree.
Besides, look. See? There's a
menorah. Oh! And a dreidel! A real
clay dreidel! How about that? I
haven't played with one of those
since I was a kid.

JANIE

But it's supposed to be generic!

JEREMY

It's multicultural.

JANIE

It's supposed to be non-religiously
specific!

JEREMY

It's inclusive, not exclusive.

JANIE

You sound like my elf.

JEREMY

Ouch.

JANIE

So what are we going to do?

JEREMY

There's no way we can get rid of
all this stuff in--

(looks at his watch)

--eleven and a half minutes. Not to
mention redecorating. Face it, Janie.

(MORE)

JEREMY (CONT'D)

These halls are decked. Literally.
See there? Boughs of holly.

JANIE

What if people are offended?

JEREMY

Who can be? Jeez, did you miss
anything? It looks like ... like every
culture and sacred winter tradition on
the planet is represented here! Look,
there's even a Tibetan Buddhist winter
butter sculpture. I think so, anyway.

JANIE

A Tibetan what?

JEREMY

In Tibet, the Buddhists celebrate
the winter holiday by carving
sculptures out of yak butter.

JANIE

You have got to be kidding.

JEREMY

(mutters)

Like it makes more sense than
chopping down a tree and dragging the
carcass inside to hang stuff on.

JANIE

But it's supposed to be generic!

JEREMY

At least it's festive.

JANIE

I am so fired.

JEREMY

Look, people are already here.
Looks like they're coming early.

JANIE

Oh, crap.

PEOPLE ENTER. One by one, they look around in unabashed
wonder, eyes open, mouths gaping. They point and LAUGH, not
in derision, but in delight.

JEREMY

Look at them. They love it.

JANIE

I am so totally fired.

JEREMY

Don't worry. We'll find a way to fix things. Look, here come Nadine and Bill.

JANIE

Oh my God.

Bill and Nadine aren't alone. JACK O'MALLEY, CEO, precedes them.

JEREMY

Look, that's O'Malley.

JANIE

The CEO? I should just go pack my stuff right now.

Nadine and Bill follow O'Malley into the auditorium. Nadine wears a black cocktail dress with her chest thrust out, her high heels CLICK-CLICK-CLICKING like machine gun fire. Bill wears his sport coat and Georgia Bulldog tie.

O'Malley wears slate gray suite with burgundy tie and polished black shoes. He made no effort to comb the last of his white hair over his balding pate, giving him a look of dignity. Next to him, Bill and Nadine look very small.

Mr. O'Malley enters the room slowly, looking this way and that, taking it all in. He comes to a stop very close to Janie and Jeremy. He absorbs every corner, taking stock of every light, every green leaf and red berry, every shining ornament. Finally, he turns back to Bill.

O'MALLEY

(coolly)

This is your doing, Sparks? You ... you ... created all this?

Bill shifts his weight uncomfortably from one foot to another. Nadine smirks. Mr. O'Malley glares at Bill. Bill's smile fades.

BILL

Um ... actually... that is--

O'MALLEY

Well? Were you not in charge of decorations this year?

BILL

I ... um ... I was, Jack. I was. But I had deals to close and money to make. So you see, I had to delegate. You know what you're always telling us. Delegate and empower.

O'MALLEY

That's not the same thing as dump off the stuff you don't want, Sparks. Would it be safe to assume that you didn't drop this off on another sales rep?

BILL

Of course not, Jack. Not when there's money to make. I make commissions when they make commissions, you know.

(winks)

And the company, too, of course.

O'MALLEY

So who, who is it, Sparks? Who's responsible for ... for ... for all this?

BILL

(looks around frantically
until he spots Janie)

Her! She's the one I ... uh ... delegated to.

JEREMY

Dumped on.

JANIE

(hisses)

Shhh!

Mr. O'Malley takes three steps, bringing him very close to Janie, and raises one bushy, white eyebrow.

O'MALLEY

Is this true? Are you the one who did ... all this?

Janie closes her eyes, took a breath, and nods.

JANIE

You see, sir, Bill just asked me to help last night. And, well, I'd also promised to help him with his year-end reports, so I didn't have time to do a proper job, you see, and--

O'MALLEY

(interrupting)

So you're saying you did all this in a single night? On top of work that I thought my sales manager was supposed to be doing himself?

BILL

Jack, I just asked her too take a quick look at--

O'MALLEY

(sharply)

I wasn't talking to you, Sparks.

NADINE

I expected her to be correlating the focus group marketing data last night. Isn't that right, Jenny?

JANIE

Janie.

Nadine digs in her purse for a cigarette.

NADINE

I hope she hasn't forgotten her own work while she's been running around doing Bill's errands.

O'Malley spins around to glare at Nadine. Nadine freezes, the cigarette halted halfway to her mouth.

O'MALLEY

You had this girl doing your focus group correlation last night?

JANIE

Don't worry. I got them done, and Bill's spreadsheets, too.

O'MALLEY

Nadine, I thought next year's marketing plan was already on my desk? Is that not so?

NADINE

(realizing that she has
inadvertently confessed)

It is.

O'MALLEY

Would you care to explain how you completed the marketing plan before you had the focus group data? And why this girl was expected to crunch the data alone? In a single night?

NADINE

I thought you wanted to speak to her about the holiday decorations.

O'MALLEY

That's right, that's right. Young lady, what is your name, please?

JANIE

Janie Mason.

O'MALLEY

Well, Janie Mason, I've worked for this company for forty years. Started here as a young man to pay my way through college, and worked my way all the way up to the corner office on the top floor. Forty years, Janie Mason. Do you know what that means?

JANIE

(meekly)

No, sir.

O'MALLEY

It means I've suffered through forty holiday parties. Forty! I thought this year was going to be the worst of all when we had to move it to Christmas Eve because of the ... well, never mind that. People hate these things, Janie.

(shakes his head)

To tell you the truth, I'd almost forgotten why we keep going through the motions. But this, young lady, this is the first time that walking in here on Christmas Eve hasn't seemed like a chore. For the first time, you've given this party soul. Look at the people! They're actually talking to each other! I've been trying to get my management team to inject this company with real spirit and teamwork for months now. No, years!

(MORE)

O'MALLEY (CONT'D)
And you, why, you've succeeded
where every one of them failed.

JEREMY
If these keeps up, we might not
need our spirit tags any more,
wouldn't you say?

Mr. O'Malley shoots him a glare that does little to hide the smile twitching at the corners of his lips.

O'MALLEY
Perhaps not, Cohen. Perhaps not.

He turns back to Janie, and offers her his hand to shake.

O'MALLEY (CONT'D)
You're the first one who's had the
courage and the imagination to
actually try to do something
special. And you did it all in a
night! Well done, Janie Mason. Well
done indeed.

AT THE FRONT OF THE ROOM, THE DJ, a tattooed and pierced kid with a monumentally huge boom box, begins playing MUSIC: BIG BAND JAZZ. Here and there, a few couples start to dance.

JEREMY
Well. That's new.

O'MALLEY
That's my cue to mingle a bit. Then
I can go back upstairs and take a
look at that plan of yours, Nadine,
and see how you managed to react to
this lady's data before she
actually compiled it.

NADINE
(hurrying to follow)
Jack, Darling--

They disappear into the crowd.

JEREMY
See? That wasn't so bad after all.

BILL
(smiles and winks)
Did you see how I gave you all the
credit?
(beat)
Listen, the music's started.

JANIE
I hear it, Bill.

BILL
Then maybe you'd give me the honor
of a dance? I'd love to dance with
you, Janie.

JANIE
(smiles)
Actually, Bill, I'm here with
Jeremy tonight. I really think I
ought to dance with him.

BILL
Oh, nonsense. This is just some BS
corporate deal. Champ here won't
mind. Will you, champ?

JANIE
I'd really like to dance with
Jeremy.

Jeremy beams.

BILL
(The smile never leaves
his face, but his eyes
seem dull and confused)
Oh, sure. No big deal. Hey, I'll
catch you later, okay?

JANIE
Bye, Bill.

Janie and Jeremy dance. She rests her head against his
shoulder.

JEREMY
This is nice.

JANIE
Mmmm. Nice.

JEREMY
Looks like you found a little
Christmas spirit after all.

Janie steps back so that she can look at him.

JANIE
Huh? You know I didn't have
anything to do with this. It was
that stupid little store.

JEREMY

The one with the elf?

JANIE

The one that can't follow
directions and get orders right.
Besides, I'm the girl who hates
Christmas, remember?

JEREMY

Do you mind if I ask you why?

JANIE

You may ask.

JEREMY

Okay then. I'm asking. Why do you
hate the holidays?

JANIE

That was supposed to be a subtle
hint for you not to ask.

JEREMY

Oh. See, I was never really good at
those.

JANIE

So it seems.

She leans in close again as they dance.

JEREMY

You don't have to tell me if you
don't want to.

JANIE

Okay. Here goes. And remember, you
asked for it.

JEREMY

I accept full responsibility. Want
to sit down while you tell me?

JANIE

No, this is nice. I like dancing
with you.

JEREMY

I'm glad.

JANIE

It goes back to when I was seven
years old.

JEREMY

That's awfully young to go cynical.

JANIE

Saves time.

JEREMY

What happened?

JANIE

I'd written a letter to Santa.
Stupid kid I was, I actually
believed that those letters really
went to the North Pole where
someone read them. I should have
known better. But I didn't. I
addressed the envelope in crayon,
snuck a stamp from my mom's desk,
and mailed it myself.

JEREMY

That's cute. What did you ask for?

JANIE

A Sally Speak and Say doll.
Remember those?

JEREMY

G.I. Joe was more my speed.

JANIE

I know it sounds silly, but I
really, really wanted that doll.
More than anything.

JEREMY

Did you get one?

JANIE

No. In fact, we didn't have any
stupid Christmas at all. On
Christmas Eve, my Dad moved out.
Yeah. That's the night I found out
my folks were splitting up. Mom
took me off to Grandma's. In all
the shouting and fighting, I guess
everybody forgot about Christmas.

JEREMY

Oh my God. Janie, I'm so sorry.

JANIE

(tears up a little)

I cried and cried and cried that night, all alone in the cold little guest room at Grandma's house. I cried because my folks were splitting up, sure. But mostly, I cried because I realized that it was all just a big lie. There was no such thing as Santa, or magic, or Christmas miracles. It was all a great big lie. I didn't have a family any more. And I didn't even get my stupid Sally Speak and Say doll.

(swallows)

Everybody forgot about me. I was all alone.

JEREMY

Maybe we can get you one now. A, uh, Sally Walk and Talk doll.

JANIE

(laughs through the tears)

Sally Speak and Say. Silly. They stopped making them ages ago.

JEREMY

Tried eBay?

JANIE

I did, believe it or not. No luck.

JEREMY

That's too bad.

JANIE

I think people've forgotten all about Sally Speak and Say. She's not exactly Barbie or Pokémon.

JEREMY

I'm sorry, Janie.

JANIE

I know. Thanks.

JEREMY

I really, really am. Sorry, I mean.

JANIE

Well, make it up to me. We're standing under mistletoe.

JEREMY

No we're not. Look, that's holly.
See the red berries?

JANIE

Jeremy, I think you'd better kiss
me before I'm forced to hurt you.

They kiss, long and deep.

INT. OFFICE AUDITORIUM - LATER

At a punch bowl, Jeremy pours two glasses and hands one to Janie.

JEREMY

I think we forgot all the people
down here.

JANIE

It's okay. I honestly don't care if
anyone sees.

JEREMY

Me either. To tell you the truth,
I'm kind of hoping someone does.
Nobody in accounting's going to
believe this.

(beat)

But that's not what I meant.

JANIE

What?

JEREMY

Just ... much everybody's here. If
we're going to take the new plan to
O'Malley's office, this is the best
chance we're going to get.

JANIE

Let's go.

Janie and Jeremy leave their glasses and walk casually, to be sure no one notices them leaving. When they reach the empty hall, they sprint.

INT. OFFICE HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Janie and Jeremy bolt for the elevator.

INT. JANIE MASON'S CUBE - MOMENTS LATER

They grab the new plan.

INT. ELEVATOR - MOMENTS LATER

They ride up to the top floor. As they watch the numbers above the door lighting one by one, Jeremy takes Janie's hand in his. She gives his hand a squeeze.

INT. OFFICE, EXECUTIVE FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

When the door slides open at last, Janie deflates. The floor isn't empty. PAINTERS have spread their tarps and ladders around the entire area, and are busy brushing a fresh coat of corporate gray on the walls.

JANIE

Oh for crying out loud! Don't tell me they're working on Christmas stupid Eve, too!

JEREMY

They get paid double time to get it done while people are away.
(On Janie's look)
Hey, I work in accounting, remember?

JANIE

And this is something you couldn't have remembered, oh, I don't know, like, any time at all before now?

JEREMY

Here. I've got an idea. Help me grab one of those tarps, okay?

They grab a plastic drop cloth and back slowly into the hallway. Jeremy leads her into a rest room.

JANIE

Wait, that's the men's room!

JEREMY

I won't tell if you won't.

JANIE

What are we doing?

JEREMY

Do you have any more of that
vanishing cream?

Janie nods and produces the jar.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Here, help me spread it on the
tarp.

JANIE

What are we doing?

Jeremy grins and waggles his eyebrows.

JEREMY

We're making our very own, genuine,
Harry Potter invisibility cloak!

JANIE

Oh. Oh! Think there's enough?

JEREMY

Let's hope. Here, help me!

They work quickly. When they finish, the jar is empty. It
works. The tarp is invisible.

JANIE

Now, the question is, will we be
invisible while we're under it? Or
will we just be walking around
under an invisible sheet?

JEREMY

I hadn't thought of that. One way to
find out. Try it on?

Janie nods and pulls it over her head -- and vanishes. Jeremy
smiles.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Works like a charm!

JANIE

Hurry! Let's move.

There isn't much of a margin for error. They stand very close
together, Janie with her back against Jeremy's chest, to
ensure that both are completely covered by the tarp. Even so,
the tarp only barely reaches the floor.

When Janie picks up her copy of the marketing plan, the extra volume proves too much. The tarp hangs a few centimeters off the floor.

JEREMY

Uh oh. What do we do now?

JANIE

If we take the long way and avoid the painters, we should be okay.

JEREMY

Let's go. Don't bump against anything.

Moving carefully, Janie and Jeremy made it to Mr. O'Malley's office without incident. They slip inside.

INT. O'MALLEY'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The plan is on Mr. O'Malley's long, mahogany desk, along with printouts of Janie's work and the spreadsheets.

JANIE

Somebody's efficient.

Janie switches the plans.

JANIE (CONT'D)

C'mon. Let's get out of here.

JEREMY

Uh oh.

Jeremy points through Mr. O'Malley's open door. Across the floor, the elevator doors have opened again. Mr. O'Malley strides toward his office, with Bill and Nadine following.

JANIE

What'll we do?

JEREMY

Quick, pull Nadine's plan under the tarp!

JANIE

We can't; they'll see!

JEREMY

And we're out of vanishing cream!

JANIE

Oh!

She has an idea. Reaching into her makeup bag, she finds another jar and began smearing the contents on Nadine's plan.

JEREMY
(whispers)
What's that?

JANIE
Concealer.

The concealer, too, does its job. They can't see Nadine's plan, even though they know where it is. She moves it to an out-of-the-way corner of the room. Then, the two of them slip out, once more covered by the tarp.

They pass O'Malley, Nadine, and Bill.

When they entered the hall in front of the elevator, they shrug off the tarp.

JEREMY
Now what? Back to the party?

JANIE
(shakes her head)
Let's go back. I can say I wanted to be sure the reports were in order. Or something.
(before he can protest)
We have to make sure Nadine doesn't blow this.

JEREMY
Good idea.

They rush back.

JANIE
(brightly)
Hi there. We saw you coming up, so we thought we'd follow. In case you need some help with the reports and all.

O'MALLEY
(nods a greeting)
That's kind of you, Ms. Mason.
Hello, Mr. Cohen.

NADINE
I'm telling you, that's not the plan I delivered! Maybe I can reprint and bring it back tomorrow--

O'MALLEY
Who could have done that?

JANIE
(innocently)
Perhaps you can ask the painters if
anyone's been in the office.

O'MALLEY
Good idea. See to it, Sparks.

BILL
Yes sir.

He hurries to obey.

NADINE
Well, someone replaced the plan. I
can't stand behind that until I--

JANIE
(panicking; an urgent
whisper)
Psst! Nadine. Your makeup's
smeared.

Nadine's eyes open wide with shock.

NADINE
It is?

She hands Nadine a tube of lipstick.

JANIE
Here. Use this.

JEREMY
(whispers)
What are you giving her?

JANIE
Lipstick.

JEREMY
Janie, no!

Jeremy's warning comes too late. Nadine brushes on a good
coat, then rubs her lips together to spread the color evenly.

JANIE
(sweetly)
That's much better.

Nadine's eyes spring open even wider. She strains her face muscles, but, try as she might, she can't pull her lips apart to open her mouth.

At his desk, Mr. O'Malley flips through the plan.

O'MALLEY

This looks good, Nadine. Damn good, in fact. I like how you've crossed referenced and annotated all the research from the focus groups. I don't know how you did it. Oh, and you've referenced the sales data, too.

NADINE

Mmmm!

BILL COMES BACK IN.

BILL

No one's been here between the time you went down to the party and the time you came back. The painters are sure.

JANIE

See, Nadine? You must be mistaken about the report cover.

NADINE

Mmmm!

O'MALLEY

Nadine, I'm actually looking forward to reading this. It just goes to show, people can always surprise you. This looks like far and away the most thorough work you've ever done for me.

JEREMY

Actually, that's because Nadine didn't do that work.

JANIE

(hisses)
Jeremy, hush!

NADINE

Mmmm! Mmmm!

O'MALLEY

What's that, Cohen?

JEREMY

Janie knew Nadine's plan would be inappropriate, because she wrote it before the research was collated.

O'MALLEY

(turns his gaze on Nadine)
I see. This wouldn't have anything to do with that cruise, would it?

JEREMY

Janie did the work, sir. When I asked her why, she said, and I quote, because it's the right thing to do.

JANIE

Wait. No. I--

O'MALLEY

Ms. Mason, would you like to tell me why I shouldn't believe my vice president of accounting? Especially when Nadine has already said this isn't her work?

Janie turns to Jeremy, stunned.

JANIE

You're a VP?

JEREMY

(shrugs uncomfortably)
I said I worked in accounting. I never said what I did in accounting.

JANIE

(to Jeremy)
Why didn't you tell me?

JEREMY

I wanted to get to know you, Janie. People don't talk to the suits. Right, Mr. O'Malley?

O'MALLEY

(nods)
Not even when I ask them direct questions, apparently.

JEREMY

And it's not like I lied to you.

O'MALLEY
(impatiently)
Ms. Mason, I asked you a question.

JANIE
(weakly)
But the painters said--

BILL
(helpfully)
They did.

NADINE
Mmmm!

O'MALLEY
I knew this work looked too
thorough to have come from Nadine.

NADINE
Mmmm! Mmmm!

O'MALLEY
Nadine, I'm taking this plan home
with me tonight. I want you to
email me a copy of your plan. Right
now. Right now, understand me? No
changes. I'll be looking at the
time stamp. Is that clear?

Nadine nods.

O'MALLEY (CONT'D)
Go now.

Mr. O'Malley turns his attention back to the bound plan on
his desk. Nadine spins around and hurried away. As she EXITS:

BILL
(wistfully)
I never noticed how pretty Nadine
was before.

JEREMY
(to Janie)
He must like quiet women.

JANIE
Hmph. They deserve each other.

JEREMY
Nobody deserves Sparky.

Janie lifted a hand to her face to hide her smile.

JANIE

You're underestimating Nadine. But maybe I can fix that.

BILL

(still looking in the
direction Nadine went)
I should go with her. See if she
needs any help.

JANIE

(quickly)
Bill, have you been under stress
lately?

Bill's brow crinkled.

BILL

No more than usual. Why do you ask?

JANIE

No reason. Your skin just seems...
wrinkled.

BILL

(gasps)
It does?

JANIE

Here, use a little of this. It'll
help.

She hands him a bottle.

BILL

(relieved)
Thanks! I'll put some on, then run
down and find Nadine. See you!

He hurries away.

JEREMY

(whispers)
I'm almost afraid to ask, but what
did you give him?

JANIE

(smiles smugly)
It's called Super Sensitive lotion.

JEREMY

Oh my God! What do you think
that'll do to him?

JANIE

I don't know. But won't it be fun
to find out?

Jeremy simply gapes.

O'MALLEY

This really does look like good
work, yes, it certainly does. And
while I do appreciate loyalty, in
the future, I'd appreciate it if
you'd take credit for your work.

JANIE

(softly)

I just didn't want anyone to get
fired.

O'MALLEY

No one will. Nadine may be
exasperating at times, but she is good
at what she does. When she actually
does it. It might do her some good,
though, to report to someone else for
a while, though. Someone with
initiative and integrity.

JANIE

Mr. O'Malley, I--

O'MALLEY

(interrupts)

Let me read these plans. We can talk
later, Ms. Mason. Now then. Why don't
you two go back down and enjoy the
rest of the party you put together?

JEREMY

Yes sir.

Jeremy pulls Janie after him as he leaves.

INT. ELEVATOR - MOMENTS LATER

The Little Man is waiting for them when the elevator doors.
He wears a red knapsack over his tunic. Janie and Jeremy
exchange a glance and ENTER.

LITTLE MAN

(scowls and glares up at
Janie from beneath his
bushy eyebrows)

(MORE)

LITTLE MAN (CONT'D)
About darn time. I've been waiting
for you. I need you. Right away!

JANIE
Huh? Me? What for?

JEREMY
I take it this is your elf?

LITTLE MAN
I'm nobody's elf but my own, too-tall.

JEREMY
(grinning)
Sorry. Janie, aren't you going to
introduce us?

JANIE
I don't even know his name. Do you
even have a name?

LITTLE MAN
Of course I have a name, girl! By
the White Bumble, doesn't this girl
child know anything? Anything at
bloody all? It's Alassë.

JANIE
Alassë?

LITTLE MAN
It's a fine ancient Elvish word. It
means joy.

JANIE
Joy?

LITTLE MAN
Joy! Joy! Can't you hear anything
with those stubby, round, useless
ears of yours?

JANIE
I was just, um, a little surprised.

LITTLE MAN
Little surprised?

Jeremy offers him a hand to shakes.

JEREMY
Hi, I'm Jeremy Cohen. I'm not sure
it means anything.

The Little Man ignores him. He pounds the lobby button several more times. The elevator doors slide open.

INT. OFFICE LOBBY - NIGHT

A scene of utter pandemonium greets them. COMPANY EMPLOYEES run from the party auditorium, POINTING AND SHOUTING, all pushing and shoving their ways to the doors or scrambling for position at the frosted windows.

JANIE

Oh my God! What happened?

BETTY

Oh, Janie! You so totally won't believe it! There's some nut job-- right out front! He's dressed like Santa Claus, reindeer and all! And it's snowing. Snowing!

JANIE

Oh my God.

As Betty hurries away:

BETTY

You've so got to see! C'mon! This guy's totally got traffic backed up for blocks! Miles!

JANIE

Oh, no.

BETTY

(over her shoulder, from a window)

The police are here. There's even a helicopter!

The lobby empties fast. Bill follows the crowd, pulling Nadine after him.

LITTLE MAN

(sadly)

It's not a ... a nut job. You know that, don't you, Janie?

JANIE

(turns and looks at the Little Man)

What do you want from me?

LITTLE MAN
I need you to believe, Janie.

JANIE
No--

JEREMY
Your wish came true, didn't it?

LITTLE MAN
You had a miracle, girl. A
Christmas miracle of your very own.
Maybe it wasn't the miracle you
expected, but it was the miracle
you needed. Wasn't it?

JANIE
(starting to cry again)
It's not ... it's not that easy.

LITTLE MAN
Santa can't fly, Janie. He's come
this far, but he can't go any
farther. He needs belief.

JANIE
No--

LITTLE MAN
There's just not enough Christmas
spirit. Not any more. He's stuck
out there, Janie. And if you can't
find faith in your heart, well...
it's over. It's all over forever.

JANIE
What ... what difference does one
person make?

Janie can't hold back the tears any longer.

JEREMY
All the difference in the world.
One person with faith that can
inspire others, why, that's the
only thing that's ever made a
difference in this world.

JANIE
But I ... I don't even like
Christmas. I hate the holidays!

JEREMY
You didn't always.

JANIE
(through flowing tears)
It's too late now. I... You can't
ask me this.

Janie hides her face in her hands and sobs. Jeremy reaches out to comfort her, but Janie turns away.

LITTLE MAN
You used to love the holidays.
Didn't you, Janie?

Janie can't answer. Jeremy puts his hands on her shoulders.

JEREMY
The girl you were ... she's still
alive inside you. Isn't she? She
thinks she's alone, forgotten. But
she's there. Isn't she?

JANIE
Please. Don't ... don't hurt her again.

LITTLE MAN
Pain is the risk of feeling. But
joy is the reward. You can't dare
the one without risking the other.
That's what it means to be alive.

JANIE
I ... I don't think I can. Please--

LITTLE MAN
At least let me give you something.

Janie shakes her head. The Little Man pulls the wrapped box and envelope from his knapsack.

LITTLE MAN (CONT'D)
Here, Janie. Here, take this. The big
guy wanted me to give it to you.

Janie opens her eyes and does her best to wipe her tears on her sleeve.

JANIE
What ... what is it?

LITTLE MAN
A gift too long in the coming, but
not too late all the same, perhaps.

JEREMY
Take it, Janie.

Janie turns and takes the small package wrapped in faded paper tied with ribbons. On top of the package, she finds a single, yellowed envelope. The envelope has been addressed in with crayon a child's simple hand:

Mr. Santa Claus

Christmas Town

The North Pole

Janie GASPS.

JANIE

Oh my God.

JEREMY

That's your handwriting, isn't it?

Janie manages a nod.

JANIE

It's the letter I wrote to Santa.
When I was seven years old.

LITTLE MAN

Open the package.

Janie takes the bundle, but her hands tremble and she can't open it.

JEREMY

Here. Let me help you.

When the paper is peeled away, Janie's tears come again. Inside, of course, is the Sally Speak and Say doll.

JANIE

Oh my God. Oh my God.

LITTLE MAN

Santa Claus tried to bring it to you
all those years ago. He never forgot
you, Janie. He never gave up. He's
kept it for you, all these years.

JANIE

I don't believe it.

LITTLE MAN

(rolls his eyes)
Oh for crying out loud. Don't start
that again.

JEREMY

Believe it, Janie. That's what this is all about. Isn't it?

JANIE

(softly)

I didn't think there were any of these left.

LITTLE MAN

(smiles)

Sally Speak and Say, she was a doll meant to be loved by children, not a soulless keepsake to be saved on a dusty shelf by collectors.

LITTLE MAN (CONT'D)

The child you were still knows how to believe, even if you've forgotten.

JEREMY

You remember, don't you, Janie? You remember how to believe.

JANIE

(barely a whisper)

Yes. Oh my God.

Janie's eyes shine with waking joy.

JANIE (CONT'D)

LITTLE MAN

What ... what do you want me to do?

LITTLE MAN (CONT'D)

(grins)

Come with me, girl. My test is a success! Come with me, and see a miracle!

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

It's not a miracle that waits for them outside.

The evening has become dark and cold, and snow falls harder. All around, DOZENS OF BYSTANDERS, including Janie's coworkers, stand and gawk. Most of them POINT AND LAUGH.

Off to one side, Bill and Nadine sit together, oblivious of everyone else around them.

Traffic has stopped in all directions. BLARING HORNS AND SHOUTED CURSES tear the night.

The cause of the commotion is instantly apparent. A sleigh laden with great velvet sacks of green and red crossed all the lanes. Nine reindeer are hitched to the sleigh. The driver CALLS OUT TO THEM, but the poor reindeer don't move.

LITTLE MAN
(his jaw falls open)
No! What's wrong? He's not moving!

JANIE
Oh, no.

LITTLE MAN
But ... this shouldn't be happening!

JEREMY
What's wrong?

LITTLE MAN
I ... I don't know!

He reaches back to his knapsack and pulled out his clipboard and began flipping through the pages.

LITTLE MAN (CONT'D)
This can't be happening--

JEREMY
Maybe it takes more than one person.

LITTLE MAN
No, no. My instructions were clear.
I was to grant a wish ... reawaken
her Christmas spirit...

On the street in front of them, a man in an SUV BLOWS A LONG BLAST ON HIS HORN.

DRIVER
Move it, you stupid jerk!

More BLARING HORNS AND ANGRY SHOUTS swell his chorus.

JEREMY
You gained one. But look, look at
the rest of these people. You'd
lost all them! Whatever you gained
from Janie, they're leeching away.
Maybe ... maybe that's just too many.

LITTLE MAN
 (heavy with despair)
 It's can't be.

In the sleigh, the driver stands and turns back to look directly at Janie, Jeremy, and Alassë. It is Santa Claus himself. His suit is still seedy. He eyes are sad, but oddly confident. As soon as Janie looks into his eyes, she knows what to do. She smiles.

JANIE
 It's okay. Follow me.

Janie dashes forward, opening her makeup bag as she runs.

As soon as she reaches the sleigh, she looks up at Santa. His eyes twinkle with bright merriment as he winks at her.

Janie smiles back at him. Then she drops to her knees in the snow, opens a jar, and begins spreading the contents on one of the sleigh's runners.

Jeremy catches up.

JEREMY
 What is that stuff?

JANIE
 (shows him the jar)
 It's called Anti-gravity Lift Cream.

JEREMY
 You've got to be kidding.

JANIE
 (grins)
 No way, José.

JEREMY
 Jeremy.

Janie races to the other side and finishes the other runner. Then she steps back and takes Jeremy's hand. The Little Man looks at Janie and bows, understanding at last.

LITTLE MAN
 (solemnly)
 Thank you.

Janie smiles, and kissed him on the forehead.

JANIE
 Thank you. Happy Christmas, Alassë.

Alassë blushes, and, grumbling something Janie can't hear, swings himself up into the sleigh. Santa's suit doesn't look seedy any more. The sleigh starts moving at once.

JEREMY

Janie, look!

Janie turns to see where he is pointing. Across the square, a red light seems to come from the lead reindeer's nose. It isn't garish, like a red bulb or a neon sign. Rather, it is a softer light, like a guiding star shining in a cold and still December sky.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Look! It's ... it's shining!

JANIE

I'd even say it glows.

Jeremy rolls his eyes.

SANTA

(calls)

Good-bye, Janie Mason! We'll speak again, I think.

Slowly, gracefully, the deer rise into the sky, and Janie gasps at the utter and numinous beauty of it. The sleigh moves across the snow, and then skyward.

The horns are silenced as the shouts gentled to GASPS OF UNABASHED WONDER. A SPONTANEOUS CHEER ERUPTS FROM THE CROWD.

The sleigh gains speed and then, in a wink, it streaks away, trailing the reindeer light like the tail of a comet. It circles once, gaining altitude, and then it vanishes among the constellations.

Janie hears a SYMPHONY OF GASPS, CHEERS, AND JOYOUS SHOUTS. Looking around, she sees smiles, tears, and even hugs.

In the midst of it all, Jeremy holds Janie, safe against the cold, while she trembles and weeps and remembers.

LATER

One by one, the workers head back inside. Janie and Jeremy, following, pass Bill still sitting with Nadine. Neither has noticed the commotion. Bill holds Nadine's hands in his. He weeps. Nadine's eyes are wider than dinner plates.

BILL

Oh, Nadine. You're such a great listener. It's so hard, so hard, to find a woman who'll listen when a man talks about his feelings--

NADINE

Mmmm!

JEREMY

(to Janie)

I think that super sensitive cream of yours created a monster.

JANIE

Hmph. They definitely deserve each other.

EXT. JANIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The snow falls.

INT. JANIE'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Janie and Jeremy snuggle on the couch, drinking hot chocolate. A merry fire blazes on the hearth.

JEREMY

(wistfully)

I wish I had some candles.

JANIE

Maybe this'll do.

Janie pulls a jar labeled Luminous Glow from her bag. She opens it, and soft, flickering light comes forth.

JEREMY

That's much better.

JANIE

So what do you think happened? Do you think it really made a difference?

JEREMY

You saw the results.

JANIE

But what about next year? Will he ... will he still be able to fly?

JEREMY

Oh, I think so. A lot of people saw, Janie. They'll tell. It'll spread. One candle may not provide much light, but shared, it can light a thousand more.

Janie rests her head on his shoulder.

JANIE

I like that. I like picturing the city awash in the light of candles.

JEREMY

Me, too.

JANIE

Most people won't believe them, will they? Or they'll think ... they'll think it was just special effects or something.

JEREMY

Probably. But some will. Maybe that's enough. Maybe that's how miracles work. Maybe the responsibility to keep them alive lies with us.

JANIE

Maybe so. So I guess the makeup test was a success.

(beat)

I just thought of something. The little man, the elf, he said I wasn't the only one.

JEREMY

The only one what?

JANIE

The only one they were ... you know. Test marketing on. Somebody else got a wish. I wonder who? I wonder what happened?

JEREMY

Oh, I can answer that. It was me.

Janie sits up, startled.

JANIE

You? You're kidding.

Jeremy shrugs.

JANIE (CONT'D)
The same elf?

JEREMY
No, different. Mine was much more pleasant.

JANIE
But why you? You're lousy with holiday spirit!

JEREMY
I was the control group.

JANIE
I see. And just what did you wish for, young man?

JEREMY
(laughs)
Just a chance to spend the holidays with this girl I've really had a crush on. The pretty creative one from marketing.

JANIE
(smiles)
That's it?

JEREMY
(shrugs)
I just wished she'd finally notice me.

Janie smiles.

JANIE
She did. Do you think magic was the cause of that?

JEREMY
Maybe not. But faith was. In the end, isn't that the same thing?

JANIE
Maybe it is, Jerry.

FADE TO BLACK.

JEREMY
Jeremy.

JANIE
Dammit!

THE END.