

EVERY SNOWFLAKE WE SHARED

Written by

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Based on the short story,

"Love on the Slopes"

FADE IN:

EXT. DENVER RESTAURANT - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Rain slicks the sidewalk outside an upscale restaurant. Holiday shoppers bustle past with shopping bags. A string of Christmas lights blinks in the window of a closed boutique across the street.

HOLLY ANDERSON (20s), stands outside the restaurant door in a deep green dress, the kind she bought three months ago specifically for tonight. Her hair is done. Her heels are already damp from the walk from the parking garage.

She holds her phone. The screen glows against her face.

A text message reads: 'I think we both know this hasn't been working for a while. I'm sorry, Holly. I really am. Merry Christmas.'

Holly reads it once. Then again. Then a third time, as though the words might rearrange themselves into something else.

They don't.

She looks up at the restaurant window. She can see their table from here -- the one she booked six weeks ago. A candle is already lit. Two glasses of water have already been poured--a small holiday centerpiece of pine and red berries.

The HOSTESS inside catches Holly's eye through the glass. Gives her a questioning look. Holly shakes her head slowly. The hostess understands. The table goes dark.

A COUPLE pushes past Holly on the sidewalk, sharing one umbrella, laughing about something. They disappear around the corner.

Holly stands very still in the rain.

She puts her phone in her purse. Looks down at her shoes. Looks up at the sky. A snowflake lands on her cheek--just one, testing the air.

She doesn't cry. That surprises her.

What she feels instead is something quieter and worse: the specific exhaustion of realizing you've been waiting for something to end for so long that the ending is almost a relief.

She walks back toward the parking garage alone.

INT. HOLLY'S APARTMENT - DENVER - TWO WEEKS LATER - MORNING

The apartment is tasteful and quiet. Graphic design awards on a shelf. A drafting table near the window is covered in freelance work. Good furniture that somehow never looks lived in.

The Christmas decorations are minimal: one strand of lights draped halfheartedly over the window frame, three bulbs burned out. A wreath on the door that she bought at the grocery store and hung without ceremony.

No tree.

Holly sits at her desk in her pajamas, staring at a blank design file on her laptop. The cursor blinks. She has been staring at it for forty minutes.

On her desk: a cold cup of coffee. A journal she hasn't opened in three weeks. A small wooden ornament—a pine tree, the kind her grandmother used to collect— is sitting outside any context because she still hasn't gotten a tree.

Her phone rings. Screen: RACHEL - BEST FRIEND.

HOLLY
(answering)
I'm working.

INT. RACHEL'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS - INTERCUT

RACHEL (20s), a sharp, warm friend who tells you hard things kindly, is at her standing desk eating a granola bar, already in full-day mode.

RACHEL
You're staring at a blank screen in your pajamas at ten-thirty in the morning. I know your working face. That's not it.

HOLLY
How do you know what I'm doing?

RACHEL
Because you have the laptop camera on and it's pointed right at you.

Holly looks at her laptop. The camera light glows green. She slaps the lid half-shut.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
Holly. It has been two weeks. You haven't left that apartment for anything except groceries.

HOLLY
I've left. I went to the post office.

RACHEL
You used the automated kiosk in the lobby.

HOLLY
That still counts as the post office.

RACHEL
It absolutely does not. Holly, listen to me. I know that what happened to Daniel felt bad, even though you also knew it was right. I know that's a confusing combination. But I need you to move.

HOLLY
I'm moving. I'm moving my fingers on a keyboard.

RACHEL
You're staring at a blank screen.

HOLLY
I'm about to type something.

RACHEL
Holly.

HOLLY
(quieter)
I know. I know I need to move. I just... I don't know where.

A beat. Rachel sets down her granola bar.

RACHEL
That's actually why I'm calling. I found something. My cousin Becca booked a ski week in Colorado—Silver Pines, this little mountain town—Christmas week at the Evergreen Pines Lodge, with a ski team called the Aspen Snow Hawks.

(MORE)

RACHEL (CONT'D)

She just had the baby early; she can't go, and the spot is already paid for.

HOLLY

Rachel, I don't ski.

RACHEL

The team teaches beginners. That's literally part of what they do.

HOLLY

I have work.

RACHEL

You have a blank screen and cold coffee. I can see both from here.

HOLLY

It's Christmas week. I can't just --

RACHEL

You were going to spend Christmas week in that apartment working on the Hartley account, which you told me yourself you find deeply uninspiring. Holly. Mountains. Fresh air. People who don't know the story. A whole week of not being the woman who got broken up with by text on Christmas Eve.

A long silence.

HOLLY

That was very effective.

RACHEL

I've been workshopping it.

HOLLY

I'd have to pack.

RACHEL

I know.

HOLLY

And figure out the bus schedule.

RACHEL

Already done. There's a direct bus from Denver to Silver Pines, which leaves on Sunday at eight AM. I may have already bought the ticket.

HOLLY
You bought the ticket.

RACHEL
I have a very strong feeling about
this.

Holly looks around her apartment. The blank screen. The
burned-out lights. The ornament with no tree to belong to --

HOLLY
(very quietly)
When do I need to be at the bus
station?

Rachel exhales with the relief of someone who has been
holding their breath for two weeks.

RACHEL
Sunday. Seven forty-five. I'll
drive you.

INT. HOLLY'S APARTMENT - SUNDAY MORNING - EARLY

Holly packs. She's methodical at first: sweaters folded,
toiletries organized, socks rolled. But then she opens her
closet and stands there looking at all her careful, neutral
clothes.

Cream. Gray. Beige. Navy. The wardrobe of a person who
stopped taking up space.

She digs to the back of the closet and finds the burgundy
scarf. She bought it on impulse two winters ago and has never
worn it because it felt like too much. She holds it up. It's
the brightest thing she owns.

She wraps it around her neck and looks in the mirror.

Something in her face shifts. Small. But real.

She packs the scarf.

Then she goes to the nightstand and picks up her journal --
the one she's been ignoring. She opens it to a blank page
near the back. Uncaps a pen.

She writes one line at the top of the page and closes it.

She holds the closed cover for a moment before she tucks it
into the bag.

A knock at the door. Rachel, right on time.

RACHEL
(from the hall)
Taxi's here. I mean me. I'm the
taxi.

Holly zips the suitcase. Looks at her apartment one last time.

The ornament is still sitting on her desk. She picks it up and drops it into her coat pocket.

She turns off the light and closes the door behind her.

EXT. DENVER BUS STATION - MORNING

Early-morning bus station energy. Families with overstuffed bags. Sleepy travelers with coffee. The sky was barely light, the air cold enough to see breath.

Rachel and Holly stand on the curb. Rachel has brought Holly a travel coffee and is holding it out like a peace offering she didn't need to make.

HOLLY
You didn't have to drive me.

RACHEL
I wanted to make sure you actually
got on the bus.

HOLLY
I would have gotten on the bus.

RACHEL
You also would have found fourteen
reasons not to and texted me from
your apartment at noon. I know you.

Holly takes the coffee. They stand together, watching the busload.

HOLLY
What if it's weird? Showing up
alone to a team trip where everyone
already knows each other?

RACHEL
Then it's briefly weird, and then
it isn't. Holly, you have walked
into rooms alone your whole life.
You're good at it. You've just
forgotten.

HOLLY

What if I'm terrible at skiing?

RACHEL

You will absolutely be terrible at skiing. That's the whole point. You get to be bad at something in front of strangers who don't know you're usually the one with all the answers.

Holly considers this.

HOLLY

That's either comforting or terrifying.

RACHEL

It's both. That's how you know it's good for you.

The boarding call. Holly picks up her bag.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Hey.

Holly turns.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

You are allowed to feel good this week. I mean it. You're not obligated to be sad just because the year was hard. You can just... be somewhere beautiful and let something nice happen.

Holly looks at her best friend for a long moment.

HOLLY

When did you get so wise?

RACHEL

I've always been wise. You're usually too busy being competent to notice.

They hug. Holly boards the bus.

INT. BUS - DAY

Holly sits with her forehead resting against the cold window glass.

She watches the city fall away behind them, replaced first by suburbs, then by open fields, then by the first suggestions of mountains on the horizon.

She opens her journal. Reads what she wrote this morning:

'What if something good is about to happen?'

She stares at it. Then beneath those words she writes: 'What if I let it?'

She closes the journal and looks out at the mountains, now closer, larger, and white at their peaks.

A YOUNG GIRL (7), in the seat ahead, turns around, peeking over the headrest with wide, curious eyes.

YOUNG GIRL

Is it snowing where we're going?

Holly smiles, the first real, uncalculated smile we've seen from her.

HOLLY

It already is—a lot of it.

YOUNG GIRL

My mom says Colorado snow is magic snow. She says it's different from city snow.

HOLLY

What makes it magic?

YOUNG GIRL

(thinking very seriously)
I think it comes from the mountains. And the mountains are very old. So maybe the snow has more... experience.

HOLLY

That might be the best explanation of anything I've ever heard.

YOUNG GIRL

Have you been to Silver Pines before?

HOLLY

Never. First time.

YOUNG GIRL

We go every year. My dad says it's the best place in the whole world at Christmas. He says it every year, too, so it must be true.

HOLLY

What's your favorite part?

YOUNG GIRL

(without hesitation)

The hot chocolate at the lodge. They put a candy cane in it, and it melts, making it taste like Christmas.

HOLLY

I will be trying that immediately.

YOUNG GIRL

You should. It fixes everything.

She disappears back into her seat. Holly turns back to the window, still smiling.

The mountains are closer now—real and enormous and patient.

Holly presses her palm flat against the cold glass.

The bus rounds a curve and --

SILVER PINES comes into view.

A cluster of warm-lit buildings nestles between snow-dusted mountain peaks. Church steeples. Pine garland is strung between old-fashioned lampposts. Christmas lights are twinkling in the afternoon. Wood smoke rising from a dozen chimneys.

It looks exactly like a place that still believes in things.

HOLLY

(barely a whisper)

Oh.

Just that. Like she's been holding her breath for months and just now let it go.

EXT. SILVER PINES BUS STOP - DAY

The bus hisses to a stop. Holly steps down onto the sidewalk, suitcase in hand.

The cold hits her all at once, not the damp cold of Denver but a clean, high-altitude cold that smells of pine and nothing else.

She gasps, then laughs at herself for gasping.

Around her, Silver Pines hums. A CAROLING QUARTET harmonizes outside a decorated storefront. A SHOPKEEPER balances on a stepladder stringing new lights across his window, calling down instructions to a teenager who holds the other end. Three children are building what appears to be an extremely ambitious snow fort in the lot next to the bus stop.

A HORSE-DRAWN SLEIGH passes on the main street, bells jingling, the driver tipping his hat to no one in particular.

Holly tips her head back and lets snowflakes fall on her face. Just stands there for a moment, eyes closed, letting the town settle around her.

HOLLY
(eyes still closed,
exhaling)
This. This is exactly what I
needed.

She opens her eyes. Pulls a printed reservation from her coat pocket. Reads it. Looks up at the street sign. Turns. Look at another sign. Turns again.

She has absolutely no idea which direction to walk.

ELEANOR (60s), a local woman with a basket of bread and the no-nonsense posture of someone who has lived in the same town for forty years, stops beside her.

ELEANOR
Evergreen Pines Lodge?

HOLLY
Is it that obvious?

ELEANOR
You've turned in a full circle
twice. Two blocks that way, left at
the big pine with the red ribbon.
You cannot miss it—it has a sign
and glows like a birthday cake.

HOLLY
Thank you. I'm Holly.

ELEANOR

Eleanor. First time in Silver Pines?

HOLLY

That obvious?

ELEANOR

First-timers look at everything like it might disappear. Which I understand--this place has a way of seeming too good to be real. Give it a day. You'll stop being amazed and start just being happy.

HOLLY

Is that what happens?

ELEANOR

(already walking)

Every time. Welcome to Silver Pines, Holly. Merry Christmas.

She's gone before Holly can say more. Holly looks after her.

HOLLY

(to herself)

Just being happy.

She squares her shoulders, grips her suitcase, and heads toward the pine with the red ribbon.

EXT. EVERGREEN PINES LODGE - DAY

The lodge is everything the brochure promised and more. Wide timber beams, a wraparound porch hung with real pine bough garland, not artificial. Two stone chimneys breathing wood smoke into the cold blue sky. A hand-carved wooden sign swinging gently in the wind: EVERGREEN PINES LODGE, EST. 1953.

Window boxes full of evergreen and red berries on every sill. Lanterns flanking the front door. A worn path through the snow where a hundred guests have walked before.

Holly stops on the front walk and looks at it for a long moment. Something in her shoulders drops, the tension she's been carrying so long she forgot it was there.

In one of the upstairs windows, a silhouette stands looking out at the mountains. Broad-shouldered, still. The posture of someone at home.

Holly doesn't notice. She's looking at the sign. She reads it twice.

Est. 1953. Seventy years of Christmases in this building. The thought warms her chest.

She pushes through the front door.

INT. EVERGREEN PINES LODGE - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

The warmth hits her first, the good, real warmth of a wood fire and many people. The lobby smells of pine sap, cinnamon, and wood smoke. A massive Christmas tree dominates one corner, reaching from floor to ceiling, decorated entirely in gold and white. No tinsel. No blinking lights. Just a warm, steady glow.

A fire crackles in a river-stone hearth large enough to stand in. Families cluster on deep leather sofas. A pair of skis leans against the wall beside a framed vintage poster of the mountain. Someone has left a half-finished puzzle on the coffee table, and three different people are working on it simultaneously.

Holly takes it all in slowly. She doesn't rush to the desk. She looks the way she used to look at things before she got so busy being practical.

MEG (20s), with freckles, wearing a Lodge sweater and an expression of genuine delight at her job, spots her from the front desk.

MEG

Welcome to Evergreen Pines! You must be Holly Anderson--your friend Rachel called ahead to make sure you'd feel welcome.

HOLLY

(touched despite herself)
She called ahead.

MEG

She was very thorough. Room 204, second floor -- it has the best mountain view on that side of the building. Breakfast is served in the dining room until ten, the slopes open at nine-thirty, and there is indeed hot chocolate available around the clock at the station beside the fire.

HOLLY

Is it true about the candy cane?

MEG

It absolutely is. The candy cane melts in about four minutes, and the last minute is the best part. Now -- the Aspen Snow Hawks practice starts at eleven tomorrow. Jason Kirk leads the group. He's --

She pauses, searching for the right word.

MEG (CONT'D)

He's very good at what he does. He'll have you comfortable on skis by day two, I promise. Any questions?

HOLLY

How many Christmas trees are in the building?

MEG

(proudly)

Eleven. One per floor, plus the dining room, the lounge, the library corner, both staircases, and the covered rink.

HOLLY

That's exactly the right number.

MEG

That's what I keep telling the owner. He says twelve next year.

INT. EVERGREEN PINES LODGE - ROOM 204 - LATER

Room 204 is small and exactly right. A wrought-iron bed with a quilt in deep reds and greens, clearly handmade. A cast-iron fireplace already glowing, someone having lit it in anticipation of her arrival. A round braided rug. A wooden chair with a cushion. A small bookshelf with a mix of paperback novels and field guides to Colorado birds.

And the window.

The window takes up most of one wall, and it faces the mountain directly. No curtains to pull. Just the glass and then, beyond it, an entire mountain range in the late afternoon light.

Holly crosses to it immediately, leaving her suitcase in the middle of the floor. She presses her palm against the cold glass.

The mountains are enormous and still. The sun is dropping behind the highest western peak, and the snow below that peak is turning from white to peach to gold in gradients so gradual and perfect they seem painted.

Holly stands there for a long time. Just looks.

HOLLY
(very quietly)
Okay. Maybe everything is going to
be okay.

She pulls out her phone. Texts Rachel: 'You were right. I'd say don't tell anyone, but I know you will anyway.'

Rachel's reply: three Christmas tree emojis, a mountain emoji, and a heart.

Holly sets the phone down on the windowsill. Goes to her suitcase. Opens it. On top of everything, the burgundy scarf. She lifts it and hangs it on the bedpost like a flag.

From her coat pocket, the wooden ornament. She sets it on the windowsill where the light hits it.

From her bag, the journal. She opens it to that page.

'What if something good is about to happen? What if I let it?'

She gets out her pen. Sits on the bed. Look at the mountain through the window. Looks back at the page.

A knock at the door.

She opens it.

JASON KIRK (32), stands in the hallway. He's in a dark ski jacket with the collar up, a pair of gloves tucked under one arm, snow still melting in his dark hair from being outside. He has the easy stance of someone who is comfortable in his body and doesn't think about it.

His eyes are warm and alert-brown, steady, the kind that see things clearly and don't make a performance of it.

He extends a hand.

JASON

You must be Holly. I'm Jason Kirk. I lead the Snow Hawks. I always try to come by and introduce myself to new members before the first practice, rather than let you walk into a group of strangers cold. Meg told me you'd just arrived.

Holly shakes his hand. His grip is firm and easy.

HOLLY

That's genuinely thoughtful. Most people would send an email.

JASON

I tried that in year one. People showed up at the wrong slope, which is a longer walk than it sounds. Knocking works better.

HOLLY

I should warn you—I have never skied. Not even once. My friend who arranged this may have slightly misrepresented my athletic ability.

JASON

What did she say?

HOLLY

That I was... and I'm quoting... 'sporty-adjacent.'

Jason considers this with the seriousness it deserves.

JASON

I've worked with worse. Our motto is ski hard, laugh harder. We take the second part more seriously than the first. If you can do that, you'll fit in fine.

HOLLY

I think I can probably manage the laughing.

JASON

Then you're already halfway there.

He glances past her at the window. The mountain, gold now in the fading light.

JASON (CONT'D)
Great view. You can see the
practice slope from right there.

He points. Holly turns to look. The gentle slope is just visible in the mid-distance.

HOLLY
That's the practice slope?

JASON
That's the gentle one. The big run
is behind the tree line.

HOLLY
Now I'm more nervous than I was
thirty seconds ago.

JASON
(easy smile)
Nervous means you're paying
attention. We start slow. You won't
be on the big run until you're
ready.

HOLLY
And how do you know when someone's
ready?

JASON
Usually, they know before I do. See
you at eleven, Holly.

He heads back down the hallway. She watches him go for just a beat longer than strictly necessary.

She closes the door. Leans back against it. Looks at the ceiling.

HOLLY
(to herself)
Hm.

She pushes off the door and goes back to the window. The mountain is nearly purple now in the failing light.

She opens her journal. Write something new beneath the question.

She smiles without realizing it.

INT. EVERGREEN PINES LODGE - DINING ROOM - THAT EVENING

The dining room is warm and full. Long wooden tables. Candles in mason jars. A Christmas tree in the corner that smells like an actual forest. The kitchen sends out roasted vegetables, fresh bread, and a stew that smells like it's been simmering since morning.

Holly enters alone, always the slightly vulnerable moment, walking into a room where everyone else already has a place. She scans the room.

The ASPEN SNOW HAWKS have claimed the two long center tables, and they are immediately identifiable: matching jackets on the backs of chairs, general organized chaos, laughter that carries.

LILY (20s), sports a ponytail, the energy of someone who genuinely enjoys being alive) spots Holly from halfway across the room and waves with her entire arm.

LILY

HOLLY! Over here! We saved you a spot!

Several other team members turn to look. Holly crosses to them, managing to look only slightly like a nervous person.

Lily immediately begins introductions:

LILY (CONT'D)

Okay, fast version: I'm Lily, a physical therapist from Boulder, a third-year with the team. I talk a lot, and I'm self-aware about it. This is Derek --

DEREK

(barely looking up from his wine)
Hello.

LILY

Derek is a financial analyst; he only seems unfriendly, but he's actually quite funny when he decides to be. This is Priya --

PRIYA

(warm but with an edge of competition)
Welcome. I'll warn you up front, I take racing seriously.

LILY
Priya takes everything seriously.
It's actually one of her best
qualities. And this is Sam --

SAM (40s), quiet, solid as the mountain, the kind of presence
that makes a room calmer, looks up from his bread and nods.

SAM
Sam.

LILY
Sam communicates efficiently.
You'll come to appreciate it. And
Jason, you've apparently already
met --

Jason appears with the bread basket and sets it in the middle
of the table.

JASON
I see Lily has conducted the full
orientation.

LILY
I'm very thorough.

HOLLY
Is there a quiz?

DEREK
If Lily ran things, absolutely yes.

LILY
I think it would significantly
improve group cohesion. Management
disagrees.

Holly laughs, real and unguarded. The tension of entering
alone dissolves completely.

She reaches for a roll. Looks around the table at these
people she met four minutes ago.

HOLLY
How long has the team been
together?

JASON
Three years for most of us. We
started with five people and a lot
of optimism. This is year three,
and we haven't lost anyone to
injury, which I consider a success.

PRIYA

I pulled my shoulder last year and
told no one.

DEREK

She skied four days on it.

PRIYA

It was manageable.

SAM

It wasn't.

Priya opens her mouth. Closes it. The table laughs. Holly
laughs with them, already feeling the specific ease of people
who know how to be together.

Across the table, Jason catches her eye. His expression is
easy and quiet, a small 'you good?' in a look.

She gives him a small nod.

INT. EVERGREEN PINES LODGE - LOUNGE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Dinner has wound down. The team has migrated to the lounge,
fire going strong, boots off, the comfortable sprawl of
people at the end of a travel day. The candy-cane hot
chocolate has been found and distributed.

Holly sits beside Lily on a loveseat near the hearth. Jason
is across the room talking to Sam, leaning against the
mantel, unhurried. His gaze drifts to Holly's side of the
room more than once.

LILY

(casually, not looking at
Holly)

He's done that four times.

HOLLY

Done what?

LILY

Looked over here. Four times in
eleven minutes. I counted.

HOLLY

You counted.

LILY

I notice things. It's a
professional occupational thing;

(MORE)

LILY (CONT'D)
I'm a physical therapist, and I
observe movement patterns.

HOLLY
Glancing across a room is not a
movement pattern.

LILY
It absolutely is. It's a recurring
directional orientation toward a
specific point in space. In this
case, you.

Holly looks at her hot chocolate.

HOLLY
We just met. He's probably just
making sure the new team member is
comfortable.

LILY
He checked in on me on my first
night. Once. He's looked at you
four times, and the night isn't
over.

HOLLY
Lily. I have been here for four
hours.

LILY
And yet.

Holly shakes her head. But she risks a glance across the
room.

Jason is looking. He raises his mug slightly, a small, easy
toast.

She raises her back.

LILY (CONT'D)
(quietly triumphant)
Five.

INT. EVERGREEN PINES LODGE - SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

The lodge has gone quiet. A small Christmas tree glows at the
end of the hall. The floorboards creak softly underfoot as
Holly and Jason walk at a matching slow pace toward their
respective rooms at opposite ends of the corridor.

JASON
Good first night?

HOLLY
I haven't talked that much at a dinner table in-honestly, I can't remember. I'd started to think I might have forgotten how.

JASON
You hadn't. You held the table for a solid ten minutes with the navigation app story.

HOLLY
It took me forty-five minutes to find my own apartment after the update changed the interface. That's legitimately traumatic, and I feel the story deserves to be shared.

JASON
(smiling)
It's a very good story. I've heard a lot of first-night stories, and that one is better than most.

HOLLY
What's the usual first-night story?

JASON
Usually, it's something about the bus being late or the luggage getting lost. Occasionally, someone confesses a secret fear of chairlifts. That one comes up more than you'd think.

HOLLY
Should I confess mine now or save it for suspense?

JASON
Do you have a chairlift fear?

HOLLY
Not chairlifts specifically. More like... the moment right before you start going down a hill. The standing-at-the-top part.

JASON

Everyone has that. That's not a fear, that's good judgment.

HOLLY

That's a very generous interpretation.

JASON

The trick is the first ten seconds. After ten seconds, you're already moving, and the fear doesn't have anything to attach to. It just... falls away.

HOLLY

Does that work for things other than skiing?

A beat. He looks at her with something thoughtful.

JASON

Usually, yeah.

They've reached the fork in the hall. Room 204 is one way. Jason's room is the other one.

JASON (CONT'D)

Get some sleep. The slope is less intimidating when you're rested.

HOLLY

Now I'll lie awake thinking about the slope.

JASON

Think about the cocoa. The candy cane part. Focus on that.

HOLLY

(small laugh)

Good night, Jason.

JASON

Good night, Holly. Welcome to Silver Pines.

She turns toward 204. He watches her for one easy, unguarded moment before heading toward his own room.

INT. EVERGREEN PINES LODGE - DINING ROOM - NEXT MORNING

Morning light bounces off the snow outside and fills the dining room with a clean, white glow. The buffet is full. The team is mostly assembled, in various states of morning alertness.

Holly arrives to find Jason already at the team table with two mugs of hot chocolate. He slides one toward her chair without ceremony as she sits.

HOLLY

Do you do this for everyone?

JASON

First morning only. After that, you're on your own.

LILY

(arriving with a full plate)

He did it for Derek on his first morning. He did not do it for me.

DEREK

Because Lily was twenty-two minutes late and took the last cinnamon roll.

LILY

I was ONE minute late, and I deeply resent that number.

DEREK

I have timestamps.

LILY

You do not have timestamps.

DEREK

I absolutely do. I was so frustrated that I took a screenshot.

The argument unfolds with the energy of something that has been experienced before and enjoyed by everyone, including those who have it. Holly wraps both hands around the warm mug and lets the bickering wash over her like something familiar and good.

JASON

(quietly, just to Holly)

How'd you sleep?

HOLLY

Better than I have in months. I don't know if it's the altitude, the quiet, the fire, or what.

JASON

It's the quiet. Cities don't have quiet like this. You don't realize how much noise you're carrying until you set it down somewhere.

Holly looks at him over her mug.

HOLLY

That's a very precise way to describe it.

JASON

I come here every year, partly for the skiing and partly because the quiet resets something.

HOLLY

What needs resetting?

JASON

Different things, different years.

He says it simply, without elaborating. She doesn't push. But she files it away.

Across the table, Lily is watching them with the poorly concealed delight of someone who has already formed strong opinions about what she's watching.

EXT. EVERGREEN PINES LODGE - SKI PRACTICE AREA - DAY

The practice area is just below the lodge, a gentle slope that beginners have been making friends with for decades. The morning sun blazes off fresh powder. The air has the sharp, clarifying quality of high-altitude winter air.

Jason stands at the front of the group with the easy authority of someone who has been doing this long enough that it no longer feels like authority.

JASON

Alright. Today is fundamentals. We don't race until Thursday, and we don't rush today. Balance, rhythm, and weight distribution -- those are the three things. Holly, you're with me on the beginner slope.

(MORE)

JASON (CONT'D)

Everyone else, Derek leads warm-up runs on the intermediate trail.

DEREK

(gravely)

The power is immense.

LILY

Please don't let it corrupt you.

The group splits. Jason leads Holly to the top of the practice slope. She stands at the edge and looks down. It seems steeper from the top, the way these things always do.

HOLLY

It's bigger than I thought it would be.

JASON

It looks bigger from the top. Your brain is adding about thirty percent. Take it away.

HOLLY

Can the brain add thirty percent? Is that anatomically accurate?

JASON

Weight forward, knees bent, eyes ahead. Don't look at your skis -- look where you want to go. And breathe. Breathing is actually important.

HOLLY

I would have forgotten the breathing. Thank you.

JASON

It happens more than you'd think. Ready?

Holly grips her poles. Gets her weight forward. Takes a deliberate breath.

HOLLY

What if I fall?

JASON

Then you get back up. Falling isn't failing. Staying at the top is failing.

She looks at him. He means it.

HOLLY

Okay.

She pushes off.

The first three seconds are pure, white panic; her skis wobble in different directions, her arms windmill, and a small, involuntary sound escapes her. But she doesn't fall. Jason glides alongside, close but not grabbing, just there.

JASON

Weight forward... good... bend your knees more... eyes up, not down... there, right there...

Holly reaches the bottom. She skids to an inelegant stop and turns to face Jason, breathing hard, eyes wide.

HOLLY

I didn't die.

JASON

That is the baseline goal, yes. Go again?

She looks back up the slope. The fear is still there, but smaller now. Behind it, something else: the specific pull of wanting to do a thing better than you just did it.

HOLLY

Go again.

They climb. The second run is smoother. The third smoother still. On the fourth run, Holly makes an actual turn -- not perfect, but intentional, leaning into it the way Jason showed her -- and the turn works, and she laughs. A real, full, surprised laugh that carries up the slope.

At the bottom, she stops, arms out, face tipped to the sky.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

I MADE THAT TURN.

JASON

You made that turn.

He grins the biggest, most unguarded expression. It changes his face completely.

HOLLY

Can we do it again?

JASON

We can do it five more times.

HOLLY

Excellent.

They climb again. From the neighboring slope, the rest of the team is watching. Lily makes no effort to pretend she isn't.

EXT. SMALL CLEARING - NEAR THE LODGE - DAY

A break in practice. Jason and Holly lean against their ski poles at the edge of a small clearing where a bench has been placed for exactly this purpose. He's produced a thermos of cocoa from somewhere. Steam curls between them.

The rest of the team mills in the distance. Out here it's quiet enough to hear the snow land in the trees.

JASON

So what do you do? When you're not navigating apps and losing your way home?

HOLLY

Graphic designer. I make things look the way other people want them to look.

JASON

Do you like it?

HOLLY

I'm good at it.

JASON

That's not what I asked.

She looks at him. He's not pushing, he's just listening, and listening accurately.

HOLLY

I used to like it. Now I think it's become something I do instead of something I love. There's a difference. I let the gap close, and I didn't notice until it had been closed for a long time.

JASON

What did you love? Before the gap closed.

HOLLY

Painting, actually. Watercolor. In college, I painted constantly.

(MORE)

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Then I got good enough at design to make money, and I told myself that was the same thing. It isn't. Design is solving someone else's visual problem. Painting is being honest about what you see.

JASON

Why did you stop?

HOLLY

I got practical. And then I got used to being practical, and after a while, I stopped noticing I'd given something up.

A beat. Wind through the pines. A small bird lands on a branch nearby and regards them with interest.

JASON

What brought you here? To Silver Pines specifically. You don't seem like someone who stumbles into things.

HOLLY

My best friend essentially put me on a bus and told me I needed to go somewhere I wasn't supposed to be. She wasn't wrong.

JASON

Where were you?

HOLLY

My apartment. A relationship that had been ending for longer than either of us admitted. A life that was very... fine. Everything fine. And fine started feeling like its own kind of problem.

JASON

Fine is the word people use when they've stopped expecting better.

Holly turns to look at him. That landed exactly where she lives.

HOLLY

Yeah. Exactly that.

JASON

What would it look like?

She thinks about it honestly.

HOLLY

I'm not sure yet. But I think it involves being in places that feel like this--and doing things that are difficult enough to make me pay attention. And people who mean what they say.

JASON

That last one matters most.

HOLLY

It does. What about you? Why engineering?

JASON

I grew up watching my dad build things. He was a carpenter. I wanted to build bigger things. Bridges, mostly. I figure out how structures hold together under pressure.

HOLLY

That sounds like something you'd be good at, beyond bridges.

She realizes what she's said. He does too. She doesn't look away.

JASON

(quietly)

I try.

EXT. SILVER PINES - MAIN STREET - AFTERNOON

Free hour before dinner. Holly wanders Silver Pines alone, taking everything in at her own pace. The main street is all Christmas and no self-consciousness about it -- wreaths on every door, a barbershop quartet performing carols outside the hardware store, a chalk sign outside the bakery advertising gingerbread made fresh hourly.

Holly stops in front of a small gallery window. Inside: watercolor paintings of the mountains and the valley. She presses her nose against the glass like a child.

A reflection appears beside her. Jason carries two paper cups of cider, looking at her, looking at the paintings.

JASON

On my way to the cider booth. You were between me and it.

HOLLY

So the cider is a coincidence.

JASON

Completely.

He hands her one. She takes it and turns back to the window.

HOLLY

These are extraordinary. Who painted them?

JASON

Clara Higgins. She's eighty-one and has been painting this valley for forty years. She says she's never painted the same view twice, even though it's the same mountain every time.

HOLLY

Because the light changes.

JASON

And because she changes. She told me once that you can't step into the same river twice, and you can't paint the same mountain twice either. Every painting is as much about where she is internally as it is about the mountain.

HOLLY

You talked to her?

JASON

She's in the gallery most mornings. Third year here, I finally went in. She spent an hour telling me about paint mixing.

HOLLY

And you stayed?

JASON

She was interesting. People who are that committed to one thing for that long are always interesting.

Holly looks at the painting closest to the window—the mountain in what looks like late afternoon light, the shadows long and blue.

HOLLY
I used to paint.

JASON
I know. You told me.

HOLLY
I was thinking about it and looking at these.

JASON
The lodge has a small art supply cabinet in the library corner: watercolors, paper, and brushes. I stumbled on it in my first year, and I've never mentioned it to anyone.

HOLLY
Why not?

He considers the question honestly.

JASON
It didn't seem to suit anyone else until now.

Holly looks at him for a moment. Then turns back to the painting.

HOLLY
I'll look for it tonight.

JASON
Third shelf, behind the Colorado bird guides.

He says it as he looks it up. Like he knows she would ask.

INT. EVERGREEN PINES LODGE - LIBRARY CORNER - LATE AFTERNOON

The library corner is tucked at the back of the lounge -- three walls of mismatched bookshelves, two deep armchairs, a round table near a frost-covered window. The fire in the main lounge is audible but not visible from here. It's the lodge's quietest room.

Holly has found the art supply cabinet. She's set up at the round table with watercolor paper, a selection of brushes, a small tin of paints that are clearly years old but still good, and a mason jar of water. The mountain is visible through the window.

She mixes a color. Holds the brush. Sets the brush down. Picks it up again.

She's been away from this longer than she realized. Her hands remember differently from her mind does.

She makes the first mark on the paper. Just a wash of pale blue-gray across the top. It's tentative and a little too heavy, but it's real.

She makes another mark.

Jason appears in the doorway with two mugs of tea. He takes in the scene -- her bent over the paper, the paints, the mountain in the window -- and doesn't announce himself or make it a thing. He sets a mug beside her and takes the armchair with his own notebook.

HOLLY
(not looking up)
You can't look at it.

JASON
Okay.

He opens his notebook. They work. The fire crackles in the next room. Snow accumulates on the window ledge outside. Someone in the lounge puts a record on, something old and Christmas-adjacent.

Twenty minutes pass. Holly sets down her brush.

HOLLY
Okay. You can look.

Jason comes to stand beside her. He looks at the painting, the mountain rendered in soft winter blues and grays, the light suggested rather than described, something alive in the looseness of the washes.

He looks at it for a long time without speaking.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
The left corner is too dark, and the trees are more gestures than trees, and it's obviously been years since I --

JASON

Holly.

HOLLY

What?

JASON

It's beautiful. I mean that very literally. It looks like what the mountain feels like, not just what it looks like. That's what Clara does.

Holly looks at her own painting. Really look at it.

HOLLY

(very quietly)

I forgot I could do that.

JASON

You didn't forget. You just stopped.

HOLLY

What's the difference?

JASON

Forgetting means it's gone.
Stopping means it's been waiting.

Holly looks at him. Then back at the painting. Something has opened up in her expression, not dramatic, just real. Like a window has come unstuck.

INT. EVERGREEN PINES LODGE - HOLLY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Holly sits cross-legged on her bed, journal open. She writes with the easy speed of someone who has broken through a dam, pages filling fast, the pen barely keeping up.

She stops. Reads back a page. Smiles at what she wrote.

She reaches for her phone. Calls Rachel.

INT. RACHEL'S HOME - CONTINUOUS - INTERCUT

Rachel is on her couch with wine, clearly waiting.

RACHEL

It has been thirty-two hours.
Status report. Go.

HOLLY
I skied today.

RACHEL
And?

HOLLY
I didn't fall. Not once.

RACHEL
Holly.

HOLLY
I painted this afternoon.

A long silence.

RACHEL
You PAINTED.

HOLLY
The lodge has supplies in the
library. I found the mountain and
just... I painted it.

RACHEL
(very quietly)
Are you okay? Good okay?

HOLLY
Yeah. I think so. I think something
is—I don't know how to say this
without it sounding dramatic.

RACHEL
Say it dramatically. I'll allow it.

HOLLY
I feel like I've been in a very
small room for a long time, and
someone just opened the door.

RACHEL
That's not dramatic. That's
accurate. Is this the mountain? The
air? What is it?

A beat.

HOLLY
I also met someone.

RACHEL
(sitting bolt upright)

HOLLY ANDERSON.

HOLLY

It's nothing. He leads the team.
He's -- he sees things very
clearly. He says things plainly
without making a production of it.
He noticed I painted before I told
him, and he found me the art
supplies.

RACHEL

He found your art supplies?

HOLLY

He knew where they were. He'd been
keeping them as information waiting
for the right person.

RACHEL

Holly. I need you to understand
what that sentence means.

HOLLY

It means he's observant.

RACHEL

It means he was paying attention to
YOU specifically from very early.
Holly, that is significant.

HOLLY

It's day one.

RACHEL

Feelings do not observe day counts.
What's his name?

HOLLY

Jason.

RACHEL

Jason. I like that. That's a solid
name.

HOLLY

You can't evaluate someone based on
their name.

RACHEL

I can evaluate anyone based on
anything. Tell me more about Jason.

HOLLY

I'll tell you more when there's
more to tell. Good night, Rachel.

RACHEL

You're leaving me with nothing, and
it's cruel. Text me tomorrow.

HOLLY

Good night.

She hangs up. Smiles at the ceiling.

She goes to the window. The mountains are dark shapes against
a deep blue sky. Stars are beginning to appear.

She opens her journal. Adds to what she wrote earlier.

Outside, it begins to snow again. Soft and steady and
patient.

EXT. EVERGREEN PINES LODGE - LONGER SLOPE - MORNING

Crisp, brilliant, the sky was already a deep blue. The Snow
Hawks are at the top of the intermediate run, a longer, more
winding slope with a few real turns. Holly stands at the edge
of it and breathes.

Jason appears beside her. He doesn't rush it. He stands with
her for a moment, looking down the same slope.

HOLLY

This is bigger than yesterday.

JASON

Same mountain.

HOLLY

The mountain got more ambitious.

JASON

You handled yesterday's slope like
you'd been skiing for years. You're
ready for this one.

HOLLY

How can you know that? You watched
me for three hours.

JASON

I can tell the difference between someone who doesn't have the skill yet and someone who has the skill but doesn't trust it. Yesterday you were finding the skill. Today you have it. You need to trust it.

HOLLY

And you can see that, just from watching.

JASON

It's mostly in the knees. Your knees trusted the slope before your brain did.

HOLLY

My knees have always been more optimistic than the rest of me.

JASON

(stepping beside her)

Then follow the knees. Ready?

She plants her poles. Gets her weight forward.

HOLLY

Ready.

She goes. Jason follows a few yards behind, close enough to call out but far enough to let her own it.

The slope is longer, and the turns are real. On the third turn, a sharp right, Holly wobbles -- but finds her edge and drives through it.

JASON

YES... that's it... That's exactly right!

She whoops. The sound bounces off the mountain and comes back to her. She laughs at the echo of her own joy.

At the bottom, skidding to a stop, she spins to face the slope she just completed.

HOLLY

I did that.

JASON

(arriving)

You did that.

She turns to him. Her cheeks are red from the cold, her eyes bright in a way that has nothing to do with the temperature.

HOLLY

I want to do it again. Right now.

JASON

Obviously.

EXT. MOUNTAIN OVERLOOK - AFTERNOON

The team has stopped at a natural plateau on the side of the mountain that overlooks the entire Silver Pines valley. It's a view that stops conversation -- mountains layered behind mountains, the town a cluster of warm light far below, an endless white forest stretching in every direction.

The team takes pictures, drinks from thermoses, and talks. Holly and Jason have drifted to the edge of the overlook, slightly apart from the group. The wind is gentle here. Everything is still.

HOLLY

I didn't expect this.

JASON

The view?

HOLLY

Any of it. The view. The team. The way this whole place feels.

She glances at him.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

You.

He looks at her. Something shifts in his expression -- something that has been carefully maintained, starting to ease open.

JASON

I know what you mean.

HOLLY

Do you?

JASON

I've led this team for three years:
same week, same lodge, good people,
good snow. Every year feels roughly
the same--which isn't bad;

(MORE)

JASON (CONT'D)
I want to be clear. But this year
feels different, and I know why.

HOLLY
Why?

He holds her gaze. The honest answer costs him something, and he pays it.

JASON
Because you're here.

The wind moves through the pines far below them. A hawk rides a thermal in a slow arc. Holly doesn't look away.

HOLLY
(quietly)
That's a dangerous thing to say.

JASON
I know.

He doesn't take it back.

LILY
(calls out)
It's time to start the rundown!

The moment closes, but it doesn't disappear. It folds itself somewhere inside both of them and stays.

EXT. LODGE COURTYARD - SNOWBALL FIGHT - AFTERNOON

The lodge staff has organized a snowball fight on the last free afternoon. Two teams, honor system, pure chaos. The courtyard is a battlefield.

Holly and Jason are on the same side, crouched behind a low snow wall. Snowballs fly overhead. Lily has claimed an entire snowbank on the far side and is throwing with the focused intensity of someone who has thought about this moment her whole life.

HOLLY
(ducking)
Has she done this before?

JASON
(also ducking)
Lily was terrifying in middle school dodgeball and has never mentally left.

HOLLY

She threw three in the last ten seconds.

JASON

She practices her form. I've seen her.

A snowball catches Jason directly in the shoulder. He looks at Holly with the expression of a man who has been wronged.

JASON (CONT'D)

You're very close to her side of the field.

HOLLY

I am on your side.

JASON

That remains to be proven.

HOLLY

Pack your snowball and stop interrogating your allies.

They scramble. Jason packs. Holly rises and launches in one motion -- a perfect arc that catches Lily in the back of the knee. Lily spins, betrayed.

LILY

Holly Anderson, I trusted you!

Holly and Jason drop back behind the wall, laughing so hard neither can breathe. Their shoulders are pressed together in the narrow space. Neither moves apart.

Jason looks at her. Laughing and close.

She looks at him. Laughing and close.

The laughter quiets. Just slightly. The world outside their small snow wall gets soft at the edges.

DEREK

(from across the courtyard)

Less of whatever that is, and more snowballs. This is a competition!

They burst out laughing again and turn back to the battle. But Jason's hand finds hers for a moment--a quick, warm squeeze, before they both grab ammunition and join the fight.

INT. EVERGREEN PINES LODGE - LOUNGE - EVENING

Post-snowball. The team is scattered around the lounge, warm and content and steaming slightly from coming inside. The fire is roaring. Holly and Jason have claimed the small sofa near the window.

JASON

Can I ask you something personal?

HOLLY

You can try.

JASON

What do you want? Not from the week. From your life. What does better actually look like?

HOLLY

That's a big question for a Tuesday evening.

JASON

The mountain makes everything feel more urgent. It's the altitude.

Holly considers. The fire snaps. Outside, snow falls steadily.

HOLLY

I want to paint again, not as a hobby, I mean, as something that matters. I want to travel somewhere to have something worth painting. I want a tree full of wooden ornaments, with people coming over to see it. I want to work on things I believe in, not just profitable things. I want to stop being careful about what I want.

JASON

That last one.

HOLLY

The careful part?

JASON

What made you careful?

She thinks about it genuinely. Not the easy answer.

HOLLY

I think when things didn't work out the way I hoped, I decided the hoping was the problem. Like if I wanted less, I'd be less disappointed. Which sounds logical, but what actually happened was I just... got smaller.

JASON

And now?

HOLLY

Now I've been on a mountain for two days, done things I was afraid of, painted for the first time in years, and somehow I feel the size I'm supposed to be again.

A long beat. He holds her gaze.

JASON

I'm glad you got on that bus.

HOLLY

Me too.

The fire crackles between them. Outside the window, Silver Pines glows in the dark.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

What about you? What do you want?

JASON

To keep feeling the way I've felt this week.

HOLLY

Which is?

JASON

(simply)
Like myself. Fully.

She holds that answer for a moment.

HOLLY

That's not a small thing to want.

JASON

No. It isn't.

EXT. SILVER PINES TOWN - CHRISTMAS MARKET - NEXT DAY

Free afternoon. A Christmas market has taken over the main street: stalls selling hand-carved ornaments, beeswax candles, hand-knitted scarves, locally made jam, hot cider, and roasted chestnuts. Lights overhead strung between the old buildings. The smell of cinnamon and wood smoke is everywhere.

Holly and Jason move through the market together at a slow, easy pace. Paper cups of cider--no particular destination. Just looking.

They stop at a stall selling hand-carved wooden ornaments. Holly picks up a small pine tree, just like the one on her desk at home. She holds it up to the pale winter light. The grain shows through.

HOLLY

My grandmother had a tree full of these. She collected one every year from wherever she traveled. I used to hold each one up to the window when I was little to see the wood grain.

JASON

Where did she travel?

HOLLY

Everywhere, eventually. She started late -- didn't take her first trip until she was fifty-two -- and then she couldn't stop. She said she'd wasted forty years being careful, and she wasn't going to waste another decade.

JASON

What happened to the ornaments?

HOLLY

They're in a shoebox in my apartment. I've been meaning to get a tree worthy of them for three years, and I keep finding reasons not to.

JASON

What's the reason?

HOLLY

If I'm honest, an apartment where
no one visits doesn't feel like it
needs a proper tree.

She says it without self-pity. Just a fact. But it lands
heavily, and she knows it.

JASON

That should change.

HOLLY

People would have to want to come.

JASON

(looking directly at her)
People would want to come.

He says it plainly. No performance. Holly holds his gaze for
a full three seconds.

Then she turns and buys the ornament. Tucks it into her coat
pocket.

HOLLY

I'm getting a tree when I get home.

JASON

(falling into step beside
her)
Good. A proper one.

HOLLY

Full to the ceiling.

JASON

With all the ornaments.

HOLLY

Every single one.

EXT. CHRISTMAS MARKET - HOT CIDER BOOTH - LATER

Holly and Jason sit side by side on a low stone wall,
watching the market move around them. Their shoulders touch.
Steam rises from their cups. The carolers have switched to
something slower and older, the kind of carol that sounds
like it's been sung for a hundred years.

A figure appears from the crowd: CARTER HAYES (30s),
effortlessly handsome, wearing a cashmere coat and moving
through a crowded space the way certain people do, with the
assumption that room will be made.

CARTER

Jason Kirk. I thought I recognized the jacket.

Jason stands. Carter extends a hand, and they shake with the comfortable ease of old friends.

JASON

Carter. What brings you to Silver Pines?

CARTER

Corporate retreat. Twenty-five investment bankers are learning to ski. We're at the Ridge Hotel. It's exactly as grim as it sounds, though the scenery compensates somewhat.

He turns to Holly with a smile that knows how to work.

CARTER (CONT'D)

Carter Hayes.

HOLLY

Holly Anderson.

CARTER

Please tell me you're with Jason's team and not trapped in a boardroom being taught the metaphorical and literal parallels between downhill skiing and fourth-quarter performance targets.

HOLLY

(laughing)

Snow Hawks. First year.

CARTER

Much better. Jason always finds the good people.

He glances at Jason when he says it. Jason holds his gaze steadily.

CARTER (CONT'D)

We're co-hosting a bonfire Thursday night with the lodge; the Ridge is providing the wine, and the lodge is providing the fire, apparently. You should both come.

(MORE)

CARTER (CONT'D)

Holly, it would be a shame to leave Silver Pines without seeing a proper mountain bonfire.

HOLLY

I'll probably be there.

CARTER

Excellent. Jason, I'll find you on Thursday. Holly, I hope to see more of you before the week is out.

He moves back into the crowd. Holly watches him go.

HOLLY

Old friend?

JASON

College. We were close for a while.

HOLLY

He's very smooth.

JASON

(neutrally)

Yes.

HOLLY

That one word carried a lot of information.

JASON

Carter is a good person. He means well. He's also very practiced at being the most compelling person in any room, and he knows it. They're not mutually exclusive.

HOLLY

Noted.

She looks at Jason.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

For what it's worth, I find sincerity more interesting than smooth.

Jason looks at her—something in his expression warms.

JASON

Good to know.

EXT. EVERGREEN PINES LODGE - COVERED ICE RINK - EVENING

The lodge's covered rink is hung with lanterns and strung with a single strand of warm lights along the perimeter. The ice is smooth and dark. Half the team is on it, in various states of competence.

Holly stands at the boards in rented skates, looking at the ice with the expression she wore at the top of the ski slope on day one.

LILY
(gliding past with
confidence)
It's just like skiing but without
the downhill part!

HOLLY
The downhill part was the part I
was getting good at.

PRIYA
(also passing)
The trick is committing. Don't half-
commit.

HOLLY
Don't half-commit is not specific
enough advice.

Jason appears at her elbow as though he's been there the whole time.

JASON
You trust me?

HOLLY
That sentence has literally never
ended well for anyone.

JASON
Take my hand.

He holds out his hand. She looks at it. At the ice. At him.

She takes it.

They step onto the ice together. Holly immediately tilts left. Jason catches her arm without drama. They start moving, slowly, around the perimeter.

HOLLY
This is different from skiing.

JASON
Different muscles. Give it a few
laps.

HOLLY
You keep saying 'give it more
time,' and you keep being right,
and I find that unsettling.

JASON
Unsettling how?

HOLLY
It means I'm going to have to start
listening to you before you finish
sentences.

He laughs -- the easy, genuine laugh she's been collecting
all week. Two laps later, Holly's posture settles. She finds
the glide. The ice makes sense.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
Oh. Okay. I see it.

JASON
There you are.

They're still holding hands. The rink is lit gold. Their
breath rises together in small clouds.

On the third lap, Holly speeds up, then overcorrects, and
grabs Jason's arm with both hands as they spin in a small,
awkward circle and come to a stop, face-to-face, inches
apart.

The lanterns sway. Blades on ice. The team is suddenly very
far away.

JASON (CONT'D)
(very quietly)
Holly.

HOLLY
(just as quiet)
I know.

He brushes a strand of hair from her face with his free hand.
Slowly. Deliberately. Like he's been thinking about doing it
since the first night.

He leans in. She meets him halfway.

They kiss. Soft and warm and certain. The lanterns sway above them. From across the rink, Lily makes a sound that is not quiet.

They pull back. Both laugh, the breathless, slightly stunned laugh of people who have done something irreversible and are glad of it.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
I wasn't expecting that.

JASON
Yes, you were.

HOLLY
I was not going to confirm it.

JASON
(smiling)
You just did.

INT. EVERGREEN PINES LODGE - LOUNGE - LATER THAT NIGHT

The rink has emptied. The fire is lower but still warm. Holly and Jason are on the sofa, she's tucked against his side, his arm around her shoulders. Easy. Natural. New.

Outside the window, the mountains are dark shapes against a star-filled sky. Inside, the lodge is quiet.

HOLLY
Jason. This week ends in three days.

JASON
I know.

HOLLY
I live in Denver. You live in Fort Collins. Those are not the same place.

JASON
Ninety minutes by car. Less if you know the route.

HOLLY
I'm trying to be practical.

JASON

(gently)

You said you were done being careful. Practical sounds like the same outfit.

HOLLY

Those are not the same thing.

JASON

Aren't they?

A beat. The fire settles.

HOLLY

I don't want to get on a bus at the end of this week and go back to being the person I was before.

JASON

You won't. That version of you is gone. She was replaced on the first ski run.

HOLLY

(small smile)

The one where I almost fell five times.

JASON

The one where you almost fell five times and got back on the slope every single time. Yeah.

She settles closer against him. He rests his cheek lightly against the top of her head.

HOLLY

Three days.

JASON

Three days. And then the map.

HOLLY

And then the map.

Stars and mountains and quiet snow. Both of them are content to let the night be exactly what it is.

EXT. EVERGREEN PINES LODGE - SLOPES - NEXT MORNING

A storm rolling in hard, the sky a thick, uniform gray, snow coming sideways, visibility already dropping.

Most lodge guests have retreated inside. The mountain has changed its character overnight.

The Snow Hawks assemble anyway. Priya takes one look at the conditions and makes a sensible decision.

PRIYA

In this?

DEREK

It's character-building weather.

PRIYA

My character is sufficiently built.
I'm going inside, I'm going to
finish my book, and I'm going to
have absolutely no regrets.

She goes. Two others follow. The core group remains: Jason, Holly, Lily, Sam, and Derek.

JASON

Clear rules: visibility drops below
twenty meters, we turn back
immediately. No heroics. Agreed?

Nods all around. Jason looks at Holly specifically.

JASON (CONT'D)

You don't have to do this.
Genuinely.

HOLLY

I've been looking at the big slope
from my window since day one. If I
don't do it today, there's only
tomorrow left.

SAM

She should go.

Sam has spoken. They drop in.

The storm makes the familiar strange. Wind in their faces. Snow stings their cheeks. The mountain narrowed to a corridor of white. Holly's skis feel uncertain under her feet, and she breathes through it the way Jason taught her, slow, steady, trust the knees.

She's doing it. She's actually doing it.

Halfway down: a hidden patch of ice under fresh powder.

Holly's left ski catches, and she pitches sideways... a hard, fast lean toward the fall --

Jason's hand shoots out and catches her arm.

JASON
I've got you --

She digs her edge in. Holds.

For a suspended second, both were completely still on the slope. The storm is howling. His hand on her arm. Her breathing is fast and steady at the same time.

HOLLY
I've got it. I'm okay.

His hand drops. She's right. She's standing.

JASON
(quietly)
You've got it.

She takes one breath. Then she finishes the run, every turn committed, every edge driven. Not despite the storm. Through it.

At the bottom, she turns to face the mountain. Soaked. Shaking slightly. Completely, radiantly alive.

HOLLY
I did that in a blizzard.

JASON
(arriving, breathless)
You did that in a blizzard.

She grabs his jacket collar with both hands and kisses him, brief and fierce and full of something that isn't just the adrenaline.

Behind them, Lily and Derek exchange a look.

DEREK
Six months before they share an address.

LILY
Three. Watch his face when he looks at her.

SAM
Three months.

They both look at Sam, surprised.

SAM (CONT'D)
What? I observe things.

INT. EVERGREEN PINES LODGE - LOBBY - AFTERNOON

The storm owns the mountain now. The lodge takes on its best indoor character, fires in every room, the smell of something baking drifting from the kitchen, guests settled into books and puzzles, with long conversations.

Holly is curled in the armchair in the library corner, journal in her lap. She's not writing, she's reading back through the week. Her expression moves through several things.

Jason comes in with two mugs of soup, the thick, slow-cooked kind the lodge makes on storm days.

JASON
Kitchen's doing a storm menu. This is the potato leek.

HOLLY
You keep appearing with warm things.

JASON
The mountain is cold. Warm things help.

He takes the armchair and stretches his legs toward the window. Outside, the storm is magnificent, snow sheeting past, the pine trees bowing and recovering.

HOLLY
Can I ask you something?

JASON
Yes.

HOLLY
You said earlier this week you almost didn't come this year. What happened last spring?

He holds his soup mug with both hands. Thinks about how honest to be. Decides to be fully honest.

JASON
The relationship ended four years ago. It didn't end badly;
(MORE)

JASON (CONT'D)

that would have been easier in a strange way. It just... slowly became clear that we'd both been trying to make something fit that didn't quite fit, and we were both too respectful of each other to say so. When it finally ended, it was almost a relief, which was its own complicated thing to feel.

HOLLY

I understand that. The relief that feels like guilt.

JASON

Exactly. And then the spring just... sat on me. I worked. I ran the team logistics for this trip. I designed a bridge in Larimer County. I did all the right things and felt very little while doing them.

HOLLY

Fine.

JASON

Fine. And then I got on the mountain, and it started to lift. It always does.

HOLLY

The present tense is forced by gravity.

JASON

(quiet smile)

Yeah.

Holly looks at him for a moment.

HOLLY

Jason. I want to say something, and I'm going to say it plainly because I'm done with being careful.

JASON

Okay.

HOLLY

Whatever this is between us -- it doesn't feel like a week thing to me. It feels like a real thing that happened over the course of a week.

He holds her gaze.

JASON

Same. That's the same for me.

HOLLY

Okay. I wanted to say it out loud.

JASON

I'm glad you did.

They sit across from each other in the library corner while the storm rages outside, soup going slowly warm in their hands, completely at ease.

INT. EVERGREEN PINES LODGE - DINING ROOM - THAT EVENING

Storm dinner, the whole team together, the dining room lit by candles because a power flicker earlier put everyone in a festive mood about it, and they never turned the overheads back on.

It's one of those meals—the kind where stories build on stories. Where someone says something true and funny at the same time, and the table holds it for a moment, then laughs.

Lily reenacts the snowball fight with props made from dinner rolls. Derek provides color commentary so dry it takes three seconds to understand why it's funny. Sam eats steadily and smiles at exactly the right moments. Priya has produced a small notebook in which she's been keeping track of everyone's skiing errors for 'reference purposes.'

DEREK

You can't tell me you have that written down.

PRIYA

(consulting notebook)

Day one: Derek caught an edge on the flat section and fell in full view of a family from Ohio.

DEREK

The ice was unexpected.

PRIYA

Day two: Lily stopped in the middle of the slope to take a photograph.

LILY

The light was extraordinary.

PRIYA
You were immediately hit by Derek,
who hadn't noticed you stopping.

DEREK
The ice was unexpected that time,
too.

The table dissolves. Holly laughs until her eyes water.

Jason, beside her, is laughing too, fully, unguarded, the
laugh of someone who feels at home.

He reaches under the table and takes her hand. She laces her
fingers through his.

MEG
(appearing with a tray)
Kitchen-made mulled wine.
Compliments of the lodge-storm
tradition.

Cheers around the table.

DEREK
Toast.

LILY
Oh no.

DEREK
To the Aspen Snow Hawks. Mediocre
skiers. Exceptional company.

SAM
Some of us aren't mediocre.

DEREK
Sam, you're excluded from the
mediocrity, as always.

Glasses lifted. Holly and Jason clink their glasses together.

JASON
(quietly, just for her)
Exceptional week.

HOLLY
(just as quietly)
Exceptional week.

EXT. EVERGREEN PINES LODGE - COURTYARD - BONFIRE NIGHT

The storm has passed, leaving the courtyard buried in fresh powder and the sky scoured clean. Stars from edge to edge. A massive fire crackles in the center stone ring, strings of lights overhead, tables of mulled wine and roasted nuts.

The Snow Hawks have claimed a section near the fire. Holly stands with Lily, hands wrapped around a mug, the firelight warm on her face.

Carter Hayes arrives in cashmere and easy confidence. He finds Holly first.

CARTER

Holly. You came.

HOLLY

You said there was a proper mountain bonfire. It seemed wrong not to see one.

CARTER

Very sensible reasoning.

He steps close and produces two glasses of mulled wine, offering one. Holly takes it. He's good at this, the small gestures that accumulate into attention.

CARTER (CONT'D)

How's the week been? Is Jason's team treating you well?

HOLLY

Better than I expected. I'm apparently a skier now.

CARTER

Jason has a gift for that. Making people feel capable of things.

HOLLY

He does.

CARTER

Is that the only gift he's demonstrated this week?

She looks at him. He meets her gaze with practiced ease.

HOLLY

Carter.

CARTER
I'm just asking.

HOLLY
I think you're doing a bit more
than just asking.

He smiles. It's a good smile, and he knows it.

CARTER
Fair enough. I'll be direct then: I
think you're interesting. And I
think you're in a beautiful place
at Christmas, and that creates a
certain atmosphere, and I want to
make sure you know there are
options.

HOLLY
Options.

CARTER
In the general sense.

Holly looks at him for a moment. He's charming, and he knows
how to use it. She used to find that quality more compelling
than she does right now.

HOLLY
I appreciate the directness,
Carter. Genuinely. I'm also going
to be direct: I know what I want
this week, and I know who I want it
with.

Carter reads her face. He's practiced enough to know when
something is settled.

CARTER
Then he's a lucky man.

HOLLY
I think it's mutual.

He nods, gracious, and moves on toward another cluster of
guests. Holly watches him go.

Jason appears at her side.

JASON
He found you.

HOLLY
He was very smooth about it.

JASON
He always is.

HOLLY
I told him I knew what I wanted.

Jason looks at her.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
You, Jason. I told him you.

He reaches over and takes her hand. Simply. No performance.

JASON
Good.

EXT. EVERGREEN PINES LODGE - SIDE OF BUILDING - LATER

Holly slips away from the bonfire to find the bathroom. On her way back, she passes the side of the lodge building and hears voices. She doesn't mean to stop. She does.

CARTER
(low, to Jason)
I like her. She's the real thing.

JASON
I know.

CARTER
I don't want you to get caught up
in something because of the place
and the week. You know how this
goes. Mountain time isn't regular
time.

Holly is very still against the wall. She holds her breath.

CARTER (CONT'D)
I've seen you do this before,
Jason. You commit before you're
sure.

A silence. Long enough that Holly can't hear Jason's answer over the bonfire.

CARTER (CONT'D)
Just think about it. That's all I'm
saying.

The sound of footsteps. Carter is moving away around the far side of the building.

Holly stands alone in the cold for a moment. The bonfire sounds distant.

She walks back to the party.

INT. EVERGREEN PINES LODGE - LOUNGE - LATER THAT NIGHT

The bonfire has wound down. Most guests have drifted inside. The lounge is warm and winding down. Holly sits alone near the fire, mug in both hands, expression thoughtful in a way that wasn't there an hour ago.

Lily drops onto the sofa beside her.

LILY
What happened?

HOLLY
Nothing.

LILY
Holly. I'm a physical therapist. I read bodies for a living. Something happened.

HOLLY
I overheard something I wasn't supposed to. Carter was talking to Jason.

LILY
And?

HOLLY
He told Jason not to get caught up in something because of the week. That mountain time isn't regular time. That he's seen Jason do this before—commit before he's sure.

LILY
What did Jason say?

HOLLY
I couldn't hear his answer.

Lily sits with this for a moment.

LILY
Holly. I've been on this team for three years.

(MORE)

LILY (CONT'D)

I have watched Jason be warm, professional, and genuinely good to everyone who has joined this group. I have never watched him look at anyone the way he looks at you. Not once.

HOLLY

Carter said he's done this before and committed before he was sure he would.

LILY

Carter Hayes went to college with Jason twelve years ago. He doesn't know Jason. Not the Jason who's been on this mountain three Decembers running, trying to reset something he couldn't name. Carter sees the version of Jason that exists at parties and alumni events. I see the version that gets up at six AM to check the trail conditions because he wants to make sure everyone on his team is safe.

HOLLY

That's a different kind of evidence.

LILY

It's better evidence. Holly, you didn't hear what Jason said back. You heard half a conversation. And in my experience, the half you don't hear is usually more important.

Holly looks at the fire. Turns this over.

HOLLY

What if I ask him about it?

LILY

Then you'll know, which is always better than the half-knowing.

Holly nods slowly.

HOLLY

When did you get wise?

LILY
Physical therapy school. You learn
a lot about what's out of
alignment.

INT. EVERGREEN PINES LODGE - DINING ROOM - NEXT MORNING

Holly arrives at breakfast early. Jason is already there,
coffee in hand, looking out the window at the mountain in its
post-storm perfection.

He looks up when she sits. Something in her face tells him
something is different.

JASON
Good morning.

HOLLY
Good morning.

A beat.

JASON
You were quietly walking back from
the bonfire.

HOLLY
I know.

JASON
Holly. Did you hear me talking to
Carter?

She meets his eyes.

HOLLY
Half of it. I heard Carter's half.

JASON
What did you hear?

HOLLY
That you commit before you're sure.
That mountain time isn't real time
that he's seen you do this.

Jason sets down his coffee.

JASON
Do you want to know what I said
back?

HOLLY

Yes.

JASON

I told him he was wrong. I told him I know exactly what week it is and exactly what town I'm in, and that none of that changes what I know. I told him the difference between someone who's caught up in an atmosphere and someone who has found something real is that the real thing doesn't feel like an atmosphere. It feels like clarity.

Holly is still.

JASON (CONT'D)

Carter is my friend. He was looking out for me. He doesn't know you. I do. And I know what this is.

HOLLY

What is it?

JASON

(plainly)

The start of something I want to keep going. Past this week, past this mountain, into whatever ordinary looks like.

Holly holds his gaze. The morning light fills the dining room. The mountain sits outside the window, patient and massive.

HOLLY

I'm sorry I went quiet.

JASON

You heard half a conversation. That was enough to make anyone quiet.

HOLLY

I should have asked instead of sitting with it.

JASON

You asked this morning.

HOLLY

I asked because Lily told me the half I didn't hear was probably more important.

JASON

Lily is correct about most things.

He reaches across the table and takes her hand.

JASON (CONT'D)

Are we good?

HOLLY

We're good.

Down the table, Lily arrives with a full plate and the expression of someone who has been watching through the window and is very pleased with how this turned out.

LILY

(sitting down normally)

Good morning. What a beautiful day.
I had absolutely no idea there was
any conversation happening just
now.

HOLLY

You were watching.

LILY

I observe movement patterns. It's a
professional thing.

EXT. EVERGREEN PINES LODGE - LAST DAY - MORNING

The storm has remade the mountain overnight. Fresh powder on everything, the sky an outrageous blue, the sun so sharp off the snow it requires sunglasses. The air is cold and clean and tastes like the last day of something good.

Holly stands on the front porch of the lodge before anyone else is out. She has her coffee. She is looking at the mountain.

She is memorizing it. She knows she is. She doesn't mind.

Jason comes out with his own coffee and stops beside her. He follows her gaze to the mountain.

They stand together for a moment without speaking. The way people do when they're both thinking the same thing, and there's no hurry to say it.

JASON

Last day.

HOLLY

Last day.

He holds out his coffee. She takes a sip and hands it back. This has become a small morning thing between them, established quickly and comfortably.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

I've been thinking.

JASON

About?

HOLLY

I finished the painting last night. I want to enter it in the Denver Arts Council open call. I haven't submitted anything in five years.

JASON

Do it.

HOLLY

You haven't even seen the finished version.

JASON

It doesn't matter. Do it. You know it's good. You were smiling when you described it last night.

HOLLY

What if they reject it?

JASON

Then you submit the next one: the blizzard slope, day six.

HOLLY

I haven't painted that one yet.

JASON

But you will.

She looks at him.

HOLLY

I will.

It's a small thing, but it lands like a promise.

JASON

Let's make you a skier one more time.

EXT. CHAMPIONSHIP SLOPE - EVERGREEN PINES - DAY

The big run. The mountain's best trail, long and winding, with three genuine challenges: a sharp right-hand turn, a narrow section through the trees, and a wide-open final section that rewards speed.

The Snow Hawks are assembled at the top in their matching jackets, all of them geared up and ready—the closing tradition: a timed run down the championship slope.

Jason runs through the plan. Holly listens with her poles planted and her eyes on the slope, the way she looked at the practice slope on day one, but entirely differently.

JASON

Same as always, pairs run together,
second skier calling the line.
Derek and Sam open. Lily and Priya.
Holly and I go last.

LILY

Going last so the audience builds?

JASON

Going last because Holly has
improved more this week than anyone
I've worked with in three years of
leading this team, and she deserves
to have the slope to herself at the
end. That's not negotiable.

Holly looks at him. He says it plainly, the way he says everything, and it means everything.

Lily puts her hand over her heart. Derek looks briefly moved and covers it by adjusting his goggles.

SAM

He's right.

From Sam, those two words are a standing ovation.

The first pair drops in.

EXT. CHAMPIONSHIP SLOPE - LATER

Holly and Jason are at the top—just them. The team is tiny figures far below, already cheering even before the run begins.

The mountain stretches below them, every detail of it familiar now in a way it couldn't have been a week ago.

Every slope angle, every turn, every place where the snow is packed and where it's soft.

HOLLY

I came here not knowing how to ski.

JASON

You always knew how. The skills were there. You just needed to trust them.

HOLLY

You keep saying things like that.

JASON

Because they keep being true.

HOLLY

I came here alone and afraid, and pretending I wasn't either.

JASON

And now?

HOLLY

Not alone. Not afraid. Not pretending.

He turns to look at her fully—the mountain, the sky, the whole week behind them.

JASON

Ready?

She looks down the slope. Then at him.

HOLLY

More than.

She goes.

This run is different from every run before it. There is no fear in her body -- just attention, just the specific focus that comes when you trust something completely. Holly reads each turn before she reaches it and commits without hesitation, her form clean, controlled, and confident.

The sharp right turn: she nails it.

The narrow section through the trees: she threads it.

The wide-open final stretch: she lets herself go, genuinely fast, the mountain and her skis in agreement.

Jason is beside her. Not leading and not following. Exactly beside her. Side by side down the mountain.

From below: the team is cheering before they arrive.

Holly skids to a stop in a plume of powder and tips her head back and laughs at the sky -- a full, unselfconscious, unbothered laugh. The laugh of someone who has done something they weren't sure they could do.

The team closes in: snow thrown, Lily crying again, Derek quietly applauding, Sam nodding with the gravity of someone who has just witnessed something significant.

Holly catches Jason's eye through the chaos.

They hold each other's gaze for one long, full, complete beat.

Everything is in it.

INT. EVERGREEN PINES LODGE - HOLLY'S ROOM - AFTERNOON

Holly packs. Deliberate and slow. Each thing is folded carefully, like she's packing something she wants to keep in good condition.

She lifts the wooden ornament from the windowsill. Holds it up to the afternoon light. The grain shows through--just like her grandmother's.

She wraps it carefully in a sock and sets it on top of everything.

She lifts the painting she finished last night. The mountain in the blizzard. More alive than anything she's made in years, looser, more honest, less worried about being good than about being true.

She looks at it for a long time. Then she carefully wraps it in a shirt and slides it into the side pocket of her suitcase.

She sits on the edge of the bed and calls Rachel.

INT. RACHEL'S HOME - CONTINUOUS - INTERCUT

Rachel is on the couch with a cup of tea and the posture of someone who has been waiting for this call.

RACHEL

You're packing, aren't you?

HOLLY
How do you know?

RACHEL
You sound like someone who's
packing reluctantly, which is
different from your regular packing
voice.

HOLLY
I have a packing voice?

RACHEL
You have a voice for everything.
Tell me everything.

HOLLY
I skied in a blizzard. I did the
big slope.

RACHEL
Holly.

HOLLY
I painted two watercolors. I'm
going to submit one to the Arts
Council open call.

RACHEL
(quietly)
Holly.

HOLLY
And I met someone.

RACHEL
Tell me everything about Jason
right now, immediately, please.

HOLLY
He's a structural engineer. He
figures out how things hold
together under pressure. He noticed
I was a painter before I told him,
and he found me art supplies. He
says things plainly and means all
of them. He led me down a blizzard
slope and caught me when I slipped,
and let me finish the run myself.
He held my hand on an ice rink. He
made me feel like I am exactly the
size I'm supposed to be.

A long silence.

RACHEL
(voice slightly thick)
Holly.

HOLLY
I know.

RACHEL
Where does he live?

HOLLY
Fort Collins. Ninety minutes.

RACHEL
That's nothing. That's a commute
some people do daily.

HOLLY
We're going to figure it out after
the week is over.

RACHEL
You are going to figure it out, and
it is going to be fine and actually
better than fine.

HOLLY
Rachel. I'm buying a Christmas tree
when I get home. A real one.
Ceiling height.

RACHEL
(voice breaking a little)
With the ornaments?

HOLLY
All of them. I found one here at
the market, too—a pine tree.

RACHEL
Your grandmother would love this.

HOLLY
I think she'd love all of it.

A beat.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
Come over Christmas Eve. Bring
wine. I want people to see the
tree.

RACHEL

I'll be there with bells on. Actual bells, Holly, I have a Christmas sweater.

HOLLY

I know you do.

RACHEL

Merry Christmas, Holly.

HOLLY

Merry Christmas, Rachel. Thank you for buying the ticket.

RACHEL

(smiling through the phone)

Best money I've ever spent.

EXT. SMALL LANTERN-LIT CLEARING - EVENING

Night has fallen, and Silver Pines has responded accordingly--the final Snow Hawks celebration: night skiing on a lantern-lit trail. Golden lanterns hung from tree branches, and iron poles lined the slope, turning it into a corridor of warm light through the dark forest.

The team skis it by twos and threes, laughter floating up through the pines. The mountain at night is a different creature -- quieter, more intimate, the darkness making the light seem warmer.

At the bottom of the trail, a small clearing. Someone--Meg, clearly, following instructions--has set up a lantern on a pole at the center and dusted the bench with fresh snow so it gleams.

Jason arrives first. He stands in the clearing, looking up at the lanterns.

Holly arrives at the edge of the clearing and stops.

She looks at him standing there in all that gold light. The mountain behind him. The snow around him lit warm. The whole week distilled into this one image.

Something in her chest tightens, the good kind of tight. The kind that means something has found its right place.

She crosses the clearing. They stand close.

HOLLY
You planned this.

JASON
Meg did the actual work. I gave her
thirty minutes' notice, and she
somehow made it happen.

HOLLY
Meg is remarkable.

JASON
She really is.

A beat. Breath rising between them in small clouds.

HOLLY
Jason. I need to say something.

JASON
Okay.

HOLLY
When I got on that bus a week ago,
I was genuinely not sure I was
capable of feeling the way I've
felt this week. Awake. Present.
Real. Like myself in a way I'd
stopped expecting.

Her voice is steady. Her eyes are bright.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
You didn't just teach me to ski.
You didn't just find me art
supplies, stand next to me on a
difficult slope, or say true things
plainly. You reminded me that I'm
the size I'm supposed to be. That's
nothing, Jason. That's not a small
thing.

He is very still.

JASON
You already were the size you're
supposed to be. You just stopped
believing it for a while.

HOLLY
Yes. And then I came here.

JASON
And then you came here.

He takes both her gloved hands in his.

JASON (CONT'D)

I want to keep standing next to you, Holly. Past this week. Past this mountain. Past the beautiful week in Silver Pines. In whatever ordinary Tuesday in Fort Collins or Denver looks like. I want to see your paintings. I want to meet your shoebox of ornaments. I want to be the person who comes to see your ceiling-height Christmas tree.

Holly squeezes his hands.

HOLLY

Ninety minutes is not that far.

JASON

(small smile)

It really isn't.

HOLLY

I'll need your honest opinion on the painting.

JASON

I'll give it.

HOLLY

Even if it's honest?

JASON

Especially if it's honest.

She steps into him. He wraps his arms around her and holds her there in the lantern light -- no hurry, no performance, no bubble of a week but the beginning of something that will outlast the mountain and the snow and the beautiful borrowed time of Silver Pines.

Snow falls around them. Soft and unhurried.

After a long moment, Holly tips her head back to look at him.

HOLLY

Kiss me before the team finds us,
and Lily cries about it.

He laughs, the full, easy, home-feeling laugh.

The lanterns sway above them. The pines are still. The snow falls.

INT. EVERGREEN PINES LODGE - FINAL DINNER - THAT NIGHT

The last supper of the Snow Hawks at Evergreen Pines Lodge. The dining room is full. Extra candles. The kitchen's best work. A bottle of good wine that Sam produced from somewhere without explanation.

Toasts are made. Lily hides her tears.

Derek presents Sam with a hand-lettered certificate reading, MOST DIGNIFIED SKIER - SILVER PINES DIVISION, THIRD CONSECUTIVE YEAR.

Sam accepts it without expression and places it in his jacket pocket with great care.

Priya reads from her notebook of errors. Everyone disputes her assessments. She is factually correct about all of them.

Holly and Jason are at the corner of the table. She leaned her head on his shoulder for a moment between stories. His hand was on the back of her chair. Comfortable, unremarkable, right.

MEG

(stops by)

This is always my favorite night of the year--the last night of a good group.

LILY

We're a very good group.

DEREK

We're a decent group with one excellent member.

SAM

Two.

Sam gestures vaguely toward Holly and goes back to his wine. Holly is touched in a way she doesn't try to hide.

MEG

Will we be seeing you all next year?

LILY

Obviously.

DEREK

Priya will want to lower her times.

PRIYA
Significantly.

MEG
Holly? Jason?

Holly and Jason look at each other.

HOLLY
Same week?

JASON
Same lodge. Same mountain. Same
room.

HOLLY
(to Meg)
We'll need two keys.

Meg beams. Lily makes a sound that should not be made in a dining room. Derek closes his eyes and raises his wine glass in salute.

DEREK
To Silver Pines. To the mountain.
And to finding things we weren't
looking for.

Glasses up. Everyone at the long table, together for the last time this year, lifting something in the candlelight.

EXT. EVERGREEN PINES LODGE - COURTYARD - LATE NIGHT

The lodge has gone quiet. Most windows are dark. The courtyard holds only Holly and Jason, who wandered out without deciding to.

The sky is astonishing. Stars from horizon to horizon, the Milky Way a pale smear above the dark peaks, the moon not yet risen. The snow gives everything a faint luminous glow.

They stand at the courtyard railing, shoulders touching, looking at the mountains.

HOLLY
I keep trying to memorize it.

JASON
The mountains?

HOLLY
Everything. The mountains. The way
the snow smells.
(MORE)

HOLLY (CONT'D)

The sound this town makes at night.
The fire in the library. Lily's
laugh. The way the hot chocolate
tastes at exactly the right
temperature.

She glances at him.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

You.

JASON

You don't have to memorize it. You
can come back. We can come back.

HOLLY

It won't be exactly this.

JASON

It'll be different. Different is
its own good thing. Clara's been
painting the same mountain for
forty years, and every painting is
its own thing.

HOLLY

Clara would approve of this week.

JASON

I think she would.

Holly leans her head against his shoulder. His arm comes
around her.

HOLLY

I came here looking for a break
from my life. I found—I don't know
how to say it.

JASON

You don't have to say it tonight.

HOLLY

The start of something.

JASON

The start of something.

She turns to face him. Snowflakes drifted between them in the
starlight.

HOLLY

Every snowflake we shared this week... I'm keeping every single one.

He smiles. Full and unhurried. The smile of a man who has stopped being surprised by good things and started expecting them.

JASON

Keep them. Add more next year. And every year after that.

She lifts onto her toes and kisses him. He holds her there against the mountain and the dark and the end of the week that changed both of them.

When they pull back, they're both laughing, the soft, private laugh of two people who have found something and know it.

HOLLY

Good night, Jason Kirk.

JASON

Good night, Holly Anderson.

Neither moves toward the door.

HOLLY

We should go inside. It's cold.

JASON

We should.

Neither moves.

The stars wheel slowly above Silver Pines. The snow falls between them, soft and patient.

INT. EVERGREEN PINES LODGE - LOBBY - NEXT MORNING

The lobby is full of luggage and the bittersweet energy of a good trip ending. Ski bags lean against the walls. Coats are zipped. The team moves through the lobby at various stages of being ready to go.

Lily wraps Holly in both arms with the full commitment of someone who means it.

LILY

You have to text me. Frequently. About everything.

(MORE)

LILY (CONT'D)

About Jason, obviously, but also about the painting and the tree and just, everything. I've decided you're one of my people.

HOLLY

I'm one of your people.

LILY

It's decided, and it's permanent. Also, I want to see the finished painting.

HOLLY

I'll send you a photo.

LILY

I'll want to be invited to the show when they accept it.

HOLLY

That's very optimistic.

LILY

You skied in a blizzard. I'm optimistic about everything you do now.

She squeezes Holly one more time and moves on. Derek extends his hand to Holly with great seriousness.

DEREK

You improved this week. For what it's worth. That's not a small thing, in my opinion.

HOLLY

That means a lot, Derek. You are discerning with compliments.

DEREK

I am, which is why they count when I give them.

Priya hugs Holly efficiently and says she'll share the notebook for 'reference purposes.' Sam nods. Holly has learned that Sam's nod is the equivalent of a long speech. She nods back, equally meaning it.

Holly carries her suitcase to the front door. Sets it down. Turns.

The lobby: the fire, the gold-and-white tree, the puzzle on the coffee table with three new pieces added since yesterday, the smell of pine, cinnamon, and wood smoke.

She takes a picture. Then she puts her phone away and looks with her actual eyes.

She is doing what Clara does—seeing it clearly so that she can carry it forward.

Jason appears with her suitcase and his in hand.

JASON

Ready?

HOLLY

Not even slightly.

JASON

Then we're right on time.

EXT. EVERGREEN PINES LODGE - FRONT WALK - CONTINUOUS

Outside. The mountain in full sun, the sky that impossible blue, the town of Silver Pines going about its last-day-before-Christmas business in every direction. A bell somewhere is ringing.

The shuttle idles at the curb. The Snow Hawks file on, calls of 'see you next December' and 'text me' fading into the cold.

Holly and Jason stand beside the shuttle.

He sets both bags down. Faces her.

JASON

This is not goodbye.

HOLLY

No.

JASON

I'll call you when I get back to Fort Collins. Christmas Eve. Before dinner.

HOLLY

I'll answer. I'll be decorating the tree.

JASON

Will Rachel be there?

HOLLY
With actual bells on. Apparently,
she has a sweater.

JASON
And next year --

HOLLY
Same lodge. Same mountain. Better
skier. More paintings.

JASON
Lead the first run.

HOLLY
Only if you carry the cocoa.

JASON
(leaning in)
I'll carry the cocoa.

HOLLY
(close)
Then it's a deal.

He kisses her on the front walk of the lodge, in full
Colorado morning light, in front of the mountain that was
there before either of them and will be there long after.

She boards the shuttle.

She finds her window seat. Presses her palm flat against the
glass, the exact gesture she made on the bus coming in,
looking out at the mountains for the very first time.

Same gesture. Completely different person.

The shuttle begins to move.

Jason stands on the front walk. He doesn't look away. A
small, certain smile on his face -- the smile of a man who
knows how something ends and is glad of it.

He pulls out his phone. Types.

On the shuttle, Holly's phone buzzes. She reads the message,
then laughs out loud, unself-consciously, in a public shuttle
full of strangers who look at her and smile anyway.

The screen: Jason: Next year, you lead the first run.

She types: Holly: Only if you carry the cocoa.

His reply is immediate: "Deal." Merry Christmas, Holly.

She looks at the message. Types: Holly: Merry Christmas, Jason.

She sends it and puts the phone in her coat pocket. Turns back to the window.

Silver Pines is receding: the lodge, the pine with the red ribbon, the carolers on the main street, the mountain rising behind everything. The small gallery where Clara's paintings live. The Christmas market. Eleanor's bakery.

She watches until the bend in the mountain road takes it all away.

She opens her journal. Turns to the page she wrote on the bus coming in.

'What if something good is about to happen? What if I let it?'

She reads it. Then she uncaps her pen. Beneath everything she has written this week, she adds three words.

We hold on the page: 'It already did.'

She closes the journal.

Outside the window, the bus climbs the mountain highway. The world is white and enormous and full of possibility.

Holly leans her head back against the seat. Closes her eyes. Smiling.

Going home.

FADE OUT.