

TWELFTH NIGHT OF CHRISTMAS

By Donna Hoke

LOGLINE: Risk-averse Violet takes the first chance of her life when she's mistaken for her screenwriter brother and accepts his speaking gig. What starts as a cheeky prank gets complicated when Violet falls for the person she deceived.

Representation:
Patricia McLaughlin
Beacon Agency
beaconagency@hotmail.com
212-736-6630

Donna Hoke
973-919-2038
donna@donnaheke.com

ACT ONE

EXT. COLLEGE - DAY

Large decorated Christmas tree gives way to campus, where students walk holding festive holiday cups. VIOLET (FEMALE, 29) strides with purpose, greets several and casts longing looks at their steaming drinks. Checks her watch--no time to get one for herself. Picks up her pace.

INT. COLLEGE CLASSROOM - DAY

Violet addresses students antsy for winter break, including TY (MALE, 19) and CHANTAL (FEMALE, 18)

VIOLET
So everybody thinks light-bulb-
light-bulb-light-bulb, but movies
started because of him.

Ty yawns. Students couldn't care less.

VIOLET (CONT'D)
You know what else Thomas Edison
invented? The first string of
Christmas lights.

Chantal picks her fingernails. Students couldn't care less.

VIOLET (CONT'D)
Come on, maybe you don't get
excited by movies, but who doesn't
get excited about Christmas?

EXT. HOUSE OF FILM - DAY

In front of film-themed Halloween window display, DUKE (MALE, 29) sweeps snow from the walk in front of House of Film, a screening room business.

Next door, OLIVIA (FEMALE, 27, wearing a snowman scarf) tends the Christmas window display of her gift shop, Occasions By Olivia. Duke waves to catch her attention, smiles.

Olivia waves and returns to her work. Duke's gazes for another wistful moment and resumes sweeping.

INT. VIOLET AND SAM'S APARTMENT - DAY

SAM (Violet's twin brother) appears to admire a Christmas tree--
 INSET: ornament of adult Sam and Violet that reads TWINS!--but
 really stares at a bulletin board with 10 or so index cards on
 it. Above the cards, a title: LAST NIGHT IN BUFFALO. Sam picks
 up a card and a pen. Cat meows. Sam looks at the cat.

SAM

She doesn't listen to me, Mabel.

Cat meows again. PHONE RINGS. Sam drops the card he's holding
 and answers.

INT. COLLEGE CLASSROOM - DAY

Class is over; students gather their things.

VIOLET

Have a wonderful holiday break.
 Anybody planning to watch any great
 Christmas movies? *The Bells of St.*
Mary? Christmas in Connecticut?
[Popular Title From This Network]?

CHANTAL

Ty's making me watch *Die Hard*.

VIOLET

That's not a Christmas movie.

TY

It definitely is. Yippee Ki Yay--

Violet's look says "Don't."

TY (CONT'D)

--pussycat.

Ty laughs and stand with the other students to leave.

VIOLET

Don't forget to upload your dawn of
 Hollywood papers by midnight!

CHANTAL

I was gonna message you--

VIOLET

No extensions, Chantal!

Students walk out. As they do:

CHANTAL

Did you watch any of those clips?
They don't even talk in some of them.
Why'd you make me take this class?

TY

I thought Intro to Film would be
more intro to filmmaking than
evolution of film, but this is
still great stuff for me to know.

CHANTAL

They were black and white, Ty.

TY

I guess history's her thing. Those
who can't, teach, right?

Violet's smile fades. Exiting students cross with MALCOLM
(MALE, 32) entering with coffee cups. He hands one to Violet,
kisses her cheek, takes a seat. He doodles chem equations on
his napkin while Violet packs her bookbag.

VIOLET

Right on time.

MALCOLM

Which wasn't easy today! The Coffee
Hub was mobbed, but professor
privilege and anything for you.

VIOLET

The Candy Cane Cappuccino.

MALCOLM

What?

VIOLET

That's why it's busy. They're
making them special today for the
last day of classes.

MALCOLM

Oh, did you... did you want one of those?

VIOLET

(uh, yeah, Malc, she did)
They were in special souvenir cups.
For Christmas!

MALCOLM

Your cup is red.

VIOLET
Yes, yes it is, Malcolm. Thank you.

Violet sips the coffee, still bothered by what she heard.

VIOLET (CONT'D)
There would be no... no Marvel movies
without the pioneers, right?

MALCOLM
What?

VIOLET
That kid on the way out. I assigned
YouTube clips to learn history,
which is important even if your goal
is to make films, isn't it?

MALCOLM
I doubt social media stars know film
history.

VIOLET
Well shouldn't they?

MALCOLM
At least the department agreed an
Intro to Film class was "English
adjacent," right?

VIOLET
I have eight students.

MALCOLM
Make it an easy A. You'll get more.

VIOLET
But I want them to like it.

INT. HOUSE OF FILM - DAY

The entry mimics an old-time theater lobby: posters, concessions, maybe vintage arcade games, and a photo of Duke and another man--Matt--cutting the ribbon on House of Film.

Another room for screening has a small stage, and a third section is for coffee and conversation.

A stone-faced Duke stocks concessions in the lobby. JAKE (MALE, 17) enters from presumable storage holding DVDs.

JAKE
I'm trying to sort these donations
but I never heard of
(looks at a DVD)
Alfred Hitchcock? Is that romance
or comedy--

DUKE
It's called *Psycho*, Jake.

JAKE
Hey, I don't know. That's why I asked.

DUKE
Suspense. The master of suspense.

Jake turns, turns back.

JAKE
Oh one more thing... So, um... my
uncle just offered me thirty
dollars an hour to help out at his
Christmas tree lot for the season.

DUKE
Thirty dollars!

JAKE
Right? So I'm gonna take off for a
couple weeks. Cool?

DUKE
You'd like a sabbatical from a part-
time job?

JAKE
Yeah, a sabbatical! Thank you!

JAKE grabs his jacket.

DUKE
Now? You're leaving now?

JAKE
It's pretty quiet here and my uncle
said the lot is hopping, so--

Duke shakes his head. Jake exits. PHONE RINGS. Duke
answers.

DUKE
Hello?... Hey Steven! Only two
seats left for your talk... Oh no!

A public domain movie theme door alert sounds and Olivia enters, wearing a Christmas tree scarf. Duke lights up.

DUKE (CONT'D)
I understand, Steven. It was short notice... The Plan B speaker, for sure... Next year...definitely.

DUKE disconnects and holds out a box of candy to Olivia.

DUKE (CONT'D)
Olivia! Want some Sno-Caps?
Raisinets? Goobers? On the house.

OLIVIA
No, but can I borrow your vacuum?
Mine's making that weird burning smell.

Duke moves to get the vacuum.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
So... what was that, Spielberg can't make it?

DUKE
Hilarious.

Duke gets the vacuum.

OLIVIA
Who's the Plan B speaker?

DUKE
My first Plan B thought was "Matt will fix this" because he was the creative half of this enterprise.

Duke hands Olivia the vacuum.

OLIVIA
You're more creative than you think.

DUKE
I'm really not. I waited way too long to even find people because the truth is...the lease is up in a month and... I'm getting kicked out for owing too much back rent. And it's for the best. My heart hasn't been in it without Matt.

OLIVIA
I don't want to hear that. Maybe Jake can help.

DUKE

Jake just took a "sabbatical" to make better money selling Christmas trees. Just as well. He thought Alfred Hitchcock made comedies.

OLIVIA

That's crazy. *Rear Window* is obviously a romance.

(on Duke's weak laugh)

Come on, he's in high school. He's looking to make a few bucks for prom tickets not be the next Jordan Peele.

DUKE

Listen to you. Maybe I'd stick it out if you went into business with me. Duke and Olivia's House of Cards and Film has a ring to it.

OLIVIA

Why Duke Orsino, that was creative!

DUKE

Enough to convince you?

OLIVIA

You want someone who shares your passion.

DUKE

You could learn.

OLIVIA

Maybe worry less about the speaker and more about changing out those--
(motions to window display)
Tuesday Night Terrors. It's December.

DUKE

Christmas displays were Matt's thing.

OLIVIA

Hang in there. Matt would hate this talk about closing shop.

Olivia exits. Duke resumes stocking, then retrieves a folder of job apps, flips through, and lands on one from Sam Braxton. He reads: Current job: Film lover, aspiring writer.

INT. SAM AND VIOLET'S APARTMENT - DAY

Sam frantically packs, dials Violet on his cell.

INTERCUT. COLLEGE CAMPUS - DAY

Violet and Malcolm walk with their coffee through campus.

VIOLET

Eight couples. And Alan Rickman! I
can't believe you never saw it.

Violet's PHONE RINGS.

VIOLET (CONT'D)

Hey Sam.

MALCOLM

Hey Sam!

SAM

They pushed up filming. I leave in
three hours!

Nearby students yell loudly.

VIOLET

You're leaving?

SAM

In three hours! They're starting
early.

VIOLET

Nobody shoots at Christmas!

SAM

Exactly!

Sam rummages in his closet and knocks a shoebox from a shelf.
Handmade cards tumble out. INSET: a handmade card with two
hearts that says "Be Mine Forever."

VIOLET

Mom's gonna freak if you're not here.

SAM

I'll take care of it when I get home.

VIOLET

So fix it in post?

SAM

What?

VIOLET

Movie talk, Sam. How did you ever
write a screenplay?

SAM
With your help!

Sam picks up with a card with two hearts, looks at it sadly before returning it to the box and resuming packing.

SAM (CONT'D)
Just wanted to let you know I won't
be here when you get home. Gotta go!

Sam hangs up.

COLLEGE MAIN STREET - DAY

VIOLET
You'll be gone for Christmas!? Sam?

Violet realizes he's hung up.

MALCOLM
Everything okay?

VIOLET
They're starting shooting early. At
Christmas.

MALCOLM
Somebody chasing the dream will
leave at any time.

VIOLET
If someone were making my novel
into a film, I wouldn't want to
miss a minute.

MALCOLM
Which is why I'm glad you're not
going anywhere.

VIOLET
You're saying I'm never going to
write a novel?

MALCOLM
Just that we're good right here.

VIOLET
I do love it here but--

MALCOLM
But you want to know what it feels
like to be a novelist turned big
screenwriter?

VIOLET

It's a tiny indie film. He's not a "big" writer.

MALCOLM

But you want to know what it feels like to be a small writer.

VIOLET

Is that wrong? Sam tells stories two different ways and I haven't finished anything.

MALCOLM

Three. Didn't he used to act in college?

VIOLET

Thanks. And now I teach people about the stories I love and he's making them and nobody even knows that I can write--

MALCOLM

(takes her hand)

Hey, lots of kids write stories and act 'em out. It doesn't mean it's your destiny to keep telling them.

VIOLET

But we always said it would be... we promised each other. And then I kind of let my planner personality take over. "Have a backup," they said. "Do what you love on the side," they said.

MALCOLM

Which was smart.

VIOLET

Except I'm not doing what I love on the--

MALCOLM

You're tenure track, Vi. Sam never knows where his next nickel is coming from.

VIOLET

But he creates. Goes with the flow.

MALCOLM

Flies by the seat of his pants.

VIOLET

But he's a pantsner living in a world he loves.

MALCOLM

Should I worry you're gonna quit your did-I-mention-tenure-track job and hole up in a cabin to "create"?

VIOLET

We bloom where we're planted. I just haven't been tending the garden.

MALCOLM

Tenure track. In English. You grew an oak tree.

VIOLET

Yeah but it's just not... I need like... a new year's resolution.

MALCOLM

It's not even Christmas.

VIOLET

True, but I'm a planner, right? So let's say by... the twelfth night of Christmas, I am going to be closer to living in a world I love.

MALCOLM

Isn't that even sooner than New Year's? Like the day after Christmas?

VIOLET

That's the second night.

MALCOLM

That doesn't make sense.

VIOLET

Which is why you teach Chemistry. The first night is Christmas. Twelfth Night is the night before the Epiphany. A time of disorder, discovery, love. It's perfect. By January fifth, I will change my world.

MALCOLM

And if you don't?

VIOLET

Then I have to accept I'll never bloom.

ACT TWO**INT. VIOLET AND SAM'S APARTMENT - EVENING**

Violet enters to Sam-less stillness, glances in his bedroom, closes the door to his bedroom mess. Cat meows.

VIOLET

I know, Mabel. I miss him already.

The bulletin board catches Violet's eye as she heads to the kitchen. She moves closer and sees an added card: DO IT!

VIOLET (CONT'D)

Sam...

Violet stares at the board, then picks up a card, writes on it.

VIOLET (CONT'D)

Hmm...

Violet moves a couple cards, then tacks up the new one.

VIOLET (CONT'D)

That could work...

Violet enters kitchen to find Sam's plate of crumbs, crumpled napkin, half-full mug--"Eat. Sleep. Write."--on the table.

She clears dishes to the sink, where we see *her* mug: "Some days, the best thing about this job is that the chair spins."

Violet impulsively throws it in the garbage then immediately suffers guilt and pulls it out. She turns on the teakettle and washes Sam's dishes, starting with his mug.

INT. HOUSE OF FILM - EVENING

Duke sips from his own "Eat. Sleep. Movies." mug, pulls out his phone, dials. He hears:

VIOLET (RECORDED)

Happy December! Leave a merry message! Bonus points if you quote your favorite Christmas movie!

DUKE

Hey, um... Sam? I was expecting a guy. That's bad, right?

(MORE)

DUKE (CONT'D)
Assuming is a bad foot to start off on, especially when you're asking a favor. I apologize. This is Duke from House of Film. You put in an application a couple of years ago...

INT. VIOLET AND SAM'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Violet sits at kitchen table, listening to voicemail.

DUKE (V.O.)
I'm in a bit of a bind and I was wondering if you might be able to help out? I know it's a long shot but hey, this is Christmas. The season of perpetual hope.

VIOLET
Home Alone.

DUKE (V.O.)
Anyway, call me back.

VIDEO CALL ALERT. Sam. Violet answers.

INTERCUT - AIRPLANE INTERIOR - DAY

SAM
Greetings from somewhere above the midwest!

VIOLET
I miss you already.

SAM
But your bank account's been missing my rent money, right? First day of filming, I get paid.

Violet shrugs.

SAM (CONT'D)
Plus every gig is networking, right? Maybe I'll meet someone who will read your thing.

VIOLET
My thing? Ten cards on a bulletin board. Eleven.

SAM
What?

VIOLET

Nothing.

SAM

You're a way better writer than I am. You can't give up just because I got lucky.

VIOLET

There are other jobs. I have another job. A good job.

Violet glances at the spinning chair mug.

VIOLET (CONT'D)

Did you apply to somewhere called House of Film?

SAM

What's that?

VIOLET

I got one of your calls again. Someone named Duke at House of Film.

SAM

House of-- oh! That little screening room in Buffalo?

VIOLET

How did I not know there's a little screening room in Buffalo?

SAM

Too busy spinning your chair in your college town.

VIOLET

That was a mean gift.

SAM

I was going for inspiring.

VIOLET

So House of Film?

SAM

I applied a few years ago when I was broke. What'd you tell him?

VIOLET

It was voicemail. I'll text back and let him know his finger slipped a digit while he was dialing.

SAM

You could just take the job as head
popcorn maker yourself.

VIOLET

I'm hanging up on you!

SAM

Love ya, twinnie!

Violet disconnects. Phone rings. Violet answers.

VIOLET

Hello.

INTERCUT: HOUSE OF FILM - DAY

DUKE

Sam--It's Duke from House of Film.

VIOLET

Hey, I was just--

DUKE

I don't know if you got my message
yet but I realized I hung up
without explaining. I'm not hiring.
I just have a sudden hole the size
of a screenwriter in my Fun in Film
lecture series and I heard--

VIOLET

I'm not--

DUKE

Hear me out. Your application said
aspiring writer. I know you haven't had
anything made, but if you could just
talk about movies and writing... That's
all my crowd wants, to hear that
insider stuff on a Sunday afternoon.

VIOLET

I can let my br--

DUKE

Oh, and there's an honorarium and
all the concessions you can eat.
Goobers to Gummies, yours for the
asking. Anything is really. I just
need to fill this spot.

The teakettle whistles. Violet turns it off.

DUKE (CONT'D)
It would really help me out so what
do you say, Sam?

Violet looks at the "Eat. Sleep. Write." mug. Puts a teabag
in it and pours water over it.

INT. THE COFFEE HUB - DAY

Malcolm pours milk into his cup, then walks to a table and
hands Violet a Candy Cane Cappuccino in festive cup.

VIOLET
Where's yours?

MALCOLM
I'm still grading finals full of
"show your work" chem equations. I
can't risk the sugar crash.

Malcolm sits. Violet holds out her cup.

VIOLET
At least taste it.

Malcolm reluctantly tastes, grimaces, passes the cup back
like it has cooties.

MALCOLM
Definitely tastes like candy cane.

VIOLET
It tastes like Christmas! What time
do you want to head to Holiday
Market tomorrow?

MALCOLM
Tomorrow?

VIOLET
It's the last day.

MALCOLM
I didn't realize that. It's just I
have that grading--

VIOLET
It's okay... I'll just have to work
on my "movies and writing" lecture
instead.

MALCOLM
Enjoy the break. Forget about school--

Violet's sneaky face says this is not for class.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
You're not talking about school.
What are you up to?

VIOLET
Step one of my Twelfth Night
resolution. I'm giving a lecture at
House of Film!

MALCOLM
About feudal documentaries?

VIOLET
Ha ha. It's for Fun in Film speaker
series at a screening room.

MALCOLM
Vi, that's great!

VIOLET
There's just one... little catch.

MALCOLM
He's paying you in exposure?

VIOLET
No, there's pay. And all the candy
I can eat.

MALCOLM
He has no idea how much candy you
can eat.

VIOLET
How much Sam can eat.

MALCOLM
Sam's coming back?

VIOLET
No--

MALCOLM
But you're writing a lecture for him?

VIOLET
Duke was desp--

MALCOLM
A guy named Duke, at House of Film?

VIOLET

Do you want to hear this?

Malcolm motions that she has the floor.

VIOLET (CONT'D)

Apparently Sam applied for a job there so they had his info. But you know how we get each other's calls because our numbers are so close--

MALCOLM

Oh, I don't like this--

VIOLET

It's like a sign!

MALCOLM

It's not a sign. People mess up your numbers all the time.

VIOLET

So I got the call and I thought why not? Pretend to be Sam and give the talk.

MALCOLM

You're not identical twins, Violet.

VIOLET

Duke doesn't even know Sam has a twin. Or that he's a novelist with a pen name. In fact, he thinks Sam is a woman. I mean Duke thinks Sam is me. So same age, same last name...

MALCOLM

You want to know what it's like to be Sam, you don't mess around. What's the lecture on?

VIOLET

Formally, screenwriting.

MALCOLM

You haven't written any.

VIOLET

Loosely, "movies and writing." That's what he said and I can do that. I know movies inside out and I've heard Sam talk about writing enough to fake the rest. Thanks to Logan Beard--

MALCOLM
That's a dumb pen name.

VIOLET
Sam doesn't like attention. Which works great for me, because thanks to Logan Beard, Duke doesn't even know that Sam adapted his own novel into a screenplay, which makes this lecture easy peasy.

MALCOLM
...

VIOLET
You don't think I can do it.

MALCOLM
It's just so--

VIOLET
Spontaneous?

MALCOLM
Unlike you.

VIOLET
It is. It's Sam!

Violet laughs. Malcolm doesn't.

INT. DUKE'S HOUSE OF FILM - DAY

Duke sorts DVDs in the screening room.

EXT. ELLICOTT STREET - DAY

Violet walks. PHONE RINGS. Violet answers.

VIOLET
Hey mom.

CROSSCUT. MOM CAROL (60s) pulls a tray of Christmas cookies from the oven. DAD ANTHONY (60s) tries to sneak dough from the mixing bowl and CAROL shoos his hand away.

CAROL
There's raw eggs in there!

ANTHONY
They won't kill me.

CAROL
You're my husband. I can't take
that chance.

Violet laughs. Anthony grabs a cookie and scoots out.

CAROL (CONT'D)
Violet, your brother is in San Diego!

VIOLET
I know.

CAROL
I'm making his favorite cookies and
he might not be home for Christmas?

ANTHONY (O.S.)
Those are my favorite cookies, too!

CAROL
What's it going to take for that
boy to stay put? Aren't novelists
supposed to loners holed up in an
attic for months at a time? What's
wrong with my attic?

VIOLET
I think that's a myth.

CAROL
If he met someone, he'd stay.

Violet passes Occasions by Olivia and admires her picture-
perfect Christmas window display. From inside, Olivia waves.

VIOLET
Mom!

CAROL
Talk to him, Vi.

VIOLET
I will but I don't have magic powers.
Tell Dad not to eat all the cookies.

CAROL
Telling him doesn't work, honey. I
have to hide them.

Violet arrives at Duke's House of Film, crooks an eyebrow at
the Halloween display.

INT. DUKE'S HOUSE OF FILM - DAY

Violet enters and the movie theme plays.

DUKE (O.S.)
Be right there Olivia!

Violet looks around, touches movie posters, memorabilia. Film fan heaven. Duke enters.

DUKE (CONT'D)
You're not Olivia.

VIOLET
Guilty of not being... Olivia.
Who's Olivia?

DUKE
She runs the fancy gift shop next door.
Out of my league.

VIOLET
The gifts or Olivia?

Should he laugh or take offense? Duke chooses the former.

DUKE
I'm Pretty Obvious.

VIOLET
Nice to meet you Mr. Obvious. May I
call you Pretty?

Violet holds out her hand. Duke shakes it.

DUKE
I'm flattered, but most people call
me Duke.

VIOLET
Hello Duke. I'm-- um, Sam Braxton.

DUKE
Sam! You didn't say you were coming by.

VIOLET
If you were expecting me, I never
would have discovered your
admiration for the girl next door.

DUKE
You even think in movie plot.

VIOLET

Story is my forte. I mean, of course writing... movies is my forte. You know.

DUKE

That's exactly what I need.

VIOLET

This place is-- How did I not know this was here?

DUKE

But you applied--

VIOLET

Still here, I mean. Still here.

DUKE

You're busy and... we don't advertise much.

VIOLET

It's a dream!

DUKE

Literally. Mine and Matt's.

Duke points to INSET: ribbon-cutting photo.

DUKE (CONT'D)

Matt was my best friend. And business partner.

VIOLET

Was?

(on Duke's sad nod
I'm sorry.

DUKE

We started this after college, because we didn't like all the streaming this and streaming that. We wanted somewhere for people to watch movies together and talk about them.

VIOLET

An enthusiastic community.

DUKE

We ran the campus film series in college, and we really dug it. Then we graduated and since there was nothing like that here--

VIOLET

You bloomed where you were planted.

Duke smiles and Violet senses a kindred spirit.

DUKE

We started with Tuesday Night Terrors--

VIOLET

(motions to window display)

Is that a year-round thing or--

DUKE

I know, I know.

VIOLET

You don't do anything for
Christmas? Not even decorate?

DUKE

Matt did a great Christmas display,
so I've just-- It doesn't matter.
I'm closing up next month.

VIOLET

For good? You can't! This is
already my new favorite place.

DUKE

It's not the same doing it alone,
and I've kind of let it slip.

VIOLET

Let me help. I love Christmas
decorating. And a Christmas movie
display? That's my dream.

DUKE

It's only a week 'til Christmas.

VIOLET

I'll bring some ideas Sunday. Now, I'm
gonna check out that cute card shop.

DUKE

Say hi to Olivia for me, by which I
mean put in a good word.

ACT THREE**INT. OCCASIONS BY OLIVIA - AN ARTISAN EXPERIENCE - DAY**

The card/gift shop looks as one does during the Christmas season. Displays showcase local artisan gifts, the centerpiece of which is Olivia's homemade cards.

Olivia, wearing wreath scarf, vacuums. Violet enters. Olivia turns off vac, approaches her new customer.

OLIVIA
Everything in the store is from
local artisans. Do you need a gift
for anyone in particular?

VIOLET
I'm done with my shopping but
there's always next year.

OLIVIA
Done? I'm like the shoemaker whose
kids are barefoot.

VIOLET
But you can shop in your own store.

OLIVIA
My family knows every inch of this
place and they'd call me a cheater.

Olivia gives Violet a quizzical look.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
Something about you is familiar.
Have we met before?

Violet picks up a Christmas card from the central rack.

VIOLET
I don't think so. These are
beautiful!

OLIVIA
Why thank you. Those are mine.
Occasions by Olivia.

VIOLET
Marriage, new jobs, new homes, new
babies... a lifetime of milestones.

OLIVIA
Mother's Day, Father's Day, Christmas,
Halloween and birthdays! Sometimes I
spend an entire weekend in my studio
just to restock birthdays.

VIOLET
But you love it, right?

OLIVIA
(nods)
I control the art I send into the
world, even if I don't have time to
shop!

VIOLET
Hey... this might be a little
spontaneous but how about joining
me at Holiday Market tomorrow?

OLIVIA
I thought you were done shopping.

VIOLET
But you're not, and helping you isn't
as lame as starting on next year.

OLIVIA
That's really planning ahead.

VIOLET
Guilty. But I love how festive it is!

OLIVIA
I'd like to check out new crafters...
My mom works with me. Let me see if
she can cover a couple hours.

Olivia exits to the back. Violet picks up a movie-themed card
that says "Congratulations on your next scene." Violet opens
the card and it's blank. Olivia returns.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
It's a date!

VIOLET
(yells to the back)
Thanks, Mom!
(holds up blank inside)
Blank. Create your own milestone.

OLIVIA
Yes! Duke, the movie guy next store--

VIOLET

Oh! He very enthusiastically asked
me to tell you hi.

OLIVIA

I'm sure he did. How do you know him?

VIOLET

Just met him. I'm speaking there Sunday.

OLIVIA

Oh so you're a--

VIOLET

Screenwriter... lover of movies.

OLIVIA

No wonder you like the card. Duke
inspired it.

VIOLET

I bet he was happy to hear that.

Olivia just smiles.

VIOLET (CONT'D)

Sorry. Not trying to pry.
I'll take the card. Where do I pay?

Olivia leads Violet to the register.

OLIVIA

Where should we meet tomorrow--
Sorry, I didn't get your name.

VIOLET

Oh, it's V-- Sam.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Sam sits in a cabana with a laptop. He picks up his phone to
call Violet, but PHONE RINGS. Sam answers.

SAM

I was just about to call you!

CROSSCUT. APARTMENT - DAY

Violet makes a bagel and coffee, with phone on speaker.

VIOLET

Why does mom think you won't be home for Christmas?

SAM

It's mom. I like to prepare her for all contingencies.

VIOLET

Does that mean you might actually not be home for Christmas?

SAM

You know how these things go.

VIOLET

Not really.

SAM

Here's how this one is going: they want rewrites. Apparently, a rainy day on the beach is too risky and expensive, so now I'm up at sunrise trying to figure out how to change that.

VIOLET

Relocate it. I told you when you were writing it you can't be precious about staying true to the novel.

SAM

But it's the part where they try to build a sandcastle in a thunderstorm.

VIOLET

I love that part.

SAM

Right?

VIOLET

But you have to serve the movie now. Write a new scene.

SAM

I'm not good at this, Vi. I can't see it any other way and I don't think in scenes like you do. Can you send me some ideas?

VIOLET

Seriously?

SAM

You helped break down half the screenplay as it is. I couldn't have done it without you. Please.

VIOLET

I wish you were home.

SAM

Honestly? Me, too. But some inspiration?

VIOLET

Give me an hour.

SAM

Love ya, twinnie.

Violet hangs up, brings her laptop and plated bagel to the kitchen table. She's about to pour coffee into *her* mug, then switches it out for Sam's Eat. Sleep. Write. mug for inspiration and pours. Sipping coffee, she clicks her email icon. The animated Christmas background transitions to:

EXT. HOLIDAY MARKET - DAY.

Bustling outdoor market with holiday music, vendor stalls, etc. Olivia--wearing a scarf with gifts on it--and Violet sit in carriage and drink hot chocolate. SFX: horse hooves clapping.

OLIVIA/VIOLET

"...in a one-horse open sleigh!"

OLIVIA

There are two horses up there.

VIOLET

Details. I love any Christmas carriage ride.

OLIVIA

But I'm supposed to be shopping for my mom, dad, two sisters, two brothers-in-law, three nieces, my dogwalker...

VIOLET

That is not a short list. What about Duke?

OLIVIA

We're not really at the gift-giving level of friendship. Oh no, did he get me-- What do you know?

VIOLET

Nothing! I just wondered, he seems great, you know, so is there a red flag that's not obvious? Like he has a secret dust bunny collection?

OLIVIA

No!

VIOLET

Or he doesn't like dessert? Or cats? Not liking cats is a dealbreaker.

OLIVIA

I'm more of a dog person.

VIOLET

Dogwalker, right. Can we still be friends?

OLIVIA

It's not Duke... I just... I had my heart broken in college. I'm wary.

VIOLET

No guts, no glory.

OLIVIA

(shakes her head)

I'm not over him. Thinking about him still makes my fingers tingle.

VIOLET

Put your mittens on.

OLIVIA

I'm serious. If it's the real thing
(holds up her hands)
Tingles.

VIOLET

Then why'd you break up?

OLIVIA

I wanted to meet his family and he wouldn't let me because he didn't want any "pressure."

VIOLET

About what?

OLIVIA

I don't know, getting married instead of writing his novel or whatever. He was very private.

(MORE)

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

He never even told them about me. Who doesn't tell their family about his girlfriend?

VIOLET

Someone like my brother. We never hear about his girlfriends because my mother also likes to push the marriage plan.

OLIVIA

What about you?

VIOLET

Malcolm and I aren't quite ready for that. What happened with College Guy?

OLIVIA

I ended it because I deserved better than being second to some future career. Thing is, I kind of get it now. When I started the shop, there was no room for a relationship.

VIOLET

You can't beat yourself up for doing what seemed right at the time.

OLIVIA

What if I made a mistake?

VIOLET

Fix it in post.

(Olivia's face: ??)

It means if you make a mistake in filming, you can fix it in the editing room later.

OLIVIA

Like find him now?

VIOLET

And tell him how you feel.

OLIVIA

I couldn't. What if he's married? Or-- I can't. I cut off all contact. It's the only way to move on.

VIOLET

But you haven't.

(on Olivia's puzzlement)

Moved on.

Violet spies her parents waving at her; she turns away.

VIOLET (CONT'D)

You should do something that might make you happy, even if it's a risk. I actually made a resolution to do just that. That's why I'm doing the lecture.

OLIVIA

You mean find the college guy?

Carriage stops and they disembark.

VIOLET

Or go on a date with Duke?

OLIVIA

I'll think about it. But now, I need to think about shopping!

EXT. HOLIDAY MARKET - DAY

Olivia points to a stall that has doll clothes. They approach, and a quick shopping montage follows.

*They look at scarves, and Olivia buys a Santa one.

*Violet spots her parents and steers Olivia away.

*Violet buys a holiday pet sweater for Mabel.

*Violet sees and avoids her parents again.

EXT. ORNAMENT VENDOR'S STALL - DAY

Olivia and Violet look at Christmas ornaments with quotes. Olivia holds up one that says "We'll fix it in post."

OLIVIA

Why does that always happen? You never heard something before and once you do, you see it everywhere.

Violet sees a poinsettia one that says "Bloom where you're planted" and she--FLASHBACK image--remembers Duke's smile when she said that to him.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

Sam. Sam. Sam!

Violet realizes Olivia means her, and turns.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

What are you so lost in thought about?

VIOLET

Nothing... I just...

Violet quickly grabs an ornament that says "Merry Christmas Ya Filthy Animal" and shows it to Olivia.

VIOLET (CONT'D)
Good gift for Duke?

OLIVIA
Now you're buying him a gift?

VIOLET
I meant for you. *Home Alone* is his favorite Christmas movie.

OLIVIA
I didn't know that and I said I'd think about one date.

EXT. HOLIDAY MARKET - DAY

They turn from the stall and bump smack into Vi's parents.

VIOLET
Mom!

CAROL
We've been looking for you since we saw you on the carriage! Not that I'm surprised you're here. Follow the Christmas and you'll find V--

VIOLET
The perfect gift. Let me show you. We'll be just a sec, Olivia.

Olivia nods and pulls out her phone. Violet drags her mother back toward the stall.

VIOLET (CONT'D)
You, too, Dad.

ANTHONY
(to Olivia)
I thought I was just here for the international cookies.

Anthony follows them to the stall.

EXT. ORNAMENT VENDOR'S STALL - DAY - CONTINUOUS

CAROL
Who's your friend, honey?

VIOLET
I'll introduce you in a second, but
whatever you do, don't say my name.

ANTHONY
Violet?

VIOLET
Sh! She might hear you.

CAROL
Is this a game, Violet? Should we
use code names like Rose or Pansy?

VIOLET
If you have to call me anything,
call me... um Sam.

CAROL
That's your brother's name!

ANTHONY
Oh! Is this a date? Does Malcolm
know?

VIOLET
No, dad. I'll explain later.

Violet shows them the "We'll Fix It In Post" ornament.

CAROL
Just play along, Anthony.
(loudly, conspiratorially)
Oh, Sam! This is a wonderful gift
for your brother because he's away
making a--

VIOLET
Exactly! Perfect, Mom.

They walk back to Olivia, who smiles, puts her phone away.

VIOLET (CONT'D)
Olivia, these are my parents, Carol
and Anthony. Mom, dad: Olivia.

CAROL
Lovely to meet you, Olivia. Sam's
never mentioned an Olivia.

OLIVIA
We just met yesterday! And Sam, I'm
so sorry, but my mom's slammed. I
need to get back.

VIOLET

She has a gorgeous gift and card shop. She makes the cards herself.

CAROL

Oh, I'd love to see it.

OLIVIA

I'm right next door to House of Film. Maybe you can stop in after Sam's talk tomorrow.

ANTHONY

Sam's talk?

OLIVIA

You didn't tell them about your movie lecture?

CAROL

Movie lecture! No, Sam did not tell us anything about a movie lecture, did you, Sam?

VIOLET

It's a surprise. You know I love movies.

CAROL

A surprise from Sam.

OLIVIA

It's tomorrow!

CAROL

It's tomorrow, Sam.

VIOLET

Right, I planned to surprise you... tomorrow.

ANTHONY

This whole day has been a surprise--

CAROL

Sam

ANTHONY

The biggest one being I still don't have cookies.

CAROL

We have so many cookies at home.

ANTHONY
They're not international.

CAROL
Come on... So nice meeting you,
Olivia. See you soon, Sam!
(sotto)
We can't wait to hear the
explanation for this.

Anthony and Carol walk away, shaking their heads.

OLIVIA
Thank you for inviting me. I'm so
sorry to bail.

VIOLET
It's okay! I should polish my
lecture anyway.

Violet and Olivia hug. Olivia exits. Violet returns to the stall and picks up the ornament for Sam, glances again at the "Filthy Animal" ornament, reaches toward it.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

An *It's A Wonderful Life* ornament on Violet's tree, where Violet stands holding index cards. Malcolm sits on the couch.

MALCOLM
But I don't get how you're going to
talk about writing screenplays.

VIOLET
It's one talk. I've seen enough
movies and I helped Sam with his.
Like just the other day, he was
trying to figure out how to--

A kitchen timer goes off.

VIOLET (CONT'D)
Be right back.

Violet exits to the kitchen.

VIOLET (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Anyway, he had a problem and I
helped with a rewrite. It was fun.

Malcolm slips a gift box--ring-sized--under the tree. He looks at the bulletin board of index cards.

MALCOLM
How long is this bulletin board
going to be here?

VIOLET (O.S.)
Until I finish my novel.

MALCOLM
It's kind of an eyesore, no?

VIOLET (O.S.)
It's a work in progress.

Violet returns with transparent mugs of mulled wine--decked
with orange slices and cinnamon sticks--hands one to Malcolm.

VIOLET (CONT'D)
Your wassail, sire.

MALCOLM
Looks like hot fruit punch.

VIOLET
But it tastes like Christmas.

MALCOLM
Everything tastes like Christmas to
you. Cheers!

They clink, take sips.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
Yep, tastes like hot fruit punch, too.

VIOLET
Stop! It's traditional for Twelfth
Night celebrations so it's perfect
for step one of my resolution.
Okay, so... Hello everyone, I'm Vi--
Sam Braxton--

MALCOLM
That's so weird.

VIOLET
Roll with it. I'm Sam Braxton. Thank
you for coming. Are you coming?

MALCOLM
I wouldn't miss you trying to pull
this off.

VIOLET
Pull it off?

MALCOLM

You know what I mean. We're like co-conspirators on covert mission.

VIOLET

Mabel knows, too. And my parents, sort of. And I had to introduce myself as Sam to Olivia at the card store. It's gotten complicated.

MALCOLM

So give the talk and we'll go back to Vi and Malc enjoying Christmas.

VIOLET

Ooh, how are Vi and Malc enjoying Christmas?

MALCOLM

Just like tonight. Hot fruit punch and *It's A Wonderful Life*, right?

VIOLET

Not 'til Christmas Eve! *Home Alone*?

Malcom raises a questioning eyebrow; Violet shrugs.

MALCOLM

(raises his mug)
Your choice, mi'lady.

Violet positions herself to speak.

VIOLET

But first, ready for the whole thing?

MALCOLM

Am I allowed to heckle?
(on her stern look)
Just kidding. You got this.

VIOLET

I hope so. I don't want them to be as disinterested as my students.

MALCOLM

You can practice all morning if you need it. I'll bring you coffee.

VIOLET

I promised Duke I'd help him decorate for Christmas. He doesn't even have a tree.

MALCOLM

That's more than just a talk.

VIOLET

My talk will be better in the right atmosphere. And like you said, it's all over tomorrow. So... Hi, I'm Sam Braxton. Thank you for coming...

Malcolm's gift under the tree suddenly looks like an obstacle.

ACT FOUR**EXT. CHRISTMAS TREE LOT - DAY**

A row of Christmas trees. Duke and Violet walk the lot.

DUKE

Do I really need a tree this close
to Christmas?

VIOLET

Am I still in charge of decorating?
(on Duke's sheepish nod)
Then yes.

DUKE

I'm not a Grinch, you know. It's
just been tough.

VIOLET

I know. And I want to help your
heart return to its original size.

Jake enters.

JAKE

Hey, Duke! You here for a tree?

DUKE

My new friend Sam here doesn't
think the place is festive enough.
Sam, Jake, my tentative employee.

JAKE

She's not wrong. It could use the
old "woman's touch."

VIOLET

Who you calling old?

JAKE

I didn't mean--

VIOLET

I'm kidding. Nice to meet you, Jake.

JAKE

Let me know when you find
something. I'll hook you up with
the family discount.

Jake exits. Violet and Duke continue looking.

DUKE

When I called you, I definitely didn't think I'd be Christmas tree shopping with such---

VIOLET

A Christmas freak?

DUKE

Good company. And up and coming screenwriter, of course.

VIOLET

I am barely up, let alone coming.

DUKE

Come on, I know the truth.

VIOLET

You do?

DUKE

Okay, I swear I wasn't stalking--

VIOLET

Oh no--

DUKE

I checked out your IMDb. You've got something in preproduction! Why didn't you say anything?

VIOLET

Oh wow. I can ex--

DUKE

You really should put up a picture. Gray silhouette doesn't do you justice.

VIOLET

What?

DUKE

People now want to hear stories from women, but maybe you're right to use Sam instead of Samantha--

VIOLET

Samuel... I mean it could be Samuel.

DUKE

Right. Keep 'em guessing. It's exciting. My audience will be impressed by someone who put aspiring screenwriter on an application not that long ago.

VIOLET

Yeah well... I really want to write a novel.

DUKE

That's exciting, too! Can you tell me about it or is it too soon?

VIOLET

It's just something my... I've been thinking about for a while. LAST NIGHT IN BUFFALO, like a coming of age thriller.

DUKE

Sounds like a great movie. What's making you think novel?

VIOLET

I don't know... People at work-- Publishing something seems like a good idea.

DUKE

For an academic, maybe. But you're a screenwriter.

VIOLET

It was a story my brother and I came up with, but he seems to have gone his own way. It's been hard moving forward without him.

DUKE

That's kind of why I'm calling it quits. That and too many months of back rent I can't pay.

VIOLET

I wish you wouldn't. You and Matt were inspired to create something and you went for it. I admire that.

DUKE

Look who's talking. You're out there hustling, writing, making things happen.

VIOLET

Um, yeah, right. It's uh... you know, hard sometimes. The grind.

DUKE

Matt and I had a plan that once we got going and made a little money, we'd offer workshops, try to get some of the resident experts to push the "film local" thing.

VIOLET

That's an incredible idea!

DUKE

Who knows? Maybe one of your movies could get made here one day.

EXT. GROUP OF TREES - DAY

Violet pulls out her phone, gestures to some trees, films.

DUKE

What are you doing?

VIOLET

Why will this year's Christmas programming be better than ever?

DUKE

(whispers)

I don't have Christmas programming.

VIOLET

Make something up.

DUKE

We're trying something brand new, something we've never done before!

VIOLET

Ooh, tell us more!

Duke gives her a look--"There isn't anything!"--but she motions for him to go with it.

DUKE

Um, it's going to... Let me start over.

VIOLET

I'll fix it in post. Keep going.

DUKE

You'll be surprised at what we've
got cooking. We're gonna turn
Christmas upside down!

VIOLET

Topsy turvy! That's great!

DUKE

I don't even know what I'm talking about!

Violet keeps filming, points to one tree.

VIOLET

How do you like this one?

DUKE

Kind of short and squat. We usually
put it in the coffee area.

VIOLET

I was thinking of your window.

Violet stops filming. Duke motions to Jake.

JAKE (O.S.)

Just a sec!

DUKE

So... if it's hard... do you ever
think of quitting? Settling down?

VIOLET

(knowing she hasn't even
started)

Trying something new. Like the
novel.

DUKE

Still think it would make a great
screenplay. And if I got my
workshops going...

VIOLET

You sound like my brother. He's
always, you know, "Bloom where
you're planted."

DUKE

You said that when we met.

VIOLET

Did I? I must've gotten it from him.
What about you and... settling down?

DUKE
...Do you mean here in Buffalo
or... like with a person?

VIOLET
Both?

DUKE
Well, I've already committed to
Buffalo and for the other... if I
met the right person, definitely.

VIOLET
Like Olivia?

Jake enters.

JAKE
Duke's totally into Olivia.

DUKE
Don't exaggerate.

JAKE
Any time she comes in, he gives her
free candy. This the tree?

Violet nods. Jake starts untying the tree.

DUKE
I'm just being courteous. Sam gets
free candy.

JAKE
Uh-huh.

VIOLET
Because I'm doing the talk, not
just because.

DUKE
Well, it doesn't mean I wouldn't give
you free candy just because-- Are you
coming to the talk Jake? You might
learn something.

JAKE
I'll try man. Busy tree day.

Jake exits with tree.

VIOLET
You should ask her out.

DUKE
Olivia?

VIOLET
Yes, Olivia.

DUKE
You want me to ask her out?

VIOLET
I thought you wanted to ask her out.

DUKE
I did--do--but she's not interested.

VIOLET
She might be. I put in a good word,
like you asked.

DUKE
Oh.

VIOLET
You said that's what you wanted, right?

DUKE
I guess so.

VIOLET
So you should ask her out. And we should
get going because my fingers are numb.

DUKE takes her hands, rubs them between his own. SFX: TINGLE.

DUKE
Better?

VIOLET
Yeah, the feeling's coming back.
They're...

DUKE
Tingly?

Violet smiles. Exactly.

EXT. DUKE'S HOUSE OF FILM - DAY

In the storefront window, Duke hangs ornaments while Violet films, occasionally adding herself into the shot.

VIOLET

...I used a storyboard to write it,
but the director comes up with the
shot list. People confuse those a lot.

DUKE

It's more thinking of a movie from
two different perspectives.

VIOLET

Exactly.

DUKE

I love talking about this stuff
with an expert.

VIOLET

I'm not.

DUKE

Well you're still impressive.

Violet hides behind her phone for a blushy beat.

VIOLET

Can I ask you a personal question?

DUKE

Go ahead.

VIOLET

Is Duke your real name?

DUKE

You think my parents named me Duke?

VIOLET

Maybe. What's in a name?

DUKE

That which we call a rose...

VIOLET

You know your Shakespeare!

DUKE

That's where Duke came from. My last
name's Orsino.

VIOLET

From *Twelfth Night*!

DUKE

"If music be the food of love, play on!"

VIOLET

(laughs)

"If movies be the food of love..." Oh
my gosh!! Topsy turvy! That's it!!

Violet stops recording.

DUKE

That's what?

VIOLET

Christmas programming!

DUKE

Christmas is in six days.

VIOLET

The first day of Christmas!

DUKE

But it is Christmas.

VIOLET

The first day in a partridge in a
pear tree way. So if we do a Twelve
Films of Christmas series, we won't
be starting late at all!

DUKE

I don't really need Christmas
programming.

VIOLET

What if it's a fundraiser to pay
that back rent?

DUKE

No... When Fun in Film is done, I
need to start packing up.

VIOLET

Let's at least try! If it doesn't
work, then at least you go out with
a bang. We can do twelve films over
eight days and end with a big
twelfth day feast!

DUKE

You want a feast now?

VIOLET

To mark the coming of the Epiphany.
When I studied abroad, we did it
all. It'll be so fun!

DUKE
I don't think so--

Violet interrupts, holding up her phone to record.

VIOLET
Say "The Twelve Films of Christmas"

DUKE
(weakly)
The Twelve Films of Christmas.

VIOLET
With a little enthusiasm.

DUKE
(not wanting to disappoint
her)
The Twelves Films of Christmas!

VIOLET
Perfect. Leave it all to me because
hark! The fair Olivia approaches.

Olivia, wearing her new Santa scarf, appears outside the glass and waves. She's got the vacuum.

VIOLET (CONT'D)
Now's your chance to ask her out.

DUKE
What do I say?

VIOLET
"Hey Olivia, do you want to grab
dinner after Sam's talk?"

The movie theme door alert sounds.

DUKE
You don't want to celebrate after?

VIOLET
You don't want your first date to
be a double date.
(on Duke's puzzled look)
My boyfriend's coming.

DUKE
Oh, I didn't know you had-- Sorry.

OLIVIA (O.S.)
Duke, do you want this in the back?

Violet shoves Duke out, then hangs another ornament. Duke and Olivia appear outside, where Violet watches them chat.

EXT. HOUSE OF FILM - DAY

An awkward encounter has led to a date.

DUKE
So cool then.

OLIVIA
Yeah. Thank you.

DUKE
No thank you.

OLIVIA
You're welcome. I mean, cool.

DUKE
"I don't know how to say goodbye. I
can't think of any words."

OLIVIA
Neither can I.

DUKE
That's from *Roman Holiday*.

OLIVIA
Oh.

DUKE
Okay, so um...

INT. HOUSE OF FILM - DAY

Violet watches Duke/Olivia's awkward disengagement. She rubs her hands together. Duke enters; Violet pastes on a smile.

VIOLET
She said yes?

DUKE
She did indeed. You're a good
wingman, Sam.

VIOLET
I'm here to help.

Violet turns to the tree to hide her surprising disappointment.

INT. DUKE'S HOUSE OF FILM LOBBY - DAY

The place buzzes as guests arrive. Violet stands in a corner in the coffee area nervously eating candy. Jake approaches.

JAKE
You got your free candy!

VIOLET
Perk of the job.

JAKE
If you say so.

Malcolm approaches with another box of candy.

JAKE (CONT'D)
And uh-oh, look. More candy.

VIOLET
What do you--

JAKE
Good luck with the talk!

Jake exits. Malcolm hands Violet the candy.

MALCOLM
Backup for the nerves.

VIOLET
When I imagined this working perfectly, I forgot people would be coming! What if someone knows Sam?

MALCOLM
Hang in there. It's almost over.

VIOLET
Can you go stand by my parents and remind them not to call me Violet?

Violet's parents approach.

CAROL
Sam!

MALCOLM
I think she's got it.

Anthony and Malcolm shake hands.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
Hey, Tony.

ANTHONY

It's Anthony.

CAROL

It could be Tony for today, though,
right Sam?

ANTHONY

No, it's still Anthony. Will there
be snacks, Sam?

VIOLET

Popcorn? Maybe.

ANTHONY

That's not popcorn you're eating.

VIOLET

There's a concession stand.

ANTHONY

There's a concession stand, Carol.

CAROL

I'm going to take your father to get
snacks, Sam. And then we're going to
get great seats for the show.

VIOLET

It's not a...

Carol and Anthony exit.

VIOLET (CONT'D)

...show.

Chantal and Ty enter. Violet grabs Malcolm's arm.

VIOLET (CONT'D)

My students are here! Why are my
students here?

Duke approaches.

DUKE

Almost ready?

VIOLET

Ready as I'll ever be. Duke, this
is, Malcolm. Malcolm, Duke.

DUKE

You must be so proud of her.

MALCOLM

You bet.

Ty and Chantal approach. Violet looks to Malcolm: "Help me!"

TY

Professor Braxton! I didn't expect to see you here.

MALCOLM

Hey, Duke, why don't you give me a quick tour of the place?

DUKE

The lecture starts in ten minutes.

MALCOLM

I know, but after, everyone's gonna want to talk to you and... uh Professor Braxton. Just a quick one.

Duke shrugs, Violet shoots Malcolm a look of gratitude, and Duke and Malcolm exit. Violet turns to her students.

VIOLET

I didn't expect you here either. It's too late for extra credit.

TY

I hang out here sometimes. And someone in my film workshop told me about Sam Braxton getting a movie made. Hey, you must be related, right?

VIOLET

I'm actually giving... the talk?

TY

But the email said the substitute speaker is Sam Braxton.

CHANTAL

Oh... are you like--

VIOLET

No, no, that's just my... screenwriting pen name? To keep my careers separate, you know.

TY

I didn't know you actually wrote movies. I thought you just liked to talk about 'em.

VIOLET

Let's keep that between us. I don't like that to get out.

CHANTAL

Why not? It's cool.

TY

Way cooler than just talking about 'em.

VIOLET

Long story.

TY

Maybe we could collaborate one day?

VIOLET

I should get in there.

INT. HOUSE OF FILM SCREENING ROOM - DAY

Guests take seats as Violet approaches the stage.

CAROL

(from her seat)

Good luck, Sam!

Duke hops on stage. Olivia enters late, wearing a movie-themed scarf, smiles at Duke and Violet.

DUKE

Hey, everyone, thank you so much for coming! This is our final night of the Fun in Film series but I'm thrilled to have found such an esteemed guest.

VIOLET

Oh stop.

DUKE

It's not easy to get your screenplay made when you live clear across the country, but her persistence paid off and I'm sure you can learn a lot from her. Please welcome Sam Braxton!

Applause! In her seat, Olivia reacts to the Braxton surname.

OLIVIA

(mouths)

Braxton.

VIOLET
Hello everyone! I'm Sam Braxton.

Olivia frowns.

VIOLET (CONT'D)
Thank you for coming. Thank you, Duke,
for having me. I want to talk about
being flexible in your writing...

Montage shows Violet killing it, audience reacting, snippets
of dialogue, occasionally showing Olivia's consternation.

VIOLET (CONT'D)
Some of us are planners and some are
pantsers, but with writing, be
both... You want structure but don't
want to miss good ideas on the fly...

VIOLET (CONT'D)
They called the other day to say
that they can't afford a scene that
calls for a rainy day on the beach--
in California.
(audience laughs)

VIOLET (CONT'D)
So I had to relocate the pages.

VIOLET (CONT'D)
Think about the first person who's
going to be reading your screenplay
thinking, "This is hilarious but
what does it have to do with this
movie?" And then cut it...

VIOLET (CONT'D)
And always remember to celebrate every
win. Finishing a script. Getting someone
to read it. Placing in a contest. Throw
yourself a party. And then remember we're
going to be hosting a big party here on
January fifth as the culmination of our
Twelve Days of Film series, which starts
the day after Christmas. Details--

Duke jumps on stage.

DUKE
Hold up, hold up. We may be having
a celebration. Nothing's set yet.
Stay tuned. But in the meantime...

Duke starts clapping and the audience joins in.

DUKE (CONT'D)
Let's hear it for Sam Braxton!
Questions, anyone?

Olivia raises her hand.

OLIVIA
Is your name really Sam Braxton?

VIOLET
What? I-- Um--

Olivia rushes out of the room.

VIOLET (CONT'D)
Olivia--

Duke looks torn. Violet motions for him to go ahead and follow. Violet is shaken but carries on.

VIOLET (CONT'D)
I'm sorry about that. Were there
other questions?

Hands shoot up. Violet points to Jake.

ACT FIVE**EXT. OCCASIONS BY OLIVIA - DAY**

Olivia is outside her shop door, crying under the Christmas streetlights. Duke approaches.

DUKE

Hey, hey, if the idea of dinner with me is that awful, you can say so.

OLIVIA

I do want to have dinner with you.

DUKE

Okay great. I'll just go back and--

OLIVIA

But can I have a raincheck? I'm feeling a little--

DUKE

Did Sam do something to upset you?

OLIVIA

No, I just... It's not you. Can we do something tomorrow after work?

DUKE

Sure, sure. You sure you're okay?

OLIVIA

Yeah. Thanks for checking on me. It's really sweet.

Duke exits. Olivia enters her store, pulls out her phone, searches social media for "Sam Braxton" but nothing comes up.

INT. HOUSE OF FILM LOBBY - DAY

The lecture over, guests are leaving. Duke enters, bumps into Jake, who is on his way out.

JAKE

That was awesome. I learned stuff.

DUKE

I'm glad.

JAKE

I also watched that *Psycho* movie.
Then I read about it. Did you know
that blood was chocolate syrup?

DUKE

I did. I'm glad you know now.

JAKE

Who's that guy with Sam?

DUKE

Her boyfriend.

JAKE

Really? Didn't get that vibe.

INT. HOUSE OF FILM COFFEE AREA - NIGHT

Violet sits with Malcolm and her parents.

CAROL

That was wonderful, Sam! I can't wait
to tell your brother all about it.

VIOLET

Let me do that.

MALCOLM

You're quite an actress.

VIOLET

But people responded to me, right?

MALCOLM

Because you were convincing as Sam.

VIOLET

But it was mostly me, my ideas.

MALCOLM

Sure, why are you are getting upset?

VIOLET

I'm not getting upset.

CAROL

It's not you, Malcolm, it's just
the excitement, right Sam?

VIOLET

Yeah, adrenaline pumping.

ANTHONY

It was fun! I learned a lot.

Violet hugs her parents; they leave, crossing with Duke.

MALCOLM

I learned a lot too.

Violet's about to speak, but spots Duke and approaches.

INT. HOUSE OF FILM LOBBY - DAY

DUKE

She postponed our date.

VIOLET

Did she say anything about... me?

DUKE

Nope, just that she was having a moment. Listen, Sam, thank you again. I got more than I expected.

MALCOLM

It did go well, didn't it?

Chantal and Ty approach. Duke sees Jake waving an empty candy case, panic in his eyes.

DUKE

Excuse me a moment.

Duke exits.

TY

That was awesome! Why don't you talk about that stuff in class? Cred matters.

VIOLET

I did... sometimes.

TY

Really? Seemed different.

CHANTAL

Like not from a book. It made me realize those silent movie people actually didn't have sound.

TY

Of course they didn't have sound. They were silent movies.

CHANTAL

I just never thought about it like that, like writing a movie visually.

TY

You have so much to learn.

(to Violet)

What are you working on now?

DUKE (O.S.)

A screenplay called *Last Night in Buffalo*.

Violet shoots a look at the approaching Duke.

TY

Awesome. I want to be the first to read it! This was great. If you teach Intro to Screenwriting, I'm there. I bet it'll help me be a better filmmaker.

Ty waves. Chantal and Ty exit.

VIOLET

Cred matters?

DUKE

When someone has experience, people grant them authority. Human nature. And he had a great idea. Would you be interested in teaching here?

VIOLET

I'm sure you can find someone more experienced. Do you need help cleaning up?

MALCOLM

We have that dinner reservation...

DUKE

You go ahead. Celebrate!

Violet and Malcolm get their coats.

VIOLET

I'll text you in the morning?

Duke looks puzzled.

VIOLET (CONT'D)

We announced the Twelve Films of Christmas. We have to plan!

EXT. ELLICOTT STREET - DAY

VIOLET

So what did you learn?

MALCOLM

That you're apparently planning a film series with Duke.

VIOLET

Isn't it a great idea?

MALCOLM

Sure, but do you have to execute it?

VIOLET

If I'm keeping my resolution, yes.

MALCOLM

Will you plan it as Violet or Sam?

VIOLET

As long as I'm not meeting more people, there's no risk in being Sam a little longer.

MALCOLM

Or you could tell him the truth.

VIOLET

It's embarrassing. Let me get through this Twelve Films thing and it's over.

MALCOLM

And then what if you get an idea for the best Valentine's Day films?

Violet's eyes light up and she opens her mouth to speak--

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

Or St. Patrick's Day or.... Arbor Day.

VIOLET

The Lorax! Tree of Life. After that, it might be tough...

MALCOLM

I'm serious. You'll be spending our whole break on this.

VIOLET

This is trying to live in a world I love, remember? And I am.

They arrive at their car, Malcolm opens Vi's door for her.

MALCOLM
It's not your world. It's Sam's.

VIOLET
Okay. I'll tell him. After I find out what was up with Olivia.

MALCOLM
Good. I want the old Violet back.

Malcolm closes the car door. Violet's face says maybe she doesn't want the old Violet back.

EXT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Violet opens the door to her apartment. Mabel greets her. Violet hangs her coat and picks up the cat.

VIOLET
I did a thing tonight, Mabel.

Mabel rubs her head on Violet or purrs.

VIOLET (CONT'D)
You're proud of me, right?

VIDEO PHONE ALERT: Sam. Violet answers.

CROSSCUT - HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Sam sits on a bed with phone.

SAM
You look fine to me.

VIOLET
Of course I'm fine.

SAM
Mom said you lost your mind.

VIOLET
Aargh. I told her to let me tell you.

SAM
You think she was going to sit on a secret like that?

VIOLET
For an hour? I had hope.

SAM

You should have told me. I could've given you advice.

VIOLET

I wanted to succeed on my own and I did, thank you.

SAM

Did you use the bit about celebrating every win?

VIOLET

Yep.

SAM

About being flexible?

VIOLET

Of course! And what you said about imagining someone reading your script and cutting what's extra--even if it's hilarious.

SAM

I never said that, but it's good sense. You didn't out Logan Beard though? No mention of the novel?

VIOLET

That crowd wasn't interested in novels. Your secret is safe.

SAM

You know what this means.

VIOLET

I have to confess to a lie before you come back.

SAM

You want this.

VIOLET

It was an impulse.

SAM

You're not impulsive or a liar, so if you impulsively lied to someone, there was a good reason.

VIOLET

Two someones. Duke and Olivia.

SAM
(with piqued interest)
Olivia? Who's that?

VIOLET
My artsy new friend.

SAM
Artsy?

VIOLET
She owns an artisan shop next to
Duke's. She makes cards and wears
scarves for every occasion.

SAM
Scarves and cards. Huh.

Taken aback by emotion, Sam turns off his video, goes to his Logan Beard social media account--which has just an image of a book cover--and searches Olivia Tanner. He's moved by images of her store and cards.

VIOLET
Sam? I lost your video.

Thinking it's her end, Violet moves to find a better signal.

SAM
Must be spotty Wi-Fi here.

Violet spots Malcolm's gift, picks it up, shakes it.

VIOLET
Sam! Malcolm left something under
my tree that looks like a ring box.

SAM
Congratulations!

VIOLET
I never thought-- What do I do?

SAM
Wait until he gives it to you!

VIOLET
Yeah.

SAM
She sounds interesting. Your new
friend.

Sam's finger hovers over Olivia's message button on social.

VIOLET
Really? Well, get in line. I fixed
her up with Duke. I hope it works
out. She's had some heartbreak.

Sam pulls back from the message button, closes Olivia's page,
turns his camera back on.

SAM
I get that.

VIOLET
You? Mr. I-Don't-Have-Time-to-Date.

SAM
I date.

VIOLET
Nothing serious.

SAM
Once. In college.

VIOLET
Sam Braxton! You never told your
twin sister that! What happened?

SAM
I let her get away.

EXT. OCCASIONS BY OLIVIA - DAY

Olivia stocks cards. Violet stands outside the shop, takes a
deep breath, enters.

INT. OCCASIONS BY OLIVIA - DAY

Olivia looks up from her work, sees it's Violet, returns to
stocking cards. Violet approaches, but Olivia ignores her.

VIOLET
Restocking birthday cards?
(moves closer.)
I hope you weren't up all night.
(moves closer.)
Talk to me, Olivia. I was worried
when you ran out...

OLIVIA
Worried I'd spill your secret, Violet?

Violet stops in her tracks. Beat.

VIOLET
I can explain. It's a stupid story.

OLIVIA
Are secrets ever smart?

VIOLET
(deep breath)
TL;DR? Sam is my brother.

OLIVIA
The brother who doesn't date?

VIOLET
(nods)
We grew up on movies. Loved them.
Going to them, talking about them,
writing them, acting out scenes. I
especially liked reading about
them. We ran movie club in high
school. I'm in a script club now.

OLIVIA
So why lie? Violet could've given
that lecture. Violet did give that
lecture.

VIOLET
Because I've never written a movie!
I can't even get my novel written.

OLIVIA
Why are you writing a novel when
you love movies?

VIOLET
Not you, too. When it came time for
college, Sam went to school for creative
writing and wrote a successful novel that
is now being made into a movie.

OLIVIA
I never heard that.

VIOLET
He uses a pen name.

OLIVIA
Still loves his privacy.

VIOLET
I went the reliable route, which
means I have less than half a
storyboard--

OLIVIA
A storyboard?

VIOLET
And a great job, but--

OLIVIA
Something's missing.

VIOLET
Yeah. So when I made my resolution
and then Duke called that same
night, it seemed like a sign. Duke!
You didn't tell him, did you?

OLIVIA
I wasn't sure yet, but you need to
right away. He'll be mortified if
people find out.

VIOLET
I never thought of that. I was
having fun and I've made a mess.

OLIVIA
Just promise you'll tell him.

VIOLET
Headed there now.

Violet turns toward the door.

OLIVIA
You know, you can still do the
dream. As you.

VIOLET
My brother told me the same thing.

OLIVIA
I think I like your brother. Is he
uh... dating anyone now?

VIOLET
(shakes her head)
Apparently, he's also got a lost
love. You two have a lot in common.

Olivia nods, Violet turns toward the door, turns back.

VIOLET (CONT'D)
How did you know I wasn't Sam?

OLIVIA

Oh... Once I heard your last name,
I searched online. I'm a good
detective.

Violet exits. Olivia gets her purse from behind the counter and pulls out her wallet. She digs behind a pocket stuffed with credit cards and extracts a photo. A smiling college-aged Sam and Olivia beam from the beat-up picture. Olivia touches his face. PHONE RINGS. It's Duke. Olivia answers.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

Hey Duke.

DUKE

Just calling to make sure we're on
for tonight! Sam's dropping by to
work on Twelfth Night stuff and
then I'm all yours.

OLIVIA

Looking forward to it!

Olivia disconnects, stuffs the picture back in its spot.

INT. HOUSE OF FILM SCREENING ROOM - DAY

A bulletin board schedule shows dates from December 26 to January 5. Duke holds index cards labeled trivia night, mix and mingle, coffee talks, etc., and assigns one to each date. Movie alarm sounds.

VIOLET (O.S.)

It's me!

Violet enters, sets down a large box.

VIOLET (CONT'D)

I brought more decorations for the
window. Is that a storyboard?

DUKE

The story of the next few weeks. I
thought we'd pair our most popular
events with the Twelve Films.

VIOLET

We're doing it!? Does that mean you
liked my promo?

DUKE

Loved it! It's already all over our
social media.

VIOLET

Good! I'm working on another.

Duke motions to a stack of DVDs.

DUKE

I pulled every even tangentially related Christmas movie I have.

VIOLET

If we're starting the day after Christmas, we could mix in more thematic stuff. Like show a *Twelfth Night* film on the final night. Vitograph did a silent in 1910 if we could get our hands on that.

Violet writes *Twelfth Night* on a card, tacks it to January 5.

VIOLET (CONT'D)

I know an indie called *Feast of the Epiphany* so that's fun. And how about one based on *Twelfth Night* traditions? Like in Spain, *Twelfth Night* is called *Parade of the Kings*, so maybe like *The King and I*.

DUKE

Or *King Kong*.

VIOLET

Even better! I love the old ones.

DUKE

I was thinking the 2005.

Violet writes *King Kong* on an index card.

VIOLET

What was Matt's favorite?

DUKE

Scrooge. The original.

Violet writes *Scrooge* on a card.

VIOLET

I like Matt.

DUKE

We complemented each other.

Beat: the way Duke and Violet are right now.

VIOLET

Oh! Some countries start carnival season with Twelfth Night so how about a Mardi Gras film?

DUKE

Easy Rider. You're good at this.

Violet smiles, writes *Easy Rider* on a card.

VIOLET

Obviously *Home Alone*.

Duke smiles, writes *Home Alone* on a card.

VIOLET (CONT'D)

Should we do *Die Hard*?

DUKE

It is a favorite. Let's open with it.

Duke writes *Die Hard* on a card, stands next to Violet and tacks it on December 26.

DUKE (CONT'D)

I don't even know what your favorite Christmas movie is.

VIOLET

I love so many, but it has to be *It's A Wonderful Life*.

DUKE

(writing it on a card)
A classic tale of blooming where planted? I'm surprised. Where do you want it?

VIOLET

Let's save the best for almost last.

Duke reaches past her to place IAWL on January 4. He's very close. Violet wiggles her fingers. SFX: TINGLE.

VIOLET (CONT'D)

Duke... I need to tell you something.

DUKE

You look serious. If we're getting serious, there's something I want to tell you, too.

VIOLET

You first.

DUKE

Thank you, Sam. Not just for the talk. I was here first thing this morning, excited to plan, just like the old days. You inspired me.

VIOLET

Oh Duke, I--

DUKE

I'm not finished. You go after what you want, even if it might not work.

VIOLET

Are you talking about staying open?

DUKE

Your belief in this place has made me think twice about calling it quits. I'm all in for the Twelve Films. The fundraiser, the whole jam.

Violet impulsively hugs him. Duke revels in the closeness and hugs back. Violet pulls away, aware of what's happening between them. Duke speaks, hopeful longing evident.

DUKE (CONT'D)

What did you want to tell me?

VIOLET

That I... I will bake the special Twelfth Night cake. Promise.

She holds up her phone to film.

DUKE

Oh... okay. What's so special about it?

VIOLET

There's a pea and a bean in it.

DUKE

That sounds gross.

VIOLET

The man who gets the bean is king for the night and the woman who gets the pea is queen.

DUKE

Keep the bean and just give me cake.

Violet stops filming.

VIOLET

You want to finish the window and
brainstorm some more?

DUKE

Yes! Oh, but maybe tomorrow? Olivia...

VIOLET

The big date.

DUKE

Yep. Can't wait.

ACT SIX**INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT**

Duke and Olivia hold glasses of red and white wine, respectively. Awkward tension of friends suddenly on a date.

OLIVIA
Your window display's coming along.

DUKE
We're working on it more tomorrow.

OLIVIA
Better late than never.
(on Duke's taken aback look)
I'm sorry. That came out wrong.

DUKE
It was pretty close to never.

OLIVIA
I'm glad you're doing it.

DUKE
I'm really excited about this whole
Twelfth Night thing.

OLIVIA
You doing the pea and bean cake?

DUKE
Why am I the last to know?

OLIVIA
The lucky king and queen will be
the last to know.

Duke laughs, toys with his wine glass.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
Sounds like you two worked it out.

DUKE
Almost. We picked most of the movies--
a good mix--but we're still---

OLIVIA
No I mean... she talked to you right?
About the misunderstanding?

DUKE

Who? Sam?

OLIVIA

Yeah... Sam.

DUKE

She talks a lot but I don't mind. I love her enthusiasm.

OLIVIA

And too bad she's taken?

DUKE

What? No. I'm happy here with you. But just... what did you mean about the misunderstanding?

OLIVIA

I must've gotten mixed up. How's your wine?

Duke takes a sip.

DUKE

Not bad. Good match for a silent short reel.

OLIVIA

What?

DUKE

Wine/movie pairings. I'm an expert.

OLIVIA

What goes with comedy?

DUKE

Depends. For black comedy, something full-bodied, like a cab. But for a cozy Christmas comedy, maybe a pinot. Noir or grigio. Comfort wine.

OLIVIA

Documentaries?

DUKE

Bordeaux.

OLIVIA

Oscar winners.

DUKE

Barolo.

Olivia holds out her glass of white wine.

DUKE (CONT'D)
May I?

Olivia nods; Duke sips the wine.

DUKE (CONT'D)
Hmmm....

OLIVIA
I don't go with movies, do I?

DUKE
Just thinking. Romcom. With subtitles.

OLIVIA
You're trying to flatter me.

DUKE
Is that a bad thing to do on a date?

OLIVIA
Next time, I'm taking you to a wine bar
and we'll see if you can be stumped.

Olivia flexes her fingers: no tingle. Duke smiles. They clink glasses, clearly not feeling the chemistry.

DUKE (PRE-LAP)
And even before our dinners came,
we made another date.

INT. HOUSE OF FILM - DAY

Duke and Violet finish the Twelve Films of Christmas display. Maybe twelves reel on a calendar or one big reel that looks like a wreath, with the titles written on holly berries. Maybe incorporating the tree. Whatever Christmas+movie theme works.

Violet films as Duke decorates.

VIOLET
That impressed with your pairing
skills, was she?

DUKE
That and the stellar conversation.

VIOLET
When's the date?

DUKE
Tomorrow.

VIOLET
Christmas Eve?

DUKE
Otherwise known as Friday.

VIOLET
That's just... I don't know, a
special day.

DUKE
Too special for Olivia?

VIOLET
Of course not, you're right.

DUKE
What are you doing Christmas Eve?

VIOLET
Malcolm and I are having dinner,
exchanging gifts, watching *It's A
Wonderful Life*.

Olivia appears outside the window, waves. Duke smiles, waves
her in. Movie alarm sounds. Olivia enters the window area,
kind of ignores Violet.

OLIVIA
(directly to Duke)
This looks great!

DUKE
I can't take credit. It was all
Sam's idea.

OLIVIA
Oh, Sam's idea?

DUKE
She's a real creative.

OLIVIA
Uh-huh. I bet she had one idea she was
going to go with and then got another
idea and went with that instead.

DUKE
No, um, this was pretty much her
first idea, right, Sam?

OLIVIA
(to Duke)
Really?

(MORE)

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
And she stuck with the first idea.
Even if might not be the best one.

VIOLET
I did have another idea--

DUKE
You did?

VIOLET
(to Olivia)
But then there just wasn't time,
you know, to switch gears--

OLIVIA
But if it was a better idea--

DUKE
What's wrong with this idea?

OLIVIA
Obviously nothing. Anyway, I just
came to borrow your vacuum again.

Olivia exits to the inside; Violet follows.

INT. HOUSE OF FILM - DAY

VIOLET
Olivia--

OLIVIA
I know where the vacuum is.

VIOLET
I was going to tell him! But then he
said "Sam" convinced him he shouldn't
close up after the new year.

OLIVIA
That's great, but you're not "Sam."

VIOLET
But if it's helping...

OLIVIA
Don't hurt my friend, Violet.

VIOLET
Your friend? But I thought--

OLIVIA
What?

VIOLET
Nothing.

EXT. HOUSE OF FILM - DAY

Violet enters the window area. Movie alarm sounds as Olivia leaves with the vacuum.

DUKE
What was that all about?

VIOLET
I don't know.

DUKE
Did you have a better idea?

VIOLET
I think if I switch the main character to a female, it might turn the whole thing around.

DUKE
What?

VIOLET
Sorry... sometimes inspiration strikes at the strangest times.

DUKE
Tell me.

VIOLET
So right now, in my novel--

DUKE
Screenplay.

VIOLET
(smiles)
Right now, it's Jason's last night in Buffalo, and he decides he's going to spend it walking the Peace Bridge, but if Jason becomes Jessica, it's just a different rite of passage. It feels bigger.

DUKE
You sparkle when you're excited.
It's amazing. You're amazing.

Violet smiles, picks up tinsel from the display and hangs it on Duke. Then another piece. And another. And another. She laughs.

VIOLET
Now you're amazing, too.

They're so busy staring at each other and thinking how amazing each other are that they barely hear the movie alarm sound. Malcolm enters. Violet and Duke move a few steps apart. Awkward. Malcolm notices, but brushes it off.

VIOLET (CONT'D)
Malcolm!

DUKE
Hey, Malcolm.

MALCOLM
This looks great!

DUKE
Couldn't agree more.

MALCOLM
If you're done, I was hoping I could whisk Violet away for high tea.

DUKE
What?

MALCOLM
It's not as ritzy as it sounds but it's one of Violet's Christmas must-dos.

DUKE
Violet?

Violet has not moved since Malcolm walked in.

MALCOLM
Yeah, Violet...
(to Violet)
Did you not tell...
(whispers)
You said you were gonna tell him.

DUKE
I'm right here.

Duke looks to Violet for answers.

MALCOLM
I'm sorry. I thought you told him.

DUKE
Told me what? Sam?

Beat.

VIOLET
I'm not Sam.

DUKE
Because you're... Violet?

Violet nods.

DUKE (CONT'D)
Who's Sam?

VIOLET
My brother.

Beat.

DUKE
Sam Braxton, screenwriter.

Violet nods.

DUKE (CONT'D)
Is that why Olivia was so weird--

VIOLET
She searched Sam and found me.
After the talk.

DUKE
Sam's talk.

MALCOLM
Well, it was still Violet's talk.

Violet glares at Malcolm.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
Technically...

DUKE
That was days ago. Everybody knows
but me.

VIOLET
Just us.

MALCOLM
Well, your parents.

VIOLET
They had to--

MALCOLM
And Sam himself, of course. Mabel.

DUKE
Mabel?

VIOLET
My cat...

DUKE
What fun you've had at my expense.

VIOLET
It wasn't like that at all! I can--

Movie alarm sounds as DUKE exits. Violet watches him walk down the street.

MALCOLM
I guess I'll warm up the car.

Movie alarm sounds as Malcolm exits. Violet pulls the "Bloom" ornament from her purse and hangs it on the display tree.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Violet's tree, Christmas Eve. Malcolm and Violet clean up dinner dishes.

VIOLET
Please stop apologizing. It was an accident and he had to find out somehow.

MALCOLM
But you're still upset.

VIOLET
Because Duke was upset. What if he doesn't want my help with Twelve Nights anymore?

MALCOLM
Then you're free to spend the rest of break with me.

VIOLET
I wanted to do it. We made all those plans--

Violet's PHONE RINGS. Violet answers.

CROSSCUT. INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Sam stares out a window at pouring rain. OUTGOING PHONE RING.
Violet pops up on his laptop.

SAM
Hey, twinnie! What's up?

VIOLET
Dinner dishes.

SAM
Ready for *It's A Wonderful Life*?

VIOLET
And then calling it a night so we
can pick you up bright and early. I
bet you're not even packed--

THUNDER CRACKS.

VIOLET (CONT'D)
Is it... raining?

SAM
The irony... But they loved the new
scenes, thanks to you.

VIOLET
So get back here before I
completely steal your identity.

MALCOLM
That's not funny, Violet.

SAM
I can't. We're running over and... one
of the guys said he can hook me up to
write on an animated show. At least for
a season. But I'd have to be in LA.

VIOLET
I'm sorry. It sounded like you said
you said you're moving to LA.

SAM
I'll be back in January to pack up.

VIOLET
You're a novelist, Sam!

SAM
Steady paycheck, Vi.

VIOLET
Is that what you want?

SAM
It's good enough for you.

We see Sam's been looking at Olivia's social story. A new pic pops up: Duke and Olivia toasting--the nail in the coffin.

VIOLET
What's going on with you, Sam? Talk to me.

SAM
I'm fine. Hey, how did things go with Duke and Olivia?

VIOLET
Good, I think! They're on another date tonight.

SAM
You get back to yours, okay?

End call. Sam looks sadly at the Duke/Olivia pic.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Malcolm hands Violet a glass of champagne. They sit.

VIOLET
He sounds so down. I don't understand. I'm his twin. Why does he keep everything to himself?

MALCOLM
He's probably just disappointed he can't come home.

VIOLET
I didn't even get a chance to tell him about my breakthrough for the novel.

Violet jumps up and moves to the bulletin board.

VIOLET (CONT'D)
I didn't even tell you because of everything, but I was thinking if I make my protagonist female, then

Violet moves a card from the middle to the start. She stops.

VIOLET (CONT'D)
Oh my gosh. This is a storyboard.

MALCOLM
What?

VIOLET
I told Olivia I had less than half
a storyboard. I'm writing a novel
on a storyboard.

MALCOLM
So?

VIOLET
I'm trying to make it a novel
because my bosses want me to
publish, but it's a screenplay!

MALCOLM
It is?

VIOLET
Yes! Listen: we start with a
silhouette of a woman walking
across the Peace Bridge at night.
It's kind of creepy and we
immediately know something's up
because it's a woman alone on a
dark bridge. And then

Violet pauses to move another card.

MALCOLM
Hey, why don't you let me give you
your present?

VIOLET
Oh. You don't want to hear...

MALCOLM
It'll cheer you up.

VIOLET
But I--

Resigned, Violet puts down the card in her hand.

VIOLET (CONT'D)
Sure. Do you want yours first?

MALCOLM
No way. I've been dying to give you
this for weeks.

Malcolm retrieves her gift from under the tree.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
I hope you haven't been shaking it
trying to guess what it is.

Violet sips her champagne, sets it down, reaches for the gift and, in doing so, wiggles her left fingers a little: NOTHING.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
Is your hand asleep?

Violet shakes her head, takes the gift and is hit by a cannonball of truth: she does not want this to be an engagement ring. She opens slowly, buying time.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
You don't have to save the paper.

VIOLET
There's a lot of tape on here.

The paper's off and Violet opens the box...

VIOLET (CONT'D)
Malcolm, I--

It's not a ring at all, but a piece of paper folded very small. She takes it out and opens it: there's a picture of a ship and it says "SURPRISE! IT'S A CRUISE!"

VIOLET (CONT'D)
It's...

MALCOLM
A vacation!

VIOLET
(so relieved)
A vacation.

MALCOLM
A cruise!

VIOLET
A cruise!

MALCOLM
Six countries! Surprised?

VIOLET
I thought it was a-- You know,
because the box looks like--

MALCOLM

Oh! No. I mean we're not-- I didn't think we were--

VIOLET

We're not. Just the box--

MALCOLM

Looks like "jewelry." Right.

VIOLET

We never talked about a vacation.

MALCOLM

Because you wanted to be a pantsner! We leave the day after New Year's, so it's spontaneous and you beat your resolution by four days.

VIOLET

I'm already beating it. I gave the talk. I'm planning Twelve Nights.

MALCOLM

Six countries, Vi.

VIOLET

The feast is January fifth.

MALCOLM

But if he's still upset...

VIOLET

I promised I'd bake the cake.

MALCOLM

Can't Duke just... put it in the freezer or something?

VIOLET

...I can't go.

MALCOLM

Maybe I can postpone it.

VIOLET

No, Malc. I mean we can't go.

MALCOLM

Oh. You mean like... at all.

VIOLET

I'm sorry.

MALCOLM
...I think I understand.

VIOLET
Really?

MALCOLM
Since I saw your talk, I've been thinking... Your right guy is going to be excited with you about all your ideas and why you're moving those cards around. Am I close?

Violet nods.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
I think I also realized at your talk I'm never gonna be that guy.

VIOLET
You're a great guy.

MALCOLM
You're pretty great yourself.
(beat)
What now?

VIOLET
It's a Wonderful Life?

MALCOLM
You enjoy it. I know how it ends.

Malcolm gets his coat; Violet retrieves a gift from the tree.

VIOLET
I still want you to have this.

Malcolm takes the gift.

MALCOLM
Thanks, Vi.

They hug. Malcolm exits. Violet picks up her phone, impulsively dials.

INT. WINE BAR - NIGHT

Olivia and Duke sit with empty glasses.

OLIVIA
You're not going to quiz me on all those wine pairings, are you?

DUKE
 Maybe we could make it a Twelve
 Nights activity.

OLIVIA
 You're going ahead with that?
 Without her?

DUKE
 We did the window, I ordered the reels.
 I need to do it. It's good for me.

OLIVIA
 Matt would be proud of you.

Duke's phone buzzes. Screen reads "Sam."

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
 Sam?

DUKE
 I haven't changed her name yet.

OLIVIA
 You want to answer, don't you?

DUKE
 (yes)
 No. We're having a nice time.

Duke looks at his phone. PRE-LAP: SFX: VOICEMAIL: "Hi, this
 is Duke--"

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Violet looks at her phone, sadly disconnects. A loud smash!

Violet rushes to the kitchen and sees that Mabel has knocked
 the Eat. Sleep. Write. mug to the floor. It lies in pieces.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Christmas: Violet dines with her parents at a festive table.

CAROL
 All right, out with it.

VIOLET
 It?

CAROL

Our big Christmas brunch at Aunt Sue's, you barely said a word. You've been on your phone all day--

VIOLET

I'm editing a new promo video for Twelve Nights.

CAROL

On Christmas? And now you're playing with your food.

VIOLET

Malcolm got me a cruise for Christmas.

CAROL

Not a ring?

VIOLET

Mom.

ANTHONY

A cruise sounds fun. I hear the food is incredible.

(on look from Carol)

Well, I do.

VIOLET

And then I broke up with him.

CAROL

Oh no! Why honey? Maybe a ring was coming for your birthday.

VIOLET

I think... because he really didn't understand how happy I was at House of Film. Or how unhappy I am that I can't go back.

ANTHONY

Of course you can go back.

VIOLET

Duke was so upset, Dad.

ANTHONY

Carol, remember when you shrunk my favorite sweater and didn't tell me for three weeks?

VIOLET

That's not the same, Dad.

ANTHONY

It was my favorite sweater.

CAROL

Every time he asked about it, I said he must've left it somewhere.

ANTHONY

But I knew I didn't.

VIOLET

I'm not following this.

CAROL

I was keeping a secret.

ANTHONY

I loved that sweater, Vi.

CAROL

But he loved me more.

VIOLET

Okay that doesn't apply to us at all. He's with Olivia and I just want him to forgive me so I can work on Twelve Nights because it made me happy!

CAROL

Was it just the movie stuff that made you happy?

ACT SEVEN**EXT. HOUSE OF FILM - NIGHT**

Violet stands outside looking in the window. A sign reads:
"Twelve Nights of Christmas begins tonight with *Die Hard*."

Ty and Chantal approach.

TY
Hey Professor!

VIOLET
Merry Christmas!

CHANTAL
This was my present from Ty,
tickets to this whole series.

VIOLET
I'm warning you: there's going to
be black and white and silent.

TY
She's been looking at them in a
whole new way.

CHANTAL
We watched *Casablanca*.

VIOLET
I take full credit for that.

Through the window, Violet sees Duke at the concession stand.
Olivia enters from the back, put her head close to Duke's and
laughs. Duke spots Violet. Olivia follows his gaze.

VIOLET (CONT'D)
You know what? I just realized that
I can't... I need to work tonight.

CHANTAL
But you'll miss *Die Hard*.

VIOLET
Die Hard's not really a Christmas
movie, right?

INT. HOUSE OF FILM LOBBY - NIGHT

Concession stand.

OLIVIA
Did you know she was coming?

Duke shakes his head.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
You never called her back, did you?

DUKE
Jake's back, you're helping. I've got things sorted out.

OLIVIA
Not with her.

Duke watches Violet wave to Ty and Chantal and walk away.

DUKE
Doesn't look like she wants to sort things out, does it?

Movie alarm sounds...

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Violet enters her apartment. Mabel greets her.

VIOLET
Weren't expecting me home so soon, were you?

Mabel meows.

VIOLET (CONT'D)
Come on. Let's get a snack.

Violet scoops up Mabel, takes her to the kitchen, picks up Mabel's bowl. Beside it, an index card: "Undeterred, Jason Jessica crosses the bridge."

VIOLET (CONT'D)
Did you drag this in here?

Violet puts treats in Mabel's bowl, takes the card to the bulletin board. She puts the card back, stares thoughtfully, grabs her laptop, opens it.

MONTAGE:

Time passes, as illustrated by Duke removing bulletin board cards until we're at January 4.

*Duke runs a *Jeopardy*-style trivia night on *Home Alone* night.

*Violet rearranges cards on the bulletin board.

*Duke Googles Twelfth Night cake recipes.

*Violet types furiously on her laptop.

*On *Scrooge* night, everyone wears night caps bearing character names.

DUKE

On the count of three, try to find
your match! You can ask each other
up to three questions, but once you
look, if you're wrong, you're out!

*Violet sends Sam an email, subject line: "LAST NIGHT-ACT 1"

*Olivia and Duke, wearing caps that say Ghost of Christmas
Past and Ghost of Christmas Future, face each other.

OLIVIA

Am I alive?

DUKE

No.

OLIVIA

You either. Am I living in the
moment?

DUKE

No.

OLIVIA

You either. Are we a match?

They both take off their caps and look, laugh.

DUKE

I guess not.

OLIVIA

Total opposites.

Beat.

DUKE

But good friends, right?

*Duke pulls a failed cake from the oven.

*Violet and Sam are on a video call.

SAM

You did it! I'm so happy I want to hug you!

*Duke gets the *It's A Wonderful Life* reels ready for viewing.

*Violet takes the *It's A Wonderful Life* DVD out of the player and puts it in its case. She pulls out her phone to watch the new promo, then posts it to House of Film's social media.

*Duke's in the window, fixing the *It's A Wonderful Life* reel that has fallen. He spots the "Bloom" ornament, touches it.

Duke's phone beeps with an alert to the new promo. He pulls out his phone to view; it's mostly a goofy thing with the tree and Duke saying "Twelve Days of Christmas." Violet makes a brief appearance.

*Duke and Violet watch the promo separately, but simultaneously. They each pause it on the other's image.

MALCOLM (PRE-LAP)

Violet! Happy new year! How are you?

INT. THE COFFEE HUB - DAY

Violet stands in line for coffee.

VIOLET

To you too! I'm... great actually. I just talked to the dean about sabbatical. Finishing one screenplay has me itching to start the next. And I just want some time to figure things out.

MALCOLM

That's fantastic, Vi. You did it.

Malcolm checks his fancy periodic table watch; it's January 4.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

And with a day to spare.

VIOLET

I'm glad you're wearing the watch.

MALCOLM

I love it. And it's fitting for a tenure chem professor, right?

VIOLET

You got tenure! Congratulations! I know how much you wanted it.

MALCOLM

Yea, I'm pretty happy. So you all
set for tomorrow?

VIOLET

Tomorrow?

MALCOLM

Twelfth Night? The big feast thing?

VIOLET

Oh... I haven't been back. I've
been busy rewriting and you know
how upset Duke was.

MALCOLM

All I know is that we are not on a cruise
because you promised someone a cake.

EXT. HOUSE OF FILM - DAY

The Twelfth Night cake is in Violet's hands.

INT. HOUSE OF FILM - DAY

Jake and Duke arrange chairs for the final night's events.

JAKE

And then I binged *Vertigo*, *Rear
Window*, *The Birds*, *Rebecca*, *Thirty-
Nine Steps*, *The Lady Vanishes*--

DUKE

All the way back to black and
white, huh?

JAKE

After a while, you don't even notice.

DUKE

I'm glad you're back, Jake. I couldn't
have pulled this off without you.

JAKE

And Olivia?

DUKE

But mostly you.

JAKE

You two finished?

DUKE
We're friends.

JAKE
Because of Sam?

DUKE
What? No.

JAKE
If you say so.

DUKE
Hey, how are you at baking?

JAKE
Uh...

Movie alarm sounds in the front.

DUKE
There's supposed to be this cake
tonight. With peas or something--

Violet enters with the cake.

VIOLET
A pea and a bean.

Awkward silence.

JAKE
I'm just gonna go... take a
sabbatical in the back.

A cat walks by.

VIOLET
Who is that?

JAKE
Roscoe. House of Film's new mascot.

Jake exits.

VIOLET
You got a cat?

DUKE
I like cats.

VIOLET
I promised you a cake.
(beat)

VIOLET (CONT'D)
I know you're upset, but I wanted
to keep my promise. I'm sorry I
wasn't here for the rest.

DUKE
Jake's been around. No more trees
to sell after Christmas.

VIOLET
Has it been going well?

DUKE
Great. Donations pouring in, too.

VIOLET
So... would it be okay for me to be
here tonight?

DUKE
I'm Not Sure.

Violet sets down the cake, holds out her hand.

VIOLET
Nice to meet you Mr. Sure. May I
call you Not?

Duke hesitates, but takes her hand. SFX: TINGLE

DUKE
My friends call me Duke.

Violet smiles.

DUKE (CONT'D)
But Dan is my real name.

Violet's smile fades.

VIOLET
Hello Dan. I'm Violet Braxton.
Can we start over?

INT/EXT. OCCASIONS BY OLIVIA

Olivia straightens cards, preparing for closing. Sam
approaches outside, watches her for a few seconds, enters.

OLIVIA
We're closing in five minutes.

SAM
If you'd give me even one of those
five, I'd be so grateful.

SFX: TINGLE. Olivia drops whatever she's holding, stares at her hand, looks up. Her mouth gapes, but words don't come.

INT. HOUSE OF FILM COFFEE AREA - NIGHT

Violet sits with Anthony and Carol, where they, Jake, Ty, Chantal, and extras have finished their Twelfth Night meal. Jake circulates with a trash bag collecting the last plates.

Duke stands in front of the group holding the cake, raises his hand. The room quiets.

DUKE
I'm told that no Twelfth Night
celebration is complete without the
traditional Twelfth Night cake.

VIOLET
Told by me. Made by me.

CAROL
Sh.

DUKE
As the lore goes, the man who finds
the bean in his piece of cake becomes
king for the night and the woman who
finds the pea becomes queen.

At their table:

CHANTAL
I hope that's us.

TY
You don't need a crown to be my
queen.
(yells)
What do the king and queen get?

DUKE
To lead us in film charades.
While Jake cuts the cake, does
anybody need more wassail?

ANTHONY
Over here!

Duke approaches with a pitcher and refills their mugs.

DUKE
Having a good time?

CAROL
The best! And I don't even have to
remember to call Violet Sam anymore.

VIOLET
Mom!

ANTHONY
You liked the espionage.

CAROL
What matters is that all's well
that ends well.

ANTHONY
Wrong play. It's Twelfth Night.

CAROL
Well they both have happy endings,
right, Duke?

DUKE
Excuse me.

Duke moves to another table.

ANTHONY
I thought you worked things out
with him, honey.

VIOLET
Enough to be civil, I guess.

CAROL
You didn't tell him how you feel?

VIOLET
It doesn't matter. He's still mad
and he's still with Olivia.

CAROL
I don't see her here.

VIOLET
She's probably closing up. Let's
not talk about it anymore.

INT. OCCASIONS BY OLIVIA - NIGHT

Sam approaches a dumbstruck Olivia.

SAM
(looks around)
This is incredible.

OLIVIA
Wh-- what... what are you doing here?

SAM
I've been talking to Violet. You're
not the only one who can put two
and two together.

Sam peruses her card rack.

SAM (CONT'D)
These are beautiful.

He pulls one from the back: it's the card with two hearts
that we saw fall from his closet earlier: Be Mine Forever. He
holds it out.

SAM (CONT'D)
If I had to pick one for you, it
would be this one.

Olivia recognizes the card instantly. She takes it from him.

OLIVIA
How did that card--

SAM
Your mom provides excellent
customer service.

OLIVIA
You saw my mom?

SAM
She seemed kind of happy to see me,
especially when I explained why I
was here.

Olivia opens the card. "Happy Valentine's Day, Love Olivia"
is crossed out and now reads "Happy Twelfth Night, Love Sam"

SAM (CONT'D)
Twelfth Night is for reversals.

Beat.

OLIVIA
So many times, I almost--

SAM

Me too. I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. For being an idiot, for thinking I had to be somebody's definition of successful or worthy before I could deserve you. I made so many mistakes--

Olivia throws her arms around him.

OLIVIA

We'll fix them in post.

Sam smiles.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

I just learned what that means from this gal named Sam.

SAM

I know you're upset with her but--

OLIVIA

To be fair, I didn't tell her about you. And how can I be mad when she brought you home?

They hug again.

SAM

Wait, what about Duke?

ACT NINE**INT. HOUSE OF FILM - DAY**

Duke sits with Jake, cake in front of them. Duke and Violet glance at each other but never catch each other's eye.

JAKE
Just let it go, man.

DUKE
I just feel stupid for believing it.
For telling an audience to believe it.

JAKE
Other than the name, did she ever
lie to you?

DUKE
Who knows? It's just hard for me to
think of her as... not Sam.

JAKE
Well maybe at this point, finding a
way could be, you know, useful.

DUKE
Yeah, but--

Duke pulls his fork from his mouth and the bean is on it.

DUKE (CONT'D)
I got the bean.

At Violet's table, Violet holds the pea on her fork.

CAROL
Violet, you got the pea! Who got
the bean? Who got the bean?!

Carol looks around and Jake holds up Duke's arm.

JAKE
Duke Orsino of the House of Film,
claim your queen, Violet Braxton.

Ty and Chantal exchanged a confused look.

CAROL
Go on, honey, go!

Violet awkwardly gets up and moves to the front of the room, where Jake waits with crowns. He puts one on Duke's head, the other on Violet's, while the crowd claps and yells "speech!"

But both Duke and Violet are speechless.

JAKE

Looks like Roscoe's got their
tongues, so finish your cake, we'll
give 'em a minute to think up some
film titles to start charades.

Violet and Duke look into each other's eyes.

VIOLET

I don't think I can...

Violet removes her crown, drops it, and runs out of House of Film. Duke stares after her, then addresses the crowd.

DUKE

Well... I'm not sure what the
Twelfth Night tradition is when
your queen runs off.

ANTHONY

You go after her!

DUKE

What?

TY

For real. Get moving.

Duke looks at Jake, who gives him a "Duh, go!" look. Duke hands his crown to Jake and exits.

EXT. DUKE HOUSE OF FILM - NIGHT

Duke exits and bumps into Sam and Olivia, happily on their way to the feast.

OLIVIA

Did we miss all the fun?

DUKE

Have you seen Sam?

OLIVIA

This is Sam.

DUKE

The other Sam.

SAM
You mean my sister?

DUKE
You're Sam's brother?

SAM
I'm Sam.

OLIVIA
You're looking for Violet?

DUKE
Yes, Violet. I need Violet.

Sam peers down the street.

SAM
I see someone walking.

Duke rushes off.

OLIVIA
That was confusing.

SAM
Wait 'til I tell you about Logan
Beard.
(on Olivia's confusion)
Shall we?

Olivia and Sam enter House of Film, where Ty and Chantal have
donned the crowns and are leading charades.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Violet catches her breath under a streetlight. She sees Duke
coming, resumes walking, faster.

DUKE
Wait up!

Duke runs until he catches up with her.

DUKE (CONT'D)
Violet, please.

Violet stops.

VIOLET
You called me Violet.

DUKE

A Violet by any other name...

VIOLET

You're not mad anymore?

DUKE

I was never "mad." Just hurt.
Confused.

VIOLET

Topsy-turvy Twelfth Night.

DUKE

You could have told me.

VIOLET

I wanted to. I wanted to tell you
it was me who loves Christmas and
old movies and cats--

DUKE

Violet.

VIOLET

But I was afraid if I wasn't out
chasing my dreams and never
actually wrote a single screenplay--

DUKE

Violet.

VIOLET

That I wouldn't be inspiring enough
to keep House of Film open and I
don't want you to give up--

DUKE

Violet. I never wanted you to be Sam.

VIOLET

But you were so impressed with all
his wisdom--

DUKE

I never wanted you to be Sam
because if you were Sam... you
wouldn't be here.

VIOLET

But--

DUKE

I really want you here.

Duke and Violet kiss.

VIOLET
When--

DUKE
From the minute you walked in my door.

Duke and Violet kiss again.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BUFFALO - DAY

*Ty shoots around Buffalo.
*Sam types a new title page: TWELFTH NIGHT IN BUFFALO, a novel by Logan--. Delete. Sam Braxton. Sam smiles.
*Violet teaches Intro to Screenwriting at House of Film. Ty and Chantal are there.
*Ty films a dark figure walking across the Peace Bridge.

TY
That's a wrap!

*Violet gives Ty the "Congratulations" card she bought.

EXT./INT. HOUSE OF FILM - NIGHT

One year later. Window sign reads "Film Local: Wednesdays at 7." Inside, an audience sits. Ty high-fives Violet as he and Chantal head to their seats. Lights dim. In the back, Olivia hugs Sam. Violet and Duke next to them.

OLIVIA
I'm so excited!

The four watch as the "LAST NIGHT IN BUFFALO" title appears on the screen. Produced by Duke's House of Film. Directed by Tyrone Peters. Written by Violet Braxton. It's clearly low-budget, but it's still awesome. Duke hugs Violet.

DUKE
I'm so glad this movie is fiction.

Violet smiles. Framed by the screen, they kiss.

THE END