

THE CHRISTMAS TWAIN

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FADE IN:

EXT. BANKS OF THE TRUCKEE RIVER - DAY

SUPER "2002, Truckee River, Reno, Nevada"

Two 8-year-old kids, a boy (YOUNG TOM) and a girl (YOUNG BECCA) complete construction of a raft from driftwood and rope, a smaller version (3-feet X 2-feet) of one Huck Finn would have built. They wear shorts and T-shirts.

They attach a plastic water bottle labeled, "Message in a bottle," with duct tape.

YOUNG BECCA

I think it will make it all the way
to the Mississippi!

YOUNG TOM

The river ends at Pyramid Lake,
Becca!

Becca gets angrier with each of Tom's comments.

YOUNG BECCA

Shows what you know, Tommy! My
imagination's just longer than
yours!

YOUNG TOM

Your last message in a bottle
carried by five helium balloons got
stuck in a tree fifty yards away.
What's the message say?

YOUNG BECCA

It's a stamped, self-addressed
letter to you that says we'll be
friends forever.

YOUNG TOM

And someone is supposed to find the
bottle, cut it open, and mail the
letter to me?

YOUNG BECCA

They can't send it to me! My dad
took a teaching job in Virginia
City but I don't have our new
address yet, so they can't send it
to me, Silly!

YOUNG TOM
How is this supposed to work?

YOUNG BECCA
Someone in the future or far, far
away... Never mind! You'll be so
surprised when you get the letter!

YOUNG TOM
No! I mean, how do we stay friends
with you moving far away?

Young Becca shrugs her shoulders.

YOUNG BECCA
I don't know, but I bet we'll be
amazed!

YOUNG TOM
I'll be amazed if the bottle
doesn't end up in a recycling can!

YOUNG BECCA
(yells)
You have no sense of adventure,
Tommy Larson. It's a wonder why I
bother with you at all!

They launch the raft and admire it. Becca is excited.

YOUNG BECCA (CONT'D)
See! Look at it go!

She turns to see Tom is sad.

YOUNG TOM
Maybe you're right. That raft may
go farther than I ever will.

Becca shrugs her shoulders, takes out a notebook titled "My
Stories," and jots down a few notes.

She closes her notebook and laughs.

YOUNG BECCA
I doubt that, Tom. It says right
here we're destined for many big
adventures!

Tom smiles, and Becca smiles back.

Behind Becca and Tom stands the GHOST of Mark Twain (70), in
his white cotton suit and smoking a cigar and laughing. No
one can hear or see the Ghost.

INT. OLD HOTEL DINING ROOM - MORNING

SUPER "Twenty Years Later, Virginia City, Nevada"

REBECCA "BECCA" STEVENS (28) smiles as she wipes down tables in the dining room of a historic hotel. She's a beautiful, lively woman wearing black pants and shirt with a name tag that reads, "REBECCA."

She stops to admire the old town outside the window and smirks.

BECCA

I think that raft took me all the way to Virginia City! A half an hour away! Some imagination!

Becca pulls out a notebook and jots down a few notes as the Ghost of Mark Twain, dressed the same and smoking the cigar, appears behind her at a table in the corner.

GHOST

"You can't depend on your eyes when your imagination is out of focus."

(points out the window)

Virginia City was the biggest silver boomtown in the world, where, in 1863 and quite by accident, I changed my name from Sam Clemens to Mark Twain.

(to Becca)

All it took was a little focus of my imagination. It could happen to anyone, especially around the holidays!

Becca stops to sniff the air, and shakes her head bewildered as the Ghost stands and speaks as he exits.

GHOST (CONT'D)

I'll be in the saloon! "Go to Heaven for the climate. Hell for the company," I always say, Becca.

CUT TO:

INT. UNIVERSITY CLASSROOM - SAME

TOM LARSON (28) is a handsome professor wearing a Hawaiian shirt and khaki pants with a cardigan Christmas sweater and black (nerd) glasses. He lectures to a small class of twenty bored STUDENTS (18-22, various types).

TOM

I've greatly enjoyed our class in Nevada State history this semester.

He looks out to the bored students.

TOM (CONT'D)

Remember, if you don't like history, go out and make your own!

The Ghost is behind Tom smoking a cigar and sipping scotch from an antique crystal glass.

GHOST

I wish I said that!

MILLIE JACKSON (23), a comical African American graduate student speaks out from the back of the room in a seductive tone.

MILLIE

How will you be making history over the holiday break, Professor Larson?

Millie laughs.

The students chuckle and eye Millie who eyes Tom.

TOM

I'll be visiting an old friend in Virginia City and checking out Mark Twain's old stomping grounds.

He holds up the book, "Roughing It," by Mark Twain.

TOM (CONT'D)

From this semester's reading assignment, while Ms. Millie Jackson grades your essays from your final lab assignment!

The Students groan.

A CHIME sounds and the students race out.

Tom gathers his laptop computer and loads it in his old leather briefcase, while Millie leaps to him.

He SEES a brochure of Virginia City on the podium.

TOM (CONT'D)

Did you leave this for me, Millie?

Millie looks puzzled.

MILLIE

No. I would have left a brochure
for a Caribbean cruise.

They laugh.

MILLIE (CONT'D)

Will you be staying at the old
hotel in case I have any questions
about the essays?

Tom looks around curious as to who left the brochure for him,
but he and Millie are alone.

TOM

Becca? Reminding me to visit?

Millie rests a hand on Tom's hand but turns serious.

MILLIE

We only have until midnight to
enter the students' final grades
into the system.

He tosses the brochure into his briefcase and sniffs the air
curiously.

TOM

Call my cell if you have any
questions. We got this, Millie.

GHOST

Lose the sweater, Tom.

TOM

(to Millie)

This sweater screams of adventure.

MILLIE

Adventure?

Tom laughs.

TOM

You know what Twain said about
adventure.

MILLIE & TOM

"An adventure is something that
while it's happening you wish it
wasn't!"

Millie and Tom laugh and share a moment.

The Ghost rolls his eyes and chuckles as Tom begins to exit.

MILLIE
 (barely audible)
 I could take that sweater off you.

The Ghost sees Millie's wanton desire for Tom.

GHOST
 This might be a tougher job than I
 thought.

INT. SUV - LATE MORNING

Tom nervously drives from Reno to Virginia City. The road is narrow, windy, and steep.

TOM
 To think Mark Twain took a
 stagecoach out from Missouri to
 Reno in the 1860s! Three miles per
 hour top speed in a stagecoach.

Looks out nervously.

TOM (CONT'D)
 Except when they were being chased
 by injuns, I mean, Native
 Americans, or desperados!

He wipes sweat from his forehead.

TOM (CONT'D)
 And me, up to 50 miles per hour on
 steep mountain roads with the
 threat of bad weather at any
 moment!

He glances down at the coffee drink in the cupholder.

TOM (CONT'D)
 I haven't been able to enjoy my
 grande, decaf, vanilla latte! Talk
 about roughing it!

INT. OLD HOTEL SALOON - SAME

Becca strolls in to see her dad, POPS (50s), behind the bar in a late-1800s shirt and apron, wiping down the counter.

BECCA
Hey, Pops.

POPS
How's my darling daughter on this
fine day?

Becca leans in to kiss her dad on the cheek.

BECCA
Couldn't be better.
(worried)
I think.

POPS
What's up?

BECCA
Tom texted me. He's driving up to
here at the hotel for a few days.

Pops lowers his head.

POPS
You haven't told him?

BECCA
I was waiting for the right time.

Pops and Becca look depressed.

POPS
He's your oldest and dearest
friend.

BECCA
BFF. Best friends forever. I should
have told him months ago, but he
was in the middle of his semester.

Pops looks disappointed in his daughter.

BECCA (CONT'D)
I know. I screwed up.

POPS
So he'll be here for your
engagement party?

BECCA
(angry)
It's not a party.
(MORE)

BECCA (CONT'D)

It's an engagement announcement
right here in the dining room with
four people: Hank, you, Christie,
and me.

POPS

Now five people.

Becca turns her back on her dad.

BECCA

I'll tell Tom right when he
arrives.

She begins to stomp out, so Pops imitates her voice.

POPS

I'm getting married to a guy you
can't stand.

She freezes at the door and turns with an icy stare.

The Ghost appears on a bar stool in the corner.

BECCA & GHOST

You're not making it any easier.

Becca stomps away.

GHOST

I had three daughters.
(to Pops)
"Children are natural mimics who
act like their parents despite
every effort to teach them good
manners."

Pops sniffs the air with a puzzled look.

INT. SUV - CONTINUOUS

Tom enters the town of Virginia City and marvels at the old
town aglow with Christmas lights and decorations.

He relaxes his hands on the steering wheel.

TOM

This is going to be the best
adventure ever!

He pulls up to an old hotel, fully decorated for Christmas.

INT. OLD HOTEL REGISTRATION DESK - NOON

HANK FINLEY (30s) hears the door open and begins speaking enthusiastically without looking up as Tom rolls a new suitcase toward the registration desk. Hank is a handsome, powerful, and rugged man with a three-day beard and fashionably outdoor clothes and boots.

HANK

Welcome the oldest hotel in Nevada opened in 1861. Truth be told, that was three years earlier than Nevada officially became a state in 1864. Not only that...

TOM

(interrupting)

Hi, Hank. Is Becca here?

Tom looks around to see Christmas garland and lights throughout the hotel.

Hank is distracted by a Carpenter (40s) who steps between Tom and Hank carrying a crowbar and hammer. Hank yells out instructions to the Carpenter.

HANK

You're just replacing those few rotten siding boards behind the office here. I don't have all the money in the world for the entire wall!

Hank looks up to see it's Tom and his tone changes immediately to a sweet rival.

HANK (CONT'D)

Tom, Rebecca's childhood playmate! Great to see you. She still talks about you a little.

Hank puts out a powerful arm and hand to shake and Tom accepts a quick handshake.

TOM

It will be fun to catch up. I know it's been a while.

HANK

Since early last summer.

TOM

I had to return early to teach a summer class on...

HANK
(interrupting)
Rebecca will be thrilled to see
you. Lots of changes around here.

TOM
I tried to book a reservation
online for two nights. It was
closed tonight for some reason. I'd
like to book tomorrow too, please.

Hank pretends to be disappointed as Becca creeps into the doorway behind Tom.

HANK
Tonight's all booked up for the big
surprise engagement dinner party.

BECCA
Hi, Tom. I was going to...

Tom turns to Becca with a smile and sees she is troubled.

HANK
(interrupts)
Tell you that Rebecca and me are
getting married!

Silence. Becca and Tom look down as Hank smiles big and steps around the reservation to hug and kiss Becca.

HANK (CONT'D)
She couldn't wait...

TOM
(interrupts)
To tell me?

HANK
We've been working closely together
for a couple of years now...

BECCA
(interrupts)
I wanted to meet you outside to
break the...

TOM
(interrupts in a half-
hearted tone)
News! What wonderful news! I'm
happy for you both.

BECCA
I should have...

HANK
Invited you to the big engagement party. I hope you'll join us.

BECCA
It's not a big party. Just four of us in the dining room.

HANK
Five now. I'm closing the saloon and the hotel for the big party.

Becca leaps to hug Tom.

BECCA
I'm so sorry. I should have warned you.

TOM
(smiles warmly)
You warn people about storms, floods, and wildfires. You invite people to important family events.

Pops races in to hug Tom, slightly pushing Becca aside.

POPS
Tom! Good to see you again. You were just here last summer, weren't you?

Hank looks on confident, but a little jealous.

HANK
Hey, I'm the one getting engaged!

Tom chuckles to make light of Hank's comment.

TOM
Two of you are getting engaged, Hank.

Tom shakes hands with Pops, then turns to shake hands with Hank who graciously accepts the handshake then gives Tom a manly hug.

TOM (CONT'D)
(joking)
Whoa, big fella. You could've cracked a rib.

Tom hugs Becca again, to Hank's dismay.

TOM (CONT'D)
Congrats to everyone.

Becca tries to smile big, but a half-smile emerges.

TOM (CONT'D)
Come on. I'll buy the first round
in the saloon.

Pops exits to the saloon.

TOM (CONT'D)
I want to hear all about how this
came to be.

Becca smiles at Hank and whispers to him.

BECCA
Let's make my best friend for life
feel welcomed here!

Hank's eyes open wide as Becca links Tom's arm and leads him
to the saloon.

Hank follows with a smile.

HANK
Let's party!

The Ghost shows up at the registration desk with a smirk.

GHOST
Service has improved a bit since I
was here in '68! 1868 that is!

INT. OLD HOTEL SALOON - CONTINUOUS

Pops is behind the bar, and Becca sits between Tom and Hank
on barstools. An empty barstool is at the end of the bar.

BECCA
When you work together and see each
other every day, things happen.

HANK
Happiest two years of my life, and
new life to our grand old hotel in
the heart of Mark Twain country! We
pan for gold together, take train
rides, and camp out under the
stars.

Tom smiles earnestly.

TOM

That does sound romantic.

Becca smiles at Tom.

BECCA

Hank is very spontaneous. We're off to wine country one week, then San Francisco or down the coast. We love to snowboard when we get the chance.

(excited)

We like to ride the train in town, the Virginia and Truckee Railroad!

HANK

All the way to Gold Hill and back! Takes thirty-five minutes!

Tom smiles at them both.

TOM

I love that little train ride.

HANK

We vacation during the off-season. Spring and fall. When the good professor is teaching.

(to Tom)

You two were seasonally incompatible!

Tom is baffled.

TOM

Seasonally incompatible? I have sabbaticals.

BECCA

Every ten years?

TOM

Every seventh year. For up to a year! My sabbatical is coming up in just three years.

HANK

Long time to wait for a vacation.

BECCA

It's not a vacation when you have to work and produce publications.

TOM

I get summers off, except when I teach summer sessions, and I get a generous holiday break!

BECCA

(serious to Tom)

We play a lot. Like you and I did as kids.

HANK

Do we ever! Don't we, Rebecca?

Hank caresses Becca and kisses her neck.

Becca speaks as she exits.

BECCA

I need to freshen up.

POPS

(sarcastic)

This is going well.

Hank and Tom glare at Pops as gorgeous CHRISTIE STEVENS (26), Becca's younger sister, enters the saloon like a movie star in a sleek low-V-neck red dress, matching high heels, a white leather coat with a white feather boa. All eyes turn wide-opened to Christie.

CHRISTIE

Darlings, where is my much older sister? I must congratulate her.

Hank and Tom stand immediately.

HANK

Christie, so glad you could make it.

TOM

Christie? You were...

Christie looks past Hank to Tom.

CHRISTIE

Tommy? Tommy Larson. Is that really you?

Christie eyes Tom like a piece of fine meat, and Tom can't help but return the favor.

TOM

The last time I saw you, you were
six years old and... plump.

Tom is red with embarrassment.

CHRISTIE

Nothing about me is plump now, Tom.
Don't you agree?

Christie does a spin move.

TOM

No... I mean, yes...

HANK

(interrupts)

Come on, Christie, let me show you
to Rebecca's room. She's in Number
2, when she's not shacking up with
me in Number 1.

He grabs her arm to guide her out.

HANK (CONT'D)

Maybe you can talk some sense...

Christie pulls away from Hank and saunters back to Pops and Tom.

CHRISTIE

I haven't kissed my Pops, yet.
Hank, be a dear, and fetch Becca,
will ya.

POPS

Hi, Sweetie, how's life in fast
lane?

Christie kisses Pops in the European style of air-kissing
both cheeks.

CHRISTIE

Fine, Pops. Martinis and Botox keep
me young!

Tom chuckles and looks away shyly.

CHRISTIE (CONT'D)

(to Tom)

How she let this one get away, I'll
never know? That's some sweater,
Tom.

Tom admires the sweater before he realizes she is being sarcastic.

TOM
Department holiday party, I...

CHRISTIE
(interrupts)
Teasing, Professor. Becca has told me all about you. In fact, every time we talk, you're all she ever talks about.

She hooks her arm in his.

CHRISTIE (CONT'D)
Pops, I'll have a dry martini with three olives and a lime twist.

Pops rolls his eyes but goes to work.

Becca enters with Hank pouting behind her. She sees Christie working on Tom.

BECCA
Sis! Thanks so much for coming all this way. Was it New York, Tahiti or Boring Boring?

CHRISTIE
Bora Bora, Sis!

Christie repeats the air kisses for Becca.

Pops delivers a martini to Christie who smiles at the drink.

CHRISTIE (CONT'D)
It'll get the job done. Keep 'em coming, Pops.
(to Tom)
Were you just a little too exciting for my aging sister?

Hank and Becca smile politely as Christie chugs the drink and begins to exit with a sultry walk.

CHRISTIE (CONT'D)
Am I in lucky room Number Three again, Hanky? Be a dear and bring up my luggage.

Christie exits.

BECCA
She's never dull. I'll give her
that!

We hear Christie walking up steps.

CHRISTIE (O.S.)
I heard that!

TOM
What room am I in?

HANK
Tonight, room Number 4, across the
hall from Christie.

CHRISTIE (O.S.)
How convenient.

Becca and Hank glare quickly toward Christie's voice, but Hank turns back to Tom.

HANK
We're full up tomorrow night.
Sorry.

We hear a door squeak open upstairs.

CHRISTIE (O.S.)
(yells)
Oh look! I've got a queen bed!

Tom's eyes open widely which Becca sees.

Becca glares at Tom with an "I'd kill you" look.

TOM
Speaking of the dead, I think I'll
go check out the cemetery!

Tom exits as Pops comes to Hank's defense.

POPS
Everyone's dying to see it!

Becca pauses, then yells to Tom.

BECCA
Wait up, Tom. We need to talk!

Becca races out as Hank shakes his head in disgust.

EXT. OLD CEMETERY - AFTERNOON

As they meander, Becca pleads with Tom, who is distracted by the old tombstones. Both maintain half-smiles trying not to appear sad.

BECCA

He's around all the time and he worships me.

Tom stops and gazes into Becca's eyes.

TOM

All I kept thinking about today was staying eight years old with you forever.

Becca laughs and looks around the cemetery.

BECCA

Look around. We get old and die.

Tom looks around and laughs.

TOM

And some die too young. I wonder how many took time out for love?

BECCA

Or adventure. My two years on Wall Street was an adventure. I made enough money to last ten years here, but I couldn't wait to get back.

TOM

I'm glad to have you back in Nevada. I thought I lost you for good!

BECCA

I felt dead back there!

Behind them, the Ghost appears with a wry smile, removes a pipe from his lips and yells.

GHOST

"The reports of my death are greatly exaggerated!"

TOM

The excitement in my life is greatly exaggerated.

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

I went to school for 19 years
straight and landed a teaching job
right away. No adventures. None!

BECCA

I feel so alive as a waitress and
writer in our old hotel in the town
I love.

The Ghost speaks to himself.

GHOST

Nothing to be ashamed of! I loved
it here too!

TOM

You could have been anything!

BECCA

And I chose to move home with Pops
when mom died. I chose a simple
life.

TOM

I chose a convenient one, and never
left Reno! At least you have Hank.

BECCA

And you've got hundreds of young,
impressionable students who depend
on you! You could never be lonely.

They HEAR a voice yelling from the parking lot.

MILLIE

Professor! Professor Larson. It's
me, Millie?

Becca and Tom turn to see Millie running toward them wearing
a tight, shiny, black jacket over a short white skirt, and
wearing white tennis shoes.

TOM

That's Millie Jackson, my Master's
student. She looks cold.

BECCA

Not to me.

Millie gets closer and the Ghost's eyes open widely.

GHOST

Well, I'll be damned.

TOM

Millie, what are you doing here?
You're supposed to be grading
essays?

BECCA

(whispers to Tom)
She looks lonely.

The Ghost begins to stroll away shaking his head in disgust.

GHOST

I'll be in the saloon. "Too much of
anything is bad, but too much good
whiskey is barely enough."

Tom fumbles with the introductions.

TOM

Becca... Becca Stevens, this is my
Millie, I mean my Master's student,
Ms. Millie Jackson.

Becca and Millie stare at Tom while shaking hands.

TOM (CONT'D)

Becca is old... I mean, an old
friend of mine.

Becca glares at Tom then looks around.

BECCA

I was just picking out a plot.

MILLIE

Professor Larson is my graduate
advisor.

BECCA

I hope he didn't advise you on
winter clothing.

MILLIE

(to Tom)
No. No. I raced up here
unannounced, and I'm sorry, but I
had some questions on the student
essays I'm grading, and I couldn't
get through on your cell phone.

Tom checks his cell phone and sees he has no service.

TOM

It's a hectic time right now...

Millie squeezes next to Tom and sounds determined.

MILLIE

I'm cold, I have to get these essays graded for you, and you have to enter the grades into the computer.

Becca smiles at Tom and Millie with a devilish tone.

BECCA

Why don't you two snuggle up in the corner of the saloon and get your work done so that Millie here can get back to Reno?

Tom speaks without thinking.

TOM

That's a great idea, Becca. Millie can follow us back to the hotel.

Tom stares at his phone and begins walking with Millie following him like a puppy.

TOM (CONT'D)

I forgot about the poor service up here.

Becca rolls her eyes in disgust and mumbles as she sees clouds rolling in.

BECCA

How could it get any worse?

INT. OLD HOTEL SALOON - AFTERNOON

Millie and Tom share a corner table in the saloon. Both are drinking coffee. They giggle as they review a student's essay.

MILLIE

Look at this. Robert Mason wrote, "Many believe the ghost of Samuel Clemens haunts the hotels and brothels in Virginia City."

TOM

Give him an "A+" for imagination.

The Ghost looks surprised.

GHOST

There are brothels here?

Christi (drinking a martini) and Becca (drinking white wine) snarl and whisper at the bar as they sneak glances at Tom and Millie. Christie wears the same red dress and heels but not the boa or leather jacket. Pops is behind the bar looking like a referee at a wrestling match.

CHRISTIE

Do you think he's actually attracted to her? Any port in the storm?

BECCA

(upset)

It's against university policies!

CHRISTIE

She's practically throwing herself at him.

BECCA

(in Christie's face)

And you didn't?

CHRISTIE

That's different. And you ain't seen nothing yet!

Christie stands and saunters seductively toward Tom who tries not to look but can't avoid her. She snarls.

CHRISTIE (CONT'D)

This one looks young enough to be your daughter, Professor.

MILLIE

(sarcastically)

If he had me when he was four-years-old.

CHRISTIE

(to Millie)

He has had you then?

Tom stands defensively.

TOM

Nobody's had anybody!

Christie glances back at Becca and Hank.

CHRISTIE

I heard that was the problem.

Becca looks away.

GHOST

So, there isn't a brothel?

MILLIE

I'm a paid teacher's assistant
trying to do my job.

The Ghost looks totally confused.

GHOST

So there is one?

TOM

We've got grades to turn in to the
university.

BECCA

Good luck with that. I've been
trying to get online since we
returned from the cemetery.

HANK (O.S.)

The network's down. Storm coming
in.

BECCA

Uh-oh!

TOM

I've got to turn in grades.

MILLIE

Not until we finish grading these
essays.

POPS

(to Tom and Millie)

Can I make you more coffee?

(to Christie)

No more martini's for you until
after dinner.

The Ghost lifts a near-empty whiskey glass.

GHOST

I suppose I have to help myself.

Christie swaggers back to her barstool as the Ghost imagines
sipping from a full glass of whiskey.

POPS

Becca? More wine? You're celebrating that engagement tonight.

Tom's face immediately changes to disappointment, which Becca and Millie see.

Becca lifts her empty wine glass.

BECCA

Yes, please.

GHOST

Good girl! "Never refuse to do a kindness unless the act would work great injury to yourself, and never refuse to take a drink - under any circumstances."

Pops fills her wine glass.

Hank RACES into the saloon with a wooden cigar box with all the seams lined with melted paraffin wax. The outside of the box reads, "Henry George." He's excited as he squeezes between Christie and Becca at the bar.

HANK

Look what the carpenter found in the back wall of the office. I watched him pry it out!

Tom and Millie gather around Hank, curious.

BECCA

Who's Henry George?

TOM

Cigar maker.

POPS

King of the five-cent cigars!

MILLIE

Looks like paraffin wax or candle wax on the seams.

TOM

Someone wanted it to be waterproof!

HANK

Pops, hand me a knife!

Hank scrapes off the wax along the top seams and pries open the box.

Everyone leans in their heads to take a look. They SEE a folded piece of paper.

Hank begins to slowly unfold the paper.

Everyone SEES a 1920 STOCK CERTIFICATE for 100 shares of Coca-Cola Bottling Company.

HANK (CONT'D)
100 shares of Coca-Cola?

BECCA
There's a receipt left in the box.

Hank examines the small receipt.

HANK
Wingfield Bank. Willian J. Henley.
100 s-h Coca-Cola, one-hundred
times forty dollars per share. Four-
thousand dollars. The month and day
are smudged, but the year is 1928.

Hank paces excited.

HANK (CONT'D)
Great-great uncle Bill on my mom's
side? Where did he get four
thousand dollars in 1928?

TOM
The 1927 bank robbery! Millie's
Master's project is covering it.

MILLIE
I'm researching major criminals in
early Nevada: bank robbers, train
robbers, ruthless madams, and claim
jumpers in the mining days.

The Ghost stands to peek curiously at the certificate.

GHOST
I like robberies... of others of
course.

MILLIE
October 25th, 1927. The first bank
robbery in Virginia City!

All eyes turn to Millie as she whips out her tablet computer and finds her notes on the robbery.

TOM
Tell them, Millie.

MILLIE
George Moore and Charles
Fitzsimmons robbed the Wingfield
Bank at gunpoint.
(more excited)
The teller's name was William James
Henley!

HANK
Great-great Uncle Billy?

TOM
Had to be!

MILLIE
The thieves got away with almost
thirty-four thousand dollars!

Tom points to the stock certificate.

TOM
A big chunk was in stocks and
bonds.

MILLIE
But there was almost ten thousand
dollars in cash, and less than one
thousand was recovered.

BECCA
Were any of the stock certificates
recovered?

MILLIE
Not a single one!

Hank paces and yells.

HANK
Doesn't prove he was a thief! He
could have been an avid saver!

TOM
Bank tellers of the day made
fifteen hundred bucks a year.

MILLIE
He had to eat and pay rent.

Christie grabs Hank's waist to settle him down.

CHRISTIE

I agree with Hank! He could have inherited the money to buy the stock. We don't know! And it really doesn't matter! You have the bill of sale! And that stock could be worth several million dollars today.

Hank speaks softly to Christie and they share a moment that everyone sees, especially Becca.

HANK

Several million dollars?

Tom looks sadly at Becca.

TOM

I'm sure it's much more than that! Turn of the century investors made multiple millions on shares of U.S. Steel. We should check the Internet!

Everyone pulls out smartphones to the amazement of the Ghost until everyone GROANS in disappointment.

HANK

The Internet is down again.

BECCA

Incoming storm.

Now everyone but the Ghost and Pops pace anxiously.

CHRISTIE

We have to know how many times the stock has split, and how many shares this is today. It could be in the thousands!

BECCA

(annoyed)

Shouldn't you know that? You took over my Wall Street job!

Christie is snooty.

CHRISTIE

Yes, but I succeeded. However, I don't know every detail about every stock such as Coca-Cola.

She paces and thinks, and Tom eyes her body as she paces.

TOM

You're a wealthy stockbroker?

Becca snarls at Tom.

BECCA

Yes, she just doesn't have enough going for her!

Christie gets in Becca's face.

CHRISTIE

I'm not a simple stockbroker. My corporation insures big stock companies from fraud!

POPS

I never understood your job.

CHRISTIE

Unscrupulous people make false claims against big corporations all the time. Hot coffee from a drive-through lane spills in your lap. Somebody finds a finger in a hot dog.

MILLIE

Ewww!

CHRISTIE

Most often, it's white-collar crime, embezzlement, or fraud.

Christie points to the stock certificate.

CHRISTIE (CONT'D)

Most old stock certificates are worthless. Wallpaper as we say. But this one looks legit.

(yells at Becca)

What kind of hotel are you running?
I need the Internet!

Millie, frightened of Christie, links arms with Tom.

Hank goes to comfort Christie with a hug, infuriating Becca.

BECCA

Can't we all forget about the stupid stock certificate and hold my engagement party?

Everyone turns to Becca.

POPS
She's right. Where are our
priorities?

Hank breaks off the hug with Christie.

Becca glances at Millie hooking elbows with Tom, so Becca
hooks her elbow with Hank.

Hank gently pushes back from Becca, and grabs the stock
certificate. He has an epiphany.

HANK
John Wagner, my attorney down the
street. He has a better internet
connection. Rebecca, sweetie, I'll
be right back!

Christie yells in excitement.

CHRISTIE
Take me with you. I know what we
need!

Hank races out with Christie following.

Becca turns sad and Tom takes a step to comfort her, but
Millie pulls him back.

MILLIE
How are we going to get your final
grades sent in? We'll have to drive
back to Reno.

Tom gazes at Becca as he speaks to Millie.

TOM
I'm not driving in a storm! The
Internet will come back eventually.

Tom goes to comfort Becca with a hug.

TOM (CONT'D)
Sorry about all of this, Becca.

Millie turns to Pops.

MILLIE
Can I please have three fingers of
whiskey, no ice?

The Ghost takes notice of Millie.

GHOST
Finally! A civilized woman!

INT. OLD HOTEL DINING ROOM - DUSK

Becca stares at a beautiful table set for four people. Christmas garland and lights surround the room.

Tom enters to see Becca's sad face.

TOM
Anything I can do to help?

Becca puts on a smile.

BECCA
Help me reset the table for six. I assume your student-friend will be joining us?

TOM
I'm so sorry. I didn't see this storm coming, and I can't check the weather or road conditions...

BECCA
(interrupting, agitated)
I know, without the Internet!

Tom smiles. Compassionate.

TOM
Everything will work out fine, Becca. It always does.

Becca turns to make eye contact and they share a moment.

BECCA
I've never seen Hank change so quickly by the lure of money! I wanted this night to be special.

Tom moves to pull a second table closer. He sounds upbeat.

TOM
Hey, it will be special! You're getting engaged, you'll get married someday, live in this gorgeous museum of a hotel in a historic western town, and live happily-ever-after.

Tom establishes eye contact with Becca who tries to convince herself.

BECCA
You're right, Tom. You're always
right! I love it here!

They reset the two combined tables for six places.

They admire their finished product as snow falls outside.

Hank and Christie storm into the dining room with huge smiles on their faces and snow in their hair.

HANK
(to Becca)
We might be rich! Very rich!

Becca shrugs.

BECCA
I felt rich before. I'd rather feel
comfortable.

CHRISTIE
John's Internet was out too, but he
did a back-of-the-envelope
calculation...

TOM
(curious)
Without the actual valuations?

Hank moves within kissing range of Becca.

CHRISTIE
Exactly, Tom! He estimates that old
stock certificate of one-hundred
shares could be worth...

HANK
(interrupts, yells)
Over twenty million dollars!

Hank kisses Becca while he lifts her off the ground and spins her around.

Becca's foot kicks the newly set table and sends water glasses and wine glasses flying off the table and crashing to the floor.

BECCA
Let me down!

Hank stops spinning Becca and sets her down.

Millie and Pops RACE in from the saloon.

HANK

Don't worry, Rebecca! We can afford all new glasses, fine china, and anything you want!

Becca pushes back. Aggravated.

BECCA

Have you gone mad? It's a stock certificate! You can't guarantee its value until it's sold!

CHRISTIE

Live a little, Sis!

Hank leaps to Becca and picks her up in his arms again.

HANK

Let's get married!

Hank is grinning. Becca is angry. Everyone else looks on, puzzled.

BECCA

Put me down! We're not even engaged yet, and your gold fever is scaring me!

Hank puts Becca down.

BECCA (CONT'D)

Let's see if we can have a civilized engagement dinner before we go any further!

POPS

Sounds reasonable to me.

BECCA

I'll get a broom and a dustpan and start cleaning up this mess.

Becca takes a step toward the kitchen, but Hank pulls her back.

HANK

You don't have to lift a finger! We saw Jimmy the busboy on the way back from John's office.

(MORE)

HANK (CONT'D)

He's coming in to serve us dinner
and clean up!

BECCA

Jimmy? I thought he was in...

HANK

They let him out for good behavior.

JIMMY (20s), a tough ex-con, enters wearing black jeans and a black hoodie. His hands and neck have eerie tattoos.

Millie's and Tom's eyes open widely.

HANK (CONT'D)

He'll clean up and reset the table
while Pops pours us Champagne in
the saloon!

JIMMY

I got this, Rebecca.
(smirks)
For the extra C-note the boss gave
me, I'll even be on my best
behavior.

Jimmy trudges to the kitchen as the others head to the saloon.

INT. OLD HOTEL SALOON - CONTINUOUS

Pops races behind the bar and uncorks a bottle of Champagne. Hank leads Christie, Tom, Millie, and finally, Becca to the barstools.

Tom offers his barstool to Becca.

TOM

Becca, do you want to sit closer to
Hank?

BECCA

Let me hear what he has to say
first.

Pops serves Becky, then Christie, then Millie, then Tom, and finally Hank who raises his glass.

HANK

To Rebecca.
(they all toast)
(MORE)

HANK (CONT'D)

I was distracted by my newfound wealth with that magnificent stock certificate, but you're the only thing that matters to me besides the hotel... and the stock.

Pops hits his palm to his forehead as Becca cringes.

Hank sees he is off-mark and tries again.

HANK (CONT'D)

Wait! I see what I did there.

BECCA

You called me a "thing."

POPS

And you led off and ended with the stock certificate.

CHRISTIE

(laughs)

And sandwiched my Sis between the stock and the hotel, and the stock again.

Tom looks with pity on Becca, as Millie shakes her head in disgust.

HANK

Wait. Give me a do-over!

Hank raises his glass to Becca again, and everyone follows suit.

HANK (CONT'D)

Even before I found the stock certificate...

Becca frowns.

HANK (CONT'D)

I told you I would surprise you by proposing tonight...

Pops hits his palm to his head again, and Christie bursts out laughing.

The Ghost appears in the back corner of the saloon and shakes his head in disgust at Hank.

GHOST

"It is better to keep your mouth closed and let people think you are a fool than to open it and remove all doubt."

CHRISTIE

That's quite a surprise, Hank.

Christie downs her Champagne.

HANK

Don't worry, Rebecca. I'll make it up to you later tonight!

Christie gets another pour from Pops and strolls next to Becca, as Hank holds out his glass to Pops and listens to Christie.

CHRISTIE

Sis, Hank is a big, strong, devilishly handsome man, who may not be a great public speaker, but he won the lottery when he found you!

Hank turns and gazes at Christie, inadvertently pulling his glass away so Pops pours Champagne on the bar.

BECCA

Aw, thanks, Sis. But I don't want to be someone's lottery ticket or prize pig at the county fair.

Hank is agitated.

HANK

Christie didn't call you a pig, Rebecca!

Hank chugs his Champagne.

HANK (CONT'D)

I promised to show the chef I brought in all the way from Reno around the kitchen for tonight's big feast. And Jimmy's never waited tables so I'll go over the basics with him.

Hank RACES to the kitchen.

BECCA
(sarcastic)
Won't this be fun?

Pops pours more Champagne.

CHRISTIE
Dry martini, with three olives.

BECCA
Make it two, Pops.

TOM
I'll switch to black coffee if I
may. I've gotta get those grades
entered.

MILLIE
Coffee for me too, please.
(gazes at Tom)
White and sweet for me.

Becca sees Millie's pass at Tom.

INT. OLD HOTEL KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Hank paces and whispers loudly in anger.

HANK
What do you mean he's not coming?!

JIMMY
Just what I said. He was on his way
out to his car in the storm,
slipped on ice, and sprained his
knee. Maybe broke it.

HANK
You can cook with a bad knee!

JIMMY
He's in the hospital. Leg is in a
brace, elevated, and he's on pain
meds. I told him he was lucky.
Those pain meds sell for a ton of
money on the street.

HANK
What am I gonna do now?

JIMMY

For another C-note, I'll cook for the six of you. I got a couple of good recipes.

Hank pulls out his wallet and gives Jimmy a one-hundred-dollar bill.

HANK

You sure you can pull this off?

Jimmy kisses the bill and puts it in his front pocket.

JIMMY

I got this, boss! Give me thirty minutes.

Hank doesn't look convinced as he throws his arms up in disgust and exits while speaking.

HANK

I'll spring for another round of drinks!

INT. OLD HOTEL DINING ROOM - EVENING

The dining room is fully decorated with garland and Christmas lights around the windows. There is soft lighting.

Hank, Becca, Tom, Christie, Millie, and Pops enter the dining room to see a beautifully set table. Each setting has a dinner plate with salad plate on top, salad fork, dinner fork, and dessert fork, a steak knife and dinner knife, cloth napkin, and wine and water glasses. Formal.

HANK

Wow. Jimmy must have gone to charm school.

Becca glares at Hank.

BECCA

After the Internet came back on, I set the table while you and Christie investigated Coca-Cola stock history and current price!

HANK

We didn't know how long it might be on...

Becca glares at Tom and Millie.

BECCA

And you were huddling in the corner
doing school work!

TOM

We had to submit the final grades.
It's really important to the
students.

BECCA

Tonight was really important to me!

CHRISTIE

The Internet is out again if that
makes you...

BECCA

Cram it, Sis!

TOM

Your table looks beautiful.

MILLIE

Yes, it does.

CHRISTIE

Very New Yorkish, except for the
old dishes.

Pops drops his head sadly.

POPS

Those were your mom's favorite
dishes.

Becca walks slowly around the table.

BECCA

I was saving them for this special
occasion.

Pops starts to tear up and he turns and starts to exit.

POPS

I put the sign on the front door,
"Closed for Private Party." I'd
better make sure it's still there
after the wind and snow!

Pops races out wiping his tears.

Tom gives Becca a quick hug. Hank sees it.

TOM

Becca, I remember your mom fondly.

Hank nudges Tom out of the way and hugs Becca for a longer time.

HANK

I didn't get a chance to meet her,
but she would have loved this place
if she wasn't dead, that is.

Becca looks up at Hank and smiles.

BECCA

Yes, she would have loved it.

Hank grabs the seat at the head of the table leaving Becca standing behind her chair next to him.

Tom, on the other side of the table, pulls two chairs out for Christie and Millie, before starting to approach Becca.

Hank hops out of his seat and pulls the chair out for Becca, as Pops returns to take the seat opposite Hank (leaving Tom the seat next to Becca).

Hank sits like a king on a throne.

HANK

I've got good news and bad news.
The good news is, our first
estimates of the Coca-Cola stock
certificate were way low...

BECCA

(interrupts)
I'd rather not talk about...

HANK

(interrupts, ignoring
Becca)
The bad news is, the chef I hired
from Reno slipped on the ice and
couldn't make it here tonight. But
don't worry, Jimmy says he's got us
covered.

Jimmy enters wearing a black muscle-shirt and a greasy apron. His tattoo sleeves are eye-catchers. He carries a gray bus tray for clearing tables.

JIMMY

I'm almost done cooking.

Millie is smitten, and can't take her eyes off Jimmy as he starts collecting the salad plates, salad forks, dessert forks, and steak knives from the table.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

I gotta make room on the table.

Becca looks disappointed at Hank.

HANK

What's on the menu for this
monumentous occasion?

The Ghost appears at his regular corner table in the dining room. He's smoking a cigar and enjoying the company.

GHOST

Monumentous? Did you mean momentous
or monstrous?

JIMMY

Some guy at the county jail called
it macaronis et fromage.

MILLIE

(swoons)
He speaks French.

TOM

Macaroni and cheese?

Jimmy turns and glares at Tom.

JIMMY

Not when I add wieners!

Jimmy appears serious and potentially violent.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

And anybody who complained in
lockup got stabbed in the thigh
with a fork!

Silence. The Ghost sits up and takes notice.

Jimmy bursts out laughing.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Just kidding. I'd never do that!

Everyone chuckles nervously.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Except one night when the cook puts
a toy wedding ring on one of the
wieners in the mac 'n cheese and
served a bowl to a guard!

(laughs maniacally)

Man, you should have seen her face!

Jimmy disappears with the bus bin into the kitchen.

Everyone is at a loss for words.

MILLIE

(excited)

I'm intrigued.

Tom stares at Millie, perplexed.

TOM

About Jimmy?

MILLIE

My entire thesis is about good
people turning bad in early Nevada
forced by adverse economic
circumstances.

Becca smiles excitedly.

BECCA

Like failed gold and silver miners?

MILLIE

Exactly! Most people would rather
steal or rob than go hungry! That's
human nature!

POPS

I'd have to be very desperate.

Christie laughs and turns to Pops.

CHRISTIE

When your teacher and counseling
salary didn't pay the bills, you
begged Hank for a part-time
bartender job.

POPS

(laughs)

At least I don't rob banks or
insurance companies.

Christie glares at Pops.

CHRISTIE

I don't steal! I make insurance companies pay what they legally owe!

POPS

So we all have to pay higher insurance premiums.

BECCA

That's why I quit!

Tom taps on his wine glass, vying for attention.

TOM

(smiles at Becca)
You had a conscience!

CHRISTIE

You didn't have the stomach for it!
They keep promoting me!

Hank taps on his glass and shatters it.

Everyone stares at Hank who forces a smile.

HANK

Let's remember why we're here tonight...

Jimmy enters with a smile and a giant cauldron which he sets in the middle of the table. A huge ladle sticks out of it.

The Ghost comes over for a closer look.

Everyone is afraid to speak as Jimmy scoops out large portions on the mac 'n cheese 'n wieners on the plates. He is very proud of his work.

HANK (CONT'D)

Looks hearty, Jimmy!

GHOST

Looks heart-attacky, Jimmy!

Everyone begins exposing the wieners from the noodles looking for rings.

GHOST (CONT'D)

Ah. They remembered the ring story.

JIMMY

Don't get too full. I found a nice
cake in the fridge, but don't
worry. I left some for you.

Jimmy disappears into the kitchen.

Pops stands and whispers.

POPS

Who'd like some wine?

Everyone immediately raises a hand.

Becca forces a laugh as Pops exits to the saloon.

BECCA

Not exactly how I imagined it, but
I'm sure I'll remember this night
forever!

HANK

(smiles)

That's what I was going for.
Building memories.

TOM

(chuckles)

And no one got stabbed in the thigh
with a fork, yet.

The Ghost pretends to pat Becca and Tom on the back.

GHOST

"Love seems the swiftest, but it is
the slowest of all growths."

EXT. OLD HOTEL - NIGHT

Becca stands alone in the cold, fully wrapped in a long coat
and wool cap. The snow is falling but Becca tries to stay
positive.

She looks at the Christmas lights around the entrance.

Tom steps out and surprises her. He's wearing his ugly
Christmas sweater.

TOM

There you are!
(upbeat)
It could have been worse.

BECCA

(chuckles)

That's the understatement of the decade.

They chuckle warmly.

TOM

I thought it was funny that Jimmy didn't notice how everyone returned their mac 'n fingers to the cauldron.

BECCA

He congratulated himself for making enough for the week.

TOM

Why don't you come back to the saloon and watch Millie try to pick up Jimmy?

BECCA

Or Christie trying to steal my fiancée's stock certificate?

Tom looks around and shivers.

TOM

Are you out here looking for a savior? Three wise men? Saint Hank?

Becca laughs heartily.

BECCA

I'm learning to make compromises. I'd settle for one wise man or a donkey that could carry me away from here!

TOM

(serious)

Hank looks nervous. I think he's waiting to pop the question.

BECCA

(laughs)

Like a swollen wiener in a bowl of macaroni? How romantic!

Tom puts an arm around Becca and begins to guide her inside.

BECCA (CONT'D)
Mark Twain said, "Give every day
the chance to become the most
beautiful of your life."

They step back inside.

Across the street, we see the Ghost laughing smoking his
cigar. He looks into the camera (fourth wall).

GHOST
Hey, that was my line!

INT. OLD HOTEL SALOON - CONTINUOUS

Jimmy and Millie are at a back table, whispering and
giggling.

Jimmy frequently glances at Christie who has her hand on
Hank's back.

JIMMY
What's with Becca's sister hitting
on Hank?

Millie leans in closer to Jimmy's ear.

MILLIE
I think she's after his newly found
stock certificate, more than she's
after him.

JIMMY
Stock certificate?

Jimmy and Millie carry on their secret conversation as Becca
and Tom enter the saloon with a dusting of snow on them.

Christie removes her hand from Hank's back and she takes a
half-step back.

TOM
Still snowing.

BECCA
And still no phone service inside
or out.

Hank steps up to hug Becca.

HANK
Who else would you call? Everyone
important to you is right here!

Hank awkwardly maneuvers to an open area around him.
He clears his throat, louder and longer than normal.

HANK (CONT'D)
I have an announcement to make.

Everyone becomes silent and they look on.

HANK (CONT'D)
First off, I need to admit that our
engagement dinner didn't go exactly
as planned.

Hank sees that Jimmy is shifting in his seat and getting
angrier as he speaks.

HANK (CONT'D)
What I mean is, the food was so
good, I didn't get a chance to
propose.

Becca looks perplexed at Hank who twitches nervously.

BECCA
Why don't we...

HANK
(interrupts)
Elope! Great idea, Rebecca!

Hank begins to pace and speak fast, loud, and without
thinking.

BECCA
What?

HANK
Don't you see? We are going to be
so freaken' rich that we should
just cut our losses and move to the
Big Apple.

Becca steps back, caught totally off guard.

CHRISTIE
New York? Yes! We could all be
together!

Hank glances at Christie but doesn't respond to her directly.

Tom sees that Becca is stunned. He takes a step toward her
but then freezes as Hank yells out.

HANK

Let's skip this whole engagement
crap and get married.

He paces around waving his arms, surprised by his epiphany.

HANK (CONT'D)

We'll elope.

(beat)

Nope. Better yet, we'll get married
right here in town. Tomorrow!

(beat)

Wait! We'll get married on the
Virginia and Truckee Railroad! High
noon! I'll get a Justice of the
Peace like in the Old West!

Hank stops to gaze into Becca's eyes.

HANK (CONT'D)

You love that train!

Becca smiles for the first time in a while.

BECCA

I do.

(beat)

I do love that train.

Hank picks Becca up and swirls her around.

HANK

You heard it, everyone! Rebecca
said, "I do!"

Hank sets Becca down softly and gives her a big kiss on the
lips.

Christie leads the cheering.

CHRISTIE

How romantic!

Pops sees Becca's smile and leaps to hug her as Christie hugs
Hank.

Tom and Millie are stunned but forcing smiles.

MILLIE

That was fast!

Tom steps up to the happy couple.

TOM
 Congratulations, you two!

Becca's head is still spinning.

BECCA
 Wow. Spontaneous! See what I mean,
 Tom. Tomorrow?

HANK
 I hope our landline telephone still
 works, I've got a lot of
 arrangements to make.

Hank puts his arm around Tom and leads him two steps away.

HANK (CONT'D)
 You're staying for the wedding I
 hope. Hey, you can be my best man.
 (whispers)
 You always know the right things to
 say, Tom.
 (beat)
 And, if you could write me a few
 wedding vows, that would be great.
 Nothing too mushy. Keep it short.
 We'll want to get on to the
 honeymoon.
 (nods to Millie)
 Maybe your girlfriend can take a
 few pictures on her phone.

Hank races to the Registration Desk before Tom can answer.

Tom turns to Becca to see Christie hugging her tighter than
 ever before.

CHRISTIE
 Looks like you're landing a husband
 before me, Sis. Lucky gal.

BECCA
 Thanks, Sis, but I...

CHRISTIE
 (interrupts)
 He's everything a woman dreams of.
 (whispers in her ear)
 I assume he's good in the sack. Big
 strong arms. That's for sure! I'll
 see if he needs my help making
 arrangements.

Christie races off to the Registration Desk.

Jimmy pulls Millie back to the corner table and whispers to her.

JIMMY

My Boss keeps telling everyone he's richer than God.

(seducing her)

Tell me everything you know about this stock certificate of his!

MILLIE

Why?

JIMMY

So I can ask him for a big enough raise!

Millie teases Jimmy.

MILLIE

I also know a lot about bank robberies and train robberies...

JIMMY

(interrupts, excited)

Like Jesse James?

Millie pulls him closer to whisper. Jimmy is all ears.

Tom takes a step toward Becca. He's surprised when she leaps to hug him.

Millie glances up to see them hugging but Jimmy grabs her hand to regain her attention for more whispering.

Becca and Tom also whisper.

TOM

I've been keeping something of yours.

BECCA

(smiles)

A lock of my hair? A full scalp? A lock on your door?

TOM

It's in my briefcase. I'll get it.

Becca's eyes open up in shock, then she playfully slaps his hand.

BECCA

You fetch it. I'll meet you in the dining room with two cups of black coffee.

Tom smiles.

TOM

Or,
(laughs)
I could start drafting Hank's wedding vows.

BECCA

(snooty)
I'll write his vows, thank you very much.

Tom gives Becca a wry smile and races away.

INT. OLD HOTEL DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Becca writes in a notebook as she sits at the table frequented by the Ghost.

The Ghost appears several feet away and approaches Becca with a snicker.

GHOST

Always writing short stories but never sharing them. Are you some kind of literary virgin?

Becca stares out the window as the Ghost eyes the notebook.

GHOST (CONT'D)

I vow to remain best friends forever? Provide emotional support always? To maximize our time together? To dream of you when we're apart?

The Ghost nods approvingly, then leans and whispers to Becca.

GHOST (CONT'D)

Are those his vows or yours?

Becca HEARS Tom coming down the stairs and she crumples up the page and shoves it in her pocket.

The Ghost steps back as an observer.

Tom carries a typed short story titled, "Becca's Bottles," and rests it gently on the table.

TOM
Remember this?

BECCA
Like it was yesterday. You were applying for a Ph.D. program and you needed to submit a writing sample. You panicked.

TOM
You bailed me out.

BECCA
"Write what you know," a great author said.

GHOST
(smirks)
I said that, but I'm not so great.

Becca thumbs through the pages quickly and slides the story back to Tom as he takes a seat.

The Ghost stares at the short story cover page with some interest.

TOM
It got me into my Ph.D. program. I have you to thank for it!

Becca puts a hand on Tom's hand.

BECCA
I believe you could have written it! You taught me more about love than Romeo and Juliet.

The Ghost snickers and lights a cigar with a stick match.

TOM
But you were always the writer. It's the way you told the story later without missing a beat. One message of undying friendship floating south on helium balloons.
(beat)
Until it got stuck in a tree.

Becca laughs.

TOM (CONT'D)

You wrote the messages and crammed them into the plastic water bottles.

BECCA

You sprang for the balloons.

They both laugh.

TOM

One bottle heading north to Pyramid Lake on the Truckee River until our little wooden raft hit a rock and disintegrated.

They chuckle warmly.

TOM (CONT'D)

I worried about attaching them to the trains with duct tape. Your idea as I recall!

BECCA

One heading west to San Francisco, and one heading east to Chicago.

Tom puts his hand on top of Becca's hand.

TOM

I thought for sure both trains would get into horrible wrecks. Yet your retelling the tale was masterful. You remembered how each bottle contained a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

BECCA

(sad, questioning)
And not one of them came back to us?

TOM

That didn't deter you from sending up a few more helium balloons.

Their eyes meet and they share a moment.

BECCA

I thought I'd become a professional writer and we would travel the world seeking our messages in the water bottles.

Tom laughs and smiles warmly.

TOM

I thought we'd get arrested for
littering plastic bottles.

Becca laughs and nods in agreement.

BECCA

I suppose that was wrong. But I'm
not wrong about still wanting to be
a writer and traveling the world!

Silence.

They smile as the Ghost whispers to Becca

GHOST

Kiss him, you idiot. You're not
married yet!

Tom can't stop himself from moving closer to Becca.

Tension mounts as he gets closer.

Becca looks deeply into Tom's eyes and they share a moment.

Hank and Christie burst into the dining room and startle them
apart.

Becca moves her hands back, and scoots her chair back, as Tom
turns over her short story.

HANK

Got my vows written yet?

TOM

Working on them now with Becca's
help.

CHRISTIE

Good news, Sis! The railroad will
give you a half-hour on the train
to get married.

BECCA

Wow. That's fast.

HANK

Not as fast as I'll be on our
honeymoon.

Everyone stares at Hank, so he laughs.

CHRISTIE
Just kidding, right?

Christie laughs and wraps her arm in Hank's.

BECCA
(laughs late)
Let's hope so.

Millie walks into the dining room with Jimmy trailing.

HANK
We're gonna grab leftover cake in
the kitchen. Wanna join us?

Becca and Tom stand.

BECCA
I'll go.

TOM
Me too.

MILLIE
I'd love some cake.

JIMMY
You guys go ahead. I had mine.

Everyone but Jimmy exits to the kitchen. Jimmy turns and races to the Registration Desk. We HEAR draws opening and paper shuffling.

The Ghost casually reaches over and picks up Becca's short story. Opens it to page one.

The Ghost nods in approval and turns to page two, as we HEAR more papers shuffling and drawers opening and closing.

GHOST
(chuckles)
Becca's writing reminds me of me as
a young man, but I like her, and I
didn't care much for me!
(turns the page)
Unlike me, it looks like she
started out as a gifted writer!

The Ghost turns another page, and we hear Jimmy GROAN.

GHOST (CONT'D)
Why didn't she become a writer, and
why did he ever want to become a
teacher?

GHOST (V.O.)

"It is noble to teach oneself, but still nobler to teach others - and less trouble."

The Ghost looks up and around.

GHOST

I forgot I said that!

INT. OLD HOTEL KITCHEN - SAME

Hank, Christie, Becca, Tom, and Millie eat cake and laugh. A half-empty bottle of whiskey is nearest to Hank.

BECCA

Those train cars are cold this time of year. I'd better wear a coat!

HANK

I'll bring the hangover.

Christie slugs Hank playfully on the arm.

CHRISTIE

You mean a coat hanger in case she wants to take off and hang up her coat.

Hank looks confused.

HANK

Yes. That must be what I meant.
(laughs and chugs whiskey)
Hey, don't judge me. This is my bachelor party!

MILLIE

Maybe... never mind.

TOM

What, Millie?

MILLIE

Maybe this is Rebecca's bachelorette party!

Becca smiles and pats Millie's back.

BECCA

Call me Becca. The only one who calls me Rebecca is Hank.

Jimmy enters the kitchen looking around.

HANK

I've always been a formal person.
 (takes a drink)
 Besides, Tom always called her
 Becca and I wanted to be different.

JIMMY

You couldn't be more different,
 Boss. Hand me that whiskey.

HANK

It's a violation of your parole,
 isn't it?

Silence.

Jimmy and Hank burst out laughing, as everyone else chuckles nervously.

Hank passes the bottle to Jimmy.

HANK (CONT'D)

Save some for Rebecca. It's her
 party too.

BECCA

No more for me tonight.

Hank turns to Becca and plants a slobbering kiss on her lips which she resists.

BECCA (CONT'D)

Maybe you should go a little
 lighter too, Henry. Big day
 tomorrow.

Hank is shocked.

HANK

You only call me Henry when you're
 mad at me.
 (slurs his words)
 But how can you be mad at me for
 making you rich! You won't have to
 wait tables or clean rooms ever
 again!

Becca glares at Hank.

BECCA

I think I'll turn in.

HANK

In my room, Numerous Unam, right?

BECCA

No! It's Numeral Uno, but it's bad luck to see the bride the day of the ceremony!

Hank grabs Becca by the arm, gently, but she doesn't like it and pulls away.

HANK

Oh! I get it! Sleeping in your room tonight. Numerous Two-oh. Saving yourself for the honeymoon. Is that it?

Becca shakes her head in disgust.

CHRISTIE

Don't get upset, Sis! Hank has done a bit too much celebrating tonight, but he'll be okay tomorrow.

TOM

I think I'll turn in too. Is there a room for Millie?

HANK

(burps)

There would have been if Rebecca joined me?

Christie steps closer to Tom and smiles seductively.

CHRISTIE

Maybe the good professor will have to share his tiny twin bed in Number 4 with his student-friend.

Millie looks away.

CHRISTIE (CONT'D)

(snickers)

That won't sit right with your university!

TOM

I have no intention...

BECCA

(interrupts, defensive)

Tom didn't know she was coming up to Virginia City!

Christie turns to Millie.

CHRISTIE

Millie, you seem attracted to bad men. Is that what attracted you to Jimmy and...

(winks at Tom)

Tom?

MILLIE

It's my thesis topic, not my pre-occupation.

Jimmy takes a swig of whiskey.

JIMMY

The Boss said I could sleep on the kitchen floor here 'til I get a place of my own.

Becca turns to Hank, angry.

BECCA

Did he now?

Hank is in a stupor.

TOM

I'll sleep in the saloon if I can get a pillow and a blanket. And Millie can have my room, Number 4.

Hank begins to stagger out.

HANK

I'm going to bed.

Becca is upset.

BECCA

Goodnight, Henry.

HANK (O.C.)

See!

Tom hands his key to Millie.

MILLIE

Thanks, Professor.

Becca turns to Tom.

BECCA

I'll bring you down blankets and a pillow.

JIMMY

What about me?

Becca snarls at Jimmy.

BECCA

Professor Larson paid one-hundred-twenty dollars for the night to sleep on the floor of the saloon.

Jimmy glares at Tom and sounds angry.

JIMMY

Fine! I'll be in the kitchen.

Becca and Millie head upstairs.

INT. OLD HOTEL HALLWAY - NIGHT

The hallway is deserted and dimly lit. Scanning the left side of the hallway we see room numbers 5 (Pops), 3 (Christie), and 1 (Hank at the far end). On the right side of the hallway is a Storage Room, and room numbers 4 (Millie) and 2 (Becca).

Christie opens her door a crack and peeks up and down the dark hallway.

She steps out wearing a short, sexy nightgown and holding her smartphone.

She quietly shuts her door and tiptoes down the hallway.

INT. OLD HOTEL SALOON - CONTINUOUS

Christie enters the saloon in time to see Tom take off his tacky Christmas sweater. He has a nice fitted shirt underneath and looks handsome and well built.

Christie admires him for a moment.

CHRISTIE

I thought you'd never take that sweater off.

Tom turns surprised to see Christie in a sexy nightgown.

TOM

I... I...

Christie knows he likes what he sees.

CHRISTIE

I wanted to remind you. My offer still stands. We can share my big queen bed.

Tom gets nervous and jittery.

TOM

Oh no! What would Becca think?!

CHRISTIE

We could put a blanket between us or sleep head to toe.

Tom sweats.

TOM

I'll be fine here. Becca's going to bring me a blanket and a pillow.

CHRISTIE

Okay, relax, big fella. I only came to tell you the Internet came on. I know you had teaching obligations.

(smirks)

And I don't mean with Millie!

Tom smiles.

TOM

Thanks for the alert. I should check to see if all my grades got registered.

He takes out his laptop computer.

Christie can't believe she is being ignored.

CHRISTIE

I must be losing my touch.

Tom is busy on his computer and ignores Christie.

The Ghost appears with a glass of whiskey in one hand and a cigar in the other. He sets down the whiskey to put an arm around Tom as he drools over Christie as she turns seductively to exit.

CHRISTIE (CONT'D)

Goodnight, Professor. Don't stay up too late.

(MORE)

CHRISTIE (CONT'D)

(giggles)

Thinking of me, that is.

Tom's eyes never leave the computer.

TOM

Goodnight, Christie. Sleep tight.

GHOST

When I said, "Give every day the chance to become the most beautiful of your life," I meant for the nights also!

INT. OLD HOTEL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Christie tiptoes down the hallway and enters her room quietly.

As soon as Christie's door closes, Becca's door opens.

Becca exits her room wearing a cute black v-neck mid-thigh nightgown. She clutches two blankets and a pillow as she passes Millie's room heading downstairs to the saloon.

As she passes Millie's room. Millie peeks out her door and glares at Becca. We can see that Millie is wearing a T-shirt and sweatpants.

Millie shuts her door quietly, and Becca turns back quickly but sees nothing.

Hank exits his room with only a bath towel around his waist and holding a bottle of wine and two bathroom glasses. He looks down the empty hallway before taking one step across the hallway to Becca's room and taps lightly on her door. We see that Hank has a blue-felt ring box in his hand.

He whispers.

HANK

Rebecca, it's me. I forgot to give you something tonight.

He taps lightly again.

HANK (CONT'D)

Probably taking a dump. I'll surprise the hell out of her.

Hank opens the door, enters, and shuts the door behind him.

CUT TO:

INT. OLD HOTEL SALOON - CONTINUOUS

Becca enters the saloon to see Tom sitting at a table working on his laptop computer. The Ghost stands behind him staring at the electronic contraption curiously.

BECCA

I brought you the blankets and pillow.

Tom gazes up at Becca and is smitten.

TOM

Thanks, Becca. You didn't have to do that.

BECCA

You didn't have to give your room to your student-friend.

Becca puts the blankets and pillow on the bar and leans close to Tom.

BECCA (CONT'D)

What are you working on this late?

TOM

The Internet came back on so I'm making sure all my grades got sent in okay.

Becca hugs his shoulders and leaves her hands on them.

At the far entrance to the saloon, we see Jimmy peeking in at Becca and Tom. He smirks, shakes his head in disgust, and tiptoes to the staircase.

BECCA

You're a dedicated teacher.

He reaches up a hand and pats Becca's hand.

TOM

You'll be a dedicated writer someday.

BACK TO:

INT. OLD HOTEL HALLWAY - SAME

Jimmy enters the hallway where he SEES and HEARS Christie's doorknob turn. He jumps into the Storage Room and shuts the door behind him quietly.

Christie opens her door, peeks out of her room, and looks up and down the empty hallway.

She exits her room still wearing a short, sexy nightgown and holding her smartphone. She is very excited. She tiptoes down to Hank's room, taps on the door.

No answer, so she whispers.

CHRISTIE

Hank! Hank! Internet's back up and
you're not going to believe this!

She taps again. No answer.

We see the Storage Room door open up a crack, where Jimmy peeks out to see Christie tapping on Hank's door for the third time.

CHRISTIE (CONT'D)

The stock certificate is worth \$57
million!

Hank opens Becca's door, still dressed in the towel and holding the bottle of wine and two glasses. His eyes open widely at the sight of Christie.

Hank jumps up and down on his tippy toes to remain quiet.

HANK

\$57 million! \$57 million!

He jumps across the hallway and pushes Christie into his room, putting a finger to his lips to quiet her. We see the ring box in his hand as he enters the room and shuts the door quietly behind them.

Jimmy exits the Storage Room, quietly tiptoes down to Christie's room mumbling.

JIMMY

I bet she has it!

Jimmy is halfway in the door, when Millie's door opens a crack, and she sees Jimmy entering Christie's room.

Jimmy shuts Christie's door quietly, as Millie's door opens she glares at Christie's room. She quietly stomps one foot on the floor before reentering her room and quietly shutting the door.

CUT TO:

INT. OLD HOTEL SALOON - CONTINUOUS

Tom and Becca sit on opposite sides of the table, with the Ghost in the middle with a puzzled look on his face. Tom and Becca avoid eye contact.

BECCA

Hank could walk in on us any second!

GHOST

I doubt that!

Tom giggles.

TOM

I admit it doesn't look good the night before your wedding.

The Ghost whispers in Becca's ear.

GHOST

Just tell him!

TOM

I'm still having difficulty processing it all.

The Ghost hits his palm to his forehead.

Becca turns to see his face and they share a moment.

Becca smiles, then changes to a worried look.

BECCA

So am I. But he adores me. He really does.

Tom half-smiles.

TOM

Who doesn't?

Becca slowly begins to exit to the stairs.

Tom stands and leaps to her, gently grabbing her hand.

TOM (CONT'D)

I haven't started writing Hank's vows. I can't do it!

BECCA

(giggles)

Just tell him you couldn't do it
because you wouldn't know what to
say either.

Becca winks at Tom as the Ghost shakes his head in
disappointment.

Becca exits to the stairs.

BACK TO:

INT. OLD HOTEL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Becca tiptoes past the Storage Room and Millie's room.

Millie peeks out as Becca is in the room and quietly shutting
her door.

Millie tiptoes out of the room wearing only the T-shirt and
undies. She tiptoes down the hallway and down the stairs.

Jimmy quietly opens Christie's door and peeks up and down the
hallway but sees nothing.

He steps across the hallway, taps on Millie's door, and
whispers.

JIMMY

Millie, it's me! I need your help.

No answer, so he taps again.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Are you asleep?

Jimmy checks the doorknob and finds it unlocked, so he lets
himself in and shuts the door quietly.

INT. OLD HOTEL SALOON - CONTINUOUS

Tom stands on his blankets in his underwear as if facing a
bride, which is really his pillow in a barstool.

The Ghost stands behind the pillow pretending to be a shy
bride, except he's smoking a cigar, sipping a glass of
whiskey, and wearing a big, fake smile.

Millie stands in the dark at the far entrance to the saloon
and peeks in to see Tom reciting vows to no one.

TOM

I vow to remain best friends
forever, provide emotional support
always, maximize our time together,
and dream of you when we're apart.

Millie steps slowly up to Tom, but pulls up short to check
him out in his underwear, while the Ghost checks out her.

MILLIE

Hi, Professor, I don't mean to
disturb you.

Tom turns to Millie embarrassed.

TOM

I was just...

MILLIE

(interrupts)
I couldn't take your room upstairs,
being your subordinate.

TOM

I see you as my peer. It's the
honorable thing to do.

Neither of them sees Becca tiptoeing to the entrance of the
saloon and peeking in. She hears Tom's last comment. She
holds two more blankets and a pillow in her hands.

The Ghost, behind Tom, tries to wave Becca into the saloon
and usher Millie out, but no one sees him.

MILLIE

I came down to tell you the
Internet is working if you wanted
to see if the grades got in.

BECCA & GHOST (V.O.)

(whispering, appalled)
Dressed like that?

TOM

I checked on the grades.
Everything's in.

Millie steps closer and puts a hand on Tom's arm.

MILLIE

And what you said when I first came
in really impacted me.

Millie and Tom share a moment. They don't see that Becca has turned around and headed back upstairs. The Ghost looks very disappointed. Becca can still hear them in the saloon.

TOM

Thanks, Millie. That means a lot to me.

Becca is gone. The Ghost paces around the saloon in a tirade!

MILLIE

I guess I'd better get to sleep.
Big day tomorrow.

Tom is sad as Millie turns to exit.

TOM

Yeah. Big day tomorrow.

Millie stops before exiting the saloon and turns to Tom with a smile.

MILLIE

By the way. Those vows you said were perfect! Any girl in her right mind would say yes to that.

Tom half-smiles as Millie heads upstairs.

INT. OLD HOTEL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Millie is almost to her door when she sees the handle turning.

Her door opens and she sees Jimmy about to exit.

She looks very sternly at Jimmy, whose eyes open in fright. Millie pauses, then pushes him back into the room. She whispers.

MILLIE

Uh uh! You're not going anywhere!

Millie enters and shuts the door quietly.

The door to Pops's room opens and he peeks up and down the hall and sees no one.

POPS

I think this place is haunted!

Pops quietly shuts the door.

INT. OLD HOTEL BEDROOM - NIGHT

Becca lays in bed sadly staring up at the ceiling. The Ghost is in the darkest corner of the room. He's disappointed.

GHOST

"There are several good protections against temptation, but the surest is cowardice."

Becca's eyes are wide awake. Her hands clutch her old notebook, "My Stories," to her chest.

INT. OLD HOTEL DINING ROOM - MORNING

Becca is the first one seated at a table set for seven. She stares out the window while sipping black coffee. Becca is nicely dressed in upscale outdoor clothing, but with a sad face.

In the corner table, the Ghost sips black coffee and reads the morning newspaper, glaring over at Becca.

GHOST

Did you hear me last night, Becca?! I said, "There are several good protections against temptation, but the surest is cowardice."

Becca spins angrily to the table that appears empty to her.

BECCA

I know what you said! I mean, wrote. Ever since mom died...

Becca glances out the window disgusted with herself.

BECCA (CONT'D)

Maybe I never had the courage that you had, or any of your characters for that matter. Tom Sawyer, Huck Finn.

(beat)

And maybe I haven't had the courage to share my stories with the world!

Becca stands and glares at her typed short story that is still on the table.

BECCA (CONT'D)

I know your writing career took off after that short story of yours was published!

(MORE)

BECCA (CONT'D)

"The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" wasn't just good... it was legendary!

Pops bursts in from the kitchen with a near-empty pot of coffee and interrupts.

POPS

Talking to yourself again?

Becca is startled and embarrassed. She sits back down.

BECCA

I guess so. Not fully caffeinated yet, Pops.

Pops empties the coffee in Becca's cup.

POPS

It sounded to me like you were talking to your mother again.

Pops glances at the short story on the table.

POPS (CONT'D)

She thought your story was great, and so did I. I read it this morning.

Becca glares at her dad as she fetches the short story, folds it three times, and shoves it in her back pocket. She mumbles.

BECCA

I didn't know it would separate Tom and me after his Ph.D. more than it would bring us together.

Pops pauses to stare compassionately at his daughter.

Behind Becca, the Ghost holds out his coffee cup and is totally ignored, as Tom enters from the saloon. Tom still wears his tacky Christmas sweater.

TOM

Morning, Becca.

BECCA

Morning, Tom. Where's Millie? I thought she'd be with you?

Tom is stunned.

TOM
Why does everyone assume...?

BECCA
(interrupting)
I'm sorry, I thought I saw her
trampsing around the saloon last
night in a tiny T-shirt...

POPS
I'll get more coffee.

Pops races to the kitchen.

GHOST
Trampsing. I like that word.
Finding the right word is like...

TOM
(interrupts, angry)
She tramped right upstairs
before...

The Ghost puts down his empty coffee cup, dejected.

BECCA
(compassionately)
I'm sorry. I was... um... coming
downstairs with my pillow and two
blankets... to keep you company...
like the campouts we had in our
backyards.

Tom is taken aback and speaks softly.

TOM
That would have made my life, I
mean, my night. I mean, my life!

Becca gazes into Tom's eyes and they share a moment, before
Hank storms in and yells toward the kitchen.

HANK
Pops, we can use more coffee out
here!

Hank speaks to Becca without making eye contact, which she
notices.

HANK (CONT'D)
There's my bride-to-be!

Pops races in with a full pot of coffee. He pours Becca and
Hank each a cup of coffee.

POPS

Where's Jimmy? He was supposed to help serve breakfast!

HANK

Asleep in the kitchen somewhere! Look in the pantry. That lazy son-of-a...

POPS

(interrupts)
I'll check!

Pops races out, as Hank looks back to Becca.

HANK

I might have had a bit too much to drink last night. You'll have to forgive me.

Christie trudges in, still wearing her sexy nightgown, but her hair is a mess, she's without makeup, and her disposition is awful as she stares at her smartphone.

Everyone stares at Christie, but she doesn't make eye contact with anyone, which Becca sees.

BECCA

Rough night, Sis?

Christie looks away, then yells back to the kitchen.

CHRISTIE

Pops, I need my vanilla latte, no cream, stat!

(to Hank)
We have a problem!

Hank gets nervous and fidgets, and tries to whisper to himself, but everyone hears him.

HANK

About last night?

Becca turns angrily to Hank.

BECCA

What happened between you two...?

Jimmy creeps downstairs and eavesdrops before being seen.

Christie speaks to her smartphone, avoiding eye contact.

CHRISTIE

(interrupts)

Last night, the Internet came on long enough for me to find a story of a woman who bought a 1929 Coca-Cola stock certificate at a garage sale for five bucks and it was worth \$130 million today, but that was ten years ago and there's no record of a settlement.

Becca laughs and scoffs.

BECCA

That's a shame.

HANK

(to Becca)

Last night, that's what I told Christie...

Becca stands and is irate.

BECCA

Last night?

Hank turns away and Christie comes unglued.

CHRISTIE

It was big news! I had to tell him.

Hank points fingers at Becca and Tom.

HANK

You two were having impure thoughts.

TOM

Impure thoughts?

HANK

That's the same thing as having an affair!

BECCA

It is not! Especially the night before we were gonna be married!

CHRISTIE

Impure thoughts are just as bad.

The Ghost looks bewildered.

Tom and Becca glare at Christie and Hank.

Jimmy is pushed into the dining room by Millie.

MILLIE

And this guy was going through everyone's room last night looking for your stupid stock certificate.

JIMMY

Hey, I just wanted to see it! Besides, you pulled me into your room!

MILLIE

That was for something else! But all you kept talking about was that stock certificate!

Hank makes an awkward attempt to get close enough to Becca to get down on one knee, but as he begins to kneel, Christie kicks him over.

Jimmy straddles Hank and clenches his fists.

JIMMY

Let me see that stock certificate, Boss!

Becca SCREAMS, stands, and pushes Christie hard to the floor.

Everyone stares at Becca in fear.

BECCA

I've had it with you, Sis! And you too, Henry! You two are greedy, untrustworthy dogs in heat! Henry, I quit!

Hank stands, angry.

HANK

You can't quit! This is our busiest season. I need the help.

Becca stands, punches Hank in the belly, and yells.

BECCA

Never refer to me as the help!

(to Pops)

How can you stand putting up with Christie's bad behavior?

(to Tom)

You're destined to be a teacher, surrounded by temptation,

(glares at Millie)

(MORE)

BECCA (CONT'D)
 And I'm destined to a life alone.
 (to herself)
 Welcome to the worst day of my
 life!

She storms out of the dining room and stomps her feet
 upstairs to her room.

INT. OLD HOTEL HALLWAY - LATER

Christie and Hank are immediately outside Becca's door, with
 Tom, Pops, and Millie right behind them.

HANK
 I know I haven't been perfect...

BECCA (O.C.)
 (interrupts with sarcasm)
 Really, Henry?

CHRISTIE
 And my behavior hasn't been the
 best...

BECCA (O.C.)
 (interrupts with sarcasm)
 Really, Sis? You two deserve each
 other. Leave me alone for a while
 to think!

HANK
 But you still have the option to
 marry me at high noon on the
 railroad!

BECCA (O.C.)
 (sarcastic)
 What's option number two?

CHRISTIE
 Maybe I could convince my boss to
 rehire you in New York.

BECCA (O.C.)
 His last words to me were, "If you
 ever show your face around here
 again we'll sue you for breaking
 your non-disclosure agreement."

CHRISTIE

I admit they have you there! Once you spilled your guts to the New York Times, without consent of the entire chain of command, you broke your confidentiality agreement.

BECCA (O.C.)

Duh!

CHRISTIE

They can garner your future wages forever! I'm surprised they're not stealing your tips here.

HANK

Tips?

Christie glares at Hank.

CHRISTIE

Not helping, Henry.

Hank appeals to Becca sweetly.

HANK

Please join us all for the little railroad trip. Thirty-five minutes! If you don't want to marry me, fine! But like I always say, five percent of life is just showing up!

The Ghost appears down the hallway. He hits his palm against his forehead as everyone stares at Hank, bewildered.

Tom steps forward to the door and whispers to Hank and Christie.

TOM

I'll talk to her.

Christie and Hank reluctantly step back.

Tom speaks compassionately.

TOM (CONT'D)

Becca, it's me.

BECCA (O.C.)

(angry)

What do you want?

TOM

You have always told me that you wanted to be the hero in one of your stories for once!

Becca softens.

BECCA (O.C.)

That's true.

TOM

And, well, Hank already paid for the railroad ride, and I'd like to go, but not without you, my best friend forever.

Silence.

Hank smiles, pats Tom on the back, and whispers to him.

HANK

Thanks, Tom. I think I'll use that as my vows.

Everyone in the hallway stares at Hank. The Ghost rolls his eyes in disgust.

TOM

I know you said this was the worst day of your life, but it doesn't have to be. Your favorite author once said...

TOM & GHOST

"Give every day the chance to become the most beautiful of your life."

Silence.

Becca opens the door a crack. She softens as she sees the looks of concern on their faces.

BECCA

(reluctantly)

I'll go if there's no more talk about moving to New York or that stupid stock certificate! Agreed?

ALL

Agreed.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

The Conductor stares at his antique pocket watch. It reads: 11:55. Behind the Conductor is the old Virginia City-Truckee railway locomotive with steam rising from its funnel.

INT. TRAIN - CONTINUOUS

In the train coach, Hank paces nervously in a tuxedo. Christie wears a revealing bride's maid dress and keeps getting in Hank's line of sight, teasing him as he paces. Millie and Pops are casually dressed, and Tom remains in his Christmas sweater. Pops carries a small bouquet of flowers for Becca. They all peek out at the coach car windows in all directions for Becca.

HANK

She loves trains. She'll be here!

CHRISTIE

We've got phone service and she hasn't texted me.

Tom and Pops stare at their phones and shake their heads, 'no.'

HANK

I forgot my phone.

Everyone rolls their eyes at Hank with disgust.

Christie's phone RINGS.

CHRISTIE

It's not Sis. It's my boss in New York. I'd better take this outside.

Christie steps off the train and about ten feet away.

We can't HEAR either person talking, but Hank, Tom, Pops, and Millie all watch Christie's face turn gloomier and gloomier.

Christie glances back toward the train with a sad look before ending the call and boarding the train coach.

Tom sees Becca slowly walking with the JUSTICE of the Peace (60s), an elderly gentleman in an antique black suit with tails and top hat. Becca is dressed in the same outdoor wear she had on in the morning.

Becca waves the Conductor over to her and the Justice of the Peace. She whispers to them as the Conductor checks his watch.

Hank grabs the flowers from Pop's hand and yells from the train.

HANK

Rebecca... darling... we're all on
the train... waiting!

Becca forces a half-smile, waves at Hank to stay back, and yells.

BECCA

I'll be there in a minute. I have a
few things to discuss with the
Conductor and Justice of the Peace.

They all hear Becca yell at the Justice of the Peace.

BECCA (CONT'D)

You! Get on the train and don't say
a word until I tell you to speak!
Got it?

The Justice of the Peace nods 'yes,' and gets onboard.

Becca yells at the Conductor.

BECCA (CONT'D)

You! Get that train rolling and
don't stop until I tell you to
stop! Got it?

The Conductor signals the train to get rolling. He hops on without saying a word.

Becca glares at everyone on the train before stomping to the coach and climbing aboard as the train slowly rolls forward. There is fire in her eyes. She yells!

BECCA (CONT'D)

I've decided to be the hero in my
own life stories!

Everyone freezes.

Becca points to the Justice of the Peace, Hank, and Christie.

BECCA (CONT'D)

You, you, and you. Stand at the
front of the coach.

The Justice of the Peace, Hank, and Christie shuffle to the far end of the coach as if at a wedding ceremony waiting for Pops to walk Becca down the aisle. Hank holds the flowers.

The Justice looks uneasy until Hank shows the Justice the wedding ring in the blue box. The Justice smiles.

Becca points to Tom and Pops.

BECCA (CONT'D)

You and you. Stand with me in the back of the coach with me until I think things out.

MILLIE

What about me?

BECCA

You and the Conductor stand in the middle of the coach and don't let anyone by you for any reason!

Millie and Conductor nod 'yes' and take their positions as the train rolls very slowly along.

The Ghost appears behind Becca, curious.

BECCA (CONT'D)

Justice of the Peace, you may begin.

The Justice raises his arms.

JUSTICE

We are gathered here...

The Justice looks out the window and sees Jimmy wearing a cowboy hat and a bandana over his face approaching the train on horseback.

JUSTICE (CONT'D)

What the hell?

Everyone turns and looks at Jimmy, but Becca yells.

BECCA

That idiot is robbing the train. Go ahead Justice!

JUSTICE

But...

BECCA

I said proceed!

JUSTICE

To join in holy matrimony, this man and...

(MORE)

JUSTICE (CONT'D)

(points to Becca)

That woman?

Jimmy waves a gun before boarding the train from the horse, but he drops the gun while climbing aboard. Jimmy yells.

JIMMY

This is a train robbery, stop the train!

The Conductor looks at Jimmy then at Becca who is angry.

BECCA

Proceed, Justice!

JIMMY

We have to go back and pick up my gun!

BECCA

I don't think so, Jimmy. Just shut up! Go on Justice.

Christie's phone RINGS.

CHRISTIE

I gotta take this. It's my boss's, boss's, boss.

BECCA

(glares at Christie)

Don't you dare!

Christie puts up a hand to stop Becca, and everyone sees Christie coming unglued with anger. She listens and paces up and down the front of the coach like she's mad.

CHRISTIE

That's it! I quit!

Christie ends the call.

CHRISTIE (CONT'D)

My company fired me for trying to pawn off that worthless old stock certificate.

Hank collapses to a seat.

HANK

It's worthless?

CHRISTIE

Wallpaper! No proof that Henley's bill of sale is legal and that he didn't steal the certificate and forge the sale! No provenance! There's no clear line of legal ownership. The certificate is worthless! Hank, I'm dumping you!

Everyone's eyes open widely following the Justice's lead.

CHRISTIE (CONT'D)

I'm grabbing the professor. Boring but a steady income.

Christie pushes past the Conductor and Millie and races back to Tom, while Jimmy paces angrily and races to the front of the coach to Hank.

JIMMY

I was going to be the biggest train robber in U.S. history!

Jimmy punches Hank.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

What am I now?

Millie rushes up and hugs Jimmy to console him.

MILLIE

Don't worry, Jimmy. You're still a horse thief who was in possession of a firearm while on probation. I'm sure they'll take you back to the County Jail if you ask them nicely.

Millie pleads with the others.

MILLIE (CONT'D)

This was my fault. I told him about the biggest train robberies in Nevada, and...

(looks away)

I may have mentioned that if the stock certificate was real, this would go down as the biggest train robber in history, bigger than Jesse James!

TOM

Why would you do a thing like that?

MILLIE

It was your idea. You told me that if it wasn't for that stock certificate, Becca might be more attracted to you.

Becca punches Tom in the stomach, where Christie is there to comfort him.

While Tom groans, Hank unbuttons his shirt and removes a money belt.

Becca sees Christie eyeing Hank's firm stomach. Christie pushes Tom away and heads back to Hank.

BECCA

Dogs in heat!

Hank hands Jimmy the money belt and starts to button his shirt, when Christie stops him and caresses him passionately.

Everyone turns to look at Hank and Christie until Becca yells.

BECCA (CONT'D)

Go on, Justice!

The Justice looks at everyone nervously before continuing.

JUSTICE

If there is anyone among us who opposes this marriage...

Hands begin to go with Becca looking sadly at each of them. First Christie, then Pops, then Jimmy and Millie, then the Ghost and Conductor, then finally Tom raises his hand.

At seeing Tom's hand go up, the others slowly put their arms down.

The Justice points to Hank.

JUSTICE (CONT'D)

This man has a ring. What do you have, young man?

Tom reaches in the pocket of his tacky Christmas sweater and pulls out a yellowing self-addressed envelope.

Becca looks on with keen interest.

TOM

I have a letter, Your Honor.

JUSTICE
Who's it from?

Tom gazes at Becca and smiles.

TOM
It's from Becca. Mailed from
Redding, Connecticut last week.

The Ghost smiles and winks at Becca and Tom.

Becca holds back tears.

BECCA
With postage due?

TOM
Of course.

Tom marches up to show it to the Justice.

JUSTICE
May I?

TOM
Yes. The letter was sent off when
Becca and I were eight years old.

The Justice opens the letter and reads it aloud as Tom walks toward Becca and she walks toward him.

JUSTICE
I vow to remain best friends
forever.
(beat)
Provide emotional support always.
(beat)
To maximize our time together.
(beat)
To dream of you when we're apart.

Tom and Becca meet in the middle of the coach. The Ghost stands before Tom and Becca like a Justice of the Peace.

GHOST (V.O.)
"A marriage makes of two fractional
lives a whole. It gives two
purposeless lives a work. And
doubles the strength of each to
perform it. And something to live
for."

Tom and Becca kiss.

Everyone cheers. Tom hugs Becca, Christie hugs Hank, and Millie hugs Jimmy, but all eyes turn back warmly to Becca and Tom.

TOM

We have adventures to plan!

BECCA

I have stories to submit!

TOM

Who sent the letter from Redding,
Connecticut?

BECCA

That's where Mark Twain died!

TOM

What did they wait twenty years to
mail it back?

BECCA

There's a story there somewhere!

They kiss again. Long and sweetly!

FADE OUT.

THE END