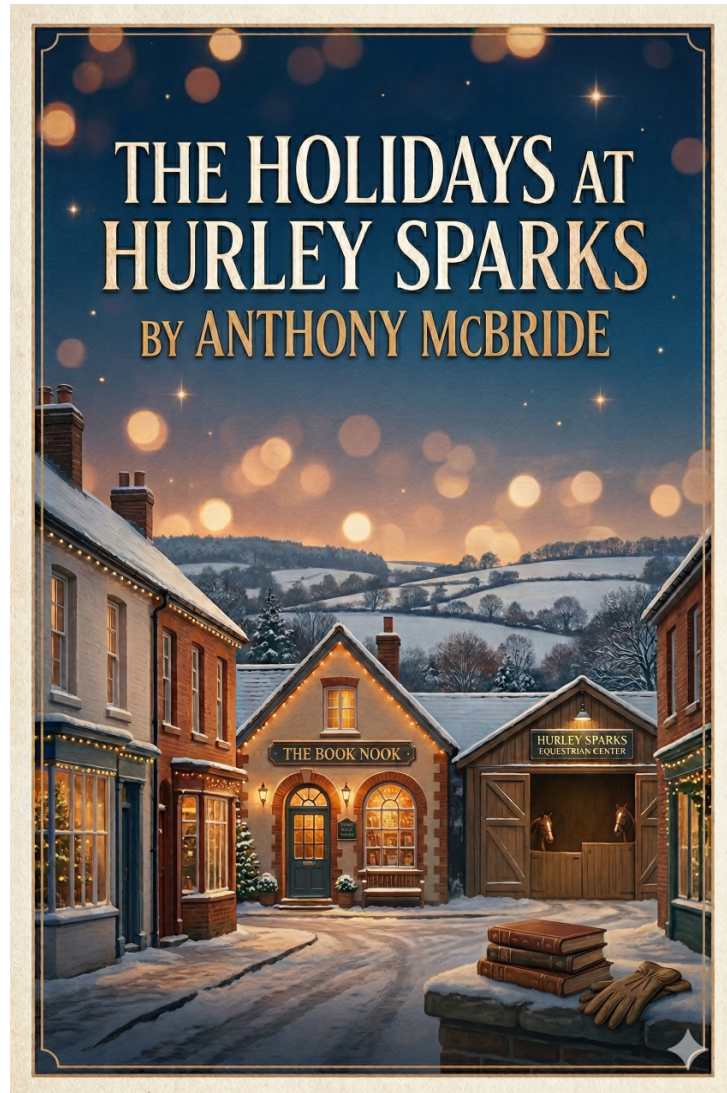




THE HOLIDAYS AT HURLEY SPARKS

Written by

Anthony McBride

EXT. HURLEY SPARK EQUESTRIAN VILLAGE - DAY

A humble equestrian village wallows in the middle of a vast horizon covered with pine trees topped with snow. The name:

HURLEY SPARKS EQUESTRIAN VILLAGE

Horses and their riders gallop down the town's streets alongside their automotive neighbors.

Stables grace the lush landscapes and beautiful ranch-style homes.

KNOCK. KNOCK. KNOCK. KNOCK.

ZHOOM. ZHOOM.

Hammers, drills and other tools go to work as men and women assemble a strange kind of decoration across the beautiful village...Trees, Wreaths, and blinking lights--

It's the holidays!!!

"Fa-La-La-La-La...LA-LA-LA-LAAAAA"

A van blasts holiday music as it strolls the streets of the village.

Scents of apple cider, egg nog, fruit cake and other baked, gastronomical goodies grapple with the gray overcast skies.

A group of bike riders travel through the town as neighbors greet them.

In the middle of the town square the construction of an ice rink commands the attention of the residents.

All is good during this time of year.

Welcome To Hurley Sparks!!!

INT. NEIGHBORHOOD EQUESTRIAN CENTER - DAY

A meeting of the minds takes place in the Hurley Square neighborhood equestrian community center.

The room is arranged in a rank-and-file setup with housewives, elderly and a splash of retired men focused on the speaker who commands the center of the room. Her name is:

FRANCINE "FRANKIE" BLAIR, 30's, slender, jeans, pink button-up shirt with hair in a ponytail--dainty.

FRANKIE

The annual holiday festival will have a special concert to end the weeks long schedule of activities.

A woman, ESTER, 50's, stands.

ESTER

Who's gonna come to Hurley Sparks and perform a concert other than those dang on horses.

Thee crowd chuckles.

FRANKIE

We haven't quite figured that out yet.

ESTER

Well, I think we should get one of those kids from that Tik Tok deal.

FRANKIE

We'll see what we can do.

ESTER

Oh, and can we get some better food this time. The roast last year was a little dry.

FRANKIE

We'll try to spring for a caterer this year.

Another woman, BETH, 60's stands.

BETH

How are we gonna get a caterer?
There's no money.

FRANKIE

We do have limited resources.

MARGARET, 50's, interrupts.

MARGARET

What kind of resources--

FRANKIE

Money and--

ESTER

Looks like we're gonna starve to
death this year folks.

The crowd erupts with laughter.

FRANKIE

We have funds from donations and we
can ask the local grocery stores
for support. Everyone's always
generous at this time of year.

MARGARET

So, we're going to be beggars for
the holidays.

FRANKIE

We can go around to the various
businesses and sing holiday carols
for donations.

BETH

We can assign groups of two to go
around and solicit donations from
businesses and families.

ESTER

I can donate one-hundred dollars on
behalf of my flower shop.

Ester reaches in her purse and pulls out a checkbook.

FRANKIE

Way to go, Ester. You know, the
holidays always seem to bring out
the love in folks.

Then, everyone in the room begins to empty their pockets and
purses with donations for the festival.

SOMEWHERE IN THE BACK OF THE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Two women, AGATHA, 40's, and KATHY, 40's, hold a side-bar conversation.

AGATHA

That woman's never going to get married.

KATHY

The only reason they made her festival chair was because of her father.

AGATHA

The poor man donated most of his wealth to the festival--

KATHY

--and her.

AGATHA

I don't like it one bit.

KATHY

Me either.

AGATHA

The first chance I get, I'm going to take her down. We just don't need that type of person in charge of our holiday festival.

KATHY

Agreed.

AGATHA

What do you suggest we do?

KATHY

We wait.

AGATHA

For what?

KATHY

She's a single woman, Agatha. She's bound to screw something up.

Agatha smirks.

AGATHA

Ain't that the truth.

MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Frankie regains control of the microphone to settle the crowd.

WHOOOOUUUUUMMM

Feedback from the speaker startles the on-lookers.

FRANKIE
Everyone take your seats, please.

The crowd gently sits in their places.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
Now it's time to draw a raffle to
assign teams for the various
festival activities.

Frankie grabs a small bag.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
The committee has placed everyone's
name in a hat. We're going to pull
the names out of the hat and then
match them to the events over there
on the whiteboard.

Ester stands.

ESTER
This is gonna be a blast!

The crowd giggles.

Frankie digs into the bag--

FRANKIE
Jared Vesper and Sylvia Janson. You
guys will be on the decorations
committee where you'll work with
another team to pick out tree
decorations.

JARED VESPER, 30's, military veteran, ball cap, t-shirt,
boots and the rugged "military dude" look stands--

JARED
Y'all just let me know what I need
to do. I'm a lil' new here and
could use someone to show me the
town.

Members of the crowd look back at Jared--smile.

FRANKIE

Well, thank you very much Mr.
Vesper.

JARED

You're quite welcome.

Jared sits back down.

Frankie reaches into the bag again.

FRANKIE

Now for the next team.

(then)

Jonathan Bay and...Me. Francine
Blair.

Francine walk the name tags over to the whiteboard and posts
them next to the activities.

Ester stands again.

ESTER

Hurry up and call my name. I want a
new boyfriend for the holidays.

Frankie turns around.

FRANKIE

Ester!

Margaret stands up.

MARGARET

I'll be your boyfriend, Ester.

Everyone laughs.

FRANKIE

Thats so sweet.

Frankie walks over to the bag and begins to pull more names.

MOMENTS LATER

Frankie completes the whiteboard of activities by matching
them with names.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

Well, that's it. Lets have fun this
holiday everybody.

INT. SPECIALTY GROCERY STORE - DAY

A cozy, little specialty grocery store sits in the middle of Main St. somewhere in Hurley Sparks.

Gourmet meats, cheeses and breads grace the aisles of a store that hums with holiday music and emblazoned with natural light.

"All I want for Christmas is you" by Mariah Carey plays over the speaker.

Scents of cinnamon, coffee and toasted treats glide through the air.

Frankie stands at the counter while she orders her favorite morning drink.

FRANKIE
I'll have the holiday tea with a
splash of raw honey...to go.

The barista enters the order, Frankie pays.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
Oh, and I'll take two of those
holiday cookies too.

The barista reenters the order, grabs the cookies and hands them to Frankie before she retreats to prepare the drink.

Frankie glows with the holiday spirit as she gazes at a holiday painting of a couple.

They kiss beneath a mistletoe.

Then, out of nowhere, a hand taps her shoulder.

Frankie turns around.

Its a familiar face--

JARED
Hey there.

FRANKIE
Hey. Jared, right?

JARED
That's right.

FRANKIE
I'm--

JARED
Frankie Blair. Daughter of Hurley
Sparks legend--

FRANKIE
James Blair.

JARED
Let me guess, your dad wanted a boy
so he named you Frankie, right?

FRANKIE
Wrong. Francine's my real name. My
folks thought Frankie was a little
bit cooler especially since I was a
tom boy who always got into
trouble.

Jared smirks.

JARED
Ah. I got that.

FRANKIE
So, how're you liking Hurley
Sparks?

JARED
A lot of horses.

FRANKIE
Yeah.

JARED
I love 'em.

FRANKIE
Good for you.

JARED
Mine is parked outside. Need a ride
home?

FRANKIE
No thanks. I'm allergic to horses.

Jared is taken back.

Frankie picks up her drink order and bolts for the door.

JARED

Hey.

FRANKIE

Cath you later.

Jared chases after her.

OUTSIDE - CONTINUOUS

Jared grabs Frankie by the arm.

JARED

Wait. You can't walk out of here
just like that. I think we have a
little chemistry here.

FRANKIE

I hated chemistry in school.

JARED

Look, it's the holiday season and
'tis the season for--

FRANKIE

Credit card bills and ravaging
parents with screaming children.

A beat.

JARED

How 'bout a nice dinner and a
movie?

FRANKIE

I'm washing my hair.

Frankie rushes to her car. Hops in.

JARED

We can go ice skating.

FRANKIE

I'm allergic.

JARED

You're allergic to ice?

Frankie starts her car. Pulls off.

INT. SHOPPING MALL - DAY

Frankie, Jared and their festival partners SYLVIA JANSEN, 30's and JONATHAN BAY, 30's, stroll the hallowed aisles of the local mall.

Families sputter in and out of stores as children compete and cajole parents to buy the latest toys and gadgets.

Christmas mall music jams through the speakers.

JARED

We just need to get a few set of lights and then hop across town to pick out a few trees for the festival.

Frankie whips out a pocket notebook.

FRANKIE

I have the list right here.

SYLVIA

Is it true that your dad gave millions of dollars to Hurley Sparks solely for the holiday festival.

FRANKIE

Yup. My dad loved the holiday season and thought that it brought people together despite what was going on in the world.

JONATHAN

Mr. Blair worked on Wall Street and gave most of his wealth to charity and--

FRANKIE

Good ol' Hurley Sparks.

JONATHAN

He was an economics guy like myself.

SYLVIA

Wait a minute, I was an economics major in college!

JONATHAN
UCLA '17.

SYLVIA
UCLA '18!

JONATHAN
I worked at the Westwood and ate
pizza across the street--

SYLVIA
At Mike's Pizza parlor!

JONATHAN
That's right.

SYLVIA
I used to work as a cashier there.
They'd give me free meals as a
student employee.

JONATHAN
They gave me free meals since I was
one of the "disadvantaged"
students.
(then)
In other words, I was broke.

SYLVIA
The pepperoni slice was the best.

Sylvia grabs Jonathan's arm. The two walk away and chat.

Frankie and Jared look on.

FRANKIE
Well, it looks like they hit it
off.

JARED
It looks like you're one heck of a
matchmaker.

FRANKIE
I guess you can say that.

JARED
So, your dad was some sort of
philanthropist who loved the
holidays, huh.

FRANKIE
I guess you can say that.

JARED
Looks like we're stuck together.

FRANKIE
I'm still not going out with you.

JARED
What's up with the Scrooge
behavior?

FRANKIE
'Jus being realistic.

JARED
You know the holidays--

FRANKIE
--Bring out the love in folks.
That's a Hurley Sparks saying.

JARED
Well?

FRANKIE
Well, what?

JARED
Well, 'tis the season to fall in
love, right.

FRANKIE
I wouldn't hold your breath.
(then)
Hey, we need to get the items on
the list.

JARED
What about Jonathan and Sylvia?

FRANKIE
We'll catch up with them later.

JARED
Lets get a move on then.

BEGIN MONTAGE

-Frankie and Jared pick out lights at a specialty shop.

-Frankie and Jared smell candles and novelties.

-Frankie and Jared watch families take pictures with Santa
Claus

-Frankie plays the piano for Jared at a piano store in the mall.

END MONTAGE

Frankie and Jared hit it off.

As they stroll down the busy aisles of the mall they notice a man and woman kiss beneath a mistletoe--

They look familiar.

It's Jonathan and Sylvia--

Making out!

Frankie and Jared rush over to the lovebirds

FRANKIE

Hey!

The two part lips and look up.

JARED

What are you two doing?!?

JONATHAN

What does it look like we're doing?

FRANKIE

We're supposed to be holiday shopping.

SYLVIA

Well, I just found a new boyfriend, so my shopping's done for the day.

JARED

You guys can't do that. You're supposed to be my partner.

SYLVIA

Sorry, Jared. I'll buy you a coffee one day.

JONATHAN

Same here Frankie.

Jonathan and Sylvia get up to leave.

FRANKIE

Wait. Where are you guys going?

JONATHAN
We're eloping for the holidays.

SYLVIA
Good luck with the festival guys.

Jonathan and Sylvia walks off.

Frankie picks up fake snow and throws it at the two.

FRANKIE
Get back here!

A moment. Then--

JARED
Looks like we're stuck with each other.

FRANKIE
I'm still not going out with you.

Frankie walks away.

Jared chases her. Grabs her arm.

JARED
What's your problem?

FRANKIE
Problem?

JARED
You walk around talking about how the holidays are a glorious time of year and you're even the head of the festival committee, yet your worse than the Grinch himself.

Frankie snatches back her arm.

FRANKIE
I am not a Grinch.

JARED
Oh yes you are.

FRANKIE
Look, I don't have time for this.

Frankie begins to walk away.

JARED
What about your dad?

Frankie stops. Turns around.

FRANKIE

What does he have to do with anything?

JARED

He gave a lot just so the town can enjoy the holidays. He must have wanted you to carry on the tradition--the tradition of the holidays. Doesn't that mean anything?

Frankie gets sentimental. Ponders.

FRANKIE

How could you try to stoop so low as to use my father to get a date?

JARED

It's not about getting a date, it's about something much more important--
-

FRANKIE

Like what?

JARED

Just look around.

Frankie looks around the mall...

Kids, parents, Santa Claus, carolers...

A spirit of cheer overwhelms Frankie.

FRANKIE

Yeah. The holidays are a beautiful time of year.

Jared shares in Frankie's bliss.

JARED

Yeah.

(then, extends his hand)
Holiday festival partners?

Frankie thinks for a moment.

FRANKIE

I'll think about it.

Frankie scampers off.

INT. ELAINE BLAIR HOME - DAY

A ranch home on the outskirts of Hurley Sparks sits coddled by a lush, golden landscape and horse stables.

Wreaths and garnish swarm the outer structure while decorative glimmer from the inside.

Inside, Frankie sits at a dining room table as she speaks to her mother, ELAINE BLAIR, 60's, silver hair, knit sweater graceful and elegant.

ELAINE

So, no more coming to my holiday parties alone?

FRANKIE

No, mom. I just met the man.

ELAINE

He must be cute if you're coming to me to ask for advice.

FRANKIE

It's nothing serious. I was just thinking about what he said.

ELAINE

Why don't you just give him a chance.

FRANKIE

I don't know if I should trust him.

ELAINE

Looks like you don't have much of a choice. You caught your partner smooching with his partner.

FRANKIE

I know. I just don't need a man in my life right now, ya' know.

ELAINE

It's only a few weeks. What's the worst that could happen?

FRANKIE

I don't know.

ELAINE

You know, you're just like your father. Stubborn.

FRANKIE

Yup. That's me.

ELAINE

So, tell me about this guy.

FRANKIE

His name's Jared--Jared Vesper. He's a military veteran and runs some sort of veteran-run production over in Hollywood.

ELAINE

A producer. Wow!

FRANKIE

Sounds pretty neat.

(then)

He reminds me of dad in a way. Very ambitious.

ELAINE

That's always a good thing. Your dad always had a plan or a dream for everything.

FRANKIE

He's not bad looking either.

ELAINE

Nice teeth? Broad shoulders?

Frankie begins to giggle.

FRANKIE

Yeah.

ELAINE

I married your dad because of his smile, you know.

FRANKIE

Really?

ELAINE

Yeah. A man's qualities go a long way--much more than money.

Frankie sits and thinks for a moment. Gazes.

INT. FRANKIE'S HOME - NIGHT

Frankie sits at her work desk as she wrestles with papers, pens and calculators.

Laptop keys clack as Frankie attacks them with a fury.

FRANKIE

Uuughh.

Frankie pushes the papers aside as frustration covers her face.

Frankie gets up and walks to the window. Looks out.

Stares for moment.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

Looks like we're in trouble, dad.
The festival is in trouble this
year if I can't find someone to
perform at the concert.

A star shoots across the sky.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

On top of that, some guy is chasing
me around asking me out for a date.
I don't even think I'm that cute.

The moonlight dances off of Frankie's face.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

It's times like theses that I wish
you were here dad. I think I spend
too much time at the bookstore and
not enough time looking for the
other person.

(then, somber)

I really wanted to give you
grandkids.

A moment.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

I miss you so much, dad. I just
don't know how to move on without
you.

(then)

Just...just give me a sign of some
sort to get me through this holiday
season. Thanks.

INT. COVER ME PRODUCTION STUDIOS - DAY

A small production studio hides in an abandoned warehouse somewhere at the end of a parking lot somewhere in Los Angeles.

Inside Jared and his crew prepare for another film shoot.

The man hustle to and from vans, trailers con-exes and storage compartments to fill them with equipment.

JARED

Alright, gang. Lets get this stuff loaded to finish out the final week of shooting.

A man, DEXTER BROWN, 40's, walks over to jared.

DEXTER

Jared. Hey, I need to speak to you for a minute.

Jared looks up.

JARED

Yeah. Go 'head.

DEXTER

I just wanted to say thanks for giving us fellas a lil' extra time off for the holidays this year. We appreciated the favor.

JARED

Hey, it's no favor. You guys always step up for me when I needed it on this project.

DEXTER

The guys asked me to come over here to tell you that you're our guy.

Dexter extends his fist.

Jared stands up--

JARED

You betcha.

Jared extends his fist and the two fist bump.

DEXTER
Got any plans for the holidays?

JARED
Nothing much. I'll probably hang
out around the village.

DEXTER
You're welcome to come by for
holiday dinner if you want.

JARED
Nope, I'll have my hands full with
the holiday festival in Hurley
Sparks.

DEXTER
Oh, the equestrian village.

JARED
I live around there and do a lot of
community work there. They enlisted
me to help out with their holiday
festival.

DEXTER
That sounds like fun.

JARED
The committee head over there's a
cutie too.

DEXTER
It's that time of year, Jared.

JARED
I know, but she's playing hard to
get.

DEXTER
I tell you what, I'll sell you the
mistletoe I used to round up my ol'
lady during the holidays way back
when.

The two share a laugh.

JARED
I'll need all the help I can get
with this one. I just can't get off
of my mind.

Jared reflects for a moment--images of Frankie cloud his
mind.

INT. JARED'S HOME - NIGHT

Jared sits in front of his laptop typing away at the computer keys while watching the latest in basketball game coverage.

He sips on a small glass of wine--then,

BRRRING. BRRRING...BRRRING. BRRRING.

Jared picks up the phone--

JARED
This is Jared.

On the other line is--

FRANKIE
Hey...Jared?

JARED
Oh, hey. Yes.

FRANKIE
I was doing some thinking and...

JARED
You changed your mind.

FRANKIE
Not about the date part, but...I think I owe it to Hurley Sparks to put together a nice festival.

JARED
So I guess where partners now.

FRANKIE
Uh, no.

JARED
Aw, come on, Frankie.

A pause.

FRANKIE
You'd better behave.

JARED
You got it.

They both hang up.

INT. EQUESTRIAN COMMUNITY CENTER - DAY

Frankie and Jared stand at a prep table in the middle of a large, spacious room.

Ornaments, wreaths, lights and other decorations are scattered all over the place.

It's just the two of them.

FRANKIE
I don't think we bought enough
lights.

JARED
Who was supposed to buy the lights?

FRANKIE
Sylvia and you.

Jared lights up with a sly smile.

JARED
Ah, that's right.

FRANKIE
Wait, what are we gonna do about
the singer for the concert?

JARED
That was supposed to be up to
Jonathan and you.

Frankie leans back with a sly smile.

FRANKIE
Ah, yes. I remember now.

The two share a light moment.

JARED
Sounds like we have a little bit
more shopping to do.

FRANKIE
I have to find a singer.

JARED
This festival looks like it's gonna
be a big grizzly bear.

FRANKIE
I second that.

A woman, BEVERLY, 50's enters

BEVERLY
Hi, all!!

Frankie and Jared notice.

FRANKIE
Hi there. How can we help you?

BEVERLY
My name's Beverly Donaldson of
Donaldson event staffing. I got
word that you were looking for a
caterer for your holiday festival.

FRANKIE
Where did you hear that?

Beverly motions to the doorway.

BEVERLY
Those two love birds over there.

Jonathan and Sylvia stand by the doorway arm-in-arm.

JARED
Oh, those two lovebirds were our
partners.

BEVERLY
Well, it's nothing like have a pair
of couples plan your holiday
festival. Love is definitely in the
air around here.

A pair of strange looks cover the faces of Frankie and Jared.

Frankie is stumped.

FRANKIE
What do you mean, pair of couples?

BEVERLY
Well, I'm talking about them
and...you two.

FRANKIE
Us?

BEVERLY

Ugh...yeah.

An awkward silence. Then--

Jared interrupts.

JARED

We're not a couple.

Beverly lightens up.

BEVERLY

Uh, oh. I'm so sorry.

The room lightens up.

Everyone laughs it off.

FRANKIE

No, no, no. That's o.k.

JARED

Everyone says that.

BEVERLY

You guys looked like you..you were a couple.

FRANKIE

Don't worry about it.

JARED

The holidays kind of does that you know. It makes people look--

FRANKIE

Like a couple.

Everyone laughs a little harder.

JARED

You know, I don't even think Frankie likes me that much.

FRANKIE

I actually don't like him at all.

They laugh harder.

BEVERLY

Really?

JARED

Yes.

They laughter subsides.

FRANKIE

Oh, yeah.

BEVERLY

(sarcastic)

I don't believe you.

Frankie straightens up. Gets stern.

FRANKIE

Well, believe it.

JARED

I sure do. She actually hates me.

BEVERLY

Whatever you guys say.

(then)

Here's my card. I specialized in most American dishes and can absolute impress with dessert.

Beverly hands Frankie her business card.

FRANKIE

I'll give you a call.

Beverly turns around and leaves.

JARED

Nice meeting you, Beverly.

A moment.

FRANKIE

Well, she was a sweet little lady.

JARED

I don't know how she could have possibly thought that we...

FRANKIE

--were some sort of an item.

Frankie and Jared ponder for a moment.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

Lets get back to work.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER - LOS ANGELES - DAY

A cozy, nearly empty space somewhere in the Woodland Hills section of Los Angeles serves as an abode to an abundance of energy and excitement--

Kids.

A small group of kids wander around an open space with strange goggles strapped to their heads--virtual reality goggles.

ZHOOM. ZHOOM.

One of the kids, TREVOR, 15 floats across the room until he bumps into a familiar face. Jared.

BOOM.

Jared grabs him--

JARED
Whoa. Easy fella...

Trevor removes his goggles. Giggles.

TREVOR
My bad. I was just kicking some bad
guy butt!

JARED
Well, don't hurt 'em too bad.

TREVOR
I'll try.

Trevor scampers off.

Jared's cell phone alarm goes off.

BLING. BLING.

JARED
Alright, guys. That's it.

The kids take off their virtual reality goggles and place them back on the shelf.

Another one of the kids, MAURICE, 17, grabs something from his bag.

MAURICE
Here Mr. Vesper. This is a gift
from the class from the holidays.

Maurice hands Jared a card. Jared opens it--

JARED
Aw, a Starbucks gift card and
Lakers tickets.

A smile stretches across Jareds face.

The room sparkles with laughter.

MAURICE
It's for you and your girlfriend.

A pause.

JARED
I don't have a girlfriend, Maurice.

MAURICE
My bad. I meant your wife.

Another pause.

JARED
I don't have a wife either,
Maurice.

Silence fills the room.

MAURICE
Then what are you gonna do for the
holidays?

JARED
I'm gonna just sit back and give
out free dinners to the homeless.

MAURICE
Why are you gonna do that.

JARED
Well, Maurice. I do it in honor of
my friends who can't come home for
the holidays. Some of them won't be
coming back home again ever.

The room is somber as Jared cracks a humble smile.

MAURICE
You mean the veterans?

JARED
That's right. I spend the holidays
in service out of honor for my
fallen comrades.

Trevor steps up.

TREVOR
My dad's a Marine.
(then)
Were you a Marine, Jared?

Jared gives a light laugh.

JARED
No, no. I was in the Army.

MAURICE
Did you go to war?

Jared thinks for a moment. Silence.

JARED
No, no I didn't.

TREVOR
Why not?

Jared takes a moment to reflect. Then--

JARED
It just wasn't my time.

Out of nowhere a flurry of parents burst into the room.

Maurice turns around.

MAURICE
Mom!!!

The kids greet their parents. Maurice and Trevor leave.

Trevor turns around and walks over to Jared--

TREVOR
Happy holidays, Jared.

JARED
You too, big guy.

Trevor turns around and leaves. Jared looks on.

INT. THE BOOK NOOK BOOKSTORE - DAY

A small, elegant bookstores stands in the middle of a Hurley Sparks lot. Alone.

Inside are shelves and columns and stacks of books of all varieties: Literature, Sports, Entertainment...you name it.

What it lacks in authentic, literary character it makes up for in excessive holiday decor--

A huge tree with old fashioned lights towers above the tomes of the bookstore in the middle of the room.

Holiday garnish, drenched with fake snow flow across the shelves from one end of the store to another.

Stockings, ornaments and candy canes litter the abode throughout.

Christmas songs add sparkle to the ambience of parents, children and "book nerds".

A woman stands behind the counter. Graceful. Eloquent.

It's Frankie.

She speaks to a woman customer, ANNE, 50's at checkout.

FRANKIE
That'll be \$19.99.

The customer digs in her purse.

ANNE
Oh, I think I forgot my coupon.

FRANKIE
I'll use mine.

Frankie digs in the drawer, pulls out a store coupon, scans it.

BLING.

ANNE

That was so nice of you.

(then)

You know, I heard so much about this bookstore. It's one of the few left standing after those online places started taking all of y'all business.

FRANKIE

Yeah. It's tough nowadays.

ANNE

Why don't you just sell this ol' thing?

FRANKIE

'Cause this ol' thing has a lot of memories. My dad left it to me. I just can't seem to let it go.

Frankie reflects for a moment.

ANNE

Oh. Well, I'll tell my friends to come on by instead of going online since you were so nice to me today.

FRANKIE

I'd appreciate that.

Anne grabs her book and heads out of the door.

Frankie attends to tidy up the store.

Then, several women enter: Agatha, Kathy and Ester from the festival committee meeting.

Frankie turns around. Notices the trio.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

Well, hey there.

Ester, jubilant, speaks first--

ESTER

Happy holidays, dear.

FRANKIE

And a happy holidays to you too.
How can I help you?

Ester eases over to Frankie. Agatha and Kathy creep up behind her.

ESTER

We just wanted to stop by to see
your holiday collection of books.
We've heard so much about this
place.

FRANKIE

Yeah, well, I thought I'd get into
the holiday spirit in a very good
way.

ESTER

Well, it definitely has a lot of
spirit!

The two share a laugh.

Then, an awkward pause.

Frankie notices.

FRANKIE

Is there something wrong?

Ester hesitates.

ESTER

Frankie. The other ladies and I
have been debating and--

FRANKIE

It's about the festival.

ESTER

A group of us ladies...the married
ladies in the group are concerned
about the number of hours you spend
at the bookstore.

FRANKIE

What does that have to do with the
festival?

ESTER

It seems that you spend too many
hours here and never attend any of
the married ladies events.

FRANKIE

I'm not married.

Agatha steps forward.

AGATHA
That's the problem, Frankie.

Kathy chimes in.

KATHY
The women of the group think that
the festival should be a family
oriented affair.

FRANKIE
Well, it is a family-oriented
affair.

AGATHA
We know, but it should be led by
someone...with a family.

Frankie is taken back. Gasps.

ESTER
I know this hurts a little bit,
Frankie.

AGATHA
But we think it's for the best.

Frankie thinks. Then--

FRANKIE
My dad put his heart and soul into
that festival.

KATHY
We know, Frankie. That's why we're
asking you to step down--

ESTER
--on your own merit.

KATHY
We're not forcing you or anything
like that.

Frazzled eyebrows cover Frankie's face.

FRANKIE
This is all a big surprise.

ESTER
We know. Please think it over and
let us know before the next
meeting.

Ester rubs Frankie's arm.

FRANKIE

I will.

The ladies leave.

Frankie sulks for a while.

The door cranks open. The bell rings. DING. DONG.

A man, JAMES STONE, 40's, well-dressed, professional, enters.

Frankie looks up.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

Hi, can I help you?

JAMES STONE

I'm looking for Frankie Blair.

FRANKIE

That's me.

JAMES STONE

I'm James. James Stone from Stone Holdings Group. We--

FRANKIE

I know who you are. The calls from your office pour in every week.

James Stone laughs.

JARED

So sorry to disturb you. I can tell my assistant to stop the calls if we can come to an agreement today.

Frankie rolls her eyes.

FRANKIE

I'm not selling my bookstore. My father left this to me and it's very dear to the family.

JAMES STONE

Ms. Blair. The bookstore brick and mortar model is becoming extinct. Your store is in the middle of an open lot.

FRANKIE

No way.

Frankie tends to tidy up a book shelf. James Stone follows her, pulls out an envelope and hands it to Frankie--she rejects it.

JAMES STONE

Look, you can take the money and--

Frankie snaps around angry.

FRANKIE

You can take the money and shove it, pal.

James Stone stands frozen.

JAMES STONE

This is a really good offer, Ms. Blair.

FRANKIE

Well, I'm in a really bad mood.

The two face off.

JAMES STONE

Just give me a number.

FRANKIE

No.

JAMES STONE

Aw, come on.

FRANKIE

No.

JAMES STONE

You are in a bad mood.

Frankie stands emotionless.

FRANKIE

You have a nice holiday, Mr. Stone.

James Stone thinks for a moment. Hands Frankie the envelope to Frankie--she accepts.

JAMES STONE

Just...think it over.

James Stone leaves the store.

Frankie eyes the envelope. Winces.

INT. SHOPPING PLAZA - DAY

Frankie and Jared shop at a local plaza for more holiday decorations.

Families, couples and coffee sippers scramble to and from as the two make their way from store to store.

FRANKIE

I hear you were in the military.

JARED

Yeah. I served.

FRANKIE

How was it?

JARED

It wasn't a vacation, Frankie.

(then)

Like most guys like me, I lost a few friends here and there.

FRANKIE

I'm so sorry.

JARED

Don't be. the holidays are the time of year when I need to kind of just chill out and take my mind off of things, ya' know.

FRANKIE

Do you have PTSD?

JARED

Not necessarily. I never really saw combat. I was just in the rear giving training.

FRANKIE

That's good, right. You didn't get hurt out there.

JARED

I don't know. I just wish I were there with them during their time of need.

FRANKIE

You could have been killed!

JARED
It was my duty.

FRANKIE
Well, thank you for your service,
and all.

JARED
You're quite welcome.

FRANKIE
So, what brings you to Hurley
Sparks?

JARED
I love the horses and it's not too
far from my production studio so I
decided to get a small ranch on the
outskirts of town.

FRANKIE
Wow. A producer, eh. You must be
related to somebody in Hollywood.

JARED
Not really. I'm just part of a
group of veterans putting out
military-themed stories. That's
all.

FRANKIE
That's so cool.

JARED
We also teach kids filmmaking and
virtual reality during the town's
after school programs. It's a
specialized camp for future
creatives.

FRANKIE
You like kids, huh.

JARED
It's another way of giving back to
the community.

FRANKIE
I admire a man who gives back to
the community. My dad was a big
philanthropist and used to make us
go to elderly homes and serve
dinner for all of the different
holidays and events.

JARED
Now that's discipline.

FRANKIE
He made me promise every year to
bring the holidays to the world.

JARED
Sounds like a plan.

FRANKIE
Between the festival and the
bookstore I have my hands full.

JARED
You seem to give all of your time
to other people. What about giving
back to yourself?

FRANKIE
What about it?

A moment, then out of nowhere a man, an ATTORNEY, approaches
the two.

ATTORNEY
Ms. Blair?

FRANKIE
Yes.

The attorney pulls out an envelope.

ATTORNEY
This is for you.

He hands the envelope to her.

FRANKIE
What's this?

ATTORNEY
Have a nice day.

The attorney walks away.

Frankie opens the envelope, pulls out the letter. Reads it.

JARED
What is it, Frankie?

FRANKIE
They're pursuing legal action to
take the bookstore from me?

INT. ADMINISTRATION BUILDING - DAY

A dim, lifeless conference room illuminated by neon lights lay home to the **County Endowment of the Arts** division.

A long line of tables sit in the front of the room manned by CLERKS. Alert. Professional.

A hearing takes place.

In the middle of the room behind a podium stands Jared.

He's all dressed up for a reason--

JARED

The virtual reality program has substantial growth in the past few months and we expect to expand with the introduction of AI.

CLERK1

That's good to hear Mr. Vesper, but the fund is going through a bit of a political turmoil and has to set strict priorities to where we allocate our resources.

JARED

The kids need the program. They need to learn about filmmaking and technology.

CLERK2

We understand your sentiments but we have hundreds of programs that have kids who need to learn.

JARED

Does this mean that my kids won't have a place to go after school.

CLERK1

What we're saying, Mr. Vesper, is that there are other programs and yours may not take priority.

Jared's defeated.

JARED

Thanks for your time.

INT. JARED'S HOME - NIGHT

It's late at night. Snow trickles from the sky in flurries like playful children.

A holiday movie plays on a big screen television in the living room.

Jared sits on his couch--alone.

He stares at something--but nothing's in front of him.

BEGIN FLASHBACK**INT. BATTALION MOTOR POOL - US ARMY - DAY**

A younger Jared talks to one of his fellow soldiers CHAZ THOMAS, 20's, while performing maintenance on a vehicle.

JARED

Hey, Chaz. What's up? I heard you were asking about me.

CHAZ

Yeah. The guys told me to relay the message over to you. Since we all came into the unit together and all.

An awkward silence.

JARED

What's the deal?

CHAZ

I don't know how to tell you this, man. The unit's deploying next year and I need you to look after my family for me while I'm gone.

JARED

You got it buddy.

The two fist bump then hug.

A YEAR LATER

EXT. MILITARY FUNERAL - DAY

A group of people gather for a solemn occasion. One that no one wants to face--

Not even Jared.

A casket, draped with an American Flag, sits idle in the middle of a funeral ceremony.

It belongs to Chaz.

Family members dressed in black and military uniforms shed tears.

A minister delivers the eulogy.

Military guns salute a flag-folding ceremony is performed.

POW. POW. POW.

Jared sits in the audience somber. Reflects.

CHAZ (V.O.)
I need you to look over my family
while I'm gone.

JARED (V.O.)
You got it buddy.

Dry tears flow down his face.

END MONTAGE**BACH TO SCENE**

Jared snaps back to current time.

Christmas carols are heard from the television.

Lights and glare flicker over Jared's face.

An emotionless gaze fills his eyes.

Dry tears crawls down his face.

Click. The television turns off. Darkness.

INT. THE BOOK NOOK BOOKSTORE - DAY

Frankie attends to work behind the counter as she rings up customers who purchase books, holiday cards and other novelties.

BLING. BLING.

The register hums as business is all good at The BOOK NOOK bookstore.

A symphony of laughter, chatter and conversation fill the walls of the store.

Frankie hands a bag to a customer--

FRANKIE
You have a lovely holiday, now.

The customer grabs the bag, waves and heads out of the door.

As the customer exits through the door, Jared enters.

JARED
Hey, Frankie. Ya' ready to get
outta here an get the rest of the
list.

FRANKIE
'Sure am. Hold on while I get my
things.
(then)
You know I was thinking about what
you said the other day about how
you were a veteran and all.

JARED
Yup. What about it?

FRANKIE
I wanna let you in on a little
secret. Follow me.

Frankie heads to the back of the store.

JARED
Where are we goin'?

Jared trails Frankie to the back.

BACK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A small back room house a petite, leather couch and a unique collection of books and other things.

A large rug lies in the middle of the room hidden beneath a boastful center table.

Candles, potpourri and incense line the outer reigns of the room and provide a light sniff of cinnamon, herbs and flowers.

JARED

I just love the bat cave.

FRANKIE

It's my little escape when things get rough.

JARED

How tough can running a bookstore get?

FRANKIE

They want to take it from me. That guy who approached me the other day was with a bunch of developers who want to tear the store down and build one of the supermarkets.

JARED

Wow.

FRANKIE

My day put everything into this place.

JARED

Just sell it. The online places are putting you guys out of business anyway, right?

FRANKIE

I can't just sell the store. It means too much.

(then)

I can't let them take it from me.

Jared caresses Frankies shoulders.

JARED
I'll do whatever I can to help you
out.

The two make eye contact.

A moment.

Frankie walks over to a chest. Opens it.

She pulls out a set of bowls. Walks over to Jared.

FRANKIE
These are my sound bowls.

JARED
Are you gonna cook dinner?

FRANKIE
No, silly. They're used for
healing. The sound waves give
certain vibrations that help the
brain heal.

JARED
I can use that during this time of
year.

Frankie walks across the room to set up the bowls.

MOMENTS LATER

Flames flicker on the heads of scented candles as the room,
dim of light, oozes mystery and calm.

Frankie sits in the middle of the floor with the set of bowls
that surround her--

She strikes... BOOOOoooooooooooooooooooo. BOOOOoooooooooooooooooooo.

The bowls vibrate and fill the room with sound.

Frankie and Jared are in a meditative state.

BOOOOoooooooooooooooooooo. BOOOOoooooooooooooooooooo. BOOOOoooooooooooooooooooo.

The session last for an hour. Then it's over.

JARED (CONT'D)
That was relaxing.

FRANKIE

I provide therapy sessions to some of my customers who are victims of trauma. We all heal through each other, ya' know.

JARED

This time of year brings up those old memories of doin' time in the Army. I just can't shake it.

FRANKIE

Memories of my dad always come up around this time too. I feel so alone sometimes without him here to give me advice and sing to me.

Silence.

JARED

I don't know what to make of it, the holidays and all.

FRANKIE

My dad says it's a time for people to get together and celebrate the things that they have...the people in their lives.

JARED

Your dad, what about you?

FRANKIE

What do you mean?

JARED

What do you feel about the holidays?

Frankie thinks for a moment.

FRANKIE

I don't know. My holidays were always about my dad...and the bookstore. I never really stopped to think about what I feel about the holidays.

A moment.

JARED

Me either.

EXT. HORSE TRAIL - DAY

A windy, dusty horse trail is flanked by a vast landscape of mountains and trees.

Frankie and Jared gallop down the trail on a pair of horses.

JARED

I guess you're not really allergic to horses after all.

FRANKIE

I was just trying to brush you off.

JARED

You know, Hurley Sparks has a beautiful character about it during the holidays.

FRANKIE

My dad always took me horseback riding during the holidays. It felt like I was in an actual holiday movie.

JARED

I loved holiday movies when I was a kid. Which one was your favorite?

FRANKIE

I liked Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer. The unlikely hero always appeals to me.

JARED

Reminds me of someone.

FRANKIE

Who?

JARED

I never really expected to be in the Army during a war and all, but I was thrust in it after losing my last sales job then...BAM. I'm talking about dyeing for my country, swearing to an oath and saving lives.

FRANKIE

We all appreciate what you guys do for us out there.

JARED

The holidays always make me
appreciate freedom. It's just
something in the air.

FRANKIE

I always get that fuzzy feeling in
my gut. It just feels like love is
swimming throughout my body.

JARED

The holidays truly bring out the
love in folks.

The two gallop away.

SOMETIME LATER

EXT. CAMPSITE - HORSE TRAIL - NIGHT

Frankie and Jared sit in front of an open fire pit at a
campsite. The horses are parked in the background. It's
quiet. Golden Hour.

A light breeze glides through the air as stars begin to
gently peak from beneath the skies.

Frankie and Jared gaze at the night sky. The cuddle.

JARED

The skies are always clearer at
this time of year.

FRANKIE

Sometimes I talk to the skies in
hopes of reconnecting with my dad.

JARED

You really miss your dad.

FRANKIE

Yeah.

Jared stares into Frankies eyes. Sings.

JARED

"I'm dreaming of a White
Christmas..."

As Jared sings, Frankie looks up at the sky and reminisces.

BEGIN MONTAGE**EXT. ICE SKATING RINK - NIGHT**

A light sprinkle of patrons slide across the town's ice skating rink.

Frankie pulls Jared's arm as she teaches him how to maneuver through the crowds and around the rink.

FRANKIE
Come on, Jared. You got it.

JARED
I don't know why I let you talk me into this.

FRANKIE
I'm going to teach you something new every week.

JARED
If you say so.

Then--

SPLISH.

Jared falls flat on his arse. Then--

Splish.

Frankie falls on top of him.

Their eyes lock. Lips are pursed.

FRANKIE
Fancy meeting you down here.

JARED
I'm just enjoying the view.

A moment.

Then.

Frankie and Jared push in. Gentle.

The night is sealed with a kiss.

INT. FINE ARTS APPLICATION OFFICE - DAY

Jared stands in front of another fine arts grants organization to plead for more money for the VR students.

JARED

The students desperately need the program. It's all they have.

Cold stares radiate from the faces of the decision board.

Jared stands behind the podium. Defeated.

Looks from Jared and the board are locked in battle.

Jared walks out.

INT. THE BOOK NOOK BOOKSTORE - DAY

Frankie attends to more customers at the bookstore. A light crowd peruses the merchandise.

A man dressed in a suit and trench coat arrives. Pulls out an envelope.

Frankie snaps--

FRANKIE

I'm not selling my store!

The man turns around and walks out.

Out of nowhere, several men with bouquets of flowers and Poinsettias flood the store.

Frankie's overwhelmed.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

What's this.

Another envelope sticks out from the side of the bouquet.

One of the men hands it to her.

Frankie opens it. It reads:

"From Your Friends at Stone Development Group"

Frankie rolls her eyes.

INT. THE BOOK NOOK BOOKSTORE - BACK ROOM - DAY

Frankie and Jared perform more sound therapy sessions.

BOOOOWOOOOOWOOOOOM.

BOOOOWOOOOOWOOOOOM.

BOOOOWOOOOOWOOOOOM.

Jared closes his eyes and meditates and Frankie makes harmonic sounds from the therapeutic instruments.

Flames dance on the tips of candle's as aromatic scents fill the air.

BOOOOWOOOOOWOOOOOM.

BOOOOWOOOOOWOOOOOM.

BOOOOWOOOOOWOOOOOM.

MOMENTS LATER

Jared sings and plays a guitar for Frankie as they both enjoy the camaraderie of each other.

They look each other in the eyes.

A moment.

FRANKIE

The holidays bring out the love in folk.

JARED

They sure do.

FRANKIE

I never thought that I would find romance during the holidays.

JARED

Me either.

The two kiss.

SERIES OF SHOTS

Background music plays as Frankie and Jared's relationship becomes real.

-Frankie enjoys virtual reality at Jared's VR workshop. She enjoys watching Jared play with the kids.

-Frankie gives Jared more sound therapy sessions.

-Frankie teaches Jared how to paint

-Jared teaches Frankie how to sing.

END MONTAGE**INT. THE BOOK NOOK BOOKSTORE - NIGHT**

Moonlight creeps through the front window of the Book Nook bookstore on a quiet night.

It's late.

The Christmas tree in the middle of the store is the lone inhabitant with lights that flicker throughout the night.

BLING. BLING.

On and Off--On and Off.

Wait a minute. Something's wrong.

A spark crackles from one of the lights. Then another.

One of the older lights seems to have malfunctioned.

Then another.

Then another.

Then--

WHOOOOOOOOOOFFFFF!

The Christmas tree is engulfed in flames.

In a matter of an hour, the entire bookstore is engulfed in flames.

Books. Cards. Noveltyies. All gone.

WHOOOOOOOOOOFFF!

Wallpaper, painting and other holiday fixtures meet an untimely death in the fiery inferno.

WHOOOOF!

The bouquet of flowers from the developers are engulfed.

The bookstore screams for mercy as flames take their merciless toll on its possessions.

WHOOOOF!

The store pleads for the salvation of a sprinkler system, but there is none.

AAAANNNT. AAAANNNT. AAAANNT.

A fire alarm goes off, but no one can hear it.

The emblazoned tree leans over to ignite books and the huge, hand-made rug.

WHOOOOF!

Help and hope for the bookstore is engulfed by the flames.

BACK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The back room doesn't escape the fiery verdict.

The couch, candles rugs and coffee tables are all victims to the flames that ravage the building.

WHOOOOF!

INT. JARED'S CAR - NIGHT

Jared drives Frankie home from another night of shopping.
Holiday music plays over the stereo.

JARED

Looks like we're taking care of all
of the items on the list.

FRANKIE

I don't even know if I took the
time to say thank you for doing
this. You really didn't have to go
out of your way for me like you
did.

JARED

Don't worry about it. You did more
for me than you can ever imagine.

FRANKIE

Thank You, Jared.

JARED

You're welcome, Frankie.

(then)

Thank You, Frankie.

FRANKIE

You're welcome, Jared.

A moment. Then--

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

Hey, can you drop me by the
bookstore? I need to pick up
something real quick.

JARED

Sure thing.

Jared turns off the road and heads to the bookstore.

MOMENTS LATER**EXT. THE BOOK NOOK BOOKSTORE - NIGHT**

Jared and Frankie arrived to the bookstore--engulfed in
flames.

Firefighters rush to settle the flames as onlooker gaze at the chaos and the untimely death of The Book Nook Bookstore.

Frankie bursts out of the car--

FRANKIE

No!

Frankie pushes through the crowd and rushes to the burning building.

Jared chases after her.

JARED

Frankie!

Frankie makes her way to the building. Closer and closer.

Then, Jared grabs her arm.

Frankie pulls away and charges towards the building.

FRANKIE

No!

Jared chases her and grabs her by the waist. Straddles her.

JARED

Frankie, stop!

A POLICE OFFICER comes over.

POLICE OFFICER

M'am, we can't let you go any further.

Frankie tries to fight out of Jared's grasp.

FRANKIE

That's my store. I need to get in there!

Jared grabs Frankie and turns her around.

JARED

You can't go in there, Frankie.

FRANKIE

That's my store. Let me go.

Jared s holds her.

JARED
It's over, Frankie.

A tear streams down Frankie's eye.

FRANKIE
That's my dad's store.

JARED
I know.

Flames, Firetrucks and water hoses form a cacophony in the background.

Flames and lights from police cars bounce off of Frankie's and Jared's faces.

A moment.

Frankie shakes her head in disbelief.

FRANKIE
Let me go.

JARED
It's over, Frankie. Let it go.

POLICE OFFICER
We can't let you go beyond this point, m'am.

The Police Officer walks away.

JARED
It's over, Frankie. Lets go home.

Frankie turns and stares at the destroyed bookstore.

She looks back at Jared.

FRANKIE
Let me go.

She pushes away from Jared. Runs away.

Jared looks at the bookstore then looks for Frankie.

JARED
Frankie!?!

Frankie disappears in the observant crowd.

The burning bookstore kindles through the night sky.

EXT. THE BOOK NOOK BOOKSTORE - DAY

A group of CONTRACTORS and INSURANCE INVESTIGATORS rummage through the remains of the charred bookstore once known as the BOOK NOOK BOOKSTORE.

Ashes and smoke roam the cool air.

Glum and somber moods emboss the atmosphere like ghosts from the graves of the deceased.

Frankie stands by and observes as the contractors retrieve what's left of what was once her abode.

Elaine stands beside her.

ELAINE

I don't know what to make of it.

FRANKIE

An arsonist...

ELAINE

Who could've thought of such an awful thing?

FRANKIE

I don't know.

ELAINE

Did you call the police?

FRANKIE

They should be launching an investigation soon.

A CONTRACTOR comes over to Frankie and Elaine. He holds a piece of wire.

CONTRACTOR

Looks like we may have found the cause of the fire.

FRANKIE

What is that?

CONTRACTOR

This is what's left from what looks like an outdate tree lighting system. It must've malfunctioned and set the tree on fire.

FRANKIE

It can't be.

CONTRACTOR

Old lighting plus old tree usually equals fire.

(then)

Sorry to break the news.

The contractor returns to destroyed bookstore.

FRANKIE

Dad gave me that tree.

ELAINE

Oh, no.

FRANKIE

I didn't want to get rid of it.

ELAINE

What are you gonna do now?

FRANKIE

I don't know.

The same ATTORNEY from before approaches the scene.

ATTORNEY

What do we have here?

FRANKIE

I'm not selling.

ATTORNEY

Doesn't look like there's much to sell.

ELAINE

Frankie's going through trying times right now.

ATTORNEY

Well, since there's nothing really to buy, all offers for the bookstore are off.

FRANKIE
Well, thanks for the support during
such a crummy time.

ATTORNEY
I don't mean to be that way--

ELAINE
Just go away, please.

FRANKIE
You heard the lady.

A pause.

ATTORNEY
Contact me if things change.

The Attorney walks away.

ELAINE
What a creep.

FRANKIE
At least they won't be bothering me
anymore.

Frankie stares at the rubble as men work to clear the debris.

INT. ADMINISTRATION BUILDING - DAY

Jared, dressed in a sports coat and button-up shirt, stands
behind a podium as he listens to a group ADMINISTRATORS
speak.

ADMINISTRATOR1
The board has rendered a decision
in regards to your petition for
sustained funding to keep the
virtual reality education program
opened.

The Administrator ruffles her papers.

ADMINISTRATOR1 (CONT'D)
Based on our findings, the policies
of the foundation and budget
constraints, we have deemed that
your program receive only a portion
of the requested amount to be
determined at a later date.

Jared wrestles with his emotions.

JARED
But, the kids.

ADMINISTRATOR1
I'm sorry, Mr. Vesper. All
decisions are final until funding
limits are increased.

JARED
This is ridiculous.

Jared packs his briefcase and storms out of the room.

INT. JARED'S HOME - NIGHT

Jared sits at his desk and works on his computer while
watching holiday movies.

BLINK. BLINK.

An email notification sounds off.

Jared clicks on the message. It reads:

***"We regret to inform you that the funding request for the
virtual reality program that you requested has been denied.
Our apologies. Please feel free to apply next year."***

Jared slams the laptop shut.

He pants and raves.

All is lost.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER - LOS ANGELES - DAY

Kids scramble around the community center with specialized
googles on as they play the latest in virtual reality games.

Arms and legs fly all over the place as the kids have the
time of their lives in virtual reality.

Jared approaches the center of the room.

JARED
Hey guys, lets round it up.

The kids take off their goggles, place them on the shelf and run over to Jared.

The form a circle around him.

Jared sobers up.

MAURICE
What's the matter, Jared?

JARED
Look, guys. I have some bad news to share...
(then)
The community center after school virtual reality program will close its doors at the end of the year.

The kids rumble with disbelief and upset.

TREVOR
I'm gonna miss you, Jared.

MAURICE
Why's the program gonna shut down?

JARED
The endowment center that gives the program funding decided that there isn't enough money for virtual reality education.

TREVOR
What are we gonna do after school?

A moment.

Jared ponders.

JARED
I don't know.

MAURICE
I'm gonna miss you too, Jared.

JARED
Same here.

The kids all give Jared hugs and fist bumps.

BRRRIIINNGG.

The end of session bell rings.

Parents flood the community center to pick up their children.

Jared waves to the children and their parents as they depart.

Jared thinks to himself. Bows his head in shame.

INT. EQUESTRIAN COMMUNITY CENTER - DAY

A meeting of the minds assemble at the Equestrian Community Center for a very special occasion:

An Emergency Meeting.

Frankie stands center-stage to address the crowd of town locals.

FRANKIE

Thank you all for coming out to this emergency meeting today. I called this meeting to let you all know...there may be no festival.

The crowd rumbles with commotion.

A man, PAUL, 50's, stands

PAUL

That can't be. We were supposed to have a concert for the kids and the community.

FRANKIE

I know. Unfortunately, accounting has notified me that there will be no funding available for the concert or the big tree lighting ceremony.

Another man, HENRY, 40's, stands.

HENRY

I thought there was some money left in some sort of will or somethin'.

Ester interrupts.

ESTER
Something really funny is going on
'round here.

The crowd continues to chatter.

FRANKIE
Everyone please stay calm.

Margaret stands.

KATHY
I kind of think this whole thing is
because that bookstore of yours
burned down the other day

Jared interrupts.

JARED
Aw, come on. Leave her alone.

AGATHA
I don't trust any of this either.

FRANKIE
I can...I can explain everything.

ESTER
Don't bother.

Ester barges to the front of the room. Margaret and Agatha follow her with a few other women.

FRANKIE
What's this?

Ester grabs an additional microphone.

ESTER
We're taking over the holiday
festival as of today.

FRANKIE
Wait a minute, I run the festival.
My dad--

AGATHA
Your dad, rest his soul, was a good
man with good intentions, but you
my lady should not be in charge of
anything family oriented.

KATHY

I'm sure the other married ladies agree. Right ladies?

There is a mild cheer from the audience.

ESTER

I'm sure some of the fellas out there are with us too.

AGATHA

Frankie, a festival like this should be run by a married woman with a family, ya' know. It just doesn't look right.

ESTER

If need be, we'll raise the rest of the funding for the festival if we have to.

AGATHA

I'm with Ester.

FRANKIE

You guys can't do this.

KATHY

I've lived in Hurley Sparks all of my life and know for sure that this town is one of morals and values.

AGATHA

Frankie, we care about you and all...but you couldn't even save your bookstore. We just think that the festival is the town's main symbol of its values and it should be represented by someone else.

Ester faces the crowd.

ESTER

I motion we have a vote. Right here, right now.

The crowd is silent.

AGATHA

We have about one hundred people here today, so I think we can come out of this with a fair number.

ESTER
Alright, lets start.
(then)
Everyone in favor of the festival
being run by a well-meaning, well-
rounded family person who didn't
burn down their own business--

The crowd roars with commotion.

ESTER (CONT'D)
Yeah, I said it.
(then)
--burn down their own business.
Raise your hand.

Members of the crowd raise their hands.

Agatha and Margaret walk around the room and count the number
of hands.

The two return to the front of the room. Tally the number.

ESTER (CONT'D)
The total we got was 84 out of one
hundred.

The room is silent.

AGATHA
Does anyone want to change their
mind?

KATHY
Speak now or forever hold your
peace.

Nothing but pursed lips and stern faces in the room.

ESTER
Well, that's a surprise. Looks like
the town wants a good ol' fashioned
holiday festival.

AGATHA
Who could've imagined.

Frankie just stares. Disgusted.

She curls her lips, clinches her fists and storms out of the
room.

Jared calls after her--

JARED

Frankie!

Nothing.

Frankie's gone.

The crowd settles.

ESTER

I guess we can go on about our
festival business for now.

Ester, Agatha and Margaret assemble at the front of the room.

AGATHA

Now, who wants to be the festival
chair?

The room begins to converse.

Jared looks at the crowd for a moment, then scampers out of
the room.

INT. JARED'S CAR - NIGHT

Jared heads home while driving in his car. He turns on the
hands-free headset...

JARED

(into the headset)
Frankie's phone.

BRRRRING. BRRRRING

FRANKIE (O.S.)

Hey, Jared.

JARED

Are you o.k.? They really gave it
to you.

FRANKIE

I know.

JARED

I'll be by your place tomorrow to
pick you up to finish the list and
make plans for how we can get your
job back.

FRANKIE

Look, Jared. I don't think this is gonna work out.

JARED

What are you talking about, Frankie.

FRANKIE

You, me...us. The women are right--

JARED

Don't listen to what they say.

FRANKIE

I don't want to do this, Jared.

JARED

Frankie.

FRANKIE

Jared. Thanks for the good times and all. You were the one person who could help me escape the truth of all this.

JARED

What are you talking about, Frankie?

FRANKIE

I'm just not cut out for the festival. I'm not cut out for any kind of holiday romance either.

JARED

Frankie, I'm coming to get you.

FRANKIE

Don't bother. The holiday shopping is off. Don't bother calling me anymore.

JARED

Frankie, lets talk this out.

FRANKIE

Sorry, Jared. Happy Holidays

Click.

Frankie hangs up.

Jared slams his steering wheel.

INT. ELAINE BLAIR HOME - DAY

Frankie and her mom, Elaine perform household chores throughout the house in preparation for the holidays.

ELAINE

I appreciate you helping me out in prepping the home for the holidays.

FRANKIE

I have plenty of time since I have no bookstore.

ELAINE

Frankie, things come and go.

FRANKIE

It was ll I ever had to stay close to dad, ya' know.

ELAINE

We all know that you loved your dad very much, Frankie, but you've got to let him go. He's gone now.

FRANKIE

For some reason, I just can't seem to let him go. Everyday I go to the bookstore, it's like coming back home to see him.

ELAINE

Frankie!

FRANKIE

What?

ELAINE

When am I going to get grandkids?

FRANKIE

That's on hold 'til I figure out how to get the bookstore up and running.

ELAINE

Those online websites are putting you guys out of business every year.

FRANKIE

I know.

ELAINE
You're fighting a terrible fight
here, Frankie.

FRANKIE
What do you want me to do, mom?

ELAINE
I want you to grow up. You're not
your daddy's little girl anymore.

FRANKIE
You want me to forget about the
festival.

ELAINE
I want you to forget about the
festival and the bookstore. Live
your own life, not your dad's. He's
gone now.

Frankie looks away.

FRANKIE
I don't know how.

ELAINE
You have to step out of your
comfort zone. Just take a chance.

FRANKIE
It'll have to wait 'til after I get
things settled with the insurance
companies and those developers.

Elaine walks over to Frankie. Grabs her by the shoulders--

ELAINE
Let it go, Frankie. You've got a
life to live...live it!

Frankie looks Elaine in the eyes. Thinks.

FRANKIE
I'm scared, mom.

ELAINE
I know you are, but you can't keep
giving yourself to the bookstore
and your dad. They're gone.

FRANKIE
What should I do?

ELAINE

Find a man. Start a family. Start over again if you have to.

FRANKIE

You mean, Jared.

Elaine smirks.

ELAINE

He's kind of cute.

FRANKIE

I don't think I should.

ELAINE

You haven't dated since forever. The man sincerely cares about you, Frankie.

FRANKIE

What if he hurt me?

ELAINE

Don't care. Just take the leap. The holidays bring out the love in folks, Frankie. Just go for it.

FRANKIE

You think he's worth it, huh.

ELAINE

Who else would take the time to put up with all of your mess if he didn't like you.

FRANKIE

That guy is pretty good with those kids at his after school program.

(then)

He can sing too. I just don't know how to get him back after I hung up on him after I cancelled our date.

ELAINE

Just keep your fingers crossed.

Frankie crosses her fingers.

FRANKIE

Fingers crossed.

Elaine walks to Frankie and hugs her. The two embrace.

INT. COVER ME PRODUCTION STUDIOS - DAY

Jared works behind his desk, laser-focused, his computer screen blinks as he adjusts production schedules, budgets and all sorts of reports.

KEVIN, 30's, walks in.

KEVIN

Hey, Jar'.

JARED

What' up, Kev.

KEVIN

Ju's wanted to let you know that one of the guys in sound got Michael Buble' to sing on one of the tracks for the movie.

JARED

Alright, now!

KEVIN

I also wanted to say thanks for all you've done for the guys during the holidays.

JARED

You guys've thanked me enough.

KEVIN

Hey, if you need a place to stay for the holidays, I got an extra room at my place.

JARED

No thanks, Kev. You're too wild for me.

KEVIN

I gotcha. Hangin' out with that dime you brought by a few weeks ago, huh.

JARED

Uh...

KEVIN

Aw, cum on.

JARED
I don't know about that.

KEVIN
What?

JARED
Things are on hold for now. I just need to focus on other things.

Kevin softens up.

KEVIN
Look, I was in the force too. This time of year gets to all of us guys who lost buddies while we were in there.

JARED
Kev, you don't have to give me the same ol' speel about--

KEVIN
I know, man. but I care about you, dude. You can't be celebrating the holidays alone.

JARED
I gotcha.

KEVIN
What about lady, uh--

JARED
Frankie.

KEVIN
Yeah.

JARED
We kind of parted ways a few days ago.

KEVIN
Darn, right before the holidays.

JARED
Yup.

KEVIN
You gonna get her back.

JARED
Nope.

KEVIN

Come on, dude. You can't celebrate the holidays alone.

JARED

Yes I can.

KEVIN

Look, I don't wanna see you die alone, man. Go get her back.

JARED

Why?

KEVIN

'Cause that was the first time I've seen you smile in a long time. You guys look good together. You even said that they mistook you two as a couple.

JARED

I know. But things got kind of crazy with her bookstore burning down.

KEVIN

So what. Go get that woman. You need someone in your life, dude.

JARED

Kev, you're killing me.

KEVIN

I care about you, man. I don't wanna see you celebrate the holidays alone.

(then)

Promise me you'll go and try to get that girl back.

Jared sighs. Thinks.

JARED

I'm scared.

KEVIN

I know, but you can't let her go. You've gotta go for it.

A moment.

JARED

I know, man. I know.

EXT. THE BOOK NOOK BOOKSTORE - DAY

Frankie and a group of contractors continue to clear rubbish from her burned-down bookstore.

Charred wood, melted candles, blackened decorations scatter the ground.

Frankie gives directions as the crew moves to make sense of the devastation.

FRANKIE

Alright, guys. Grab what you can so we can get out of here.

(then, under her breath)

If there is anything left worthwhile.

The men hustle to rummage through the wreckage.

One of the men, CHUCK, comes from behind the building.

CHUCK

Ms. Blair.

Frankie turns around.

FRANKIE

Yeah.

CHUCK

I found these.

Chuck pushes a wheel cart with a chest. The same chest that was in the back room.

Frankie lights up.

FRANKIE

Ah. My bowls.

Frankie opens the chest to see her bowls. Unharmd.

CHUCK

I thought you'd like it.

FRANKIE

I sure do. Thanks, Chuck.

CHUCK

No worries.

Chuck turns away and heads to the building.

Frankie glows. Looks at the bowls and puts them back into the chest.

She returns to work.

Then.

Somebody's singin' "Kissin' by the Mistletoe" by Aretha Franklin.

JARED (O.C.)

"There's a very good reason/ Why
the holiday season/ Is a wonderful
time/ For a boy and girl to fall in
love/ 'Cause Santa and Cupid/
Planned exactly what you did / When
you kissed me by the mistletoe
above..."

Jared sings while he plays the guitar.

(Pretty romantic if you ask me)

Frankie turns around. Spots Jared.

FRANKIE

I didn't think you'd come back.

JARED

My heart told me that I shouldn't
let this one go. It's special.

(then)

My friends told me the same thing.

Frankie laughs.

FRANKIE

You know, my heart said the same
thing too.

(then)

My friends told me the same as
well.

JARED

I miss you, Frankie.

FRANKIE

I miss you too, Jared.

The two inch closer to each other.

They kiss.

INT. ELAINE BLAIR HOME - DAY

Elaine sits in her easy chair while she watches her favorite entertainment news program.

Click. CLick.

ELAINE
(to the door)
Frankie.

The door creeps open.

Elaine rushes to the door.

Frankie and a very special guest emerge in the living room.

It's Jared.

FRANKIE
Mom. I want you to meet Jared.

Jared walks over to extend his hand.

JARED
Ms. Blair.

Elaine accepts Jared's hand.

ELAINE
Jared.

FRANKIE
This is the guys that's been
helping with the festival...until I
got canned.

ELAINE
Who cares about that stupid
festival.

JARED
I do.

Frankie and Elaine perk up.

ELAINE
Why would you care about a festival
that you have nothing to do with?

JARED

Hanging out with Frankie these past few weeks has showed me that this festival is about more than lights and gifts. It's about people...the people of Hurley Sparks.

FRANKIE

The married women won't let me back in. I'm too single.

ELAINE

Those old hags.

JARED

Who cares about what they think. If we put our heads together, we can come up with a plan.

FRANKIE

What plan? What together? My bookstore is destroyed, the women kicked me out of the festival. I'm through. Lets just move on with our lives.

JARED

Frankie. The festival needs you more than ever now.

FRANKIE

What don't you understand: they don't like single women running their family-oriented holiday festival.

ELAINE

Frankie and I talked earlier about how she needs to just move on and forget about the bookstore and the festival.

JARED

Frankie, I know how much this festival meant to you and not just your father's dream. I could see your eyes light up when you'd talk about the festival and how it brought Hurley Sparks together.

FRANKIE

I don't even know if I have the holiday spirit anymore.

ELAINE

Frankie. Just hear him out.

FRANKIE

But mom, you said--

ELAINE

I know what I said. Just hear him out.

JARED

Frankie, I can't bear to see the sorrow in your eyes anymore. You probably won't see the bookstore again, but at least you can be a part of the festival--for yourself--not your dad.

Frankie thinks.

FRANKIE

All of this time, I've been modeling myself after my dad and now I'm finally faced with being an adult and taking a stand without him. How am I gonna get myself out of this trap now?

ELAINE

Your dad would've wanted you to do this. He would've wanted you to step out on your own.

JARED

You need to get back on the festival committee, Frankie. You love it more than anyone in all of Hurley Sparks.

FRANKIE

But they voted me off of the committee.

ELAINE

Those ladies were ruthless.

FRANKIE

I can't even show my face in the coffee shop. I'm so embarrassed.

JARED

Look, I've got a plan.

EXT. ICE SKATING RINK - DAY

Ester, Kathy and Agatha lead a crowd of festival volunteers in front of the town center's ice skating rink.

Knit caps, scarves and holiday sweaters swarm the crowd as the volunteers wrestle with wreaths, garnish and lights to don the ice rink and the center of the town.

ESTER

Alright, gang. Lets get to dressing this sucker up so it can look beautiful for the concert.

Agatha whispers into Ester's ear.

AGATHA

Wait, we don't have enough money for the concert.

ESTER

I know. We just need to pretend that we're having one to keep the morale up.

KATHY

Maybe we shouldn't have been so hard on poor ol' Frankie.

ESTER

Too late for that now.

Paul strolls over.

PAUL

Are we gonna get lunch? My stomach's growling already.

Hank follows up.

HENRY

Frankie use to have the best snacks.

KATHY

Frankie's not here anymore, Henry.

PAUL

Frankie used to get us catering.

AGATHA

Frankie's not here with us anymore,
Paul.

The two men walk away.

ESTER

Now that the little debate over
snacks and lunch is done we can get
back to making the town look
beautiful.

AGATHA

Where is the layout plan?

KATHY

Ester has the layout plan?

ESTER

I don't have the layout plan, I
thought you had the layout plan,
Margaret.

ESTER/KATHY/AGATHA

Who had the layout plan?

A moment of silence as the three women wonder--

ESTER/KATHY/AGATHA (CONT'D)

Frankie had the layout plan!

The women scramble to gather the decorations.

ESTER

Lets just fake it 'til we make it.

AGATHA

That's right.

KATHY

Just fake it 'til we make it.

A guy, RALPH, on a horse arrives.

RALPH

Hey, all. I got the horses for the
parade to be measured for
decorations.

AGATHA

Horses?!?

RALPH
We have a parade every year,
Agatha.
(then)
You all are the new organizers of
the festival, right?

AGATHA
Yessir.

RALPH
Well, whadya want me to do with the
horses?

ESTER/KATHY/AGATHA
Put 'em over there.

The three women point to the hardware store across the
street.

Ralph's face squints.

RALPH
Huh?

A familiar voice emerges--

FRANKIE (O.C.)
You can stage them in the emergency
stable at the end of the block. I
put a set of decorations in the
rear that you can use to dress them
up.

Ester, Agatha, and Margaret turn to see a humbled Frankie
flanked by Jared and Elaine.

ESTER
Everything was under control.

FRANKIE
It didn't look like it to me.

AGATHA
Thank you, Frankie, for helping us
out.

FRANKIE
No problem.

Everyone stands for a moment. Reconnects.

ESTER
Look, maybe we were a little--

AGATHA

Mean.

KATHY

We were a little mean to you,
Frankie.

ESTER

(Re: Jared)

Wait a minute, who's that guy.

FRANKIE

He's the guy that's been helping me
with the festival 'til I got
booted.

AGATHA

So, you two are kind of together.

JARED

Yeah.

FRANKIE

Something like that.

Ester, Agatha and Margaret chuckle.

ESTER/KATHY/AGATHA

Oh.

ELAINE

Maybe we can fix things here to get
the festival back on its feet.

ESTER

How do we do that? We have no plans--
-

FRANKIE

I have that covered.

AGATHA

We have no lunch or snacks--

ELAINE

I'm a retired caterer and can take
care of the hungry people.

KATHY

On top of all of that--

ESTER/KATHY/AGATHA

WE HAVE NO CONCERT!!!

JARED

I can take care of that.

Out of nowhere a group of men: veterans, kids from the virtual reality program and Michael Buble' (**insert famous holiday music singer here**)!

MICHAEL BUBLE'

Hey, Jared. The guys though you'd need a little bit of help.

EVERYONE

It's Michael Buble'!

Michael Buble strolls over with the rest of the gang.

MICHAEL BUBLE'

The guys tell me you need a singer for your festival.

JARED

You got that right.

MICHAEL BUBLE'

Well, lets do it.

Michael Buble' pats Jared on the shoulder and walks away.

Dexter walks up.

DEXTER

The production design and art department will build a stage for the carolers and Michael Buble'.

JARED

The kids will help with decorations.

ELAINE

I'll get lunch and snacks.

Elaine scampers away.

FRANKIE

Look, ester, Margaret, Agatha...I know how you guys feel about me but the festival means a lot to me. Can we work together? For the sake of the festival.

Ester, Margaret and Agatha convene.

ESTER

We're so sorry that we were mean to you, Frankie.

KATHY

We really got ahead of ourselves.

AGATHA

Lets work together. For the sake of Hurley Sparks.

Frankie takes a moment.

FRANKIE

Sure. Lets do it.

Frankie an the ladies huddle. Chat.

After a while, they break.

Frankie stands in front of the group.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

Alright, everyone. I have the plans here.

The volunteer committee, Jared and his production crew and the Hurley Sparks observers all gather around.

Frankie holds up her notebook.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

I have assignments for everyone.

Ester steps forward.

ESTER

Lets get to work!

The crowd gathers around Frankie as she hands out assignments.

BEGIN MONTAGE

EXT. ICE SKATING RINK - DAY

Jared and his production design and art department teams assemble and design a stage for the carolers and Michael Buble'.

JARED
Way to go, guys. This is coming
together.

INT. EMERGENCY HORSE STABLES - DAY

Ralph, Paul and Henry dress up the horses in holiday
decorations.

INT. VOLUNTEER HOLDING STATION - DAY

Elaine serves lunch and snacks to the volunteers.

ELAINE
Enjoy, guys.

EXT. TOWN CENTER - DAY

Frankie, Ester, Agatha and Margaret decorate the Hurley
Sparks town center with holiday decorations.

ESTER
'So glad you're back Frankie.

FRANKIE
It's so good to be back.

The women giggle.

EXT. HURLEY SPARKS TOWN CENTER - DAY

Frankie, Jared and the entire volunteer committee marvel at
the beauty of the town center as it lusters from the holiday
decorations.

Everyone applauds at the achievement.

Frankie, Ester, Kathy and Agatha rejoice together and cheer.

Jared stands in the background with his crew. Smiles.

END MONTAGE

Out of Nowhere, James Stone appears. He approaches Frankie.

JAMES STONE

Ms. Blair.

Frankie turns.

FRANKIE

Yes.

JAMES STONE

I got word how my attorney treated
you after the fire at your
bookstore and I wanted to
apologize. I'm so sorry.

FRANKIE

Apology accepted.

JAMES STONE

I also wanted to let you know that
the offer still stands regardless
of the state its in.

He hands Frankie an envelope.

Frankie takes the envelope. Thinks.

FRANKIE

Offer accepted. I'm moving on.
(then, after opening the
envelope)
Jared. There's enough here for your
after school program too.

Jared lights up.

JARED

Oh, yeah! I'll gotta tell the kids.

THE NEXT DAY

Music plays as decorated horses and carriages stroll down
the main street of Hurley Sparks.

Droves of town spectators look on and cheer.

Different organizations represent themselves with flags,
floats and holiday themed costumes.

MOMENTS LATER

A small group of carolers sing holiday songs on the main stage just behind the ice skating rink.

Then, the main act, Michael Buble' takes the stage.

Music plays.

MICHAEL BUBLE
"Chestnuts roasting on an open
fire..."

Michael Buble' sings the holiday classic "The Christmas song" by Nat King Cole.

The couples and families in the audience cuddle as they enjoy the tunes.

In the background, one of the newest couples cuddle, Frankie and Jared.

FRANKIE
Thank you so much for everything.

JARED
You've helped me so much. I
would've been so alone during the
holidays without you.

The two gaze into each other's eyes.

FRANKIE
I guess the holidays at Hurley
Sparks brings out the love in
folks, huh.

JARED
'Sure does.

The two cuddle and kiss.

A small gathering of Elaine, Ester, Agatha, Kathy and the rest of the volunteers cheer and applaud.

Frankie, Jared and a cheerful and united Hurley Sparks community fades into a beautiful starry sky.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END