

A True Christmas
an original screenplay by
C Cannon Rosenau

FADE IN:

EXT. TRAFFIC - MORNING

It's an overcast, gray winter day. The traffic light turns yellow as a couple of cars whiz through. It hits red and a small 1990's sedan screeches to a stop.

INT. 1990'S SEDAN - CONTINUOUS

ANDI ANDREWS, 25, taps the steering wheel impatiently as she waits for the light.

ANDI
C'mon, c'mon.

A tippy-cup sails into the empty passenger seat. The baby WAILS. Andi reaches for the cup but can't reach.

She doesn't notice that the light turned green until the other cars lay on their horns. She gives up on the cup and drives through.

In the back seat, BABY ROXY, age 1, still fusses and flails.

ANDI (CONT'D)
Hold on, baby girl.

She reaches at Andi's purse right next to the carseat. More fussing.

ANDI (CONT'D)
Roxy, it's okay.

Roxy pulls out an open package of Rollos. She stops fussing immediately as she proceeds to lick and slobber all over one of the candies as babies do.

EXT. DAYCARE - A LITTLE LATER

Andi pulls the car into a parking spot, hops out and rushes to the back to pull Roxy out. Roxy gets chocolate handprints all over Andi's shirt.

Andi grabs a jacket out of the car and wriggles it on as they run up the daycare steps. Roxy barfs all over Andi. They run back down - back into the car.

EXT. DENISE'S HOUSE - A LITTLE LATER

DENISE ANDREWS, 50s, jogs out her front door wearing her skin tight workout gear over her perfectly taunt body as Andi pulls up in the sedan, window rolled down.

ANDI

Mom?

Denise turns on her toes and jogs to the open window.

DENISE

Andi, why are you here? I mean,
aren't you supposed to be somewhere?
Work, school?

Andi hops out and takes Roxy out of the backseat.

DENISE (CONT'D)

Yikes. You're a mess.

ANDI

Daycare won't take her when she's
sick. Can you watch her, please?

DENISE

No, I can't.

ANDI

Please? Mom, I'm desperate.

DENISE

Not today, I can't. I have a hair
appointment. And I wanted to get a
wax.

Andi hoists the baby into Denise's arms and hangs the diaper
bag onto her. She kisses Roxy on the cheek.

ANDI

Be good for grandma.

She gets back in the car and creeps forward.

ANDI (CONT'D)

Sorry, mom. Gotta do, what you gotta
do. You taught me that.

With that, Andi drives off leaving Denise frozen.

DENISE

(to herself)

But I was talking about landing a
decent man. Something you say you
don't need.

Denise looks at the messy baby Roxy and gives her a half-
baked smile.

INT. COMMUNITY COLLEGE CLASSROOM - LATER

MRS. ZIMMERMAN, 40s, paces the front of the classroom full of mostly young COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS in her simple black heels and crisp pencil skirt suit. "Sociology 101 - final projects" is written on the white board behind her.

MRS. ZIMMERMAN
We've hit the halfway mark. That means you better get started on your final projects.

MURMURS all through the classroom.

MRS. ZIMMERMAN (CONT'D)
Seriously, folks. It's worth half your final grade. Doesn't it then make sense to work half the quarter on it? You will be partnered up alphabetically...

Andi bursts through the classroom door, still a mess, and takes a remaining seat up front. She mouths "sorry" to Mrs. Zimmerman.

MRS. ZIMMERMAN (CONT'D)
Earliest you've been late, Miss Andrews.

Andi catches ASHER, 27, in the seat next to her, as he shakes his head in disapproval.

ANDI
(whispers)
At least I show up every day.

MRS. ZIMMERMAN
Aaron and Aaron. Convenient. Andi and Asher, Bethany and Chloe...

A LITTLE LATER

The desks are now pushed together in pairs, including Andi and Asher. Asher's attention is on his phone. Andi looks over the assignment packet.

ANDI
This looks pretty straight-forward. Hardest part will be choosing a specific topic.

She looks up to see Asher's face still in his phone. She swipes it from him. He grabs it back and issues her a death stare.

ANDI (CONT'D)
Look. I don't have a lot of time
outside of school. And I need a
good grade.

ASHER
You don't need an elective.

ANDI
Some of us care about our GPA.

ASHER
And some of us live in the real world.

He goes back to his phone. Andi looks down at the packet,
takes a deep breath.

ANDI
I'm sorry. I shouldn't be judging
you. Text me your number and we can
figure out a time to work on this.

Phone in hand, he nods.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHWEITZER'S DEPARTMENT STORE - LATER

Andi zips into the parking lot at Schweitzer's Department
Store. She holds a pb&j sandwich in her teeth as she gets
out and runs up the steps to the store.

INT. SCHWEITZER'S DEPARTMENT STORE - CONTINUOUS

LIV, 20s, stands behind the counter in the ladies department
as Andi rushes in. Liv holds out a clean shirt for Andi who
grabs it as she whizzes past.

HOUSEWARES DEPARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Andi, all set in her fresh shirt, spots a purplish-grey haired
customer, MRS. MACKAY, 70s, comparing a Nutribullet and a
regular blender.

ANDI
Can I help you decide something?

Mrs. MacKay turns around, happy to see Andi.

ANDI (CONT'D)
Oh, Mrs. MacKay! I didn't recognize
your new hair. Very hip.

MRS. MACKAY

Oh, deary, no one says hip anymore.
You don't want to sound like a square,
do ya?

ANDI

Well, it's lovely and you're lovely.
Doing some Christmas shopping?

She nods to the two boxes in Mrs. Mackay's arms.

MRS. MACKAY

I'm looking for something for my
daughter-in-law. What's the
difference between these two
contraptions? Does it matter which
one I get?

ANDI

Well, depends. Does she like booze
in her smoothies? Or vegetables?

MRS. MACKAY

Hmmm, that's a good question. Ever
since the triplets were born, it
could be either.

She puts the blender back on the shelf.

MRS. MACKAY (CONT'D)

I suppose she has a few of these
already, given the mound of wedding
gifts she got. This one is a bit
smaller to ship. How's little Roxy?

ANDI

She has a little flu bug. I dropped
her off at my mom's.

They head to the cash register so Andi can ring her up.

MRS. MACKAY

Shut the front door! Your mother?

ANDI

I didn't really give her a choice.

MRS. MACKAY

Well, you drop her on me tomorrow if
you need to.

ANDI

That would be great. I have to get
ahold of this guy...

MRS. MACKAY

A guy?! You always say you don't need a guy.

ANDI

...For a school project. Don't get your panties in a bunch.

MRS. MACKAY

Oh, girl, at my age my panties are always in a bunch. Right under my armpits.

Andi places the Nutribullet in a shopping bag and hands it to her.

MRS. MACKAY (CONT'D)

I'll see you tomorrow. And you take your time with that...

(air quote)

...Project.

ANDI

Stop. I'll tell Pastor Hagen on you.

MRS. MACKAY

Yeah, yeah. That's nothing compared to what he already knows.

She gives Andi a wink.

MRS. MACKAY (CONT'D)

You may not need a man, but we all need love.

Andi walks out from behind the counter and plants a kiss on Mrs. MacKay's cheek.

ANDI

You give me plenty of that. But I'm still tattling on you.

Mrs. Mackay waves her off and is out the door.

CUT TO:

INT. ANDI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Modest, clean apartment besides a few baby items strewn about. The Christmas tree stands bare in the corner next to a couple of boxes of decorations topped with a pile of tangled lights.

Andi kicks her feet up while she reads an Economics textbook. Baby Roxy toddles around the table and reaches her arms up for Andi.

Andi peers around the text book.

ANDI

Peek a boo!

Roxy giggles. Then arms back up.

ANDI (CONT'D)

Come here. You tired?

She picks up the baby and lays her on her chest.

ANDI (CONT'D)

Me too.

She goes back to reading as Roxy passes out on her.

DISSOLVE TO:

MORNING

Andi and Roxy sleep in the same position we left them in, the book fallen to the side.

Andi's eyes spring open, she looks around confused for a moment. She wipes her drool from her mouth, then Roxy's drool from her arm.

ANDI

Good morning. Let's get you to Mrs. MacKay's. Mama's got a long day.

She stands up with Roxy.

CUT TO:

INT. COMMUNITY COLLEGE CLASSROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Andi and the OTHER STUDENTS take their seats. Mrs. Zimmerman gives her an approving smile.

MRS. ZIMMERMAN

Don't get too comfortable. Find your partner. I'm going give you a little time after the lecture to work on your final.

The Other Students pair up. Andi's left with an empty desk next to her, Asher's not there.

CUT TO:

INT. POP'S HARDWARE STORE - SAME TIME

A Scroogey Asher unpacks boxes of Christmas inventory: lights, yard decor, fake trees etc. He considers each item. He studies a snowman cut-out.

ASHER
(grumbling)
Every year, with the lame fake snowmen. Don't you people realize we get 22 inches of snow. Make a real snowman.

Next, he picks up a Baby Jesus statue. He shakes his head in disapproval.

ASHER (CONT'D)
All this fuss over a baby. Sorry, dude. I'll never understand.

Next item up: the Grinch. Asher smiles.

ASHER (CONT'D)
You, I can get behind.

He breaks down the now empty box. His cell phone RINGS. On the screen: "girl from class." He picks it up.

ASHER (CONT'D)
Yeah?

EXT. COMMUNITY COLLEGE - SAME TIME

Andi walks furiously to the parking lot as she talks on the phone.

ANDI
Why weren't you in class today?

INTERCUT BETWEEN ANDI AND ASHER

ASHER
What are you? My mother?

ANDI
No, but I kind of need your help with this final project.

ASHER
Calm down, Flash Gordon. We have time.

ANDI
Not really.
(MORE)

ANDI (CONT'D)

The closer Christmas gets, the more hours I have at work. And I would like to spend a little time with my daughter.

Asher softens.

ASHER

Fine. I can move some things around tonight.

ANDI

(Victorious)

Great. Can you meet me at Maple Street Christian Church. I'll be in the office. 7pm, okay?

ASHER

Seven works, but...

ANDI

Okay, see you then.

She hangs up.

ASHER

But does it have to be at the church? Hello?

He looks at his phone.

ASHER (CONT'D)

Guess, I'm going to church. Hope it doesn't spontaneously combust.

He dials a number on his phone.

ASHER (CONT'D)

Hey, how's your day been?

(beat)

I have to cancel our date.

Apparently, I'm going to church.

(beat)

No, I'm not gonna turn all holy roller on you. Okay, I'll come see you in the morning. Love you.

Asher puts the phone down and digs into another box.

INT. MONA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

MONA, 55, lies in the hospital bed by the window hooked up to dialysis as the tall, dark and handsome DR. PEMBROOK reviews her chart. The second bed in the room is empty.

MONA
Looks like it's just me and you
tonight, doc.

DR. PEMBROOK
Where are you going to take me
tonight, Mona? France? Belize?
Atlantic City?

Mona grabs the TV remote.

MONA
How about a nice night in?

DR. PEMBROOK
Suit yourself. No visitors tonight?

As he turns his back to grab a fresh pair of gloves, Mona
attempts to primp. He turns towards her and she acts casual.

MONA
I'm afraid not. My son has other
plans.

DR. PEMBROOK
He's a good son. So many of my
patients aren't so lucky.

MONA
Well, we've only got each other.

Mona flinches as Dr. Pembrook pushes on her abdomen.

DR. PEMBROOK
It looks like your swelling's gone
down. One less thing to worry about.

He marks her chart. She lays her head back in defeat.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MAPLE STREET CHURCH OFFICE - EVENING

PASTOR HAGEN, 50s, and a couple of retirement age office
volunteers, JOHN and RENEE call it a day and gather up their
belongings.

Andi comes through the door.

PASTOR HAGEN
Andi, Andi, want some candy?

ANDI

That'll never get old as long as you
keep the candy coming, Pastor Hagen.
Fork it over!

Pastor Hagen hands her a candy cane. John, Renee and Pastor
Hagen head to the door.

JOHN

I made you a fresh pot of coffee.
Figured you'd be tired from work and
school.

ANDI

Thank you!

John and Pastor Hagen leave, Renee pauses.

RENEE

I can stay if you want to go spend
some time with Roxy.

ANDI

It's okay. I won't get much
volunteering in once the holidays
are in full swing. Besides, Mrs.
MacKay has her for the night. I
think she enjoys the company.

RENEE

I agree. Her house probably seems
so quiet ever since Ralph passed
away. Good night!

ANDI

Night, Renee.

Renee leaves. Andi unpacks her school books as the phone
rings. She picks it up.

ANDI (CONT'D)

Maple Church prayer line, this is
Andi.

DISSOLVE TO:

A LITTLE LATER

Asher knocks on the office door as he opens it and peers in
reluctantly.

ANDI

Hi, come on in.

He uncomfortably pulls up a seat next to her at the reception.

ANDI (CONT'D)

You okay?

ASHER

I'm just surprised that I'm not on fire.

Andi laughs, Asher relaxes.

ASHER (CONT'D)

I'm glad you have your book and notes. I didn't bring mine. What were you thinking for a topic?

ANDI

I really don't know. Honestly, this class is pretty useless to me. It was the only elective that fits around my required classes. I'm getting my business certificate.

ASHER

Yeah? Me too. It's a wonder why we don't have more classes together.

ANDI

Maybe we do, but you're just not there.

He opens his mouth to rebut, but the front door opens. In comes an exhausted Mrs. MacKay with Roxy. Andi jumps up to retrieve her baby.

ANDI (CONT'D)

What a nice surprise!

MRS. MACKAY

We were on our way home from the 3rd Street Diner and thought we'd stop by for a quick snuggle. Plus, I forgot my Pepto Bismol.

ANDI

I'm so happy.

She covers her baby in kisses while she hands Mrs. Mackay the bottle of pretty pink Pepto from the desk.

ANDI (CONT'D)

You're definitely gonna need this after eating there.

ASHER

That's half the fun of eating there. I'm Asher by the way.

MRS. MACKAY

Lovely to meet you. How do you know
our sweet girl Andi?

ASHER

Sweet you say?

The phone rings, Andi hoists Roxy up on her hip and answers
as Asher and Mrs. Mackay continue talking.

MRS. MACKAY

Oh, yes. And as honestly open as my
dear husband's coffin was...God rest
his soul.

ASHER

I suppose I can see that. She hasn't
exactly shown me her sweet side yet.

Andi hangs up the phone.

ANDI

You are not exactly easy to be sweet
to.

MRS. MACKAY

Now, now, you two. I better get
that baby home for bath and bedtime.

Andi hands the baby to her.

ANDI

Thank you. I have to make a house
call anyhow. Mrs. Harvey was pretty
frantic about her grandson or
something. I'm going to go see her.

MRS. MACKAY

Say, "Bye, bye, mommy!"

ANDI

I love you so much, sweet pea!

And the old lady's off. Andi gathers her coat and purse.

ASHER

Do you want me to come with you? We
can hammer this out on the way.

ANDI

Great! You drive. I'll take notes.

CUT TO:

INT. ASHER'S PICKUP - MOMENTS LATER

Asher pulls the little truck out of the church parking lot.

ASHER
Is there a Mr. Andi?

ANDI
Nope. Roxy came from immaculate
conception.

ASHER
C'mon.

ANDI
I'm kidding. Obviously. She's the
product of a night of heavy drinking
and a bad decision with a perfect
stranger.

Asher jerks the brakes in surprise.

ASHER
You? Seriously? And they let you
in your church?

ANDI
Of course! Do you think hospitals
are meant for people who are already
well?

He contemplates.

ASHER
I guess not.

ANDI
Pull over there. The second
driveway...Oh my gosh! She's on the
roof.

Asher slams the truck into park. They both jump out.

EXT. MRS. HARVEY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

MRS. HARVEY, a frail, little old blue-haired woman of 85
wanders on the roof in her nightgown.

Asher spots the ladder and hurries up it.

ANDI
Mrs. Harvey, I asked you to wait by
your phone. What are you doing up
there?

Andi climbs up to the top rung.

MRS. HARVEY

I'm sick of waiting for my grandson to come help me. He promised he'd be here last week and then this weekend and now here I am with nothing to show for my Christmas spirit. I want my Santa in place now.

ASHER

It's okay. I'll help you. Please come down. Carefully. Where's Santa at?

MRS. HARVEY

Who are you?
(to Andi)
Who the heck is he?

ANDI

It's okay. He's a friend. Come on down and he'll put your Santa up for you.

Asher ushers Mrs. Harvey to the ladder as Andi guides her down. Andi accidentally looks up, right up Mrs. Harvey's nightgown. She shields her eyes from the horror. Asher laughs at her.

Asher spots the Santa upside down in a nearby bush.

ASHER

Andi, can you hand me Santa? He's over there.

Andi guides Mrs. Harvey to the front door.

MRS. HARVEY

I'm going to go get a jacket. It's breezy in my nightgown.

ANDI

(stifling a laugh)
I bet.

Andi hoists the Santa up the ladder. He trades her a roll of duct tape for the Santa.

ASHER

She's lucky she didn't fall down with Santa. She was trying to duct tape him to her chimney. I'm coming down to grab my tools.

They both shimmy back down the ladder. Mrs. Harvey, now with an overcoat on, drags a giant messy box of Christmas lights and decorations back outside with her.

MRS. HARVEY

While you're up there, could you be
a dear and tack this stuff up too?
Santa won't be ready to visit all
the girls and boys without it.

Andi looks at Asher, begging with her face. He gives a quick nod as he grabs his tools from the back of his truck. She mouths "thank you" and takes over dragging the box to the ladder.

ANDI

We got you covered, Mrs. Harvey.

ASHER

(whispers)
Covered, unlike her nightgown.

Asher yanks a string of lights out of the box and heads back up the ladder. Andi sorts through the rest of the box.

DISSOLVE TO:

A LITTLE LATER

Asher, hammer in hand, steps backward off the ladder to admire his handiwork.

Andi helps Mrs. Harvey out the front door and down the front stoop steps with a plate of hot cookies.

MRS. HARVEY

You did it all wrong!

Asher, speechless, drops his hammer. Andi laughs.

ANDI

She's messing with you.

Asher comes to his senses and picks up his hammer. He cracks a smile.

ASHER

Oh man, I was this close to yanking
it all back down.

Mrs. Harvey offers him a Santa cookie.

MRS. HARVEY

Peace offering?

Asher takes the cookie, contemplates and forces a smile.

ASHER

Festive.

ANDI

Wait until you try it. It's like a Christmas party in your mouth.

Asher scowls at Andi but takes a bite. Mrs. Harvey hugs Andi.

MRS. HARVEY

Thank you for being here for me, dear. I don't know what I'd do without you.

She turns to Asher.

MRS. HARVEY (CONT'D)

And thank you. You don't even know me yet you helped an ornery old ninny like me. Will I see you again? At church?

ASHER

That's not really my thing. Too many people there. But I can come back and see if you need anything else done around the house.

Asher and Andi wave goodbye to Mrs. Harvey as they walk toward the truck.

ANDI

You'd really do that for Mrs. Harvey?

ASHER

Sure. Why wouldn't I? Do you think I'm so terrible that I wouldn't help an old lady out?

ANDI

I feel like I should say no to be polite, but you basically did say you weren't a people person.

They giggle as they each hop in the truck.

ASHER

I do like a couple people.

And off they drive.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. COMMUNITY COLLEGE - MORNING

An angry Andi files out of the classroom with the other STUDENTS. She moves to the side and digs out her phone, lets her anger dial and her venom speak.

ANDI

Where were you? We had the entire class to work on our project.

She takes a short deep breath. Softens.

ANDI (CONT'D)

I'll go ahead and finish the outline later during my hour between school and work but it sure would be nice to have your help. Call me! Please. Oh, this is Andi. Call me. Bye.

She slips her phone back into her bag and continues on with her day.

CUT TO:

INT. MONA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - SAME TIME

Asher sits in the chair between the empty bed and Mona who's asleep in her hospital bed. His hand rests on her arm as the TV plays a catty talk show with INDISTINCT VOICES YELLING AT EACH OTHER.

Mona stirs awake and smiles weakly at her son.

MONA

You could have changed the channel when I fell asleep.

ASHER

Nah, by that time I was hooked. I had to know if it was Chuck or Bill who was the father of Susan's triplets.

She laughs.

ASHER (CONT'D)

Neither dudes are the father, by the way. How are you feeling?

MONA

Happy with you here. Can you help me up? Nature calls.

Asher assists his mother over to the bathroom door, she goes in and shuts it behind her.

Asher checks his phone message from Andi as he waits outside the bathroom. Stress overtakes his face as he exhales loudly.

Mona comes out and he attempts a brave face.

MONA (CONT'D)
Well, that's better.

Mona looks at Asher.

MONA (CONT'D)
What's the matter? Who's the girl?

ASHER
Nothing. No one.

She stares him down mom-style.

ASHER (CONT'D)
Fine. I'm just worried I'm gonna let Pops down when he retires. I can't even keep up with my business classes, let alone run his business.

MONA
Your business. You've worked there since you were 13. Your grandpa trusts you. Trust yourself, Ash.

ASHER
I'll try.

MONA
And the girl?

ASHER
There's no girl.

She mom-stares again.

ASHER (CONT'D)
It's not like that. I'm partnered with the most annoying, frustrating...

MONA
Cute?

ASHER
...girl.

She squeezes his hand. They look up as Dr. Pembroke comes in.

DR. PEMBROOK

Well, I would say it was my handiwork that is making you look so radiant this morning. But this is the glow only Asher can give you.

MONA

I do love my boy.

ASHER

Oh my gosh. No wonder I can't get a girlfriend. I must have mama's boy written all over me.

Dr. Pembrook looks up from his clipboard.

DR. PEMBROOK

Hmmm, that might be my problem too. Do you need anything else before I go?

MONA

Not for now. I'll miss you, darling.

Dr. Pembrook winks at Mona as he exits.

MONA (CONT'D)

I tell you what, if I was 10 years younger and he was single. Mm Mm.

ASHER

That's my cue to leave.

Asher plants a kiss on her head.

ASHER (CONT'D)

I'll come back after work, okay? You want some more crosswords? Sudoku?

MONA

That'd be great. Love you, pooh bear.

He smiles and shakes his head as he leaves.

CUT TO:

INT. ANDI'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Baby Roxy flings spaghetti all over from her high chair. She lets out a frustrated SQUEAL.

ANDI (O.S.)

Hold on, baby. Mama's coming!

The DOORBELL RINGS. Andi rushes out, a toilet chain and float ball in hand. She opens the door to find Mrs. Mackay. Andi hugs her urgently and ushers her in the door.

ANDI (CONT'D)

Bless you! I'm so glad you're early.

Mrs. Mackay grabs a wash rag and cleans up baby.

ANDI (CONT'D)

I have to stop by the hardware store on my way to work if I want to pee tonight.

MRS. MACKAY

Won't your landlord take care of it?

ANDI

Please. I can't hold it that long!

Mrs. Mackay picks Baby Roxy out of the high chair.

MRS. MACKAY

Okay, dear. You run along and I'll get princess changed and we'll lock up.

Andi stops and appreciates Mrs. Mackay with a grateful smile.

MRS. MACKAY (CONT'D)

Go on. Get out of here.

ANDI

Okay, I'm going. I'm off at midnight so I'll come grab her just after that. Love you, baby.

Andi smothers her Baby Roxy in kisses. She heads out the door. She opens the door back up and tosses the toilet parts onto the couch, then leaves again.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. POP'S HARDWARE STORE - MOMENTS LATER

Andi pulls up in front of Pop's Hardware, "Est. 1949." She gets out of her car and heads inside.

INT. POP'S HARDWARE STORE - CONTINUOUS

Andi finds the plumbing section and grabs a new toilet ball and chain. She heads to the register and "dings" the bell for service.

Asher saunters up, still chewing his lunch, he wipes his mouth with a napkin.

ANDI

Oh, no. Why are you here?

ASHER

Nice to see you too. I work here.
How was class today?

ANDI

Don't even get me started. I have
no time to be angry at you. How
much do I owe you?

ASHER

\$4.65.

She tosses a twenty on the counter.

ANDI

Bring me my change to class tomorrow.
Please. I'm literally begging you.
Come to class!

She runs out the door. He makes the change at the register
and sets it aside, shaking his head.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHWEITZER'S DEPARTMENT STORE - LATER

Andi refolds kitchen towels in the housewares department.
Her coworker Liv comes over to help.

LIV

That rush was a rush! The first of
many to come.

ANDI

Tis the season! It's pretty fun
though.

LIV

How d'ya figure? My dogs are barkin'
and I'm pretty sure I forgot to put
on deodorant before my shift.

ANDI

I can't tell. But then again, I'm
immune to bad smells. Diapers, you
know. So you know how I have that
sociology elective?

A MIDDLE-AGED MAN comes in and immediately starts browsing.

LIV

Yeah?

(to MIDDLE-AGED MAN)

Welcome to Schweitzers. Let us know you need any help finding anything.

MIDDLE-AGED MAN

Just browsing for now. Thanks.

ANDI

Anyhow, I'm paired up with that guy I told you about who is no help at all. So I've been observing customers and taking lots of notes. It's perfect this time of year. Nobody is shopping for themselves. They're all totally out of their comfort zone. Watch him, for example.

They look up and observe intently.

The Middle-Aged Man weighs his options between different hideous Star Wars or cartoon themed kitchen gadgets. He picks one up. Puts it down. Picks the other one up. Puts it down. Scratches his head.

ANDI (CONT'D)

He's too far past what's called his optimal anxiety. Far outside of his comfort zone - too stressed to make a decision. Frozen.

LIV

You are an excellent multi-tasker, my friend. Back to my cell block. I'll take some notes for you too.

Liv grabs a spirralizer and hands it to the Middle-Aged Man as she saunters out of the department, leaving the man dumbfounded for a moment.

ANDI

I can ring you up right over there.

He meets her at the counter.

MIDDLE-AGED MAN

This doo-dad looks kind of cool. My wife will have fun with it. I'm worthless in the kitchen.

ANDI

That's why we're always here to help. Come back again.

MIDDLE-AGED MAN
Thanks. I definitely will.

She hands him his bag and he leaves. She looks down and sees "Pastor Hagen, 23 missed calls" on her cell phone. She immediately returns the call.

ANDI
Is everything okay?
(beat)
Which hospital?
(beat)
I'm on my way.

She puts the phone down, runs over to Liv, talks to her w/o sound. Liv nods, Andi leaves.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL LOBBY - LATER

Andi enters through the automatic glass doors to find Pastor Hagen holding a sleeping Baby Roxy over his shoulder. She takes her sleepy girl from him.

ANDI
Ah, sleepy baby. How is Mrs. Mackay?

PASTOR HAGEN
They're moving her to a room. She's groggy, but still her spunky self.

Andi laughs.

ANDI
She's something else, that woman.
They think she had a heart attack?

He nods and pours her a cup of hospital coffee sludge. He motions for her to sit down.

PASTOR HAGEN
Here. Drink it black. The cream is questionable.

ANDI
Thanks. Is she going to get out of here? Alive, I mean.

PASTOR HAGEN
Hard to say. She is 87, afterall.

Andi takes a drink of her coffee, makes a bitter beer face and sets it on the table.

CUT TO:

INT. MONA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

The drape is drawn hiding Mona's side of the room. Mrs. Mackay lays in the bed hooked up to an IV. NURSE TERRY checks her vitals.

Pastor Hagen and Andi with Baby Roxy still passed out on her shoulder enter.

NURSE TERRY
Visiting hours were over a couple
hours ago, but I'll give you a few
minutes.

Pastor Hagen nods as the Nurse exits. He lays a hand on Mrs. Mackay's arm and quietly prays for her. Andi bows her head in agreement.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MONA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - MORNING

Mrs. Mackay stirs awake as the Nurse Terry opens the drape divider. Mona's fast asleep in her bed, while Asher sleeps like a pretzel in the chair next to her.

NURSE TERRY
Good morning. Do you need anything
before I go home?

MRS. MACKAY
Just a little help to the toilet
please. And can you have the clergy
bring me a Bible.

Asher wakes up as Nurse Terry whisks Mrs. Mackay away. He gets up and leans over his mom.

ASHER
I gotta go, mom. Please stay
positive. I love you so much.

He kisses her on the forehead, grabs Andi's change from the store off the table and leaves.

CUT TO:

INT. COMMUNITY COLLEGE - MORNING

Asher enters the class, Mrs. Zimmerman grasps her desk to keep from falling over.

MRS. ZIMMERMAN
So nice of you to grace us with your
presence, Mr. Johnson.

He ignores her and scans the class as he takes a seat. He stacks the cash for Andi on his desk and places a couple of books over it.

MRS. ZIMMERMAN (CONT'D)
All right. Turn to your Smith text,
page 87. We're going to discuss...

A TARDY STUDENT barrels through the door. Asher starts to smile and wave, until he realizes it's not Andi. Awkward.

He quickly puts his hand down, acts casual as he picks his book up to hide. The Tardy Student takes a seat.

CUT TO:

INT. ANDI'S CAR - SAME TIME

Andi taps the steering wheel impatiently at a red light. She peeks at a happy Baby Roxy in the rearview mirror.

ANDI
You're a happy girl, huh, baby. You
should be, we slept an hour late.

Baby Roxy GIGGLES. The light turns green, Andi drives forward.

ANDI (CONT'D)
You know what? We're playing hooky
today. Well, at least until I have
to go to work. What do you think of
that?

Another red light. Andi smiles at Baby Roxy in the rearview.

ANDI (CONT'D)
Let's go check on Mrs. Mackay.

Baby Roxy SQUEALS. Light turns green, Andi pulls a U-turn.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MONA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Mona's curtain is drawn. Mrs. Mackay sleeps as Andi chases an unsteady Baby Roxy into the room. She catches up and swoops her into her arms.

Baby Roxy WHINES and FUSSES, tries to get down.

ANDI

Shh, shh, shh. Mrs. Mackay is night night.

She lets Baby Roxy down who runs straight for Mona's curtain.

MONA (O.S.)

Well, what do we have here?

Andi hesitantly comes through the curtain.

ANDI

I'm so sorry. She just became this mobile. Roxy, come see mommy.

MONA

I remember those days. My son's grown now, but when he was that age, he wouldn't walk or run, he'd climb and jump everywhere.

Andi scoops up Baby Roxy.

ANDI

Sounds like a mother's nightmare!

Mona chuckles and nods. Andi waves as she shuts the curtain again. Mrs. Mackay wakes up.

MRS. MACKAY

My sweet girls. How are you?

Andi lays Baby Roxy next to Mrs. Mackay. Baby Roxy snuggles into her arms. She takes a seat next to the bed.

ANDI

We're fine. How are you feeling?

MRS. MACKAY

Well, I don't do drugs or drink alcohol.

Andi looks at her confused.

ANDI

Okay. That's good...

MRS. MACKAY

At my age, just standing up does the same thing.

Andi laughs and feigns shock.

MRS. MACKAY (CONT'D)

That's the same look my Ralph always gave me.

ANDI

I can't imagine why. You never say anything weird. Or inappropriate. Or weirdly inappropriate.

Mrs. Mackay adjusts to sit up as Baby Roxy falls asleep on her. She kisses the top of the baby's head.

MRS. MACKAY

I think that's why I'm so fond of you, Andi. You get me the way Ralph did.

Andi takes her hand.

ANDI

You miss him, huh? Tell me what you miss the most about him.

MRS. MACKAY

Well, that's an evolving question. In the beginning, it was that fire and ice. He would get under my skin so bad, I'd vow to never see him again.

ANDI

That's love?

MRS. MACKAY

No, dear. That's what fed the passion.

(beat)

At the end, after 66 years with him, he just knew what I needed right when I needed it. If I needed to laugh or complain, he'd say the right thing or just listen. I'd do the same for him. Give him space when he needed it; take it when I needed it. To know someone so well, to have gone through all the ups and downs and put in the hard work because you knew they were worth it.

She takes a labored deep breath.

MRS. MACKAY (CONT'D)
That was love.

Andi wipes a tear from her eye.

ANDI
I'm sorry he's not the one here with
you right now. Truly.

Mrs. Mackay smiles genuinely.

MRS. MACKAY
I told you, by God's grace you girls
are exactly who I need here. Why
don't you run next door to that coffee
shop and fuel up while I get some
beauty rest with this little princess?

ANDI
And you, my dear friend, know exactly
what I need. Good coffee. I'll be
back soon. You sure you guys will
be okay?

Mrs. Mackay nods as she lets her eyelids droop.

CUT TO:

INT. COFFEE SHOP - A LITTLE LATER

Andi waits in a long coffee line. Asher comes through the door and spots her after a moment. He takes a deep irritated breath and storms over to her.

ASHER
Fancy seeing you here. And not in
class. Turns out you're not so
perfect after all.

She whips around and mean mugs him. They move up in line.
A RANDOM PATRON taps Asher on the shoulder.

RANDOM PATRON
Hey, no cutting the line.

ASHER
I'm with her.

ANDI
No he's not.

The Random Patron points his thumb to direct Asher to the back of the line.

ASHER

I'll pay for your coffee.

The Random Patron gestures to let him stay in front of him in line.

RANDOM PATRON

By all means.

Andi finishes telling the BARISTA her coffee order. Asher peers over to recite his.

ASHER

20 ounce, quad mocha please. And whatever he's having.

RANDOM PATRON

Same.

Asher hands the Barista cash. They step aside to wait for their coffees.

ASHER

Mrs. Zimmerman is not happy with you.

Andi glares at Asher.

RANDOM PATRON

Your funeral, bro.

Barista then passes all three of their coffees. Random Patron is off to resume his own life. Andi attempts to escape with him but Asher touches her on the shoulder. She stops.

ASHER

No, seriously. She pulled me aside today and told me that both of our attendance will affect our grade on our final.

Andi takes a deep breath, exhales in a low GROWL and lays into him.

ANDI

You miss half the semester and I miss one day. One day! Yes, a lot of tardies, I admit, but at least I show up. And suddenly it's like your lack of attendance is going to affect my grade.

ASHER

Hey, don't shoot the messenger.

(MORE)

ASHER (CONT'D)
Here's what's left of your change
from the store. Thanks for the
coffee. Gotta go.

He hands her the little bit of cash and leaves quickly.
She's not far behind as she leaves too.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

Asher is bent down tying his shoe as Andi enters the lobby
from outside. She walks right past him to the elevator.
DING. The doors open, she goes in.

INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

Asher makes it in before the doors close.

ASHER
Why are you here?

ANDI
Visiting a friend. Why are you here?

ASHER
My mom.

Tension fades to awkward silence as they both exit the
elevator and wander together down the:

HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Awkwardness continues as they walk, heads down. They look
up at each other and immediately look away.

Asher arrives at his mom's shared hospital room.

ASHER
This is me.

She follows right behind although he doesn't notice her.
They enter:

MONA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Asher continues to Mona's side of the curtain oblivious that
Andi is still right behind.

Andi sits next to Mrs. Mackay's bed, both her and Baby Roxy
are still sleeping. She takes her phone out and quietly
works on it.

OTHER SIDE OF CURTAIN

Asher kisses his mom hello. She's resting but smiles.

MONA

(Weakly)

Hi, baby. How was school? I'm real proud of ya.

ASHER

They must have you real doped up, huh?

She smiles and nods sleepily. Baby Roxy wails from the other side of the curtain.

MONA

Who let all the cats in here? Get them out!

ASHER

It's okay mom. I'll check it out.

He peeks through the curtain and sees Andi bouncing Baby Roxy as she ruffles through her diaper bag.

ANDI

Shh shh. We'll go get you a snack.

ASHER

Hey, I'll come with you. We can go together.

Andi looks up and nods quietly.

INT. HOSPITAL CAFETERIA - LATER

They're seated at a table with Baby Roxy in a high chair happily stuffing crackers in her cute baby pie-hole. Andi checks her phone.

ASHER

My mom thought your baby was a herd of cats. Pain killers, am I right?

Andi is still distracted by her phone.

ANDI

Mmm hmmm

ASHER

I can't believe I didn't recognize Mrs. Mackay. I feel bad.

She looks up.

ANDI
Well, you did only meet her once.

ASHER
A lady with blue hair is hard to
forget.

Andi is back at her phone. Without looking up she hands
Baby Roxy her tippy cup upside down.

ASHER (CONT'D)
Is everything ok?

Andi immediately looks up at him.

ANDI
I'm sorry. I'm just trying to get
my mom to watch Roxy while I'm at
work tonight. But, no, she'd rather
go out hip-hop dancing with some
weirdo she just met in her Sip and
Paint class.
(beat)
How insensitive of me. You'd probably
give anything so you're mom could go
out dancing.

ASHER
I would. But don't worry, I get it.
My mom was boy crazy when I was
growing up too. Hard balance I guess.
Mothering and dating.

ANDI
I don't want to do that to Rox. I
hated that. I felt like she could
have saved her dates for the weekends
I was at my dad's. But that was
then, this is now. I thought she'd
smother this cute little baby after
she was born and to be honest she
has no interest in her grandchild.

ASHER
People suck, don't they?

Andi laughs.

ANDI
Yeah, sometimes. You just got to
surround yourself with the good ones
and hope the sucky ones figure out
how to not suck.

Asher nods in agreement and laughs.

ANDI (CONT'D)

It's just lame. I don't really need the money because of my school grants, but the CEO promised me a really great internship next semester in the corporate office. This is the last Christmas I have to juggle these four to midnight shifts. Lord willing.

ASHER

I'm guessing it's hard to find a daycare open that late.

Andi touches herself "on the nose" and nods.

ASHER (CONT'D)

There is one I've seen downtown. It's called Smutty's Tavern. At least that was the daycare I went to.

ANDI

That place over-serves. And voila, it's a girl!

She motions to Baby Roxy as she smashes a cracker on her own head and GIGGLES

ASHER

I can watch her for you.

ANDI

You don't have to do that. What about your own job?

ASHER

It's a family run business. I ran around there playing with hatchets and hammers my entire life. The rest of my time is spent here anyway. So Mrs. Mackay and my mom can help from their beds.

ANDI

I owe you big time. Rox and I will run home and get her stuff.

ASHER

You can just drop her off at the hardware store.

Andi gets up, turns to Asher looks right in his eyes and places her hand on his shoulder.

ANDI
Really, thanks.

An OLD PERSON walking by stops in his tracks.

OLD PERSON
Nice to see you still remember to
love one another even with this little
tyke. Don't lose that fire.

ANDI/ASHER
Oh, we're not...

The OLD PERSON is already shuffling off.

INT. MONA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - AFTERNOON

Mona stirs awake to find the dividing curtain drawn back a bit, revealing Mrs. Mackay's side of the room. Mrs. Mackay lays on her side, eyes staring at Mona.

MONA
Can I help you? (Beat) Hello? Quit
staring at me. Oh no, you're freaking
dead.

Mrs. Mackay SNORTS herself awake. Mona lets out a deep breath.

MRS. MACKAY
Well, hello, neighbor.

MONA
You freaked me out, sleeping with
your eyes open like that. How creepy!
I thought you were dead.

Mrs. Mackay smiles, at ease. Mona tenses.

MRS. MACKAY
I guess that's a good bet to place
your wager in this place.

MONA
Don't remind me.

She lays back.

MRS. MACKAY
I know it's hard not to be scared,
honey. But there's nothing to be
afraid of. At my age, I'm ringing
death's doorbell and one of these
days, he's gonna answer.

MONA

But how can you be so at peace about it?

As Mrs. Mackay grabs her Bible off of her nightstand, Dr. Pembrook comes in.

DR. PEMBROOK

Well, well, well. This is awkward. I see my two best gals have met and must vie for my attention.

MRS. MACKAY

You can have him. Who needs a two-timer. Even if he is a handsome doctor.

Mona manages a laugh as Dr. Pembrook looks over the charts.

CUT TO:

INT. POP'S HARDWARE - LATER

Asher opens the door to a

BACK ROOM

There's paint cloth over a couple furniture items. He removes one and dust flies. He COUGHS.

He checks out the old playpen that was underneath. He notices some tools, like a mallet and a rusty saw, in the corner.

ASHER

Those are a hazard.

He grabs the mallet and saw and carries them back out front as Andi comes in with Roxy and loaded diaper bag in tow.

ASHER (CONT'D)

Check out these old baby toys I found for Roxy.

ANDI

Those are way cooler than the machetes she has at home.

They smile and gaze dopily at each other. Andi breaks the spell by hoisting the diaper bag on the counter. He places the old tools under the counter.

ANDI (CONT'D)

I left her carseat by the front door, so you're not stranded.

(MORE)

ANDI (CONT'D)

Oh and I put my binder in there for class. Do you mind adding your research to mine? And could you highlight anything that doesn't make any sense from mine? I was half asleep when I wrote a majority of it.

ASHER

I don't mind. I just want that class off my plate.

Andi nods in agreement and hands over the baby. Asher takes hold as if he's grabbing a steering wheel.

ANDI

Oh my gosh. You've never even held a baby. What am I doing?

ASHER

Relax. Pops will be here soon enough. Besides how hard can it be?

CUT TO:

LATER

Asher's shirt is pulled over his nose as he bags up a nasty diaper.

ASHER

That ought to do it.

He tosses the nasty diaper into the trash, grabs the diaper bag and scoops up Baby Roxy.

ASHER (CONT'D)

I'm going to have one buff arm after a day with you, aren't I?

Baby Roxy just looks at him and makes a baby GURGLE noise.

ASHER (CONT'D)

Yeah, you're pretty darn cute. What do I do with you now?

Baby Roxy FUSSES.

ASHER (CONT'D)

Shhh, it's okay. I'm freaking out a bit on the inside too. Let's see, you ate your snack already. You, um, got rid of your snack already. Are you tired?

Her fuss gets LOUDER. He brings her to the

BACK ROOM

He lays her down in the now clean play pen. He grabs her little stuffed animal out of the diaper bag. She takes it and drifts off into a nap.

He takes the big binder out of the bag and sits in a nearby rocking chair. He leafs through it quickly.

ASHER

Looks good to me.

A paper falls onto the ground. He picks it up and studies it for a moment. It reads: "List for Foster Children's Christmas Celebration."

ASHER (CONT'D)

This I can do.

He jumps up loudly. He freezes and holds his breath as Baby Roxy stirs and then goes back to sleep. He exhales and exits.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MONA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

The curtain between Mona and Mrs. Mackay is open and the ladies are deep in conversation.

MONA

You really wore a clown suit to church?

MRS. MACKAY

I did. Pastor Hagen told the wrong person about his fear of clowns.

MONA

I thought you were such a stiff church lady.

MRS. MACKAY

Us church gals will surprise ya.

MONA

You really did. I assumed you'd be all mightier than thou, well, thy. My? Me? Look down your nose at me!

She winks then looks up at the clock.

MONA (CONT'D)

Nine-thirty. Goodness. I didn't even notice the time. Asher was supposed to come by for dinner three hours ago. With that baby you love so much. Is that your granddaughter?

MRS. MACKAY

She's like one. I like to help Andi out as much as I can.

MONA

That's awful sweet of you.

MRS. MACKAY

Her own mother isn't much help. Can't blame her, just enjoying her empty nest, I suppose. I call it her loss, really.

Mona nods in agreement.

MRS. MACKAY (CONT'D)

Andi's just so motivated. She's as busy as can be, yet still finds time to be an amazing mom and also help others. I'd hate for her to lose that drive.

In walks Asher with Baby Roxy, both of their clothes are covered in Red and Green paint. Both Mrs. Mackay and Mona look at Baby Roxy horrified.

ASHER

Guess what we did?

Mrs. Mackay GIGGLES and reaches her arms out for the baby. Asher passes her over.

MRS. MACKAY

Oh my! Did you do some painting, little princess?

Mrs. Mackay kisses her chubby baby cheek. Asher leans over and kisses Mona.

MONA

Who are you and what did you do with my son?

ASHER

What do you mean?

MONA

That baby has a spell on you. I've never seen you in a good mood like this. Not even when you were a kid on Christmas.

Asher GRUNTS, proving her right.

MONA (CONT'D)

He's always been a grumpy old man.

MRS. MACKAY

That's how my Ralph was. Until he married me of course. Then he was giddy as a schoolgirl.

She winks at Asher. Andi enters, Baby Roxy sits up and reaches her arms excitedly.

ANDI

Hi, sweet girl!

MRS. MACKAY

Hi back! Oh, you were talking to the baby.

Andi scoops up the baby and snuggles her close.

ANDI

I missed you so much.

She flops down into a chair, still holding baby tight.

ANDI (CONT'D)

Well, I see I have a budding artist on my hands. Thank you, Asher, for watching her. And keeping her alive.

MONA

Asher was just about to go to the cafeteria to grab some food if you want to join him.

ASHER

Mom! Geez.

ANDI

Maybe next time. I just want to get her home to bed. I need to finally go through the Christmas decorations I've had sitting in the middle of my living room. Assuming she falls asleep before I do, that is.

They laugh as Andi collects her diaper bag.

EXT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Andi stops next to the open door to readjust the baby and the diaper bag on her shoulder.

MONA (O.S.)
You're smitten with that girl.

ASHER (O.S.)
Stop, mom. I am not. I can barely stand to be around her. So drop it, okay?

Andi hoists Roxy closer and stomps off.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ANDI'S APARTMENT - LATER

Andi sits in the glow of her Christmas lights and a table lamp amidst a pile of text books. She taps her pencil against her notebook and lets out a giant SIGH.

She picks up her phone and puts it down. Opens one of her books. Puts it down. Grabs the phone and texts.

ANDI (V.O.)
Hey, I just wanted to thank you again for taking care of Roxy today. I appreciate it. Also, I don't understand how Chapter Five explains the reactions. Help! Can't sleep.

She tosses the phone aside and picks back up the book. Let's out a big SIGH again and grabs the remote.

The TV plays a trashy talk show as indistinct VOICES ARGUE ON THE TV over some jerk of a man.

She grabs the phone again. Puts it down. SIGH. Picks it up and fires off again.

ANDI (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I heard what you said today. I barely like you back.

She set the phone back down. SIGH. She sinks into the couch as she watches the drama unfold on the TV.

Her phone CHIRPS at her. She grabs and reads, slams it back down.

ANDI (CONT'D)
What the heck does he mean by that?
(MORE)

ANDI (CONT'D)
(mimicing voice)
'But that's the problem, I do like
you,' he says.
(normal voice)
Like me how? *Like* like me?

She GROANS and flails her head back onto the couch.

INT. COMMUNITY COLLEGE CLASSROOM - MORNING

The desks are filled by all the VARIOUS STUDENTS with Asher and Andi on opposite ends of the row.

Mrs. Zimmerman drones on about social institutions.

MRS. ZIMMERMAN
Under the guidelines of this social
institution, the classroom, I suppose
it is expected that I let you leave
now since the hour is up.

The students all get up to leave. Andi tries to get out the door without making eye contact with Asher but he catches up to her.

EXT. COMMUNITY COLLEGE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Asher holds out a paper and shakes it behind Andi. She turns around.

ASHER
Here. My notes on chapter five.

Andi beams.

ANDI
Really?

ASHER
Don't get too excited. It's nothin'
compared to the work you've put in.

She looks over the paper.

ANDI
You're right.

She waves the paper.

ANDI (CONT'D)
I am overthinking the assignment.

Asher smiles.

ASHER
How many more classes do you have
today?

ANDI
Two. Economics and Communications.
They walk with the flow of STUDENTS.

ASHER
I just have Marketing left. Snooze.

ANDI
I loved that class!

ASHER
Not my bag.

He shoves his hands in his pocket and they walk in awkward
silence for a moment.

ASHER (CONT'D)
Do you want to grab lunch after?

ANDI
That sounds great. Wait for me in
the Leisure Hall.

Asher nods and off Andi goes.

EXT. COMMUNITY COLLEGE - LATER

Asher holds the door open for Andi as she comes out.

ANDI
Brrr.

ASHER
We can drive if you want.

ANDI
Oh, no. Let's walk. It smells like
snow!

They make their way to a path by the river and saunter along.
Asher pulls a pile of loose leaf paper from his jacket pocket
and hands it over to Andi.

ASHER
Here. More notes on chapter five.

ANDI
Great. That's amazingly helpful,
actually.

ASHER
Actually. Gee thanks.

She hits his arm playfully.

ASHER (CONT'D)
My mom's on the short list for surgery.

ANDI
Asher, that's great. I bet you feel like you can exhale a bit now.

ASHER
Yeah, exhale. That's a good way of putting it. I guess I have been holding my breath.

They make it to the Railway Cafe. It's all swagged out in Christmas decor.

INT. RAILWAY CAFE - CONTINUOUS

The swag is just as abundant inside the cafe as outside. A fireplace blazes in the corner as the HOSTESS seats them in a booth nearby.

DISSOLVE TO:

A LITTLE LATER

They're eating their food: Asher a burger and Andi a pile of pancakes complete with sprinkles and whip cream.

ASHER
Did you find someone to watch Roxy tonight?

ANDI
Uck. Don't remind me. My direct supervisor has been kind of a nightmare harassing me about sales numbers and blah, blah blah.

She takes a bite.

ASHER
That wouldn't get me to work any harder. I guess I've been lucky in the boss department.

Andi notices as his gaze drops to her plate.

ANDI

Want a bite? You know you'd love a
Christmas Cookie Pancake.

ASHER

Blech.

ANDI

What's your deal with Christmas?

He bites and chews his burger.

ASHER

I guess, I don't know, it started
the first year Santa didn't show up.
My dad always dressed up like Santa.
He smelled like candycanes.

Andi puts her fork down.

ANDI

How old were you?

ASHER

Five. My mom hates my dad. I guess
it just became easier to hate him
too.

ANDI

Ouch. I'm sorry. I hit the child-
of-divorce lottery. They lived a
block apart and I could come and go
as I wanted.

He points out the window. The WAITRESS drops the check off.

ASHER

Look.

Andi looks outside at the giant flakes now pouring down.
Asher puts some cash in the check and follows Andi outside.

EXT. RAILWAY CAFE - CONTINUOUS

Andi opens her arms and smiles up at the snow falling down.
Asher smiles at her as he comes out of the cafe.

ANDI

I'm going to go pick up my baby and
take a snow day with her.

ASHER

Spontaneous.

ANDI

And you're coming with. We can head to the hospital after.

ASHER

I guess I have no choice then.

They both run toward the path.

CUT TO:

EXT. POP'S HARDWARE - LATER

Asher's truck pulls into the parking lot. He and Andi hop out and she gets Baby Roxy out. He takes the baby from her. She smiles, pleasantly surprised.

ASHER

C'mon. Let's show your mom what we did.

INT. POP'S HARDWARE - CONTINUOUS

He leads Andi to his workshop room and flips on the light. Laid on and around the workbench are several Christmas wood cutouts and a couple painted Cornhole boards. He points to the cornhole board with little baby handprints.

ANDI

Did you do that, baby girl? So pretty.

She leans over to Asher.

ANDI (CONT'D)

The kid could use to watch a couple episodes of Bob Ross.

She touches all the various cutouts.

ANDI (CONT'D)

Wow, Asher. Your inner elf is shining.

ASHER

I found your notes for the foster kid benefit. I was thinking they could paint these themselves. People will be more likely to get off their wallets for the kids' efforts.

ANDI

Brilliant. It's almost like you paid attention in marketing class.

(MORE)

ANDI (CONT'D)
You should sell these instead of the
plastic ones you carry.

He fiddles with some lights on one of the Cornhole boards.

ANDI (CONT'D)
That is so cool. Do you play?

ASHER
Community champion. Humble too.

He smiles at her. Baby Roxy let's out a squeak.

ASHER (CONT'D)
Let's go play in the snow.

Andi takes Baby Roxy from Asher and they head out.

EXT. POP'S HARDWARE - A LITTLE LATER

Baby Roxy sits next to Andi in a pile of snow and bats at it
with her mitten hands. Asher hovers near the discarded sleds.

ANDI
This is the perfect snow. Not too
wet. See, Roxy, snow.

She piled some onto the baby's leg.

ANDI (CONT'D)
(in a fake baby voice)
C'mon, Mr. Asher, come pway in da
snow.

He throws a snowball and it lands next to Andi.

ASHER
Your baby voice is super creepy.

She hits him with a snowball. Baby Roxy SQUEALS in delight.

Andi lays back and makes an angel. She sits up and helps
the baby make hers. Baby Roxy WAILS.

Andi and Asher laugh.

ANDI
It's okay, baby girl.

Asher gets down and makes his own angel. Roxy stops crying
to watch.

ASHER
See? It's not so scary.

ANDI

Yeah, if he can do it, anybody can.

She turns to him.

ANDI (CONT'D)

It's not so scary, is it? Letting yourself enjoy wintery things.

He turns to her.

ASHER

And not so scary having someone cover for you at work and letting yourself have some fun, is it?

Baby Roxy crawls on top of Andi. Asher leans over to push himself up and looks into Andi's eyes. He leans in and they lock lips.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MONA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - EVENING

Mrs. Mackay and Mona sit up in their beds and Asher and Andi sit next to them in the chairs. Baby Roxy sits in Andi's lap.

MRS. MACKAY

I can't believe you played hooky from work. What do you suppose is going on with these two, Mona?

ANDI

Behave yourself, Mrs. Mackay, or I'll tell Dr. Pembroke on you. He won't let you go home tomorrow.

MRS. MACKAY

No, don't do that. My youngest grandson's coming to stay with me until I get back up and runnin' right.

ANDI

Nathaniel's coming? I haven't seen him since he moved to the East Side. What? My senior year? Wow.

Asher perks up in his chair.

MRS. MACKAY

Yes. I can't wait. He said you better come see him. You were betrothed, after all.

ANDI

I will. We were not betrothed. You were trying to play matchmaker. Don't add that to your list of talents.

MRS. MACKAY

Well, we'll see about that. That is...if Asher doesn't mind.

She raises an eyebrow at Asher, but he ignores her.

ANDI

Dr. Pembroke!

MRS. MACKAY

I'll shut up.

MONA

Finally.

They all laugh. Andi turns to Asher.

ANDI

Can I bring Nathaniel by the store sometime to show him your Cornhole boards? You guys can co-miserate about all the estrogen you're stuck with over a game.

Asher nods.

MONA

I know for a fact that Asher could use some guy time. His buddies all have wives now.

She looks longingly at Baby Roxy.

MONA (CONT'D)

And some with babies.

Andi places Baby Roxy next to Mona on the bed.

ANDI

Here. Take this one.

Mona kisses and whiffs the top of her head.

MONA

Oh, she smells so good.

Andi beams proudly as her daughter nestles into Mona.

DISSOLVE TO:

LATER

Mona watches the quiet TV. Mrs. Mackay turns over.

MRS. MACKAY

Can't sleep?

MONA

No. I'm nervous and excited. And I'm going to miss your company.

MRS. MACKAY

You'll be home before you know it. When I was in my 40s, my Ralph and I read some hippy dippy book about positive thinking.

MONA

Your Bible?

MRS. MACKAY

Nope, but there's lots in there about that. Picture yourself walking through your front door.

Mona closes her eyes and smiles.

MRS. MACKAY (CONT'D)

Soak in that feeling. Smell your home. How's it feel?

Mona breathes in deeply.

MONA

It feels like...home. I smell my mint plant in the kitchen window. A cup of tea warming up my hands. The sight of my horribly painted cupboards, courtesy of twelve year old Asher. Mmmm. Feels good.

MRS. MACKAY

Ah, the quirky things that make a house your home.

Mona relaxes back and smiles.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MRS. MACKAY'S HOUSE - MORNING

Andi drives through the fresh snow up Mrs. Mackay's dirt driveway. She gets out and gets a sleeping Baby Roxy out.

As she slushes up the front walk, the front door flings open and reveals an enthusiastic NATHANIEL.

NATHANIEL

You really are a mom now! I mean I knew that. Grandma keeps me up to date on everyone within four towns from here, but now I'm seeing it with my own eyes.

Andi gives him a hardy hug, baby slung over her shoulder.

ANDI

It's true. I am a mom. But I don't wear mom jeans or have mom hair. Yet.

NATHANIEL

You can borrow my mom jeans anytime.

Andi laughs from her gut, shaking the baby awake - she starts to fuss.

ANDI

Oh no, poor baby. The thought of you with jeans hiked to your neck is making her cry. I forgot how funny you are.

They head inside.

INT. MRS. MACKAY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

ANDI

What's your grandma doing?

Andi removes her and Roxy's heavy coats.

NATHANIEL

You mean, besides nagging me to find a wife on this side of the state? She's resting in her recliner.

ANDI

Good. Make her take it easy. She's stubborn.

MRS. MACKAY (O.S.)

I heard that. I have half a mind to take back over the foster benefit planning. I'm bored.

Andi goes into the family room and plops the baby on a rug to play at Mrs. Mackay's feet.

ANDI

You'll do no such thing. But you can help me. A couple of our sponsors have retired or are under new ownership. Ralph's Market being one of them.

MRS. MACKAY

Oh, dear. I forgot about that. They always supplied all the food. I guess my notes weren't very helpful for you.

ANDI

It's okay. I was thinking of doing a potluck dinner.

Mrs. Mackay crinkles her nose at Andi.

ANDI (CONT'D)

Don't worry. It will still be classy and nice for the foster kids. I have a theme for the dishes. Family recipes and good home cooking.

MRS. MACKAY

Okay, I like it. I smell what you're cookin'.

Nathaniel comes in with a plate of roasted kale chips.

NATHANIEL

No, you were smellin' what I was cookin'. Heart healthy. Eat up, grandma. Yum, yum.

Mrs. Mackay crinkles her nose at Nathaniel now.

ANDI

You made cookies for us didn't you? I smell sugar.

He nods and winks as he sits down.

ANDI (CONT'D)

I don't have a family recipe to make since my mom didn't cook. Besides Top Ramen. Do you have something I could make?

Mrs. Mackay smiles big.

MRS. MACKAY

Nathaniel, can you grab that yellow tin off the fridge?

He hops up and runs into the kitchen.

MRS. MACKAY (CONT'D)
I have all of my mom's recipes. And
dad's actually. My dad got into
cooking during the war.

Nathaniel comes back in and hands a yellow tin to Mrs. Mackay,
she opens it.

NATHANIEL
Was that the Civil War?

MRS. MACKAY
Ha, ha. I'm old. Open a history
book, would ya? When my mom went to
work at the B-17 Boeing factory during
World War Two, my dad would work
through his lunch break so he could
come home early and start dinner.

ANDI
That's seriously so romantic. Was
he any good?

Mrs. Mackay fingers through the recipe cards and smiles.

MRS. MACKAY
He was awful. At first. He enjoyed
it, so he spent a lot of time pouring
over mom's housekeeping magazines
and became a fantastic cook for the
rest of his life.

She pulls out three recipe cards.

MRS. MACKAY (CONT'D)
This one is in my mom's handwriting.
Here. My dad's handwriting. And
the ones done on the typewriter were
my mom's too. That typewriter was
the first thing she saved up for
with her own paycheck. She was so
proud of that.

Mrs. Mackay passes the recipe cards to Andi and Nathaniel.

NATHANIEL
Wow, so much family history in that
little box. Who knew? I got my
love of the kitchen from grandpa.

MRS. MACKAY
That's right dear. You also got
your stubborn attitude from him.

She winks at him. She replaces the recipes into the box and hands it to Andi.

MRS. MACKAY (CONT'D)
You'll find something special in here. And you can make these your family recipes too.

Andi hugs Mrs. Mackay.

ANDI
Thank you. This is exactly how I want these meals to make those children feel.

NATHANIEL
You can count me in to help. I'm staying at least through Christmas. Speaking of, Grandma, I just need a couple extension cords and string lights so I can put up all your decorations.

MRS. MACKAY
Take my checkbook off the counter and use that because I also want you to buy a bigger yard display for outside my window. Since that'll be my only view for awhile.

ANDI
I'll come with you. You can meet Asher.

Mrs. Mackay looks at Nathaniel mischievously.

MRS. MACKAY
Look at that shade of red on her face. Asher, Asher, Asher.

Nathaniel laughs and heads back to the kitchen as Andi scoops up Baby Roxy. She leans down and kisses Mrs. Mackay on the forehead.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. POP'S HARDWARE - LATER

Asher leans over the counter over the spreadsheets, forehead in his hands. He taps his pencil impatiently.

He looks up as Andi and Nathaniel come through the shop doors. Nathaniel carries Roxy as they all giggle. Asher blows out his breath.

ANDI

Hey, Asher. This is Nathaniel.
Nathaniel, this is Asher. We're in
school together and his mom was in
the same hospital room as your
grandma.

They shake hands. Andi takes Roxy from Nathaniel, planting
kisses on her cheek.

ANDI (CONT'D)

Come here, big girl. We'll shop,
you should show Nathaniel your boards.

She wanders away and browses, while Asher nods toward the
back room. The boys head that way.

INT. BACK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Asher activates the lights on the cornhole boards with the
fishing theme and quietly sets them up. He hands Nathaniel
his three bean bags.

ASHER

Not quite 27 feet apart. You play?

NATHANIEL

A little. That's a sweet board.
You made that?

Asher nods as Nathaniel tosses his bag, it lands on the board.
Asher tosses and sinks his bag into the hole in his board.

NATHANIEL (CONT'D)

Andi couldn't stop braggin' about
your boards. She's really something,
isn't she? My grandma's crazy about
her.

Nathaniel tosses his next bag, it slides off the board.

ASHER

She's crazy about your grandma.

Asher sinks his next bag.

NATHANIEL

Andi's tough, I'd hate to see her
get hurt.

ASHER

What are you getting at? Just play.

Nathaniel tosses his bag, missing the board completely.
Asher sinks the next one.

CUT TO:

INT. POP'S HARDWARE - MOMENTS LATER

Andi adds a few extension cords to her pile on the check out counter as Asher and Nathaniel come back up.

ANDI
Good game?

NATHANIEL
Humiliating.

That puts a smirk on Asher's face.

NATHANIEL (CONT'D)
What'd you pick out for my grandma?

ANDI
I found a Charlie Brown nativity set
for her. I slid the box next to the
counter.

NATHANIEL
She's going to love that.

Asher rings up the items.

ASHER
That's \$102.83

Nathaniel hands him the per-signed check and he runs it through the check reader. It BEEPS.

ASHER (CONT'D)
It says there's not enough funds.

He hands the check back to Nathaniel.

NATHANIEL
That's strange. This is the same
checkbook she had me use to get her
medicine and groceries.

Andi pulls out her cash and hands it over to Asher.

ANDI
Here, I'll take care of it and we
can figure it out when we get back
to her house. I have to go to work
in a bit.

ASHER
I can babysit if you want.

ANDI
I've got Pastor and his wife lined
up already for today. But I may
take you up on that sooner rather
than later.

He smiles and nods.

NATHANIEL
We better get going.

They head toward the door.

ANDI
If you have time will you start on
the visuals for the project?

ASHER
Yeah. Text me some ideas.

Andi smiles at and salutes Asher. With that she heads out
the door with Nathaniel.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MRS. MACKAY'S HOUSE - A LITTLE LATER

Andi and Nathaniel bring the loot into the kitchen. Roxy is
fast asleep in her carseat.

NATHANIEL
Let's not alarm my grandma about her
checkbook. Maybe we can find her
ledger or something.

ANDI
Good idea. You check your guest
room and I'll check her room.

They set the stuff on the counter and peek into the family
room. Mrs. Mackay is also fast asleep.

ANDI (CONT'D)
Their nap times are in sync.

Andi, with her diaper bag still flung over her shoulder heads
into

MRS. MACKAY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

She looks around and contemplates, then checks in the closet.
There's a row of binders on a low shelf.

She kneels down and pulls one out.

It's labeled "Geneology," she puts that one back and pulls out another. This one is labeled "Wish List."

Andi flips open the binder, the first page yellowed with time. She flips forward and reads.

ANDI

July 5th, 1965. Hank Jones needs gainful employment. Ways I can help: Introduce him to Mack from Mack's Market. Help him with his resume. Invest in a startup business.

Andi turns the page and continues reading.

ANDI (CONT'D)

September 13, 1975. Update: Hank's Small Engine Repair is flourishing. Wow.

She flips to the end pages.

ANDI (CONT'D)

Oh my gosh. There I am. She's been funding my grant.

NATHANIEL (O.S.)

Any luck?

ANDI

Not yet.

She stuffs the binder into her diaper bag and browses the shelf again. She pulls another one out. It's labeled "Check Ledger."

ANDI (CONT'D)

Found it.

Andi meets Nathaniel back in the

KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

She hands the ledger binder to him.

NATHANIEL

Nice work, detective.

ANDI

Speaking of detective work. Did Asher say anything about me?

NATHANIEL

I knew it. You do like him.

ANDI

Well?

NATHANIEL

I don't know, Andi. He's kind of hard to read. Kind of rude actually.

ANDI

That's his demeanor. He's really sweet, I swear.

NATHANIEL

Boy, us nice guys really do finish last. Why weren't you this into me?

ANDI

Same reason you weren't into me, silly. Right?

NATHANIEL

You're right. You're right.

Andi picks up the baby seat.

ANDI

I'm going to introduce you to my friend Liv. She's amazing. And pretty and wise.

NATHANIEL

I'm in.

She winks as she leaves out the back door.

INT. SCHWEITZER'S DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY

Andi grabs her time card as Liv punches hers into the time clock.

ANDI

Thank you so much for covering for me.

LIV

Oh my gosh. You kissed him.

ANDI

How do you even know that? I'm so confused. I don't have time to be confused over some guy. I'm a mom first.

LIV
You'll figure it out. And Roxy will
be just fine no matter what.

Andi punches her time card. Janine heads toward her. Liv
walks off and waves.

ANDI
Hi, Janine. Been busy today?

JANINE
Not as busy as it was yesterday.
Speaking of, you cannot miss anymore
work without a doctor's note. We
clear?

ANDI
Crystal. I'm sorry. I needed that
time with my daughter.

Janine gives an emotionless nod and walks off. Andi exhales.

CUT TO:

INT. MONA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - EVENING

Asher enters the room with a coffee cup.

ASHER
Hi, mom. Brought you some peppermint
tea.

MONA
Thank you, baby.

He hands it to her, she enjoys the sip.

MONA (CONT'D)
Just tell her how you feel.

ASHER
What are you talking about.

He sits next to her bed. She mom-stares him down.

ASHER (CONT'D)
Fine. I'll tell her how I feel.

She takes a sip and smiles behind the cup.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SCHWEITZER'S DEPARTMENT STORE - EVENING

Andi hands a CUSTOMER her change and package. The Customer leaves. Nathaniel comes out from behind a display. Andi jumps and puts her hand on heart.

ANDI

You scared me. Why are you being a creep?

NATHANIEL

I saw your boss lady glaring at you.

ANDI

Well, you could have acted like a customer.

NATHANIEL

Right-o!

She giggles then grabs his arm and leads him over to Liv, who refolds a pants display.

ANDI

Liv, this is Mrs. Mackay's grandson, Nathaniel. Nathaniel, the amazing woman I was telling you about, Liv.

Nathaniel grabs Liv's extended hand and they limply shake as they stare starstruck. She leaves them right where they are and returns to her post, smiling.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ANDI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Andi and Roxy snuggle on the couch while Andi reads her text book out loud like a bed time story.

ANDI

There are three psychological states: comfort zone, optimal performance zone and danger zone. Robert Mearns Yerkes, an early 20th century psychologist found that levels of concentration and focus are enhanced by stepping out of one's comfort zone and producing a level of stress which is the optimal performance zone.

Her cell phone DINGS.

ANDI (CONT'D)

Saved by the bell, huh, baby girl.

She kisses the top of her head and reads the phone in the same manner.

ANDI (CONT'D)

From Asher. My mom is having her surgery tomorrow. Can you come to the hospital after school, before you go to work? And mommy is responding with: of course.

She puts the phone down and picks the book back up. Roxy drifts off to sleep so Andi reads to herself.

DISSOLVE TO:

MORNING

Andi and Roxy are asleep in the same positions, only the book has fallen to the side. Andi opens her eyes. She lifts Roxy as she stands up.

ANDI

Good morning, princess. Mama needs coffee. Stat.

They head to the kitchen.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DAYCARE - A LITTLE LATER

Andi and Roxy walk up the daycare walkway and enter

INT. DAYCARE - CONTINUOUS

Andi walks over to reception and is greeted by MELINDA, 30, chubby and cheerful.

MELINDA

Good morning! How's my favorite baby girl today?

Andi attempts to hand Roxy over to her but the baby just clings harder to her mama.

ANDI

She's good, but she's sticking to me like a little spider monkey.

MELINDA

She's getting to that age. She's letting her needs be known. They all get clingy around age one.

Melinda steps closer and attempts to help by assisting in peeling the baby off her mom.

Baby Roxy WAILS - she just loses her marbles, snot bubbles and the whole nine yards.

ANDI
I can't do it. This is too
heartbreaking.

She grabs Baby Roxy who quickly stops wailing once back in her mom's arms.

MELINDA
Aw, that's better, huh? You're doing
fine, Andi.

ANDI
Thanks.

Melinda strokes Roxy's hair and looks at Andi sympathetically. Andi walks out with Roxy.

EXT. DAYCARE - CONTINUOUS

ANDI
Well, baby girl, I guess we better
not waste precious time. Let's go
pick up the flyers I ordered for the
party. Go hit up some sponsors.
And then you can nap in your own bed
for once.

Baby Roxy hiccups as they walk to the parking lot.

INT. ANDI'S APARTMENT - A LITTLE LATER

Baby Roxy snacks happily in her high chair as Andi stirs a cup of coffee at the counter. She goes and sits at the table that has a couple books, binders and the stack of flyers.

She selects Mrs. Mackay's binder.

ANDI
Let's see what else we have in here.

She takes a sip of her coffee.

ANDI (CONT'D)
I'm a horrible person. Can't help
it.

She dives into the binder and sips her coffee as she browses.

ANDI (CONT'D)

Oh my gosh. Mrs. Zimmerman. How does she know Mrs. Zimmerman? We still have time if we hurry.

She gets up, throws on her coat, grabs the flyers and heads out of the kitchen. She comes back in for the baby.

INT. COMMUNITY COLLEGE - HALLWAY - A LITTLE LATER

Andi waits outside of the classroom with Roxy in tow. The door opens and STUDENTS pour out. Mrs Zimmerman follows behind.

MRS. ZIMMERMAN

Oh, Andi. I'm surprised you weren't in class given the risk of your grade. Asher wasn't here either.

ANDI

His mom was scheduled for her surgery this morning. I'm meeting him before work to pick up some visuals he made for our project though.

Baby Roxy grunts, Andi shifts to her other hip.

MRS. ZIMMERMAN

Who do we have here?

ANDI

This is Roxy. I'm sorry I missed class. She threw a huge fit. She's getting awful clingy. To be honest, it broke my heart. I just couldn't drop her off.

Mrs. Zimmerman lets Roxy wrap her fingers around her pointer finger.

MRS. ZIMMERMAN

I remember when my sister's kids went through that.

Andi reaches into her diaper bag and pulls out a flyer.

ANDI

Here. I wanted to invite you and your husband to the foster child benefit. Bring a family recipe to share.

MRS. ZIMMERMAN

I'd love to. Thanks.

Andi turns to leave.

ANDI

And don't worry if you have to dock my grade. I'm probably losing my grant funding as it is.

MRS. ZIMMERMAN

I think you and Mr. Jamison have some extenuating circumstances. I may be able to be flexible.

Andi nods and prompts Baby Roxy to wave, she does.

INT. MONA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - AFTERNOON

Asher hovers over Mona's bed as she lays there lethargically awake.

MONA

(weakly)

Relax. I'm feeling fine. Just groggy.

He sits down in the chair.

ASHER

I know. I'm trying to relax.

Andi stands in the doorway.

ANDI

Knock, knock.

Asher jumps up like a nervous twit. Andi comes and gives Mona a hug.

MONA

What a nice surprise. Where's that baby?

ANDI

She's at Rachel and Pastor's house. I dropped her off first. I Get more time with you if I don't have to run across town before work.

MONA

Ah, sweetheart. I remember running my little diaper-bottomed pooh bear all over town.

ASHER

Don't mind her. I think they gave her too much medicine.

Andi and Mona laugh at him, not with him. He sits back down in defeat.

ANDI

How are you feeling?

Mona's eyes droop.

MONA

Tired.

ANDI

Don't mind me. Please rest. We have our project to work on.

Mona nods and drifts off to sleep.

ASHER

You want to see what I have so far?
They're at the shop, but I have pics
on my phone for you so you'd believe
me that I did them.

He waves her over. She leans over his chair and peers at his phone. She unwittingly sniffs his head. Then shakes her head at herself.

ASHER (CONT'D)

This one is basically the title slide.
Only bigger and painted on plywood.
Like the circle chart in our text
book.

ANDI

Asher, that looks amazing. You are
so talented. We're getting an A
just because of that.

ASHER

Relax, it's just a chart.

He swipes to the next one. Andi laughs.

ANDI

Ha! That's us in our own comfort
zone circles. Looking at each other
in disgust! I really did think you
were the worst.

He looks up with his crooked smile.

ASHER

The feeling was mutual.

He keeps going and swipes again.

ASHER (CONT'D)
Me holding Roxy.

ANDI
Look how far outside your comfort
zone you are. You're in the red!

He swipes to the next one. We see it on the screen.

It depicts the "comfort zone" circle representing the sled hill, the outline blurs as the sled (with Asher, Andi and Baby Roxy on it with huge smiling faces) breaks through it to the optimal space outside the comfort zone.

ANDI (CONT'D)
That explains the concept more
thoroughly than my eight pages of
the report.

ASHER
Last and not least...

He looks up at her, their faces close enough to kiss. He swipes to the next one. It shows a caricature of just Asher standing in the red zone with an empty speech bubble protruding from his mouth.

ANDI
The speech bubble is empty. I don't
get it.

He gets up and pulls the board from behind his chair.

ASHER
Because it wasn't finished. Here,
look.

He shows it to her. It's the one they were just looking at on the phone but the speech bubble is now filled with the words "Andi, I'm crazy about you!"

Andi takes a step toward him, looks up at him with big eyes. Then she turns around and bolts right out of the room, leaving Asher there, mouth agape, dumbfounded.

INT. SCHWEITZER'S DEPARTMENT STORE - EVENING

Andi walks to the break room and there's Liv cozied up to Nathaniel. He's feeding her bites out of a tupperware.

They don't even notice Andi as she gets her sandwich out of the fridge and heads out toward the time-clock where Janine waits.

JANINE

Ah, Andi. I received your request for donating the pajamas to the orphans.

ANDI

Oh great. Did they make a decision on it?

JANINE

I'm afraid it's not in the budget this year. Sales are down as I mentioned before.

Andi nods sadly.

JANINE (CONT'D)

And before you request the day off for the event, I'm afraid I can't spare you.

ANDI

But I'm organizing it. I have to be there. Please.

JANINE

It's a noble cause, but after your stunt the other day...you blew it. You're not proving to be reliable and I'm just not going to be able to recommend you to the corporate internship either.

Andi breathes in a large breath and breathes out slow.

JANINE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry to be the bad guy. I don't have a choice.

ANDI

The thing is, Janine, you do have a choice. And the foster party is way more important than this silly little job. I guess you leave me no choice either. I quit.

Andi punches the time card for the last time and walks out.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHWEITZER'S DEPARTMENT STORE - MOMENTS LATER

It's snowing as Andi exits the store and catches herself on the side of the building in a chair pose.

ANDI
What have I done?

She gathers her bearings and continues to walk through town at a fast pace. She slows down as she enjoys the Christmas window displays.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. COMMUNITY COLLEGE CLASSROOM - MORNING

Asher and Andi sit on opposite ends of the row of desks. Mrs. Zimmerman carries on with a lecture.

MRS. ZIMMERMAN
The term media has expanded vastly over the last couple decades. It's not just newspapers...

RANDOM STUDENT
What's a newspaper?

MRS. ZIMMERMAN
Something that was quite popular in the time of payphones and dinosaurs.

She chuckles along with a few of the students.

MRS. ZIMMERMAN (CONT'D)
As you can see, it's a fascinating time to study sociology and media. It's changing faster than we can adapt our societal reaction to it.

She checks her watch.

MRS. ZIMMERMAN (CONT'D)
Well, it looks like we have some extra time. Why don't you partner up and work on your final project.

Asher grimaces.

Down the row, Andi's eyes bug out in panic. She reluctantly gets up, grabs her pile of books and binders off her desk and plops it all onto the desk next to Asher.

ANDI
I'll be right back, I have to sharpen my pencil.

Andi bolts to the pencil sharpener at the front of the class. Another STUDENT bumps Andi's desk as he walks by. A couple of Andi's books and her phone slide off.

Asher catches them before they hit the ground. Her phone lights up as he places it back on her desk. He reads the notification, a text from Nathaniel: "Had the best date of my life last night. Thank you for..." He slams the phone on top of the books as Andi returns.

ASHER
Your phone fell. You have a text
from Nathaniel. Sorry I didn't mean
to look.

ANDI
It's fine. Thanks.

She smiles huge as she reads the text. She puts the phone down and looks at Asher.

ANDI (CONT'D)
I tried to sharpen my pencil as long
as I could to avoid this awkwardness.
I'm so sorry. For the other day.

ASHER
Forgotten. Let's just work on our
paper.

They both put their noses in their text books. Andi looks over at Asher.

ANDI
Asher?

He looks up over the book.

ANDI (CONT'D)
Is it okay if I come see your mom as
soon as you get her settled? She
wants to help me with some of the
food for the party.

ASHER
She'd like that. I'm bringing her
home this afternoon, so anytime
tomorrow or whatever.

Noses back to their books. Asher looks over at Andi.

ASHER (CONT'D)
Andi?

She looks over her book at him.

ASHER (CONT'D)
I'd still like to help. With the
party.

ANDI

Thank goodness. I have a list of
other shop owners that I'm sure you,
or at least Pops, can smooze for me.

She smiles at him. He gives in and smiles back.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MRS. MACKAY'S HOUSE - EVENING

Andi sits on the couch next to Mrs. Mackay who's in her chair.
Baby Roxy plays at their feet.

MRS. MACKAY

Thanks for babysitting me so Nathaniel
could take that lovely Liv girl out.

ANDI

I think I owe you some babysitting.

Andi takes a gingerbread cookie off the plate on the table.
Baby Roxy attempts a swipe at the plate, but Andi hands her
half of her cookie.

MRS. MACKAY

Nathaniel is crazy about her. I
caught him looking at jobs over here.

ANDI

That makes me so happy.

She takes a bite of the cookie.

ANDI (CONT'D)

Oh my gosh. These are the best things
I've ever shoved into my pie-hole.

MRS. MACKAY

You'll find it in the recipe tin.
This was my mom's recipe. Gingerbread
and peanut butter. My dad made his
with raisins. No peanut butter.
They had a bit of a feud over which
ones were better.

ANDI

Well? Who won the feud?

Mrs. Mackay lays her head back and smiles.

MRS. MACKAY

Daddy. But I think he got pity votes.

ANDI

Well, I'm going to let the foster kids decide.

MRS. MACKAY

How's the party coming along? It feels so weird letting go of the reins, but also kind of relaxing.

Andi picks up Baby Roxy off the floor and snuggles her.

ANDI

I have the activities figured out. Mona is going to help with food. I still need a couple sponsors. But now with my new found free time, that won't be a problem.

MRS. MACKAY

And Santa?

ANDI

What about Santa?

MRS. MACKAY

Who's going to play Santa? You don't have a Santa? Oh dear.

ANDI

Don't worry your pretty little head, Mrs. Mackay. We'll get a Santa. I have prospects. No one will compare to your Ralph, but we'll get a Santa.
(under her breath)
I hope.

She pops a cookie in her mouth.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MONA'S HOUSE - EVENING

Mona sits at her kitchen table across from Asher. She sips her tea blissfully.

MONA

I can't believe I'm back in my own kitchen. You'll be able to get back to your own life before you know it.

Asher GRUNTS.

MONA (CONT'D)

Oh, it doesn't have to be that complicated. Just tell her you're into her.

Asher GRUNTS again.

ASHER

I did. She ran.

MONA

It will work out. I promise.

Mona shifts in her seat.

MONA (CONT'D)

I have to tell you something.

ASHER

Uh oh. I haven't heard those words since you and dad split.

MONA

That's the thing. I've been talking to him. Your dad.

ASHER

How's his wife feel about that?

MONA

Gina's great. She's the one who called me when I was in the hospital. Mrs. Mackay helped me figure out my mistakes. They've missed you terribly. It's all my fault.

Asher slams his fist on the table.

ASHER

They can just keep on missing me.

MONA

Don't say that, Ash. This is important to me. I created this mess with my ugly jealousy. You've missed out on a lot because of me.

ASHER

You gave me the best childhood, mom. I didn't need him. If I needed time away from you and your girlfriends or needed to blow off steam away from you and your girlfriends, I had my workshop. You made that for me. Not them.

Mona nods.

MONA

Because I wouldn't let them. Trust me, your dad was relentless. It would have been easier for me to just give in. I felt helpless, like that was the only power I had. And that was wrong.

Mona grabs Asher's hand.

MONA (CONT'D)

Not that this is what you want to hear, but it's Christmas. You have a little half brother who is dying to see you. Just think about it.

Asher opens his mouth in protest.

MONA (CONT'D)

Please. It's important to me.

He sighs, but nods in defeat.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. POP'S HARDWARE - NIGHT

Asher puts the finishing touches on a grand Christmas display - Grinch is front and center. Pops gets out of his car and walks up to Asher.

ASHER

You're back. How was Arizona?

POPS

Hot. What's going on here? You put up...Christmas?

ASHER

Got my mind off stuff.

POPS

I'm heading in, I'll look over your ledgers and get them back to you tomorrow. You coming or going?

Asher looks up and admires his work.

ASHER

I'll take a walk first. Check out the competition in town.

Pops smiles and heads inside the shop.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DOWNTOWN - A LITTLE LATER

Asher strolls down the lane and pauses at the view of the town. It's festive and breathtaking.

ASHER
Wow. I get it.

A PASSERBY looks at him.

PASSERBY
Pardon?

Asher shakes his head and the Passerby moves on.

He snaps a photo with his phone and continues walking.

He spots Liv and Nathaniel coming out of a restaurant, holding hands, smitten. Liv leans her head on his shoulder - they're all smiles.

ASHER
That two-timer. He doesn't even appreciate Andi.

ANOTHER PASSERBY looks at him.

ANOTHER PASSERBY
What did you say?

ASHER
I said he's a two-timer.

The poor passerby walks off. Asher snaps a photo and texts it over to Andi.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ANDI'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Andi sits and studies her text books cozy on her couch in the soft Christmas lights. She picks up her phone, reads it and laughs out loud.

ANDI
He thought I was dating Nathaniel?
Poor sap. We'll see how crazy it drives him.

She puts her phone down, gets back to her books. She giggles.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MRS. MACKAY'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Andi and Nathaniel sit in the living room with Baby Roxy as Mrs. Mackay walks in, dressed in her old lady track suit.

MRS. MACKAY

No plastic and I look fantastic.

Nathaniel whistles.

ANDI

Yes you do.

MRS. MACKAY

I'm happy to be out of my pajamas.
Thank you for taking me with you to
Mona's. I can't wait to visit with
her. Ready?

Andi stands up. Mrs. Mackay feels her hip, then her other hip.

MRS. MACKAY (CONT'D)

I'm losing my marbles. I forgot my
purse. Have you noticed me doing
anything funny lately?

Andi and Nathaniel look at each other with raised eyebrows.

MRS. MACKAY (CONT'D)

You know what I mean. More than
usual.

She sits next to Andi on the couch.

NATHANIEL

Well, it's going to take a bit to
get organized after your hospital
stay. I've been sorting through
your bank ledger. The check declined
the other day.

MRS. MACKAY

See, that's impossible. I have a
healthy retirement. Yet I screwed
it up. And I misplaced another, um,
ledger of sorts. Something I've had
longer than you guys have been alive.

She forces a Mrs. Mackay smile.

MRS. MACKAY (CONT'D)
Almost as long as this underwear I
have on.

Andi shifts.

ANDI
Is it the yellow one? The wish list
one?

She pulls it out of the diaper bag and hands it over.

ANDI (CONT'D)
I'm sorry. I took it and it was a
huge invasion of your privacy. But
I did make a couple notes. And I
want to thank you for sponsoring my
school grant.

MRS. MACKAY
You made notes?

Nathaniel exits to the kitchen. Andi flips open the binder.

ANDI
Here. Mrs. Zimmerman. I invited
her to the foster party.

She flips the page again.

ANDI (CONT'D)
Mr. Lamb, well, he lives down the
street from my mom so I can rally
some of her neighbors to pitch in
while his leg heals.

Andi closes the book and hands it over to Mrs. Mackay who
pets the cover with her hand. She hands it back.

MRS. MACKAY
It's yours. I thought I was the
only weirdo that would do something
like this.

ANDI
Little things make a big difference.
You're living proof of that in my
life.

Nathaniel returns with the green ledger, Roxy still on his
hip.

NATHANIEL
I couldn't figure out your checkbook.

ANDI

Please let me pay back my grants to you. I still have some in savings.

MRS. MACKAY

Don't be silly, you enjoy this time off during the holidays. Besides, I'm not worried.

She turns to Nathaniel.

MRS. MACKAY (CONT'D)

I gave you the wrong checkbook. That one's for my property taxes. See? My marbles are coming back slowly but surely.

NATHANIEL

Don't call me Shirley. I'm glad you don't have to go live in a refrigerator box. Now, you ladies get out of here.

With that, the ladies get up, Andi grabs Baby Roxy from Nathaniel and they head out.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MONA'S HOUSE - A LITTLE LATER

Mona and Mrs. Mackay sit at the table with Baby Roxy next to them in a portable high chair.

Andi gets some crackers down from a cupboard and sets a couple in front of Baby Roxy. She sits next to the gabbing ladies.

MRS. MACKAY

You're really going to make all the roasts yourself for the party? You're up to it?

MONA

Sure, it's easy. I get to use my girlfriend, Kay's commercial kitchen. Did I tell you, she used to date Dr. Pembroke in high school?

MRS. MACKAY

That lucky girl.

ANDI

No wonder Dr. Pembroke kicked you out of your hospital room.

MONA

Thank goodness he did. Poor Asher though. Did I tell you guys I told him that I've made amends with his dad?

MRS. MACKAY

No. Is Asher going to see him?

Mona shrugs.

ANDI

I hear he played quite the Santa Claus. Do you think it would be overstepping if I invited him to do it for the Foster Benefit?

MONA

That's an idea. I'll leave that up to you. Asher can be moody, but he can be forgiving. He has a funny way of showing it, but he's a sweetheart.

Andi sighs.

ANDI

I know. He is sweet.

Mrs. Mackay and Mona exchange a glance.

MRS. MACKAY

Maybe you can set a good example to him and invite your mom.

ANDI

Maybe. I'll sleep on it. I'm going to head home and get some rest. We have our final presentation tomorrow. Don't let your boy be late.

MONA

He knows it's important to you. He'll be there. But I'll give him a bedtime for old times sake!

They giggle and Baby Roxy squeals.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ANDI'S CAR - MORNING

The snow is thick, Andi's car is buried outside of her apartment complex - the plows plowed in the driveway, what jerks.

Andi comes out with Baby Roxy in tow.

ANDI

No! No, no, no, no. Guess we have
no choice, baby girl.

She takes her phone out of the diaper bag.

ANDI (CONT'D)

Hey, Asher. My driveway's blocked.
(a beat)
Yup. Thank you.

She replaces the phone.

CUT TO:

INT. ASHER'S PICKUP - A LITTLE LATER

Andi secures her buckle. Asher drives off.

ANDI

So nice and warm in here. We're not
going to have time to take her to
daycare, so we'll just use her as
one of our props.

Asher nods. They sit in awkward silence for a moment.

ASHER

Why didn't you call your boyfriend
to rescue you?

ANDI

I don't have a boyfriend.

ASHER

So you did get my text then.

Andi smirks to herself.

ANDI

Did I not respond? Oopsie.

He steals a look at her.

ASHER

You guys weren't even dating, were
you?

Andi bursts out laughing. Asher shakes his head but smiles
his crooked smile.

CUT TO:

INT. COMMUNITY COLLEGE CLASSROOM - LATER

The students are all getting seated in walk Asher and Andi with Roxy. Mrs. Zimmerman eyeballs the baby.

ANDI

She's sort of a prop. If she'll cooperate.

MRS. ZIMMERMAN

Well, I suppose Aaron and Aaron won't mind letting you go first.

The two Aaron's nod vigorously. Mrs. Zimmerman motions Andi and Asher to the front of the class. Andi hands her the typed report as she and Asher take their place.

They exchange a look and Asher leans the paintings against Mrs. Zimmerman's desk. He turns the first one around, the one with the title that we saw at the hospital.

ASHER

Our topic is the human comfort zone. We all have different degrees of it. At first, we both started this project by observing other people and taking notes.

ANDI

We got some good stuff too. Clueless husbands shopping for their wives this time of year.

Asher changes the painting to the one that depicts him being terrified of the baby. Andi hands him Baby Roxy.

ANDI (CONT'D)

In the picture, you can see a very accurate account of how terrified Asher was of this little monster. But clearly, he's established a new boundary. And throwing him under the bus again, I got this Scrooge to make snow angels.

Still holding Roxy with one arm, Asher switches the visual to the last board, the one that made Andi run away.

ASHER

And now it's my turn to make her uncomfortable. Again. I made her this painting and she ran. Yet somehow, I don't regret stepping out of my comfort zone, even if she didn't feel the same way...

Andi runs over and plants her lips on his, right in front of God and country.

STUDENTS
WOOOOOOOOOH!

BABY ROXY
Ooooooh!

Everyone laughs. Andi recovers.

ANDI
Where were we? Oh, yeah, good things
happen outside that comfort zone.

Mrs. Zimmerman smiles.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. POP'S HARDWARE STORE - AFTERNOON

Andi and Asher walk hand-in-hand into the store.

ANDI
You did a great job with the lights.
You make a great Christmas guy.

ASHER
Humbug!

Pops is behind the counter. Andi waves to Pops and takes Baby Roxy to the back.

POPS
Hey, Ash, did you mean to order a
thousand of these fidget spinners?

ASHER
No, I meant to order 100. I must
have put an extra zero.

Andi comes back to the front.

ANDI
She's out like a light. You must be
Pops.

POPS
And you must be that sweet little
baby's mama. I can't believe you
got Asher to babysit.

ANDI
He volunteered. He acts tough, but
he's a big softy.

POPS
Just like his mama.

ASHER
Anyways, I don't think I can return
the extras back to the wholesaler.

Pops hands Asher the stack of papers.

POPS
You'll get it figured out. I made
my share of mistakes when I started
out. I once ordered a ton of boring
Tonka Trucks thinking those would be
the hot Christmas item.

ASHER
Mom's told me this. That was the
year the Pet Rock made all the other
shops in town rich.

Pops does finger-guns to Asher.

POPS
Bingo! Speaking of bingo...I gotta
go. See you lovebirds later.

And he's out. Andi takes the papers from Asher.

ANDI
Do you mind if I take a look?

He passes over the mess of papers.

ANDI (CONT'D)
You guys ever heard of computers?

ASHER
Don't look at me. I just work here.

ANDI
Well, being as I'm unemployed, we
finished our classes and the party's
almost planned, I don't mind getting
you guys up to speed, you know, into
this century.

ASHER
If you can find the funds in the
budget, I can pay you. Plus, won't
this count toward your internship
credits? I'd love the help.

Andi smiles.

ANDI

It's the least I can do, you made all those extra wood toys for the foster kids. Not to mention the daycare is built right in. You have no idea how awesome this is. Plus, you know, the eye candy.

She hugs him and tucks the papers into her diaper bag.

ANDI (CONT'D)

Can I ask you something else? I don't have a Santa and I was thinking of asking...

ASHER

I'll ask Pops for you.

ANDI

Well, I meant...

ASHER

Me? No way. I'm not exactly jolly.

Andi opens her mouth to protest, but Baby Roxy interrupts with a wail of a wail. Andi runs to get her.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MAPLE STREET CHURCH - THE NEXT NIGHT

The big church hall is transformed into a Santa Wonderland. There's kids running around everywhere.

Asher shows a group of tween kids how to play Nathaniel and Liv hang out with a group of older teens. Andi helps of the younger kids paint the wood cutouts Asher had made.

Mrs. Zimmerman, classy as ever, finds Andi. A LITTLE GIRL, about age 6 looks up starstruck at Mrs. Zimmerman.

LITTLE GIRL

Are you a real life princess?

Mrs. Zimmerman smiles and crouches down next to the girl. Andi gives them space and walks over to where Mrs. Mackay sits at a table with Mrs. Harvey. Baby Roxy sleeps in her stroller next to them.

MRS. MACKAY

You really made a pair of pajamas for every kid here in just two weeks.

Mrs. Harvey nods proudly.

MRS. MACKAY (CONT'D)
You're a crazy old bat.

MRS. HARVEY
I learned from you, my friend.

ANDI
Now, now, ladies. You're both crazy old bats. Almost time for Santa. I sure hope Asher doesn't get mad at me. I asked his dad to do it.

MRS. MACKAY
I thought you told him.

ANDI
I tried. Roxy rudely interrupted me.

Pastor Hagen gets on the microphone up front.

PASTOR HAGEN
Are you kids ready to see Santa?

The kids go out of their minds with excitement.

PASTOR HAGEN (CONT'D)
Well, let me introduce the one, the only...Santa Claus!

They all clap and out walks Pops as SANTA 1. Then out comes Asher's dad WYATT as SANTA 2. Then a third, Asher as SANTA 3.

SANTA 3
Dad?

Asher/Santa 3 backs away back behind the curtain. Wyatt/Santa 2 follows. Pops/Santa 1 waves to all the kids.

PASTOR HAGEN
I guess he brought helpers because you guys are extra special.

The kids clap and line up to talk to Santa. Andi looks at Mrs. Mackay.

ANDI
I hope I did the right thing.

MRS. MACKAY
You did. Now it's your turn. There's your mom.

Denise walks toward Andi, Andi gets up and meets her.

ANDI

Hi, mom. I'm glad you made it.

Her mom gives her a big hug.

DENISE

I've been a huge turd to you. I'm sorry.

ANDI

Mom, you're not obligated to coddle me. I'm an adult.

DENISE

Yeah, but I was jealous of your friendship with all these ladies.

She motions around the room.

ANDI

They'll take you in too.

Denise smiles and they sit down together at Mrs. Mackay's table.

DISSOLVE TO:

LATER

All the guests were gone. Andi was alone in the big hall. She picked up the last of the wrapping paper garbage and tossed it in the trash can.

Asher came out, back in his normal clothes. Andi looks up at him with her big eyes.

ANDI

I'm so sorry.

ASHER

Thank you. For taking that risk. I have a feeling you're the one that's like my mom. Always right. I did miss my dad.

He grabs her hand and they go to leave. She stops.

ANDI

I can't believe you dressed up as Santa. I don't think you have any humbug left in ya. But why did you dress up, if you had Pops to do it?

ASHER

He told me he had a date. I didn't want to let those kids down. When he realized he got stood up, he rushed over here. But I had already changed.

ANDI

There's no turning back now. You like Christmas.

ASHER

And there's no turning back now. You like me.

She smiles and kisses his cheek and they walk out hand-in-hand.

FADE OUT