

The Art of Christmas Love
(alternative title:
Lodged In Love for Christmas)

By Debbie Johnson

*Inspired by True Events
(see end of document for explanation)

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FADE IN

INTRO FOOTAGE: Large city, lovely views.

CUT TO: Closer in to businesses or city square with Christmas decorations on the outside or in windows.

CUT TO: Outside of large office building.

Act 1 - Scene 1

CUT TO A.I. COMPANY, (INT), HALLWAY TO DANI'S OFFICE,
 DAYTIME

DANIELLE (DANI) NADEAU - Senior Accountant of an A.I. company. But her true passion is art. She's techy, but her artist side makes her sensitive to others. Her heart is open to all, but she doesn't give much thought to herself. Slightly klutzy, sometimes clueless because she focuses more for others than herself.

AARON - Danielle's assistant gay, married, fun and loving. He and Dani are super close and she trusts him implicitly.

STEPHANIE - CEO of MEGATRON- Tough, driven.

EXTRAS - "SUITS" - 8-10

DIRECTOR: Please note that words I feel should be emphasized are in italics for yours and actors' ease. Also, words in French are in italics, in case you have a dialect coach.

SET DESIGN: Any office with Dani's desk with wall behind it, and Aaron's desk catty-corner to hers, with printer and other possible equipment behind him. There are landscape paintings on the wall- one of each season. Aaron's side of the office is more decorated for Christmas. Dani has a few small decorations.

DANI walks down hallway carrying coffee and navigating EXTRAS/SUITS on their phones either talking or texting.

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DANI is weaving in and out between them, trying to keep the coffee from spilling, looking a bit worried, even though it may have lids.

CAMERA follows DANI into her office.

DANI puts a cup of coffee down on AARON'S desk, smiling widely. He's on his desk phone (landline), so she takes a deep breath and exhales, obviously relieved that she didn't spill, and whispers this as she grins.

DANI
I made it!

AARON looks up at DANI and pulls his eyebrows together and half smile/smirks as if to say, What are you doing, you crazy woman.

AARON
Uh huh, sure, okay.

DANI walks to her desk, drinking her coffee. AARON hangs up the phone and grins at DANI.

AARON
DANIELLE, dear senior-
accountant-boss, aren't I
supposed to be getting
you coffee?

DANI smiles and walks toward her desk while she's speaking.

DANI
Consider it a thank you for
the volunteer gig.

DANI stops and looks back at AARON

DANI
Who was that on the phone?

AARON waves his hand in the air as if he was swatting a fly away.

AARON
Oh, that was STEPHANIE.
She said to tell you she'd be
here in a minute.

DANI looks concerned, then lets it go and smiles as she grabs her purse out of her bottom file drawer, then her art bag/case from behind her desk. All this while talking to AARON, who is getting up to walk to a printer. She is also trying to get her purse out of her file drawer, and gets it on the third try. First two tries she grunts or groans (at Oomph and Uuhn).

DANI

AARON, you are the
best friend in the world
to get me this-oomph-golden volunteer
gig in Crystal Falls.-Uuhn-
I mean, I'm a bit nervous about it.
And I'm definitely not sure that I feel
good about going back to Crystal Falls.
I mean, it's been years since our family
. . . well you know, . . . but
I'm staying positive!

AARON

Smart woman!

DANI

Anyway, this is a great opportunity,
because STEPHANIE will . . .

STEPHANIE walks in the door just then, looking stern,
raising her eyebrows (or better - one eyebrow).

STEPHANIE

Stephanie will what?

AARON gives DANI a secret look as DANI kind of chokes, then she recovers and fake smiles.

DANI

Oh, STEPHANIE, I'm just
really excited about this
new volunteer position,
and thought you'd love
to see how it will
showcase our company's
dedication to community service.

STEPHANIE waves her hand in the air as if she's got better things to think about. Sounding totally bored:

STEPHANIE

Great. Well, carry on.
I can talk to you later about the
CFO candidate requirements.

AARON walks over to DANI and sympathetically puts his hand
on her shoulder.

AARON

Don't worry, DANI
she will *for sure*
take this into consideration
for the CFO position competition.
Hey, I'm a poet!

DANI shakes her head, smiling, as AARON looks proud of
himself.

DANI

Ha, Ha.
You always know how
to get me out of a my head.
Anyway, thank your
husband for me, too.

AARON talks as he turns to head back to the printer.

AARON

Thank him yourself,
he runs the community
center programs, you know!

DANI starts to walk out the door as AARON calls to her.

AARON

And don't forget our
Christmas party tomorrow night!

DANI groans, then looks back at AARON, grinning.

DANI

Only for you will I
take time out of this race!

Act 1 - Scene 2

CUT TO CRYSTAL FALLS, (EXT), DAYTIME

DANI

EXTRAS - Town folks and tourists

DANI parks her car and walks about two blocks, looking nostalgic. She looks into windows and at Christmas decorations on light poles, etc.

Act 1 - Scene 3

CUT TO CRYSTAL FALLS COMMUNITY CENTER (INT), ENTRYWAY TO CRAFT ROOM, DAYTIME

CARTER- Easygoing, small-town boy made good in business, but very modest about it. Still has his country charm.

DYLAN - Aaron's husband - artistic and well-organized, manages the community center programs, and especially passionate about the art program.

DANIELLE

MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT - JACKSON -

MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT - AIDEN- open, kind, intelligent, fun

MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT - MATEO

MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT - ETHAN - bit of an attitude

MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT - MIA - Open, loving, intelligent,
White and Asian bi-racial

MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT - ZOE

MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT - AMARA

MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT - ELLA

SET in CRAFT ROOM:

Two tables in craft room are set up with art supplies for making ornaments and two tables. Both tables have paint in holiday colors, glitter and pinecones, glue and ribbon, clear or just plain plastic ornaments and paper to fold, clay in packages.

PROPMASTER: Small, about 2" by 3" small canvases or piece of lightweight wood, like balsa with holes in the top, small paint brushes to make paintings as ornaments, and ribbons in Christmas colors to hang ornaments. Also: a

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finished one. *I will send the "painting" ornament I have to you- you can use it or as a sample.*

Extra smaller table has plates of Christmas cookies that are covered with napkins.

DANI walks into entryway then looks around, as if confused. DYLAN walks out of the office or other room, smiling and looking welcoming.

DYLAN
DANI, it's so good to
see you!

DYLAN gives DANI a hug and she grins.

DANI
You, too, DYLAN!
It's so sad, though, about
the budget cuts at school that
decimated the art programs.
But I'm so glad you are doing this
for the passionate artists like me!

DANI
So, where do I start?

DANI looks nervous.

DANI
I'm not doing this alone am I?

DYLAN
No way!
I'm not throwing you
to the wolves.

DYLAN grabs DANI'S hand and leads her to the craft room.

FX: Small Angel-images near Dani and Carter, by their shoulders, up until they move closer to each other and meet. (There will be links at bottom for suggested images.)

CARTER'S eyes open wide when he sees DANI, and he starts to pull in a breath of surprise, but he catches himself, smiling a welcome, not wanting DANI to know that he recognizes her.

DANI looks a bit confused at his wide eyes.

DYLAN

DANI, This is CARTER, who is great
with kids and art.
His company is actually
funding this program.

DANI puts out her hand out to shake CARTER'S when he offers it.

DANI

So nice to meet you.
Thanks for letting me help!

CARTER

Oh, uh, really glad you
could be here.
The kids will be here any . . .

Just then, all the MIDDLE-SCHOOL KIDS walk in the door; all except ETHAN looking excited.

As they file in and thump down in chairs, tossing backpacks on the floor next to them, and/or phones on the table, some looking at them or texting. CARTER opens his arms as he says, while pointing out the ornament decor supplies:

CARTER

Welcome to your personal
art world, Christmas-style.

ETHAN shifts around in his seat, sneering and snorting a bit.

DANI looks sympathetically at ETHAN, then at the others as she walks around the room, then grabs her bag as she says: "someone you love."

DANI

I know, it seems lame to make

ornaments as an art project.
 But think of the unconventional,
 unique ways you can surprise
 someone you love . . .

CARTER joins DANI, who has started looking into her art case, fumbling a bit, like she's nervous, while the kids are already grabbing materials as CARTER talks, and AIDEN slaps JACKSON'S hand lightly as he starts to grab the piece AIDEN has gone for. They both laugh.

CARTER
 Remember, people you make these for
 will keep these ornaments for a long time.
 You'll never know how much
 your gift can touch someone's
 life, and maybe even their
 kids and their grandkids!

DANI smiles widely and looks impressed that CARTER had her same idea:

DANI
 Exactly! Especially if it's
 made with love . . .

CARTER gives DANI a huge smile and she blushes. ETHAN snickers at them, but quietly enough for them to ignore him.

DANI pulls a beautiful handmade ornament out of her bag as she begins to speak, sincerely and heart-felt.

DANI
 . . . which is why I brought
 this treasured ornament my
 Irish grandmother made.
 She was my mom's mom, so it's
 really special to me.

ETHAN still looks disappointed, twisting his mouth around in disgust.

ETHAN
 Yeah, but I wanted to

paint—like a *painting*,
you know?

CARTER picks up a clear plastic ornament and a small brush, demonstrating without paint. While he talks, DANI is digging something else out of her bag.

CARTER
Well, you can just
paint on a globe, for a
challenge, right?

DANI holds up a small canvas, then ribbon.

DANI
But if that still doesn't
make you happy, how about
a miniature painting you can
do today?
If you want to, you can
put some glitter on the edges,
The ribbon will be put
through a loop in
the back to make an ornament!

DANI pulls out another one from her bag—a completed one she made.

DANI
Voila!

MIA and AIDEN lean forward at the same time, and say together:

| | |
|------------|------------------|
| MIA | AIDEN |
| I love it! | That is so cool! |

MIA and AIDEN look at each other and blush.

CARTER has an adoring look on his face as he stares at DANI. Then he remembers where he is as the STUDENTS look up and all now snicker at them. CARTER clears his throat, stumbling over his words adorably. While he's talking, he walks over to the small table and pulls a napkin off a cookie plate.

INSERT of Christmas cookies on plate at the words "have treats."

CARTER

Uh, . . . um, well, if all this
art doesn't do it for you,
we have *treats*!

AIDEN, JACKSON, MATEO, and ETHAN all jump up and
practically run toward the table.

DANI

What is it about teenage
boys and food?

CARTER laughs.

CUT TO MIDDLE SCHOOL KIDS grabbing their stuff and leaving.
CARTER and DANI are standing near one table, same side,
(not too close together, but enough for a med. shot,) gaze
at the mess, look at each other with humorous looks on
their faces that say, "Oh my goodness, what a mess!"

They both burst out laughing. Then CARTER smiles at DANI.

CARTER

I think that went well,
don't you?

DANI

I *do*!
I was so nervous, though.

CARTER

Why? You're *great* with
the kids and you definitely have
talent with art.

DANI

Well, I've been more of an
accountant than an artist,
but *thank you*!
I would love to do my art more.
There's just no time!

CARTER looks sympathetic, nodding.

DANI starts to clean up (gathering napkins from cookies and brushing crumbs off the table with them into a trash can CARTER hands her. DANI looks a bit hesitant before she asks this:

DANI
By the way, CARTER,
what do you for a living?

CARTER smiles.

CARTER
My brother and I run a
financial investment firm we
started.

DANI pulls away a bit, looking back and forth to the table as she talks, cleaning up a bit more.

DANI
Oh.

DANI pauses after "Oh," looking disappointed. Then brightens a bit.

How is that going for you?

CARTER starts to put some things away in a bin.

CARTER
Well, it's *always* a challenge,
but we hold our own!

DANI looks disappointed.

Act 1 - Scene 4

CUT TO A.I. COMPANY, (INT), DANI'S OFFICE, DAYTIME

DANIELLE (DANI)

AARON

DANIELLE'S MOM, SARAH - Sweet and loving - can be voice only or record for face-time.

DANI walks into her office, and as she walks and puts her art bag behind her desk and her purse in the drawer, she talks.

Same time as DANI starts into the office, AARON gets up and walks around his desk, then sitting on it, listening intently.

DANI
That was so great!
Like I told CARTER—
he's the art director—
I wish I could either make art
my living or teach it.

DANI sits at her desk and morosely (looking like a child who doesn't get what she wants) rests her chin in her hands.

DANI
Or both.

AARON
So why don't you?

AARON walks over to the paintings on the wall, gazing at them with appreciation.

AARON
You are so talented and . . .

STEPHANIE walks in just then, and says with a smirk.

STEPHANIE
Did you have fun playing
art with the kids?

DANI looks a bit confused, and then hurt, then tries to smile and look professional.

STEPHANIE doesn't even pay attention, or even give her a chance to answer.

STEPHANIE
Maybe you can use your artistic
sense of gab for this challenge.
Try to get our procrastinating clients

to send back the disclosure
forms we need like now!
I sent you their contacts.
Get on it right away.

STEPHANIE doesn't wait for an answer, but leaves
immediately. DANI sits back down and slumps in her chair
dejectedly.

AARON
Looks like a late
night, hon.

DANI drops her head down to her desk and groans, then lifts
it up.

DANI
I was so inspired by those
kids and their love of art that
I was going to go home and make
my own ornaments for gifts!

AARON
But now . . .

DANI'S cell phone rings and she looks at the screen, then
answers, looking worried.

DANI
Hey, Mom, is everyone okay?
You don't usually call me
at work.

SARAH
Everything's fine, honey.
But there will be something
very wrong if you don't
come to the lodge with
us for Christmas week.

DANI pulls her head back in confusion.

DANI
Why?

SARAH

Your Grand Mere won't fly
all the way here from
Quebec if you can't make it.
And you know how she is.

DANI
Oh, I *do* know, and I really, *really*
want to see her, and you, too!
But with this
stiff competition for CFO,
well, I just . . .

SARAH
Oh, sweetie, Christmas is
so special - can't you find a
way to make it work so we
can all be together?
After all, we don't know
how many more Christmases, if any,
your Grand Mere has *left*.
And you know how close she
feels to you.

DANI laughs happily.

DANI
Oh, Mom, I think you're channeling
Grand Mere's dramatic streak.
Brava! Well done.
And you know how much I love
Grand Mere.
I really want to come, but . . .

DANI looks like she's thinking hard, biting her bottom lip,
drawing out the word 'Well.'

DANI
. . . Wellllll, If I can get AARON to . . .

DANI looks over at AARON with her eyebrows raised and he
smiles and nods fast, happily.

DANI
Yes! I will be there with
sleigh bells on!

SARAH laughs.

Act 1 - Scene 5

CUT TO CARTER'S HOME, (INT), LIVING ROOM, NIGHT

CARTER

CARTER picks up his yearbook from middle school, opens it, and looks at a page of photos.

INSTERT: One page with images of Young Dani, the actor who plays the character of Young Dani, plus other photos in rows or however set up.

Act 1- Scene 6

CUT TO FLASHBACK MIDDLE SCHOOL, (INT), OPEN-AREA OR HALLWAY, DAYTIME

YOUNG CARTER

YOUNG DYLAN

YOUNG DANIELLE

DANIELLE'S FRIENDS

MIDDLE-SCHOOL-STUDENT EXTRAS

DANIELLE is talking with her friends, some dressed in cheer or dance uniforms. They call "Hi" and "Hey" to a few friends, waving and smiling.

YOUNG DYLAN and YOUNG CARTER, with hair in his face, looks at DANI as he limps by a few feet away from her group with YOUNG DYLAN. The other girls ignore them, but DANI smiles at them gently, knowingly (she's sympathetic to the "underdogs."

YOUNG CARTER
She's the only one
who's nice to us.

YOUNG DYLAN
I know, man.
She's kinda special.

YOUNG DYLAN smiles at YOUNG CARTER knowingly. They are still walking.

YOUNG DYLAN
Hey, did you know she
has the same birthday
as you?

YOUNG CARTER
No way, DYLAN!

YOUNG DYLAN just nods and laughs happily.

Act 1 - Scene 5

CUT TO CARTER'S HOME, (INT), LIVING ROOM, NIGHT

CARTER

CARTER closes yearbook and sighs, looking nostalgic.

Act 1 - Scene 6

CUT TO FLASHBACK MIDDLE SCHOOL, (INT), HALLWAY, DAYTIME

YOUNG CARTER
MIDDLE-SCHOOL-STUDENT EXTRAS

In locker area, with a few Christmas decorations:

CARTER is in a hidden place, behind some lockers or in a corner near the lockers. He has a card in his hand, opens it and we see a drawing of a Santa with a heart shape drawn on his chest. It's signed, "Your Secret Birthday Santa," He closes the card, puts it in the envelope, and walks up to a locker, then looks around to make sure no one sees him. The coast is clear as he seals it quickly and kisses it.

DYLAN slides it into a locker (in air slot or space at bottom, if necessary), just as some students round a corner or come down a hallway toward where DYLAN is standing, and DYLAN quickly walks away.

Act 2- Scene 1

CUT TO A.I. COMPANY, (INT), DANI'S OFFICE, DAYTIME

DANIELLE (DANI)

AARON

DANI is asleep at her desk, in the same clothes she wore in last scene with her.

AARON walks in with two coffees and waves it around by DANI'S nose.

DANI sniffs, lifts her head up a bit and groans.

AARON

You *better* come to our
party tonight.

DANI

I can see how much you
love me. Coffee and a
sweet invitation.

AARON snorts and returns to his desk.

AARON

Don't worry, I'm going
to do half your work so
you can go home and take a nap,
then get into that red
dress and put the pin on it
I gave you.

DANI, lifting her head higher and putting her hands together, bowing slightly, looking mock-serious.

DANI

Yes, master, oh brilliant one.

DANI begins to stand up, then plops back down in her chair.

DANI

I feel so guilty leaving you to
do so much work!

AARON
Remember the Caribbean Cruise
DYLAN and I will be taking
in January?

DANI
Okay, okay, you're right.
And Stephanie does like to
see us have a good work-life balance,
right?

AARON
Even if she doesn't have one herself.
Way to smash guilt!
Well done, Amiga.

Act 2- Scene 2

CUT TO APT. LOBBY to ELEVATOR to HALLWAY (INT), NIGHT

DANI
CARTER

WARDROBE: DANI needs to be wearing a holiday-colored dress with a slim skirt (gets caught under her and she has to pull it down in the last party scene), and a pin - Christmas wreath or classy-looking Christmas pin, pinned onto her upper chest, close to shoulder area, as it will get ripped!

DANI is waiting for the elevator in well-decorated lobby, pushing the button several times, impatient, looking at her phone.

CARTER walks up to her and grins, putting his hands in his pockets shyly as DANI looks over at him.

CARTER
Hi.

DANI
Oh, Hi CARTER.
What are you. . . I mean, are you
here for someone?

CARTER smiles happily, and speaks as the elevator door opens and he holds it for DANI.

CARTER
I believe we're going to
the same party.

DANI
Oh! You know DYLAN
from the community center.

DANI steps into the elevator, CARTER follows, and he presses the button for the floor they need.

CARTER
Yes, but way further back
than that. We actually
went to school together
from first grade on.

CARTER leans back in the elevator, still looking happy and appreciatively assessing DANI, who is standing perpendicular to CARTER, leaning against another wall.

Elevator stops and DANI starts to step out, right at the side of the door so she runs into it slightly. She snags the pin (pinned onto her upper chest) on her dress at the door.

SOUND FX: Rip

DANI immediately covers it with her hand, so we don't see that it's not really ripped.

CARTER
Oh, no, can I help?

DANI looks down and laughs, holding the pin to her chest. As they talk, CARTER follows and they walk down the hallway.

DANI waves him off with a laugh, as she still holds her pin area with one hand.

DANI

Oh, this is just the
icing on the Christmas
cookie today. No worries,
AARON can fix it. He sews
like a pro, and
the pin will cover it.

CARTER knocks on the door and they hear party music and
noises as AARON yells:

AARON
Enter Rudolf's Domain!

Act 2- Scene 3

CUT TO AARON and DYLAN'S APARTMENT, (INT), NIGHT

DANI
CARTER
AARON
DYLAN
EXTRAS - PARTY- GOERS

EXTRAS are drinking eggnog, talking, looking at:

SET DEOCOR: Ornaments on the Christmas tree, some are
dancing to rockin' Christmas music, others eating fancy
appetizers from a table that has a statue of Rudolf in the
middle. Also, a "Pin the Nose on Rudolf" game.

DYLAN and AARON come to the door and greet CARTER and DANI
(improv).

DANI'S whispers in AARON'S ear.

DANI
I have a wardrobe malfunction.

AARON snorts.

AARON
Already? It's only eight o'clock!

DANI smirks at AARON.

DANI
Good thing I love you.

AARON grabs DANI'S hand and leads her away as DYLAN and CARTER go to the food table.

AARON
Come with me, darling.

Act 2- Scene 4

CUT TO AARON and DYLAN'S APARTMENT, (INT), NIGHT

DANI
CARTER
AARON
DYLAN
EXTRAS - PARTY- GOERS - down to 5 or so at this point.

SAME SCENE except:

PROPS: Small red and/or green, gold, silver envelopes holding slips of paper with questions typed on them. Only three need to be visible - though not necessarily on camera.

This scene should move quickly to the question "reveal" section.

AARON claps his hands and sings out:

AARON
Time for the *inner* gifts
of Christmas!
And the winner gets
a prize if he or she
can pin the nose on
Rudolf too.

EVERYONE says, all at once (improv): Things like "Oh, what fun!" or "I love it!" and "I'm in!"-type statements as

DYLAN goes somewhere like a shelf to grab the stack of envelopes.

EVERYONE is finding seats on couch or chairs, but DANI ends up next to CARTER on the couch when someone and takes the chair she's headed toward.

AARON walks over to DYLAN and places an arm around his shoulder, speaking in "Academy Award" style.

AARON
DYLAN, do you have
the envelopes?

DYLAN pulls them out from behind his back, and says:

DYLAN
And the winner is . . .
All of us!
Just answer the best you can.
Questions about your inner
Christmas are in each
envelope, and you don't have
to answer out loud if you
don't want to.

DYLAN and AARON sit down together as EVERYONE is opening their envelopes and reading their questions.

AARON
Oy! It's so nice to sit!
Who's first?

EVERYONE is quiet. AARON grabs the envelopes and shuffles them during this next bit of dialogue:

DYLAN
Okay, I'll go first,
since this is our fault
anyway.

AARON starts the envelopes being passed around the room, person to person.

AARON
You mean *your* fault.

DANI and CARTER look at each other and chuckle knowingly.

DYLAN opens his envelope, pulls out his question and reads it out loud:

DYLAN
What was your
favorite *place* to enjoy
Christmas?

DYLAN looks at AARON.

Oh, that's easy.
Right here with my husband.

AARON grins at DYLAN.

AARON
Right answer!

EVERYONE laughs as DANI scoots forward on her seat, then pulls her dress back down. She reads her question out loud.

DANI
What's the best *feeling*
you have about Christmas?

DANI thinks for a moment.

DANI
Oh, wow, that's hard!
I love *all* the feelings, but mostly,
I love the feeling of pure,
unconditional love that's in
the air. When everyone is so
much nicer to each other!
I wish we could have that
always.

EVERYONE nods and agrees (AARON, DYLAN, CARTER voices, improv) like "Awww, that's so sweet," "You are so right!", "Wouldn't that be great?" etc., all at once.

CARTER
Okay, here goes. Mine says:
If you had a Christmas
wish for your best friend,

what would it be?

CARTER looks up and cocks his head to the side, as if thinking.

CARTER

I think I'd want her to
be able to follow her
dream, no matter what other people
thought about it, and to attain it.

DANI looked up at CARTER in wonder, speaking softly just to CARTER.

DANI

Well, she's a lucky
woman to have a best
friend who wishes that for her.

CARTER smiles gratefully, but also confidently at DANI.

Act 2 - Scene 5

CUT TO A.I. COMPANY, (INT), DANI'S OFFICE, DAYTIME

DANIELLE (DANI)

AARON

DANI is putting her notebook or laptop into her bag, picking up her purse, and looking a bit frazzled as she gets ready to leave for the lodge.

AARON walks over and gives her a hug, then pulls back, still holding her shoulders as he says:

AARON

It's all going to be
okay, sweetie.
Just breathe.

AARON slips his hand through DANI'S elbow and guides her toward the door. DANI looks worried, still, over at AARON.

DANI

But I still have so
much to do, and . . .

AARON
And I'll help you, DANI.
Remember that I can do
your job as well as mine.

DANI stops and smiles at AARON.

DANI
Yes, you can!
Remind me why you don't
want to be a
corporate accountant?

AARON starts pulling DANI toward the door again.

AARON
Because I prefer to have
a *life*. And cooking appeals
to me so much more!

DANI
That's an art form, too,
you know!

AARON
You're right, it is.
Now get out of here!
I don't want to see you
until after Christmas!

As DANI walks out the door, AARON grins like he has a secret.

Act 3 - Scene 1

CUT TO HIGHWAY, (EXT to INT), DAYTIME

DANI
AARON -on phone

STOCK FOOTAGE or B-ROLL - aerial of beautiful, mountainous
or hilly area, then:

CAMERA: DANI'S car from above, then interior.

DANI looks enchanted as she hears the phone ring and answers on car speaker hookup or...

DANI
Hey, AARON, everything okay?

AARON
Of course it is, I just
want to make sure you are
letting go of work!

DANI
Well, I wasn't even thinking
about it until you called!
All I could think of was how much
I'd love to paint these gorgeous
scenes onto my Christmas-painting ornaments!

AARON
Good.
My work here is done.
Have a sparkly vacation!

DANI laughs and ends the call, going back to watching the scenery with enchantment on her face. (3-5 seconds)

CUT TO B-ROLL of town- Crystal Falls again- DANI drives through.

DANI gazing out the window at the decorations in town as she drives through it, with the same look on her face (she wants to paint it!).

Act 3 - Scene 2

CUT TO LODGE (EXT), DAYTIME

DANIELLE

JADA - Danielle's sister - Easy-going, a smart (and crafty) woman with a romantic imagination.

DANIELLE'S GRANDMOTHER, "GRAND MERE" SIMONE - French, loves life, a bit controlling, but for a "good cause." Also very spiritual, sometimes metaphysical. In great shape physically - yoga enthusiast!

LOCATION MANAGER: I see the Lodge as a small, family-run operation with not a lot of room -maybe just for three or four families.

SET DESIGN: Of course, the lodge is fully decorated beautifully for Christmas. Signage (name of Lodge): "Lodged in Love"

WARDROBE: SIMONE needs to be wearing a hat with a brim.

DANIELLE has just parked her car and as she steps out of it, she sees JADA driving in and stopping, with a passenger.

DANI squints her eyes, then as SIMONE steps out, DANIELLE squeals happily and runs over to JADA'S car, passenger side.

DANI
GRAND MERE!

DANIELLE hugs SIMONE hard and happily. As she pulls back from the hug, DANI knocks SIMONE'S hat to the side (with her head).

SIMONE straightens her hat, laughing.

SIMONE
Oh, DANIELLE, *mon cheri*,
you are still a
delight!

DANI takes SIMONE'S arm and walks her into the LODGE, leaving JADA to follow. No one has their bags.

DANI
Well, most people
would call me a klutz,
but I like what you said
way better, my sweet GRAND MERE.

JADA catches up to DANI and SIMONE.

JADA
What am I, chopped liver?

DANI looks back at JADA and laughs, giving her a quick hug.

The Art of Christmas Love, copyright 2023, Debbie Johnson

DANI
Of course not, little
sister. I'm so happy to
see you, too! You know
I love you. I just haven't
seen GRAND MERE in so long.

JADA opens the door to the Lodge as GRAND MERE walks in and
DANI follows.

Act 3 - Scene 3

CUT TO LODGE (INT), LOBBY, DAYTIME

JADA

SIMONE

DANIELLE'S MOM, SARAH - Sweet and loving

DANIELLE'S STEPDAD, JASON - Kind, caring

TREY - Manager, desk clerk, sweet and caring, care-free,
but service oriented.

SET DESIGN: And, of course, the interior of the Lodge is
tastefully decorated for Christmas - but not snobby, just
simple and warm-feeling, welcoming. Christmas tree in lobby
only has about half the normal amount of ornaments, but can
also have a few bows, lights, or whatever else, but
tastefully placed (leave room for more to be added later).

PROPS: "Touristy" brochures on the check-in counter.

DANIELLE

DANI, JADA, and SIMONE walk in and up to the Christmas
tree, seeing it with just a few decorations. JADA and
SIMONE are looking at it.

DANI goes to the desk where TREY is standing.

DANI
Hey, TREY, good to see
you again!

TREY smiles warmly, hands on his computer.

TREY
Welcome back, DANI.
I'll get you all checked
in.

TREY begins looking at his screen.

DANI leans on the counter right on top of the brochures.

DANI
Hey, TREY, why is the
Christmas tree only half
decorated?

TREY looks up, smiling.

TREY
Oh, yeah, that's because
we donated ornaments to the local
hospital for the patient rec-room
tree. So we're going to
have you guys make more!

DANI
I love that!

DANI pulls back from the counter and spills the brochures.

As DANI shakes her head at herself, starting to pick up the brochures, JADA and SIMONE laugh, then come over to help.

Just then, SARAH and JASON walk into the lobby and rush over to give everyone hugs.

SARAH
DANI!

DANI
MOM, I'm so glad I
could come!

DANI then hugs JASON.

DANI

And JASON-Dad, it's so good
to be here with you, too.

DANI turns to JADA and grabs her hand as SARAH and JASON hug SIMONE. (improv "welcome" as DANI speaks) As DANI walks toward the outside, front door with JADA the voices in the lobby fade, and she opens the door for JADA. All this while she's talking.

DANI
Let's go get all our bags.
Oh, and thank you for
picking up GRAND MERE at
the airport.
You're the best!

JADA
Okay, I admit it.

DANI laughs.

Act 3 - Scene 4

CUT TO LODGE (INT), DINING ROOM, DUSK or NIGHT

DANIELLE

JADA

SIMONE

DANIELLE'S MOM, SARAH - Sweet and loving

DANIELLE'S STEPDAD, JASON - Kind, caring

TREY - Manager, desk clerk

CARTER

LIAM- Carter's brother - Easy-going, likes everyone and has a teasing sense of humor.

AIDEN

MIA

TRISHA - Aiden's mom - Nice looking, friendly demeanor

JONATHAN - Mia's dad - Caucasian or Asian

SUKI (Asian)

TERRA - TREY'S daughter and Server- sweet and kind, bi-racial (mom is dark-skinned).

EXTRAS - Lodge guests - Family of four or five

LOCATION MANAGER and SET DECORATOR - please note that the Dining room can also be used for "Party room" and "Craft Room" for later scenes- not necessary to hide that fact at

all, as it's a small, family-owned biz. Two Long tables to fit 8 (10 if using ends). One shorter table to fit four. Tablecloths set up for dinner, glasses of wine or juice for kids on table also.

PROPS: Tablecloths, dinner settings, and salads for 20

AIDEN and TRISH, plus MIA, JONATHAN, SUKI are already seated at a smaller table. AIDEN AND MIA'S parents are sitting together at one end of the table, and AIDEN and MIA across from each other at the end closest to DANI'S family table.

EXTRA FAMILY is seated at the other long table.

DANIELLE'S FAMILY walk in and take seats as the other guests talk (improv). Except DANIELLE, who first walks over to AIDEN and MIA's table. AIDEN and MIA both look really happy to see DANI, and put their glasses of juice or whatever down.

AIDEN

Hey, MS. NADEAU!

MIA

What are you doing here?

TREY walks through just as MIA says this:

MIA

Oh! Do we get to do more art?

DANI

I certainly hope so!

And you can join me anytime.

TREY walks over to the table, grinning mischievously.

TREY

I guarantee you will have
lots of art ops. Like decorating
Christmas cookies - that's totally
great art, right?

AIDEN and MIA together:

MIA

AIDEN

When? I'll be there!

TREY and DANIELLE laugh,

TREY and DANIELLE walk away, toward the door, as they see CARTER and LIAM walk in, looking around. CARTER sees DANI laughing with TREY and looks a bit worried, jealous.

TREY
Right after dinner, friends.
You will earn your dessert!

DANIELLE goes to sit down and notices CARTER and LIAM looking around. She goes to them.

DANI
Hey, CARTER - are you here
for Christmas week, too?

CARTER puts his hands in his pockets, looking shy, but then gestures to LIAM as he introduces him.

CARTER
Yes we are.
DANI, this is my brother, LIAM.

SIMONE comes over.

SIMONE
The family took a vote and
decided we'd have more fun
with you two good-looking
guys to join us.

SIMONE grabs LIAM'S arm and leads him to the table, as he looks back at his brother with a silent laugh on his face. DANI looks embarrassed, but graciously walks with CARTER

DANIELLE, SIMONE, JADA are sitting on one side of their table, with one empty seat across from DANIELLE's, which CARTER takes, and an empty seat next to JADA, which LIAM takes. SARAH and JASON are on the opposite side. They are all in various stages of sipping drinks.

JASON
Well, I'm so glad you men
joined us. I'm always

surrounded by women!

SARAH
And you love every
minute of it,
don't you, dear?

EVERYONE laughs.

JASON puts his arm around SARAH and gives her a kiss on the cheek just after he says:

JASON
Busted.

SIMONE
What do you do for work, JASON?

DANIELLE looks very interested, her eyes widening.

CARTER
I own a small investment
company. Well, we do.
Just me and my
brother, LIAM, here.

CARTER smiles over at LIAM.

LIAM says quietly to JADA, trying to impress her:

LIAM
I'm his superior sidekick.

JASON looks over at LIAM and laughs this out:

CARTER
I heard that!

JADA looks at DANI, who looks a little upset.

SARAH purposely changes the subject.

SARAH
Is your family going
to join you here?

SERVER is rolling a serving cart with plates of salad to the other tables.

CARTER

No, sadly.

Both Mom and Dad have a
military contract overseas.

EVERYONE but LIAM and Carter makes sympathetic noises and comments (Improv).

DANI

Oh, so is that why
you two came to the lodge
this week?

.

CARTER looks at DANI with a grin.

CARTER

Well, that, and we
saw the sign of the lodge
when we were driving by one day.
And who doesn't want to be
lodged in love? Right LIAM?

LIAM looks at his brother and smirks.

LIAM

Uh, I don't think guys
are supposed to admit that.

JASON smiles knowingly at both men.

JASON

Hey, it's what I'm here for.

DANI

Good answer, Dad of my heart!

JASON puts his hand on his heart.

JADA

And you're the only
Dad I've really known well,
and the best one for me!

TERRA comes by with their salads, starting to serve them, and looks at LIAM and CARTER for last line.

TERRA
It's so good to see you
all back here again!
Except I don't know you two guys,
but we can introduce ourselves
at the cookie-art time later!

CARTER smiles at TERRA.

CARTER
Oh, definitely!

DANI looks slightly jealous.

Act 3 - Scene 5

CUT TO LODGE (INT), KITCHEN or DINING ROOM, (if needed),
NIGHT

DANIELLE
JADA
SIMONE
TREY
CARTER
LIAM
AIDEN
MIA
TERRA

CLAUDIA - (pronounced "cloudia" Trey's wife - dark-skinned French-Canadian - speaks with slight French accent.

SET DESIGN: Large work table or two, as needed (or dining-room tables if needed) are set up with (see props below) and hooks on wall have ten decorated Christmas aprons.

PROPS: plates or trays of plain sugar cookies in various Christmas shapes (Must Have a Santa, as well as a Star shape), paper to cover tables for cookie art, holiday aprons (maybe on hooks?), and clear plastic serving gloves, if producer wants to show cleanliness.) There are decorating icing - plastic bottles, sprinkles, candy canes

in plastic bags, and a hammer. Also, one cookie either in Santa shape, or round, either one with icing decor as "cookie-art" of Santa (maybe waist-up) with a heart on his chest.

DANIELLE, JADA, and SIMONE walk into the kitchen and start looking at the cookie-art ingredients on the table.

CLAUDIA grabs SIMONE on her way by as they grin at each other:

CLAUDIA
SIMONE NADEAU!
It's so good to
see you, *mon ami*!

CLAUDIA and SIMONE kiss each other on both cheeks. SIMONE looks mischievous.

SIMONE
Oh, yes!
And we will have some
girl time later.

CARTER, LIAM, AIDEN, and MIA walk in, going right to the cookie table. TREY quickly follows, looking pressed for time. He rushes over to CLAUDIA and puts his arm around her, giving her a kiss on the cheek.

TREY
CLAUDIA is my adoring
wife-

CLAUDIA pokes TREY lightly.

TREY
I mean, my adorable
wife, who is also
our master baker and decorator.

CLAUDIA
Thank you, sweetheart.
This cookie art will be appreciated
by many in our community who
are hurting this Christmas.
We'll drop them off at the

community center before the town
tree-lighting in a few days.

Now grab an apron and
let's get to decorating!

EVERYONE begins talking all at once (improv) about what they want to do as they go to get a holiday apron and put it on, then go to their stations, CARTER makes sure he is next to DANI, so he lets her choose her spot first by pretending to have trouble tying his apron.

CLAUDIA walks around and says:

CLAUDIA

Let me know what you need,
but I want you to just
have fun and be as
creative as you like.

AIDEN

Can we eat our mistakes?

CARTER and DANI look at each other and chuckle softly, saying softly or whispering at the same time, and just about the time SIMONE starts with "You", they end:

CARTER and DANI

Teenage boys!

SIMONE

You can eat *my* mistakes.

CLAUDIA is standing near a table, greeting everyone with:

CLAUDIA

Thank you for helping
us get these decorated
for the Christmas baskets
we make yearly for families
who are hurting . . .

EVERYONE: (improv) says things like: "Oh, how wonderful"
"that's sweet" etc.

AIDEN looks a bit disappointed.

CLAUDIA says with a cheeky grin:

CLAUDIA
 Don't worry, you'll get
 your dessert, too.
 We *did* say you had
 to work for it though!

EVERYONE laughs or chuckles as they put on plastic gloves and start to grab cookies and decorations.

CARTER is decorating a Santa cookie with a heart, just like the picture in his birthday/Christmas card to Young Dani.

DANI, next to CARTER, is working on a star-shaped cookie, but making it unique in some way (circle in the middle?) She looks over at CARTER'S cookie as he is "painting" the heart on Santa's chest. (INSERT)

DANI looks a bit thoughtful, drawing her brows together, then smiles brightly at CARTER, looking drawn in to his eyes.

DANI
 CARTER, that's so unique!
 I love it!

JADA looks at LIAM, catching his eye, with her head bent in DANI and CARTER'S direction, raising her eyebrows a bit, looking in their direction.

LIAM looks at where JADA is pointing with her eyes and lifts his chin up and smirks, then back to JADA with a smile.

CARTER looks into DANI'S eyes also, warmly.

CARTER
 Thank you.
 It's my signature Santa.

CARTER looks at DANI and smiles mysteriously, waiting for her to "get it."

DANI picks up CARTER'S Santa cookie.

DANI
 It looks a bit

familiar, but I don't
know why.

CARTER
Oh, who knows?
You have a loving heart,
DANI. So I wouldn't be
surprised if any heart
would be unfamiliar to you.

DANI looks at CARTER with a happy grin, and as if she has a new appreciation of him. She puts his cookie down near her own as she says:

DANI
That's so sweet.

DANI starts to grab a glitter bottle that is open and accidentally spills it on Carter's SANTA cookie.
CARTER laughs, then picks up the cookie to look at where the glitter went.

DANI
Oh, I'm so sorry, CARTER!

CARTER chuckles as he says:

CARTER
No worries!
This is actually an
improvement, I think.

DANI looks comically sorrowful.

CUT TO EVERYONE filing out happily as some people hang up aprons and others wave goodbye.

Act 3- Scene 6

CUT TO LODGE, (INT) GUEST ROOMS - TOGGLING BETWEEN (FIRST) JADA/DANI'S and SIMONE'S), NIGHT

JADA
DANIELLE
SIMONE
CLAUDIA

WARDROBE: JADA and DANI wearing pajamas or loungewear
SIMONE in loungewear - yoga outfit
CLAUDIA is casual.

LOCATION MANAGER: It's important that SIMONE'S room be
large enough to have three women doing yoga (next scene in
her room).

JADA is sitting on chair and DANI on the bed in their room.
DANI looks contented and sighs happily. JADA looks ready to
pounce, in a good way.

JADA
So, do you like him?

DANI puts on an innocent, clueless look.

DANI
Who?

DANI twirls her hair.

JADA tips her head to the side as she lifts her eyebrows,
then smirks.

JADA
I think you like him
a *lot*, or you wouldn't be
twirling your hair.
And you know *exactly* who I mean.

EDITOR: FLIP to SIMONE'S Room

SIMONE is making two cups of tea when CLAUDIA knocks and
enters.

CLAUDIA
Oh, I smell Jasmine tea.
You remembered!

SIMONE picks up the tea cups as she and CLAUDIA go to sit
at a small table, opposite each other.

SIMONE
Of course I did.
Sit down and help me
figure out how to
get my DANIELLE to

open her heart to love!

CLAUDIA

Oh, so that's your hidden
agenda this weekend, hmmm?

EDITOR: FLIP to DANI'S Room

DANI is laying flat on the bed, but sits up as she says,
"have to"

DANI

I don't have time for
liking anyone a lot.
I have to get this CEO
position.

JADA

Why?

DANI

Because of our Dad, of course.
I have to prove that I don't
have the same DNA.

JADA snorts.

JADA

Okay, I get it, though.
Dad made some really bad
decisions and lost all our money.

DANI

And we had to move away
from all our friends!

JADA

Yes, we did.
And it made us stronger.

DANI

How did my little sister
get to be so smart?

JADA
I learned from the best.
You!

DANI
Awwwww.

EDITOR: FLIP to DANI'S Room

SIMONE
You are right, my friend.
Now, what do we do?

CLAUDIA
I have some ideas.
It seems like she is
close to CARTER, *non*?

SIMONE
Oh, *Oui*!
But she doesn't
know it yet.

Act 4 - Scene 6

CUT TO LODGE, (INT), LOBBY, MORNING

DANIELLE
JADA
CARTER
LIAM
CLAUDIA
TREY

PROPS: Hats, scarves, other items to create original-looking snowpeople. Round, Jewel-like earrings needed. Box labeled in large lettering: "Lost & Found," Coat rack with extra coats other than the four needed for this scene. Bracelet for JADA to wear, and sparkly belt for DANI, or long sparkly scarf.

DANIELLE and JADA walk into the Lobby area, presumably from the dining room. CLAUDIA is whispering to TREY (we can't hear what they say).

DANIELLE
Great breakfast, CLAUDIA.

CLAUDIA
Merci, DANIELLE!

JADA and DANIELLE stop and gaze outside (presumably, or if window, great!)

DANIELLE
It's so beautiful out there.
Let's get some fresh air.

JADA
Oh, definitely sister.

DANIELLE and JADA turn around to get their coats and CLAUDIA calls to them just as CARTER and LIAM walk into lobby.

CLAUDIA
JADA, DANIELLE, come over
here and see what things we
have to make snowmen.

As they talk, CLAUDIA points to the counter as TREY puts a box on it. DANI and JADA walk over there.

DANI
Oh, that sounds like
fun!

JADA
I love it!
Just what we need.

TREY
Have at it, ladies!

JADA pulls hats, scarves, earrings, gloves, etc. out of the box as DANI begins to look at each.

CARTER and LIAM look at each other and LIAM pokes CARTER with his elbow and they walk over to the counter near the box. TREY notices, and looks at CLAUDIA, who winks.

TREY

Hey, you gents want to
look in here, too?
I mean, in case you'd like
to make a snowman or two.

DANI and JADA are still looking through the box, DANI
holding up and examining each from her artist's eye.

CARTER
Would you girls mind a
little masculine help
with the heavy lifting?

DANI turns her head, but still pulling things out of the
box as JADA looks through them.

DANI
Oh, we can lift alright,
but you boys can join
us if you think you can keep up.

JADA
How about a contest?

LIAM
Cool. What kind?

DANI taps her chin, thinking.

DANI
Hmmm. How about we
make a snow-woman,
you two make a snowman,
and we ask AIDEN and
MIA to judge?

JADA
Sounds great, but
what do the winners
get?

LIAM looks mischievous.

LIAM
How about a night out
paid for by you two?

DANI laughs.

DANI
Oh, you are so confident.

JADA looks at DANI and grins, pointing to CARTER, then to DANI.

JADA
Oh you'll be paying boys.
I think you've met
your artistic match.

CARTER
Okay, then I think we
should add speed to the
qualifications!

CARTER and LIAM race to the coat rack as DANI and JADA saunter over to the counter, throw everything back in the box, and walk to coat rack as they talk. JADA has box under her arm.

DANI
Oops, they forgot
something very important.

JADA
Oh, yeah, we got this, sis.

Act 4- Scene 1

CUT TO LODGE, (EXT), SNOWY AREA, DAYTIME

DANIELLE
JADA
CARTER
LIAM
AIDEN
MIA

PROPS: Snowballs, "Lost & Found" box. All from last scene as well, and two sets of small branches for arms. Lipstick in Dani's pocket.

MAKEUP: Blush on DANI'S "affected" cheek after she gets hit later in this scene.

LIAM and CARTER are busily rolling snow into a large ball for their base as DANI and JADA walk out with their box, put it down, and begin rolling snow, grinning at each other and CARTER/LIAM mischievously.

CUT to Snow-people being done except for clothing. LIAM and CARTER are putting branches in for arms as DANI is placing the round jewel-like earrings for eyes.

CARTER looks over at DANI and JADA in consternation, then walks over to them.

CARTER
Oh, uh, could we get
some of those things?

JADA is looking through the box, pulling out a fancy hat as DANI smiles sweetly, then puts her hands on her hips.

DANI
Of course, CARTER,
but it will cost you.

CARTER
Huh?
That wasn't in the rules.

JADA looks up and laughs.

JADA
Neither was a race
to the finish!

LIAM has sneaked over near JADA and makes a grab for the box. JADA quickly pulls out a sparkly scarf and lets him have the box.

JADA
Go ahead fellas.
But you either give
us your dessert tonight,
or we tell the judges
you changed the rules.

Just then, AIDEN and MIA come out. They try to look serious and official, walking around the Snow-people as LIAM and CARTER finish putting a hat and scarf on their man.

DANI pulls her scarf off as JADA pulls off her bracelet and they place them on their snow woman.

Then DANI pulls some lipstick out of her purse and makes a pretty smile on the snow woman.

CARTER and LIAM look at each other and throw their hands up in the air in defeat.

AIDEN and MIA laugh.

MIA
Well, it's clear who's
won *this* contest . . .

AIDEN
But, hey guys, we can try
a *different* one.

CARTER and LIAM grin as AIDEN run away from the snow-people and makes a snowball. As he's making the snowball(s) MIA has her back to AIDEN, talking with JADA and DANI, as CARTER and LIAM grin and start slowly, stealthily, moving toward AIDEN to join him.

DANI looks up and sucks in a breath.

DANI
Watch out, MIA!

AIDEN throws a snowball at MIA and hits her back, while LIAM and CARTER are making their own snowballs.

MIA
Oh, you are so going
to pay for this, AIDEN!

MIA starts making snowballs and looks back at JADA and DANI, who have joined her quickly and started making their own balls as she speaks.

MIA
Snow Divas rule!
Let's get 'em!

IMPROV Snowball Fight ensues for about 7-10 seconds until DANI tries to lower her body and turn to move away from CARTER'S snowball, but stumbles and gets hit in the face. She puts her hand on her cheek, looking shocked, as JADA starts walking toward DANI, shaking her head.

JADA smirks.

JADA
The klutz at her finest.

CARTER looks worried, but is waiting for DANI to speak, since she looks just startled at first.

AIDEN starts to run to the lodge as he yells:

AIDEN
I'll go get my mom!

Then, as CARTER moves closer, DANI opens her eyes wide, evidently beginning to feel the pain, and removes her hand from her cheek, looking at CARTER:

DANI
Owww, that really hurts!
What did you do, put a
rock in it?

LIAM has come closer, too, standing next to CARTER, but just behind a bit, so CARTER can turn to him on his next action.

LIAM
Nope, he's just got a
super strong arm, cuz
his legs . . .

CARTER turns to LIAM with a fierce look and uses his hand on his own throat with a cutting motion, tight enough so DANI wouldn't see.

CARTER gets close to DANI and gently brushes the snow away from her cheek, as he says:

CARTER
I'm so sorry, DANIELLE.

Let's get you inside so we
can get some first aid.

DANI looks up at CARTER like she's really seeing him, into his soul. Then she smiles.

DANI
Sure, CARTER, and it's okay.
Things happen. At least
I know how strong you are if
I ever need someone
to help me move!

JADA chuckles.

JADA
I know *just* what you
need. Hot cocoa.

DANI snorts.

DANI
You mean what *you* need.
But, yeah that would be nice.

Act 4- Scene 2

CUT TO LODGE, (INT), LOBBY, DAYTIME

DANI
CARTER
TRISHA (Aiden's mom, also a nurse)

MAKEUP: Blush on DANI'S affected cheek.

DANI and CARTER, who is looking a bit concerned, are sitting on couch or chairs close together in the lobby. TRISHA is just finishing *gently* dabbing a cotton ball on DANI'S cheek, which still looks red when she removes the cotton, gathers her first aid kit and stands up as she speaks:

TRISHA
That should do it.
Let me know if you need

a pain-killer okay?

DANI

Thanks, TRISHA.
You're the Best!

TRISHA smiles nurturingly at DANI and walks out.

CARTER turns to DANI.

CARTER

I still feel terrible.
This was supposed to be fun!

DANI chuckles.

DANI

It was! Besides,
I think I'll live.

FX: Small angels again near CARTER'S and DANI'S shoulders.

CARTER'S expression softens.

CARTER

I sure hope so.
I wouldn't want to see a world
without you in it.

DANI looks touched and puts her hand on her heart.

DANI

Awww, that's one of the
nicest things I've heard
in a long time.

CARTER leans in and brushes some hair back from DANI'S
cheek.

CARTER

Well you should hear more
of . . .

CARTER'S phone rings.

CARTER

Drat!

I have to get this.
Vital time of day for investments.

DANI leans back, blushing and a bit flustered, waving her hand to say "go on."

DANI
Oh, uh, that's fine, of course.
I totally get it.

DANI stands up and trips over her own feet, laughing at herself and shaking her head.

DANI
I should check in with
AARON anyway.
See you later!

DANI starts walking up the stairs looking happy until she hears this, with each word clear as she walks slowly, but the last sentence fading as she gets higher on the staircase:

CARTER
Hmmm. Yes, I agree,
it's risky. But you
know that's what we do.
Go for it, Thomas.

DANI looks really upset as she quickly walks up the rest of the stairs.

Act 4 - Scene 3

CUT TO LODGE, (INT), NOOK or END OF HALLWAY, DAYTIME

DANI
AARON - Voice or Voice and Facetime

MAKEUP: DANI'S face is still red a little bit.

DANI walks into the Nook or Hallway area as she pulls her phone out of her pocket, then calls AARON as she leans against a wall or sits in a chair.

AARON answers.

AARON
DANI!
How's your time at the . . .

DANI
Don't ask!
I can't believe I . . .

AARON looks more closely at his phone as he says:

AARON
Wait a minute.
Tell me what happened to
your face.

DANI waves a hand in the air as if swatting a fly.

DANI
Oh, *this* is nothing.
I had a run-in with a
snowball and it won.
What's really bugging me is
that I started falling for a
guy that seems an awful lot
like my dad!

AARON leans back in his desk chair, shaking his head.

AARON
Explain please.

DANI
Well, he's taking risks
with money!

AARON sits back and chuckles.

AARON
Isn't that the business
he's in?

DANI
Exactly my point.
Too scary!
Now, the reason I called
is to see if you have
been able to keep up,

or if I should come help
you.

AARON laughs.

AARON
And escape your fate?
No way, hon.
I'm doing just fine,
as you well know, and
you need to prove to Stephanie
that you have totally prepared
me for anything, right?

DANI pulls away from the wall or stands up and sighs.

DANI
Okay, okay!
I'll be here until Christmas,
as planned.
And you better tell me if
you need my help!

AARON
Of course I will . . .

AARON presses end as he says quietly, smiling.

AARON
. . . not!

DANI talking to herself as she walks back to her room:

DANI
I am so stupid!
But I really, really like him!

Act 4 - Scene 4

CUT TO LODGE, (INT), DANI/JADA'S GUEST ROOM, DAYTIME

DANIELLE
JADA

DANIELLE walks in the door with a huff, closes it not too gently, and wakes up JADA, who is napping on top of the bed with a throw over her, she sits up as she speaks.

JADA
Hey, where's the fire?

DANIELLE
In my brain!
Or my heart!
I don't know!

JADA motions for DANI to come closer.

JADA
Aw, sister, come over here
You need a hug first off.

DANI walks over to JADA and sits on the edge of the bed, hugging her.

DANIELLE
Thank you, JADA.
You always know what
to do.

JADA
Okay, now spill.

DANI tears up a bit.

DANI
How could I fall for someone
like Dad?

JADA smiles, gets up, and goes to sit in a chair, smiling to herself, her back to DANI as she talks.

JADA
Oh, you mean CARTER?

DANI
How can you sound so
happy about it?

JADA
Uh, because he's cute,

sweet, and what's the problem?

He's *not* Dad. He's too smart for that. And don't get me wrong, Dad is smart, too.

Just not the same way someone needs to be when risking money on investments.

DANI, still sitting on the bed, is twirling her hair with her finger.

DANI

Hmmm. I guess I can see that.

I want to see that.

JADA

Give him a chance, DANI. Dad knew technology, not investing. And he didn't have the kind of money CARTER and LIAM must have.

CARTER also has a partner, his brother LIAM, remember? I'm sure they keep each other in check.

DANI looks doubtful.

DANI

Hmmmmmm.

That may be true, but I still have to establish my own strong financial foundation. The last thing I want is to get blindsided like Mom did.

JADA looks sympathetic, but a bit clueless.

DANI

You weren't old enough to remember, but Mom was a wreck for a long time. I'm just so glad Jason came along when he did. Those three jobs she was working just about killed her!

DANI grabs a pillow and hugs it.

JADA presses her lips together.

JADA
I'm sorry, DANI.
I guess I never realized
how bad it was.

DANI
It's okay, peanut.
We all made it and we're
strong women, right?

JADA
Yeah, but strong women
need love too.

DANI and JADA both sigh deeply in sync, then laugh.

Act 4 - Scene 5

CUT TO LODGE, (INT), SIMONE'S GUEST ROOM, DAYTIME

SIMONE
DANIELLE
JADA

PROPS: 3 Yoga mats

SET DESIGN: Space needed for yoga for three, so maybe
furniture can be moved as needed.

YOGA POSES to learn- Lord of the Fishes and Yoga-twist-
laying-down

DANI, JADA and SIMONE are on yoga mats (in that order),
sitting side by side in yoga pose - Lord of the Fishes -
which twists their heads over their shoulders, so camera
can catch them from the back, too, in a nice shot, if
wanted. If pose is too hard for the older actress, use
simpler version or other pose.

DANI
Oh, this is so relaxing,

GRAND MERE.

JADA looks done-in.

JADA
I don't know how you
do it, GRAND MERE.

SIMONE
At my age, you have to stay flexible.
Well, at *any* age!
You can enjoy life better that way, *non*?
Okay, now Yoga-twist-
laying-down to the right.

EVERYONE lays down and twists to the right with right leg
bent over body, shifting lower body to the left.

DANI
And you do this every day?

SIMONE
Yes, *mon ami'*
Every day it should be!
And not just for your
body.

DANI
What do you mean?

SIMONE
You need to focus on
relaxing your mind, and
your heart, too!

DANI
How?

SIMONE
That is up to you.

JADA
Chocolate does it for me!

DANI and SIMONE laugh as they sit up just relaxing, and
JADA does too.

DANI
Hmmm.

SIMONE
Okay, this might help:
What do you love to do *the most*?

DANI
That's easy.
Art! Any kind of art.
Especially for Christmas!
Even decorating.

SIMONE raises her eyebrows knowingly as she says:

SIMONE
Well?

DANI smiles, nodding her head as she draws out the word
"Ah."

DANI
Aaaah. I get it!

JADA starts rolling up her mat.

JADA
I'm heading for *my* happy
place right now.

SIMONE and DANI together, grinning:
Chocolate!

EVERYONE giggles or chuckles.

Act 5 - Scene 1

CUT TO LODGE, (INT), CRAFT ROOM (OR DINING RM), NIGHT

DANIELLE
JADA
CARTER
LIAM
AIDEN
MIA
SARAH

JASON
SIMONE
CLAUDIA
TREY

SET DECOR **AND** PROPS: Tables set up with plastic covers and ornament parts and pieces, plus paint and glitter. Things like pine cones and small, flat, stiff-board (wood look) pieces work, as well as same things from art-craft scene at community center set.

MIA and AIDEN race in the door and find a seat as CLAUDIA and TREY are doing some last minute arranging of parts and pieces. MIA and AIDEN sit next to each other and start looking through items, picking some up as they speak.

MIA
I hope Ms. Nadeau comes
to help us too.
She's so good at art!

CARTER and LIAM walk in at "But I like" and overhear AIDEN.

DANI and JADA come in at "Carter's style" with SIMONE, JASON, and SARAH following a two-three seconds later.

AIDEN
Yeah, me too.
But I like CARTER'S style best.

CARTER
Well, that's nice to . . .

JADA
Uh, oh.

DANI elbows JADA gently.

DANI
Hey, I'm not competitive.

JADA snorts.

DANI
Well, not *that* much.

CLAUDIA and TREY step back as DANI sits next to SIMONE and JADA on the other side. CARTER is across from DANI and everyone else fits in around them—all as they exclaim over the pretty ornament “ingredients.” (improv).

DANI
Oooh, look at this little board.
I’d love to paint something on it.

CLAUDIA
That’s the idea!
We also have glue to stick
the hangy thing on it.

TREY
Is that the technical term,
love?

EVERYONE laughs and CLAUDIA gives TREY a small playful shove, but smiling.

CLAUDIA
Hey, I get a pass.
You know English is
not my first language.

AIDEN and MIA have started on their ornaments. JADA and DANI pick up some pieces, as do CARTER, LIAM, SARAH, SIMONE, and JASON.

TREY kisses CLAUDIA on the cheek.

TREY
Of course I do.

CLAUDIA
And, dear husband, do
you even know what it’s called?

TREY kind of ducks his head and chuckles.

TREY
Oops.

EVERYONE laughs.

TREY

All teasing aside folks,
 we are making these ornaments
 to include in our Christmas-cookie
 gift baskets for the people
 gathering at the community center
 who want to accept our gifts of love.

CARTER

It's so great to know there
 are people who aren't ashamed
 to accept a gift when they
 truly need it. . . .
 I know we had to at
 one time, and I really appreciated
 all the love that went into
 those special treasures.

DANI looks at CARTER in a new way, learning something new
 about him in her expression, like wonder.

DANI

Huh. We went through the same
 thing, didn't we Mom?

SARAH

Yes, we did, sweetheart.
 That first
 Christmas after we left
 Crystal Falls was really *hard*.

JASON puts his arm around SARAH and looks at her with
 compassion.

JASON

I so wish I could
 have been there for you then,
 SARAH, and you girls too.

SARAH turns to JASON, holding up whatever she was working
 on to keep it safe.

SARAH

But here's the thing, JASE,
 I learned how amazing the help
 from total strangers can feel.
 Like angels surrounded us!
 They didn't even know us.

I mean, we could have just been
passing through and those people would
still have helped us.

JADA
I never thought of it that way.
And now, we're being angels
to someone else!

DANI grins and hugs JADA.

DANI
You're *always* an angel, JADA.

EVERYONE laughs.

CUT TO:

EVERYONE is mostly done with their ornaments. SIMONE'S is finished.

SIMONE holds up her ornament, something (pine cone or other natural beauty?) with sparkles and a red bow on it.

SIMONE
What do you think of this?

DANI
It's lovely, GRAND MERE.
I almost want to keep it!

JADA
Yeah, *that's* the hard part.

LIAM looks at JADA with a cheeky grin.

LIAM
Well, you can keep *me*, JADA!

JADA
Ha ha!

LIAM clutches his chest.

LIAM
You wound me, woman!

JADA giggles, same time as CARTER turns to LIAM and pats his shoulder.

CARTER
You'll get over it, bro.

CARTER turns to DANI

CARTER
DANI, let me see yours.

DANI shows CARTER her ornament.

DANI
Oh, it's just a little
painting.

CARTER takes it and looks at it more closely. It's a Santa with a heart in it. CARTER looks misty-eyed, then smiles.

CARTER
This is the best compliment
you could ever give me.

DANI smiles.

LIAM
And I think she even did
it better than you could.

CARTER smirks at LIAM. AIDEN shakes his head.

AIDEN
Don't listen to him, man.

Act 5 - Scene 2

CUT TO LODGE, (EXT), DAYTIME

DANIELLE
JADA
CARTER
LIAM

PROPS: Will need four mountain bicycles with snow tires and helmets.

STOCK FOOTAGE or B-roll: Four Mountain-Bikers riding on snowy road, BUT, please show wardrobe in advance so they can match the colors and outfits, if not the actual actors/film.

WARDROBE: Snow-biking outfits to match footage (see above).

In the front of the lodge, presumably leading to the outer road: DANI is getting on her bike. CARTER brings his next to DANI'S and gets on his as they speak:

DANI
This was a great idea!

CARTER
Well, you can thank Simone.

DANI
Really?

JADA and LIAM look at each other and grin mischievously as they mount their own bikes and pull up behind DANI and CARTER. DANI looks a bit befuddled.

DANI
Huh. I thought Claudia
came up with this idea.
Anyway . . . I love it!

EVERYONE takes off on their bikes.
STOCK FOOTAGE or B-ROLL of four cyclists on snow-covered road.

Act 5 - Scene 3

CUT TO PARKSIDE AREA WITH FIRE RING (EXT), DAYTIME

DANIELLE
JADA
CARTER
LIAM

PROPMASTER: Fire pit or ring or whatever you can find!
 Small kindling and larger branches needed for a small fire
 that will last for about ½ to 1 hour.
 Smallish marshmallows with red stripes (however you can get
 them to stay stripes! - cornstarch or whatever is edible)

DANI and CARTER are sitting by fire ring, next to each
 other, as fire gets going, rubbing their hands to get them
 warm. JADA and LIAM are putting larger branches on top of
 kindling. DANI calls to them.

CARTER rubs his left leg, like it's sore.

DANI
 You were fierce on the road!
 Are you okay, CARTER?

CARTER waves a hand as if to blow off any concern.

CARTER
 Oh yeah, just an old
 injury that likes to
 remind me not to be
 an egomaniac!

DANI looks over at LIAM and then JADA as they forage for
 wood and kindling, smiling.

DANI
 I'm sure glad you two
 were in camping clubs.

CARTER grabs his backpack and opens it as he speaks.
 JADA and LIAM are bringing in small sticks and larger ones.

CARTER
 That makes two of us.
 And . . . I've got something
 that'll help warm us,
 fast for now.

CARTER pulls out a large thermos and four cups from his
 back pack and ceremoniously holds the thermos up, then
 opens the lid.

JADA starts arranging kindling as LIAM puts the larger sticks/branches next to the fire pit.

JADA
Ooh, is that chocolate I smell?

CARTER
That's just the beginning.

LIAM and JADA are now warming their hands on the fire.

LIAM
Wait till you see the food-
art this guy does.

CARTER pulls out a plastic bag with red-striped marshmallows.

CARTER
I present to you, my own artistic
food invention:
Candy-cane marshmallows!

DANI
Oooh, peppermint marshmallows!
And a man who can cook.
My favorite kind of artistic
excellence!

CARTER pours cups of cocoa and gives DANI the marshmallows
She pops one in her mouth, then drops some in her cocoa.
JADA grabs bag from DANI, laughing.

JADA
Hey, you have to share,
DANI!

JADA puts a marshmallow in her mouth as DANI looks ecstatic taking a sip.

LIAM
Oh, I remember someone
not always sharing.

CARTER
Ha! That would be you, bro.

DANI

This is soooo good.

JADA sips hers.

JADA

Mint, chocolate, and marshmallows!
Does life get any better?
You can make us
cocoa anytime, CARTER.

LIAM raises his eyebrows playfully, wiggling a little.
He and CARTER are also drinking their hot chocolate by now.

LIAM

Oh, I'm sure he will.

DANI looks a little confused as JADA laughs and nudges
LIAM. CARTER gives them a look like "stop it!"

DANI

Okay, what am I missing here?

CARTER

Nothing at all, just my
nutty brother trying to predict
my future.

DANI smiles.

DANI

Oh. . . well, in that case,
I'm totally fine with it if
it involves this nectar of the gods!

CARTER smiles and sits up straighter, puffing his chest out
a bit in confidence.

Act 5 – Scene 6

CUT TO LODGE, (INT), SIMONE'S GUEST ROOM, MORNING

DANIELLE

SIMONE

DANI and SIMONE are on yoga mats on their backs, stretching one leg at a time – bending and holding leg just below the knee. This is called “Half-wind Relieving” pose (yes, really! ha ha!)

SIMONE

What is bothering you, *mon ami*?

DANI

Why do you think something’s
bothering me?

SIMONE

You are too much like me,
DANIELLE SIMONE!
I know you like I know myself.
And I know it’s about a man.
Now out with it.

DANI

Okay, okay. I really like
CARTER, but
I still don’t know if
I can trust a man who takes
risks with money.

SIMONE

I know.
It’s hard for you.
Switch legs.

SIMONE and DANI switch legs. SIMONE takes a deep breath, sighing.

SIMONE

You must forgive my son,
your father. Girard made
one bad mistake, but who
knew it would cause such
heartache for your family?

DANI

Losing our house was only
part of it. We lost our dad!
I don’t know if I can ever forgive
him for abandoning us when he

lost all that money.

SIMONE

I know, *Cheri*.

But your *papa'* was so ashamed.

He didn't feel worthy to
be your dad.

He has changed so much.

DANI looks conflicted.

SIMONE

And you know he wants to talk
to you, don't you?

DANIELLE

Yes, I do, but I don't know
if I can. I'm not ready.

SIMONE and DANI put their other leg down as she says this:

SIMONE

Corpse position.

DANI

Oh, I love this one!

SIMONE laughs.

SIMONE

Of course you do!

Now, another subject.

What are you going to do about
CARTER?

DANI

I don't know, GRAND MERE.

Do you have any advice?

SIMONE sits up, relaxed, leaning on her hands behind her,
as DANI sits up as well, sitting with legs folded.

SIMONE

The only advice I can give
anyone is to use God's greatest
gift . . . inner guidance.
When I follow it, I am always

happy with the results.
When I don't, . . .

SIMONE laughs.

. . .well, it doesn't work out so nice for me!

DANI
How am I supposed to know
if it's really my inner guidance?
I mean, is it from God or my
mind?

SIMONE
A very important question!
Where do you feel it in your
body when everything
is good and right?

DANI
Like when I'm doing my art?

SIMONE raises her eyebrows as she bends her head to the
side, saying:

SIMONE
Exactly!

DANI
It feels like love!
It *is* love, I think!

DANI touches her chest as she says "here,
slowly, sincerely:

DANI
Because I feel it here . . .
in my heart.

SIMONE
My sweet DANIELLE, you
are *magnifique*!
So much smarter than I was
at your age!
What a gift to know yourself
so well.

DANI laughs as SIMONE stands, starts to roll up her mat, and DANI follows, all while she's speaking.

DANI
 I *wish* I knew myself that well!
 Anyway, I love the gifts I can't
 see, like inner guidance
 and more. Those are the best!

SIMONE
 Yes, *mon ami*, like our love
 for each other, yes?

DANI
 Oh, yes!

DANI smiles big and gives SIMONE a long hug as she says:

DANI
 You're my angel, GRAND MERE.

SIMONE stands back and looks DANI in the eye.

SIMONE
 Oh, DANIELLE, if you only knew
 me when I was young.
 I was not such an angel then!

DANI laughs.

Act 6 - Scene 1

CUT TO LODGE (INT), CRAFT ROOM, DAYTIME

DANI
 CARTER
 AIDEN
 MIA
 CLAUDIA

DANI (facing away from the door), AIDEN, and MIA are sitting at a table, all painting more mini-"Christmas-paining" ornaments.

AIDEN

This is so much fun!

MIA

Totally.

Hashtag: Coolest Art Ever.

I think my Aunt Suki
would love these.

I'm going to try to get
her to come to the Christmas
Eve party tomorrow.

DANI

That would be great!

I'd like to meet her.

MIA and AIDEN look at each other and grin mischievously.

Just then, CARTER walks into the room, but very quietly,
putting his index finger to his lips to warn AIDEN and MIA
to stay quiet.

Just as DANI dips her brush in a paint jar, CARTER taps her
on the shoulder, presumably trying to startle her, and it
does! She turns so quickly, brush in hand on the side she
turns to him, and splashes paint on his shirt.

DANI sucks in a breath and looks horrified at what she's
done. Then she laughs.

DANI

Oh, CARTER, I'm sorry about
your shirt,
but that was so not my fault.
Don't you know better than
to sneak up on a klutz!?

CARTER laughs this out as he looks down at his shirt.

CARTER

Now I do!

MIA comes over with a rag and hands it to DANI, who begins
to clean CARTER'S shirt.

CARTER

It's okay, DANI.

I need some new shirts anyway.

AIDEN takes on a parental voice:

AIDEN

What are we going to do with
you kids? We can't leave you alone
for two seconds without you
making a mess!

EVERYONE chuckles.

DANI looks up into CARTER'S eyes, searching them, then
blushes and lowers her head to her task again.

CLAUDIA pokes her head in the door as she says:

CLAUDIA

Hey, friends, I need a
favor. Can someone get me
some Holly and greenery outside?
SIMONE and I are making wreaths
to take to the Community Center tonight.

DANI looks like she wants to escape, speaking quickly,
looking at AIDEN and MIA as she says, grinning, "but I
may...":

DANI

Yes! I'll do it,
but I may need some help.

AIDEN and MIA start cleaning up their table as CARTER
speaks, holding his shirt out as he says "I just have
to...":

CARTER

That sounds like fun.
I want to help, too!
I just have to change this shirt.

DANI turns away from CARTER and bites her lip as he heads
out the door.

DANI

I'll finish cleaning this up, kids.

You go ahead
and I'll see you out back.

MIA
Thanks, MS. NADEAU!

Act 6 - Scene 2

CUT TO LODGE, (EXT), AREA with PINE TREES, DAYTIME

AIDEN
MIA
DANI
CARTER

AIDEN and MIA are making snow angels as DANI walks up to them, and CARTER is close behind.

DANI giggles like a kid, grinning, and falling on the snow to make her own snow angel.

DANI
Snow-angel art!

CARTER draws a halo in the snow over DANI'S head.

CARTER
You are now an official snow angel!

DANI grins and looks happily at CARTER.

Act 6 - Scene 3

CUT TO LODGE (INT), LOBBY, DAYTIME

AIDEN
MIA
DANI
CARTER
CLAUDIA
TREY
TRISHA
JONATHAN

SUKI

SET DESIGN- Christmas Tree with few decorations still.

PROPS: Ornaments in a nice-looking box, presumably hand-made by guests that week, holly, evergreen branches. Sparkly, narrow material, like ribbon or other.

CLAUDIA, TREY, and MIA'S and AIDEN'S parents are decorating the tree, chatting about where things should go and how pretty they are, or unique (improv).

AIDEN, MIA, DANI, and CARTER walk in (from either the back or front), AIDEN and CARTER with arms full of evergreen boughs and/or holly.

TREY
Hey, come join us!

CLAUDIA looks at TREY at "Is that the right word...."

CLAUDIA
But first, let me show your parents
where we'll need these things, and *merci*
for finding such beautiful greenery!
SIMONE and I have recruited
them! Is that the right word
mon ami?

TREY and MIA'S and AIDEN'S parents step over to take the holly and evergreen from AIDEN and CARTER, then follow CLAUDIA.

CLAUDIA turns back toward the tree, where MIA, and DANI are already looking through ornaments in a box.

CLAUDIA
Have fun decorating!
When you're done, you can help
with the wreaths if you want.

CUT to MONTAGE of Christmas-tree decorating:

AIDEN takes ornaments from MIA to place as she points out some good locations on the tree.

The Art of Christmas Love, copyright 2023, Debbie Johnson

CARTER puts ornaments up high, while DANI puts them a bit lower, then looks up at CARTER, smiling as she sees how focused he is.

DANI tries hanging a heavy ornament on the end of a bough, which drops it. She laughs.

CARTER smiles at her and gently takes it from her, placing it closer to the inside of the tree so it stays.

DANI pulls some sparkly material, like ribbon or other out of another box.

CARTER takes it from her and wraps it around her.

AIDEN and MIA look at each other and laugh as they see the look on CARTER'S face.

IMPROV with lights by everyone, trying to get them on the tree.

AIDEN lights the tree and EVERYONE claps.

CUT TO POST-MONTAGE:

AIDEN and MIA are looking out the window at a massive snow storm. They look at each other and grin.

MIA
Maybe we'll get to stay
here longer.

AIDEN
That would be so cool.

CUT TO: DANI and CARTER are reposition some ornaments and swag, etc. DANI and CARTER are both smiling, happy.

LIAM walks in and up to CARTER, looking upset. CARTER looks at LIAM and raises his eyebrows in question, but LIAM is silent, still looking upset.

CARTER
What is it, bro?

LIAM

You know that utilities
investment we though was so
waterproof?

CARTER nudges LIAM and points to a corner couch or chairs.

DANI hears LIAM and looks ready to cry, and throws down her
swag.

MIA is walking by, and sees DANI is upset, looking
concerned.

MIA
Are you okay, Ms. Nadeau?

DANI wipes her eye, then smiles brightly at MIA.

DANI
Oh, honey, I'm fine.
It's just some renegade
swag dust in my
eye or something.

MIA looks unconvinced, but lets it go.

MIA
Okay, well I'll see you at
dinner.

AIDEN catches up with MIA as they walk toward the dining
room.

CARTER and LIAM are in the background, sitting down and
leaning in toward each other, talking softly.

CARTER
What happened, LIAM?
I mean, if you checked it out yet.

LIAM runs a hand through his hair nervously, then takes a
deep breath.

LIAM
Uh, yeah, I did.
Turns out there were some
major, *humungous*
infrastructure updates needed.

The company couldn't afford them
and they went bust!
Who knew? I mean, how do we
check these things in advance?

CARTER puts his hand on LIAM'S shoulder comforting him up
to "And that is why..."

CARTER
Well, as good as you are
at research, and you are my
hero, there, little bro.,
you can't *possibly* find
out *everything*.
And that is why we have our
backups—solid investments and savings.
We are still fine!
No worries.

LIAM lets out a breath of relief.

LIAM
Thanks for that, big bro., but
I still feel badly.
Losing money just is *not* at
all fun.

CARTER laughs.

CARTER
Well, I agree, even a few
dollars at a casino.
However, you *do* know it's what
we signed up for with this
risky business, right?

LIAM smirks at himself and shakes his head.

LIAM
Yeah, I do.
But that doesn't mean I
have to *like* it, do I?

CARTER laughs.

CARTER
Hey, can I use that line

on *you* someday?

LIAM just rolls his eyes.

CARTER

And you *do* know the most
important investment for me, don't you?

LIAM

Oh, yeah, your Art From the Heart
foundation, right?

CARTER stands up and LIAM does next.

CARTER

Our future generation needs
to have a way to open their
hearts in the times to come.
They will do great things when
they see with their hearts.

CARTER and LIAM start walking toward the dining room and
LIAM pats CARTER on the back as he says, "but a good one.'

LIAM

You're such a dreamer, CARTER,
but a good one.

Act 6 - Scene 4

CUT TO LODGE (INT) DINING ROOM, DUSK or NIGHT

DANI

CARTER

LIAM

JADA

SIMONE

SARAH

JASON

AARON

DYLAN

TREY

CLAUDIA

TERRA

AIDEN

MIA

AIDEN'S MOM, TRICIA

MIA'S PARENTS

VINCE - nice-looking, friendly and kind.

EVERYONE is seated at tables, like in first dinner scene, with maybe one or two changes. Plates are being picked up by TERRA and TREY as most people are finished.

CLAUDIA walks in with a phone in her hand.

CLAUDIA

Can I have your attention please?

EVERYONE looks up, some wiping their faces with napkins or putting forks down.

CLAUDIA

The good news is the snow
has stopped, so we may be
able to make it to the community
center to deliver our baskets
and wreaths.

MIA

Yay!

EVERYONE claps and laughs.

JASON

What's the bad news?

CLAUDIA

Well, it's only bad if you
don't like to cook!

SUKI raises her hands.

AKI

That would be me.

CLAUDIA

Oh, *well then*, you can do dishes,
right?

SUKI groans. EVERYONE laughs.

CLAUDIA

You see, the snow storm has
blocked the road.

SARAH
Then how will we . . .

CLAUDIA raises a hand to stop her, grinning.

CLAUDIA
By sleigh ride!

SARAH
Oh, that's wonderful!
But what do we need to cook for?

CLAUDIA
Many volunteers won't
have ski-mobiles or
sleighs, like our neighbor
Vince, who's taking us in two loads.
So, the center needs
replacement cooks to prepare most
of tomorrow's feast.
We're hoping, the
roads are cleared by then.

CARTER raises his hand.

CARTER
I'm in!

EVERYONE else chimes in (improv) - like, 'Me too!", "Count
me in," etc., almost at once.

VINCE walks in, dressed for snow and cold, but smiling.

VINCE
Prancer, Dancer, and I are
ready whenever your first
crew is!

TRICIA looks at VINCE like he's familiar, and he looks at
her and smiles. She smiles back. (Note to Producer: This
and tree-lighting scene with them is a setup for my next
screenplay - Valentine theme at the lodge).

Act 6 - Scene 5

CUT TO ROAD, (EXT), LARGE SLEIGH, NIGHT or DUSK

DANI
CARTER
SIMONE
CLAUDIA
AIDEN
MIA
VINCE
TEAM OF HORSES - PRANCER and DANCER

CLAUDIA is sitting up front with VINCE.
DANI and CARTER are sitting together in the sleigh, back seat. CARTER grabs a blanket nearby and puts it over DANI'S legs. DANI puts part of blanket over CARTER'S lap as she says:

DANI
I can share!

CARTER
Thanks, DANI.
You're always so thoughtful.

DANI looks mischievous.

DANI
How do you know?
I *might* have an evil twin in me.

CARTER laughs this out:

CARTER
No way. . . .

Act 6 - Scene 6

CUT TO FLASHBACK MIDDLE SCHOOL, (INT), OPEN-AREA OR HALLWAY, DAYTIME

DIRECTOR: This does not have to be re-shot, just a different view of it maybe? Your choice.

YOUNG CARTER
 YOUNG DYLAN
 YOUNG DANIELLE
 DANIELLE'S FRIENDS
 MIDDLE-SCHOOL-STUDENT EXTRAS

DANIELLE is talking with her friends, all dressed in cheer or dance uniforms. They call "Hi" and "Hey" to a few friends, waving and smiling.

YOUNG DYLAN and YOUNG CARTER, with hair in his face, looks at DANI as he limps by a few feet away from her group with YOUNG DYLAN. The other girls ignore them, but DANI smiles at them gently, knowingly.

Act 6 - Scene 7

CUT BACK TO ROAD, (EXT), LARGE SLEIGH, NIGHT or DUSK

DANI
 CARTER
 SIMONE
 CLAUDIA
 AIDEN
 MIA
 VINCE

SET SETUP - SAME

CARTER
 I've seen how you are with
 everyone, DANI.
 You have a beautiful, golden heart.

DANI looks at CARTER with misty eyes and a wobbly smile.

DANI
 That's about the *sweetest*
 thing anyone's ever said to me!

Act 7 - Scene 1

CUT TO CRYSTAL FALLS COMMUNITY CENTER, (INT), COMMUNITY ROOM, NIGHT

The Art of Christmas Love, copyright 2023, Debbie Johnson

SET DESIGN and PROPS: Christmas decorations, tree, tables with festive tablecloths (also need gold or other plastic forks/knives), side tables to hold gift baskets everyone brings. Ornaments the Lodge people made are in their gift baskets filled with cookies and small gifts, some food/snacks and/or candy.

DANI
CARTER
SIMONE
CLAUDIA
TREY
DYLAN
AARON

EXTRAS -TWO in community room.

TWO EXTRAS are arranging napkins and "gold" or other plastic forks on tables.

TREY is arranging the donated Christmas baskets on one table, while CARTER and DANI greet AARON and DYLAN.

SIMONE and CLAUDIA go into the kitchen as DANI walks up to AARON and CARTER to DYLAN. They are far enough apart to speak softly without the others hearing.

DYLAN
You look healthy and happy, amigo.

CUT TO DANI and AARON

DANI gives AARON a hug, and he pulls away to look more closely at her, bending his head to the side and smiling.

AARON
Oh, you look fabulous, honey.
I do believe you've been bitten.

DANI looks confused, kind of stumbling back as she tried to step away, obviously knowing the answer to this and scared:

DANI
By what?

In the background, TREY goes into the kitchen.

The Art of Christmas Love, copyright 2023, Debbie Johnson

CUT TO CARTER and DYLAN. CARTER crosses his arms (protective mode) as he says:

CARTER
I'm doing well.
Having fun at the lodge.

DYLAN lifts his head, raising his eyebrows.

DYLAN
Oh, it's more than that!

CUT TO DANI and AARON

DANI
AARON, you know I can't be
in a relationship yet!

AARON looks at DANI and shakes his head. DANI twirls her hair with her finger.

DANI
Well, not until my future
is secure.

AARON
DANI, what does security
really mean to you?

CUT TO CARTER and DYLAN

CARTER
Every time we get close,
she pulls away.

DYLAN
There's obviously some history . . .

CUT TO DANI and AARON

DANI
You know those financial
goals are important to me.

AARON

And with the rate of inflation,
how long will that take?

DANI looks up to the right, twisting her mouth as she's
thinking.

DANI

Hmm . . . Um . . .

CUT TO CARTER and DYLAN

CARTER

I don't know, buddy, I'm just
about to give up.

DYLAN

You know what you need to do,
don't you?

CUT TO CARTER and DYLAN

CARTER

Well, I kind of tried that.

CUT TO DANI and AARON

AARON

Next question:
If one horse can pull five hundred
pounds in a sleigh,
how many can two pull?

DANI

Oh, no you don't!
You aren't going to give me
that "We can work better
together" lecture.
See how that worked for my mom?

AARON

Yes, but did your dad even
ask your Mom if she was
on board with . . .

CUT TO CARTER and DYLAN

CARTER
I did all I could.
I've really tried.

DYLAN bends his head to the side, raising his eyebrows as is to say, "this is obvious."

DYLAN
Try harder.

CLAUDIA sticks her head out of the kitchen door. She smiles as she says this, to lighten it up, laughing a bit at first words.

CLAUDIA
VINCE didn't get out in
the cold for you to stand
around gabbing.
Get in here and help!

DANI, CARTER, DYLAN, and AARON go toward the kitchen as they talk.

CARTER
Uh oh, I guess we might
get fired if we don't
get cooking.

EVERYONE looks at each other and giggles.

Act 7 - Scene 2

CUT TO COMMUNITY CENTER, (INT), INDUSTRIAL KITCHEN, NIGHT

DANI
CARTER
SIMONE
CLAUDIA
TREY
DYLAN
AARON

EVE- Kitchen manager. Pretty, about CARTER'S age, flirty.
EXTRAS - TWO volunteers in kitchen.

CLAUDIA are working at the stove, stirring pots of something, putting in spices or chopped veggies.

EVE looks happy, welcoming everyone as they file past her, and putting her hand on CARTER'S arm as she says:

EVE
CARTER, I'm so glad you
could make it.
It's always a pleasure
to work with you.

DANI looks over at EVE and CARTER, pulling her brows together, then looking away as AARON grabs her arm and pulls her over to a work table.

EVE walks over to another work table next to where CARTER is standing, who is obviously trying to get some distance from her, standing next to DYLAN. EVE smiles at everyone, pointing first to DANI'S table at "The table over there..." line.

EVE
Let's team up.
The table over here
can work on baking cookies.
The table over there will
decorate.

AARON smirks just to DANI, then looks to EVE.

AARON
Oh, honey, you've got
us all mixed up.
CARTER and DANI are the artists.
DYLAN and I are the bakers.

AARON pushes DANI so she kind of stumbles toward the other table, and DYLAN grabs EVE to bring her over to AARON'S table.

CUT TO Montage of cookie baking and decorating, especially DANI working on designs next to CARTER, hesitantly smiling up at him, as he smiles back and she flubs a stroke of icing on a cookie.

Act 7 - Scene 3

CUT TO COMMUNITY CENTER, (INT), INDUSTRIAL KITCHEN, NIGHT

DANI
SIMONE
CLAUDIA
SARAH
JASON
TRISHA
SUKI
JONATHAN

SIMONE and DANI are working together, talking quietly, packing up the decorated cookies.

CLAUDIA, SARAH, and JASON are cleaning up and putting dishes in the sink as SUKI and TRISHA wash and JONATHAN dries, improv talking softly.

SIMONE
That AARON is really smart
to put you together with your
amour.

DANI
He's not my . . .
Oh, why do I even try . . .

SIMONE
My sweet DANI,
Christmas is about love, *non?*
No, Christmas *is* love!
Anyone can feel it.
They just have to open
their hearts.

SIMONE looks at DANI pointedly and firmly.
DANI looks hopeful.

DANI
Do you really think there's
a chance that I can have a better
life than my mom?

SIMONE takes DANI by the shoulders and looks her in the eye.

SIMONE
DANIELLE SIMONE NADEU,

SIMONE puts up one finger as she says "un."

SIMONE
Un, you have my middle name,
but more, you have my lioness heart!

SIMONE touches her own heart.

SIMONE
That means you can do whatever
you set your heart to.
Not your mind, your heart.
Go and be an artist if you want to.
You will have your whole
family's support.

Deaux, Sarah has learned to be
strong, too, by her experience.
And, *trois*, if you look around you,
there are many wonderful marriages
that work because everyone forgives.

DANIELLE sucks in a breath.

DANI
Oh! That's something I never
thought about.
Thank you, Grand Mere!

DANI gives SIMONE a hug and kisses her on the cheek.

TREY walks into the kitchen.

TREY
Let's get to the tree lighting
before the angels sing!

DANI
Huh?

TREY says this as he's walking out the door.

TREY
That's how good they are!

Act 7 - Scene 4

CUT TO TOWN SQUARE or CENTER, (EXT), NIGHT

DANI
CARTER
LIAM
JADA
SIMONE
SARAH
JASON
AARON
DYLAN
TREY
CLAUDIA
AIDEN
MIA
AARON
DYLAN
TRISHA
JONATHAN
SUKI
EVE
VINCE
CHOIR of Four or Five Singers
TOWN EXTRAS

SET DESIGN - Large Christmas tree with small stage nearby and "button" to light the tree, decorated as you wish. As DANI and SIMONE leave the community center, we hear "angelic" singing: "Angels We Have Heard on High."

CAMERA pans toward the town square or center, showing the singers near the tree. VINCE and TRISHA are standing together, talking happily.

CARTER comes back to walk with DANI and SIMONE, taking each of their hands to put through his elbow, as in old-fashioned gentleman style.

CARTER

I love this song!
It's really special to me.

DANI looks at CARTER, surprised.

DANI
Me, too.
Why is it special to you?

SIMONE grins privately and lets go of CARTER'S arm to walk toward SARAH and JASON. He doesn't even notice as he looks to DANI. DANI and CARTER face each other.

CARTER
Because I so badly needed
an angel when I was young.
So I asked for one in my prayers,
and I got one!

CARTER smiles as DANI looks in wonderment.

DANI
I can't believe it, CARTER!
I got one, too!
When we had to leave Crystal Falls
because of my Dad, I was so
heartbroken.
But the angel in my dreams
comforted me and told me that
everything would be okay,
and it has been!

DANI sucks in a breath.

DANI
Oh, my goodness - It *has* been okay!!
We've survived and thrived.
How did I miss that all these years?

CARTER puts his arm around DANI'S shoulder and pulls her into a side hug, facing the tree.

CARTER
It's easy to miss the most obvious
things. Trust me, we *all* do it!
Oh, and speaking of obvious.

CARTER points to the tree. DANI laughs as
EVERYONE has just started shouting down the numbers
(director's call on how many)
MIA is lighting TREE with button push.
EVERYONE applauds.

DANI
Ooooh!
That's beautiful!

Act 7 - Scene 5

CUT TO LODGE (INT), DANI'S GUEST ROOM, NIGHT

DANI
JADA
STEPHANIE by phone or facetime

PROPS: One special "mini-painting" ornament on table.

DANI is in a chair near a table, looking at a 'mini-painting' ornament in her hand. She puts it down and picks up her phone or whatever taking a deep breath, looking strong and brave, then dialing.

STEPHANIE
What are you doing calling
me on Christmas Eve?

DANI
Merry Christmas, STEPHANIE.

STEPHANIE
Right, you too.
But again, what are you...?

DANI
Oh, I figured you'd be at
work and I wanted to save you
some time and effort.

STEPHANIE
Huh?

DANI takes a deep breath.

DANI

STEPHANIE, I've had a
great time working with you, . . .

STEPHANIE

Uh, oh.

DANI

. . . but I've discovered
that I have a talent and passion
for it that I can't ignore.
I have an opportunity to do
something I love and I want
to explore that.
I hope you are okay with
one month notice?

STEPHANIE

Of course!

You know you are always
welcome back, DANI, and I
respect your courage to follow
your dreams!

DANI looks a bit confused.

DANI

You do?

STEPHANIE

Of course I do.
It's why I am where I am!

DANI

Thank you so much for
understanding!
And again, Merry Christmas.

DANI hangs up, takes another deep breath, and calls her
bio-dad, GERARD.

GERARD

DANI! It's so good
to see you on your birthday.

DANI

You remember?

GERARD

Of course I do!
I just didn't always know
where to send your cards.

DANI looks wide eyed, like she just realized something.

DANI

Oh!

GERARD

I hope you know how
much I love you and am
so sorry for making such a big
mistake with our family's security.

DANI looks sympathetic.

DANI

I forgive you, DAD.
I didn't think I ever could,
but I've learned a lot this
Christmas about forgiveness, and that
I don't always see the whole
picture, unless I'm painting it,
of course!

GERARD

Thank you for that, *cheri*.
And do you still paint?

DANI glows and smiles big here:

DANI

Yes.

And I'm being *brave* and
I'm going to step forward into
my future as a painter!
And hope that my angels
are watching over me.

GERARD

Well, they *are*, *mon ami*,
because I have set up a trust
fund for you and JADA.

DANI sucks in a breath, with a huge smile.

DANI
No way!

GERARD
Oui, cheri. I have done
well now and have good income
to share with you girls, and of
course, for your mother if
she ever needs it.
I owe you all that much.

DANI brushes a tear from her eyes.

DANI
Thank you so much, Dad.
You have no idea how
much that means to me right now!

Act 7 - Scene 6

CUT TO LODGE (INT) PARTY ROOM, NIGHT

DANI
CARTER
LIAM
JADA
SIMONE
SARAH
JASON
AARON
DYLAN
TREY
CLAUDIA
AIDEN
MIA
AARON
DYLAN
AKI - MIA'S Aunt, very smart business woman, but also kind
and positive.
TRISHA
JONATHAN
SUKI
LODGE STAFF EXTRAS

SET DESIGN: Tables with finger food and Christmas cookies, plus a Bouche De Noel cake with two candles in it, one on each end. Another table has a few gifts on it. Christmas decor as you wish, but Christmas tree a must, with some of the "mini-paining" ornaments at about shoulder to eye level for most women.

MUSIC: Softer Christmas music as DANI walks in, but Christmas music to dance to after that.

LIAM and JADA, with DANI and CARTER following, walk into the party room. LIAM and JADA turn around to face DANI and CARTER as everyone yells:

EVERYONE
Surprise!

DANI looks at CARTER as JADA and LIAM push them forward (LIAM to CARTER).

DANI
What's going on?
Oh, AARON, it's so good
to see you and DYLAN here!

AARON
Do you think I would have
missed this surprise for your
Christmas-Eve birthday?

DYLAN
And did you know that CARTER
has the exact same birthday?

DANI looks back at CARTER, who nods a bit shyly, smiling.

ALL but characters below start to dance or mill about, getting food, and looking at the ornaments on the tree.

JASON and SARAH come over to hug DANI.

SARAH
Happy Birthday, Sweetheart.

JASON points to the table with gifts as he says "on the table."

JASON

I hope you know how much
we love you and want you
to have a great birthday this year.
I'm sorry we didn't always do it up.
There are presents on the table
there for you.

SARAH looks over at CARTER.

SARAH

And, CARTER, we remembered
you, too!
There are some surprises
there for you, too.

DANI

Thank you so much, Mom and Dad,

DANI says this louder.

DANI

and everyone,
for helping me to . . .

DANI looks over at CARTER as she says the first line, then
to JASON and SARAH as she says "understandably" - looking
sympathetic to them.

DANI

. . . well, us, to celebrate our
birthdays on Christmas Eve,
which, understandably,
usually doesn't happen for me!

CARTER

Me, either!
Thank you all!

CUT or PAN to MIA and AIDEN pointing out to AKI the "mini-
paining" ornaments, then SUKI picks one up in her hand to
hold it up to the light to see it better.

CUT TO MIA walking up to DANI with her Aunt AKI.

MIA

Happy Birthday, Ms. Nadeau!

DANI smiles warmly at MIA

DANI
Thank you, MIA!

MIA motions to her aunt.

MIA
This is my Aunt AKI.

DANI puts her hand out to AKI to shake.

DANI
I'm so happy to meet you, AKI.
MIA told me she was excited you
could come tonight.

AKI looks a bit mysterious, but smiling.

AKI
And did she tell you why?

DANI looks at MIA, smiling, but a bit confused.

DANI
Uh, no?

AKI
Well, she insisted I needed
to see your "mini-painting" ornaments.
And she was right!
I adore them!
I want to feature them in my
ornament sales and distribution.
Would you like to create some
designs for *all* the holidays for us?
We can easily get them printed.

DANI
Oh, thank you, JADA!
I would love that!

DANI gives MIA a side hug.

DANI

Thank you so much, MIA.
 You are so thoughtful.
 I think you can call me DANI
 now!

AKI laughs, and MIA hugs DANI back.

SIMONE is lighting the two candles on the *Buche de Noel*,
 one on each end.

CARTER
 Oh, it looks like they have
 a special cake for us.

DANI
 It's a *Buche de Noel*,
 a French Christmas cake.
 It means: Yule log,
 but tastes a whole lot better
 than a log!

CARTER
 Thank goodness.

SIMONE
 Come, you two, and make a wish,
 then blow out your candles!

DANI and CARTER come forward, as do (following) LIAM, JADA,
 SARAH, JASON, CLAUDIA, TREY, MIA and PARENTS, SUKI, AIDEN
 and PARENTS, AARON, and DYLAN.

DANI and CARTER look at each other as CARTER says:

CARTER
 You go first.

DANI takes CARTER'S arm and pulls him forward.

DANI
 Let's do this together,
 Birthday Boy!

DANI and CARTER bend and blow out their candles together,
 then knock their foreheads together as they look at each

other too soon upon trying to stand up (lean back up). They each rub their heads and laugh, as do others around them.

CUT TO DANI and CARTER putting down their cake plates as they both look at the dance floor, and CARTER puts his hand out to DANI, palm up.

CARTER

Do we *dare* try to
dance without injuring
each other?

DANI laughs.

DANI

I think you'll have to
just take your chances with me.

CARTER

Hey, I do that on a daily basis
with my work!

DANI presses her lips together, but then, looking also like she's trying to be brave.

DANI

Oh, that's right, you do,
don't you?
That must take guts.

CARTER laughs.

CARTER

If you only knew!
But it *works*.
My angels are watching over me.

CARTER pulls DANI closer, and they dance that way for 7-8 seconds.

CARTER

It's feeling warm in here,
want to get a breath of air?

DANI

Sounds perfect.

CARTER looks mischievous here, smiling.

CARTER
We should get our coats.

CUT TO: CARTER and DANI by coat tree with CARTER checking his pocket, then putting on DANI'S coat first.

Act 7 - Scene 7

CUT TO LODGE (EXT), PATIO or any outdoor setting near doorway.

DANI
CARTER

OUTDOOR SET DESIGN: Any Christmas decor plus twinkle lights.

DANI and CARTER are stepping outside.
DANI sees CARTER taking the card out of his pocket, looking curiously at him, obviously wondering about the card.

CARTER hands her the card, and it has her name on the outside of the envelope, in nice script (he's an artist!)

CARTER
Happy Christmas-Birthday,
DANI.

DANI
Happy Christmas-Birthday to
you, too, CARTER.
I'm sorry I didn't even
know it was *your* birthday,
too, until tonight!

CARTER
My gift is seeing you
happy, DANI.

CARTER looks excited as he says:

CARTER
Go ahead, open it!

INSERT: DANI opens the card, which is in Christmas colors or theme, and sees on the left-hand side a colored drawing of Santa with a heart on his chest. It's signed, "Your Secret Birthday Santa."

DANI
Oh, my goodness!

DANI puts her hand up to her mouth.

DANI
Oh my goodness!

Act 7 - Scene 8

CUT TO FLASHBACK, (INT), MIDDLE SCHOOL, ART CLASS, DAYTIME

YOUNG DANI

YOUNG CARTER

EDEN - Young Dani's friend, enthusiastic cheerleader

ANNA - Young Dani's friend, gentler personality

TEACHER - Kind, efficient

EXTRAS -STUDENTS - 10-12?

SET DESIGN: Christmas decor in room. Four longish tables with students at them working on molding clay or any other table-friendly art project.

PROPS: Molding clay or whatever is decided.

YOUNG DANI, EDEN, and ANNA are sitting together at one table, YOUNG CARTER at another.

STUDENTS are just beginning to pick up clay and work with it. TEACHER is weaving between tables and making positive or encouraging comments (Improv) quietly. She's in a far part of the room as DANI pulls a card out of her backpack or purse. She's talking quietly.

DANI
Psst! ANNA, EDEN,
I have to show you this.
I got *another* one this year!

INSERT: DANI opening her card. It has the picture of Santa with the heart on his chest. DANI smiles.

DANI
Isn't it sweet?
I wish I knew who keeps
giving them to me!

CUT TO YOUNG CARTER, ducking his head and slumping down in his seat, like he wants to hide.

Act 7 - Scene 9

CUT TO LODGE (EXT), PATIO or any outdoor setting near doorway.

DANI
CARTER

SAME SETUP as before FLASHBACK.

DANI looks misty-eyed, putting her hand on her heart.

DANI
It was you!
It was *you* who gave me all
those Christmas-Birthday Cards
in Middle school.

CARTER nods happily.

CARTER
It was me.

DANI looks down at CARTER'S legs.

DANI
But how. . . ?

CARTER
Many surgeries.
That's why I needed an angel.

DANI
Oh, CARTER! I'm sorry.

CARTER
Well, you were one of my
angels back then, you know!

I fell in love with you
in middle school.

DANI puts her hand on her heart when she says: "and now you make my heart..."

DANI
I think I love you, too,
CARTER, but I've been too afraid
of love.
You always made me smile
on my birthday in middle school
with those amazing cards,
and now you make my heart
really happy.

CARTER leans in toward DANI, who leans in toward him.

CARTER
I hope *this* makes your heart
even happier.

MUSIC: Pachelbel cannon or similar.

CARTER kisses DANI, and the same small angel-images appear,
one on each side of them, full of light.
DANI and CARTER look at each other in wonder, awe-struck,
and kiss again.

The images float up and bump together, then head off into
the night sky as the camera moves up to follow.

FADE OUT 1

ALTERNATE ENDING, EXTENDED:

CARTER takes DANI'S hand in his and they walk back into the
building, then CUT TO walking into the party, coats now
off.

CARTER pulls DANI into a dance and then kisses her and the
crowd applauds, especially focusing on SIMONE, CLAUDIA,
TREY, LIAM, JADA, AIDEN, and MIA.

FADE OUT 2

(Synopsis and Details below)

SYNOPSIS

Title: *The Art of Christmas Love*

Genre: Hallmark-style Christmas Romance

Logline: Christmas Art turns magical when a senior accountant surrenders to love.

Length: 90 minutes with some room for cuts.

Story:

DANIELLE (DANI) loves art, especially related to Christmas, but she's vying for the new CFO position at her company, so no time for much art, interest in romance! She's so focused on her goal of CFO and setting herself up financially, due to some bad experiences, she almost misses Christmas with her family at the Lodge where they usually celebrate. Her family guilted her to joining them for the holiday weekend by saying her Grand'Mere (Grandmother), from France, may not come if Dani doesn't.

In order to win the CFO position, Dani has to show her versatility and work-life balance, so she gets her cute and funny assistant, Aaron, to help. Aaron knows Dani is an artist, so he sets her up as a volunteer to work with teen artists at the community center that his husband DYLAN manages. Carter is the director of the teen art program, but Dani doesn't recognize her Carter, her middle school classmate, because he used to have a bad limp and was super shy and withdrawn, even covering his face with long hair. Even as he recognizes her, it takes until the end for Dani to get who he is, since he is now very outgoing, fun, and caring, without any trace of a limp!

The Art of Christmas Love, copyright 2023, Debbie Johnson

When Dani was in middle school, Carter was crushing on her, so he secretly slid Birthday/Christmas cards into her locker - with a special artistic drawing of Santa, because he knew they shared the same birthday: Dec. 24th. He was crushed that Dani had to move, but didn't know why she did.

When Carter runs into Dani at the Lodge during Christmas week, he learns eventually that she had to move away because her dad left the family, and left them with a mountain of debt from a bad investment her mom didn't know about (thus, her focus on financial security). Dani's mom worked hard, but could never seem to get ahead, so Dani became driven to make money and steward it carefully.

Dani's Grand Mere, Simone, and Claudia, Lodge owner, plus Dani's sister Jada and Carter's brother Liam get Dani and Carter together in stages, as do some of the middle-schooler artists who show up at the lodge that week. There's a definite attraction between them, but Dani doesn't trust his financial security, due to his business of investments. She goes back and forth with her attraction to him, very conflicted. When Dani overhears Carter on the phone with his business partner about a loss from one of their investments, she freezes and gets more scared. Her sister and Grand Mere talk her down off the ledge. She is still hesitant until she discovers, during their mutual surprise-Christmas-birthday celebration, that Carter is the same boy from middle school with the limp and that he's the one who left her cards. She figures it out because he gives her a Christmas/Birthday card with the same artistic drawing and signature of "Your Secret-Birthday Santa. She melts, knowing he had to overcome so much to be who he is today.

CHARACTERS :

DANIELLE (DANI)NADEAU - Senior Accountant of an A.I. company. But her true passion is art and especially related to Christmas. She's techy, but her artist side makes her sensitive to others. Her heart is open to all, but she doesn't give much to herself.

CARTER- Easygoing, small-town boy made good in business, but very modest about it. Still has his country charm.

LIAM - Carter's brother - Easy-going, likes everyone and has a teasing sense of humor.

JADA - Danielle's sister - Easy-going, a smart (and crafty) woman with a romantic imagination.

AARON - Danielle's assistant gay, married, fun and loving. He and Dani are super close and she trusts him implicitly.

SIMONE - DANIELLE'S GRANDMOTHER, "GRAND MERE" - French Canadian, loves life, a bit controlling, but for a "good cause." Also very spiritual, sometimes metaphysical. In great shape physically - yoga enthusiast!

CLAUDIA - (pronounced "cloudia" Trey's wife - dark-skinned French-Canadian - speaks with slight French accent.

TREY - Manager, desk clerk, sweet and caring, care-free, but service oriented. Claudia's husband

TERRA - TREY'S daughter and Claudia's daughter, and Server/helper- sweet and kind, bi-racial (mom is dark-skinned something).

GERARD - DANIELLE'S BIO DAD - Light French accent. Now humble and successful

YOUNG CARTER - Extremely shy due to walking with a limp. Hair over his face most of the time, so it's hard to see what he looks like, especially when he sees Danielle.

YOUNG DANIELLE - Energetic, kind, eager to please.

MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT - JACKSON -

MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT - **AIDEN** - open, kind, intelligent, fun

MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT - MATEO

MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT - ETHAN - bit of an attitude, but loves art.

MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT - **MIA** - Open, loving, intelligent, White and Asian bi-racial or just Asian

MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT - ZOE

MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT - AMARA

MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT - ELLA

TRISHA - Aiden's mom, Nice looking, friendly demeanor, gentle person but strong, nurse.

(Important: Will play opposite "VINCE" in my next screenplay with Valentine's theme.)

JONATHAN - Mia's dad, Caucasian or Asian

SUKI - Mia's mom - (Asian)

AKI - Mia's aunt- business-like, smart, but kind and positive.

VINCE - nice-looking, friendly and kind.

(Important: Will play opposite "TRISHA" in my next screenplay with Valentine's theme.)

MIDDLE-SCHOOL EXTRAS - for school scene - flexible number

EXTRAS - Lodge guests - Family of four or five

EXTRAS - Town of Crystal Falls for two scenes

Note to Producer: Tricia and Vince connection at last dinner scene and tree-lighting scene with them is a setup for my next screenplay - Valentine theme at the lodge. See synopsis for that on separate document.

Locations:

A.I. Company hallway

A.I. Company office

Town of Crystal Falls-

with small businesses in quaint town and town center
or square

Crystal Falls Community Center -

needs craft room and industrial kitchen.

Carter's home

Middle school hallway

Apartment Lobby with Elevator

Aaron's Apartment

Mountainous or hilly highway

(can be stock footage for this)

Lodge -

Small okay, with dining room and at least two guest rooms - one needs to be big enough for three people to do yoga, even if furniture moved. (Lodge needs to look big enough for 6 guest rooms), large kitchen, land around it with some pine trees, lobby large enough for Christmas tree.

Parkside area with fire ring (or Prop master can find one)

Different road - this one into Crystal Falls opposite way.

Props:

1. Several Small, about 2" by 3" small canvases or piece of lightweight wood, like balsa with holes in the top, small paint brushes to make paintings as ornaments, and ribbons in Christmas colors to hang ornaments. Also: a finished one. *I will send the "painting" ornament I have to you- you can use it or as a sample.*

2. PROPS: Tablecloths, dinner settings, and salads for 20

Plate of Christmas cookies (can be used for two scenes or more).

3. Small red and/or green, gold, silver envelopes holding slips of paper with questions typed on them. Only three need to be visible - though not necessarily on camera.

4. "Touristy" brochures on the check-in counter.

5. Plates or trays of plain sugar cookies in various Christmas shapes (Must Have a Santa, as well as a Star shape), paper to cover tables for cookie art, holiday aprons (maybe on hooks?), and clear plastic serving gloves, if producer wants to show cleanliness.) There are decorating icing - plastic bottles, sprinkles, candy canes in plastic bags, and a hammer. Also, one cookie either in Santa shape, or round, either one with icing decor as "cookie-art" of Santa (maybe waist-up) with a heart on his chest.

5. Hats, scarves, other items to create original-looking snowpeople. Round, Jewel-like earrings needed. Box labeled in large lettering: "Lost & Found," Coat rack with extra coats other than the four needed for this scene. Bracelet for JADA to wear, and sparkly belt for DANI, or long sparkly scarf.

6. Snowballs, "Lost & Found" box. All from last scene as well, and two sets of small branches for arms. Lipstick in Dani's pocket.

7. 3 Yoga mats

8. Tables set up with plastic covers and ornament parts and pieces, plus paint and glitter. Things like pine cones and small, flat, stiff-board (wood look) pieces work, as well

as same things from art-craft scene at community center set.

9. Will need four mountain bicycles with snow tires and helmets (Wardrobe for helmets?).

10. Fire pit or ring or whatever you can find! Small kindling and larger branches needed for a small fire that will last for about ½ to 1 hour.

11. Smallish marshmallows with red stripes (however you can get them to stay stripes! - cornstarch or whatever is edible)

12. Ornaments in a nice-looking box, presumably hand-made by guests that week, holly, evergreen branches. Sparkly, narrow material, like ribbon or other.

13. Two Christmas trees - one for lobby, one large for town. Decorations for Larger tree.

14. Christmas decorations, tree, tables with festive tablecloths (also need gold or other plastic forks/knives), side tables to hold gift baskets everyone brings. Ornaments the Lodge people made are in their gift baskets filled with cookies and small gifts, some food/snacks and/or candy.

15. Molding clay for 15-20 art students.

16. Matches! :)for fire pit.

17. Dani's car (2 scenes), Jada's car (1 scene)

Wardrobe:

Business suits for Dani, Aaron, and Stephanie
Holiday-colored dress with narrow-ish skirt, holiday pin to match it, placed on upper chest near shoulder for Dani.

Hat with brim for Simone

Sleepwear for Dani and Jada

Yoga outfits for Dani, Jada, and Simone

Mountain-biking-wear for Dani & Jada, and Carter & Liam.

Holiday dress for last scene for Dani.

Dressy outfit for Carter for last scene.

Christmas-decorated aprons - 8-10.

Dressy coats for Dani, Simone, and Carter

Casual winter wear for Dani, Carter, Liam, Jada, Mia, and Aiden

Makeup: Special darker blush on one cheek for injury i scene with snowball fight – search “rock in it?” in case scene numbers change.

Hair Stylist: Dani twirls her finger in her hair two times or more – you can search “twirls” to find them. You may need to fix her hair after those!

FX:

Sound FX: Rip/fabric tearing.

Light/Image FX:

Small Angel Images, suggested examples (top one is my fav):

https://2.bp.blogspot.com/-eOB87Wn41Zo/T7_hlrKCwgI/AAAAAAAAAHY/lUIxWmMmWeg/s1600/angel_lightgoogleimages.jpg

<https://clipart-library.com/images/zcX577Lri.jpg>

https://3.bp.blogspot.com/-8cMeYiOxsTY/TzOK_TJhZDI/AAAAAAAAABOY/JkuppwMYBEc/s1600/Angel_of_light.jpg

https://3.bp.blogspot.com/-jZktsTc-UiY/TiSdKodTiCI/AAAAAAAAAFM/W7TDSlPW7J4/s1600/Angel_of_Light_by_DrkSnprl4.jpg

True Events that Inspired this Story:

“J”, my super-crush, and I were in middle school when I learned we had the same birthday–December 20th! I didn’t think he knew I even existed then. He was a jock (though nice to everyone, like Dani), I was a klutz (even though graceful as a dancer) who befriended everyone, like Dani.

I secretly gave J a birthday card each year for three years by slipping it into the slot in his locker, knowing most people forget or ignore our birthdays, so close to Christmas.

Fast forward to high school when he would smile and nod at me as he walked by and I said "Hi." That was the extent of our contact until my best friend's sister got sick, couldn't sneak out with her, so she invited me to meet up with her crush, and her crush brought his best friend - guess who? Yup, "J." So, J and I connected, talked for hours and ended the night with a kiss and his promise to ride his bike by my house the next day. Never happened. I never knew why, but I suspected it was because I was Jewish and his family were strict Christians. I started dating others.

Cut to college when I met his ex-wife (Yes!). Evidently he married young. I was in between boyfriends, and I only saw her once. I could have found him from information she shared (no internet then!) but I didn't feel right about it, thinking he was still Christian and that wouldn't fit with me. I was more like Simone, following my inner spiritual guidance which has given me a (mostly - see bio) magical life! Also, I have had a guardian angel my whole life since I was about seven. Many times I have seen the effect, for example: I was on CNN worldwide because I wasn't killed when my car was crushed by a semi-truck, I survived!

I always wondered what would have happened with J. So Carter and Dani get to fulfill my teen dream. :)

Note: I made Dani's and Carter's birthdays fit with the timeline of the screenplay - Dec. 24th instead of 20th. And I had Carter leave the cards for Dani in the screenplay due to it being more romantic.

Note for Credits: Please give credits to the artist: Gina Nicolae Johnson (not a relative!)

Bio: Debbie Johnson is a best-selling author (*Think Yourself Thin*) and an award-winning filmmaker (*Angels-in-Training*, aka *Soul Survivors* series). She's a media veteran of national TV/Radio/major Magazines. She's accomplished nearly all her goals and dreams, the major one being to help others make their own dreams come true!