

CHRISTMAS FOR RENT

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FADE IN:

INT. SUV - AFTERNOON

It's a sunny afternoon on a road through a forest blanketed with snow.

We see LAWRENCE DANSON (28) in the driver's seat, and his mother, LUNA SANCHEZ-DANSON, (AKA MOM; 55) smiling pensively in the passenger's seat.

MOM (V.O.)

I didn't want a FaceTime Christmas!  
I wanted an in-your-face time kind  
of Christmas unspoiled by the  
Internet, Wi-Fi, TV, or presents. I  
believe that the greatest presents  
in life come from being together!

(sadly)

My husband died almost a year ago.  
My only goal was to rent the  
perfect location for Christmas.

(laughs)

Our grown children and their  
partners were in for the biggest  
surprises of their lives!

Mom looks into the forest, apprehensive.

LAWRENCE

Renting a cabin deep in the woods  
seems risky to me.

MOM

Cabin? The website said it was a  
lodge. I want this Christmas with  
the entire family after three years  
to be special.

LAWRENCE

For what you're paying for the  
place, it better be special!

They see an elderly man sitting on the porch of what looks like an old barn.

MOM

Lawrence, ask that kindly old man  
how far up ahead the lodge is.

LAWRENCE

My GPS says we're almost there.

MOM

Lawrence?

Lawrence stops the car, rolls down the window, and yells out to the old man (GRAMPS (75) wearing tattered western ware, cowboy boots, horned-rimmed glasses, and a cowboy hat.

LAWRENCE

Excuse me, Sir. How far is it to the Deluxe Pine Tree Lodge?

GRAMPS

(sternly)

Don't call me Sir, Sonny Boy. That title's reserved for them that rode with me.

Lawrence's and Mom's eyes open wide, stunned.

GRAMPS (CONT'D)

Deluxe Pine Tree Lodge, says you? It's just up the road to the right across from the meadow.

Mom smiles and yells.

MOM

Sounds delightful. Thank you so much for your help.

Lawrence rolls up his window and drives ahead, shooting a quick glare in Gramps's direction while Mom smiles at him.

LAWRENCE

(mumbles)

That weirdo should be in a museum.

MOM

Oh, the stories he could tell.

He and Mom look up the road to the right.

LAWRENCE

You see? There it is.

They stare out the windshield in disbelief at the dilapidated cabin badly in need of repairs, a new roof, and paint.

EXT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

They exit the SUV.

Lawrence turns to see Gramps smiling, but he quickly puts a shoulder around his mom to comfort her.

LAWRENCE

There must be a mistake. The photos you sent me didn't look anything like this.

MOM

Maybe it looks better from the inside, Mom.

LAWRENCE

I'm not going in there without Tetanus and Rabies shots. I'm a lawyer! You're going to get your money back before the rest of the others show up.

They HEAR a rugged older Jeep pull up behind them.

SHARON DANSON (25) leaps from the passenger side of a dirty Jeep in the finest Brand Outdoor ware and the finest snow boots. She has short-cropped hair and a huge smile.

SHARON

I love it!

LAWRENCE

(sarcastic)

Glad you like it, SHARON!

BILLY DANSON (23) steps out of the driver's side of the Jeep. He's a wildly behaved, handsome man dressed in rugged brown jeans, a red plaid shirt, and a three-day beard. He laughs as he snaps a photo on his cellphone.

BILLY

I smell a lawsuit, Big Brother. Nothing remotely similar to the photos Mom sent us.

Lawrence steps to the door covered in cobwebs, and pulls away a snow shovel hiding a sign that reads "Pine Tree Logs" with the word "Deluxe" painted above it in white paint, and the word "Logs" is crossed out with the word "Lodge" painted in white above it.

LAWRENCE

(to Mom)

Well, that explains it. It's a typographical error. This isn't the AirBnB you booked!

(MORE)

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

(snickers)

It's an AirBnC for Con job.

SHARON

It will do nicely. Billy said the whole point of getting together for the first Christmas in three years is just to be together.

BILLY

I just hope we brought enough alcohol! Let's unpack, check our email, and have a glass of wine!

They all hear a shotgun cock behind them.

They turn to see Gramps dressed as before but holding a shotgun.

GRAMPS

You look like squatters to me.  
(glares at Billy)  
Especially the wino playboy.

The guests turn and instinctively throw their hands in the air.

LAWRENCE

Don't shoot!

MOM

We rented the place!

BILLY

I'm not a wino. I prefer a good espresso martini with a flake of dark chocolate...

Gramps aims the shotgun at Billy.

GRAMPS

I'm shootin' the loudmouth playboy first!

Lawrence steps forward and lowers his arms.

LAWRENCE

I see nothing here that can't be rectified with a little more information.

Gramps points the shotgun at Lawrence.

GRAMPS

What's your name, Sonny Boy?

LAWRENCE

Lawrence Regan, Esquire. We rented this place for \$1000 plus booking and cleaning fees to have Christmas here with our mom.

SHARON lowers her arms, so Gramps aims at her.

SHARON

We lost our dad to an illness earlier this year, and this is our first time together since the funeral.

Mom looks away sadly and lowers her arms.

MOM

Go ahead and shoot me. I don't give a damn. Just let them live.

The kids go to hug their mom.

GRAMPS

This sounds like somethin' that dimwitted absentee owner would do. She set the place up as a rental five years ago to help pay the taxes.

Everyone glares at Mom.

LAWRENCE

Those pictures on the web are more than five years old. That's false advertising.

GRAMPS

You, Sonny Boy.  
(aims at Lawrence)  
Say one more bad thing about the place and I shoot the loudmouth playboy in both knees.

BILLY

(squeaky voice)  
I like what you've done with the cobwebs.

Lawrence steps away a few steps then stops and glares at Gramps.

LAWRENCE

We're gonna get that absentee  
owner...

(checks his phone  
"notes.")

Ms. Maggie Regan, on the phone  
right now! We're getting our money  
back!

Billy and Sharon stare blankly at their phones.

BILLY

Uh uh. It's non-refundable over  
Christmas, the rental agreement  
said.

SHARON

(glares at Gramps)  
I'm calling 9-1-1 on this psycho  
with the rifle.

LAWRENCE

(yells)  
There's no goddamn cell service!

Billy and Sharon are taking videos of the threatening Gramps.

GRAMPS

You can't call out from there.

LAWRENCE

Why the hell not?

GRAMPS

Cell tower is out.

BILLY

What do you mean, out?

Gramps points to a ridge.

GRAMPS

Fell over.

SHARON

They don't fall...

GRAMPS

(interrupts laughing)  
A massive storm took it out months  
ago.

MOM

What do you do in case of an emergency?

GRAMPS

You don't have one.

LAWRENCE

We don't have emergencies?

GRAMPS

No. You don't have a phone. The absentee homeowner had the landline removed from the cabin five years ago.

BILLY

(laughs)

When she turned the place into a rental? Where do you stay, old-timer?

Gramps points behind him to a small barn.

GRAMPS

In the barn.

(to Mom)

Don't get any ideas, Cutie. There's only room for one.

MOM

I'm not that Lonely!

BILLY

Where is the nearest cell service?

GRAMPS

How should I know? I barely remember phone booths.

The guests have a look of horror.

BILLY

We fan out in cardinal directions and yell when you get service.

The guests fan out a little ways from the cabin with no luck.

GRAMPS

You can try the open meadow out yonder. That's where the plumber goes to call for parts.

Billy runs way out into the meadow.



LAWRENCE

Great! Plumbing issues too.

GRAMPS

Not as bad as the electricity  
issues from what I hear.

Mom steps to Gramps to confide in him softly.

MOM

I wanted this Christmas to be  
special! It's our first Christmas  
together in three years, and our  
first time together in almost a  
year. I didn't want a FaceTime  
Christmas. I wanted an in-your-face  
time Christmas. I didn't want  
presents.

(points to her kids)

I wanted their presence!

Billy yells.

BILLY

I got service. One bar. Barely.  
Jumps back and forth to no service.

Gramps points the shotgun at Billy and yells.

GRAMPS

Get off that meadow or I'll shoot!

LAWRENCE

We paid in advance.

GRAMPS

You rented this here cabin. That  
meadow is my property and you're  
trespassing.

SHARON

We'll find another place to stay.

LAWRENCE

There's no other place to stay  
within a half-day drive!

Gramps points his shotgun at the sign.

GRAMPS

Welcome to the Deluxe Pine Tree  
Lodge.

(winks at Mom)

(MORE)

GRAMPS (CONT'D)

Call me Gramps! I'll be in the barn  
if you don't need nothin'!

Gramps heads back to the barn.

Billy gets back to the front door and they all stare at the  
strange old cowboy.

BILLY

(whispers)

I say we kill him and bury him in  
the meadow while we make our phone  
calls.

GRAMPS (O.C.)

I heard that, Playboy!

Mom builds up the courage to go inside the cabin.

MOM

Come on, kids. We're going to make  
the best of a bad situation before  
I turn as looney as Gramps!  
(smiles courageously)  
Besides, it's Christmas!

INT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

The guests step cautiously into the cabin. It's clean and  
tidy, but very small. A table and eight chairs take up most  
of the main room. There's a well-worn, uncomfortable couch by  
the fireplace with a small stack of firewood. They spot a  
small binder on the kitchen counter. Billy races to grab it  
first, and the others gather around him as Billy reads like  
British royalty.

BILLY

Thanks for renting the Deluxe Pine  
Tree Lodge. My name is Maggie Regan  
and this was my granddad's ranch  
before he moved to town five years  
ago. Grandma died almost twenty-  
five years ago.

Mom turns sadly toward the front door.

MOM

This is dated five years ago, so  
his wife died about the same age as  
your dad. That poor lonely thing.

BILLY

Might need to run the faucets and hot water a bit before trusting it. There are towels, soap, some coffee, and a hefty supply of booze if you look in every nook and cranny of the house. My Grandma, Delia Regan would break every bottle she found.

SHARON

(reading over Billy's shoulder)

I moved to town to keep a closer eye on my Gramps, but call me in an emergency from the meadow north of the front door if the cell tower is out again.

LAWRENCE

What have we gotten ourselves into?

Billy laughs.

BILLY

I'll start a fire. We'll eat the first one who complains like the Donner Party did when they ate that disgruntled camper named Stu.

MOM

(reading)

There are boxes of Christmas decorations in the back closet. They had the Christmas decorations up in the website photos. The place looked nice enough so I rented it for us.

They all smile at Mom.

They fetch their luggage and groceries (and wine) from the cars.

They amass all their groceries in the kitchen and their wheeled suitcases stack up near the entrance

LAWRENCE

The website said it sleeps five comfortably.

They fan out to seek cell phone service in the cabin. Lawrence disappears into a bedroom.

LAWRENCE (O.C.) (CONT'D)  
I found a small bedroom with a full-size bed. Not even a queen.

BILLY (O.C.)  
I found the coat closet with some old Christmas decorations.

SHARON  
I found a tiny bathroom.  
(sadly)  
Tub but no shower. I can't stay here unless the tub has cell service, but nope, it didn't!

MOM  
I found the mudroom and backdoor.  
(yells happily)  
Come here, kids! You guys gotta see this! Charming!

Everyone runs to see a smile on Mom's face.

Mom is staring at two bunk beds on either side of the mudroom where the washer and drier had been.

Mom tries to maintain the smile, but can't.

MOM (CONT'D)  
But it's Christmas, and at least we're all together.

Mom brings her half-smile to the kitchen.

LAWRENCE  
I'm going out to the meadow to give the proprietor a call. Billy, if crazy old Gramps shoots me, call 9-1-1.

BILLY  
What if he shoots me too?!

SHARON  
He wore glasses. Maybe he's a lousy shot!

Billy looks out the front door.

BILLY  
I'll go. I've got to share the video of "Gramps Gotta Gun!"  
Someday it will be called evidence.

SHARON

I'll go too. I need to hop online  
and order us some sleeping bags.  
Think they can deliver way out here  
by tomorrow?

Mom stares sadly at the bags of food and bottles of wine.

MOM

Wait until it's dark. I can't bear  
to go to another funeral this year!

The children gather around their mom.

MOM (CONT'D)

(smiles weakly)  
Come on! Help me cook dinner.

They hug and share a moment before racing to the meadow.

EXT. MEADOW - CONTINUOUS

The youngsters race around the meadow like chickens with  
their heads cut off while staring at and waving their phones.

They drop their heads in disgust and trudge back to the  
cabin.

INT. CABIN - EVENING

Mom is stir-frying shrimp in a pan. Everyone is silent, but  
they are all sipping glasses of wine and listening to  
Christmas music from one of their smartphones.

Sharon grates a block of cheddar cheese frequently staring at  
her phone on the kitchen counter.

SHARON

What if I can't keep the connection  
long enough to order sleeping bags?

Billy opens a can of enchilada sauce while staring at his  
phone.

BILLY

I usually get kitchen help from  
YouTube videos.

MOM

To open a can with a manual can  
opener?

BILLY

For everything. Recipes. Cooking tips. Burial guides.

LAWRENCE

I use my wine app for wine pairings.

Mom speaks quietly and profoundly.

MOM

Sounds like your smartphones have outsmarted you.

The children turn to stare at their mother.

LAWRENCE

Says the voice of reasoning and seasonings.

SHARON

The only Kitchen Aid a daughter ever needs is a Mom, is that it?

BILLY

A regular Obi-wan-canoli.

Mom turns serious but avoids eye contact.

MOM

Did you see yourselves in that meadow?

(turns to her kids)

Don't you remember how to hold real conversations?

BILLY

We could talk about current events if there were a TV and internet service.

MOM

You've gone without electronics for three entire hours now.

SHARON

I'd call 9-1-1, except I can't.

LAWRENCE

Mom, is that what this is to you? Watching your digitally addicted kids go mad without their gadgets?

Mom laughs.

MOM

Electronic Delirium Tremens, the E-DTs. No TV, no radio, and no Internet and Wi-Fi. I'm not sure you'll survive.

The kids laugh and shake their heads in disbelief.

MOM (CONT'D)

See, your heads are shaking already.

LAWRENCE

Nonsense.

(beat)

But I do need to drive to town tomorrow to check on my cases. Natalia told me yesterday that she can't wait to meet Billy's latest online date.

Mom and Sharon are giddy.

MOM

Billy, you didn't mention you were bringing a date.

SHARON

Is she an out-of-work...  
(uses air quotes)  
"Actress?"

BILLY

(looks away)

I'm supposed to text her the address and directions tonight.

LAWRENCE

So you'll be risking your life for a date.

SHARON

(mumbles)

I hope you're paying her well.

LAWRENCE

Did you rent a girlfriend for Christmas?

BILLY

(angry)

No! I did not rent a girlfriend!

MOM

I hope she brings a bed!  
 (turns to Sharon)  
 When does Diane arrive?

SHARON

Tomorrow. She can't wait to meet  
 Billy's fiancé.

Billy races to Sharon and yells in her face.

BILLY

You told Diane we were getting  
 married? What? After one week? Just  
 to end up divorced like Lawrence  
 and Natalia?

Mom is shocked. She collapses in a chair.

MOM

You're getting divorced? When were  
 you going to tell me?

The others turn to Lawrence in shock. Lawrence is defensive.

LAWRENCE

I told you we were having issues,  
 but that she still might come for  
 Christmas! She wasn't feeling well.

SHARON

I knew you weren't on speaking  
 terms, but...

Billy elbows Sharon and then teases Lawrence.

BILLY

I heard she was going to serve you  
 the papers this week...

MOM

(interrupts)  
 It's Christmas! She'll do no such  
 thing. If she gets here, she'll be  
 welcomed with open arms.  
 (to Sharon)  
 Like your significant other.

Sharon turns angry.

SHARON

We live in a state that supports  
 gay marriage, Mom.  
 (MORE)



SHARON (CONT'D)

We got married, although you didn't make the wedding.

MOM

I had problems that week.

SHARON

You can at least call Diane my wife.

Mom hugs Sharon, but she resists.

MOM

I'm sorry. You know what I mean.

Sharon sulks.

SHARON

Sure, I do, Mom. I'll go to town with you, Lawrence. I need to order us sleeping bags and I forgot to pack face cream.

BILLY

I'll go. I need to go to text my friend, Sheila, the address and directions. Maybe I shouldn't post my "Gramps Gotta Gun" clip.

Mom is part angry, part smug.

MOM

Oops, I took your car keys from the counter an hour ago.

Billy, Sharon, and Lawrence search madly for the keys but come up empty.

LAWRENCE

You can't do that, Mom! It's not safe. If you get sick, fall, or have another serious bout of anxiety, we'll need to get you to the hospital.

MOM

If I die, you'd all have to speak to each other as adults in a meaningful way.

The kids race to their mom and encircle her.

BILLY

You're okay though, right, Ma? Not like Pops, right?

Mom takes a large gulp of wine. She turns to her kids in a depressed state, fighting back tears.

MOM

If you must know, I've been in a deep state of depression since your father died.

SILENCE

SHARON

We didn't know.

LAWRENCE

How bad?

Billy struggles to speak but goes to hug his mom, who looks away.

MOM

(looks away)

None of you cared to ask. You called quickly to talk about the weather or some other small talk before hanging up and going about your busy lives for days or weeks at a time.

Mom paces in the kitchen.

MOM (CONT'D)

I was lost without my lifelong companion and best friend.

(to Lawrence)

I couldn't tell you. I knew you had your troubles with Natalia.

Lawrence is in denial.

LAWRENCE

It's not that bad...

Sharon is defensive.

SHARON

And you couldn't tell me because I had a wife and not a husband?

Mom turns on Sharon.

MOM

It's not about you, Sharon. You are all so self-absorbed with your smartphones and computers that you've forgotten how to be compassionate -- I've failed you all in Parenting 101. I dreaded coming here for Christmas.

(sadly)

Imagine that? Dreading Christmas with your only family.

Gramps steps out of the bathroom with a towel around him. He looks scared, like a lost and frightened child.

Mom and others turn and stare at Gramps in disbelief.

LAWRENCE

What are you doing here?

Mom sees the troubled look on Gramps's face and runs to comfort him.

MOM

You'll be okay. I know that look.

Gramps looks away sadly.

GRAMPS

Borrowed some hot water. Y'all were complaining away like chickens heading to the chopping block, so I didn't want to disturb you.

MOM

You used to live in this house. Is that right?

Gramps nods, 'Yes.'

SHARON

How did you get in?

GRAMPS

Through the backdoor and the mudroom, like always.

BILLY

What do you mean, like always?

Gramps looks down and sees the bath towel around him and is immediately shocked and embarrassed.

GRAMPS

This was my house 'til my dimwitted granddaughter decided to move me to town and rent it out.

LAWRENCE

That's right! We rented it and you're not welcome here, which I'll tell your granddaughter when I get a chance to call her without getting shot!

Mom guides Gramps back to the bathroom.

MOM

You get back in your clothes! We're about to eat! Would you like a bite to eat?

Gramps sulks back into the bathroom.

The others whisper.

LAWRENCE

Can you believe that?

BILLY

I wish I gotta video.

SHARON

(laughs)

That would have gone viral.

Mom exits the bathroom.

MOM

Poor thing. We had to ask him to dinner.

GRAMPS (O.C.)

I'd love to.

The kids glare at their mom.

INT. CABIN - LATER

They all sit nervously around the table and eat shrimp enchiladas. Gramps is dressed in his bathrobe, cowboy boots, and cowboy hat. He gulps down enchiladas as everyone stares and eats slowly.

LAWRENCE

So, you lived here for almost all  
of your 75 years?

GRAMPS

That's right.

MOM

Gramps, why did your granddaughter  
move you to town? What about your  
children?

GRAMPS

(looks away)

My son and his wife hated  
everything about the wilderness.  
They never understood the beauty of  
nature. They moved to New York City  
when their Maggie turned 18. She  
loved it here, but couldn't afford  
the taxes so she started renting it  
out. I just come out to check on  
the old place from time to time for  
sentimental reasons.

MOM

Because you miss your wife and  
kids?

GRAMPS

(looks away again)

Maybe.

SHARON

I get that. Makes me want to have  
children.

GRAMPS

(winks at Sharon)

Children let you fall in love  
again.

(to Mom)

But grandchildren?

(turns and spits)

I ended up with a devious,  
manipulative, conniving little  
granddaughter...

LOUD KNOCK on the front door.

GRAMPS (CONT'D)

(mumbles)

Uh oh!

Lawrence pops up to answer the door.

He opens the door to see a stunningly beautiful, MAGGIE REGAN (23), but she stands back so no one else can see her.

MAGGIE

I'm Maggie Regan, the idiot who rented you the place before checking it out.

Lawrence is lost in her beauty and at a loss for words.

LAWRENCE

Oh... Oh...

Mom, Sharon, and Billy strain to see out the door.

MAGGIE

Is my medically ill, psychologically impaired, and socially challenged grandfather here?

(louder)

I checked the barn which he was forbidden to use, and I needed to get him back to his retirement home.

GRAMPS (O.C.)

I heard that!

LAWRENCE

Won't you... please...

Maggie steps in and it's clear that Lawrence and Sharon are immediately smitten with Maggie. Billy barely glances at her.

MAGGIE

Oh, I couldn't impose. I tried to call Mr. Lawrence Danson, Esquire all afternoon but...

Lawrence raises his hand like a school child.

LAWRENCE

That's me. I'm an... an...

MOM

Attorney, my oldest.

SHARON

(awkward)

The cell tower fell over again.

(MORE)

SHARON (CONT'D)

(more awkward)

I'm... I'm...

MOM

Sharon. My second.

BILLY

I wanted Lawrence to call you to  
cancel the rental,

(glares at Gramps)

but I didn't want to get shot.

Maggie glares at Gramps who avoids eye contact with her.

Mom sees her older children drooling over Maggie.

MOM

(points to Billy)

And that's the youngest, William.

Billy speaks in a comical voice.

BILLY

I'm why they stopped having  
children. Call me, Billy.

MOM

I'll bring you a plate.

Lawrence pulls out a seat for Maggie.

LAWRENCE

May I serve you a glass of wine? We  
have...

MAGGIE

No, thank you, Lawrence. I'm just  
here to tidy up and decorate for  
Christmas like the website said.

Maggie leans into Gramps's face.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

And take this troubled escape  
artist back to his home.

GRAMPS

(looks away)

It's not a home, you ungrateful...

MAGGIE

(to Gramps)

Your residence then, where your many doctors agreed they could keep a close eye on your many, many, medical and psychological conditions. And where you're around people your age. You should make more friends.

GRAMPS

(to the others)

I can't remember my name half the time let alone somebody else's.

MAGGIE

He's had one TGA, Transient Global Amnesia episode, where he can't remember where he is or how he got there.

Mom looks especially worried.

MOM

How long do they last?

MAGGIE

A few hours. They're non-life threatening, unlike a stroke, but to him and me they're really scary.

Mom sets a plate of enchiladas and a knife, fork, and napkin, at Maggie's place.

LAWRENCE

You sound quite knowledgeable.

MAGGIE

I'm finishing up my Master's Degree in Psychology.

Lawrence and Sharon gasp in awe. Billy smirks.

Maggie smells the enchiladas and smiles.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

These enchiladas smell so delicious.

Lawrence brings a wine glass and pours an overly generous serving.



MAGGIE (CONT'D)  
No, I can't. I'm driving Gramps  
back to town.

Gramps glares at Maggie.

GRAMPS  
Oh, loosen up, Maggie. This is why  
you can't find a husband!

Lawrence and Sharon smile optimistically at Maggie.

LAWRENCE  
Tell us about your research.

Maggie looks around the table and bursts out laughing.

MAGGIE  
Oh, what the hell. I'll sleep in  
the barn with Gramps.  
(glares at Gramps)  
And I'll drive this hooligan back  
to the retirement home tomorrow  
morning.

Everyone raises a glass to Maggie.

MOM  
Then you can meet the rest of the  
family.  
(mumbles)  
And Billy's newest girlfriend.

Maggie glances at Billy, but Sharon changes the subject.

SHARON  
What is your research topic?

Maggie gazes at Sharon, who sighs warmly.

Billy takes a big gulp of wine.

MAGGIE  
My thesis is on "The Benefits  
Associated with Spooning."

Billy laughs so hard that wine exits his mouth and nose.

Gramps hits his palm on his forehead.

Maggie is stunned to see everyone giggling.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Non-sexual spooning. It has many of the same psychological effects as hugging and even full...

BILLY

Spooning? You can get a Master's Degree for that? I may go back to college!

Maggie glares at Billy.

MAGGIE

Spooning, like hugging, increases serotonin, a neurotransmitter called the "feel good" hormone that helps us feel happy, calm, and confident. And your blood pressure decreases.

(smiles)

You want to feel good, don't you, Billy. And you'd like everyone here to feel good.

Maggie surprises Lawrence.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Lawrence, come join me on the couch. Let me demonstrate.

She takes his hand and leads him to the couch.

She lies on her side with her back against the couch and pats the cushion in front of her.

All eyes are on Maggie, who smiles.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Spooning is nothing more than a horizontal hug. Snuggling, if you will.

SHARON

(mumbles)

I will.

Lawrence hesitates, and Sharon teases that she's ready to substitute for Lawrence, but he finally surrenders and sits down on the couch. He is immediately uncomfortable sitting on the couch.

Mom and Billy's eyes open wide as Maggie gently pushes Lawrence's shoulder down so he lies in front of her.

Maggie puts her arm loosely around Lawrence's rib cage and gently squeezes him.

Lawrence's eyes open wide in shock.

MAGGIE

Can you feel the serotonin building  
in your body, Lawrence?

Lawrence can barely speak.

LAWRENCE

Um... Um.

MAGGIE

(seductively)

Studies have shown that even a few  
minutes of spooning can get those  
'feel good' hormones going.

Lawrence leaps up from the couch.

LAWRENCE

I see what you mean. That was a  
very effective demonstration.

SHARON

(jealous smile)

I'll say.

Lawrence slips away to the kitchen in embarrassment.

BILLY

(snickers)

I'd like to go next.

Mom slaps Billy's arm.

MOM

It's not like that, Billy! I really  
miss Gustov hugging me like that.

Gramps looks up at Mom and smiles.

GRAMPS

I miss my wife too.

Maggie stands and takes a bow with a huge smile.

MAGGIE

It's all part of being human.

Mom genuinely SMILES for the first time all day.

INT. CABIN - LATER

Everyone, but Billy and Gramps are clearing the table and doing the dishes. Gramps sits on one side of the couch. Billy sits on the other. Gramps is quite comfortable. Billy grimaces and squirms on the couch.

In the kitchen, they are captivated by Maggie's lecture on spooning.

MAGGIE

Most species of mammals freely surrender to some form of spooning, especially at night or when it's cold.

LAWRENCE

I imagine it conserves energy and heat.

SHARON

I imagine humans must require even more intimacy.

BILLY (O.C.)

You have to imagine it, you two!

Billy can't see Maggie glaring in his direction.

MAGGIE

You're right to be skeptical, Billy. There are intimacy profiteers.

LAWRENCE

Ladies, and men, of the night?

At the couch area, Gramps leans to whisper to Billy.

GRAMPS

She hates playboys.

Back in the kitchen area.

MAGGIE

Sex workers have never been about intimacy. I'm talking about charlatans who establish businesses for hugging and cuddling.

MOM

Are there such establishments, Maggie?

MAGGIE  
Yes, in New York City and many  
international cities.

Billy struts into the kitchen.

BILLY  
Do people pay for hugs and  
spooning?

MAGGIE  
You bet.

BILLY  
How hard up can people be?

Mom looks away, as do Gramps, Lawrence, and Sharon. Billy is oblivious to them as Maggie sees.

Maggie realizes it's time to change the topic.

MAGGIE  
I know, let's decorate for  
Christmas.

Maggie hauls in two boxes of Christmas decorations from the back closet and looks around.

She sets up a wooden Advent Calendar and sets the date to December 23rd.

Mom grabs some garland and decorates the front window with Lawrence's help.

MOM  
You can bring a small tree back  
from town tomorrow, Lawrence.

Maggie adds garland with small lights above the fireplace.

MAGGIE  
Nonsense. We'll cut one down in the  
forest behind the house.

GRAMPS  
(proudly)  
I cut one down every year.  
(uncertain)  
Didn't I, Maggie?

Mom turns to Gramps with compassion.

MOM  
(smiles)  
I'm sure you did, Gramps.

Gramps smiles at Mom.

Billy enters from the backdoor/mudroom carrying a large bottle of vodka.

BILLY  
Look what I found in the old vent  
for the dryer.

Everyone glares at Billy.

GRAMPS  
The Devil's Drink, Grandma used to  
say!

MOM  
That's not necessary, Billy.

MAGGIE  
My research shows that alcohol may  
lead more often to lust than  
intimacy or love.

Billy ignores them all.

BILLY  
We have a coffee machine, fresh  
ground espresso beans, and vodka.

Billy dances to the kitchen.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
It's Espresso Martini time. This is  
what I call a Christmas party.  
Lawrence, turn up the tunes!

Maggie grumbles at Billy as Lawrence and Sharon race to find martini glasses in the kitchen.

They open up several cabinets but don't find any.

MAGGIE  
My grandfather and I are extra wary  
of the effects alcohol has on  
families, especially ours. We don't  
have any...

BILLY

(laughs)

I found some mason jars. They'll do in a pinch.

MAGGIE

None for Gramps. It could be very dangerous for him and the people around him. The last time he drank wine at the retirement home, he put a handful of silverware in the microwave.

GRAMPS

(argues)

It was after one of my amnesia things.

MAGGIE

Which you can have at any time!  
It's why I didn't put a microwave in here. Gramps, why don't you decorate the cabin?

Sharon and Lawrence jump to help decorate to impress Maggie.

They decorate, laugh, and listen to Christmas music from an iPhone. Mom has the time of her life.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

(teasing)

So, you're all addicted to your electronic devices.

LAWRENCE

I wouldn't say addicted. I need it for work.

SHARON

Necessary evil for me. I'm a shopaholic.

BILLY

I use 'em for fun and to meet people.

Maggie turns to Billy with an inquisitive look.

MAGGIE

Online instead of in-person?

MOM

It's no wonder why they've all had  
difficulty with interpersonal  
relationships, my therapist says.

Lawrence, Sharon, and Billy are shocked and turn to Mom.

LAWRENCE

(in denial or disbelief)  
Really, Mom?

BILLY

Are you seeing a shrink?

SHARON

For how long?

MAGGIE

Good for you, Ms. Danson.

MOM

(sadly)  
I miss deep and meaningful  
conversations. Maybe I miss  
spooning too.

BILLY

Eww, Mom. We're in mixed company.

MOM

Is that so bad?

Maggie hugs Mom while glaring at her children.

MAGGIE

I hope they listen to you, Ms.  
Danson.

MOM

Call me, Luna, dear.

Lawrence, Sharon, and Mom sit at the table as Billy brings in  
three coffee-looking espresso martinis in mason jars from the  
kitchen.

Maggie gets up from the far end of the table and heads to the  
couch.

MAGGIE

Maybe I should get you home,  
Gramps.

Gramps doesn't respond. His eyes are open but unfocused.



Maggie studies him, worried. She speaks louder.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)  
Gramps! Gramps! Are you okay?

She checks his pulse and the others gather around her. She speaks in a quiet, soothing voice.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)  
Gramps, it's me, Maggie. Your  
loving granddaughter.

MOM  
I hope he's okay. We can't call 9-1-  
1.

BILLY  
(loud)  
Who rents a place without cell  
service and Internet?

MAGGIE  
(glares at Billy)  
Keep your voices down. The cell  
tower is not our responsibility.

LAWRENCE  
You could have provided cable  
Internet service.

MAGGIE  
Gramps can't afford it. I'm sorry.  
I've got him to think about now.

SHARON  
What can we do to help?

MAGGIE  
Keep the stress level low, and  
we'll keep him comfortable until  
the TGA subsides.

MOM  
I'll warm a blanket by the fire.

SHARON  
I'll make a warm cup of tea.

Maggie hugs Gramps.

MAGGIE  
You're going to be okay, Gramps.

Billy gathers the Espresso Martinis and returns them to the kitchen.

Lawrence turns down the Christmas music.

Sharon and Mom pace in the cabin as Maggie hugs Gramps.

ONE HOUR PASSES

Maggie's chin sinks to her chest in despair.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

I don't know what to do.

Gramps speaks in a soft, frightened voice.

GRAMPS

Who am I?

Maggie whispers to Mom.

MAGGIE

His name is Mickey Regan. My great-grandparents named him after Mickey Mouse in 1949.

Maggie establishes eye contact with Gramps.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Do you remember that, Mickey?

Gramps pauses and looks sadder.

GRAMPS

Where am I?

MAGGIE

You're... You're...

Mom sits by Gramps's side but she squirms on the uncomfortable couch.

MOM

You're home, Gramps.

Gramps looks slowly around the room.

He manages a weak smile.

MAGGIE

You're home, Gramps.

GRAMPS  
(to Maggie)  
I'd like to go to my bed.

He points to the bedroom.

MOM  
That's fine. I'll sleep on the  
couch.

MAGGIE  
Don't say that! That couch is  
awful.

Lawrence and Billy step up to help Gramps off the couch and walk him to the bedroom.

INT. CABIN, BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Maggie turns on a small lamp beside the bed.

Lawrence and Billy sit Gramps on the bed.

MAGGIE  
You'll feel better after a nap,  
Gramps.

Mom pats Gramps's shoulder.

MOM  
You'll be fine, Mickey.

Gramps looks in Maggie's direction and shakes in fear a little.

He looks in Mom's direction and smiles a little.

MAGGIE  
(to Mom)  
Looks like you've got the magic  
touch tonight.

Maggie helps get Gramps's clothes off as Lawrence and Billy exit. Sharon looks on with concern from the door.

SHARON  
(smiles)  
Looks like the old cowboy connected  
with you, Mom.

Maggie and Mom help Gramps into bed. He's on his side as Maggie covers him up.

Gramps looks nervous and frightened.

SHARON (CONT'D)

Spoon with him a while, Mom. Might  
be good for both of you.

Maggie smiles and hugs Sharon who melts with a smile.

MAGGIE

She doesn't have to...

They turn around to look at Mom who climbs on the other side  
of the bed on top of the covers, and spoons with Gramps.

Sharon grabs the warm blanket from the fireplace and covers  
her mom.

Gramps looks more comfortable and relaxed almost immediately.

Mom is smiling too.

Maggie tears up a little as Sharon shuts off the lamp and  
hugs Mom on the way out the door.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

He should be fine in a couple of  
hours.

Maggie gazes at Mom.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Luna, you're a kind friend with a  
wonderful family.

Mom smiles big and hugs Gramps even more as Maggie and Sharon  
shut the door.

INT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Maggie and Sharon return to the couch by the fire. They both  
grimace and squirm on the couch as neither is comfortable.

Lawrence and Billy pull chairs from the table near the couch.  
Lawrence points to the bedroom and whispers.

LAWRENCE

I'm not a huge fan of what's going  
on in there.

SHARON

She's on top of the covers. What's  
the worst that could happen?

BILLY  
(concerned)  
Could he get violent?

MAGGIE  
He's had only one TGA before, but  
he wasn't violent.

SHARON  
He looked quite content to me. I'll  
stand guard if it will make you  
guys feel better.

LAWRENCE  
I'll check on her in a few minutes.

BILLY  
This might be as good for Mom as it  
is for Gramps.

Maggie smiles at Billy.

MAGGIE  
I think so too. You're mom looked  
pretty stressed out some of the  
night.

SHARON  
Since Dad died.

Lawrence looks away.

LAWRENCE  
It's everything. Mom carries all  
our troubles on her back too.

Maggie sees that Sharon and Billy also look away.

BILLY  
It's because Lawrence is getting a  
divorce and Sharon doesn't have a  
husband.

Maggie is stunned as Lawrence and Sharon attack Billy. They  
push him and whisper.

LAWRENCE  
No one said anything about divorce.

SHARON  
How can you be so cruel?

Maggie stands and heads to the front door.

MAGGIE

On that note, I think I'll go.

Billy tries to stop her.

BILLY

What if your grandfather wakes up violently?

MAGGIE

He won't! But if ever any of you are uncomfortable with the situation, come knock on the door of the barn and I'll fetch him with my Jeep.

Billy is giddy with excitement.

BILLY

You're a Jeeper?

MAGGIE

(smiles)

It appears to be the only thing we have in common.

Maggie steps out and shuts the door.

Billy runs to the door, opens it a crack, and watches her walk away.

BILLY

(mumbles)

I think I'm in love.

He turns to see Lawrence and Sharon glaring at him.

SHARON

I'd better check on Mom.

Sharon opens the door to the bedroom and peeks in. Lawrence is peeking in right behind Sharon.

They see Mom sound asleep with a slight smile on her face. Her arm is around Gramps's ribcage.

Gramps is sound asleep with a slight smile on his face too.

Sharon shuts the bedroom door slowly and quietly.

SHARON (CONT'D)

Huh? Maybe it works.

INT. CABIN, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mom is still on top of the covers, with one arm around Gramps. She's smiling a little.

BEGIN DREAM SEQUENCE

Mom is spooning with a man (Gustov, 55, her late husband who is very much alive and smiling).

Mom is under the covers with Gustov. We SEE her bare shoulders and Gustov't bare chest.

Mom's hand is roaming under the covers causing Gustov to moan in delight.

Mom moans too. The serotonin is flowing freely in this happy scene.

END DREAM SEQUENCE

Mom is back on top of the covers, with one arm around Gramps. She's smiling a little and has a barely audible happy moan.

INT. CABIN, MUDROOM - NIGHT

Lawrence is in the bottom bunk, and Billy is in the top bunk on one side of the mudroom.

Sharon is on the bottom bunk on the other side of the mudroom.

They are freezing with only a single blanket on each of them. They are tired and snarky.

LAWRENCE

Thanks for throwing us under the bus out there, Billy.

SHARON

What were you hoping to gain, you turd!

LAWRENCE

You didn't exactly improve your chances with her.

SHARON

And what are you going to say when your new lover, Sheila shows up tomorrow, probably wearing her Sports Illustrated bikini?

BILLY

Wishful thinking on your part,  
Sharon. She knows it's winter.

LAWRENCE

Sounds like you pegged a Rhode's  
Scholar this time, Billy. Is she  
driving a convertible sports car?

BILLY

I reserved her a Jeep at the  
airport if she needs it.

SHARON

Another Jeeper. You have enough for  
a senseless club.

BILLY

Like your Gay Rights club.

SHARON

That's Diane's thing.

LAWRENCE

I understand she couldn't make it  
today because of that March in  
Oklahoma.

SHARON

Nebraska.

LAWRENCE

Same thing.

BILLY

Diane would have loved to see you  
drooling over Maggie tonight.

SHARON

I wasn't drooling as much as  
Lawrence.

(sweetly)

Well, maybe I was a little smitten.  
I don't think Diane will notice.

LAWRENCE

Did she lose her eyesight and sense  
of smell?

SHARON

Leave me alone, you two. We have  
the best relationship of all of us.

(sadly)

(MORE)



SHARON (CONT'D)

Except when we talk about children.  
We're just so busy!

Sharon fights back tears...

Lawrence tries to sound upbeat.

LAWRENCE

Couples often go through a rough  
patch now and again. Mom told  
Natalia that she wants at least  
three grandchildren and that she's  
not holding out for you two.

SHARON

That puts a lot of pressure on  
Natalia.

LAWRENCE

Not to mention, on me. I want  
kids...  
(fights back tears)  
But I don't have time for them.

Billy climbs down from the top bunk holding his blanket.

BILLY

Tell you what. I'll let you two  
have a good cry-out and I'll go  
sleep on the most uncomfortable  
couch in the world.

Billy exits.

INT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Billy sits on the left side of the couch and is immediately  
uncomfortable. He moves to the center of the couch and is  
uncomfortable. He moves to the right side of the couch and  
grimaces.

Billy lays down with his head to the left and tries with his  
head to the right.

He gets up and sits in a wooden chair at the table.

He stares at the front door.

Billy stands and wraps the blanket around his shoulder. He  
slips his shoes on at the front door and sneaks out.

EXT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Billy stares down at the barn that has a small light shining in the window.

He trudges down to the barn slowly and cautiously, thinking about what he'll say.

EXT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

Billy knocks on the door gently.

Maggie opens the door a crack with a worried look.

MAGGIE

Is everything okay with Gramps?

Billy looks away shyly.

BILLY

Oh, yeah. Nothing like that.  
Lawrence and Sharon told me they  
hadn't seen Mom that content in a  
year.

Maggie looks away and then back to Billy.

MAGGIE

Then why are you here?

Billy takes a step back.

BILLY

I couldn't sleep. I don't think  
that I treated you respectfully  
today and I wanted to apologize.  
(beat)  
Sorry.

Billy starts to turn and walks away.

MAGGIE

Wait. I don't think I was fair with  
you either. I'm having a cup of  
tea. Do you want to join me? It  
might help you sleep.

Billy smiles slightly.

BILLY

If it wouldn't be a bother.

Maggie swings open the door to reveal that she's wearing a pair of Grandpa's oversized pajamas from the retirement home.

MAGGIE

No jokes about the pajamas. I wasn't planning on staying.

Billy looks around the small barn made into a studio apartment. It contains a double bed, a reading chair, several books on birds and wildlife, a coffeemaker, a hotplate, a small fridge, and a landline telephone.

His eyes are glued to the telephone.

BILLY

I thought there was no landline here.

MAGGIE

Not in the rental cabin. We had to keep one in the barn for emergencies.

BILLY

(compassionately)  
For Gramps.

MAGGIE

He lived here instead of the cabin after Grandma died and before I finally moved him to town. That big cabin was too lonely for him.

BILLY

Big cabin?

MAGGIE

The entire back half of the cabin was crushed by the same snowstorm that took out the cell tower. We lost a larger family room with a separate fireplace, a library, a sunroom, the master bedroom, and two guest bedrooms.

BILLY

What? Storms are that powerful here?

MAGGIE

They are like a targeted atmospheric river. Gramps didn't have the funds to rebuild.

BILLY

And you had to rent what you had  
left to pay the property taxes.  
(suspicious)  
No insurance?

MAGGIE

He lost his homeowners insurance a  
few years ago by not removing the  
forest fuels around the cabin.  
Defensible space, they called it.

BILLY

Preventative fire safety makes  
perfect sense. That would have paid  
you to rebuild.

Maggie pours Billy a cup of tea. She sits on the bed. He sits  
in the chair.

MAGGIE

I know that now! Gramps's library  
was filled with books on philosophy  
and critical thinking.

Billy stands, excited as Maggie studies him.

BILLY

That was my major in college. My  
thesis was on "Developing Critical  
Thinking and Logical Reasoning in  
Elementary Schoolchildren."

Their eyes meet and they share a moment.

Maggie looks back at the phone.

MAGGIE

Why were you so interested in the  
phone earlier? Was it because I  
didn't run down here to call 9-1-1  
when Gramps suffered his TGA?

BILLY

(looks away)

No. I was supposed to call my  
friend and give her directions on  
how to get here. With all the  
commotion, I forgot to call her  
from the meadow while your Gramps  
was incapacitated and couldn't  
shoot me.

MAGGIE

I filled his shotgun with liquid solder and he didn't have any shells. He's harmless.

BILLY

We didn't know.

Maggie points to the phone.

MAGGIE

Go ahead. Make your call to your Christmas date.

Billy paces in nervousness.

BILLY

I don't know. I think she knows how to get here.

(looks away)

I just wanted to say goodnight to her.

Maggie is taken aback.

MAGGIE

(smiles)

That's so sweet.

(beat)

I'll wait outside while you call.

Maggie grabs Billy's blanket from the chair and she steps outside.

EXT. BARN - SAME

Maggie shivers outside while Billy makes a short phone call inside.

She HEARS Billy whispering, but can't make out the words.

She HEARS him giggle, and she smiles.

She HEARS him speak a little louder.

BILLY (O.C.)

Goodnight. See you tomorrow.

She HEARS Billy hang up but waits patiently outside.

Billy opens the door.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
Won't you come in? Your tea's  
getting cold.

Maggie giggles and steps in.

INT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

Maggie hands Billy the blanket and returns to sit on the bed.  
Billy remains standing.

MAGGIE  
It was nice hearing you giggle.  
(catches herself)  
Oh, I wasn't eavesdropping.

BILLY  
Thanks for the use of your phone. I  
should go now.

She reaches out a hand to stop him.

MAGGIE  
Wait. Tell me why you didn't pursue  
a career in philosophy and critical  
thinking.

BILLY  
(laughs)  
It doesn't pay as well as  
carpentry. Have you ever looked for  
a job with a master's degree in  
philosophy?

Maggie stands and laughs.

MAGGIE  
I'm about to look for work in  
psychology, but I see your point.

They make eye contact again and share another moment.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)  
Thanks for stopping by. I look  
forward to meeting your Christmas  
date tomorrow.

Maggie opens the door for Billy who is wrapped in his blanket  
again.

BILLY

As long as my mom has the best  
Christmas ever, everything will be  
fine. I hope your Gramps is okay.

Billy exits.

MAGGIE

That's very thoughtful of you  
Billy. Goodnight.

BILLY

Goodnight.

Maggie watches Billy walk back to the cabin. She tilts her  
head and smiles before shutting the door.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

Billy enters the cabin and considers his sleeping options by  
first looking at the bunk beds in the mudroom. He shakes his  
head, 'No.'

He SEES Sharon on her lower bunk and Lawrence on his lower  
bunk, but they are both restless.

Billy walks in and stares at the couch. He shakes his head,  
'No.' He takes his pillow from the couch and tosses it down  
on the floor in front of a dwindling fire.

He falls quickly to sleep.

BEGIN DREAM SEQUENCE

EXT. BARN - NIGHT

Billy walks confidently to the front door of the barn and  
knocks loudly on the door.

BILLY

Open up!

Billy pauses and knocks again.

BILLY (CONT'D)

I said, open up!

Billy is shocked when Gramps opens the door and Billy sees  
his mom in Gramps's bed sound asleep.

END DREAM SEQUENCE

Billy is sitting straight up, wide awake, and his forehead is sweaty.

He shakes his head, "No," wipes his forehead with his forearm and lays back down.

He falls asleep immediately.

BEGIN DREAM SEQUENCE

EXT. BARN - NIGHT

Billy walks slowly to the front door of the barn and knocks softly on the door.

BILLY  
Maggie, I don't mean to bother you.  
I just wanted to apologize.

MAGGIE (O.C.)  
Billy? Is that you?

Maggie quickly opens the door wearing a sexy nightgown.

Billy panics and takes a step back.

BILLY  
No! No! This isn't real! No.

MAGGIE  
Of course, it's real, Billy. Why  
don't you come in and lay with me?

BILLY  
I could use a good spooning  
session.

She pulls him to the bed.

MAGGIE  
Of course, you can, Billy.

LATER

Billy is fast asleep spooning with "a woman" (SHIELA; 35) from behind. Billy's hand is on her breast, and realizing this, Billy wakes up. We DON'T SEE Shiela's face.

Billy sits up immediately and whispers.

BILLY  
Sheila?

END DREAM SEQUENCE



Billy is sitting straight up, wide awake, and his forehead is sweaty.

Billy lays back down, but his eyes remain wide open.

INT. CABIN - MORNING

Mom, fully dressed, steps over Billy who stirs awake as Mom changes the Advent Calendar to December 24th.

Billy sits up, still a little groggy from lack of sleep.

BILLY

Good morning, Mom. How did you sleep?

Mom smiles as Billy's eyes are drawn to Gramps's backside in the kitchen. Gramps wears only boxer shorts and a red Christmas apron.

MOM

I slept better than I have in a year. How did you sleep?

Mom heads to the kitchen.

BILLY

Weird dreams.

MOM

You were just excited about Christmas, I bet. I'll get you coffee. Mickey is making his world-famous cinnamon buns.

Billy stares at Gramps.

BILLY

Mickey?

MOM

He prefers, Gramps. But when his memory came back, I asked him all sorts of questions.

BILLY

Last night?

MOM

And all morning. Did you know this cabin had five other rooms and a master bath with a glass shower facing the forest?

Mom brings Billy coffee.

BILLY

Yes, Maggie told me last night.

Gramps glares at Billy with a look that would kill, but Mom doesn't see it.

Billy stands, fully clothed, to explain himself.

BILLY (CONT'D)

I... I...

Maggie knocks once and bounds in the front door with a smile. She's wearing an old tacky Christmas sweater and her clothes from the day before.

She runs straight to Gramps, who smiles at her.

MAGGIE

Gramps, are you okay? Are you making your cinnamon rolls?

Lawrence and Sharon enter looking a bit tired and they head straight to the coffee.

LAWRENCE

Morning.

SHARON

Morning.

GRAMPS

(to Maggie)

I'm fine. You must have slept in the barn.

(glares at Billy)

Alone, I hope.

Maggie hugs Gramps.

MAGGIE

Of course, alone. But after breakfast, I'm taking you back to your residence to get you checked out.

Gramps is cantankerous.

GRAMPS

Nope. Luna said I could stay for Christmas Eve dinner.

Mom smiles.

MOM

He's right. You must stay too, of course. It's a simple potluck meal like we've always done.

Mom checks the list on her phone.

MOM (CONT'D)

I'm baking a ham with pineapple.

GRAMPS

Beats the mystery meat at the home.

MOM

(smiles at Lawrence)

Your Natalia is bringing fresh green beans and a salad.

(smiles at Sharon)

Your Diane is bringing store-bought pecan and pumpkin pies.

SHARON

Mom, please don't call them, "Your Natalia and your Diane." It denotes ownership.

Mom ignores the comment.

MOM

(smiles at Billy)

Billy and his new friend, Sheila, will be making the mashed potatoes and gravy.

BILLY

How did you arrange all this.

MOM

I called everyone from the meadow this morning. Mickey allowed it, since it was Christmas.

Lawrence and Sharon stare at Gramps.

LAWRENCE

Mickey?

SHARON

Mickey?

MOM

And, both Diane and Natalia are bringing blow-up mattresses so the kids can have an old-fashioned campout right here after we move the table tonight. Won't that be grand?

Lawrence, Sharon, and Billy are stunned.

BILLY

(glances at the mudroom)  
I suppose Sheila and I have the bunk beds?

MOM

Oh, I didn't invite Sheila to spend the evening. Sorry.

Billy turns angry, and Maggie's eyes open wide.

Billy grabs his smartphone and heads to the door.

BILLY

I'd better call Sheila.  
(glares at Gramps)  
I'll be in the meadow. Don't shoot me.

Maggie waits for the door to shut, and grabs a small ax from the fireplace.

MAGGIE

I'm going to make us a centerpiece for the table.

Maggie races to the back door.

EXT. MEADOW - CONTINUOUS

Billy stomps around trying to get service bars on his phone.

First, he has 'no service,' and then one bar, and then two.

He uses speed-dial to connect to Sheila on a video call. His phone has a background photo of a beautiful professional woman in a business suit and with stylish glasses.

Behind the cabin, Maggie spies on Billy and listens in.

SHEILA

William, how did you sleep? I missed you.

BILLY

I missed you too. I heard that my mom called you.

Billy glances back at the cabin.

SHEILA

She must have gotten my number from your phone. You didn't tell her I was staying at your place, did you?

BILLY

She's been depressed a lot this year. I didn't want to get her all worked up.

SHEILA

(disappointed)

I see. She sure didn't sound depressed this morning on the phone.

BILLY

I didn't mean it like that. I think Lawrence's wife might divorce him, and Sharon's wife is a loose cannon on gay rights, and I didn't want to add the stress.

SHEILA

Thanks for reserving the rental jeep, but my car will make it. And, I'll help you make the mashed potatoes and gravy your mom asked for.

BILLY

I'll make it up to you, I promise!

SHEILA

I'll see you in a few hours.

(she sees the meadow)

Wait. Are you calling me from a meadow?

BILLY

Ha! Long story. See you soon.

Billy ends the call and runs back to the cabin.

INT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Billy returns to see everyone sitting at the table drinking coffee and eating cinnamon rolls. Now, the table sports a beautiful centerpiece: the top 18 inches of a pine tree nailed into a homemade tree stand.

Maggie adds a single tree ornament to one branch of the centerpiece.

Billy points at the centerpiece and chuckles.

BILLY

I love the Charlie Brown Christmas tree knockoff.

MAGGIE

(smiles at Billy)

It's a hack-off, but at least we own it.

Sharon jumps up.

SHARON

(to Gramps)

I should call Diane. Mind if I borrow your meadow?

GRAMPS

Go ahead, little lady.

MAGGIE

(to Sharon)

Be careful. Voices carry a long way across that meadow.

Billy glances at the centerpiece before glaring at Maggie.

SHARON

Thanks for the warning.

Sharon exits.

MOM

Lawrence, I assume you'll be using the open-air phone booth next.

Lawrence looks nervously at the front door.

LAWRENCE

No, I think we'll chat after she arrives.

Lawrence looks away as he takes a bite of a cinnamon roll.

EXT. CABIN - AFTERNOON

Billy, Maggie, Lawrence, and Sharon are bundled up and kicking a soccer ball around in the meadow. They laugh and have a good time as Diane arrives in a quiet, electric SUV.

Sharon is busy dribbling around Maggie to see or hear Diane drive up.

DIANE WONG (25), a passionate Asian woman, opens the door, exits, and smiles warmly at Sharon, which Maggie sees.

Sharon finally sees Diane and yells.

SHARON

Diane, you made it, my love!

Sharon runs to her smiling, and Diane runs to Sharon. Both are glowing with love as a perfect couple.

SHARON (CONT'D)

I've missed you so much.

DIANE

It's only been one night!

SHARON

It was the longest night of my life.

(yells to Maggie)

Maggie, I'd like you to meet my wife, Diane Wong.

Maggie runs up, chipper as can be to hug Diane.

DIANE

Any friend of Sharon's is a friend of mine.

MAGGIE

Hi, Diane. Welcome to the "Lodge," but I can explain.

DIANE

(to Sharon)

Where Sharon is, so is my love.

SHARON

Diane, you're all I need.

Sharon kisses Diane.

BILLY

That's what I see. Not much room  
for the rest of the family in  
there.

Maggie turns to Billy like she doesn't get Billy's point.

MAGGIE

What?

Billy is embarrassed.

BILLY

They're so busy in work and love,  
it's hard to get them to family  
functions so we do a lot of video  
calls, but it's not the same.

Sharon and Diane shrug and chuckle.

SHARON

Billy's right. Damn him.

DIANE

But we made it this time!

Lawrence races up and pulls Maggie toward the cabin.

LAWRENCE

Let's go inside and warm up, shall  
we?

Diane chuckles at the cabin and when she SEES the sign for  
the Deluxe Pine Tree Lodge.

She hugs Sharon as they enter.

INT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Lawrence, Maggie, Billy, Sharon, and Diane enter the cabin.  
Mom leaps toward Diane.

MOM

Diane, thank you so much for  
joining us in person. It's been  
years since we all had Christmas  
together. I know you two are always  
busy between LA and New York City,  
but the family misses you.

Mom squeezes in for a hug that is only loosely returned.



DIANE  
 (mumbles)  
 We meet when we can.

Mom turns to Gramps in the kitchen. Gramps is now fully dressed but still wears the Christmas apron.

MOM  
 Mickey, this is Diane.

Mom pauses and smiles at Sharon.

MOM (CONT'D)  
 She's Sharon's wife.

Gramps's eyes look a bit perplexed as he studies Diane and walks toward her.

GRAMPS  
 (cantankerous)  
 Back in my day...

Maggie runs up and intercepts Gramps and interrupts him.

MAGGIE  
 Gas was thirty cents a gallon, and when you were 16 years old they passed the Voters Rights Act for Black people...

Maggie leads Gramps into the kitchen.

SHARON  
 How about some water or Billy makes a mean Espresso Martini?

DIANE  
 That's what I want but hold the Espresso.

Billy runs to fetch the vodka.

Diane looks around the cabin.

DIANE (CONT'D)  
 It looks so much bigger on the website.

MOM  
 You did bring the queen-sized blow-up mattress that I talked about on the phone?

DIANE

I thought "queen-sized" was a gay slur and you were kidding about the mattress.

(chuckles warmly)

What kind of a lodge doesn't have guest rooms?

GRAMPS

(proudly)

The Deluxe Pine Tree Lodge!

Everyone but Diane laughs and smiles.

SHARON

(smiles to Maggie)

We're getting along fine.

(to Diane)

It's fun. You'll see.

Diane shoots a short glare at Maggie and then smiles at Sharon.

DIANE

We'll be fine. Sharon, help me bring in the pies.

Diane exits with Sharon following behind.

EXT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Diane gets to the SUV and opens up the passenger door.

She takes out two pie boxes and hands them to Sharon.

DIANE

I'm not sure there's room for us here, especially after we all eat pie.

Sharon is confident and gutsy.

SHARON

I'm staying here. I love the great outdoors and you do too.

DIANE

You're crushing on that false advertiser, Maggie. I saw her photo on the website.

SHARON

They lost half the lodge in last year's worst storm. You remember, the Atmospheric Shiver.

DIANE

Atmospheric River?

SHARON

Ten feet of heavy snow, hundred-mile-an-hour winds, and freezing cold temps. Took out the cell tower too.

Diane checks her phone.

DIANE

No service. No Wi-fi.  
(hugs Sharon)  
How will we ever survive?

Diane starts to walk to the driver's side, but Sharon stops her and kisses her.

SHARON

Tonight, I'll teach you about proper spooning.

DIANE

Spooning?

SHARON

It will be a night you'll never forget! It's all about the serotonin increases and blood pressure decreases.

Diane tilts her head, warms, and smiles.

DIANE

Why do I let you talk me into these things?

Sharon turns confidently with the two pie boxes.

SHARON

Because you love me.

As they enter the cabin, NATALIA DANSON (28), a feisty Latina, races up in a sporty AWD SUV. She dresses in high-end winter fashion and nice boots. She opens the hatch door but ignores the small suitcase and overnight bag.

She exits the SUV and looks at the small cabin with a laugh.

She tucks a bottle of sparkling cider under her arm and carries a casserole dish covered in aluminum foil with a salad bowl on top to the door.

Lawrence exits with a huge smile. He closes the door and whispers to her.

LAWRENCE

I wasn't sure you'd come.

NATALIA

It was a last-minute decision after your Mom called me this morning. I hadn't heard her sound so happy in a long time. I wanted to encourage her.

LAWRENCE

It was the spooning?

Natalia is puzzled.

NATALIA

The what?

LAWRENCE

I'll explain later.

NATALIA

Get my bags from the car.  
(glares at Lawrence)  
That stupid queen-sized blow-up mattress your mom ordered is back there too!  
(sadly)  
We still need to talk, but it can wait.

Lawrence's face immediately shifts from a smile to a look of concern. He forces a smile.

LAWRENCE

Yes, Dear. I'm so happy you came.  
(kisses her on the cheek)  
Merry Christmas.

NATALIA

We'll see.

Lawrence opens the door for Natalia and goes to fetch the luggage.

INT. CABIN - SAME

Christmas music plays softly in the background, but the small cabin's chaos drowns it out. Gramps is dressed in his boxer shorts and Christmas apron, angrily keeping everyone out.

GRAMPS

I want all the strangers out of my kitchen.

Maggie tries to hug him, but he pushes her out of the kitchen.

MAGGIE

(pleading)

They're not strangers, they're renting the cabin.

Diane storms in from the mudroom.

DIANE

I'm not sleeping in a tiny bunk bed.

SHARON

I slept there last night and survived.

Mom interrogates Natalia.

MOM

If Lawrence and you aren't getting along, you can tell us about it. There are no secrets in the family.

NATALIA

With all due respect, Luna, that's our business, not yours.

MOM

I know when Lawrence says 'with all due respect' in court, he means the opposite.

Lawrence laughs and gets an immediate glare from Natalia.

LAWRENCE

She's right you know.

Billy laughs as he comes in from the bathroom.

BILLY

Hey, Maggie, the toilet's clogged...

Maggie spins, gets in Billy's face, and interrupts.

MAGGIE  
That's not my...

Billy calms her down by speaking softly.

BILLY  
I can't find your plunger!

Maggie calms down and smiles.

MAGGIE  
I think I borrowed it for the barn.  
I'll go get it.

BILLY  
I'll fetch it.

Maggie leaps to the door.

MAGGIE  
I could use a break from this  
madhouse.

Maggie exits.

Mom gets in Billy's face, clearly upset.

MOM  
Where's this mysterious girlfriend  
of yours? She's bringing the  
potatoes and we have to get them  
peeled and boiled!

BILLY  
She's coming, Mom. Stay calm.

Mom is more agitated.

MOM  
Telling a woman to stay calm has  
the opposite effect. Didn't you  
learn anything in college?

LAWRENCE  
He learned he wanted to be a lowly  
carpenter.

Billy gets in Lawrence's face.

BILLY  
Harrison Ford was a carpenter!

LAWRENCE

You're no, Harrison Ford, Billy.  
You're like a Ford pickup. Common  
as they come.

BILLY

(angrier)

Better than being a soon-to-be-  
divorced lawyer!

Natalia gets in Billy's face as Diane snickers.

DIANE

This is getting good.

NATALIA

Where did you hear that nonsense?

Billy turns to Sharon.

SHARON

I heard you weren't getting along.

Mom glares at Sharon.

MOM

Some of the things I say are in  
confidence.

SHARON

Mom keeps saying there are no  
secrets in a family.

Lawrence gets in Sharon's face.

LAWRENCE

Like your relationship never hits a  
rough patch!

Diane leans in to kiss Sharon on the lips, and they both  
laugh.

DIANE

Only when we're with the family!

SHEILA JACKSON (40), a stunning black woman in a stylish  
green dress and heels, COUGHS loudly at the door. Sheila  
holds a bottle of wine and a 10-pound bag of potatoes.

The crowd turns silent and stunned as they turn to see  
Sheila.

BILLY  
Professor Jackson, how long have  
you...

SHEILA  
Long enough.

Billy goes to hook arms with Shiela and leads her in, as  
Maggie enters to door with the toilet plunger held high.

BILLY  
Mom, and everyone, this is  
Professor Sheila Jackson, Chair of  
the Philosophy Department at the  
University.

Maggie sees Shiela and quickly puts the toilet plunger behind  
her back.

MAGGIE  
Doctor Jackson, what are you doing  
here?

Sheila turns and smiles at Maggie.

SHEILA  
I was asked to help William whip up  
mashed potatoes and gravy for  
dinner.

Sheila goes to shake hands with Maggie who holds out the  
plunger with her right hand and changes it to her left hand.

Both Maggie and Sheila pull back their hands for sanitary  
reasons.

MAGGIE  
Dr. Jackson heads my thesis  
committee.

SHEILA  
That strange topic about spooning  
and human intimacy, is that the  
one, Ms. Regan?

Megan turns away, devastated.

MAGGIE  
That's the one.

Billy changes the subject with introductions.



BILLY

That's my mom, Luna Danson, my older brother, Lawrence, and his wife, Natalia. Over there we have my sister Sharon and her wife, Diane.

(points to Gramps)

And the exhibitionist in the kitchen is Maggie's Grandpa or Gramps.

MOM

It's so nice to finally meet you, Dr. Jackson.

(glares at Billy)

We've heard so little about you.

SHEILA

And no presents. You specified only our presence! And I couldn't find a blow-up mattress so I brought a case of wine.

Many eyes are raised in the room, especially Maggie's.

MAGGIE

I was just about to take Gramps back to his residence in town.

MOM

Nonsense! You're staying for dinner.

MAGGIE

I'm so sorry. Wish we could stay, but he needs to get back.

Maggie points at Billy and then back to Sheila.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

(confused)

You two are a...

Everyone HEARS a THUMP in the kitchen as Gramps falls to the floor on his back.

Mom and Maggie race to Gramps.

MOM

Mickey, are you okay?

Maggie takes his pulse as Gramps's legs tense up and shake for an instant. Saliva exits the side of Gramps's mouth.

MAGGIE

He's got a pulse and he's breathing. He must of have had another TGA. Help me get him to the bedroom.

Gramps opens his eyes but has a blank, ominous stare.

Lawrence and Billy race to pick Gramps up and cart him to the bedroom.

SHEILA

A Transient Global Amnesia episode?

Sheila takes out her smartphone.

Maggie follows Lawrence and Billy while talking.

MAGGIE

He's had three TGA episodes in the past year, but two of them in the past two days. Right here!

SHEILA

I don't have service. Someone else has to...

SHARON

There's no service in the cabin. I'll go to the meadow.

BILLY

I'll call out from the barn.

Maggie exits the bedroom with a sad face and Billy and Sharon reach the front door.

MAGGIE

Don't bother.

Mom runs to hug Maggie.

MOM

Is he d...

MAGGIE

He'll pull through this one like the last one. His advanced medical directive is very clear. He doesn't want so much as an oxygen mask, much less an IV or a heart monitor.

MOM

What? That's ridiculous!

MAGGIE

That's his call. Last year he wanted to get "DNR" tattooed on his forehead but I wouldn't let him. Since Grandma died and my parent moved to New York City five years ago, he's lost his will to live.

The mood sours.

SHARON

(to Maggie)

Don't your parents stay in touch with him?

MAGGIE

He refused to get a smartphone, tablet, or computer. He prefers personal visits or a landline phone call.

Lawrence and Billy exit the bedroom.

MOM

I understand.

LAWRENCE

He appears stable, but sad.

MAGGIE

I fill them in, but he misses out, and so do they. It's so sad.

SHEILA

What can we do?

MAGGIE

We cook dinner and hope he comes out of it in a few hours. If not, I'll take him back to his residence and get him checked out.

MOM

(worried)

Checked out? It sounds like you're having him put to sleep.

Billy hugs Maggie.

BILLY

He's comfortable, Maggie. Mom didn't mean that!

Billy shoots Mom a glare.

Lawrence tries to change the subject gleefully.

LAWRENCE

Who wants a glass of wine?

Everyone raises a hand.

INT. CABIN - LATER

Billy and Sheila peel potatoes as Mom puts a big pot of water on the stove. Everyone else, except Natalia, sits at the table with a half glass of wine and a sour face. Natalia's wine glass is full.

Maggie glares at Sheila and then puts on a fake smile.

MAGGIE

Dr. Jackson, how long have you been seeing Billy?

Billy snickers and draws a glare from Maggie. Sheila uses air quotes.

SHEILA

What makes you think William and I are "seeing" each other?

BILLY

We're just friends. I took three classes from Dr. Jackson.

SHEILA

Intro to Philosophy, Critical Thinking, and Logic.

Lawrence laughs and raises his glass of wine.

LAWRENCE

Nothing useful, then?

Sharon stands like a legislator.

SHARON

Point of clarification! Is it ethically acceptable for a professor and student to become romantically engaged?

Mom turns to Billy, shocked.

MOM

Are you engaged?

Billy stops peeling potatoes and addresses the crowd.

BILLY

This is how hurtful rumors spread.

The potatoes are peeled and dropped in the pot.

Billy heads for the table, while Sheryl heads for the couch.

She sits in three different spots on the couch, but each is uncomfortable.

Billy walks slowly to the table and stands by Maggie who focuses on her wine glass.

BILLY (CONT'D)

After I graduated last May, I ran into Dr. Jackson at the grocery store.

Sheila joins everyone at the table. She glares at the couch and shakes her head in disgust.

SHEILA

He was buying cheap beans, rice, tortillas, and peanut butter, so I figured he hadn't landed a job yet.

DIANE

(sarcastic)

With all those philosophy skills? Shocking!

Lawrence and Diane chuckle.

BILLY

I was working odd carpentry jobs.

SHEILA

And I wanted to remodel my two bathrooms over Christmas Break, so I hired him on the spot.

Sharon, Mom, and Maggie roll their eyes in disbelief.

BILLY

Last week, we had to shut off her water for a week to reroute the plumbing so I offered her my guest room so she didn't have to stay in an expensive hotel.

SHEILA

(to Mom)

That was very kind of your son. I was able to move back home yesterday.

BILLY

And she paid me in full. I offered to rent her a Jeep but she insisted on driving her car so she could go home tonight.

Maggie stands and gazes at Billy.

MAGGIE

So you too weren't... aren't...?

SHEILA

(to Maggie)

William was the perfect gentleman.

BILLY

And she was the perfect roomie. We talked philosophy and critical thinking late into every night.

Maggie smiles.

BILLY (CONT'D)

She may have convinced me to go on for my Ph.D.

MAGGIE

That would be wonderful.

Maggie hugs Billy and they share a moment.

Natalia pulls out a bottle of sparkling cider from underneath the table and stands with a full glass of wine.

Lawrence moves next to her and they hook arms and smile big.

NATALIA

We're pregnant!

Mom screams with delight and races to hug Natalia, as Lawrence collapses into his chair, stunned and frightened.

LAWRENCE

(to Natalia)

I thought you were going to announce you weren't going to divorce me.

SHARON

So that's why you're not drinking!  
I thought you two weren't getting  
along.

LAWRENCE

She's been sick every morning and  
irritable. I assumed it was me. I  
didn't think we had time for kids.

BILLY

You must have had time to make one.

NATALIA

(laughs)  
We might be having twins.

Everyone cheers as Billy elbows Sharon and whispers to her.

BILLY

Divorce, huh? Another ugly rumor.

Sharon laughs defensively.

SHARON

I didn't know.

Diane entwines her arm with Sharon's.

DIANE

We volunteer to babysit, spoil them  
rotten, and then toss them back!

SHARON

Yes, we do!

Everyone congratulates Lawrence and Natalia.

BILLY

Uh oh! There is only one blow-up  
mattress.

LAWRENCE

And that's ours! Right here in  
front of the fire.

NATALIA

He might even get lucky tonight.

Everyone laughs.

LAWRENCE

I'm going to teach her all about  
spooning.

Sheila turns her head.

SHEILA

How is that unconventional research  
of yours going, Ms. Regan?

MAGGIE

Better than I could dreamed of,  
Professor.

SHEILA

How so?

MAGGIE

My research measured significant  
increases in serotonin in couples  
who enjoyed spooning for as little  
as fifteen minutes compared to  
control subjects lying next to each  
other but without touching. We also  
found a significant decrease in  
blood pressure, an indicator that's  
easier to measure.

SHEILA

Interesting. Great idea. Who knew?

MAGGIE

I found that spooning elicits the  
same response across genders and  
ages.

SHEILA

Completely non-sexual?

MAGGIE

Yes.

LAWRENCE

I was skeptical until Maggie, I  
mean, Ms. Regan demonstrated  
spooning with me.

Natalia glares at Lawrence.

NATALIA

What?

LAWRENCE

Don't worry, Dear. I'll show you  
tonight.

MOM

I tested spooning out on Mickey.



Sheila turns her head to Mom.

MOM (CONT'D)

I mean Gramps. I mean Mr. Regan.

MAGGIE

The subject was anxious and agitated during his Amnesia episode last night.

Sheila turns her head to the bedroom.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

We observed an immediate calming effect on both Mr. Regan and Mom, I mean, Mrs. Danson.

MOM

It was my best sleep since my husband passed.

Maggie grabs Billy's hand and pulls him toward the couch.

MAGGIE

I can demonstrate the technique with Billy's help.

Maggie lies on the couch and pats the cushion for Billy to lie alongside her.

Surprisingly, Billy is hesitant.

SHEILA

I don't blame him. That's a very uncomfortable couch.

Everyone chuckles as Billy surrenders.

After a few moments of spooning, Billy can't hide his ecstasy. Everyone sees that Maggie is enjoying it just as much.

Sheila and Mom stand together and smile at the cute young couple.

LAWRENCE

Should we throw cold water on them?

Maggie and Billy laugh as Maggie pushes Billy off the couch.

Sharon raises her hand.

SHEILA

Do you have something to add?

SHARON

I confess that Lawrence and I tested this spooning thing out last night.

All eyes turn to Lawrence and Sharon.

Lawrence is defensive.

LAWRENCE

It was very cold and both of us were worried that Mom wouldn't have a great Christmas.

MAGGIE

Sharon admitted to me this morning that it was a soothing experience.

Sheila stands and shakes Maggie's hand.

SHEILA

Ms. Regan, now I can't wait to read your Master's Thesis. It sounds like an important contribution to William's strange and wonderful family and the scientific community at large. What a great human intimacy topic you selected to work on. You should be very proud.

MAGGIE

Thanks, Professor.

Sheila hugs Mom.

MOM

You can't leave, you haven't had dinner yet.

SHEILA

I'm sorry, I have to go. My mom insists I take her to church Christmas morning, and I can't let her down.

Sheila shakes Billy's hand and they gaze into each other's eyes and share a moment.

SHEILA (CONT'D)

Special thanks for the bathroom remodel.

(glances to the bathroom)

This place could use your next remodel.

MOM

That's a wonderful idea.

Mom pauses to think as Sheila looks into Billy's eyes.

SHEILA

And, William, I'll never forget the kindness you showed me letting me stay with you while I was without water. I brought you all a gift.

Sheila runs out to her SUV and returns with the Parker Brother's game, "Clue."

SHEILA (CONT'D)

It's the ultimate game for evidence-based critical thinking.

(laughs)

And William says y'all often want to kill each other anyway.

They all laugh.

EXT. CABIN - LATE AFTERNOON

They all wave goodbye to Sheila.

MOM

What a wonderful woman and role model. And she gave me some wonderful ideas.

INT. CABIN - LATER

Everyone but Gramps is around the dinner table, although Gramps has a place setting waiting.

MAGGIE

Billy just checked on Gramps. He's resting comfortably.

BILLY

He looked like he'd been napping, except he kept opening one eye.

Maggie turns irate. She yells toward the bedroom.

MAGGIE

One eye open! Gramps! Get your butt out here now!

Gramps trudges out of the bedroom wearing his boxer shorts and Christmas apron.

Maggie stands and scolds Gramps like a school child. Everyone else looks confused.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

I get it now! You faked those amnesia episodes, didn't you?

Mom is sympathetic.

MOM

He wouldn't do a thing like that! Causing us all needless worry.

Maggie stomps over to Gramps and gets in his face.

MAGGIE

You faked an amnesia episode so I couldn't drive you back to your residence and so this poor woman...  
(points to Mom)  
Would spoon with you all night long!

Gramps looks sadly at Maggie and then at Mom.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

And then you did the same tonight for the same reason!

Gramps shakes his head, 'No.'

GRAMPS

Not exactly.  
(beat)  
I did it for you too.

MAGGIE

For me?

GRAMPS

You are always looking out for me, but not looking out for you! When I met Luna and her oddball family, I thought you, and I, might be in for our first good Christmas in years.  
(smiles at Billy)  
When I saw that playboy look at you the way he did,  
(smiles at Maggie)  
(MORE)

GRAMPS (CONT'D)

and the way you looked at him, I thought you deserved to give him a chance. You just needed a little more time together.

Gramps turns and trudges slowly back to the bedroom.

Maggie and Billy lock their eyes and share a moment.

Mom steps up and turns Gramps toward his seat at the table.

Everyone is smiling, but Mom's smile is the biggest.

MOM

Come on, you silly old fool! Let's all enjoy Christmas Eve dinner!

Everyone cheers. Gramps kisses Maggie on the top of her head and then heads to his seat.

MAGGIE

Uh-uh, Gramps. Go put on some clothes.

Gramps happily heads to the bedroom as everyone laughs.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

This is why our family photo albums were always rated PG-13.

Everyone laughs and enjoys dinner as the couples pair up around the best family dinner ever. The Christmas centerpiece shines, the decorations are gorgeous, and the Holiday music is fun.

INT. CABIN - LATER

Mom and Gramps are doing the dishes. They smile as they watch the youngsters play "Clue."

GRAMPS

That game came out the year I was born. 1949.

Maggie shakes the dice and flirts with Billy.

MAGGIE

Miss Scarlet isn't the harlot you think she is Billy.

BILLY

I heard she was a serial spooner!

MOM

We played it all the time when I was young too.

Natalia points to Lawrence and makes an accusation.

NATALIA

I think Mr. Green did it with his dead pipe in the study.

LAWRENCE

Don't you mean, lead pipe?

Natalia pats her belly.

NATALIA

Not in your case. I needed a paternity test to prove it.

Everyone laughs.

DIANE

What kind of mansion doesn't have a master bedroom?

SHARON

(teases Maggie)  
Just like this place.

Everyone laughs.

MAGGIE

It used to have three beautiful bedrooms, a library, and a family room.

Mom approaches the table with a serious look.

MOM

I got my first wish with all of you and without all your electronic devices distracting you all day.

BILLY

I guess that's right. What's your second Christmas Wish?

MOM

Oh, I got that one already when Natalia said she was pregnant.

(smiles)

I'm going to be a grandma, and I get to fall instantly in love again when the baby is born.

SHARON

We all get that wish!

Mom leans in and speaks softly to Sharon, holding back tears.

MOM

And, I got my third Christmas wish  
seeing you and Diane as the  
happiest married couple I've ever  
seen in my life.

Diane, almost in tears, races to hug Mom.

DIANE

You don't know how much that means  
to me... to us.

Diane kisses Sharon and Mom hugs them both.

Lawrence races over to Natalia and kisses her long and hard.

LAWRENCE

I realized from watching Sharon and  
Diane that outward signs of  
affection may be as important as  
spooning!

Gramps begins to get up from the couch with a devious look.

Mom turns and stops him with a glare.

MOM

Don't even think about it, Mickey!

Everyone laughs except Mom, who clears her throat to  
continue.

Everyone giggles and takes their seats like scolded  
schoolchildren.

MOM (CONT'D)

Mickey and I were talking in the  
kitchen. I have another Christmas  
Wish for all of us.

Everyone turns to Mom.

LAWRENCE

Another one?

MOM

You kids didn't know that your dad left me a hefty life insurance policy that took until two weeks ago to get me the check. After the past two days, I know what I want to do with it.

BILLY

Rent a resort and spa in Belize for next Christmas vacation?

MOM

No, I want to rent the Deluxe Pine Tree Lodge forever, but not the barn, so Gramps can run away whenever he feels the need.

MAGGIE

That is the sweetest thing I ever heard.

Mom raises a wine glass on the table and looks up to heaven.

MOM

If Gustav could see you now, he would be so proud of all of you!

SHARON

And you, Mom.

Sharon hugs her mom. Lawrence and Billy join them.

They retake their seats where they hug their mates. Billy looks left out so he hugs Maggie briefly. Maggie smiles.

MOM

There's more! I want to hire Billy to rebuild the back half of the cabin to its full glory, including a master suite with a glass shower, two guest rooms with queen-sized beds, and a library filled with your favorite books so we can all come here each Christmas.

Everyone cheers.

BILLY

I hope I can return to graduate school for my Ph.D. when I'm done with the remodel.



MOM  
(glares at Gramps)  
We'll add a satellite mobile  
hotspot for real emergencies only.

Maggie laughs.

Natalia stands and points to the couch.

NATALIA  
Can we get rid of that awful couch?

MOM  
No, Mickey is comfortable in it.

Everyone laughs.

INT. CABIN, BEDROOM - MUCH LATER

Mom is on top of the covers again with her arm loosely around Gramps who pretends to be sleeping. They whisper.

MOM  
You're lucky Maggie didn't throw  
you out in the cold for faking  
those amnesia spells.

Gramps smiles.

GRAMPS  
I don't regret it for a minute.  
Last night was my best sleep in 30  
years.

Mom smiles.

MOM  
You'd better not try any monkey  
business or I'm leaving.

GRAMPS  
I won't. You have my word.

MOM  
I think I would have done the same  
thing in your position.

GRAMPS  
I believe you. Goodnight, Luna.

MOM  
Goodnight, Mickey.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

Small romantic lights hang on the fireplace. A small fire adds to the ambiance.

Lawrence and Natalia are spooning on the air mattress in front of the fire. They are covered with two blankets.

NATALIA

I've been a bit of a wreck lately. I was tormented about when to tell you versus when to break the news to Mom and the others.

LAWRENCE

You handled it beautifully. Did you see the look on Mom's face? That made her Christmas!

NATALIA

But I wanted to tell you first, in private.

LAWRENCE

There's no privacy here, and no secrets in the family. You did great. I'm so happy for you, us, and the family.

NATALIA

Mom is right. We all get to fall in love again.

LAWRENCE

(yells)  
There will be presents next year!

MOM (O.C.)

Shush, you two, Mickey's trying to sleep.

GRAMPS (O.C.)

Uh-uh. I'm trying to stay awake!

SHARON (O.C.)

(laughs)  
Gross.

DIANE (O.C.)

(also laughs)  
That's too much information, Gramps!

Everyone laughs.

Everyone HEARS everyone else giggling like children.

INT. CABIN, MUDROOM - SAME

Sharon and Diane are spooning in a twin (bunk) bed under two blankets.

SHARON

I've never been happier.

(loud)

This is the best Christmas ever!

MOM (O.C.)

Go to sleep, Sharon.

DIANE

(loudly)

I won't let her. She said she would teach me the proper art of spooning.

GRAMPS (O.C.)

That's too much information.

Everyone laughs.

DIANE

(whispers)

No electronics. Wild family. Good wine and food. A great game of Clue, and best of all, you!

The others are giggling like children (O.C.).

EXT. CABIN - SAME

Maggie guides Billy from the back of the cabin. They are fully dressed in winter gear. Maggie holds a small flashlight.

MAGGIE

So, the plumbing, sewage, and electricity are waiting for you.

BILLY

(laughs)

And it's only one year to Christmas.

Billy stops at the faint sound of giggles from inside the cabin.

Billy smiles.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Those are the true sounds of  
Christmas.

Maggie smiles. She holds out her hand to be held by his hand  
and he complies.

MAGGIE

This is the first touch of  
Christmas.

She tugs Billy gently toward the barn.

BILLY

First touch?

Maggie laughs and looks away as they walk to the barn.

MAGGIE

Don't push your luck.

BILLY

Did you think Professor Jackson and  
I were a couple?

Maggie stops and looks into Billy's eyes. They share a  
moment.

MAGGIE

She's a highly intelligent and  
attractive woman.

BILLY

So are you.

MAGGIE

Thanks for helping me convince her  
that my research on spooning was  
strong, evidence-based science.

BILLY

You convinced her yourself.

MAGGIE

I could graduate this Spring if she  
approves my thesis.

BILLY

Great, I could use your help on the  
remodel.

Maggie laughs and they giggle as they enter the front door of the barn.

INT. BARN - SAME

One strand of small white Christmas "ferry lights" stretches across the backboard.

Maggie guides Billy into the barn and turns to kiss him, but suddenly holds up and doesn't kiss him. Billy is perplexed.

BILLY

I get that. You don't want to kiss me.

MAGGIE

Oh, no. I do.

(looks away, shy)

Since the first time I saw you. It quickly became my first Christmas wish.

BILLY

But you're hesitant like me.

Billy has an epiphany.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Maybe if we got those serotonin's flowing.

Maggie steps back defensively.

MAGGIE

Are you mocking my research?

Billy steps forward to comfort her.

BILLY

No. No. I never mock sound science, or bright, young... and beautiful evidence-based scientists.

Maggie inches closer, kissing close.

MAGGIE

But you're still a little skeptical.

(smiles)

That's a good sign. All advancements in science are initiated by curiosity.

She pulls Billy to the bed. She removes her coat, kicks off her boots, and lies down on her side ready to spoon.

Billy's eyes open wide with tempered excitement.

He awkwardly takes off his coat and kicks off his boots. He hesitates.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)  
Another good sign.

Maggie pats the bed in front of her.

Billy freezes.

BILLY  
I... I...

Maggie reaches out a hand to him.

MAGGIE  
I think you're overthinking this.

Billy laughs quietly and a little nervously as he lies on his side in a spooning position, but he's not close enough to touch her body.

She inches closer to him so their bodies touch.

Billy smiles.

Maggie reaches her hand around Billy's ribcage and they both smile.

Billy exhales a pleasurable sigh.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)  
(whispers)  
Relax. Don't speak. Enjoy.

They both exhale a pleasant sigh. They smile and drift slowly off to sleep.

INT. BARN - SUNRISE

We see Maggie and Billy remain fully clothed. They are spooning with Billy behind Maggie.

Billy's eyes open slowly at first until he sees that his arm is reaching over Maggie's chest. His eyes open wide in shock.

He lifts his head slightly to see that Maggie remains asleep but with a smile on her face.

He watches in amazement as Maggie clutches one hand atop his and holds it to her breast.

Billy closes his eyes in ecstasy and smiles.

Christmas music plays in the background.

MAGGIE (V.O.)

I'll never forget my first Christmas with the family. I tell Mom, to this day, that the smartest thing she ever did was to rent a cabin in the woods for Christmas without a TV, Internet, Wi-Fi, or presents. Mom and Billy remind me that the greatest gifts in life come from being present.

FADE OUT.

**THE END**