

The Gingerbread Suite

Who doesn't believe in love at first sight.

A Romantic Comedy in One Act

by James Hutchison

Also available from www.jameshutchison.ca

A Christmas Carol – Two versions available. *Every man has the power to do good.*

When Scrooge's nephew Fred finds some letters Scrooge had written to his sister Fan a long time ago the past is unlocked, and Scrooge learns how his fear of poverty and pursuit of wealth have cost him a chance for love and genuine happiness.

CAST OF 10+ - Two Act Drama, 6M, 4W, Multiple Sets, 120 minutes

CAST OF 25+ - Two Act Drama, 15M, 10W, Multiple Sets, 120 minutes

What the Dickens! *Even Scrooge got a second chance.*

When Marty Fisher gets caught kissing his stage manager Samantha and the actor playing Scrooge shows up drunk Marty has to scramble to save the opening night production of a Christmas Carol and his engagement to his fiancée Tami.

Two Act Comedy, 6M, 3W, Multiple Sets, 120 minutes

Heart of Stone: A Jessica Quinn Mystery *Trusting the wrong person can be deadly.*

When Jessica Quinn uncovers the truth about her father's killer and the truth behind a woman claiming to be the long-lost daughter of her client Mary McConnell more than one person ends up dead.

Two Act Mystery, 7M, 3W, Multiple Sets, 120 minutes

Stories from Langford *Every town has its secrets.*

Six characters from Langford tell stories from their lives: stories about, jealousy, revenge, love and forgiveness.

Two Act Drama, 1M, 1W, Simple settings, 120 Minutes

Death and the Psychiatrist *Even Death Could Use a Friend*

Feeling depressed about having a job where no one likes him Death goes into therapy with Dr. Thompson in order to help him cope with his guilt.

One Act Comedy, 3M, or 2M, 1W, Single Set, 50 Minutes

500 Bucks and a Pack of Smokes *How much is your life worth?*

Calling off a hit he put out on himself because he mistakenly thought he was dying proves to be more difficult than Donny expected.

One Act Comedy, 3+ 2M, 1W, Multiple Sets, 60 Minutes

Plus, other One Acts and 10 Minute Plays including The Blood of a Thousand Chickens, 500 bucks and a pack of smokes, Never Give Up, Written in Stone, and Elvis is Dead.

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Acknowledgements

Under the Mistletoe - The Gingerbread Suite was originally titled *The Christmas Suite* and was workshopped at Lunchbox Theatre in 2012 during the Suncor Energy Stage One Festival with actors David LeReaney, Roberta Mauer Phillips, and director/dramaturge Pamela Halstead.

James Hutchison writes comedies, dramas, and mysteries. He also interviews other playwrights, actors, and directors about the business and creative aspects of theatre, film, and television. You can read his interviews on his blog and download his plays at www.jameshutchison.ca.

The Candy Cane Suite – Who doesn't believe in love at first sight.
A Romantic Comedy in One Act by James Hutchison

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

ACT I

Mike Riley

Mike is 57 and has had a run of bad luck after getting divorced and losing his job, but when he meets Claire at her Company Christmas party, he hopes his luck has finally changed for the better.

Claire McKenzie

Claire is 57 and tired of always being the dependable one so when she meets Mike and they hit it off she decides to act on impulse and have a one-night stand.

VOICE ONLY

Diane – Mike's daughter
Holiday Channel Announcer One
Holiday Channel Announcer Two

Character ages can be adjusted a few years up or down.

SETTINGS

ACT I

The Gingerbread Suite at the Prairie Dog Inn Regina.

Scene i: December 24, 8:00 A.M.

Scene ii: December 24, 8:00 P.M.

Scene iii: December 25, 8:00 A.M.

The script has both a Canadian version and an American Version

In the American version of the play the action takes place at the Prairie Dog Inn in Omaha Nebraska. In the text of the play Canadian locations are replaced with American locations

STORY OF THE PLAY

ACT I: The Gingerbread Suite

It's Christmas and fifty-seven-year-old Mike Riley is unemployed, divorced, and living in his brother's basement. Is it any wonder he's depressed? Especially, since he's spending the holidays in the Gingerbread Suite at the Prairie Dog Inn Regina.* It isn't until Mike meets Claire McKenzie and the two spend a romantic night together that his luck begins to change. Now, on Christmas Eve determined to change his life Mike purchases the Two Turtle Doves Holiday Romance Gift Basket and hopes to make his relationship with Claire more than a one-night stand.

NOTE

All songs used in The Gingerbread Suite are in the public domain.

- *It Had to Be You* – Music by Isham Jones, Lyrics by Gus Kahn (1924)
- *Ain't We Got Fun* – Music by Richard A. Whiting, Lyrics by Raymond B. Egan and Gus Kahn (1921)
- *Let Me Call You Sweetheart* – Music by Leo Friedman, Lyrics by Beth Slater Whitson (1910)

NOTE: The Gingerbread Suite is part of the full-length play Under the Mistletoe

The Gingerbread Suite can be performed as a stand alone 60-minute one act play however it can be combined with *The Candy Cane Suite* which is another 60-minute play that takes place in the same hotel.

The Candy Cane Suite and *The Gingerbread Suite* are part of the full-length play – *Under the Mistletoe* – *Not every romantic evening goes as planned*. You can download *Under the Mistletoe* at www.jameshutchison.ca.

*American Version: Prairie Dog Inn in Omaha, Nebraska.

For Nicole

**ACT ONE: UNDER THE MISTLETOE
THE GINGERBREAD SUITE**

SCENE i: THE GINGERBREAD SUITE – DECEMBER 24 – 8:00 A.M.

Setting: At curtain we find ourselves in the Gingerbread Suite on the third floor of the Prairie Dog Inn. The wall art, bedding and decorations are all Christmas themed. There is a queen-sized bed, a sofa, a coffee table, a chest of drawers, a table and chairs, a television, a coffee maker, a Mini bar, and a small fridge. In one corner is a Christmas tree. On the coffee table is a smart phone and on the chair is a bright red Christmas party dress. The bed is tousled, and the Christmas themed linens and comforter are in a bit of a heap on the bed. A dance trophy sits on one of the night tables along with MIKE RILEY's smart phone.

At Rise: MIKE is asleep in bed. After a few moments pass MIKE's cell phone rings. MIKE stirs from his sleep and wakes up a little bit dazed. He grabs his cell phone off the night table and rubs the sleep out of his eyes and looks to see who's calling. He thinks for a moment. He's about to answer the phone when he changes his mind and lets it go to voice mail. He gets out of bed. He's wearing a traditional two-piece pair of striped pajamas. He yawns and then looks around the room looking for CLAIRE whose name he thinks is RACHEL.

MIKE

Rachel?

There is no answer. Mike yawns again and stretches – his back is a bit tender.

MIKE

Oh...oh...ah.

MIKE scratches his stomach.

MIKE

Rachel? (No answer.) Uh.

MIKE heads over to the washroom and knocks on the door.

MIKE

Rachel? (No answer)

Mike opens the bathroom door and goes into the bathroom and disappears for a moment and then reappears and stands in doorway for a moment thinking.

He sees the bright red party dress laying across the chair and crosses over and picks up the dress and holds it in front of him. He looks around the room. MIKE puts the dress back on the chair and then crosses to the bed and throws back the comforter. No RACHEL. He throws the comforter back on the bed. Thinks. Gets on his hands and knees and looks under the bed. No RACHEL. He stands up and thinks.

MIKE

Uh.

MIKE crosses to the sofa puts his phone on the coffee table beside CLAIRE's phone and gets on his hands and knees and looks under the sofa. No RACHEL. He stands back up and thinks for a moment.

MIKE

Huh.

MIKE heads to the bathroom and closes the door behind him. From the bathroom we hear him start to sing, It Had to be You. He's not a great singer just an ordinary guy who likes to sing songs.

MIKE (Off Stage)

IT HAD TO BE YOU, IT HAD TO BE YOU
I WANDERED AROUND, AND FINALLY FOUND
THE SOMEBODY WHO
COULD MAKE ME BE TRUE,
AND COULD MAKE ME BE BLUE
AND EVEN BE GLAD, JUST TO BE SAD
THINKING OF YOU

CLAIRE hurries back into the room with a room service cart. The cart has a coffee carafe, a small jug of orange juice, and two plates of food with lids on them. She hears MIKE singing and joins in for a couple of lines but not so loud that MIKE would hear her.

MIKE (Off Stage)

SOME OTHERS I'VE SEEN, MIGHT NEVER BE MEAN
MIGHT NEVER BE CROSS, OR TRY TO BE BOSS
BUT THEY WOULDN'T DO

CLAIRE & MIKE (Off Stage)

FOR NOBODY ELSE, GAVE ME A THRILL
WITH ALL YOUR FAULTS, I LOVE YOU STILL
IT HAD TO BE YOU, WONDERFUL YOU,
IT HAD TO BE YOU

CLAIRE takes the lid off of one of the meals and grabs a slice of bacon and takes a bite and puts the lid back.

CLAIRE

Mmmmm.

CLAIRE munches on the bacon as she pours orange juice into the glasses.

MIKE (Off Stage)

IT HAD TO BE YOU, IT HAD TO BE YOU
I WANDERED AROUND, AND FINALLY FOUND THE SOMEBODY WHO

MIKE enters singing. He gives CLAIRE a big smile as he ends the song.

MIKE

COULD MAKE ME BE TRUE, AND COULD MAKE ME BE BLUE
AND EVEN BE GLAD, JUST TO BE SAD,
THINKING OF YOU

CLAIRE

Good morning. Do you always start your day with a song?

MIKE

Not every day but this morning I have something to sing about.

CLAIRE

Do you?

MIKE

Oh, yes. I'm so very glad you've reappeared, but then I figured you couldn't have gone too far – your dress was still here.

CLAIRE

I just stepped out to get us some breakfast. You want some orange juice?

MIKE

Yes please. You ordered room service?

CLAIRE hands MIKE a glass of orange juice.

CLAIRE

Not exactly.

MIKE

I was thinking we could go out for breakfast, but I like this better. Why not stay in? Cheers!

CLAIRE

Cheers.

MIKE and CLAIRE take a drink of orange juice.

MIKE

Oh my, that's good. So, have you been up long?

CLAIRE

Maybe an hour.

MIKE

Why didn't you wake me up?

CLAIRE

I'm an early riser. I didn't know if you were.

MIKE

I'm a bit of a night owl, but I can adapt. *(Beat)* Good morning.

CLAIRE

Good morning.

MIKE and CLAIRE kiss.

MIKE

So, what have you been doing?

CLAIRE

I was on Facebook for a bit. And then I was texting my sister.

MIKE

You have a sister?

CLAIRE

I have four sisters.

MIKE

Four?

CLAIRE

Yup. Four sisters and six brothers. There's eleven of us.

MIKE

Your parents didn't want to try for an even dozen?

CLAIRE

Who says they didn't try?

MIKE

Good point.

CLAIRE

You have any brothers or sisters?

MIKE

One brother but we don't see too much of each other. He joined a cult and I don't approve.

CLAIRE

He joined a cult.

MIKE

He works for Apple.

CLAIRE

Oh, you don't like Apple.

MIKE

The fruit I like. The company I have some issues with.

CLAIRE

You don't like big companies like Apple or Amazon?

MIKE

Not a huge fan. Look I don't want to talk about Jeff Bezos. I doubt very much he's talking about us this morning.

CLAIRE

You're the one that brought up corporate America.

MIKE

I won't do it again. Promise. So, what did you get us?

CLAIRE (*Lifts the lid on one of the plates.*)

There's bacon and an omelet of some sort. (*She lifts the lid on the other plate.*) And some fresh fruit and yogurt and whole grain toast by the looks of it. I wish there were hash browns.

CLAIRE grabs some fruit and eats while her and MIKE talk.

MIKE
Why didn't you order hash browns?

CLAIRE
I told you. I didn't really order this.

MIKE
No?

CLAIRE
No. I took it from a row of carts by the service elevator.

MIKE
You took it!

CLAIRE
I did.

MIKE
Oh, my God! I can't believe you would just take someone else's breakfast.

CLAIRE
I know. It's so unlike me. I can't believe it either! I've never stolen anything in my life before.

MIKE
Then why start now?

CLAIRE
I was hungry. I saw an opportunity. I was feeling impulsive. So, I took it. You're not going to turn me in, are you?

MIKE
Well, this orange juice makes me an accessory after the fact so I'm as guilty as you are.

CLAIRE
Partners in crime?

MIKE
Looks like it.

CLAIRE
Okay then – let's eat. I'm starving. Have some bacon.

CLAIRE gives MIKE a slice of bacon and MIKE takes a bite.

CLAIRE

It's good isn't it.

MIKE

Oh my God – this is good. I haven't had bacon in ages. I wish I could eat like this every day, but I'm not sure my waistline could handle it.

CLAIRE

You don't have to have it every day, but a couple of slices of bacon once or twice a week isn't going to kill you. You have to live a little, right? You have to go for the bacon. Time is short.

MIKE

Time is short. You're right. Best to seize the bacon.

CLAIRE

Now you're getting it. Do you want some coffee?

CLAIRE pours herself and MIKE coffee and they eat and drink as they talk.

MIKE

Yes please. Double cream. So, are you always this impulsive?

CLAIRE

Hardly. I told you this is very much out of character. I'm usually the reliable one. You know the one who drops everything when some family member or friend calls. I've spent my whole life being reliable and doing the safe and expected thing. Well not anymore. I'm going to live a little. I'm going to have some fun! I'm going to take some risks and have an adventure.

MIKE picks up the order on the tray and checks the name.

MIKE

So, poor Mr. and Mrs. Hoffstader in the Candy Cane Suite will have to go without breakfast?

CLAIRE

I'm sure the hotel will remedy the situation. What about you? Have you ever done anything crazy?

MIKE

Define crazy.

CLAIRE

You know like bungee jumping or skydiving.

MIKE

Can it be something that doesn't involve jumping off bridges or out of planes?

CLAIRE

Those are just examples. Haven't you ever been totally spontaneous? You know just felt something and then acted on those feelings without considering the consequences?

MIKE

I think crashing your company's Christmas party last night and asking you to dance is probably the most spontaneous thing I've ever done.

CLAIRE

I'm glad you did.

MIKE

Listen Rachel.

CLAIRE

Rachel?

MIKE

It's not Rachel?

CLAIRE

Not the last time I checked my driver's license.

MIKE

Oh, dear. I'm so sorry. That's such a typical man thing, isn't it? We spend the night together and I don't even remember your name. Oh, my God...I am so sorry. I'm not that kind of guy, I assure you. I'm just getting older, you know, and I don't always remember names as well as I used to. It's horrible. And the most embarrassing thing is it's not just new people either. I'll run into someone I've known for thirty years and do you think I can remember their name? No. So you know what I do? I call them Bud. "Hey, how you doing Bud?" "Long time no see, Bud." And then five minutes after they've gone – boom – I remember their name. It's so embarrassing.

CLAIRE

I wouldn't worry about it, (beat) Bud.

MIKE

Bud?

CLAIRE

Yeah, I don't remember your name either.

MIKE and CLAIRE laugh.

MIKE

Now I don't feel so bad.

CLAIRE

Well, we didn't do a lot of talking last night, did we?

MIKE

That's true. We didn't.

CLAIRE

I had a really nice time.

MIKE

Me too, but...um...my back is paying a price.

CLAIRE

You okay?

MIKE

I just need to take some of these pain killers my doctor prescribed.

MIKE opens a bottle of pain killers and takes a couple of pills with his orange juice.

MIKE

He said they're the strongest thing you can get without breaking the law, but I took a couple the other day and they didn't seem to do much.

CLAIRE

You want me to rub it.

MIKE

Would you? That would be great. Thanks.

MIKE sits on the couch and CLAIRE sits behind him and rubs his back.

CLAIRE

Where's it hurt?

MIKE

Right in the middle.

CLAIRE begins to MIKE'S back.

MIKE

Oh, that feels good.

CLAIRE

This is so unlike me.

MIKE

What? Giving back rubs?

CLAIRE

No, I mean this. I'm the last person you'd think would have a one-night stand.

MIKE

A one-night stand?

CLAIRE

Well sure, you said you were visiting from out of town so...

MIKE

...right...

CLAIRE

...I just want you to know this isn't the sort of thing I do. I just had a really horrible year and a shitty December, and I needed to blow off some steam and you danced into my life and voila!

MIKE

And voila! I like to think you kind of danced into mine, too. Do you want to be friends on Facebook?

CLAIRE

Ahhhh, I don't know.

MIKE

Too soon?

CLAIRE

Yeah, a little too soon. I mean that's a big step giving you access to my entire life on Facebook. Why don't we just see how things go today and then we can decide.

MIKE

Well, I'm not going any where.

CLAIRE

You're not flying home for Christmas?

MIKE

Nope, I'll be spending Christmas here at the inn.

CLAIRE

Just you and a few wise men maybe?

MIKE

Maybe. It just kind of worked out that way this year. You?

CLAIRE

I had toyed with the idea of going to Barcelona for Christmas.

MIKE

Why didn't you?

CLAIRE

Guilt.

MIKE

Guilt?

As CLAIRE talks, she rubs MIKE's back with more and more force.

CLAIRE

Yup. My grandmother is ninety-three and you know – according to my mom and dad and numerous brothers and sisters and cousins and uncles and aunts you can't miss Christmas because it might be Grandma's last one. And God forbid I should be in Spain when she dies. Not that she's going to die. She's ninety-three and she has eaten bacon every morning for her entire life and she drinks a bottle of Guinness every night before she goes to bed. I just don't like being guilted into doing something I don't want to do. I mean, I love my family and all but at my age I'm really starting to feel like death is on the doorstep and I'm afraid if I don't start doing what I want to do with my life I may never get the chance. Do you know what I mean?

MIKE

Ow! Ow! Ow!

CLAIRE

Oh, I'm sorry. I guess I got a little carried away.

MIKE

No, no, no, no, no it felt good. You've done wonders. *(He stands.)* You clearly have strong feelings about this. Oh my, that feels so much better. You're a miracle worker. Thank you.

CLAIRE

You're welcome.

CLAIRE and MIKE continue to drink and eat as they talk.

MIKE

Say, why don't we go to Spain now? You said you wanted to be spontaneous. Why don't we go to the airport and take the first flight to Spain and wake up Christmas morning in Barcelona?

CLAIRE

We should probably be on a first name basis if we're going to start taking vacations together. Unless you want to keep calling me Rachel?

MIKE

You don't like Rachel?

CLAIRE

You like Bud?

MIKE

Point taken. But I do have my passport if you change your mind.

CLAIRE

Good to know. So, what is your name?

MIKE

Albert.

CLAIRE

Albert?

MIKE

Albert Einstein.

CLAIRE (She laughs)

That I would have remembered. It's not every day you meet a Nobel prize winning scientist.

MIKE

That's true, and with a name like Einstein I could probably get a pretty good job teaching physics at Princeton. I'd probably get my own parking space.

CLAIRE

Are you looking for work?

MIKE

I am as a matter of fact.

CLAIRE

Do you know anything about physics?

MIKE
Not a thing.

CLAIRE
Well then Albert Einstein is not your name.

MIKE
You're right. (Beat) What's your name?

CLAIRE
Cleopatra.

MIKE (Laughs)
Going historical, are you?

CLAIRE
Not at all. My father is an archeologist and I spent many childhood summers on expeditionary digs in the Sahara Desert. I have a sister named Nefertiti and a brother named Tut.

MIKE
You tell a good story, but even so I don't think your name is Cleopatra.

CLAIRE:
Wow Einstein! You're smart.

MIKE
If I'd been smart, I would have bought gold at thirty-five bucks an ounce.

CLAIRE
Or Apple at twenty-two bucks a share. Am I right?

MIKE
You're right.

CLAIRE
So, if your name isn't Einstein what is it?

MIKE
It's George Clooney.

CLAIRE
You don't look much like George Clooney.

MIKE
Maybe not but with a name like Clooney I could probably win an Oscar and get a job starring opposite Julia Roberts. Hey that reminds me. I want you to have this.

MIKE gets the dance trophy off the bedside table and proudly hands it to CLAIRES.

What's this for?
CLAIRE

Last night.
MIKE

I'm flattered. I've never had a man give me a trophy before.
CLAIRE

It's the dance trophy we won at your company's Christmas party last night.
MIKE

One, two
CLAIRE

Cha, cha, cha.
CLAIRE & MIKE

CLAIRE and MIKE laugh.

They only gave us the one. I think you should keep it. We could get it inscribed.
MIKE

Yeah, we should. I'm going shopping with my sister a little later. I could get it inscribed at the mall.
CLAIRE

You're going shopping?
MIKE

Yeah, I still have a couple last minute stocking stuffers I want to pick up for my kids.
CLAIRE

Oh, you have kids.
MIKE

Yeah, I have two. A boy and a girl. Stephen just started teaching high school in Saskatoon (Wichita) and Carol and her husband live in Thunder Bay. (Milwaukee). What about you?
CLAIRE

I have a daughter.
MIKE

CLAIRE

Why aren't you spending Christmas with her?

MIKE

Diane and her husband usually take a vacation at the end of the year. A couple of years ago they were in Australia at Christmas and she sent me a Christmas Koala.

CLAIRE

What's a Christmas Koala?

MIKE crosses to his suitcase and pulls out a stuffed Koala bear wearing a small red hat and an ugly miniature Christmas Sweater from his suitcase.

MIKE

It's a Koala bear with a Santa hat and a Christmas Sweater.

CLAIRE

He's cute.

MIKE

Listen to this. He has a microchip.

MIKE presses the stomach of the KOALA and we hear a recording of DIANE's voice.

DIANE (Recording)

"Hi dad! Ho. Ho. Ho. Wish you were here on the beach with us down under in sunny Sydney. See you soon. Love you. Merry Christmas."

CLAIRE

That's nice.

MIKE

Yeah, I love this stupid little bear.

CLAIRE

You okay?

MIKE

I'm fine. I just...

CLAIRE

You miss her.

MIKE

Oh God, you have no idea.

CLAIRE

I miss my kids too. Especially now that they don't live in the same city. This is the first year both of them are spending Christmas with the in-laws, so I probably won't see them until the new year. Phone calls let you keep in touch but it's not the same thing, is it?

MIKE

No, not at all. Last year Diane was in Chili.

CLAIRE

Good wine in Chili. Did she send you a Christmas Lama?

MIKE

No. But there was that earthquake.

CLAIRE

Oh, I remember that.

MIKE

It was horrible. A lot of people died. Parts of the country were in complete ruins. The hotel where my daughter and her husband were staying completely collapsed. It was absolute chaos.

CLAIRE

The hotel collapsed.

MIKE

Yeah, can you believe it? I kept trying to call and find out what was going on. But I couldn't get through. I didn't hear anything for more than a week. That was the worst part. Not knowing. Waiting for the phone to ring with the hope that my daughter's voice would be on the other end and then...*(Pause)*... Um, I'm sorry. Can we talk about something else?

CLAIRE

You need a minute?

CLAIRE sits beside MIKE and puts her arm around him.

MIKE

I'll be fine. I just wish things were different than they are. I'm sorry.

CLAIRE

You don't need to apologize.

MIKE regains his composure.

MIKE

I wish we'd had more children but life doesn't always work out the way we hope.

CLAIRE

And what happened to Diane's mom?

MIKE

You mean am I a married man?

CLAIRE

No, that's not what I meant at all, but well...you're not wearing a ring.

MIKE

Neither are you.

CLAIRE

So, you are married?

MIKE

No, not anymore. We've been divorced for just over a year. We don't even live in the same city anymore. Sharon moved to Toronto (Boston) and I stayed in Vancouver (Seattle). The frustrating thing is she got practically everything. The house. Which she sold. The car. Which she sold. And my two thousand and eleven autographed Vancouver Canucks' jersey. (And my two thousand and thirteen autographed Seattle Seahawks' jersey.)

CLAIRE

Which she sold.

MIKE

Which she burned. It was a nasty divorce. I should have gone with a better lawyer.

CLAIRE

Why didn't you?

MIKE

Because my brother said he could handle it.

CLAIRE

Your brother's a lawyer?

MIKE

Yup.

CLAIRE

I thought you said you two had drifted apart.

MIKE

I was just joking. I'm actually living with my brother right at the moment – that is until I can get a place of my own. The only good thing to come out of my marriage was my daughter. That's really the only reason Sharon and I stayed together as long as we did. Which looking back on it now was probably a mistake. I mean if a relationship isn't working you should move on, right, and give yourself a chance to meet someone new.

CLAIRE

Look, why don't we start over and stop playing games? I'm Claire.

MIKE

Hello Claire. I'm Mike.

CLAIRE

Welcome to Regina. (Omaha.)

MIKE

Thank you. So, um Claire do you think there's any way we could see each other over the holidays?

CLAIRE

Trying to make this more than a one-night stand?

MIKE

We could go for lunch.

CLAIRE

I was going to have lunch with my sister at the mall.

MIKE

Right. Ummm. Well. Do you think your sister would mind if I tagged along?

CLAIRE

Really? You want to go shopping with me and my sister? Won't you get bored?

MIKE

Not at all. I love shopping for Christmas presents. It's just not a lot of fun when you don't have anyone to shop for. And I'd really like to spend some more time with you and get to know you a little better, if that's okay?

CLAIRE

Well, I suppose I can check with my sister.

MIKE

That's all I'm asking.

CLAIRE

She might say no.

MIKE

Whatever she decides is fine by me. Look I'll give you some privacy and you can call her, and then you can let me know what you two decide. But if she says no maybe we can see each other later.

CLAIRE

I'd like that.

CLAIRE grabs MIKE's phone which looks almost identical to hers off the coffee table and goes to dial but stops.

CLAIRE

Oh, sorry I grabbed your phone.

CLAIRE hands MIKE his phone. MIKE puts the phone in his pajama pocket and heads to the washroom.

MIKE

Thanks, I'll go practice my singing, shall I?

MIKE exits singing Ain't We Got Fun.

MIKE

EV'RY MORNING, EV'RY EVENING
AIN'T WE GOT FUN?
NOT MUCH MONEY, OH, BUT HONEY
AIN'T WE GOT FUN?
THE RENT'S UNPAID DEAR
WE HAVEN'T A BUS
BUT SMILES WERE MADE DEAR
FOR PEOPLE LIKE US

CLAIRE dials her sister.

CLAIRE

Hi Samantha. I'm just confirming our plans for today. Maybe eleven would work better? Um listen, would it be okay if I brought a friend? You don't know him, he's from out of town. I wouldn't normally ask but his daughter passed away a year ago and I think he really needs to be with people over the holidays. So, you're okay with him coming? You're a sweetheart. Thanks sis. See you then. Bye.

MIKE emerges from the bathroom.

MIKE

So, what's the verdict?

CLAIRE

Lucky for you I've got a nice sister. We're going to meet her at eleven in the food court by the Burger Barn.

MIKE

I love Burger Barn! I'll treat you ladies to lunch. We can have their Rudolph Burgers. They come with a slice of pineapple and a maraschino cherry on top.

CLAIRE

Which any other time of the year is their Hawaiian Burger and a buck cheaper. Now I really should head home and get showered and changed. Can you meet us at the mall? It's only about ten minutes from here.

MIKE

Do you have to go? That mistletoe over there gives me a better idea. Why don't you shower here?

CLAIRE

So, your back is feeling better?

MIKE

Much better.

CLAIRE

I suppose that would be a nice way to start the day.

MIKE takes CLAIRE in his arms and they dance to the song as he sings.

MIKE

EV'RY MORNING, EV'RY EVENING
AIN'T WE GOT FUN?

MIKE & CLAIRE

NOT MUCH MONEY, OH, BUT HONEY
AIN'T WE GOT FUN?
THE RENT'S UNPAID DEAR
WE HAVEN'T A BUS
BUT SMILES WERE MADE DEAR
FOR PEOPLE LIKE US

As MIKE & CLAIRE finish singing, they kiss.

END SCENE

TRANSITION TELEVISION AUDIO

SFX: CHRISTMAS MUSIC AND TELEVISION ANNOUNCERS UP

ANNOUNCER ONE

You're watching the Holiday Channel and our Spirit of Christmas Movie Marathon.

ANNOUNCER TWO

Brought to you by Dollar Daze.

ANNOUNCER ONE

Why spend a fortune when all you need to spend is a buck?

ANNOUNCER TWO

Dollar Daze making your Christmas affordable.

ANNOUNCER ONE

We now return to *A Rocky Mountain Christmas Carol* featuring the Royal Canadian Mounted Choir and special guest stars Michael Bublé as Ebenezer Scrooge and Justin Bieber as Tiny Tim.

SCENE ii: THE GINGERBREAD SUITE – DECEMBER 24 – 8:00 P.M.

Setting: The hotel room has been tidied up and the bed is made. The Christmas Koala sits on the nightstand beside the bed. On the coffee table is an ice bucket with a bottle of champagne in it, two champagne glasses, a small rose bouquet in a crystal vase, and a gift basket containing numerous romantic items.

At Rise: MIKE is in the bathroom singing “Let Me Call You Sweetheart”

MIKE (Off Stage)

LET ME CALL YOU SWEETHEART
I'M IN LOVE WITH YOU
LET ME HEAR YOU WHISPER
THAT YOU LOVE ME TOO
KEEP THE LOVE LIGHT GLOWING
IN YOUR EYES SO TRUE
LET ME CALL YOU SWEETHEART
I'M IN LOVE WITH YOU

MIKE enters singing and is dressed in casual slacks and a jacket. He crosses to the television and uses the remote to shut off the television. His phone rings and he looks to see who's calling and then lets it go to voice mail. He puts his phone

on the counter and takes a small jewelry box with a ribbon and bow on it out of his jacket pocket. He practices talking to CLAIRE.

MIKE

Listen Claire I know we've only known each other for a day but sometimes a day is all you need when you've met the one. The one person who makes you sing in the morning. The one person you want to spend the rest of your life with. No, no, no, that's way too direct.

MIKE crosses to the mini bar and pours himself a shot from one of the mini bottles and downs it in one gulp.

MIKE

Okay, lets try this again. Listen Claire I know this might seem sudden but even though we've only known each other for a day I can't help but feel that there's a special connection between us. And life is too short not to say what's in your heart...and I heart you. I heart you. Oh my God. I sound like an idiot.

MIKE crosses to the mini bar and pours himself another shot from one of the mini bottles and downs it in one gulp.

MIKE

Okay, one more time. *(Pause)* Listen Claire, when I saw you...my life changed because suddenly instead of feeling all alone in the world I didn't feel alone. I felt like there was another soul in this crazy, cold, and indifferent universe who cared about me and I didn't feel like ending it all. For the first time in a long time I wanted to live and I want to have you in my life and... Jesus Christ Mike get a fucking grip on yourself. You sound desperate.

MIKE crosses to the mini bar and pours himself another shot from one of the mini bottles and downs it in one gulp.

MIKE

Listen Claire you're a woman and I'm a man, and sometimes the forces of the universe bring men and women together so that men and women can do men and women things. Oh my God. I'm getting worse...Jesus.

SFX: KNOCK AT DOOR

MIKE puts the jewelry box in his jacket pocket and crosses the room and opens the door. CLAIRE is standing in the hallway wearing an attractive dress and carries her winter jacket and an overnight bag. As CLAIRE comes into the room she embraces MIKE and they give each other a kiss.

MIKE

Well, hello beautiful.

CLAIRE

Hello handsome.

MIKE hangs up CLAIRE's jacket and CLAIRE sets down her overnight bag.

MIKE

I'm glad you're here. I was getting a little worried you might have gotten lost.

CLAIRE

No, I'm just running a little late because of our extended shower this morning.

MIKE

I had no idea I could bend that far over and keep my balance.

CLAIRE

Well, I hope it was worth the effort.

MIKE

It was well worth the effort, but I messed up my back again.

MIKE opens his pill bottle and takes a couple of pain killers during.

CLAIRE

Have you tried Yoga? I started about six months ago and it's done wonders for me.

MIKE

I did actually. That's how I hurt my back in the first place.

CLAIRE

You must not have had a very good instructor. I'll teach you some Yoga positions later.

MIKE

Sure, why not. Um, listen Claire, I just want you to know that even though we've only known each other for a day that I like...champagne.

CLAIRE

Do you?

MIKE

Yes, I love champagne.

CLAIRE

You're in luck. I like champagne too.

MIKE

Oh, that's such a relief. What if you hadn't? I'd have had to drink this whole bottle of champagne on my own. And then where would we be?

CLAIRE

Well, you won't have to do that. I'll split it with you.

MIKE

Great. Listen Claire, I know it's only been a day since we met but I wanted you to know that...

CLAIRE

Yes?

MIKE

...that I got you some roses.

CLAIRE

Roses?

MIKE

Yes, I got you some roses to go along with the Champagne.

CLAIRE

I love roses.

MIKE

I'm so glad.

CLAIRE

So, what is all this?

MIKE

It's the Two Turtle Doves Holiday Romance Gift Basket. It comes with champagne, roses, and a basket of romantic delights.

CLAIRE

Did you steal it from the Hoffstedeers?

MIKE

No. That's more your style. I ordered this from room service.

CLAIRE

So, what's in the basket?

MIKE and CLAIRE dig into the Gift Basket.

MIKE

There's a romantic card game called – Naughty or Nice.

CLAIRE

A box of chocolate truffles and a gingerbread scented candle.

MIKE

Some hot to the touch massage oils.

CLAIRE

A box of holiday flavoured condoms including cranberry, peppermint, and pumpkin pie.

MIKE

Some rainbow flavoured candy canes and, oh my.

CLAIRE

What?

MIKE

A Christmas vibrator from Santa's naughty workshop.

CLAIRE

What's a Christmas vibrator?

MIKE turns on the vibrator. The vibrator plays Jingle Bells while red and green lights flash in time to the music. It is more festive than sensual.

CLAIRE

I think it would look good on top of the tree, don't you?

MIKE

Well, it certainly fits the décor, that's for sure.

MIKE turns off the vibratory and the two share a laugh.

CLAIRE

Where are the two turtle doves?

MIKE

I guess we're supposed to be the turtle doves. God, I hope you're not embarrassed.

CLAIRE

Not at all. Besides I'm looking forward to playing Naughty or Nice later.

MIKE and CLAIRE kiss.

MIKE

Listen Claire...you're a man and I'm a woman and...I mean I'm a man and you're a woman and that's good. Could you imagine if we were two men?

CLAIRE

Not really. I'm quite happy being a woman.

MIKE

And I'm happy you're happy being a woman.

CLAIRE

Are you happy being a man?

MIKE

Oh God, yes. I'm very happy being a man.

CLAIRE

Good.

MIKE

Why don't we have some champagne.

CLAIRE

Mike if you're nervous there's no reason to be. I'm planning on spending the night.

MIKE opens the Champagne.

MIKE

Good.

CLAIRE

I thought we discussed this.

MIKE

We did.

CLAIRE

Then what's going on?

MIKE

Listen Claire...

SFX: CLAIRE'S PHONE RINGS

CLAIRE checks her phone.

CLAIRE

Sorry, it's my sister.

MIKE

Which one Nefertiti or Samantha?

CLAIRE

(To Mike.) Samantha. *(Answering phone.)* Hello. Oh hi. No, I wasn't planning on dropping by tonight. I have other plans. Yes. Yes. That's none of your business. I don't know. You want to ask him yourself?

MIKE

Ask me what?

CLAIRE

Whether or not you got me anything for Christmas.

MIKE

I did as a matter of fact.

CLAIRE

He says he did as a matter of fact. I don't know. I just got here. Look you can grill me tomorrow at mom and dad's. I'll be over in the afternoon. I already made the sweet potatoes. We just need to pop them in the oven. Right. Yes. Okay. See you tomorrow. Love you.

MIKE finishes pouring the champagne and hands CLAIRE a glass.

CLAIRE takes the champagne and sets her phone down close to MIKE's.

MIKE

Your sister's checking up on you. That's good actually. She's looking out for you.

CLAIRE

That's what brothers and sisters do.

MIKE

Yeah, I guess so. Cheers

CLAIRE

Cheers

MIKE and CLAIRE take a drink of Champagne.

CLAIRE

She had a lot of questions for me after you left.

MIKE

Like what?

CLAIRE

Like what you do for a living and what brought you to Regina? (Omaha) I mean, we really don't know that much about each other, do we?

MIKE

No, I guess we don't. What do you want to know?

CLAIRE

Well, what brought you to Regina (Omaha) and the Gingerbread Suite at the Prairie Dog Inn?

MIKE

Chance.

CLAIRE

Chance?

MIKE

Yeah, I literally took a chance. I put my fate in the hands of God. I put an old atlas on the kitchen table. Opened it to a world map. Closed my eyes. Spun around three times and stuck a pin in the map and that's how I ended up in Regina. (Omaha) I wanted my destination to be completely left up to fate.

CLAIRE

I'm not sure if you're telling me the truth or just pulling my leg.

MIKE

Why would I lie? Do you think I would have picked Regina (Omaha) in the middle of winter if my eyes were open? What about you? Is Regina (Omaha) home?

CLAIRE

Yup born and raised. Were you born in Vancouver? (Seattle)

MIKE

I was born in Guelph (Rochester) and my parents moved to Kelowna (Reno) when I was a kid and then I moved out to the coast when I got married.

CLAIRE

And what about work? How do you pay the bills?

MIKE

I was in media for a long time. Selling radio commercials mostly. But the radio group I worked for got bought at the start of the year by Harper Media. The first thing they did was fire the local sales team including me and centralize everything in Toronto. (New York)

CLAIRE

And you haven't been able to find anything since?

MIKE

Nothing full time. I was up for a sales job with another radio group a couple of weeks ago. I even had three interviews for the damn thing – I was really counting on it – and then they go and offer it to some kid out of college with more social media experience they said. Just because I'm old doesn't mean I don't get it. I'm on Facebook and LinkedIn. I have a Twitter account, Google Mail, Instagram and I even check out Reddit from time to time. That was hard. Brutal. It's been a tough year with the divorce and losing the job.

CLAIRE

I'll bet you find a job you love in the new year.

MIKE

I sure hope so. What about you? Are you happy in your work?

CLAIRE

I used to run my own business. I had a little print shop, but it just got hard to compete with the online stores. They could offer faster service, cheaper prices, and a bigger product line so after twenty years I had to close. I wanted to sell but nobody was buying. So, now I'm working in a real estate office doing admin while I try to figure out my next career move.

MIKE

Yeah, it's tough out there.

CLAIRE

Tell me about it.

MIKE

Do you mind if I make a confession?

CLAIRE

Aren't we a little early in the relationship for confessions?

MIKE

I don't think so. I just want you to know that you're the first woman I've been with since the divorce.

CLAIRE

You haven't been with anyone for over a year?

MIKE

Try five years. The marriage was over long before the divorce papers were signed. How about you? Are you divorced, separated, we didn't really talk about your husband, did we?

He died.

CLAIRE

Oh, I'm sorry.

MIKE

It was a long time ago.

CLAIRE

Were you two married long?

MIKE

Eighteen years. He's been gone almost eleven.

CLAIRE

No thoughts of remarrying?

MIKE

I've had a few serious relationships since then, but no marriage proposals. Why are you proposing?

CLAIRE

Do you want me to?

MIKE

I think it's a little too soon to be proposing marriage, don't you think?

CLAIRE

This morning you were talking about being spontaneous that would certainly be spontaneous.

MIKE

It would but I just ended a long-term relationship and I'm in no hurry to start a new one. I just don't understand how people can share a bed and a life and when things don't work out they become so hostile towards each other.

CLAIRE

It happens. I'll bet your husband was a nice guy.

MIKE

What makes you say that?

CLAIRE

I can't see you with anyone who wouldn't be nice.

MIKE

CLAIRE

Oh, there are lots of men and women that hook up with the wrong partners. My brother Frank hasn't had much luck. He's been married and divorced five times. Twice to the same woman. He's a bit of a screw up but he's always been there for me and for that I'm forever grateful.

MIKE

Do you think it's just dumb luck that brings people together?

CLAIRE

I don't know. I met my husband because I stayed an extra five minutes at work to help a customer. Staying that extra five minutes meant I missed my bus. Missing my bus meant I had to walk home. And because I had to walk home, I got caught in a downpour. And because I got caught in a downpour this attractive young man offered to share his umbrella with me.

MIKE

And that attractive young man ended up being your husband.

CLAIRE

Nope.

MIKE

No?

CLAIRE

No, we dashed into a coffee shop and the man with the umbrella bought me a cup of coffee. That's where I met my husband.

MIKE

At the coffee shop.

CLAIRE

Yes, Garry was waiting tables and working his way through university.

MIKE

Was it love at first sight?

CLAIRE

There was a moment when we first looked at each other. I went back the next day hoping he'd ask me out.

MIKE

And did he?

CLAIRE

Not at first, he was so shy, but he was cute, and kind, and I liked him, and so I started having my lunch at the restaurant, and I always made sure that he was the one who waited on me. Finally,

he got up enough courage to ask me out to a movie, and we started dating, and a year later we were married. So, was it chance or was it meant to be? You tell me.

MIKE

I like to think that it was meant to be. Which makes me wonder about us. Are we meant to be?

CLAIRE

Why don't we just have some champagne, put on some music, and get to know each other a little better.

MIKE

Music. Oh sure. What kind of music would you like?

CLAIRE

Do they have something we can dance to?

MIKE grabs the television remote and turns on the television and scrolls down the music channels as CLAIRE tops up their champagne glasses.

MIKE

I'm not sure. Let me see. They've got Holiday Classics, Broadway Showstoppers, Accordion Favourites with Orlando Hibbs.

CLAIRE

There's nothing more romantic than accordion music.

MIKE

Ah here's something we might like, Melodies for a Magical Night. How does that sound?

CLAIRE

That sounds nice. You like the old songs, don't you?

MIKE

Yeah, I do. My dad used to sing them all the time. We'd sit at the piano when I was a kid and sing old songs and just hang out together. And then when I got older, I learned to play the piano and those are some of the first ones I learned.

MIKE selects the channel.

SFX: SOFT ROMANTIC MUSIC PLAYS.

CLAIRE

Those are nice memories.

MIKE

Yeah, they are. *(Claire hands Mike his Champagne glass)* Thanks. Cheers.

CLAIRE

Cheers.

CLAIRE takes a drink of her champagne.

MIKE downs his champagne in one gulp.

MIKE

Listen Claire I know we've only known each other for a day but I have to tell you something feels right about this. At least it does for me. And I know it's early in our relationship, but I want you to know how I feel.

CLAIRE

You want to discuss feelings?

MIKE

Don't you feel like there's something special between us?

CLAIRE

Maybe so, but there's a lot more to life than just being good dance partners.

MIKE

I know.

CLAIRE

And besides I live in Regina. (Omaha) You live in Vancouver. (Seattle) How is that going to work?

MIKE

You could move to Vancouver. (Seattle)

CLAIRE

You could move to Regina. (Omaha)

MIKE

We could meet in the middle and both move to Calgary. (Salt Lake City)

CLAIRE

I suppose but I don't really think that's going to happen. I like my hometown.

MIKE

What's not to like. Look I was originally going to give you this on Christmas morning, but I'd really like to give it to you now.

MIKE takes the small jewellery case from his jacket pocket.

Okay.

CLAIRE

I hope you don't mind I got you a Christmas present.

MIKE

Why would I mind? I like presents.

CLAIRE

But before you open it, I have something I need to tell you.

MIKE

Alright.

CLAIRE

It's just I'm a little nervous.

MIKE

Really? I hadn't noticed. What about?

CLAIRE

About how you might react. Do you want one?

MIKE

MIKE crosses to the bar and opens one of the small whiskey bottles and pours in into a glass.

No, I'm good with the champagne, thanks.

CLAIRE

MIKE downs the whiskey in one shot.

MIKE

Okay, well here it goes. Claire, I know we've only known each other for a day...but sometimes a day is all you need...and normally I wouldn't be talking about this...normally I'd take it slow, but when I look back at my life the only regrets I have are the times I haven't taken a chance and gone after what I wanted. And you said you wanted to be spontaneous – to do something without thinking of the consequences. Well shouldn't love be spontaneous? I mean do we really need words to describe how we feel about someone else? I have feelings for you, and even though it's early in our relationship it's not early in my life's journey or yours, right? To use your words, you have to seize the bacon! Well that's what I'm going to do. I'm going to seize the bacon and go after the sausage. To say what's in my heart and my heart is telling me that I love you and as crazy as that sounds it's the truth of what I'm feeling and I just don't want to move forward in this relationship without you knowing how I feel about you because I think that would be unfair to you and to me. So, I'm just laying it out there and letting you know that I want this to be more

than a one-night stand. And yes, I live in Vancouver (Seattle) and you live in Regina (Omaha) but that doesn't matter. There's nothing keeping me in Vancouver (Seattle) and from what I've seen of Regina (Omaha) I could be happy here. I mean you have a Burger Barn and I love Burger Barn. And so that's why I got you a little something...something I was going to give you on Christmas morning...something that would signify a new start and a new life and I'm just terrified that by opening myself up and telling you all of this it's going to scare you off. But if I didn't tell you how I was feeling and what I was thinking then that wouldn't be honest, and I really believe that in order for a relationship to work you have to be honest with each other. So, that's what I've been trying to say, and I don't know if I've used the right words or explained things so they make sense to you, but I sure hope you feel the same way.

CLAIRE doesn't say anything.

MIKE

Aren't you going to say anything?

CLAIRE

I don't know what to say. That was quite the speech.

MIKE

Just be honest.

CLAIRE

Okay, well to be honest, I think maybe you've had a bit too much to drink and you've had a rough year losing your job and getting divorced and I know you miss your daughter but I just think you met me and we spent the night together and suddenly the world didn't seem so dark and lonely and you think I'm the solution to your problems. I'm not. I have my own baggage. I'm not perfect. You can't say you love someone unless you spend enough time with them to see the good and the bad because love isn't just about the good times. It's about the tough times too. It's about acceptance and understanding and you and I don't know enough about each other to really know if we'd make a good match. How can you say you love me when you couldn't even remember my name this morning?

MIKE

Well, you didn't remember my name either and I forgave you. Don't you have any feelings for me?

CLAIRE

Of course, I have feelings but I'm not ready to say I love you.

MIKE

But isn't that what every woman wants to hear?

CLAIRE

Not on a first date.

MIKE

Well technically this is our second date.

CLAIRE

That's still too soon.

MIKE

But look at how easily we dance together. How good it feels to hold hands. There must be some kind of deeper connection between us. Can't you feel it?

CLAIRE

There's a physical connection that's for sure. And I admit I do feel really comfortable with you, but we hardly know each other. You're moving way too fast. If we keep going at this rate, you'll have us married by New Years.

MIKE

Hey now, wouldn't that be a fantastic way to start the New Year?

CLAIRE

Look I understand how much you want to rebuild your life but Mike it takes more than a day to get to know someone.

MIKE

Does it? I've known couples that have gotten married after knowing each other for a decade and their marriage has ended in less than a year. Why can't the reverse be true? Why can't two people who've known each other for a day have a lifetime of happiness?

CLAIRE

This isn't a fairly tale.

MIKE

I know that. I'm sorry if I've made you feel uncomfortable. Tell you what, why don't you just open up your Christmas present and see what it is. I guarantee you'll be surprised.

CLAIRE looks at the small ring sized jewelry box.

CLAIRE

This isn't what I think it is, is it?

MIKE

What do you think it is?

CLAIRE

It isn't an engagement ring, is it?

MIKE

What if it was?

CLAIRE

Oh, come on Mike I can't accept this.

MIKE

You haven't even looked at it.

CLAIRE

I'm sorry but this is getting a little too crazy.

MIKE

So, what's wrong with acting a little crazy? This morning you liked it. Didn't you say you wanted an adventure?

CLAIRE

Making off with someone's breakfast is a little crazy but proposing to someone you've known for less than a day is insane.

MIKE

That doesn't make it wrong.

CLAIRE

You know what, I think maybe it would be best if I went home.

MIKE

Hold on a second, you don't need to do that.

CLAIRE

I know, but I'm feeling a little tired and tomorrow's a big day and I still have a couple of presents to wrap.

CLAIRE grabs her coat, MIKE's phone instead of her own, and her overnight bag.

MIKE

Listen Claire, I'm sorry I was just joking around and I took it too far – way too far – but I wasn't serious. Come on. It was just a game.

CLAIRE

You seemed pretty serious to me.

MIKE

Just forget everything I said. We can still have a nice evening. I'll order room service. They have turkey wings.

CLAIRE

Turkey wings?

MIKE

Yeah, they're like chicken wings but with it being Christmas instead of using chicken they use turkey.

CLAIRE

Well, as tempting as that sounds I think we should call it a night. I'm not sure we're on the same page when it comes to this relationship. I was just looking for something fun and temporary and you're looking for something more and I don't know if it would be fair to either of us to spend the night together when our expectations and hopes are so different. I wouldn't want to take advantage of you.

MIKE

No, please feel free to take advantage of me. You said you wanted to play Naughty or Nice later. We can do that, and we've got the massage oils and the truffles.

CLAIRE

I'm not really in the mood to play games.

MIKE

We could just watch *It's a Wonderful Life* on TV and eat ice cream. How does that sound?

CLAIRE

Goodnight Mike.

MIKE

Will you at least give me a call?

CLAIRE

Sure, I'll give you a call.

Claire exits.

MIKE

Dammit! You idiot. Dumb. Dumb. Dumb. Dumb. Why can't you keep your big mouth shut?

END SCENE

TRANSITION TELEVISION AUDIO

SFX: CHRISTMAS MUSIC AND TELEVISION ANNOUNCER UP

ANNOUNCER ONE

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from everyone here at the Holiday Channel.

ANNOUNCER TWO

Now sit back, relax, and enjoy the fire.

ANNOUNCER ONE

It's the Holiday Channel's annual Christmas Morning Yule log.

SFX: ELECTRONIC SALES AD MUSIC WITH REVERB

ANNOUNCER TWO

Brought to you by MEGA Sounds 22nd Annual – Christmas Clear Out – Year End Madness – Red Tag – Factory Blow Out Sale!

ANNOUNCER

And remember starting tomorrow there are only 364 shopping days until Christmas.

SCENE iii – THE GINGERBREAD SUITE – DECEMBER 25 - 8:00 A.M.

Setting: The bed is still made and there is a room service cart with the remains of some late night snacks including a plate of turkey wings. Empty pop cans, a half dozen empty hotel size bottles of alcohol, the empty champagne bottle, and the half empty bottle of prescription pain killers, are also on the coffee table. The candy canes and chocolates from the Two Turtle Doves Gift basket have also been munched on.

At Rise: MIKE is in the bathroom. He sings some of the lines from, After You've Gone and then enters the hotel room continuing to sing. He is wearing one of the Christmas themed bathrobes but no pants just some boxer shorts and his shirt. He has been up the entire night feeling sorry for himself, drinking, eating, and popping pills. The television set is turned on and the annual Christmas Yule log is playing.

SFX: FROM THE TELEVISION WE HEAR CHRISTMAS MUSIC AND THE SOUND OF A CRACKLING FIRE

MIKE (Singing It Had to be You)
SOME OTHERS I'VE SEEN, MIGHT NEVER BE MEAN
MIGHT NEVER BE CROSS, OR TRY TO BE BOSS
BUT THEY WOULDN'T DO
FOR NOBODY ELSE, GAVE ME A THRILL
WITH ALL YOUR FAULTS, I LOVE YOU STILL
IT HAD TO BE YOU, WONDERFUL YOU
IT HAD TO BE YOU.

MIKE crosses to the couch and sits. He grabs a handful of pills and pops them in his mouth and then takes a drink and swallows them. He picks up the Christmas Koala and pushes the play button.

DIANE (Recording)
“Hi dad! Ho. Ho. Ho. Wish you were here on the beach with us down under in sunny Sydney. See you soon. Love you. Merry Christmas.”

MIKE
Love you too sweetheart.

MIKE hugs the Koala.

SFX: KNOCK AT DOOR

CLAIRE (Off)
Mike?

SFX: KNOCK AT DOOR

MIKE looks towards the door.

CLAIRE (Off)
Mike?

MIKE
Claire?

CLAIRE (Off)
Mike it's Claire.

MIKE
Claire? Claire? Alright.

MIKE turns off the television with the remote.

SFX: KNOCK AT DOOR

MIKE

Hang on. I'm coming.

MIKE crosses to the door and opens it. CLAIRE is standing in the doorway dressed in casual but comfortable clothing and wearing her winter jacket.

MIKE

Claire what are you doing here?

CLAIRE

May I come in?

MIKE

Sure, come on in. Merry Christmas.

CLAIRE

You look terrible.

MIKE

I feel terrible.

CLAIRE

I spoke to your brother.

MIKE

My brother. Marty? How did you do that?

CLAIRE

I took your phone instead of mine when I left. He called about an hour ago.

MIKE

Is that right.

CLAIRE

We had a nice little chat.

MIKE

What about?

CLAIRE

You.

MIKE

Me?

CLAIRE

Yes. He wants you to call him. He said it was important.

MIKE

And you came all the way over here to deliver that message.

CLAIRE

I came to get my phone.

CLAIRE takes her own phone and puts it in her pocket.

MIKE

Oh. Right. Well thanks for letting me know. Now if you don't mind, I think I'd better lie down.

MIKE lies down on the floor.

CLAIRE

What are you doing on the floor?

MIKE

It's the only part of the room that doesn't seem to be spinning at the moment.

CLAIRE

Don't you think the couch would be more comfortable?

MIKE

I don't think I can make it to the couch.

CLAIRE

Your brother's worried about you. He said you've been depressed and yesterday he found an envelope in your room addressed to him with five dollars in it and a goodbye card.

MIKE

He has a birthday coming up, so I thought I'd give him cash.

CLAIRE

Five dollars?

MIKE

Well, if he'd gotten me a better divorce settlement, I'd have given him more money.

CLAIRE

Why the goodbye card?

MIKE

They were all out of birthday cards.

CLAIRE

You should have told your brother where you were going.

MIKE

Look Claire I know you mean well but right now my life is a mess.

CLAIRE

Well, sometimes life can be messy, Mike. People get divorced. They lose their jobs. They get sick and sometimes they die. And sure, it feels awful when those things happen but that's the way it is. The only thing you can control is how you respond to those things.

MIKE

So, I'm just supposed to put a smile on my face and pretend everything is okay? Well, it's not okay. You have no idea the kind of hell I've been through this year.

CLAIRE

Oh, I think I have some idea about what you've been through and what you've been feeling.

MIKE

Well right now I'm not feeling so good. So, if you'll excuse me, I think I need to freshen up.

MIKE begins to crawl on his hands and knees towards the washroom.

CLAIRE

Not telling your family – the people that care about you – where you're going or what you're doing is selfish and irresponsible.

MIKE

Yeah, yeah, yeah. I'm selfish and irresponsible. We'll pick it up from there when I get back.

CLAIRE watches MIKE crawl into the washroom. CLAIRE crosses down to the table and surveys the mess. She takes out MIKE's cell phone and dials.

CLAIRE

Hi Marty. I'm here now. Well, he's in rough shape. *(She picks up the half empty pill container)* It looks like he's been up all-night drinking, eating crappy food, and good Lord – popping pills. Really. He did the same thing a couple of weeks ago. Yeah, he told me about the job. Well, it looks like half the bottle's gone. Listen I'll call 911 and get him to the Emergency. What? These are garlic. You replaced the pills his doctor gave him with garlic. It looks like it was a good thing you did. Yes, I'll get him to call you. I will. Thanks for letting me know about the pills. Merry Christmas.

What a stupid, stupid, stupid, thing to do.

MIKE enters from the bathroom with a hand towel as he dries off his face.

CLAIRE

So how are you feeling now?

MIKE

My back still hurts, I've got a wicked headache, and my stomach is all in knots.

CLAIRE

Maybe you shouldn't have eaten so many turkey wings. Listen Mike, that guy I met two days ago. He was fun and full of life. But this guy – the guy who drinks too much, crawls around on the floor, and spends his time feeling sorry for himself. Him, I'm not so fond of.

MIKE

Me neither. I hate that guy.

CLAIRE

Well then which guy are you?

MIKE

I'm just a fifty-seven-year-old unemployed, divorced male trying to navigate my way through life who got a crazy idea in his head about seeing where chance would take me. And it took me to you. Listen Claire, I know I shouldn't have said I love you. And if I could take it back I would but I can't. I messed up okay. But there was a real spark between us when we first met. You can't deny that. One, two – cha, cha, cha. Not going to join in.

CLAIRE

I'm not in the dancing mood.

MIKE

Oh, hell maybe you're just scared to fall in love again.

CLAIRE

And why would I be scared to fall in love?

MIKE

Because I'm willing to bet you've been hurt.

CLAIRE

And how would you know?

MIKE

You said you just ended a long-term relationship and that sometimes people get involved with the wrong person. You told me about your brother, but I'm willing to bet you were really talking about yourself. Am I right?

CLAIRE

Some men just say they love you, but they don't really mean it.

MIKE

Well, I mean it. I ended up in Regina (Omaha) because I stuck a pin in a map. When I got here I didn't even have a reservation so I told the cab driver to take me to a nice hotel and he brought me here. And while I was standing in the lobby checking into my room I heard the band play, "It Had to be You" and I looked up and there you were. And the moment I saw you – in that red dress – and I know you think I'm stupid for saying this – the moment I saw you was the moment I fell in love with you. It was that fast. And it was that real. And that's why I had to walk over and say hello. And that's why I was so devastated last night after you left and said you didn't want anything more to do with me.

CLAIRE

I never said that. Don't go putting words in my mouth. I said, you were moving too fast and that we needed to slow things down. Now you may have heard something different but that's your problem not mine. I like you Mike but I'm not ready to say I love you or get married. When I got home last night, I did a lot of thinking about what you said and it's true there was a spark between us and so I decided I was going to give this relationship another chance but after coming here this morning I have to tell you I have my doubts. I certainly don't need this kind of turmoil and drama in my life. I'm willing to give you the benefit of the doubt because I know what a shitty time you've had the last couple of years, but I'm not going to promise you anything Mike.

MIKE

Oh my God, I'm an idiot.

CLAIRE

Finally, something we can agree on.

MIKE

You have to get me to the hospital.

CLAIRE

Why?

MIKE

Because – look – I...I'm ashamed to say this...but – I – I haven't been very happy...and the reason I came here was...I just thought if God wanted me to live he'd show me a sign and if he didn't well then. I thought you were the sign but after you left – I did something stupid. I did something...I don't know if you'll understand. Oh God, I don't want to scare you off again.

CLAIRE

You took an overdose, didn't you?

MIKE

Yes, my prescription pain killers. I've been eating them like peanuts.

CLAIRE

That's a pretty stupid and irresponsible thing to do.

MIKE

Hey, we've already established that I'm selfish and irresponsible. Do you have to add stupid to the list?

CLAIRE

Stupid, dumb, foolish – you pick.

MIKE

Let's go with foolish. Listen I think we should call 911.

CLAIRE

What for? You said you wanted to end it all. Maybe you should.

MIKE

What!

CLAIRE

After all, if I stop you this time who's going to stop you next time.

MIKE

Come on Claire don't joke around.

CLAIRE

I'm not joking. Clearly, you're unhappy. If you want to kill yourself who am I to stand in your way?

MIKE

But I don't want to die.

CLAIRE crosses over to the bar and opens a pack of ENO and dumps it into a glass of water and stirs it up during.

CLAIRE

That's good to hear because killing yourself over love might work in a Shakespearian tragedy, but it's not a very attractive or appealing quality in real life.

MIKE

Did you bring your car? We can drive to the hospital.

CLAIRE

Darn, took an Uber. Wouldn't you know it.

MIKE
Maybe there's a doctor in the inn?

CLAIRE
I'm sure there is.

MIKE
Let's call the front desk and find out.

CLAIRE
Why should we ruin his Christmas? Here drink this.

CLAIRE hands MIKE a glass of ENO.

MIKE
Are you sure this is going to help?

CLAIRE
Positive. Drink up.

MIKE drinks the ENO.

CLAIRE picks up a pillow from the bed.

CLAIRE
All of it. You'll feel better. All done?

MIKE
Yeah.

CLAIRE whacks MIKE hard with the pillow.

MIKE
Hey, why'd you do that?

CLAIRE
How dare you do such a thing.

MIKE
We need to call an ambulance.

CLAIRE
No, we don't.

MIKE
Why not?

CLAIRE

Because before you ran off to Regina, (Omaha) your brother replaced your pain killers with garlic capsules.

MIKE

They're garlic!

CLAIRE

Yeah, you might have an upset stomach for a day or two but that's nothing compared to what could have happened.

MIKE

Oh, thank God.

CLAIRE

If you're going to thank anyone you should thank your brother because he's the one that kept you from doing something stupid. Oh, I'm sorry foolish. What is wrong with you? Just because you lost a daughter doesn't give you any right to be careless with your own life.

MIKE

Whoa, hold on a second. I never said anything about losing a daughter.

CLAIRE

Your daughter is alive?

MIKE

Yes.

CLAIRE clobbers MIKE with the pillow.

MIKE

Hey!

MIKE grabs a pillow to defend himself as CLAIRE continues to clobber MIKE with her pillow.

CLAIRE

You told me you miss her.

MIKE

I do miss her.

CLAIRE

You said she was in Chili during that earthquake and that her hotel collapsed and what a horrible time it was.

MIKE

It was a horrible time, but she didn't die. How could you even think such a thing?

CLAIRE

What about the tears and the wishing things were different?

MIKE and CLAIRE stop the pillow fight.

MIKE

She won't talk to me. She's completely cut me out of her life since her mom and I got divorced. She blames me and won't listen to my side of things. Diane hasn't phoned, e-mailed, or written to me for over a year. That's why that stupid Koala means so much to me – it's the only way I can hear her voice. Hear her call me Dad. Have her tell me she loves me.

CLAIRE

Good Lord why do people add so much unnecessary misery and pain to their lives. I lost a husband to cancer and you and your daughter are both alive and too stubborn to mend the fence. Well you're the father be the bigger person. Make the call.

MIKE

You're not going to hit me again, are you?

CLAIRE

I don't know. Has it knocked any sense into you? What if those pills had been real? Then what?

MIKE

You could try and be a little more understanding.

CLAIRE

Oh, I understand more than you think. The first couple of years after Gary died, I had moments where I didn't feel like going on either. On the first anniversary of his death I took a long drive out into the country and eventually found myself standing on a bridge looking down into the water and thinking how easy it would be to jump in. That scared me. I got back in my car and drove straight to my brother Frank's. He spent the next six months with me while I got my life straightened around. I didn't feel like going on, but I did. Because I knew that one day it would get better. I didn't give up and I don't believe you're the sort of person who wants to give up. Now I want you to call your brother, or I'll call him for you.

CLAIRE hands MIKE his phone.

MIKE

Okay. Okay. Fine. Just stop hitting me with the pillow, alright? (*Mike dials*) Hello Marty. Yeah, I'm okay. I know I should have told you where I was going. I'm sorry I didn't. You heard from Diane. Really. Is everything okay? What? Really. Oh my God. Thanks for letting me know.

Where is she? London? England? Alright text me the number and I'll give her a call. Thanks Marty. Merry Christmas.

CLAIRE

Is everything okay?

MIKE

Diane is pregnant.

CLAIRE

Your daughter is expecting?

MIKE

Yeah. I'm going to be a grandfather. Oh my God that's wonderful. What was I thinking? Quick hit me.

CLAIRE

What?

MIKE

Hit me!

CLAIRE whacks MIKE across the face with the pillow.

MIKE

Thanks. That one I deserved.

CLAIRE

So, now what are you going to do?

MIKE

She wants me to give her a call. What time is it in London?

CLAIRE

Late afternoon.

MIKE

God I'm nervous. I don't think I can do this alone.

CLAIRE

You're not alone, I'm here. Christmas is the perfect time to mend fences. To forgive and forget. To start fresh.

MIKE

Yeah, you're right. Listen Claire about your present.

CLAIRE

The engagement ring.

MIKE

You never opened it.

MIKE hands CLAIRE the Christmas present and CLAIRE opens it.

CLAIRE

Earrings.

MIKE

Yeah, earrings. I noticed you looking at these when we were shopping. So, I doubled back and got them before I left the mall.

CLAIRE

I'm sorry. I really thought you had gotten me an engagement ring.

MIKE

Well considering our conversation last night and how crazy things got I can see how you would. So, are we good?

CLAIRE

Yeah, we're good. Lucky for you I believe in second chances. Ready to make that call?

MIKE

Yeah.

MIKE and CLAIRE sit on the sofa. MIKE dials. The Christmas Koala is cuddled between them. CLAIRE holds MIKE's hand. The phone rings once. Twice. And gets answered on the third ring.

MIKE

Hello? Diane. It's dad. Merry Christmas. I was talking to your Uncle Marty and he told me some wonderful news. Oh, that's wonderful honey. I'm so happy for you and Jack. Yes, it's good to hear your voice too. You don't have to apologize we were both being stubborn. Yeah, I know. I love you too.

END PLAY