



A KEEPSAKES CHRISTMAS

by

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EXT. CLAYTON TOWN CENTER, 1963 - NIGHT

Fresh snow covers booths and attractions of the neighborhood Christmas Carnival, as SOUNDS of the season fill the air. CAROLERS sing from a nearby gazebo as FAMILIES pass by.

CLAIRE ROWAN (18), in a pink poodle skirt and cat-eye glasses, holds hands with SHAWN KELLEY (21), a handsome man in a bomber jacket with slicked back hair.

They pass under a banner which reads "CLAYTON CHRISTMAS CARNIVAL - 1963" along a row of Midway booths, each touting various Christmas prizes.

A midway BARKER catches their attention.

BARKER

Step on up, sir. Win an ornament!

CLAIRE

Come on, give it a try.

Shawn chuckles and walks over to the booth as the Barker readies three balls on the table.

BARKER

Three balls, twenty-five cents.  
Knock the bottles off the table and  
win an ornament. Easy peasy.

SHAWN

Guess we'll find out.

Shawn picks up a ball, blows into his hands, narrows his steely gaze as he takes a pitcher's pose. He breathes in deep, winds up and throws the softball toward the target.

BAM!

Three milk bottles BLAST off the table with a direct hit at the sweet spot of the triad, leaving the table bare.

The Barker smiles and hands him a shiny SUGAR PLUM FAIRY ballerina ornament.

BARKER

Another winner! Merry Christmas!

Shawn hands Claire the ornament and she beams.

CLAIRE

Thank you! I love it!

Claire looks down at the ornament and gently rubs the outline of it. We focus in on the ornament, and Claire's thumb tracing the figurine until-

CUT TO:

INT. CLAIRE'S HOUSE, PRESENT DAY - CONTINUOUS

Claire, now 77 (frail, silver hair) opens her blue eyes.

She stands in front of a Christmas tree, caressing the much aged Sugar Plum Fairy ornament in her left hand, as she holds a BRACELET around her left wrist with her right hand.

She closes her eyes again, clutches the ornament to her chest and sways slowly back and forth. Her long silver hair slips off her forehead to reveal a SCAR.

Lost in her own world.

INT. ST. LOUIS DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES - DAY

The 'hive' of cubicles buzz as phones RING while case workers and crisis managers attend the lines.

DEANA PRESTON (36, efficiently professional) is oblivious to all of it, not only surviving the chaos but thriving in it.

Faced with day after day of unhappy clients, she's a one-woman solution machine and proving it on the phone. Again.

DEANA

Yes, Miss Johnston, I understand the issue. Let me open your case file right now...by the way, is Joseph feeling better?

She types and talks with grace and ease.

DEANA (cont'd)

Oh, I'm so happy to hear that. I remember when my daughter had croup; I was a wreck. Okay, here we go. I see the problem now...

She types away on the computer and addresses what seems like one of a million system errors each day.

DEANA (cont'd)

Alrighty, I took care of it on this side and now you should be able to open the link and do what you need.

(MORE)

DEANA (cont'd)  
 Do you have the link open? You got it? Great. Let me know if you have any other issues.

Deana smiles as she TYPES a few more keystrokes.

DEANA (cont'd)  
 What was that? Oh yes, that's right...Merry Christmas. Take care of Joseph and stay well.

She taps her earpiece then searches through a stack of files on her desk, pulling one out. She opens it, scribbles some notes on the inside cover, and drops it in the out-box.

A VOICE in the neighboring cubicle pipes up as a head pops up over the partition. It's PETE HEDLEY (38, tall, kind and dorky), resting his arms on the barrier between them.

PETE  
 And how am I supposed to be able to do that, exactly?

Deana leans back in her chair.

DEANA  
 Do what?

PETE  
 Remember every detail from every client who ever calls?

DEANA  
 Ahh, that. You'll get there. How's the Anderson case coming along?

Pete lifts a finger then disappears below the partition.

Deana's Supervisor, CLIFF MELTON (51, the bad comb-over adds ten years), walks toward their cubicle with CHAD PARKINGTON (58, gray tips, all smarm and no charm) chatting away.

CHAD  
 Thanks again for helping with this matter, Cliff.

CLIFF  
 We'll take care of it. Thanks for bringing it to our attention.

They shake hands and Chad disappears down the hallway as Cliff steps into Deana's cubicle door holding a thick oversized FOLDER. All business.

CLIFF (cont'd)  
Got a hot one here. City Council is  
all over it and I need you to jump  
on this and close it out.

She reaches across the desk and takes it. Opens it.

DEANA  
Claire Kelley...site visit? I can--

Just then, Pete's head pops up over the partition like a  
Whack-A-Mole game, file in hand, interrupting them.

PETE  
--Anderson case is closed. What's  
next on the list--

Now it's Cliff's turn to interrupt. Points toward Pete.

CLIFF  
See? Case closed! Bring your  
shadow. It's good training.

Deana stands and gets her jacket.

DEANA  
We're on it.  
(to Pete)  
C'mon. Field trip.

INT. DEANA'S CAR - LATER

Outside a coffee joint, Pete gets in and hands her a cup.

PETE  
Decaf mocha. No foam. No whip.

She takes it and smiles.

DEANA  
See, you're picking up the details  
just fine. You've been a great  
shadow these past couple months.

She merges into traffic and heads out, careful not to spill.

PETE  
I'm glad the County swaps personnel  
like this. You're incredible at  
what you do. It's an eye-opener.

DEANA

Thanks. Cases spike around the holidays and you've been a real help. Got any advice about fourteen year old teenagers?

PETE

That's out of my department, I'm afraid. My daughter Erika is eight and I'm going to hold onto that for as long as possible.

DEANA

I love eight. I mean, I love all of it, but eight was nice. Everything changed for me after that, though.

PETE

Oh, great. Can't wait.

DEANA

No, no...not like that. I mean, for Becca it changed. For us. Her dad...he got sick. It was tough.

PETE

Oh, wow. That's so hard...for all of you. I'm sorry.

Pete glances over at her, changes topics.

PETE (cont'd)

I remember when I was fourteen. What I put my parents through. Oof, I really need to call them more.

DEANA

(chuckles)

Well, lately, seems every time I try to help, I just face-plant.

PETE

I'm sure you're an incredible mom. And I'm sure she knows that too. Maybe it's just a phase.

DEANA

Well, this phase is going to drive me off a cliff. Speaking of Cliff, what's the file say?

Pete picks up the file and shuffles through it.

PETE

Several anonymous complaints  
through City Council, but not much  
else. Wonder what's up?

DEANA

Hmm. Weird.

She drives through an upscale Clayton neighborhood, past the manicured lawns and rich landscaping of the affluent two-story, brick-faced colonials decorated for Christmas.

PETE

Nice area.

She slows down and peeks through the passenger window as she pulls up curbside to make sure the address is correct. By the look of the place, she already knows it is.

Yellowed grass overrun with weeds creeps over the edges of the sidewalk. Ratty, unkempt bushes surround the home.

She pulls up and stops the car.

EXT. CLAIRE'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Deana navigates the weed-ridden walkway up to the front door and RINGS the doorbell. Adjusts her credentials as Pete follows close behind.

She takes in her surroundings as they wait: rusted and stained gutters overflowing with old leaves, old paint chipping off the panel siding.

PETE

Place could sure use some work.

Deana looks at the house across the street and notices a WOMAN'S face peering from behind a curtain. She watches Deana briefly, then disappears.

Deana turns around and peeks through the front window when the door CREAKS open. Blue eyes peek through the crack.

CLAIRE

H-help you?

DEANA

Claire Kelley?

Claire nods, opens the door.

Deana smiles and begins her carefully practiced salutation verbatim, dispassionate and unemotional.

DEANA (cont'd)  
 (flashes credentials)  
 Hello, my name is Deana Preston  
 with the Department of Health and  
 Human Services. This is my  
 colleague, Pete Hedley. We would  
 like to ask you a few questions. I  
 promise we won't take up too much  
 of your time. Mind if we come in?

Deana holds her hand out to shake Claire's and Claire looks at it. Then at Deana. Leaves her hanging for a moment.

Then she takes her hand and squeezes it while rubbing the BRACELET on her wrist. Claire pauses a moment, releases her hand, then waves them inside. STUTTERS as she speaks.

CLAIRE  
 P-please come in, Deana.

INT. CLAIRE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Deana enters the foyer and then turns toward the...

DEANA  
 Thank you, we won't-

FAMILY ROOM

...and is instantly faced with wall-to-wall bookshelves packed in every nook and cranny with Christmas tchotchkes, souvenirs, mementos, and keepsakes. Stops in her tracks.

DEANA  
 -be too...

Pete slams into the back of Deana, then looks up.

PETE  
 Whoa Nelly...

It's Santa's Workshop on steroids. Deana wanders around slow as she gathers her first impression of the cluttered but festive family room.

It's also borderline hoarding and a cleaning nightmare. Just about every free space on tables, bookshelves, and counters has something unique on it. All about Christmas.



Claire closes the front door and a small pile of mail rests at her feet. She picks up the letters and places them on a table overrun with bills and notices, then shuffles in.

Deana moves toward one of the bookshelves stocked with Christmas memories of the past. She walks past a shelf full of snow globes, each neatly marked with a date.

Pete checks out holiday panels on one wall, crystal figure skaters on a glass table top, Hummel porcelain collections on a shelf. A Santa's Workshop centerpiece.

It's like they stepped into a Holiday souvenir museum.

Claire gets to her favorite parlor chair and sits down, then waves Deana over. She rubs the bracelet on her wrist as she watches them both ogle over all her keepsakes.

DEANA

This is all your...where did you...  
how many places...?

Pete rushes to three fully-decorated Christmas trees, each full of keepsakes and ornaments from around the world: wooden elephants from Thailand, aluminum jeepneys from the Philippines, replicas of the Eiffel Tower, the Taj Mahal, the Great Pyramids.

PETE

You've been to all these places?

Deana turns and finds Claire seated, smiling as they admire her souvenirs. She nods.

DEANA

I've always wanted see the world.  
Closest I'll get is Discovery  
Channel. But, maybe someday.

Claire rubs an ICE-BLUE charm on the bracelet.

CLAIRE

Y-yes, maybe.

DEANA

I'm so sorry, we promised not to  
take up too much of your time and  
I'm standing here admiring all of  
your trinkets. We just have a few  
questions. May I?

Deana sits while Pete wanders about the room, enthralled.

DEANA (cont'd)  
Miss Kelley, there have been  
concerns among your neighbors and  
we needed to verify you were okay-

Deana notices Claire RUBBING the stone on her bracelet.

DEANA (cont'd)  
That's a very pretty bracelet.

Claire looks down at it and smiles.

DEANA (cont'd)  
Do you live here alone?

Claire looks down again, her smile disappears.

DEANA (cont'd)  
It says here you have no immediate  
family? No children or siblings?

Claire shakes her head 'no'. Sullen.

DEANA (cont'd)  
Says you've lived here your whole  
life, is that right?

Claire nods, then points to the keepsakes around the room.

DEANA (cont'd)  
Of course...when you weren't  
gallivanting around the world.

CLAIRE  
T-that's right.

PETE  
I'm sorry, but I notice you have a  
speech pattern issue. Is that from  
a stroke or ongoing health issue?

Claire waves him off. Points to the scar on her forehead.

CLAIRE  
A-Accident. Long time ago.

DEANA  
I'm so sorry to hear that.

Pete's phone RINGS. He looks at it, then at Deana.

PETE  
 Me too, Miss Kelley.  
 (to Deana)  
 It's Cliff. Be right back.

Deana nods, as Pete heads outside to take the call.

She scribbles notes on the paperwork, while Claire watches her. Concerned.

Claire looks over to the bookshelf, then back at Deana. Gets up and walks toward it, then picks up an old snow globe.

DEANA  
 May I help you with that?

Claire brings it over and shows it to her. A boat at the base of a large waterfall. It reads NIAGARA FALLS, 1965.

Deana's eyes go wide. She takes the globe from her.

DEANA (cont'd)  
 Oh, wow. I bet that was beautiful.

CLAIRE  
 Very. And so wet!

Claire chuckles. Her eyes narrow onto Deana with intent.

CLAIRE (cont'd)  
 You want to go?

DEANA  
 I'd love to, but I never have time-

Claire reaches out to the globe and holds it with Deana. Then rubs the ICE-BLUE stone on her bracelet and-

FLASH TO:

FLASHBACK - EXT. MAID OF THE MIST DECK, 1965 - DAY

Instantly, the deafening ROAR of Niagara Falls hits Deana as she's face to face with a full one-hundred eighty degree panorama of raw power.

Deana is paralyzed with excitement and marvel, standing on the deck of the boat ferrying tourists toward this wonder of the world. The mighty Falls get closer and closer.

She turns and sees a YOUNG MAN holding hands with a beautiful WOMAN with blonde, flowing hair...a familiar face...a SCAR on her forehead. Smiling right at her.

DEANA

Claire?

Claire smiles, winks, then turns toward the mighty Falls.

Deana follows her gaze as the NOISE drowns out everything around her. Waves of mist SLAM into her body and face.

Wave after wave. Her face, hair, and clothes instantly drenched. Suddenly a large wave of mist SLAMS into her.

Deana jumps back--

CUT TO:

BACK TO PRESENT DAY - INT. CLAIRE'S HOUSE - DAY

--as Deana releases the snow globe, shocked and startled. And dry as a bone.

DEANA

What...what just happened?!

Deana notices Claire's scar and takes another step back.

DEANA (cont'd)

That was you! HOW?!

CLAIRE

(smiles)

Pretty wet, huh?

Deana can't wrap her head around what's happening, as she looks at Claire, then at the snow globe, then at Claire.

Pete walks back into the room just as Deana grabs the paperwork and rushes past him, freaked out.

PETE

Hey, Cliff needs us to get...hey, where are you going?!

DEANA

I...I have to go.

She's out the door as Pete looks at Claire confused. Claire just smiles back at him, kind as can be.

PETE

Umm, sorry...and thank you.

Pete follows Deana out as Claire waves goodbye, then looks down at the snow globe. Then out the window at Deana as she rushes to her car with Pete close behind.

INT. DEANA'S CAR - LATER

Deana sits in her car, eyes wide. Pete settles in the passenger seat and looks over at her.

PETE

What happened in there?

She starts the car. Deana looks at Pete, then back up at the house and sees Claire watching them from the window. Waving.

DEANA

I don't want to talk about it.

Deana puts the car in gear and drives away.

INT. DEANA'S HOUSE - LATER

Deana walks in to her cute-but-plain two-bedroom house, completely void of holiday cheer. She removes her coat and calls out down the hallway.

DEANA

Becca? You home?

Silence. Deana tosses her stuff on the nearby couch and walks down the hallway.

DEANA (cont'd)

Becca?

She KNOCKS on a door where R-E-B-E-L is spelled out, the 'L' clearly changed from what once was a 'C', followed by a faded and long removed -C-A. KNOCKS again, opens it a notch.

BECCA (14, quiet, brooding) lays across the bed away from the door, bobbing her head as she scrolls on her phone.

Deana walks in and taps her foot to get her attention, startling her so much that she jumps. She removes her earbuds, a scowl across her face.

BECCA

Geez, Mom, you scared the crap out of me!

DEANA

I knocked, but, your earphones--

BECCA

--yeah?

DEANA

You're not going to believe what happened today--

BECCA

Wait, me first. So, they announced the Christmas Dance and I totally want Jeremy to ask me but I don't know what I'm going to do if he doesn't. Then Ashley texted and said she wanted Keller to ask her and totally blew me off.

DEANA

The Christmas Dance? That sounds fun! You can still go even if--

BECCA

Seriously? Jeremy doesn't even know I exist. It's so embarrassing.

DEANA

I'm sure it's not that--

Becca's phone PINGS, a text from one of her million friends. She looks at it.

BECCA

It's Ashley. I need to talk to her.

DEANA

I'm here if you need me.

Deana turns to leave as Becca rolls back over and TAPS away on her phone.

Deana closes the door and sighs.

INT. CLAIRE'S HOUSE - DAY

Claire shuffles through the family room and dusts off a shelf of porcelain snowmen figurines.

She picks up the one sledding on top of another, closes her eyes, and rubs the ICE-BLUE charm on her bracelet.

She smiles and chuckles, arms outstretched like she's gliding down a hill with the wind in her hair. Sways slowly back and forth.

In the entryway, several letters FALL to the floor through the mail slot on the front door. The sudden NOISE startles Claire as she opens her eyes.

The smile fades as she puts the figurine down on the foyer table, then walks over and picks up the letters.

She shuffles through them, bills marked PAST DUE, home association OVERDUE notice, a red envelope marked URGENT.

She puts the letters inside a paper bag filled with other bills and notices and rubs the bracelet as she does.

CLAIRE  
Remember. Remember.

INT. HHS BREAK ROOM - MORNING

Deana pleads her case with her best friend and colleague MICKI REED (37, pink highlights, pure energy) as they sip their coffees.

DEANA  
I swear Micki, it happened.

Micki raises her eyebrows.

MICKI  
Sure you weren't just daydreaming again?

DEANA  
I tell you, one moment I was in her living room and the next I was getting drenched at Niagara Falls.

MICKI  
Drenched?

DEANA  
I could feel the water on my face! And then, BOOM, I was back! My ears were still ringing from the roar of the Falls! How do you explain that?

MICKI  
I can barely explain how I got here this morning, but I know that it's gotta be in your head.

DEANA  
That doesn't explain what I felt on the boat! Or what I heard!

MICKI  
Subliminal hypnosis.

DEANA  
Subwho the whatsis?

MICKI  
It's in your head. Have her take  
you to the beach next time. You  
know, sun, fun, drinks with  
umbrellas? Hell, I'd go there.

DEANA  
That's it!

MICKI  
What's it?

DEANA  
I'll take you with me!

MICKI  
Ha! Forget it.

DEANA  
I ran out of there so quickly I  
didn't get a signature for the  
paperwork. You can come with me and  
see for yourself.

Deana looks at her with pleading eyes.

DEANA (cont'd)  
Please, pretty please?

MICKI  
Don't give me that puppy dog look.

DEANA  
It'll get you out of work early.

Sold.

MICKI  
Lead with that next time.

INT. ST. LOUIS DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES - LATER

Deana KNOCKS then pokes her head into Cliff's office.