

EXT. CLAYTON TOWN CENTER, 1963 - NIGHT

Fresh snow covers booths and attractions of the local 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 with slicked back hair in a bomber jacket.

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.

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 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--

INT. CLAIRE'S HOUSE, PRESENT DAY - CONTINUOUS

Claire (now 82, thin, 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 rubs a BEJEWELED bracelet dangling on her left wrist.

She clutches the ornament close to her chest and closes her eyes again, sways 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 office 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. Do you have the link open? You got it? Great. Let me know if you have any other issues.

Deana smiles as she punches out 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, pulls one out. Opens it, scribbles notes on the
inside, and puts it in the outbox at the corner.

A VOICE in the cubicle nextdoor--

VOICE (O.S.)
And how exactly am I supposed to be
able to do that?

--as PETE HEDLEY (38, tall, glasses, dorky) pops up and
rests his arms on the partition between them.

Deana leans back in her chair.

DEANA
Do what?

PETE
Remember every detail from every
client who ever calls you?

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 boss, CLIFF MELTON (51, bad comb-over), stops in
front of her 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.

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 and takes the folder. 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! Do that. Bring
your shadow. It's good training.

Deana stands and gets her jacket.

DEANA
We're on it.
(to Pete)
Field trip. Let's go.

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 few 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

Out of my department, I'm afraid.
My daughter Erika is only 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 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 really 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 to make sure the address is correct.

By the look of the place, she already knows it is.

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

She pulls up curbside 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

Could use some work, yeah?

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

Deana peeks through the front window when the door CREAKS open. Blue eyes pierce through the crack.

CLAIRE

H-help you?

DEANA

Claire Kelley?

Claire nods, opens the door wider.

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.

(MORE)

DEANA (cont'd)
 We would like to ask you a few
 questions, if that's okay with you.
 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 grabs 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 and turns toward the FAMILY ROOM...

DEANA
 Thank you, we won't-

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

DEANA (cont'd)
 -be too...

Stops in her tracks. Pete slams into the back of Deana, then
 looks around.

PETE
 Holy Christmas...

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

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

Claire shuts 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. A shelf full of snow globes,
 each neatly marked with a date.

Pete checks out crystal figure skaters on a glass table top, then Hummel porcelain collections on a shelf. Below it, an immaculate Santa's Workshop centerpiece.

It's as if they stepped into a Holiday souvenir museum.

Claire gets to her parlor chair and sits. Rubs the bracelet on her wrist as she watches them ogle over her keepsakes.

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

PETE (cont'd)
You've been to all these places?

DEANA
How did you...where did you--?

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

DEANA (cont'd)
I've always wanted see the world.
Closest I'll ever get is Discovery
Channel or YouTube. Maybe someday.

Claire rubs the ice-blue charm on her bracelet.

CLAIRE
Yes, maybe.

Deana sits while Pete wanders about the room, enthralled.

DEANA
Miss Kelley, there have been
concerns among your neighbors and
we wanted 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. Nods.

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

Claire looks down again, her smile disappears. Nods.

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
traveling 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
It's Cliff. Be right back.

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

She scribbles notes while Claire watches her. Concerned.

Claire looks at the bookshelf, then back at Deana. Stands,
walks over, and picks up an old snow globe.

DEANA
May I help you with that?

Claire turns and hands it to her. Deana's eyes go wide.

She takes the globe from her. A boat at the base of a large
waterfall. A brass plaque reads NIAGARA FALLS, 1965.

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

CLAIRE
Yes. So loud. And wet!

Claire chuckles. Her eyes lock onto Deana's.

CLAIRE (cont'd)
Want to go?

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

Claire cups the globe and holds it with Deana, then rubs the ICE-BLUE stone on her bracelet, when--

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 (23) holding hands with a beautiful WOMAN (20) with blonde, flowing hair...striking blue eyes...a scar on her forehead. Smiles right at her.

DEANA
Claire?

Claire 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--

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--

PETE
Hey, Cliff needs us to get--

--just as Deana grabs the paperwork and rushes past him.

DEANA
I...I have to go.

PETE
--hey, where are you going?!

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

PETE (cont'd)
Sorry...and thank you. Great stuff!

Pete follows after Deana as Claire waves goodbye, then watches them through her window rush to her car.

INT. DEANA'S CAR - LATER

Deana sits wide eyed as Pete settles in the passenger seat and looks over at her, concerned.

PETE
What happened? Is everything okay?

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

Still 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 used to be 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 steps in and taps Becca's foot to get her attention, startling her so much that she JUMPS UP. She taps her phone, 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 then 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. Picks up a sledding
one, closes her eyes, and rubs the ICE-BLUE charm.

She smiles and chuckles, then sways slowly back and forth,
as if a cold wind were blowing in her hair while sledding.

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, then picks up
the letters. Shuffles through them, bills marked PAST DUE,
home association OVERDUE notice, a red one marked URGENT.

She puts the letters inside a paper bag filled with notices
and bills, then rubs the bracelet and closes her eyes.

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 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'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, even 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.

MICKI
Lead with that next time.

INT. CLIFF'S OFFICE - LATER

A KNOCK, then Deana pokes her head into Cliff's office.

DEANA
I'm finishing up the Kelley case
file, but I need to go back for a
witness visit.

CLIFF
Kelley? Which one is that...oh yes!
Good, good. The witness visit?

Deana enters and hands him the file to look over.

DEANA
I made some notes from our first
visit, but with these cases the
forms need witness verification.

CLIFF
(flips open file)
Of course. I got another call from
City Council this morning about
this one, so close it quickly.

He points to a poorly designed motivational poster on the
wall that reads "CASE CLOSED!" then hands the file back.

Deana takes it as she exits.

DEANA
You'll have it by tomorrow.