

LOVE RESTORED

by

Johnny B. Dunn and
Georgia K Vinson

Contact:

Johnny B. Dunn
johnnybdunn@gmail.com
310-467-5139

FADE IN:

INT. DINER - EVENING

Nowhere, Oklahoma. Present Day. Two heaping, greasy plates of food plop onto the counter.

COOK
Order's up!

Two arms reach in and grab the plates, and we follow them as they weave their way through the tables, finally arriving at a booth in the corner.

We pull back to reveal CATHERINE "CAT" ANDERSON (mid 30s), pretty despite her crumpled blue waitress' uniform, smiling tiredly down at the COUPLE in the booth as she sets their plates before them.

CAT
Can I get you anything else?

The couple both shake their heads as they dig into their meals. Cat nods and quietly excuses herself.

She makes her way back to the counter, which we now see is decorated with several gaudy plastic turkeys and a banner that reads "Happy Thanksgiving." Cat busies herself refilling coffee cups.

SHIRLEY TURPIN, a 40ish former beauty queen with teased up hair and a couple of thick layers of overdone make-up, adds up receipts at the register. She glances at Cat.

SHIRLEY
Thanksgiving's about here.

Cat says nothing as she returns the coffee pot to the warmer.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)
Honey, you know you're always
welcome to join me and John Earl
and the kids.

CAT
Maybe next year, Shirl. But
thanks.

Shirley watches her wipe down the counter, then shakes her head again, and goes back to the receipts.

Across the room, the bell on the door TINKLES, announcing the arrival of another customer.

Shirley looks up at the SCRAGGLY MAN with the slicked-back black hair standing in the doorway and the BLONDE on his arm. Her eyes immediately shift back to Cat.

SHIRLEY

Cat, ain't that your man Marcus?

Cat glances over her shoulder. For the briefest moment, her face twitches, threatening emotion, then MARCUS catches her eye, and her face turns to stone.

CAT

Was.

Shirley glares at Marcus as he slides into a booth with the Blonde and slobbers all over her in a disgustingly fake show of affection. Over the Bimbo's shoulder, he winks at Cat.

SHIRLEY

Jerk.

CAT

(turning back to her work)

They always are.

COOK

Order's up!

Two more plates land on the counter. Without another word, Cat grabs them and heads off across the diner. Shirley watches, a look of pity on her face.

EXT. DINER PARKING LOT - LATER

Cat waits in the parking lot as Shirley locks the door.

A minivan pulls in, screeching to a stop. Shirley gives a wave in the direction of the van and turns to find Cat staring at the cold, cloudy sky.

CAT

Not even one star.

SHIRLEY

I reckon they can't grant wishes every night.

CAT

I guess not.

Shirley hesitates, glancing towards the van.

SHIRLEY

Look, Cat, don't you be sobbin' over that Marcus. There's something better out there for you. You just gotta give yourself a chance.

CAT

I think I'm better at flying solo.

SHIRLEY

Everybody needs somebody, even if it's just a...

(pauses reaches into her apron pocket)

Well, shoot, I was hoping not to look the fool givin' you this, but you know I got stuck workin' a twelve-hour shift on my day off last Saturday at the church bazaar. Good Lord, you shoulda seen some of that stuff. Anyhow, the kids were doing crafts made out of old used material to give it life again, and I saw this... Now, you gotta promise not to laugh.

She produces a crude homemade bracelet made out of colorful, braided string. In the center - or somewhere thereabout - "LOVE RESTORED" is spelled out in pieced together beads with black lettering.

Cat stares at the proffered gift.

SHIRLEY

I know it ain't worth a back flip or nothin'. 'Course we gave the kids hugs and "good jobs" and such for recycling and all ...It's sorta silly... I just thought...

Cat accepts the bracelet, shaking her head.

CAT

No, no... thank you.

The minivan horn honks, and Shirley waves again.

SHIRLEY

Okay, okay, I'm comin'!
(pats Cat's arm)
Night, hun!

Cat stands, clutching the bracelet, as she watches Shirley hurry across the parking lot and jump in the waiting van.

INT. DILAPIDATED STUDIO APARTMENT - LATER

Cat drags in the door, tosses her keys on the table, and lets her purse slide to the floor.

The dingy room leaves much to be desired. It's furnished with only a ratty sleeper sofa, an ancient TV, a dinged up table, a couple of mismatched chairs, and a wobbly dresser. A tiny kitchenette inhabits one corner, and the door to the bathroom fills the other.

Cat tosses a stack of bills marked "past due" on top of an already towering pile. The mountain topples and envelopes cascade to the floor, scattering in every direction.

With a weary sigh, Cat drops to her knees and starts gathering the mess. As she picks up one envelope, she pauses. The return address is from Samuel L. Perkins, Attorney at Law, in Jamestown, NY.

CAT

Great, now they've got their lawyers after me, too.

She tosses the envelope and the bills back on the table and collapses on the couch.

After a moment's rest, Cat reaches into her pocket and retrieves the bracelet. She ties the bracelet around her wrist examining it before removing it again and clutching it tight in her hand.

INT. DINER - EVENING

Thanksgiving Day. Cat weaves through the tables, chatting with the few diners - mostly single men - and refilling coffee cups.

In the corner an OLD MAN (late 70s), dressed in an out-of-date but perfectly pressed suit and bowtie, watches her. Another WAITRESS refills his coffee, but he continues watching Cat.

Cat and the other waitress meet behind the counter.

WAITRESS

Seems Grandpa only has eyes for you.

CAT

I saw. I wonder what he wants?

WAITRESS

(laughing)

I know what he *wants*!

CAT

Shut up!

Shirley exits the kitchen and props on the counter beside them.

SHIRLEY

(nodding towards old man)

What the heck's that guy doing?

They watch as the man gets up and crosses to an old jukebox in the corner. A faded and torn "OUT-OF-ORDER" sign is taped over the selections. Undeterred, he lifts it to peruse the song titles.

WAITRESS

(elbows Cat)

You gonna tell him that thing's been eatin' quarters since 1997?

CAT

(shrugging)

If he's got change to toss, that's his business.

She turns to start a new pot of coffee as the old man drops a quarter into the slot.

SHIRLEY

Hey, y'all, look at this.

Cat glances over her shoulder, then turns for a better look. The lights on the jukebox have lit up. Cat and the other waitress look on as the man presses a button, and "Love Me Tender" fills the air. With a satisfied smile, the man returns to his seat and sets his gaze back on Cat.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)

Well, I'll be danged. I didn't know the thing was even still plugged in.

WAITRESS

I've been working five years, and I ain't ever heard a sound out of it.

Ignoring them, Cat stares at the jukebox. Slowly, she shifts her gaze to meet the man's, holding it for a moment, then she grabs a piece of pie and crosses to him.

CAT

Okay, what's your deal? That jukebox has been dead for years.

MAN

Sometimes you just got to believe, and jiggle the cord. I find that the most obvious fixes are often the ones that we fail to see.

Cat nods absently, listening to the song.

CAT

That song. My mother used to-- it was one of her favorites.

MAN

It's fascinating how a song can transport the mind, the soul. Sometimes, for me, it's less than that. Sometimes it's just a single note on the piano.

His eyes meet Cat's eyes, and she fidgets, uncomfortable.

Finally, she breaks away, squares her shoulders, and slides the pie across the table to him.

CAT

Look, I brought this pie over so as not to make a scene. You've been watching me all evening, and that sure as hell ain't what I'm looking for. Now, I understand lonesomeness, but I want to make it clear that - jukebox magician or not - I don't like being ogled over like a piece of meat.

The man shifts in his seat and straightens his tie.

MAN

Now, look, Ms. Anderson, I--

CAT

How do you know my name?

She takes a step back, debating fight or flight, but the man calmly holds his gaze on her.

MAN

Ms. Anderson, I believe there has
 been some sort of misunderstanding.
 (extends his hand)
 My name is Samuel Perkins from
 Jamestown, NY.

Cat ignores his hand. SAMUEL reaches into a weathered
 briefcase and pulls out a stack of papers.

SAMUEL

I assume you didn't receive my
 letter.

Cat stares at him blankly.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)

About your great-aunt Edna Alice
 McAlister's passing?

Cat sinks into the seat across from him.

CAT

Edna Alice?... Auntie E?
 (the hint of emotion
 quickly vanishes)
 I thought she'd died years ago.

SAMUEL

That's... understandable, I
 suppose. But I have been
 attempting to contact you for some
 time now. Understand, I wouldn't
 be here on Thanksgiving if it
 weren't of the utmost importance to
 get her estate settled as soon as
 possible.

He passes her a copy of Edna's will, which states simply: I
 leave the whole of my estate to my only living relative, my
 great-niece, Catherine Emily Anderson.

CAT

What is this estate? Money?

SAMUEL

(eyebrows raised)
 Some. Not a lot. As the sole
 heir, it is your responsibility to
 take care of Mrs. McAlister's
 personal effects.
 (MORE)

SAMUEL (CONT'D)

Now, I expect you want to settle this promptly, so I have reserved a room for you at The Edgewater House, a little bed and breakfast central to--

CAT

Hold on there! I barely knew this woman! I can't go running off to New York! What about my job?

Cat looks around to see if she has drawn attention. The other Waitress pretends to ignore them.

CAT (CONT'D)

(loud whisper)

I don't have the money to jet off to God knows where. Do you know how little they pay me?

Unaffected, Samuel gathers his papers and stuffs them back in his briefcase. He pulls out an envelope.

SAMUEL

I assure you the matter can be resolved quickly, but your presence is required to do so.

Samuel hands her the envelope and his business card. Cat opens the envelope, full of cash.

SAMUEL

I'll expect you in my office at 10AM the day after tomorrow.

CAT

How do you know I won't just spend the cash? I haven't seen her since I was six?

Samuel sits there, studying her a moment. Then, he reaches beside him and sets a box on the table.

SAMUEL

(standing)

I thought perhaps you would like to look at these. They were Mrs. McAlister's... She always said the path to the future is often found through the lessons of the past.

Stunned, Cat glances at the box and up at Samuel. He holds her gaze for several seconds. She shifts under his scrutiny, uncomfortable at what he may see.

Then, quick as a flash, he breaks his gaze away and reaches down to take a bite of the pie.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)

Well, I really must be on my way.

He drops \$20 on the table, sets his hat on his head, and tips it to Cat, who can only stare as he heads out the door.

After a moment, Cat slowly lifts the lid off the box. It's full of photos. On top is an aged one of an older lady and a little girl of about five. It's Cat and Auntie E.

WAITRESS

So you get you a date?

Cat looks up, startled, as the waitress slides into the booth across from her. Cat quickly throws the photos as well as the envelope of cash into the box and shuts the lid.

CAT

No... no, just some senile old man.

WAITRESS

(chuckling)

Oh, baby, we've all been there!

But Cat doesn't hear her. She glances over her shoulder in the direction that Samuel just left.

Shirley approaches and motions to the waitress.

SHIRLEY

Come on, now, back to work.

The waitress sighs and shuffles back to work.

SHIRLEY

Okay. What was that all about?

Cat glances at Shirley and grabs the box.

CAT

Nothing... it was... nothing.

She grabs the box and hurries to the back of the restaurant.

Shirley sighs and shakes her head.

SHIRLEY

Good Lord, the holiday foolishness has already started!

INT. PLANE - DAY

Cat sits by the window, staring out at the passing clouds. In her lap she absently fingers the wedding photo of the young couple.

FADE TO:

SUPER: JAMESTOWN, NEW YORK 1880

EXT. MERCHANT DISTRICT - DAY

Bustling business District. People move up and down the street on foot, in carriages, wagons. They pass SPEARMAN'S FURNITURE AND CABINETS.

A woman steps out of the door onto the wood plank that connects the store to the road. MRS. FAIRCHILD, a woman of wealth, (25) wears a dark taffeta busseled dress. She stops to pull on her dark gloves, crosses the plank, holds her hand up stopping a wagon and the flow of people. Satisfied the world has stopped for her, she ventures into the dirt street.

INT. SPEARMAN'S - CONTINUOUS

A large open wood-framed building, exposed rafters, wood working tools scattered on workbenches and hanging on the walls, all covered with wood dust. A small office is built out from the corner of the room.

CHARLES DOWNUM, (20) well-formed upper body from hard work, sands a highboy chest with drawers.

ANDREW SPEARMAN, (40) stout from years of logging his own wood, comes out of the small office, approaches Charles.

CHARLES

Working as fast as I am able.

SPEARMAN

What? Mrs. Fairchild? About as impatient as a goose in winter. No bother. She'll take delivery when my wagon pulls up in front of that castle she calls a house.

(Beat)

Let me take a look.

Andrew Spearman inspects the smooth corners of the highboy. He SPITS on the wood and rubs his finger on the grain.

SPEARMAN (CONT'D)

She's a beauty. You don't do one thing different. That Mrs. Fairchild has no idea what she's getting.

CHARLES

Yes, sir.

SPEARMAN

A couple more hours, then off for the day.

Charles picks up the sandpaper and works with vigor.

EXT. WOOD CHURCH - EVENING

PIANO MUSIC floats from the open doors of the whitewashed clapboard structure surrounded by a white picket fence and trees filled with the colors of fall.

Charles steps up to the fence, opens the gate. He steps onto the porch and opens the doors. He peers in, smiles as the music floats by him.

INT. WOOD CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

A modest church with benches facing a short alter railing that separates the pulpit from the congregation. Along one wall toward the front, EMILY DOWNUM (20), as beautiful as the music she plays, reads from a hymnal at the piano.

Charles slowly approaches Emily from behind. She stops, turns to Charles. A smile turns to embarrassment.

EMILY

Oh, my. Charles! If you're here, then I have played much longer than I had anticipated.

She quickly turns and returns the hymnal to the top of the piano and closes the lid to the keys. She stands and grabs her wrap and puts it over her shoulders.

Charles gently holds her shoulders and looks into her eyes.

CHARLES

I know no one who can play as beautifully as my Emily.

EMILY

It's because you have not heard
that many play.

CHARLES

Is that so? I will remember that
the next time you compliment my
furniture making.

Charles kisses her.

EMILY

I have some wonderful news. The
Pastor was here earlier and the
congregation has decided to
purchase a new piano.

CHARLES

Jamestown has some fine piano
makers. I'm sure someone will make
a fair trade to allow this one for
a down payment.

EMILY

That's just it Charles. They have
offered the piano to me.

CHARLES

That is very generous of the
congregation for all of your
playing.

EMILY

Actually... they have offered it to
me at a very reasonable price--

CHARLES

Emily, you know we are in no--

EMILY

--I told them we would consider it,
that's all. I thought that--

CHARLES

--I will not hear of it. I cannot
believe you would put me in a
position to refuse their offer.

Charles charges out of the church. Emily waits a moment,
then follows.

EXT. DOWNUM HOME - LATER

A wagon's path winds through a glen. Charles, still angry, walks quickly home. Emily tries to keep up ten feet behind.

EMILY

You are too prideful, Charles
Downum!

(Beat)

I will tell the Pastor tomorrow.

CHARLES

And, what will you say?

EMILY

Why, are you afraid I will
embarrass you?

They reach the front of a small two-room house. Just behind, a small barn.

CHARLES

I'll check on the animals.

EMILY

If you plan to stay angry at me all
night, then you can just stay with
the animals.

EXT. DOWNUM HOME - MORNING

The sun just breaks the horizon and a fall morning mist hugs the ground. The barn door opens. Charles steps out after sleeping in the hay all night. He stretches. He pulls the hay out of his hair and dusts off his clothes.

INT. DOWNUM HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Emily stands at the front window of the house. She watches as Charles splashes water on his face from the rain barrel at the corner of the house.

Emily sits at the table. She opens a small JOURNAL. She writes trying to keep her attention inside the house. She looks up in time to see Charles walk by the window and down the road toward town for work.

CUT TO:

EXT. EDGEWATER HOUSE - DAY

Present.

A Grand Victorian Painted Lady, manicured lawn and deep green Holly bushes surround a gilded wooden sign that reads, "EDGEWATER HOUSE BED AND BREAKFAST".

INT. CAB - CONTINUOUS

Cat stares out the window at The Edgewater House B&B. A MAN balances on a ladder against the front, hammer in his hand. He's talking to a plump WOMAN, who stands on the ground looking up.

The man sees the taxi, smiles, waves, and starts his descent.

CAT

What have I gotten myself into?

Suddenly, the CAB DRIVER knocks on the window.

CAB DRIVER

You getting out?

Cat reluctantly gathers her purse and steps out. She hands the driver his fare, and he immediately abandons her to the man's approach. The man grins and extends his hand.

MAN

I'm Sean Grier, owner of this little place. You must be Catherine. I'm sorry to hear about your loss.

Cat studies SEAN as she takes his hand. He's in his mid-thirties with a strong build, handsome features, and a bright smile, though his blue eyes hint at a bit of sadness.

CAT

It's Cat... and it's not so much a loss when you didn't know the them.

Sean's smile dims a bit, but he nods. The woman, DOT HARPER, (40s) and round, is now by his side. She grabs Cat's hand.

DOT

Well, these things can still be a shock, no matter how you look at it. My name's Dot, by the way.
(glances at Sean)
Can't accomplish much just standing here, you know.

Dot offers a smile to Cat, then heads off towards her car.

Cat motions to the hammer, still in Sean's hand, and several boxes strewn across the yard.

CAT (CONT'D)
Renovating?

SEAN
Decorating... Christmas..

CAT
Oh, I guess that is coming up.

INT. EDGEWATER HOUSE - PARLOR - MOMENTS LATER

Cat follows Sean inside. The room is full of period antiques, a large grandfather clock, a heavy mahogany desk, and a fresh Christmas tree. The tree is mostly decorated. Boxes and strands of lights are strewn about the room.

CAT
You don't waste any time, do you?

Sean rummages in one of the desk drawers.

SEAN
We have regular guests this time of the year. They enjoy the decorations.

CAT
We?

Sean pauses, hesitating. Then, resumes his search.

In the awkward silence, Cat walks around the tree, gently touching its branches. She absently starts humming the first few notes of "Sleigh Ride." Sean glances at her just as he produces a key from the drawer.

SEAN
My wife loved the Christmas carols.

Cat's humming stops, but her fingers linger on the tree branches.

CAT
(shrugging)
I guess they sorta get lodged in your head. My Auntie E used to sing them... endlessly.

SEAN

I thought you said you didn't know her.

Cat abruptly withdraws her hand from the tree.

CAT

That was a long time ago.
(motions to the key)
Is that for my room?

SEAN

(nods, hands it over)
Up the stairs, second door on the right. You need help--

CAT

I've got it. Thanks.

She grabs her suitcase and heads up the stairs.

INT. SAMUEL PERKINS' OFFICE - LATER

Cat sits in one of the worn leather chairs across from Samuel's desk, impatiently tapping her fingers on the arm.

CAT

So you think I'll be out of here by tomorrow?

SAMUEL

(looking up from his paperwork)
I don't see why not. I just need you to sign a few papers regarding the transfer of the property, then you'll need to go over to Edna's - Mrs. McAlister's - room at the assisted living facility and gather her things.

He sets three pieces of paper in front of her and hands her a pen.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)

Sign beside the X's.

CAT

(as she signs)
And the money?

SAMUEL

(frowning)

Well, the final amount has yet to be determined. After expenses are paid, it should be only about ten thousand.

CAT

Only ten thousand? Mr. Perkins, that'll be a fortune to me. Thank you, Auntie E!

(stands)

Is there a good charity around here for me to donate her things?

Samuel is silent for a moment as he gathers the papers into a neat stack.

SAMUEL

Maybe you should take a look through before you dump it off, Ms. Anderson. Your aunt held on to a lot of tokens from your family's past.

CAT

I don't have a family, Mr. Perkins. Thank you for your help.

She leaves, shutting the door behind her. Samuel sits, staring at the closed door for several moments. Then, his phone rings and breaks the trance. Back to work.

INT. AUNTIE E'S APARTMENT - LATER

Jamestown Pines, Assisted Living and Nursing Home Facilities. Cat glances around the empty apartment and her gaze lights on a stack of boxes and three laundry baskets full of folded clothes.

The MANAGER, a kind woman in her 50s, comes in behind her.

MANAGER

Those are all her things. Everything else has been cleaned and readied for the next occupant ...we always have a waiting list.

Cat nods.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

I'll just leave you to get everything in order. Call if you need anything.

CAT

Thank you.

The manager leaves. Cat glances around, drops her purse on the floor, and pulls the first box towards her. It's overflowing with knickknacks. She gently runs her fingers over them - most cheap tokens from various travels. She lingers a moment, then moves on.

She peeks inside one box after another, finding very little of any interest, until she reaches a box full of yellowed letters and fragile journals.

She flips through a few letters, then picks up one of the journals. It's a worn leather-bound volume.

Cat opens the cover and reads the inscription: Emily Downum, 1880. She flips through the pages and lands on one.

CAT

(Reading)

...a mule. He works as hard as one and is as stubborn as one to boot.

INT. SPEARMAN'S - EVENING

Charles organizes his tools, gets ready to leave for home. Andrew continues to work on a ornate rocker.

CHARLES

Mr. Spearman? Would you mind? Of course, if would be all right...

SPEARMAN

Charles, spit it out.

CHARLES

I would like to begin work on my own piece? On my own time, of course.

SPEARMAN

(smiles)

Of course.

Charles enthusiastically grabs his hat and exits. Spearman chuckles, continues his work.

EXT. SPEARMAN'S - EVENING

Charles buttons on his coat as he crosses the plank into an almost empty road. A wagon passes by, Charles puts on his hat, tips it to the driver.

Charles crosses the road to AHLSTROM'S PIANO MAKERS. He looks in the window, moves to the side of the building, disappears.

EXT. AHLSTROM'S PIANO MAKERS - CONTINUOUS

Charles rounds the corner to the back of the building. He waits next to the back door. After a moment, the door opens.

A hefty man, SWEDEN to his friends, sticks his head out. He looks around, see Charles.

SWEDEN
(Swedish accent)
Charles, come with me.

CHARLES
Sweden, are you sure?

SWEDEN
Sure, I'm sure. Now get yourself inside.

Charles enters through the back door.

INT. AHLSTROM'S PIANO MAKERS - CONTINUOUS

A wood shop similar to Spearman's, only larger with pianos located at work stations in different stages of development. Sweden signals Charles to follow under a staircase.

Charles follows. Sweden throws back a large canvas tarp exposing the sound board to an upright piano. Charles caresses the metal board as he would a beautiful piece of furniture. His fingers trace a small crack in the board.

CHARLES
This is it?

SWEDEN
Old Man Ahlstrom said today I must take it to Smithies by day's end tomorrow.

CHARLES
But, why?

SWEDEN

Don't know. Melt it down. No use to us.

CHARLES

Don't mind if I take it?

SWEDEN

Old man wants it gone. You, the Smithie, no mind.

(Beat)

You want?

CHARLES

(controlled excitement)

Oh, yes... please.

SWEDEN

I will help you move it to the shop tomorrow. Your shop.

CHARLES

Thank you, Sweden. After I build the cabinet, will you help me with the strings?

SWEDEN

My pleasure.

CHARLES

Someone will give this sound board the life it was meant to have.

INT. SPEARMAN'S - EVENING

Nearly dark, snow gently falls outside the window. Charles glues an ornamental piece on to a nearly-finished upright piano. He screws block clamps tight on to the newly-glued piece.

A young boy (10) ANDREW JR. sweeps the shop floor. He opens the door and sweeps the wood shavings out into the snow.

Unable to see on the dark table, Charles fumbles around looking for sand paper. He nicks his finger on a tool. He yells out in pain, then sucks his finger.

Andrew Spearman exits his office with a lit oil lamp. He places it on the table next to Charles.

SPEARMAN

I know we said no flame in the shop, but I can't bear to lose your hands, let alone a finger.

CHARLES

I want to be finished by Christmas.

SPEARMAN

Two weeks is a long time. You should go home. Winter has slowed business. Work on it in the day. I won't cut your wage. But...

CHARLES

You can't have my blood. I have already spilled it on this piano.

SPEARMAN

Don't be a fool, Charles. I want the joy of helping you deliver when it's done. Won't we, Andy?

ANDREW JR.

Yes, pop.

CHARLES

Thank you, my friend. Both of you.

SPEARMAN

Now, turn the light out and go home.

CHARLES

Soon.

SPEARMAN

Ah, should have known. Andy wrap up, it's cold. Momma will be waiting.

Spearman and Andrew Jr. put on their coats. Spearman gives a chuckle as he chases Andy out the door.

CUT TO:

INT. DOWNUM HOME - EVENING

A dark gray evening as snow falls outside the window. A single oil lamp lights a kitchen and table with chairs. A door to a second room is open, revealing a made bed.

Emily sits at the table, looks out at the snow, on the table her JOURNAL lies open in front of her. She picks up a plain wood graphite pencil and makes an entry. She writes, but is soon distracted when:

RATTLE, the LID of the IRON POT vibrates on the stove as steam SPEWS into the air. Emily closes the journal and moves to the wood stove.

Emily moves a boiling pot to the back burner. She grabs her wrap, places it over her shoulders. She takes a bucket from a side table and exits the front door.

EXT. DOWNUM HOME

Emily stops to look up at the dark gray sky and watches the snow fall. She then moves quickly to the barn. She opens the barn door and enters.

INT. BARN

Emily lights a lamp hanging next to the door. As she turns the wick up, the light reveals a modest-size barn with a chicken coup, a goat, and a milking cow. Emily approaches the cow, places the bucket under. She calmly strokes the neck of the cow as she softly hums a tune.

CUT TO:

INT. SPEARMAN'S - CONTINUOUS

Charles strokes a piece of wood removing the wood chips and revealing a message to Emily. "To the song in my heart that can never be silenced."

Charles places the board on the piano as the top. He turns down the light to darkness.

EXT. SPEARMAN'S - TWO WEEKS LATER

Charles, Spearman, and Andrew Jr. shove the piano onto the back of a wagon. Spearman and Andrew Jr. climb aboard.

CHARLES

(excited)

I will stop and get Emily. You know what to do?

SPEARMAN

Jumpy as a cat in a room full of
rockers. We know what to do.

CHARLES

Don't forget the candles.

SPEARMAN

I'm more worried about your
forgetting Emily.

Spearman chuckles as he SNAPS the reins. The horses pull through the muddied road. Charles sprints off.

EXT. WOOD CHURCH - MOMENTS LATER

Charles leaps over the picket fence and stops suddenly at the church doors. Music inside brings a smile to his face. He removes his hat and smooths down his hair, puts on a serious face. He opens the door and reveals:

INT. WOOD CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

Candles and evergreen adorn the walls of the church and alter. A glow radiates in every corner. Emily plays a heartwarming Christmas Carol as Charles moves slowly to her.

Emily finishes the song. She rests in her joy. Charles places his hands on her shoulder and kisses the top of her head. She knows it is time to go and grabs her wrap and exits without saying a word. Charles, miffed, follows.

EXT. WORN PATH - LATER

Emily walks in a hurried pace. Charles walks ten feet back, slowly as not to catch up to her. He watches her with a bright smile.

She stops, turns to him. He quickly stops and puts on his serious face. She turns and walks.

EMILY

You are a stubborn man, Charles.
It has been weeks.

(Beat)

How long do you plan to punish me
over that piano.

Emily stops and turns to him again. Quickly, he stops and holds back any emotion. Frustrated at no reaction, Emily stomps home.

EXT. DOWNUM HOME - MOMENTS LATER

In the distance, Spearman's wagon moves down the path toward the horizon. Emily, still ten feet in front of Charles, is nearly home. Snow begins to fall.

Emily approaches the door of their house. She opens it to reveal:

INT. DOWNUM HOME - CONTINUOUS

Candles and evergreen adorn the entire house. Emily steps in with wonder. She looks around the room at the spectacular scene. Charles, now in the doorway restrains his excitement. Emily turns to Charles, confused. He turns her around to face the newly finished piano in the corner of the room.

Emily, in shock, slowly moves to the piano. She pulls the bench out and sits carefully, gliding her fingers over the keys.

CHARLES

Go ahead, play.

EMILY

Oh, Charles. My hands are shaking.
It is so beautiful.

CHARLES

From my hands to yours.

Charles places his hands on her shoulders. Emily takes a deep calming breath and plays.

EXT. DOWNUM HOME

The snow continues to fall as the warm glow of the candles light the windows and the music fills the air.

BACK TO:

INT. AUNTIE E'S APARTMENT - LATER

Cat ruffles her fingers over the pages, and a photo slides out and drops to the floor. Cat retrieves it and holds it up to see the black and white image of a serene, beautiful young woman sitting at a shining upright piano. She gazes lovingly down at the keys, but the young man standing beside her only has eyes for her. Cat turns it over.

CAT
(reading)
Emily and Charles Downum, January
1881.

A moment of realization. Cat grabs for her purse and pulls out the yellowed wedding photo of the young couple. She holds it up next to this photo. It's the same couple.

Cat sits on the floor and sets the two photos in front of her. She flips through the journal to the spot where the photo had been tucked and begins to read.

EMILY (V.O.)
The cherry and apple blossoms are
all in bud. Nature is bursting at
the seams. But just as God gives,
God took one of its own today. I
cried myself to sleep. I tried to
hide my eyes as not to look weak
and foolish...

Cat looks at the photos again, captivated by the image of the young couple.

CUT TO:

INT. DOWNUM HOME - DAY

SPRING. The front door is open, sunlight floods the main room, highlighting the piano in the corner. Emily sweeps the wood plank floor of the house.

Emily moves to the piano and pulls a cloth from her dress pocket. She dusts the piano with the same tenderness of her playing. She lifts the lid of the piano and reads the inscription. The room becomes dark when:

Charles stands in the doorway of the house, alarmed.

EMILY
Charles, what's wrong?

Charles, silent, darts back to the barn. Emily follows.

INT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

Charles stands in the cow's stall, frustrated. The cow lies in the hay, eyes closed, panting. Emily enters and looks at Charles, frightened by his look.

CHARLES

There is nothing to do.

Emily rushes over to the cow lying in the hay. She reaches down and strokes the cow's neck. She hums as the cow's panting slows until silent. Emily sits back, stunned. Charles turns, grabs a shovel hanging in the barn.

INT. DOWNUM HOME - LATER

Emily sits at the piano, pensive, her hands resting in her lap. Charles enters, covered in dirt. He rinses his hands and face at a basin of water in the kitchen.

EMILY

We should replace the cow.

CHARLES

We'll make do. Maybe before winter.

EMILY

The Johannsons had a calf last year... good milking cow by now. We can talk--

CHARLES

No need. We'll make do.

EMILY

If it is the money you're concerned about?

Charles dries his arms and face. He moves to Emily at the piano. He wraps his arms around his shoulder.

CHARLES

I'll find a way. You know I will, but it will take time. Winter.

EMILY

If we were able to get one now, we could calf it and have two by winter.

CHARLES

We couldn't eat as much butter, cheese, or milk.

EMILY

I could sell what we do not use.

(Beat)

(MORE)

EMILY (CONT'D)

I'm only concerned to go too long without.

CHARLES

We will have the money saved by winter and that is that.

Charles pulls away from Emily.

EMILY

And if we were to start our family?

Charles lifts Emily to her feet.

CHARLES

We will have to wait to start, that is all. Besides, there is only one item of value we have, and I am not to see you part with your piano.

Charles holds Emily close. She remains pensive.

EXT. JAMESTOWN STREET - DAY

Emily walks along a busy street. Carriages and wagons pass by. Shells of new homes and businesses fill the horizon. Emily looks at a piece of paper that reads, FAIRCHILD. She stops at a large Victorian three-story home. A MAID exits the house carrying an empty bag.

Emily stops the maid as she passes by.

EMILY

I'm sorry to bother you, but is this the home of the Fairchilds?

MAID

The Misses is just inside. I would take you, but she has me on an errand and it be the wrath of God if I'm not back in time.

EMILY

That's fine. I'll find my way.

The maid continues down the street, turns back to Emily with sympathy. Emily walks up a flagstone path to the large wrap around porch. She approaches the door and knocks. No answer. Emily knocks again.

Mrs. Fairchild opens the door.

MRS. FAIRCHILD

I am not accepting guests at this moment. My maid will be back shortly.

Mrs. Fairchild closes the door on Emily. Emily continues to talk through the door.

EMILY

I'm sorry to bother you, Mrs. Fairchild, but my husband is Charles Downum... from Spearman?

Emily waits. Finally, the door opens. Emily steps in. Mrs. Fairchild closes the door behind her.

INT. FAIRCHILD ESTATE - CONTINUOUS

A beautifully ornate home full of lace and silver. Emily is in awe of the splendor.

MRS. FAIRCHILD

I only let you in because of your husband. You must be very proud of his work. Have you seen the chair he made me?

EMILY

No. I'm sorry I haven't.

MRS. FAIRCHILD

Pity, you should take an interest.

Mrs. Fairchild walks into the PARLOR. Emily follows. The PARLOR is ornate, decorated in a beautiful Victorian style.

MRS. FAIRCHILD

I found the most beautiful brocade fabric from London to upholster it.

(Beat)

I'm sorry we can't have tea. Next time send your maid to give us warning that you will be calling.

EMILY

Please, I don't want to be a bother, I have something I must speak to you about.

MRS. FAIRCHILD

Well, you are already here.

The two women sit.

EXT. DOWNUM HOME - DAYS LATER

TWO MEN load Emily's piano onto a wagon. Mrs. Fairchild and Emily watch. Emily is visibly distraught.

MRS. FAIRCHILD

...When you came to my house, I was stunned. And I don't mean your abrupt nature. Your husband has done a beautiful job with my other furniture... and to learn he had made a piano. Well, I was stunned.

EMILY

As much as I, when I found myself on your porch the other day.

(Beat)

And, you made sure my husband knows nothing of this transaction?

MRS. FAIRCHILD

What two women confer among themselves, remains conferred.

EMILY

Thank you.

MRS. FAIRCHILD

Not opposed to secrets myself, God knows I keep enough... But, if I could ask?

EMILY

Oh, it's...

Emily gently rubs her stomach. Mrs. Fairchild notices with great confirmation.

MRS. FAIRCHILD

That is wonderful news. I too hope to start a family soon. But, why sell the piano?

EMILY

Our cow, she died, and I know we will need all the butter, milk, and cheese all of our mouths will eat.

MRS. FAIRCHILD

That is unfortunate.

Mrs. Fairchild pulls cash from her purse. She hands it to Emily, who quickly places it in her dress pocket.

EMILY

I can't thank you enough, Mrs. Fairchild. Do you play?

MRS. FAIRCHILD

Oh, no. When I have children, I insist they learn.

(Beat)

When the time comes, if you have a mind to, maybe I could employ your services to teach them.

EMILY

When the time comes.

Emily smiles and enters the house. Mrs. Fairchild tests the ropes holding the piano to the wagon. Satisfied, one of the men helps her into her carriage.

INT. DOWNUM HOME - CONTINUOUS

Emily sits at the table and watches the wagon and Mrs. Fairchild's carriage ride off down the road. Emily opens her journal and writes.

INT. SPEARMAN'S - DAY

Charles works chiseling dove tails on drawers. He is distracted when:

Emily walks in the door. She carries a bucket covered in cloth.

EMILY

You left without lunch this morning. I decided a walk would do me good.

CHARLES

A nice distraction in my day. Will you stay?

Emily sets the bucket down in front of Charles. He pulls a workbench to a table and dusts it off. Emily sits. Charles unwraps bread and dried beef. He eats.

EMILY

It won't be long before I will be feeding three mouths.

CHARLES

Next spring. A good time to bring a boy into this world.

EMILY

I think she will come much earlier than that.

Charles stops eating, looks at Emily. She stands and smooths her dress, reveals the beginning of her pregnancy. Charles hesitates, then leaps up to hug Emily. Both, excited.

CHARLES

I know the Johannson's were not willing to barter for their heifer, but with this news...

EMILY

I spoke with Laura Johannson, and they have an offer from a man in Stillwater.

CHARLES

Well, that is settled. I can travel to Elmhurst tomorrow and see if someone there will barter with me.

(Beat)

Don't you worry. We will find a way.

Emily pulls cash from her pocket. She hands it to Charles. Charles, knows the worst, gives Emily a disapproving look.

EMILY

Please, Charles, don't be angry with me. I sold it to Mrs. Fairchild--

CHARLES

Mrs. Fairchild? That woman has more money than sense. I want you to take this money back to her immediately.

EMILY

She is a very nice woman...

CHARLES

You sold the piano when you knew it was against my wishes.

EMILY

She has asked me to teach her children.

CHARLES

She has no children.

EMILY

(anger builds)

No, she doesn't... not yet.
 However, Charles Downum, we will have one in not so many months. The piano was my gift to sell, and I chose to provide for our baby. So, you take that money and stop by the Johansson's and buy that cow!

Charles watches her for a moment, then bursts out with laughter. Emily, more angry, turns her back to Charles, fuming. Unable to stave his infectious laughter, Emily breaks into laughter. Charles holds her.

CHARLES

When you get your mind to something, Not likely to win am I?

EMILY

I'm not that horrible.

CHARLES

Yes, you are, and I love every fit you can possibly throw my way.

EMILY

Well, are you going to buy the cow?

CHARLES

I will stop by on my way home, and we shall celebrate with milk!

CUT TO:

PRESENT

INT. EDGEWATER HOUSE PARLOR - MORNING

Cat comes down the stairs, the old leather journal under her arm. Lost in her thoughts, she strolls into:

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sean's other guests are all already seated around the table awaiting breakfast. HOWARD AND STELLA WOODS (late 60s), a retired couple, both with long pony-tails, sit on one side of the table reading separate sections of the newspaper. On the other side are an uptight, preppy couple NATE AND DANIELLE STEPHENS (early 30s).

Danielle checks her watch with a frown.

DANIELLE

A breakfast that is now seventeen minutes late.

A loud CLATTER and muffled CURSES come from the kitchen.

CAT

Perhaps Sean could use some help.

Cat heads for the kitchen.

Behind her, Howard flips a page of his paper.

HOWARD

Take your time. I'm fine as is.

Both Nate and Danielle look at Howard with matching scowls.

NATE

However, some of us are on a schedule.

Howard flips another page. He couldn't care less.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Cat walks in as Sean grabs the handle of a hot skillet of burning eggs. He YELPS and the whole thing CRASHES to the floor as he sticks his bright red thumb in his mouth.

CAT

I see kitchen duty has sent you all the way back to thumb-sucking.

Sean glances at her and immediately removes his thumb from his mouth.

SEAN

You know those mornings when nothing seems to go right?

Cat laughs and nods. She sets the journal on the table and grabs a dish towel. She runs it under cool water, then grabs Sean's hand to inspect his thumb.

CAT
You're gonna live.

Sean studies her as she wraps the cloth around his thumb. He smiles, starts to say something, then suddenly clears his throat and pulls back. He nods towards the journal.

SEAN
What's that?

She studies him, a bit unsure about his sudden retreat.

CAT
Just something I found at my aunt's place yesterday.

A silence falls between them. Then, Cat turns to the stove.

CAT (CONT'D)
You handle clean up. I'll get the food started.

Sean nods and grabs another towel and starts cleaning up the burned eggs.

By the time, he grabs the skillet, drops it in the sink, and turns back to Cat, she already has scrambled eggs and fried bacon well in the works.

SEAN
You sure know what you're doing.

CAT
I guess there are some benefits to being a career waitress after all.
(glances at him)
How do you usually manage?

SEAN
Surprisingly enough, I usually do okay for myself. It just hasn't been the same... for a while now.

Cat dumps the finished eggs onto one serving plate and the bacon onto another. She opens the oven and pulls out a pan of perfectly-toasted bread.

CAT

Grab that fruit I saw in the
fridge, and we should be all right
this morning.

She arranges the bread in a basket, then she balances the basket and two plates expertly on her arms and heads out to the dining room. Leaving Sean just staring after her.

INT. DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Sean comes out with the plate of fresh fruit to find all of the guests served and eating. Cat sits in her seat, a tiny smile on her lips.

Sean sets the fruit on the table and glances back at Cat, who just shrugs and takes a quick bite of eggs.

INT. SAMUEL PERKINS' OFFICE - LATER

Cat stands next to Samuel at his desk. Cat opens the journal and pulls out the photo of Emily, Charles, and the piano.

CAT

Emily and Charles Downum. How are
they connected to Auntie E?

Samuel pulls his glasses out of his pocket, sets them on his nose, and takes the photo, examining it in the light filtering through the window.

She also pulls out the wedding photo and passes it to him.

CAT (CONT'D)

I also have this one.

Samuel nods as he studies the two photos.

SAMUEL

You know, if I recall correctly,
Mrs. McAlister once told me these
were her grandparents... on her
mother's side. That would make
them your... great-great
grandparents.

He hands the photos back to Cat and removes his glasses. He watches a moment as Cat studies the photo.

SAMUEL

Sometimes it's good to see where
you come from.

CAT
 (absently, in thought)
 Yeah... yeah, I guess so. Thanks.

INT. EDGEWATER HOUSE - STUDY - LATER

The journal and several other books are scattered across the reading table.

Cat stands in front of one of the tall bookcases scanning the titles on the spines.

Sean pokes his head in the room.

SEAN
 I was looking for you. Doesn't your plane leave in a couple of hours.

CAT
 (still scanning)
 I pushed it back.

Sean comes on into the room, eyebrows raised, curious.

SEAN
 Oh... okay... well, I want to thank you for helping out today.

CAT
 (absently)
 Sure... it was no big deal.

SEAN
 Actually, it was. Things aren't always... so easy this time of...

He realizes she hasn't heard him.

SEAN (CONT'D)
 You looking for something in particular?

CAT
 I just noticed you have a lot of books on the history of Jamestown.

SEAN
 My wife loved research.
 (beat)
 What are you looking for? Maybe I can point the right direction.

CAT
 Okay, first of all, just know that
 even I realize this sounds
 ridiculous.

SEAN
 (really interested now)
 What?

CAT
 My aunt had an old photo of my
 great-great grandparents. They
 were sitting at this piano that he
 had made for her. I'd... well, I'd
 like it to see it.

Sean's expression changes, softens, and he smiles sadly.

SEAN
 I don't think that's ridiculous.

Cat holds his gaze for a long moment, then breaks away.

CAT
 Here, um, let me show you.

She flips through the journal, but the photo isn't there.
 She shifts around some of the other books... nothing.

CAT (CONT'D)
 I must've left it in my room.

Sean glances at the volumes Cat has on the table.

SEAN
 Do you know who has the piano now?

CAT
 I only know they had to sell it to
 a woman named Lydie Fairchild.

SEAN
 The Fairchild estate is on the west
 side of town. Up on the hill, you
 can't miss it.

CAT
 Then the family is still here.

SEAN
 One of them, I think. I can't
 recall her name, but she might know
 about the piano.
 (MORE)

SEAN (CONT'D)

You know what, you should talk to Dinah at the coffee shop. She used to work as a cook up there.

CAT

You think she'd mind talking to me?

SEAN

(laughing)

Dinah doesn't mind talking to anyone.

Cat glances at her watch and starts stacking the books.

CAT

I might just head over there then.

SEAN

You could save it for tomorrow?

Cat pauses and looks up at him. Sean reddens and fidgets under her gaze.

SEAN (CONT'D)

I-I mean you already extended your trip, and I could use some help out front with the lights. Tonight's the street's annual house lighting.

CAT

Look, Sean, I'm not much for the Christmas cheer. Never have been.

SEAN

A little fun might do you good. It's just families and friends getting together to--

CAT

My parents died around this time. I was six. That kind of stole the magic out of the season.

Sean stares at her, stunned.

SEAN

I'm sorry.

CAT

Everybody always is.

She grabs up the journal and hurries from the room.

INT. CAT'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Cat rushes in and slams the door behind her. She leans against it, trying to regain her composure.

This room is a stark contrast to her little apartment. Like the rest of the house, filled with antiques, including a desk, imposing armoire, and four-poster bed.

Cat sets the journal on the desk and begins looking around and under things. She finds the wedding photo on the dresser, but the one of the piano isn't with it.

CAT

Where is it?... Where IS IT?!

The search quickly escalates as Cat grows more frantic. She drops down to her knees and claws desperately under the bed, but she finds nothing.

Red-faced and frazzled, Cat sits back on the floor. Her nose running, she digs in her pocket for a tissue. As she pulls it out, the bracelet Shirley had given her falls from the tissue onto her lap. She stares at it a moment reading the words, Love Restored, then slowly wraps her hand around it, squeezing it tight.

A sob escapes her mouth, followed by another one. She pulls her knees to her chest, fights to control her breathing.

Cat grabs her cell phone off the night stand and dials. Seconds later, Shirley's sunny voice breaks the silence.

SHIRLEY (V.O.)

Hello, stranger! You through explorin' the world yet?

A couple of tears trail down Cat's cheeks. She hesitates.

SHIRLEY (V.O.)

Cat? Honey, are you okay?

Cat quickly swipes the tears away and swallows hard.

CAT

I-I'm fine... wonderful... everything's good.

SHIRLEY (V.O.)

(skeptical)
Is it?

CAT

It's beautiful very Christmasy.

SHIRLEY (V.O.)
Oh, honey. You hate Christmas.

Cat falters but manages to maintain her control.

CAT
I just called to tell you I may be a few days late. I ran into a few extra things to take care of.

SHIRLEY (V.O.)
All right... yeah, sure. We've got everything covered here... as long as you're okay.

CAT
I'm great. Okay, well, bye.

She hangs up the phone, not waiting for Shirley's response. With a wail muffled against her hand, Cat collapses back against the bed and cries.

INT. CAT'S ROOM - LATER

Cat, curled up on the floor, awakens to the sound of hammering outside. Her eyes red and her mascara smeared, she pushes herself into a sitting position. Then, she drags herself to her feet and peers out the window.

She watches as Sean continues work on his Christmas decorations, stopping occasionally to wave to a neighbor or speak to one of the other guests.

EXT. EDGEWATER HOUSE - LATER

The sun sets below the horizon. Sean puts on the finishing touches. Sean's guests, the Stephens and the Woods, have put aside their differences, chatting as they drape lights across the front shrubbery.

All up and down the street Sean's NEIGHBORS are doing the same thing. CHILDREN laugh and play in the yards while MOMS serve steaming cocoa. Even a light snow has begun to fall, very Norman Rockwell-esque.

Sean grabs another strand of lights and heads back up the ladder as Cat come out onto the porch carrying a tray of steaming mugs. She pauses for a moment, taking in the scene, then moves on to the edge of the porch.

Howard immediately makes a dive for the tray.

HOWARD
Hey, hey, hey, this looks good!

CAT
Thought y'all needed something hot.

She passes the mugs out.

HOWARD
(sniffing his)
I don't guess you put a little
something special in here?

CAT
Sure did... marshmallows.

Howard laughs and winks at her before joining the others on the porch for a break. Sean comes towards her with a grin.

CAT
You give your guests discounts when
you put them to work?

SEAN
You make them feel at home, and
they keep coming back. Howard and
Stella, there, were some of our
first guests.

Cat balances the tray on the porch railing and takes the last two mugs. She holds one out to Sean.

SEAN (CONT'D)
(taking the mug)
Thought you weren't much for the
Christmas spirit.

CAT
(shrugging)
Might do me some good.

She smiles down at him as she takes a sip of her cocoa.

EXT. EDGEWATER HOUSE - LATER

Darkness has now taken hold, and the neighbors bunch together on the sidewalk awaiting the big moment. A countdown starts from somewhere up the street.

NEIGHBORS
10...9...8...7...6...

Cat fidgets next to Sean, the excitement rising.

NEIGHBORS (CONT'D)

...5...4...3...2...1

Suddenly, the whole street illuminates with colorful Christmas lights, and the crowd cheers. Cat claps in spite of herself, a smile playing on her lips.

Sean glances down at her and laughs.

INT. DINAH'S COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Cozy coffee shop. Cat sits at the bar warming her hands on a hot cup of coffee. DINAH MORRIS (60s) leans on the counter.

DINAH

You want to know about the Fairchilds?

CAT

I found some of my family's papers that said my great-great grandmother sold a piano to Lydie Fairchild back in 1881, I believe. I was kind of hoping to find it.

Dinah chuckles, grabs a coffee mug, and pours herself a cup.

DINAH

Worked at that house for almost thirty years, never saw a piano.

(Beat)

The Fairchilds are nice enough, but never known for their musical ability. If you could hear Martha on Sunday mornings at church, you'd know what I mean.

CAT

Martha?

DINAH

Yeah, Martha Warner. She'd be, let's see... yeah, she'd be Lydie's granddaughter. Lydie was before my time, but believe me, she's still the matriarch of that family.

CAT

Is there a chance Mrs. Warner might see me? Maybe she remembers something about the piano.

Dinah grabs a napkin and pen and scribbles out a number.

DINAH

Sure! Martha's getting up there,
but her mind is still sharp. She'd
appreciate the company.

She slides the napkin across the counter to Cat.

EXT. DINAH'S COFFEE SHOP - LATER

Cat exits the coffee shop, tucking the napkin in her pocket.
As she turns down the street, she runs smack into Samuel.

CAT

Oh, Mr. Perkins! I didn't see you!

Samuel smiles as he straightens his tie and rights his hat.

SAMUEL

Not to worry. No harm done. Quite
frankly, I'm a bit surprised to see
you. Thought you'd be back home.

CAT

I've come across a bit of
unfinished business.

SAMUEL

(nodding)

Ah yes, well that I understand.
Speaking of...

(reaches into his pocket
and produces the photo)

I believe I walked away with this
by accident yesterday.

Cat takes the photo, her eyes on Samuel the whole time.

CAT

I was looking for this. I could
have sworn I remember you giving it
back to me.

SAMUEL

Well, I suppose the old noggin
isn't always so truthful, but what
was it your aunt always said?

CAT

I-I didn't know her that well.

SAMUEL

I believe it was that the proper things will always be revealed at the proper time. As I knew her, she was quite a profound lady.

(tips his hat.)

Good afternoon, Ms. Anderson.

Cat just nods as he strolls on down the sidewalk.

EXT. FAIRCHILD ESTATE - DAY

A taxi pulls up to the gate, and Cat gets out. She pays her fare, and as the taxi drives away, she turns to face the intimidating wrought iron gates, guarding the massive white Victorian house now more ornate than in the past, complete with a Gothic twist and rolling lawns.

Cat reaches to press the intercom button, but before she can, the gates slowly start to swing open. Cat hesitates for a moment before stepping through.

Cat reaches the towering front door, Cat bangs the heavy brass knocker a couple of times. Almost instantly, the door swings open to reveal a dour old BUTLER (70s).

BUTLER

Ms. Anderson?

Cat can only nod.

BUTLER (CONT'D)

Right this way.

Cat steps over the threshold into

INT. FAIRCHILD ESTATE - FOYER - CONTINUOUS

An elegant foyer that could easily be twice as large as Cat's apartment back home with a grand staircase descending from the upper levels. A perfectly-decorated Christmas tree stands to the right of the stairs.

From a nearby room comes a warbled and very bad rendition of "Hark the Herald Angels Sing."

The butler stops, turns, and points to the room.

INT. FAIRCHILD ESTATE - PARLOR - CONTINUOUS

Cat pauses just inside the door to find the ancient MRS. MARTHA WARNER (certainly pushing 100) singing away as she arranges garland and candles on the mantle.

CAT

Good afternoon, Mrs. Warner.

The singing stops abruptly, and Martha slowly turns to Cat. Then, a huge smile spreads across her face.

MARTHA

Well, come on in, child! Sit down!
The tea's already on the table!

Moving with an ease, Martha sits down on the sofa and pats the spot next to her then pours two cups of hot tea.

Cat takes the seat and accepts the cup.

CAT

Thank you for allowing me to visit.

Martha laughs and waves her hand as if it's nothing.

MARTHA

Now, you were asking after my
grandmother, Lydie. Is that right?

CAT

Yes... well, in a sense... I was
looking to find a piano she bought
back in 1881.

MARTHA

(laughing)
I'm old, but I'm not quite that
old! We haven't had a piano in
this house for sometime now.

CAT

Maybe this will help.

She produces the photo from her purse and passes it to Martha. Martha lifts her glasses, hanging ready on their chain around her neck and studies the image for a good while.

MARTHA

You know, I do remember this piano.
I was just a bit of a thing when
Grandmother decided I was to become
the next Mozart.

(MORE)

MARTHA (CONT'D)

She loved this piano because it was handmade... unique.

CAT

My great-great grandfather is the one who made it.

MARTHA

Oh, oh, I see your interest now.
 (looks at the photo again)
 Honestly, I don't recall what happened to it. I'm certain Grandmother wouldn't have just tossed it aside, but in my mind, it was there... then it wasn't.

She passes the photo back to Cat.

CAT

(Crushed)

Oh...

MARTHA

I'm sorry, dear.

CUT TO:

SUPER: JAMESTOWN, NEW YORK 1927

EXT. FAIRCHILD ESTATE - DAY

The grand Fairchild home, now with an established garden turning with the colors of fall, sits among other homes built within the last forty years. The road, now brick not dirt, runs in front of the Fairchild Estate iron gates. Early model cars sputter by.

INT. FAIRCHILD ESTATE - PARLOR - DAY

A small child's fingers awkwardly play Emily's PIANO, misses keys, and produces an unbearable noise. The child, a YOUNG MARTHA (10), sits, slouched and not in the mood.

A piano instructor, GLADYS PAYNE (late 20s), very erect, stands next to the piano clapping her hands to the proposed rhythm of the piece.

Behind a tall WINGED-BACK CHAIR hides a transfixed young girl, SYLVIA STRAUSS (8). She nods her head to the correct rhythm and cringes as sour notes are played.

GLADYS
Stop now, Martha. That is quite
enough.

The clanging stops abruptly. Gladys enjoys the silence.

YOUNG MARTHA
May I go now?

GLADYS
Your lesson isn't over.

YOUNG MARTHA
You mean my torture.

GLADYS
It is through pain a great artist
is made.

YOUNG MARTHA
But, I don't want to be a great
artist. I would rather dig up my
worms. Grandfather is taking me
fishing tomorrow.

GLADYS
Martha, you are incorrigible. I
believe your grandmother will have
something quite different to say.

YOUNG MARTHA
If my mother were here--

GLADYS
Precisely why your grandmother
wants you to learn so when your
mother and father return from
Europe you can surprise them.

YOUNG MARTHA
They left me here, for a year! Why
should I do anything for them?

Young Martha BANGS the keys and rushes out of the Parlor.
Gladys follows her out of the room.

GLADYS
Martha! You come back here!

INT. FAIRCHILD FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Gladys rounds the corner into the Foyer just as she sees Young Martha dash into the kitchen. Gladys stops when Lydie Fairchild, now sixty-seven, descends the stairs.

GLADYS

I am so sorry, Mrs. Fairchild.

MRS. FAIRCHILD

What on earth for, Mrs. Payne?

GLADYS

It appears, as you may have well heard, Martha has not taken to the piano as we had hoped.

MRS. FAIRCHILD

That's nonsense. I am sure she is just like her mother, stubborn. However, she will overcome her inability to focus.

GLADYS

She needs more than focus.

MRS. FAIRCHILD

Mrs. Payne, I pay you, quite well I might add, to make it her focus.

GLADYS

I'm sorry, Mrs. Fairchild, but all the money in the world--

Gladys stops when music fills the air from the parlor.

MRS. FAIRCHILD

It appears she has taken to the piano just fine.

GLADYS

But, Mrs. Fairchild... worms.

MRS. FAIRCHILD

I beg your problem?

Gladys runs into the parlor followed by Mrs. Fairchild. Sitting at the piano is Sylvia. She plays the piece to perfection. Gladys watches in awe of the playing of an eight year old. The playing stops when:

MRS. FAIRCHILD

Sylvia!
(to Gladys)
(MORE)

MRS. FAIRCHILD (CONT'D)
 Would you please explain why I have
 been paying you to teach my maid's
 daughter to play the piano?

GLADYS
 But I didn't--

MRS. FAIRCHILD
 Sylvia, go summon your mother.

Sylvia runs from the parlor.

GLADYS
 You must believe, Mrs. Fairchild, I
 did not teach that girl to play.

MRS. FAIRCHILD
 She must have learned some way.

GLADYS
 She always hides behind the chair
 when I give lessons. That is the
 only way--

MRS. FAIRCHILD
 Are you telling me, Mrs. Payne,
 that plain, young Sylvia learned to
 play from behind a chair?

GLADYS
 It is possible. She watched and
 listened as I instructed... It's
 obviously not possible that Martha
 taught her to play.

Sylvia and her mother, HILDI STRAUSS (26), stand in the
 doorway unbeknownst to Mrs. Fairchild.

MRS. FAIRCHILD
 (fuming)
 It is no wonder my granddaughter
 has not learned to play with that
 attitude, Mrs. Payne.
 (Beat)
 So, you are telling me that an
 uneducated child of a maid has far
 more talent than my granddaughter
 who came from a well-traveled, well-
 educated family?

Gladys notices Sylvia and Hildi standing in the doorway.
 Mrs. Fairchild turns to see them both standing there.

HILDI

(German accent)

I am sorry, Mrs. Fairchild... won't happen again.

MRS. FAIRCHILD

You are quite right, Hildi. I do not want to see your... your child under my roof again. Do you understand?

HILDI

But, Mrs. Fairchild. I work all day, there is no one at home--

MRS. FAIRCHILD

Do you wish to keep this job?

HILDI

Yes, ma'am.

(To Sylvia)

Sylvia, gehen schnell.

Sylvia runs out of the parlor. Gladys gathers her sheet music, hat, and wrap.

MRS. FAIRCHILD

Hildi, you can go back to work.

Hildi leaves. Mrs. Fairchild closes ranks on Gladys, ready to distribute more orders.

MRS. FAIRCHILD (CONT'D)

And, where are you going?

GLADYS

I believe my services are done.

MRS. FAIRCHILD

My granddaughter--

GLADYS

Your granddaughter is outside digging for worms.

She charges the front door, then pauses, turns back.

GLADYS (CONT'D)

Come to think of it... I'm sure her refinement has prepared her well for that. But, wait. That should be the skills of an uneducated, impoverished child.

Gladys slams the door as she leaves. Mrs. Fairchild stands alone in the parlor, stunned.

INT. FAIRCHILD ESTATE - PARLOR - DAY

SNOW falls outside the window. Mrs. Fairchild watches as she sips on a hot cup of tea. She moves her gaze to the beautiful Christmas decorations that fill the house.

The room is silent, only the TICK-TOCK of the Grandfather clock is amplified by the quiet. She finally rests her gaze on Emily's piano against the wall.

Hildi steps into the doorway. Mrs. Fairchild is not distracted from her gaze on the piano.

HILDI

Will there be anything else, ma'am?

(Beat)

It is Christmas Eve... do you have any plans?

Mrs. Fairchild, after a beat, sets her cup down and smiles at Hildi.

MRS. FAIRCHILD

No. Since Mr. Fairchild died.

HILDI

The grandchildren... Martha?

MRS. FAIRCHILD

Spending the winter in Florida, I believe.

HILDI

You don't want to join them?

MRS. FAIRCHILD

It's a swamp. No wonder Spain gladly sold it to us.

(Beat)

What about you and your family?

HILDI

Mr. Strauss will be working. Sylvia, young August, and I will stay at home. I have my own house to clean, laundry.

MRS. FAIRCHILD

I see. How is Sylvia? I haven't seen her much lately.

HILDI
But, Mrs. Fairchild--

MRS. FAIRCHILD
I know. You don't have to remind me. I have become a selfish woman in my old age. Look what it has gotten me... alone for Christmas.
(Beat)
I wasn't always this way, Hildi.

Hildi doesn't respond. Mrs. Fairchild looks at her.

MRS. FAIRCHILD (CONT'D)
Go home to your family.

HILDI
Yes, ma'am.

Hildi leaves. Mrs. Fairchild walks to the piano and strokes the wood with the same compassion Emily would give it. She sinks on to the bench in despair. She is distracted by the sound of the back kitchen door SLAMMING. Hildi has left.

MRS. FAIRCHILD
(Calls out)
Hildi?... before you leave?

The house is silent. The grandfather clock strikes two and the CHIMES fill the room. Mrs. Fairchild runs to the coat rack in the foyer, wraps herself, and exits the front door.

INT. AHLSTROM'S PIANO MAKERS - LATER

Mrs. Fairchild enters the showroom. The BELL above the door RINGS. Gladys organizes SHEET MUSIC on a shelf. She approaches Mrs. Fairchild with stern disdain.

GLADYS
I'm sorry but the store is closing.
It's Christmas Eve.

MRS. FAIRCHILD
Yes, I know. This won't take long.

GLADYS
I have work.

Mrs. Fairchild follows Gladys to the sheet music.

MRS. FAIRCHILD (CONT'D)
I am sure you remember my maid's daughter, Sylvia.

GLADYS

It is a day I shall never forget.

MRS. FAIRCHILD

I would like you to teach Sylvia to play the piano. I'll pay for a year's worth of services.

Gladys stops shelving music and turns to Mrs. Fairchild.

GLADYS

How am I to know you won't just change your mind on a whim?

MRS. FAIRCHILD

I will pay you in advance.

GLADYS

May I ask why?

MRS. FAIRCHILD

There's more, Mrs. Payne. Please, I beg you to hear me out.

Gladys hesitates a moment, then nods, waiting.

INT. STRAUSS HOUSE - MORNING

A small, narrow Shotgun House. Hildi bakes cookies in the kitchen. Sylvia darns socks next to a hurricane lamp. They both stop when there is a KNOCK on the front door. Hildi wipes her hands with a rag before opening the door.

On the stoop of the house, Mrs. Fairchild stands, heavily wrapped for the weather.

HILDI

Mrs. Fairchild?

MRS. FAIRCHILD

I have a request to ask of your daughter, Mrs. Strauss.

HILDI

This is Christmas day, my day off and my house. Besides, my daughter doesn't work for you.

MRS. FAIRCHILD

This is not that kind of a request.

(Beat)

May I come in? It is dreadfully cold out here.

HILDI
Yes, of course.

Mrs. Fairchild enters the modest house. She looks around and smiles. Sylvia puts the sewing away and stands.

HILDI
Does my house amuse you?

MRS. FAIRCHILD
Of course not. Please forgive my enthusiasm. May I sit?

Hildi directs Mrs. Fairchild to a chair with torn fabric. Mrs. Fairchild sits without a second thought.

SYLVIA
Merry Christmas.

MRS. FAIRCHILD
Oh, my heavens. I don't recall ever hearing you speak.

HILDI
She knows her place.

MRS. FAIRCHILD
Now, to my request. In a matter of moments, two men will come through that door with my piano.

HILDI
I'm sorry? Your piano?

MRS. FAIRCHILD
Yes. It is my hope Sylvia will use her brilliant talent and learn to play the way we all know she is fully capable.

HILDI
I don't--

MRS. FAIRCHILD
I will not accept no for an answer. Besides, Gladys Payne will be here Monday afternoon to begin her weekly lessons.

HILDI
We couldn't possibly--

SYLVIA
Please, Momma!

HILDI

Sylvia, you don't understand.

MRS. FAIRCHILD

Oh, I believe she does. She is destined for great things... and to give joy to others with her gift.

(Beat)

You never knew him, but a wonderfully gifted man built this piano so his wife could experience the joy of playing. I know this sounds absurd, but I bought it from her when she needed a cow more.

HILDI

Not absurd.

MRS. FAIRCHILD

I bought it thinking I would find joy in this piano.

HILDI

It is beautiful.

MRS. FAIRCHILD

Yes, it is. As much as I enjoy its beauty, it was not made for that purpose. It was made to be played.

HILDI

But, your daughter and granddaughter...

MRS. FAIRCHILD

Forced, for my sake. They hate me for it, among other things. That is not joy, only emptiness.

(Beat)

Please, I give this with my whole heart. Don't begrudge me this moment on Christmas day?

Sylvia walks and stands in front of Mrs. Fairchild.

SYLVIA

Will you come to hear me play?

Mrs. Fairchild wells up with tears. She grabs Sylvia and holds her tight. Hildi watches the moment with great joy.

CUT TO:

PRESENT

INT. FAIRCHILD ESTATE - FOYER

Martha walks Cat to the front door.

MARTHA

I'm sorry I couldn't be of more help.

Cat smiles and shakes Martha's proffered hand.

CAT

No, it's all right. Thanks for your time, Mrs. Warner. I enjoyed just coming up here and...

Cat notices Martha has shifted her attention to a MAID coming down the stairs dusting the banister. Cat glances at the maid, then back at Martha.

CAT (CONT'D)

Mrs. Warner? Are you okay?

MARTHA

(to herself)

What was her name?

CAT

What are you talking about, Mrs. Warner? Whose name?

MARTHA

The maid... the maid we had back then. Grandmother gave her the piano... I'm sure of it.

CAT

You-you remember?

MARTHA

Yes, it was most certainly the maid. I remember Grandmother telling me... Her name was Hildi... Hildi Strauss.

CAT

You're sure?

MARTHA

Quite certain... yes... she had a daughter, younger than me, but I don't remember her name.

Before Cat realizes what she's doing, she throws her arms around the old woman's neck.

CAT
Thank you, Mrs. Warner!

Martha just laughs and hugs her back.

EXT. EDGEWATER HOUSE - LATER

It's getting dark as Cat returns to the inn. She pauses on the sidewalk to take in the Christmas lights, twinkling against the night sky.

Smiling, she continues up the walk to the front door.

INT. DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Cat enters to find everything dark and quiet. A light spills from under the kitchen door, accompanied by the soft sounds of clinking plates.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Cat enters to find Sean standing over the sink rinsing plates and putting them in the dishwasher.

CAT
Where is everyone?

Sean puts in the last plate and turns to her.

SEAN
They all checked out today. You'll be my only guest until my holiday regulars get here in a few weeks... that is, if you're planning on staying that long?

He's fishing. Cat smiles, but avoids a direct reply.

CAT
I visited with Martha Warner today.

SEAN
And?

CAT
And she remembers her grandmother gave the piano to one of their maids... a Hildi Strauss.

SEAN
You should contact her family.

CAT
Well, I would if I knew exactly who
to contact and where they were.

SEAN
Maybe it won't be that hard to
track them down.

Sean grabs the local phonebook from under one of the
cabinets. He places it on the counter and cracks it open.

SEAN
It's old fashioned, but a good
place to start.

CAT
Considering we're finding someone
in the past, I'd say your instincts
are brilliant.

Sean takes pleasure in the compliment. Cat joins him at the
counter. She moves in close and places her hand on his
shoulder as he scans the pages.

SEAN
Hildi... H...

Cat lets him search for a moment, smiles and gently...

CAT
I know it's been a while, but
shouldn't we be in the S's for
Strauss?

SEAN
(with a sigh)
I feel my brilliance fading away...

Cat ignores his comment to lessen the moment.

CAT
Strauss, if I were guessing.

Sean flips to the S's and runs his finger and stops at the
first initial H before continuing on.

SEAN
No Hildi. It was a long shot. I'm
sure she's long passed.
(Beat)
(MORE)

SEAN (CONT'D)

We can go to City Hall and check
the records there.

CAT

We?

SEAN

(shrugs, hesitates)

I don't have that much to do around
here until the other guests arrive.
I could help you out, if you want.

CAT

(smiling)

I'd like that.

INT. CITY HALL RECORDS - DAY

Cat and Sean sit across from one another at a table with
several large books spread out around them.

CAT

This is ridiculous.

SEAN

I don't understand why they don't
have all of this on the computer.

The RECORDS SECRETARY drops another stack on the table.

SECRETARY

You going to do it?

Sean glances up, a bit sheepish, and Cat bursts out laughing.
The secretary smiles despite herself.

SECRETARY (CONT'D)

(points to the new stack)

It could also be in these.

Cat groans and drops her head to the table. With a sigh,
Sean pulls the first book off of the new stack.

INT. CITY HALL RECORDS - HOURS LATER

Cat stares bleary-eyed at one of the books. Sean runs his
finger down a column... until he suddenly comes to a stop.

SEAN

Here it is.

Cat looks up at him, blinking her tired eyes.

CAT

What?

Sean shoves the book towards her and points to a list of names near the bottom.

SEAN

August Strauss and his wife Hildegard. Looks like they were first generation Germans. Two children are listed in this census, a daughter Sylvia and also a son named August.

CAT

What year was this?

SEAN

(checking the book's cover)

Looks like 1924... the kids could still be alive.

CAT

At least it's a lead.

SEAN

It's getting late. Why don't I introduce you to some local flavor this evening. We could use a break.

CAT

I'm really anxious--

SEAN

Come on. Besides, the Strauss' may turn in early.

CAT

First thing tomorrow...

SEAN

First thing.

He grins warmly. Cat blushes, but a smile plays on her lips.

EXT. JAMESTOWN STREET - EVENING

Sean and Cat walk down the sidewalk in the lightly falling snow looking at the Christmas decorations in store windows.

Cat pauses at one store that has a whole Christmas village on display. She studies the little family figurines.

CAT

Do you have any family, Sean?

SEAN

My mom raised me. She died about a year after I got married. After that, it was just Hope and me. And now...

CAT

It's just you...

She nods, understanding.

Suddenly, she straightens and continues down the sidewalk. Sean follows.

After a while, Sean stops and turns to Cat.

SEAN

You know what we should do?

CAT

What?

SEAN

Go ice skating!

CAT

(skeptical)

I haven't ever been on ice skates in my entire life.

SEAN

It's about time we changed that!

He grabs her hand, and they hurry off, their laughter drifting up into the night.

EXT. ICE RINK - LATER

MONTAGE

Cat shuffles carefully on the ice as Sean glides smoothly beside her. She makes short strides with her arms out at her sides for balance.

With Sean's guidance, Cat makes a full circle around the rink. She thinks she's got it. Then, a KID shoots around her, and she loses her balance, but Sean catches her.

Cat looks up at Sean in surprise. Sean steadies her with sure arms. A moment passes between them, an almost kiss, but the kid shoots by again with a "Sorry!"

Sean sets Cat firmly back on her feet. She's a little put off, but then he reaches for her hand.

Hand-in-hand, they skate around the rink together as the other skaters weave around them, laughing and giggling.

END MONTAGE

INT. SEAN'S CAR - DAY

Cat checks the paper and scans apartment buildings.

CAT

Are you sure you wrote down the right address?

SEAN

4239 Beatrice Street... you didn't expect it to still be here?

CAT

I guess I hoped.

SEAN

What about that place?

He points to a tiny house - the lone holdout to development - nestled between two large apartment buildings.

Cat squints to read the address on the door.

CAT

4237... Must have been next door.

SEAN

(unbuckling his seat belt)
Well, it couldn't hurt to ask.

EXT. BEATRICE STREET HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Sean stands back as Cat rings the doorbell.

Seconds later, a YOUNG ASIAN WOMAN with a BABY on her hip opens the door, but leaves the screen shut. She stares at them, a questioning look on her face.

CAT

Do you know anything about a house
that used to be next door?

The woman continues to stare.

CAT (CONT'D)

Or, um, the Strauss family? Have
you heard of the Strauss'?

WOMAN

(shaking her head)
I don't know anything.

She slams the door. Cat turns to Sean.

CAT

I guess that's a no.

The lock on the door clicks shut behind her.

SEAN

A definite no.

They head back towards the car.

EXT. EDGEWATER HOUSE - NIGHT

Cat sits out on the front steps, looking up at the sky. Sean
comes out the door carrying a blanket. He drapes it around
her shoulders and sits down beside her.

SEAN

Are you going to keep looking?

Cat tugs the blanket tight around her.

CAT

Maybe I should just let it go.

SEAN

And go home?

Cat glances at him, silent for a moment.

CAT

I've just never had anything
concrete to hold onto... to prove
that I came from somewhere other
than the Richmond, Virginia, Home
for Orphans.

Cat looks back up at the sky, but Sean keeps his gaze on her as they sit together in silence.

INT. DINAH'S COFFEE SHOP - DAY - TWO WEEKS LATER

Cat sits with the photo and the journal in front of her and a half-full cup of coffee by her hand.

Dinah swings by the table and refills her cup.

DINAH

Been hearing some fun chatter about you and Sean the past few weeks.

CAT

I have no idea what you're talking about.

But a hint of a smile plays on her lips. Dinah laughs.

DINAH

Believe me, everybody's relieved to see that man smiling again. He's lived in a dark cloud ever since his wife died.

Cat glances up, a mix of surprise and confusion in her eyes.

DINAH (CONT'D)

You didn't know?

CAT

We haven't really discussed... I mean, I guess I didn't ask...

DINAH

It was cancer. A few years ago now. Absolutely broke his heart.

They glance up at the JINGLE of the bell on the door to see Samuel ducking inside, rubbing his hands together for warmth.

He smiles at them, then makes his way up to the counter.

DINAH (CONT'D)

Guess that old goat's gonna want some service.

(Beat)

Cat, let me tell you, Sean's been devastated for a long time now. If he's smiling, it means something.

She pats Cat's hand and heads off back to the counter.

Cat looks down at the photo of Emily and Charles until - a few seconds later - Samuel sits down across from her, his own coffee in his hand.

SAMUEL

I trust you've got your Christmas shopping done! Only five more days, you know!

Cat pushes the photo off to the side.

CAT

The good thing about not celebrating is that you don't have to worry with all that.

SAMUEL

But the joy of the season is in giving to others.

Cat flips a few pages in the journal and doesn't answer.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)

Well, I was sure you'd caught the Christmas spirit by now.

CAT

Hardly.

SAMUEL

Really? I was certain I spotted you and Sean out ice skating a couple of weeks ago.

She looks up, frowning, but Samuel doesn't break his smile.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)

Well, if it isn't Christmas that's kept you here, I can only assume you have yet to find your piano.

CAT

I'm looking for the daughter of the woman who had it last. I found records of the son's death last week, so the girl - Sylvia - is my last hope.

SAMUEL

Where have you looked?

CAT

You name it, I've been there. City Hall, the Internet, the library, the newspapers... everywhere.

SAMUEL

You mustn't give up! This town has an abundance of wonderful little trinkets of historical information. You never know what you'll find... or where it'll lead you.

CAT

Well, where do you suggest I look for these "trinkets."

Samuel grins at her over his coffee.

SAMUEL

I may just have an idea or two. But first, you have to be open to seeing them.

Cat studies him skeptically, but he just smiles on.

INT. EDGEWATER HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

Cat bursts into the room, excited. Sean, balancing on a foot stool to reach the top shelf in the pantry, pokes his head out the door at the her entrance. Cat takes pause - a moment of hesitation - at his warm smile.

With a steadying breath, she takes a couple of steps forward.

CAT

I know the next step!

Sean teeters just a bit. He tries to reestablish his balance on the stool. His foot catches the rim of a bushel basket of potatoes. Best laid plans...

Sean's foot catches the basket as he falls to the kitchen floor. The potatoes scatter throughout the kitchen. Cat rushes to his aid.

CAT

Oh, Sean! Are you okay?

Sean opts to play it up by staying on the floor feigning pain. Cat checks him for broken bones. Sean, pleased with the attention, can't help but milk it. He winces in pain.

SEAN

You know, my ankle hurts a little.

Cat rubs Sean's ankle.

CAT

This one?

SEAN

Sure, that works. But, you know...
I think my neck...

Cat rushes to his neck and rubs. Sean can't hold it much longer and bursts out laughing.

Realizing the tease, Cat playfully slaps his gut. Sean grabs his stomach as he sits up.

CAT (CONT'D)

I suppose you think you're funny?
What were you doing in there?

SEAN

Taking stock. My holiday guests
start arriving in the morning.

CAT

Well, I hope they like mashed
potatoes.

Both laugh as they look at the scattered potatoes.

SEAN

I can't tell you how long it's been
since I laughed so hard.

He gazes at Cat, catches her eye. Embarrassed, Cat scurries on the floor and grabs potatoes. Sean takes in Cat a moment longer, then gathers potatoes of his own.

SEAN (CONT'D)

I believe my fall stole your
thunder. So what's this next step?

CAT

The Jamestown Historical Society!

SEAN

(enthusiasm deflating)
Oh.

CAT

I don't know why we didn't think of
it before! Finish your list.

(MORE)

CAT (CONT'D)

We can swing by to ask a few questions on our way to the store.

SEAN

I don't think so.

He grabs the basket and loads potatoes with more diligence.

CAT

Why not.

SEAN

I've, um, got a lot to do.

He turns his back as to not look at her.

CAT

Is something wrong?

SEAN

No... no, you should just take this one on your own. Okay?

CAT

Okay.

She reluctantly turns to leave.

CAT (CONT'D)

I guess I'll go check it out, then.

She nods, hesitates for a moment, then leaves. When he hears the door close, Sean turns around, struggling against the tears already streaming down his cheeks.

EXT. JAMESTOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY - LATER

Cat walks along the sidewalk, thoughtful, tapping the white picket fence as she walks. She stops at the gate to the a modest, yet elegant Colonial. A shingle hangs over the porch steps, "JAMESTOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY EST. 1936"

INT. JAMESTOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY - MOMENTS LATER

A parlor furnished with antiques and old portraits of a number of Jamestown residents.

WANDA BEECHER (50s), a matronly woman stands with her arms crossed and one foot tapping, thinking, as Cat looks on.

WANDA

So you're saying Lydie Fairchild gave the piano to her maid?

CAT

That's what Mrs. Warner told me.

Wanda straightens a crystal candy dish on the coffee table.

WANDA

Well, generosity was certainly not known as Lydie's strongest trait, but I suppose it could be true.

Cat pulls out the photo of Charles, Emily, and the piano.

CAT

That's Charles Downum and his wife Emily. He's the one that made the piano and that's it, right there.

Wanda cocks her head, lost in thought, her foot tapping the seconds once again.

WANDA

Now, the maid - you said her name was Hildi - do you have a last name?

CAT

Strauss. Her daughter's name was Sylvia. I thought she'd be my best connection.

Wanda's foot suddenly comes to a stop as her eyes travel up to the portrait hanging over the fireplace. It's a silhouette of a young woman sitting at a grand piano.

WANDA

Sylvia Star.

CAT

Who?

WANDA

(pointing to the portrait)
Right there. Sylvia Sternchen Strauss. Her mother gave her the middle name, Sternchen, because it translates to "little star." Sylvia was gaining fame just as WWII was brewing... her agent didn't want her to come across as too German...

CAT
... so she became Sylvia Star.

WANDA
Plays beautiful, beautiful music.
Short of the classics, I've never
heard anything like it.

Cat looks up at the portrait of a young Sylvia with a perfect posture, her finger graceful on the piano keys.

CAT
Is she still alive?

WANDA
Moved back to Jamestown five years ago to retire. She was already in her early nineties then.

She moves around the desk in the corner of the room and rummages through a box sitting on the top. Finally, she comes up with a business card. She copies a number onto a slip of paper and passes it to Cat.

WANDA (CONT'D)
That's her agent's contact number.
I think you have to go through him to speak with her.

INT. EDGEWATER HOUSE - DINING ROOM - DAY

Cat helps Sean set the table.

CAT
Did everyone get settled in?

SEAN
Most are already out and about.

He finishes the last place setting and sits.

SEAN (CONT'D)
I can't believe Hildi's daughter is Sylvia Star.

CAT
It seems she's pretty treasured around here.

SEAN
Oh yeah... aside from Lucille Ball, probably our most famous resident.
(MORE)

SEAN (CONT'D)

(Beat)

Did you get through to her agent?

CAT

At first, he stone-walled me, but as soon as I mentioned that piano, I got a meeting with her.

SEAN

She probably started out on that piano. She must still have it.

CAT

Well, he didn't say that. I guess I'll find out tomorrow.

CUT TO:

JAMESTOWN, NEW YORK 1937

INT. STRAUSS HOUSE - DAY

Sylvia, now eighteen, sits at the piano, jacket and white gloves. A suitcase sits next to the piano. Sylvia runs her gloves over the worn keys.

HILDI (O.S.)

Syl? Sylvia.

Hildi, now ten years older, worn, enters the living room from the kitchen. She stops when she sees Sylvia at the piano.

HILDI (CONT'D)

You know, when you get to New York you will have grand pianos to play.

SYLVIA

Momma, I'm scared.

HILDI

My subigkeit, Julliard is the most prestigious. And, you've worked so hard...

SYLVIA

I know.

Sylvia stands and runs her hand across the top of the piano.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

Take care of her, Momma.

HILDI

What, the piano? Of course. Now,
you are going to miss your train.
Your father is outside waiting.

SYLVIA

(hugs Hildi)
I love you.

HILDI

I love you. Now, you go to New
York and become a star!

With one last glance at the piano and a kiss for her mother,
Sylvia hurries out the door.

CUT TO:

PRESENT

INT. SYLVIA'S HOUSE - PARLOR - DAY

A HOME CARE NURSE shows Cat into the room, then exits.

Alone, Cat wanders around looking at the photos on the wall
and the shiny awards in ornate glass cases.

A GRAMMY sits out on a specially-made pedestal. Cat reaches
out to touch it.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

Beethoven was dead, and they had to
give that thing to someone.

Cat spins around to find SYLVIA STAR (90s) standing in the
doorway, still as tall and graceful as ever. Sylvia strolls
into the room.

SYLVIA

I find it rather vain to display
shrines to myself, but my daughter
insists I should be proud of my
achievements.

CAT

(finding her voice)
Are you? Proud of your
achievements?

Sylvia cocks her head thoughtfully as she sizes Cat up.
Then, she smiles.

SYLVIA

I love to play the piano. That's all I really know.

(offers Cat her hand)

Ms. Anderson, I presume.

CAT

It's a pleasure to meet you, Ms. Star.

SYLVIA

Sylvia, please. The star is in retirement.

Cat laughs, and Sylvia beams with pleasure. She motions for Cat to follow her.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

I believe the photo you were looking for is over here.

They cross the room, and Sylvia pauses beside an 8x10 of a little girl in pigtails sitting at Emily's piano. Two women, Hildi and Lydie Fairchild, look down on the girl with smiles on their faces.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

My mother... and Mrs. Fairchild. This was taken at my first recital held in our tiny little living room. Mrs. Fairchild was always at my recitals. That woman was hard to figure out, but deep down, she had a kind spirit. That piano was my greatest gift. I will forever be grateful to her for that.

Cat pulls out the photo of Emily and Charles and holds it up next to the larger one. It's definitely the same piano.

CAT

That's my great-great grandfather. He made the piano.

Sylvia touches Charles' face, then Emily's.

SYLVIA

He made it for her?

CAT

Yes.

SYLVIA
I always knew that inscription
evidenced great love.

CAT
(eyeing her)
What inscription?

SYLVIA
"To the song in my heart that can
never be silenced." It was inside
the lid. I was certain you knew.

CAT
(shaking her head)
Um... no... wait, it was?... You
don't know where the piano is now?

SYLVIA
No, but I know what happened to it.

She opens her hand to reveal a well-worn, yellowed folded
piece of paper. Tears twinkling at the corners of her eyes,
Sylvia holds it out to Cat.

Cat hesitates for a few moments before carefully unfolding
the paper.

CAT
(reading)
"Darling, Sylvia. We've lost
everything. It was a fire, an
accident. Your piano is destroyed.
Nothing is left... "

The letter shaking in her hand, Cat looks up at Sylvia.

SYLVIA
I was at Julliard when it arrived.
My heart broke that day.

CUT TO:

SUPER: JAMESTOWN, NEW YORK 1938

EXT. STRAUSS HOUSE - NIGHT

Hildi stands in the street, crying, covered in soot. FIREMEN
and MEN of the neighborhood struggle with buckets and a PUMP
ENGINE to put out the FIRE that engulfs Hildi's house.

POPS and CRACKS sound as the wood collapses on itself. SPARKS drift into the night air. HILDI falls to her knees in anguish as a few WOMEN run to her aid.

EXT. STRAUSS HOUSE - NEXT DAY

The house lays in ruins. Partial pieces of furniture and rafter beams are strewn about. Nothing can be salvaged.

Hildi moves charred debris to reveal small pieces of china. She collects a few saucers as she looks around at the destruction. She moves to a pile of charred beams and pushes them to the side to reveal:

The PIANO, charred and badly scarred, but for the most part, intact, brings tears to Hildi's eyes. She strikes one note, but there is only silence.

CUT TO:

PRESENT

EXT. SYLVIA'S HOUSE - LATER

Cat bids Sylvia good bye and steps out into the winter sunlight.

As she reaches the sidewalk, several KIDS race past, one carrying a sled. The sun strikes the sled's runners and causes Cat to reach up to shield her eyes.

CUT TO:

JAMESTOWN, NEW YORK 1967

INT. RED BARN - DAY

SUNLIGHT streaks inside the dark barn through the cracks in the clapboard walls. Old RELICS and ANTIQUES are strewn about the barn, some covered in old sheets or a tarp.

CROSS CUT TO:

INT. EDGEWATER HOUSE - PRESENT

Cat comes in the front door. Everything is quiet. She shuts the door and leans against it for a moment.

INT. RED BARN (1967) - DAY

PIGEONS, startled, FLY, stirring up dust as the two large doors swing open. TWO MEN fan the dust from their faces as they survey the barn's condition.

MAN 1

Don't know why the city keeps this junk... only good for the dump if you ask me.

MAN 2

Another man's trash...

MAN 1

Just shut up and help me move it in here.

They disappear outside the door.

INT. EDGEWATER HOUSE - PRESENT

Cat starts up the stairs. When she's half-way up, Sean appears at the bottom, holding a cake, proud of himself.

SEAN

Thought we could do a little celebrating.

Cat turns to him.

CAT

The piano's gone.

SEAN

(smile fading)
What?

CAT

Burned... in a fire.

They're silent for a moment.

SEAN

Cat, I'm so sorry.

(Beat)

This-this search was more than just about the piano. It was about you learning about yourself.

CAT

Yeah... I learned that no matter
how sweet the fantasy, reality
always comes crashing through.

She turns back up the stairs.

INT. RED BARN (1967) - DAY

The two men re-enter the barn pushing the charred PIANO across the floor and up against the wall. One man grabs a tarp, shakes it out, and throws it over the piano.

The barn doors close as the men leave. Darkness falls on the piano.

INT. EDGEWATER HOUSE - PRESENT

Sean stands, helpless at the bottom of the stairs, watching Cat go.

SEAN

Cat...

Cat pauses, but doesn't look at him.

CAT

It's time for me to go home, Sean.

Without waiting for his response, she hurries up the stairs and disappears down the hall.

SUPER: JAMESTOWN, NEW YORK 2012

INT. RED BARN - DAY

DARK and QUIET. The silence is broken by the sound of CLANKING metal as a chain is removed from the door outside. The barn doors SHAKE from force. Suddenly, a blast of LIGHT and DUST fill the air as the doors pull open.

Two women step into the barn shrouded with light. HOPE (32), a thin, firey woman looks around the room. Dot Harper, a few years younger, but still plump, waves the dust from her face as she COUGHS.

DOT

The things we volunteer for. Lordy Hope, I didn't know the Historical Society had this barn, and I've been a member for ten years.

HOPE

Wanda said it has been a dumping ground for the City since the fifties.

DOT

Smells older than that.

HOPE

... afraid someone might come back looking and sue them if they didn't store it.

DOT

Obviously no one came looking.

HOPE

The forgotten become our treasures.

DOT

One way of looking at it.

Hope pulls sheets and canvas tarps away from pieces of furniture, crates, and other odd antiques.

HOPE

The Historical Society's annual rummage sale is coming up and Wanda just wants an inventory of the items in here... a possible list of items for sale.

DOT

I can see why Wanda sent us two. You see possibility, and I'm thinking the dump.

HOPE

Well, maybe after this a little "hope" will rub off on you. Pun intended.

DOT

Ha, ha. You don't know who you're messing with.

Hope removes an old birdcage, and a mismatch of lamps from a tarp. She pulls the tarp back and reveals the PIANO. Still scarred and charred, she caresses the top with intrigue.

DOT (CONT'D)

Okay, now there you go - Dump!

HOPE

How can you say that? A little TLC and this piano will be like new.

DOT

Honey, there is a fine line between optimism and insanity... and I think you just crossed the line. There is no way I'm going to let you put that on the list.

HOPE

I bet if I sand it down, refinish it, someone will love it.

DOT

Yeah, three rummage sales from now.

HOPE

Whatever it takes.
(Lifts the lid)
Dot, take a look at this.

Dot moves over to the piano. They both read the inscription.

DOT

...to the song in my heart...

HOPE

...that can never be silenced.

DOT

Okay, that's quite enough. Have you ever seen a big girl cry? We're talking flood gates.

HOPE

This really meant something to someone...

EXT. JAMESTOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY - WEEKS LATER

Behind the offices sits an old carriage house that once served the main house. Renovated, contemporary doors and windows serve the building's new purpose, storage.

A beautiful English Garden fills the space between the carriage house and offices.

Dot and Wanda exit the back door of the offices. Wanda locks it as Dot waves goodbye and treks through the garden, purse in hand. She peers in the carriage house window before pushing through the door.

INT. HISTORICAL SOCIETY CARRIAGE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Shelves stocked with an inventory of antiques. Identification tags hang from each item with donors' names and log numbers. In the center of the garage, a tent made from sheets hangs from the rafters. A light glows through the sheets from inside.

Dot enters. Rough SCRATCHING from behind the sheets catches Dot's attention. A person's shadow feverishly works behind the sheets. Dot pulls back the sheet to reveal:

Hope wears a carpenter's mask as she sands down the piano.

DOT

What's all this? It's no secret
you're working on this thing.
You've been at it six months now.

Hope stops sanding. She pulls back the sheets and ties them off to the side, revealing the piano, stripped down to the raw wood. The charred finish is gone. Hope pulls off her mask.

HOPE

Just keeping the dust off the other
antiques. It's beautiful, isn't it?

DOT

Looks a little naked.

HOPE

In another few weeks or so, she'll
be ready for the stain and varnish.

DOT

It's time to call it a day.
Besides, your husband called and
asked if I would intervene and get
you to go home.

HOPE

He worries too much.

DOT
Rightfully so.

HOPE
I have been leaving him with all
the work lately.

DOT
Go home! I'm tired of keeping your
secrets. If he were my husband--

HOPE
Okay, okay.
(Beat)
Tomorrow I'm going to Ahlstrom's
Piano to see if they can help me
with who manufactured it. Wouldn't
it be incredible if they made it
right here in Jamestown?

DOT
See?

Dot puts her hands up to accentuate her face.

DOT (CONT'D)
(sarcastic)
Look, this is me holding my breath.

Hope throws a rag at Dot and hits her in the back on her way
out. Dot just waves as she walks out the door. Hope steps
back and takes a look at her handy work. She pulls out her
phone and calls a number.

HOPE
Hey, babe. Yeah, I'm coming home.
No, I got a lot done. This
inventory is just too much. I'll
see you soon. Love you.

Hope raises her phone and takes a picture of the Piano.

INT. AHLSTROM'S PIANO MAKERS - NEXT DAY

BEN PAYNE, an older man in his sixties, stands behind a
counter next to the register. He looks at the photo of the
piano on Hope's phone screen. He hands the phone back to
Hope, who stands at the counter, waiting expectantly.

BEN
Sorry, lady. I've never seen that
piano before. You sure it has one
of our sound boards in it?

HOPE

Yes, it has a date stamp of 1880.

BEN

Well, we were making pianos then and would have had sound boards. But, if our stamp isn't above the keys and inside the cabinet... I just don't know what to tell you.

Hope rustles through notes scattered on the counter. Sweat forms on her forehead.

HOPE

I know the piano has been stored by the City since the sixties...

Hope wipes the sweat away with her hand. She falters a bit, and Ben rushes around the counter to support her.

BEN

Hey, now, you don't look so good.

HOPE

I-I'm fine.

BEN

Are you sure? I could get you some water, or--

But Hope weakly shoves her hand away.

HOPE

I said I'm fine!

She catches Ben's gaze and fidgets under his knowing stare. Finally, he nods and offers her a handkerchief from his pocket. Hope reluctantly accepts it. She mops her forehead.

HOPE

So you're sure you've never seen records of this piano?

BEN

No, not that I can recall... It's a shame my mother is gone, God rest her soul. She taught piano for over fifty years. Gladys Payne, you ever heard of her?

HOPE

No... no, I don't think so.

BEN

(Chuckles)

Back in the day, she was revered by mothers and feared by kids.

(Beat)

She taught Sylvia Star.

HOPE

Of course.

BEN

Yes, she sure can play. My mother's brightest.

(Reflects)

My mother, she used to know every piano in town.

Hope puts her phone in her purse and gathers her notes.

HOPE

Thanks for your time, Mr. Payne.

She extends a shaky hand. Ben grasps it gently.

BEN

It's Ben... Sorry I couldn't be of more help.

HOPE

That's all right. It's just enough to get it restored, I suppose.

BEN

A labor of love...

HOPE

Yes, I suppose so.

Hope walks to the front door.

BEN

You better believe it... especially if it has an Ahlstrom sound board in it. Let me know when you get it done, and I'll tune it for you.

Hope turns back to Ben before stepping out of the door.

HOPE

May just take you up on that, Ben.

BEN
 (Smiling brightly)
 Good, good... You get you some
 rest. You'll be fine in no time.

Hope hesitates, then nods. With a small wave, she turns again and pushes out the door.

INT. JAMESTOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY - LATER

Hope enters through the front door. Pale, she reaches for a chair and sits. Dot sits at a desk, works on the computer with data entry, unaware it's Hope.

DOT
 You hold on. I'll be right there.

Hope passes out and falls out of the chair. Dot hears a THUD. She jumps up and finds Hope on the floor. Hope comes to just as Dot reaches her.

DOT (CONT'D)
 Lordy, what have you done to
 yourself?

Dot helps her into the chair.

HOPE
 I'm fine.

DOT
 You're not fine. Let me get you
 some water.

Dot runs to the WATER COOLER and fills a paper cup. She rushes it back to Hope. Hope drinks.

HOPE
 Thanks. I guess a little too much
 running around today.

DOT
 A little? I think I should call an
 ambulance--

HOPE
 No! Really, I'll be fine. This
 happens all the time.

DOT
 Then I should at least call--

HOPE

No, don't worry him. Just give me
a minute to catch my breath.

DOT

Well, one thing is certain. You
are not working on that piano
today. You're going home.

HOPE

Now, that I will agree with you.
(Beat)
But, after I rest a moment.

DOT

You take as long as you like. I'm
not going anywhere. And, when you
are ready to go home, I'll just
lock the place up, and I'll take
you there.

HOPE

Thank you, Dot. You are the best.

DOT

To nag you and be a regular pain in
your ass.

HOPE

That's why we love you.

Dot reflects and has a serious moment.

DOT

The reason I keep coming back here
day after day, year after year...
to help out. It's because I need a
little sunshine in my life, and you
show up everyday and there it is.

HOPE

And, I thought it was just the old
smelly antiques you love so much.

DOT

Now, look at you. I'm trying to be
serious for the first time in my
life and you go and make fun.

HOPE

I love you too, Dot.

DOT
Of course you do. Who wouldn't
love an old goat like me.

They both give a chuckle as Hope rests her head on Dot's
shoulder.

INT. EDGEWATER HOUSE - PARLOR - DAY

Wanda, Dot, and even Ben from the Ahlstrom's Piano mingle in
the parlor with other MOURNERS. A SIDE TABLE is nicely
draped with a linen table cloth. On top of the table is a
tray of cookies and coffee service.

Sean, wearing a dark suit, looks inside the COFFEE TURIN at
the coffee level. Dot notices and reaches for his arm.

DOT
What do you think you're doing?

SEAN
Just making sure we don't run out
of coffee.

DOT
And, so what if we do?

SEAN
...someone comes over here and
expects coffee... I have to--

DOT
You don't have to do a thing.
Here, come on.

Dot grabs Sean by the arm and takes him into the kitchen.

KITCHEN

Sean enters with Dot right behind. Sean stops at the sink
and rinses a coffee cup. Dot grabs the cup and turns the
water off.

DOT
This is not a house full of guests.
These are your friends... here for
you, not the other way around.

SEAN
It's just easier...

DOT
 Honey, I know it is. But, you just buried Hope. No amount of washing is going to make that go away.

SEAN
 It's what I do.

DOT
 Not today.
 (Beat)
 Come on. I want to show you something. Let's leave these buzzards to fend for themselves.

Dot and Sean exit the back kitchen door.

INT. HISTORICAL SOCIETY CARRIAGE HOUSE - LATER

Dot enters, turns on the light. She looks out the door and waves Sean in to the carriage house.

In the middle of the room is the unfinished piano. Dot stands behind it with Sean in front.

DOT
 A beauty, isn't it? She was almost finished with it.

Dot opens the lid. She points out the inscription to Sean.

DOT (CONT'D)
 I'm guessing she never told you about this. This damn piano... she would ask me everyday, "Dot, do you think it was made with as much love as Sean and I have for each other?"
 (Beat)
 Hell, if I should know. But one thing I do know, she loved you very much, and this was going to be her surprise to you.

SEAN
 And all this time she told me she was doing inventory.

DOT
 She called this her project of restored love. I never really knew what she meant. But, she believed this piano was special, would bring love to whomever had it.

SEAN
It is beautiful.

DOT
I think you should finish it.
Finish it for her.

Sean runs his fingers over the smooth sanded wood as tears fill his eyes and a joy moves across his face.

CUT TO:

PRESENT

INT. CAT'S ROOM - DAY - CHRISTMAS EVE

Cat packs her clothes with resolve. She pauses once - for just a moment - over the framed photo of herself, her parents, and Auntie E that she had found amongst Auntie E's things. She runs her fingers over the faces, then quickly shoves it in her suitcase. She picks up the bracelet from the night stand that Shirley had given her. With sigh, she plops down on the bed, fingering the frayed ends in thought.

INT. SEAN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sean sits on the edge of his bed, staring at the dresser, which sets against the wall in front of him. On it are several framed photographs, including a wedding photo of Sean and Hope and an 8x10 shot of a smiling Hope.

Sean stands, straightens his shoulders, and with one last glance at his wedding photo, leaves the room.

INT. EDGEWATER HOUSE - PARLOR - MOMENTS LATER

Cat sets her suitcase at the door and turns to find Sean watching her from the bottom of the stairs.

SEAN
It's Christmas Eve. You could stay until tomorrow. You could go with me to midnight mass.

CAT
They'll need me in the diner tomorrow. It'll be a wonder if they even take me back.

SEAN
But I-I need...

CAT
What?

SEAN
You could, um, work here with me.
Help me out...

Cat closes her eyes and shakes her head slowly.

CAT
I don't want to drag this out.

SEAN
Is that what you think I'm doing?

Cat crosses to him and touches the side of his face, then reaches up and kisses his cheek.

Sean takes hold of her hand and is reluctant to let her go, but Cat gently pulls away from him.

She picks up her suitcase, and he opens the door for her.

EXT. EDGEWATER HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Snow falls softly on the yard. Cat walks out onto the porch, down the steps, and towards the waiting taxi. Sean watches from the top step.

Halfway down the sidewalk, Cat pauses and turns back to him. She sets her bags down. Sean steps down to the sidewalk.

Cat reaches into one of her bags and pulls out the photos of Emily and Charles. She looks up at Sean, and he can see the tears welling up in the corners of her eyes.

CAT
I never showed you these.

She holds out the photos, and Sean takes them. He studies the wedding photo, then flips to the one of the piano. He pauses over it, pulling it closer for a better look.

CAT (CONT'D)
To the song in my heart that can
never be silenced.

Sean's head snaps up as he searches her face.

SEAN

What?

CAT

That's what he wrote to her, carved on the piano. What kind of love is that, Sean? To feel that way about someone to--

SEAN

Cat...

CAT

That kind of love doesn't exist anymore.

She looks up to find Sean smiling at her.

SEAN

Yes, it does.

He takes her hand and leads her around to the back of the house, ignoring the TAXI DRIVER waiting impatiently.

They round the corner and tucked in the back is an old Carriage House. Sean pulls on the latch and opens the door.

INT. EDGEWATER CARRIAGE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A dirt floor, the building is much in the same condition as a hundred years ago. Sean guides Cat inside.

CAT

Sean, please... what are we doing?

SEAN

The inscription...

He stops and lets go of her hand. He pulls away a tarp revealing the piano.

As he opens the lid, Cat's hand goes to her mouth. Inside, still scarred from age and the fire but readable, is the inscription: To the song in my heart that will never be silenced.

Cat reaches out and traces the words with her finger.

SEAN (CONT'D)

Hope had to do major repairs on the outside, but she insisted this part be salvaged. She worked with the Historical Society...

(MORE)

SEAN (CONT'D)

this was her last project... when-
when she... passed, I finished it
for her.

Cat sits on the bench and runs her fingers across the keys.

CAT

It's been here all along.

Sean sits beside her and gently touches her cheek. He leans in and kisses her. Slowly, the kiss deepens as Cat's arms ease around him and his around her. After the kiss, he looks into Cat's eyes.

SEAN

This is where you belong. Hope,
you've come back home to me.

Cat pulls back realizing...

CAT

Back to you? Sean, I'm not your
wife, and never will be.

EXT. EDGEWATER HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The snow falls harder as the wind picks up. The Taxi Driver looks up into the sky, then HONKS repeatedly.

INT. EDGEWATER CARRIAGE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

SEAN

Cat, I didn't mean... I do miss her
so very much.

Cat pulls away from Sean. Tears fill Cat's eyes.

CAT

Things never change. I should just
accept the fact that I'll always be
alone.

She rushes out the door into the heavy snow fall.

Sean sits at the piano alone, as the horn continues to HONK. The wind begins to blow harder pushing snow into the Carriage House door. Suddenly the HONKS stop. Sean runs to the front of the house just as the taxi pulls away.

INT. CAB - CONTINUOUS

Cat unable to control her tears sees Sean through the side view mirror as he runs to the drive. His image grows smaller as the cab drives away and the snow blurs visibility.

INT. CHURCH - MIDNIGHT

The church is lit for Midnight Mass. The door opens and snow blows in as does Sean. He takes off his stocking hat and shakes the snow from his coat as he closes the door behind him against the heavy wind.

Samuel approaches carrying a handful of bulletins.

SAMUEL

A Joyous Christmas.

Sean grabs a bulletin and steps into the church. It glows with candles and the sparkle of the season. He looks over the pews. A homeless man sits alone in an otherwise empty church.

SEAN

(Turns to Samuel)

Where is everyone?

SAMUEL

The blizzard, everyone stayed home.
But our doors are always open.
Services will start soon.

SEAN

Can so few of us need a miracle
tonight?

SAMUEL

Miracles come in different shapes
and forms. They're unexpected, but
always when they are needed most.

Sean collapses in a back pew burying his face in his hands.

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - CONTINUOUS

Cat stands at the ticket counter in a near empty airport. The TICKET AGENT stands behind the counter.

TICKET AGENT

I'm sorry, but you'll just have to
go home and try again tomorrow.
Maybe the blizzard will be over.

CAT
 (Defeated)
 I'm trying to get back home.

INT. CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

Suddenly, the door opens and the wind gusts into the church. Sean quickly spins around hoping to see Cat.

Samuel rushes to the door and closes it behind a YOUNG COUPLE who bounce in to the church. Sean sinks down into the pew.

Samuel walks up to Sean placing his hand on Sean's shoulder.

SAMUEL
 To think she'll walk through that door. That's too easy.

SEAN
 What? How do you know--

SAMUEL
 Think of where your heart first saw her. A heartfelt vision is a powerful thing. It can bring what we wish for right to us.

SEAN
 I don't know how.

SAMUEL
 First, we have to make room for what we want, then it comes to us.

The WIND slowly quiets...

SAMUEL
 Do you hear that? The wind. It's stopped. See? A miracle.

EXT. EDGEWATER HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A Taxi pushes through the snow and pulls in front of the Inn. Cat gets out, hesitates. The Taxi drives off. Cat nowhere else to go, trudges up the sidewalk to the front porch. She rings the bell. No answer. She peers into the windows. No one. She pulls her coat around her neck and grabs her suitcase. She steps down and looks up at the snow falling.

EXT. JAMESTOWN STREET - LATER

Sean strolls the streets following the path he and Cat walked reminiscing the time he had with her.

EXT. EDGEWATER HOUSE - LATER

Sean walks up to the Inn. He looks at the lonely house. He looks up into the sky just as the snow stops and the evening stars begin to peek through the shifting clouds. He looks back at the porch and sees Cat standing in the cold.

CAT

I had nowhere else to go.

SEAN

Cat, I'm so sorry. I know you're not Hope. Nor do I want you to be. I love you.

CAT

How can you love this mess.

SEAN

You're not a mess, Cat.

CAT

Then, what am I. I've been searching, but can't--

SEAN

You're a my miracle.

CAT

I've never been anyone's anything.

SEAN

Everyday I've prayed, envisioned love to come back to this house, to me. That day picking potatoes off the floor I knew it had come back.

Cat's eyes fill with tears.

SEAN

But the pain of losing Hope was taking up too much space. I see now that when I could finally let the pain go, love would come back to me. I'm ready to let it back into my heart. Please tell me you are too.

The both run to each other and embrace.

EXT. EDGEWATER HOUSE - CHRISTMAS DAY EVE

Cat stands at the bottom of the steps waiting. Sylvia makes her way up the now shoveled walk. The sky fades to a brilliant shade of purple with the sunset. As if on cue, the outside Christmas lights click on. The lights on the porch pillars glow around Cat as she reaches for Sylvia's hand.

The two women embrace briefly.

CAT

Merry Christmas.

SYLVIA

It is a Merry Christmas, isn't it.

INT. EDGEWATER HOUSE - PARLOR - MOMENTS LATER

The Parlor, adorned with fresh evergreen, lights and ribbon, portrays the perfect Victorian Christmas. Speckled amongst Sean's holiday guests are familiar faces. Dinah tells an animated story to a Guest while her husband TOM looks on.

Dot and Wanda inspect the antique ornaments on the tree. Dot lets out a GASP and CHORTLE as the tree lights flash on. Ben from Ahlstrom's emerges from behind the tree.

As GUESTS mingle about, wishing one another MERRY CHRISTMAS, Cat and Sylvia pause by the piano now displayed prominently in the Parlor. Sylvia lets go of Cat's arm and runs her hand over the piano.

Cat lifts the lid, and a smile spreads across Sylvia's face as she sees the inscription is still there.

Sean approaches holding two crystal glasses.

SEAN

Can I interest two beautiful ladies
in a Christmas punch?

He hands each a glass and plants a kiss on Cat's cheek. He then pulls a wrapped gift from under his arm. He gives it to Cat. She unwraps it. It's the photo of Charles and Emily standing at the Piano in a beautiful leaded crystal frame.

Cat is overwhelmed and throws her arm around Sean's neck and places the photo on the piano. Just as the frame rests, the doorbell rings. Cat jumps with enthusiasm.

Cat races to the front door and opens it. Shirley throws open her arms and dawns a bright grin. Cat glows with great joy.

CAT

Shirley, I've missed you so much!

SHIRLEY

Come here, you.

Cat and Shirley embrace. Shirley enjoys a warmth she has never felt from Cat before. From the Parlor the sounds of the Piano play out a Christmas song.

SHIRLEY

Honey, that's just about the best hug. As nice a surprise as when that courier delivered the ticket.

CAT

I was hoping--

SHIRLEY

I knew right away when John Earl and the kids decided to go hunting that I was going to use it to see my friend at Christmas. Thank God that blizzard stopped when it did. I would have never got here.

CAT

Yes, thank God... I have someone special I would like you to meet.

Shirley holds Cat's hand and looks at the bracelet on her wrist. Shirley holds back a tear and grabs her bag and whisks in. Cat leads her into the parlor where Sean stands watching Sylvia play the Piano. He extends a hand to Shirley who quickly gives him a bear hug.

Sean hands Shirley a glass and signals everyone else to grab their glasses.

SEAN

I'd like to take this opportunity to toast the holiday season and Cat, whose search for herself helped some of us learn a bit more about ourselves.

He smiles at Cat, then leans down for a quick kiss.

Cheers and "Here, heres" and CLINKING GLASSES. Then, Cat stands, glances at her watch.

CAT

(To Sean)

I was waiting for Mr. Perkins. I was hoping you could meet him. He's the one who brought me here.

SEAN

I would have loved to thank him.

Sylvia grabs Cat by the hand and leads her to the Piano. Cat sits on the bench waiting for Sylvia to join her.

SYLVIA

Dear, why don't you play for us?

CAT

I don't remember... I was so small when Auntie E. taught me.

SYLVIA

My mother told me...

(German accent)

It is like riding bike, an ounce of skill, a cup of courage and a whole lot of faith.

Sylvia turns to the Guests and get's their attention.

SYLVIA

What shall we start with?

MARTHA

"Hark, the Herald Angels Sing"... my favorite.

Sylvia looks to Cat with a reassuring smile. Cat, fear struck, looks at the picture of Emily and Charles. For a brief moment Cat can see the reflection of Emily in the glass of the frame. Tilting her head to focus on the image, the reflection of Emily offers a soft smile and slight nod.

Cat turns to look behind her. Emily is not there, but Sean fills the void.

SEAN

Everything alright?

Cat looks into his eyes and is comforted. She smiles at Sean and turns, resting her fingers on the piano. Slowly, the tune trickles onto the keys.

Dot covers her mouth to stifle a potential noise. Shirley holds her heart. All eyes are on Cat...

Finally, with a joyful exuberance, Cat picks up the tempo and the song fills the room.

The group breaks out in song, with Martha's warbled voice rising above the rest. Sean rests his hands on Cat's shoulders and kisses the top of her head.

As the song ends, Cat smiles up at Sean, then out of the corner of her eye she catches sight of Samuel through the window standing on the porch, unnoticed by the others.

With a wink and the tip of his hat, Samuel tightens his coat around him and heads out into the night.

Cat encourages Sylvia to sit down and play.

EXT. EDGEWATER HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Outside the house, a song can be heard drifting into the night. Cat steps out on to the porch. But all else is quiet. She looks up and down the street. No sounds, no Samuel, no movement... except, perhaps, one star that twinkles just a little brighter than the others.

FADE OUT.

THE END