

HAPPY HOLI-DNA

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. THE SKYLINE OF SEATTLE - DAY

A PANORAMIC VIEW OF SEATTLE'S MAJESTIC SKYLINE FILLS THE SCREEN. THE CAMERA SOARS ABOVE THE BUSTLING CITYSCAPE, GRADUALLY CLOSING IN ON A SLEEK, MODERN OFFICE BUILDING NESTLED WITHIN THE URBAN JUNGLE.

EXT. MODERN OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

AS THE CAMERA APPROACHES, THE BUILDING'S GLASS EXTERIOR REFLECTS THE VIBRANT CITY BELOW. WE CAN NOW READ THE BOLD LETTERS ON THE DOORS: "DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE."

INT. ASSISTANT D.A.'S OFFICE - DAY

A SIGN ON THE DOOR IDENTIFIES IT AS THE DOMAIN OF "E. MARGARET PEARSON, CHIEF ASSISTANT D.A".

The room buzzes with LAWYERS and STAFF preparing for yet another day of legal battles. SARAH ELLIS, (late 20s) a paralegal, a little frumpy perhaps, sits at her desk which is currently overrun with Christmas DECOR - a small tacky tree, an elf on the shelf, cheap tinsel strung about. Sarah plainly loves Christmas. She "oohs and ahhs" over some image on her smartphone. A YOUNG WOMAN (late 20s) approaches; professional, polished. This is E. MARGARET "MEGGIE" PEARSON, she carries a legal file in one hand, briefcase in the other. She stops to take in the sight. Sarah is not only her assistant but her friend and confidant.

MEGGIE

Where did all the Thanksgiving stuff go?

SARAH

Oh, that was SO last week. It's Christmas now. Tis the season!

MEGGIE

(dryly)
It's still November.

SARAH

Exactly! It's Christmas!

Meggie rolls her eyes at her friend then changes the subject.

MEGGIE

What's so interesting on the phone?

SARAH

It's my new niece. Isn't she beautiful?

She hands the phone to Meggie. From Meggie's POV we see the photo of the INFANT. If babies can be homely this one is. She does actually look like Sarah. Meggie winces a little at the sight.

MEGGIE

Uh...yeah. She definitely...
She's...

She can't find the right words

MEGGIE (CONT'D)

A handsome child.

Sarah is still smitten.

SARAH

Genetics are amazing aren't they?
All the babies in my family have
looked just like this when they
were born. Don't you think that's
amazing?

From Meggie's POV we see several BABY PHOTOS among the clutter on Sarah's desk. They do all look alike.

Meggie has drifted from the conversation and is now filtering through the file in her hand looking for something.

MEGGIE

Mm. Yeah, I guess.

SARAH

So who do you look like in your family?

MEGGIE

(She's still distracted)
No one really.

SARAH

Well, you have to look like someone. I've never met your Mom. Is she tall like you?

MEGGIE
No. Not really. She's like 5'2.

SARAH
5'2? Well your Dad must have been
the tall one, right? Or did they
just feed you really well?

Sarah has amused herself with her comment.

Meggie's getting a little perturbed with all the questions.
She looks up from her legal file.

MEGGIE
Sarah, I've told you that I was
adopted as a baby, right?

Sarah is clearly taken aback.

SARAH
Adopted? What? No, you certainly
did NOT ever tell me that.

MEGGIE
Hmmm, I was sure I told you. It's
never been a secret.

SARAH
Well, that's a pretty big deal.

MEGGIE
Not so much. I never really think
about it.

SARAH
Well, do you know who your birth
parents were? Any details?

Meggie shrugs.

MEGGIE
Nope. Not a thing.

SARAH
Well, aren't you curious?

MEGGIE
No. Not really.

A beat as she reconsiders.

MEGGIE (CONT'D)
Maybe a little.

SARAH
Well I would be. Especially if I
was abandoned as a child.

What?

MEGGIE
I was not "abandoned", Sarah. My
mother just couldn't keep me. I'm
sure she had her reasons.

SARAH
Well, if it was me, I would want to
know.

MEGGIE
Well, it's not you, so let's drop
it, okay?

Sarah is reluctant to give up her mission

SARAH
Okay, okay. But you should
really....

MEGGIE
Drop it....

She hands Sarah the file she's been looking through as SARAH
rolls her eyes.

MEGGIE (CONT'D)
My brief is due on this case on
Thursday. My notes are in the
file.

Sarah looks at her disapprovingly. She's a dog with a bone.
She takes a breath to say something else, Meggie stops her.

MEGGIE (CONT'D)
Drop it.

Meggie turns and heads toward her office.

SARAH
(to herself)
Not on your life, sister.

INT. - MEGGIE'S OFFICE - DAY

A FEW DAYS LATER

Meggie is her usual hurried self as she breezes into the office. Sarah's desk now holds even more Christmas paraphernalia if that is possible. Even in her rush, Meggie notices the "Christmas Land" that the desk area has become.

MEGGIE

Sarah, seriously? I expect any day to come here and find you sitting on Santa's lap. We still have nearly a month until Christmas. What's next? A live reindeer? A toy shop?

Sarah is nonplussed.

SARAH

Maybe. Not a bad idea.

Meggie feigns a disgusted look at her friend.

MEGGIE

Is the brief ready? I've got to get it to the Courthouse today.

SARAH

Have you forgotten who you are talking to? Of course it's ready. Have I ever NOT had something ready when you needed it?

She smiles sweetly but raises her eyebrows at Meggie.

MEGGIE

No, Sarah. You haven't. You are always my savior.

Sarah hands the neatly stacked pages of the brief to Meggie along with a gaily wrapped box sitting on the top.

MEGGIE (CONT'D)

What's this?

SARAH

A little early Christmas present from me.

Meggie's a little flustered by the gift.

MEGGIE

I...I...don't know what to say. It's still a month until Christmas. I haven't gotten you anything yet.

SARAH
Pffft! Who cares? Open it! Just
open it!

Meggie glances at her watch.

MEGGIE
I've got to be in court in 10
minutes...

SARAH
It will only take a second. Open
it already!

MEGGIE
You're awfully excited. Is this a
gift for me or for you?

SARAH
Both. Now open it.

Meggie begins to unwrap the package. Her eyes widen and she
looks up to Sarah. We see the printing on the box from
Meggie's POV. "*INSTANT DNA.COM*".

MEGGIE
What?

SARAH
It's the answer to the puzzle of
your true identity.

Sarah is obviously in love with the idea.

MEGGIE
There is no puzzle to my true
identity. I'm Meggie Pearson. I'm
the youngest assistant D. A. in the
history of this office. I'm from a
loving and successful family, I
have a bright future ahead of me
and THAT is my identity.

Those are her words but the look of curiosity in her eyes
speaks differently.

A beat as she runs her fingers over the box.

MEGGIE (CONT'D)
(thoughtfully)
I just saw an ad for this company
on TV last night.

SARAH

DNA testing is all the rage right now. My neighbor did it and found out one of her ancestors was the Duke of Romania!

She nods proudly in agreement with her own statement.

MEGGIE

Well, what if she had found out that one of her ancestors was Jack the Ripper? How would she have felt?

Sarah shrugs.

SARAH

Well actually, her great-great uncle on her mother's side was arrested for murder in Arizona in 18...

Meggie holds up her hand to stop her.

MEGGIE

This is exactly the kind of thing I don't want to find out. I wouldn't want to know if I come from a long line of criminals and ne'er do wells. I am who I am now. I don't want to know anything else.

Sarah is a little deflated.

SARAH

You don't like it.

Meggie softens.

MEGGIE

Awww. I'm sorry Sarah...of course I like it. It's just going to take a little thought, that's all.

SARAH

Then you'll think about doing it?

Hope rises.

MEGGIE

I'll think about doing it.

Sarah is regenerated.

SARAH

Well you need to hurry up. They're having a holiday special right now. If you get your test in this week, you're guaranteed to have the results before Christmas.

MEGGIE

What I need to hurry up and do is get to court.

She looks at her watch again.

MEGGIE (CONT'D)

I cannot be late today. The public defender is resting his case in the Ericson trial and we have to be ready to make the State's closing argument.

She turns to leave, gift still in hand. Sarah calls after her.

SARAH

I'm so excited! What if you're related to the Duke of Romania?

Meggie rushes off. She doesn't turn around but waves her hand acknowledging Sarah's excitement. She shakes her head and smiles as she hurries off.

INT. EMILY MILLER'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

EMILY MILLER, 20s, pretty, newly married. So newly married that wedding gifts are still sitting on her dining table in the background. She's thumbing through the latest fashion magazine when she sees an ad: INSTANT DNA.COM As she reads through, she is taken by the claims of "health information".

She calls out to her new husband who is O. C.

EMILY

David? Honey come here and look at this.

DAVID enters from another room. He is also maybe late 20s, dressed in khakis, glasses and a button down shirt. A pleasant fellow.

DAVID

What is it honey?

EMILY

Have you ever wanted to have your DNA tested?

DAVID

No. I've never thought of it before, why?

EMILY

Well, what if there's something in your genes that we wouldn't want to pass on to our children?

DAVID

Emily, we just got back from our honeymoon. I don't think we have to start worrying about that yet.

A sobering thought crosses his mind.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Do we?

EMILY

Oh no! Of course not. It's just that when we do decide to have children, we'll want to know that neither of us is a "carrier" or anything.

DAVID

You make it sound like we may have plague or something.

EMILY

David, you're a doctor, you should understand things like this.

DAVID

I'm a psychologist, Emily. We don't deal with inherited genetic traits.

EMILY

I know, silly. It's just that sometimes things are hidden in your genes and if your mate has those same genes, well, your children may have it. We don't want that do we?

He's coddling her now.

DAVID

No. We definitely don't want that.

EMILY

Well, then I think we should get ours tested. Just to make sure.

DAVID

Okay, okay, whatever. But you go first. Once we get yours back, and see that it's the real deal, then I'll do mine.

EMILY

I just want to make sure everything is okay.

DAVID

Just to make sure. Anything you say, darling.

He jumps on the sofa with her and starts kissing her neck, to her delighted giggles.

EXT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

WORKERS are busily hanging wreaths and other Christmas decorations. A large CHRISTMAS TREE is being placed with the assistance of a boom truck. People coming and going. A TV NEWS CREW is waiting on the steps. One of them spots Meggie from a distance. He motions for his crew to follow.

REPORTER

Ms. Pearson! Ms. Pearson! Can you make a comment on the State's case against Mr. Ericson?

MEGGIE

No, I'm sorry. No comment at this time.

She keeps moving with the REPORTER on her heels.

REPORTER

The Defense is slated to rest their case today. They've made a pretty convincing argument that their client is innocent.

She stops and turns back to him.

MEGGIE

(coyly)

Well, it IS the Public Defender's job to convince us that ALL their clients are innocent...regardless of the evidence.

She begins to walk away again.

REPORTER

Ms. Pearson! Do you have a comment on the new so-called "hired gun" that the Public Defender's office is bringing in today?

This stops Meggie in her tracks and she turns back.

MEGGIE

New Public Defender?

REPORTER

So you didn't know!

The reporter is obviously excited that he has broken the news to Meggie.

REPORTER (CONT'D)

He's supposedly a new up and coming hot shot. Likes to work with DNA evidence.

A beat as he waits on the stunned Meggie to respond.

REPORTER (CONT'D)

Do you have a comment on that?

MEGGIE

DNA?

REPORTER

Ms. Pearson. Is it possible that new evidence may be introduced today that may clear the defendant? Possibly in the form of DNA?

Meggie hesitates, but only for a moment. She's too smart to be outwitted by a reporter.

MEGGIE

My only comment is that the State is prepared to litigate against any new evidence brought forward by the Defendant or his counsel - hot shot or not.

She turns again to leave as the reporter hounds her.

REPORTER

Ms. Pearson! Ms. Pearson!

MEGGIE

I'm late for court. That's all.
Good day.

And she is gone inside the courtroom doors.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

The courtroom is bustling. Obviously a high-profile case. People milling about waiting for court to convene. A buzz of conversations in the background.

Meggie pushes through the doors. As she does she receives a text which she hurriedly glances at. We see it from Meggie's POV, the sender is "PATRICIA".

TEXT MESSAGE

"Taken off case. The Big Dog will be joining you this morning. Good Luck".

Meggie is confused as she looks up.

Meggie makes her way through the crowd and takes a seat at the D.A.'s table. The "Big Dog", chief D.A., WILL ANDERSON, a distinguished man (60s) is already seated at the table. Meggie is obviously surprised to see him.

MEGGIE

Will? Good Morning. I just got a message from Patricia that she's been taken off the case. Is there a problem?

WILL

I hope there's no problem. But I thought I better step in just in case.

MEGGIE

Is this about the new deputy Public Defender?

WILL

You know about him then?

MEGGIE

For about thirty seconds now. What's going on? Why weren't we informed of a change of counsel?

WILL

Good question. I'll be looking for a good answer from the Public Defender's office. In the meantime, we're going to find out what this new young sharpshooter has up his sleeve.

MEGGIE

Who is he?

WILL

Jacob a/k/a "Jake" Johnson. Just got into town and hit the ground running. Word is he plays hard ball...and he's quite the expert on DNA evidence.

MEGGIE

Jake Johnson? Sounds like a gunslinger.

She rolls her eyes.

MEGGIE (CONT'D)

So what do they have?

They are interrupted by a collective GASP from the crowd as the doors open and JACOB JOHNSON (30s) tall, confident, doggedly handsome and dressed straight out of GQ is tailed into the courtroom by the same team of reporters who are immediately cornered by the BAILIFF and escorted back outside the courtroom. He nods politely to Will, then to Meggie. He hesitates for a moment when they make eye contact and a slight smile comes to his lips.

He said a thousand words in that instant, but no one else notices as he takes his seat at the Defense table.

WILL

I have no idea yet. But I have a feeling we are in for a show. Hold onto your hat.

MEGGIE

Well, I'm not particularly impressed so far.

She glances at her watch.

MEGGIE (CONT'D)

He's nearly ten minutes late on his first day.

WILL

I'm sure that was a calculated move.

A beat as he winks at Meggie.

WILL (CONT'D)

Every gunslinger has them.

Meggie glances over at Jake, trying not to be noticed, he catches her looking and there's that smile again. She looks away quickly.

Meanwhile, the jury is being seated. When they are all in their places, the JUDGE (50s), female, distinguished, enters the courtroom.

BAILIFF

All rise.

And everyone does.

BAILIFF (CONT'D)

The 6th Circuit Court of this county is now in session. Honorable Alice Merchant presiding.

JUDGE MERCHANT

Please be seated.

The Judge immediately looks toward the defense table.

JUDGE MERCHANT (CONT'D)

Mr. Nelson, I understand we have new counsel this morning representing the Defendant?

MR. NELSON
Yes, your honor.

A beat.

JUDGE MERCHANT
Well....we don't have all day.
Would you like to introduce him to
the Court?

Mr. Nelson and Jake stand.

MR. NELSON
Yes, your honor. If it please the
court, this is Mr. Jacob Johnson,
he has been appointed co-counsel
representing the defendant and the
Public Defender's office. He will
be taking over this case at this
time. I will of course remain of
counsel during these proceedings.

JUDGE MERCHANT
Does the State have any objections?
Mr. Anderson? Ms. Pearson?

WILL
(standing)
No, not at this time your honor,
although we would like the record
to show that this is an unusual
move on the part of the Public
Defender's office.

He looks pointedly toward the Public Defender.

JUDGE MERCHANT
Very well. I agree, it is an
unusual move. The Court will so
note your comments.

Will returns to his seat as the Judge dons her reading
glasses and shuffles papers on her desk.

JUDGE MERCHANT (CONT'D)
Before we adjourned yesterday, the
defense was about to rest its case.
Do we agree that is where we are
this morning, Mr. Johnson?

JAKE

Yes your honor, we will likely rest our case this morning. But I do have one bit of vital evidence...

A beat as he looks toward the jury box.

JAKE (CONT'D)

DNA evidence...

He says each letter as if it is a word.

JAKE (CONT'D)

...that I believe is irrefutable and will clear my client of all charges that I would like to submit this morning, with the Court's permission.

A murmur runs through the crowd.

JUDGE MERCHANT

Order please!

She raps her gavel on her podium.

JUDGE MERCHANT (CONT'D)

Mr. Anderson?

WILL

The State has no objection at this time, your honor.

The Judge nods.

JUDGE MERCHANT

As you wish then, Mr. Johnson. Proceed.

Jake gives a questioning look toward Meggie as if asking her permission to tear apart her carefully fought case. Oh he is very good. She gives him a sarcastic "go ahead" wave of her hand.

OUTSIDE THE COURTROOM - LATER THAT SAME DAY

A large crowd gathers round as the Defendant, Ericson, emerges from the courtroom flanked by Jake. They have obviously been victorious. TV Cameras and Reporters jockey for position to interview Jake.

The same reporter who interviewed Meggie, pushes his way in front.

REPORTER

Mr. Johnson. Mr. Johnson

He shoves the microphone to Jake's face.

REPORTER (CONT'D)

Can you comment on your client's not guilty verdict?

JAKE

Well, once the DNA came into play, it was a foregone conclusion. My client's DNA was not found at the scene, therefore, he could not be found guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. DNA always has the last word.

REPORTER

You were able to pretty much dismantle the DA's case with one swipe, it's obvious that Mr. Anderson and especially Ms. Pearson are not too happy with the outcome.

Before he comments on this latest statement, Jake looks O.C. to see Meggie and Will Anderson standing just outside the courtroom door.

JAKE

Well, I....

The reporter interrupts.

REPORTER

Did you know this case is already being referred to as "Ms. DA" versus "Mr. DNA" ?

Jake is still distracted by Meggie O. C.

JAKE

Uh....no, I hadn't heard that...I'm sorry, that's all the comment I have at this time.

More crowd and reporter bustle as Jake makes his exit through the throng.

INT. MEGGIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Meggie, alone and dressed in her pajamas, glass of wine on the table beside her. From her POV we see the evening newspaper with its headline: "MR. DNA TROUNCES MS. DA IN TRIAL. ERICSON GOES FREE".

MEGGIE

Mr. DNA. What a load of....

Meggie folds the newspaper over to get the headline out of her sight. She considers the DNA box also laying on the table in front of her. She picks it up. Then puts it back down. Drums her fingers on the table and picks it back up again. She is having a conversation with herself.

MEGGIE (CONT'D)

This is ridiculous. Probably some kind of hoax. Poor Sarah spent her hard-earned money on a hoax.

She considers the box for another beat.

MEGGIE (CONT'D)

If I don't do this, Sarah will be so hurt. I probably won't find out anything anyway. After the day I've had today, what's one more DNA "adventure"? What did my worthy opponent say today? "DNA always has the last word"?

She is making an entire case for and against her own decision.

MEGGIE (CONT'D)

What if I really am related to the Duke of Romania?

She reconsiders.

MEGGIE (CONT'D)

No. I'm going to keep my expectations low. That way there's no disappointment.

(MORE)

MEGGIE (CONT'D)

I can tell Sarah I did this, we'll have a laugh or two and that will be that. Problem solved.

She sighs and opens the box. She pulls out the paper of instructions along with a test tube with a black mark high on it's side. She turns it over a time or two examining it, then starts to read the instructions.

MEGGIE (CONT'D)

"Do not eat or drink anything for 30 minutes before performing test"

She glances at the glass of wine.

MEGGIE (CONT'D)

Oops. Off to a bad start already.

She continues reading.

MEGGIE (CONT'D)

Deposit saliva into test tube to the indicated mark.

She looks disgusted then picks up the tube again.

MEGGIE (CONT'D)

You spit in the tube? Gross!

She looks at the level of the mark again on the tube.

MEGGIE (CONT'D)

That's a lot of spit.

She gets up, pours out the rest of her wine and sits back down to wait. The clock on her wall reads 8:30. The next thing we know the clock now reads 9:00. It's been 30 minutes.

MEGGIE (CONT'D)

Okay, time's up. Here we go.

We don't see her spitting in the tube but see her leaning over the sink and hear her comments O. C.

MEGGIE (O.C.) (CONT'D)

That is A LOT of spit. I don't have that much spit. What if you don't send enough spit? Do you only get part of your information?

(MORE)

MEGGIE (O.C.) (CONT'D)
Do you only know who half of your
relatives are? Why did I agree to
do this?

FADE OUT:

INT. MEGGIE'S OFFICE - DAY

Meggie barely gets through the door until an excited Sarah
fires off a volley of questions.

SARAH
Well, did you send it in?

MEGGIE
Yes.

A beat. She can't lie.

MEGGIE (CONT'D)
No.

SARAH
Why not? You've got to get it in
the mail today. It's the deadline.

MEGGIE
Yes, I know that. You've reminded
me of that fact... numerous times.

SARAH
So? What's the problem?

MEGGIE
Nothing. I did the test last
night. Did you know you have to
put like a gallon of spit in the
test tube? It was really kind of
disgusting.

SARAH
You are stalling.

MEGGIE
I'm stalling.

SARAH
Meggie. Put the sample in the
mail. Today.

Meggie is defeated. She doesn't know why, this doesn't matter anyway.

MEGGIE

Okay, okay. I'll put it in the mail today.

SARAH

Would you like for me to take it?

MEGGIE

No. No, I will do this myself.

SARAH

It's going to be worth it, Meggie. I just have a feeling. And you know I am never wrong about things.

Meggie sighs. Sarah is right.

MEGGIE

Right. What's the worst that could happen? People do this all the time. Nothing bad ever happens.

She's convinced herself.

EXT. BUSY STREET - DAY

A POSTAL MAILBOX.

Meggie stands in front of the box. She opens and shuts the mailbox a few times without depositing the package. This is ridiculous. She gives the box one last pull, drops the package in and then peers in after it, as if she just deposited part of her soul.

MEGGIE

(to herself)

What's the worst that could happen?

JAKE (O.C.)

Good Morning.

Meggie wheels around to see him standing there.

MEGGIE

Well, there's my answer.

JAKE

Excuse me? Did I miss something?

MEGGIE
(rolling her eyes)
I was just pondering something and
seeing you answered my question.

Jake looks a little perplexed but continues on.

JAKE
Did you lose something in there?

MEGGIE
No. I was just mailing a package.

JAKE
It looked like you were having
second thoughts.

MEGGIE
No. I was...it was just a Christmas
gift for someone.

JAKE
Someone special?

Why does he care?

MEGGIE
I'm not sure that's any of your
business, Mr. Johnson.

JAKE
Please. My friends call me Jake.

MEGGIE
I'm sure your friends do... Mr.
Johnson.

He recognizes her cat and mouse game.

JAKE
Touche, Ms. Pearson.

There's the smile and she finds it hard to look away, but
then shakes it off.

MEGGIE
If you'll excuse me, I have to get
back to my office.

She turns to walk away.

JAKE
 (calling after her)
 I hear you've been assigned to the
 Silverman case.

She turns back.

MEGGIE
 Word seems to travel quickly. I
 only found out myself yesterday.

JAKE
 So, I guess I'll see you in court.

MEGGIE
 I suppose you will....Mr. Johnson.

He smiles as she walks away. He likes this girl. She's not an easy mark. He is still standing by the mailbox. He opens the hatch briefly then closes it.

JAKE
 (to himself)
 Christmas gift. Probably not for
 me.

He smiles, shakes his head and walks in the opposite direction.

THE SAME POSTAL MAILBOX - DAY - LATER THAT SAME DAY

Emily has her own DNA kit in hand ready to mail. She looks at it, gives the box a kiss and puts it in the box.

INT. MEGGIE'S APARTMENT - EVENING

A FEW DAYS LATER

Meggie is sitting on her sofa scrolling on her laptop. We see a MESSAGE from INSTANT DNA.COM. She sees it too and inhales sharply. It's here!

MEGGIE
 Oh my gosh! That was quick.

She clicks on the link and begins reading aloud from her results.

MEGGIE (CONT'D)
 30 percent Italian, hmmm, no wonder
 I can't quit with the pasta...

She continues down the list.

MEGGIE (CONT'D)
 20 percent Irish, 15% Scandinavian,
 15% Western European, 10% Native
 American...what? Really?

She stops and picks up small compact mirror on the table
 beside her, opens it and peers into the mirror, she squints
 her eyes and looks at both sides of her face

MEGGIE (CONT'D)
 Native American....hmmmm, I don't
 see it.

She slams the compact shut.

MEGGIE (CONT'D)
 Of course I don't see it. What was
 I expecting to see? It's still me.

She reads on, quoting from the web page.

MEGGIE (CONT'D)
 You have one thousand two hundred
 seventy distant cousins. Well,
 that certainly narrows it down...

Something catches her attention and her eyes pop.

MEGGIE (CONT'D)
 I have WHAT???

CUT TO:

OVER BLACK

EMILY (O.C.)
 (In unison with MEGGIE)
 WHAT???

INT. EMILY'S HOUSE BEDROOM - EVENING

Emily is frantically looking at her own laptop. Obviously
 having received her results at the same time Meggie has. She
 has seen the same information.

EMILY

Oh this can't be right. David was right. This is some kind of hoax.

She wrinkles her nose and shakes her head.

EMILY (CONT'D)

David? Honey, come here.

David appears at the doorway.

DAVID

Yeah honey, what is it?

EMILY

You were right. I am SO glad we didn't order a test for you. It was a waste of money. This is some kind of mistake or hoax or something.

DAVID

What is it?

EMILY

It's too ridiculous to even tell you.

DAVID

What's too ridiculous?

EMILY

These results say I have a half-sister.

DAVID

A half-sister?

He lets out a little "I told you so" laugh.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Emily, I told you not to get your hopes up of getting any reliable information from those testing sites. They're just in it to make a profit off gullible people.

Emily is crestfallen.

EMILY

I know. But that's really a strange thing to come up with.

She's still scrolling through the site as she talks, but then finds something else.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Hey, there's my cousin, Natalie. I forgot that she told me she did this awhile back. She thought it was really cool.

She stops to think for a beat.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Now how could it be so accurate to match her as my first cousin but come up with some ridiculous claim of a half-sister?

DAVID

So does it give a name of this sister?

EMILY

No. Whoever it was used an online identity. EMP95.

DAVID

Hmmm, EMP95. Maybe ninety five is her birth year...or her IQ, or her waist size.

He laughs at his own humor.

EMILY

It's not really funny, David. I was hoping to get some real information here.

DAVID

I'm sorry you're disappointed honey. What about the health info you wanted.

EMILY

That costs extra. I thought I would get the basics first, then if I thought it was legit, I'd get the rest. This pretty much proves that they don't know what they're talking about.

DAVID

Well, you know, stranger things have happened than people finding out they have a previously unknown sibling out there somewhere.

EMILY

Honey. You know my Mom and Dad. They are the squarest, most conservative people on the planet. Do you really think that's a possibility?

David ponders this for a beat. She's right.

DAVID

(flatly)

No.

INT. MEGGIE'S APARTMENT - EVENING

We are back to Meggie. She is staring at her computer screen, lost in thought.

MEGGIE

A sister? Is that possible? E. Miller...could this be true?

A thought occurs to her.

MEGGIE (CONT'D)

Did you get this message too?

A beat as she considers what to do. She nods her head, she's decided. From Meggie's POV we see her laptop screen. A blank message screen appears and we hear her voice as she begins to type.

MEGGIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

"Dear E. Miller, my name is Meggie..."

She stops then backspaces over the word "Meggie" then continues.

MEGGIE (CONT'D)

Nope, not too much info in the first message.

She begins typing again.

MEGGIE (CONT'D)

"My name is Elizabeth and I just received my DNA results and to my surprise found that it has matched us as sisters..."

INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM EVENING

SAME NIGHT

Emily is still looking at her computer when we see from her POV, the "MESSAGE" screen pop up. She hesitates and then clicks on it. We also hear Meggie as she reads the message.

MEGGIE (V.O.)

"Elizabeth....it has matched us as sisters..."

She mumbles on through a few more lines of Meggie's message as the voice over begins again.

MEGGIE (V.O.)

"I was born in Seattle in 1995."

EMILY

Oh good, then it definitely isn't her waist size.

Continuous

MEGGIE (V.O.)

"I was adopted at birth and never knew my birth family. I'm a little shocked that I may have a sister..."

EMILY

Not as shocked as I was...

MEGGIE (V.O.)

"I wonder if you would message me back and let me know if this is possible..."

Emily looks concerned as she looks up from the message

EMILY
 Adopted? 1995. That was five
 years before I was born. Only a
 year before Trey...

She slams the laptop shut.

EMILY (CONT'D)
 Nope. Impossible.

INT. COUNTY COURTHOUSE - DAY

A COFFEE SHOP INSIDE THE COURTHOUSE.

A glass door to the shop reads "LEGAL GROUNDS". Inside all
 the tables are full - a popular spot for attorneys, clerks
 and the like. Meggie and Sarah are seated at a table.

SARAH
 So, Instant DNA thinks you have a
 sister? That is absolutely amazing!

MEGGIE
 A half-sister. It may just be
 baloney, who knows?

SARAH
 Well, you never know. Did you
 contact her?

MEGGIE
 I sent her a message, but I haven't
 heard anything back.

In the background, Jake strolls through coffee shop door. He
 immediately spots Meggie and heads toward the table. Sarah
 notices him.

SARAH
 Uh oh.

MEGGIE
 What?

SARAH
 (whispering)
 It's "Mr. DNA"

MEGGIE
 He's coming over here?

SARAH
 Yep. Like a bee to honey.

Meggie rolls her eyes.

JAKE (O.C.)
 Ms. Pearson?

Meggie looks up questioningly at him...what does he want?

MEGGIE
 All my friends call me Meggie.

JAKE
 I'm sure all your friends do.

That game again.

MEGGIE
 Very clever, Mr. Johnson.

A beat as he considers the empty chair at their table.

JAKE
 Would you mind if I sit down?

Sarah is a little perturbed, she was just getting all the juicy info.

SARAH
 Well actually...we were in the middle of a private....

MEGGIE
 Ummm...sure. Have a seat.

Jake nods to Sarah.

MEGGIE (CONT'D)
 This is my assistant...and friend, Sarah.

JAKE
 (to Sarah)
 My pleasure.

He smiles that smile at Meggie and takes a seat. Sarah senses the energy between them as the conversation takes off.

JAKE (CONT'D)
 I had two law professors named Pearson. Any relation?

MEGGIE
Then you went to State.

JAKE
Yeah.

MEGGIE
My Mother and Father. They're an institution there.

JAKE
Well, I guess the apple doesn't fall far from the tree. Law must be in the blood.

MEGGIE
Uh, yeah, so to speak.

Sarah rolls her eyes.

JAKE
So I'm sure I would remember you from law school...I take it you didn't go there.

MEGGIE
No. My parents and I agreed it would be a little awkward. Me being a student there that is.

SARAH
Meggie went to Stanford.

JAKE
Impressive.

SARAH
Graduated at the top of her class.

Sarah is as loyal as a puppy. Meggie is a little embarrassed and gives the "eye" to Sarah to lay off.

MEGGIE
So, Mr. Johnson....Jake, if you haven't heard, I have recused myself from the Silverman case. One of the other assistant DAs is taking over. Hopefully the prosecution will give you a little more competition than in our last outing.

It's obvious she's a little sore about the outcome of the trial and he knows it.

JAKE

Listen, I hope there aren't any hard feelings about the outcome of the Ericson thing. It's just what I do. DNA has opened up an entire new dimension in not just the prosecution but the defense of the accused. I found it fascinating from the start, so that's just the direction I decided to pursue.

MEGGIE

I didn't just fall off the truck, I'm very aware of the importance of DNA.

SARAH

Yeah, Meggie just had...

Meggie stops her abruptly.

MEGGIE

...a really busy morning in court and I need to get back to the office. Sarah, shall we?

She rises to leave and Sarah follows suit.

JAKE

Yeah, I'm late for a hearing.

MEGGIE

You seem to be chronically "time challenged". You were late your first day in court.

JAKE

Guilty as charged. The clock has never been my friend.

MEGGIE

Obviously.

Jake brushes off her comment.

JAKE

I'd like to continue our conversation. Maybe lunch one day?

Though she tries to not be affected, Meggie can't help but fall for his charm.

MEGGIE

Maybe lunch one day.

JAKE
Good. I'll call your office.

MEGGIE
That would be fine. Talk with you
then.

Meggie and Sarah are leaving as Jake calls out:

JAKE
Talk with you then...

INT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

OUTSIDE THE COFFEE SHOP. CONTINUOUS

Sarah stops outside the door.

SARAH
What just happened in there?

MEGGIE
Nothing.

SARAH
You agreed to go to lunch with him!

MEGGIE
So?

SARAH
What happened to your policy of
"not dating opposing counsel"?

MEGGIE
I certainly wouldn't if we were
involved in a trial. But we're
not.

SARAH
Is that why you signed off the
Silverman case?

MEGGIE
Of course not!

Sarah knows better. She raises a judgmental eyebrow.

SARAH
You're asking for trouble you know.

MEGGIE
It's just a hypothetical lunch. I
won't even go if he asks.

A beat

MEGGIE (CONT'D)
...probably.

SARAH
You are smitten with him, aren't
you?

MEGGIE
Smitten? What kind of word is
that? It sounds like something
from a romance novel.

SARAH
I saw that smile of his. I'm sure
it gets him wherever he wants to
go.

MEGGIE
Well, the only place he wants to go
is lunch. And if, and I do mean IF
I go, that will be it. Lunch.
Between professionals.

Sarah narrows her eyes at her friend.

SARAH
Right. Two professionals at
lunch... with that smile.

MEGGIE
We need to get back to the office.

SARAH
After you, "Ms. DA"

Meggie gives Sarah the "knock it off" look again and turns to
leave.

INT. EMILY'S PARENTS' HOME - NIGHT

Emily and David are having dinner with her PARENTS. SAM
(late 50s) her father is a pleasant man, and her mother,
BARBARA (late 50s), is fit and energetic - she takes care of
herself.

SAM

So Dr. Dave, what's new in the world of psychology?

DAVID

Not much. The whole world has gone crazy.

SAM

Good for business.

DAVID

Yep.

They are obviously comfortable bantering with each other.

SAM

Emily. What have you decided about joining David at the counseling center?

EMILY

Nothing Dad. My diploma hasn't even cooled off yet. And we just got back from our honeymoon. I'm not in a huge rush.

SAM

Well, it's never too early to start planning. I just think it's a great opportunity that both of you are in the counseling field. I think it would be wonderful if you worked together.

EMILY

I don't know that that's such a great idea, Dad. Studies have shown that the murder rate is much higher among spouses who work together.

Everyone stops chewing for bit.

BARBARA

Well, I couldn't work with your father.

Sam is a little offended.

SAM

Why not? We met while we were working together.

BARBARA
Yes, we did. But we were friends
then.

SAM
Well, we're still friends now.

BARBARA
No we're not. We're married.

A beat as everyone considers this.

David motions his head to Emily. He knows what she wants to ask and he wants her to get on with it. She takes a deep breath.

EMILY
Mom. Dad.

They both look up.

EMILY (CONT'D)
I need to tell you something...

BARBARA
You're going to have a baby!

EMILY
No!

Barbara is deflated.

SAM
What is it, honey?

EMILY
Well, it actually all started with
the thought of having a family.

Barbara immediately brightens again with hope.

EMILY (CONT'D)
In the future, Mother.

Barbara deflates again.

EMILY (CONT'D)
I have been doing some research and
counselors are beginning to
encourage DNA testing as part of
family planning. I thought it was
a really legitimate step, so I
decided to send my own sample in.
Just for research sake of course...

SAM
And what did you find out?

EMILY
Well genetically, I'm 30% Western
European, 20% Italian...

SAM
That's my grandmother, Anna Maria.

EMILY
Yeah, I figured that. Anyway, 30%
Irish....

BARBARA
Oh, that must be from my side.

EMILY
Yeah, maybe...but there's something
else...

A beat. She hasn't gotten to what she really wants to
divulge.

SAM
Is the missing link in our family
line?

He's kidding and makes a silly face.

EMILY
Dad...

SAM
Well, what is it? Some mysterious
family member?

EMILY
Yes...

A beat. Dad's still laughing at his own humor.

EMILY (CONT'D)

They linked me with someone they
think is my... half sister.

There she said it.

Sam looks like a bomb has just dropped. David notices his
reaction but Barbara and Emily are oblivious.

BARBARA

Well that's ridiculous. You don't have a sister. That just proves that those DNA registries are hogwash. That's the silliest thing I've ever heard of. Sam, isn't that the most ridiculous thing....?

For the first time she notices that Sam has stopped eating but is still holding his fork in midair.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

Sam, I said, isn't that ridiculous?

Sam comes out of his shock momentarily.

SAM

What? Oh yes, yes. Ridiculous.

EMILY

Well that's what I told David. I'm just sorry that I wasted the money on it.

David is silent, still watching the reaction Sam has had to this news.

EXT. SMALL OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

A SIGN out front reads "DAVID MILLER, PhD., Psychologist Child and Family Counseling".

INT. DAVID'S OFFICE - DAY

A KNOCK on the door.

DAVID

Yes?

A RECEPTIONIST (20s), pretty, sticks her head in.

RECEPTIONIST

Your father-in-law is here.

DAVID

Oh great. Send him in.

He rises and meets Sam at the door. They shake hands.

DAVID (CONT'D)
Dad, come on in. I'm glad you
could take the time to stop by.

SAM
I got your text. It sounded
mysterious. I don't know if I've
ever been summoned by a "shrink"
before.

He chuckles nervously and looks around.

SAM (CONT'D)
What's up?

DAVID
Sit down, Dad.

They both sit. David behind his desk and Sam in front.

DAVID (CONT'D)
About the conversation we had last
night.

SAM
Conversation?

DAVID
About Emily's DNA results.

Jovial Sam sobers immediately.

SAM
What about it?

DAVID
You obviously know something.
Would you like to tell me about it?

SAM
There's nothing to tell.

DAVID
I have a PhD in Psychology. I'm
trained to notice people's
behavior. I didn't need that PhD
last night.

Sam looks away.

SAM
Was it that obvious?

DAVID
Yes. It was.

A beat.

DAVID (CONT'D)
Dad, does Emily have a half sister?

Sam is dead serious now, eyes downcast. He nods and replies almost in a whisper.

SAM
Yes.

David's eyes widen.

DAVID
What? Does no one else know this?

SAM
No one.

DAVID
Why not?

SAM
Because she was given up for adoption right after she was born. It was a decision between her mother and me. That was a long time ago. Years....long before the advent of this DNA stuff.

DAVID
And you never told Barbara?

SAM
No. I couldn't bring myself to tell her. She was my best friend, she knew I had a girlfriend for awhile but I just told her we broke up. I didn't see the need of divulging the entire story to her. It really didn't concern her.

DAVID
But then you married her?

Sam looks sheepish. He shuffles in his seat, uncomfortable.

SAM
That still had nothing to do with what happened before that...with the baby.

David sighs and shakes his head.

DAVID

You know you're going to have to tell her now don't you? And Emily. And Trey.

Sam lets out a sigh of defeat.

SAM

Yeah. I know. I knew it as soon as it came out of Emily's mouth. What's that saying about chickens coming home to roost?

DAVID

I know this doesn't make your situation any easier, but this new DNA rage is going to blow the roof off a lot of hen houses.

Sam gives a small laugh and nods his agreement.

SAM

Thanks for talking with me, Dave.

DAVID

Any time. You've got a good, solid family. They're going to be okay with this....eventually.

SAM

Yeah....eventually.

INT. THE JOHNSON HOME - EVENING

Barbara is busy happily baking holiday cookies while she hums a Christmas tune to herself. Sam sits at the kitchen table watching her. He knows that he has to tell her.

SAM (CONT'D)

Honey, come over here and sit down.

Barbara continues placing cookies on the cookie sheet.

BARBARA

Sam, can't you see that I'm in the middle of my holiday baking?

SAM
Honey, I really think we need to
talk about something.

Barbara looks up now and sees that he's serious. She places
the cookie sheet in the oven, wipes her hands and comes to
sit down.

BARBARA
What is it, honey?

SAM
I went by to talk with David today.

BARBARA
David? What about?

SAM
Our....conversation at dinner last
night?

BARBARA
What?

She's perplexed for a moment.

BARBARA (CONT'D)
Oh, you mean that silly DNA stuff?

SAM
Yeah. The DNA stuff.

BARBARA
What about it? I thought they
agreed that it was a hoax and that
David wouldn't do it.

SAM
It's not exactly a hoax, Barbara.

BARBARA
What do you mean? What are you
talking about?

SAM
Honey...

Another defeated sigh. This is harder than he imagined.

SAM (CONT'D)
Honey...Emily does have a half-
sister.

Barbara goes pale.

BARBARA

What on earth are you talking about?

SAM

It was a long time ago. Twenty nine years to be exact.

BARBARA

Well we've been married almost that long. Sam, what are you trying to tell me?

SAM

Can you remember when we were working at the agency together, I initially had a girlfriend?

BARBARA

Yes, I remember. Amanda wasn't it?

SAM

Yes, Amanda.

BARBARA

I never met her, but I remember you two broke up. That's how we...

SAM

Yes. But I never told you why we broke up.

BARBARA

And I never asked. We were just friends at the time. I thought if you wanted me to know, you would have told me.

SAM

I didn't know how to tell you, Barbara.

BARBARA

Tell me what?

SAM

That Amanda and I... had a child together.

Barbara goes pale again.

BARBARA

What? Is this some kind of joke?
You mean you've kept that from me
all these years?

Tears start to well in her eyes.

SAM

We put the baby, a little girl, up
for adoption. We realized that we
weren't really in love - we
certainly didn't want to get
married - I guess I would have, but
it was her decision. I went along
with it. We both thought it was
the best thing....for everyone.

BARBARA

And you never wondered what
happened to either of them in all
these years?

SAM

Amanda went home to Chicago. She
finished school. Last I heard, she
had her own dental practice.

BARBARA

And the baby?

SAM

It was a private adoption. I only
knew she went to a loving, stable
home. I didn't know who or where.
They don't tell you things like
that. I guess it's for the best.

BARBARA

Oh Sam....

She starts to tear up again.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

After all these years. I didn't
think we had any secrets between
us. You broke up with your
girlfriend, we started dating and
got married. How could you not
tell me this?

SAM

I should have told you. I know
that now.

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

But as time went on I just didn't think it had any bearing on our relationship. It was just part of my past that I wanted to put behind me and move on.

Barbara suddenly has a thought.

BARBARA

Is that why you married me? On the rebound? You knew I was at a difficult place in my life then too, and maybe you just wanted to make yourself feel better. You didn't love me, you pitied me!

SAM

Oh no, no honey. That's not why at all. You were my best friend, but I realized that is where love should begin. And I did love you, very much. Something I never had with Amanda. I wanted you to be my wife, more than anything.

Suddenly the FIRE ALARM sounds, there's SMOKE coming from the oven.

BARBARA

My cookies!

She's still wiping the tears from her eyes as she leaps up and pulls the charred mess from the oven. She dumps the smoking pan into the sink and then slumps down on the floor dissolving into tears once again.

Sam, still at the table, puts his hand to his head and lets out a sigh.

SAM

(to himself)

I hope those cookies are the only thing that just went up in smoke.

EXT. THE JOHNSON HOME - EVENING

A COUPLE DAYS LATER

Emily's car pulls into the driveway of the gaily decorated Johnson home.

INT. JOHNSON HOME - EVENING

Emily enters through the front door.

EMILY
Mom? Dad?

She takes a deep whiff and smiles.

EMILY (CONT'D)
(to herself)
It smells like Christmas.

Sam is coming down the stairs.

SAM
Honey? Are you alone? Where's
David?

EMILY
Am I not allowed to come see my
parents alone anymore?

She's kidding of course.

EMILY (CONT'D)
He had a late appointment this
evening and said he couldn't make
it.

Barbara enters from the kitchen and gives Emily a hug.

SAM
(to himself)
Coward.

EMILY
What Dad?

SAM
Nothing, honey. Nothing. Sit
down. Your Mom and I want to talk
to you.

EMILY
Trey's not here yet. I thought you
said he was coming too.

SAM

He couldn't make it either. He's preparing for a case tomorrow and he's an hour away. I'll give him a call later this evening.

EMILY

Oh okay, whatever. Well, if it's about Christmas, David and I have it all figured out. We're coming here for the party on Christmas Eve and then the next day we'll go to his....

BARBARA

Honey, it's not about Christmas.

Emily looks perplexed.

EMILY

Well, what then?

BARBARA

Sam?

Sam has the weight of the world on his shoulders. He takes a deep breath and begins.

SAM

Emily, the DNA thing. The half sister...you need to know.

His voice FADES as he begins to retell the story. ANGLE on Emily as her eyes widen at hearing it.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JOHNSON HOME - EVENING - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Emily is still sitting on the sofa looking a little shell-shocked.

EMILY

Well, I have to say, this is a little more than shocking, Dad. And Mom, you seem awfully calm. I mean, really?

BARBARA

I've had a couple days to get used to the idea.

(MORE)

BARBARA (CONT'D)

I wish your father had shared this with me, but, in hindsight, I suppose nothing would have been different. He did what he thought was best for his child. Just like we always did for you and Trey.

EMILY

Oh my god! So she really is my sister.

BARBARA

Yes, I'm afraid so, honey.

SAM

Have you been in touch with her?

EMILY

Yes. Only by email. Her name is Elizabeth.

BARBARA

Elizabeth? What's her last name?

EMILY

I don't know yet. We made an agreement that until we were sure this was the real thing, that we wouldn't exchange personal information. In case one of us was, you know, a stalker or a weirdo or something.

SAM

Well, I guess that makes sense in this day and age. As much of any of this can.

EMILY

I do know she's an attorney in Seattle.

BARBARA

Seattle? Does she know Trey?

EMILY

I don't think so. I told her my brother was an attorney there too. She said there are a lot of lawyers in Seattle and she certainly doesn't know all of them.

BARBARA

Well, that's true I suppose. Odd, she could be in the same courtroom with him and not even know it.

A beat as they all consider this.

EMILY

I doubt it, Mom. Like she said, Seattle is a big place.

Emily suddenly has another thought.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Oh my god, David is going to freak out when he hears this.

SAM

He already knows.

Emily shoots him "the look".

EMILY

What? You told him before you told me about my own sister?

She's incensed.

SAM

No honey. David saw the writing on the wall the night you were both here and we were discussing this. He called me to his office the next day.

EMILY

So he knew you were lying?

BARBARA

Emily! Don't talk to your father like that.

Emily softens.

EMILY

Sorry, Dad. So he knew you were "covering up the truth"?

SAM

Read me like an open book.

EMILY

Yeah...well, I've never been able to pull anything over on him either. Sees right through me every time. He says it's a gift.

Sam smiles at her.

SAM

Maybe this is a gift too. For all of us.

EMILY

Yeah, maybe. Trey and I have a brand new sister for Christmas.

Another thought occurs to Emily.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Trey! Oh my god! He doesn't know yet? He is going to freak out too!

Sam takes another deep breath.

SAM

Yes, he probably will "freak out". But just like the rest of the family he's going to have to get used to the idea.

EMILY

Oh man, I do not envy you having to tell "Mr. Straight and Square" that you had a fling and a child before you married Mom. This is going to be epic.

BARBARA

Emily. Your brother is a grown man. He will be shocked at first...as we all were...

She looks toward Sam who seems to shrink a little.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

But he will come around. Trey is a good man. He will be okay with this. He will.

EMILY

Well, I hope so. For all our sakes.

A beat

EMILY (CONT'D)

Well, I guess I need to get back in contact with Elizabeth and tell her what I found out. I'm sure she'll be happy. She said she's never known anything about her birth family. I can't imagine what that must feel like.

BARBARA

Well, I'm sure she had a wonderful adoptive family.

EMILY

Yes. She said she did. But still...I'm glad I have some news for her.

She stands to leave.

EMILY (CONT'D)

I need to be getting home.

She hugs Barbara and Sam.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Love you both.

SAM

We love you, honey...and I'm sorry. I wish I had told all of you a long time ago.

EMILY

It's okay, Dad. It's really okay.

And she exits. Barbara and Sam are left alone. Now it's Barbara's turn to hug him.

BARBARA

Sam. It really is okay. I love you and I know I will love Elizabeth too. How could I help it? She's your daughter.

SAM

I love you too, honey.

He whispers in her hair.

SAM (CONT'D)

Merry Christmas, Barbara.

BARBARA
Merry Christmas, Sam.

INT. MEGGIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Meggie sits with her laptop. She reads an email silently.
It is from Emily.

EMILY (V.O.)
"Dear Elizabeth, I have recently
found out that it is true, we are
sisters. We have the same
father...."

MEGGIE
Oh my gosh!

EMILY (V.O.)
"...I wonder if you would agree to
meet me and my brother....your half
brother, Trey?"

MEGGIE
I have a brother too?

She places her hand over her mouth and tears up a little.

EMILY (V.O.)
"...I know Christmas is soon, but I
was wondering if maybe we could
have dinner or something.
Honestly, I'm dying to meet you,
I've never had a sister..."

MEGGIE
I'd love to meet you too...you have
no idea...

From Meggie's POV we see her hit "REPLY" and begin typing.

MEGGIE (V.O.)
"This is the best news I have ever
received, and YES! I would love to
have dinner with you. Just say
when and where".

Meggie closes the laptop.

MEGGIE
 (to herself)
 I have a sister and a brother...and
 a Dad. Wow!

INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Emily and David are in bed asleep, suddenly her cell phone RINGS. She awakens abruptly, picks up the phone and sees the time "12:15 a.m." and the caller: "TREY"

EMILY
 (into the phone)
 Trey?

Trey's voice is muffled and we understand most of the conversation from Emily's responses.

TREY (O.C.)
 (on the phone)
 I just got off the phone with Dad!

EMILY
 Trey, it's after midnight.

David stirs in his sleep and she puts her hand over the phone to quiet Trey's tirade.

TREY (O.C.)
 (muffled - but obviously yelling
 into the phone)

EMILY
 (quietly)
 Trey....yes. I know. I was there.
 He told me the whole story...

TREY (O.C.)
 (still muffled)

EMILY
 I don't know why. Yes, Mom says
 she's going to be okay with it...I
 don't know....I don't know that
 either...

A beat as she listens.

EMILY (CONT'D)
 My fault? Are you kidding me?

Her voice rises as she defends herself and David stirs again.

EMILY (CONT'D)
(in a loud whisper)
I was only trying to get some
health information, if it's any of
your business. You of all people
should understand this, "Mr. DNA".

She emphasizes "Mr. DNA".

EMILY (CONT'D)
I read the newspaper, you know. I
know what they're calling you.

TREY (O.C.)
(still muffled - tirade
continues)

EMILY
Look Trey, it's late. You need to
sleep on this. When you've calmed
down and it's not the middle of the
night, we'll talk. Okay?

TREY (O.C.)
(muffled)

EMILY
Good night, Trey.

TREY (O.C.)
(still talking)

She disconnects the call and lays back on her pillow.

EMILY
And Merry Christmas to you too.

INT. MEGGIE'S OFFICE - DAY

Sarah and Meggie are sitting in Meggie's office.

SARAH
You told her your name is
Elizabeth? Why?

MEGGIE

My name IS Elizabeth. I just thought that, you know, in case she turns out to be a crazy person or something, I didn't want her knowing my real name. We agreed that we would keep it superficial.

SARAH

Did you tell her you're an Assistant DA?

MEGGIE

No, only a lawyer.

SARAH

And what about her?

MEGGIE

Just that her name is Emily Miller...

SARAH

Oooohhh...she likes to live dangerously, giving you her entire name and all.

MEGGIE

Very funny. Anyway, she's newly married and lives about an hour away.

A beat

MEGGIE (CONT'D)

AND...I have a half brother! AND he's an attorney too.

SARAH

You do?? That's so cool! See, I told you this was going to be amazing!

MEGGIE

Yes, you told me. You are always right, my friend. I'm actually going to get to meet my real family!

Sarah sobers in thought for a moment.

SARAH

How are your parents, your adoptive parents that is, going to feel about this?

MEGGIE

I don't know. I'm glad they're out of town. I just want to be excited about this right now and I can't stand the thought that this might hurt them somehow. I'll deal with it when they get back after the New Year I guess.

SARAH

I think that's a good idea.

She reaches for Meggie's hand.

SARAH (CONT'D)

I'm so happy for you, Meggie.

MEGGIE

Me too. Me too. What say we get back to work?

SARAH

Yes ma'am.

INT. MEGGIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Meggie sitting on the sofa studying her laptop. Her fingers begin to type as we hear her V. O.

MEGGIE (V.O.)

"Dear Emily"

MEGGIE

(then speaking to herself)
No, too formal.

She resumes typing.

MEGGIE (V.O.)

"Hi, Emily. I received your message and I would love to meet you and Trey at "LeMaison" on the twentieth at seven. I can't tell you how much this means to me.

(MORE)

MEGGIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 See you then. Oh! I'm attaching a
 photo so you'll know who to look
 for"...

CUT TO:

EXT. A COZY CITY CAFE - DAY

Meggie stands at the entrance to the cafe. A Salvation Army "RINGER", a rotund fellow, stands with his red kettle and bell nearby. She looks both ways up and down the street, a little perturbed, and then glances at her watch.

We finally see Jake approaching at a brisk pace. She spots him and rolls her eyes with a sigh as he approaches her.

MEGGIE
 You're late. Again.

JAKE
 Sorry...I...

MEGGIE
 That's really an annoying habit,
 Mr. Johnson.

JAKE
 Are we back to that again?

MEGGIE
 We never left it. Every time I
 have ever laid eyes on you, you
 have been late.

JAKE
 Less than five minutes today.
 That's a record for me. Shows how
 much I was looking forward to this
 lunch.

MEGGIE
 If that is your attempt at charming
 me, you've failed.

Jake ignores her feigned indifference to him.

JAKE
 Why don't we start over. I'll just
 go back a few steps, walk up to you
 again and we'll go from there.

He performs that move and then extends his hand to her.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Ms. Pearson...so good of you to agree to have lunch with me this fine day.

He is ridiculously charming and she has to smile and relent at his effort as he takes her hand.

MONTAGE: SCENES OF SEVERAL SUBSEQUENT LUNCH MEETINGS

Each meeting seems to be a little more casual, a little friendlier, each begin with Meggie looking at her watch before Jake appears. She and the Salvation Army worker chat in what has become a daily meeting. She's no longer as annoyed but has begun to accept it for what it is.

CUT TO:

EXT. - SAME COZY CITY CAFE - DAY

It is Jake's turn to stand in front of the Cafe cooling his heels. The Salvation Army worker looks at him questioningly. He looks up and down the street and then at his watch, the same as Meggie has been doing for days. Finally he spots her as she approaches

JAKE

You're late.

MEGGIE

No, actually I'm just on "Jake Johnson time". I thought if we were going to continue to meet for lunch we needed to mix it up a little. You know, not go for the same boring scenario every day, Meggie standing here waiting for Jake.

The Salvation Army worker overhears and winks at Meggie. Jake smiles and shakes his head.

JAKE

Touche, Ms. Pearson.

He puts his arm around her as they enter the cafe.

INT. CITY CAFE - DAY

Jake and Meggie are finishing their lunch as the waiter brings the check.

JAKE

You know, I think we've about exhausted the menu here. What say we try somewhere new tomorrow?

MEGGIE

Sure. Where do you want to go?

JAKE

Why don't I surprise you?

MEGGIE

Well you can't keep it a surprise for too long or I won't know where to meet you.

JAKE

Why don't I pick you up?

MEGGIE

At my office?

JAKE

At your house, say around seven?

MEGGIE

Are you asking me to dinner, Mr. Johnson?

JAKE

I'm asking you to dinner, Ms. Pearson.

MEGGIE

Around seven?

JAKE

Seven.

MEGGIE

I'll be ready at seven fifteen.

That makes him laugh.

JAKE

Perfect.

MEGGIE

Perfect.

They rise from the table and share a hug before leaving.
This relationship is going somewhere.

EXT. THE CITY SKYLINE - NIGHTFALL

INT. A RESTAURANT OVERLOOKING THE CITY LIGHTS - NIGHT

Jake escorts Meggie through the door of an elegant restaurant. A beautifully decorated tree and candles set the mood. They approach the MAITRE'D, a distinguished looking fellow, who looks over his reservation list and then looks at his watch.

JAKE
We're a few minutes late.

The Maitre'd looks at his watch.

MAITRE'D
You are twenty minutes late, sir.

JAKE
Is that a problem?

The Maitre'd looks to Meggie.

MEGGIE
Is that a problem?

He studies her for a moment and sighs.

MAITRE'D
No, not for you, madam. This way to your table.

Meggie admires the beautiful surroundings as Jake follows her and the Maitre'd to the table.

MEGGIE
Wow, you have expensive taste.

JAKE
Nothing but the best for our first dinner date.

He takes her hand and she smiles. The waiter has poured glasses of wine and Jake raises his glass.

JAKE (CONT'D)
To DNA...let it never get in the way of our relationship again.

MEGGIE

I would think you might want to
make the first toast to timeliness.

She's teasing him.

JAKE

Everybody has their Achilles heel.
Like I said, the clock has never
been my friend.

MEGGIE

And I thought your last minute
arrival in court that day was for
effect.

JAKE

It was. Sometimes it works to my
advantage to be late.

MEGGIE

Well, they do say that timing is
everything.

JAKE

I think my timing is perfect.

He gives her that smile that melts her. She gets his romantic
innuendo.

MEGGIE

To DNA then. What did you say? It
always has the last word?

JAKE

Always.

Their glasses clink as they look in each other's eyes.

MONTAGE: Jake and Meggie laughing, talking, sharing their
dinner, then slow dancing to romantic Christmas music. He
whispers something to her and holds her closer.

EXT. MEGGIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jake walks her to her door.

MEGGIE

I had a wonderful time tonight,
Jake.

JAKE

Me too. I hope you believe me when I tell you that this has been the best night ever.

MEGGIE

Well, that would normally sound like a line, but for some reason it doesn't...coming from you.

JAKE

Maybe because you feel the same way?

MEGGIE

Maybe.

She smiles.

A lingering beat as they consider each other.

MEGGIE (CONT'D)

I should go in now.

Another beat as they consider what comes next.

JAKE

Uh....yeah, sure. It's getting late.

Another slightly awkward beat.

JAKE (CONT'D)

When can I see you again? Soon I hope.

MEGGIE

Soon. I have a meeting tomorrow night, but maybe the day after?

JAKE

I'm tied up tomorrow night too, a family thing, so yeah, the day after.

MEGGIE

Perfect.

JAKE

Perfect.

He leans forward and gives her a somewhat chaste kiss.

MEGGIE
Well, goodnight.

JAKE
Goodnight, Meggie.

She turns, unlocks her door and goes inside leaving Jake standing outside. He turns and walks toward his car.

JAKE (CONT'D)
(to himself)
No rush, Jake. This girl is the one you've been looking for. A goodnight kiss is a great way to start the rest of your life. Like she said, timing is everything.

He gets into the car and drives off into the night

EXT. "LE MAISON" RESTAURANT - NIGHT

QUICK SHOT.

INT. "LE MAISON" - NIGHT

It's nearly Christmas and the restaurant is crowded. It's obviously the "in" place and decked out for the holidays. We see Emily in the midst of the crowd looking around, searching for Meggie(a/k/a Elizabeth). She glances down at Meggie's photo on her phone, just to remind herself who she's looking for. Suddenly she sees her. Meggie notices her at the same time. Meggie approaches and Emily puts her hand over her mouth, holding back tears. The sister have seen each other for the first time.

EMILY
Elizabeth?

MEGGIE
Emily?

EMILY
Oh my God, you look just like Dad.

She reaches to hug her - they separate to study each other and then go into another hug.

EMILY (CONT'D)
 Let me look at you! I have a
 sister! I just can't believe it.

MEGGIE
 Yeah, me either. Do you really
 think I look like my Dad?

This little bit of info threatens to overwhelm her.

EMILY
 The very image.

Meggie is a little teary.

MEGGIE
 I can't believe this is happening.
 This has got to be the best and
 most unusual night I've ever had.

Emily nods as they both beam at each other.

EMILY
 (softly)
 Yeah...me too.

She wipes away another tear.

MEGGIE
 Is Trey coming?

EMILY
 Yes. I finally convinced him.
 He's always late though...for
 everything, but don't worry, he'll
 be here.

MEGGIE
 I understand. I have a friend with
 that very same problem.

We know who she's talking about.

MEGGIE (CONT'D)
 I was really afraid that he wasn't
 going to do this.

EMILY
 Men are weird sometimes. I don't
 think they can deal with their
 feelings as well as we do.

MEGGIE

Well, you have to admit, this was kind of a huge surprise.

EMILY

He'll be fine.

MEGGIE

What about your Mom...and our Dad?

EMILY

That's going to be okay too. Mom was a little shaken by the announcement, to say the least, but when she saw how much it had hurt my Dad to let you go, she came around. It really had nothing to do with their relationship. I'm just sorry that he chose to keep it from us for so long.

MEGGIE

Well, like you said, men deal with their feelings differently than we do.

EMILY

They certainly do.

Suddenly something catches Emily's eye. Through the crowd she spots TREY. She waves to try and get his attention through the throng of people. We can see partial glimpses of him, but never his FACE.

EMILY (CONT'D)

He's here!

MEGGIE

He is?

She's looking too but can't make him out through the throng of people.

EMILY

Trey! Over here!

Trey hears his sister but can't find her yet in the crowd. He finally spots her and waves his acknowledgment.

EMILY (CONT'D)

He sees us. He's coming this way.

Meggie turns back toward Emily. She's obviously anxious.

MEGGIE
Maybe this wasn't a good idea.

EMILY
What?

MEGGIE
I don't know. This is just a lot to take in. A sister AND a brother in one day. I'm just a little overwhelmed.

EMILY
It's fine. We are so happy to have found you. Look, here he is.

She's beaming up toward Trey as Meggie turns around. The immediate look on both Meggie and Trey's face (whom we now recognize as Jake!) could stop a train. Both their eyes fly open in disbelief. They speak almost in unison.

JAKE
Meggie?

MEGGIE
Jake?

JAKE
You're Elizabeth??

MEGGIE
You're Trey??

Emily is thrilled!

EMILY
You two know each other!

They now answer in unison.

MEGGIE/JAKE
Yes.

A beat

MEGGIE/JAKE (CONT'D)
No.

EMILY
What?

Meggie and Jake continue to stare at each other in disbelief. Both now speechless.

EMILY (CONT'D)
What's going on?

Meggie finally finds her voice though she still cannot stop staring at Jake.

MEGGIE
Is this some kind of terrible joke?

EMILY
Joke? Of course not. This is my brother, Trey. Have you two met in court or something? What?

JAKE
Something like that.

Emily looks back and forth between them. She is baffled by this sudden turn of events but she's determined to keep on with the reunion. The maitre'd arrives and motions that he has a table for them.

EMILY
All right, let's just sit down and I want you both to tell me what is going on here.

Emily, then Meggie and then Jake follow the maitre'd through the crowd. Meggie looks back over her shoulder at Jake, still carrying her look of disbelief. They are finally seated at the table.

EMILY (CONT'D)
Now that we are properly seated, regardless of what just happened - Trey, this is our half-sister, Elizabeth. And Elizabeth this your half-brother, Trey.

If she expected family harmony to descend, she was mistaken.

JAKE
(to Meggie)
I thought you had a meeting tonight.

MEGGIE
(right back at him)
I thought you had a "family thing".

JAKE
Why did you tell my sister your name was Elizabeth?

MEGGIE

My name IS Elizabeth. Elizabeth
Margaret Pearson.

JAKE

Right. And all your "friends" call
you Meggie. We obviously don't
know each other well enough for me
to know your REAL name.

Meggie snorts.

MEGGIE

A perfect retort from someone
called "Trey".

Then she turns on Emily.

MEGGIE

(CONT'D)

Why did you tell me his name was
Trey?

EMILY

Because that's what we call him.
Our Dad and Grandad are both Jacob
Samuel Johnson. My Dad goes by Sam
and my brother has always been Trey
to us.

Jake is smug now - back at Meggie.

JAKE

Jacob Samuel Johnson, "the Third".

He puts sarcastic emphasis on "the third".

JAKE (CONT'D)

Glad to make your acquaintance,
"Elizabeth".

Again, the emphasis on her "real" name.

Emily is incensed by the entire scene. This is not the
joyful scenario she had imagined.

EMILY

Stop it! Both of you! I have no
idea what all this is about, but
somebody better start talking.
Right now.

A beat as everyone takes a deep breath.

JAKE

Our "sister" is an Assistant D.A. in Seattle. We...have worked together.

EMILY

So you've had some type of courtroom battle or something?

JAKE

Or something.

Emily is beginning to sense something else now as she looks between them.

EMILY

Something like what?

MEGGIE

Oh, I don't know...Something like a few cozy lunches, a romantic dinner date and dancing last night...

Meggie glares at Jake.

EMILY

You had a date with each other?

She's appalled.

JAKE

I wasn't sure I was going to tell her that at this point.

MEGGIE

(a little hysterically)
Why not? This was slated to be an evening of surprises. So let's just let that cat out of the bag, why don't we?

Emily, who has been observing the back and forth like a tennis match, picks up her glass of wine and downs it in one swallow.

JAKE

How were we supposed to know any of this? Can someone tell me that?
(MORE)

JAKE (CONT'D)

If the two of you hadn't gotten the DNA "bug", none of us would ever have known about any of this and our relationship would have progressed just like every other...every other... normal couple.

MEGGIE

Oh, there's nothing normal about this, "Trey".

She's still using his name as a weapon.

EMILY

This is sick.

Suddenly a horrifying thought crosses her mind

EMILY (CONT'D)

You haven't.....I mean the two of you haven't....

MEGGIE/JAKE

(in unison)

No!

JAKE

Not yet...

MEGGIE shudders at the thought.

EMILY

Oh thank God.

MEGGIE

I really think I should go.

JAKE

Me too.

MEGGIE

Well there's no need for you to leave if I'm leaving.

JAKE

No. I'm going. You and Emily can pick up where you left off when I walked in.

MEGGIE

Oh, right. Just like none of this nightmare just happened.

They are at it again and Emily has had it with the bickering. She is going to piece together the shreds of her tattered evening if it's the last thing she ever does.

EMILY

Both of you SHUT UP! No one is leaving this table. We are all going to sit here and have dinner together like one big, happy, freaking, dysfunctional family. Got it?

A beat as Emily dares either of them to say a word then flags down the waiter.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Waiter, we are all going to need another glass of wine.

The waiter nods politely and turns to leave.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Wait a minute. Just bring us a bottle.

The waiter again nods politely and turns to leave the table. Emily calls after him.

EMILY (CONT'D)

A big one.

WAITER

Of course, madam. Anything you wish.

He looks to the three at the table all glaring at each other. He shrugs and turns again to leave.

As the evening progresses, MIX IN images of the three eating dinner. No conversation. Only the murmur of the crowded restaurant and the clinking of their utensils can be heard. Emily, still not deterred by the train wreck that is this evening, forges on.

EMILY

I don't guess anyone would like to hear any of our family stories.

Silence.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Trey, tell the one about the time
Dad fell out of the boat while you
were fishing.

JAKE

(flatly)
Dad fell out of the boat while we
were fishing.

He takes a very large swallow of wine.

Emily glares at him.

EMILY

Okay fine. I'll tell one.

JAKE

Emily. I just don't think this is
a great night for storytelling,
that's all.

MEGGIE

(sarcastically)
Oh I agree. It would be hard to
beat the whopper that we just
created tonight. The family story
to end all family stories.

They all stare at each other and again all take a huge
swallow of wine, draining their glasses.

FADE OUT

OVER BLACK

SARAH (O.C.)

WHAAAAT??

INT. MEGGIE'S OFFICE - DAY

MEGGIE

SHHHH! Close the door before the
entire office hears.

SARAH

In the name of all that is holy,
Meggie. What are you talking about?

MEGGIE
Just what I said. Jake Johnson
is... my brother.

Sara couldn't be more shocked if her head was on fire.

SARAH
That's impossible...isn't it?

MEGGIE
Oh it is quite possible. And
according to my DNA profile, quite
definite.

SARAH
Did he have his DNA done too?

MEGGIE
He didn't have to. If I match with
his sister, I match with him. They
have the same mother and father and
I have the same father. Half-
siblings.

SARAH
Holy cow! This is as awesome as
the Duke of Romania!

Even though she's upset for her friend, she can't help but be
intrigued.

MEGGIE
This is not awesome, Sarah. This is
tragic. We were just beginning a
very... close relationship. And
now that, no need to say, is
finished, over with and done. Gone.

Sarah suddenly has the same thought that came up previously.

SARAH
Wait! You two didn't....

MEGGIE
No! And thank God for that.

SARAH
Thank God for that.

She makes the sign of the cross.

A beat as she considers her friend.

SARAH (CONT'D)
I'm sorry Meggie. This is just so
unexpected and....and

She can't find the word to finish her thought, but Meggie
does.

MEGGIE
Sick?

SARAH
No!

MEGGIE
Twisted?

SARAH
No! That's not what I meant. It's
just that, what kind of terrible
Karma finds you the perfect man
then turns around and kicks you in
the teeth with the fact that he's
your brother?

Meggie stares at her. Sarah is not helping her mood.

MEGGIE
It has nothing to do with Karma,
Sarah. It's DNA. He's family and
there's no arguing with that. I'll
just get to spend the rest of my
life at holiday dinners, weddings,
funerals, family reunions..watching
him spend his life with whomever he
finds to spend it with. He'll
always be in my life, but I can't
make a life with him.

A beat as she considers this.

FADE TO:

DAYDREAM SEQUENCE

Meggie imagining future family get-togethers. She is dressed
frumpily. An old maid. Jake is there with his stunningly
beautiful WIFE and perfect CHILDREN. She can only look on
with misery.

AND..WE ARE BACK TO THE PRESENT

MEGGIE
 You're right. What kind of teeth-
 kicking Karma is that?

They both shake their heads at the unfairness of it.

A KNOCK at the door interrupts their shared misery.

MEGGIE (CONT'D)
 Yes? It's open.

Jake's head appears in the doorway.

JAKE
 Am I interrupting something?

There's a deafening silence as they stare at each other. Sarah's eyes are as big as saucers. She's looking at Meggie without making eye contact with Jake.

SARAH
 Is he interrupting something?

MEGGIE
 No. We're finished. Come in.

SARAH
 Are you sure?

MEGGIE
 I'll talk with you later, Sarah.

Sarah rises to leave. Jake acknowledges her but then takes a seat at Meggie's desk. Just when we think she's gone, Sarah peeks her head back in.

MEGGIE (CONT'D)
 (to Sarah)

Later.

Sarah disappears and closes the door.

Meggie and Jake sit in uncomfortable silence for a moment, both their heads down, not looking at each other. They both look up.

MEGGIE/JAKE
 (in unison)
 I'm sorry.

They smile painfully at each other, Jake is the first to speak now.

JAKE

Really Meggie, I don't know what to say.

MEGGIE

What's to say? I'm your sister.

A beat as he studies her.

JAKE

You look like Dad.

MEGGIE

Emily said the same thing.

JAKE

You need to meet him.

MEGGIE

Would you be okay with that?

JAKE

Sure. I was going to invite you to meet my family anyway. I just didn't dream that the circumstances would be so different than I had imagined.

MEGGIE

Who could have ever imagined anything like this?

JAKE

A real kick in the teeth, huh?

This causes a small sarcastic laugh from Meggie.

MEGGIE

That term keeps coming up. I can't think of anything that fits this situation better.

JAKE

What are we going to do, Meggie?

MEGGIE

Do? We'll do what the situation warrants. We're going to be a family.

JAKE

Obviously not the kind that I had imagined.

She's intrigued by his admission.

MEGGIE

Were you thinking of me that way?

JAKE

I guess I was. I didn't realize it until last night though.

Another beat as they consider what this means. Meggie is first to break the spell.

MEGGIE

Well, enough of this. It is what it is. We're strong people. We'll move on with our lives...and I'll have a new family. I really can't wait to meet your folks.

JAKE

They're having a Christmas Eve party, mostly family, you could meet everyone. Would you like to come?

MEGGIE

I'd like that. If you're sure it's okay.

JAKE

I think they would love to have you. Mom is really okay with it now that she's had some time to think about it.

MEGGIE

And our Dad?

JAKE

He'll have to love you. He sure can't deny that you're his daughter.

He smiles a sad smile at her.

MEGGIE

Okay then, it's a date.

Oops.

MEGGIE (CONT'D)

Oh, I don't mean a "date" date, just a....I'd love to come to the party.

JAKE

Great. Can I pick you up tomorrow evening?

MEGGIE

No. That would be too awkward, too much like a "date". I'll drive myself.

JAKE

Fine. Seven o'clock?

MEGGIE

Seven o'clock.

They both rise from their seats and Jake turns to leave.

JAKE

See you then.

MEGGIE

See you then.

They pause then reach for each other for an awkward brother/sister type hug.

JAKE

Well, bye then.

MEGGIE

Bye.

He's out the door. Meggie's shoulders slump like she's been pummelled.

MEGGIE (CONT'D)

(to herself)

Teeth-kicking Karma.

EXT. JOHNSON HOME - EVENING - CHRISTMAS EVE

Meggie hesitates as she approaches the front door, holiday music and laughter come from inside. She knocks apprehensively. Emily answers the door. They hug.

EMILY

Come in. We're so thrilled you are here.

Sam, Barbara and Jake stand waiting in the background as Emily leads Meggie toward them.

EMILY (CONT'D)
 Meggie, this is Sam
 Johnson...our...your Dad.

Sam melts when he sees Meggie and they dissolve into a hug along with a few tears. After a few moments the hug ends as they look into each other's face for the first time.

Another beat.

EMILY (CONT'D)
 And this is my Mom, Barbara.

Barbara also comes forward and hugs Meggie. Meggie hands her a small gift and a bottle of wine that she is holding.

BARBARA
 Meggie, we are truly glad to have
 you with us.

MEGGIE
 Thank you so much....I'm sorry, I'm
 a little overwhelmed.

She wipes another tear.

MEGGIE (CONT'D)
 I just can't believe this is
 happening.

Jake steps forward.

JAKE
 Meggie?

The look between them is pure love...and sadness. Observant Dave who doesn't miss a beat, doesn't miss this either. He and Barbara exchange a momentary glance.

MEGGIE
 Hello....Trey...Jake. Merry
 Christmas.

JAKE
 Merry Christmas...

David interrupts the mood.

DAVID
 Meggie, I'm David, Emily's husband.

Meggie pulls her gaze away from Jake.

MEGGIE

Oh yes, nice to meet you, David.

They share a hug.

DAVID

Why don't I introduce you to our family and friends.

MEGGIE

Do they know...

BARBARA

Oh yes. We let everyone in on our surprise earlier.

MEGGIE

Oh good. I'm sure that was quite a revelation.

David takes Meggie by the arm and directs her toward the PARTY-GOERS milling about, who all begin to greet her warmly.

INT. JOHNSON HOME - EVENING - LATER IN THE EVENING

The Christmas Eve Party is in full swing. People laughing, talking, eating. Barbara and Jake are looking on when Jake notices Meggie across the room. She is standing by herself, looking slightly alone but smiling and nodding as people pass.

JAKE

She looks like Dad, doesn't she?

BARBARA

Oh yes, no doubt about that.

JAKE

She's really beautiful.

BARBARA

Yes. She is.

A beat as Barbara notices the look on Jake's face as he looks toward Meggie.

JAKE

Would you excuse me, Mom, I'm going to see if Meggie needs something to drink. I hate to see her standing all alone.

BARBARA
Sure honey, go ahead.

She watches as he walks toward Meggie. She has that "mother knows everything" look on her face, as Emily joins her.

BARBARA (CONT'D)
They knew each other didn't they?
Before all this, I mean.

EMILY
How did you know?

BARBARA
Look at them.

We see Meggie and Jake from their POV, he has brought her a glass of wine and they are deep in an intimate conversation as if no one is around. Talking as if they had known each other for years.

BARBARA (CONT'D)
I have a brother. He doesn't look
at me like that.

EMILY
Okay, okay. You might as well
know, since you already suspect
something. Meggie is the Assistant
DA in Seattle. She and Jake were
courtroom rivals...initially, until
they started....seeing each other.

BARBARA
(stoically)
I see.

EMILY
They were both crushed by this,
Mom. They didn't see it coming.
Who could have? They had no idea.
I think they were beginning to fall
in love when this bomb dropped on
them.

Emily and Barbara continue to watch Meggie and Jake.

EMILY (CONT'D)
They would die if they knew I told
you, Mom.

BARBARA
Why?

EMILY

Why? Are you kidding me? She's his sister, that's why.

Barbara now has a sad, wistful smile, like she's remembering something.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Mom? Are you okay?

Barbara snaps out of it.

BARBARA

Oh yes, yes I'm fine, honey. Go on and mingle with everyone. It's Christmas.

Emily gives her a quizzical look but moves on to talk with the other guests.

A FEW MINUTES LATER

Barbara is speaking quietly with Sam. From their POV we see Jake and Meggie still deep in conversation. Sam nods his head at something Barbara has said. He has a look of concern on his face although we can tell she has convinced him of something.

LATER THAT SAME NIGHT

The party is ending. People are starting to say their good-byes with hugs and a healthy round of "*Merry Christmas*" and "*Happy Holidays*".

Meggie is saying goodbye to Sam, Barbara, Emily and David.

MEGGIE

Barbara, I can't thank you enough for inviting me into your home. You don't know how much this has meant to me.

BARBARA

You're very welcome here any time, Meggie. We are happy to have you as part of our family.

MEGGIE

(to Emily)

And Emily. I've always wanted a sister. Now I have one.

She reaches to hug her.

EMILY

You certainly do. We had to spend the first part of our lives apart, but no more. We are family forever now.

Now Meggie looks to David.

MEGGIE

And a brother-in-law to boot.

She reaches out and hugs him also.

MEGGIE (CONT'D)

I just can't thank you all enough. This has already been the merriest Christmas ever.

JAKE

Can I walk you to your car?

MEGGIE

Thank you. That would be nice.

Meggie says one more round of goodbyes and then she and Jake are out the door. Barbara and Sam look knowingly at each other. Emily dabs a tear in her eye. David takes in the scene of all of them.

DAVID

Would someone like to go ahead and tell me?

EMILY

(feigning innocence)
Tell you what?

DAVID

What the heck is going on here, that's what. I have a sister. I don't look at her like that.

EMILY

Oh my god, you sound like Mom.

Sam interrupts.

SAM

Emily, David, if you have a little time, I think we all need to sit down for a family talk.

Emily looks to David and shrugs. She has no idea what this is about.

EXT. JOHNSON HOME - EVENING - CONTINUOUS

Jake walks Meggie outside. They stop at her car.

MEGGIE
Well...good night. Thanks for
walking me out.

JAKE
Sure.

A beat as he looks at her.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Are you okay getting home? It's
kind of late.

MEGGIE
I'm a big girl. I'll be fine.

She smiles sweetly at him.

JAKE
Are you going to your folks for
Christmas tomorrow?

MEGGIE
No. They're actually spending the
holidays in Greece.

JAKE
You're not going to be alone are
you?

He's concerned.

MEGGIE
Oh no. Sarah has invited me to her
Aunt Millie's house for Christmas
dinner.

She begins to giggle a little.

JAKE
That's funny?

MEGGIE
Well, yeah. Her Aunt Millie is a
little...eccentric. Sarah said
that last year she served turkey
soup and chili dogs for Christmas
dinner.

Now it's Jake's turn to laugh.

JAKE

Well, I can see why you can't turn that down.

MEGGIE

Sarah's a good friend. We'll make the best of it. There are worse things than spending Christmas with your best friend.

Jake saddens a little at that comment.

JAKE

Yeah. There are worse ways to spend Christmas...

A beat as they consider what they wish could be.

MEGGIE

Well....I better get going. Merry Christmas, "Trey".

JAKE

Merry Christmas, "Elizabeth"

Once again they perform the awkward brother/sister hug.

JAKE (CONT'D)

I'll talk with you soon.

Meggie gets in the car.

MEGGIE

Yeah. Talk with you soon.

And she drives away leaving Jake standing looking after her.

INT. JOHNSON HOME - EVENING

A FEW MINUTES LATER

Jake re-enters the house to find the family staring at him.

JAKE

What?

EMILY

Dad wants to have a family meeting.

Jake is definitely not in the mood for this.

JAKE

Dad, not now. It's Christmas Eve, it's late. I think we should all just go home. We can talk tomorrow.

SAM

Your mother and I may lose our nerve by tomorrow. We'll talk tonight.

Emily, Jake and David all look at each other.

What is going on?

SAM (CONT'D)

We all need to sit down.

EMILY

(whispering to David)

No good news ever starts with telling people they need to sit down.

David nods in agreement. They all find a spot and sit. Barbara takes a seat next to Sam and he puts his arm around her.

SAM

As you all know, I've had a pretty hard few days, having to come to terms with something that happened a long time ago. I feel so fortunate that your mother has chosen to understand what I did and why and that all of you have been so welcoming to my daughter.

EMILY

We already love Meggie, Dad. She's a natural fit with our family.

Everyone agrees.

SAM

Trey, son, I'm going to apologize for what I'm going to tell you next. I hope you can see your way clear to forgive your mother and I for keeping this from you for so long.

Jake straightens with concern. This family meeting is about him??

JAKE

Keeping what from me for so long?
We don't have another long lost
sibling that's shown up do we?

SAM

No, son. It's just that your
mother and I are aware of the
relationship you had with Meggie.

A beat as Jake looks at Emily with dagger eyes.

JAKE

Thanks Emily. Why would you tell
them that? I thought I could trust
you to just let this go.

Emily shoots right back at him, her voice rising.

EMILY

I didn't have to tell them, Trey,
Mom already knew.

JAKE

How could she have known?

EMILY

You should see the two of you
together. Like two love sick
puppies. Anyone with eyes at the
party knew.

Jake is taken aback. He doesn't know how to counter that. He
sighs in defeat.

JAKE

It's over. As soon as we found out
- that night at dinner. It was
over. Believe me, it's O.V.E.R.

BARBARA

Trey. Listen to me. You need to
know something.

Her tone is serious as everyone looks toward her.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

I was pregnant when your Dad and I
got married.

JAKE

Mom, I hate to break it to you, but
I already knew that.

(MORE)

JAKE (CONT'D)

You two were only married five months when I was born. I did the math. I've known for a long time. It's no big deal. It never bothered me.

BARBARA

Honey....I'm only telling you this now, because of your feelings for Meggie.

JAKE

What does she have to do with any of this?

BARBARA

Trey, I was pregnant...but it wasn't Sam.

A stunned silence.

JAKE

(incredulous)

What?

BARBARA

Honey, you've heard the story. Your father and I were very good friends. We worked together and liked each other very much, but we were both in other relationships. When I found out I was pregnant I was terrified. Then right after, your biological father and I broke up. He wasn't ready for a baby. We were very young. Too young. I didn't know what I was going to do, but I knew I wanted you.

Sam picks up the story...

SAM

About that same time, my girlfriend and I had just put our baby up for adoption - that was Meggie of course, and we had split too. She went back home and I went back to work - to your Mom. When she confided to me that she was pregnant and destined to be a single mother, I did what I had really wanted to do all along. I asked her to marry me and let me be the father of her child.

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

I guess I was still grieving the loss of my own child but I couldn't think of anything I wanted more than your Mom....and you.

Jake is listening with his head in his hands. When he lifts his head he is calmer than we might expect.

JAKE

And you waited all these years to tell me this?

SAM

It's my fault, son. The right time just never presented itself. We had such a happy family and then Emily came along and made it perfect. She was my daughter and you were my son. That's all I focused on.

JAKE

So why are you telling me now? At nearly midnight on Christmas Eve?

BARBARA

So that you know.

JAKE

Know what?

Barbara and Sam exchange a loving glance.

BARBARA

That Meggie isn't your sister.

A light comes on for Jake.

JAKE

She's not my....

SAM

No. She isn't.

JAKE

Emily...?

He looks to her. She is still in shock too.

EMILY

I'm still your sister...half sister I guess, but still your sister.

A thought crosses her mind as she looks to Barbara and Sam.

EMILY (CONT'D)
 I AM his half-sister, right? I
 mean you're not going to pull
 anymore skeletons out of the closet
 are you?

Jake looks to David.

JAKE
 Dave...

David retains his usual droll style.

DAVID
 I'm still your brother-in-law.

At last a little relieved laughter from the family.

A beat

SAM
 No more skeletons. All the secrets
 are out now.

JAKE
 I'm going to need some time to
 process this. There must be a
 million questions I need to ask,
 but for some reason I can't think
 of even one right now. I guess I
 should be hurt or furious or
 confused or conflicted but for
 right now, all I can think is that
 I'm feeling a little...I don't
 know...jubilant.

A beat

JAKE (CONT'D)
 She's not my sister.

Jake looks to Sam.

JAKE (CONT'D)
 Dad, no matter what, you ARE my
 father. You always have been.

Sam and Barbara are a little teary. Even normally stoic
 David wipes a tear.

INT. JOHNSON HOME - EVENING - A LITTLE LATER

Jake is in his bedroom (which still looks like it did when he was a teenager). He picks up his phone and presses the contact for "Meggie". We hear the phone ring and she picks up.

MEGGIE (O.C.)
(on the phone)
Jake?

JAKE
Meggie.

He loves to hear her voice.

Meggie is driving in her car. It is late Christmas Eve.

MEGGIE
Why are you still up? It's late.

JAKE
How far away are you?

MEGGIE
About half way home. Why?

JAKE
Could I talk you out of the turkey
soup and chili dogs tomorrow?

MEGGIE
What?

JAKE
Meggie, I want you to come back
here for Christmas.

MEGGIE
Jake. I don't think that's a good
idea. I don't want to overstay my
welcome. Tonight was wonderful, I
mean, I met my Dad, that's the best
Christmas present I could ever ask
for.

JAKE
What if I told you I had a better
one?

A beat

MEGGIE

Jake, I don't know what this is about, but this is not a good idea.

JAKE

Meggie. Come back. Mom and Dad are expecting you.

Now Meggie is really confused.

MEGGIE

Expecting me? I....I don't know.

Even as she says it she slows the car and pulls over.

JAKE

Meggie, trust me. I have something to tell you.

MEGGIE

Tell me what?

JAKE

I want to wait until I see you.

A beat

JAKE (CONT'D)

I have an idea. Do you remember the old church you passed in the center of town?

MEGGIE

Yes, I think so.

JAKE

Meet me there.

Meggie now has a very confused look on her face.

MEGGIE

It will be midnight before I get back there.

JAKE

That's perfect. Meet me at the church...at midnight.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

We see Meggie's car turn around and head back in the direction from which she came.

INT. - MEGGIE'S CAR - NIGHT

We can see Meggie is conflicted. She glances at the dashboard clock - *11:30 p.m.*

MEGGIE
 (to herself)
 What am I doing? This is crazy.

But she keeps driving.

EXT. AN OLD CHURCH - NIGHT -AWHILE LATER

We see Meggie's car pull up in front of the church. She gets out. No Jake in sight. Everything is dark, still, quiet. CHRISTMAS LIGHTS adorn the church. She glances at her watch.

MEGGIE (CONT'D)
 (to herself)
 Five minutes til midnight. Where are you Jake? Please...don't be late this time.

JAKE (O.C.)
 Meggie.

She turns to see him walking toward her. We now see them from a distance. He is obviously telling her the news although we cannot hear his words. We see her shocked reaction as she mouths the word "WHAT?" then disbelief on her face. He is obviously assuring her it's true. He takes her in his arms.

CLOSE on them now.

JAKE (CONT'D)
 I told you the best gift was saved for last.

MEGGIE
 I still can't believe it.

JAKE
 For once, DNA didn't have the last word.

MEGGIE
 And for once you were one time.

They both smile at the old joke.

JAKE
Didn't we agree that timing is
everything?

MEGGIE
Yes, I believe we did.

A BELL on the old church begins to TOLL. Jake and Meggie look
up in wonder as SNOWFLAKES begin to fall.

MEGGIE (CONT'D)
(almost a whisper)
It's Christmas.

JAKE
I think the timing was perfect on
this.

MEGGIE
Yes. Perfect.

A beat as they hold on a loving gaze.

JAKE
Merry Christmas, Ms. Pearson.

MEGGIE
Merry Christmas, Mr. Johnson.

He takes her in his arms again and they kiss. A real kiss
this time.

FADE OUT.

THE END