

Merry Broadcast!

an original screenplay by

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Note: sketches are included in their entirety. They can be utilized for what is needed.

Merry Broadcast

INT. DOC'S APARTMENT - EVENING

It's a cluttered railroad loft, somewhere on the lower East Side. DOC DEVITO, one of the 30ish generation of comedy content creators, sits in the bathtub in his kitchen with a lap top, He looks like he's in a trance wearing his Charlie Chaplin t-shirt and beat-up jeans. He looks over to a counter top and sees a couple of birthday cards from his mom that he left out.

His cell phone rings. It's Mom.

DOC
Hey, Mom. Everything okay?

INTERCUT:

INT. DEVITO KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

A small kitchen from the era of avocado appliances.

MOM DEVITO, the Italian Matriarch, with her low beehive and apron, is mixing a batter while she talks on the kitchen wall phone.

MOM
Everything is fine. I just wanted to know if you'll make it this week.

DOC
I'm not sure. I'm really trying to get a handle on this week's show.

MOM
You shouldn't try too hard.

DOC
That's my job, Mom.

MOM
I know, I know. But everything your write is so mean.

DOC
It's not mean.

MOM
Why can't you write something nice, like one of those Christmas shows?

DOC

We want to save the Christmas stuff
until the next show.

Jake, Doc's slick brother passes Mom, and tries to dip his
finger into the batter for a taste. She smacks his hand
away with the wooden spoon.

MOM

Why? My cable station has been
showing Christmas movies since
Halloween.

DOC

Really?

MOM

Well, if you solve your problem, let
me know if you'll come to dinner.

INT. DOC'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

DOC

I will. Love you. Bye.

Doc disconnects and slumps back in tub.

Then he looks out the window to see SOMEONE across the alley
hanging some Christmas lights.

A bulb goes off. He starts typing (montage):

CU on the laptop screen with a series of dissolves of Doc
typing:

"EXT. SMALL TOWN SQUARE"

"That Actress is seated to introduce the show. Lights up on
The Candy Cane Factory..."

"Close the factory!"

"Don't call me Mayor McCheese!"

"Peppermint tulips."

"They kiss."

CUT TO:

INT. DOC'S OFFICE - DAY

CU: on printer. The sketch "Candy Cane Christmas" is coming
out of the printer.

JANET (O.S.)

Welcome to the Benchmark Channel,
home of the Benchmark Hall of Fame
and lots of lesser nonsense. Hi,
I'm that actress you know from that
sitcom that got canceled a few years
back and I'll be your host tonight
for the new Benchmark movie, "A Candy
Cane Christmas," starring that guy
from that thing and the girl in those
commercials. Enjoy!

Doc is there grabbing the pages as they come out. Janet is there, reading the pages as they come off. Doc is dressed for work now, business casual; t-shirt with jacket. JANET is a 30ish, honey-haired, weirdly serene comedy player. Doc tries to pull that page from Janet who takes a moment to release it. He clips the pages to his clipboard. She stares at the papers.

JANET (CONT'D)

This as a brilliant aura. This'll
work.

DOC

Thanks.

The office itself is a semi-sloppy affair; movie posters and souvenirs are all about. There's a bean bag chair and a stack of pillows in a corner.

CUT TO:

INT. 25TH FLOOR HALLWAY - DAY

The writer's area, a collection of offices connected by a hallway to a common area, with the stairwell at the far end.

As they walk and talk, Doc hands the pages to TOM and JACK. Tom always looks like he's under siege but has the air of the de facto leader of the cast of actors. JACK is a hefty guy, looks perpetually nervous and wears glasses.

DOC

Got it!

TOM

Not the zombie sketch.

DOC

No, no. New. You're the lead, Tom.

TOM

But of course.

DOC
And Jack-

JACK
I'm the best friend.

DOC
Absolutely. In a b-plot sort of way.

JACK
(reading)
Oh, no, did you read the news?

TOM
(reading)
What?

JACK
(reading)
Old Man Meyers sold the Candy Cane factory!

Doc suddenly ducks into another office while Tom and Jack continue on, reading pages.

INT. REHEARSAL SPACE - EVENING

Doc oversees as Tom, Jack, SALLIE, JANET, MARK, DONNA, and JAXON, the athletic Hollywood superstar (who is guest hosting) block the skit and run lines. They are in their street clothes. Doc makes notes.

The ever-confident SAL'LIE who dyes her hair gray!

The dark-haired and feisty DONNA.

MARK, the schlubby one.

TOM
Who'd he sell it to?

JACK
Some hedge fund in the city!.

TOM
A hedge fund? What the heck would a hedge fund want with a candy cane company?

JACK
They like the hard "k" sound?

CUT TO:

INT. CUE CARD TABLE - LATER

Doc stands with the CUE CARD GUY, as they transfer the script to cue cards. Sal'lie watches, reciting her lines.

SAL'LIE

I'm Carly Cahn, representing the new soulless owners. We're tearing the factory down, selling the parts off, licensing the name to Macy's, and fraking the lot for natural gas.

DOC

Can you read it a little more brittle?
Really uptight?

She nods.

CUT TO:

INT. BREAK ROOM - AFTERNOON

Cast members are eating sushi and heroes while Doc sidles up to them to give notes.

SAL'LIE (O.S.)

The accounting department says we'll be laying off the employees. You can imagine how that's going to shore up our 4th quarter!

CUT TO:

INT. LOBBY - EVENING

Audience Members are being led into the LAFF-TV studios by a STAFF OF PAGES.

TOM (O.S.)

Well, merry Christmas to us.

SAL'LIE (O.S.)

And a happy New Fiscal Quarter!

TOM (O.S.)

I hate you!

SAL'LIE (O.S.)

I hate you more!

Video B-roll:

The show theme plays. The credits roll, with photos of each cast member and their name appearing.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
 It's time for LAFF-TV! Starring
 Janet Appleton! Tom Baine! Jack
 McCluster! Donna Shamwow! Sal'lie
 Tendersen! And Mark Victors as the
 surprise murderer!

Applause up.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LAFF-TV STUDIO - SATURDAY EVENING

LAFF-TV, the live comedy show, is in progress before a laughing audience, doing the Candy Cane sketch. The stage is set as a small town square. Tom looks like a lumber jack. Sal'lie is the business woman. Jack is overwhelming in flannel and mukluks, while Donna is made up as mousy.

Tom and Sal'lie turn their backs on each other. Jack and Donna share a lingering look.

JACK
 You're very attractive.

DONNA
 You are too. In a B-plot sort of way.

JACK
 Thank you. My agent says it's the best I can hope for.

SAL'LIE
 Assistant, let's get out of here!

CUT TO:

INT. BACKSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Sal'lie exits. Donna lingers behind.

SAL'LIE
 Assistant!

Donna hustles off after Sal'lie to backstage.

Performers and workers are running around getting in and out of costume as the sketch continues.

Doc, is walking around with a clip board and is wearing a headset.

CUT TO:

INT. STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

Audience laughing as the sketch goes on.

JACK
Sal, what do we do?

TOM
We'll go to the mayor!

JACK
Wait, there he is now! Mayor
McCheese, a moment, please!

CUT TO:

INT. CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

We see the different camera feeds of the sketch as LESLIE DAVIDSON, the director, commands her crew, calling off the shots.

We see Mark making his entrance as the Mayor.

MARK
Please don't call me that.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Suave, chill producer MICHAEL REYNOLDS, 60-something but wears it well, watches the show from his lectern, on a monitor with his glass of wine.

The audience is enjoying it all.

JACK
But it's your name and your title.

MARK
Sometimes I think this town elected
me just because of my last name.

Jack and Tom nod.

CUT TO:

INT. STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

Crew member manages boom mic. Costumes are being changed.

JACK
We have to save the candy cane
company!

CUT TO:

INT. BACKSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Actors preparing, including Jaxon getting into a Santa outfit.
Doc is following along, script to cue cards, mouthing the
words along with the actors.

MARK
You know what? I don't think these
new owners filed for any permits to
close the factory!

JACK
Is that a thing?

TOM
Hush, we need a stalling tactic to
keep the girl in town and change her
mind!

CUT TO:

INT. LAFF-TV STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

MARK
It's either this or hoping for a
blizzard that snows us all in.

JACK
Exactly.

TOM
Okay, you bury her in paperwork,
while I try to convince her what a
swell town this is and what an
important asset the Candy cane factory
is!

MARK
How are you going do that?

TOM
I'll think of something.

Tom turns. Jack and Mark start making kissy faces behind
him. He turns back, they stop.

JACK
Yeah, sounds like a plan.

Mark and Jack exit. Sal'lie comes walking through, talking on her cell. She then confronts Tom.

SAL'LIE
What have you done??

TOM
What?

SAL'LIE
We were just told we have to file
all sorts of paper work to rip down
that stupid old factory!

TOM
That was quick. I'm guessing there
was supposed to be a commercial break
there.

SAL'LIE
Now I'm stuck in this God-forsaken
town until my fiancé the lawyer can
sort it all out!

TOM
Fiancé? What's his name?

SAL'LIE
I just call him the lawyer.

TOM
The town's not that bad.

SAL'LIE
I come from the big city, we have
electricity, cable, internet, shows,
opera, pretzels on the streets!
(suddenly)
Is that a flower?

There's a red and white tulip set up.

TOM
What? Oh, that, it sure is. It's
the peppermint tulip. Only blooms
up here this time of year.

SAL'LIE
It's so festive! It makes we want
to break out into a generic, public
domain Christmas song! It's beautiful!

TOM
You're beautiful.

They kiss. Suddenly the factory whistle blows. Everyone rushes out.

SAL'LIE

What's going on?

JACK

A new article came out in the medical journal. It shows that peppermint cures the common cold! We just got flooded with orders for peppermint suppositories!

TOM

That's great! Wait, when did you start reading medical journals?

JACK

I have unfulfilled dreams, too, you know.

SAL'LIE

Well, I guess I'd be crazy to close the factory now. But still be crazy enough to jack up the price on peppermint five hundred percent!

She turns to Donna who is making out big time with Jack.

SAL'LIE (CONT'D)

Assistant, make a note of that!
Assistant? Assistant!

TOM

So, you'll stay?

SAL'LIE

I will!

TOM

And your fiancé?

SAL'LIE

I'll text him. He's a lawyer, I'll just take him off retainer!

They hug and kiss. Everyone says "Aaaaw."

SANTA walks through, waving. It's Hollywood star Jaxon Ferguson.

JAXON

Ho-ho-ho! Buy greeting cards,
everybody!

CAST
Merry Christmas!

A jazzy version of "Oh Christmas Tree" starts playing. Jaxon takes off his beard and addresses the TV camera and studio audience.

JAXON

Well, that's our show! I had a blast hosting this week with this amazing cast! Thanks to the cast, the crew, the writers, and you guys for watching! Good night, everyone! And merry Christmas where applicable!

INT. CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Leslie is watching the close, calling off shots as the credits roll. A phone RINGS. An ASSISTANT grabs it. She listens. She shakes her head and hands it to Leslie. She listens a moment and face-palms.

INT. BACK STAGE CORRIDOR - LATER

It's the functional, warehouse-type walkway connecting prop rooms, dressing rooms and the studio exit. Photos of past hosts line the wall. There's a long glass case holding years worth of Emmys and other awards.

Cast and crew are headed out, we hear them saying "See you at the party," "I'll catch up," "Great show."

Doc brings up the rear, then stops at the end of the glass case. There are the most recent awards there, and some empty space for future honors.

Doc is staring at the empty space.

Tom comes up.

TOM

Ready, Doc?

DOC

What? Oh, yes. Of course. Always ready. Good show.

TOM

Yeah. Don't worry, you'll get yours.

DOC

Will I? Every head writer had an award by their second year. I'm now mid-way through my third.

TOM
Well, maybe tonight's...

DOC
Thanks for the pep talk, Tom, but tonight was not an award-friendly show.

TOM
There's always next week. Or the week after that, or the week after that...

TOM & DOC
And so on and so forth...

Tom directs Doc down the hall to the exit.

INT. AFTER-HOURS BAR - NIGHT

Cast members, the staff, Guest Star Jaxon, along with others, are enjoying the post-show party, that's just loud enough to let them blow off steam. Jaxon is seated at a table with Michael, who is listening, but multi-tasking with the crowd.

Michael sees what he's looking for and with a small gesture, beckons Doc.

Doc is speaking with a couple of the nerdy writers when he sees Michael and excuses himself. Doc makes his way over, greeting and re-greeting the revelers. Once at the table, he leans in.

JAXON
It was a blast, Michael, a blast--
(sees Doc)
Oh, there he is! This was a blast.
You guys really came through for me.

DOC
We love when you dramatic actors come on and cut loose.

JAXON
I really think my fans got a charge out of it.

DOC
Absolutely!
(beat)
Just don't check Twitter.

Jaxon laughs and gives Doc a playful shoulder punch. Doc laughs then winces.

JAXON

Well, I have to push off. Headed to Canada to for a new movie!

MICHAEL

Oh, what are you doing?

JAXON

Action cop thing that's supposed to take place in New York.

DOC

Oh, we hate when they cast a stunt double for New York City. Well, safe travels!

Jaxon heads off feigning another punch at Doc who flinches. Doc and Michael wave him off.

Doc keeps attempting to address Michael with a familiar "Mike" then backs off continuously.

DOC (CONT'D)

Trouble, Mike...kel?

MICHAEL

Steve Blemish dropped out as host next week.

DOC

Why?

MICHAEL

We're not sure if it's the drug allegations or the "Me Too" allegations.

DOC

Do we cancel?

MICHAEL

It's the Christmas show. Always our highest rated show. The network has been kind enough to remind me how are ratings are slipping.

Doc grimaces.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

So, no, we don't cancel.

DOC

Fine. We're flexible. What's the plan?

MICHAEL
The musical guest.

DOC
Holly Rose? The queen of country?
What about her?

MICHAEL
She's been on the show before.

DOC
But not for a while.

MICHAEL
She knows us. And she's done comedy.
We bump her to host and musical guest.

DOC
What? She's done a couple of bits
on that Country Jamboree show on
cable.

MICHAEL
Give her a call in the morning and
see if she's open to the idea. My
gut is comfortable with this. I
think yours should be as well.

DOC
Sure, su gut es mi gut. *

Michael wanders off to mingle. Doc looks perplexed. Suddenly
Tom, Jack and Donna appear, carrying drinks and food plates.

DONNA
Hey Doc, why the mood, dude?

JACK
Is it because Blemish is out?

DOC
What? How did you--?

TOM
(holding up phone)
You think I'm on Instagram for my
health?

DONNA
It's all over the 'net. That's what
us cool kids call the interweb.

DOC
Yup, he's out.

JACK
Bummer. So, can I host?

DOC
No, Jack.

JACK
Nothing ventured, nothing gained I
always say.

DOC
Well, rest up. The Christmas show
must go on.

TOM
And that will require--?

DOC
Holly Rose will be hosting.

JACK
Really? Then can I be musical guest?

DOC
Keeping the streak going; no.

JACK
Just as well.

TOM
Yeah, Jack isn't very musical.

DONNA
He can't even wind up a music box
correctly.

TOM
I saw him misuse a bike bell.

JACK
Hey, Tom, that bell had it coming.

TOM
So, Doc, I hope you can write
"wholesome."

DOC
This is a ridiculous situation. She
doesn't fit our mold. She's going
to throw cold water on everything!

DONNA
It's a never ending battle.

TOM

What are you talking about?

JACK

She's an urban legend.

DONNA

What? Like alligators in the sewers?

TOM

Rural Legend.

DONNA

Oh, like Bigfoot.

DOC

Rural legends are not a thing.

Jack is focused on his food now.

TOM

Holly Rose is a country music superstar. She's done it all. And she'd be perfect for a Christmas show; her name is Holly, for Pete's sake!

DOC

Is she edgy? Is she snarky? No. Those are our best qualities. I didn't graduate Harvard to write jokes that start "Knock-knock."

JACK

(interrupted from his food)

Who's there?

Donna pats him to go back to what he's doing.

TOM

It is the Christmas show. A little less snark would work.

DONNA

This has embarrassment written all over it. It'll be a train wreck.

JACK

People watch train wrecks.

EXT. HOLLY'S HOME GROUNDS - MORNING

Sunday morning and we're on the estate of country super star Holly Rose.

It's a large southern affair with a massive vegetable garden and fruit trees, bare for the winter.

HOLLY ROSE, a big-haired bubbly blonde, is working in the garden. She's off duty now, in overalls and flannel. She's pulling some beets out of the ground and gathering them up in a basket.

Her cell phone rings. She doesn't recognize the number, but answers.

HOLLY
You best not be spam!

INTERCUT:

INT. DOC'S OFFICE - MORNING

Doc is on the office phone.

DOC
What? No, I'm not spam.

HOLLY
Prove it.

DOC
How can I...I'm calling from Laff-TV.

HOLLY
Oh, yes! I'm getting everything together for our big set! I hope you like beets!

DOC
That's great. Beets? I don't care for them.

HOLLY
More for me, then.

DOC
Look, Ms. Rose, there's something we need to ask.

HOLLY
Oh, honey, I don't do requests. Our play list is locked.

DOC
No, no--

HOLLY
Who is this?

DOC
Doc DeVito.

HOLLY
Well, what's up, Doc?

DOC
Ms. Rose--

HOLLY
Call me Holly.

DOC
We were wondering if you would like
to host the show in addition to being
musical guest?

HOLLY
Shut the barn door! Are you funning
me?

DOC
I realize this is short notice, so
if you can't--

HOLLY
Oh, no way I'm passing up this
opportunity! I saw William Garth
host and I can do that and more!

DOC
Truth be told, you'd really be saving
our bacon if you do it.

HOLLY
Just send us the details and when
you need me there, I'm there, darlin'.

DOC
Well, you need to be there, I mean
here, tomorrow.

HOLLY
What am I doing talking to you? I
need to get booking a flight! I'll
see you there!

She disconnects, then looks at her beet.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
Well, can you beet that? I'm sure
you can.
(glances around)
See? I can do comedy!

INT. DOC'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Donna pokes her head in. Doc is sitting there holding the phone in his hand.

DONNA
I thought I heard your voice. It's Sunday, what are you doing here?

DOC
I just confirmed Holly as host.

DONNA
Don't look so thrilled.

DOC
Trust me, I'm not. Wait a second; Donna, what are you doing here?

DONNA
Taking office supplies. Nobody's here on Sundays.

DOC
Good to know.

She ducks out, carrying some reams of paper.

Doc's cell phone signals a text coming in. He looks at it.

DOC (CONT'D)
Geez, Mom.

He texts back.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

A giant tour bus is on the road headed to New York City. The sign on the side reads: Brick Noble: Grabbing my Guitar Tour. Bus sign in front reads "New York City."

INT. TOUR BUS - CONTINUOUS

Rugged looking Country star BRICK NOBLE is lounging in his seat, scrolling on his cell phone. Suddenly an entertainment notice pops up. It announces Holly Rose is hosting LAFF-TV.

Brick looks at it and grins a bit. A ROADIE is seated across from him.

BRICK
Hey, Arnie.

ROADIE

Yeah, Brick?

BRICK

How are the tickets selling in New York?

ROADIE

A little slow, Brick, to be honest.

BRICK

I think I got a way to sell out.

DISSOLVE TO:

SFX: AN ADVENT-TYPE CALENDAR FOR THE SHOW'S PRODUCTION WEEK, WITH THE MONDAY SPACE OPENED.

EXT. ABS NETWORK STUDIO BUILDING - MONDAY MORNING

The big city at Christmas time, with all the hustle and bustle. Laff-TV broadcasts out of the art Deco skyscraper which is the home of the ABS network.

We see Doc make his way into the building, with his backpack, ready to tackle a new week, smoothie in hand.

INT. ABS BUILDING LOBBY - LATER

It's the front desk (wo)manned by the determined and feisty ANN PAGE, one of the many pages that work for the network. She's seems mousy, in her page jacket, but she observes everything. Things seem quiet as she scans her monitors while writing in a notebook.

Doc walks buy.

ANN

Good morning, Mr. DeVito!

Doc absentmindedly and vaguely waves in her general direction while sipping a smoothie.

Ann shrugs and goes back to making notes.

Suddenly, Holly Rose bursts in, now a ball of Deep Fried energy, with a personality as big as her hair, bright and brassy. She carries some shopping bags.

HOLLY

Howdy New York City! Holly is back!
Hold onto your lattes!

ANN

Oh my! Ms. Rose! It's true, you're here!

HOLLY

I am, darlin'! I can't believe it! I got the call yesterday and they asked me if I wanted to host. How do you say no to that? Christmas in New York! Granted, it's not Christmas in Peak's Hallow but it's pretty darn close!

Ann pulls out a badge.

ANN

Well, here's your badge.

HOLLY

Still up on 24?

ANN

Studio 24 is there. But as host, you start on Floor 25, where the writers and Mr. Reynolds are. It's pitching day.

HOLLY

Oh, pitching day. And what, pray tell, is pitchin' day, dove?

ANN

The whole staff gets together and pitches ideas for the show.

HOLLY

And I get to be there?

ANN

They're all here to tailor the show to you.

HOLLY

And how are you so knowledgeable about the workings of this show...
(looks at name tag)

Ann?

ANN

Oh, I've been reading about it for years. I want to write for the show.
(holds up notebook)
I'm a writer. That's why I took the page job, to get my foot in the door.

HOLLY
Is it working?

ANN
I'm still a lobby page. And the doors here are surprisingly foot-free.

HOLLY
Never give up, dear. I'm proof of that!

ANN
I won't! Thank you!

Holly takes the pass and heads for the elevator. She steps in, turns and pauses to look back at Ann, who is now scribbling furiously in her notebook. As the doors close, she sticks out her foot to hold them open.

INT. MICHAEL REYNOLDS' OFFICE

A fairly spacious office, furnished impressively, all oak and dark stains. Out the window is a spectacular view of the city.

Michael sits at his over-sized desk, as the various writers and cast members squeeze in around the office on chairs, couches and stools. They all have pads and iPads. There's an empty seat beside Michael.

Doc is seated beside Tom and Donna on a couch.

DOC
So, should we start, Mike...kel?

MICHAEL
We normally wait for the host.

DOC
The host is normally punctual. Is she operating on backwoods time?

TOM
We've had later. Ned Wilson didn't show up 'til show day.

DOC
Then he got charged for murder. So, how'd that work out for him?

SAL'LIE
Twelve years later!

Door flies open, hitting Mark who sits behind it. Holly enters.

HOLLY
So, sorry, kind people. I had a wig-
mishap but to make it up, I bear
gifts!

ANN (O.S.)
And bear claws!

Ann now enters, pushing a cart filled with pastry, donuts, bagels and a box of coffee. She sees Jack and Jack sees her. There's a connection going on here.

HOLLY
I got y'all doughnuts, the soft kind
and the hard kind!

DOC
The hard kind are called bagels.

HOLLY
Aren't you the helpful one? Everyone
dig in and let's get his holiday
hullabaloo started!

DONNA
(to Tom)
So blatant, trying to bribe us with
food.

TOM
(munching)
It's good food.

DONNA
(turning to Jack)
Can you believe this?

Jack looks up. He already has two donuts and a large coffee.

HOLLY
I can't wait to hear these skits.

DOC
We call them sketches.

HOLLY
Then sketch away!

Holly is walking around with the tray of donuts. She presents to Doc.

DOC
I had an energy bar earlier, thank
you.

Is Holly up to this challenge?

Doc turns to Donna.

DOC (CONT'D)
Can you believe this?

DONNA
(with a mouthful of
bagel)
No, I can't believe this at all.

DISSOLVE:

INT. MICHAEL REYNOLDS' OFFICE — LATER

Coffee cups and napkins and half-eaten food are evident.
And sheets of paper, so many crumbled-up sheets of paper.

SAL'LIE
Remember that sketch where I was the
kid interrupting mom during summer
vacation?

DONNA
Summer Crisis sketch. The mom was
trying to get her kids to get to
sleep.

SAL'LIE
The way they kids were stalling.

DOC
What about it?

SAL'LIE
What if we set it for Christmas Eve?

JANET
Yeah, I can totally see that. This
could even be a stronger premise.

DONNA
What do you think, Doc?

DOC
I'll consider it.

MICHAEL

Ok, ok, write up a draft but Phillips left the cast, we'll have to recast the other kid.

Mark and Jack raise their hands.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Work it out. But remember, we have Holly Rose, right?

HOLLY

I'm ready to jump into whatever you need me to. This is your sandbox, y'all.

DOC

(aside to Donna)
About to become a litter box.

MICHAEL

You were saying, Doc?

DOC

So, I'm going to pitch my Zombie Apocalypse Christmas Special.

SAL'LIE

Again?

He pulls some old papers off his clipboard. Groans from the others.

DOC

Do not groan.

TOM

It's the lattes talking.

HOLLY

That seems a mite dark for Christmas, no?

DOC

We're not The Happy Sunshine Show here.

MICHAEL

And moving on...Janet?

JANET

(checking notes)
Speaking of dark sides, Christmas has a dark side.

DOC

Wait, did you just segue me?

MICHAEL

Moving along.

JANET

I want to do an interview with the head of the CDC to talk about the holiday maladies.

MICHAEL

Go on.

JANET

Beyond the holiday blues, we have to talk about things like Claus-ophobia: the fear of Santa. Or the Holly-Jollies: like the heebie-jeebies.

Holly is laughing.

HOLLY

Or tinsel-istis!

JANET

This lady gets it!

DOC

Does she?

HOLLY

Can the doctor be a nervous type? I do a good nervous type.

JANET

No reason not to.

MICHAEL

All right, I like that Holly is already vested in it. Write that up, but consider it as a News Desk bit. Maybe do it old school with cards showing each disease name.

JANET

On it, boss!

HOLLY

I love this sandbox!

MARK

Is there any way I can turn my "Three Opera Tenors Sing Christmas Carols"

(MORE)

MARK (CONT'D)
 into "Three Grand Old Opry Singers
 Sing Christmas Carols?"

ALL
 No.

MARK
 Man.

MICHAEL
 And on that note, let's end it here.
 Get out there and pound away on those
 keyboards people!

INT. 25TH FLOOR HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Outside Michael's Office, everyone pours out. Pads are open, notes scribbled. Holly is thanking each person as they come out the door. Ann stands beside her holding the donut box. Jack walks out with 2 donuts on a pencil. Ann adds one to Jack's pencil. He smiles.

Michael steps out. He sees Ann and pauses.

MICHAEL
 You work here?

ANN
 I do.

MICHAEL
 (considering)
 Keep up the good work.

Michael continues on. Doc comes out.

DOC
 Ms. Rose.

HOLLY
 Call me Holly.

They walk through to the writer's area.

DOC
 Fine, Holly, you don't have to suck
 up to everyone on staff. They're
 all here to make you look good no
 matter what. It's their jobs.
 Technically, if you need to suck up
 to anyone, it should be me.

HOLLY
I'm not sucking up! I'm being
appreciative, Mister...oh, my, I
missed your name.

DOC
Doc Devito.

HOLLY
Oh, the phone spam guy!

DOC
I'm not spam!

HOLLY
Look, I know I wasn't your first
choice and I dearly love this program
and I just want everyone to know I'm
a team player. With snacks.

DOC
Unfortunately, we're not so much a
team as a herd of cats.

HOLLY
Then I'm just the catnip you need!

She beeps his nose.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
Boop!

Ann walks her down to her dressing room.

DOC
O-M-G, she's a nose booper.

Shaking his head, he goes into his office. There's a beat.

DOC (O.S.) (CONT'D)
What are all these beets doing in my
office?

INT. HOLLY'S DRESSING ROOM - LATER

Holly and Ann are organizing her stuff.

ANN
So, after the pitching, tonight they
write up the ideas into sketches.
Then tomorrow, there's the table
read. We're all seated--I can't
believe I'll be there--we sit around
and read through all the scripts.

(MORE)

ANN (CONT'D)

Then Michael Reynolds and Doc and the other writers decide which ones go into rehearsal for the show. After the full rehearsal, Mr. Reynolds picks the final group of sketches that will be done on the live show Saturday night.

HOLLY

They do all that in a week? I'm exhausted just listening to that.

ANN

Plus, you'll have to rehearse your songs.

HOLLY

So, Ann...

ANN

Yes?

HOLLY

The head writer...?

ANN

Oh, Doc Devito. He's Doctor Comedy here. Harvard grad. Editor of the Lampoon--

HOLLY

Oh, a Harvard man. La-de-dah.

ANN

He started writing with a comedy troupe off-off Broadway.

HOLLY

How off?

ANN

Jersey. Then he produced content for social media and he got a job here. Worked his way up the ranks to head writer. He's a legend.

HOLLY

Well, you've certainly been keeping tabs on him.

ANN

Absolutely. If I want to work here, I have to know the territory.

HOLLY
He seems a bit...

ANN
Aloof?

HOLLY
No.

ANN
Preoccupied?

HOLLY
That's not it.

ANN
Snarky?

HOLLY
No...he seems kinda humorless for a
comedy writer.

ANN
Really? I would have went with
snarky.

INT. WRITERS COMMON SPACE - NIGHT

It's the shared space of the floor to a hallway of doors.
It's dark but people dart in and out of each other's offices.
There's the clackety-clack of computer keyboards heard all
about. There's an ancient couch parked in the middle of the
space.

Donna steps out of an office, sniffing the air.

DONNA
Is the food here?

The double doors open and it's Holly ahead of a couple of
chefs with rolling meal stations. They set up in the large
foyer.

Jack stumbles out of an office.

JACK
I thought we ordered Thai?

Mark pokes a head out.

MARK
I smell roast beef. I love roast
beef au jus!

HOLLY
Supper time, people. Come and get
it.

As people shuffle out of their offices, Doc pokes his head
out.

DOC
What is going on?

He sees the troops lined up, as Ann hands out plates.

DONNA
I thought we ordered Thai?

Doc and Donna approach Holly.

DOC
Holly, what is going on here?

HOLLY
Well, a little birdie told me y'all
pull an all-nighter to get the show
written, so I just thought you might
want some vittles.

DONNA
Vittles? Did you say vittles?

HOLLY
I was going to say "chow" but I
thought you all might be expecting
me to say vittles.

Mark at the food station, upset with the meat. Doc looks
on.

MARK
No au jus??? Oh, man.

Doc sighs. He turns back to Holly.

DOC
You don't have to do this.

HOLLY
I don't have to. I want to. It's
my way.

DONNA
We do things a certain way here.

HOLLY
I know, honey.
(MORE)

HOLLY (CONT'D)

You all have been doing this show
day in and day out for 40 years,
maybe. Not each of you personally.

OLD WRITER walks by with a full plate.

OLD WRITER

Speak for yourself, Minnie Pearl.

HOLLY

But a little change-up is good. A
little break from the routine can
shake off the cobwebs and re-energize
everyone.

DOC

Our methods have developed for a
reason.

HOLLY

Methods? Remember, I'm no stranger
to being creative, sometimes you
have to shake-up to wake-up.

She pulls out a pad and writes that down.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

I can use that. I can't force a
song out of me. I have to let the
muse inspire me.

DONNA

We don't have the luxury of
inspiration.

DOC

Holly, we can't wait for the muse to
find us. The show goes on every
Saturday night not because we're
ready but because it's Saturday night.

HOLLY

I understand. But being locked away
week after week up in this comedy
vault can't be very inspiring.

DOC

That's why we get the big bucks.

DONNA

What big bucks?

DOC
(waving her off)
We have to do it this way or it
doesn't get done. You have to trust
the process.

People pass by with food.

TOM
Great spread, Ms. Rose.

MARK
Thanks so much.

SAL'LIE
I may write something really funny
now.

DOC
Stop undermining me, people!

JANET
Oh, and by the way, Ms. Rose, your
aura is amazing!

Jack and Anne are by one of the chafing dishes.

JACK
So, how long have you been working
for Holly?

ANN
Me? Almost 12 hours now.

JACK
Have we met?

ANN
I'm the receptionist at the main
entrance.

JACK
Wait, the one I barely acknowledge?

ANN
That's me!

JACK
Huh. I'm Jack.

ANN
I'm Ann Page.

JACK
You're a page.

ANN

Yes.

JACK

So, you're page Ann Page.

ANN

Yes.

JACK

You must get a lot of comments about that.

ANN

Why?

JACK

(beat)

No reason.

ANN

It's really exciting to be out of the lobby.

JACK

Upon reflection, I should have been paying more attention to the front desk.

She lifts up a serving fork full of beef.

ANN

Brisket?

SFX: ADVENT-TYPE CALENDAR FOR THE SHOW'S PRODUCTION WEEK, WITH THE TUESDAY SPACE OPEN.

EXT. CRITERION CARD COMPANY HEADQUARTERS - TUESDAY MORNING

A neatly kept but imposing brick structure situated in the flatland of the midwest.

INT. EXECUTIVE WAITING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Two NERVOUS EXECUTIVES are pacing in the simply furnished outer office. The SECRETARY looks on, concerned.

NERVOUS EXECUTIVE 1

Do you think he saw it?

NERVOUS EXECUTIVE 2

It's virtual. I have to think he saw it.

NERVOUS EXECUTIVE 1
It's not like he's that tech savvy.

NERVOUS EXECUTIVE 2
Neither are you and you saw it.

NERVOUS EXECUTIVE 1
Touché.

Secretary's intercom buzzes. She picks up the phone, then turns to the Executives.

SECRETARY
You may go in now. He's been waiting.

They approach the doors to the inner sanctum. Once they go in, the Secretary opens her PC to the Candy Cane skit playing on the internet. She chuckles at it.

INT. CRITERION'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

It's a massive, imposing office, but with a modern flair. The artworks hanging are all from greeting cards. MR. CRITERION sits at his desk, an older gentleman, who keeps a stern exterior, but has a glint in his eye. He is looking at his laptop.

NERVOUS EXECUTIVE 1
You called for us, Mr. Criterion?

He turns the laptop around and it's playing the Candy Cane sketch from LAFF-TV.

NERVOUS EXECUTIVE 2
Oh. You saw it.

CRITERION
Of course I saw it. Three dozen people forwarded it to me. I've been hashtagged. I've been informed that we are "trending."

NERVOUS EXECUTIVE 1
Well, I've got a call into our lawyers, sir. We should be able to get a cease and desist order out and get it scrubbed from the internet.

CRITERION
Oh, no, no, no. I'm not going to be the bad guy here. Besides, it's funny.

NERVOUS EXECUTIVE 2
True, but it mocks us pretty well.

CRITERION

Maybe. But it's right on the nose,
isn't it?

NERVOUS EXECUTIVE 2

Well--

NERVOUS EXECUTIVE 1

Yeah, it is.

CRITERION

They skewered our movie template
pretty well.

NERVOUS EXECUTIVE 2

They did, they did.

CRITERION

Which means they've been watching,
right?

NERVOUS EXECUTIVE 1

I suppose so...

CRITERION

Maybe we should take heed. Maybe
it's time to put a twist on our
template.

NERVOUS EXECUTIVE 2

What do you mean, sir?

CRITERION

Get the people responsible for this
and hire them. Heck, buy the rights
to this Candy Cane thing and produce
it as a real holiday movie.

NERVOUS EXECUTIVE 2

Say what?

NERVOUS EXECUTIVE 1

Are you serious, sir?

CRITERION

Show them we can take a joke. We
make funny cards, right? We can put
a little more com into our rom-coms.

NERVOUS EXECUTIVE 2

That's brilliant, sir.

CRITERION

Oh, calm down. Call the production
team and get them on it.

NERVOUS EXECUTIVE 1

Yes, sir.

NERVOUS EXECUTIVE 2

Right away, sir.

INT. STUDIO - DAY

The cast, writers and crew are seated around a big table. There are piles of short scripts at each place.

Michael is seated at the head. Holly is next to him and Doc is next to her. She's munching on some trail mix and offers Doc some. He politely declines. He pulls out his phone to read something. He texts something back.

MICHAEL

Ready?

DOC

Just one minute...and done.

Everyone pulls out copies of the next script, Michael is reading stage directions.

MICHAEL

Donner Christmas Special. A big band plays the theme song. Set is a rustic cabin. Off-stage Announcer says--

DONNA

(announcer voice)

Merry Christmas, everyone! Welcome to the Donner Christmas Party! And here's your host, George Donner!

MICHAEL

A famished George enters.

TOM

High, everyone, nice to eat ya! I mean meet ya! Boy, Christmas in the Sierra Nevada is a special one. Look at all that snow! Talk about your white Christmases! But it's no picnic. Well, more like a barbecue. But it is the most wonderful time of year, until the spring thaw, that is.

MICHAEL

Tamsen, looking worse for wear, enters.

HOLLY

Oh, George!

TOM

Oh, look, it's the little woman,
Tamsen. Hmm, something smells good,
dear.

HOLLY

Just getting the holiday dinner
cooked.

TOM

What's for dinner?

HOLLY

Stu.

TOM

Good old Stu Hanson. He'll be missed.
I'm mighty hungry. When do we eat?

HOLLY

Waiting to see who shows up.

TOM

Is Patrick Dolan coming?

HOLLY

No, we ate him.

TOM

Oh, how about Antonio?

HOLLY

No, remember that night we felt like
Italian?

TOM

Right. Good man. Hmm, very good.

MICHAEL

Sleigh bells are heard.

HOLLY

What's that sound?

TOM

It's sleigh bells!

HOLLY

They've come to rescue us!

TOM

No, wait, it's coming from the roof!

HOLLY

Who would drive a sleigh onto our roof? Except maybe our wagon master. Idiot.

MICHAEL

Santa enters carrying his sack.

MARK

Ho, ho, ho!

TOM

It's Santa Claus!

HOLLY

Santa, is that really you, or a hunger-induced hallucination?

MARK

It's me, in the flesh!

TOM

Hmmm, flesh.

MARK

I couldn't forget about you on Christmas Day.

HOLLY

Did you bring us food?

MARK

No, I brought you a spinning wheel and a new tobacco pipe. And a whole sack-full of toys for the children. Hm, where are the children?

TOM

Toys? Spinning wheel?

HOLLY

My, Santa, you sure are a big man.

TOM

Yeah. Look at the stomach.

MARK

Ho, ho! Yes, it shakes when I laugh like a bowl full of jelly.

HOLLY

Hmmm, jelly.

TOM

So, Santa, how about some jerky?

MICHAEL

He holds out some pieces of jerky
for Santa. Santa takes a piece.

MARK

I usually get cookies.

TOM

It's all we have.

MARK

What is it?

HOLLY

A Slim Jim.

MARK

Hmmm, tasty. Like venison.

TOM

Well, Jim was pretty jerky to begin
with so it just worked out.

MARK

What?

HOLLY

So, Santa, you're like what, 275,
280 pounds?

MARK

Yesssss?

TOM

So, what do you think?

HOLLY

At 20 minutes a pound, we're looking
at like 93 hours. That's 3 days!
That's a lot of basting.

TOM

But, man, look at those drumsticks.

MARK

You know, I think I should be going.
But I did bring you a special present!

HOLLY

What? What?

MARK

It's over there!

TOM

Where? Where?

MICHAEL

As they turn to look at a present set out, Santa dashes out.

HOLLY

You let him get away!

TOM

Sorry, he just flew up the chimney! He moves quick for a fat guy.

HOLLY

We would have been set until Easter. And then Easter rabbit stew.

TOM

Again, sorry. I can't stop drooling.

HOLLY

So, what special present did he leave us?

MICHAEL

They look in the box.

TOM

A snow cone machine.

MICHAEL

Horn plays "Wah-wah."

TOM

Oh, well, everyone, that's our Christmas special. Thanks for stopping by.

HOLLY

Good-night, everybody! Hope to have you for dinner soon!

TOM

Hush! Good-night! Come back soon!

HOLLY

We'll keep the light on for you. The pilot light.

MICHAEL

Music up and under.

DONNA
(announcer voice)
Stay tuned for "A Very Dahmer
Christmas" next on most of these
stations.

Holly turns to Doc.

HOLLY
You are a seriously disturbed
individual.

DOC
(shrugs)
It was kind of dark.

HOLLY
Like an eclipse over Mudtown.

Doc just shakes his head.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
Don't get me wrong, it's as funny as
a sheepdog at a wedding but couldn't
we bring in something a bit, oh,
what's, the word? Jolly.

DOC
Everyone is doing jolly, Holly. I'd
like to see us get a bit more of a
sting in.

HOLLY
You're right, you're right. I'm the
visitor here.

MICHAEL
All right. We'll put it up and see
if the audience is as generous as
Holly. But, to be fair, it's not
that we haven't done "heartfelt"
before.

SAL'LIE
The Mother's Day shows are sweet and
funny.

Doc shoots her a look.

SAL'LIE (CONT'D)
Well, they are. My mom was totally
not embarrassed being part of it.
And usually she is.

HOLLY

Like that Candy Cane skit last week.
It was satire--see I know what that
is--but it actually had a sweetness
to it.

DOC

You think?

HOLLY

Well, you can't deconstruct a romantic
comedy without knowing how they work
and without the romantic parts, silly
as they may be.

MICHAEL

You really liked that sketch?

HOLLY

It was a humdinger.

MICHAEL

You may be surprised to learn that
was the work of our own Doc Devito.

HOLLY

Shut the barn door! You wrote that?

DOC

Yes, actually.

HOLLY

I watched those movies all the time.
You nailed it good. I never would
have guessed you watched them too!

DOC

I was watching them ironically--

CAST

Aww.

DOC

For research!

CAST

Uh-huh.

HOLLY

So, do you have anything like that
for me?

Doc uncomfortably shrugs. Suddenly he gets a text.

INT. STUDIO — LATER

Holly's band is setting up their equipment. Holly comes in with several coffees. She's using Doc's clipboard as a tray. Ann tags behind with deli bags.

HOLLY

OK, boys, let's finish up this sound check with some New York coffee and something called an "egg cream."

Doc comes in agitated. Tom follows.

TOM

Doc. Doc, calm yourself. It'll turn up.

DOC

I just put it down for a second. I was getting the fresh copies of material. Where did it go?

He sees Holly serving the drinks.

DOC (CONT'D)

Nooooo!!!!

He runs over.

DOC (CONT'D)

What are you doing???

HOLLY

Just giving the band some much needed caffeine. Want some?

Doc removes the last drinks and puts them aside. He snatches back his clip board.

DOC

This is not a snack tray. This is my clipboard. This is ...just...

HOLLY

Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't realize—

DOC

No, you wouldn't. Just...just...stick to the process.

Doc walks off. Tom shrugs. Holly is miffed now. She turns to the band.

HOLLY
What gopher got into his garden?
Excuse me, people.

INT. CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Holly catches up to Doc.

HOLLY
Now hold up just one finger-lickin'
minute, doctor. I am sorry a
misappropriated your precious clip
board but why aren't you using a
electronic tablet like everyone else
in this century?

DOC
Because this clipboard is history.
This clipboard keeps me grounded.
Everyone knows that. Everyone who
is supposed to.

HOLLY
Well, Doctor Comedy, you've been the
backwash in my canteen since I
arrived. Why don't you enlighten me
as to the magnificence of this
clipboard?

DOC
You wouldn't understand.

HOLLY
Try me, Mr. Head writer. Use your
words.

DOC
Fine. This show has been running
for years. It was created by Shemp
Nelson, a comedy legend. He was one
of the men who practically invented
late night TV. See these teeth marks?
He bit this board when Shecky Lewis
hosted and went off script and started
using his blue material. When I
came on the show, he was long gone,
but I got to meet Shemp at a Writers
Guild function. He was the president.
I'm not saying we were friends but
we did exchange refrigerator magnets.
And when he found out I got on the
show, he sent this board. His board.
And wished me the best of luck.
I've had it ever since.

(MORE)

DOC (CONT'D)
This is my touchstone. This is my
comedy talisman.

Holly chuckles.

DOC (CONT'D)
I knew you wouldn't get it.

Holly reaches into her blouse, into her bra strap.

DOC (CONT'D)
Whoa, whoa! HR! HR!

HOLLY
Oh, calm down. You're too young to
be an old prude.

She pulls out an old, yellowed guitar pick and displays it.

DOC
What's that?

HOLLY
This is a guitar pick given to me by
Blue Rivers.

DOC
Is that supposed to mean something
to me?

HOLLY
He's my Shemp Nelson. A blues
guitarist. He only recorded a few
albums. My daddy used to play them
over and over. I did too. I met his
wife after he passed, when I was a
slip of a girl. I told her how much
Blue Rivers and his music meant to
me growing up. And she gave me this;
one of his guitar picks. It means
the world to me and keeps me connected
to the past.

DOC
So...you get it.

HOLLY
I do. And, again, I'm so sorry. It
won't happen again.

DOC
Yeah, well, it had better not.

HOLLY

Wow, you almost made it through a whole conversation without getting snippy. Congratulations on the effort.

She walks away. Doc begins hitting himself with the clipboard. Suddenly he realizes what he's doing and stops. Wide-eyed at his transgression, he checks the board for damage and tucks it under his arms and leaves.

INT. WRITERS COMMON SPACE - EVENING

Jack is seated on the sofa by himself tossing a ball against the wall.

Ann's head pokes out of Holly's dressing room. She looks around and sees Jack. She heads on over to him.

ANN

You okay?

JACK

I'm blocked. My sketch is going nowhere.

ANN

How so?

JACK

I got a title. I pitched the title and then nothing.

ANN

You got a dynamite crew to get you over a few bumps.

JACK

Everyone is deep into their own stuff now. I was helping Mark with that Tenors thing, then he got pulled into the shopping mall bit so now, when I had to sit down for my piece, nothing.

ANN

What was it again?

JACK

A visit from Anti-Claus. You know, like the opposite of Santy Claus.

ANN

Oh, Santa Claus.

JACK

No, you have to say it old-timey;
Santy Claus, or the premise doesn't
work. Santy-anti.

ANN

So, he takes presents.

JACK

That's what I got. And now...I'm
blocked.

ANN

He just does the opposite.

JACK

Yeah but, sure, South Pole, takes
presents but what's the opposite of
reindeer? What's the opposite of a
toy shop? I came up with a title
and nothing else. And I have to
keep it simple. Nothing too stagy.

ANN

Oh. So you can't go to the workshop
or show him using his submarine.

JACK

Submarine?

ANN

Wouldn't that be the opposite of a
flying sleigh?

JACK

Ok, I can see that. But we don't
have the budget for a submarine.
Doc is still mad about my Hindenburg
sketch.

ANN

Well, I suppose you can do the thing
where the kids stay up to catch Santa
and get him instead.

JACK

Oh...oh, so, then he can explain
himself to the kids.

ANN

It might be too Q and A.

JACK

Maybe, but it's a solid way in.

ANN

If you stay sharp.

JACK

My middle name is sharp. But with an "e." My folks are weird. I'm thinking now, it's kinda sad that Claus takes all the presents.

ANN

That is mean. We're...I mean, you guys are trying to avoid mean this week, aren't you?

JACK

Not officially, but yeah.

ANN

How about at the end, the Reverse Grinch shows up and brings the kids presents. So the kids are happy again.

JACK

Reverse Grinch! Yes. Tom does a great Grinch. I should be writing this down. Come on, you want to go to my office and write a sketch?

ANN

I thought you'd never ask.

They go down the hall and into Jack's office. A moment later, Mark is evicted from that office and the door slams shut.

MARK

Oh, man!

DISSOLVE:

EXT. WRITERS COMMON SPACE - LATER

Tom, Mark, Donna and others are headed out. Doc comes out, texting away. Jack and Anne hurry out of his office and catch Doc. Jack is waving his pages.

JACK

Doc! I got the Anti-Claus sketch!

DOC

Oh, great. We'll do a run through tomorrow. But let's not make a habit of these post-table read additions.

JACK

Yes, sir.

Holly and Ann wind up in the middle of them.

TOM

How about a night cap? Or two?

DONNA

I'm in.

JACK

Ditto.

ANN

(to Holly)

That would be nice.

HOLLY

Mind if we tag along?

DONNA

I'm still in anyway.

DOC

Could I even prevent that?

HOLLY

Unlikely.

Doc shrugs and leads the group out.

INT. GRAND HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

It's the classy-looking bar connected to the elegant Grand Hotel, just around the corner. The gang is seated at a table; Jack, Ann, Holly, Doc, Donna and Tom.

HOLLY

---then he says "Not with my burro
you don't!"

Everyone laughs.

ANN

(tipsy)

I really have to thank you for
dragging me along on your whirlwind
tour and getting to be part of all
this. If only for a week.

HOLLY

I'm sure something will come of it.

She shoots Doc a look. Doc tries to look noncommittal. Donna looks at her phone.

DONNA

Oh, man, look at the time. I have to head out.

TOM

You know what? So do I. Share a ride?

DONNA

Shotgun!

They each toss down some cash and exit.

TOM

That's not how it works. We've talked about this.

HOLLY

Well, we do have a busy few days ahead of us, I guess I should skedaddle, too. Ann, you want to go?

ANN

(looking to Jack)

Well, actually, I thought I'd stay for one more drink.

She winks at Holly. Holly nods and winks back.

JACK

One more drink sounds better than no more drinks. I'm in.

DOC

Well, maybe one more-

HOLLY

Doc, excuse me, where's the little girls room? I got all turned around.

DOC

It's right over there, inside the Ladies Toilet.

HOLLY

Now, hun, no need to get huffy.

DOC

I'm not being huffy. I'm just...it's over there, by the neon bidet.

HOLLY
Could you walk me over?

Surrendering, Doc gets up to lead her off. Holly throws Ann a wink.

The overly attentive BARTENDER comes over, gathering glasses. Jack is a bit tipsy, too.

BARTENDER
What, your friends evacuating?

JACK
Naw, they just had their fill.

BARTENDER
Another round?

ANN
(giddy)
That comes around!

Bartender gives them a big thumbs up and heads off. Ann is staring at Jack.

JACK
What?

ANN
Do you need those glasses?

JACK
Only to see.

Ann slides them off Jack and puts them on herself.

ANN
Oh, look at me, I'm a professional comedy writer! Woo-hoo! So, how do I look? Do I look funny now?

JACK
I don't know, I can't see.

ANN
Oh, right.

She goes to put them back on Jack and pokes him in the eyes with the temples of the frame.

JACK
Ow! Ow!

ANN

Oh, I'm so sorry! Are you injured?
I'm sooo sorry! Come here, bring it
in. So sorry!

She gives him a big hug. Very big. Jack looks surprised,
then satisfied. He starts to ease into it, head resting on
her shoulder.

Bartender arrives with drinks.

BARTENDER

Here you go!

They separate.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)

Oh, sorry. Didn't mean to break up
your date night.

JACK

That's quite all right, my good man.

They raise their glasses.

BOTH

Cheers!

They each take a big gulp.

ANN

He thought we were a couple!

JACK

Silly barkeep.
(considering it)
That was an awesome hug, by the way.

ANN

Did you think so?

JACK

I'm no expert but it was world class.
I felt that down to my heels.

She leans in.

ANN

Want to know a secret?

Jack leans in.

JACK

What?

ANN

I did, too!

They stare at each other a moment.

Bartender steps up.

BARTENDER

Anything else for America's
sweethearts?

JACK

Us? Oh, well...

ANN

Do you have cheese platters?

BARTENDER

We do!

ANN

Great! Then cheese me, bartender!
(pulls out cell)
I just have to give my room mate a
heads up. Excuse me.

She steps away.

JACK

So, barkeep...

BARTENDER

What do you need?

JACK

Do you have any mistletoe?

BARTENDER

I'll have to check.

Bartender exits.

EXT. GRAND HOTEL - NIGHT

It's Holly and Doc. They still haven't left, as they are deep in a discussion. There's a line of couples waiting for transportation. The HOTEL DOORMAN signals a couple behind them to the cab that is waiting and it drives off.

HOLLY

Doc, darlin', I'm not trying to get
in your head!

DOC

Good, because you'll find there's nothing there.

HOLLY

Nor am I trying to topple you.

DOC

I know that! And yet, I do not!

HOLLY

Well, I can't help that. I can only do what I can do.

Another cab pulls up. The Doorman holds open the door.

DOC

Me, as well! Only you know I have to keep a show going besides! That's what I can do.

The Doorman waves in the Next Couple into the cab.

HOLLY

Why do you see me as a threat to that?

DOC

A country singer killed my mother.

Holly looks shocked. Then bursts out laughing.

DOC (CONT'D)

(smiling)

No, really. Then he wrote a hit song about it. I couldn't even watch the country music awards that year.

HOLLY

You're awful. Is everything you think of that dark?

DOC

Not everything. I'm kind of contrary that way.

Another cab pulls up. The Doorman waves in another Couple and it drives off.

HOLLY

You're a good egg, Doc. Cracked, but good.

DOORMAN

We're running out of cabs, here.
You two ready to go?

HOLLY

I'm ready. You?

DOC

Sure.

Cab pulls up and they get in. A PAPPARAZZI steps up and snaps a picture.

HOLLY

Home, James!

The cab drives off a bit, that screeches to a halt. Holly and Doc get out and start walking back to the hotel.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

What am I doing?? I'm staying at this hotel!

DOC

Oh, right, all guests of LAFF-TV stay at the elegant Grand Hotel. Sorry. I got caught up in the moment.

HOLLY

Good. So did I.

She boops him on the nose.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Good night, Doctor Comedy.

She heads back to the hotel. Doc turns to get the cab but it drives off.

DOC

(beat)

I'll just walk.

INT. GRAND HOTEL BAR - CONTINUOUS

Ann returns and sits.

ANN

What did I miss?

JACK

Too complicated to explain.

There's a lull but they just stare into each other's eyes.

ANN
We could do that hug thing again.

JACK
I'm game.

They hug.

The Bartender steps over and hands Jack what looks like a sprig of mistletoe. Jack takes it and holds it up over his head. Ann pulls away and looks up.

ANN
What is that?

JACK
Mistletoe. It's a Christmas tradition!

ANN
Really? It kinda looks like a celery stalk with some maraschino cherries attached to it.

Jack looks at it. Yes, it's a stalk of celery with a couple of cherries attached with toothpicks. He then looks to the Bartender behind the bar. He shrugs apologetically.

JACK
Oh. Well, is that a problem?

Ann considers.

ANN
No, no I don't think it is.

She leans in and they kiss.

Bartender is watching while he wipes off a bottle of champagne that suddenly pops open.

**SFX: ADVENT-TYPE CALENDAR FOR THE SHOW'S PRODUCTION WEEK,
WITH THE WEDNESDAY SPACE OPEN.**

INT. HOTEL ROOM - WEDNESDAY MORNING

Brick Noble is lounging in his less-than-fancy room eating his room service breakfast. It doesn't seem very good to him. He picks up a NY newspaper to see...a photo of Holly getting into a cab with a caption of her hosting Laff-TV. He nods and heads out.

BRICK
It's time.

INT. DOC'S OFFICE - DAY

Doc is typing away, while sorting through some papers. A folding snack tray holds a multitude of snacks. His office phone rings.

DOC

LAFF-TV, Joe Laff speaking. How may I help you? Who? What? Now?

INT. CRITERION'S OFFICE - DAY

Criterion is at his desk with sample greeting cards. He drops them in the trash. His intercom goes off.

SECRETARY (O.S.)

He's on line two, sir.

CRITERION

Thank you.

(gets phone)

Mr. DeVito? I hope I haven't call at an inconvenient time.

INTERCUT:

INT. DOC'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

DOC

No, I was on the phone anyway.

CRITERION

I saw your little comedy skit last week.

DOC

You know I'm legally allowed to do that, right?

CRITERION

Yes, yes, I'm aware. In fact, I found it quite amusing.

DOC

Oh, well.. Thank you?

CRITERION

I've been talking to my people and we think its exactly what we need for our channel.

DOC

You're joking.

CRITERION

Although I have a refined sense of humor, I'm very serious about this.

DOC

I'm not sure what you mean.

CRITERION

We would like to buy the sketch and turn it into a Criterion Channel Christmas movie.

Doc is stunned. He gets up and closes his door.

DOC

I see. How would that even work?

Now he's pacing.

CRITERION

Take that material and, you know, make it longer. Not too much longer, we have commercials to consider.

DOC

You want me to do it?

CRITERION

I was under the impression you are a writer.

DOC

It's my best impression.

CRITERION

I'll have my people send the contracts to your people.

DOC

To be honest, I just have the one person; my agent, Jerry Logan.

CRITERION

Yes, we've spoken. I think you'll find the offer satisfactory.

DOC

You're not going to pay me in greeting cards, are you?

CRITERION

(curt laugh)
Very amusing!

INT. STUDIO - DAY

The cast and crew are trying to set the Anti-Claus sketch on its feet while others watch.

It's a living room with a Christmas tree. Santa (Jack) comes in and starts taking presents and stuffing him in his sack. Two kids (Holly and Sal'lie) step out.

HOLLY

Santy Claus, what are you doing?

JACK

Oh, no, no, no, kids! I'm not Santy Claus, I'm Anti-Claus. I take all the excess presents! Otherwise you kids will get spoiled.

Doc is watching, taking notes. He checks his phone and texts a response.

DOC

Jack, can you tighten it up a bit. It's lagging. And we need to cut it down a minute.

Jack looks to Ann who nods.

JACK

You bet!

DOC

Oh, and Network Standards called. Lose the "Kids are bored in China" line.

Doc approaches Holly.

DOC (CONT'D)

So, how do you feel? Comfortable?

HOLLY

I do.

DOC

If you have any input, don't be shy.

HOLLY

Dove, I'm more outgoing than a beaver at a flapjack festival.

Doc makes a note and chuckles. Holly sidles up to him.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Are you ok? I hope I wasn't
overstepping my boundaries last night.

DOC

Last night was good night. As nights
go. I hope you thought so.

HOLLY

To be honest, I truly thought so,
too. I got to let my hair down.
And that rarely happens with this
'do!

Suddenly, Michael has sidled up to them.

MICHAEL

Good to see the talent bonding.

DOC

All part of the process.

Holly gives Doc some side-eye.

MICHAEL

Good to know.

Near-by: Ann is huddled with Jack and the script.

ANN

It works, right? They like it!

JACK

They do. Thanks to you!

ANN

You'll be letting them know I had a
hand in it, right?

JACK

Of course, of course.

ANN

I don't mean to get my hopes up, but
this seems like one of those "big
breaks" everyone wishes for.

JACK

Consider it done.

ANN

I like you.

JACK

Me, too.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ROOF TOP - DAY

It's the roof of the ABS building, land of vents and cellphone antennas. Doc is pacing. Slowly, the door opens. It's Donna. She looks around then, nonchalantly and quickly, steps out.

DONNA

What's the clandestine all about, chief?

DOC

Nothing, nothing. But...but...I need some insight.

DONNA

About?

DOC

Us.

DONNA

Let me sit for this.

She goes over to a vent and puts out an old lawn chair from behind it and sits.

DOC

When we were together...were we toxic?

DONNA

Toxic? What have you heard?

DOC

It's been rolling around in my head for some time now. I have a gig.

DONNA

Of course. I should have guessed. Heaven forbid it was about something real life.

DOC

My candy cane sketch.

DONNA

What about it?

DOC

The people at Criterion Cards saw it and they liked the premise and thought it could be an actual Christmas movie.

DONNA

Shut up.

DOC

But...they want some sincerity. Some added heart. Still a comedy but...with heart. I don't know if I have that. I was wondering if that was our issue.

DONNA

No. Well, maybe. We're two of a kind, Doc. And both passive-aggressively competing for laughs. Don't get me wrong, it was swell, but, I think we both knew it wasn't a love connection.

DOC

Am I too snarky? Do I wear my bile on my sleeve?

DONNA

Well, let's just say we have layers. I've seen the sweet side. And the sour. But, yeah, your default setting is snide.

DOC

Being introspective hurts.

DONNA

That's why I totally avoid it. We're still talking about the script, right?

DOC

Oh, totally.

INT. WRITERS COMMON SPACE - MOMENTS LATER

Donna and Doc come out of the stairwell from the roof.

DOC

Thanks for coming up. I needed that.

DONNA

That's what I'm here for.

She punches him in the shoulder as they separate. He winces.

Holly, in her singing outfit, just happens to turn the corner and sees them together.

Holly goes to the stairwell and looks around, then up.

HOLLY
Up on the roof, eh?

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. STUDIO - DAY

Holly is rehearsing with the band. Doc is standing by. Michael wanders by him, while talking on his cell. He pauses.

MICHAEL
Are we keeping our star happy?

DOC
I'm trying, Mike...kel.

MICHAEL
Continue to do so.

Michael wanders off, continuing his call. Holly notices Doc.

HOLLY
Oh, no, mister, I'm not letting you off the hook! You're joining us!

DOC
Who? What? Me?

Holly tosses him some jingle bells. They start doing "Sleigh Ride." Doc reluctantly joins them and joins in, then gets more into it as Holly's joyous rendition continues.

Donna is munching on a hero in the seats, watching, along with others on a break. She grins. Then pulls out a cell phone and snaps a photo.

As the number ends, Brick enters, all Nashville cowboy, guitar slung on his back.

BRICK
Holly Rose!

HOLLY
Brick! What in Sam hill are you doing here?

She walks over, hand out to shake and he lifts her up and around.

BRICK

I heard you were in town so I had to come by! Look at you, Miss TV star!

Doc is leery of this fraternizing.

HOLLY

Oh, you know how it is. It's just another gig.

BRICK

You look good. So good.

HOLLY

I ain't gonna argue with you about that. So, er, shame about your last album.

BRICK

Yeah, I went too pop.

HOLLY

So, what are you doing in town?

BRICK

I'm at the Garden for a couple of nights.

Doc moseys up.

DOC

(muttering)

So's the circus.

BRICK

Remember when we played there last? That was a night to remember!

DOC

(muttering)

So was the Titanic.

HOLLY

Did you say something, Doc?

DOC

It was titanic! With a small "t"!

BRICK

Good times, am I right?

HOLLY

There were those.

BRICK

Hey, why don't I come on the show with you and sing along? Like old times?

DOC

Whoa, whoa, I'm not--

HOLLY

That would be...something. But remember, I'm a guest here. I don't want to step on any toes.

DOC

There are so many toes to consider--

BRICK

Oh, me and Mike Reynolds go back a long ways.

DOC

Michael-

BRICK

He'd be thrilled to have a special guest drop in.

DOC

Thrilled? I'm not sure that's the term--

Michael has suddenly sidled up to the group.

MICHAEL

That would certainly bring in the ratings.

Doc is startled by him.

BRICK

That's why you are Mr. Show biz, Mike. Holly, how's your "Sleigh Ride?"

DOC

Her sleigh ride is just fine.

HOLLY

Dashing as ever.

Brick takes the jingle bells from Doc.

BRICK

What else?

HOLLY
I was going to do "Oh Holy Night."

BRICK
Oh, I love when you do that. I would
be honored to back you up on that!

DOC
Gosh, we all love it, but--

BRICK
This is more exciting than a five
alarm marshmallow raid!

Holly and Brick head toward the stage, Brick attempting to
link arm in arm.

DOC
I smell a hound dog come home to
roost.

MICHAEL
Your country metaphors need work.

He walks off to Doc's exasperation. He then turns back to
Doc and signals toward Brick and Holly.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Oh, and have publicity tweet this
out.

INT. LAFF NEWS DESK SET - DAY

They are in dress rehearsal at the LAFF NEWS DESK. Janet
and Sally are the anchors, in their news team jackets. Brick
is in the audience, watching.

JANET
As we often hear, the holidays are
not always cheerful for everyone.
To discuss the topic of holiday
distress, we have with us Doctor
Loretta Erickson, of the Noel
Institute of Well Being. Welcome,
Doctor.

Holly slides in as the doctor.

HOLLY
Good evening, sir. I mean, ma'am.

JANET
The holidays are a distressing time
for some.

HOLLY

Indeed.

JANET

What are some of the ailments which afflict people this time of year? It's not just the "holiday blues" we read about.

HOLLY

Oh, no. It goes well beyond that. For instance, we see marked increases in cases of Claus-aphobia.

She pulls up a sign that reads CLAUSAPHOBIA.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Like any other phobia, it's a unreasonable, irrational Fear of something, like heights, closed places---

JANET

So, Claus-aphobia is a fear of?

HOLLY

Santa Claus.

JANET

Santa?

HOLLY

Heavens, yes.

JANET

Many children are Claus-aphobic, no?

HOLLY

(getting panicky)

No. Kids are just scared. Big hairy guy breathing on them like that? They have every right to be afraid. But when an adult comes upon a right jolly old elf, and gets nervous, sweaty, heart palpitations. Real anxiety. That's Claus-ophobia.

JANET

Remarkable.

HOLLY

There are times they get nervous just looking at those soda-pop ads, or greeting cards.

(MORE)

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Most can't even bring themselves near a mall this time of year. You walk down the street and there they are, corner after corner of Santas, ringing their bells, looking so jolly! Aaaaah!

JANET

Doctor, please, settle down. Are you okay?

HOLLY

Sorry.

JANET

I take it you're a Claus-aphobic?

HOLLY

Acute. It's ruining my life.

JANET

How did this happen?

HOLLY

I think it was because once I was locked in a closet with nothing but a copy of "Miracle on 34th Street."

JANET

That's surprising. It's considered a great movie.

HOLLY

The remake.

JANET

Oh. I understand.

HOLLY

I can't even work in my garden anymore.

JANET

No? Why not?

HOLLY

I'm afraid to hoe-hoe-hoe.

RIM SHOT.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Aaah!

JANET

What's the matter?

HOLLY

I also have a fear of rim shots!

We cut to Sally, who now has a little drum set on the desk. She looks very proud.

JANET

Noted. Are there any other seasonal maladies that our listeners should be aware of?

Holly pulls out a stack of display cards and pulls up each one as she announces the disease.

HOLLY

Oh, many. The stress of the holidays can manifest itself into many other ailments. There's the Holly-Jollies. It's a lot like the heebie-jeebies. Then there's Noel-zheimer's Disease. You become suddenly forgetful about gifts to buy and clothing sizes or what you did at the office Christmas party. I've seen cases of Jingle Swells and Tinsel-itis, which usually leads to a tinselectomy. There's In-yule-lenza...the common Yule-flu and Mistletoe.

JANET

What's Mistletoe?

HOLLY

It's similar to athlete's foot, but can be easily treated with some tannin-balm. Less treatable is Kris Kringle Shingles. It's a viral infection, which causes a painful rash. You usually get it by sitting on untreated Santa laps. I've treated many patients who were bi-North Polar. This affliction causes major mood swings, one minute they're naughty, next minute they're nice. And there are cases of people who are so stressed by the season, they go into denial, refusing to believe the existence of the holidays. We call them egg-nog-stics.

RIM SHOT by Sal'lie again.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Eeek!

JANET

Sal'lie! Well, thank you, Doctor
Loretta Erickson.

Holly, Janet and Sal'lie finish up the bit. Holly gets up.
Janet leans into Sal'lie.

JANET (CONT'D)

Is it me, or does Holly's aura seem
off?

SAL'LIE

(beat)

It's you.

INT. STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

Doc is offstage with his clipboard. Tom joins him.

TOM

Things look very not awful.

DOC

Right?

TOM

(glancing at Brick)

I thought having Holly's old flame
around might upset the apple cart
but it's going gang busters.

DOC

Absolut--old flame?? What old flame?

TOM

Brick and Holly. They were an item
a couple of years ago.

DOC

Seriously?

TOM

Serious enough to get a celebrity
couple name.

DOC

Holly and Brick...Oh, no.

TOM

Hick. A little on the nose, right?

DOC

I'm assuming that's what broke them up.

TOM

Not quite. The Gossip Channel got Brick on video with a C and W cutie at one of those award shows and that seemed to do it. Heard that didn't last long. Then his last album tanked.

DOC

And now he shows up here.

TOM

The season is the reason.

DOC

Why that no good--

TOM

Easy, Doc, easy. Things are going fine.

DOC

Maybe. But this is too much.

TOM

What are you getting upset about? It's not like you...Suffering Sugarplums, it *is* like that!

DOC

No, it's not.

TOM

No, it's not what?

DOC

Nothing.

TOM

Leaping yule logs, you have succumbed to her country charms! Oh, Doc, no. It's not something--

DOC

What if it was?

TOM

It's like my grandfather would say; a fish can love a bird, but where would they live?

DOC
Soho, probably.

TOM
She's this week's host, Doc! You've had crushes on hosts before. You have your little show-mance and then everyone moves on.

DOC
But, just hear me out, what if it's more than that this time?

TOM
Are you willing to fight for her?

DOC
I suppose. Not like fisticuffs because that clown would totally maim me.

TOM
No, he's in your house, dude. You have the home field advantage.

DOC
Yes. I'm an important guy around here. I can defend my turf!

Tom starts snapping his fingers, West Side Story style.

DOC (CONT'D)
We're not doing the Jets and Sharks, Tom.

Tom stops. Donna wanders over.

DONNA
What's the topic of discussion, guys?

TOM
Doc is going to fight for his woman.

DONNA
Holly?

DOC
Who said--?

DONNA
(taking out money)
Are we taking bets?

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BACKSTAGE – LATER

Carpenters are building sets.

Doc is reviewing some pages at his lectern.

Holly is off in the back. She's having an angry phone call.

HOLLY

Brick, would you kindly explain to me what this meme of us is doing all over social media?

Michael passes through, observing. He then swings over to Doc.

MICHAEL

Doc.

DOC

Yes, Mike...kel.

MICHAEL

Is it me or does Holly seem upset?

DOC

Upset? Well, I guess. But it works for her.

MICHAEL

Don't want our host to be upset.

DOC

Well, no, of course not—

MICHAEL

Perhaps you could take her under your wing for the next few days, as we head into crunch time.

DOC

Under my wing? What am I, Big Bird?

MICHAEL

First time host. Holiday show. Maybe take her out to see some sights tonight. Turn her jitters into jingles.

DOC

Tonight? Ah, no, sorry, I have dinner with my folks tonight. I've been promising them I'd visit since Thanksgiving.

MICHAEL

Fine, bring Holly along. A nice home-cooked meal might be just the thing. I'll authorize a limo for the trip.

(pulls out cell)

Which outer-borough is it again?

DOC

Staten Island.

(watching him text it)

Just two t's.

MICHAEL

Oh, of course. I was using the Dutch spelling.

DOC

Of course.

MICHAEL

Call your mother, let her know.

DOC

Ok, Mike...kel.

Doc pulls out his cell and calls.

DOC (CONT'D)

Hey, Mom. Yeah. I just wanted to let you know I'm bringing a girl with me to dinner.

(beat)

What's so funny?

(beat)

Yes, I'm a comedy writer but that's not a bit. Really. Yes. See you tonight. Love you...anyway.

EXT. SWEETWATER AVE., STATEN ISLAND - EVENING

Gray snow is on the ground of this tract housing site, with a series of duplex houses all alike, all in a row. Houses are seriously over decorated for the holidays, including one house with an inflated dreidel on its lawn. One house has a few cement madonnas on the front stoop. That's the house the limo pulls up to.

Doc notices his neighbor, MR. TUMINELLO, decorating his small front lawn with every conceivable inflatable Christmas figure.

DOC

Hi, Mr. Tuminello! I think you missed a spot!

He waves back, holding another boxed inflatable. Doc and Holly continue to the front door.

DOC (CONT'D)

This is it.

HOLLY

Which one?

DOC

The religious one.

They get out and walk up to the DeVito front door. We notice the neighbors are all peeking out their front doors.

INT. DEVITO'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The front door opens directly into the living room which leads to the dining room, which leads to the staircase to the second floor with the kitchen beyond the stairs.

The rooms are decorated within an inch of their lives with Christmas tchotchkes. Mom, greets them at the door. Doc's older brother Jake follows.

MOM

Edgar!

Holly give him a look, as Doc takes her coat.

DOC

Hey, Mom!

HOLLY

(aside)
Edgar?

DOC

(aside)
Rich uncle.

MOM

Wait a second; you said you were bringing a girl! You didn't say you were bringing country music star Holly Rose! Oh, my! We're such fans!

DOC

You are?

MOM

Yes. Your father's been going through a deep bluegrass phase.

HOLLY

A pleasure to meet you, Mrs. Devito.

MOM

Oh, please, my mother was Mrs. Devito,
call me Carol.

DOC

That's not how that works, Mom.

MOM

I can't believe I'm meeting you in
person! You're working with Edgar.
I can't believe that, either.

DOC

Trust me, neither do I.

JAKE

Whoa, classy dish! How'd you land
this one?

Annoyed, Doc is ready to reply.

HOLLY

(jumping in)

Charm, strictly charm.

She hooks her arm in his and pulls him close. Doc is as
surprised as Jake, then okay with it.

DOC

And this would be my brother, Jake.

JAKE

I would be.

DAD DEVITO comes walking down the stairs wearing sweatpants,
an undershirt and...a tie.

DAD

You made it! And there is a girl!

MOM

I told you to dress nice! We have a
big singing star coming for dinner!

DAD

I wore a tie!

JAKE

Good one, Dad.

MOM

Come in, come in. Dinner's almost ready.

HOLLY

Well, I can't hardly wait. Doc was saying what a fine cook you are.

JAKE

He did? Where'd he get that idea from?

MOM

Shut up, Jake!

Out of nowhere she pulls out a wooden spoon and whacks Jake with it.

JAKE

Where did that come from???

DAD (O.S.)

Are we eating or what?

They all turn and Dad is at his seat, fork and knife at the ready.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DINING ROOM - LATER

They are all seated around the dining room table, the one with the plastic table covering (even on the seats). There are dishes holding the remaining baked ziti, meatballs, sausages, and braciole still out.

MOM

So, more?

HOLLY

Oh, ma'am...I mean Carol, that was excellent.

JAKE

Hey, maybe you can write a song about it!

DOC

You know, I wrote that dinner sketch last season.

DAD

I remember that skit!

JAKE
Yeah. It wasn't that funny.

MOM
So, more?

HOLLY
Oh, I'm stuffed. That was an amazing
noodle casserole.

DOC
-Baked ziti.

HOLLY
Baked ziti.

Mom gets up and grabs a serving dish.

MOM
Jake, grab the other dishes and make
room for the chicken.

JAKE
What about Edgar?

MOM
He's company! Move!

The wooden spoon appears.

Jake grabs some dishes and they both head to the kitchen.

HOLLY
So, Mr. DeVito, what do you do?

DAD
Whatever I'm told.

Holly simply nods.

Mom returns with a roasted chicken. Jake has side dishes of
potatoes and broccoli.

HOLLY
(stunned)
Wait, that wasn't dinner?

DOC
That was the pasta. This is the
dinner.

HOLLY
Then I shouldn't have had seconds.

DOC
It's a marathon, not a sprint.

HOLLY
Why didn't you warn me? Oh, Carol,
there's so much food!

MOM
We feed you!

DAD
Make sure you leave some room for
dessert. Your mother's well into
the holiday baking.

MOM
Me? You're the one that baked Aunt
Jenny's cake and the grain pies.

DAD
I did. They came out good.

DISSOLVE:

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Mom is seated with a photo album on her lap, between Holly and Doc, while Jake sits on the couch arm beside Holly. Dad is asleep on the recliner in the corner. Mom flips through the pages.

MOM
Oh, here's Edgar at the school talent
show. He did "Who's on First" with
his friend. What was his name?

DOC
Lyle.

MOM
Oh, yes, Lyle. What became of Lyle?

JAKE
Firefighter.

HOLLY
You were always the performer.

JAKE
Always had to be the center of
attention.

Jake nudges Holly. Doc notes the poke.

DOC

Actually, that's when I realized I wasn't a performer, so I just concentrated on the writing.

MOM

(turning page)

Oh, yes. This is the program from the history fair.

HOLLY

History fair?

DOC

It's like a science fair but only for history.

MOM

He and his friend made a video about the radio show "War of the Worlds" and how it fooled America on Halloween. Who was that you did it with?

DOC

Glenn.

MOM

Yes, Glenn. What happened to Glenn?

JAKE

Cop.

MOM

(turning the page)

Oh, the prom!

DOC

(checking wrist)

Oh, look at the time!

HOLLY

Don't you look all spiffy! Who's the lucky lady?

MOM

That's Tara Brenner. Sweet girl. What happened to her?

JAKE

Cop.

MOM

They did a whole dance routine that night. Rehearsed it for days.

Jake places his hand on Holly's shoulder.

JAKE

I heard they dumped the punch bowl
on him.

Door bell rings. Dad shifts but doesn't wake. Mom looks to Jake, who gets up to answer it. It's MRS. KELLY, a neighbor. She carries a covered casserole.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Oh, Hi, Mrs. Kelly. What's going
on?

MRS. KELLY

I saw the limo and I thought someone
died, so I made you a casserole.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. STOOP - LATER

Mom and Jake stand on the stoop while Doc and Holly head out. We can see all neighbors standing at their doors. Mom is holding two Tupperware containers filled with food.

HOLLY

Thank you so much for dinner, Carol.
It was wonderful.

MOM

Anytime, sweetie. You are welcome
here any time.

HOLLY

I just might take you up on that!

JAKE

Well, thanks Mr. Show Biz for stopping
by and visiting your mother.

DOC

Oh, please, I'm here all the time.

JAKE

No, I'm here all the time!

DOC

You still live here.

JAKE

Don't confuse the issue!

Holly pulls Doc into the limo, while Mom steps in with the Tupperware.

MOM

Here, I made one for you and one for the driver.

DOC

Thanks, Mom.

They get in. The limo drives off.

MOM

(seeing the neighbors)
Take a picture, it'll last longer!

INT. LIMO - NIGHT

Doc and Holly are seated apart.

DOC

So, thanks for that thing you said to my brother about the charm. It got him to back off.

HOLLY

I wasn't lying.

Doc starts to look into the Tupperware containers. Holly slaps his hand away.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Stop that, it's for the driver!

DOC

All right, all right! So, anyway, sorry about all that.

HOLLY

Sorry about what? You don't think I have a family?

DOC

Not like that.

HOLLY

True, we'd serve possum instead of bracirole. I have four brothers and two sisters. And we have our moments.

DOC

So, what you lack in quality you make up with quantity.

HOLLY

Trying to get attention was a full-time job.

DOC
Isn't it though?

The car gets on the Staten Island Expressway to the V-N Bridge. You can see the NYC skyline.

HOLLY
There's a sight! And right in your backyard!

DOC
It is. Still is, after all these years.

Holly opens the sun roof.

HOLLY
Let's get a better look!

She stands up through the car roof. Doc tries to follow.

DOC
Wait! Michael will get mad if I let you get decapitated!

EXT. LIMO - NIGHT

Holly's face is lit up, hair blowing in the wind. Doc pops up.

DOC
Whoa.

HOLLY
Isn't it amazing?

DOC
It is. I never did this this before.

HOLLY
Not even at your prom?

DOC
My dad drove us in the minivan. He wore that same tie.

HOLLY
Oh.

DOC
That's why we came up with the dance routine, to kind of distract everyone from that. And other stuff. It was an awkward time.

(MORE)

DOC (CONT'D)

Tara and me; we were just friends.
Getting people to laugh papers over
a lot of insecurities.

HOLLY

No girlfriends to do that?

DOC

(thinking)

Not many.

Both get lost in their thoughts for a moment.

HOLLY

Your family is nice.

DOC

Oh, absolutely. Mostly.

HOLLY

They must be so proud of you.

DOC

Yeah, well, they manage to hide it
pretty well.

HOLLY

Harvard?

DOC

That impressed them until I told
them it was so I could write comedy.
"Comedy," my dad said, "You could go
to community college to write comedy!"

HOLLY

Ha!

DOC

Turns out he was right, too. They
have a pretty decent communications
major.

HOLLY

It all worked out.

DOC

It did. It did work out.

HOLLY

Can I ask where "Doc" came
from...Edgar?

DOC

Yeah. In college I had the reputation of being able to fix anyone's material before we published it. They started calling me the comedy doctor. That became "Doc." Which was good. Actually, I kinda asked them to call me that. I mean, Edgar? What comedy writer is named Edgar?

HOLLY

Well, since we're being honest...

DOC

Not my intent.

HOLLY

Rose is my middle name.

DOC

Say what?

HOLLY

My actually family name is Hickenlooper.

DOC

You made that up.

HOLLY

I didn't.

DOC

Oh, that beats Edgar. What else to I need to know about you, Miss Big Family Country girl?

HOLLY

There was no fancy schoolin' for me. Although I did take some business courses after I got my first recording contract.

DOC

Business?

HOLLY

Talent I got. Business savvy, not so much. I'm diversified now and supporting my family! I have a record label, a snack food company, and a team that scouts for endorsements and causes to support.

Doc is just gazing at her.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

What?

DOC

You really are just that remarkable.

HOLLY

(smiling)

Yes, I am. I was wondering when you'd notice.

DOC

I deserved that.

Her cell goes off.

HOLLY

Hello? Brick? What's up? Rehearsal? When? We're headed back now. We'll be there in about-

Doc flashes his fingers 3 times for 30 minutes.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

In five turns of the old mill.

Doc just looks at his fingers like "did they say that?"

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Ok, see you shortly. What else? No, no, the arraignment is fine-

Holly lowers herself back into the limo, arguing.

Doc sighs.

DOC

Maybe they'll be a low overpass.

INT. DOC'S OFFICE - FRIDAY DAY

Doc types away while Donna leans over his back, reading along.

DONNA

Yeah, that works much better.

DOC

We may actually pull this off.

DONNA

Well, it's been fun saving your bacon, but I have my own material that needs honing. See you later, Darth Vader.

DOC
After 'while, Gomer Pyle.

INT. WRITERS HALLWAY - EVENING

Doc's door opens and Donna stealthily exits and heads down the hall and into her own office.

SAL'LIE (O.S.)
(panicky)
Donna! What are you doing here?

We see that Anne and Holly are observing her from down the hall.

HOLLY
What was that?

ANN
I know Donna and Doc were dating a while back but they broke it off, so I heard.

HOLLY
Oh, one of those office romances.

ANN
LAFF-TV is a hotbed of office romances. Why?

HOLLY
No reason. I keep forgetting that I'm the outsider here.

ANN
Oh, nonsense. You're doing great. I was the outsider, and, well, I think it's worked out well for me. I made...a connection.

HOLLY
Really? The big guy?

ANN
Jack. Yes, we've gotten very close. Very.

HOLLY
You mean--?

ANN
We co-wrote a sketch! And Jack got it into the dress rehearsal! I have a shot at being on air!

HOLLY

Oh.

(beat)

Ooooh, good for you, dove.

Holly hugs Ann. Holly glances back down the hall.

INT. STUDIO - DAY

The crew cues up lights and green screen footage of turkey flocks.

It's set up for rehearsal of Tina's House of Stuffing. Holly plays Tina, standing in front of the green screen, wearing a jazzy cooking apron. Donna is dressed like a TV housewife.

Sal'lie steps before an old fashion microphone stand as the spokesperson.

SAL'LIE

We gather together for the holidays
and that means turkey which means
stuffing...

DONNA

I'm all discombobulated. Dave loves
his mother's chestnut stuffing and I
want to make an oyster stuffing but
maybe I should make a healthy tofu
stuffing.

SAL'LIE

Once a year you make stuffing,
stressing over the fact that if you
don't get it right, it'll be 364
days before you get to try again.
Who needs that kind of pressure?

DONNA

Not me! But what can I do?

SAL'LIE

Maybe it's time to visit Tina's House
of Stuffing.

Holly steps forward.

HOLLY

Hi, I'm Tina and I make and stock
over 300 different kinds of stuffing,
from acorn to zucchini stuffing.
There's stuffing for every person,
every occasion and every mood, from
fruit to nuts.

(MORE)

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Can't decide which to serve? Then try my Stuffing Sampler, containing up to 12 different stuffing portions.

CUT TO:

INT. STAGE - CONTINUOUS

A close up of a box of many stuffings.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

HOLLY

For those of you who can't get their fill of stuffing enjoy one of my Stuffing Logs or some Stuffing Jerky.

SFX: Visuals of stuffing logs and jerky dissolve in and out.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Or if you want to extend that stuffing spirit all year long, you can enroll yourself or a friend in Tina's Stuffing of the Month Club. Club members receive a fresh and exciting stuffing every 30 days personally selected by me! Stuffing is the gift that keeps on giving.

SAL'LIE

Too much leftover turkey but no leftover stuffing? Then pick up one of Tina's Stuffing Loafs, cut to order. Perfect for those next day turkey sandwiches.

Tom, as the husband, joins Donna at counter.

TOM

Great stuffing, honey. And you seem so calm and sedate this year. I wasn't the least bit nervous while you handled the carving knife.

DONNA

Thanks, honey. I am calm and sedate, thanks to Tina's House of Stuffing.

SAL'LIE

Come to Tina's House of Stuffing, where Tina says:

HOLLY

There's no need to be stressing,
come try my turkey dressing.

SAL'LIE

Tina's House of Stuffing, 118 Main
Street, right next to Hank's Gravy
Hut.

The rehearsal concludes, crew members start to strike the set.

DOC

Holly, we need to pick up the energy
about 30 percent. It's kind of
dragging.

HOLLY

Oh, is it?

DOC

Yeah. You don't seem to have your
heart in it-

HOLLY

Well, I'm starting to learn I need
to beware of what I put my heart in.

DOC

The sketch is solid. This is a
creative safe space. Trust the
process.

HOLLY

Frankly, the process is the only
thing I do trust!

She storms off. Beat.

DOC

Break!

Tom comes over.

DOC (CONT'D)

She's nuts.

TOM

She's not nuts.

DOC

That's normal behavior?

TOM

Ok, something is up. This is the part where you chase after her to find out what's bothering her.

DOC

It is? It is!

Tom takes the clipboard and pushes him off. Once Doc exits...

TOM

(brandishing clipboard)

Ok, you slackers, break's over!

As Doc walks, he passes by Ann, who is looking at the show's run-down. She's flipping some pages back and forth.

ANN

Where's my name?

INT. HOLLY'S DRESSING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Holly enters and Brick is standing there, being startled as he puts down some face make-up he was examining.

HOLLY

Brick? What are you doing here?

BRICK

Holly, we have to talk.

HOLLY

Not now.

BRICK

These last few days have been amazing. Just like old times. You can feel the chemistry again, right?

HOLLY

Yes, Brick, we sound great together.

BRICK

It's more than that! This isn't you! Music is what you were born to do. It's who you are.

HOLLY

Look, maybe this show wasn't the perfect fit but I'm not just what I do. I can do whatever I choose to.

BRICK

You don't want to choose these urban blights. You're a country girl. You need a country boy. Choose me. Let's hit the road and make some magic.

HOLLY

Just like that?

BRICK

Just like that. I feel special when I'm around you. And you feel it to. I know you do.

HOLLY

I certainly want to feel special. I just can't seem to hold on to that feeling around here.

BRICK

Then hold on to me, Holly. Hold on to me.

He sweeps her up in another bear hug and kisses her.

Suddenly the door opens. It's Doc.

DOC

Oh my lord, it's Hick-two-point-oh!

He hurries back out.

Holly pushes away to see Doc go.

HOLLY

Doc? Doc!

BRICK

Stop fighting it.

He picks her up again. Unexpectedly, the Roadie from the bus enters.

ROADIE

Brick, did you trick Holly into going on tour with you yet?

HOLLY

What? Who are you? Get out!

Roadie flees.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Put me down, you stinky-fingered
honey badger!

He does.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

I've had it with the both of you!
Go! Get your flea-bitten, mangy
hide out of here!

Brick leaves. She slams the door. She opens it and slams
it again. She opens it once more and slams it.

MARK (O.S.)

Ow!

She opens it. Mark is there holding his tender nose and
carrying a large year-book-like journal.

MARK (CONT'D)

Hey, Holly. I was wondering if you
could sign my book of guest hosts.
It's just a hobby of mine. I'm not
prepping it for Ebay or anything.
But I can come back when you're less
seething.

INT. STUDIO - MOMENTS LATER

Doc comes back. He's angry. Tom hands him his clipboard.
Doc takes it, breaks it in two, throws it down and storms
out.

The cast gathers around the broken clipboard.

JANET

He seems upset.

TOM

What gave it away?

JANET

He has this crimson aura.

DONNA

And he smashed his treasured clip
board.

JANET

That totally factors into it, as
well.

SAL'LIE

At least we know what to get him for
Christmas now!

JACK

Great. He's so hard to shop for.

All agreed that he is.

EXT. ROOF TOP - EVENING

Doc is pacing, muttering to himself. Then he just stops and
screams. From somewhere in the city comes:

PERSON (O.S.)

Shut up!

DOC

You shut up!

Holly pokes through the door.

HOLLY

I figured you'd be up here. Are you
alone?

DOC

Sure, violate this space as well.
It's what you do.

HOLLY

Excuse me? May I remind you that
y'all invited me here. Save your
bacon I believe was the phrase
employed.

DOC

Yeah, well, maybe the bacon wasn't
worth saving. Maybe I should have
went with the sausage or pulled pork.

HOLLY

Are you making a double entendre at
me?

DOC

What if I am? I can do anything I
want. I'm an adult. I'm a comedy
writer. I'm the head comedy writer!
I can't make something a joke if I
want to?

HOLLY

Maybe that's your problem. You make
everything a joke.

DOC

Occupational hazard. If Michael hadn't told me to be nice I'd tell you exactly what I think about you and Brick!

HOLLY

Brick?? Is that what this is about? You would sabotage the show over Brick? How unprofessional are you?

DOC

Just unprofessional enough! Deal with it!

HOLLY

That's it, I don't have to. I have an actual career. I have a life. This show won't make or break me. Why do I have to stand for this? I don't. I won't. I quit.

DOC

Quit?

HOLLY

You treated me like I was a burr under your saddle since I got here. You never wanted me here. That was plain enough. Now you won't have to be.

DOC

Be what?

HOLLY

You know what I mean!

DOC

Fine, go!

HOLLY

I'm gone!

She pulls on the door. It's stuck.

DOC

Good!

HOLLY

Good!

Still tugging on door.

DOC
You have to jiggle it!

HOLLY
Fine!

It opens.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
See? I can jiggle it just fine!

She goes.

DOC
Ha!
(beat)
Oh-oh.

PERSON (O.S.)
Shut up!

INT. LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

Ann enters with boxes of donuts. Holly comes storming out of the elevator to leave.

ANN
Hey, Holly, got the donuts...Where are you going?

HOLLY
Away! Far away!

Ann follows her out.

EXT. LAFF-TV NETWORK STUDIO PLAZA - CONTINUOUS

Holly is on the move. Ann hurries to keep up.

ANN
Holly! Wait! The show!

HOLLY
I'm done. Doc can't talk to me like that!

ANN
Like what?

HOLLY
He's just been all friendly to keep the talent happy. It was all an act. Then that polecat Brick shows up trying to get me on tour?
(MORE)

HOLLY (CONT'D)

No, that's it. I'm out. Let them work it out!

BYSTANDER

We love you, Holly!

HOLLY

(all sweet)

Aren't you sweet! Thank you, darlin'

(back to Ann)

Let those big city pigs figure it out!

She pulls away as Ann halts.

SFX: ADVENT-TYPE CALENDAR FOR THE SHOW'S PRODUCTION WEEK, WITH THE SHOW DAY SPACE OPEN.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - SATURDAY DAY

It's empty and dark. Except for Doc, sitting there, watching a playback of Holly, paused at her delightfully smiling in an elf outfit.

TOM (O.S.)

Hey, boss. Everyone's been looking for you. We have to get going. The show's tonight. What are you doing here?

DOC

I kinda ruined the sanctity of the roof.

TOM

You ready?

Doc looks up to see Tom at the door.

DOC

Doesn't matter if I am ready. If just matters that it's Saturday.

Leslie walks in.

LESLIE

We're going to have to get ready for the broadcast.

They look at her. She shrugs, sits and starts powering up the control board.

DOC
I blew it. I blew it all. I failed
the show. And I guess I don't get
to be with Holly.

TOM
But, and this is important, do you
want to be with her?

DOC
(considers)
I do.

TOM
Well, we know Brick isn't good for
her.

DOC
I pretty much proved I'm not.

TOM
You just have to prove you are.

DOC
How?

LESLIE
Well, from a director's point of
view, a grand gesture goes a long
way.

They look at her.

DOC
I don't do grand gestures. I do set-
ups and punch lines.

LESLIE
So, do a big set-up and then leave
off the punch line.

Tom shrugs and nods.

Suddenly, Ann pops in, all worked up.

ANN
There you are!

DOC
What? Is Holly back?

ANN
(trying to be tough)
What? No.

(MORE)

ANN (CONT'D)

I need to tell you that I worked on that Anti-Claus sketch with Jack and I don't see my name anywhere attached to it!

DOC

Yeah, I know. Jack told me. We're setting an "additional material" credit during the end crawl.

ANN

(back to normal)

Oh. Of course Jack told you. He said he would. Why did I doubt him? He's a good person, isn't he?

Tom, Doc and even Leslie nod.

ANN (CONT'D)

I know we just met but I felt it. I knew it. I was all set to ruin something magical and special for a writing credit. There will be other gigs but not that many Jacks. Why do I always sabotage myself like that?

DOC

Welcome to comedy.

Tom and Leslie shrug.

ANN

I'm sorry, this isn't really about the skit, when I think of it.

DOC

I used to be a good person.

ANN

I'm sure you were. I've got pre-show donuts to set out now. But thank you for restoring my faith.

She heads out.

TOM

Any time. Wait, what did you mean is Holly back?

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Ann, with the donuts, comes down the hall to Holly's room. She goes in.

INT. HOLLY'S DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ann enters. Brick and Donna are in a serious kiss.

ANN

What are you doing?

BRICK

What? Nothing...wait, who are you?

DONNA

Oh, hey, Ann.

ANN

Why are you in Holly's dressing room?

BRICK

She's not here.

DONNA

I share with Sal'lie and she's there. She needed a little "me time" after her sketch got cut and I was looking for a little "pre-show fling."

ANN

She's not back?

BRICK

"Pre-show Fling?"

ANN

So, you're just in here cheating on Doc? You're giving comedy a bad name!

DONNA

Doc? I'm not cheating on Doc.

ANN

Oh, please, we've seen you two sneaking around.

DONNA

Sneaking around?

ANN

Doc looks miserable, by the way.

DONNA

Oh, wait...We're working on a script on the down-low. He doesn't want Michael to learn about it yet.

ANN

A script? You're helping Doc with a script?

DONNA

We're friends with benefits and ghostwriting is one of the benefits.

ANN

You're not joking?

DONNA

No, but don't let that get around. I have a hilarious reputation to maintain.

BRICK

Wait a minute; What do you mean "Holly didn't come back?"

ANN

Holly thought, I mean, we both thought...oh no. That's why she stormed out of here.

DONNA

Stormed out?

ANN

She said she was done.

DONNA

She can't do that!

ANN

I know she was mad at Doc and then she got ticked off my this polecat--

BRICK

Hey!

ANN

Her words, not mine! Then Doc tried to get all alpha male on her-

DONNA

Not alpha-Doc. I've seen Alpha-Doc. It's not pretty.

ANN

Will they cancel the show if she really quit? Will my sketch get canceled?

DONNA

Come on, come on, let's find Holly.

They start out. Brick goes to follow.

DONNA (CONT'D)

No, you stay here, Daniel Boone.

ANN

Yeah, you've caused enough trouble.

The girls run out.

BRICK

Man.

Mark shows up with his autograph book.

MARK

Excuse me...

DISSOLVE

INT. BACKSTAGE - EVENING

The troupe has gathered around Doc. There's panic in the air.

SAL'LIE

The audience is queuing up outside!
What do we do?

JACK

Now can I host?

MARK

I have some great hiding places I
can share.

DOC

Stop it. It's Saturday night. We
do the show. Tom, go re-cast Holly's
parts with the rest of the group.
Grab a couple of writers to fill in
if you need to. Janet, tell cue
cards to stand by.

TOM

And you?

DOC

I have an opening monologue to write.

He pulls out a pen and his clipboard which has been duct-taped together. The troupe looks befuddled.

JANET
Hey, where's Donna?

INT. CONTROL ROOM - EVENING

Leslie is at her station with the crew at the ready. The phone rings. She picks up.

LESLIE
Of course we're ready. What? What do you mean "wing it?" Doc? Doc!

She hangs up.

LESLIE (CONT'D)
Ok, people, ready in 10. Apparently we're winging it tonight. Listen for my cues. Merry Christmas to us! Five-four-three...

They countdown to start.

LESLIE (CONT'D)
Roll opening!

Video B-roll:

The show theme plays. The credits roll, with photos of each cast member and their name appearing.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
It's time for LAFF-TV! Starring Janet Appleton! Tom Baine! Jack McCluster! Donna Shamwow! Sal'lie Tendersen! And Mark Victors as needed! Now, welcome our host Holly Rose!

Applause up.

Doc steps out to home base, acknowledging the audience as the applause drops off.

Michael is at his station looking bemused.

INTERCUT:

INT. DEVITO LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mom and Jake watch the show. Dad's asleep on the recliner. Mom and Jake look confused. Dad looks peaceful.

INT. CENTER STAGE - CONTINUOUS

Doc stands there a moment.

DOC
Hi! I'm...Edgar DeVito. I'm the
head writer here at LAFF-TV.

Quiet ensues.

INT. BACKSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Mark is in an elf costume looking out.

MARK
Edgar?

STAFF MEMBER hands Mark an index card.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

CREW MEMBER is poised over the applause sign button. Leslie
nods. She presses it.

INT. STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

The applause sign starts blinking. The audience starts to
applaud.

DOC
Welcome to the Christmas show. We
have a great show tonight. We have
no host or musical guest but it's
going to be a great show anyway.

We notice members of the troupe are scattered in the audience
now with index cards. Tom raises his hand.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

They are trying to keep up.

LESLIE
Here we go. Camera four, get Tom,
take four, now.

INT. STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

Doc acknowledges Tom.

DOC
Oh, we have a question. I'm sure
everyone has one right now.

TOM
According to my ticket stub, I was
under the impression that Holly Rose
was hosting tonight.

DOC
 Yes, we did give people that
 impression what with our commercials
 and press releases. But here's the
 thing; she's not.

Sal'lie raises her hand.

DOC (CONT'D)
 Yes? You there.

SAL'LIE
 What did you do to offend Holly Rose,
 America's country music sweetheart?

DOC
 What makes you think I did something?

SAL'LIE
 Look at you!

TOM
 Okay, good call.

Some audience members have their phones out and are posting
 like mad.

INTERCUT:

INT. COLLEGE DORM ROOM - CONTINUOUS

STUDENT reads a text, then grabs a remote and turns on LAFF-TV.

INT. APPLIANCE STORE - CONTINUOUS

A CLERK is standing by a display wall of TV sets, all playing
 different shows. The Clerk receives a text, then turns all
 the TV sets to LAFF-TV.

INT. GRAND HOTEL BAR - CONTINUOUS

Holly is at the bar with a glass of whiskey. The Bartender
 is back on duty. The bar television is playing the game.

Ann and Donna come in and see Holly.

ANN
 See? I told you!

They go to her.

ANN (CONT'D)
 Holly, are you okay?

HOLLY

I'm fine, I'm fine. Wait, no I'm not. I'm miserable.

DONNA

Look on the bright side, maybe you'll get a new song out of all of this.

HOLLY

I don't need to hear from you, you shanty-town trollop.

ANN

No, no, Holly, she's not the painted city-woman you think she is.

DONNA

No, I'm not...wait, what?

HOLLY

Doesn't matter. Doc showed his true colors. I haven't let my guard down in a very long time and I let that snide, smarmy, elitist snake slither into my life.

DONNA

Now, now, sure Doc is several of those things but you could do a lot worse. A lot. Like Brick. Doc was trying to prevent another Brick mishap.

HOLLY

Oh, please.

Just then, the Bartender gets an alert on his phone and puts on LAFF-TV. There's Doc.

DOC

Sure, Holly seems like this amazing and talented woman but once you get to know her, you realize, it's all true. It is insane just how special she is. The problem was...I still managed not to realize it.

ANN

The show! It's on!

HOLLY

What did he just say?

INTERCUT:

INT. STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

Jack raises his hand, stands and reads off the index card.

JACK

Wait, are you telling us that you like Holly Rose? You're a big-time comedy writer from the city!

DOC

Crazy, right? But yes, I like her

Janet's hand goes up.

JANET

You like her or like-like her?

DOC

I like-like her. I tried not to. I did. But it just...happened.

INT. GRAND HOTEL BAR - CONTINUOUS

Everyone is staring at the screen.

HOLLY

Is this live?

DONNA

We have to get back! We have to get back, like, now!

HOLLY

I want to see how this ends!

Ann and Donna drag her off.

DONNA

Let's move it, Annie Oakley.

INT. STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

Doc still on stage.

DOC

...So, I guess that brings you all up to date. She was here, I was a jerk and now she's not. But don't you go away, the show is prepped and ready. Nobody's here but our regulars are all set to go. We wrote some great material, so we'll figure it out--

HOLLY (O.S.)
 Wait just a corn-pone minute, Mr.
 Big City Comedy Writer.

Holly steps out to center stage. Audience goes nuts.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Leslie snapping out camera cues to the crew.

LESLIE
 Home base, give me home base! Camera
 One, Two shot, two shot! Five, Go
 to Holly!

INT. CENTER STAGE - CONTINUOUS

DOC
 Holly? You came back!

HOLLY
 After that pitiful...Opening
 monologue, I had to. I can't let
 my...fans down like that. Not after
 I had some things clarified for me.

DOC
 I never meant to hurt you or
 disrespect you. Or insult you. Or
 embarrass you. Or demean you.

HOLLY
 Yet you managed all those.

DOC
 Sorry.

HOLLY
 Are you?

DOC
 I'm saying in front of this audience.
 And our dozens of viewers. What
 more can I do?

HOLLY
 You know what.

DOC
 Come on, not that.

HOLLY
 Do it.

DOC

Fine.

He boops her nose.

DOC (CONT'D)

Boop.

HOLLY

That's how you start a show!

Segue music plays.

She kisses him. He's good with it and Audience goes nuts.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Stick around everyone!

DOC

She'll be right back!

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. STUDIO - NIGHT

MONTAGE of the scenes of sketches performed over the course of the show. There's much laughter and applause. It's going well.

INT. STUDIO - LATER

The stage is set up as a living room, decorated for Christmas. Make-Up ARTIST is refreshing Holly as the FLOOR MANAGER counts down to air. Holly is the Mom trying to feed a "baby" in a high chair. Donna swings by.

DONNA

Yo, Holly. Just so you know, this is one of Doc's sketches.

Holly looks surprised.

She sees Michael at his post, beside the monitor. He gives her a thumbs up. The sketch begins.

HOLLY

Come on, baby, it's late. It's Christmas eve. Drink your ba-ba. Mommy's got a lot to do yet. I still have to put together the bike and something called "Captain Danger's Laser Palace and Turbo Home." Be a good baby.

The kids enter. They are played by Mark, Sal'lie and Tom.

KIDS

Mom!

HOLLY

What is it, kids?

MARK

Mom, is it Christmas yet?

HOLLY

No, it's still a couple of hours
away, Bobby.

TOM

Did Santa come early, maybe?

HOLLY

No, Teddy, Santa doesn't come early.
He comes exactly on time every year.

SAL'LIE

What time does he come, Mom?

HOLLY

Bedtime. Now go to sleep, Debbie.
All of you.

Kids grumble off.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Come on, babe. Daddy's not going to
be home from the store 'til late.
Lord knows why he waits 'til the
last minute to try and find "Dolly
Crawl-about." Don't you want your
Blue's Clues Foam Neighborhood and
Action Figures? You won't get it
until you go to sleep.

Kids reenter.

KIDS

Mom!!!

HOLLY

What is it?

MARK

We can't sleep.

HOLLY

Count sheep.

SAL'LIE

But it's Christmas!

HOLLY
Then count reindeer. Upstairs,
now!...

Kids grumble off.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
All right, little one, let's get a
nice burp, then we go to sleep.
Come on, little burp...

Huge burp is heard.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
Whoa! I wanted a burp, not an
eruption!

CUT TO:

INT. BACKSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

The Monitor shows the program on air. Doc is staring at
Holly in close-up. Donna comes up to him.

DONNA
Such a sweet sketch.

DOC
Thank you. Shut up.

INT. STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

Back to the Mom and kids sketch. Kids reenter.

KIDS
Mom!

HOLLY
What?

TOM
We're too excited to sleep.

MARK
Yeah, we're thinking about all the
great presents we're going to find
under the tree.

HOLLY
Well, then think about all the coal
you're going to find in your stocking
if you don't go to bed now!

SAL'LIE
But mom, it's Christmas Eve. Santa's
already made his list.

MARK
And checked it twice!

TOM
Now doesn't count.

HOLLY
I can text him. Bed. Now.

Kids grumble off.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
There we go, darlin'. Nice and easy.
Night-night. (singing) Silent night.
Holy night. All is calm---

Kids reenter.

KIDS
Mom!

HOLLY
What!

MARK
We took a vote.

TOM
We want to watch the rest of the
Yule log on Channel 11.

HOLLY
You watched enough.

SAL'LIE
But we want to see how it ends.

HOLLY
I'll tape it for you.

MARK
Mom, did you leave cookies out for
Santa?

HOLLY
Yes.

TOM
What kind?

HOLLY
Chocolate chip.

TOM
Jimmy left Oreos last year and he
got a Mr. Savage Action Man and his
Killer Dino-Droids.

HOLLY
So?

SAL'LIE
Maybe you should put out some Oreo
cookies so we can get good stuff.

MARK
Yeah. And real Oreo. Not that bogus
Hydrox stuff.

HOLLY
Get to bed before I put out saltine
crackers and you can kiss your chance
for a polyurethane skateboard and
helmet good-by.

KIDS
But we're not sleepy!

TOM
Yeah, we want to do something
Christmas-y.

SAL'LIE
Like sing carols.

MARK
Or decorate something.

HOLLY
Okay, fine. I have something here
we can play with.

KIDS
What! What!

HOLLY
Mistletoe. You know how this works?

KIDS
No.

HOLLY
I hold it over your sister's head
and you have to kiss her!

Kids exit screaming.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
I suppose I could tell them it's
only celery. Nah.

Ann, just off stage with Jack. They giggle at the mistletoe reference with a fist bump.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
(sings)
Sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in
heavenly peace.

Audience applauds. Everyone in the background is hustling around after the end of the sketch. Lights dim. Then the cast all assemble for the wrap up and waving to camera. Holly steps forward.

Closing music plays.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
This has been the most...the most
week of my life. Good night,
everyone! Merry Christmas!

Doc comes up to Holly.

DOC
I don't want to be a cameo in your
life. I want us to be a beloved,
long-running characters.

HOLLY
Oh, you son of a muskrat!

DOC
I don't know what that means.

HOLLY
It means this...

She boops his nose again.

DOC
That seems anti-climatic.

She kisses him. Music swells. Fake snow drops. The show end credits run.

INT. DEVITO'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mom is watching. Dad's asleep in his chair. Jake looks annoyed. Mom hits Jake.

MOM

Why can't you find a girl like that?

INT. CRITERION'S OFFICE - EVENING

Mr. Criterion is watching the show with the two Nervous Executives.

CRITERION

See if you can buy that story!

Both Nervous Executives pull out their phones.

INT. STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

Michael's phone lights up and he gets it.

MICHAEL

Hello. Why yes, Dave, we can do a lot more shows like this one. As many as you need.

On Stage: As Holly and Doc kiss, Jack and Ann step up.

ANN

What a great show!

JACK

Merry Broadcast, everyone!

Mark comes out dressed as Santa.

MARK

And buy greeting cards, everybody!

DISSOLVE:

INT. CORRIDOR - LATER

Holly and Doc, arm in arm, lead the cast and crew to their cast show, all joy and happiness. We hear phrases like "Great show," "Nice job," and "Merry Christmas."

DOC

As it happens, we have a holiday break now. Three weeks off.

HOLLY

A lot can happen in three weeks.

DOC

I'm counting on it.

117.

They pass the trophy case. In the empty spot is Doc's clipboard with Holly's guitar pick held in the clip.

FADE OUT

The End