

INT. TAIM - VALERIE'S OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

VALERIE is dressed down while on her phone, long hair up in a rough style, nodding while typing on her laptop.

VALERIE

...no that's fine. I might be working on Christmas Eve but I still get paid... Oh no, I just mean the copy you're insisting I use is drek, but I'm good either way... Awww, there's that Christmas spirit, bye now.

Valerie makes a face and ends the call, closes her laptop. STC walks by looking more disheveled than normal, sees her in her office and walks in, surprised.

STC

I didn't know you people were still here. I wouldn't have dressed down so much.

He begins to eat chips from his shirt pocket.

VALERIE

Dude, one, I'm the only one here. And two, how many years have I been with TAIM? Do I ever go back to Jersey with them during Christmas?

STC

(stunned)
Ohhhh right, it's Christmas again.

Valerie sits back in her chair, yawns a moment.

VALERIE

(rolls eyes)
Exxxactly. Anyway what do you got going on?

STC finishes his snacks with wide eyes and sits across.

STC

Oh, it's going to be hashtag epic... Me and my friends are going to downtown Van Nuys to the soup kitchen.

BEAT

VALERIE
 (skeptical)
 Wait, what?

STC
 (nods)
 Yep, the alley behind has a group of bums that dress as Santa's and just wail on each other till no one is left standing... We all then go to the bridge and get liquored up and wow, do things get weird after that... You'd love it.

VALERIE
 (sarc)
 Would I STC? Would I really?

STC
 (matter of fact)
 Your violent *and* alcoholic streak would both be satisfied. Win win in my book.

Valerie shrugs, takes in a long breath, gathers her things.

VALERIE
 You're not wrong, but it's Christmas, so I at least suppress the rage a little more.

STC
 Oh right, Christmas... Wait, so if you hate your family so much, why stay alone here and not go with our best friends back to New Jersey?

She rolls her eyes again at that, getting ready to leave.

VALERIE
 First, I don't hate my family... It's my mother and I really, and she's just a low level of awful that's best to deal with from afar. And who said I would be alone?

STC
 (shrugs)
 You're all around history of disdain toward most people.

Valerie stops for a moment, glaring at him, then nods with a half smile and put's her bag around her shoulder.

VALERIE

Can't argue with that logic... To be honest; from hearing about how big and crazy Niles' family is, snipey Sierra's is, and I could just listen to Blake's parents alzheimer's fueled stories all day; I think I might take them up on their offer next year.

STC

(genuine)

My papa always goes to the villa in Tuscany during this time of year.

VALERIE

Why don't you go?

STC stares another nostalgic moment, snaps out of it and stands up abruptly from the chair.

STC

(genuine)

I told you; bum fights.

Valerie nods at that, then gestures for him to leave first.

STC (CONT'D)

No I'm good; I wanted to roam around this side of the building and get into stuff anyway.

VALERIE

Yeah no, we're in gray mode for the next week; and part of that includes removing all of your access to *TAIM* proper.

STC pauses a moment at her door, considers, nods his head.

STC

Good move... I'd just end up naked with my friends for the after after party here... We'll just go to the 7-11 parking lot instead.

VALERIE

(matter of fact)

Thank you for proving my point.

STC walks out, Valerie following, locking her office.

CUT TO:

EXT. EMPTY PUBLIC STREET - NIGHT TIME

BLAKE NILES and SIERRA are slowly walking down the street, looking somewhat roughed up. Blake is limping a bit, Niles moving his arm carefully, and Sierra fixing her hair.

Blake finally breaks the silence.

BLAKE
(thoughtful)
You know what the worst part is?

Niles and Sierra exchange looks.

SIERRA
(annoyed)
Getting in a fight with assholes at
the bar on Christmas Eve?

NILES
(sighs)
The fact that we missed our flight
while our bags keys cell phones and
other various possessions are
halfway to South Jersey?

Blake shakes his head, gestures around them.

BLAKE
No; we can't see our breath.

They all slow at the entrance to a development, Sierra and Niles expressions softening.

BLAKE (CONT'D)
(genuine)
It's Christmas Eve and it's not
cold here, like at all.

NILES
I'm not going to lie, the same
thing crossed my mind.

SIERRA
(smiling)
Yeah, I don't know how they do it
here in Cali.

Continuing to walk, they all stop at the top of a street.

BLAKE

(genuine)

Well, if I was ever going to spend the holidays in a warm climate, after everything that happened tonight; I couldn't think of anyone better.

Sierra smiles, immediately hugs Blake. He holds out his other arm as Niles rolls his eyes, trying not to smile himself.

NILES

Oh, right; this is where we 'bring it in' for a group embrace.

BLAKE

(laughing)

Exactly buddy, and you're welcome in advance.

Niles moves in and they all hug for a moment, Blake then whispering something causing them to laugh and break up. Niles stretches his neck and notices the street sign.

NILES

(surprised)

Wait a minute... I think this is Val's development.

Blake and Sierra smile at each other.

BLAKE

See, I told you trying to find another Uber, this time without a coke head driving it, would lead us to our destiny.

NILES

(awkward)

Yeah but like, I was hoping we would just end up back near *TAIM*... God only knows what Val is doing, and I just know *STC* is going to jimmy around with the locks.

Sierra begins to bounce on her feet.

SIERRA

Looks like we're about to find out; I have to pee!

BLAKE

(surprised)

Dude, again?

Sierra nods her head quickly and begins to walk down the street at a fast pace. The guys look at each other.

NILES

Juuuuussssst like at Disney.

Blake laughs patting his sore friend on his back.

CUT TO:

INT. VALERIE'S HOME - SAME TIME

SLOW FADE IN and OUT to VALERIE'S bedroom, her bathroom door cracked open. Christmas music can be heard from the inside.

SLOW FADE IN to the inside, Valerie leaning back in her big tub filled with bubbles. Hair up, eyes closed; she takes a sip of wine, lets out a long breath, relaxing more.

There's a knock on her door, which she doesn't respond to at first. It happens again; she sighs in frustration. Leaning up, she grabs a tablet on the ledge of her tub.

VALERIE

(to herself)

I swear if it's more god damn
carolers I'm releasing the hounds.

She activates her porch camera and shakes her head, stunned at seeing her people standing there.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

(to herself - surprised)

Welp, didn't see this happening.

SMASH CUT:

INT. VALERIE'S HOME - FOYER - MINUTES LATER

VALERIE is in a silk bathrobe walking toward her front door. She can hear talking from the outside and when she opens it; *HER POV*: BLAKE is trying to climb her porch, NILES rubbing the bridge of his nose, and SIERRA moving around nervously.

VALERIE

(sarc)

There's something about this that
seems... *Off*.

SIERRA
 (surprised)
 Val thank god, I was about to go on
 your side lawn, again.

Valerie opens her door wider and Sierra rushes past her
 toward her master bedroom.

VALERIE
 (annoyed)
 Wait, no, use the guest...

Valerie stops when Sierra runs into her bedroom.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
 (sarc - to herself)
Thhhaaaattt's great.

Niles and Blake walk inside next and close the door, both
 looking around in stunned silence.

NILES
 My god; it's like if Christmas and
 Prada had a child together.

BLAKE
 (surprised)
 Huh, so this is why you don't want
 us to have movie night at your
 place during Christmas time.

NILES
 Which if nothing else, calls into
 question why you put out such a
 grinch persona toward the holidays.

Valerie attempts to explain, Sierra walking back into the
 living room, looking satisfied.

VALERIE
 Yeah, I think I should be asking
 the questions; such as what the
 frig, and why aren't you all having
 your 'awesome family Jersey time?'

NILES
 (sighs)
 Much to our chagrin, it's a long
 story.

SIERRA
 (surprised)
 Val, I didn't know you liked
 Michael Buble's Christmas album.

Niles looks pleased, folding his arms as Valerie bites her lower lip, looks up and mouths *frig* silently.

CUT TO:

INT. VALERIE'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

The group are all sitting on VALERIE'S sofas, her small yet fancy Christmas tree standing off to the side. SIERRA and BLAKE are drinking wine, NILES hot chocolate.

VALERIE
(incredulous)
So let me get this straight then;
after Niles suggests you go tech-
less for the flight, stowing away
your phones with everything else...

Niles clears his throat a second.

NILES
(interrupting)
In my defense, I think it's a good
way to reconnect with one's energy.

Valerie shakes her head, rolls her eyes.

VALERIE
(sarc)
Yeah, sure it is... You then have
the poster boy for AA here drop a
deuce in the 757's bathroom, but
instead of saying that or the other
thousand ways to describe taking a
shit; he tells a nun, of all
people, to not go in after him
because he just dropped a bomb.

Blake leans forward and looking like he's about to respond, fills his glass with more wine. They all stare, he shrugs.

BLAKE
Okay what, I was feeling no pain,
and I thought I was being polite to
the nun... I mean it is Christmas
time and all, Val.

They all laugh or smirk at that.

VALERIE

Then after the TSA gets through with you three, having already missed your flights and being stranded at LAX; Sierra finds the one Uber driver with a coke habit and poor directional skills...

SIERRA

(interrupting)

Okay now in my defense, he had that skinny emo rock star vibe that I really dig.

VALERIE

(stunned)

Exactly; crack head, but I repeat myself. And of all the bars you end up at so he can get his score, it's the one that doesn't exactly take too kindly to you three.

Blake Niles and Sierra all look at each other.

BLAKE

(beginning)

In those words...

NILES

(finishing)

Pretty much yes, accurate on all counts.

Valerie nods her head making a face, finishes her wine.

SIERRA

But at least all our families know we're safe and sound with you, Val.

BLAKE

And for at least the next couple days until the airline sends back our everything.

Blake goes for the bottle of wine, see's its empty and looks at Valerie, who nods toward her kitchen.

VALERIE

Go crazy, I've got a pallet.

Blake grins and gets up, Sierra following. Niles and Valerie stand up, the former stretching again, going to the tree.

NILES

I do feel compelled to reiterate, although moot at this point, that you're always welcome to come back with us to Jersey.

Valerie nods, takes in a long breath.

VALERIE

No I know, believe me I know all your hearts are in the right place, and maybe next year. But Blake's parents are geriatric, Sierra's family is too back bitey, and yours is too loud and Italian.

Niles laughs at that, crosses his arms.

NILES

Hey, that's just my Ma's side, the other half is actually sane.

Valerie smiles, both their heads darting to the kitchen when Blake and Sierra begin laughing loudly at something.

VALERIE

(sighs)

My Christmases growing up were never all Norman Rockwell-ish like you three.

NILES

(surprised)

Oh Val, neither were ours. But that's part of dealing with the family we're born into, and the same goes for the one we choose.

They stare a moment, Valerie then hugging Niles tightly. They stop when Blake and Sierra approach them, smiling.

BLAKE

Don't let us stop you; we were just hoping it would lead to the naked kind, Val on top and all aggressive like.

SIERRA

Wait a minute Val, was their mistletoe there before?

Valerie grins and looks away, Niles looks above them and just shakes his head, awkwardly stepping aside.

BLAKE

Anyway, Sierra and I were just talking in the kitchen, and since we're locked out of our places for a while; we should probably get comfortable here.

VALERIE

That's fine, but I can only clothe one of the three of you.

Blake shrugs, begins to take his shirt off as Niles stops him. The girl's laugh as Niles just shakes his head.

NILES

This could be my pounding head on account of today's stress and what not, but let's take a trip to a 24 hour Walmart, and I'll reimburse you later, Val.

Sierra and Blake look at each other and smile, look to Valerie who nods her head in the affirmative.

VALERIE

Fine, but Niles you drive my car, I'm four deep already and I'm not slowin down.

Blake and Sierra scurry to the door, Niles waiting for Valerie. She joins him and looks above their heads; Niles following suit, surprised there's mistletoe above them.

SIERRA

(excited)
Come on guy's, they might be closing soon.

The pair nod and smile, follow the other two out.

CUT TO:

INT. WALMART - LATER THAT NIGHT

MONTAGE SET of the core four shopping in the store. BLAKE and NILES first try on sleepwear, with awkward results.

In the grocery section Blake and SIERRA are loading up the cart with booze and snacks.

Next, a skeezer Santa is sweet talking Sierra when he stops and walks away nervously; VALERIE then seen standing behind her with a display cross bow, waves sarcastically.

Later Valerie is looking at the less expensive lingerie, shaking her head disgusted; while Blake is chatting up one of the workers, following her into one of the dressing rooms.

Finally Niles goes to Valerie with some vegan snacks, she nods and smiles, gesturing above the two of them to more mistletoe above, his eyes wide.

CUT TO:

INT. VALERIE'S HOME - LATER THAT NIGHT

MONTAGE SET, everything is lit and festive, VALERIE SIERRA and BLAKE are cooking, NILES joining them. Valerie hands him hot chocolate, he notices Blake and Sierra laughing, his smile fades when looks above him and Valerie, more mistletoe.

Next they're all together watching *Christmas Vacation*; Blake then standing in front of them reenacting one of the scenes.

Finally the movie is over and now it's early Christmas morning, Blake and Sierra talking. Niles and Valerie join them handing them wrapped presents. They both look happy as the other two smile and quickly open their techy gifts.

CUT TO:

INT. VALERIE'S LIVING ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

NILES is finishing his drink on a chair while BLAKE and SIERRA play with their new devices on the carpet. VALERIE comes over and sits on the arm of the chair next to him.

VALERIE

Okay you guys, I would have been in bed hours ago if not for this surprising mishap.

SIERRA

(smiling)

You mean awesome mishap.

VALERIE

Anyway, my two bedroom rancher here only has one bed; but it's a California king, and if we all squeeze in extra tight and I just lie on Niles all night...

NILES
 (interrupting)
 Wait, aren't both these couches
 pullouts?

Niles notices Blake shudder at that.

NILES (CONT'D)
 Dude come on, I'm sure Val keeps
 them clean... Right Val?

Valerie rolls her eyes, standing up.

VALERIE
 Of course Howard Hughes, but that's
 not why Blake shook like that.

Blake stands shaking it off.

BLAKE
 Pullout? I mean come on, it's
 against nature.

The girls laugh as Niles looks typically confused.

SIERRA
 (excited)
 We can all sleep out here then!

Valerie and Niles both look like they're about to object, but
 Sierra stands with her hands out.

SIERRA (CONT'D)
 Come on... My sisters and I would
 fight all the time, but would bring
 it all together for Christmas
 night; and we'd all sleep in the
 same bed and then open presents and
 have a big breakfast in the
 morning.

Valerie and Niles exchange looks, the former throwing her
 hands up. Blake and Sierra quickly get the living room ready.

QUICK TRANSITION LATER; only Christmas lights illuminate
 Valerie's living room, inset lights on in her kitchen. Niles
 puts something away and turns to see her massaging her neck.

NILES
 (smiling tiredly)
 Long day?

VALERIE
 Not as long as yours I'm thinking.

He leans on the opposite counter and nods yes.

NILES
Well, it definitely turned out differently than what I had expected... But I find the end result to be... Positive.

Valerie nods, walks over to Niles and leans next to him.

VALERIE
You said something earlier about the family we choose... Just look at ours, sweetie.

Niles snickers at that; *CAMERA PANNING* to Valerie's living room with Blake sleeping on his back stiffly, his hands folded on his chest; Sierra next to him twisted up in the sheets with her hair all over.

NILES
(sighs)
With our alcoholic stripper son.

SIERRA
And our hyper active daughter who can't handle her booze.

They both laugh at that, Valerie turning to face Niles.

VALERIE
Well, we could have always done worse... Anyway...

Valerie trails off, taking in a long breath with a subtle smile. Niles just closes his eyes, shakes his head slowly.

NILES
It's above us again, isn't it?

Valerie puts her hands on Niles shoulders and nods yes, he opening his eyes and looking up, then at her.

NILES (CONT'D)
I mean is it AI, following us on some kind of magnetic device somehow?

VALERIE
Don't ask questions you don't need the answers to... The point is, if they're our kids, then you're my hubby, baby.

NILES

(without a beat)

Ah, then if we're married in this scenario; we can be like those couples on TV in the 1950's that slept in different beds.

Niles laughs a little, Valerie squeezing his shoulders.

VALERIE

Can I tell you something private?

NILES

Is it going to make me uncomfortable?

VALERIE

(grinning tiredly)

In every way, yes.

NILES

(sighing)

Well you did put yourself out for us... *Oof*, wrong choice of words. See I'm already uncomfortable... Let's just call it a night then.

Valerie shakes her head no, lets her long hair fall down past her shoulders sensuously.

VALERIE

I had always fantasized that if I ever got married, and my husband and I were caught under the mistletoe; that we could kiss each other, wherever we wanted to.

NILES

(thoughtful)

You know, this might be the fatigue; but I can see how that would promote romance and...

Surprised at that, Valerie moves to the opposite counter and undoes her robe.

VALERIE

(interrupting)

Welp, I guess we know where you'll be nuzzling for the next hour or so... Go nuts and use a lot of tongue, I won't mind.

Niles bites his lower lip at that, looks away a second trying not to laugh, looks back at a smiling Valerie. He goes to her as her smile fades, taking her one hand in his.

NILES
(quietly)
Merry Christmas, Val.

He then moves her hand and kisses the back of it. Valerie then puts her hands around Niles' neck, she stares a few seconds as he swallows awkwardly.

Slowly she pulls him into a tight hug, kissing the side of his neck a moment later. She then whispers in his ear.

VALERIE
(genuinely)
Merry Christmas, Niles.

They then separate staring quietly at each other, the silence broken from the living room.

FROM THEIR POV; Sierra is now on the other side with her one foot on Blake's chest, Blake still in the same position as before. This causes Valerie and Niles to exchange looks.

NILES
Okay, so it's not just me.

VALERIE
Dude, Blake looks like he's in a coffin and Sierra possessed.

NILES
Yikes, I'll say... Anyway, off to your bathtub then.

Valerie is about to object when Niles smiles, the former rolling her eyes as she walks toward her bedroom.

NILES (CONT'D)
Promise you won't make this a whole thing, okay?

VALERIE
For sure, and because I know you sleep naked I'll do the same; so you won't feel weird.

NILES
(awkward)
Ohhhh yeah; not sure if you're serious or not.

Niles follows her in the bedroom and she closes the door.

CUT TO:

INT. VALERIE'S BEDROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

TIGHT ON VALERIE, sleeping. She moves a little; *CAMERA SLOWLY PULLS BACK* to show she's asleep on NILES' chest. She stirs a little and opens her eyes, looks up at him and smiles, puts her head back down on him.

CAMERA CONTINUES TO PULL BACK SLOWLY; revealing BLAKE asleep next to Valerie on her side; SIERRA asleep next to Niles' on his side. They all look comfortable and content.

CAMERA CONTINUES TO PULL BACK SLOWLY; *final shot* of STC at the bottom of Valerie's bed, shirtless and in a potato sack for some reason.

END SAMPLE