

A CHRISTMAS IN ORDERVILLE¹

BY

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FADE IN:

EXT. DOWNTOWN ORDERVILLE² - DAY

DONNA WYNTERS, 22, runs down Main Street. She is dressed in urban-looking running clothes. The town and its folksy residents are decorated for Christmas. Snow (obviously fake) covers everything but the street, sidewalks, and pedestrians. Peppy Christmas music plays over the opening credits.

CUT TO:

INT. HOLLYWOOD SKYSCRAPER - BOARDROOM

A whooshing sound effect, like someone blowing into a microphone, signals a Nolan-esque³ time-jump.

SUPERIMPOSE: One Week Earlier

DONNA stands at the front of a boardroom. She is dressed in an expensive pantsuit. Behind her is a flatscreen TV with a large Christmas-colored graph.⁴ About 10-15 obviously bored people in designer suits and slick hair sit around a long table.

DONNA

As you can see from this graph,
people are tired of the same old
Christmas movies. They want
something new.

CUT TO:

¹ Grandpa wrote this screenplay fragment when he was fifteen. In his 2013 journal, he mentions working on the screenplay and "trying to completely subvert the Hallmark paradime [sic]" (see entry for Dec. 14).

² Orderville is a small town in southern Utah, not far from the entrance of Zion National Park. Grandpa likely set the screenplay there because of its history with Mormon polygamy.

³ At the next family reunion we should debate whether this so-called "time-jump" is actually "Nolan-esque" or simply a conventional flashback.

⁴ A bit on the nose, but grandpa may have intended that. Another journal entry mentions his desire to "pretend to give the audience what they want only to give them what they really want" (see Dec. 19).

EXT. DOWNTOWN ORDERVILLE - DAY

DONNA ends her run in front of a cozy Christmas-themed diner called Kringle's. She rolls her eyes and enters. A bell jingles.

CUT TO:

INT. HOLLYWOOD SKYSCRAPER - TIM'S OFFICE

The jingling bell morphs into a whoosh, signaling another time-jump. DONNA paces in front of a sleek modern desk. Behind the desk sits TIM, 26, a sharp dude who looks like he's never gone two weeks without a haircut.⁵

DONNA

I can't believe they're going with another company!

TIM

I told you this would happen! They've built an entire business on Christmas cheer!

DONNA

I just thought...

TIM

You didn't think, Donna! That's the problem! And I'm saying that as your boss...and your fiancé.

CUT TO:

INT. KRINGLE'S

DONNA enters the diner and sees PAULA, 22, her no-nonsense childhood friend, sitting at a booth. PAULA waves to her and they embrace.

PAULA

You're back! We've missed you in Orderville!

DONNA

I doubt it!

⁵ Hilarious. You'll recall that grandpa said this about Uncle Mike when he joined the family.

PAULA

Your family has lived in this small Mormon⁶ town for more than a century, Donna. You will always have a place here.

DONNA

I guesse I thought my Orderville days were behind me.

PAULA (TEASING)

Because of a man?⁷

CUT TO:

INT. HOLLYWOOD SKYSCRAPER - TIM'S OFFICE

Whoosh! DONNA and TIM stand at his office window. The Hollywood sign can be seen in the distance.

TIM

I guess you can take the Orderville out of the girl, but you can't take the girl out of Orderville.

DONNA

What does that mean?

TIM

It means you need to go home, Donna. It means you need to figure out what Christmas means...to you.

DONNA

You know why Christmas is hard for me, Tim.

⁶ Typical grandpa. In his journal entry for July 21, 2014, he wrote, "One day I will be greater than Peterson and Thayer combined." Apparently, Levi Peterson and Douglas Thayer were Mormon novelists from the late twentieth century.

⁷ Haha. This is so comically bad!

TIM

Yes, Donna. But do you?

DONNA

Don't you dare say that!

TIM

Donna, I think we need some space...at least until you work out your issues with Christmas.

INT. KRINGLE'S

DONNA looks sad as she sips gourmet hot chocolate with PAULA. A melancholy Christmas song is playing over the diner speakers.

PAULA

You know, I never could see you with a city slicker.

(A BEAT)

Still, maybe he's right.

DONNA

I want to love Christmas, Paula. I just don't know that I can.

PAULA (ENCOURAGINGLY)

Well, Tony and I are decorating Christmas cookies tomorrow. Why don't you stop by?

DONNA (SIGHING)

If you insist!

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. RURAL ORDERVILLE ROAD - NIGHT

DONNA, dressed in stylish winter clothes, walks down a road. She stumbles and looks at her feet. She sees a horseshoe and picks it up. She regards it briefly and then looks at the sky. A star twinkles.

DONNA

I wish...this simple Mormon town
could help me...learn to love
Christmas again.

The star twinkles again and DONNA smiles. Then, off screen, we hear the clattering of hooves. DONNA looks up and sees a horse-drawn carriage barreling towards her. A horse squeals⁸ as Donna falls into the snow.

WILLARD (O.S.)

Whoa! Teancum!

The carriage screeches⁹ to a stop and WILLARD HYDE, 26, leaps out to help DONNA. He is in pioneer clothes and looks like he belongs on the cover of a western romance novel.

~~SUPERIMPOSE: Orderville, 1883~~¹⁰

WILLARD (O.S.)

Are you okay, sister? I did
not see you yonder.¹¹

WILLARD takes DONNA in his arms. She looks flustered, but when she looks into WILLARD's eyes, she becomes charmed.

DONNA

I'm sorry...I didn't see you
either.

WILLARD

I am Willard Hyde. I am
bishop in these parts.¹²

⁸ Do horses squeal? Grandpa's suburban roots betray him here.

⁹ And do carriages screech? Again, suburbia.

¹⁰ Crossed out in red ink. Deleted for subtlety, no doubt.

¹¹ Yonder! I'm dying!

¹² The fragment ends here, unfortunately, but Grandpa's journal gives some clues about where he wanted to take the story. On December 12, he writes that Mildred, Donna's "great-great-great-great grandmother," would "plant a more nuanced love for Christmas in her heart." Then, two days later, he cryptically scribbles "third act crisis: Willard is a polygamist!" in the journal's margins. He says nothing about the screenplay's ending, but knowing grandpa, he probably planned to have Willard die in a bloody shootout with U.S. marshals.