

THE COMPANY

"A Company Christmas Carol"

By
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FADE IN:

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

A CHARITY SANTA, his rosy face half hidden beneath a wispy beard, rings a BELL on a street corner.

SANTA

Ho ho ho! Merry Christmas!

THWACK! A snowball hits him in the face! He smiles and sighs in relief as the icy mush slides down his neck.

A group of barefoot KIDS race around him. Shrieking with glee, they throw melting snow cones at each other.

Definitely not your stereotypical "Christmas" scene, the city is sweltering. The mid-summer sun is high in the sky, beating down onto the sweating faces of those brave enough to face the outside world. Two such souls being --

-- VI and SHANE.

They walk past Santa, with the kids running along nearby. Vi holds a dry-cleaning bag while Shane babbles excitedly.

SHANE

... Oh, and the games! Secret Santa, definitely. Then there's this one Tabitha's sister sent over from Amsterdam - "Who Shot Rudolph?". It's kinda like "Clue", I think, except whoever is Mrs. Claus has to wear this really slutty outfit and Tabitha keeps trying to volunteer Jimmy so, yeah, awkward.

(then)

Jimmy! Yes! He bribed the Fire Chief with Lady Gaga tickets so they're totally turning a blind eye to the Wicker's fire regulations. Everyone is gonna be there. People I don't even know.

(beat)

Which is a lot of people, Vi.

For the first time, Shane realises that Vi isn't listening. She is eyeing the kids, an annoyed expression on her face.

SHANE (CONT'D)

Vi?

There's no reply.

SHANE (CONT'D)

(testing her)

I just bought an emu farm,
y'know. Yep. Just sitting there
one day thinking, "What is an emu
farm? Is it like a sheep farm?".
But you can't shear emus can you?

VI

You kill them. You kill them, and
you eat them. Emu meat.

SHANE

Oh. Gross.

(then)

Ah! But you were listening!

Vi rolls her eyes.

VI

Of course I was listening. I'm a
girl. I can multi-task, y'know.

SHANE

So you're coming tonight?

VI

Christmas Eve, party at the
Wicker? Where else would I be?

SHANE

Awesome.

Suddenly, the kids dash in front of them. A snow cone
spills on the dry-cleaning bag that Vi is holding.

VI

Watch it!

She wipes off the sticky melting ice in disgust.

SHANE

Hey, no dramas. They're just
trying to cool you down.

Vi glares at the retreating kids.

VI

(under her breath)

I'll cool them down.

SHANE

Nice threat, Vi. Chilling.

(beat; laughs)

Heh. Chilling. Like, "to the
bone" but also because of the...

(off her steely look)

... frozen... treats.

(MORE)

SHANE (CONT'D)

(then)

Are you okay?

VI

I'm fine.

Shane raises an eyebrow.

VI (CONT'D)

Okay, so I'm a little annoyed.

SHANE

Why?

Vi bites her lip, considering. Then, holding up the dry-cleaning bag, she starts to unzip it.

VI

I've got this new assignment...

Angled away from the camera, we can't see inside as she shows the contents to Shane. His face, however, lights up.

Off his delighted, teasing grin --

CUT TO:

EXT. "SANTA'S VILLAGE" - ENTRANCE - DAY

Static-prone speakers pump out generic holiday MUSIC.

Vi, looking ridiculous in a green and red striped tunic, curled shoes (with bells on the toes) and pointed elf ears, stands in front of a "Welcome to Santa's Village" sign.

She waves sunburnt FAMILIES into the gaudy Christmas attraction with a "kill me now" look on her face.

VI

(monotone)

Welcome to Santa's Village. Have your picture taken with Santa every day at eleven, two and four o'clock. Also, don't forget to visit the Christmas Tree Maze and pet a real live reindeer.

Suddenly breaking out of character, Vi grabs the arm of a passing FATHER, walking with his YOUNG FAMILY.

VI (CONT'D)

But don't feed them, trust me. One of them has gastric problems. (ominous)

And I'm not gonna tell you which one.

The disturbed Father pulls away. Vi is left alone. A beat.

VI (CONT'D)
This is ridiculous.

She looks to the sky and gives her tunic a tug.

VI (CONT'D)
This thing is like a polyester
microwave! What the hell am I
doing here? Just give me a Sign!

She looks around, searching. Her eyes land on the "Santa's Village" sign behind her. Only now it says, "Keep Smiling".

Glowering, Vi turns back as some more PEOPLE walk towards the entrance. The loop of irritating MUSIC starts up again.

CLOSE ON VI'S EYE

It twitches.

CUT TO:

EXT. MORGAN RESIDENCE - DAY

The outside of the house is decorated elegantly. A wreath on the door, fairy lights woven through the porch railings.

INT. MORGAN RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

A scene from "The Muppet Christmas Carol" plays on the TV.

Michael Caine sweeps through the streets of London as Muppets pops into frame, SINGING about mean ol' Scrooge.

Then, a ROARING noise - not part of the movie - starts up.

CAM, on the couch, looks to see CAROLINE vacuuming around the Christmas tree. He's annoyed.

CAM
Mum...
(no reply; louder)
Mum!

She stops, turning off the appliance.

CAROLINE
Yes, Cam?

He merely motions to the TV.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)
Oh, pssh! You've seen it a
thousand times.

Cam pauses the DVD.

CAM

Exactly. Participating in a Christmas tradition here! You should support me because soon enough, I'll be all grown up.

He blinks innocently.

CAM (CONT'D)

One day, I might not even believe in Santa anymore.

Caroline rolls her eyes and drops the vacuum handle.

CAROLINE

Fine. Watch your stupid puppets.

She moves around the couch. Cam starts the DVD again.

CAM

(over his shoulder)
They're Muppets!

Caroline heads for the doorway to the front hall, but PENNY appears - carrying an arm load of festive looking blankets.

PENNY

Found them.

CAROLINE

Oh, great! Thanks Penny.

She takes a blanket and shakes it out. Dust flies. Penny drops the other blankets on a nearby chair.

PENNY

Mum, it's forty degrees outside. We don't need blankets.

CAROLINE

It's nice.

PENNY

It's insane.

CAROLINE

I already told you, I just want --

PENNY

Christmas like you had back in the "old country", I know.

CAROLINE

It's not the "old country", it's the "mother country".

A wave of nostalgia comes over her.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

Every year, the English cousins invited the whole family over for Christmas. They had this huge old manor in the countryside, just surrounded by snow covered hills. At night, we'd stoke up the fire and wrap ourselves up in blankets and drink hot chocolate and --

PENNY

(groans)

Kill me.

Caroline frowns and starts shaking out the other blankets.

CAROLINE

It wouldn't hurt you to have a little respect, you know.

PENNY

And it wouldn't hurt you to think about having a proper Australian Christmas this year.

CAROLINE

Which is?

CAM

(from the couch)

Race riots on the beach?

Caroline and Penny turn to him.

PENNY

First of all, that reference is dated like whoa. Second, why don't you save the political comedy for somebody with underarm hair, pipsqueak.

(back to Caroline)

And it doesn't have to be the beach! We could just have a barbecue or something outside.

(smiles hopefully)

I don't need the beach to wear that new bikini I asked for.

Caroline realises where this has been going.

CAROLINE

I didn't get you the bikini, Penny.

PENNY

What?!

CAROLINE

Sticking post-it notes over your nipples would've covered more.

She heaves up the blankets and exits. Penny, stunned, locks eyes with Cam.

CAM

Did she just say...

PENNY

The word "nipples"? Yes.

Cam turns back around, facing the TV. He looks disturbed.

CAM

Guess I'm all grown up now.

INT. MORGAN RESIDENCE - FRONT HALL - DAY

Vi enters, the BELLS on her curled shoes jingling. She is exhausted. Halfway to being completely dead on the inside.

PETER clomps down the stairs, wrapped gifts piled in his arms. He stops at the bottom and smiles at her.

PETER

What? You're not working tonight?

Vi looks confused.

PETER (CONT'D)

I thought you'd be working overtime. Trying to get all those toys finished in time.

VI

(not smiling)

Very funny, Dad.

Her eyes go to the presents he's holding. All the tags say "To Vi". Peter catches her looking. He shifts, awkward.

PETER

I know, I know. The rule is that we're supposed to wait until tonight to bring everything down but the tree just look so bare without any --

VI

(with a sinking feeling)

-- Presents.

PETER

Exactly.

He frowns, studying Vi's suddenly pale face.

PETER (CONT'D)
Vi-Pie? What's wrong?

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. SHOPPING CENTRE - LATER

The place is busy, it's the Christmas Eve rush. But no one is as panicked as Vi - frantically rifling through a bin of rejected items outside a National Geographic store.

She's still got her costume on which adds to the crazy.

VI
(still rifling; to
herself)
Stupid! Stupid! Stupid! Stupid!

ANDREW appears beside her. He holds up a plastic frog.

ANDREW
What about this?

He presses something and a tiny light bulb goes on inside its mouth.

VI
What is that?

ANDREW
No idea. But tell your sister
that Zac Efron has one and she'll
love it.

Vi gets back to the items in front of her.

VI
She's not twelve.

ANDREW
Vi, everyone loves The Zefron.

VI
Are you going to help me or you
going to make jokes?

ANDREW
I can't do both?

Vi rolls her eyes. She walks away, out into the main concourse of the mall, and stops at the next shop along.

She goes to a rack of t-shirts and starts to flip through.

ANDREW (CONT'D)
 (as he catches up)
 What kind of genius forgets to buy Christmas presents for her family, anyway?

VI
 The one who doesn't have time because she's too busy rescuing kids who can't find their way out of the easiest Christmas Tree Maze ever.

ANDREW
 Did you also forget about tonight?

Vi's "t-shirt flipping momentum" slows.

VI
 Uh... No...

ANDREW
 Vi!

VI
 (quickly; remembering)
 I didn't forget! Eggnog party at your place. I remembered. See?

ANDREW
 It's not just any eggnog party, Vi. It's our First Annual "Drink eggnog, realise it's disgusting and try not to throw up" Christmas Extravaganza!

A suspicious beat.

VI
 Did you make coasters?

ANDREW
 Just a test batch.

Vi smiles a little. But her mood quickly drops again when she looks back to the rack of t-shirts.

Shoving them away, she walks off. Andrew jogs to catch up with her. When he does, he puts an arm around her.

ANDREW (CONT'D)
 It's alright, Vi. We'll find something for your family.

Vi jerks away and turns to him - distressed.

VI

On Christmas Eve? Andrew, it's so bad, I'm actually considering the Zefron frog.

(then; to herself)

I hate Christmas.

Andrew is shocked. He is so taken aback that he, well, takes a step back.

ANDREW

Wow! Okay... Wow... You wanna kick some puppies as well?

Vi isn't offended. In fact, she's building up momentum.

VI

So what? I think I'm allowed to hate Christmas. It sucks. It's three billion degrees everywhere we go, we're forced to wear stupid outfits that --

(to her jingling feet)

-- Will not shut up!

(back to her rant)

And, really, who's profiting from this? Orphans? The economy? National bloody Geographic?!

She takes several deep heaving breaths. A WIDE ANGLE reveals concerned SHOPPERS giving her a wide berth.

VI (CONT'D)

(calmer)

Why is it so wrong for me to be in a bad mood? I'm not hurting anyone. Nobody would even notice if I wasn't here. So I guess it doesn't matter.

She sighs and looks around.

VI (CONT'D)

This is pointless.

Andrew looks sympathetic.

ANDREW

You wanna try Bath and Body?

VI

No. I think I'm done.

She walks off, shoes JINGLING. Andrew sadly watches her go.

The soft sounds of people SINGING fade in...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - NIGHT

A group of CAROLERS sing "Silent Night". FAMILIES and COUPLES emerge from their decorated houses to watch.

INT. MORGAN RESIDENCE - VI'S ROOM - SAME TIME

Vi is at her window, looking out at the Carolers. A beat.

VI

Bah humbug.

She SLAMS the window closed.

CAROLINE (O.S.)

Vi! It's time!

Vi takes a deep breath and goes to her bedroom door. She drags her feet like she's walking to the gallows.

INT. MORGAN RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Peter, Caroline, Penny and Cam bustle around the tree - all arranging beautifully wrapped gifts.

CAROLINE

Honey, put that one over there.
It's blocking those others.

PETER

(moving a large box)
They don't mind. They're shy.

CAROLINE

It looks nicer. Big goes behind
small.

PENNY

That's why Cam's always in the
front in school pictures.

CAM

(sarcastic)
Aw, funny.

Penny grins. She spies the gift in his hands.

PENNY

Ooh - is that for me?

She reaches for it but he spins away.

CAM

Get off!

Turned away from the group, Cam now faces the doorway.

CAM (CONT'D)

Oh, hey, Vi.

(then)

Where are your presents?

Vi, hands empty, moves further inside. As the rest of the family turn to look at her, she smiles casually.

VI

Here's the thing...

PENNY

You didn't get us anything?

VI

Well... Not really.

She steps forward - jumping in before they can speak.

VI (CONT'D)

I was just kind of busy with this summer job at Santa's Village and, y'know, with school and everything.

CAROLINE

Vi, school is over.

VI

Thinking about school. Mentally preparing myself. It's my last year, I've gotta stay sharp.

CAM

But we got you presents.

An awkward beat.

VI

I... I know. And thanks. Really.

Caroline and Peter share one of those parental "something needs to be said" looks. Caroline turns to Vi.

CAROLINE

Vi, sweetie, we understand that you've had a lot on your plate but we're disappointed. Not about the gifts. They're just material objects.

Over by the tree, Penny leans down to Cam.

PENNY

(whispers; longing)

All I asked her for was a gift certificate.

CAM
(sighs; disappointed)
Ant farm.

PENNY
Bitch.

Back with Caroline and Vi, who haven't heard the little off-stage conversation. Caroline looks genuinely saddened.

CAROLINE
What's disappointing is that
you're showing us that you don't
really care.

VI
Oh, like it really matters
whether I care or not.

A stunned beat. Nobody was expecting that response.

CAROLINE
Excuse me?

VI
I love you guys but, let's face
it, you're going to have a great
time tomorrow despite this whole
"me not giving you presents"
thing.

CAROLINE
Er... Peter? A little help.

Peter jumps in.

PETER
Vi, I don't understand where this
is coming from. What are you
saying?

Vi throws her hands up in frustration.

VI
Just that you guys really need a
reality check if you're hanging
your enjoyment of Christmas on
me. I seem to remember you all
getting by just fine last year.

Peter reacts to that - stung. In fact, all the Morgans take this statement surprisingly hard. Caroline is angry.

CAROLINE
Alright, Vi. That's enough. You
can go back upstairs now.

Vi meets her hard stare - challenging.

VI
Actually, I'd like some air.

She exits.

EXT. CITY STREET - LATER

Walking and still in a foul mood, Vi passes the Charity Santa from earlier. He rings his BELL at her.

CHARITY SANTA
Ho ho ho! Merry Christmas!

VI
Shove it.

Vi's phone RINGS. She checks the screen before she answers.

VI (CONT'D)
Hey, Andrew.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. CORNER MARKET - SAME TIME

Andrew, basket in one hand and phone to his ear, stands in front of the eggnog. He studies a carton quizzically.

ANDREW
What are your thoughts on
peppermint?

VI
Context, please.

ANDREW
I'm at that specialty market on
Sixth. The place that has the --

VI
Eggnog, yeah. And?

ANDREW
It's all they have.
(reading carton)
With "peppermint extract".
(then)
What exactly do they extract?

VI
It's dignity?

She sighs. Andrew frowns, worried.

ANDREW
Everything okay, kid?

VI
Yeah, I'm --

She stops and reconsiders.

VI (CONT'D)
Actually, no. Things at home are
sort of crazy at the moment. I
can't really go out right now.

A car HONKS as it drives past her. Vi scrambles to cover
the phone speaker. Cringes. Then, back into the phone:

VI (CONT'D)
So...

ANDREW
You can't make our extravaganza?

VI
'Fraid not. Sorry, Andrew.

Andrew shrugs and puts the eggnog into the basket anyway.

ANDREW
Hey, it's cool. I ended up
inviting some more people so
it'll still be fun. Especially
since now I can put booze in it.

Vi is relieved.

VI
Okay, great. Save some for me?

ANDREW
You wish.
(then)
Merry Christmas, kid.

VI
Ditto.

She hangs up, not even a little bit guilty.

END INTERCUT.

EXT. WICKER RECORDS - NIGHT

A guitar-heavy, punk-pop version of "12 Days of Christmas"
plays over the sound system. The store is empty of
customers as Shane, JIMMY and HANNAH put up some final
decorations.

Jimmy is up on a raised platform, setting up a male
mannequin dressed in a sexy Mrs. Claus costume.

SHANE

No, no - Slutty Mrs. Claus goes on the left side of the stage.

JIMMY

If you must know, Manny here is in a loving monogamous relationship. Take your slut-shaming elsewhere, dude.

SHANE

That's what it says on the box!

A loop of tinsel whips over Shane's head. It slips down around his middle and tightens. Shane reacts in surprise, turning to see Hannah wrangling the sparkly lasso.

HANNAH

Got you.

SHANE

I live to be gotten.

Hannah grins and reels him in. Standing toe-to-toe, they stare deeply into each other's eyes. Hannah glances up.

HANNAH

I feel like there should be mistletoe or something.

Shane groans. He angles back towards Jimmy.

SHANE

Damnit, Jimmy! We need mistletoe!

He looks back to Hannah. She lunges forward and kisses him. Shane closes his eyes and leans into it.

JIMMY (O.S.)

When you guys are done sucking face, I need some help over here!

They pull apart, Shane looking less than pleased with the interruption. Hannah doesn't seem to mind. She smiles.

HANNAH

Happy Christmas.

She kisses him quickly on the nose and darts away.

SHANE

(sighs)
I love the holidays...

He follows her, the tinsel around his waist trailing on the ground. He passes the window and reveals Vi - looking in.

EXT. WICKER RECORDS - CONTINUOUS

Out here, the MUSIC is muffled. Vi watches as Jimmy climbs a ladder propped up beside a towering Christmas tree.

Shane and Hannah join him and begin handing him ornaments.

Vi moves to the door and puts her hand against it - about to enter. She hesitates, watching the others inside.

Then, she drops her arm and walks away into the night.

INT. THE COMPANY - RECEPTION - NIGHT

Through the elevator, Vi enters into the dimly lit room.

With no decorations and no sign of life, the places gives off an eerie, unsettling vibe. Vi, however, looks relieved.

VI

At least some people haven't gone completely nuts.

But, in the silence, we hear LAUGHTER and... SINGING.

Morbidly curious, Vi ventures down the hallway - following the sound.

INT. THE COMPANY - DINING HALL - NIGHT

Vi pushes open the double doors and takes in the scene.

Inside, EMPLOYEES are partying it up - wearing paper hats, drinking and have a blast. It's disturbing, but nothing compares to the show going on at the end of the room.

BENSON and SIDNEY - both completely plastered - belt out a Christmas classic on the karaoke machine. They're terrible.

BENSON & SIDNEY

(singing)

Deck the halls with boughs of
holly! Fa la la la la la la la
la! Tis the season to be jolly!
Fa la la la la la la la la!

(slurring; forgetting
the words)

Done me now the... ah...

They MUMBLE through for a few second and then --

SIDNEY

Everybody!

EMPLOYEES

Fa la la la la la la la la!

Vi slowly backs out of the room.

INT. THE COMPANY - CONTROL CENTRE - NIGHT

Vi slips into the cavernous room. She makes her way past the softly BEEPING computer consoles and heads upstairs.

INT. THE COMPANY - JENNA'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Vi enters. Like the control centre, it's empty. Vi sighs in relief. She is exhausted - physically and emotionally.

She sinks down into the chair behind Jenna's desk and spins a little. What now? She looks around and innocently reaches for Jenna's computer. She flicks it on. It HUMS to life.

She thinks, types something and settles in.

VI
Thank God for YouTube.

She props her chin up with her hand, eyes on the screen.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE COMPANY - JENNA'S OFFICE - LATER

Vi is asleep, slumped and drooling on the keyboard.

Something WHIRS in the darkness of the room and she snaps awake. She tries to get her bearings.

VI
Oh...

Glancing down at the keyboard, she sees the drool.

VI (CONT'D)
(grossed out)
Oh...

The WHIRRING starts up again. The FAX MACHINE is on. It spits out a sheet of paper which flutters to the floor.

Vi crosses the room and picks it up. She goes to put it on the desk, leaving it for Jenna, but stops. Something's off.

At the top of the page, it reads: "ATTN: VIOLET MORGAN".

VI (CONT'D)
What?

She scans the rest of it.

VI (CONT'D)
(reading)
"Tonight you will be visited by
three ghosts".

A stunned beat. Then, she laughs. She pulls out her mobile phone and starts to text.

VI (CONT'D)
 Very funny, Andrew. Don't know
 how you knew I was in here but --

She's cut off by the fax machine which churns out another page. She stops texting and snatches it up before it falls.

It reads: "The first ghost will appear at midnight".

VI (CONT'D)
 Midnight...

CLOSE ON HER PHONE

The tiny glowing numbers flash from 11:59 to 12:00.

VI

puts it back in her pocket - unimpressed.

VI (CONT'D)
 (calling out)
 Okay, I get it. I'm a Scrooge,
 hah-hah. Big laughs all round.

A mysterious WIND rolls through the room, rustling the paper in Vi's hand. She drops it and takes a wary step back, obviously starting to get creeped out.

VI (CONT'D)
 (voice shaking)
 You can stop now. Really.
 (beat)
 Andrew?

Something WHISPERS in the dark corners of the room. It's all around her. Vi gulps and takes another step back.

She stumbles into the desk - her hand landing on the computer mouse. There's a BURST OF SOUND from behind her.

Vi SCREAMS and whirls around to face the computer. Still on YouTube, a video of a cat playing the keyboard has started.

She recovers, chuckling in embarrassment.

VI (CONT'D)
 Play me off, Keyboard Cat.

She switches it off and turns to go --

-- Where she finds KOU, standing in the doorway!

A long moment passes, then:

KOU
I don't get a scream? You
screamed for Keyboard Cat.

Vi finds her voice.

VI
W-what are you... You're dead.

KOU
Typically the definition of
"ghost" but, as you'll come to
see, I'm the exception tonight.

He moves further into the room.

KOU (CONT'D)
So how've you been, Vi? Did you
get that little Sign problem
fixed up?

VI
Yeah. I'm good.
(beat; awkward)
How... are you?

KOU
A little pressed for time,
actually. We need to get moving.

He motions to the door. Vi doesn't budge.

VI
Silly question. How are you here?

KOU
Well, you're not crazy. So, you
can be thankful for that.

VI
Good. Great.

She waves her hand behind her, searching for the chair.

VI (CONT'D)
I need to sit down.

Kou darts forward, pulls the chair over and eases her onto
the seat. Vi takes several calming breaths.

KOU
And, to answer your question, I'm
here because... I'm the Ghost of
Christmas Past.

VI

Ghost of Christmas Past? As in, Charles Dickens, Tiny Tim, "God bless us everyone"?

Kou nods. Vi's eyes widen. She's panicking.

VI (CONT'D)

This isn't real. I'm dreaming. I was watching a lot of YouTube and I think it warped my brain. Like when you go to sleep with a fever and dream about ninjas living in your walls.

KOU

I never said this was real.

VI

So it is a dream?

KOU

Didn't say that either.

He makes another move for the door.

KOU (CONT'D)

Come on. We've really got to go.

Vi stands and folds her arms defensively.

VI

And why the hell should I go with you? I didn't sign up for any Scrooge redux, okay?

Kou thinks for a beat. Then --

KOU

Say this is a dream, or say that it's not. Either way, I'm here. If you come with me, it's the perfect chance for you to get something off your chest. Something you've been wanting to say for awhile. Who knows if you'll have that chance again?

He smiles, strong and encouraging. Vi considers. And joins him at the door.

VI

Fine. But if Freddy Kruger shows up, I am so out of here.

Together, they step through the doorway.

FLASH TO:

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - BAR - DAY

WAIT-STAFF hurry in and out of the kitchen, carrying trays of complicated looking food to nicely dressed PATRONS.

Vi and Kou stand by the bar, going unnoticed.

KOU
You remember this?

VI
Uh, sure.

She points to a passing WAITRESS.

VI (CONT'D)
Pretty sure she was on Australian Idol last season. Could hold a note but had the "crazy eyes".

KOU
I meant the restaurant.

VI
I know what you meant. And how could I? I've never even been...

A duplicate of Vi walks past. She's a year younger, dressed nicely, and she doesn't see "our" Vi at all.

VI (CONT'D)
(remembering)
Oh, yeah. That's right.

Vi follows the copy of herself.

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - DINING AREA - MOMENTS LATER

"Past Vi" slips into a seat at a table with the rest of the Morgans. They're all dressed up for a special occasion.

Our Vi steps up behind her, followed by Kou. They watch the Morgans as they finish off their Christmas lunch.

VI
Last Christmas. I was still grounded after shredding dad's book, but mum decided she didn't want to cook so...

She waves to the table.

VI (CONT'D)
That's why we're here.
(turns to Kou)
But why are we here?

KOU

Just watch.

They turn their attention to the others. Caroline clutches a camera and tries to get the attention of a Waiter.

CAROLINE

Excuse me, could you -- Would you mind --

PENNY

Give it up, Mum.

CAROLINE

One nice picture. That's all I'm asking for, Penny.

A WAITER approaches.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

Oh, excellent!

She goes to speak, but all the Waiter does is snatch up Peter's plate and scurry off. Peter's fork is poised in mid-air. An awkward beat. He meekly lowers it.

PETER

That's okay. I was done.

Across the table, "Past Vi" busies herself with re-folding her napkin. Cam puts out a hand for Caroline's camera.

CAM

I can set the timer. We can take it ourselves.

PENNY

No way. Every time you program that thing, you leave me like no time to get ready.

She runs her fingers through her hair, primping.

PENNY (CONT'D)

My Christmas photo poses take careful planning, you know.

CAM

Oh, so that "fat neck" thing you do is on purpose, then?

Penny hands flies to her neck.

PENNY

What?!

Cam bursts into laughter. Caroline looks annoyed.

CAROLINE

Both of you stop it right now.

PENNY

Me? I didn't do anything! He --

PETER

C'mon, Penn.

Penny's angry expression drops. She folds her arms.

PENNY

(softly)

Whatever.

She glares at Cam. He gives her a small half smile. Penny bites back her own - she can't stay mad.

PENNY (CONT'D)

I hate you.

"Past Vi" has been silently observing the whole debacle. She remains stony faced - sad and troubled.

Caroline looks to Peter. She takes his hand and mouths --

CAROLINE

You okay?

Peter feigns a reassuring smile. He kisses her hand.

ON VI AND KOU

as Vi reacts to this moment of affection. She turns to Kou.

VI

See? This is just how it is. I did something totally horrible and cruel and they're... fine.

KOU

Really?

VI

Really.

(then)

So what if I didn't get them any presents this year? Last Christmas was way worse in the family drama department and they got over it.

KOU

So, what you're saying is that you think your actions don't affect anything? You think you don't matter?

Vi is unimpressed.

VI

If I wanted an amateur therapy session, I'd watch the Tyra Banks Show.

KOU

I'm just doing my job.

VI

Which is to do what, exactly? Enlighten me? Good work so far.

KOU

How can you work for the Company, doing the things that you do, and not understand that you change things, you affect things - just by being there?

Vi gives him a blank look. Not buying it.

KOU (CONT'D)

Take a look for yourself.

Their attention is dragged back to the table as "Past Vi" scrapes back her chair. She stands and starts to walk away.

CAROLINE

Where are you going?

Past Vi pauses. She hadn't expected anyone to notice.

PAST VI

Bathroom.

CAROLINE

You just went.

Past Vi shrugs.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

Okay.

As Past Vi leaves, Vi leans in to Kou.

VI

(whispers)

Hundred bucks that nothing changes. They won't care if I'm there or not.

KOU

(whispers back)

Why are you whispering?

Vi blushes. The Waiter approaches the table again. He points to Caroline's camera.

WAITER
Would you like a photo of the family?

CAROLINE
Oh, yes. Thank you.

She goes to hand it over, but stops.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)
Could you wait a minute? My daughter will be right back.

WAITER
Of course.

Kou smiles smugly. Vi glares.

VI
Shut up.

She turns on her heel and walks away. Kou jogs to catch up.

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - BAR - MOMENTS LATER

Vi sits down on a bar stool. Kou comes to stand beside her.

VI
That doesn't mean anything. It was just a picture.

The MAN beside Vi is served a cocktail. He looks away and Vi swipes it from in front of him. She takes a sip.

KOU
To you, maybe. But to your mother, it wouldn't be the same if you weren't in it.

The Man reaches for his drink, but it's gone. He looks around in confusion - he can't see Vi or his drink.

KOU (CONT'D)
(re: cocktail)
I shouldn't let you do that.

VI
'Course you should. I think this is actually a "mocktail", anyway. I figure since I've never had a real cocktail, my subconscious doesn't know what they taste like.

She takes another sip.

VI (CONT'D)

Hmm. Fruity.
(then)
Are we done?

Kou sighs.

KOU

If it's your dream, like you
said, I guess that's up to you.

VI

Then we're done.

She puts down the drink and hops up. Beside her, the Man
finds the half-empty glass. He is very confused now.

Vi and Kou start for the entrance. Vi grabs Kou's sleeve.

VI (CONT'D)

Kou, wait.

He turns to face her. She looks sincere, nervous. All trace
of her previous attitude now gone.

VI (CONT'D)

If I'm going to wake up now, I
guess that means that I should
get some things off my chest.
While I still have the chance.

KOU

Vi, you don't have to say it.

VI

Because it wasn't my fault,
right?

KOU

You know it wasn't.

VI

Still...

She takes a deep breath.

VI (CONT'D)

I didn't really know you that
well. But I'm sorry that you're
dead because of me.

KOU

(sad smile)
Me too.

He leans down and places a gentle kiss on her cheek.

Vi's eyes flutter closed - only for a second - and when she opens them again...

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

She's outside. Alone. Vi looks around, confused.

VI
Well... That was unexpected.

ANDREW (O.S.)
Vi!

Andrew walks towards her, no jacket in the humid night air.

ANDREW (CONT'D)
You came!

VI
What?

Andrew holds up a plastic bag.

ANDREW
Our first annual --

VI
The eggnog thing. Right. Yeah, of course. That's why I'm here.

Her smile falters.

ANDREW
What's wrong? You look like you've seen --

VI
If you say anything about a ghost, I will hit you. Hard.

ANDREW
Well, I was going to say "you look like you've seen a mildly entertaining Pauly Shore movie".
(off her look)
But now you just look like you've had some bad Christmas turkey.

Vi rubs her eyes, trying desperately to clear her mind.

VI
This is going to sound crazy but... I think I just woke up.

ANDREW
Figuratively?

VI

Literally. I think I was, I don't know, sleepwalking or something. I was having this crazy dream, events of which were totally not possible --

ANDREW

Definition of the word "dream".

VI

Right. And when I opened my eyes, I was here.

A beat. Andrew shrugs and keeps walking.

ANDREW

Okay, then.

VI

You don't find that weird?

ANDREW

'Course I do. But can I find it weird upstairs in my air-conditioned apartment?

He motions to the apartment building just ahead of them.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Andrew marches up the stairs - Vi trailing after him. Both are slightly sweaty and out of breath.

VI

... And then - BAM! - on the street, cars driving past, no Kou. Weirdest thing ever.

(then)

It was so vivid, though. It was like he was...

She glances up at Andrew,

VI (CONT'D)

Sorry. You probably don't want to hear this.

Andrew stops at the top of the stairs. He smiles.

ANDREW

I like hearing what you have to say.

VI

(small laugh)

Yeah, sure.

They continue onto the hallway landing...

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

... And near the door to Andrew's apartment.

VI

So, who else did you invite,
anyway? Lex? Jenna?

ANDREW

She's away, visiting her parents
for Christmas.

VI

That sucks. But, really, you
didn't invite Benson, did you?

Andrew smirks as he unlocks the door. He holds it open.

ANDREW

Why don't you see for yourself?

A confused, intrigued smile crosses Vi's face. She enters.

INT. ANDREW'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The place seems empty, though the lights are on.

VI

(calling back)
Nobody's going to jump out and
yell "surprise", are they?

She gets no response from behind her.

VI (CONT'D)

Andrew?

She rounds the corner, into the living room area. A beat.

VI (CONT'D)

(shocked)
Andrew?

Another version of Andrew - dressed in boxers and a sweat-stained t-shirt - lies on the couch. He watches TV, bored.

Vi whirls around to find GHOST ANDREW standing behind her.

VI (CONT'D)

Oh my God! I'm still asleep?!

GHOST ANDREW

If you say so.

Vi walks over to the couch.

VI

Shut up.

GHOST ANDREW

(grins cheekily)

But then how am I supposed to help you?

Vi stands beside the "real" Andrew. She waves a hand in front of his face. He yawns and changes channels.

VI

I don't need any help.

GHOST ANDREW

That's not what Kou said.

Vi stops. She turn back to Andrew, suspicious.

VI

You spoke to Kou?

GHOST ANDREW

He texted me.

Vi rolls her eyes.

VI

So, what are you supposed to tell me about this? This is what, a couple of years ago when you were a boring no-friends loser who spent Christmas Eve watching...

She peers at the TV.

VI (CONT'D)

... Re-runs of Dog the Bounty Hunter?

Andrew puts his grocery bag onto the table.

GHOST ANDREW

Actually, I'm the Ghost of Christmas Present. But I only took the gig because I misheard it as "Ghost of Christmas Presents". So this is a bit of a let down for me, too.

VI

But you're not dead.

GHOST ANDREW

You don't need to have wings to fly to the moon, Vi.

VI

What?

GHOST ANDREW

I read it on an inspirational
fridge magnet once.

Vi turns back to the real Andrew on the couch.

VI

So, if you're the Ghost of
Christmas Present... This is
happening now?

GHOST ANDREW

Yep.

VI

But what about the eggnog party?
When I said I couldn't come,
you... he told me he'd invited
other people. Where are they?

GHOST ANDREW

There's no one else.

VI

You lied?

GHOST ANDREW

What can I say? Gagging on eggnog
just isn't the same unless you're
doing it with Violet Morgan.

Andrew, eyes on the TV, gropes blindly for a carton of
eggnog on the floor. He takes a gulp. Splutters a bit.

Vi starts searching her pockets for her phone.

VI

I have to call him.

GHOST ANDREW

Don't bother. He'll bounce back.
Isn't that what everyone does? Vi
lets 'em down and then --

Vi glares.

VI

I get it.

GHOST ANDREW

Not sure you do.

(beat)

(MORE)

GHOST ANDREW (CONT'D)
 Besides, we've already got one
 more guy scheduled for tonight
 and he'll be pissed if you don't
 show. He's kinda sensitive like
 that.

VI
 (re: Andrew)
 So what am I supposed to do about
 this? I can't just let him sit
 there watching crappy TV and --

On the couch, Andrew sighs and flicks the channel over
 again. This time, seedy PORNO MUSIC begins to play.

VI (CONT'D)
 (eyes wide)
 -- Oh, hello.

Ghost Andrew leaps forward, grabs Vi's shoulders and
 hustles her out the door.

GHOST ANDREW
 Okay! Time's up! Let's go!

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Ghost Andrew slams the door behind them. There's an awkward
 beat as Vi just stares at him. Ghost Andrew is embarrassed.

GHOST ANDREW
 Don't look at me like that.

He sweeps past her. Vi blinks away her disturbed shock.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Vi and Ghost Andrew emerge from the building. He goes to
 the curb and looks down the street - waiting for something.

VI
 You said there's one more ghost
 tonight, right? Is it someone
 famous? Ooh - is it Jesus?

GHOST ANDREW
 Okay, now you're just making fun
 of the process.

VI
 Hey, I'm just passing the time
 while I wait for the white light
 or flash of whatever that
 teleports me to my next date.

She looks around.

VI (CONT'D)
Which, speaking of, why isn't
that happening? Aren't I supposed
to be going, y'know, poof?

Ghost Andrew spies something approaching.

GHOST ANDREW
You're totally right.

A city bus pulls up next to them. The doors open to let
some people off. Ghost Andrew spreads his arms and grins.

GHOST ANDREW (CONT'D)
Poof.

Vi's face drops.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BUS - NIGHT

Vi has a window seat on the near empty bus. She grumbles.

VI
Budget cuts. What the hell does
he mean "budget cuts"?

She angles around to the SLEEPING HOMELESS MAN behind her.

VI (CONT'D)
And if this is my dream, why
aren't you Ryan Gosling?

The bus slows.

DRIVER (O.S.)
Last stop. Everybody off.

Vi perks up and looks around. She raises her eyebrows as
she realises where she is...

EXT. WICKER RECORDS - NIGHT

Vi walks up to the darkened store. Behind her, the bus
rumbles off and the other passengers go their separate
ways.

She eyes the "CLOSED" sign hanging on the door.

VI
(shrugs)
What the hell.

Pushing on the door, she's surprised to find it unlocked.

INT. WICKER RECORDS - NIGHT

ANGLE ON FLOOR

Littered with empty plastic cups, food crumbs and discarded napkins. Vi CRUNCHES tentatively through the debris.

ANGLE ON SCENE

The place is dark and echoey. The decorated Christmas tree looms over the room, creating a sense of forboding.

VI

Anybody home? Shane?

Out of nowhere, there's a powerful burst of ELECTRIC GUITAR. Vi jumps and turns to the stage across the room.

A FIGURE - hidden in shadow - stands in the centre, one arm raised, the other clutching the vibrating guitar.

Vi steps forward, squinting into the darkness. Then, with a metallic THUNK, a SPOTLIGHT comes on, shining down onto...

... Jimmy!

He lets the sound of the guitar fade out. Then, he strums it again - gentler. He steps up to the microphone, takes a deep breath and moistens his lips.

He looks like he's about to start singing. Then --

GHOST JIMMY

You're late.

The spotlight goes down as the HOUSE LIGHTS go up. He puts the guitar aside, hops off the stage and walks over to Vi.

VI

What do you expect? I took the bus. Anyway, are you a... y'know?

GHOST JIMMY

You think Regular Jimmy could've pulled off that lighting trick?

(thinks; then)

Well, yeah, probably.

He bows.

GHOST JIMMY (CONT'D)

Limited Edition "Ghost of Christmas Future" Jimmy, at your service.

Vi gives him a once over.

VI

Have to say, you're a little nicer than the normal one.

GHOST JIMMY

It's the spirit of the season. Makes me all fuzzy inside. Now, am I gonna have to listen to yakking away all night or can we hurry this thing up?

Vi purses her lips. Yep, same old Jimmy. Then, she motions for him to go ahead. Jimmy indicates the room.

GHOST JIMMY (CONT'D)

This is the Christmas yet to be.

Vi kicks aside a plastic cup.

VI

So it's like some post-apocalyptic Christmas where we've run out of necessities like brooms?

GHOST JIMMY

It's Christmas Eve. The one you just left, plus a couple hours.

VI

We're a whole "couple hours" in the future? Gee, mister - that's just gosh darn kooky!

GHOST JIMMY

Hey, now. I'm doing a thing.

Vi glares and is about to retort -- but a THUD from inside the store causes her to stop.

VI

What was that?

GHOST JIMMY

Jimmy.

VI

Hiding in the dark? What's he doing?

Ghost Jimmy shrugs and avoids Vi's eyes.

GHOST JIMMY

He's, ah, indisposed.

It takes Vi a second. She screws up her face in disgust.

VI

What? Oh -- Uggh! What the hell?
Is Christmas just "porn-a-
palooza" for you guys?!

She storms out, the bell above the door JINGLING as she exits. Ghost Jimmy sighs and follows.

A moment later, the door to the store room opens. The real Jimmy pops his head out.

JIMMY

Hello? Who's there?

When no one responds, he retreats back into the store room.

INT. WICKER RECORDS - STORE ROOM - NIGHT

Jimmy smiles to himself as he settles into a sagging fold out chair. He puts on some headphones, which blare MUSIC.

He arches up and pulls a magazine out from under him. He flips through and nods appreciatively.

JIMMY

Oh, yeah...

ANGLE ON MAGAZINE

It's a guitar mag. Each glossy page filled with pictures of electric guitars.

BACK TO JIMMY

He grabs a plate of gingerbread cookies and takes a big satisfying bite of one. Through a full mouth, he sighs.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

I love Christmas.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Vi and Ghost Jimmy walk slowly.

GHOST JIMMY

You never came to the party.

VI

I know. I meant to. I wanted to.
But things were just... I kinda
wanted to be alone. And --

GHOST JIMMY

It wouldn't have mattered anyway.

Vi groans.

VI

Not you too.

GHOST JIMMY

That's the spiel. We're all shoveling it tonight.

VI

Shovel something else.

They wander in front of an electronics store. The TVs in the window play "It's a Wonderful Life".

GHOST JIMMY

You started this.

Vi stops and turns on him angrily.

VI

By what? By deciding that I didn't want to go to your stupid party? By realising that I was sick of all this holiday crap and just wanted a few moments to myself? What did I change, Jimmy? Tell me.

GHOST JIMMY

A whole lot, actually.

The TV screens in the window change, like someone hit the remote. Now, they show the interior of Wicker Records earlier that night. The Christmas party is in full swing.

GHOST JIMMY (CONT'D)

Y'see, when you didn't show up, Shane got a little... Let's just say that he took a liking to BB's extra special candy-cane punch.

Vi watches uneasily, as the screens show Shane at the punch bowl. TIME CUTS show him guzzling down cup after cup.

VI

He got drunk? Why would he even --

GHOST JIMMY

Because you're his best friend.

(beat)

Hate to say it, but my little cousin is sort of a loser. Even by indie music geek standards.

On the screens, Hannah approaches Shane. They talk. Hannah looks hurt by something Shane says and she storms off.

VI

What's happening? I can't hear.

GHOST JIMMY

The gist of it is, Shane...

He puts a finger on the glass and drags it across, to the left. The images on the screen REWIND until they reach the moment Hannah walks up to Shane.

GHOST JIMMY (CONT'D)

... Is an idiot.

He taps the glass and it begins to play as normal. This time, the SOUND of their conversation comes through.

HANNAH

(on TV)

Are you drunk?

SHANE

(on TV)

It's Christmas!

HANNAH

I get that but... this isn't "Christmas" drunk. This is "you're upset about something and you'd rather get wasted than deal with it" drunk.

SHANE

Aren't those the same thing?

Hannah purses her lips. She's serious.

SHANE (CONT'D)

She's not here.

HANNAH

I'm here. I'm your girlfriend, Shane. Aren't I enough?

Shane goes to pour himself another cup.

SHANE

(under his breath)

Apparently not.

A hurt beat. Hannah walks away. Shane doesn't seem to care.

ON VI AND GHOST JIMMY

Vi, shocked, steps back from the glass.

VI

I don't believe it. Shane would never say that. He loves her.

GHOST JIMMY

I know he does. But that doesn't mean he's doesn't make mistakes.

VI

(realising)

Because of me.

GHOST JIMMY

Ding! Ding! Ding! Give the girl a prize! It's all because of you.

VI

Wait... All? There's more?

Ghost Jimmy smirks. The screens change again. This time, all of them becoming individual pieces of a larger image.

A piece of mistletoe.

GHOST JIMMY

Now, I won't say Hannah's completely blameless for this next part. You know teenagers. They just can't say no to a little revenge now and again.

The image on the screen PANS DOWN to reveal a couple kissing beneath the mistletoe. It's Hannah and VINKLE!

They pull apart, Vinkle in complete shock and Hannah glaring daggers at Shane who watches from across the room.

The screens go dark.

VI

(shocked)

No way. It's too...

GHOST JIMMY

90210? At least they didn't find out they were long lost siblings.

He leans in, voice lowered.

GHOST JIMMY (CONT'D)

We're saving that til next Christmas.

VI

(ignoring him)

Where is he now?

GHOST JIMMY

Oh, so now you care about what I'm trying to --

VI

Jimmy!

He sighs.

GHOST JIMMY

Follow the star. Y'know. Like the
Three Wise Men.

VI

A star?

She looks up at the sky but, this being a city, there's not
a whole lot of stars. Ghost Jimmy points down the street.

GHOST JIMMY

Oh for God's sake, go that way!

Vi flashes him a quick, grateful smile.

VI

Thanks, Jimmy.

She takes off.

GHOST JIMMY

You're welcome, Girl-Shane.

ON VI

as she runs. Adrenaline pumping, heart pounding.

EXT. "SANTA'S VILLAGE" - LATER

Vi runs past, disappearing from frame. A beat. She returns,
walking backwards and staring at something inside the park.

It's a STAR. Glowing brightly in the sky, calling out to
her. It seems to be hanging over the Christmas Tree Maze.

Vi starts towards the entrance.

EXT. CHRISTMAS TREE MAZE - NIGHT

Vi rounds the last few corners, expertly making her way
through the maze. She emerges into the centre - triumphant.

The star is at the top of a huge Christmas tree, reaching
up into the night sky. Vi follows the tree down to see
Shane sitting beneath it. He is alone.

Vi smiles in relief.

VI

Shane...

She starts toward him, but freezes as --

-- BIANCA gets to him first. She sinks down beside him.

VI (CONT'D)
What the hell?

GHOST JIMMY (O.S.)
Not a pretty picture, is it?

Ghost Jimmy is now beside her.

GHOST JIMMY (CONT'D)
I mean, she's way too hot for him
for a start.

VI
Please don't tell me they're
about to start kissing.
(then)
No. Shane wouldn't. He --

GHOST JIMMY
There's a lot you don't know
about Shane. Like that he's not a
doormat.

Vi frowns indignantly.

VI
I don't think that he's a --

GHOST JIMMY
But you treat him like one.

He lets it sink in. Vi looks guilty. She knows he's right.

GHOST JIMMY (CONT'D)
Let me break it down for you,
Girl-Shane. You can't keep
thinking that Shane will be fine
without you, because he won't be.

He taps his chest.

GHOST JIMMY (CONT'D)
You're in there. In his little,
geeky, David Bowie loving heart.
And when you're not around - it
changes things. It changes him.

Vi folds her arms across her chest.

VI
Shane's a big boy. I don't
control what he does.

She casts a quick glare at Bianca.

VI (CONT'D)

I think that's pretty obvious.

GHOST JIMMY

You're missing the bigger picture. Blondie over there could be anyone. She's just a replacement. A seat-filler.

VI

For me.

GHOST JIMMY

If you keep acting like your friendship doesn't matter, he's going to start believing it. If you keep not being there...

He looks back over and Vi follows his gaze. Shane and Bianca are gone. Just the beautiful tree remains.

GHOST JIMMY (CONT'D)

... Then neither will he.

Vi starts to tear up.

VI

Great. I'm a horrible friend. Now I have another reason to hate Christmas.

GHOST JIMMY

Hey, at least you've come around on that whole "you are significant in the lives of others" thing.

She glares at him through tears, then sighs. She's tired.

VI

Can I go home now?

GHOST JIMMY

Have you learned something?

VI

Yes.

GHOST JIMMY

(condescendingly)
What have you learned?

VI

That you're way more annoying than I thought you were?

GHOST JIMMY

And?

VI

And... that you were right.

Ghost Jimmy pumps his fist.

GHOST JIMMY

The system works!

VI

Congratulations. Now, how do I
wake up?

(quickly)

For real this time.

GHOST JIMMY

What do I look like, a guardian
angel?

Vi shakes her head. Typical.

She starts for the archway into the maze - the way she came
in. Ghost Jimmy's eyes remain on the tree. He smiles...

The star on top starts to glow - brighter than before. It
catches the attention of Vi, who turns.

She puts up a hand to shade her eyes. The light grows and
spreads outwards until it envelopes everything. The tree,
Jimmy and, finally, Vi.

FADE TO:

WHITE

Endless. Empty.

Then, a distant, echoing voice...

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Vi? Vi, wake up.

FADE IN:

INT. THE COMPANY - JENNA'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Vi stirs from her slumped position on the keyboard. JENNA
stands over her, a hand on her back.

JENNA

Vi...

Vi sits up groggily.

VI

What time is it?

JENNA

Almost eleven. You fell asleep on my desk.

Vi yawns, still out of it.

VI

I had the weirdest dream.

Jenna leans over and clicks off YouTube.

JENNA

I'm not surprised. What are you doing here?

VI

What are you doing here? Andrew said you went home for Christmas.

(beat)

At least, I think he did.

JENNA

I only stopped by for Christmas Eve. That's when my family celebrates.

VI

Oh. Right.

Jenna pulls a wrapped parcel from her desk drawer.

JENNA

I just came in to get Andrew's present and found you.

(concerned)

Is everything okay?

Vi nods. She spots something in Jenna's other hand.

VI

What's that?

JENNA

This? Oh, I found it hanging in the break room doorway.

She reveals a bunch of mistletoe.

JENNA (CONT'D)

It's a sexual harassment suit waiting to happen.

Vi, staring at the mistletoe, has stopped listening.

VI

I've gotta go.

She leaps up and runs for the door.

JENNA

Vi?

VI

Tell Andrew I'll be there soon.
And save some eggnog for me!

She's gone. Jenna watches after her, still a bit startled.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Through the glass wall of a hotel lobby, a bank of elevators is visible. One opens and Vi bolts out.

She dashes through the lobby and out the front door where she almost collides with a SLEEPY DOORMAN.

SLEEPY DOORMAN

Hey!

VI

Merry Christmas!

She continues on down the street.

INT. WICKER RECORDS - NIGHT

The party is a success. It's packed and everyone is having a great time. Well, except for Shane...

He sits glumly on the staircase. BB and Vinkle come to sit down on either side of him. BB holds a plastic cup.

BB is dressed all in black - effortlessly cool. Vinkle wears a stifling "Grandma-made" Christmas sweater.

BB

Dude.

SHANE

What?

VINKLE

He thinks you're depressed. Are you depressed? You can talk to us.

Vinkle puts a hand on his shoulder. Shane shrugs him off.

SHANE

I'm not depressed.

BB

Then cheer the hell up.

SHANE

Vi didn't show.

BB

So? Are you going to define your happiness by whether or not one girl is in your face every second of the day?

SHANE

I thought you liked Vi.

BB

I do like Vi. But, dude, it's Christmas.

He claps Shane on the back, hands him his cup and walks away. Vinkle follows, tugging at his uncomfortable sweater.

Shane looks at the liquid in the cup. He swishes it around, sniffs it. Recoils. It's strong. He lifts it to his lips...

VI (O.S.)

Drop it, Evans.

Vi stands in front of him - steely eyed. Shane grins.

SHANE

You made it!

He stands, putting the cup aside.

VI

You didn't think I'd bail on my best friend, did you?

SHANE

Well --

VI

Don't answer that.

They share a smile.

VI (CONT'D)

So... Do we hug or...

SHANE

I think we're good.

Vi laughs. Linking arms, they move further into the room.

SHANE (CONT'D)

Okay, what do you want to do first? There's dancing. And food.

He grabs a plate off the front counter.

SHANE (CONT'D)

We've got gingerbread!

Jimmy swoops past and takes the plate from Shane's hand.

SHANE (CONT'D)

Or not...

VI

Actually, I sort of need your help with something.

SHANE

(groans)

The Company? But it's Christmas!

VI

No, not the Company. Something else. You up for it?

SHANE

Of course. Anything.

VI

Great.

She looks past him to Hannah, chatting with Vinkle.

VI (CONT'D)

First, go get your girlfriend.

(then)

Second, does Jimmy give friend-of-relative discounts?

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY - LATER

The door to Andrew's apartment opens. Just a little, anyway. Andrew is shirtless and wearing a crooked Santa hat. His cheeks are flushed as he looks out at --

Vi, Shane and Hannah. Standing before him, all with slightly different amused reactions on their faces.

ANDREW

Oh!

(clears his throat)

Hey, Vi. And co.

VI

(impish)

Whatcha doin'?

From inside the apartment, a woman LAUGHS.

ANDREW

Jenna.

Shane barks out a laugh. Andrew glares.

ANDREW (CONT'D)
 I mean, Jenna is here.
 (beat; awkward)
 She brought mistletoe.

VI
 That's just a smidgen too much
 information for me right now.

She claps her hands.

VI (CONT'D)
 So! The reason we're here -- The
 reason I'm here... I wanted to
 apologise about tonight.

ANDREW
 (hurried)
 Apology accepted.

He reaches behind him and grabs a carton of eggnog. He
 hands it to her and goes to close the door.

ANDREW (CONT'D)
 Enjoy.

Vi puts her hand out, stopping him.

VI
 And I wanted to ask you for a
 little favour.

JENNA (O.S.)
 Andrew! Where'd you go?

ANDREW
Really not a good time, Vi.

Shane and Hannah try to hold back their giggles. Vi presses
 her palms together "begging". Andrew rolls his eyes.

ANDREW (CONT'D)
 Okay, what is it?

VI
 I'm guessing you won't be needing
 your car tonight...

Off her innocent, curious expression, CUT TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - NIGHT

Andrew's car ROCKETS into frame.

INT. ANDREW'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Vi is in the driver's seat, looking pleased with herself.

She glances into the rearview mirror and rolls her eyes (though she's not at all annoyed) at the sight of Shane and Hannah making out.

Also in the backseat - half a dozen bags stamped with the Wicker Records logo.

INT. MORGAN RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

ANGLE ON A BLAZING FIRE

Crackling, radiating heat.

ANGLE ON SCENE

Caroline reads while Peter moves around the tree. He shifts presents with his feet, trying to get a look at the tags.

CAROLINE

Stop it, Peter.

PETER

Just making sure everything's there.

He steps over Cam, lying on the floor, and sits beside Caroline, who smirks. Penny is sprawled on the couch.

PENNY

(re: fire)

Too hot. I'm dying.

CAM

(sounding delirious)

Now I know what it's like to be a polar ice cap. I didn't particularly want to know, but now I do. Funny how things work out...

CAROLINE

Oh, please. It's not that bad. It reminds me of --

CAM, PENNY AND PETER

"White Christmases at the manor".

A beat. Caroline huffs and gets up.

CAROLINE

Fine. I guess I'll just join in and refuse to care about anything. Sure will make things less complicated around here.

She goes to put out the fire...

VI (O.S.)

Mum, wait.

Vi enters - followed by Shane and Hannah. Their arms are laden down with the bags from Wicker Records.

VI (CONT'D)

It's nice.

Penny eases herself up.

PENNY

Oh, great. Little Miss Too-Cheap-For-K-Mart is back. I'm keeping the present I got you, by the way.

VI

You should. I don't deserve it.

(beat)

What I said before, I was being really selfish and insensitive and, well, kinda oblivious. And I'm sorry. But I wanna make it up to you.

She holds up the bags.

CAM

You got us presents?

Vi nods. Cam and Penny look at each other. A beat. They leap up and hurry over to Vi.

PENNY

When I said I was keeping your present, it's just so I could re-wrap it. The ribbon didn't quite match.

CAM

I told them not to write you off. I was on your side, Vi. All along. Seriously.

They start eagerly pawing at the bags.

CAROLINE

Hang on a second.

Everyone stops and looks to Caroline. The "deciding vote". A tense beat, and Caroline looks past Vi - to Hannah.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

You haven't introduced your friend.

The stillness is broken. Shane, Cam and Penny divide up the presents while Caroline approaches with a welcoming smile.

VI

Mum, this is Shane's girlfriend, Hannah.

CAROLINE
Lovely to meet you, Hannah.

They shake.

VI
(knowingly)
She's from England.

Caroline pauses mid-handshake.

CAROLINE
(pleasantly surprised)
Oh...

Vi leaves them. She looks over to Peter, still sitting. She smiles, nervous and apologetic. He smiles back. It's okay.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MORGAN RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Everyone is enjoying the presents, the evening and each other's company. We MOVE WITH Vi as she flutters around the room, collecting the discarded bags and shrink wrap.

Caroline and Hannah sit together, deep in conversation.

HANNAH
Oh, I know! I miss it, too.
Opening your window, first thing
in the morning, and it's like
someone just laid a fresh white
sheet over the whole countryside.

CAROLINE
It just takes your breath away.

HANNAH
Not quite Christmas without it.

CAROLINE
(looking around)
But this isn't too bad, either.

Vi steps over Cam who fiddles with a voice tuning device. She picks up the box. Cam lifts the device to his mouth.

CAM
(robot voice)
Thank you, earthling. When the
end comes, you shall be spared.

VI
Good to know.

She sweeps past Peter. He's engrossed in a Motley Crue biography.

PETER
Fascinating. Just fascinating.

And finally, Vi passes Shane and Penny. They sit on the floor with Penny watching impatiently as Shane tries to program a karaoke machine.

PENNY
Are you done yet?

SHANE
This is a very sensitive piece of machinery, okay?

PENNY
Karaoke-Party 5000? Please. A monkey could do it.

He thrusts the instruction manual at her.

SHANE
Prove it.

INT. MORGAN RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Vi enters. She stuffs the trash she's collected into the bin and straightens up - wiping sweat from her forehead.

She fans out her shirt and looks around for something to help her cool down. She spies the carton of eggnog.

MOMENTS LATER

She's at the freezer. She digs around inside and produces an icecube tray. Popping out a couple, she drops them into her glass of eggnog.

Closing the freezer door, she takes a sip - and gags. She looks down at the glass, thinking.

Then, she raises it into the air and, as she walks back into the living room --

VI
(excited; enticing)
Who wants eggnog?

As she passes the freezer, she reveals a photograph pinned there. It's of the Morgan family, a year earlier and sitting around the table at the restaurant.

They're all smiling, looking happy. Even Vi. Just for a moment. PUSH IN on this and then --

CUT TO BLACK.

THE END